



A Hawaií Five-0 Story

By Peg Keeley



The Soul That Perishes

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(Dec 1966)

Steve McGarrett toured the small hotel room one more time to be sure he'd collected all his personal items. It did not take long. By American standards, the small Colombian hotel room, only moderately lit, without air-conditioning or effective screens would have been sub-standard. He had traveled abroad often and the Spartan accommodations had not disturbed him in the least. The small conference had been better than he had anticipated; they had been well received, the audience responsive although an interpreter had been necessary most of the time, which had slowed communications. He carefully latched his bag closed, locked it and pocketed the key. Picking up his suitcase, he walked down the one flight of steps to the lobby.

The clerk looked up at him from where his desk sat nested amongst small tropical palms. "Has your stay been pleasant?"

The cockatiel on its nearby perch gave a single squawk.

"Yes, thank you," Steve commented cordially, glancing around.

"Mr. Williams is outside," the clerk informed him, accurately analyzing his search.

He gave a nod. "Thank you." Bag in hand, he walked out into the hot South American afternoon and immediately spotted Dan Williams seated beneath the shade near the fountain. "Ready, Danno?"

"Taxi is on its way - maybe," he replied. Unlike Steve who wore a suit even in the heat, Williams was clad in white denims and a bright yellow and blue flowered aloha shirt.

Steve sat down near him. "It will be good to get home."

Williams did not reply. *Yes, home and my resignation. That offer in Maui looks better all the time. No big city, no stress - no McGarrett to try to please. Maybe I won't even have to report to the office. He'll just find the letter on his desk if the mailman did his job.*

Steve gave a small forced grin. He'd selected Williams as his companion hoping to foster a relationship of sorts. And he knew Williams was familiar with South America which was plus and made the believable excuse. He liked the young officer, but Williams was rarely open with him. Steve recalled his invitation.

"It is just a week. You could use the time away," Steve had suggested.

"It's Colombia," had come the flat response.

"It's a conference on civilian police force methods of containing cocaine production,"

Steve corrected. "We've been effective in Hawaii - we might have a word or two of wisdom."

Williams had been unimpressed.

"I want you to come."

"Why?"

"You know your way around South America," Steve answered.

"Mexico, Steve. Not South America."

"Same difference. You know some Spanish."

He snorted. "I can ask where the bathroom is. I am not fluent in Spanish by any stretch."

McGarrett never one to beg considered trying to lighten the mood by joking but abandoned it. "You are coming. Like it or not."

Looking back on the exchange, Steve pondered if he should have chosen a more friendly route. Aside from the tequila-drinking contest with two Mexican officers on the first night, Williams had been tense and distant. And if Steve had hoped to draw out the more casual side of the junior officer, this trip was a failure.

The cab pulled up, the driver, wearing a white cap and shirt with a three-day beard and cigar jumped from the driver's side. "Americanos?" he called towards Steve. "Airport? Huh?"

"Guess that's our ride," Danny remarked and rose.

Steve glared at the driver, hoping the man would realize the indiscretion and extinguish the smoke. The driver ignored him. They dropped their bags into the trunk and got into the back seat.

The driver restarted the engine - it took two tries, then he lurched the vehicle into first gear with a bone-jarring grind and floored the gas. The vehicle spun out the hotel drive, throwing dirt into the air. He grinned through his cigar. "*Debemos recoger uno más persona.*"

Steve glanced at Danny for translation. Danny merely shrugged.

The car shot through the dirt streets of Bogata, swerving and sliding around dogs, chickens, children and burros. It slid to a halt before another hotel and the driver jumped out.

"We must be picking up another passenger," Steve guessed.

Danny seemed disinterested. "He'll probably charge us double for the pleasure of the experience."

The driver returned carrying large suitcase of a well-built young woman. He opened the back door for the girl who bent low, exposing most of her cleavage.

"Room for one?" she asked in accented English.

Steve moved over on the seat for her, mildly irritated that his long legs were now drawn up under his chin on the hump of the floor of the back seat. He glanced at Danny and detected the look of amusement.

The driver re-started the car again and the acrid fumes of the cigar rapidly mixed with the powerful perfume of the new passenger, nearly bringing tears to Steve's eyes. By the time the twenty minute ride concluded at the small airport, Steve's legs were cramped and his mood hostile.

