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June 17, 1966

Dear Friends Both,

Events, as you both must have experienced, have a way of taking over and denying one options. That is what happened today. As soon as Jerry called, my wife tried to stop the telegram, but it was too late. She then placed a number of calls to me at the Archives, where I was, and was either left dangling on the phone by people who never returned or was falsely told I was not there. I was, and very profitably (except in cash, which always seems to escape us or we it).

I learned the whole story when I got home. Now that I have briefly told you what happened and how, let me tell you what preceded it. As Jerry knows, for I discussed it with him, I was going to ask Knox Burger to wait a short while for me to explore other possibilities and think it over and find out more of what they had in mind. This is what I asked and what he agreed to, yesterday morning. He told me he was leaving town and we left it that if I made an affirmative decision before his return after the Fourth, I'd phone Vice President Deigh, whose name he gave me. Either way, I'd phone Burger after the Fourth unless I heard from him earlier. Naturally, I was surprised shortly thereafter to get this wire: "Must have your acceptance or rejection of our offer for WHITEWASH by 4 p.m. June 17. Knox Burger Editor Gold Medal Books." What happened in those two or three hours I do not know, but the ultimatum I did not like, especially because he had just changed their promise to do this in a month to about October. He explained his staff was either away or tied up and no earlier date was possible.

He had further retreated from an initial offer of a 100,000 to perhaps 125,000 first printing to a refusal to say what the first printing would be, but when he raised the advance from \$5,000 to \$6,500 I presumed the initial printing would be enough to cover that, anyway. He refused to even suggest what in his opinion the ultimate sale might be. He refused to consider anything other than an advance! He offered nothing over what I now have for promotion of the book, and for advertising nothing but perhaps some point of sales materials. He changed from a 95¢ book to a 75¢ book, and when what is involved is a 110,000 word book plus appendix, and he makes a great point out of the magnitude of the editing that is required, this made me apprehensive of the gutting of the book. And that will not happen, regardless of its cost. Initially he had said it needed "some" editing and there were a couple of questions of possible libel he wanted to take up with his lawyer, although he did not believe there was any libel. I immediately replied I'd agree to any normal editing and any change required by the lawyer.

His increase in the advance is meaningless. Had he upped the percentage it would have made a difference, and he did not do it. So what it boiled down to is simply that they would do a book on the cheap, probably gutting it in the process, spending nothing on it, on the chance the attention it has had and will get before they have it out will make them a profit. Further, he insisted nothing by way of secondary activity until after they have the book out and on sale. They were talking of ~~XXXX~~ October, but suppose, as my experience leads me to believe is possible, they do not have it out by then, and months drag by, and I have no

control and worse, am bound to a contract whose provisions I do not now know and which have not even been indicated except what I reveal above? Need I remind you that I have a perfectly good and legal agreement for the publication of my book last year, and that the publisher had reports from his salesman indicating an initial sale of 25,000? This is why I never approached World, which was to distribute it. I have been through an intensive year and a half of liberal education with publishers, including many close friends of close friends, and it always turns out that whoever I am dealing with and no matter what his level always has things taken out of his hands.

These were but some of the things in my mind. The conditions of our lives are beyond your imagining, and especially is it imperative that I change the environment that is so hazardous to my wife. She has suffered and labored as few have and has been a blessing to me beyond measure. I must do something, and this offer denies me the one possible opportunity with the one thing I now have that has any chance of having value. The book may never do it. The agreement with Fawcett guarantees it cannot and further, denies me the opportunity of making anything on the side with it until whenever they'd have the book out. I recognize this is not likely, but I also know it is possible. It is a straw, perhaps, but dare I put myself out of grasp of it? Nothing may come of it, but a year ago the book was under serious consideration at the Saturday Evening Post, when the acceptance of such a book was not as easy as today. Although I have no reason to believe it, I have been assured by people I have no reason to doubt that this is again true. This is allegedly top-level information. Despite the emphasis on the assurances, I realize the immediate chances are slight, but is this in itself not worth all that Fawcett is offering, leaving me still what I have?

As time goes on, the collateral rights become more not less attractive, for the climate is changing. There are many indications of it, and you two have helped this at least as much as any others. And as time goes on, I have better means of doing something about this myself, for what I am developing is perhaps as sensational right now as anything in the book - possibly even more so - but I am too close to judge and too influenced by the immediate past to trust my judgement. While all this is going on, I now have inquiries from abroad, and these should not suffer from the present exposure.

