

been Deirdre though no one mentioned her by name. It was just too weird to call her by her name.

A facial was just squeezing blackheads and whiteheads. Even so, I was not invited to participate, neither as extractor or extractee. I felt so isolated and alone though no more than usual.

My lawyer said, "You're better off where you are for the time being. The environment out here is not conducive to ..." She paused.

"To what?"

"Conducive to your privacy, to your ability to come and go."

[Poem]

WE'RE GOING TO GET MARRIED

By Jeff Dolven, from a collection in progress. Dolven is the author of Speculative Music, published last year by Sarabande.

We're going to get married, married, she said,
going to get married, me and my sister,
and I don't care what it looks like, she said.

A sister like mine is harder to find
than a needle lost in the high cactus-desert,
than a hay-colored camel lost in the haystacks.

We mustn't let go! We're going to be richer
together than any old rich man, and truer,
true to each other, and damn the beholder:

he gets the needle, right in the eye,
and then she and I will be left free to wander,
wander right through the eye of the needle

ring-fingers first: we'll meet in the middle,
and there we can linger, sister and sister,
properly married, not lying together

like camel and camel, like nickel and quarter,
like hayfield and haystack and hay-harvest
weather,
like mistress and master, beheld and beholder

and the eye that's so ready to put them together.
What have they ever promised each other?
It just isn't right: we can do better.

"I want to be able to come and go out there."
"Don't we all," the lawyer said. "I mean in
the deepest sense."

From the very first I had found her annoying.
"But I didn't hurt anyone."

"A felony's a felony," she said.

I spent my days attempting to read a little pamphlet entitled *The Room*. It was about file cards and Jesus. It was pretty depressing. It was trying to provide hope but I did not find it hopeful. Too, the problem might have been with the lighting, which was deliberately terrible. It took forever to read anything.

Then I saw Mr. Hill again. I rushed to the red line painted on the floor. He nodded to me to advance.

"Hello, N. Frame," he said.

"Hello!" I said. Thinking quickly, I added, "I am to be released today."

Then I wanted to take it back because N. Frame had been released many days before by my calculation.

"I'm afraid not," Mr. Hill said. "You're a recidivist and your time with us starts all over again."

Despite myself I thrilled to his use of the word "recidivist," which is a lovely sounding word.

"I'm really not N. Frame," I said. "But for my own actions I take full responsibility. I am so contrite."

He looked at me wearily.

"I am," I said.

"Nothing you do will be enough," he said. "No solatium will suffice."

"I know, I know, I know," I said.

He shifted the folders he held from one hand to the other. "... enhanced punishment ..." I heard in part.

"Wait, wait, wait," I said, for "enhanced" was a lovely word as well though I believe in this context it wasn't as nice as it sounded. "Am I a recidivist or did my sentence just get worse regardless?"

Even before I finished I felt the unworthiness of my question. I retreated to my bunk and I thought of Mr. Hill returning to his residence beneath the Mission where the light was good and where water moved as if it were alive and where possibly dozens of the pressed pink shirts I admired were in orderly rows. Our clothes smell of metal—our soap and socks and even the candy that we keep. It all smells unconsolingly of metal.

It was very late and all was quiet. There wasn't a dream moving.

The girl with the tattooed eyelids said to me, "There is no Mr. Hill."

I felt better immediately.

Her eyes were shut of course. There was a design on her lids but I had always felt that any attempt to determine what it was would be most unwise and I feel that way still.