

Carbon dating by Rachael Brooks

The thing about time is that it doesn't replace itself. It stacks,
presses the past into the marrow of things,
the grain of the wood, the dust settling in the corners.
If you dig deep enough, you'll find it,
bone-deep, time-stamped, waiting.

Here:
the walls of the house are caving in, like a body too tired to hold itself up,
beams peeling apart like old sutures, scurvy splitting scars open.
The roof crumbles like a jawbone left too long in the sun.
No one lives here anymore, but you still do.

You died here, once.
You were loved here, once.
These things are true at the same time,
soft earth swallowing hard stone,
like bones beneath the soil, like a hand on your cheek.

The house doesn't fight it.
Memory is an isotope, half-life unknown.
The house is still decaying. The house is still breathing
and the vines crack the foundation open like a ribcage,
but the guts are still there.

Everything dissolves,
given enough time.
Press your palm against the place where someone touched you gently.
Trace the fault lines of every moment you stood still when you should have run.
Close your eyes, and the house inhales.