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## **It's Only Hair**

Stormy called Devyn, "Since you came to our church, Mom said you can visit our house when she or Dove is here."

"Cool."

Stormy warned, "Mom's off at times. I hope she's okay when you come down. If she isn't, I'll come outside and wave at you not to come in - I never know."

"To see you, I can handle anything. I'll ask Dad if I can come right now."

Stormy greeted him at the open door. "She's good, come on in."

"Should I take off my cowboy boots?"

Stormy felt jittery, one hand-picked at her eyebrows and she bit her lower lip. "No, we don't worry about shoes. Mom does hair – just come in."

He clomped into their living room as Mrs. Knutson walked out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on a towel. It smelled like baking brownies.

"Hello, Mrs. Knutson. My name is Devyn, I'm pleased to meet you." He stood at attention.

She had a perfect 1950's chin-length hairstyle, fluffy and heavily sprayed – not a hair moved. It was light brown, somewhere between Stormy's sister's hair: Dove's blonde and Alayna's red locks. A toothpaste smile plastered her face like a commercial for the Molly Mormon Bakery. "Hello, Devyn. I've heard a lot about you," Her eyelids narrowed.

"Thank you, ma'am, I've heard a lot about you, too."

"I hope it was good."

“Yes Ma’am, it was.”

“Well, aren’t you a nice young man?” She ran her hands over Devyn’s head, touching his locks. “You’d be handsome if you got a haircut.”

His face went pink.

Stormy rolled her eyes. “Mom!”

“Now Stormy, you know I’m a professional hairstylist and with a proper haircut he’d be a good-looking missionary.”

Devyn brushed Beatle-length hair from his eyes. “Guess I haven’t seen a barber in a while.”

Stormy said, “Mom, I like his long hair. It’s the style.”

“Why don’t I do it for you? I cut both men’s and women’s. Come, I insist.” She took him by the arm, leading him to a small room where her shop chair sat.

“Mother please, don’t cut his hair; I like it the way it is – it’s cool and in style.” She pushed up her glasses as she followed her mother.

“Have a seat young man, and I’ll fix you up, no charge since you are my daughter’s friend. I know she likes you.”

He gave Stormy a frightened grin but sat in the chair. “I like Stormy too. She’s funny and bright.”

Stormy stood near the door watching as Mom proceeded to put on her hairstylist apron and covered Devyn with a plastic sheet. She bit her lower lip as Mom began snipping away.

Mrs. Knutson stopped cutting with scissors. “I think I need the clippers.” Switching tools, she buzzed around his head, asking questions. “Are you related to the McDowells who run the fuel delivery company?”

"Yeah, he's our cousin. We have lots of relatives in the valley."

"Mother please..." Stormy couldn't keep from picking at her eyebrows. She twisted around, rocking up and down on her toes.

"What do your parents do?"

"My dad's a farmer. We have 135 acres of apples and some peaches near Eckert."

"How about your mother – does she work outside of the home?"

"She's the secretary at Cedaredge Elementary."

"That's nice. Do you have brothers and sisters?" Blonde locks fell like big fat snowflakes.

"I have a older sister. She recently married."

"Where do they live?"

"Mother please, stop with all the personal questions." She pulled off her glasses, cleaned them, and jammed them back on.

"Out on 25 Mesa." Devyn popped the knuckles on one hand.

"I'm making conversation while I cut his hair, getting to know Devyn." It was a hair blizzard as if she was shearing a dog, no, make that a sheep, a very frightened white sheep.

"Do you go to church with your parents?"

"Sometimes, my mom teaches Sunday School."

"Only sometimes? Where?"

"The Eckert Presbyterian Church." He popped the knuckles on his other hand.

"What do you believe?" Huge locks fell.

"I'm a follower of Jesus."

Stormy stomped one foot, glaring at her mother and pinching her lips together.

Looking at her, Devyn grinned. He wasn't sure what she was seeing because her mom kept him turned away from the big mirror on the wall.

"So you're a Christian." A toothpaste smile on her face.

"I'd rather say that I try to live my life the way that Jesus taught – He wanted us to love one another and have the compassion to remove suffering."

"Mom, don't give him the third degree. You just met him." Stormy swung her long straight hair in a wave, wishing she could rope her mother in with it. Mom was in one of her manic moods, which was better than her depressed moods, but still...

"I'm trying to get to know your Devyn, he's a polite young man. I see why you like him."

She cut the power to the shaver. "Are you interested in learning how the true and original Christian teachings were lost and had to be restored?" Her smile never changed. "I have angels who teach me the truth."

Mortified that Mom brought up her angels, Stormy said, "Mother don't go there. Devyn is entitled to his own beliefs."

He shrugged. "I'm interested in history and philosophy. I read a lot."

"Very good, I'd like to tell you about our church and what the angels tell me."

Stormy's face felt hot with embarrassment. "Mother, this isn't the time, you just met him." Involuntarily, her fingers picked at her eyebrows. She pushed her heavy glasses up and rubbed her nose with two fingers.

