

Jail Break (Horror Edition)

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. ABANDONED PLAYGROUND - LATE AFTERNOON

A meadow silhouetted by dark forest trees. Long dead. Jutting up, they resemble teeth.

Birds chirp as the sun dips. Branches tickle its edge. The orb giggles--

-- or several CHILDREN do. Dressed in rags, they run around the playground, not on it. Equipment's rusted out.

In one sandy patch DURIN (6 year old waif) focuses intently on an "art" project: a standing STICK FIGURE.

A sparrow lands nearby, curious. Durin tosses seeds.

Feet away, older kids huddle. Negotiations are tense. Two leaders face off:

FOSTER: Latino, 11 - no-nonsense eyes in a kind face.

ALBRICH: 12. Blond and thin, tough. Albrich yanks a large boy (WARREN, 12) to his side.

ALBRICH

I choose Warren.

FOSTER

You sure? He's big - but can he run?

ALBRICH

Won't have to, that's strategic. Say Hello to 'The Wall,' Despacito.

(pokes Foster's chest)

Try n' beat that, Numb Nuts.

Foster scans the remaining kids, who cower. His eyes drift to little Durin - now using mud to glue grass to his stick figure's head.

FOSTER

Hey, Durin - whatcha up to?

DURIN

Making a statue of my mom. Look!

Foster side-eyes Warren. Then Durin. Weighs the risk.

FOSTER

Wanna join our game?

Play with the big kids! Durin scampers over, all smiles.

MOMENTS LATER

Two teams of six face off in separate lines.

Between them, a makeshift JAIL: rusty metal pipes create the bars. 13 year old KHEE stands as guard.

ALBRICH

When I say go, everyone spread out. No-one leaves the forest. Any cheating will be punished by the Gamekeeper.

Several teammates shudder.

ALBRICH

Last time, my team was robbers. Now, we're cops. Which means, all you gotta do is run while we try to catch you guys!

DURIN

How?

ALBRICH

By grabbing you-

He fake-grabs at Durin, who flinches. Albrich laughs.

ALBRICH

And counting. By three, you go to jail.

DURIN

(whispers, scared)
What if I don't wanna?

Foster gently pats Durin's head, eyes the fading sun.

FOSTER

Run fast and you'll be fine.

ALBRICH

Prisoners get free if a teammate gets past Khee and touches the bars.

The sun's now halfway behind the trees: Albrich bellows.

ALBRICH

Action time. Go!

Kids scatter. This game is on!

MOMENTS LATER

Children scurry side-to-side.

Kids who *didn't* get picked watch in eerie silence. Beyond them, the forest seems darker. Quieter, too.

Warren grabs ELLA (10, a tomboy with pig-tails.) She struggles, but his ham fisted grip is too tight.

WARREN

One. Two.

ELLA

Lemme go! I know your sister. If you jail me, she'll hate your guts!

Unsure, Warren glances towards Albrich. The blond leader flashes "thumbs down": Execute.

WARREN

Three. I bind thee!

Ella sags. Glancing towards the tree line, she shudders. Trudges to jail. A grinning Khee waves her inside.

Durin darts under a cop girl's legs (NERIDA, 11). And zips towards a JUNGLE GYM.

On a high bar, weather-worn TOYS and TRINKETS dangle. Names scrawled on strips of fabric. Souvenirs... of who?

Durin limbos under a low bar. Trying to follow, Nerida whacks her head. Ow! Too tall.

Durin laughs, sticks out his tongue. This is fun!

Albrich stalks Foster, who ducks behind a MERRY GO ROUND. Graffiti decorates planks. Scary monsters. Cartoon claws.

ALBRICH

You can't hide forever.

FOSTER

That's kinda the rules, Doofus.

ALBRICH

Rules are what you make 'em.

Albrich scavenges for rocks to throw, spots Durin's stick-statue nearby.

ALBRICH

Hey, Durin... this your mom?

He kicks the stick figure. Branches fly!

DURIN

No!

Durin freezes. Nerida seizes her moment. Him, too.

NERIDA

One, two, three - I bind thee!

Scared, Durin looks to Foster. The leader nods.

FOSTER

Sorry. Rules are rules. Jail for now. But I'll get you out before it's dark!

The boy shuffles off to jail. Beyond his small silhouette, faint mist rises from the woods.

Foster grimaces. He's worried, now.

INT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Durin's got company: Ella and 12 year old NID.

ELLA

Hey, you're the newbie? I'm Ella. This is Nid. They caught you? That sucks eggs.

Durin eyes the bars: just wide enough for him to escape. He slips an elbow through. Nid tugs him back, terrified.

NID

Don't! What are you, crazy?

DURIN

Why not? I bet I can outrun him.

Durin points to Khee. Ella frowns.

ELLA

It's not Khee you've got to worry about. Some rules just shouldn't be broken.

