



Let Down Your Hair

By Lena Beckman

Zelli had been proud of her hair. She had even worn it as a feminist statement:

“This is what a pussy looks like, dude, and if you don’t like it, you can go fuck yourself.” They never had of course, as she had been very pretty. She had been proud of her blonde bush and had never been shy about loudly giving her opinions regarding men who preferred it smooth: they were paedophiles or addicted to porn.

But nothing was the same now. She would never fuck again. Her pussy was just as dead as her legs.

Spoon in hand, she was stirring the golden liquid on the stove. She had refused to have the kitchen lowered, and the woman from social services had not insisted. The woman had worn a gray suit and was tall, maybe five-nine. Her ginger bob had fallen onto her face as she looked down on Zelli in her chair. She looked like a giant come to take pity on the little cripple. Zelli could see the struggle in her face: pity and compassion unevenly matched against the will to save money. No reconstruction of the kitchen meant less cost for social services, and that would look good on her worksheet. Zelli could see her face stiffen as her brain calculated the reduced cost. She wrote something down on her pad and shook her head. Zelli had seen that too. She saw right through the bitch. They all just wanted to be out of her sight, a cripple like she was.

“I don’t want any one coming here either.”

The giant, who had introduced herself as Mrs. Gothel, looked even more uncomfortable.

“What do you mean?”

“I can take care of myself. I don’t need anyone coming here cleaning the apartment or wiping my bum.”

Mrs Gothel had nodded and Zelli knew that her rudeness had finally made the Giant’s internal

struggle resolve itself in a clean knockout. Economy had won.

“You have to fill out this form wavering your right to disability help.”

Zelli had signed and then asked her to get the hell out of there and please could she shut the door behind her. Mrs Gothel had gathered the papers and walked out of the apartment, showing off her healthy legs just to spite her.

Zelli slammed the door shut and locked it.

The baking alarm rang. Twenty minutes. Zelli held up a mirror over the pot to see the colour of the liquid. It looked right. She took a small spoon from the drawer and dipped it into the pot, taking out a drop of what looked like really runny resin and poured it into the bowl of cold water, the test to see if it was ready. The beautiful black lady on You Tube had stressed the importance of getting the consistency right and warned that it might take you a few tries. Zelli hoped she hadn't failed making the sugar wax: she had been very careful stirring it all through the process. She pulled out the honey substance from the bowl and made a little ball of it between her fingers. It was just right: like toffee. She rolled over to the cabinet and took out a glass jar, rolled back to the sink and started pouring hot water on the jar from the tap. Then she poured the liquid from the pot into the jar. Now it had to cool down.

Zelli was alone in her apartment for the first time since the accident. She awoke in the morning in her chair, her neck stiff. She rolled out to the living room and sat in front of the large panorama windows, looking at the people moving around in the opposite building and on the street below. The alarm clock startled her. It was time for her BMP, Bowel Management Program. The doctor at the rehabilitation centre had set up a schedule for when she was to empty herself. She hated it. It took so much time. She went into the kitchen and opened the fridge. Nothing looked good. She forced herself to eat a bowl of milk and All-Bran cereal and then went back to sit in front of the windows. Food set the bowels in motion, and though milk wasn't up to the job, she hoped the fibre cereal would be. After thirty minutes the clock rang again and she headed to the bathroom and rolled up to the toilet. She pulled fast the breaks on her chair and began pushing herself up to place herself on the toilet seat. She was strong and she could lift herself up from the seat by the armrests. She put one hand on the wash basin next to the toilet and pulled herself higher up, and then she grabbed the top part of the toilet, trying to drag her body towards it. It didn't work. She fell back onto her chair. Zelli tried again, sweat pouring down her back. She was too heavy, and she was too damned crippled. Finally she just slid down onto the bathroom floor and dragged herself to the shower, pulled down her pants and began the hard work of emptying her bowels.

That night, she lay in bed designing in her head a construction that could help her in the bathroom. During the next couple of weeks she barely ate anything, trying to regulate the emptying of her bowels to every third day. And when she did, she did it seated in the shower. The little food she ate she ordered online and made them leave it outside her door. She didn't want them to see her. She was dirty and skinny: a freak. Finally she had the design ready. Zelli just needed someone to build it for her. But that meant letting someone into her apartment. It took

her a few days to decide, but the sores she got on her back from doing it in the shower made up her mind. Doing it in the shower, she thought, used to have other connotations than what it meant now.