Tipping up his chin and winking, Devyn waved Stormy off. "Sure, I'm interested in learning."

Mom went back to snipping as she told him about the Mormon Church and how Joseph Smith received the golden tablets from the angel. "I also have angels that talk to me."

“Mother, don't cut off all of his hair! That isn't the style. You're making him look like a nerd.”

His eyes widened. Hair flew. Devyn took a deep breath. “It's okay Stormy, my dad will be happy, especially 'cause it's free.” Long blond chunks of hair dropped in his lap. He clenched his jaws.

“How do you plan to support your wife?”

“MOTHER STOP IT!” Stormy balled up her fists with her arms straight down. She could just smack Mom. She caught Devyn's eyes.

He grinned and nodded. “In whatever way my wife would feel satisfied with her life. That's my dream, to make Stormy happy. I'm going to college next year. I'm working on getting an academic and athletic scholarship to C.S.U. in Fort Collins or maybe Mesa College in Grand Junction.”

With a wide smile, Mrs. Knutson leaned to look directly into Devyn's face. “That's admirable. Stormy wants to be a doctor but she should be a nurse.” She listened to a voice. “What do you plan to be?”

Devyn said quietly, “A good man, a good provider, and a friend to my wife.” He looked at Stormy.

Snipping and clipping, she said, “Do you have a career in mind?”

“Not for sure. Maybe something in science or the social sciences. I've thought about being lawyer but I enjoy being outdoors. I'm also a musician and like to write fiction. I'm interested in so many things that I'm not sure about a specific career.”

Mom held the point of the scissors at his chin with a dark scowl. “The angels want to know – will you keep your hands to yourself around my daughter until you're married?”

“MOTHER! Don't put scissors in his face!” She turned to Devyn. “She is so inappropriate at times.”

Devyn glanced at the point of the scissors and then her mom's oddly blank eyes. “Yes, Ma'am, I am honorable to her now and will be after we're married.”

Stormy smiled because he said it like he had really decided they would get married.

“You'll need to get baptized and go on a mission to marry Stormy in the Temple.” She talked about the church, the true church, the only true church as she snipped and smiled. At last, she said, “There you go, dear, all done. Now you look clean like a good missionary.” She expertly pulled off the sheet and dumped his blonde hair in the trash.

“MOM! You cut it all off. He hasn't got any hair left. Now he looks stupid!”

Devyn winced. He stood to look in a mirror. His face turned bright red. In less than twenty minutes, her mom made him look like a marine. His ears stood out like a bat. They'd get sunburned. He headed out the beauty shop door. Turning around, he forced a smile and put his hand out. “Thank you, Mrs. Knutson. It was nice meeting you. My dad will appreciate the haircut.” He strode across the front room, his cowboy boots clomping loudly, the back of his neck flushed bright pink.

“You're leaving?” Stormy followed him.

Mrs. Knutson came after them, carrying the scissors. “Oh, you're to stay, I made brownies for you kids and I haven't told you about everything about the Mormon Church.”

He took a deep breath. “I don't want to be rude, but my dad told me one hour and it's twenty minutes back home. Time for me to skedaddle.” He managed a fake smile.

Mrs. Knutson rushed to the kitchen for the plate of brownies.

Stormy walked out to the car with him. She grabbed his hand, bouncing up and down, pleading, "Please Devyn, I'm so sorry, I didn't know she was going to do this. I know she's weird, please, stay and have at least one of Mom's brownies. It's important."

He stopped with the car door open, his voice even and his body stiff. "Don't worry, I'll get over this – it's only hair." He waved her away. "I've learned that everyone is better off if I get cooled down or I'll say something I regret."

Stormy felt her eyebrows crunch down tightly as she fought the horrible emotions rushing from her chest. Hot tears ran down her cheeks. "I'm so sorry I invited you over. I didn't mean to say you look stupid. I meant my mom was being stupid. She has a mental problem. I'm so embarrassed by her. Please, I'm so sorry, please forgive me."

Her mother stood at the open door holding a dish of fresh brownies, her eyes narrowing into green-eyed cat slits, something evil in them.

Devyn got into the car and rolled down his window. After taking a deep breath, he said, "I'll always forgive you, no matter what. Tell your mother I appreciate the haircut and that my dad will be extremely pleased."

Stormy crumbled, her eyebrows turning into black caterpillars that crawled across her wrinkled forehead, "Oh, I'm so ashamed of my life." Huge tears sprang from her eyes, splattering her glasses like rain on a windshield.

"Stormy, I...I...Your Mom did what she thought was best. Maybe I can come back another time. Everything's cool." He peeled out.

Reluctantly, Stormy walked back to the house, staring at the ground.

Mom was livid. "He left! Your friend didn't eat my brownies. Devyn rejected me! The angels will punish him for this!"

Stormy ran to her room.

Mom followed her. "I'm sick of you throwing a fit every time something happens. Keep it up and I'll cancel your birth certificate."

At least she didn't pull her hair like usual.

Stormy couldn't help crying.