A Crying Shame

by Nerve_Itch

Summary

A hunt goes horribly, horribly wrong, and for once, Hannibal isn't to blame.

Mostly.

Will screams.

The nerves on the soles of his foot recoil, and then cling to the metal of the nail as it drives through toughened skin, and then, then each nerve rushes its impulse to the pain centre of Will’s brain. There’s a fire of synapses; growing and sputtering as the nail splits the meat of his foot, and Will’s throat opens in reflex. It’s a gaping, roaring sound.

For a second, it’s a distraction.

Then, the point of the nail breaches the upper arch of his foot, and if he looks – and, he is looking, straining his neck against the belt holding it down – he can see the red pooling out of it, draping over the stretched skin in ribbons, soaking into the wood beneath.

It’s less the sensations of his flesh being ground into with metal and a hammer and a grimly smiling stranger that’s got him immersed in his own hopeless distress. It’s that he knows what has to come next.

While his right leg forms an endless spasm, the heel of his unbroken foot is pulled against the wood he’s laid against. Metal rests against the inner arch, and there is no movement he can make that will stop this.
“You’re doing it…back to front,” he tells the hammer, poised to make the next impact into his skin. He’s burning up, biting at the inside of his mouth to distract from the inevitable.

The iron penetrates, and his eyes are prickling, stinging, heating, and…

Oh, no.

The first drizzle of saline spills from his eyes, and his gut has become a tight and coiled thing. His groin is tensing and no.

The second nail drives in, and now his tears are a rivulet heading towards his ears, and there’s the splot, splot, of wetness drilling against the wood below and fuck.

He didn’t used to have this problem.

This problem is, that his dick is swelling behind the insubstantial white cloth wrapped around his middle, and in his prone position, there is no way that this is going to go unnoticed.

This, he blames Hannibal for.

He’s distracted, for a moment, by a twist of the metal and Jesus Christ he can feel the muscles in his foot tearing, thread by thread, and the roar from his throat is drowning out the calmly spoken observations about his… predicament.

He doesn’t blame Hannibal for the detail that he’s experiencing a slow execution at the hands of a killer he’d become preoccupied with since they crossed the border into Mexico. That, Will accepts, is all on him. A fixation with the poetry of this new killer, ever since seeing the first reports in the press of a victim speared by arrows and adorned in iconographic detritus. A concept of biblical righteousness, and a hunt gone awry.

Horribly, inescapably awry.

But right now, no amount of meditative breathing or clenching and unclenching of his fists is slowing the thumping, thundering pulse behind his dick.

The agony, it’s forming a melee of heat. There’s the sound of humming from his intended victim – his now aggressor – and a scraping of metal against metal as bolts twist against the nails in his feet.

He needs to stop crying.

He’s grinding out a curse between his teeth, only the curse is the name Hannibal, and it’s a name that sits raw on his tongue as the cloth across his dick dampens with sweat.

It didn’t used to happen this way. Before Hannibal, if Will could ever comprehend such a time, Will could swear that he didn’t feel the swell of a lump in his throat and a leaking of his tear ducts spilling before he could even think of coming.

His legs are shunted into a fold and his vision whitens. He strains to look, through the fog of damp around his eyes, and he’s watching hinges and metal clicking into place as his feet are locked onto the spine of the wood and of course, of course it would be the martyr’s pose.

He thinks that when Hannibal finds out about this, sees his body laid out in this way, he’ll appreciate the artistry of it.

Hannibal, Hannibal likes it when he cries. It was hardly a surprise to learn that, the first time; an
invocation of Will’s distress which led to the two of them synchronising in release, punctuated by a thumb pressed hard into an open wound.

Hannibal had learned from this; he had treated this in much the same way as he handled all of his treasures; he cultivated it. Manoeuvred their intimacies until they didn’t happen without suffering, and then sufferance.

Will accepted it, not knowing any alternative strategy to it. Held this new relationship with his own tears as something between mere tolerance and true enjoyment. Until, as with everything with Hannibal, the two states – the crying, and the wretched, painful arousal, could no longer exist separately within his skin.

So now, with Will’s wrists pinned outward and the threat of a nail hovering over the palm of his right hand, he’s feeling himself leaking. Feels his hair matting at the sides of his head and he’s still chewing the inside of his mouth because he can’t let this out, not here and not like this.

He knows, by now, that it’s too late.

In every sense of the sentiment.

The metal tickles at his palm and it should have pierced the skin, by now.

Will looks sideways, sees the bloodied fingers pinching the nail, sees the head of the hammer and a blur of the face behind it.

“You’re a strange one,” the voice is telling him, and this, this Will knows is true. “You’re not supposed to enjoy this,” says the voice, and it sounds almost amused, in a brittle, curious way.

Will shuts his eyes, feels his throat contracting with a sob that won’t, can’t come out.

Fingers run tacky across his sweating hand, pulling at the strap holding it down and snapping it back down.

Just a sting.

Not enough to pull his mouth open and pull the drilling pressure behind his dick out of him.

Not yet.

Will tries to think of Hannibal doing this to him, instead. Wonders, as his back seizes and his legs shake, how long Hannibal would keep him like this. If he’d go through with it, all the way; watch as the cross got elevated and the weight of his own body crushed the air from his lungs. It’s a comfort, almost.