DURIN

Why?

ELLA

Let's just leave it at that, alright?

Durin plops to the ground, a bundle of frustration.

DURIN

We're stuck in here forever?

ELLA

Have faith. *Someone* will get us out.

She and Nid exchange grim looks.

ELLA

Soon, I hope.

Movement outside. ROSA (11) sneaks towards the jail, finger to her lips. Khee's back is turned. Ella smiles.

Rosa tiptoes, mere seconds from the bars. When...

A monstrous shadow forms out of nowhere. Angry eyes flash. It's Warren! He grabs Rosa, throws her down.

NID

Do that to me. Bully!

Belly in the grass, Rosa spots a DEAD BIRD. Inches from her face, the body's fresh. She squeals, tries to roll away. Warren pinches her neck - pins her down.

WARREN

One, two, three. I bind thee!

He tosses Rosa like a rag-doll over to Khee.

WARREN

That's two. Where's my reward?

IN THE JAIL CELL

Rosa enters. Ella winces at her scrapes. The girl shrugs.

ROSA

It's just dirt and rocks. Nothing -
(gulps)
Worse. Sorry I screwed up.

ELLA

You tried. That's what counts.

Rosa glances at Ella, then Durin.

ROSA

How many are we down? You, me and him.
That's three.

Durin realizes... Nid's missing. His face brightens.

DURIN

Cool! Nid got out?

ELLA
Not exactly.

ON THE PLAYGROUND

Foster runs between swings. Warren tangles in the chains.

The young leader zips over to ROOSEVELT, a 10 year old with ebony black skin.

The two confer MOS. Foster pants, points towards jail. It's almost completely dark. Twilight's come.

IN JAIL

Ella and Rosa comfort Durin, explain the "facts of life."

ELLA
Nid didn't "escape."

ROSA
If you're in jail too long, people-

ELLA
Disappear.

DURIN
Wait. What? Where?

ROSA
No-one knows.

ELLA
Except the Gamekeeper, of course.

DURIN
Who's the Gamekeeper?

ROSA
The one who... makes the rules.

Durin cries. The girls hug him. Words won't work here.

ON THE PLAYGROUND

Roosevelt trips Warren. Fist pumps. Boo-yah! Until Khee grabs him from behind.

KHEE
One two three, I bind thee. You're out!

Albrich chases Foster, who darts around a SEE SAW, pushes down. The end clips Albrich's chin! Foster whoops as Albrich goes down.

The blond boy sputters, crawls across the ground.

ALBRICH

Hey, "Leader." Where's your team now?

Foster pales, squints in the cell and counts.

FOSTER

Roosevelt, Durin, Rosa. Where's Ella and Nid?

ALBRICH

They're yum yum gone. But there's room for dessert.

Curled in fetal position in a corner, Durin starts to FLICKER. Foster chokes. He knows what that implies.

Warren creeps up on Foster. Nerida and Khee to his right.

Foster gauges the distance. Can he reach the cell, jail break them all?

But Durin's got mili-seconds left. Foster gulps. Decides.

He grabs Warren, forces his own arm into the boy's fist.

FOSTER

One two three. You bind me!

ALBRICH

Hey, that's cheating!

FOSTER

Nah. Rules are what you make 'em. This game's done.

Durin stops flickering. The jail bars topple to the ground, on their own.

An exhausted Foster smiles. Albrich spits blood, scowls.

AT THE TREE LINE

The sun's a memory, fully swallowed by the forest. Skeletal trees ring the field. Waiting... for what?

Game participants stand exhausted. Bloody but proud. Albrich yells into the dark.

ALBRICH

The sacrifice is complete! Are you pleased?

In the forest: RED EYES blaze. The form attached is immense, but impossible to make out. It growls.

Albrich points to Foster's team. Ella and Nid still MIA.

ALBRICH

This cycle, we have bequeathed you two souls. It would've been three, but someone... cheated.

He pouts at Foster, who stands defiant.

FOSTER

No, the battle was fair. Strategic, too.
(grins at Albrich)
Guess someone doesn't like to lose? Next month, we'll be cops. I promise to deliver *more* than two.

Red eyes close. The creature in the forest shuffles off. All the children sigh. The danger's gone - for now.

Durin tugs on Foster's cuff. The tired leader looks down.

DURIN

Is it over?

FOSTER

For us. Now.

DURIN

Ella was nice. When's she coming back?

Foster ruffles Durin's hair, doesn't answer.

FOSTER

Hey, want me to help fix your sculpture?

Durin beams. They walk toward the sandy part of the lawn.

FOSTER

Tell me what your mom looked like, and I'll do the rest. She was pretty right? Before... everything?

DURIN

Oh, yes. Very much!

Foster smiles wistfully. Not *all* innocence is gone - yet.

FADE OUT: