

Dear Larry,

12/31/72

Beginning with the cover of The Plot to Kill the President, I was at first deceived. Perhaps self-deceived. The cover is a copy of the design of Sylvan Fox's book, The Un-answered Questions... As I got into the beginning, there were slight suggestions of familiarity with other assassination fiction. Several, for example, have senators as key figures, one in an almost identical role. However, as I got farther into it, this changed. I welcomed it and its timing because of the bug Lil and + have. I'd probably not have kept going if I'd been fit for work, although in time I'd have finished it on your word that I should.

If you put that clipping from Chicago Today in by accident, it is a remarkable accident. I disagree with you by one page if you intended it to make the change in the book. I'd place it one page earlier than you seem to have. My wife thumbed through it while I read your letter. Otherwise, I'd not have known about the clipping for a while. She may have replaced it at the wrong page.

I am sure you noted certain relationships to reality. Perhaps you missed the slight inaccuracy in recounting the conclusions of the Warren Report. Not great. slight. But there are little touches that can't all be accidental and they intrigue me.

Beginning with the pen name. Not Jack Ruby, Jack Pearl! Coincidence? If you can find time, would you please check your library's Contemporary Authors, then other standard sources, and satisfy us that this is the first time the pen-name was used. Then I'd like rather much to know by whom. I doubt Pinnacle would tell you, assuming they know.

Let me just give you a few examples of the use of names that I find provocative.

Kelley as the name of the former chief of the President's security in the Secret Service (one of the two places where there is toying with the proper names of the various agencies, and only two). He is introduced to Paul as Joe Kelly. Well, the real name of the man in charge of the President's security for some years, beginning shortly after the JFK assassination, is Tom Kelley. There is fudging with the Protective Research Service, which could be accidental, but I think more likely not. It is the real name of the bunch in direct charge of the president's security inside the SS.

The identity of the owner of the cabin is Harold Marcus. Odd that two of the people who have written about this key part of the novel, the shooting, have these names. One you know. You may not know that The Bastard Bullet is the title of a monograph by Ray Marcus. It is overly-scholarly, and Mark, in all ways, including his walk, is countrified, yet "Pearl" at this point has his pose as scholarly.

All the intelligence agencies but one are correctly identified. That is the DIA. In this book it is JIA. Oddly, what most people do not know, is that it is by far the largest, is larger than the CIA, etc.

I found myself conjecturing much about this as + got into the last part. For one thing, this is an experienced writer, experienced with the devices of the novel. At the same time, it shows signs of hasty writing. Yet I do not really think it was a pot-boiled. There are structural flaws. Mark, with all Welles' emphasis on the line that the first duty of the assassin who knows his business is to get away, never asks what the plan is or thinks of it himself. And with OSS training? (By the little, little touches of verisimilitude: the Nazis did rather thoroughly penetrate OSS' SI, the spy end as distinguished for the dirtyworks boys and counterintelligence, in Italy; and there was a famous case of the murder of an agent, only not in Yugo but in northern Italy. And, an Italian name, as is used in this novel, of all the possibilities, was involved. As I recall, the accused was of Italian origin, the victim having an Irish name.)

The central theme can have several sources, ranging from me to Garrison, who exaggerated extremely and got enormously more attention to his embellishment. The essence of what this says I believe I was the first to say. But I specifically said I had no reason to believe it was organized this way. Well not quit this but I won't go into detail. I said I didn't believe Helms ordered the job or knew about it but I asked myself the lawyers' question, cui bono? Note that this guy leaves the CIA entirely out of it. Suggestion: he was. ..

At various stages, having already noted the inaccurate reflection of the Warren Report, I found myself wondering whether this was a professional writer who had not read my books but had heard my appearances especially, but more likely more than mine. I would imagine from this before-the-conclusion thinking that he is from the New York-Philadelphia area, from the Chicago area, or within hearing of stations in San Francisco or Los Angeles, less likely but possibly Boston. If not CIA.

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Still personalizing, let me tell you something you don't know and few do. When I was having trouble getting my first book published I did much thinking. I decided that probably the only way one could present a reasonable account of what really did happen was in the form of a novel, and I started to write it. (Terrible!) I did the writing by tape recorder, between Hyattstown and New York, on the Jersey and Kennedy Turnpikes, when traffic permitted. I also had these I later came to call The Dedicated Wrong as the villains. I am sure I discussed this with a number of writers and editors, none of whom I can recognize as Jack Pearl, so I'm not suggesting cribbing the idea. In a way, it is pretty obvious.

