

The Hot Earth

by Jerry Ratch

The fame of the underworld may spread its cheeks and blow out nearly every virgin's candle, just so you know. But don't let them take away our youth, even if we have to beat the paint out of birds the way we did when we were young. I knew we could do anything, so let's go back into that world and describe the new dawn all over again, even if we have to use the frozen feet of dinosaurs as our brush.

Hail to belief in ourselves! Hail to the ends of dry land and the savage ones who inhabit it, as famous for their feasting on others as they are on each other. We are all loathe to leave the edible, so what the hell! Hail, and farewell to the suffocating madness we were famous for.

Women in labor producing god knows what. To swell, to become round, big, swollen out of the moment with seed, to produce an image of self. A figure that springs forth and acquires a name, out of the dark sweet bay returning. I was that woman. Ever our eternal organs, soft, gentle, divine, home of the gods hidden in fur, in silence.

I am like a spice in the wind, warm and gentle on your face, a reminder of our youth. So once more lick the trapped silk from my soul with your high language. Go ahead, get the core out of me and turn it under your tongue. Why shouldn't the egg pull the river, pull the strong muscle over the sea? Even while I am screaming out, Yes, yes! and the whole fever shivers through our virgins like it used to.

Pure and clean, the sky, the heavens. What came from your mouth made me ache. I still remember when I could fetch the young thing from your trousers any time I wanted. And there it is, my fever, my friend, my one-time lover forever. Play until the end and some sweet obscenity catches you, which earlier may have pulled you from the river.

Doesn't joy always threaten the dream? Tell me. I have looked at the face of the fire and seen the flame. I have kissed all the gods

going in there. And I listened to the minor music trailing after the swan, while I held the swan itself in my arms, like a lover. Yes, a lover.

