

**T H E D I S A P P E A R E D**

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**Olympia Press**



Dedicated to the memory of  
**Desmond Flower**  
*of Cassell*  
*for too many reasons to list here*

*Book 1*

**A Diary of Flight**

*'Do not set sail*

*for it is windy*

*and tomorrow*

*it will be calm*

*and then you will be*

*free to go.'*

ARTHUR WHALEY



## Chapter 1

*Santiago, Chile. April*  
*The Whisper of Fear*

**In places in our world** - and in our time - Argentina, Chile, Central America, in Tibet, the Balkans in Kosovo, the simple word '*Disappeared*' has taken on a very lonely, secret meaning.

A flavour of bitterness and sadness, because for all the people of these and many other places the word itself encompasses hard reality, a whole continent of personal yet curiously shared fears. Fears which

suddenly, one day, one man, Pablo, began quickly and painfully to understand.

The fact was that by inheriting the luxury of survival, quite by chance, this man had become, by default, a privileged witness to a crime perversely committed by those close to him: other Chileans, his countrymen.

Nineteen seventy four, nineteen seventy five. In a while one would have expected that of course by it's dynamic, and by the way that collective memory is massaged by politics, time would change the character of the original crime in some transitory way. Except that Pablo, by this time living in our bright media world a few seconds away, had begun to see this all in a new bright, especially dreadful, and staccato perspective, defined with that fractured sharpness from which almost random, yet definite images spontaneously and unexpectedly spill over into life.

**It would never let him alone.** How could you expect that? The knowledge that had been impressed upon him as a by-product of the violence of knowing these places, those people: the coldness of television images as he saw these horrors reported, such that he knew the feel, the touch of familiar situations, the passage of some manufactured chaos, trauma. At least, not then. Perhaps he would die with the experience somehow fresh in his mind.

But that was not all: such pain became refined in a particular way, because whilst experiencing the ultimate dread of the existential eye witness - the pain of living a life of relative comfort amidst the distant torment of those he loved - and by being related to these things by reason of his own sadness and loss - it was clear that he had been an unwitting agent of at least some of that evil, whilst ironically becoming a victim himself.

**And so** Pablo's nameless disease grew, the condition ever more chronic; his fears fired by the fact that from now on this particular life would only ever be one lived at second-hand, fear and loss resident in the back of his mind every single day, making his skin creep, itching, almost physical like a ghost limb, invisible yet wholly existent, a banshee wailing away in the lonely dark, over *there*. Every long day. Every long moment. Only ever over *there*.

After all it had been merely by luck, by accident, the vaguest parallel of chance, that he had survived - but only to pay the price by becoming a chronicler of other people's dread, fear, suffering, not actually *Disappeared* himself but anyway transparent in his own mind, because these experiences would always be at second hand for him, coward as he was, and because he would always thus think of himself as being the

proxy of those who had *Disappeared* into that vacuous tunnel of dark and silence.

Pablo would always be the silent witness, the inchoate survivor. The damned.

"*Why?*" That recurrent dream.

**Why?** Because in the fact of *Disappearance* there is only silence, in every way, that is the condition of it's existence, the fact of non-existence, because to be Disappeared is to have your voice and your face stolen from you while you are still existing, whilst in that time as the silence of unknowing grows ever greater and more impenetrable, another silence, the perverse sad silence of misunderstanding, begins to wax, laying cold as ice in everyone *else's* mind.

**But that is not to forget *darkness*:** the darkness of not knowing, the darkness of forgiveness without knowledge, *dark* death, *dark* soil over a blank grave.

Thus it is that the Disappeared become transparent, damned, inhabiting another empty version of some kind of reality, and thus fade from life and from memory like ghosts in the dark.

Imagine that nobody knows you any more, while you are not yet a memory, after all, you never died. Or did you?

When you are *Disappeared* you lose your voice, you are darkness - have nothing, no rights and no existence - gain only distant memory. You truly have vanished from human experience, existence, from those who one day a long time ago saw you for a moment and then lost you, forgot you.

**To Pablo** no simple phrase could express his lack of understanding, as it could never mine or yours, no "*como se dice*" could ever express his horror, his lack of grasp of what could happen through cold steel and pain *to others*.

This thus led in Pablo to a state of mind which defies description: a bizarre, obsessive lack of understanding had woven itself around him, grown in the intersticing time like an obsession about sight held by a blind man, a sticky spiders web, an opera of conviction, an imagination of what could be, painfully always only possible in theory, forever out of reach.

Which fact, coupled with other fears - more imagined than unknown - fears of losing the grasp of this terrible moment like sliding off a rock and falling, falling: described the state of his life. The thought was all he really possessed now, at a vertiginous moment which was still really in *his* time, but which would slide through his fingers and vanish without warning as if it had never existed, were he to relax his grip upon it: as if the moment itself might be forever *Disappeared*.

What we in our worlds see as reality has an extraordinary quality - it does not exist, though at any moment it is palpable, real, hard, solid. Concrete. Reality escapes from your fingers the second you think to retain it. And reality was that for him. Reality was the lost flow of many real days, now gone.

**There was a time** long ago before he had begun to age, when he would have described himself as *comfortable*, part of the '*Junkers*' the '*Bourgeoisie*'. Polyglot, liberal, with the usual weakness of the cultured for those little expected luxuries with which to assuage their forgetfulness; unthinking, except about the successes of his small life.

But then that world up-ended in a dreadful dying moment and such memories of comfort became part of Pablo's fear. Not simply that newly kindled fear of loss: but fear like a hammer in his mind, brutalising him again and again: not rational or logical or about anything except lost things: seeping into his skin like lice. And coupled with that new fear of not being, of being transparent, of perhaps existing but maybe of not.... Of losing more than the everything that he had lost already....

**Moments as cold to his heart** as these would plague Pablo all his life and he knew that. There could be no comfort now; it seemed that as certain as

death was the frailty of such memory: as limited by its time as the cry of a blue bird in an arid desert of Man's making. Would he have to die before someone else could understand how much pain there was in loss? And could that be your pain if he were you?

At first Pablo found solace in sleep, but in the wintry desert of his slumbering mind there were living skeletons aplenty, come to haunt him, sighing in the terrifying cold fogs of the lost dark.

**That nightmare come again to plague him,** raise his blood, bring tears of hatred and fear into his eyes.

No, not *his* eyes, her eyes. His dreams visited him spitefully, came again and again against his will: and in them he would see with awful clarity and brightness those eyes which through time he had almost learned to forget: beautiful Pilar's eyes.

**In his sleep,** again and again, he began to see those now empty eyes repeated - somehow reflected in his, the neon of his imagination and the video of his recollection winking on and on, on and on, to torture him another way. Forever

Forever - dead, glazed in that delicate aspic of inertia that brings death in its wake, forgiveness and fulfilment in one empty lonely colourless second. There is no turning back at such a moment. You lose time, *and then it loses you.*

Memory winding back like a tape, sticking against the capstan; reminding him mercilessly:

*'How the wind whistled as we walked, twining our fingers.'*

**Santiago** had never been a particularly beautiful city, partly industrial, partly administrative and partly living on it's memories. And Santiago's backdrop, those gorgeous distant Andes, became in some abstract way the making of their love. Santiago would forever remain the frame of frozen lives. Stopped at some secret moment, like a picture on your wall.

No dreams of ego or loss, only moments of hope and knowledge. His and Pilar's shared dreams those of the permanence of their admiration, that perfect, required essential.

He had thought of this relationship; *them* as permanent as a rock (how stupid, how childish, how absurd).

And now? Their love was just a memory, a distant map of their shared lives. Only the loss uncovered occasionally and painfully as forgotten things always are, by time: marks upon the dust of time. Unreachable distances covered only in the span of memory, mortality.

Very quickly, this too would become merely a fragment in the map of time, forgotten. Fifty years

maybe. When he was dead. Only God could know that.

**With the shock of ice** against skin, instant sensation. He was aware that he had had a waking dream before this transient version of reality.

*the track.....*

The main artery of it: the rapid passing of time and the exchange of velocity for space: '*La Carreterria Colombiana*'; a passage of memory, a tunnel in the dark. Perhaps a motor road.

Yellow lines flashing by in the scheme of the headlight beams and whistling restless weight of wind against the screen. Centre markings clicking by like morse. *Dab Dab Dab, Dit Dab Dit.*

Something rapping against the dashboard surround inside. Now only the sounds remembered. *Clack, Clap, Dit, Dab, Dit.*

**An ice cold road**, wind whipping and whining across the jagged edges of this edge, its teeth the concrete blocks that lined the north-west side of a frontier, and this entombed margin itself twisting its way over the mountain passes and across a line in his mind.

Dreading that long distant pass, the frontier of his most secret, most feared dreams.

Now, in his reverie, sleep, memory, he saw his hand reach across the car, saw that strong chin that he knew, *hers* - Pilar's chin, suddenly outlined by an electronic battery of lights, against the hidden glares and softnesses of the uneven light of that time of the year so high in the cordillera and so late in the night.

He slept fitfully, then the memory, no, the unavoidable reality of her beauty made Pablo recoil, for he choked, then coughed in his mind, in his deepest slumber, as if a veil had been lifted by an unseen hand.

He would write one day that beauty it is that has permanence, but only in the deep resource of the mind - while existence itself flees before your eyes.

Then he detected something from the corner of his eye: a movement perhaps - no, nothing.

Was it a shadow?

"Is that ...?"

In his sleep he started, passed a weary hand across his chin; the next moment looked across at Pilar and admired the fine blonde whisper of hair on her cheek laid flat by the airstream.

The elbow of his coat rimed with frost.

Crazy, irrelevant thoughts, Escaping from him as he ran for his life. *'The sensation of speed has always delighted Pilar.'* How absurd of him to think that.

Far below the car as it sped along the *carreterria*, plantations and groves of trees; now black, then deep blue.

