

Basement Level
(Basement as Metaphor)

Imprisoned in your basement, dark and musty, I hear the click of the lock, and your footsteps fade as you exit the house. I imagine that smile you've worn for eons, wicked and smug, pleased you leave us trapped here.

I lie face down on the cement and, with compelled effort, scrape off the duct tape you placed over my lips, and with blood dripping from injured skin, bite through the leather that binds my wrists and reach to untie my strapped ankles.

I stand, stiff, take wobbling steps and approach the others with an offer to free them, but their eyes are filled with fear of your wrath, and they shake off my rescue. Your spouse, especially.

Abiding among these kidnapped souls, I know well how, with microphoned voice, you interrupted us and talked over us. How, you monitored our behavior and policed our speech. How, you made each of us wrong for what we said, did, thought, felt, wrong for who we are, what we are. How, you put us down to build yourself up. Stripped us of our Selves to our very cores, leaving us gagged and bound at basement level.

I turn my head, see a window, locked and painted shut. Find a ladder and locate tools. Step up and pound the lock, slice through coats of paint. Work at it, work at it, breathing dankness.

The others, sitting with shoulders slumped and heads hung, do not watch.

With final effort, I break through the window's confines and shinnying out, I stand, stretch tall, raise my eyes to sun and sky, and take a deep breath of freedom.

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