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ENGLISH EXTENSION 2

SCHOOL NUMBER: 11770

# 'Le Cheveux, Le Dent'

Air kisses, 'darlings' and black clad designers graze past Jane who sits on a solitary stool in front of a chrome-plated bar. No one air kisses Jane. No one calls her 'darling'. Jane strongly suspects it is simply because, with her turned shoulders and tightly closed lips, she does not resemble a black clad designer. Or any black clad member of the fashion circuit. Jane is simply a menial bar attendant, and an unsuccessful one at that. Plucking another champagne flute from the cluster on the bar top, Jane polishes the smudged glass. She sighs and grimaces at the halitosis foggily announcing its presence on the glass. Slipping a mint under her tongue, Jane smiles. She can now smile, share intimate banter, breathe through her mouth when paying for groceries and even exude enough confidence to achieve her ultimate goal. To become a black clad member of the fashion circuit, a sophisticated intelligent being, a fashion editor.

Jane sits polishing, buffing and shining. The empty space echoes the clatter of single strap mules with perspex wedge heels as models stumble backstage, late and languid. The stage lights pulse silently above the bare catwalk, blinding flares of white rendering her momentarily sightless as they glare in her direction. She sighs.

Perhaps there is another way, she thinks. Jane, of course, had never wanted to be a menial, unsuccessful bar attendant, or even a talented, successful bar attendant. Like any other little girl, Jane had wanted to dictate the fashion movements of a culture. She had wanted to be a fashion editor. She had wanted her name to be in the magazines she leafed through. Cosmopolitan, Vogue, Marie Claire, Cleo, Vanity Fair. However, as the years wore on, and Jane developed an inexplicable fear of her toothbrush. Suddenly, the bristles

threatened to dislodge in her mouth, travel down her throat and lodge in her spleen, appendix, liver, lung and cause irreversible damage. Her thrice daily toothpaste ritual was neglected, and she developed a nasty case of halitosis, and her confidence waned.

She stopped trilling 'Darling!' and blowing kisses; as the ramifications would be unthinkable. The recipients may discover her embarrassing dental condition. Halitosis, and quite soon swollen gums, tooth decay, plaque, tartar, decay, abscesses, inflammations, irritations, canker sores, periodontal disease. Jane knew she could never be a fashion editor, not without confidence, not without power over her own toothbrush and certainly not without tictacs. Nevertheless, that does not stop her from infiltrating any possible circumstance where a fashion editor would be present. The only way to success, she confirms to herself, so I can be the envy of my sister; the fashion victim. Jane and her sister had not spoken for several years.

It was not a gradual depletion of a relationship, for the sibling love had never existed. Jane had sat through her adolescence, listening to hours of her vapid sister's gossip. But when her sister laughed, whispered, hissed and gasped the titillating tidbits a hairsbreadth away from Jane's nose, there was never a hint, a suggestion of bad breath. Only the appearance of over bleached split ends, the brittle strands, her perfect sister's only downfall. Jane hated, hates her sister for her immaculate dentistry, the admirable condition of her gums. Every confident smirk, every carefree giggle caused Jane to grit her teeth and narrow her eyes. But every time her sister squealed about a new fashion item, Jane would grin with ill-kept glee, knowing she would one day dictate fashion. Jane would be the envy of her sister, soon enough.

A monotonous beat emerges from one of the studded speakers beside the catwalk, followed by a panting pre-pubescent teen, begging 'baby, hit me one more time'. The music swings louder, blaring at Jane, solitary on her stool, ripping her from her reverie. A woman in black leather struts briskly across the function room floor, and nods approvingly to no one in particular, before continuing her prowl. She was Jane's boss. So powerful, so accepted. Jane imagines herself in black leather with an authoritative strut. But it is only imagining. Jane is once again alone with the light checks, music checks and her foggy reflection in the glasses she continues to polish, preparing for champagne, Chardonnay, Riesling, Grange.

The anaerobes in Jane's mouth overpower the aerobes, and once again, she reaches for a mint.

Affected lisps, blow driers and champagne wielding anorexics surround Elizabeth, who leans, overwhelmed, against the temporary backstage wall. No one lisps to Elizabeth. No one offers her champagne. Elizabeth naively suspects it is because, with her well concealed, heavily sprayed, densely gelled split ends, she resembles a member of the fashion circuit. Any member of the fashion circuit. The ill-concealed truth is, Elizabeth is simply a menial hair assistant, irrelevant to the make up smears and mascara tears that engulf the room.

Elizabeth runs a hurried hand through the bristled ends of her hair, grimacing at the splintered strands. She smiles elusively, smoothing the fly away ends with a palm, well moistened with champagne. She can now smile, flick her

hair with confidence, and even exude enough allure to achieve her ultimate goal.

