

The Sewing Tin without Red String

My father did not feel emasculated,
acknowledging he knew how to sew with grey string:

it gave him pride. To mend the seams
in his plaid ties, made him
unstoppable. To mend the tears
in my corduroy slacks, made him
heroic.

My father tucked the marigold sewing tin behind the winter coats,
preserving its contents for his next mission:

he was my Mrs. Doubtfire. To mend the gashes
on my knees, made him
a paramedic. To wipe the tears
off my lips, made him
an angel.

My ragdoll skin, an intricate, patched pattern,
reveals my father's grey needlework. His threads
stitch the sternum scar, where the girl with amethyst eyes lacerated me.
Blood oozes beyond the stitch creases, tainting the grey thread.
I try applying blue plaid patches,
yet blood seeps through the hems.
I try wrapping white gauze,
yet blood drowns the bandage.

My scarecrow persona, my embroidered skin
cannot be mended with my father's resources:

Blood cakes my chest—
I need red string.

At the Clinic

after August Stramm's "Guard Duty"

Not an inconvenience, but a
dilemma, my falling star:
your inability to thrive frightens
me; forgive me, for the
force of the steeple
in my uterus, your haven. I will cross
the universe over and backward to have a
chance together in another life. Ride your horse
upward—where Jupiter bows and the eclipse gasps:
God will let you in. Dissipate like smoke;
vanish, my queen, vanquish. Life cannot iron
your sheets, provide you meals, offer you joy; it clanks,
pities, scolds, disregards, and hates you—blink drowsily.
Heed my lamentations. Thinking of you mists
my eyes—to never know sight; to never spread
your fingers in sand. Cramped and full of fears,
baby girl, you will never taste the sweets staring,
at you from bakery windows. Never shivering
in mid-January. Frantically shivering,
I must listen to my inner cajoling,
but my heart is whispering
“I love only one: it is You!”

She was A Forward Thinker

Saxophone complementing the hum of cordial greetings,
emphasized their white-bleached smiles, overpowered with small talk—
about the climate, the state of privacy, European paintings,
or more on hypocrisy. Laughter closeted their squawk
of politics, inviting each other, instead, for exquisite
secrecies. Macaroons stacked in pyramids
adjacent to cherry and blueberry wine, as requisite
pre-conversation. Such infectious elegance in liquids,
for businesswomen stood balancing graham
and glass placidly under red lips, ignoring froth.
They become aware of their dresses tightening; their bodies are crammed:
they fidget in heels, pulling black cloth
lower nearer their knees. Humidity looms;
expecting a jazz reverie in the bathroom.

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Expecting a jazz reverie in the bathroom,
a businesswoman stretches her lace over her ankles,
ready to dance. Trumpets roar in the ballroom;
she didn't care if the swing made her stumble in circles.
Unzipping the back zipper, she came alive—
with every pant, every breath. She clutched onto her partner,
desperate to keep up with his swiftness. He dipped her low during the jive,
and then returned to their upbeat routine. The pair reached the center
of the dance hall. When the song ended, he bypassed salutations:
she is accustomed to such *laisse-faire* adieux. They are mere solemn indulgences:
she doesn't Balboa often. Her lace rests safely on her hips, reinforcing her reputation.
Chanel No. 5 lingers in her liberated stall; she returns to the conference.
Strutting back to mingle with New York entrepreneurs,
she smirks beneath her wine glass, unashamed of her character.

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Beneath her unashamed character, she smirks, her wine glass of
berries and infidelity coat her throat. Warm with pride, for she possesses
a confidential enigma, a minor conundrum. Her heels raise her prestige above
black-dressed businesswomen and men. She weaved among them, giving their shoulders a caress
to indicate her slipping through. Another wine to fade her mother's scowl:
What would God have to say about this? —
ringing cello drowned the memory-induced glare. A beaver that befouls

its own dam lies in the river restless.

A moment of reproach, of digression, nothing more.

The congeniality of her enigma drove her heart to race;

the tart satisfaction lies insatiable on her tongue, opposite to her familiar bore.

Does this make her a disgrace? —

The young, perturbed businesswoman sat apprehensive amid beaming saxophone complementing the hum of cordial greetings.

Canned Tomato

Slicing tomatoes is routine practice
a swift motion, extended by dicing
and incessant reminders that oranges
have no residency, no connections with tomatoes—
besides the kitchen, where both lay.

The knife's incision and disdain resonate with both tomato and orange:
tomato wants the nectarine to be salsa;
orange wants the veg-fruit to be garnish—
neither fulfilling.

Peeling back her eyelids, ripping off pulpy flesh,
tomato strips herself of dignity, rationality,
hydrophilicity to saturate in tangerine juice.
Oranges thrive when juiced and sipped
by the mouths that lick their lips with eagerness,
yearning to trace the lips of tart furor.

Underneath vibrant nectarine skin, lies a web well-
versed in the art of denial and deflection,
flaunting herself in the fruit bowl.

The tomato suppresses herself in the can.

Ars Poetica Rooted in Nocturne

Sitting amid drowsy silence at three, I soak in the April emptiness:
the Japanese maple is beginning to die. It's feeble limbs
grow weaker, its stringy leaves browning.

A spider retracts to its web within the branches. Its rich fiber
holds strong despite the unsympathetic wind; she's colder
than usual this year. The spider's viscid silk prevails—

it doesn't know her 20-degree sting against exfoliated pores,
its exoskeleton is too thick. I envy the spider. Peppermint Chapstick
coats my lips; the inclement congelation threatens the mint.

She enhances the cooling sensation on my lips. I let her indifference kiss
my cheeks. Her howl keeps my demon silent; he despises frigidity.
He is my nurtured foible, my creative organ from which poetry leaks.

An incubus, whispering enlightenment in my ear—
I listen, unlike most. I must, or he consumes my inhibited soul.
He resembles artists desperate to sing their own lyrics.

Call it Poet's Malady, reader, for I relinquish control over
diction to the incubus. He understands better than I. He designates it
Poet's Devotion: diction as premonition of an exquisite delicacy prepared for you.

He wants your attention; he wants to coalesce. My incubus whispers
in mazes, insisting on mingling images like the Japanese maple, the spider, peppermint—
leaving it to the poet's adoration to arbitrate, until decreeing the metaphor:

like a spider capturing flies in its web, poets want to engross readers in
an entanglement of interlacing demonic whispers. Poetry sanctions reality
in its investigation of the underlying layers we exist in.