

HOSTAGES

TERRENCE CRIMMINS

Chapter One

“May I help you?” asked the dark haired gentleman as he opened the door, with an accent the young man he questioned did not yet recognize.

“Didn't you order two pizzas?” the young man questioned in response, for he was confused, as this dark individual with an olive complexion did not look like a State Department employee.

“Ah yes, come in,” came the response. “That's right.”

But things appeared quite different to the young pizza deliverer as the heavy door closed behind him, and this strange individual bolted the door with his left hand, because his right hand was busy supporting the weight of an Uzi Submachine Gun.

“Pizza!” he exclaimed. “They've ordered pizza! Ha-ha-ha-” and his laughter turned into a chuckle.

So the speechless young man was guided to the second floor while his mind reeled with apocalyptic questions of whether or not he might survive this unexpected calamity, which was occurring on his last delivery of the evening.

And it was in all probability his last delivery ever, as the young man had just graduated from Georgetown University that very day, and was just filling in for a couple of hours in this supplementary occupation.

Just four hours earlier young Tom, Tom O'Malley was his name, had been sitting with his girlfriend inside the Georgetown University football stadium listening to the ambassador from Holland speak about the future opportunities for their generation, bringing a bittersweet end to the four easiest years in the lives of these young Americans.

“Amy, psst Amy,” Tom had whispered to her as she looked over, annoyed, as she sat upright out of respect for that cherubic face revealing its wisdom in the distance. “I've got a secret to tell you.”

“Tchh-, what now?” she questioned, expecting some silly, prankish response from her lover.

But “I love you” he revealed as the great secret, and she blushed, whispering the same secret in return as they began to hold hands, but then:

“Come on Tom, he's speaking...” as she motioned up to that great master of public service who was commenting on their destiny.

It was important to the young lady that they act mature on this great day, for her parents were to meet Tom's parents, an event that seemed more important than the graduation itself.

They'd been seeing each other for a whole two and a half years, more and more as time had passed, and Amy had to fetch a whole carload of personal belongings back to her house for the graduation. Had she not, it might have been apparent that she lived with Tom, for they slept together at his house almost every night, and this discovery might have been viewed poorly by her parents on their visit from Maryland. So it was mostly this summit which fueled the butterflies in their stomachs on commencement day, which fluttered even more in anticipation as they hurled up their graduation caps.

The celebration had gone well, where the jocularity of the greetings of the many outstanding young students and their families mingled that day inside the Beltway. The two supporting parental delegations shook hands with an uneasy familiarity, for it seemed obvious that it wouldn't be long before the two youngsters asked permission for marriage.

But all this had been interrupted by the ill-fated phone call Tom had received while his parents freshened up at the hotel. Angelo, his boss for three years, needed someone to fill in for a few hours.

“I can't Angelo, I'm sorry but I just graduated and my parents are in town.”

And frankly, he thought, his employment was supposed to be over and done with. Why he and Angelo had even had a beer together in nostalgia

“But please Tom, please, all the others have run out on me.”

And Tom could picture sweet old Angelo in his frustration on the phone in the little pizza shop, while his wife stood forlornly in the corner fretting about the possibility of lost business.

“Please, just for three hours.”

And he succeeded in getting Tom to think. Why what a good impression that might make on the Amy's parents, giving back a favor to the reliable employer who had furnished the occupation from which he'd earned his spending money. Why he'd seem conscientious, he'd seem like a hard working American citizen with a good understanding of the great business world. Thus favorably

impressed while they waited and Amy charmed his own parents, Tom would arrive just in time for dinner, for he had three hours to spare.

“Okay, let me call you right back Angelo,” he said.

But this was all a world away from Tom now, for the two pizzas' cardboard containers were shaking on the ascent to the second floor. His newly found guide was dressed in a blonde Bermuda jacket with gray wool blend pants, and, to Tom's surprise, a polo shirt. For heaven's sake, a polo shirt. And what even seemed more stunning, he seemed amused by his occupation in this terrorist act.

“Pizza, pizza, pizza, let's have some pizza,” he announced as he opened the first door on the right at the top of the stairs. “I hope you're still hungry.”

And he thrust Tom into the room with a smirk. But the occupants probably weren't disposed or even able to munch on pizza at the moment, for they sat on the floor along the walls, all nineteen of them, restrained by plastic handcuffs and gags.

“Greetings from Islam my friends, it is almost time for us to talk.”

It was André, the man who had interrupted young Tom in his pizza duties, speaking from the balcony to the cameras, the reporters and the multitudes.

“Islam and Allah have tried many times to speak to you about the rights of the Palestinians, who you crush under the heel of your Israelis, but you have not listened. So now we come to your own turf, my friends, and you will see that we are not intimidated by your guns and your money.”

This was the moment André had been looking forward to for many years.

André Armoceeda had grown up in Lebanon and was not unaccustomed to chaos. He reveled in anarchy in fact, and a history of past successes in that dramatic part of the world had helped to place him on that balcony, flanked by two steely-eyed Iranian stalwarts. The Iranians were standing at attention and they too had Uzis, which were clutched upright with the barrels in front of their noses. André's gun moved casually about as he spoke, as though he might like to shoot a few bystanders for the fun of it.

André had been born a Christian in Beirut in 1948, in what was then a rising metropolis by Western standards. It was fast becoming a playground for the rich, or a place for the display of western vices, depending on your point of view. His father was for a time fortunate in economic matters. As a young entrepreneur in what was then a tourist Mecca, he owned three hotels before

they were demolished by Moslems in 1964; at this time André was kidnapped by the occupying vandals and taken away to Syria. He never learned what had happened to his parents, which was probably for the best. They'd been gunned down on their knees while his father's flagship hotel was burning down.

André was taken to the western part of Syria, which had just been cleansed of the Christians and their large private farming enterprises. Here he had a change in vocation. Instead of head bellboy he became latrine cleaner, then pig tender, wheat planter and gradually supervisor as he worked his way up the ladder. And the Syrians were impressed. Here was evidence of the advance of Allah, where a young man who was formerly a tool of the barbarians was rapidly becoming a soldier in the army of His justice. (And his last name was changed to Abdul, a far more fitting name for a soldier in the army of Islamic Justice.)

