

Red

RED

DAWKINS

STAMMAS

ROOSTER

BOGS

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

adapted for the stage by

Owen O'Neill & Dave Johns

based on the novella *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption* by

Stephen King

ACT ONE

Scene 1: Processing Area

(As the curtain rises:

A square prison block consisting of twelve cells, each lit with a hanging light. Above are the landings. We hear the sound of heavy rain and the noise of a winch or something mechanical, almost musical, with a beat to it: iron doors banging shut in time to the beat, voices shouting, buckets clanging. As the lights come up onstage, RED, a wily con of many years, stands downstage.)

RED. My name is Red. I'm an inmate of the Shawshank Penitentiary. The Shank. I've been here most of my adult life. The Shank was built a hundred and fifty years ago and is Maine's oldest prison. It's overcrowded, antiquated, and rat-infested . . . and most of them are walking around in uniform. Violence and corruption is rife in every nook and cranny, it's what makes the rotten heart of this place beat. I'm the guy in the Shank who can get things. Tailor-made cigarettes, a bag of reefer, alcohol, cotton underwear. I'll get you damn near anything . . . within reason. Anyway, it's not me I wanna tell you about. I wanna tell you about a guy named Andy Dufresne.

(Chief guard BRYAN HADLEY and second guard MERT ENTWISTLE enter, flanking the naked ANDY, RICO, and PINKY, who cover their genitals with their bundles of prison clothes. The CONS shout and jeer at them, rattling their cages like animals.)

ROOSTER. Ooooh my oh my we got some new fresh cracks in the joint.

(This receives a loud raucous cheer from the CONS. They rattle and bang.)

BOGS. Jesus! Look at those white-bottomed killers. I ain't gonna sleep tonight!

DAWKINS. I love the smell of fresh fish. I'm taking bets on who will piss his pants first!

ROOSTER. Yeah. Your scaly ass is mine little fishy, dead or alive!

(The jeering subsides as a guard appears with his rifle poised.)

RED. Andy was sent to the Shawshank for murdering his wife and her lover . . . it was one hell of a case, one of those juicy ones with all the right elements. A beautiful society girl murdered! A local sports star murdered! And a prominent, smart businessman doing two life sentences for both . . . oh yeah, we all knew about Andy Dufresne long before he came to the Shank.

(Sound effect: radio news bulletin from the warden's radio)

RADIO ANNOUNCER. (V. O. :) At the Polo Grounds today, Bobby Thomson hit a truly amazing one out three home run in the bottom of the ninth inning. The hit that's been heralded as the shot heard 'round the world! Thomson drilled it into the left field stands to win the 1951 National League Pennant for the New York Giants and knock the Brooklyn Dodgers, their most hated rivals, out of their spot in the World Series. Up to that point the Giants had been trailing four-two.

Scene 2: Warden's Office

(The warden's desk is brought on. It has a bakelite radio and reading lamp. The WARDEN switches off the radio mid-report. A pool of light picks out RED.)

RED. It's parole time again. Warden Stammias is going to ask me about my rehabilitation and I'm going to tell him, because I think it's coming along just fine.

(RED enters the warden's office. Stands at attention.)

STAMMAS. Mr. Redding. Have a seat.

(RED sits at the desk. The WARDEN flicks through Red's file.)

STAMMAS. Are you a baseball fan, Mr Redding?

RED. Yes sir.

STAMMAS. So I assume you've heard about Bobby Thomson's amazing home run against the Dodgers.

RED. Yes sir.

STAMMAS. Did you know that Bobby Thomson was an immigrant? Came here with nothing, but he worked hard and had faith in the

American system. He was told that he would never make it as a baseball player, but was given a chance to prove them wrong, by a Catholic priest in Staten Island.

(A beat.)

I like to think that's what I do in my job as the warden of this penitentiary. I give people a chance . . . So, let's talk about your rehabilitation shall we? How do you think it's progressing?

