

WEST LONDON MAN (25): THE HOLDING CELL ARCHIPELAGO

by

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CHARACTERS

Narrator

George An early middle-aged, London-based banker whose rakish behavior often gets him into and out of professional and personal scrapes.

Officer 1 A young corrections officer recently assigned to the area of the facility where George is currently detained.

Officer 2 A senior corrections officer assigned to the area of the facility where George is currently detained.

Officer 3 A corrections officer assigned to an adjacent area of the detention facility.

Scott Greenfield George's defense counsel.

SCENE 1.

1. NARRATOR: Following his arrest at La Guardia Airport in New York City, George has been relieved of the diamonds and jewelry he received from financier Bernard Madoff and is now a guest of the American authorities in a nearby detention center. As an Englishman with refined cultural and culinary sensibilities, George considers these austere surroundings akin to an outer circle of Dante's Inferno or perhaps to Scotland. His defense counsel, the well-known New York lawyer Scott Greenfield, shepherds him through the American legal system while his wife, Caroline, secures matters on the home front. Although storm clouds continue to gather, George has resolved that he will not be broken by his present circumstances. Allowed writing materials by his captors, he has begun to compose an epic memoir.

1. GEORGE: (OFF) (LOUDLY) I took as my archetype the noble Odysseus. As his quest... (BEAT) As he was steadfast despite the interferences (BEAT) the machinations of Titans...
2. OFFICER 1: Morning! Checking in.
3. OFFICER 2: Hey, right on time. (BEAT) What's your number? I'll log you in. (PAUSE) You can stow your things over there.
4. OFFICER 1: Thanks. (PAUSE)
5. GEORGE: (OFF) Though for some, life in... these prisons is, as Bentham so aptly described, nasty, brutish, and...
6. OFFICER 1: What's this about?
7. OFFICER 2: Him? He's writing a book about life in prison.
8. OFFICER 1: Jesus! I thought this wasn't a long-term facility. How long has he been here?
9. OFFICER 2: (PAUSE) (LOOKS AT WATCH) Thirty... no, thirty-four hours.

1. OFFICER 1: Thirty-four hours?
2. OFFICER 2: Yeah. Not even a day-and-a-half yet.
3. OFFICER 1: A drama queen?
4. OFFICER 2: Shit, you don't know the half of it. (PAUSE)
(OFF) You want coffee?
5. OFFICER 1: Yeah, thanks.
6. GEORGE: (OFF) (LOUDLY) Locked in the glare of the
steely eye of the...
7. OFFICER 2: He wasn't here an hour, you know what he
wanted?
8. OFFICER 1: What?
9. OFFICER 2: A Bible. (BEAT) And you know, we got clergy
of every kind in here day and night, you
think we can find a friggin' Bible? Nope.
10. OFFICER 1: What'd you tell him?
11. OFFICER 2: Well, we found one eventually. I borrowed it
from an admin. A Jesus freak. (BEAT) Sorry.
You...?

1. OFFICER 1: Huh? Me? No, no.

2. OFFICER 2: O.K. So anyway, this admin., she's smart like a sack of hammers, right? I get this Bible from her, it's a "simplified and abridged" one. I give it to him and he starts complaining.

3. GEORGE: (OFF) ...in earlier times would've been the very definition of "the third degree." My resolve impressed even the blackguards and jackboots who...

4. OFFICER 1: A Bible's a Bible, right?

5. OFFICER 2: I guess not. (BEAT) He bitched about it for a while and then wanted "a cleric and some holy water."

6. OFFICER 1: No way!

7. OFFICER 2: Yeah. I'm right on it! Maybe a voodoo priestess and a bottle of Perrier!

8. GEORGE: (OFF) The heart of the leviathan... (BEAT) The beating heart of... (LOUDLY) fuck!

9. OFFICER 1: A little over-the-top, huh?

SCENE 2.

1. NARRATOR: George's defense counsel, New York criminal defense attorney Scott Greenfield, has arrived. After exchanging a few pleasantries, Greenfield has noticed the many pages of George's memoirs strewn about the small room.
2. GREENFIELD: What's this? Have you been writing?
3. GEORGE: Yes! I've started a memoir of my experiences in American custody. I'm making considerable progress....
4. GREENFIELD: (INTERRUPTING) Where did you get this paper?
5. GEORGE: Well, I asked for some writing materials. They seemed concerned initially, but I explained that I wasn't writing to you. I wanted to memorialize a few thoughts for future publication... perhaps.
6. GREENFIELD: Wonderful. Didn't you wonder why they were so accommodating?
7. GEORGE: Of course. (PAUSE) Well, no.

1. GREENFIELD: Let me explain something to you, George.
Those kind folks out there? (BEAT) They're not your friends. They don't really like you.
2. GEORGE: I understand that.
3. GREENFIELD: No, I don't think you do. They want two things: First, they want you in prison; and second, they want that to happen with minimal effort on their end.
4. GEORGE: (NERVOUSLY) I... I don't think I've written anything that....
5. GREENFIELD: (INTERRUPTING) You didn't think. Period.
Communications between us are protected by attorney-client privilege, or are supposed to be at least. Everything else, (BEAT) you might as well pick-and-choose the juiciest parts, take them out-of-context, and mail them straight to the prosecutor. Giving you these things, they're giving you enough rope to hang yourself.
6. GEORGE: What do I do, Scott?

1. GREENFIELD: (CLOSE) Gather it all up. (BEAT) (LOUDLY) I appreciate you preparing this timeline I requested, George. This is all great information. Really great. It'll be very useful for me in preparing your defense. (CLOSE) Hand them over. Now.

