

King of Spades Alone with Table

I pile high my sometime dominion
of pocked wood and misplaced crumbs
with jetsam, the dead weight of a life

spent waiting, that kind of living that feels
more like drifting: keys, coats, bags, mail,
a few barnacles, the cat.

I can't use it when you're gone, instead
writing from a rut in the couch, stuffing
starches into my mouth over the sink.

If I am a king, I'm living in exile,
my ship wrecked somewhere between
the bedroom and the back door, and

this table's too full of junk to ever float
me out of here. I'll while away the time
treading water, playing cruel solitaire,

because there's no game of spades
without a partner; I tried to teach the cat
but he won't wet his feet willingly.

There's an alternate timeline so close
I can taste it like the salt in seawater:
you're already home, and the table

isn't any cleaner. Instead its legs buckle
under the combined weight of our sloughings,
all the paper and outerwear and lipsticks—

and yes, the cat, purring for once—
but we're sitting at it anyway, drinking coffee
that you made because you like making it.

You unbrow my crown, lay with me beneath covers
sweat-soft and pummeled with lonesome.
There's nothing about you I want to rule over.