

A Little Bird That Sings and Itches

by Jerry Ratch

I guess it was a foregone conclusion that you would be gone at the end of the year. A foregone conclusion that you wouldn't be coming back, and that after you began writing letters to Sharon saying what you would do to her when you did come back in the back of your dad's ski boat out on Fox River, that you were never coming back for me. Never.

Though I did get you to come back to me one more time, didn't I? It was that one time in my little Hillside studio apartment, when I knew for a fact that would be the last time you were ever going to make love to me. Ever.

I'll tell you where my soul is. Maybe there's still just a *little* smudge up on the ceiling of your bedroom. What gets left behind when a big dusty moth hits the ceiling? Soul dust, I guess you would call it. It's sort of brown, but with streaks from where my golden hair touched it. And now I am like a little bird that sings and itches.

Only one problem. I think the heart is the greatest exhibitionist. The heart may be immobile at its center, and may revert only to the softer spots in the darkest moments of the night, when silence is eating away at everything, all resolve and everything. Honestly, I don't know how the nights can be so long when life is so short. Can you tell me that?

