

IN THE SAME BOAT SKIN DEEP

I spent some quality time in the big city a few weeks ago, which translates to mean I went shopping. Now, as my friends will attest, I usually spend most of my big city shopping time in the I-must-be-in-heaven big box bookstores (when I am not following behind my daughter as she attempts to persuade me why I absolutely HAVE TO buy those purple Bermuda shorts that all the girls are wearing even though it's only 40 degrees outside). But on this particular outing, I happened onto a new store in the hoity-toity mall that took me so by surprise I just had to venture in:

It was a 5,000 square foot store dedicated solely to skin care products.

There were thousands of products for women, hundreds for men, and probably several dozen for your cat. There were oils and creams and toners and gels, potions for dry skin, oily skin and presumably just-right skin, and FDA watch-list herbal concoctions for every condition. Shelves were filled with products that would peel away, melt away or otherwise disintegrate any and all layers of your face and hands. On purpose. There was something for everyone. Got wrinkles and fine lines? No problem. These four hundred products will take care of that. Age spots or blemishes? Aisle 3. People were swarming in every nook and cranny, scooping up bottles and jars like sugared-up kids on Trick or Treat night. And in the back, happy women (and one slightly uncomfortable-looking man) were seated in reclining chairs with mud masks on their faces, while attendants in white lab coats bustled around them.

As I stood there wondering how that man explains to his football buddies that he pays money for someone to put mud on his face, one of those bustling attendants sidled up to me. She must have seen me coming a mile away. She had astutely profiled me as the slapdash, laissez-faire type of skin caretaker I am, and could somehow tell that I don't cleanse, tone and buff on a daily basis or treat my under-eye circles and crow's feet as Public Enemies Number 1 and 2.

I was about to turn and run when she smiled an ultra-white smile and asked, in her twenty-something voice, "Ma'am, would you like to see some of the new products that can take years off your face?"

Blink, blink, blink went my eyes at the Bustler while I attempted to process that statement. Wow, I thought, I didn't even merit a "Miss"— I'm a full-fledged Ma'am now. And not just any old Ma'am-- I'm a Ma'am who obviously has too many years piled up on her face and shouldn't waste another minute looking so hideous!

It was a defining moment. I stared as the Bustler held out a magic skin-altering formula for me to trial. And then...

Thirty minutes later I left that store with two bags full of Super Skin Tonics guaranteed to make me look twenty-five again before sundown. It's an immense relief that I will soon be mistaken for my daughter's sister.

Now all I need is some purple Bermuda shorts.

Mary Beth Weisenburger lives in Putnam County and is eagerly awaiting her total skin transformation.

