

The Wood Ranch Country Club

Based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Bernice Bob's Her Hair"

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Chapter One

The sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm golden glow over the picturesque town of Beverly Hills, California. The streets buzzed with activity as people bustled about, their shadows stretching long in the fading light.

In the heart of this glamorous town, a tale of two young women began to unfold. Marjorie sauntered down Rodeo Drive, her heels clicking against the pavement like a metronome. Her hair was teased to perfection, her poodle skirt swishing with each confident step. She epitomized 1950s glamour, her red lipstick a bold statement against her flawless porcelain skin.

Bernice, on the other hand, walked a few paces behind Marjorie, her long straight hair cascading down her back like a waterfall. She wore no makeup, her natural beauty hidden beneath her plain attire. Her shy demeanor was a stark contrast to Marjorie's bold confidence.

"Marjorie, slow down," Bernice called out, her voice soft and melodic.

Marjorie turned around, a smirk playing on her perfectly painted lips. "Oh, come on, Bernice! We've got to hurry if we want to make it to the dance on time."

The two girls were on their way to the annual spring dance, a highly anticipated event at the Wood Ranch Country Club in Beverly Hills. Marjorie had insisted that they arrive early to make a grand entrance, much to Bernice's chagrin.

As they neared the town square, the music from the dance filled the air, mingling with the laughter and chatter of the townspeople. Marjorie's eyes sparkled with excitement, while Bernice's gaze darted nervously around the crowded square.

"I don't know about this, Marjorie," Bernice said, her voice tinged with uncertainty.

Marjorie laughed, a tinkling sound that turned heads as they passed by. "Relax, Bernice."

Bernice nodded, trying to muster up some confidence as they made their way to the ballroom. The room was a dazzling display of crystal chandeliers, intricate floral arrangements, and elegantly dressed guests. The air was filled with the sound of laughter and clinking glasses. Marjorie glided through the grand entrance of the Wood Ranch Country Club, her heels clicking against the marble floor. She exuded confidence, her designer dress hugging her slender frame perfectly. Her glossy hair cascaded down her back in perfect waves, and her emerald eyes sparkled with excitement. Beside her, Bernice fidgeted nervously, her hands twisting the hem of her simple dress. She felt out of place amidst the opulence of the country club, the soft murmur of the elite crowd making her feel small and insignificant. Despite Marjorie's reassurances, Bernice couldn't shake the feeling of unease that gnawed at her insides. She had always felt like the shadow of Marjorie's spotlight, never quite able to step into the limelight herself.

The girls entered the dance hall, the music enveloping them in a lively rhythm. Couples twirled on the dance floor, their laughter mingling with the strains of the band. Marjorie immediately grabbed Bernice's hand, pulling her towards the dance floor.

"Come on, Bernice! Let's show them how it's done," she said.

Bernice hesitated for a moment before allowing herself to be swept into the dance, her body moving awkwardly alongside Marjorie's graceful steps. As they danced, Marjorie's laughter rang out like silver bells. Bernice couldn't help but feel a pang of jealousy as all eyes turned to her radiant friend.

"You're a natural, Bernice!" Marjorie exclaimed, her voice filled with a hint of sarcasm.

Bernice smiled weakly, her heart heavy with the knowledge that she would always be second to Marjorie.

The dance continued into the night, the music swirling around them like a whirlwind. Marjorie and Bernice moved as one, their steps perfectly synchronized despite the underlying tension between them. Marjorie spotted their host, Mr. Montgomery, and steered Bernice towards him.

"Mr Montgomery, so lovely to see you again," Marjorie purred, extending her hand with practiced grace.

Mr. Montgomery's eyes lit up at the sight of Marjorie.

"Marjorie, my dear, you look stunning as always," he said, kissing her hand.

His gaze then flickered to Bernice, and his smile faltered for a moment before he regained his composure. "And who is this... lovely young lady?"

"This is my cousin, Bernice," Marjorie said smoothly. "She's visiting from out of town, and I thought she might enjoy the festivities."

Mr. Montgomery nodded, though his eyes lingered on Bernice for a moment longer than necessary. "Well, it's a pleasure to have you both here. Enjoy the evening."

As they mingled with the guests, Marjorie effortlessly charmed everyone she spoke to. Bernice tried to keep up, but her awkward attempts at conversation often fell flat.

