

I will do my best not to lie.
It wouldn't help my cause to exaggerate,
fabricate
or change any aspect of my life.

Also, I will do my best not to forget anything that may be helpful.
Unfortunately, I have never been the kind of person to remember dates
or write such information down. Still, I hope that I will be able to
generate enough material to aid me.

This is a plea for help.

If you have found this manuscript and think it to be only a novel or an ancient piece of fiction, it is not. This is the story of my life and I hope in your reading of it you will be able to help me.

If you can't be of assistance, please pass this on to someone who might be able to help. I would recommend a scientist or a professor at a local university. I would not recommend a government official. The one thing true throughout history is the inability of a majority of the people in government to do something good for the common man.

My name is Jacob and I am lost. I have been lost for thirty years... Yes, it must be at least thirty years. I can't be certain of the exact amount of time. All I can use to make that determination is the appearance of the man that looks back at me through the mirror.

He looks to be in his thirties.

And he looks tired.



I don't know my last name. I lost it the same day I lost my mother. I don't remember her name, but I can tell you how she looked. She had light blonde hair cut to shoulder-length, blue eyes and a warm smile.

She liked to wear blue dresses that matched her eyes.

She laughed a lot.

Before I was lost, I didn't yet come up to her hip. I remember tugging on her dress to get her attention. I remember her kneeling down and looking at me straight in the eyes. "It'll be okay, Jacob," she said. "It'll be okay."



I was too young to know my address, my country, or even the year I was lost. All I can tell you is how everything looked. And even with all my experiences since then, I still have a hard time placing it. Somewhere in the twenty-first century is the best I can do.

The walls of my bedroom were a light blue. My bed was white, as was my dresser and my toy chest. My favorite toy was a brown teddy bear named Rupert.

I liked to bite on Rupert's leg. I liked how the cotton squished in my mouth.

The living room was a pale green with dark wooden furniture. I remember being sure to avoid the arms of the couch since I once bumped my head on one. I'd gotten a bruise from it. (It was probably my first real bruise... I have had many bruises since then. They are almost impossible for me to avoid now.)

The carpet was a light cream and I was prone to spilling things on it. My mom would say, "Tut-tut, Jacob, tut-tut."

There was a fireplace and I remember fires in the evening, in the dark. My mom would hold me then and I would feel safe...

The thing I can most clearly see, in my mind's eye, is the door that led to my bedroom.

Dark wood about two inches thick.

Two panels.

Brass circular doorknob.

In many ways a common door, a kind I have seen a thousand times since

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.
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All memories of my childhood innocence end with that door.

I remember this moment vividly. It used to haunt my dreams like a movie played over and over again without ever stopping, until I had the “calm” and my dreams were replaced by a new one.

I was scampering to my bedroom to get Rupert. My mom was in the kitchen. She said, “Be careful, Jacob, not too fast.”

I move like the wind. Quick as lightning! Whenever I ran and she caught me, it always amazed me. How could anyone possibly catch me?

On this day my bedroom door was shut. I had to stand on tiptoe to reach the knob. It was easier for some reason to do this if I balanced on only one leg (my left) while reaching with my other hand (my right).

The knob felt cold.

It was too big for my little hand. Once I had a firm grasp on it with the one hand, I moved my other hand to it as well and applied pressure...

Click.

The door swung open and I ran in without a moment's thought...

I wasn't in my room.

Somewhere between the hallway and the frame of the door I got lost on the way to my room...

I am writing this by candlelight so if my handwriting is hard to read, I apologize. I couldn't wait until dawn before starting my plea.

Something inside my head demanded that I start it at this moment, at this time. So here I sit under a single candle flame trying my best to write on parchment. I've never been fond of parchment, but I had few other choices in front of me at the monastery. I should be happy that I was able to find the parchment, the ink and pen, the food, and the horse I rode on to get to this abandoned farmhouse.

I have been here two days.



"Well there, how can I help you, young man?"

When I think back on that day, it is that sentence that I remember first, even though it was not the first thing he said to me. I will relate the meeting in the proper order.

