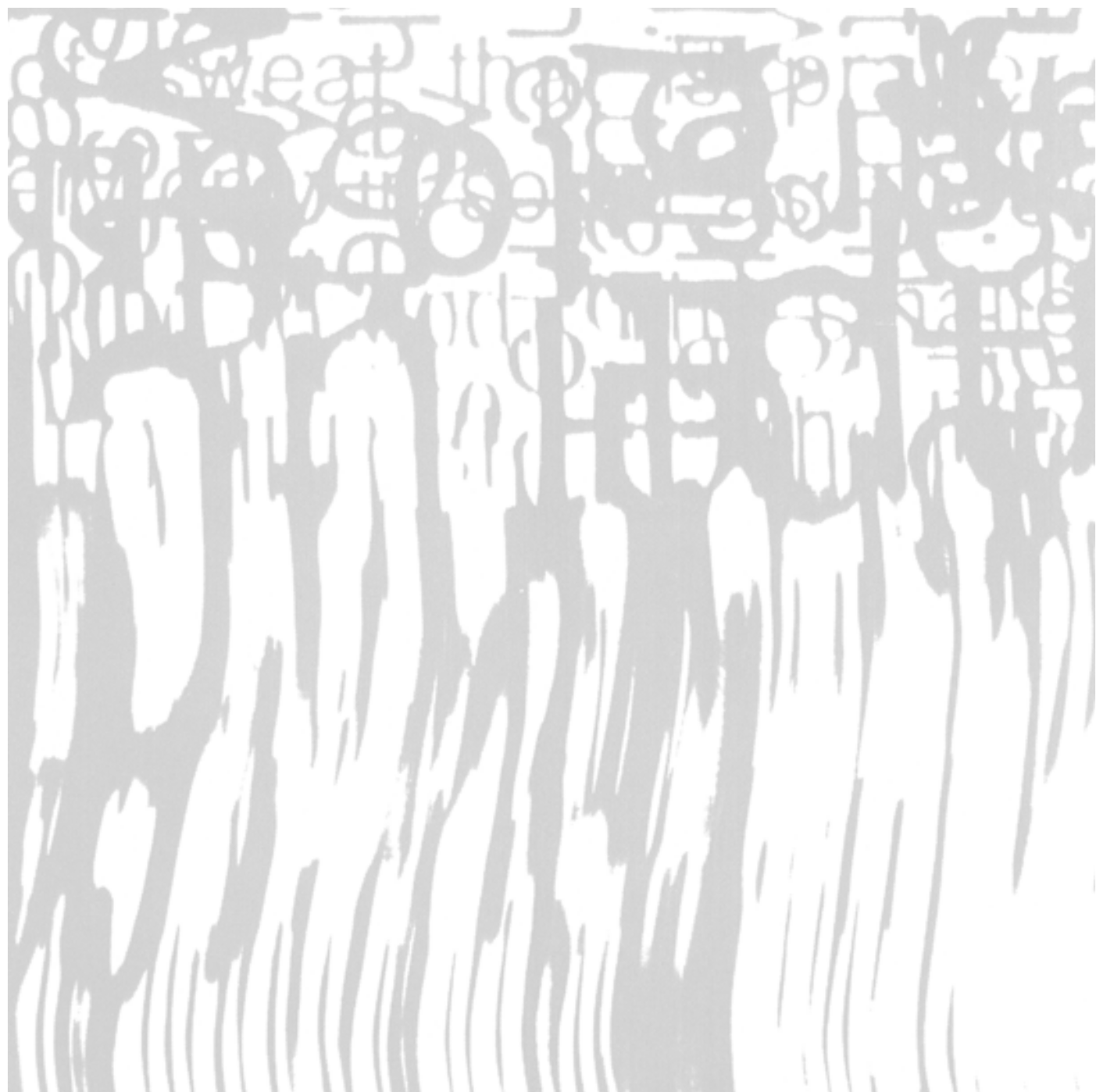


SWAN  
SONGS  
I - V

Laurie Schneider

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[perspicacity@xexoxial.org](mailto:perspicacity@xexoxial.org)

