

3 Unforgotten Remembrances

by Martha Rand

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I watch my body

No
broken knees,
please.

I watch my body
(praying),
from the ceiling view.

This was before
I learned yoga's
child pose of relaxation.

Frozen. Surviving.
Surveillance was
an early skill my body learned.

A useful skill.
Tonic
immobility. Better than

the other possibility
of being
smothered for the crime

of inconvenient
whooping cough.

Infidel body!

Or the uncontrollable option
of my throat
being slit. Aye!

I don't, can't want,
yet, remember feeling
the cold.

Steel, sharp, slender blade
slid silently.
Music pulsed, quietly, in the room.

Neither do I
remember
feeling her embrace.

I know it happened.
Although,
my body at that moment

Seemed to dissolve,
forgetting
what I didn't want to fit.

Like I keep forgetting
to return
those jackets that don't fit

to Bloomingdales.
I love the privacy
of fitting rooms.

No longer do

I frequent
the large open spaces

of cheap department stores.

Rooms
where other's slyly eye me.

Some things I no longer
need
to endure.

I never learned to ski
because
my body's integrity

gave me important reason
to dance, to climb,
to stand and clearly see.

Visiting in Paris

My husband has a cousin
who lives in France.
He's once removed,
a generation older.
Or twice removed
if you count his deportation
to the children's camp.
called Buchenwald.
Jacques Zylbermine might have been forgotten
along with many others.

I cannot forget.
Passover at the age of twelve,
the first year I was a woman.
After dinner, in the kitchen I
joined the other women
washing, drying dishes at my Aunt's.
In an apartment on the Grand Concourse,
many women spoke
with many European
accents. One blonde woman
rolled her sleeve up to reach
into the sink's full soapsudsy
dish bath.

My eyes were shocked,
my pupils unblinkingly stilled
by the black tattoo-ed numbers
I never suspected,
I never knew.

My Years of Magical Thinking

Dear Joan,

I understand
what it is
to tell
and retell
and tell again.

To tell the same story,

that is not a story,
that is the truth,
to tell
and retell
and tell again.

Attempting
to believe,
trying to believe
the truth I tell
and retell
and tell again.

To believe the story happened,
to ask others to join in my belief,
to listen and tell me back.
Retell to me,
and tell again
the truth you've told
that I've told you
like you believe it, too.

