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ON WINGS OF EAGLES

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[RT, 1] [LS] Ad CARD to Come [CO] —

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Card Page to come

89990002

ON WINGS OF EAGLES

by Ken Follett

Final draft

130,000 words

9 January 1983

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Writers House Inc. A LITERARY AGENCY

ALBERT ZUCKERMAN

[ii] [iv] Copyright To Come [v]

Copyright Page to come

89990004

Amendment to final draft ~~new~~ 1

Cast of characters Video

Video throughout [t9]

Dallas

[t10] Ross Perot, Chairman of the Board, Electronic Data Systems Corporation, Dallas, Texas.

[t11] Merv Stauffer, Perot's right-hand man.

T.J. Marquez, a vice-president of EDS.

Tom Walter, chief financial officer of EDS.

Mitch Hart, a former president of EDS who had good connections in the Democratic Party.

Tom Luce, founder of the Dallas law firm Hughes & Hill.

Bill Gayden, president of EDS World, a subsidiary of EDS.

[t12]

Tehran [t10]

Paul Chiapparone, country manager, EDS Corporation Iran; Ruthie Chiapparone, his wife.

[t11] Bill Gaylord, Paul's deputy; Emily Gaylord, Bill's wife.

Lloyd Briggs, Paul's No. 3.

Rich Gallagher, Paul's administrative assistant; Cathy Gallagher, Rich's wife; Buffy, Cathy's poodle.

Paul Bucha, formerly country manager of EDS Corporation Iran, latterly based in Paris.

Bob Young, country manager for EDS in Kuwait.

John Howell, lawyer with Hughes & Hill.

Keane Taylor, manager of the Bank Omran project. [t13]

video throughout

(The team)

[t14] Lt-Col Arthur D. 'Bull' Simons, in command.

[t15] Jay Coburn, second-in-command.

[t15]

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[t15] Ron Davis, point.
[t15] Ralph Boulware, shotgun.
Joe Poché, driver.
Glenn Jackson, driver.
Pat Sculley, flank.
Jim Schwebach, flank and explosives. [t13]

(The Iranians)

[t14] Abolhasan, administrative assistant to Paul Chiapparone and the most senior Iranian employee.
[t15] Majid, assistant to ~~Jay~~ Coburn; Fara, Majid's daughter.
[t15] Rashid, Seyyed, and "the Cycle Man": trainee systems engineers.
Gholam, personnel/purchasing officer under Jay Coburn.
Hosain Dadgar, examining magistrate. [t13]

(At the US Embassy) [t14]
William Sullivan, Ambassador.
[t15] Charles Naas, Minister Counselor, Sullivan's deputy.
[t15] Lou Goelz, Consul General.
Bob Sorenson, Embassy official.
Ali Jordan, Iranian employed by the Embassy.
Barry Rosen, press attaché. [t12]

Istanbul [t10]

"Mr. Fish", resourceful travel agent.
[t11] Ilsman, employee of MIT, the Turkish intelligence agency.
"Charlie Brown", interpreter.
[t11]

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[t12]

Washington

[t10]

Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser.

Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State.

[t11] David Newsom, Under Secretary ~~of State~~ at the State Department.

Henry Precht, Head of the Iran Desk at the State Department.

Mark Ginsberg, White House - State Department liaison.

[C8]

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Preface

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This is a true story about a group of people who, accused of crimes they did not commit, decided to make their own justice.

When the adventure was over there was a court case, and they were cleared of all charges. The case is not part of my story, but because it established their innocence I have included details of the court's Findings and Judgement as an appendix to this book.

In telling the story I have taken two small liberties with the truth.

Several people are referred to by pseudonyms or nicknames, usually to protect them from the revenge of the Government of Iran. The false names are: Majid, Fara, Abolhasan, Mr Fish, Deep Throat, Rashid, the Cycle Man, Mehdi, Malek, Gholam, Seyyed and Charlie Brown. All other names are real.

Secondly, in recalling conversations which took place three or four years ago people rarely remember the exact words used; furthermore real-life conversation, with its gestures and interruptions and unfinished sentences, often makes no sense when it is written down. So the dialogue in this book is both reconstructed and edited. However, every reconstructed conversation has been shown to at least one of the participants for correction or approval.

With those two qualifications, I believe every word of what follows is true. This is not a 'fictionalisation' or a 'non-fiction novel'. I have not invented anything. What you are about to read is what really happened. [C8] [C8]

I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

- Exodus 19, 4.

[t18]

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[RF,2][M1] KEN FOLLETT [M2] ON WINGS OF EAGLES [M3]

[PN,10]

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Rules video thru-out

[t20] [t20]

It all started on 5 December 1978.

Jay Coburn, Director of Personnel for EDS Corporation Iran, sat in his office in uptown Tehran with a lot on his mind.

The office was in a three-storey concrete building known as Bucharest (because it was in an alley off Bucharest Street). Coburn was on the second floor, in a room large by American standards. It had a parquet floor, a smart wood executive desk, and a picture of the Shah on the wall. He sat with his back to the window. Through the glass door he could see into the open-plan office where his staff sat at typewriters and telephones. The glass door had curtains, but Coburn never closed them.

It was cold. It was always cold: thousands of Iranians were on strike, the city's power supply was intermittent, and the heating was off for several hours most days.

Coburn was a tall, broad-shouldered man, five feet eleven inches and two hundred pounds. His red-brown hair was cut businessman-short and carefully combed, with a part. Although he was only thirty-two he looked nearer to forty. On closer examination, his youth showed in his attractive, open face and ready smile; but he had an air of early maturity, the look of a man who grew up too fast.

All his life he had shouldered responsibility: as a boy, working in his father's flower shop; at the age of twenty, as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam; as a young husband and father; and now, as Personnel Director, holding in his hands the safety of 131 American employees and their 220 dependents in a city where mob violence ruled the streets.

Today, like every day, he was making phone calls around Tehran

trying to find out where the fighting was, where it would break out next, and what the prospects were for the next few days.

He called the U.S. Embassy at least once a day. The Embassy had an information room which was manned twenty-four hours a day. Americans would call in from different areas of the city to report demonstrations and riots, and the Embassy would spread the news that this district or that was to be avoided. But for advance information and advice Coburn found the Embassy close to useless. At weekly briefings, which he attended faithfully, he would always be told that Americans should stay indoors as much as possible and keep away from crowds at all costs, but that the Shah was in control and evacuation was not recommended at this time. Coburn understood their problem - if the U.S. Embassy said the Shah was tottering, the Shah would surely fall - but they were so cautious they hardly gave out any information at all.

Disenchanted with the Embassy, the American business community in Tehran had set up its own ~~informal~~ information network. The biggest U.S. corporation in town was Bell Helicopter, whose Iran operation was run by a retired Major-General, Robert N. Mackinnon. Mackinnon had a first-class intelligence service and he shared everything. Coburn also knew a couple of intelligence officers in the U.S. military and he called them.

Today the city was relatively quiet: there were no major demonstrations. The last outbreak of serious trouble had been three days earlier, on 2 December, the first day of the general strike, when seven hundred people had been reported killed in street fighting. According to Coburn's sources the lull could be expected to continue until 10 December, the Moslem holy day of Ashura.

Coburn was worried about Ashura. The Moslem winter holiday was not a bit like Christmas. A day of fasting and mourning for the

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death of the Prophet's grandson Husayn, its keynote was remorse. There would be massive street processions, during which the more devout believers would flog themselves. In that atmosphere hysteria and violence could erupt fast.

This year, Coburn feared, the violence might be directed against Americans.

A series of nasty incidents had convinced him that anti-American feeling was growing rapidly. A card had been pushed through his door saying: 'If you value your life and possessions, get out of Iran.' Friends of his had received similar postcards. Spray-can artists had painted 'Americans live here' on the wall of his house. The bus which took his children to the Tehran American School had been rocked by a crowd of demonstrators. Other EDS employees had been yelled at in the streets and had their cars damaged. One scary afternoon, Iranians at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare - EDS's biggest customer - had gone on the rampage, smashing windows and burning pictures of the Shah, while EDS executives in the building barricaded themselves inside an office until the mob went away.

In some ways the most sinister development was the change in the attitude of Coburn's landlord.

Like most Americans in Tehran, Coburn rented half of a two-family home: he and his wife and children lived upstairs, and the landlord's family lived on the ground floor. When the Coburns had arrived, in March of that year, the landlord had taken them under his wing. The two families had become friendly. Coburn and the landlord discussed religion: the landlord gave him an English translation of the Koran, and the landlord's daughter would read to her father out of Coburn's Bible. They all went on weekend trips to the countryside together. Scott, Coburn's seven-year-old son, played soccer in the street with the landlord's boys. One weekend the Coburns had the rare privilege

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of attending a Moslem wedding. It had been fascinating. Men and women had been segregated all day, so Coburn and Scott went with the men, his wife Liz and their three daughters went with the women, and Coburn never got to see the bride at all.

After the summer things had gradually changed. The weekend trips stopped. The landlord's sons were forbidden to play with Scott in the street. Eventually all contact between the two families ceased even within the confines of the house and its courtyard, and the children would be reprimanded for just speaking to Coburn's family.

The landlord had not suddenly started hating Americans. One evening he had proved that he still cared for the Coburns. There had been a shooting incident in the street: one of his sons had been out after curfew, and soldiers had fired at the boy as he ran home and scrambled over the courtyard wall. Coburn and Liz had watched the whole thing from their upstairs verandah, and Liz had been scared. The landlord had come up to tell them what had happened and reassure them that all was well. But he clearly felt that for the safety of his family he could not be <u>seen</u> to be friendly with Americans: he knew which way the wind was blowing. For Coburn it was yet another bad sign.

Now, Coburn heard on the grapevine, there was wild talk in the mosques and bazaars of a holy war against Americans beginning on Ashura. It was five days away, yet the Americans in Tehran were surprisingly calm.

Coburn remembered when the curfew had been introduced: it had not even interfered with the monthly EDS poker game. He and his fellow-gamblers had simply brought their wives and children, turned it into a slumber party, and stayed until morning. They had got used to the sound of gunfire. Most of the heavy fighting was in the older,

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southern sector where the bazaar was, and in the area around the University; but everyone heard shots from time to time. After the first few occasions they had become curiously indifferent to it. Whoever was speaking would pause, then continue when the shooting stopped, just as he might in the States when a jet aircraft passed overhead. It was as if they could not imagine that shots might be aimed at <u>them</u>.

Coburn was <u>not</u> blase about gunfire. He had been shot at rather a lot during his young life. In Vietnam he had piloted both helicopter gunships, in support of ground operations, and troop/supply-carrying ships, landing and taking off in battlefields. He had killed people, and he had seen men die. In those days the Army gave an Air Medal for every twenty-five hours of combat flying: Coburn had come home with thirty-nine of them. He also got two Distinguished Flying Crosses, a Silver Star, and a bullet in the calf - the most vulnerable part of a helicopter pilot. He had learned, during that year, that he could handle himself pretty well in action, when there was so much to do and no time to be frightened; but every time he returned from a mission, when it was all over and he could think about what he had done, his knees would shake.

In a strange way he was grateful for the experience. He had grown up fast, and it had given him an edge over his contemporaries in business life. It had also given him a healthy respect for the sound of gunfire.

But most of his colleagues did not feel that way, nor did their wives. Whenever evacuation was discussed they resisted the idea. They had time, work and pride invested in EDS Corporation Iran, and they did not want to walk away from it. Their wives had turned the rented apartments into real homes, and they were making plans for Christmas. The children had their schools, their friends, their

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bicycles and their pets. Surely, they were telling themselves, if we just lie low and hang on, the trouble will blow over.

Coburn had tried to persuade Liz to take the kids back to the States, not just for their safety, but because the time might come when he had to evacuate some 350 people all at once, and he would need to give that job his complete undivided attention, without being distracted by private anxiety for his own family. Liz had refused to go.

He sighed when he thought of Liz. She was funny and feisty and everyone enjoyed her company, but she was not a good corporate wife. EDS demanded a lot ~~of~~ from its executives: if you needed to work all night to get the job done, you worked all night. Liz resented that. Back in the States, working as a recruiter, Coburn had often been away from home Monday to Friday, travelling all over the country, and she had hated it. She was happy in Tehran because he was home every night. If he was going to stay here, she said, so was she. The children liked it here too. It was the first time they had lived outside the United States, and they were intrigued by the different language and culture of Iran. Kim, the eldest at eleven, was too full of confidence to get worried. Kristi, the eight-year-old, was somewhat anxious, but then she was the emotional one, always the quickest to over-react. Both Scott, seven, and Kelly, the baby at four, were too young to comprehend the danger.

So they stayed, like everyone else, and waited for things to get better - or worse.

Coburn's thoughts were interrupted by a tap at the door, and Majid walked in. A short, stocky man of about fifty with a luxuriant moustache, he had once been wealthy: his tribe had owned a great deal of land and had lost it in the land reform of the sixties. Now he worked for Coburn as an administrative assistant, dealing with the

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Iranian bureaucracy. He spoke fluent English and was highly resourceful. Coburn liked him a lot: Majid had gone out of his way to be helpful when Coburn's family arrived in Iran.

'Come in,' Coburn said. 'Sit down. What's on your mind?'

'It's about Fara.'

Coburn nodded. Fara was Majid's daughter, and she worked with her father: her job was to make sure that all American employees always had up-to-date visas and work permits. 'Some problem?' Coburn said.

'The police asked her to take two American passports from our files without telling anyone.'

Coburn frowned. 'Any passports in particular?'

'Paul Chiapparone's and Bill Gaylord's'

Paul was Coburn's boss, the head of EDS Corporation Iran. Bill was second-in-command and manager of their biggest project, the contract with the Ministry of Health. 'What the hell is going on?' Coburn said.

'Fara is in great danger,' Majid said. 'She was instructed not to tell anyone about this. She came to me for advice. Of course I had to tell you, but I'm afraid she will get into very serious trouble.'

'Wait a minute, let's back up,' Coburn said. 'How did this happen?'

'She got a telephone call this morning from the Police Department, Residence Permit Bureau, American Section. They asked her to come to the office. They said it was about James Nyfeler. She thought it was routine. She arrived at the office at eleven-thirty and reported to the Head of the American Section. First he asked for Mr Nyfeler's passport and residence permit. She told him that Mr Nyfeler is no longer in Iran. Then he asked about Paul Bucha. She said that Mr Bucha also was no longer in the country.'

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'Did she?'

'Yes.'

Bucha was in Iran, but Fara might not have known that, Coburn thought. Bucha had been resident here, had left the country, and had come back in, briefly: he was due to fly back to Paris tomorrow.

Majid continued: 'The officer then said: "I suppose the other two are gone also?" Fara saw that he had four files on his desk, and she asked which other two. He told her Mr Chiapparone and Mr Gaylord. She said she had just picked up Mr Gaylord's residence permit earlier this morning. The officer told her to get the passports and residence permits of both Mr Gaylord and Mr Chiapparone and bring them to him. She was to do it quietly, not to cause alarm.'

'What did she say?' Coburn asked.

'She told him she could not bring them today. He instructed her to bring them tomorrow morning. He told her she was officially responsible for this, and he made sure there were witnesses to these instructions.'

'This doesn't make any sense,' Coburn said.

'If they learn that Fara has disobeyed them - '

'We'll think of a way to protect her,' Coburn said. He was wondering whether Americans were obliged to surrender their passports on demand. He had done so, recently, after a minor car accident, but he had later been told that he did not have to. 'They didn't say why they wanted the passports?'

'They did not.'

Bucha and Nyfeler were the predecessors of Chiapparone and Gaylord. Was that a clue? Coburn did not know.

Coburn stood up. 'The first decision we have to make is what Fara is going to tell the police tomorrow morning,' he said. 'I'll talk to Paul Chiapparone and get back to you.' [L1] [L1]

*

On the ground floor of the building Paul Chiapparone sat in his office. He, too, had a parquet floor, an executive desk, a picture of the Shah on the wall and a lot on his mind.

Paul was thirty-nine years old, of middle hight, and a little overweight, mainly because he was ~~very~~ fond of good food. With his olive skin and thick black hair he looked very Italian. His job was to build a complete modern social security system in a primitive country. It was not easy.

In the early seventies Iran had had a rudimentary social security system which was inefficient at collecting contributions and so easy to defraud that one man could draw benefit several times over for the same illness. When the Shah decided to spend some of his twenty billion dollars a year oil revenues creating a welfare state, EDS got the contract. EDS ran Medicare and Medicaid programmes for several States in the U.S., but in Iran they had to start from scratch. They had to issue a social security card to each of Iran's thirty-two million people, organise payroll deductions so that wage-earners paid their contributions, and process claims for benefits. The whole system would be run by computers - EDS's speciality.

The difference between installing a data processing system in the States and doing the same job in Iran was, Paul found, like the difference between making a cake from a packet mix and making one the old-fashioned way with all the original ingredients. It was often frustrating. Iranians did not have the can-do attitude of American business executives, and seemed often to create problems instead of solving them. At EDS headquarters back in Dallas, Texas, not only were people expected to do the impossible, but it was usually due yesterday. Here in Iran everything was impossible and in any case not due until 'fardah' - usually translated 'tomorrow', in practice 'some time in the future'.

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Paul had attacked the problems in the only way he knew: by hard work and determination. He was no intellectual genius. As a boy he had found school work difficult, but his Italian father, with the immigrant's typical faith in education, had pressured him to study, and he had got good grades. Sheer persistence had served him well ever since. He could remember the early days of EDS in the States, back in the sixties, when every new contract could make or break the company; and he had helped build it into one of the most dynamic and successful corporations in the world. The Iranian operation would go the same way, he had been sure, particularly when Jay Coburn's recruitment and training programme began to deliver more Iranians capable of top management.

He had been all wrong, and he was only just beginning to understand why.

When he and his family arrived in Iran, in August 1977, the petrodollar boom was already over. The government was running out of money. That year an anti-inflation programme increased unemployment just when a bad harvest was driving yet more starving peasants into the cities. The tyrannical rule of the Shah was weakened by the human-rights policies of American President Jimmy Carter. The time was ripe for political unrest.

For a while Paul did not take much notice of local politics. He knew there were rumblings of discontent, but that was true of just about every country in the world, and the Shah seemed to have as firm a grip on the reins of power as any ruler. Like the rest of the world, Paul missed the significance of the events of the first half of 1978.

On 7 January the newspaper Etelaat published a scurrilous attack on an exiled clergyman called Ayatollah Khomeini, alleging, among other things, that he was homosexual. The following day, eighty miles from Tehran in the town of Qom - the principal centre of religious

education in the country - outraged theology students staged a protest sit-in which was bloodily broken up by the military and the police. The confrontation escalated, and seventy people were killed in two more days of disturbances. The clergy organised a memorial procession for the dead forty days later in accordance with Islamic tradition. There was more violence during the procession, and the dead were commemorated in another memorial forty days on ... The processions continued, and grew larger and more violent, through the first six months of the year.

With hindsight Paul could see that calling these marches 'funeral processions' had been a way to circumvent the Shah's ban on political demonstrations. But at the time he had had no idea that a massive political movement was building. Nor had anyone else.

In August this year Paul went home to the States on leave. (So did William Sullivan, the U.S. Ambassador to Iran.) Paul loved all kinds of water sports, and he had gone to a sports fishing tournament in Ocean City, New Jersey, with his cousin Joe Porreca. His wife Ruthie and the children, Karen and Ann Marie, went to Chicago to visit Ruthie's parents. Paul was a little anxious because the Ministry of Health still had not paid EDS's bill for the month of June; but it was not the first time they had been late with a payment, and Paul had left the problem in the hands of his second-in-command, Bill Gaylord, and he was fairly confident Bill would get the money in.

While he was in the U.S. the news from Iran was bad. Martial law was declared on 7 September, and the following day more than a hundred people were killed by soldiers during a demonstration in Jaleh Square in the heart of Tehran.

