

# The Hermit

by George Albert Leddy

**THIS IS THE TALE THE HERMIT TOLD  
TO HIS DOG, HIS GUN, AND HIS KNIFE;  
OF A LOVE, A HATE, AND A BITTER WRONG;  
A DEATH— AND A WASTED LIFE.**

*The Hermit with a wrinkled brow, and weather-beaten face;  
His unkempt beard, his knatted hair, his slow, and weary pace;  
Now in his cabin, dark and cold, no loving voice to cheer;  
He looks back o'er his wasted life—he knows the end is near.*

*He sees the many happy days, and Loved-ones he has known;  
He sees the many sorrows, in the swift years that have flown.  
His only pals: his faithful Dog, his Rifle, and his Knife;  
And there alone, he tells them—of a lonely, wasted life:*

Ah yes, I'll tell to you a tale; a tale you've never heard.  
I know you'll understand me, for there's truth in every word.  
I'll start back in my younger days, the days I knew but joy;  
The Hermit, old and haggard now, was then a fair-haired boy;

And loved a winsome little Miss, with eyes of heaven's blue.  
And then, one day our Country called—for noble sons, and true.  
With sword and musket by my side, I marched away to war.  
With kisses, sweet, she vowed she'd wait for me, till all was o'er.

Then came the day on battlefields, 'mid deadly shot and shell;  
Where Comrades fought for victory—till 'neath their flag they fell.  
I've seen them dying on the field, I've listened to them pray;  
For Glory and for Liberty—while life's blood ebbed away.

And there my Brother, whom I loved, was ever by my side;  
Until one day I missed him, and I thought that he had died.  
With blinding tears and aching heart, I sought him 'mong the slain.  
I thought of Mother, old and gray—she'd wait for him in vain.

But when the cry of "Sacred Peace!" went ringing through the land;  
And home again, our soldier boys, a gallant little band.  
And 'though our spirits seemed most gay, much sorrow filled our mind;  
The thoughts of struggles, hard and cruel—and dear ones left behind.

But lo—the Brother, once beloved, and whom I'd long thought dead;  
Deserted from the rank-and-file, and from Old Glory, fled.  
He told my Sweetheart how I'd fell, my wish before I died:  
That he would come back home again, and claim her for his Bride.

And for my sake, my Sweetheart dear, my Brother's Bride became;  
And for a long, and dreary year, she suffered pain and shame.  
Starvation stared her in the face, and wrecked her life as well.  
Deserting coward, heartless cur—he made her life a hell!

His love for drink had made him blind: a bum, a low-down bum.  
He lost his pride, he cursed his life, he sold his soul for Rum;  
He cursed and beat that faithful Wife, the girl he stole from me;  
Until her soul, from living-hell—by death, at last, was free.

And when I heard the story of the misery and shame;  
My soul cried out for vengeance, and a madness filled my brain.  
To think that he, my Brother, whom I'd loved since childhood play,  
Would wreck the life of one I'd loved—I swore that he must pay!

I sought him, and I found him, in a dismal den-of-sin.  
He greeted me with malice, a scoff, a sneer, a grin.  
He taunted me, and told me, in a voice of drunken scorn;  
How he had won my Love from me—my heart, with grief, was torn.

And like the Lion held for years, seeks freedom from the cage;  
And like the jungle Tiger tares, the small prey in his rage;  
And like the hissing Serpent, strikes the poison to his foe;  
And like the Damned that suffer, all the tortures down below.

I lived it all, in one short space—from God and world apart.  
He'd struck the poison from his soul, into my very heart.  
To turn my brain, to drive me mad, to fill my veins with fire;  
To break the bars that bound me—to a coward, thief, and liar.

I did not wait to hear his words, but with a savage cry, I roared;  
    “You killed the girl I loved, and for the crime—you die!”  
He drew a pistol from his breast; the drunken, slinking cur.  
I fought him then for life or death; I fought him then for her.

I grasped the villain by the throat; no knife or gun for me.  
He struggled like a trapped coyote; vain efforts to get free.  
    He held the pistol in his hand; a shot, a fiendish yell;  
A moan, a groan, and then a curse—he, by his own hand, fell.

I saw him lying at my feet, I heard his dying prayer;  
    He seemed to me a savage beast, a lion in its lair.  
I heard a gasp, his soul then fled, his worthless life was o'er.  
I left him there, a lifeless heap, in his blood upon the floor.

And then I fled, and since that day, the Law has pressed me hard.  
    I take the lead, they follow suit, I hold the winning card.  
    I hid away, they lost the trail, and that was years ago;  
And though they search, they find me not—the truth they'll never know.

For Father Time, the reaper sure, who always wins the race;  
He comes, and yet I do not fear—I'll meet him face-to-face.  
And should my soul departing from, this wasted, weary life;  
Reach realms above, I there will meet—she, who'd have been my Wife.

My Mother, whom in sorrow died, is kneeling by her side.  
My Comrades from the battlefield, I'll meet again with pride.  
My Brother, whom my memory hates, since at my feet he fell;  
I'll meet no more, unless my soul sinks—to that brimstone Hell!

*The Hermit, now, from memories past, his heart is filled with pain;  
    His whole long-life, his wasted life, he sees it all again.  
He sees the happiness he knew, in days that's long gone-bye;  
He sees the misery brought by hate, he knows that he must die.*

*He bids his Dog, his loyal friend, “Good-bye for evermore.”  
    He prays for God's forgiveness, and then his life is o'er.  
Next day the Sheriff finds the door, but justice has them barred:  
The Hermit's dead upon the floor—the old Dog standing guard.*

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