Scribner, November 2003

Ivan Doig

Prairie Nocturne
A Novel

From one of the greatest novelists of the American West comes a surprising and riveting story set in Montana and New York during the Harlem Renaissance—drawing on characters and the fictional past of Doig's most popular work.

Susan Duff—the bossy, indomitable schoolgirl with a silver voice from the pages of Dancing at the Rascal Fair—has reached middle age alone, teaching voice lessons to the sons and daughters of Helena's high society. Wesley Williamson—business scion of the cattle-empire Williamson family—has fallen from the heights of gubernatorial aspirations, forced out of a political career by foes within his own party who uncovered his love affair with Susan. Years later, Susan is taken off guard when Wes arrives at her door with an unusual request: to train his black chauffeur, Monty, in the ways of voice and performance.

Prairie Nocturne is the saga of these three characters and their interlocked fates. Monty is distantly known to Susan from their childhoods in the Two Medicine country, yet an enforced stranger because of the racial divide. When she realizes he possesses a singing voice of rare splendor, Susan joins Wes's Pygmalion-like project to launch Monty on a performing career—only to find the full force of the Ku Klux Klan in their way. As Monty and Susan cope with their growing attraction to each other, Wes's mysterious motives unsettle everyone, including himself, and the trio's crossed fates form a deeply longitudinal novel that raises everlasting questions of allegiance, the grip of the past, and the costs of career and love.
“Doig writes with absolute, perfect-pitch authority.” — The Washington Post

Ivan Doig grew up in a family of Montana sheep ranchers in the 1940s and 1950s. His books include Mountain Time, Bucking the Sun, and the highly acclaimed Montana Trilogy—English Creek, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, and Ride with Me, Mariah Montana. He lives in Seattle with his wife, Carol.

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Mountain Time
0-684-86569-6, $13.00
Bucking the Sun
0-684-83149-X, $13.00
Dancing at the Rascal Fair
0-684-83105-8, $13.00
one-page fax to Brant Rumble, associate editor, Scribner

Brant, good morning--

Please deliver hugs and tickles to whoever wrote the catalogue copy. It's great. The one tweak I'd like done is in the bio graf, where my honorable but propertyless forebears need to be changed from "Montana sheep ranchers" to "Montana ranch hands"--otherwise, perfecto.

FYI, I'll be turning off my fax machine while we're in Tucson, the 22nd through the 29th. (It doesn't coexist well with my answering machine on the same line.) Any communications during that period, phone call or snail mail, please. Will be back at the desk, more or less operative as usual, Jan. 30.

All best,

[Signature]

20 Jan. '03
VIA FAX

January 17, 2003

Dear Ivan,

I'm sitting here late on a Friday evening sorting through the various piles on my desk, and I've just discovered that I've been circulated some first draft catalog copy for Prairie Nocturne. I've barely had a chance to skim it, but I'm faxing it through this instant because I want to get it to you before I leave for the weekend. If you have a chance to take a look and offer your opinion before you leave town, then great. If not, we'll handle it when you return.

All best,

[Signature]

my fax: 212-632-4918
PRAIRIE NOCTURNE dedication

To Dave Walter and Marcella Sherfy

for doing half the laughing

and damn near all the history.
This work of fiction takes its cues from something once said by Peter Brook, who as a stage director has sought to imbue storytelling, as he phrased it to an interviewer, with "the closeness of reality and the distance of myth, because if there is no distance you aren't amazed, and if there is no closeness you aren't moved."

--I.D.
Brant, mon gallant--

I’ve given the manuscript a solid month of work and I do believe it’s now thoroughly ready for us to make it a book.

Most of my redone pages will be evident from their penciled-in page numbers, but when it was just a matter of fixing a phrase or two on a page I simply changed it on the original computer page and re-printed it. The points you raised in your cover letter I think have been dealt with handily in this version:

--Dolph: his dalliance with the Klan came from shooting his mouth off while he was drinking, then realizing where this was heading, and tipping off Wes, as it’s now spelled out on p. 254, “Major, I better tell you, there’s some bastards in town trying to git me in on their funny stuff.” Wes then has him string the Klan along while he and Bailey make preparations to strike at the Klan, etc. In short, Dolph’s role has to be glimpsed--and glimpsed only, so that it stays mysterious to the reader until Wes busts the Klan--and not elucidated beyond his big mouth. Having redeemed himself, he incidentally is back on the Double W in English Creek, ten years on, in a one-sentence reappearance as choreboy.

--Susan and Monty/Susan and Wes: I did some recasting of the scenes of Susan and Monty confessing love for each other, and I think nailed it this time. Pp. 369-380B do the job, and I also feathered in some small touches of more awareness of each other’s attributes, back in the Broadwater Hotel scene and even one or two early in the North Fork singing lessons. As to Susan and Wes, I’ve made it clear that her descent to bed with him when he returned to NY was to keep him unsuspecting until after the Carnegie Hall event--in other words, in this novel of motives under motives she did it for Monty--and I specifically gave her a pang of disconnect at the end of the Brevoort Hotel scene where you suggested. In the Park Avenue party scene it’s on her mind how two-faced this was of her, but she doesn’t know what else she could have done, and so on. I believe the Susan/Wes disconnect doesn’t need any more spelling out than it now has--hell, he wouldn’t leave his wife for her, she ultimately doesn’t owe him or the reader any more remorse than is implicit in a triangular situation, seems to me.

---The hat, the h-a-t: it’s really spelled out that much now. Ninian now (p. 418A) blasts a hole through the crown of the hat “just so there won’t be any doubt about how this came out,” and on the next page Wes specifically talks about the message sent by the shot-up hat being barb wired to the gate between the WW and Scotch Heaven. I also describe Wes’s notion of the rustling incident as a “necessarily bare-bones version” and beyond that, I think the reader has been acclimated by the earlier flashback scenes to accept the rustling scenario as an unfolding of the overall story rather than a recital by Wes.
Oh, and the opening of the Medicine Line scene. I squinted long and hard at your suggestion to move things around there to make life easier for the reader, but the problem for me in changing the sequence is that it would have put the scene of Monty listening to the radio (which is needed as a setup for Monty’s escape/launch of career involving that specific radio station) immediately ahead of his first session with Susan in the auditorium, and the reader would have every right to say, hey, they’ve just toured the whole damned fort and now we’re sitting around listening to the radio, when is something going to happen? What I’ve done instead is fit in a couple of locatng sentences before the dumb cowboy song hits Monty and the reader, and I’m still convinced this sequence is ultimately smoother—the transition from Wes handing Monty his performance tux to Monty trekking off through the cheatgrass to the first session with Susan is about as slick as transitions get, say I.

So, immense thanks for all your good works in tuning up the manuscript, and I’m equally pleased with mine. It is really the way I want it, now.

Other stuff:

--A number of places where considerable passage of time or shift of scene has occurred but not enough to warrant a new chapter, I’ve marked in drop capitals as a cue to the reader that there’s a little change of gear in the story here. I believe it was Becky Saletan who came up with this when she edited Bucking the Sun, and I’ve attached one of those pages as an example of what I have in mind.

--I adamantly want to head off one of the headaches that I’ve had on probably half a dozen of my now ten books, undoing things that the copy editor changed without asking first. Accordingly, here’s a list, partial but the best I could do amid the other chores of re-reading, of things I’ve deliberately done and want left alone. Naturally I want the copy editor to question any other strange doings on the page, but I’d like to be checked with when the copy editor has her or his own list ready. This is not without precedent: a brilliantly intuitive copy editor named Zoe Kharpertian would simply call me up a time or two, when she was handling Bucking the Sun and a couple of my books before that, and ask, hey, did you mean to do this here?

--Acknowledgments are at the end of the ms, where they’re to go in the book, and dedication and an author’s note I’d like on the epigraph page are attached.

--I don’t know if the brilliant promptitude of thee and me can make any difference in the production schedule, but I think you know I’m in favor of cheating ahead all we can, on the chance that we can get me out there selling copies hand over hand in western stores way ahead of official pub date.

The cover, as we both fatalistically realize, is its own thing. The best idea I can come up with, a magic carpet of music bearing Monty, Susan, and West E from the prairie to New York, is in this packet separately. That, and I guess all else, is over to you now. Carol and I are going to take a week’s escape from all this, Jan. 22-29 to Tucson; if you absolutely utterly desperately need to reach me during that, we’re at the Windmill Suites, (520)577-0007.

Again, medals and bangles for your time spent in the trenches with Wes and Monty and Susan and yours truly,
I certainly welcome other ideas, but here’s one that, my artistic abilities aside, is meant to show Monty, Susan and Wes being borne to New York on a magic carpet of music. I can’t render it right, but the “music carpet” would rise, unfold, up out of the prairie at the bottom of the cover. The musical score would have to be vastly more deft than my pasted-on version, but it could be Chopin’s Nocturne in F Sharp which Susan plays in the book (example of the score is attached). The New York skyline—at night?—of course could be jewel-box magnificent, and while I hesitate to suggest one more element, the prairie at the bottom could include a small but significant rendering of a hat hung on a fence post as a reference to the hat clue in the book. A few other specific considerations:

---Susan, if she is portrayed in this version or some other, has chestnut hair, which she can wear either long or done-up as she does at different points in the book. She is quite tall and more an attractive presence than a beauty—along the lines of Vanessa Redgrave or Maggie Smith when they were her age, forty.

