

Brian Leibold

Islanded Widow

Yesterday my brother called
from that dreary east coast city
to stress his dread. A year ago tomorrow
my husband of five summers
drowned. When my mother
read about it in the Times,
she snail-mailed me the day's paper,
highlighting her Scorpio horoscope
in brown, and his obituary in red.
I couldn't miss it.

People need me to look okay,
to be happy, or at least get by.
Plenty of other cod in the sea, my sister says.
As for me, walking down the strand
I cannot stand the glee
the seals in freedom bring forth. Their ecstasy
ruins me. Their animal cries careen
through the holes in the screen
surrounding my keening heart
like a zephyr wind that suddenly chills
with the memory of how it once warmed
moonlit summer nights by this same sea
rivaled in muscular mystery
only by the depths of his steady gaze.
I need to rest.

I sit down on the bench
where he and I kissed
for the first time. I can't escape
the three dolphins in the sunlight.
Though the sight makes me feel nothing
I make sure I don't show it.
I make a show of it: *How*
wonderful, I say. The man next to me
does not even look at me, but I know
I'll be sure to hear it if I look sad.
At least he left you plenty of money,
my father told me at the wake.
Take me, breakers.

I knew the tides were not safe that day.
Why didn't I share my heart?
He loved to surf when the waves were roughest,
but this time would've been different,
this time I know he would have listened,
and we could have eaten together the salmon
he had caught at sea that morning,
the cucumbers and tomatoes and carrots
I had harvested from the garden that afternoon.
It's time I return to the garden.

The siren sounded while I was chopping
the vegetables. I remember the colors:
one was green like the Caribbean;
one was orange like his hair;
one was red. I said
a prayer for the victim,
put down the knife, opened the door,
and looked up at the summer sky
drowned in pink like the salmon
I would eat that night alone.

Brian Leibold is a writer who lives in Virginia. His poetry has appeared in *HeartWood Literary Magazine*.