

The Number 174: Swinging at Gallows Corner

(from *The Tale of Wanton Ange*)

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#) (May 2023)



Landschaft mit dem Galgen (Landscape with Gallows), Paul Klee

'Twas at the stop at fearsome Gallows Corner,
The tale is told by local people there,
That wanton Ange was sent a sign to warn her
Which did indeed produce a nasty scare.

While at her usual occupation texting
She happened to observe some nearby trees.

And there she saw what most would find most testing:
A bloated body swinging in the breeze!

Now wanton Ange was not one easily frightened
And took the apparition in her stride.
But then her hands around her cellphone tightened
When next its eyes the body opened wide.

It seemed to plead and groan in her direction
As though for kindness from a kindred soul.
But then she saw a worrying projection
And realised the nature of its goal!

Then from the tree the thing began descending,
And, arms outstretched, came lumbering on towards her.
And on it came, the groaning never ending,
Colliding into cars at Gallows Corner.

By now our Ange was feeling apprehensive.
The pleasures of the flesh she much enjoyed;
Indeed, of these her knowledge was extensive
As with the hearts of men she'd often toyed.

But corpses were a *different* proposition
Which Ange considered *really not her taste*.
And this she took to be an admonition
To swap her life of sin for something chaste.

Yet still the hideous thing advanced towards her,
Its groans imploring piteously for sex,
While Ange's mind was plunged in such disorder
For surely this an Einstein would perplex!

In desperation, Ange appealed for guidance,
And like a little child again she prayed.
She found again that long-neglected silence,
While recognising how from good she'd strayed.

Just then the waiting bus resumed its journey,

And Ange, in gratitude, began to weep.
And from that time she lived a life more worthy:
At last she'd learnt that what you sow you reap.

Gallows Corner is a major road junction in Romford in Greater London. It was the site of gallows in the C16th and C17th. In what are now the grounds of a local school stood a jail where the condemned were held before execution. The bodies of felons were buried nearby.

Gallows Corner has an above-average number of collisions.

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Paul Freeman is an art dealer in London. The poems are from *The Bus Poems: A Tale of the Devil*, currently in preparation. His book, *A Chocolate Box Menagerie*, is published by New English Review Press and is available [here](#).

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