

## In Stitches

At Leach Lake the women drove  
to the five and dime with two floors of shelves  
ceiling high. In Ben Franklin's dim basement,

tread muffled by carpet and feminine talk,  
my sister and I wandered in search of *Anything  
you girls want*. We said *Gum? Chocolate? Toys?*

Aunt Jill roved the isles of batting, bulk cloth  
to select squares small enough for girls' hands  
to teach needles to whisper. Aunt Jean paused

for us before the L-hooks of beads, wire, clasps  
for bracelets and necklaces to string sentences  
of glass light through the long summer nights.

The mosquitoes hushed by screens. The men gone  
on the boat with lines pulling up the green shine  
of perch scales or the black whiskers of catfish.

The annual lessons in craft: the cross-stitched  
murmurs of cat and seahorse, the latch hook's  
tongue wrapped around wool yarn, soft quilts,

pillows for a doll's sleep, bright floss in plaits.  
Colonial knots, slipknots, hidden knots, ties,  
binds. They never unraveled, but kept us

in the cabin or by the dock, beside them,  
like them, our fingers and eyes trained  
to still the world in practiced expositions.