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A Slip of a Thing

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A Slip of a Thing

Maria Avery

The room was a blur of gold-pink stars. My lungs pressed hard against the cage of my ribs, clawing for air. I stared hard at the dress hanging off the edge of the bed, a slip of a thing; tight and silver. A small sliver of moonlight on my cream colored sheets. I had been so happy when he bought it for me, a giggling child again with a box wrapped with string and glittering bows. He didn't understand why the smile fell from my cheeks when I pulled the strings loose. Couldn't understand that not every girl is a little slip of a thing and moves like the breath of a garden fairy.

I pressed my cheek to its fabric, rubbed it in my hair, down my legs. Pressed its seams to my nostrils; took in the dances of the needles and thread, tasted the harsh, irony blood that got caught up between the stitches when the seamstress pricked her finger. Imagined what a night wearing liquid silver would mean. Coy half smiles, devilish flicks of the lashes and small touches turn to sizzling gropes that would lead to bottles of wine half drunk and forgotten on the kitchen table, leaving purple ringlets to stain the tablecloth. Intoxicated kisses that burn down my belly, the moonlight slipping from me like crystalline water droplets. And he would love me, love me in my perfection; love the curls of my hair, the slope of my hips and the splatter of freckles on the inside of my left thigh—just like the perfection of the dress.

It mocked me with its ease of beauty. Laughed at me with what I would never have in it. Tears, quiet and greedy, fell down to my bare chest as I slipped one leg in. The pale seams strained at my thighs and the zipper pinched at my tailbone. I folded myself into it, like the wings of a paper crane. Smoothed my edges until they were razor sharp. The next leg in, pressed tightly against its twin, folded beneath each other, cut myself on the corners, twisted myself further. Scrunched to my thighs, inch by inch, freckle to freckle, scar to scar. Clutched my stomach, pushed to mingle with my ribs, forgot how to breathe, pinched my hips close to fold myself into an airplane. To fly away from my crumpled limbs and become the perfumed air with the garden fairies. But the stitches popped and the zipper broke before I could rip myself apart.

When he found me, staring at the splotchy bits of flesh in the mirror with moonlight straining at my waist, he looked at me slowly, toes to eyelashes. Lingered on my large hips that my mother told me would be perfect for perching sons, my full breasts that never had trouble filling out a shirt and my wide shoulders that made me strong enough to hold the heat and anger in his gray eyes. With a snarl on his lips he ripped the dress from me, scratched at my skin, pushed at my bones; shoved me to the bed. Watched me for a moment, picking apart my skin like a vulture pecking at his road-kill meal. He stormed out without saying he loved me, without telling me I was beautiful anyway.

Left there on the bed I dreamt of flying above myself again. Closed my eyes for a moment, let myself soar; skim the clouds and splash my face with the songs of the birds, glitter stardust along my collarbones, my eyelids. But I tripped off the edge of a star, tumbled through the atmosphere and am tossed back into my bed.

Tears now were angry with me and refused to come and ease the burning stabs at my heart. I wished he would hit me, slap me, force himself on me; something to fill the emptiness he carved out in me. He went instead to drink clear poison from the bottle. To dance in fast circles under glowing blue and red lights. To breathe in the nighttime air until he walked on the craters of the moon. And I was left with the emptiness, burrowing itself deeper and deeper into my

stomach. Forcing itself into my veins and pushing the air out from my lungs; mirror shards that cut my tongue and burnt my lips.

Until the mirror hung above me, perfect and complete, staring back to the hollowness of me.