

## ELEGY FOR PHILLY

Nick Stanovick

August has come, cloaked in the stress of leaving  
the geese calling you to follow them south  
the skyline already a forgotten shape  
lost to a skirt hemmed with cloud.  
no stranger ponders this unfairness,  
the city ripped from you  
like a necklace from a damsel's throat

your sanctuary rendered useless  
a voice bled of sound

you unsnarl the house key from its chain  
scratch your initials into dirt  
finally acknowledge the beggar's hand

what is it you must not forget?  
the dandelions crowding the papi store's stoop  
ready to lose their heads  
the basketball gate braiding itself with honeysuckle  
the wavy summer heat  
keeping the asphalt quiet  
until twilight calls the boys from their rowhomes

still, the final hours chew through you  
like maggots through sour meat.  
remember the dragonflies wiping fountain from their wings,  
the park dog nuzzling your arm?  
remember the pier—  
the slow tide of love, the weightless feel  
of skates, the river silvered by moon?

Isn't this what the leaving do—  
hoard a timeline's worth of memory  
into one last golden hour?

then, sudden as a sickness,  
city in the rearview  
horizon napping above the dash,  
each breath putting another mile between the two  
what other option is there  
but to go  
and leave the sorrow  
to its work