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Suum Cuique - To Each What He Deserves

Melina Kline

Four One One Four Five Three One Five
Weimar, Germany
You can call me Rebekah Elizabeth Malbach.
Records destroyed.
Remember my name.

Day 1826, Inescapable captivity,
torture, experimentation,
hard labor, forced
sterilization, rape

Whispers of liberation always wafting through the air, teasing my ears.

Sixth straight day
no food no water no matter.
With a dried tongue
I lick my palm, smooth my hair. Forgive my appearance and my dress,
rather, undress.
Expected tears. Shame,
in and out of reach, trickles through my bony fingers.

Roll Call.
Time for a long-awaited
shower before the Liberators arrive. I can
finally drink.

Escorted to the Woodshed,
my hop-drag-hop-drag tempo angered Guard Müller.
My hip is out of joint.
A jab to my back.
I stumble.

All in. A longer than normal creak,
a glance toward the door,
Guard Müller's tilted head,
piercing blue eyes haunt.
Slam, lock.
Vapors dispersing. No water.
Coughs, screams, cries,
prayers, songs, hugs
Overcome.

Lips tightly pursed, short breaths in, short breaths out.
relax breathe chest
burns relax breathe
chest burns
relax

The Liberators arrive. Too late for many.
Bodies stacked outside the Woodshed,
limbs facing every direction.
Rigor mortis sets in
Organic, human sculpture for the world to witness.

The Liberators force Camp guards to detangle the sculpture and inhume
bodies in mass grave.
Too many bodies. Bulldozer needed
before guests arrive.

Weimar villagers with effervescent strides
enter the Camp gates.
Suum Cuique.
Greeted with lampshades of skin
shrunken heads
portraits of high-ranking guards' wives
on skinned canvases.

Stench of death, skeletal remains resting on fire pit,
human sculptures.
Fainting spells, gasps, stone faces,
head-shaking disbelief,
Smiles.
To alleviate their distress, they were invited into
the Woodshed.

Guard Müller and I meet again. Guard Schmidt joins her.
Schmidt grabs both legs.
Müller oddly grabs one arm, turning her head left and right, refusing to see
me.

My contorted body not carried but dragged. Face down,
right arm above my head clawing the earth.
My nose and mouth shovel and inhale dirt,
my head rises and falls over
uneven,
hastily prepared mounds.

We arrive at the open pit,
With a slight lift and effortless swing, my naked body prepares for its
mouth.
Thrown over the edge, right arm trying to grab anything it could.
Hard landing on pile,
lime spread over me.
relax breathe chest
burns relax breathe
chest burns
relax