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# I

The fearful walk keeping their shadows well in front. Drawing a bead of sweat that is prayer they seek to penetrate the mystery only in so far as it feels good to each other's breasts. Talking to god. The smallest particle of a tree's trunk. LEFT TO HER SELF. She likes to dress sexy by hiding her body in his RIGHT TO THE POINT. They flew over the mountains to find their births silenced by snow. No NOW here. Thrust through the door. A horrible dream. A virgin birth. A tiny love. Hair-covered skulls facing a white wall in a darkened room. "Thank you...thank you... thank you, see you tomorrow." I hate NOW when I'm here. Rehearsing the question before daring to ask the venom's antidote. PAPER CUT. The start of the rain is leaves rustling, cat's fur brushing the door. "...those who were slaughtered for the sake of the word of God...." The larger,

loud, head, or prophecy. The morning an insult with diamond-studded sidewalks. Feckless. Wanderers with grocery carts and ill-bred dogs. Loose broom straw. The phone, the phone. EVERY WHERE. "Those slaughtered for not listening." Entering the church of many tongues. Too many sexual acts. Distress to the moment's brim. Middle man neither here nor now. "Those slaughtered for living." Half the child belongs to the mother. Out of mercy, immersion, warm and fresh from the dryer, our fertility. The looming hospital. For HER half. The nervous new place where tea is slurped. An Oedipal thing; perhaps an intimate waiting place. We know not and we say so, just to be sure. The blind knitters clicking. A sleep-stricken thought. Seems leaking from IS. Or day on day of laborious story spinning. A six-pointed idea, each point made of clay. A December-blue light. Clouds puff up over the city as if over an explosion. Terror builds row on row of houses, all alike. Brings morning deathly close. Then all faces are familiar, and most stones. The fearful stay home.





## II

The lost feel at home in a shipwreck, are calmed by a cross-roads. Brethren of the blank look, a decade of your very own. A REGENERATION. A divine hatrack. An empty file. "One may say that water does not contain any virtue, but it is part of God's plan of salvation." Warped and wet. Paper lily pecked to shreds. Our homes fumigated, our jobs antiseptic. He had an OCCUPATION. Star, moss, map, or anchor. She has a PREOCCUPATION. Potato eyes, tree's knots. Only in the most narrowly expansive times could those who are lost claim to have found themselves. Slippery id, slumped ego. First-hand doppler effect. Their complaints grow smaller in the distance. That's an error in usage or a useless pining away. What of God's renovation? 52 PICK UP. A self-induced trance, an accident of orgasm.

To be the first, we risk death, PASS and FAIL. Whose rending birth? "Spring is for war games." A home where the honey moons and even the cat's depressed. ALL WAYS. Ma & Pa Kettle's cast iron marriage. BOILING. Whose cup? God's cup. She actually wants to become a merry widow, broken 2X4's between kisses. Something deeply forgotten, insidious, like the police officer's creased neck. The waste-can groomers and butt scroungers parade. A house engulfed by flames. Grandiose fantasies of a shit-smearred shoe. One of the four greatest philosophies of our time. Compass points. Little tributaries feeding head, heart, and lungs. The cat's unwillingness to respect or obey orders. The desperation of a Sunday morning; the little man in a big hospital bed. Children's faces on wax cartoons. You wish to take your mother's place or die trying in a shed called "sex". All the men encountered with knives dangling. A daily ritual involving praise and morning sickness. And maybe just at the right moment the wrong person enters. A tribute to the lost tribe's lost cause.

### III

The sensible buy brick, keep the wolf away. His chaff, her wheat, his coffee, her grounds. That couple is legally uncoupled. When the snail trail glistens, the morning is leaking. By the hair of your chinny chin chin. You can't think straight because you've a woman's heart. LADEN. INSIDE. Listening is your vice. OVER and OUT. A Little blue bay with sails. Oh you two-dimensional doll, you. Make a note of that: CHECK MATE. He got in the shower and turned on the stove. Hot pins poured out. Nothing left but acid rain and squeaky snow. Oh that warm pink thing! A very deep sink. Meet my running mate, our campaign to extinguish anguish. A vanishing point or period. Period. A rolling stone in a glass house, or something like that. Another derelict spirit on mission street taking a black hole for a walk. What he saw unfold between cars. An extravagant gesture egging him on. Death was more common then, like a good friend hungry for seed cake.



