

The door opened slowly and silently, and he knew he had just one chance to escape. He pushed his way through the dry grass and the rotten food — which was now the source of the smell to high heaven. He held onto the grills and espied the surroundings. No one. Silence encompassed him. Placing his tiny foot outside the room, he found an inclined ramp. The only way to cross it was to slide. So, he squeezed his eyes, stiffened his shoulders, and placed his forelimbs and hindlimbs on the plane. Creating resistance to move slowly, he barricaded himself by gripping the wooden plank with his claws. The screech of wood echoed across the empty pathway. When he reached the floor, he felt a sense of pride, as if he had achieved something none of his friends had done.

“Tap, tap,” he heard footsteps from the end of the hallway. Was that the entrance? Glancing back at his room — his cage — for one last time, he made his way past the silence into the unknown. Raising his heels, he walked on his toes to ensure that he carried stillness along with his movement. He decided to follow the resonance created by creatures of the outer world. Maybe that was his one-way ticket to freedom. As he made his first few steps, he reminisced about his past when he was trapped within the four walls. The whip which scarred his skin, the gunshots which he woke up to every morning, the days when he was made to starve until he could make his first roar — everything. The tumultuous screams of his friends when people would come to take their teeth, skin, flesh; the days when his friends disappeared into the darkness of their cages — poof, gone — it haunted him. What would become of him?

“Ding,” a bell rang, bringing him to a halt. The sound was blaring and resonated much less. He realized that he wasn’t far. His pace quickened. If he was the lucky one of the lot, he didn’t want to fly away from the chance. The eleutheromania made him want to break the tranquillity and find the exit to his entrapment. He imagined apicating in the wildness of the prairies, running and chasing and catching prey for his meal, roaring like a king and having nobody strike him for his authority. He imagined.

From where he stood now, he saw a small, square opening through which sunlight basked into the darkness — as if it were a magnet and attracted anything that wanted to feel it. When he made his way towards the horizon of the murkiness, the light that the sun shone lay in front of his paws. As he squinted and looked up at the sky for the first time in what felt like years, weird particles were strangled and suspended in the beam of light. “Wipaah!” — the sound of the whip came from the entrance. “Oh no!” he thought. He turned his back into the black, only to see grills. In a second, something barged in from two opposite holes — metal rods — poking him towards either side of the walls diagonally. He was pushed towards the entrance. It was only a matter of seconds before he was involuntarily thrown into a gargantuan cage.

“I miss the previous one... how naive can I be?” he thought. Hundreds of hideous, monstrous creatures, ranging in all sizes, sat outside the cage. Laughter and amusement on their faces, by catching sight of his misery, infuriated him. Humans — creatures who have no limits to cruelty. The gun sounds were ear-splitting. Not one, but a whip from each gap of the cage slashed across his skin. All his dreams were thrashed in a second. Did he yearn for liberty? He looked like he was experiencing penal servitude.