

Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

Volume 1 | Issue 2

Article 2

October 2022

Appell

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Recommended Citation

Lowery, Joanne (2022) "Appell," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 1: Iss. 2, Article 2.
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol1/iss2/2>

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Appell

by Joanne Lowery

This was one of the first of their words we learned.
Before dawn we had to leave the barracks
and stand in lines of five in the courtyard.
We waited while they counted us.
The dogs waited while they counted us.
We waited, and then we waited.

We waited under their terrible sun
and in their terrible rain.
Three pieces of ash floated in their sky.
We waited, those of us who were left,
in the beautiful snow.

I watched a louse crawl on the neck-stalk
in front of me and disappear in an ear.
I waited to see if it would come back out.

Then *appell* was over.
We moved we walked we marched
outside the camp to dig a huge pit.
We waited for the hole to be big enough.
I wished we were back in *appell*.
That is how I learned
I would never be happy again.