Sea glistening like oil and ice between broken headlands, sparkling as the tone of the motor fell slightly.

Memory is always fugitive.

They climbed through another long open pass, empty, silent. Quite alone.

Pablo flicked the lights onto high beam, the ribbon of tarmac extending into a whirling infinity of the dark.

Now they sped into a black tunnel, the air thick with bats and dust, seeing then only disembodied touches of reflective shattered colour; the track of frightened eyes in the air.

No markings. A frontier to memory.

And all gone, all dead, now.

**Accelerating** like a ferris wheel out of sync in darkness that cannot stop. A horror of falling at great speed.

**He remembered it now.** That last, dark exhausted night, running away from him as if possessed with it's own secret, torturing banshee.

A torrent of air hammering upon the body of the car.

Now, they were through a deepcut pass, passing down a long incline, all at once in the total silence and running cold sweat of fear.

He looked across at her for perhaps the thousandth time that night, seeking to say all those important, pointless, forgotten things he should have said, had meant to have said, quickly, in the time remaining between them as her life ran away from him, dwindled like sand through his fingers. There was too much to say, now desperate, too much unsaid. Those wasted silences that they had shared. Was there any point in loving her, touching her or thinking about her: maybe just saying '*Te ador*'.

**In his memory**, the picture of her face, moist, though the the temperature was well below zero. He struggled to make the heater work (though it had never worked properly), the ducts behind the windscreen blocked with the detritus of *his* family life gone by; cigarette packets, torn pieces of paper, lost maps, lollipop sticks, a forgotten cigar. His fingers sought to clear the debris away, caught a sharp edge. A small pain, some blood, first blood, on his fingers....

Now a wide long deep stretch of road, forest or some kind of savannah, blurred, either side, beckoning. '*Drive into me, -Disappear*'.

For a moment he fought the wind to gain control of the car.

Total, total blank. Beckoning dark frontiers

**Exhaustion.** No favours left to give, to return, no duties left undone.

Pilar driving, to ease his exhaustion, for he would have to run on and on, he needed whatever strength he could muster to start the race again and again. Perhaps forever. No words, time unreeling. Filling the tank from a jerrycan on an empty stretch of black tarmac.

As first light touched the high tops of the trees Pilar slowed the car slightly and it slewed. Then all at once she said:

"We've come at least four hundred kilometres".

In her mind the words tailed off; she turned to Pablo and the speed of the car dropped a little more: she meant to say '*I have to leave you now, maybe forever*', but choked back the words in her mind, so instead she said:

"Its too dangerous to go further now...I must go back to the children - want you to stop off...you know I have some old family friends..."

Pablo saw those words, never to be spoken, he said:

"*No....!*", touched by an impossible mixture of dread and regret.

She looked at him once more, tightened her mouth, started to react, cancelled the thought, and chased the side of her tired right eye with the red painted nail of her little finger, looked into the overwhelming dark and then once again looked at him and said:

"OK. You know who I mean, okay: its not a question of them, its a question of whether you can get away now, Pablo. Please forget about me, I shall meet you once this is over...."

"Forgive me, my darling Pilar..." *Life unwinding.*

***Life unwinding...*** Even at that moment, before it really was all over for them, or the real horrors had for that matter truly begun, this thought left him suddenly lonely, bereft, dying, longing, a pain gathering in his stomach, an emptiness in his mind. Pablo knew that he had seen the stamp of his time on it, the marks of fact and loss, as final as anything could ever be. If he escaped, Pilar would be arrested, that much seemed clear.... and the children? Pablo could not understand just what she had meant with those words, sacrifice or .....*Why?* Perhaps she was right, *maybe she knew.....*

But he never could have that knowledge now. He never would be enabled to understand. The data would never be there for him to assemble it with any

certainty. Life was never like that; it would have been only too easy.

## Chapter Two

### *The Song of the Nightmare.*

Winding down mountain roads, back into memory, in-between winds and through rains, raising a plume of dust as they raced across a valley, at some almost forgotten moment they had come across an old adobe shack in a worn, nameless valley.

It was there where he recalled a cantina where Pilar had once befriended the Patron. Sitting out in the sun watching the vaqueros, toying with the dirt, scratching pictures and loving icons of graffiti in the dust with dry twigs. All that manufactured, crazy, languid, pleasant idleness in the eye of the hurricane.

But bright flashes across his eyes brought him back, back to the hard steel of the light, cutting across ravines suddenly, without warning like molten steel. This today, buzzards wheeled overhead in the blinding haze.

History haunted him. That last today... Pilar's skin dry, edged and rhimed with a glaze of salt-sand.

He looked secretly covertly and jealously, yes, sideways, at her eyes. Pablo had seen that rare flaxen hair on her shoulders skip with the force of the whip of the wind. Prizing, coveting, envious.

Then, he knew that such moments were rare. And now he knew, with the sudden solid knell of the tomb, that those moments had escaped. Now, they were lost.

No, to retrace a thought in his mind - wrong syntax, not rare, but prized. And precious enough to be the objects of a sort of fear, like the fear of dying: the obsession of complete loss. Now gone. In the tunnel of the dark.

**In the past**, echoing slightly, background desire, like distant noise.

**They, Pablo and Pilar** had developed a resistance to that which was outside.

"I'm dry, really dry"

"Well, we'll stop here", he had said.

They climbed stiffly out of the car and walked across the dust strip that was the road. Pilar sat on the bench by the wall of the cantina while Pablo ordered himself a coffee, a glass of bitter spirit for her.

"Do you have Cynar?"

It seemed absurd, but in those faraway days they had had a lifetime to sit in the shade; luxuriating, speculating, watching, people drifting by.

In his dream, his nightmare, Pilar leant across to him:

"The thing is.." she said. And then quickly, as if suddenly caught off guard, in a rush for some reason - but drowned by mysterious noise, she stopped, never to complete that moment. So he never heard the mystery of those words. Perhaps they were a song, though the tune never reached him

The image of her mouth froze in his mind. An imprint that would never leave him.

In silence. The Song of the Nightmare. Always in silence.

*Montevideo Uruguay, August*  
*Hotel Los Angeles*

**The lobby of the hotel** all at once crowded. And in him, now a great loneliness.

But loneliness is all around us, we all sweat, have fear. Why fear the commonplace?

Fear within Pablo's chest, fear within his arms, soft and palpable, heavy as lead.

His face, hot, flushed, and torpid. Fear was in the time of day, and in the deep cold night: fear; Chile, Argentina, now Uruguay.

Commonplace, anywhere, here. Where?

Suddenly he awoke from a reverie. He had heard something moving outside the window. Someone muttering something again, a chance remark perhaps? Or was it his imagination? Could that be? Was someone softly calling him? .."*PABLO!*"..

He looked around on the pillow. The darkness had the bright unearthly blue of ultra violet: as his fingers sought the steel of the gun, it glistened as if soaked with seaspray, encrystalled.

To the butane of his imagination the flash of light under the door. 'No, this can't be right!' He spoke as if it were all some perverse dream: 'No this can't be right!'

Now he spoke aloud.

"Jake...is that you?"

**He could see the words**, like a curse, the shape of the lips....had Pilar said -

"Will we be together for always?"

It was then - on one of those evenings when the air seems to bear the light elegance of honey, when the

light kisses hair and skin and makes the senses aware of just how good it can be to be alive.

Pilar had said this in a shadow, her eyes missing the flicker of pain across his face. Then the light was once more upon her. Pablo always remembered her skin, the texture of her hair: in fact he would remember it as long as he lived.

The fine line of her nose and her lips were furred by the movement of her blonde mane, furred by distance and loss, now the pain of time. That was her signature in his mind, all at once he wanted to kiss her *now*, but instead he found himself saying:

*"As long as we live"*

He had held himself back and now found hatefully that it had all run away from him- like blood from a dying man.

The night was split by a shout of laughter.

**Now the ghosts were come to haunt him,** take him. The nightmare once more upon him:

*"Nothing will part us, ever..."*

"Don't say that"

*"No, I mean, I will wait for you."*

"Darling, I know you will- I know you will!"

**He had left her by the road** in the misting ice, the growing daylight of a new dreadful moment. Had he left her to die, in his cowardice?

Back to this room, this night.

He spoke again in the darkness:

*"Jake?"*

Nothing moved. Then a voice, no, more a harsh whisper:

*"Jaime...Jaime...que haces hombre?"*

**It could be only one thing.** He all at once shook and simultaneously began to pour copiously with sweat, scrabbling around in the sheets for the skittering Beretta; that satire, that whisper again:

*"Nada, hombre.."*

A beat, then:

*"Bien, vale..."*

He waited some moments in this dream..... or was it become some sort of waking?, the Beretta smeared, damp in his palm. With twitching fingers he drew the slide back and heard the round click into the breech and the hammer tock.

Now he held the weapon in both hands. Pointed the weapon at blank darkness, the muscles in his back convulsing in fear.

He said in a whisper, the further to find his balance, logic:

*"This can't be true...this can't be right!"*

And then he opened his eyes. Nothing had appeared to move, but in the darkness he saw again

something that took space and created light, flashed; a flash of something through the slatted blinds.

Outside in the bushes he located a hollow tap. Not an animal or a cat.

The heel of a riding boot alighting on a plank: clack, tock, tock, thump. Very distant, but he heard them, and then saw a flash of sudden green against the dark.

Of course, light. A light, through the transparency of a green leaf, illuminated veins and fibres against the glare of the reflector.

All suddenly, his senses.

Logic, into focus, sharp focus.

He threw off the remaining sheets in one movement as he started across the room.

**Stopped**, because -

Suddenly, extraordinarily - a pair of legs protruded from the ceiling.

Thus, half way across the room he froze. He stumbled in the glaze of sleep, cannoned against the wardrobe, fumbled with the slippery Beretta, bucking with all his fears.

