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It Was Not a Star

Nina Bogin

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Five Poems · *Nina Bogin*

IT WAS NOT A STAR

It was not a star loosened from its hold, not
the night turned inside-out
by a needle catching up its threads,

it was the hours
whispering about imperfection, the words
we simply will not admit,

those graceless truths that prick us
under the skin—call them
the smaller cruelties,

so easy, like jewels—
and we have the gall
to aspire to purity,

that image of glass
that sits there
placidly stitching layettes,

blonde and able to smile
albeit abstractedly at the children
pulling at her skirts—

here is a kiss for her lover,
behind the ear, here is a
biscuit for the cat—

but the real
skirt is a lapful
of pins, that draw

real blood and hurt even
as the least intelligible murmur
slips under the skin

with its flicker of inevitability,
that truth recognized long ago
beyond any sky unthreading

its constellations, beyond any beauty
we would prefer to see.

THE KETTLE HUMS

The kettle hums on its blue ring. Steam
rubs the windowpanes, and everything

has become small again, even
the hours, whose creaking as of floorboards

or hidden mice is familiar, really, one of the kinder
evils, though it can, at three a.m., wake you

into terror—my life, my loved ones—
but this is what you must not

think of, this is what the friendly kettle
would protect you from as its vapor

rises so bravely
from the circle of flame.