

# only, remember me

by Jerry Ratch

*I know how deeply your hands plunged into my fire. I remember putting my arms around your back and holding you in the flames for as long as I could bear it. And I remember feeling you slip away, serenely, with that light that urges the rose up out of my skin, after trying to hold on to the liquid jet.*

*I have always wondered how it must have felt to be inside me. But you cannot easily change the natural course of a river, or freeze the structure inside a cloud. Yes, you were a thief, three times over, and I know most beautiful things have the need to be watched. And that clouds approach the divine to get light up inside them.*

*The sun is my only stimulant now, and of course, the moon. There is saleable laughter to be found, somewhere, because I still hear the sharp voices of youth shouting in the fields of random pleasure. Too bad it is wasted on the young only. The sunlight softens the lips of memory, it is said, and I can remember being one of them. Fortune is a small rain that a small mouse recalls.*

*You were never at all like Narcissus, trying to remember girls' names with marble in their eyes. You never adored your own image, looking at yourself in the river, like I did. I remember you admiring the dresses that I wore, painted by immortals. You had me try them on. You bought me boots that laced up the front. You bought me perfumes to lend that faint odor of a woman at my neck.*

*I got easily excited when you were with me. Parties every night. I got nervous and jumpy, excited. When winter drew near, they were the shortest days, and long sleepless nights. I wanted to hold things, be near you. But you were leaving and going away. Still, I was easily excited, nervous, and thrilled when you were inside me, like a long calming, stirring rod. And I remember how we proceeded as if we had nothing to lose. And we had to lie on our own flames too!*

