

thank you, for everything

by Jerry Ratch

I was in life, in my dream. I was feeling around underneath your clothing. My fingers were shining in the underwater afterlife of memory, searching for those lovely nipple-sized mollusks. I lived in a land somewhere between the past and the future. Now I draw a few details from the present and send them in both directions.

I never lived exactly, but I never died either. It was exquisite to be here. A pleasure, as always. We call out to each other in reconciliation. I hear all of their names now in my ears. They are like a chorus to me. We are vessels, taking fearless inventory. I'm one too, just like you. I inherited next to nothing, and gave back everything.

I remember lounging around in that infamous Impressionist painting, *Luncheon On My Ass*. In heat like you, always in heat, and it was great. Just tremendous! We were underneath a tree, overlooking a river. You put your arm around my waist and leaned your head on my shoulder. It was getting dark and we both got up. I told you I had to be going. I don't know why.

And I remember when we wheeled my mom into the old folks home in Flagstaff, and she took one look around and said, "*They're all old here.*" But she took my hand in hers and told me, "*I wanted to thank you, for everything. Just the words I want to say to you. For everything.*"

I wept when we left her, knowing it was the last time I would see her. Ever.

