

The Gallows

I sit here in my prison cell wondering *why*? Why am I still here? Why aren't they doing anything to get me out of this lousy predicament? Why won't they believe me? Why is God letting this travesty of injustice prevail?

You see, it was just mere days ago that I found myself here. I cannot recall how I came to be in this rat hole. All I know is that I woke up one morning feeling as though I had been stampeded on and I awoke upon this very bench that I now sit.

On that first day, no one spoke to me. In fact, no one even came to me – despite my calling out for help. I was not given food or drink either. I was left to rot in this very cell.

Speaking of the cell, it is the dreariest room you could imagine. It consists of four concrete walls. One wall contains a small – and I do mean small – window, while another houses the door. The door is constructed of some heavy sort of metal and has a tiny slot that can only be opened from the outside. This is where they come to speak to me – when they come. This is where they stick the stale bread and water through. This has been my only contact to the outside world and that has even been brief. Even the window is far too high for me to see out of.

In fact, my most frequent visitors have been a family of rats. Somehow they have found their way into my cell. At first I was a bit freaked by it. I despise small animals. However, they do not bother me now. Even rat contact is better than no contact.

The rest of my cell consists of the sturdy wooden bench I sleep and sit on, a horribly rusted and stained sink, and a small toilet. Now, the toilet does not really function as such. It is also made of concrete and is simply a place to sit on in order to complete one's bowel movement. I do not even know where the waste ends up.

I suppose you want to know what I am in here for. I don't blame you. Why else would you want to listen to some sorry prisoner's story? I suppose it is as dreary as this bloody cell. I will tell you why I am in here, but you must know upfront that what I have to say is only what I have been told has happened. I have no memory of it. I don't believe any of it, as I am a God-loving good-hearted human being. The things I have been accused of disgust me.

According to the guards, the story goes like this.

A few nights ago, I supposedly left a local pub very drunk. The fact that I don't drink makes me believe this is totally untrue. Anyway, I was thrown out of the bar by some regulars and told never to come back. It is at this point that some unbeknownst passerby claimed to have seen me pull a knife from my pocket. This person claims that I was spewing hatred from my mouth and slashing at the door with the knife.

I assure you, this is utter bulls###. I do not have a temper like that. I do not carry a knife. I don't even own any kind of knife that would be worth carrying around. Believe me, I am a decent human being! But enough of this, I shall continue my tale so you can judge for yourself.

I heard the guards mention that a local policeman had stopped at the bar and demanded that I come with him. According to their witness, I stabbed this policeman in the throat and left him for dead. Supposedly he was gushing blood like some geyser. Now why would a God-loving man do something like that?

So it is said that I ran. I ran down the streets slashing my knife at anyone who got in my way. Three people were injured with various cuts, and two more succumbed to wounds I supposedly dished out. Apparently a drunken person has the ability to cut people down with ease! I say it is utter nonsense. I'm innocent I tell you!

But I digress. Sorry for that. I am supposed to be telling you what happened – SUPPOSEDLY happened. I will refrain from my personal comments until the story is complete.

Now where was I? Oh yes, I was slashing like a maniac. The last the eyewitness saw of me was me running down an alleyway and hopping over a fence. This is where the story goes from bad to worse.

It is said that I entered a family's home, desperately looking for more victims. I supposedly went into the master bedroom; slit the throat of a man there, while gutting his wife like a fish. One of the children rushed to the bedroom door to see what was the matter, she screamed, and I leapt like some kind of monster and [text removed]. Now how does a drunkard do that? Sorry – the story...

I then walked down a hall and found the dead father's shotgun. I somehow found the bullets that went with it, and proceeded to blast holes in the remaining [text removed]. The guards have been heard to say that their rooms looked like slaughterhouses. But that is not the worst of it – no, it is not even close.

I walked into a nursery where there were two twin babes all nestled in their cribs. They managed to sleep through the entire massacre. Unfortunately for them, they would never open their eyes again. [a lot of text removed]

Sorry, but I need to interrupt the story. It sickens me just thinking about it. I love God. I'd do anything for God. No matter what, I would never do anything for some demon. Demon or not, I would never harm anyone, let alone massacre a family in such an evil way. There is not one drop of evil in me. But will they listen to any of that? No. They claim to have picked me up with blood soaked limbs and clothing.

Anyway, back to the story.