Elizabeth presses herself against a wall, habitually detracting as much attention as possible from her hair. Emaciated limbs. Pouted lips. The scent of nail varnish punishes her nostrils. Eyes heavy with liner reflect in mirrors. Hair flicks and twists against the continual hiss of the hair drier. Underfed hips push rudely against backs. Men in leather vests and with hair free chests straighten, gel and snip. Women in transparent shirts and lace trimmed skirts jab colourful traces on the anaemic faces of girls. Zippers whiz and champagne fizzes as laughter, criticisms and superficial compliments pass back and forth. Stylists trip past in panic, dressers furiously pin hems, hair stylists blow dry frantically, while make up artists paint hasty colours onto blank faces.

These are my people, she thinks. Elizabeth, of course, had never wanted to be a menial hair assistant. She had dabbled in bleach and home perms since the age of thirteen, and had developed a passion for thrice bleached, synthetic curls. Her ambitions were centred on the appeal of lucrative hair design. However, as Elizabeth became increasingly zealous with bleach, her hair became increasingly brittle, and her ambition was somewhat dampened. But Elizabeth was determined to be the envy of her sister.

Her sister, who sat, a withdrawn teenager, staring at Elizabeth with such intensity that she was forced to babble uncomfortable incoherence. Her sister, who shook her auburn tresses from her single plait each morning, the gold spun strands mocking Elizabeth's bedraggled tail, that layed limply against her skull. Her sister, who Elizabeth hated, hates for her beautiful locks. But

every time she heard her sister murmur about 'the trends' in her vile smelling breath, Elizabeth would sneer knowingly, sure that she would be the one influencing 'the trend' in hair. In taking up a hair apprenticeship, Elizabeth discovered a new passion, a new ultimate goal. To become a desirable woman, a highly sensual being, a lover.

'Elizabeth!'

She starts at the sound of her own name. A limp wrist beckons from in front of a mirror. Kevin Finetti. Elizabeth dodges her way toward him. Reaching toward a half-filled glass, she once again flattens her hair with champagne against her scalp.

A rack of billowing garments hustles Elizabeth to the side. A harassed stylist glares through designer frames at her ignorance before hurtling through a crowd of lounging models. Elizabeth continues to stalk through the chaos. Furrowed brows. Affected lisps. Kevin, wearing a mesh vest and a great deal of confidence. His gelled, frosted hair. She smiles in triumph, hoping the stylist would be watching as Kevin consults her. She picks her way past jostling, red-faced make up artists. Red faced and jostled, she approaches him. He stares at her and opens his highly glossed lips. Models meander. Stylists shoulder. Elizabeth leans forward in anticipation. Leather, lycra, liposuction, Lima beans, cigarettes, scissors, sleaze, silence.

"We've lost power!"

Jane sits in the eerie stillness. The room is dim. Jane puts down the champagne flute and leans against the bar.

"Miss Leonard! If you have time to lean, you have time to clean!"

Jane's manageress, the authoritative black clad female, stands with her studded and spiked arms crossed against her ample frame, grimacing in attempted menace. She stalks to the neatly buffed rows of champagne flutes and appraises them in the dim light with a scathingly professional eye. She flicks her eyes over Jane, with resentment permeating from her heavily lined eyelids.

"If you can stand it, Miss Leonard, I want you to be able to see your own reflection in these glasses." She turns on the heel of one of her heavy black army boots and stalks into the shadowed recesses of backstage, where faint screams and wails emerge and whisper past Jane. She smiles at her manageress' confidence. Just think when I will be that way. Just think of a time when she will grovel to be blinked at by me.

A burly electrician, laden with cables and cords, swaggers toward Jane. She grimaces and swallows quickly, her heartbeat quickens. He surely expects her to speak, doesn't he? She fumbles for a mint, slips it discreetly under her tongue and quickly breathes into her cupped palm. Jane sighs with minty relief.

The electrician nods his head to Jane as she sits with her hands clasping her knees. "Sorry to bother you love, but I'm looking for the fuse box. We have a power failure, and by the sounds of Mister Dent who rang, it's urgent. Any clues to where it is?"

Jane smiles tentatively. Before she could reply, however, a shrill voice interrupts her. It screams with a vague European lisp, Italian one moment and French the following. "This is Monsieur Dent of 'Le Cheveux and Le Dent', do

you comprendè? My power is failed, I have ten minutes until curtain, my models half dressed, I want you to fix, fix! I will never calm down, never!”

A slim man in a tailored vintage suit and tie stalks with practised vigour down the length of the catwalk and abruptly halts at its end. He places one Italian loafer in front of the other and stares at Jane and the electrician. Jane raises a shaking hand to her throat.

