Hanged

I sat in my jail cell and waited for the executioner to come and get me, I wanted to get this over with as quickly as possible; I wanted to pay for my crimes.

I was a mass murderer but worse than that I was an adulterer.

I had killed hundreds of people in my time out here in the west, but I didn’t regret a single one, the only thing that I did regret was sleeping with that whore.

The whore who made me cheat on my wife, Mary.

But who was I kidding, it takes two to tango, killing the whore would have solved nothing, the only thing that I could do to fix my mistake was face my punishment for all of my crimes and do it with a straight face.

There are far worse ways to go.

I could be shot in the legs and made to bleed to death in the dirt, just like I’d made some of my victims.

Hell, I probably deserved far worse, but my mam told me not to look a gift horse in the mouth.

The jailer came into the room, he was stocky and big, I guessed he needed to be, so I could be carried if I tried to escape.

But I just got up and stared at him, he stared back, his eyes were filled with an intense hatred that spanned multiple years and lifetimes.

“What’s with the look, partner?” I asked the young man.

“You killed my papey fifteen years ago,” He growled.

I smirked, “Then I guess this must be divine retribution?”

He nodded.

“Are you going to walk out or am I going to have to carry you?”

“I’ll walk thanks, lord knows I could use the exercise, I’ve been stuck in this dump for three days.”

The big man nodded.

I slowly walked over to him and thought about my next move, I saw several different ways to escape, I could have dashed out and locked him in the cell or I could have stabbed him with the bit of glass that I’d found on the floor.

But I just couldn’t do it, there was no point, I had to admit, now was my time to face the music.

I walked outside and was immediately welcomed with a barrage of boos and angry stares from my audience.

I smiled, glad that my effect on the world had gone largely noticed by every settlement in the west, including the ones that I’d never visited before.

Someone threw a tomato at me, I soaked it up and felt the juices impact and sting my eyes.

I laughed as they took me up to the gallows and wrapped the noose around my neck.

The young executioner punched me in the face and told me to shut up.

The crowd cheered.

“It feels good doesn’t it, being the hero?”

“What would you know about heroism?” The man asked disgustedly.

I smiled, “I guess you’ll never know.”

The truth was, I wasn’t always a villain and a crook like all of the young bucks in the audience below thought I was.

No, many years before they were born, I was a sheriff and a damned good one at that, I was widely known as my town’s hero.

That was until my momma died, the doctors just let her go, they didn’t even try to treat her, they just let her die and that, made me crack.

I killed those fucking doctors for their callousness but then I got the taste for blood.

And that is when I became the criminal that the audience knew me as on that day, on the gallows.

“Any last words?” The executioner asked.

I nodded and cleared my throat, “I know a lot of you think I regret killing your families or your friends, but I’ve gotta tell you, I don’t!”

The audience gasped, “Pull the fucking lever already, kill the monster!” Someone in the audience yelled.

Soon that yelling became a chant. “Kill the monster! Kill the monster! Kill the monster!”

I closed my eyes and waited for my descent but it didn’t come.

Bang

I opened my eyes and darted them to the left, my executioner had been shot in the head.

He stood there for a few seconds lifeless with a confused look on his face, then his body collapsed to the floor.

I looked around and saw that bandits were descending onto the town with guns raised and ready to kill.

The audience was alive with screams as they ran out of the way of the oncoming demons.

I just stood there and watched, my mind was in a haze and all I could hear was an abject ringing in my ears.

The horses stopped in front of me and I saw that the bandits were young men in their twenties.

The man at the front, got off of his horse and trudged towards me, he stopped in front of me and I saw that his face had several scars that cascaded down the length of his face, they looked purposeful like the man had branded them himself to look intimidating.

He lifted the noose on my neck and carried me to his horse, he placed me onto it and then got on behind me.

We rode away from the town and into the sunset.

That night, we stopped on a nearby cliff and the other bandits rested, while the leader started a fire.

I was still in a daze, “Why- why did you-

“We rescued you because we need you for a heist.” The man responded without looking up from the fire.

“A heist?” I was way too old for that crap.

“Yes, a heist.”

“What if I say no?”

“I’ll kill you.”

I laughed, “Boy, do you have any idea who I am? You couldn’t kill me if you had fifty men here let alone four!”

The man sighed, “Then I guess, we’ll kill Mary if you don’t!”

I gulped, “You know about Mary?”

“Oh, yeah, she’s a great gal, but she won’t be if you don’t help us.”

The man got up and wandered over to me, he towered over me and sneered. “We have people in your town that can make life painful for her.”

I sighed, “I’ll do it.” After all, I didn’t have any other choice.

Just between us, I was glad to be saved, a man should die on his own terms, never on anyone else’s, even if he is a mass murderer.

I lay down, closed my eyes and went to sleep.