

and we can only hope

by Jerry Ratch

When I was alive with you inside me, I discovered briefly and finally how to fly. Up near your ceiling as I floated around the universe with widening eyes, like a butterfly, like a god, like a bird with golden hair at my neck, like a speckled moth inflamed by the touch of your soul. The flowers themselves seem to have been those kinds of gods at the beginning of the world, like a runner running out of emptiness, when they ran out of swans. So you fell for the inflamed flower of my youth, and it was up to you to father the world, to wash in the great line of heaped-up generations, if you could only reach up under my plum, lock and curl, to those frail lightning-like bones of mine.

I had my pretty face in the ice, and my rosy moon, with which to cleanse the dark off our youth, together. But you fled the land and went west. Went West. And I was watching myself as in a dark mirror then. You had added something to my life, made my life bigger. When you smiled, I remember life got bigger.

I may buy myself a glass of champagne now and again, in sadness or drunkenness, or in health. Without judgement, we witness the actual as it happens, and only occasionally the small curved lines form at the corners of my mouth. Things you used to notice about me. And of course, the eyes like an animal's where the soul lives, still. And every woman smiles at a man buying flowers, because we can imagine. And we can only hope.

