

Chapter Five

1

On 11 January - the day Perot flew to London and Coburn arrived in Tehran - Paul and Bill had a second meeting with examining magistrate Hosain Dadgar.

They had been in jail for fourteen days. Paul, who at first had imagined he would be released any minute, was now telling himself he would be released any day. There was a certain amount of encouraging news. On the first day of the New Year they had been visited by an Italian builder called Lucio Randone who had been in jail with them. His release had been secured by a bribe, he told them; and his employers, the construction company Condotti d'Acqua, were willing to talk to EDS about how they had done it.

Paul was also touched by the bravery of his EDS colleagues in Tehran. Rich Gallagher, who had stayed in Tehran, Keane Taylor, who had flown back in from Frankfurt, and Bob Young, who had come in from Kuwait, risked their lives every time they drove through the riots to visit the jail. Each of them also faced the danger that Dadgar might take it into his head to ^{seize} ~~xxxxxx~~ some more EDS hostages. Paul was particularly grateful to Bob Young: his wife had a new baby, and this was a specially bad time for Bob to put himself in jeopardy.

But the biggest source of optimism was Dr Ahmad Houman, their Iranian attorney. His assurance that he would have them out of jail within a week had not quite been justified, but he still exuded contempt for Dadgar and confidence in himself. On his second visit to the jail, he reported that he had spoken with Dadgar's superiors at the Ministry of Justice, and they had agreed to force Dadgar to back down and reduce the bail to a sum EDS could pay easily and swiftly out of funds

currently in Iran. Everything would be finalised, he said triumphantly, at their meeting with Dadgar on 11 January.

Dadgar came to the jail in the afternoon. He wanted to see Paul alone first, as he had before. Paul was in fine spirits as the guard walked him across the courtyard to the visiting room. Dadgar was just an over-enthusiastic prosecutor, he thought, and now he had been slapped down by his superiors and would have to eat humble pie.

Dadgar was waiting, with the same woman translator beside him. He nodded curtly, and Paul sat down, thinking: He doesn't look very humble.

Dadgar spoke in Farsi, and the woman translated: 'We are here to discuss the amount of your bail.'

'Good,' said Paul.

'Mr Dadgar has received a letter on this subject from officials at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.'

Dadgar began to read the letter. The Ministry officials were demanding that bail for the two Americans should be increased to twenty-three million dollars - almost double - to compensate for the Ministry's losses since EDS had switched the computers off. It dawned on Paul that the letter was a put-up job. Dadgar had neatly outmanoeuvred Ahmad Houman, EDS's attorney. This meeting was nothing but a charade.

It made him angry.

The hell with being polite to this bastard, he thought.

When the letter had been read Paul began to speak slowly and clearly. 'Now I have something to say,' he told the interpreter, 'and I want you to translate every word, is that clear?'

'Of course,' said the woman.

'You have now held me in jail for fourteen days. I have not been taken before a court. No charges have been brought against me. You

have yet to produce a single piece of evidence implicating me in any crime whatsoever. You have not even specified what crime I might be accused of. Are you proud of Iranian justice?'

To Paul's surprise, the appeal seemed to melt Dadgar's icy gaze a little. 'I am sorry,' Dadgar said, 'that you have to be the one to pay for things your company has done wrong.'

'I don't know what you mean,' Paul said. 'I am the company. I am the person responsible. If the company had done wrong I should be the one to suffer. But we have done nothing wrong. In fact we have done far in excess of what we were committed to do. EDS got this contract because we are the only company in the world capable of doing this job - creating a fully automated welfare system in an underdeveloped country of thirty million subsistence farmers. And we have succeeded. Our data processing system issues social security cards. It keeps a register of deposits at the bank in the Ministry's favour. Every morning it produces a summary of the welfare claims made the previous day. It prints the ~~Mixx~~ payroll for the entire Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. It produces weekly and monthly financial status reports for the Ministry. Why don't you go to the Ministry and look at the printouts? No, wait a minute,' he said as Dadgar began to speak, 'I haven't finished yet.'

'There is readily available proof that EDS has fulfilled its contract. It is equally easy to establish that the Ministry has not fulfilled its side of the deal, that is to say it has not paid us for six months and currently owes us something in excess of ten million dollars. Now, think about the Ministry for a moment. Why hasn't it paid EDS? Because it hasn't got the money. Why not? Because, as you and I know, it spent its entire budget during the first seven months of the current year. There might well be a degree of incompetence in some departments there. And those incompetent people may well need

an excuse - someone to blame for what's gone wrong - a scapegoat. And isn't it convenient that they have EDS - a capitalist company, an American company - right in there working with them? In the current political atmosphere, people are eager to hear about the wickedness of the Americans, quick to believe that we are cheating Iran. But you, Mr Dadgar, are supposed to be an officer of the law. You are not supposed to believe that the Americans are to blame unless there is evidence. You are supposed to discover the truth, if I have the correct understanding of the role of an examining magistrate. Isn't it time you asked yourself ^{anyone} why/~~the~~ Ministry should make false accusations against me and my company? Isn't it time you started to investigate the goddam Ministry?'

The woman translated the last sentence. Paul studied Dadgar: the man's expression had frozen again. He said something in Farsi, and the woman turned to Paul.

'Mr Dadgar will see the other man now,' she said.

Paul stared at her.

He had wasted his breath, he realised. He might just as well have recited nursery rhymes. Dadgar was immovable.

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Paul was deeply depressed. He looked at the pictures of Karen and Ann Marie which he had stuck on the cell wall: Keane Taylor had brought the photos in during a visit. He missed the girls badly. ~~Not~~ Being unable to see them made him realise that in the past he had taken them for granted. Ruthie too. He looked at his watch: it was the middle of the night in the States now. Ruthie would be asleep, alone in a big bed. How good it would be to climb in beside her and hold her in his arms. He put the thought out of his mind: he was just making himself more miserable. He had no need to worry about them: they were out of Iran, out of danger, and he knew that whatever happened, Ross would take care

of them. That was the good thing about Perot. He asked a lot of you - boy, he was just about the most demanding employer you could have - but when you needed to rely on him, he was like a rock.

Paul lay back on his bunk and lit a cigarette. He had a cold. He never seemed to be able to get warm in the jail. He felt too down to do anything. He did not want to go to the Chattanooga Room and drink tea; he did not want to watch the news in gibberish on TV; he did not want to play chess with Bill. He did not want to go to the library for a new book. He had read *The Thorn Birds*, by Colleen McCullough, three times. He had read *Hawaii* by James Michener, *Airport* by Arthur Hailey, and *The Guinness Book of Records*. He never wanted to read another book for the rest of his life.

He could not remember a time in his adult life when he had been at a loss for something to do. He was always busy. At the office he would typically have three days' work backed up. Never, never did he lie down smoking and wondering ~~what~~ how on earth he could keep himself amused.

But the worst thing of all was the helplessness. Although he had always been an employee, going where his boss sent him and doing what he was ordered to do, nevertheless he had always known that he could at any time get on a plane and go home, or quit his job, or say No to his boss. Ultimately the decisions had been his. Now he was unable to make any decisions about his own life. He could not even do anything about his ~~problem~~ situation. With every other problem he had ever had, he had been able to work on it, try things, attack the problem. Now he had to sit and suffer.

It occurred to him that he had never known the meaning of freedom until he lost it.

The flight from Zurich to Tehran seemed short to Coburn, perhaps because his thoughts were busy with his instructions from Simons.

He had been sent first because, as Director of Personnel and as evacuation mastermind, he had the most complete knowledge of EDS resources in Tehran: the empty apartments, the cars, the Iranian employees and the belongings - food, drink and tools - left behind by the evacuees. His job was logistics. He was to arrange hideouts and transport for the rescue team. His cover story, for the benefit of the few EDS executives still in Tehran, was that he was arranging shipment of evacuees' personal belongings. Simons had made it very clear that Coburn was not to reveal the existence of the rescue team to Keane Taylor, Rich Gallagher, Bob Young or any of the Iranians.

Going through customs and immigration formalities at the airport, he was alert for any changes in procedure which might pose a threat to Jim Schwebach and his false-bottomed suitcase. In fact the customs were if anything more slack than before.

The arrivals hall was a zoo. The waiting crowds were more unruly than ever and seemed to have penetrated deeper into the terminal. There had been a strike, Coburn knew, and the military were now keeping the airport open; but they certainly were not running it on military lines. All the better for Schwebach.

He fought his way through the crowd to the cab rank. He skirted two men who appeared to be fighting over a taxi, and took the next in line.

Driving into town, he noticed a good deal of military hardware on the road, especially near the airport. There were many more tanks about than there had been when he left. Was that a sign that the Shah was still in control? he wondered. The Shah still talked as if he

were in control, but then so did Bakhtiar. So, for that matter, did the Ayatollah, who had just announced the formation of a Council of the Islamic Revolution to take over ~~from Bakhtiar~~ the government, just as if he were already in power in Tehran instead of sitting in a villa outside Paris on the end of a telephone. In truth nobody was in charge, Coburn concluded; and while that hindered the negotiations for ~~the~~ the release of Paul and Bill, it would probably help the rescue team.

The cab took him to Bucharest Street and he went straight to Keane Taylor's office. Lloyd Briggs, Paul's second-in-command, had gone to New York for meetings with EDS lawyers, leaving Taylor as the senior EDS executive in Tehran. Taylor was sitting at his desk in an immaculate vested suit, just as if he were a million miles from a revolution. He was astonished to see Coburn.

'Jay! When the hell did you get here?'

'Just arrived,' Coburn said.

'What's with the beard - you trying to get yourself fired?'

'I thought it might make me look less American here.'

'Did you ever see an Iranian with a ginger beard?'

Coburn laughed. 'Keane, we're obviously not going to bring our people back in here in the foreseeable future, so I've come ~~xxxxxx~~ to police up everyone's personal belongings and get them shipped ~~xxxx~~ to the States, okay?'

Taylor shot him a funny look, but ~~said nothing~~ did not comment. 'Where are you staying?' he said. 'We've all moved into the Crown Hyatt. It's safer.'

'How about I use your apartment?'

'Whatever you say.'

'Now, you remember every evacuee had to leave behind an envelope with the keys to his apartment, his car keys, and instructions for shipping his belongings?'

'You want the envelopes.'

'Right.'

'We've got most of the cars parked in a school yard here, with a couple of boys keeping an eye on them.'

'What's the gas situation?'

'Terrible. Long lines at every filling station.'

'All right. I want you to get ~~xxx~~ me twelve cars with full tanks. Get our drivers to work on it - hell, they got nobody to drive around, they might as well sit in gas lines. When they have twelve cars filled, they can start siphoning any more gas they get into drums right here, okay?'

Taylor said: 'Jay, you aren't here to police up everybody's personal belongings.'

Coburn said nothing.

'Why don't you tell me what you're really doing? Hell, I think I can guess.'

It would have made sense to tell him, Coburn thought. Taylor was a very resourceful and energetic man, and he would be more useful if he were in the know than if he were blindly following instructions. Besides, Taylor had been on the original list for the rescue team. But Simons had been very definite. Taylor had not been through the training programme, he was not part of the team, and - most importantly - Simons had never met him, and Simons never trusted anyone he had not met, no matter how highly they were recommended. So Coburn said: 'Keane, let's just stick with what we've got here.'

'Well, I know what you're up to.'

'Fine. You want to police up those envelopes?'

'Sure.'

'I'll be in my office.'

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Next day Coburn went to work on the apartments.

When the team arrived, he decided, they might as well move into Taylor's apartment, where Coburn was already staying. His second choice was Bill Dvoranchik's place. Using the street map of Tehran on the wall of his office - which had, since the evacuation, been marked with the location of every EDS apartment in the city - he picked two more empty apartments as alternative hideouts.

During the day, as Taylor got the cars gassed up, Coburn drove them one by one from Bucharest Street to the hideouts, parking three cars at each of the four apartments.

Looking again at his wall map, he tried to recall which of the wives had worked for the American military, for the families with commissary privileges always had the best food. He listed eight likely prospects and began visiting them that afternoon, picking up canned and dried food and bottled drinks and transferring the stuff to the four hideouts.

He selected one more apartment suitable as a hideout, but he did not stock it with food or cars. It was to be a safe house, never visited until it was used; a hideout for a serious emergency.

By the end of the day he felt he had done a pretty good job, apart from failing to hoodwink Keane Taylor.

That evening, alone in Taylor's apartment, he called Dallas and reached Merv Stauffer.

Merv was cheerful, as always. 'Hi, Jay! How are you?'

'Fine.'

'I'm glad you called, because I have a message for you. Got a pencil?'

'Sure do.'

'Okay. Honky Keith Goofball Zero Honky Dummy - '

'Merv,' Coburn interrupted.

'Yeah?'

'What the hell are you talking about?'

'It's the code, Jay.'

'What is Honky Keith Goofball?'

'H for Honky, K for Keith - '

'Merv, H is Hotel, K is Kilo ... '

'Oh!' said Merv. 'Oh, I didn't realise you were supposed to use certain particular words ... '

Coburn started to laugh, ~~and Merv laughed too~~. 'Listen,' ~~Coburn~~ ^{he} he said, 'get someone to give you the military alphabet next time.'

'I sure will,' Merv laughed. 'I guess we'll have to manage with my own version this time.'

Coburn took down the coded message, then ~~xxx~~ - still using the code - he gave Merv his location and phone number. After hanging up, he decoded the message Merv had given him.

It was good news. Simons and Joe Poche were arriving the following day.

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The traffic came to a complete stop. After a few minutes, Joe Poche turned off the engine of the car. There was nothing to do but sit it out.

It was 14 January, the day after Simons and Poche flew in. The other five rescue team members were still in Paris, waiting for tickets. Meanwhile, Simons, Poche and Coburn were heading for downtown Tehran, to reconnoitre the jail.

Coburn wondered what they would find. It was too much to hope that the jail would be exactly as he had described it after his conversation with Amir Bakhtiar. The team had based a very precise attack plan on quite imprecise intelligence: just how imprecise, they ~~were~~ would soon find out.

If the traffic ever got moving.

Fortunately, the demonstration which was causing the traffic jam was peaceful. There were several burning cars close by, but the demonstrators were otherwise satisfied with marching up and down carrying pictures of Khomeini and putting flowers in the turrets of tanks. The military ~~observed~~ ^{looked on, looked on} passively.

Coburn got out of the car and went to buy bread. When he returned the three men sat eating as they waited for the traffic to move again.

Simons was animated. Coming through the airport he had been asked the purpose of his visit to Iran. He had said that he had always been interested in revolutions, and this was the only chance he was ever likely to get of actually seeing one. It was true, Coburn now realised: Simons was fascinated by what was going on all around. 'Not many people get a chance like this,' Simons said. 'To live through a revolution.'

The traffic jam finally cleared, and they drove farther south. Poche had worked out their route the previous evening. They would drive past the jail several times but would not stop.

They reached the Ministry of Justice and drove around the block to Khayyam Street, where the jail was.

As they passed the jail, Simons said: 'Oh, shit.'

Coburn's heart sank as he realised that the jail was quite different from his mental picture of it.

The entrance consisted of two steel doors fourteen feet high. On one side was a tall building. On the other side was a single-storey building with barbed wire along its roof.

Simons said: 'So where's the fucking exercise yard?'

Poche drove on, made a few turns, and came back along Khayyam Street in the opposite direction. This time Coburn saw a little

courtyard with grass and trees, separated from the street by a fence of iron railings twelve feet high; but it was plainly nothing to do with the jail, which was farther up the street. Coburn realised that, in his telephone conversation with Amir Bakhtiar, he had confused the exercise yard of the jail with this little garden.

Poche made one more pass along Khayyam Street. Simons was thinking ahead. 'We can get in there,' he said. 'But we need to know what we'll be up against once we're over the wall. Someone will have to go in and reconnoitre.'

'Who?' said Coburn.

'You,' said Simons.

*

Majid

Majid Coburn walked up to the jail entrance with Rich Gallagher and [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]. Majid pressed the bell and they waited. Coburn ran over in his mind all the points Simons had told him to watch out for - security, numbers of guards, weaponry, layout of the place, cover, high ground - it was a long list.

Majid

A peephole in the door opened. [redacted] said something in Farsi. The door was unlocked and the three of them went in.

Straight ahead of him Coburn saw a courtyard with a grassed traffic circle and cars parked on the far side. Beyond the cars, a building rose five stories high over the courtyard. To his right was another steel door; to his left, the one-storey building with barbed wire on its roof.

Coburn was wearing a long, bulky coat under which he could easily have concealed a shotgun, but he was not searched by the guard at the gate. He noted that this guard was armed with a small pistol.

The three men were led into the low building on the left. The Colonel in charge of the jail was in the visiting room, along with another Iranian. This second Iranian, Gallagher had warned Coburn, was

always present during visits, and spoke perfect English: presumably he eavesdropped on conversations. Coburn had told ██████████ Majid that he did not want to be overheard while he was talking to Paul, and Nabi had agreed to engage the eavesdropper in conversation.

Coburn was introduced to the Colonel. In broken English, the Colonel said he was sorry for Paul and Bill, and he hoped they would be released soon. Coburn noted that neither the Colonel nor the eavesdropper was armed.

The door opened, and Paul and Bill walked in.

They both stared at Coburn in surprise - partly because of the beard, ~~and partly~~ but mainly because they had not known he was in town. 'What the hell are you doing here?' Bill said, *with a broad smile.*

Coburn shook hands warmly with both of them. Paul was fighting back tears. 'Boy, I can't believe you're here,' he said.

'How's my wife?' Bill said.

'Emily's fine, so is Ruthie,' Coburn told them.

Nabi suddenly started talking very loudly to the Colonel and the eavesdropper. He seemed to be telling them a complicated story, with many gestures, in Farsi. Rich Gallagher said something to Bill, and Coburn sat Paul down.

'If you haven't guessed it already,' Coburn began, 'we're going to get y'all out of here by force if necessary.'

Paul smiled excitedly. 'I guessed it already,' he said in a low voice.

'Ross has retained just about the best man in the whole world for this kind of operation, and we have carte blanche.'

'Jay, this is just marvellous - '

'Now I need to ask you some questions. Where do you exercise?'

'Right here in the courtyard.'

'When?'

'Approximately twice a week.'

'Which days?'

'It doesn't seem to be regular.'

'Damn.' That made planning difficult, Coburn thought. 'How long do you spend out there?'

