

PROLOGUE

Thank you for your patience. According to the documentation we have found, Alexander Misewitsch, born in Wilkia on October 17, 1908, died at Römhild on April 7, 1944. His cause of death was listed as tuberculosis. He is buried in the Waldfriedhof in Römhild.

We have now completed our research on this request.

September 5, 2011

CHORD

Listen:

music travels far
on quiet nights.

Open the windows,
enjoy another man's opera,
your neighbor's wife
singing at her bath.

Listen,
death can't not be
musical,

pick axes clanging,
kapos beating,
one last breath
guttering the throat
of the no longer living.

Listen
for my entrance.
I've timed it
beautifully.

I CAN'T BREATHE

We string words.

Winter robins
hunting seeds.

One word?
Answers.

Two words?
A plea.

Three pearls
in a chokehold

rest in peace.

THE FINER THINGS: PORTRAIT OF A *KAPO*

You expect fine things: rich food,
rare wine, soft clothes, long baths?
Me, too. Here luxury means sleeping
off the floor, a few more grams
of bread, a sturdy pair of shoes.
You grow accustomed to the thud
a truncheon makes, the shock a kick
sends up your leg. Not that I like it.
No, no, I'm not some sadist.
I made a choice between beating
or being beaten. Who wouldn't?
No back breaking work, more soup,
warmer feet come winter, surviving
to see spring. Don't think I am not you.

WE WORE CAIN

Whoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.

—King James Bible

Red cords wreath
kapos' arms.
AEL rides
each man's back.
Who doesn't bear
the mark of Cain here?
Slamming shovels
against resistant stone,
beating, being beaten:
No one keeps
a brother.
Abel long dead,
each Cain
kills another
and all of us suffer
vengeance sevenfold.