

LYN LIFSHIN

She Said Oh I Know It's Almost Midnight

But I wanted to give you
the bare skeleton. My
father was very rich, a
Czech. First it was
just the Gypsies. No
body thought but then
they started liqui
dating businesses. My
mother looked so rich.
Jews started having
to carry papers. On a
train she saw these
young boys pulling
an old man's beard,
jabbing his yamulka.
My mother hissed and
spit said isn't this
action beneath you.
No one thought she
was a Jew. When they
left, she, who mostly
spoke pure German,
tried to use the
little Yiddish she
knew, yet the man on
the train backed away.
Oh god she was tough
cookies. Had her kids
yanked by Mengele,
her momma beaten,
crying, at 5'5" she
was a big one and
strong she had to
kneel once in a snow
bank in a small thin
pale, it was faded
with once blue flowers,
thin dress in snow. She
came to days later. All
she lived for was to
keep her sister alive.
Friends walked each
morning to the wet
ground near the tall
electrified fence,
they curled near it,
couldn't take it. My

mother, on the way
there one pewter
morning, got them
all to turn around,
said she knew they'd
get out. She never
talked about it. I
was born in '45 in a
tent in Israel. No
food and snakes near
the torn blanket I
was wrapped in. My
mother who's never
even washed a diaper
or seen a cow up
close turned them
into pets, got more
milk from the one
they let sleep near
the bed. I didn't
know we were porr,
thought all mothers
got tattoos, the way
they got breasts and
hair. I wasn't
afraid but whenever she got
together with friends
for coffee they'd
whisper. It was always
about the camps. My
mother's sister, all
she had to live for,
died the evening of
liberation. She said
it's getting dark
and died in her arms.
My mother said if
she'd known what
would happen she
wouldn't have let
her suffer so long

Lyn Lifshin's poetry appears earlier in this issue.