When the Chiapparone family came back to Iran the very air seemed different. For the first time Paul and Ruthie could hear shooting in the streets at night. They were alarmed: suddenly they

0020

realised that trouble for the Iranians meant trouble for them. There was a series of strikes. The electricity was continually being cut off, so they dined by candlelight and Paul wore his topcoat in the office to keep warm. It became more and more difficult to get money out of the banks, and Paul started a cheque-cashing service at the office for employees. When they got low on heating oil for their home Paul had to walk around the streets until he found a tanker, then bribe the driver to come to the house and deliver.

His business problems were worse. The Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr Sheikholeslamizadeh, had been arrested under Article 5 of martial law, which permitted a prosecutor to jail anyone without giving a reason. Also in jail was Deputy Minister Reza Neghabat, with whom Paul had worked closely. The Ministry still had not paid its June bill, nor any since, and now owed EDS more than four million dollars.

For two months Paul tried to get the money. The individuals he had dealt with previously had all gone. Their replacements usually did not return his calls. Sometimes someone would promise to look into the problem and call back: after waiting a week for the call that never came, Paul would telephone once again, to be told that the person he spoke to last week had now left the Ministry. Meetings would be arranged then cancelled. The debt mounted at the rate of $1.4 million a month.

On 14 November Paul wrote to Dr Heidargholi Emrani, the Deputy Minister in charge of the Social Security Organisation, giving formal notice that if the Ministry did not pay up within a month EDS would stop work. The threat was repeated on 4 December by Paul's boss, the President of EDS World, at a personal meeting with Dr Emrani.

That was yesterday.

If EDS pulled out, the whole Iranian social security system

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would collapse. Yet it was becoming more and more apparent that the country was bankrupt and simply could not pay its bills. What, Paul wondered, would Dr Emrani do now?

He was still wondering when Jay Coburn walked in with the answer. [L1]

*

At first, however, it did not occur to Paul that the attempt to steal his passport might have been intended to keep him, and therefore EDS, in Iran.

When Coburn had given him the facts he said: 'What the hell did they do that for?'

'I don't know. Majid doesn't know, and Fara doesn't know.'

Paul looked at him. The two men had become close in the last month. For the rest of the employees Paul was putting on a brave face, but with Coburn he had been able to close the door and say Okay, what do you really think?

Coburn said: 'The first question is, What do we do about Fara? She could be in trouble.'

'She has to give them some kind of an answer.'

'A show of co-operation?'

'She could go back and tell them that Nyfeler and Bucha are no longer resident ...'

'She already told them.'

'She could take their exit visas as proof.'

'Yeah,' Coburn said dubiously. 'But it's you and Bill they're really interested in now.'

'She could say that the passports aren't kept in the office.'

'They may know that's not true - Fara may even have taken passports down there in the past.'

'Say, senior executives don't have to keep their passports in

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the office.'

'That might work.'

'Any convincing story to the effect that she was physically unable to do what they asked her.'

'Good. I'll discuss it with her and Majid.' Coburn thought for a moment. 'You know, Bucha has a reservation on a flight out tomorrow. He could just go.'

'He probably should - they think he's not here anyway.'

'You could do the same.'

Paul reflected. Maybe he should get out now. What would the Iranians do then? They might just try to detain someone else. 'No,' he said. 'If we're going, I should be the last to leave.'

'Are we going?' Coburn asked.

'I don't know.' Every day for weeks they had asked each other that question. Coburn had developed an evacuation plan which could be put into effect instantly. Paul had been hesitating, with his finger on the button. He knew that his ultimate boss, back in Dallas, wanted him to evacuate - but it meant abandoning the project on which he had worked so hard for the last sixteen months. 'I don't know,' he repeated. 'I'll call Dallas.' [L1] [L1]

*

That night Coburn was at home, in bed with Liz, and fast asleep when the phone rang.

He picked it up in the dark. 'Yeah?'

'This is Paul.'

'Hello.' Coburn turned on the light and looked at his wristwatch. It was two a.m.

'We're going to evacuate,' Paul said.

'You got it.'

Coburn cradled the phone and sat on the edge of the bed. In a

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way it was a relief. There would be two or three days of frantic activity, but then he would know that the people whose safety had been worrying him for so long were back in the States, out of reach of these crazy Iranians.

He ran over in his mind the plans he had made for just this moment. First he had to inform a hundred and thirty families that they would be leaving the country within the next forty-eight hours. He had divided the city into sectors, with a team leader for each sector: he would call the leaders, and it would be their job to call the families. He had drafted leaflets for the evacuees telling them where to go and what to do. He just had to fill in the blanks with dates, times and flight numbers, then have the leaflets duplicated and distributed.

He had picked a lively and imaginative young Iranian systems engineer, Rashid, and given him the job of taking care of the homes, cars and pets which would be left behind by the fleeing Americans and - eventually - shipping their possessions to the U.S. He had appointed a small logistics group to organise plane tickets and transport to the airport.

Finally, he had conducted a small-scale rehearsal of the evacuation with a few people. It had worked.

Coburn got dressed and made coffee. There was nothing he could do for the next couple of hours, but he was too anxious and impatient to sleep.

At four a.m. he called the half-dozen members of the logistics group, woke them, and told them to meet him at the 'Bucharest' office immediately after curfew.

Curfew began at nine each evening and ended at five in the morning. For an hour Coburn sat waiting, smoking and drinking a lot of coffee and going over his notes.

When the cuckoo clock in the hall chirped five he was at the

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front door, ready to go.

Outside there was a thick fog. He got into his car and headed for Bucharest, crawling along at fifteen miles per hour.

Three blocks from his house, half a dozen soldiers leaped out of the fog and stood in a semicircle in front of his car, pointing their rifles at his windscreen.

'Oh, shit,' Coburn said.

One of the soldiers was still loading his gun. He was trying to put the clip in backwards, and it would not fit. He dropped it, and went down on one knee, scrabbling around on the ground looking for it. Coburn would have laughed if he had not been so scared.

An officer yelled at Coburn in Farsi. Coburn lowered the window. He showed the officer his wristwatch and said: 'It's after five.'

The soldiers had a conference. The officer came back and asked Coburn for his identification.

Coburn waited anxiously. This would be the worst possible day to get arrested. Would the officer believe that Coburn's watch was right and his was wrong?

At last the soldiers got out of the road and the officer waved Coburn on.

Coburn breathed a sigh of relief and drove slowly on.

Iran was like that.

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[CO]

[CO] Coburn's logistics group went to work making plane reservations, chartering buses to take people to the airport, and photocopying handout leaflets. At ten a.m. Coburn got the ~~socter~~ team leaders into Bucharest and started them calling the evacuees.

He got reservations for most of them on a Pan Am flight to Istanbul on Friday 8 December. The remainder - including Liz Coburn and the four children - would get a Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt that same day.

As soon as the reservations were confirmed, two top executives at EDS headquarters, Merv Stauffer and T.J. Marquez, left Dallas for Istanbul to meet the evacuees, shepherd them to hotels, and organise the next stage of their flight back home.

During the day there was a small change in plan. Paul was still reluctant to abandon his work in Iran. He proposed that a skeleton staff of about ten senior men stay behind, to keep the office ticking over, in the hope that Iran would quiet down and EDS would eventually be able to resume working normally. Dallas agreed. Among those who volunteered to stay were Paul himself, his deputy Bill Gaylord, Jay Coburn, and most of Coburn's evacuation logistics group. Two people who stayed behind reluctantly were Carl and Vicki Commons: Vicki was nine months pregnant and would leave after her baby was born.

On Friday morning Coburn's team, their pockets full of ten-thousand-rial (about $140) notes for bribes, virtually took over a section of Mehrabad Airport in western Tehran. Coburn had people writing tickets behind the Pan Am counter, people at passport control, people in the departure lounge, and people running baggage handling equipment. The plane was overbooked: bribes ensured that no one from EDS was bumped off the flight.

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There were two especially tense moments. An EDS wife with an Australian passport had been unable to get an exit visa because the Iranian government offices which issued exit visas were all on strike. (Her husband and children had American passports and therefore did not need exit visas.) When the husband reached the passport control desk, he handed over his passport and his children's in a stack with six or seven other passports. As the guard tried to sort them out, EDS people in the queue behind began to push forward and cause a commotion. Some of Coburn's team gathered around the desk asking loud questions and pretending to get angry about the delay. In the confusion the woman with the Australian passport walked through the departure lounge without being stopped.

Another EDS family had adopted an Iranian baby and had not yet been able to get a passport for the child. Only a few ~~weeks~~ months old, ~~and desperately undernourished,~~ the ~~tiny mite~~ baby would fall asleep, lying face down, on its mother's forearm. Another EDS wife, Kathy Marketos - of whom it was said that she would try anything once - put the sleeping baby on her own forearm, draped her raincoat over it, and carried it ~~through all the checkpoints and~~ on to the plane.

However, it was many hours before anyone got on to a plane. Both flights were delayed. There was no food to be bought at the airport and the evacuees were famished, so just before curfew some of Coburn's team drove around the city buying anything edible they could find. They purchased the entire contents of several kuche stalls - street-corner stands that sold candy, fruit and cigarettes - and they went into a Kentucky Fried Chicken and did a deal for its stock of bread rolls. Back at the airport, passing food out to EDS people in the departure lounge, they were almost mobbed by the other hungry passengers waiting for the same flights. On the way back downtown two of the team were caught and arrested for being out after

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curfew - but the soldier who stopped them got distracted by another car which tried to escape, and the EDS men drove off while he was shooting the other way.

The Istanbul flight left just after midnight. The Frankfurt flight took off the next day, thirty-one hours late.

Coburn and most of the team spent the night at Bucharest. They had no one to go home to. [27] [L1]

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While Coburn was running the evacuation, Paul had been trying to find out who wanted to confiscate his passport and why.

His administrative assistant, Rich Gallagher, was a young American who was good at dealing with the Iranian bureaucracy. Gallagher was one of those who had volunteered to stay in Tehran. His wife Cathy had also stayed behind. She had a good job with the U.S. military in Tehran. The Gallaghers did not want to leave. Furthermore, they had no children to worry about - just a poodle called Buffy.

The day Fara was asked to take the passports - 5 December - Gallagher visited the U.S. Embassy with one of the people whose passports had been demanded: Paul Bucha, who no longer worked in Iran but happened to be in town on a visit.

They met with Consul General Lou Goelz. Goelz, an experienced consul in his fifties, was a portly, balding man with a fringe of white hair: he would have made a good Santa Claus. With Goelz was an Iranian member of the consular staff, Ali Jordan.

Goelz advised Bucha to catch his plane. Fara had told the police - in all innocence - that Bucha was not in Iran, and they had appeared to believe her. There was every chance that Bucha could sneak out.

Goelz also offered to hold the passports and residence permits of Paul and Bill for safekeeping. That way, if the police made a

formal demand for the documents, EDS would be able to refer them to the Embassy.

Meanwhile, Ali Jordan would contact the police and try to find out what the hell was going on.

Later that day the passports and papers were delivered to the Embassy.

Next morning Bucha caught his plane and got out. Gallagher called the Embassy. Ali Jordan had talked to General Biglari of the Tehran Police Department. Biglari had said that Paul and Bill were being detained in the country and would be arrested if they tried to leave.

Gallagher asked why.

They were being held as 'material witnesses in investigation', Jordan understood.

'What investigation?'

Jordan did not know.

Paul was puzzled, as well as anxious, when Gallagher reported all this. He had not been involved in a road accident, had not witnessed a crime, had no connections with the CIA ... Who or What was being investigated? EDS? Or was the investigation just an excuse for keeping Paul and Bill in Iran so that they would continue to run the social security system's computers?

The police had made one concession. Ali Jordan had argued that the police were entitled to confiscate the residence permits, which were the property of the Iranian government, but not the passports, which were U.S. Government property. General Biglari had conceded this. ~~However he had demanded Paul's and Bill's work permits as well as their residence permits.~~

Next day Gallagher and Ali Jordan went to the police station to hand the documents over to Biglari. On the way Gallagher asked

Jordan whether he thought there was a chance Paul and Bill would be accused of wrongdoing.

'I doubt that very much,' said Jordan.

At the police station the General warned Jordan that the Embassy would be held responsible if Paul and Bill left the country by any means - such as a U.S. military aircraft.

The following day - 8 December, the day of the evacuation - Lou Goelz called EDS. He had found out, through a 'source' at the Iranian Ministry of Justice, that the investigation in which Paul and Bill were supposed to be material witnesses was an investigation into corruption charges against the jailed Minister of Health, Dr Sheikholeslamizadeh.

It was something of a relief to Paul to know, at last, what the whole thing was about. He could happily tell the investigators the truth: EDS had paid no bribes. He doubted whether anyone had bribed the Minister. Iranian bureaucrats were notoriously corrupt, but Dr Sheik - as Paul called him for short - seemed to come from a different mould. An orthopaedic surgeon by training, he had a perceptive mind and an impressive ability to master detail. In the Ministry of Health he had surrounded himself with a group of progressive young technocrats who found ways to cut through red tape and get things done. The EDS project was only part of his ambitious plan to bring Iranian health and welfare services up to American standards. Paul did not think Dr Sheik was lining his own pockets at the same time.

Paul had nothing to fear - if Goelz's 'source' was telling the truth. But was he? Dr Sheik had been arrested three months ago. Was it a coincidence that the Iranians had suddenly realised that Paul and Bill were material witnesses after Paul told them that EDS would leave Iran unless the Ministry paid its bills?

When the evacuation was over the remaining EDS men moved into

two houses and stayed there, playing poker, during 10 and 11 December, the holy days of Ashura. There was a high-stakes house and a low-stakes house. Both Paul and Coburn were at the high-stakes house. For protection they invited Coburn's 'spooks' - his two contacts in military intelligence - who carried guns. No weapons were allowed at the poker table, so the spooks had to leave their firearms in the hall.

Contrary to expectations, Ashura passed relatively peacefully: millions of Iranians attended anti-Shah demonstrations all over the country, but there was little violence.

After Ashura Paul and Bill again considered skipping the country, but they were in for a shock. As a preliminary they asked Lou Goelz at the Embassy to give them back their passports. Goelz said that if he did that he would be obliged to inform General Biglari. That would amount to a warning to the police that Paul and Bill were trying to sneak out.

Goelz insisted that he had told EDS, when he took the passports, that this was his deal with the police; but he must have said it rather quietly because no one could remember it.

Paul was furious. Why had Goelz had to make any kind of deal with the police? He was under no obligation to tell them what he did with an American passport. It was not his job to help the police detain Paul and Bill in Iran, for God's sake! The Embassy was there to help Americans, wasn't it?

Couldn't Goelz renege on his stupid agreement, and return the passports quietly, perhaps informing the police a couple of days later, when Paul and Bill were safely home? Absolutely not, said Goelz. If he quarrelled with the police they would make trouble for everyone else, and Goelz had to worry about the other twelve thousand Americans still in Iran. Besides, the names of Paul and Bill were now on the 'stop list' held by the airport police: even with all their documents in

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order they would never get through passport control.

When the news that Paul and Bill were well and truly stuck in Iran reached Dallas, EDS and its lawyers went into high gear. Their Washington contacts were not as good as they would have been under a Republican administration, but they still had some friends. They talked to Bob Strauss, a high-powered White House troubleshooter who happened to be a Texan; Admiral Tom Moorer, a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who knew many of the generals now running Iran's military government; and Richard Helms, sometime Director of the CIA and a former U.S. Ambassador to Iran. As a result of the pressure they put on the State Department, the U.S. Ambassador in Tehran, William Sullivan, raised the case of Paul and Bill in a meeting with the Iranian Prime Minister, General Azhari.

None of this brought any results.

The thirty days which Paul had given the Iranians to pay their bill ran out, and on 16 December he wrote to Dr Emrani formally terminating the contract. But he had not given up. He asked a handful of evacuated executives to come back to Tehran, as a sign of EDS's willingness to try to resolve its problems with the Ministry. Some of the returning executives, encouraged by the peaceful Ashura, even brought their families back.

Neither the Embassy nor EDS's lawyers in Tehran had been able to find out who had ordered Paul and Bill detained. It was Majid, Fara's father, who eventually got the information out of General Biglari. The investigator was examining magistrate Hosain Dadgar, a mid-level functionary within the office of the public prosecutor, in a department which dealt with crimes by civil servants and had very broad powers. Dadgar was conducting the inquiry into Dr Sheik, the jailed former Minister of Health.

Since the Embassy could not persuade the Iranians to let Paul

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and Bill leave the country, and would not give back their passports quietly, could they at least arrange for this Dadgar to question Paul and Bill as soon as possible so that they could go home for Christmas? Christmas did not mean much to the Iranians, said Goelz, but New Year did, so he would try to fix a meeting before then.

During the second half of December the rioting started again (and the first thing the returning executives did was plan for a second evacuation). The general strike continued, and petroleum exports - the government's most important source of income - ground to a halt, reducing to zero EDS's chances of getting paid. So few Iranians turned up for work at the Ministry that there was nothing for the EDS men to do, and Paul sent half of them home to the States for Christmas.

Paul packed his bags, closed up his house, and moved into the Hilton, ready to go home at the first opportunity.

The city was thick with rumours. Jay Coburn fished up most of them in his net and brought the interesting ones to Paul. One more disquieting than most came from Bunny Flyshacker, an American girl with friends at the Ministry of Justice. Bunny had worked for EDS in the States, and she kept in touch here in Tehran although she was no longer with the company. She called Coburn to say that the Ministry of Justice planned to arrest Paul and Bill.

Paul discussed this with Coburn. It contradicted what they were hearing from the U.S. Embassy. The Embassy's advice was surely better than Bunny Flyshacker's, they agreed. They decided to take no action.

Paul spent Christmas Day quietly, with a few colleagues, at the home of Pat Sculley, a young EDS manager who had volunteered to return to Tehran. Sculley's wife, Mary, had also come back and she cooked Christmas dinner. Paul missed Ruthie and the children.

Two days after Christmas the Embassy called. They had succeeded in setting up a meeting for Paul and Bill with examining magistrate

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Hosain Dadgar. The meeting was to take place the following morning, 28 December, at the Ministry of Health building on Eisenhower Avenue. [L1]

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Bill Gaylord came into Paul's office a little after nine, carrying a cup of coffee, dressed in the EDS uniform: business suit, white shirt, quiet tie, black brogue shoes.

Like Paul, Bill was thirty-nine, of middle height, and stocky; but there the resemblance ended. Paul had dark colouring, heavy eyebrows, deep-set eyes and a big nose: in casual clothes he was often mistaken for an Iranian until he opened his mouth and spoke English with a New York accent. Bill had a flat, round face and very white skin: nobody would take him for anything but an Anglo.

They had a lot in common. Both were Catholic, although Bill was more devout. They loved good food. Both had trained as systems engineers and joined EDS in the mid-sixties, Bill in 1965 and Paul in 1966. Both had had splendid careers with EDS, but although Paul had joined a year later he was now senior to Bill. Bill knew the health-care business inside out, and he was a first-class 'people manager', but he was not as pushy and dynamic as Paul. Bill was a deep thinker and a careful organiser. Paul would never have to worry about Bill making an important presentation: Bill would have prepared every word.

They worked together well. When Paul was hasty, Bill would make him pause and reflect. When Bill wanted to plan his way around every bump in the road, Paul would tell him to just get in and drive.

They had been acquainted in the States but had got to know one another well in the last nine months. When Bill had arrived in Tehran, last March, he had lived at the Chiapparones' house until his wife Emily and the children came over. Paul felt almost protective toward him: it was a shame that Bill had had nothing but problems here in Iran.

