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## About the Weather

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Andrea Jurjević

## About the Weather

Mom interned at an old concentration camp turned mental hospital.

The island of Rab was a pile of white rocks, pine groves, sheep, the arthritic hands of olive trees in the sea folding into itself, like butter into pastry. At times a truck would dart through a cloud of dust delivering men and women suffering from *duševne bolesti*, illnesses of the soul, as my people say.

Thursdays, in a hospital-issued bathing suit and cap, Mom washed them. One nurse stood on a wooden bench, shampooed a woman's hair, while Mom soaped-up her body. The women whose souls were diseased stood compliant.

Mom held them, together with four or five staff, during shock therapy. Their screams filled the soundspace and the gauze-wrapped spatula between their teeth.

She made their caged beds, watched their endless pacing and drooling, shirtsleeves so long they could've hugged the moon.

At the sound of the delivery truck, a woman yelled, *It's the planes!*, and everyone dove for the ground, covering their heads. Mom told them the war had ended twenty years ago.

But like a memory, a war goes on living. Perhaps in perpetual exile. A wandering existence. Or in a body.

In the bride who leaped into the well, and landed into silence; the war slumped in the wet moss of her eyes, the husk of her pliant body.

Sometimes the sky turned inside out like a stocking, still holding the shape of the leg. As if it no longer wanted to be the sky. Or it no longer wanted itself.

It turned that way the day this granny escaped past the barbed wire—the original camp fence—and she—small and slim, quick as a doe—she sprinted, and Mom raced after her. The granny leaped over a ditch, then tripped, and fell into a deep sob.

When Mom caught up to her, the granny crashed into Mom's arms, still crying, and Mom, eighteen years old, rocked her, cried with her, and said,

*It's okay, everything's alright, let's go home now.*

And before long the woman whose soul was diseased walked back in compliance.