

Limbo Lane

By

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Based on the unfinished short story, Dream, by O. Henry

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FADE IN:

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

A cinder block-gray prison cell. A small metallic desk sits against the wall with a small plastic chair. Opposite the desk is a cot the length of the room with yellow-stained sheets.

MURRAY FOLLSSEN, 34, lays on the cot. He is lean and has short, brown hair, along with short, uncared stubble. He is notably malnourished and has large bags under his eyes.

He's dressed in a deep-gray jump suit with a white undershirt underneath, along with a pair of matching gray shoes.

Murray stares blankly at the flickering florescent light above him. A bundled, gray, wool blanket rests by his feet.

At the far-end of the prison, adjacent to Murray's cell, the cell of BONIFACIO BERITOLLI. Bonifacio, late-twenties, has a great booming voice.

BONIFACIO (O.S)

Hey. Mr. Murray. Hey!

MURRAY

(apathetic)

Yes, Bonifacio?

BONIFACIO (O.S)

You uh... feeling alright, sir?

MURRAY

Alright Bonifacio. Alright.

BONIFACIO (O.S)

That's good, Mr. Murray. That's good.

MURRAY

Yeah.

BONIFACIO (O.S)

Mr. Murray, I won last game of Checks. Do you remember?

MURRAY

Chess. And yeah, Bonifacio, I remember.

BONIFACIO (O.S)
Yes. Yes. I had you with the Queen
and then I trapped you, do you
remember?

MURRAY
I do. You got me with your Bishop.

Murray sits up and rubs his head vigorously.

BONIFACIO (O.S)
Yes! Yes! With the clergy. It was a
good game. Maybe we can play again
sometime.

MURRAY
Sure thing, Bonifacio.

BONIFACIO (O.S)
(laughs)
I don't know if we will have to say
the movement damn-loud where they
sendin' us.

A long silence stretches between the two.

BONIFACIO (O.S)
Mr. Murray, I think-

The LOUD CLICK of steel bolts from the main door down the
hall interrupts Bonifacio.

The sound of FOOT STEPS make their way down the corridor.
Both Bonifacio and Murray remain silent as the FOOT STEPS
get closer.

THREE MEN stop in front of Murray's cell. Murray looks up
casually.

PRISON SARGEANT HENRY HOKENSON, mid-forties, nods a greeting
at Murray. Sergeant Hokenson is barrel-chested with broad
shoulders and thick arms. He looks imposing but he also has
a kind, sympathetic face. His hair, slicked back and parted
to the side, shows streaks of gray.

He wears a blue uniform with a baton hanging off his right
hip and a taser gun on his left. A small, silver badge is
clipped to his left breast.

He is accompanied by another GUARD in his late twenties. The
young guard glances around anxiously and frequently as if on
edge for possible trouble.

The REVEREND LEONARD WINSTON, early-thirties, clutches a Bible with several bookmarks sticking out. He has a wide gruff face and a scar across one cheek. He, too, sports a buzz-cut. And if it wasn't for the clerical collar on his dark dress shirt -- he could be mistaken for a recently released prisoner.

Murray glances at the two guards before he turns and looks at Reverend Leonard.

MURRAY

What're you doing here, Len?

REVEREND LEONARD

I got them to let me take the prison chaplain's place.

MURRAY

How? Why?

REVEREND LEONARD

The Prison's Chairman's wife died of pneumonia last week. I sat by her and Sal for three days keeping them company. She is in God's hands now.

MURRAY

What-a shame... Janice was a *Hell* of a woman.

(beat)

Why would you waste that favor in coming to see me? We haven't spoken in years- since they threw me in here.

Reverend Leonard turns to Sargeant Hokenson and places his free hand on his shoulder.

REVEREND LEONARD

Would it be alright if we spoke alone for a while?

SARGEANT HOKENSON

I can't leave you alone with him if you step into the cell, Reverend.

REVEREND LEONARD

I'll stay here, then, outside the cell.

