

R it a Haywor t h and Sha ws han k

R ede m ptio n

By Stephen King

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There's a guy like me in every s tate an d federal prison in America, I guess - I' m the guy who ca n get it for you . Tailor- made cigarettes, a bag of reefer, if you're partial to t hat, a bottle of bra n dy to celebrate you r son or da ughter's high school gradu a tion, or almost anything else ... wit hin reason, t hat is. It was n't always t hat way.

I ca me to Sh awsha n k when I was ju s t twenty, an d I a m one of the few people in ou r happy little family who is willing to own up to wh a t he did. I committe d murder. I p u t a la rge in s ura nce policy on my wife, who was three years older th a n I was, an d t hen I fixed t he brakes of the Chevrolet co u pe her fa t her h ad given u s as a wedding present. It worked ou t exactly as I had pla nned, except I h ad n't pla nned on her s topping to pick u p t he neighbour woman an d the neigh bou r woma n's infan t son on the way down Castle Hill an d in to town. The brakes let go a n d the car crashed through the bu shes a t the edge of

t he town common, gat hering speed. Bystan ders said it mu st have been doing fifty or better when it hit the base of t he Civil War stat ue a n d b urst into fla mes.

I also h ad n't pla nned on getting ca ught, bu t ca ugh t I was. I got a season's pass into t his place. Maine h as no death penalty, bu t the district attorney saw to it th a t I was tried for all three deat hs an d given th ree life sentences, to run one after the other. Th a t fixed up a ny ch a nce of parole I migh t have, for a long, long time. The judge called what I h ad done 'a hideo us, heinous crime', an d it was, b u t it is also in the past now. You ca n look it u p in the yellowing files of the Castle Rock Call, where the big headlines a nnou ncing my conviction look sort of funny an d an tique next to the news of Hitler an d Mussolini a n d FDR's alphabet sou p agencies.

Have I reh abilita ted myself, you ask? I don't know what t hat word mea n s , a t least as far as prison s an d correction s go. I thin k it's a politicia n's word. It may have some ot her mea ning, an d it m ay be that I will have a ch ance to fin d ou t, bu t that is the fu t ure ... something cons teach t hemselves not to t hin k abou t. I was young, good-looking, an d from t he poor side of town. I k nocked u p a pretty, sulky, headstrong girl who lived in one of the fine old hou ses on Carbine Street. Her fat her was

agreeable to t he marriage if I would take a job in the optical com pa ny he owned a n d 'work my way up'. I foun d

ou t that what he really had in mind was keeping me in his house an d un der his th umb, like a disagreeable pet

t hat has not quite been hou sebroken a n d which may bite. E nough hate eventu ally piled u p to ca u se me to do what I did. Given a secon d chance I would not do it again, b ut I' m not s ure t hat mea n s I a m rehabilitated.

Anyway, it's not me I wa n t to tell you abou t; I wan t to tell you abou t a guy na med An dy Dufres ne. Bu t before I ca n tell you abou t An dy, I have to explain a few ot her t hings about myself. It won't take long.

As I said, I've been t he guy who ca n get it for you here at S h awsha n k for damn near forty years. An d t hat doesn't ju s t mea n con traba n d items like extra cigarettes or booze, although t hose items always top t he lis t. B u t I've gotten t hou san ds of other items for men doing time here, some of t hem perfectly legal yet hard to come by in a place where you've s u pposedly been brough t to be p unished. There was one fellow who was in for raping a little girl an d

exposing him self to dozen s of ot hers; I got him three pieces of pin k Vermon t marble a n d he did th ree lovely sculptu res ou t of t hem - a baby, a boy of about twelve, a n d a bearded young man. He called t hem The Three Ages of Jesu s , an d those pieces of sc ulptu re are now in t he parlou r of a man who used to be governor of this s ta te.

Or here's a na me you may remember if you grew u p north of Massach usetts - Robert Alan Cote. In 1951 he tried to rob the First Mercan tile Ban k of Mech anic Falls, a n d the hold-u p t ur ned in to a bloodbat h - six dead in the end, two of them members of the ga ng, t hree of them hostages, one of them a young state cop who p u t his head u p a t the wrong time a n d got a b ullet in the eye. Cote had a penny collection. Nat u rally t hey weren't going to let him have it in here, bu t with a little help from his mother an d a middleman who used to drive a lau ndry tr uck, I was able

to get it to him. I told him, Bobby, you mu s t be crazy, wan ting to have a coin collection in a s tone hotel full of t hieves. He looked a t me an d smiled an d said, I know where to keep them. They'll be safe enough. Don't you

worry. An d he was righ t. Bobby Cote died of a brain t umou r in 1967 , b u t th a t coin collection has never t u r ned up.

I've gotten men chocolates on Valen tine's Day; I got three of t hose green milkshakes they serve a t McDon ald's a roun d St Paddy's Day for a crazy Irishman na med O'Malley; I even arranged for a mid night showing of Deep Th roat an d The Devil in Miss J ones for a party of twen ty men who had pooled their resources to rent the film s ... although I ended up doing a week in solitary for that little escapade. It's the risk you r un when you're the guy who ca n get it.

I've gotten reference books an d fuck- books, joke novelties like han dbuzzers an d itching powder, a n d on more t han one occasion I've seen th a t a long-timer has gotten a pair of pan ties from his wife or his girlfriend ... a n d I guess you'll k now what guys in here do with s uch items d uring t he long nigh t s when time draws ou t like a blade. I don't get all those t hings gratis, an d for some item s the price comes high. B ut I don't do it just for t he money; what

good is money to me? I' m never going to own a Cadillac car or fly off to Ja maica for two weeks in February. I do it for the sa me reason that a good bu tcher will only sell you fres h meat: I got a repu ta tion and I wan t to keep it. The only two t hings I refu se to handle a re gun s an d heavy dr ugs. I won't help a nyone kill him self or anyone else. I h ave enough killing on my min d to last me a lifetime.

Yeah, I' m a regular Neiman-Marc us. An d so when An dy D ufresne ca me to me in 1949 a nd asked if I co uld s muggle Rita Haywort h in to the prison for him, I said it would be no problem a t all. An d it wasn't.

When An dy ca me to S h awsh a n k in 1948 , he was t hirty years old. He was a short neat little ma n wit h san dy h air a n d sm all, clever ha n ds. He wore gold- rimmed spectacles. His finger nails were always clipped, an d t hey were always clea n. Th a t's a funny thing to remem ber abou t a m an, I s u ppose, b ut it seem s to sum Andy u p for me. He always looked as if he should have been wearing a tie. On the ou t side he had been a vice-presiden t in the tr ust depart ment of a la rge Portla n d ban k. Good work for a

m an as you ng as he was, especially when you consider how conservative most ban ks are ... an d you h ave to multiply th a t conservatis m by ten when you get u p in to New Englan d, where folks don't like to tr ust a man with t heir money unless he's bald, lim ping, an d constan tly plucking at his pa n t s to get his tr u ss aroun d s traight Andy was in for mu rdering his wife an d her lover.

As I believe I have said, everyone in prison is an innocent m an. Oh, they read th a t scriptu re the way those holy rollers on TV read the Book of Revelations. They were the victims of judges wit h hearts of s tone an d balls to match, or incom peten t lawyers, or police fr a me-u ps, or bad luck. They read the scriptu re, bu t you can see a different scriptu re in their faces. Most cons a re a low sort, no good to t hem selves or anyone else, an d their worst luck was t hat their mothers carried t hem to term.

In all my years at S h awsh a n k, there have been less th a n ten men whom I believed when t hey told me they were innocen t An dy Dufresne was one of t hem, although I only beca me convinced of his innocence over a period of years.

If I had been on the ju ry that heard his case in Portla n d S uperior Co urt over six s tormy weeks in 1947 - 48 , I would have voted to convict, too.

It was one hell of a case, all righ t; one of those juicy ones with all the righ t elements. There was a bea u tiful girl with society connections (dead), a local sports figure (also dead), an d a prominent young b usinessman in the dock. There was this, plus all the sca n dal the newspapers co uld hin t at. The prosecu tion h ad a n open-a n d- sh u t case. The trial only lasted as long as it did beca u se the

DA was planning to r un for the US Hou se of Represen ta tives an d he wan ted J ohn Q Pu blic to get a good long look a t his phiz. It was a crackerjack legal circ us, with spectators getting in line a t fou r in the morning, despite the s ubzero tem peratu res, to assure

t hem selves of a seat.

The facts of the prosec u tion's case that An dy never contested were these: That he had a wife, Lin da Collins D ufresne; that in June of 1947 s he had expressed an

interest in lear ning t he game of golf a t t he Falmout h Hills

Co un try Clu b; that she did in deed take lessons for fou r mon ths; that her in s tr uctor was t he Falmou th Hills golf pro, Glenn Q uen tin; t hat in la te Augu s t of 1947 An dy learned that Quentin an d his wife had become lovers; t hat An dy a n d Lin da D ufres ne a rgued bitterly on the after noon of 10 Septem ber 1947; t hat the su bject of their a rgumen t was her infidelity.

He testified th a t Lin da professed to be glad he knew; the s neaking a rou n d, she said, was distressing. She told Andy that s he pla nned to obtain a Reno divorce. An dy told her he would see her in hell before he would see her in Reno. She went off to spend the nigh t wit h Quen tin in Q uentin's ren ted bu ngalow not fa r from t he golf cou rse. The next morning his clea ning woman foun d both of t hem dead in bed. Each h ad been s hot fou r times.

It was that last fact that mitigated more again s t An dy t han any of t he ot hers. The DA with t he political aspirations made a great deal of it in his opening s ta tement an d his closing summation. An drew Dufresne, he said, was not a wronged hu sban d seeking a

hot- blooded revenge against his cheating wife; t hat, the DA said, co uld be un derstood, if not con doned. B ut this revenge h ad been of a much colder type. Con sider! the DA th u n dered a t t he ju ry. Four a n d four! Not six shots, b u t eight! He h ad fired the gu n em pty ... a n d then s topped to reload so he co uld s hoot each of t hem again! FOUR FOR HIM AND FOUR FOR HER, t he Portla n d Su n blared. The Boston Register du bbed him The Even-Steven Killer.

A clerk from t he Wise Pawn s hop in Lewiston testified th a t he had sold a six- shot . 38 Police Special to An drew D ufresne ju st two days before t he dou ble mu rder. A bartender from t he co un try club bar testified that An dy h ad come in aroun d seven o'clock on the evening of 10 Septem ber, had tossed off t h ree s traigh t whiskeys in a twenty-min ute period - when he got u p from t he bar-stool he told the bartender that he was going u p to Glenn Q uentin's hou se an d he, t he bartender, co uld 'read about

t he rest of it in the papers'. Another clerk, this one from t he Han dy-Pik s tore a mile or so from Q uen tin's house, told the cou rt th a t D ufresne had come in aroun d quarter

to nine on the sa me nigh t. He p urch ased cigarettes, three q u arts of beer, an d some dis h-towels. The co un ty medical examiner testified t hat Quentin an d the Dufresne woman

h ad been killed between eleven p.m. a n d two a.m. on the nigh t of 10 - 11 Septem ber. The detective from the Attor ney General's office who h ad been in charge of the case testified th a t there was a t ur nou t less t han seventy yards from t he bungalow, an d t hat on the after noon of 11 Septem ber, th ree pieces of evidence had been removed from t hat tu rnou t: firs t item, two empty q u a rt bottles of Narragansett Beer (with the defen da n t's fingerprin t s on

t hem); t he secon d item, twelve cigarette en ds (all Kools, t he defen da n t's bran d); third item, a plaster moulage of a set of tyre tracks (exactly matching the tread-a n d-wear pattern of t he tyres on the defen dan t's 1947 Plymout h).

In t he living room of Q uen tin's b ungalow, fou r dish towels h ad been foun d lying on the sofa. There were bullet-holes t hrough t hem an d powder-b ur n s on t hem. The detective t heorized (over the agonized objection s of An dy's lawyer) t hat the murderer h ad wrapped t he towels a roun d the muzzle of the mu rder-weapon to muffle the soun d of the

gu n shots.

Andy D ufresne took the s tan d in his own defence and told his story calmly, coolly, a n d dispassionately. He said he had begun to hear distressing r umou rs abou t his wife a n d Glenn Q uentin as early as t he last week in July. In Augu st he h ad become distressed enough to investigate a bit. On a n evening when Lin da was su pposed to have gone s hopping in Portlan d after her tennis lesson, An dy h ad followed her an d Quentin to Q uentin's one- s torey rented house (inevitably d u bbed 'the love-nest' by the papers). He had parked in the t ur nou t un til Q uen tin drove her back to the co un try clu b where her car was parked, abou t t hree hours la ter.

'Do you mea n to tell this co urt t hat you r wife did not recognize your bran d-new Plymou th sedan behin d Q uentin's car?' the DA asked him on cross-examin a tion.

'I swapped cars for the evening wit h a frien d,' An dy said, a n d this cool ad mission of how well- pla nned his investigation h ad been did him no good a t all in the eyes of t he jury.

After ret ur ning t he frien d's car an d picking up his own, he had gone home. Lin da had been in bed, reading a book. He asked her how her trip to Portlan d h ad been. She replied t hat it had been fun, b u t she had n't seen a nything s he liked well enough to b uy. That's when I k new for su re,' An dy told t he breat hless spectators. He spoke in the sa me calm, remote voice in which he delivered almost all of his testimony.

'What was your fra me of min d in the seven teen days between then an d the night you r wife was mu rdered?' Andy's lawyer asked him.

'I was in great distress,' An dy said calmly, coldly. Like a m an reciting a s hopping lis t he said that he had considered suicide, an d had even gone so fa r as to p u rch ase a gun in Lewiston on 8 Septem ber.

His lawyer then invited him to tell t he ju ry wh a t had h appened after his wife left to meet Glenn Quentin on the nigh t of t he murders. An dy told them ... a n d the im pression he made was t he worst possible.

I knew him for close to thirty years, an d I can tell you he was the most self-possessed man I've ever known. What was right wit h him he'd only give you a little a t a time. What was wrong with him he kept bottled u p inside. If he ever had a dark nigh t of the soul, as some writer or other h as called it, you would never know. He was the type of m an who, if he h ad decided to commit s uicide, would do it withou t leaving a note bu t not un til his affairs had been p u t neatly in order. If he had cried on the witness s tan d, or if his voice had t hickened an d grown hesitan t, even if he had gotten yelling a t th a t Was hington- boun d District Attor ney, I don't believe he would h ave gotten t he life sentence he woun d up with. Even if he h ad've he would h ave been ou t on parole by 1954 . Bu t he told his s tory like a recording m achine, seeming to say to the jury: this is it. Take it or leave it. They left it.

He said he was dr un k that night, t h a t he'd been more or less drun k since 24 Augu st, an d t hat he was a ma n who didn't han dle his liq uor very well. Of co u r se t hat by it self would have been hard for any jury to swallow. They ju st

co uld n't see this coldly self- possessed young man in the neat double-breasted t hree- piece woollen suit ever getting falling- down dru n k over his wife's sleazy little affair wit h some sm all-town golf pro. I believed it because I had a ch a nce to watch An dy t hat those six men an d six women did n't h ave.

Andy D ufresne took just fou r drin ks a year all the time I k new him. He would meet me in t he exercise yard every year abou t a week before his birth day an d then again about two weeks before Ch ris t mas. On each occasion he would arrange for a bottle of Jack Daniels. He bought it t he way most con s arra nge to b uy t heir st uff-the slave's wages t hey pay in here, plus a little of his own. Up un til 1965 wh a t you got for your time was a dime an hour. In '65 they r aised it all the way u p to a q u a rter. My commission on liq uor was a n d is ten per cen t, an d when you add on that s urcharge to the price of a fine sippin' whiskey like t he Black Jack, you get an idea of how many hours of An dy D ufres ne's sweat in t he prison lau n dry was going to b uy his four drin ks a year.

On the mor ning of his birth day, 20 September, he would h ave himself a big k nock, an d then he'd have another t hat nigh t after ligh t s out. The following day he'd give the rest of the bottle back to me, an d I would s h are it aroun d. As for the other bottle, he dealt him self one drin k Ch ris t mas nigh t an d another on New Year's Eve. Then t hat one would also come to me with in str uctions to pass it on. Fou r drin ks a year -a n d that is the beh aviou r of a m an who has been bitten h a rd by the bottle. Hard enough to draw blood.

He told the ju ry t hat on the nigh t of t he 10th he had been so drun k he could only remem ber wh a t h ad h appened in little isolated snatches. He had gotten dru n k that after noon - 'I took on a dou ble helping of Du tch cou rage' is how he pu t it - before taking on Lin da.

After s he left to meet Q uen tin , he remem bered deciding to confron t t hem. On the way to Quentin's bu ngalow, he swung in to the co un try clu b for a co uple of q uick ones. He co uld not, he said, remember telling t he barten der he co uld 'read abou t the rest of it in the papers', or saying

a nything to him a t all. He remembered buying beer in the Han dy-Pik, bu t not the dish towels. 'Why would I want dish towels?' he asked, an d one of t he papers reported t hat three of the lady jurors shu ddered.

Later, much la ter, he spec ulated to me abou t the clerk who had testified on the s u bject of t hose dish toweis, an d I thin k it'i worth jotting down what he said. 'S uppose that, d u ring their chmv mhn fur witnesses,' An dy said one day in the oxwulio yard, 'they s tum ble on t his fellow who sold me the beer t hat nigh t. By then th ree days have gone by.

The facts of t he case have been broadsided in all the papers. Maybe they ganged u p on the guy, five or six cops, plus t he dick from t he attorney general's office, plu s the DA's assista n t. Memory is a pretty s u bjective thing, Red. They could have s tarted ou t with "Is n't it possible th a t he p u rch ased fou r or five dish towels?" an d worked their way u p from there. If enough people wan t you to remem ber somet hing, th a t can be a pretty powerful pers uader.'

I agreed th a t it co uld.

'B u t there's one even more powerful,' An dy went on in t hat musing way of his. 'I thin k it's at least possible that he convinced himself. It was t he limeligh t. Reporters asking him q u estions, his picture in the papers ... all topped, of cou rse, by his star tu rn in co urt. I'm not saying t hat he deliberately falsified his s tory, or perju red himself. I thin k it's possible that lie could have passed a lie detector test with flying colours, or sworn on his mot her's sacred n a me that I bought those dish towels. Bu t still ... memory is su ch a godda m s ubjective thing.

'I k now this mu ch: even though my own lawyer though t I h ad to be lying abou t half my s tory, he never bough t that b u siness about the dish towels. It's crazy on the face of it. I was pig- drun k, too dr un k to have been thin king abou t muffling the gun s hots. If I'd done it, I just would h ave let t hem rip.'

He wen t up to the t urnou t an d parked there. He dran k beer an d s moked cigarettes. He watched t he lights downstairs in Q uen tin's place go ou t. He watched a single ligh t go on u pstairs ... a n d fifteen min u tes la ter he

watched th a t one go out. He said he co uld guess the rest.

'Mr Dufresne, did you then go u p to Glenn Quentin's house an d kill the two of them ?' his lawyer thu n dered.

'No, I did not,' An dy a n swered. By midnigh t, he said, he was sobering up. He was also feeling t he fir s t signs of a bad h a ngover. He decided to go home an d sleep it off an d t hin k abou t the whole thing in a more adult fashion the next day. 'At th a t time, as I drove home, I was beginning to t hin k th a t t he wisest co urse would be to sim ply let her go to Reno a n d get her divorce.'

'Th a n k you , Mr D ufresne.'

The DA popped u p.

'You divorced her in the quickest way you could t hin k of, didn't you ? You divorced her with a . 38 revolver wrapped in dish towels, didn't you?'

'No sir, I did not,' An dy said calmly.

'An d then you shot her lover.'

'No, sir.'

'You mea n you shot Quentin firs t?'

'I mea n I didn't s hoot either one of them. I dra n k two q u arts of beer an d smoked however m any cigarettes that t he police fou n d at the tu rnou t. Then I drove home an d went to bed.'

'You told the ju ry t hat between 24 August a nd 10 Septem ber, you were feeling suicidal.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Suicidal enough to buy a revolver.'

'Yes.'

'Would it bother you overmu ch, Mr D ufres ne, if I told you

t hat you do not seem to me to be t he suicidal type?'

'No,' An dy said, 'b u t you don't im press me as being terribly sen sitive, a n d I dou bt very much th a t, if I were feeling suicidal, I would take my problem to you .'

There was a slight tense titter in t he co urtroom at t his, b u t it won him no poin ts with t he jury.

'Did you take your . 38 with you on the night of Septem ber?'

'No; as I've already testified -'

'Oh, yes!' The DA s miled sarcastically. 'You th rew it in to t he river, did n't you? The Royal River. On the afternoon of 9 Septem ber.'

'Yes, sir.'

'One day before the mu rders.'

'Yes, sir.'

Th at's convenien t, isn't it?'

'It's neit her convenien t nor inconvenien t. Only t he tru th .'

'I believe you heard Lie u ten an t Mincher's testimony?' Mincher had been in ch arge of t he party which had dragged the s tretch of the Royal near Pon d Bridge, from which An dy had testified he had t hrown the gun. The police h ad not foun d it

'Yes, sir. You know I heard it.'

Then you heard him testify t hat t hey foun d no gu n, although they dragged for th ree days. That was ra t her convenien t, too, was n't it?'

'Convenience aside, it's a fact th a t they didn't fin d the gu n,' An dy responded calmly. 'Bu t I should like to poin t ou t to bot h you an d the jury that t he Pon d Road Bridge is very close to where the Royal River em pties in to the Bay

of Yar mou th . The c urrent is s trong. The gun may h ave been carried ou t in to t he bay it self.'

'An d so no com parison ca n be made between the riflings on the bullets taken from the bloodstained corpses of you r wife an d Mr Glenn Quentin an d the riflings on the barrel of you r gun. Th a t's correct, isn't it, Mr D ufres ne?'

'Yes.'

Th at's also ra t her convenient, isn't it?'

At that, according to the papers, An dy displayed one of t he few sligh t emotional reaction s he allowed himself d u ring t he entire six-week period of t he trial. A sligh t, bitter s mile crossed his face.

'Since I a m innocen t of this crime, sir, an d since I am telling the tru th about th rowing my gun in to the river the day before the crime took place, t hen it seems to me decidedly inconvenien t that the gu n was never foun d.'

The DA ha mmered a t him for two days. He re- read the Han dy-Pik clerk's testimony abou t the dish towels to Andy. An dy repeated that he could not recall b uying t hem, b ut admitted that he also co uldn't remember not b uying t hem.

Was it tr ue t hat An dy an d Lin da D ufresne h ad t aken ou t a join t in s u rance policy in early 1947 ? Yes, t hat was true. And if acq uitted, was n't it tr ue th a t An dy s tood to gain

$50 , 000 in benefits? Tr ue. An d was n't it tr ue th a t he h ad gone u p to Glenn Quentin's hou se with murder in his heart, an d wasn't it also true t hat he had indeed committed mu rder twice over? No, it was not true. Then what did he thin k had happened, since there had been no sign s of robbery?

'I have no way of knowing that, sir,' An dy said quietly.

The case wen t to the ju ry a t one p. m. on a snowy Wednesday after noon. The twelve ju rymen an d women ca me back a t t hree-thirty. The bailiff said they would h ave been back earlier, bu t they h ad held off in order to

enjoy a nice chicken dinner from Bentley's Resta ura n t at t he co un ty's expen se. They fou n d him guilty, a n d brot her, if Maine had the death pen alty, he would have done the airda nce before that spring's crocu ses poked their heads ou t of the dirt.

The DA had asked him wh a t he t hough t had h appened, a n d An dy slipped the q u estion - b u t he did h ave an idea, a n d I got it out of him la te one evening in 1955 . It h ad t aken those seven years for us to progress from nodding acqu ainta nces to fairly close friends - b ut I never felt really close to An dy un til 1960 or so, an d I believe I was t he only one who ever did get really close to him. Both being long-timers, we were in the sa me cellblock from beginning to end, alt hough I was halfway down the corridor from him.

'What do I thin k?' He laughed - bu t there was no h umour in t he soun d. 'I t hin k there was a lot of bad luck floating a roun d th a t night. More tha n could ever get toget her in t he sa me short spa n of time again. I thin k it mu st have been some s tranger, ju st passing through. Maybe

someone who h ad a fla t tyre on t h a t road after I wen t home. Maybe a b urglar. Maybe a psychopat h. He killed t hem, that's all. An d I'm here.'

As simple as t hat. An d he was con demned to spend the rest of his life in Sh awsha n k - or t he part of it th a t m a ttered. Five years la ter he began to have parole hearings, an d he was t urned down ju st as regular as clockwork in spite of being a model prisoner. Getting a pass ou t of Shaws h an k when you've got murder s ta m ped

on you r ad mitta nce-slip is slow work, as slow as a river eroding a rock. Seven men sit on t he board, two more t han at most s ta te prison s, an d every one of those seven h as an ass as hard as the water drawn u p from a mineral-spring well You can't buy t hose guys, you can't no, you ca n't cry for t hem. As fa r as the board concerned, money don't talk, a n d nobody walks. pc other reason s in Andy's case as well ... bu t t hat belongs a little fu rt her along in my s tory.

There was a tr usty, na me of Kendricks, who was in to me for some pretty heavy money back in the fifties, a n d it

was fou r years before he got it all paid off. Most of the interest he paid me was inform ation - in my line of work, you're dead if you ca n't fin d ways of keeping you r ear to t he grou n d. This Ken dric ks, for in s t ance, h ad access to records I was never going to see ru nning a s ta m per down

in the godda m plate-shop.

Ken dricks told me t hat the parole board vote was 7 -0 again st An dy Dufresne through 1957, 6 - 1 in '58 , 7 - 0 again in '59 , an d 5 -2 in '60 . After t hat I don't know, bu t I do know that sixteen years la ter he was s till in Cell 14 of Cellblock 5 . By tben, 1976 , he was fifty-eigh t. They probably would have fatten big-hearted an d let him ou t a roun d 1983 . They give you fife, an d that's wh a t they t ake - all of it th a t co un ts, anyway. Maybe they set you

loose someday, bu t ... well, Listen: I knew this guy, S herwood Bolton, his na me was, a n d he had this pigeon in his cell. From 1945 un til 1953, when t hey let him ou t, he had that pigeon. He was n't any Bird man of Alcatraz; he just had this pigeon. Jake, he called him. He set Jake free a day before he, S herwood, th a t is, was to walk, an d J ake flew away ju s t as pretty as you co uld wa n t. B u t

about a week after S herwood Bolton left our happy little fa mily, a friend of mine called me over to the west corner of t he exercise yard, where S herwood u sed to hang out, a n d my frien d said: 'Isn't th a t Jake, Red?' It was. That pigeon was just as dead as a tu rd.

