

Rydale's Prison

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Entry for One Week Challenge on [simplyscripts.com](http://simplyscripts.com)

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EXT. NORTH YORK MOORS PRISON - TWILIGHT

High on the North York Moors, a bleak and inhospitable place, a large dark prison is surrounded by boggy peat and a shroud of wet grey mist.

INT. PRISON DINNING HALL - SAME TIME

Prisoners are eating dinner at lined up tables in a hall with high ceilings and traces of ornate trim. A young disoriented prisoner, DANNY (19), turns away from the food counter with his tray and pauses, unsure where to go and sit.

He slowly steps forward and sees that many of the tables are full and he is not welcome at others.

Across the room he notices a table with three older prisoners. One of the older prisoners FRANCIS (60, in fair health) notices him looking at them and waves for him to join them.

FRANCIS

Hello, young man. You're welcome to sit with us until you figure out where you really belong. I'm Francis.

JIM (82, frail and weather-beaten), sitting next to Francis, is uneasy about meeting the stranger.

DANNY

I'm Danny.

Danny sits down opposite Francis, next to SEYMOUR (71, drawn and a little academic).

FRANCIS

These old duffers are Seymour and Jim. Did they bring you straight here from the court?

DANNY

Yeah. I was told Leeds was full.

SEYMOUR

Yes and this place is as well. But that doesn't stop more people coming!

JIM

I know what they're going to do.

SEYMOUR

Will you stop going on about that!

JIM

But they will. I'm telling you they will. I saw the guards looking at the barriers.

SEYMOUR

So what if they do? It's only rooms!

JIM

No no no. Some things should be left alone.

There is an awkward silence. Danny is confused but focuses on eating his food. Francis has heard this discussion before and realizes it makes no sense to Danny.

FRANCIS

They are talking about the Rydale offices.

DANNY

Rydale offices?

FRANCIS

Rydale, as in the trading magnate?

Danny is blank. The older prisoners shake their heads as they realize that Danny does not understand the significance of this.

SEYMOUR

Do young people know about anything?

DANNY

Sorry.

Francis decides to explain what they are talking about.

FRANCIS

This prison was not always a prison. Look up there. Around the walls.

Francis points to the classical cornicing around the room and the tops of the pillars that are ornately decorated.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

They don't decorate prisons like that on purpose. This was the stately home of the Rydale family.

SEYMOUR

God only knows why he would build such a home on the Moors.

FRANCIS

True, but he did. Using slave trading money, and probably some of the slaves, Rydale built this beast of a place.

JIM

This place destroys souls.

Danny is uneasy and looks around as if to find somewhere else to sit.

SEYMOUR

Don't listen to him. Buildings don't destroy people. Other people do.

DANNY

What happened?

SEYMOUR

Old Man Rydale wanted all his family with him. And they, the children, and the grandchild, had no choice. They were all waiting for a share of his money. So they all moved in here.

Seymour pauses and looks at Francis, deciding if they should continue the story.

FRANCIS

Look, it's only a story. A prisoner probably made it all up and everyone has fallen for it ever since.

JIM

I heard it before this place was ever a prison, from a Moors shepherd. They should've knocked it all down and stayed away.

Bang, bang, bang. A GUARD (45, gruff and mean) bangs a metal plate against a door frame and all goes quiet.

GUARD

That's it! Dinner's over! Back to your cells. Those of you who just arrived line up at the back of the line!

INT. CELL CORRIDOR - A LITTLE LATER

The prisoners are all walking in a line along a corridor of cells. Francis, Seymour and Jim are together in the middle of the line and Danny is at the back being followed by the Guard.

Halfway along the corridor on the right hand side is an archway entrance that was barricaded up. One of the guards is removing the central panels of the barricade.

JIM

Dear God they are opening it up!

The prisoners walk past the opening staying as far away as possible but peering curiously through into the blackness.

The end of the line reaches the opening and goes a little past it.

GUARD

Where do you think you newbies are going? You're in here.

The four new inmates at the back of the line stop and stand looking at the entrance.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Grab a cot, blanket and torch each of you and get in there.

Next to the entrance is a pile of fold-out beds, blankets and flashlights. The prisoners pick up one of each. Even the guard looks uncomfortable and will not go in first.

GUARD (CONT'D)

In line! As you were. In you go.

The prisoners shuffle back into the same line they were in before and the new prisoner who is first looks very uncomfortable about being first. But he turns on his flashlight and goes through.

Danny is the last of the new prisoners to go through and he is followed by the guard.

On the other side dimly lit by the flashlights is a short corridor.

Ornately decorated, with the wallpaper and fixtures still in place, but damp, dirty and run down. The prisoners stop in the middle of the corridor. There are two doors on the left, one on the right, and a large door at the end with the word "RYDALE" carved into the stone lintel above it.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You boys are lucky. You get a room each. You two into those ones. You into that one.