But André was drawing further into himself, which might be expected under such a difficult transition. He was, like his father, a strong willed man; but also, like his father, he was accustomed to adapt to circumstances.

And so it was not to help Allah when André joined the Syrian Army when he turned 18, but to obtain a higher form of servitude. Gradually rising through the ranks before an Israeli bullet removed the two small fingers of his left hand during the war of 1967, André Abdul had become a hero.

But he did not consider himself a hero, for he thought that the Syrians were cowards. They'd lost battles where they'd outnumbered the Israelis three to one. The Syrian infantry, formerly accustomed to bare feet, had on several occasions slashed off their boot strings with razors so that they might retreat more in a manner to which they were accustomed. Cowards! And as they were fleeing, the Israelis were firing on them with the same Russian tanks they'd just abandoned. Cut off your boots, get shot with your own weapons, and you call yourself soldiers?

But it was only in his own soul that André reminisced in this manner, for his main goal was to insulate himself from what he'd come to consider a world full of fools. So there was a basic irony in his character during his advance in the Syrian armed forces. The promotion to lieutenant colonel and the purchase of a house in Damascus did not satisfy him, as might be expected of one who had been diverted from upper class to serfdom. Andre wanted and expected to feel himself a part of the ruling class again.

So he resigned his position in 1982, and went back to Beirut, this time with the other team, as it were.

Here André was again successful. His brash demeanor and military connections stood him well in this chaotic environment, and even attained him the adoration of Iran's Party of God, as well as certain of the Ayatollah's chieftains. They considered him a great asset in their undeniable goal: the humiliation of spoiled and sinful Western decadence by the mighty hand of Allah.

His leadership and charisma were very noticeable in helping them gain a strong foothold on the Moslem side of the Green Line in East Beirut, where André Abdul was able to open a Swiss bank account with profits from the heavy arms trade there. Eventually, as his presence in Beirut became more well known, the financiers of Islam grew to respect him enough to let him plan and lead this essential mission.

So André was quite satisfied by the view that day from the balcony, the yellow POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS tape, the jeeps, the silent soldiers, and most of all, the cameras. He smiled benignly at these signs of crisis in the Western world of fools.

And he rose to the occasion for propaganda which might even increase his stature in that other Middle Eastern world of fools. The tools were certainly at his command. Hostages. A worldwide audience. Washington, DC, the center of power. But most of all he appreciated that last minute gift of fortune, that perfect vehicle of propaganda, the Pizza Boy.

“We have inside this building twenty hostages who shall not be released until our demands are met. I will not state these conditions now, but shall give them to you in writing through an intermediary.

“Now I would like to speak to you about the intermediary. He is an American citizen who was delivering pizza to the spies who work here; yes spies, do not bother to deny it. He is one of your own kind American people, a hard working individual who is crushed under the merciless heel of your capitalist pigs. How could we be more honest than through negotiations with one of your own downtrodden? Allow me to show him to you.”

Tom was inside the glass doors trembling during this little speech. His captors had re-costumed him for the presentation, replacing his ban lon shirt with a ribbed undershirt, his cotton blend slacks with a pair of sweat pants, and his penny loafers with a pair of Converse Sneakers which, unfortunately, were a size too small.

It was difficult for Tom as he was pushed roughly through the doorway by Allah’s servants in the tight and unfamiliar sneakers. But André was in his glory, rising far above this world of the mediocre. He raised Tom up to a firmer stance. There he stood, eyes squinting at the camera lights, his hands clad in plastic handcuffs, slightly chilled by the spring breeze on his new attire, as André introduced him.

“Here you are America, take a look at your Pizza boy.”

André then gazed out above the crowd, as though he was gazing beyond it, to America itself and the world at large, before turning on his heel to take Tom back inside, leaving the two gun toting

henchmen outside. He took Tom down the second floor hallway into the first office on the left, which was normally occupied by the agency's boss. His first move was to turn on the television, where, after a bit of channel surfing, the following report appeared:

“We now interrupt this program with a special report. Here is our correspondent Philip Curtin.”

“Good Evening. Twenty hostages have been taken today in the Georgetown area of our nation's capital, Washington D. C. Here is our correspondent Rick Stearns, who is on the scene.”

“Thanks Phil. The hostages are being held in a State Department office in the brownstone building you can see on your screen behind me. There are two guards, with machine guns, on the balcony of the building who, we presume, are helping to guard the prisoners. We have a tape of a gentleman who officials here believe to be the leader of the group.”

“Greetings from Islam my friends, it is almost time for us to talk...”

While watching the televised recapitulation of his speech, André surveyed the office in a glance. Its normal occupant was Quentin Billingsley, whose diplomas were mounted on the wall: BA, Summa cum Laud, Bates College, Sociology. MA, Brandeis, International Finance. Phd. Harvard Kennedy School of Government, International Relations. Upon the bookshelves were scholarly looking tomes standing at attention above the bottom shelf where, to eliminate the possibility that Mr. Billingsley might be perceived to be a total bore without any desire for leisure, more casual items: a baseball, autographed by several members of the 1962 Washington Senators, mounted in a plastic case. A bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson gazing with a Napoleonic gaze toward the horizon. An eight by ten picture of the Billingsley family, Quentin and his wife, grinning, and two teen-age sons dressed up for Groton on their way to the Ivy League. And in the middle, the television, (usually concealed by a sliding wooden panel.)

Upon the far wall was a document which described the function of the institution, The Agency for World Peace, (AWP). A distinguished looking document, it was printed on parchment in flowing Italics, explaining the aims of the organization. “The purpose of the AWP is to help American corporations promote the peace and freedom of American life to our brothers and sisters overseas by trade and commerce for a better life for all the world's citizens,” the document said. The organization had been set up by the Democratic Party as an appropriation to a bill of what they considered wasteful defense spending, in 1983, hopefully, so they'd thought, to create a new and peaceful foreign policy in the post Cold War world. Next to the document were mounted pictures of photo ops of some of the distinguished moments in the organization's history, some of which contained Mr. Quentin Billingsley.