Bill was much more worried by the rioting and the shooting than

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most of the others - perhaps because he had not been here long, perhaps because he was more of a worrier by nature. He also took the passport problem more seriously than Paul. At one time he had even suggested that the two of them take a train to the north-east of Iran and cross the border into Russia, on the grounds that nobody would expect American businessmen to escape via the Soviet Union.

Bill also missed Emily and the children badly, and Paul felt somewhat responsible, because he had asked Bill to come to Iran.

Still, it was almost over. Today they would see Mr Dadgar and get their passports back. Bill had a reservation on a plane out tomorrow. Emily was planning a welcome-home party for him on New Year's Eve. Soon all this would seem like a bad dream.

Paul smiled at Bill. 'Ready to go?'

'Any time.'

'Let's get Abolhasan.' Paul picked up the phone. Abolhasan worked alongside Rich Gallagher as an administrative assistant to Paul. He was the most senior Iranian employee, and he advised Paul on Iranian business methods. The son of a distinguished lawyer, he was married to an American woman, and spoke very good English. One of his jobs was translating EDS's contracts into Farsi. Today he would translate for Paul and Bill at their meeting with Dadgar.

He came immediately to Paul's office and the three men left. They did not take a lawyer with them. According to the Embassy, this meeting would be routine, the questioning informal. To take lawyers along would not only be pointless, but might antagonize Mr Dadgar and lead him to suspect that Paul and Bill had something to hide. Paul would have like to have a member of the Embassy staff present, but this idea also had been turned down by Lou Goelz: it was not normal procedure to send Embassy representatives to a meeting such as this. However, Goelz had advised Paul and Bill to take with them documents

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establishing when they had come to Iran, what their official positions were, and the scope of their responsibilities.

As the car negotiated its way through the usual insane Tehran traffic, Paul felt depressed. He was glad to be going home, but he hated to admit failure. He had come to Iran to build up EDS's business here, and he had found himself dismantling it. Whatever way you looked at it the company's first overseas venture had been a failure. It was not Paul's fault that the government of Iran had run out of money, but that was small consolation: excuses did not make profits.

They drove down the tree-lined Eisenhower Avenue, as wide and straight as any American highway, and pulled into the courtyard of a square, ten-storey building set back from the street and guarded by soldiers with automatic rifles. This was the Social Security Organisation of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. It was to have been the powerhouse of the new Iranian welfare state: here, side by side, the Iranian government and EDS had worked to build a social-security system. EDS occupied the entire seventh floor ~~of the building~~ - Bill's office was there.

Paul, Bill and Abolhasan showed their passes and went in. The corridors were dirty and poorly decorated, and the building was cold: the ~~power~~ heat was off again. They were directed to the office Mr Dadgar was using.

They found him in a small room with dirty walls, sitting behind an old grey steel desk. In front of him on the desk were a notebook and a pen. Through the window Paul could see the data centre EDS was building next door.

Abolhasan introduced everyone. There was an Iranian woman sitting on a chair beside Dadgar's desk: her name was Mrs Nourbash, and she was Dadgar's interpreter.

They all sat down on dilapidated metal chairs. Tea was served. Dadgar began to speak in Farsi. His voice was soft but rather deep,

been a failure. It was not Paul's fault that the government of Iran had

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and his expression was blank. Paul studied him as he waited for the translation. Dadgar was a short, stocky man in his fifties, and for some reason he made Paul think of Archie Bunker. His complexion was dark and his hair was combed forward, as if to hide the fact that it was receding. He had a moustache and glasses, and he wore a sober suit.

Dadgar finished speaking, and Abolhasan said: 'He warns you that he has the power to arrest you if he finds your answers to his questions unsatisfactory. In case you did not realise this, he says you may postpone the interview to give your lawyers time to arrange bail.'

Paul was surprised by this development, but he evaluated it fast, just like any other business decision. Okay, he thought, the worst thing that can happen is that he won't believe us and he will arrest us - but we're not murderers, we'll be out on bail in twenty-four hours. Then we might be confined to the country, and we would have to meet with our attorneys and try to work things out ... which is no worse than the situation we're in now.

He looked at Bill. 'What do you think?'

Bill shrugged. 'Goelz says this meeting is routine. The stuff about bail sounds like a formality - like reading you your rights.'

Paul nodded. 'And the last thing we want is a postponement.'

'Then let's get it over with.'

Paul turned to Mrs Nourbash. 'Please tell Mr Dadgar that neither of us has committed a crime, and neither of us has any knowledge of anyone else committing a crime, so we are confident that no charges will be made against us, and we would like to get this finished up today so that we can go home.'

Mrs Nourbash translated.

Dadgar said he wanted first to interview Paul alone. Bill

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should come back in an hour.

Bill left. [L1] [L1]

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Bill went up to his office on the seventh floor. He picked up the phone, called Bucharest, and reached Lloyd Briggs. Briggs was number three in the hierarchy after Paul and Bill.

'Dadgar says he has the power to arrest us,' Bill told Briggs. 'We might need to put up bail. Call the Iranian attorneys and find out what that means.'

'Sure,' Briggs said. 'Where are you?'

'In my office here at the Ministry.'

'I'll get back to you.'

Bill hung up and waited. The idea of his being arrested was kind of ridiculous - despite the widespread corruption of modern Iran, EDS had never paid bribes to get contracts. But even if bribes had been paid, Bill would not have paid them: his job was to deliver the product, not win the order.

Briggs called back within a few minutes. 'You've got nothing to worry about,' he said. 'Just last week a man accused of murder had his bail set a a million and a half rials.'

Bill did a quick calculation: that was twenty thousand dollars. EDS could probably pay that in cash. For some weeks they had been keeping large amounts of cash, both because of the bank strikes and for use during the evacuation. 'How much do we have in the office safe?'

'Around seven million rials, plus fifty thousand dollars.'

So, Bill thought, even if we are arrested we'll be able to post bail immediately. 'Thanks,' he said. 'That makes me feel a lot better.' [L1] [L1]

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Downstairs, Dadgar had written down Paul's full name, date and place of birth, schools attended, experience in computers, and qualifications; and he had carefully examined the document which officially named Paul as Country Manager for Electronic Data Systems Corporation Iran. Now he asked Paul to give an account of how EDS had secured its contract with the Ministry of Health.

Paul took a deep breath. 'First, I would like to point out that I was not working in Iran at the time the contract was negotiated and signed, so I do not have first-hand knowledge of this. However, I will tell you what I understand the procedure to have been.'

Mrs Nourbash translated and Dadgar nodded.

Paul continued, speaking slowly and rather formally to help the translator. 'In 1975 an EDS executive, Paul Bucha, learned that the Ministry was looking for a data processing company experienced in health insurance and social security work. He came to Tehran, had meetings with Ministry officials, and determined the nature and scale of the work the Ministry wanted done. He was told that the Ministry had already received proposals for the project from Louis Berger and Company, Marsh and McLendon, ISIRAN, and Univac, and that a fifth proposal was on its way from Cap Gemini Sogeti. He said that EDS was the leading data processing company in the United States and that our company specialised in exactly this kind of health care work. He offered the Ministry a free preliminary study. The offer was accepted.'

When he paused for translation, Paul noticed, Mrs Nourbash seemed to say less than he had said; and what Dadgar wrote down was shorter still. He began to speak more slowly and pause oftener. 'The Ministry obviously liked EDS's proposals, because they then asked us to perform a detailed study for two hundred thousand dollars. The results of our study were presented in October 1975. The Ministry accepted our proposal and began contract negotiations. By August 1976 the contract

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was agreed.'

'Was everything above board?' Dadgar asked through Mrs Nourbash.

'Absolutely,' Paul said. 'It took another three months to go through the lengthy process of getting all the necessary approvals from many government departments, including the Shah's court. None of these steps was omitted. The contract went into effect at the end of the year.'

'Was the contract price exorbitant?'

'It showed a maximum expected pre-tax profit of twenty per cent, which is in line with other contracts of this magnitude, both here and in other countries.'

'And has EDS fulfilled its obligations under the contract?'

This was something on which Paul did have first-hand knowledge. 'Yes, we have.'

'Could you produce evidence?'

'Certainly. The contract specifies that I should meet with Ministry officials at certain intervals to review progress: those meetings have taken place and the Ministry has the minutes of the meetings on file. The contract lays down a complaints procedure for the Ministry to use if EDS fails to fulfil its obligations: that procedure has never been used.'

Mrs Nourbash translated, but Dadgar did not write anything down. He must know all this anyway, Paul thought.

He added: 'Look out of the window. There is our data centre. Go and see it. There are computers in it. Touch them. They work. They produce information. Read the printouts. They are being used.'

Dadgar made a brief note. Paul wondered what he was really after.

The next question was: 'What is your relationship with the Mahvi group?'

'When we first came to Iran we were told that we had to have

Iranian partners in order to do business here. The Mahvi group are our partners. However, their main role is to supply us with Iranian staff. We meet with them periodically, but they have little to do with the running of our business.'

Dadgar asked why Dr Towliati, a Ministry official, was on the EDS payroll. Was this not a conflict of interest?

Here at last was a question that made sense. Paul could see how Towliati's role could appear irregular. However, it was easily explained. 'In our contract we undertake to supply expert consultants to help the Ministry make the best use of the service we provide. Dr Towliati is such a consultant. He has a data processing background, and he is familiar with both Iranian and American business methods. He is paid by EDS, rather than by the Ministry, because Ministry salaries are too low to attract a man of his calibre. However, the Ministry is obliged to reimburse us for his salary, as laid down in the contract; so he is not <u>really</u> paid by us.'

Once again Dadgar wrote down very little. He could have got all this information from the files, Paul thought; perhaps he has.

Dadgar asked: 'But why does Dr Towliati sign invoices?'

'That's easy,' Paul replied. 'He does not, and never has. The closest he comes is this: he would inform the Minister that a certain task has been completed, where the specification of that task is too technical for verification by a layman.' Paul smiled. 'He takes his responsibility to the Ministry very seriously - he is easily our harshest critic, and he will characteristically ask a lot of tough questions before verifying completion of a task. I sometimes wish I did have him in my pocket.'

Mrs Nourbash translated. Paul was thinking: What is Dadgar after? First he asks about the contract negotiations, which happened before my time; then about the Mahvi group and Dr Towliati, as if they

were sensationally important. Maybe Dadgar himself doesn't know what he's looking for - maybe he's just fishing, hoping to come up with evidence of something illegal.

How long can this farce go on? [12]

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Bill was outside in the corridor, wearing his topcoat to keep out the cold. Someone had brought him a glass of tea, and he warmed his hands on it while he sipped. The building was dark as well as cold.

Dadgar had immediately struck Bill as being different from the average Iranian. He was cold, gruff, and inhospitable. The Embassy had said Dadgar was 'favourably disposed' toward Bill and Paul, but that was not the impression Bill had.

Bill wondered what game Dadgar was playing. Was he trying to intimidate them, or was he seriously considering arresting them? Either way, the meeting was not turning out the way the Embassy had anticipated. Their advice, to come without lawyers or Embassy representatives, now looked mistaken: perhaps they just did not want to get involved. Anyway, Paul and Bill were on their own now. It was not going to be a pleasant day. But at the end of it they would be able to go home.

Looking out of the window, he saw that there was some excitement down on Eisenhower Avenue. Some way down the street, dissidents were stopping cars and putting Khomeini posters on the windshields. The soldiers guarding the Ministry building were stopping the cars and tearing the posters up. As he watched, the soldiers became more belligerent. They broke the headlight of a car, then the windshield of another, as if to teach the drivers a lesson. Next they pulled a driver out of a car and punched him around.

The next car they picked on was a taxi, a Tehran orange cab. It went by without stopping, not surprisingly; but the soldiers seemed

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angered and chased it, firing their guns. Cab and pursuing soldiers disappeared from Bill's sight.

After that the soldiers ended their grim game and returned to their posts inside the walled courtyard in front of the Ministry building. The incident, with its queer mixture of childishness and brutality, seemed to sum up what was going on in Iran. The country was going down the drain. The Shah had lost control and the rebels were determined to drive him out or kill him. Bill felt sorry for the people in the cars, victims of circumstance who could do nothing but hope that things would get better. If Iranians are no longer safe, he thought, Americans must be in even more danger. We've got to get out of this country.

Two Iranians were hanging about in the same corridor, watching the fracas on Eisenhower. They seemed as appalled as Bill at what they saw.

Morning turned into afternoon. Bill got more tea and a sandwich for lunch. He wondered what was happening in the interrogation room. He was not surprised to be kept waiting: in Iran, 'an hour' meant nothing more precise than 'later, maybe'. But as the day wore on he became more uneasy. Was Paul in trouble in there?

The two Iranians stayed in the corridor all afternoon, doing nothing. Bill wondered vaguely who they were. He did not speak to them.

He wished the time would pass more quickly. He had a reservation on tomorrow's plane. Emily and the kids were in Washington, where both Emily's parents and Bill's lived. They ~~all~~ had a big party planned for him on New Year's Eve. He could hardly wait to see them all again.

He should have left Iran weeks ago, when the firebombing started. One of the people whose homes had been bombed was a girl with whom he had gone to high school in Washington. She was married to a diplomat

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at the U.S. Embassy. Bill had talked to them about the incident. Nobody had been hurt, luckily, but it had been very scary. I should have taken heed, and got out then, he thought.

At last Abolhasan opened the door and called: 'Bill! Come in, please.'

Bill looked at his watch. It was five o'clock. He went in.

'It's cold,' he said as he sat down.

'It's warm enough in this seat,' Paul said with a strained smile. Bill looked at Paul's face: he seemed very uncomfortable.

Dadgar drank a glass of tea and ate a sandwich before he began to question Bill. Watching him, Bill thought: Look out - this guy is trying to trap us so he won't have to let us leave the country.

The interview started. Bill gave his full name, date and place of birth, schools attended, qualifications, and experience. Dadgar's face was blank as he asked the questions and wrote down the answers: he was like a machine, Bill thought.

He began to see why the interview with Paul had taken so long. Each question had to be translated from Farsi into English and each answer from English into Farsi. Mrs Nourbash did the translation, Abolhasan interrupting with clarification and corrections.

Dadgar questioned ~~him~~ about EDS's performance of the Ministry contract. Bill answered at length and in detail, although the subject was both complicated and highly technical, and he was pretty sure that Mrs Nourbash could not really understand what he was saying. Anyway, no one could hope to grasp the complexities of the entire project by asking a handful of general questions. What kind of foolishness was this, Bill wondered? Why did Dadgar want to sit all day in a freezing cold room and ask stupid questions? It was some kind of Persian ritual, Bill decided. Dadgar needed to pad out his records, show that he had explored every avenue, and protect himself in advance against possible

criticism for letting them go. At the absolute worst, he might detain them in Iran a while longer. Either way, it was just a matter of time.

Both Dadgar and Mrs Nourbash seemed hostile. The interview became more like a courtroom cross-examination. Dadgar said that EDS's progress reports to the Ministry had been false, and EDS had used them to make the Ministry pay for work that had not been done. Bill pointed out that Ministry officials, who were in a position to know, had never suggested that the reports were inaccurate. If EDS had fallen down on the job, where were the complaints? Dadgar could examine the Ministry's files.

Dadgar asked about Dr Towliati, and when Bill explained Towliati's role, Mrs Nourbash - speaking before Dadgar had given her anything to translate - replied that Bill's explanation was untrue.

There were several miscellaneous questions, including a completely mystifying one: Did EDS have any Greek employees? Bill said they did not, wondering what that had to do with anything. Dadgar seemed impatient. Perhaps he had hoped that Bill's answers would contradict Paul's; and now, disappointed, he was just going through the motions. His questioning became perfunctory and hurried; he did not follow up Bill's answers with further questions or requests for clarification; and he wound up the interview after an hour.

Mrs Nourbash said: 'You will now please sign your names against each of the questions and answers in Mr Dadgar's notebook.'

'But they're in Farsi - we can't read a word of it!' Bill protested. It's a trick, he thought; we'll be signing a confession to murder or espionage or some other crime Dadgar has invented.

Abolhasan said: 'I will look over his notes and check them.'

Paul and Bill waited while Abolhasan read through the notebook. It seemed a very cursory check. He put the book down on the desk. 'I advise you to sign.'

Bill was sure he should not - but he had no choice. If he wanted to go home, he had to sign.

He looked at Paul. Paul shrugged. 'I guess we'd better do it.'

They went through the notebook in turn, writing their names beside the incomprehensible squiggles of Farsi.

When they finished, the atmosphere in the room was tense. Now, Bill thought, he has to tell us we can go home.

Dadgar shuffled his papers into a neat stack while he talked to Abolhasan in Farsi for several minutes. Then he left the room. Abolhasan turned to Paul and Bill, his face grave.

'You are being arrested,' he said.

Bill's heart sank. No plane, no Washington, no Emily, no New Year's Eve party ...

'Bail has been set at ninety million tomans, sixty for Paul and thirty for Bill.'

'Jesus!' Paul said. 'Ninety million tomans is ...'

Abolhasan worked it out on a scrap of paper. 'A little under thirteen million dollars.'

'You're kidding!' Bill said. 'Thirteen million? A murderer's bail is twenty thousand.'

Abolhasan said: 'He asks whether you are ready to post the bail.'

Paul laughed. 'Tell him I'm a little short now, I'm going to have to go to the bank.'

Abolhasan said nothing.

'He can't be serious,' Paul said.

'He's serious,' said Abolhasan.

Suddenly Bill was mad as hell - mad at Dadgar, mad at Lou Goelz, mad at the whole damn world. It had been a sucker trap and they had fallen right into it. Why, they had walked in here of their own free will, to keep an appointment made by the U.S. Embassy. They had done

nothing wrong and nobody had a shred of evidence against them - yet they were going to jail, and worse, an Iranian jail!

Abolhasan said: 'You are allowed one phone call each.'

Just like the cop shows on TV - one phone call then into the slammer.

Paul picked up the phone and dialled. 'Lloyd Briggs, please. This is Paul Chiapparone ... Lloyd? I can't make dinner tonight. I'm going to jail.'

Bill thought: Paul doesn't really believe it yet.

Paul listened for a moment, then said: 'How about calling Gayden, for a start?' Bill Gayden, whose name was so similar to Bill Gaylord's, was president of EDS World and Paul's immediate boss. As soon as this news reaches Dallas, Bill thought, these Iranian jokers will see what happens when EDS really gets into gear.

Paul hung up and Bill took his turn on the phone. He dialled the U.S. Embassy and asked for the Consul General.

'Goelz? This is Bill Gaylord. We've just been arrested, and bail has been set at thirteen million dollars.'

'Oh, dear, I - '

'The hell with oh dear!' Bill was infuriated by Goelz's calm measured voice. 'You arranged this meeting and you told us we could leave afterwards!'

'I'm sure, if you've done nothing wrong - '

'What do you mean if?' Bill shouted.

'I'll have someone down at the jail as soon as possible,' Goelz said.

Bill hung up.

The two Iranians who had been hanging about in the corridor all day came in. Bill noticed they were big and burly, and realised they must be plain-clothes policemen.

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Abolhasan said: 'Dadgar said it would not be necessary to handcuff you.'

Paul said: 'Gee, thanks.'

Bill suddenly recalled the stories he had heard about the torturing of prisoners in the Shah's jails. He tried not to think about it.

Abolhasan said: 'Do you want to give me your briefcases and wallets?'

They handed them over. Paul kept back a hundred dollars.

'Do you know where the jail is?' Paul asked Abolhasan.

'You're going to a Temporary Detention Facility at the Ministry of Justice on Khayyam Street.'

'Get back to Bucharest fast and give Lloyd Briggs all the details.'

'Sure.'

One of the plain-clothes policemen held the door open. Bill looked at Paul. Paul shrugged.

They went out.

The policemen escorted them downstairs and into a little car. 'I guess we'll have to stay in jail for a couple of hours,' Paul said. 'It'll take that long for the Embassy and EDS to get people down there to bail us out.'

