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Body Language

by Lorna Van Gilst

Sixty or seventy wrenching bodies crushed inside,
pressed like grapes to wine
in one bulging, wheeled vat
designed for thirty-five—

—Vita, Lena, Inna, Marina—

Lurching in drunken spurts
through Kharkov streets,
We feel the sultry juices
oozing on the surface of our skin—

—Vitaly, Vladimir, Sasha, Misha—

We all stick together,
a clump of squeezed-out pulp,
limp and drained—

—Olga, Zhenya, Oksana, Natasha—

You press your country's weariness into my pores.

The motion stops, the doors unjam.
We peel ourselves apart, extract our separate bodies
from the sticky mass,
step back to drink in fresher air—

Lord, press the hope of blood into their veins.