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Poetry: Bad Man Going Down

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Bad Man Going Down

You can't recall the name of the cancer that's killing you.

It sounds something like "crayfish" or "cryogenic,"
like something slowly putrefying,
a familiar odor carried on the wind,
the decayed gestures of a thousand mornings before the mirror.

It sounds like the names of the wives you've abandoned,
the riffled snapshots of the children you've forgotten,
the pounds of your discarded plastic gurgling down the streams.

It sounds like the name of an executioner who wants you to live forever--
lost in coma--
or paraplegic with a pencil in your mouth,
slowly muscling a board through noontime intersections.

It sounds like a portable final solution, insoluble
and complete as the morning light that strikes the top of your dresser,
like the infinite ticking of a summer sunset
when you're dying for darkness and some well-earned rest.

Phil Tabakow