---Monty, I’d think, should clearly be shown to be African-American, and probably in his tux to perform in. Maybe his posture, his arms out or his hands spread, should convey wonder and maybe some apprehension at making it to New York. He’s heavy-shouldered, but otherwise lanky in a cowboy way.

---Wes is always elegant, tailored to a T, whatever suit the artist chooses for him to wear. He is tall and solidly built but not portly; facially he resembles the heavyweight champ Jack Dempsey.

---This would need checking, but I believe the New York skyline of 1925 ought to feature the Chrysler Building—the Empire State wasn’t done until 1931.

---If there’s a hat and it’s shown in any detail at all, it should be a cavalry campaign hat with the little crossed sabres escutcheon pinned to the front of its crown (examples of the crossed sabres emblem attached, though I don’t have one of a campaign hat).

The cutout figures I found for this mockup aren’t meant to suggest a specific artistic style, but my preference would be for some mix of naturalism with the magic waft of the music and day-into-glittering-night transformation of the landscape, rather than toward cartoony, ironic, or god help us post-modern. I’m attaching a Wolf Willow cover with roughly that level of suggested actuality: the horses look plenty enough like horses but have the artist’s warmth to them, too, for example. This cover also happens to show a version of a prairie, and for that matter a fencepost for a hat to hang on.

Whether or not this theme is used for the cover, my vote is for a story-telling cover (of the ilk of The Lamplighter in the spring catalogue) rather than a mood one. Will be glad to talk over any and all ideas.
Prairie Nocturne
a folk song.

The opening tune in Chopin’s Nocturne in F-sharp has an elegance unique to the composer—an elegance that stems partly from the wonderfully graceful rhythm, partly from the Romantic turns of harmony, and partly from the pianistic decorations of the melodic line. We have seen decorated melodies before, but Chopin’s have an almost liquid quality, caused partly by chromaticism—by the free use of all the notes of the chromatic scale, as in this fragment:

\[\text{Larghetto} \quad \text{dolciss.} \quad \text{pp} \quad \text{e poco ritenuto}\]

Romantic form contributes to the Romantic effect. Chopin avoids sharp demarcations and literal returns; the music seems to grow spontaneously, in an almost improvisational way. The main tune, \(A \ (a, \ a'b)\), does not really end; it is interrupted by plaintive sounds emerging out of nowhere, which surge up to a moment of real passion. Then the return of the tune (\(a'\)) is fragmentary, though in a way more intense, and the whole is capped by an unexpected littleoda: delicious right-hand arpeggios over a bolero rhythm in the left. Free rhythm in the performance (rubato) mirrors the freedom of form.
December 16, 2002

Ivan Doig
17277 15th Ave. NW
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan,

So it looks like we've staved off another NYC transit strike for the moment. Wish us luck over the next few days. In the meantime, here's the letter I promised—

Well, you taught this kid a thing or two (thousand) about the War, the West, the Klan, music/voice theory, and the Harlem Renaissance. That's why I love this job. I can't thank you enough.

If you've had a chance to go over the manuscript, you know that I didn't suggest much cutting. Just sentences and phrases here and there, and I recommended that one or two short sections could be trimmed. Most of my comments where along the lines of "unclear" or "what does this mean?" I know that a number of those quizzical notations are sparked by authentic details—words or phrases that I'm unfamiliar with, but that are definitely of the time and/or place. Whether or not a change or additional context is necessary is completely up to you. I just wanted you know when and where you lost me.

In terms of broader suggestions, we only have a few:

1) Dolph. I want to know more about him, especially his relationship with the Klan. I want to see more clearly his transformation from Monty's friend to his secret enemy. I realize that Dolph must've gotten more and more bitter with every chore Susan assigned him, but I want to see more of his bitterness. I also want to know exactly how he got to the Klan, or how the Klan got to him. I want to know where his extreme racism came from, and why he wanted so badly to be apart of the Klan, seemingly just to quit town and move on. Speaking of which, I'd like to know where he went. I know that some of this lack of information is intentional, and that it adds to the mystery and tension of the novel, but if you see fit, I'd love to have a few of these questions answered with a sentence
Brant Rumble's editorial comments, on pages I re-did on the computer rather than in pencil

Medicine Line

1924

I wonder if might want to move this first section, which breaks on p. 190 to p. 197. I realize you're trying to break up chronology a little, and hold us at some level of suspense, but I think that starting w/ the section that runs from 190 to 197 would help the reader a great deal. If you take this advice, you might want to tie w/ this section (188-190 and the section that would follow (the one that starts p. 197)."Jake and Roany was a-chousin' along

And Jake was a-singin' what he called a song--

Oh-da-lay-de-oh-da-lay-de-ooo..."

"Now there's homegrown music for you," the announcer's voice crackled out of the radio set with professional enthusiasm. Not in my book, Monty grumbled to himself as he made his bed, the only chore he could find left to do. Call that a yodel? "That was the Medicine Line's own Prairie Troubadour, Andy Olswanger, singing a traditional cowboy song," the announcer rattled on, "right here in our studio. Well done, Andy! Say, friends, we here at station CINE, the voice of Medicine Hat and the province of Alberta"--a gulp of distance, then the sound wavered in strong again--"bringing you the finest listening that radio has to offer, from the Medicine Line to the High Line, all across these splendid wide open spaces where two nations meet in--"

Bunch of open spaces between their ears, Monty fumed as he stepped over and pinched off any more yowling from either the yodeler or the announcer.
Putting that on the air. Yet, it had only been last night, late, when the radio set swept voices in from anywhere, that he had come across Roland Hayes singing from Pittsburgh. He had nearly shouted across to Miss Susan to come over and hear, but that was complicated, even here.

As he had been doing all morning, he told himself to set his face for it. Complication was not going to leave either of them alone for awhile now. Glancing around the strange room, he did not feel beckoned by any of the well-intentioned furniture and sank himself back down on the freshly made bed. His mind ticked on their situation as steadily as the unhelpful clock beside him. The Major had better be on the mark about this hidey-hole, or the clucks would come night-riding again, ready to scorch the life out of more than grass this time. Flock of bastards them anyway. What he wouldn’t give to take on those Klan boobs, one to one, he didn’t care whether with rifle, jackknife, tire iron, name it. On the other hand, what he wouldn’t give to be a thousand miles from here about now. Somewhere that he wouldn’t stick out like this from rubbing up too close to white people.

But her, cooped up here with him. These Klan hoodoos had her on their bent little minds, too, and she was about as white as they come. So maybe that wasn’t the cure either. Tired of trying to calculate it all, right now he would settle for the most temporary of medicine; he half-hurt all over from his desperation to get back into the swing of singing.

Once again he checked the three-legged clock on the apple box that was his new bedside stand. He could scarcely believe it, but it was still twenty minutes yet before his lesson could happen, under her decree that it took two hours for breakfast to settle. Privately he figured she was underestimating the staying power of Mrs. Gustafson’s stiff hotcakes, but he wasn’t going to broach anything that produced more waiting.
Too restless to stay on his back, he rolled onto his feet and prowled back over to the window. The windowglass was the old wavy kind. The sprawling parade ground, the tired old barracks across the way, the windbreak of skimpy dried-up cottonwoods that had never quite died and never quite flourished here, all had a waver to them, as if flowing in place; as if the air still held the slightly turbulent rhythm of parading cavalry.

They came to Fort Assinniboine in a cavalcade of horsepower and dust, the afternoon before, with Monty driving Wes in the Duesenberg, Susan in her tin Lizzie, and three clattering Double W trucks of furniture and provisions. Out on the paintless verandah of what had been the commandant’s quarters stood the Gustafsons, Vikings of the prairie, awaiting them.

“Sit tight,” Wes instructed Monty, “while I get our marching orders.” Ignoring how stiff his game leg was from the long car ride, he pegged his way to Susan’s car and told her the same. A man none of them knew had come out of the guardhouse on the far side of the expanse between officers’ row and the barracks. Pulling on his suitcoat and walking carefully around the patches of cheatgrass that infested the parade ground, he advanced to them. Not looking forward to meeting him, let alone spending the time ahead under the eyes of him and his, Susan scanned around at the gaunt files of empty reddish-brown buildings, as sudden up out of the prairie as ruins scoured free by a shift in desert dunes.

“What, Wes, no sense owning a fort if you can’t put it to use?” her astonishment spoke for her when he singled out this as the refuge for her and Monty and his voice-in-training.

“Something new in the history of amortization,” he admitted with a trace of amusement inadvertently showing on him. Sober-faced again in an instant, he looked as if there was more he wanted to tell her than what she heard in his
squadrons of soft-edged little clouds dragged disconcerting shadows across the prairie anywhere he looked. He resigned himself to a climate only rattlesnakes could prosper in. His eyes joined the others in trying to take in the mass of deserted habitations over these arid acres. Ranked across from the ramshackle barracks and seeming to squint toward them in disgusted inspection stood prim old house after house of officers’ quarters with randomly broken windows and shutters half gone. And down the middle the wind blew, the parade ground its permanent right-of-way.