'About an hour.'

'Okay. Now, how many guards are there in this jail?'

'Around twenty.'

'All uniformed, all armed?'

'All uniformed, some armed with handguns.'

'No rifles?'

'Well ... none of the regular guards have rifles, but ... See, our cell is just across the courtyard and has a window. Well, in the morning there's a group of about twenty different guards, like an elite corps, you might say. They have rifles and they wear kind of shiny helmets. They have reveille right here, then I never see them for the rest of the day - I don't know where they go.'

'Try and find out, will you?'

'Sure.'

'Which is your cell?'

'When you go out of here, the window is more or less opposite you. If you start in the right-hand corner of the courtyard and count toward the left, it's the third window. But they close the shutters when there are visitors, so we can't see who's coming in.'

Coburn nodded, memorising it all. 'Now, tell me your daily routine.'

'They wake us up at six o'clock,' Paul began.

Coburn concentrated, knowing he would have to repeat all this to Simons. Nevertheless, at the back of his mind one thought nagged: If we don't know in advance when they come out for exercise, how the hell

can we bust them out?

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'Visiting time is the key,' said Simons.

'How so?' Coburn asked.

'It's the one time that we can predict they will be out of the actual jail, and vulnerable to a snatch, at a definite moment in time.'

Coburn nodded. The three of them were sitting in the living-room of Keane Taylor's apartment. It was a big room with a Persian carpet. They had drawn three chairs into the middle of the room, around a coffee table. Beside Simons's chair, a small mountain of cigar ash was growing on the carpet.

'Based on the routine you described,' Simons said, 'we could get two men in there as visitors, with shotguns or ~~thirty-eight~~ Walthers under their coats. Paul and Bill would be brought to the visiting room. Our two men could overpower the Colonel and the eavesdropper ... '

'Then what?'

'That's the problem. The four of them then have to cross the courtyard, reach the gate, and either open it or climb the wall.'

'It sounds possible,' Coburn said. 'There's just one guard at the gate ... '

'Two things bother me, the windows in the high building that overlooks the courtyard, and the elite guards with shiny helmets and rifles. Whatever happens, our people have to hesitate at the gate. If there's just one guard with a rifle looking out of one of those high windows, he could pick off the four of them like shooting fish in a barrel.'

'We don't know the guards are in the high building.'

'We don't know they're not.'

'It seems a small risk - '

'We're not going to take any risks we don't have to take. What's

this Colonel like?'

'He was friendly, seemed to feel sorry for Paul and Bill.'

'I wonder if we can get to him. Do we know anything at all about him?'

'No, but we could find out.'

'Let's do that. If he can be bribed, we can still bring this off. He would have to make sure there were no guards around at visiting time. We could make it look good by tying him up, or knocking him out ... See what you can get on him.'

'I'll put Nabi on to it,' said Coburn.

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That was on 15 January. In the following three days there were two momentous events. The first changed the course of Iranian history. The second wrecked Simons's plan.

3

For Bill, the big problem was time.

He knew it was different for Paul. For Paul - restless, aggressive, strong-willed, ambitious - the worst of being in jail was the helplessness. Bill was more placid, by nature, and he could cope with the helplessness: if nothing could be done, Bill would do nothing - except pray, and he did a good deal of that. What got to Bill was the excruciating slowness with which time passed.

A day in the real world, a day of solving problems, making decisions, taking phone calls, attending meetings, was no time at all. A day in jail was endless. After breakfast, he would try to fill the long morning with some reading, perhaps a game of chess, a little conversation in the Chattanooga Room. Lunch came around midday, and then the afternoon stretched out ahead, utterly empty. He started to

keep a diary, but most days there was nothing to write except the news of the outside world which he learned from the TV. One day he wrote in his diary a formula for conversion of real time to jail time:

<u>Real Time</u>	<u>Jail Time</u>
1 Second	1 Minute
1 Minute	1 Hour
1 Hour	1 Day
1 Week	1 Month
1 Month	Year

He wrote letters to Emily. Each visiting day he would hand a letter to Keane Taylor, and Keane would read it to Emily, over the phone, that evening. It was embarrassing to write 'I love you,' knowing that Keane would be reading it; but Bill got over the embarrassment, because he wanted very badly to tell Emily and the children how much he loved them, ~~in a moment of weakness~~ for he thought he might never have another chance to let them know. They were like the letters written by a pilot before a dangerous mission.

Sometimes Keane would bring letters from home, and once Emily sent a snapshot of Christopher, their six-year-old son, standing in front of the Christmas tree.

A make-work project which filled several days was Bill's survey of the jail. He measured the cells, the corridors, the windows and the bunks, and drew an exact plan.

But the time was literally endless, for they had no release date. There was no point in counting the days or the weeks, no reason to make a calendar of scratch-marks on the cell wall, nothing to look forward to.

Coburn's visit cheered Bill, but the following day there was bad news. On 16 January the Shah left Iran, never to return.

The television set on the wall in the hall of the jail was switched on, exceptionally, in the afternoon; and Paul and Bill, and the other prisoners, watched the little ceremony in the Imperial Pavilion at Mehrabad Airport. There was the Shah, with his wife, three of his four children, his mother-in-law, and a crowd of courtiers. There, to see them off, was Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar, and a crowd of generals. Bakhtiar kissed the Shah's hand, and the royal party went out to the airplane.

It could only mean ~~more~~ further chaos and confusion, less chance of a swift release, and more danger to all Americans in Tehran, Bill thought gloomily.

Soon after the television showed the Shah's jet rising into the sky, Bill began to hear a background noise, like a distant crowd, from outside the jail. The noise quickly grew to a pandemonium of shouting and cheering and hooting of horns. The TV showed the source of the noise: a crowd of hundreds of thousands of Iranians was surging through the streets of Iran, yelling: 'Shah raft!' The Shah is dead! All cars were driving with their lights on and most were hooting continuously. The crowd pulled down all the statues of the Shah in the city. Truckloads of jubilant young men drove through the streets, celebrating.

Bill wondered what was going on in the minds of the prison guards and the Iranian prisoners. It was a day for the release of pent-up emotions, and one of those emotions might be hatred of Americans. Paul and Bill left the others watching TV, and retired to their cell, where they sat quietly, trying to be inconspicuous, for the rest of the day.

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Two days later, on the morning of 18 January, a guard came to their cell and said something in Farsi to their cellmate Dr Reza Neghabat, the former Deputy Minister of Health.

'You must get your things together,' Neghabat translated. 'They

are moving you.'

'Where to?' Paul asked.

'To another jail.'

Alarm bells rang in Bill's mind. What kind of jail were they going to? The kind where people were tortured and killed? Would the EDS people know where they had gone, or would Paul and Bill simply disappear?

It was the work of a couple of minutes to collect their shaving gear, toothbrushes and change of underwear. Then they sat and waited - for three hours.

It was unnerving. Bill had got used to this jail, and he knew the people; he was afraid the change would be for the worse. Paul asked Neghabat to try to get news of the move to EDS, maybe by bribing the Colonel in charge of the jail.

Another of the prisoners in their cell, an old Iranian who spoke very little English, seemed upset that they were leaving: he had apparently grown fond of them. Paul was so touched that he gave the man the photograph of Karen and Ann Marie which he had stuck on the cell wall.

At last they were taken out into the courtyard and herded on to a mini-bus, along with half a dozen other prisoners from different parts of the jail. As the bus pulled out of the jail, Bill spoke to one of the other prisoners, a Frenchman.

'Do you know where we're going?'

'I am to be released,' the Frenchman said.

Bill looked at Paul. This was good news! Perhaps they would be released too.

There was another familiar face on the bus, Bill realised as he looked around: the big, burly Iranian who had been cell leader in the basement jail the first night Paul and Bill were incarcerated. Why was

he being moved?

Bill turned his attention to the scene in the streets. It was the first time for three weeks that he had seen the outside world. The government buildings all around the Ministry of Justice were damaged: the mobs really had run wild. Burned-out cars and broken windows were everywhere. The street^s were full of soldiers and tanks but they were doing nothing, neither controlling traffic nor maintaining order. It seemed to Bill only a matter of time before the Bakhtiar government would collapse.

What had happened to the EDS people - Gallagher, Taylor and Coburn? They had not appeared at the jail since the Shah left. Had they been forced to flee, to save their own lives? Somehow Bill was sure they were still here, still trying to get their friends out of jail. He began to hope that this transfer had been arranged by them. Perhaps, instead of taking them to a different jail, the bus would divert and take them to the airport. The more he thought about it, the more he believed that everything had been arranged for their release. No doubt the American Embassy had realised, since the departure of the Shah, that Paul and Bill were in serious danger, and had at last got on the case with some real diplomatic muscle. The bus ride was a ruse, a cover story to get them out of the Ministry of Justice jail without arousing the suspicion of hostile Iranian officials such as Hosain Dadgar.

The bus went north. It passed through districts with which Bill was familiar, and he began to feel safer as the turbulent south of the city receded behind him.

Also, the airport was in the north.

The bus pulled into a wide square dominated by a huge stone structure like a fortress. Bill looked interestedly at the building. Its walls were about twenty-five feet high and dotted with guard towers and machine-gun emplacements. The square was full of Iranian women in

black robes, all making a heck of a noise. Was this some kind of palace, or mosque? Or perhaps a military base?

To his horror the bus drove right up to the huge metal gates set centrally in the front of the fortress. It stopped for a moment, its nose to the gateway; then the gates opened and the bus drove in.

Bill realised that he was not going to the airport, EDS had not arranged a deal, the Embassy had not got moving, he was not being released. This was the new jail.

The bus stopped just inside. The gates closed behind it and a second set of metal doors opened in front.

The bus passed through into the fortress, and stopped. The doors opened. The guard said something in Farsi and all the prisoners stood up to get off the bus.

Bill felt like a disappointed child. Life is rotten, he thought. What did I do to deserve this? What did I do?

*

Joe Poche steered the car into the square and halted.

Coburn looked up, across the heads of the weird women in black, and saw the vast stone fortress of the Gasr Prison.

'Jesus Christ,' said Simons. His deep, rough voice was tinged with ~~xxx~~ awe. 'Just look at that motherfucker.'

'To bust them out of there,' said Coburn, 'you'd need the whole U.S. Army.'

'Yeah,' said Simons.

The three of them sat in the car, staring at the high stone walls and the enormous gates, the guard towers and the machine-gun nests.

'Who are these women?' Coburn wondered aloud.

'They have relatives in the jail,' Poche explained.

They sat there a little longer. Coburn could hear a peculiar noise. 'Listen,' he said. 'What's that?'

'The women,' Poche said. 'Wailing.'

Chapter Six

1

On 13 January Ross Perot took off from Amman, Jordan, in a Lear jet of Arab Wings, the charter operation of Royal Jordanian Airlines. The plane headed for Tehran. Cradled in his lap, Perot held half a dozen videotapes in a net bag.

As the little jet flew east, high over the desert, Perot wondered whether he was the craziest man in the world or the sanest. There were powerful reasons why he should not go to Tehran. There was, for one thing, the possibility that the mobs might consider him the ultimate symbol of bloodsucking American capitalism and string him up on the spot. More seriously, there was a good chance that Dadgar would get to know Perot was in town, and arrest him. Perot did not understand Dadgar's motive in jailing Paul and Bill, but it seemed likely that his mysterious purposes would be even better served by having H. Ross Perot behind bars. Why, Dadgar could set bail at a hundred million dollars and feel confident of getting it, if money was what he was after.

Perot told himself that negotiations for the release of Paul and Bill were stalled, and he was going to Tehran to kick ass in one last attempt at a legitimate solution before unleashing Colonel Simons and the rescue team; but that was a rationalisation. The truth was, he was going because his deepest instincts told him that he could not sit comfortably in Dallas while two of his men were rotting in a Persian dungeon.

Still, he knew that the trip might result in him, and his colleagues, and his company ending up in much worse trouble than they were in already. Should he do the prudent thing, and stay away, or follow his instinct, and go? It was a moral dilemma: he had consulted

his mother.

She knew she was dying; she knew that, even if Ross came back alive, she might not be there when he arrived. Cancer was rapidly destroying her body, but there was nothing wrong with her mind, and her sense of right and wrong was as clear as ever. 'You don't have a choice, Ross,' she had said. 'They're your men. You sent them over there. They didn't do anything wrong. Our government won't help them. You are responsible for them. It's up to you to get them out. You have to go.'

Happy that he was right - if not smart - he had flown to London, where he caught up with Bob Young and John Howell. Young worked for EDS in Kuwait; Howell was a partner, with Tom Luce, in the Dallas law firm of Hughes & Hill. Both Young and Howell were on their way to Tehran.

The three men flew to Amman and there chartered the Arab Wings jet. Bob Young was the one who had thought of the videotapes. Arab Wings regularly flew tapes into Tehran and out again for the American television network NBC. Sometimes NBC would have somebody carry the tapes; other times the pilot would take them. Today Perot was carrying the tapes. He was also wearing a sports jacket and no tie. If by any chance there was someone at Mehrabad Airport looking out for H. Ross Perot, he might ~~perhaps~~ fail to notice the ~~man~~ NBC messenger with the net bag.

They left the desert behind and climbed over the mountains of western Iran. Unlike Simons and Coburn and Schwebach, Perot was a stranger to physical danger. He had been too young for the Second World War/ ^{and} too old for Vietnam, and the Korean war had finished while his ship was on its way there. He had been to Vietnam and Laos during that war, visiting POW camps, but he had never come under fire, although it had been no picnic. The most dangerous thing that had ever happened

to him, since the days of the Texarkana paper route, had been in a small plane over Laos, when a door right next to his seat fell off; and even then he had been safely strapped in.

He was not sitting next to a door today. He looked through the window and saw, in a bowl-shaped depression in the mountains, the city of Tehran, a mud-coloured sprawl dotted with white skyscrapers. The plane began to lose height.

He felt tense, wired, alert. For the next few days he would need his wits about him - assuming that he could get through the airport without being arrested.

The plane landed, taxied, and came to a halt. Perot got out, carrying his net bag of videotapes.

'Come with me,' the pilot said. 'I show you where to go.'

Perot followed the pilot across the tarmac. He felt grateful for his inconspicuous appearance. He thought of a Norwegian friend, a tall, blond Adonis who complained of looking too impressive. 'You're lucky, Ross,' he would say. 'When you walk into a room nobody notices you. When people see me, they expect too much - I can't live up to their expectations.' No one would ever take him for a messenger boy. But Perot, with his short stature and homely face, could be convincing in the part.

They entered the terminal. Perot told himself that the Ministry of Justice and the Customs were two separate government departments, and if one government department knew what the other was doing, or whom it was seeking, why, they would be more efficient than any government body Perot had ever come across.

He walked up to the desk and showed his passport. He was nodded through.

(go to pl26A)

He was not stopped at the Customs check.

He followed the pilot to a counter in the arrivals hall and left the bag of television tapes there.

He shook hands with the pilot and thanked him.

He turned around and saw another tall, distinguished-looking friend: Keane Taylor.

'Hi, Ross, how did it go?' said Keane.

'Great,' Perot said with a smile. 'They weren't looking for the ugly American.'

(go to pl27)

They walked to Taylor's car and headed into town. The road was lined with tall, half-finished buildings on which work seemed to have stopped. People were living in the concrete shells. It was an appropriate symbol, Perot thought, of the way the Shah had tried to modernise Iran too quickly. Closer in to the city there were roadblocks, burning cars, and people standing around with machine-guns. Perot had thought, like most Americans, that the Iranian army was a powerful force for stability; but just by looking around him he could see that the military here could not or would not maintain order. There were long queues of cars at every gas station, and he found that ironic in a country rich in oil.

'We're at the Hyatt,' Taylor said.

'What's it like?'

'Beautiful. It's a new hotel. Wonderful food, wine ... we're living like kings in a city that's falling apart.'

A few minutes later Taylor parked in the hotel forecourt and they went in. 'You don't have to check in,' Taylor said. 'Your suite is in my name.'

'Good.'

They took the elevator to the eleventh floor. 'We've all got rooms along this hall,' Taylor said. He unlocked a door and showed Perot into a suite.

Perot walked in, glanced around, and smiled. 'Would you look at this?'

The room was vast. He looked into the bathroom. It was big enough to hold a cocktail party in. 'It sure is different from the room I had last night, in Amman,' he said. 'The bathroom was so small I had to put my feet in the tub when I was sitting on the john. There's a real business opportunity for a civil engineer in that town.'

Taylor laughed. 'I'll leave you to settle in. I have to brief

Howell and Young.'

'Okay.'

Taylor left. Perot went to the window and looked out. His suite was at the front of the hotel, and he could look down and see the forecourt. I might hope to have warning, he thought, if a squad of soldiers or a revolutionary mob comes for me.

But what would I do?

He decided to map an emergency escape route. He left his room and walked up and down the corridor. There were several empty rooms with unlocked doors. At either end of the corridor was an exit to the staircase. He went down the stairs to the floor below. There were more empty rooms, some of them without furniture or decoration: the hotel was unfinished, like so many buildings in this town.

I could take the staircase down, he thought, and if I heard them coming up I could duck back into one of the corridors and hide in an empty room. That way I could get down to the ground floor.

He walked all the way down the stairs and explored the ground floor.

He wandered through several banqueting rooms which he supposed were unused most, if not all, of the time. There was a labyrinth of kitchens with a thousand hiding places: he particularly noted some empty food containers big enough for him to climb into. From the banqueting area he could reach the health club at the back of the hotel. There was a sauna and a pool. ~~And~~ He opened a door at the rear of the health club and found himself outside, in the hotel car park. From here he could walk to the next hotel, the Evin; or he could take an EDS car and just drive away.

He re-entered the hotel and took the elevator. As he rode up, he felt grateful for his inconspicuous appearance. He thought of a Norwegian friend, a ~~xxx~~ tall, blond Adonis who complained that he

looked too impressive. 'You're lucky, Ross,' he would say. 'When you walk into a room nobody notices you. When people see me, they expect too much: I can't live up to their expectations.' Perot ^{he} ~~now~~ ^{He} resolved always to dress casually in Tehran. He had brought with him khaki pants and some chequered flannel shirts, and he also had a jogging outfit. He could not help looking American, with his pale, ~~skin~~ ^{clean-shaven face} and blue eyes and ultra-short crewcut; but, ^{if he should find himself on the way,} by capitalising on his short stature and homely ~~xxx~~ features, he could at least make sure he did not look like an important American, much less the multimillionaire owner of Electronic Data Systems Corporation.