The driver took the bags from the back of the car, extending his hand expectantly for his pay and tip. The woman gracefully paid her fare and then, glancing at Steve and Danny moved off.

The driver stood there awaiting their payment. Grudgingly Steve handed over the fare. The driver continued to wait, hand extended.

"The tip," Danny remarked. "And hers."

"What?" Steve snapped.

"The gentleman pays the lady's tip," Danny explained softly.

Steve held back the words that sprang to mind. "Take care of it," he muttered.

Danny counted out the tip.

The driver burst into a broad smile. "*¡Gracias, señores!*" He touched his cap.

As they walked towards the dusty terminal Steve remarked. "Must have been a big tip."

Danny smirked. "It'll be on the reimbursement form."

The airport in Bogata was small, but making attempts to look professional. There were armed guards with machine guns stationed in obvious locations with intent alert expressions. Although Bogata was peaceful enough, that claim could not be made for all of Colombia and certainly not for Colombia's neighbor, Bolivia, where the notorious revolutionary Che Guevara had been executed just a few weeks before, plunging the country into open warfare. Bogata wanted to take no chances with her tourists and business people.

Large ceiling fans moved the humid heat through the terminal where the young female clerk behind the ticket stand gracefully stamped the ticket of the woman who had shared the taxi, then swung the baggage that seemed almost as big as she was onto the cart behind her.

"*Buenos dias,*" the clerk said in completion of the transaction with a broad white smile.

Steve and Danny stepped up to the counter.

"Americans," the girl said, her pleasure obvious. "You have a good stay?" Her accented English had obviously been well rehearsed.

"Yes, the stay was fine. Thank you," Steve replied cordially.

"Please come again," she said stamping the ticket and put his bag onto the cart. She focused her smile on Danny. "Good day, you have a good stay?"

He nodded. "*Buenos dias, Senorita.*"

She blushed slightly, internally mildly honored that this young American had attempted to greet her in her native tongue. "*Tu habla bien español.*"

Steve gave a wry look. *It just takes a pretty girl for him to show off for.*

Danny nodded, as though he was looking for a way to continue the conversation and had just exhausted most of the Spanish he could construct into sentence form. "*¿Dónde está el lavabo?*"

She giggled and pointed towards the sign on the right baring the international mens restroom figure.

Danny turned over his bag and gave a chuckle towards Steve. "Just in case you wanted to know," he muttered.

They took seats and watched the flies in their own holding patterns over the waiting area that was gradually filling with passengers. This flight to Mexico City would be the only international flight of the day so event though it was still before ten in the morning, the terminal was busy.

The flight was scheduled to leave at 10:45. At eleven, Steve glanced at his watch. Things were running pretty consistent with South American time - the flight would depart sometime today, but being close to the promised time did not seem to be of urgency.

A man's voice suddenly came over the loudspeaker declaring in a rush of Spanish information regarding the departure. People began rising from their seats. The information was repeated in English.

"Welcome to Satena Airlines, flight 329 to Mexico City. Please have your ticket in hand as we will prepare to board in just a moment."

Steve and Danny joined the line of humanity that had formed leading out onto the runway. The drone of the propeller driven engines could be heard as from outside, the DC-4 came into view from behind a hanger, it's propellers kicking up dust and trash that spiraled across the flat landing area. The engines died away and the dust settled. Just as the procession of people began to move, a large black Cadillac came charging across the tarmac. The back door was flung open and two men carrying weapons jumped out, looked around, then motioned the man inside to come ahead.

The sixty year old man, his silver and black peppered hair shining in the bright sunlight, left the car and, with still a third weapon toting man at his rear and climbed the stairway into the plane.

As the herd of people again began to move, the two bodyguards remaining at the steps gave a quick scan over each person. One man was pulled aside, screamed at, his pockets turned out and frisked before they allowed him to get on board.

"Looks like we are traveling in style today," Danny remarked.

"I think that is Romero Catava," Steve murmured. "I did not get a good look."

"Catava, huh?" Danny said with a nod. "Colombian ambassador. Explains the security."