Bailey gestured to the barracks building closest to them as though shooing it out of their way. He murmured, “My fellows picked this one for theirselves, because of,” indicating upward. A three-story tower, its parapet crowned with castle-style battlements, buttressed the near end of the building. Susan, Monty, Wes, all three goggled at this. Rapunzel could have let down her golden hair perfectly in character with the odd medieval aspect, except for the mat of buffalo grass beneath. Bailey whistled through his teeth, and a lookout carrying a rifle peered down at them through one of the battlement notches. “That’s Ned,” said Bailey, and left it at that.

Susan drew in her breath, as if she had stepped by mistake onto the stage of some fantastic opera.

Wes fell into logistical conversation with Bailey while the four of them trooped off toward further batches of buildings. Monty thus far had no sense of recaptured past such as the visit during the dust storm had whirled up for him here, his mood too heavy for memory to make any headway. Was he losing his marbles, or did Fort Assinniboine constitute the last place on earth he’d ever expected to be plunked down in and told to set up housekeeping? While the Klaoonies got to roam around free as bees? That stinks. His dismay at the thought
of being put in this falling-down coop of a place had been immediate and hadn't
lessened since. "I don't want to be running from them, I tell you," he had
implored the Major in his own session of argument against being made to hole up
here. "This way you won't be," the reply came gliding, "you're just going to the
other ranch." Some ranch; you could lose track of cows for a week just in the
jumble of these buildings. Although right now, he saw, a couple of the hands
were down at the road putting up the set of gateposts where the freshly done
Deuce W sign would hang. The Williamson's never wasted any time in putting
their brand on anything.

A wrangling corral, holding a restless new saddle string of mares and
geldings, loomed into their path now, and beyond it, a tumbledown blacksmith
shop for horseshoeing and enough stables for a major racetrack. Susan was
impatient to scoot on past these, but the men weren't.

"Barns aren't in any too bad a shape," Monty at length was moved to
remark to the Major, one connoisseur to another.

"That was the cavalry for you," Wes assessed, "the horses lived better
than the troopers."

Susan was not growing any more patient. "Wes, you said a fort."
Directly ahead there was another tower, and probably another Ned, in a further
contingent of barracks and other buildings beyond the stables. "This is like a
military city."

"They went at it a bit strong," he could only agree. "Maybe the War
Department thought it was making up for lost time. Custer would be cleaning
spitoons at West Point right now, if all this had been wangled in here before the
Little Big Horn."

"But what were they thinking of, building all this that late?" Susan
persisted as if the prairie deserved an explanation for all this intrusion on it. She
"I don't grant that they have. Our fellows who work the trains at Havre and the Falls haven't seen them. Even trying it by car, he'd stick out. They're tucked somewhere, I'd say." He studied his fellow Klansman as if wishing for better material. "How do we stand--do we have anybody on the ranch?"

"This Williamson bunch is no cinch," the other man complained. "They cut loose the couple of boys out there we were counting on."

The leader resorted to the whiskey bottle now, pouring them each a strong splash. "One of them named Alf, Rolf, something of the sort?"

"Who? None of our likelies, called that."

"All right then," the leader said in relief. "Spread the word for the Klavern to make itself scarce around town, Saturday night. Let me see if I can nighthawk us a certain somebody when he gets enough of this"--he flicked a finger against the bottle--"in him."

Monty popped awake. By reflex his near hand reached out and made sure the rifle was there. Every bedtime he propped the 30.06 against the apple-box bedstand. And every morning he got up and slid it and the couple of boxes of ammunition--thoughtful parting gift slipped to him by Angus McCaskill--out of sight behind the woodbox, as nicely hidden as when he'd brought them here in his bedroll. The Major maybe didn't want him doing anything crazy against the Klan, but it wasn't the Major's skin that was on the line with those maniacs, either. Just now he'd been dreaming about them again. One of those jumbled dreams, there was a rodeo arena in it, and Dolph standing up on top of the saddle showing off while his horse moseyed around and he himself was the announcer but could never find the megaphone and so had to keep cupping his hands and shouting to the crowd, and while he was trying to do that the clump of white hoods and sheets down around chute number one kept opening and closing the
Wes in that instant wished bayoneting was legal without a congressional declaration of war. He looked at Potter as he would a gob of spit on a dinner plate. “Even if there was anything to it, you yellowbelly,” the words snapped out of him in pellets of cold rage, “there’s no witness.” Dolph by now would be halfway to Chicago on the cattle train, done with his turnabout job of coughing up those who were wooing him, and a couple of months of bonus wages in his wallet and his provisional Klan card folded away somewhere as a souvenir. “And don’t count on any others of that skulking bunch you head up. They’re busy being reasoned with.”

Potter glanced involuntarily at the clock behind Wes. “That includes that pathetic toady of yours,” Wes took extreme satisfaction in letting him know, “the one you sent off into the brush with a hunting rifle. It’s not hunting season any more, Potter, particularly that kind.” Caught and hogtied and ready for delivery to the sheriff, the Klan’s second-in-command was in for the rare privilege of having a Duesenberg serve as his paddywagon. The rest of the bunch were having the run put on them. Whit and his men right now were going name to name from those cards through this town. The remainder of Bailey’s force was doing the same in Valier, the rejuvenated sheriff and muscular deputies were spreading the gospel of persuasion in the town of Conrad. Across the state at this hour, Wes’s old political allies were hitting the Klan with what he knew would be varying effectiveness, but some of it was sounding effective enough; the sheriff at Butte had put out a public declaration that any Klan members caught lingering would be shot like wolves.

The specimen across the desk from Wes made another try at dodging. “I have standing in this town, you’re dreaming if you think you can turn people--”

“Potter,” Wes said as if instructing the clumsiest member of the awkward squad, “half the banks in this state have gone under in the past couple of years.
She made a conceding murmur and ducked onto surer ground. "At any rate, you can quit worrying—I’m going to lease out the homestead. Helena has me on her hands again, poor old town."

Now Monty was the surprised one. "The Major didn’t say anything to me about you giving up the place."

"No? Did you check the reflections in his vest buttons?" Fanning a hand and holding it with her other, Susan expertly mimicked a person playing cards close to the chest.

He acknowledged that with a slow nod. "I’ll need to do that when he comes in from the ranch tonight, you think?"

"Whit’s, too, while you’re at it. You knew you’re going to be honored with his presence, didn’t you?"

"You must be kidding. He’s setting foot off the place when there’s no livestock involved?" It was on the tip of his tongue to say what next, the ghost of old Mister Warren showing up along with them tonight at the Marlow Theater and growling out *I take it back, Monty, go ahead and blow your bugle, boy.* But her and the Major, as close or apart as rails of a railroad track, depending on when you squinted in their direction—right now she was really up on the doings of the Williamsons, and he didn’t want to tramp flatfooled into whatever that meant. He switched back over to his original intention. "I started to say, it’s bothered the living daylights out of me that you were where the Klan hoodoos could have got at you. I know you wrote that the Williamsons made it too hot for them, but—"

"Scalding, was more like it." Departures in the night. Examples made by Whit and his ax-handle crew. Sheriffs and county attorneys suddenly rigorous. Wes and the influences he could bring to bear had taken the Klan out of the prairie heartland of Montana like lice soaked out of sheets. "My neck never felt at risk, any of the school year," she maintained. "No excitement except the boys tipping
over the girls' privy, and that's eternal. No, I've done my bit in memory of
Angus and helped Adair close up their place, and now I'm tucked back into the
house here and the Double W's cows inhabit the North Fork." Susan made a
gesture, that was enough of that. Looking across at Monty, she sent him a mock
teacherly frown intended to let him know she was inspecting his progress. He
had filled out somewhat, but solidly, no jowls or paunch. His nice gray suit
would not give any of Wes's a run for the money--whose would?--but it had a
tailor's touches. All along the line, so far as she could see, he looked as if New
York life agreed with him. Still, he was here, not there. "Somehow I didn't
expect to see you back, this soon."

"Denver is next on the tour." He grinned. "I convinced my manager this
is practically on the way."

Susan's eyebrows were up. "I must have left geography out of those
lessons of yours."

"That'd be about the only thing. You know what works slick; that I'd
have rather eaten dirt but you made me do? That music stand." He had
particularly wanted her to know the audience problem was whipped. "Can't
explain it, but I don't get choky with the songsheets right there, even if I never
need them."

"Told you." Her face lit, she urged: "Now your turn. Those fancy-pantsy
musicales of yours--tell all."

From there on their conversation kept jumping its banks. He told her
about hobnobbing with the Rabiznaz, wanted to know how her own music was
coming. She told him she was within shouting distance of the end of the operetta
if the shout could be a better song than she had managed to come up with yet, and
what were his living arrangements in Harlem like? They were back and forth at
she had already arranged to sail from Montreal, thank you very much. Now, though, here she sat, running a caretaking eye over his view of the ocean liners and the docks they were nuzzled to, as if they were her personal aquarium. He cleared his throat. "Susan, may I ask--what brings you to New York at last?"

