



# TSUKIHI BRUSHING

HEROINE BOOK 7: FIRE SISTERS

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TRANSLATION: HAREMLESS

Brushing her hair is a girl's dedication, her daily ritual. But something becoming a habit also means that you become oblivious to changes. I, Araragi Tsukihi, hadn't been aware of that, not until that day, that morning, and that time, when I felt it.

"Ow!"

"What is it, Tsukihi-chan? My dear sister?"

My brother, hearing his sister's scream, came rushing into the bathroom. I pulled the hairbrush out of my hair and explained myself.

"I stepped on my hair."

I began.

"It's already past my tips of my toes, so I guess I have to cut it now."

My brother had graduated from high school, and Nadeko-chan seemed to be on her way to recovering as well, so there was no point letting my hair grow out to wish for good luck for them. I felt like lopping it all off, nice and short this time. Maybe I could even style it like Nadeko-chan.

It was still early in the morning, more than enough time to make a reservation for today at a hair salon. I was actually quite a regular as well, so I could probably get some leeway. I hadn't done anything with my hair except for a few trims to keep the ends neat, so I could use a real styling at a beauty salon.

"So, brother."

"Yes?"

"Give me back my 30000 yen."

My brother stared at my outstretched hand, then began to turn around as if the monumentally important fact that his precious sister had stepped on her own hair were nothing but a trifling matter. My brother, who had also incidentally been growing out his hair with no less gusto than myself, took hold of my shoulders with a stern look.

"Tsukihi-chan, you should treat the money you lend someone, even your own family, as if you're never getting it back. Money is precious, and you should never give it out if you're not prepared to not get it back."

"Wow, such wise words! Coming from the person I lent money to!"

So that means I'm related to some piece of trash.

You could call this a tragedy in two acts.

"Fine, just give me 10000 back, at least. I need it for the beauty salon."

"Hmm, I see. So that means that, on the other hand, if you didn't need to go to the beauty salon, you wouldn't need the 10000 back."

"No, it doesn't mean that at all."

"Alright, it's settled."

"Nothing's settled until you settle that debt."

Why are we even related?

And somehow he still has the nerve to lecture his sisters.

"You know, you're starting to remind me of a certain scam artist, borrowing money from girls in middle school and never returning it."

"Ugh..."

It looked like I'd hit a sore spot and a bitter smile stretched across his face.

“Alright, I think I get it now. I’ll draft up a loan repayment plan to have the 30000 back to you by the end of the month, so how about we settle for me being your stylist and cutting your hair today, Tsukihi-kun?”

“Why are you acting like I’m the one—”

Whatever.

I couldn’t really blame him because I had nothing on myself either, but I’m just the type of person who hates not being able to do the things I decide to do on the day I decide to do them. I’d decided to get a haircut today, so I wanted it done today.

“More importantly, you know how to cut hair?”

“I didn’t think you’d underestimate me like this. Do you even know who cut off Hanekawa’s braids?”

And now I wish I could have lived my life not knowing.

But I guess it could be interesting to see how it turns out since he does have experience. And if I don’t like it, I’ll just charge him an outrageous interest rate far beyond legal limits, then demand that he pay immediately.

“Okay then, show me what you’ve got.”

“No problem, I was just thinking that I needed to practice in case I ever have another chance to cut Hanekawa’s hair.”

He just told me I was practice out loud.

And I’m not sure he should be practicing for something like that...

“So, I’m going to need you to take all your clothes from your waist up off and sit down on this chair.”

He said, strapping a scissor holster around his waist the moment we arrived at his room. What? Take all my clothes off? Why did he need me to take my clothes off if he wasn’t going to make me change into something else?

“What are you saying, you moron. What’s baring your upper body in comparison to how the hair stylist bares every facet of his personal life chatting with his customers?”

“Ooh! I see! It all makes sense now! You’re smarter than you look! Is that what you were expecting me to say?”

You'd better come up with a better explanation if you want your sister to take all her clothes off from the waist up.

"The little bits of hair will fall into your kimono and make you all itchy. I couldn't bear to watch your delicate skin being prickled like that. Any brother would want to protect his little sister."

"Don't you have a barber cape or something?"

Don't tell me the guy who had more than ten different kinds of scissors in his scissor holster, and kept his long bangs in place with a clip like he was some ultra-chic stylist, didn't even have a barber cape.