'They might be there already,' Bill said optimistically.

The bigger of the two policemen got behind the wheel. His colleague sat beside him in the front. They pulled out of the courtyard and into Eisenhower Avenue, driving fast. Suddenly they turned into a narrow one-way street, heading the wrong way at top speed. Bill clutched the seat in front of him. They swerved in and out, dodging the cars and buses coming the other way, other drivers honking and shaking their fists, for five terrifying blocks.

They headed south and slightly east. Bill thought ahead to their

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arrival at the jail. Would people from EDS or the Embassy be there to negotiate a reduction in the bail so that they could go home instead of to a cell? Surely the Embassy staff would be outraged at what Dadgar had done. Ambassador Sullivan would intervene to get them released at once. After all, it was iniquitous to put two Americans in an Iranian jail when no crime had been committed and then set bail at thirteen million dollars. The whole situation was ridiculous.

Except that here he was, sitting in the back of this car, silently looking out of the windows and wondering what would happen next.

As they went farther south, what he saw through the window frightened him even more.

In the north of the city, where the Americans lived and worked, riots and fighting were still an occasional phenomenon, but here - Bill now realised - they must be continuous. The black hulks of burned buses smouldered in the streets. Hundreds of demonstrators were running riot, yelling and chanting, setting fires and building barricades. Young teenagers threw Molotov cocktails - bottles of gasoline with blazing rag fuses - at cars. Their targets seemed random. We might be next, Bill thought. He heard shooting, but it was dark and he could not see who was firing at whom. The driver never went at less than top speed. Every other street was blocked by a mob, a barricade or a blazing car: the driver turned around, blind to all traffic signals, and raced through side streets and back alleys at breakneck speed to circumvent the obstacles. We're not going to get there alive, Bill thought. He touched the rosary in his pocket.

It seemed to go on forever - then, suddenly, the little car swung into a circular courtyard and pulled up. Without speaking, the burly driver got out of the car and went into the building.

The Ministry of Justice was a big place, occupying a whole city block. In darkness - the street lights were all ~~out~~ off - Bill could make

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out what seemed to be a five-storey building. The driver was inside for ten or fifteen minutes. When he came out he climbed behind the wheel and drove around the block. Bill assumed he had registered his prisoners at the front desk.

At the rear of the building the car mounted the kerb and stopped on the sidewalk by a pair of steel gates set into a long, high brick wall. Somewhere over to the right, where the wall ended, there was the vague outline of a small park or garden. The driver got out. A peephole opened in one of the steel doors, and there was a short conversation in Farsi. Then the doors opened. The driver motioned Paul and Bill to get out of the car.

They walked through the doors.

Bill looked around. They were in a small courtyard. He saw ten or fifteen guards armed with automatic weapons scattered around the courtyard. In front of him was a circular driveway with parked cars and trucks. To his left, up against the brick wall was a single-storey building. On his right was another steel door.

The driver went up to the second steel door and knocked. There was another exchange in Farsi through another peephole. Then the door was opened, and Paul and Bill were ushered inside.

They were in a small reception area with a desk and a few chairs. Bill looked around. There were no lawyers, no Embassy staff, no EDS executives here to spring him from jail. We're on our own, he thought, and this is going to be dangerous.

A guard stood behind the desk with a ballpoint pen and a pile of forms. He asked a question in Farsi. Guessing, Paul said: 'Paul Chiapparone,' and spelled it.

Filling out the forms took close to an hour. An English-speaking prisoner was brought from the jail to help translate. Paul and Bill gave their Tehran addresses, phone numbers, and dates of birth, and

listed their possessions. Their money was taken away and they were each given two thousand rials, about thirty dollars ~~each~~.

They were taken into an adjoining room and told to remove their clothes. They both stripped to their undershorts. Their clothing and their bodies were searched. Paul was told to get dressed again, but not Bill. It was very cold: the heat was off here, too. Naked and shivering, Bill wondered what would happen now. Obviously they were the only Americans in the jail. Everything he had ever read or heard about being in prison was awful. What would the guards do to him and Paul? What would the other prisoners do? Surely, any minute now someone would come to get him released.

'Can I put on my coat?' he asked the guard.

The guard did not understand.

'Coat,' Bill said, and mimed putting on a coat.

The guard handed him his coat.

A little later another guard came in and told him to get dressed.

They were led back into the reception area. Once again Bill looked around expectantly for lawyers or friends; once again he was disappointed.

They were taken through the reception area. Another door was opened. They went down a flight of stairs into the basement.

It was cold, dim and dirty. There were several cells, all crammed with prisoners, all of them Iranian. The stink of urine made Bill close his mouth and breathe shallowly through his nose. The guard opened the door to cell number nine. Paul and Bill walked in.

Sixteen unshaven faces stared at them, alive with curiosity. Paul and Bill stared back, horrified.

The cell door clanged shut behind them. [C8] [C8]

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Display ↓

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Display 1

Until this moment, life had been extremely good to Ross Perot.

On the morning of 28 December 1978 he sat at the breakfast table in his mountain cabin at Vail, Colorado, and was served breakfast by Holly, the cook.

Perched on the mountainside and half-hidden in the aspen forest, the 'log cabin' had six bedrooms, five bathrooms, a thirty-foot living room, and an apres-ski 'Recuperation Room' with a Jacuzzi pool in front of the fireplace. It was just a holiday home.

Ross Perot was rich.

He had started EDS with a thousand dollars, and now the shares in the company - more than half of which he still owned personally - were worth several hundred million dollars. He was the sole owner of the Petrus Oil and Gas Company which had reserves worth hundreds of millions. He also had an awful lot of Dallas real estate. It was difficult to figure out exactly how much money he had - a lot depended on just how you counted it - but it was certainly more than five hundred million dollars and probably less than a billion.

In novels, fantastically rich people were portrayed as greedy, power-mad, neurotic, hated and unhappy - always unhappy. Perot did not read many novels. He was happy.

He did not think it was the money that made him happy. He believed in money-making, in business and profits, because that was what made America tick; and he enjoyed a few of the toys money could buy - the cabin cruiser, the speedboats, the helicopter; but rolling around in hundred-dollar bills had never been one of his daydreams. He <u>had</u> dreamed of building a successful business that would employ

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thousands of people; but his greatest dream-come-true was right here in front of his eyes. Running around in thermal underwear, getting ready to go skiing, was his family. Here was Ross Junior, twenty years old, and if there was a finer young man in the state of Texas, Perot had yet to meet him. Here were four - count 'em, four - daughters: Nancy, Suzanne, Carolyn and Katherine. They were all healthy, smart and lovable. Perot had sometimes told interviewers that he would measure his success in life by how his children turned out. If they grew into good citizens with a deep concern for other people, he would consider his life worthwhile. (The interviewers would say: 'Hell, I believe you, but if I put stuff like that in the article the readers will think I've been bought off!' And Perot would just say: 'I don't care. I'll tell you the truth - you write whatever you like.') And the children had turned out just exactly how he had wished, so far. Being brought up in circumstances of great wealth and privilege had not spoiled tham at all. It was almost miraculous.

Running around after the children with ski-lift tickets, wool socks and sunscreen lotion was the person responsible for this miracle, Margot Perot. She was beautiful, loving, intelligent, classy and a perfect mother. She could, if she had wanted to, have married a John Kennedy, a Paul Newman, a Prince Ranier, a Rockefeller. Instead she had fallen in love with Ross Perot from Texarkana, Texas; five feet seven with a broken nose and nothing in his pocket but hopes. All his life Perot had believed he was lucky. Now, at the age of forty-eight, he could look back and see that the luckiest thing that ever happened to him was Margot.

He was happy man with a happy family, but a shadow had fallen over them this Christmas. Perot's mother was dying. She had bone cancer. On Christmas Eve she had fallen at home: it was not a heavy fall, but because the cancer had weakened her bones, she had broken

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her hip and had to be rushed to Baylor Hospital in downtown Dallas.

Perot's sister Bette spent that night with their mother, then, on Christmas Day, Perot and Margot and the five children loaded the presents into the station wagon and drove to the hospital. Grandmother was in such good spirits that they all thoroughly enjoyed their day. However, she did not want to see them the following day: she knew they had planned to go skiing, and she insisted they go, despite her illness. Margot and the children left for Vail on 26 December, but Perot stayed behind.

There followed a battle of wills such as Perot had fought with his mother in childhood. Lulu May Perot was only an inch or two over five feet, and slight, but she was no more frail than a sergeant in the Marines. She told him he worked hard and he needed the holiday. He replied that he did not want to leave her. Eventually the doctors intervened, and told him he was doing her no good by staying against her will. The next day he joined his family in Vail. She had won, as she always did when he was a boy.

One of their battles had been fought over a Boy Scout trip. There had been flooding in Texarkana, and the Scouts were planning to camp near the disaster area for three days and help with relief work. Young Perot was determined to go, but his mother knew that he was too young - he would only be a burden to the scoutmaster. He kept on and on at her, and she just smiled sweetly and said No.

The time he won a concession from her: he was allowed to go and help pitch tents the first day, but he had to come home in the evening. It wasn't much of a compromise. But he was quite incapable of defying her. He just had to imagine the scene when he would come home, and think of the words he would use to tell her that he had disobeyed her - and he knew he could not do it.

He was never spanked. He could not remember even being yelled at.

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She did not rule him by fear. With her fair hair, blue eyes, and sweet nature, she bound him - and his sister Bette - in chains of love. She would just look you in the eye and tell you what to do, and you simply could not bring yourself to make her unhappy.

Even at the age of twenty-three, when he had been around the world and come home again, she would say: 'Who have you got a date with tonight? Where are you going? What time will you be back?' And when he came home he would always have to kiss her goodnight. But by this time their battles were few and far between, for her principles were so deeply embedded in him that they had become his own. She now ruled the family like a constitutional monarch, wearing the trappings of power and legitimising the real decision-makers.

He had inherited more than her principles. He also had her iron will. He, too, had a way of looking people in the eye. He had married a woman who resembled his mother. Blonde and blue-eyed, Margot also had the kind of sweet nature that Lulu May had. But Margot did not dominate Perot.

Everybody's mother has to die, and Lulu May was now eighty-two, but Perot could not be stoical about it. She was still a big part of his life. She no longer gave him orders, but she did give him encouragement. She had encouraged him to start EDS, and she had been the company's book-keeper during the early years as well as a founding director. He could talk over problems with her. He had consulted her in December 1969, at the height of his campaign to publicise the plight of American prisoners-of-war in North Vietnam. He had been planning to fly to Hanoi, and his colleagues at EDS had pointed out that if he put his life in danger the price of EDS stock might fall. He was faced with a moral dilemma: did he have the right to make shareholders suffer, even for the best of causes? He had put the question to his mother. Her answer had been unhesitating. 'Let them

sell their shares.' The prisoners were dying, and that was far more important than the price of EDS stock.

It was the conclusion Perot would have come to on his own. He did not really need her to tell him what to do. Without her, he would be the same man and do the same things. He was going to miss her, that was all. He was going to miss her very badly indeed.

But he was not a man to brood. He could do nothing for her today. Two years ago, when she had a stroke, he had turned Dallas upside down on a Sunday afternoon to find the best neurosurgeon in town and bring him to the hospital. He responded to a crisis with action. But if there was nothing to be done, he was able to shut the problem out of his mind, forgetting the bad news and going on to the next task. He would not now spoil his family's holiday by walking around with a mournful face. He would enter into the fun and games, and enjoy the company of his wife and children.

The phone rang, interrupting his thoughts, and he stepped into the kitchen to pick it up.

'Ross Perot,' he said.

'Ross, this is Bill Gayden.'

'Hi, Bill.' Gayden was an EDS old-timer, having joined the company in 1967. In some ways he was the typical salesman. He was a jovial man, everybody's buddy. He liked a joke, a drink, a smoke and a hand of poker. He was also a wizard financier, very good around acquisitions, mergers and deals, which was why Perot had made him president of EDS World. Gayden's sense of humour was irrepressible - he would find something funny to say in the most serious situations - but now he sounded sombre.

'Ross, we got a problem.'

It was an EDS catch-phrase: We got a problem. It meant bad news.

Gayden went on: 'It's Paul and Bill.'

Perot knew instantly what he was talking about. The way in which his two senior men in Iran had been prevented from leaving the country was highly sinister, and it had never been far from his mind, even while his mother lay dying. 'But they're supposed to be allowed out today.'

'They've been arrested.'

The anger began as a small, hard knot in the pit of Perot's stomach. 'Now, Bill, I was assured that they would be allowed to leave Iran as soon as this interview was over. Now I want to know how this has happened.'

'They just slung them in jail.'

'On what charges?'

'They didn't specify charges.'

'Under what law did they jail them?'

'They didn't say.'

'What are we doing to get them out?'

'Ross, they set bail at ninety million tomans. That's twelve million, seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars.'

'Twelve million?'

'That's right.'

'Now how the devil has this happened?'

'Ross, I've been on the phone with Lloyd Briggs for half an hour, trying to understand it, and the fact is that Lloyd doesn't understand it either.'

Perot paused. EDS executives were supposed to give him answers, not questions. Gayden knew better than to call without briefing himself as thoroughly as possible. Perot was not going to get any more out of him right now; Gayden just didn't have the information.

'Get Tom Luce into the office,' Perot said. 'Call the State

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Department in Washington. This takes priority over everything else. I don't want them to stay in that jail another damn minute!' [21]

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Margot pricked up her ears when she heard him say damn: it was most unusual for him to curse, especially in front of the children. He came in from the kitchen with his face set. His eyes were as blue as the Arctic Ocean, and as cold. She knew that look. It was not just anger: he was not the kind of man to dissipate his energy in a display of bad temper. It was a look of inflexible determination. It meant he had decided to do something and he would move heaven and earth to get it done. She had seen that determination, that strength in him when she had first met him, at the Naval Academy in Annapolis ... could it really be twenty-five years ago? It was the quality that cut him out from the herd, made him different from the mass of men. Oh, he had other qualities - he was smart, he was funny, he could charm the birds out of the trees - but what made him exceptional was his strength of will. When he got that look in his eyes you could no more stop him that you could stop a railway train on a downhill gradient.

'The Iranians put Paul and Bill in jail,' he said.

Margot's thoughts flew at once to their wives. She had known them both for years. Ruthie Chiapparone was a small, placid, smiling girl with a shock of fair hair. She had a vulnerable look: men wanted to protect her. She would take it hard. Emily Gaylord was tougher, at least on the surface. A thin blonde woman, Emily was vivacious and spirited: she would want to get on a plane and go spring Bill from jail herself. The difference in the two woman showed in their clothes: Ruthie chose soft fabrics and gentle outlines; Emily went in for smart tailoring and bright colours. Emily would suffer on the inside.

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'I'm going back to Dallas,' Ross said.

'There's a blizzard out there,' said Margot, looking out at the snowflakes swirling down the mountainside. She knew she was wasting her breath: snow and ice would not stop him now. She thought ahead: Ross would not be able to sit behind a desk in Dallas for very long while two of his men were in an Iranian jail. He's not going to Dallas, she thought; he's going to Iran.

'I'll take the four-wheel drive,' he said. 'I can catch a plane in Denver.'

Margot suppressed her fears and smiled brightly. 'Drive carefully, won't you,' she said. [L1] [L1]

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Perot sat hunched over the wheel of the GM Suburban, driving carefully. The road was icy. Snow built up along the bottom edge of the windscreen, shortening the travel of the wipers. He peered at the road ahead. Denver was 106 miles from Vail. It gave him time to think.

He was still furious.

It was not just that Paul and Bill were in jail. They were in jail because they had gone to Iran, and they had gone to Iran because Perot had sent them there.

He had been worried about Iran for months. One day, after lying awake at night thinking about it, he had gone in to the office and said: 'Let's evacuate. If we're wrong, all we've lost is the price of three ~~hundred~~ or four hundred plane tickets. Do it today.'

It had been one of the rare occasions on which his orders were not carried out. Everyone had dragged their feet, in Dallas and in Tehran. Not that he could blame them. He had lacked determination. If he had been firm they would have evacuated that day; but he had not, and the following day the passports had been called for.

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He owed Paul and Bill a lot anyway. He felt a special debt of loyalty to the men who had gambled their careers by joining EDS when it was a struggling young company. Many times he had found the right man, interviewed him, got him interested, and offered him the job, only to find that, on talking over with his family, the man had decided that EDS was just too small, too new, too risky.

Paul and Bill had not only taken the chance - they had worked their butts off to make sure their gamble paid off. Bill had designed the basic computer system for the administration of Medicare and Medicaid programmes which, used now in many American States, formed the foundation of EDS's business. He had worked long hours, spent weeks away from home, and moved his family all over the country in those days. Paul had been no less dedicated: when the company had too few men and very little cash, Paul had done the work of three systems engineers. Perot could remember the company's first contract in New York, with Pepsico; and Paul walking from Manhattan across the Brooklyn Bridge in the snow, to sneak past a picket line - the plant was on strike - and go to work.

Perot owed it Paul and Bill to get them out.

He owed it to them to get the Government of the United States to bring the whole weight of its influence to bear on the Iranians.

America had asked for Perot's help, once; and he had given three years of his life - and a bunch of money - to the prisoners-of-war campaign. Now he was going to ask for America's help.

His mind went back to 1969, when the Vietnam war was at its height. Some of his friends from the Naval Academy had been killed or captured: Bill Leftwich, a wonderfully warm, strong, kind man, had been killed in battle at the age of thiry-nine; Bill Lawrence was a prisoner of the North Vietnamese. Perot found it hard to watch his country, the greatest country in the world, losing a war because

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of lack of will; and even harder to see millions of Americans protesting, not without justification, that the war was wrong and should not be won. Then, one day in 1969, he had met little Billy Singleton, a boy who did not know whether he had a father or not. Billy's father had gone missing in Vietnam before ever seeing his son: there was no way of knowing whether he was a prisoner, or dead. It was heartbreaking.

For Perot, sentiment was not a mournful emotion but a clarion call to action.

He learned that Bill's mother was not unique. Although the Government was not admitting it, there were many, perhaps hundreds, of wives and children who did not know whether their husbands and fathers had been killed or just captured. The Vietnamese, arguing that they were not bound by the rules of the Geneva Convention because the United States had never declared war, refused to release the names of their prisoners.

Worse still, many of the prisoners were dying of brutality and neglect. President Nixon was planning to 'Vietnamize' the war and disengage in three years' time, but by then, according to CIA reports, half the prisoners would have died. Even if Billy Singleton's father were alive, he might ~~never~~ not survive to come home.

Perot wanted to do something.

EDS had good connections with the Nixon White House. Perot went to Washington and talked to Chief Foreign Policy Advisor Henry Kissinger. And Kissinger had a plan.

The Vietnamese were maintaining, at least for the purposes of propaganda, that they had no quarrel with the American people - only with the U.S. Government. Furthermore, they were presenting themselves to the world as the little guy in a David-and-Goliath conflict. It seemed that they valued their public image. It might be possible

Kissinger thought, to embarrass them into improving their treatment of prisoners, and releasing the names, by an international campaign to publicise the sufferings of the prisoners and their families.

The campaign must be privately financed, and must seem to be quite unconnected with the Government, even though in reality it would be closely monitored by a team of White House and State Department people.

Perot accepted the challenge. (Perot could resist anything but a challenge. His eleventh-grade teacher, one Mrs Duck, had realised this. 'It's a shame,' Mrs Duck had said, 'that you're not as smart as your friends.' Young Perot insisted he was as smart as his friends. 'Well, why do they make better grades than you?' It was just that they were interested in school and he was not, said Perot. 'Anybody can stand there and tell me that they could do something,' said Mrs Duck. 'But let's look at the record: your friends can do it and you can't.' Perot was cut to the quick. He told her that he would make straight As for the next six weeks. He made straight As, not just for six weeks, but for the rest of his high school career. The perceptive Mrs Duck had discovered the only way to manipulate Perot: challenge him.)

