Truman Capote—suffering from writer’s block, crisis mounting—decides to publish excerpts from his savage roman à clef *Answered Prayers* in *Esquire* magazine, inexplicably betraying the confidences of his inner circle, mid-twentieth century society's wealthy and powerful elite: the women he called his ‘Swans’.

Capote has reached the pinnacle of success. After six arduous years of labor, his masterpiece *In Cold Blood* has achieved wild acclaim. He has hosted his infamous Black and White Ball at the Plaza Hotel. He’s the darling of the press. Yet celebrity has begun to erode his work. Eight years delinquent delivering his next manuscript, Capote commits a social and literary crime that will have seismic ramifications.

Haunted by the voices of the confidants he’ll betray, Capote makes the fateful decision to publish excerpts of his unfinished opus in *Esquire*, drowning his reservations in booze and bravado. When his inflammatory ‘La Côte Basque 1965’ hits newsstands, war is declared. In a single stroke, Capote’s closest allies become sworn enemies, rendering the aging wunderkind persona non grata. Stunned by the ruthlessness of their rejection, Capote spins his position from betrayer to victim, lamenting his fall from grace.

Centered around events that scandalized New York society in 1975, *Swan Song* spans three decades of complex friendships, as told from the collective and divergent perspectives of iconic tastemakers Babe Paley, Slim Keith, C.Z. Guest, Gloria Guinness, Marella Agnelli and Lee Radziwill.

A novel rooted in libel and slander, *Swan Song* strives to replicate—through language and shifting point of view—the corrosive nature of the gossip-riven world that its characters inhabit. A world in which everyone talks…and where talk can, quite literally, prove deadly.
The narrative moves between the PAST, 1955-1974 and PRESENT, 1975, the year Capote dropped his literary grenade. The PRESENT storyline charts the fallout from Truman’s transgression and subsequent excommunication, while the PAST explores the unique relationship dynamics the Swans experienced with their beloved ‘Tru-heart’ before being cast as the victims of his prose.

Interludes revealing Truman’s childhood in Depression-era Alabama shed crucial insight. Abandoned by both parents, young Truman is left to be raised by distant cousins in a conservative Southern backwater. This rejection in Capote’s early years and his resulting coping tactics— relying on invention to combat rejection— spawn the pathology that will later enable both his meteoric rise and his self-destructive fall.

The novel employs a First Person Plural perspective— the collective ‘We’— functioning as the voice of Society, the voice of Capote’s Betrayed. While the Swans predominantly function as a Greek Chorus, the gossip they perpetuate requires, by its very nature, both ‘gossips’ and ‘gossip-ees' in order to exist. The First Person Plural narration therefor ‘splinters’, in strategic moments, into each of the six Swan’s perspectives. When the Collective renders one of their own the object of scrutiny, the ostracized member of the group emerges as soloist from the larger chorus, offering chapters which serve to illuminate each Swan’s individual perspective on shared events.

Ultimately, Truman fails to publish Answered Prayers (the incomplete Esquire segments were only published in a posthumous volume.) After the loss of his beloved Swans, he spirals into a world of addiction and annihilation. He continues to threaten the release of his eight-hundred page manuscript, but fails to deliver. His mix of bombast and secrecy stirs speculation… Did Capote actually write the remainder of his infamous roman à clef…? Or was the stack of pages he flaunted nothing more than a ‘Minnesota bankroll’? Did he destroy his precious manuscript, so heartbroken was he over the loss it had inflicted? Or did he hide the completed draft, as he often suggested, for literary scavengers to pursue in vain?
Swan Song investigates Answered Prayers as the shapeshifting puzzle at the heart of a very human drama. It is both sacred text and weapon; it functions, in turns, as catalyst, riddle, confession, narcotic and masterpiece. Whatever form, the work of art takes on a life of its own, forever altering the lives of creator and subjects alike.

Swan Song tells the story of six ‘romances’ and six ruptures, made all the more fascinating for their incestuous entanglement. While the Swans combat Truman’s betrayal as a unified flock, their solidarity masks their deeply personal heartbreaks.

As the author himself careens toward a point of no return, wrestling demons from his childhood box of terrors, the alternatively adoring and vengeful Swans haunt Capote, asking the question at the novel’s core: Why would he attempt to publish Answered Prayers, knowing what he stood to lose...?

In the tradition of the Capote-invented nonfiction novel, Swan Song turns a forensic eye on events surrounding Truman's professional and social suicide, and his incomprehensible slaughter of the jet-set elite, who’d trusted him with their martini-soaked secrets.