

Laura Lardinois
Intro to Corsetry

Bits of thread follow me wherever I go, sticking to improbable places with tenacity, my project a shedding pet that hasn't learned to stay off the couch.

Time is told by the unspooling of my bobbin. My hope wraps around those last few coils, as if wishing could stretch them just one inch farther.



Maybe, if I'm sneaky enough, my mother won't notice her seam ripper has been relocated to my stash, along with the shears, the ruler, and a sad pile of bent pins.

I'll put them back. Eventually. Except the pins. We won't speak of the pins.

Many hands guide my stitches – my grandmother's patient ones, carefully basting each hem as her sister taught her; my great-aunt's rough ones, confidently tacking down raw edges with neat rows of tiny invisible stitches; my mother's impatient ones, quickly darning socks and patching clothes with a rainbow of threads on long car rides. When my thread snags, I

hear them tell me, "lange draad is vuile naad" – a long thread is a dirty seam, a phrase that shakes its head at me with the weight of generations of seamstresses. Their comments come with loving smiles, proud to see another set of hands pick up where they left off and start to sew.

"Done is good," you say. « Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien, » choruses the voice of my mother, echoing my grandmother and her mother before her. My sewing machine agrees with them, its motor's pitch rising in protest against another layer of coutil. Yet my fingers itch to unpick, to fix, to alter, to add ad infinitum. Next time, I promise them in a whisper, switching off the light.



