



*Reluctant Press*

# Jailbird

Deena Gomersall



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS

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**AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL**

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## *Reluctant Press TG Publishers*

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# Jailbird

by Deena Gomersall

## Chapter One: AN INNOCENT MAN

For Darren Walker, life seemed to be in full swing. He and his lovely wife of fourteen months, Heather, had not long since moved to a new town after the firm that Darren worked for had relocated their bright and cheerful computer program analyst to their head office with a substantial salary increase.

Heather was three months pregnant, they had managed to buy a lovely detached cottage in a peaceful, picturesque part of town and they got on marvelously with their new neighbors.

In fact, Darren was making a lot of new friends and gaining much respect because of his happy, good-natured personality. He was a caring and considerate man always ready to help others, especially the elderly. He played on the park with the local children and attended all of the neighborhood meetings and functions.

In the nine months they had lived in the town, he and Heather had become well thought-of and seen as model citizens of the community.

“May I help you with your shopping Mrs. Brady?” he asked one of the town’s elderly women as he walked back home from the stores.

“Oh, would you Darren? Thank you ever so, I can't carry heavy shopping bags like I used to. Heaven knows how I managed before you and Heather came to live here.”

“Don't mention it, Mrs. Brady, I'm only too happy to help. Age catches up with all of us sooner or later. Hello, Mrs. Cooper.”

“Good morning, Darren,” Mrs. Cooper greeted as she passed him and Mrs. Brady. As Darren handed the elderly lady's groceries over at her front door, the local vicar called him over.

“That Darren Walker is such a nice, pleasant young man,” Mrs. Brady told her husband George.

“Darren, I'm organizing a fete at the Church Hall in two weeks' time and I was just wondering if you and your lovely wife could spare some time to help me once again?”

“Well, I can't be entirely sure without looking in my diary, Vicar, but rest assured that if we can, we shall both be there. I'll give you a call this evening and let you know.”

“Thank you so much Darren, that would be excellent,” the Vicar responded.

On the far side of the town, the local Police chief was scratching his head as he pondered over the details he was sharing with other officers. Over the last six months there had been five vicious assaults on women in the area; each had been raped and battered as they had walked home at night unescorted.

The last of these women was so badly beaten that she was now on a life-support machine.

“Don't give me any crap, Blake. I want this bastard caught before he goes on to kill someone...if he hasn't already. There's only a slim hope that Margaret Dempster will pull through.”

“I've prepared the posters, Chief. As far as I can gather from two of the victims and an eyewitness, we have a pretty good likeness.”

“Great. I want you to distribute them immediately throughout the county. Let's also have it shown on the local Television channel; perhaps it just may jog someone's memory.”

Two nights later, Darren was returning from the countryside. He was a nature lover and enjoyed watching the wild birds and mammals in nearby woodland; it helped him to unwind and release the stress after a hard day at work. He also loved the solitude.

On the way back, he stopped off at a local pizza shop to buy Heather and himself some supper.

“Evenin' Darren,” Tom bid from behind the counter. “Your usual?”

As the pizza baked in the oven, Tom and Darren chatted.

“You got yourself a nasty looking scratch on the side of your face there, Darren. What you been doin' to get that?” Tom inquired as he took note of the two inch long vertical gashes down Darren's cheek.

Darren instinctively put his hand to his face. “I thought it felt like I'd scratched it. I've been over to Beck Wood until dusk watching badgers and owls. I caught my face on a tree branch as I was leaving.”

“Get some antiseptic on it soon as you get home, it'll probably scab over but I doubt it will leave a scar.”

“Chief!” the duty sergeant cried out as he rushed into his office. “There's been another attack, west of town.”

Chief Inspector Hanley looked up from his paper work and studied his Sergeant. “I'm afraid you were right sir, this one's had it,” he continued. “She's been butchered. All indications seem to lead to our man.”

The chief arose quickly from his desk. He wanted this matter resolved, and quickly. Now he was all the more anxious to catch the rapist-turned-killer.

