

**MR
NORWIN'S
EXILE**

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*MR NORWIN GOES INTO EXILE/MR
NORWIN TRIES TO CONTACT AN
AUTHOR, A PUBLISHER AND A
POLITICIAN/THE TWO-ROOM METHOD
MR NORWIN GETS HIS STUFF
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MR NORWIN GOES INTO EXILE

Knowing that many people have lived in exile, Mr N decided to spend some time away from his home country so that he might understand what it was like. He looked for a country that would welcome him, but found that he could go just about everywhere. He found that he could get access to his money in almost all the towns and cities of the world. He had a telephone and a computer with which he could keep in constant touch with friends and family.

“It seems quite easy to be an exile these days,” Mr N said, “but it would probably be harder if I didn’t have any money and there were people who wanted to kill me.”

MR NORWIN TRIES TO CONTACT AN AUTHOR, A PUBLISHER AND A POLITICIAN

Knowing that the Internet was a great way of communicating, Mr N thought it would be quite easy to send a message to various people he wanted to contact. First he decided to write to one of his favourite authors to congratulate him on his new book. He found the author's website quite easily but there was no obvious address to which he could write. He was offered the opportunity to buy books, to add something on what was called social media, to review the author's latest book, and to indicate that he liked the author – but not to indicate the opposite. There was no direct postal or email address to

which he could write, and no telephone number he could call.

When he tried to contact the publisher, he found that he could buy books or fill in a form that would go to a department such as sales, rights or press, but no name or office address to which he could send a letter. The website gave no direct email addresses for named individuals and no direct telephone lines. Mr N decided to write to his Member of Parliament to raise the issue of how difficult it was to contact writers and publishers. He found the politician's email and postal addresses quite easily and sent a message. He had an instant reply from the politician's office saying that the matter would receive immediate attention.

“I am still waiting for a reply,” Mr N told his friend some weeks later. “I am not sure if my messages got through to the right people, although I am sure many of the wrong people are very well aware of all the messages I have sent.”

THE TWO-ROOM METHOD

Mr Norwin knew that he often wrote without thinking about it enough and that he also wrote much more than people could be bothered to read. He also suspected that anyone who did read what he wrote usually forgot it very quickly. So he adopted the two-room method and told his publisher. "First I sit at a table in a room with no pen and no paper and think about what I am going to write. Then I go to another room and write it down. This way I remember what I write."

"That's good," said the publisher. "Get in touch when you've written more."

MR NORWIN GETS HIS STUFF TOGETHER

Mr N said to himself: “If I want to be like the other great writers I should publish my collected works.” He gathered together a set of his published books and articles but they weren’t enough to fill more than one volume. He searched for unpublished manuscripts, letters, journals, notes and other things he had written, but he could only find a few scrappy bits of paper. He hadn’t kept copies of most of his writing.

Mr N explained this to his publisher and asked him what he should do. “Don’t worry,” said the publisher, “we’ll sort it all out when you are dead.”

MR NORWIN TRIES TO SEND BOOKS TO PRISONERS

Having heard that prisoners like to read books and that books can help them learn things in prison that might make it easier for them to lead honest lives when they are released, Mr N decided that he would like to send some of his books to his local prison. He made a careful selection of useful titles and telephoned his local prison to see how he should address the package. The person on the telephone said: "We cannot accept the books because they might be a security danger, and anyway books can only be received by prisoners who have proved they want to live productive crime-free lives."

Mr N asked what might help the prisoners to reform their behaviour. “Education and training would be a good start,” he was told. “Then a prisoner can have books.”

Then he asked his publisher for help. The publisher said: “I’m not sure if there is any point. Prisoners don’t have much money and they would probably steal the books anyway.”

MR NORWIN WRITES A REVIEW OF A FRIEND'S NEW BOOK

When his friend's new book was published, a well-known literary magazine asked Mr N to write a review. It was a long book and Mr N took more than a week to read it and write quite a favourable review, although it took issue with some of the writer's ideas and arguments. When the review was published his friend telephoned to thank him for his comments which he said it would be very helpful to him when he came to write his next book.

"I hope I get to review your new book when it is published," said Mr N's friend. "I'll try to give it the same thorough treatment you have given mine."

TITLES

When Mr Norwin travelled to conferences and seminars he was often introduced as Dr N even though he had never received a PhD. The first few times it happened he corrected the mistake, but gradually he recognized that this confused and disappointed the people he was talking to, so he stopped. There was no way of knowing if he was taken more seriously by those who thought he was Mister and those who thought he was Doctor. "The next time I am called Doctor," he said, "I will say that I would prefer to be called Professor and that should put everyone at their ease." Eventually Mr N's publisher started using this title.

