

Reading a Poem

You enter a poem
mid-conversation—
the subject unclear,
the timeframe, uncertain,

the path may proceed
along a lighted hallway,
down a dark alley,
up a spiral staircase.

Knocking you off-balance
is likely its intention.

Some verse may require
bags be checked at the gate,
shoes be removed,
weapons surrendered
before proceeding unattended
to an unknown destination.

Or a poem may appear
as an open invitation
to a simple garden
with crumbling stone walls
vined in bougainvillea
and pink climbing rosebuds —

only to find
the funeral of a love story
hidden in the folds.

In the end, nothing
is as it seems—

lift your eyes from the page
and notice what has changed.