

## Curls

By Yap Swi Neo

My sister came home proudly tossing her short fringe and long curly back tresses. Her first curls. I wanted curls too.

“When you are twelve you can get a perm,” Grandfather promised.

“Ahhhhh, but that’s five years to wait,” I bawled. No arguing with Grandfather.

Eileen taunted, “Little girl, look at my beautiful, beautiful curls.” She smiled sweetly sweeping my face with her curls. All day long she twirled her head. I wondered whether she would eventually fling her head off, like one of our dolls with all body parts detachable.

At bedtime she warned me not to roll around and mess up her curls.

“I think it would be better for you to sleep on the floor,” she said and shoved me off the bed we shared.

“This is my bed too!” I wished I had grandfather’s long, strong hands to hit her.

Saturdays were hair washing days. Mum made sure both of us had coconut oil thoroughly rubbed into our scalp and hair, and left to be absorbed over two hours. We protested the strong smell. Mum said we would be grateful for our forever shining black hair. Mum had lots of white hair.

Under the rain shower, the bar of Sunlight soap did an excellent job of cleansing.

“Ahhhhh!” Eileen sobbed. Her curls had decided to uncurl themselves.

I smiled sweetly. “When I have my curls, it won’t be the cheap five-dollar-perm. I’m saving up now for the twenty-dollars-permanent.”