

IF MY  
WORDS  
HAD WINGS



# PRAISE FOR DANIELLE JAWANDO

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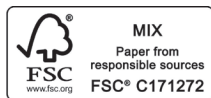
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*For all of the incredible young people I've had the honour of meeting and working with, this book is for each and every one of you. Never forget how much your voice matters. Never forget how much of a difference you make to this world.*





They say you can get used to anything, if it's part of your life for long enough; even somewhere like here. It's mad, cos never in a million years did I think I'd ever get used to prison. The noise, the smell, the way you've always gotta be on constant alert, looking over your shoulder for the next fight that's about to kick off, or the next load of screws that are gonna start beating the shit outta someone. Being in here feels like you're constantly stuck inside a ticking time bomb that's about to explode and take you down with it. And if you don't keep your guard up, if you don't watch to see who's looking at you funny, or if you get too cocky, or if you come across like too much of a pushover ... then you won't last a minute in here. Not one.

All I've tried to do, in the eighteen months since I've been here, is survive. Make it back from the servery to my cell with a tray full of food. Make it to the end of my sentence alive. I guess I've learned how to block out bits of my life. How to keep this place . . . separate . . . from who I am. Which is hard, *fucking hard*, when you're banged up for hours, with nothing but your thoughts going around in your head.

If you start to let it seep in, tho, into your skin and your veins. If you start to properly think about the constant alarms and the slamming of the metal hatch or the banging against the cell doors. If you let in the shouts of: *'Oi, you listening? You listening, yeah? When I catch you on wing, you're dead! Fucking dead – y'hear me, bruv?'* Or all the shit that the screws say about you. That you're a lowlife, an animal, scum, a worthless piece of crap that's ruined his life for ever. If you let in the fact that you ain't even seen as a person any more. You're just a thing. A criminal. An *it*. Prison number 88582LD.

Or you stop to think about how much of your life you've already wasted, and how you threw it all away in one dumb moment. How every day feels like you're slowly starting to disappear, cos the outside world forgot about you. When you let all those thoughts take over, that's when it can feel like there's no point even trying to make it to your release date. Cos you just feel so hopeless and empty.

That's when things get really bad. Or you end up on Ibis



Wing, cos cutting yourself seems like the only way you can cope. I was on Ibis for a bit when I first got here too. All the wings are named after birds, which is mad, cos why would you name a place where people are locked up after something that shouldn't even be kept in a cage? That pulls its own feathers out when it's kept behind bars. When doing a sentence is called 'a bird' as well. I dunno if it's a coincidence or what, but it's like at every moment, you're reminded that you won't ever be free. Not really.

Everyone on suicide watch gets put on Ibis. And the thing is, once you end up there, you're marked too, cos everyone else sees you as weak. You might as well walk around with a fucking target slapped to your forehead . . . so then you've gotta work five times as hard not to be seen that way.

All my mates back home tried to give me advice when they found out I was getting locked up, but unless you've actually been inside, you can't say shit. No one tells you that where your cell is on the wing properly makes a difference to how easy or hard your life is gonna be. Or that there ain't no such thing as 'keeping your head down'. Or that you need to make sure you have a loaf of bread in your cell at all times, cos prison food is nasty, and even then, they don't give you enough of it.

When I first got sent down, I was on a secure unit cos I was only fifteen. That was hard enough, but as soon as I turned sixteen, they shipped me off to Ryecroft Young Offenders. My

first week here, this guy called Spider, who has a scar down the right side of his face, started giving me a hard time. His real name's Wesley, but everyone calls him Spider cos of the eight plaits he has, tied up in a bobble, that look like tarantula legs. Even tho Spider was the same age as me, he already seemed to have so much respect from everyone in prison. Spider decided that he didn't like me from the get-go. That's another thing about being inside: people don't need an excuse to hate you. You don't always have to of done something. It ain't always about rival wings or being from different ends on the outside. Someone can decide that they just don't like your face, and then it becomes your problem. I started off having to 'pay rent' – that's what they call it – giving Spider or some of the other guys a shower gel a week or the food off my tray, or anything else they wanted out my cell, all to stop me from getting my head kicked in.

Eventually, when I started running out of stuff to give him, he started pulling me off the pool table, even tho I'd been queuing for ages. And that gave the go-ahead for everyone else to start taking my food off me, and pushing me about too. Spider took my CD player, my Maryland cookies, my Pot Noodles – he even took my Adidas sliders. All the things that mean nothing to you when you're on the outside, but everything when you're in prison.

