

Gold

by Ethel Rohan

He entered the kitchen, carrying the silver metal scuttle filled with coal. The draught brought in the scent of woodbines. She paused her work, her hands resting inside the bread dough, and breathed deep, having always loved that smell.

He hunkered close to the fire, his hands almost inside the leaping flames.

“You're cold,” she said.

“It's in my bones.”

She saw a flash of his skeleton, grey and splitting as his hair.

A knock sounded at the door, making her start.

The stranger was peddling hairbrushes and hair accessories. She waved him away. Her husband urged the young man to wait, pulling his purse from his trouser pocket, and purchasing a gold hairpin.

As the peddler disappeared down the dirt road, she mock-threatened her husband with her hawthorn stick, chiding him for a wasteful fool, her eyes brighter than the hairpin, the fire.