It is said that I became possessed after offering up my sacrifice. I flew from that house – literally according to some witnesses – and entered every house on the street. In each one I performed gruesome murders that I care not to describe. I'll just say that each one made the baby ritual look like child's play. It was while leaving the last house where law enforcement caught up to me.

Somehow my possessed body managed to take down ten officers before they managed to sedate me. Why they wouldn't have killed me on the spot is anyone's guess. This is one reason I don't believe any of it. Anyway, I woke up the next morning not remembering any of it. Over the next few days – not the first day mind you – I overheard bits and pieces of my rampage through town and eventually put the full story together. At one point, one of the guards came in to ream me out, promising that I would pay most dearly for what I had done. He spoke of my own personal sacrifice and that was that. Later, another guard came by to inform me that nothing I say will change my punishment.

That was earlier this morning. I have sat here the entire day waiting to find out what is going on. I try to profess my innocence, but they will have none of it. I can only guess by the light coming in the window that it is nearing the evening hours. I'd say around four or five.

Wait! What is that noise? Is it church bells? Why would they be ringing church bells? One, two, three, four...five - five church bells. It must be five o'clock. Why is this the first time since being imprisoned that I am hearing these bells?

Suddenly there is a knock on my door. Who could it be? And why would anyone be knocking? The guards don't knock. I suppose I should answer it. I get up and approach the door.

"Yes?"

"Mr. Lawrence?"

"Yes, that is me. Who might you be?"

"I am Father Charles. I am here to read you your last rites. Of course, that is if you wish to hear them."

My last rites? What is going on? Those bells couldn't possibly mean...

"Mr. Lawrence?"

What am I going to do? Surely they can't be thinking to execute me without trial. Surely this must be some kind of mistake.

“Mr. Lawrence? This is the last chance for you to confess your sins to the Lord above. For if you decide to deny my visitation, you will surely be damned to hell without question. I am your last chance to make peace with God.”

No. NO! This can't be happening. This has to be some kind of sick dream. Surely I will wake up at any moment. Yes...yes, that is why I can't remember the events prior to coming here.

“Ok Mr. Lawrence, I will take that as a no. May the Lord have mercy upon your soul.”

What? “Wait, no...do not leave me.”

There is a moment of silence and finally I hear the priest talking to the guard. They are discussing what to do if I try to attack the priest. How absurd can they be?

“Mr. Lawrence, please sit down and I will come in.”

I sit back down, for there is nothing else I can do. There is no use protesting to the guard. It will only lead to some kind of reprimand. I watch as Father Charles enters this tiny cell. I can only imagine what he is thinking; “He's already in hell.”

He takes a few glances around my residence and then opens his mouth to speak. Before he can mutter a single word, I interrupt him.

“I did not do it!”

“Mr. Lawrence, confession comes after I read you your rites. That is when you can pour your heart out to God.”

“Father, please! This is all a lie. It is a mistake. I did not kill those people. My hands are clean.”

“Mr. Lawrence! I have explained how the procedure works. I will not do so again. God will not put up with such antics and neither will I.”

He is right. By God he is right. I must let him speak first. God has procedures for everything. “I'm sorry Father, please go ahead.”

He starts with the Lord's Prayer “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name...”

I hear nothing after this. All I can think about is this grave injustice that has befallen upon me. If those people were indeed killed, it was not by these hands. My soul is clean of blood. My soul is pure. God knows this. Surely he does. Surely he will stop this execution with all the power that he has.

I notice that the priest has stopped. He is staring at me as though he has seen something truly frightening. “Father?” I ask.

He shakes his head as if to clear his thoughts. “Sorry son, I thought I saw something in your eyes. Almost like a dark cloud rolling over your whites. It must have been my imagination.”

I watch as he makes the sign of the cross and continues on with his scripture. I am still not paying attention to the words. My mind is racing. I have to get out of this. I have to wake up. Sadly, it is becoming obvious that this is no dream. I realize now that there is no way out.

Before the priest has a chance to speak again, there comes a *rap, rap, rap* on my cell door.

“Father...it is time.”

Oh God no – this can’t be happening now. Surely they are not meaning to proceed with this ghastly deed already. I can feel the blood exiting from my face. I am about to faint.

