

Diary of an Inmate

By Kelly Soderstrom

Day 7: I have been imprisoned for a week now and am starting to get a feeling for life here. In the grand scheme of things, prison life isn't too bad. I am fed well and have as much water as I need. The cell is pretty spacious too, with a wide view of the outside world through the steel bars. Plus, there is plenty of opportunity to exercise. But I am alone in my cell and grow increasingly bored. While my cell appears adequate for my comforts, I yearn for the sweet taste of freedom.

Day 14: Two weeks now and any comforts that my cell may provide pale in comparison to my loneliness. The repetitive nature of the daily routine has become stale, as has the view through the thick steel bars. I wake early and spend an hour or so exercising. The exertion temporarily distracts me from my sorry plight. At some point, a huge prison guard, with fingers like swollen sausages and a large, chubby face, refills my water supply and gives me my daily food. The rest of the day is spent pacing my cell, eating sporadically and napping. I rarely see the guard, but when I do, he speaks to me in a strange tongue I do not understand. He comes and goes, seemingly at random. Sometimes bringing strange objects into the room outside of my steel cage, other times returning to retrieve some other object and leave without warning or explanation. Often, he will sit at a desk next to my cage, scribbling strange markings on a piece of paper, looking worried and frustrated. Finally, when the light out the distant window turns to darkness, and the faint stars flicker in their black velvet beds, the guard will turn off the light. I creep back to my own bed, welcoming the escape of sleep, but dreading the continuation of the cycle with the rising of the sun. This cannot continue.

Day 16: I can't take it any longer! I must escape! The banal repetition of endless, pointless days is driving me towards insanity. If I do not escape soon, I may start to lose myself, and myself is the only thing I have left. But how do I escape? The steel bars of my cell are strong, as is the lock on the door. The only time my cell is opened is when the guard gives me my daily food. Wait, that's it! The guard is huge and slow, he would never be able to catch me

if I were to jump through the door when he opened it. Once I am out, I will make a break for the window across the room and finally have my freedom. Oh, to run free through the soft grass and taste the sweet air! Alright then, it is set. Tomorrow, I make my escape.

Day 17: Today is the day I reclaim my freedom. Today is the day I escape. After waking early, I quietly waited for the guard to arrive with my food. Finally, after an eternity of anticipation, the guard arrived and opened the cage door. Quick as a flash, I dashed past the guard and through the open portal. The guard's surprised cries filled the air as I rushed towards the large window on the far side of the room. I could hear the guard chasing me as I dashed along the floor, my heart racing. 100 meters, 75 meters, 50 meters, I am there! Thud! I ran headlong into the glass of the window. Of course it wasn't open. Why would I think it was open? I scrambled along the edges of the window, trying to find an opening, a way to heave the glass open so I could taste the free air. Too late, the guard was on top of me. His sausage fingers tried to enclose around me, but I was too fast. I slipped through his grip and dashed across the floor. A large door at the end of the room stood open. I ran as fast as I could through the door into a corridor, the cries of the guard trailing behind me. As I ran down the corridor, trying to put as much distance between me and the guard as possible, I heard a sound that made my blood run cold. I froze. Some deep, primal part of my brain recognised the sound. I forced myself to turn and saw, to my horror, a monster. Covered in a thick coat of fur, with piercing golden eyes and sharp white fangs, the monster uttered a low, rumbling growl that shook my very bones. Summoning all my strength, I coaxed my legs to run and dashed through a narrow opening on the side of the corridor. The monster leaped after me. Its body was far too large to fit through the narrow opening, but it swiped at me with its huge paws and razor claws. I pressed myself flat against the back wall, trying to avoid the deadly claws reaching for me. The monster screamed in frustration as its claws failed to find purchase in my flesh. My heart is pounding in my ears and it will take some time before my breathing returns to normal, but I appear to be safe for now. I will spend the night here and plot my next moves in the morning.

Day 18: I awoke smelling food. Not just any food, but food I have not tasted in what seems like a lifetime. Delicious food, not the dry swill that the guard would feed to me each day. My stomach rumbled and I suddenly became conscious of the dryness of my mouth. The

darkness of the narrow space in which I had chosen to seek refuge obscured the time of day. I did not know how long it had been since my last drink of water or bite of food. I slowly inched out of the safety of my narrow hiding place towards the enticing aromas. There it was! Cheese! It had been an eternity since I had tasted cheese. Forgetting all caution and lost in the promise of cheese, I dashed from my hiding spot. But as I reached the delicious morsel, I instantly realised the gravity of my mistake. A strong hand wrapped around me, lifting me up into the air. I screamed as the fingers curled tightly around my fragile body, my legs kicking as I scrambled to free myself from the guard's grip. In desperation, I sunk my teeth into the guard's flesh. He let out a howl, blood trickling from the wound, but he maintained his grip. I continued to scream and kick as I was carried through the air back to my cage. As the steel door shut behind me, the guard, face red with rage, yelled in his strange language and cradled his still bleeding hand. I may only be a mouse, but the guard would learn that even mice can put up a fight.

Day 1: My new plan to escape is taking shape. Now that I know there is a cat outside the room, I will be more cautious in my next escape attempt. The guard brings me my daily food, a bandage covering his hand and a look of triumph plastered across his face. You may have won this battle, human, but I will win the war. Just you wait and see.