What a bunch of garbage, André thought, just like dad would have believed. For his father, during his abbreviated life span, taught André that men of all political persuasions and religions should live in peace and harmony. He had practiced what he preached, opening his hotels to Christians, Moslems and Jews alike. How could André forget those memories of his boyhood

when his father's hotels stood tall in the days when Beirut was in its heyday. What a city it had once been, a veritable tourist Mecca. Sometimes, secretly, he fondly remembered the adolescent reverence he had once held for his father's flagship hotel. And majestic it had been. Its white stucco frontage lined dark glass windows that rose thirty-three stories high on an Olympian hillside above the Mediterranean Sea, looking down upon the azure blue waters. The echoes of the squawking sea gulls could be heard rising in the swirling wind. Out by the pool he recalled his father sitting and socializing with the hotel's customers in the late afternoon sun, his eyes gleaming with enthusiastic appreciation as he socialized with the variety of cosmopolitan Beirut society.

"Dad, Dad, Look! I'm going to do a back flip!" young André would call out from the end of the diving board.

Thus as a young man he was entranced by his father's visions of peace and harmony.

"Encourage all you encounter to cooperate and help each other," his father advised him. "And if they disagree, so be it. But encourage them to discuss their disagreements."

But there wasn't much discussion after the hotels were burned down that fateful day, a day that was the beginning of a revolution in the way André thought about the world. No, Dad, you had it backward, he'd mused as a Syrian pig tender, a more realistic view of the world led him to believe that only fools would try to profit from cooperation. For what was the point? It was a nice thought, world peace, and all that, but surely not a normal state of affairs. For centuries the Jews and Arabs had fought, and when the Jews left, the Arabs fought amongst themselves. And then, in the so-called "modern" twentieth century, the Jews came back! They said they were there to establish some Holy Theocratic State but André knew very well that their true purpose was anything but holy. They were there as a military launching pad for the Western Powers' control of their oil interests. The Western powers, of course, though they might pretend otherwise, had a history that was no better. In the Twentieth Century alone there was the Spanish Civil War and two World Wars that involved half the globe, as well as all the minor wars of American colonization from South America to the Philippines, finishing off with internal conflicts of repression and ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe. (That's not mentioning the dozens of wars of religious oppression in the previous centuries.) No Dad, you had it all backwards, the way to true and reliable wealth was to seek profit from conflict, for that was the true way of the world. In André's homespun philosophy the world was full of conflict, and this was normal. Why bother in a quest for the ideal when it was likely to get you killed? (Right Dad?) This was the planet earth, and things were far from perfect, so why not be a realist and learn to gain from what was normal. And the normal thing was that humanity, on the whole, was greedy, warlike and corrupt, and cared only for its own best interest.

The average man of any nationality, thought André, was a fool and a coward. Far too insecure to make their own decisions, they banded together behind the closest available leader. He could see it in Lebanon: the Catholics behind General Aoun; the Syrians invading with their army; the

extremist Hezbollah, a Muslim militia, funded by the Shah and his minions; or look at the Phalangists, who latched their allegiance on to whoever was convenient at the time.

Problem was, Lebanon wasn't big enough for all of them, and when you threw in the Israelis, it ended up in a civil war where no one was the winner. Well Dad your heart was in the right place, but your kind couldn't hope to run the world. The extremists would always win out.

Ah, but America. It was, culturally speaking, quite different from Europe; the land of plenty, and that meant plenty of everything. Walt Disney! McDonalds! Automobiles! Frisbees! And television! There they lapped up information like pigs at a trough! Look at them now! As usual, on television:

“Any ideas as to who's behind this Rick?”

“I'm afraid not Phil, I'm sure they're going to analyze this fellow's picture but that's going to take some time.”

“It sure seems different in our own country, doesn't it?”

“You can say that again.”

“Thanks Rick, we'll be getting back to you.

“Once again, ladies and gentlemen, twenty hostages have been taken tonight in the Georgetown area of our nation's Capital...”

André, now satisfied that the show was going on as planned, turned off the television and invited Tom across the hall to check on the other hostages.

“Let's go Pizza Boy,” he said.

He grabbed Tom by the shoulder and dragged him across the hall, into the building's conference room, where the rest of the hostages were held. They sat on a hardwood floor, backs propped up against the walls, their feet protruding out onto the pale blue carpet at the center of the room. The room's table, chairs and blackboard were crowded into the far corner, where one of André's henchmen stood to guard the prisoners.

A common feeling of outrage pervaded the room's occupants. Raised eyebrows and rolling eyeballs conveyed their sentiments in spite of the gags and hand restraints, as the agency's employees did not consider themselves to be a legitimate target. It was the Agency for World Peace, for heaven's sake. It was their mission to protect the world from tinhorn dictators and rabble-rousing megalomaniacs. How ironic! So their cooperation was muted and unenthusiastic when André began to question them.

He did so by reaching down to temporarily unfasten their gags and asking questions.

“Who are you?” he inquired.

“May Parchman,” the round middle aged woman replied.

“And what do you do here?”

“I’m Mr. Billingsley’s secretary.”

“Are you armed?”

“No,” she replied testily.

“Hmm,” André Abdul responded.

And so around the room he went, questioning each in turn, with no evidence of any particular interest, until he came to a young gentleman.

“Who are you?”

“Amado Salpedro.”

“And what do you do here?”

“I’m a translator.”

“Where are you from?”

“I was born in Santiago Chile.”

Amado was a handsome young man with high cheekbones and jet-black hair, which was combed straight back. He wore dark blue slacks with a black belt fastened by a gold clasp. His green and red striped tie was fastened up to the collar by a gold tiepin, and his shirt was very white.

“Does it not bother you to work in the nation that oppresses your country?”