He was wearing a British officer's uniform. He had a thick black mustache and looked to be in his mid-thirties (probably the same age I am now). When I first arrived, he was sitting quietly at his desk doing paperwork.

Rupert the bear wasn't there.

Nor was my bed, or the big toy chest or the dresser or the light blue walls. These walls were painted white and only a portrait of Queen Victoria graced them.

The Lieutenant (for that was his rank) didn't look up from his paperwork right away. "What is it?" he asked with his head down. He had a British accent.

He was trying to look busy. He didn't like to be disturbed when he was working. This was a common trick of his; actually his "paperwork" was nothing more than a letter home to his wife and his two daughters.

I didn't speak. My little mind didn't have the strength to comprehend what had just happened to me.

"If you have nothing to say," he said gruffly, "then you should bloody well let me get back to my work. I'm—" It was then that he looked up and saw me standing there.

I was scared.

I was alone.

It was then that he said, "*Well there, how can I help you, young man?*"

I didn't have an answer for him. I didn't know. To this day, it is a question that I am still puzzled over how to answer.



I have never considered myself a great horseman, but my new horse seems to adore me. He's in the room with me, watching me write. I don't mind his presence. It's very reassuring. Riding a horse was one of the skills the Master taught me only indifferently. He must have thought that it would not serve as much purpose as my ability to fight.

Of all the horses I have stolen (and there have been many), this one from the monastery was easy to ride and incredibly well-tempered—better than most. He dealt well with the British landscape and the rocky, beaten roads and paths we had taken to avoid witnesses. For me, it was a surprisingly smooth trip and he came out unscathed as well.

I wanted to be five hours away from the monastery. The horse only needed to stop twice for water. On both occasions he used the stream that we were following north. The first time we stopped, I brushed his mane with my fingers as he drank. I named him Rupert. He didn't complain, so I guess it was okay.

It was at the second stop that I noticed the little cottage. It was on a hill about a quarter mile off, completely surrounded by weeds. The house was abandoned and, from the look of it, had not been lived in for quite some time. In the main room there was a wooden table with some chairs and some hay in the corner. Two empty and somewhat crooked shelves were on the back wall. There was one door leading into the main room from outside, and from the window, I could see two other doors leading to two separate rooms.

It was exactly what I was looking for...except for the doors.

I had learned a long time ago there was no easy or safe way for me to do this alone.

I took a deep breath and kicked in the front door.

Whomp!

It easily swung open.

I took a second deep breath, nervously squinted my eyes, and walked in.



When the Lieutenant asked me that question that day, my little mind failed to work. Even as an adult, I am embarrassed to admit what I did.

I wet myself and then I cried.

The Lieutenant quickly ran around his desk and picked me up without hesitation, just like any good father would have. “There, there, son. There, there. We’ll get you all cleaned up and then we’ll find your family. Doesn’t that sound good? We’ll find your home. Please stop crying... It’ll be all right.” He was a very good foster father to me.

I believe that my own father worked a lot. I remember him in suits. I remember him sometimes being at dinner. I remember those moments clearly, watching my parents talk and laugh and me looking on, not understanding what was being said. My memory of him is not as strong as the one I have of my mother. He wore hats a lot and sometimes I would notice hats like his and think of him. I’m sure he would have spent more time with me if he could’ve. That’s what I believe because of my memories of the time he spent at home. There was an obvious desperation to try and learn everything about me in a short span of time.

When I look back now at my life, and think of who my real father was, I think of the Lieutenant.

The Lieutenant’s daughters were six and three years of age. Because of his military assignment, he had not seen them in almost two years, and he missed them terribly. Both he and his wife were very good correspondents and enjoyed writing letters, not as simple accounts of daily life, but as elaborate tales with plot twists and dialogue. Many times

he would read the letters to me and, in a way, his daughters existed to me much as fictional characters do for other children.

Where they existed was as far away a land as Oz or any other magical place. Over the years, my original home would come to share that sense of illusiveness. Sometimes, on a lonely night, I would imagine my mom and the Lieutenant’s daughters sitting down to share tea in a breezy, green field... I would wonder what they would talk about. Of course, I now know that such a thing would have been impossible.



