

Sunday, Nov. 20 '88

Dear Janice,

Here is your copy of "Shorn Glory" as well as my edited version of the same. I hope that you'll like some of my suggestions. My plan had been to produce a nice clean, ^{edited} manuscript with the aid of Carol Mann's word processor, but this is as far as I got. I'm sorry. I never submitted this to The Saturday Evening Post, but I hope you will try them again yourself. Or you could ask your new agent ☺.

I gave Susan Ramer "Burning of the Hills" ☺ to read and as soon as I have chapter 1 of "Two Shades" I will give that manuscript ☺ to her as well. It will certainly please me if she becomes your agent.

It's been raining all day and so, we have spent most of the day at home. The next three days are free for me and then Bob and I will both go to Charlotte, NC for Thanksgiving. Hope your Thanksgiving is nice.

Best,
Nancy

Shorn Glory

While the sun approached the eleven mark on the sundial bleached by summer, Clifford staggered alongside his bicycle down the dun dirt road. The ^{bicycles'} rear fender rasped ^{against the tire} in rhythm with the locusts, and the spokes clicked in time with the grasshoppers, ^{that flitted around between the} flitting ~~from ditches to~~ ^{and the} dogfennels.

The road swarmed in white waves and sparkled with bursting stars as his tongue darted to the ridge between his nose and mouth. He stopped, leaning ^{ed} the bicycle on his boney hip, ^{and} as he mopped ^{up} the perspiration with his neckerchief from his stubbly beard. From his back pocket he slid ^a the pint of whiskey, uncapped it ^{as he drew it to} on its way to his mouth, ^{first} tasted its acrid sweetness, before he guzzled ^{it}, burped, and put it back in his pocket.

Then he rode off, ^{swerving} weaving into the waves, ^{of heat rising up from the road.} following the road-
~~defined by the lines, high about the washboard ruts and straight into~~
the brick well. 2

The jolt sent him sailing back ^{with} from the blurry red bricks where mortar ran and puddled in the white sand.

Looking up into the sky, which reeled with angel faces ^{he saw} streaming ^{from which} silver hair, ^{streamed} he chuckled, ^{he} shook his head and ^{tried to} focused on the sand and mortar rushing at his feet.

Suddenly, a cold shock of water cascaded over his head. He shook himself like a dog and sputtered, hearing the angel voices above him.

"He's coming to hisself," one said.

He gathered his numb self to his feet, meeting them eye to eye as he rose. Three sets of blue eyes encircled him like a ring of sapphire gems pounded into a pale brown wall. ^{Next} Focusing on the solid ^{his gaze} ^{red brick} well, he waited.

"He's bad drunk," said one.

He snapped ^{his head around} toward the face before it could spin, a fat girlface with cheeks like candied apples.

"You th'owed water on me," he stammered.

"Gloriann done it to bring you to," she said, motioning toward her double on the other side of him.

He focused rapidly on the other one who nodded an affirmative double chin on her chest. Quickly, he switched back to the first, waist-high to him, and ^{his} his blurry eyes snagged yet another, in front of him, who also seemed to struggle beneath a head weighted with molten silver running to her thighs.

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

"You ladies mind if I set a spell?"

They shrugged their chubby shoulders, indifferently.

He staggered off towards the paisley shade of the tree looking back all the while at the threesome which clustered and crept behind him.

"Y'all ain't all that friendly. Are you?" he called back, dabbing his face with his kerchief as he examined the scars of mouths for smiles. They were fixed with frowns, their eyes rigid and unyielding, even as he smiled at them.

Finally, the tree stayed ^{in place} long enough for him to collapse against it and slide into its soothing curve. Resting his hand on a bent knee, he weakly waved the red kerchief at them while he ⁱⁿcoaxed them to the shade, with garbled statements.

"I bet yall think I'm a plum mess. Don't yall?"

They huddled together, like sheep, ^{they} and stopped on the fringe of the shade that threw a lacey shadow on their molded heads.

"Where's yalles Mommer and Popper at?" he asked.

"Gone to Val'osta to take off the tobaccer," said Gloriann, hesitating as the other icy eyes bore down on her.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Gloriann. She done told you," she said, nodding to her sister on the other side.

"All yall named Gloriann?"

They shook their heads.

"What's yalles names?" he asked the others.

