

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

The Haircut: Boston writer Pamela Painter literally cuts the topic of infidelity down to size. The Haircut is voiced by Karen McDonald.

Tony Kahn:

Hi, this is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* for WGBH. People often ask me how we get *Morning Stories*. Well, it's really a question of how we get to somebody's *Morning Story* because I'm convinced, and I haven't been proved wrong yet, that everybody's got a story; some moment of significance that when they, when they connect with it, just naturally takes the shape of an anecdote of some kind they want to tell you – a little gift of experience from them to you.

Well, sometimes people want to write down their stories and then read them, and sometimes they just want to come in and talk with me and we'll, we'll schmooze for an hour and we'll go hunting for a story and we'll usually find one. And it's not, and it's not always going to be the one that seems obvious, it may be one that will just pop up like a mushroom in the course of that hour.

Every once in a while though, there are stories that are actually waiting for us in the pages of a book – that good old-fashioned technology. Now Pamela Painter is a local writer who writes short, short stories. You've actually heard one of hers before on *Morning Stories* called *The Ham*. What she does is, she kind of channels voices. She starts hearing this voice; it talks to her and then a story starts to take shape around that voice.

Now these accounts may be fictional but that doesn't mean that they aren't real, because if you can visualize that voice, if you can imagine that that person talking could be you or has been you, well then believe me that story is real. So today's story number two from Pamela Painter: *The Haircut*.

Karen McDonald:

My cutting her hair is her idea. I sit her down at the kitchen table, pour a steaming mug of coffee like I don't know a thing about her and my husband Ernie. I wet her slug-brown hair, splash some cold water on her matching slug-brown blouse. "Don't cut too much," she says. Then she rattles on about that scrumptious macaroni casserole I brought to the Christmas bowling banquet.

I hunt for the sharpest scissors I can find. She's nervous. Not about her hair. I push her head forward till her chin is resting on her skinny chest. Then I pretend I don't know how to start in, back the way I do at Betty's House of Beauty. I start on one side, beneath her fake, gold earring and [the sound of scissors chopping] chop around toward her other ear. When I get there I stand back and say, "Oops, a little uneven."

I circle back the other way. She doesn't ask for a mirror and I don't offer. Ernie's at work, where he belongs, for once. Then I stand in front of her bony knees and tug two hanks of hair straight toward her chin. "Just a bit more," I say. I do a repeat. When I finish I stand back and admire my work. She needs another haircut for sure.

She studies herself in the toaster. "That's short," she says. "Could be shorter," I say, knowing it soon will be. "Some men like short hair, but my Ernie, he likes long." I let my ponytail down and shake it loose. "More coffee?" I ask.

Now she's in a hurry to leave. She almost forgets to thank me, but that's the last thing she calls before she hops into her old Ford. "Anytime!" I call back. Ernie gets home and sees the scissors out, me sweeping up. "On your day off?" he says. I tell him who dropped by. Then I sit him down and cut his hair.

[Sound of electric hair clippers cutting hair]

Good.

Tony Kahn:

That's today's Morning Story from writer Pamela Painter and it's called: *The Haircut*. Karen McDonald, by the way, is the actress who did that wonderful voice. And I love Karen McDonald. I mean, what she can put into a line-reading can take you like, about three different listenings to uncork and appreciate; like a fine "parfum."

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[End of recording]

Transcribed by: Lorena Knight

Note from Liz:

I love this wicked little story!! Heh heh! Now I'm going to find more by the author and more by the narrator.