



My name was Calvin J. Rinehart. My name is John
Doe. Which doesn't account for my lack of passport

or wallet. The loss of my wife. Even now when I sit at a table
with objects on top, I'm afraid to break through and touch them.

When new words come to mind, I jot them in green. I whisper these
to myself: *screw pine*, *blergh*, *mnemonist*. I get lost when I go for walks.

I try to strengthen my recall staring through candle-flame. I like to sing
along with the Rondells even when I can't get all the words. That Russian

man who couldn't *not* remember everything he did could never build
a story of his world. For him *leffel*, the Yiddish term for *spoon*, was braided

like *challah*—itself so hard a word he had to snap it off. Eighteen-
eighties France saw in its indoor workers swells of amnesia and flight: shopkeepers,

clerks, and artisans. Does the past have a future? Amnesiacs can only ever add to who
they'd like to become. That windowsill's a bass line, pulse, a psalm. You may hum along.

From *American Amnesiac* by Diane Raptosh

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