“My God!” Heather exclaimed. “I just can't believe that a thing like this is happening here...in this town. It's always seemed so peaceful and friendly. I don't think I'd dare set foot out of the house until he's caught.”

Darren sighed. “It just goes to show, nowhere is safe these days. We think that we've found the perfect place to live and raise our children, then something like this happens. How many people does it say he's killed?”

“Just one so far, the latest one. Other than that there have been five attacks and one of the poor girls is fighting for her life.”

“How on earth can anyone do such things?” Darren asked. “The guy has to be insane. If they catch him, they should throw away the key and never let him loose in society again.”

“For crimes such as this, they really ought to bring back the death penalty,” Heather suggested.

The following day, the normally quiet town became a hive of police activity with patrol cars seemingly everywhere. Beat officers were making house-to-house inquiries whilst others put up posters of the wanted man. One officer went into the church yard that evening and found the Vicar still there.

“Good evening, Reverend,” the officer greeted. “I expect you've heard of the murder last night on the other side of town?”

“Yes indeed, a most terrible thing, officer. Have you got any further with catching him?”

“Not as yet sir, though we are, of course, keen to catch him before he strikes again.”

“And do you believe that last night's attack was made by the same man as the one who attacked those other poor women or have we two madmen on the loose?” the Vicar asked.

“It's almost certainly the same person. I have a reliable picture made up by one of the victims and an eyewitness, I was wondering, Vicar, if I may put it up on your notice board in the church yard? You never know, someone may recognize him if he's local.”

“Yes, Yes, by all means, officer. Anything at all that I can do to help you bring this man to task.”

Suddenly the vicar's face looked alarmed. "Is this the man you are looking for officer?" he asked.

"Yes, why? Do you recognize him?"

"My word. I don't really know but, well it looks uncannily like young Darren Walker but....no, that's impossible, Darren is a really nice man."

"And how long you have known this Darren Walker, Vicar?" the officer pursued.

"It will be about nine months since he moved down here from the North with his job."

"So, you've only known him for nine months and he has come down here to live from the North. That's quite interesting. Thank you, Vicar," he said as he reached for his radio.

"Where's Chief Inspector Hanley?" the desk sergeant asked one of his officers back at the police station.

"He's in the lunchroom, sir, shall I get him?" the young officer replied.

Sergeant Dobson rushed off himself to find the Chief. Hanley was taking a lunch break with two other detectives as they worked the night shift.

"Excuse my interruption, sir, but I think we may have a lead on the rapist...."

Heather and Darren were laying in bed together; she had not long since turned the bedroom light out and was just giving her husband a cuddle when suddenly the bedroom was again illuminated by what appeared to be car headlights out in the street. Simultaneously a large bang followed by a crash was heard downstairs, then the sound of many feet rushing up the stairwell.

Darren and Heather sat up in alarm, both in total shock and bewilderment. The bedroom door was kicked open and a stream of powerful torch lights dazzled the young couple. Heather screamed and instinctively pulled the sheets tight around herself covering up to her mouth.

"FREEZE! POLICE! Put your hands out in front of you," a loud voice commanded.

Darren immediately did as requested but Heather kept a tight grip of the sheet. Gathering his wits, Darren spoke.

"What the hell's the meaning of this? What do you think you are doing, bursting into my home and terrifying my pregnant wife?" he exploded.

The person in plain clothing who seemed to be in charge began reading Darren his rights as several officers pointed their handguns toward him.

"Just tell me what you are doing in my home," Darren persisted.

"You are being arrested on suspicion of murder, sir. Would you kindly get up, get some clothes on and come with us."

"WHAT!? That's ridiculous. Darren, what is going on?" Heather exclaimed in a trembling voice.

“I don't know, honey. There's been a mistake here and I'm sure it will be sorted out quickly. Then, I'm going to sue the ass off someone for this.”

Darren was made to quickly dress and was soon being escorted outside to a waiting police van, wearing handcuffs. Outside, his peaceful street was littered with police cars and armed police. Many of his neighbors were now outside too, either in the street or standing in their gardens, wearing their dressing gowns, trying to find out what all the commotion was about.