“Mister Dent.” She breathes. The designer. He was looking at her. Maybe he could listen to her editing ideas. He could get her established in the industry. He could -

He jabs at the slim black prism in his hand, trips prettily down the stairs and rushes toward the stunned pair. He grasps the electrician’s worn hands in his manicured ones and effuses appropriately. “You received my call? Can you fix it? Fantastic!”

Mr Dent turns to Jane, his face suitably thankful, before realising she is not an electrician, and she is not benefiting him in any immediate way. He squints contact blue eyes at her. “Who might you be?” He hurls.

Jane presses her lips against her halitosis and remains silent. The designer smirks and sashays toward a dimly lit exit, the electrician in tow.

Jane firmly sets the glass on the bar top and stands. He has no idea what I can offer him, she thinks in a rare moment of self-assurance. Jane walks purposefully toward the retreating slim cut jacket clad back of the designer. Suddenly, a surge of light emerges; the studio revelling in the revealing brightness. Jane hesitates, her hand hovering about her mouth, her less than black clothes. Mr Dent’s affected laugh is becoming increasingly louder. Jane quickly turns and seeks refuge in the ladies.



Elizabeth smiles reassuringly at Kevin. Her new passion. Her new ultimate goal. She awkwardly shifts her weight as she attempts to look sensuous, trying to take the attention from her hair. A small hiss sounds from the ceiling, followed by a weak filter of light. Elizabeth catches sight of Kevin's biceps reflecting the dim light, as he continues the desperate curling of a model's hair. She watches with admiration as the light flickers, illuminating then shrouding his muscular frame. Finally, a burst of synthetic light illuminates the room.

Faces freeze in amusement, shock and bewilderment. Monsieur Dent has materialised next to Kevin, his hand, frozen with the shock of returned power, lingers over Kevin's buttocks. Elizabeth stares in disbelief. This is a blatant case of sexual misconduct, she thinks, glowering at Monsieur Dent as he makes a rapid, flustered exit. Poor Kevin. The frantic pace ensues as the power returns and the threat of the fashion show overwhelms the memory of Monsieur's compromising position.

A throng of queuing models surrounds Elizabeth, clamouring for Kevin's attention. The arrogant stylist who had pushed her to the side returns with a now empty rack. Snagged leathers, unravelled feathers, misplaced gems, fraying hems. The stylist pauses at the braying models. Elizabeth smirks. Now the stylist will understand her importance, her status. Elizabeth clears her throat loudly and asks in a resonating lilt. "Kev, you called me? I'd suggest more curl with this girl, perhaps more spray."

Kevin glares nastily from beneath lowered brows. "Elizabeth," he shrills "I would like a glass of Evian, not amateur advice. Is that too much?"

Rudely poking elbows, knowingly raised eyebrows. Red glossed scorn, jackets, gloves, shawls. The satisfied leer of the stylist. A flash of two fingers. A plum mouth. Make that two, darling.

Elizabeth blinks and obeys. Through frocks and socks, wails and fingernails, cosmetic litter and bitter smiles she finds her way. Elizabeth shuts the backstage door behind her. Kevin humiliated her. She stares at the empty studio, illuminated in cool light, with rows upon rows of unoccupied seats. She meanders through the columns of chairs and imagines the rock stars, the Martini sipping guests of the designers and the women who were sleeping with rich old men that will be seated in less that ten minutes. Elizabeth feels somewhat calmer.

It was never her intention to fall in love with her boss. Elizabeth's aim to become a hair artist herself had faded in comparison to her aim to call Kevin her own. When she started her position as Kevin's assistant, Elizabeth found his affected laughs and arrogance endearing. Elizabeth found them giving each other pet names. She would call him Kev. He would call her Gofer.

If only, Elizabeth thought, if only her hair was in better condition. Her hair had always depleted her confidence, made her feel a hair designing failure. But Kevin, Kevin kept her interested in hair, but now her only passion was him. Elizabeth tosses her brittle hair and continues to the bar. All the hair nonsense was a front, to spend time with Kevin. And to make her sister horribly envious about her involvement with the fashion industry.

At the bar, Elizabeth finds the requested Evian and the required stool. She sits. One would never have thought that fashion was so demanding. A noisy and exuberant crowd is gathering at the entrance to the studio. Elizabeth

allows herself the luxury of an indulgent, informed laugh. If only the audience understood the pressures of being a necessary element to the success of a production. The pressures of having their creativity demanded. If only the audience understood Kevin, like Elizabeth did.

Elizabeth runs a hand over the brittle ends of her thrice bleached home permed mop. A door slams and footsteps sound next to the washrooms. Elizabeth gathers up the Evian bottles, fearing Kevin would be told that she was wasting the final moments, and strides with confidence toward backstage, swinging her hair as she had seen models do during the run through. She smiles secretively. Kevin would be getting more than Evian if she had her way.