APPEARING ON TELEVISION

Mr Norwin was invited to appear on television to discuss the future of publishing. He had some distinct views on this. Once the programme started he forgot all his ideas about publishing and talked instead about his own new book.

His publisher watched the programme and the next time they met Mr N he congratulated him on his performance. “We saw a good spike in sales for the next few days,” he said. “That’s the future of publishing, after all.”

THE SECOND HALF OF THE BOTTLE

When he finished his work for the day, Mr N went to his local bar to have a drink with his editor. “This bottle of beer tastes strange, just like the one I had last night,” he said to the publisher. “Do you think there is something wrong?”

The editor looked at the bottle, sniffed the top, and took a swig. “There is something strange about it,” he agreed, “but the beer at the bottom of the bottle probably always tastes this way.”

“Tomorrow we’ll do it the other way round,” said Mr N. “You can have the beer from the top and see what that tastes like. I trust your judgement and would appreciate your views.”

SIGNING

When he was in a bookshop in a foreign country, Mr Norwin saw a pile of books that had his name on the cover. He couldn't make out the title so he asked the bookseller.

“This is your book, but it has been translated so that people here can read it. The title means the same as the original title and I'm told it's a very good translation,” the bookseller said.

“But it isn't the book I wrote,” said Mr N. “All the words are different and I have no idea what this book says.”

“It's a very good seller here, and it's had good reviews,” the bookseller responded.

“Will you come back tomorrow and sign copies for some of our customers. I’ll run a special promotion.”

Mr N hoped that people in his own country would continue to read the words he had written and not a version that might say something he didn’t mean to say.

MR NORWIN TRAVELS TO A NUMBER OF CITIES

Every few months Mr N went to a different city to work and meet friends and colleagues. Sometimes it was fun and sometimes he felt dejected, but he always enjoyed it when he returned to his peaceful island home. When he was there he invited old friends to come and visit. Many came and some stayed for several months so they had a chance for long talks and many games of chess.

Mr N wasn't able to return to the city he liked best for many years because the people there didn't like him and they would probably end up allowing him to be killed.

“Homesick isn’t quite the word I would use,” said Mr N, “but it will have to do until I can think of another one.” Mr N was generally pretty good at thinking of the right way of describing what he meant, but, in this instance, he was lost for words.

THE BOOK HAS CHANGED IN SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT WAYS

A child was reading a book that Mr Norwin remembered from his own childhood. When asked if the child liked the story, and received the reply that it was OK but a little old-fashioned. “Why is it old-fashioned?” asked Mr N. The child replied that the characters in the book all talked to each other in a strange way.

Later Mr N picked up the book and read some of his favourite passages about how the children had outwitted the robbers and found the buried treasure. The baddies didn't seem as bad as he remembered and the heroes didn't seem as heroic as he remembered.

Mr N wondered if some of the detail had been changed because of prevalent social and political attitudes. “I suppose,” he sighed, “we all change as time goes by, and that must go for the characters in our books as well. I do regret that the treasure doesn’t seem as fabulous as it used to do.”

MR NORWIN GETS EASILY FROM PLACE TO PLACE

While in exile, Mr N noticed that the roads were set up to encourage cycling; drivers obeyed speed limits and were considerate of other road users; bus timetables were synchronised with train timetables and there was free and adequate parking at railway stations. He also realised that there was a good motorway system and that the trains ran on time. "History is full of ironies," Mr N wrote in the journal he was keeping in preparation for his new book. "Even the worst governments can sometimes leave behind good ideas." He never repeated this observation to anyone so it was never attributed to him.

MR NORWIN GETS AN ACCOLADE

Mr N's latest book was awarded a major literary prize. Other writers won prizes too, and all of them saw an increase in sales. Strangely hardly anyone won more than one prize. They seemed to be given out quite fairly.

After he won the prize, Mr N found that he had to spend more time talking to journalists and giving interviews, and some of the interviewers asked intimate questions about his family and personal life. Not many of the interviewers appeared to have read the book. Mr N wondered why there were so many prizes and why they all had different winners.

“The judges must have very different ideas of what makes a good book,” Mr N noted, and added, “I wish I had won a prize named after a person rather than one named after a company.”

POSTERITY

Mr Norwin reflected that many people he had known had already died. He thought of their achievements and the ways these achievements had been praised while they were alive, both by others and by themselves. He read their obituaries and learned things about the friends that they had not told him when they were alive.