From then on, everything seemed to be in a dream world, one which Darren believed he must surely wake from. It was all just so unreal.

He remembered being escorted roughly into the police station and being charged before being bundled into a small cell for almost four hours. He remembered his attorney being called and his being taken to an interview room and questioned. He was questioned repeatedly and was being treated like a common criminal.

With nothing resolved, he was put back into his cell and sometime later was given something to eat. More time dragged slowly by; he was losing his sense of time. Finally, he was allowed to see Heather in his cell and under supervision.

“They think I am the rapist, darling,” he told her incredulously, with fear in his voice.

Heather, her eyes red with crying, vowed to help her husband fight this terrible mistake. More time passed by, he slept, he woke, he was fed, then he was taken back to the interview room. Everything was becoming a blur to him.

“We have it that you have been living in this town for nine months, Darren. Is that correct?” The interviewing C.I.D. officer asked him.

“Yes, that's right. I moved down here at my firm's request.”

“And when you were questioned about your specific whereabouts on evenings in May, June, August, September and lastly, on the 4th of October, you answered that you were in a wood, by yourself, with no eyewitnesses to vouch for you?”

“Yes, that's what I said, I often g...”

“Interesting isn't it, Mr. Walker, that these attacks began shortly after your moving into this town and, on each occasion you were away from public view, a place where nobody else was likely to be, so as to vouch for you?”

Darren could only look at his questioner; he did not know how to answer his interrogation.

“Then...on the 15th October, the very night that Shelley Taylor was murdered, you were out once again at.. hmm, let me see, Beckwood. Is that also correct?”

“Yes, that is so.”

“And what were you doing there at that time of the night?”

“I was er, I was watching a family of badgers.”

“Watching dumb animals, eh? Then, as we have it, you called at the Pizza King at around 21:50, looking somewhat disheveled and with fresh scratch marks on your face.”

“Yes, I told you, I caught it on a tree branch. It was getting dark and I caught my face as I was leaving the wood.”

“For your information, Darren, Miss Taylor's body was discovered at 21:35. Miss Taylor put up a struggle as she tried to fight for her life. She wounded the attacker, samples of skin tissue and blood were found under her finger nails.”

Darren realized that things were looking bad for him, every shred of evidence seemed to suggest his guilt. He was again returned to his cell and allowed to speak to his lawyer for a short time. The lawyer wasn't happy about all the evidence being stacked against Darren.

He had slept and had another four meals before he was allowed to see Heather again. She visited him, along with the Vicar. Darren learned from his wife that it was afternoon, two days after his arrest.

“I really am terribly sorry, Darren,” the Vicar apologized. “It just seems as though it's my fault that you are here, I told one of the officers that the picture resembled you. I had no idea that you would be arrested.” The Vicar pulled out one of the posters and handed it to Darren.

There was indeed a striking resemblance. The drawing indicated a man in his early twenties with similar features to Darren, though with a rougher, more aggressive look. The man's hair was probably longer too though; as it was all mussed-up, it was really hard to be certain.

The man had been described as being 5'9" in height compared with Darren's 5'7", but he had the same slim build.

“But the eyes are different, and the hairstyle. His eyebrows are bushier than mine, too,” Darren pointed out to the officer who was standing guard in the cell.

“That is only a photo, sir, it does not stand as evidence in court. You can't expect witnesses, especially those who are traumatized after an attack, to be exact in their descriptions. To be honest, comparing the face with your own sir, I would say that it is a very good likeness. I personally think that both witnesses have done remarkably.”

“Well, what about clothing? What was the attacker wearing?”

“It is perfectly reasonable, especially with a car, to have a change of clothing ready, especially where the last victim was concerned, as the clothes would be very bloodstained. We are looking for a second set of clothing at the moment; there would have been plenty of time for the attacker to change and make it to a pizza place.”

“I would just like to say that, from what I know of you, Darren, I do not believe that you have done these things,” the Vicar offered the defendant. “If you are prepared to swear to me your innocence in God's good name, then I will stand in court as a character witness in your defense.”



