

# **DYKES, GANGS, AND DANGER: DEBUNKING POPULAR MYTHS ABOUT MAXIMUM-SECURITY LIFE\***

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although the number of incarcerated females is rapidly increasing, few of us will have actual contact with women in a correctional setting. For the most part, our ideas about female inmates and the prisons they are housed in come from filmic images – images that, though highly accessible to the public, depict inaccurate accounts of prison life. From the use of unlikely characters and their corresponding improbable behavior to the maintenance of insecure facilities and impossible happenings, the four films reviewed for this article propagate common, negative stereotypes of inmates. After providing numerous filmic images of inaccurate depictions, the author provides counterexamples based on her own work in a maximum-security prison as an educator of female inmates. More than being wrong, celluloid portrayals of female prisoners inspire additional marginalization of a group who, though convicted of serious crimes, will eventually be released into society.

## **INTRODUCTION**

At a reception in the winter of 1998, I overheard a Dean at Marymount Manhattan College talking about the college's participation in an inmate education program. Marymount was part of a consortium of colleges that sent its professors to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility – New York State's only maximum-security facility for women. Immediately, I applied to teach in the program, and by June of 1998, I was standing in front of my first incarcerated class.

Though I thought that I had no expectations about what I would experience as a penal educator, most everything I witnessed on my first visit surprised me. The women were articulate, kind, and eager to learn. Soon, going to the prison became one of my favorite activities. Naturally, I was disappointed when few people shared my enthusiasm for my volunteer work. After all, I was working in a maximum-security prison sans guard, communications equipment, or weapon. To others, all that protected me from "them" was faith – faith and reality. To tell the truth, my students on the inside are among the brightest, the best, the most dedicated that I have ever had. They read the assignments, they memorize the syllabus, and they hunger for knowledge.

And so, when repeatedly my involvement with the prison was not only questioned, but criticized, I decided to try to determine the source of such negative attitudes by examining the portrayal of incarcerated women in four films: *Chained Heat*, *Red Heat*, *Fugitive Rage*, and *Angels in Chains*. Appendix A contains the plot synopses for each of the films.

## **UNLIKELY CHARACTERS AND IMPROBABLE BEHAVIOR**

Aside from sharing the experience of being incarcerated, female prisoners have much in common. They are likely to be black or Hispanic, poor, uneducated, abuse survivors, single parents, and in poor health (see for example, Brownell, 1997; Fletcher, Shaver, & Moon, 1993; Marquart, Merianos, Cuvelier, & Carroll, 1996; Richie & Johnsen, 1996; Turnbo & Murray, 1997). At Bedford, the population is 51 percent Black, 28 percent Hispanic, and 19 percent White, with the remainder being Asian. The average age is 34 years. Over 75 percent are mothers, and less than 50 percent finished the 12th grade prior to incarceration (College Bound Task Force, 1997).

Since none of those characteristics were accurately portrayed in the films viewed for this project, I will begin by focusing my analysis on the celluloid depictions of inmates. First, despite the fact that women of color are the majority group in most American prisons, *Chained Heat* was the only film to include black inmates, one of whom was promptly stabbed to death by an entire cellblock of white women. In keeping with stereotypes, the women were portrayed as belonging to an ethnically defined gang, and only the gang leader had speaking lines, which were minimal. The leader did serve a role in the overthrow of the prison administration at the conclusion of the film, but she was able only to accomplish this feat with the assistance of her white peers. Viewers of these films are presented with completely inaccurate portrayals of the ethnic backgrounds of most incarcerated women.

Thus, the main characters in each of the films were white females who were assigned one of the following three roles: the violent, sex-crazed victimizer who furthers the goals of a corrupt prison administration; the innocent victimized limpet who is used as a sexual pawn or to incite the anger of other inmates; and the beautiful young heroine-to-be, wrongly imprisoned and in pursuit of justice for herself and her peers. This last character, of course, is the object of the sexual desires of the warden, correctional officers, and other inmates. Based on the work of Manatu-Rupert (1999), that each of these character types is highly sexualized is not surprising; females, especially black females, are often presented as sex objects in film.

As much as the cast lusts after the inmate protagonist, they fear the wrath of the sex-crazed victimizer. For example, in *Red Heat*, an inmate known as Sophia routinely rapes other inmates, steals from those in her cell block, and facilitates the evil deeds of her girlfriend, the prison warden. It is Sophia's job not only to assault each of the new arrivals to the facility, but also to force them into sex acts with the warden and correctional officers. Although *Chained Heat*'s Erika becomes slightly less predatory by the film's end, opening scenes show her forcefully fondling new arrivals. We later see her cruising through communal showers watching the women bathe themselves and each other as she decides who her next victims will be.

