

The Art of Escape

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The Art of Escape

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

[GRIAN]

Statement of Ivory Cello, regarding her escape from solitary imprisonment. Original statement transcribed January 20th, 2014. Statement begins.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Chapter 1



[Click]

[GRIAN]

Statement of Ivory Cello, regarding her escape from solitary imprisonment. Original statement transcribed January 20th, 2014. Statement begins.

[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

They'd been following me for awhile, I think, before they finally caught me.

It's hard to tell, though. I was homeless at the time, and a lot of people I knew were also prone to delusions of being followed, and people will always stare, so I was never quite sure how seriously to take it if I thought I saw somebody watching me. It didn't really *bother* me. I just tried to be as careful as I could. There wasn't much else to do.

The prospect of being chased never scared me, really. What scared me was the thought of being *caught*.

I've always had some issues with... claustrophobia. I've always hated feeling *trapped*. Ever since I was a child, growing up in a house I couldn't escape. I don't want to get too into my traumas, but- as soon as I was out of there, I promised myself I'd always choose the streets over a room I couldn't leave on my own terms. The vulnerability of it was a price I was willing to pay, no matter what happened.

It was spring, when it happened. I was relieved, since the weather was improving and I could get back to avoiding the shelters. I've never liked them, even the better ones. I was sitting on a park bench. I remember that very clearly- the birds, the little buds of green on the trees, the people walking by. I just wanted to enjoy the weather. It was sunny. I love the sunlight. I remember starting to doze off.

When I woke up, I was in a cell.

It was tiny. All concrete- floor, ceiling, walls. About the size of a closet. There was a cot bolted to the floor that took up about half the space, and a heavy iron door with no window and no doorknob. The ceiling was just high enough that I couldn't reach it even if I jumped from the cot. There was a bare lightbulb hanging from an inch or so of cord. That was the only source of light in the room.

At first I thought I'd just been arrested. For loitering, or whatever the newest term was for 'sleeping in a park.' It wouldn't have been the first time, even though the room I was in didn't look like any holding cell I'd ever been in before. Normally they're bigger, for holding groups of people, and designed so the cops can see inside. So I figured I'd wait, and eventually they'd have to just cut me loose with a warning.

For hours and hours I sat there, waiting to be let out, but nobody came. I couldn't even hear anything from outside- no footsteps or anything. Eventually I started banging on the door. I don't know why I expected that to do anything. It didn't. Obviously.

And the longer I was in there, the more I processed just how uncomfortably *small* the room was. It quickly got maddening. The walls were just the tiniest bit too narrow for me to stretch my arms out all the way. I couldn't pace. I couldn't jump. It seemed like a room designed to be unpleasant just for the sake of pain.

Nobody came. Nobody ever came. Not a guard, not a warden, nothing.

It was... I think it must have been about a day in that I realized I needed to keep track of time somehow, or else I was going to lose my mind. So I started counting. Sixty seconds in a minute, thirty-six hundred seconds in an hour, eighty-six thousand four hundred seconds in a day. I counted out loud just for the sake of hearing a human voice in the silence until my throat got too raw, and then I continued in my head.

Along with keeping me from going insane, the counting helped me think. I've always been good at math and logic puzzles, and working out estimations for the time and how long it had been was a good warmup to start thinking about how I was going to get out.

You could call me a stubborn person. I guess I am. I'm not inclined to give up. Never have been. I think despair is the worst enemy a person can possibly have.

I spent, I think, about two and a half days throwing myself against the door. I had horrible bruises all down my arms by the time I had to give up on that as a potential escape route, but I hadn't had high hopes in the first place. If there was a way out of there, it was never going to be through the door. Given... everything about that place, I almost doubt there was ever anything on the other side of the door but more concrete.

Do you get it? The door existed to lock me in. No other reason.

So I had to find another way out.

When I was a kid, I would get locked in my room for misbehaving. I grew up in a very old house, and all the doors were solid, heavy oak. Immovable even if I was brave enough to try and break them down- and I did, plenty of times. But there's always a way out.

That old house had radiators, and so there were little doors in some of the walls for easy access to the ancient water pipes. My parents had had a modern heating system installed, so nobody ever paid any mind to those doors, but one of them was tucked away in my closet, painted over behind piles of blankets. I chipped away the paint from the little knob and latch and wrestled it open, and found that I could squeeze myself in past the pipes and drop straight down into the basement, and from there I could climb out one of the egress windows, and I'd be free.

There was nothing as convenient as a hidden door in that cell, but that didn't mean there was nothing. There was the cot, and there was the lightbulb, hanging from the ceiling by a tangle of wires. And where there's wires, there's wiring. And wiring always has to connect to something. I just needed a way to reach it.

The cot was bolted to the ground, but not as securely as it could have been. Whoever made that... prison, I don't think they were prepared for someone to seriously try to escape. It's like the door. The goal was to make something that appeared hopelessly inescapable. I'm sure it worked on many, many people before me. I've always wondered if there were other prisoners, you know. If there still might be, somewhere, buried miles deep in concrete boxes.