"You need to relax, Bernice," Marjorie whispered, leaning in close. "Just be yourself."

Bernice forced a smile, but deep down, she knew that being herself was exactly the problem. She didn't belong in this world of wealth and privilege, where every word and gesture seemed to be scrutinized.

The evening wore on, and Bernice found herself retreating to a quiet corner of the ballroom, away from the prying eyes of the guests. She watched from a distance as Marjorie effortlessly captivated the crowd.

Suddenly, a hush fell over the crowd as a tall, handsome young man entered the room. His dark hair was slicked back and his suit was impeccably tailored to his lean frame.

Marjorie's eyes lit up as she caught sight of him, a mischievous grin spreading across her face. "Well, well, well, look who decided to grace us with his presence..."

The young man made his way towards her, his gaze fixed on Marjorie.

"Marjorie, always the belle of the ball," he said, his voice smooth as velvet.

Bernice watched the interaction with a sinking feeling in her chest. She knew that Marjorie had a way of captivating everyone she met, and this newcomer was no exception. Marjorie was whisked away for a dance, led by the young man, leaving Bernice to stand aside. When their dance finished, Marjorie pulled the young man close and whispered.

"Could you do me a favor?" she asked, her voice louder than she realized.

"Anything for you" he responded.

"Well, my cousin over there, she's incredibly awkward. She couldn't get a dance to save her life. Could you dance with her, but don't make out like I asked you", Marjorie pleaded.

"You're serious?" he responded.

Marjorie nodded. The young man obliged and glided across to Bernice. Bernice's entire body tensed as he approached.

"Who might you be?" the young man asked Bernice with a kind look.

Bernice blushed under his intense gaze, her hands fidgeting nervously at her sides. "I-I'm Bernice."

"A pleasure to meet you, Bernice. I'm James," the young man said, offering her a charming smile.

Marjorie approached quickly, interrupting them. She shot Bernice a knowing look before turning back to James. "Well, James, would you care for another dance?"

James's eyes never left Marjorie's face as he nodded. "I would be delighted."

As they danced, Bernice felt a sense of isolation creep over her. She was once again the outsider, watching from the sidelines.

The night wore on, the music fading into a soft melody as the dance drew to a close. Marjorie and James bid each other a fond farewell, leaving Bernice alone in the corner.

"Bernice, are you okay?" Marjorie's voice broke through Bernice's reverie, concern etched on her features.

Bernice forced a smile full of unspoken words. "I'm fine, Marjorie. Just tired."

Chapter Two

Bernice sat at her vanity, staring at her reflection with a mix of longing and self-doubt. She sighed, tracing the delicate features of her face with her fingertips.

Bernice stood in the shower, water splashing against the white tiles, enveloped in steam. The heat and humidity formed a gentle fog that clung to the mirror and walls, creating a serene, private haven... Until, the bathroom door swung open unexpectedly, and

Marjorie walked in, the steam swirling around her, breaking all tranquility.

"Jesus! Can't you knock?" Bernice snapped.

Marjorie hesitated for a moment, her expression a mix of apology and urgency. "Sorry! I just wanted to tell you... well, I was hoping you would want to hang out at the club again. What do you say?"

Bernice paused, her hand still gripping the edge of the shower curtain. Water droplets clung to her skin, glistening in the light. "I don't know..."

"Come on! Why not? As if you currently have any other appealing offers..." Marjorie pressed, her voice tinged with a blend of hope and desperation.

Bernice turned off the water, the sudden silence amplifying the tension in the room. She grabbed a towel, wrapping it around herself as she stepped out of the shower. Her eyes met Marjorie's, sharp and probing.

"You know, I didn't want to bring it up, but... I heard the whole conversation from last night."

Marjorie's face paled, her eyes widening in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Between you and James, about me," Bernice said, her voice firm and unwavering.

"You did?" Marjorie asked, clearly shocked, her voice barely a whisper.

"The whole nine yards! You think I'm awkward. In other words, that I don't fit in and I'm anti-social?" Bernice's voice trembled with a mix of hurt and defiance, the raw emotion hanging in the steamy air.

Marjorie sighed deeply, leaning against the sink as if the weight of the situation bore down on her shoulders.

She searched for words, her mind racing. "What do you think?"