"Recuperation." When she realized Vandiver had no idea what to make of that, she tacked on: "A friend's, after a bad accident. I came to help with the care."

Vandiver waited, but that appeared to be all. After a bit, he ventured:

"You're available to us, do I gather?"

"I apologize, Van," she said with a start. "Talk about out of practice--it's been an age since I was any kind of job applicant. But yes. I need a steady wage while I'm here, and I thought--"

The big hands spread apart on the table as if measuring out the invitation.

"We can always use your talents," Vandiver delivered it along with the practiced smile, "I've told you that before."

"Fine, then. Oh, did I mention, I must have mornings for myself. The, ahm, recuperative shore. Although if you'll furnish me a typewriter, I can take any amount of work home and do it at night."

That set an executive nerve to twitching in him, she could tell. But when he spoke, it was to say he supposed they could work around that, since it was her. As if that reminded him of something, he cocked his head to one side again.

"You'll need to find lodging, I suppose? Miss Cooper or Mister Lehrkind could go around with you. Or, my wife's mother knows Mrs. Maeterlinck in the Village, she might take in--"

"That's quite all right. I'm taken care of."

Susan's return glance having firmly sealed off that topic, Vandiver cleared his throat more extensively. "It's really quite lucky, for you to show up just now.
“Susan? You know how I’d like to celebrate?” The request came out shy but determined. “You play something.”

“Mental telepathy. I hoped you would ask.”

With a flourish she turned around to the piano again, and sitting very straight, she caressed the keys as if reminding them to trust her touch. The music at once rose in suggestion, a sudden glide of reprise of what she had played for him in the Fort Assiniboine auditorium, then the tune soared, turned in flight, soared again. It fit. That was Monty’s first thought: this piece found its way gloriously to her opening music, as if time was cutting its own circle on itself and the past was hooking onto the present moment. He listened with all his might, so glad for her he could feel his heart run itself up.

When she had finished, he let the eloquence of silence match the echoing memory of the notes. Then, to make sure: “That what I think it is?”

“Mmm hmmm. The ending of Prairie Tide, which I was always afraid would end me first. It even has words, but I’ll spare you those.” Now she turned full around to him on the piano bench and gestured as if the music flew in from hiding places unknown. She was as aglow, he registered, as whatever the most valuable white gem was. “The operetta bunch I told you about kept after me, I had to write and write in self-defense. And working the way we did here—it must have been catching.”

“It’s a beauty. Makes me homesick, if that was home.”

“High praise, I think.” She laughed a little. He didn’t.

“That brings up something,” he said huskily. “The day we’re done, rehearsals or whatever, you’re off back to Helena, aren’t you.”

“Not just that quick,” she did what she could to sugarcoat the inevitable, “you make me sound like I have one foot on the train. But soon enough after, I’d better. The house is there waiting, the mothers with my pupils dribbling after

I think I know what you mean, but this phrase is awkward.
a fresh one for whatever next. *Before letting him in, Monty looked at me as we both fixed our expressions and said, “Painted in a corner, aren’t we. Two coats.”*

J.J. did a skip-step to keep in stride with her. Whatever Susan was marching to today, it didn’t know slow. They were already bearing down on the el station and he still was trying to catch up with her surprise prognosis.

“Really ready?” he persisted. “Enough that I can put him up in front of people and they won’t mob me for their money back?”

“His voice is ready,” she repeated.

“Well, then, amen,” he made his decision. “I’ll set up a musicale or two, sprinkle him around town that way at first. Let Montgomery tune himself up without the whole world listening.”

“And then?”

“Maybe tour him some before letting the New York crickets at him. One thing, Miss Duff.” He halted so abruptly at the base of the el stairs that Susan flew past him a couple of steps before she could attend to his next utterance.

“You have to understand, you probably won’t see us in Helena again,” and he handed her the black bag in the usual ritual of goodbye.

Each of them ever so carefully tended to business the next time in the apartment, Monty meticulous in his fresh parsing of the songs, Susan fastidiously breaking off the accompaniment to amend the tempo of a passage here, turn a sharper corner on a line there. When neither of them could find any way to make the rehearsal go on any longer, there they were again, involved in what had yet to find a name in the world.

“You’re sounding fine, at least.”
"I wish that’s how I was.” His brows were drawn down. The ability to start a frown with his forehead was a marvelous stage attribute, but not one she wanted to see at the moment. “Susan? Maybe we went sort of overboard the other day,” he was trying to put it delicately, “about how bad we need to link up.”

She had been afraid of this, that now that she had brought her mind past the wrappings they each came in, he would find the tangle of color too much for them. “I categorically--”

“--disagree, don’t I know. But that doesn’t change--”

“Skin and hair,” she said as if heartily tired of hearing those words, “that’s not all we’re made of--why should those rule all else of life? We are not some kind of a stain on other people’s notion of things, we amount to more than that.”

“’Amount to’ is what I was trying to get at,” he managed to seize a bit of talking space. “Susan, I’m not that much of a bargain. When it comes to”--he visibly had to fish up the word--“providing, could be I’m on my way from broke to well-fixed, but maybe not, too. Then there’s me in general.” Trying to smile, he summed up: “Beauty’s only skin-deep, and I keep being skinned by life.”

“Put that in the poorbox,” she told him warmly. “We each have a fair idea of what we’re getting, Monty.”

“I hope you’re right about that,” relief and rue mixed in his voice, “but even so--you’re sure about us keeping on?”

“I’m set in stone.” I hope.

Monty was up and restless now. “That’s that, then. You find out how you stand with the Over Therers?”

“They can use me until after the Observance. That gives us a bit of time.”

“Take what we can get. J.J.’s lined up a musicale. Even if I have to hogtie everybody involved, I want you on hand there.”

“That’s dear of you, but--"
“Never mind dear. It’d put a stick up my back to look out over Cecil’s pointy head and see you. Besides, you deserve to be there as much as I do. We don’t have to be, what’s a nice way to put it, obvious--but I just want you in that room hearing the music we’ve put together.”

“Don’t think I wouldn’t give a year off my life to be there. Really, but no. You’ve told me yourself how swank those evenings are, and I’m only the voice teacher. That’s no leg up at all on the roost back here,” she spoke from experience.

“You’re going to be there, depend on it,” he decreed. “I know somebody you can show up with, it’ll look just fine. Don’t be a scaredy-cat, Susan. I’m enough that for both of us.”

She poked a half-willing smile back at him. “If you’re that sure. When?”

“Before I know it, almost. Friday.”

“You’ll knock the ears right off them, I know you will.” Her spirits went up at the sudden chance to hear him in front of people.

“There’s something else.” He glanced around as if the air could help him out with this. “J.J.’s booking me and Cecil a tour. Across the pond.”

“That’s wonderful,” she said, sick underneath.

“One end of Europe to the other, what he tells me. He’s not saying so, but I expect he wants to break me in on big audiences where nobody in this country can hear. Can’t exactly blame him.”

“How long?”

“That’s the catch. Half a year. I hate it like blazes, but J.J. claims that’s what it takes to cover the ground, over across.”

“That sounds right.” In that instant, Bristol, Cologne, Brest, the tens and dozens of provincial stages where she had toured, came alight in her memory like a stained-glass window; and the greater halls, the leading cities, would be thrown
"I wouldn’t say perfectly. But do I want a chance to let the songs out, Godamighty, do I ever."

"Party bunches, those can be uncomfortably close quarters." That drew her a look from him; one more instance when she had hit the nail on the head in the dark.

"Funny you say that. Let’s just say I’m not overly comfortable with these sasseny shindigs, but I can swallow them."

"Bigger crowds," she said as if speculating. "You told me back at the Broadwater that having the music stand took care of the nerves you had about those."

"That could have been truer."

"Monty, wait, you aren’t still bothered by having to face a genuine audience, are you?"

"Sometimes."

"Often?"

"Just about always. Listen, Su--Doctor Duff," he glanced around at the passersby canting inquisitive looks at him, "I get myself by the scruff of the neck and make myself face those audiences, okay? Did it before, every damned time, and I have to figure I can again. Question for you now. Do you ever let a poor beat-up singing pupil alone?"

"In this case, not until he’s perfect. You’re within a spoonful or so."

"Right. Try several shovelfuls."

They came to the el station. A polite skirt of parting. He tipped his hat, tried to joke. "Any hope for the patient, you think?"

She responded as if he was not the only one who needed steadying.

"Cures like this always take a while."
“All is forgive,” Susan resorted to a comic tragic accent that could have got her hired on the spot at the Brevoort.

The grand piano at the Brewsters’ had the type of gleam to it that comes from that assiduous polishing agent, old money. Cecil hung around the great dark lustrous instrument looking as pleased as if it was his to take home. Run your hands under hot water before touching it, did you, Cece? Monty stood by, anchoring himself into what seemed the best spot to sing from, watching as Cecil enthroned himself on the piano bench and began manipulating the follow sheets, and along with them his third beer. Prohibition, in Cecil’s opinion, had made brewing an uncertain art, and as usual he plopped a cough drop into his glass to give the beer some snap.

