

# A Question of Sickness

*Susan Terris*

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*Where were you when she first got sick?*

the park by the bay in a dark grove,  
just the two of them, balancing vulnerability,  
lamenting how their fathers must die and leave them

*Why did it take you so long to act?*

the apartment was cold and underfurnished and  
often they had to warm themselves in the tub before  
they could eat or talk or lie together

*When did you tell her your waist was smaller?*

hubris was involved, living the life of a writer,  
Odette the white swan who only liked men  
and would follow him along the street when he left

*How long before you refocused?*

too long and the leaves got in the way  
the water, too, and the swans, the cold, their fathers  
and the unearthly sounds of salt and rapture

*And then what? Was it too late?*

no not too late just terrible and the world shrank  
as she did to a glass of water, a locked door,  
breadcrumbs and a dark chill

*So . . . does the story have a happy ending?*

what is a happy ending—a cycle of swans, fire  
on the hearth and the dark grove left behind  
warmth, perhaps, but never enough