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500 Word Essay: Change or Time
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Marking Time

I find myself marking time. I am not sure I ever really understood that phrase but find it now structuring my life, at least as I have redefined it. Conventionally it means “*to wait: to do nothing but wait.*” For me, at this time of life, physically noting and marking off the days, hours, minutes, even the seconds consumes me.

Say I am having a dinner party. Which I don't do often. I begin mentally blocking out the amount of time it's going to take and what I need to do: decide on a menu, make a shopping list, set a housecleaning schedule. The moment I confirm the date and time, a countdown timer is set, with this mental list of what needs to be accomplished in what order and how much time each task will require. More lists begin to appear, literally, on paper, scattered in various places, pondered over, added to and revised until it all shifts back to mental calculations. I make the lists, but don't necessarily follow them. The more time I have to plan the less I actually do, because I've got it done in my head. *I can name that tune in 3 notes.*

I am a skilled procrastinator. A daydreamer. A saboteur. Giving myself a false deadline helps me stay on task although I still manage to find a way to take it right up to the edge. I don't go over the edge. I'm too responsible for that. The adrenaline produced by fear kicks in, along with a desire to succeed. *I can name that tune....*

In college, during reading week for exams I would pull out my favorite books and reread them instead of studying. In my mind, I had plenty of time. I would manage to pass my exams all right. Nothing amazing. Sometimes berating myself for my lack of discipline but still safely

accomplishing whatever was needed. I perfected the timeline of deferral, and found I could be successful even with the distractions I created for myself. That felt pretty good. But I didn't call this "marking time." It was more of a technical, practical, expedient method of getting through the day, the class, the job, the routine. *I can name that tune....*

Now it's different. I am conscious of the physical passage of time every single day. The hours. The minutes. Sometimes the seconds. I am aware of when I need to wake and get moving. How much time it takes to shower and dress, make coffee, eat breakfast, read the paper, take out the trash, feed the dog, water the plants. Do the laundry. Walk the dog. It all adds up; minute by minute. Sometimes productively. Sometimes not so much. The definition of marking time implies no forward movement but I *am* moving, albeit sometimes very slowly. So I check the clock or the calendar, let the dog out, meet a friend... marking time in my own way, on my forward journey.

I can name that tune....