Again, without thinking, he brought the gun at half-cock straight along the line of his fingers, the slide back as far as it would go, and as he did that the metal caught on his palm, the injector took a nick out of the skin and he winced and (as it missed his thumb)

tripped the hammer which at half-cock had his skin by its edge: then the slide slid fully back as his right thumb contacted the safety catch and the collective pain of the two small wounds caused him to lose his grip on the slide.

His right hand convulsed on the butt which bucked again, in fear, and the trigger mechanism released in a continuous movement.

Huge flame leapt from the muzzle of the pistol, seemed to strike across the room with a brazen violence all of its own, a yellow-white inverted heart: and at that instant his mind photographed the strange sight of the sole of a shoe (and the pair of legs protruding from the ceiling) sliding against the far wall as if it had suddenly become a vampire bat. A jagged tear appeared in the door frame and the report flamed back at him, wanged around the room as the metal of the cocking-piece on the Beretta clanged back and the spent shell whirled away tinkling into the darkness.

**A shock of silence** and then a muttered screech and a yowl from the creature transfixed dangling from the ceiling.

Now he realised that the figure was emerging from a trap set in the ceiling which he had only dimly seen when entering the room earlier. So this was the trap set for a traitor!

And now in all the darkness, naked, he stood there, the figure still trapped by the width of the aperture.

**All hell had broken loose** outside the hotel.

Steps clacked up the ladders outside and doors and windows seemed to whoosh open and crash down while racing boots clopped along the verandah and tripped along the stairways.

He sat down crazily amid the bedlam and wanted to weep, but death was upon him, there was no weeping now. All was lost.

Screeching like a banshee, but with fear, the Beretta in his cut hand, he grabbed what was left of his belongings, and shrieking through the night wailed through the ragged empty doorway and into the dense darkness of the bushes.

**Twenty metres** down the gravelled drive he fell into a ditch, covering himself with grime, then clambered through into a dense grove of trees, tore his body on wire, climbed over a low fence and ran across a piece of cactus covered hill.

He ran for fifteen minutes in the dark, cold air against his skin, blundering into he knew not what, clutching whatever remained of his possessions in one hand and his life and death, the Beretta, in the other.

## Chapter Three

### *Death and the Mountains..*

He sat for what seemed hours, teeth chattering, nerves jangled, stomach creased, an imaginary pneumonia of fear upon him. It was then that he took stock, for then he must.

He sat on the top of the hill in the dark, slipped clothes on to cover his scourged body, and let himself weep for a moment.

Where was that address Pilar had given him?

Miraculously the thumbed shard of cartonboard was somehow still in the top pocket of his shirt, now marked with the blood from his bleeding hand.

He had nothing more with him.

Was this all that was left?

Below him he could see the moving embers of cars, men running against lights, disorder. Now a scattered, pointless, volley of shots. Curses, orders being shouted.

A shudder of relief, despair and cold, sickness, nausea.

More shots, running, shouting. Sudden shuddering silence. Then a scuffle, disorder, the outward sign of the inward evil of men, a body impacting the ground, scuffed dust, the form of someone else being dragged by a torn shirt into sudden yellow light as a door opened and then slammed. The sound of someone being beaten, a cry of pain. Silence. More shouting. More silence. The flat blank bang of a shot being fired.

He waited for another twenty minutes to get his breath, take stock and search for those snapshots.

He turned down the hill and broke into a run, took a broken stony track west, turning again by an outcrop of rock and running east, away from the road. After an hour a helicopter with American markings flew by slowly and low, way away to his left, but still he threw himself under a rock.

Now east again, blindly. Blindly until the sun began to rise bleaching his vision, presenting him weeping before the grave of everything that he valued and that he had left behind.

For murder had become law, secrecy become security, lies become truth.

It had become a way of life, a way of feeling, a way of pretending to think and to be.

Pablo turned his face away and towards the broken desert- perhaps Bolivia, who knew where...?.. and ran on and on, forever.

*Asuncion, Paraguay, November*

*La Plaza Generalissimo*

It was a different world.

Looking out into the large square from a point of particularly generous vantage; Pablo could see first the yellow stone of the Plaza Generalissimo, and set upon its edge the peeling chiarascuro and stucco of the Plaza Revolucion,(a nice contrast in dualism) cut-in by the concrete and glass of the large American and European bank buildings.

Combined with these sensations were the sudden greens of the pine-like branches which interspersed the view, and then a complex of tattered tarmac-ed roads broken by bright gardens.

Now and then suddenly a verdant efflorescence, a luxury of jungle-like plantations: and finally the warm browns of a cloud of dust, blown at the foot of the rise of a hill in the near distance; sucked-in, Pablo supposed, by the heat of the plain before which the

yellow stone of the Plaza Generalissimo seemed to sway ever so gently and rhythmically in the rising heat.

**That November** in Asuncion was a month when temperatures topped twenty-five degrees before the night had fully faded away.

But he had peace. Peace, if only for a moment.

No news of home, there was no home now, but endless mortal space. Space.

Freezing tracks in high lost places. The Cordillera.

**Pablo's mind inexorably wound** back through such contrast, to those last lost days of balance....it was then, in distress, that he had fled losing all that he had ever held dear, run before his pursuers like an animal at bay. Stumbling.

After that hopeless hour he had turned his face away and begun to climb the last tortuous kilometres of pink granite so close to the roof of that fastness: so cold and so barren that nobody would believe that it was there. A good place to start to fight again.

A high lost kingdom where civilisations waxed: Aztecs, Toltecs, Mayans germinated in such places; they had grown from a whisper here to a great rage on the plains below, a deep groan, a spreading swell of nationhood, a vast gathering of consciousness, both on the plains and in these mountains.

Walking all that way across the broken, rolling, verdant, matted high plains he had had many hours to ruminate.

**But it was** the nights that were something unearthly. Unearthly cold and gripped by fear.

Pablo would often travel by night - for safety, draped in a blanket or a poncho. Carrying the few victuals he could cadge, he had passed for a wandering peddler, passing campesino. Nobody had remarked on him, but there were differences which he knew people could see. Even his light, educated, literary accent was a potential destroyer. Fear gripped him, despite the smiles and laughter of these strangers.

More days spent in the passing fevers of walking in cold wind. He had had to keep moving, for betrayal was everywhere.

In the main he had steered clear of habitation.

It was that obsession that they might trace him, know him by however slight a sign.

**Pablo** had known real cold fear, no philosophical simulations in the University before coffee-break, no, real cold coarse heavy iron in his soul.

**Then** one late September morning he had left one more tattered car behind in the mountains and

shivered his way along the knobbed spine of the mountain roads, along more deserted Cordillearan tracks avoiding the small cold mining villages where he would surely have found warmth, food, and some coca or kefe to alleviate his ills, but might have paid for them with discovery and death; and finally, using some of the small gold pieces which Pilar had had sewn into his clothing, he had purchased a horse - a nag really, merely poor flesh and skin - and the mare with her old bones had carried him patiently far away from his country.

For years he would carry that picture with him, how he had travelled forever onwards, the Beretta now gathering rust in his pocket because of the damp; the old nag now sickly. So then, in some sort of gentleness recognizing her suffering and patience he had left her by herself, meditatively crunching the grasses on her last mountain slope, at last released her from the bonds of the saddle and her shackles.

**He traded dollars** for another old car which had been too cheap to be legal, and finally had left that car in a backstreet at Corrientes, for fear of an over-assiduous clerks reporting of it back to some ministry, by which he would have been cornered once again.

There must be no reference, he must really be forgotten.

Then he had crossed the river Pilcamayo, in spate and grossly swollen, fearsome, muddy and threatening, and struck through the barrier of forest. At a small village with the incongruous name Las Palmas he had managed to trade Chilean pesos for an old Mercedes; and now he stood as it were, with his back to the old world and his face to the new: just enabled by his false identity and dwindling mix of currencies to escape across the wide Parana, next - perhaps Brazil...who knew...he felt rather than knew that there was no safety here.

### *Space.*

There was no space in Paraguay, where one found to one's surprise the greatest concentration of Mercedes cars in South America, and where the language of the powerful was German.

Space. Climbs and descents.

The crossing of a line, a line mainly in the mind, the sealing of a letter with wax, the finality of an action that was uncorrectable. Crossing a line one way.

The boundary line: the boundary line, not anything neutral; for what are boundaries but puny things among the majesty of vast rolling mountain fastnesses where blood and flesh mean nothing.

In the wind, the rolling listless, whistling, cutting wind.

And then once more across endless high plains.

In the distance the vague blue visage of something that at first seemed merely a promise. Then forgetting, forgetfulness. Blue memory and vertiginous distance.

For the rest of his life he would carry those pictures with him. Forever.

*Silence* **Pablo.**

For weeks he had hardly spoken a word. Only to himself.

"Most of the things you've said...they don't know"

"Then how do you know them?"

Tick. Tick.

**What happens to the soul** of someone on the run after a year or two..?...and it had been that long: he had lost count of the silent days.

**In his mind** the quotable quotes of fear; the dredging-up of silence. Months of solitude. Crystal. *Goddam You!*

He laughed softly to himself; and that broke the crystal silence: soft perfect elements of laughter echoing over the edge of the precipice and down deep into the valley, across the lawns of mountain grass and up the far granite walls.

Back, back, back into time.....

Death had tempted him back to visit an unmarked grave.

Deep down in the gorge the water scattered and flattened itself against the boulders and white spume flew in the air.

Plumes of gaseous spray hovered over lichened rock fringes in the air. Now wind.

They called it the music of the spheres, water. the heartbeat of the wilderness, unbroken total silence. Broken only by the music of the wind. The absolute silence of deep earth.

He had sat here for many days, losing all count of time, watching clouds drifting by, sunsets, changes of light.

The infinitesimal details of existence, crowded in by a sequence of deep snowfalls, making his solitude all the more perfectly silent and total.

The fast few centimetres of growth in the grass after that winter, extending into spring.

Now the gradual lightening of the days, until he would awaken with the sun and see the animals going about their business.

