

Waiting

by Geoff Ellis, 2023

Where is she?

In God's waiting room, I listen for her steps. The tick of my watch races the tock of the wall clock. Grinding down the moments. My watch is so damned tired. It lost the struggle to keep up. The gold is tarnished, the engraving worn away to memory. I ask Lennie Cohen "How lonely does it get?"

Waiting.

Looking back I painted the people left behind. Still life. Life drawing. Still listening. Waiting for the bombs to drop, the guns to stop and the rubble to be torn away. Look at him. Waiting at the station we watched cattle trains of humans rattle past. He looked away and tried not to remember their faces. I paint to remember them and make jokes to forget.

The yoyo spins before it winds back up to the hand that flicks it back down again. Those days were quiet. The sun shone as our guns rusted under wetted beds. Our parents were so proud once the Germans left. They worked at night to break the occupation.

Waiting.

Lennie Cohen hasn't answered me yet.

My friend's father lost an arm and leg under all that rubble. Which ones? I never knew though he screamed into the dust for hours. We packed and left. Left them all behind and queued toward the dock. "We're doing this for you," I remember my dad's words but not his voice.

As we waited for the crew to cart our hopes and nightmares my dad carefully undid the band of his shiny watch. He then handed it to me. "This is yours now. There's enough gold in the case to get you out of trouble; once!" he said as he slapped my back with gleeful relief.

Still waiting.

Where is she? I need coffee. Where was I? That's right, waiting at the dock. The boat was swift, the seas were kind. We disembarked soon enough.

And free I was.

School? Who needs school to learn words when you can bend metal at your will to cage the unspeakable. I painted cars with a spray gun then built houses out of wood. Those hammer sessions ended. In 83 I grasped a brush, sketched out a life of art for art, for the love there of, and painted, and painted, and painted, to the waltz, to the rhythm, of the monkey, with that cardboard, violin.

A life waiting for red dots.

Counting back the forty hangings, the forty years I gave you, the forty times you smashed my heart, no gallery is wide enough for ten thousand words of linear narrative nor is there time to

read them, and no time left to write them. Dad's watch and that damned clock raced on ahead. Till they stopped. Her steps echo toward me. Finally.

I am still.

Listening to songs about the monkey and the cardboard violin.

I am still.

Waiting.

I am. I was. Like him.

Copyright and all rights of publication and/or use reserved by the author.