Jane stares curiously at the woman entering backstage with a vivacious flick of her tresses. But Jane realises that vivacious hair flicking was the last thing on her mind. Doors open in five minutes, the atmospheric beat had begun to leak from the speakers. Jane had yet to steel herself for another barrage of rude, Martini swilling high fashion elitists who wear too tight pants and leave smudges of red over the rims of the neatly polished champagne flutes. They gulp cocktails and grab at the latest designer scraps masquerading as garments. But they are my audience, she reminds herself. They will buy what I tell them soon enough.

A sound of scuffling makes Jane pause. It is the enormity of the waiting staff, all clad in their black platform boots and studded collars, with spiked and variously coloured hair. Jane smiles a closed lip smile as they formed groups around her. They do not smile back. They can see that Jane does not wear

black. They know Jane is clearly not a member of the fashion circuit. Even more clearly, they know Jane can not offer them anything of use. Not just yet, she thinks, but wait until the day you are the ones to wait on me. They look away.

Her ample, black clad manageress nods briskly at the gathered group. Trays are grasped from the pile on the bar top. Another nod. Ten young men take their places behind the bar, each holding a champagne bottle. Yet another nod. Champagne began to fill the polished glasses and that are placed on trays. The woman glances at her black watch. Her final nod is directed toward the doormen. The function room doors slide open.

Jane gasps at the appearance of fashion editors flashing invitations, emerging from the frenzied mob that pushes against the barricades. Rock stars, models, fashion hasbeens and the social elite strut, slink, stumble and slide into the studio. Incredible soundtrack. Lovely runway. Fabulous set up.

Impressive colour scheme. The comments slide past Jane. She stands, with an idiotic smile set on her face and a tray of alcohol balancing on one wrist.

Eyes appraise, fists are raised. Leather pants and rock and roll bands. Inebriated laughter, the fat content of pasta, the size of the catwalk and my, hasn't she put on weight? Champagne is grabbed and guzzled, false compliments bat back and forth, superficial atmosphere runs underneath the monotonous music.

While the ignorant fake knowledge, the working class fake arrogance and the apathetic fake empathy, Jane keeps her lips tightly closed. They could not, would not discover her halitosis. Beneath the hollow hum of activity, feet tap,

eyes shift, teeth chew. Anticipation has the milling audience firmly in its sweaty grasp.

Exasperation has the frantic bodies backstage in a frenzy of movement. Over zealous dressers tear garments off wrongly dressed models. Highly-strung stylists tear the heads of the over zealous dressers. Wrong shoes, Harry. Baste that hem, Leona. Blush, brush, liner, lip gloss, highlight, conceal. The beat begins to increase its volume. Hands pushing. Eyes darting. Veins straining. You're on, you're on.

Elizabeth leans against the mirror with relief. Despite her lack of involvement and the fact she is void of responsibility, Elizabeth revels in her feeling of triumph for Kevin. He was a success. Mindlessly, Elizabeth seats herself on Kevin's tool box, ignoring the half clad models that run past her with taffeta and tulle hanging from their elbows. Kevin stands next to the draped backdrop of the catwalk, viewing the show from a portable television. He senses Elizabeth's eyes roaming his handsomely gelled quiff. He turns sharply and snaps "Gofer, make yourself useful. Tidy my storeroom. Organise it alphabetically or in colour coordination, I do not care. Just stop staring at me."

Elizabeth beams at him with a tolerant smile. "No use taking your nerves out on me Kev. But anything you say." She slinks away to the closet marked 'Storage', sashaying in a way that she hopes Kevin is still watching. She turns at the door, an expectant smile hovering about her lips. Kevin remains engrossed in the catwalk. Elizabeth glares and slams the door behind her.

Jane sets the empty tray on the bar and seats herself on a stool. Her feet brush a crumpled paper object resting beneath her stool. It is a boutique bag. She holds it gingerly and glances around her. Women with bleached hair exclaim over the scantily clad female pacing down the catwalk. Jane stares wistfully at the row of fashion editors in black, taking notes. She makes a mental note to invest in more black clothing next year.

Jane curiously opens the paper bag. Black leather pants, pointed boots and a lace, plunging blouse scream fashion editor from inside the bag. Jane begins to hyperventilate. Who owns these clothes? She glances around at the braying crowd before staring back into the bag. The pulsing stage lights and repetitive music thump in her ribcage. She stares at the bag. What if –

A drunken woman with lipstick smeared teeth pushes Jane to the side and screams for another vodka. A smattering of applause follows an androgynous model in jeans and a marle sweatshirt exiting the catwalk. Jane stares at the bag. What if-

Jane grasps the bag and hurriedly crosses the room, through milling elitists in uniform black, past seated stars of all genres. Jane pauses and turns to the row of fashion editors. She smiles, clutching the paper bag to her chest. With a flat palm, Jane pushes through the swinging door of the ladies room. This is her chance.