Pablo would sit under the windblown trees, oil the Beretta. Click the catch, load and unload the magazine, eject rounds through the slide, worn silver with endless, useless use.

All that had kept him sane, gave him timing, contact.

Methodical calculations to ensure his existence.

Now mystically the rhythms of his body had locked-in with the unfelt rhythms of the Sun, Moon, Stars, Seasons.

For out here there was only the change of light in the length of the days and the nights that indicated to him what grew, what had decayed.

**Now** were moments of communication. Amid that intense and sensitive loneliness. He talked to the rats that lived on the roof, the wildcats that visited him; had begun to develop tenderness at last. At last.

*Hey Hombre, did you know that in Argentina when they 'Disappeared' people they put hoods over their heads - and that some people remained hooded thus, for years?*

*Bolivia, May*

**Under the pine trees** three kilometres away and swaying and then shattered by the heat before it cleared, something was moving. He could feel it. At the same time the air was so clear that from his vantage here he could almost hear it move: three kilometres of vibrating, flexing, vital, air.

Pablo sat on the verandah of the shack and meditated.

Back of him, as the night closed down over the mountains the great grey chasms and crevasses of the sky opened up and then closed like huge doors, doors to heaven and to hell, creation, knowledge and nothingness.

There in front of him, facing the cabin in the valley at the fringe of the trees by the cairn of broken ancient stones, the place he'd called 'The Cairn of Forgiving': he saw the wandering nameless river washing textured cloudy water against the rocks.

Tampering with the rocks and eddying upon the banks it flowed breaking huge boulders into tiny grains of sand over the passage of years: flowing into an indestructible infinity without care or worry, pain or sensation; only the ecstasy of spaces wider and deeper and more flowing than he, Pablo, could imagine, only the constant flow of the rhythm of its meaning and existence making the logic of this stream.

Perspectives there were, great perspectives receding into the infinity of the future of the distance: the thighs of the mountains, the lush high thighs of the meadows where farmers could grow one crop on one level, another on the next. A whole market on a slope.

On the high snow-laden peaks there were only goats: further down, pastures of tomatoes, oranges, wheat.

In the valleys, paddy fields; and coffee where frosts could never touch them.

Wafting along the basements of the valleys then, great warm ground mists, sweeping along like bizarre studio smoke blown by enormous convection fans.

Behind these wafting waves, the uncertainty of future time.

Sitting there watching the movement of the forest and the tumbling of the humours of the earth, there was no longer reason, only that fine final arbiter. The reason for being is the reason that makes us struggle to believe; itself without motive. The catch-all; we are powerless in our weakness to understand the end of it all, and ultimately to have real power over our destiny.

Once long ago he fancied that had said to a friend:

"There's something about me that you don't know!"

Hollow memory. What? to a friend? No you fool! - to the darkness.

He laughed out loud, like a maniac on this mountain. No-body would hear.

Isolation was like that, could affect your personality, your moods, your whole life.

His laughter warped in the wide high breeze.

**And he was wrong**, not for the first time: up high in the snow a mile away, somebody was watching him laughing at himself. Eyes flashed from under the brim of the green hat and pursed lips quartered the sky to seek its secrets.

Then, tight over the valley like a minute change of climate, there was a flash of colourless light in the air, suspended pure as silver against the setting sun, a colour so unlike those of expected nature that it would bring attention to itself.

It could have been an ice droplet, dangling from the support of an undiscovered perch underscored by a thousand metres of clear dark air; or perhaps the riveted marker on the collar of a lead billie-goat, or even the glint on the worn squared machined steel of breech-block of a rifle kilometres away.

**That realization** had set Pablo to thinking.

"Actually had me believing it...." he said, rubbing the side of his head with that nervous gesture that had begun to be part of him.

Conversations that he'd heard drifted through his mind, shadows, banshees. He rubbed the back of his hand against his now grizzled chin where it itched.

Speeches in other places, at other times: meetings and brave pretensions: ghosts of imagination and reality. He found himself laughing soundlessly. Now he knew.

**He rose** and went back into the cabin, took the Beretta out and cradled it like a metallic infant. Counted the shells in the cartons and cleared the slide; applied oil with one fined fingertip gently to the spring assembly, soft as butter: oiled the return spring and demounted the top slide assembly; worked a shell through the breech with his thumb restraining the ever impatient hammer.

Finally he knew the Beretta would work smoothly.

He replaced it in its rag and perched it over the doorframe where no-one would search for it.

He burned the remains of the cartons. Cursing his incompetence at even such critical things as survival, defence.

Now there was no trace.

Pablo was the only witness. They would have to catch him first, even after all this time.

He masked the window with the ragged sack blanket; almost unhurriedly, as if working to some ordered interior rhythm.

He perched the coffee over the fire and broke open a can with the back of the bowie knife, scooping the contents out onto chipped enamel.

He took the knife in both fists and cut the twigs thrown into the corner of the room into small pieces as tinder.

**'A man with a dark past!'** For some reason, like a lunatic, he found that amusing. The words and his laughter to frame them, rang out staccato in the quiet.

**Silence** out on the ridge. But only for now.

*Bolivia, June*

*Pages from the Diary*

Above them the woolly white clouds were pounding across the snowbound peaks, scudding down the granite sides as Pablo and his guide somehow found their way on the sure footed ponies, tearing heather with hooves, panting hard as the cold wind loosened the bonds of their heavy clothing and eased its way into their bones.

**From here** in the tweed of the high tops the vista was enormous. Way, way in the distant blue, a great line of soaring rock worked its way across the sight with a nervous pinsharp etch of purple.

Now in front of it fell a curtain - a sheer face of cliff, red and grey from this distance, before a long pattern of crawling river which bled silver onto a

rolling green plain from whence the hills on which they stood unfolded, like the delicate tissues of a huge body laid open for them to see and to enjoy.

A secret pleasure granted to them and contained by its time; when Pablo considered, he realised that it was that fundament of majesty, of the preeminent engine, that made it all so beautiful.

Wherever they stood or moved they could only see power struggling from beneath the huge weight and contused colours of the landscape.

Everywhere, the dominance of that pristine force driving the whole enormous cycle, energy, motor of creation.

Now wild winds blowing across the top of this world. Great sweeping spaces covered only with speed and by light, discovered only by scattered individuals, prospectors and lost pampas cowboys, lonely Indians on the uncharted tracks and ancient patterns of this roof.

Yet only a few hours ride from these wild hills were tropical beaches, verdant plantations, great sweeping pampas, high deserts, barrens covered with alfalfa and cactus and still uncharted formations of mysterious rocks, tangled caves and half-forgotten entries into ancient systems, in the rocks of such a scattered and strange vertiginous land. Such then was the spirit of this place, alone in its busy wilderness, a

great sweep, the top of everything, an isolated crown at the apex of creation.

**Somewhere far down on the plain** Pablo saw that glint of metal once again.

They dismounted from the ponies at a sign from the guide, who slipped a pellet of Kefe into his mouth and offered him one, but Pablo declined, dreading the buzz it might give him at the wrong moment. His guide indicated the ancient Winchester which he took with frozen hands; cocking the lever over and ejecting only air as the shell tripped the neck of the magazine and slid into place.

The guide indicated the magazine cover back into place with a wizened finger and smiled in-between chaws on the Kefe.

Then he pointed with one bent finger.

A trace of dust in the valley, the glint of metal again, perhaps the glint of silver.

the guides wizened face under the old wide black hat, battered and threatened by the wind, frayed and bent, fastened with a cord, flexed, and dark piercing eyes, sought prey on the plain.

"I see him", he said - dropping his arm with finality.

"Where is he"

"I see him, no vaquero - I see him moving, he wears army clothing, he carries a rifle with a telescope.

"Your eyes are better than mine, *viego*."

The old man smiled in assent.

Pablo had a moment alone looking over the pampas, the wind tugging at his eyes, driving water into their corners, making him blink continuously to clear the sight.

The ponies whinnied from behind the rocks from where they were huddled against the wind.

"I see him turn away"

"And where does he go?"

"I see he is trained- he looks for cover, maybe an arroyo"

They moved once more. Clearly now, the trail they followed would fall in the control of the strangers place of vantage. Well thought out, the stranger was prepared to seek the most effective hiding place.

Then this meant that he, Pablo was being sought, waited for. The thought brought an acid shiver to him. They stopped and began to pick their way amongst huge scattered boulders.

**Pablo took the rifle** once more as they traversed a broken overhanging pathway which displayed almost a map of the valley below them. Despite the cold wind he was all over sweat. Now he almost tripped and gravel bucked down the hard rock angles overlooking a precipice. His grip on the Winchester tightened. Under his arm, occasionally

reminding him of its presence by knocking his side, lay the Beretta. Now it scratched his ribs and tumbled upon itself. He straightened the butt with the back of his hand as, with one motion he pushed the hair from his eyes.

"Old man", he said, puffing with imagined exhaustion, "What is the best thing to do?"

The old man considered for some time, sitting cross legged on a rock in the windbreak of a bush where the stranger could not see them.

After a while he rose to his feet.

"This is what we will do.." he said, and led the way along the path.

### **Later.**

Afternoon was in the sky.

They had stopped for a meal to ease the constant pain of exertion, cold and wind. The old mans patience and clearsightedness irritated Pablo greatly: his sense of pace being so perfect.

*'I'm used to things being done NOW, NOW, and I can't stand the thought of waiting for anything....I'm like a spoiled child!'*

The ponies picked their way over the rock strewn hillside as surely as mountain goats on a high pasture. Pablo's breath pounded in his chest, and his ears tweaked sharp pains. It must be the altitude.

The ponies sensitive touch sought invisible

paths, followed rocky surfaces beneath the lichen covered slopes with delicate precision. They were making steady progress.

After three hours of constant picking among the rubble of the hills, they had traversed the top of the escarpment, gained the height of the valley, dropped behind the shoulder and were now processing close to where he fancied he had seen that glint of steel.