RED. I think I'm there, sir. I'm knocking at the gates. I'm a changed man. I've had a lot of time to take stock, so to speak. I've prayed to the good Lord Jesus Christ to guide me and I think I'm ready to leave the Shawshank and take my place in society.

(STAMMAS ponders this for a moment.)

STAMMAS. Good . . . good. I'm glad to hear that, Mr. Redding, because that means you don't *get things* for people anymore. Right?

RED. Yes, sir. I've put that behind me a long time ago.

STAMMAS. "Deliver my Soul, O Lord, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue." Psalms, chapter 120, verse two. Are you familiar with that quote, Mr. Redding?

RED. Sir, I am telling you the truth. I—

STAMMAS. *(Cutting in:)* On the last shakedown of cell blocks eight and nine, the guards found marijuana, Belgian chocolates, French wine, Cuban cigars, a horse syringe, Chuck Berry records, and this, *Flirt Magazine!* A disgusting, filthy publication that has no place in any establishment, let alone one where godless men without women are incarcerated.

(STAMMAS opens the center page of Flirt and shows RED a model in a full-body swimsuit.)

RED. Yes sir I agree and I assure you I didn't have anything to do with any of those.

STAMMAS. *(Cutting in:)* The only thing you haven't managed to obtain, Mr. Redding, is the wool to pull over my eyes. You are still a long way from rehabilitation, my friend, and if you ever come into my office again and take the good Lord's name, you will find yourself in solitary. Do we understand each other?

RED. Yes, sir.

STAMMAS. You have been given many chances, Mr. Redding, and you have not taken any of them, so I will not be recommending you to the parole board anytime soon.

ANDY
RED

BROOKSIE

DAWKINS
ENTWISTLE
ROOSTER STAMMAS
HADLEY
RICO

ANDY. You know how it works, Red. Guys like us, we choose the lesser of two evils, we try and keep our good intentions in front of us.

RED. I know about good intentions. A man can walk all the way to hell on that road. He's using you.

ANDY. Do you really think it's easy for me to do business with someone as vile as Stamma? I need you to trust me, Red, and despite what you say I know what a chance you took getting me that rock hammer. It may not seem like much, but it's kept me going. You're the only one in this cesspit that I can talk to, have a conversation with. If I can turn down the heat a little and get something in return, then that's what I'm going to do. Hell is right here, Red. Right here in the Shank.

(A horn sounds. RED exits.)

Scene 5: Library

(TOMMY is writing in a notebook, his tongue stuck out in concentration. ANDY, DAWKINS, and RED are reading. ROOSTER has a girlie mag and is turning it around to get a better view. BROOKSIE enters with ENTWISTLE. He's dressed in his suit and carrying an old suitcase. They all look up and whistle.)

ENTWISTLE. You got two minutes to say your goodbyes, Brooksie.

ANDY. Hey Brooksie, you're looking good.

DAWKINS. You know I think that suit is back in fashion.

BROOKSIE. I'm not allowed in the library.

ANDY. What?

BROOKSIE. Not allowed.

(BROOKSIE puts his case on the table, flips it open, and takes out a gasoline can, climbs to the top of the stepladder, takes the top off and pours the gasoline over his head.)

RED. Brooksie, what in hell are you doin'?

DAWKINS. You gonna make a speech?

ROOSTER. Wowah! That smells like gasoline!

BROOKSIE. I told them I didn't want to leave they wouldn't listen.

(BROOKSIE takes a Zippo lighter from his pocket and flicks it open.)

ANDY. That's okay, Brooksie . . . just come down off the ladder and let's talk about it.

BROOKSIE. There's nothing to talk about.

(RICO exits quickly. We can hear him shouting for the guards.)

RED. I got *Lady Chatterley's Lover* back offa Rico. You need to talk to him, Brooksie, he's ripped the three best pages out of it.

BROOKSIE. They won't give me a library card on the outside, did you know that?

(HADLEY and ENTWISTLE enter with RICO.)

HADLEY. Brooksie! Get down offa that ladder . . . now!

