Anthony Lawrence

Observance

Having entered the Third Act, I've been trying
to stop the seeding of clouds like blister packs
on my eyes, and I watch clocks for movement

of the second hand as if to delay the start
of a one-way trip to curtain fall.
I watch myself go back and forth in the world

finding symbols for mortality in unlikely places:
the moon and sun in time-lapse light
and shade on shut blooms at night, ocean spray

tracking the contours of a cliff as I hear
my grandmother: *You won't find pockets on a shroud.*
I frame scenes as I would the ground

glass on a camera under a black-out cloth.
I am older than the possum who
surprised me from a low branch, and who said

Today I arranged flowering weeds around
the body of my friend. I felt you might
need to hear this. I thanked her and waysided

myself with prayer. I am older by at least
two scores than the spotted-tail quoll
who stopped hunting to say *You are an open*

invitation for intervention, and then *There are*
no endings, only this, by which I mean …
instead of words it ran in circles to release

the code its spots were broad-casting in fits
and starts: *Breathe and fall through*
a portal of faith, which I did and was caught,

not lost between belief and action.
I am younger than the stone I found on a beach
that announced itself as one-of-a-kind

among many sharing the same sea-worn corium.
It was mapped with fracture-lines
as though an ocean-dwelling spider had spun

water-proof web on its skin. I held it aloft
and saw swirls like those on bark
made by the larvae of the scribbly gum moth.

I remained silent, still and watchful,
my hand raised, the stone warm in my palm.
A tennis ball came past, followed by a mongrel

who made a sound like a spectre doing laps
around my bed during a fever.
As daylight conceded texture and form to night,

I returned with dandelions I had picked
from a field where corellas were looping-
the-loop in a pine and gave them to Len

the tortoise. As he ate he looked up at me,
a dying yellow spark in his mouth.
Thank you, he said. *Love and goodwill*

can fly overhead or travel slow as a shelled
patchwork house. I am the grateful
beneficiary of their arrival.