

The Prison Rowan

A faint glow of light filtered through the thick, barred, windows. My eyes stared blankly through the gaps between the hot, sticky iron bars that caged me. Across the cellblock, red, sweaty hands wrapped tightly around the bars of their heavy cell doors. Years of dark, blood-red, rust and caked-in dust and grime decorated the walls of the sandstone corridors. People dragged themselves, like wounded moths attracted to a bulb, glumly towards the light that emanated from the decrepit yard.

Tall concrete walls towered over the perimeter of the complex, with rolls of barbed wire atop them. Through the dust-coated windows, I could make out the hazy silhouette of two prison guards. Guards dotted the perimeter, arms tightly folded over their breasts as they wandered around and penned us in. Freedom was almost visible on the other side of the enclosure.

Our minds were caged in there. The hot stench of dried blood and decaying flesh rose from the unlevelled earth beneath the cracked skin of my feet. What little oxygen had managed to find its way into the cell - and failed to escape - was overtaken by death's perfume. A sweltering gust of musty air buffeted against my face, flinging dust and dirt into my eyes, clogging my sweaty pores. The walls were burdened with the marks of psychotic men who, as they drew ever closer to their impending death, had scratched away at the walls, etching markings of names and symbols and people, like a Neanderthal frittering his life away in a stone cave.

Outside the block, small, tan, scaly lizards chased each-other's tails, pitter-pattering across the desolate landscape that was a prison wall, oblivious to the humans around them. The merciless sun beat down on the parched soil as raucous shouts echoed around the enclosure; unhinged men yelled, spat, hit each-other with flailing arms. There was no peace, no quiet out there. All about the place, man terrorised man. Thunderous banging noises reverberated through the walls of the building, shaking its foundations, as men locked up in communal cells boiled over, releasing their pent-up rage onto each other, forming bloody, writhing piles in the corner of their cells. Glimmers of pink light fell through the barred windows, illuminating the wretched sight, as the sun set silently behind the enclosure.