



THE GREEN MILE #2

« ROLL ON TWO... »



1932, at Cold Mountain Penitentiary, Louisiana, United States of America.

There was that hum, like an old fridge kicking on, and the lights burned a little brighter. Our shadows stood out a little sharper, black shapes that climbed the wall and seemed to hover around the shadow of the chair like vultures. John drew in a sharp breath. His knuckles were white.

'Does it hurt yet?' Mrs. Detterick shrieked brokenly from against her husband's shoulder. 5
 'I hope it does! I hope it hurts like hell!' Her husband squeezed her. One side of his nose was bleeding, I saw, a narrow trickle of red working its way down into his narrow-gauge mustache. When I opened the paper the following March and saw he'd died of a stroke, I was about the least surprised man on earth.

Brutal stepped into John 's field of vision. He touched John's shoulder as he spoke. 10
 That was irregular, but of the witnesses, only Curtis Anderson knew it, and he did not seem to remark it. Brutal, who died of a heart attack about twenty-five years later was a good man. My friend. Maybe the best of us. He had no trouble understanding how a man could simultaneously want to go and still be terrified of the trip.

'John Coffey, you have been condemned to die in the electric chair, sentence passed by a jury of your peers and imposed by a judge of good standing in this state. God save the people of this state. Do you have anything to say before sentence is carried out?' 15

John wet his lips again, then spoke clearly. Six words. 'I'm sorry for what I am.'
 'You ought to be!' the mother of the two dead girls screamed. 'Oh you monster, you ought to be! YOU DAMN WELL OUGHT TO BE!' 20


John's eyes turned to me. I saw no resignation in them, no hope of heaven, no dawning peace. How I would love to tell you that I did. How I would love to tell myself that. What I saw was fear, misery, incompleteness, and incomprehension. They were the eyes of a trapped and terrified animal. I thought of what he'd said about how Wharton had gotten Cora and Kathe Detterick off the porch without rousing the house: He kill them with they love. That's how it is every day. All over the world.

Brutal took the new mask from its brass hook on the back of the chair, but as soon as John saw it and understood what it was, his eyes widened in horror. He looked at me, and now I could see huge droplets of sweat standing out on the curve of his naked skull. 25

'Please, boss, don't put that thing over my face,' he said in a moaning little whisper. 'Please don't put me in the dark, don't make me go into the dark, I's afraid of the dark.' 30

'All right, John,' I murmured.
 Brutal put the mask back, checked the strap, then stood back. I waited for him to speak, but he didn't. As he crossed his hands behind his back and stood at parade rest, I knew that he wouldn't. Perhaps couldn't. I didn't think I could, either, but then I looked at John 's terrified, weeping eyes and knew I had to. Even if it damned me forever, I had to. 35

'Roll on two,' I said in a dusty, cracking voice I hardly recognized as my own. 40



1. Give the name of all characters.
 - Define their function in the story
2. When was the document published?
3. When is the situation happening?
4. Where is the situation taking place?
 - Give all possible details.
5. What is John's situation? What is he accused of?
6. What is the guards' behavior towards John?
7. Who is the narrator?
 - Why is it important?
8. Focus on the feelings.
 - Give all possible details concerning the characters' feelings. What does it reveal about their personality?

Stephen KING, *The Green Mile*, 1996