

approx 4000 words

# Shorn Glory

Clifford Weeks



As the sun <sup>approached</sup> ~~reached~~ the eleven A.M. position ~~of~~ ~~the~~ sun in the sky bleached by summer

As the sun <sup>st</sup> approached the 11 A.M. mark on the ~~the~~ sky <sup>SP</sup> bleached by summer, ~~and~~ Clifford ~~staggered~~ staggered alongside his bicycle on the dun dirt road. The ~~scattered~~ <sup>rear</sup> fender ~~scraped~~ <sup>scraped</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>rasped</sup> the harmony with the locusts, and ~~clicked~~ <sup>scraped</sup> the spokes clicked in time with the grasshoppers <sup>(flitting)</sup> from ditches to dog fennels.

The road <sup>swarmed</sup> ~~came~~ in white ~~wavy~~ waves & sparkled with bristling stars as he darted his tongue to the ~~ridge~~ <sup>ridge</sup> between his sharp nose & mouth. He stopped, leaning the bicycle on his jutted hip bone, ~~while~~ <sup>as</sup> he mopped perspiration with his neckerchief. He ~~could~~ <sup>felt</sup> feel the stubbles of his beard penetrate ~~the~~ <sup>heard the</sup> ~~redundant~~ <sup>rattle</sup> and rattle, but the sounds effect <sup>registered</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>muddled</sup> muffled ~~of~~ <sup>in</sup> his mind. From his back pocket he ~~took~~ <sup>slid</sup> the font of whiskey, uncapping it as it drew near his mouth, tasting its acid-sweetness before he sizzled, burped, and replaced it.

Then he ~~rode~~ <sup>rode</sup> off again, ~~riding~~ <sup>weaving</sup> weaving into the ~~white~~ waves, following the ~~road~~ <sup>road</sup>

defined by the <sup>lines</sup> ~~lines~~, high above the  
washboard ruts and straight into the  
brick well.

The jolt ~~at~~ sent him sailing back  
from the blurry red bricks where mortar  
ran & puddled in the white sand.

Looking up into the sky seeing with angel  
faces, framed with ~~streaming~~ <sup>streaming</sup> silver ~~white~~ <sup>white</sup> hair, ~~he~~  
~~he~~ he chuckled, shook his head &  
looked ~~at~~ <sup>focused on</sup> the ~~puddles~~ sand & mortar  
rushing at his feet.

Suddenly, a ~~flood~~ <sup>flood</sup> of silver  
water crashed ~~into~~ cascaded over his  
head. He ~~shattered~~ shook himself  
like a dog & coughed & spluttered, hearing  
the angel voices above him.

"He's coming to himself," one said.  
He gathered his numb self to his  
~~feet~~ feet, meeting them eye to eye as  
he rose. ~~Three~~ <sup>Three</sup> sets of blue eyes <sup>(gems)</sup>  
encircled him, like a ring of <sup>sapphire</sup> ~~interlocking~~  
~~and~~ pounded into a white wall. ~~He~~  
found focus on the solid well and  
waited.

"He's bad drunk," said one.

He snapped toward the face before  
it could spin, a fat girl face with  
cheeks like candied apples.

~~"Who are you~~

"You throwed water ~~some~~ on me," he  
stammered.

"~~Mamma~~ <sup>Glorianna</sup> ~~that~~ done it to bring you to,"  
she said, nodding toward her ~~double~~ <sup>double</sup> on the  
other side of him.

He focused <sup>rapidly</sup> on the other one,  
~~emotionlessly~~ <sup>who</sup> nodding with an affirmative  
double chin on her chubby chest. Quickly,  
he switched back to the first, waist high to  
him, and ~~found~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~eyes~~ <sup>bleary</sup> snapped yet  
another <sup>in front of him</sup> who also seemed to struggle beneath  
a head weighted with molten silken hair  
which hung to her thighs.

~~Halt~~

He looked behind him for another  
and saw the sobering shade of a  
chinaberry tree. Behind it a <sup>crude</sup> cabin  
squatted cockeyed.

"You besties mind if I set a spell."

~~Help yourself, one said.~~  
They shrugged their shoulders indifferently.