2

John Howell was born in the ninth minute of the ninth hour of the ninth day of the ninth month of 1946, his mother often said. Like so many of the people around Ross Perot, he was young to have such a responsible job: ^{only} ^{only} on thirty-two. Like Perot, Howell was born in Texarkana, Texas. Like Perot, he was short in stature and long on guts. Nevertheless, at midday on 14 January he was scared.

The previous afternoon, soon after arriving in Tehran, he had gone to the office of Dr Ahmad Housman, the Iranian attorney who was representing Paul and Bill. Housman had advised Howell not to meet with Dadgar: if he did, said Housman, there was a strong chance Dadgar would arrest Howell ~~and throw him in jail~~ - it was not unusual, in Iran, to put the lawyer in jail along with the accused.

This morning Dadgar had raided the EDS office in Bucharest Street.

He had turned up at eight-thirty with half a dozen investigators. Howell, hiding in an office on another floor, had called Housman and, after a quick discussion, had advised all EDS personnel to co-operate fully with Dadgar. They had done so, even to the extent of breaking

open a locked file cabinet to which nobody could find the key.

Meanwhile Howell snuck out of the building and went, with Houman, to meet Dr Kian, an official at the Ministry of Justice.

That, too, had been scary, for they had been obliged to fight their way through an unruly crowd which was demonstrating, outside the Ministry, against the holding of political prisoners. Once inside, Howell had told Kian that EDS was a reputable company which had done nothing wrong/^{and} it was eager to co-operate with any investigation in order to clear its name, but it wanted to get its employees out of jail.

The meeting was fruitless: Kian merely promised to look into the matter.

Afterwards, Howell decided that he would not be able to make any progress at all unless he met Dadgar; so he decided to bite the bullet and go and see the man.

That was why he was scared.

If he was unhappy, his wife was even more so. Angela was mad at him for leaving her alone in Dallas to cope with a ten-month old baby and an ice storm. He had spent much of November and December in Tehran, trying to force the Ministry to pay EDS's bill; since getting back to the States ~~xxxx~~ he had made several trips to New York; and even when he was in Dallas he stayed at EDS headquarters until all hours of the night, working on the Paul and Bill problem. On New Year's Eve he had arrived home to find Angela and ~~xxxx~~ baby Michael huddled in front of the wood fire in a cold, dark house: the blizzard had caused a power cut. He had moved them into his sister's apartment and gone off to New York again. Angela had had about as much as she could take/^{, and} when he announced he was going to Tehran again, despite the riots there, she hit the roof. It took him a long time to talk her round, and when eventually she agreed that he should go, it was a distinctly lukewarm blessing

that she gave. He had called her a couple of times since, and he knew that she was watching the riots on the TV news and worrying about him. They had been planning to move house, and he encouraged her to go house-hunting without him: it would help to take her mind off her worries.

He pushed domestic problems to the back of his mind as he headed for the office Dadgar had taken over. Keane Taylor went with him. Taylor was acting Country Manager because Lloyd Briggs had gone back to New York. Taylor was a full seven inches taller than Howell. We must look an odd couple, Howell thought; like Batman and Robin. He knew Taylor well. They had worked together on several EDS contracts in the States. As they stood outside Dadgar's door, Howell said: 'Mutt and Jeff?'

Taylor grinned. 'Mutt and Jeff,' he agreed.

They went in.

Howell introduced himself to Dadgar and shook hands, thinking: He doesn't look like a monster, he looks like a rather weary man of middle age who is losing his hair.

There were two interpreters in the room: an Iranian woman for Dadgar, and an EDS employee, Ahmad Sadri, for Howell and Taylor.

Howell began by ~~xxx~~ repeating to Dadgar what he had said to Dr Kain. 'EDS is a reputable company which has done nothing wrong, and we are willing to co-operate with your investigation. However, we cannot tolerate having two senior executives in jail. Now, what are the charges against them?'

Through his interpreter, Dadgar replied: 'We will let you know what the charges are when we are ready.'

Taylor said: 'So this is nothing but blackmail.'

'Now, wait a minute, Keane,' said Howell. He turned to Dadgar. 'Our men are in jail now, so we need to know what the charges are now.'

'There are no charges,' said Dadgar imperturbably.

'You see?' Taylor said. 'They're just hostages! This is plain extortion!'

Dadgar pointed at Taylor as he spoke. Ahmad Sadri translated: 'You must hold your tongue or you will be arrested.'

Taylor was overdoing his side of the good-guy, bad-guy act, Howell thought. He said: 'There must be charges.'

'I am conducting an investigation,' Dadgar said. 'When the investigation is concluded, I will know whether there are any charges against Chiapparone and Gaylord.'

'So what are you investigating?' Howell said.

'I do not like to be cross-examined,' Dadgar replied, with just a hint of anger ~~creeping into~~ ^{showing in} showing in his expression.

Careful, Howell told himself. 'My clients have done nothing wrong.'

'If they have done nothing wrong, why have you not posted the bail?'

Howell was taken aback. 'There is no connection between the two,' he said. 'Bail is a guarantee that someone will appear for trial, not ~~when they do, the bail is repaid~~ a sum to be forfeited if he is guilty. Guilty or innocent, the bail will be repaid as soon as my clients appear in court.' He waited while the woman translated. Dadgar made no reply, so presumably he agreed, but all the same Howell wondered whether 'bail' was the correct translation of whatever Farsi word Dadgar was using to describe the \$12,750,000 he had demanded of EDS.

Howell continued: 'However, there is a reason why we have not posted bail: so far we have been unable to bring thirteen million dollars into the country because your banks are on strike.' That was not strictly true; but, Howell felt, if he tried to explain to Dadgar that American banks did not want to get involved in helping EDS pay what they

saw as extortion money, Dadgar would probably put him in jail.

When this was translated, Dadgar shrugged, as if to say that the bank strike was EDS's problem, not his.

Howell continued: 'Nevertheless, we will post bail as soon as possible, and to that end we need to know exactly what kind of documentation you will require.'

Dadgar began to give him details of the form of bank guarantee he would require before releasing Paul and Bill. As he made notes, Howell thought: Well, he hasn't arrested me.

Yet.

3

Jay Coburn sat in the lobby of the Sheraton Hotel in Tehran, reading Newsweek magazine and feeling like a character in a bad spy movie.

He was waiting for [REDACTED], nicknamed Deep Throat.

Coburn had never met [REDACTED], ^{Deep Throat} but he knew of him. [REDACTED] ^{Deep Throat} was an American living in Tehran and working as a ~~business~~ consultant, giving advice to businessmen ~~and~~ on how to deal with the Iranians. Before Paul and Bill were arrested, he had called EDS and told them that they were in deep trouble, but for a payment of two and a half million dollars the Ministry of Justice would close the file and give them a clean bill of health. They had not believed [REDACTED]: the ^{Ministry government} ~~Iranian~~ owed ^{government} ~~EDS~~ money to EDS, not vice versa; it was the Iranians who needed a clean bill of health.

When Paul and Bill were arrested, it became clear that [REDACTED] ^{Deep Throat} had been right about how much trouble EDS was in, so Lloyd Briggs had called the man and asked him to try to find out what was going on.

[REDACTED] ^{Deep Throat} subsequently called back and said the problem could be solved by six million dollars, ^{He} ~~that was Dadgar's price.~~ ^{He} [REDACTED] wanted to

meet with Perot to set up the deal. Perot had asked Coburn to see
Deep Throat

██████████. (Perot had first carefully asked Simons's permission to
borrow a member of the rescue team.)

Coburn heard a voice say: 'Do you know where Pahlavi Avenue is?'

He looked up and said: 'No, I don't. I'm new in town.'

That was the identification code. ██████████ was being very

cloak-and-dagger about this whole thing - hence his nickname.

Deep Throat

██████████ seemed very nervous, looking around him constantly.

'Let's go,' he said. 'Over there.'

Coburn got up and followed him to the back of the hotel. They
stopped in a dark passage. 'I'll have to frisk you,' ██████████ said.

Coburn raised his arms.

Deep Throat

██████████ searched him.

'What are you afraid of?' Coburn said.

'There are no rules any more in this town,' said ██████████. 'You
can't trust anyone.'

Deep Throat

'Okay,' Coburn said when ██████████ finished frisking him. 'What's
the deal?'

'Six million dollars, paid into a bank account in Switzerland.
Your men will get out the next day.'

'We wouldn't pay before they got out.'

'The money goes into an escrow account, to be released when they're
out of Iran.'

'Who's the money for?'

'Who do you think? Dadgar.'

'So you're representing him?'

'Look, I'm just passing on information here.'

'Yeah, but where does the information come from?'

'The Ministry of Justice.'

'How do we know you really have a deal wired?'

'You don't need to know. If your men don't get out, you get your money back.'

Coburn nodded. 'We'll be in touch.'

*

After four days in Tehran, Perot was savage.

Taylor did not look forward to the evening debriefing sessions. After a day of dashing around the city, fighting the traffic, the demonstrations, and the intransigence of Iranian officialdom, he and Howell would have to explain to Perot why they had achieved precisely nothing.

Perot had been out of the hotel only twice: once to go to the Embassy and see Ambassador Sullivan, and once to go to military headquarters to talk to Generals Gast and Huyser. Taylor had persuaded Perot to stay in the hotel otherwise: he was shit scared that Dadgar would have him arrested. But the result was that Perot was like a caged bear, and being debriefed by him was like getting into the cage with the bear.

Each morning Perot would knock on the door while Taylor was shaving. Taylor got up a little earlier each day, in order to be ready when Perot came, but Perot got up earlier each day too, until Taylor began to fantasize that Perot listened outside the door all night, waiting to catch him shaving. Perot would be full of ideas which had come to him during the night: arguments for Paul and Bill's innocence, schemes for persuading the Iranians to release them. Taylor and Howell would go off to the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Health, where officials would destroy Perot's ideas in a few seconds. Perot was still using a legalistic, American approach, and, in Taylor's opinion, he had yet to realise that the Iranians were not playing according to those rules.

Taylor sighed. He poured a little rum into a big glass, added

ice, and filled the glass with coke. Then, carrying his drink, he went to Perot's room for the evening bloodbath.

*

Perot paced up and down his hotel room, waiting for the team to gather. He was doing no good here in Tehran, and he knew it.

He had suffered a chilly reception at the U.S. Embassy. He had been shown into the office of Charles Naas, the Ambassador's deputy, who had given him the old story about how EDS should work through the Iranian legal system for the release of Paul and Bill. Perot had demanded to see Sullivan, the Ambassador; but that, too, had been a waste of time. Sullivan had come in, shaken Perot's hand, told him he was most unwise to come to Iran, and left the room without sitting down. Perot was not used to such treatment. He was, after all, ~~an~~ ~~fairly~~ ~~well~~ ~~known~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~Embassy~~ ~~and~~ a distinguished American, and in normal circumstances someone like Sullivan would have ~~been~~ ~~to~~ ~~have~~ ~~licked~~ ~~his~~ ~~hand~~.

The visit had been worse than useless. Rich Gallagher was periodically checking, through a contact in security with Pan Am, on the names on the stop list at the airport; and soon after Perot ~~went~~ went to the Embassy his name was added to the list.

The airport was so disorganised that Perot did not believe they were operating the stop list efficiently, but nevertheless the news meant that the Iranians knew he was in town and that they were looking for him.

His visit with the military had been warmer but no more productive. Air Force General Phillip Gast, chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), had sent a bulletproof car to the Hyatt to take Perot to MAAG headquarters. He had spent an hour with Gast and Dutch Huyser. Huyser ~~wore~~ wore a weary, baffled look, like a man who could not figure out what he was doing wrong. Perot knew from the

newspapers that Huyser was President Carter's emissary, here to persuade the Iranian military to back the doomed Bakhtiar government. Huyser was a pal of Perot's, and Perot felt sorry for him. Huyser candidly said he would like to help Paul and Bill but at the moment he had no leverage with the Iranians; he had nothing to trade. Even if they get out of jail, Huyser said, they will be in danger in the city. Perot told the generals he had that taken care of: Bull Simons was here to look after Paul and Bill once they got out. Huyser burst out laughing, and Gast saw the joke a moment later: they knew who Simons was, and they realised that if he was here, he would be planning more than a babysitting job - he would be scheming a rescue.

But that was all. Warm words from the military; cold words from the Embassy; no action from either. And nothing but excuses from Howell and Taylor.

Perot went to the window and looked down into the forecourt of the hotel. The scene was normal: they were not coming for him yet.

There was a knock at the door, and Taylor came in, carrying his usual drink. He was followed by Howell, Gallagher and Young. They all sat down.

'Now,' said Perot, 'did you tell them that we'd guarantee to produce Paul and Bill for questioning anywhere in the U.S. or Europe, on thirty days notice, any time in the next two years?'

'They're not interested in that idea,' Howell said.

'What do you mean, they're not interested?'

'I'm just telling you what they said - '

'But if this is an investigation, rather than a blackmail attempt, all they need is to be sure Paul and Bill will be available for questioning.'

'They're sure already. I guess they see no reason to make changes.'

Perot sat down. It was maddening. There seemed no way to reason with the Iranians, no way to reach them. 'Did you suggest they release Paul and Bill into the custody of the U.S. Embassy?'

'They turned that down, too.'

'Why?'

'They didn't say.'

'Did you ask them?'

'Ross, they don't have to give reasons. They're in charge here, and they know it.'

'But they're responsible for the safety of their prisoners.'

'It's a responsibility which doesn't seem to weigh too heavily on them.'

Taylor said: 'Ross, they're not playing to our rules. Putting two men in jail is not a big deal to them. Paul and Bill's safety is not a big deal - '

'So what rules are they playing to? Can you tell me that?'

There was a knock at the door, and Coburn walked in, wearing his ~~bulky~~ long, bulky down coat. Perot brightened: perhaps he would have good news. 'Did you see Deep Throat?'

'Sure did,' said Coburn, taking off his coat.

'All right, let's have it.'

'He says he has a line to Dadgar, and Dadgar wants six million dollars. The money would be paid into an escrow account in Switzerland and released when Paul and Bill get out.'

'Hell, that ain't bad,' said Perot. ~~What kind of a guy is Deep Throat?~~ 'We get out with fifty cents on the dollar. What kind of a guy is Deep Throat?'

Coburn considered for a moment, then said: 'I don't trust the bastard.'

Howell said: 'Ross, I don't like this one bit.'

'I don't like it,' Perot said. 'But you've just been telling me

that the Iranians aren't playing to our rules.'

'Yes, but, listen. We have only one thing going for us in this situation: we are innocent. That's our whole case! That's what we've been telling the State Department, the Embassy, Dadgar, the Ministry of Justice, everybody.'

'And how far has it got us?'

'Ross, I believe that with time and patience we will succeed. But if we get involved in bribery we're no longer innocent.'

Perot turned to Coburn. 'How do we know Deep Throat has a deal with Dadgar wired?'

'We don't know. His argument is, we don't pay until we get results, so what do we have to lose?'

'Our reputation,' Howell said.

Taylor said: 'It stinks. The whole thing stinks.'

Perot was surprised by their reaction. He hated the idea of bribery, but he had been prepared to compromise his principles if it meant getting Paul and Bill out of jail. But he was impressed with Howell's vehemence. And a further misgiving had occurred to him. 'I suppose,' he said, 'this could even be a trap. Dadgar may by now believe that we aren't guilty of corruption - but he could save face if he could catch us in a bribe situation now.'

'Right!' said Howell.

'All right,' said Perot decisively. 'Tell Deep Throat thanks, but no, thanks.'

Coburn stood up. 'Okay.'

Perot said: 'The question is, what the heck else can we try?'

There was nothing else to try. All the legitimate team could do was

to continue arguing with Dadgar, keep up the political pressure on the State Department in Washington, try to find a way to ~~get~~ post the bail, and keep calling the Embassy. After six days in Tehran, Perot believed that none of this would work. His only remaining hope was Simons. Realising that was the only achievement of his trip. But there was one thing he could do for Paul and Bill before going home.

He could visit them.

It was like putting his head into the lion's mouth. There was reason to believe the Iranians were looking for him, and if they found him they would arrest him; yet here he was, in the U.S. Embassy's Volkswagen minibus, heading for the very jail they wanted to throw him into. It was foolhardy, but he wanted Paul and Bill to know that he was prepared to stick his neck out for them. It was the kind of decision he liked to talk over with his mother, but he could not do that. Still, he had a pretty good idea of what she would say. She would tell him to go in there and cheer them up.

His hopes were pinned on the notorious inability of government to let its right hand know what its left was doing. The Ministry of Justice was looking for him; the police ran the jails; the military was running the airport. He was confident that the search for him would be hopelessly inefficient.

Nevertheless, he took care to look like one of the regular team of EDS men visiting Paul and Bill. He even carried a box of groceries for them; and he wore his usual casual clothes.

The bus pulled into the square, and he got his first sight of the Gasr Prison. It was formidable: he could not imagine that Simons would find a way to break into it.

The bus stopped and Perot got out. Keane Taylor and Rich Gallagher were with him, and Coburn had come to reconnoitre the inside of the jail for Simons.

Outside the prison were scores of people, mostly Iranian women, making a lot of noise. The four EDS men pushed their way through the crowd to the huge steel gates. Someone looked out through a small window set in the wall, then the gates swung open and the four men walked in.

The gate clanged shut behind them.

Perot had passed the point of no return.

He gave the guard a five-dollar tip, as was normal - he wanted to do everything completely normally - and walked on, through a second set of steel doors, into a reception area.

There was a \$5 bill inside it.

He showed his passport./ He was betting that neither his face nor his name would mean anything to anyone in the prison. If he was wrong, the receptionist would blow a whistle, or pick up a phone, or just start hollering, and the game would be up.

The receptionist handed his passport to him - minus the bill - and pointed to a visitors' book.

He signed it 'H.R. Perot.'

He had been right. Nobody here had ever heard of Ross Perot.

He walked into the waiting room - and there, to his horror, he saw someone/^{who} knew him very well indeed. It was Ramsey Clark, the former U.S. Attorney-General.

