

A BLOND SHOCK
by Howard Rosenfield

SHEILA, an attractive woman in her early 70's, enters and stands center stage. SHE smiles.

SHEILA

My birth was otherwise uneventful: one more perfectly normal infant girl, requisite number of fingers and toes, born at Boston City Hospital one chilly November morning, some 72 years ago. There was one thing that distinguished me, however, and gave the nurses something to talk about.

(DR appears a bassinet holding baby SHEILA. Two NURSES hover and gaze.)

NURSE 1

Look at her! She's practically bald!

NURSE 2

But then there's that one shock of blond hair.

NURSE 1

Awww!

(NURSES exit DR, chuckling.)

SHEILA

And that's how it's been my entire life. (introducing) My Mom and Dad:

(THEY enter SR, wheeling a baby carriage across the stage.)

MOM

(to DAD)

You'll see—it's like this every time I walk through town.

DAD

I don't get what the problem is.

MOM

Haven't you ever wanted a quiet walk, just lost in your own head?

(A PASSERBY enters SL, stops and inspects.)

PASSERBY

(looking into carriage)

Look at that darling shock of blond hair! Awww!

(PASSERBY walks off, SR.)

MOM

And that's what it's always like!

DAD

I'd enjoy the attention, myself. I walk through town and no one notices me at all-- just another guy, loping down the street.

MOM

(relenting, looks into carriage)

She is awfully cute, though.

DAD

There you go! And she won't be a baby forever.

(MOM and DAD exit SL.)

SHEILA

And sure enough I wasn't.

(Two teenaged boys, DENNIS and BERNIE, enter SR.)

DENNIS

Have you seen the new seventh grader? She just transferred in.

BERNIE

I think her name is Sally.

DENNIS

It's Sheila, asshole.

BERNIE

It doesn't matter what her name is. You don't stand a chance with her.

DENNIS

Looks like I've got some competition, if I do.

BERNIE

She is pretty cute though, isn't she?

DENNIS

I love that shock of blond hair.

BERNIE

(mocking)

Awww!

DENNIS

Shut it up, dirtbag. I wonder what she'd say if I gave that ponytail a yank.

(BOYS walk off SL, chuckling.)

SHEILA

He didn't yank my ponytail just then, but his friend did. Oh, he pulled my ponytail

more than once. And I pulled his... [SHE thinks: *penis.*] Well, let me say that was quite an initiation. It didn't go anywhere just then—do these things ever?—but it was enough for what it was. Yes, indeedy! And then, just after my college graduation, the first boy reappeared on the scene.

(DAD and DENNIS enter, SR.)

DAD

You want to marry my daughter?

DENNIS

I've come here to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage.

DAD

So formal.

DENNIS

I love her and want to spend the rest of my life with her. Do I have your permission?

DAD

You hardly need to ask for that. I presume you've discussed this with Sheila.

DENNIS

We love each other and have talked about getting married some time in the future. She doesn't know I've bought her this ring. (HE shows it to DAD.) Or that I'm here now talking to you.

DAD

I'm touched that you've thought to ask me. (HE sniffles.) I don't know why I'm crying.

DENNIS

(hands DAD HIS handkerchief)

It's OK, sir.

DAD

You'll have to call me Dad if you're going to marry my daughter.

DENNIS

It's OK, Dad. I cry at nothing too.

DAD

This isn't exactly nothing, you know. This is quite a big thing.

(DENNIS and DAD exit SL.)

SHEILA

And so it was. I married Dennis, we had two kids, and we were happy, mostly, for 32 years, until he died of lymphoma. Then funnily enough...

(BERNIE and DAD enter SL.)

DAD

You want to ask for Sheila's hand in marriage? I feel like I'm getting a little old for this.

BERNIE

Are you saying No?

DAD

Not at all. It feels like only yesterday that Dennis was asking me the same thing. Funny how life seems to speed right by...

BERNIE

Dennis was a great guy. Do you know we'd been friends since junior high?

DAD

I do remember that, yes.

BERNIE

We both took a shine to Sheila. Nearly busted up our friendship.

DAD

And now both of you will have married her.

BERNIE

I love your daughter, sir. Will you give me her hand?

DAD

It's hers to give, of course.

BERNIE

Of course.

SHEILA

(entering the scene)

Say Yes, Dad.

DAD

Why, Sheila—I didn't realize you were right there!

BERNIE

She tags pretty close to me.

SHEILA

I've lost one man. Can't take the chance of losing another!

BERNIE

(hugs HER)

You're never gonna lose me, sweetheart.

SHEILA

If only you could promise that!

BERNIE

I can promise that I love you more than I've ever loved anything.

DAD

And that's a pretty good promise! You two boys both liked Shelia, you say-- back in junior high? What was it about her, way back then? Can you remember?

(DAD and BERNIE exit SR, talking silently.)

SHEILA

(to audience)

It was my damn shock of blond hair—(mocking) Awww! In my 20's I cut it off—tired of being tagged by it. But then at 35 I let it grow back. Some things in life you just can't fight. (beat) But then Bernie died too. Stepped in front of a car, poor bugger. Texting. I thought that was only for kids! Left me alone except for Allison and Theo—the two greatest kids you could imagine. No more men for me. I've lost two and that's enough. And—you wouldn't guess this—it was Theo who carried on the tradition!

(Two teenaged GIRLS enter SR.)

GIRL 1

Did you see that guy in algebra when he stood up? His ponytail?

GIRL 2

That cute little shock of blond hair.

GIRL 1

It's more than just a shock.

GIRL 2

It's an *electric* shock!

BOTH GIRLS TOGETHER

Awwwww!

GIRL 2

I'd like to give that ponytail a yank!

(The two GIRLS walk off SL, chuckling.)

SHEILA

And so the beat goes on. Word was my grandmother had a blond shock of hair, too, but her mother cut it off. She didn't believe in vanity of any sort, and thought it would cause a girl nothing but trouble. And I suppose it has. (smiles) But it was worth it!

(SHEILA walks to a bed DL and lies down upon it. Two NURSES enter SL and walk downstage to SHEILA's bed.)

NURSE 1
(examining SHEILA)

She's stopped breathing.

NURSE 2

After dying quietly for three days.

NURSE 1

No fuss about this one.

NURSE 2

She never wanted to give anyone any bother.

NURSE 1

Do you know what kind of life she had?

NURSE 2

Don't know much. She was a nurse. Married twice—survived them both. Her kids are devoted—they visit a lot. And her son looks just like her.

NURSE 1
(examines SHEILA's head)

Oh look—a shock of white hair.

NURSE 2

Her son has that too. But it's blond, not white.

NURSE 1

As hers must have been.

NURSE 2

I wonder if it caused her trouble.

NURSE 1

I hope so!

NURSE 2

It's awfully sweet, though—that little shock of hair.

BOTH NURSES

Awwww!

(Lights fade.

End play.)