I'm not sure I should even call him a stylist, more like a crazier Edward Scissorhands on the loose.

I always wore kimonos around the house, so it was difficult to only take the top off. Looking in the mirror, I saw a psychopath holding a pair of thinning shears and a middle school student wearing a kimono with the top half pulled open. What sort of brave new world was this supposed to be? It's not like the series is allowed to go anywhere it likes just because it's finished.

"Assistant!"

As the perverted sham hair stylist snapped his fingers, a young girl in a white lab coat appeared from somewhere. A young girl, about eight years old. I could see that she was blond from the few stray hairs peeking out from behind the mask and cap she wore, but they otherwise made it impossible to tell who she was at all. But really, I don't care how cute you think the mask makes you look, why is a hair stylist's assistant wearing a mask and a cap?

That had me confused before I started wondering who she even was.

"Don't worry. This is my assistant I hired in exchange for three golden chocolate donuts."

"I should be worried about her shockingly low wage which, depending on the circumstances, could be less than 300 yen, but could you explain to me first why your assistant is dressed like a dentist's assistant?"

"That's because I didn't really know what a hair stylist's assistant looks like, so I just had her use an old costume."

“You don’t even know that? Go figure it out!”

“You can’t expect me to go into a hair salon! The people in there are all so stylish, it’s scary!”

Here I was, about to let a sham hair stylist, one who had never been inside an actual hair salon because he was afraid of how stylish the people inside were, cut my hair. I suppose this is why people call me rash.

“Well they say barbers also used to work as surgeons, so it makes perfect sense for my assistant to be wearing a surgeon’s outfit.”

“I have no idea how you think that makes ‘perfect sense’ at all, there’s only so far you can stretch the truth, you know.”

The young girl, no, the assistant, silently pushed a cart in.

I couldn’t see very well because of the angle, but looking in the mirror, there was a plastic tray on the cart, and on that tray were all sorts of brushes and hair dryers. They were the sort you might expect to find in a genuine beauty salon; all the tools needed for a haircut assembled in a single set.

“Not that I’ve learned how to use them and their names...”

“Ahem, could you stop making your customers worry any more than they have to?”

Not that I wouldn’t be worried if he hadn’t said that.

In any case I was already as worried as I possibly could be about my brother’s hair-cutting skills, but as for his assistant, she seemed to have dyed her own hair blond (probably) and was quickly and efficiently going through all the necessary preparations. She went about setting up various pieces of equipment around the chair, including a shampoo unit that even had its own backwash basin, as well as the far infrared light beam hair curling apparatus, with the fluency of a seasoned veteran. I wondered where exactly in my house this entire beauty set had been hidden. It was almost as if it were hidden inside of someone’s shadow.

“So, learning from my past mistakes, the shampoo unit’s all set up here so if you feel like throwing up, you know where to go.”

“Why would I feel like throwing up during a haircut...?”

The assistant placed a few magazines on my lap as I began trembling. Maybe she was just a thoughtful person, but it almost seemed like she felt sorry for me. Like she was doing all she could for me.

I didn't really get what was going on, but I knew something was bound to be off if this young girl was feeling sorry for me.

"Don't worry, Tsukihi-chan. I really have no sense at all for what a hair stylist is supposed to do, but I know I won't have any of that pesky common sense standing between me and the way I treat my customers."

"Don't you think you should?"

"Now, allow me to shave you."

Said my brother, ever the avant-garde intellectual, as he began to lather some shaving cream in a bowl.

"Hehehe, did you know that legally, only actual barbers' shops and not beauty salons are allowed to give a customer a shave with shaving cream?"

"Haa! I can't believe you'd actually try to throw out some random trivia everyone knows like you're a genius!"

"I'll make sure you don't have a single bit of fuzz left on your silky-smooth face!"

"Wouldn't you just call that 'hair' normally?"

Don't talk about a person's face like a fruit.

He might seem like an idiot from the things he said, but the way he lathered the cream really was something. It looked like he could beat a cup of matcha better than me from the way he was frothing up the soapy water, and I was in the tea club.<sup>73</sup>

I knew what a face shaving was, but they didn't do it at beauty salons, so I was somewhat interested.

