

Suffer a Wytche

by

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EXT. NEAR THE JAIL GATES - DAY

Autumn leaves are seen falling from a nearby maple.

CONSTANCE (17) is locked in a tight form-fitting cage, so tight that she cannot move.

The rusty shackles she wears have abraded through her skin, leaving festering rings around her extremities.

The cage hangs from an iron arm that juts from the prison wall. A sign hangs above her cage that reads "Wytche".

It is cold. You can see her breath, yet she is dressed only in her tattered linen shift. She shivers uncontrollably.

CHILDREN mock her and pelt her with rotten food and rocks. Some of the projectiles bounce off the bars of the cage with a deafening clatter, most however land punishing, bruising blows on her helpless body.

CHILD ONE
Satan's whore!

CHILD TWO
Filthy evil witch!

The second child throws a rather hefty rock that impacts Constance's swollen abdomen.

Had she not been restrained, she would have doubled over from the painful blow to her pregnant womb.

A trickle of blood is seen tracing a trail down her unclothed thigh.

The pain is too great and she lapses into unconsciousness.

EXT. NEAR THE JAIL GATES - NIGHT

Constance still hangs in her cage.

The wind howls and driving rain soaks her to the bone.

Shivering uncontrollably, she struggles to find a position in the cage to conserve body heat, but none can be found in its tight confines.

Across the plaza she can see light filtering out of a home. There, in comfort inside a fire burns warmly in the hearth. The family that lives there can be seen gathering around their table for a meal.

Constance licks droplets of rain from the rusty bars of her cage to sate her thirst.

EXT. NEAR THE JAIL GATE - MORNING

The rain the night before has settled to frost on every surface.

Constance is asleep or unconscious. In her state there is very little difference betwixt the two.

The JAILER exits the jail gate. He carries a bucket. He operates the pawl on the winch used to haul Constance's cage aloft.

The cage falls to the cobblestones with a deafening clatter.

Constance stirs, not yet fully conscious.

JAILER

Got ta clean ya up puppet! Can't
have ya smelling like the baker's
ass before the magistrate!

He unceremoniously tosses the filthy water in the bucket on her.

Constance screams.

The jailer laughs which bares his brown, fetid teeth.

He unlocks the cage, and grabs her by her shackles.

Constance; unable to stand, is drug across the cobblestone plaza to the courthouse, diagonal from the jail.

INT. COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The jailer drags Constance into the chambers. He deposits her in a heap on the floor before the magistrate's bench.

The Magistrate ROBERT ABERNATHY (60's) scowls down at her.

ABERNATHY
Constance Alden...
(pokes a bony finger at
her)
Dost thou admit thy guilt of the
sin of witchery and fornication
with the devil? Admit that thou
doth carry the devil's seed in thy
wretched womb and thou shalt
receive our mercy!

From the floor, Constance peers at the prosecutor's table
and there finds Barrister TERRENCE BREWSTER(mid 40's), his
visage the very picture of smugness.

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)
(forcefully)
I bid thee now, Speak!

The jailer steps forward and kicks her.

JAILER
Speak when the nice man asks you
to puppet!

Constance fights through the pain. Amidst the clatter of
her chains, she forces disused arms to lift her torso from
the floor. She lifts her head and stares defiantly at
Abernathy.

ABERNATHY
(harshly)
"Speak! For on the morrow thou
shalt die regardless, but the
manner of thy death can still be
of thy choosing! Repent and mercy
shall be accorded thee."

Though she'd not drank in days, Constance still summons all
of her remaining might and spits in Abernathy's direction.

The jailer's boot slams into her face. The blow knocks her
unconscious.

FADE TO MEMORY
SEQUENCE:

INT. ALDEN FARMHOUSE - DAY

Constance dressed in mourning black sobs. She pulls the
funeral shroud across the face of her FATHER and begins the
final stitches to sew the shroud closed.

CONSTANCE

Oh poppa! Why didst thou leave me
all alone in this place?

There is a knock at the door.

Constance mops her tears, sets the needle aside and goes to
answer the door.