"That's Annie Bell and this'un here's Janie Ruth," said Gloriann.

"Let's see now. We got us a Gloriann, got us a Janie Ruth and a Annie Bell," he said, straightening out three ← fingers like rabbit ears, in the air above his knee. "So they is three of yall! Huh?"

They nodded in perfect unison, swaying in their blue-^{pottery}sprigged shifts in harmony with the mocking bird's chant above him.

He looked up, ^{at the bird} and the bird defecated on his nose and fled. He ^{11/10}screwed up his chapped mouth and ^{ed}laughed, wiping it off his nose with the kerchief.

"They ain't nothing more despiteful than a dadbummed mocking bird," he said, looking at the three faces fractured with smiles.

"One of yall younguns want to get me a dipper've water?"

Gloriann twisted, looked at her sisters, and ambled toward the well. They watched her, twisting sideways to see her draw the bucket to the top and dunk the pint jar that stayed on the ledge.

When she returned to the edge of the shade, she paused for the other two to inch ^{up} alongside her, ^{hand} stopped and extended the jar to his ^{clifford.} far-reaching hand.

He grunted ^{in appreciation} as he took ^{the jar of water,} it, touching her fingers, which drew back reflexively like a reverse snake strike. They stepped back to watch him guzzle it. Water trickled down his scrawny neck to his frayed shirt collar.

He burped, sighed long and heavy, and thrust the ^{only} jar back toward them, but they backed away, so he ground the base of it into the dirt between two roots.

"Thank you, mam, he said, leaning back to watch the leaves settle above. "How ole are yall?" he asked, absently.

"Going on ten," said Gloriann.

"Going on ten, huh?" he said. "All of yall?" he added, looking at them again.

"Yessir," said Gloriann.

"Oh! Yall must be what they call triplets!" he said, enlightened. "I ain't never had the chance to meet up with no triplets before."

"Yessir," said Gloriann, twisting self-consciously. The others joined her, one of them sucking on her fingers.

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

They laughed meekly, looking down.

"Yall got shoes?" he asked, looking at their dirty brown toes.

"For Sunday school," Gloriann said, clasping her hands behind her as she swayed.

"Sunday school, huh?" he said, looking up as if he were reminiscing. "I used to go to Sunday school, my ownself, when I was a little bitty boy."

"You did?" asked one of them.

"Yep," he said. "Shore as Sunday rolled around, ma'd light out to church a'dragging me by the hand up the old sawmill road. "Church of God" it was. Remember it like yesterday."

"Us too," one said.

"Where bouts you from?" asked another one.

He looked quickly to see who spoke and saw only the three stern faces framed with platinum.

"Over yonder at Tarver," he said. "Yall ever been around them parts?"

They shook their heads.

"Well, you ain't missed all that much. Ain't nothing but a train track and a shutdown tur'tentine commissary now."

They moved nearer as he pulled himself up by his knee.

"Listen here," he said earnestly. "Yall younguns is needing a haircutting bad."

"A haircutting?" said Gloriann, combing her fingers through her silken tresses which hung down to her thighs. Another one twisted hers around her like a belt. And the third only looked at hers hanging like tattered silk.

"Ain't yall hot?"

"Yessir," said Gloriann, looking out over the landscape.

"Well, run on in yunder and git your Mommer's cutting scissors and I'll git shed of it for yall."

"Nosir," said Gloriann.

The others nodded in agreement.

"How come?" he asked.

They shrugged, still glaring at him.

"Well I'd hate like hell-uh-heck to have to be the one a'toting around them headfuls of hair in this here heat," he said and laid back against the tree, pretending to take a nap but watching them finger their hair all the while.

One of them flipped her head ^{back} and the hair undulated in evanescent waves to her square thighs.

"Yep," he said, with a sanguine air. "I'd shore get shed of that stuff if it was mine. Course I can keep mine cut close cause I'm a barber. Been to barbering school and everything," he said, running his fingers through his spikey hair.

"You a real barber?" one asked.

"Yep. Got my Georgia license and all," he said, whistling low as he looked up into the tree.

"Georgia, huh?"

"Yep," he said. "Got it in Val'osta some years back. Cut more heads of hair than I can count on my two hands."

"Run go git Ma's scissors, Janie Ruth."

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

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

"No we ain't. Go on," said Gloriann again.