"You know, the way you lather the cream makes a difference in how good the shave feels. So as a professional, I feel a duty to make sure this cream is thoroughly beat and fluffy. The bubbles should foam up until they're at least as full as your breasts."

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<sup>73</sup> Matcha (抹茶, *matcha*) is finely ground powder of specially grown and processed green tea leaves, and is used in traditional Japanese tea ceremonies.

He said as he checked the curvature of the bubbles against my bare breasts with a practiced dexterity.

Wait, that means only people with little sisters can be barbers!

“Come on, you’re touching your sister’s boobs too much!”

“I feel like you’ve been saying more than ‘I’m platinum mad’ recently...”

“Well the only reason for that I can think of would be that you’re touching my boobs too much.”

“That makes me sound like a baby who can’t quite wean.”

“Just let go already, or do I have to put you on a weaning diet?”

You better get those hands and their practiced dexterity off already.

How can you even call yourself a professional?

“I’ll put mustard all over my boobs.”

“I think that’d end worse for you than me... Just to be sure, you don’t have anything on your face, right, like makeup?”

“Nope, and on top of that I don’t have anything on my upper body either.”

“Alright, we’re good.”

“What’s good? There’s nothing good about your little sister being naked from the waist up.”

“Here we go.”

Anyway, my brother tied my hair up with a hairband and then began applying the shaving cream to my bare face. Ooh, this feels sort of warm but really nice! I looked into the mirror to see myself appearing more like I had grown a luscious beard like Santa Claus, instead of having been shaved.

Ho! Ho! Ho!

“Your face looks like a death mask when it’s all white.”

“...”

Us two siblings didn’t always see things the same way, evidently.

“Now, I’ll take this safety razor and... Haa, haa, haa, haa—”

The hand holding the safety razor began to tremble, making it seem not very safe at all. Hey, wait a second, you're not going to point a sharp object at me with your hand shaking like that, are you?

"Worry not, sister. I'm just trembling with excitement."

"As your sister, that makes me even more worried."

"I can barely keep my heart from beating out of my chest with excitement when I think of how I'm just seconds away from putting this blade against my little sister's delicate skin."

"You better keep your heart right where it is. For the rest of your life."

"It'll be fine, I've wielded a katana a hundred times longer than this razor in battle."

"Every word I hear from you just makes me more worried."

"Here I come!"

I'd rather he didn't come at me at all, but he did, wielding the blade with a surprising, almost timid, tenderness.

So this would be my first time being shaved.

My whole body felt immersed in a floating sensation, like I was lying on a bed of bubbles, along with a physical sense of unease at having my skin caressed by a razor-sharp blade, and a nagging apprehension at the thought of the delicate part of my body that was my face being at the complete mercy of another person.

"Haa, haa, haa, haa, haa..."

My brother's breathing grew more and more intense as he watched me, unable to move a muscle and trying to take the shallowest breaths I could. You know what, I'll let you touch my boobs, but please don't let this be the experience that awakens something even weirder in you, alright?

If my brother was telling the story himself, that would be one thing, but I don't think I was nearly skilled enough of a narrator to follow up on something so abnormal.

The experience of being shaved was "thrilling" in so many different meanings, but in the end, possibly due to my brother's powers of self-control, I emerged unscathed.



“Well, Tsukihi-chan, you didn’t have that much hair in the first place... Oops, there’s still some shaving cream left on your forehead.”

He said, as he bent down close to my face, licking the cream off of the spot on my forehead close to my hairline. He seemed as excited as he would be licking the frosting from a cake off my face, except for the fact that the “cream” he had been licking was soap bubbles.

“Bleh!”

He fell onto the shampoo unit.

Are you going to throw up?!

“Cough, cough... Whew, I thought I was going to die for a second.”

“What kind of barber thinks they’re going to die during a haircut? Get it together, would you?”

“I was holding the razor in one hand and the shaving cream container in the other, what was I supposed to do?”

“I guess.”

“How about this, Tsukihi-chan, cough, cough, do you want me to shave the back of your neck too?”

“The coughing doesn’t exactly make that sound very appealing. I don’t think I’m brave enough to have a blade on the back of my neck, though.”

“Well that’s frustrating. I’ll just have to wait for the next time.”

I prayed from the bottom of my heart that this would be the first and last time.

I just hope Hanekawa-san firmly shuts him down... Although we’ll have no idea who his next victim will be, then.