One of the bodyguards stopped the line before Steve and Danny. "Good day, Señor McGarrett," the man said politely. "I see your conference. Americans have many -" he seemed to lose the word, " - ideas, yes? - about making our cities safe. This is a good thing."

Danny, who had been a little concerned about the response they would receive when the bodyguards discovered they were armed law enforcers, was relieved.

Steve shook the man's hand and they were waved ahead.

The plane was crowded with people in all stages of hygiene and squeezing down the narrow passageway was difficult. Steve and Danny had isle seats across from each other. One would sit next to a woman and her baby - who was loudly protesting his trip; the other seat seemed much more peaceful, next to a young frock-garbed priest.

"Your choice," Danny murmured.

Steve picked the priest and Danny sat down next to the young Colombian mother and her small crying infant. He began to playfully make noises at the baby in hope to quiet the child, but the boy, not older than three months was too young to be effectively entertained.

Steve greeted the young priest in polite tolerance.

"Pedro Ortiz," the young man replied in clear English with a smile and extended hand. "It is a pleasure to have your company."

Steve accurately assessed the priest to be younger than thirty, and accepted the shake. "Your English is very good," he replied to make conversation.

Pedro laughed. "It should be, I'm from Miami. I have come to Colombia to help with a mission here. I am meeting the bishop in Mexico City and bringing him back here to inspect the work."

Steve managed a nod. The plane was hot and stuffy. Every seat was crowded and most of the passengers were carrying bags and belongings on their laps. It somehow seemed like a glorified bus - just missing the chickens. The pilot restarted the engines and the propellers throbbed to life, vibrating through the passenger cabin with noise that was almost deafening.

The mother next to Danny, pulled her breast from beneath her shirt and began to nurse her infant, who promptly stopped crying and routed intently for the comfort of her milk. Danny turned uncomfortably toward Steve.

It would be a long ride.

Within moments, the plane was hurtling down the lumpy runway, bounding over the uneven spots of asphalt, then as engines whined, nosed up and struggled into the air much like an overweight goose. Airborne at last, the pilot kept the nose at a steep incline knowing they would need to get above ten thousand feet quickly to clear the Andes Mountains that lay immediately ahead.

The passengers were mostly silent, seeming aware that this process of flying was unnatural and for the first several moments of the flight it was difficult to forget that there were no ties to the earth that lay beneath.

Pedro rested back in his seat, a confident smile on his face. "I love flying," he remarked to Steve. "Me, too," Steve answered. *But this isn't flying.*

Although the plane was still in steep ascent, two or three passengers were already milling around in the cabin, holding loosely to the backs of seats as they made their ways along the narrow walkway.

The sound was sudden - a thump, followed quickly by two more pops.

"What's that?" Danny voiced towards Steve who sat up straighter.

"Whatever it is, it isn't good," Steve remarked, trying to look unalarmed. *No sense frightening the passengers.* He glanced out of the window, but heard a scream from the front of the cabin.

Black smoke was billowing down from the front, enveloping everything almost instantly. The engine pitch was whining and the plane suddenly began to roll towards the left. People began shouting and leaping out of their seats.

Steve, totally blind, tightened his seatbelt, coughing with each searing breath of fumes. *We are going to crash! How can I survive this?* He glanced in Danny's direction but could not see through the smoke. Things were falling from bins. Items that had been in passengers' hands were crashing through the compartment as the plane continued its inexorable roll. The wing engine was screaming now as the air was rushing past. Steve's seatbelt cutting into him was all that kept him from thudding against the ceiling as he could hear other non-restrained bodies doing. There was a brief nauseating sense of weightlessness. *The plane is falling.* Violent shaking and a momentary attempt to roll back towards the right were the only indications that the unseen pilots were fighting to correct the craft. The screams were mellowing into fierce coughing. *I cannot breathe! I need to hang on just long enough for air.*

The wrenching slam of the left wing striking the jungle spun the craft, tearing first the left, then the right wing from the fuselage.

In the blackness of smoke and impending unconsciousness, Steve could hear a prayer and as his mind realized that it had come from within himself, he was struck just over the left ear by a dislodged tray table opening a large gash on his head and rendering him senseless.