“Our agency attempts to establish-”

“Silencio!” shouted André, showing off a little knowledge of Spanish. “Get up and come with me.”

He roughly helped pull the translator to his feet and took him, along with the newly christened Pizza Boy, back to the office across the hall, and thrust them into the room together.

Then both doors were closed.

Chapter Two

“This guy's crazy,” said Tom.

“You are right my friend,” the Chilean replied.

Now separated from the perpetrator of his distress, Tom began to vent some of his anger.

“I'd like to take that bozo and his bouncers and kick their little Muslim-” Then, checking himself, in fear of being xenophobic in front of a foreigner. “My name is Tom.”

“Amado.”

“How'd this start? How long have they been here?”

“Not long,” said Amado. “They came in about 15 minutes before you showed up.”

“What happened?”

“They just came in downstairs and locked the doors, I guess. I was in my office down the hall. That head guy came upstairs with his machine gun and herded everybody into the room across the hall at gun-point, and then ordered the guys in the black robes to put these plastic handcuffs and gags on us and made us sit against the wall.”

“That's it?” asked Tom.

“Not much to tell until you showed up.”

“Jeez, I wonder why he let me in.”

“So do I,” mused the Chilean. “He must have seen you out the window holding the pizza boxes and had a moment of inspiration.”

“Inspiration?”

“You know, for publicity. He used you as a prop, didn't he?”

“Yes,” said Tom despondently. “Pizza Boy.”

“You don't seem like a pizza deliverer.”

“It's part time.”

“Oh?”

“I just today graduated from Georgetown and was filling in because of an emergency.”

“Emergency?”

“It's a long story.”

“I see,” said Amado. “Georgetown had its graduation today, no?”

“That's right. I worked part time for that parlor for two years, and today they got stuck, so I was just filling in for a couple of hours.”

“On your graduation day? That was certainly going out of your way.”

“You got that right,” said Tom, looking dejectedly at the walls of the office of their confinement.

“What about you? Why did he pick you out of all those people?”

“I don't know, my friend. Maybe it's because I'm not American, and he can use me out on the porch, like he did with you. It's like you say, this guy is crazy.”

“If it weren't for this right now I'd be, ... ah-” Tom thought, alas, of what might have been, had it not been for this catastrophe he'd probably have been, at that moment, swirling ice cubes around in a nice snifter of Grand Marnier, after a nice gourmet dinner accompanied by some gourmet wine in a gourmet restaurant, with, of course, a distinguished atmosphere. There he'd be theorizing about the glorious life as an adult that awaited him out there.

“I'd be out to dinner celebrating our graduation. My girlfriend and I with our parents.”

“You must not have liked the way they introduced you.”

“I'd like to take that guy and, ... have you ever seen anything like this before, down in...where are you from?”

“Chile.”

“Yes, Chile. Ever seen anything like this down there?”

“Once, sort of,” Amado mused, strolling over to the office windows where the staccato noises of the multitude out there still reverberated, the voices, the sirens, the speakers, the foot traffic.

How could he describe this to an American?

“Once when I was a boy, some revolutionaries wanted to break into our house.”

“Revolutionaries?”

“When Salvador Allende was elected president in 1971, he told his followers that the rich should share their houses with the poor. One night a whole crowd of his supporters came and demanded to move in.”

“Did you let them?”

“No, my father did not, I was just a boy.”

“Did you live in Santiago?”

“Yes, but this happened at a place we had out in the country. It was very scary.”

“I’ll bet.”

Ah, the hacienda, was a place that was an arcadia to Amado as a boy. For the Salpedro family it was a place of escape from the toils of everyday living. On that springtime day Amado had been out riding horses with his boyhood heroes, Juan and Romero, two of the farm hands. As the family relaxed to a late, 9:00 PM, leisurely dinner, out on the screened in verandah where the lengthy picnic table sported a sumptuous buffet, life was grand. Amado, then fourteen years of age, was trying, with limited success, to narrate the big event of that day for him, his heroic passing on the left of Romero's horse on a narrow bend in the path; to Romero the assault wasn't at all expected, so he and everyone else laughed it off. But it remained a superb adventure to the young Amado. Then as the adults retired to the living room to enjoy some cognac and Cuban cigars and listen to the cicadas, Amado was sent off to bed.

It was then that the trouble had started. A whole gang of socialists stormed the gates of the hacienda. It was lucky, thought some, that they hadn't made a rear approach. They rattled and banged the heavy black iron bars, demanding admission.

“Let's go, my friends!”

“Let us in!”

“It is time to share!”

“The poor deserve better!”

And it was the first time that Amado saw a different side of his father who, as an army general, had a professional life that was usually quite set apart from his family. That night was what General Salpedro most feared after the election of Salvador Allende, that the poor would follow their leaders' advice literally and demand, ad hoc, to share the quarters of the rich.

Amado's father was a handsome man then, not far out of the prime of his life, in his early fifties, a big barreled chest with muscular forearms covered with a coat of coarse black hair. A career military man, in the way of the Chilean Army, he carried himself with the quiet dignity of a man who has known the company of great warriors, and that night he led his other three sons in repelling these foreign invaders. Amado knew that he was too young to participate.

Who were these crude barbarians, these lowly ingrates who, without knowing it, had fallen back to lower levels of animal behavior. Thinking that they deserved to share in the belongings of others that they hadn't done a thing to earn. For the Salpedro family was aware that their ancestry was of a higher order indeed- even the young Amado knew this- and it would be impossible to consider even for an instant such ridiculous suggestions, share our belongings with these- these- only God knew what they really were. The Salpedros did not consider themselves, in fact, to be South American. They were descended from great Spaniards, from a higher aristocracy. These lowly creatures outside were South American, Mestizos, or partly so, indigenous native peoples who, having lost the respect and dignity of discipline, work and honor, were happy to entrust their undignified fate to whatever idiotic idealist best promised them the world for a song. Amado's older brothers, clad in linen slacks and broad collared shirts that tied with a string, went to unlock the gun case while listening to their father's instructions.