Elizabeth could faintly hear moments of applause and the continuous pounding of the catwalk music through the walls of the storage cupboard. Elizabeth pouts at her memory of Kevin. How could he not be seduced by her? How could he resist? Elizabeth had used her most irresistible means of

seduction and to no avail. It was almost as if Kevin had no interest in the female sex.

Elizabeth sits on the floor and continues to place the bottles and jars in no particular order on the shelves, staring at their labels with little interest.

Control serum, curl booster, frizz-free. Could she have been wasting her time? Kevin could not be gay, it is impossible. The man is simply too adorable. And arrogant. Eye gloss, matte finish powder, lipstick. Not that she had only kept her job because of Kevin. No, it really had been helpful to her hair design career. And it had certainly impressed her sister.

A jostling of the door, made Elizabeth turn. An impertinent model glances down her nose at Elizabeth. She grimaces and slams the door, with a toss of her glossy locks. Elizabeth snarls and puts more jars in a row. Mousse, hot oil, flexible hold. What if –

She runs her hand through her split ends, squints and stands abruptly. She stares at the hair products before her. Stares at the mirror hanging from the door. Listens to the disembodied beat of the music. What if –

Elizabeth reaches for a random tube. Staring at herself in the mirror, a slow smile curves Elizabeth's cheeks. This is her chance.

Jane stares at her reflection in the ornate mirror above the basin. Who is the confident woman winking back at me? She smothers a laugh. Jane rips the tags from her blouse and leather pants, and admires the pointed boots. Two ladies burst through the door and stare at Jane, holding a stuffed paper bag. "Hello, darling, love the boots!" they coo, tripping toward the lavatory. Jane stares wide eyed. They have accepted me. She glances at the bag containing

her jeans and shirt, then back to her refection. Slipping a mint under her tongue, Jane quickly shoves the bag into the waste paper basket, before swinging the door open, and strutting her first strut toward the bar.

Smiles instead of smirks are thrown her way. The pony-tailed men and sleek women do not glare. Jane feels free to smile. She picks up her tray of hors d'oeuvres and faces the seated mass. Jane smiles to herself. Suddenly, they do not seem so hard to conquer. I will be one of them, she adds, next year.

Elizabeth brushed the final coat of gloss over her hair, admiring her cosmetic artistry and hair design. Flicking back her glossy, yes, glossy hair, Elizabeth primps and smudges. She pouts, smiles, laughs and stares as sensuously as she can into the mirror. Kevin, she thinks, try to resist me. A brisk knock on the door rattles her refection in the mirror.

“For God’s sake Elizabeth, I said get it organised, not pretty.” Kevin shrills, opening the door. Elizabeth hastily shoves the cosmetics and hair products on a shelf. She smiles in her most licentious way and suggestively raises an eyebrow. Kevin stares at her hair, then, quite unexpectedly, raises one back.

Elizabeth’s lascivious smile falters. He can’t possibly – He can’t really want – Can he? A strident yell interrupts Elizabeth’s thoughts.

“Kevvy!”

Kevin and Elizabeth exit the storage cupboard. Five stylists are hurling tissue paper and last minute fabric scraps about the dressing room. Ten dressers scamper on all fours. Three models scream in indecipherable panic. Beneath the chaos, a continuous mutter is heard.

“Where is the size nine kitten heel shoe?”



Jane whisks her tray toward a row of fashion mongers, in tartan, suede and pointed cowboy boots. They point in awe at the tulle layered anemic waif that skitters about the catwalk, yelling comments over the incessant beat. Jane smiles, confident in her black leathers. I am a fashion editor, she repeats, I am one of them.

Jane strides with confidence toward the row, all eight glancing at Jane with a bored air. They spot her pointed boots and smile enthusiastically, shouting over the music.

"Great show!" "Marvellous collection." "Can we buy direct?"

Jane teeters closer, smiling still. The eight continue to stare expectantly at her. Jane glances at her tray and reads the ivory placard, 'Hors D'oeuvres'. Several faces turn back to the catwalk, staring at a model limping the length of the catwalk with one missing kitten heel. The others' interest is dwindling quickly.

Jane shoves the tray at the nearest male, raising her voice to be heard over the monotonous din. "Care for some 'horses doovers'?" She yells. The man stares over his wire framed glasses. Laughter bursts from his companion before he quickly joins in. Jane smiles uncertainly, still offering the tray.

Shaking their heads, they turn back to the parade. Jane starts to turn away, before being accosted by an emaciated woman with black hair and over sized dark glasses. A socialite has been, still vainly hanging on to her social status.

