

Caterpillars and Eyebrows

By Jean MacLeod

My Chinese-American friend, Reanne, has the face of a Hollywood Woman Warrior. She is very beautiful; Reanne's eyes are warm and brown, set-off by perfectly defined black eyebrows. I complimented her on her dramatic brows one day, and she raised them gracefully in acknowledgment.

"I grew up with the fuzzy eyebrows typical of many Chinese children" Reanne said. "They looked like two little caterpillars." I glanced over at my 7th grader from China, occupied with Harry Potter. Lily is a lovely girl, and I had always thought her caterpillars were cute. "My eyebrows" Reanne continued, "looked just like your daughter's!"

I thought about Reanne's comments for several months. I help my 17 year old daughter with her eyebrow plucking occasionally, but she was born to me and I was familiar with the territory. Scrutinizing Lily with new awareness, I realized I wasn't equipped to ever help her guide her wild bits of eyebrow into a recognizable shape. How did Chinese moms handle caterpillars? I called Reanne.

"You must take her to see Michelle at The Salon" Reanne advised. "She understands Asian eyebrows."

"Don't you think Lily is a little young for this kind of thing?" I asked nervously.

"Get her in" said Reanne, "before she's starts plucking them herself. Or" she added ominously, "before a friend gets a hold of them at a makeover party."

I asked Lily if she would like to get her brows shaped before school started, and she said sure.

"Does it hurt?" she asked me as an afterthought.

"A little" I answered. "But it's quick."

A day later, Lily was dabbing at the corners of her eyes with a kleenex while sitting in the eyebrow chair of The Salon. Michelle smiled at her compassionately, tweezers in hand.

"I'm OKAY" Lily announced through clenched teeth. "I just can't HELP the tears!"

Lily's brow shaping was being watched by three other women who were patiently waiting their turn.

"You are so brave, Lily!" one called out.

"It won't be as painful next time you do it!" said another.

"I remember my first time, Lily. You are doing great!" encouraged the third.

Lily beamed from the group encouragement, but one foot tapped wildly as Michelle proceeded to pluck. I was a little worried. This would be the kind of thing that Lily

would hold against me for awhile. I was just trying to be the best Caucasian Asian mom I could be! As much as I would like to, I can't always be the role model for my Chinese daughters; sometimes I need the advice and help of Chinese women I trust and admire.

"There!" said Michelle, twirling Lily's chair around to face the mirror. "I gave you perfect 11 year-old eyebrows, Lily. What do you think?"

"WOW" Lily and I both said simultaneously. From caterpillar cuteness sprang smooth, graceful beauty. I gazed in the mirror at the early prototype of my daughter's adult face, and under the approving murmurs of the other customers, heard the faint flutter of butterfly wings.

"You look very pretty," I said softly. *You will be a beautiful woman*, I added silently. *You come from beautiful women*.

"Can we get ice cream?" Lily asked, and I quickly agreed. My tweenie is growing up, but I don't need to think about letting go. She is still my caterpillar for a few more years...

Copyright 2007, MacLeod, All Rights Reserved

Skincare and Make-up Resources for Tweens and Teens

available on www.amazon.com

Asian Faces: The Essential Beauty and Makeup Guide for Asian Women

by Taylor Chang-Babaian and Yoko Ono

Asian Beauty

by Margaret Kimura and Marianne Dougherty

The Beauty of Color: The Ultimate Beauty Guide for Skin of Color

by Iman

Brown Skin: Dr. Susan Taylor's Prescription for Flawless Skin, Hair and Nails

by Susan C. Taylor, MD

Beautiful Skin of Color: A Comprehensive Guide to Asian, Olive and Dark Skin

by Jeanine Downie, Fran Cook-Bolden and Barbara Nevins-Taylor