Accepting Kissinger's challenge, Perot went to J. Walter Thompson, the largest advertising agency in the world, and told them what he wanted to do. They offered to come up with a plan of campaign within thirty to sixty days and show some results in a year. Perot turned them down: he wanted to start today and see results tomorrow. He went back to Dallas and put together a small team of EDS executives who began calling newspaper editors and placing simple, unsophisticated advertisements which they wrote themselves.

And the mail came in truckloads.

For Americans who were pro-war, the treatment of the prisoners

showed that the Vietnamese really were the bad guys; and for those who were anti-war the plight of the prisoners was one more reason for getting out of Vietnam. Only the most hard-line protesters resented the campaign. In 1970 the FBI told Perot that the Viet Cong had instructed the Black Panthers to murder him. (At the crazy end of the sixties this had not sounded particularly bizarre.) Perot hired bodyguards. Sure enough, a few weeks later a squad of men climbed the fence around Perot's seventeen-acre Dallas property. They were chased off by savage dogs. Perot's family, including his indomitable mother, would not hear of him giving up the campaign for the sake of their safety.

His greatest publicity stunt took place in December 1969, when he chartered two planes and tried to fly into Hanoi with Christmas dinners for the prisoners-of-war. Of course, he was not allowed to land; but during a slow news period he created enormous international awareness of the problem. He spent two million dollars, but he reckoned the publicity would have cost sixty million to buy. And a Gallup poll he commissioned afterwards showed that the feelings of Americans toward the North Vietnamese were overwhelmingly negative.

During 1970 Perot used less spectacular methods. Small communities all over the United States were encouraged to set up their own PoW campaigns. They raised funds to send people to Paris to badger the North Vietnamese delegation there. They organised telethons, and built replicas of the cages in which some of the PoWs lived. They sent so many protest letters to Hanoi that the North Vietnamese postal system collapsed under the strain. Perot stumped the country, giving speeches anywhere he was invited. He met with North Vietnamese diplomats in Laos, taking with him lists of their prisoners held in the south, mail from them, and film of their living conditions. He also took a Gallup associate with him, and together they went over the

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results of the poll with the North Vietnamese.

Some or all of it worked. The treatment of American PoWs improved, mail and parcels began to get through to them, and the North Vietnamese started to release names. Most importantly, the prisoners heard of the campaign - from newly captured American soldiers - and the news boosted their morale enormously.

Eight years later, driving to Denver in the snow, Perot recalled another consequence of the campaign; a consequence which had then seemed no more than mildly irritating, but could now be important and valuable. Publicity for the PoWs had meant, inevitably, publicity for Ross Perot. He had become nationally known. He would be remembered in the corridors of power - and especially in the Pentagon. That Washington monitoring committee had included Admiral Tom Moorer, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Alexander Haig, then assistant to Kissinger and now the senior American general at NATO; William Sullivan, then a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and now U.S. Ambassador to Iran; and Kissinger himself.

These people would help Perot get inside the Government, find out what was happening, and promote help fast. He would call Richard Helms, who had in the past been both head of the CIA and U.S. Ambassador to Tehran. He would call Kermit Roosevelt, son of Teddy, who had been involved in the CIA coup which put the Shah back on the throne in 1953 ...

But what if none of this works? he thought.

It was his habit to think more than one step ahead.

What if the Carter administration could not or would not help?

Then, he thought, I'm going to break them out of jail.

How would we go about something like that? We've never done anything like it. Where would be start? Who could help us?

He thought of EDS executives Merv Stauffer and T.J. Marquez,

and his secretary Sally Walther, who had been key organisers of the PoW campaign: making complex arrangements half across the world by phone was meat and drink to them, but ... a prison break? And who would staff the mission? Since 1968 EDS's recruiters had given priority to Vietnam veterans - a policy begun for patriotic reasons and continued when Perot found that the vets often made first-class businessmen - but the men who had once been lean, fit, highly-trained soldiers were now overweight, out-of-condition computer executives, more comfortable with a telephone than with a rifle. And who would plan and lead the raid?

Finding the best man for the job was Perot's speciality. Although he was one of the most successful self-made men in the history of American capitalism, he was not the world's greatest computer expert, nor the world's greatest salesman, nor even the world's greatest business administrator. He did just one thing superbly well: pick the right man, give him the resources, motivate him, then leave him alone to do the job.

Now, as he approached Denver, he asked himself: Who is the world's greatest rescuer?

Then he thought of Bull Simons.

A legend in the U.S. Army, Colonel Arthur D. "Bull" Simons had hit the headlines in November 1970 when he and a team of commandos raided the Son Tay prison camp, twenty-three miles outside Hanoi, in an attempt to rescue American prisoners-of-war. The raid had been a brave and well-organised operation, but the intelligence on which all the planning was based had been faulty: the prisoners had moved, and were no longer at Son Tay. The raid was widely regarded as a fiasco, which in Perot's opinion was grossly unfair. He had been invited to meet the Son Tay Raiders, to boost their morale by telling them that here was at least one American citizen who was grateful for

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their bravery. He had spent a day at Fort Bragg in North Carolina - and he had met Colonel Simons.

Peering through his windscreen, Perot could picture Simons against the cloud of falling snowflakes: a big man, just under six feet tall, with the shoulders of an ox. His white hair was cropped in a military crewcut, but his bushy eyebrows were still black. Either side of his big nose, two deep lines ran down to the corners of his mouth, giving him a permanently aggressive expression. He had a big head, big ears, a strong jaw, and the most powerful hands Perot had ever seen. The man looked as if he had been carved from a single block of granite.

After spending a day with him, Perot thought: In a world of counterfeits, he is the genuine article.

That day and in years to come Perot learned a lot about Simons. What impressed him most was the attitude of Simons's men toward their leader. He reminded Perot of Vince Lombardi, the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers: he inspired in his men emotions ranging from fear through respect and admiration to love. He was an imposing figure and an aggressive commander - he cursed a lot, and would tell a soldier: 'Do what I say or I'll cut your bloody head off!' - but that by itself could not account for his hold on the hearts of sceptical, battle-hardened commandos. Beneath the tough exterior there was a tough interior.

Those who had served under him liked nothing better than to sit around telling Simons stories. Although he had a bull-like physique, his nickname came not from that but, according to legend, from a game played by Rangers called The Bull Pen. A pit would be dug, six feet deep, and one man would get into it. The object of the game was to find out how many men it took to throw the first man out of the pit. Simons thought the game was foolish, but was once needled into playing

it. It took fifteen men to get him out, and several of them spent the night in hospital with broken fingers and noses and severe bite wounds. After that he was called 'The Bull'.

Perot learned later that almost everything in this story was exaggerated. Simons played the game more than once; it generally took four men to get him out; no one ever had any broken bones. Simons was simply the kind of man about whom legends are told. He earned the loyalty of his men not by displays of bravado but by his skill as a military commander. He was a meticulous, endlessly patient planner; he was cautious - one of his catch-phrases was: 'That's a risk we don't have to take;' and he took a pride in bringing all his men back from a mission alive.

In the Vietnam war Simons had run Operation White Star. He went to Laos with 107 men and organised twelve battalions of Mao tribesmen to fight the Vietnamese. One of the battalions defected to the other side, taking as prisoners some of Simons's Green Berets ~~prisoner~~. Simons took a helicopter and landed inside the stockade where the defecting battalion was. On seeing Simons, the Laotian colonel stepped forward, stood at attention, and saluted. Simons told him to produce the prisoners immediately, or he would call an airstrike and destroy the entire battalion. The colonel produced the prisoners. Simons took them away, then called the airstrike anyway. Simons had come back from Laos three years later with all his 107 men. Perot had never checked out this legend - he liked it the way it was.

The second time Perot met Simons was after the war. Perot virtually took over a hotel in San Francisco and threw a weekend party for the returning prisoners-of-war to meet the Son Tay Raiders. It cost Perot a quarter of a million dollars, but it was a hell of a party. Nancy Reagan, Clint Eastwood and John Wayne came. Perot would never forget the meeting between John Wayne and Bull Simons. Wayne shook

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Simons's hand with tears in his eyes and said: "You are the man I play in the movies."

Before the tickertape parade, Perot asked Simons to talk to his Raiders and warn them against reacting to demonstrators. "San Francisco has had more than its share of anti-war demonstrations," Perot said. "You didn't pick your Raiders for their charm. If one of them gets irritated he might just snap some poor devil's neck and regret it later."

Simons looked at Perot. It was Perot's first experience of The Simons Look. It made you feel as if you were the biggest fool in history. It made you wish you had not spoken. It made you wish the ground would swallow you up.

"I've already talked to them," Simons said. "There won't be a problem."

That weekend and later, Perot got to know Simons better, and saw other sides of his personality. Simons could be very charming, when he chose to be. He enchanted Perot's wife Margot, and the children thought he was wonderful. With his men he spoke soldiers' language, using a great deal of profanity, but he was surprisingly articulate when talking at a banquet or press conference. His college major had been journalism. Some of his tastes were simple - he read Westerns by the boxful, and enjoyed what his his sons called 'supermarket music' - but he also read a lot of non-fiction, and had a lively curiosity about all sorts of things. He could talk about antiques or history as easily as battles and weaponry.

Perot and Simons, two wilful, dominating personalities, got along by giving one another plenty of room. They did not become close friends. Perot never called Simons by his first name, Art (although Margot did). Like most people, Perot never knew what Simons was thinking unless Simons chose to tell him. Perot recalled their first

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meeting in Fort Bragg. Before getting up to make his speech, Perot had asked Simons's wife Lucille: 'What is Colonel Simons really like?' She had replied: 'Oh, he's just a great big teddy bear.' Perot repeated this in his speech. The Son Tay Raiders fell apart. Simons never cracked a smile.

Perot did not know whether this impenetrable man would care to rescue two EDS executives from a Persian jail. Was Simons grateful for the San Francisco party? Perhaps. After that party, Perot had financed Simons on a trip to Laos to search for MIAs - American soldiers Missing In Action - who had not come back with the prisoners-of-war. On his return from Laos, Simons had remarked to a group of EDS executives: 'Perot is a hard man to say No to.'

As he pulled into Denver airport, Perot wondered whether, six years later, Simons would still find him a hard man to say No to.

But that contingency was a long way down the line. Perot was going to try everything else first.

He went into the terminal, bought a seat on the next flight to Dallas, and found a phone. He called EDS and spoke to T.J. Marquez, one of his most senior executives, who was known as T.J. rather than Tom because there were so many Toms around EDS. 'I want you to go find my passport,' he told T.J., 'and get me a visa for Iran."

T.J. said: "Ross, I think that's the world's worst idea."

T.J. would argue until nightfall if you let him. "I'm not going to debate with you," Perot said curtly. "I talked Paul and Bill into going over there, and I'm going to get them out."

He hung up the phone and headed for the departure gate. All in all, it had been a rotten Christmas. [L1] [L1]

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T.J. was a little wounded. An old friend of Perot's as well as a

vice-president of EDS, he was not used to being talked to like the office boy. This was a persistent failing of Perot's: when he was in high gear, he trod on people's toes and never knew he had hurt them. He was a remarkable man, but he was not a saint.

[CO] [CO]

Ruthie Chiapparone also had a rotten Christmas.

She was staying at her parents' home, an eighty-five-year-old two-storey house on the southwest side of Chicago. In the rush of the evacuation from Iran she had left behind most of the Christmas presents she had bought for her daughters Karen, eleven, and Ann Marie, five; but soon after arriving in Chicago she had gone shopping with her brother Bill and bought some more. Her family did their best to make Christmas Day happy. Her sister and three brothers visited, and there were lots more toys for Karen and Ann Marie; but everyone asked about Paul.

Ruthie needed Paul. A soft, dependent woman, five years younger than her husband - she was thirty-four - she loved him partly because she could lean on his broad shoulders and feel safe. She had always been looked after. As a child, even when her mother was out at work - supplementing the wages of Ruthie's father, a truck driver - Ruthie had two older brothers and an older sister to take care of her.

When she first met Paul he had ignored her.

She was secretary to a Colonel; Paul was working on data processing for the Army in the same building. Ruthie used to go down to the cafeteria to get coffee for the Colonel, some of her friends knew some of the young officers, she sat down to talk with a group of them, and Paul was there and he ignored her. So she ignored him for a while, then all of a sudden he asked her for a date. They dated for a year and a half and then got married.

Ruthie had not wanted to go to Iran. Unlike most of the EDS wives, who had found the prospect of moving to a new country exciting, Ruthie had been highly anxious. She had never been outside the United

States - Hawaii was the farthest she had ever travelled - and the Middle East seemed a weird and frightening place. Paul took her to Iran for a week in June of 1977, hoping she would like it, but she was not reassured. Finally she agreed to go, but only because the job was so important to him.

However, she ended up liking it. The Iranians were nice to her, the American community there was close-knit and sociable, and Ruthie's serene ~~placid~~ serene nature enabled her to deal calmly with the daily frustrations of living in a primitive country, like the lack of supermarkets and the difficulty of getting a washing machine repaired in less than about six weeks.

Leaving had been strange. The airport had been crammed, just an unbelievable number of people in there. She had recognised many of the Americans, but most of the people were fleeing Iranians. She had thought: 'I don't want to leave like this - why are you pushing us out? What are you doing?' She had travelled with Bill Gaylord's wife Emily. They went via Copenhagen, where they spent a freezing cold night in a hotel where the windows would not close: the children had to sleep in their clothes. When she got back to the States, Ross Perot had called her and talked about the passport problem, but Ruthie had not really understood what was happening.

During that depressing Christmas Day - so unnatural to have Christmas with the children and no Daddy - Paul had called from Tehran. 'I've got a present for you,' he had said.

'Your airline ticket?' she said hopefully.

'No. I bought you a rug.'

'That's nice.'

He had spent the day with Pat and Mary Sculley, he told her. Someone else's wife had cooked his Christmas dinner, and he had watched someone else's children open their presents.

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Two days later she heard that Paul and Bill had an appointment, the following day, to see the man who was making them stay in Iran. After the meeting they would be let go.

The meeting was today, 28 December. By midday Ruthie was wondering why nobody from Dallas had called her yet. Tehran was eight and a half hours ahead of Chicago: surely the meeting was over? By now Paul should be packing his suitcase to come home.

She called Dallas and spoke to Jim Nyfeler, an EDS man who had left Tehran last June. 'How did the meeting work out?' she asked him.

'It didn't go too well, Ruthie ...'

'What do you mean, it didn't go too well?'

'They were arrested.'

'They were arrested? You're kidding!'

'Ruthie, Bill Gayden wants to talk to you.'

Ruthie held the line. Paul arrested? Why? For what? By whom?

Gayden, the president of EDS World and Paul's boss, came on the line. 'Hello, Ruthie.'

'Bill, what is all this?'

'We don't understand it,' Gayden said. 'The Embassy over there set up this meeting, and it was supposed to be routine, they weren't accused of any crime ... Then, around six-thirty their time, Paul called Lloyd Briggs and told him they were going to jail.'

'Paul's in jail?'

'Ruthie, try not to worry too much. We got a bunch of lawyers working on it, we're getting the State Department on the case, and Ross is already on his way back from Colorado. We're sure we can straighten this out in a couple of days. It's just a matter of days, really.'

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'All right,' said Ruthie. She was dazed. It didn't make sense. How could her husband be in jail? She said goodbye to Gayden and hung up.

What was going on out there? [L1]

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The last time Emily Gaylord had seen her husband Bill, she had thrown a plate at him.

Sitting in her sister Dorothy's home in Washington, talking to Dorothy and her husband Tim about how they might help to get Bill out of jail, she could not forget that flying plate.

It had happened in their house in Tehran. One evening in early December Bill came home and said that Emily and the children were to return to the States the very next day.

Bill and Emily had four children: Vicki, fifteen; Jackie, twelve; Jenny, nine; and Chris, six. Emily agreed that they should be sent back, but she wanted to stay. She might not be able to do anything to help Bill, but at least he would have someone to talk to.

It was out of the question, said Bill. She was leaving tomorrow. Ruthie Chiapparone would be on the same plane. All the other EDS wives and children would be evacuated a day or two later.

Emily did not want to hear about the <u>other</u> wives. <u>She</u> was going to stay with her husband.

They argued. Emily got madder and madder until finally she could no longer express her fustration in words, so she picked up a plate and hurled it at him.

He would never forget it, she was sure: it was the only time in eighteen years of marriage that she had exploded like that. She was highly strung, spirited, excitable - but not violent.

Mild, gentle Bill, it was the last thing he deserved ...

When she first met him she was twelve, he was fourteen and she

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hated him. He was in love with her best friend Cookie, a strikingly attractive girl, and all he ever talked about was who Cookie was dating and whether Cookie might like to go out and was Cookie allowed to do this or that ... Emily's sisters and brother really liked Bill. She could not get away from him, for their families belonged to the same country club and her brother played golf with Bill. It was her brother who finally talked Bill into asking Emily for a date, long after he had forgotten Cookie; and, after years of mutual indifference, they fell madly in love.

By then Bill was in college, studying aeronautical engineering 240 miles away in Blacksburg, Virginia, and coming home for vacations and occasional weekends. They could not bear to be so far apart so, although Emily was only eighteen, they decided to get married.

It was a good match. They came from similar backgrounds, affluent Washington Catholic families, and Bill's personality - sensitive, calm, logical - complemented Emily's nervous vivacity. They went through a lot together over the next eighteen years. They lost a child with brain damage, and Emily had major surgery three times. Their troubles brought them closer together.

And here was a new crisis: Bill was in jail.

Emily had not yet told her mother. Mother's brother, Emily's Uncle Gus, had died that day, and Mother was already terribly upset. Emily could not talk to her about Bill yet. But she could talk to Dorothy and Tim.

Her brother-in-law Tim Reardon was a U.S. Attorney in the Justice Department and had very good connections. Tim's father had been an administrative assistant to President John F. Kennedy, and Tim had worked for Ted Kennedy. Tim also knew personally the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Thomas P. 'Tip' O'Neill, and Maryland Senator Charles Mathias. He was familiar with the passport problem, for Emily

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had told him about it as soon as she got back to Washington from Tehran, and he had discussed it with Ross Perot.

'I could write a letter to President Carter, and ask Ted Kennedy to deliver it personally,' Tim was saying.

Emily nodded. It was hard for her to concentrate. She wondered what Bill was doing right now. [11] [L1]

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Paul and Bill stood just inside Cell No. 9, cold, numb, and desperate to know what would happen next.

Paul felt very vulnerable: a white American in a business suit, unable to speak more than a few words of Farsi, faced by a crowd of what looked like thugs and murderers. He suddenly remembered reading that men were frequently raped in jail, and he wondered grimly how he would cope with something like that.

Paul looked at Bill. His face was white with tension.

One of the inmates spoke to them in Farsi. Paul said: 'Does anyone here speak English?'

From another cell across the corridor a voice called: 'I speak English.'

There was a shouted conversation in rapid Farsi, then the interpreter called: 'What is your crime?'

'We haven't done anything,' Paul said.

'What are you accused of?'

'Nothing. We're just ordinary American businessmen with wives and children, and we don't know why we're in jail.'

This was translated. There was more rapid Farsi, then the interpreter said: 'This one who is talking to me, he is the boss of your cell, because he is there the longest.'

'We understand,' Paul said.

'He will tell you where to sleep.'

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The tension eased as they talked. Paul took in his surroundings. The concrete walls were painted what might once have been orange but now just looked dirty. There was some kind of thin carpet or matting covering most of the concrete floor. Around the cell were six sets of bunks, stacked three high: the lowest bunk was no more than a thin mattress on the floor. The room was lit by a single dim bulb and ventilated by a grille in the wall which let in the bitterly cold night air. The cell was very crowded.