He ~~was~~ staggered off towards the  
paisley shade of the chinaberry tree

that insisted on taking two giant steps back as he approached, looking back, all the while, at the three ~~who~~ <sup>which</sup> clustered & ~~erupted~~ <sup>crept</sup> behind him.

"Yall ain't all that friendly, are ya?" he yelled back, ~~blowing~~ <sup>dabbling</sup> his face with his ~~dabbling~~ kerchief as he examined the scars & wrinkles for smiles. They were fixed with frowns, their eyes rigid & unyielding even as he smiled at them.

Finally, the tree stayed long enough for him to collapse against it & slide into its soothing curve. One knee cocked up for his hand to rest <sup>+</sup> wave the ~~red~~ <sup>red</sup> kerchief at them while he coaxed them to the shade with ~~his~~ garbled statements.

"'erl bet yall think I'm a <sup>plum</sup> mess. Won't yall?"

They huddled together, like sheeps, & ~~stood~~ <sup>stopped</sup> feet on the edge fringe of the shade that ~~cast~~ <sup>strobed</sup> leafy shadows on their ~~molded~~ heads.

"Wher's yaller ~~Ma~~ <sup>Ma</sup> ~~Pa~~ <sup>Pa</sup> ~~Monner~~ & Popper at?" he asked.

"Gone to ~~town~~ <sup>Val'osta</sup> to take of the ~~lot~~  
the tobacco," said ~~Manne Mae~~ <sup>Glorian</sup>, hesitating  
as the other ~~two~~ <sup>blue eyes</sup> bore down on her.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"~~Manne Mae~~ <sup>Glorian</sup>. She done told you,"  
she said, nodding to her sister on the  
other side.

"All yall named ~~Manne Mae~~ <sup>Glorian</sup>?"

They nodded.

"What's yaller name?" he asked the others.

"That's Annie Bell & ther here's  
Janie Ruth," said ~~Manne Mae~~ <sup>Glorian</sup>.

"Let's see now. We got us a  
~~Manne Mae~~ <sup>Glorian</sup> got us a Janie Ruth and  
a Annie Bell" he ~~said~~ <sup>said</sup>, cocking two  
fingers <sup>like rabbit ears</sup> in the air above his knee, "So  
they is three of yall, huh?"

They nodded in perfect unison, ~~and~~  
blue sprigged shifts swaying in ~~unison with~~  
~~the~~ ~~nodding~~ ~~bird's~~ ~~chant~~  
above him.

He looked up & the bird defecated on  
his ~~face~~ <sup>nose</sup> ~~face~~. He screwed his ~~eyes~~  
chapped mouth, laughed and smeared it on the  
kerchief that flopped back to his knee.

"They ain't nothing more desp'ful than a dabbled mocking bird," he said, looking at the three ~~siding~~ faces fractured with smiles.

"One of you younguns want to get me a dipper 'n' water?"

~~Mamma~~ <sup>Glois</sup> ~~Mama~~ twisted, looked at her sister, & ~~scrambled~~ <sup>trudged</sup> toward the well. They watched her ~~twisting~~ <sup>twisting</sup> sideways to see her draw the bucket to the top & dunk the pint jar that set on the ledge.

When she ~~returned~~ <sup>returned</sup> to the edge of the shade, she ~~stopped~~ <sup>stopped</sup> & paused for the other two to inch alongside her, stopped & extended ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> jar to ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> far reaching hand.

He grunted as he took it, touching her finger ~~which~~ <sup>which</sup> reflexively drew back ~~and~~ <sup>like a</sup> ~~reverse~~ <sup>reverse</sup> snake strike to her waist. They stepped back ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> watch him guzzle it as it ~~dropped~~ <sup>dropped</sup> & trickled ~~over~~ <sup>over</sup> the stubble along his scrawny neck to his ~~frayed~~ <sup>frayed</sup> shirt collar.

He burped, sighed, long & heavy, and thrust it back toward them, but they backed ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> step back, so he ground the base of it into the dirt between twin roots.

"Thank you, Man," he said, leaning  
back to watch the settling leaven <sup>above</sup> ~~above~~.

"How old are yall?" he asked absently.

"Going on ten," said <sup>Gloria</sup> ~~Mamma~~ Mae.

"Going on ten a Week?" he said. "All  
of yall?" he added, looking back at  
them.

"Yessir," said <sup>Gloria</sup> ~~Mamma~~ Mae.