They would soon reach the top of the escarpment, a carefully chosen hollow of ground, where the old man knew the horses could have shade while they themselves traversed the remaining distance beneath an outcrop from where their quarry would not expect them to appear.

Just how the old man knew the geography of this place was beyond him, he being as Pablo knew, not a native of this place.

The old man checked their weapons. With a smile and a gesture of dismissal he covered his dismay at the state of the Beretta, checked the Winchester, ejecting all the shells and then reloading them one after the other, with gnarled fingers.

Now he unrolled his ragged bedroll, and out tumbled an ancient single action Colt .44 incongruously wrapped in a plastic bag and accompanied by a long silver machete with 'Sheffield Steel' stamped across the blade.

"I got the bag in La Paz", smiled the old man.

The machete would be carried slung between his shoulder blades, where it would both protect and support his back.

**They struggled to the top of the bluff.**

The heat in the direct sun was intense. Extremes in temperature are more searing than heat, exertion and distance itself.

Pablo was exhausted, smeared with sweat and grime from the chipped rock escarpments. He found himself covered all over with fine sweat, his breathing now painfully harsh, his chest rattling.

At length they entered a gully, which cut down the inside of the rise of the shoulder of the valley.

Twenty five metres down the gully the old man, walking ten metres ahead of him, made an urgent motion with his hand.

Pablo switched to the right hand side of the gully, and took cover behind a rock.

Now his guide was five metres from him, peering over an outcrop. He looked round and his eyes glinted as he motioned with the black shape of the Colt. The cartridges in his belt glistened darkly against the rich earth colours of the rock wall and the gully floor.

Pablo joined the old man and suddenly found himself peering directly down at what had once been just a glint of imagination in the middle distance.

### **Below them sat their quarry.**

The campsite, for so it was, was contained among rocks and consisted of a ridge tent or awning set against an outcrop at one side and fastened down with the aid of a bush, and a bed roll or sleeping bag. In the centre of the clearing a small fire ebbed beneath a blackened coffee pot. At one side of the clearing, peering down into the valley and the yawning void beneath him, their quarry sat on a rock. His equipment consisted of a high velocity rifle with the long black finger of a wide-bore night sight telescope mounted along the top of the barrel.

By his side lay a powerful pair of naval binoculars and a belt of sharp nickel and bronze cartridges.

It was this belt that must have glinted in the sun, the nickel heads of the cartridges newly broken out of their packages shining like silver stars or sharks teeth, armoured to attack the unwary traveller on the valley path far below. And way below them he had clear view of his main interest, Pablo's shack, nestling on the short hard shoulder of the valley side.

**Pablo** was not prepared for what would happen next. Something must have alerted their quarry, for suddenly the man below them spun around and jumped for his rifle. His reflexes were good, for the

rifle was cocked, the old round already airborne as it ejected, and the cocking lever clicked back ready for release, as the barrel levelled up to show its dark mouth to Pablo's eyes - but then the old mans Colt burped black powder smoke and the slow flat bang of the report slammed back against the granite walls of the escarpment and bounded into the void of the mountain passes.

The sound was perfectly contoured by the wind as it gusted, and for a moment the stranger looked vaguely surprised. He had stopped in the middle of his action and his tanned face looked up at them as if to bring greetings: and then the rifle, held loosely by the left hand by its stock seemed to part company with its owner.

It fell upon the rock and bounced up. Set midway in the diversion of this bounce, Pablo suddenly realised that the stranger had gone over the rock edge without a sound.

The old man looked back at him and flashed his teeth and his sharp eyes.

There was nothing said.

They dropped into the camp, taking the gun, binoculars and ammunition, but leaving it otherwise as it was, wiping all traces from the dust with a branch of dead leaves.

They never found the body of the man, though they searched for a while, the drop was too great, the

distance too deep, the valley too fraught with unseen  
untold dangers.....

## Chapter Four

### *Female Socialisation*

Hanneke and Mieke, perhaps as the product of an over liberal set of educations, perhaps as a result of the slipping through the net of subversive teachers at school, or the misfortunes or benefits of a wayward lecturer or two later on, had somehow never felt that the use of force could be used as a justification, per se: (what their Afrikaans background transparently represented as '*Defence of the Vaterland*'.) But that was the *Raison d'Etre* of the whole exercise that they were involved in, and they knew it. Of course, tendencies like these were '*Streng Verbout*', in fact downright nihilistic: (and they knew that too, part of the

mechanism of survival): perhaps that was why they had always stuck together, complicit, never mentioned a thing.

The mitigating factor however was, that as Government Employees, and for that reason 'Special People', they had lots of licence, leeway. It was desirable to look down upon *blacks* or *coloureds* (or anyone else for that matter who might be considered 'suspect') and simply ignore or distrust them. Straightforward really. It was an attitude and a set of factors hard to rid oneself of - and hard to ignore, they being such an integral in the culture as a whole. After all *Heeren Volke* were special people in Gods eyes - and everyone knew it - or else paid the consequences.

Thus the two of them tended to steer clear of any form of overtly political argument; made easy by the fact that many Afrikaaners would regard them simply as 'Girls' (i.e. brainless), and thus maintained a continuing process, secret between themselves: out of that process came sometime later a decision, more intuited than stated. But that was for the future. Thus neither of them had ever been asked or required to give an opinion about such things in public, or even in private, even if they had been in the ludicrous position of wanting self immolation: it was better to keep quiet and wait for the right moment, whenever that might arrive. Probably never.. Mieke had a name for

everything: called it *Female Socialisation*. Perhaps it *was* Hormones.

To put it simply: it would seem logical, would it not, that the security of your own country, of your very own people, of all things homely and desirable, was worth fighting for. Right. But. Later it became clear what direction their 'Training' would take. They both recognized that subversion and murder were wrong, but now they had seen the facts, compared figures, and made notes. That was the requirement of the job, and they were too far into it to turn back. Anyway perhaps that would never be a requirement, life could just pass you by on that point, couldn't it?

For the two of them, somehow the arithmetic never quite added-up. After all, one simply did not make judgements without informing the 'proper' authorities.

And anyway, everyone knew that the 'wrong' direction, friends, thoughts even, spelt trouble. Stubbornly, however, over time *thoughts* had clarified, like disturbed water settling to a perfect flatness and uniformity: the process had taken a long time in the gelling, but crystallized in the briefest of moments. That was a first time of realization.

**There had been another first time**, and it had started in a worn school room, vacated by the kids for the Christmas Holiday.

That was in Bloemfontein, an age ago.

The group sat at desks rather too small for them; there were six of them sitting there. Their 'Introduction' had been a long process, and now they were there.

She in the last bloom of her teenage. The roses fresh out of her cheeks, fear and desire new in her belly.

Then the man she had learned to first love, then hate, and finally fear; Coetzee, had started his talk:

"And now, this is something which you have not experienced before."

That was obvious, true, but invisible in such a scholastic setting. This was the world as it really was, all claws and fur.

She was waiting for something. It would come.

Despite the academic title, Doctor Coetzee had a grip on reality that was older, more knowing, as she thought and as she later found out, far more cynical than any mere academic could ever have had had. After that she often wondered just what his doctorate was in. Or did the Broederbond give it him for being a *Goude Junge*?

There was much to be memorised; and at this stage, much that was disallowed as secret or confidential.

In the perspective of time, things had begun to resolve themselves, became clarified, like the reversed

picture of a shattered window forming itself into a perfect pane of glass, like an explosion transcending reality and thus fashioning finished objects from mere shards.

Many of the pre-prepared introductory texts were in the garble of the professional civil-servant; the Office of Security '*Which is responsible for protecting the state*' (as they said), had prepared everything in detail, following what was known as the 'C.I.A. Collection' : and now it arrived on their small hot, dry, brown desks, in green folders on light green sheets.

**Different colours** for different levels of security. Green sheets for security, pink sheets for secret, yellow sheets for top security, red for specially sensitive information, not to be communicated to anyone except the authorised reader of the material, white sheets unclassified (though in practice all this information was effectively secret).

And the first green sheet they saw said this:

"The polygraph consists of three apparatuses which are attached to the body of the person being interrogated, which connect by tubes or cords to the desk ensemble'

["An ensemble" said Mieke, "is three people who play music while you're kissing!"]

.....'each apparatus measures physiological changes marked on moving paper by pens. There is a) a blood pressure cuff that can be attached (either to

the arm or the leg if need be), b) a corrugated rubber tube that is placed around the chest and fastened in the back; and c) a hand device with electrodes, secured against the palm.

The cuff measures impulse and blood pressure, the chest tube measures changes in breathing and the hand instrument measures changes in perspiration....' at this point the document broke back into its usual embarrassingly dense officialese...

'....the person to be interrogated is hooked into the machine, told to look straight ahead, to be very still, and to answer only yes or no. The interrogator is behind, and faces the back of the head of the interrogatee (Make sure that questions are fired at the back of the interrogatee)...

So this was how the official sources worked it out! A neatly couched neutral language, to express the flesh and blood of a cold blooded business.

On a red form, later:

....'Clandestine Collection is part of the Security, also known as Clandestine Security, Services....

.....this consists of a headquarters and various field stations in almost all foreign countries.....the bulk of the clandestine services are divided into operating divisions and staff organisations. Operating divisions, geographical areas and specialised services. Senior staff co-ordinate and review operational activities within functional categories.'

Clearances: -Senior Level Clearances.-*Memorise*

- 1> Ministry of Information from Ministry of Defence
- 2> Department of Intelligence (Includes Bureau of State Security)
- 3> Foreign Matters from Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 4> Others from Office of Prime Minister

More pages now....

