## Michael Boccardo

## The Long Goodbye

Imagine someone you love is drowning.

Imagine someone you love is drowning slowly.

Wait,

what I mean is though the body begs to stay afloat, it is not unlike a kind of drowning this immersion, dense

with brine. Memory's mute erosion.

Imagine there is little you can do but trust useless methods of rescue. Passing vessels, a lifejacket,

the awkward miracle of prayer. This is okay.

A stranger says, It's normal to be afraid of the day when she'll go under.

Another stranger says, It's normal to wish for the day when she'll go under.

You won't know what to do with your fear. This is okay, too.

Imagine that asking how many poems it takes to save a life is still cliché, but you hang with the rest

another around your neck. Secure it—anchor, trinket, charm.
Albatross.

Imagine no one knows the calendar you keep—the years, their uneven harm. Suppose what survived before

can love only the certainty of when this life finally recedes.

Go ahead: wait at the edge of her thrashing. The flail. The churn.
The lament, unending. Not of limbs.
But history, its dark waves famished.

Admit it—you've never been good at endings. Somehow, you think, this was never okay.

But time is an artifice, staggered among the living. Reinvented, repurposed. The brunt

carried upon the back. Look how vast, how archaic. Like childhood.

A detritus of shells salvaged from your pocket.

You palm the one that broke open first.

Hear it? —along each jagged notch: the swells, the rolling surge. A breach between.

You can't stop listening: her music

sets a place at the table, fills a cup with wind. Weeps through rooms locked inside your blood.

Imagine yourself as the sorrow you mold out of every hollowed space.

Imagine silence as its own animal, breached & desolate.

A friend says, *let go*.

Another says, *there's nothing left now*.

There is nothing left

(now)

& you will never be ready for it.

This is how you spend your life.