

# Prison Breaks

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Entertainment

## Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of episode outline)

So apparently insomniacs enjoy cover art. Remember when I solicited feedback from the listeners as to whether I should go back to creating cover art for each episode? I had stopped because it's kind of a hassle... well, the insomniacs don't care about my well-being, but they do care about pretty pictures. So the art has returned. You're welcome, everyone, and screw you all. No, I love you guys, and speaking of which we have an announcement, a huge milestone that is only achievable because of all of you...we have passed one million downloads. I guess we could have done this *without* all of you but it would have taken a lot longer, that would have been a lot of listening to my own voice, and frankly I don't like the show that much. I don't care for this podcast. It's overrated. No. This is huge news. A huge number, a huge achievement, and a huge thank you to all of you for making it possible. Here's to the next million, which should come much quicker because the audience is still growing. I remember when it was super

exciting that we got our first thousand downloads, total. And then the first time we broke a thousand downloads in a day, and then the numbers just kept growing and we're so excited to see where this show can take us; and you're the ones who are going to get us where we're going. It's all due to word of mouth and reviews and recommendations, those are the engines that drive growth, so please please please keep doing what you're doing or doing what other insomniacs are doing if you're not doing any promoting. Help us build these midnight masses so that we can keep doing this show for millions more downloads to come. Or don't do any of that and just keep listening, that works too. We appreciate you even if you're just a casual fan, we're just super grateful, I've been in a great mood ever since that number popped up. Now I just need that number in my bank account. That milestone is still a way off.

Ok, on to today's episode: infamous prison breaks. I don't think there are any prison breaks that *weren't* infamous. Dangerous criminals escaping into public...traditionally unpopular, not highly regarded. But maybe the most popular of the unpopular prison breaks was one that occurred in the 1960s, and I feel like deep down most of us even today are kind of rooting for the bad guys in this story. I like to think of it as a success, but we will probably never know. I'll explain.

So Alcatraz Penitentiary, also known as the rock, or Dwayne Johnson, sits on a stony island in the San Francisco Bay. It was originally built as a military fort in the late 1850s and its first use as a jail was to house confederate sympathizers. Incidentally, I would be in favor of reinstating that usage...I think if you are a confederate sympathizer you should spend some time away from polite society, and also maybe consider getting on the winning team. Let it go, JimBob. It's over. The bums lost, Lebowski. So in 1910 Alcatraz was converted into a US Army military prison, and then during the infamous crime surge of 1930s the federal bureau of prisons acquired Alcatraz and embarked on a major overhaul in 1934 to modernize and increase security. There would eventually be four cell blocks, A through D, a barbershop, dining hall, kitchen, hospital, visitation room, library, and a warden's office. That's where you bring your bribes, btw, always hidden in delicious pies. Observe protocol. The jail was segregated, because racism, and D-Block was reserved for the worst offenders, with six of its cells referred to as "the hole" where prisoners were sent for isolation and brutal punishments. As we mentioned and everyone already knows because Nicolas Cage, the prison is located on a rocky island in the middle of San Francisco Bay, and the bay is not a hospitable body of water. Successful escape was deemed extremely unlikely,

and thus notorious mobsters like Al Capone would be housed at the Rock, along with the original Machine Gun Kelly, the one who terrorized America with heinous crimes and violent atrocities rather than heinous tattoos and musical atrocities, and of course John Mason, the only man to successfully escape the Rock. No, and I promise that will be my second-to-last Michael Bay movie-reference...I don't have another one planned but I'm leaving myself some leeway. As you could probably guess from his name, the prison also hosted the famous "Birdman of Alcatraz," Robert Stroud, who became a beloved fixture of American lore because of his obsession with birds. And more than just obsession, he became one of America's foremost bird experts. No joke. He first began studying birds in Leavenworth prison, when he found three injured sparrows in a nest in the prison yard, and eventually became a respected ornithologist; I am not kidding, he wrote a scientific treatise that would end up being published called *Diseases of Canaries* and he was instrumental in curing the hemorrhagic septicemia family of avian ailments. Did I mention he was also a pimp and murderer who had been sent to prison for killing a man who refused to pay one of his sex workers, and he later stabbed a prison guard to death; he was transferred to Alcatraz when it was discovered that he was using some of the scientific equipment he had been granted to produce alcohol in his cell at Leavenworth prison. That's a lot.

