

A Cell And A Savior  
alicia britt chole

I awoke in a prison. How long had I been sleeping? All of my life. When had I entered the prison I awoke within? I had not entered it; it had grown up around me. Now that I was finally awake, I could see and feel the prison walls and bars. They were thick, solid, and cold. They were walls of self, walls of sin. They were walls I had built while yet asleep, thought upon thought, deed upon deed. Now awake within my cell, despair like an icy wind began to breathe upon my soul.

A man appeared within my cell. His name was Nithiw.

“Can you free me, sir?” I asked. “Despair like an icy wind is consuming my soul.”

“That wind blows upon all who live,” he replied. “But your mind can shield you from its breath. Create within yourself a place of freedom, a place that is absent of walls and bars. Retreat to that place often. Exchange this dark reality for another reality within your mind.”

I imagined a beautiful haven free from the cell that surrounded me. Retreating within myself, I tried to believe that my haven was real. But each time I opened my eyes, my cell instead of fading grew darker and its walls seemed thicker.

“Nithiw!” I cried. “Can you not just give me the key to this cell?”

“I have no key,” he said quietly.

“Then there is no freedom?” I asked.

“Only in death.”

I asked him never to return.

Another appeared within my cell. His name was Sellecarg.

“Can you free me, sir?” I asked. “Despair like an icy wind is consuming my soul.”

“That wind blows upon all who live,” he replied. “But your deeds can shield you from its eternal breath. Pray. You must pray to God five times a day. I will show you how you must pray, and I will teach you what you must say.”

How good it felt to *do* something! Each day I would rise and pray. Yet soon I realized that the walls of my cell did not thin, and the bars of my cell did not fade. So I prayed six times a day and then ten times a day. My prison remained.

“Sellecarg!” I cried. “Your god neither hears nor speaks! My prayers have neither thinned my cell’s walls nor removed its bars. Can you not just give me the key to this cell of self and sin?”

“I have no key,” he replied.

“Then there is no freedom?” I asked.

“Only in death.”

I asked him never to return.

Several others appeared within my cell. Some told me things to do. Others told me things to think. None had keys.

I discovered that the more I did, the more I despaired. My doing did not diminish the darkness of my cell or the strength of its gates. As for thinking, I quickly learned that my mind could not stay where my body could not go.

One day a man stood outside my cell: the others had appeared from within, but this man came walking toward me from without. We faced one another in silence. As the sun rises and bathes the

morning with its warmth, so His eyes seemed to penetrate my very being and cut the icy chill that had been consuming my soul. Then he spoke my name. His voice summoned tears of hope. Deep within me a chord—a new yet wonderfully familiar chord—was richly strummed, as though a Master had lovingly picked up His long lost violin and begun to play its first melody.

I stood transfixed, afraid to breathe for fear that this dream would vanish.

He spoke again, “Freedom, child. I have come so you can be freed.”

Freedom? My hands touched the iron bars of my cells. My eyes surveyed the strength of its walls and I remembered with pain the disappointment of earlier attempts to set myself free.

“The ones who came before you said that the only true freedom was in death,” I softly countered.

“They spoke truth in part, child. There is a death that can set you free but it is not your own. Those who die in their cells awaken to only a darker, longer shadow of life in a darker, stronger cell.”

His words, His Word, resurrected hope within me, “Master, tell me who’s death sets me free so I may seek this deliverer.”

His eyes smiled, “The Deliverer has sought and found you. It is I, child. Jesus.”

Resurrected hope now began to dance, “Master Jesus, tell me what I must do and what I must think to be free from this cell of sin and self!”

With tears now on His cheeks He replied, “You need only to choose, you need only to ask.”

“Master Jesus! With all that I am I ask you to set me free!” And in that very moment I found myself freed from my cell and safe in His arms. Wrapped in His garment, my Master’s warm tears fell upon my face and washed my spirit. I felt embraced by Love itself.

“Never,” I whispered, “never, do I ever wish to awaken again to a cell of sin and self.”

“Then never, child, never remove yourself from the garment of My Presence.”

*Alicia Britt Chole  
Spring 1995*