



Execution: The Guillotine, the Pendulum, the Thousand Cuts, the Spanish Donkey, and 66 Other Ways of Putting Someone to Death

Geoffrey Abbott

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In his own darkly humorous style, Geoffrey Abbott describes the instruments used and their effectiveness and reveals the macabre origins of familiar phrases such as “gone west” or “drawn a blank,” as well as the jargon of the underworld. He covers everything from the preparation of the victim to the disposal of the body. *Execution* is everything you ever wanted to know about the ultimate penalty---and a lot you never thought to ask.

It includes such hair-raising categories as:

- **Cave of Roses:** A rare Swedish method of execution in which the victim was confined to a cave full of snakes and poisonous reptiles.
- **Bastinado:** Involved the victim being caned gently and rhythmically with a lightweight stick on the soles of the feet until the mental collapse and eventual death of the victim.
- **Sewn in an Animal’s Belly:** A living person is sewn into the belly of an animal and left to die.
- **The Spanish Donkey:** This method of torture consisted of seating a victim on top of a wall that resembled an inverted “v” with weights attached to the ankles, the weights slowly increased until the victim’s body split in two.
- **Iron Chair:** The victim is tied to an iron armchair and pushed nearer and nearer to a blazing fire.
- **Sawn in Half:** Victims are secured in a standing position, pinned between two wide boards fixed between a stake driven deep into the ground while two executioners (one on each side) would wield a long, two-handled saw downwards through the boards.

Execution is a unique fascinating look at the grim and gritty history of sanctioned death.

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