The Lieutenant’s aide was as shocked to see me as the Lieutenant was. All three of us were dumbfounded by the situation, but I was the only one lucky enough not to be expected to contribute to the conversation about it. “I’m sorry, sir,” the aide stammered out. “I didn’t see anyone.”

“Well, someone must have left him here.”

“No, sir. There’ve been no visitors.”

“You must have left your desk.”

The aide was turning a shade of pink. His mind probably raced trying to remember if he had, and for how long—since his job was very monotonous it was surprising that he could forget. “No, I didn’t, sir.” He kept emphasizing the word “sir.” And each time he spoke he looked at me a little more intensely. Everything about me confused him, from my sudden appearance down to my strange clothes.

“He couldn’t have just sneaked in,” the Lieutenant continued. “He walked into my office through the door.”

The aide was getting more worried. He truly had no answers for the situation and he began to wonder if he could actually be disciplined for merely letting a child slip by him. Could he be transferred or demoted? A job lost at the hands of a three-year-old boy? “I did see your door open, sir. I assumed you were coming out when it shut again. Maybe it was the wind I thought, sir. Yes, I thought it was only the wind, sir.”

“Well, it clearly wasn’t the wind, was it?”

“No, sir.” The aide hung his head.

The Lieutenant frowned at his aide and then smiled at me. “Well, I suppose this may take a little more investigation than I first thought. Are you hungry?”

I nodded my head.

“I’ll take you to my house to get cleaned up and you’ll eat there.” He turned to his aide. “Go and find some clothes that will fit our little visitor.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And do some looking around please, don’t just ask one or two lost souls on the street. See if anyone is missing a child. And really, it shouldn’t be too hard to find out. I’m sure his mother must be screaming right now.” He was probably right, but there was no way we could have heard her from where we were.

The wind is whistling through the house. This late at night with only one candle lit, a person can’t help but feel the cold shiver on the spine. I wrap my monk’s robe (another souvenir from the monastery) more tightly around myself. The cold is more biting than I expected. It’s my fault that I am cold. I knew that when I arrived at the cottage I was going to remove the doors. So there would surely be a way for the cold to get in. The trick is to fight the cold once it’s in, and I am losing that battle. I will probably ride Rupert around tomorrow looking for someplace where I can steal some blankets. It’s too bad I didn’t think of this problem before I removed the doors.

Given how feebly medieval doors are often built, it had been much easier for me to remove them once I was inside. The wood was even more flimsy than I had expected it to be, and after trying to be careful with one door, I allowed my brute strength to work its magic.

The door I kicked in was the first to be thrown outside. (I made sure I knew where Rupert was before I threw it.) Once I had all four doors out front of the house, I could easily walk through without any worries. Without any doors, I wouldn’t leave.

The Lieutenant lived in a small house in Cape Town to the southwest of the Castle. He had one female Basotho servant and they took care of each other. Originally he had had a male servant, but there was something in this woman's smile that made his days less painful. It was easier for him to come home to that warm expression on a friendly woman's face than to the bowing of a man. She was as family to him there, even though he would never admit it. For her part, she knew he didn't want to be in Africa, and she saw the loneliness on his face each day. She had a big family and she would occasionally bring her children by to play with him on Sundays when she could tell he was having a bad week, being separated from his own children.

The Kind Lady smiled at me. I still didn't feel like smiling but I tried my best to return it. She tickled my stomach. I let out a little giggle at her touch. My mother used to do that and it made me feel a little safer.

"His clothes are strange," she said in her native speech. Of course, at the time I didn't know that was what she said. It would be another year before I could understand her when she spoke her mother tongue. All I knew was that it sounded so strange, reminding me of a talking toy I had once dropped down the stairs, breaking it—as if there were garbles and occasional clicks distorting the original words. The foreignness of it frightened me.

The Lieutenant always showed his respect by attempting to speak in Sesotho despite the difficulty. "He was just standing in front of my desk. My aide didn't see him enter."

The Kind Lady coughed a little under her breath. She didn't have a high opinion of his aide.

"Have you seen him before?" the Lieutenant asked.