Bernice's eyes narrowed, her gaze piercing. "I think, who are you to judge? Especially as we're family,"

Marjorie raised an eyebrow, reflecting on Bernice's words. Slowly, she nodded, a reluctant acceptance in her eyes. "Touché..."

Bernice reflected on this for a moment before exclaiming: "I'll tell you what, make me over... let's see how popular I can be!"

Marjorie's shock melted into excitement, a spark igniting in her eyes. "Really?!"

Bernice nodded, determination and challenge blazing in her expression.

"I am as one-hundred-percent sure. As a heart attack. I don't want to be the awkward girl on the sidelines anymore..."

Marjorie's smile widened, her eyes sparkling with newfound excitement.

Bernice's expression sunk in disbelief. "But... where do we start?"

Marjorie waved a hand dismissively. "Leave it to me. I know just the right people to help us."

Chapter Three

Marjorie and Bernice walked down a bustling LA street, their destination in sight. The city buzzed with life around them – people chatting, cars honking, the aroma of street food mixing with the summer breeze.

Anticipation built with each step, their pace quickening as they approached the hair salon.

The salon was a whirl of activity: the hum of hair dryers, the snip of scissors, and the chatter of stylists and clients creating a lively atmosphere.

The stylist swiveled the chair around, revealing Bernice's lavish makeover, complete with a sleek choppy haircut that framed her face perfectly. Marjorie stood beside them, her jaw dropping in shock and awe.

"Oh. My. Gosh! You look—" Marjorie began, her voice filled with astonishment.

Bernice, slightly embarrassed but pleased, finished the sentence. "—Girly..."

"I was going to say, different," Marjorie corrected herself, her eyes taking in every detail.

"Different as in good or bad?" Bernice asked, seeking reassurance as she nervously tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

"Fabulous!" the stylist declared with enthusiasm, her eyes sparkling with pride in her work.

"I concur," Marjorie agreed, her eyes shining with approval and admiration. She applauded enthusiastically.

Bernice blushed, her excitement growing with every passing second. "Now I'm ready to go to the club!"

Marjorie smiled awkwardly, a hint of self-doubt creeping in as she realized she might now have competition.

Bernice stood in front of a full-length mirror; the final touches of her transformation complete. Her hair was styled in elegant waves, her makeup subtle yet striking, and she wore a stunning gown that hugged her curves in all the right places.

Bernice was unable to tear her eyes away from her reflection. "I... I can't believe it's me."

Bernice stepped out of the salon feeling like a new woman. Even the way she walked was different – she held herself strong and tall, a reflection of her new-found confidence.

Marjorie followed and quickly linked arms with Bernice, a twinkle in her eye. "Now, my dear, it's time to show the world the new you. Party?"

Chapter Four

That evening, Marjorie and Bernice made their grand entrance at the most exclusive gala in Beverly Hills; the kind of party Marjorie regularly turned down because she was inundated with invites to events all over town. The room buzzed with whispers as all eyes turned to Bernice, a vision of grace and beauty. The moment she entered, heads turned, and whispers filled the air. For the first time, and a contrast to before, Bernice could feel the stares of admiration on her, like a warm embrace.

Marjorie drawled as Bernice leaned into her. "New haircut worked, huh?"

Bernice smiled, trying to ignore the edge in Marjorie's voice. "I think so. Are they looking at me?"

Marjorie's smile didn't quite reach her eyes. "Oh, they'd look at anyone."

Bernice sensed the insincerity in Marjorie's tone but chose to brush it off. She knew she could be a bit competitive at times. As they mingled with the elite of society, Bernice felt a newfound confidence blossoming within her. She laughed, she danced and she charmed everyone she met. As the night wore on, Bernice couldn't help but notice the way people gravitated towards her, complimenting her on her new look and engaging in lively conversations. Marjorie, on the other hand, found herself increasingly ignored, overshadowed by Bernice's confidence and charm.

"You seem to be the center of attention tonight," Marjorie commented, a hint of bitterness creeping into her voice.

Bernice laughed, the sound light and carefree. "Oh, it's just the haircut and the new dress, Marjorie. Nothing to be jealous about."

A wealthy socialite soon approached them, her eyes gleaming with curiosity. "Evening ladies. And who might this stunning woman be?"

Bernice smiled, a twinkle in her eye. "I'm Bernice. It's a pleasure to meet you."