Sargeant Hokenson hesitates a second before nodding politely to the Reverend. He then walks off and the sound of RATTLING KEYS, then, the CREAKING of a cell door.

Sargeant Hokenson returns with a matel chair and sets it down by The Reverend. The Reverend smiles and nods at Sargeant Hokenson.

Both Sargeant Hokenson and the Young Guard walk back to the steel door. Murray and the Reverend wait until the LOUD CLICK of the Steel bolts are heard and the FOOT STEPS fade away.

MURRAY

Why're you here?

The Reverend picks up the chair and places it directly in front of Murray's cell and then sits.

REVEREND LEONARD

I'm here to offer you salvation.
Repent and the hands of God will
carry you to heaven.

MURRAY

You're confusing God with The
Chair.

REVEREND LEONARD

The chair is only but your release.
As long as you repent for what you
have done, you may live an eternity
of happiness and joy.

MURRAY

What did I do?

REVEREND LEONARD

You know what you have done.

MURRAY

(nonchalantly)

Lets say I don't. Why don't you
tell me what I did?

Murray gets up and pulls up the chair in front of the desk and sits. He grabs the worn-out Bible sitting on the corner of the desk.

The Reverend watches intently.

REVEREND LEONARD

(beat)

I'm here to help you. If you don't
want to repent then maybe just
talking with me can give you some
closure...

BONIFACIO (O.S)
 Hey! Mr. Murray! Tell your
 friend... tell him that if he don't
 stop bothering you I'm gonna break
 out of here and give 'em a good
 beating!

Bonifacio LAUGHS before a fit of COUGHING interrupts him.
 Then the sound of SPITTING. The Reverend shifts on his seat
 uncomfortably.

MURRAY
 It's okay, Bonifacio. Start
 thinking about your next strategy
 for our Chess match.

Murray redirects his attention to his Bible. He flips
 through the pages and stops. He turns a few more pages
 before flipping the Bible pages down to mark the page.

MURRAY
 Len-

REVEREND LEONARD
 Reverend.

MURRAY
 Jesus. This bullshit-self-righteous
 act of yours is getting really old,
 really quickly...

REVEREND LEONARD
 (interrupts)
 Will you shut the.... Damn it,
 Murray! For Christ sake!

The two pause at the Reverend's outburst.

MURRAY
 I'm pretty sure you're not supposed
 to use Christ's name in vain.

Murray grins and they both chuckle, the tension dissipating
 momentarily. Then, silence.

Murray stands and walks over to his desk. He turns to The
 Reverend.

REVEREND LEONARD
 You've always been a smart-ass.

MURRAY

Len... I'm not interested in your salvation... I'm not interested in your Holy Words. It's nearly eight. Why don't you just turn around, and let me be?

REVEREND LEONARD

I'm not going to do that, Murray.

Murray SIGHS and looks down at the metallic desk with the Bible still spread open.

He notices something crawling about the desk. Murray rips out a page from the Bible and roles it up.

REVEREND LEONARD

(annoyed)

What in God's Name are you doing?

CLOSE ON ANT: Murray ignores the Reverend and uses the rolled-up page from the Bible to herd the ant about.

The Reverend looks at Murry curiously.

REVEREND LEONARD (CONT'D)

You should talk about what you're feeling. It will do you good. You are right to be afraid, Mur.

MURRAY

Don't call me that. No one calls me that.

REVEREND LEONARD

I know...

Murray continues to toy with the ant.

MURRAY

Fine. Do you know how many men are here?

REVEREND LEONARD

I believe Sargeant Hokenson said there were still seven men that were to be executed. You included.

MURRAY

Seven men. Seven men that deserve to die. Myself included...

REVEREND LEONARD

(beat)

You are here because of the
decisions you've made.

MURRAY

Am I?

Murray pauses. He stops and toys with the ant for a moment
before resuming.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

I suppose that does appear to be
the case, yes.