The Guard points to each of the first three prisoners and at the doors on the sides of the corridor which leaves only Danny.

GUARD (CONT'D)

And you, you get the big one.

They all look around at each other.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Don't just stand there get in! And don't use your torches too much. It'll be a long time before you get any more batteries.

The prisoners jump towards their doors. The first three each arrive at theirs first and open them to reveal small side offices, without furniture, once used by assistants. They each step warily into the rooms and begin setting up their beds.

GUARD (CONT'D)

And don't get any funny ideas just because you have no locks and bars. The dogs and shooters aren't going to care!

Danny moves towards the large door and notices a big lock on the door. He pauses and the guard hangs back.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Well try it!

Danny grips the handle, turns the heavy loud mechanism with a klunk, and slowly opens the door.

Inside is a cavernous office with high ceilings and tall glass windows. The walls are paneled in dark oak and broad empty oak shelving. Much of the furniture is gone but towards the window is an enormous heavy desk in the same style as the walls.

GUARD (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
Don't disturb... anything.

The guard closes the door as he leaves and Danny gets a chill down his spine as he continues to look around the room. High in the center of the damp ceiling is a chandelier with drips of water falling almost rhythmically from one crystal to the next.

To each side of the room there is a large fireplace. Dominating one of them is a portrait of a huge, intense, serious man dressed in Victorian clothes standing as lord of all he surveys.

Above the other fireplace is a much smaller portrait of a pretty young girl with a quizzical expression dressed unnaturally in bejeweled black. She is standing quite rigidly to attention and is surrounded by jeweled toys of gold and silver. Under the picture is a label "Beloved Clarissa".

The room has one other door next to the fireplace with the girl's portrait. This door is smaller than the entrance but has a similar lock on it.

Danny shakes himself away from looking around and finds a spot out in the open space near the large door to begin setting up his bed.

INT. RYDALE'S OFFICE - LATER IN THE NIGHT

Danny is restlessly asleep on the bed with the room dimly lit by moonlight from outside. He starts awake as the smaller door in the room begins to rattle.

The door rattles at first a little and then much more heavily. Danny is frightened and clutches tightly to his blanket.

The rattling fades away and is replaced by a scraping noise. Eventually the scraping fades away also. But Danny is now totally awake.

INT. RYDALE'S OFFICE - DAWN

The dawn is breaking and light is coming in through the uncurtained very dirty windows.

Danny has not gone back to sleep but is comforted by the dawn and gets up. He sniffs the air and touches the damp on the oak paneled desk before looking at the tall windows.

He reaches up and unlatches one of the large windows before giving it a push. The window opens just a little and he is relieved to be able to breathe some of the fresh morning air from outside.

Through the gap he sees a glimpse of the high barbed wire topped walls and one of the watch towers.

GUARD (O.S.)  
Come on out here you lads. The  
workshops won't wait all day!

Danny quickly moves out of the door, along the short corridor, through the hole with the other new prisoners and joins the back of the line of prisoners going towards the dining hall.

INT. PRISON DINNING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Danny has been given his breakfast and turns away from the food counter. This time he looks quickly towards the table he sat at before and sure enough the same three older prisoners are in the same places.

He goes over and sits down. The others are wary of him and concerned. Initially they don't say anything.

FRANCIS  
Tough night?

DANNY  
Yeah I guess.

FRANCIS  
It does get a little easier.

Jim is agitated. Seymour is trying not to let his curiosity get the better of him and eventually fails.

SEYMOUR  
So what are the rooms like?

DANNY  
I think I got Old Man Rydale's  
office.

Jim throws his hands to his head and gasps in anguish before clutching for a small pennant he is wearing around his neck. Francis and Seymour look at each other.

SEYMOUR  
Old Man Rydale's office...

The old men go quiet and won't look at Danny anymore.

DANNY

Well... So what was the story you were telling me yesterday?

FRANCIS

It's like I said Danny, it's probably just a story.

Francis thinks he has successfully shut down the subject. Seymour is too mouthy to let that happen.

SEYMOUR

They say that Rydale loved nothing so much as money. And his children was all the same. Only they didn't have any 'cause the old man clutched it all to himself. They lived on meager handouts waiting for the day he was dead.

FRANCIS

They floated like vultures those long years. Waiting for the feast.

SEYMOUR

There was but one ray of joy amongst 'em all. Rydale's only grandchild. Born out of wedlock and killed her mother in childbirth. But Rydale loved her none the less.

DANNY

The girl in the portrait. Clarissa.

The others look around awkwardly.

JIM

Ah yes Clarissa. That's what he said. Pretty, kind and charming. Everything that her uncles and aunt were not. She'd play... in Rydale's office.