"Darling, do you work here?"

Jane started. "Well, yes."

“Oh, darling, do you have a clue to what the ‘Le Cheveux and Le Dent’ finale is?”

“No, I –“

“Oh, it is supposed to be spectacular.” She stares at Jane. “Who are you? Anyone who is anyone should know.”

Jane blinks at this statement, staring at the drunk little woman in front of her.

“Of course, I know, darling. And if anyone who is anyone knows, then, what does that make you?”

Kevin beckons Elizabeth toward him. Her heartbeat leaps. Maybe he is apologising for his rudeness. Maybe he would offer her an after show martini. She touches her hair, synthetically glossy and smooth. She tosses it with jaunty abandon over her shoulders, before realising Kevin’s motivation. He is not offering any martinis, or apologies. He is preparing the show’s most important model, Paolo. Elizabeth moves with caution toward Paolo. He flicks his tongue between his lips, his beady eyes following her cautious approach.

“Elizabeth, I need you to finish Paolo. I have to complete Anna’s hair. I trust you won’t disappoint me,” Kevin’s voice lingers at the word trust. He trusts me, Elizabeth thought. “Finish the diamante pattern along his back. I know you will be responsible for him. For me.” Kevin rests a manicured hand on Elizabeth’s arm. She stares down at his hand on her forearm. Semi-naked models chatter past. Designers shriek over the music. Paolo slides in his chair. Kevin’s hand. Her arm.

Kevin smiles and struts toward a seated model, leaving Elizabeth staring where Kevin’s hand used to be. Paolo shifts in the chair and eyes Elizabeth.

She places the final diamonds along his spine, trying to control her grimace at the feel of his scaly skin. She smiles as she completes the pattern. "Paolo do you approve?" she trills, spinning him in the chair.

Paolo simply stares at the draped backdrop to the catwalk. Elizabeth flicks her hair, luxuriating in the conditioned texture. She finally has perfect hair.

Paolo shifted, subtly reminding her of his presence.

"Sorry, Paolo." Elizabeth grasps his scaled midsection and hauls him toward his gilded cage. Quickly pushing the remainder of his body into the cage, she slams the door shut. Elizabeth stares into Paolo's eyes. "I said I was sorry." She shrugs.

Elizabeth catches sight of her forearm and sets her face into its most alluring expressions, turning toward Kevin. "I have finished with the python!"

Kevin nods without looking at Elizabeth. She sits herself, disheartened, upon a chair. Elizabeth stares blankly at Paolo, confused as to his importance to the show. Perhaps phallicism, perhaps eroticism, Elizabeth did not care. All she knew is that a prepubescent teen fondling a reptile while slinking down a catwalk is not at all titillating. She smiles. A diamond studded Kevin, slithering down the catwalk. That would be a finale.

"Three fashion editors all in a row, Marie Claire, Cosmo and Vogue." Jane sings under her breath as she oscillates toward the front row. "All I have to do is breathe and they will like me."

The front row. Fashion Editors. Jane pauses behind them, her tray teetering precariously in her nervous grasp.

The black clad trio wrote detailed notes on the disastrous organza creation, while laughing with red lipsticked laughter into one another's faces. Jane smirks. They are obvious strangers to halitosis. Jane slips another mint under her tongue. What if she can impress these three ladies? What if she offers opinions they find so enthralling, they offering her a job? Or, impossibly, their jobs? Jane could then be the one bragging to her sister. Impossibly, she could be envied, instead of envious.

The beat of the music increases its pace, sending anticipation through the crowds. The catwalk is bare, lit by a single spotlight. Jane quickly trots toward the front row. The three women, in leather pants and pointed boots smile at Jane, in leather pants and pointed boots.

"Champagne, ladies?"

Elizabeth sighs in relief as Paolo is draped over the final barely clothed model. The show is drawing to its completion. Kevin glances at Elizabeth. She gasps. Could this be the moment she had dreamt of? The moment she had prayed for, and made impossible deals with God for?

A dark haired man strides confidently toward Kevin. Elizabeth can hear him exclaiming over the catwalk music. The two men embrace and air kiss.

Elizabeth raises a hand to her throat. Kevin had never air kissed her. In fact, Kevin had never embraced her. Staring at him, Elizabeth watches while Kevin giggles and talks avidly to the man, who nods as if his eyes were tied to Kevin's gesturing hands with a string.

Elizabeth steps back, blindly. Kevin was – Kevin is –

She steps back again, grazing Paolo the python's cage. Kevin is gay.

Elizabeth steps back. And slips, her foot catching and sliding on an object.

Elizabeth looks down, whilst trying to regain her balance.

The stray size nine kitten heel shoe.