"Oh! Yall must be what they call  
triplets." ~~It~~ ~~was~~ he said, enlightened.

"U ain't never had the chance to meet up  
with no triplets before."

"Yessir," said <sup>Gloria</sup> ~~Mamma~~ Mae,  
twisting self consciously. They others joined  
her, one of them sucking on her finger.

"Cat got your tongue?" he asked  
the other two, laughing.

They laughed muckly, looking down.

"Yall got shoes?" he asked, looking  
at their dirt-pied, pinky toes.

"For Sunday school," <sup>Gloria</sup> ~~Mamma~~ Mae  
said, ~~catching~~ <sup>clasp</sup> her ~~hands~~ hands  
behind her as she swayed.

"Sunday school, huh?" he said, looking  
up <sup>as if he were</sup> ~~that he was~~ thinking reminiscing. "I  
used to go to Sunday school, myself."





like battered silk.

"Ain't y'all hot?"

"Yessir," said ~~Thannie Mae~~ <sup>Thannie Mae</sup> lookin' out at the ~~silver sand~~ <sup>silver sand</sup> ~~scared by the sun.~~ <sup>scared by the sun.</sup>  
~~silver sand.~~

"Well, sun on in yonder I get your Mammer's sewing scissors, & it'll get shed of it for y'all."

"Noser," said ~~Thannie Mae~~ <sup>Thannie Mae</sup>.

The other ~~silver~~ <sup>sculpted</sup> heads flicked in agreement.

"How come?" he asked.

~~Can't~~

They shrugged their <sup>chubby</sup> shoulders and looked at him.

"Well it'd hate like hell <sup>uh</sup> heck to have to be the one totting around them head full of hair in this ~~hot~~ <sup>heat</sup>," he said, & laid back against the tree watching them from beneath his eyelids as they fingered their hair.

One of them flipped her head and the hair undulated in silver waves its ~~her square buttocks~~ <sup>square</sup> ~~thighs~~ <sup>thighs</sup>.

"Yep," ~~he~~ <sup>with a care</sup> said, ~~it'd~~ <sup>it'd</sup> ~~shove~~ <sup>shove</sup> get shed of that stuff if it was mine. Course I can keep mine out close cause

"I'm a barber. Been to barbering school & everything," he said, running his fingers through his ~~spiky~~ <sup>spiky</sup> hair & ~~hat~~ <sup>hat</sup>.

"You a real barber?" one asked.  
"Yep. Got my Ga. licence and all," he said, whistling low as he looked up into the tree.

"Georgia, huh?"

"Yep," he said. "Got in in Vlasto back some year ago. Cut more heads of hair than I can count on my two hands."

"Go get Ma's scissors, Janie Ruth."

"Huh, uh. I ain't afixing to," said Janie Ruth.

"We gonna get in trouble with Ma," said Annie Bell.

"No we ain't. Go on," said ~~Glenn~~ <sup>Glorious</sup> Mae.

"You go."

"Scardy cat."

"I ain't scared 've nothing," said ~~Glenn~~ <sup>Glorious</sup> Mae. "It's yall two that's scared to go to the toilet by yourself. Not me."



retract

While they remained watching for her return, Clifford ~~swiftly~~ <sup>quietly</sup> removed the bottle from his rear pocket where ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> crafty hand poised. He emptied ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> and replaced it before they looked back.

(over)

While they remained watching for her return, Clifford ~~swiftly~~ <sup>swiftly</sup> removed the bottle from his rear pocket where his crafty hand poised. He emptied ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> and replaced it before they looked back on his repose.

He flapped his arms & exercised  
the <sup>yawning</sup> scissors with a broad exaggerated  
air ~~that~~ <sup>as</sup> the others gaped.

With the first snip, they ~~soaked~~  
~~in air~~ and ~~held their~~ stood motionlessly.

The sound merged like tearing silk  
with the locusts ~~run~~ <sup>rustle</sup> or the ~~topical~~ trusses  
~~hair~~ knaked on the roots of the china  
berry tree. A faint odor of ~~the~~ perspiration stole on the air, not  
unpleasant, but ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> the mark of the child's neck.

He snipped the ~~hair~~ <sup>hair</sup> in a level jagged  
bank around her head, the released  
ends flying and frizzing around her  
face & neck.

