

Growing Old Dis/Gracefully

Your older years don't have to be about twin sets and caravanning. Celebrity Wellbeing Programme Teacher, 67-year-old Irene Estry, shows **the magazine** how age is just a number

Life's a bitch, you grow old, you die. Okay so it's not a great philosophical sound bite but it works for stand up comics, metaphysical poets and grumpy university lecturers in postmodernist philosophy. It doesn't work for me though.

From the age of 30 onwards, we begin to look into the mirror and wonder where the flower of youth went. Apparently, women in their late 20s and early 30s are putting up a valiant fight against the seven signs of ageing, whatever they are, and it must be a losing battle because I see unhappy young things all the time on TV with frown lines, worrying about the onset of age, that dreadful thing that's out to get us.

It appears that a pot of cream with pentapeptides will make it all go away, because the previously-worried looking girl on my TV catwalks back into her hectic and glamorous lifestyle minus the frown lines. The guy sat in the sports car leans over and holds her door open, a twinkle in his eye and a camera lens flash on his perfect teeth - everything in paradise back to normal. Mind you, the sports car guy had a close call too. He was looking tired and that twinkle needed a little help. Many a girl who passed by looked at him like he was a pensioner, so he took Pierce Brosnan's advice and squirted a bit of L'Oréal onto the hideous bags beneath each eye. Bish bosh - The International Man of Mystery twinkle returns. Result! Anyway, why is Pierce Brosnan worried about losing his boyish good looks? He never had them. He was and is ruggedly handsome, more so now than ever. It's how we like our 007. Nobody is going to take his licence to kill seriously if he looks like Russell Brand.

Ageing gracefully used to mean twin sets, coffee mornings and knitting patterns. For men it involved rather more in the way of Werthers Originals and caravan clubs. That doesn't work for me either though. It's a cliché, but here goes anyway - Growing old is mandatory, growing up is optional. Hitting 50 doesn't have to mean selling up for a bungalow at Codger on Sea. Age is a state of mind. An intelligent woman of 45 can be gorgeous, engaging and vivacious. To the intelligent man, she has more appeal than any inexperienced piece of eye candy, and she very likely has the legs, both physically and metaphorically, to make enduring relationships work.

Life may be a bitch for some, but for most of us it's what we make it, which is why I can promise you that the best is yet to come. Each year adds another 365 days of additional wisdom and additional savvy. It brings compassion and insight. Each additional decade gives a greater understanding of passion and sexuality, the nuances of touch, aroma and sensuality. A Beaujolais Nouveau is fine if you want to drink something before its ready and wake up with a headache. But if you want something sultry and sophisticated - to savour as it touches the lips, it needs to have seen the seasons come and go.

Life isn't about being thin anymore; it's about being fit in mind, body and soul. You can age gracefully if you want to, but a little disgracefully now and then is good for the soul. The fitter you are, the more enjoyable life can be. I am Irene Estry and I can't make you thin, but I can help you to be vivacious and happy.

the words: Irene Estry