



**NO
LULLABY
FOR TOMMY**

CHARLES HARDMAN

No Lullaby For Tommy

A Novel By
Charles Hardman



Eloquent Books

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Introduction

This is a modern day horror story. The characters are not real persons and each of them becomes a monster or was made into one by having to deal with disappointments in their lives. It seems that just by living a person can do things that make them grotesque. Most of the locations and businesses that show up in this book are not real but there are similar places in the real world. I don't know these characters in my life and I am blessed for that. They were created to show how no one is really safe. Life is a trip that can go bad so fast that nothing can save a person once it does. I know that people want to believe what they read. Well, believe this "Murphy's Law" is alive and well in the real world. Read this book and enjoy the ride through Tommy Murphy's nightmare. No one is singing him a lullaby. Just remember. This is just a book.

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Tommy awoke wrapped in a sheet and lying on a concrete floor. The smell of human waste and body odor was everywhere. He moved his arm and an empty bottle rolled and stopped against something. It was dark. His mind was confused and groggy. His eyes were not focusing very well. His mouth felt like he had been eating cement or some other dry powder. Where was he? How long had he been here? He rolled over to untangle himself from a sheet. There was a single air mattress next to him that he must have rolled off. It was where the human waste smell was coming from. He tried to focus his eyes to the light in the room but there were no windows and it was pitch black. He tried to stand but his legs were rubbery and not responding. His arms were not much help either. He just lay there not really awake and definitely not fully conscious. He dragged himself along the floor trying to find a wall. He touched what seemed like a stud and then sheetrock. He pulled himself up and by putting both hands on the sheetrock slowly moved across the wall in hopes of finding a light switch or a door. He felt a door and made himself grab the door knob and twist it. He fell outside into the bright sunlight. He wasn't wearing any clothes and he was covered in his own human waste.

He was blinded at first. He must have been cooped up in that room for a while. His focus was slowly coming back. He shielded his eyes with his hands but still the light was too intense. He curled up in a ball but when he did so the stench of his body caused his head to thrust back and hit the pavement. He saw stars. He tried to spit but no saliva was present. How could this have happened to him? Who would do this to a person? He had no answers and his head wasn't clearing up very fast. He took deep breaths trying not to breath close to his body. His vision was clearing and getting used to the light. Tears were coming to his eyes and that

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had to be a good sign. He felt his legs and they seemed to be getting some feeling back. He clenched his fists and tried to wave his arms. Everything seemed to be coming back to life. He rolled over and managed to get on his hands and knees. Then he heard a voice.

“My god! What have you done to yourself?”

18 MONTHS EARLIER

Dealing with the everyday life of a home appliance sales job can get pretty monotonous. Especially if you had been doing it for the same company for well over 15 years. That is where Tommy was at this moment in his life. He was married to his high school sweetheart and had two teenage children. He had a nice house, a gas guzzling SUV, and a big Lexus. He had married Janice while he was going to junior college and working part time at Sears selling home appliances. She was 3 months pregnant with their first child and also worked at Sears part time in the jewelry department. Tommy quit junior college and began working full time while Janice went to work for her parents at their veterinary hospital. After Jillian was born he gave up all hopes of graduating from college and Janice became a full time mom.

They were living in a two bedroom apartment with one bathroom and did so until she gave birth to Jack two years later. They borrowed a down payment for a house from Janice’s parents and moved to Alpine, California, a suburb of San Diego about 30 minutes south in the hills. In five years time they paid the down payment back to her parents. When the children were older she decided that it was time for her to go back to work. She opened a do it yourself pet washing station in San Diego and it became an overnight success. Tommy’s business at Sears was very good and he was making a lot of money. Life couldn’t have been any better. Then life threw him a curve ball.

If things seem too good to be true then they usually are. Tommy was a 35 year old male who was slightly balding and

had the usual pot belly of a well fed and prosperous middle class californian. Not old by any means and only a little out of shape because he worked all the time. Southern California is what you would call beautiful people territory. Everyone was brought up to look at the world as if you weren't one of the beautiful people then earn enough money to have the plastic surgeons make you one.