The destruction seemed to continue to unfold in slow motion. The only sounds now were of the loud ripping of the metal of the aircraft. The left side of the plane had been torn open, seats containing travelers blown out as the flooring was torn loose. The smoke billowed out through the holes, providing a limited visibility.

Danny, still conscious, could see the mother next to him, covered in blood, her left shoulder and arm gone, her baby having disappeared. The remaining fuselage of the DC-4 slammed against the side of a mountain, then rolled back to rest on the left side. Danny quickly released his seatbelt, dropping the short two feet down to the side of the plane, astonished that he had survived -- just as the body of a large man fell on him, pinning him against the wall, completely burying him, knocking the air out of him. Beneath the weight, he tried to breathe as incredible weight of more bodies piled atop of him. He was helpless to free himself and could not find another breath.

Fire had started in the front of the craft and was rapidly moving back through the passenger cabin. Pedro was amazed to find himself basically uninjured, still strapped to a seat that had been ejected from the side of the craft. Releasing the seatbelt, he stumbled to his feet. Throwing off his black frock and stiff collar, he climbed up into the five foot by five foot yawning opening that was where his seat had been in the plane. Almost immediately, he found Steve, his former seatmate, released the seat belt and pulled him from the craft.

There is no time to decide who is alive and who is not. I am the only person here to pull these people from the flames that are quickly approaching. I must save them all. Leaving behind only those obviously dead, Pedro grabbed person after person and pulled them from the craft. Flames were nearly upon him as he pulled the ninth person away from the inferno.

Danny could not breathe. He could feel the heat. *I am going to die here. O please let me suffocate before I burn!* He gave a last desperate effort to move beneath the mound of dead and dying humanity. There was a scream.

Pedro turned back. Someone is alive in there! He raced back into the flame, spotted the flaming woman and pulled her from the plane. He covered her with his jacket, beating out the fire, but her burns were terrible. He prayed for her as she collapsed in a faint. *I need to find others. There must be more!* The air was now filled with the bitter stench of burning flesh and plastic. He tried to go back into the craft, but the heat was unbearable. "Can anyone hear me?" he shouted, sweat and tears clouding his eyes. "*Oh God, can you hear me! Help me!*"

There was a movement in the midst of the heat radiating from the flaming interior.

Is that just an illusion? A foot moved right across there. There is a pile of bodies, but I think someone moved. Pedro hesitated, the flames were close, billowing black smoke rushed from the craft. Throwing his arm across his face in the heat, the young priest made one last venture into the small hell on earth. The first body was already burning, as he pulled it to the side, trying not to think of the human life that had been attached to it a short time before. The second and third were also dead. He turned back to the man who had been on the bottom and as he did, he saw a hand move. Pedro with adrenalin assisted near superhuman strength, grabbed hold of him by the shirt and leapt back for the gaping exit from the plane. The flames were now licking at the exit. As Pedro fell backwards through the opening, a life-grip on his last survivor, his shirt began to burn. Jumping back to his feet, he beat out the single flame and looked back a last time at the passenger cabin completely engulfed in fire.

Dan Williams, at Pedro's feet, gave a deep hacking cough.

Pedro squatted down next to him. "You are alive," he told him.

Danny opened his eyes, amazed to be both outside of the craft and alive. "Steve? Where is he?"

Pedro nodded. "He is here, but I don't know any more. I have just been pulling those out I could save." He glanced over towards those scattered about he had pulled from the plane. None of them were moving.

Just as Danny sat up and began to feel the bruises and aches, they heard a man begin screaming in pain a short distance away. Pedro and Danny both jumped up and followed the sound through the brush to where they found a man hunched over on his knees, hands pressed to his eyes.

"¡Mis ojos! ¡Ayúdeme! ¡Ojos quemados!" the man pleaded.

"Estamos aquí. Nosotros lo podemos ayudar," Pedro answered, taking hold of the man's arm, wondering if he really could help as he had promised.

The man was covered in oily hydraulic fluid. "He has hydraulic fluid in his eyes," Danny guessed, but a quick glance around did not reveal anything they could use to rinse the man's eyes out. "We need to wash his eyes."

The man kept sobbing and moaning, hands to his face.