Crouching at his bedroom window listening closely, afraid for his life, Amado heard new things.

“We'll shoot the guns off in the air and if they don't leave then we'll go and hang a few of them.”

Fortunately they fled at the sound of the guns, but that night was the start of the bad times, and Amado did not see much of his father for a while. But he was old enough to watch the television and read the paper and so could not help but wonder what was his father's role in the squashing of the revolutionaries.

How could Amado explain this to an American?

And who was this American anyway, sitting there in sweat pants and a ribbed T-shirt?

“Are those your work clothes?”

“No, no, this is what they put on me. My clothes are out in the hall.”

“Why?”

“I guess it's a sort of a costume.”

“That was not very nice of them.”

“No.”

Who was this young man? They were such an insulated people, so isolated from the troubles of the world outside, the revolutions, civil wars, starvation, and political oppression. They read about them in the papers, of course, but to them, in their privileged little dens and parlors, it was just entertainment. Young Tom here could have been out with his parents to be celebrated like some trophy in a case, soon to be packed off to some elevated cushy job, what a spoiled people the Americans were, in the opinion of the Chilean.

“Do you think we'll survive this?” asked Tom.

“Oh I think so,” said Mario. “It's purely for propaganda probably. He'll just put on a little show, then get arrested and we'll be fine.”

“I hope so.”

Despite these momentous events, the earth still revolved on its axis around the sun, making night follow day, and darkness fell upon the little brownstone holding Tom and Amado. Their conversation gradually died away, and, though the two were unnaturally pumped a bit by adrenaline, they became tired, and lay down upon the carpeted floor, using two chair cushions for pillows, and drifted into a state of semi-sleep.

What was the young American feeling? A large part of him, of course, was caught up in the controversy of fear, rage and resentment toward his captors, who had deprived him of one of the best days yet in his young life, and threatened the very freedom which he'd come to take for granted. In another part of his being, however, Tom O'Malley sought relief from these difficulties in the fact that he was a young man in love. In such romantic reminiscences he could find escape, at least in part, from these momentous burdens, by taking himself to a place where such worldly concerns were soothed away, and log onto vistas and horizons that transcended mere earthly troubles.

Secretly, to himself, he renewed his feelings of veneration toward his girlfriend, which, in times of crisis, he found a source of great comfort; this he did by renewing his previous personal

emotional commitment to her, reaffirming for her a high and special status in his priorities. Of course it wasn't the first time he'd recommitted his feelings to her in such a manner but now, under these new, different, dangerous circumstances, it was with renewed intention and vigor, for he wanted the intensity of his affection for her to match the new adventures of his own experience. This, he felt certain, she at that same time was also doing. He drifted off into the fairy land of love by dreaming of little things, like her nose wiggle, her smile, her light laughter, her demeanor, the way she touched him, greeted him, stared at him with bright eyes, or held him tight when they were alone. Thus having established a beachhead of emotional security, he enhanced it by recalling times that they'd spent together, in a most wistful and appreciative fashion. Like that day they'd gone to the shore outside of Ocean City Maryland, where the two had sojourned one day the summer before last. Her little Honda Civic took them into a beautiful world where it was just the two of them. Sand dunes, with wild grass growing- (so many dunes in fact that they had to give a couple of passing locals in a jeep ten bucks to tow them out a little when they'd driven in too far.) They had walked out to the Ocean itself, where they beheld the small waves lapping against the shore and mist rising in the early morning sunshine. There they lay down on the sand and snuggled their faces together with hugs and kisses.

Fortifying himself with such testaments to how, at times, they seemed so close to be almost one person, Tom reflected Amy's testimonials to their unity; on some occasions, she couldn't stand to be without him.

"I hate the weekends," she'd once said.

This was during the previous summer when they'd shared an apartment in Ocean City and weekends, to Amy Fryman, meant Friday and Saturday nights of waiting for Tom to finish his waitering shifts at the Oceanside Resort Inn.

Of course, she could be out having a beer with her girlfriends or coworkers from the housing office, which she often was, but surely it wasn't the same. She'd rather be out to dinner with Tom, gazing across the table at him, whispering those secret words of endearment- 'Piggly Wiggly', she called him when no one was around. Or having dinner with him at her apartment, where he did the cooking, being an experienced restaurant man, and the two would touch hands across the table enjoying chicken piccata- (one of his specialties)- as their love was slightly enhanced by a bottle of California chardonnay. Then retiring to the nearby bedroom to enjoy the joys of love and then relax to watch a rented movie.

But despite how close the two had become, they were separate and unique people, and Tom's recollections of the start of their relationship reinforced the attraction that had developed in a quite unexpected way. When he and Amy had first met, in fact, it did not seem as though they would ever go out together.

In the beginning of their sophomore year they lived in opposite apartments on the top floor of a three-decker, and Tom thought her far too tame for his agenda. Why he was a bit of a man about

town whose most glorious moments were with the rugby team, especially on road trips. These were for away games, when they piled into cars together in the morning with the spirit of unknown adventure to a distant location- (University of Pennsylvania say, or Bucknell), and they growled and grunted their way through the Rugby matches.

“Pass the ball you idiot!”

“I’m with you!”

“Hit em!” they exclaimed.

Then came that most magic hour, that time of the splendor of the social lubricant called alcohol, this time provided in a keg of beer- (Or several kegs preferably, if it were a large party.) There, still clad in their rugby shorts with athletic looking socks tied above the calf, their rugby shirt tails now hanging freely down, the freedom and adventure of youth flowed with complete abandon.

They sang drinking songs:

“If I were the marrying kind,

And I thank the Lord I’m not sir,

The kind of man that I would be,

Would be a Rugby Keg Sir...”

They played drinking games:

“Cardinal Puff drank three waspys, I mean raspies, I mean....”

“Drink! Drink!”

“You blew it”

“Drink!”

And their drinking resulted in trips to the urinals, where they indulged in athletic conversations.

“If you’d passed the ball before that guy hit you...”

“Yeah, Yeah, Yeah....”