His wife Janice wasn't what you would call pretty. She was beautiful. She had their two children when she was 19 and 21 and worked hard to get her figure back after each of them. She had joined a gym and attended aerobics three times a week. She looked much younger than her 34 years old. They had many arguments over his not wanting to join the gym or in fact participate in any exercise except for the games in his Tuesday night softball league. The guys usually went to their favorite pizza parlor afterwards and ate pizza and guzzled beer for a few hours. She didn't say anything but he could tell that she was not accepting this as exercise. She tried for several years to get him to take his health more seriously and after a while just gave up.

As far as his children went. Jillian took after her mom. She was gorgeous. Five foot two inches tall with red hair and a figure that had him watching every boy that wanted to date her as if they were a rapist or worse. She was on the high school swim team and played softball and tennis. She was quite good at all of these sports. She had joined the gym and went there three or four times a week. Jack was a natural athlete. He was playing varsity baseball as a third baseman and during his first year of playing guard on the high school basketball team he had become the team leader in scoring points. He also joined the gym and worked out everyday.

Janice started her do it yourself pet wash station without really consulting with him and he really didn't think anything about it. He just figured that she needed more to do than just be a housewife. She seemed to be happy and doing very well financially. She didn't talk about it much and after several months he only saw her at night and during breakfast

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in the mornings. They hardly even spent a weekend together since his business was good and hers seemed to keep her very busy and not at home. He worked many weekends and took his days off during the week. He couldn't remember his last vacation and certainly not as a family. Things were going so well for him and his family that of course lightning struck.

Tommy drove the thirty minutes home from Sears and was singing to some oldie but moldy rock and roll song when he noticed that no lights were on at the house and there were no cars in the driveway. This seemed odd to him but then he just figured that everyone must be doing something and would be home soon. He parked his Lexus and unlocked the front door. When he entered the house he also noticed that it was dark so he turned on a few lights. He kicked off his shoes. He went to refrigerator and took out a beer. He popped the tab and turned on the television set. He watched some news and then switched to Sportscenter. He realized that no one had come home. No one had brought the mail in so he went to the mailbox. There were some bills, some junk mail, and a letter from some law firm addressed to him. He threw the mail on the bar counter and went to the phone answering machine. It was blinking and there were three messages.

He couldn't even think that something was wrong at this point but it was getting late and no one was calling to tell him that they would be late. He hit the play button on the phone answering machine. The first message was from Janice. "Tom, please call my cell phone when you get this message." He hit the next button. Again it was from Janice. "Tom, call my cell phone" He hit next again. It was Jillian this time. "Dad, you had better call mom's cell phone right away." What was going on? This was not normal. Something was happening and he had no clue as to what. He went over to the bar counter and picked up the letter from the law firm. It wasn't registered and it seemed like a regular letter sized

piece of mail. He tore it open. He took the single page out and began to read. It was from a law firm in San Diego that Janice's parents used. It read:

Thomas Earl Murphy. This letter is to inform you that our law firm, Jones, Jones, Wilson, and Smith have been retained to file divorce papers against you by Janice Kay Murphy. You are requested to appear at our law offices on Tuesday, October 21 for the purpose of finalizing the settlement of personal belongings in the name of both parties. It would be to your advantage to bring counsel with you. Signed, Daniel M. Smith.

It was dated October 1. That was two days ago.

Have you ever felt blind sided, caught off guard, never saw it coming, had no clue, or in this case were struck by lightning on a sunny day. Tommy walked over to the sofa and sat down hard. He just held the letter in his hand and stared blankly at nothing in particular. How could he be so out of the loop? Nothing was said last night at dinner or at breakfast this morning. Everybody seemed engrossed in their normal everyday routines. He just didn't get it.

He must have sat there for over an hour. He was not really sure of what was happening to him. He felt like he was in a dream, no a nightmare, where he really needed to wake up. How could he be so blind? There must have been some signs. Maybe some small things that pointed to something being not right but he didn't see this coming. He was lost in his own little world and had just plain not focused on what his family was doing with their lives. He was a fool and now he would be the one that had to pay. He tried to think of a way to make everything all right but then his mind told him that maybe it was too late. Why did Janice go to a law firm before talking with him about the issues that were causing their marriage to fall apart? Was he that unapproachable that she couldn't at least have tried to talk to him? He wasn't

ready to end his marriage. He wasn't ready to change his life. Tommy wasn't ready.

