

Murder of A Crow

a True Story

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You know how They say, "It's not the heat, it's the humidity," confirming the notion that Hell Itself has a dew-point. And that's just how it is in a Mississippi Prison: a hellacious sauna of sweat, blood, tears and the odor of body funk. Cell number 114 was my Home Away from Home for about five years and provided me with a wide range of experiences during my extended stay, one of the more memorable of which I will recall for you: the Reader. The goal here is not to manufacture Sentimentalism for you to feed on, but to simply tell you the tale. After all, some stories are worth telling.

In prison, days seem to run together becoming difficult to distinguish them from one another: a tragic Groundhog Day Affair. As every day is pretty much the same, this provides the

groundwork to deprive its prisoner of Hope, Sanity, and Good Taste, allowing the capacity for a terrific sense of humour. I believe that God created Mississippi (aka the Armpit of the Universe) for the same reason He gifted us with such things as: Thorns, The Mosquito, Banana-flavored Laffy Taffy and Poison Ivy: to remind us that Man has indeed sinned against God, and that — because of Woman, (Some women are worth sinning for, others not) Most of the blame falls on Eve, but I blame Mother too, as it happens to be most convenient and effectual.

Often people experience situations that are confirmed by Enormous Waves of Emotion, but that's not what this is. One Morning in Particular — a regular one, not so bad — began the way most days begin here: Instant Coffee. After one serves enough time in prison, routines become rote as

instinct takes over, allowing one to acclimate to this terrible environment. I do believe this capability was put inside us by the Almighty Himself - to help us through hardships; you would be surprised at what you can get used to.... As I sip the aforementioned "roasted" beverage, I am pulled to my little window - a small slit in the concrete wall partially obscured by the welded metal bars in place to prevent inmates from simply breaking the safety glass and squeezing to Freedom. I happen to be grateful for Window, as it is my Portal through which I may view the Natural World. The Prison Grounds outside my window provide me with quite the blessing: to observe and admire the few animals and birds that chance to drop by, sort of like a curiously backwards zoo where one still views the assortment of creatures, but it is the humans who are in the cages.

From my Portal I see a bird - a crow to be precise - who has managed to become tangled and trapped by his right claw in the nook of the chain-link fence that borders the Outdoor Recreation Yard. He dangles upside-down, apparently at rest from his violent, vain attempts to achieve freedom from the unforgiving metallic spider's web as his breast hammers away from the frenzy of panicked exhaustion.

The thought of Christ pushing Himself up against the nails simply to take a breath comes to mind....

♪ "Some bright mornin' when this life is o'er, I'll fly away." ♪ I ponder Crow's condition and realize that I am not merely saddened, just depressed. It seems as if this Prison punishes more than just criminals and convicts. "Welcome to the Party," I say, as if he can hear me. I secretly root for Crow, but

outwardly and audibly I am simply curious....

Can he get loose?

The frenzied blur of feathers and bird noises are deliberate - one helluva panic - but to no avail... the blur ceases as abruptly as it began only to dangle once more by claw, exhausted with effort. It becomes readily apparent that my feathered friend (I say friend, not because we prefer one another, but because we are here, locked in this moment together, struggling in a similar manner to exist.) is only fast on the way to dying tired, hungry, thirsty - exposed to the Elements as the Day Star scorches the remaining days of Crow's life from him. It is of great comfort to have company when in misery - especially when the other has a worse time of it than you - but quite evil to enlist others to this position to simply make yourself feel better. Anyway, the days groan on and, as expected, Crow's

efforts become increasingly lame and just as futile. He may have had a chance for freedom with a solitary deliberate, exertive effort, but now....

His fate is rather obvious to any lookers-on. At some point since I saw him last, he managed to switch entrapped claws - he now hangs by the other leg (the left one). It's apparent that Crow's attempt to gain Freedom led him to pull his claw free by pushing against the nook of the chain-link with his other leg.

Freedom at the cost of Bondage.

It's almost as if the Fence mocked Crow's wishes: "If only I could free this claw!" Taking care in how one phrases wishes is no longer left solely to the realm of those who make deals with the Devil or those who coax Genies from out of their Lamps.

I wonder if anyone else uses depression as a defense mechanism: protection from theirself....

♫ "Just a few more weary days and then, I'll fly away." ♫ Crow and I are struggling to complete the Mission at hand.

I imagine Crow imparting to me the wisdom accumulated only by way of his Final Struggle: "Don't be like me," he says, "sometimes wings simply give you greater access to Trouble."

Glad to have my feet firmly on the ground, I watch as several guards throw rocks at Crow. If I could insert myself into that situation, not only would I lose Crow, but I would avenge him as well: I would push the guards - one by one - into the glistening coil of razor wire that runs along the bottom edge of the Perimeter Fencing and then proceed to stone them with the very rocks they used against Crow.

The Enemy of my Friend is my Enemy.
Eventually, Crow moves no more... his struggles are over and he has gone on to the Great

Nest in the Sky. The Evidence of Death appears as the passing of days reveal the various stages of decomposition. As his now bloated carcass begins to deflate, his feathers fall away and the unseeing eyes reveal the sockets underneath. The tissue separates from his hollow Crow bones and I think about the life and times of Crow, the time we spent together, and the thoughts we shared as we looked at one another through the Portal.

Shakespeare wrote, "I have been studying how I may compare this prison where I live unto the world."

I decide then and there that I will make it free from my bonds one day... ♪ "Like a bird from these prison walls I'll fly, I'll fly away." ♪ ... and I will never forget Crow and his Murderer.