

## Open World

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## Open World

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

### Summary

#### [GRIAN]

Statement of... Illumina, no last name? Regarding an indeterminate amount of time spent in an empty world. Statement originally taken six years ago, November 12, 2016. Statement begins.

### Notes

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

[Click]

#### [GRIAN]

Alright! New day, Mumbo's back at work and only a little lopsided, so everything's more or less back to- well, not *normal*, but...

*(Clears throat)* Anyways. I'm *hungry*.

Statement of... Illumina, no last name? Regarding an indeterminate amount of time spent in an empty world. Statement originally taken six years ago, November 12, 2016. Statement begins.

#### [GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

I guess I've always been kind of a solitary person.

Which isn't to say I don't *like* other people, or anything. I've got a pretty good group of friends I stay in touch with even when I'm bouncing around, and these days I even have a roommate I get

along great with. I've just always liked taking time to myself.

The walks were a habit that started in high school. After class, I would never want to go home right away. Nothing against my family- I didn't have problems at home, or anything. I just always wanted some alone time to think, clear my head, maybe listen to music without having to talk to anybody.

So I would take an hour or two and just... wander around town. Go down alleys, explore parks- whatever caught my attention, really. I climbed a lot of fences I wasn't supposed to, snuck into more than one abandoned building. Something about just being in my own head and getting to really see the world without any other people distracting me or taking my attention away... it was nice.

I did lose track of time, once or twice. Once I didn't get home until after it was dark. Hadn't even occurred to me that people would get worried about me. I guess that might sound concerning, but I'd genuinely just... forgotten.

Well, I managed to graduate high school, even though I spent most of it staring out the windows. I moved away right after. I wanted to see as many interesting places as I possibly could, so I spent a couple years backpacking- around Asia first, then Europe. I don't like staying in any one place for too long, but I'd usually stay in cities for a couple months to earn some money before picking up again, and that's how I wound up in... I don't actually remember what city. Sorry, it was a long time ago.

Even though I'd moved around a lot, I'd kept up the habit of the walks. Which, you know, people say is dumb to do in strange cities? And maybe it was, but I've always had a good sense of direction, and I'm fast, so I was never too worried about getting into anything I couldn't get out of again.

Then again, maybe I should've been.

I'd had... one or two moments, previously, of getting... lost? That's the only thing I can think to call it. It wasn't common; it happened maybe twice in the time I was traveling. Both times, I would be in what I thought was a familiar area, and then I'd blink and I would be... in what *looked* like the same place, but absolutely empty. Not a sign of life, buildings deserted, streets broken.

Both times, I'd just... kept walking, because I didn't know what else to do, and eventually I'd come across people again. Brushed both instances off, when they happened. Maybe I shouldn't have, but at the same time, I don't think I could've done anything differently, except maybe stop traveling entirely.

I was on my way home for the night- I was staying at a hostel at the time, the sort of place where you sleep on top of your duffel bag- and, like usual, I wound up wandering off course. There was a side street leading to a plaza I hadn't noticed before along my way home, and I turned down it. I wasn't really paying attention to where I was going; I had music on, and even if I hadn't been that exact way before, I'd explored down probably thousands of similar routes before. I just sort of tuned the world out, and let my feet take me where they did.

And then I looked up, and I had no idea where I was.

At first I thought I'd just crossed into a park without realizing. There were still cobbles under my feet, even though they were sort of mossy and overgrown, but all around me was just... plains, with tall grass and wildflowers. Bunches of trees, here and there. I could see a lake in the distance.

I'd been right in the heart of a city. And then I looked up, and I was standing in the middle of an empty field.

And, on the horizon, the sun was rising.

It's funny, but at the time, I think the sunrise was actually what threw me more. I probably could've talked myself into the idea that I'd wandered into a... really, *really* big public park without realizing it, but I *knew* it had just gotten dark less than half an hour ago, and now the sun was rising.

The sun was rising over an empty world, and as far as I could see, I was the only person in it.

I turned all the way around, but I couldn't see anything that looked even remotely like the way I'd came. There was just the lake in the distance, trees thickening into a forest on the horizon, what looked like some very distant mountains. No roads, and no people.

I didn't... okay, so, they say the first thing you should do if you ever end up lost in the wilderness is not go anywhere, right? You're supposed to sit down and just wait for help. I had no idea how I'd gotten there, but I knew I *was* lost, so that's what I did. I sat, and I waited.

The longer I stayed in one place, though, the more I realized how *wrong* everything was. I couldn't see a single building, not even on the horizon. No roads, no sidewalks, no planes overhead. Things weren't *completely* quiet- I could hear a bird somewhere, and the wind, and bugs in the grass- but I couldn't hear any people, or even any sign of human life.

And the longer I stayed there, the more certain I was that nobody was going to come find me.

When I stood up, the sun hadn't moved in the sky at all.

I didn't love the thought of leaving the place where I'd been waiting. It didn't feel... safe. I felt like if there was any way to get back where I was supposed to be, it should have been right there. Leaving felt like a mistake. But I knew nobody was coming to help me. I can't say how I was so sure of it, but I *was* sure. Nobody was coming.

So I picked a direction, and started walking. I started towards the lake, first, because I remembered that was another thing you're supposed to do if you get lost- you're more likely to find settlements near water.

Honestly, it was almost peaceful, or at least it could've been. The world was quiet, and really... pretty. The sunlight was bright on the water. I could tell it was the sort of place I would love to go hiking, if only I'd *meant* to be there in the first place. As it was, though, it was just... *wrong*, and I was just trying to figure out how I was possibly going to get home.

I made it to the lakeside, but I still couldn't see any sign of life aside from a few shapes that might've been fish flickering through the deeper water. No civilization. I couldn't even see any trails.