On her third try, the man at the other end of the line seemed interested in the job. He could come by tomorrow to take a look at the blueprint. Zelli hesitated, but finally agreed.

The apartment looked like shit. She hadn't cleaned it in weeks. Zelli started to pick up dirty clothes, and introduced the floor to first the vacuum cleaner then the mop. When she was done, she undressed and sat in the shower on the tile floor, exhausted, letting the hot water rain down on her, soaping up her entire body. That was when she noticed her bush. It looked funny somehow, growing down there in the wasteland below her waist. It looked like something that didn't belong to her. She touched it and the only thing she could feel was the rugged texture of the pubic hair on her fingers. She didn't like the way it felt, like she had a wire brush between her legs. The dead hair somehow made her vagina even deader.

He came early the next morning, knocking on the door. Zelli suddenly had second thoughts.

"Hallo?" he called. She sat and decided whether to answer. "Miss Rapunzel, are you there?" Zelli took a deep breath and opened.

He had ruffled blond hair and a gap between his teeth. Zelli tried not to look at him as he sat on the sofa by the coffee table. She had prepared tea and cheese sandwiches and laid out her design on the table. His name was Tom, and she was relieved that he didn't seem to be looking at her, only at her blueprints. He sipped his tea, helped himself to a sandwich, and then asked permission to go see the bathroom.

"You may." Zelli didn't know where the words came from. She sounded like she was from the nineteenth century. "Do what you have to do," she added, trying to sound cool, but Tom had already left the room. Soon Zelli could hear him banging on the ceiling, and then he came out, pulling his hand through his blonde mane.

"This will be an off the clock job."

Zelli didn't know what that meant, but dared not ask. "Whatever. Just get it done. I will pay you whatever it costs."

She tried to sound blatant. He finally looked at her. His eyes were the bluest she had ever seen and they penetrated hers. Fuck. She looked away.

He was engrossed in the blueprints again. "This is really an interesting design; it will be fun to try to make it work." He was bent over the drawings and when he looked up, he gave her a broad smile showing off his gap. "I have an idea that might make it even better. Let me show you." He was suddenly behind her chair and began pushing it, and her in it, towards the bathroom. God. She felt so degraded. He had to leave. She pulled down her brakes.

"Just say when you can start, then get the hell out of here."

She could feel him freeze behind her. Her words seemed to echo around the room.

“Okay,” he said after a slight pause, and then Tom had put on his jacket and left the apartment, silently closing the door behind him. When Zelli dared to turn around and raise her eyes from the crevice in the wall where she had fixed them, she found to her surprise that Tom had taken the blueprints with him.

The next day she sat by the great windows expecting not to see him, but secretly hoping he would come. But he didn't. And not the next day either. But at seven o'clock on the third night, there he was outside the door. He didn't knock this time just called out her name, “Miss Rapunzel?”

Zelli did not dare to look at him as she opened the door to let him in. Then she rolled over to the great windows and sat with her back towards him. But as the night grew darker outside she began to see him, mirrored in the panorama windows: his blonde hair, his strong arms.

It was the same procedure every night. He called outside her door and she let him in. He brought his tools into the bathroom and she placed herself with her back to him, staring at the window. He usually worked for a couple of hours, mostly in silence. But sometimes she thought she heard him talking to himself. Sometimes she thought that he sang. But he never spoke to her and never smiled at her again, and as his visits turned into a week, Zelli found herself desperately longing to see that gap between his teeth again.

On the twelfth night, he finally spoke and declared that he was ready.

“Do you want to try it?”

Tom looked at her and his blue eyes and face radiated a pride that only comes from a job well done. Zelli really didn't want him to see her dead limbs more than necessary. She opened her mouth to refuse, but changed her mind. How could she destroy his happiness? A 'no' from her might wash that glorious smile away.

“Yes, please.”

He waited by the door, having learned his lesson not to help her, she thought, as she wheeled herself over there. And then he showed her.