After a while a guard came down, opened the door of cell number nine, and motioned Paul and Bill to come out.

This is it, Paul thought; we'll be released now. Thank God I don't have to spend a night in that awful cell.

They followed the guard upstairs and into a little room. He pointed at their shoes.

They understood they were to take their shoes off.

The guard handed them each a pair of plastic slippers.

Paul realised with bitter disappointment that they were not about to be released; he <u>did</u> have to spend a night in the cell. He thought with anger of the Embassy staff: they had arranged the meeting with Dadgar, they had advised Paul against taking lawyers, they had said Dadgar was 'favourably disposed' ...Ross Perot would say: 'Some people can't organise a two-car funeral.' That applied to the U.S. Embassy staff. They were simply incompetent. Surely, Paul thought, after all the mistakes they have made, they ought to come here <u>tonight</u> and try to get us out?

They put on the plastic slippers and followed the guard back downstairs.

The other prisoners were getting ready for sleep, lying on the bunks and wrapping themselves in thin wool blankets. The cell boss, using sign language, showed Paul and Bill where to lie down: Bill

[illegible]

was on the middle bunk of a stack, Paul below him with just a thin mattress between his body and the floor.

They lay down. The light stayed on, but it was so dim it hardly mattered. After a while Paul no longer noticed the smell, but he did not get used to the cold. With the concrete floor, the open vent, and no heating, it was almost like sleeping out of doors. What a terrible life criminals lead, Paul thought, having to endure conditions such as these; I'm glad I'm not a criminal. One night of this will be more than enough.

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[C0] Ross Perot took a taxi from the Dallas/Fort Worth regional airport to EDS corporate headquarters at 7171 Forest Lane. At the EDS gate he rolled down the window to let the security guards see his face, then sat back again as the car wound along the quarter-mile driveway through the park. The site had once been a country club, and these grounds a golf course. EDS headquarters loomed ahead, a seven-storey office building, and next to it a tornado-proof blockhouse containing the vast computers with their thousands of miles of magnetic tape.

Perot paid the driver, walked into the office building, and took the elevator to the fifth floor, where he went ~~walked~~ to Gayden's corner office.

Gayden was at his desk. Gayden always managed to look untidy, despite the EDS dress code. He had taken his jacket off. His tie was loosened, the collar of his button-down shirt was open, his hair was mussed, and a cigarette dangled from the corner of his mouth. He stood up when Perot walked in.

'Ross, how's your mother?'

'She's in good spirits, thankyou.'

'That's good.'

Perot sat down. 'Now, where are we on Paul and Bill?'

Gayden picked up the phone, saying: 'Lemme get T.J. in here.' He punched T.J. Marquez's number and said: 'Ross is here ...Yeah. My office.' He hung up and said: 'He'll be right down. Uh ...I called the State Department. The head of the Iran Desk is a man called Henry Precht. ~~Jesus Christ, he's a prick.~~ At first he wouldn't return my call. In the end I told his secretary, I said: "If he doesn't call me within twenty minutes, I'm going to call CBS and ABC and NBC and in one hour's time Ross Perot is going to give a press conference to say that we have two Americans in trouble in Iran

was loosened, the collar of his button-down shirt was open, his hair

and our country won't help them." He called back five minutes later.'

'What did he say?'

Gayden sighed. 'Ross, their basic attitude up there is that if Paul and Bill are in jail they must have done something wrong.'

'But what are they going to do?'

'Contact the Embassy, look into it, blah blah blah.'

'Well, we're going to have to put a firecracker under Precht's tail,' Perot said angrily. 'Now, Tom Luce is the man to do that.' Luce, an aggressive young lawyer, was the founder of the Dallas firm of Hughes and Hill, which handled most of EDS's legal business. Perot had retained him as EDS's counsel years ago, mainly because Perot could relate to a young man who, like himself, had left a big company to start his own business and was struggling to pay the bills. Hughes and Hill, like EDS, had grown rapidly. Perot had never regretted hiring Luce.

Gayden said: 'Luce is right here in the office somewhere.'

'How about Tom Walter?'

'He's here too.'

Walter, a tall Alabaman with a voice like molasses, was EDS's chief financial officer and probably the smartest man, in terms of sheer brains, in the company. Perot said: 'I want Walter to go to work on the bail. I don't want to pay it, but I will if we have to. Walter should figure out how we go about paying it. You can bet they won't take American Express.'

'Okay,' Gayden said.

A voice from behind said: 'Hi, Ross!'

Perot looked around and saw T.J. Marquez. 'Hi, Tom.' T.J. was a tall, slim man of forty with Spanish good looks: olive skin, short, curly black hair, and a big smile which showed lots of white teeth. The first employee Perot ever hired, he was living evidence

that Perot had an uncanny knack of picking good men. T.J. was now a vice-president of EDS, and his personal shareholding in the company was worth millions of dollars. 'The Lord has been good to us,' T.J. would say. Perot knew that T.J.'s parents had really struggled to send him to college. Their sacrifices had been well rewarded. One of the best things about the meteoric success of EDS, for Perot, had been sharing the triumph with people like T.J.

T.J. sat down and talked fast. 'I called Claude.'

Perot nodded: Claude Chappelear was the company's in-house lawyer.

'Claude's friendly with Matthew Nimetz, Counselor to Secretary of State Vance. I thought Claude might get Nimetz to talk to Vance himself. Nimetz called personally a little later: he wants to help us. He's going to send a cable under Vance's name to the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, telling them to get off their butts; and he's going to write a personal note to Vance about Paul and Bill.'

'Good.'

'We also called Admiral Moorer. He's up to speed on this whole thing because we consulted him about the passport problem. Moorer's going to talk to Ardeshir Zahedi. Now, Zahedi is not just the Iranian Ambassador in Washington but also the Shah's brother-in-law, and he's now back in Iran - running the country, some say. Moorer will ask Zahedi to vouch for Paul and Bill. Right now we're drafting a cable for Zahedi to send to the Ministry of Justice.'

'Who's drafting it?'

'Tom Luce.'

'Good.' Perot summed up. 'We've got the Secretary of State, the Head of the Iran Desk, the Embassy, and the Iranian Ambassador all working on the case. That's good. Now let's talk about what else we can do.

T.J. said: 'Tom Luce and Tom Walter have an appointment with Admiral Moorer in Washington tomorrow. Moorer also suggested we call Richard Helms - he used to be Ambassador to Iran after he quit the CIA.'

'I'll call Helms,' Perot said. 'And I'll call Al Haig and Henry Kissinger. I want you two to concentrate on getting all our people out of Iran.'

Gayden said: 'Ross, I'm not sure that's necessary -'

'I don't want a discussion, Bill,' said Perot. 'Let's get it done. Now, Lloyd Briggs has to stay there and deal with the problem - he's the boss, with Paul and Bill in jail. Everyone else comes home.'

'You can't make them come home if they don't want to,' Gayden said.

'Who'll want to stay?'

'Rich Gallagher. His wife -'

'I know. Okay, Briggs and Gallagher stay. Nobody else.' Perot stood up. 'I'll get started on those calls.

He took the elevator to the seventh floor and walked through his secretary's office. Sally Walther was at her desk. She had been with him for years, and had been involved in the prisoners-of-war campaign and the San Francisco party. (She had come back from that weekend with a Son Tay Raider in tow, and Captain Udo Walther was now her husband.) Perot said to her: 'Call Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, and Richard Helms.'

He went through to his own office and sat at his desk. The office, with its panelled walls, costly carpet, and shelves of antiquarian books, looked more like a Victorian library in an English country house. He was surrounded by souvenirs and his favourite art. Margot bought Impressionist paintings, but Perot preferred American art: Norman Rockwell originals and the Wild West bronzes of Frederic

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Remington. Through the window he could see the slopes of the old golf course.

Perot did not know where Henry Kissinger might be spending the holidays: it could take Sally a while to find him. There was time to think about what to say. Kissinger was not a close friend. It would need all his salesmanship to grab Kissinger's attention and, in the space of a short phone call, win his sympathy.

The phone on his desk buzzed, and Sally called: 'Henry Kissinger for you.'

Perot picked it up. 'Ross Perot.'

'I have Henry Kissinger for you.'

Perot waited.

Kissinger had once been called the most powerful man in the world. He knew the Shah personally. But how well would he remember Ross Perot? The prisoners-of-war campaign had been big, but Kissinger's projects had been bigger: peace in the Middle East, rapprochement between the U.S. and China, the ending of the Vietnam war ...

'Kissinger here.' It was the familiar deep voice, its accent a curious mixture of American vowels and German consonants.

'Dr. Kissinger, this is Ross Perot. I'm a businessman in Dallas, Texas, and -'

'Hell, Ross, I know who you are,' said Kissinger.

Perot's heart leaped. Kissinger's voice was warm, friendly and informal. This was great! Perot began to tell him about Paul and Bill: how they had gone voluntarily to see Dadgar, how the State Department had let them down. He assured Kissinger they were innocent, and pointed out that they had not been charged with any crime, nor had the Iranians produced an atom of evidence against them.

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'These are my men, I sent them there, and I have to get them back,' he finished.

'I'll see what I can do,' Kissinger said.

Perot was exultant. 'I sure appreciate it!'

'Send me a short briefing paper with all the details.'

'We'll get it to you today.'

'I'll get back to you, Ross.'

'Thank you, sir.'

The line went dead.

Perot felt terrific. Kissinger had remembered him, had been friendly and willing to help. He wanted a briefing paper: EDS could send it today -

Perot was struck by a thought. He had no idea where Kissinger had been speaking from - it might have been London, Monte Carlo, Mexico ...

'Sally?'

'Yes, sir?'

'Did you find out where Kissinger is?'

'Yes, sir.' [L1] [L1]

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~~Kissinger was a guest of Nelson Rockefeller at Pocantico, the Rockefeller family estate in Westchester, New York. It was a beautiful place. The main house, Kykut, was an imposing Georgian structure in weathered fieldstone. It stood on the crest of a hill overlooking the Hudson river. The guest house used by Kissinger nestled in trees half way down the hill. The view from Kissinger's window was magnificent.~~

Kissinger remembered Ross Perot clearly. Perot was a rough diamond. He helped causes with which Kissinger was sympathetic,

Kissinger was in New York, in his duplex at the exclusive River House apartment complex on East Fifty-second Street. From the window he could see the East River.

Kissinger was in New York, in his duplex at the exclusive River House apartment complex on East Fifty-Second Street. From the window he could see the East River.

usually causes having to do with prisoners. In the Vietnam war Perot's campaign had been courageous, even though he had sometimes harassed Kissinger beyond the point of what was doable. Now some of Perot's own people were prisoners.

Kissinger could readily believe that they were innocent. Iran was on the brink of civil war: justice and due process meant little over there now. He wondered whether he could help. He wanted to: it was a good cause. He was no longer in office, but he still had friends. He would call Ardeshir Zahedi, he decided, as soon as the briefing paper arrived from Dallas. [L1]

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Perot felt good about the conversation with Kissinger. Hell, Ross, I know who you are. That was worth more than money. The only advantage of being famous was that it sometimes helped get important things done.

T.J. came in. 'I have your passport,' he said. 'It already has a visa for Iran, but Ross, I don't think you should go. All of us here can work on the problem, but you're the key man. The last thing we need is for you to be out of contact - in Tehran or just up in a plane somewhere - at a moment when we have to make a crucial decision.'

Perot had forgotten all about going to Tehran. Everything he had heard in the last hour encouraged him to think it would not be necessary. ~~He felt particularly good about the conversation with Kissinger. Hell, Ross, I know who you are. This was the one advantage of being famous: it helped get important things done.~~

'You might be right,' ~~Perot~~ he said to T.J. 'We have so many things going in the area of negotiation - only one of them has to work. I won't go to Tehran. Yet.'

[C0] Display 4

Display

[C0] Henry Precht ~~was not a prick, but he~~ was probably the most harassed man in Washington.

A long-serving State Department official with a bent for art and philosophy and a wacky sense of humour, he had been making American policy on Iran more or less by himself for much of 1978, while his superiors - right up to President Carter - focussed on the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel.

Since early November, when things had really started to warm up in Iran, Precht had been working seven days a week from eight in the morning until nine at night. And those damn Texans seemed to think he had nothing else to do but talk to them on the phone.

The trouble was, the crisis in Iran was not the only power struggle Precht had to worry about. There was another fight going on, in Washington, between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance - Precht's boss - and Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's National Security Advisor.

Vance believed, like President Carter, that American foreign policy should reflect American morality. The American people believed in freedom, justice and democracy, and they did not want to support tyrants. The Shah of Iran was a tyrant. Amnesty International had called Iran's human rights record the worst in the world, and the many reports of the Shah's systematic use of torture had been confirmed by the International Commission of Jurists. Since the CIA had put the Shah in power and the USA had kept him there, a President who talked a lot about human rights had to do something.

In January 1977 Carter had hinted that tyrants might be denied American aid. Carter was indecisive - later that year he visited Iran and lavished praise on the Shah - but Vance believed in the human-rights approach.

Zbigniew Brzezinski did not. The National Security Advisor believed in power. The Shah was an ally of the United States, and should be supported. Sure, he should be encouraged to stop torturing people - but not yet. His regime was under attack: this was no time to liberalise it.

When would be the time? asked the Vance faction. The Shah had been strong for most of his twenty-five years of rule, but had never shown much inclination toward moderate government. Brzezinski replied: 'Name one single moderate government in that region of the world.'

There were those in the Carter administration who thought that if America did not stand for freedom and democracy there was no point in having a foreign policy at all; but that was a somewhat extreme view, so they fell back on a pragmatic argument: the Iranian people had had enough of the Shah, and they were going to get rid of him regardless of what Washington thought.

Rubbish, said Brzezinski. Read history. Revolutions succeed when rulers make concessions, and fail when those in power crush the rebels with an iron fist. The Iranian army, four hundred thousand strong, can easily put down any revolt.

The Vance faction - including Henry Precht - did not agree with the Brzezinski Theory of Revolutions: threatened tyrants make concessions because the rebels are strong, not the other way around, they said. More importantly, they did not believe that the Iranian army was four hundred thousand strong. Figures were hard to get, but soldiers were deserting at a rate which fluctuated around eight per cent per month, and there were whole units which would go over to the revolutionaries intact in the event of all-out civil war.

The two Washington factions were getting their information from different sources. Brzezinski was listening to Ardeshir Zahedi, the Shah's brother-in-law and the most powerful pro-Shah figure

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in Iran. Vance was listening to Ambassador Sullivan. Sullivan's cables were not as consistent as Washington could have wished - perhaps because the situation in Iran was sometimes confusing - but, since September, the general trend of his reports had been to say that the Shah was doomed.

Brzezinski said Sullivan was running around with his head cut off and could not be trusted. Vance's supporters said that Brzezinski dealt with bad news by shooting the messenger.

The upshot was that the United States did nothing. One time the State Department drafted a cable to Ambassador Sullivan, instructing him to urge the Shah to form a broad-based civilian coalition government: Brzezinski killed the cable. Another time Brzezinski phoned the Shah and assured him that he had the support of President Carter; the Shah asked for a confirming cable; the State Department did not send the cable. In their frustration both sides leaked stuff to the newspapers, so that the whole world knew that Washington's policy on Iran was paralysed by in-fighting.

With all that going on, the last thing Precht needed was a gang of Texans on his tail thinking they were the only people in the world with a problem.

Besides, he knew, he thought, exactly why EDS was in trouble. On asking whether EDS was represented by an agent in Iran, he was told: Yes - Mr Abolfath Mahvi. That explained everything. Mahvi was a well known Tehran middleman, nicknamed "the kind of the five percenters" for his dealings in military contracts. Despite his high-level contacts the Shah had put him on a blacklist of people banned from doing business in Iran. <u>This</u> was why EDS was suspected of corruption.

Precht would do what he could. He would get the Embassy in Tehran to look into the case, and perhaps Ambassador Sullivan might be able to put pressure on the Iranians to release Chiapparone and

Gaylord. But there was no way the United States Government was going to put all other Iranian questions on the back burner. They were attempting to support the existing regime, and this was no time to unbalance that regime further by threatening a break in diplomatic relations over two jailed businessmen, especially when there were another twelve thousand U.S. citizens in Iran, all of whom the State Department was supposed to look after. It was unfortunate, but Chiapparone and Gaylord would just have to sweat it out. [L1] [L1]

*

Henry Precht meant well. However, early in his involvement with Paul and Bill, he - like Lou Goelz - made a mistake which at first wrongly coloured his attitude to the problem and later made him defensive in all his dealings with EDS. Precht acted as if the investigation in which Paul and Bill were supposed to be witnesses was a legitimate judicial inquiry into allegations of corruption, rather than a barefaced act of blackmail. Goelz, on this assumption, decided to co-operate with General Biglari. Precht, making the same mistake, refused to treat Paul and Bill as criminally kidnapped Americans.

Whether Abolfath Mahvi was corrupt or not, the fact was that he had not made a penny out of EDS's contract with the Ministry. Indeed, EDS had got into trouble in its early days for refusing to give Mahvi a piece of the action.

It happened like this. Mahvi helped EDS get its first, small contract in Iran, creating a document control system for the Iranian Navy. EDS, advised that by law they had to have a local partner, promised Mahvi a third of the profit. When the contract was completed, two years later, EDS duly paid Mahvi four hundred thousand dollars.

But while the Ministry contract was being negotiated Mahvi was on the blacklist. Nevertheless, when the deal was about to be signed, Mahvi - who by this time was off the blacklist again - demanded that the contract be given to a joint company owned by him and EDS.

EDS refused. While Mahvi had earned his share of the Navy contract, he had done nothing for the Ministry deal.

Mahvi claimed that EDS's association with him had smoothed the way for the Ministry contract through the twenty-four different government bodies which had to approve it. Furthermore, he said, he had helped obtain a tax ruling favourable to EDS which was written into the contract: EDS only got the ruling because Mahvi had spent time with the Minister of Finance in Monte Carlo.

EDS had not asked for his help, and did not believe that he had given it. Furthermore, Ross Perot did not like the kind of 'help' that takes place in Monte Carlo.

EDS's Iranian attorney complained to the Prime Minister, and Mahvi was carpeted for demanding bribes. Nevertheless his influence was so great that the Ministry of Health would not sign the contract unless EDS made him happy.

EDS had a series of stormy negotiations with Mahvi. EDS still refused point blank to share profits with him. In the end there was a face-saving compromise: a joint company, acting as subcontractor to EDS, would recruit and employ all EDS's Iranian staff. In fact the joint company never made money, but that was later: at the time Mahvi accepted the compromise and the Ministry contract was signed.

So EDS had not paid bribes, and the Iranian government knew it; but Henry Precht did not, nor did Lou Goelz. Consequently their attitude to Paul and Bill was equivocal. Both men spent many hours

on the case but neither gave it top priority. When EDS's combative lawyer Tom Luce talked to them as if they were idle or stupid or both, they became indignant and said they might do better if he would get off their backs.

Precht in Washington and Goelz in Tehran were the crucial, ground-level operatives dealing with the case. Neither of them was idle. Neither was incompetent. But they both made mistakes, they both became somewhat hostile to EDS, and in those vital first few days they both failed to help Paul and Bill. [C8] [C8]

Display

THREE

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A guard opened the cell door, looked around, pointed at Paul and Bill, and beckoned them.

Bill's hopes soared. Now they would be released.

They got up and followed the guard upstairs. It was good to see daylight through the windows. They went out of the door and across the courtyard to the little one-story building beside the entrance gate. The fresh air ~~in the courtyard~~ tasted heavenly.

It had been a terrible night. Bill had lain on the thin mattress, dozing fitfully, startled by the slightest movement from the other prisoners, looking around anxiously in the dim light from the all-night bulb. He had known it was morning when a guard came with glasses of tea and rough hunks of bread for breakfast. He had not felt hungry. He had said a rosary.