The socialite raised an eyebrow, impressed. "Well, Bernice, you've certainly made quite the impression tonight. Would you care to join me for a drink?"

Bernice glanced at Marjorie, who nodded encouragingly. "I would love to," she replied, her voice steady despite the flutter of excitement in her chest.

And so, Bernice found herself swept into a whirlwind of glamour and excitement, her new persona opening doors she never knew existed. She was no longer the shy girl hiding in the shadows; she was a force to be reckoned with.

Later, Bernice stood on the balcony of the party, gazing out at the twinkling lights of the city below, she felt a sudden wave of loneliness wash over her.

Marjorie found her there, a concerned look on her face. "What's wrong, Bernice? Can't handle the attention?"

Bernice sighed, her shoulders slumping. "I don't know... I just feel like... like maybe this isn't me. Like I'm playing a part, but deep down, I'm still insecure."

Marjorie sighed. "Not everyone can handle it – you must learn how to hold a room... But I think this confidence looks good on you. Don't you? Do you want to go back to how things were before?"

Bernice contemplated for a long moment before standing up straight. "You're right... I don't." Bernice's confidence resurrected and she returned to the party. However, Marjorie's heart raced as she watched Bernice twirl in her new designer dress, flaunting her transformation to the rest of the party.

"Oh, Bernice, you look stunning," the guests murmured, showering her with compliments.

Marjorie clenched her fists, feeling a surge of anger bubbling within her. She couldn't let Bernice get away with this charade... this falseness...

As the music swirled around them, Marjorie made her way through the crowd with determination on her face. Bernice could see her coming and showed some concern after reading Marjorie's expression.

"Hey, Marjorie, what's up?" Bernice chirped, a smug smile playing on her lips.

Marjorie took a deep breath, steeling herself for what she was about to do. "I need to talk to you, Bernice. Alone."

Bernice raised an eyebrow, her smile faltering slightly. "Sure, Marjorie. Let's go outside."

The cool night air enveloped them as they stepped out onto the terrace, the distant sound of laughter and music drifting through the night.

"What's on your mind, Marjorie?" Bernice asked, her voice laced with curiosity.

Marjorie locked eyes with her cousin, her gaze unwavering. "I know what you're doing, Bernice. And I won't stand for it."

Bernice's eyes widened in surprise. "What do you mean, Marjorie? I'm just trying to have a good time."

Marjorie shook her head, her voice tinged with bitterness. "Don't play dumb with me, Bernice. You know exactly what I'm talking about. This entire thing is an act."

Bernice's facade cracked, a flicker of fear crossing her features. "What are you going to do, Marjorie? Expose me to everyone here?"

Marjorie took a step closer, her voice low and dangerous. "That's exactly what I'm going to do, Bernice... I won't let you steal my thunder."

Bernice let out a nervous laugh, trying to regain her composure. "You wouldn't dare, Marjorie."

Marjorie's eyes blazed with fury. "I don't care, Bernice. This ends now."

With a sudden burst of courage, Marjorie entered the party and stood in the center of the room. She raised her voice, addressing

the party guests who had gathered at the door. "Listen up, everyone! I have something to say."

The chatter in the room died down as all eyes turned to Marjorie and Bernice.

"What's going on?" someone whispered, the curiosity palpable in the air.

Marjorie took a deep breath, her heart pounding in her chest. "I have something to show you all about Bernice."

Bernice's eyes widened in horror as Marjorie reached into her clutch bag and pulled out a stack of photos.

"These photos," Marjorie began, her voice steady, "show the real Bernice. The one she's been hiding from all of you."

Gasps echoed through the crowd as the guests passed the photos around, their expressions changing from admiration to shock.

Bernice's face paled as she realized her carefully constructed facade was crumbling before her eyes.

"Is this true, Bernice?" someone called out, their voice filled with disbelief.

Bernice stood frozen, her eyes darting around the crowd, searching for a way out.

Marjorie's voice rang out, clear and strong. "Yes, it's true. Bernice has been pretending to be someone she's not all night, all to steal my moment in the spotlight."

The guests whispered among themselves, their murmurs growing louder with each passing moment.

"I can't believe this, she told me she's been with a modelling agency for years" one guest muttered, shaking their head in disbelief.

Bernice finally found her voice, her words tinged with desperation. "It's not what you think, everyone. Please, let me explain."

