

# Naked Ladies

by Jack Swenson

## *Love Birds*

I tell Max I don't remember what my wife and I argued about. We sit in the library and drink bourbon and listen to music. Later, Max tells one of his guests to show me her legs. She is a tall, dark-eyed beauty. I tell the girl that her laugh is full of sunshine. Max fancies that he can look into a woman's eyes and see her soul. Later the three of us lie on a bed in the moonlight, and I touch the nipples of her tiny breasts with the thumb and pinkie of one hand. The morning I leave Fargo to go back to sunny California it is twelve degrees below zero. That night when I get home, the bedroom is dark, and my wife is already asleep.

## *Post Time*

"Who do you like in the sixth at Pimlico?" the fat man asked. I looked up at a black sky filled with stars and tried to spot my lucky one. After dinner we sat on the balcony until it got too cool, and then we moved inside. I mingled with the other guests, chatted with my wife's friend Peggy. I placed a glass of champagne in her hand. Missed opportunities: they follow you around, I said. She put her arms around my neck and whispered something in my ear. She said she wanted to find a man who could appreciate a woman who gave great head. I told her about my nightmares.

## *A Grave Matter*

You nibbled a potato chip, peeled a grape. You said you were going to have a D & C, and you would need a ride home. At the table next to ours, a slender man in a suit and tie was commiserating with a balding man with a walrus moustache. Later you sat on my bed wearing nothing but your hat and rummaged through your purse.

You told me that the score never interested you, only the game. At the gravesite the next day we stood far back and watched while they planted your lover. I scanned the mourners and wondered which one was his wife. That afternoon the fog rolled in early. In the morning my resentments were back. They were lined up on my window sill like fat little birds.

