

Daniel Whitlow, P-31994

“a prophecy of virulence”

** Author's Note: As Trauma's victim dances beneath its twitching, puppet master fingers, acting out its self-annihilating desires and divinations through its unfortunate marionette, the victim, believing themselves incapable of choice and bereft of control, falls into an apathetic, dissolutive fugue, isolating themselves behind layer after layer of walls, distance, and silence. In this aberrant place, Trauma implants its nauseating seed into the mind and heart of the victim, watching with ruthless satisfaction as its putrid spawn awaken and break through psychic eggshells to spread their filth. This is Trauma triumphant. This is the beginning of a violent end—this is what we must prevent.*

I stand in a field.

I stand with chains grasping from my exposed spine.

My vertebral shackles reach out to wrap around the necks of my loved ones.

My family chokes and gasps for breath from the disfiguring touch of my spinal afflictions.

We stand in a circle of tall reeds, foxtail swaying in silence.

Sickness emanates from within me.

It blankets the meadow, dissects the hearts of my precious captives, and spreads out through the pasture, into the ignorant, unsuspecting world.

It consumes sight. It rebukes sense. It summons the lethargic kraken of extinctive inevitability.

I am afraid of my alchemic disease,

of the ghastly symbols marking my infected skin with the iniquitous insignia of death.

The realness of my worthlessness, the certainty of my piece-of-shitness, the sadness of my futility, pains me.

I ache, so I build ramparts around me.

The walls will protect me.

The walls will secure me.

The walls will shield others from my sneering, isolated, and entrenched leprosy.

The walls will seal my virus in, preventing it from spreading.

The barriers trap those who love me, with me.

Their suffocating eyes horrified, glowing eclipsed, wracking terror in the augured lightlessness of my murderous eventualities.

My bacterium fills up the cavity my defenses created.

I drown.

My mutilated treasures perishes with me,
immobilized by me,
lungs brimming with my contagion, floating back and forth in my venomous flux—
—dead victims of my broken, bilious, blasphemous darkness.

My infection fills up the pit and spills out from the top of my razor-wired walls.
No matter how deep I plunge into my gaping, encompassed abyss,
no matter how totally I sink myself in the phosphorus burn of shame,
no matter how completely I entomb myself and my adored within the soil of denial, my plague saturates it
and erupts forth forever, scarring the world.

No matter what I do, my sickness infects the earth.
The walls did naught but ensure I sacrifice everything and everyone I love, for a vanishing taste of nothing's
toxicity.

My corruption pollutes the world, proliferates its ruinous lethality,
and it destroys; and it dismantles; and it devours;

and it is me.