

The Mender

by Philip F. Clark

I polished his shoes to an avid
black; sewed buttons back
and mended torn silk and cotton.
His clothing was my busy work.
Needle, thread, stitch, and iron,
I was his apothecary of linens.
Blood, wine, soup, vomit --
these I cleaned too, until all their
color and scent were gone.
I never saw him wear the things
I mended. There was a dresser for that.
Instead, I held what was left
to repair -- tattered rips from fights;
mud stains; mucus, and semen.
Piecing him together, I worked late
into the night so that by morning,
a man without a body, seemed to appear.
I did not know him. I knew all the things
he did; his meals, his sex. His age.
And with thread I pushed and pulled;
with soap and sandalwood, I washed
finer things than I would ever wear.
I loved a man who was never there.

