

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in their building, Della would have let her hair hang out the window to dry just to reduce the value of the queen's jewels. What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?" At seven o'clock that night the coffee was made and the pan on the back of the stove was hot and ready to cook the meat. Jim was never late coming home from work. Della held the silver chain in her hand and sat near the door. Then she heard his step and she turned white for just a minute. She had a way of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty." Pennies saved one and two at a time by negotiating with the men at the market who sold vegetables and meat. Now, Mr. and Mrs. James Dillingham Young had two possessions which they valued. So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, shining like a brown waterfall. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny round curls of hair that made her look wonderfully like a schoolboy. And sixty cents of it in the smallest pieces of money – pennies. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. Which led to the thought that life is made up of little cries and smiles, with more little cries than smiles. Della finished her crying and dried her face. With a quick motion and brightness still in her eyes, she danced out the door and down the street. Where she stopped the sign read: "Madame Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." "Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the hair with an experienced hand. She gave the shopkeeper twenty-one dollars and she hurried home with the eighty-seven cents that was left. When Della arrived home she began to repair what was left of her hair. Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a dog smelling a bird. Negotiating until one's face burned with the silent knowledge of being poor. So Della cried. She stood by the window and looked out unhappily at a gray cat walking along a gray fence in a gray back yard. Expenses had been greater than she had expected. Something fine and rare -- something close to being worthy of the honor of belonging to Jim. Suddenly Della turned from the window and stood before the glass mirror and looked at herself. Her eyes were shining, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Quickly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length. The other was Della's hair. Della ran up the steps to the shop, out of breath. "I buy hair," said Madame. Down came the beautiful brown waterfall of hair. "Give it to me quick," said Della. Della looked in all the stores to choose a gift for Jim.