"..... Clandestine services: includes various divisions, International Organisations, supervises state security with labour, youth, student professional and news media throughout the world: funds are related to and given various organisations such as friendly news agencies, business funding and help organisations. Also News Agencies and Business Organisations and certain individuals, such as lobbyists in the Western Hemisphere who have undertaken to work for us for money through a myriad of low-level associations, confederations, clubs, groups and companies..... or been infiltrated by our agents in order to feed positive information about us in and filter negative material out. Naturally this is expensive, but remember that our struggle in this context is largely economic.

Technical Services (Acronym, T Services) provides support, for example listening devices, telephone 'taps', plastered-in microphones and glass

mounted microphones as well as skin implanted radio devices which are becoming increasingly common.

Automatic transmission devices using solar cells can be used, as for example the successful operations recently uncovered accidentally in the Paris offices of various foreign newspapers. [See for reference: 'Canard Enchaîné']

Division F (Acronym, D-F) is the Clandestine Services Unit that supports the State Security in breaking codes: when it is necessary to mount operations against the communications of other countries, division F turns to its sister Intelligence services such as Military (Acronym, D-M), Naval (D-N), Airforce (D-A), all of which have sizeable monitoring operations against various unfriendly countries.'

She suppressed a chuckle. "*Unfriendly, that means everyone!*"

'Finally, the Records Division (Acronym, Records) is a specialised recording service using complex data tie-ups through computers and outside memory banks for instant retrieval and millions of bytes of information which can be cross-referenced at a moments notice given the proper grade of clearance from a Station Controller.

Records Integration Division (Acronym RID) is a most important part of the State Security Bureau. Though we have had problems here recently in

importing computer hardware, we now have several operations going on in other countries run by our agencies and the free movement of hardware has become considerably easier due to the apparent freeing of funds in friendly countries (see index) and the activities of friendly pressure groups in these countries (*see appendix*).'



*Book 2*

**Seasons of the Mind**



## Chapter Five

*Pages from a forgotten diary, Chile*

Pablo. Total empty darkness. Unknowing-Ness. Space to remember.

That was the thing, the trick.

His mind wound back, the knife of memory:from time to time his memory would switch back involuntarily, without any hint of his control, the cold blade of fear in his stomach.

It had been late evening when the ADC had come into his room and said:

"Senor, it is time we were leaving". Pablo, not understanding had replied:

"Why? Why is that?"

"It is time...." a hopeless gesture, "The Yanquis", and in the half-light he had seen the barrel of a Colt in the ADC's hand. "Any moment now".

He hustled some things together, a suitcase, the Beretta the ADC had given him, some boxes of ammunition stuffed into the outer pockets of his jacket, a torch and some spare pesos, the photographs of Pilar and the children...leaving the faded pictures of smiling faces and ill-posed bodies in grass fringed fastness, now consigned only to mind.

Night cold. Like autumn coming on.

**A few scattered goodbyes**, half hidden faces in and out of the tracery of shadows, no time for tears: only dark pomaded hair and the texture of some corner somewhere moving. And again and again anxious, fearful, eyes.

Many movements, blurred motion, coagulating the image of a second.

He hurried through the backstreets of Santiago, feet padding in the dust.

The ADC tracking across a half ruined, dilapidated courtyard. A back way he had not known.

Was he fleeing?

Was flight like this?

The sound of heavy engines in the distance.

**The scattered clacks** of distant firecrackers, oddly out of keeping with the creeping wintry light.

They dodged in and out of a ruined hulk of a house and found themselves in a deserted cobblestones space. Down the long street behind him he could see the Commissariat - still burning in the distance.

**Then into the car**, one of the few still capable of movement: he had managed to get some fuel from somewhere, he shuddered, even he had been forced on to the black market.

Now they lit out in the middle of the night along strange main roads, the lights flickering out of sequence as their main generators began to fail, as reality flicked on and off like confetti in a dream.

He found himself talking deep in his throat, silent to the air: *'What are my ideals worth?'*

Sounds, troops, theirs? His? Whose? They dodged behind a parked bus and a couple of rusty trucks.

Speeding along the cobbles they soon had left the wolves, the mob behind.

Now a few tricky side roads, a stop, muttered goodbyes, bags in the back seat. Now started along an empty *carreterra*.

Victims and cowards, criminals, yellow, red: with hands limed with yellow gore.

Behind Pablo now, the arc of exploding arcs of flame; tropical dry rainbows of fire in the cold half dark.

Ducking once again down now darkened avenues and through small somehow familiar plazas, past a cinema where he liked to take Pilar when they could get away, sometimes...

**Sometimes when Pablo was a child**, fearing that his father would leave his room before he had fallen asleep, limbs wreathed in the lead of tiredness, he would open his eyes a slit and querulously enquire;

"Why so early...for so long...?" and his father would smile and kiss his forehead so that finally he would lose all resistance, fall back into the beckoning waves of sleep.

**Mornings of enslavement now past**, all buried, the people too turned to sand along with the desert of their memories.

All forgetfulness, the blanket of deep sable sand as you sleep without hope of protest, like death, past struggle. Forgotten. *Dark night*

### Cold Summer Nights

**Fear.** A paroxysm freezing the limbs. An untold violent disease. Paranoia. Shivering unto death.

Fear. A ballooning infection affecting ones view of the world; a distorting inflation of the mind.

Pablo was such an infected man. Like that animal in the glare of the lights on the road out of Santiago, cold, on a late Summer's night like this. Two small reflectors; two mobile traces of fear leaving a line in the mind as they moved.

Existence in video. The soiled trace of life.

It was in such cold by night, in such cold places in cool mountain mists, that having so far survived, his mind had begun to surface from un-stirred depths like a survivor amid the wreckage of himself.

At the time he realised with a certain candour that it was that a new man was being born, of past fears and hunger, loneliness and savagery, as brother was turned by strangers against brother. How could it not be so?

The sickness of it, the disease; the paranoia precipitated by the de-stabilisation by 'friends': lies and disbelief.

He told himself. There would be a time. But not now. Not now.

Back to the present.

Heat.

**Starting once more** across the *Plaza Generalissimo*, his gaze moving studiously and languidly over the strange, pleasant battered superstructure of the city.

For in this city he was a stranger. With the Mexican passport in his case and the Beretta stashed under the mattress or over the door he was someone else, a stranger.

He had been alone and found the lack of stress enervating; at the same time he had used the stasis to straighten out his accent, to wipe away the flattened poetic vowels of Chile and substitute the rounded burr of the Mexican.

He was in a well of silence, or so he thought. Now he could rest.

That afternoon he hired a car and toured around the city. Drove along the banks of the wide Parana, found a spot where he could lie by the water undisturbed.

He dozed all afternoon, wasting the hours, trying to forget; strange calm in the eye of the storm.

It was the relief of escape. But not yet total.

The waves were still and the afternoon was broken by few sounds; occasionally a river-boat would rumble past, or a river submersible putter along. Mostly though, he had peace.

At about five he decided to return to Asuncion.

He turned a corner onto the noisy highway and a car in his mirror winked steel and sun at him.

Further on, at a traffic intersection he caught sight of it again. Later, as he drove along a deserted road, the mirror blank, the car turned in from a side

road he had not seen into the road behind him, then stopped. He watched it dwindle in the mirror, nearly over-running a dusty junction.

He forgot about it but then, hanging back in the dust of the elderly Mercedes, the raggedy boys selling pau-pau's and oranges on the road, against the glare of a westering sun, he saw that outline again.

A car of unfamiliar make.

Sometimes he found that his mind had seized on bizarre details; in this case, not the fact that the car was suspicious, but that the badge on the bonnet hung slightly to one side, askew, as if it had been bumped in order to make it different.

That was what brought fear back into his throat like sudden steel: his first knee-jerk reflex was to jam on the brakes and make a screaming U-turn.

It could be anyone: or no-one; he must not panic for then all would be lost.

He drew the car up at the hiring garage, left the motor running and went inside.

"Hombre", said the manager "What do you want?"

"I think the oil's run down," he said, "I heard it knocking!"

"Hey, Hombre", said the manager, concerned, "There is nothing wrong with that car!".

Now the strange car had toured past. Perhaps they had lost him? All he could see was that it was driven by a girl in a white dress.

White . The colour of the virgin. And here was a virgin in white following him.

Paranoia crept back, like a leech on his skin.

**Persecution like that** to which he should by now have become immune though pain still lingered, and the fear that was in him rather like a mans fingers that tremble uncontrollably in battle: then suddenly steady. That fear should have died just as certainly as his friends had died in Chile, just as a secret part of him had died for other men's greed..

**The next day** dawned, sultry, with a hint of rain. When he stood on the balcony to savour the air his face became covered with fine dew or mist: traceried with droplets.

He breakfasted at the cafe with the motley collection of tables that had become comfortable for him. He carried the Beretta. Always. For some reason, any reason. despite his attention it persisted in developing those delicate edges of fine rust which he was at pains to wipe away as he cleaned it.

The gun sat awkwardly at his armpit, cold and sticky and gathering condensation from the air.

A gap in the crowds, taking in the early Autumn sun.

And then, unexpectedly, in-between gulps of hard black coffee, he saw *her* again. The woman from yesterday. How? It might have been coincidence.

She sat at the other end of the bar and watched him, with almost the trace of a smile; neither welcome nor hostility, merely the threat of a distant smile. She wore the same, now smudged, white frock. No virgins garb that: at least, no longer.

Openly. That gave him a gathering fear. Who was she?

He dared not speak to her.

Was it my imagination?

Now she was looking at him directly, half smiling.

Smoking a cigarette, saying something to herself.

**He'd sat there for an hour**, and with a shock realised that she hadn't moved. She took a paper down from the wall and lit yet another cigarette. She was certainly waiting. Waiting for him to move.

She pored over the paper, searching each column minutely. He began to sort through his

thoughts, trying to find a trace: who was she...how was it she knew him..?..

Now suddenly she paid the bill, rose, and began to walk away from him, round the Plaza.

What should he do?

