

Henry Crockett's Short Story Submission for the Behind the Vision Writing Competition

As usual in spring, a light rain came down upon the city. It looked especially good from the hospital window, and it was one of the few times I was glad to be here. I summoned what little energy I had and rolled onto my side. From this angle I could perfectly see the hospital garden in all its glory. The torii present throughout the garden gave it a Japanese motif that I thought blended quite well with the rain and patches of sunlight breaking through the cloud cover. It almost looked perfect. I had to give it to regional weather control these days. A little rain could come a long way. A little slice of heaven, I thought, before being overcome by a fit of coughing. Thrust back into reality, I fell back on my back in exhaustion. Instinctually I attempted to run my fingers through my hair before receiving another wave of disappointment. I sighed and slowly let myself succumb to drug-induced sleep.

When I awoke, there was a pleasant surprise waiting for me. Staring me right in the face, actually. Soon after it was licking me in the face with its slobbery tongue.

"Ahh! Gregory, geoff!"

"Sorry about him," said mom. "I tried to stop him, but that dog weighs about 100 Kilograms."

"S'okay mom." I said, with a big grin on my face. Mom was a small woman, who looked as though she had been raising kids a lot longer than she actually had. Still, she was the kind of person who could light up a room with a smile if you got to know her. With everything going on at mom's work, she'd

barely gotten to visit me all week. We knew it was a small miracle that she was here now.

Mom gave me a weary smile. "So, how's my little trooper handling all of this?"

I smiled back. "Come on, I'm not that small. I'll let you know I'm a perfectly average height for my age!" I said in a jaunty tone.

Mom's smile faded a bit. "How's the treatment sweetie? Are you holding up alright?"

I felt a pang in my chest. "Oh! Come on mom, I was just starting to forget!" I yelled in mock pain. "You really gonna bring that up so soon?" Mom kept smiling, but I could see the pain in her eyes. I forced out a laugh. "Come on! Don't come here and tell me nothing! I'm bored to tears in here!"

Mom's regular cheer returned somewhat, and her smile widened. "Well, I should probably tell you about what your sister told me..."

It was a while before mom had to leave. I lay there for a while, before I eventually had to relieve myself. While there I caught a look at myself in the mirror. What stared back at me was a symbol of everything I had lost. It's not that I thought I looked ugly without the hair. I had my own way of rocking the bald look. It's just that... it was so far from me, it almost made me sick (even though I am sick). Regardless, I hated it. As I went back to my bed, my thoughts inevitably turned to the upcoming procedure. It would theoretically get rid of the tumor, but still... a 5% mortality rate. It's hard to find a procedure these days with recorded mortality rates, and yet here we are. I sighed, and walked over to the window. The rain had cleared up, and there was now a light fog over the city skyline, where the sunset colored the world orange

and red. As I was looking out, I saw something. A person was out in the garden, perfectly framed against the setting sun. I stared in awe. Atop their head was flowing, beautiful hair. It almost seemed to flow and move on its own, and the color seemed to be shifting ever so slightly. Then I realized it wasn't my imagination, or a trick of the light. The hair was cybernetic. I knew this as I watched, but to me, it seemed almost magical, something that shouldn't be possible in this world. It was beautiful. Now I know how to take back a piece of my life.

As I was readying myself to undertake the surgery, I was visited by mom. She was smiling, and almost crying, and went up and asked me, "How do you feel?" I looked back and said, "Beautiful"