

Jimmy and I had become friends almost instantly. We ate together, walked in the exercise yard together, lifted weights and played handball at least once a week, and spent long hours in the library discussing cases and reading.

One day at chow, Jimmy said to me casually:

"Ed, I understand you've been writing letters to people looking for a job, so you can have something to put on your parole plan."

"That's right, Jim. I'm afraid I haven't had too much success."

"Well, why in the world didn't you talk to me about this?" He seemed genuinely perplexed and even hurt that I hadn't discussed my problem with him.

"Hell, Jim, I guess I've just been too strung out about the whole thing. I know that a job offer would increase my parole chances almost 100 percent, and I've been worried

stiff that I haven't had a nibble."

"Ed," Hoffa replied, "I'll be getting a visitor tomorrow or the next day. Twenty-four hours after my visitor leaves, you'll have a telegram in your hands stating that you have a guaranteed job on your release from Lewisburg. It will be a good job. I can't promise it will be in the Akron area,

"Jim, how can I thank you? If I get the job, don't be surprised if I jump up and kiss you right on the forehead."

"Ah, now," Jim Hoffa chuckled, "don't you worry about kissing me on the forehead. You're just an old time con, and you're trying to turn me into a homo."

We both laughed, and I tried to camouflage my anxiety that something would happen to prevent this incredible promise from being fulfilled.

That night, I suffered my worst case of insomnia. I knew Jim Hoffa was a man of his word, but Christ, a million things could happen. Jim could die of a heart attack before his friend arrived for the visit. The friend could die of a heart attack on his way out of prison, and Jim mightn't find out about that until my chance of parole had been lost. Or I might succumb to the pressure of these last days and have a heart attack myself, making me unfit for any kind of a job. I was conjuring up all kinds of weird fantasies. I was sitting on boiling ice.

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"Jim, baby! Jim! Guess what!"

"You made parole."

"That's right, I made it! Oh, buddy, thanks to your help I'm getting out! Jimmy, I'll never forget you. Never! I owe you a debt for life."

"Don't worry about it, Ed. You deserve every break in the world. Hell, I wish I was making parole, too. By God, I'd take you out and buy you the biggest steak dinner you ever had."

"Jimmy, thanks! Oh, thanks!" I all but slobbered over him.