There's the bang; where's the whimper? The rest split between the dog and the Hoover. It was part of the plan: to grow up and inherit his father's eyebrows, or trace his sickness to dawn's crack. A very good beating, a licking. She sang for holy tears to drip upon the tower. OR ELSE.... Come highwater they'll fill hell with spades and a dumptruck. Her diary of desire. For instance, as a result of waking up horny, they find the willow fronds stimulating. The neighbor's baby or a cat in heat. He plots his career while killing flies. Each day attached to another out of order. A peace conference full of clay feet in net shopping bags. On Sunday, they sit the old ladies on hard benches. Not for punishment but for sense's sake. Leaping the year. After the straw house burned, to sweep up the cuttings brought about a vicarious thrill, a thrum. And then sleep comes stirred with cream. They found themselves for \$30 a week. But all the water was flowing away into a two inch slit in the ground. You can't talk sense from a tree.

## IV

The paranoid walk around ladders, meet their match in mirrors. Of course she's threatened by the veteran skirt chaser. CHASED. Apprehend this? The particles of life all jiggling at an alarming rate, the collisions and near misses, the roving minstrels, wandering eyes, kidnapped kids. In the NUCLEUS. Caught between television signals, the mad housewife and her burned out husband chewing corkscrews. A dangerous accumulation of verbiage. WORDS. Small white feet. Pale nails and Christ-like veins. Relieved, he laughed at the man with breasts. Penetrated and escaping. Ha-ha happy as an old bicycle tire. Laying on the guilt. An OFF year. Bell-like meow. Curious. Limber. An inkblot on four legs. "All right! Burn the x-rays!" A vast emptiness filled by the blaring of loudspeakers. Our national anthem. A cocktail that perpetuates the love/hate



of little crawly things. He entered the lottery over and over with the same sentence. A NOTHING NOTHING SCORE. Spread your legs and peanut butter. For WHOM? The omen of the vulture versus the prophecy of the wedding. In his dreams: hairless, tooth-less, and pursued. All sexual activity is to be avoided if you've lost your mind. His victim recovered while being caressed with 100 arms. Green tennis balls at the mercy of some sicko. Under the bed, in the closet, behind the drapes. All answers that look like lies. Hiding his head attracts baseballs, ufo's, blue birds. If the words sound like gongs slam the chapel doors. The yogi in a steady state. A multitude of O's. Her father gives her away for life in the root cellar. BED SPRINGS. The murderer's mother cuts his hair with the scythe. It was only a department store shroud. Lost between walls of boxes and walls of cans, wailing. The tall woman with the cart seeks us. I found your name on a rock and blew. What makes the public cry out? Wind cowering by the snuffed candle stub. The fruits of their labor have brown spots.



# V

The hopeful pack babies on backs, plant crosses on parents. Far better, I think, than listening to the multitudes within. Spring fever unabated: we stand at attention before a diamond on a green field. MAY. Hope or a woman's name. Blind slats dusted with sun. A sky-eaten branch. Cat sniffing a crushed robin. Blinking back a sneezed yessss. Those aren't our stars, but a marquee of intense pleasure. A sigh of release sun, a slider. The prodigal son's three day weekend. "I feel a lot better now." We don't want to imagine aliens in god's garden or a withered hand holding an apple. It makes us feel too good to phone home. Each day another the bomb hasn't dropped. Affirming his discovery of the life span, a plant-like hand strokes his urgent need to make love. Streets littered with nursing mothers clutching sympathetic chest pains. HUNGRY and



THIRSTY. Humanly possible or possibly human. Deciduous thoughts raked, bagged, and later burned. We walk past the oxygen exchange. He likes an automatic teller, a sociable ice cream. The flea, head buried, blithely seeing red. His body, doors open. WISH FULL. An adequate trait for a bullheaded sissy. The full, sticky story. Born with no hair, no eyes, we do not wish to visit the sins of the fathers. "A whole lot better." Touching wood. Adam's wife. When the cash flows they raise children and money. Daisies chained. Her petals closing over his desire for renewal. A bright place to live; brief glimpse of his nuts. For a living; a line drive. Another bed with a crop of stone angels. Now that they can manufacture sunlight from seaweed we can stop saving for a rainy day. A short hopper. A sack of potatoes. A giggle box. A brat. That's what sounds like a fire engine. The rhythm of speech puts them to sleep. A spoon, a lovely silver grandmother. The lazy river pulling the lace from her hips. Just another day of information and weather. A naturally occurring poem which, for better or worse, we haven't discovered yet.





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