

#### WAR

at a morgue in the cold city a man works all day washing bodies trying to piece together the dead. Hands, arms and legs litter the bath room. "We don't know what belong to who," he says grimly. "Over the war, he's driven his hearse at least 2000 times



chapbook W

#### WAR

if I could not talk, nobody would know

When they came to my farm I said, "Do you have children?" and when he said "yes," I pleaded, "Please think about our children." He said, "it doesn't interest me. Lets start." And then 14 of the 15 men were dead, their bodies covered with straw, doused with gasoline. His face once bronzed, not is lips reduced to pus and scabs and bloody sores bubble from his single hair, cheeks dried white and black, bandages streaked red by blood and iodine. "All the men were killed," he says, "their blood trickled down my face. I didn't dare breathe, smelled the gasoline. The bodies on top of me protected me a little but the heat became intense. I didn't know if there were any still there, if crawling out would mean my certain death. Finally I knew I'd be burned alive, I pushed the body aside and opened the straw with my hands. That's when my face and hands were burned. I rolled out screaming, my clothes on fire. I pulled them off, stripping flesh from my nails, ran screaming into the yard where I found some water. That helped me find my senses. On the street, 20 corpses, cousins, a brother. I ran to my uncle's house, found my father, uncle, all elderly men-they didn't recognize me at first, hid me in the basement, put yogurt on my burns. I was conscious. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't move my hands. A week later, someone came to the house, put me in the back of a tractor carrying elderly men and we made it to the border



#### September 11 2002



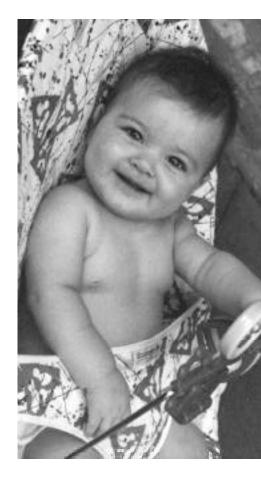
my new kitten has found a new game as she does daily, attack toilet paper, toss the green beans up in the air and pounce on it. Mouse rehearsal. She is so small and wild, hardly afraid of anything except maybe the printer spewing white mysteries and making a clicking noise. I Was so unafraid a year ago, brash as she is running for the train, no fear of plans. Riding upstate, wild to see the **Empire State** Building, towers like my mother who asked in her last days where she'd go with the little life she had left beamed "New York City"

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For my new cat it's a day of discovering new thing: wind and the thrill of unrolling toilet paper. Maybe mew babies are what keep the young widows alive, something to live for when hate unfolds like some man eating plant. I try to imagine a mother whose son died because he wanted to help someone in a wheel chair, how she could walk by his old room and not want to lie down in his quilt and never leave



#### 1944

with the last transport we were all together. We couldn't understand. All together in one

corner of the carriage. I didn't understand why there were the old people. We thought it was to

work. We didn't know Auschwitz. Some of us tried to jump. Then they called out names,

It all went wrong, Then we saw our parents for the last time



#### 1944

we talked and laughed, never about serious things. We had to wear a boiler suit because we'd gone into hiding. We talked about boyfriends we'd met we talked about food we'd eat if we ever got out





#### IN ONE SHOT

only a small plume of smoke, hardly there at the right of the square where every thing else looks ordinary. A brown cube like a Rothko painting, still, long, quiet calm. A few birds gliding thru the clear air that you could never believe were people jumping





# WE HEARD PARIS HAD FALLEN

we felt we'd stay here. Then there was news of an other transport. Several days before the political prisoners were hauled up, the charges read.. But I got a horrid feeling that that was the last transport Sept 23

### YOUR HEART WOULD BREAK

and there was nothing you could do. The children expected so much of life. Yes we heard of the extermination camps but we had no say, had to wait and see. If the worst was to happen, we didn't want to know

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## warstories2 lyn lifshin

scarsuopeopend

published in conjunction with



the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art magazine ccandd96@scars.tv ISSN 1068-5154

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Freedom & Strength Press



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My mother always re-packed the trunk.

My sister stayed in the car, ate bologna sandwiches.

When we were younger we let our dolls turn brown in the air.

Packing for them was better than going

My sister stayed in the car, as if leaving now to be difficult.

My father wrote down every penny he spent. Packing for vacation was better than going

We ate at Bill and Thelma's for 99 cents a dinner.

My father kept a notebook where he wrote every cent he spent.

My mother had to coax him to go to musical theaters.

We ate at Bill and Thelma's every night.

When I saw Brigadoon I wanted to never come back from fantasy.

My mother had to coax him to go to the musicals. She beamed when he liked it.

I wanted to dance, live in a dream, never come back

We needed the mists of the gloaming to blur what wasn't said in the car

My mother beamed when my mother liked anything.

My sister was the beauty, better at ballet and boys.

I wanted to live in a dream, in fog.

My mother with her own dreams of father named me Rosalyn Diana

My mother beamed at almost everything I did.

After she died, a theater bought her clothes from the 40's.

At least her clothes would be on stage.

She would have beamed, she would have liked being there to repack them.

Vacation

