Not So Serious:

A mini-collection of poems from my time of incarceration

James Kilgore, 2013
Anyone Who Says a Prison Is a Hotel

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Has never stripped
Done lift your nutsack spread your cheeks and cough
Before going to kiss his mother in the visiting room.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Has never developed an intimate relationship
With all those who have scratched their presence
On a cement ceiling
Fatal ‘98
Crips forever
Woods rule
Puro Mejicano

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Has never listened to a shank sharpen to a fine edge
In the cell above
Wondering if it’s for you

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Has never scooped goulash
Off his tray with his i.d. card
Because he left his spork in the house

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Only knows the kind of dump truck
That carries garbage
Not the ones that discard human lives
Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Doesn’t understand
How much ten, twenty or thirty years is
Out of a person’s life.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Doesn’t know what it means
When she stops writing
And refuses your phone calls.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Doesn’t know what it means to hurry up
And wait and wait and wait and wait
Then be told you’re too late.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Has never had to stay ready
So they don’t have to get ready
Has never has to sleep with their boots on.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Doesn’t want to solve the problem
But just lock it away
And pretend we’ll all live happily ever after.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Doesn’t understand a thing
No entiende nada

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel
Can go to hell.
Birthday Celebration

Lockdown birthday
The cells holds a treat
One specialty teabag
English Breakfast
The instructions say
“steep 1-2 minutes”
I give it three
I’ve got the time

The plastic cup hits my lips
The celebration begins
It’s been a great year
Do I sing Happy Birthday to myself?
How do I blow out the candles?
Not So Serious

Young Crip
Told me he’d never had
A serious argument
With his mother
Just the time
He dragged her out of a crack house
Drove her home
Then handed her his heat
“Just shoot me,” he told her
“Because what you’re doing is killing me anyway.”
At least she didn’t pull the trigger.
That would have been a serious argument.
A Haircut

The barber
Shaves the hair away
So the swazi tattoo
At the back of the man’s head can shine.
White pride profiled.
This hot house of hate
Heated up another degree.
For Nikiwe

1984
A time of meat and bread
A bus to town for 16 cents
Nikiwe sat in the middle of the class
She sparkled
As she sharpened her tiny pencil with half an old razor blade
And solved her simultaneous linear equations
X was equal to three, y was four
No problem.

Today she can’t find x
There is no y
Pencils are no longer in the equation
The rich have eaten Zimbabwe
And left Nikiwe
Only a razor to swallow
Stuck on Lockdown

9/19/09

Locked down
I’m constipated
My own private hell

Locked down
Nothing but stinkin’ gas
In my cell

Locked down
No fibre
No Metamucil

Locked down
And blocked down
It just ain’t no thrill

Locked down
Let me out
I’m tired of this trap

Locked down
Open up, please
Then maybe I’ll crap
Election 2008: The Morning After

As he fastens the shackles
On a black diabetic
So he can walk him
Two hundred yards to the nurse’s office
For his insulin shot
The guard, a veteran of fifteen years
Asks no one in particular
What it will be like to have a President
Who refuses to wear
An American flag lapel pin.
High Speed Chase

This mind of mine
Once gave me a torsion-air ride
Now I bounce along the road
Lost
Shock absorbers worn
Hard changing gears
Can’t quite recall if I’m in first
Or second.
No idea how to use that GPS.

Too much information perhaps
Life on one too many continents
Then thousands of days
In concrete houses
A diet of under-cooked carrots
And spider web tattoos

Finally I check the rear view mirror
Red lights flashing
Sirens
This can’t be happening to me
The highway patrol of age
Has got the wrong man.
If only I could remember where I put my license and registration.