



JOHNNY MAHAFFEY SAYS: "To live or not to live; that is not the question."

Like Sysyphus condemned by the gods to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain, where the stone would--each time--fall back of its own weight; so too, do we prisoners share the punishment of futility.

Hopeless labors to go unnoticed.

Schadenfreudistic little people plan it that way. Forcing their want of imagined justices and Ivory Towers on others, unhappy with their own lot--taking pleasure in the pains of others that suffer, especially those suffering the most. It's inhumane, and a dis-service to society. Though, schadenfreude itself is hopelessly and inherently unavoidable, as with all human emotions. The downfall of an enemy, or the scandal of a proper; have a way of making one feel a sense of psuedo-justice, Fate at work, Karma! The emotion is highly complex.

I speak of this, because I see a guy that--I have not exactly liked, as he conducts himself outside my moral range--starving himself in want of death. He looks like death too, now that he's wasted himself to almost nothing but a skeleton.... The prison is aware of the situation, and at some point, if the prison church chaplain cannot sway him to eat--I have no doubt he will be strapped into a chair and force-fed like the California prisoners that sued their state over such inhumane feeding: a tube so violently installed as to cause damage, in hope of giving the prisoner something to think about before considering another hunger strike, or suicide.

This particular prisoner was just divorced by his wife.
He's made the choice not to go on.

I can have empathy--though my wife did not divorce me upon my incarceration, she did commit profuse adultery that led me to divorce her. I still love her, as with most exes. It's hard to be alone in here, because your solitary existence is under a giant magnifying glass, directed back at you. You feel like Sysyphus moving forward through each day, and just as you feel like you might get somewhere--everything comes crashing back down.

I forgave my wife long ago, she moved on--something I'd asked her to do because I loved her and wanted her to be happy. Some guys in here refuse to free their loves. I used to be that way, when I was younger and naive. Thinking love was forever. But, truth

is: it's not always. Sometimes we have to be thankful for what time we get with our love. Better to have so many weeks, months, or years, and lost; than to never have known. As cliché as that may sound. I guess what I'm saying is that I don't regret any ex. I'm glad to have known them, and I'm thankful for what time I did have. Maybe one day I'll get to love again, and I think if I do, things will work out finally.

But, that's the romantic in me speaking.

Therein being one of my rocks--a boulder--a thought and hope for love, that keeps rolling back over me. If you take Homer's word for it, Sisyphus was the wisest--and most prudent--of mortals. Then why keep pushing the rock? Why keep looking for love? Keep living under such inconsequential circumstance? It's said also that Sisyphus, while near death, wanted to test his wife's love; asking her to cast his unburied body into the middle of the public square. Then, shocked by her compliance, he asked Pluto permission for returning to this world from the underworld, so that he may chastise his wife for her obedience. I asked my wife to move on, so how could I chastise her for doing so? She's happy today, I'm sure; and would not have been so if she'd stayed.... This is my lot, my fall. My boulder to push.

Though at times, like today, when the prison had a father type day in which families came to the chapel with the prisoners' kids--I regret that I'm single. They had games for fathers and sons, a father daughter dance, and pizza and refreshments for everyone. A prisoner can be part of their children's lives. I didn't think such a thing was possible before I came to prison. But, that's because as a nonprisoner that had never been a felon before, I believed the stereotypes that authorities portray of prisoners.

Ignorant, I was, of the truth.

Prisoners are people, 95 plus percent of them getting out; they are everyone's neighbors, food servers, mechanics, etc. They (we), are everywhere--think "Fight Club". Not to be disregarded. The grandiloquent nose snubbing of self-perceived elite towards prisoners, and those deemed "criminal" is only a sign of self-doubt. Everyone knows what rests inside themselves. There's thin lines between politicians and criminals, cops and cons--many have duplicitous existences, as with most humans. Law-abiding is a relative term: not only does what constitutes an upstanding denizen vary from time to time, country to country; but it varies from state to state, county to county. A decent, and virtuous person in one place, can be considered a complete transgressor in another. Laws, religion, and local societal norms dictate which is which. The people at the bottom, keep the people at the top feeling safe in their position.

At each moment when Sisyphus reaches the peak, he is showing that he is stronger in his virtues, he is stronger than his rock. It is the mountain that rolls it back. It becomes a point that it is not the crossing, but the climb he works for....