Communal showers and living areas, which will be discussed later, encourage frequent occurrences of rape and group sex. Only in *Fugitive Rage* were the inmates occasionally segregated from one other, so orgies and punishing assaults were orchestrated by the likes of Sophia and Erika in the cell blocks on a regular basis. Though prone to violent ends – Sophia was shot in the back by her warden girlfriend – the violent, sex-crazed victimizer character has the most freedom and the easiest time on the inside.

The second inmate type – the hapless victim – was also a staple of each film. This character is routinely victimized for the purpose of impressing others. For example, in *Red Heat* Sophia destroys a possession of the victim Barbara and then rapes her with a plunger to show the new inmates what will happen to them if they do not succumb to her commands. Later, in order to win favor with a guard, Sophia allows Barbara to be raped by him. She concludes the assault by murdering Barbara and hanging her body from the laundry room ceiling.

In addition to being used as pawns, the victimized also serve to inspire other inmates to action. For instance, the sight of Barbara's brutalized body suspended over the linens sparked the inmate protagonists into planning a rebellion against the murderous Sophia and her counterparts. Similarly, Josey – the victimized inmate in *Fugitive Rage* – is violently beaten to provide future justification for her cellmate's attack on the evil officials that are threatening them both. In *Angels in Chains*, in which Charlie's Angels pretend to be inmates for the purpose of gathering information about the facility's corrupt administration, the Angels redouble their efforts after seeing the character played by Kim Basinger forced into a prison-based prostitution ring. In the end, Basinger's character is released and she gets a job as a secretary for the Angels. The martyr character's existence incites other inmates to action and allows sexual predators to display their power without having to attack the final type of inmate: the beautiful heroine-to-

be, wrongly imprisoned and in pursuit of justice.

In *Chained Heat*, Linda Blair, as the character Carol, epitomizes this role. She is young, attractive, refuses the advances of her fellow inmates and guards, and wishes only to address the flaws in the facility where she is incarcerated. For example, when Carol – who is wrongfully incarcerated for vehicular homicide – discovers that her warden is creating video tapes of himself having sex with inmates in his office and running a prostitution ring composed of her peers, she hatches a plan to smuggle the tapes to outside law enforcement. In the process of achieving this objective, her confidant, the victimized limpet Val, is bludgeoned to death by another inmate. Val's murder motivates Carol to expose the warden and to orchestrate an escape attempt *en masse*. In the end, the once shy and retreating Carol succeeds in delivering the tapes to the police, killing the corrupt guards, and facilitating the escape of most of her counterparts.

Charlie's Angels also embody the character of the militant heroine. The Angels are perfect for this role because they are sent to the prison by their crime fighting boss and thus completely innocent of any crime. Moreover, the Angels appear as glamorous and polished in their form-fitting prison issued garb as they do in their civilian clothing. Taunted by the warden and correctional officers, they suffer multiple indignities in the hopes of bettering the lot of the other inmates. Inspired by the suffering of their incarcerated peers, the Angels ultimately facilitate the release of over 50 percent of the inmates and receive commendation from the governor.

Of course, many films display the victimizer, victim, and heroine characters, and one can find similar individuals in prison. At issue is the degree of the behaviors portrayed. For example, based on my knowledge, rape occurs infrequently in female institutions. In fact, when I inquired about the likelihood of such an event, the inmates laughed at me. Rape, either between inmates or between correctional officers and inmates, was characterized as rare. It happens, but not often.

This is not to say that there is no sexual contact between female inmates. Though prohibited by prison regulations, research suggests that approximately 50 percent of incarcerated women will adopt homosexual behavior during the length of their sentence for an array of reasons. In order to replicate the structure of the society from which they have been removed, women form couples. Women become partners for the purposes of companionship and affection, just as they might on the outside and, occasionally, women trade sex for protection, for resources, or out of a need to belong to a group.

Although incarceration does not insure rape, prison life can be violent, but not to the extent portrayed in the films I viewed. If those movies accurately depicted the rate of assault in our penal institutions, society would not have to worry about how to house the burgeoning numbers of incarcerated females – they would all kill each other in less than a year.