This guy was a diagnosed psychopath with an IQ of 112, and I kind of want to just do this entire episode on Robert Stroud. The story of the Birdman is effing bonkers and we could do easily a whole episode on this guy and maybe someday we will.

So by the 1960s Alcatraz was considered a "last resort prison," for inmates who couldn't be contained by other facilities. A quote from the warden in the Clint Eastwood movie "escape from Alcatraz, "if you disobey the rules of society, they send you to prison. If you disobey the rules of the prison, they send you to us." As a result, Alcatraz featured a large number of aspiring escape artists. And btw I mentioned I watched the movie escape from Alcatraz, it's entertaining. There's some weird race stuff, which I guess is sort of unavoidable in a prison movie but it's also a little offputting to hear Clint Eastwood say "I hate N-words." That's in the context of sarcasm, like the movie is actually trying to be progressive in a very icky way. It's hard to explain...it doesn't hold up, I'll say that. But if you can get past Clint Eastwood saying the N-word I guess I'd give it a lukewarm thumbs up.

So Alcatraz was designed to be escape-proof, and...yeah. Remember the name of our spaceship, from the black holes episode? Hubris indeed. It's absolutely possible to swim from Alcatraz to the shore, many people have done it. Although it helps to be in

great shape and have trained. Since 1981 the annual Escape from Alcatraz triathlon begins with a swim from Alcatraz to the mainland, followed by a bike ride over the Golden Gate Bridge and then a long jog over Mount Tamias to Stinson Beach and back. So I'd say the swim is eminently doable...if you happen to be an elite athlete. I really wish the Escape from Alcatraz triathlon was more realistic and appropriate for the name of the event. Like you have to swim across the bay, then steal a car, bleach your hair, take a couple hostages. The first contestant to make it to Mexico wins. Anyway, it's definitely a harrowing swim if you're not used to it, the water hovers around 50 degrees, which doesn't sound super cold, but that's a lot lower than body temperature and it will sap your strength over time. And of course most escape attempts are going to take place during the night when the air and water are coldest. Also, there ARE sharks in the SF Bay, though that's probably the least of your worries. So-called "Bay Sharks" are also known as "nibblers," because they typically just take a couple bites and then are satiated. No, that's ridiculous, there are 11 species of shark native to the Bay, the most dangerous of which is the Sevengill. There have been five documented instances of Sevengill attacks, so, like I said, not the number-one concern. Tides and cold are the real killers, and the bay is connected to the Pacific Ocean, so the undertow is tugging you directly out to the open sea, and if that happens you're toast.

So there are many reasons not to attempt an escape, but prison life at Alcatraz must have been unpleasant, because a number of convicts over the years were willing to take the risk.

Alcatraz operated for a total of 29 years, and throughout that time prison officials would frequently boasts that no one successfully escaped, but that statement is debatable at best, and intentionally inaccurate at worst.

Five men may have actually escaped Alcatraz successfully. The first attempted escape was in 1936 when Joseph Bowers, prisoner AZ 210 suddenly bolted for the chain-link fence...and was shot while at the top. He fell 50 feet and died. Not a great start. This one wasn't exactly a well thought-out master plan. According to official statistics there would be 13 additional escape attempts, representing a total 36 prisoners, with two of them trying twice. Six were shot and executed during the attempt, 23 were caught alive, two definitely drowned, and five are

"presumed drowned." That's a big presumption, and in fact we know that at least one prisoner was able to survive the swim to the mainland. On December 16, 1962, prisoner John Paul Scott bent the bars of a latrine window and escaped down a rope. Ok, Shazam. Jesus. He was Bruce Banner all over that prison, just hulking out on iron bars. Anyway, he somehow bent the bars open and then donned inflated rubber gloves as water wings—those are the plastic inflatables that kids wrap around their upper arms

in public pools—he made it across the bay alive. He was later found by the police...unconscious and hypothermic...but alive! Technically a success.

Also, I encourage everyone to pause the episode right now and look up his mug shot. John Paul Scott. It's worth a google. I imagine that is the face you make during a colonoscopy.