Elizabeth falls, her hands wildly grabbing, toward the draped backdrop.

Elizabeth closes her eyes and hopes for the best.

The fashion editors are laughing. Jane smiles incredulously as the three women nod and agree with her observations. The catwalk is still empty, the music still frenzied, but one thing is changing. Jane is morphing into a black clad fashion editor. She is accepted, assimilated, adapted. One black clad woman reaches into her glomesh clutch.

"Jane, I would like you to call my office on Monday. I think I could use your opinions." A white business card dangles between a forefinger and a middle finger. Jane reaches for it.

Her future, printed black on white, a business card for Vogue Magazine.

Lights blaze white, the music blares louder and a gaunt model in a diamante studded python print gown appears, of course, with matching diamante studded python. The fashion editors applaud vigorously, Jane reaches for the business card in vain, fluttering in the air, still grasped in between the fingers of the third woman.

The python clad model begins her strut. Instantaneously, the draped background pulls taut to one side, holding for a moment. the audience gasps in unison. The drapes stretch, hold, snap. The backdrop rips from the roof.

Backstage and models in various stages of nakedness are revealed. Shocked

faces. Gasps. Screams. The python clad model spins. Jane stretches her fingers toward the card. The pounding music cuts out. The third editor drops the white square. The mass of backdrop writhes. Mouths open in shock. Bodies shift. A blonde head emerges. Untangles itself. Stands panting. Silence.

Jane stares at the figure. "I don't believe it!"

A fashion editor leans toward Jane. "Do you know her?" she whispers in bewilderment, handing Jane the card.

"That," Jane states in monotonous shock "Is my sister."

Elizabeth stares in shock at the gaping audience. She steps out of the mass of fabric and smiles. Sweeping her arms in front of her, she bows deeply, before strutting the length of the catwalk, ignoring the purple face of Monsieur Dent. Kevin is gay. What else does she have to lose?

Thunderous applause erupts from the audience. "Their best statement yet."

"A triumph for 'Le Cheveux and Le Dent'!" "Fantastic visuals!". Monsieur Dent's face regains its fashionable paleness as the appraisals gush past him in hysterically affirmative streams.

Jane stands and gazes at Elizabeth who is flicking her hair vigorously at the end of the catwalk. Jane stares through lowered brows as Elizabeth laughs and prattles into the flashing cameras surrounding her. She kisses Monsieur Dent on the cheek, before giggling directly into his nose. Jane searches for Monsieur Dent's repulsion. Nothing. Elizabeth still has perfect teeth, clean gums, and no sufferance from halitosis.

Elizabeth turns her head and catches sight of a familiar face in the effervescent crowd, glowering from lowered brows. Her sister! Elizabeth feels

her own brows lower as she notes Jane's auburn hair, still smooth and thick. Tucking a wayward strand behind her ear, Jane moves from her front row seat, past a crowd of champagne swilling women. She flicks her hair in determination, as she slowly moves toward Elizabeth, her locks catching the stage lights and spinning gold reflections that seem to hit Elizabeth between the eyes.

Jane stares at Elizabeth, now only centimetres away. Elizabeth stares back. A photographer shouts 'smile' and a barrage of flashes begin.

"I can see your hair is still in horrid condition. Can I suggest you invest in some smoothing serum?" Jane hisses, smiling falsely out at the paparazzi.

"And I can see you have still got that troublesome gum condition. Can I suggest a mint?" Elizabeth shoots back through a fixed grin.

Jane slips a mint into her mouth, staring venomously at her sister. The flashes of paparazzi distract her momentarily, before she leans closer to Elizabeth. Glancing at her from the corner of her eye, Jane snarls. "At least I have achieved my goals," she mutters, flashing the white business card.

Elizabeth narrows her eyes into the audience. Someone was waving enthusiastically. It was Kevin. He blew her a kiss and mouthed 'loved the finale'. Elizabeth grinned triumphantly. "So have I, sister dear."

Six months later, Jane sits solitary on another bar stool, sucking laboriously on a mint and polishing champagne flutes with a fistful of newspaper. Her three month apprenticeship with Vogue had not been fruitful. It was simply too great a task to overcome her intemperate fear of toothbrush bristles. She tried to floss, clean her tongue, drink copious amounts of water and use chlorine

dioxide mouthwash, but her effortless remain pointless, without the use of a toothbrush, and her halitosis remain prominent. Consequently, Jane had not vocalised her brilliance, and once again, Jane is a menial bar attendant.

Ripping another page from the city's gossip magazine, Jane catches sight of a familiar faultless grin, beaming in technicolour from page three. Lifting the torn page toward her, she reads the scolding headline: 'Hair Designer Gay! Marriage sham as Kevin Finetti reveals "I only married Elizabeth for the publicity. The woman was a living bad hair day."'

