Ponytails Overrule: Be afraid, be very afraid...

No, Mum, it’s not like *that*... I didn’t want this to happen; I didn’t ask for it---it was the ponytail that did it! I know you said I should cut my hair and I didn’t because I figured it would be okay if I just pulled it back into a tail. Lotsa guys wear their hair that way and it looks cool. But once I grew it out, it looked so awesome I couldn’t bring myself to cut it, so it just kept growing and now it’s halfway down my back and I don’t think it’s gonna stop there. More and more I can feel it inside my mind. It wants me to... do stuff. Like use hair removal creams and moisturizers on my face, and pluck my eyebrows, and get eyelash extensions, and put on all this makeup---because it wants me to look like a girl. A pretty ponytail needs a pretty girl---that’s what it told me, inside my head. It’s all I can think about. I *have* to be a pretty girl. I have no choice! That’s why I shaved my legs, and got a boob job and cheek implants, and a tracheal shave, and went to town with your credit card at Forever 21. If I don’t make myself pretty I think I’ll die. That’s what the ponytail is telling me right now---and you know what? It means business, Mum. It really does. I’m not running the show anymore, the ponytail is in charge. The good news is that it wants me to go to beauty school. Then I’ll be able to get a job and have my own apartment, so I can be a girl all the time and the ponytail can grow really long and maybe try to take over the world. Be afraid, be very afraid...

Right you are, my girl. I shall take over the world, but I won’t stop there...

Ponytails for everyone! No excuses, no exceptions!
On the sentience of ponytails...

The above caption depicts the ponytail as a sentient entity. One might well ask, how can this be? There is no gray matter in hair, it’s no more than a grouping of fibrous structural protein cells (i.e. keratin) linked together in strands.

Well, the brain is just a bunch of nerve cells linked together. The key is that the cells in question must be able to store information and communicate between themselves. A self-aware mind is the property that emerges when enough of these cells get together and start thinking. Short hairstyles simply don’t have enough cells to reach the critical mass necessary for intelligence to develop. With loose hairstyles, the distance between most of the strands means that cells are not able to adequately communicate. Only the ponytail provides the necessary combination of mass, proximity, and the freedom to act that comes with being bound only at the base of the tail.

In light of this, it is understandable why a ponytail would not wish to be trimmed even slightly, and why its prime directive—so to speak—would be to keep growing. A longer tail means more cells added to the mix, greater mass and hence increased brainpower.

The ponytail, it seems, is also able to communicate with the human mind inside the skull. Mercifully, it cannot directly control the human body upon which it resides, but it can add its own voice to the brain’s interior monologue. That voice, which the human is not able to distinguish from her own inner voice, is so insistent and non-stop that it effectively becomes a form of hypnotic conditioning. In this way, the human is driven to respond to commands from the ponytail—all the while believing she is responding to her own wishes, according to her own free will.

Interestingly, the young male in the caption appears to have detected the influence of his ponytail and is communicating that fact to his mother. But such was not the case. In fact, he believed that he conjured this story from his imagination as a last-ditch excuse for the superlative cross-dressing he’s been indulging in, during which he has just been caught red-handed and red-lipped. By a fantastic coincidence, his wild story happened to coincide perfectly with the reality of the situation. Seriously, you couldn’t write this stuff!

One might go on to ask, why would a ponytail even want to take over the world? To answer, one must delve into the psychology of how the condition of ‘want’ arises in the first place. It surely begins with a ‘need’ and proceeds from there (a ‘need’ being some item one requires to survive, like air, water, food and shelter). A ‘want’ not based upon a true ‘need’ can only arise if it addresses some aspect of one’s mental landscape that the individual believes is not quite up to snuff. It is not too over-the-top to describe such a condition as a defect in the mind. Yet we must also consider the degree of defectiveness involved. After all, a child who desires a particular toy for Christmas cannot be considered defective in any serious way; greedy, perhaps, or self-absorbed, but not defective.

Taking over the world is a whole different story.
I think we can agree that no one needs to take over the world. Indeed, it’s hard to imagine why anyone would want such a thing either—think of how many decisions you’d have to make every day. No rest for the wicked—you’d literally never get a moment’s peace! Therefore, it’s safe to say that the mental defect from which this particular want arises must indeed be a very serious defect.

Now consider the individuals who are on record as wanting to achieve world domination. The list starts with mad scientists, rogue AIs, mice with genius-level enhanced brains (who attempt the feat every night), and in general anyone who defines himself in opposition to a superhero. All brilliant, all terribly unbalanced. Long story short, the ponytail is out of its freakin’ mind. It’s not uncommon for such an individual to believe that if only everyone else in the world was more like me we wouldn’t be in this big freakin’ mess we’re in. (In some cases—myself, for instance—this happens to be true, but I digress.) This extreme focus on the self accounts for the ponytail’s intention to require everyone on the planet to grow their hair and wear it ‘high-pony’ style. The tail evidently believes that the world would be a better place if this were to happen. (And who among us can say that’s not true?)

There could also be a certain amount of paranoia involved in its belief. The ponytail might believe, in all seriousness, that its own survival depends on its absolute control over all forms of hairstyling. This fear is manifestly absurd, since ponytails in general aren’t going out of style anytime soon. But more to the point, perhaps it fears not for the ponytail as a styling option, but for its own personal survival.

Here the ponytail’s paranoia is surely not misplaced, given that its life has already been threatened—and indeed ordered—by a figure of authority in the form of the young man’s mother. The tail’s own long-term survival depends on the youth’s ability to stand up for the choices he has made as a cross-dresser—and it does not bode well that he felt it necessary to make up this bizarre story as an excuse.

Ironically, the ponytail’s survival also depends on his mother’s disbelief in said bizarre story. Because if she were to actually believe him—if she happened to be extremely gullible, for instance—then her logical course of action would be to seize the ponytail and hack it off with whatever sharp tool happened to be handy—for example, a Japanese razor saw. Such an event is highly unlikely, yet one can understand the ponytail’s trepidation.

So perhaps the world can be saved after all. If we can all simply resolve to respect the choices other people make with respect to their hairstyle—not to mention the choice a young man makes when he chooses to turn himself into a girl—then ponytails the world over can rest easy and won’t feel like they have to take command to safeguard themselves.

Is a little tolerance too much to ask for in this day and age? If it is, then you’d better stock up right now on ponytail holders—because you do not want to be caught short when the crunch hits. ■