

Hair Loop

1. My father used to tell me that he'd gone bald from holding the hair dryer too close to his head.
2. That the gleaming bulb of his flat scalp skin had been burned free into the light.
3. For years in the barber's chair I cringed, fearing the same, and often asked to go home sopping.
4. The several dark brown hairpieces my father wore in rotation, stored in his closet on Styrofoam heads. Their features formed but slightly muted—noses without nostrils; skin without wrinkles; eyes with no pupils, lashes, lids.
5. The short weird rip of adhesive as he pulled the hair off in the evening and sat in the living room in front of the TV wearing a denim hat my mother'd made.
6. How self-conscious and incensed he'd become when as a stupid child I'd snatch the hat from his head and squeal in glee.
7. The average human head has 100,000 follicles, each of which can grow 20 individual hairs over a lifetime, and from which an average of 100 hairs are lost each day.
8. Increasingly, in my frustration, and even without thinking now, I pull my hair out at the front.
9. The damage becoming apparent in the wispy, frittered fragments of my bangs.

10. Hair as the body's slow expulsion; as a set of fuses from the brain.
11. The strange arrival of the new hair during puberty, which as a somewhat frightened child I immediately extracted one by one until I could no longer keep up.
12. The single long mutant black hair on my left forearm that continues to grow back no matter how many times I rip it out.
13. Hair as a pack of multiplicity. As a signifier of demeanor, rank, intention.
14. In that same closet with his fake heads, my father hid a stack of old porn under a T-shirt, which on the evenings he was not home I would sometimes steal into my room.
15. The hair those women had or did not have. The soft width of their papered flesh.
16. From certain issues I snipped certain pages and hid them in a purple folder in my desk.
17. Some I reinforced with paste onto cardboard to extend longevity, like enormous trading cards. Others I traced on paper in fear their absence would be noticed.
18. The graphite outline of that blonde-headed woman in the orange bikini top pulling her thong down as if to make sure she was still all there.
19. The now ridiculous myth of hair growing on one's hands in retribution for dirty acts.
20. Hair of Samson, Medusa, Rapunzel.
21. *During fetal development, a fine hair known as lanugo grows to cover the entire body as a form of insulation.*
22. *As the lanugo is shed from the skin, it is normal for the developing fetus to consume the hair since it drinks from the amniotic fluid and urinates it back into its environment.*
23. Numerous times throughout my teenage years I allowed my hair to be determined by the ladies at Great Clips for \$9.99.

24. The old women's fingers in my output.
25. Their breath against my neck.
26. The smell of disinfectant from the combs soaking in blue fluid. The bristled tickle of the brush.
27. Perspiration. Spritz and rinse. Snip of metal scissors. Rare spot of blood.
28. Afterward standing in my bathroom mirror sometimes crying and pleading for god.
29. Yet returning to the same place the next time my locks had grown out, as if with my hair they'd taken my memory, or pride.
30. All those pictures of me ruined and blustered, preserved in yearbooks, hung in Mother's hall.
31. *Relax—You're at Great Clips.*
32. Hair as a trophy, token, as in a bounty hunter's bag of scalps.
33. Hair as a mold that grows across the face and in the nose and ears.
34. As in the way hair can be anticipated, I often sense the residual presence of whoever rented my home before me.
35. Their fingerprints and oils and output in the places where I now sleep and eat and shower.
36. What surfaces we've shared without intention. What cells we've taken in our mouths.
37. Clogs of long hair yanked up from my apartment's bathroom sink and shower drain.
38. Strands of dead cells snaking their way down, encased, drawn out with a coat hanger to stink and glisten in the light.
39. The inevitable layer of loose hair on almost any floor. A constant carpet. Fodder for the roaches, feeding protein.
40. *35 meters of hair fiber is produced every day on the average adult scalp.*

41. Hairpin, hair turn, hair trigger, hairnet, hair tonic, hair lock, hair care, hair shirt, hairbrush, hair trap, hair band, hair remover, hat hair, hair on fire, hair of the dog, win by a hair, lose by a hair, let your hair down, splitting hairs, hair up your ass, angel hair.
42. Combing. Braiding. Shaving. Teasing. Crimping. Regeneration. Rinse and repeat.
43. The crudded crowd of prior selves stored and expelled, still hanging on, styled and combed and cleaned, worn in dreadlocks, braids, and perms.
44. The sudden whitening of one's hair after significant trauma.
45. The bits of others' sheddings unknowingly consumed—hair in the hash browns, coleslaw, orange juice.
46. The hairs found in the mouth while kissing.
47. The single strand of her hair I kept for years after she was gone.
48. The slow recession of my scalp as I molt like my father, my head flesh opening unto the light.
49. The way hair evaporates immediately when touched with flame.
50. And, burnt, such sharp stench blooming.