“Yes I will, Vicar,” Darren told him, looking directly into the Vicar's eyes. “I did not commit these crimes, in God's name.”

“Then I believe you, son, and you can trust in my support. The church will pray for you.”

Heather hugged Darren tightly. “So will I, darling,” she told him as she tried to fight back her tears. “It is all a horrible mistake, but what happens next?”

“I go to court in the morning for the hearing. I don't suppose I will be released though, not according to my attorney. I just want to get out of here and put it all behind me...I've hardly slept.”

“You were featured on the national television news last night, the whole town knows. Most of our friends and neighbors believe that you are innocent...those who really know you, they say that they cannot believe you would ever do such a thing. Others ignore me and keep their distance. I am having my own rough time and the police had better be ready to apologize after we have proved that you weren't guilty.”

The officer present asked the two visitors to leave. With a long kiss, Heather reluctantly left her husband.

The following morning, Darren was doubting that he had ever been more nervous in his life. He had never been in a courtroom before, not for anything, let alone a murder charge.

Matters were worsened by the fact that Darren's attorney, Bernard Denton, seemed to be doubting his client's innocence. Rather than trying to prove that Darren was not guilty, he suggested that Darren come clean and plead guilty as, in the long run, this might get him a lighter sentence.

When Darren told him without uncertainty that he was innocent and no way would he plead otherwise, Lazenby said that he would then try to prove his innocence but he warned that it was not going to be easy. All that Darren could offer was that he was alone by himself in the countryside, had parked his car without being seen and hadn't encountered anyone who could act as witness.

Darren was allowed to smarten himself up, putting on his work suit before having the handcuffs snapped onto his wrists to be led out to a police car and taken to court.

Outside of the police station, a mass of journalists were waiting and the flashes of cameras dazzled him. Innocent as he was, Darren was ashamed to realize that he was going to have his photograph splashed all over the national tabloids, essentially convicting him as a rapist and murderer.

On his arrival, Darren was placed in a holding cell beneath the courthouse to await his hearing. Also in his company were an assortment of social dropouts and an unshaven elderly man, three shabbily dressed teenagers, a black youth who wore a baseball cap and had a heavy, golden ring in his left ear and a drunk.

Darren's own, smart appearance made him stand out like a sore thumb.

“Hey man, Wod dey got you in here fer? You bin cookin' the company books or sumthin?” the black youth mocked; there were grins from the others.

Darren sat down on a bench and the elderly man resumed talking to one of the three youths as he had been doing when Darren entered.

“Yeah, so the coppers grabbed me as I was leavin' the house, me hands full o' stolen loot. I'd turned over forty bleedin' houses on that estate with never a problem. I've got an inkling that someone's ratted me out. What you kids bin doin'?”

“We got involved in a fight outside a bar. One of the other lads pulled a blade so Gibby here put a glass in the bastard's face. All hell got let loose then, din' it? The owner pointed us out 'cos of what Gibby had done, but like I said, it was one of the others who pulled a blade first.”

After a while, the three youths were called to the dock first, followed twenty minutes later by the black youth, leaving Darren in the cell with the elderly burglar and the drunk who was sound asleep.

It was only ten minutes afterwards that Darren's name was called.

“Good luck, kid,” the old man wished as Darren was led outside. Soon after, with pounding heart, Darren stepped into the courtroom.

As he looked around, he saw the assembly of legal people; Clerk, Ushers, the Bench.. He saw members of the public who had come to hear the various cases on trial. Amongst them he saw Heather, her parents, the Vicar, plus several family friends.

Darren's own parents had been killed when he was just eighteen. He was one of two children. His sister Brenda had married six years ago and gone to live in New Zealand with her husband; he therefore had no close family present.

The prosecutor read the charges, speaking as though it was already established that Darren was the culprit. He sat uncomfortably as the charges were read, feeling an urge to stand up and protest his innocence but he knew that he must sit quietly or be in contempt of court.