In any event, the decision was not mine to make, for by the time I got your urgent recommendation, there was nothing I could do. The telegram was beyond recall and for reasons I can only suspect (such as the reasons for my delayed and undelivered mail and interrupted phone service) my wife was told I was not here I was by the people who certainly knew I was there because I had to sign a register to get in and had to sign a receipt for the materials I was using in a guarded area. Coincidence. Perhaps. But this is the way it happened. More, had I not been there, I did get there, and no one told me any one was looking for me. I presume I am less welcome than I might be and that even this is more welcome than I will yet be. Before I leave the work on which I am now engaged, let me tell you I believe I now have very solid evidence that proves one of the at least three conspiracies I show in WHITEWASH.

Because I have come to prize you both so highly on such brief acquaintance I must also tell you honestly that had I been able to take your advice I might not. I have been broke for so long it is now even easier for me to value other things more highly than money. Maybe I am wrong, but I think some of these things are now involved. Urgently as I need money, the time, I hope, will never come when

these other things will not be more important. Some day soon, I hope we'll be able to get together for an evening and talk about this and more. Several people are trying to get me on one of the talk programs in New York. Now that the distributors have the books, I'd very much like for this to happen.

Meanwhile, I continue to work and the work is fruitful, I am working on the public relations by mail and in Washington and I'm still investigating and I'm still working on carrying this forward from Whitewash (what a slogan!). The only reason I stayed home yesterday was to phone Burger. Yet I got 7,000 more words done, then end early this morning before leaving for Washington, besides some mail. Once again I do not know what it is to read a newspaper.

There are more ways than identifying the "other assassin" by which this may be broken open. It is on these things I am working. With the two and a half years of frustration to look back on perhaps I should not be optimistic. But I am. Meanwhile, aside from the reviews, do not conclude that there remains no further interest in the press. Until things get rough (and when they do, what would happen to an open-end agreement with Fawcett, daughter of Sally's dad!) there is every reason to expect some worthwhile news developments.

Europe now holds some possibilities, and there it is less easy for opposition to make itself felt. Especially in Western Europe. This may not address itself to the Fawcett offer, but it does to the alternatives to locating the other assassin, as Jerry put it. A friend tells me some paper has a story today reporting I'm getting rave notices in Moscow. Odd. They declined the book, too!

All of this may seem elliptical or emotional. I do hope until we have a chance to talk it over you can take it on trust, and I do hope you will continue your great and it would seem productive efforts. Do I take it from Sally's comment that Wilentz will not carry the book. He and Peter Martin told me they would, and it costs them nothing to do it. News, I believe, is where the key to the whole thing lies. I can for the moment not do much unless the bookstores have the book. A&A and Dimontstein said they'd really try. Bill Epstein was much less enthusiastic than Theodore. About Reynar I really do not know. The Washington distributor says it is doing well, but I don't know what this means. The three places I have checked in DC are peanuts but more than encouraging. Sale at the Univ of Md had so impressed that school that I've been invited to address some kind of faculty-student meeting three weeks from now.

What the other possibilities are, aside from Fawcett, I do not know. You should, and I appreciate the great time and effort you spent in the canvass, for you both must have all your time well committed. Yet I have been told that in one of the larger houses, there is an active file. My information comes from an employee. Is it not possible that the book and its reception, aside from news developments, may influence this is not the public discussion now reaching the point where the normal lust for the book may overcome reluctances.

On the other side, little hurtful, things happen. The Worker carried a story without my address. There is a cover-noted review in the current New Republic that, in the light of my experiences there is better than I expected, and more, yet they also and I fear not by accident avoided the address. Orders to us can amount to something if people know where to write. From the Times mention alone we got 57 orders so far this month, by mail or phone, here. Peanuts, yes; but helpful.

For just a moment, let me raise another question some time in the future one of you might answer. We now know of four books, three with major promotions. Entirely aside from whether, as I believe from having read Epstein's and from what others who have read both Lane's and Sauvage's tell me, mine is the best, is there paperback business such that only one paperback publisher will take one of these four? Tawcett has an interest in the subject, and they are not doing mine. Will they then not do another? And will they alone among their kind touch the subject? Will their's be unmet competition?

Please be patient with me if I do what you consider the wrong thing, or make the wrong decision. If I did not value and want your advice, I would not seek it, especially when I do not have the cash to pay for the phone calls. And please, do continue to offer it, whether or not I ask for it.

We both very much appreciate what you have done. Please don't stop now.

I'll write again as soon as I get the BOOK piece.

Who can I approach for central and south-central distribution, where those I have named do not sell and where Coma does not go?

Sincerely,