



THE RINGMASTER
ANSWERS THE PHONE

Your birthday in a month no one remembers:
cinderblock sky but no snow. It's never

good news, this time of night – someone dead
or arrested or worse: drunk & in the mood to reminisce.

Your bedroom smells like feet & cat food –
your life this time of year stalled:

flickering paused image, impatient twitch.
They say sharks must keep moving or die,

but it turns out that's not true – one of those things
we believe because we like the sound of it,

because sometimes we feel like that, unable
to be still, to rest, to sit in silence

like the stem of a flower gathering dew
in these final moments before dawn,

when old friends or old flames
spark so briefly to light: sudden tiny flare,

awkward intoxicated conversation
like rowing across a lake with your hands.

Your whole life is a series
of the moments just before other moments –

when what could go right
& what could go wrong

hold hands & drown together in the murky air.