I remem ber the fir st time An dy D ufresne got in touch with me for something; I remem ber like it was yesterday. Th at was n't the time he wan ted Rita Haywort h, though. Th at ca me la ter. In that summer of 1948 he ca me around for something else.

Most of my deals are done righ t there in t he exercise yard, a n d that's where this one wen t down. O ur yard is big, much bigger than most. It's a perfect sq u are, ninety yards on a side. The north side is t he ou ter wall, with a gu ardtower at eit her en d. The guards up there a re ar med with binoculars an d riot gun s. The main gate is in t hat nort h side. The tru ck loading-bays are on the sout h side of t he yard. There a re five of t hem. S h awsh a n k is a b usy place du ring the work-week - deliveries in, deliveries ou t. We have t he licen se- plate factory, a n d a big in du strial

la u ndry th a t does all t he prison wetwash, plus that of Kittery Receiving Hospital a n d t he Eliot San a torium . There's also a big au tomotive garage where mecha nic inmates fix prison, state, a n d municipal vehicles - not to mention the private cars of t he screws, the ad ministration officers ... an d, on more tha n one occasion, t hose of t he parole board.

The east side is a thick s tone wall full of tiny slit win dows. Cellblock 5 is on t he other side of t hat wail. The west side is Ad ministration an d the infirm ary. Sh awsha n k has never been as overcrowded as most prison s, an d back in

'48 it was only filled to something like two-thirds capacity, b u t a t a ny given time t here migh t be eighty to a h u n dred a n d twenty cons on the yard - playing toss with a football or a baseball, shooting craps, jawing a t each other, m aki ng deals. On S u n day t he place was even more crowded; on S u n day the place would have looked like a co un try holiday ... if there had been any women.

It was on a Su n day th a t An dy first ca me to me. I had just finished talking to Elmore Ar mitage, a fellow who often

ca me in han dy to me, abou t a radio when An dy walked u p. I k new who he was, of co urse; he had a rep utation for being a snob an d a cold fish. People were saying he was m arked for trou ble already. One of t he people saying so was Bogs Dis mon d, a bad man to h ave on you r case. Andy had no cellmate, a n d I'd heard t hat was ju st the way he wan ted it, alt hough t he one-m an cells in Cellblock 5 were only a little bigger th a n coffin s. Bu t I don't have to lis ten to rumou rs abou t a man when I ca n ju dge him for myself.

'Hello,' he said. 'I' m An dy D ufresne.' He offered his han d

a n d I shook it. He was n't a man to waste time being social; he got righ t to the poin t. 'I un dersta n d t hat you're a man who knows how to get things.'

I agreed t h a t I was able to locate certain items from time to time,

'How do you do that?' An dy asked.

'Sometimes,' I said, 'things just seem to come in to my

h a n d. I ca n't explain it. Unless it's beca u se I' m Irish.'

He s miled a little a t th a t. 'I won der if you co uld get me a rock ha mmer.'

'What would t hat be, an d why would you wan t it?'

Andy looked su rprised. 'Do you make motivation s a part of your bu siness?' With words like those I co uld u nderstan d how he h ad gotten a repu ta tion for being the

s nobby sort, the kin d of guy who likes to pu t on airs - b u t I sen sed a tiny thread of h umou r in his q u estion.

I'll tell you ,' I said. 'If you wan ted a toot hbru sh, I would n't ask q u estions. I'd ju st q uote you a price. Becau se a toot hbru sh, you see, is a non-leth al sort of a weapon.'

"You h ave s trong feelings abou t leth al weapons?'

'I do.'

An old friction-taped baseball flew towards us an d he

t u r ned, cat-quick, a n d picked it ou t of the air. It was a move Fran k Malzone would h ave been prou d of. An dy flicked the bail back to where it had come from -just a q uick an d easy-looking flick of the wrist, b u t th a t th row h ad some mu sta rd on it, ju s t the sa me. I co uld see a lot of people were watching us wit h one eye as they went abou t t heir bu siness. Probably t he guards in tile tower were watching, too. I won't gild the lily; there a re cons that swing weigh t in a ny prison, maybe four or five in a s mall one, maybe two or th ree dozen in a big one. At S h awsha n k I was one of those with some weigh t, an d

what I t hough t of An dy Dufresne would h ave a lot to do with how his time wen t. He probably k new it too, bu t he was n't kowtowing or su cking u p to me, an d I respected him for that.

'Fair enough. Ill tell you wh a t it is a n d why I wan t it A rock-ha mmer looks like a miniatu re pickaxe - abou t so long.' He held his ha n ds abou t a foot apart, an d that was

when I fir s t noticed how neatly kept his n ails were. 'It's got a sm all sharp pick on one end an d a fiat, blunt h a mmer head on the other. I wa n t it becau se I like rocks.'

'Rocks,' I said.

'Sq uat down here a min u te,' he said.

I humoured him. We hu n kered down on ou r h a unches like In dian s.

Andy took a han dful of exercise yard dirt a n d began to sift it between his neat han ds, so it emerged in a fine cloud. S mall pebbles were left over, one or two sparkly, t he rest dull an d plain. One of the dull ones was quartz, b u t it was only dull un til you'd ru bbed it clea n. Then it h ad a nice milky glow. An dy did t he clea ning an d then tossed it to me. I ca ugh t it a n d na med it.

'Q uartz, su re,' he said, 'An d look. Mica. S h ale, silted gra nite. Here's a piece of graded limestone, from when t hey cu t this place ou t of the side of the hill.' He tossed t hem away a n d d u sted his ha n ds. 'I'm a rock houn d. At least... I was a rockhoun d. In my old life. I'd like to be one again, on a limited scale.'

'Sun day expeditions in the exercise yard?' I asked, s ta n ding u p. It was a silly idea, a nd yet ... seeing t hat little piece of q u artz had given my heart a funny tweak. I don't know exactly why; just an association wit h the ou t side world, I su ppose. You didn't thin k of su ch things in term s of t he yard. Quartz was something you picked ou t of a small, quick- running s trea m.

'Better to h ave S u n day expedition s here than no S u n day expeditions a t all,' he said.

'You co uld plan t an item like t h a t rock-h a mmer in somebody's sk ull,' I remarked.

'I have no enemies here,' he said q uietly.

'No?' I s miled. 'Wait awhile.'

'If t here's trou ble, I ca n han dle it wit hou t u sing a rock-ha mmer.'

'Maybe you wan t to try a n escape? Going u n der the wall? Beca u se if you do -'

He la ughed politely. When I saw t he rock-ha mmer three weeks la ter, I u n derstood why.

"You know,' I said, \*if anyone sees you with it, they'll take it may. If tbey saw you wit h a spoon, they'd take it away.

i: you going to do, ju s t sit down here in the yard an d 3' away?'

"Oh, I believe I ca n do a lot better t han th a t.'

I nodded. Th at part of it really was n't my bu siness, a nyway. A man engages my services to get him somet hing. Whet her he can keep it or not after I get it is his b usiness.

'How much would an item like that go for?' I asked. I was Beginning to enjoy his q uiet, low- key style. When you've spent ten years in s tir, as I had then, you ca n get awfully tired of t he bellowers an d the braggarts a n d the

lou d- mou th s. Yes, I din k it would be fair to say I liked Andy from the fir s t.

'Eight dollars in any rock-an d-gem s hop,' he said, 'b u t I realize that in a b usiness like you rs you work on a cost-plus basis-'

'Cost plus ten per cen t is my going ra te, b ut I have to go u p some on a dangerou s item. For something like the gadget you're talking abou t, it takes a little more goose-grease to get the wheels t ur ning. Let's say ten

dollars.'

'Ten it is'

I looked a t him, s miling a little. 'Have you got ten dollars?'

'I do,' he said quietly.

A long time after, I discovered that he had better than five h u n dred. He had brough t it in wit h him. When they check you in at this hotel, one of the bellhops is obliged to

bend you over an d take a look u p you r works - bu t there a re a lot of works, an d, not to pu t too fine a poin t on it, a m an who is really deter mined can get a fairly la rge item q uite a ways u p t hem - fa r enough to be ou t of sigh t, u nless the bellhop you happen to draw is in the mood to

p ull on a r u bber glove a n d go prospecting.

Th at's fine,' I said. 'You ough t to k now wh a t I expect if you get caugh t wit h what I get you .'

'I su ppose I should,' he said, an d I co uld tell by t he slight ch ange in his grey eyes that he knew exactly what I was going to say. It was a sligh t ligh tening, a glea m of his special ironic humour.

'If you get ca ugh t, you'll say you foun d it. That's about t he long an d s hort of it. They'll p u t you in solitary for t hree or fou r weeks ... plus, of cou rse, you'll lose you r toy a n d you'll get a black mark on you r record. If you give t hem my n a me, you an d I will never do bu siness again. Not for so much as a pair of s hoelaces or a bag of B ugler. And I'll sen d some fellows a roun d to lum p you u p. I don't

like violence, bu t you'll un derstan d my position. I ca n't allow it to get aroun d t hat I can't ha n dle myself. That would s urely finis h me.'

'Yes. I s uppose it would, I u n dersta n d, an d you don't need to worry.'

'I never worry,' I said. 'In a place like t his there's no percentage in it.'

He nodded an d walked away. Th ree days la ter he walked u p beside me in t he exercise yard du ring the la un dry's morning break. He did n't speak or even look my way, b ut pressed a pict ure of the Hon. Alexa n der Hamilton in to my h a n d as neatly as a good magicia n does a card-trick. He was a m an who adapted fast. I got him his rock- ha mmer. I h ad it in my cell for one nigh t, an d it was just as he described it It was no tool for escape (it would h ave taken a m an just about six hun dred years to t unnel un der the wall u sing that rock-ha mmer, I figured), b u t I s till felt some misgivings. If you pla n ted t h a t pickaxe end in a m an's head, he would su rely never lis ten to Fibber

McGee a n d Molly on t he radio again. An d An dy had already begun having trou ble with the sis ters. I hoped it was n't them he was wan ting the rock-ha mmer for.

In the end, I tr usted my ju dgment. Early the next morning, twen ty min u tes before t he wake-u p horn went off, I slipped t he rock- ha mmer an d a package of Ca mels to Ernie, t he old tru sty who swept the Cellblock 5 corridors un til he was let free in 1956 . He slipped it in to his t unic withou t a word, an d I didn't see the rock-ha mmer again for seven years.

The following S u n day An dy walked over to me in the exercise yard again. He was nothing to look a t that day, I ca n :"il you . His lower lip was swelled u p so big it looked like a summer sa u sage, his righ t eye was swollen h alf- shu t, a n d +ere was an ugly was h board scrape across one cheek. He was having his trou bles wit h the sis ters, all righ t, b u t he never men tioned t hem. 'Than ks for the

tool,' he said, a n d walked n r ay.

I watched him cu riously. He walked a few s teps, saw in

t he dirt, bent over, an d picked it u p. It was a s mall rock. Prison fa tigues, except for t hose worn by mecha nics when they're on the job, h ave no pockets. B u t there are ways to get a rou n d t hat. The little pebble disappeared u p Andy's sleeve an d didn't come down. I ad mired that... a n d I ad mired him. In spite of t he problem s he was h aving, he was going on with his life. There are t hou san ds who don't or won't or ca n't, an d plenty of them a ren't in prison, eit her. An d I noticed th a t, alt hough his face still looked as if a twister h ad h appened to it, his h a n ds were still neat an d clea n, the nails well- kept.

I didn't see mu ch of him over t he next six mon ths; An dy spent a lot of th a t time in solitary.

A few words about the sis ters.

In a lot of pen s they a re known as b ull queers or jailhouse s usies - just la tely the term in fas hion is 'killer queen s'. B u t in they were always the sis ters. I don't know why, b ut ot her than the na me I guess t here was no difference.

It comes as no s urprise to most these days that t here's a lot of buggery going on in side t he walls - except to some of t he new fish, m aybe, who have t he misfort une to be you ng, slim, good-looking, a n d u nwary - b ut homosexu ality, like s traight sex, comes in a hu n dred differen t sh apes a n d form s . There a re men who can't s ta n d to be without sex of some kind an d t urn to another m an to keep from going crazy. Usu ally what follows is an arra ngemen t between two fun damentally "Heterosexu al men, although I've sometimes won dered if they a re q uite as heterosexual as t hey t hough t t hey were going to be when t hey get back to their wives or their girlfriends.

There a re also men who get 'tur ned' in prison. In the c urrent parlance they 'go gay', or 'come ou t of the closet'. Mostly (bu t not always) they play t he female, an d their favou rs a re competed for fiercely.

And then there are the sis ters.

They a re to prison society what t he rapist is to the society ou t side the walls. They're us ually long-timers, doing hard

b ullets for bru tal crimes. Their prey is the young, the weak, an d t he inexperienced ... or, as in the case of An dy D ufresne, the weak-looking. Their hun ting groun ds are t he s howers, the cra m ped, tu nnel-like a rea way behind t he in d u s trial was hers in the la u n dry, sometimes the infir mary. On more tha n one occasion rape h as occ urred in the closet- sized projection booth behin d the a uditorium. Most often what t he sis ters take by force t hey co uld have had for free, if they wan ted it; those who h ave been tu rned always seem to h ave 'cr u shes' on one sis ter or a not her, like teen age girls with their Sin atras,

Presleys, or Redfords. Bu t for the sis ters, t he joy has always been in taking it by force... a n d I guess it always will be.

Beca u se of his s mall size an d fair good looks (a n d m aybe also becau se of that very q u ality of self- possession I h ad ad mired), the sis ters were after An dy from the day he walked in . If t his was some kin d of fairy s tory, I'd tell you t hat An dy fought t he good figh t un til t hey left him alone. I wish I co uld say that, bu t I ca n't. Prison is no fairy-tale world.

The firs t time for him was in the s hower less th a n three days after he joined our happy Shaws h an k fa mily. J ust a lot of slap an d tickle t hat time, I u nderstan d. They like to size you up before t hey make their real move, like jackals fin ding ou t if the prey is as weak an d ha mstr ung as it looks.

Andy punched back an d bloodied t he lip of a big, h ulking sis ter na med Bogs Dia mon d - gone these m any years since to who knows where. A guard broke it up before it co uld go any further, b u t Bogs promised to get him - an d Bogs did.

The secon d time was behind the was hers in t he lau n dry. A lot has gone on in that long, du s ty, an d narrow space over the years; t he guards know abou t it an d ju st let it be. It's dim an d littered with bags of was hing an d bleaching com pou n d, drums of Hexlite catalyst, as har mless as salt if your han ds a re dry, mu rderou s as battery acid if t hey're wet. The guards don't like to go back there. There's no room to manoe uvre, an d one of the firs t things

t hey teach them when they come to work in a place like t his is to never let the con s get you in a place where you ca n't back u p.

Bogs was n't there th a t day, b ut Henry Back us, who had been wash room forema n down there since 1922 , told me t hat four of his friends were. An dy held them at bay for a

while wit h a scoop of Hexlite, t hreatening to t hrow it in t heir eyes if t hey ca me any closer, b u t he tripped trying to back a roun d one of t he big Washex four- pockets. That was ail it took. They were on him.

I guess the ph rase gang-rape is one th a t doesn't change much from one generation to the next. Th a t's what t hey did to him, those four sis ters. They bent him over a gearbox an d one of them held a Phillips screwdriver to his tem ple while they gave him the b u siness. It rips you u p some, bu t not bad - a m I speaking from personal experience, you ask? - I only wish I weren't. You bleed for a while. If you don't wan t some clown asking you if you ju s t s ta rted your period, you wad up a bunch of toilet paper an d keep it down the back of you r un derwear un til

it stops. The bleeding really is like a menstru al flow; it keeps u p for two, maybe th ree days, a slow trickle. Then it s tops. No harm done, unless t hey've done somet hing even more unnatural to you . No physical harm done - bu t rape is rape, an d eventu ally you h ave to look at your face in the mirror again an d decide wh a t to make of you rself.

Andy went th rough t hat alone, the way he went th rough everyt hing alone in those days. He mu s t h ave come to the conclu sion that ot hers before him had come to, na mely, t hat there are only two ways to deal with the sis ters: figh t t hem a n d get taken, or just get taken.

He decided to figh t When Bogs a n d two of his b uddies ca me after him a week or so after t he la un dry inciden t ('I heard ya got broke in ,' Bogs said, according to Ernie, who was aroun d a t the time), An dy slugged it ou t wit h t hem. He broke the nose of a fellow named Rooster MacBride, a heavy-gu tted far mer who was in for beating his s tep- da ugh ter to death. Rooster died in here, I' m h appy to add.

They took him, all th ree of them. When it was done, Rooster an d the other egg - it migh t have been Pete Verness, bu t I' m not com pletely su re - forced An dy down to his knees. Bogs Dia mon d s tepped in front of him. He h ad a pearl- han dled r azor in those days with the words Dia mon d Pearl engraved on both sides of the grip. He opened it a n d said, I' m gonn a open my fly now, mister m an, an d you're going to swallow what I give you to swallow. An d when you done swallowed mine, you're gonn a swallow Rooster's. I guess you done broke his nose a n d I thin k he ough t to have something to pay for it'

Andy said, 'Anything of yours th a t you stick in my mout h, you're going to lose it.'

Bogs looked a t An dy like he was crazy, Er nie said.

'No,' he told An dy, talking to him slowly, like An dy was a s t upid kid. 'You didn't un derstan d what I said. You do a nything like that an d I'll pu t all eigh t inches of this steel into your ear. Get it?'

'I un dersta n d what you said. I don't thin k you u nderstan d me. I' m going to bite whatever you stick in to my mout h. You can pu t that razor in my brain, I guess, b u t you s hould k now that a su dden seriou s brain inju ry ca u ses t he victim to simultaneou sly urin a te, defecate... a n d bite down.'

He looked up a t Bogs, s miling t h a t little s mile of his, old Er nie said, as if the th ree of them had been discu ssing s tocks an d bon ds with him in s tead of t h rowing it to him ju s t as hard as they co uld. J ust as if he was wearing one of his t h ree- piece ban kers' s uits in s tead of kneeling on a dirty broom-closet floor wit h his pan ts aroun d his an kles a n d blood trickling down the in sides of his thighs.

'In fact,' he wen t on, 'I un derstan d th a t t he bite- reflex is sometimes so strong that the victim's jaws have to be pried open with a crowbar or a jack h an dle.'

Bogs didn't p u t anything in An dy's mou th th a t nigh t in late Febr uary of 1948 , an d neit her did Rooster MacBride, a n d so fa r as I know, no one else ever did, either. What

t he three of them did was to beat An dy wit hin a n inch of

his life, a n d all fou r of t hem en ded u p doing a jolt in solitary. An dy an d Rooster MacBride went by way of the

infir mary.

How m any times did that partic ular crew have a t him? I don't know. I thin k Rooster lost his taste fairly early on

- being in nose-splin t s for a mon th can do t hat to a fellow

- an d Bogs Dia mond left off th a t summer, all a t once.

Th at was a s tr a nge thing. Bogs was foun d in his cell, badly beaten, one morning in early Ju ne, when he didn't s how u p in t he breakfast nose-co un t He wouldn't say who had done it, or how they h ad gotten to him, b ut being in my b u siness, I know t hat a screw can be bribed to do almost anything accept get a gun for an inmate. They didn't m ake big salaries then, an d they don't now. And in those days there was no electronic locking system, no closed-circ uit TV, no m aster- switches which controlled whole areas of the prison. Back in 1948 , each cellblock had its own t urn key. A guard co uld have been bribed real easy to let someone - m aybe two or three

someones - in to t he block, a n d, yes, even in to Dia mon d's cell.

Of co u rse a job like th a t would have cost a lot of money. Not by ou tside s tan dards, no. Prison economics a re on a s maller scale. When you've been in here a while, a dollar bill in you r han d looks like a twenty did outside. My guess is, that if Bogs was done, it cost someone a serious piece of ch a nge - fifteen b u cks, well say, for the t u r n key, an d two or s tore apiece for each of t he lum p-u p guys.

I' m not saying it was An dy D ufres ne, b u t I do know th a t he brough t in five h u n dred dollars when he ca me, a n d he was a ban ker in the s traight world - a man who u nderstan ds better t han t he rest of u s the ways in which money can become power.

And I k now this: After t he beating - t he th ree broken ribs, t he haemorrh aged eye, the sprained back an d the dislocated hip - Bogs Dia mond left An dy alone. In fact, after that he left everyone pretty much alone. He got to be

like a high win d in t he s ummertime, all bluster an d no bite. You co uld say, in fact, that he tu rned in to a 'weak sis ter'.

Th at was the end of Bogs Dia mon d, a man who migh t even t ually have killed An dy if Andy hadn't taken steps to prevent it (if it was him who took t he s teps). Bu t it was n't t he end of An dy's trou ble wit h the sis ters. There was a little hiat us, an d then it bega n again, alt hough not so h ard nor so often. Jackals like easy prey, an d t here were easier pickings a roun d tha n An dy Dufresne.

He always fough t them, t hat's what I remem ber. He knew, I guess, that if you let t hem have a t you even once, withou t figh ting it, it got th a t much easier to let them h ave their way without fighting next time. So An dy would t u r n u p with br uises on his face every once in a while, a n d there was t he matter of the two broken fingers six or eigh t mon th s after Dia mon d's beating. Oh yes - a n d sometime in la te 1949 , t he m an la n ded in the infir mary with a broken cheekbone t hat was probably t he result of

someone swinging a nice ch u n k of pipe with the

b u siness-end wrapped in fla nnel. He always fough t back, a n d as a result, he did his time in solitary. Bu t don't t hin k solita ry was t he hardship for An dy t hat it was for some men. He got along wit h himself.

The sis ters was something he adju s ted him self to - an d t hen, in 1950 , it stopped almost completely. That is a part of my s tory that 111 get to in due time.

In the fall of 1948 , An dy met me one morning in the exercise yard an d asked me if I could get him h alf a dozen rock-bla n kets.

'What the hell are those?' I asked.

He told me th a t was ju st what rockhoun ds called them; t hey were polishing cloth s about t he size of dis h towels. They were heavily padded, wit h a s moot h side a n d a rough side -the s mooth side like fine-grained san dpaper, t he rough side almost as abrasive as in dustrial s teel wool (An dy also kept a box of t hat in his cell, although he

didn't get it from me - I imagine he kited it from the prison la un dry).

I told him I though t we could do b u siness on those, a n d I ended u p getting them from t he very sa me rock- an d-gem

s hop where I'd arranged to get t he rock- ha mmer. This time I charged An dy my us ual ten per cent an d not a penny more. I didn't see anyt hing lethal or even dangerou s in a dozen 7" x 7" squ a res of padded cloth. Rock- blan kets, in deed.

It was about five mont hs la ter t hat Andy asked if I could get him Rita Hayworth. Th a t conversation took place in t he a uditorium , d uring a movie-s how. Nowadays we get t he movie- shows once or twice a week, b u t back then the s hows were a mon thly even t Usu ally the movies we got h ad a morally u plifting message to t hem, a n d t his one, The Lost Weeken d, was no different. The moral was th a t it's dangerous to drin k. It was a moral we co uld take some comfort in .

Andy ma noe uvred to get next to me, an d abou t halfway t hrough t he s how he lea ned a little closer a n d asked if I co uld get him Rita Haywort h. I'll tell you the tr ut h, it kin d

of tickled me. He was u su ally cool, calm, an d collected, b u t t hat nigh t he was jum py as hell, almost embarrassed, as if he was asking me to get him a load of Trojan s or one of t hose s heepski n-lined gadgets th a t are s upposed to 'enhance your solitary pleas ure,' as the m agazines p u t it. He seemed overch a rged, a m an on the verge of blowing his radiator.

'I can get her,' I said. 'No sweat, calm down. You wan t the big one or the little one?' At t hat time Rita was my best girl (a few years before it had been Betty Grable) a n d she ca me in two sizes. For a bu ck you co uld get the little Rita. For two-fifty you could have t he big Rita, fou r feet high a n d all wom an.

'The big one,' he said, not looking a t me. I tell you , he was a hot sketch t hat nigh t He was blus hing ju s t like a kid trying to get in to a kootch s how with his big brot her's draft-card. 'Ca n you do it?'

'Take it easy, s ure I ca n. Does a bear shit in t he woods?' The au dience was appla uding a n d catcalling as t he bugs ca me ou t of the walls to get Ray Millan d, who was having

a bad case of t he DT's.

'How soon ?'

'A week. Maybe less.'

'Okay.' Bu t he soun ded disappoin ted, as if he had been hoping I h ad one st uffed down my pa n t s right then. 'How much ?"

I q uoted him the wholesale price. I co uld afford to give him this one a t cost; he'd been a good cu s tomer, what with his rock- ha mmer an d his rock- bla n kets. F u rthermore, he'd been a good boy - on more t han one nigh t when he was having his problem s with Bogs, Rooster, an d the rest, I won dered how long it would be before he u sed the rock- ha mmer to crack someone's head open.

Posters are a big part of my business, ju s t behin d the booze a n d cigarettes, u sually half a s tep a head of the reefer. In the 60s the b usiness exploded in every direction, with a lot of people wa n ting fun ky ha ng- u ps like J imi

Hendrix, Bob Dylan, t hat Easy Rider poster. B ut mostly it's girls; one pin up queen after another.

A few days after I spoke to Ernie, a laun dry driver I did b u siness with back t hen brough t in better th a n sixty posters, most of them Rita Hayworth s. You may even remem ber the pict ure; I s ure do. Rita is dressed - sort of- in a bat hing s uit, one han d behin d her head, her eyes h alf closed, t hose full, s ulky red lips parted. They called it Rita Hayworth, b u t they migh t as well have called it

Wom an in Heat.

