

Post-Op

by Kyle Hemmings

The best tools are the ones she leaves buried in their bellies: rasps, trocars, intraosseous drill bits. Even love letters in her mother's handwriting. She tells Tuesday's lover that there's nothing wrong with cheap thrills without anesthesia, gives false testimony that her kind of love is only minimally invasive. One of her thin-skinned loves calls from Ohio's underbelly and tells her It still hurts. She once used a head mirror to diagnose his sickness. Friday's goat-man brings only famine and ruined metatarsals. To soothe him, to make him forget, she hands him a retouched photo of herself dressed as Clara Barton. When her lovers don't return, she dreams of spreading the ribs of Manhattan, cross-clamping its aorta to block traffic. Thoughts down a Penrose drain, New York can no longer be seen from above. She loves the sound of car crashes. From tonight's dinner menu, she orders a wound, a shattered-spine, a hopeless case of bradycardia, immersed in ice. She will break open a new victim, remember her mother's surgeons who practiced without a license, recall the whoosh of closing curtains. A number. The hollow. As a girl growing up with splints, she couldn't be numbed by men in masks. In her room, they appeared in threes, never answered any of her questions. We're sorry about your mother, they said, but we needed the experience. She will continue to pull sponges from the bottom of her soup.