The voice is murmuring something else, prayer-like and inaudible against the rushing of blood in Will’s ears, and then the nail breaks in. Threads of sinew snap and recoil, and nerves sprint to the thalamus to remind Will just how badly this is going for him as the wood beneath his knuckles splits.

His throat convulses; heaving, wracking sobs that lack the air to carry sound, and it’s that – the release of that choked cry no longer trapped – that prompts his swollen dick to spill. Lurching, barely confined behind the fabric, and now he’s sticky, gasping out breaths and feeling his cheeks reddening with the damn shame of what he’s just done. He shakes, each vibration of his muscles grinding flesh against the metal pinning him to the wood, and he can’t stop, now.
He’s only spent in one sense, and yet his eyes are still forcing tears out of him.

The voice in the room with him, it’s laughing now; compounding his wretchedness as though it knows. It understands.

Will does not want to be understood. He wants Hannibal with him here, now, instead. Wants the monster who loves him, and not this new facsimile who’d see him dead without celebration, without cherishing.

The voice is telling him something about cleaning, about fixing, and now only one of Will’s hands can form a fist as the cloth is unknotted from his waist and shaken off him.

The voice mutters something about dirt, dirty, and Will’s lying, skewered, and he knows he’s softened, now, but he’s still trembling. The tension inside him hasn’t left, and he knows how wrong this is, and he knows how he’d like to blame Hannibal for the way he’s more preoccupied with this than with his increasingly imminent death, and yet.

Something wet and cold wraps around the inside of his thighs, wipes around his balls, over his stomach and his dick and Christ, Will wants to pull himself off this damn cross to make it stop.

And then he’s not even sure that it’s the stopping that he cares about. It’s less about the what, than about the who. He’d accept this, he thinks, from Hannibal.

The arch he makes with his back when a wrap of dry fabric is pulled beneath him, it pulls screaming out of him again. Heaves the skin and scrapes it against iron. The cloth is knotted at his stomach, and those blood-crisped fingers are at the scar of his gut.

“Of course you like this,” the voice tells him. Will forces his breathing into a steadier rhythm. Less frantic, more controlled. Less wet. “This isn’t the first time you’ve been a martyr.”

It isn’t entirely a question, but Will tries to make the word no push from his lungs as metal rattles around the space. He tries to savour the sensation of his unpierced hand before this new killer’s picture can be completed, and finds no justification for himself remaining in any way whole within it.

“No,” says another voice, saying what Will couldn’t, and now, now Will is confused.

There’s light, so much light, and Will finds the idea of holy ascension a little premature, when he’s still decorated by the straps to accompany the nails spiked into him. He’s not complete.

He dares to imagine that the light is some beacon of salvation.

“He is more than familiar with the concept,” says this second voice and now his hope is manifest, and Will has never hungered for the source of those words more fully than in this moment.

His lightbringer.

Hannibal’s voice advances, and Will can’t see from this angle, not with his throat pinned and his eyes blurred from water.

“Though you are an unworthy cause for it,” says Hannibal, and the final syllable is paired with the unmistakeable crack of vertebrae.

Then, Hannibal’s hands are on his face, stroking at the scar and touching the damp around Will’s eyes.
Will tries to speak, then. Tries to convey the gratitude, the desperation, the livid wracking pain that was no one else’s but Hannibal’s to create in him, and all that happens when he opens his throat is a fresh gasp that sounds too much like a cry.

“‘I know,’” is all Hannibal says in answer to it.

He’s given a sheet of wood to bite as Hannibal works the nails from the cross they’re fixed to, and he drinks in each spoken admonishment and accolade as Hannibal wraps bandages around the iron protrusions from his feet and hand.

He nods when Hannibal tells him that much of this can repair, in time. That he will remove the metal, when they are away from this place. Somewhere hygienic. Somewhere that is theirs.

He holds Will’s right hand in his, where the blood is oozing into the bandages and the pain is giving way to numbness, and he tells Will that he fears for the damage done, here. Will picks the wood from his mouth, from where his teeth have bitten imprints into it.

“It’s fine,” he tells Hannibal, as he’s lifted from the cross into a slump across Hannibal’s shoulders. It’s fine.

“It’s not fine, and that is okay,” Hannibal tells him, that warm, impenetrably knowing voice. “But we are both of us alive in this moment, Will. You do not need to keep up those barriers against your emotions. Not with me.”

Will agrees, trying and failing to make a loop of his arms to hold onto Hannibal with.

He’s survived this, after all.

Hannibal scoops an arm beneath Will’s legs, lifting him fully and carrying him towards where the light is too bright, too welcoming, and Will expects the surge of emotions as they come; an overwhelming tide of neurological responses he doesn’t yet know how to name. He’s saved, in the most tentative sense of the word. And with the realisation, and with Hannibal’s encouragement, he feels his eyes growing damp as he’s carried towards the home of his salvation.

“You can let it all go, Will,” Hannibal tells him. “You’re safe now, with me.”

Will knows that he isn’t, and yet the moisture swells and then spills as he closes his eyes on Hannibal’s smile.