The prison administration knows about the black market, in case you were won dering. S u re t hey do. They probably k now as mu ch abou t my b usiness as I do myself. They live with it beca u se they k now t hat a prison is like a big press u re cooker, an d there have to be ven t s somewhere to let off s tea m. They make the occasional b ust, an d I've done time in solita ry a time or th ree over t he years, bu t when it's something like posters, t hey win k. Live an d let

live. An d when a big Rita Hayworth wen t up in some fishie's cell, the assum ption was t hat it ca me in t he m ail

from a frien d or a relative. Of co u r se all the care-packages from friends a n d relatives a re opened an d

t he contents inventoried, bu t who goes back an d re-checks t he inventory sheets for somet hing as h a r mless as a Rita Haywort h or a n Ava Gardner pin-u p? When you're in a press u re-cooker you learn to live an d let live or somebody will carve you a bra n d- new mou th ju st above the Ada m's apple. You learn to make allowances.

It was Ernie again who took t he poster u p to Andy's cell, 14 , my own, 6 . An d it was Er nie who brough t back the written in An dy's careful han d, ju s t one word: Th a n ks.'

A little while la ter, as they filed us ou t for morning chow, I glanced in to his ceil a n d saw Rita over his bun k in all her swims uited glory, one h a n d behin d her head, her eyes half-closed, t hose soft, satiny lips parted. It was over his b un k when he could look a t her nigh ts, after ligh ts ou t, in the glow of the a rc sodium s in the exercise yard.

B u t in the brigh t morning su nligh t, t here were dark slas hes across her face - the s h adow of t he bars on his

single slit-win dow.

Now I'm going to tell you what happened in mid-May of 1950 t hat finally ended An dy's th ree-year series of skir mis hes wit h the sis ters. It was also t he inciden t which eventu ally got him ou t of the la un dry an d in to the library, where he filled ou t his work-time un til he left our h appy little fa mily earlier t his year.

You may have noticed now much of what I've told you Lready is hearsay - someone saw something an d told me a n d I told you . Well, in some cases I've sim plified it even more t han it really was, an d have act ually repeated (or will repeat) fou rt h- or fifth -h a n d infor mation. That's the way it s here. The grapevine is very real, an d you h ave to u se it if you're going to s tay ahead. Also, of cou rse, you h ave to k now how to pick out the grain s of tr u th from the ch aff of lies, rumours, an d wish-it- had- been s.

You m ay also h ave gotten the idea t hat I' m describing someone who's more legen d than m an, an d I would h ave to agree that there's some tr u th to t h a t. To u s long-timers

who knew An dy over a space of years, there was an element of fan tasy to him, a sen se, almost, of myth- magic, if you get what I mea n. That s tory I passed on abou t An dy refu sing to give Bogs Dia mon d a head-job is part of th a t myth, an d how he kept on figh ting t he sis ters is part of it, a n d how he got t he library job is part of it, too ... bu t with one importan t difference: I was t here a n d I saw wh a t h appened, an d I swear on my mot her's na me that it's all

tr u e. The oat h of a convicted murderer may not be worth much, bu t believe this: I don't lie.

Andy an d I were on fair speaking term s by t hen. The guy fascinated me. Looking back to the poster episode, I see t here's one t hing I neglected to tell you , a n d maybe I s hould. Five weeks after he hung Rita u p (I'd forgotten all about it by then, a n d had gone on to other deals), Ernie passed a small white box th rough the bars of my cell.

'From Dufresne,' he said, low, and never missed a s troke with his pu sh- broom.

Th anks, Ernie,' I said, a n d slipped him half a pack of

Ca mels.

Now what the hell was this, I was won dering as I slipped t he cover from t he box. There was a lot of white cotton in side, an d below th a t...

I looked for a long time. For a few minu tes it was like I didn't even dare tou ch them, they were so pretty. There's a crying s hortage of pretty things in t he sla m, an d the real pity of it is th a t a lot of men don't even seem to miss t hem.

There were two pieces of qu a rtz in that box, both of t hem carefully polished. They had been chipped in to driftwood s h apes. There were little sparkles of iron pyrites in them like flecks of gold. If they h ad n't been so heavy, they would h ave served as a fine pair of men's c ufflin ks - t hey were that close to being a matched set

How much work went in to creating t hose two pieces? Hou rs an d hours after ligh ts out, I knew th a t First the chipping an d shaping, an d then the almost endless

polishing an d finis hing with t hose rock- bla n kets. Looking a t them, I felt the war m th that a ny man or woman feels when he or she is looking at something pretty, somet hing th a t has been worked an d m ade - t hat's the thing t hat really separates us from the animals,

I t hin k - a n d I felt something else, too. A sense of awe for t he m an's br u te persistence. B ut I never k new ju st how persistent An dy Dufresne co uld be un til mu ch la ter.

In May of 1950 , the powers th a t be decided th a t the roof of t he licence- plate factory ought to be res u rfaced wit h roofing t a r. They wan ted it done before it got too hot up t here, an d they sued for volun teers for the work, which was planned to take abou t a week. More th a n seventy men spoke u p, beca u se it was ou t side work an d May is one damn fine mont h for ou tside work. Nine or ten na mes were drawn ou t of a hat, an d two of t hem happened to be Andy's an d my own.

For t he next week we'd be marched ou t to the exercise yard after breakfast, with two gu ards u p front an d two more behin d ... plus all the guards in t he towers keeping

a weat her eye on the proceedings th rough their field-glasses for good meas ure.

Fou r of us would be carrying a big extension ladder on t hose morning m arches - 1 always got a kick ou t of the way Dickie Betts, who was on th a t job, called t hat sort of ladder an exten sible - an d we'd pu t it u p against the side of t hat low, lit building. Then we'd s ta rt bu cket- brigading hot b uckets of tar u p to the roof. Spill th a t s hit on you a n d you'd jitterbug all t he way to t he infir mary.

There were six guards on the project, all of t hem picked on the basis of seniority. It was almost as good as a week's vacation, beca u se instead of sweating it ou t in the la u ndry or the plate- shop or sta n ding over a bu nch of cons cu tting pulp or br ush somewhere ou t in t he willy wags, t hey were having a regular May holiday in the sun, ju s t sitting t here with their backs up again s t the low parapet, shooting the b ull back an d forth.

They did n't even have to keep more t han h alf a n eye on u s , beca u se t he sou th wall sen try post was close enough so t hat rte fellows up there could h ave spit t heir chews on

u s , if ih sy'd wa n ted to. If anyone on the roof-sealing party h ad made one fu nny move, it would take four secon ds to c u t him s mack in two wit h . 45 calibre m achine-gun b ullets. So those screws just sat there an d took their ease. All they needed was a cou ple of six- packs b uried in cr u shed ice, an d they would h ave been the lords of all creation.

One of them was a fellow na med Byron Hadley, a n d in :hat year of 1950 , he'd been a t S h awsha n k longer than I had. Longer t han t he last two wardens p ut together, as a m atter of "act. The fellow ru nning the show in 1950 was a prissy-looking downcast Ya n kee na med George D u nahy. He had a degree in pen al ad ministration. No one liked him, as far as I co uld tell, except the people who had gotten him his appoin tment. I heard that he was n't interested in a nything b ut com piling sta tis tics for a book (which was la ter p u blished by a sm all New E ngla n d outfit called Ligh t Side Press, where he probably had to pay to h ave it done), who won the in tra mu ral baseball ch a mpion s hip each Septem ber, an d getting a death- pen alty law passed in Maine. A regular bear for the

death- pen alty was George Dun a hy. He was fired off the job in 1953 , when it ca me ou t he was ru nning a disco unt a u to repair service down in the prison garage an d splitting the profits wit h Byron Hadley an d Greg Sta mmas. Hadley a n d Sta mmas came ou t of t hat one okay - t hey were old h a n ds a t keeping their asses covered

- b u t D una hy took a walk. No one was sorry to see him go, b u t nobody was exactly pleased to see Greg Sta mm as

s tep into his shoes, either. He was a short m an wit h a tigh t, h ard gut an d the coldest brown eyes you ever saw. He always had a painful, pu rsed little grin on his face, as if he had to go to the bat h room an d couldn't q uite m anage it. Du ring Sta mm as's ten u re as warden there was a lot of bru tality a t S h awsh a n k, a n d although I have no proof, I believe there were m aybe half a dozen moonligh t bu rials in the s tan d of scr u b forest that lies east of the prison. Du n ahy was bad, b u t Greg Sta mmas was a cr uel, wretched, cold-hearted man.

He an d Byron Hadley were good frien ds. As warden, George Dun a hy was nothing b ut a postu ring figurehead; it was Sta mmas, an d th rough him, Hadley, who act ually

ad ministered the prison.

Hadley was a tail, sha m bling man with thinning red hair. He s un bu rned easily an d he talked lou d an d if you didn't move fast enough to suit him, he'd clou t you with his s tick. On th a t day, our third on the roof, he was talking to a nother guard n a med Mert En twhistle.

Hadley h ad gotten some a mazingly good news, so he was griping about it. That was his s tyle - he was a than kless m an wit h not a good word for anyone, a m an who was convinced th a t t he whole world was again s t him. The world had cheated him ou t of the best years of his life, a n d t he world would be more t ha n happy to cheat him ou t of the rest. I have seen some screws t hat I t hough t were almost sain tly, an d I thin k I k now why that happen s

- t hey a re able to see t he difference between their own lives, poor a n d s tr uggling as t hey might be, an d the lives of t he men they a re paid by the s ta te to watch over. These gu ards a re able to for mulate a com parison concer ning pain. Others can't, or won't.

For Byron Hadley there was no basis of comparison. He

co uld sit there, cool an d a t his ease u n der the war m May s un an d fin d t he gall to mour n his own good luck while less th a n ten feet away a b unch of men were working a n d sweating an d b urning their hands on great big b uckets filled wit h b u bbling t a r, men who had to work so hard in t heir ordinary roun d of days th a t this looked like a respite. You may remem ber the old q u estion, the one t hat's su pposed to define you r ou tlook on life when you a n swer it. For Byron Hadley the a n swer would always be h alf em pty, the glass is h alf em pty. Forever a n d ever, a men. If you gave him a cool drink of apple cider, he'd t hin k abou t vinegar. If you told him his wife had always been fait hful to him, he'd tell you it was beca u se she was so da mn ugly.

So there he sat, talking to Mert E n twhistle lou d enough for all of us to hear, his broad white forehead already s ta rting to redden with t he su n. He had one han d t hrown back over the low parapet su rrou n ding the roof. The ot her was on t he bu tt of his .38 .

We all got the s tory along with Mert. It seemed that

Hadley's older brother had gone off to Texas some fou rteen years ago an d the rest of t he fa mily h ad n't heard from the son of a bitch since. They had all assumed he was dead, an d good riddance. Then, a week an d a half ago, a lawyer had called t hem long- dista nce from Au s tin. It seemed that Hadley's brother had died four mon th s ago, a n d a rich m an at t hat ('It's frigging incredible how lu cky some assholes ca n get,' this paragon of gratit u de on the plate-s hop roof said). The money h ad come as a res ult of oil an d oil-leases, an d there was close to a million dollars.

No, Hadley wasn't a million aire - t hat migh t have made even him happy, a t least for a while - b ut the brother h ad left a pretty da mned decen t beq uest of t hirty-five t hou san d dollars to each surviving mem ber of his fa mily back in Maine, if they could be foun d. Not bad. Like getting lucky an d winning a sweepstakes.

B u t to Byron Hadley t he glass was always h alf-empty. He spent most of t he morning bitching to Mert abou t the bite t hat the godda m gover nmen t was going to take out of his windfall. "They'll leave me about enough to buy a new car

with,' he allowed, 'a n d t hen what h appen s? You h ave to pay the da mn taxes on the car, a n d the repairs a n d m ain ten ance, you get you r goddam kids pestering you to t ake 'em for a ride with the top down -'

'An d to drive it, if t hey're old enough,' Mert said. Old Mert E n twhistle knew which side his bread was b u ttered on, a n d he didn't say wh a t mu s t have been as obviou s to him as to t he rest of u s: If that money's worrying you so bad, Byron old kid old sock, I'll ju s t t ake it off your han ds. After all, what a re friends for?

Th at's righ t, wan ting to drive it, wan ting to learn to drive on it, for Ch rissake,' Byron said with a sh udder. 'Then what happens a t t he en d of t he year? If you figured the t ax wrong an d you don't have enough left over to pay the

overdraft, you got to pay ou t of you r own pocket, or m aybe even borrow it from one of those kikey loan agencies. An d they a u dit you anyway, you k now. It don't m a tter. An d when t he gover nment au dits you , they always take more. Who can fight Uncle Sa m ? He pu ts his h a n d inside your shirt an d squeezes your tit u n til it's

p u rple, an d you end u p getting the short en d. Ch ris t.'

He lapsed in to a morose silence, thin king of what terrible bad lu ck he'd had to inherit that $35 , 000 . An dy D ufresne h ad been spreading t a r with a big Padd br ush less than fifteen feet away a n d now he tossed it in to his pail an d walked over to where Mert an d Hadley were sitting.

We all tightened up, an d I saw one of t he other screws, Tim You ngblood, drag his han d down to where his pistol was bolstered. One of the fellows in the sen try tower s tr u ck his part ner on the ar m and t hey both tu rned, too. For one moment I t hough t An dy was going to get s hot, or clu bbed, or Then he said, very softly, to Hadley: 'Do you tr u s t you r wife?'

Hadley just stared a t him. He was starting to get red in t he face, an d I knew that was a bad sign. In abou t three secon ds he as going to p ull his billy an d give An dy the b u tt en d of it righ t in the solar plexus, where that big b u n dle of nerves is. A h ard enough hit t here ca n kill you , b u t they always go for it. If itdoesn't kill you it will

paralyze you long enough to forget whatever c u te move it was th a t you had pla nned.

"Boy," Hadley said, I'll give you just one ch a nce to pick up t hat Padd. An d then you're goin' off this roof on you r head.'

Andy ju st looked a t him, very calm an d still. His eyes were like ice. It was as if he had n't heard. An d I foun d myself wa n ting to tell him how it was, to give him the crash co urse. The crash cou rse is you never let on that you hear the guards talking, you never try to horn in on t heir conversation unless you're asked (a n d then you always tell t hem ju st wh a t they wa n ting to hear an d shu t u p again). Black man, white ma n, red m an., yellow ma n, in prison it doesn't matter becau se we've got ou r own bra n d of equality. In prison every con's a nigger an d you h ave to get u sed to the idea if you in tend to s urvive men like Hadley an d Greg Sta minas, who really would kill you . ju s t as soon as look at you . When you're in s tir you belong to the s ta te an d if you forget it, woe is you . I've k nown men who've lost eyes, men who've lost toes an d

fingers; I k new one man who lost t he tip of his penis an d co un ted himself lucky that was all he lost. I wa n ted to tell Andy that it was already too la te. He co uld go back an d pick u p his br us h a n d there would s till be some big lug waiting for him in the s howers t hat nigh t, ready to ch arlie- horse both of his legs and leave him writhing on t he cemen t. You could b uy a lug like r a t for a pack of cigarettes or three Baby Ru th s. Most of all, I wan ted to tell him not to make it any worse t han it already was.

What I did was to keep on running ta r onto t he roof as if niching a t all was happening. Like everyone else, I look after n? own ass fir st. I have to. It's cracked already, an d in Shaws han k t here have always been Hadleys wiling to finish the job of breaking it.

Andy said, 'Maybe I pu t it wrong. Whet her you tru s t her or not is imm aterial. The problem is whether or not you believe she would ever go behin d you r back, try to h a m string you .'

Hadley got up. Mert got u p. Tim Youngblood got u p.

Hadley's face was as red as t he side of a firebar n. 'You r only, problem,' he said, 'is going to be how many bones you s till get un broken. You ca n coun t t hem in the infir mary. Come on, Mert We're th rowing t his su cker over t he side.'

Tim You ngblood drew his gun. The rest of u s kept t arring like mad. The sun beat down. They were going to do it; Hadley a n d Mert were sim ply going to pitch him over the side. Terrible accident D ufres ne, prisoner 81433 -SHNK, was taking a co u ple of em pties down an d slipped on the ladder. Too bad.

They laid hold of him, Mert on the righ t a rm, Hadley on t he left. An dy didn't resist. His eyes never left Hadley's red, horsey face.

'If you've got you r thum b on her, Mr Hadley,' he said in t hat sa me calm, com posed voice, 'there's not a reason why you s houldn't have every cen t of t hat money. Final score, Mr Byron Hadley thirty-five thousa n d, Uncle Sa m zip.'

Mert s tarted to drag him towards t he edge. Hadley ju st s tood still. For a moment An dy was like a rope between t hem in a t ug-of-war ga me. Then Hadley said, 'Hold on one secon d, Mert. What do you mean, boy?'

'I mea n, if you've got your th umb on you r wife, you can give it to her,' An dy said.

'You better s tart m aking sense, boy, or you're going over.'

"The government allows you a one-time-only gift to your spouse,' An dy said. 'It's good u p to sixty thou san d dollars.'

Hadley was now looking a t Andy as if he had been poleaxed. 'Naw, th a t ain't righ t,' he said. 'Tax free?'

'Tax free,' An dy said. 'IRS ca n't tou ch cen t one.'

'How would you know a thing like th at?'

Tim You ngblood said: 'He u sed to be a ban ker, Byron. I s'pose he migh t-'

'S h u t ya head, Trout,' Hadley said wit hou t looking at him. Tim You ngblood flu shed a n d s h u t u p. Some of the gu ards called him Trout beca u se of his thick lips an d b uggy eyes. Hadley kept looking at An dy. 'You're the s mart ban ker who shot his wife. Why s hould I believe a s mart ban ker like you ? So I ca n wind u p in here breaking rocks righ t alongside you ? You'd like t hat, wouldn't you ?'

Andy said q uietly, 'If you went to jail for tax evasion, you'd go to a federal peniten tia ry, not S h awsh a n k. B u t you won't. The t ax-free gift to the spou se is a perfectly legal loop hole. I've done dozen s ... no, h u n dreds of them'. It's mea nt primarily for people wit h s mall bu sinesses to pass on, or for people who come in to one-time-only windfalls. Like you rself.'

'I thin k you're lying,' Hadley said, b u t he didn't - you co uld see he didn't. There was an emotion dawning on his face, something t hat was grotesq u e overlying that long,

ugly coun tenence an d th a t receding, s un bu rned brow. An almost obscene emotion when seen on t he featu res of Byron Hadley. It was hope.

'No, I' m not lying. There's no reason why you should take my word for it, eit her. Engage a lawyer -'

'Am bulance-chasing highway-robbi ng cocks uckers!'Hadley cried.

Andy sh r ugged. "Then go to the IRS. They'll tell you the sa me t hing for free. Actually, you don't need me to tell you a t all. You would have investigated the matter for you rself.'

'You fucking-A. I don't need a ny sm art wife- killing ba n ker to show me where the bear shit in the b uckwheat.'

'You'll need a t ax lawyer or a ba n ker to set up the gift for you an d that will cost you something,' An dy said. 'Or ... if you were in terested, I'd be glad to set it u p for you nearly free of ch arge. The price would be th ree beers apiece for my co-workers -'

'Co-workers,' Mert said, an d let ou t a r usty guffaw. He slapped his knee. A real knee-slapper was old Mert, an d I hope he died of in testin al ca ncer in a part of the world were morphine is as of yet u n discovered. 'Co-workers, ain't t hat c ute? Co-workers! You ain't got a ny -'

'S h u t your friggin' trap,' Hadley growled, a n d Mert sh ut.

Hadley looked a t An dy again. 'Wh a t was you saying?'

'I was saying th a t I'd only ask t hree beers apiece for my co-workers, if that seems fair,' An dy said. 'I thin k a man feels more like a m an when he's working out of doors in t he springtime if he ca n have a bottle of su ds. That's only my opinion. It would go down smoot h, an d I' m s ure you'd h ave their gratitu de.'

I have talked to some of the other men who were u p there t hat day - Rennie Martin, Loga n St Pierre, a n d Paul Bon sain t were three of them - an d we all saw the same t hing then ...felt t he sa me thing. S uddenly it was An dy

who had t he u pper han d. It was Hadley who had the gun on his hip a n d t he billy in his h an d, Hadley who had his friend Greg Sta min as behind him an d the whole prison ad ministration behin d Sta mm as, t he whole power of the s ta te behin d t hat, b ut all a t once in that golden su n shine it didn't matter, a n d I felt my heart leap u p in my chest as it never had since the tr uck drove me a n d fou r others t hrough the gate back in 1938 and I s tepped out in to the exercise yard.

Andy was looking a t Hadley wit h t hose cold, clear, calm eyes, a n d it was n't just the thirty-five t hou san d then, we all agreed on that. I've played it over a n d over in my min d a n d I know. It was m an against m an, a n d An dy sim ply forced him, the way a s trong ma n ca n force a weaker m an's wrist to the table in a game of In dian wrestling. There was no reason, you see, why Hadley co uldn't've given Mert t he nod a t t hat very minu te, pitched An dy overside on to his head, a n d s till taken An dy's advice.

No reason. B ut he didn't.

'I could get you all a co uple of beers if I wa n ted to,' Hadley said. 'A beer does taste good while you're workin'.' The colossal prick even man aged to sou n d magn a nimous.

'I'd just give you one piece of advice the IRS would n't bot her with,' An dy said. His eyes were fixed unwin kingly on Hadley's . 'Make the gift to you r wife if you're su re. If you t hin k t here's even a cha nce s he migh t dou ble-cross you or backshoot you , we co uld work ou t something else

-'

'Dou ble-cross me?' Hadley asked hars hly. 'Dou ble-cross me! Mr Hotshot Ba n ker, if s he a te her way th rough a boxcar of Ex-Lax, she wouldn't dare fart unless I gave her t he nod.'

Mert, Youngblood, an d t he ot her screws yucked it u p d u tifully. An dy never cracked a smile.

'I'll write down the for ms you need,' he said. 'You can get t hem at the post office, an d I'll fill them ou t for your signature.'

Th at soun ded suitably im porta n t, an d Hadley's chest swelled. Then he glared a rou n d a t the rest of us an d hollered, "What are you jimmie s s t a rin' at? Move you r asses, goddammit!' He looked back at An dy. 'You come over here with me, hotshot. And lis ten to me well: if you're Jewing me somehow, you're gonna find yourself ch asing you r head a rou n d S hower C before t he week's ou t.'

'Yes, I u n derstan d that,' An dy said softly.

And he did un derstan d it. The way it tu rned ou t, he u nderstood a lot more t han I did - more than any of u s did.

Th at's how, on t he secon d-to-last day of the job, the convict crew th a t ta rred t he plate-factory roof in 1950 ending up sitting in a row at ten o'clock on a spring morning, drin king Black Label beer s u pplied by the h ardest screw that ever walked a tu rn a t S h awsha n k Prison. Th a t beer was piss-war m, b u t it was s till t he best I ever had in my life. We sat a n d dra n k it an d felt the su n on our s houlders, a n d not even t he expression of h alf

a mu sement, half-con tem pt on Hadley's face - as if he was watching apes drin k beer in s tead of men -could spoil it. It lasted twen ty min u tes, that beer- break, an d for those twenty min utes we felt like free men. We could have been drin king beer an d t arring t he roof of one of our own houses.

Only An dy did n't drin k. I already told you abou t his

-linking habits. He sat hu n kered down in the sh ade, h a n ds dangling between his knees, watching us an d s miling a little. It's a mazing how m any men remember him th a t way, an d am azing how m any men were on t h at work-crew when An dy D ufresne faced down Byron

Hadley. I though t there were nine or ten of us, bu t by 1955 there must h ave been two h u n dred of u s , maybe more ... if you believed what you heard.

So, yea h - if you asked me to give you a fla t-ou t a n swer to t he q u estion of whether I' m trying to tell you about a man or a legend that got made u p a roun d the man, like a pearl a roun d a little piece of grit - I'd have to say that the a n swer lies somewhere in between. All I k now for s u re is

t hat An dy D ufresne wasn't mu ch like me or a nyone else I ever knew since I ca me inside. He brought in five h u n dred dollars ja mmed u p his back porch, b ut somehow t hat graymeat son of a bitch managed to bring in something else as well. A sense of his own wort h, m aybe, or a feeling t hat he would be t he winner in the end ... or maybe it was only a sense of freedom, even in side these godda mned grey walls. It was a kin d of inner ligh t he carried a rou n d wit h him. I only knew him to lose t hat ligh t once, an d t hat is also a part of this s tory.

By World Series time of 1950 - this was t he year Bobby Thom pson hit his famous home r un a t the end of the season, you will remem ber - An dy was having no more trouble from the sis ters. Sta mm as an d Hadley h ad passed the word. If An dy Dufresne ca me to either of them or any of the ot her screws th a t for med a part of their coterie, a n d showed so much as a single drop of blood in his un derpan ts, every sis ter in S h awsha n k would go to bed t hat nigh t with a headache. They didn't figh t it As I h ave poin ted out, t here was always an eigh teen-year-old car thief or a fireb ug or some guy who'd gotten his kicks

h a n dling little children. After t he day on t he plate-shop roof, An dy went his way a n d the sis ters wen t theirs.

He was working in the library t hen, u n der a tough old con n a med Brooks Hatlen. Hatlen had gotten the job back in t he la te 20s beca u se he had a college edu cation. Brooksie's degree was in animal h u sba n dry, true enough, b u t college ed ucation s in in s titu tes of lower learning like

The Sha n k are so rare that it's a case of beggars not being able to be choosers.

In 1952 Brooksie, who had killed his wife an d daugh ter after a losing streak a t poker back when Coolidge was Presiden t, was paroled. As u sual, the s tate in all it s wisdom had let him go long after any cha nce he migh t h ave h ad to become a useful part of society was gone. He was sixty-eight an d a rt hritic when he tottered ou t of the m ain gate in his Polish s uit an d his French shoes, his parole papers in one 'an d an d a Greyhou n d b us ticket in t he ot her. He was crying "hen he left. S h awsh a n k was his world. What lay beyon d it s vails was as terrible to Brooks as the Western Seas h ad been to su perstitious

13th-cen t ury sailors. In prison, Brooksie had been a person of some im porta nce. He was the head librarian, in ed ucated ma n. If he wen t to the Kittery library an d asked or a job, t hey would n't give him a library card. I heard he lied in a home for in digen t old folks u p Freeport way in 1952 , a n d a t t hat he lasted abou t six mont hs longer than

I though t he would. Yea h, I guess the s ta te got it s own back on Brooksie, all righ t. They trained him to like it in side the s hithouse an d then they th rew him ou t.