And the thing is, I never said anything cos I was too scared. I'd seen Spider slam some guy's head onto the tiled floor of the showers, and once throw boiling water mixed with sugar

in someone else's face. I'd heard that he'd kept another inmate hostage and threatened to burn the entire prison down. So when he'd shout, '*Forrester, I'll kill you, y'know!*' through the bars of his window at night, I fucking believed him; and I didn't know how I'd even get through a week, never mind 548 days – that's what it said on this shitty slip of paper that got pushed underneath my cell door on the first night. They call it a sentence calculation and everything's broken down into all these different sections. The amount of time I got in total is on there – 1,095 days. Then, my CRD – conditional release date – which is the date I'm supposed to be getting out, and my LED – license expiry date, which is when I won't have to go to probation anymore, is on there too.

At first, I couldn't work out why they write your sentence in days instead of years, but now I do. Cos getting through each day is like passing another milestone.

So that's when I first started cutting myself. I used this sharpened bit of my lighter. You ain't even allowed lighters inside, tho there's a lot of stuff you ain't allowed that you can easily get hold of. It fucking hurt, but at the same time, it was the only thing that made me feel . . . I dunno. *Normal*. Like I had some tiny bit of control over my life. Cos nothing made sense and everything had been taken away from me, and I just wanted to be back home with my mum and my brothers, Kias and Isiah.

I figured that even if Spider didn't kill me, my life would be

ruined anyway, cos once you go prison, that's it. You'll only ever be seen as a criminal and nothing more. When I was on the outside, I'd sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and my heart would be beating proper fast and my whole body would be shaking. I'd have moments where I'd find it hard to breathe as well, or I'd end up crying for no fucking reason. I never bothered to try and talk to my mum or Isiah about it. I dunno why. Maybe cos I didn't really get what was going on myself. Or maybe cos that's when things were really bad at home. Me and my older brother, Isiah, were fighting all the time and I could tell that my mum was fed up with all the dumb shit I was doing and I didn't wanna give her *another* thing to be pissed about. Besides, all that stuff was easier to handle when I was on the outside. I'd just go to town or play a game on my Xbox or hang out with Clinton, Abass and Shaun, and it was like I could push everything else to the back of my mind. You can't do that in here tho.

Those first few weeks in Ryecroft were the hardest. What with Spider hassling me, and me trying to figure out all the unspoken rules in jail, and seeing people being jumped almost every day. Then there was all the hours in my cell. Thinking about my dad and everything I'd ever done wrong. Or how my mum and Isiah, and maybe even Kias, must hate me. Or how Elisha, who used to be one of my closest friends, must think that I'm a lowlife too. I never started cutting before prison. I never

even thought about it. But loads of people do it here. Even before I realized that that's what was going on, I'd clock the scars on people's arms or other parts of their body.

At first, I'd do it to try and block out all the thoughts I was having. It made me feel like there was one tiny thing in my life that I had some sorta control over too. Not just that, tho, but a part of me felt like I deserved it. It would always make me feel better while I was doing it, and for a split second, I'd almost forget. Forget everything that had happened and the fact that I was locked up. But then the pain would hit, and I'd be in agony. Every time I did it, I'd hate myself for ages afterwards, but I still couldn't stop. Soon, cutting myself just weren't enough, cos I didn't wanna be here any more and I thought that everyone else would be better off if I wasn't. At least then I wouldn't be such a burden.

One night, I got so desperate that I couldn't see a way out. I don't think I wanted to die; I just didn't wanna be alive any more. It all just felt too much. Too painful, and I didn't know how else I was supposed to handle it. How else was I supposed to cope? It wasn't just prison I had to deal with; it was all these low feelings I kept getting too. Ryecroft was like being stuck inside this black hole, and no matter how hard I tried, no matter how many days I struck off my calendar or how many visits I had coming up, it was like there was no end in sight. And I just wanted it to be over. *I just wanted to be free . . .*

I don't even remember much about that night, really. I used my bed sheets tho. I just remember that there was all this noise from the wing around me one minute; then the next, I passed out. I woke up after one of the screws resuscitated me, and that made me feel a million times worse cos I didn't get why they'd saved me. Part of me wished that they hadn't bothered. Then I got checked out, and that's when they moved me onto Ibis Wing.

