

Surgery

By Nneoma Prudence LaMarche

I used to bite my lip until it bled
Peeling the skin back with my teeth as it healed
I would hope to taste the iron in my blood
Desiring the sting of meeting the open flesh

I never really thought about it
I know that I didn't like the feeling
Of my tongue on my skin when it was healing
It was surgery for me I must admit

I was fixing myself
I had a problem to be corrected
I was often alone as a child
I wouldn't say that I was neglected

My nails received my attention, too
I used to manicure my hands
Attacking hangnails with patience
The result would be beautiful I told myself

With my fingernails or with tweezers
Or fingernail clippers, I would perform
I'd look for the dry, white skin
And off I'd go into the operating room

I knew what the result would be
Of removing this skin which merged
My nail and my finger
Pain, oozing, bleeding and sensitivity

I'd be unable to touch anything normally
And when I did, I'd remember my work
I'd look at my finger and tell myself good job
Not seeing the white, dried out skin

Which lay between my finger and my nail
But detesting the puffy, pink flesh
inflamed and irritated,
Protruding from my nail bed

I'd forgive myself believing

That the act was necessary
That the white stuff had to go
It didn't belong where it could show

Surgery was one of my most beloved pastimes
I used to do it to pass the time
I used to do it to clear my mind
I used to do it to tell myself that I feel fine

Surgery was a way of actualizing
The pain that I felt deep inside
To pretend I enjoyed the hurt
To give myself more to make me stronger

For sure that's what I thought
Subconsciously. It's what I was taught
Subliminally. It's what helped me
Seriously. Now pain has no effect on me.

I no longer perform that surgery
I no longer ascribe my internal pain
To external imperfection, I maintain
God created me perfectly