Andy su cceeded to Brooksie's job, an d he was head libraria n for twenty-th ree years. He used the sa me force of will I'd seen him u se on Byron Hadley to get wh a t he wan ted for t he library, a n d I saw him grad ually t ur n one s mall room (which s till s melled of t u rpen tine beca u se it h ad been a pain t closet u n til 1922 a n d had never been properly aired) lined with Reader's Digest Con den sed Books an d National Geographies into the best prison library in New Engla n d.

He did it a s tep a t a time. He p u t a suggestion box by the door a n d patien tly weeded out such a ttempts at humou r

as More F uk-Boox Pleeze an d Escape in 10 EZ Lesions. He got sold of t he t hings the prisoners seemed serious about. He wrote to th ree m ajor book clu bs in New York a n d got two of them, The Literary G uild an d The Book of t he Mon th Clu b, to sen d edition s of all their major selection s to u s at a special cheap ra te. He discovered a h u nger for infor mation on su ch sn ail hobbies as soap-carving, woodworking, sleigh t of h a n d, an d card solitaire. He got all the books he co uld on s uch s ubjects. And those two jailhou se s taples, Erie Sta nley Gardener a n d Louis L'Amour. Con s never seem to get enough of the co urtroom or the open range. And yes, he did keep a box of fairly spicy paperbacks un der the checkou t desk, loaning them ou t carefully an d m aking s ure t hey always got back. Even so, each new acq uisition of that type was q uickly read to ta tters.

He began to write to t he s ta te sen a te in Augusta in 1954 . Sta minas was warden by then, a n d he u sed to pretend Andy was some sort of mascot He was always in the library, shooting the bull with Andy, an d sometimes he'd even th row a patern al a rm aroun d An dy's shoulders or

give him a goose. He didn't fool anybody. An dy Dufresne was no one's m ascot.

He told An dy that m aybe he'd been a ban ker on the ou t side, b ut that part of his life was receding rapidly in to his past an d he had better get a hold on the facts of prison life. As fa r as that b unch of jumped-u p Repu blica n Rotaria n s in Augu s ta was concerned, there were only t hree viable expen ditu res of the taxpayers' money in the field of prison s a n d corrections. Number one was more walls, num ber two was more bars, a nd n umber t hree was more guards. As fa r as t he s ta te sen a te was concerned, Sta mmas explained, t he folks in Thomastan a n d S h awsha n k an d Pittsfield a n d Sou th Portlan d were the scum of t he earth. They were there to do hard time, an d by God an d Sonny Jesu s , it was hard time they were going to do. An d if t here were a few weevils in the bread, was n't that ju s t too fucking bad?

Andy s miled his s mall, com posed s mile a n d asked Sta mmas what would happen to a block of concrete if a drop of water fell on it once every year for a million years.

Sta mmas la ughed an d clapped Andy on the back. 'You got no million years, old horse, b u t if you did, I believe you'd do it wit h that sa me little grin on your face. You go on an d write you r letters. I'll even m ail t hem for you if you pay for the s ta m ps.'

Which An dy did. An d he had the last la ugh, although Sta mmas an d Hadley weren't aroun d to see it An dy's requests for library fu nds were rou tinely tu rned down u n til 1960 , when he received a check for two h u n dred dollars - t he sen ate probably appropriated it in hopes t hat he would shu t up a n d go away. Vain hope. An dy felt t hat he h ad fin ally gotten one foot in the door a n d he sim ply redoubled his efforts; two letters a week in s tead of one. In 1962 he got fou r hun dred dollars, an d for the rest of t he decade the library received seven h u n dred dollars a year like clockwork. By 1971 that h ad risen to an even t hou san d. Not mu ch s tacked u p against what you r average sm all-town library receives, I guess, bu t a t hou san d bu cks ca n b uy a lot of recycled Perry Mason s tories an d Jake Logan Western s . By the time An dy left, you could go in to the library (expan ded from its origin al

pain t-locker to t hree rooms), an d fin d just abou t a nything you'd wan t. An d if you co uld n't fin d it, ch a nces were good t hat An dy co uld get it for you .

Now you're asking yourself if all t his ca me abou t just becau se An dy told Byron Hadley how to save the taxes on his win dfall inherita nce. The a n swer is yes ... an d no. You ca n probably figu re ou t what happened for you rself.

Word got a roun d th a t Shaws h ank was hou sing it s very own pet fin ancial wizard. In the la te spring an d the s ummer of 1950 , An dy set up two tru s t fun ds for guards who wan ted 10 ass ure a college ed ucation for their kids, he advis ed a cou ple of ot hers who wan ted to take s mall fliers in common s tock (a n d they did pretty damn well, as t hings t urned ou t; : ne of them did so well he was able to t ake an early retirement two years la ter), a n d I'll be da mned if he didn't advise the warden himself, old Lemon Lips George D unahy, on how to go abou t setting u p a t ax-s helter for himself. Th a t was ju s t before D unahy got t he bum's r ush, an d I believe he - u s t h ave been dreaming abou t ail t he millions his book was going to

m ake him. By April of 1951 , An dy was doing the tax retu rns for h alf t he screws at Shaws h an k, a n d by 1952 , he was doing almost all of t hem. He was paid in what m ay be a prison's most valu able coin: sim ple goodwill.

Later on, after Greg Sta mm as took over the warden's office, An dy beca me even more importan t - b u t if I tried to tell you the specifics of just how, I'd be guessing. There a re some t hings I know about an d ot hers I ca n only guess a t. I know t hat t here were some prisoners who received all sorts of special con siderations - radios in t heir cells, extraordinary visiting privileges, t hings like that - a n d t here were people on t he ou t side who were paying for t hem to have t hose privileges. Such people a re known as

' a ngels' by t he prisoners. All a t once some fellow would be excu sed from working in the plate- shop on Sat urday forenoon s, an d you'd know that fellow h ad an angel out t here who'd co ughed u p a ch u ck of dough to make s ure it h appened. The way it u su ally works is t hat the angel will pay the bribe to some middle-level screw, a n d the screw will spread the grease both u p an d down the ad ministrative ladder.

Then there was t he disco un t a u to repair service that laid Warden D unahy low, It went un dergroun d for a while a n d then emerged stronger than ever in the la te fifties. And some of the con tractors that worked a t the prison from time to time were paying kickbacks to t he top ad ministration officials, I'm pretty s ure, an d the same was almost certainly true of t he com pa nies whose eq uipment was bough t an d in s t alled in the la un dry and t he licence- plate shop an d t he s ta m ping-mill th a t was b uilt in 1963 .

By the la te sixties there was also a booming trade in pills, a n d the sa me ad ministrative crowd was involved in t u r ning a b uck on t hat All of it added up to a pretty good- sized river of illicit income. Not like the pile of cla n destine b ucks that must fly aroun d a really big prison like Attica or Sa n Quentin, b u t not pea nu t s , eit her. And money it self becomes a problem after a while. You ca n't ju st s tuff it in to your wallet an d then shell ou t a b u nch of cr umpled twenties and dog-eared ten s when you wan t a pool b uilt in your back yard or an addition

p u t on you r house. Once you get past a certain poin t, you h ave to explain where that money ca me from ... an d if you r expla nations a ren't convincing enough, you're apt to wind u p wearing a num ber you rself.

So t here was a need for An dy's services. They took him ou t of the la u n dry a n d in stalled him in t he library, bu t if you wan ted to look a t it another way, they never took him ou t of t he lau n dry at all. They just set him to work was hing dirty money in s tead of dirty sheets. He fu nnelled it in to stocks, bon ds, tax-free municipals, you na me it.

He told me once abou t ten years after that day on the plate-s hop roof that his feelings abou t what he was doing were pretty clear, an d that his con science was relatively u n trou bled. The rackets would have gone on with him or withou t him. He h ad not asked to be sen t to Shaws han k, he went on; he was an innocen t m an who h ad been victimized by colossal bad luck, not & missionary or a do-gooder.

'Besides, Red,' he told me with that sa me half-grin, 'what

I' m doing in here is n't all th a t differen t from what I was doing ou t side. I'll ha n d you a pretty cynical axiom: the a mou n t of expert financial help an in divid ual or com pa ny needs rises in direct proportion to how many people that person or bu siness is screwing.

The people who run t his place are st u pid, bru tal monsters for the most part. The people who r un the s traight world a re bru tal an d mon s trous, b u t they h appen not to be quite as s tu pid, becau se the s ta n dard of com petence out t here is a little higher. Not mu ch, bu t a little.'

'B u t the pills,' I said. 'I don't wan t to tell you your b u siness, b ut they m ake me nervou s . Reds, u ppers, downers, nemb u tals - now they've got these things they call Phase Fou rs. I won't get a nyt hing like t hat. Never h ave.'

'No,' An dy said. 'I don't like the pills either. Never h ave. B u t I'm not mu ch of a one for cigarettes or booze, either. B u t I don't p ush the pills. I don't bring t hem in , an d I

don't sell them once they a re in. Mostly it's the screws who do t hat.'

'B u t-'

'Yeah, I know. There's a fine line t here. Wh a t it comes down to, Red, is some people refu se to get their h a n ds dirty a t all. That's called sain thood, a nd the pigeons lan d on you r shoulders a n d crap all over your shirt. The other extreme is to take a bat h in t he dirt a n d deal any godda mned t hing that will tu rn a dollar - gun s, switch blades, big H, what the hell. You ever have a con come u p to you an d offer you a con tr act?'

I nodded. It's happened a lot of times over the years. You're, after all, the man who ca n get it. An d they figu re if you ca n get them a nine- bolt battery for t heir tra n sis tor radio or a - anon of Luckies or a lid of reefer, you ca n p ut t hem in tou ch wit h a guy who'll u se a k nife.

'Sure you have,' An dy agreed. 'Bu t you don't do it. Beca u se guys like u s , Red, we know there's a third choice.

An alter n ative to s taying simon-p u re or bat hing in the filth a n d the slime. It's the alter native th a t grown- ups all over the world pick. You balance off you r walk th rough t he hog-wallow again st what it gain s you . You choose the lesser of two evils an d try to keep your good in ten tion s in front of you . An d I guess you ju dge how well you're doing by how well you sleep at nigh t... an d what your dreams a re like.'

'Good inten tion s,' I said, an d la ughed. 'I know all about t hat, An dy. A fellow ca n toddle righ t off to hell on th a t road.'

'Don't you believe it,' he said, growing som bre. This is hell righ t here. Righ t here in The S h an k. They sell pills a n d I tell them what to do with t he money. B u t I've also got the library, an d I know of over two dozen guys who have u sed t he books in here to help t hem pass their high school

eq uivalency tests. Maybe when they get ou t of here they'll be able to crawl off t he shitheap. When we needed t hat secon d room back in 1957 ,1 got it Beca u se t hey wan t to keep me happy. I work cheap. That's the trade-off.'

'An d you've got your own private q u arters.'

'Sure. Th a t's t he way I like it.'

The prison pop ulation had risen slowly all t hrough the fifties, an d it da mn near exploded in the sixties, what with every college-age kid in America wan ting to try dope a n d the perfectly ridiculou s pen alties for the use of a little reefer. B u t in all th a t time An dy never had a cellm ate, except for a big, silen t India n named Norm aden (like all In dian s in The Shan k, he was called Chief), an d Norm aden didn't last long. A lot of t he ot her long-timers t hough t An dy was crazy, b u t Andy ju s t s miled. He lived alone a n d he liked it that way ... an d as he'd said, they liked to keep him happy. He worked cheap.

Prison time is slow time, sometimes you'd swear it's s top-time, bu t it passes. It passes. George Dun a hy departed the scene in a welter of newspaper headlines

s hou ting SCANDAL an d NEST-FEATHERING. Sta mm as s ucceeded him, a n d for the next six years S h awsh a nk

was a kin d of living hell. D uring the reign of Greg Sta mmas, the beds in the infir mary a n d the cells in the solitary wing were always full.

One day in 1958 I looked a t myself in a sm all shaving mirror I kept in my cell an d saw a forty-year-old man looking back a t me. A kid had come in back in 1938 , a kid with a big mop of carrotty red hair, half-crazy with remorse, t hin king about s uicide. Th at kid was gone. The red h air was h alf grey a n d s tarting to recede. There were crow's tracks a roun d the eyes. On t hat day I could see an old m an inside, waiting his time to come ou t. It scared me. Nobody wa n t s to grow old in s tir.

Sta mmas went early in 1959 . There h ad been several investigative reporters s niffing arou n d, a n d one of t hem even did fou r mon ths un der an ass umed na me, for a crime made up out of whole clot h. They were getting ready to drag out SCANDAL an d NEST-FEATHERING again, b u t before t hey could bring t he h a mmer down on

him, Sta mmas r a n. I can un dersta n d t hat; boy, ca n I ever. If he had been tried a n d convicted, he co uld have ended

u p righ t in here. If so, he might have lasted all of five hours. Byron Hadley had gone two years earlier. The s ucker h ad a heart a ttack a n d took an early retirement.

Andy never got tou ched by the Stamm as affair. In early 1959 a new warden was appoin ted, a n d a new assista nt warden, an d a new chief of guards. For t he next eigh t mon ths or so, An dy was ju st anot her con again. It was d u ring that period that Nor maden, the big half-breed Passa maq uoddy, shared An dy's cell wit h him. Then everyt hing just s ta rted u p again. Norm aden was moved ou t, an d An dy was living in solitary sple ndou r again. The n a mes a t the top change, b u t die r ackets never do.

I t alked to Nor maden once abou t An dy. 'Nice fella,' Norm aden said. It was h ard to m ake ou t anything he said becau se he had & h a relip an d a cleft palate; his words all ca me ou t in a slush. 'I liked it t here. He never made fu n. B u t he didn't wan t me there. I co uld tell.' Big sh r ug. 'I was glad to go, me. Bad draugh t in that cell. All the time

cold. He don't let nobody tou ch his things. Th a t's okay. Nice man, never made fun. Bu t big draugh t.'

Rita Hay worth h u ng in An dy's cell un til 1955 , if I remem ber righ t Then it was Marilyn Mon roe, th a t picture from The Seven Year Itch where she's s tan ding over a s u bway grating an d the war m air is flipping her skirt up. Marilyn lasted un til i960 , an d s he was considerably t attered abou t the edges when Andy replaced her with J ayne Man sfield. Jayne was, you should pardon the

expression, a b ust. After only a year or so she was replaced with a n English actress - migh t have been Hazel Co urt, b ut I'm not s ure. In 1966 th a t one ca me down an d Raq uel Welch went up for a record- breaking six-year engagemen t in An dy's ceil. The last poster to hang there was a pretty coun try- rock singer whose na me was Lin da Ron s t adt

I asked him once what the posters mea n t to him, an d he gave me a pec uliar, s urprised sort of look. 'Why, they mean the sa me thing to me as they do to most cons, I guess,' he said. 'Freedom. You look a t those pretty women an d you feel like you could almost ... not quite b u t almost step right through an d be beside them. Be

free. I guess that's why I always liked Raquel Welch the best It was n't just her; it was t hat beach she was s ta n ding on. Looked like she was down in Mexico somewhere. Someplace quiet, where a man would be able to hear himself thin k. Didn't you ever feel that way about a pict ure, Red? That you could almost s tep right through

it?'

I said I'd never really though t of it t hat way.

'Maybe someday you'll see wh a t I mea n,' he said, a n d he was righ t Years la ter I saw exactly wh a t he mea n t ... and when I did, the firs t t hing I t hough t of was Nor maden, a n d abou t how he'd said it was always cold in An dy's cell.

A terrible t hing h appened to An dy in la te March or early April of 1963 . I h ave told you that he h ad somet hing that most of t he ot her prisoners, myself inclu ded, seemed to lack. Call it a sen se of eq u animity, or a feeling of inner peace, m aybe even a con stan t and u nwavering fait h that

someday the long nigh t mare would en d. Wh a tever you wan t to call it, An dy Dufresne always seemed to have his

act together.

There was none of that sullen desperation about him t hat seem s to afflict most lifer s after a while; you co uld never s mell hopeless ness on him. Until t hat la te win ter of '63 .

We had a not her warden by t hen, a m an n a med Sa muel Norton. The Mat her brothers, Cotton an d Increase, would h ave felt righ t a t home with Sa m Norton. So far as I know, no one had ever seen him so much as crack a s mile. He h ad a t hirty-year pin from the Baptist Adven t Ch u rch of Eliot. His major innovation as t he head of ou r happy fa mily was to make s ure th a t each incoming prisoner had a New Testa ment. He had a s mall plaq ue on his desk,

gold letters inlaid in teakwood, which said CHRIST IS MY SAVIOUR. A sa m pler on the wall, m ade by his wife, read: HIS J UDGMENT COMETH AND THAT RIGHT EARLY.

This la tter sentiment cu t zero ice with most of us. We felt t hat the judgmen t had already occu rred, an d we would be willing to testify with t he best of them t hat the rock would not hide us nor t he dead tree give us shelter. He h ad a Bible q uote for every occasion, did Mr Sa m Norton,

a n d whenever you meet a ma n like that, my best advice to you would be to grin big a n d cover up you r balls wit h bot h han ds.

There were less infir mary cases th a n in the days of Greg Sta mmas, an d so far as I know t he moonligh t bu rials ceased altogether, bu t t his is not to say that Norton was not a believer in punishmen t. Solitary was always well pop ulated. Men lost t heir teet h not from beatings bu t from bread an d water diets. It bega n to be called grain a n d drain, as in Tm on t he Sa m Norton grain an d drain train, boys.'

The man was the foulest hypocrite t hat I ever saw in a high position. The rackets I told you abou t earlier contin u ed to flou rish, b ut Sa m Norton added his own new wrin kles. An dy k new abou t t hem all, a n d because we had gotten to be pretty good friends by that time, he let me in on some of them. When Andy talked abou t them, a n expression of amused, disgu sted won der would come over his face, as if he was telling me abou t some ugly, predatory species of b ug t hat has, by its very ugliness

a n d greed, somehow more comic t han terrible.

It was Warden Norton who in s tit uted the 'Inside-O u t' progra mme you m ay have read about some sixteen or seventeen years back; it was even written u p in Newsweek. In the press it soun ded like a real adva nce in practical correction s an d reh abilita tion. There were prisoners out cu tting pulpwood, prisoners repairing bridges an d ca u seways, prisoners constr u cting potato cellars. Norton called it 'Inside-O u t' an d was invited to explain it to da mn near every Rotary a n d Kiwanis clu b in New Englan d, especially after he got his pictu re in Newsweek. The prisoners called it 'road-ganging', b u t so fa r as I k now, none of them were ever invited to express t heir views to the Kiwa nians or t he Loyal Order of the Moose.

Norton was righ t in there on every operation, thirty-year ch u rch- pin a n d all, from cu tting p ulp to digging s torm- drains to laying new c ulverts on s ta te highways, t here was Norton, skimming off t he top. There were a h u n dred ways to do it - men, materials, you na me it. Bu t

he had it coming another way, as well. The constr uction b u sinesses in the area were deat hly afraid of Norton's In side-Ou t progra mme, beca u se prison labour is slave labou r, an d you ca n't com pete wit h that. So Sa m Norton, he of t he Testa ments an d t he thirty-year ch u rch- pin, was passed a good ma ny thick envelopes un der t he table d u ring his fifteen-year tenure as S h awsha nk's warden.

And when an envelope was passed, he would either overbid the project, not bid a t all, or claim that ail his In side-Ou ters were committed elsewhere. It has always been something of a won der to me that Norton was never fou nd in the tr un k of a Thu n derbird parked off a highway somewhere down in Massachu setts with his h a n ds tied behin d his back an d h alf a dozen bullets in his head.

Anyway, as t he old barrelhouse song says, My God, how t he money rolled in . Norton mu st h ave s ubscribed to the old Purita n notion t hat the best way to figu re ou t which folks God favours is by checking t heir ban k accou n t s .

Andy D ufresne was his righ t ha n d in all of this, his silen t partner. The prison library was An dy's hostage to fort une.

Norton knew it, a n d Norton used it. An dy told me t hat one of Norton's favou rite aphoris ms was One han d was hes the ot her. So An dy gave good advice an d made u seful suggestion s. I ca n't say for su re t hat he h a n d-tooled Norton's Inside-O ut progra mme, b u t I'm da mned s ure he processed t he money for the Jes u s- shouting son of a whore. He gave good advice, m ade u seful suggestion s, the money got spread a roun d,

a n d ... son of a bitch! The libr a ry would get a new set of a u tomotive repair m anu als, a fresh set of Grolier E ncyclopedias, books on how to prepare for the Scholastic Achievement Tests. An d, of cou rse, more Erie Stanley Gardeners a n d more Louis L'Amou rs.

And I' m convinced that what happened happened becau se Norton ju s t did n't wa n t to lose his good righ t h a n d. I'll go fu rt her: it happened beca u se he was scared of what migh t happen - wh a t An dy migh t say again s t him

- if An dy ever got clear of Sh awsha n k State Prison.

I got the s tory a ch u n k here and a chu n k there over a space of seven years, some of it from An dy - b ut not all.

He never wa n ted to talk about that part of his life, an d I don't bla me him. I got parts of it from maybe half a dozen differen t sou rces. I've said once th a t prisoners are nothing bu t slaves, bu t they have th a t slave habit of looking d umb an d keeping their ears open. I got it backwards a n d forwards an d in the middle, bu t I'll give it

to you from poin t A to poin t Z, a nd maybe you'll u nderstan d why the ma n spent about ten month s in a

bleak, depressed daze. See, I don't thin k he knew the tr u t h un til 1963, fifteen years after he ca me in to this sweet little hell- hole. Until he met Tommy Willia ms, I don't thin k he knew how bad it could get.

Tommy Willia ms joined ou r happy little Sh awsha n k fa mily in Novem ber of 1962 . Tommy thought of himself as a native of Massach u setts, b u t he wasn't prou d; in his twenty-seven years he'd done time all over New Engla n d. He was a professional t hief, an d as you may have guessed, my own feeling was t hat he should have picked a nother profession.

He was a married m an, an d his wife ca me to visit each

a n d every week. She h ad an idea that t hings migh t go better wit h Tommy - an d con sequently better with t heir t hree-year-old mi a n d herself - if he got his high school degree. She talked him in to it, an d so Tommy Willia ms s ta rted visiting the library on a regular basis.

For An dy, this was an old rou tine by then. He saw t hat Tommy got a series of high school eq uivalency tests. Tommy would bru sh u p on the s ubjects he had passed in high-school - there weren't many - a n d t hen take the test Andy also saw th a t he was enrolled in a num ber of correspon dence co urses covering the s ubjects he had failed in school or just missed by droppi ng ou t

He probably wasn't the best s tu den t Andy ever took over t he jum ps, an d I don't k now if he ever did get his high school diploma, b ut th a t for ms no part of my s tory. The im porta n t t hing was that he ca me to like An dy D ufresne very mu ch, as most people did after a while.

On a cou ple of occasions he asked An dy 'what a sm art guy like you is doing in the join t' - a q u estion which is the

rough eq uivalen t of that one that goes 'What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?' B u t An dy wasn't the type to tell him; he would only s mile an d t urn the conversation in to some ot her cha nnel. Q uite nor mally,

Tommy asked someone else, an d when he fin ally got the s tory, I guess he also got the shock of his young life.

The person he asked was his part ner on the la un dry's s team ironer an d folder. The inmates call t his device the

m angier, beca u se th a t's exactly what it will do to you if you aren't paying a tten tion an d get your bad self caugh t in it. His j partner was Ch a rlie Lat hrop, who had been in for abou t twelve years on a mu rder charge. He was more t han glad to reheat t he details of t he D ufresne murder

trial for Tommy; it broke t he monotony of p ulling freshly pressed bedsheets ou t of t he machine an d t ucking them into the basket. He was ju st getting to t he jury waiting

u n til after lunch to bring in t heir guilty verdict when t he trouble whistle wen t off an d the m angle grated to a stop. They had been feeding in freshly was hed sheets from the Eliot Nu r sing Home a t the far end; these were spat out dry an d neatly pressed a t Tommy's an d Ch a rlie's end at

t he r a te of one every five secon ds. Their job was to grab t hem, fold t hem, an d slap them in to the cart, which had already been lined with brown paper.

B u t Tommy Willia ms was just sta n ding there, s ta ring a t Ch a rlie Lat hrop, his mout h unhinged all the way to his chest. He was sta n ding in & drift of sheets that had come t hrough dea n an d which were now sopping u p all t he wet muck on t he floor - an d in a lau ndry wetwas h, there's plenty of muck.

So t he head bull that day, Homer Jess u p, comes r us hing over, bellowing his head off an d on the prod for trouble. Tommy took no notice of him. He spoke to Ch a rlie as if old Homer, who had b usted more heads t han he co uld probably cou n t, hadn't been there.

'What did you say that golf pro's n a me was?'

'Q uentin,' Charlie a n swered back, all confu sed an d u pset by now. He la ter said that the kid was as white as a tr uce flag, \*Glenn Quentin, I thin k. Something like t hat,

a nyway -'

'Here now, here now,' Homer Jess u p roared, his neck as red as a rooster's com b. 'Get them sheets in cold water! Get q uick! Get q uick, by Jesu s , you -'

'Glenn Q uentin, oh my God,' Tommy Willia ms said, an d t hat was all he got to say beca use Homer Jess u p, that least peaceable of men, brough t his billy down behin d his ear. Tommy hit the floor so h ard he broke off t hree of his front teet h. When he woke up he was in solitary, an d confined to sa me for a week, riding a boxcar on Sa m Norton's fa mou s grain an d drain train. Plu s a black m ark on his report card.

Th at was in early Febr uary in 1963 , a n d Tommy Willia ms went arou nd to six or seven other long-timers after he got ou t of solitary an d got pretty much the sa me s tory. I k now; I was one of them. B ut when I asked him why he wan ted it, he just cla mmed up.

Then one day he wen t to t he library a nd spille d one

helluva big b udget of inform ation to An dy Dufresne. An d for the fir s t a n d last time, at least since he had approached me abou t the Rita Hayworth poster like a kid b u rying his firs t pack of Troja ns, An dy lost his cool ... only t his time he blew it en tirely.

