

I've gotten used to life in exile. I Can't have a radio or TV, they are too much like life on the outside. I can't read anything more sophisticated than a cookbook either, it might compel me to want to go and rejoin the outside. I still write and draw and paint, and so on. But I occasionally withdraw from these things when faced with the fact that noone else can ever read them or see them.

I often stare at the boarded windows and wonder how thing might have changed since I saw the outside world. Still, I know that whatever things may have happened, things are still the same. I still can't be permitted to leave; not now, not ever.

After I spend too much time looking at the boarded windows it comes into my mind that just a short glimpse outside couldn't hurt. I try to force this thought out of mind, but it keeps creeping back. I go to the window and put my hands on the boards. Sometimes I stay right there for days at a time. With ears strained I pretend that I can hear some hint of sound from outside. I consciously know that this is impossible, but as I listen I can pick out birds chirping, and the trees rustling in the wind, and perhaps a dog barking in the distance. Thoughts come to mind of what the outside world looked like. I try to remember each leaf and blade of grass by this window. I say to myself, 'what harm could there be in seeing the outside, surely I wouldn't actually see any people.

I go over this again and again in my mind until I'm convinced that no harm could come of a short glimpse. Eventually I run

to get tools to take down the boards, and stop myself barely in time.

Now I run to the cellar and lock the door behind me. I sit in a corner and stare at my hands, wondering how I could have even considered what I almost did. My hands seem like murderers' hands when I review my actions. There almost seems to be blood on my hands. After a while I don't even understand my motivations for wanting to see the outside. What could the world possibly have had to interest me? After even longer I wonder whether the outside even exists, or ever existed. Eventually I dutifully go back upstairs and secure the boards over all the windows even more securely.

At other times I sit near the door and think with a mixture of fear and longing that someone may come to the door. Sometimes I am so frightened by the door that I run to another room and then conspicuously avoid that side of the house for several days. The door is so frightening because it, more than anything else in my life, represents potential. How can I possibly face so much possibility and so much uncertainty at once?

Several times I put up another door at the end of the hall to the door. At first it helps. I don't have to see the door to the outside. Even if I am to open the door to the hall I don't face the actual outside. I can proceed with my normal activities and not give much thought to the door out.

But slowly I begin to imagine the door. The thought of it

becomes stronger and stronger. Even though I can't see it, the thought of this door becomes as terrifying as its actual presence. It seems to me that I must be a spineless coward to not even be able to face a harmless door. Eventually I take down the door to the hall, but I'll certainly be forced to put it up once again.

My experiences with the windows and the door happened very often at first. Now that my memory of the outside has somewhat faded they happen less often. Still, I think they frighten me even more, as my imagination can create even more terrible images than my memory.

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My exile started three years ago next week. I've lived here alone the entire time. It's a reasonable house, I've lived in it since before my exile. When I look around I can almost get an idea of what life used to be like. I can almost even remember the outside. Everything's nearly the same, except for the boards over the windows.

I am very clever, I knew what was going to happen before anyone else even suspected. I made all the preparations discretely, and in advance. For example, the basement had to be expanded quite a bit to hold all the food stores and gasoline for heating. Obviously it was necessary that nobody, absolutely nobody, knew about my labors, or else they might figure out the truth, or perhaps merely think me mad. I had to do all of the digging myself. The dirt I put into large sacks which I smuggled out in the cover of night. Even with this precaution I dreaded that some random passer-by might see my activities and realize the nature of them.

It was more difficult to buy all the supplies I would need entirely anonymously. Fortunately, I had inherited a large sum of money not too long before, and enough money can get almost anything done. I bought all the food stores I thought it would take to last me moderately through the years. I installed a large ice locker also. But ~~there~~ this couldn't keep nearly as long as I would need. There would certainly be no means to go about getting more ice to replace the melted blocks, and it was clearly impossible to rely on electricity for refrigeration, as it would have to come from the outside. This I couldn't count

on. Self-sufficiency is what mattered above all else. Unfortunately, I've had to rely primarily on dried rations, as the ice is nearly gone.

I also stored enough gasoline to heat the house through the winters. It must be admitted that I did allow myself the luxury of a small gasoline generator to provide electric lighting for special evenings. Primarily I rely on candles and oil light to illuminate at night, but occasionally I feel extravagant and use the electric lights. Caution is necessary however, lest I burn it all this way and don't have enough to heat the house through the winters.

I have built a special device of mirrors and lenses which lights the house during the days. Its' function is to light the house in the days without allowing me any sight of the actual sun or anything on the outside. This is crucial. I realized beforehand that any view of the outside whatsoever would certainly drive me ~~to~~ to temptation. I have thought of everything that comes of desperate necessity.

By now I'm sure you've guessed the reason behind these procedures. However, I shall clarify why all of this is necessary. I had to go into exile because I was becoming aware of the true nature of mans' situation. This is something which many have speculated on, and which some very well may have realized. Any who had truly become aware of the human s-tuation would have had to do the same as I have. Anyone with any altruism and human dignity would hide the truthe. Nothing is more damaging than the truth.

Should I have stayed among the public I would have certainly told someone, many people would have then had the sense to do what I did, but some may not have. It is fortunate that knowledge dawned on me only slowly, but still not slowly enough. I had barely enough time to finish my preparations.. Now I could not even see any other human being without atonce telling him everything. Early on I could keep my burning knowledge to myself with difficulty, now I understand even more even more clearly.