"Ma's gonna kill us," said Annie  
Bell.

"Not if y'all don't run & tattler,"  
said ~~Marianne~~ <sup>Marianne</sup> Mae, between gritted  
teeth.

"Who's next?" Clifford asked on the  
final snip as he released the sheaf  
of hair to the ground, sliding ~~it~~  
on it.

He grabbed the tree as the next  
~~girl~~ girl was pushed forward. (same para)  
on next  
sentence

She backed also, & scrunched her shoulders as if

He repeated the <sup>warning of</sup> exercise ~~as~~ before, blurring a command for "a little more water" to get himself going."

The next ~~chair~~ <sup>girl</sup> scuttled off & clasped her ~~arms~~ <sup>arms</sup> over her head as if the final one backed to the barber.

"I'm gonna give you an extra treatment cause of you having to wait on me," he said, and snipped high above the ear, losing his ~~original~~ <sup>originally composed</sup> design and sloping it to a diagonal on completion. She resembled a doll whose head had been screwed sideways.

He ~~sat~~ <sup>sprawled</sup> in the ~~middle of the~~ mat of <sup>platinum</sup> ~~platinum~~ hair & began snoring before his head fell back to the track of the tree. ~~Both hands~~ One hand clasped a bouquet of hair & the other still latched onto the scissors.

When he awoke, the sun was straight in front of him, and the girls were gone. Not ~~even~~ <sup>even</sup> the ~~strands~~ <sup>strand</sup> of hair remained, nor the scissors, and

The house was still & appeared vacant, but at the window overlooking the tree, a pyramid of melon heads <sup>peered through the wavy window pane.</sup> He would, but they remained ~~planted~~ <sup>planted</sup>, almost <sup>as if</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> in the fixed stone of evening with their ~~heads~~ <sup>heads</sup> cropped near.

He thought he had only imagined it in his drunken stupor.

He shook his head & mopped his face with the kerchief ~~and~~ as he straddled his bicycle & ~~pedaled~~ <sup>toiled</sup> east with the heat on his back,

After ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> bolted ~~down~~ <sup>onto</sup> the Jarver highway, separate clumps of gravel seemed to jump to his eyes & thud ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> his head, a pulsing pain that promised relief from the bottle that waited on the table at his trailer. He pedaled faster as the sunset

(?) flushed orange ~~and~~ <sup>on</sup> the ~~dark~~ <sup>dark</sup> pines and sank to a steady ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>band of</sup> James Forderoke lay in his path; he ~~closed~~ <sup>penetrated</sup> the distance <sup>it</sup> ~~swerving~~ <sup>swerving</sup> alongside the blue aluminum ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> separated him from the bottle on the other side. Through the door, in the ~~dark~~ <sup>dropped</sup> dusk and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> creaks his ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> movements made, he tread in the welcome isolation where the pines' rustling pushed back the world. He drained the bottle & collapsed on the pallet ~~by~~ beneath a span of windows that opened into the dusk ~~and~~ <sup>filled with</sup> the flurry of fire flies ~~sparkling~~ <sup>sparkling</sup> the woods like the aftermath of ~~fire~~ <sup>fire</sup>. But there was no sound, just silence & his ~~head~~ <sup>pain</sup> surrendering to the placid night.

But at the onset of relief came a distant whirring of an automobile. He would have ignored it, but it was dying in the thick dusk, and the clasp of the car door made him start. He groaned and padded on socked feet to the window on the other side, seeing ~~the Sheriff~~ <sup>the Sheriff</sup> ~~plant~~ <sup>plant</sup> beside the special car of Duran Co. with his arm propped on the top.

~~Week~~ "What the hell?" Clifford mumbled, the Sheriff <sup>the Sheriff</sup> ~~called~~ "Weeks! You in there?" ~~the Sheriff~~ called.

"Yep. What you want?"

"I need to talk to you. Come on out."

Clifford ambled to the door and opened it to the tepid air that seemed to bring on a numbing <sup>sensation</sup> of his tongue.

"How de do, Sheriff," he slurred, cleared his throat & groped for sober thoughts.

"Weeks, what's this I hear about you meering around with them little gals of Hubert Sims <sup>this morning</sup> ~~this afternoon~~?"

"Huh?" Clifford responded, leaning on the door as he scratched his head.

