

PRISON BREAK

A Ten-Minute Comedy Duet

by
David Burton



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CAST: HANK and SHORTY

HANK: Is everything set on your end?

SHORTY: Sure, Hank. The whole thing is ready.

HANK: I have one more thing to tell you before we go.

SHORTY: What? What do you have to tell me?

HANK: Be quiet and listen.

SHORTY: Sorry, Boss. I just...

HANK: Everything has to go off without a hitch. Today is the day, and if we're not able to execute precisely on cue, we could all...

SHORTY: Die, Boss?

HANK: Yeah, Shorty. We could all die. We're working with a narrow margin of error. Even if we're perfect, there's no guarantee of success. On the other hand, one mistake...one person who fails to do his job...one small miscue, and today could be our last on the earth. I can't stress this enough. Once we begin, there's no turning back. And if anyone messes us up, they'll wish they had been shot by the guard! Understand!?

SHORTY: S-S-Sure.

HANK: No matter what happens, we keep going. No one stops for anyone else. If someone falls, we leave him behind. Even the slightest pause could be deadly. **(pauses and stares closely at SHORTY)** Hey, you don't look too good. What's wrong?

SHORTY: I've been needing to talk to you.

HANK: So, talk.

SHORTY: This isn't easy, Boss. I can't remember when I had my last good night's sleep. I thought about it all night, and I've made up my mind.

HANK: Exactly what are you trying to say?

SHORTY: I don't want to mess things up. You know I don't want to do that.

HANK: Just say it! What are you telling me!?

SHORTY: I'm not as tough as the rest of you. I...I don't know what'll happen. I...

HANK: Spit it out! What are you trying to say?

SHORTY: I want out. I don't want any part of this escape.

HANK: Did I hear you right? You want out?

SHORTY: I...I just don't think this is the right time for me. I'm sorry, Boss.

HANK: **(grabs his collar)** What do you mean? WHAT DO YOU MEAN!?!

SHORTY: Please! I want to go through with it, but I just can't. I'm sorry.

HANK: You don't know what sorry is until you double-cross me!

SHORTY: Honest, I wouldn't abandon you now, but I'm scared.

HANK: **(lets go of collar)** Are you out of your mind, Shorty? Are you out of your ever-loving mind?! We've been locked up in this prison for over a decade. In fact, if I remember correctly, you were here a year before I joined this country club. You and I have been here a lifetime. All these crummy, stinking years wasted. People are living real lives on the outside. We live the kind of life the prison warden chooses for us.

SHORTY: At least we're alive in here. As long as you're alive, there's always hope. But this escape...well, what if...I mean, if one thing goes wrong...

HANK: It already has. One of our key men is quitting on us!

SHORTY: It's not like that, Boss. I didn't quit my post in the middle of the escape. I didn't do anything like that. I'm telling you now so you can get someone else.

HANK: The escape is today, you miserable coward! We've made all the plans, down to the smallest detail, and the odds are still stacked against us. And you're telling me we now have to take an additional chance by putting a new person at your post. Thanks a lot, Shorty. I hope it won't bother your conscious when they bring our lifeless bodies back into the yard! I hope it won't bug you when we all die because you're a pathetic, pea-brained coward! I hope that won't put a damper in your day!!!

SHORTY: **(pauses, then speaks as if partially in tears)** I'm not a coward! This just...just isn't the right time for me.

HANK: Oh, and what would be a more appropriate time?

SHORTY: Maybe if we could wait one week. Yeah, that's it. I know I'd be ready in a week.

HANK: Busy this week, are you, Shorty? Do you have too many big plans around the prison yard? Are you too tied up with important prison matters to worry about escaping? What, do you have a big date or something? Maybe you're going to see a Yankees game this afternoon?

SHORTY: Come on. I just need time to clear my head. I'll be ready next week.

HANK: You've had your whole life to clear your head. The escape is planned for today, and we go today...with or without you.

SHORTY: You know I'd like to be with you...b-but I just can't.

HANK: Is this all you want for the next thirty years? We're locked up most of the time, we have rotten food, no privacy, and guards telling us what to do night and day. We're lifers, Shorty! Get that through your head. You'll never walk out of that door a free man. You're a dreamer. Only dreams don't come true in a place like this. It's escape now or continue to live as a nobody...a walking prison number.

SHORTY: I'm a realist. I know it's better out there than it is in here, but I'm scared. You said yourself that the odds were stacked against us. I call what you're planning a pipe dream. Even if you do escape, what chance will you have then? Everyone will be looking for you. They won't stop after a week. You'll always look over your shoulder. Any siren could be your escort back to prison. Any stranger you see could be a person sent to see if your true identity is really the same as Hank's, that vicious criminal that escaped a few years back. A total and complete escape from this place...now that's a dream!

HANK: It may seem impossible to you, but the rest of us have pinned our futures...no, our very lives, on this one day and the events that are about to unfold.

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