In the films I analyzed, not only did blatant incidents of inmate violence go unpunished; they were encouraged by the institutions' administrations. In reality, violent expressions insure "tickets," a permanent recording of inappropriate behavior on one's record. As an example of how undesirable a ticket can be, the issuance of one ticket at any time during a prisoner's incarceration means that the recipient will never be considered for residence in the honor dorm – the most comfortable, autonomous living quarters. Tickets result in "lock down" (confinement to one's cell) and the loss of privileges, including the right to attend special and educational programs. Furthermore, the few inmates I have observed being aggressive or unpleasant were shunned by their peers – especially by the women in special or educational programs.

But aggressive behavior brings more than blight on one's permanent record. Aggression insures confinement to a place multiply known as "SHU," "Special Housing Unit," or "The Box." And as if time in solitary confinement were not punishment enough, women enrolled in educational or special programs who visit The Box do not receive excused absences for the class meetings that they miss. Violence is not encouraged or unpunished.

Of course, there is an occasional incident, but they typically bear no resemblance to celluloid events. For example, after one of the women I work with “disappeared,” I learned that she was in solitary for smashing a commode with a woman’s face. The other inmate had flushed some personal property of my acquaintance’s down that same toilet, and so my student exacted a punishment for which she was also punished. Her attack was not motivated by a need for power, in order to frighten other inmates, or in response to an order by a guard. The vast majority of the violent scenes in the films were borne of one of the preceding conditions. In reality, the sex-starved power monger does not exist on the inside.

What happens to the weaker or less popular inmates? They sit alone during group activities. They “hang” in the yard by themselves. They walk to work alone. Though occasionally the target of taunts and verbal threats, I don’t know that they are physically harmed. Rather, their peers tend to withhold information and attention from them – two of the most valued commodities of prison life. I am positive that if violence occurred with even half the frequency of the extent to which it occurs in prison films, all of the inmates would be dead or in solitary.

Of the three celluloid inmate characters, the beautiful heroine figure actually is the closest to being accurate. One of the things I initially found the most shocking about the residents of the maximum-security prison I visit were their appearances. The women looked great. In fact, many of them had spent more time preparing their hair and make-up than had I. Only their identically colored green garb reminded me that I was no longer in the presence of civilians. For the most part, the majority of these women were as camera ready as the celluloid protagonists, though behaviorally, they share two major distinctions from their fictional peers.

First, unlike their two dimensional peers, I rarely hear real inmates deny guilt. The two times inmates told me they felt unjustly punished, they did not deny perpetrating crimes; rather, they asserted that they did not perpetrate the crimes for which they were currently incarcerated.

Second, the fictional characters’ objective was to curtail the activities of the correctional officers, warden, and predatory inmates, which usually involved the trafficking of drugs and sex. In sharp contrast, the inmates that I work with seek only to work in harmony with the facility’s administration and other residents. Without co-operation between all said groups, the special and educational programs at Bedford would not exist. In fact, it is common for close bonds to form between inmate and non-inmate groups. Yet viewers of the films I analyzed would never believe that anything other than exploitation and violence characterize prison relationships.

In sum, the demographic profile of celluloid inmates, their appearances, their behaviors, and their relationships with others are almost entirely inaccurate. Given only those images, it is easy to see why many people on the outside have a “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” attitude. In film, from the warden to the newest arrival, nearly every person involved with the penal system is corrupt, violent, and unable of making a positive contribution to society. More than being entertaining, these films are damaging and damning.

### **INSECURE FACILITIES AND IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENINGS**

As inaccurate as the images of female inmates and their behaviors are, depictions of the maintenance of prisons and their policies are just as unrepresentative. The regulation of inmates’ behavior and depiction of daily routines, along with the presentation of the prison environment, have little in common with the realities of incarcerated life – especially maximum-security life.

As previously mentioned, Bedford Correctional is indeed a maximum-security facility. Every minute of every inmate’s day is structured and under surveillance. The inmates are subject to four “counts” each day, plus an additional four counts if they participate in the educational program. In the morning, at

noon, at supper, and before bedtime correctional officers count each of the facility's 800 residents. If the women are in school, a teacher and an officer each take attendance twice, both before and after the break. Additionally, correctional officers are posted at the entrances and exits of each of the facility's buildings. There is no such thing as unaccounted for movement. Meals, mail, medication – everything is distributed at pre-specified times in pre-determined locations. Furthermore, each inmate is promptly issued a time schedule upon arrival, which dictates what she will be doing every hour of every day for the duration of her sentence. Nothing about life at Bedford is mysterious, ambiguous, or surprising.

