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Morehead

Caddo Magnet High

Things They Take, Things They Give

The first thing they took

Was your name. They took it

Long ago, and

In Its place, put

The yellow star

The *judenheus*

The word “Jew” spewed

Out like a curse.

But now they give.

In exchange for your clothing

And jewelry and family,

An ice water bath

And the feel of the cold air

On a freshly shaven scalp.

Locks of hair fallen to the ground

Like downy feathers, like ash.

They gift you the

Convex curve of your stomach,

From hours of
Shoveling and digging and carrying,
Until your line of sight threatens to blur
And the air stings and rips your lungs
With each exhale.

They give dirt and dust.
The memory of the first time
You see a dead man,
Discarded on the ground and crumpled
like a used napkin.
Eyes are the windows to the soul,
And his are fogged up, haunting,
As you realize that
The light inside has been snuffed out.

The jackrabbit pace of your heart
Keeps you company at night,
As you listen to the
Snoring, coughing, crying
All around you.
You wonder.
“Is it my time, now?”

They give and they give
And you don’t want to, *can’t*, take it.

Later, people will mourn 6 million

of you, gone in smoke.

But.right.now, the only number

You know is the one on your arm.

It's who you are now, The first thing

They took was your name.

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