"Our only hope is that his tears will wash much of it away," Pedro whispered in distress.

"We need to do something," Danny replied in frustration.

Pedro's gaze met his. *Isn't that way I have felt for the last several minutes? Isn't there something more we can do?*

Danny stumbled through the scattered debris that was littering the ground along with horrific parts of bodies and flesh. The plane had been cracked in two, everything in the forward part had been completely incinerated. The rear remained in flames. He found a suitcase that was intact, forced the lock open, but found nothing to wash the eyes out with. For several minutes he continued his frantic search until Pedro came to him.

"It does not matter any more," Pedro said quietly. "He has passed out for now. His eyes are beyond hope."

Danny stood helplessly, a lady's flowered skirt in one hand. "I need to find Steve," he murmured, trying to put aside this failure.

They walked back to the group of those Pedro had rescued and Danny knelt next to Steve. "He's alive," Danny announced in relief. There was a gash over Steve's left ear that had bled freely, yet was now congealed in a blackish-red mass, but his pulse was strong and there were no other obvious injuries. "Steve, can you hear me?"

McGarrett did not move.

Danny tried to check Steve's eyes, but wasn't completely sure what he was looking for. At least the pupils were equal and reactive - he could remember that much for first aid training. He sat back on his heels and glanced around at the jungle. *Just what I wanted - to be dumped into a South American jungle.*

Steve gave a low groan.

"Hey," Danny shook him gently again. "Steve, wake up."

McGarrett was aware first that he hurt all over, then was able to focus on the pain in his head that threatened to explode with every heartbeat. *At least I have a heartbeat.* He slowly opened his eyes, to see Danny leaning over him. *We are both alive.*

"You okay?" Danny asked.

Steve tested each arm and leg, realizing that aside from his throbbing headache, he seemed remarkably in good condition. "I think so."

Pedro moved amongst the other rescued passengers - two were dead, three more including the burned woman would likely die soon. He now approached the two Five-0 officers. "We need to help these people," he said cautiously to Danny.

Danny and Steve both looked at him. "There isn't a whole lot we can do but wait for a rescue team."

Pedro ran a hand through his dark hair. "Rescue team?" He glanced up at the mountains around them. "It will be at least a day - maybe more."

"You are not recommending we try to hike out of here, are you?" Danny stated, his tone clear he did not think it was a good idea.

Pedro looked a bit uncertain in the face of Danny's determined response. "I don't know."

"We need to stay with the plane," Danny replied. "They will be looking for a downed craft. We wander off into the jungle and we will be worse off than we are now. Let's try to see how everyone is and if we have any resources at all."

Pedro gave a nod, and seemed willing to release leadership to Danny - for now.



They spent the next hour assessing the survivors and doing a preliminary examination of what they had to use. It was difficult not to be affected by the grizzly bits of bodies that lay on the ground and dangled from trees. And as the sun began to sink towards the mountain tops Danny began to wonder about what new hazards the night would bring.

Steve had done his best to take part in the activity, but his head ached so severely, he had to sit down frequently. On one of his short spurts of activity, he turned over a curved piece of outer skin of the plane and was shocked when there came a responding cry of a baby. Both Danny and Pedro came on the run and the three of them stared down at the wriggling baby that lay screaming and in apparent good health.

"A miracle," Pedro whispered, dropping to his knees in a spontaneous gesture of prayer.

Steve and Danny exchanged glances. "How will we keep a baby alive?" Danny muttered, recognizing the infant of his seatmate. "I think his name is Esteban."

Pedro gently collected the baby into his arms and for a moment, Esteban stopped crying. "He is a gift, a sign that God is going to bring us through."

He is a liability in a situation that is already desperate, Steve thought, but did not express.

In another hour, several of the saved passengers had regained consciousness, some just to lie in pain. The man whose eyes had been injured was amongst them. He was totally blind.

"There are thirteen of us alive," Pedro reported. "Five are in very poor condition. Delores," he motioned to the unconscious woman with third degree burns, "may not live through the night."

Night. Danny glanced skyward. Yes, darkness would soon be upon them and with it cold and the nocturnal predators. *I have just six rounds. It isn't much.*

"There is no food or water," Steve added. "What is the likelihood of a search party arriving by morning?"

