

Leisure-Loving Man Suffers Untimely Death

You ask why the dinner table has been so quiet.
I've felt, for a month, like the table:

holding strange things in my head
when there are voices present.

And when the voices die,
a cool cloth and some sparkling spray.

I'm on painkillers around the clock,
and I fear it's always been

just the pain talking to you.

The last vision was of the pain leaving—
it looked just like me as it came out

of my mouth, but it was holding a spatula.
It was me if I had learned to cook.

The pain drifted to the kitchen.
He hitched himself to the oven, was a centaur

completed by bread, great black loaves
bursting from the oven,

and then the vision vanished.
I followed, and stood where he had stood.

The knives rustled in the block,
the pans clacked overhead.

I'm sterile from chemo,
and thought of that.

Sure, I wish my imagination well,
wherever it is. But now

I have sleep to fill. Every night
I dream I have a bucket

and move clear water from a hole
to a clear ocean. A robot's voice barks

This is sleep. This is sleep.
I'd drink the water, but I'm worried the next

night I'd regret it.
I might need every last drop. Nobody will tell me.