“Now then, Tsukihi-chan, let’s get started on what we’re really here for. It’s time to cut that hair nice and short.”

My brother put the razor down on the cart, then unsheathed a pair of scissors and a comb from his scissor belt in one nimble motion.

“So, how do you want it?”

He was going all the way with playing the part.

But unfortunately, no matter how hard he tried, all he looked like was a bad attempt at being a psychotic hair stylist. It wasn’t even a question of

his acting ability, his long and unkempt hair made anything he tried to say completely unconvincing.

“Hmm, how do I want it?”

I thought that cutting it short like Nadeko-chan might be nice, but since I’d already grown it out this long, I may as well swing by a different style on the way there. There was also the fact that if my brother messed up while cutting my hair that short, it would be beyond saving.

Alright, how about a lob then?

“A lob? What’s that? Something like twintails? I’m pretty particular when it comes to twintails.”

It seemed like our sham hair stylist had mistaken “lob” as a short form of “lobster”.

He wasn’t being “particular”, just particularly annoying right now.

“It’s halfway between leaving it long and a bob, so you know, put it together and you get a lob.”

“Ah, I see.”

Said my brother without a hint of shame, as he put another completely unnecessary hairclip in his hair almost flauntingly, likely to hide his embarrassment at the sad misunderstanding he had no excuse for.

“My apologies. I’m not very familiar with all this hair stuff, I don’t even know the differences among conditioner, shampoo and hair treatment.”

“...”

I was finding it hard to continue watching his “I’m not really interested in all that fashion stuff, I’ll have you know” shtick any more.

And by the way, those are barely different things anymore, so you’re not too far off the mark.

“So, give me a lob, and a light, fluffy perm after. Seems like you have all those expensive tools for it.”

“It’s a misunderstanding! I mean, understood. ‘It’s a misunderstanding!’ has been my go-to line this past year because of all the times I’ve had to use it, so it’s the first thing that comes out of my mouth whenever something happens.”

“What sort of series have we been in this whole time? We hit eighteen volumes, you know?”

Snip, snip snip—went the scissors. I had no idea how or where he managed to get these tools, but all of his tools, like the safety razor he had just been using, were top of the line.

So this sham hair stylist started cutting my hair right away, without even washing it first... Not that I mind, I already washed it, anyway.

Clip, clip.

His scissors went along, cutting a girl’s hair with barely a hint of hesitation. This actually left a good impression, resolutely doing his business fearing neither my hair, nor gods.

I honestly get quite annoyed with people asking me why I changed my hairstyle, especially with how often I do change it, and if not that, being thought of not as a woman of affairs, but a woman of many affairs. But as a staunch opponent of the view that a girl’s hair is her most important possession in this world, I liked my brother’s way of thinking, “it’s getting long so it’s time to cut it.”

I guess that’s what it means to have some experience under your belt... Although I never actually knew Hanekawa-san when she still had long hair. And now that I think of it, I remember hearing that my brother’s girlfriend, Senjouhara-san, used to have long hair too.

“Hehehe ♪”

My brother was spinning the pair of scissors around and around in the palm of his hand to the rhythm of a song he was humming. It seemed like he was getting into the groove. Looking more carefully in the mirror, I saw that he was spinning the scissors not by the finger hole, but only around the finger brace.

Don’t do anything dangerous like that above someone’s head!

Putting that aside, the haircut itself went along incredibly smoothly; what wasn’t so smooth, however, was the feeling of the bits of my hair that fell onto my bare skin, which was a bit uncomfortable. I can see how stripping down from the waist up avoided the problem of the bits of hair

getting all over the inside of my kimono, but it didn't do anything to help the fact that the hair would still get all over my body.

It's like he was looking out for the kimono more than me.

"What? Really? It's itchy?"

"Don't talk to me while you're spinning those scissors around! I'll be more than itchy if you keep doing that!"

"I see. Assistant!"

Said my brother.

And as soon as I turned around, there was his assistant, the young girl, sweeping up my hair with a broom. She may have been dressed like a surgeon's assistant, but there was something unmistakably like a beauty salon assistant who excelled at her job in the fluid grace of her every movement.

She might actually be really good at what she does.

She might actually be quite famous.

It was a complete mystery to me why someone with a reputation like her would be working for my brother, but in any case, she took the tool our resident sham stylist had asked for from the cart and handed it to him, just as requested. It was a convenient little neck duster.