PRESENT DAY

Tommy slowly started to focus on his surroundings. He was on his hands and knees outside of a garage and there was a man asking him what had he done to himself. He must have been quite a sight. He was nude and smelling of sweat and human waste. Just then he recognized the man. He was his coworker at Sears Bob Landreth.

He started to clear his head. He sort of felt like vomiting. He dry heaved a couple of times and then his eyes really started to tear up. He tried to stand up but he didn't have the strength. Bob came over and helped him to his feet. He helped him over to an outdoor faucet and hosed him off while scolding him for being such a fool. He scrubbed himself with his hands to get the waste and sweat off. He started to feel human again.

Bob went into the garage and came out with some blue jeans and a t shirt. Tommy leaned against the wall of the garage and Bob helped him dress. "Damn you look bad. You were in there for three days. I guess I should have checked on you earlier but when you asked to stay in my garage you seemed OK. I never expected you to go ape." He walked around to the front of the garage and raised the door. Tommy just stared at him. "I'll pull all of your stuff out here and hose it off but you can't stay here anymore. Get a hotel room or stay with some relatives." He still could only just stare at him. "It smells like something crawled in my garage and died. You have serious problems my friend and I for one don't need them. I'll help you get sober but then you have got to get some professional help. I didn't take you on to raise. God this place stinks." He still just stared at Bob. Everything was starting to come back to him. He really had sunk to rock bottom. He had been sleeping in a garage and drinking rum in

the dark for several days. He didn't even leave to shit or piss. He really was a mess. Bob was right. He needed help.

TOMMY'S DIVORCE

Tommy didn't call Janice. He just sat there on the sofa and did nothing. His mind had shut down. He wasn't ready to accept that his nice safe comfortable life had just come to an end. He really wasn't thinking at all when the phone rang.

He let it ring. The answering machine came on and after the message he heard Janice's voice. "Tom, pick up. I know you are there." He slowly walked over to the phone and picked it up. "Tom, just listen to me. Don't say anything until I'm done." He couldn't have said a word if he tried to. He was paralyzed. "I tried to think of a way to tell you what was going on but you seemed so into your own zone that things just progressed without your participation. You live like everyday is just like every other day. We used to talk and I tried to involve you in my and the kid's lives but you were too much into your routine. I tried to get you to join the gym, stay fit, eat healthy, and be involved in what the rest of us were into but you just kept your head buried in the sand. I have bought a town home where Jillian, Jack, and I will live. I met a very nice man at the gym and he has been very understanding and patient while I made up my mind. Please show up for the meeting with my lawyer. Oh by the way he is very good at getting wives what they want from their ex husbands so you had better get a good lawyer yourself. Now you can talk." He tried but nothing could break through the fog his mind had fallen into. The silence must have made Janice uneasy as she spoke again. "Tom, please don't hate me. I didn't know how to end it." He finally spoke. "Well, you certainly found a way." He then hung up.

He just stood there for a while. He finally went to the refrigerator and got another beer. He headed back to the sofa and collapsed on it. He turned up the volume on the televi-

sion set and just sat and stared not knowing or caring what was showing. He awoke to the television blaring and him. He was still in a sitting position on the sofa. He hadn't moved in over eight hours.

That day he drove into town and sat outside Janice's do it yourself pet wash station. He waited until he saw her open the doors and turn on the open sign. The place was nice. It had a retail store that sold soaps and other treatments for washing your pet. It had toys and other items that pet owners would want to purchase for their pets. The washing station was out back and was open to the elements but covered so that customers could even wash their pet when the weather was bad. She looked gorgeous. An hour or so passed. The kids showed up. They looked beautiful and healthy. A Land Rover pulled up out front and a very distinguished and handsome man got out and went in the store. Tommy got out of the Lexus and walked across the street and looked inside. Janice kissed the man and the kids looked pleased to see him. He had been replaced by Prince Charming. He turned and headed for the Lexus feeling even lower than he had felt earlier. He was being dumped like a sack of garbage. He didn't want to accept what he was seeing but how could he not. He didn't fit in with these beautiful people. Prince Charming did. The last twenty years of his life was being erased and he was helpless to stop the process.

