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*The Welcome This Convict Received Was  
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# Grisley's Reception

By WILLIAM SANFORD

*Author of "Hootch" and "The Scarlet Night"*

**J**OE GRISLEY, convicted wife slayer, and more beast than man, was making his escape from a life sentence in prison.

He had served a little more than a year, and hardly for a moment during all that time was his mind free from the thought of escape. Then the knowledge that perhaps he was to escape came to him suddenly, when one day a woman, associate of his in bygone days, came to the cells and began to pass out small cakes to the prisoners. She was accompanied by the warden, who seemed quite free from any suspicion as to who she really was—a woman of the underworld.

Although Grisley did not know it, the visitor, who had once been his woman, and wanted him again for her mate, had been working for his escape for some time. Posing as one interested in the welfare of prisoners, she had made many visits to the prison with cakes, fruit and magazines, until at last she gained the utter confidence of the warden, and the edibles were not probed into for possible tools for escape, and she was allowed to distribute them to the prisoners herself.

It was after her third personal visit to the cells that Grisley, eagerly breaking open his cake for that which he knew he would sometime find, drew forth a tiny saw with an edge that would bite into the hardest steel—an edge cut into steel itself as hard as criminal ingenuity could produce.

The visits of the woman continued.

Other saws came to Grisley, that he might always work with keen tools. He concealed these tiny instruments in the mattress of his bed, when danger was near. He worked only when he was doubly positive that he would not be detected. He covered up his efforts with soap, over which he rubbed dust.

The work on the bars of his window passed day by day unnoticed. And work was slow, for the bars were tough, and even those saws in which so much skill had been used bit only little by little into the hard steel. It was a full month before Grisley had completed the work. The bars of the window on one side had been sawed completely through, flush to the wall; on the other side they had been sawed almost through, so that Grisley knew he could bend them back when the time came to escape.

And now with the prison clock tolling the hour of 2 in the morning, and with the knowledge, conveyed by a note in one of the cakes, that the woman would be waiting not far from the outer wall of the prison with an automobile, Grisley was ready. He knew the woman would be there. He had given her the sign that it would be about 2 o'clock in the morning; had given it to her when she had called late the previous afternoon—the sign she had been waiting for ever since he had got the note.

Grisley had tied all his bed clothing together, and into the crook of the al-

most severed bars which he had bent he had fastened one end of his line. He knew they would stand the strain. The line would reach about thirty feet. There would still be about twenty feet to the ground, but Grisley was an old hand at long drops. He knew he would land safely.

He knew something else, too, and it had filled him with joy, a joy that still pulsed through his body. Something was wrong with the electric lights about the prison yard. They were out, and the yard was in blackness; but he knew it would only be a matter of a few minutes before they would be on again: there would be quick work to locate the trouble and remedy it; meanwhile Grisley wanted to land in that yard and scale the prison wall. He was confident that he could. He had several times escaped from prison when sentenced for minor charges.

Standing on top of the bed, on which he had stood while working all those weary hours with the tiny saws, he doubled himself up like a jack-knife and worked his wiry little body, feet first, through the opening. It was a tight squeeze. Had he been a trifle larger he could not have made it. Grasping his line firmly, he began to descend.

The bars had not allowed Grisley to see directly under his window, but his line of vision began some thirty feet out from the prison wall. Workmen had been laying an asphalt surface about the prison, replacing the gravel that had extended out to where the grass began. Grisley had seen the men at work, and the odor of the scented asphalt had been wafted into his cell all the previous day. Now,

as he descended, it came up to him more strongly. It was a pleasant odor to his nostrils—it breathed of the outdoors and freedom.

Down — down — down — he went, only a few feet more of line remaining. He reached the end, stiffened his body for the drop and looked below. It was still as dark as pitch, but any moment the guard might appear with his lantern. One second more he held on, then closed his eyes and let go.

THE automobile with the woman of the underworld at the wheel waited in vain for Grisley, the wife murderer. He did not scale the prison wall. He did not even reach it. He landed feet first in the five-foot vat of melted asphalt. The fire in the box below the vat had long since gone out, and the asphalt in the vat had thickened. It was getting thicker all the time; and try as he would, Grisley could not draw himself out of it: the impetus from the twenty-foot drop had been sufficient to sink him to the bottom.

And it was there that a guard found him a short time later, up to his shoulders in the slowly hardening asphalt. The warden, when he arrived, was angry enough to order a fire built in the box below the vat to soften up the asphalt for Grisley to get out. He added that this would save the workmen the trouble of getting the asphalt melted into liquid form again when they arrived to resume work.

But Grisley begged so piteously when he heard the suggestion that the warden finally ordered that he be dug out with spades.

