

My arms or legs I would gladly have given them. But my tongue! It was the most vital part of my body. I tried desperately to talk but my strenuous efforts caused me too much pain. I started thrashing about and deliberately injuring myself in the hope that the new pain would serve as a distraction from the old pain. I was just coming to terms with the fact that this self abuse was unnecessary when the doctors came and took me to a new room.

My new room is all white. There is no furniture, no window, just the door through which I was led. And they swapped my white shirt for a white jacket which fastened at the back. It had very long arms which, presumably so that they



wouldn't dangle and have me tripping over them, were also fastened at the back. Despite the absence of furniture the room is very comfortable. I can lie on the floor and it feels as if I am in a beautiful bed. The walls are just as soft as the floor, as is the inside of the door. And the ceiling appears to be of the same texture apart from a break where there is a caged fluorescent strip light.

One day after the doctors had left me, having finished their daily inspection, I saw a pen lying on the floor. It must have fallen from one of the doctors' clipboards. I had by now been relieved of the rather restrictive white jacket I had had to wear so I was able to pick the pen up.

And that's when I started to write and be happy again. I wrote on the floor and on the walls in tiny neat handwriting my thoughts, just as they came to me. After a day or two the doctors saw my writing and smilingly offered me sheets of paper. But I declined their offer. The writing had replaced the talking and the best place to do it seemed to be on the walls and floor of my soft room. Maybe when I've filled all the space I can reach, the doctors will move me to another room so I can write there. I only hope they don't chop my fingers off or refuse to let me have any more pens. It worries me that when they come to see me now they stand around making notations on their clipboards, frowning their grey brows, and discussing what they seem to see as my new problem.

POETRY 3

LAMENT

by

Alexander

Baron

Tell me the wasted years weren't really wasted,
Tell me I never cared for song and wine,
Tell me some fruits were better left untasted,
Convince me hedonism's asinine.

Tell me the girls I never kissed weren't beauties,
That foolish passion masked their ugliness;
That there are only spiritual booties,
And hylc wealth is filled with emptiness.

Tell me that self-denial is applauded,
Be it intentional or otherwise,
That in the next world I will be rewarded.
Tell me: Make me believe your cursed lies.

Convince me there's but one path to salvation,
That I am not in any sense bereft;
But if you can't, consign me to damnation,
And satisfaction, while I've still time left.