

F 7 now, back

Then and Now and Then Again

"Dressed up," for Gransallie, meant slipping on a pink or white Belks cardigan over one of the cotton print dresses she bought new at ✓ Easter and Christmas. Maybe pinning ~~on~~ a brooch at the throat, or clipping on a pair of faux pearl earbobs if she was feeling fancy.

✓ And those shoes--those square-toed shoes with the block heels had to be the appropriate color for the season: black in winter, white in spring, bone in autumn. Same with her hard triangular pocketbooks.

✓ Gransallie would as soon blaspheme as walk into church with ~~white shoes~~ <sup>white</sup> ~~shoes~~ <sup>packet book</sup> after Labor Day.

She owned one box of Tussy face powder her whole life; she wore the same shade of pink lipstick for forty years. She kept an emory board by her sagging upholstered chair in the livingroom, that and her blue bottle of Nivea body lotion, which I later learned was the source of that grandmotherly smell. She went to the beauty parlor every couple of months for a trim and a perm and to get that starch-water bluing applied to her gray hair.

She was short, fat, clumsy and looked old as far back as I can

remember. She was fixated on food--eating from the five basic food groups mostly, but never denying herself a slice of coconut cake or that last fried chicken back on the platter. Exercise was walking up the lane to the mailbox and back.

Gransallie's teeth soaked overnight in a small squat glass. When I was a child and went with her to Florida, and we would stay overnight in one of those green court-style motels, she would come out of the bathroom looking like a ~~spook~~ without her teeth.

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I wake up each morning worrying about the twenty pounds I've gained. I start my day with two glasses of water and eight vitamins guaranteed to make me live forever and a vow to count fat grams in even my salads and bran cereal. I shower, I shave my legs and under my arms. I shampoo, condition, blowdry. I tincture my toe nails with fungicide. Sometimes I wear contacts if I'm going out. I cannot read or write ~~wearing contacts~~ <sup>with them</sup>, so I have to switch to one of the four pairs of glasses I carry in my ~~tan~~ <sup>present for leather</sup> leather shoulder tote, which also contains ~~my four pairs of glasses and a small bag I carry to keep up~~ <sup>toys</sup> with the backup cassette of my computer files <sup>and a contact case.</sup>

Every third day, I scrub my face with table salt and ivory soap; just as every third day, I exercise on my Fitness Flyer. Used to, I walked fast--aerobic exercise for twenty years, thirty minute a day-- but now I have a Mortman's tumor, a pulled tendon, and a hammer toe on my left foot from wearing pointy-toed high heels. I now wear special orthotics in my Nike Air walking shoes. I have wardrobes ranging from Barbie to circus fat-lady size. I have shoes I'll never wear again because of my ruined feet. I have a Gucci bag that went out of style the day I bought it. All of my jewelry is hidden in

FN now - bad

✓ places I can't remember because I <sup>keep forgetting my Vit E, and I</sup> got scared some street punk might <sup>Daugherty 3</sup> cut off my finger to get my diamond ring.

Every six weeks, I go to a beauty salon to have my roots dyed brown to cover the gray, and every three months, I have the ends highlighted, which involves having a thick, flexible, perforated rubber hat pulled down over my hair and strands snatched through the holes with a crochet needle. I want a simile to describe how I look, but can't find one. I've had three babies and birthing comes close to describing how I feel. Last time I went to the salon, my hairdresser suggested that she dye my eyebrows; I said okay as long as she could do it while my hair was coloring. Otherwise I wouldn't have time, because of all this other stuff I have to keep up.

My makeup is tailored to my skin type, and costs as much as a new wardrobe, which I don't have time to shop for. I don't have time to dress good and keep up my beauty regimen; just as I cannot wear dress shoes and stay in shape.

✓ I brush my teeth three times a day because I wasn't paying attention when I went for my last cleaning and the dentist suggested grinding down my front teeth and bonding them, so now I'm afraid my too-perfect, white teeth will stain. I floss them at night while other people go to parties, then I put Retina on my face--all except for the area between my nose and top lip where I put a strip of Scotch cellophane tape to prevent those puckered gathers that will send me to the cosmetic surgeon. They now have laser for that, I've been told. Just last month, I learned about Alpha Hydroxides. According to the directions on the jar of cream, you should put it on your face, neck and chest. I couldn't put it on my face because of my

Retina, so I put it all over my body, even the tops of my hands.

Which are beginning to look like Gransallie's.

At night, I take two Benedryl capsules to put me to sleep because sleep is rejuvenating and because I need to be rested for the next day when my beauty routine will start all over again.

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My five year old granddaughter is spending the night. Midnight, and I hear her getting up in the room next to mine. Then I see the light from the hall fanning across my bedroom as she opens the door. Her light brown hair is humped up in back; she is sucking her thumb. Her gray eyes are stretched and seeking, as she stops at the foot of my four poster bed.

I sit up.

She stands there watching me for a while, then comes around to my side of the bed and climbs up. She slips under the cover, facing me close. Still sucking her thumb and studying the tape above my top lip with her drowsy-cat eyes.