

HAIR'S THE THING

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Bradley Hayward

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SYNOPSIS: A woman untangles her life (and her hair) thanks to a strange man she meets while dining alone.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 1 WOMAN)

LORNA (f).....Single and waiting.

JIMMIE (m).....Single and looking.

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AT RISE:

At a restaurant, LORNA sits at a table cluttered with dirty dishes and chews on a rubbery piece of steak. JIMMIE enters from behind. He surveys the room and spots LORNA. He stands directly behind her and begins to braid her long hair. More than a little confused, she stops chewing. A big hunk of meat dangles from her lips.

LORNA: Excuse me...

JIMMIE: Don't mind me. *(He continues braiding as if it were a normal, everyday occurrence.)*

LORNA: But—

JIMMIE: You have lovely hair. Has anyone ever told you that you have really lovely hair? Really.

LORNA: But—

JIMMIE: Lovely.

LORNA: Thank you...I think?

JIMMIE: You're welcome. *(LORNA keeps gnawing on her meat. She finally swallows.)*

LORNA: Can I ask you a question?

JIMMIE: Just go about your business as if I wasn't here. *(She gulps down some of her iced tea and tries to ignore him but simply cannot.)*

LORNA: Why are you braiding my hair?

JIMMIE: Why not?

LORNA: For starters, I don't know you.

JIMMIE: Do you have to know a person to braid their hair? Just think how many times you've sat down at the beauty parlor without having any idea who's coming at you with scissors.

LORNA: But that's their job.

JIMMIE: I mean, they could be a serial killer for all you know. Sure, they have a rented chair at Cost Cutters, a fancy-schmancy blow dryer, and three combs in a jar with that blue water...

LORNA: Yes, but—

JIMMIE: I often wonder what's in that blue water. Sometimes I lay awake at night and think about that blue water. They want you to believe it's some sort of disinfectant, but it's probably just Kool-Aid.

LORNA: Listen, I'm not really—

JIMMIE: But the point is, you don't actually know who's cutting your hair. That chair, that blow dryer, that blue water. Kool-Aid, I know it is. It's all a clever rouse to make you vulnerable. Suddenly, they spin you away from the mirror and...WHAM! They stab the shears into your neck.

LORNA: You think?

JIMMIE: I think.

LORNA: But why? Why would they do that?

JIMMIE: Who knows? *(He fishes out a pick from his pocket and uses the end to pull out strands of hair for a French braid.)*

LORNA: But you're not going to stab me, right? *(He doesn't answer.)* Right? *(He puts the pick in his teeth as he fishes for more hair with his fingers. LORNA becomes alarmed at his silence.)* Right?!

JIMMIE: Pardon?

LORNA: Do you want to stab me? Then dunk the bloody scissors in Kool-Aid?!

JIMMIE: *(The comb still in his teeth.)* Of course not. I'm not crazy. Now go back to your steak. It smells terrific.

LORNA: It's gross. I chew and chew, but it won't have it.

JIMMIE: Well, it looks terrific. *(LORNA picks up the plate and carefully examines it.)*

LORNA: I suppose you could say that. Although, it could be the mushrooms.

JIMMIE: Yeah, that could be it. I've always said mushrooms are the prettiest vegetable.

LORNA: Really? You've actually said that before?

JIMMIE: Sure, lots of times. Haven't you?

LORNA: Can't say as I have.

JIMMIE: That's too bad. So what do you think is the prettiest vegetable?

LORNA: I never really thought about it.

JIMMIE: You must have looked at a vegetable, a cucumber, a radish, or a grape and thought: "Wow, that's a pretty vegetable."

LORNA: Never. And a grape is a fruit, I think.

JIMMIE: You think?

LORNA: I know, in fact.

JIMMIE: Silly how I mixed that up. I must have been thinking about the tomato. Isn't that a fruit?

LORNA: I think so.

JIMMIE: I know so. The ugliest fruit too, if you ask me.

LORNA: I didn't.

JIMMIE: Just the same, it's ugly. Exactly the way a mushroom isn't.

LORNA: You still haven't answered my question.

JIMMIE: What question?

LORNA: Why are you braiding my hair?

