

Something Worn

I believe it's when no one's watching
that we engage in magical thinking.

The old moon knows: how I found a corset
hidden under my floorboards when

the builders were installing a new hearth.
Corset in the void, old as my old house:

a body with yellowed skin, fine bones,
a gutted faun of a thing. Ancient

as believing a hare is leaping, exiled
in the moon. How it carried her scent

for a short while: rosemary, comfrey
salve to slick a woman's skin. Sometimes

we confuse the thing with the body,
the body with the self. Do you think

she was well-beloved, a mother lost;
a lover walked off? Our fiercest magic thoughts

are reserved for love and hate. Do you think
her corset was buried to punish or keep her

safe? How warm she was. Somewhere a body
without a home, a home without a soul.

Somewhere a woman so slack and free
she does not know herself.

I bury the corset back beneath the boards.
No need to close the curtains tonight.

A needle moon tacks herself to the dark
and all our vulnerabilities arrive at once,

elbowing for the door. I am fingers crossed,
a believer, and a wish, as I hammer her in.

Once there was a corset undone, a heart
sliced free and stuck with pins.