Down Home: Doggonit, she got a bad haircut

October 12, 2012
Topanga's groomer picked a lousy time to go on vacation.

Or maybe we picked a lousy time to take our dog in for a haircut.

Either way, we paid. And now she's paying.

One of the ways I mark time is recognizing how often we spend money to get our dog's hair cut. Well, that's not exactly true. I never remember how many weeks have passed since the last time she went in for a trim. But it always seems like only yesterday. Before you know it, she's walking around like a no-eyed bundle of fur, or maybe a dustbunny with feet, or perhaps an energetic mop without a handle.

Topanga is a Cava-Tzu—a cross between a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and a Shih Tzu. More precisely, she's a Breeder's Husband's Mistake. Once upon a time, a little more than six years ago, a woman who breeds Shih Tzus and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels went shopping and left her husband in charge of her kennels. Apparently, her husband isn't great with details. Like keeping pet pens closed and purebred dogs segregated. So, the gestational period of a small-breed dog later, our puppy bounded into this world.

The day we met Topanga, her breeder told us, "This little one thinks she's a person." That seemed like a bunch of hooey. But the brindle-and-white puppy looked cuter than her black-and-white siblings. So, we brought her home.

Later, we realized we did not purchase a pet. We adopted a child who just

happens to be a dog. She really thinks she's one of us.

We let her roam around the house for a few days before we named her. The more I watched her, the more she reminded me of one of our daughters' favorite characters on one of their favorite childhood TV shows, *Boy Meets World*. Topanga was this girl with a monstrous mass of light-brown hair. Just like our little dog.

Well, I got the monstrous mass part right. Topanga has figured out a few tricks, but her most consistent accomplishment is growing a monstrous mass of brindle-and-white hair.

The woman who normally grooms Topanga is from South America. Unfortunately, she sometimes thinks visiting her family is more important than maintaining the beauty of North Texas dogs. So, when I didn't pay close-enough attention to her schedule, we had to take Topanga elsewhere.

When she got home, I wish we had pretended she was a Tasmanian Devil for about a month and just waited for her haircut. Tufts of fur stick out in all the wrong places. It's not a pretty sight.

But here's an important truth: Dogs don't look in the mirror. Topanga has no idea she received the worst haircut of her life.

And here's another truth. I don't love her for her looks. Sure, I picked her out because she was cute. But now I love her because we all know she's part of our family.