The next couple of weeks seemed to drag on and before he knew it it was time for the meeting with Janice and her lawyer. He hadn't even tried to contact a lawyer and his business at Sears was suffering from his almost comatose existence. He hurriedly opened the yellow pages to lawyers and chose one that said that he specialized in divorces. After paying a retainer fee with his credit card he gave the receptionist the time and date of the meeting. He then went back to his foggy life.

THE MEETING

Tommy showed up for the meeting not even knowing who or what his lawyer looked like. In fact when the lawyer intro-

duced himself he was in a daze. He made him sign some papers to insure that he got paid and then proceeded to tell him that this law firm played hardball. He told him that he was in for a fight. He and his lawyer got in the elevator and proceeded to the floor the law firm occupied. It was gaudy and they had security guards sitting on either side of the receptionist. They were ushered into a meeting room and asked if they wanted coffee, water, or anything else. Tommy would have asked for poison if he had known what was about to happen to him.

Janice came in with a lawyer and a secretary. They sat across from him and his lawyer. He now knew his lawyer as William Usher. They opened folders and laptops. His lawyer took out a legal pad and some pencils. Her lawyer spoke first. "Mr. Murphy we have made a list of all your joint possessions and Janice has agreed to splitting them in a way that should be satisfactorily to both parties. She has hired a real estate agent to sell the house in Alpine and split the profits down the middle. She seeks custody of both children which both have agreed to. She asks for no alimony and a very reasonable child support. She will keep the Cadillac and you can keep the Lexus. She only wants enough furniture to furnish the townhouse she has purchased. She has a list of appliances and electronics that she wants. You will be bound by a restraining order to not come within fifty feet of her. You may only visit your children on neutral territory and only if they wish to see you. You may keep your finances in your bank account and any 401K's you have. You will not be present while movers take the furniture and other articles from the house in Alpine and must vacate the premises within thirty days of this filing for divorce. All of these demands are listed in the divorce papers which you and your lawyer will receive copies of at the end of this meeting. The grounds for the divorce are irreconcilable differences. If you have any questions speak now as this meeting is coming to an end."

He really didn't know what to say. His head hurt and he really wasn't ready to finalize this matter so quickly. He just

looked at his lawyer and said “Can I have a moment with my lawyer alone?” They all stood. They nodded their heads and her lawyer said to let the receptionist know when they should return. Janice just turned and walked out without a word.

“What should I do?” He asked his lawyer.

“Well, if you had the demands we could look them over but I feel they were pretty lenient on you. I was expecting them to put you on a rack and take everything but the clothes you are wearing.”

“But what if I wanted to fight it?”

“You would probably lose more than what they are leaving you with. I have never seen a woman as cold as your wife seems to be and her lawyer is known for his ruthlessness.”

“But I had no notice.”

“None needed. If you try to fight it they can strip you of everything that you earned while both of you were together and still get alimony and child support. You would be living in a cardboard condominium on a street corner somewhere.”

“Can I stall?”

“Sure but then they can change the terms which in your case may make your life more of a living Hell than it is now. It is up to you but I would look at the terms and if they leave you enough crumbs take the deal and start a new life.”

He hated his lawyer. He hated Janice. He hated his life. How in Hell did this happen to him without so much as a clue on his part? He was fucked. He looked at his lawyer and said “Tell the receptionist to send in the death squad.”

NEW LIFE

Tommy’s new life was very different from his old one. After the sale of the house and selling off everything that didn’t fit into his one bedroom apartment. He had exactly \$150,000.00 and a car payment of \$466.00 a month on his Lexus for three more years. Janice and the kids stayed as far away from him as they could and his business at Sears was still suffering

due to him being so miserable. He started drinking every night after work at bars and being a loud and nasty drunk soon was banned from most of the nicer establishments on the downtown strip. He started coming in late to work and then just quit showing up. He never even knew that he had been fired until he received his final check in the mail. He started going to the Indian casinos and soon ran through most of the money that he had saved and got from the settlement. He tried to sober up but instead he became involved with a dealer at one of the casinos and she and he drank and gambled away most of the rest of his 401K and pension from Sears. She had left him one night after taking every penny that he had in his wallet while he was passed out. Tommy was a person without a future and now his past had pretty much disappeared. He thought that he was at rock bottom but that was just wishful thinking.

