

The Swan On Earth

by Jerry Ratch

I saw God sobbing in a wheelchair. I saw God on the ceiling of your bedroom on Illinois Street while you were inside me the first time. (I remember so many things... Do you remember who I am yet?) I saw myself, far away in a window — the swan on earth — with short blond hair at my neck. I saw a bug, standing up in a drop of water. I don't know how the nights can be so long when life is so short.

I remember once when we were in your backyard and you were sniffing something and staring at some plants. "You are beautiful!" you said — to your mother's tomatoes. I was standing right there!

"How about me?" I remember saying. "You too," you said, almost as an afterthought.

But then you lifted a curl of blond hair from my neck, which was ringed by your hickeys, and I felt a spark leap from your fingertip to my neck. And yes, I was so hooked it was ridiculous. No desire, and no way, to back out of this now. Even though I had just asked you whose initials those were, besides yours, etched into that brandy snifter in your bedroom. That JAM person — when you became so evasive and withdrawn.

