

Nail Salon Pondering

Having my nails done professionally is a luxury that I have allowed myself over the past decade, partly because my nails are so fragile that they break easily, but mostly because I chew my nails. This is a habit that I have never been able to kick, despite my father dousing my fingertips in iodine and wrapping them in tape or band aids. Regardless, I am now at a point where I can afford to have artificial nails. The process of having nails done at a salon is not always pleasant. In fact, at certain points during the process, it can be downright painful.

And yet, as I sit here in this chair, my forearms resting on foam pad, my hands splayed out in front of a total stranger, I find moments of pure exhilaration. There is an intimate dance that takes place during a nail appointment. Today, I have a male technician, and he leads me through the ritual with subtle movements.

As I sit just a foot away, I study his face. By the age lines in his face, he appears to be about my own age. He is fairly well groomed. I think he is educated, but again, this is only my perception of the aura that he gives off. He does not speak as he works each finger individually, holding them with just enough grasp to keep them in control, but lightly enough to roll my fingers around in his. If he were a date, this intimacy would be sensual. He preps, coats, dips, brushes, and files each nail painstakingly.

After my nails are coated, buffed and topcoat applied, we move to my favorite part, the hand massage. He starts by placing a dollop of cream on the back of my hand and then lightly rubs it into the skin. Flipping the hand over, he continues with the palm and the wrist. He intertwines his fingers in mine, tugging gently as my knuckles crack. Another short full hand massage and it is on to my favorite part. The draping of a hot hand towel over the newly manicured and massaged fingers is a feeling you have to experience to understand. It is invigorating, yet relaxing. Heated, yet refreshing.

Having been isolated at home for the past two years of this Covid outbreak, human touch has been non-existent. It is only in moments like this that I understand how important it is to our social well-being, to our emotional state. I had not realized the effect until this moment, having returned to the salon after such a long time away.

I snicker and silently scold myself for finding such joy in the touch of a stranger, but then, isn't everyone a stranger the first time they touch us?

`Make peace with your broken pieces.`

Smudge