"You go."

"Scardy cat."

"I ain't ascaired've nothin," said Gloriann. "It's yall two that's scared to go to the toilet by yourself. Not me."

"I ain't."

"Me neither."

"Well, go git Ma's cutting scissors," said Gloriann, waiting. "Awright, I'll do it," she added bravely as she skipped, their gazes stretching after her.

While they watched for her return, Clifford swiftly removed the bottle from his rear pocket where one crafty hand had been poised. He emptied the bottle and put it back in his pocket before they turned to look at him again.

"He's done and dozed off again, anyhow," whispered Jane Ruth.

"No, I ain't," he said, sitting up. "I'll do it, just like I said I would. For free," he added, scrambling up and brushing chinaberries from his wet seat.

They backed away and stopped.

"Yall ain't scared are you?" he asked, halting in the midst of brushing himself off .

"Huh uh," they said.

The door slammed and Gloriann dashed over from the house. The scissors gleamed in the sunlight. She rushed up to him, eager, reticient, a grin pasted on her face. She turned around and backed up to him, squinting her eyes.

He flapped his arms and exercised the yawning scissors with a broad exaggerated air as the others gaped.

With the first snip, they gasped and stood motionlessly.

"My Mommer used to have long hair, just like this," he said.

The sound, like tearing silk, merged with that of the locusts' rustle as the silver tresses landed on the roots of the chinaberry tree. A faint odor of stale perspiration stole on the air -- not unpleasant, but vulnerable as the nape of the childneck.

He snipped the hair in a jagged band around her head, the released ends flying and frizzling around her face and neck.

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

"Not if yall don't run and tattle," said Gloriann, between gritted teeth.

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

He grabbed the tree as the next girl was pushed forward. She backed up to him also and scrunched her shoulders as he repeated the warming up exercise, slurring a command for "a little more water to git hisself going."

The next shorn girl scuttled off and clasped her arms over her head as the final one backed up to the barber.

"I'm gonna give you a extræ treatment cause of you having to wait on me," he said, and snipped high above the ears, losing his original design and sloping it to a diagonal on completion. She resembled a doll whose head had been screwed ^{on} sideways.

He sprawled ^{out} on the mat of hair and began snoring before his head fell back ^{against} to the trunk of the tree. One hand clasped a bouquet of hair and the other ^{hand} still latched ^{clutched} onto the scissors.

When he ^{awoke}, the sun was straight in front of him and the girls were gone. Not a strand of hair remained, not the scissors, and he thought he had only imagined it in his drunken stupor.

The house was still and appeared vacant, but at the window overlooking the tree, a pyramid of melon heads peered through the wavy glass pane. He waved, but they remained planted, almost eerie, and sad in the final stance of evening with their tiers of oddly cropped hair.

He shook his head and mopped his face with the kerchief as he straddled his bicycle and tooled east with the heat on his back.

When he bolted onto the Tarver highway, clumps of gravel seemed to jump to his eyes and thud with his head, a pulsing pain that he would soon relieve promised relief from the bottle that waited on the table at his home trailer. He pedaled faster as the sunset flashed saffron on the flanks of pines and sank to a steely dusk. [A band of lame woodsmoke lay in his path; he penetrated it and closed the distance, swerving alongside the blue aluminum wall that separated him from the bottle on the other side.]

Through the door, in the drooped dusk and the creaks his movements made, he trod in the welcome isolation where the rustling pushed back the world. He drained the bottle and collapsed on the pallet, beneath a row of windows, open to the dusk, [filled with the flurry of fireflies sparking the woods, like the aftermath of fire.] There was no sound, just silence and his pain 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 dust, and the clap of the car door made him start. He groaned and padded on stockinged feet to the window on the other side, seeing Sheriff Sol planted beside the official car of Duran County with his arm propped on top.

"What the hell?" Clifford mumbled.

"Weeks! You in there?" Sheriff Sol called.

"Yep. What you want?"

"I need to talk with you. Get out here!"

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

"How de do, Shurf," he slurred, cleared his throat and groped for sober thoughts.

"Weeks, what's this I hear about you messing around with them little gals of Hubert Sims, this morning?"

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

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

"I ain't got nary notion what you're atalking ^{about}, Shurf," Clifford said, sobering rapidly.