"Don't play dumb on me. There Ma's about ready to string you up."



"I ain't got no notion what you're  
atalkin' about ~~Sheriff~~," Clifford said,  
sobbing rapidly.

"Well, they're waiting back <sup>under</sup> at the  
courthouse for me to bring you in. ~~Let~~  
Let right & let's go," ~~the Sheriff~~ said with  
finality as he got back into the car I  
waited.

"I hope they ain't acounting on me  
to lay the blame on for something I ain't  
had nothing to do with," mumbled Clifford  
as he tugged his ~~sho~~ ~~boots~~ on, leaving  
the laces ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~trail~~ behind the stuck out tongue.

In the Sheriff's Office, the white light  
blinded him, and he hesitated at the door,  
~~start~~ rubbing his bleary eyes. When he looked  
up, he saw ~~the~~ his <sup>accusers</sup> ~~accusers~~ lined up along  
~~the~~ one wall in straight chairs, with straight  
faces and eyes that bore into him.  
He laughed & ~~the Sheriff~~ ~~then~~ jerked  
his arm, forcing him to sit across from them.  
He went on to his desk, removed his hat and  
reared back on his seat of authority, a padded  
chair that squeaked under his large bulk.

# SHERIFF SHURF

"It wouldn't be laughing if it was you," he said focusing ~~the~~ on the wall where Clifford sat alone. "You gonna <sup>find out</sup> you can't just come back here <sup>at run harum scarum over people's</sup> just cause you <sup>one off</sup> come back smart."

Clifford laughed again and watched the first of the five sets of eyes drop. Herbert Sims looked down at the <sup>weathered</sup> ~~calloused~~ hands and tapped the toe of his shoe on <sup>the floor</sup>.

"What you got to say for yourself?" asked his wife ~~not asking~~ <sup>but thrusting</sup> into the mud to ~~say something~~ open & it fell out.

Like tired cow-patties, rows of <sup>broken</sup> braids nestled on the crown of her head. Her <sup>red</sup> face exuded contempt, and her staunch shoulder bore it, broader with her long big arm crossed <sup>in a huff</sup> beneath her ample breasts. <sup>One hand clutched a</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>clapped</sup> hands.

Beside her  
On the other side of her, <sup>the</sup> three little girls with cow-naired heads leaned ~~to~~ toward her with three sets of accusing eyes <sup>focusing</sup> ~~bearing down~~ unblinking, on him.

"Hey, little girls," he said.

They blinked & shifted, but resumed their best posture toward the large lap of their ~~mother~~.

"Is he the one, girls?" asked ~~the~~ Sheriff, tapping his lips with two fingers while

he rocked on the revived chair.

All three nodded affirmatively.

"A woman's hair is her crown & glory," erupted from the Mama's mouth ~~stem~~ stem & rigid as a preacher. "I want that good-for-nothing drunk locked up for what he done." ~~Her complacent chin lifted.~~

"Well, Miss Barbren, to tell the honest to God truth, I ain't shore they's a law against what he done," said ~~the~~ <sup>Sheriff</sup> Sheriff ~~looking forward~~ <sup>looking forward</sup> ~~clanking his elbow forward~~ <sup>clanking his elbow to the deck.</sup>

"Well, you just find one them, or I'll have to take the law in my own hands," she ~~huffed~~ spat.

"Yessum," said ~~the Sheriff~~ <sup>Sheriff</sup> Sheriff, rising. "Let me see if I can't borrow one of Judge Waverington's <sup>low</sup> books & look it up. I'll hate like the dickens to wake him up to ask him."

He left the ~~room~~ office yard his steps echoing in the corridor were all that ~~remained~~ <sup>remained</sup> the sounds in room.

Clifford <sup>looked</sup> at the ~~three sets~~ <sup>three sets</sup> of blue eyes, and they lowered their lids to half-mast.

Sheer mana nudged Hubert their paper he  
sank lower into his ~~neutral~~ neutral position, hunched  
between his knees over the black tile floor!

"Y'all don't pay him no tention. He's  
a old drunk," Myra Barbra said of Clifford  
to her. Then her <sup>eyes</sup> ~~eyes~~ tipped up to the ceiling  
leaving one <sup>of them</sup> ~~of them~~.

