

Mother-gun

Beloved son, listen. Seek. You will find a photo in my wallet. It is folded thrice, creased, feeble, from opening, closing. Open gently. Do not tear. I have owned this since your birth. A mother embraces her child, protects it from inevitability. She is turned one quarter away, looking to her left, into her child, who buries its head in her breast. To her right stands a Nazi, an S.S., erect, poised, beautifully postured, like a ballet master, but left arm extended with Luger, pointed at her head.

She waits.

I waited. In slow motion, the bullet slowing, slowing as it approaches me, I waited. (I can see in my mind's eye, the air, just before the missile, compressed, morphed, torpedo shaped, obeying the arriving bullet. Even before death, the air obeys Bernoulli's principle.) I turned away to protect you. Could my head stop this missile completely, at least enough to protect you? I could not know. But I, like this mother, embrace you. Years it took for this bullet to reach me. I hoped to protect you. Have I?

I told Chanan -- my one love, my love too late. Showed him this photo as we sat on a sun-dappled rise, over the Mediterranean on a summer day, I told him of this. I wore Armani. Its colors were mine: grays, tinged blue, and light mauves, like the sunset on Kinneret's western bluffs; streaks of white, like the seagulls over the Kinneret darting to and fro, shuttlecocks, weaving water's blues into land's mauves. It billowed, Armani's silk (my second skin); I pressed

the ankle-length silk down with my arms. It billowed, protested my restraints. I fought the sensual breezes' urgings. Offshore, over Chanan's shoulder, just slightly offshore, a glider floats over the amphitheater, harvesting Mediterranean breaths to stay aloft. The amphitheater is empty, concentric benches face an empty stage. This silent audience faces a never-fading sea (these receiving waters in which I made *shekhita*). I spoke of death's immanence as I felt hope. The Mediterranean's breeze breathed hope. (But this is also Ulysses' sea, bearing memories of Circe's jealous fury and death; of six-headed, ravenous Scylla and sea-sucking Charybdis; of blinded rageful Cyclops; even as its waves carry the hope of finding haven.)

The hints of gray at my widow's peak, I had colored that morning. He noticed (silently, but I saw his eyes caress my brow) that the gray had disappeared. Chanel #5, my mother's fragrance, I misted before I left. Here is how to mist perfume for a woman: a slight misting before her, like a gentle fog, then she floats through its fragrance, which bathes her. Hope stirred after twelve years.

And I confessed death to him.

Durer engraved a scene of death's time halted; a scene frozen in time, *Melancholia*. Look as you read this. Study the faded photocopy also in my wallet, hidden in the left side among the folds. Now look again; don't glance as you have in the past, mind elsewhere. Concentrate your self on this Durer, for you will see the death inside of me come alive again even as I am dead. A winged maiden sits, eyes downcast, book on lap, one hand inscribing words,

the other holding a weary head -- hers -- haloed by death. Many encrypted symbols lie within; perhaps you will decode some and you will decode me: a sun, its piercing rays over the ocean as a rainbow crowns its setting; the building blocking the sun's light from this winged angel (as I believe I was, before that man's tool entered me); a weary cherub, downcast poses between her and the sun; an hourglass, half-spent next to the bell and secret calendar over her left shoulder. And at her feet, the globe, the broken sword, the sleeping, ravenous hound. Beneath the intricate folds of her gown (as in Michelangelo's practiced folds of fabric) hides her body.

"Melancholia" floats in the horizon, but this one word obscures the portrait, does not fully explain. Durer, who could sculpt praying disembodied hands, engraved this portrait of my soul, frozen in time. Portraiture is biography for the eyes, spoken without words.

I show Chanan this. On the hill's brow, overlooking the Mediterranean, the Sea's life sighing on us, I show him. I try to explain time frozen by death. In hope, the maiden awaits reawakening, against hope. Chanan nods, listens, but does not grasp life-in-death. It is like fog whorls within fog: cloud whorls that roll back upon themselves heavily, even as they float through a lighter fog. I have seen rivers of fog, that somehow crept, labored over the coastal mountains, just barely clamber over the coastal peaks, to course, tumble downwards, almost with relief, bathing the otherwise drought-stricken landscape, enveloping a single cypress, collapsing into Sausalito Bay. I hoped, somehow that in the fog of death, these

pregnant, tear-laden fog clouds would course through to revive my life. As they did, briefly. With you. With him.

There is a lone cypress, like a guardian, overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. Just north of this single cypress, the Pacific Coast fog sweeps through statuesque Redwoods. Their branches grasp the fog, tear-laden fog-clouds; these branches weep fog tears onto the forest ground, quenching the thirst of those straining to grow in giants' shadows. I thought that my tears, always falling within -- never from my eyes -- would quench you, son. I once strained fog tears, once overshadowed, but I was not quenched.