(beat)

Three men. That's how many I've
seen taken to their deaths since
I've been here... The first one was
dragged out screaming and fighting
mad like a wolf caught in a trap.
The second walked the dead man's
trail offering up a lip-service to
Heaven. The third, collapsed out of
fear and weakness and was carried
out, strapped to a stretcher.

Murray pauses. The Reverend is quiet and stares at Murray
intently.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

I don't know what kind of man I
will be in the end.

Silence stretches between the two. The Reverend shifts
uncomfortably in his seat.

REVEREND LEONARD

That is entirely up to you. But I
can tell you that with the
acceptance of Jesus Christ our Lord
and Savior, you can face anything--

MURRAY

Oh God, will-you-shut-up!

The Reverend stops talking as Murray continues to toy with
the ant.

REVEREND LEONARD (CONT'D)

... Mur, what're you doing?

MURRAY
(beat)
Playing God.

The Reverend sits silently. A look of sympathy and worry on his face.

REVEREND LEONARD
Murray...

MURRAY
Don't.

REVEREND LEONARD
(beat)
Do you know what the Bible says
about guilt?

MURRAY
Is that what you're here for?
Preaching? Because if so, you can
go ahead and walk back the way you
came.

REVEREND LEONARD
(casually)
There's a few passages that speak
of it, but my favorite would have
to be... "Each person is tempted
when he is--"

MURRAY
"--when he is lured and enticed by
his own desire." I know it. She
used to recite it to me too.

Murray then breaks his gaze away from the ant. He stands up
and walks over to the Reverend. He hands him the rolled-up
page from the Bible.

The Reverend, obviously confused, takes the page and unrolls
it. Murray stands looking at the Reverend as he quickly
reads over the page.

REVEREND LEONARD
James one-14

The Reverend looks up from the torn page at Murray. They
stare at one another through the iron bars in silence.

Murray slams the palm of his hand on the desk with force.
The SLAM resonates through the prison. The other inmates
shuffle at the sound before they settle down once more.

REVEREND LEONARD
... What're you trying to say?

Murray looks at the Reverend, his hand still resting on the surface of the desk. The Reverend looks at Murray's hand and back at Murray.

REVEREND LEONARD (CONT'D)
Mur... I'm so sorr...

MURRAY
Fuck you. You think you can come here, after you left me in the dock alone that night and preach to me? Why am I fucking here, huh? Whose idea was it to go there that night to pick-up a package for his dearly-beloved friend?
(beat)
How is he by the way? Erick, I mean. Do you guys still have your weekly... tea dates?

REVEREND LEONARD
You're going too far Mur...

MURRAY
(shouts)
No. No, I am not.
(beat)
Too far is leaving your friend out in the docks alone at night. *Too* far is getting the death sentence because of someone else. How could you have left me there, Len? You know I still see her when I close my eyes at night? Every night.

Murray trails off. Eyes wide and filled with tears. He looks away from The Reverend.

The sound of STEEL BOLTS PULLING BACK and then FOOT STEPS break the trance of both men.

The two guards appear behind the Reverend. Murray forcefully slides his hand from the desk and approaches the cell door.

REVEREND LEONARD
Oh. Is it time...?

Sargeant Hokenson hesitates. He stares back and forth between both men.

SERGEANT HOKENSON

Yes, sir.

Murray stands looking at the Reverend, hand still on the desk. He slides his hand off the desk forcefully and walks to the cell door. He stares at the Reverend.

Sargeant Hokenson removes a set of keys from his belt and opens the door. Murray stays put. Sargeant Hokenson then pulls out a silver flask and offers it to Murray.

Murray glances at the Reverend before taking the flask.

SERGEANT HOKENSON

Whiskey. We give the prisoners a drink if they feel like they need it. They usually do. There's no danger of it becoming a habit, you see.

Murray then opens the flask, raises it to his face, and takes two large gulps.

SERGEANT HOKENSON (CONT'D)

Atta boy! Just a little something for the nerves and everything else will be as smooth as silk.