BROOKSIE. You can't tell me what to do any more, you brainless moron. I got paroled, goddamn it! I'm a free man . . . I can do what I want!

(BROOKSIE lights the Zippo lighter and holds it over his head. RICO enters.)

RICO. Brooksie, I'm sorry I ripped the pages out of *Lady Chatterley*. Look I got them here. *(Pulling them from the front of his trousers:)* I'll tape 'em back.

HADLEY. Shut the fuck up, Rodriguez! I'm warning you, old man. You don't come down offa there in ten seconds, you're goin' outta here in a box.

BROOKSIE. What am I going to do on the outside? . . . They paroled me! I told them not to! I told them . . . I begged them . . . but they wouldn't listen to me . . .

(HADLEY walks slowly towards the stepladder.)

I'm the librarian . . . I'm Brooksie . . . the librarian . . . you know that . . . you hear me! . . . You take one more step and I'll—

ANDY. *(Shouting:)* Yes, we hear you, Brooksie . . . everybody knows that!

HADLEY. You shut the fuck up, Dufresne! I'm handling this.

BROOKSIE. *(Tearful:)* No . . . not everybody . . . not when I get outside these walls. Outside of these walls I'm nobody . . . I'm nothing! They train you to accept it inside this shithouse and then they throw you out!

HADLEY. Alright, that's it! I've heard enough of your shit, if you don't come down, I'm gonna torch you myself.

(STAMMAS enters.)

STAMMAS. Stay where you are, Mr. Hadley.

HADLEY. I have it under control, Mr. Stammers.

STAMMAS. No I don't think you have, Mr. Hadley. Mr. Dufresne, get that man down from there now!

BROOKSIE. I won't be able to get a library card, do you know that? They don't trust ex-cons with books on the outside. I won't be allowed in the library . . . Imagine that, Mr. Stamma. Brooksie Hatlen not allowed . . . in the library!

ANDY. You have your own library right here. The Brooks Hatlen Library. You can come back here anytime you want, borrow as many books as you like.

BROOKSIE. Is that true, Mr. Stamma?

(Pause.)

STAMMAS. Yes.

BROOKSIE. Can I have that in writing?

STAMMAS. You'll have to take my word for it.

BROOKSIE. That's what I thought!

(BROOKSIE lifts the end of his jacket and goes to light it.)

ANDY. Brooksie, wait! Listen to me . . . If you do this, then they've won, and I know you don't want them to win.

(BROOKSIE looks at HADLEY and STAMMAS.)

Look at them, pathetic excuses for human beings, you're not going to let them dictate how you're going to live your life, Brooksie, I know you're not, you're a good man. The world needs good men like you.

(BROOKSIE goes to light his jacket, then at the last moment, flicks the lighter closed and gives it to ANDY. HADLEY and ENTWISTLE take him down from the ladder. BROOKSIE cradles his suitcase and is lead away. The CONS break out into spontaneous applause. STAMMAS glares at ANDY, holds out his hand. ANDY gives him the Zippo lighter. STAMMAS exits. A piece of music plays as the lights dim. The CONS file back to their cells. Fade slowly to black.)

Scene 6: Library

(Fade up on ANDY on a stepladder, checking in some new books. TOMMY enters. He seems on edge.)

ANDY. Ah . . . Mr. Einstein.

TOMMY. What?

Tommy

RICO
RED
DAWKINS

ROOSTER

time is a healer. Not in solitary it's not. I've known men who have gone insane down there.

(Lights up on the prison yard. RICO, TOMMY, ROOSTER, DAWKINS, and RED enter and throw a football around. RICO catches the ball and holds on to it.)

Scene 8: Prison Yard

RICO. It don't make no sense! It says on the first day, God said, "Let there be light."

TOMMY. So?

RICO. And on the fourth day it says he made the sun, the moon, and the stars. So that means God didn't make the sun, the moon, and the stars until the fourth day, right?

RED. Just throw the dice.

