The Cell

There were two problems I needed to solve before I could be truly free. The first was how to cut the bars of my cell. There were seven of them altogether, strung from the top of the window to the bottom like kithara strings, but made of solid iron and much thicker. There would be just enough space for me to squeeze through the window once the bars were cut.

The only tool I had was a metal fingernail file, so it took me a long time to cut through each of the bars—seven years for one bar, in fact, but what else did I have to do? Cutting the bars became my life's work. Every morning I would wake up and spend the day filing away. For me, this was the meaning of life, which I measured each evening by counting the tiny specks of iron that had fallen from the bars to the windowsill below before blowing them away.

Finally my mission was accomplished. The file cut through remaining sliver of iron on the last bar. I pulled the bar from the window and wriggled myself into the cell. It felt good to be surrounded by four stone walls, knowing that they would protect me.

It was almost dusk. Dim light from the setting sun filtered in through the window. As I sat down on the cold stone floor, I saw my shadow on the far wall of the cell. My shadow would be my companion.

The first problem had been relatively easy to solve. The second was more difficult. Now I had to figure out how to put the bars back into the window so I'd never be able to leave again. I wanted to stay safe and secure inside my cell forever, with no chance of returning again to the world outside.

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