
SHAWSHANK
REDEMPTION
STEPHEN KING
A novella in DIFFERENT SEASONS

Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption

Stephen King

A Stephen King novel telling of unfair imprisonment and escape.

Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption

There’s a guy like me in every state and federal prison in America, I guess — I’m the guy who can get it for you. Tailor-made cigarettes, a bag of reefer, if you’re partial to that, a bottle of brandy to celebrate your son or daughter’s high school graduation, or almost anything else … within reason, that is. It wasn’t always that way.

I came to Shawshank when I was just twenty, and I am one of the few people in our happy little family who is willing to own up to what he did. I committed murder. I put a large insurance policy on my wife, who was three years older than I was, and then I fixed the brakes of the Chevrolet coupe her father had given us as a wedding present. It worked out exactly as I had planned, except I hadn’t planned on her stopping to pick up the neighbour woman and the neighbour woman’s infant son on the way down Castle Hill and into town. The brakes let go and the car crashed through the bushes at the edge of the town common, gathering speed. Bystanders said it must have been doing fifty or better when it hit the base of the Civil War statue and burst into flames.

I also hadn’t planned on getting caught, but caught I was. I got a season’s pass into this place. Maine has no death penalty, but the district attorney saw to it that I was tried for all three deaths and given three life sentences, to run one after the other. That fixed up any chance of parole I might have, for a long, long time. The judge called what I had done ‘a hideous, heinous crime’, and it was, but it is also in the past now. You can look it up in the yellowing files of the Castle Rock Call, where the big headlines announcing my conviction look sort of funny and antique next to the news of Hitler and Mussolini and FDR’s alphabet soup agencies.

Have I rehabilitated myself, you ask? I don’t know what that word means, at least as far as prisons and corrections go. I think it’s a politician’s word. It may have some other meaning, and it may be that I will have a chance to find out, but that is the future … something cons teach themselves not to think about. I was young, good-looking, and from the poor side of town. I knocked up a pretty, sulky, headstrong girl who lived in one of the fine old houses on Carbine Street. Her father was agreeable to the marriage if I would take a job in the optical company he owned and ‘work my way up’. I found out that what he really had in mind was keeping me in his house and under his thumb, like a disagreeable pet that has not quite been housebroken and which may bite. Enough hate eventually piled up to

cause me to do what I did. Given a second chance I would not do it again, but I'm not sure that means I am rehabilitated.

Anyway, it's not me I want to tell you about; I want to tell you about a guy named Andy Dufresne. But before I can tell you about Andy, I have to explain a few other things about myself. It won't take long.

As I said, I've been the guy who can get it for you here at Shawshank for damn near forty years. And that doesn't just mean contraband items like extra cigarettes or booze, although those items always top the list. But I've gotten thousands of other items for men doing time here, some of them perfectly legal yet hard to come by in a place where you've supposedly been brought to be punished. There was one fellow who was in for raping a little girl and exposing himself to dozens of others; I got him three pieces of pink Vermont marble and he did three lovely sculptures out of them — a baby, a boy of about twelve, and a bearded young man. He called them The Three Ages of Jesus, and those pieces of sculpture are now in the parlour of a man who used to be governor of this state.

Or here's a name you may remember if you grew up north of Massachusetts — Robert Alan Cote. In 1951 he tried to rob the First Mercantile Bank of Mechanic Falls, and the hold-up turned into a bloodbath — six dead in the end, two of them members of the gang, three of them hostages, one of them a young state cop who put his head up at the wrong time and got a bullet in the eye. Cote had a penny collection. Naturally they weren't going to let him have it in here, but with a little help from his mother and a middleman who used to drive a laundry truck, I was able to get it to him. I told him, Bobby, you must be crazy, wanting to have a coin collection in a stone hotel full of thieves. He looked at me and smiled and said, I know where to keep them. They'll be safe enough. Don't you worry. And he was right. Bobby Cote died of a brain tumour in 1967, but that coin collection has never turned up.

I've gotten men chocolates on Valentine's Day; I got three of those green milkshakes they serve at McDonald's around St Paddy's Day for a crazy Irishman named O'Malley; I even arranged for a midnight showing of Deep Throat and The Devil in Miss Jones for a party of twenty men who had pooled their resources to rent the films … although I ended up doing a week in solitary for that little escapade. It's the risk you run when you're the guy who can get it.

