

LYN LIFSHIN

I Am Old, I Am Sick, I Do Not Want To Die In Auchwitz

on a sub zero night January 18
fast approaching the gates of
Auschwitz, Rapael, then 19,
was forced into line with
thousands of Jewish prisoners
under the light of the full moon.
The bright moon brought an
unearthly clarity to a moment
of dread. Shouting Nazis
separated emaciated prisoners,
some barely able to move,
into groups of 500. For a fleeting
moment Rafael thought they
might all be killed right there.
A French Jew hauled to the camp
on a cattle car after his arrest
in Lyon 11 months earlier
made a promise to survive the
ordeal. The thing he'd seen
had already tested his will to live.
But what came next, was a

different kind of horror:
the death march. The Nazis
pushed tens of thousands of
weakened prisoners into long
treks bound for other facilities
farther west. On hard ice
the prisoners marched in shoes
of cloth and wood that quickly fell
apart. The worst were barefoot
and within a few hours were
swollen, their bloody soles sticking
to the ice with each step. Their
feet would freeze and they
would fall to their knees. When
they fell, a Nazi officer would
stick a gun to their heads
and pull the trigger. "I could only
think of my mother, that I
would never see her again and I
would die before I was 20.
Now 70 years later, after spending
years talking to high school
students and hearing them say "I
don't want to hear about the
Holocaust any more. I've had
enough." "It makes you feel
terrible. He said he "He had been
back a dozen times, but this
anniversary I'm going to
sit it out, I am old, I am sick and
I do not want to die in Auschwitz

LYN LIFSHIN has written more than 125 books and edited 4 anthologies of women writers. Her poems have appeared in most poetry and literary magazines in the U.S.A, and her work has been included in virtually every major anthology of recent writing by women.

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