RICO. So where did the light come from on the first day?

DAWKINS. Who gives a shit?

RICO. I do . . . It's in the Bible! If I can't trust the Bible what can I trust? . . . So who wrote those lies?

(They stare at him.)

Where did God get the light from for the first three days?

RED. He had a flashlight, now throw the ball.

RICO. "The unspeakable beauty to the touch of the warm living buttocks and . . ."

(RICO struggles to remember. Pulls a page from the front of his pants. Reads it.)

RICO. "The strange weight of the balls between his legs and the butting of his haunches seemed ridiculous to her, and the sort of anxiety of his penis to come to its little evacuating crisis." . . . *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, now that makes sense.

DAWKINS. Make sense of this!

(The guys charge at him to shut him up. Pile on top of him. Eventually, TOMMY gives him a hand up.)

RICO. (To TOMMY:) Thank you. Mr. Einstein . . .

TOMMY. Can you stop calling me that! . . . Who the hell is Mr. Einstein anyway?

RED. He invented the H-bomb.

DAWKINS. Yeah, he's doin' life down on Cell Block Eight.

(TOMMY ponders this.)

TOMMY. Oh . . . him.

(The guys crack up and throw TOMMY the ball. He holds onto it.)

Okay, okay . . . listen guys . . . there's somethin' I been meanin' to talk to you about.

RED. What's up?

TOMMY. Stammas came to my cell last night . . . I think if I help Andy . . . the son of a bitch is gonna stop my parole . . .

ROOSTER. Well, sometimes kid, you just gotta suck it up.

TOMMY. I'm not asking your advice, asshole! What are you hanging around here for anyway? You're not one of us!

ROOSTER. What?

(TOMMY hurls himself at ROOSTER. RED and DAWKINS hold him back. DAWKINS squares up to ROOSTER.)

RED. Okay, calm down.

(ROOSTER laughs. Shakes his head at Tommy's cheek and walks away to a corner of the yard.)

TOMMY. He wants my decision today . . . What am I gonna do?

RICO. Whatever you do, son, Andy isn't going to hold it against you.

TOMMY. That's not the point . . . all that stuff about Blatch . . . I wouldn't make somethin' like that up! Andy's the only one who never gave up on me . . . but I got Shirley and my little girl to think about.

RED. It's a tough decision, son.

RICO. *(To TOMMY:)* "We all have to live, no matter how many skies have fallen."

(TOMMY gives RICO a puzzled look.)

Lady Chatterley's Lover. You should read this.

TOMMY. Andy is innocent.

DAWKINS. Shit!

RED. Innocent! Shit! Yeah!

STAMMAS. I'll give you another day to think about this, speak to your wife.

TOMMY. No thank you sir. I've made my decision.

STAMMAS. Sleep on it, son. Talk to me tomorrow.

TOMMY. No sir. Thank you. Like I said. I've made my decision.

(STAMMAS stares at TOMMY.)

STAMMAS. Very well, Thomas, if that's what you want. Mr. Hadley!

(HADLEY emerges from the shadows.)

STAMMAS. Escort Prisoner Williams back to his cell, for the night.

HADLEY. For the night. Yes sir.

(HADLEY takes TOMMY's arm and ushers him out firmly. STAMMAS exits. Fade to black.)

(Fade up on Andy's cell. RED is sitting on Andy's bunk, Rita Hayworth behind him on the wall. On a shelf are a few of Andy's carvings, some chess pieces, the American Flyer train. The poster of Rita is old and faded, fraying slightly at the edges. ANDY appears, blinking in the harsh light he shades his eyes with his hand. All around them is the noises of the prison, guards coming and going, any talk between them has to be careful. They are watchful throughout.)

Scene 10: Andy's Cell

RED. Enjoy your vacation?

ANDY. Did you know that the Monarch butterfly migrates from the Rocky Mountains all the way to sunny Mexico? It's the only insect in the world that can fly two thousand . . . five hundred miles . . . Did you know that?

