

## RETURN TO HELL

David Irshad

They were merciless. The burly sets of forearms released their vice-like grips and he collapsed to the floor. They departed, slamming the cell door behind them; the boom echoed in his battered head like a bass drum. He laid face down in a sobbing heap; the bruises and welts were beginning to take shape, the pain unbearable. He couldn't fully comprehend the events which had taken

place. His escape was made good; he had beaten the odds, the trackers, the dogs. He would never forget the kind pilot who had risked his license to bring him safely to Montreal. The whiskey celebration had been good; too good. He was not habituated to it and therefore over drank. The rest was a hazy series of beatings and finally the return to hell.

He opened his eyes, still sprawled on the floor, had he been sleeping? unconscious? a moment? a day? He slowly raised his head, it ached and pulsated. He instantly verified his surroundings, the all-too familiar cell which he'd

been habitating for the past four years. A large fault lay in the wall beginning at the floor and meandering up the wall where it split in two, one side of the fork ending at the window, the other at the ceiling. The excretion bucket lay in one corner awaiting to be filled, awaiting to further sicken him with its repugnant odour. He had once flung the contents out into the corridor and almost died for it. He again closed his eyes and returned his head to the floor. He thought he could faintly hear the barking hounds; a smile spread across his face as he remembered what he had done to the lead hound, the lone sniffer. He could visualize it lying on its side blinking

stupidly at the gash he had inflicted in its stomach, the intestines protruding from the aperture like an over-inflated inner tube sticking out of a slashed tire; a small piece of the establishment destroyed, more destruction would come.

The warmth of the sun's rays filtering through the mesh-wire window was soothing. He slowly eased himself to his feet and followed the beam to the window. The brief taste of freedom had been ecstasy, like honey-orange after years of salt water. Soon the push-ups would begin; the battle with time, his sanity being the stakes.

But he was the rock and the rock would prevail.

He studied the fault in the wall and traced the crack which made the exit out the window. He was the rock and the rock would prevail.



talk as soon as this question registers.

JOHN: (barely perceptible) Yes.

## CLOSE-UP ON BILL

The last thing he's wanted to do was say something wrong again but apparently he'd done it. For lack of anything else to say, he says: Well, how do you like it here so far?

John continues to study the ground. Bill realizes that this is a pretty stupid thing to say and he

hits himself on the head with the palm of his hand. But he's got himself together now; he's going to straighten this out.

BILL: If you didn't catch it, John, my name's Bill. (He holds out his hand. John, although he's still looking at the ground, sees it out of the corner of his eye. He raises his eyes to look at Bill, once again, and he takes his hand. The look of pain that's always in his eyes is gone, somewhat, for the moment at least, which makes things easier for Bill.)

BILL: O.K. John. Listen, I've been around here for quite a while, and you're just new, so if there's anything I can help you out with, you just let me know. Gimme that scribbler for a sec and I'll write my number on it. (He takes a scribbler out of pile of books John is carrying. He is about to start writing on it when he stops and looks at John.)

BILL: Hey, you don't mind if I write on this cover, do you?

John pauses, because this fellow has managed to surprise him again. Then he shakes his head. No, he doesn't mind.

## ANGLE SHOT OF BILL AND JOHN

Bill is down on one knee, balancing the scribbler on his other knee. John is looking down at him. Bill begins to write out the number, saying each number out loud as he does so. Then Bill's up on his feet, handing the scribbler back to John.

## CLOSE-UP ON BILL

BILL: By the way, you can call me up for anything except schoolwork. Believe me, you're better off. Bill's smile couldn't stay away for long, and it's back now, as big as is possible for a smile to be.

## CLOSE-UP ON JOHN

John nods his head, and we see that even he is

smiling slightly.

## CUT BACK TO BILL

BILL: Look, I've gotta get into the school and get this stuff off before they lock it up. (He starts to jog away towards the school. As he does, though, he's turned half-way round and he's waving to John as he goes). See you tomorrow in class! (Then he stops all of a sudden, and turns all the way around to face John, who is still looking at him) Unless, like I said, you want to call me up tonight to talk or something. (Then he waves again and runs off towards the school.)

## PROFILE CLOSE-UP ON JOHN

He doesn't know quite what to think. He turns around and starts heading in the direction he was originally going. The he stops. He turns around and looks into the distance at Bill.

## CUT TO LONGSHOT OF BILL

He's still running across the fields, and in the late autumn afternoon that this day is, he's running towards the falling sun.

## CLOSE-UP ON BILL

His face looks a little puzzled. He's not accustomed to being puzzled about things. He stops running and turns around to take another look at what is puzzling him. He sees that John is looking at him.

## CUT TO LONGSHOT OF JOHN

There is a pause. Then, Bill sees John, in the distance, slowly raise his open hand up, and hold it there.

## CUT TO CLOSE UP OF BILL

A smile breaks open his face again. He raises up his hand in a reciprocal wave. Then he turns around, the smile still on his face, and begins to walk the rest of the short distance to the school. Looking at the ground as he walks along, he shakes his head in amused surprise.

FADE OUT.