

SYNOPSIS

In *The Green Mile*, there are two apparent main characters, Paul Edgecombe, a prison guard, and John Coffey, a huge black convict with seemingly miraculous powers.

The story takes place in two time setting frameworks, the present, where an elderly Paul Edgecombe lives in Georgia Pines nursing home writing his account of his experience working as a prison guard in Cold Mountain Penitentiary, and the past (supposedly 1932), where Paul relives the John Coffey incident in details.

Paul works as a supervising prison guard in the E Block of the prison, where he and his fellow guards takes care of the last days of the convicts there, waiting their turn to be executed in the electric chair dubbed The Old Sparky. During the John Coffey incident, there are four inmates who wait their turn to walk the Green Mile. Arlen Bitterbuck, an Indian convict, sometimes called the Chief, who goes to the electric chair first, Eduard Delacroix, a small Cajun inmate with a special fondness for the mouse, Mr. Jingles, John Coffey himself, and William "Wild Bill" Wharton, a mad and dangerous inmate with homicidal tendency. The guards, beside Paul himself, are Brutus "Brutal Howell, Paul's second hand man in E Block, Harry Terwilliger, Dean Stanton, and Percy Wetmore, a guard with constantly irritating behaviors, who builds a hatred for Delacroix. Paul's warden in E Block is Hal Moores, whose wife, Melinda, is terminally ill. Other characters include Janice Edgecombe, Paul's wife, Elaine Connelly, Paul's friend at the Georgia nursing house, Burt Hammersmith, John Coffey's public defender, Brad Doulan, Paul's nagging caretaker in the nursing house, and Toot Toot, the prison's wiry old trusty.

John Coffey comes to E Block as a man whose physical appearance contrasts his attitude. A black man with the body of a giant, and the mind of a child. Paul's first impression on him is that Coffey must be a dumb person. He is, however, charged with a terrible crime of raping and murdering two little girls, Cora and Kathe Detterick. In the cell, Coffey spends most of his day either sitting still or sleeping with his face against the wall.

Life proceeds as usual in E Block. The time for the execution of Arlen Bitterbuck has come. After the rehearsal with Toot Toot replacing Arlen's place is done, the execution is carried out smoothly. At this time, Paul is experiencing a tremendous urinary infection that tortures him every time he is about to take a leak. This troubles him so much that he feels he cannot do well both on his job and his role as a husband.

After the execution of Arlen Bitterbuck, a new inmate comes to E Block, William Wharton, often called Wild Bill, whose maniacal behaviors bring a lot of troubles to the guards. His first entrance is marked with his trying to strangle Dean Stanton to death with his chains. After some struggles, he is subdued by Brutus "Brutal" Howell, whose body is the biggest amongst the other guards. Meanwhile, Percy, upon seeing Wild Bill's action, cowers in fear and urinates in his pants, which soon triggers mockery laughter from Eduard Delacroix.

Percy holds a grudge against Delacroix and intends on having a revenge of some sort on him later on. Percy seems to build a wall of problems with whomever he comes in contact with, including Paul and his loyal guards. He always resorts to his connection with the governor whenever the other guards try to reprimand him for his mistakes and misdemeanors. The other guards put up with this because they

know that Percy promises himself to be transferred to another institution provided he gets his chance to preside over Eduard Delacroix's execution.

Another strange thing happens in E block when all the guards and inmates of E Block discover a unique mouse with no fear against humans. Del even adopts this new mouse as his new pet, names it Mr. Jingles, and trains it to play with a spool. Everyone seems to be alright with Del's insistence to keep the mouse as his own. Percy, however, has another thing in his mind.

John Coffey, who has been passive all these times, somehow knows about Paul's sufferings with his urinary infection. He calls out for Paul to come to his cell and suddenly grabs his crotch without warning. It turns out that Coffey magically absorbs Paul's illness and spits it out into the air in the forms of bug-like swarms. Paul feels that his urinary infection has been completely healed and starts to have his doubts over Coffey's criminal charges. He starts to feel sympathetic towards John Coffey.