His own attorney then approached the bench and began telling them that his client was of good character, had a job with very good prospects, his own home and that his wife, present in court, was expecting their first child.

He went on to tell the court how Darren had an interest in natural history and that at the time of each incident he was engaged in pursuing his interest. Even to Darren, his alibi sounded lame.

The hearing continued for a short time with much legal jargon being spoken. This hearing was just a preliminary; putting the case forward as it were.

“There is no application for bail, sir,” the court clerk told the judge, making Darren sit up. “No application for bail?” he thought. Why hadn't his lawyer applied for bail? He could have at least tried. Why hadn't he consulted him about it? Then Darren heard a voice telling him to stand.

The judge looked at him sternly. "Because of the severity of this offense, you will be detained at her Majesty's pleasure for three weeks whilst the case is considered and summed up, Do you understand?"

"Yes Sir," Darren found himself mumbling. In the back he could hear Heather sobbing but he felt too ashamed to look back at her or her parents. Numb, he was led back down to the cells.

"What happens to me now?" he asked a warden.

"You'll be shipped off to Brentcliffe to await your trial," the warden replied stiffly.

"Is...is that a prison?"

"Of course it's a prison. What do you expect it to be, a flamin' holiday camp?"

"Why can't I just be kept at that police station, or even here, until the case is reheard?"

"We don't hold prisoners here, we haven't the security."

"But I'm not a criminal. I can't be put amongst that kind," Darren protested.

"Not a criminal, eh? The court will decide that for you. I'll tell you something though, you'll find the cons a bit tougher than some of those poor women. I reckon you'll find out, first hand, the kind of terror, shame and humiliation you put them through."

This was a nightmare, a hideous nightmare which he was unable to waken from. He was a quiet, placid man, he hated any kind of violence, yet he was going to be put into a prison full of thugs.

He could hardly imagine what it would be like, he didn't even want to try think about it. He knew that he had to be strong, he had to get through it for Heather and their unborn baby's sake.

He sat gloomily in the cell, was served a plate of lukewarm mush, then sat some more. Hours seemed to pass by before he and others were led into a corridor. Darren was handcuffed to another prisoner, then they (sixteen of them) were led onto a prison coach which set off into the night. The man that Darren was cuffed to spoke only occasionally during the journey; first to ask him what he was in for. He seemed to be embarrassed about being cuffed to a man dressed in a suit, who was pleading his innocence and spoke in an educated voice.

"Fuckin' 'ell, I got meself attached to a fuckin' ponce," he muttered gutturally.

Later, the other prisoner spoke again.

"Got any snout, mate?"

"I beg your pardon?" Darren asked, not understanding.

"Snout...ciggies!" the man exclaimed incredulously.

"Oh, er no. Sorry, I don't smoke."

"Don't smoke! Bleedin' 'ell, should've known it. I'll bet you don't go boozin' either, yer know, have a drink."

“Well yes actually, I do. I enjoy the occasional brandy or maybe a glass of beer sometimes at the club.”

The man tutted in disgust and turned away, leaving Darren feeling uncomfortable.

The journey took about an hour and half. It was very dark as the bus drove up a small road leading to the prison gate. Darren looked out at the silhouette of the tall, foreboding prison walls, dark even against the night sky.

A gate opened and the bus drove inside. Soon, the sixteen prisoners were being escorted out and led in a single file towards a desk.

The desk officer gave each prisoner a number after writing their name in a book. One of the inmates then presented each man with a pile of clothes and an empty box.

As Darren stood at the desk and received his pile of clothing, the desk officer instructed, matter-of-factly: “Go into a cubicle over there, change into these clothes, fold your own clothes up and put them in the box provided. Put any valuables you have into this bag, then bring everything back over here.”

Darren walked over to an empty cubicle, which had a tatty draw curtain, which did not fully close to conceal him. He found a baggy pair of undershorts, a pair of stiff woolen socks that scratched his feet, a loose, striped cotton shirt and a pair of brown serge trousers which irritated his legs. There was also a short brown, serge jacket and a pair of worn, slip-on type shoes.