The girls lay their platinum bobbed heads  
back to the wall & swung their chubby legs to  
the rhythm of the returning footsteps.

"I'll found one on you guys," said ~~the~~  
Sheriff, going back to his desk through the  
scents of chlorine bleach & whiskey that wafted  
in the air. "Sense see" he said, as  
he sat ~~pouring over~~ scanning <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ ~~pages~~  
he flipped ~~the~~ in the gray bound book. "Child...  
child... child neglect... child abuse... child mo-lect  
(...)"

"Hold it, just a ~~dermal~~ <sup>minute</sup> minute," shouted  
Clifford, rising to his feet. "You bruckin'  
fuckin' air & saddle me with ~~two~~ such  
a charge. I ain't been in the army for  
nothin'. I know what child mo-lectatin  
is & I ain't ~~no~~ done it. As a matter  
of fact, I ain't done nothin' but give  
these lil' ole gals a bod needed hair  
cuttin'."

"Look at 'em, settin' over there, <sup>skared</sup> ~~scared~~  
plum to death of that old broad. Look

at their lil ole skint heads. I might  
may've got carried away & cut off a  
littler more'n I <sup>set out to</sup> ~~should've~~, but they was  
abornin' up. I done 'em a favor and didn't  
change any cent. And that's all I done,  
he finished & sat just as Miss Barbara  
rose.

"I'm fixing to lay you out, you  
sorry drunk," she shouted, and as he  
leaned <sup>with a drink</sup> ~~in~~ to the wall, she ~~put~~ <sup>cocked</sup> him  
in the mouth.

~~He saw she~~  
Stagg bust, and behind them he saw  
Hubert ~~the Sheriff Sol~~ shuffling with a fat <sup>arm</sup> on each hand.  
"Now, Miss Barbara, I expect we  
can ~~find~~ handle this without that," said  
~~the~~ Sheriff Sol, his baby pink skin luminous with exertion.

"I reckon you 're just better," <sup>he</sup> ~~looked~~ <sup>shouted</sup>  
at them lil ole heads. They're rivin', &  
he done it."

Clifford ducked beneath his  
~~up lifted~~ <sup>up</sup> ~~raised~~ arm as the shuffling reared him  
again.

"A wooden hair in her crown & glory!"  
she spat at him as the room ~~smelled~~  
smelled with her fury. "Hit him, Hubert!"

she hollered.

"Set the ~~sharp~~ ~~sharp~~ ~~sharp~~ handle it,"  
Suz, "Sherpherd Hubert."

"He ain't doin' it. Is he?" she yelled.  
"Leave 'em time, Hon," ~~Hubert~~ said Hubert.  
"He's a checking out the law."

"Alright," she said, backing to her chair, "I'll  
give him ten minutes to ~~finish~~ <sup>finish</sup> it out & then  
I'm aightin' into him, my ownself."

"Now, Miss Barbara, it's <sup>ain't</sup> all that  
simple," said ~~the~~ <sup>Sheriff</sup> ~~Sheriff~~ <sup>Sheriff</sup> going back to the  
desk for the ~~key~~ <sup>key</sup> look and striding back through  
the middle. ~~Now~~

"Well, it's simple to me," she  
shouted, rose & sat.

"See heah, <sup>it's just a matter of</sup> ~~if~~ <sup>they ain't no law of doin' that,</sup> he'd a harmed one of 'em,  
we'd have a airtight case of We could lock  
him up & ~~throw~~ throw away the key. But  
he didn't of ~~them~~ <sup>you</sup> & you see? Did he  
girls?" he asked <sup>where</sup> <sup>he</sup> stopped in front of  
the three who fidgeted quietly.

They nodded their noses.

"Did he make y'all let him shake off your  
hair?" he inquired.

"Yeh, what about that?" ventured Clifford.

Again they nodded.

"He didn't hurt y'all in no way. Did he?"

"Nossir," one of them said.

"Just 'look at em, churf," shouted Mrs. Barbra.

"If you a looking," ~~the~~ Sheriff shouted at her. "And, for a fact, their heads is skint, but they, ever one, admitted he didn't hold 'em down & cut it off."

"You girls like your new hair cuts?" he asked softly, looking back at them.

They shrugged their shoulders in unison.

"Speak up," he said.

"Some," one said, looking leaning away from their mama.