On the other hand, everything about celluloid penal life and the regulation of the inmates is unpredictable. Unbelievably, *Chained Heat*, *Red Heat*, and *Fugitive Rage* all include as a significant plot development the traffic of inmates in and out of both their cell blocks and their respective facilities. In *Chained Heat*, viewers are quickly introduced to the goings-on of the warden's office. Outfitted with a full-sized hot tub, liquor, and all the amenities of a luxury hotel, the room is also heavily equipped with hidden cameras. In return for sex, the inmates are allowed freely to travel in and out of his office and the rest of the institution. Additionally, the warden video tapes his interactions with inmates and then sells the tapes to pornography outlets. Furthermore, it is made clear to viewers that the correctional officers are not only aware of, but actually facilitate these activities. Here we find multiple violations of prison policy, security, and contact with inmates. Questions of morality aside, that sort of behavior would be logistically impossible in a real prison.

Depictions of inmate treatment grow even more outrageous when we learn that the assistant warden regularly rounds up the inmates deemed most sexually desirable by the warden, outfits them in glamorous underwear, shoes, and evening gowns, directs their escape from the prison, and loads them into a limo, where they are delivered to the warden's opulent home. Incidentally, the prisoners escape by removing a large, circular cover hiding a large hole in the wall, step through it, and drive away. Because no fencing surrounds the facility and there are no guards posted outside (as is the case with the other fictional facilities), the escape is fairly anticlimactic. Once at the warden's home, a champagne and caviar poolside party commences with the inmates serving as the warden's prostitutes to his prison suppliers.

A similarly implausible scene is repeated in *Angels in Chains*. Correctional officers recruit inmates from the general population, dress them in provocative clothing, and inform them that after attending three parties – three sexual exchanges with prison suppliers – they will no longer have to dig potatoes from the fields. Again, this behavior involves the trafficking of large numbers of inmates to the warden's home on the outside.

Equally inaccurate, though not as dramatic, are depictions of inmates' daily lives. Though inmates at Bedford Hills undergo an intensive daylong orientation immediately upon their incarceration, only *Red Heat* included an orientation scene. But instead of being geared toward the healthy adjustment of the prisoners, the three-minute lecture is nothing more than a series of threats issued by a screaming warden.

Atypical as the orientation session is, it prepares viewers for further discrepancies. As has been mentioned earlier, the women of Bedford have mandated daily schedules. However, only in *Angels in Chains* did the inmates have work assignments. None of the women were seen participating in educational or special programs; incarcerated time was seemingly without structure. In accordance with stereotypes and in stark contrast to reality, the celluloid women served remarkably easy time. Furthermore, although counselors and rehabilitation specialists are staples of real prison life, none of those figures appeared in any of the movies.

Additionally, counts, a staple of prison existence, were not present in any of the movies. And unlike Bedford, where all of the women are locked in their cells at night, only one of the films, *Fugitive Rage*, included a lock-down scene. Instead, women were confined to cells only when sentenced to a stay in solitary. As alluded to earlier, because the women rarely experienced periods of confinement, group violence and orgies were common occurrences. Interestingly, again with the exception of *Fugitive Rage*,

the films' facilities were constructed to accommodate group showers, sleeping quarters, and recreational areas. While fights and sexual assault took place in the sleeping and recreational areas, the showers were used for playful, soapy caressing. So aside from the fact that viewers are expected to believe that the inmates run free like so many hyper gerbils in a converted fish tank, we are also expected to accept that the same group of women who try to beat the hell out of each other in the open, under the watchful eyes of the guards, can't wait to strip down and teasingly splash water on each other's breasts. These scenes were most prevalent in *Red Heat* and *Chained Heat*.

Finally, perhaps the most striking affront to reality concerns the celluloid appearance and regulation of the penal facilities. Although it is not clear whether any of the institutions are maximum-security, the security measures displayed to viewers are less than minimal. For example, in *Chained Heat* the lighting is never brighter than dim, creating many shadows and dark halls in which inmates can engage in inappropriate conduct. Combine that darkness with the smog from the inmates' chain smoking, and visibility is significantly reduced. Indoor smoking, however, is another of the behaviors restricted at Bedford – no one wants the inmates to have the ability to start a fire, which is what eventually happens in *Chained Heat*.