Now, the first two prisoners who may have actually successfully escaped—meaning they made it off the rock and were not recaptured—were Theodore Cole and Ralph Roe, two veteran cons from Oklahoma, both of whom had been caught trying to escape multiple times from McAlester prison. At Alcatraz the two men worked together in the mat shop, cutting up automobile tires that would later be converted into rubber mats for the US Navy. At 1 PM on December 16, 1937, guards at the mat shop took a headcount, and everyone was accounted for. The next headcount took place half an hour later, and came up two men short. Ralph and Theodore (sounds like a kids cartoon starring two adorable dachshunds) had spent days filing through a couple of iron bars in the mat shop, covering the sawing marks with shoe polish and grease, then broke a window and bolted out of the facility on an extremely foggy day. They used a wrench to break open the lock on a gate that led to the water, then jumped directly into the Bay and disappeared forever. This was in the middle of December, during a time of day when swift tides would probably



have pulled them out to the Pacific Ocean. There was speculation that maybe they met up with accomplices from the mainland, but the fog was too thick for any kind of aquatic rendezvous with a boat in the open water. So logic dictates that they perished, but the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper would disagree. A 1941 article claimed that the pair were living in South America...this was based on an account by a cab driver who said he had been taken hostage and shot by the men, eye witness accounts of a couple of hitchhikers, and then a supposed crime spree that coincided with the escape. The Chronicle seemed to be asserting that the police covered up the identity of the perpetrators to avoid having to admit that the spree had been perpetrated by the adorable dachshund duo of Ralph and Theodore. So...maybe? Seems sus...I don't know much about the San Francisco Chronicle's journalistic standards in the 1940s, but they probably didn't get worse over time.

So the first successful escape may have taken place in the late '30s, but when you hear the term "escape from Alcatraz" most people immediately jump to the famous events of 1962. In no small part because the escape was immortalized in a movie of that name starring Clint Eastwood. Thirty-three years before he bizarrely lectured an empty chair onstage at the 2012 Republican National Convention, Eastwood portrayed inmate number

1441, escapee Frank Morris. An orphan and drug user who had been convicted of his first crime at 13, Morris spent his youth in and out of jail for theft and eventually bank robbery. He managed to escape from the state penitentiary of Louisiana, a facility which was considered so secure that it had been known as the "Alcatraz of the south." Kind of an appropriate nickname because a bunch of people escaped from both of those prisons. After his escape Morris spent a year on the lamb before he was captured while committing yet another robbery, and this time was sent to the Alcatraz of Alcatraz: Alcatraz.

There would be three other potential escapees on this journey, but only two of them would actually accompany Morris on the attempt. These were two men that Morris knew from jail time in Atlanta: The Anglin brothers, John and Clarence, each of whom were a quintessential Florida man, they had gotten into all kinds of shenanigans down south, many of the shenanigans being of the bumbling Keystone Cops variety. They claimed to never have actually used weapons during any of their bank heists, but once used a toy gun, which may explain why they got caught. Menace me with a pop gun and I will tackle you. The brothers repeatedly and unsuccessfully attempted to escape from their Atlanta penitentiary and ended up being sent separately to Alcatraz, a few months apart...and then for some reason ended up housed in cells that were side-by-

side. Brilliant work on the part of Alcatraz administrators. Nothing could possibly go wrong putting two brothers who constantly hatched plans to escape from prison right next to each other where they could spend the entire night hatching plans to escape from prison. The brothers were extremely close, you might say they were "thick as thieves." Sorry. I saw that written somewhere and I wanted you to hate it as much as I did. The brothers were also well-known for being strong swimmers. As kids, their family would migrate north in the summers to pick cherries, and the boys would often swim in the ice cold waters of Lake Michigan.

The final conspirator, who would not in fact join the actual escape but by his own account was the mastermind of the plan, was a man named Alan Clayton West. Born in 1929, he was incarcerated more than 20 times during his life, and his final imprisonment was for car theft in 1955. After a stint at Florida state prison and of course a failed escape attempt—are you sensing a theme here?—he ended up in Alcatraz at the age of 28 in 1957.