When she does, her neighbors Brewster and Abernathy wait
without.

The two men crowd their way into the door. They remove
their hats as they enter.

ABERNATHY

Miss Alden, accept our condolences
on the passing of thy father. We
are come with a proposal. I
beseech thee listen to my
brother-in-law, Barrister
Brewster's generous offer.

BREWSTER

As thou art perhaps aware, my
sainted wife is passed two winters
hence. Thou art amply sturdy and
well of child-bearing age, wouldst
thou consent to being my second
wife? We shall have many fine
children together.

Constance is dumbstruck. She composes herself and selects
her words with care.

CONSTANCE

Good Barrister, thank you for your
most kind offer. I do however beg
your temperance, as I am only just
in mourning cloth and my father's
burial shroud is not even yet sewn
to!

ABERNATHY

Yes dear child, of course. Take
thee thy time to mourn. My
brother-in-law and I shall return
anon!

Constance shows the two men to the door.

EXT. ALDEN FARM - CONTINUOUS

As the door closes behind them...

BREWSTER

I shall soon be the owner of this,
the most fecund farm in the entire
parish! There is no better land
than this astride Gooseberry
Creek! Not thy farm thither nor
even mine hither!

ABERNATHY

Aye Terrence, fine land it is...
but if she should decline thy
proposal?

BREWSTER

She would be mad!
(incredulous)
She wouldn't dare!

ABERNATHY

...and if?

BREWSTER

Cats can be skinned by more than
one means, my dear Magistrate!

EXT. THE FOREST - NIGHT

A dog's pained cries are heard echoing through the mist
shrouded forest.

Constance runs through the forest. She holds a candle
lantern aloft, seeking.

CONSTANCE

Hedy! What nonsense hath found
now? Come here thou, silly hound!

Constance continues her search through the dense foliage.

A final pained yelp is heard, a death yelp and nearby.

Constance breaks into a small clearing.

There she finds her lost dog, a bloody carcass pinned to a
tree with a knife.

She spins to flee and runs head-long into Brewster. He
stands uncomfortably close behind her.

He grabs her by the throat, lifts her off her feet & slams
her against the tree next to her dog.

BREWSTER

If thou wilt not give me that to
which I am entitled, then I shall
take it from thee by force! Both
thy father's farm and thy flower!

Brewster lifts her dress and rips off her knickers. He rapes her there held against the tree by her throat, next to the bloody carcass of her pet.

Constance screams and cries but there is no one to hear or help.

Brewster laughs as he bucks into her like an animal possessed.

FADE BACK TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Consciousness slowly returns.

Constance finds herself face down in the filthy straw of her cell.

As her senses return, she becomes aware that she is not alone.

Her tattered shift is lifted and the obese jailer lies upon her back like a greasy, stinking, furry blanket.

His dank breath and rotten teeth are mere inches from her ear. He grunts and ruts into her.

JAILER

C'mon puppet, you know your filthy
little quinnies likes a good
thorough rutting! Dun'it?

The rape continues - the jailer grunts like a beast. Sweat pours in rivulets down his face and drips off his nose onto the back of her neck.

Constance remains silent, enduring...

At length the jailer's had his fill. His flabby body stiffens and presses harder against her as he releases his noxious seed. His visage contorts into a twisted grimace as he emits guttural, inhuman grunts.

Finally sated he rises. He leaves her there, the unceremonious vessel for his ardor.

The keys are then heard as they rattle against the cell door.

Constance fights to straighten what is left of her shift. She pulls herself toward the corner. Once there she cowers into the corner and tries to find some rest.

A cricket chirps from the corner.

In the other corner, a rat happily munches upon some morsel.

She sleeps.

INT. JAIL CELL - MORNING

Constance is awoken to the sound of keys at her cell door. She does not stir.

The jailer enters and hoists her to her feet. He wraps his arms around her in a greasy, meat embrace.

JAILER
I'm gonna to miss you, my sweet!
(licks her face)
I'm 'specially gonna to miss the
special times us two've had
together! Eh, my puppet?

