

Daniel Whitlow, P-31994
Words Uncaged
(3-part Poem/Project)

* Author's Note *

Allow me a moment to provide a bit of context for these poems. A family member once asked if I would write a poem about the experience of living in prison so they could better understand what it was like for me. These three poems, written in 2013, are the product of that request, and while they may, or may not, represent the experience of existing here, they also speak to common themes, like guilt, depression, frustration, disillusionment, etc., I find relevant for prisoners. I also composed music to go with them. I hope they speak to you and provide some clarity into how I feel about my obscure little world and the tremendous power of this place, for what that is worth. (D.W.)

“Suffering As One (Prison - Part One)” By: Daniel Whitlow (2013)

How many forgotten footsteps have we taken
 In worn, colorless boots?
How many more are we to take
 grimacing through the sharp agony of stale, stained breath,
 browned by coffee and life's brackish, boastful promises
 left unfulfilled?

How many more?

Our restless wounds cauterize beneath isolation's blistering glare,
 charred cinders of undying distance,
 but we do not suffer alone;
 you do not suffer alone.

“This is a Graveyard (Prison - Part Two)” By: Daniel Whitlow (2013)

Glimpses of radiance ring out silent
in the dank emptiness,
But never enough to light our way,
never enough to lessen the ache,

A dark red venom drowns me,
poised, tentatively waiting to claw through
my mouth and fingertips,

This is a graveyard—

We are corpses being slowly tortured

and put to a tormented rest,

lethargic iron hammers
pounding
shining silver nails
into
dry, brittle lids
atop
ramshackle cardboard caskets

We struggle against the funereal crawl of time,
ponderous and bleak

—But we know, we know all too well,
and not even knowing our future can prepare us.

“Beyond Repair (Prison - Part Three)” By: Daniel Whitlow (2013)

Sucking on swaying teats fat with rotted toxins, prised by the viscous, soured jealousy it was milked from,
Dead mice and maggots have infested my head,
The ever-present feral grin autopsies my confidence, nerveless razor mandibles vise-grip my hopes,
“Quiet now; no need to raise a voice that will go unheard!”

Living though I die—breathing as I cry—failing to save all the vulnerable minds raped in this fortress,
Only when we sleep do we live, and when we wake we’re dead,
A shackled angel laying on her wings as she sings about giving up and giving in, some ancient rhyme
concerning sin,
Some fucking hymn of foul treason—vague and empty,

Trapped and suffocating; these shards of broken glass are pointed reminders of mistakes
imbedded too deep in the tissues of my feet to be forgotten,
I have been alone for so long, my creator has passed and gone—another father who leaves before he tries to
know me,
And deeper still the hurt burrows until it has eaten out my heart,

And I will stiffen and cease to be in the same way of those I have bitten,
Can I be salvaged or am I past saving? Am I the monster they say?

I scream my aches like apprehensive shakes
and twisting guts caught beneath desperate quakes,
and hand-carved stakes driven through muscled chests of apostates—
Cruel lungs of a loveless ingrate pinned to the ground as it claims to feel sorrow but merely hates,
Everything that flies and floats or selflessly inundates,
And understates the damage I will cause with my broken claws,
—before I choke, let me cleave off this burden,
I do not deserve your love, I deserve to die, and I deserve a frozen murder; seal my adamant fate—

I desecrate and dominate my most private of temples, and though the smoke has cleared, I still dully remain,
One half of a whole I am doomed to sustain—

