

Shabbat in the Rockies

by Tracey Rosenberg

For the last time, we light candles on the windowsill

and scoop our hands to greet the Shabbat queen.

Never again will the shadowed Carpathians glower at two tiny flames
straining to spread their light. Never again will we flee to the cold crevices,
escaping the screams: *Kill the Christ-killers! Kill the Yids!*

We wrap our treasures in the velvet cloth that should hold two braided loaves.

We push them deep into a bundle and carry them west.

How confused they must be, our candlesticks, though they once stood
bold as brassy servant girls and upright as virtuous women!

Now they shake and bump on a train. Now they sway and dip,
riding an ocean of cruel, watery uproar where our highest climbs plunge
faster than our stomachs empty over the ship's side.

Within a covered wagon, they jolt heads like dummkopfs
smacked by a drunken teacher cursing their ignorance –
but what can they know, these now-dumb candlesticks, in a land so flat
you can stand on an upturned barrel and gaze on the end of the world?

Once a week they cower on the wagon's wood bench.

The sky is a too-large bowl. No light can illuminate a void.

In the city, they huddle on a shelf, sneered at by painted plates.

A town boy grabs our hats and shouts *where are your horns, devil Jews?*

"There," we cry, pointing over the roof to the horizon's peaks.

No one can snatch away the snow caps gleaming on their heads.

On a rough board which will become a windowsill
we set the candlesticks. Two flames dance up,
unfolding their fingers of light. The mountains lean forward,

gazing in wonder, and nod heavy greetings.

The curious eagles scream. We open our arms

to the light and the mountains, and welcome the Shabbat queen.