I saw him later th a t day, an d he looked like a man who h as s tepped on the bu siness end of a rake an d given himself a good one, whap between the eyes. His han ds were trembling, an d when I spoke to him, he did n't a n swer. Before th a t afternoon was ou t he had ca ugh t u p with Billy Ha nlon, who was the head screw, a n d set u p an appoin t ment wit h Warden Norton for t he following day. He told me la ter that he did n't sleep a win k all that nigh t; he just lis tened to a cold win ter wind howling ou tside, watched the searchlights go a roun d an d aroun d, p u tting long, moving s h adows on the cement walls of the cage he h ad called home since Harry Tr um a n was President and tried to thin k it all ou t He said it was as if Tommy h ad produ ced a key which fitted a cage in the back of his mind, a cage like his own cell. Only in s tead of holding a m an, th a t cage held a tiger, a n d t hat tiger's na me was

Hope. Willia m s had produ ced the key t hat unlocked the cage an d the tiger was ou t, willy-nilly, to roam his brain.

Fou r years before, Tommy William s had been arrested in Rhode Isla n d, driving a s tolen car t hat was full of stolen merch a n dise. Tommy tu rned in his accom plice, the DA played ball, an d he got a lighter sentence ... two to fou r, with time served. Eleven mon ths after beginning his term,

his old cellmate got a ticket ou t an d Tommy got a new one, a man na med Elwood Blatch. Blatch h ad been bu sted for b u rglary with a weapon an d was serving six to twelve.

'I never seen s uch a high- s tr ung guy,' Tommy said. 'A m an like th a t should never wan t to be a bu rglar, specially not wit h a gun. The sligh test little noise, he'd go th ree feet into the air ... an d come down shooting, more likely t han not One nigh t he almost strangled me beca u se some guy down the hall was whopping on his cell bars with a tin c u p.

'I did seven mon ths with b un, until t hey let me walk free. I got time served an d time off, you un dersta n d. I can't say

we t alked becau se you didn't, you k now, exactly hold a conversation wit h El Blatch. He held a conversation with you . He talked all the time. Never s h u t u p. If you tried to get a word in , he'd s h ake his fis t a t you an d roll his eyes. It gave me the cold chills whenever he done that. Big tall guy he was, mostly bald, with these green eyes set way down deep in the sockets. Jeez, I hope I never see him again.

'It was like a talkin' jag every nigh t When he grew up, the orph a nages he run away from, t he jobs he done, the women as fucked, the crap ga mes he clea ned ou t I just let him ru n an. My face ain't mu ch, b u t I didn't wa n t it, you k now, rearranged for me.

'According to him, he'd bu rgled over two h u ndred join ts. It was h ard for me to believe, a guy like him who wen t off like a firecracker every time someone cu t a lou d fart, b ut he swore c was true. Now ... listen to me, Red. I k now guys sometimes make t hings u p after they know a t hing, b u t even before I knew about this golf pro guy, Quentin, I remem ber t hin king that if El Blatch ever b urgled my

house, an d I foun d ou t abou t it later, I'd have to co unt myself ju st abou t t he luckiest mot herfu cker going s till to be alive. Can you imagine him in some lady's bedroom, sifting th rough her jool'ry box, a n d she cough s in her sleep or t ur n s over q uick? It gives me the cold chills just to t hin k of something like that, I swear on my mot her's n a me it does.

'He said he'd killed people, too. People th a t gave him shit. At least t hat's what he said. And I believed him. He sure looked like a man th a t could do some killing. He was just so fu cking high-str ung! Like a pistol with a sawed-off firing pin. I knew a guy who had a S mit h & Wesson Police Special with a sawed-off firing pin. It was n't no good for nothing, except maybe for something to jaw abou t. The p ull on th a t gun was so ligh t that it would fire if t his guy, J ohnny Callahan, his na me was, if he tu rned his record-player on full volume a n d p u t it on top of one of t he speakers. Th a t's how El Blatch was. I can't explain it a ny better. I just never dou bted th a t he had greased some people.

'So one nigh t, just for something to say, I go: "Who'd you kill?" Like a joke, you know. So he la ughs a n d says, "There's one guy doing time up Maine for these two people I killed. It was this guy an d the wife of the slob who's doing time. I was creeping t heir place an d the guy s ta rted to give me some shit."

'I can't remember if he ever told me the wom an's name or

not,' Tommy wen t on. 'Maybe he did. Bu t hi New Englan d, D ufresne's like Smith or J ones in t he rest of the co un try, becau se there's so many Frogs u p here. D ufresne, Lavesq u e, O uelette, Poulin, who Ca n remember Frog n a mes? B ut he told me the guy's n a me. He said t he guy was Glenn Q uen tin an d he was a prick, a big rich prick, a golf pro. El said he thought t he guy migh t have cas h in

t he hou se, maybe as much as five t housa n d dollars. That was a lot of money back t hen, he says to me. So I go, "When was th at?" An d he goes, "After t he war. J ust after t he war."

'So he went in an d he did the join t a n d t hey woke u p and t he guy gave him some trou ble. Th at's what El said.

Maybe the guy ju s t s ta rted to snore, t hat's what / say. Anyway, El said Q uen tin was in t he sack with some hots hot lawyer's wife an d they sent t he lawyer up to S h awsha n k State Prison. Then he laugh s t his big la ugh. Holy Christ, I was never so glad of anyt hing as I was when I got my walking papers from t hat place.'

I guess you can see why An dy wen t a little won ky when Tommy told him that s tory, a n d why he wan ted to see the warden righ t away. Elwood Blatch had been serving a six-to-twelve rap when Tommy k new him four years before. By the time An dy heard all of this, in 1963 , he migh t be on the verge of getting ou t ... or already ou t. So t hose were t he two prongs of the spit An dy was roasting on - the idea t hat Blatch might s till be in on one han d, a n d the very real possibility that he might be gone like t he win d on the ot her.

There were incon sis tencies in Tommy's s tory, b u t aren't t here always in real life? Blatch told Tommy the m an who got sent u p was a hots hot lawyer, a n d An dy was a ba n ker, b u t those a re two professions th a t people who a ren't very

ed ucated co uld easily get mixed u p. An d don't forget that twelve years had gone by between t he time Blatch was reading the clippings about t he trial a n d t he time he told

t he tale to Tommy Willia ms. He also told Tommy he got better tha n a t hou san d dollars from a footlocker Q uen tin h ad in his closet, b ut the police said a t An dy's trial th a t t here h ad been no sign of bu rglary. I h ave a few ideas about th a t. First, if you take the cash an d the man it belonged to is dead, how a re you going to know anything

was s tolen, u nless someone else ca n tell you it was there to s t a rt wit h? Secon d, who's to say Blatch was n't lying about that part of it? Maybe he didn't wa n t to ad mit killing two people for nothing. Third, maybe there were sign s of bu rglary an d the cops eit her overlooked them - cops ca n be pretty d umb - or deliberately covered them u p so t hey wouldn't screw the DA's case. The guy was r unning for pu blic office, remem ber, a n d he needed a conviction to r un on. An u n solved b u rglary-murder would have done him no good a t all.

B u t of t he th ree, I like t he middle one best. I've known a few Elwood Blatches hi my time a t S h awsh a n k - the

trigger- p ullers with t he crazy eyes. S uch fellows wan t you to t hin k they got away with die eq uivalent of t he Hope Dia mon d on every caper, even if t hey got ca ught with a two-dollar Timex an d nine b ucks on the one they're doing time for.

And there was one t hing in Tommy's s tory that convinced Andy beyon d a shadow of a dou bt. Blatch hadn't hit Q uentin a t ran dom. He had called Quentin 'a big rich prick', an d he had known Quen tin was a golf pro. Well, Andy an d his wife h ad been going out to that coun try clu b for drin ks an d dinner once or twice a week for a co u ple of years, a n d An dy had done a considerable a mou n t of drin king t here once he foun d ou t abou t his wife's affair. There was a marina with t he co un try clu b, a n d for a while in 1947 there h ad been a part-time grease-an d-gas jockey working t here who m atched Tommy's description of Elwood Blatch. A big tall man, mostly bald, with deep-set green eyes. A man who h ad an u npleasan t way of looking a t you , as though he was sizing you u p. He was n't t here long, An dy said. Either he q uit or Briggs, the fellow in ch a rge of the marina, fired

him. B u t he was n't a man you forgot He was too striking for th a t.

So An dy went to see Warden Norton on a rainy, win dy day with big grey clou ds scu dding across t he sky above t he grey walls, a day when the last of the s now was s ta rting to melt away a n d show lifeless patches of last year's grass in t he fields beyon d t he prison. The warden h as a good- sized office in the administration wing, a n d behin d the warden's desk there's a door which connects with the assista n t warden's office. The assista n t warden was out that day, bu t a tru s tee was there. He was a h alf-la me fellow whose real na me I have forgotten; all the inmates, me inclu ded, called him Chester, after Mars hall Dillon's sidekick. Chester was su pposed to be watering t he pla n ts an d du s ting an d waxing the floor. My guess is t hat the plan t s went t hirsty t hat day an d the only waxing t hat was done h appened beca u se of Chester's dirty ear polishing t he keyhole plate of t hat connecting door.

He heard the warden's main door open an d close a n d t hen Norton saying, 'Good morning, Dufres ne, how ca n I

help you ?'

'Warden,' An dy bega n, an d old Chester told u s t hat he co uld hardly recognize An dy's voice it was so ch anged. 'Warden ... there's something ... something's happened to me that's ... that's so ... so ... I hardly know where to begin.'

'Well, why don't you ju st begin a t the beginning?' the warden said, probably in his sweetest let's-all-tu rn-to-t he- 23rd- psalm-a n d- read-in- unison

voice. 'That u su ally works the best.'

And so An dy did. He began by refreshing Norton of the details of the crime he had been im prisoned for. Then he told the warden exactly what Tommy Willia ms had told him. He also gave ou t Tommy's na me, which you may t hin k was n't so wise in ligh t of later develop men t s , b ut I'd ju s t ask you what else he co uld have done, if his s tory was to h ave any credibility at all.

When he had finis hed, Norton was com pletely silen t for

some time. I can just see him, probably tipped back in his office chair u n der t he pictu re of Governor Reed ha nging on the wall, his fingers s teepled, his liver lips pu rsed, his brow wrin kled in to ladder r ungs h alfway to the crown of his head, his t hirty-year pin gleaming mellowly.

'Yes,' he said fin ally. Th a t's t he da mnedest story I ever heard. B ut I'll tell you what s urprises me most abou t it, D ufresne.'

'What's that, sir?'

'Th at you were taken in by it.'

'Sir? I don't un derstan d what you mea n.' An d Chester said t hat An dy D ufresne, who h ad faced down Byron Hadley on the plate-s hop roof t hirteen years before, was almost floun dering for words.

'Well now,' Norton said. 'It's pretty obvious to me t hat this you ng fellow Willia ms is im pressed with you . Q uite taken with you , as a matter of fact He hears you r tale of woe,

a n d it's q uite n a t ural of him to wa n t to ... cheer you up, let's say. Quite nat u ral. He's a you ng m an, not terribly brigh t Not s urprising he didn't realize what a state it would p u t you in to. Now what I suggest is -'

'Don't you thin k I though t of t hat?' An dy asked. 'B u t I'd never told Tommy about the man working down at the m arin a. I never told a nyone that - it never even crossed my min d! B u t Tommy's description of his cellm ate and t hat man ... they're iden tical!'

'Well now, you may be in dulging in a little selective perception there,' Norton said wit h a chu ckle. Ph rases like th a t, selective perception, are req uired learning for people in the pen alogy a n d correction s b usiness, an d t hey use t hem all t hey ca n.

"Th at's not it at all. Sir.'

"Th at's you r slan t on it,' Norton said, 'bu t mine differs. And let's remember that I h ave only your word that there was su ch a ma n working at the Falmou th Co un try Clu b back then.'

'No, sir,' An dy broke in again. 'No, th a t is n't tr ue. Beca u se-'

'Anyway,' Norton overrode him, expan sive an d loud, 'let's ju s t look a t it from the other en d of t he telescope, shall we? S uppose -just su ppose, now - t h a t t here really was a fellow na med Elwood Blotch.'

'Blatch,' An dy said tigh tly.

'Blatch, by all mea n s . An d let's say he was Thomas Willia ms's cellm ate in Rhode Isla n d. The ch a nces are excellen t th a t he has been released by now. Excellen t. Why, we don't even k now how mu ch time he migh t h ave done there before he en ded u p with Willia ms, do we? Only t hat he was doing a six-to-twelve.'

'No. We don't know how much time he'd done. Bu t Tommy said he was a bad actor, a c ut- u p. I thin k t here's a fair ch a nce that he may s till be in. Even if he's been released, the prison will h ave a record of his last k nown

address, t he n a mes of his rela tives -'

'An d both would almost certainly be dead ends.'

Andy was silen t for a moment, a n d then he b urst ou t: 'Well, it's a ch a nce, isn't it?'

'Yes, of cou rse it is. So ju st for a moment, Dufresne, let's ass ume that Blatch exists an d t hat he is s till safely en sconced in the Rhode Islan d State Peniten tia ry. Now what is he going to say if we bring t his kettle of fish to him in a bu cket? Is he going to fall down on his knees, roil his

eyes, an d say "I did it! I did it! By all mea ns add a life term on to my b urglary charge!"?'

'How ca n you be so obt use?' Andy said, so low t hat Chester could barely hear. B ut he heard t he warden ju st fine.

'What? What did you call me?'

'Obt use? An dy cried. 'Is it deliberate?'

'D ufresne, you've taken five min u tes of my time - no, seven - an d I have a very b usy sched ule today. So I believe we'll just declare this little meeting closed an d -'

'The cou n try clu b will h ave ail the old time-cards, don't you realize that?' An dy shou ted. They'll have tax-form s a n d W-2s an d u nem ploymen t compensation for ms, all with his na me on them! There will be em ployees there now that were there t hen, maybe Briggs him self! It's been fifteen years, not forever! They'll remem ber him! They will remem ber Blotch! If I've got Tommy to testify to wh a t Blatch told him, an d Briggs to testify th a t Blatch was t here, act ually working at t he cou n try clu b, I can get a new trial! I can -'

'G uard! G uardl Take this m an away!'

'What's t he matter wit h you ?' An dy said, an d Chester told me he was very nearly screaming by then. 'It's my life, my ch ance to get ou t, don't you see th at? An d you won't m ake a single long- distance call to a t least verify

Tommy's story? Listen, I'll pay for the call! I'll pay for -'

Then there was a soun d of thrashing as the guards grabbed him an d started to drag him ou t

'Solita ry,' Warden Norton said dryly. He was probably - gering his thirty-year pin as he said it 'Bread a n d water.'

And so they dragged An dy away, totally out of control now, s till screaming a t t he warden; Chester said you co uld hear him even after the door was shu t: 'It's my life! It's my life, don't you un dersta n d it's my life?'

Twenty days on the grain an d drain tr ain for An dy down t here in solitary. It was his second jolt in solita ry, an d his d u st- u p with Norton was his fir s t real black mark since he had joined ou r happy little family.

I'll tell you a little bit abou t Shawsh a n k's solitary while we're on t he su bject It's something of a throwback to t hose hardy pioneer days of the early-to-mid- 1700s in Maine. In ..those days no one wasted mu ch time with

s uch things as pen alogy' and 'reh abilitation' an d 'selective perception'. In , those days, you were taken care of in term s of absolu te black an d white. You were either

guilty or innocent. If you were guilty, you were either h u ng or p u t in gaol. An d if you were sen tenced to gaol, you did not go to a n instit u tion. No, you d ug your own gaol with a spade provided to you by the Province of Maine. You d ug it as wide an d as deep as you co uld d u ring the period between s un up a n d s un down. Then , they gave you a cou ple of skins a n d a b ucket, an d down you went Once down, the gaoler would bar the top of you r hole, -.row down some grain or maybe a piece of m aggoty meat once or twice a week, an d maybe there would be a dipperful ; barley soup on S u n day nigh t You pissed in t he b ucket, an d you held u p the sa me b ucket for water when t he gaoler ca me aroun d a t six in the morning. When it rained, you used lie bu cket to bail ou t you r gaol-cell ... u nless, that is, you wan ted to drown like a r a t in a r ainbarrel.

No one spen t a long time 'in the hole', as it was called; t hirty mon th s was a n un u s ually long ter m, a n d so far as

I've been able to tell, t he longest ter m ever spen t from which an inmate actu ally emerged alive was served by t he so-called D urh a m Boy', a fou rteen-year-old psychopat h who castrated a schoolm ate with a piece of r usty metal. He did seven years, b u t of cou rse he wen t in you ng a n d s trong.

You have to remember t hat for a crime that was more serious th a n petty theft or blasp hemy or forgetting to p ut a snotrag in your pocket when ou t of doors on the Sabbat h, you were hung. For low crimes s uch as those ju s t mentioned an d for others like t hem, you'd do your t hree or six or nine mon th s in t he hole an d come ou t fish belly white, cringing from the wide-open spaces, you r eyes half- blin d, your teeth more t han likely rocking an d rolling in their sockets from t he sc urvy, you r feet crawling with fungu s . J olly old Province of Maine. Yo- ho-ho an d a bottle of rum .

S h awsha n k's Solitary Wing was nowhere as bad as th a t... I guess. Things come in three m ajor degrees in the h uman experience, I thin k. There's good, bad, an d

terrible. An d as you go down in to progressive darkness towards terrible, it gets harder an d harder to make s u bdivisions.

To get to Solitary Wing you were led down twen ty-three s teps to a basemen t level where t he only sou n d was the drip of water. The only ligh t was s u pplied by a series of dangling sixty-watt bulbs. The cells were keg- shaped, like t hose wall-safes rich people sometimes hide behin d a

pictu re. Like a safe, the roun d doorways were hinged, a n d solid in s tead of barred. You get ven tila tion from above, bu t no ligh t except for you r own sixty-watt b ulb, which was t ur ned off from a m aster- switch prom ptly at eigh t p. m., an hou r before lights-ou t in the rest of the prison. The wire was n't in a wire mesh cage or a nything like that. The feeling was t hat if you wan ted to exist down t here in the dark, you were welcome to it. Not many did ... b u t after eigh t, of cou rse, you had no choice. You had a b u n k bolted to t he wall an d a can wit h no toilet seat. You h ad th ree ways to spend your time: sitting, shitting, or sleeping. Big choice. Twenty days co uld get to seem like a year. Thirty days co uld seem like two, an d forty days like

ten. Sometimes you co uld hear r a t s in t he ventilation system. In a situation like th a t, s u bdivisions of terrible tend to get lost.

If anyt hing at all can be said in favour of solitary, it's just t hat you get time to thin k. Andy had twenty days in which to t hin k while he enjoyed his grain an d drain, and when he got ou t he requested another meeting with the warden. Request denied. Su ch a meeting, the warden

told him, would be 'cou n ter- produ ctive'. That's another of t hose p hrases you h ave to master before you can go to work in the prison s an d correction s field.

Patiently, An dy renewed his req uest An d renewed it An d renewed it He had ch a nged, h ad An dy D ufresne. S uddenly, as th a t spring of 1963 bloomed aroun d us,

t here were lines in his face an d sprigs of grey s howing in his h air. He had lost that little trace of a smile that always seemed to linger a rou n d his mou th . His eyes s tared out into space more often, an d you get to know th a t when a m an s ta res that way, he is cou n ting u p the years served, t he mon th s, the weeks, the days.

He renewed his request an d renewed it He was patien t He h ad nothing b ut time. It got to be summer. In Washington, Presiden t Kennedy was promising a fresh assa ult on poverty an d on civil righ ts ineq ualities, not k nowing he had only half a year to live. In Liverpool, a mu sical group called The Beatles was emerging as a force

to be reckoned wit h in British mu sic, b u t I guess that no one Stateside had yet heard of t hem. The Boston Red Sox, s till four years away from what New E ngla n d folks call The Miracle of '67 , were la nguishing in the cellar of the America n League. All of t hose things were going on ou t in a la rger world where people walked free.

Norton saw him near the end of J une, an d t his conversation I heard about from Andy himself some seven years la ter.

'If it's t he money, you don't have to worry,' An dy told Norton in a low voice. 'Do you think I'd talk that u p? I'd be cu tting my own throat I'd be ju s t as in dictable as -'

Th at's enough,' Norton in terr upted. His face was as long

a n d cold as a sla te gravestone. He lea ned back in his office ch air un til the back of his head almost tou ched the sa mpler reading HIS JUDGMENT COMETH AND THAT RIGHT EARLY.

'B u t-'

'Don't you ever mention money to me again,' Norton said. 'Not in this office, not anywhere. Not u nless you wan t to see th a t library t urned back into a s torage room a n d pain t-locker again. Do you un dersta n d?'

'I was trying to set your min d a t ease, t hat's all.'

'Well now, when I need a sorry son of a bitch like you to set my min d at ease, I'll retire. I agreed to this appoin t ment beca u se I got tired of being pestered, D ufresne. I wan t it to s top. If you wan t to b uy this partic ular Brooklyn Bridge, t hat's your affair. Don't make

it mine. I could hear crazy s tories like yours twice a week if I wan ted to lay myself open to t hem. Every sinner in t his place would be u sing me for a crying towel. I had

more respect for you . Bu t this is t he end. The end. Have we got an un derstan ding?'

'Yes,' An dy said. 'Bu t I'll be hiring a lawyer, you k now.'

'What in God's na me for?'

'I thin k we can p u t it together,' An dy said. 'With Tommy Willia ms an d with my testimony an d corroborative testimony from records an d employees a t t he coun try clu b, I t hin k we ca n p u t it together.'

'Tommy Willia ms is no longer an inmate of this facility.'

'What?'

'He's been tran sferred.'

'Transferred where?'

'Cashman.'

At th a t, An dy fell silent. He was an in telligen t ma n, bu t it would have taken an extraordinarily s tu pid man not to s melt deal all over th a t. Cashma n was a minimum- secu rity prison far up north in Aroostook Co un ty. The inmates pick a lot of potatoes, a n d th a t's h ard work, bu t t hey are paid a decent wage for t heir labou r an d they ca n a tten d classes at CVI, a pretty decen t vocation al-technical in s tit u te, if t hey so desire. More im porta n t to a fellow like Tommy, a fellow with a you ng wife a n d a child, Cas hman had a furlough progra mme ... which mea n t a chance to live like a nor mal m an, a t least on the weeken ds. A ch ance to b uild a model pla ne with his kid, have sex with his wife, maybe go on a picnic.

Norton had almost su rely dangled all of t hat un der Tommy's nose with only one s tring a ttached: not one more word abou t Elwood Blatch, not now, not ever. Or you'll end u p doing hard time in Thom aston down there on scenic Rou te 1 with the real hard guys, an d instead of h aving sex with your wife you'll be having it with some old b ull q u eer.

'B u t why?' An dy said. 'Why would -'

'As a favour to you ,' Norton said calmly, 'I checked with Rhode Isla n d. They did have an inmate na med Elwood Blatch. He was given what they call a PP - provisional parole, another one of these crazy liberal progra mmes to p u t criminals out on the streets. He's since disappeared.'

Andy said: 'The warden down there ... is he a friend of you rs?'

Sa m Norton gave An dy a smile as cold as a deacon's watchchain. 'We are acqu ainted,' he said.

' Why?' An dy repeated. 'Can't you tell me why you did it? You k new I was n't going to talk abou t ... abou t anything you might have had going. You knew th a t. So why?

'Beca u se people like you make me sick,' Norton said deliberately. 'I like you right where you a re, Mr Dufresne, a n d as long as I a m warden here a t Shaws han k, you are going to be right here. You see, you used to thin k that you

were better than a nyone else. I h ave gotten pretty good at seeing that on a man's face. I m arked it on yours the firs t time I walked in to the library. It migh t as well h ave been written on you r forehead in capital letters. Th a t look is

gone now, an d I like that ju s t fine. It is not just t h a t you a re a u seful vessel, never t hin k that. It is simply that men like you need to learn h umility. Why, you used to walk a roun d th a t exercise yard as if it was a living room an d you were a t one of t hose cocktail parties where the hellhoun d walk a roun d coveting each others' wives an d h u sba n ds an d getting swinishly dr un k. B u t you don't walk aroun d th a t way anymore. And I'll be watching to see if you s hould s ta rt to walk t hat way again. Over a period of years, I'll be watching you wit h great pleas ure. Now get the hell ou t of here.'

'Okay. B u t all the extrac urric ular activities s top now,

Norton. The invest ment co un selling, the sca ms, the free

t ax advice. It all stops. Get H & R Block to tell you how to declare your extortionate income.'

Warden Norton's face firs t wen t brick-red ... an d t hen all

t he colou r fell ou t of it 'You're going back in to solitary for t hat Thirty days. Bread a n d water. Anot her black m ark. And while you're in , thin k about t his: if anyt hing t hat's been going on should s top, t he library goes. I will make it my personal b usiness to see t hat it goes back to wh a t it was before you ca me here. An d I will m ake your life... very hard. Very difficult You'll do t he hardest time it's possible to do. You'll lose that one-b un k Hilton down in Cellblock 5 , for s ta rters, an d you'll lose t hose rocks on t he win dowsill, a n d you'll lose a ny protection the guards h ave given you again s t t he sodomites. You will... lose everyt hing. Clear?'

I guess it was clear enough.

Time con tin ued to pass - the oldest trick in the world, a n d maybe t he only one th a t really is magic. Bu t An dy D ufresne had ch a nged. He h ad grown harder. That's the only way I ca n t hin k of to p ut it He wen t on doing Warden Norton's dirty work an d he held on to the library, so ou twardly things were about the sa me. He con tinued to h ave his birth day drin ks an d his New Year's Eve drin ks;

he con tinued to share ou t t he rest of each bottle. I got him fres h rock-polis hing clot hs from time to time, an d in 1967 I got him a new rock-h a mmer - the one I'd gotten him nineteen years ago had plum b worn ou t Nineteen years! When you say it s udden like that, those three syllables soun d like t he t hu d an d double-locking of a tom b door. The rock- ha mmer, which had been a ten- dollar item back t hen, went for twenty-two by '67 . He a n d I had a sad little grin over that

Andy contin u ed to sh ape an d polish t he rocks he foun d in the exercise yard, b u t t he yard was s maller by then; h alf of what had been there in 1950 had been asphalted over in 1962 . Nonetheless, he foun d enough to keep him occu pied, I guess. When he had finished with each rock he would pu t it carefully on his win dow ledge, which faced east He told me he liked to look a t them in the s un, t he pieces of the planet he had taken u p from the dirt a n d s h aped. Schists, quartzes, gra nites. Fu nny little mica sculptu res th a t were held together with airpla ne glue.