"They ain't even had no chance to see themselves in the looking glass. ~~See~~ When we come home from town, he was long gone and they was just a sitting, pitiful or could be, by the under. Wadn't they Hubert?" she prodded.

Hubert nodded unenthusiastically.

"What was you doing messin' around Mr. Hubert's place?" ~~the~~ Sheriff asked, turning ~~on~~ to Clifford who craned his

neck from side to side to interpret the proceedings.

"It just happened back along there and stopped by for a <sup>swift</sup> ~~single~~ of ~~water~~ water, it being hot & all. And they give me some. That's all they was to it," he said, watching them watch him.

"You ever drinking body-Whore & you?" asked ~~the~~ <sup>sheriff</sup> ~~sheriff~~, jangling ~~change~~ <sup>keys</sup> in his pockets as he ~~peered~~ <sup>looked</sup> over him.

"Some," Clefford said, scratching his head. "To tell the truth, it was, I shurf, it probably wouldn't no more 'me thought ~~of~~ cutting no hair, <sup>for nothing</sup> if it hadn't been. Been on it going on two weeks," he confessed, looking around at the girls. "I used to be a cracker-jack barber when it was in the army."

"Well, you ain't no more," shouted Miss Barbaron.

"Don't look like hit, Man," he said, looking down again.

"Well, let me ask you this, what'll it take to <sup>satisfy you so you can</sup> settle this up <sup>for home</sup> ~~and~~ to supper?" asked ~~the~~ <sup>sheriff</sup> ~~sheriff~~, rocking on the ~~side~~ <sup>sides</sup> of his feet with his arms crossed.



"Lock him up," shouted Miss Barbara.  
"Can't do it Mam, ~~the Sheriff~~ <sup>Sheriff Sol</sup>  
explained, walking now to & fro.  
"Ain't no law against what he done."  
"Make up one," she shouted.  
"Awright," he said. "We'll make  
~~up~~ up one. Being as how ~~to~~ to get  
to the Fla. line beer joint - which was  
about where he was headed from -  
he ain't got no choice but to ~~pass~~  
come by your place, what if you all  
was to ~~think up~~ come up with  
something to remind him of what he  
done every last time he gets a  
notion to start in ~~drinking~~."

"Yeah," said Miss Barbara. "Remind  
him of his sins."

"That's right, Miss Barbara. You  
could have one of those lil ole gals  
run out and ~~skin~~ shine her skint head  
at 'em when he comes by."

"What about when it grows out?" she  
querried.

"I hadn't thought about that," he said  
tapping his mouth with his fingers. "What  
you think about it, Hubert?"

"One thing about as good as another,  
best of my ~~of~~ estimation," <sup>Hubert</sup> said,  
dropping his chin to his neck.

"You don't even care that you  
own your gun in rent, do you?"  
shouted <sup>Barham</sup>.

"Yeh. Shore I do, <sup>he said</sup>, but I just  
ain't got no fitter ideas that'll  
~~change nothing~~ grow it back like it was."

"Girls, let me put it to y'all," ~~the~~  
Sheriff <sup>he</sup> said, leaning propping his hands on  
his bent knees to lower his face to  
theirs. "What y'all think'd make  
Old ~~Cliff~~ Clifford, there, not never take  
it on hisself to chop off <sup>no more?</sup> <sup>him?</sup> no little girlies'  
hair?"

They shrugged their shoulders again.

"Well, I'm gonna give y'all a  
few minutes to come up with something.  
And they ain't no body gonna get into  
it, neither. Y'all just ~~put~~ step right  
out ~~there~~ <sup>in</sup> the hall and mull it  
over & come back in here and tell us,  
and we'll abide by it. You understand?"  
he asked.

"Yessir," said one eagerly.

"Just come on with me," he said, leading as they dropped to their bare feet & paddled behind him like a tribunal of ~~many~~ <sup>spindature</sup> monks.

He went out & returned, silently pacing ~~down~~ in the aisle, <sup>went to her desk</sup> <sup>where she</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>impressed</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>creaking</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>her</sup> <sup>feet</sup> <sup>on</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>floor</sup>. The clock over the desk lapsed fifteen minutes before the door knob turned & swung inward, only enough to reveal a timid <sup>character</sup> face.

