

The Beginning

Why was I always so hot? Even in the dead of winter, when the world around me lay silent under a blanket of frost, my flesh still felt like it was melting from my bones. Sweat streamed down my forehead, hissing as it struck the scorched earth. The air itself was alive — thick, burning, clawing its way into my lungs until every breath felt like fire ripping through me.

Hell was not fire and brimstone in the way the stories told it. It was heat without mercy — a suffocating weight pressing from all sides, a light so fierce it burned through closed eyes.

I thought that after a century here, I would have grown used to it. But no. The sun still bore down like a magnifying glass, fixed solely on me. Every inhale was torturous punishment. Every exhale a prayer never answered.

I hadn't always been here. Once, I had lived a simple, unremarkable life — the kind that drifted quietly between days in the fields and doing chores. I remember the river at Gympie, dark and sluggish under a harvest moon. I'd gone there late one night to pan for gold, hoping for a spark of fortune to shine on me. My fingers closed around a lump of mud and gold, heavy and gleaming beneath the grime — a nugget nearly the size of my thumb. It shimmered like a promise. As I gazed in wonder at my gold the world suddenly went black, and I woke to find myself here. Dead.

Gympie had once been a haven for dreamers. Men came chasing wealth, fame, and redemption. But dreams have teeth. The town became a pressure cooker for so many desperate souls; its dirt soaked in sweat and failure. Now it had become something so much worse — a waiting room for the damned to linger before their turn to enter the gates of hell, to suffer their fate for their allotted time. To relive their worst nightmares over and over, before their souls returned back to Earth to try for salvation once again.

I've watched thousands arrive since my own death — new souls, frightened, angry, broken. They pass through, one by one. But I remain. A century of fire, a hundred years of burning silence, and still no release.

So why am I still here?

What sin did I commit that even Hell forgot about me?