“Son, the time has come.” It is Father Charles who speaks to me. Yet I am barely hearing his voice. My mind is drifting towards unconsciousness. Wake up, wake up, WAKE UP! “Mr. Lawrence? You do not look so well.”

“Father Charles? Time is up Father. We are coming in.”

I vaguely notice as two armed guards enter my dreary cell. They hook their arms around mine and begin to drag me from my cell. *Please*, I try to mutter, yet nothing comes from my mouth. I try to will my body to escape their grasp, but my legs will not respond. I am lost.

“Mr. Lawrence?” Father Charles asks again. “May the good Lord in Heaven treat you as you are deserved. I pray for thee.”

I fear that is the last I will hear from Father Charles. The guards have already dragged me past numerous cells. They are now dragging me up some stairs – my legs from the knees below bouncing off their very foundation. Yet I don’t care about the pain. My mind – what consciousness is left within it – is only thinking of one thing, *why*.

As I am pulled past the last of the cells, I hear someone call out to me, “May God be with you...for all that you have done, may God be with you.”

God? God has forsaken me. Either that or he doesn’t exist. Damned to hell I am to be, and it is because of this falsity that God allows to be done to me. I killed no one! I am no murderer! God can go f### himself.

I sigh. “God, I’m sorry...”

I find myself whacked strongly across the back of my head by one of the guards. “It is too late to be sorry, you heathen. Now shut your mouth before I rip out your foul tongue.”

I must be in hell already. My memories are nowhere to be found. I have no control here at all. Yes, hell is where I am. No, I cannot even convince myself that that is true.

As I try to imagine where I am, the reality soon sheds its light upon me. The guards drag me through a double door exit and out into the prison courtyard. Suddenly I am stricken with fear and my consciousness returns to full alertness. My mouth gapes in awe as I witness a horrific site.

I am quickly pelted by vegetables of all kinds, eggs, and many other nasty things. Chants begin amongst the massive crowd that awaits. This is no simple courtyard. This is a public hanging ground. The entire village must be here. Smack in the center lies a very ominous looking gallows.

Almost without warning, some madman rushes me and stabs me in my arm. I presume that he has only missed my heart due to the intervention of the guards. I watch as they tackle the man to the ground. This madman spits at me and utters angry words regarding my slaughtering of his family. I start to assure him that I had nothing to do with it, but I think better of it. I would only suffer more cruelty from the guards.

Various food items continue to pelt my body as I am marched up the wooden steps of the gallows. I feel no physical pain from each blow. Instead, I feel the mental anguish that professes my innocence. Anger builds within, yet there is nothing I can do. A feeling of hopelessness starts to come over me. It is only now that I truly realize the fate that is to come. I am stricken by panic.

I suddenly find myself wrestling with the guards...trying to make my bold escape. It is of no use. I am tackled to the ground and beaten viciously.

“Control the prisoner!”

I can’t see who is commanding the guards, as my face is mashed repeatedly against the wooden planks that make up the floor of the gallows. During the mashing, my face has been turned towards the horror that will mark my end – a latch. THE latch. The one that will come undone when the command is spoken. The one that will cause the floor to drop from beneath my feet and end my life. The one that is ironically symbolic of the fate that awaits my fragile neck when the noose tightens itself upon my descent.

It is now that I realize that tears are streaming down my face. Through my peripheral vision, I can see a puddle quickly developing beneath my eye. I have never been afraid of dying, yet here I am crying. Some kind of change has enveloped my being. Maybe there

is some truth to it after all. Who have I become? What have I become? Am I even in my own body? *ARGH!* Why the hell can I not remember anything?

Without realizing it sooner, I now find myself on my feet. One guard is on each side of me holding my arms out as though I am the Christ almighty upon his death cross. My feet are directly on top of the hatch that I witnessed just moments ago. I think about how I might be able to stretch my legs to prevent the fall, but it would be useless. The hatch is much too wide and deep to prevent that. Of course you idiot, did you really think this death trap would have an easy escape?

I watch as the would-be executioner approaches me with a black hood. Please God, no! Can it be made any worse? At least let my eyes give me sight in my final moments. Have I not suffered enough injustice and humility? For crimes I have not even committed?

The hood is slipped over my head despite my prayers. It is now that I realize there truly is no God. If there is, he is not the almighty loving God of which we are brainwashed into believing in. I mentally spit towards an image I have conjured up in my mind that represents this disgusting *Supreme Being*. You f####ing coward. For all that I have ever devoted to you; this is how I am to be treated. Well I s#### on your heaven.

