

VIOLINS OF HOPE DRAFT #12
By Gareth Mann 4/10/2023

A pink sun smiles
Time to take his violin from its worn case
His dreaded morning ritual awaits
Time to play tunes
that might help him survive
that might keep him alive
another day
In the cold morning air
he shivers and wiggles stiff fingers
Stomach churning
weak from hunger
holding onto his sanity by a thread
he joins his comrades
deep misery in his pores
as he prepares to perform
on command
while watching others
march to the gas chambers

Numb to the pain
he must succumb to the abuse of his talent
He lifts his bow
trying to imagine playing as a boy
remembering his first recital
joyfully making his violin sing
at his daughter's wedding
Ah such intense sadness
Such mental torture
Yet endure it he must
His choice is to die or to play
Will this be a day
his captors play a game
randomly choosing
a few of his fellow musicians
shooting them before his eyes?
Will he be one of those chosen?
Will this be the day he sees his beloved wife
marching to her death?
The SS guards sadistically sneer and smirk
smoking cigarettes as the music plays
And so begins another day

Each Violin of Hope has a story
Each violin once belonged
to someone who loved her
From virtuosos in orchestras
to those in klezmer bands
The uniting factor
Joy in making music
Joy in joining their souls with their instruments
each as unique as its owner
Today we honor those musicians
and their stories
knowing that the resurrection
of these precious violins
symbolizes optimism

As the instruments travel all over the world
exhibited and played at concerts
the violins' voices
sing a sharp reminder
six million persecuted and perished

Valuing each violin
treasuring the memory of those who played them
brimming with gratitude for their
loving and painstaking restoration
we listen as the strings sing
Never again
Never again
Never again

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