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The Great Escape

I didn't regret doing it, but I did regret *how* I did it.

At the time, I thought that I was slick for a 7 year-old. I had planned out my escape to a point at which I thought no one could ever find me out. My orange scissors sat boldly in my open window, and every afternoon I snuck a few snips to the screen that separated me from my goal. At least I can say that I had patience when I was younger. Gradually, *tiny* bits each day, I snipped until a hole was formed in my window screen. Screen: taken care of.

At this point, one might find themselves asking: how could a parent walk into their child's room and not notice that they had cut a hole in their window screen? I still wonder that to this day. My mother sometimes would come into my room from time to time to check up on me or make conversation. While she spoke to me, I would sometimes risk glancing at my window to make sure that my scissors were still in their spot and that the hole was still present. Somehow, she didn't notice my suspicious actions. When she left the room, I always let out a big breath of air (I had seen adults do that on television before). I had decided to lay low for a while and let any suspicion I had caused to decrease before I moved on in my plans.

About three days later, after resisting the urge to check on my window screen, I had gathered the courage to finish what I had started. I put on an old t-shirt and some shorts that I didn't mind getting dirty: the clothes of a young adventurer.

Walking very quietly, even though no one was paying attention, I made it from one end of the house to the other. Even though no one was around, I still opened the door to the garage as quietly as I could and quickly ran inside, making sure to shut it back. Now it was time to move on to the next step: rope.

Luckily, I used to hang out in the garage all of the time, so it wasn't hard to find the rope. The hard part was grabbing it. The rope hung from a hook about a foot just out of my reach. I decided that it would be a good idea to stand on top of a car creeper seat to reach the right height. The car creeper seat was essentially a gray stool with a blue padded seat with a space underneath the seat for tools, all on four smooth-riding wheels. How I managed not to fall is still a mystery to me. I remember my legs shaking as I climbed on top of the roller.

Rope: achieved. I stuck my arm through the loop of rope and quietly carried it back in the house. I ran back into my room as quickly as my little feet could carry me. I shut the door behind me and breathed heavily, aware of what I was about to do. I hid the rope under my bed. I was paranoid that someone would walk in at that exact moment. I tried to play it cool; I sat on my

bed and turned on my television, trying to watch some television to get my mind off the rope whose presence I thought I'd never stop noticing.

Eventually, I stopped noticing. About three episodes of *Wizards of Waverly Place* later, I remembered about my plan. It was alright though, I told myself that I waited that long on purpose. I didn't want it to seem like I was up to anything suspicious, anyway.

"Okay," I muttered to myself: a one-word pep talk. Time to set my plan into action. I pulled the rope out from under my bed and unwound it, laying it out in its full length on my floor. At this point I decided that it was probably a good idea to shut my door. After doing so, I came back to my rope. I looked at it for a little, processing what I was about to do one last time. I moved my bed over to the left, so that there was a small space between it and the wall the window was on. I sat down beside the foot of the bed with the rope in my hands.

One quick fact about me: I didn't learn to tie my shoes until the fourth grade. Every day up until the third grade, I wore shoes with velcro straps. When I switched to shoes with actual shoelaces, I still didn't tie them myself. I would ask my mother to tie them before school and hope that they wouldn't come untied before the school day was over. If that ever happened, I had a friend who I thought was an expert at tying shoes.

I couldn't tie my own shoes, so I obviously couldn't tie a rope.

I realized this as wrapped the rope around the foot of my bed. I hoped that today was a lucky day for me and I attempted to tie it anyway. I did what all little kids who couldn't tie their shoes would do: I made an 'x' shape with the rope, tucked one end underneath the other, and pulled. That was all that would hold me.

I stood up and looked around my room one last time. I took in the silence that filled the air. I looked at my setup and my heartbeat began to speed up. *I'm going to do this*, I thought as I threw the end of the rope through the cut screen, out of my window.

I climbed onto my windowsill and sat down on my knees, facing inwards toward my room so I couldn't look down at the ground. I certainly didn't *want* to look down from a second-story window. I held onto the rope with both hands, turned around, and pushed myself out of the window like I was going down a slide. Except, you stay facing in one direction when you go down a slide.

As I slid down the rope, I was turned over so that the right side of my body was touching the side of the house. The textured side of the house. There was suddenly something that hurt—something I didn't plan for. I couldn't just give myself away and cry out in pain like I normally would have, so I just inhaled a sharp breath as the pain increased while I slid down. Landing (surprisingly) on my feet, I took a motherent to settle myself before searching my body for where the source of the pain was.

Oh, I thought. Found it.

The entirety of my right forearm had been scraped to oblivion. It was a harsh red and there was skin everywhere and even just looking at it made it hurt more. But, for some reason, I didn't cry. Which was all for the better, anyways. It'd look awful suspicious if I walked inside the house crying. I tried to pull the rope down so that no one could see it hanging out my window. That didn't work. The only way I could hide the rope was by going back inside my house and untying it from the foot of my bed. So, I started to walk across the yard to go inside.