"Well, they're awaiting back yonder at the courthouse for me to haul you in. Get right and let's go," Sheriff Sol said with finality as he got back into the car and waited.

"I hope they ain't accountin on me to ^{accept} lay the blame on for something I ain't had nothing to do with," mumbled Clifford as he tugged his brogans on, leaving the laces to trail behind the stuck-out tongues.

In the sheriff's office, the white light blinded him and he hesitated at the door, rubbing his bleary eyes. When he looked up he saw his accusers lined up along one wall in straight chairs, with straight faces, and eyes that pinned him down.

He laughed and Sheriff Sol jerked his ^{by the} arm, forcing him to sit across from the ^{went} going on to his desk, removing his hat, and rearing ^{ed} back on his seat of authority, a padded chair that squeaked in protest.

"I wouldn't be alauding if I was you," he said, focusing on the wall where Clifford sat alone. "You gonna find out you can't just come back here and run harum-scarum over people just cause you gone off and come back smart."

Clifford laughed again and watched the first of the five sets of eyes drop. Hubert Sims looked down at the laced fingers of his weathered hands and tapped the toe of his shoe on the floor.

"What you got to say for yourself?" asked his wife -- not asking, but bursting with the need to say something, as her pouty mouth opened and it fell out.

Like stacked ^{up} cow patties, rows of brown braids nestled on the crown of her head. Her red face exuded contempt, and her staunch shoulders shored it up, broader with her big arms crossed in a huff beneath her [?] sapped breasts. One hand clutched a balled ^{up} white handkerchief.

On the other side of her, the three little girls with cow-gnawed heads ^{that looked like they'd been gnawed on by cows} leaned toward her with three sets of accusing eyes bearing down, unblinking, on him. ^{their mother but bore down on him w/ accusing, unblinking eyes.}

"Hey little girls," he said.

They blinked and shifted, but ^{positions} resumed their bent postures ^{than} toward the large lap of their Mama. ^{-- all three bent}

"Is he the one, girls?" asked Sheriff Sol, tapping his lips with two fingers while he rocked ^{mouth} on the swivel chair. ^{back + forth}

All three nodded affirmatively.

"A woman's hair is her crown and glory!" erupted from the Mama's mouth, stern and rigid as a preacher. "I want that good-for-nothin drunk locked up for what he done!"

"Well, Miss Barbran, to tell the honest to God truth, I ain't shore they's no law agin what he done," said Sheriff Sol, rocking forward and clanking his elbows to the desk.

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

"Yessum," said Sheriff Sol, rising. "Let me see if I can't borry one of Judge Weverington's law books and look it up. I hate like the dickens to wake him up to ask him."

He left the office, ~~and his steps echoing from the corridor were all that comprised the sounds in the room.~~

? [] [Clifford looked at the three sets of blue eyes punched in the children's clay faces and they drew them inward to slits.]

Their mama nudged their papa and he sank lower into his neutral position, hunched between his knees over the black tile floor.

"Yall don't pay that ole drunk no 'tention," Miss Barbran said of Clifford, to Clifford. Then her face tipped up to the ceiling leaving one compacent chin.

The girls lay their bobbed heads back ^{against} to the wall and swung their stubby legs to the rhythm of the returning footsteps.

? [] "I found one on youngun," said Sheriff Sol, going back to his desk. ~~through~~ [The scents of choloreine bleach and whiskey wafting ^{at} in the aisle.] "Lemme see," he said, as he sat scanning the tissue ^{him} pages he flipped ^{through} in the gray bound book. "Child...child... child neglect... cheld abusion...child mo-les-tation...."

"Hold it just a G.D. minute!" shouted Clifford, rising to his feet. "You bunch've hicks ain't asaddling me ^{(i)w}th no sech a charge. I ain't been in the army for nothing. I know what child mo-lestation is and I ain't done it. As a matter of fact, I ain't done nothing but give them lil ole gals a bad-needed haircutting.

"Look at'em setting over there, skeared plum to death of that old broad. Look at their lil ole skint heads. I may've got carried away and cut off a little moren I set out to, but they was aburning up. I don't'em a favor and didn't charge ary cent. And that's all I done," he finished and sat just as Miss Barbran rose.

"I'm fixin to lay you out, you sorry drunk!" she ~~s~~shouted and, as he leaned with a smirk into the wall, she socked him in the mouth.

