

OTHER PEOPLE'S TROUBLES (St Louis Poet, Jason Sommer)

The Jewish parable goes
that in the waiting room
where all souls come, they leave
a bundle of their troubles
on hooks. At their return,
emerging from interviews,
they eye the parcels hung
in hundreds on the walls
with care, and take their own.

Trash night, curbside sits
a little sofa meant
for the taking, no one around
even to see our need.
A few speculatable stains,
though in the abstract forest
on its cover, shadows turn out
to be not impeded streetlight
but the body's unguent,
armrests oiled by arms.
We leave the sofa there,
sturdy and recoverable,
life in it yet.

Lilly said that on
The rim of Birkenau
before the women heard
the name or saw the chimneys'
fires and long shadows
of ash, but after stripping,
herding, shearing, searching,
the unhinged laughter at this,
the only nakedness of its kind
in their lives, a minute
of dribbled shower, the slap
of disinfectant – scalp
crotch and underarms –
the mad clothes thrown at them
without regard for fit,
rag remnants of gowns,
tattered cocktail dresses'
satin, tulle, and crepe

put on – more laughter than:
*Who are these scarecrows who
are us?* But not one of them –
the heavy woman choked
inside the sheath skirt
with the slender girl tenting
in a gown with a train: not
the tall woman bound
in the arms of the short dress,
pulling it down to cover
her thighs, with the small woman
hiking up folds – no one
would trade with anyone.

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