



Makeup

BY DORA MALECH

My mother does not trust
women without it.

What are they not hiding?

Renders the dead living

and the living more alive.

Everything I say sets
the clouds off blubbering
like they knew the pretty dead.

True, no mascara, no evidence.

Blue sky, blank face. Blank face,
a faithful liar, false bottom.

Sorrow, a rabbit harbored in the head.

The skin, a silly one-act, concurs.

At the carnival, each child's cheek becomes
a rainbow. God, grant me a brighter myself.

Each breath, a game called Live Forever.

I am small. Don't ask me to reconcile
one shadow with another. I admit—
paint the dead pink, it does not make
them sunrise. Paint the living blue,

it does not make them sky, or sea,
a berry, clapboard house, or dead.

God, leave us our costumes,
don't blow in our noses,

strip us to the underside of skin.
Even the earth claims color
once a year, dressed in red leaves
as the trees play Grieving.

Source: *Poetry* (May 2007)

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