Bad Hair Day

Christine Mowery

Picture Day at school: a day to memorialize our awkward teenage years. This is a day that has the potential to haunt you for the rest of your life. It is a day you will be reminded of every time you walk into your grandparents’ home. There you will be, on display, on the fireplace mantel, smiling that goofball smile for all your aunts, uncles, and cousins to see. So why, of all days, would I decide that the night before picture day was the best time ever to cut my own bangs?

This was going to be my year. After all, I was in seventh grade now; I was practically an adult. A snazzy new haircut was going to be my ticket to a good picture. My parents weren’t home and I couldn’t drive myself to the salon that night, so it was up to me to make my picture dreams come true.

I grabbed the kitchen scissors and took my bangs into my own assertive hands. All I had to do was cut a straight line, right? How hard could that be? I gathered a section of hair and started cutting. When I heard the scissors crunching through my hair, I knew there was no turning back.

The first attempt was a little less than straight. That’s okay, I could just straighten things up on my second attempt. My second attempt led to my third attempt, which led to my fourth attempt. I am not sure how many attempts I made. I blacked out once I realized I was running out of bangs!

I wanted to look pretty for picture day. I used the kitchen scissors to cut my bangs.

I cut and cut. I realized my bangs were almost all gone. This had to be a bad dream!
And still I had to face the camera.

This had to be a bad dream. Maybe it didn’t look that bad. Spoiler alert: it did look that bad.

The following school day was brutal. During my walk of shame through the judgmental walls of middle school, no one said a word to me. No one even made eye contact with me. It was simply too uncomfortable for them to be face to face with where my bangs used to be.

And still I had to face the camera. I grabbed a black plastic comb offered by the cameraman. Hey, maybe it had magical power and would stimulate my hair follicles to grow, and maybe this nightmare would be over. No such luck. I was still in shock when the flash went off. I simply couldn’t wait for the day to be over.

Eventually, the day came to an end. Eventually, my bangs grew out. Eventually, I started to forget the whole ordeal had ever happened. And just when it was all a distant memory, the pictures came in. Bad hair days are no fun. They’re even worse when the everlasting proof is sitting on your grandparents’ fireplace mantel for the whole family to see, forever.

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Study the Writing

According to the author, what was she like as a 13-year-old? Which parts of the text reveal directly or through inference something about her character as a teen?

Find the humorous moments. Identify what makes them funny.

Notice the variety in the author’s sentence structure. Find some of the following types of sentences and label them with the abbreviations given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Sentence</th>
<th>Abbrev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>short sentence</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long sentence</td>
<td>LS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repetitive structure/words</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>questions</td>
<td>Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>exclamations</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Write a humorous story from your childhood. What writing strategies will you use to capture the funny moments? Share your writing and get feedback. To hear how it flows, read it out loud to the whole class.

The next day, I had to face the camera. I was in shock when the flash went off.

Now the picture sits on my grandparents’ mantel for the whole family to see forever.

Illustrations by Ann Cleaves

...CONTINUED (SEE ANOTHER PICTURE STORY ON P. 36)