I've gotten reference books and fuck-books, joke novelties like handbuzzers and itching powder, and on more than one occasion I've seen that a long-timer has gotten a pair of panties from his wife or his girlfriend … and I guess you'll know what guys in here do with such items during the long nights when time draws out like a blade. I don't get all those things gratis, and for some items the price comes high. But I don't do it just for the money; what good is money to me? I'm never going to own a Cadillac car or fly off to Jamaica for two weeks in February. I do it for the same reason that a good butcher will only sell you fresh meat: I got a reputation and I want to keep it. The only two things I refuse to handle are guns and heavy drugs. I won't help anyone kill himself or anyone else. I have enough killing on my mind to last me a lifetime.

Yeah, I'm a regular Neiman-Marcus. And so when Andy Dufresne came to me in 1949 and asked if I could smuggle Rita Hayworth into the prison for him, I said it would be no problem at all. And it wasn't.

When Andy came to Shawshank in 1948, he was thirty years old. He was a short neat little man with sandy hair and small, clever hands. He wore gold-rimmed spectacles. His fingernails were always clipped, and they were always clean. That's a funny thing to remember about a man, I suppose, but it seems to sum Andy up for me. He always looked as if he should have been wearing a tie. On the outside he had been a vice-president in the trust department of a large Portland bank. Good work for a man as young as he was, especially when you consider how conservative most banks are … and you have to multiply that conservatism by ten when you get up into New England, where folks don't like to trust a man with their money unless he's bald, limping, and constantly plucking at his pants to get his truss around straight. Andy was in for murdering his wife and her lover.

As I believe I have said, everyone in prison is an innocent man. Oh, they read that scripture the way those holy rollers on TV read the Book of Revelations. They were the victims of judges with hearts of stone and balls to match, or incompetent lawyers, or police frame-ups, or bad luck. They read the scripture, but you can see a different scripture in their faces. Most cons are a low sort, no good to themselves or anyone else, and their worst luck was that their mothers carried them to term.

In all my years at Shawshank, there have been less than ten men whom I believed when they told me they were innocent. Andy Dufresne was one of them, although I only became convinced of his innocence over a period of

years. If I had been on the jury that heard his case in Portland Superior Court over six stormy weeks in 1947—48, I would have voted to convict, too.

It was one hell of a case, all right; one of those juicy ones with all the right elements. There was a beautiful girl with society connections (dead), a local sports figure (also dead), and a prominent young businessman in the dock. There was this, plus all the scandal the newspapers could hint at. The prosecution had an open-and-shut case. The trial only lasted as long as it did because the DA was planning to run for the US House of Representatives and he wanted John Q Public to get a good long look at his phiz. It was a crackerjack legal circus, with spectators getting in line at four in the morning, despite the subzero temperatures, to assure themselves of a seat.

The facts of the prosecution's case that Andy never contested were these: That he had a wife, Linda Collins Dufresne; that in June of 1947 she had expressed an interest in learning the game of golf at the Falmouth Hills Country Club; that she did indeed take lessons for four months; that her instructor was the Falmouth Hills golf pro, Glenn Quentin; that in late August of 1947 Andy learned that Quentin and his wife had become lovers; that Andy and Linda Dufresne argued bitterly on the afternoon of 10 September 1947; that the subject of their argument was her infidelity.

He testified that Linda professed to be glad he knew; the sneaking around, she said, was distressing. She told Andy that she planned to obtain a Reno divorce. Andy told her he would see her in hell before he would see her in Reno. She went off to spend the night with Quentin in Quentin's rented bungalow not far from the golf course. The next morning his cleaning woman found both of them dead in bed. Each had been shot four times.

It was that last fact that mitigated more against Andy than any of the others. The DA with the political aspirations made a great deal of it in his opening statement and his closing summation. Andrew Dufresne, he said, was not a wronged husband seeking a hot-blooded revenge against his cheating wife; that, the DA said, could be understood, if not condoned. But this revenge had been of a much colder type. Consider! the DA thundered at the jury. Four and four! Not six shots, but eight! He had fired the gun empty … and then stopped to reload so he could shoot each of them again! FOUR

FOR HIM AND FOUR FOR HER, the Portland Sun blared. The Boston Register dubbed him The Even-Steven Killer.