So all of the men either knew each other intimately or were at least acquaintances before arriving at the rock, and they quickly set to work on a plan. Problem one: how to get out of their cells? The only hole in the concrete was the small grates at the base of the cell wall., about the size of a hardcover book. And this is where I

want to stop and point out that these men were undeniably resourceful, clever, and much braver than I am. But they weren't necessarily geniuses. The specifics of the escape and its intricacies get somewhat oversold in some of the retellings. I listened to a podcast that started out by saying "this may have been one of the most ingenious plans ever devised by man." That's a little much. Like we covered another plan that humans devised, the plan to get to the moon. I'm just saying a little perspective is helpful. That enthusiastic podcast host would gush about all of the ideas the convicts devised, like when West was researching in the library and discovered a recipe for a substance that could dissolve the concrete around the grill. And then the podcast host would be like, "but that didn't work. So then they came up with an idea that used temperature instead of chemicals, they would melt concrete using a conductive wire like the one from a toaster, and smuggled one out of the machine shop and plugged it into the single outlet in their cell...and that didn't work, it was even less practical than the first idea. Finally they decided to utilize the ingenious method of brute force: hacking at the concrete with a sharpened spoon. The brilliant high-tech method of flatware. In the various documentaries and podcasts I watched and listened to, there were many examples of this overselling of ingeniousness. It would be like, "They discovered a series of eight ventilator shafts in the

ceiling of C block that had been cemented shut years earlier, and West quickly deduced that one of the vents hadn't been fully closed. He began formulating a strategy...

before realizing that this was a terrible, borderline suicidal plan; the men would have been trapped in the ceiling and died of asphyxiation. So it was back to the drawing board." Genius!

To be fair, I think the smartest thing they did was to create an improvised drill using the motor of a vacuum cleaner...although even *that* MacGuyver-style contraption sounds a little more high-tech than it was. If you remember, I got my tattoo from a guy who had been to prison and learned how to attach a guitar string to the motor of a Walkman, it's not hard. You just plug it in. My favorite part though is that in order to hide the sound of the motor, Morris played an accordion during "music hour" and yeah, that would disguise the sound of pretty much anything. And also keep the guards away. That's guard-and-other-people repellent. One of my favorite musicians is an accordion player, but he's the exception that proves the rule. Him and weird Al.

As I mentioned, the brothers had wisely been given cells side-by-side, and Morris and West also shared a wall. After the 5:30pm headcount, they would each take turns chipping away, one of them working diligently while his neighbor kept an eye out for guards. After 9:30 lights out, it was a chipping

bonanza until morning. Not a lot to do in those cells, especially if you happen to be an insomniac. The debris and cement that they chipped away would be either flushed down the toilet or shoved back into the corridor behind the grate. Here's the really brilliant part: when they dug out enough cement to remove the grate, they created a fake grate with cardboard, and filled in the chunks of wall that were now missing with a mixture of soap and toilet paper that they mixed into a hardened paste, and then colored all of it with paint they had stolen from the industrial arts building and mixed to match the wall.

Once they had holes wide enough to squeeze through, the men climbed a utility corridor and reached a vacant cell block where they set up a base of operations. After lights out they would sneak off to their base and work on constructing the life preservers and raft, which they made from over 50 rubber raincoats. From a PBS article called "what you will need to create your own raincoat raft," Raincoats were common on the Rock even on sunny days. The joke on Alcatraz was that the birds were better shots than the guards. The inmates would sometimes wear their olive green and rubberized raincoats out to the yard, take it off and have someone else pick it up. The inmates used raincoats made of plastic or rubber like PVC to create a fourteen feet by six feet raft. They sealed the raincoats together with a type of waterproof glue. The FBI recovered a bottle of Rem-Weld book

repair liquid plastic on top of Cell block B. "

Now this next part actually IS kind of brilliant: they used a concertina—a small accordion that they stole from another inmate— as a bellows to inflate the raft. Also, how many accordions were in this prison? Was this part of the punishment for the other prisoners? Do you know what's worse than solitary confinement? The cacophony of 50 poorly-played accordions reverberating through a cellblock. I'd rather be sodomized in the shower. You know what's worse than being sodomized in the shower? Being sodomized in the shower to the soundtrack of 50 poorly played accordions...anyway, using the concertina as a Bellows was the plan; we don't know if that actually worked, the life preservers that would later be recovered were deflated so who knows. Cool idea, though.

