

ALEX GREENBERG

**Anonymous**

*for Gabriel Reyes, 14 years in Solitary Confinement*

Each day, I enter my life at the same moment:

the guard with the leaden boots is slipping bread  
through a slit in the door,

his nails the color of burnt glass  
rotting the honey wheat,

his mouth inventing a sin out of silence.  
This is the same man who lost his youngest boy  
to child services and appropriated my body

for parenthood:  
disciplined & upbraided me, bruised my hands so well  
they still fall like-wide whenever I try  
to make a fist. He starved the other inmates for days.

I was the far-off field who was just spared of the fire.

Now, I am alone in the corner  
trying to teach myself how to love the inanimate:

I dip my head between the shoulder blades of the wall  
but emerge shivering. I bend light over the objects in my cell  
to make shadow people who I undress until there is nothing left.

It is not a mistake to want this.

After my prayers have clotted so thick they trigger the smoke alarm  
in the cell four doors down. The guards relocate us,  
we frantically try to re-carve the tally marks into the stainless steel tables  
without embittering our fingers.

You ask about torture?



Last night, they smogged the windows from the outside.  
They wore black gloves  
when they delivered our food,

played an interment song on mail day.

Speak to the others. We haven't asked much of our religion.

A window,  
or better yet,  
a piece of edgeless glass  
we can carry in front of our faces  
        stand with our backs against the door,  
and pretend we are on the outside  
of this cruel & dismal exhibit.

Tapping the glass with our tooth-chiseled nails  
to coax out whatever poor animal is inside.

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**Alex Greenberg** is a seventeen-year-old poet whose work has been published or accepted for publication in *The Cortland Review*, *The Florida Review*, *Third Coast*, *Salt Hill*, and *Puerto Del Sol*, among others. He was a finalist for the Lascaux Review Poetry Prize and *Hunger Mountain's* Ruth Stone Poetry Prize.