Pedro looked skeptical.

"Ambassador Catava is here," the blind man, Carlos, commented in a deep, but determined voice. "They will look for us."

Catava was actually sitting amongst them, one of the few in reasonably good condition except for broken arm that Pedro and Danny had effectively splinted. The blind man had been one of his bodyguards and Catava had now become dedicated to the care of the man who had before been his protector.

"Unfortunately, although my presence may encourage action, it will not help the search parties find us any sooner. We are in a valley between two ridges of tall mountains. We might not be found for days."

"It is getting cold, we need light and warmth," Danny announced and got to his feet. "I'm going to find something to use for fire wood." Finding wood would not be a problem - finding dry burnable wood might be something else.

"I'll come with you," Steve offered.

They moved off from the group. "How's your head?" Danny asked.

"Hurts." Steve picked up a long stick and used it to hunt through the brush. "We need to determine why that plane went down."

Danny blinked in surprise. "Let the aeronautical team do that."

"No, we need to do that," Steve answered gazing at the pathway the plane had taken.

"I don't understand," Danny murmured.

"Why did it go down?" Steve insisted. "Those odd sounds we heard, remember?"

He nodded.

"I think someone was shooting at the plane."

Danny's jaw dropped. "We were *shot down*? Why?" The answer came over him. "Catava."

Steve nodded. "Yeah, Catava. And my guess is we have just twelve rounds of ammunition between him and his assassins. If someone is trying to kill Catava, he will come to make sure the job was done."

"We can't stay with the plane," Danny whispered.

"No, we have to stay with the plane," Steve countered. "But we need to be ready."

"We won't stand a chance."

"Nor will we stand a chance in that jungle," Steve snapped. "Most of those people will die if we try to move them." He bent down and picked up a book. It would burn. They picked up a few more odds and ends before Steve noticed large portion of plane poking through the greenery a short distance away. It was most of the right wing. It was still smoking near the engine that had supported the now missing propeller, otherwise it was intact. Steve walked the length of it carefully, examining each inch. "Danno," he motioned to one spot. "What do you think?"

Danny examined the small circular hole, then spotted a second. "Looks like a bullet hole to me. High powered velocity. Two of them." He sighed. "What are we going to tell them?"

Steve lifted an eyebrow. "The truth - that they may have just survived a plane crash to be killed by revolutionaries."



The air was cold which was a little surprising in a tropic jungle until one recalled they were above 6,000 feet. They were all shivering and huddled close around the small fire that had been built beneath the shadow of the carcass of the shattered plane. Pedro moved amongst the wounded frequently. There were no bandages, no water, no food and no pain relievers. Delores had succumbed shortly after sunset.

Pedro hunched before the small fire now, running his hands through his dark hair. "There is nothing I can do for them," he murmured. "I just watch them die. I rescued them from death in the plane to watch them suffer a slower tormented death now."

"You are offering them all the comfort you can," Catava said gently.

"But they still die," Pedro replied shaking his head. "Such a waste."

"And if our American policemen are right, this was intentional," Carlos interrupted.

"We are pretty certain about the bullet holes," Steve replied.

"So we must try to enable a rescue party to find us while hiding from assassins," Carlos commented. "And I am of no use to you, Catava! I cannot protect you."

Catava patted Carlos' arm. "Things are as they are, Carlos. It is a waste of time to concern yourself with the things we cannot change."

"We must have a plan," Carlos persisted, staring blindly into the warmth of the fire. "I had a weapon. Is it with us?"

"Unfortunately, no," Steve answered. "It must have been lost in the front half of the plane."

"We have two handguns, six rounds each against militants with high-powered automatic rifles?" Carlos said shaking his head. "Father Pedro, we will need your prayers."

"And you will have them," Pedro replied.

Danny rose and walked towards the burned out cavity of the back half of the plane. The fires were now out, but the darkness contained thirty or so smoldering corpses and no one had expressed interest in hiding within the plane itself. Yet that remained the most likely plan of action - other than taking to the jungle.

Steve walked over to him. "Any ideas? You are, after all, the survivalist of the group."

