

## Ladies Night #2

This is not dusk but a gravity  
of twilight, air a moist pewter  
no one could breathe.  
Not you, with mysterious asthma  
and undiagnosed stuttering of the lungs.  
The public fainting.  
The talking in tongues.

The old man waving his T-shirt  
on the wharf?  
He's waiting for your ship.  
Contagion stalled it at sea.  
It's abandoned but for caskets  
in rows like April hyacinths.

Some women make a career  
of dirty fingers and planning graves.  
Mine's been ready for decades.  
An open hole, a wound, a picked sore,  
a door into a nightmare,  
one final O like a vile mouth  
with a sordid vocabulary.

All those spelling tests  
and optional extra credit lists.  
What did it get you, really?

Tax season. A storm due.  
And that spasm? It's not the mutiny  
of your heart but stray unsullied  
thunder loitering above the harbor  
strung with sodden banners announcing

### *Poetry Week.*

You missed it. Again.

Some women are like stained lamps  
discarded in attics and thrift shops.  
Two bucks.  
Some women are lost cargo  
adrift on the border  
between intimacy and violation.

Some women have insomnia and grief.  
It adheres like sea creatures and rust.  
Nights of the ambulance and divorce  
exposed beneath gulfs of indifferent stars.

Some women are not worthy of oceans.  
They are bad swimmers with a diabetic's thirst.  
They swallow bilge, oily kelp, a colossus of salt.  
Bloat shuts them up.  
We call them stitch-mouth.  
You don't need an autopsy.  
They open like melons, boneless,  
an anatomy of glittering cruelties.

All those spelling tests  
and optional extra credit book reports  
and book reviews and what did it get you, really?

Some women scar everyone like radiation.  
Husbands. Infants. Failure makes them narrow  
and raw. They confuse magnitude with definition,  
become vague to themselves, disappear

and no one notices.

Some women are like bulbs going bad,  
infiltrating rooms -with a darkening leak.  
You hear it coming like an ocean.

Some women smell like cancer.  
Skin the texture of disaster.  
Rashes. Lice.  
That's the least of it.  
They can't scrub the ruined  
linoleum off, trailer park  
faux wood plastic paneling.  
Food from a can like a dog.  
Remember?

All those spellingspellingspellingspellingspelling tests  
and book reports and deadline revisions  
that always come at Thanksgiving  
and what did it get you, really?

The carnival is in the plaza.  
The cops are out.  
The social workers who take  
your kids.  
It's Ladies Night.  
It's Ladies Night at Club Lobotomy.

And some women take too many pills,  
go for a sail and fall from the brow  
with the ease of rained on maples.