Jane scans the article with glee. She crumples the paper, slowly, and smiles at Elizabeth's creased features as they polish the inside of the champagne flute, the cleaning fluid turning her beautiful teeth slowly blue.



Reflection Statement

It was my intent to create an imaginative, satirical piece that would allow a humorous study of the flamboyant, dramatic and chaotic world of the fashion industry. Within this study, I aspired to portray the nature of sibling rivalry within the relationship between two erratic and obsessive sisters. I chose the medium of a Short Story as I have been reading and writing since I was old enough to do both. Reading allowed me an escape into a world of possibilities. Writing allowed me to create this world to suit me.

With the creation of my Short Story, I researched the context of the fashion industry and its characters. Along with this research and gathering of material, I also researched dentistry and the nature of hair follicles and the like, to create realism when listing the obsessive elements to my two central characters, Elizabeth and Jane. Doing so allowed me to continue with my intent and create a realistic satire of fashion culture, depicting sibling rivalry.

Not only did I research material for my Short Story, I researched the features of a good Short Story. To do so I read various short stories, along with articles portraying the vital elements to an engaging Short Story.

The research that had the greatest impact on my intent and final product, was the research I conducted into the style of my piece. I enjoyed writing with quick wit and imagery, and found several helpful authors that gave my major work a maturity and conviction in its execution.

The intended audience for my major work is an individual who appreciates the fashion industry or one who scorns its superficiality. Both groups can be entertained by my portrayal of the fashion culture, it is up to them as to whether they take the work to be satirical or a compliment. Additionally, I

intend to the audience to include any individual who has found themselves in the midst of sibling rivalry. I am sure that one can be entertained by the extremities of the main characters and their venomous attitudes.

The purpose of my work is clearly to entertain the intended audience, and in doing so I hope they relate to the elements I am satirising and commenting on. Along with the clear purpose to entertain, I hope to draw attention to the superficiality of certain elements of the fashion industry and the paltry basis that Elizabeth and Jane's sibling rivalry is based upon. In doing so, I hope the audience can reflect on their own relationships, attitudes and blind consumption of what the fashion industry presents to society and not be as trivial as the central females in my Short Story.

My major work is set around the lead up to and the actual fashion parade, by fictitious designing company 'Le Cheveux, Le Dent'. This French phrase alludes to two elements of my concept. The use of foreign language has always titillated members of the fashion circuit, phrases and exclamations punctuating their sentences to show their highly cultured nature, while having limited knowledge to the precise meaning. 'Le Cheveux, Le Dent' simply means 'the hair, the teeth', encapsulating the essence of the exotic in fashion with the obsessive qualities of the lead characters.

The structure of my Short Story is a narrative that delineates the stories of the two leads, interchanging the character and following her subplot at each beat. This technical feature not only allows the build toward the climax, but allows the reader to experience the fashion show and backstage, and both sisters and their obsessions.

The use of superlatives is prominent as a language feature in my major work. To allow the reader experience fashion culture and the extent of the lead characters, I indulged in lavish description, often using strings of para rhyme and medial rhyme, to add to the tension and collection of visual stimulants present at my setting.

Originally, I had not set out to write a humorous Short Story. The idea of Extension Two was once synonymous with a brilliant expose on the condition of the human spirit. I had initially wanted to create a serious major work, dealing with the issue of loyalty between sisters. But as I endeavoured to create a suitable style, I realised that I was not a serious writer. I could not capture a moment without including an element of melodrama, just to satirise what I was essentially making a serious situation. It was in realising my short comings that I discovered a style that I could work with.

From that style came eccentric ideas and plots concerning loyalty and then the fashion industry that I researched and studied, before they twisted themselves into my major work. I enjoyed this work immensely, not only because it satirised an element of society I was critical of, but because it offered, through humour, a chance for the audience to reconsider the validity of all that is presented to consumers by the fashion culture. Again, through humour, it allowed me to comment on feuding siblings, and the triviality of their qualms.

The simplicity of my concept allows my Short Story to have relevance to many. Using research to define my style, subject matter and detail within my major work has supported and resolved my concept. With each element

researched, from writing style to Periodontitis, my concept became clearer and easily accessible.

The final product is a cumulation of ideas and social comments, the concept clear. When viewing the hectic nature and superficiality presented in my study of the fashion industry, one cannot help but think if the levels of consumption society condones from the fashion culture are healthy. When realising the trifling nature of such a spiteful rift between family members, one can only pity their triviality. Exploring such issues in my concept is evident throughout my final product. It allows the reader to explore their own attitudes towards relationships and the 'underfed hips' of the fashion industry, while still presenting a humorous satirisation of trends, industry and family relationship and loyalty.