Various sedimen ta ry conglomerates that were polished a n d cu t in su ch a way that you could see why An dy called

t hem 'millennium san dwiches' - t he layers of differen t m a terial t hat had b uilt u p over a period of decades and centu ries.

Andy would give his stones an d his rock- sc ulptu res away from time to time in order to make room for new ones. He gave me the greatest num ber, I t hin k - co un ting the s tones t hat looked like matched c ufflin ks, I had five. There was one of the mica sculpt u res I told you about,

carefully crafted to look like a m an t hrowing a javelin, a n d two of t he sedimen t ary conglomerates, all the levels s howing in s moot hly polis hed cross-section. I've s till got t hem, an d I take t hem down every so often an d t hin k about what a ma n ca n do, if he has time enough an d the will to u se it, a drop a t a time.

So, on the ou t side, at least, things were about the sa me. If Norton had wan ted to break An dy as badly as he had said, he would have had to look below t he su rface to see t he ch ange. Bu t if he had seen how different An dy h ad become, I thin k Norton would h ave been well- satisfied with the fou r years following his clas h wit h An dy.

He had told An dy t hat An dy walked aroun d the exercise yard as if he were at a cocktail party. Th a t isn't the way I would have p u t it, b ut I know what he mea nt. It goes back to what I said abou t An dy wearing his freedom like a n invisible coat, abou t how he never really developed a prison men t ality. His eyes never got t hat d ull look. He never developed the walk th a t men get when the day is over an d they a re going back to t heir cells for another endless night - that fla t-footed, h ump- shouldered walk. Andy walked with his shoulders squared a n d his s tep was always ligh t, as if he was heading home to a good home-cooked meal an d a good woman in s tead of to a tasteless mess of soggy vegetables, lumpy mas hed potato, a n d a slice or two of t hat fa tty, gristly st uff most of t he cons called mystery meat ... th a t, an d a pictu re of Raq u el Welch on the wall.

B u t for t hose fou r years, although he never became exactly like the others, he did become silent, introspective, a n d brooding. Who co uld bla me him ? So m aybe it was Warden Norton who was pleased ... a t least,

for a while.

His dark mood broke aroun d t he time of the 1967 World Series. Th a t was t he drea m year, t he year t he Red Sox won the pennan t instead of placing nin th , as t he Las Vegas bookies had predicted. When it happened - when t hey won the America n League penna n t - a kin d of eb ullience engulfed the whole prison. There was a goofy sort of feeling that if the Dead Sox co uld come to life, then

m aybe anybody co uld do it I ca n't explain th a t feeling now, any more than an ex-Beatlemaniac could explain

t hat madness, I s u ppose. B u t it was real. Every radio in t he place was t uned to the ga mes as t he Red Sox pou nded down the s tretch. There was gloom when the Sox dropped a pair in Cleveland near the en d, an d a nearly riotou s joy when Rico Petrocelli pu t away the pop fly t hat clinched it An d t hen there was t he gloom th a t ca me when Lonborg was beaten in the seventh ga me of t he Series to en d t he drea m ju s t s hort of complete fr uition. It probably pleased Norton to no end, the son of a bitch. He liked his prison wearing sackcloth a n d ashes.

B u t for An dy, there was no tum ble back down in to gloom. He was n't much of a baseball fa n anyway, an d maybe t hat was why. Nevertheless, he seemed to have ca ugh t

t he c urrent of good feeling, an d for him it didn't peter out again after t he last ga me of the Series. He had taken that invisible coat ou t of the closet and p u t it on again.

I remem ber one brigh t-gold fall day in very la te October, a co u ple of weeks after the World Series had ended. It mu st h ave been a S u n day, becau se the exercise yard was full of men 'walking off the week' - tossing a Frisbee or two, passing a roun d a football, bartering what they h ad to barter. Others would be at the long table in the Visitors' Hall, un der the watchful eyes of the screws, talking wit h t heir relatives, smoking cigarettes, telling sincere lies, receiving their picked-over care packages.

Andy was sq u a tting In dia n-fas hion again s t t he wall, ch u nking two s mall rocks toget her in his ha n ds, his face t u r ned u p in to the s unlight. It was s urprisingly war m, t hat s un, for a day so la te in the year.

'Hello, Red,' he called. 'Come on a n d sit a spell.'

I did.

'You wan t this?' he asked, an d ha n ded me one of the two carefully polis hed 'millenni um san dwiches' I just told you about

'I s ure do,' I said. 'It's very pretty. Th a n k you .'

He sh r ugged an d ch a nged t he su bject 'Big anniversary coming u p for you next year.'

I nodded. Next year would make me a thirty-year ma n. Sixty per cen t of my life spen t in S h awsha n k Prison.

Thin k you'll ever get out?'

'Sure. When I have a long white beard an d just about t hree marbles left rolling a rou n d u pstairs.'

He smiled a little an d then tu rned his face u p in to the

s un again, his eyes closed. 'Feels good.'

'I thin k it always does when you k now the da mn win ter's almost righ t on top of you .'

He nodded, an d we were silent for a while.

'When I get ou t of here,' An dy said finally, 'I'm going where it's war m all the time.' He spoke with su ch calm ass ura nce you would have though t he had only a mon th or so left to serve. 'You know where I' m goin', Red?'

'Nope.'

'Zihu a tcnejo,' he said, rolling the word softly from his tongue like music. 'Down in Mexico. It's a little place m aybe twen ty miles from Playa Azul an d Mexico Highway

37 . It's a h u n dred miles north-west of Acap ulco on the Pacific Ocea n. You know wh a t the Mexica ns say abou t t he Pacific?'

I told him I didn't

They say it has no memory. An d t h a t's where I wan t to finish ou t my life, Red. In a war m place that h as no memory.'

He had picked u p a h an dful of pebbles as he spoke; now he tossed them, one by one, an d watched them bounce a n d roll across the baseball dia mon d's dirt infield, which would be u n der a foot of snow before long.

'Zihu a ta nejo. I' m going to have a little hotel down t here. Six caba n as along t he beach, an d six more set further back, for the highway trade. I'll have a guy who'll take my guests ou t charter fishing. There'll be a trophy for the guy who catches the biggest m arlin of t he season, a n d I'll pu t his pictu re u p in t he lobby. It won't be a fa mily place. It'll be a place for people on t heir honeymoons ... fir st or secon d varieties.'

'An d where a re you going to get t he money to buy t his fabulous place?' I asked. 'Your stock acco un t?'

He looked a t me a n d smiled. 'That's not so far wrong,' he

said. 'Sometimes you s ta rtle me, Red.' 'What a re you talking abou t?'

There a re really only two types of men in the world when it comes to bad trouble,' An dy said, c u pping a m atch between his han ds an d ligh ting a cigarette. 'S u ppose t here was a hou se full of ra re pain tings an d sculptures a n d fine old an tiq ues, Red? And s uppose t he guy who owned the hou se heard that t here was a monster of a h u rricane headed right a t it. One of those two kin ds of men ju s t hopes for the best The hu rricane will ch ange co urse, he says to himself. No righ t-t hin king h u rricane would ever dare wipe out all these Rem bra n dts, my two Degas horses, my Jackson Pollocks an d my Pa ul Klees. F u rthermore, God wouldn't allow it. And if worst comes to worst, they're in s u red. That's one sort of ma n. The ot her sort ju s t ass umes th a t h u rrica ne is going to tear righ t t hrough t he middle of his house. If the weather b u rea u says t he hu rricane ju s t ch a nged cou rse, this guy ass umes it'll ch a nge back in order to p ut his hou se on groun d zero again. This secon d type of guy k nows there's no har m in hoping for t he best as long as you're prepared

for the worst.'

I lit a cigarette of my own. 'Are you saying you prepared for the even t uality?'

'Yes. I prepared for t he hu rrica ne. I k new how bad it looked. I didn't h ave mu ch time, b u t in t he time I had, I operated. I had a friend - ju st abou t the only person who s tood by me - who worked for a n investmen t com pa ny in Portlan d. He died about six years ago.'

'Sorry.'

'Yeah.' An dy tossed his bu tt away. 'Lin da a n d I had abou t fou rteen thousa n d dollars. Not a big b un dle, b ut hell, we were young. We had ou r whole lives ahead of u s .' He grimaced a little, t hen la ughed. 'When t he shit hit t he fan, I started lugging my Rembran dts ou t of the pat h of the h u rricane. I sold my s tocks an d paid t he capital gain s tax ju s t like a good little boy. Declared everything. Didn't cu t a ny corners.'

'Didn't they freeze you r estate?'

'I was ch a rged with mu rder, Red, not dead! You ca n't freeze the assets of an innocen t m an - than k God. An d it was a while before t hey even got brave enough to charge me with the crime. J im - my frien d - an d I, we had some time. I got hit pretty good, just dum ping everything like t hat. Got my nose skinned. B ut a t the time I had worse

t hings to worry about than a s mall skinning on t he s tock m arket.'

'Yeah, I'd say you did.'

'B u t when I ca me to S h awsha n k it was all safe. It's still safe. O u tside these walls, Red, t here's a ma n that no living soul has ever seen face to face. He h as a Social Sec u rity card an d a Maine driver's licen se. He's got a birth certificate. Na me of Peter Steven s . Nice, a nonymous n a me, hu h ?'

'Who is he?' I asked. I thought I k new what he was going to say, bu t I couldn't believe it.

'Me.'

'You're not going to tell me that you h ad time to set u p a false iden tity while t he b ulls were sweating you ,' I said, 'or that you finished the job while you were on trial for -'

'No, I' m not going to tell you that. My friend J im was the one who set u p the false identity. He s ta rted after my appeal was tu rned down, a n d t he m ajor pieces of identification were in his han ds by t he spring of 1950 .'

'He mu s t have been a pretty close friend,' I said. I was not s ure how mu ch of this I believed - a little, a lot, or none. B u t t he day was war m a n d t he su n was ou t, an d it was one hell of a good s tory. 'All of t hat's one h u n dred per cent illegal, setting u p a false ID like that.'

'He was a close friend,' An dy said. 'We were in the war together. France, Germ any, the occu pation. He was a good frien d. He knew it was illegal, b u t he also knew th a t setting u p a false iden tity in t his co un try is very easy and very safe. He took my money - my money with all the

t axes on it paid so the IRS would n't get too in terested - a n d invested it for Peter Steven s . He did th a t in 1950 a n d 1951 . Today it a moun t s to th ree h u n dred a n d seventy t hou san d dollars, plus change.'

I guess my jaw made a th ump when it dropped again st my chest, becau se he smiled.

'Thin k of all t he things people wish they'd invested in since 1950 or so, a nd two or t hree of them will be things Peter Steven s was in to. If I hadn't ended u p in here, I'd probably be wort h seven or eight million b ucks by now. I'd h ave a Rolls ... a n d probably a n ulcer as big as a portable radio.'

His ha n ds went to the dirt an d began sifting ou t more pebble s . They moved gracefully, restlessly.

'I was hoping for t he best and expecting the worst

- nothing b ut t hat The false na me was just to keep what little capital I had un tain ted. It was lugging the pain tings ou t of the pat h of the hu rrica ne. B u t I had no idea t hat t he h u rrica ne ... th a t it co uld go on as long as it has.'

I didn't say anything for a while. I guess I was trying to absorb the idea th a t this s mall, spare m an in prison grey next to me could be wort h more money tha n Warden Norton would m ake in the rest of his miserable life, even with the sca ms th rown in .

'When you said you co uld get a lawyer, you su re weren't kidding,' I said a t last 'For that kind of dough you could h ave hired Clarence Darrow, or whoever's passing for him these days. Why didn't you , Andy? Ch ris t! You could h ave been ou t of here like a rocket.'

He s miled. It was the sa me s mile that had been on his face when he'd told me he an d his wife had had their whole lives a head of them. 'No,' he said.

'A good lawyer would h ave spr ung the Willia ms kid from Cas hman whether he wan ted to go or not,' I said. I was getting carried away now. 'You co uld have gotten your new trial, hired private detectives to look for t hat guy Blatch, a n d blown Norton ou t of t he water to boot. Why

not, An dy?'

'Beca u se I ou t sm arted myself. If I ever try to p u t my h a n ds on Peter Steven s's money from in side here, I'd lose every cent of it My friend J im could have arra nged it, bu t J im's dead. You see the problem?'

I saw it For all the good t he money co uld do An dy, it migh t as well have really belonged to a not her person. In a way, it did. An d if the st uff it was invested in s uddenly t u r ned bad, all An dy could do would be to watch the plunge, to tr ace it day after day on the s tocks-an d- bon ds page of the Press-Herald. It's a tough life if you don't weaken, I guess.

'I'll tell you how it is, Red. There's a big hayfield in the town of B uxton. You know where B uxton is at, don't you ?'

I said I did. It lies right next door to Scarborough.

"Th at's righ t An d a t t he nort h end of this partic ular

h ayfield there's a rock wall, right ou t of a Robert Frost poem. An d somewhere along the base of that wall is a rock that h as no b usiness in a Maine hayfield. It's a piece of volcanic glass, a n d un til 1947 it was a paperweigh t on my office desk. My friend J im p ut it in that wall. There's a key un der neat h it. The key open s a safe deposit box in t he Portla n d branch of the Casco Ba n k.'

'I guess you're in a pack of trouble,' I said. 'When you r friend J im died, the IRS mu st h ave opened all of his safety deposit boxes. Along with t he execu tor of his will, of co urse.'

Andy s miled an d tapped the side of my head. 'Not bad. There's more u p there th a n mars hmallows, I guess. Bu t we took care of the possibility t hat J im might die while I was in the sla m. The box is in the Peter Stevens n a me, a n d once a year the fir m of lawyers that served as J im's exec utors sends a check to the Casco to cover the rental of t he Stevens box.

'Peter Steven s is inside th a t box, ju s t waiting to get ou t

His birth certificate, his S.S. card, an d his driver's licen se. The licen se is six years out of date beca u se Jim died six years ago, tr ue, b u t it's s till perfectly renewable for a five-dollar fee. His stock certificates a re there, the t ax-free municipals, a n d abou t eigh teen bearer bonds in t he a moun t of ten thousa n d dollars each.'

I whistled.

'Peter Steven s is locked in a safe deposit box a t the Casco Ba n k in Portla n d an d An dy Dufresne is locked in a safe deposit box at Shaws han k,' he said. Tit for ta t An d the key that unlocks the box an d the money an d the new life

is un der a hu n k of black glass in a Buxton hayfield. Told you this mu ch, so I'll tell you something else, Red - for the last twen ty years, give or take, I h ave been watching the papers wit h a more than us ual in terest for news of any constr uction projects in Buxton. I keep thin king t hat someday soon I'm going to read t hat they're p utting a highway through there, or erecting a new community hospital, or building a shopping centre. B urying my new life un der ten feet of concrete, or spitting it in to a swam p

somewhere wit h a big load of fill.'

I blurted, ' Jesu s Ch ris t, An dy, if all of t his is true, how do you keep from going crazy?'

He s miled. 'So far, all q uiet on t he Western fron t.'

'B u t it co uld be years -'

'It will be. B ut maybe not as m any as the s ta te an d Warden Norton thin k it's going to be. I just ca n't afford to wait t hat long. I keep t hin king about Zih u a tanejo an d t hat sm all hotel. Th at's all I wa n t from my life now, Red, a n d I don't thin k that's too much to wan t. I didn't kill Glenn Q uen tin an d I didn't kill my wife, an d t hat hotel ... it's not too much to wa n t To swim an d get a tan a n d sleep in a room with open win dows and space... th a t's not too much to wan t.'

He slung the s tones away.

'You know, Red,' he said in an offh a n d voice, 'a place like t hat... I'd h ave to have a man who k nows how to get

t hings.'

I t hough t abou t it for a long time. An d the biggest drawback in my min d was n't even that we were talking pipedrea ms in a s hitty little prison exercise yard wit h a r med gu ards looking down a t us from their sen try posts. 'I couldn't do it,' I said. 'I couldn't get along on t he ou tside.

I' m wh a t they call an in stit utional m an now. In here I' m t he man who ca n get it for you , yea h. Bu t ou t there,

a nyone ca n get it for you . Ou t there, if you wa n t posters or rock- ha mmers or one partic ular record or a boat-in-a- bottle model kit, you ca n u se the fucking Yellow Pages. In here, I'm t he fu cking Yellow Pages. I wouldn't know how to begin. Or where.'

'You un derestimate yourself,' he said. 'You're a self-edu cated man, a self- made ma n. A r a ther remarkable ma n, I thin k.'

'Hell, I don't even h ave a high school diploma.'

'I know th a t,' he said. 'B ut it isn't ju s t a piece of paper

t hat m akes a man. An d it is n't ju s t prison that breaks one, either.'

'I couldn't hack it ou tside, An dy. I know that.' He got u p. 'You t hin k it over,' he said cas ually, ju s t as t he inside whistle blew. An d he s trolled off, as if he was a free man who had just made another free m an a proposition. An d for a while ju st t hat was enough to m ake me feel free.

Andy could do that. He could make me forget for a time t hat we were bot h lifer s , a t the mercy of a hard-ass parole board an d a psalm-singing warden who liked An dy D ufresne righ t where he was. After all, An dy was a lap-dog who co uld do tax-ret urn s. What a won derful a nimal!

B u t by t hat nigh t in my cell I felt like a prisoner again. The whole idea seemed absu rd, an d that mental im age of blue water a n d white beaches seemed more cr uel th a n foolish - it dragged a t my brain like a fishhook. I ju st co uld n't wear that invisible coat t he way An dy did. I fell asleep that night a n d dreamed of a great glassy black s tone in t he middle of a hayfield; a s tone sh aped like a

gia n t blacks mit h's anvil. I was trying to rock the s tone up so I co uld get t he key that was u nder neath. It wouldn't b u dge; it was ju s t too da mned big.

And in the backgroun d, bu t getting closer, I co uld hear t he baying of bloodhoun ds.

Which leads us, I guess, to the su bject of jailbreaks.

S u re, t hey happen from time to time in ou r happy little fa mily. You don't go over the wall, though, not a t S h awsha n k, not if you're sm art. The searchligh t beams go all nigh t, probing long white fingers across the open fields th a t s urroun d the prison on th ree sides an d the s tin king mars hlan d on t he fourth. Cons do go over the wall from time to time, an d the searchligh ts almost always catch t hem. If not, they get picked up trying to t hum b a ride on Highway 6 or Highway 99. If they try to c u t across cou n try, some fa r mer sees them an d just p hones t he location in to t he prison. Con s who go over t he wall a re s t upid con s. Shawsh a n k is no Ca non City, b u t in a ru ral area a ma n hum ping his ass across

co un try in a grey pyja ma suit s ticks out like a cockroach on a wedding cake.

Over t he years, t he guys who h ave done the best - m aybe oddly, maybe not so oddly - a re the guys who did it on the sp ur of the moment Some of them have gone ou t in the middle of a cartful of sheets; a convict sa n dwich on white, you could say. There was a lot of th a t when I firs t ca me in here, b u t over t he years they have more or less closed t hat loop hole.

Warden Norton's fa mou s 'In side-Ou t' progra mme produ ced it s sh a re of escapees, too. They were the guys who decided they liked what lay to t he righ t of the hyphen better t han what lay to the left An d again, in most cases it was a very cas ual kin d of t hing. Drop your blueberry rake a n d s troll in to the bu shes while one of the screws is h aving a glass of water a t the tru ck or when a cou ple of t hem get too involved in a rguing over yards passing or r us hing on t he old Boston Patriots.

In 1969 , the In side-O u ters were picking potatoes in

Sabbat u s . It was t he third of Novem ber an d the work was almost done. There was a gu ard na med Henry Pugh - an d he is no longer a mem ber of ou r happy little fa mily, believe me - sitting on the back b um per of one of the potato tr u cks an d having his lu nch with his carbine across his knees when a beautiful (or so it was told to me, b u t sometimes these things get exaggerated) ten- poin t b u ck strolled ou t of the cold early after noon mist Pugh went after it wit h visions of just how that trop hy would look moun ted in his rec room, and while he was doing it, t hree of his charges just walked away. Two were recapt ured in a Lisbon Falls pinball parlou r. The third h as not been fou n d to this day.

I s u ppose the most famous case of all was that of Sid Nedeau . This goes back to 1958 , a n d I guess it will never be topped. Sid was ou t lining the ball-field for a Sat u rday intra mural baseball ga me when t he three o'clock in side whistle blew, signalling t he s hiftch ange for t he guards. The parking lot is just beyond the exercise yard, on the ot her side of the electrically-operated main gate. At three t he gate open s j a n d the gu ards coming on du ty a n d

t hose going off mingle. There's a lot of back-slapping an d b ullyragging, com parison of league bowling scores a n d t he us ual n umber of tired old ethnic jokes.

Sid ju st trun dled his lining machine righ t ou t th rough t he gate, leaving a th ree-inch baseline all t he way from t hird base in the exercise yard to t he ditch on t he far side of Rou te 6 , where they foun d the m achine overt urned in a pile of lime. Don't ask me how he did it He was dressed in his prison uniform, he s tood six-feet-two, an d he was billowing clouds of lime-d ust behin d him. All I ca n figure is that, it being Friday after noon an d all, the guards going off were so h appy to be going off, an d the gu ards coming on were so downhearted to be coming on, that the mem bers of the former grou p never got their heads ou t of t he clouds an d those in t he la tter never got t heir noses off t heir shoetops ... an d old Sid Nedeau ju st sort of slipped ou t between the two.

So far as I k now, Sid is s till a t large. Over t he years, An dy D ufresne a n d I had a good m any la ughs over Sid Nedeau's great escape, an d when we heard abou t that

airline hijacking for ra n som, the one where the guy parach uted from the back door of t he airplane, An dy swore u p an d down that D B Cooper's real n a me was Sid Nedeau .

'An d he probably had a pocketful of baseline lime in his pocket for good lu ck,' An dy said. 'That lucky son of a bitch.'

B u t you should un dersta n d t hat a case like Sid Nedea u , or t he fellow who got away clean from the Sabbat us potato-field crew, guys like th a t a re winning the prison version of the Irish Sweepstakes. Pu rely a case of six differen t kin ds of luck somehow jelling toget her all a t the sa me moment A s tiff like An dy co uld wait ninety years a n d not get a similar break.

Maybe you remem ber, a ways back, I men tioned a guy n a med Henley Backu s , t he wash room forema n in the la u ndry. He ca me to S h awsh a n k in 1922 a n d died in the prison infir mary thirty-one years la ter. Escapes an d escape attem pts were a hobby of his, maybe beca u se he

never q uite dared to take the plu nge himself. He co uld tell you a h u n dred differen t schemes, all of t hem crackpot, an d all of t hem had been tried in the Shan k a t one time or another. My favou rite was the tale of Beaver Morrison, a b & e convict who tried to b uild a glider from scratch in the plate-factory basement The pla n s he was working from were in a circa-1900 book called The Moder n Boy's G uide to Fun a n d Adven t ure. Beaver got it b uilt wit hou t being discovered, or so the s tory goes, only to discover there was no door from the basemen t big enough to get the da mned thing ou t When Henley told t hat s tory, you could b ust a gu t la ughing, an d he knew a dozen - no, two dozen -just as funny.

When it ca me to detailing Shawsh a n k bu st-ou ts , Henley h ad it down chapter a n d verse. He told me once that d u ring his time t here had been better th a n four hun dred escape a ttem pts that he knew of. Really thin k abou t t hat for a momen t before you just nod you r head a n d read on. Fou r h u n dred escape a ttem pts! Th at comes ou t to 12 . 9 escape a ttempts for every year Henley Back us was in S h awsha n k an d keeping track of t hem. The Escape

Attem pt of t he Mon th Clu b. Of cou rse most of t hem were pretty slipshod affairs, the sort of t hing t hat en ds u p with a gu ard grabbing some poor, sidling slob's ar m an d growling, 'Where do you thin k you're going, you happy asshole?'

Henley said he'd class maybe sixty of them as more serious attem pts, an d he inclu ded the 'prison break' of 1937 , t he year before I arrived a t t he Sha n k. The new ad ministration wing was u n der con str uction then an d fou rteen cons got ou t, u sing con s tr uction eq uipment in a poorly locked shed. The whole of sou ther n Maine got in to a pa nic over t hose fou rteen ' h ardened crimin als', most of whom were scared to death and had no more idea of where they should go th a n a jackrabbit does when it's headligh t- pinned to the highway with a big tru ck bearing down on it Not one of those fourteen got away. Two of t hem were shot dead - by civilian s, not police officers or prison personnel -b u t none got away.

How ma ny h ad gotten away between 1938 , when I came here, an d that day in October when An dy fir s t mentioned

Zihu a t anejo to me? Pu tting my infor mation an d Henley's together, I'd say ten. Ten that got away clea n. An d although it isn't the kin d of t hing you ca n k now for s ure, I'd guess th a t a t least half of t hose ten are doing time in ot her in stit ution s of lower lear ning like the S h an k.

Beca u se you do get institu tionalized. When you take away a man's freedom a n d teach him to live in a cell, he seem s to lose his ability to thin k in dimen sions. He's like t hat jackrabbit I men tioned, frozen in the oncoming ligh t s of t he tr uck that is boun d to kill it More often th a n not a con who's just ou t will p ull some dum b job t hat h asn't a chance in hell of succeeding ... an d why? Beca u se it'll get him back inside. Back where he u nderstan ds how things work.

Andy wasn't that way, b u t I was. The idea of seeing the Pacific soun ded good, bu t I was afraid th a t act ually being t here would scare me to death - the bigness of it

Anyhow, t he day of that conversation about Mexico, an d about Mr Peter Steven s ... t hat was the day I bega n to believe that An dy had some idea of doing a disappearing

act. I hoped to God he would be careful if he did, an d s till, I wouldn't h ave bet money on his ch ances of s ucceeding. Warden Norton, you see, was watching An dy with a special close eye. An dy wasn't ju st another deadhead with a n umber to Norton; t hey had a working rela tionship, you might say. Also, he had brains a n d he h ad heart Norton was determined to use the one and cr u sh the ot her.