“Perhaps what they did during their lives was made too much of at the time,” pondered Mr N. “It’s much more difficult to see what has value when someone is always moving on to the next project than when all a person’s projects are complete.” Then Mr N thought of his own life and realised he had run out of new things to do.

A TAXING TIME

When Mr Norwin had spent some time in his new home, he was told that he might not have to pay tax in his own country or in the country where he now lived. He had several meetings with tax advisors and was told of the advantages he might get by becoming a tax exile. “I don’t want to pay tax to governments that don’t represent my interests,” he decided. “Why should I pay for policies that I don’t agree with?”

He paid the financial advisors to submit a lot of complicated paperwork to a number of government offices, and eventually was called in for a meeting to discuss his tax affairs.

The officials were polite and thorough, taking him through all the ramifications of the way his tax returns had been submitted.

“It was such a relief when they told me I owed no tax. I don’t have enough income or enough assets,” said Mr N. “Perhaps people in exile never have to pay tax, or perhaps writers never earn enough anyway.”

FERRIES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GARDEN

Mr Norwin was the latest guest to notice the ferries out on the sound, going to and fro all day joining this place to the nearby islands. The largest one went each hour to the island that was furthest away, while small ferries went to the smaller nearer islands. None of them went to the mainland, because there were now bridges, although the bridges were too new to appear on the map pinned up in the kitchen. Mr N wondered if there were smugglers and what they might smuggle. “There aren’t any real borders anywhere near here any more,” he remembered, “so that’s probably a pretty old-fashioned question. Perhaps all of my questions are old-fashioned now.”

WASTE PAPER

Mr N noticed there were several waste paper receptacles around the house. Mr N supposed that he was expected to throw away a lot of paper. He had a lot of notes on paper but he did not want to throw these away as they might have caused him embarrassment if they were to be found by someone else. Apart from these notes he did the rest of his writing on his computer so this didn't produce a lot of paper to throw away. Mr N was worried that if he didn't throw any paper away people would think he wasn't doing any work in the house. "It's strange," said Mr N, "that in order to prove I am being productive I will have to throw something away. If I throw too much away I am not sure I will have produced anything at all."

THE NATIONALITY OF CLOWNS

When he saw the large number of people with big red noses Mr N remembered the clowns he knew when he was young. Those clowns were always falling down and trying to start cars that fell apart. Occasionally there was one very smart clown who was sad most of the time, but he was obviously cleverer than the others and could play a musical instrument. Here the clowns visited schools and hospitals and were generally very good natured and helpful, but they were not very funny. The man who had lived in the house all those years ago had been used to clowns that had strong political views, had bohemian habits and were sometimes very cruel.

“They suited the times, just as the clowns I knew as a child suited the world then,” said Mr N. “The clowns in this town are well-meaning and helpful just like all the other people here today, and I don’t think they would last long in the past, when people had more need to laugh at life.”

TIME AND PLACE

Mr N found an old atlas while he was in exile and he looked at the pages that covered the neighbouring countries. He was shocked to discover that one map showed a city that no longer existed, as the other writer had been there several times to meet comrades and to put on plays. That city now had the same name it had many years ago and the new encyclopaedias downplayed the fact that that other city had ever existed.

Mr N thought of all the pleasure he had experienced while studying maps of places he had never been to, and, although he knew that old maps showed places that no longer existed, he was glad that the printed map still provided proof that the

places of the past had existed unlike the digital maps everyone now used.

“Still,” Mr N reasoned, “I suppose that that is the difference between geography and history. One is always changing and the other stays the same, although it is not always clear which is which.”

CUCKOO!

When he was young Mr N often heard cuckoos, but now he rarely did. In this country Mr N was pleased to hear the distinctive sound again. He remembered the Wordsworth poem that ends:

“O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!”

“This unsubstantial faery place is where all the cuckoos have ended up,” he decided. “These birds are used to finding themselves in a foreign environment and obviously feel at home here, but there are lots of places cuckoos couldn’t survive without the help of others.”

WHO IS MR NORWIN?

MR NORWIN HAS AN INTEREST IN WRITING, PUBLISHING AND BOOKS AND HE THOUGHT ABOUT THESE THINGS DURING HIS STAY IN SVENDBORG IN MAY 2014.

THE NAME **MR NORWIN**, LIKE THAT OF **HERR KEUNER**, HAS ECHOES OF **NO ONE**. IT ALSO MIGHT SUGGEST **NO WIN** AND **NORTH WIND**.