The first of the many differences that developed between Bud and me is his childish concept that a committee of us could solve the crime. And my first objections included the improbability that any active participant was still alive, having been killed by those for whom they worked. "Pearl" wastes no time in saying this in his own way, early. If there is a hired assassin, he can finger who hired him. If there is a conspiracy, the living of any member jeopardizes all the others.

By the way, my tentative title for this novel was I Killed John Kennedy. I think you will agree that Pearl was really writing about the JFK assassination, even though he says otherwise.

There are little touches that fascinate me in particular. I do not attribute anything to this, but let me suggest that you can find a novelist's variation on what I alone said. Many of us talked about The Grassy Knoll. I alone talked about two, and there are two, and as of today a credible case can be made for a shot from the never-mentioned one to the south, thanks to Mark's (note the name!) attempt to stake a claim to even the name, The Grassy Knoll, and Garrison's later improvisations. Remember that stupidity of Garrison's about a shot from a street-level sewer? That derives from some work done for me by a far-right Dallas buff, who took pictures of more than all the sewers in the area, including one never talked of by anyone but me, the rarity of a very high one, one of two atop the north grassy knoll. (For you information, this is directly behind the stockade fence and at that very point I have pictures showing a gate in the fence was eliminated!)

Another is that no bad thing is said of any of the many real agencies whose name is used. Only the non-existent JIA is vile. I think this is conspicuous.

That there is no reference to the assassinations of Teddy or King may be meaningless, but it can be interpreted as a dating of the writing of the book. And those of JFK's policies hated by some of the spooks, like the "hunts, and the non-spoopy right, are those attributed to Stevens. This is not the kind of book that could be published with ease. If I am right about the possibility of its having been written earlier, then the fact that it finally appears as a paperback by a small house bears on the opinion. If publishers weren't so uptight on the subject, this could have been a hardback by a larger house and a reprint and a movie. But it isn't.

I don't think it is the work of a young man and I do think it was written by a man, probably not much younger than I, maybe even formerly OSS. The book shows enough accurate knowledge of it in small details not essential to the story or plot.

If it is too literate for the average FBI or SS agent to have written it, it is not impossible that a writer friend of mine wrote it after some breast-beating, and I'll cite the kind of thing I have in mind. I don't want to forget that LBJ was nominated in Atlantic City. At a college I will not identify, I made a speech in 1966. Afterward I sat at a table to one side of the auditorium and autographed books. The whole thing lasted long. Some of the audience went to get a bite and returned, that long, all questions after my remarks. I noticed a beautiful young woman, tall, brown haired and brown-eyed, hanging back as the other students came up, some just to talk, until she was the last and alone. She said, softly and with moistened eyes, "I want to thank you for the kind things you said about my father." I told her she had the advantage, that she knew her father. I didn't. She identified him by name, a SS agent since retired. She then said that she hoped the day would come when they dared say aloud what they had told their families. Later, after Manchester's rotten abuse of the escort - her father was in it - I did two things. I got a reporter friend on the Balt. Sun to interview me on just this, the abuse of the agents, and got a WTOP talk show to air me on it. I immediately got thank-you anonymous calls from women identifying themselves as friends and neighbors of some of the escort and saying some of what this daughter had.

Things like this and what follows I ask you to keep in confidence. I don't want anyone hurt in any way, nor do I want to close more sources for myself than the assorted nuts have too often closed for me after I've opened them. I've had more Dallas officialdom and others talk openly and honestly with me than you'd think possible. I've gotten things without suit from DJ and SS, and some SS people have spoken to me frankly, if not always fully honestly, meaning not that they lied but didn't tell all they could have. You've seen some of my stuff and none was stolen. At least a half-dozen former FBI agents have spoken to me. Even one who was fired. One has even done some work for me. I got an approach from another, a stranger. It was a trick from which he backed off or genuine and ruined by one of the nuts. But what I got from him through a now-frightened intermediary was solid and not known. On one case about one FBI agent from another. Two cases. One I know is authentic and I have no reason not to believe the other.

Enough to indicate that someone "in a position to know" may have had some connection with this novel? The essence of what it says, stripped of the license of a novel, is not new and not unreasonable. So, I'm interested.

If your New York gal is not too busy to do you a favor, ask her to read it and then ask Pinnacle if they can deliver him for an interview. I'd just like to know who he really is.

Man, what one couldn't deduce from his pen name, so close to that of another assassin!

Excuse the haste. Gotta try and do some work while there is still some energy, before the bug I think I'm throwing tires me again. Thanks lots. Fascinating!