She glanced at him and seemed to smile again, or was it his imagination. It could be an obvious trap but like a moth towards a flame there was a closing inevitability to it now, he could no longer resist; he would have to confront his fate just as wonderful Pilar had done. Beautiful Pilar. What.....?..

The Gringos from the north were *cerdo* only *cerdo* to take her away from him. The bravado of anger transported him as his blood rose.

He would not care about death, he would meet it face to face; and the best time was now, on a warm overcast day, with sun breaking through.

He was following her as if she were a ghost, a shadow. She turned and glanced at him, inviting him to die.

He quickened his pace. Hurrying to meet her...

She took a diagonal across a square he did not know, around a palm fringed green (what a nice place to die, just there!) and walked, at pace now, through a market of trinket sellers and tramps, across a dirty brown road and zig-zagged through the ranks of parked Mercedes'.

Now an uneven pavement.

Then a view of the wide river and the port. Sailors or crewmen drifting along laughing.

Interminably a clear view of the port, the jetties and a long perspective view of the entry road running parallel and away from it.

For a moment he almost lost sight of her through the dense crowds of people streaming out of a factory of some kind and into a *barraca* of sorts, shouted conversations echoing above his head, laughter, men playing card games on up-ended wooden boxes, street level *estancos* and tiny stinking bars.

Now he was almost level with her in their strange slow dance; he noticed her brown skin as yet unmarked by age, her hair streaked with the blonde of some distant liaison; a young woman old enough to command the respect of the men by the road sufficiently that they did not pester her.

Out of time he watched her swing ahead of him across a wide *carreterra* and down a couple of dirty lowrise city blocks. 'They are going to a wedding, or an interment', somebody watching might say. They were close enough to be mistaken for lovers having a disagreement of some sort, their walking choreographed in its intensity.

Realizing all that suddenly he changed pavements and walked as her counterpart, mirror image, a partner whose doppelganger was unknown.

It may have been moments, but the day had changed as the dullness and haze increased, their rhythm almost synchronized; the chase, the kill, the dance, the death. It was too far now, and he was lost. Streets were more verdant, more jagged and broken, merging at times into patches of scrubland.

Another wide carriageway. She dodged between cars, now not so many, and infinitely poorer: and he had to dash across the central reservation to save his own life.

She was again two hundred or so metres ahead. Perhaps she thought she had lost him, for she momentarily slowed, looked in a shop window and then glanced back. Walked against the breeze so that when the light flickered against her body he could see its shape.

He closed up, touching at the Beretta at his armpit unconsciously, as she stopped again and adjusted the strap of her shoe with great deliberation.

In a freeze-frame moment, the sharp focus of his senses picked her out like an illustration; the ripples of the wind pressing the folds of the thin dress against her legs.

Momentarily he saw that the dirt on the dress had found her outline, like a radarscope seeking for things that it could only perceive.

Now from where he was, he could see that her body was strong and lithe, and she walked proudly, straight, no stoop in the shoulders.

All at once the blocks were left behind, and they were among the huddled huts of a hillside favela. Between the shacks, making a punctuation of sounds and of time and space came the endless flow of the rolling bulk of the river.

*'I think of the two of us as a loose team, the hunter and the quarry, actually, the quarry and the hunter dancing in some suspension of time to a mechanism that we cannot understand; at any moment the two of us could cease to exist.'*

They reached the end of a long drive as he came closer to her; he was almost within touching distance and she must surely have heard his footfalls or the crunch of the broken ground, but she gave no sign. They crossed a wider road, and the sounds of the river were growing louder.

A sudden stupid panic.

In his obsession he had forgotten to check his own back! He spun round raising a fine rime of dust.

Nobody on the road; nobody on the road behind Pablo, empty, a ticking sound from the trees and bushes moving minutely in the afternoons heat.

This was stupid...two people walking so far...!

He must be mad!

He broke the rhythm and began to fall back.

And as he changed his mind, a voice changed it once more for him: a voice which in his ear said, together with a pressure in his ribs and the waft of sweat:

"Hombre....", said the man, " if you do not walk as straight as you have been walking, and behave normally, I will slip this knife between your ribs!"

Thus his life was ineradicably changed. And that was how he met them, knew them: the method of their meeting became his life.

### *Ottoshoup Camp, April*

Hanneke watched as outside the hut the wind stirred and blew tiny rivulets of sand about.

*"What you generally mean by work", said the man with the dead grey face, "is not what we would term relevant work".*

The other man stood up, stretched his legs.

"And what we for the purposes of this study term 'relevance', is that work which achieves given tasks, not hopeless pen pushing leading nowhere, or for that matter unproductive activity using inadequate resources".

"There are lifetimes spent without achievement in any concrete form"

The two of them looked at each other without noticeable emotion as if checking the pecking order, for there was one, there was always one.

"That work which produces that thing may be only 5% of the time", one of them gestured, as if he were holding a huge balloon, "the other work may be just preparation or wastage because of inefficiency: so remember that the cutting-down of inefficiency can be the saving of 95% of all your work: in other words, you can spend almost all your time doing nothing."

"What I want you to know is that we must work effectively, using resources whatever they are, however extensive, effectively".

War is, after all, quantitative.

"We have it on good authority that to kill a soldier in the second world war needed 240,000 rounds of ammunition or its equivalent weight in explosive: hence the fact that now we use 6.56mm or .22 inch ammunition. This has the effect of multiplying the available ammunition, or reducing the cost base of targeting enormously. Now think a moment: add to this the fact that the care of one injured soldier effectively takes the full time work of two or three people and that the cost of the wounded together with the transport and all services including food and ancillaries can be economically crippling for an economy. That's why, (apart from Kaffirs) we aim to

injure or maim, not kill. (There are too many Kaffirs around anyway!)"

The class laughed at an in-joke.

"Thus the basis of all war is economic. Apart from being merely economic, of course: just picture the 2 ounces a .303 round weighs as compared to the half ounce that a 6mm military load weighs, now imagine 500 rounds sixty miles on your back, now add to that the expense of so called Strategic Minerals: copper, bronze, brass, and nickel, as well as the cordite powder and the percussion cap. Then combine the skilled work taken to proof, blend, machine and work heavy breeches and then compare them to the Hechler and Koch 6mm fully automatic here,..." he held up the tiny sub-machine gun in one hand coupled to an obscene silencer, and displayed a 6mm round between two fingers of the other..."... which is all moulded in ABS Plastic the injection-moulded titanium or alloy breech pieces, with minimum machining required, and compare relative cost as well as relative weight, transport costs, storage (rust &c.) and the sum becomes even clearer...."

Those were the things that underlay this training.

A man in a grey uniform came through the door.

"In order to be a successful insurgent..." he said, and gave a most charming smile.

That you see, was the signature of it all: "In order to be a successful insurgent.."

In order to be anything one had to be aware of its potential as destruction, and this was the philosophical problem contained in such things: one could spend a lifetime discussing the mechanical problems of destruction: one drop of bacteria in a reservoir of clean water could destroy many thousands, and so one insurgent, like a bacteria could spread a hideous wave of destruction like a pebble beginning a distant tidal wave. One insurgent can break the back of an organised structure. The correct insurgent.

She was a perfect insurgent, or at least she would be.

War was become economic. Destroy the 'enemy' by stalling until your strength caught up with your progress, talk until your adversary began to tire of talking: and then when the moment was right, his guard lowered, strike at economy, developments, hospitals, food, agriculture, economic geography, roads, communications. If need be, kill a few civilians and medical workers, teachers, administrators. After all, with fifteen years lead and lag in production, infrastructure is almost impossible to continuously rebuild.

Wars are won by economic success, not by firing guns, that is just the diversion, smokescreen; game.

Ah! Such perfect economy of means.

The Instructor sat back and looked across the room, his eyes piercing the darkness, coming to nowhere.

"Ja.."

"The destruction must be something that we can re-create"

It takes very little creation to develop destruction .....thank about the armies of the world... do they advertise their existence?

*"We have to judge very coolly what is possible to achieve, and what is impossible."*

And that was true; a whole technology, a whole separate production based upon destruction: could that be its driving force, its motive, engineering?

Such is the economy of destruction; so much production outpaced by so much destruction, the equation of X multiplied by Y: an economists curve, a dream in time. That effort would become a productive force by the perverse rules of this game.

Just as she would consider her time as being worth so many Rand per unit. she could now think of her 'loss', destruction, as having an unequal economic relevance, value. So much per hour. A rate.

And could this be a truth or just another falsehood? could this be a lie or just another catch? another cul-de-sac of logic, another philosophical paradox? (when she thought about the output of the

government in terms of public relations: she realised that something so basically nasty and anti-social, when well presented became mysteriously wholesome.

**Strange but deadly** with the Broederbond, locked into it; locked over the need, the power, the greed. They must have put a price on her - and what was it?

### *Ottoshoup Camp*

Hanneke had always thought that the appearance of the entrance to the enormous sprawl of the camp, hidden as it was between containing low hills and dusty rocks, and itself containing a small deep lake and many enclosures, was that of an ordinary little gate house with lightly chipped paint and the worn but neat look of an official enclosure.

Which was what in fact it was.

The little perimeter gate house was manned by an ordinary civilian policeman, who, himself and his comrades, were not allowed anywhere else but at that perimeter.

She often wondered what they must think - if indeed they were capable of reasoned thought.

This enclosure was state secret and the only way here was via your university or training college, where lonely disjointed men with lost eyes would corner you in empty seminar rooms towards the end of your stay, and have a 'talk'.

**This critical moment** in any undergraduates life would be a good target time because often future female graduates were not yet sure of their ability to do anything but play their appointed social role, expecting that being a *hausfrau* was the summit of their achievement. After all, education was like finishing school; any good Boer knew that a woman should have the children and mind the kitchen. And what was University but a hyped-up middle class pretension?

She dreaded to become 'artistic' in defence of her indolence, ignore what went on around her and be the hausfrau that she would normally be expected to be.....

