

## **Carol Prepares Her Third Perm of the Day**

*Ashington, 1984*

She combs through Mrs Robson's hair,  
pulling at the silky strands.

*You'll alwuz work, Dad had said.*

*Folk'll alwuz have hyer wants cuttin'.*

She took his advice. It fell to someone  
else to give him his last cut,  
laid in a box in his only suit,  
dead before he could meet the bairns  
she didn't know she was growing.

*Head back, she says, starts the stream  
of near-warm spray.*

Folk'll alwuz have hyer wants cuttin',  
but might not alwuz have money to pay.  
There's only so many IOUs  
you can write off for a miner's wife  
before you end up in the same hole.

She strokes at Mrs Robson's locks.  
Mebbes he thought he'd alwuz be there,  
till the night she had to call 999.  
Mebbes he thought there'd alwuz be the pits.