Murray hands the flask back to Sargeant Hokenson. Once again he looks at the Reverend. Sargeant Hokenson takes a quick swig too, caps it, and slides it into his pocket. He then makes his way behind Murray, takes hold of his hands and cuffs them. He takes a firm grasp of his arm and guides him out of the cell.

They step into Limbo Lane. Some of the other inmates are heard as they SHIFT UNCOMFORTABLY at the knowledge of what's to come. The four men begin to walk.

BONIFACIO (O.S)

(shouts)

Eh... Mr. Murray... I'll see you in a weeks time, yeah? For that game of checks.

Bonifacio LAUGHS and then COUGHS. Murray walks with the other men.

They pass by MARVIN, 56, another one of the inmates. He is a large, bald man, with tattoos on both arms. He stands by the iron bars of his cell, and grips them forcefully.

Marvin looks into Murray's eyes and nods. Murray leans towards the Reverend.

MURRAY

That's Marvin. He killed one of the guards while he was trying to escape.

The Reverend walks in silence.

They continue to walk in silence. They pass by another inmate, BASSETT, 22. He is thin and worn-out with sunken eyes that make him appear more like a skeleton than a person. He sits on his cot, arms resting on his knees.

BASSETT

Murray!

The four men stop and look at Bassett. Bassett stands up and walks towards the four men.

BASSETT (CONT'D)

Tell 'em they best put their hands up when I goes up.

Bassett smiles wickedly. He raises his right arm and points a finger gun at him. Murray smirks. Sargeant Hokenson then tugs at Murray's arm and they continue to walk.

Murray leans towards the Reverend once more.

MURRAY

He killed a bank manager while robbing the bank because the manager wouldn't put his hands up when he told 'em to.

REVEREND LEONARD

Why are you telling me this?

Murray looks at the Reverend and says nothing. The remainder of the inmates sit silently on their cots.

The four men reach the steel bolt door. Sargeant Hokenson struggles in the attempt to unclip his I.D from his breast pocket.

REVEREND LEONARD

Murray, please, accept the salvation I'm offering. You can be forgiven for all you've done. I can help you.

Sargeant Hokenson finally taps his I.D on the security pad. A BUZZER on the other side of the door is heard. Then the LOUD CLICK of the bolts pulling back.

Murray looks at the door.

MURRAY
So you want to help...

REVEREND LEONARD
Yes.

The final CLICK of the last bolt resonates. The door opens slightly. The Young Guard grabs hold of the steel door and opens it with a GRUNT.

MURRAY
(uncertain)
So then, if I don't repent now,
I'll go to hell?

REVEREND LEONARD
Yes, Murray. But I can save you.

Murray hesitates, and looks into the Reverend's eyes. He is obviously fearful.

MURRAY
Do you know what we call this
place?

REVEREND LEONARD
(beat)
I've heard it's called Limbo Lane.

Murray nod.

MURRAY
Do you know why?

REVEREND LEONARD
It's pretty self-explanatory.

MURRAY
(beat)
I don't want to die, Len.

REVEREND LEONARD
I know, Mur...

The two stare at each other. The guards stand back observing them. Murray's eyes fill with tears.

MURRAY
I'm not a bad man, Len...

Murray CRIES. He attempts to compose himself but fails.

REVEREND LEONARD
I know, Mur... Let me help you now.
Let me do this last thing for you,
so we can meet once more in the
after life.

Murray pauses, then looks up in anger.

MURRAY
If I don't repent to you... I'll go
to Hell...

The Reverend continues to stare at Murray.

MURRAY (CONT'D)
So... what happens to you then?

REVEREND LEONARD
(confused)
I'm sorry?

MURRAY
What happens if I end up going to
Hell?
(beat)
What happens to you *then*?

Murray turns and walks towards Sargeant Hokenson. The
Sargeant grabs Murray's arm once more and walks him through
the door.

The Reverend stands paralyzed. The Young Guard glances at
the Reverend, then pulls the steel door shut.

The LOUD CLICK of the bolts locking in place resonate. The
Reverend is left in Limbo Lane with the other inmates. He
stares at the steel door.

FADE OUT.

THE END