

See, Nadia!

Every night I dream of my husband –
how he will come for me:
he strides through the gates,
tall, alight with power;
the guards tremble;
he walks through the many-eyed brambles of necks and arms and legs,
gazing compassion on them,
but he does not stop for them;
the kapos bow their heads
as he sweeps through barracks after barracks
looking for me.
I know that he will come.
I have told Nadia,
and she says, “Yes, he will come
when dead Jews
find a way
to rise up
out of the pit.”

She speaks this way
since they burned her child.
I do not blame her.
How could she understand
the dream is a premonition
of what is to come?
(I had such a dream before he asked me
to be his wife.)
It will come true.
She brings me soup
because I can no longer stand in the line.
This morning she held me up during roll call.
She is a good friend
even if she does not believe my premonitions.

I am shrunken on this shelf,
twig limbs unable to move,

but my heart still beats, waiting,
for him.
He will come for me,
just as I have dreamed it,
and he will lift me in his arms
and carry me out over the brambles
and through the fires
and past the guards
into the clean forest.
I will grow strong in his love
and never be sick again.
My limbs will be ivory, round and soft,
and on beds of silken pine leaves
he will delight in the fragrance of my flesh
and I will give birth to children
on the cool forest floor,
and we will grow like the flowers;
we will grow like the trees.

Ah! See, Nadia! You are wrong.
See! He comes!

Paulette Callen