William "Wild Bill" Wharton continues to cause mayhem in E Block and every time he does, the guards will put him for some time strapped in a straightjacket in a locked storage room at the end of the corridor. Percy finds whatever occasion possible to find fault with Delacroix, in order to exact his revenge upon his humiliation by Del. He finds the chance when he sees Del's mouse, Mr. Jingles, out of his cell, chasing the spool. He stamps on the mouse, which soon triggers Del's anguish and the other guards' anger. Seeing this, John Coffey suddenly asks that the mouse be given to him. As this is done, Coffey holds Mr. Jingles in his two hands and blows to it. Miracle strikes twice as Mr. Jingles starts to twitch its tail and returns to life. Everyone is so amazed by this feat, especially Del, who feels so grateful to John Coffey.

Later on, as the night of the execution of Eduard Delacroix comes, a thunderstorm occurs. As planned before, Percy takes charge of the execution that night. He deliberately sabotages the execution that Eduard Delacroix's body is fried alive on the chair. Everyone gets so furious of Percy and delivers him the threat that he must sign off his resignation paper as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, in the present time, the elder Paul is having trouble with Brad Doulan, a caretaker that tries to find his easy prey on Paul. Paul gets his support from Elaine Connelly, who sympathetically listens to Paul's every word regarding his past life working as a prison guard.

In the prison, everyone, especially Paul and his wife Janice, is concerned about the warden Hal Moores' wife, Melinda, who suffers from a brain tumor. The doctors say that she will only live a short while. Hal is terribly depressed by his wife's condition. Paul and the other guards think of an idea to help Melinda. They plan to smuggle John Coffey out of his cell for a while to visit and hopefully cure Melinda at her house. They work out the plan and when the night comes, they put sedative into Wild Bill Wharton's drink and put Percy, who is not involved, into a straightjacket and locks him in the storage room.

The night goes on smoothly as John Coffey miraculously cures Melinda's disease and behaves very calmly on the way. Yet, this time, instead of spitting out the usual bug-like clouds, Coffey chokes himself with whatever he has inhaled from Melinda and begins to look badly ill himself. The guards take a great deal of concern on this and immediately bring Coffey back to prison. In the prison, as the guards let Percy out from the storage room, Coffey suddenly seizes Percy and pours into his mouth what was previously taken from Melinda's body. Percy seems suffocated at first, and the guards alarmed. Yet, Percy seems perfectly well and

takes a walk outside Wharton's and shoots the sleeping Wharton to death. No one can grasp what has just happened but they all agree to keep it secret to themselves.

Percy is then transferred into a mental institution for his deed, while Paul's attempt on saving Coffey from the electric chair faces a dead-end. Coffey gives the vision to Paul as to what actually happened during Coffey's capture and so he knows that Coffey is indeed innocent and that the killer of the Detterick twin sisters is none other than Wild Bill Wharton. Paul meets whoever involved in Coffey's arrest and trial to try to find away to prove Coffey's innocence. Yet, even Burt Hammersmith, Coffey's public defender, thinks that Coffey is guilty and that is the end of the case. John Coffey himself states to Paul that he agrees to take his punishment and that he is tired of every sin of men he has witnessed in his life. Paul understands Coffey's determination and decides to proceed with the execution. Paul's wife, Jan, protests this injustice that John Coffey has to suffer, but there is nothing else anyone can do about it.

So John Coffey walks the Mile and dies in the electric chair. Paul starts to question the nature of his job and soon quits from his position in E Block. He deeply feels the guilt he has to bear for letting Coffey, a man of God's grace, die for the wrong reason.

In the present day, the elder Paul takes Elaine to a secret hut just behind the woods near the Georgia nursing house. He reveals a secret that he has brought from Coffey's era, Mr. Jingles, now a very old mouse with a still burning preference to chase spools. Paul believes that he and Mr. Jingles live tremendously long lives because of John Coffey's touch. Brad Doulan finds out this hut but does nothing because Elaine threatens to make him quit his job if he ever disturbs Paul again.

Mr. Jingles dies in Paul's hands. Later on, Elaine dies, leaving Paul alone in the nursing home and he starts to relive his experience of losing his beloved wife, Janice, in a terrible bus accident while going to attend his granddaughter's graduation ceremony. He grieves this so much that he regrets why John Coffey hasn't been there to save his wife.

Paul lives on to write the story that the reader reads and keeps the burden of living an exceptionally long life in loneliness that he considers it as his own version of *The Green Mile*, the road to his final destination.