Darren hated the idea of wearing this cheap, nasty stuff or thinking of the countless criminals that had worn it before him, but he really had no choice. Once dressed, he packed up his own belongings and returned them to the desk.

The desk officer entered each item, which a prisoner then separated before Darren was told to sign for what was there.

After all sixteen prisoners were uniformed, a barred gate was opened and they were led into the prison area. Darren averted his gaze from the many prisoners were eyeing up the newcomers. There were greetings shouted out to some of the new bunch who were obviously returning; this included the man that Darren had been handcuffed to. For the rest there were cat calls and ridicules.

They were all led up a flight of stairs and along a metal gangway; here, one by one, they were put into cells. Darren went into number 211.

Once inside, Darren could tell immediately that he was sharing; there were personal belongings and one bed was neatly made up, whilst the other had a pile of sheets and a pillow at the bottom of a tatty, hole-ridden sponge mattress that had seen better days.

Darren sat on the edge of this bed and clasped his head in despair; however would he survive three whole weeks in this hell hole? He wondered briefly what the person would be like that he had to share with, then he began to cry. For the first time in many years, since he was a schoolboy, Darren cried. Once the tears began, he sobbed his heart out in a futile attempt to relieve his emotional state.

## Chapter Two: LIFE INSIDE.

An unknown period of time passed by before Darren heard the lock on the door being opened and a young man of mixed race entered. He was dressed similarly to Darren except that he wore a baseball cap.

As he entered, he looked long and hard at Darren, then threw himself down onto his bunk, his legs outstretched and his hands behind his head.

“Give you some advice pal, get your bed made up or you'll be for it.” He spoke with a strong Liverpool accent.

Darren looked across at him. “Is that the rules? I haven't been told anything.”

“It's what's expected, pal. You keep everything clean and ship-shape in here...specially since the new gov'nor took over. A woman, would you believe? She's a real bitch.”

Darren had a feeling that the governor being a woman might help him; he had never thought of a prison governor being anything else but a man. If she realized that he was here on false pretenses and wasn't like the rest, she may well be sympathetic to him and keep him away from the tougher inmates.

“I'm Affie by the way,” the other spoke again, breaking Darren's thoughts. “So, what you banged up for?”

Darren briefly explained his circumstances to the young man.

“Hey man, what the fuck! I've heard about you on the news 'n that. You tellin' me that you didn't do it? Hey pal, you can tell me the truth, y' know. I don't give a fuck.”

“No, honestly, I really didn't do it. I'm still hoping to prove my innocence in three weeks.”

“Well, let me give you some advice, pal...and that's two you owe. In this joint, it don't matter shit whether you done it or you ain't, you'll be tret just like everyone else here.”

“I think I ought to try and keep myself to myself and avoid trouble, shouldn't I?”

“You'll do yourself a bigger favor by mixin'. If people think you's standoffish, they'll bait you fer sure. Hey, 'n drop that posh voice of yours, you sound stuck-up, well-off. You know what I mean? You're better just being one of the lads. If they think you believe you're better than they are, then you'll get a hard time. Try to look a bit tougher too, man. If you walk about like a sissy, you'll really regret it.”

“I'm not a sissy, nor do I look like one,” Darren answered indignantly. “I'm married and perfectly normal and I can handle myself too, if need be.”

“Sure, that's fine with me, pal. Jest warnin' you, that's all,” Affie responded before turning to face the wall, putting an end to the conversation.

“Look, I'm sorry, er, Affie, did you say? Thanks for the advice. How did you come about your name anyway. Unusual isn't it?”

Affie laughed “You blind, pal? coffee 'n cream ain't I? I'm a half-caste man, you know? Affie for short.”

“Oh, yes...of course.”

“Best of both worlds in here, pal. The blacks 'n whites don't get on real good. I blend to suit.”

-ooOoo-

At nine-thirty, the cell door was opened and two prisoners pushed a trolley inside under the supervision of a warden. Affie and Darren were each given a plastic mug of stewed tea and a stale cake. The cell door was then closed.

