

Chicken Paprikash

Madison Weiss

This is my people's last rite of passage.
They didn't die in German camps
for me to not master this recipe.
Pearled chicken bone slips
and pricks me, tingeing oil
and onion an ember red that is
one with the paprika, and I am
reminded that this dish is my blood.

But did I add enough bouillon?
There are no directions
other than what Dad told me,
which Tova told him,
and a whole onslaught of dead
ancestors grumble from their graves
that there are no such things as teaspoons,
only "not too much" or "not too little."

The last bit isn't kosher, enough to where
I can hear Tova muttering
about the foolishness of Gentiles,
but I splash in that lump of sour cream
because I uphold no ancient law in my cuisine.
It is crucial to end the rite properly:
I take a bite, shrug like a Jew,
and say, "Meh. Maybe next time."