

## *DogCat*

Long ago there lived a young boy called Felix. His hair hung about his heart shaped face in soft curls and its colour shone the most beautiful golden blonde you had ever seen. Whoever saw him would marvel at its brilliance and comment, “My what beautiful hair you have child, if ever you should tire of it I would like to buy it and fashion it into a wig, so that I too can become the envy of all.” And then they would laugh at such a tempestuous thought and wander off shaking their heads and smiling to themselves.

In the neighbouring village lived the little boy’s best friend whose name was George. Now George did not have particularly beautiful hair, in fact he did not have a particularly beautiful anything. But of course this didn’t matter, why should they care if one has blonde curly hair and the other brown? No, what was important was that they always stuck together and when one was feeling sad the other would cheer him up. When one was given some sweets, he would always share them with his friend.

Years past and the boys turned into men. Felix and George remained loyal friends and took pleasure in the others interests and concerns. Felix was studying to be a scientist and wanted very much to make his mark on the world. George became a priest and decided to dedicate his life to God.

Now, Felix was not an especially vain person but he had been told since he was a young boy that he possessed the most beautiful head of hair. So it was only natural that he was aware of this fact. In his fourth year the students at the university were asked to initiate their own course of scientific study. One which they would undertake on their own and present at the end of the academic year to the professors.

Felix spent a good deal of time contemplating his choice and decided in the end to see if it were possible to harvest his own crop of hair. Hadn’t everyone all his life told him how exceptional it was? Think of the money he could make. Yes, this was definitely the way forward he thought.

Felix set about transforming his laboratory and began work. Several months into his research he was still none the wiser on how to grow his crop. He had extracted several pints of his own blood, shaved his entire head a good many times and done endless painful skin grafts. All his experiments had come to nothing. He began to lose hope. He called his old friend George who immediately came to see him, bringing with him a box of Licorice All Sorts. A small gesture but one none the less that reminded them both of simpler times.

“Felix, my dear friend,” began George, “it simply isn’t meant to be. Humans or any part of a human body is not meant to be grown. That is within the domain and priority of God himself. We are born not from manufactured means but by the loving union of man and woman.” At this Felix flew into a violent rage and began cursing God and his rights over our bodies. “I will succeed” shouts Felix, “even if I have to sell my soul to the devil.” This was simply too much for the poor priest to bear and his usual mild manner was broken.

George found himself kneeling on Felix’s chest, with his hands clasped around his delicate unshaven neck. His friend’s body had long stopped moving and Felix’s face bore the marks of a man desperate to hold onto life.

George stood up. He slowly drew breath and looked down on what he had done. He felt a tremendous loss, as if part of him had died with his friend. He knew that he would carry this heavy burden with him for the rest of his life and that no matter how hard he tried he would never find fulfilment or happiness in anything he did ever again.

Now, being a man of the cloth his first course of action was to speak to someone of influence. He turned to the Bishop, who happened to be a friend of his. The Bishop heard his confession and gave him absolution, after which, George felt much better.

The Bishop had some helpers who went to collect the body from the lab. Together George and the Bishop embalmed the body with beautiful smelling oils. George took great care over this and the Bishop was touched by his tenderness.

George decided to place his friend's body inside a glass coffin. He wanted always to be able to gaze upon that beautiful heart shaped face. It would also serve as a terrible reminder of what he had done, his penance. He asked the Bishop that he be moved to a closed order so that he could spend the rest of his days in solitude. He requested that he be sealed inside a room, with his dear friend's body and be given only the basics needed for his life to continue. The Bishop duly obliged.

Years passed and the poor humble priest grew thin and weary. His encased companion was all but bones. The priest had noted however that Felix's hair still remained golden. Its luster and beauty had not faded. In fact he felt sure that the hair was still growing. Not only had it had still been growing but had grown to an extraordinary length.

George waited until his next meal was delivered before he spoke of this miracle. When the hatch opened in the big heavy wooden door to his cell he spoke softly and calmly to the young priest,  
"Please, I need to speak urgently to the Bishop. Something quite miraculous has happened to the body of my dear friend whom I have cared for these past years. Something so wonderful I'm sure the Bishop will want to be the first to hear of it." The young priest, who had taken a vow of silence nodded as if to comprehend George's request and then gently closed the hatch.

George paced around his cell. Feeling something other than his usual nothingness and smiled for the first time in twenty years. He felt as though his friend had forgiven him.

Several days passed and the Bishop had not come. No matter how much George thought, I am a patient man. He knelt down on his hands and knees to take another look at the growing prodigy. The blonde hair had entirely filled the underside of the glass coffin. Joy rose from within the weary priest.

More days past and the hair still grew. It began to push its way through the seams of the coffin. Again he asked the silent priest,  
"Please won't you send for the Bishop. Look, you may see for yourself." George gestured madly at the cascading locks of golden hair. Still more days passed and the Bishop did not come. The days turned into weeks and the weeks into months. George felt as though he were going mad. He could not understand why no one would listen to him and why the Bishop had not come.

The golden hair had grown so much that it covered the stone floor of George's cell. At night George would lie down upon it and dream of happier times. It was not long before the hair had reached halfway up the walls. George began to devise ways of moving about his cell, which mainly involved rolling from side to the other since walking proved too difficult on the thick mass of curling hair. Soon the hair reached the ceiling and George could no longer stand. Forced into a horizontal position with a choice of either facing the ceiling or pressing his face into the dense bulk of ever growing hair.

George began to lose hope. He could only feel the darkness that surrounded him. His mind saw no reason to struggle. His now fragile body grew limp and listless. It sagged and

slumped and moulded itself within the mountain of hair. Eventually he just stopped breathing. His now tiny body sunk through the thick bed of hair until it silently reached the ground.

The next morning the Bishop arrived to see how George was doing. He opened the small hatch to his cell and looked inside. The glass coffin was in the center of the room as usual but George lay naked, curled up in the corner. The Bishop called to him but there was no reply. He opened the door and walked towards the coiled figure. To his great sadness George was dead. They found no real cause for his death, although his body had grown very thin. His ribs protruded through his pale skin and with the arch of his spine you could see all of his vertebrae.

All thought poor George had died of a heartache.

The Bishop decided to bury the two men together, side by side in death as n life and hoped that they would both find peace in the after-life.