Additionally, the living areas are sordid, dirty, and demoralizing. Graffiti and shackles decorate the walls, and corridors are booby-trapped with trip wires. The very air is heavy with depression and despair. In sharp contrast, Bedford assigns numerous women to daily, thorough cleanings. Women sweep, swab, and scrub continually. In my Bedford classroom an inmate enters at least once each night to empty my trash can – which is always barren. As soon as the last student vacates the room, a woman enters to sweep. My classroom on the inside is cleaner than my civilian quarters. Moreover, due to the poverty and poor living conditions that plagued my students prior to their incarcerations, for many Bedford is the best home they have ever had, far from celluloid depictions.

During rare moments of lighting, viewers see that the inmates in *Chained Heat* – just as in the other films – are clad in low-cut, tight fitting, short prison-issue garb or are allowed to wear civilian clothing. Moreover, in *Red Heat*, Sophia's shirt is torn open to the waist during the day, exposing a flimsy red camisole. At night, in a scene reminiscent of a boutique ad, the inmates all wear revealing lingerie. At Bedford, women are restricted to wearing green on at least half of their bodies. They choose from pants, shirts, skirts, and or dresses, and then have the option of replacing one of those items with street clothes. Without these restrictions, inmates could theoretically walk out of the facility. In contrast, the films' women look like cheaply clad club-kids out for a night on the town.

Other security-related compromises are even more outrageous. As previously described, the celluloid inmates experienced few difficulties leaving their facilities. Similarly, three civilian characters found it nearly as easy to break in. The first break-in attempt, though unsuccessful, occurs in *Chained Heat* in a large holding cell where detainees are about to be processed and housed in the prison. Just prior to being searched and given a uniform, correctional officers discover a transvestite among the group. When his entry is denied, he screams, cries, and rolls on the concrete floor, but to no avail; he is eventually returned to the outside. It would be next to impossible for a male successfully to hide among females awaiting incarceration.

The next two break-in attempts are more successful. After discovering the location of his girlfriend's wrongful incarceration, the boyfriend of the film's protagonist breaks into the facility portrayed in *Red Heat*. Once inside the prison (viewers are not privy to how this feat is accomplished), the young man quickly discovers a single electrical switch which, once flipped, completely disables the facility's security and communication systems. Ironically, of all the films, the prison in *Red Heat* is most obviously depicted to be maximum-security. When the inmates realize what has happened, they swiftly set about releasing their peers from solitary confinement, attacking the guards, and starting fires. In fact, the entire administration appears helpless as the women merely walk away from the correctional inferno. To

characterize those happenings as anything other than impossible would be an understatement.

The final impossible break-in occurs in *Fugitive Rage*. Shortly after having been incarcerated for the attempted murder of her sister's killer, our protagonist, Tara, is visited by an FBI agent who informs Tara that her record will be expunged in return for the assassination of a drug dealer – the target of her original murder plot. Though cooperation would insure immediate release, she refuses, and returns to her cell. Once there, her lovely limpet cellmate, Josey, tells Tara that she was incarcerated after the removal of her husband's penis – an act of retaliation against an abusive husband. Josey immediately wins the affections of Tara, and when the FBI agent returns again to hire Tara for the hit, she agrees, but with a stipulation. During her release, she demands that Josey be placed in solitary confinement so that she can be protected from the other inmates and also be released if Tara can kill her prey. Tara subsequently is released into the custody of the FBI agent and the opportunity for numerous sexual escapades. In the end, the drug dealer is killed and both Tara and Josey are released.

### DISCUSSION

“Wise up, kid. In here, it's not a matter of what you know, it's who you know, how you know.” These words of wisdom were spoken by victimizer Erika to protagonist Carol in *Chained Heat*. But if you watch these films, you won't know anything about the inside. From depictions of the inmates and their behavior, to the lack of security and impossible happenings of the celluloid facilities, the content of the four films viewed for this project can at best be described as misleading, and at worst, as damaging. Since “visual images have a persuasiveness beyond any vocabulary in or outside a given film,” the depictions are dangerous (Manatu-Rupert, 1999, p. 5); given time and exposure, consumers “see” the celluloid world as reality. According to Manatu-Rupert's interpretation of Bandura, viewers' attitudes are formed in response to the images presented on television and film, which, in this case, are totally misleading:

Filmic visuals stimulate acceptance, not contemplative thinking . . . and because of film's ability to simulate reality so persuasively, the images tend to appear “real” to viewers. If analysis is not brought to bear on the images, then for all intents and purposes, they are real for many, and this, indeed, poses serious problems (Manatu-Rupert, 1999, p. 17).