For a moment Perot froze. Could he keep out of Clark's sight? Clark was talking to an Iranian in general's uniform. The Iranian had ~~xxxxxxx~~ a proprietorial air, as if he were in charge here. Any minute now Ramsey will see me and ~~xxxx~~ say 'Lord, there's Ross Perot, the owner of EDS,' and it will be worse if I look as if I'm trying to hide, Perot thought. He decided the best thing to do was to brazen it out, so he walked over to the two men, stuck out his hand, and said: 'Hello, Ramsey, what are you doing in jail?'

Clark and the General laughed. Clark said: 'This is General

He walked into the waiting-room - and there, to his horror, he saw someone who did know him. It was Ramsey Clark, the human rights campaigner and former U.S. Attorney-General. Perot had met Clark several times and knew Clark's sister Mimi very well.

For a moment Perot froze. Could he keep out of Clark's sight? Clark was talking to an Iranian in general's uniform. Perot thought: Any minute now Ramsey will see me and say: 'Lord, there's Ross Perot, the owner of EDS,' and it will be worse if I look as if I'm trying to hide.

He made a snap decision. He walked over to Clark, stuck out his hand, and said: 'Hello, Ramsey, what are you doing in jail?'

Clark laughed and shook hands. 'How's Mimi?' Perot asked, before Clark could perform introductions.

'She's fine - '

'Good to see you,' Perot said, and he walked on.

His mouth was dry as he went out of the waiting-room and into the prison compound. That had been a close one. He wondered what Clark was saying to the Iranian general now ...

(go to p142)

Mohari, governor of the prison; this - '

Perot interrupted him before he could say 'This is Ross Perot.'

~~He shook hands with you~~ Shaking Mohari's hand, he said: 'Hello, General, how are you? Well, Ramsey, it's funny to meet you here. I guess you're visiting some Americans, just like me. General, this is quite an establishment you have here. How many prisoners are there?'

'It's about eleven thousand - '

'My, my. Dutch Huyser's in town, Ramsey, did you know that?'

'Yes - '

'I saw him a couple of days ago. Boy, he pulled a lousy assignment this time.'

The general interrupted him. 'Colonel Razi will take care of you, sir.'

Perot turned to see a young officer standing nearby, waiting. 'Well, I've got to run.' He shook hands again. 'Good to see you, Ramsey. Thankyou, General.' He walked away.

His mouth was dry as he followed the Colonel out into the prison compound. That had been a close one. He wondered what Clark was saying to Mohari now....

*

Paul was depressed. He had thought that Coburn's rescue team would ambush the bus that brought them from the Ministry of Justice, and when the bus entered the formidable Gasr Prison he had been bitterly disappointed.

General Mohari had explained to Paul and Bill that he was in charge of all the jails in Tehran, and he had arranged for their transfer to this one for their own safety. It was no consolation: being less vulnerable to the mobs, the prison was also more difficult, if not impossible, for Coburn's team to raid.

The Gasr Prison was part of a large military complex. The

original palace was now the Police Academy, and the prison compound was in what had once been the palace gardens. To the north was a military hospital; to the east an army camp where ^ehlicopters took off and landed all day. The compound itself was bounded by an inner wall twenty-five or thirty feet high, and an outer wall twelve feet high. There were six cell blocks and several other buildings, including a bakery and a mosque.

Paul and Bill were in Building No. 8. It was a two-storey block within a fenced courtyard. The environment was not bad for a jail, Paul thought. There was a fountain in ^{the middle of} the courtyard, ~~and~~ rose bushes around the sides, and ten or fifteen pine trees. There was a ping-pong table and space for the prisoners to play volleyball. During the day they were allowed outside at will. However, they could not pass through the courtyard gate, which was manned by a guard.

The ground floor of the ~~hospital~~ block was a small hospital with twenty or so patients, mostly mental/^{cases.}~~patients~~ They screamed a lot. Paul and Bill and a handful of other prisoners were on the first floor (USA: second floor). They had a large cell, about twenty feet by thirty, which they shared with only one other prisoner, an Iranian lawyer in his fifties who spoke English and French. He showed them pictures of his villa in France. One of the other prisoners, evidently a wealthy man who was spending a lot to buy unofficial privileges, had a private room and meals brought in from outside.

There was a visiting room on the ground floor, but the first time they had visitors, on 19 January, they were taken out of the ~~compound~~ courtyard and across the prison compound. ~~They~~ Paul realised they were headed for a building known as the Officers' Club, set in a small tropical garden with ducks and peacocks. Paul sniffed: on top of everything else he had a persistent cold. He felt very low. He just wanted to go home.

As they approached the Officers' Club he looked across the compound and saw a group of people walking toward him.

He could not believe his eyes.

'My God!' he said delightedly. 'It's Ross!'

Forgetting where he was, he turned ~~and started to~~ to run over to Perot: the guard jerked him back.

'Can you believe that?' he said to Bill. 'Perot's here!'

The guard hustled them through the garden and into the building. Paul found himself in a big circular room with banquetting tables around the ~~wx~~ outside and walls covered with small triangles of mirrored glass: it was like a ballroom. A moment later Perot came in with Coburn, Taylor and Gallagher.

Perot was grinning broadly. Paul shook his hand, then embraced him. It was an emotional moment: Paul was moved almost to tears. He felt the way he did when he listened to The Star Spangled Banner: a kind of shiver went up and down his spine. He was loved, he was cared for, he had friends, he belonged. H. Ross Perot had come twelve thousand miles just to visit him and Bill.

Perot and Bill embraced and shook hands. Bill said: 'Ross, what in the world are you doing here? Have you come to take us home?'

'Not quite,' Perot said. 'Not yet.'

The guards gathered at the far end of the room to drink tea. The Embassy staff who had followed the EDS men in sat around another table, talking to a woman prisoner.

Perot took a stack of envelopes from his pocket. 'I brought you some mail.' ~~Rxxx~~

Paul glanced at his. There was a letter from Ruthie. Another envelope was addressed to 'Chappanoodle'. Paul smiled: it would be from his friend David Behne, whose son Tommy, unable to pronounce Chiapparone, had dubbed Paul 'Chappanoodle'. He pocketed the letters to read later,

and said: 'How's Ruthie?'

'She's just fine, I talked to her on the phone,' Perot said. 'Now, we have assigned one man to each of your wives, to make sure everything necessary is done to take care of them. Ruthie's in Dallas now, Paul, staying with Jim and Kathy Nyfeler. She's buying a house, and T.J. Marquez is ~~xxxx~~ handling all the legal details for her. Bill, Emily has gone to visit her sister Vickie in North Carolina. She needed a break. She's been working with Tim Reardon in Washington, putting pressure on the State Department. She wrote to Rosalynn Carter - you know, as one wife to another - she's trying everything. Matter of fact, we're all trying everything ... '

*

As Perot ran down the long list of people who had been asked to help get Paul and Bill out - from Texas Congressmen all the way up to Henry Kissinger - Bill realised that the purpose of Perot's visit was to boost his and Paul's morale. Well, it was working. With his letters from home and his box of groceries he seemed like Santa Claus; and the big grin on his face as he walked ~~xxxxxxx~~ across the prison compound had symbolised, for Bill, a tremendous defiance of Dadgar, the prison, the mobs and everything that threatened them.

Bill was worried, now, about Emily's morale. He knew instinctively what was going on in her mind. The fact that she had gone to North Carolina told him that she had given up hope. It had become too much for her to keep up a facade of normalcy with the children at her parents' house. He knew, somehow, that she had started smoking again.

While Perot was talking, Keane Taylor took out a pack of cigarettes, lit one, and handed the pack to Bill. Bill did not smoke, and Taylor knew it. 'Keep the pack,' Taylor said. Bill put it in his pocket for later investigation.

'If all this fails,' Perot was saying, 'we have another team in

town who will get you out of here by other methods. You'll recognise all the members of the team except one, the leader, an older man. Don't ask any questions, for now; you'll know more when you need to.' Perot's face softened and he changed the subject, addressing Paul. 'I've brought you some long underwear.' Bill recalled that Paul, who was always cold in jail, had asked for long underwear, and nobody had been able to get hold of any. Perot continued: 'Now I want you to know that this belongs to me personally - so don't you leave here without it!'

Bill was embarrassed about his moustache. He had grown it to make him look more Iranian. However, EDS executives were not allowed to grow moustaches or beards. It was silly, he knew, but he hated Ross to see him with a moustache. 'I apologise for this,' he said, touching his upper lip. 'I'm trying to look inconspicuous. I'll shave it off as soon as I get out of here.'

Perot smiled. 'You should keep it - let Emily and the children see it. Anyway, we're going to change the dress code. We've had the results of the employee attitude survey, and we'll probably permit moustaches, and coloured shirts, too.'

Bill looked at Coburn. 'And beards?'

Perot smiled. 'No beards. Coburn has a very special excuse.'

The guards came over to break up the meeting: visiting time was ~~xxxx~~ up.

Perot said: 'We don't know whether we'll get you out quickly or slowly. Tell yourselves it will be slowly. If you get up each morning thinking "Today could be the day," you may have a lot of disappointments and become demoralised. Prepare yourselves for a long stay, and you may be pleasantly surprised. But always remember this: we will get you out.'

They all shook hands. Paul said: 'I really don't know how to thank

He need not have worried. Clark, who was there at the invitation of Iranian human-rights groups, did not have such a good memory. He had known that Perot's face was vaguely familiar but thought he was Colonel Frank Borman, the president of Eastern Airlines.

*

you for coming, Ross.'

Perot smiled. 'That's all right.'

They all went out. The EDS men walked across the compound toward the prison gate. Watching them walk away, Bill was seized by a longing just to go with them. Not today, he told himself; not today.

*

Perot headed for the front of the prison, wondering whether he would be allowed to leave.

Had Ramsey Clark told General Mohari who he was? Had someone recognised the name in the visitors' book? Would there be a reception committee waiting for him in the administration block at the prison entrance?

His heart beat faster as he entered the waiting room. ^{The General} Mohari was not there. He walked through, and into the reception area. Nobody looked at him.

With Coburn, Taylor and Gallagher close behind, he walked through the first set of steel doors, giving the guard a five-dollar tip.

He crossed the little courtyard and waited by the big gates.

The gates opened.

He walked out of the prison.

He had made it.

*

Later that day Keane Taylor drove Perot to the rescue team's hideout. Perot was wearing his jogging suit with tennis shoes and a dark businessman's overcoat. The rescue team had moved into their second apartment, one which had been used by Bill Dvoranchik. Taylor showed Perot into the house, then went outside with Coburn, leaving Perot alone with Simons.

Perot looked around distastefully. Perhaps the place had been spotless when Dvoranchik lived here, but now, inhabited by a bunch of

men none of whom was very interested in housekeeping, it was dirty and run-down, and it stank of Simons's cigars.

'You've seen the new prison,' Perot said to Simons.

'Yeah.'

'What do you think?'

'The idea of taking that place with the kind of frontal attack we had in mind just ~~isn't~~ isn't worth talking about any more.'

'That's what I figured.'

'Which leaves a number of possibilities. One: I understand there are cars parked in the prison compound. We may find a way to get Paul and Bill driven out of there in the trunk of a car. Two: We may be able to bribe or blackmail this General who is in charge of the jail. One of your Iranian employees is getting us a rundown on the man.'

'General Mohari.'

'Right. Three: The negotiating team may be able to get Paul and Bill released on bail, or under house arrest. If that happens we can snatch them from their guards. We're working on a plan for that eventuality ^{paused.} ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ right now.' Simons lit a fresh cigar from the stub of the old one. 'There's one other possibility. There's a revolution going on here, and revolutions are predictable. The same things happen every damn time. You can't say when they'll happen, only that they will, sooner or later. And one of the things that always happens is, the mob storms the prisons and lets everyone out.'

Perot was intrigued. 'Is that so?'

Simons nodded. 'At any rate, our next step is to develop a plan, or several plans, for getting everyone out of this goddam country just as soon as Paul and Bill are in our hands.'

'I've had promises of help from the American military - '

'Sure,' Simons said. 'I'm not saying they're insincere, but I will say that they have higher priorities, and I'm not prepared to

place a great deal of reliance on their promises.'

Perot nodded. 'What can I do?'

'Get back to the States. For one thing, you're in danger here. For another, I need you over there. I will get these men out of Iran - but I may take them to Turkey, or Kuwait, or Iraq, or Afghanistan, and you'll have to pick up the rescue operation from that point in the game. I've sent Boulware, Davis and Jackson back to the States to help with that aspect of the operation. Schwebach and Sculley have gone to London to pick up some good maps. I don't need an assault force here any more. We'll do something more subtle. Or we may do nothing at all, and let the revolutionaries do our dirty work. Go home, Ross. I'll have one less passenger to worry about.'

Perot stood up, smiling. 'I'll leave tomorrow.'

*

He got a seat on an all-economy ~~Parman~~ flight from Tehran to London on 20 January. Margot was on her way to London. They would have a few days' holiday. If Perot succeeded in getting out of Iran.

He had been sceptical about the stop list - Gayden was supposed to be on it, so were Boulware and Briggs, and Perot had not really believed that the Iranians were being that efficient - but now his scepticism was to be put to the test.

In order to minimise the amount of time he would have to spend at the airport, he stayed at the hotel until the last minute. He called the airport to check that flight BA 200 was leaving on time, at 10.20 a.m. It was, he was told.

He checked in a few minutes before ten o'clock.

He went through customs and passport control without incident. He paid the airport tax. Then he came to the last checkpoint, where - so it was said - the stop list was held. Here he had to hand over a yellow form with details of items he had bought in Iran and was

taking out with him. The form had his name at the top. He also had to show his passport.

He put a five-dollar bill in his passport and approached the desk. The girl behind the counter was reading a paperback book. Hardly looking up, ~~from her book~~ she took his yellow sheet, stamped his passport, pocketed the bill, and returned to her book.

Perot went into the departure lounge.

The flight was delayed.

He sat down. He was on tenterhooks. At any moment the girl could finish her book, or just get bored with it, and start checking the stop list against the names on the yellow sheets. Then they would come for him, the police or the military or Dadgar's investigators, and he would go to jail, and Margot would be like Ruthie and Emily, not knowing whether she would ever see her husband again. He checked the departure board every few seconds. It just said Delayed.

He sat on the edge of his chair for the first hour.

Then he began to feel resigned. If they were going to catch him, they would, and there was nothing he could do about it. He started to read a magazine. Over the next hour or so he read everything in his briefcase. Then he started talking to an Englishman sitting next to him who was waiting for the same flight. They swapped magazines.

Lunchtime went by, and the afternoon wore on. They're not coming for me, Perot thought.

At six o'clock in the evening the flight was called.

Perot stood up. If they come for me now ...

He joined the crowd and went through the departure gate. I've almost made it, he thought as he boarded the plane. He sat between two fat people in an economy seat. I think I've made it, he said to himself.

The doors were closed and the plane began to move.

It taxied on to the runway and gathered speed.

The plane took off.

He had made it.

He had always been lucky.

Chapter Seven

1

Emily Gaylord sat down with her needlepoint. She was making a nude for Bill.

It was a normal day of quiet desperation. She had driven Victoria to high school then returned to her parents' house and taken Jacqueline, Jennifer and Christopher to elementary school. She had called in on her sister Dorothy and talked for a while with her and her husband, Tim Reardon. Tim was still working through Senator Kennedy and Tip O'Neill to put pressure on the State Department, but so far there were no results.

Emily was becoming obsessed with Dadgar, the mystery man who had the power to put her husband in jail and keep him there. She wanted to confront him herself, and ask him personally why he was doing this to her. Today she had asked Tim to try to get her a diplomatic passport, so she could go to Iran and just knock on Dadgar's door. Tim had said it was a pretty crazy idea.

Now, back at her parents' house, she was waiting for the daily call from Dallas. It was usually Ross, T.J. Marquez or Jim Nyfeler who called. In the afternoon she would pick up the children then help them with their homework. After that there was nothing ahead but the lonely night.

She had only recently told Bill's parents that he was in jail. Bill had asked her, in a letter read over the phone by Keane Taylor, not to tell them until it was absolutely necessary, because his father had a history of strokes. But after three weeks the pretence had become impossible. Bill's father had been angry at having been kept in the dark so long.

The phone rang, and she snatched it up. 'Hello?'

'Emily? This is Jim Nyfeler.'

'Hi, Jim, what's the news?'

'Just that they've been moved to another jail.'

Emily closed her eyes. Why was there never any good news?

'It's nothing to worry about,' Jim said. 'In fact it's good.'

The old jail was in the south of the city, where the fighting is.

This one is further north, and more secure - they'll be safer there.'

Emily lost her cool. 'But Jim,' she yelled, 'you've been telling me for three weeks that they're perfectly safe in jail, now you say they've been moved to a new jail and now they'll be safe!'

'Emily - '

'Come on, please don't lie to me!'

'Emily - '

'Just tell it like it is and be upfront, okay?'

'Emily, I don't think they have been in danger up till now, but the Iranians are taking a sensible precaution, okay?'

Emily felt ashamed of herself for getting mad at him. 'I'm sorry, Jim.'

'That's all right.'

They talked a little longer, then Emily hung up and went back to her needlepoint. I'm losing my grip, she thought. I'm going round in a trance, taking the kids to school, talking to Dallas, going to bed at night and getting up in the morning ... Visiting Vicky for a few days had been a good idea, but she didn't really need a break - what she needed was Bill.

It was hard to keep on hoping. She began to think about life without Bill. She thought of an aunt who worked at Woody's department store in Washington: maybe she could get a job there. Or she could talk to her father about getting secretarial work. She wondered ~~if~~ whether whether

she would ever fall in love with anyone else, if Bill died in Tehran. She thought not.

She remembered when they were first married, and had very little in the way of material things. Then Bill's career had begun to take off, and they became quite affluent. Now she realised that in the end she did not care what they had; those material things were worthless and empty. Bill would always be enough for her, enough to make her happy.

If he ever came back.

*

Karen Chiapparone said: 'Mommy, why doesn't Daddy call? He always calls when he's away.'

'He called today,' Ruthie lied. 'He's fine.'

'Why did he call while I was at school? I'd like to talk to him.'

'Honey, it's so difficult to get through from Tehran, the lines are so busy, he just has to call when he can.'

'Oh.'

Karen wandered off to watch TV, and Ruthie sat down. It was getting dark outside. She was ~~fixing~~ finding it increasingly difficult to lie to everyone about Paul.