These and other 'out with the boys' kind of occasions did not lead Tom to believe that he would be interested in a girl like Amy. For when they'd first met, he considered her to be far too conservative for his agenda.

He saw her with her friends at home and in the cafeteria and their world seemed a far cry from the lively friendships that he reveled in. They wore wool skirts or fashionable slacks and dainty little blouses with cute little bows at the top. They were very polite and always concerned with the welfare of others.

“That poor guy!”

“What about Carla?”

“Is everything okay?” the young ladies questioned.

In short, Amy reminded him of his mother.

And neither was she, at first, taken with him. She thought that his jokes were silly and immature, his friends and acquaintances lively verging upon rude- “You live next to rugby players?!” her friends asked in amazement. He did not seem like the kind of guy that she'd want to spend her life with.

But as time and the proximity of their living situation wore on, the attraction of their very different natures began to gather steam. Their three-decker had a communal Halloween party when the two first noticed an attraction developing.

“What is that costume?” he asked her, looking at the yellow raincoat, brown overalls and conical seaman's hat.

“I'm a Paddington Bear.”

“What is a Paddington Bear?”

“Come on I'll show you,” she said, taking him across the hall to her apartment into her bedroom where, on the inside of the door, she showed him a poster of the teddy bear in question, sitting unobtrusively in an outfit similar to hers. “See?”

And as the night wore on the two spent time together, laughing, drinking, talking, some with his bosom buddy 'Froggie' from the rugby team, who proudly showed off his ability to open Heineken bottles with his teeth.

“Do it again!” Amy entreated him.

Then at the close of her evening when she felt the exhaustion of intoxication overcoming her she asked Tom provide her guidance to her home, which, as he well knew, must be evidence of some other kind of intoxication, for she'd found the way quite unaided on many other occasions. She grabbed on to his hanging shirttail as he guided her along.

“There it is,” he announced theatrically, pointing across the hall.

Tom was for the first time attracted to her, but not quite ready to commit. He was still in the bachelor out with the boys mode, and more prone to temporary, live for the moment romances which, whether or not they had succeeded, were rehashed in hilarity- (“And then what did she do??!!”), with the boys. But with the passage of time it was another kind of attraction that guided the young man’s attention, and he began to feel that Amy was much more the kind of woman that he'd want to spend his life with.

And, one evening, when the two future lovers came home at the same time a casual hello how are you became a conversation late into the night, they discovered an attraction that neither of the partners could quite understand which swept them away. The young man knew, as he let go, at least temporarily, of the macho swinging singles, get all the girls you can attitude, that he was going to experience something new. He decided that Amy was a very nice girl and that he would accept her, including whatever faults and deficiencies she had, as she was. And so as time rolled on their experiences together, the romantic dinners, the movies, the bars, the parties, the five in the morning I Love You kisses, even Amy's occasional admiration of his rugby heroics, made them a happy couple. It was this union that produced for Tom a place of peace in his heart that sustained him in times of trouble, and it was there that he secretly retreated to during the progress of his sudden transformation into a hostage-celebrity.

“What time is it?”

“Aaagh, Let's see,” said Amado, rolling over onto his stomach and looking at his watch. “It is seven fifteen.”

“Maybe they've given up,” said Tom.

“I doubt it.”

“There hasn't been much noise from across the hall,” said Tom.

“They must still have their gags on.”

“Sleeping with a gag on? Jeez.”

“We'd better keep our voices down then.”

“That's quite true, my friend,” said Amado.

Then, Later on:

“Why do you suppose he's keeping us separate from everyone else?” Tom asked.

“I don't know,” said Amado. “You are here probably because you don't work here and he introduced you outside and all, but me, I really don't know.”

“Maybe he's going to take you out on the balcony.”

“I hope not.”

They paused.

“Well, I have to go to the bathroom,” said Tom.

“So do I,” said Amado.

“Do you think they'll let us?”

“We'll have to knock on the door and find out.”

“You go first,” said Tom.

“Maybe we should flip a coin,” said Amado.

“No you go first.”

“You were the first one to suggest it.”

“Okay.”

Tom stood up and began knocking gently on the door. In a few minutes André Abdul answered.

“Can I go to the bathroom?”

“Yes,” André answered. “He will escort you. But make it quick.”

One of André's robed henchmen, carrying his machine gun, took Tom down the hall.

When he came back he brought some provisions.

“Look,” he said. “They've given us something to eat.”

“What is it?” Amado asked.

“Syrian bread, And a gallon of water,” said Tom, clenching the two items in his bound hands.

“Isn't that nice of him?” whispered Amado.

“My goodness, Bread and water. We won't be gaining weight.”

“You'd better not miss your chance to go to the bathroom.”

“Quite right, quite right,” said Amado.

He walked over to knock gently on the door, as Tom struggled to rip off the plastic top of the gallon of water while handcuffed.

Morning turned into afternoon and Tom and Amado were still imprisoned in the office, having had no communication with their holders since their trips to the bathroom. They passed the time with conversation, and naturally sought out topics relevant to their predicament.

“I've read in the newspapers a couple of times about Americans being taken hostage down in South America,” said Tom.

“Yes it's true,” said Amado. “Usually big corporate executives.”

“Why is that?”

“Well the executives are the ones they have the most chance of getting ransom for.”

“Oh?”

“But usually they won't pay it, the companies I mean.”

“They won't?”

“No,” said Amado. “They don't want to set a precedent to encourage it to happen all of the time.”

“What kind of people take them hostage?”

“Usually it is done by revolutionary groups, who live out in the mountains.”

“Revolutionary groups? What are they like?”

“Usually the government rules the cities, and the revolutionary groups are off in the country, in the mountains, you know, remote areas. There they rouse up the peasants by promising them a better standard of living. This sometimes leads to civil wars.”

“It must get kind of messy.”

“I’m afraid so. On the one side you have the rich industrialists and wealthy landowners and the army and their militias, and on the other side the poor, the revolutionaries, and the drug dealers.”

“The drug dealers?” asked Tom.