I was there for a couple days, and I had to have some psych assessment with the nurse. When I'd convinced her that I weren't having suicidal thoughts and I wouldn't try and do it again, they moved me back to my cell on Jay Wing. I don't even know if I meant what I said. At least, I don't think I did at first. But then the prison phoned my mum and told her what had happened, and when she came to visit me, she stretched her hand out across the plastic visiting table and held on to mine. She cried for pretty much the whole hour, and when it was time for her to go, she said: *'Please, Ty. Don't do anything like that again. I know it's hard, but promise me you won't. You've just got to hold on. You'll be out soon, okay? I love you. I love you more than anything ...'*

I nodded, even tho I wanted to cry, cos I hadn't heard her say she loved me in such a long time. Even tho I wanted to hug her and tell her not to go, cos I missed her and Kias and Isiah like mad. I didn't. I held all that inside me, cos I could feel some of the other guys from Jay watching me and I knew that if I

started getting emotional in a visit, then that would be another target on my head. It would be *another* reason to see me as weak, on top of the fact I'd tried to kill myself. I dunno if it was seeing my mum like that and knowing that I'd caused her even more pain, or the fact she'd reminded me that I was loved, but I decided that day that I wasn't gonna die inside. That I had to make it to the end of my sentence. *No matter what*. I waited until association, which is where they unlock all the cells on the wing and you're allowed out to socialize with the other inmates for an hour and a half a day. Then I went and got all my shit back out of Spider's cell.

As soon as I'd done that, I went downstairs to the main bit of the wing, where I knew Spider would be playing pool with all his mates, and I jumped on his back. I didn't stop punching and I managed to bust up his lip and his eye. Spider never in a million years expected me to fight back, so he was caught off guard. Before he could even get a proper punch in, the alarm went off, and all these screws came running over. About ten of them grabbed me off Spider, then twisted up my arm so much that I yelled out in pain. Then there were knees in my back and my face was pressed to the floor. They did the same to Spider too. I couldn't see them, but I could hear Spider yelling at them to get off him. It didn't matter which one of us started it.

They yanked me up, and one of the screws had his hand on my neck, pushing my head towards the floor, so I couldn't see

where I was going, but they dragged me away. They took me round the back of the block, tho, and they put me on basic for two weeks. Which is where they take all your privileges off you and you're pretty much left in an empty cell. With no TV or radio or kettle, like you're usually allowed. Being on basic made me realize that I *never* wanted to be put on it again tho. There's just too much time to think. It was shit, but it was worth it, cos at least I'd stood up to Spider.

After our fight, everyone on the wing started saying I was mad, cos no one in their right mind would mess with Spider. But I'd had no other choice. I had to fight Spider, and everyone had to see it, if I wanted to survive. They had to see that I could hold my own. Spider left me alone after that. Even tho I kept waiting for him to get his revenge. Part of me was scared that he'd do it when I was least expecting it.

That was time ago now, but I know that Spider ain't forgotten. I can tell by the way I see him glaring at me in association. I also know that people don't let go of grudges too easily in here. No matter how long ago it was, or how minor it may seem, it ain't that sorta place.

Now, I get up off my bed and make my way to the tiny window in the corner of my cell. I'm getting out in three weeks. It's the only thing that's keeping me going right now, even tho it still feels like forever. Time has a way of moving mad when



you're locked up. A couple of days can feel like a lifetime, and you don't believe anything till you see it. You can be due to be released one minute; then the next, you end up doing something dumb. Breaking the rules, or being found with some shit in your cell. Or people set you up. Then suddenly you've got more days added onto the end of your sentence. Most of the lifers don't give a fuck about what happens to them, cos as far as they're concerned, they're being locked up for ages anyway. So, they'll move proper mad. Someone on Quail even got stabbed the day before he was about to be released. He died as well. That's why no one ever has any hope in here. Cos the moment you start to dream, or believe, or think that some sorta future is possible, it gets ripped to shreds right in front of you.

I press my face against the window and try and breathe in the little bit of fresh air from the outside. Through the bars, I can see the other wings of the prison and a bit of the path that leads up to the main gates. Sometimes I see other inmates getting released as well. I used to feel mad jealous whenever I saw that, cos they were getting out and not me. But I know that my time's coming soon. That I'll be walking down that path with a whole load of people watching me, wishing that they were the ones who were leaving instead.

I turn my head so that I'm facing as much towards the cell on my right as possible.