The men *did* make use of the prison library, as previously referenced...for instance an issue of popular mechanics that Morris discovered within an article "your life preserver – – how will it behave if you need it?" And also various articles about navigating rough water etc. They were eventually able to stitch together a 6 x 14' rubber raft, and seal it with liquid plastic from the shops by using heat from steam pipes. They used plywood and screws for paddles. And the most famous element of the escape: with a mixture of soap, toothpaste, concrete dust, and toilet

paper, the men improvise a papier-mâché like substance that they then sculpted into fake heads. They stole hair from the barbershop floor and paint from the maintenance shop to fashion realistic looking heads. Realistic in the dark when laid on their side, I mean let's be real these didn't look like heads. They were like nightmare corpse- piñatas but if you just glanced through a cell at the back of the head, they did the job. The men would then stuff clothing under the blankets in the shape of a body, and this is how they were able to get out of their cells so often at night without being detected.

Finally, the day arrived. On June 11, 1962 Frank Morris and the Anglin brothers slipped through their widened vent holes, navigated the utility corridor, and climbed up a ventilation shaft to reach the roof, where presumably they waited for Alan Clayton West. West, however, would not make the trip. He found that the mixture of fake cement that he had used to seal the grate back in place had hardened into a substance a lot like cement, and he couldn't remove the grill. By the time he actually got the hole sufficiently widened, his three co-conspirators had bailed. Without a raft of his own, Westwood return to his cell and go back to sleep. Doh.

Now, while West had been frantically chipping away in his cell, the three escapees eventually gave up and broke



through the cover of a shaft that led to the roof, which was apparently loud, but the guards ignored it, they were probably half deaf from all of that accordion playing. The men then shimmied down a 50 foot kitchen vent pipe. After this it's all speculation, no one knows what happened after this point. But it's a safe bet that they made their way to the water and slipped in. The destination was not San Francisco, but rather Angel Island, another island in the San Francisco Bay much closer than the mainland. The idea was to regroup there while authorities fruitlessly searched San Francisco, and then make the second part of the journey after they had recovered some energy.

The raft would never be found, but a couple of their life vests later washed up on shore, and were, as mentioned, deflated, though West would claim it was part of the plan...the guys agreed that they would sabotage all of their equipment after a successful escape in order to throw off investigators.

So one month after the escape, a Norwegian ship called the *SS Norefjell*, reported seeing a body that was floating in the ocean around 17 miles from the Golden Gate Bridge. They didn't report this sighting until three months later, but prison officials were eager to cite this body as evidence that the men were deceased.

The San Francisco county coroner was skeptical, however; it seems unlikely that one of the escapee's bodies was still floating around a month later, and

there is speculation that the corpse was instead one of the many Golden Gate Bridge suicides that is an unfortunate fact of life in the Bay Area...to this day around 30 people every year commit suicide by jumping to their death, despite the "Golden Gate Bridge suicide deterrent system", nets that have been placed there to prevent exactly such an occurrence. From the Golden Gate Bridge website: "The net consists of marine-grade stainless steel netting installed 20 feet below the sidewalks and extending out 20 feet over the water. Jumping into the net is designed to be painful and may result in significant injury." so if you're extremely depressed, we don't want you to end your suffering, we just want to significantly add to your pain. Oh, you're in emotional distress? How would you like to also be physically brutalized? Feeling less self-killy now?" I'm sure that failing to accomplish a goal and being physically punished for the attempt is probably a huge improvement to the mental health of a bridge jumper.

