

# **BUZZ CUT**

by

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## BUZZ CUT

You ever thought about how a hairdresser gets a haircut? Do they do it themselves with mirrors and all that? Is there like a machine? Probably not, otherwise we'd all be using them, wouldn't we? Unless all the hairdressers keep the robot to themselves so schmuckos like us keep going to them for bad haircuts. Maybe they get a hairdresser friend of theirs to come in. One-for-you, one-for-me sort of deal. All I know is when I see a hairdresser with a bad looking 'do, all I think is, gee, you got no one to blame but yourself.

Me? I got plenty people to blame. I blame my parents for my hair. I'm a big guy, you can see that, but I'm a hairy guy too. *Hirsute* is the medical term I found on Google. Makes me sound like a German bigwig politician. Nah, my dad is as hairy as me and him as hairy as his dad (rest his soul). I had no choice but to be hairy too, especially with mother's moustache as well. Hair hair hair. Makes me want to puke. Puke up a hairball.

I need a haircut every week. I don't get one but I need one. I should be shaving about every hour as well but I don't. That would be impractical. I wrote to the comic books once and pitched them an idea for a superhero whose power was excessive hair growth, and like he could control it and whip baddies with it and everything. They said they liked it but for a villain. For a villain!

I try to keep on top of it as best I can though, and that's probably my problem. If I just let it grow and be free, maybe it'd all leave me be. I tried a beard for a while but I looked like a wizard and that's one thing I am not. I let the top just go wild but it didn't go all long and flowing like I wanted. It just grew out in like a sad afro. A sadfro. Looked as good as it sounds.

So no, I cut it all the time. I get to know my barber well, let me tell you. Guy I saw for years, let's call him Harley, he cut it real good, best I've ever had. He didn't talk to me much either when he did it and boy I loved that. He asked how I was, if I wanted the usual and if I was happy at the end. It's all I ever wanted from a relationship. When Harley cut it, it looked fine, I mean, Harrison Ford-like fine. I got a lot of compliments, probably too many to count. I still had to go back every

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other week to get it under control, especially that damn neck hair that acted as if I fertilised it with solid gold cow shit. But it was worth it to see Harley and feel that razor blade up and down my neck, up and down. I still miss that razor blade.

Harley went and died on me about a month ago. I won't go into the details because they still upset me, but don't worry it wasn't to do with all that business down south, as far as I know. With Harley out of the picture and his apprentice taking over, I found myself in a real bind. See his apprentice, who goes by the name of Bevan (believe it or not) is not somebody I really get on with.

To put it squarely, he's a real piece of work whose jaw would have been acquainted with my fist a long time ago were it not for my respect for old Harley. Nah, Bevan has always been around, shooting me dirty looks, making little snide remarks, trying to tell me about his conspiracy theories, which no matter how they start, always seem to end up with those of the Jewish faith secretly in charge of every little thing. I tell you what, if they really are in charge, they can't have been too secretive about it if Bevan, world's stupidest man, is onto them. Good God, I could talk about my disdain for that sorry excuse for a human being all day but I won't. Because I want to tell you about Yates.

Yates was the guy I went to see to cut my hair after Harley carked it. I held Harley in such esteem that I gave it three days until after his little old funeral until I got my haircut again. Boy did I need it - all furry at the sides, the fringe all out of whack, the neck hair joining with my back hair joining with my arse hair. I needed it worked on by a professional. That's when I saw Yates's new place.

Well, truth be told, I had seen it a few times before, a couple streets away from Harley's, but I hadn't looked too close, again out of the high regard I held for Harley. But now he was gone, I knew he'd want me looked after and really, deep down he'd to have known how shitty Bevan was, so I thought he wouldn't mind me seeing this Yates gentleman.

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The place smelled like a barber's should. It looked like how a modern male hairdressing establishment ought to as well - I cannot stand those silly retro 1950s throwback wannabe red and white striped poles and fancy Sweeney Todd murder chairs that all these millennial hipster types are into now. There's a reason they died out and there's a reason you will too. Prematurely.

Something clean, something white, no fancy magazines, just a chair, a mirror and a pair of scissors and an electric razor. That's all you need and that's all Yates had.

He was working on a little boy but greeted me warmly, indicating that I should sit next to the kid's mother on the seat. The mother was pretty but a little old for my tasting. The kid was about five or six and was squirming around his seat.

Yates didn't seem to mind but I was reminded of something Harley once told me when he was in something of a talkative mood. The only other time I'd seen him so talkative was when his wife left him for his brother. "Two birds, one stone," he told me.

"I hate children" he mumbled in my ear. "Three little rats this morning. They take longer than a regular man does with their moving around and their squirming and you can't charge as much as you need to and you have their stupid parents watching every little cut, just waiting for you to make a mistake so they can put you on the internet as a racist or a homophobe. Ooh boy, if I had it my way, the children wouldn't get haircuts. No, they would not."

I nodded in agreement with Harley. He always knew what to say.

This Yates fella, however, seemed to love kids. He was talking about his granddaughter who he doesn't get to see much on account of them living in New Zealand. He had a Batman cape for the kid to wear. He gave the little shit a lollypop when he finished and winked at the mother as she paid.

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They left and Yates turned his attention to me. "Now, would you like the Batman cape too, young man?"

I had two problems with this. Firstly, I'm not a young man at all, and that is clearly obvious by looking at my face. Secondly, it should go without saying that I want the Batman cape, just as sure as there is blood in my veins and air in my lungs.

"Yes, absolutely."

Yates chuckled, raised his eyebrows and motioned for me to sit down. As I did, he put the Batman cape away in the cupboard and instead pulled a regular black one around my neck instead. Perhaps my poker face needs some work because he asked me if I was all right.

"Oh yes. Just, uh, thinking."

