

THE GOLDEN GOWN

—after Yehudit Arnon

C A R O L D I N E

Birkenau. The new woman pushed up beside me on the stone slab cries out in Hungarian in her sleep. I press my hand over her lips. Morning. Before the guard arrives, I show them how to unknot their bodies, stretch. Facing me, women in pajamas, striped birch trees.

Christmas Eve. They come for me. A large room, candles fluttering, the smell of beer and pine. Soldiers clap their big hands, they are shouting, “Dance for us.” I stiffen, look down at my mismatched socks. “Nein.” A soldier drags me outside to the yard. I grip the icy fence. Snow falls like a curtain. Snow covering my bare feet.

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In the forest, I shiver in the soldier’s coat and boots, stolen from the camp. Bent over, inch from tree to tree in the moonless dark. I look up at a single star, afraid to ask God for anything more.

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On deck of the ship to Palestine, I gather the parentless children. We pretend to leap the rolling waves.

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Karmiel, Israel. Center stage. My dancers watch from the wings. I bend my knees, extend the skirt of the golden gown across the floor until it is wide as a desert. The music swells. I lie down; the golden flecks are sand. On my bare skin, sun.

Two Paintings

—after Nancy Spero

Male Bomb

I diffuse
 half the male torso;
 in light brown gouache,
 a mushroom cloud.
 Between the open legs,
 his serpentine cock
 erect,
 carnage
 spewing
 from its mouth.

I work up
 sheet after opaque sheet
 until the paint of war
 runs out.

Gunship

With impermanent black
 I mark the horizon line.
 The helicopter
 hovers
 over a village;
 from the American eye
 of the pilot,
 from the apocryphal belly
 of the beast,
 jism, napalm
 spills over a mother father child.
 Their arms and spoons scatter,
 their paper skin burns.

—Carol Dine