

THE BIRD'S NEST

Jen-Jen came back from school. The minute she saw her mother she cried, "Mommy, what happened to your hair?"

Mommy said, "How do you like it? Isn't it beautiful? I just had a permanent."

Jen-Jen pucks her lip. She circles around her mother. "Not very good-looking. I don't like it. I liked it the way it was. It looks so fuzzy now and it seems to have grown bigger. It looks like a bird's nest. It makes me want to throw up."

Mommy tried to comfort Jen-Jen and seemingly to comfort herself.

"Yes, I agree with you. I don't like my hair now. It's too curly. But maybe after several days you'll get used to it. Then you'll start to like it."

Jen-Jen didn't agree. "Maybe. Nevertheless, I still feel your head is twice as big as yesterday--and it's growing like a huge bird's nest. It makes me want to throw up."

Next morning, the first thing that happened was that Mommy got up and looked in the mirror. "My God," she said. Her hair, after a night's sleep was worse than yesterday. She combed her hair for a long time and started to blow it with the hair dryer. She took a shower, came out into the bedroom, combed it again and blew it again and again. Her hair got bigger and bigger. Mommy looked sad and then angry. She thought about the money she had spent on the permanent. She didn't know what to do with her hair now.

Jen-Jen walked in. She was startled and started to scream. "Mommy, your bird's nest is growing. You told me it was going to be better, but it is worse."

Mommy answered, "Grrrl. Don't say that anymore. I know it is ugly."

But Jen-Jen would not give up. "Why did you go to have a permanent, Momma? It was straight and very nice. I told you yesterday that your hair looks like a bird's nest. It's ugly and it's not good-looking."

Mommy answered in a loud voice. "Bird's nest. Bird's nest. How many times are you going to say it. Please cut it out. Okay?"

Jen-Jen just stood there and said calmly, "It's a fact, isn't it, Mommy. It's a bird's nest."

Momma's temper rose like a 30-foot fire and she screamed, "I begged you not to say it again. And you said it. I don't want to talk about my hair anymore."

Jen-Jen was silent for a long time. Then she opened her mouth. "Remember last year when I was playing the piano? You used to stand by me and kept saying my playing was not right. I was sad and angry. I wanted you to go away. But you wouldn't listen. I already knew that I needed to practice much more. I was practicing then. But you were nagging all the time."

Momma seemed very surprised. But she said nothing. In a hard tone of voice, grinding her teeth, she said, "Hair and piano are two different things. Don't get them mixed up."

Jen-Jen responded thoughtfully, "Are they really different? I thought they were the same. What is the difference?"

Yeh Hseng-Hong