He had lost thirty pounds, his face was all puffy and red, his eyes were like tail lights on an automobile at night, and his breath smelled like a brewery. He was nothing like the confident and comfortable person that he had been just eighteen months ago. He had begun sleeping too many hours a day with the drapes closed and the air conditioner set to high so that he wouldn't sweat through the sheets and into the mattress. That is when he made it to the bedroom. He was sleeping on the sofa or passing out on it most nights. He awoke one morning not sure what day it was and decided to go to one of the casinos. He went outside his apartment and his parking stall was empty. He called the police to report his Lexus as stolen. They called back about an hour later saying that they were sorry but it hadn't been stolen. It had been repossessed. He started swearing at the officer so he just hung up. Now he was at rock bottom. No, there was still a little way to sink just yet.

He started using cabs to get to the casinos. He was not losing every night but he was still losing more than he was winning. His drinking continued. He switched to rum as it was cheap and still gave him a good buzz. He returned home

one morning after an all nighter and found his furniture and clothes piled up near the trash area of the apartment complex. He went to his apartment and there was a note telling him that he had been evicted for non payment of rent for three months. He went to the manager's apartment and she told him that she had given him written warnings and that now if he didn't leave she would call the police. That is when Tommy went to Sears and talked to his old coworker Bob Landreth.

He had gotten as many of his clothes as he could pack into a duffle bag and then called a cab. He went to Sears and found Bob. He was dealing with a customer so he waited. He asked if he could stay at Bob's new homesite for a little while until he could find a new apartment. He said that there was no electricity yet and only the garage was finished. Tommy asked if he could stay in the garage. Bob looked at him and finally said that he would let him stay there for a few days only. He told him to come back after work and he would drive him out there. Tommy went to the sporting goods area and bought a twin air mattress. He then bought some sheets and a pillow from the bedding department. He charged them to his Sears card which somehow still was open. He then went looking for a liquor store.

He bought six fifths of rum and tucked them in his duffle bag. He then met Bob at the employee's exit. They drove to his new homesite. He unlocked the garage and told him to let him know when he found an apartment. Tommy said that he would and Bob drove off.

THE GARAGE

Bob pulled all of Tommy's belongings out of the garage and they both just looked at them. There wasn't much. A filthy single air bed, a duffle bag that contained a few pair of jeans and some shirts and underwear, a pillow that looked as if it was years old instead of only a few days, some filthy smelly sheets, and a folder filled with neglected paperwork.

“What do you want to do with this stuff?”

Tommy looked at the small pile and realized that this was all that was left of his life. He felt like crying.

“Throw everything away but my clothes and paperwork.”

“Are you sure?”

“Bob I need to get away from here. Let’s go by my old apartment and see if there is anything left there that I might need. Just help me get away from here.”

They threw his duffle bag and paperwork into his truck and drove to Tommy’s old apartment. No surprise. In the three days that he had been gone the other renters had looted his belongings. What they left was looted by the mexicans and what was left after that the garbage truck had hauled away. A wasted trip. San Diego being a large city had no pity. Tommy sighed very deeply. Bob asked him “What now?”

He just shook his head and mumbled. “Get me out of here before I start screaming.”

When a person hits rock bottom it is good to have someone around human enough to pull them out of the water and set them on dry land. Bob was Tommy’s savior this day. He drove him to his home where he and his wife Alice let him shower and clean up his appearance as best he could. They fed him and helped him go through his paperwork. He still had about \$5000.00 left in his savings account only because he was too wasted to remember that he had a savings account. His checking account was overdrawn. He had gone through his 401 K and his Sears pension. His cell phone bill was three months behind but was still active. His life insurance was being paid by interest and he hadn’t cashed his final paycheck from Sears.

Bob had him sign the paycheck over to him and they went to his bank where he got cash and gave it to Tommy with a promise that he wouldn’t drink and gamble it away. Then they went to Tommy’s bank and emptied out his savings account before the bank put a hold on it to pay his over drawn checking account. Tommy made a call to his Uncle Sean who lived in the Bay Area of Northern California. It just so

happened that he was a recovering alcoholic and he invited him to move in with him so that he could get some help. Bob put him on a bus for Concord and made him promise to let him know when he had made it to his destination and was settled in. Tommy got on the bus and crashed hard. Darkness became a blessing after the horrors that had become his reality.

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