"Thinking, huh? Got ourselves a thinker here!"

"Yeah. "

He just kinda stared at me for a while. I wasn't uncomfortable.

"So what do we want today?"

"Oh, well, you see it gets kinda bushy pretty quick."

"Yeah. Nice hair though. Thick."

"Right, so I usually keep in a little longer on top, then a trim around the back and I usually get a number two on the clippers. Pretty short."

"Coming right up."

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Yates hummed as he worked, then whistled, and when he wasn't doing any of that, he was asking me inane questions. What I do for a living - self-employed businessman. Where I'm from - here, never moved. Did I have a family - not anymore.

Once the interrogation was over, he moved on to regaling me with his thoughts on race relations ("I don't care if you're black yellow purple or pink!"); sport ("I don't care if the footy players smoke crack, as long as they get rid of the bloody video referee!") and entertainment ("Paper said this local girl has just made it over in Hollywood. You know, you suck the right dick and you're bloody set for life, aren't you?").

He also thought all politicians were a pack of bastards and we'd be better off if everyone got a vote on all the issues like the Romans did. Or the Greeks did. He wasn't sure.

He was the farthest thing from Harley and I wasn't sure if I liked it or not. On one hand, Harley got in and out, cut the hair like an assassin who's late for dinner. Although I loved the old guy, he was a little impersonal now I think about it.

Yates, though, well, he was talking my ear off and seemed like a pretty prejudiced old fart. Yet, something about him just seemed... charming. If he had given me that Batman cape, he might well have been my favourite hairdresser there and then.

But then it happened. It had to have. Things were going too perfect, weren't they? Things always gotta go to shit eventually.

We were getting to the end of the haircut. It was taking about twice as long as a regular Harley haircut, but still, I got that feeling like it was finishing soon. The sides were taken care of, the back felt freer. I felt better.

But Yates, still yammering away, kept cutting. He kept cutting all over the top, then found his electric razor and buzzed all over. He kept talking about free trade deals

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and the world's richest women, all the while my hair was whittled away, inch by inch.

By the end of it, he had given me a buzz cut. I looked like an alien with a perfectly spherical head. Like an orange only brown and pink and fuzzy. Yates couldn't see the horror barely suppressed on my face, innocently inquiring to whether I liked it. I had to say yes - what was the alternative? Can't exactly undo such a crime. Can't exactly glue the hair back on.

I paid and said my goodbyes and Yates seemed pleased with himself. I wondered if he did this with everybody - pepper them with populist half-truths while totally disregarding their haircut instructions. It seemed entirely likely. I can't be the first one. But I get the feeling I was the first one to do something about it.

All afternoon I stewed on what the best response might be. A letter to the editor seemed too old fashioned. A letter bomb seemed like too much work. A letter opener to the throat... To be honest, I don't know why I was so focused on letter-based revenge. I don't even like reading. Nah, my revenge had to be proportionate. You give a dodgy haircut, this is what you should expect.

Around dusk, I went and found a place out of the way where I could wait for Yates to close up the shop. I smoked my first cigarette in sixteen years and watched from across the road. His last customer left, some little bloke with weird feet. Yates swept up the last bit of hair, locked up the till, went outside and locked the door.

He turned around and lit his own cigarette. He looked across the street, looked as if he was looking right at me. He kept that pose for a bit too long.

Next thing I knew, he was walking around the back and I was following him and he was startled to see me and I was asking for a lift home. Yates didn't remember me at first but I reminded him about the Batman cape and he laughed.

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I was in the car. I figured he'd have something better but it was just a junk old car, not the sort'll ever be in a collector's garage, unless they're collecting shitty vehicles. Turns out he wasn't going far from my destination anyway. He was going to visit his girlfriend who, he told me, was much younger than he.

"I've hit the bloody jackpot mate. She's thirty-nine, looks twenty-eight, legs up to here, goes at it all night and lets me call her Sweetums."

At least I was going to be doing Miss Doll a favour.

He pulled up near the cliffs as per my request. There was a little old cottage, which I told him I owned.

"Well then, champion," he said as he pulled up. "Let's hope the bloody tow-truck bastards get the car back to you, no dramas tomorrow."

"Why don't you come in with me? For a drink?"

"Oh, I wish I could, but the missus will be waiting. She'll be ready and raring."

I pulled out the letter opened from my jacket pocket. Yeah, I decided to go with the letter opener after all.

"I think maybe you step out of the car now."

Yates looked down the sharp knife in my hand, finally lost for words.

"Right. I can probably be a bit late..."

I made him give me the keys. I walked around and opened his car door.

"Come on."



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"Where are we going, mate?"

"I want to show you the view."

We walked past the house, to a viewing spot looking over the cliffs. My knife circled his back as we walked. I could see him getting more and more frightened. I got more and more excited.

"Well, it's a lovely view mate, especially this time-a day, but I really should be -"

" - Not yet."

"Right. Look, whatever's happened I'm sorry. I can't go and die, I have friends! I have family! Sweetums, she'd be bloody distraught!"

But I could tell he didn't really mean that. I could tell he really wanted this.

"Is it about the haircut? I thought you said you liked it! I'll give you a refund! Come on mate, fair dinkum!"

Something about this made me laugh. Fair dinkum, I hadn't laughed this much since I brought Harley here.

"It's always about the haircut. My hair grows too fast. I blame my parents."

I'll spare you the details. They're just for me. Just know, I dumped his car far away and was home in time for a late supper.

And – damn it! I just realised I forgot to ask how he got his haircut. His hair was nice, now I think about it too. I always get too excited in the moment.

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Well, I got an appointment with Bevan tomorrow. See, there aren't too many barbers left around these parts except for him and I still need my haircut. It's still driving me crazy.

Maybe I'll ask him then. Who cuts his hair?