

She seemed to have been hearing reports like this for weeks. There were always delays, postponements, frustrations. 'But, Jim,' she began; then the tears started and she could not stop them. 'Jim ...' Her throat tightened up until she could not speak. She thought: All I want is my husband! Jim stood there looking helpless and embarrassed. All the misery she had kept locked up for so long suddenly flooded out, and she could not control herself any longer. She burst into tears and ran from the room. She rushed to her bedroom, threw herself on the bed and lay there sobbing her heart out.

*

Liz Coburn sipped her drink. Across the table were Pat Sculley's wife, Mary, and another EDS wife who had been evacuated from Tehran, Toni Dvoranchik. The three women were at Recipes, a restaurant on Greenville Avenue, Dallas. They were drinking strawberry daiquiris, and Mary Sculley was spilling the beans.

'They ~~xxx~~ drive ~~x~~ up to the fence, then they get on the roof of the van and drop a ladder down into the exercise yard,' she said.

Toni Dvoranchik had started this conversation. Her husband suspected there was a secret plan for getting Paul and Bill out, but he did not know what it was. Toni had asked Mary whether Pat was involved, and Mary had said Yes. Then she commenced to tell the whole story.

Liz Coburn was horrified. 'Is Jay in Tehran?' she said miserably.

'Yes.'

'I knew it.'

'But he's doing administrative work,' Mary added.

Liz wanted to cry. Jay had told her he was in Paris. Why couldn't he tell the truth? Pat Sculley had told Mary the truth. But

Jay was different. Some men would play poker for a few hours, but Jay had to play all night and all the next day. Other men would play nine or eighteen holes of golf: Jay would play thirty-six. Lots of men had demanding jobs, but Jay had to work for EDS. Even in the Army, when the two of them had been not much more than kids, Jay had to volunteer for one of the most dangerous assignments, helicopter pilot. Now he had gone to Tehran, ~~and even~~ 'administrative work' was perilous in the middle of a revolution. Same old thing, she thought: He's gone away, he's lying to me, and he's in danger.

Toni Dvoranchik was saying: 'What if Bill can't make it over the fence?' The wives always talked this way about Bill: they saw him as a sensitive, vulnerable soul, and they worried about him more than they did about tough, confident Paul. 'What if he's sick?' Toni went on. 'What if he doesn't want to be rescued? What if he freaks out?'

'They've thought of that,' Mary said. 'Jay will carry him over the fence ... Oh, God.'

Liz stared at her.

Mary said: 'I shouldn't have said that.'

Liz suddenly felt cold all over, as if she were in shock. He's not coming back, she thought numbly. He's not going to get out of there alive.