

The Art of Cutting Light

My left hand remembers the Sioux wind:
its long thread unspooling across the plains,
a breath that stitched horizon to sky.
My right hand recalls the microscope's hum,
the slow turning of glass and light,
how sight must be shaped before it can see.

Between them I have pieced a life:
reservation dust caught in a white coat,
dumpling dough folded beside sterile gauze,
suturing the eye's torn fabric
while recalling my grandmother's hands
hemming curtains against the prairie dusk.

Every stitch holds its prayer:
for the patient, for the thread,
for what the hand learns
before the mind consents.
But crafting also asks for cutting:
the clean incision through membrane or cloth,
the small surrender of what can't be saved,
the opening that must bleed before it mends.

I have built myself from fragments:
Culver drills, Boston winters,
the quiet apprenticeship of seeing.
I have carried my tools like heirlooms:
the curved needle, the shining blade,
the patience of my mother weaving words
in a tongue I half remember.
Each motion, each breath,
a mercy against forgetting.

Tonight, I fold the light into my palm,
as my father once folded sandpaper over cedar.
I trace the seam where cultures meet,
where the visible leans toward grace.
The quilt of my life lies unfinished on the table:
stitched, cut, and mended again,
a handmade map of everything still becoming.

—David Anson Lee