The jailer laughs and drags her from her cell...

INT. JAIL MAIN ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

The jailer hauls Constance up the uneven stone stairs into the room.

Present are Magistrate Abernathy, Barrister Brewster and PASTOR SMYTHERS.

ABERNATHY
This is thy final opportunity!
Confess thy crimes and receive our
mercy!

The Pastor raises his finger and begs a moment with the accused. He draws near to her, there in the jailer's burly embrace. He reaches forward and brushes a stray lock from her battered face.

PASTOR
(kindly)
Please my child, confess thy sins
and repent of them, that god shall
receive thy soul.

The pastor's face is soft with concern, for she and her father had been members of his flock.

CONSTANCE
(weakly croaking)
I'm sorry pastor, but I can not
confess to that which I have not
done!

Abernathy rushes forward. He shoves the pastor aside and his hand is drawn back like a club. He rains a blow down across her face. It rocks her head to the side and elicits a trickle of fresh blood from the corner of her mouth.

ABERNATHY
Stupid little girl! Thou shalt
have thy wish! No mercy will be
accorded unto thee!

Abernathy then addresses the jailer...

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)
Burn her at the stake!

PASTOR
I'm sorry, my dear.

The Barrister, Magistrate and Pastor turn and make their way out of the door.

As the door is opened, Constance struggles to shield her unaccustomed eyes from the light that glares through the opening.

ABERNATHY
(calling behind)
Come along, jailer...

JAILER
...seems a waste of such a wicked
li'l strumpet... Eh, puppet?

The jailer drags her through the brilliant portal into...

EXT. TOWN PLAZA - CONTINUOUS

The plaza is filled with rowdy TOWNSFOLK, come to see the spectacle.

The Barrister, Magistrate and Pastor push through the crowd, followed by the jailer as he drags his limp charge.

They pass a stump into which is driven an executioner's axe. This was to have been her mercy.

The air is cold and great clouds of steam rise from the mouths of the unruly crowd as they shout their disapproval at the convicted witch.

As they arrive at the stake, the jailer removes the shackles from Constance's wrists.

Her respite from them is however only fleeting.

The jailer uses his corpulent belly to press her back into the rough hewn wood of the stake. He lifts her hands and secures each wrist in the shackles that are secured there above her head.

The jailer then kneels and removes one of the shackles from her ankles. He passes the chain behind the stake then attempts to re-secure it.

Before he can however, Constance brings her knee up with all the strength she has left to muster.

The move catches the jailer off guard. It busts his nose and sends him sprawling onto his posterior on the cobblestones.

The crowd laughs.

The jailer does not share their mirth. He mops the blood from his nose with his sleeve and struggles to haul his prodigious girth back atop his feet.

JAILER
Bleeding whore!

The jailer surges forward. He drives his meaty fist with all his might into the defenseless girl's midriff.

All wind is knocked from Constance's sails. She drops like a rock, stopped only by the manacles that hold her hands aloft.

A fresh flow of blood runs down her inner thighs.

The jailer, kneels to re-secure the shackle and sees the blood flowing. He laughs.

JAILER (CONT'D)
I guess that one found home, eh
puppet?

The jailer then stacks bundles of sticks around her feet. Cold, in pain and afraid Constance shivers uncontrollably. The jailer sees it and again laughs.

JAILER (CONT'D)
(mocking)
No worries puppet, things'll warm
up anon!

He then pours some lamp oil from a nearby bucket onto the sticks, before he piles more substantial firewood on top.

When satisfied, he steps back and retrieves a torch.

The magistrate steps forward, unfurls a scroll and reads from it...

ABERNATHY
(addressing the crowd)
For the crimes of committing
witchcraft, consorting with
demons, fornicating with the very
devil himself and wielding the
unholy powers of hell against thy
neighbors, thou art sentenced
henceforth to burn at the stake
until thou art dead! May thy
death dissuade others from
following thy evil path!"

The kind-faced pastor then steps forward...