Stars burst and ^{through} behind them he saw Hubert and Sherriff Sol shuffling with a fat arm in each hand.

"Now, Miss Barbran, I expect we can handle this wintout that," said Sheriff Sol, his baby pink skin luminouf with exertion.

"I reckon you just better!" she shouted. "Look ~~at~~ them lil ole heads. They're ruint. And he done it."

Clifford cowered beneath his uplifted arms as the shuffling neared him again.

"A womn's hair is her crown and glory!" she spat at him as the room swelled with her fury. "Hit him, Hubert!" she hollered.

"Let the shurf handle ^{it}, Sug," whimpered Hubert.

"He ain't adoing it. ^{is} he?" she yelled.

"Give him time, ~~Mon~~," said hubert. "he's achecking out the law."

"Awright," she said, backing up to her chair. "I'll give him ten minutes to figger it out and then I'm alighted into him myownself."

"Now Miss Barbran, it ain't all that simple," said Sheriff Sol, going back to the desk for the gray book and striding back through the middle.

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

"See heah, he's just a smart alec, and they ain't no law agin that. If he'd aharmed one of'em, we'd have us a airtight case. We could lock him up and th'ow away the key. But he didn't. Dont' you see? Did he, girls?" he asked where he stopped in front of the three ^{who} ~~we~~ fidgeted quietly.

They ~~signaled their nosirs.~~ *shook their heads.*

"Did he make yall let him whack off your hair?" he inquired.

"Yeh, wabt about that?" ventured Clifford.

Again, they shook their heads.

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

"Nosir," one of them said.

"Just look at'em, Shurf!" shouted Miss Barbran.

"I am alooking." Sheriff Sol shouted at her. "And, for a fact, their heads is skint, but they, everone, admitted he didn't hold'em down and cut it off.

"You girls like you new haircuts?" he asked softly, looking back at them.

They shrugged their shoulders in unison.

"Speak up," he said.

"Some," one said, leaning away from her mama.

"They ain't even had no chance to see their selfs in the looking glass. When we come home from town, he was long gone, and they was just asetting, pitiful as could be by the winder. Wadn't they, Hubert?" she prodded.

Hubert nodded unenthusiastically.

"Wahnt was you doing messing around Mr. Hubert's place?" Sheriff Sol asked, turning to Clifford who craned his neck from side to side to interpret the proceedings.

"I just happened back along there and stopped by for a swig of water -- it being hot and all. And they give me some. That's all they was to it," he said, watching them watch him.

"You was adrinking bad. Wadn't you?" asked Sheriff Sol, jangling change in his pockets as he stood over him.

"Some," Clifford said, scratching his head. "To tell the truth, I was, Shurf. I pro'bly wouldn't no more've though of cutting no hair than nothing if I hadn't abeen. Been on it going on two weeks," he confessed, looking around at the girls. "I used to be a god hand to barber when I was in the army in fifty-two."

"Well, in two years, you lost it. You ain't no more!" shouted Miss Barbran.

"Don't look like hit, Mam," he said, looking down agian.

"Well, let me ask yall this. What'll it take to satisfy you all, so I can settle this up and go home to supper?" asked Sheriff Sol, rocking on the sides of his feet with his arms crossed.

"Lock him up!" shouted Miss Barbran.

"Can't do it, Mam," Sheriff Sol explained, walking now to and fro. "Ain't no law agin what he done."

"Make one up," she shouted.

"Awright," he said. "We'll make us up one. Being as how to get to the Florida line beer joint -- which was about where he was headed from -- he ain't got no choice but to come by your place. Wahnt if

yall was to come up with something to remind him of what he done, every last time he takes a notion to set in adrinkin?"

"Yeh," said Miss Barbran. "Remind him of his sins!"

"That's right, Miss Barbran. You could have one of them lil ole gals run out and hshine her skint head at'em when he comes by."

"Wah't about when it growed out?" she queried.

"I hand't thought about tha'," he said, tapping his mouth with his fingers. "Wah't do you think about it, Hubert?"

"One thing's about as good as another, best of my estimation," Hubert said, dropping his chin to his chest.

"You don't even care that your own younguns is ruint. Do you?" ejaculated Miss Barbran.