“Yes. They’ve made it a lot more difficult for the governments, because drugs mean money, and money means arms, and arms mean trouble for the army.”

“Is it like that in Chile now?”

“Well,” said Amado. “Chile doesn’t have as big a drug war problem because it’s further south, so the climate is not right for the cocoa plant, from which cocaine is derived.”

“That’s good.”

“But Chile did have a kind of a civil war when Pinochet came to power after overthrowing Salvador Allende, but it was more like a coup de tat.”

“You mentioned that yesterday, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” said Amado.

“A coup, is that when the army overthrows the government?”

“That’s right. Pinochet was a general in the army, and they made him president.”

“I think I’ve heard about that,” said Tom. “Some people still argue about it, right?”

“Yes. They tried to put him on trial.”

“He’s still alive?”

“Yes,” said Amado. “But he’s pretty senile, that’s why he got off.”

“For health reasons?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think the coup was good for the country?”

“I don’t know,” said Amado. “Chile is probably the richest country in South America now, but a lot of people were killed.”

“Really?”

“The army killed off a lot of the radicals, and tortured others.”

“That wasn’t very nice of them.”

“No,” said Amado

These images made Tom afraid.

“Let’s try to get a look outside,” said Amado.

“OK,” said Tom.

They got up and walked over to the office’s two windows, and used their fingers to part the venetian blinds. The view was not good, as they were looking from the side of the building at an angle, with another brownstone right next to them, yet they could see the crowd of people there, reporters and soldiers.

“They’re still out there,” said Tom.

“With cameras and soldiers,” said Amado.

“That’s good, I guess.”

“They haven’t given up on us.”

“Let’s turn on the TV and find out what’s happening.”

“There’s a TV in here?” asked Amado.

“Yes, it’s behind that wooden panel there. That guy turned it on to watch the report after we

came in off the porch. Here, I'll show you."

Tom walked over and slid the panel aside.

"Do you think they'll get mad?"

"Well," said Tom. "They haven't kept us from talking, have they? We'll just keep the volume low."

"OK," said Amado.

Tom sat in the leather desk chair and turned it on while Amado pulled over another chair. The first thing they saw was a soap opera, but Tom picked up the plastic controller and began to channel surf, so soon they found news:

"We interrupt this program for a special report. Ladies and gentlemen, Phil Curtin."

"Good afternoon. Twenty Americans are still being held hostage in a State Department office in Washington, D. C. Our correspondent, Rick Stearns, is still on the scene there. How are things going Rick?"

"Well we're now well into our second day of this unique hostage drama here in Washington and there's not much new to report. The hostage takers, whoever they are, seem to have hunkered down and haven't issued any communications or the set of demands they promised last night. It's hard to tell what they're doing. According to confidential sources, they won't even answer the phone, so the government can't negotiate with them."

"Rick it sounds like it's turned into a waiting game."

"That's right Phil, at least for the moment."

"I understand they've found out a little about who this fellow they've introduced as Pizza Boy is."

"Right again, Phil, but the government doesn't want to disclose all it knows for fear of his safety. But they did tell us that he's not really a pizza deliverer but a college student who delivers pizza part time."

"Well that's quite different than the way he was portrayed out on the balcony, isn't it Rick?"

"You can say that again."

"How about the fellow who introduced him out on the balcony?"

“They don't know, or, if they do, they're not telling us.”

“Well what do you think the government's strategy is here? Do they think they can just wait till these guys give up?”

“Well they think that for now it's better to wait it out rather than barge in and risk getting people killed and hope that some kind of negotiations might get started. But sources say that if they keep holding out without saying anything it could become dangerous. There aren't many terrorists there, four or five tops; we're not quite sure about that, but they're afraid that if they wait it out too long these guys might become irrational from tiredness and lack of sleep and do something crazy that might get some of the hostages killed.”

“That's not an attractive possibility.”

“No Phil, it's certainly not.”

“Thanks Rick.

“Well ladies and gentlemen twenty-two hostages are still being held in a government agency in Washington, D. C. by an unknown Middle Eastern terrorist group. As soon as there's any breaking development we'll be back on the air to let you know.”

“Well,” said Tom. “At least they're starting to say I'm more than a pizza boy.”

“Hopefully that will help,” said Amado.

“Shh- what's that?”

The two listened intently. There had been a loud bang, and then the sound of voices talking, but they couldn't distinguish what was being said. But, considering what it was, they probably wouldn't have wanted to.

In the map room, a small office at the rear of the second floor, Amado's boss, Quentin Billingsley, was being questioned by André Abdul. A Formica counter ran along the back wall, on which sat indexes, atlases and a computer. A metal stool behind the counter faced a wall full of maps of the world, and on the stool sat Billingsley. Amado walked about the captive, interrogating him.

“If you could just let my employees go,” said Billingsley. “you can keep me hostage as long as you want but let them go please, they haven't done anything.”

The answer was a punch in the side of the head from André Abdul, which sent the state department employee sprawling to the tiled floor.

“You just shut up, and speak only when spoken to,” said André. “I’m the one conducting this interview and I don’t need any suggestions. Understand?”

Billingsley did not answer. André kicked him in the face.

“I said, do you understand?”

“Yes,” he squealed out, choking from the force of the kick. “I understand.”

André grabbed him by the lapels, yanked him to his feet, and plunked him back on the stool. Billingsley’s hands were still bound. He was a thin, frail man, compared to the muscular André; his tortoiseshell glasses lay on the floor from the force of the blows, and drops of blood began to appear on the left side of his lower lip.

“Are there any underground entrances to this place?” André asked.

“Underground entrances? What do you mean?”

“Sewage tunnels, air vents, storage ducts, ways for those soldiers out there to come sneaking in.”

“I don’t know- I mean I don’t think so. I’m sorry, I’m not an architect.”

“How do people get out of here in case of fire?” André asked.

“There’s a chart in the back hall,” said Quentin, pointing with his bound hands around the corner.