The old men pause. Again it is Seymour who can't resist continuing the story.

SEYMOUR

Each time Rydale would go away to London on business he would lock his safe room and lock his office.

FRANCIS

He couldn't have his children  
laying hands on money while he was  
away.

SEYMOUR

Well... they say that Clarissa was  
hiding in his safe room one day  
when she was ten... He locked the  
doors and went away...

FRANCIS

When he returned a month later his  
children said they thought Clarissa  
had gone with him. They searched  
all around but when Old Man Rydale  
opened his office and his safe  
room... there she was, lifeless  
inside...

Danny has listened with growing horror to the story and is as  
white as a sheet.

INT. CELL CORRIDOR - EVENING

The other prisoners are filing away leaving the new prisoners  
at the barrier. Danny is petrified. The guard looks at him  
and smirks a little.

GUARD

I see there's been some story  
telling going on.

DANNY

Is there no where else?

GUARD

We don't let prisoners pick and  
choose their cells. Any that asks  
to do so takes up their request  
with the Governor!

DANNY

Can I, can I talk to the Governor?

GUARD

Sure you can, he's right here!

The guard lifts up his baton and pushes Danny's head hard  
against the wall with it. The baton is wedged right under  
Danny's eyes.

GUARD (CONT'D)

There he is boy! What do you want to say to him?

DANNY

Nothing! Nothing. Sorry!

GUARD

Well OK. It's always good when communication is clear.

The guard lowers the baton and looks at Danny and the others. They all hustle through the barrier, along the short corridor, and into their rooms.

Danny closes the door behind himself and then sinks to the floor crying and cowering away from the pictures and the safe room door.

A few miles away a storm is brewing. Thunder rumbles and flickers of lightening light up the room.

EXT. NORTH YORK MOORS PRISON - LATER IN THE NIGHT

The storm is around the prison. The wind is blowing hard. Lightening and thunder are heavy and close. The search lights are sweeping the grounds.

INT. RYDALE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Danny is on his bed in the furthest corner away from the safe room door. He is not asleep. He is under the blanket staring in horror at the safe room door.

DANNY

There's nothing there... There's nothing there...

He grips tight to the blanket and pulls it over his head. He begins to feel better. He breathes a little more easily and starts relaxing a bit.

The rattling begins.

At first it is quiet becoming louder. Danny hears it and is struck by fear. He whimpers and cringes still under the blanket. He tries to bring himself to look out from under the blanket.

The scratching starts.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
Clarissa it's OK. Please Clarissa,  
please...

The rattling and scratching continues. Danny pulls the blanket down and looks at the safe room door. It is moving and shaking in its frame.

Danny jumps from his bed and scuttles over to sit in behind the huge bulk of the desk near the window.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
Why didn't they hear you? I know  
you shouted. Why didn't they hear  
you?

The lightening flashes and behind Danny's head all over this end of the desk are doodles, scratchings and drawings by a young child. The lightening flashes again and prominent amongst the scratchings it says "Clarissa Rydale".

There is a banging from the safe room door. Tap, tap, tap. Bang, bang, bang.

Danny starts and then understands something.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
They did hear you didn't they. The  
money. Oh God they heard you...

Bang. The safe room door shakes to it's foundations. Bang. A crack appears in the door.

Danny looks around at the desk and sees the scratchings lit up by the lightening. He jumps up in terror and sees the crack in the door. He backs against the wall near the window.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
I'm, I'm not one of them! Your  
Aunts and Uncles are not here!  
Please Clarissa!

There is an almighty bang and the door crashes in spraying debris across the room.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
No!

Danny shields against the debris but is struck by some of it. He jumps up to the window pushes it full open and jumps out.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
No Clarissa! No!

He scrambles quickly away across the courtyard and struggles to get to his feet.

He gets a little way away from the office and looks back at the building.

As he looks through the rain he sees that on the other side of the safe room door there is no room. The only thing there is the newly fallen tree that was in that corner of the courtyard and has now fallen against and through the safe room door.

He begins to breathe a little more easily. He smiles a little and wipes the rain from his brow.

Bang. A single gunshot rings out in the darkness.

Danny wheels around sideways as the impact throws him to the wet ground. Lying motionless on the ground he stares towards Rydale's office as his life slips away.

INT. PRISON DINNING HALL - NEXT DAY

The three old prisoners sit quietly together contemplating what has happened.

FRANCIS

The poor boy.

SEYMOUR

I guess we should have told him that Old Man Rydale pulled down the safe room.

JIM

More than that.

The other two look around at Jim.

JIM (CONT'D)

The Moors shepherd what told me the story said Rydale buried the room out on the Moor... Together with the money... And his children.

THE END.