

## DONNA BOURNE

*Secluded*, 2011  
oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in.



courtesy: the artist

## DALE PENDELL

### Solitary

I came of age in prison. When I was eighteen I was in a prison in Mexico. When I turned twenty-one I was in a federal prison in Texas. By nature I'm a solitary, but that was my time of socialization.

I'm a solitary because I stutter. Not all stutters are solitaires, but most are, and those who aren't, you wish they were. In prison, solitary is special treatment, at least today. In County, solitude would be a gift. Wouldn't you prefer a private cell to the tank? Well, maybe not, but which would a solitary prefer?

Your preference doesn't matter, because you don't get to choose. That's because you're a loser. Born to, as in. It's bigger than you. You lost, so surrender your sword. You can't, because we just took it. So grovel. So get used to it. Go sit in the corner, with your blanket.

Solitaries don't like the real world. They want their own world, a world they create themselves. They might think they crave the real world, the social world of people and friends—something like a high school club—but they don't. Not really.

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It was 1965 when we went down to Mexico, me and Mike and Kelly and Frank Red Buttons. The fifties were turning into the sixties. The Watts riots, the anti-

War movement, the first Grateful Dead concert. Back then most of my friends called me Jonah.

Getting busted in Mexico turned out to be easy. About halfway between Hermosillo and Guaymas, Mike said that he was sick so we stopped the car and Mike got out and threw up. Then we couldn't get the car started. It was vapor lock but none of us knew that and we ran down the battery turning the engine over. We were going to push the car and pop the clutch but Mike said that he wanted to see a doctor and he and Kelly hitchhiked back to Hermosillo. They said they'd send help. Frank Red Buttons and I stayed with the car. After about an hour Frank and I rolled up half a joint out of our bag of stems. Just after we had lit up, a police car rolled up beside us and stopped and two Mexican policemen got out. Frank put out the joint and swallowed the roach but the big cop drew his gun and told us to get out of the car and put our hands on the roof. The other cop frisked us and then turned us around and handcuffed us. We were stupid enough to try to bribe them without knowing how to do it.

"You have money?" the big cop said.

"Yes, in the suitcase," we said.

"Bribery is a crime," he said, "shall I charge you with that also?"

"No," we said.

So we were arrested. When we finally got our suitcase, of course, there was no money in it. And it had been a lot of money, about four hundred dollars—several thousand today—enough to bribe cops, judges, prosecutors, the whole shebang. We'd been planning to buy weed.

The cops drove us back into Hermosillo, handcuffed. First we went to the police station. The police station was off of the plaza, where there were trees and a small park. A big colonial church faced one side of the park. It was dusk but still quite warm and people were walking around on the streets and sidewalks. Inside the police station they took our names and had us sign some papers. Then they took our picture. The picture got around a lot. It was on television and in