

Donnelly's Revue

A Hollywood Classic Updated

Or, the New Breed of Felon

By Tom Donnelly

It seems possible that in the aftermath of Watergate our prison population will have a new look, with throngs of former White House biggies, ex-CIA agents, CRP directors, and ex-cabinet members jockeying for position with the more usual varieties of felons. And, of course, there'll be more big time financiers and fallen mighty lawyers than there ever were before. The time has come then, for an updating of that Hollywood classic, "The Big House."

From his window high above the prison yard, Warden Lewis E. Grindstone watches the prisoners milling about below him during morning recess. He shakes his head in wry disbelief. "That White House gang is holding another prayer meeting," he says. "That's the 10th this week and here it is only Tuesday. It's no wonder the Old Cons hate their guts. We haven't had such a pious bunch in here since the Belles of St. Mary's gave us a rock concert on St. Vitus' Eve."

Shiny Sam McGee, a trusty who polishes the warden's desk every day, joins his boss at the window. "Snobs is what they are," he says, looking down. "Dirty snobs. When I was tellin' that big administration lawyer man how I knocked over a Savings & Loan for \$5,234.46 didn't he look at me like I was the dirt under his feet and say he never handled petty cash. No sir, he sold an ambassadorship for \$500,000 in campaign money. But then when Al 'Big Noodle' Lefkowitz said he'd like to buy an ambassadorship for his sister Sadie's boy didn't this administration creep just walk away and leave Al standin' there with his mouth hangin' open? Imagine doin' that to Big Noodle, who has bought and sold governors! Oh, these Nixon men are *rude!*"

Warden Grindstone (sighing heavily): "I understand this sort of thing goes on all the time."

Sure enough, all over the prison, in machine shop, mess hall, and shower, assorted conspirators, perjurers, and justice-obstructors are giving the cold shoulder and the curt answer to housebreakers, pocketbook snatchers, forgers, and shoplifters. Some members of the New Breed let it be known that whatever they did, they did for patriotic reasons, for the very security of the nation.

Others, like Frank Prussian and Otto Caligari, the biggest of the White House biggies, deny (before, during, and after prayer meetings) that they ever for one teensy minute lied, prevaricated, falsified, varnished over, assaulted, or in any way trifled with the truth. They never for one instant ever did anything criminal, immoral, bad, or even naughty. They were framed. By a conspiracy of left-wing baddies.

The Boston Beaner, convicted of beaning six Back Bay area cops, speaks for the Old Style Cons when he says, "All of us say we wuz framed. We always did say that. But there's something about the way Prussian and Caligari say *they wuz framed*—maybe it's the way they roll their eyes up to heaven—that's downright sickening."

The Old Style Cons, especially the Mafaiates among them, find the New Breed baffling in the extreme. As one veteran mobster puts it: "Us guys really know how

to live in stir. We've had plenny of practice. We pay off, and we get breakfast in bed, color TV, our clothes pressed, manicures and pedicures, and like that. But these new guys! Always doin' paper work. Always writing notes and shredding 'em. With a shredder they made out of old razor blades—we thought they was fashionin' a weapon to kill some guard with. And recordings! All the time bugging everybody! What's that for?"

In every prison picture there are scenes showing the women on the outside that the men on the inside are longing for. In the montage sequence in this movie an old con named Al the Clipper is dreaming of Flo Behold, the most luscious little stripper to ever finish an act by throwing a G-string and pasties to the audience. "Take me, I'm yours!" murmurs the dream Flo to the snoring Al. The Boston Beaner is dreaming of Mabel Hips, the blondest waitress who ever slung hash in the Cordon Bleu Dinery. "Come and get me!" murmurs the visionary Mabel. Makepeace Tidyman, former CRP official, is dreaming of Mrs. Leona Thudpuddle, at 58 the most indefatigable Republican committeewoman of them all. "There's no way the Party can come a cropper in Amber county," whispers Leona as Makepeace stirs blissfully on his pillow.

Al the Clipper is awakened from his dream of Flo the stripper by a message tapped out on the radiator pipes. "Important meeting in the shower room. No absences. No excuses."

In the shower room the Old Cons confront a pale, weak-chinned, informer: a type no prison picture is without. This particular specimen is Jameson Feeblie III, a former White House aide convicted of dirty tricks during the '72 Nixon re-election campaign. Feeblie did some singing for the authorities and became embittered when he got five years instead of an expected five days. He is prepared to reveal an escape plan of the New Breed in exchange for breakfast in bed and color TV.

"You forgot one thing, rat," says Al the Clipper sternly. "Nobody likes a stoolie. One word of this escape plan to Warden Grindstone and—" (he makes a gesture of drawing a knife across his throat and so do all the other Old Cons) —"and it's crimson curtains for you. Now scamper back to your hole, rat."

Al the Clipper (after Jameson Feeblie III has scampered): "Nobody likes a stoolie and besides if this holier-than-thou gang escapes it's good riddance to bad rubbish."

The shower room is bugged, and Warden Grindstone hasn't missed a word of the foregoing. Neither has his trusty trusty, Shiny Sam McGee. Sam says wonderingly, "You really think they'll make it back to the White House?" The Warden shrugs. "I've certainly done everything possible to speed them on their way. Wonder where they think all these disguises and trucks came from?"

Sam says, "But ain't it a dirty thing to do to the country. Letting 'em get back in the White House?" The Warden says, "They were all set to take over here, weren't they? You want that gang to run our nice clean jail?" Sam says, without a moment's further reflection, "Boss, you did the right thing."