

Dream Faster

by Andrea Musher

In the morning I mention my appreciation for
the Yiddish expression, *Sleep faster—we need the pillows*
My friend asks, “What’s funny about that?”

So what is funny about shtetl poverty, my grandparents fleeing
to America, my grandmother taking in new arrivals,
adding more water to the soup, assigning beds,
couches and the bathtub in shifts?

The Yiddish sense of humor,
and capturing the right vocal inflection,
is in the shrug of the shoulders:
lifting the burden just high enough to laugh
before stooping again under its weight.

In the afternoon, the woman ahead of me
in the library check-out line holds, *A Woman’s Guide to Sleep*.
The book looks thick and authoritative.
I wonder what women need to know about sleep
that men shouldn’t, can’t or don’t.

At night, I fall asleep with the t.v. on
during a National Geographic Special,
and wake to hear that the elusive desert elephants
sleep standing up during the day by the watering hole,
so that by dark they’ll be ready for the long trek
across the night-cooled dunes to the next
hard-to-find source of water.
They have evolved extra-long legs for the journey;
I think that they would understand the Yiddish expression.

And I want to say: *Dream faster—we need the peace!*
Let us grow visions that have longer legs
For trekking across the landmines, the bomb-sites
the exploding fragments of blood, glass, flesh, ball-bearings,
bones, angry rhetoric, surface-to-air missiles,
daggered cloaks and letters full of deadly spores.
Clenched as we are in the fist of the unforgivable,
I dream of waking to a universal channel
that plays all peace news all-the-time
every day more and more peace
than anyone can yet imagine. . .

If we open the book of sleep,
can we learn to choose our dreams?