That was why she had left Chicago and come to Dallas. Living with her parents and keeping the secret from them had become impossible. Mom would say: 'Why do Ross and the fellows from EDS keep calling you?'

'They just want to make sure we're okay, you know.'

'That is so nice of Ross to call you.'

Here in Dallas she could at least talk openly about the problem to other EDS people. Moreover, now that the Iran operation was certain to be closed down, Paul would be based at EDS headquarters, at least for a while, so Dallas would be their home; and Karen and Ann Marie

had to go to school.

They were living with Jim and Kathy Nyfeler. Kathy was especially sympathetic, for her husband had been on the original list of four people whose passports Dadgar had asked for: if Jim had happened to be in Iran at the time, he would now be in jail with Paul and Bill. It will only be for maybe a week, Kathy had said; then Paul will be back. That had been at the beginning of January. Since then Ruthie had proposed to move into an apartment, but Kathy would not hear of it.

Right now Kathy was at the hairdresser's, the children were watching TV in another room, and Jim was not yet home from work, so Ruthie was alone with her thoughts.

With Kathy's help she was keeping busy and putting on a brave face. She had enrolled Karen in school and found a nursery school for Ann Marie. She went out to lunch with Kathy and some of the other EDS wives - Mary Boulware, Liz Coburn, Mary Sculley, Marva Davis, ~~She~~ Toni Dvoranchik. She wrote bright, optimistic letters to Paul, and listened to his bright, optimistic replies read over the phone from Tehran by Keane Taylor. She shopped and went to dinner parties.

She had killed a lot of time house-hunting. She did not know Dallas at all well, but she remembered Paul saying that Central EXpressway was a nightmare, so she looked for houses away from that highway. She had found one she liked and decided to buy it, so there would be a real home for Paul to come back to, but there were legal problems because he was not here to sign the papers: Tom Walter and T.J. Marquez were trying to sort that out.

Ruthie was making it look good, but inside she was dying.

She rarely slept more than an hour a night. She kept waking up wondering whether she would ever see Paul again. She tried to think about what she would do if he did not come back. She supposed she

would return to Chicago and stay with Mom and Dad for a while, but she would not want to live with them permanently. No doubt she could get some kind of job ... But it was not the practical business of living without a man and taking care of herself that bothered her: it was the idea of being without Paul, forever. She could not imagine what life would be like if he were not there. What would she do, what would she care about, what would she want, what could possibly make her happy? She was completely dependent upon him, she realised. She could not live without him.

She heard a car outside. That would be Jim Nyfeler: perhaps he would have some news.

A moment later he came in. 'Hi, Ruthie. Kathy not home?'

'She's at the hairdresser's. What happened today?'

'Well ... '

She knew from his expression that he had nothing good to tell her and he was trying to find an encouraging way of saying so.

'Well, they had a meeting scheduled to talk about the bail, but the Iranians didn't turn up. Tomorrow - '

Ruthie fought to keep cool. 'But why don't they turn up when they arrange these meetings?'

'You know, sometimes they're called out on strike, and sometimes people just can't move around the city because of ... because of the demonstrations, and so on ... '

She seemed to have been hearing reports like this for weeks. There were always delays, postponements, frustrations. 'But, Jim,' she began; then the tears started and she could not stop them. 'Jim ... ' Her throat tightened up until she could not speak. She thought: All I want is my husband! Jim stood there looking helpless and embarrassed. All the misery she had kept locked up for so long suddenly ~~burst through~~ flooded out, and she could not control herself

any longer. She burst into tears and ran from the room. She rushed to her bedroom, threw herself on the bed and lay there sobbing her heart out.

2

With each additional day that he spent in Tehran, John Howell became a little less the upright American lawyer and a little more the devious Persian negotiator.

Mars Mar^s Attar, an Iranian accountant, had explained things to him like this: 'In Iran many things are achieved by friendship. There are several ways to become Dadgar's friend. Me, I would sit outside his house every day until he talked to me. Another way to become his friend is to give him two hundred thousand dollars. If you like I can arrange this.'

Howell was not sure how to handle this proposal. Had Dadgar dropped his price, having been refused six million dollars? Had LoBello's offer been completely fraudulent? Was this just another trap?

He discussed Attar's offer with the other members of the negotiating team, including Bill Gayden, the president of EDS World, who - convinced now of the nonexistence of the stop list - had flown in and taken over Perot's suite at the Hyatt.

They decided they would play along with Attar for a while. If the proposal was for real, they might be able to expose it and thus discredit Dadgar. Alternatively they might get desperate and abandon their moralistic objections to corruption. Either way, they wanted a clear sign from Dadgar that he was in on the deal. Howell told Attar this, and suggested that Dadgar should signal his corruptibility by coming to a meeting in odd socks or with his tie on backwards. Attar

looked dubious and said he would see what he could do.

Dadgar asked for a meeting at the office of the Social Security Organisation, a sub-department of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Howell went with Taylor and interpreter Ahmad Sadri. When they arrived Dadgar was waiting with half a dozen officials from the SSO.

Howell looked carefully at Dadgar's socks. They matched. And his tie was on right.

He had not really expected Dadgar to be wearing odd socks. No doubt Mars Attar would think of a more dignified kind of signal, and forewarn Howell of it.

Dadgar began by explaining, through an interpreter, that the staff of the SSO wanted EDS to turn over to them what was known as the small data centre.

The small data centre, Howell recalled, ran the payroll and pensions for the SSO. What these people wanted was to get their wages even if nobody got any social security benefits.

Keane Taylor said: 'It's not that simple. Such a turnover would be a very complex operation needing many skilled staff. Of course they are all back in the States.'

Dadgar replied: 'Then you should bring them back in.'

'I'm not that stupid,' Taylor said.

Dadgar said: 'If he speaks like this he will go to jail.'

'Just like my staff would if I brought them back to Iran,' Taylor said.

'Uh, Mr Dadgar,' Howell said quickly, 'would you be able to give a legal guarantee that any returning staff would not be arrested or harrassed in any way?'

'I could not give a formal guarantee,' Dadgar replied. 'However, I would give my personal word of honour.'

Howell darted an anxious glance at Taylor. Taylor said nothing but his expression was eloquent.

Howell said: 'We could certainly investigate ways of arranging the turnover. There would have to be safeguards, of course. For example, you would have to certify that the machinery was handed over to you in good condition - but perhaps we could employ independent experts to do that ...' Howell was ~~huffing~~ shadow-boxing. Dadgar had just handed him a bargaining counter, and it was the only one he had. If the small data centre was handed over, there would be a price: the release of Paul and Bill.

Howell said: 'Would it help if EDS were to renegotiate its contract with the Ministry?'

'This would not be a legal solution to our problem, but it might be a practical solution,' Dadgar said. 'It would be a pity to waste all the work that has been done to computerise the Ministry.'

Howell decided to be blunt at this point. 'Of course, it would be quite out of the question to switch the computers on again ~~until~~ ~~until~~ while Chiapparone and Gaylord are still in jail.'

Dadgar replied: 'Still, if you commit to good faith negotiations, the Minister will call me and the charges might be changed, the bail might be dropped, and Chiapparone and Gaylord might even be released on their personal guarantees.'

Was this what it was all about, Howell wondered? Was the whole wretched business no more than a scheme to get EDS to reduce its charges?

The SSO officials started speaking. They all had complaints about EDS. The most vociferous was a man whom EDS had had downgraded for inefficiency. As the meeting degenerated into a gripe session, Howell thought over the idea of renegotiating the EDS contract.

A similar suggestion had come from Paul Bucha. Bucha had gone to

Rome and talked to Condotte D'Acqua, the construction company who had managed to spring from jail their employee Lucio Randone, Paul and Bill's cellmate. Condotti D'Acqua had been building apartment blocks in Tehran with Iranian finance. The Iranian partners had run out of money and consequently the Italians had stopped construction. Unfortunately many Iranians had already paid for their apartments, and in the furore Randone had been jailed as a scapegoat. Condotti D'Acqua had found a new source of finance and resumed building, and Randone got out of jail.

Bucha also said that the Italians were not being completely candid with him, but had hinted that a bribe was required to make the deal happen. Everything had been arranged by an Iranian lawyer called Ali Azmayesh.

Howell had met with Azmayesh, who told him that EDS did not have a legal problem, it had a business problem: if EDS could come to a business arrangement with the Ministry, Dadgar would go away.

Now Dadgar was saying something similar.

Howell decided that he and Taylor had better go see the Minister of Health.

*

'Mr Taylor, the head of the American company EDS, is calling you, Minister,' said the secretary.

Dr Razmara took a deep breath. 'Tell him that American businessmen may no longer pick up the phone and call Ministers of the Iranian government and expect to talk to ~~them~~ us as if we were their employees,' he said. He raised his voice. 'Those days are over!'

Then he asked for the EDS file.

Manoutchehr Razmara had been in Paris over Christmas. French-educated - he was a cardiologist - and married to a Frenchwoman, he considered France his second home, and spoke fluent French. ~~When~~ He
He

was also a member of the Iranian National Medical Council and a friend of Shahpour Bakhtiar, and when the Shah had asked Bakhtiar to form a civilian government, Bakhtiar had called Razmara in Paris and asked him to come home to be Minister of Health.

The EDS file was handed to him by Dr Emrani, the Deputy Minister in charge of social security. Emrani had served under the previous Minister, and so had been a party to the decision to put the two EDS executives in jail.

Razmara read the file with mounting anger. The EDS project was insane. The basic contract price was forty-eight million dollars, with escalators taking it up to a possible ninety million. Razmara recalled that Iran had twelve thousand working doctors to serve a population of thirty-two million, ^{and} that there were sixty-four thousand villages without tap water; and he concluded that whoever had signed the deal with EDS/~~were fools or traitors,~~ ^{were fools or traitors,} or both. How could they possibly justify spending millions on computers when the people lacked the fundamental necessities of public health like clean water? There was only one explanation: they had been bribed.

Well, they would suffer. Emrani's dossier had been prepared for the special court which prosecuted corrupt civil servants. Three people were in jail: the former Minister, Dr Sheikholislamadeh, and two of his Deputy Ministers, Reza Neghabat and Nili Arame. That was as it should be. The blame for the mess they were in should fall primarily on Iranians. However, the Americans were also to blame. American businessmen and their government had encouraged the Shah in his mad schemes, and had taken their profits; now they must suffer. Furthermore, according to Emrani's dossier, EDS had been spectacularly incompetent: the computers were not yet working, after two and a half years, yet the automation project had so disrupted Emrani's department that the old-fashioned information systems were not working either,

With the result that Emrani could not monitor his department's expenditure. This was a principal cause of the Ministry's overspending its budget, the dossier said.

Razmara noted that the U.S. Embassy was protesting about the jailing of the two Americans, Chiapparone and Gaylord, because there was no evidence against them. That was just typical of the Americans. Of course there was no ^{proof:} ~~xxxxxxx~~ bribes were not paid by cheque. The Embassy was also concerned for the safety of the two prisoners. That was ironic. Razmara was concerned for his own safety. Each day when he went to the office he wondered whether he would come home alive.

He closed the dossier. He had no sympathy for EDS or its jailed executives. Even if he had wanted to ~~xxx~~ have them released, he would not have been able to, he reflected. The anti-American mood of the people was rising to fever pitch. The government of which Razmara was a part, the Bakhtiar ~~gxxxxx~~ regime, had been installed by the Shah and was therefore widely suspected of being pro-American. With the country in such turmoil, any Minister who concerned himself with the welfare of a couple of greedy American capitalist lackeys would be run out of town on a rail. And quite ^rrightly. Razmara turned his attention to more important matters.

The next day his secretary said: 'Mr Taylor of the American company EDS is here asking to see you, Minister.'

The arrogance of the Americans was maddening. Razmara said: 'Repeat to him the message I gave you yesterday - then give him five minutes to get off the premises.'

Simons now concentrated on routes out of Iran. He was not prepared to

rely upon the vague promises of help which Perot had got from the U.S. military.

He had Coburn investigate the possibilities of flying out. Paul and Bill might get on a scheduled flight, in disguise; or there might be a way of getting them out as freight. Coburn talked to a contact in security at Pan Am, but the man was highly nervous about the whole idea, and in the end mentioned it to his superiors, who vetoed it. Coburn also scouted a helicopter base in Tehran, with a view to stealing a chopper. It could be done relatively easily, he decided; but the danger was that the aircraft might not be properly serviced.

Simons was anyway uneasy around airports. You were always in someone else's hands. His preference was to get out by road.

To the north was the USSR, and to the north-east Afghanistan. Iraq was to the west. None of them were hospitable countries. To the south was the Persian Gulf, with Kuwait only fifty or hundred miles away across the water; and to the north-west was Turkey.

Simons asked Coburn to ^{have} ~~xxxx~~ a trustworthy Iranian employee drive south all the way to the Gulf, to find out whether the road was passable and the countryside peaceful. Coburn picked the Cycle Man, so called because he zipped around Tehran on a motorbike. A trainee systems engineer, the Cycle Man was about twenty-five, short, and street-smart. He had been hired despite his lack of a college degree because he scored remarkable high marks in aptitude tests. Coburn was fairly sure that the Cycle Man was involved with the revolutionaries. One day he had asked Keane Taylor for a car. Taylor had let him take one of the many surplus vehicles EDS had in Tehran. Next day the Cycle Man had asked for another car. Taylor had given it to him. The Cycle Man always used his motorcycle anyway. Taylor and Coburn presumed the cars were being used by the revolutionaries. They

did not care: it was more important that the Cycle Man was obligated to them. So, as a return for past favours, the Cycle Man drove to the south.

Meanwhile, Simons sent Glenn Jackson to Kuwait.

*

Glenn Jackson had a first-class mathematical brain and the ability to stay calm under stress. This combination had got him into Mission Control at NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston as a flight controller. His job had been to design and operate the computer programmes which calculated trajectories for in-flight manoeuvring. His unflappability had been severely tested on Christmas Day, 1968, during the last mission he worked on, the lunar flyby. When the spacecraft came out from behind the moon, astronaut Jim Lovell had read down the list of numbers, called residuals, which ^{Jackson} told ~~Glenn~~ how close the craft was to its planned course: the numbers were way outside the acceptable limits of error. ^{Jackson} ~~Glenn~~ asked the astronaut to read them down again, to double-check. Then he told the flight director that if these numbers were correct, they had lost three astronauts: there was not enough fuel to correct such a huge divergence. ^{Jackson} ~~Glenn~~ asked Lovell to read the numbers a third time, extra carefully. They were the same. Then Lovell said: 'Oh, wait a minute, I'm reading these wrong ... '

The manoeuvre had been almost perfect.

It was all a long way from busting into a prison.

Still, he had not yet got anywhere near Tehran. He had been cooling his heels in Paris for ten days when at last he got instructions from Simons, via Dallas, to go to Kuwait. EDS was doing a preliminary study for Kuwait's central bank, and the EDS country manager, Malloy Jones, would be told that Jackson would work on that study.

He flew from Paris to Kuwait, did a little work for the benefit

of his cover story, and started looking around. He spent some time at the airport, watching the immigration officers. They were being very tough, he soon learned. Hundreds of Iranians without passports were flying in to Kuwait. They were handcuffed and put on the next flight back. Jackson concluded that Paul and Bill could not possibly fly into Kuwait.

Assuming they could get in some other way, would they be allowed to leave without passports? Jackson went to see the American consul, saying that one of his children seemed to have lost a passport, and asking what the procedure was with the authorities. The consul revealed, in the course of a long and rambling conversation, that it was possible for the Kuwaitis to check, when they issued an exit visa, whether the person had entered the country legally.

That was a problem, but perhaps not an insoluble one: once inside Kuwait Paul and Bill would at least be safe. The main question was: assuming the escapers could reach the south of Iran and sneak out in a small boat, would they be able to land in Kuwait? Jackson ~~xxxxx~~ travelled the sixty-mile length of the Kuwait coast, from the Iraqi border in the north to the Saudi-Arabian border in the south. He spent a lot of time on the beaches, looking for seashells in winter. Normally, he had been told, coastal patrols were very light. But the exodus from Iran had changed everything. Everywhere he stopped he saw, out at sea, at least one coastguard boat; and they were stopping all small craft.

The prognosis was gloomy. Jackson reported to Simons, via Merv Stauffer in Dallas, that the Kuwait exit was a no-no.

*

That left Turkey. Simons had favoured the Turkish exit all along. It was the closest border to Tehran. Furthermore Simons had lived in Turkey in the fifties, training Turkish soldiers, and he spoke a little of the language. So he sent Ralph Boulware to Istanbul.

*

Ralph Boulware grew up in bars. His father, Benjamin Russell Boulware, was a tough and independent black man who had a series of small businesses: a grocery store, house property, bootlegging, but mostly bars. Ben Boulware's theory of child-raising was that if he knew where they were he knew what they were doing, so he kept his boys mostly within his sight, which meant mostly in the bar. It was not much of a childhood, and left Ralph feeling that he had been an adult all his life.

He had returned to the States after it was learned that his name was on the stop list at Tehran airport, so he was in Dallas when his new orders came from Simons. Texas was a better place than London to buy sophisticated electronic equipment, so Boulware got the two-way radios that Schwebach and Sculley needed. He bought six five-channel radios, ten rechargers, and a supply of batteries.

He also got from Merv Stauffer forty thousand dollars in cash. The night before he left, his wife Mary walked into the bedroom and saw his open suitcase containing the money and the radios. She hesitated a moment, then said: 'I'm not even going to ask.'

Boulware met Schwebach and Sculley in London, gave them five of the six radio sets; and - keeping one radio for himself - flew on to Istanbul. There he contacted [REDACTED] Mr. Fish, the travel agent.

Boulware knew that EDS had tipped [REDACTED] \$150 for all his help during the evacuation, and that seemed to Boulware grossly inadequate, so the first thing he did was to tell [REDACTED] that there had been some confusion about showing him EDS's appreciation, and give him a thousand dollars. Then he invited [REDACTED] to dinner to talk about some other things.

He knew that [REDACTED] liked him. Their daughters had played together during the evacuees' stopover in Istanbul. However, Boulware figured that by now [REDACTED] was suspicious of EDS, since Pat Sculley had come over

with a transparent tale about smuggling computer tapes into Iran. Tuna was neither a fool nor a criminal, in Boulware's estimation; it would be best, he judged, to tell the plain truth.