J.J. was down at the far end of a living room that at a minimum had to be called sumptuous, making chitchat with the heir to something or other. Monty never liked taking it on himself where Cecil was concerned, but an accompanist who was not up to the mark was the last thing this night needed. He pattycaked a brief drumbeat on the piano top, leaving fingerprints that drew Cecil’s instant attention. “Easy does it, partner,” he issued. “Those cough drops can get you.”

The pianist looked up, irked, and just as quickly learned he had better not be. Cowpoke or wrangler or whatever he was, Monty had a set to him that suggested you really ought to start herding yourself in the direction he wanted you to. And he hadn’t come out of that beating any less determined to have performances done his way and no other. Privately Cecil had figured Monty was headed for the scrap heap. But that woman, whatever kind of music witch she was, and him, however they did it the pair of them had come up with renditions that made his fingers itch, they were so good.
everything in order to have a good time. Quite a few of these, he figured, were
the sort of person who would be fun on a picnic, if it was a short enough picnic.

At last he saw Susan come in, on the much-used arm of Phil Sherman.

*Here we go, hon,* his thought cried across the room to her. *Someplace
we never thought we'd get to, let alone in a bundle.*

*Do I have enough faces for this?*

Looking at herself in the abstract, which was currently the only way she
could stand to, Susan believed herself to be as revealing and moment-by-moment
duplicitious as a mirror with multiple panels. The first reflection showed a man her
heart went to, across the room there. Somewhere on his way up Park Avenue to
join the picture, a man whom her impulses had desperately tried to fit with, that
very afternoon. And this divided version of herself, about to enter a stratospheric
evening where they would both be. She hoped she could hold together long
enough to sort herself out.

First, though, she had to survive the onslaught of hospitality.

*Delighted...acquaintance...welcome to our little evening,* was luxuriantly
drawled at her from both sides before either she or Phil could put a name on
herself. When he managed to, the hostess and host beamed expertly while they
tried to place it. Even the muscles of their smiles, Susan sensed, had pedigree.

Sussetta Brewster was of an old Virginia family, Tidewater roots as far back as the
first anchor splashes, and slender and decisive as a sceptre. Her husband, older,
possessed a high stomach, on the style of a pigeon, and had a way of leaning in
on whomever he was talking to as if offering the comfort of that hearty bosom.

As the Brewsters' gracious hovering elongated into hesitation, though, Susan
realized that her showing up with Phil Sherman did not fit expectations, rather like
a kangaroo print in the snow. She fixed a shielding smile against the determined
Now that rehearsals and musicales were at an end, meeting without
drawing notice was desperately hard. They resorted to the bridle path at first
light.

"Any trouble?" Susan asked as her horse caught up to his, the countless
seagulls and pigeons staking early claims to one of Central Park's nearly countless
monuments their only spectators.

"They figured I was looking for a job as a stable hand, is all." Monty cast
an eye over her riding outfit, a purple velvet divided skirt. "Bet they didn't ask
you that, did they."

"Grace Vandiver loaned it to me. It makes it, but it's snug."

His evaluating smile said all that was necessary.

"They'll maybe think I'm your--what's that the French have?"

"Equerry," she rolled the word. "A Two Medicine equerry, first of its
kind in the world. You're rare enough for it."

They rode without saying anything for a few minutes while they
accustomed themselves to the feel of their rental saddles and fit of their stirrups.
True daughter of her father, from the side of her eye she studied Monty's
potbellied mare and its plodding gait. Son of a cavalryman, he dolefully eyed
Susan's broadbeamed bay as it waddled along.

"Naga," he said it for both of them.

"And they call these silly things spurs."

They cantered along as best they could make the horses move, well ahead
of other horseback denizens of dawn and those were few. At that early hour, the
stilled park seemed something central to not merely the metropolitan island of
Manhattan but all the kingdom of autumn, the ramble of its gravelly outlined
barebone trees and subdued lawn greenery and quiescent waters where even the
mallards still dozed a portal between the summer that had been and the winter well
The lay of the land was not bad for their purpose, they decided. "I'd say let's try them from that coulee," Ninian provided in the same low murmur they always used when hunting.

To make sure they were playing the same hand, Donald countered: "And then?"

"It's still the old drill, isn't it. 'Ready, steady, fire.'"

"Hurry the hell up, Rathbun, dab the rope on her," Flannery encouraged or jeered, it was hard to tell which, while he more or less hazed the one-horned cow away from joining the brush expedition.

Mose flung him a look that would have taken a trooper's head off, but had no apparent effect on his fellow taker of cows. Flannery's qualifications for rustling apparently amounted to his having been in a scrape of some kind in Texas. Not that mine are a hell of a lot better, Mose had to admit to himself as the brockle-faced cow went one side of a willow clump and his lasso toss caught only wood. Easy money for a dab of hard riding, this was not turning out to be.

"Roping was not in my schooling," Mose rumbled back, but on his next throw his loop flopped over the cow's neck. She immediately bellowed and lurched deeper into the willow thicket before he could manage to dally his rope around the saddlehorn and get his horse started on dragging her out of there.

"Better see this," he heard Flannery say. "Honyockers think they're an army."

Still cinched to the creature in the brush by the lariat, Mose dubiously turned half around in his saddle. Flannery for once wasn't just wooing. The pair of men at the mouth of the coulee were a great deal closer than Mose liked to see. One figure like a mop, the other like a chopping block, both of them in antiquated infantry kneel that he had only ever seen in tattered manuals. Flannery
Finale
1925

“That may not be quite the right of it,” Wes concluded, after his necessarily sketched-in version, “in every particular. But close.” His voice had gone unusually soft. The telling of it had taken long enough that he’d had to rest his weight against the trestle table. There beside him, as if on fashion-of-the-season display, the battleworn hat reposed atop the hatbox. “Whit and I—we were the ones who found it.”

Dry-mouthed, with the hard corners of the story still bruising in her as she thought it through, Susan could see the rest of it as if though it were taking place now as puppet-play on that table. Royal cubs with the run of the ranch, he and Whit bringing the hat to their father in excited curiosity. The old manipulator, out-manipulated, his guns outgunned, pulling back to a waiting game. Angeline Rathbun and Monty, casualties of Mose’s disappearance, reduced to charitable charges. And coming home to Scotch Heaven, that day, with a bloodwrit added to their landclaims there, her father in his Jehovan determination and reliable
or two sprinkled throughout the sections that Dolph already bungles his way through.

2) Susan and Monty/Susan and Wes. Nan and Susan have asked for a bit more telescoping of Susan and Monty’s developing relationship—a few sentences throughout maybe. Conversely, they’ve also asked to see just a bit more disconnection between Susan and Wes. We know it’s there, but it’s subtle, and perhaps it should be less so for the more impenetrable heads in the world.

3) The role of the hat. Susan, Nan, and I were all a little thrown by this—as per my note on page 419. The hat seems to carry with it more of a story than would be possible. We realize that you’re an omniscient narrator from 412 to 418, but Wes seems to have something close to the same grip on this tale. We have to wonder, would a hat, however strategically placed by Ninian Duff, have said all that? Maybe there’s a way to imply that Wes knows far, far less detail than the third person does.

That’s it. Not too much, right? I’d love to discuss any of it.

All best,

[Signature]
106. Scene break?

124. 

125. Clavicle. Do they meet?

166. Why? 

171. skulked? no. Used on 211.

175. And here

179. more ital.

197. - sp? + 209 + 259

MA-reference

SP stories or stories?

Top 207 - Paint request for marriage to Duke?

217. omit comma

217 - Should any other have been with

316 - What is Mr. Quirt? Is he thinking?

35 - add Helen's as cue to reader?
I especially like the way you've interspersed Susan's diary entry in the earthquake scene.
366 - the words

368 - Bill of Exceptions?

370 - No. Although, if you want, you could add her first name, but 363.

372 - Bravo!

383 - a l'eau = boiled in cream? Sounds like water.

387 - next review and be removing prohibition.

414 - Use most specific version.
VIA FAX

December 13, 2002

Dear Ivan,

I'm done. I just packed up the pages and sent them your way for delivery tomorrow morning. This novel was an absolute joy to edit, but I'm afraid my mental powers have been drained for the moment. Therefore, I think I'm going to compose my editorial letter on Monday, when I'm fresh. I'll fax it along then. You have a great weekend.

All best,

[Signature]
December 9, 2002

Ivan Doig
17277 15th Ave. NW
Seattle, WA 98177

Dear Ivan,

Well, here’s half and then some. I hate to send manuscripts back in pieces, but this is pretty hefty piece, I suppose. I truly hope to send the rest of it back to you before the end of this week. Hey, at some point, I’ve got to do my Christmas shopping.

Regarding my edits, they’re all on the page. As you’ll see, my pencil wasn’t too heavy. When I send the rest of the manuscript, I will detail some broader suggestions. But, really, I can’t say enough of the good stuff about the book as a whole. It’s quite rare that a novel is this well-measured and moving—not just the first time through, but the second time through as well. We thank you for it.

And, of course, I’m willing to discuss anything you’d like to discuss.

