

# Darkness

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I don't like having my window open. I don't want to let nature in. I don't like to have the sun's brilliant rays shining in, leaving a bright patch on the pale beige carpet. The brightness makes the stains disappear – I'd rather look at the stains. The yucky brown, black and red colours of the various different foods and drinks I've spilled in the time I've spent locked in my room. Days, weeks, months – who knows how long I've been here? It doesn't matter now.

I like the darkness when the thick blind is pulled tightly over the window cavity. The only light that bleeds through and poisons the gloom comes from the gap at the top, between the wall and the curtain rod. I can see it now, from where I lie, casting shadows on the imperfections in the rendered stone walls. This light is tolerable – it is enough to see.

My mother's at the door now, knocking softly as she does, and whispering through the gaps in the wood. She's asking me permission; permission to come inside. I won't answer her, I won't let her in. She'll bring the light in with her. She knocks again, her voice pleading now, begging me to speak. I won't return her pleas. She never heard mine.

She tries to turn the handle. That won't work – the door's locked. She tries again. Why does she bother? It doesn't matter now. She rattles the door desperately, nearly shouting. She begs, she screams at me to open the door. Why? What's the point? It's just a phase. She was the one who said, "It's just a phase. She'll grow out of it." What would she know? It doesn't matter now. The phase is over.

She's calling now, calling for my father. She's upset – I can hear her voice tremble with the tears that are no doubt streaking down her face. I'm glad I cause her this pain. Maybe now she'll understand. My father is coming, I hear him running down the hall. He shouts through the door. Let me in, let me in. Like the big bad wolf, come to knock down my house, and let the light in. I can hear banging, against the door. He is trying to break it down; trying to break down the wall between me and the light. But it doesn't matter now. It's too late.

The door is open now. But there is no light flooding in. It must be dark in the house. It must be night. Then what of the light bleeding in? At the gap at the top of the window? They see me now, but it's too dark in here. They can't see. My mother speaks: "Turn on the light, Richard." I want to say no – tell them to stop. But I can't find my voice. It's lost; choked by something. Something in my throat. The light is turned on. My mother screams. My father picks up the little empty bottle on the bed, next to me.

I don't like having my window open. I don't want to let life in.

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