'Yo, Dadir!' I shout. 'Dadir!'

‘Yo!’ I hear a voice shout back. I can’t see him cos of the way that the windows are positioned, but I can hear him, which is all that matters. Dadir was one of the first friends I made in here, he was at Ryecroft six months before me. He feels more like a brother than a friend tho. Even tho he noticed all the scars up my arms, he never once treated me any different, either. Although there’s bare people who self-harm in Ryecroft. The longer you’re here, the more you realize that too. I’m gonna properly miss Dadir when I go. The thought of leaving him behind almost breaks me, cos never in a million years did I think I’d come to prison and find someone who I’d be mates with for the rest of my life. Who I care about and would back just as much as my brothers, Kias and Isiah. Probably more than Isiah, if I’m honest, cos even tho he’s my actual brother, he still pisses me off most of the time.

The faint smell of weed catches in my throat and I hear Dadir cough. Sometimes people crumble the inside bits of a teabag into their spliff to stop it stinking so much. Or they put a wet towel over their heads and blow the smoke down the toilet while they flush. Most of the time, tho, the screws just turn a blind eye to drugs. Especially if it’s something like weed that’s just gonna mellow people out. It’s easier for them, I guess. Cos then they don’t have to break up fights twenty-four-seven or deal with people who are giving them aggro.


‘I’d offer you some,’ Dadir says. ‘But there’s *no way* I’m

gonna let you fuck up your last few weeks. Not when you're so close to getting out . . .' He pauses. 'It ain't worth it.'


I shake my head, even tho he can't see me. 'Nah,' I say. 'I know! I'm good anyway.'

I can almost picture Dadir nodding, the way he always does. He don't say shit just to fill the silence, either. Even when we ain't talking, it never feels awkward. That's how you know when you're tight with someone. When you can just sit there, comfortable, and you feel like you can truly be yourself. The only other time I had that was with Elisha, before we stopped talking. Elisha and me had been best mates for as long as I could remember. We'd lived in the same street since we were born and went to the same primary and secondary school for a bit. We just clicked. Not just that, tho, but Leesh felt like the only person in the world who truly got me. Maybe cos she lived so close, so she'd see or hear all the shit that would kick off with my dad. Then I just started talking to her about stuff. One time, I was too scared to go home, so I stayed at Elisha's for what felt like ages. I didn't tell anyone apart from her that my dad would hit my mum. Or how frightened I really was of him whenever he got mad. Imagine that, being frightened of your own dad.


Then, when I got kicked outta my third school and got sent to some pupil referral unit, people call it PRU for short, which is where you go when no other schools want you, I met Clinton



and his mates, Abass and Shaun, who were a bit older than me and Clinton. When I was with them, tho, I felt . . . safe. I'd never felt that before, and it was like having a second family, almost. Not only that – I could pretend to be someone else when I was with them, even if deep down I knew that that someone else wasn't really me. It was like I could forget about all the other crap that was going on. But at the same time, it wasn't like the way it is with Dadir or even Leesh. Shaun and that lot were always starting shit with people or going on a mad one, and most of the time, I felt like I had something to prove. I know that if they saw the scars up my arms, they'd probably rip into me as well. Or make me feel dumb or pathetic for doing something like that. Dadir doesn't tho.



I hear Dadir cough again and I know he must be trying to finish his spliff quick-time. Drugs, phones, shit like that ain't as hard to get hold of as you might think. There's always a way to get something inside. People usually dig a hole through the wall around the pipes and pass stuff through that way. Or it gets brought in during visits. One guy on Nightingale even got one of his mates on the outside to try and fly stuff in using a drone. They got caught tho. It's mainly this drug called spice that people smuggle in, cos it's harder to detect. But I don't touch none of that stuff. There are people in here who are addicts as well. Which is mad, cos before I got sent to Ryecroft, I thought addicts were all older people, not kids around my age,



who were sixteen and seventeen. And sometimes they start using even more, maybe to try and block out all the stuff that happens inside.

They've got a special wing in the prison for people like that. Cos as soon as they get locked up, they start having a comedown and screaming down the whole jail, and that can be rough to hear.

I rest my head against the brick wall. 'How'd it go with your barrister?' I ask. 'It was today, innit?' I pause after I say it. Part of me doesn't wanna ask, cos I already know the answer. And even tho it might be dumb – cos everything about this place and the world and my life has taught me that it's wrong to hope; that you should never, ever have even a glimmer of it – I so badly want Dadir to prove me wrong. You don't realize how fucked this whole system is until you get caught up in it. I did some dumb shit – that's how I ended up in Ryecroft – but Dadir shouldn't even be in here in the first place.

