

The Tortoise in the Hair

by G. Arthur Brown

Pete Nevins bought the Fielding property in '48. It was all still farmland back then, you see. But Old Man Fielding hadn't been keeping it up at all, so Pete had to go around surveying all the outbuildings and pastures to make sure it was all up to snuff.

Second day he was out on the southern end of the property and came across a plot of what appeared to be brownish grass growing. When he got up closer, it was real strange--too soft and real long. The ground around it was very pale and waxy. He cut off a big piece and got a closer look. Turned out to be hair. About a half acre of it. He went in there poking around, wondering why there was all that hair there, and he came across a big tortoise, almost as big as the Galapagos ones. He named it and took it home with him. Pete believed there was something special about that tortoise. Course, he went back and set fire to all that hair, because that sort of thing just ain't natural.

Pete told me, honest to God, that the first night he had that tortoise back home with him, he woke up the next morning bald. The damn thing had eaten off all his hair. So then Pete figured he'd strike up a deal with Clarence Magee, the barber. Everyday he was hauling home sacks brimming with hair to feed to that tortoise.

But I never liked it. Gave me the willies. Course, I was just a little boy then, you understand. One day as I was passing by on the way to the swim hole I saw that tortoise crawling around in Pete's front yard, trying to get close enough to one of the cats to eat its hair. I ain't never seen a hair-eater up close, and I wasn't about to touch the thing, but I crept up real close and kind of prodded it with my stick. Well, it burst like a damn bubble, got oily film all over the footpath. Nothing left but slime, not even a shell. Pete was out front at the time digging holes for fence posts, and he saw what had happened and ran up screaming his head off. He wouldn't shut up about that tortoise. He blamed me for its popping. I went up to the man, grabbed the spade out of his hands, and hit him upside the

Available online at [«http://fictionaut.com/stories/g-arthur-brown/the-tortoise-in-the-hair»](http://fictionaut.com/stories/g-arthur-brown/the-tortoise-in-the-hair)

Copyright © 2009 G. Arthur Brown. All rights reserved.

head. That shut him up real good. What else was I supposed to do?

I think I was already back home sipping lemonade when they found me and brought me here. Course, I was a kid, you have to understand. They couldn't do the things to me they really wanted to.

