

September 9th—Wading In

We made a game of it. Our friend Rick said:

Nothing moves me anymore. In fact

I'm not sure anything ever did.

Rick was in one of his depressions
and a mood like that is hard on a dinner party.

We were stuck like lamp posts around the kitchen island
picking olives out of a glass bowl of brine.

Tomorrow, another Monday, and Rick couldn't take it.

We tried our best. We stuffed stone fruits into pantyhose
and suspended them from a ceiling hook. It's postmodern,
we explained. *And don't think it's going unappreciated,*

Rick shrugged into the refrigerator, chipping an incisor
on a bottle cap. We recited Whitman, and took great liberties
in changing the words. This bored him. All these exclamation marks,
and he was so near sleep. I walked him home, down Brunswick,
and through the old burial ground in the hopeless light
of the sturgeon moon. He called in sick to work, citing insomnia.

Rick says the Dalí at the Beaverbrook keeps him up at night.

He wants to know how often they're sweeping those floors.

All those people lying down and just looking up, up, for hours.

The horse's abdominal vortex. The jasmine flower exploding.

The well-meaning son of a friend once was caught
placing two fingers against the blue surface of the canvas.

For this he was banned. I offered this anecdote to Rick
in a gesture of inspiration. *A poem is like anything*, he said,
grabbing hold of my wrist. I'd reached down

to pocket a smooth-sided stone. I saw him once wade
into a late October lake, his knit sweater a sopping blue gradient.

He threw his head back, disappeared under the surface.

You can't take back a thing like that, I told him. So here you are,
a moment of a facsimile I am building in my enclosure
overlooking George Street. Just try to recall a thing,

uncontaminated by bifurcating metaphor. The dinner party—

do you remember that salmon-cherry candle on the coffee table?

Strike it down against the insult of the white page.

Melt the blush out of it. You might find in the void
of the unwritten idea a worthy component.