JIMMIE: If you recall, I have answered that question.

LORNA: You did? I don't think so.

JIMMIE: Why not?

LORNA: Why not what?

JIMMIE: No, that was my answer, "Why not?"

LORNA: What was my answer?

JIMMIE: You didn't have one. Well, not a good one, anyway. The second you have an answer, I'll stop. Now, eat. Your steak must be getting awfully cold.

LORNA: It was cold to begin with.

JIMMIE: Then you should have sent it back.

LORNA: I'm not that kind of person.

JIMMIE: I am. I send everything back.

LORNA: Like what?

JIMMIE: Doesn't matter. Now, finish your steak. *(He takes out a spray bottle and sprays her hair, then drags the pick through a tangle.)*

LORNA: Now what are you doing?

JIMMIE: You've got a snarl.

LORNA: Oh.

JIMMIE: *(Holds up the bottle.)* Why? Did I get some mist on your steak?

LORNA: Yes, actually.

JIMMIE: Sorry.

LORNA: Don't be. Maybe now I can chew it.

JIMMIE: You're funny... In a dry, bitter sort of way.

LORNA: So are you... In a creepy, weird sort of way. *(They laugh. She drinks. He sprays.)*

JIMMIE: Can you do me a favor?

LORNA: Hold my head down?

JIMMIE: No, scrape the mushrooms off and find out.

LORNA: Find out what? *(He sighs.)*

JIMMIE: You ask a lot of stupid questions.

LORNA: Is it stupid to wonder why a strange man is braiding my hair?

JIMMIE: There you go again.

LORNA: Don't call me stupid.

JIMMIE: I did not call you stupid. For someone who asks stupid questions, you sure don't listen very carefully to the answers. *(She grabs a fork and fiddles with her peas, pouting.)* Fine. Scrape off the mushrooms so that we can find out if it's the steak that looks good...or the mushrooms, as I suspect. *(She perks right up.)*

LORNA: Now was that so difficult? *(She scrapes all the mushrooms off the steak. She looks at it for some time, considering. Then holds it up for JIMMIE.)*

JIMMIE: You're right.

LORNA: About what?

JIMMIE: That's one crappy steak.

LORNA: *(Buries her head in her hands.)* I don't even know how to pick a good restaurant.

JIMMIE: There, there.

LORNA: This was supposed to be a blind date.

JIMMIE: Blind dates can be dangerous.

LORNA: Only if your date shows up.

JIMMIE: When was he supposed to be here?

LORNA: Four hours ago. *(Picks up her glass.)* I've had six iced teas, two steaks and a pie.

JIMMIE: The whole thing?

LORNA: Eight slices; all equally disgusting. He probably saw me and turned the other way.

JIMMIE: I doubt that.

LORNA: I shouldn't have sat near the window. *(JIMMIE turns her head downward and starts slipping bobby pins into her hair to keep the braid in place.)*

JIMMIE: You know what I do when a woman stands me up?

LORNA: No, what?

JIMMIE: I give her phone number to my mother. She's getting old and has rheumatoid arthritis, but her dialing finger works just fine.

LORNA: What does she say?

JIMMIE: What doesn't she say? She leaves messages upon messages of pure crazy. First, she lets loose with all the million different reasons they'll be sorry for not going out with me. "He's very sensitive," she says. "He knows how to treat a woman," she says. "He'll fix your toilet!" But when they don't call her back, the cuckoo comes right out of the clock. "Thanks to you, I'm all alone," she says. "You're robbing me of grandchildren," she says. "I'm not getting any younger, you tramp."

LORNA: Do these women ever go out with you again?

JIMMIE: (*Shakes his head.*) They just change their phone numbers. I feel bad for whoever gets saddled with the old ones. Mother goes through her Rolodex nightly, dialing the numbers that have long since been given to someone else. The other day, she accidentally called a daycare center and told them to give her some grandchildren. Police were called. It was a mess.

LORNA: I guess she just wants to make sure you don't end up all alone.

JIMMIE: Are you all alone?