She pushed it, ever so slowly, and entered, trailed by the other two, cradling their hands and looking down at their feet scrunched on the tile floor.

~~The sheriff sat~~

"Well, what'd y'all come up with?" ~~the~~ <sup>sheriff</sup> ~~sheriff~~ asked.

"Gloria's gonna tell it, 'one said & rat. The other one followed suit, leaving Gloria twisting with her hands clasped behind. She stopped and thrust her chest forward, plump as duck breasts, released her ~~bottom~~ bottom lip clamped by a crescent of tiny teeth, and began her steady oration:

decorate  
ma's  
pore

"Well what we tried to come up with,  
Mister ~~had~~ <sup>was</sup> something Ma could still feel  
proud of and me & Fannie Ruth & Annie Bell  
could get some good out of, too." she began,  
turning to face Clifford. "And ~~something~~  
~~the address~~ that'd learn the barber a  
lesson at the same time. He ain't all  
that handy with hair," she said, reaching  
up to <sup>touch</sup> the evidence. "Probably don't no more  
have a Georgia licence than the man in  
the moon do. But he cut it off, and we  
let him <sup>go</sup>. Ma, here, ain't afixing to let  
him off without a lesson, neither," she  
said ~~turning~~ facing her Ma, then  
looking back at ~~the sheriff~~ <sup>sheriff Sol.</sup>. "We brunched  
ever last hair up & cramed 'em in a croker  
bread and put it in the smoke house so  
Ma wouldn't find it. So we still got it.  
And we figgered on making honey glue it  
back on. But first washing, it'd fall off,  
I reckon. And besides that, he wouldn't  
abairnt nothing. Ma wouldn't have no satisfaction  
frum hit."

"Mister" she said, eyeing Clifford who  
sat forward for the ~~sentencing~~ judgment.

"We want you to make us ~~one~~ long pig tail  
out 'me it. Ever last hair plaited til you  
get a rope that'll decorate Ma's porch  
so she can ~~look~~ look at it, fiddle with it,  
if she <sup>has any notion</sup> ~~wants to~~ while she's setting, rocking.

Then everytime you come by a hankering for  
some likker, you'll see it hanging there  
in the wind to remind you. The figger  
you could put that down in your lawyer  
book, <sup>with a ribbon</sup> ~~just~~ in case you come up on  
another 'un like this! And that's about all  
we got to say," she finished, faced each  
with an adamant stare of sat.

~~The Sheriff~~ <sup>Clifford</sup> wrote it on the half blank  
page in the back of the law book, slapped  
it shut, and looked at Clifford.

"Come tomorrow morning, you be setting in  
that smoke house making a pig tail. When  
you get done, I want to see it hanging out  
on the front porch of ~~the~~ Sam's place.  
You hear?"

"Yessir," said Clifford.

The next two weeks passed in gnawing  
timelessness spent by Clifford braiding the

platinum hairs together. At last, he dumped  
the sack and found ~~none~~ it depleted. He  
looped it around his arms & exited the  
gray building that had housed his energy  
for ~~twelve~~ fourteen days. It was mid-morning,  
~~morning~~ overcast, hollow heavy with the  
threat of rain.

They were waiting beside the door steps  
as he plodded past with his head hanging,

On an existing nail <sup>above</sup> the rocker  
at the ~~edge~~ <sup>end of the</sup> porch, he hung it and  
stepped back to ~~admire~~ <sup>watch</sup> it brighten the  
mushy morning <sup>light</sup> ~~It~~ swayed in the breeze,

~~platinum~~ <sup>platinum</sup> & gold, ~~vented~~ <sup>shimmering</sup>  
nuances of silver from ceiling to floor, a ubiquitous pa  
~~selon~~ <sup>selon</sup> ~~thru~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~my~~ <sup>my</sup> ~~eyes~~ <sup>eyes</sup> ~~gray~~ <sup>gray</sup> in the  
severed but not lost.

~~It got ever last hair on it for  
said proudly, keeping his eyes riveted on it as he  
stepped back & mopped his brow.~~

→ "You girls is got you a play pretty, now,"  
Clifford said proudly, ~~keeping~~ <sup>keeping</sup> his eyes riveted on it as he  
stepped back & mopped his brow. "It got ever last  
~~hair in it,~~ dab of your crown & glory in it."