

# women in labor

*by* Jerry Ratch

Women in labor producing god knows what, the returning year, the yearly produce. To swell, to become round, big, swollen out of the moment with seed, to produce an image of self, that's what. 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 wind, warm and gentle on the face, a reminder of your youth, tried and true. Lick the trapped silk from my soul, is all I am saying, with your high language. 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? While I am screaming out, *Yes, yes, the whole fever shivers through your virgins, still, like it used to.*

Pure, 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. Play until the end and some sweet obscenity catches you, which earlier pulled you from the river.

Doesn't joy always threaten the dream? 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.

