

5. Death March, Spring 1945

John Guzowski

My father came upon three of his friends,
men from Buchenwald, in a field outside
of a village west of Magdeburg.

Their hands were tied behind their backs
and their feet were bound with rags.
The Germans had slit their throats.

My father couldn't stop looking at the cuts
On his friends' bodies, on their faces
And backs and stomachs and hands,
those wounds that looked like smiles.
They were long but not deep.

He knew why the cuts were long
But not very deep. The Germans
wanted his friends to die slow,
wanted them to scream and weep
for the hour it took them to bleed out.

My dad knew what he wanted to do
when he saw his friends there, cut like that.
He wanted to kill a German, any German,
a guard or a woman or a child.

But he couldn't. He wasn't a German.