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Embrace the Pallor!

by Brittany Taylor

May 27, 2007

There are half a dozen tanning salons within five minutes of my house, and most of the girls in my high school boasted a deliciously golden glow. There were the occasional "oops I'm orange" incidents and a few that tanned so frequently that their skin resembled coarse, dried out leather, but for the most part, they were a thoroughly homogeneous, sienna-toned crowd. Tanning infiltrated every conversation, from the locker room to the cafeteria, and I found myself in the possession of information on everything, from what brand of sunscreen to use to how long to toast at which salon. Amidst all of this tanning-talk, however, there was a problem: I don't tan.

I don't mean the "I don't tan in tanning salons because that's bad for you" type of "I don't tan" (even though I don't and it really is bad for you). I mean, literally, I don't tan. I may freckle and I will burn, even with the continual application of heavy-duty sun block, but I don't tan. Sure, my shoulders might be slightly brown by the time August rolls around, but the rest of me is as white as the day I

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was born.

It took me seventeen years and summers filled with bad burns topped off with a round of sun poisoning to realize that the dark, sexy tan my friends coveted was never going to happen to me. I had two choices: white and red. I chose the one with the least amount of physical pain (that would be white, for those of you who have never experienced the searing pain of a really bad sunburn).

Instead of merely accepting defeat and moving on, however, I decided to embrace the natural beauty of pale, milky white skin. And so now, instead of lying out on a towel for an afternoon in nothing but a skimpy bathing suit, I go to the beach armed with a long sleeve shirt and pants to protect my skin. I wear sunscreen religiously, and I've even been known to don a hat or two. I am also entirely aware that I just might look ridiculous walking onto a beach fully clothed, but I know that what I'm doing is not only good for my health but also for my mind. There can't be anything more important than accepting who you are and realizing the beauty that can be found in your own limitations.

For all those porcelain dolls in denial out there, there are two choices: join the throng, spread your beach towels, climb into your machines, grab your oil and faux glow; or not. You can live your life trying to be something you're not, or you can embrace what you naturally are: pale, yes, but pale, beautiful, and healthy. Whatever you decide, I'll still be the girl who enjoyed her day on the beach while most everyone else will be luxuriating in the feeling of parched, burnt skin, all for that sun-kissed color we call a tan.

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