The book is missing. Somewhere in the house, mis-shelved, or at the bottom of some pile, its columned pages keep their measurements, ingredients, oven times, and helpful hints beyond perusal in a fat, useless wad.

The island kitchen counter lets me have my pick of sides to feel myself marooned on. I push ahead without a recipe, halving quantities of what I have somehow to make edible without the stir of appetite.

We used to work together at it, each on a different side, she stirring, measuring, tasting, I chopping, dicing, mincing as required. Rocking the blade the way she showed me to, I freed from each raw thing a smell we liked: the garlic’s earthy reek, the ginger’s sting, the anise wisping up from celery leaves.

Now I look at the counter’s empty side and listen to the onion I hacked up sputtering angrily, intense but futile, faltering as its fund of hoarded tears dissolves in the hot oil that some hunks of meat will sear in next. It probably
isn’t quite right (like so much else these days) 
but it will do: I need to make it do. 

The book is missing. Even if it’s found 
and followed to the letter, there will still 
be loss, the unlisted ingredient 
throwing the best efforts out of balance. 
It bakes itself into what’s left of life. 
The cold plate waits. Nothing now tastes the same.