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A LITERARY AGENCY

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Dear Ken:

What a wonderful yarn this is!

As we discussed, I think the best way to approach this draft is to consider it as a sketch for a painting, something in black and white which is waiting for a color to be added. Another way to look at it is as an extended and detailed outline.

At the moment what we have are the events, bizarre, exciting, full of fear and heroism and fierce loyalty; but they are largely events still as opposed to human dramas, and it's human dramas that we are going to need.

As in any of your thrillers, there are several individual stories here which intersect at key points, and I think your next job is going to be sorting out and focusing on these individual stories.

The "initiating" story plainly is the one of the men in prison. I think we lose by trying to treat them equally; and I would suggest that this strand be written entirely from one man's point of view. If the emotional impressions which you have are more powerful from Gaylord than from Chiapparone, then I think that Bill should be our man. We can experience Paul through Bill's eyes as well as Bill's sense of the action.

Our key character Number Two, I think, has to be Ross. Lots of people are doing things in Dallas, once the news of the arrest comes in, but he after all is the one that is orchestrating all their movements. He's the one to whom they report. He's the one that ultimately decides on a rescue operation; so that I think that the whole managing of the attempts to first free these guys legally, and then illegally, all could successfully be told from his point of view--and that would eliminate lots and lots of characters in Dallas and Washington who from my point of view clog up the story.

In other words, what we would have in the book is not what these people do, but rather the news of what they do as it reaches him. What we are interested in then is how he thinks and feels and reacts as he gets the news. And as the story proceeds, he of course makes new decisions based on information and based on his intellectual reactions to that information. With each decision, he takes on greater and greater risk. Good stuff.

Once Ross undertakes the notion of calling Simons, he then is less personally involved in the active planning of the mission; and at this point we are going to need an additional point

of view character, either Simons himself or Coburn. If you choose Simons, you of course are going to have to fantasize as to his hopes, fears, plans, contingency notions etc. With Coburn, you could get a bit more reality, maybe a lot more; but then of course there are all sorts of situations in which he was an observer and not the prime mover, someone participating as opposed to someone who would be taking responsibility for the basic risks. But you have met Coburn and I have not, so you'll have to make that choice.

For example, when the men are training together, it would be interesting to imagine what Simons thinks of these men, what he believes are their capabilities and limitations. But similarly, it might be interesting to know what Coburn thinks of each of them and also what Coburn thinks of Simons as a leader, as a teacher, and also we have very little sense in this section, for example, of what sort of danger is anticipated. Do these guys, for example, really take seriously the notion that they may all get killed trying this? I would imagine that they would have to. And I would imagine that their terror must come out in some private but also interesting way.

You say things like, "the original plan had been to stage the team in Istanbul." It seems to me that we always should begin with some individual who formulates a particular plan. In other words, we must try always to talk about these actions as ones originating with particular characters. *It's corporate style. No use of the royal "we."*
 the royal "we" No corporate style. No use of the royal "we."

Another "character" if you will is Iran and in particular Teheran. We need to experience this place through all of our senses; sight, sound, smell etc. And ideally, we should see it through the eyes of either Coburn or Simons--maybe both.

John Howell and Keane Taylor seem to be the leaders of the "clean team," and this is a somewhat separate strand, so probably one of these guys also ought to be a point of view character. My sense is that you prefer Howell which suits me fine.

A character who in his own way is as fascinating as Simons and Perot does not appear in your present draft until about forty percent of the manuscript is complete, and I am talking about Rashid. Maybe we could introduce him earlier, when he first learns of Bill's imprisonment. At that point we might get into his head in terms of where he wants to go with the rest of his life, how he feels about the pending revolution in Iran etc. If you handle it that way, he would be well integrated into the story as one of the key characters, so that when he is called upon actually to help with the rescue, he won't seem merely to be a "hired hand."

Then Jackson and Ralph Boulware both have their own separate strands, pieces of the story in which they operate independently of the other major characters. Your choice here is either to write these strands from their own points of view or alternatively you could write about them as their news comes either to Coburn or to Simons or to Perot. Jackson has only a very short adventure, so in his instance you might be better off not using him as a point of view character, whereas Boulware's story is much more substantial, and he probably would have to be a point of view character.

Ken, I think I made all my other general suggestions earlier

in the week.

I don't think that these people all need large chunks of biographical material as you introduce them. The lesser characters need only some description, preferably something about them which distinguishes them from other people and serves to pinpoint their uniqueness. The major characters obviously could have more, but in the cases of characters like Simons and Perot, I think that the background material ought to be parceled out through the first four or five chapters of the book. As you have things now, the action stops dead as you introduce each of these major characters, with the result that when we pick up the story, it's hard to keep in mind names of characters you've introduced earlier, place names, etc.

Missing from the book also is what is at issue. In other words, I think that the reader will want to know more specifically about what EDS is doing in Iran, the problems they had there, and of course the problems that Iranians such as Dadgar had with EDS-- or that Dadgar's associates, colleagues, etc had with EDS. As I mentioned, Dadgar is engaging in very extensive daily negotiations, and we know that what the Americans want is to get their two men out of jail, but it's entirely unclear as to what Dadgar is after, and how the Americans are reacting to this or how they are negotiating with Dadgar to get what the Americans want while perhaps giving Dadgar something. Finally, we don't want a great deal of this, or it too would stop the action; but we need enough to really feel that we know what the hell is going on.

Another thing you might try for in the next draft is to get some of the special music in the way these people speak. Here and there you do have some wonderful turns of phrase, but having listened to people like Ross myself, I'd love to have more of that flavor in the book.

A passing ^{etc etc} thought I had which might be helpful is that the most successful ^{etc etc} novel in the last twenty or so years has been PAPPILLON. There everything revolves around the dealings of one central character, but those doings are handled with enormous verve; and if you're not familiar with that book, it might be worth taking a look. You might get some helpful ideas.

Finally, I should say that facts are ^{can} straining. Truth is limiting or can feel limiting; and I think now you are going to have to let yourself play with this whole thing a bit, fantasize, using your rich imagination, test that against reality; and I feel confident that you'll come up with a book by far as exciting and wonderful as any you have written.

Love,

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