PASTOR
In the name of the father, the son
and the holy ghost, May god have
mercy on thy beleaguered soul oh
daughter of sin!

The pastor then steps aside. He prays silently to himself as he goes.

ABERNATHY
(to the jailer)
Light it!

The jailer steps forward. Again he grins his rotten toothed grin from ear to ear. He touches the torch to the kindling and the lamp oil springs into a smokey blaze.

TO CONSTANCE'S POV:

Constance looks down at the sooty flames. She struggles against the bonds that hold her. Futilely she tries to avoid the flames. It is to no avail.

The flames grow higher and higher.

Constance screams in pain. She surveys the crowd through the heat induced mirage.

At the forefront of the jeering crowd stands Terrance Brewster. The source of all of her woes.

She screams in anger and pain and struggles against the shackles that bind her within the heart of the fire.

CONSTANCE

I curse thee to hell Terrance
Brewster! I curse thee!

With the flames now licking higher, she struggles with renewed vigor against the chains and she feels them give slightly.

Through the flames, there still is Brewster. He laughs and points at her.

She feels the life force waning.

She summons the last that's left in her and struggles once more against the hateful chains.

This time, to her surprise she comes free.

She stumbles over the burning logs but regains her footing on the cobblestones. She reacquires her target, Terrance Brewster.

She rushes him. Her hands are pulled back, cocked to shove him off his feet, but she passes straight through him. As she does pass through him, for one instant she sees the scene through his eyes.

Angered, she turns to rush him again, this time from behind. Again she passes straight through him and again for the briefest of instants, she sees the scene through his eyes.

That rush brought her once again to the edge of the fire. She looks up.

There, still strapped to the stake was her body, motionless - her once coppery hair a smoldering mat - her once alabaster skin now charred and blistered.

Constance pauses for a moment confused by her predicament. She protracts her ethereal hands.

BREWSTER
(jubilant)
Serves a witch right! The evil hag
deserved no better!

Constance wheels about and closes on him. She draws her hand back to deliver a blow. As she swings for all she's worth, her hand again passes straight through and she stumbles forward into him.

FROM BREWSTER'S
PERSPECTIVE:

She can hear Brewster's inner voice.

BREWSTER (CONT'D)
Get out of me!

She possesses Brewster's body. She raises his hands and looks at them through his eyes. She looks around and explores this new perspective. Then sees it, there, tucked in Brewster's belt - a wheel lock pistol.

BREWSTER (CONT'D)
(inner voice)
Leave me foul spirit.

She draws the pistol and cocks it. She twists him about and brandishes the pistol at everyone nearby.

The gathered crowd recoils back from him. Then she forces him to hold the pistol to his chin. For moment she is intent on blowing his brains out.

An echoing voice is heard...

ABERNATHY
Terrence!?

She spins Brewster around to find the magistrate standing there. She lowers the gun instead on him!

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)
Terrence I beseech thee, stop!

She pulls the trigger.

The round strikes Abernathy in the middle of his face. His head explodes. Everyone nearby is covered in a crimson mist and gobs of grey matter.

She can feel the hands grabbing Brewster and hauling him to the ground.

She steps out of him, intent on a new target. There before her was the jailer - his visage a picture of confusion.

She steps into his hideous corpulent form. She scans the surroundings and looks for something. Then it comes into view - the bucket of lamp oil.

JAILER
(inner voice)
Wha' in blazes?

She smiles and so too does the jailer. He flashes the crowd his fetid, rotted, demented smile.

She lifts the bucket of oil over the jailer's head and forces him to douse himself with its contents.

The on-lookers stare on in astonishment as the jailer turns about and trundles into the fire.

Constance steps out of him as the flames begin flashing up his flabby legs.

He screams in bewildered pain.

Behind her she hears a comforting voice...

FATHER
Constance? Constance dear!

She turns and sees her father's ethereal form there standing across the plaza, bidding her come.

She walks at first, then runs into his waiting embrace. As his comforting arms enclose her there is a blinding flash...

...as she passes to the other side.

ROLL CREDITS: