

Chapter 7

Evans Tries an O-Level

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1. What kind of a person was Evans?

Answer: Evans was a young and clever prisoner. He had escaped thrice from the prison for which he was known 'Evans the Break'. He had never involved himself in violence. He had quite a pleasant personality and was a star at the Christmas concert. A kleptomaniac by birth, he was a law-breaker and was not a seasoned criminal. He was good at mimicry like Mike Yarwood and had an analytical mind to foresee the loopholes of the prison. He perplexed the prison staff with his crafty strategies. His charismatic personality had charmed even the senior prison officer. His presence in the prison caused a lot of tension. With his cheerful demeanour that was a sharp contrast to his cunning nature, he succeeded to make the fourth jail-break.

2. What were the precautions taken for the smooth conduct of the examination?

Answer: For smooth conduct of the examination, various precautionary measures were taken. All sharp instruments like razor and nail -scissors were removed. The Governor, senior prison officer Jackson and officer Stephen were put on duty. A special invigilator was arranged. A microphone was fitted in the prison cell where the examination was to be conducted.

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1. Will the exam now go as scheduled?

Answer:No, the exam will not go as scheduled.It had to be started at 9.15,but it started at 9.25. Everything had been in order for the exam to start on its scheduled time, but the Governor, still apprehensive, ordered a last minute change in plan. As another precautionary measure, he ordered frisking the invigilator as well, before allowing him to carry out his assigned job. This wasted some time and the exam started at 9:25am, ten minutes later than the scheduled time.

1. Did the Governor and his staff finally heave a sigh of relief?

Answer: Evans was a shrewd man who allowed only a momentary sigh of relief to the Governor and his staff. The exam was supposed to have ended peacefully, but when Stephens rechecked Evans's cell, he was stunned to see the profusely bleeding McLeery still in the cell. He concluded that the man he had escorted to the gate was actually Evans. Measures were taken to recapture Evans with the help of the bleeding McLeery, who was later sent off to a hospital for treatment. However, soon it was exposed that this 'bleeding McLeery' was the real Evans. Finally, when the Governor traced Evans and ordered him to be taken back to the prison with a prison officer in the official van, another conspiracy unfolded. Evans fled again, as the prison officer and the van were part of his back-up plan. His flawless plans left everyone perplexed and troubled.

1. Will the injured McLeery be able to help the prison officers track Evans?

Answer: Yes the Injured McLeery will be able to help the prison officers track Evans. Mc Leery showcasing his knowledge of German, reveals the supposed plan of Evans through the superimposed question paper. He proposes to guide the officials to the whereabouts of Evans. However, this is later revealed to be a part of Evans' plan to flee to safety, as it was Evans himself who was disguised as the injured McLeery. It can be, thus, noticed that the disguised McLeery's help to the officials was fake as it was just a part of Evans's escape plan.

1. Will the clues left behind on the question paper, put Evans back in prison again?

Answer: Yes they will. Evans escaped from the prison with the help of a clever, infallible plan. Certain clues were left behind by the shrewd fugitive which was a "careless" act according to the Governor. There was a superimposed question paper with directions to the

supposed plan. However, it was soon seen that all of it was fake and part of the plan to misguide the officials. But the little German the Governor knew and the 'correction slip' did help them to track him down.

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1. Where did Evans go?

Answer: After deceiving the police intelligently, Evans went to the hotel Golden Lion located in Chipping Norton. From there, finally he left for Newbury with his friends in the police van.

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1. Reflecting on the story, what did you feel about Evans' having the last laugh?

Answer: Evans smartly devised and executed the plan of his escape. He managed to fool everyone till the end of the story. He left fake clues to misguide the officials chasing him. Even as the Governor heaved a sigh of relief after nabbing him in the Golden Lion hotel, Evans was secretly cooking and executing another path of escape. The prison officer and the van used by the Governor for transferring Evans back to the prison were forged. The

Governor was happy that ultimately he was able to track him down using his intelligence and knowledge of German. However, Evans had planned a step ahead. With his successful escape, Evans definitely had a well earned last laugh.

2. When Stephens comes back to the cell he jumps to a conclusion and the whole machinery blindly goes by his assumption without even checking the identity of the injured ‘McLeery’. Does this show how hasty conjectures can prevent one from seeing the obvious? How is the criminal able to predict such negligence?

Answer: Evans was a smart and perceptive criminal. He had assessed the weaknesses of the jail officers successfully. Stephen was new recruit to the prison set up. When he saw the injured Mcleery in the cell he was so overwhelmed that he did not even check who he really was and neither did anyone else. It did not occur to anyone to question how there could be two persons there— one in the cell and the other who had been escorted out by Stephens. It was for this very reason that the friend of Evans, who, posing as the Governor on the phone, had directed Stephens that he himself should escort the parson out, when the exam was finished. The Governor and his officers, in effect actually led Evans out of the

prison. The question paper was left behind to mislead the Governor. This shows that Evans the criminal had enough time to study the behavioral patterns of the jail officers and to plan his strategy well.

3. What could the Governor have done to securely bring back Evans to the prison when he caught him at the Golden Lion? Does that final act of foolishness really prove that “he was just another good-for-a-giggle, gullible governor, that was all”?

Answer: The Governor took all the precautions to make sure that Evans should not have any chance to escape from the prison. He even tracked and arrested him at the Golden Lion after his sensational escape from the prison. But his overconfidence once again proved that he was no match for the clever and crafty Evans. The Governor after finding the clues from the question paper tracked Evans at the Golden Lion. When Evans entered the room he was shocked to see the Governor. Evans offered no resistance and was arrested. The gullible Governor gloated over his success and said goodbye to him. Evans was handcuffed and made to sit in the police van. The Governor did not take care to check the identity of the driver, the van and the officer. A little more vigilance could have averted the escape of the criminal. If the Governor had accompanied Evans to the

prison cell with full police arrangements the criminal would not have escaped. This act of negligence proved that he was “just another good-for-a-giggle gullible governor that was all”.

4. While we condemn the crime, we are sympathetic to the criminal. Is this the reason why prison staff often develop a soft corner for those in custody?

Answer: ‘Crime’ and ‘criminals’ are usually considered synonymous. However, our perception changes when we see a criminal suffering or taking his punishment. This is what happens with the prison staff. Noticing a criminal suffer in the prison, they unwillingly develop a soft corner for him in their hearts. They look at him as a human being and not as a mere criminal. They start noticing and appreciating their mental capabilities rather than just recalling their crime. In the story, Jackson lets Evans keep his hat after knowing that he considered it to be his lucky charm. Evans knew of the emotional side of Jackson and so hit it directly through his talk about “lucky charm”, and managed to fool the stern and practical officer. Even the Governor could not help noticing his intelligence when he caught him in the hotel. Thus, he was not cruel or stern with Evans, and regrettably, took him leniently.

5. Do you agree that between crime and punishment it is mainly a battle of wits?

Answer: In every battle the stronger side wins; and this strength could be physical or mental. However, after reading the story we can conclude that between crime and punishment, it is mainly a battle of wits. The side which outsmarts the other wins. It is not always that a criminal gets punished. In the given story, the police officials, though well-trained, were easily fooled by the clever Evans who managed to escape from right under their nose. The Governor and Evans, both tried to outwit each other. The Governor took all the precautions like bugging the cell during the examination. He sent Stephen to escort McLerry and found the hotel precisely. Evans was also taken aback when he came to know that the receptionist in the hotel was an informer. There are several examples of the battle of wits between crime and punishment.