The films reinforce society's stereotypes about female prisoners: that they are violent, worthless, sex-crazed monsters totally unworthy of humane treatment, much less educational programs. But unlike their film peers, most of today's incarcerated females will leave their penal homes someday to become our neighbors, our co-workers, and our fellow community members. In order for that transition to be successful, many incarcerated women are in desperate need of special programs – programs for parenting, substance abuse treatment, and education. Just like their civilian counterparts, inmates need educational interventions in order to be the best citizens that they can be. Based on the images presented in these films, there is little reason for taxpayers to support the allocation of funds for the rehabilitation of incarcerated women. It is for this reason that the films are so disturbing. While their inaccurate portrayals of prison life are initially humorous, the possibility that the public will be less disposed to react favorably to the need for the special programs that long have been linked to lowered recidivism rates is upsetting.

Yet there is one disquieting similarity between the films and incarcerated life. In *Chained Heat* we hear the warden announce, “You know, the worst kinds are in here, murderers, prostitutes, dopers, perverts.” In New York State, those crimes are, indeed, equated. Due to the severity of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, persons convicted of murder one are incarcerated with first-time, non-violent drug mules and usually receive shorter sentences. Hauntingly, especially for the women experiencing the nightmare, in film and in reality, the penalty for taking someone's life is no more severe – is sometimes more lenient – than the penalty for carrying a controlled substance. And the accuracy of that portrayal is nothing short of tragic.

## ENDNOTES

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1. There is one notable exception. In the 1920s, the warden of Atlanta's Federal Penitentiary was given a 1-year sentence at his own facility because he was caught accepting bribes from the inmates. In return, he released them to gamble in Atlanta's clubs. Unlike the real inmates, however, the celluloid inmates were forced from the facility.

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## APPENDIX A

### 1. *Chained Heat* (1983)

What these women did to get into prison is nothing compared to what they'll do to get out! From the producer of *The Concrete Jungle* comes another explosive look at the violence, cruelty, and corruption of women in prison. A startling and explicit saga exposing the vicious reality of life behind bars, *Chained*



*Heat* stars Linda Blair (*The Exorcist*), Stella Stevens, and Playboy cover girl Sybil Danning as opponents in a stunning clash of wills.

Carol (Blair) is the newest inmate of the women's correctional facility, sent up for accidentally killing a man in a car. For Carol, the transition from student to prison inmate is a nightmare, with horrors beyond her ability to bear. The warden (John Vernon) is fond of filming himself in his hot tub with beautiful inmates. The warden's assistant (Stevens) is the leader of a drug trafficking and prostitution ring – selling drugs to the inmates and selling the inmates to men. Inside the prison walls, the white faction, led by Erika (Danning), and the black faction, led by Duchess (Tamara Dobson) strive to dominate the prison's drug and prostitution ring.

Carol is unwillingly caught in between – a pawn in the brutal fight to increase or finally expose the corruption that threatens all their lives. Explosive action!

## **2. *Red Heat* (1985)**

Linda Blair, Sylvia Kristel, and Sue Kiel are inmates in trouble in *Red Heat*. It's a sizzling and steamy action film that burns with intrigue, romance, and adventure.

Chris Carlson (Blair) is an American visiting her future husband, an Army Lieutenant stationed in West Germany. The handsome couple is relaxing at a lush resort when East German police kidnap her and take her across the border – an extreme case of mistaken identity.

Chris is taken to Zwickau, the infamous women's prison known for its heinous brutality and bizarre psychological torture. Under the endless, broiling, and intense questioning, she confesses to being a spy for the CIA in exchange for her free release. But it's a lie – Chris is sentenced to three years! The violent legend of Zwickau proves to be true. Led by a beautiful Sophia (Kristel), the inmates are sadistic to each other, but save their sickest twists for the newest prisoner. Meanwhile, Chris's fiancé, who is getting no assistance from the U.S. Embassy, commandeers his own fighting force for an all-out rescue attempt. In an action-packed shoot-out behind the Iron Curtain, it's a fight for freedom the American way.

## **3. *Fugitive Rage* (1995)**

Rage against the machine. Tara McCormick (Wendy Schumacher) takes justice into her own hands. When a notorious mobster is acquitted for the murder of her younger sister, Patricia pumps his chest full of lead and lands behind bars with a bounty on her hand. But prison bars can't hold her or her cellmate (Shauna O'Brien) as they make their desperate escape. Now it's the two against the mob and the law with nowhere to turn but each other.

## **4. *Angels in Chains* (1976)**

The Angels infiltrate a corrupt Southern prison and are forced to join guest star Kim Basinger in the warden's bordello.