The Kind Lady was friends with many of the other servants throughout the area, and, as white children were uncommon there, her answer would only add to the mystery of the situation. "No, I have never seen him," she replied in English.

They both stared at me silently for a minute.

I stared back.

The Kind Lady was the first to speak. "We should change him. He has made a mess."

This declaration seemed to wake the Lieutenant up from his thoughts. "Yes. I sent my aide out for some clothes for him. Could you give him a bath while I make some inquiries? Maybe there are some visitors here that are looking for him."

She nodded her head.

He ran his hand through my hair and left. He seemed nice. I had never seen a mustache before, and his intrigued me.

As the Kind Lady bathed me she sang me a song. I didn't understand any of it then, but throughout my life I have sung it anytime I worked on something. It always seems to help my concentration; it gives me a sense of peace.



I was singing that song as I began breaking the doors up into pieces. I can't begin to explain how good it was to feel the wood breaking under the weight of my foot.

Another door gone.

About twenty feet from the house, I piled the remains into a tall pyre, just waiting for a spark to set it aflame.



When I first decided to create this plea for help, my mind quickly began to fill with ideas on how I could best explain my situation without your thinking I was mad.

After two months of considering the problem, I could see no way to do it. All I can do is tell the truth and hope that the material ends up in the hands of someone who will believe me and who has the strength to help me.

First off, you have to understand that I can't explain why things are this way for me; they just are. If I knew how to solve my problem, I would be back with my family or my Love.

In the past, whenever I had arrived in a city with a great library I would do some research, scanning any reference I could find for historical anomalies (things only someone with my experience could see),

any little sign that I was not alone; but I have yet to find any evidence of someone else who has had my problem, either in history or in any of the trashy sci-fi novels I'm fond of. If there have been others, they knew something that I did not (since I never saw them or any reference to them); then again, one would have to wonder how much evidence a researcher could find about me.

Probably not much...not much at all...

Or maybe, if there *were* others, they were simply less successful at surviving than I. Survival has always been one of my most difficult challenges.

Doors
don't work
for me
like they do for other people...

While for you a door simply leads into a building or a room, a door for me can suddenly move me to another place, another time. I have calculated that about one out of twenty doors that I open and step through will take me away.

One out of twenty.

Sometimes it happens less, sometimes more often, but the frequency is always about the same.

I have been around this world, as far back as 2500 years before the Common Era, and as far forward as 3500. The third millennium BCE was lush and green and inhabited with people; 3500 CE was almost the complete opposite. The sky was red. I couldn't find anyone and it hurt to breathe. I had to run from empty building to empty building to find a door that would get me out of there. To this day, I haven't discovered where all the people went.

A majority of my travels have been in Europe and the Americas between 500 and 2200 CE. Since I jump so often, it is fairly easy to keep to the periods in history I feel safest in, the countries where I know my way around. If I arrive in a strange place, I just look for another door.

Of all the time periods, those after the turn of the twenty-third century are those that I land in the least often anyway. There are few normal doors then and usually I appear in some kind of a museum

re-creation of a house... Of course, I won't have known that until I've wandered outside into the dirty air and the streets filled with giant *shiny* buildings...and so I will turn back and try the door I came in through until it sends me away.



There are few other facts that I know and can share about my problem. If someone opens the door for me, I will be fine. If I open the door and let someone through first, I will be fine. I must be alone for it to occur.

I am always alone when it happens...and I will be gone from that location before the door swings shut.

Bang.



Rupert seems to be interested in the dried blood in the corner of the farmhouse. I don't know what it means. I noticed it too when I first entered. I don't know what would make a family leave a house like this, so the blood is my only clue. For the Middle Ages it is a good sized house, one any peasant would have been proud of.

Did his competition drive him out?

Is it the farmer's blood that has dried in the corner?

All I know is that whoever did live here is gone for good and the land has not been farmed in quite some time. The vegetation in the back is overgrown and has not been cared for. I have no idea what they were growing...

This is my second night here.



Though I didn't realize it until just now, the Lieutenant actually gave me the idea to do this on that very day I found him. It was after I had been bathed and dressed in the outfit of a British child. He had taken me back to his office.