From the Color Purple

DEAR GOD, I spend my wedding day running from the oldest boy. He twelve. His mama died in his arms and he don't want to hear nothing bout no new one. He pick up a rock and laid my head open. The blood run all down tween my breasts. His daddy say Don't do that! But that's all he say. He got four children, instead of three, two boys and two girls. The girls hair ain't been comb since their mammy died. I tell him I'll just have to shave it off. Start fresh. He say bad luck to cut a woman hair. So after I bandage my head best I can and cook dinner— they have a spring, not a well, and a wood stove look like a truck— I start trying to untangle hair. They only six and eight and they cry. They scream. They cuse me of murder. By ten o'clock I'm done. They cry theirselves to sleep. But I don't cry. I lay there thinking bout Nettie while he on top of me, wonder if she safe. And then I think bout Shug Avery. I know what he doing to me he done to Shug Avery and maybe she like it. I put my arm around him. DEAR GOD, I was in town sitting on the wagon while Mr. was in the dry good store. I seen my baby girl. I knowed it was her. She look just like me and my daddy. Like more us then us is ourself. She be tagging long hind a lady and they be dress just alike. They pass the wagon and I speak. The lady speak pleasant. My little girl she look up and sort of frown. She fretting over something. She got my eyes just like they is today. Like everything I seen, she seen, and she pondering it. I think she mine. My heart say she mine. But I don't know she mine. If she mine, her name Olivia. I embroder Olivia in the seat of all her daidies. I embrody lot of little stars and flowers too. He took the daidies when he took her. She was bout two month old. Now she bout six. I clam down from the wagon and I follow Olivia and her new mammy into a store. I watch her run her hand long side the counter, like she ain't interested in nothing. Her ma is buying cloth. She say Don't touch nothing. Olivia yawn. That real pretty, I say, and help her mama drape a piece of cloth close to her face. She smile. Gonna make me an my girl some new dresses, she say. Her daddy be so proud. Who her daddy, I blurt out. It like at last somebody know. She say Mr. . But that ain't my daddy name. Mr. ? I say. Who he? She look like I ast something none of my bidniss. The Reverend Mr. , she say, then turn her face to the clerk. He say. Girl you want that cloth or not? We got other customers sides you. She say. Yes sir. I want five yards, please sir. He snatch the cloth and thump down the bolt. He don't measure. When he think he got five yard he tare it off. That be a dollar and thirty cent, he say. You need thread? She say, Naw suh. He say. You can't sew thout thread. He pick up a spool and hold it gainst the cloth. That look like it bout the right color. Don't you think. She say, Yessuh. He start to whistle. Take two dollars. Give her a quarter back. He look at me. You want something gal? I say, Naw Suh. I trail long behind them on the street. I don't have nothing to offer and I feels poor. She look up and down the street. He ain't here. He ain't here. She say like she gon cry. Who ain't? I ast. The Reverend Mr. , she say. He took the wagon. My husband wagon right here, I say. She clam up. I thank you kindly, she say. Us sit looking at all the folks that's come to town. I never seen so many even at church. Some be dress too. Some don't hit on much. Dust git all up the ladies dress. She ast me Who is my husband, now I know all bout hers. She laugh a little. I say Mr. . She say. Sure nuff? Like she know all about him. Just didn't know he was married. He a fine looking man, she say. Not a finer looking one in the county. White or black, she say. He do look all right, I say. But I don't think about it while I say it. Most times mens look pretty much alike to me. How long you had your little girl? I ast. Oh, she be seven her next birthday. When that? I ast. She think back. Then she say, December. I think, November. I say, real easy. What you call her? She say, oh, we calls her Pauline. My heart knock. Then she frown. But I calls her Olivia. Why you call her Olivia if it ain't her name? I ast. Well, just look at her, she say sort of impish, turning to look at the child, don't she look like a Olivia to you? Look at her eyes, for god's sake. Somebody ole would have eyes like that. So I call her ole Livia. She chuckle. Naw. Olivia, she say, patting the child hair. Well, here come the Reverend Mr. , she say. I see a wagon and a great big man in black holding a whip. We sure do thank you for your hospitality. She laugh again, look at the horses flicking flies off they rump, /-/orsepita lity, she say. And I git it and laugh. It feel like to split my face. Mr. , come out the store. Clam up in the wagon. Set down. Say real slow. What you setting here laughing like a fool fer?

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