

Darren's Haircut

Darren, Kate, Bonnie and I were sitting around in the office one day when Kate said, seemingly out of nowhere, "Darren, you need a haircut!"

"Huh?" Darren wasn't impressed.

"No, really. I think it's time you gave up that greasy, spiked look. Times have changed. You're a Principal now. You need to look like one!"

"What do you mean, greasy?" Darren wasn't going to let that one slip by. "I like my hair!"

"Help me out here, will you, Bonnie? Don't you think he could look a little more dignified with a better haircut?"

"Uh ..."

Bonnie didn't know what to say. On the one hand, she agreed with Kate. But on the other hand ... Darren was about to redo the supervision schedule. She *liked* having time to eat lunch.

"See? Bonnie agrees with me!"

"Wait a minute! She didn't say *anything*!"

"She didn't have to. I know exactly what she was going to say. Don't I, Bonnie!"

"Uh ...yes?"

"See? Darren, you need to look more professional. Like Bill here."

"What?? He doesn't even *have* any hair!"

"Yes, but what little he *does* have makes him look dignified!"

I wasn't sure whether I'd just been complimented ... or not. So I didn't say anything.

"Well, I suppose ..." Darren still wasn't convinced.

"You should call Jenna. Book an appointment. She was the one who gave you those spiky things in the first place. I'm sure she can give you something new ... something a little more ... *suitable*!"

"I don't know ... she's awfully busy."

It was true. Jenna's talents as a hair stylist kept her in great demand. The usual wait to get in to see her was four weeks.

Darren probably knew that when he went to make the phone call. He was figuring it would all blow over long before he had to show up for his haircut.

But Jenna surprised him. "Sure, Mr. Phelps! By the way, congratulations on being Principal! If you'd been Principal when I was in high school I never would have had all those detentions ..."

"Uh ... thanks, Jenna. So when can you book me in? I have November open ..."

"*November?* Don't be silly. I'll book you for this Saturday. How does six o'clock sound?"

"I didn't know you were open that late ..."

"Six o'clock in the morning, silly. I'll open up early just for you! Don't be late!"

"What?? Six in the morning? I can't ..."

But it was too late. She'd hung up.

"Now look at what you've done!" Darren had returned to where we were sitting. "Six in the morning on Saturday!"

"Oh, that's fantastic! We can go down the night before and stay over! Look at all the shopping we can do!" Kate was ecstatic.

Kate loved to shop. Darren, on the other hand, hated it with a passion.

Kate would spend hours going from store to store, looking for a bargain, perhaps for a blouse. And then she'd go back to check all the stores again, just to make sure. All the while dragging Darren along with her.

Darren, on the other hand, would walk into a store, grab a shirt off the rack that was his size, and buy it. Shopping over.

Saturday arrived, and Darren arrived at 'The Look' bleary eyed and cranky. "*That's just what I need*" he mumbled to himself. '*A look! What I really need is five more hours of sleep!*'

Darren wasn't a morning person. If you asked him for anything before about nine-thirty in the morning, he'd never remember later what he'd said. We often used that time to ask him if we could spend some money. And we always managed to convince him later that he'd agreed wholeheartedly. So far he hadn't caught on.

Darren found Jenna waiting for him. He climbed into the chair.

“So what kind of haircut would you like this time, Mr. Phelps?”

Jenna was cheerful, even this early in the morning. “Anything special?”

Definitely too cheerful. It was getting on his nerves. How could anyone be this cheerful at six in the morning?

“Kate says I have to look more dignified, now that I’m a Principal.” He didn’t sound happy. “You need to get rid of the spikes. Maybe make me look more like Mr. Willis.”

Jenna stifled a giggle. “Mr. Willis? He hardly has any hair! And what he has is starting to look a little...”

“Grey? That’s a thought! Colour it a little, will you? Just a touch of grey!”

Darren was thinking that maybe if he looked a little older, the other Principals might take him a little more seriously at their monthly meetings. It was worth a shot. Maybe he should grow a moustache too.

No, he couldn’t do that. Kate’s allergies ...

“OK, Mr. Phelps. Whatever you say!” She smiled. “I’ll do my best!”

“If she starts whistling ‘Hi Ho, Hi Ho, it’s off to work I go’, I’m out of here”.

Darren thought this, but he didn’t say it. He was too polite. Besides, he didn’t want to make Jenna angry. Not when she was holding the scissors.

“Would you like your eyebrows plucked too?”

“What’s wrong with my eyebrows?!”

“There’s nothing wrong with them ... I just ...”

“Leave the eyebrows, OK?”

“All right.” Jenna smiled again. “How about a nose-hair wax?”

“What?!?”

“I’m just kidding, Mr. Phelps! Lighten up, OK? It’s just a haircut!”

Darren tried to relax. But he had visions of ending up with a haircut that would make him look like Justin Bieber. There were posters of him all around the salon. That must be Shelaine.

“So, Jenna ... do you cut women’s hair too?” Darren attempted to make conversation. Probably to take his mind off what was about to happen to his hair. He really liked those spikes.

“Of course. Lots of women come in. I do Melanie’s hair all the time!”

“But ... it always looks the same!”

“Yeah, isn’t that great? Do you know how hard it is to style someone’s hair and always have it come out looking the way it always did? It takes real skill!”

Jenna finished combing out Darren’s hair, and picked up the electric clippers.

“OK, let’s go for something dignified! Hold still, OK?”

Jenna turned on the clippers and touched them against the side of Darren’s head.

What she’d forgotten was that, this early in the morning, they hadn’t really had a chance to warm up. They were ice cold. When the clippers touched the side of Darren’s head, the cold metal made him jerk his head forwards.

“Oops!” The clippers had cut a wide swath of hair all along the side of his head. Right down to his scalp.

“What do you mean, oops?? What did you do to my hair??”

“It wasn’t my fault, Mr. Phelps! You moved your head! I *told* you to keep still!”

Both of them surveyed the damage in the mirror. There was no way around it. He was partially bald on one side of his head.

“I’ll have to do the other side to even things up ...”

Darren winced.

Jenna worked on his hair for half an hour, trying to repair the damage. When she’d finished, she let him look at the result.

“Jenna! I can’t go to work like this!”

“Sure you can, Mr. Phelps. It’s actually quite stylish. Everyone is having that done now. You’ll look totally cool! Trust me!”

“Well, I don’t know ...”

“It’s true, Mr. Phelps. I do two or three of these every day. You’ll be a fashion leader as well as a school leader!”

Jenna was laying it on a little thick. But Darren conceded that maybe she was right. She’d even added a little grey, just as he’d asked.

“OK, I guess I’ll take your word for it. How much do I owe you?”

“Two hundred and forty dollars.”

“What??”

“That’s what we’d normally charge. We’re a prestige salon. Didn’t you know that? But for you, I can make it just a hundred.”

Darren mumbled something that Jenna politely chose to ignore. And she was whistling.

“That song! I knew it!” he muttered, as he said goodbye and hurried out.

Monday morning we were all suitably impressed with Darren’s new look. At least, we pretended to be. But the students loved it. They thought it was totally cool.

We now had the only Principal in the School Division with a mohawk. With grey tips.