“Supper, pal. We eat it, go for a piss or whatever, then it's lights out and lock up at ten,” Affie stated.

Darren could have done with emptying his bladder, but he wasn't ready for leaving the safety of his cell yet. Instead, while Affie was out, he made up his bed and got into it.

His first night at Brentcliffe was one that would haunt him for the rest of his life. Although the same was repeated each and every night, that first time was the worst.

He had not long fallen asleep when he was startled back to consciousness by the sound of banging on the water pipes that ran through each cell. The sound echoed eerily at first and grew louder as more and more prisoners took to banging the pipes with anything to hand. Then, the calling started.

First it was prisoners calling to friends in other cells along the corridor or lower floors, then it was voices shouting from block to block. Some were friendly conversation, others were threats.

Outside was the exercise yard with the prison buildings surrounding it on three sides. Everywhere voices were calling to each other; occasionally there were hysterical screams or noises made by insane prisoners. To his terror, he even heard one inmate talking about him.

“Hey, Daz.”

“Yeah, what you want?”

“You awake?”

“No, you goon, what you think?”

“You heard, they got that killer rapist banged up in here. I hear he's in 211.”

Darren covered his ears with his flimsy pillow in an attempt to shut out the noise; across the cell Affie was snoring loudly. Finally, through sheer exhaustion, he fell asleep.

-ooOoo-

He was woke the following morning by a warden who told both prisoners to get up; the doors of the cell were left wide open. Now he really needed to go to the toilet. Because of his nerves and the horrendous change of circumstances in his life, he had been constipated for the last few days. His bladder was a different matter.

The large urinal was a long stainless steel wall with a trough running along the bottom. The toilets were full of men idly moving around; he was amazed to see that the cubicles were door-less and the convicts sitting upon them were on full view to everyone else.

He thought that he would be far too embarrassed to ever use one and was actually pleased now that he hadn't been able to go.

As he stood against the wall to pee, he felt a hand squeeze his bottom cheek. Turning quickly, he came face to face with a leering, unshaven man with rotting teeth.

“Nice ass,” the offending man said, grinning uncouthly.

Darren was so shocked that he froze and couldn't continue. He left as quickly as he could, passing inmates emptying bed pans from the night before; the smell was terrible.

Everywhere there seemed to be belching and farting prisoners and it made him feel like they were all animals locked up in a zoo.

He decided that, in the future, he would try and hold his bladder until the toilets were less crowded or use his bed pan to preserve his dignity.

“I told you pal, you just look too neat, too poncy. A lot of these guys have gone a long time without sex, anyone less than hard-looking is a good substitute for both the heteros and homosexuals. In nick, everyone becomes like bisexual for the duration, either that or they wank themselves to death.. You know, pull your meat, masturbate,” Affie lectured after Darren mentioned the insult in the toilets.

After half an hour sitting in their cells, they were all taken down to the dining area for breakfast. joining a long queue of inmates to get served. Darren received a tray with a plastic cup of lukewarm tea, a portion of lumpy porridge and two slices of hard, cold toast. They then made their way to the long rows of tables and benches to sit and eat.

“Do you mind if I join you?” Darren asked his cell mate as he saw that he intended to join a group of friends.

“Yeah, sure pal, what the hell,” Affie replied. “Come on, we'll sit over here but don't tag me too much or people will think you're my bitch.”

“What do you mean by that?” Darren asked as Affie led him away from his intended table.

“You know, my...aw, never mind, you'll learn.”

As the two made their way to a bench, a convict carrying a tray scooped out Darren's porridge with his fingers and transferred it to his own tray.

“Hey!” Darren began to protest but stopped after a nudge from Affie.

“Let it go man. You want to get carved? Just sit down and leave it.”

Darren's heart was pounding, whether from annoyance, fear or whatever, he couldn't be sure. He couldn't bring himself to touch the porridge that was left, so just ate his toast.