A little bit about my house: you could only enter and exit through the front door and the garage door. We had a backyard that was surrounded by a wooden and barbed-wire fence with no gate, so you couldn't enter or exit the house from there. The garage was on the left side of the house, and the front door was just a bit to the right of it. My bedroom was on the right-back side of the house, past the front door. My window was on the other side, facing perpendicular to the front door. To get inside, I had to walk through the front door from a direction it should have been impossible to go through. If I was to get caught outside, I would have no excuse as to how I got out there.

As fate would have it, I did get caught, and I didn't have an excuse for how I got outside. All that time, I never once checked where my mother was. If I had known she was sitting outside by of the front door, I wouldn't have gone through with my plan.

“Hey,” she said to me. I noticed her confused look as she realized I came from the right side of the house, but she never saw me come out of either the front or garage door. “How'd you get out here?”

Of course, I did what any seven year-old would do in that situation. I lied. “I came out the garage,” I told her as I nudged past her through the door. I made sure to hide my right arm from her, which wasn't suspicious at all.

As soon as the door shut behind me, I ran into my room. I didn't shut my door; I was afraid that'd just put me under more suspicion. My heart was racing—*I did it, I did it, my escape worked!*—I needed to do something to calm my nerves down. I turned on my television and put on one of my VHS tapes of *Little House on the Prairie*, raising the volume. I walked to my bookshelf and ran my finger across the spines of the wildlife encyclopedias my grandparents once gave to me. I picked my favorite one—the one with the salamanders—and opened it up on the floor, trying to look normal. For half an episode of *Little House*, I sat on the floor with my head resting on my knee while I tried to read my encyclopedia. I didn't turn a page the whole time.

“Cole?” I heard my mother say from down the hall, calling me by the nickname only family was allowed to use. She sounded worried—no, concerned. Angry? Upset? I couldn't tell. I was so paranoid that she found me out. In my mind, she could have been ready to throw me out

of the house and I wouldn't have been surprised! I knew she wouldn't do that, though. At least that was one possibility crossed off my imaginary list.

Oh boy, I thought, already dreading this confrontation. My heartbeat sped up again, and I had to find something to do. I quickly jumped up and into my bed, covering myself with the quilt I had laying on top of it. I laid there, stiff as a board, waiting for my mother to come in. I laid on my back with my arms straight by my sides. Not suspicious at all.

“Yeah?” I replied. I tried to focus on *Little House*, which was still playing. On the screen, Laura had on a red dress and was arguing with Nellie. I could hear my mother's footsteps coming closer. My chest felt tight. *My heart's gonna leap out of my chest!*

As my mother stepped into my room, I instantly realized five things:

1. I didn't pull the rope out from the window.
2. I didn't *shut* the window.
3. I didn't move my bed back to its original position.
4. My forearm *really* stung.
5. I was definitely caught.

“Hi, mama,” I said. I noticed her puzzled look when she saw how...*casually* I was laying in my bed. I mentally scolded myself for looking so suspicious. My body tensed up while doing so, brushing my scraped forearm against my sheets. I winced. I could sense how guilty I looked.

I watched as my mother's eyes locked into my open window and the rope that was still hanging out of it. I watched as they widened and shifted from the window to me, to the window, to me, back to the window. This may have happened over the span of about five whole seconds, but it felt like centuries to me.

Then, she walked out the door.

That was it? I thought, stumped. Was I off the hook? *Maybe she didn't even really notice the rope! Maybe I just imagined it! I'm not in trouble, she's not even here to get me in trouble—*

She came back in my room with my father behind her.

“Hi, daddy,” I quietly said. He didn't say anything back, he just looked disappointed in me. I pulled my quilt up closer to my face. Both of my parents walked up to the side of my bed and crouched down so that we were at eye-level. Except, there was no eye-contact. I tried not to focus on them; my eyes were still glued to *Little House on the Prairie*.

“Cole,” my mother started. “Do you know how dangerous that was? We didn't know what you were doing. You could've broken something and we wouldn't know about it for a long time. Or you could have gotten so hurt that you couldn't be fixed again.”

Maybe I could have ended up in a wheelchair. Wheelchairs seem like they'd get really annoying, I thought inside. Outside, though, I nodded. I mumbled a quiet apology. I looked over at my father, who still hadn't said a word. He looked in my eyes and told me to get up. I hesitantly did as I was told, afraid I was going to get a spanking. As I stood up out of bed, he moved his hand towards the ground and pointed at where I had tied the rope to the foot of the bed.

“Look how loose that knot is,” he said. At that point, I realized that tying the rope like that wasn't the best idea. When I tied my shoes in a similar fashion, they always came untied. I realized how lucky I was that the rope didn't come untied while I was sliding down it.

“Something really bad could've happened,” my father continued.

“I'm sorry,” I muttered. My parents gave me a pitiful look.

“It's fine, Cole. Just promise us that you'll never do anything like that again,” my mother said. I nodded as quickly as my little head could move. “Where'd you even get that idea from?” She asked.

Both parents awaited my answer. I looked at how sincere their expressions were and I suddenly felt embarrassed at how my escape plan came to be. I felt my face redden as I said, “I saw it on TV one time.”