I don't really want to say I was lucky. It might be more accurate to say I was ready to grind myself to dust if it meant getting out of there.

It took me weeks to wrench the cot loose from the floor. I would shove it back and forth for hours and hours on end, straining the metal to the point of break. Eventually it started to creak. The sound of the first leg starting to twist free was the loveliest sound I'd ever heard. It meant there was *something*. There was some reality to that place, and there was some force I could exert on it to *break it open*.

I worked harder, after that. Obsessively. It's not like there was anything else to do. I rubbed my hands raw against the metal. There were red fingerprints all over it by the time I broke it loose. But I *did* break it loose. The last leg was the easiest of all of them, and it felt like the whole room shuddered when I finally broke it free.

The frame of the cot was metal, so it was heavy, but not as heavy as it could've been. I was able to get my shoulder under it and lever it upward, shoving it up to lean vertically against one of the walls.

I think that's when it realized I was trying to escape, because that's when the room started to close

in.

The walls just sort of started... moving in, slowly but relentlessly, starting from the bottom of the room and moving up, so it narrowed almost like a cone. And I- I *knew*, that if they closed on me it wouldn't kill me, but it would trap me and hold me there, *forever*, and that would be *so much worse*.

I climbed up the bedframe to the highest point in the room as the walls closed in around me, and I could finally reach the lightbulb. I jumped for it, closed my hands around it, and it was so warm it felt like my hands were burning, but I didn't let go. I knew if I did, that would be it. I would never get out. I reached up to wrap my fingers around the wire, and the ceiling started cracking open around my hands, like it wasn't real enough to hold together.

And I climbed. The cell closed in on itself behind me, broken pieces of concrete walls slamming together like teeth. There was nowhere to go but up, and nothing but the wire in my hands and the stone cracking apart around me. My hands were bloody and my arms burned from the strain, but I couldn't let go. I couldn't, I couldn't, I couldn't. So I didn't.

And eventually, I could see light above me. It was faint, but after weeks of nothing but the ugly yellow glow of the lightbulb, I recognized it immediately. Sunlight.

And I pulled myself out and up into fresh air.

I think I must have passed out, when I finally made it. When I came back to myself, I was lying on my back on the grass, spread-eagled, staring up at the sky. It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. I know I was laughing. I couldn't stop. I was just so happy to be alive, and free, and feel the sun.

According to the date, I was down there for three years.

It was closer to two months for me, by my count, but after everything else, I don't think I even had room to be surprised about that. Nothing else had made sense, down in that cell. Of course time wouldn't either. To be honest, it didn't even bother me. I could hardly concentrate on anything besides the relief of being free.

I was half-starved, as it turned out. Hunger hadn't bothered me in the cell, even though they never fed me, but once I was out- that took me a long time to recover from. And the places on my hands where the skin rubbed off still haven't healed entirely. I'm not sure if they ever will.

You would probably think my claustrophobia would get worse after an experience like that, but it's actually gotten easier to deal with.

If I could break myself out of that place, I can break myself out of anywhere.

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[GRIAN]

Unfortunately, not much follow-up to be done here. There are no records of a person named Ivory Cello anywhere that I can find, but apparently she did disclose during her interview that it was a chosen name she'd only started going by recently, so I really don't think that's any reason to discount her story.

The only piece of verifiable evidence we have is, it looks like Etho took photos of Ms. Cello's hands after her interview. They show a collection of large, half-healed cuts and abrasions across her palms and fingers. Obviously injuries like this could come from any number of sources, but they definitely lend some support to her claims.

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Supplemental:

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[GRIAN]

Ever since I read Ms Cello's statement the other day, there's been this thought rolling back and forth between my two braincells.

The thing is, we could so easily have completely missed out on her story.

She was, by her own admission, recently homeless, and it's likely she was still in an unstable situation by the time she came in to give her statement. She could so easily not have had the funds, or the opportunity, or even the knowledge to make it to the Institute. It was a complete fluke that she did. A stroke of luck.

I've been thinking about all the other people who must be out there, who aren't that lucky.

Most of the statements we've gone through have been from Britain, and most of those from the London area. Which means we're covering only a *tiny* fraction of the world's population. And it's not like people could just email us statements, either. If the real ones, the ones that mean something, if they only record to tape, they probably won't come through on an email, and especially not over the phone.

There are so many statements out there. There are *so many*. I know it. It's so *frustrating*. If we didn't have so much work to do here, maybe I could...

I don't know.

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End Notes

[go watch ivorycello on twitch!! also go watch her prison escapes playlist it's what inspired this statement she is simply so cool!!](#)

this is the first statement i've written that hasn't been about a hermit or hermit adjacent person! this won't be a regular thing, ivory is just That Cool. also like this is the first statement i'm posting during pride month so really it's only proper. the gender binary is a jail for breaking out of, respect trans women or die, etc etc

my goal here was to strike a balance between my favorite Vibes of ivory's old lore and just her as a person generally while not necessarily tying her too tightly to a character she wants to distance herself from now- i hope i did an alright job! and if u enjoyed comments are super appreciated.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!