

The Swap

By Megan Shull

Ellie

I jump down out of the gigantic black truck and follow Gunner down the strip-mall sidewalk because I have no idea what I just agreed to do or where in the world we could possibly be going.

Gunner ruffles my hair again. “Dude, you got some sick flow, bro.”

“Huh?” I say.

“Nothin’ like a good chop to start the season. Need to shake some things up, right?”

I still have no idea what he’s talking about, so I decide the best approach is to just keep saying yes.

“Yeah, um, sure,” I say, and nod for emphasis.

Gunner throws his arm around me as we walk side by side. “Sup, big fella?” He winks. “Feels unreal to be back on the sticks with the boys!”

“Yeah,” I repeat, throwing one of those guy nods in again.

“Bro,” he starts. “Honestly, I was thinking about growing a mullet. It’s making a comeback. Business in the front, party in the back.”

I look at him a little weird again. I can’t help it. I like him, but I can’t understand a word he is saying. Gunner just keeps his arm around my shoulder. “Tough day, little man. Have to bounce back. Let’s get it goin’!”

He shoots me a wink and stops all of a sudden in front of a door, holding it open for me. "After you, Jacko!"

The barber's name is Geno. Geno Anthony DiAngelo, to be exact. The only reason I know this is because I'm so freaked out, I keep my eyes glued straight ahead at the framed barber's license leaning on the counter against the mirror.

I think by accident I agreed to, like-

Get Jack's hair shaved off!

Gulp.

I sink down into the big leather barbershop chair, trembling. Gunner whips out his iPhone and starts filming. "Let's see that shaggy mop, Jacko!" He laughs. "Little bro's flow has got to go!"

Geno the barber looks at me. "The usual?" he asks.

"I, uhhh-"

"Yeah, old-school, Geno," Gunner answers for me, then looks at me in the mirror. "A fade, right, broski?"

"A fade?" I repeat. I am seriously wondering if boys even speak English.

Gunner turns to Geno. "Big guy's had a rough day," he tells him. "Lets' go with number two on top, and number one around those big beauty ears."

It all happens so fast.

Geno the barber moves behind the chair, turns on the electric clippers, and the next thing I know I'm watching in the mirror as huge clumps of Jack's thick, dark, curly, beautiful hair drop off his head.

Nobody says a word. Besides the buzzing of the clippers, we sit in total silence.

It doesn't take long.

Seven minutes max.

"Here you go," says Geno the barber, holding up a mirror so I can see the back. There's not really any purpose to that, though. Besides a very minuscule layer of prickly, sandpapery stubble? Jack's hair is—

G-O-N-E.