

Every 365 days my father lets me leave my room, and that one day out of the year, I am able to take in the world for what it truly is; a beautiful, warm, and unwelcoming place. Throughout the year I spend my days here, in my room, with the door locked shut and the windows covered with black iron curtains.

My father lives here too, but in another room down the hall. He lives freely, not confined to a room. He faces the world every day, and with each passing day he gradually decays. He's very loving, so much so he locked me in this room when I was a child, to protect me from the terrible planet.

But every spring, the door is unhinged, and the window barriers shoot up into the ceiling, sunlight fills the room with its radiance, and fresh air seeps in through the open entrance. It's almost nauseating, but I get use to it after I've left the room. Yes, when I stand in the carpeted narrow hallway, I inhale the smell of spring that trickles into the house, the aroma of flowers somehow finds its way in through the crevices, and covers up the smell of the old house.

The house is the same every year, bland, dark, and unkept. Moving down the hallway into the living room, the smell of flowers still lingered, but the living room's putrid stench was forefront. The carpet was stained and sticky with some red substance, the glass in the windows were replaced with thin sheets of metal, there was no furniture except for the towering piles of garbage in two corners of the room, and the way to the kitchen, if it's still being used as a place to make food, is gated off by a large wooden case filled with guns and ammunition. Fortunately, I only saw this place once a year.

Opening the creaky front door and stepping outside onto the soft dirt, the patchy parts of grass poking out between my toes, I looked out into the distance. Our yard was still gated in by a thick wall of trees and cement, and the grass barely got enough sunlight over the year to grow... But I made due with what I'm given, because by tomorrow, I'll be back in the room.

Switching between running and walking, I transversed the yard, being careful not to trip over the huddled piles of bodies placed every so often, the cool breeze swept over my frail body like a wave of water, and the sun overhead warmed my partially bald head as if I was being cooked. Looking at the sky, sometimes I would see birds and would wonder what it would be like to fly, or to see what lies outside our yard. Other times I would find daises sprouting out from the ground, and wonder how it got there, and how I could sprout elsewhere from the Earth too.

For fun I would close my eyes while walking, to see where I would end up without seeing, and typically I would find myself in the forest. Opening my eyes I could see dozens of

tall great trees, the sunlight trickling in through the congested branches above, and some bugs moving around the damp grass. Odd little creatures, I thought, they're so innocent and thoughtless, they know nothing of what happens around them, simply living out their days wiggling around the blades of grass, sometimes defying gravity by crawling up a tree... If only we could do that, ignore the troubles of the planet and idly live among the insects and animals.

It started to become darker, so I made my way out of the forest and back into the yard. I knew the sun set sometime near nighttime, but I could never tell when. All I could see was the top of the walls glow orange, sometimes yellow and red, and then it would be gone. I wonder what the sun setting would look like, probably beautiful, or horrible, I'll never know.

Walking through the grass, there was a noise coming from the right side of the yard, and looking I could see a bright red dot that grew larger, and more detailed, as it came closer. My feet and hands grew clammy, my body trembled, and water seeped out from my eyes... It was someone, someone unknown.

Before I could break my ever-growing fear, my father bursted through the front door, rifle in hand, and sprinted towards me. In a swift motion, he picked me up, threw me over his shoulder and ran towards the house, his greasy hair flowed in the wind, and he smelled of beer. We were half way when he let out a scream, so loud it made my ear hurt, then he toppled over, dropping me onto the hard ground.

He was huddled, holding his leg and looking at the glowing red light in the trees. The sweat that poured from his body made him smell even worse than before, but he was my father, so I crawled over to him. We both looked at each other, his brown eyes meeting mine, then he shouted at me to drag him inside. Grabbing onto his wet plaid shirt, I started to pull his heavy body towards the open door behind me.

Loud buzzing noises, like bees, flew past me while I was dragging him, and some of them created holes in our house. The red dot from before grew bigger, brighter, and the silhouette of a human stood at the edge of our forest. My father screamed for me to pull him faster, but I couldn't, I was only a young girl, but I tried my hardest. Suddenly my heel slipped on my floral dress when I looked from the forest to my father, falling backwards and hitting my head against a rock, everything became foggy after that.

I couldn't move, my arms and legs were numb, and all I could see was my father lying there shouting at me, to drag him, to get him to safety, but my body wouldn't move, and the ghost of a man walked through our yard with a rifle in one hand, a torch in another. He was a little taller than my father, but thinner and dirtier, and his shirt and pants were caked with reddish

brown mud. He came nearer as I fought with myself, yelling to get up, grab father, and get inside, but I couldn't. He was standing over father now, rifle pointing down at his chest, and in one moment of horrible clarity, the gun went off, father screamed, I screamed, then there was silence.

The man stood over him, still pointing the gun, then looked at me. The only thing I could do was cry, and I did, tears streamed down my face forming a small puddle underneath my head as I watched this terrible man stand over me. The day I was to enjoy, to experience something other than the room, came to this. I wasn't ready to die, to become one of the bodies in the yard, to not see what lies outside of this place, and to not find someone else who thinks about flying like a bird, or sprouting like a flower.

The internal struggle continued, but I started to win, a tingling sensation filled my arms and legs, my fingers could be wiggled, soon my toes. The man still stood over me, staring, as if he never saw a young girl before, inspecting me like some type of experiment, but I was glad he was. His blue eyes were not the soft blue of the sky, but dark blue like the bottom of an ocean. My legs moved, he didn't notice, then my arms twitched, I could do it, I was winning, and in a burst of unbound energy, I grabbed a big rock nearby and crashed it against his ankle. He collapsed on the grass, like a tree being hacked down, and tumbled on his side, his head cracking against an unnoticed rock.

I jumped to my feet faster than I knew I could, gazed at father, seeing his lifeless brown eyes stare idly towards the sky, then I turned and ran inside, shutting the door behind me, sprinting through the putrid living room, down the narrow hallway, and into the room. I slowly closed the door, acting as if the smell of flowers and the sight of the house would stay longer if I didn't close it quickly, eventually it was closed. When it was shut, the clinks of the locks were heard, and the large black sheets of iron descended from the ceiling, slamming onto the ground, and I was left staring and standing aimlessly in the dark, the smell of flowers soon left me, as did the imprinted image of the house.

The world really is a warm, beautiful, and unwelcoming place.