

Julie Suk

La Dolce Vita

The woman steps down from the bus
into a swarm of paparazzi,
a new dress under her arm,
not a cloud smearing the sky.
She has yet to learn
her children and husband are dead.
Murder. Suicide.

Story after story, the same
sun-bathed day,
muted guns at the border,
women berry-picking in a field near town.
I gave my love a willow sprig they sing.
A few kilometers away, the enemy
slips through the forest.

Say happiness is suspect,
reason enough to knock on wood
before the axe swings.
Barbed questions catch us
trying to escape.
Were the women left sprawled
across rows of blood?
Were the children asleep
when the father raised his gun?

Say we're incapable of certain acts.
Say it again.

Boxcars rattle through the countryside,
crammed with the fear
that this is not just a change of camps.
The pitch night swells with screams,

the ground between trees
strewn with owl pellets,
those indigestible remains
of lives swallowed whole.

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Julie Suk is the author of *The Angel of Obsession*, University of Arkansas Press. Her poems have appeared in many publications, most recently, *Chelsea*, *Chariton Review*, and *The Laurel Review*.