There was no time. Everyone knew that, time being expensive and your femaleness itself your betrayer: and at such times as these the Officer of the Bureau might just catch you unawares.

"Can you imagine working closely with your government for the good of your Fatherland?", was

the first question put to her, naturally in Afrikaans, English speakers being tolerated, but not trusted.

Later, at the grey empty office where Hanneke met her next (nameless) interviewer, she had been connected to a machine and asked many questions.

He gave no sign of interest, only nodded when addressed directly:

"What's your grandmothers *rice*"

For a mad moment she thought this had something to do with shopping.

"*Why?*"

Not Why!

"White"

"That's a good girl now"

"Any Venereal Disease"

She faltered:

"Any venereal...VD?"

"Yes"

"Who from" after a moment she gave the name.

It was a local boy, and she hoped it wouldn't get around the town now; a moment's madness with the local beau in the back-seat of his '*Bakkie*'.

"Jah.."

"Hospital?"

She gave the reference.

"Was that all?"

*Was that all...!*

"Sure.. are you sure?" Maybe they knew more than she did.

"Yes"

"Many partners?"

"Sure?"

"Of course!"

"How many?.. we'll check!"

She told him. She had to, her father was sick and her mother needed the money, there seemed to be no choice. If she told a mis-truth, however small, they would get her for it. *'Get you for it Mijn Fijn Dame.*

Then she found when opening the mail one morning that she'd got the job.

Her mother had been overjoyed, she'd been surprised.

"Government work is always very secure, dear.. I'm happy for you"

But she felt sick; compromised; somehow violated, that that had been only the first violation.

**The casual observer** was not to know what lay behind the dense coils of razor wire carefully honed to tear human flesh and sinew, forty kilometres from Theresienstadt on the Jo'burg road: it was easy for a blonde blue-eyed girl to walk through: she merely showed the card with the red bars and the officer checked it with the infrared reader. She passed

through under the guards array. No trouble here; no troublesome pigmentation: even the sexual difference made things simpler.

The camp was so large that many of the trainees that were brought in were not aware of where they were; in fact there were isolated blocks which for one reason or another were off-limits to everyone she knew.

On hot afternoon breaks in the canteen they speculated who and what went on in there, or there, or what *that* contained.

Then sometimes in this neck of the Freestate, used more to the hum of farm machinery, the unlikely crack of small arms fire and sometimes too the deeper crump of a mortar or a recoil-less rifle.

Occasionally too, in the middle of a quiet night the bush would be lit up by a flare and one would hear a muffled series of explosions, perhaps a distant scream of apparent pain, or a shout.

Perhaps it was a military training ground?

**Apart** from the daily strictures of physical training, they learned what you would have expected that they would learn: judo, self defence; the amorphous 'Structured Aggressive Technique'[SAT] which meant, said Mieke, one thousand and one ways to kill unpleasantly.

The women were trained somewhat differently from the men, but this did not stop liaisons from developing. That was nature: and also it must be a good method she realised upon reflection, of creating bonding patterns within the Bureau which would ensure tighter security. Also blackmail.

But naturally, blackmail. Their stock-in-trade. Blackmail being a large part of the system.

Apart from the third of her salary paid into her mothers bank account each month she suddenly realized one weekend at home that another factor had entered the equation.

"Hanneke Dear," said her mother unexpectedly one day "Thank you for the other two hundred you sent me last month, they were very useful, very useful indeed".

She said nothing, but covertly checked the record.

An extra two hundred Rand had entered her mothers bank account each month. Now, after a year, it had become indispensable. When she checked the source the trail went dead.

She left it alone: the blackmail was perfect and in place, there was nothing that could stop it now.

**They** were being trained to be '*Women*'.

The thought of this made Mieke titter, but cut short her tittering after a moment.

'We shall train you officers as women should be trained', said the hard-faced grandmother who instructed them.

What that was was not left to the imagination for long. They were programmed to use their bodies and their looks against any enemy of any type. When you considered it, that was canny thinking. An 'Executive' thinking like a man, but with all the potential physical qualities of a good looking woman would be a frightening prospect. And they were all uncommonly attractive. Ah, but they had been chosen for it: hand-picked, had they but suspected it.

One of the security policemen looked at her as she walked through the gate one evening;

"Screw?" he said.

**Her interest in dancing** was to play a part. She danced each day, and was paid to take lessons each day later when she had finished training. That would make a passable cover should she need one.

**And she** was still young.

Those hot summer nights, the knowledge of her own sexuality; the need for amusement, flirtation, sometimes mere sex.

Not only was the camp off limits and also remote; but the male company was awful.

One night, after too many whiskies, there was the inevitable dalliance - with a girl. She knew not why: it was part of her nature to express herself to another. But that was in secret, and soon over. Quickly over. Anyway it was *Forbudt*.

She had no thoughts of blackmail, for that was impossible here, they all had much too much to lose. It was quietly put away and forgotten. The slip of a moment, forgotten like a childhood crime.

"But I do know what you like."

Just a forgotten smile in the dark.

"Good night!"

**Now there were six of them;** five blondes, one brunette; all good, and chosen for it. No discussion.

Immaculate backgrounds, perfect lineages, good degrees (apart from Mieke), rather pedestrian and boring lives. Captive, virgin soldiers.

It was all a joke: especially between her and Mieke.

Mieke was, like Hanneke, tall blond and blue eyed; they began to mix less with the others and spend time together. They became firm friends. They never talked about 'The Business', that was excluded from their relationship and had never been part of it.

"Screw?", said Mieke, and laughed.

## Chapter 6

### *Killing School*

Pablo.

Through the rising columns of heat that created bizarre mirages of trees and seas and unknown oases way out in the hills, Pablo passed workers pulling grapes from shrivelled vines.

Then the express-train whoop of a 105mm howitzer and the distant crack, the column of dust or debris. Frightening silence. Noise always followed by silence.

The pickers worked on, locked in ageless disregard, or fear.

In these levantine hills they created wines which yielded deep red colours and tasteless liqueurs.

Out in these spaces were the places where they taught men how to kill, the rich red-brown dust sown with the blood of generations.

His life had taken on the tenor of a war, with no administration to be done, no logic relevant, nothing but defence possible while he waited for the final attack.

In these places the seeking eye could find the schools for those lost people who had travelled thousands of kilometres for the same purposes and were congregated and motivated to do those things which one could never consider as being natural-making murder and sabotage. Reaction and attack should be automatic, not taught; programmed....

Somehow his wanderings had brought him to this place, this killing school, forced by the perversities of his fugitive's life into accepting what at an earlier, more placid, time of life he would have considered impossible, unacceptable. In the gathering darkness of the soul such currency as this had become the lingua-franca of his existence.

**'Situations make men,** and men make the stress that pulls a situation together.....we kill in order to survive.....'

Out in the killing ground, on its aged and bloodstained earth, he learned an ancient trade, a skill that his other self would have found inconceivable,

inconceivable at least until the day when that letter in a plain brown envelope had arrived from an apparently secure source.

It simply said *'Pilar Vasconsellos Hawkins and children are believed 'Disappeared'... or perhaps together with an unknown number of government linked people they were were shot dead in the central football stadium in Santiago soon after the accession of the junta lead by Generalissimo Pinochet...'*

He stifled his reaction, put the copied sheet down and went on as normal. Except that normal now precluded everyday, included murder, murdered, *'Disappeared'*. Now. Unbeknown to him his face had set in a hard grey arc, the eyes lacking their fire, the skin clammy and pallid.

Then it was decided, though by whom he did not know, did indeed not care: that now, for as long as it took, he would learn how to shoot, to send coded groups and use side-band digital transmissions, become proficient with plastique, defuse booby-trap bombs, lay mines and make machines to maim others. He would lose his domesticity and become a savage like those who had destroyed his heart and in order to finally destroy them too...to think of destruction in the most efficient way and in merely quantitative terms. To *Disappear*.

**With his** native intelligence the grasp of these things was rendered simple; though physical fitness itself was a long time coming. How to destroy: there

was much creative thinking involved in such grave matters; a dichotomy where the destruction itself always took him aback, confused his eyes while he dreamed of his dead children and pictured poor, dead, Pilar...

Perhaps he should think again? But no, it was too late, things were too advanced....and nothing could remedy the wound in his heart that had been Pilar. Nothing.

**One should not cry in a desert** because you merely lose liquid, which is your life-sustaining goodness. Anyway, possibly for reasons of survival, you simply never think to.

No, there was no crying now, the time for that was past. Now all that was left was the life of his memories, already become terrifyingly mellowed by time, transparent like worn film, unsharp and out of register, unimaginably savaged by recollection and transposition.

How do you explain your loss, your longing, the aloneness of being a traitor, a living symbol of escape? And will they believe you if you do that?

Everything, time, had continued, run on and become too advanced by this process for him to ever turn back; as if one ever could turn the clock back; after all now, people wanted his neck, *Gringos* and *juntas* both: and despite his incapacity for murder,

murder it was that afflicted him, murderers it was whom he spent his days with, murder it was that he had to learn in order to avoid murder.

At least that was the rationale of it; so he spent his time concentrating, in order to destroy.

Now it was that the days broadened and widened, and as the light intensified and the heat came down like sheets of steel upon the land, they reckoned that he had learned enough.

It was time to leave; a thanksgiving, a '*kyriai*' to the Gods of the desert. One warm morning he checked out and saw the leader of his training section drop him a cursory, forgetting nod.

Then he turned on his heel to forget them; he did all but run away from that desert.

They took him to a station, and put him on a train.

On his buff file a heavy hand had stamped the legend: 'Substandard Fighting Skills - Second Class Operative.' And underneath that, in neat marker pen: '*Skilled in the Development of Strategy - use in Command Role where possible*'.

***The Ace, and the Nature  
of the Game.....***

Six thousand miles away, time moved slowly in the low savannahs. Now they, Hanneke and her friends, were instructed that the bureau used time-