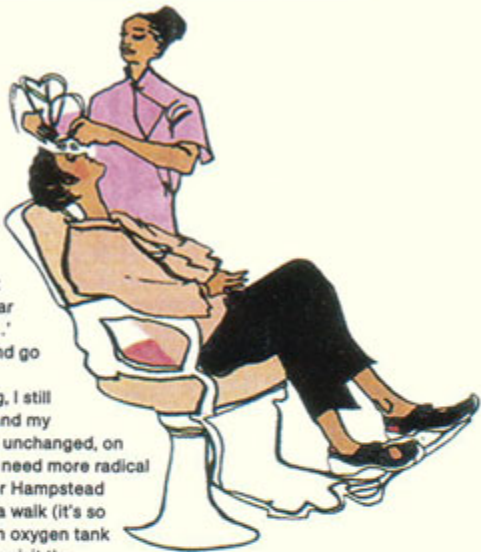


# BEAUTY NOTEBOOK

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**F**resh air. Sunlight. Glowing cheeks. At this time of year, when darkness falls at four o'clock and smog descends before dawn, these things seem like a distant memory. Which is why it's not enough to slump on the sofa surrounded by Quality Street wrappers, the central heating on full, watching *The Sound of Music* with the sound off while my husband croons, 'All I need is the air that I breathe, and to loovve you, all I need is the AAIIRRR!'

No. 'We need a change!' I say.

'I thought you liked *The Sound of Music*,' says my husband, flipping the television to *2001: A Space Odyssey*. 'How about this, instead?'

'No, we need oxygen!' I say.

'Jean Michel Jarre?' he says. 'But I don't know the words to that...'

'No, no,' I say, removing a package from my handbag. 'We need this!'

'This' is a handy canister of O-PUR oxygen (see below), the newest, grooviest beauty product, as stocked in the mini-bars of the newest, grooviest hotels in London. This, according to the label, 'will revitalise your life, reinvigorate any time fatigue drains you, stimulate your senses and improve vitality'.

So befuddled are we by Quality Street and the television that it takes huge efforts to puzzle out how to operate the mouthpiece. By the time we manage to, I am even more drained and in need of revitalising, so I get the first blast. Unfortunately, it gives me a headache and I have to stop immediately.

My husband, on the other hand, spends 20 happy minutes attached to the thing, breathing through the mouthpiece like an astronaut. 'Well, it's not exactly like climbing a mountain, is it?' I say, irritably.

'No, but it's quite good,' he says. 'I feel like I'm in 2001. Maybe I'll turn into a foetus instead of an old

man. Maybe a vast monolith will appear before us. Maybe...'

'Hmmm,' I say, and go to bed.

The next morning, I still have a headache and my husband is asleep, unchanged, on the sofa. I decide I need more radical help, and set off for Hampstead Heath. No, not for a walk (it's so smoggy I'd need an oxygen tank on my back), but to visit the

Heath Healthcare Centre for a beauty treatment: the O-Lys light therapy, so new and so very, very groovy that you can't even get it at the Metropolitan Hotel.

Now this is exciting. I lie on my back and Elizabeth the beauty therapist places wiggly fibre optic tubes over my face, like the doctor in *Star Trek* when he brings someone back to life. I close my eyes, because I am a coward, while she explains that the light from the tubes will penetrate my (raddled) skin, 'stimulating a natural cellular regeneration and repair process'. Unlike sunbeds, the light contains no UVA or UVB rays: so no sunburn, just a healthy glow, in theory.

I fall asleep while Elizabeth massages my skin and when I wake up... well, I don't look like Sleeping Beauty, but there's a definite improvement. I rush home to show my new face to my husband. 'Look, look!' I say. He gazes at me, blankly.

'Hmmm,' he says. 'You've got a spot on your chin, must be all the Quality Street. You need some fresh... But he gets no further, because I am beating him over the head with the empty canister of oxygen. ■