

THE BEARER OF ALL THAT CAN BE FELT

By **Sharkchild**

Touch—I felt all ways of it. I felt light moving silk, soft fitting cotton, and elegant velvet; I knew the embrace of satin and the weave of polyester. Upon me danced the colors and shapes of the universe. Those hands that pressed and brushed against me told the tales of creation’s wisdom, and I collected of their ways. Dresses, vests, jackets, cloaks—I wore them all and aided them in their completing beauty. There was not a piece of clothing that I did not feel or know. My skin was the palette of the sure and tried and the steady thread.

From the moment of my creation, I had been destined to the art of tailoring, and I was no ordinary assistance to the noble industry. I was, as I believed from the successes associated with me, the only of my kind to have such an occupation. My essence, in its entirety, was bittleclay: an “inanimate” material with the capability to learn from the environment embodying it. Like a baby out of the womb absorbed the world around it, bittleclay did the same by those means given to it in its beginning, allowing for the growth of an aware, mobile, and fully cognitive entity.

I began my essence as a dull figure comprised of arms, hands, a torso, and a faceless head atop a base that extended upwards into me and held me upright. In my beginning there was only darkness, but quickly I gained those qualities that awoke me from the slumber of lifelessness and thrust me headlong into the narcissistic abyss of consciousness. Without any such organs as those carried by the builders of society, I attained my individuality by vibrations. Through these very sensitive, minute movements, I learned of the versatility of sound and expression, and fully cultured myself into existence.

In no time at all, I was suggesting to the seamster of my parlor the very ideas that would develop his wealth and set in motion those events of both my endless suffering and endless enjoyment. What began as the simple and purposeful repositioning of my pose when once assisting in the fabrication of a winter’s dress, soon evolved into the renowned and unrelenting glitter-web trend: the attachment of streaming silk slivers, or an otherwise compliant textile substitution, between the forearm and the bottom hem of a dress, whilst being covered in the grace of any color, or multiple colors, of glitter.

These times of fruitfulness were very fulfilling for me. The extent of my purpose had meaning, which was all a creature of my composition could ask for. It was also then that I attained the knowledge of emotion. The happiness and joys of the seamster were different than my first experiences with him and so I attuned myself with those aspects of life that affected esteem.

Eventually, the acclaim of our labor dwindled and the fame of the seamster began to fade. Business slowed and the seamster’s way of life changed. Though he had riches to last him for a long time to come, he became depressed in his deprivation of gluttony. He started to grow sloppy in his art, regardless of my own expertise and ingenuity. He lost himself to frivolous amusements and degrading expeditions, burying his sorrows with the accouterments of alcohol.

I would not have minded the seamster’s peculiar condition if his idle meddling was all that encompassed the stature of his name, but he began to grow careless with his handwork as well. The occasional slip of the needle and

slight perforation in my outer surfaces was manageable, however, their frequency and impressionable force slowly advanced, and with that, expanded the torment of absurd pain. Each drunken mistake that sent a needle deep into my side exploded a malicious triumph of appalling agony. And while those of the builders of society had the ability to heal, I did not; what occurred to my form, remained ever so. With me, after each needle-caused intrusion, remained the stain, mark, and sickening abrasion of my unavoidable deterioration.

One day, upon the mid-time of work, after a short leave of the seamster, I felt the air from the opening of the parlor door against me upon his stumbling return. Particles rushed across my surfaces, bringing to me the coolness from the outside. The feeling encircled me, pouring even into those punctured crevices from the needles. I became irritated at the feeling of such vibrations.

Under the seamster's lack of complete awareness and butchered singing, he slammed the door with unknown force behind him as he entered, sending fiercer air particles upon me, enraging further my own temperament.

"Back to work," the seamster moaned to himself. Then he repeated the words, "back to work," but this time followed them with a repulsive cackle.

In reaction to his laugh, I began to have strange thoughts. I had thoughts that convinced me of my importance over that of the seamster—that the worthiness of the accredited master sewer was more of my deserving than his. I had thoughts of creating my own art and proving that I was of no less talent than that of the seamster himself. These thoughts were foreign to me, but I liked them.

The seamster then approached me with horrible imbalance, seizing a needle and thread to begin his work on the shirt upon me. He had threaded a needle thousands of times before this moment, and, even under his loss of coordination, was able to do it easily again. But, when he made the motion towards his first insertion, he lost his focus and drove the needle deep into me, cackling again with his brash sound. With his head resting on me, his laugh hammered against my surfaces, sending vibrations as potent as sinister earthquakes across my being. I moved my arms and pushed him upright.

He continued to laugh, uncontrollably.

I tried to let it be, to cooperate as wholly as I had any other day, but I could not—not this time. I realized that I had to communicate the severity of such an action by reciprocating with an equivalent force. And so, while the seamster laughed, I unscrewed the fingers on my right hand and let the fingers fall to the ground. They clinked and rolled before coming to a stop. On my hand was left four screws to where the fingers had once been attached; my whole body was composed of such screws to give me the mobility and flexibility I needed to perform my purpose. I focused on the seamster's thick breath that was upon my surfaces, gauged the location of its origin in the darkness before me, and swiped forth with my screw-bearing hand, catching the seamster square in his neck with my makeshift needles.

I expected the seamster to shout in pain and acknowledge his own wrongdoings. I expected him to understand the hurt I felt in his carelessness and apologize, but there were no sounds. He fell to the floor and became still. A warm fluid ran down my arm and dripped from beneath me. Some of the fluid seeped into my scars, filling them. I had never felt anything like it, and it felt good; it felt complete.

I waited for the seamster to rise and return to work, but he never did. Confusion confronted me and I began to feel outward with my arms to catch any vibration that might come from him. For hours I did this before I understood that I had done something terrible.

What I did next was beyond the bounds of my reason, but I did it anyway; I swung my arms back and forth until enough inertia was formed to topple me from the post I had always known. I fell to the floor with a loud thud. My bittleclay body cringed under the vibrating attack.

I felt with my hands briefly before they came upon the seamster's body, finding also the warm fluid that had run down my arm. He was not moving and he was not breathing, but I did not know what that meant. I tapped him, over and over again, hoping that he would awaken and return me to my stance so that he could again work on the shirt left uncompleted.

After several minutes, I gave up, and lay quietly atop the ground, tangled within my thoughts. I let my attention drift to the fluid beneath me and the fluid that still flowed steadily from the holes on the seamster's neck. With my hand that still had fingers, I scooped at the fluid, collecting it and then rubbing it across my body, filling in those apertures that caused me so much pain. Feeling content, I rested tranquilly once more.

Soon, the fluid grew cold and sticky and lost its appeal.

When the builders of society found me with the seamster's body, they threw me into a fire. The flames, like the crowned kings of eternal anguish, lavished over me with their curling whips of maddening, unimaginable pain. I shrunk. I fell apart. I became scattered atop a ground that consistently burned and endlessly tormented. There was nothing left for that part of me, that part of my purpose was spent, but that was not all of my purpose.

Those fingers I detached from myself in the parlor were also found. They were acquired by a traveling fisherman in search of a cloak, who, in his passing, took them and shortly later whittled them into four small animals. I know of what they became only by the vibrations of the fisherman's words and the pain of the transformations. One of the creatures was a builder of society, one was a lion, one was an ox, and the last was an eagle.

Each of them are me as I am them, and I travel with the fisherman, feeling of those vibrations around me and learning ever still.