“You'll get a lot of that. If you were tougher, you might get yourself into a position where it's you that takes the food or just be left alone. But for now just let it go, don't try messin' with Moxy, the guy who took your food. You're gonna find a whole new way of life in here, pal. It's dog eat dog and only the fittest survive.”

“Thanks Affie. I guess you saved me from getting into trouble.”

“Yeah well, if you can handle yourself, it pays to protest or somethin'. It shows you ain't to be messed with, deters others from having a go. However, no matter how tough you think you are, you'd get eaten alive, man. If they think they can get away with it, they will keep comin' back for more, so just watch yourself... but don't try to fight back.”

“You never told me why you are here,” Darren said.

“Bit of joy ridin' really. I get me a buzz from stealin' fast cars, gettin' the cops to give me a chase. I usually just get a caution if I'm caught, 'cos there's so little prison space and the CPS don't like wasting public money taking such things to court. Time before last, I was given a two and a half year bender, two years suspended sentence. I did it again, got caught and here I am. I just got me three more months to serve.”

“And will you do it again when you get out?”

“What, TWOC cars...that's take without owner's consent, by the way, Yeah, I guess so, that's my life, pal. By the way, what you say your name was?”

“Darren.”

-oo0oo-

After breakfast, it was down to the yard for exercise which consisted mainly of just walking slowly 'round and 'round the perimeter in a circle. Several times other convicts bumped deliberately into Darren but he just ignored them; he was already learning.

“Hey asshole,” one burley six-footer called to him. “How many smokes you got? Give me your smokes, man.”

“I...I don't have any, I don't use them,” Darren replied.

“Fuckin' fairy,” the man grunted before moving off.

At the far end of the yard was a segregated area with groups of the toughest-looking men Darren had ever seen in his life, strolling around or playing ball games. There seemed to be a large faction of blacks with smaller groups of whites and others interspersed.

“Who are they?” Darren asked.



“That's D Block, all the lifers go there; it's kept segregated from the rest of us. There's some real nutters in there, pal and I fer one am glad I'm not amongst them.”

Each time the inmates walked past the segregating fence of D Block, there were calls shouted out, mostly of a sexual nature and mostly by the large group of blacks.

“Hey, whitey, nice buns. I got me a juicy pole of black meat to give yoo's over here,” one of them shouted to someone further down the line.

“Yo, Sweet Lips, get your mouth around ma shaft ‘cos I have a need to shoot ma load,” another yelled to the white, toothy grins of his friends.

On one occasion, Darren couldn't help but look across towards the lifers out of curiosity. Sitting on steps leading up to the doors of the block was a cluster of huge, muscular, black prisoners. Darren had to look twice as he thought that he saw two girls sitting either side of one of them and fondling him.

One of the lifers standing by the fence, calling out, spotted Darren looking.

“Hey man, what der fuck you lookin' at? You sissy-assed white bastard.”

Darren immediately looked away and began to redden as the lifer ranted on. “You wanna see what's goin' on here, you get yo ass over here and I'll show you, man.”

The hideous day was passing into mid-afternoon when Darren decided that he had better try the toilets or burst. There didn't seem to be anyone around so he stood and relieved himself as fast as he could. He heard footsteps approaching just as he was finishing so he shook his penis quickly and put it away to go back out.

Suddenly he felt a rough, strong hand clamp around his mouth and nose and he was pulled backwards.

In spite of his sudden shock, Darren became aware of two other prisoners besides the one that was gripping him. One was standing by the entrance obviously to keep watch. The other helped the assailant pull Darren over to the cubicles.

“What is it you want? What have I done?” he asked in panic.

“Just keep your mouth shut,” the second man told him as he pushed Darren over the pan of the toilet.

Darren was alarmed to suddenly feel his pants being pulled down his legs. One attacker firmly held him in a bending position by pushing down on his shoulders, the other gripped his waist to keep his rear end up whilst at the same time pulling his underpants down. The awful truth suddenly dawned on Darren as to what these men meant to do to him.

“Oh no, please no...I beg you, please.”

“Quiet bitch while you're given a taste of your own medicine,” the gruff voice of the first man told him.