

The Sentence: Oz Justice

by Bob *Wednesday, Jun 21 2006, 6:38am*

international / prose/poetry / literature

Bob's barrister nudged him in the ribs as a signal to stand. The jury had returned with its verdict. Bob anticipated their decision as one would an echo – guilty as charged! The Judge shifted into automatic and delivered the sentence – three years with not less than twelve months to be served for his third offence, possession of marijuana.

Bob was escorted to an office by an acutely intelligent police officer, his IQ made apparent by the way he gripped Bob's arm. After due process Bob was taken to a prison van and handcuffed to another prisoner. Bob watched the clerk sign for the human items give a copy to the prison driver then walk off with a standard issue public service clipboard pressed tightly under his arm. The driver, taking a quick dispassionate glance at the forlorn faces inside the van, slammed the van door shut and fastened the padlock leaving the prisoners in the dim twilight of a small electric bulb.

Bob mused over his fate as the van made its way to the Bay, his twenty-first birthday was only two months away; he would come of age in jail.

The van arrived at the Bay where Bob and the other prisoners were again processed and fitted with government issue attire. After a briefing on prison etiquette, delivered by one of the senior screws, the new arrivals were allotted cells in various sections of the jail.

Bob was relegated to Wing 13 of the MTC. One of the junior screws escorted Bob to slot No. 6. Noticing the numb look on Bob's face the young screw tried to lift Bob's spirits by informing him that eighty percent of the jails' inhabitants were "druggies!" Bob wondered whether that figure included some of the screws.

The young screw showed Bob into his new home. Bob was appalled; he just flopped onto the iron cot exhausted from the day's ordeal. The screw slammed the steel door shut making a loud clang that resounded in Bob's head until he fell asleep.

Bob was wakened early next morning by the successive banging of steel doors being opened; it was morning muster. Bob fell into the file of shuffling prisoners making their way to the yard. The prisoners formed two rows facing a senior screw who was holding a standard issue public service clipboard.

As the screw called the names Bob glanced along the row at the faces of the other inmates. They were all present, Palaeolithic, Neanderthal, early Cro-Magnon and a few gorillas in man suits. Bob decided to keep to himself as much as possible.

Two months passed during which time Bob busied himself with a rough routine he'd created, callisthenics in his cell before breakfast; walking back and forth in the small yard like a rat trapped in a corridor; catching up on his 'reading' in the small prison library; yoga postures and attempted meditation at night before retiring. In general, building up to a nervous breakdown.

Bob was in better spirits today, however, as it was his birthday. A young screw gave Bob his mail,

which contained cards from his 'friends' who apologised for not visiting. An ex-girlfriend sent him a copy of 'Papillon', with love; a letter from his mother made no mention of his birthday. Bob threw the mail into the nearest bin and headed for the amenities block to take a piss.

Bob was standing at the urinal absorbed by the stream of piss jetting against the stained stainless steel trough. He paid little attention to the sound of shuffling feet approaching behind him.

A hairy tattooed arm suddenly gripped Bob from behind gagging his mouth; Bob instinctively recoiled but two other lags grabbed each arm and dragged him over to a small wooden bench. Bob tried desperately to resist but was completely overpowered. His attackers pushed his torso across the bench pinning his face hard against the mouldy wood. Horrible pain and perverted sexuality saturated the air; unshaven stubble pricked his back and neck. Bob's mind shrilled as each attacker had his way.

The hooter sounded signalling evening muster. Its sound found Bob lying alone semi-conscious on the piss-house floor. Bob knew he must make the muster, there'd be too much trouble and certain reprisals if he didn't. He slowly picked himself off the floor and stumbled into a cubicle. Bob wiped the muck from inside his thighs with toilet paper; he pulled his pants up and limped to the muster.

The role was called. The prisoners proceeded to file indoors for the night. Bob looked up at a large picture of the Queen and Prince Philip hanging above the doorway. He hadn't noticed the faint smiles on their faces before.

As the prisoners filed past the screws a senior screw approached Bob and slapped him on the back, "I hear its your twenty-first birthday today", he said, "many happy returns of the day."

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-235.html>