What Is Not There

There is a phone booth by the side of the road
With the light burned out,
You don’t have coins
And outside it has begun to rain.
This is where the sound lives.

Its small voice comes
From what sounds like underwater,
Dismantle your life
It says,
You have settled
For too little, though
You may never find more.

You are busy unpacking
In the new house you will come home to
Every night, and every night
Lie next to the one you have chosen
To ease your weight against.
You will do this for many years,
For as long as it is possible.

The voice sounds like a radio
From the bottom of the lake.
It is announcing news of war,
The conflict of a small country,
A country you think you could locate
On a map, though what you know
Of this country is almost nothing.

The body is happy with its good meal,
And the mind with someone to go places with.
The clothes are happy to be piled
On top of each other on the chair,
And the books are content
Leaning into each other on the shelves.

But the soul is a bad dog
Chained in the yard,
And though there are no intruders,
Not even a small animal
Rustling in the bushes,

It barks until it wakes you,

Wakes the entire neighborhood,
Always calling attention
To what is not there,
In the absolute stillness of the night.

Jacqueline L. Berger