One of the first things I considered was suicide. I couldn't bring myself to take my own life. It was not so ~~no~~ much that I am not willing to end my life, as I fear to end my knowledge. What I know is what nearly everybody thinks they want to know. I'm not nearly brave enough to kill what I know.

Once again I am faced with the problem of the window. All my arguments seem shallow. Even though it is obvious that the harm which might conceivably come of my foolishness could very well destroy human civilization, it doesn't any longer strike me as being more important than my sight of the outside. Besides, it is so unlikely that anyone would actually see me or me them.

I envision the outside of my house. It is in a deserted ghost town, far up in the mountains. To an observer walking the streets of this town, my house would just look like all the other buildings. Even the chance of anyone ever coming to this town is remote.

Wait, I don't think that was right. I think I just made up that memory over the years. It comes back to me that actually my house is a lone building in the grasslands. I remember now. I considered having it in the ghost town, but found the idea too risky. My house is actually in the middle of a wide field, miles from the nearest road. I remember it well.

But I'm unsure again. Maybe the location in the field was one I also looked at but rejected. Now I really can't remember at all.

I am very clever. Where ever it is that I decided to put the house must be a very secluded place. Surely if I just took a peek out the window I wouldn't see anyone.

I try to tear open the boards. I pull on one and it budes, just barely. I can hear the creak of the nails coming out when I redouble my effort. One of the boards finally comes off, but the effort of pulling at it has left me in a state of complete exhaustion. I lie on the floor, sweat covered wood in my hands. I pant from the sweat of my labor.

Eventually I get up again and start at another board. This one seems even more difficult to move than the last one. The splinters dig painfully into my hands as I pull at the wood. With a huge heave the nails start to loose on this board. I put every ounce of my being into getting off this wood. The wood must be evil itself. The outside seems to be my salvation.

I keep struggling until I get this board off. I start at the next one without pause. After hours of work, after gallons of sweat, after scraping and scratching my hands until they are bloody and callused, I see the outside.

At first the sight is more than my eyes can behold. I haven't seen the light of day for years. It is much too bright for me to look at. I am blinded from the beam which falls through the hole I have made, though it is only inches wide. The color of the light, ~~though~~ the feel of its heat on my face, is as much delight as I can possibly feel, even so.

I stare at the light. That I still can't quite see any shapes or forms doesn't really matter. This is still a sight of the outside. Very dimly I start to be able to see shapes. There

is a ~~1~~ long, reaching willow outside my window. As I stare longer I can see the colors and more details. There are several more trees near my window. Farther away there is a river with a concentration of trees along its banks. In the distance I can see low, rolling hills which go out indefinitely. All around is a high lush looking grass. I don't remember looking at this place before.

I continue to pull at more boards. These seem to come off with hardly any effort at all, inspired as I am by the sight of the outside. Board after board comes off until the entire window is left exposed. Now I look outside even more carefully. I can see the grass ripple in the wind. I can see the clouds blow overhead. As I listen I can hear the rustle of the breeze through the trees. I can also hear crickets chirping and occasionally in the distance the ~~son~~/sound of bluebirds. It smells sweetly of flowers of some sort and of the water nearby.

I climb out the window and lie on the grass. The world seems so alive. There are insects in the grass. There are the sounds of birds all around, thundering in my ears. I look off and see the movement of some sort of creature through the grass. I feel like I can breathe again, after being a long time dead.

I get up and run to the river. I run and run. It only seemed like a hundred ~~1~~ meters and first, but I go on and on trying to reach the river. ^{through} I am exhausted from running, I run even faster. Finally I reach it and stop short in shock.

There under the willows is a man, another human being. I don't

know how it is possible that he should be here. Noone should be anywhere near my house. I planned it that way, I had to make sure I would never see anyone. Here he is though. I stand still and stare at him, not drawing his attention, but at the same time not hiding from it.

He is quietly walking along the shore, humming some tune to himself. He is a very handsome young fellow, sharp feature and ~~light~~ light blond curly hair just slightly hanging over his face. He is dressed in a white// dinner jacket and perfectly matching well-tailored slacks. He is carrying a white cane which he gently swings as he walks. His manner seems to show absolute confidence and at the same tyme a certain naivete and ~~innocentness~~innocence.

I continue to watch him until he happens to turn around and notice me. I am caught now, I should flee away as fast as I can run. Instead I stay where I am unable to move. At the sight of ne he runs to me and throws himself in my arms. We fall to the ground holding each other. We go over to the river and make love on its banks.

Afterwords I turn away from him, ashamed that I allowed myself to ~~leave~~leave my exile. I beg him to flee before I tell him what I know. He won't leave he just stays and asks what could be so bad that I could know. I ~~continue~~continue to beg him to leave but slowly I am unable to not tell him the horror of what I know. I tell him about my reasons for realizing that human existence is truly only an exercise in despair. All my ~~logic~~logic is emaculate there are no flaws in my reasoning. He starts to realize the conclusion that I will get at and becomes uncomfortable and unable to look at me any

longer. I continue on with my proof. I wish that I could control myself, the knowledge takes more to contain than I can possibly hold. As I keep talking this innocent man screams at me, 'I hate you, I hate you'. Then he screams, 'Why must I know this'. Then he just screams.

I awake screaming. Then I ~~cry~~ cry.