Now it seemed his prayers were being answered.

Inside the one-storey building was a visiting room furnished with simple tables and chairs. Two people were waiting. Bill recognised one of them: it was Ali Jordan, the Iranian who worked with Lou Goelz at the Embassy. He shook hands and introduced his colleague, Bob Sorenson.

'We brought you some stuff,' Jordan said. 'A battery shaver - you'll have to share it - and some dungarees.'

Bill looked at Paul. Paul was staring at the two Embassy men, looking as if he were about to explode. 'Aren't you going to get us out of here?' Paul said.

'I'm afraid we can't do that.'

'God damn it, you got us in here!'

Bill sat down slowly, too depressed to be angry.

'We're very sorry this has happened,' said Jordan. 'It came as a complete surprise to us. We were told that Dadgar was favourably disposed toward you ... The Embassy is filing a very serious protest.'

'But what are you doing to get us out?'

'You must work through the Iranian legal system. Your attorneys -'

'Jesus Christ,' Paul said disgustedly.

Jordan said: 'We have asked them to move you to a better part of the jail.'

'Gee, thanks.'

Sorenson asked: 'Uh, is there anything else you need?'

'There's nothing I need,' Paul said. 'I'm not planning to be here very long.'

Bill said: 'I'd like to get some eye drops.'

'I'll see that you do,' Sorenson promised.

Jordan said: 'I think that's all for now ...' He looked at the guard.

Bill stood up.

Jordan spoke in Farsi to the guard, who motioned Paul and Bill to the door.

They followed the guard back across the courtyard. Jordan and Sorenson were low-ranking Embassy staff, Bill reflected. Why hadn't Goelz come? It seemed that the Embassy thought it was EDS's job to get them out: sending Jordan and Sorenson was a way of notifying the Iranians that the Embassy was concerned but at the same time letting Paul and Bill know that they could not expect much help from the U.S. Government. We're a problem the Embassy wants to ignore, Bill thought angrily.

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Inside the main building, the guard opened a door they had not been through before, and they went from the reception area into a corridor. On their right were three offices. On their left were windows looking out into the courtyard. They came to another door, this one made of thick steel. The guard unlocked it and ushered them through.

The first thing Bill saw was a TV set.

As he looked around he started to feel a little better. This part of the jail was a lot more civilised than the basement. It was relatively clean and light, with grey walls and grey carpeting. The cell doors were open and the prisoners were walking around freely. Daylight came in through the windows.

They continued along a hall with two cells on the right and, on the left, what appeared to be a bathroom: Bill looked forward to a chance to get clean again again after his night downstairs. Glancing through the last door on the right, he saw shelves of books. Then the guard turned left and led them down a long narrow corridor and into the last cell.

There they saw someone they knew.

It was Reza Neghabat, the Deputy Minister in charge of the Social Security Organisation at the Ministry of Health. Both Paul and Bill knew him well and had worked closely with him before his arrest last September. They shook hands enthusiastically. Bill was relieved to see a familiar face, and someone who spoke English.

Neghabat was astonished. 'Why are you in here?'

Paul shrugged. 'I kind of hoped you might be able to tell us that.' Mister Dadgar,

'But what are you accused of?' Mister Dadgar,

'Nothing,' said Paul. 'We were interrogated yesterday by the

magistrate who's investigating your former Minister, Dr Sheik. He arrested us. No charges, no accusations. We're supposed to be 'material witnesses', we understand."

Bill looked around. On either side of the cell were paired stacks of bunks, three high, with another pair beside the window, making eighteen altogether. As in the cell downstairs, the bunks were furnished with thin foam rubber mattresses, the bottom bunk of the three being no more than a mattress on the floor, and grey wool blankets. However, here some of the prisoners seemed to have sheets as well. The window, opposite the door, looked out into the courtyard. Bill could see grass, flowers and trees, as well as parked cars belonging, he presumed, to guards. He could also see the low building where they had just talked with Jordan and Sorenson.

Neghabat introduced Paul and Bill to their cellmates, who seemed friendly and a good deal less villainous than the inmates in the basement. There were plenty of free bunks - the cell was not as crowded as the one downstairs - and Paul and Bill took beds on either side of the doorway. Bill's was the middle bunk of three, but Paul was on the floor again.

Neghabat showed them around. Next to their cell was a little kitchen, with tables and chairs, where the prisoners could make tea and coffee or just sit and talk. For some reason it was called the Chatanooga Room. Beside it was a hatch in the wall at the end of the corridor: this was a little commissary, Neghabat explained, where from time to time you could buy soap, towels and cigarettes.

Walking back down the long corridor, they passed their own cell - No. 5 - and two more cells before emerging into the hall, which stretched away to their right. The room Bill had glanced into earlier turned out to be a combination guard's office and library, with books in English as well as Farsi. Next to it were two more

cells. Opposite these cells was the bathroom, with sinks, showers and toilets. The toilets were Persian style - like a shower tray with a drain hole in the middle. Bill learned that he was not likely to get the shower he longed for: normally there was no hot water.

Beyond the steel door, Neghabat said, was a little office used by a visiting doctor and dentist. The library was always open and the TV was on all evening, although of course programmes were in Farsi. Twice a week the prisoners in this section were taken out into the courtyard to exercise by walking in a circle for half an hour. Shaving was compulsory: the guards would allow moustaches, but not beards.

During the tour they met two more people they knew. One was Dr. Towliati, the Ministry data processing consultant about whom Dadgar had questioned them. The other was Hussein Pasha, who had been Neghabat's financial man at the Social Security Organisation.

Paul and Bill shaved with the electric razor brought in by Sorenson and Jordan. Then it was noon, and time for lunch. In the corridor wall was an alcove screened by a curtain. From there the prisoners took a linoleum mat, which they spread on the cell floor, and some cheap tableware. The meal was steamed rice with a little lamb, plus bread and yoghurt, and tea or Pepsi-Cola to drink. They sat cross-legged on the floor to eat. For Paul and Bill, both gourmets, it was a poor lunch. However, Bill found he had an appetite: perhaps it was the cleaner surroundings.

After lunch they had more visitors: their Iranian attorneys. The lawyers did not know why they had been arrested, did not know what would happen next, and did not know what they could do to help. It was a desultory, depressing conversation. Paul and Bill had no faith in them anyway, for it was these lawyers who had advised Lloyd Briggs that the bail would not exceed twenty thousand dollars. They returned

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no wiser and no happier.

They spent the rest of the afternoon in the Chatanooga Room, talking to Neghabat, Towliati and Pasha. Paul described his interrogation by Dadgar in detail. Each of the Iranians was highly interested in any mention of his own name during the interrogation. Paul told Dr Towliati how his name had come up, in connection with a suggested conflict of interest. Towliati described how he, too, had been questioned by Dadgar in the same way before being thrown in jail. Paul recollected that Dadgar had asked about a memorandum written by Pasha. It had been a completely routine request for statistics, and nobody could figure out what was supposed to be special about it.

Neghabat had a theory as to why they were all in jail. 'The Shah is making a scapegoat of us, to show the masses that he really is cracking down on corruption - but he picked a project where there was no corruption. There is nothing to crack down on - but if he releases us, he will look weak. If he had looked instead at the construction business he would have found an unbelievable amount of corruption ...'

It was all very vague. Neghabat was just rationalising. Paul and Bill wanted specifics: who ordered the crackdown, why pick on the Ministry of Health, what kind of corruption was supposed to have taken place, and where were the informants who had put the finger on the individuals who were now in jail? Neghabat was not being evasive - he simply had no answers. His vagueness was characteristically Iranian: ask a Persian what he had for breakfast and ten seconds later he would be explaining his philosophy of life.

At six o' clock they returned to their cell for supper. It was pretty grim - no more than the leftovers from lunch mashed into a dip to be spread on bread, with more tea.

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After supper they watched TV. Neghabat translated the news. The Shah had asked an opposition leader, Shahpur Bakhtiar, to form a civilian government, replacing the generals who had ruled Iran since November. Neghabat explained ~~the~~ that Shahpur was leader of the Bakhtiar tribe, and that he had always refused to have anything to do with the regime of the Shah. Nevertheless, whether Bakhtiar's government could end the turmoil would depend on the Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Shah had also denied rumours that he was leaving the country.

Bill thought this sounded encouraging. With Bakhtiar as Prime Minister the Shah would remain and ensure stability but the rebels would at last have a voice in governing their own country.

At ten o'clock the TV went off and the prisoners returned to their cells. The other inmates hung towels and pieces of cloth across their bunks to keep out the light: here, as well as downstairs, the bulb would shine all night. Neghabat said Paul and Bill could get their visitors to bring in sheets and towels for them.

Bill wrapped himself in the thin grey blanket and settled down to try to sleep. We're here for a while, he thought resignedly; we must make the best of it. Our fate is in the hands of others.

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[C0] Their fate was in the hands of Ross Perot, and in the next two days all his high hopes came to nothing.

At first the news had been good. Kissinger had called back on Friday, 29 December, to say that Ardeshir Zahedi would get Paul and Bill released. First, though, U.S. Embassy officials had to hold two meetings: one with people from the Ministry of Justice, the other with representatives of the Shah's court.

In Tehran the American Ambassador's deputy, Minister-Counselor Charles Naas, was personally setting up those meetings.

In Washington, Henry Precht at the State Department was also talking to Ardeshir Zahedi. Emily Gaylord's brother-in-law, Tim Reardon, had spoken to Senator Kennedy. Admiral Moorer was working his contacts with the Iranian military government. The only disappointment in Washington had been Richard Helms, the former U.S. Ambassador to Tehran: he had said candidly that his old friends no longer had any influence.

EDS consulted three separate Iranian lawyers. One was an American who specialised in representing U.S. corporations in Tehran. The other two were Iranians: one had good contacts in pro-Shah circles, the other was close to the dissidents. All three had agreed that the way Paul and Bill had been jailed was highly irregular and that the bail was astronomical. The American, John Westberg, had said that the highest bail he had ever heard of in Iran was a hundred thousand dollars. The implication was that the magistrate who had jailed Paul and Bill was on weak ground.

Here in Dallas, EDS's chief financial officer Tom Walter, the slow-talking Alabaman, was working on how EDS might - if necessary - go about posting bail of $12,750,000. The lawyers had advised him that bail could be in one of three forms: cash; a letter of credit

drawn on an Iranian bank; or a lien on property in Iran. EDS had no property worth that much in Tehran - the computers actually belonged the the Ministry - and, with the Iranian banks on strike and the country in turmoil, it was not possible to send in thirteen million dollars in cash; so Walter was organising a letter of credit. T.J. Marquez, whose job it was to represent EDS to the investment community, had warned Perot that it might not be legal for a public company to pay that much money in what amounted to ransom. Perot deftly sidestepped that problem: he would pay the money personally.

Perot had been optimistic that he would get Paul and Bill out of jail in one of the three ways - legal pressure, political pressure, or by paying the bail.

Then the bad news started coming in.

The Iranian lawyers changed their tune. In turn they reported that the case was 'political', had 'a high political content', and was 'a political hot potato'. John Westberg, the American, had been asked by his Iranian partners not to handle the case because it would bring the firm into disfavour with powerful people. Evidently, examining magistrate Hosain Dadgar was not on weak ground.

Lawyer Tom Luce and financial officer Tom Walter had gone to Washington and, accompanied by Admiral Moorer, had visited the State Department. They had expected to sit down around a table with Henry Precht and formulate an aggressive campaign for the release of Paul and Bill. But Henry Precht was cool. He had shaken hands with them - he could hardly do less, when they were accompanied by a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff - but he had not sat down with them. He had handed them over to a subordinate. The subordinate reported that none of the State Department's efforts had achieved anything: neither Ardeshir Zahedi nor Charlie Naas had been able to get Paul and Bill released.

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Tom Luce, who did not have the patience of Job, got mad as hell. It was the State Department's job to protect Americans abroad, he said, and so far all State had done was to get Paul and Bill thrown in jail! Not so, he was told: what State had done so far was above and beyond their normal duty. If Americans abroad committed crimes they were subject to foreign laws: the State Department's duties did not include springing people from jail. But, Luce argued, Paul and Bill had not committed a crime - they were being held hostage for thirteen million dollars! He was wasting his breath. He and Tom Walter returned to Dallas empty-handed.

Late last night Perot had called the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and asked Charles Naas w[illegible]e still had not met with the officials named by Kissinger and Zahedi. The answer was simple: those officials were making themselves unavailable to Naas.

Today Perot had called Kissinger again and reported this. Kissinger was sorry: he did not think there was anything more he could do. However, he would call Zahedi again and try once ~~more~~ again.

One more piece of bad news completed the picture. Tom Walter had been trying to establish, with the Iranian lawyers, the conditions under which Paul and Bill might be released on bail: for example, would they have to promise to return to Iran for further questioning if required, or could they be interrogated outside the country? Neither, he was told: if they were released from prison they still would not be able to leave Iran.

Now it was New Year's Eve. For three days Perot had been living at the office, sleeping on the floor and eating cheese sandwiches. There was nobody to go home to - Margot and the children were still in Vail - and, because of the nine-and-a-half-hour time difference between Texas and Iran, important phone calls were often made in the middle of the night. He was leaving the office only to visit his

mother, who was now out of hospital and recuperating at her Dallas home. Even with her he talked about Paul and Bill - she was keenly interested in the progress of events.

This evening he felt the need of hot food, and he decided to brave the weather - Dallas was suffering an ice storm - and drive a mile or so to a fish restaurant.

He left the building by the back door and got behind the wheel of his station wagon. Margot had a Jaguar, but Perot preferred nondescript cars.

He wondered just how much influence Kissinger had now, in Iran or anywhere. Zahedi and any other Iranian contacts Kissinger had might be like Richard Helms's friends - all out of the mainstream, powerless. The Shah seemed to be hanging on by the skin of his teeth.

On the other hand, that whole group might soon need friends in America, and welcome the opportunity to do Kissinger a favour.

While he was eating, Perot felt a large hand on his shoulder, and a deep voice said: 'Ross, what are you doing here, eating all by yourself on New Year's Eve?'

He turned around to see Roger Staubach, quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, a fellow Naval Academy graduate, and an old friend. 'Hi, Roger! Sit down.'

'I'm here with the family,' Staubach said. 'The heat's off in our house on account of the ice storm.'

'Well, bring them over.'

Staubach beckoned to his family, then said: 'How's Margot?'

'Fine, thankyou. She's skiing with the children in Vail. I had to come back - we've got a big problem.' He proceeded to tell the Staubach family all about Paul and Bill.

He drove back to the office in good spirits. There were still a <u>bunch</u> of good people in the world.

He thought again of Colonel Simons. Of all the schemes he had for getting Paul and Bill out, the jailbreak was the one with the longest lead time: Simons would need a team of men, a training period, equipment ... And yet Perot still had not done anything about it. It had seemed such a distant possibility, a last resort: while negotiations had seemed promising he had blocked it out of his mind. He was still not ready to call Simons - he would wait for Kissinger to have one more try with Zahedi - but perhaps there was something he could do to prepare for Simons.

Back at EDS, he found Pat Sculley. Sculley, a West Point graduate, was a thin, boyish, restless man of thirty-one. He had been a project manager in Tehran and had come out with the 8 December evacuation. He had returned after Ashura, then come out again when Paul and Bill were arrested. His job at the moment was to make sure that the Americans remaining in Tehran - Lloyd Briggs, Rich Gallagher and his wife, Paul and Bill - had reservations on a flight out every day, just in case ~~Paul and Bill should get out~~ the prisoners should be released. the prisoners should be released.

With Sculley was Jay Coburn, who had organised the evacuation and then, on 22 December, had come home to spend Christmas with his family. Coburn had been about to go back to Tehran when he got the news that Paul and Bill had been arrested, so he had stayed in Dallas and organised the second evacuation. A placid, stocky man, Coburn was thirty-two but looked forty: the reason, Perot believed, was that Coburn had lived eight years in one as a combat helicopter pilot in Vietnam. For all that, Coburn smiled a lot - a slow smile that began as a twinkle in his eye and often ended in a shoulder-shaking belly-laugh.

Perot liked and trusted both men. They were what he called eagles: high-flyers, who used their initiative, got the job done, gave him results not excuses. The motto of EDS's recruiters was:

Eagles Don't Flock - You Have To Find Them One At A Time. One of the secrets of Perot's business success was his policy of going looking for men like this, rather than waiting and hoping they would apply for a job.

Perot said to Sculley: 'Do you think we're doing everything we need to do for Paul and Bill?'

Sculley responded without hesitation. 'No, I don't.'

Perot nodded. These young men were never afraid to speak out to the boss: that was one of the things that made them eagles. 'What do you think we ought to do?'

'We ought to break them out,' Sculley said. 'I know it sounds strange, but I really think that if we don't, they have a good chance of getting killed in there.'

Perot did not think it sounded strange: that fear had been at the back of his mind for three days. 'I'm thinking of the same thing.' He saw surprise on Sculley's face. 'I want you two to put together a list of EDS people who could help do it. We'll need men who know Tehran, have some military experience - preferably in Special Forces type action - and are one hundred per cent trustworthy and loyal.'

'We'll get on it right away,' Sculley said enthusiastically.

The phone rang and Coburn picked it up. 'Hi, Keane! Where are you?' ... Hold on a minute.'

Coburn covered the mouthpiece with his hand and looked at Perot. 'Keane Taylor is in Frankfurt. If we're going to do something like this, he ought to be on the team.'

Perot nodded. Taylor, a former Marine sergeant, was another of his eagles. Six foot two and elegantly dressed, Taylor was a somewhat irritable man, which made him the ideal butt for practical jokes. Perot said: 'Tell him to go back to Tehran. But don't explain why.'

A slow smile spread across Coburn's young-old face. 'He ain't gonna like it.'

Sculley reached across the desk and switched on the speaker so they could all hear Taylor blow his cool.

Coburn said: 'Keane, Ross wants you to go back to Iran.'

'What the hell for?' Taylor demanded.

Coburn looked at Perot. Perot shook his head. Coburn said: 'Uh, there's a lot we need to do, in terms of tidying up, administratively speaking - '

'You tell Perot I'm not going back in there for any administrative bullshit!'

Sculley started to laugh.

Coburn said: 'Keane, I have somebody else here who wants to talk to you.'

Perot said: 'Keane, this is Ross.'

'Oh. Uh, hello, Ross.'

'I'm sending you back to do something very important.'

'Oh.'

'Do you understand what I'm saying?'

There was a long pause, then Taylor said: 'Yes, sir.'

'Good.'

'I'm on my way.'

'What time is it there?' Perot asked.

'Seven o'clock in the morning.'

Perot looked at his own watch. It said midnight.

Nineteen seventy-nine had begun. [L1] [L1]

*

Taylor sat on the edge of the bed in his Frankfurt hotel room, thinking about his wife.

Mary was in Pittsburgh with the children, Mike and Dawn, staying

at Taylor's brother's house. Taylor had called her from Tehran before leaving and told her he was coming home. She had been very happy to hear it. They had made plans for the future: they would return to Dallas, put the kids in school ...

Now he had to call and tell her he would not be coming home after all.

She would be worried.

Hell, he was worried.

He thought about Tehran. He had not worked on the Ministry of Health project, but had been in charge of a smaller contract, to computerise the old-fashioned manual book-keeping systems of Bank Omran. One day about three weeks ago, a mob had formed outside the bank - Omran was the Shah's bank. Taylor had sent his people home. He and Glenn Jackson were the last to leave: they locked up the building and started walking north. As they turned the corner on to the main street, they walked into the mob. At that moment the army opened fire and charged down the street.

Taylor and Jackson ducked into a doorway. Someone opened the door and yelled at them to get inside. They did - but before their rescuer could lock it again four of the demonstrators forced their way in, chased by five soldiers.