As there a re honest politician s on t he ou t side - ones who s tay bough t - there a re honest prison guards, an d if you a re a good judge of ch aracter an d if you h ave some loot to spread aroun d, I su ppose it's possible th a t you co uld b uy enough look-the-ot her-way to m ake a break. I'm not the m an to tell you su ch a t hing has never been done, b u t Andy Dufres ne was n't t he ma n who could do it Beca u se, as I've said, Norton was watching. Andy knew it, an d the screws knew it, too.

Nobody was going to nominate Andy for the In side-O u t progra mme, not as long as Warden Norton was evalu ating the nomin a tion s. An d An dy was not the kin d

of m an to try a cas ual Sid Nedea u type of escape.

If I had been him, the though t of t hat key would have tor men ted me endlessly. I would h ave been lucky to get two hou rs' wort h of honest sh u teye a nigh t Buxton was less than thirty miles from Shaws h an k. So near an d yet so far.

I s till though t his best ch ance was to engage a lawyer a n d try for t he retrial Anyt hing to get ou t from un der Norton's t hum b. Maybe Tommy Willia m s co uld be shu t up by nothing more t han a cu shy fu rlough progra mme, bu t I was n't en tirely su re. Maybe a good old Mississippi h ardass lawyer co uld crack him ... an d maybe th a t lawyer wouldn't even have to work that hard. Willia ms h ad honestly liked An dy. Every now an d then I'd bring t hese poin ts u p to An dy, who would only s mile, his eyes fa r away, an d say he was t hin king abou t it.

Apparently he'd been thin king abou t a lot of other things, as well.

In 1975 , An dy Dufresne escaped from Sh awsha n k. He h asn't been recapt ured, an d I don't thin k he ever will be. In fact, I don't t hin k An dy D ufresne even exists a nymore. B u t I thin k there's a man down in Zih u a tanejo, Mexico n a med Peter Stevens. Probably ru nning a very new s mall hotel in this year of our Lord 1977 .

I'll tell you what I k now a n d what I thin k; th a t's abou t all I can do, isn't it?

On 12 March 1975 , the cell doors in Cellblock 5 opened a t 6 . 30 a. m., as they do every mor ning aroun d here except S u n day. An d as they do every day except S u n day, t he inmates of those cells s tepped forward in to the corridor a n d for med two lines as t he cell doors sla mmed s h u t behin d them. They walked u p to t he main cellblock gate, where they were co un ted off by two guards before being sent on down to the cafeteria for a breakfast of oat meal, scra mbled eggs, an d fa tty bacon.

All of this went according to rou tine un til t he co un t at the cellblock gate. There should have been twen ty-nine.

In s tead, there were twen ty-eigh t. After a call to the Captain of the G uards, Cellblock 5 was allowed to go to breakfast.

The Captain of t he Gu ards, a not half-bad fellow na med Rich ard Gonyar, an d his assista n t, a jolly prick n a med Dave B u rkes, ca me down to Cellblock 5 righ t away. Gonyar reopened the cell doors a n d he and B urkes wen t down the corridor together, dragging their s ticks over the bars, their guns ou t. In a case like th a t wh a t you us ually h ave is someone who has been taken sick in the night, so sick he can't even s tep ou t of his cell in the mor ning. More rarely, someone h as died... or committed s uicide.

B u t this time, they foun d a mystery in s tead of a sick m an or a dead m an. They foun d no m an a t all. There were fou rteen cells in Cellblock 5 , seven to a side, all fairly neat - restriction of visiting privileges is the pen alty for a sloppy cell a t Sh awsha n k - an d all very em pty.

Gonyar's fir s t assum ption was t hat there had been a misco un t or a practical joke. So in s tead of going off to

work after breakfast, the inmates of Cellblock 5 were sen t back to their cells, joking a n d happy. Any break in the rou tine was always welcome.

Cell doors opened; prisoners s tepped in; cell doors closed. Some clown shou ting, 'I wan t my lawyer, I wan t my lawyer, you guys r un t his place just like a frigging prison.'

B u rkes: 'Sh u t u p in t here, or I'll r a n k you .'

The clown: 'I ra n ked your wife, Bu rkie,'

Gonyar: 'Sh u t u p, all of you , or you'll spen d t he day in t here.'

He an d B u rkes wen t u p the line again, co un ting noses. They did n't h ave to go fa r.

'Who belongs in t his cell?' Gonyar asked t he righ tside nigh t guard.

'An drew Dufresne,' the righ tside a n swered, an d that was all it took. Everyt hing s topped being rou tine righ t then. The balloon wen t u p.

In all t he prison movies I've seen, t his wailing horn goes off when there's been a break. Th at never happen s at S h awsha n k. The firs t t hing Gonyar did was to get in tou ch with the warden. The secon d thing was to get a search of t he prison going. The t hird was to alert the State Police in Scarborough to t he possibility of a breakou t

Th at was t he rou tine. It didn't call for them to search the s uspected escapee's cell, a n d so no one did. Not t hen. Why would t hey? It was a case of what you see is what you get It was a s mall sq u a re room, bars on the win dow a n d bars on the sliding door. There was a toilet an d an em pty cot. Some pretty rocks on t he win dowsill.

And t he poster, of cou rse. It was Lin da Ronstadt by then. The poster was righ t over his bu nk. There had been a poster there, in that exact sa me place, for twen ty-six

years. An d when someone - it was Warden Norton himself, as it tu rned ou t, poetic ju stice if t here ever was any - looked behin d it, they got one hell of a s hock.

B u t t hat did n't happen u n til 6. 30 t hat nigh t, almost twelve hou rs after An dy had been reported missing, probably twenty hou rs after he h ad actu ally made his escape.

Norton hit the roof.

I have it on good a uthority - Chester, the tr ustee, who was waxing the h all floor in t he Ad min Wing that day. He didn't have to polish any keyplates with his ear th a t day; he said you co uld hear the warden clear down to Records & Files as he chewed on Rich Gonyar's ass.

'What do you mea n, you're "satisfied he's not on the prison groun ds"? Wh a t does t hat mea n ? It mea n s you didn't fin d him! You better fin d him! You better! Beca use I wan t him! Do you hear me? I wa n t him!'

Gonyar said somet hing.

'Didn't happen on you r shift? That's what you say. So fa r as / can tell, no one knows when it happened. Or how. Or if it really did. Now, I wan t him in my office by three o'clock t his afternoon, or some heads are going to roll. I ca n promise you that, an d I always keep my promises.'

Something else from Gonyar, something that seemed to provoke Norton to even greater rage.

'No? Then look a t this! Look at t his! You recognize it? Last nigh t's tally for Cellblock 5 . Every prisoner accou n ted for! D ufresne was locked u p last nigh t a t nine a n d it is im possible for him to be gone now! It is impossible! Now you fin d him!"

B u t at six th a t evening An dy was s till among the missing, Norton himself s tor med down to Cellblock 5 , where the rest of u s h ad been locked u p all of t h a t day. Had we been q u estioned? We h ad spen t most of t hat long day being q u estioned by harried screws who were feeling the breath of t he dragon on t he backs of t heir necks. We all said the

sa me thing: we had seen not hing, heard nothing. An d so fa r as I k now, we were all telling t he tr u th . I know that I was. All we co uld say was t hat An dy had in deed been in his cell a t the time of t he lock-in, an d at ligh t s-ou t a n hour la ter.

One wit suggested that An dy had poured himself out t hrough the keyhole. The suggestion earned t he guy fou r days in solita ry. They were u ptigh t.

So Norton ca me down - s talked down - glaring a t u s with blue eyes nearly hot enough to s trike sparks from the tem pered s teel bars of our cages. He looked a t u s as if he believed we were all in on it Probably he did believe it.

He wen t in to An dy's cell an d looked aroun d. It was just as Andy h ad left it, t he sheets of his b un k t ur ned back bu t withou t looking slept-in. Rocks on the win dowsill... b ut not all of t hem. The ones he liked best he took with him.

'Rocks,' Norton hissed, a n d swept t hem off the window-ledge with a clatter. Gonyar, already fou r hours overtime, winced b u t said nothing.

Norton's eyes fell on the Lin da Ron s t adt poster. Lin da was looking back over her shoulder, her han ds tu cked into the back pockets of a very tigh t pair of fawn-coloured slacks. She was wearing a halter an d she had a deep

Califor nia t a n. It must h ave offended t he hell ou t of Norton's Baptist sen sibilities, that poster. Watching him glare a t it, I remem bered what Andy had once said abou t feeling he could almost step th rough the pict ure a n d be with the girl.

In a very real way, that was exactly what he did - as Norton was only secon ds from discovering.

'Wretched t hing!' he gru n ted, and ripped the poster from t he wall with a single swipe of his han d.

And revealed t he gaping, cr umbled hole in the concrete behin d it. Gonyar wouldn't go in.

Norton ordered him - God, t hey mu st h ave heard Norton ordering Rich Gonyar to go in there all over the prison - a n d Gonyar ju st refused him, poin t- bla n k.

'I'll have you r job for t his!' Norton screamed. He was as hysterical as a wom an having a hot-flus h. He h ad u tterly blown his cool. His neck h ad tu rned a rich, dark red, a n d two veins s tood ou t, th robbing, on his forehead. 'You ca n co un t on it, you ... you Frenchman! I'll h ave you r job an d I'll see to it th a t you never get anot her one in any prison system in New Englan d!'

Gonyar silently held ou t his service pistol to Norton, bu tt fir st. He'd h ad enough. He was fou r hours overtime, going on five, an d he'd just had enough. It was as if An dy's defection from ou r happy little family had driven Norton righ t over the edge of some private irr a tionality that h ad been there for a long time ... certainly he was crazy that nigh t.

I don't know wh a t that private irr a tionality migh t have been, of cou rse. Bu t I do know t hat there were twenty-eigh t cons lis tening to Norton's little d ust- up with Rich Gonyar that evening as the last of the ligh t faded from a dull la te win ter sky, all of u s hard-timers an d

long-line riders who had seen the ad ministrators come a n d go, t he hard-asses an d the' ca n dy- asses alike, a n d we all k new t hat Warden Sa muel Norton had just passed what the engineers like to call 'the breaking s train'.

And by God, it almost seemed to me that somewhere I co uld heard An dy Dufresne la ughing.

Norton fin ally got a skinny drink, of water on the nigh t s hift to go in to t hat hole that had been behind An dy's poster of Lin da Ronstadt. The ski nny guard's na me was Rory Tremon t, an d he was not exactly a ball of fire in the brain s depart men t. Maybe he thought he was going to win a Bronze Star or something. As it tu rned ou t, it was fort unate that Norton got someone of An dy's approximate heigh t an d build to go in t here; if t hey had sent a big-assed fellow - as most prison gu ards seem to be - the guy would h ave st uck in there is s ure as God made green grass ... an d he migh t be there s till.

Tremont wen t in with a nylon fila ment rope, which someone had foun d in the tr un k of his car, tied a roun d

his waist an d a big six- battery flas hligh t in one h an d. By t hen Gonyar, who had cha nged his min d abou t quitting a n d who seemed to be the only one there s till able to t hin k clearly, had dug ou t a set of blueprin t s . I knew well enough wh a t they showed him - a wall which looked, in cross-section, like a sa n dwich. The en tire wall was ten feet thick. The inner an d ou ter sections were each about fou r feet thick. In the centre was two feet of pipe-space, a n d you wan t to believe th a t was t he meat of the thing ... in more ways than one.

Tremont's voice ca me out of t he hole, soun ding hollow a n d dead. 'Somet hing s mells awful in here, Warden.'

'Never min d th a t! Keep going.'

Tremont's lower legs disappeared in to the hole. A moment ia ter his feet were gone, too. His ligh t flas hed dimly back an d fort h.

'Warden, it s mells pretty da mn bad.'

'Never min d, I said!' Norton cried.

Dolorously, Tremont's voice floated back: 'S mells like shit. Oh God, that's wh a t it is, it's shit, oh my God lemme ou tta here I'm gonn a blow my groceries oh shit it's shit oh my Gawwwwwd - An d then ca me the unmistakable soun d of Rory Tremon t lsing his last cou ple of meals.

Well, that was it for me. I co uld n't help myself. The whole day - hell no, t he last t hirty years - all ca me up on me a t once an d I s ta rted la ughing fit to split, a la ugh su ch as I'd never had since I was a free ma n, t he kin d of la ugh I never expected to have inside these grey walls. An d oh dear God didn't it feel good!

'Get t hat ma n ou t of here!' Warden Norton was screaming, a n d I was la ughing so hard I didn't know if he mea n t me or Tremont I ju s t wen t on laughing an d kicking my feet a n d holding on to my belly. I couldn't have s topped if Norton had t hreatened to shoot me dead-bang on the

spot. 'Get him OUT!'

Well, friends an d neigh bou rs, I was t he one who wen t Straigh t down to solitary, an d there I s tayed for fifteen days. A long shot. Bu t every now a n d t hen I'd thin k about poor old not-too-bright Rory Tremon t bellowing oh shit it's shit, an d then I'd thin k abou t Andy Dufresne heading sou th in his own car, dressed in a nice s uit, an d I'd ju st h ave to la ugh. I did th a t fifteen days in solitary practically s ta n ding on my head Maybe becau se half of me was with Andy D ufresne, An dy D ufresne who had waded in shit a n d ca me out clea n on t he other side, An dy Dufresne, headed for the Pacific.

I heard the rest of what wen t on t hat nigh t from half a dozen sources. There was n't all t hat mu ch, anyway. I guess that Rory Tremon t decided he didn't h ave mu ch left to lose after he'd lost his lunch an d dinner, beca use he did go on. There was no danger of falling down the pipe-sh aft between t he inner and ou ter segmen t s of the cllblock wall; it was so narrow t hat Tremont actually had

to wedge him self down. He said la ter t hat he co uld only t ake half-breat hs an d that he knew wh a t it would be like

to be bu ried alive.

What he fou n d a t the bottom of t he shaft was a m aster sewer-pipe which served the fourteen toilets in Cellblock 5 , a porcelain pipe t hat h ad been laid thirty-t hree years before. It had been broken in to. Beside t he jagged hole in t he pipe, Tremon t foun d An dy's rock-h a mmer.

Andy h ad gotten free, bu t it hadn't been easy.

The pipe was even n arrower t han t he sh aft Tremon t h ad ju s t descended; it had a two-foot bore. Rory Tremon t didn't go in , an d so fa r as I know, no one else did, either.

It must have been damn near unspeakable. A r a t jum ped

ou t of t he pipe as Tremon t was examining the hole a n d t he rock-ha mmer, an d he swore later that it was nearly

as big as a cocker spaniel p u p. He wen t back u p the crawlspace to An dy's cell like a mon key on a stick.

Andy had gone in to th a t pipe. Maybe he knew that it em ptied in to a strea m five h u ndred yards beyon d the prison on t he m ars hy western side. I thin k he did. The prison blueprin ts were a roun d, a nd An dy would have

fou nd a way to look a t them. He was a methodical cu ss.

He would h ave

k nown or foun d ou t that t he sewerpipe r unning ou t of Cellblock 5 was the last one in S h awsha n k not hooked into the new waste-treat ment pla n t, an d he would have k nown it was do it by mid- 1975 or do it never, beca u se in Augu st t hey were going to switch u s over to the new waste-treat ment pla n t, too.

Five hun dred yards. The length of five football fields. Ju st s hy of a mile. He crawled t hat dis ta nce, maybe wit h one of t hose s mall Penlites in his han d, maybe with nothing b u t a co u ple of books of matches. He crawled through foulness that I either can't imagine or don't wa n t to im agine. Maybe t he ra ts scattered in fron t of him, or m aybe they wen t for him the way su ch animals sometimes will when they've had a ch a nce to grow bold in t he dark. He must have had just enough clearance a t the

s houlders to keep moving, a n d he probably had to shove himself t hrough t he places where t he lengths of pipe were joined. If it had been me, the clau s trophobia would have

driven me mad a dozen times over. Bu t he did it

At t he far end of t he pipe they fou n d a set of mu ddy footprin ts leading ou t of t he sluggish, pollu ted creek the pipe fed in to. Two miles from there a search party fou n d his pris on unifor m - that was a day la ter.

The s tory broke big in t he papers, as you migh t guess, b u t no one within a fifteen- mile radius of t he prison s tepped forward to report a s tolen car, s tolen clothes, or a n aked man in t he moonligh t There was not so mu ch as a barking dog in a far myard. He came ou t of t he sewerpipe a n d he disappeared like s moke.

B u t I am betting he disappeared in the direction of B uxton.

Th ree mont hs after th a t memorable day, Warden Norton resigned. He was a broken ma n, it gives me great pleasu re to report The spring was gone from his s tep. On his last day he sh uffled ou t with his head down like an old con shuffling down to the infir mary for his codeine

pills. It was Gonyar who took over, an d to Norton th a t mu st have seemed like the un kin dest c ut of all. For all I k now, Sa m Norton is down t here in Eliot now, a tten ding services at t he Baptist ch u rch every Sun day, and won dering how t he hell An dy Dufresne ever co uld have gotten the better of him.

I could have told him; the answer to the question is sim plicity itself. Some have got it, Sa m. An d some don't, a n d never will.

Th at's what I k now; now I' m going to tell you what I thin k.

1 m ay have it wrong on some of t he specifics, bu t I'd be willing to bet my watch an d chain t h a t I've got t he general ou tline down pretty well. Becau se, with An dy being the sort of ma n that he was, there's only one or two ways t hat it could h ave been. An d every now an d then, when I thin k it out, I t hin k of Nor maden, that h alf-crazy In dian. 'Nice fella,' Nor maden had said after celling with An dy for six or eigh t mont hs. 'I was glad to go, me. All the time cold. He don't let nobody touch his things. That's okay. Nice m an, never m ake fun. Bu t big draugh t.' Poor crazy Norm aden. He knew more tha n ail the rest of u s , a n d he

k new it sooner. An d it was eigh t long mont hs before An dy co uld get him out of t here an d h ave the cell to him self again. If it hadn't been for the eigh t mon th s Nor maden h ad spent wit h him after Warden Norton fir s t ca me in, I do believe th a t An dy would have been free before Nixon resigned.

I believe now th a t it began in 1949 , way back then - not with the rock-ha mmer, bu t wit h t he Rita Hayworth poster. I told you how nervous he seemed when he asked for t hat, nervou s a n d filled wit h s u ppressed excitemen t. At the time I though t it was ju st em barrass men t, that Andy was the sort of guy who'd never wan t someone else to k now that he had feet of clay and wa n ted a woman ... even if it was only a fan tasy-woma n. B u t I thin k now that I was wrong. I thin k now that An dy's excitement came from something else altogether.

What was responsible for t he hole th a t Warden Norton even t ually foun d behin d the poster of a girl t hat hadn't even been bor n when t hat photo of Rita Hayworth was t aken ? An dy Dufresne's persevera nce an d hard work,

yeah - I don't take a ny of that away from him. B u t there were two ot her elements in the eq uation: a lot of luck, a n d WPA concrete.

You don't need me to explain the lu ck, I guess. The WPA concrete I checked ou t for myself. I invested some time a n d a co u ple of s ta mps an d wrote firs t to the University of Maine History Depart men t an d t hen to a fellow whose address t hey were able to give me. This fellow h ad been foreman of t he WPA project th a t b uilt t he Sh awsha n k Max Secu rity Wing.

The wing, which con tain s Cellblocks 3 , 4 , an d 5 , was built in the years 1934 - 37 . Now, most people don't t hin k of cemen t an d concrete as 'technological develop men t s', the way we t hin k of cars an d oil fu rn aces an d rocket-s hips, b u t they really a re. There was no modern cemen t un til 1870 or so, a n d no moder n concrete un til after the t urn of t he centu ry. Mixing concrete is as delicate a b usiness as m aking bread. You can get it too watery or not watery enough. You can get the sa n d- mix too t hick or too thin, a n d the sa me is tr ue of t he gravel- mix. An d back in 1934 ,

t he science of mixing the s t uff was a lot less sophisticated t han it is today.

The walls of Cellblock 5 were solid enough, b ut they weren't exactly dry an d toasty. As a m atter of fact, t hey were a n d a re pretty da mned dank. After a long wet spell t hey would sweat a n d sometimes even drip. Cracks had a way of appearing, some an inch deep, an d were routinely mortared over.

Now here comes An dy Dufresne into Cellblock 5 . He's a m an who grad uated from the University of Maine's school of b u siness, bu t he's also a man who took two or three geology cou rses along the way. Geology had, in fact, become his chief hobby. I imagine it appealed to his patient, meticulous nature. A ten-thousa n d-year ice age here. A million years of mou n t ain-b uilding there. Tectonic plates grin ding again s t each other deep under t he earth's ski n over the millennia. Press ure. An dy told me once th a t all of geology is the s t udy of press u re.

And time, of cou rse.

He h ad time to s tu dy those walls. Plen ty of time. When t he cell door sla ms a n d the lights go ou t, t here's not hing else to look at.

First-timers us ually h ad a hard time adjusting to the confinemen t of prison life. They get screw-fever, they h ave to be ha uled down to the infir mary an d sedated co u ple of times before t hey get on the bea m. It's not u n u su al to hear some new mem ber of ou r h appy little fa mily bang on t he bars of his cell an d screaming to be let ou t ... before the cries have gone on for long, t he chan t s ta rts u p along the cellblock: 'Fres h fish, hey little fishie, fres h fish, fresh fish, got fresh fish today!'

Andy didn't flip out like th a t when he ca me to the S h an k 1948 , b u t th a t's not to say th a t he did n't feel many of sa me t hings. He may h ave come close to madness; some a n d some go sailing right over the edge. Old life blown away in t he win k of an eye, indetermin a te nigh t mare s tretching ou t ahead, a long season in hell.

So what did he do, I ask you? He searched almost desperately for something to divert his restless min d. Oh. t here are all sorts of ways to divert you rself, even in prison; it seems like the human mind is full of an infinite n umber of possibilities when it comes to diversion. I told you abou t the sc ulptor an d his Th ree Ages of Jes u s . There were coin collectors who were always losing their collections to thieves, s ta m p collectors, one fellow who h ad postcards from t hirty-five differen t cou n tries - an d let me tell you , he would have tu rned ou t your ligh ts if he'd caugh t you diddling with his postcards.

Andy got in terested in rocks. An d t he walls of his cell.

I t hin k t hat his initial inten tion migh t have been to do no more tha n to carve his initials into the wall where the poster of Rita Hayworth would soon be h a nging. His initials, or m aybe a few lines from some poem. In s tead, what he foun d was th a t in terestingly weak concrete. Maybe he s ta rted to carve his initials a n d a big chu n k of t he wall fell ou t I can see him, lying there on his bu n k, looking at that broken chu n k of concrete, t u rning it over

in his ha n ds. Never min d the wreck of your whole life, never min d that you got railroaded in to this place by a whole trainload of bad lu ck. Let's forget all t hat an d look a t this piece of concrete.

Some mon ths fu rt her along he migh t have decided it would

be fun to see how much of t hat wall he co uld take ou t. B u t you ca n't just s tart digging in to your wall an d then, when the weekly inspection (or one of the s urprise

in spections th a t are always t ur ning u p in teresting caches of booze, dr ugs, dirty pict ures, an d weapons) comes a roun d, say to the guard: This? J u s t excavating a little hole in my cell wall. Not to worry, my good man.'

No, he co uld n't have th a t So he ca me to me an d asked if I co uld get him a Rita Hayworth poster. Not a little one bu t a big one.

And, of co u rse, he h ad t he rock- ha mmer. I remember t hin king when I got him th a t gadget back in '48 that it

would take a ma n six h u n dred years to b urrow t hrough t he wall wit h it Tr ue enough. B ut An dy wen t right t hrough the wall -even with t he soft concrete, it took him two rock-h a mmers an d twen ty- seven years to hack a hole big enough to get his slim body th rough four feet of it

Of co urse he lost most of one of those years to Nor maden, a n d he co uld only work a t night, preferably la te a t nigh t, when almost everybody is asleep - inclu ding the guards who work the nigh t shift. B ut I su spect the thing which slowed him down the most was getting rid of the wall as he took it ou t He could muffle the soun d of his work by wrapping t he head of his hammer in rock- polishing cloth s, b ut what to do with the p ulverized concrete an d t he occasional chu n ks that ca me ou t whole?

I thin k he must have broken u p the ch u n ks in to pebbles a n d...

I remem bered the Sun day after I h ad gotten him the rock-ha mmer. I remember watching him walk across the exercise yard, his face puffy from his la test go-roun d with

t he sis ters. I saw him stoop, pick u p a pebble ... an d it disappeared u p his sleeve. That in side sleeve-pocket is an old prison trick. Up you r sleeve or ju st in side the cuff of you r pan t s. An d I have another memory, very s trong b ut u nfoc used, m aybe something I saw more th a n once. This memory is of An dy D ufresne walking across the exercise yard on a hot summer day when t he air was u tterly s till. Still, yea h ... except for the little breeze that seemed to be blowing sa n d aroun d An dy Dufres ne's feet.

So maybe he had a cou ple of cheaters in his pan ts below t he knees. You loaded the cheaters u p with fill an d then

ju s t s trolled aroun d, your h a n ds in you r pockets, a n d when you feel safe an d unobserved, you gave the pockets a little twitch. The pockets, of cou rse, a re a tt ached by s tring or s trong t hread to the cheaters. The fill goes cascading ou t of you r pan tslegs as you walk. The World War II POWS who were trying to t unnel out u sed the dodge.

The years went past an d An dy brought his wall out to the exercise yard cu pful by cu pful. He played t he ga me with

ad ministrator after ad ministrator, a n d they though t it was beca u se he wa n ted to keep t he library growing. I h ave no dou bt t hat was part of it, b u t t he main thing Andy wan ted was to keep cell 14 in Cellblock 5 a single occu pa ncy.

I dou bt if he had a ny real plan s or hopes of breaking ou t, a t least not a t fir s t. He probably assumed the wall was ten feet of solid concrete, an d th a t if he su cceeded in boring all t he way t hrough it, he'd come ou t thirty feet over the exercise yard. Bu t like I say, I don't t hin k he was worried overmu ch abou t breaking th rough. His ass um ption could have run t his way: I' m only making a foot of progress every seven years or so; therefore, it would take me seventy years to break th rough; that would m ake me one h u n dred and seven years old.