Mr. Fish

'We have two people in Iran without passports,' he told [REDACTED] over dinner. 'I need to meet them at the Iran-Turkey border. I have to make sure they get into the country without too much hassle. I have to take them to the nearest American consulate to get new passports, then I have to get them on a plane to the United States. If things go wrong, I may even have to sneak across the border into Iran to bring them out. Can you help me?'

Mr. Fish [REDACTED] was horrified. 'You don't understand,' he said. 'That is a terrible place, around the border. The people are Kurds and Azerbaijanis - wild/^{mountain}men, they don't obey any government. You know how they live up there? By smuggling, robbery and murder. I personally would not dare to go there. If you go there, an American, you will never come back. Never.'

Boulware thought he was exaggerating. 'I have to go there, even if it's dangerous,' he said. 'Now, can I buy a light aircraft?'

Mr. Fish [REDACTED] shook his head. 'It is illegal in Turkey for individuals to own aircraft.'

'A helicopter?'

'Same thing.'

'All right, can I charter a plane?'

'It is possible. However, such a thing would invite the attention of the authorities ... '

'Are there scheduled flights to the border area?'

'No.'

'All right. Let's set up the option of chartering. Find out about price and availability, but hold off from making any kind of booking. Meanwhile, I want to know more about getting there by land.'

If you don't want to escort me there, fine; but maybe you can find somebody who will.'

Mr. Fish

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

A few days later he introduced Boulware to a man who had relatives among the mountain bandits. Mr. Fish ██████ said the man was a criminal, and he certainly looked the part: he had a scar on his face and little beady eyes. He said he could guarantee Boulware safe passage to the border and back, and his relatives could even take Boulware across the border into Iran, if necessary.

Boulware called Dallas and told Merv Stauffer about the plan. Merv relayed the news to Coburn, in code; and Coburn told Simons. Simons vetoed it. If the man is a criminal, we can't trust him, Simons pointed out.

Boulware was annoyed, having gone to some trouble to set it all up; but Simons was the boss, and he had no option but to start all over again.

Mr. Fish ██████ finally came up with a better contact. He had a business colleague whose sister was married to someone in the Milli Istihbarat Teskilati, or MIT, the Turkish equivalent of the CIA. The name of this secret policeman was Ilsman. His credentials might secure for Boulware army protection in bandit country. Without such credentials, Boulware gathered, the ordinary citizen was in danger not only from the bandits but from the army.

Mr. Fish ██████ was still very edgy about the whole thing. Taking Boulware to meet Ilsman, he went through a lot of cloak-and-dagger stuff, changing cars and switching to a bus for part of the journey, as if he were trying to shake off a tail. Boulware could not see the need for all that if they were really going to visit a perfectly upright citizen who just happened to work in the intelligence community.

They ended up in a dimly lit apartment building in a section of

the city unfamiliar to Boulware. At first they could get no answer from ~~xxxx~~ Ilsman's apartment. ^{Mr. Fish} ~~xxxx~~ attempt to be secretive fell apart at this point, for they had to hammer on the door for what seemed like half an hour, and every other inhabitant of the building got a good look at them in the meantime. At last a woman opened up, and they went in.

They sipped tea while Boulware explained his problem, with ^{Mr. Fish} ~~xxxx~~ translating. Ilsman was suspicious. He cross-examined Boulware about the two fugitive Americans. How could Boulware be sure they were innocent? Why did they have no passports? What would they be bringing with them into Turkey? In the end he seemed convinced that Boulware was telling the truth, and he agreed to get Paul and Bill from the border to Istanbul for eight thousand dollars. ~~Boulware~~ ~~agreed to the price and Ilsman broke out the scotch~~

Boulware wondered what was the truth about Ilsman. Was he for real? Smuggling Americans into the country was a funny occupation for an intelligence agent. If Ilsman worked for MIT, ^{Mr. Fish} who was it that ~~xxxx~~ thought might be tailing Boulware across town?

Ilsman might be freelancing - eight thousand dollars was a lot of money in Turkey. It was even possible that Ilsman would tell his superiors what he was doing. After all, if Boulware's story were true, Ilsman might figure, no harm would be done; and if Boulware were lying, the best way to find out what he was up to might be to accompany him to the border.

Anyway, at this point Ilsman seemed to be the best Boulware could get. Boulware agreed to his price, and Ilsman broke out a bottle of scotch.

*

Simons and Coburn drove the road from Tehran to the Turkish border. Simons had decided that the best kind of car for the trip was a British

Range Rover, a cross between a jeep and a station wagon. There were no dealerships or used car lots open in Tehran, so Coburn gave the Cycle Man the job of buying two Range Rovers. The Cycle Man printed a notice saying: 'If you would like to sell your Range Rover, call this number ...' Then he went around the streets on his motorcycle and put the notice under the windscreen wipers of every Range Rover he saw. He got two vehicles for \$40,000 each, and he also bought enough tools and spare parts for any foreseeable repairs.

Simons and Coburn took two Iranians with them: Nabi, and a cousin of Nabi's who was a professor at an agricultural college in Rezaiyeh, a town near the border. The professor had come to Tehran to put his American wife and their children on a plane: taking him back to Rezaiyeh was Simons's cover story for the trip.

They left Tehran early in the morning. For the first hundred miles, as far as Qazvin, there was a modern freeway. Then they took a two-lane blacktop up into the mountains. The temperature dropped rapidly, and there was snow on the hillsides, but the road was clear. If it was like this all the way to the border, Coburn thought, they might do the ^{four}~~six~~-hundred-mile trip in a single day.

They stopped at Zanjan, two hundred miles out, and spoke to the chief of police who was related to the professor. This part of the country was peaceful, the policeman said; if they were to encounter any problems, it would happen in the area of Tabriz.

They drove on through the afternoon, on narrow but perfectly passable country roads. After another hundred miles they entered Tabriz, and found it peaceful. They stopped and bought supplies in the bazaar.

Along the way Simons had been talking to Nabi and the professor. It seemed like casual conversation, but Coburn knew that Simons was feeling them out, deciding whether he could trust them. So far the

prognosis seemed to be good, for Simons began to drop hints about the real purpose of the trip.

The professor said that this part of the country was pro-Shah, so Simons stuck a photograph of the Shah on the windscreen of the Range Rover before they moved on.

The first sign of trouble came just north of Tabriz, where they were stopped at a roadblock. It was an amateur affair, just two tree-trunks laid across the road so that cars could manoeuvre around them but could not get through at speed. It was manned by villagers armed with axes and sticks.

The professor showed his university identity card, and said that the Americans were scientists come to help him with a project at the university. The villagers let them pass.

Next time they saw a car coming in the opposite direction, Nabi stopped the Range Rover and the professor jumped out and flagged down the other car. After a short conversation he announced that the next town, Khoy, was anti-Shah. Simons took down the picture of the Shah from the windscreen and replaced it with one of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

On the outskirts of Khoy they were stopped by another roadblock.

Once again it was an unofficial one, manned by people in civilian clothes, but this time the men and boys ~~were~~ had firearms.

Nabi stopped the car and the four of them got out. To Coburn's horror a teenage boy pointed a gun at him.

Coburn froze. ~~The boy was about sixteen years old~~ The gun was a 9mm Llama pistol. The boy looked about sixteen years old, and he had probably never handled a firearm before today. He was holding the gun so tightly that his knuckles showed white.

Coburn was scared. He had been under fire many times, in Vietnam, but what frightened him now was the possibility that he would

be killed by accident.

'Rooskie,' the boy said. 'Rooskie.'

He thinks I'm a goddam Russian, Coburn realised.

Perhaps it was because of the bushy red beard and the little black wool cap.

'No, American,' Coburn said.

The boy kept the pistol levelled. Coburn just stood and stared at those white knuckles, thinking: I hope the punk doesn't sneeze.

Simons, Nabi and the professor were searched. Coburn, still watching the kid, heard Nabi say: 'They're looking for weapons.' The only weapon they had was a little knife which Coburn was wearing in a scabbard behind his back.

One of the men came over to search Coburn, and the kid lowered the pistol. Coburn breathed a sigh of relief, but he wondered what would happen when the knife was found.

The search was not very thorough, and the knife was not found. The kid kept his pistol lowered.

It seemed the vigilantes believed the story about a scientific project. Nabi said: 'They apologise for searching the old man.' The 'old man' was Simons. 'We can go on,' Nabi added.

They climbed back into the car and drove on. They were now very close to the border. However, of two possible border crossings - Barzagan and Sero - Simons preferred the smaller, Sero, because it was likely to be quieter. They were now at the north end of Lake Rezaiyeh, and Sero was near the town of Rezaiyeh, on the west side of the lake, about fifty miles south of Khoy. So, outside Khoy, they turned south. They were following a roundabout route, looping over the northern end of the lake, because although the distance was greater the road was said to be better.

The professor knew Rezaiyeh well, so he was able to lead them

into the town by remote roads where there were no roadblocks.

It had taken them twelve hours to drive here from Tehran. The border was an hour away.

They spent the night at the professor's house.

*

Next day Simons and Coburn drove to the border.

There was a small border station with only two guards. It had a customs warehouse, a weighbridge for lorries and a guard house. The actual border was a chain across the road. Beyond the chain was about two hundred yards of no-man's-land, then a small frontier station on the Turkish side.

They got out of the car. The air was pure and bitingly cold. Simons pointed across the hillside. 'See the tracks?' Coburn followed Simons's finger. In the snow, close behind the border station, was a trail where a small caravan had crossed the border, impudently close to the guards.

Simons pointed again, this time above their heads. 'Easy to cut the guards off.' Coburn looked up and saw a single telephone wire leading down the hill from the border station. A quick snip and the guards would be isolated.

Coburn and Simons walked down the hill and took a side road, no more than a dirt track, into the hills. After a mile or so they came to a small village, just a dozen or so houses made of wood or mud brick. Speaking halting Turkish, Simons asked for the chief. A middle-aged man in baggy trousers, waistcoat and headdress appeared. Coburn listened without understanding as Simons talked. Finally Simons shook the chief's hand, and they left.

'What did you say?' Coburn asked as they walked back.

'I told him I wanted to cross the border on horseback at night with some friends.'

'What did he say?'

'He said he could arrange it.'

'How did you know that the people in that particular village were smugglers?'

'Look around you,' Simons said.

Coburn looked around. He saw nothing but snow-covered slopes.

'What do you see?' Simons said.

'Nothing.'

'Right. There is no agriculture here, no industry. How do you think these people make a living? They're all smugglers.'

*

That evening, Simons explained his plan.

Simons, Coburn, Poche, Paul and Bill would come from Tehran to Rezaiyeh in the two Range Rovers. They would be driven by Nabi and the professor: they would need Iranians to talk them through the roadblocks, and Simons was now prepared to trust these two.

At Rezaiyeh they would stage at the professor's house. It was ideal for the purpose. The building was detached, and no one else lived there; and it was on the outskirts of the city for easy egress.

Between Tehran and Rezaiyeh they would be unarmed: judging by what had happened on the reconnaissance trip, they could get into trouble with the people who manned the roadblocks if they carried guns. However, in Rezaiyeh they would pick up firearms. Nabi had made a contact in the city who would sell them Browning 12-gauge shotguns for six thousand dollars apiece.

Coburn would cross the border legitimately in one of the Range Rovers and link up with Boulware, who would also have a car, on the other side. Simons, Poche, Paul and Bill would cross on horseback with the smugglers. That was why they needed the guns: in case the smugglers should decide to 'lose' them in the mountains.

Coburn and Boulware would pick them up on the other side. They would drive to the nearest American consulate, where they would confess all and get new passports for Paul and Bill.

It was a good plan, Coburn thought; but he recalled the last plan Simons had made, for the assault on the jail, and he wondered whether changing circumstances would render this plan as useless as the last.

*

They returned to Tehran by a different route. They went around the southern, instead of the northern, end of Lake Rezaiyeh, passing through the small town of Mahabad, and rejoining their original road at Zanzan (?). This route was more mountainous, and the roads were narrower, but they were paved and presented no problems to the Range Rover, which never needed its four-wheel drive. The towns they passed through on the southerly route were smaller, and Simons decided there would probably be less trouble with the authorities there; so it was agreed that they would come this way ^{if and if and} when they returned with Paul and Bill.

4

On 22 January hundreds of homafars, or warrant officers, mutinied at air bases in Dezful, Hamadan, Isfahan and Mashad, and declared themselves loyal to Khomeini.

The significance of the event was not apparent to ^{National Security Advisor} Zbigniew Brzezinski, who still expected the Iranian military to crush the Islamic revolution; nor to Premier Shahpour Bakhtiar, who was talking about meeting the revolutionary challenge with a minimum of force; nor to the Shah, who instead of going to the United States was hanging on in Egypt, waiting to be summoned to save his country in its hour of

need.

Two people who did see its significance were Ambassador William Sullivan and General Abbas Gharabaghi, the Iranian chief of staff.

Sullivan told Washington that the idea of a pro-Shah counter-coup was moonshine, the revolution was going to succeed and the U.S. had better start thinking about how it would live with the new order. He received a harsh reply from the White House suggesting that he was disloyal to the President. He decided to resign, but his wife pointed out that he had a responsibility to the thousands of Americans still in Iran, and he could hardly walk out on them right now.

General Gharabaghi also contemplated resigning. He was in an impossible position. He had sworn his oath of loyalty, not to the parliament or the government of Iran, but to the Shah personally; and the Shah was gone. For the time being his attitude was that the military was loyal to the Constitution of 1906, but that meant little in practice. Theoretically the military should support the government of Bakhtiar, but - as the revolt of the homafars showed - in a confrontation between supporters of Khomeini and supporters of Bakhtiar, Gharabaghi could not rely upon his soldiers to follow his orders and fight for Bakhtiar.

On the day that Gharabaghi announced to his fellow-generals his intention of resigning, Bill Sullivan was summoned to Bakhtiar's office at six o'clock in the evening. Sullivan had heard, from 'Dutch' Huyser, of the intended resignation, and assumed that this was what Bakhtiar wanted to talk about.

Bakhtiar waved Sullivan to a seat, saying with an enigmatic smile: 'Nous serons trois.' There will be three of us. Bakhtiar always spoke French with Sullivan.

A few minutes later, General Gharabaghi walked in. Bakhtiar spoke to him in French, talking of the difficulties that would be

created if the General were to resign. Gharabaghi began to reply in Farsi, but Bakhtiar made him speak French. As he spoke, he toyed with what seemed to be an envelope in his pocket: Sullivan guessed it was his letter of resignation.

As the two Iranians argued, Bakhtiar kept turning to Sullivan for support. Sullivan actually agreed with Gharabaghi, but his orders from the White House were to encourage the military to support Bakhtiar, so he argued strongly that Gharabaghi should ^{stay;} ~~not resign~~; and after a discussion of half an hour, the General left without delivering his letter of resignation. Bakhtiar thanked Sullivan profusely for his help. Sullivan knew it would do no good.

On 24 January Bakhtiar closed Tehran's airport to stop Khomeini entering Iran. It was like opening an umbrella against a tidal wave. On 26 January soldiers killed fifteen ~~pro-Khomeini~~ pro-Khomeini protestors in street fighting in Tehran. Two days later Bakhtiar offered to go to Paris for talks with the Ayatollah. For a ruling Prime Minister to offer to visit an exiled rebel who had called him a traitor was a fantastic admission of weakness, and Khomeini saw it that way: he refused to talk to Bakhtiar unless Bakhtiar first resigned. On 29 January thirty-five people died in the fighting in Tehran and another fifty in the rest of the country. Gharabaghi, cutting Bakhtiar out of the loop, talked directly with the rebels in Tehran. He consented to the return of the Ayatollah, and all he got in exchange were vague promises which were never kept. On 30 January Sullivan ordered the evacuation of all nonessential Embassy personnel and all dependents. On 1 February Khomeini came home.

His Air France jumbo jet landed at 9.15 a.m. Two million Iranians turned out to meet him. At the airport the Ayatollah made his first public statement. 'I beg God to cut off the hands of all evil foreigners and all their helpers.'

*

Simons saw it all on TV, then he said to Coburn: 'That's it. The people are going to do it for us. The mob will take that jail.'

Coburn wondered how sure he really was.

'Get a message to Paul and Bill,' Simons said. 'If they get out, they should go to the Hyatt.'

'Okay.'

Simons lit a cigar. 'That isn't enough,' he mused. 'I need someone in the mob. Have you got an Iranian who could pose as a revolutionary?'

Coburn thought immediately of Rashid. Rashid was a dark-skinned, rather good-looking twenty-three-year-old from a middle-class Tehran family. He had completed EDS's training programme for systems engineers. He was intelligent and resourceful, and he had bags of charm. Coburn recalled the last time Rashid had demonstrated his talent for improvisation. The striking Iranians had refused to key the data^a for the Ministry payroll system, but Rashid had got all the input together, taken it down to Bank Omran, talked someone there into keying the data, then run the programme on the Ministry computer. The trouble with Rashid was that you had to keep an eye on him, because he never asked permission for his unconventional solutions to problems. Breaking the strike that way might have got EDS into big trouble, and when Bill Gaylord heard about it he had been more anxious than please^d. Rashid was excite^aable and impulsive, and his English was not so good, so he tended to dash off and do something crazy without telling anyone about it. But he could talk his way into or out of anything. Meeting people, or seeing them off, at the airport, he always managed to pass through all the barriers and checkpoints into the areas reserved for passengers, although he did not have ^a~~the~~ boarding card or passport to show. Coburn knew him well - Rashid had been to his house for dinner - and Coburn had

no doubts about Rashid's loyalty to EDS, especially since the strike, when Rashid had been one of Coburn's spies among the hostile Iranian employees.

'I'll call Rashid,' Coburn said. 'When do you want to see him?'

'Tomorrow.'

*

When Rashid was eight years old he had wanted to be President of the United States.

At twenty-three he knew he could never be President, but he still wanted to go to America, and EDS was going to be his ticket. He knew he had it in him to be a great businessman. He was a student of human psychology, and it had not taken him long to figure out the psychology of the EDS people. They wanted results, not excuses. If you were given a task, it was always better to do a little more, rather than a little less, than was expected of you. If for some reason the task was difficult, or even impossible, it was best not to say so: there was nothing they hated more than people whining about problems. You never said 'I can't do that because ... ' You always said 'This is the progress I have made so far, and this is the problem I am working on right now ... ' It was an attitude that suited him perfectly. He had made himself useful to EDS, and he knew they appreciated it.