"Brush, brush, brush."

"Kyaa!"

Stop gently caressing my naked upper body with the brush! Stop tickling me! This is just turning into some perverted play!

"Is it? It might be quite a hassle, but how about this? I'll painstakingly pick up each and every single hair from your bare skin with my hands, one by one."

"Kyaa, kyaa, kyaa! You're grabbing me so tenderly now! It's even more like some play now! The difficulty's going up, it's hard mode now."

"All the sweat on your skin is making this so hard... Getting one of my sisters to strip from the waist up might have been a mistake this time."

You'd think that'd be a mistake no matter the situation.

Has it ever worked out for you?

"You sure sweat a lot since you have a good metabolism, Tsukihi-chan."

“Most of this is nervous sweat, though.”

“Hmm? Let me see.”

“Could you not try to check the temperature of my sweat? Nervous sweat doesn’t necessarily mean it’s colder, you know? And could you stop putting your hand under my armpit to feel the difference in temperature between the sweat and my body?”

“Hmm. Well, we’ll leave removing the little bits of hair clinging to your body for another time…”

My brother looked down at my hair that had fallen to the ground, setting the discussion of what to do with the brother clinging to my body for another time aside, as well.

His assistant was still working as hectically as before, but she could hardly keep up, seeing as the hairs were long enough to reach past my toes.

“It almost feels like a waste to throw out all this luscious and voluminous hair. There must be some way to reuse it.”

Maybe there is.

I never had to worry about this when I went to the beauty salon, but someone might wonder if something had happened in our house if they saw this much hair being thrown out in the garbage one day.

“Assistant, put all the hair you collect into a plastic bag and store it for safekeeping. We’ll see later whether we can use it as pillow stuffing.”

“Pillow stuffing?!”

“With this much hair, we might even be able to make a whole futon out of it, not just a pillow. There are futons stuffed with goose down and sheep’s wool, so why not human hair? It’ll be so soft you won’t believe.”

“I think it’ll be so heavy I can’t sleep.”

“Or how about making another one of these neck dusters using your hair? I’d be cleaning the hair off your body with a human hair duster. Dusting off hair with hair, ladies and gentlemen, I do believe we have created a perpetual motion machine.”

The spark of environmentally sustainable brilliance that had struck my brother seemed to have cheered him up, and he continued cleaning up the

ends of my hair ever more rhythmically than before. He switched between his numerous types of scissors, cheekily layering my hair into a lob.

But at least, at this rate it doesn't seem like I'll need to go get it cut again at a hair salon tomorrow.

“Alright, on to the bangs.”

“Sure. They've actually grown out a bit longer than how Nadeko-chan used to wear them, so they're starting to merge with the sides, so could you just cut it so it has a nice defined front?”

“... Now that you mention it, didn't you slice off a bit of her bangs a while ago?”

“What? Did I?”

“How could you forget about that?”

My brother began to clean up my bangs using a comb and a hairclip, with a look on his face as if he were threatening to slice off a bit of my bangs. I was worried that he might do a straight-across princess cut style<sup>74</sup> because that was his personal preference, but it seemed like the style he had chosen would require quite a bit more delicate styling, like the back.

“Hehehe, maybe I'll cut it just long enough that it'll get into your eyes.”

“That's as creative as you can get trying to annoy me?”

“Or I could curl your eyelashes so they always poke into your eyes...”

“Don't try something that advanced, please.”

“Just kidding, just kidding. I would never do something like that, as someone who loves eyeballs.”

“I'd prefer if you brushed it off as a joke for a different reason. You can't just joke about these sorts of things.”

“Where do you want the parting?”

“Hmm, I guess I'll go with right.”

“Okay, so about 70-30.”

That's fine, but could you not say it like that?

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<sup>74</sup> A princess cut (姫カット, *hime katto*) is a hairstyle consisting of straight, usually cheek-length sidelocks and frontal fringe. As the name suggests, the style is thought to have originated, or at least become common, in the Imperial court during the Heian Period of Japanese history.