Paper-shuffling and crumpling noises are heard as Greenfield stuffs George's memoirs into his briefcase.

I don't want you writing your name in the snow outside unless I tell you to do it. Understand?

2. GEORGE: Yes, I understand. (BEAT) (SIGHS) Have there been any developments in the case?

3. GREENFIELD: Not much thus far. I doubt they think that you're an international diamond smuggler, but they'll continue to pursue that for a while, if only to see where it leads. The Madoff connection is the one that's more interesting to them.

(GREENFIELD/CONT'D OVER)

1. GREENFIELD (CONT'D): He may be close to settling the civil charges against him, but his criminal case is far from over. The Feds won't be shy about trying to turn you into a witness against Madoff. (BEAT) As we discussed, I can't recommend that road for numerous reasons. Anyhow, for now the financial guys seem content to let Immigration and Customs take the lead on you. The Assistant U.S. Attorney wants to meet with me tomorrow, so I'll listen to what he's got to say. I don't expect that it will be anything that interests me.
2. GEORGE: Can't you tell him that he's made a big mistake, and we can all just shake hands and forget about this silly matter?
3. GREENFIELD: Uh, no. As far as he's concerned, only you made a mistake, and it's his job to make sure you don't get a chance to make another.
4. GEORGE: After you finish telling me how naïve I am, do you have a plan?

1. GREENFIELD: Yes, I do. With the Madoff connection, there are a lot of loose ends for them to tie up here. Our best option is to push for trial as quickly as possible, and let them know that we plan to subpoena Madoff as a witness.

2. GEORGE: Well, I'd enjoy poetic justice at least. Madoff's done me no favors. Until he sent me those diamonds, I hardly remembered meeting the man. (PAUSE) A trial, though? I don't know. Isn't it risky?

3. GREENFIELD: Everything's a calculated risk, George. It's your choice, but given the options, you need to give a trial some serious consideration. What you did might've been stupid (BEAT) unbelievably stupid, monumentally stupid, (PAUSE) (COUGHS) but when you get down to it, the evidence just doesn't support the charges. They know it. If we stand firm, and they know we're not going to cave in, my feeling is that this is not a case they want to try. Of course, I could be wrong.

1. GEORGE: Christ. I just want it done with.
2. GREENFIELD: Sure. And then you can move on to your next headache. (CHUCKLES)
3. GEORGE: You're a ray of sunshine, Scott. What is it?
4. GREENFIELD: Well, your Hasidic garb when you came through La Guardia? While it was certainly a bold fashion statement, it seems to have offended the sensitivities of the Anti-Defamation League a bit. You've been their poster child in the press for two days.
5. GEORGE: I've upset the Jews? Well, I suppose it's not too late to switch teams on that front. I'm not yet "born again."
6. GREENFIELD: What?
7. GEORGE: Born again... as a Christian. (BEAT) Anytime one of your government officials or business leaders gets caught with his hand in the jar, he goes to jail for twenty minutes or so, then is "born again" and gets released.

(GEORGE/CONT'D OVER)

1. GEORGE (CONT'D): This country is overrun with fundamentalist Christians. Show them you're one of them and they'll take care of you. (LONG PAUSE) I figured, why wait until things get worse before I get started?
2. GREENFIELD: I'm not sure I'm following you, George.
3. GEORGE: It's simple, Scott. I had them bring me a Bible. No harm there, right? I skim it over and get a bishop or whatever these Evangelicals have to come in here, splash a bit of water around, and voilà! Instant forgiveness from the religious zealots who control this place.
4. GREENFIELD: I wouldn't say that....
5. GEORGE: (INTERRUPTING) These dunces seem to have brought me the wrong bloody Bible, though. This "revised" volume seems to be a bit light on the scriptures. Granted, I don't recall much from school, but still. (BEAT) Here, the twenty-third Psalm.

(GEORGE/CONT'D OVER)

1. GEORGE (CONT'D): You know, "Yea, though I walk through the valley in the shadow of death...."
2. GREENFIELD: Uh huh.
3. GEORGE: Well, in here it reads, "Woah! It's pretty dark in here, God, but I'm not afraid because you're here, too." What the bloody hell?!
4. GREENFIELD: I'm pretty sure this isn't going to work.
5. GEORGE: Not now, certainly! I've the wrong Bible and the "Official Jew Anger Society" wants my scalp. I see that I've picked the wrong side. (BEAT) Is it easy to convert to Judaism?
6. GREENFIELD: It's easier to be born into it, and substantially less painful.
7. GEORGE: Look, no offense intended, Scott, but Madoff's one of your people. He's got me into this and I don't need more Jews blocking my path out.

(GEORGE/CONT'D OVER)

1. GEORGE (CONT'D): Can't you call them off? Tell them that when this is over, I'll throw them some gold to plant trees in Israel.

2. GREENFIELD: (ANGRILY) "My people" didn't get you into this mess, George -- you did. There's no Jewish Union Hall where I can go to put in a good word. If you want to get through this anytime soon and in any kind of decent shape, you'd better pull your head out of your ass and get it in the game.

3. GEORGE: I'm sorry, Scott.

4. GREENFIELD: I don't need "sorry." I need you to do what you're told and only what you're told, when you're told to do it. (BEAT) Think about what I said about pushing for trial. I'll see you tomorrow, unless an emergency Jewish convention comes up and we're all required to attend. (PAUSE) (LOW) Asshole.

END