

## Flawless Escape

Hank had not spent the last ten years digging under the prison and the last ten minutes crawling through a drainage pipe to have the manhole cover not open. But that's what Donald told him was happening. Hank nudged Donald out of the way and pushed up. It didn't budge.

"What's going on, Hank?" Donald asked. He sounded afraid.

"It's probably just rusty. C'mere and push together."

He scootched over to make room and the two of them both heaved. The metal scraped and Hank felt it move a tiny bit but the cover slid back down forcing them to let go. Both men winced at the small thud it created.

Currently both men were laying prone in a small sewer line barely wide enough for the two of them to lay shoulder-to-shoulder. If Hank's calculations were correct, and they were, they were about half a block from the rear left corner of the penitentiary. Four blocks further it met the main sewage line but metal bars obstructed their path. This was the only manhole they could access but even with their unfavorable angle the cover should have moved no problem. A couple body lengths ahead there was a small opening. Hank wiggled his way to it. Definitely too small to fit through, but he could kind of sit up and peer out.

A dog was sitting on the manhole cover. At first Hank didn't believe it and lowered his head but snapped back up when it registered. That was definitely a dog, laying on his manhole cover engorging on a piece of steak. Behind it he could see the corner of the penitentiary.

"What the fu-?" Hank asked aloud.

Donald wormed his way to Hank and crowded the opening to see.

"What is it?" He asked.

"A fucking dog."

"A dog? Oh yeah, a dog. German Shepard, by the looks of it. Or a doberman."

"I don't care what kind of dog it is."

"Maybe a Rottweiler. It's kind of hard to see in the dark."

"I just said I don't care. We need to get rid of it?"

"What do we do?"

Hank stuck his arm out of the opening up to elbow and tried snapping. The dog did not even notice so he tried hissing at it and waving. Nothing.

"Hey boy," Donald said, trying to whisper. "Come on boy, come here." He tried a series of stunted whistles but the dog did not pay him the slightest heed.

"What can we do, Hank?"

"Hand me a shoe."

"A shoe?"

"Yeah, a shoe."

"Aww, but it's wet in here."

"Just give me a damn shoe."

Donald his left shoe off and handed it to Hank. It was hard to get a good angle but Hank flung it towards the dog. It went over top by a good few feet.

"Gimme your other one."

Donald acquiesced. Hank flicked his arm sideways and tossed it like a skipping stone. It was the correct height but fell short and clattered on the ground about halfway to the dog. Hank signed and took his shoes off. The first shoe was close enough that the dog looked up but it resumes feasting after only a brief moment. Hank threw his remaining shoe and it smacked square on the dog's body. The dog stopped and looked up, letting out a muted 'boof' noise. It looked around but couldn't figure out what happened so it resumed eating, with Hank's shoe still leaning against it.

"Now what?" Donald asked.

"We'll just push hard. The dog will move eventually."

The men wriggled back to the manhole and heaved again. Hank hoisted himself up and pushed up with his back. They made some definite progress but the dog shifted its weight and the cover thudded back down. Hank could hear the dog growling.

"We've almost got it, get up here like me," he said.

Donald rose and both men heaved with their backs. They lifted enough that Hank could see the end of the dog's tail dropping down. The dog stood up on the over and began barking downwards. The shift in weight caused both men to falter and slam the cover shut again. Hank crawled back over to the opening and looked out. The dog was standing directly on the cover. Its face was pointed straight down so its nose was almost touching the metal and it was still barking. Hank stuck his hand out again and waved around but the dog was too preoccupied to notice. He reached down for a shoe but remembered he'd thrown all of them.

"Okay, just push really hard," he said after he crawled back to Donald. "On three, as hard as you can, got it?"

"Gotcha."

"One...two...three,"

Both men jabbed their entire bodies upwards and strained as hard as they could. They pushed so hard the cover practically flew off as they met far less resistance than expected. Hank's knee banged the top of the pipe. He felt for the manhole rim and leaned his back against it, eyes still closed from the strain. A bright light burned through his eyelids. He opened them and saw the business end of a flashlight pointed straight at him. The sudden flood of light caused his eyes to jam shut again. Donald rose up next to him, holding the back of his head.

"Clever boys, but not quite clever enough," the security guard holding the flash light said. The guard turned to the dog and patted its head.

"Good boy," he said. The dog just picked up its steak and laid back down to resume chewing.