All best,

[Signature]
Name
Sept - Oct
Oct - Nov not
- positioned
- 60
Mary Beth
Sarah Scheller
1st (10)
Feb -
regs read
March
Apr / May
Feb / May
next yr / great
Liz  Oct 21 '02

1 thing:
- Honesty to Susan
  - not a surprise, but her legs are
  - seems my fault?
  - no clue toward N
  - reader needs scene or moment
deeper compelling
  - NY stuff right & on!
Name: Norris
- great; fantastic job!
- plan to strengthen: history
- get to get back to the Crying Cab
- really intense
- Nor is public data!
- 11/1

I took Grant's edit notes:
- couple places to tweak
- trim in pt section?
- S's attraction to M to muddy
add sentence a growing connection
sentences on disconnection for Wes
- that a must

My incredibly well
love title
- S fantastic character
- minimally

was taken aback by her inability;
the ought to be left/owing
part of her unavable to him
- can't feel exactly what she felt
before
B trim in garden
- sounds of lessons

4 sentences - don't say much to each other
- wonders w/ understatement

telegraphing
VIA FAX

December 2, 2002

Dear Ivan,

Just a quick fax to let you know I’m not quite done yet. I know I’m running a little behind schedule, but I expect to finish the work very soon. It’s true I was hoping to finish over the holiday weekend, but sometimes those four day weekends fly by faster than the two day ones. If I’m not done by the end of this week, I’ll contact you again with an update.

It’s all going very well, by the way, and I’m thoroughly enjoying the work. Please don’t think that my slowness has anything to do with your manuscript—other than the fact that you’ve delivered such a polished piece of work. I have to be extra careful not to muck it up. I wish I had this problem with all of our authors.

All best,

Brant Rumble
Nov. 13, ‘02

one-page fax to Susan Moldow, Publisher, Scribner

Dear Susan--

Well, hey, all I had to do was to give my female protagonist the best first name in the world and the rest of the book fell into place, right?

Hugely appreciated your appraisal of Prairie Nocturne, and full kudos to you for immediately sensing Nov. 11 as the most propitious publication date; I’m still in the day-by-dayness of work on the book--hashing together the Acknowledgments at the moment--and it would have taken me until next Nov. 11 to realize, “Hey, why not bring the book out on...” I’m aware that under the S&S stadium roof this makes the book something of a sprint, instead of the pre-positioning/positioning/etcetera marathon of more than a year that Nan originally described to me, and I’ll accordingly try to be nimble at my end of things. As a start, I’ll put together what thoughts I have about any hand-selling of the book or other useful participation I can chip in and send it in to Nan, I hope by tomorrow. I gather everyone currently has the glooms over readings/signings, and heaven knows I’ve done my fill of ‘em, but I can winnow down to a list of stores that have reliably produced strong signings and durable sell-throughs in past booktours, for you and Nan and Pat Eisemann and the marketers to ponder. If you end up wanting to send me to some of them, I’m reasonably game within bounds of western weather at that season and bodily endurance at airports these days.

Looking forward to working with Brant to touch up the book as needed, and I feel immoderately lucky to have you as its publisher.

All best,

[Signature]
Via FAX (206) 542-6658

November 11, 2002

Dear Ivan,

I'm the late voice in the chorus of glee you have already heard from people here at Scribner in praise of PRAIRIE NOCTURNE. But please don't take the lateness of response for lack of enthusiasm.

Because I was literally amazed by the novel. What a host of unknown worlds you've offered up for examination while maintaining a clear, throughline with the body of your work. Of course I fell well and truly for my eponymous heroine (and what has happened to that noble and once popular girl's name in today's world—no new Susans in 25 years) and for Monty. But it was as an education—in everything from bull-baiting to operetta construction—that I found a second level of appreciation and one missing from so much serious contemporary literature. Thank you. Thank you and Bravo!

In any event, Ivan, I'm thrilled that we will publish PRAIRIE NOCTURNE and that you've given us such a perfect November 11 springboard for off-the-book page coverage.

And thanks for getting us your excellent descriptive material so quickly. As to Pennie—I was at a Costco Vendor Summit in Queens last week (believe it or not) and the only author she mentioned by name during her presentation was Ivan Doig! So I think the fix is it.

Best to Carol.

Much love and appreciation,

Susan Moldow
November 2

Ivan, Doug

P.S. Could I have a hard copy by mail?

Dear Ivan —

If you wouldn't mind writing some author questionnaires for others on our list, it would be a big help.

The two essays are pitch perfect. They make our job a piece of cake. The link to Rascal Fair, which I certainly recognized, is so much more eloquently announced through your description of Susan — and your endless curiosity about her. Thank you! Nan.
4 November 2002

Dear Ivan and Liz:

Brant finished PRAIRIE NOCTURNE over the weekend, but he’s not allowed to talk because Susan and I still have about 120 pages to go, and we sure as hell don’t want anyone telling us what really happened to Monty’s dad, or why Wes is so intent on this Monty mission.

The writing is so confident and polished, Ivan; the territory, so fascinating; and the suspense is terrific. That came as a surprise, the intensity of the Klan story.

We’ll finish tonight, and then we’ll reconsider this business of publication date. I don’t think this book needs near as much line work as MOUNTAIN TIME, so we might well be able to put it in early November, a month that Chip McGrath at the NYTimes Book Review claims he can’t find anything serious to review in.

In the meantime, would you do me a big favor? Would you see if you can fill out the two questions in the author questionnaire that the reps find most useful? One is, “How I came to Write this Book.” That’ll be very helpful in pitching the book in-house, but also in figuring out our publicity pitch, especially to National Public Radio. I agree that this is not a “historical novel,” but it’s full of fabulous history – in particular about WWI and about the KKK in the West – and that will give us more publicity opportunities than usual for fiction. Also, give us your description of the book. We can use the old questionnaire to fill in the other blanks, but those two questions, quickly answered, would help enormously.

Congratulations, Ivan. We’re thrilled so far, and expect to be even more so.
2-page FAX to Nan Graham, editor-in-chief, Scribner

Nan, hi--

Appreciated the thus-far report on the reading of NOCTURNE. I'll get going on your damnable pair of questionnaire questions in the morning, and they may take a couple of days--okay if I fax them in to you probably Thursday? If there's more of a breakneck hurry than that, let me know.

Meantime, I thought you might like to see a Klan membership card to tide you over. Found a whole Klavern's worth in the archives of the Montana Historical Society. This particular one doesn't have the guy's vital statistics, but note the dues: 66 2/3 cents (ignore the dollar sign--the bastards were too lazy to change it to $ on the form) per month), i.e. $2 for 3 months but recorded in this cabalistic 6666 format. Already spooky, huh?

The WWI history is also astonishing; a few of Wes's details I picked up from a Historical Society copy of a captain's diary that had retrieved from a city dump.

Will try to boil all this down into succulence. Keep reading.

Best,

[Signature]
November 4, 2002

Dear Ivan,

As per Nan’s fax, here is a copy of the Author Questionnaire you filled out for Mountain Time. There are only a couple of items that require revisiting for Prairie Nocturne:

1) Page 6—author’s description of the book
2) Page 9—“how you came to write this book”

Beyond those two bits, we can cut and paste the rest. You can email (or fax or mail) your answers, and we’ll pull everything together and have it typed up in the usual format.

As Nan mentioned, I’m not allowed to say anything to her and Susan about what I know now that I’ve finished, but I’m pretty sure I can say something to you. So, out with it then: It’s a wonderful novel. The central relationship is so incredibly powerful, especially placed alongside the hideous presence of the Klan. Such a tremendous juxtaposition of love and hate. When Monty makes it to New York, I’m so relieved, and then you lay us out with a firm left hook. Then another resurrection, and a finale that is truly exceptional. I look forward to being some small part of this publication.

All best,

P.S. What is your email address?
Call me if you have questions - (212) 632-4932
Nov. 6, 2002

4-page fax to Nan Graham, editor-in-chief, Scribner

Nan, hi again for the umpteenth time today--

Here are the book description and "How I came to write..." entries, plus a mildly updated bio sheet to supplement the questionnaire. Couple of other quick updates in the q'airre: I do now have a website--IvanDoig.com--although it needs some updating which I'll get done by, oh, January or so. And the question about warehouse clubs: we have a considerable ally in Penny Clark Ianicello, the buyer for Costco, who recently featured *This House of Sky* as her pick of the month, and effused about my description of *Prairie Nocturne* when I called to thank her.

All for now. Will await Brant's guiding light. You made my day--week, month, year--with your *Prairie Nocturne* hymn of praise.

Best,

[Signature]

Ivan Doig
Ivan Doig was born in Montana in 1939 and grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front, the dramatic landscape that has inspired much of his writing. His first book, *This House of Sky*, was a finalist for the National Book Award in contemporary thought. "The language begins in western territory and experience but in the hands of an artist it touches all landscape and all life," Robert Kirsch wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*. "Doig is such an artist." Richard Critchfield added in the *Washington Post*: "Nor is Doig’s gift merely literary. Besides his intuitions and artistry there is the iron purpose of an ex-ranchhand who has earned his Ph.D. in history." His career has been honored with the lifetime “Distinguished Achievement” award by the Western Literature Association, and in the century’s-end *San Francisco Chronicle* polls to name the best Western novels and works of non-fiction, he is the only living writer with books in the top dozen of both lists: *English Creek* in fiction and *This House of Sky* in non-fiction. He and his wife Carol divide their time between his home in Seattle and the places his writing takes him.

