

Prison le Devil

Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the most notorious prison in France, the Prison Le Devil. Here we keep only the most hardened criminals, those who have been found guilty and sentenced to a horrible death. You will find people from all walks of life here. Some may even look like your neighbors and friends.

You have picked a particularly exciting day for a visit. We have something almost unheard of taking place here today. Three of our most notorious prisoners have been granted a pardon and I, as a representative of the king, am here to deliver it to the inmates. You see, by law, the king of the country can issue a pardon to anyone he might choose to. And he has chosen to do so today for these very fortunate individuals. The pardon comes as the result of someone stepping forward to take on the responsibility of the crime and take the punishment himself. Now, do understand this, the one taking on the punishment is not guilty of any crime, he has just volunteered to take the punishment, so that the convicted felon may go free and pursue his life. It is truly an exciting thing that is taking place here today. I am so glad you are here.

Let's visit our first inmate. He is here in cell number 47291. Let's give him the good news, shall we? Knock, knock..... Excuse me sir, but I have some very good news to share with you. As representative of the King, I bear this news for you...

Shut up and leave me alone! I don't want to hear from you or your kind. I have no desire to know anything about the king or anything he might want to do. And who are you anyway? I don't recognize you, and would actually prefer that you just go on your way and leave me alone. I don't care what kind of news you have or who it concerns, I have my own life to live and am just fine without your drivel and nonsense. Do you understand me or do I have to spell it out more plainly. Go away and never come back. Leave me alone. I don't want anything that you might have to offer. I never invited you to come here in the first place. Life was better before you came along and tried to ruin it. So do you understand? Go Away! (He then closes the cell door).

I am so sorry that you had to see that. I don't understand why he was so angry and hurtful, but I guess there is nothing we can do. As representative of the king, my job is to present the pardon and explain how it works. But if they reject it, the law says there is nothing that I can do to force them to take it. He will be stuck forever in that cell. What a pity. He was offered a wonderful option. Maybe we can come back another day and offer it again. Hope he doesn't die before we get a chance to tell him the good news again. Well, let's move on to the next person on my list. Prisoner number 6378. This cell right here. Let's see if anybody is at home.

Knock, knock..... Excuse me sir, but as a representative of the king I have some very good news to share with you. I bring you a pardon direct from the king himself. It grants you freedom to leave this cell and live life again. What do you think of that?

A pardon you say? Well how about that. It sounds too good to be true and I'm sure it is. A pardon from the king, huh? Well I can assure you that there is no such thing as a king. I have never personally seen one and I can assure you that neither has anyone else in this dungeon. The king. Really! You expect me to take your word, someone who I don't even know, someone who could be from almost anywhere, telling me I'm free. Hah. What a bunch of malarkey. How can you expect me to believe in a king, when one has never been here in the prison visiting any of us. If there is a king, let him come here and personally hand me a pardon, then maybe I'll believe that there is one, but who's to say even then that he is real? I don't believe in your so-called king. You believe all you want, just leave me out of your imaginary world of make believe. Just go your way now and leave me alone. Hah, just about the time I thought I had heard everything, here comes some fool trying to make me believe in a king that can issue pardons. Good bye.

Now I didn't expect that, did you? How narrow minded can you be? The king is very real and so is his pardon. But again, I cannot force him to believe in the king and accept the pardon. I just hope he changes his mind before it is too late.

Well, we have another on our list. It is prisoner number 33879. Right here. I wonder how he will react. Let's see. Knock, knock.....Excuse me sir, but I have some very good new for you. The king has found someone to pay for your crime and I am bringing you the offer of a lifetime. This sheet of paper grants you a full pardon and immediate release from this prison. Would you like it?

Let me see the fine print on that paper. Hmmmmmmmm. I have been really cleaning up my cell here. Did you notice how bright and shiny the floor is? Why, you could eat of my floor. It's not like most of the other cells around here. Their floors are a mess, with rats and mice and stuff. But mine, now that's another story. Oh, and I clean each day and dust all of the rocks in the walls. No one has ever seen a cell as shiny as this one. This takes a lot of work you know, cleaning and keeping things clean like this. I put a lot of effort into this and it would be such a waste to just walk away from it all. This cell cleaning is my life. It has become my obsession, and I believe that one day the Warden will come down here and notice how clean my cell is and will give me release from this cell. That is a sure thing to me. Yours is just a story. Sorry, I gotta go with my gut, and my gut tells me that I need to keep up the good work and keep my cell as clean as I can. Sure, it's not perfect, but you gotta admit, it is pretty impressive looking. Hey, thanks for coming by. It was good talking with you. If you see the Warden, tell him what you saw down here, will ya.

This has not been the day I expected. Three wonderful full pardons granted by the king himself, and not one acceptance out of the bunch. I know the king will continue

to issue pardons, and I, as his representative, will continue to deliver the good news. I hope things are better next time.

We see a story like this one and scratch our heads and say to ourselves, "How stupid, how ignorant." And yet the story plays out like this every day. God grants each of us a pardon from our sin. God takes sin very seriously and has attached the death penalty to all of those who are found guilty. And we all, all of humanity, have been found guilty of sin and therefore we are all on death row, awaiting our execution. But Jesus stepped out of time and eternity and offered to pay the price for our sin. His death on the cross was sufficient for all, and as a result, God has issued and offered each of us a full pardon from the death penalty. How many of us react the way these three inmates have. What a pity. They could have all gone free. And so can each one of us.