You know those sleepover questions, about what you'd do if you were stuck on a deserted island? I wasn't on an island, but I may as well have been. In a way, it might've actually been worse. At least on an island the isolation makes sense. On an island, you can assume there's something on the other side of the water.

If you were trapped on a deserted island, what would you bring? Who would you want with you? How would you keep yourself busy?

I didn't have anything or anyone with me. I walked.

The sun didn't set. It just stayed in the sky, right where it'd been, fixed above the eastern horizon.

I think I wanted to go home. When I tried to picture what that looked like, though, nothing really... came to mind. I hadn't lived anywhere longer than six months since leaving my parents' house. I don't know if that *matters*, exactly, but it feels like it does. I feel like if I had just known where I was trying to get to, I would've gotten out of there a lot sooner than I did.

Instead I just kept walking, for... hours, days, weeks. I could hear animals, sounds like birds and squirrels, but I couldn't really see any living thing besides me. It felt like the world was... empty. Haunted. Like it had only loaded halfway, and left all the important things out.

And even though it was empty, it never felt *safe*.

I had this... feeling, that there was something... not chasing me, exactly. Following me, the way a vulture follows somebody it knows is dying. It wasn't going to kill me, but it was just going to wait for me to lie down and give up, and then it would eat me.

I never saw it, obviously. Maybe there was never anything there at all, and I was just... going out of my mind. But I could never shake the feeling that if I ever stayed in one place too long, if I ever laid down in the grass and couldn't bring myself to get up, that would be it. I always kept moving, and I always kept one open.

I couldn't begin to guess how long I was... there. I remember crossing deserts, circling a mountain range, making my way through probably dozens of different forests. It was all beautiful, but I never saw anyone else, never an animal or a person or any sign of life. The sun never set, and never rose.

Nothing *changed*. I started to think nothing ever would, and that that empty world would just be... the rest of my life forever. And that *terrified* me. The idea that I would've just... disappeared, and no one would ever know anything else about me, or know what happened to me, or even know that I was still alive.

I'm not... you know, I've never been the sort of person who cared at all about being famous, or anything. But I at least wanted people to know I existed at all.

And then, at some point in that... endless stretch of dawn, it just... let me go. I don't know why. Maybe it was just luck.

I remember crossing a field, what felt like a hundred years in, barely even looking where I was going, and feeling something hard underneath my shoes, all of a sudden. I looked down, and saw cobblestones. They were familiar.

And then I looked up, and someone bumped into me, and I was standing two steps into a side street in some city I'd long since forgotten the name of. The sun was setting.

I can't even start to describe how I felt when I processed it. I'd really thought I was never going to get back to the real world. I'd thought that eventually, my legs would just give out under me, and whatever had been waiting would eat me, and that would be it.

It wasn't until I tried to find my way back to the place where I'd been staying that it started setting in. It'd been so long since I'd even *talked* to anyone. I'd open my mouth and nothing would come out. I wouldn't even know where to start. I think this is the most I've talked to anybody at once since then.

I left the city the next day. It took a few months before I felt like I could more or less trust I wasn't going to wander out of the world again at a moment's notice, and it's still... well. I wound up here, eventually, and I haven't moved around much since.

Like I said, I've got a roommate now, and a steady job. Things are a lot more stable, or at least they seem stable.

I keep wondering, though.

I haven't been able to stop myself from going out walking, still, despite everything that happened. At this point, it's such an ingrained habit I can't sleep if I don't. And it's not like I don't have plenty to think about.

But I still keep wondering if someday I'll take one more wrong turn and get lost for good.

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**[GRIAN]**

You know what this one reminds me of? [Statement... 0140120](#), that's the one. With the woman who was trapped in solitary confinement. For all that they're completely opposite circumstances, something about them just... feels similar? Two sides of the same coin, or something. Something to look into- or it *would* be if there was a *full name* on this one.

As is, there's not much more to-

*(Phone rings; Grian startles, and the rustling of things being moved on a desk is heard)*

**[GRIAN]**

Oh, for goodness sakes, where is-

*(Beep of a call being answered)*

Hello?

*(Pause)*

*Martyn?*

...No! No, it's- certainly fine, I just wasn't expecting- well, it's been a while, hasn't it?

Actually, how did you- ah. Of course.

Well, what can I do for you?

*(Pause)*

Of course, the Institute's open to the public. Can I ask what specifically you're looking to investigate?

...Haunted buildings?

Of a specific type? Are we thinking libraries, amusement parks-

A *stage*. Interesting. I wonder...

Listen, what if you came in tomorrow and gave a proper statement? I know you've done it before. This sounds like it *might* be connected to something else I've been looking into, so I'd really like to know what happened in as much detail as possible.

*(Pause)*

Oh, come on, I'm not that scary, am I? Timmy's done it. If he can, anyone can.

*(Laughs)*

Alright, then, I'll see you tomorrow.

*(Beep of phone hanging up)*

**[GRIAN]**

Well! That'll be fun.

**[Click]**

## End Notes

FIRST OF ALL! THE PODFIC! [THE STATUE GARDEN IS NOW UP!](#) you should go listen to it if you haven't! the current plan is to post one full statement every two weeks on monday, and where there are supplementals and such those will be posted on the off-weeks. i am so so excited about this project and for you all to hear our full cast of marvelous voice actors.

this statement came of when i was looking at the list of mcc players trying to figure out who i could potentially have a good statement about, and illumina jumped right out at me. guy's just got an energy what can i say. he and ivory share the distinction of being so cool i literally dont care that neither of them arent really hermit-adjacent at all

also the next one is gonna be a banger. btw

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