

UNDERNEATH MY BED – A MONSTER WAITS

by: Al Cunningham, California

It is not uncommon that children often tend to believe that a monster lives underneath their beds. For me, the latest transformation in my present existence is something which is an everyday belief in the face of the reality which confronts me.

Equally terrifying and destructive in my present state of mind is the fact that for me, this monster really does exist, because just around the corner is the chamber where that monster lives. It is there where my future may someday come to a screeching halt, where my presence no longer serves a purpose, and my past – a thought in the back of someone's mind.

Unseen, but felt, I wear a mask. A mask which I have seen so many others wear before me. It is the manifestation of the fears and uncertainties that lie ahead. It is this uncertainty and fear which compels me to write these words, in hopes that all who read them will know and understand my feelings of expecting the worst and praying for the best.

DEATH ROW ... You have seen me age, as your existence in my life have caused my hairs to change from black to grey and then to silver. You have been the existence of so many others before me, whose lives you have witnessed passed into another dimension of existence. You existed in their minds, spirit and flesh, every day of their existence within your tormented and sadistic confines.

The masses only know you as a place where such men/women are locked away until such a time as to when their lives are taken to that dim room just underneath their beds (my bed). But they do not know the men/women or their feelings, their inter-thoughts, their desires, or consider what positive purposes they can serve if their lives were preserved.

DEATH ROW ... Society remains ignorant of your effects upon them or upon the lives of the families of these men/women, or even how such an existence on death row robs a person of their humanity, which in turns robs them of the same, and send ill-fated messages to the youth of today.

Death Row takes away the will to live and limits one's ability to exercise the human kindness that is within his/her heart. It squashes the dreamer's dream with its reality and then shrouds men's/women's hearts in darkness, forcing them to call it... "Home!"

Of such importance and power, death row has become to the politicians and people of the state, that in that final time when the decision must decide on such man's/woman's lives, they, like that of Pontius Pilate, tend to wash their hands off the guilt and allow such men/women to take that last walk down the road which terminates their lives. But those ahead of me have lathered up their sleeves, so even in my attempts to reach out a hand for help, my gasp only slips and I find myself mentally back facing the same reality, that same monster.

You (Death Row), tantalize the mighty and terrorize the poor, but when a ray of sunshine penetrates your walls, you scramble like the cockroach, as you run away to hide. Then you rear your ugly head again, when it is time for men/women to die.

DEATH ROW ... You divide and conquer like a General at war and you reward those you accept your fate with the belief that; "there is nothing more to lose".

For those who have deprived you of your victories, you send forth the soldiers of deception under orders to enslave the dreamer's dream of peace. For those others, undecided, you hold them captive with your rhetoric and make them feel the fury of your mean and weary ways.

Deprived of the ability to mourn, like the shadow of death, you send forth the memories that will make them feel the helplessness that, in time, will turn them into you. Then when void of all emotions, you exact your revenge by taking away the last remaining grain of hope.

It is here amidst the lonely and the lost where you will keep them until that day, when you are fit for them to see the little room just underneath their beds (my bed).