

An Ode to the Uselessness of Things

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It was the third Thursday of the month, and the sky opened up. The fabric on my back filled from stitch to stitch with rainwater and clung to every wrinkle of my body like a second skin. Stitch to stitch. But despite the rain, I had to visit my father, so on I went, flexing my empty fingers to keep them warm and dry. Umbrellas were redundant and only half-useful anyway. Stitch to stitch, and no umbrella. My father also hated umbrellas and would only dismiss me if he saw me pathetically attempting to escape the storm under measly pieces of plastic. A man of blue-collar work around a neck fat from a lifetime of greasy foods would surely spit the chewing tobacco at my feet at the sight. To my own credit, I almost stopped on my stroll to buy him flowers, but I knew he'd chastise the feminine things. He hated flowers like he hated umbrellas. Or at least he used to—many storms had come and gone since we'd spoken. Stitch to stitch, no umbrella,

empty hands. Would he care about the words I'd force from my chest? Beneath me, the dirt path ran liquid beneath my heels and threatened to swallow me whole with every moist step. I hoped it would. Or maybe I would drown in the rain, the same way I used to drown in the lingering smell of another woman's perfume wading from my father's clothes. But with lungs still pulling wet air through my lips, I spotted father in the corner of the clearing isolated from the bodies around him. Suddenly, I wished I'd brought flowers. He was laid to rest under smooth stone. Decaying in the earth enveloping him, he was a better listener now than when he was drunkenly marching around my home. Stitch to stitch, no umbrella, empty hands, rotting flesh and greasy bones. Perhaps he was still passing silent judgment. But perhaps he was also proud of my refusal to use an umbrella as I sat in the violent rain and spoke to him.