

H A R K H E R A L D

1. deuteronomy 7:1-2 (conquest, gaoler of the world)

the first month

for days he will not eat the food sliddden through the slot
 when the men with guns come to clean his cell
there are stacks of plastic trays days old already the food starting to rot

he has written crisp english letters on yellow legal pad
 'please take these out to the yard dogs
 i am hearing them howling hungry awake all night'

they must bring the interpreter to ask why he is on a hunger strike
he is not white he is from town nearby he tells the prisoner that if he does not eat
the americans will force him to they will put plastic tubes down his nose his throat

now prisoner must explain that he is not on strike but still he will not eat their food
if it comes from beneath the door it is already beneath him
he wants the doors opened during mealtimes the food passed to him by a soldier

the lieutenant now orders they must open the door for meals
they open the door yesterday's tray now empty is exchanged for a new one
 he is eating again the journalists leave the headlines recede

the second month

one morning the brook that passes the military prison runs choked putrid black
the village upstream was drone bombed the bodies were dumped in the river
 now drinking water is very scarce and the sun is unforgiving

none of the americans have had a sip for one and a half days
but when they let the prisoner out into the yard for brief walks he knows
which of the plants in the cracks of the stones can be safely wrung and chewed for water

he is careful not to gather moss while the guards have their eyes on him
each prize plucked from the earth goes into his pocket right away and stays there until
 he is taken back to his cell and left alone he is sated the soldiers parch

the next day two enormous trucks arrive from across the border
they bring pallets stacked high with bottled water and an industrial auger
they rip a massive ragged hole in the earth and they call it a well

[illegible]

the third month

each night as the sun is setting he asks the americans if he will be killed in the morning
but they cannot understand what he is saying
the interpreter from the town died not long ago an IED on the roadside

there are so many cells in this compound but ever since he was taken here,
he has never seen another prisoner an entire zoo well-provisioned air-conditioned,
guarded by a hundred soldiers with a single mangy starving tiger no visitors

on his supervised walks in the yard he goes directly to the well
it was dug so poorly shoddy work now perpetually in collapse caving into the earth
they've surrounded it in barbed wire *'you no can jump'* smiles the nearest guard

many days it is as if they forget their duties no one comes to bring him food
or clean his cell or loiter in the hallway the only sound is the buzz of fluorescents
he is alone all the time like the war left him behind

[illegible]