

## The Invisible.

We are the invisible  
the forgotten the locked away  
behind steel, concrete and razor wire,  
a false environment for rehabilitation punishment re education  
already damaged broken and abused  
we are punished for showing emotion  
for not showing emotion self medicating  
labelled as ill antisocial criminals  
High Risk  
we lose everything we gained  
in a society which doesn` t care  
and when we lash out  
sick of being ignored frustrated out of sight  
we are twisted up locked in a punishment block  
a single cell a mattress on the disinfected floor  
a radio our only contact  
now imagine a child locked in a bathroom  
forced to eat, shit and sleep in that room  
cut off from those they love  
controlled and watched by others no better than her  
the only difference, they were luckier  
Would you expect that child to change for the better?

-Kath Pengilley

## The Brand

It's not easy,

I'm Lucky they say a roof over my head for 90 days,

The Gate closes behind me. I walk away there's a brand on my forehead It says prisoner. I feel it there

I go to the hostel my life re-starts I'm not going to give in. Getting recalled would be the easy way, a trip to my old home would do it. I'm excluded from here

I see others drinking, pilling, smoking, grifting, day after day. I'm not perfect but I resist the temptations, the sirens call I can pretend everything is normal although it's not, my real self hides in horror behind the brand. I feel it there

The violence scars me twisting my thoughts painting that brand on my forehead I feel it there

My Dad said 'You could tell a jailbird by their eyes'

I spend hours in front of the mirror trying to see what he meant but it's not my eyes that give me pause but the brand I feel there.

My mind is still but every time I tick that box or there's a police car in my street, my heart beats faster, measuring my fear, of never being independent again of being abused by the system no longer an ex-prisoner The brand, I feel, is still there.

I still feel it there.

-Kath Pengilley

## Heartwood

Seeking safe haven  
a ship on a stormy sea  
finds a rock in the maelstrom  
clings with mussels that grow  
where water ebbs and flows  
timbers stressed  
bleached white by cycles of sun and ice  
swept by currents  
becomes driftwood  
washed up on sand  
burned  
stronger  
carved  
beauty revealed by skillful hands  
a final polish  
then offered on the altar of your ego.  
Destroyed.  
but still returns  
seeking the safe haven  
that never was.

-Kath Pengilley

**See more of Kath's work at:**

East Leeds FM 2021 Writing on Air festival, '[High Risk](#)'

[Swan Song Project – Sorry That I Hurt You](#)

Please get in touch with MEAM if you would like to be passed her contact details!