The wax had cooled off. Jar between her knees, she rolled into the bathroom. Zelli took off her tee shirt and threw it on the floor. Then she grabbed the remote from the sink and pressed the grey button, and the harness lowered from the ceiling. When it was parallel with her torso she let go of the button. She pulled her arms into the straps that fit her like a rucksack then secured the front straps that came around her torso. Pressing the grey button upwards, she could feel her weight being lifted by the harness. Just a little bit over the chair, her legs still on the footrests, but enough to enable her to glide out of her sweatpants and her panties. Then another button and two straps came down. She reached down for her left knee and secured one strap around it then did the same with the other leg. Then she pushed the grey button again and the harness lifted her up. Suddenly she was erect, her legs hanging just an inch from the floor. Looking at her reflection

in the living room windows opposite the bathroom, it was as if she was standing. She couldn't stop looking at herself. She closed her eyes and fantasized about having the rail go all around the apartment. Then she would hang from the harness, and go back and forth in the living room, so that from the outside, it looked like she was walking. She would even do it naked. Maybe some guy in the opposite building would look in and see her thin body moving and get aroused. And jerk off to her. They wouldn't see a cripple in a wheelchair. They would only see a naked girl.

The rail to which the harness and straps were connected went in an s-shape from the bathroom door. Jar of wax in one hand and the remote in the other she pressed another button and she floated forward in a curve towards the toilet to the left. She passed it, however, and pulled to a halt inside the shower. With another click on the remote, her legs were pulled up by the straps fastened around her knees. It was like she was seated in midair. Zelli put a wooden spatula down into the jar and pulled up a bit of the warm honey coloured wax. She smeared it on her labia and then pressed a square piece of cloth she had cut from an old sheet. She pulled. The wax was now on the square, but with it, it had taken a big bush of her pubic hair. She let the hair drop to the floor. Another dip in the jar, sugar wax on her other labia, and rip. She inspected it. It too was filled with wax and wavy wire. Strip after strip of hair she let drop to the floor until she couldn't feel any more hairs with her fingers. The dead forest was gone. She turned on the shower, letting the hot water wash away the leftover wax that still stuck to her skin.

A push of a button and she was in front of the bathroom mirror. She let the straps move towards the floor and with them her legs, and she was standing again. It made her almost forget. She lifted her hands and gently touched the harness strapped around her thin body and closed her eyes.

She remembered rolling into the bathroom not looking him in the face. How he had gently put the harness around her shoulders and tightened the three straps, one above her breasts and two below, asking her if it was too tight. "No." Then he had let her go and she had lifted for the first time. He had raised her up until they were face to face, Zelli hanging several inches off the floor. She finally dared to look at him. And there was the gap. Tom had smiled the most brilliant smile.

Zelli's hands left the harness and travelled lower across her stomach, lingering in the zone where her sense of feeling ended. It was right below her bellybutton. But where one sensation disappeared, it doubled in her fingertips. It was like an explosion going from her fingers up her arms. She ran her fingers back and forth over the twilight zone, letting the sensation come and go in waves up her arms. Her fingers travelled further down, but now it was Tom's fingers she felt. They slowly ran over her mons pubis, now smooth as silk, and the sensation in her fingers got stronger. Zelli sighed. His fingers went further down, the hair on her arms stood up.

Tom's face was close to hers, and he kissed her. Zelli traced his teeth with her tongue, found his gap and slightly bit his upper lip.

"Miss Rapunzel, I have an idea that might make this harness even better." He was kissing her neck now.

"What might that be?" Zelli had her fingers in his blond hair.

"I will build you a rail that goes all around your apartment," he said between his kisses. "I will build you a rail that goes to the supermarket, and to the bar, and all the way down to the beach

and into the water so you can swim.” He kept on kissing her and lightly stroking her mons. “I will build you rails around the world.”

“Yes!” it was like explosions running through her arms now. “Please. Please set me free. I want to be free.”

Mirrored in the large living room windows was the image of a woman standing. The figure was thin and pale and naked.

Zelli hung in her harness and cried until the morning light washed the darkness away, and she could see the woman no more.

Lena Beckman was born and raised in Stockholm, Sweden. English is her second language, but it is the language she loves most. In 2009, she received a BA in English at the University of Stockholm. Her stories often have a taste of magic realism to them, and many times spark from a personal memory or a place she has been to. “Let Down (Your Hair)” began in an action, though. After the first draft, she developed the story into an adaptation (a very subtle one) of a fairytale. This is the first time she has been published.