He kisses his teeth. 'Same bullshit, man,' he says. 'It's fucked up, *I swear!* My solicitor is such a wasteman. I'd prefer anyone else but him. He just keeps using all these big words and telling me he's "trying" to appeal it. Well, try harder, then . . . And the worst thing is when he goes, "I understand." Can you imagine? Nah, you fucking don't, bruv. You roll up here in your Merc, come inside for fifteen minutes, then go back to your nice house in Cheshire, and you wanna tell me that *you understand?*

Get outta here!’ Dadir pauses. ‘I told him that he ain’t the one serving a life sentence for murder, when I didn’t even do nothing! And d’you know what he said as well?’

‘What?’ I ask.

‘How there’s a risk I could end up being deported back to Somalia as soon as I turn eighteen. They’d ship me out to a prison there, cos now that I’m a “convicted murderer”, I ain’t classed as a British citizen any more. How are my family gonna come and visit me when this place is far enough as it is? I’ve been in England since I was two . . . This place is my home. Manchester’s all I’ve known, my whole life, and they’re gonna take that from me too? *It’s just fucked!*’

Dadir sucks in a breath, and it’s like I can feel the heaviness of it all. For as long as I’ve known Dadir, he’s been trying to appeal his sentence. To be honest, I dunno how he does it. I’ve just about managed eighteen months, but if I was serving life for something I didn’t do . . . I ain’t sure I’d cope.

‘It’s like I can’t win,’ Dadir adds. ‘If this appeal keeps getting dismissed, by the time I get out, I’m gonna be an old man. I’ll be thirty-six, and even then, I’ll still be a murderer. And that’s if they don’t try and send me back to Somalia.’ Dadir pauses. ‘Who makes these fucking laws?’ he continues. ‘Cos they weren’t made for people like me and you.’

I go silent. Dadir’s been here for two years and he’s got nineteen more years to go. *Nineteen!* He’s right, tho, cos the

more I try and wrap my head around it, all these laws, the way that everything goes when you're in court and then in prison, the more I really don't understand. I'd never even heard of joint enterprise till I went to prison. Which is mad, cos there's *so* many guys in here locked up for it. That's what Dadir's in here for. The first time he told me about this whole joint enterprise thing, I thought he was taking the piss or something, cos it just didn't make sense. You can be sent down for something like murder, even if you didn't do anything. Even if you didn't kill or hurt anyone. You don't even have to know the people who did it, either. You just have to have been there, and that's enough.

I soon realized that Dadir wasn't lying tho. Cos I kept seeing more and more guys coming here cos of joint enterprise. All of them Black or brown, and from council estates too. It's always big groups as well. Like, ten, fifteen guys, around the same age as me or a bit older, all being sent down at once. Dadir had told me that he was coming out of this takeaway place, not too far from his house, when something kicked off between these two guys, Lance and Marlon, and some other guy called Yusuf. Dadir didn't even really know Lance and Marlon; he'd just seen them around the estate. But he'd never seen this Yusuf before. This argument started between these two boys and Yusuf, and they chased Yusuf onto the main road, then stabbed and killed him. It was this Marlon who'd done it. There were loads of

witnesses as well, cos it was early evening when people were coming back from work.

And even tho this Marlon murdered Yusuf, the police arrested ten other boys who were in the area or near the takeaway shop at the same time as Dadir as well.

They said it was a ‘planned gang killing’.

All Dadir did was nod at Marlon cos he’d seen him around. *That’s it.* Then the next minute, he was up for a murder charge. He wasn’t even allowed bail while he was waiting to go on trial, either. They just picked Dadir up and sent him straight to Ryecroft. They tried him at this new super court they built in Manchester that cost almost three mil. I got tried there too. It’s this proper massive courtroom that they built especially for ‘gang cases’. Even tho me, Dadir, or the rest of the guys who got sent to Ryecroft for joint enterprise ain’t even in a gang. But, I suppose, if they’re gonna build a special court for gang cases, then they need ‘gang members’ to actually put on trial there.

