

True Crime Document

'A gruelling cautionary tale  
reminiscent of *Midnight Express*'

# THE DAMAGE DONE

TWELVE YEARS OF HELL IN A BANGKOK PRISON



WARREN FELLOWS

I would like to thank Jack Marx for all his hard work in helping me write this book. Without Jack, this story would never have been told.

# **THE DAMAGE DONE**

**TWELVE YEARS OF HELL IN A BANGKOK PRISON**

Warren Fellows



**M A I N S T R E A M  
P U B L I S H I N G**

**EDINBURGH AND LONDON**

*This is dedicated to my mum and to the memory of Paul Hayward*

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# PROLOGUE

I AM GOING to tell you about the worst thing that ever happened to me.

I don't really want to tell you, because it's too terrible for me to recall, but I have to tell you. It's important that you know, and I have to get it out of my heart.

This thing went on for eleven and a half years. Think about that. Think of the most wretched day of your life – maybe it's when somebody you loved died, or when you were badly hurt in an accident, or a day when you were so terrified you could scarcely bare it. Imagine 4,000 of those days, together in one big chunk, and you're getting close.

I do not tell this story to bring pity on myself. I know that many people hate me for what I did and would believe that I deserved whatever I got. I can only ask those people to keep reading. If, at the end of my story, you still believe that anyone could deserve the horrors that I saw, then you, too, are a criminal. A vengeful and sadistic one. Maybe you just haven't been caught yet.

I'll tell you of something I saw in a prison called Bang Kwang, nine years into my imprisonment in Thailand. This isn't an isolated incident – it's one of many – but it is one that stays in my head and plays like a short horror movie, over and over.

I was awakened late one night by the screaming of a young French prisoner in the cell next door. The sound of his scream was excruciating. It wasn't just a scream of pain, but of madness too. It was the sort of sound you would never want to hear coming from a human being. I'll never forget it. For hours and hours he screamed, until I and a friend called David, who was in a cell opposite, began screaming back, begging him to tell us what was wrong. It became obvious that whatever was torturing him was so overwhelming that he couldn't hear us at all. He was lost in his own pain.

Eventually, David and I began shouting for the guard. We knew that the hospital staff, who didn't care too much at the best of times, wouldn't be interested at this hour. So we pleaded with the guard to let us into the Frenchman's cell to see what was wrong. David had served in the US army,

knew a fair amount of first aid and thought he might be able to help. Luckily, we had a good guard this night, and he agreed.

When we entered the Frenchman's cell, he was alone, curled into a ball, facing the corner. His screams didn't stop for the whole time we were there – he seemed totally oblivious of our presence. As soon as we turned him over, we saw what was wrong. On his neck, just below the ear, was an enormous lump, about the size of an avocado. As we looked at this lump, it appeared to be moving.

David seemed to know what was going on and dashed back to our cell to get a razor blade (keeping razors was illegal in Bang Kwang, but the guard, who was now as concerned as we were, turned a blind eye this time). David told us to hold the Frenchman down, as he was going to lance the lump with the razor. As soon as the blade sliced the skin, the wound opened up like a new flower. And out of the gash in the Frenchman's neck spilled hundreds of tiny, worm-like creatures, wriggling and oozing out like spaghetti. It was appalling, a dreadful dream, only real and right before my eyes, happening to a human being. According to the hospital staff who examined him later, a cockroach had crawled into his ear, burrowed through to his neck and laid its eggs. A man who, somewhere, had a mother and a father, family and friends, had been left to become a living nest for maggots. And when I remember the grotesque sound of his screams, I'm certain he knew what was happening to him.

This little scene didn't have a staggering impact on me at the time. It should have, but it didn't. Such visions marked my days like the chimes of a clock. One ill moment means a lot on its own. Place it in the middle of a million other ills and it means nothing.

I remember seeing a young American, who'd just arrived in the prison, crying one night and I said to him, 'What's the matter?' Looking back, it was a ridiculous question. Everything was the matter. But I'd lost touch with how sick our circumstances were, and I no longer had any recollection of what it was to live like a normal human being.

Today, when I walk around, I sometimes find myself wondering if the whole thing, my whole experience there, really happened at all. It seems so unreal. At other times, it feels as if this new life is far away – even though I'm surrounded by it – and the one I lived through in those dungeons in Bangkok is my true life, still out there, waiting for me to return. It seems

impossible that both worlds could exist at the same time. They're natural enemies. Surely one would conquer the other.