

## Laura Bayless

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### Long After

*Life goes on long after  
the thrill of living is gone,*  
says the song about Jack and Diane...

the way a second marriage starts out  
like a teenage love affair,  
all heat and passion while  
you ignore what nags...

the way things like remodeling  
a house turn to existential disagreements  
about bathroom tiles, décor,  
where pots go in the cupboards.

After a while less time spent together  
becomes no time in any meaningful way.  
Dinners turn into love/hate confrontations,  
intimacy disappoints or occurs not at all.

You separate, move a few miles apart,  
make practical concessions to finances.  
Maybe you're euphoric for a year or so,  
wake up in delight every morning  
until depression creeps in,  
dreadful reminder you have failed again.

You count up what you've lost,  
hopeful beginning,  
notion of growing old together.  
Eventually you pick up the pieces,  
occupy your never-ending thoughts  
with mystery novels, lunch with friends,  
claim you have no regrets,  
weep for everything and nothing.

## Offshore

In the leeward shelter  
of a half moon cove  
detachment takes form  
at the brim of a rolling breaker  
fifty yards offshore.  
Indigo dream, edged in turquoise,  
cautiously crests, coils, then  
dissolves dazzling onto the sand.

This scene becomes a moment  
to gather up eternal losses,  
revisions from a previous life  
to sustain whatever days remain.  
Five black surf scooters float  
in calm intervals,  
disappear under fissured foam,  
rise again and again,  
reminders of how I coped with  
more than one crushing wave,  
how I still emerge  
from the seachange aches  
challenging my body  
in these late decades.

**Laura Bayless** is the author of four collections of poetry, *The Edge of the Nest*, *White Streams and Touchstones*, *Persistent Dreams*, and most recently *Chairs in the River*. Her poems have appeared in local and national publications, and anthologies, including *Porter Gulch Review*, *The Homestead Review*, and *Blue Heron*. She is co-editor of an award-winning compilation of stories and poems about the Carmel River – *Passion for Place*.