

Nameless – A Poem on Homelessness

I remember the day when they gave me a name.
My body would shiver because they saw me
At least partially sane.
But now I shiver for nothing—in weather and fear
As I ask myself over and over,
“Why the hell am I here?”

Maybe it was a fault in my wishes
Or how I measured success.
But what blessed me
Now lays so heavy on my chest.

Worse than you, worse than it,
Most people are soulless.
They don't know the weight of calling one homeless.

My home was in people I loved, in thoughts from above.
When my mother would relentlessly tell me,
“You're enough.”

In the scent of the fall, it was all
As those fragmented memories pass by in a crawl.

But now I step inside and I consume of the saturated air of coffee.
It stops me and causes me to dream.
When I smelled it before and the sentiments of home it would mean.
But now, with eighty cents in my hand
And a half-forced smile on my face
As this atmosphere senses a foreigner in its place.
One who does not fit the standard that society erects:
You prosper on the surface but internally a wreck.
Infecting your feeling of me,
You can't understand the importance of things not seen.

For what you see is not me.
Your view of freedom is not free.
But free the walls that separate you and I from We.
That we all live with pain
Though mine may be nearer and grasping for recognition.
Put a name to the man dirt-caked in the prostrate position.

Clear the sea of superficiality flooding your ears and listen.
Tell me a simple thing you have that you have not been given.
I'm living with a canvas of cardboard cut to display my identity.
Left to a short, inadequate one-line plea
In a feeble attempt to describe how unfortunate things are for me.
Only to be brushed aside silently muttering, "How unfortunate his life must be."

No job I write, yet in your mind it's clear;
You shelter your eyes from the downcast, disheveled man with fear.
You see here one consumed by laziness as though I've never once tried
But it's that condescending pride
That hides amongst the walls of your monotonous 9-to-5.

I sit in this bitter cold ring of life.
The odds against me are stacked immeasurably high.
These interminable rounds beating my remnant of drive.

Now do you truly believe you can define me?
But let me speak to that stereotyping:
I was a doctor, a teacher.
I was a father, a mother, a brother, and a preacher.
A cook, a lover of nature and her every feature.
A youthful spitfire inspired by arts and immersed in many bands.
The amount of people who knew it was my birthday...
They used to amount to more
Than what I could count on my left hand.
1...2...3...

For all these details are nothing more now but petty.

Do you still not get me? I'm thirsty.
Drinking from the fountain of death and desperate for mercy.
The worst thing life's served me
Is a platter of empty dreams.
Searching for worthiness seems the very reason my integrity now bleeds.

No home, you see the symptom clear and completely.
The blood stained sharpie is carved out so neatly.
But what's scarring is how these busy streets
Have hallowed the heart that once stood for something.

Now this concrete ring has risen up into a cage.
The stage was erected and characters named.
Yet what am I but an extra, expendable and marred by a resentful fame.

Treated like an animal, yet when can I feed?
No, why am I set apart when you are so much like me?
Watering the garden of an infectious seed
It will grow to the trees
And shadow the sun that reminds men they're free.

It's simple, I tell you
As a mere player in your selfish game.
Our mission is one in the same.
Close your wallet,
Open your heart,
And ask me my name.
Ask me my name.