

Sophia Graham

Age: 13, Grade: 8

School Name: Altamont School, Birmingham, AL

Educator: Dan Carsen

Category: Short Story

Hairband

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It was a random Tuesday morning, but generally speaking, the days are all the same to me. I'm a hairband. A bottom-of-the-barrel, run-of-the-mill, boring old hairband. I don't particularly remember how I got here. I'm not like most hairbands who are given to their owners as a present for lack of better knowledge of the person. But I can't complain too much. Most hairbands who get taken out of this jar never come back, and I've heard horror stories from the ones who do. It looked like it was going to be another boring day, talking to the other hairbands and teased of by all of the flashy jewelry. I'd never really thought about getting used because I wasn't that elastic, I was too big, I didn't have fancy charms like some of the others, and I'm not even on the top of the jar. Plus, Sophia, the person I belong to, doesn't usually wear hairbands. But today was different. She rushed into the bathroom, already dressed, and went straight for the jar where we lived. Every one of us held our breath as she rummaged through the jar looking for a victim. Her hand brushed past me and before I knew what was happening, she pulled me out and looped me around her wrist. A few of the others murmured "good luck" as she walked out and turned the lights off behind her.

I was terrified. The ground beneath me had been yanked out from under my feet. My life isn't great, but the likelihood of even making it back to the house again that afternoon was too low for comfort. Nothing I can do about it now.

Sophia went to school that day, and I managed to keep from falling off. Then it was time for PE. Sophia wandered into a new area with many other girls like her, and many hairbands like myself. Everything smelled like rancid feet or bad milk. She changed into what, in my humble opinion, was a hideous uniform and then went into a large open area. She took me off her wrist and began pulling her hair back into one common location. This is what I was made to do, I thought to myself. I gulped, or would have if I'd had a throat, before she put me in her hair. It wasn't as bad as some of the other hairbands had described, but I guess that had something to do with my size. I, or I guess I should say we made it through PE class, and in the end, I was removed from her hair and looped back around her wrist.

2019-June

Time has passed since Sophia started carrying me around. I get used almost every day now on account of the warming weather. Having a purpose is kind of nice. Every hairband that I've met says that I'm lucky to be kept for a week without getting lost, so eight months is practically obscene. I do worry sometimes because I'm getting looser by the day and I could fall off Sophia's wrist, but I try to push that toward the back of my mind.

One evening, Sophia took me off and sat me on her vanity to take a shower as she does every night. Steam fogged up the mirror and eventually she stepped out again. She began drying her hair with a nearby blow-dryer and when she was satisfied that it wouldn't soak her pajamas, she set the hairdryer down on the counter. But it wasn't totally turned off. I got blown across the counter behind the jar of hairbands before she reached down and pushed the switch. But it was too late. She didn't notice that I was missing. The lights clicked off and she left the bathroom. So, I thought to myself, this is it. Right back where you started. More worthless than ever. And then I was struck by the hardest realization in my life. I am nothing to Sophia. She hung onto me only because it was convenient for her. Tomorrow, she won't remember me at all; she'll come in here and get another hairband and never think twice about it. This was it. Even if she did somehow manage to find me, it didn't matter anymore, because I was just a useless hairband, manufactured like millions of others in the world. I was never special, and I was stupid for ever thinking

that I could be anything more than a stretched out, misshapen, average piece of mass produced elastic, destined to be forgotten about and lost.

2019-July

I've been missing for about two weeks now, maybe three. I stopped keeping track after a while. I tried to convince myself that I was better off at this point, because I had no responsibilities and my life was back to the way it was before all this, and that I was happier now. But deep down, I just felt empty. In the beginning, my life had no purpose, then I had a wild ride of grand adventures, and then was lost, and never thought about again.

Sophia walked into her bathroom about three minutes after her alarm went off, same as ever. She hadn't been wearing hairbands much anymore, but no one gives an explanation to a hairband. She reached back for her toothpaste, allowing me to see her between the hairbrush and deodorant. She looked around for the toothbrush and seeing that it was not in its usual spot, she looked back into my hiding place. Suddenly, she gasped and grabbed me eagerly, yelling down the hall, "Mom! You'll never guess what I just found! It's my favorite hairband that I lost a few weeks ago!"

Her mom called back some confused version of 'that's great honey' and then went back to whatever she was doing. Sophia looked down at me and said,

"I really missed you. I know you're just a hairband, but you feel like a friend to me. We've been through a lot together and I'm never going to lose you again." She smiled to herself before saying, "Wait, am I talking to a hairband?" She looped me around her wrist and left the bathroom.

I realized two things that day. First of all, no matter what you are or how small you are, you can make a difference in someone's life. Second, I shouldn't have doubted what I meant to Sophia. Just because I'm a hairband doesn't mean that that's all I can be, and I shouldn't have underestimated myself. I've heard it said on TV that "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and dog gone it, people love me!" We walked out the front door and I breathed in the morning air from my place on Sophia's wrist. I had found my way home.