

THE HAIRCUT STORY

My son needs his hair cut and so do I. He has a special barber that we go to, an older man like my father who gave haircuts to me. I have another barber who cuts mine.

I can't cut hair; only once did I trim the back of my father's neck which he couldn't cut in a mirror. So I put a hat and gloves on my son and we head for the barber-shop.

It is closed. The candy cane sign isn't turning, and it looks like night in there. I tell him we will go to my barber to get his hair cut. He says no, he doesn't want to. I tell him he will. He says that I need a haircut too. I agree, I do.

Walking from the car to the barber's, he puts his hand in mine, and we notice puddles from last night's rain. Bird footprints trim the edge. He thinks this is very funny, like a drawing inside a photograph. I laugh.

At the barbershop (only one customer inside), I hold the door for him and we can feel the light and heat inside. We enter the room.

There in the chair is his barber staring up at us, first at me and then my son. His eyes want to know what we are doing there. We stare back at him like mirrors. My son looks up to ask which barbershop this is. My barber says hello, you're next; the other barber nods. My barber is done cutting now and he won't let the other barber pay. My son's barber insists; the other barber says no, it's a professional courtesy, someday you'll do the same for me.

He cuts both our hair. First my son, and then me.

-- Larry Smith

Huron OH

NEIGHBORS

Just because you live next door and your mailbox is freshly painted gold, you probably think you get more interesting mail, too. When I press 104 I suddenly

feel like an American tourist in my tan corduroys and blue flannel shirt. The initials C. and E. on the thin adhesive strip look very strange for a Greek name. I'm used to Greek names being long and unpronounceable like this kind of Russian vodka I buy by pointing at it. I'd be disappointed if the E. stood for Eileen or Edna. Rather something exotic, like Elephantitis. I wonder if your apartment smells like that Greek restaurant I don't like. When there's no answer I press my face to the door and stare down the dark hall hoping your head will be poking out the door. I hope my patch of breath will last till you get back so you'll know I stopped by.

BROKE BRANCHES OVER HEAD

One time when he was hunting
rabbits in the woods
a large branch way up came loose
and fell a long way before it broke
cleanly over his head.
He was not the least bit surprised --
nothing about his head surprised him;
not even strange dreams
of antelopes with no hooves.

After he told his story
he was very much admired in the village
for the hardness of his head.
Even in fights and games
the other boys were careful
not to bang their heads against his head.
All except one who did not believe him.
So a contest was held.
This boy who did not believe
and another, held both ends
of a buffalo's thigh bone
the women were using to stir
the buffalo stomach soup.
When they brought it down over his head
Broke Branches Over Head collapsed
like a tepee under wet snow
but the bone broke in half,
his head was that hard.

-- Dave Lucht

Milwaukee WI