

Daniel Whitlow, P-31994
WordsUncaged Submission
(Poem)

“Body Language Asylum Waltz” (2018) ** Author’s Note: In this dance, equal parts rejection, and pity, the cave dweller agonizes over the collapsed nature of his self-image, hiding in the sweet embrace of denial.*

I spend the long hours hiding,
from promised threats of pain,
a fool, a crude, chiseled chump
—stooped back pressed so flat
against the safe wall of my cave,
its damp face, cool in the wind,
soothes sore spots out of reach,
settles nerves and carries sleep.

Before my sanctuary, I had to walk out in the open, beneath the bleak, affiliated harshness of sun and communal scrutiny; society hates me—I know they do—they threw jagged rocks and insults with equal precision, the prowess of the wounds still twinge, with each step. I always ache because I am repulsive
—it is my fault. My inability to fit in,
my clumsy attempts to serve,
my lack of intelligence
and dignity and
value and
worth
all
show
a deficit
of humanity.
It’s better this way,
for all involved, if my face
never knows the sentiment of affection
or the desperation when everything falls apart and
crumbles to dust. The permanent scars of affliction define me,
with their disfigured symmetry and injured sophistication—something I wish I could see.
Before this refuge preserved and saved me, I was the worst of all things and, left on my own, I would ruin you all.

rivulets of medicine heal me,
leaking from my lovely stone
like tears from mother. I am
so glad she does not have to
see what all my friends have
done to me—what I choose
to do to myself—and how I
spend the long hours hiding.