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50% Ginger, 50% Blonde, 100% Boldly in Between

“Is *that* my baby?” my mother asked the nurse. “She sure is, and she has beautiful red hair.” Why my mom was so confused is beyond me. My grandma on my mother’s side of the family had red hair. It’s strange that I’m the only child with strawberry blonde hair, while my sister and brother are both natural brunettes. The difference in our hair color never fazed me until the questions came pouring in.

“Why is your hair *so* red?” all of my little kindergarten friends asked. “My mom told me it’s because I fell from the sun.” Now that I think about it, her response was kind of preposterous. But as kindergarteners, we believed anything we heard. “You did *not* fall from the sun! Are you an alien?” they’d ask while taunting me on the playground.

“Isn’t she a firecracker?” My mom created spunky hair-dos for me every day. Those hairstyles matched who I was and who I still am—sassy and spontaneous with a fiery personality. I’d strut around while holding her hand, flaunting the orange fluff that sat on top of my head decorated in clips of all shapes and sizes.

Questions about the color of my hair continued to bombard me throughout my life. “Hey, Macy, want to dye your hair darker?” my friend, Amber, asked me multiple times. “Maybe. Let me ask my mom and see what she thinks. I’m getting my hair cut tonight so I’ll see.” My friends made drastic “improvements” to their hair color all the time throughout middle school. Everywhere girls around me were dyeing their hair from jet black to platinum blonde, changing

like night and day. I saw stunning silky brunettes add streaks of pink and blue. All I wanted to do was keep up with the crowd by making my own changes too, but secretly I wished my friends tried out a light auburn tinge, to have a little taste of what it means to be a strawberry blonde.

“Why would you want to dye your hair?” asked Barb, the woman who has cut my hair since I was five, when I mentioned Amber’s suggestion. Barb told me about the negative and positive effects of dying hair. She told me semi-permanent dyes contain no, or low levels of peroxide or ammonia, and are safer for fragile hair. However, these dyes may still contain the possibly harmful ingredients. In her opinion, the negative side to dying my hair: I’d lose my tangerine-tinted color. In my head I thought, if she’s trying to convince me not to dye my hair, she’s doing a terrible job. I don’t care about the chemicals; I still want to dye it. Barb’s exact words were, “Even though the positives are facts and the negatives are my opinion, your hair is *your* signature. It’s a trait you don’t want to trade. There are very few people I see with naturally strawberry blonde hair like yours anymore.” Her opinion, not the facts, made me reconsider my decision. Maybe I wanted to stand out.

“Why is it that we always get teased?” asked my friend Lauren. “It’s not like we’re full-blown carrot tops.” We’re both considered “strawberries.” She was the only person I could ever talk to about the harassment and teasing; we understood each other’s irritations. “I wish I could confidently answer that question, but I have no idea,” I said. Her response, “It’s because they’re jealous.” How is it remotely possible for someone to be jealous of my hair? That was the turning point; it took one simple question for me to realize that I should be taking more pride in the flurry of flames that drape from my skull.

What does it mean to have strawberry blonde hair? We are a group of walking recessive genes who are called out by pure red-heads for considering ourselves to be one of them. We

don't belong to the group of so-called "gingers" because our hair isn't red enough. Yet our hair is *too* red to be considered blonde, which rules us out of that group.

"Is that your real hair color?" This is the most common question my mom's friends and strangers ask. The rarity of having strawberry blonde hair does have its advantages. I didn't start receiving these compliments until I was older. "You're the last young person we know today who doesn't dye and destroy their hair." That's another reason why I chose to keep my hair color the same, but I wanted to change something about the style.

"Are you *really* going to cut off your hair?" my sister asked. "Yes, it needs to be done!" My hair used to be down to my lower back, thick like a lion's mane. My sister wanted me to keep my long hair. Along with the color of my hair, the length was my trademark too. Barb chopped about ten inches, and I donated it. The women from "Locks of Love" told me someone will greatly appreciate the health and color of my hair.

"Do we have a ginger on the team now?" Too intimidated to answer this question I've heard millions of times before, afraid I might snap, I took a deep breath. "Of course! Born and raised!" I answered. One day our soccer coach split us up for our shooting game. "We're going to play the blondes versus the brunettes!" Of course, my teammate, Amanda, had to chime in, "Macy is on her own team!" I couldn't help but laugh. It wasn't the first time I've heard this joke. But each day, these comments bug me less and less.

Do I enjoy standing out? Yes, standing out from the pack isn't a bad thing. It has given me character; it's my signature, and now something I will forever take pride in. Even though my hair length has changed, the color will forever remain from my roots to the tips. Now, I'm boldly in between a ginger and a blonde with my strawberry blonde hair. Bring on the questions.