RED. Sure I did. I've got a new poster for you.

(RED gets up from Andy's bunk. ANDY lies down, shielding his eyes, exhausted from his time in the hole.)

RED pulls a poster from the waist of his trousers and unrolls it to reveal Raquel Welch)

ANDY. I know my eyes are bad, but even I can see that's not Rita!

RED. That's right. It's not. It's Raquel Welch, or as Dawkins calls her, Big Rack-el Welsh.

ANDY. Thanks, but I think I'll stick with Rita.

RED. Rita Rita Rita! What does Rita really mean to you, Andy?

(A beat.)

ANDY. Freedom.

RED. Christ's sake, you gotta move on. Rita is old and gray.

ANDY. Not in my mind she's not.

(A beat. RED rolls up the poster and sticks it back in his pants. Picks up the cardboard box from the floor.)

ANDY. What's in the box?

RED. Brooksie's things. We gotta make a decision about what we want.

ANDY. You keep it.

RED. That's going against Brooksie's wishes . . . Okay let's see what we got here.

(RED takes the contents out of the box.)

A pocket watch, a deck of cards? Hmm, his wedding photo . . . happy times, his wedding ring. 85 dollars. A gold ink pen . . . *(Smiles.)* Arthritis ointment . . . and look at this.

(RED opens a Bible, looks at the inscription, laughs, and hands it to ANDY.)

ANDY. A Seventh-Day Adventist Bible.

(ANDY reads the inscription.)

"You'll burn in hell Dufresne."

RED. No argument who that belongs to.

ANDY. I'll keep the Bible. You have the rest.

RED. You sure?

ANDY. Yeah.

(A beat. RED stares at the box and sighs.)

RED. Poor bastard. So much for freedom.

ANDY. You must never give up hope, Red.

RED. Hope? I'm getting kinda sick of that word.

ANDY. You gotta get busy living. Or get busy dying.

(A beat. ANDY takes the butterfly from the shelf, holds it up, moves it around in the air as if it is flying.)

RED. You gonna go through with this trial?

ANDY. . . . I don't know, Red . . . It's a chance to prove my innocence and if I can do that I can walk free of this place, get my life back.

RED. You're gonna have to hire the best, most expensive lawyer in the country. How are you going to afford that?

(ANDY comes close to RED and whispers to him.)

ANDY. . . . I don't know . . . I did have money . . . well I still have . . . it's mine . . . but it's not mine . . . not legally . . . it's complicated.

RED. Sure as hell sounds like it.

ANDY. When the shit hit the fan for me, I got in touch with a stockbroker friend of mine name of Jim Oaks.

(HADLEY walks within hearing distance. ANDY stops talking until HADLEY is out of hearing.)

ANDY. I had \$28,000 in savings. After my appeal was turned down, Jim set up an account for me in a false name . . . he withdrew my money, paid all the taxes on it, and then invested it for one Peter Stevens. He did that in 1950, and the money from that investment is now in a safe deposit box. Jim hid the key in a secret place only him and I knew about, he died two years ago, there's \$370,000 in that box.

(RED stares at ANDY stunned, then holds his mouth to keep from laughing out loud.)

RED. 370 thousand . . . Holy shit! . . . 370 . . . and it's in a different name?

ANDY. Yeah. Peter Stevens.

RED. So . . . you can't get at it?

ANDY. Not from in here . . . no . . . I outsmarted myself.

RED. Well fuck me ten times and twice on Sundays! Andy, how in hell can you keep from going crazy? Je-sus! I ain't never heard anything like this in my entire . . .

(Suddenly, STAMMAS and HADLEY enter Andy's cell and without turning around or losing a beat RED starts sweeping the floor of the cell.)

RED. Life . . . a butterfly flying 370,000 miles . . . that's insane, I dunno shit about butterflies.

(RED exits, bowing his head in deference to STAMMAS and HADLEY. STAMMAS walks around the cell, looks at the poster. Sees the Bible on the bed, picks it up.)