

Janice D. Soderling

A Long-suffering Wife Speaks Graveside

Lately fond of gin and rum,
here lies my household's head
who hid his bottles here and there
and underneath the bed.

Confronted with proof positive
he gaped in mock surprise.
There are no hidden bottles here.
And still he lies.

The Widower Visits the Bordello

A vague unrest, a hollow sense of loss.
Forget the sparkling start. It's how it ends
that counts: a limp balloon, a double-cross,
a vague unrest, a hollow sense of loss.
His guilt hangs heavy as an albatross.
He tries, he sighs, he lies, he condescends.
A vague unrest, a hollow sense of loss.
Forget the sparkling start. It's how it ends.

Washing Dishes After the Last Guest Finally Went Home

It was that wordless voice
clamoring in his eyes
that made me drop
the gilt-edged saucers
and turn from the sink
to meet his mouth.

It was that interior tidal surge
loosening my legs
pounding against all my doors.
It was that soft loss of strength
oiling the golden hinges
with frankincense and myrrh.

It was his wordless voice
it was celebration
it was all those little cries
crowding my throat with
yes, yes, yes, pulling
him down on the kitchen floor.