## **El Chapo**

Joaquín Archivaldo Guzmán Loera, aka "El Chapo, is the most notorious drug lord to ever lord over drugs; for around two decades he ruled the brutal

Mexican Sinaloa Cartel with an iron fist, eventually building the organization into an international crime syndicate that trafficked cocaine, meth, marijuana and heroin all across the Americas and as far away as Europe. His worldwide fame was unprecedented for a wanted criminal; outside of his home country he inspired fear and revulsion and fascination, but inside his native Mexico his legacy is more nuanced and mixed; for many people in the Mexican state of Sinaloa and even the broader country as a whole, Guzman is a legendary freedom fighter in the mold of Robin Hood. His ability to stay one step ahead of the unpopular government and elude the famously corrupt authorities earned him a mainstream following and inspired folk songs and fandom. He was the boy band of murderous criminals; his rise from nothing to billionaire made him an aspirational figure to the downtrodden worldwide, and he became an icon of gangster culture.

Here's a great example of how El Chapo cultivated good will, as related by the excellent kingpins podcast.

November 2007, the Las Palmas restaurant in Culiacan, the capital of Sinaloa Mexico. On a November evening, Armed men filed into the establishment, and the diners immediately began to panic. This was the Sinaloan nightmare; this part of Mexico has historically been the battleground for warring drug cartels, and mass shootings are an all-too common occurrence. But these men

quickly reassured patrons that they had nothing to fear, they simply needed to hand over their phones and continue their meals and they would be released without harm. Very reassuring, coming from strangers with guns. Who is more than trustworthy than a bandit? Once all of the phones had been collected, a short stocky man entered, immediately recognizable from the media saturation he receives. El Chapo was boisterous and came across as friendly; he was wearing casual, humble attire, not an ounce of bling in sight. Not even a diamond studded grill or a pimp cane. When he finished his meal he left without fanfare; his men then paid the tab for everyone in the restaurant, returned their phones, and filed back into the warm Sinaloan night. I get that this is gentlemanly behavior for a drug lord, but still...a little nerve wracking. And what if you had just finished eating when he sauntered in? Like, cool, you'll pay for my meal but I have two kids at home and the babysitter's extra time costs more than these tacos. Time is money, bro. I do not like to be inconvenienced.

Anyway, between 2009 and 2013 Guzman was listed as one of the most powerful people in the world by Forbes magazine. His exploits were breathlessly documented by journalists and governments; yet he is also an enigma. The publicly available info on El Chapo is often suspect or spotty at best; If you look at Guzman's profile on Wikipedia, it lists spouses as "at least 4" and children "at least 15." He spent

the majority of his life on the run and was frequently incarcerated, so it was in his best interest to obfuscate his biographical data and spread misinformation. But one thing we do know is that jail never slowed him down; when caught, he still managed to run his drug empire under the radar. Throughout his early career, prison was at worst an inconvenience, and often a comfortable base of operations.

Not much is known about Guzman's early childhood other than that he was born in La Tuna Sinaloa, which translates to "the prickly pear." I knew you wouldn't believe that because you've been burned in the past, but it's true. It refers to those fruits that grow on Cacti; tun in Spanish is atun. So little Jaoquin briefly sold oranges, has almost zero formal education, and is functionally illiterate. However, he quickly changed trajectories; young chapo—little chapito?—quickly graduated from orange-selling to marijuana, and cultivated both marijuana and poppies for the heroin trade. Jaoquin started as a small-time smuggler with the Guadalajara Cartel, and quickly earned a reputation for efficiency and ruthlessness. He also earned the first of his nicknames: El rapido, for that famous efficiency. He would later become known as el chapo—or "shorty"—due to his stature. I would probably have stuck with speedy over shorty. But it's an apt moniker; he is not a tall nor attractive man. He's an ugly little fuck. This is an Ed Kemper situation; I feel comfortable insulting

him because he's safely locked away for the rest of his natural born life. So... fuck that guy. Unless he escapes again. But I don't think he will; I'll explain why.

