



Threading the Needle

It was an indulgence tailor made of guilt. Barely luggable at 30 pounds. Work horse with metal innards. Red S on the arm like a superhero insignia. All for 88 dollars.

Back then, housewives assembled *Cream of Mushroom Soup* casseroles and teen girls sewed aprons with Mrs. Kurtz, a real-life Stepford Wife. Her ensembles patterned from *Butterick*—brass buttoned jackets, pleated skirts hemmed to the knee—hinted at a picket perfect homelife awaiting her ministrations after school.

In my skylit attic bedroom, away from the fraying day to day, I determined to refashion myself in the hope of stitching my family back together.

I began with *Simplicity* patterns but my wrap dresses didn't lay flat. Dirndl skirts made me look like Humpty Dumpty, and a sad plaid seersucker vest was tragically mismatched at the seams.

Next I tried gauzy peasant blouses and flowing gypsy skirts. I felt like an imposter in them so I retreated to my faded *Landlubber* bell bottoms and tie dye t-shirts.

That summer after 7th grade, I rummaged through a bag for Goodwill and salvaged a panel of corduroy from my sister's slacks, flannel sleeves from my pajamas, swath of nicotine scented velvet from mom's dress, and a patch of floral silk from a necktie dad left behind.

Soothed by the purr of the motor, pressure steady on the pedal, threaded needle bobbing apace, square by square, I pieced together a crazy patchwork quilt.

— Elise Chadwick