Brief Encounter with a Hero, Name Unknown

It could have been a matter of modesty
It could have been the gold sewn in your dress
You might even have feared for your chastity
Maybe it was simple recklessness

Perhaps you couldn’t part with that one dress
Once rumpled by a skillful, knowing beau
Or were wearing it to hide a gaping abscess
Or were pregnant and ashamed to let it show

Maybe you’d seen a western dubbed in Polish
Or Yiddish or Czech or whatever it was you spoke
And remembered some hokey John Wayne flourish
That downed four outlaws at a single stroke

Maybe your were an unexceptional girl
Who’d gone crazy on the claustrophobic ride
Maybe you had had a lovers’ quarrel
And, for days, been contemplating suicide

You could have been a fighter in the woods
And drilled this tactic over and over and over
Who knows? Perhaps you thought you’d beat the odds
Maybe it wasn’t even the right maneuver

My father-in-law mentioned it in passing
When I asked how well he’d known his SS boss
(His job in Birkenau had been delousing;
They also used the Zyklon B for lice)

And he named on Schillinger, SS
And told how he had watched Schillinger die
When a new woman, ordered to undress
(You were going to the gas chamber, apparently)

Instead grabbed hold of Schillinger’s own gun
And killed three other guards along with him
Such things, says my father-in-law, were common
(Needless to say, in seconds you had joined them)
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