But Marjorie wasn't having it. "No more lies, Bernice. The truth is out, and everyone here deserves to know who you really

are. An insecure girl who is relying on a cheap transformation to lie to a room of people... you also hate people like this – you've told me yourself."

A tense silence settled over the party as the guests processed the shocking revelation.

Then, without warning, Bernice let out a piercing scream, her facade crumbling completely.

"No! This isn't happening!" Bernice wailed, her hands trembling as tears streamed down her face.

Marjorie stood firm; her gaze unwavering as she faced her cousin's breakdown.

The guests watched in stunned silence, unsure of what to do in the face of such raw emotion.

"I trusted you, Marjorie," Bernice cried, her voice filled with betrayal. "How could you do this to me? You're the one who encouraged all of this."

Marjorie felt a pang of guilt in her chest, but she knew she had done the right thing.

"I did this because I care about you, Bernice. I couldn't stand to see you living a lie," Marjorie said, her voice softening.

Bernice collapsed to the ground, her sobs echoing through the night air.

Chapter Five

Bernice had returned home to Marjorie's house and was curled up in her bed in the guest room. As dawn broke on the horizon, Bernice's sobs had turned into quiet sniffles, her tears spent. After a long and tense moment, Bernice pulled back the covers and moved into the bathroom.

Bernice moved in front of the bathroom mirror, her hand trembling, she took a deep breath and picked up the electric razor.

The buzzing sound filled the room as she ran the razor over her head, tufts of wavy hair falling to the ground.

Bernice finished shaving her head, her heart aching. Once the deed was done, Bernice dropped the razor and collapsed on the floor, her sobs echoing in the small room.

Marjorie's heart pounded in her chest as she pushed open the bathroom door, the creak echoing in the silence of the house. She gasped at the sight before her—strands of hair littered the floor. She froze, her eyes widening in shock and disbelief.

"Bernice? What happened?" Marjorie asked, her voice quivering with fear.

There was no response, only the sound of water dripping from the abandoned faucet. Bernice was curled up on the floor in the darkness before muttering "...Just leave."

Marjorie paused. The minutes ticked by, each one feeling like an eternity as Marjorie stood there, lost in her thoughts. She replayed their arguments in her mind, the hurtful words they had flung at each other in the heat of the moment.

"Bernice... I'm so sorry," Marjorie murmured, her voice barely a whisper. She closed her eyes, willing herself to go back in time and make things right, to erase the pain she had caused. But time was a cruel mistress, and there was no going back. The only thing Marjorie could do now was face the consequences of her actions and try to mend what was broken.

With a heavy heart, Marjorie gently moved towards Bernice, determined to make things right.

Bernice's body was shaking with gentle sobs. Marjorie stepped into the room, her hand reaching for the light switch. The harsh brightness flooded the room, illuminating the scene.

Marjorie knelt beside her, "Bernice, about earlier, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it!... What have you done?"

Bernice jumped up, her eyes red and puffy, her face a mask of anger and hurt. She barged past Marjorie, her movements jerky

and desperate, storming out of the room without a word, leaving Marjorie standing in stunned silence.

The guest bedroom was a haven of tranquility. Bernice sighed heavily as she sat on the bed, the weight of the day's events pressing down on her. She felt exhausted and emotionally drained. Marjorie followed her, her face a mix of horror, guilt, and shame, each emotion battling for dominance.

"What in God's name did you do to your hair?" Marjorie asked, her voice trembling, her eyes wide as they took in Bernice's shorn scalp.

"I shaved it," Bernice replied, her tone flat and devoid of emotion, her gaze fixed on the floor.

"I can see that. But, why?" Marjorie pressed, desperation creeping into her voice, her hands clenching and unclenching at her sides.

"Like you said, my new hair was a bluff. That wasn't really me," Bernice explained, her voice barely above a whisper, her eyes avoiding Marjorie's penetrating gaze.

"I didn't mean that. Of course that's you! I didn't mean, go and shave your hair," Marjorie said, her voice softening, a note of pleading entering her tone. "We can- We can get you a nice wig when the shops open."

"I know," Bernice replied, her voice barely a whisper as she climbed into the bed. She turned away from Marjorie, her back a silent wall, and clicked off the bedside lamp.

"Bernice? Answer me..." Marjorie said softly, hoping for a response, her voice filled with regret and concern.