Books and awards:

*This House of Sky*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978; Harvest paperback; nominated for the National Book Award; winner of The Christopher Award; chosen “best book about Montana” in *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* readers’ poll; more than 185,000 copies have been sold in the U.S.

*Winter Brothers*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980; Harvest paperback; Governor’s Writers Award; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence; adapted for television by KCTS, Seattle.


*Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, Atheneum, 1987, and Scribner paperback; Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for Literary Excellence; his most popular book, with more than 200,000 copies sold.


*Bucking the Sun*, Simon and Schuster, 1996, and Scribner paperback; winner of the Governor’s Writers Award.


*For further information see* Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 49, pp. 103-5 or Who’s Who.
Fireflies at the Parthenon synopsis

"Susan Duff was liberal with the night," the story begins. "The hours beyond dark she counted as her own, free and clear of beginner lessons and approximations to music. It was nearing one, she had just begun to salt away another day between diary covers, when she heard the turn of a key in the front door and then the rhythm of him coming up the stairs to her for the first time in four years."

He is Archer Williamson, the business and political scion of a cattle-empire family. Archie--"incorably married," in Susan's phrase for him--was forced out of a governor's race, and his public career ended, by foes within his own party who knew of his affair with Susan. This night in the mid-1920's, he says he has a singing pupil for her, whose tutelage he will pay. Susan studies Archer, the window behind him framing the state capital dome--"the copper helmet of government that she had cost him"--and his limousine with his black chauffeur, Monty, waiting outside in the flurry of the winter's first snowfall, and she skeptically asks who in this world means that much to him. He looks stunned at her question, obviously not having thought of it that way, but he half turns toward the scene outside and tells her: "Monty."

Catch a firefly, string it by the ring on your finger, and you wear a live, pulsing jewel until its glow gradually extinguishes. The flare of involvement that Archie sets off here, in Susan's domain of night, lights the saga of these three characters all the way from Montana's ins-and-outs of striving and power to New York and the Harlem Renaissance. Monty, fully named Montmorency Rathbun, is known to Susan from their growing-up years in the Two Medicine country--he is the descendant of a "buffalo soldier," the black troopers sent west to fight Indians--and yet an enforced stranger because of the racial divide. When she realizes he possesses a stunning voice, untrained but vibrantly born of spirituals, Susan joins Archie's Pygmalion-like project to launch Monty on a singing career. And so, from the political corridors and attired drawing rooms of Helena, by way of a harrowing scene of a snowed-in train on Archie's branch railroad in the Two Medicine country, the three go east to try to affix Monty's star in the musical firmament. Their crossed fates, as Susan and Monty must cope with their growing attraction to each other across the era's dangerous barrier of color, as Archie's motives unsettle everyone including himself, will make a deeply longitudinal novel, into everlasting questions of allegiance, the hold of the past, and the costs of love and career.

As with This House of Sky, this is a story whose shoulder I have peered over for most of my life. Monty's real-life counterpart, Taylor Gordon, was the only black man in my Montana hometown and his singing voice did carry him to Harlem, and for that matter Carnegie Hall, briefly in the 1920's. I tape-recorded his memories of those times not long before he died, familyless, in 1971, and his papers and other Harlem Renaissance archival holdings are rich with detail. The baronial West, the Archie Williamson's of the world, I see as a perfect counterpoint to a life such as Monty/Taylor's, endowed with simply talent. As for Susan Duff, who will be the central voice and distinctive sensibility of this novel, she first came into my pages as a bossy indomitable schoolgirl in Dancing at the Rascal Fair and has demanded her own book ever since. I look forward to making this trio into the incandescent cast of characters of Fireflies at the Parthenon.

###
October 02,

Dear Ivan and Liz -

I'm afraid we're all backed up
and downstream around here. I'm so

Sorry. Susan, Brant and I will

finish reading this weekend.

Love everything so far, but am barely

past where I left off last year.

All best. More soon (ASAP)

and again, apologies.

[Signature]
Nan Graham  
Editor-in-Chief  
Scribner  
1230 Avenue of Americas  
New York NY 10020

Dear Nan—

Susan, Monty, Wes, and their doings are now in your care. I hope you find their company as intriguing as it’s been to me while I worked on them.

One piece of thinking that quite consciously guided me in this book I should pass along to you. It’s my belief that *Prairie Nocturne* shouldn’t be positioned or described or whatever as a historical novel, because while it has plenty of history’s laws of gravity to it, it also has all the imagination and personal velocity for the characters I’ve been able to summon. Drama, stagecraft on the page, lives being mythically tinged, whatever you want to call it, but I’ve greatly tried to put a dimension beyond historical fidelity into the story of these characters. For example, I thought up the Over There Memorial and archive purely to power some of the plot developments for Susan and Wes; but in researching it, lo, there were sundry World War One memorial projects, one of them in the very town I’d chosen, St. Mihiel. History following imagination instead of vice versa in these pages, but the soundness of historical research providing the crystalizing details of scenes, I guess is how I’d put it. Probably I’d like to include in the front matter, where an epigraph page usually runs, something like this: The guiding strictures of this work of fiction are the words of Peter Brook, who as a stage director has sought to imbue storytelling, as he put it, with “the closeness of reality and the distance of myth, because if there is no distance you aren’t amazed, and if there is no closeness you aren’t moved.”

Well, over to you now, to see how amazing and moving we can make this. How about we make the publication date April of ’04. (Naturally, if there’s a palace revolution in the way of doing things within the S&S empire and it’s decided to speed things up, I still stand ready for next September.) We’re permission-free on the sundry songs, because except for a couple of bits of traditional spirituals early in the book and a few old lines of Robert Burns, I made ‘em up. There are a couple of pages of acknowledgments I need to work up yet, when I catch my breath. Ah, and in your scheduling, please pencil in that I’m going to be away during the last half of January, okay? Looking forward to hearing from you.

All best,
one-page fax to Nan Graham, editor-in-chief, Scribner

Nan, hi again--

You’ll be glad to know that I’m not one who has to ask where the summer has gone, because it went into work on Prairie Nocturne, tooth and nail. Right now I’m working on the absolute last scene. I’ll have that under control by the time I have to leave town for a week—will be away Sept. 16-23—and then the ms needs a little combing out and brushing up, and then it goes to you. Barring utter catastrophe, let’s say I’ll send it in between mid-October and November 1 at the very latest, and I think there’s a real good shot at the middle of October, okay? Let me know how this sounds.

As to how the book is stacking up, it feels to me like it has a lot going for it: big walloping story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Am much looking forward to ushering it to your desk from mine.

Hope all is well with you. Carol and I are thriving, although I had a brief writer’s nightmare mid-summer when the Pacific Northwest Writers Conference gave me a “lifetime excellence” award and the hollandaise sauce at the banquet laid me low for about three days.

All best,
Liz phone call, Jan. '02, Scribner has hired 2 new editors, Colin Harrison from Harper & Ileene Smith.
1/4/02

Dear [Name],

Hope all's well with you and Carl and Prairie. Not sure.

Loved the Holiday greeting.

Here's Tim Winton's new book —

tough and violent and pretty
dark and romantic, too.

I think he's done an amazing

job. Know you helped on The Riders.

Thought you'd be interested.

In case ever.

Nan

Scribner

Nan Graham

Vice President & Editor-in-Chief

Simon & Schuster, Inc.

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24 Sept. '01

one-page FAX to Nan Graham, Editor-in-chief, Scribner

Nan, hi--

You Tribeca dwellers must really have had the bad edge of life to deal with lately. Just wanted to start this workweek by saying I hope the weeks ahead are greatly better times for you and yours.

All best,

[Signature]
8/28/01

Ivan,

Vernon Reid? Sounds good to me. I saw Living Colour open up for the Stones way back in 1989. I still consider it among the best concerts I’ve ever attended. I’ve never seen Dave Stewart play, but my wife, Kristin, saw them at Madison Square Garden this past spring. I was, in fact, a Black Crowes fan in high school, but I’ve kind of fallen off since. I know they’ve never been known for their manners. I have a buddy who waited on them several years ago. The band and their groupies walked out on their tab. My friend still seethes at their mention. Anyway, thanks for the details. I look forward to reading the finished manuscript next year.

Nan says hello and thanks for the scoop as well.

All best,

Brant
Nan Graham  
Editor-in-Chief  
Scribner  
1230 Avenue of Americas  
New York NY 10020  

Dear Nan--

In addition to the beautiful people leeringly depicted in the *People* snippet, Paul Allen must have wanted a couple of average-lookers along, too, as Carol and I are just back from this St. Petersburg whizbang. Stimulating, to say the least. Halberstam, Moyers, Stoppard also there. James Watson the DNA guy, the philosopher Dan Dunnett, Martha Stewart, Robin Williams, George Lucas...I spent some time around Laurence Fishburne, by way of our buddy from the similar Alaska trip, Vernon Reid of the band Living Color; now all we have to do is to get Laurence to play Monty Rathbun in the movie version, right?