As if God is listening, the noose is lowered around my neck as I think my profane thoughts. I have ruined any chance of being saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is my shepherd no more. I am damned to eternal rot in hell. If nothing else, I deserve my reservation for the profanities that I have wished upon our true Father. I have sinned.

I notice now that a hush has fallen over the crowd. I hear a familiar voice begin to speak. It is the same voice that demanded control over me. I decide to listen in – if only to make use of my ears one last time.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here today to put an end to a life that deserves far worse than this hanging will provide. If our laws did not prevent it, surely this despicable human being...no, MONSTER, would be suffering a slow, lingering death accompanied by endless torture. I almost feel the urge to put forth a new proposed bill to amend the death penalty clause, but it will take too much time. This foul being must be silenced now. We will have our justice tonight!”

I hear a massive roar of cheers. I can feel the gallows rumble as the crowd expresses its desire to end my life. Once again I am pelted by various things, but I am saved by the MC to my death proceedings.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I totally agree with your desires to mutilate this creature’s flesh. However, we must refrain from doing so, lest we lose the opportunity to witness the site of one’s end by hanging. It won’t hold the same pleasure if his body is slumping before the death door is opened.”

The crowd ceases to attack me with their rotten food. However, there is a new painful sting. This man is sick. What pleasure can there be in seeing a man die. So much for his f####ing laws. And I am the monster?

The host continues, “The man before you is responsible for the murders of over 50 of our most loved men, women, and children. No punishment fits his crimes. No amount of torture can bring justice to those lost. No hanging can return our loved ones. At the same time, this is what must be done – and done immediately!”

Again cheers. Surprisingly, I feel nothing smacking against my body. Either they have stopped the onslaught, or my skin has grown so numb I no longer can feel any pressure against it. It doesn’t really matter anymore. The damage has been done.

“Mr. John Lawrence, you are hereby sentenced to death by hanging. Even though you have been sentenced, you still have the right to any last words that you feel may overturn our decision – regardless of how strongly I feel otherwise about those rights.”

What can I say? Should I say anything? Will it make a difference? No, it will just lead to further humiliation on my part.

“I take your silence to mean you are satisfied with our decision. Executioner, prepare the...”

Now wait just a damn second. Who said I was satisfied with any of this? I find myself speaking before I am mentally prepared, “Hold on you cowardly disgrace of a man. I am not satisfied with anything. This is an injustice! I have murdered no one!”

Boos drown out my voice. I hear various comments that counter my statements. How is it that all these people have been swayed by these deceivers?

“I’m sorry you feel that way Mr. Lawrence, but the truth is the truth. You mutilated and slaughtered many people! You r#### innocent children and [text removed]. You d##### in the mouths of babies. You performed demonic rituals that have not been witnessed in hundreds of years – and even then, they were performed by many. As one foul human soul, you managed to do the work of many in less than one hour’s time. How you did it, we are not sure. But we are sure you did it. Many of this very crowd witnessed your actions with their very eyes.”

“LIES!” I try once again to free myself, knowing full well that the noose will prevent my escape even if I manage to pull myself from the guards. “If I get a hold of you, I will strangle you for your filthy untruths!”

“Control him!”

I feel sharp, violent pains across my back. I am being whipped, just as Jesus himself was whipped prior to execution. The world is an evil place – I realize that now. I am defeated.

Is this how the Christ child himself felt when he realized that the world was full of sin? Did he struggle to understand what wrong doings he could have possibly done when he was so kind to others?

I realize now that I am content with dying. A world such as this is not worth living in. I no longer fight to prevent my death – I welcome it. I tune out the shouts from the crowd. I tune out the words from the one who commentates. I focus my mind on one thing – the Lord’s Prayer. I imagine the voice of Father Charles reading to me. *Our father, who art in heaven...*” As I recount the Father’s speech in my mind, I hear the latch click and feel the death door drop. I feel butterflies in my stomach as I drop from my perch. It all happens in the blink of eye. I feel the noose tighten around my neck. I feel my neck snap. I hear my neck snap. And then I realize that I never heard Father Charles finish the Lord’s Prayer. In fact, he had barely started.

With the last breath that I can muster, I try to finish the prayer myself. “Hallowed be thy na...”