

Three Poems · *Maureen Seaton*

SWAN LAKE

1

The Canada geese preen
along the lake's west end,
notice our passing
like old women on a porch.
A few murmur. One growls lightly.
Monarchs flit round our thighs,
refusing to land.

Something in my hand
betrays me. I speak in tongues:
You fly to the highest branch,
balance like a hawk.
The lake reflects your eyes:
Chiaroscuro. I want you.
Everything I say sounds like that.

2

We lie beneath a beech
that weeps light and rain.
Our lips sing nonsense.
Our fingers play like children.

You draw two faces in the earth,
one with stars on the cheek,
one with tears, tell me:
Choose both.

The night swells around us.
 Our voices, tense with lightning,
 create a new silence.
 Tree frogs surrender their bows,
 crickets hush. Your shadow

emerges among the fireflies,
 soft-edged, reflecting the moon.
 I start, as if seeing you
 for the first time, ask myself:
 Who's the arrow and who's the swan?

THE FIRST DRINK

My mother stands in the doorway,
 always leaving. She thinks
 I'm a woman. Her face shows this—
 how odd. I'm four years old
 or less. The scene: Grandma's
 kitchen, my father, his lap, me.
 The choice: him or her. My heart
 empties soundlessly. I need her
 but she never touches me.
 The kitchen seems to shrink when she leaves
 like some hot air balloon dying.