So by the early 90s El Chapo had taken full control of the Sinaloa cartel, and much of his success was due to his pioneering use of tunnels for transporting narcotics across the border. But success comes with a price: as his profile continued to rise, he become more of a target for law enforcement, and also a target of jealousy and resentment within the drug trade. El Chapo was arrested for the first time on June 9, 1993, having essentially been handed over to the Feds by some of the drug lords who were his compatriots and/or rivals. But if they thought prison would neutralize El Chapo's power and influence, they were sorely mistaken. Guzman would spend six years managing and actually expanding his empire from a private prison cell that was furnished like a condo in the Puente Grande prison. His lavish prison lifestyle of sex, girls, fine dining and volleyball, was made possible in large part by the conveniently flexible morals of deputy director of security Dámaso López Nuñez. Aside from giving him cash and a house, El Chapo also paid the medical bills for Nuñez's child when the young boy was injured. Damaso would later explain, "When I needed anything, I would ask and he would give it to me." However, Nuñez was fired in 2000, under suspicion of

corruption (who was the eagle-eyed genius who sniffed out corruption in the condo-party-prison; top-tier detective work. That giant disco ball was a little bit of a tell) and his departure coincided with a decision by the Mexican Supreme Court authorizing extradition to the United States, which would have resulted in a slightly less luxurious prison experience. Less volleyball.

On January 19, 2001, a prison guard named Francisco Camberos Rivera, known as El Chito, or the Silent One, passed El Chapo's cell rolling a laundry cart. Moments later, El Chapo was gone.

The story of the escape has been hotly debated. The famous and often repeated version is that El Chapo climbed into the laundry court, but various journalists have pointed out that the cart would have had to pass through various checkpoints featuring sensors that couldn't be paid off. Rather, they claim that he was taken to the infirmary with a fake ailment and then simple escorted out to the parking lot and hopped into the trunk of an El Camino. Eventually 71 people would be implicated in assisting with his escape, and the prison Director would be jailed. The Director can count himself lucky though, as a guard who came forward to snitch disappeared and was presumed murdered. So it could have been worse, although I WILL say...if you are the director of a prison and then

you're SENT to prison...that's probably not a comfortable experience. The other inmates are literally salivating. I'd avoid the showers. Just get some Axe body spray and splash yourself with toilet water every now and then. Eau de toilette indeed.

So El Chapo would remain free and hunted for over a decade, but he was once again apprehended in 2014. He eluded the initial attempt at capture by escaping through a tunnel under his bath tub, but was finally cornered in a nearby apartment complex. He would be incarcerated in Altiplano prison about 50 miles west of Mexico City. On July 11, 2015, cameras showed El Chapo head into the shower of his cell, the only area not visible to security. When he hadn't returned in almost half an hour, guards rushed to the room and discovered a 20 inch by 20 inch hole in the floor of the shower, connected to a steep ladder leading to a very narrow tunnel. Slightly more than 5 feet tall and only 28 inches wide, the tunnel is pretty much my claustrophobic nightmare, but did feature air ducts, lighting, and a modified motorcycle on a track that could carry Guzman the mile-plus distance between his shower and a safehouse. More than a mile in that gopher hole...jesus. I would be curled in a ball and hyperventilating just by looking into the tunnel. I wouldn't even step foot inside and it would still haunt my dreams. The pictures I saw ruined my day. I haven't recovered. The safe house where the tunnel originated had



been under construction, so all of the heavy machinery in the area hadn't aroused suspicion. It's wild that Guzman's men were able to construct a tunnel so precisely that it eventually broke through in exactly the tiny area of the shower which was the only spot hidden from the cameras. This was tunneling perfection, and based on techniques pioneered by Guzman himself. The master of tunnels had created the most masterful of tunnels. I don't even know.

So do you know how Guzman was finally caught for good? The story is surreal and if it were in a movie would not be believable. There is a Mexican actress that Guzman was obsessed with, her name is Kate del Castillo. You might say she's a very attractive lady, if you're into that kind of thing. In January 2012 she posted a long message on Twitter pleading with El Chapo to "traffic in love" instead of drugs. And he immediately quit smuggling heroin, he was like well why didn't I think of that. What's the street price for "love," btw? Does it come in ounces? So that's the kind of idiot Kate del Castillo is. And she truly is an idiot, she is a bonkers ass conspiracy theorist. Part of her message said, "Today I believe more in Chapo Guzmán [than in] the government that hides painful truths from me, that hides the cure for cancer, AIDS, etc., for their own benefit and wealth." Ok. Governments historically have made a ton of money from AIDS. Charging those AIDS taxes...what?