Mr Simons did not seem like an EDS executive. For one thing, they were all in their thirties or forties, and Simons looked nearer sixty. On top of that, his long hair and white moustache and big nose seemed more Iranian than American. Finally, he did not come right out with whatever was on his mind. People like Coburn would say 'This is the situation and this is what I want you to do and you need to have it done by tomorrow evening ... ' Simons just said: 'Let's go for a walk.'

They strolled around the streets of Tehran. Rashid found himself talking about his family, his work at EDS, and his views on the psychology

of human beings. They could hear continual shooting, and the streets were alive with people marching and chanting. Everywhere they saw the wreckage of past battles, the overturned cars and the burned-out buildings. 'The Marxists smash up expensive cars and the Moslems trash the liquor stores,' Rashid explained.

'Why is this happening?' Simons asked him.

'This is the time for Iranians to prove themselves, to accomplish their ideas, and to gain their freedom.'

They found themselves in Gasr Square, facing the prison. Rashid said: 'There are many Iranians in these jails simply because they ask for freedom.'

Simons pointed to the crowd of women in shodorahs. 'What are they doing?'

'Their husbands and their sons are unjustly imprisoned, so they gather here, wailing and crying to the guards to let the prisoners go.'

Simons said: 'Well, I guess I feel the same about Paul and Bill as those women do about their men.'

'Yes. I, too, am very concerned about Paul and Bill.'

'But what are you doing about it?' Simons said.

Rashid was taken aback. 'I have done everything I can to help my American friends,' he said. He thought of the damn dogs. One of his tasks at the moment was to care for all the pets left behind by EDS evacuees. He had never had pets and he did not know how to deal with large aggressive dogs. Every time he went to the apartment where he had stashed the dogs to feed them, he had to hire two or three men off the streets to help him restrain the animals. Twice already he had taken them all to the airport in cages, having heard that there was a flight out; both times the flight had been cancelled. He thought of telling Simons about this, but somehow he knew Simons would not be impressed.

'Do you know anything about the French Revolution?' Simons asked.

'A little.'

'This place reminds me of the Bastille - a symbol of oppression.'

Simons was right, Rashid thought.

Simons went on: 'The French revolutionaries stormed the Bastille and let all the prisoners out.'

'I think the same will happen here.'

Simons nodded. 'If it does, someone ought to be here to take care of Paul and Bill when they get out.'

'Yes.' He wants me to do that, Rashid thought. 'I will be here.'

'Good.'

They stood there, looking at the high stone wall of the prison and the huge gates. Rashid remembered that you always had to do a little more than you were asked to. Maybe he could make sure the mob stormed the prison. It would help not only Paul and Bill but the whole Iranian people. Wouldn't that be something, he thought. Wouldn't that be something.

Chapter Eight

1

John Howell thought he was on the point of getting Paul and Bill out of jail at midday on 5 February.

Dadgar had said all along he would accept bail in one of three forms: cash, a bank guarantee, or a lien on property.

Howell never seriously considered using cash. First, he was afraid that anyone who flew into the lawless city of Tehran carrying \$12,750,000 in bills in a suitcase might never reach Dadgar's office alive. Secondly, there was a strong chance that Dadgar would take the money and keep Paul and Bill, either by raising the bail or by re-arresting them on some new pretext. It was essential, Howell believed, that the document which gave Dadgar the money also gave Paul and Bill their freedom.

Howell did consider property, and it was out of that idea that today's big chance had come. He had asked the State Department to pledge the U.S. Embassy in Tehran as bail. ~~The~~ State would not do that, but they did offer to give the guarantee of the United States Government that the money would be paid. First, Tom Walter in Dallas got a bank to issue a letter of credit in favour of the State Department for \$12,750,000. Because this transaction took place entirely within the U.S. it was accomplished within hours rather than days. Once the State Department had the letter, Minister Counsellor Charles Naas in Tehran issued a diplomatic note saying that Paul and Bill, once released, would make themselves available to Dadgar for questioning, otherwise the bail would be paid by the Embassy.

Right now Dadgar was in a meeting with Lou Goelz, Consul General at the Embassy. Howell had not been invited to attend the meeting,

so he was waiting by the phone.

He had had a preliminary meeting with Goelz yesterday. Goelz, a short, very round man in his fifties with a balding head and a fringe of white hair, was a typical bureaucrat: cautious, conventional, unimaginative, a stickler for the rule-book - the kind of man who would never in a million years get a job with Ross Perot. He sometimes infuriated Howell by refusing to do anything which might offend the Iranian authorities: he had thousands of Americans to worry about, he kept saying, and he needed the goodwill of the Iranians to get them all out of Iran safely. No doubt that was true, Howell thought; but he wished the old boy would bend the rules a little from time to time. Together they had gone over the terms of the State Department's guarantee, with Goelz reading the phrases in his quiet, precise voice. The decision to release Paul and Bill would have to be made by Prime Minister Bakhtiar, Goelz/said; but first it would have to be cleared with Dadgar. Howell hoped Goelz would not have trouble with Dadgar: Goelz was not the type to bang the table and force Dadgar to back down.

The phone rang.

'John Howell.'

'This is Lou Goelz at the Embassy.'

'How did it go?'

'He turned us down.'

'Oh, no. How could he?'

'He won't accept the guarantee of the United States Government.'

'Why not?'

'There's nothing in the law that says he can. Bail must be in the form of cash, a bank guarantee - '

'Or a lien on property, I know.' Howell was bitterly disappointed. Dadgar surely knew that the U.S. guarantee was as good as gold. Why was he being so obstructive? 'Did you say anything about Bakhtiar?'

Khomeini men.

On 9 February, at two Tehran air bases - Doshen Toppeh and Farahabad - formations of homafars (warrant officers) and cadets gave a salute to Khomeini. This infuriated the Javadan Brigade, which had been the Shah's personal bodyguard, and they attacked both air bases. The homafars barricaded themselves in and repelled the loyalist troops, helped by crowds of armed revolutionaries milling around inside and outside the bases.

Units of both the Marxist Fedayeen and the Muslim Mujahedeen guerillas rushed to Doshen Toppeh. The armory was broken open and weapons were distributed indiscriminately to soldiers, guerillas, revolutionaries, demonstrators and passers-by.

That night at eleven o'clock the Javadan Brigade returned in force. Khomeini loyalists within the military warned the Doshen Toppeh rebels that the Brigade was on its way, and the rebels counter-attacked before the Brigade reached the air base. Several senior officers among the loyalist^s were killed early in the battle. The fighting continued all night, and spread to a large area around the base.

By noon on the following day, the battlefield had widened to include most of the city.

*

That day John Howell and Keane Taylor went downtown for a meeting at Bank Omran.

It was a scary ride, but ~~they thought~~ they were on the point of getting Paul and Bill released.

A week earlier, the National Bank of Commerce in Dallas had lodged a letter of credit for \$12,750,000 with the New York branch of an Iranian bank, Bank Melli. The plan was that the Tehran branch of Bank Melli would then issue a bank guarantee to the Ministry of

Justice, and Paul and Bill would be bailed out. It had not worked out quite that way. The deputy managing director of Bank Melli, Sadr-Hashemi, had recognised - as had all the other bankers - that Paul and Bill were commercial hostages, and that once they were out of jail EDS could argue in an American court that the money had been extorted and should not be paid. If that happened, Bank Melli in Tehran would still have to pay the Iranian Ministry of Justice, but Bank Melli in New York would not be able to collect the money. Sadr-Hashemi said he would change his mind if the bank's New York lawyers would issue an opinion saying there was no way EDS could prevent payment on the letter of credit. John Howell knew perfectly well that no decent American attorney would issue such an opinion.

So he had tried Bank Omran, the people for whom EDS was installing an on-line computerised accounting system. There he had met with Farhad Bakhtiar, a relative of the Prime Minister. It was clear that Prime Minister Bakhtiar was going to fall from power any day, and Farhad Bakhtiar was planning to leave the country. Perhaps, Howell thought, this was why Farhad was less concerned than Sadr-Hashemi about the possibility that the \$12,750,000 would never be paid. Anyway, for whatever reason, he agreed to help; and Howell's hopes rose again.

Bank Omran did not have a U.S. branch, but it had one in Dubai. Howell agreed with Bakhtiar that the National Bank of Commerce in Dallas would lodge its letter of credit with Bank Omran in Dubai by tested telex. Dubai would then call Tehran on the phone to confirm that the letter of credit had been posted, and Bank Omran would issue the guarantee to the Ministry of Justice.

There were delays. The Board of Directors of Bank Omran had to approve everything. On 6 February Farhad Bakhtiar announced that the deal required Central Bank approval. Next day Howell and Taylor

went to the central bank and got the necessary authorisation. On 8 February Farhad said that Bank Omran's lawyers had to review the whole deal. Everyone who reviewed it suggested small changes in the language. The changes, in English and Farsi, had to be communicated to Dubai and to Dallas, then a new telex had to be sent from Dallas to Dubai, tested, and approved by phone with Tehran. Because the Iranian weekend was Thursday and Friday, there were only three days in the week when both banks were open; and because Tehran was nine and a half hours ahead of Dallas the banks were never open simultaneously. Furthermore, the Iranian banks were on strike a good deal of the time, so Howell and Taylor often had to find the homes of senior officials and hold meetings with them there. Consequently a two-word change in the ~~xxx~~ agreement could take a week to arrange.

But on Saturday 10 February Howell felt sure the deal was all set: it had been approved by everyone imaginable, including Dadgar. Success was being achieved not a moment too soon: not only Paul and Bill, but Howell and Taylor and the others were in grave danger now. They had to get out of Iran fast.

With Taylor at the wheel - he was good at dangerous driving - they drove through the mobs and the street fighting to the bank. The office was opposite a hospital. The dead ^d and wounded were being brought in from the battle zones in cars, pickup trucks and buses, all the vehicles having white cloths tied to their radio antennae to signify emergency, all hooting ^s constantly. The street was jammed with people, some coming to give blood, others to visit the sick, still others to identify the corpses.

Howell and Taylor went into the bank. If Bakhtiar would now simply hand them the bank guarantee, they would go straight to the Ministry of Justice and exchange it for a release letter for Paul and Bill; then they would head for the jail.

They found Farhad Bakhtiar cleaning out his desk. 'I'm going to Switzerland,' he said. 'However, my colleagues will look after you, don't worry.'

Howell said: 'Maybe you could just give us the bank guarantee ...'

Bakhtiar looked mournful. 'Unfortunately, there are some minor changes in the language -'

'Oh, no!' said Taylor.

'My colleagues will give you the details. Now, if you will excuse me ...'

Bakhtiar introduced them to two of his associates, and they sat down to discuss the new changes. A few minutes later a secretary poked her head around the door and said something in Farsi. One of the officials said: 'An immediate curfew and general strike has just been announced on the radio, gentlemen. I'm terribly sorry.'

'Hold on,' said Howell. 'Let's just get this finished, okay?'

'I am very sorry. I will give you my home telephone number.'

'Maybe somebody else here can help us.'

'Perhaps. I must leave.'

Two minutes later Howell and Taylor were alone in the office.

*

That evening Simons said to Coburn: 'It's going to happen tomorrow.'

Coburn thought he was full of shit.

2

Rashid was out on the streets early in the morning on Sunday 11 February.

He felt excited as he walked around, mingling with the crowds, seeing the men and boys with automatic rifles in their hands. Surely today would be the day the Iranian people seized their freedom. The

rumours said that the Evin Prison had been stormed last night. Today the Gasr Prison would go the same way - with Rashid's help. It was a day of opportunity for Rashid personally, for if he could help Paul and Bill, the Americans would never forget him.

The first thing he needed was a gun.

He thought of the draft registration office near the prison. There was a small armory in the basement, and one of Rashid's friends worked there.

He hurried to the office and went inside. His friend was not there: the soldiers had abandoned the place to the mob. There was a crowd of twenty or thirty people around the door to the basement. Rashid pushed his way to the front of the crowd. 'Is the door locked?' he said.

'It might be booby-trapped,' someone said.

'Why would it be booby-trapped?' Rashid said, and he opened the door.

He walked down the steps. All around him were automatic rifles racked against the wall and stacks of boxes of ammunition. The crowd followed him down.

Rashid collected three machine-guns and a sack of magazines and went upstairs. As soon as he got outside people jumped all over him, asking for weapons: he gave away two of the guns and some of the ammunition. 'Let's go to the jail,' he said. He repeated it several times. Then he started walking.

Some of the crowd went with him.

On the way they passed the military garrison to the east of the prison. There was a mob outside, shooting at the gates. A few soldiers returned their fire in a desultory way. Rashid and the crowd with him joined in the shooting.

It was a funny kind of battle, Rashid thought. He had never

imagined the revolution would be like this: just a disorganised crowd with guns they hardly knew how to use, wandering around on a Sunday morning, firing at stone walls, encountering half-hearted resistance from invisible troops.

After ten minutes the shooting stopped. The battle seemed to be over, although Rashid did not really see why it had ended. There were no casualties on either side.

'I'm going to the prison!' Rashid shouted.

A handful of people around him shouted their agreement.

'The people in there are prisoners of the regime - if we are against the regime we should let the prisoners out!'

'Yes!'

He started walking.

They followed him.

It's the mood they're in, he thought; they'll follow anybody who seems to know where to go. They want excitement and adventure. For the first time in their lives, they have guns in their hands; they just need a target, and anything that symbolises the regime will do.

As he walked, the crowd following him grew bigger: anyone with nowhere to go automatically joined in.

Rashid had never imagined it would be so easy to become a revolutionary leader.

He stopped just before Gasr Square and addressed his army. 'The jails must be taken over by the people, just like the police stations and the garrisons; this is our responsibility. There are people in the Gasr Prison who are guilty of nothing. They are just like us - our brothers, our relatives. Like us, they only want their freedom. But they were more courageous than us, for they demanded their freedom while the Shah was in power, and they were thrown in jail for it. Now we shall let them out!'

They cheered.

He remembered something Simons had said. 'The Gasr Prison is our Bastille!'

They cheered louder.

Rashid turned and ran into the square.

He took cover on the street corner opposite the front of the jail. There had already been a fair-sized mob in the square before he arrived with his troops, he realised: probably the prison would have been attacked today with or without his help. But the important thing was, he was here to help Paul and Bill.

He raised his gun and fired high in the air toward the prison gates.

The mob in the square scattered, taking cover, and the shooting began in earnest.

Once again the resistance was half-hearted. A few guards fired back from the gun towers on the walls and from the windows over the jail entrance. As far as Rashid could see, no one on either side was hit. Once again, the battle ended not with a bang but a whimper: the guards simply disappeared from the walls and the shooting stopped.

Rashid waited a couple of minutes, to make sure they had gone, then he ran across the square to the prison ~~gxxxxx~~ entrance.

The gates were locked.

The mob crowded around. Someone fired a burst at the gates, trying to shoot them open. Rashid thought: He's seen too many cowboy movies. Another man produced a crowbar from somewhere, but it was impossible to force the gates open. We would need dynamite, Rashid thought.

In the brick wall next to the gate was a tiny window, through which the guard could see who was outside. The window was too small to climb through, but it gave Rashid an idea. He smashed the glass

with his gun, then started to attack the brickwork around the window frame. The man with the crowbar helped him, then three or four others crowded around, prying bricks loose with gun barrels, with their hands, and with anything else they could find. Soon there was a hole eighteen or twenty inches square in the wall.

Rashid climbed through.

The little office was empty of guards. A big bunch of keys hung from a hook on the wall. Rashid snatched up the keys and went out of the office door. He tried all the keys in the big lock, which would open the giant steel gates; but none fitted. He tried again with the small door-within-a-door, and was able to open that.

The mob poured in.

Rashid stood back. He gave the keys to someone, shouting: 'Open every cell you can - just let the people go!'

He watched them spread through the prison compound. He did not want to lead them any more - his moment of glory was over. All he wanted now was to find Paul and Bill among the eleven thousand inmates of the Gasr Prison.

*

Bill woke up at six o'clock and said a rosary.

He washed, shaved and dressed, then he sat looking out of the window, waiting for breakfast, wondering what EDS was planning for today. Every time a helicopter flew overhead he watched for a ladder to come dropping out of the sky into the courtyard. The alternative to helicopters would be a break-in through the high brick wall near Building No. 8. There might be a small group of EDS men led by Coburn and an older man, or there might be a large force of American military. Would they blas^t a hole in the wall, or come over with rope ladders?

Paul woke up around seven. He looked at Bill and said: 'Couldn't sleep?'

'Sure I slept,' Bill said. 'I've been up an hour or so.'

'I didn't sleep well. The shooting was heavy all night.'

Paul got out of his bunk and went to the bathroom.

A few minutes later breakfast came: bread and tea. Bill opened a can of orange juice which had been brought in by Keane Taylor. The guards did not seem to be following their normal routines: they appeared nervous, whispering in corners, hurrying everywhere. The sounds of gunfire, which had been sporadic at dawn, grew heavier. The prisoners speculated about what might be going on outside, but no one had any hard information. However, they could hear, and during the morning it gradually became evident that there were battles going on all over the city.

At about ten-thirty Bill saw most of the officers crossing the prison compound, heading north, as if they were going to a meeting. They came back half an hour later, hurrying. The major who was in charge of Building No. 8 came in and went to his office. He emerged a couple of minutes later in civilian clothes. He carried a shapeless parcel out of the building. Bill looked out of the window, and saw him open the boot of his BMW, which was parked outside the fence surrounding the courtyard. Then he got in the car and drove away.

Would they all leave? wondered Bill. Was that how it would happen? Would he and Paul be able just to walk out of the jail?

Lunch came, as usual, a little before noon. Paul ate but Bill was not hungry. The firing seemed very close now, and they could hear shouting and chanting from the streets around the prison.

Two or three of the guards in Building No. 8 suddenly appeared in civilian clothes.

Paul and Bill went downstairs and out into the courtyard. The mental patients on the ground floor all seemed to be screaming. The guards in the gun towers were firing into the streets outside: it

appeared the prison was under attack.

Was that good news or bad? wondered Bill. Did EDS know this was happening? Was it part of Coburn's rescue?

He noticed that the sentry who normally guarded the courtyard gate had gone, and the gate was open. Other cell blocks must have been open, too, for prisoners and guards were running around the compound. Bullets whistled through the trees and ricocheted off buildings. Suddenly a slug landed at Paul's feet. Bill realised that the guards in the gun towers were now firing into the prison.

