

## The Power of Words

"I look so ugly! How could I have been so stupid!" I wailed. I dropped the scissors I was holding and burst into a flood of tears.

Being in my mid-twenties, I was itching for a change. I had worn my hair long for more than ten years at this point, as a mark of girlish charm. It felt appropriate for my outward appearance to reflect the new chapter of my life as a sophisticated, independent, working woman.

Unsmiling, and with an air of professional arrogance, the stylist I had visited made quick work of chopping off my waist-length hair. As I watched the long lengths of cut hair fall to the floor, my heart sank and I was struck by an instant pang of regret. I shut my eyes, waiting for the ordeal to be over. When I next glanced in the mirror, I was greeted with an unrecognisable reflection of a lady with what looked like a broom on her head.

"All done!" said the stylist as he stepped back, whisking off the cape that was protecting my clothing. My mind vehemently protested the blunt, chopped bob that he had given me, but being someone who was intensely shy and self-conscious, I could not bring myself to open my mouth.

I did not know what it was that possessed me when I got home. The moment I stepped through the door, I reached for a pair of scissors and tried to repair the odd shape of my hair. "Just some layering of the hair here and there should make it better," I said to myself. Snip. Snip. Snip. Before long, I had transformed what had already been a bad haircut into an uneven, misshapen mess.

As loud sobs filled my bedroom, my sister poked her head quietly through my door and peered in. Seeing my distress, she left, saying nothing.

Fortunately, it was the weekend. I holed myself up in my room, emerging only at odd hours of the day to have meals, avoiding the critical eyes of my family. The shame and self-beratement continued, as I alternated between avoiding the mirrors in my room and staring frustratedly at my reflection, tearing hopelessly at my hair.

A soft knock on my door broke the silence that Sunday afternoon. A hand emerged through the crack in the door and thrust a clear plastic package into mine. Then, as before, my sister slipped wordlessly away. I looked down at the object that I was holding. It was a maroon-coloured cotton baseball cap. As I stared at it, my eyes teared up and a faint wisp of a smile formed on my lips. Embroidered in large purple cursive letters across the front of the cap were the words "Love covers over all wrongs".

Placing it on my head, I felt a wave of forgiveness and peace wash over me, dispelling the aggravation and despair from the events of the day before. It covered not just my unsightly hair, but the series of unfortunate decisions that had led to its current state. Grasping the doorknob with a renewed sense of confidence, I opened the door and stepped outside.

Elena Yeo