

Scissors, Needle, Thread

My sister loved to work with needle and thread.
When she was eight,
she made hand puppets for me.
Each stitched together with fur, feather
and blind faith,
their animal faces misshapen like a stone cherub
with part of the cheek missing.

One night, when she was showing me how to
sew arms to a baby doll,
our father walked in and stared, silent.
There is no money in crafts, he finally said
and slammed the door.
We could hear him in the living room,
snapping on the radio,
pouring himself a shot of whiskey,
mumbling about how our mother was dead,
two kids, all alone.

I remember
my sister walked to her mirror,
wings folded, infant doll in hand
and began touching her own body,
sensing the way the fibers of her skin
connected. Then she picked up the needle and thread
and began to stitch.
I winced with each passing of the needle,
witnessing only the thinness of her elbows,
stroking the air.
Stitch and loop, stitch and loop.
I could feel each one draw through the fabric,
through the remnants of our mother's cotton.

She pulled the seams tighter together.

A transformation was taking place,
a pattern forming.

Then she turned towards me
and ran her hands across the flesh of the doll,
the flesh which has been stitched to the
belly of her dress.
And she began to sob as she stroked its head,
humming a lullaby as she searched
for the fabric of our mother's unfinished work.



Ceramic Instrument
Sculpture
By Greg Bernath