

A Man of Battles Braids His Daughters' Hair

In the meager, rationed days of peace,
My husband, Mormon, would return to us
Sick of blood and death and desolation.

Discarding his embattled armor,
He would leave his heavy sword untouched,
Wash his hands in clearest water,
And kneel, his lips alive with prayer.

Later, he would call our daughters
And speak with them in sunlight,
Braiding carefully their waist-long hair.

It was a precious gentleness to see this man of battles
Holding three soft strands of hair,
Weaving them together snugly
While he spoke of charity and faith and hope—

They were, he said, like streams
That joined together in a river rich with living water
That would carry us into the very arms of Christ.

He talked of reaching through the unseen veil
Toward the Savior's hand,
Of finding there the borning possibility of everlasting life
And being wrapped so warmly in his pure, unfailing love.

Now, swept within the agony and dark ascending tide of war,
Our daughters braid each other's hair,
Whispering among themselves,
Clinging to the memory of sunlight and their father's hands,
Trusting in his words to lift them
Far beyond the spreading fear and rising sorrow.

—Randall L. Hall

"A Man of Battles" won second place in the 1993 *BYU Studies* Writing Contest, poetry division.