"Yeh. Shore I do, Sug," he said. "I just ain't got no fitten idears that'll grow it back like it was."

"Girls, let me put it to yall," Sheriff Sol said, propping his hands on his bent knees to lower his face to theirs. "What yall think'd make old Clifford there not never take it on hissself to chop off no little girlses' hair no more? huh?"

They shrugged their shoulders, again.

"Well, I'm gonna give yall a few minutes to come up with something. And they ain't nobody gonna get into it, enither. Yall just step right out yonder in the hall nad mull it over and 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, leding as they dropped to their barefeet and padded behind him like a tribunal of miniature monks.

He went out and returned, silently pacing in the aisle, then went to his desk where he mused in the creaking of his chair.

The clock over the desk lapsed fifteen minutes before the door knob turned and the door swung inward, only enough to reveal a timid, cherub face.

2 {} She pushed it, ever so slowly, and entered, trailed by the other two, [cradling their hands] and looking down at their toes scrunching on the tile floor.

"Well, what'd yall come up with?" Sheriff Sol asked.

"Gloriann's gonna tell it," one said, and sat down. The other followed suit, leaving Gloriann twisting from side to side with her hands clasped behind her.

? {} She stopped and thrust her chest, forward — plump as duck breasts, forward, releasing her bottom lip, [clamped by a crescent of tiny teeth] and began her steady oration:

"Well, what we tried to come up with, Mister Shurf, was something ma could still feel proud of, and me and Janie Ruth and Annie Bell could get some good out of, too, " she began, turning to face Clifford. "And something that'd learn the barber here a lesson, at the same time. he ain't all that handy with hair," she said, reaching up to touch the evident. "Pro'bly don't no more have a Georgia license than the man in the moon do. But he cut it off, and we let him.

"Ma here ain't fixing to let him off without a lesson, neither," she said, facing her mama, then looking back at Sheriff Sol. "We bunched everlast hair up and crammed'em in a croker sack so ma wouldn't find it. So we still got it. And we figgered on making him glue it back on. But first washing, it'd fall off, I reckon. And besides

that, he wouldn't alearnt nothing. Ma wouldn't have no satisfaction from hit neither.

"Mister," she said, eyeing Clifford who sat forward for the judgement. "We want you to make us one long pigtail out've it. Ever last hair plaited til you get a rope that'll decorate ma's porch so she can look at it, fiddle with, if she takes a notion, while sh'e setting arocking. Then evertime you come by ahankering for some likker, you'll see it hangin there in the wind to remind you.

"We figger you could put that down in your lawyering book, Mister Shurf, jsut 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 admant stare and sat down.

Sheriff Sol wrote it on the half-blank page in the back of the law book, slapped it shut, and looked at Clifford.

"Com'e tomorrer morning, you be asetting in that smokehouse at Sim's place, making a pigtail. When you get done, I want to see it ahanging out on the front porch. You hear?"

"Yessir," said Clifford.

~~The next two weeks passed in gnawing timelessness, spent by Clifford in waning sobriety~~ *spent the next two weeks sober,* braiding the platinum hairs together. ~~Tediously, he had separated the mangled tresses, and spread them on a board placed between two sawhorses, like precious threads of gold.~~ *First,* ~~he had~~ *out, like precious threads of gold,* separated the mangled tresses, and spread them on a board placed between two sawhorses, like precious threads of gold. When the outside light dimmed, he slept, rising when it bloomed again and grew like vines through the open plank door and cracks. Then he wove, reweaving when he discovered a lost strand in some

corner, ~~brightening the dusk~~. At last, he dumped ^{out} his ^{the} sack and found it depleted. He looped the braid around his arm and exited the gray building that had housed ^{him} his ~~every~~ for fourteen days. It was midmornign, overcast, and heavy with the threat of rain.

They were waiting beside the doorsteps, arms linked like paper dolls, as he plodded past with his head lowered.

On an existing nail above the rocker at the end of the austere porch, he hung it and stepped ^{back} back to watch it brighten the musty mornign.

"You girls is got you a play pretty now," Clifford said proudly, his eyes riveted on it as he stepped back and mopped his brow. "I got ever last dab of yalls crown and glory in it."

It swayed in the breeze, bright and bold, shimmering [with nuances of silver to a core of pewter,] from ceiling to floor, a ubiquitous part of them, severed by not lost.