'Let's go back in,' Paul said.

They ran into the building to take cover. They stood at the window, watching the mounting chaos in the compound. Paul said:

'What do you think we should do?'

'I don't know. Is it more dangerous in here or out there?'

Paul shrugged. 'I wonder if Dutch Huyser will send a helicopter for us.'

'Hey, there's the billionaire,' Bill said. He could see the rich prisoner from their block - the one who had his meals brought in from outside - crossing the compound. There were two people with him. His head was shaved and his moustache had gone, and he was not wearing his fur-lined coat. He headed toward the back of the prison.

'He's getting out,' said Paul.

The guards from Building No. 8 were now leaving the courtyard.

'See that motorcycle?' Paul said.

'I see it.'

'Maybe we could leave on that. I used to ride a motorcycle.'

'How would we get it over the wall?'

'Oh, yeah.' Paul laughed at his own foolishness. 'I wonder where Gayden is now, the son of a bitch. The only reason I'm here is because he sent me to Iran.'

Bill looked at Paul and realised he was only joking.

Their cellmate had found a couple of big bags from somewhere and was packing his clothes. Everyone was leaving. Bill felt the urge to take off, just to get out of here, whether or not that was part of the EDS plan. Freedom was so close. But bullets were flying around out there, and the mob attacking the jail might well be anti-American. On the other hand, if the army were to regain control of the prison they would have lost their chance of escape ...

Someone had unlocked the hospital on the ground floor, and now the mental patients swarmed out into the courtyard. Bill could hear a tremendous commotion from the women's cell block opposite. Then, looking across the courtyard, he saw smoke. Paul saw it at the same moment. Bill said: 'If they're going to burn the place ... '

'We'd better get out.'

They left the building and crossed the courtyard. Paul paused at the gate and stuck out his hand. 'Hey, good luck, Bill.'

Bill shook his hand. 'Good luck to you.'

Bill thought both of them would probably die within the next few minutes, most likely from a stray bullet. He was not afraid, just angry that Emily and the children would have to manage without him, and that he would not be able to watch the kids grow up.

They stepped through the gate.

Most of the eleven thousand prisoners appeared to have made the same decision as Paul and Bill, at the same time, and now they were swept into a sea of people flowing toward the prison ~~xxxxxx~~ entrance. There was still a lot of shooting. One lone guard had stayed at his post and seemed to be firing into the crowd from his gun tower. Two or three people fell, but Bill did not know whether they had been shot or had merely stumbled.

They passed the officers' club where Paul and Bill had met with

Perot. Vengeful prisoners were smashing up the club and wrecking the cars outside. Where was the sense in that? wondered Bill. For a moment the whole scene seemed unreal, as if it were a dream, or a nightmare.

The scene around the prison entrance was worse. Paul and Bill held back, for fear of being trampled in the crush. Bill recalled hearing that some of the prisoners had been here for twenty-five years: now that they smelled freedom they were going beserk.

The gates must still be shut, Bill thought, for he could see people trying to climb the walls. ^{Some} ~~They~~ had pushed cars and trucks up against the walls, others were climbing trees near the wall, and others still were propping planks up against the stonework. One or two people had reached the top of the wall by one method or another and were letting down ropes and sheets to those below, but the ropes were not long enough.

Paul and Bill hesitated. They were joined by some of the other European prisoners from Building No. 8. One of them, a New Zealander charged with drug smuggling, had a big grin all over his face as if he were enjoying the whole thing hugely.

Looking around, Bill saw an Iranian prisoner, standing by the wall a good distance from the entrance, waving as if to say: This way! There had been some construction work going on at that section ~~of the~~ ~~wall~~ - a building seemed to be going up on the far side of the wall - and there was a steel door in the stonework to allow access to the site. Looking more closely, Bill saw that the Iranian had got the steel door open.

'Hey, look over there!' Bill said.

'Let's go,' said Paul.

They ran over. Several other prisoners followed them. They went through the door - and found themselves trapped in a kind of

cell with no doors or windows. There was a smell of new cement. Bill noticed some tools lying around. One of the prisoners ~~xi~~ got hold of a pickaxe and started to attack the walls. The concrete was fresh and quickly crumbled. Two or three other prisoners joined in, and soon there was a big hole. They all scrambled through.

They were now between the two prison walls. The inner wall, behind them, was the high one - twenty-five or thirty feet. The outer wall, which stood between them and freedom, was only ten or twelve feet high.

One of the Iranians got up on top of the wall. Another one stood at its foot. The man on the ground pushed people up, and the man on the wall pulled them.

It happened very quickly then. Bill ran at the wall, scrambled up with a push from below and a pull from above, paused on the top, and jumped the twelve feet to the pavement.

A split-second later Paul landed beside him.

They looked at one another.

They were out.

*

That morning John Howell drove to the Ministry of Justice for yet another meeting with Dadgar.

He hardly expected Dadgar to turn up. The city was a battlefield, ^{an} and/investigation~~x~~ into corruption under the Shah now seemed an academic exercise. But Dadgar was there, waiting for him.

Dadgar had asked Howell about EDS's relationship with one Abolfath Mahvi. Howell knew that getting involved with Mahvi was not the smartest thing EDS had ever done. Mahvi, the brother of a general, had made the business introductions which got EDS its early, small contracts in Iran, and for this service he had been paid \$400,000. However, he had demanded a share of all EDS's subsequent profits in

the country. EDS had learned that Mahvi was a notorious illegal middleman, nicknamed 'the king of the five percenters', and despite his high-level connections he was eventually put on the Shah's business blacklist, which meant he could not trade in Iran.

Howell now handed Dadgar a twelve-page document, plus a Farsi translation, outlining in detail EDS's dealings with Mahvi.

Dadgar said, and Ahmad Sadri translated: 'Your company's helpfulness is laying the ground for a change in my attitude toward Chaipparone and Gaylord.'

'Good,' Howell said.

While Dadgar was reading the document, the phone rang. It was for Howell. He took the receiver. 'Yes?'

'John, this is Keane.'

'Hi, where are you?'

'Still at the Bucharest Street office. I've been up on the roof. John, there are fires down there by the prison. If the mob attacks the prison Paul and Bill could get hurt. Ask Dadgar to turn them over to the American Embassy for their safety until this is over.'

'Okay, Keane.' Howell hung up and repeated the request to Dadgar.

Dadgar said: 'Chiapparone and Gaylord have to be kept in an Iranian prison, according to our laws. I fear we cannot consider the U.S. Embassy to be an Iranian prison.'

This was getting crazy, Howell thought: everything was falling apart and Dadgar was still consulting his book of rules. He said: 'How do you propose to guarantee the safety of two American citizens who have not been charged with any crime?'

'Don't be concerned,' Dadgar replied. 'The worst that could happen is that the prison might be overrun.'

'And what if the mob decides to attack Americans?'

'Chiapparone will probably be safe - he could pass for an Iranian.'

'Terrific,' said Howell. 'And what about Gaylord?'
Dadgar just shrugged.

*

Coburn put down the phone and said: 'The mob has overrun the prison.'

Simons nodded. 'Good.'

'Shouldn't we get down there?'

Simons looked at him. 'If a bunch of Americans went tearing in there in a car what do you think would happen to them?'

Coburn shrugged.

'Rashid should be there,' Simons went on. 'But send someone else as well.'

'I'll call Nabi.'

'Then get over to the Hyatt. If Paul and Bill don't turn up there by nightfall, get out on the street with Nabi and look for them.'

'Do you think they'll be all right?'

'Yeah,' said Simons.

*

There was a crisis at the U.S. Embassy.

Sullivan had received a phone call from General Gast, head of the Military Assistance Advisory Group. MAAG headquarters was surrounded by a mob. Tanks were drawn up outside the building and shots were being exchanged. Gast and his officers, together with most of the Iranian general staff, were in a bunker underneath the building.

Sullivan had every able-bodied man in the Embassy making phone calls, trying to find revolutionary leaders who might call off the mob. ~~Sullivan~~ The phone on Sullivan's desk was ringing constantly. In the middle of the crisis he got a call from Under Secretary of

State Newsom in Washington.

Newsom was calling from the situation room in the White House, where Zbigniew Brzezinski was chairing a meeting on ~~the~~ Iran. He asked for Sullivan's assessment of the current situation. Sullivan gave it to him in a few short phrases, and told him that right now he was somewhat preoccupied with saving the life of the senior American military officer in Iran.

A few minutes later he got a call from an Embassy officer who had succeeded in reaching Ibrahim Yazdi, a Khomeini sidekick. The officer was telling him that Yazdi might help when the call was overridden and Newsom came on the line.

Newsom said: 'The National Security Advisor has asked for your view of the possibility of a coup d'etat by the Iranian military to take over from the Bakhtiar government, which is clearly faltering.'

The question was so ridiculous that Sullivan blew his cool. 'Tell ~~them~~~~Max~~~~Brzezinski~~ Brzezinski to go fuck himself,' he said.

'That's not a very helpful comment,' Newsom said.

'You want it translated into Polish?' Sullivan said, and he hung up the phone.

*

John Howell returned to the Bucharest Street office. The rest of the negotiating team was still there: Bill Gayden, Bob Young, Keane Taylor and Rich Gallagher. They were looking out of the windows. They had a small transistor radio, and Taylor's driver Ali was translating the news for them.

'Well?' Gayden said to Howell. 'What did that bastard say?'

'He won't let them go.'

'Look at this,' said Taylor. Howell went to the window. He saw a bunch of kids running along the street waving automatic rifles. 'I think it's time to get out of here,' Taylor said.

They left the office and drove to the Hyatt. The hotel was in the north-eastern section of the town, where there was less fighting. There they gathered in Bill Gayden's room: Gayden had taken over the spacious suite vacated by Perot. Rich Gallagher's wife Kathy joined them. She had been the only one of the wives who did not leave in the evacuation. She had with her her tan-coloured poodle, Buffy.

Gayden had stocked the suite with booze looted from the abandoned homes of EDS evacuees. He had the best bar in Tehran, but now no one felt much like drinking.

'What do we do next?' Gayden said.

Nobody had any ideas.

The phone rang in the bedroom, and Taylor went to get it. When he came back he looked excited but puzzled. 'That was Rashid,' he said. 'He asked me if Paul and Bill were here.'

'What did he mean? Where was he calling from?' said Gayden.

'I couldn't get anything else out of him. He seemed kind of breathless, and you know how bad his English is when he gets wound up.'

'Didn't he say any more?'

'He said: "I'm coming, I'm coming," then he hung up.'

'Shit.'

It was late afternoon in Iran, early morning in Texas. Gayden called Dallas and got Tom Walter. He told Walter about Rashid's call, about the meeting with Dadgar, and about the street fighting. If the phone lines went down, Gayden said, he would try to get messages through via the U.S. military in Tehran: Kathy Gallagher worked for the military and she thought she could swing it.

'That's all I got to report,' Gayden said.

Walter said: 'Other than that a quiet day, huh?'

~~They discussed the situation in Tehran. Susan, the boys, the children, the women and the men.~~

A few minutes after Gayden hung up, Rashid burst into the room,

dirty, smelling of gunsmoke, clips of M16 rounds falling out of his pockets, talking a mile a minute so that nobody could understand a word. Taylor calmed him down. Eventually he said: 'We hit the prison. Paul and Bill were gone.'

*

Paul and Bill stood at the foot of the wall outside the jail and looked around.

The scene in the street reminded Paul of a New York parade. In the apartment buildings across from the jail everybody was at the windows, hollering and clapping as they watched the prisoners escape over the walls. At the street corner, a vendor was selling fruit from a stall.

But they could still hear gunfire not far away, and then, as if to remind them that they were not yet out of danger, a car full of revolutionaries came down the street, bristling with machine-guns.

'We've got to get out of here,' said Paul.

'Where do we go? The Hyatt?'

Paul considered. 'We don't even know that our people are still there.'

'The American Embassy?'

'They'd hand us over to Dadgar.'

'The French Embassy? The Iranians seem to be friends with the French - Khomeini came in from Paris.'

'Do you know where the French Embassy is?'

'No.'

'Me neither.'

'We need to get away from here. Who knows when the police might decide to start rounding up escaped prisoners.'

'Let's just head north. That's bound to take us away from the fighting.'

Paul started walking. Bill walked a little behind him, with his coat collar turned up and his head bent to hide his pale American face. They came to an intersection. It was deserted: no cars, no people. They started to cross it. Suddenly shots rang out.

Both of them ducked and ran back the way they had come.

There were no more shots.

'How are you doing?' Paul said.

'Still alive.'

Paul headed south and east through the city streets, intending to circle around until he could head north again. Close to the prison they had to push their way through a large crowd. Paul avoided meeting people's eyes: he did not want anybody to notice ~~them~~ him, much less speak to him. The people were yelling and chanting, almost hysterical. If they were to learn that there were two Americans in their midst they might turn ugly.

After that the streets were quiet for half a mile or so, then they turned a corner and ran into a battle. There was a barricade of ~~xxxx~~ overturned cars across the road and a bunch of youngsters with rifles ~~behind~~ shooting over the barricade. Paul turned away, circling again, to look for a clear way around the fighting. He was worried about being hit by a stray bullet.

They passed an unfinished building, and Paul stopped. 'We could duck in there and hide until nightfall - after dark nobody will notice that you're American.'

'We might get shot for being out after curfew.'

'You think there's still a curfew?'

Bill shrugged.

'We're doing all right so far,' Paul said. 'Let's go on a little longer.'

They walked south and east, braving the crowds and dodging the

gunfights, for a couple of hours before at last they were able to turn north. Soon they found themselves in a relatively affluent area of pleasant villas. The gunfire receded into the distance, and they even saw children on bicycles.

Paul was tired. After forty-four days in jail he was not in good shape. 'What do you say we hitch-hike?' he said.

'Let's give it a try,' said Bill.

Two Iranians in a car picked them up and took them north. Paul and Bill were grateful for the chance to rest. The car dropped them off near the Catholic Mission.

'We could take refuge in the Mission,' Bill said.

'I don't know,' Paul said. Father Williams had visited them in jail, and Dadgar presumably knew that. 'That might be the first place Dadgar looks for us.'

'Maybe.'

'I think the Hyatt is our best bet. There'll be phones, some way to get plane tickets ... '

'And hot showers.'

'Right.'

'Keane and Rich may still be there, anyway.'

They walked on. Suddenly they heard a voice: 'Mr Paul! Mr Bill!'

Paul's heart missed a beat. He looked in the direction of the voice, and saw one of the prison guards in a car. The guard was in civilian ~~xxxxxx~~ clothes with a bunch of people, and he looked as if he had joined the revolution. His big smile seemed to say: Don't tell who I am, and I won't tell who you are.

He waved and drove on. Paul and Bill laughed with relief.

They started hitch-hiking again. Paul walked in the road, holding out his thumb, while Bill stayed on the pavement, so that

motorists might think there was only one man hitching, an Iranian.

A young couple stopped. Paul got in the car and Bill jumped in after him.

'We're headed north,' Paul said.

The woman looked at her man. The man said: 'Okay,' and pulled away.

They drove into a mob. The Iranian couple began to look nervous, as well they might with two Americans in the car; but nobody tried to give them a hard time and they emerged unscathed from the crowd. A little later they passed the Niavron Palace. There were still tanks outside, Paul noticed, but they had white flags attached to their radio antennae: they had surrendered to the revolution.

Bill

~~xxxx~~ leaned forward to talk to the Iranian couple. 'Boy, it's getting a bit late, it sure would be nice if y'all could take us all the way to the Hyatt hotel - we'd be, you know, happy to thank you and give you something for taking us there.'

They had money, for Keane Taylor had frequently given Bill a pack of cigarettes with money rolled up inside on his prison visits. The driver of the car said: 'Okay.' He did not ask how much he would be given.

They were back in battle territory now. They passed wrecked and burning buildings, and continually came up against street barricades and had to turn back. And then they saw the Hyatt.

'Oh, boy,' Paul said feelingly. 'An American hotel.'

They drove into the forecourt. Paul was so grateful to the Iranian couple that he gave them two hundred dollars.

Paul and Bill thanked the couple and waved goodbye, then they walked into the lobby of the hotel.

Suddenly Paul wished he were wearing his EDS uniform of business suit and white shirt, instead of prison dungarees and a dirty raincoat.

He went up to the reception desk and asked for Bill Gayden's room number.

'There was no Bill Gayden staying here, the clerk told him.

'How about Bob Young?'

'No.'

'Rich Gallagher?'

'No.'

'Jay Coburn?'

'No.'

They've all gone home, Paul thought. He did not blame them, but he was disappointed all the same.

'How about John Howell?' he said, remembering the lawyer.

'Yes,' the clerk said at last, and he gave Paul a room number on the eleventh floor.

Paul and Bill went up in the lift.

They found Howell's room and knocked on the door. There was no reply. Maybe he had left without checking out.

'What now?' said Bill.

'I'm going to check in,' Paul said. 'I'm tired. I want a bath and a meal and a rest. We can call the States, tell them we're out, let them handle it.'

'Okay,' Bill said.

They walked back to the elevator.

*

Bit by bit, Keane Taylor got the story out of Rashid: how he had led the storming of the Gasr Prison, how he had looked for Paul and Bill at the entrance. Later he had gone to Building No. 8 and searched it. It had been empty. He had searched all the other ~~xxxx~~ cell blocks without success. He had returned to the hotel on foot and by hitch-hiking. They had refused to let him into the hotel with a machine-gun,

so he had given it away at the door, simply handing it to the nearest Iranian.

Coburn and Nabi turned up while Rashid was telling the story. They were planning to go looking for Paul and Bill as soon as darkness fell. Taylor asked Rashid to go back to the area of the prison and look again. Rashid agreed. There were several EDS cars in the hotel car park, and Taylor decided to give Rashid one. Gayden got on the phone to Dallas to tell them about the latest development.

Taylor and Rashid left the suite and walked down the corridor. At the elevator they saw Paul and Bill.

Rashid rushed up to them and hugged them both. He said: 'My God! I thought you guys were dead! I couldn't find you!'

Paul and Bill did not know what he was talking about but they did not care. They both embraced Taylor.

Rashid rushed back into Gayden's suite, yelling: 'Paul and Bill are here! Paul and Bill are here!'

A moment later they walked in, and all hell broke loose.