

# oh she gotta head fulla hair

by Ntozake Shange

**f**or months allegra simply brushed her hair. she had a dream that she had such a head fulla hair that she cdnt lift her head offa her pillows. yeah. she had light blue satin pillows like the sky in manhattan the four days a year that the wind blows. blue like the horizon in curacao, so it's hard to tell the bottom of the sea from the blue reaching to the sun. she had awready had this dream where she had such a head fulla hair that yng rita hayworth wda blushed with shame. rapunsel pull her tresses back into the tower. & lady godiva give up horse back riding.

allegra altered her social life dramatically. she brushed 100 strokes in the morning. 100 strokes midday & 100 strokes before retiring. she had a busy schedule. between the local train & the express, she brushed. she brushed between telephone calls. at the disco she brushed on the slow songs. (she didnt slow dance with strangers) she brushed her hair before making love & after. she brushed her hair in taxis. while window-shopping. when she had visitors, over the kitchen table, she brushed. allegra brushed her hair while thinking abt anything. mostly she thought abt what it wd be like when she got her full heada hair. like lifting her head in the morning wd be a chore. she wd try to turn her cheek & her hair wd weight her down. she dreamed of chaka khan, chocolate from graham central station with all seven wigs, & medusa. allegra brushed & brushed. she used olive oil, hair food, & posner's vitamin E, but she brushed & brushed.

she soon lost contact with most of her friends. she wda lost her job, but she waz on unemployment & brushed while waiting in line for her

check. she got good recommendations from her social worker: such a fastidious woman, that allegra, always brushing her hair. nothing in thr dream allegra had suggested that hair brushing, per se, had any-thing to do with her particular heada hair. a therapist wd say the head fulla hair had to do with something else, like a symbol of allegra's unconscious desires. but allegra had no therapist & to her dreams meant things like if you dreamed about tobias, then something happened to tobias, or he waz gonna show up. if you dreamed abt yr grandma who's dead, then you must be doing something she doesnt like or she wdnt a gone to all the trouble to leave heaven like that. if you dream something red, you shd stop.; if you dream something green, you shd keep doing it. if a blue person appears in yr dreams, that's a person who's yr true friend. that's how allegra saw her dreams.

& this head fulla hair she had in her dreams waz lavender & nappy as a three yr-old's in a apple tree. Allegra cd fry an egg & see the white of the egg spreading in the grease like her hair waz gonna spread in the air, but she waznt egg-yolk yellow/ she waz brown & the egg white wdnt be white at all/ it wd be her actual hair/ & it wd be lavender & go on & on forever, but irregular like a rasta 'man's hair. irregular, gargantuan & lavender. Nestled on the blue satin pillows/ pillows like the sky. & so she fried her eggs.

she bought daisies dyed lavender & laced-lavender tablemats & lavender nail polish. though she never admitted it, allegra believed in magic. she cd do strange things. when she felt moved, when something came over her. after a while everything around her waz lavender, fluffy & consuming, except her hair. she even found a man who was so malnourished he looked blue. allegra had all intentions of turning him lavender, but her cooking brought him back to health.

her sense of time changed. usedta be that daylight & nighttime waz different. but so she cd see her head fulla hair allegra began to sleep at noon & get up at midnite. her eyes wd be so stunned from visions of herself laden in lavender nappy tufts, she stopped seeing the sky as indigo & azure/ always there was a hint of violent. lavender seepin in the air abt her. she brushed. & she brushed & her hair waz certainly healthy, but not significantly changed. allegra knew not a moment of bitterness. thru all the wrist aching & tennis elbow from brushing, she smiled. no regrets. 'je ne regrette rien' she'd sing like edith piaf. when

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some people send to japan for ben-wa, others to sweden for kitty porno books. allegra simply brushed her hair & smiled as if jesus had not foresworn celibacy. when she started to schedule her day or what we wd call day & jimi hendrix wd call 'lavender blue' around the different brushes she used at different hours, something happened.

allegra found ambrosia. her hair grew pomegranates & soil, rich as round the aswan. allegra woke in her bed to bananas/ avocados/ col-lard greens/ the Tramp's latest disco hit/ fresh croissant/ pouilly-fuisse/ ishmael reed's essays/ charlotte carter's stories/ streamed from each strand of her hair. everything in the universe that allegra needefell from her hair. but it still waznt lavender. waznt any thicker or nappier than ever before. but with the bricks that plopped from where a nine year old's top braid wd be, allegra built herself a house with running water & a bidet. she found germaine monteil bath soaps & douches in her roots. her brick house with the garden she planted in the soil that fell from her head waz bob marley's permanent address & only michael manley knew the phone number. she hadda closet full of clean bed linen & the lil girl from the castro convertible commercial opened the bed repeatedly & stayed on as a helper to brush allegra's hair. allegra waz the only person i know whose every word left a purple haze on the tip of yr tongue. when this happened she said clouds were forming & she wd have to close the windows. violet rain waz hard to remove from blue satin pillows.

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