So, continuing along, after he had finished touching up my bangs, his assistant the young girl brought a square mirror around to my back, her little feet tapping the ground with each step. Now I had a 360-degree view of my hair through the large mirror. Woah, it might not be professional quality but this was better than I expected. I was secretly preparing myself for the possibility that I might have to go through the “Hey, you cut this part too short! Could you just cut this part a bit shorter to balance it out?! Oh my gosh you cut it too short again!” routine, but my brother was actually pretty good.

“From the angle I’m at, the two mirrors are forming an infinity mirror and it’s like my little sister’s boobs are going off into infinity, this is the best.”

“Can’t you just let me be impressed with you for once?”

“My bad, I shouldn’t have said that. I almost lost my precious sister’s trust. Why don’t we do a scalp massage next to improve your circulation? Let your brother massage your head and your breasts until you’re all nice and loose.”

“You’re getting obsessed with my boobs again.”

Your precious sister doesn’t have any trust in you left to lose.

“You see, you have to massage the scalp softly with the balls of your fingers, like this.”

“Could you not show me your scalp massage technique on my boobs? How long are you going to be pulled into my boobs for?”

*What does it mean to be pulled into my boobs in the first place?* I thought to myself, retorting to my own retort (although I suppose it was better than being pulled into safety razors), after which I reminded my brother of one thing, just in case he had forgotten.

“Don’t forget the light and fluffy perm. I want it a bit wavy, okay?”

“I knew exactly what you were going to say. I’ll put such an amazing perm in your hair, every student at your school’s hair will start coiling up into waves the moment they see you at the beginning of your new term.”

“I don’t want it that curled. It wouldn’t even be light or fluffy anymore if it started coiling up.”

“Alright, let’s see this machine.”

My brother rolled the far infrared light beam hair-curling apparatus over himself, without the help of his assistant. I could already see where this was going the moment he started with his “stylist” act, but I hoped that I was just mistaken.

I had managed to avoid the expected outcome of a sloppy haircut, there was no way something like him turning the dial on the far infrared light beam hair-curling apparatus the wrong way and setting my hair on fire would happen.

“Oh no! I turned the dial on the far infrared light beam hair curling apparatus the wrong way and set your hair on fire! ‘Cause you’re one of the Fire Sisters, get it!?”

“You didn’t need to tell me the last part!”

Hot! Hot! Hot! Hot!

And this was where the shampoo unit that my brother had brought to serve as nothing more than a vomit bowl, seeing as I didn’t need my hair washed, proved to be useful in the most unexpected of ways.

He forcefully shoved my flaming head into the backwash basin and pressed the showerhead right up against my scalp, soaking it in water, then immediately got to work putting out the fire.

“Glug, grgggle, cough, I’m drowning I’m drowning I’m drowning!”

“My bad, that was close. I almost drowned my little sister again.”

“Again?! You did something like this before!?”

“It’s okay, it’s okay. Everything’s alright. Assistant, remove the mirror.”

He ordered his assistant, not wasting a second after shutting off the shower. Hey wait, let me see what the perm looks like before you take the mirror away!

He was way too used to covering things up.

“Calm down, Tsukihi-chan. Don’t panic, and don’t get up. Stay in exactly the same position you’re in now. I’m just going to wash your hair to finish off the haircut. It should still be repairable.”

“R-Really...?”



Finishing off with a hair wash, I guess he was leaning toward the barber shop treatment more than the beauty salon course. It seemed more and more like he was actually clueless about hair salons and not just acting that way. No surprise considering that the shampoo unit was set up to use with the face down instead of the face up...

“Are you sure it’s going to be okay? I don’t want to see you carrying a 300 trillion-yen debt.”

“Well I’m sure you could do something about that debt if you wanted to... And isn’t that way too much interest for a 30000-yen loan? I don’t think you could rack up that much even with compound interest.”

“So how are you going to repair it? Do you have some sort of fancy shampoo?”

“You betcha. This stuff will get that burnt hair looking luscious and flowing down to the cuticles. However, as you can see, I burnt both of my hands when I was trying to put out the raging inferno on your head, so because of that—”

He turned away looking despondently, and after looking around as if searching for some other solution that nonetheless eluded him, hung his shoulders weakly.

“I’ll have to wash your hair with my mouth.”



“Whew! I managed to get my immortality-infused saliva all over Tsukihi-chan’s hair. With that, the damaged hair will be repaired and there’s no doubt it’ll completely heal, right Shinobu?”

“I think her hair would have gone back to the way it was even without your help...”