André walked out to the back hallway to look. There, on the wall of the rear staircase, a colored chart was posted with instructions for what to do in case of fire.

“Do you train your employees how to use this for escape?”

“Sort of. It’s part of the employment initiation.”

“Do you have fire drills?”

“No.”

“If you want your employees to stay alive you’d better cooperate,” André said. “And that means cooperate with me because I’m the one calling the tune here. Are there any of your employees you think might be crazy enough to plot some kind of escape attempt?”

“Well,” Quentin said, thinking for a minute. “I don't think so.”

He'd considered for a moment saying that Amado might be in this category, but then overruled that idea, thinking it might put the Chilean in danger.

“Well if any of them do you let them know I'm going to kill them. Understand?”

“Yes.”

André Abdul began to refasten Billingsley's gag.

Tom and Amado watched TV on into the evening, looking for information on their predicament.

“Let's turn on The News Hour,” said Tom.

“The News Hour?”

“Yes, it's on Public Television. They have experts and scholars discuss things, it's very interesting.”

“Oh?” said Amado.

“My father likes to watch it.”

Tom switched to the News Hour, where they happened to be having a discussion about the hostages:

“On tonight's Program we have two experts on international foreign policy and terrorism. Nathan Garver was Undersecretary of State in the Reagan Administration, and now works at the Freedom Foundation here in Washington. Harry Glassberg is a professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University. Welcome gentlemen.

“Mr. Garver I'd like to start with you. What do you think the object of this hostage taking is? Is there some real specific political objective or is it just a voicing of general discontent on the part of the Arab world?”

“Well Jim, I'm afraid the answer is all of the above, or, to put it another way, a little of both. On the one hand, this is sort of an irrational, angry, “Now we're going to be heard from see” kind of demonstration, the same as any of the bombings or shootings routinely practiced by Arab terrorists in the Middle East. You have to remember that the radical Arab groups have never

considered themselves part of the world power structure which has developed from the industrial revolution on. Even the oil fields, to the extremists, are just something that were taken over by the Western powers and resulted in setting up and defining their borders after World War One. They don't feel they, meaning the little guy, have ever really been consulted at all. On the whole, Arab terrorists feel that the governments that rule them are just puppet states who help the Western powers exploit them. So in that sense, this hostage taking can be viewed as just a statement of anger.

“But in another way, in the way that it gains world attention, it is a very rational way of making an effective political statement about their view of imperialistic ambitions of the United States to dominate the politics of the Middle East. It was sort of a David and Goliath style argument when he said 'All to long have the Western powers', and so on.”

“Professor Glassberg?”

“Jim I'd have to say I agree with Nathan on all of those points, and I'd also like to pick up on something else. When he portrayed that fellow as Pizza Boy as being one of the oppressed, he was bringing up some old Marxist class warfare arguments to try to get the American people to rebel against what he says is the oppression of their leaders. What did he say, 'one of your own downtrodden,' “

“You don't think any Americans are going to go for that do you?”

“No, Jim, of course not. It's not designed for Americans. It's designed for the Arab masses back home. I mean if you think about it, he's beaten Americans at their own game, using the great power of American publicity to enunciate Arab views, and using Western metaphors to boot.”

“Do you agree Mr. Garver?”

“Very much so Jim. You have to remember that all the oil money flowing into the Middle East only goes into the hands of a small percentage of the people there, and that the majority of people there have a very poor standard of living. Those are the kind of people who make a very ripe audience for radical fundamentalists. The countries over there are way, way behind Western nations in the creation of industries to support a middle class.”

“No what about the hostages? Will they survive? Do you think this guy's crazy enough to kill them? Professor Glassberg?”

“I find this fellow very hard to size up, Jim. He's far more creative than the standard Islamic fundamentalist. Usually, as we know only too well, the radicals just do suicide bombings, and I don't think I have to elaborate on that, sometimes followed by a crude statement taking credit for it. This fellow's approach has been far more creative, with his showmanship and all. He seems more cosmopolitan, so it's hard to figure.”

“Does that make it more likely that the hostages will survive? Mr. Garver?”

“The fact that he just didn't walk in with a bomb strapped to himself and blow the place up is a positive sign. But a whole host of things, like the creative way he used the pizza deliverer-”

“Uh, hang on you mean college student.”

“Well yes college student; college student that this guy passed off as a pizza deliverer in a Western style creative way. I think that makes this guy kind of hard to predict.”

“That's a very interesting discussion,” said Amado.

“They make it seem like he's a real con man,” said Tom. “Do you think so?”

“Maybe, he certainly looks like he feels at home in front of the camera.”

“And he seems so casual about it all.”

“Maybe he'll get to make television commercials after this,” said Amado.

Tom laughed.

Suddenly they heard the Master lock that André had hinged to the door to lock them in being jostled around and jumped to their feet. Tom turned off the television and hid it behind the panel, and they turned around to face André, who strode in with one of his henchmen.

“Let's go you two,” said André.

The dark robed Muslim grabbed them both by the elbow and yanked and pushed them down the hallway out to the entrance of the porch, which was still occupied by the two Muslim guardians with their Uzis. André stood inside the doorway, using it like a proscenium archway, waiting again to face the multitudes in another appearance at dusk. When the crowd quieted down, the spotlights went on and the cameras whirred, the three stepped onto the porch; André positioned himself in the middle and began to address them.

“It is time for me to introduce you to another hostage, my friends. He is from Chile, that country where men work like dogs mining the tin that you make cans for the food of your dogs. His name is Amado, and we shall call him Amado the Mole. Need I remind you that Chile is the country currently governed by a thinly disguised military dictatorship that your country helped to install in a coup which overthrew a democratically elected government. I am bringing him to you so you can look at him and see, American people, one of the servants who helps your imperialist government oppress the rest of the world.

“Now I am going to send back to you your Pizza Boy, with a list of our demands. If you do not begin to accue to these demands by tomorrow, there will be death.”

The Lebanese raconteur pulled Tom back inside and shoved a list of demands into his bound hands, and began to thrust him down the stairs out into the melee.