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"Cut" by Vivian Wagner

This is what life does. It throws you into a hair salon with all the other women and girls who have nowhere else to go on a Saturday morning, and it makes you listen. It makes you connect. It makes you look at the six-year-old who comes in to get her hair fixed after trying to cut it herself, and it nudges you to remember how often you tried to cut your own hair, to recall your own failures with scissors, to understand what a blessing it can be to go somewhere to be fixed. It makes you listen to the woman who talks about how she once hit her child's mouth when he bit her in line at an Air Force commissary. She laughs it off, but life makes you hear she still feels sad and guilty and confused about the moment. Life also makes you look at your own reflection, with its wrinkles and visible pores, and it makes you almost unbearably happy when your stylist tells you that you have beautiful hair. Life creates these spaces where women come together and listen to each other, commiserate, talk about babies and husbands, jobs and groceries, broken-down cars and Homecoming dances. Life encircles the woman getting her hair dyed dark red, who says she'd like to get a buzz cut, but her husband won't let her. And life lets that vision of a buzz cut hang in the air, a vivid, lovely, not-altogether-impossible dream.

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