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Yom Hazzikkaron

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YOM HAZZIKKARON

Tonight strangers bones
crawl in bed with me.
Their bandaged arms
float my head
from the pillow. They whisper
Barekhu, come to prayer
with us, and carry me
to the cellar
where I am sure I will drown.
There among the chairs, fugitive
clothes, a thigh of a hog
hangs marked
with a slash. Stumpy
and heavy, it pulls
on its hook.
The forbidden food—trayf.
The ritual slaughter—shohet.
I have said your words

and I too burn.
Burn with your tora rolls
wound in purple cloth,
with your children
huddled stiff
in the blaze. I peel
the tight lids
of their sockets, the tissue
that flags on their bone.
Dream the glow
on white walls.

Now, before the water barrel
I stand naked. Plunge
into the cold sleeve
of water, lose my face

twice to the swell.
Wrapped in bed sheets
I return upstairs,
all ghost.