

LET'S



FACE IT

Eleanor Tucker, 53, wants to turn back time - not just for the lack of wrinkles, but so she can enjoy the high-tech make-up that's now available

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I've got a Zoom call in about 20 minutes and I really need some extra help to look less like I've been awake since 5am, which I have (thanks, perimenopause). Searching through my make-up bag for a quick fix or two, I suddenly have a better idea and make a bold decision that might just be worth it - to venture into my teenage daughter's bedroom.

I don't have time for a full hazmat suit, but I know what I've come for and as long as I'm quick, I should be OK. I dodge past the abandoned cereal bowls and mugs containing what I hope are mouldy apple cores (but could be anything...), and head straight for the dressing table, stepping over pants, false nails and popcorn on the way.

I open the drawer, and there it is - at complete odds with the state of the rest of the room, which would give *Britain's Biggest Hoarders* a run for its money. It's a perfectly arranged and incongruously clean Perspex make-up organiser, with beautifully sharpened kohl pencils, an array of blushers and highlighters, and more under-eye concealers than I have ever owned in my life.

I feel like I have just walked into Space NK. How is it that my make-up bag screams 'local chemist', while hers is more 'billionaire'? Right now, it doesn't matter. I'm here to steal - I mean, 'borrow'. And I might even use her giant mirror while I'm in here, with its built-in magnifier, five brightness levels and a 'cool-to-warm' setting, which means you can see how you'll look in different lights.

Now and then

I get to work, and within minutes I look like a much glossier version of my middle-aged self - one who had eight hours' sleep, not five. This is all thanks to a hydrating skin 'prep mist' (imagine having this in 1985), a Korean foundation that promises 'glass skin' (same), and a lip-plumping gloss that genuinely seems

to make me look poutier - no mean feat at my age. And that's when it dawns on me - in the 80s, when I was a teenager, we had to make do with not just a much smaller range of products, but formulas that weren't half as well developed as they are these days. And we certainly didn't have illuminated vanity mirrors to make it easier to see while we put it all on. They were the preserve of Hollywood stars, not mere mortals. Which led to quite a lot of mistakes...

The whole thing was much more of a 'wish and a prayer'. You picked a product - from a choice of about three shades; five, if you were lucky - and based your selection on a smear on the back of your hand in Boots, not 35,000 Trustpilot reviews. And you hoped for the best. This make-up wasn't long-lasting, ultra-pigmented and high-impact. It was either invisible or glaringly obvious, unlikely to match your skin tone (or anyone else's, for that matter) and would probably slide south by lunchtime.

Foundation was always the biggest challenge, of course. The choice was a compact like your mum's (heaven forbid), or a bottle of chalky liquid reminiscent of a roux sauce that hadn't been simmered long enough. And to apply it? Fingers, of course - as though you were slathering on calamine lotion. Either that, or a make-up sponge harbouring so many bacteria it could probably make its own way to the bin. The result was, let's put it this way, not exactly natural, and nobody's jawline matched their neck back then - nobody's. Oh, to be young now, and blending carefully with a 'deluxe miracle complexion brush', which, unlike her bedroom, my daughter cleans meticulously on a weekly basis.

These days, the eyes definitely have it. Palettes - collectibles, if you're my

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daughter - were something only make-up artists owned or Christmas gifts for glamorous women, of which there were very few in suburban Oxford. For us, it was one colour - two if you were a real 'expert'. Frosted was the name of the game, and when applied

in poor lighting like our foundation, the finished look was very much *Disney on Ice*, and not in a good way.

As for mascara, we grew up with panda eyes - who can forget lining up in the loos on a night out, desperately trying to rub away the runaway mascara

and kohl? My daughter, meanwhile, is all about the new 'tubing' formulas, which, if you haven't tried yet, I highly recommend. They stay put, don't smudge and come off lashes in the form of neat little miniature mascara sausages. What's not to love?

It's so much easier to get make-up right these days. And I can't help thinking those first dates, parties and roller discos would have all seemed much easier if I'd been less worried about what the eyeliner trick I'd learnt from *Mizz* magazine looked like in broad daylight (answer: terrifying). Isn't teenage life hard enough without make-up mistakes?

Cosmetic kudos

So - with apologies to my daughter if she happens to take a break from TikTok to read this - my filching forays into her bedroom might become a regular occurrence. If she does find out, I'll explain - woe is me - I'm making up for lost youth.

Eek... time for my Zoom call. It's a tricky work situation, but I don't get stressed because I've got the experience to know how to deal with it, and the confidence to speak up. Middle age isn't so bad. In fact, I honestly don't want to be young again - but I'll take the make-up, thanks!

✦ *Turn Back Time* (£9.99, PB, Canelo) by Eleanor Tucker is out now.

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