So anyway, El Chapo saw her tweet as his opportunity, and subsequently his lawyers reached out to del Castillo to gauge her interest in being involved with a movie about his life. Another interested party who was curious about the life of El Chapo: the Mexican government, who promptly placed Kate Del Castillo under surveillance. Now this is even more bizarre, because this is when American actor Sean Penn got involved. Because why not? He wanted to interview El Chapo for Rolling Stone magazine. I feel like this is just a bunch of words and they can't possibly have any real meaning. Sean Penn, Rolling Stone magazine, El Chapo, Mexican actresses, it's very bizarre.

So Castillo and Sean Penn communicated with El Chapo through burner phones, and arranged a meeting and an interview. This is a real thing that happened in the actual known universe. The interview is also notable for being the first time El Chapo acknowledged and publicly admitted to drug smuggling. "Guzmán, who had never before acknowledged his drug trafficking to a journalist, told Penn he had a "fleet of narco-submarines, airplanes, trucks and boats" and that he supplied "more heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana than anybody else in the world". Narco submarine sounds like a wild time. Should definitely be a movie. Hot tub time machine, Cocaine Bear and the narco submarine.

Of course, unbeknownst to Kate del Castillo and Sean Penn, the Mexican government was monitoring the

entire meeting; somehow Super-Spy Op-Sec is not the speciality of mid-tier actors. The feds moved in, but El Chapo was able to escape by running away while holding a baby. Or at least a child. Less high-tech than his usual tunnel strategy, but effective. He's better at this than actors. but the feds were on El Chapo's trail, and his days as a free man were numbered. A tiny, ugly free man. El Chapo eventually took refuge at a safe house that wasn't, it was safe at all because it was being monitored by the government, and when one of his flunkies was sent on a taco run, police followed him back to the house. That is true. The subsequent police raid resulted in the deaths of five bad guys, which in Mexico could include police but in this case it doesn't. So El Chapo was finally doomed by his love of tacos. And in a way, aren't we all?

But wait, did I mention that Guzman escaped again, through another fucking tunnel—who would've guessed—and then he perpetrate a carjacking (such a gentleman, man of the people). Finally the car was intercepted and Guzman was taken into custody. He was extradited to the United States, despite arranging for the murder of one of the extradition judges who had committed the crime of doing his job and going outside. He was killed while jogging. Man of the people! El Chapo is currently housed in ADX Florence prison in Colorado, aka Florence Supermax the most secure prison in America. it's actually one step higher than a maximum

security prison, and I don't know how that works from a linguistic perspective, but OK. It's more maximized than the maximum. This is true, it's actually known as the "Alcatraz of the Rockies." Which takes us back to the beginning...a great place to stop. At the beginning. Don't you always stop at the beginning? I don't know what that means.

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### ☆ **Entertaining and educational**



Anonymous • 3 days ago

Please stop doing the samples, we want full episodes :(



I totally get the sentiment, I wish we could do a full new Miffy episode every week. And I'm optimistic that someday we can! These take a lot of work, a lot of research, I simply can't do an episode every week and still live my life and also have a job, and also do Comedy, and also make these episodes quality. Something had to give. I have severely cut back on Stand Up Comedy, I'm doing hardly any

shows at this point, I think the podcast is going to be my focus, but I still won't be able to do an episode every week, it's just not possible unless this is my full-time job. And that's what we're working towards. but I wanna make it clear that the samples are not just teasers, you can get the full free episode in our discord community for one week. So if you want the full episode, it is absolutely available to you, please don't think that the sample is just a teaser that you have to pay for. We would like you to join our discord and contribute three dollars a month and help us get to the point where maybe we can do an episode every week, but for now we're still building this show to the point where it's sustainable and hopefully will be viable income for both of us. That's the dream. For some quick backstory we started this podcast right around quarantine, when we had nothing else to do. Even then, it was tough to do one episode every week, but now we are back to full-time jobs, it is just brutal. And for that, we need people to join our Patreon, tell their friends, we need more listeners, and eventually we will have to include ads in these episodes. It's just going to have to happen so that we can get to the next level, but we will always make sure that you get a free Miffy episode every other week and we will keep the After Midnight episodes free in the discord community. We really are not trying to bait and switch or frustrate you guys, trust me, we wish we could give you two episodes a week, that would be

amazing.

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