"Fine. Whatever," Bernice muttered, her voice muffled by the pillow, the words heavy with resignation.

"I came to tell you how sorry I am," Marjorie said, her voice cracking with emotion.

"I don't know if I can ever forgive you, Marjorie," Bernice said, her voice barely a whisper.

Marjorie felt her heart shatter into a million pieces.

"Please, Bernice, just give me a chance to make things right," Marjorie pleaded, her eyes filling with tears. She reached out to touch Bernice's hand, but Bernice pulled away.

"I need time, Marjorie, time to heal and time to think," Bernice said, her voice firm. Marjorie nodded, her tears falling freely now.

"I understand, I'll give you all the time you need," Marjorie said, her voice filled with determination. She stood up, feeling the weight of her guilt lifting slightly.

"I'll be here when you're ready," Marjorie said, her words hanging in the air between them.

"Thank you, Marjorie," Bernice said, her voice soft. Bernice looked up at her, a glimmer of hope in her eyes. Marjorie nodded, a small smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

Marjorie stood there for a moment, the silence between them thick and suffocating. She felt a sharp pang of guilt and sorrow, knowing she had crossed a line. She retreated to her room, leaving Bernice in the enveloping darkness of the guest room.

Chapter Six

The morning sun filtered through the sheer curtains, casting a soft glow on the tear-streaked faces of Marjorie and Bernice as they sat facing each other in the guest bedroom.

"I can't keep living like this, Marjorie, I want to go home..." Bernice whispered, her voice heavy with exhaustion.

Marjorie reached out a trembling hand, her fingers brushing against Bernice's in a silent plea for understanding.

"I know, Bernice. I know," Marjorie murmured, her voice cracking with emotion.

The weight of unspoken words hung heavy in the air between them, a barrier that seemed insurmountable.

In that moment of shared vulnerability, walls crumbled, and the truth lay bare between them.

"We have to forgive each other, Bernice. It's the only way we can move forward, and I know out of both of us, you're the bigger person and always have been. You don't deserve how I treated you" Marjorie said, her voice filled with quiet desperation.

After a moment of contemplation, Bernice nodded, a tremulous smile tugging at the corners of her lips. "I forgive you, Marjorie. And I hope you can forgive me too."

Marjorie let out a sob, the sound muffled by her hand pressed against her mouth. "Thank you, Bernice, I'm so sorry for trying to change you."

The air in the room seemed to shift, a palpable sense of relief washing over them like a gentle tide. They sat in silence, the weight of past grievances lifting with each passing moment.

"It's a new day, Bernice," Marjorie said, her voice filled with optimism.

Bernice smiled, her eyes shining with newfound resolve. "A new day indeed, Marjorie."

Marjorie took Bernice's hand in hers, a silent gesture of solidarity and companionship.

"Let's make a promise. A promise to always be honest with each other, no matter what," Marjorie said, her voice firm.

Bernice nodded with an unwavering gaze. "I promise, Marjorie. I'm grateful for this moment - for the chance to start anew and be true to myself" Bernice said, her voice soft but sincere.

Marjorie squeezed Bernice's hand, a smile playing on her lips. "I am too, Bernice. I am too."

"Thank you, Marjorie. For everything," Bernice said, her tone hard to gauge.

Chapter Seven

The clock read 2:00 AM, the luminous numbers glowing in the darkness. Marjorie's house was silent except for the sound of creaking footsteps creeping closer, their sound barely audible over the hum of the night.

Marjorie was fast asleep, her breathing steady and calm, her face peaceful and untroubled. Her door creaked open slowly, a faint sound that barely disturbed the quiet.

A shadow moved across the room, stealthy and determined. It was Bernice, her face set with determination, her eyes cold and focused. In her hand, she clutched a pair of shears, their metal glinting faintly in the dim light. She reached the bed, her eyes fixed on Marjorie's beautiful long locks, which spilt across the pillow like a dark river.

Without hesitation, Bernice pushed the shears into Marjorie's hair, her movements swift and precise. There was a loud and sudden snipping sound. The sound was sharp and final, cutting through the night. Bernice watched as a lock of Marjorie's hair fell to the floor, a symbol of her pain and defiance. The room seemed to hold its breath, the weight of the moment hanging heavily in the air.

Bernice grinned with relief and pleasure; she finally got payback.