

Southern Stories

POEMS AND PAINTINGS

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DOLPHIN
PUBLICATIONS

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Poem.

Poem

JOSEPH BIRSTEIN.

(Freely Translated from the Yiddish.)

I see it written in their hands and eyes,
Their humiliation.
My people are oppressed with toil and desolation
And I am of them.
Like them I am outcast and alone:
In my eyes are reflected their regrets,
For I am a partner to their griefs
And one with them in all their tears.

I have willing shoulders. The yoke
They carry on their shoulders
Joins me in their harness.
If I am sad, then it is well,
For in the abyss of their sorrow
I have my small place.

Compare with our translation:

Under Alien Skies by Yossel Birstein

People

Translated by Leigh Fetter

People wrapped up in their weekly horror,
wronged, with tired hands and weary brows –
we eat together, at night like them I drowse;
though I am gloomy, I am feeling glad:

that like them I am small, superfluous,
that regret shadows my eyes just like theirs –
I am a partner in their malaise,
I am at one with their distress.

I've willing shoulders. The heavy burden
that weighs them down won't fail
to harness me as well, for I can give.

Though I am gloomy, I am feeling glad
that I've not come to separate myself,
I've come here simply to live.