

BROKEN

Amy Crosby

He was a reassembly job. A fixer-upper. A jigsaw puzzle. At first I tried with stitches while he slept; my mother had taught me how to sew when I was a little girl and I knew all the different patterns but none of them held. He shuffled free from the sheets beside me each morning looking like a man but, by the time he came home, his heavy shoes had torn his ankles, his helmet, lopsided, perching on the semblance of his head, had ripped loose my careful backstitch.

His eyes were the hardest to fix. Every night, he took them out and left them by the side of the sink, not wanting to see anymore, and we lay in the dark, two strangers side by side, never touching, never speaking.

But I loved his eyes the best. They were like two deserts; full of stormy sand and reddened by the sun. I didn't mind what they'd seen. I still remembered the first time they'd ever looked at me and filled me with some of that burning warmth. My mother was wrong in her tuition; sometimes cotton wasn't thick enough to rebuild a man.

I went to classes that taught me how to plaster. It was hard at first not to let the sloppy paste cling to my arms but I worked at it until I could get it smooth and then, one by one, I plastered up the fissures that were tearing him apart.

One night, I stopped him from taking out his eyes. I eased the plaster deep inside the sockets and held him together in my arms until, at last, rain fell on those deserts and washed away all of the things that had made him crumble.