

## From the Inside Looking Out

My footsteps echo off these dungeon walls. I shuffle around my cell, trying to keep my spirit alive, trying to hold on to hope. Silence haunts me, and with little but my thoughts to keep it at bay, I lose myself in the wild depths of my own consciousness. Memories flit past; shafts of warm light and the soft sound of long-lost laughter. I miss the days when I was free to roam, free to leave these walls of steel and see the world! But those days have faded, drowned out by the clamouring of the voices that filter through from the cell next to mine. Voices that shepherd death, disease, and destruction, as the world I no longer know collapses outside. I eat, sometimes, and I drink, more than I should. Most times it helps quieten the voices, others, it makes them louder and more insistent. The faceless drones that keep the world outside spinning leave food outside my cell, though as time blurs, I cannot tell whether they leave it once a day, or once a week, or once a month. I have read the few books I have with me a hundred times each, and the small television brings me no joy; it simply lets the voices in. I can see the world outside through the bars of my cell; sometimes full of bright colours and white clouds, and other times, it seems like my eyes have lost the will to see clearly, for it appears as a wet palette of comforting greys, and then the world outside looks just as dreary as the one inside my head. As time has presumably kept flowing during my imprisonment, the nature of living has taken its toll on my body. I am thinner than I was, and I can count my ribs quite easily; I see now just how fragile we really are; nothing more than glass dolls covered in a thin skin of hopes, dreams, and a will to live. Were those to fail, we would simply crack, and crumble into nothing. My hair hangs into my eyes now, but I like it, as it hides me from the eyes I feel watching me, and keeps the world outside out of view when I don't wish to be reminded of everything I no longer have. Sometimes people come to visit me; they stand outside my cell and plead with me, begging me to come out and see them. But I can already see them, so why are they asking? I see them outside, free to do what they please, taunting me with their wide smiles and bright eyes. They say my cell door is unlocked; that I can walk through it, but I know they are lying. So I leave them, calling from the outside, and hide away in the forest of my mind. I can never be free, never leave my cell. The voices told me so. They said they wouldn't let me. They say it's too dangerous. It's very dark in here, but I can't find the light switch. I can't find the light. It must be outside. But outside is out of reach. It is beyond. It is beyond this small world of mine. I cannot reach it. So I hide.