It has been an unexpectedly oblique summer, what with this St. Petersburg gold-plated junket, doing the intro for the re-issue of *The Yearling* for you guys, and next and last, a post-Labor Day speech I'm doing to civic heavy-hitters in Portland at the invitation of the governor of Oregon. Before all this started evolving, I hit the critical-mass point of manuscript I was aiming for, and have done some scene-blocking since, and by mid-September will be back at piling up the rest of *Prairie Nocturne*’s words for you. You’ll see a full draft in relatively timely fashion next year. Meanwhile, I hope you’re perking, and hugs and tickles to Susan.

All best
Honing the Science Of the Release Date

HarperCollins Plans the Timing Of 'Prey' Almost to a Nanosecond

BY BILL GOLDEIN

On the Monday before Thanksgiving, most people will be looking ahead to a short week and a four-day weekend. But at HarperCollins, it could be the busiest and most important day of the year.

That day, Nov. 25, is the carefully chosen debut date for Michael Crichton's "Prey," a science thriller about a predatory swarm of nanoparticles. It is the first book in a two-book deal that is reported to have cost the publishing house $30 million for world English-language rights.

The planning behind the date's selection, and the intensely concentrated promotion that will accompany "Prey," show how the "opening" of a major book has increasingly come to resemble the opening of a movie.

A new book by Michael Crichton or John Grisham has always been publicized with as much fanfare as possible. But the definition of big has changed in publishing, as it has in other entertainment industries. Higher advances for the elite commercial authors make publishers eager to see financial returns as quickly as possible.

Competition for the top spot on best-seller lists is more than ever a means of protecting a major investment from the consequences of potentially negative word-of-mouth opinions.

Blockbuster movies are increasingly opening "wide" on several thousand screens across the country on the same weekend. Publishers of books like Mr. Crichton's have been forced to coordinate distribution in a similar way.

Books are now effectively available from Internet retailers on publication day and are distributed more widely in nontraditional outlets, like Target and Wal-Mart, intensifying pressure to keep independent bookstores and the chains competitive.

At mass merchants, a higher standard of success — and a faster rate of sale — is expected. More accurate tracking of sales among all book retailers means that a book's commercial fate can be determined far more quickly than in the past.

On Nov. 25, Mr. Crichton will start a seven-city promotional tour, appearing on NBC's "Today Show," the requisite first stop for an author of Mr. Crichton's magnitude. Later that day, Mr. Crichton will appear on "The View" on ABC, and that evening on "The Charlie Rose Show" on PBS. The Friday before, Entertainment Weekly will publish an exclusive interview with Mr. Crichton. On Sunday, Parade will publish an article by him on nanotechnology. On Tuesday he will appear on CBS's "Early Show."

Mr. Crichton will continue to make media appearances through the beginning of December, and HarperCollins has planned a print and television advertising campaign through mid-December.

"It's more important than ever to have a fireworks display," said Patricia Eisenstadt, publicity director of Scribner, a division of Simon & Schuster, which publishes Stephen King. "And I say 'fireworks' because competitive time for publishers because of the timing.

"This is Michael Crichton's first book in three years," said Jane Friedman, HarperCollins's president and chief executive. "We're hoping people will see his face or hear the word 'Prey,' everywhere. They'll walk into a bookseller, and it will smash them in the face."

Publishers get a list of preliminary release dates of other companies' books far in advance, and pay attention. "You see which are available," said one publishing executive who insisted on anonymity. "Or you take the tent-pole approach, and you choose a date and say, 'Everybody, get out of my way.'"

Cathy Hemmig, president, and publisher of HarperCollins General Books Group, said of the decision about the release date of "Prey," "We certainly cruised what other publishers were doing."

The fall is always a fiercely competitive time for publishers because book sales are strongest in the fourth quarter of the year. Mr. Crichton's publication day comes at the last possible moment to exploit the full month of increased traffic in bookstores during the Christmas season.

The advantage of Nov. 25 is that HarperCollins avoids the traffic jam on the fiction best-seller list in The New York Times Book Review on Sunday. New books by Danielle Steel, Anne Rice, Maeve Binchy, Jan Karon and Scott Turow all went on sale during the last week of October and will debut on the list simultaneously. Sales of these books may have peaked their first week out, and in any case are likely to peak before Mr. Crichton's book reaches stores.

For publishers and booksellers, the growing sophistication in the forecasting and tracking of sales has had an impact.

"We track dailies like the movies track dailies," Ms. Friedman said of HarperCollins's proprietary system. "Barnes & Noble knows what it sells every single minute. Technology has helped the publishing industry, and from Day 1 we'll know the sales and extrapolate from that."

"Prey" is Mr. Crichton's first book for HarperCollins. His first book, "The Andromeda Strain," was published in 1969 by Knopf, where he worked closely with Ms. Friedman for three decades before she left the company in 1997 to run HarperCollins. His 1999 book, "Timeline," sold about 1.5 million copies in hardcover, the number of copies of "Prey" that HarperCollins is initially shipping. HarperCollins will also publish three of Mr. Crichton's older titles in paperback and will acquire more of his backlog as reprint licenses expire.

Two weeks before the publication of "Prey," the signs are auspicious. Barnes & Noble has placed what its fiction buyer, Sessilee Hensley, calls the chain's largest initial order for a fiction book this year. Overall sales at Barnes & Noble "are kind of soft," said Bob Weittrak, vice president for merchandising. Adding Mr. Crichton to the holiday mix "was one of the best announcements any publisher could give us this year," he said.

Ms. Hensley did not need to read the book before ordering it, saying that its success would depend more on "marketing and the timing than anything else."

"I know he'll deliver," she added. "He's Michael Crichton."

HarperCollins can only pray that the public will agree with her.
When Interpublic announces results this week, it may say more about accounting irregularities.

WHEN the Interpublic Group of Companies announces its third-quarter earnings on Wednesday, it faces a warning twice of financial setbacks and shortfalls — is expected to learn that the advertising giant’s account- ing irregularities are more extensive than had been feared just four weeks ago.

In August, Interpublic disclosed unexpectedly that the irregularities, which had been sweeping through European operations of its largest division, the McCann-Erickson World Group, required the company to restate five years of earnings, like a $68.5 million pretax charge. On Oct. 16, Interpublic announced that a continuing investigation had forced an adjustment upward to a figure “not expected to exceed $120 million.”

The amount of the latest restatement could not be determined, as the company’s internal investigation continues to scrutinize thousands of invoices at McCann-Erickson’s European division. Philippe Kra- koparty, a spokesman for Interpublic in New York, declined to comment when reached late Friday.

The coming disclosure by Interpublic, whose earnings make it the world’s largest advertising company, intensifies the pressure on top executives to fix the financial and operational problems that have caused its stock to plunge. Investors’ clients are wary and its competi- tors to salivate.

Interpublic has already begun making changes. A dozen top executives at several central large divisions, like the FCB Group and Initiative Media, have been dismissed. Senior man- agers at Interpublic agencies, notorious for their low tolerance for change, have been cut, apparently, are being urged to play nicely together. And Salvatore La- Greca, the vice chairman and chief finance officer at McCann-Erickson, announced last month that he would step down in early 2003.

In the next week or two, Interpub- lic’s board of directors is expected to con- duct a review of why cable prices have climbed so steeply. Since 1996, cable rates have risen 36 percent, almost three times the pace of infla- tion, the Consumers Union said.

While he has not taken a position on the FCC’s proposed rules for its satellite television rival Direc- TV, which the Justice Department and F.C.C. have both rejected, Sena- tor McCain has said that the satellite industry appears to be asking to make inroads into cable’s market share. He has also criticized the broadcast industry for what he considers excessive reliance on the transition to digital television.

A maverick proposal is the sena- tor’s call to broadcasters to grant free air time for political candidates — a campaign reform measure which the National Association of Broadcasters, one of the largest and most powerful lobbying groups, strictly opposes. Senator McCain

The company will take a charge, but how big will it be?

keters like Coca-Cola, General Mo- tors, Nestle and Unilever, is being watched with a mixture of fascina- tion and dread both inside and out- side the agency company, which has been estimated at $67 trillion by the trade publication Advertising Age.

Interpublic, as well as other agency companies, like the Omnicom Group and the WPP Group, has been scrutinized by the drastic downturn in advertising spending, leading to the worst results for the advertising industry in the 1990's. It suffers from a morning-after hangover from scores of acquisitions made in the 1990's.

Added to those difficulties are problems of Interpublic’s own making, including larger-than-expected losses at Octagon, a sports-market- ing division that owns motor-racing tracks.

One nonfinancial complication is Interpublic’s corporate culture. It stubbornly clings to a to-each-its-own-pace philosophy that has led Omnicom and WPP to move more adroitly to encourage collaboration among their agencies.

Also, interviews with more than a dozen current and former high-rank- ing managers of Interpublic and its agencies indicate that the blame game is ongoing. "Who lost Interpublic?" and "Who won Interpublic?"