LORNA: Completely. I have no boyfriend. Obviously. I have no friends. Obviously. And my family is more screwed up than I am. Not obviously, but some of my cousins are more closely related than they should be. Yet, I'm considered the black sheep. Me. (*JIMMIE runs the pick through the bottom of her braid. It gets caught in a huge tangle. He roughly yanks her head back over and over as she continues.*) I feel caught between who I should be and who I have to be in order to fit in. I guess it trickles down from my childhood. My mother left when I was three. Since I'm the only girl in my family, I think they all keep expecting me to run off too. So I'm stuck attending tractor pulls and drag races, just to assure my father that I'm not going anywhere. Sure, my six brothers are allowed to be themselves. They can burp and spit whenever they want. They found wives right away. Go figure. But I'm stuck acting the part of a hillbilly, just so I can attract a man that won't alienate

the only people who love me. Only it's not me. I just keep my teeth crooked and hair fried so I don't stand out in family photos. (*JIMMIE yanks hard with the pick.*) Ow!

JIMMIE: Sorry.

LORNA: That's okay. Just be careful.

JIMMIE: Quite a tangle you've got.

LORNA: Like I said, I keep my hair fried on purpose.

JIMMIE: Not that. Your life is a tangle.

LORNA: (*Smiles.*) You could say that.

JIMMIE: So who's the real you? Underneath the trashy exterior?

LORNA: I don't really know anymore.

JIMMIE: Come on. You must.

LORNA: Well...I like the opera. It's so pretty and refined. But if I ever went, my family would think I'm the weird one. Sure, it's perfectly normal for them to attend church barefoot. But if I bought tickets to La Bohème, I'd never hear the end of it. Then what would happen? I'd dress up in a beautiful gown and meet a man in a tuxedo who would sweep me off my feet and make all my dreams come true. Only to have my family stare him down with their crossed eyes and closed minds. ...All because he lifts the toilet seat when he pees.

JIMMIE: What does it matter what they think?

LORNA: They're all I've got. Finding someone to love the real me means losing them... But losing them means I could end up alone forever.

JIMMIE: See what I mean? A total tangle. (*She pushes away her plate and sighs.*)

LORNA: You got that right. (*JIMMIE finally runs the pick through the tangle in her hair and smiles. He proudly runs his fingers down the sides of her hair.*)

JIMMIE: There. All done.

LORNA: And you didn't even stab me in the neck.

JIMMIE: This was just a "do." I never cut anything.

LORNA: Except to the quick. (*She runs her fingers down the end of her braid. Smiles.*) Look at that. Not one tangle.

JIMMIE: (*Touches his own his hair.*) Wish I could say the same. My hair's totally out of control. So I think I'll have a seat at the counter and wait.

LORNA: For what?

JIMMIE: A "do" of my own.

LORNA: Or...

JIMMIE: Or what?

LORNA: Well...maybe this is another stupid question.

JIMMIE: Shoot.

LORNA: Would you like to join me?

JIMMIE: Join you?

LORNA: For a gross dessert.

JIMMIE: You already had dessert.

LORNA: Just a little pie. I bet the cake is disgusting. Let's find out. Together. (*He sits down immediately.*)

JIMMIE: I thought you'd never ask.

LORNA: Really?

JIMMIE: I love this place.

LORNA: No, you don't. The food is rotten.

JIMMIE: Can't be that bad.

LORNA: I found enough hair in the salad to make a toupee.

JIMMIE: Ambiance counts.

LORNA: The lights are fluorescent.

JIMMIE: Perhaps.

LORNA: And there are mustard stains on the tablecloth.

JIMMIE: But the mushrooms were good.

LORNA: True. The mushrooms were good.

JIMMIE: And you're here.

LORNA: That counts?

JIMMIE: (*Nods.*) Four stars.

LORNA: Well, then. Let me run to the ladies' room. If this is a date, I want to freshen up. (*She gets up, but he stops her with a gentle touch of his hand.*)

JIMMIE: That won't be necessary. You look lovely.

LORNA: (*Blushing.*) I do?

JIMMIE: Oh yes. You do. (*LORNA smiles.*) And your hair...

LORNA: Yeah?

JIMMIE: Looks lovely.

LORNA: Why, thank you. I just had it done. *(They lean in for a kiss as the LIGHTS FADE.)*

BLACKOUT.

THE END

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