When Dadir was on trial, the prosecution started saying all this stuff about Dadir being the ‘lookout’ who had let Marlon know exactly where Yusuf was, and how he’d been keeping an ‘eye out’ to make sure that the police weren’t about. Then they started saying all this stuff about an eye witness seeing Dadir nod, which was a signal for Marlon to kill Yusuf. And how Dadir was ‘dangerous’ and ‘calculated’ and ‘cold’ when it comes to stuff like this, cos he was ‘from Somalia’ and was clearly used



to being around war and violence from a young age, so would have no problem setting someone up to be murdered like that.

They even used the lyrics from some of Dadir's drill music videos as well, and decided that that was enough 'evidence' to prove that he was in a gang and guilty of Yusuf's murder. When you're in court, it's like they create this whole new story about who you are and what your life is like, and why you did what you did to end up on trial in the first place. They did it with me and Abass and Shaun too. I didn't even recognize the version of me they told everyone about in that courtroom.

'I know,' I reply finally, and I dunno what else to say. Cos I know that whatever comes out of my mouth just ain't gonna be enough. How can it? I don't just want to say nothing, tho, so I add: 'I'm so sorry, bro.'

But my words feel flat, empty. What could I even say to make any of this feel bearable? To give him some sorta comfort? I could tell him to keep fighting, but he's already doing that. Besides, there's people in here that tried to fight in the beginning, but it didn't make any difference. Cos once you get sent down for joint, there's no way they'll overturn the sentence. Not from what I've seen anyway.

Dadir goes quiet for a moment. 'It is what it is,' he says. But I can hear the pain in his voice. 'Y'know some guy's just come onto Wren,' he continues. 'Same thing. Only – check this, yeah. Him and nine other guys have been given life sentences

for conspiracy to murder, over some messages in a WhatsApp group chat . . .’

‘What the fuck?!’ I say.

‘Swear down!’ Dadir continues. ‘Cem was telling me about it. They’re from somewhere in south Manchester. They got sent down for some messages, cos they were saying how they wanted to get some guy, yeah, who murdered their friend. Nothing even happened to the guy they were talking about, tho. He weren’t hurt. None of them were planning anything. They were just grieving in a private chat, that’s it. I swear, if that had happened to one of my mates, I’d be running my mouth in the group chat, as well. They were hurting – that ain’t no conspiracy . . .’

I shake my head. ‘Yeah, if my friend had been killed, I’d be saying all sorts Anyone would!’

‘*I know!* And the thing is,’ Dadir continues, ‘the victim don’t even wanna press charges, y’know? It’s the CPS and them lot that still decided to take it court.’ Dadir pauses. ‘It’s a different case, but it’s the *same* story again and again. They’re all “part of a gang”. They’re “too dangerous to be on the streets” . . . When’s this all gonna stop tho? It’s like they’re locking us all up for the joke of it. Just cos they can.’


Dadir sighs loudly and I rest my head against the brick wall by my window. It kinda makes me scared for Kias. Cos it ain’t even about ‘staying out of trouble’ any more, like my mum used to say to me. You can end up inside so easily, for sending

WhatsApp messages, or nodding to someone outside a fast-food place, or having a saved drill music video on your phone. People don't realize just how easy it is. Especially when you look like me and Dadir. Or when you're from an estate too. I glance around my cell at the cramped space that's been my home for nearly eighteen months, and I wish more than anything that I could tell Dadir that everything will be all right. That he'll get some sorta justice, cos how is shit like this even allowed to happen? And it ain't just a one-off, either. It's happening all the time. I know that it ain't just in Manchester too, cos people have been sent to Ryecroft from London and Nottingham and Birmingham, even Bristol.

'It's so fucked!' I reply. 'I just wish there was something we could do.'

Dadir doesn't say anything and I'm not sure if it's cos he's thinking the same thing as me – *What can we actually do?* We're just two boys, two prisoners . . . caught up in something that's so much bigger than us. That's out of our control. How are we supposed to do anything?

I dunno if Dadir's still standing by the window or if he's gone over to his bed at the other side of his cell, but he doesn't say another word. I stare out the window at the metal fencing that runs all the way around the prison, and the narrower parts of the massive building that stick out. I stare down at Quail and Ibis and Wren Wing, and all around me, there's the usual sounds.



The yelling and shouting and banging against cell doors. I try to look beyond the building, to the sky above me. But even though I know it's there, I can't see anything. All I can see is bricks and bars, and I can't help but think that even when I do get out, even when it's time for me to be released, what chance do I have?

*What chance does someone like me have out there?*