

Fiction

HOPPER: CONFESSIONS OF LIGHT, DARKLY

*(seam you
apart, tendon
by tendon)**by Nupur
Shah**"What I wanted to do was to paint sunlight on the side of a house."
-Edward Hopper (1882-1967)***Girl at Sewing Machine (1921)**

Sometimes, on most days, the sight of me in your mind's eye, a girl at the sewing machine, is much too much. Oh, how it makes me claw at these prisons of paint, searching for what, only your fugitive self running around in me can know. No sooner do the balls in my eyes penetrate the largess of this light than the wild trembling commences. The fit descends upon me like a sun in the sky, flaming the whole earth of my draped body. The manic twitches arrive soon enough, but show no signs of departure, because, don't you know, I like my pain to knock on me but not without prior appointment.

But ha, what is time is now? Time, that arrow of Cupid I can no longer shoot into me, for it has far fled the sheath of my lonesome body. On most days, your nostalgia caresses me; on others, it simple bores me to death. Yes, that. Oh, my sad body, what shall I do with you, apart from what I do and that is the best? For the best is to seam you apart, tendon by tendon, again and again so that again and again I can find myself sitting cross-legged, at this ghastly ghostly machine, sewing the bits back up again. I have no scars to show you, but only stitches, and which I know, won't be of any interest in your sailor hands. Despite it, despite also the fact that these seams of you may gush open anytime and flood me with the light of love, I keep inscribing in them tales of your bravery and betrayal.

Won't you tell me though, if there is any way to cease telling this tired tale where nothing is as you and I may want it to be if you and I should want anything anymore to be? What if I finally did it? Buried this body of mine--all soft edges and shining parts--into the wall of red pain on which hangs that moment when we exchanged those 'I do's'? Is death the only way a body is shattered? I don't think so. I think these dusty photons of light are enough for the job, casting away, as they do, their spectral shadows here, there, everywhere of, of, of possibilities that I was once married to, but which have now widowed me in this waiting room. This can mean only one thing: that these points of pain mustn't exist. Nothing must exist except this thread of dark that I, Penelope, keep weaving around the smithy of time inside which my woman's grief is as iron cheap as the mountain of martyr-men that Father Homer erected back in Troy, but whose phallic peak is disappearing in the veil of mist risen from the silent epic of my untouched body.

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