

Commotion

by Sean Seu

There were geese in front of the rest stop, but the lady next to me said that they were swans, even though I know the difference between geese and swans, I'm not stupid, but the lady next to me thought swans were more romantic. When our bus pulled up, she leaned over me and pointed and said "look honey, swans!" and I told her right away that they weren't swans, swans were white and these were so obviously gray, of course. But when I told her, she frowned at me, and so I tried to pretend that they were swans, I even squinted my eyes, but I couldn't do it no matter how hard I tried, and anyway, it wouldn't have made her any more glad.

They let us off the bus at the rest stop. I didn't need to pee, but I went out anyway, and when I got off the bus I guess I did actually need to pee, so I followed the swan lady over the lawn, past the gray mountains, and into the bathroom, with four mirrors and four stalls. She had chosen a mirror, and was brushing something gray over her eyes, and for a second she saw me seeing her in the mirror, so I chose a stall and closed myself in.

When I came out of the bathroom everyone was gathered on the pavement. There was a commotion. That's my word of the day, commotion. My word yesterday was variety. Variety variety variety. I said it so much it stopped sounding like anything at all. Anyway, someone was missing. A lady, they said. Someone could have sworn there was a lady in a gray sweater on the bus earlier. Of course, no one told me this, no one tells me anything, I had to pretend I wasn't listening. So I watched the geese honk louder and fly away in a panic, off to the gray, white-capped mountains. And when I looked back at the rest stop, I saw the lady, a different lady, no longer in a gray sweater but in a white coat, with dark around her eyes, and she was

looking at the geese while everyone flew around her, looking for her, and I saw her seeing me and she gave me a wink and she mouthed “swans” like she had caught me.

I tried looking for the geese again but they were gone. So I looked for them in the mountain tops and tried to find gray specks, but my eyes got tired, and the snow was so white that it turned pink, which is a color I hate but it was weird that I saw pink when there was none, like a pink hazy commotion that covered my vision and turned green when I blinked. And it was weird that the snow was white when the mountain was gray, so I let the snow and the mountain be the same thing (maybe they're glaciers, we learned about them in school), and I let the geese and swans become the same thing, and so I told the woman, the same woman, that they were searching for her, and she said “me?” and seemed a little more glad, or maybe a little panicked, and then she thanked me and told the bus driver that she wasn't missing, and the gray swans flew overhead, or maybe they were white geese, although at this point, what's the difference?