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Joan of Arc Swaps Scissors for a Sword

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Joan of Arc Swaps Scissors for a Sword
By Kimberly J. Reynolds

In the blue-black before dawn,
I creep from my patchwork-quilted bed,
tiptoe to the mantle for a candle,
light the wick that lends its flicker of light,
see the needle and thread on the table

only yesterday, mending my mother's
skirt that slipped like flax between
my fingers. I take up the blade
on the sewing table and grasp my hair,
still smelling of smoke from sitting

fireside last night, and twist the tresses
into a single rope of red. I use the blade
to slice through the strands of russet,
saw and sever the locks that I
coil into one cord of curls and tie

with a bit of twine, a token for my mother.
I remember when I pricked my finger,
and the spot of blood smudged the border
of a quilt before I noticed and sucked
the coppery dot away. I take

a strip of fabric and wrap it around
and around my chest, press the breasts
flat before pulling on a coarse tunic
of lamb's wool. The cock-crow comes

as the sun breaches the horizon.
A stitch of light slips through a crack
in the wall, a sign from the saints
making my body blaze, I ride
before the troops tomorrow.