A clerk from the Wise Pawnshop in Lewiston testified that he had sold a six-shot .38 Police Special to Andrew Dufresne just two days before the double murder. A bartender from the country club bar testified that Andy had come in around seven o'clock on the evening of 10 September, had tossed off three straight whiskeys in a twenty-minute period — when he got up from the bar-stool he told the bartender that he was going up to Glenn Quentin's house and he, the bartender, could 'read about the rest of it in the papers'. Another clerk, this one from the Handy-Pik store a mile or so from Quentin's house, told the court that Dufresne had come in around quarter to nine on the same night. He purchased cigarettes, three quarts of beer, and some dish-towels. The county medical examiner testified that Quentin and the Dufresne woman had been killed between eleven p.m. and two a.m. on the night of 10—11 September. The detective from the Attorney General's office who had been in charge of the case testified that there was a turnout less than seventy yards from the bungalow, and that on the afternoon of 11 September, three pieces of evidence had been removed from that turnout: first item, two empty quart bottles of Narragansett Beer (with the defendant's fingerprints on them); the second item, twelve cigarette ends (all Kools, the defendant's brand); third item, a plaster moulage of a set of tyre tracks (exactly matching the tread-and-wear pattern of the tyres on the defendant's 1947 Plymouth).

In the living room of Quentin's bungalow, four dishtowels had been found lying on the sofa. There were bullet-holes through them and powder-burns on them. The detective theorized (over the agonized objections of Andy's lawyer) that the murderer had wrapped the towels around the muzzle of the murder-weapon to muffle the sound of the gunshots.

Andy Dufresne took the stand in his own defence and told his story calmly, coolly, and dispassionately. He said he had begun to hear distressing rumours about his wife and Glenn Quentin as early as the last week in July. In August he had become distressed enough to investigate a bit. On an evening when Linda was supposed to have gone shopping in Portland after her tennis lesson, Andy had followed her and Quentin to Quentin's one-storey rented house (inevitably dubbed 'the love-nest' by the papers). He had parked in the turnout until Quentin drove her back to the country club where her car was parked, about three hours later.

‘Do you mean to tell this court that your wife did not recognize your brand-new Plymouth sedan behind Quentin’s car?’ the DA asked him on cross-examination.

‘I swapped cars for the evening with a friend,’ Andy said, and this cool admission of how well-planned his investigation had been did him no good at all in the eyes of the jury.

After returning the friend’s car and picking up his own, he had gone home. Linda had been in bed, reading a book. He asked her how her trip to Portland had been. She replied that it had been fun, but she hadn’t seen anything she liked well enough to buy. That’s when I knew for sure,’ Andy told the breathless spectators. He spoke in the same calm, remote voice in which he delivered almost all of his testimony.

‘What was your frame of mind in the seventeen days between then and the night your wife was murdered?’ Andy’s lawyer asked him.

‘I was in great distress,’ Andy said calmly, coldly. Like a man reciting a shopping list he said that he had considered suicide, and had even gone so far as to purchase a gun in Lewiston on 8 September.

His lawyer then invited him to tell the jury what had happened after his wife left to meet Glenn Quentin on the night of the murders. Andy told them … and the impression he made was the worst possible.

I knew him for close to thirty years, and I can tell you he was the most self-possessed man I’ve ever known. What was right with him he’d only give you a little at a time. What was wrong with him he kept bottled up inside. If he ever had a dark night of the soul, as some writer or other has called it, you would never know. He was the type of man who, if he had decided to commit suicide, would do it without leaving a note but not until his affairs had been put neatly in order. If he had cried on the witness stand, or if his voice had thickened and grown hesitant, even if he had gotten yelling at that Washington-bound District Attorney, I don’t believe he would have gotten the life sentence he wound up with. Even if he had’ve he would have been out on parole by 1954. But he told his story like a recording machine, seeming to say to the jury: this is it. Take it or leave it. They left it.

He said he was drunk that night, that he’d been more or less drunk since 24 August, and that he was a man who didn’t handle his liquor very well. Of course that by itself would have been hard for any jury to swallow. They just couldn’t see this coldly self-possessed young man in the neat double-