
in these prisons

Kate Morris

i

in these prisons
there are no guards

in these prisons
there are no bars
no barbed wires
no large stone walls

in these prisons
there are regular beatings
often deaths in custody

in this prison
i get day leave

ii

in this prison
there is no pay for work done

in this prison
the chores aren't divided
amongst the inmates

in this prison
he is top dog
he cannot see
he is trapped
within this prison

iii

outside this prison
flowers bloom
trees sway
leaves rustle

outside this prison
i have no maps

outside this prison
i am terrified to go

iv

in this prison
it begins with ridicule
laughter
jokes

in this prison
it is common sense
to use
"reasonable force"

in this prison
i covet the tiny cracks i see

in this prison
i pluck, pull, shave
torture myself
seemingly for pleasure

in this prison
i read romance novels

late into the night

v

in this prison

i grow gaunt from my hunger strike

in this prison

i ration my love like cigarettes

in this prison

i crave for a caress of my hair

in this prison

i write things on scraps of paper

vi

in this prison

the cats hiss

howl

piss outside

in this prison

i live with all the fears of my life

in this prison

i laugh - glad it is not me

vii

for this prison

i report escapees

for this prison

i turn my head

for this prison

i feed daily lies to my children

viii

in this prison

i get mild relief whilst inflicting pain

in this prison

i train the newest inmate
to take my place

in this prison

fear gnaws my belly
like a hungry rat

in this prison

i beg Mary for mercy
- the priests won't help

in this prison

the bruises on my face
map his moods

ix

in this prison

i wrap her dead body
in a red and white robe

in this prison

my crushed wrist comforts my soul

in this prison

most of me watches
from the ceiling

in this prison

i lose the use of my legs

x

it is in this prison
that killing in self-defence
is not good enough

it is from this prison
they remove me
and place me in another

it is from this prison
i watch you skulk from yours

it is from this prison
they say it is so easy to leave

it is from this prison
i whisper words

xi

it is from this prison
they say i'm right to leave

it is from this prison
other women point-
murmuring
"why did she stay?"

it is from this prison
i rode on a horse into the sunset

it is from this prison
i run
changing location
every six days

xii

it is from this prison

i conceal escapees like fingers
in the folds of curtains

it is from this prison

i kidnap my sons and daughters

it is from this prison

i seek asylum
in another country

it is in this prison

i shriek and howl
for the other countries
are full tonight

xiii

after escaping from this prison

i come to terms with my wheelchair

after escaping from this prison

it takes many years to remove
the barbed wire from my mind.

after escaping from this prison

he raped me one last time

after escaping from this prison

i felt thankful
the price of the ticket
was not my life

after escaping from this prison

i found his mines within my body

xiv

after escaping from this prison
i was shunned

after escaping from this prison
i found the bones mended
but the scars remained

after escaping from this prison
they told me I was a bad
mother for staying so long

after escaping from this prison
it took me years to wrench
the bars off my heart

after escaping from this prison
i cradle my sobbing son

xv

years after leaving the prison
there is rubbish
the garbage truck never takes away

years after leaving the prison
he still stalks our kids

years after leaving the prison
i can never talk of those times

years after leaving the prison
my chronic pain speaks eloquently
of those times

years after leaving the prison
i fear for the boys my ex did bring up

years after leaving the prison
my poems have bare bones
like the stews I serve

in that prison
there were no bars
no barbed wires
no large stone walls

in that prison
there were regular beatings
often deaths in custody