Here's a secon d assum ption I would h ave m ade, had I been An dy: that eventually I would be ca ugh t a n d get a lot of solitary time, not to men tion a very la rge black m ark on my record. After all, t here was the regular weekly in spection a n d a s urprise toss - which us ually

ca me a t nigh t - every secon d week or so. He mu st have decided that t hings couldn't go on for long. Sooner or later, some screw was going to peek behin d Rita Hayworth ju st to make s ure An dy didn't have a s h arpened spoon-ha n dle or some marijuana reefers Scotch-taped to the wall.

And his respon se to th a t secon d assum ption must have been to hell wit h it. Maybe he even m ade a ga me ou t of it. How far in can I get before they fin d ou t? Prison is a godda m boring place, an d the cha nce or being su rprised by an un scheduled in spection in t he middle of the nigh t while he had his poster u n s tu ck probably added some spice to his life du ring t he early years.

And I do believe it would have been im possible for him to get away just on d um b lu ck. Not for twenty- seven years. Nevertheless, I have to believe that for the firs t two years

- u ntil mid-May of 1950 , when he helped Byron Hadley get aroun d the tax on his win dfall inheritance - th a t's exactly wh a t he did get by on.

Or m aybe he had something more than d um b lu ck going for him even back then. He had money, a n d he migh t h ave been slipping someone a little sq u eeze every week to t ake it easy on him. Most gu ards will go along with t hat if t he price is right; it's money in t heir pockets a n d the prisoner gets to keep his wh ack-off pictu res or his t ailor made cigarettes. Also, An dy was a model prisoner - q uiet, well- spoken, respectful, non-violent. It's the crazies an d the s ta m peders that get their cells tu rned u pside-down a t least once every six mon th s, their m a ttresses u nzipped, t heir pillows taken away a n d c ut open, the ou tflow pipe from their toilets carefully probed.

Then, in 1950 , An dy beca me something more t han a model prisoner. In 1950 , he beca me a valuable commodity, a murderer who did t ax retu rn s as well as H & R Block. He gave gratis estate-planning advice, set u p t ax-s helters, filled ou t loa n application s (sometimes creatively). I ca n remem ber him sitting behin d his desk in t he library, patien tly going over a car-loan agreemen t paragraph by paragraph with a screwhead who wan ted to b uy a used De Soto, telling the guy what was good abou t

t he agreemen t an d wh a t was bad abou t it, explaining to him t hat it was possible to shop for a loan an d not get hit q uite so bad, steering him away from the fin ance com panies which in those days were sometimes little better th a n legal loan- sharks. When he'd finished, the

screwhead started to p ut out his h a n d ... an d then drew it back to himself q uickly. He'd forgotten for a momen t, you see, th a t he was dealing with a mascot, not a man.

Andy kept u p on the tax laws a n d the changes in the s tock m arket, an d so his usefulness didn't en d after he'd been in cold storage for a while, as it migh t have done. He began to get his library money, his r u nning war with the sis ters h ad ended, an d nobody tossed his cell very hard. He was a good nigger.

Then one day, very la te in the going - per h aps aroun d October of 1967 - the long-time hobby su ddenly t ur ned into something else. One nigh t while he was in the hole u p to his waist wit h Raquel Welch h a nging down over his ass, the pick en d of his rock- ha mmer mu st have s u ddenly s un k in to concrete past t he hilt.

He would have dragged some chu nks of concrete back, b u t maybe he heard others falling down in to t hat shaft, bou ncing back a n d fort h, clin king off t hat s tan dpipe. Did he know by t hen that he was going to come u pon that s h aft, or was he totally su rprised? I don't know. He migh t h ave seen the prison blueprin ts by then or he might not h ave. If not, you can be da mned s ure he foun d a way to look at them not long after.

All a t once he must have realized that, in s tead of just playing a game, he was playing for high s takes ... in term s of his own life a n d his own fu t ure, the highest Even t hen he couldn't h ave known for s ure, bu t he mu s t have h ad a pretty good idea beca u se it was righ t aroun d then t hat he t alked to me abou t Zih u ata nejo for t he firs t time. All of a su dden, in stead of just being a toy, that s tu pid hole in the wall beca me his master - if he knew abou t the sewer-pipe a t the bottom, a n d that it led un der the outer wall, it did, a nyway.

He'd had the key u n der the rock in B uxton to worry

about for years. Now he h ad to worry t hat some eager- beaver new guard would look behin d his poster a n d expose the whole thing, or that he would get another cellmate, or that he would, after all those years, su ddenly be tran sferred. He h ad all those t hings on his min d for t he next seven years. All I can say is th a t he mu s t have been one of t he coolest men who ever lived. I would h ave gone com pletely n u t s after a while, living wit h all that u ncertain ty. Bu t An dy just wen t on playing the ga me.

He h ad to carry t he possibility of discovery for a not her eigh t years - the probability of it, you migh t say, beca u se no matter how carefully he s tacked the cards in his favou r, as a n inmate of a s ta te prison, he ju s t didn't have t hat m any to s tack ... a n d the gods had been kin d to him for a very long time; some eigh teen years.

The most gh astly irony I can think of would have been if he had been offered a parole. Can you imagine it? Three days before the parolee is act ually released, he is

tra n sferred in to the ligh t secu rity wing to u n dergo a com plete physical an d a battery of vocational tests. While

he's there, his old cell is com pletely cleaned ou t. In s tead of getting his parole, An dy would h ave gotten a long tu rn downstairs in solita ry, followed by some more time u pstairs ... b ut in a differen t cell.

If he broke in to the shaft in 1967 , how come he didn't escape u n til 1975 ?

I don't know for su re - b ut I can adva nce some pretty good guesses.

First, he would have become more careful th a n ever. He was too s mart to just pu sh ahead a t flan k speed an d try to get ou t in eight mon th s, or even in eighteen. He mu st h ave gone on widening the opening on the crawlspace a little at a time. A hole as big as a teac u p by t he time he took his New Year's Eve drin k that year. A hole as big as a dinner- plate by the time he took his birth day drin k in 1968 . As big as a serving-tray by t he time the 1969 baseball season opened.

For a time I though t it should h ave gone much faster t han it apparently did - after he broke th rough, I mea n. It

seemed to me t hat, in s tead of having to p ulverize the crap a n d take it ou t of his cell in the cheater gadgets I have described, he could sim ply let it drop down the sh aft. The length of time he took makes me believe t hat he did n't dare do that. He migh t have decided that t he noise would a rou se someone's su spicions. Or, if he k new abou t the sewer-pipe, as I believe he mu st have, he would have been afraid th a t a falling ch u n k of concrete would break it before he was ready, screwing up t he cellblock sewage system an d leading to an investigation. An d an investigation, needless to say, would lead to r uin.

Still an d all, I'd guess t h a t, by t he time Nixon was sworn in for his secon d term, t he hole would have been wide enough for him to wriggle th rough ... an d probably sooner t han that An dy was a s mall guy.

Why didn't he go then?

Th at's where my edu cated guesses r un ou t, folks; from t his poin t they become progressively wilder. One possibility is th a t the crawlspace it self was clogged wit h

crap an d he had to clear it out B u t th a t wouldn't accoun t for all the time. So what was it?

I thin k that maybe An dy got scared.

I've told you as well as I can how it is to be an in s titu tional man. At fir s t you ca n't s tan d those four walls, then you get so you can abide them, t hen you get so you accept t hem ... a n d t hen, as you r body an d you r mind a n d your spirit adjust to life on an HO scale, you get to love them. You a re told when to eat, when you ca n write letters, when you can s moke. If you're a t work in t he la un dry or the plate- shop, you're assigned five minu tes of each hou r when you can go to t he bat h room. For thirty-five years, my time was twen ty-five min u tes after the hou r, a n d after thirty-five years, th a t's the only time I ever felt the need to take a piss or have a crap: twenty-five min utes past the hou r. And if for some reason

I co uldn't go, the need would pass a t thirty after, a n d come back a t twenty-five past t he next hour.

I thin k An dy may have been wrestling with that tiger -

t hat in stit ution al syn drome - and also wit h the b ulking fears t hat all of it migh t h ave been for nothing.

How m any nights mu st he h ave lain awake u n der his poster, thin king abou t that sewer line, knowing th a t the one ch ance was all he'd ever get? The blueprin ts migh t h ave told him how big the pipe's bore was, bu t a blueprin t couldn't tell him wh a t it would be like in side t hat pipe - if he would be able to breathe withou t choking, if the r a t s were big enough an d mean enough to fight in s tead of retreating ... a n d a blueprin t couldn't've told him what he'd fin d at t he en d of t he pipe, when an d if he got t here. Here's a joke even fu nnier tha n the parole would have been: An dy breaks into the sewer line, crawls

t hrough five h u n dred yards of choking, shit-s melling darkness, an d comes u p against a heavy-ga uge mesh screen a t t he end of it all. Ha, ha, very funny.

Th at would have been on his min d. An d if the long shot act ually ca me in an d he was able to get ou t, would he be able to get some civilian clothes a nd get away from the vicinity of the prison un detected? Last of all, s uppose he

got out of the pipe, got away from Shaws h an k before the alarm was raised, got to Buxton, overtu rned the righ t rock ... an d foun d nothing beneath ? Not necessarily somet hing so dra matic as arriving at the righ t field an d discovering that a high-rise apartment building had been

erected on the spot, or t hat it had t ur ned in to a s u per market parking lot. It could have been that some little kid who liked rocks noticed t hat piece of volca nic glass, tu rned it over, saw the deposit-box key, an d took bot h it a n d t he rock back to his room as souvenirs. Maybe a Novem ber hu n ter kicked t he rock, left the key exposed, an d a sq uirrel or a crow with a liking for brigh t s hiny things had taken it away. Maybe there had been spring floods one year, breaching t he wall, was hing the key away. Maybe anything.

So I thin k - wild guess or not - t hat An dy just froze in place for a while. After all, you can't lose if you don't bet. What did he h ave to lose, you ask? His library, for one t hing. The poison peace of institu tional life, for a not her. Any fu tu re chance to grab his safe iden tity.

B u t he finally did it, ju s t as I have told you . He tried ... a n d, my! Didn't he s ucceed in spectac ular fas hion ? You tell me!

B u t did he get away, you ask? What happened after? What happened when he got to t h at meadow an d t urned over the rock ... always ass u mi ng t he rock was s till there?

I can't describe that scene for you , beca u se this in s titu tional ma n is s till in this in s titu tion, an d expects to be for years to come.

B u t I'll tell you t his. Very la te in the s ummer of 1975 , on

15 Septem ber to be exact, I got a postcard which had been mailed from t he tiny town of McNary, Texas. Th a t town is on the American side of t he border, directly across from El Porvenir. The message side of the card was totally blan k. Bu t I k now. I know it in my heart as su rely as I know t hat we're all going to die someday.

McNary was where he crossed. McNary, Texas.

So t hat's my story, Jack. I never believed how long it would take to write it all down, or how many pages it would take. I s ta rted writing just after I got th a t postcard, a n d here I a m finishing up on 14 J a n uary 1976 . I've u sed t hree pencils righ t down to knu ckle-st ubs, a n d a whole t ablet of paper. I've kept t he pages carefully hidden ... not

t hat many co uld read my. hen-tracks, anyway.

It s tirred u p more memories th a n I ever would have believed. Writing about you rself seems to be a lot like s ticking a branch in to clear river-water an d roiling u p the mu ddy bottom.

Well, you weren't writing abou t you rself, I hear someone in the pea nu t-gallery saying. You were writing abou t Andy D ufres ne. You're not hing bu t a minor ch aracter in you r own s tory. B ut you know, th a t's ju st not so. It's all about me, every da mned word of it An dy was t he part of me they co uld never lock u p, the part of me t hat will rejoice when t he gates fin ally open for me an d I walk ou t in my cheap suit with my twenty dollars of mad-money in my pocket That part of me will rejoice no m atter how old

a n d broken an d scared the rest of me is. I guess it's ju st t hat An dy had more of that part th a n me, a n d u sed it better.

There are others here like me, ot hers who remember Andy. We're glad he's gone, bu t a little sad, too. Some birds are not mea nt to be caged, t hat's all. Their feathers

a re too brigh t, t heir songs too sweet an d wild. So you let t hem go, or when you open the cage to feed t hem they somehow fly ou t past you . An d t he part of you that knows

it was wrong to imprison t hem in t he firs t place rejoices, b u t s till, t he place where you live is that much more drab a n d em pty for their depart ure.

Th at's t he s tory a n d I'm glad I told it, even if it is a bit inconclu sive an d even though some of t he memories the pencil prodded u p (like that bra nch poking up the

river-mu d) made me feel a little sad an d even older t han I a m. Than k you for listening. An d An dy: If you're really down there, as I believe you are, look a t the s tars for me ju s t after su n set, an d tou ch the sa n d, an d wade in the water, an d feel free.

I never expected to take u p t his narrative again, b u t here I a m with t he dog-eared, folded pages open on t he desk in front of me. Here I a m adding anot her three or four pages, writing in a bran d-new tablet. A tablet I bough t in a s tore

- I just walked in to a store on Portla n d's Congress Street a n d bough t it.

I thought I h ad p ut finis h to my s tory in a S h awsh a nk prison cell on a bleak Jan u ary day in 1976 . Now it's late J une of 1977 an d I a m sitting in a s mall, cheap room of t he Brewster Hotel in Portla n d, adding to it

The win dow is open, an d the soun d of the tr affic floating in seem s huge, exciting, an d in timidating. I have to look constan tly over a t the win dow an d reassure myself t hat t here are no bars on it I sleep poorly a t nigh t beca u se the bed in this room, as cheap as the room is, seem s much

too big a n d luxu rious. I s n ap awake every morning prom ptly at six-thirty, feeling disorien ta ted an d frigh tened. My dreams are bad. I h ave a crazy feeling of free fall. The sensation is as terrifying as it is exhilarating.

What has h appened in my life? Ca n't you guess? I was paroled. After thirty-eigh t years of rou tine hearings an d rou tine details (in t he cou rse of those thirty-eigh t years, t hree lawyers died on me), my parole was gran ted. I s u ppose they decided th a t, a t the age of fifty-eigh t, I was finally used u p enough to be deemed safe.

I ca me very close to bu rning the document you have just read. They search ou tgoing parolees just as carefully as t hey search incoming 'new fish'. And beyon d containing enough dyn a mite to assu re me of a q uick tu rnaroun d a n d another six or eigh t years inside, my ' memoirs' contained somet hing else: the name of the town where I believe An dy D ufres ne to be. Mexica n police gladly cooperate wit h the America n police, an d I didn't wan t my freedom - or my unwillingness to give up t he s tory I'd worked so long an d hard to write - to cost An dy his.

Then I remem bered how An dy h ad brough t in his five h u n dred dollars back in 1948 , and I took out my s tory of him t he sa me way. J ust to be on t he safe side, I carefully

rewrote each page which mentioned Zih uata nejo. If the papers h ad been foun d du ring my 'outside search', as t hey call it at the S h an k, I would have gone back in on t u r naroun d ... bu t the cops would have been looking for Andy in a Peruvian seacoast town n a med Las In tru dres.

The Parole Committee got me a job as a 's tock- room assista n t' at t he big FoodWay Market a t the Spr uce Mall in Sou th Portlan d - which mea ns I beca me ju s t one more

ageing bag- boy. There's only two kin ds of bag- boys, you k now; the old ones a n d t he young ones. No one ever looks a t eit her kin d. If you s hop a t the Spr uce Mall FoodWay, I m ay have even taken your groceries out to you r car ... bu t you'd have had to have s hopped t here between March a n d April of 1977 , beca u se that's as long as I worked t here.

At fir st I did n't thin k I was going to be able to make it on t he ou t side a t all. I've described prison society as a scaled- down model of you r ou t side world, b u t I had no idea of how fast things moved on the ou t side; the raw speed people move a t. They even t alk faster. An d louder.

It was t he toughest adju s tment I've ever h ad to make, a n d I h aven't finished m aking it yet ... not by a long way. Women, for in s tance. After hardly knowing t hat they were h alf of the h uman r ace for forty years, I was s u ddenly working in a s tore filled with them. Old women, pregn an t women wearing T- s hirts with arrows poin ting downward an d the prin ted motto reading BABY HERE,

skinny women with their nipples poking ou t of t heir s hirts - a woma n wearing somet hing like t hat when I went in would have gotten arrested a n d t hen had a sa nity hearing - women of every shape a n d size. I foun d myself going a rou n d wit h a semi-hard almost all the time an d c ursing myself for being a dirty old ma n.

Going to the bat hroom, t hat was another thing. When I h ad to go (a n d the urge always came on me a t twen ty-five past the hou r), I h ad to figh t the almost overwhelming need to check it with my boss. Knowing th a t was somet hing I co uld ju s t go an d do in this too-bright ou t side world was one thing; adju s ting my inner self to t hat knowledge after all t hose years of checking it with

t he nearest screwhead or facing two days in solitary for t he oversigh t... that was something else.

My boss didn't like me. He was a you ng guy, twen ty- six or

- seven, a n d I could see t hat I sort of disgu sted him, the way a cringing, servile old dog that crawls u p to you on it s belly to be petted will disgu st a m an. Christ, I disgusted myself. B ut ... I couldn't make myself stop. I wan ted to tell him, Th a t's what a whole life in prison does for you , you ng man. It tu rn s everyone in a position of au thority into a m aster, an d you in to every m aster's dog. Maybe you know you've become a dog, even in prison, bu t since everyone else in grey is a dog, too, it doesn't seem to m a tter so mu ch. Ou tside, it does. B u t I co uld n't tell a you ng guy like him. He would never un derstan d. Neither would my P.O., a big, bluff ex-Navy ma n with a huge red beard a n d a la rge s tock of Polish jokes. He saw me for about five min u tes every week. 'Are you s taying ou t of the bars, Red?' he'd ask when he'd r un ou t of Polis h jokes. I'd say yea h, an d that would be t he en d of it un til next week. Music on t he radio. When I wen t in, t he big ban ds were ju s t getting u p a good head of s team. Now every song

soun ds like it's abou t fucking. So m any cars. At fir s t I felt like I was taking my life in to my h a n ds every time I crossed the s treet.

There was more - everyt hing was s trange an d frightening

- b u t maybe you get the idea, or can at least grasp a corner of it I began to thin k about doing something to get back in . When you're on parole, almost a nything will serve. I' m as ha med to say it, b ut I began to thin k abou t s tealing some money or shoplifting s t uff from the FoodWay, a nything, to get back in where it was quiet an d you knew everything t hat was going to come u p in the co urse of the day.

If I had never k nown An dy, I probably would have done t hat B ut I kept t hinking of him, spending all those years chipping patiently away a t the cement with his rock-ha mmer so he could be free. I t hought of t hat an d it m ade me ash a med an d I'd drop t he idea again. Oh, you ca n say he h ad more reason to be free th a n I did - he had

a new iden tity a n d a lot of money. Bu t t hat's not really tr u e, you know. Beca u se he didn't k now for su re t hat the

new identity was s till there, an d withou t the new identity, t he money would always be ou t of reach. No, what he needed was ju s t to be free, an d if I kicked away what I h ad, it would be like spitting in the face of everything he h ad worked so hard to win back.

So what I s ta rted to do on my time off was to hitchhike a ride down to t he little town of Buxton. This was in the early April of 1977 , t he snow just s ta rting to melt off the fields, the air just beginning to be war m, the baseball team s coming north to start a new season playing the only ga me I' m s ure God approves of. When I went on t hese trips, I carried a Silva compass in my pocket.

There's a big hayfield in B uxton, An dy had said, an d at t he north end of that hayfield there's a rock wall, right ou t of a Robert Frost poem. And somewhere along the base of that wall is a rock th a t has no earthly bu siness in a Maine h ayfield.

A fool's erra n d, you say. How many hayfields are there in a s mall ru ral town like Buxton ? Fifty? A h u n dred?

Speaking from person al experience, I'd p ut it a t even higher tha n t hat, if you add in the fields now cultivated which might h ave been h aygrass when An dy went in . And if I did fin d the righ t one, I migh t never k now it Becau se I migh t overlook that black piece of volca nic glass, or, much more likely, An dy p u t it in to his pocket an d took it with him.

So I'd agree with you . A fool's erra n d, no dou bt abou t it. Worse, a dangerou s one for a m an on parole, beca u se some of t hose fields were clearly m arked with NO TRESPASSING sign s. An d, as I've said, t hey're more t han h appy to sla m you r ass back in side if you get ou t of line. A fool's erra n d ... b u t so is chippi ng a t a blan k concrete wall for twenty-eigh t years. And when you're no longer t he man who can get it for you an d just an old bag- boy, it's nice to have a hobby to take you r min d off your new life. My hobby was looking for An dy's rock.

So I'd hitchhike to B uxton an d walk the roads. I'd listen to t he birds, to the spring r unoff in the culverts, exa mine t he bottles the retreating snows had revealed - all u seless

non-ret urn ables, I a m sorry to say; the world seems to h ave gotten awfully spendthrift since I went in to the sla m

- an d looking for hayfields.

Most of them could be eliminated righ t off. No rock walls. Ot hers had rock walls, b u t my com pass told me they were facing the wrong direction. I walked these wrong ones a nyway. It was a comfortable thing to be doing, a n d

on those ou tings I really felt free, a t peace. An old dog walked with me one Saturday. An d one day I saw a winter- ski nny deer.

Then ca me 23 April, a day I'll not forget even if I live a nother fifty-eigh t years. It was a balmy Saturday

after noon, an d I was walking u p what a little boy fishing from a bridge told me was called The Old S mit h Road. I h ad taken a lunch in a brown FoodWay bag, an d h ad eaten it sitting on a rock by the road. When I was done I carefully b uried my leavings, as my dad had ta ught me before he died, when I was a sprat no older than the fisherma n who had na med the road for me.

Arou nd two o'clock I ca me to a big field on my left. There

was a s tone wall at the far end of it, r unning roughly nort hwest I walked back to it, sq u elching over the wet groun d, an d bega n to walk the wall. A squirrel scolded me from an oak tree.

Th ree-quarters of the way to t he end, I saw the rock. No mistake. Black glass an d as smoot h as silk. A rock with no earthly bu siness in a Maine hayfield. For a long time I ju s t looked at it, feeling th a t I migh t cry, for whatever reason. The sq uirrel had followed me, an d it was s till ch a ttering away. My heart was beating madly.

When I felt I had myself un der con trol, I went to the rock, sq uatted beside it - the join t s in my knees wen t off like a dou ble- barrelled shotgun - an d let my h a n d tou ch it It was real. I did n't pick it u p beca u se I t hough t there would be anyt hing un der it; I co uld ju st as easily h ave walked away wit hou t fin ding wh a t was beneath. I certainly had no plan s to take it away wit h me, beca u se I did n't fed it was mine to take - I had a feeling t hat taking that rock from t he field would have been the worst kind of t heft. No, I only picked it u p to feel it better, to get the heft of the

t hing, an d, I s u ppose, to prove it s reality by feeling its satiny text ure against my skin.

I had to look a t what was u n derneat h for a long time. My eyes saw it, b ut it took a while for my min d to catch u p. It was an envelope, carefully wrapped in a plastic bag to keep away the da m p. My na me was written across the front in An dy's clear script.

I took the envelope an d left t he rock where An dy had left it, an d An dy's friend before him.

Dear Red,

If you're reading t his, then you're ou t. One way or a nother, you're ou t. An d If you've followed along t his fa r, you migh t be willing to come a little further. 1 t hin k you remem ber the na me of the town, don't you ? I could use a good ma n to help me get my project on wheels.

Mea n time, have a drin k on me - an d do thin k it over. I will be keeping an eye ou t for you . Remember th a t hope is

a good thing, Red, maybe the best of t hings, an d no good t hing ever dies. I will be hoping th a t this letter fin ds you , a n d fin ds you well.

You r friend, Peter Steven s

I didn't read that letter in the field. A kin d of terror had come over me, a need to get away from t here before I was seen. To make what m ay be an appropriate p un, I was in terror of being apprehended.

I wen t back to my room an d read it t here, with t he s mell of old men's dinners drifting up t he s tairwell to me - Beefaroni, Ricearoni, Noodleroni. You can bet t hat whatever the old folks of America, t he ones on fixed incomes, a re eating tonight, it almost certainly ends in roni.

I opened t he envelope an d read the letter a n d then I pu t my head in my a rms a n d cried. Wit h t he letter t here were twenty new fifty- dollar bills.

And here I a m in t he Brewster Hotel, technically a fugitive from ju stice again - parole violation is my crime. No one's going to th row up any roadblocks to catch a criminal wan ted on that charge, I guess - won dering what I should do now.

I have this ma n u script I have a s m all piece of luggage about t he size of a doctor's bag t hat holds everyt hing I own. I have nineteen fifties, fou r tens, a five, th ree ones, a n d assorted ch a nge. I broke one of t he fifties to b uy this t ablet of paper an d a deck of s mokes.

Won dering what I s hould do.

B u t there's really no q u estion. It always comes down to ju s t two choices. Get bu sy living or get b usy dying.

First I'm going to pu t this m anuscript back in my bag. Then I'm going to b uckle it u p, grab my coat, go downstairs, a n d check ou t of this fleabag. Then I' m going

to walk u ptown to a bar an d pu t th a t five dollar bill down in fron t of the bartender an d ask him to bring me two

s traight shots of Jack Daniels - one for me an d one for Andy D ufresne. Ot her t han a beer or two, t hey'll be the fir st drin ks I've taken as a free m an since 1938 . Then I a m going to tip the barten der a dollar an d than k him kindly. I will leave the bar an d walk u p Spring Street to t he Greyhoun d termin al there and b uy a b us ticket to El Paso by way of New York City. When I get to El Paso, I'm going to b uy a ticket to McNary. An d when I get to McNary, I guess I'll h ave a chance to fin d out if an old crook like me can fin d a way to float across the border a n d in to Mexico.

S u re I remem ber t he n a me. Zih u a tanejo. A na me like t hat is ju s t too pretty to forget

I fin d I a m excited, so excited I can hardly hold t he pencil in my trem bling han d. I thin k it is t he excitemen t t hat only a free ma n can feel, a free ma n s ta rting a long jou rney whose conclusion is uncertain.

I hope An dy is down there.

I hope I ca n make it across the border.

I hope to see my frien d a n d shake his ha n d.

I hope the Pacific is as blue as it h as been in my dreams.

I hope.