

Vintage Hair Comb

Balanced on deeply curved teeth, the top edge
rimmed in gold, tortoise shell as out of place on my desk
as the husk of a horseshoe crab, this leathery seduction

dark with age and oils, layers of era and place
chock-full of echoes, only some welcome,
has cupped my hair as you did.

Is it perverse to confess I like most what's been
lost, bits of gold beading along the edge? I mean,
I like the space where the beading ought to be

but isn't. I don't think of the tortoise except to say
I wear this in tribute, bought cheap
because of what was missing. The hard truth is

my convictions wobble in the face of beauty.
And here comes the excuse—
I keep the comb that it not be lost.

If I were Neruda this would be an ode, a love ditty
celebrating how it holds my beloved all day
as I cannot. But there is something fierce, almost primal,

deep in the DNA, something about the carapace,
how it protects and gets in the way, something about
how we come together, solitary and mortal.