



A visual representation of "Contrast" by Tammy Ho

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The artwork portrays a poignant story of a father's obsession with hiding his grey hair, and his daughter's realisation of the inevitability of ageing. The yellow box filled with grey hair represents the father's futile attempts to reverse time. The daughter, feeling sorry for her father, eventually refuses to help him cover up his greys. The use of hair dye is depicted as a dangerous solution that cannot change the fact of ageing. In the end, the birth of the daughter's child brings about a change of heart in the father, who accepts his grey hair as a sign of wisdom and experience.

Happiness is represented by a change from black to grey hair. To show how the father in the poem has learned to roll with the inevitable changes that age brings, I made birds out of the grey hairs in the box. By giving up the fight against becoming older, the father might enjoy greater levels of affection and satisfaction from his family.

**Contrast**

**Tammy Ho**

He asked me to put the hairs  
in a small yellow box. It was plastic,  
with a catch at the front that clicked  
when closed.

Every Sunday, I looked carefully  
at my father's head  
and plucked out the grey hairs  
that hid sneakily

among the robust black ones.  
He gave me twenty cents for each strand  
until one day, a few years later,  
the box was full

and there were still so many more to pluck.  
Overcome with sadness, I said,  
'Father, I don't want the money.'  
He then began dyeing his hair

and in the bathroom sink every week  
drips of black water  
revealed that father was clawing  
back his youth.

Fifteen years later, he  
has stopped dyeing his hair,  
worried that the chemicals  
might harm his grandchildren

whom he often rests  
on his shoulders,  
proud now  
to highlight the contrast.

"Contrast" first appeared in the Asia Literary Review:  
<https://www.asialiteraryreview.com/contrast>.  
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**Positive value(s) and attitude(s):**

- Being true to yourself
- Loving your family and yourself