Taylor and Jackson flattened themselves against the wall and watched the soldiers, with their truncheons and rifles, beat up the demonstrators. One of the rebels made a break for it. Two of his fingers were almost torn off his hand, and blood spurted all over the glass door. He got out but collapsed in the street. The soldiers dragged the other three demonstrators out. One was a bloody mess but conscious: the other two were out cold, or dead.

Taylor and Jackson stayed inside until the street was clear. The Iranian who had saved them kept saying: 'Get out while you can.'

And now, Taylor thought, I have to tell Mary that I've just agreed to go back into all that.

To do something very important.

Obviously it had to do with Paul and Bill; and if Perot could not talk about it on the phone, presumably it was something at least clandestine and quite possibly illegal.

In a way Taylor was glad, despite his fear of the mobs. While still in Tehran he had talked on the phone with Bill's wife, Emily Gaylord, and had promised not to leave without Bill. The orders from Dallas, that everyone but Briggs and Gallagher had to get out, had forced him to break his word. Now the orders had changed, and perhaps he could keep his promise to Emily after all.

Well, he thought, I can't walk back, so I'd better find a plane. He picked up the phone again. [L1] {L1]

*

Jay Coburn remembered the first time he had seen Ross Perot in action. He would never forget it as long as he lived.

It happened in 1971. Coburn had been with EDS less than two years. He was a recruiter, working in New York City. Scott was born that year at a little Catholic hospital on Staten Island. It was a normal birth and, at first, Scott appeared to be a normal, healthy baby.

The day after he was born, when Coburn went to visit, Liz said Scott had not been brought in for his feed that morning. At the time Coburn took no notice. A few minutes later, a woman came in and said: 'Here are the pictures of your baby.'

'I don't remember any pictures being taken,' Liz said. The woman showed her the photographs. 'No, that's not my baby.'

The woman looked confused for a moment then said: 'Oh! That's right, yours is the one that's got the problem.'

It was the first Coburn and Liz had heard of any problem.

Coburn went to see the day-old Scott, and had a terrible shock. The baby was in an oxygen tent, gasping for air, and as blue as a pair of denim jeans. The doctors were in consultation about him.

Liz became almost hysterical, and Coburn called their family doctor and asked him to come to the hospital. Then he waited.

Something wasn't stacking up right. What kind of a hospital was it where they didn't tell you your new-born baby was dying? Coburn became distraught.

He called Dallas and asked for his boss, Gary Griggs. 'Gary, I don't know why I'm calling you, but I don't know what to do.' And he explained.

'Hold the phone,' said Griggs.

A moment later there was an unfamiliar voice on the line. 'Jay?'

'Yes.'

'This is Ross Perot.'

Coburn had met Perot, two or three times, but had never worked directly for him. Coburn wondered whether Perot even remembered what he looked like: EDS had more than a thousand employees at that time.

'Hello, Ross.'

'Now, Jay, I need some information.' Perot started asking questions: What was the address of the hospital? What were the doctors' names? What was their diagnosis? As he answered, Coburn was thinking bemusedly: Does Perot even know who I am?

'Hold on a minute, Jay.' There was a short silence. 'I'm going to connect you with Doctor Urschel, a close friend of mine and a leading cardiac surgeon here in Dallas.' A moment later Coburn was answering more questions from the doctor.

'Don't you do a thing,' Urschel finished. 'I'm going to talk to the doctors on that staff. You just stay by the phone so we can

get back in touch with you.'

'Yes, sir,' said Coburn dazedly.

Perot came back on the line. 'Did you get all that? How's Liz doing?'

Coburn thought: How the hell does he know my wife's name? 'Not too well,' Coburn answered. 'Her doctor's here and he's given her some sedation ...'

While Perot was soothing Coburn, Dr Urschel was animating the hospital staff. He persuaded them to move Scott to New York University Medical Centre. Minutes later, Scott and Coburn were in an ambulance on the way to the city.

They got stuck in a traffic jam in the Midtown Tunnel.

Coburn got out of the ambulance, ran more than a mile to the toll gate, and persuaded an official to hold up all lanes of traffic except the one the ambulance was in.

When they reached New York University Medical Centre there were ten or fifteen people waiting outside for them. Among them was the leading cardiovascular surgeon on the east coast, who had been flown in from Boston in the time it had taken the ambulance to reach Manhattan.

As baby Scott was rushed inside, Coburn handed over the envelope of X-rays he had brought from the other hospital. A woman doctor glanced at them. 'Where are the rest?'

'That's all,' Coburn replied.

'That's all they took?'

New X-rays revealed that, as well as a hole in the heart, Scott had pneumonia. When the pneumonia was treated the heart condition came under control.

And Scott survived. He turned into a soccer-playing, tree-climbing creek-wading, nose-picking, thoroughly healthy little boy. And Coburn began to understand the way people felt about Ross Perot.

Perot's single-mindedness, his ability to focus narrowly on one thing and shut out distractions until he got the job done, had its disagreeable side. He could wound people. A day or two after Paul and Bill were arrested, he had walked into an office where Coburn was talking on the phone to Lloyd Briggs in Tehran. It had sounded to Perot like Coburn was giving instructions, and Perot believed strongly that people in head office should not give orders to those out there on the battlefield who knew the situation best. He had given Coburn a merciless telling-off in front of a room full of people.

Perot had other blind spots. When Coburn had worked in Recruiting, each year the company had named someone 'Recruiter of the Year'. The names of the winners were engraved on a plaque. The list went back years, and in time some of the winners left the company. When that happened Perot wanted to erase their names from the plaque. Coburn thought that was weird. So the guy left the company - so what? He had been Recruiter of the Year, one year, and why try to change history? It was almost as if Perot took it as a personal insult that someone should want to work elsewhere.

Perot's faults were of a piece with his virtues. His peculiar attitude toward people who left the company was the obverse of his intense loyalty to his employees. His occasional unfeeling harshness was just part of the incredibly energy and determination without which he would never have created EDS. Coburn found it easy to forgive Perot's shortcomings.

He had only to look at Scott. [L1] [L1]

*

'Mr Perot?' Sally called. 'It's Henry Kissinger.'

Perot's heart missed a beat. Could Kissinger and Zahedi have done it in the last twenty-four hours? Or was he calling to say he

had failed?

'Ross Perot.'

'Hold the line for Henry Kissinger, please.'

A moment later Perot heard the familiar guttural accent. 'Hello, Ross?'

'Yes.' Perot held his breath.

'I have been assured that your men will be released tomorrow at ten a.m., Tehran time.'

Perot let out his breath in a long sigh of relief. 'Dr Kissinger, that's just about the best news I've heard since I don't know when. I can't thank you enough.'

'The details are to be finalised today by U.S. Embassy officials and the Iranian Foreign Ministry, but this is a formality: I have been advised that your men will be released.'

'It's just great. We sure appreciate your help.'

'You're welcome.' [L1] [L1]

*

It was nine-thirty in the morning in Tehran, midnight in Dallas. Perot sat in his office, waiting. Most of his colleagues had gone home, to sleep in a bed for a change, happy in the knowledge that by the time they woke up Paul and Bill would be free. Perot was staying at the office to see it through to the end.

In Tehran, Lloyd Briggs was at the Bucharest Street office, and one of the Iranian employees was outside the jail. As soon as Paul and Bill appeared, the Iranian would call Bucharest and Briggs would call Perot.

Now that the crisis was almost over, Perot had time to wonder where he had gone wrong. One mistake occurred to him immediately. When he had decided, on 4 December, to evacuate all his staff from Iran, he had not been determined enough and he had let others drag

their feet and raise objections until it was too late.

But the big mistake had been doing business in Iran in the first place. With hindsight he could see that. At the time, he had agreed with his marketing people - and with many other American businessmen - that oil-rich, stable, Western-oriented Iran presented excellent opportunities. He had not perceived the strains beneath the surface, he knew nothing about the Ayatollah Khomeini, and he had not forseen that one day there would be a President naive enough to try to impose American beliefs and standards on a Middle Eastern country.

He looked at his watch. It was half past midnight. Paul and Bill should be walking out of that jail right now.

Kissinger's good news had been confirmed by a phone call from David Newsom, Cy Vance's deputy at the State Department. And Paul and Bill were getting out not a mement too soon. The news from Iran had been bad again today. Bakhtiar, the Shah's new Prime Minister, had been rejected by the National Front, the party which was now seen as the moderate opposition. The Shah had announced that he might take a vacation. William Sullivan, the American Ambassador, had advised the dependents of all Americans working in Iran to go home, and the embassies of Canada and Britain had followed suit. But the strike had closed the airport, and hundreds of women and children were stranded. However, Paul and Bill would not be stranded. Perot had had good friends at the Pentagon ever since the PoW campaign: Paul and Bill would be flown out on a U.S. Air Force jet.

At one o'clock Perot called Tehran. There was no news. Well, he thought, everyone says the Iranians have no sense of time.

The irony of this whole thing was that EDS had never paid bribes, in Iran or anywhere else. Perot hated the idea of bribery. EDS's code of conduct was set out in a 12-page booklet given to every new employee. Perot had written it himself. 'Be aware that federal law

and the laws of most states prohibit giving anything of value to a government official with the intent to influence any official act ... Since the absence of such intent might be difficult to prove, neither money nor anything of value should be given to a federal, state or foreign government official ... A determination that a payment or practice is not forbidden by law does not conclude the analysis ... It is always appropriate to make further inquiry into the ethics ... Could you do business in complete trust with someone who acts the way you do? The answer must be YES." The last page of the booklet was a form which the employee had to sign, acknowledging that he had received and read the Code.

When EDS first went to Iran, Perot's puritan principles had been reinforced by the Lockheed scandal. Daniel J. Haughton, chairman of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, had admitted to a Senate committee that Lockheed routinely paid millions of dollars in bribes to sell its planes abroad. His testimony had been an embarrassing performance which disgusted Perot: wriggling on his seat, Haughton had told the committee that the payments were not bribes but 'kickbacks'. Subsequently the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act made it an offence under U.S. law to pay bribes in foreign countries.

Perot had called in lawyer Tom Luce and made him personally responsible for ensuring that EDS never paid bribes. During the negotiation of the Ministry of Health contract in Iran, Luce had offended not a few EDS executives by the thoroughness and persistence with which he had cross-examined them about the propriety of their dealings.

Perot was not hungry for business. He was already making millions. He did not need to expand abroad. If you have to pay bribes to do business there, he had said, why, we just won't do business there.

His business principles were deeply ingrained. His ancestors

were Frenchmen who came to New Orleans and set up trading posts along the Red River. His father, Gabriel Ross Perot, had been a cotton broker. The trade was seasonal, and Ross Senior had spent a lot of time with his son, often talking about business. 'There's no point in buying cotton from a farmer <u>once</u>,' he would say. 'You have to treat him fairly, earn his trust, and develop a relationship with him, so that he'll be happy to sell you his cotton year after year. <u>Then</u> you're doing business.' Bribery just did not fit in there.

At one-thirty Perot called the EDS office in Tehran again. Still there was no news. 'Call the jail, or send somebody down there,' he said. 'Find out when they're getting out.'

He was beginning to feel uneasy.

What will I do if this doesn't work out? he thought. If I put up the bail, I'll have spent thirteen million dollars and still Paul and Bill will be forbidden to leave Iran. Other ways of getting them out using the legal system come up against the obstacle raised by the Iranian lawyers - that the case is political, which seems to mean that Paul's and Bill's innocence makes no difference. But political pressure had failed so far: neither the U.S. Embassy in Tehran nor the State Department in Washington had been able to help; and if Kissinger should fail, that would surely be the end of all hope in that area. What then was left?

Force.

The phone rang. Perot snatched up the receiver. 'Ross Perot.'

'This is Lloyd Briggs.'

'Are they out?'

'No.'

Perot's heart sank. 'What's happening?'

'We spoke to the jail. They have no instructions to release Paul and Bill.'

Perot closed his eyes. The worst had happened. Kissinger had failed.

He sighed. 'Thankyou, Lloyd.'

'What do we do next?'

'I don't know,' said Perot.

But he did know.

He said Goodbye to Briggs and hung up the phone.

He would not admit defeat. Another of his father's principles had been: Take care of the people who work for you. Perot could remember the whole family driving twelve miles on Sundays to visit an old black man who had used to mow their lawn, just to make sure that he was well and had enough to eat. Perot's father would employ people he did not need, just because they had no job. Every year the Perot family car would go to the County Fair crammed with black employees, each of whom was given a little money to spend and a Perot business card to show if anyone tried to give him a hard time. Perot could remember one who had ridden a freight train to California and, on being arrested for vagrancy, had shown Perot's father's business card. The sheriff had said: 'We don't care whose nigger you are, we're throwing you in jail.' But he had called Perot Senior, who had wired the train fare for the man to come back. 'I been to California, and I'se back,' the man said when he reached Texarkana; and Perot Senior gave him back his job.

Perot's father did not know what civil rights were: this was how you treated other human beings. Perot had not known his parents were unusual until he grew up.

His father would not leave his employees in jail. Nor would Perot.

He picked up the phone, 'Get T.J. Marquez.'

It was two in the morning, but T.J. would not be surprised: this

was not the first time Perot had woken him up in the middle of the night, and it would not be the last.

A sleepy voice said: 'Hello?'

'Tom, it doesn't look good.'

'Why?'

'They haven't been released and the jail says they aren't going to be.'

'Aw, damn.'

'Conditions are getting worse over there - did you see the news?'

'I sure did.'

'Do you think it's time for Simons?'

'Yeah, I think it is.'

'Do you have his number?'

'No, but I can get it.'

'Call him,' said Perot.

Display

Display

[C0]

3

[C0] Bull Simons was going crazy.

He was thinking of burning down his house. It was an old wood-frame bungalow, and it would go up like a pile of matchwood, and that would be the end of it. The place was hell to him - but it was a hell he did not want to leave, for what made it hell was the bitter-sweet memory of the time when it had been heaven.

Lucille had picked the place. She saw it advertised in a magazine, and together they had flown down from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to look it over. At Red Bay, in a dirt-poor part of the Florida Panhandle, the ramshackle house stood in forty acres of rough timber. But there was a two-acre lake with bass in it.

Lucille had loved it.

It was 1971, and time for Simons to retire. He had been a colonel for ten years, and if the Son Tay Raid could not get him promoted General, nothing would. The truth was, he did not fit in the Generals' Club: he had always been a Reserve Officer, he had never been to a top military school such as West Point, his methods were unconventional, and he was no good at going to Washington cocktail parties and kissing ass[redacted]. He knew he was a goddam fine soldier and if that was not good enough, why, Art Simons was not good enough. So he retired, and did not regret it.

He has passed the happiest years of his life here at Red Bay. All their married life he and Lucille had endured periods of separation, sometimes as much as a year without seeing one another, during his tours in Vietnam, Laos and Korea. From the moment he retired they were together all day and all night, every day of the year. Simons raised hogs. He knew nothing about farming, but he got the information he needed out of books, and built his own pens. Once the operation

was under way he found there was not much to do but feed the pigs and look at them so he spent a lot of time fooling around with his collection of 150 guns, and eventually set up a little gunsmithing shop where he would repair his and his neighbours' weapons and load his own ammunition. Most days he and Lucille would wander, hand in hand, through the woods and down to the lake where they might catch a bass. In the evening, after supper, she would go to the bedroom as if she were preparing for a date, and come out later, wearing a housecoat over her nightgown and a red ribbon tied in her dark, dark hair, and sit on his lap ...

Memories like these were breaking his heart.

Even the boys had seemed to grow up, at last, during those golden years. Harry, the younger, had come home one day and said: 'Dad, I've got a heroin habit and a cocaine habit and I need your help.' Simons knew little about drugs. He had smoked marijuana once, in a doctor's office in Panama, before giving his men a talk on drugs, just so that he could tell them that he knew what it was like; but all he knew about heroin was that it killed people. Still, he had been able to help Harry by keeping him busy, out in the open, building hog pens. It had taken a while. Many times Harry left the house and went into town to score dope, but he always came back, and eventually he did not go into town any more.

The episode had brought Simons and Harry together again. Simons would never be close to Bruce, his elder son; but at least he had been able to stop worrying about the boy. Boy? He was in his thirties, and just about as bull-headed as ... well, as his father. Bruce had found Jesus and was determined to bring the rest of the world to the Lord - starting with Colonel Simons. Simons had practically thrown him out. However, unlike Bruce's other youthful enthusiasms - drugs, I Ching, back-to-nature communes - Jesus had lasted, and at least

Bruce had settled down to a stable way of life, as pastor of a tiny church in the frozen north-west of Canada.

Anyway, Simons was through agonising about the boys. He had brought them up as well as he could, for better or worse, and now they were men, and had to take care of themselves. He was taking care of Lucille.

She was a tall, handsome, statuesque woman with a penchant for big hats. She looked pretty damn impressive behind the wheel of their black Cadillac. ~~In~~ But in fact she was the reverse of formidable. She was soft, easygoing, and lovable. The daughter of two teachers, she had needed someone to make decisions for her, someone she could follow blindly and trust completely; and she had found what she needed in Art Simons. He in turn was devoted to her. By the time he retired, they had been married for thirty years, and in all that time he had never been in the least interested in another woman. Only his job, with its overseas postings, had come between them; and now that was over. He had told her: "My retirement plans can be summed up in one word: you."

They had seven wonderful years.

Lucille died of cancer on 16 March 1978.

And Bull Simons went to pieces.

Every man had a breaking-point, they said. Simons had thought the rule did not apply to him. Now he knew it did: Lucille's death broke him. He had killed many people, and seen more die, but he had not understood the meaning of death until now. For thirty-seven years they had been together, and now, suddenly, she just wasn't there.

Without her, he did not see what life was supposed to be about. There was no point in anything. He was sixty years old and he could not think of a single goddam reason for living another day. He stopped taking care of himself. He ate cold food from cans and let

his hair - which had always been so short - grow long. He fed the hogs religiously at 3.45 p.m. every day, although he knew perfectly well that it hardly mattered what time of day you fed a pig. He started taking in stray dogs, and soon had thirteen of them, scratching the furniture and messing on the floor.

He knew he was close to losing his mind, and only the iron self-discipline which had been part of his character for so long enabled him to retain his sanity. When he first thought of burning the place down, he knew his judgement was unbalanced, and he promised himself he would wait a year, and see how he felt then.

His brother Stanley was worried about him, he knew. Stan had tried to get him to pull himself together: had suggested he give some lectures, had even tried to get him to join the Israeli army. Simons was Jewish by ancestry, but thought of himself as American: he did not want to go to Israel. He could not pull himself together. It was as much as he could do to live from day to day.

He did not need someone to take care of him - he had never needed that. On the contrary, he needed someone to take care of. That was what he had done all his life. He had taken care of Lucille, he had taken care of the men under his command. Nobody could rescue him from his depression, for his role in life was to rescue others. That was why he had been reconciled with Harry but not with Bruce: Harry had come to him asking to be rescued from his heroin habit, but Bruce had come offering to rescue Art Simons by bringing him to the Lord. In military operations, Simons's aim had always been to bring all his men back alive. The Son Tay Raid would have been the perfect climax to his career, if only there had been prisoners in the camp to rescue.

Paradoxically, the only way to rescue Simons was to ask him to rescue someone else.

It happened at two o'clock in the morning on 2 January 1979. The phone woke him.

'Bull Simons?' The voice was vaguely familiar.

'Yeah.'

'This is T.J. Marquez from EDS in Dallas.'

Simons remembered: EDS, Ross Perot, the PoW campaign, the San Francisco party ... 'Hello, Tom.'

'Bull, I'm sorry to wake you.'

'It's okay. What can I do for you?'

'We have two people in jail in Iran, and it looks like we may not be able to get them out by any conventional means. Would you be willing to help us?'

Would he be willing? 'Hell, yes,' Simons said. 'When do we start?' [C8] [C8]