He slowly shook his head. "We could forge some weapons, spears and such but if the opposition has sniper scopes they don't have to get within two hundred yards of us. We might try to find our way out of here or someone should go for help."

Steve sighed. "It may come to that, but not just yet. Maybe a search team will get here first. None of us knows the terrain."

Danny walked away to a stand of trees and broke off a few thin branches. Using his small penknife, he began to whittle sharp tips onto the sticks. *This isn't really going to help us, but it gives me something to do besides walking amongst the dying.* He glanced at Pedro who was kneeling before another of the victims and praying with him. *Maybe that priest is made of stronger stuff than I am.*

The baby began to cry again. Juan, a man with two broken legs accepted the child from Pedro and placed his smallest finger into the corner of the baby's mouth. Esteban began to suck on it. Pedro gave an approving nod and moved back to the other passenger who was asking for last rites.

"We need to try to get some sleep," Steve remarked. "It's about all we can do to help ourselves right now. Can you take the first watch?"

Danny squatted down and began poking his penknife around the base of a tree.

"Did you find something?" Steve asked, crouching down in mild curiosity.

Danny glanced at him. "First rule of survival - have food, water, shelter and fire."

Steve gave a thin smile. "We've got the fire."

Danny jabbed the knife into a root and drew it back, a two inch grub impaled on the tip of the blade. "We've got them all." He extended the larva still thrashing on the knife towards Steve. "Bon appetite."

McGarrett made no motion. *If I act disgusted he wins. But I'm not hungry enough to eat an insect - yet.*

Danny shrugged and popped the grub into his mouth. The exoskeleton crunched faintly and he chewed then swallowed.

"Nice demonstration," Steve remarked, "but I don't think it will answer our problems. So how did you make it out of the jungle last time?"

Danny shook his head. *Last time* was in Mexico and I had a bigger knife. I was also dressed for the occasion and had an armed partner. There is not much in common with the *last time*. But the jungle has food, there are aqua de sapio trees here that contain water, we can build shelter if we must - but we haven't got the tools. One machete could make the difference in our survival. I don't think we can get those people out. Most of them cannot walk. And we have the baby. He could be noisy."

Steve gave a nod. "I'm going to recommend Pedro hide in the plane with the survivors once it cools down. You and I and Catava will hike out. At least if there are people after him, they'll be following us away from the survivors."

Danny kept working on his stick. "You think Catava's bodyguard will let us leave him behind?"

"I'm not offering him a choice," Steve snapped. He rubbed a hand over his aching brow.

"I'm not so sure you should be running through the jungle either," Danny added.

"I can take care of myself," Steve snapped a little harshly. *How dare he suggest I am weak.* He reminded himself that Williams was trying to be practical. "Let's get back to the others." He steadied himself against a tree trunk as he rose.

Danny did not miss the action. "You okay?" He realized almost instantly that McGarrett probably had not appreciated the comment. "Why don't you check on the others, I'll be back in a few minutes."

"What will you be doing?" Steve almost demanded.

He raised the pointed stick he'd created earlier. "Find something better than grubs for you to eat."

Steve walked back around the still smoldering aircraft to where Pedro was ministering to the wounded. "Father, how are they," he asked formally.

"Call me Pedro, please," the young man answered. He wrapped a bandage he'd made from a shirt around a man who was burned. "I took what I could find from the luggage that was thrown from the plane. We have some bandages to help."

Steve nodded and slowly sat down next to the small fire. "How are they?" he repeated his question.

"Dolores, rest her soul is gone," Pedro told him quietly. "Phillippi has bleeding internally I think. He has bad stomach pains. His abdomen is very hard." He motioned to the thirty year old man who lay clutching his abdomen attempting not to moan. "Carlos," he motioned to the man next to him, "cannot see. He is otherwise able. Don seems to be in a coma. He cannot be aroused. There is bleeding from his ears, so I think that's very bad. Mantalvo has a broken leg and I think his back is injured. He cannot stand. Tomas is burned almost as badly as Dolores was. Raphael has a broken arm, his neck hurts but he can be of help. Juan broke both his legs," he motioned towards the man still trying to comfort the baby. "Catava is all right except for a broken arm. You have a bad cut on your head. Danny and I seem to be without injury. And there is, of course, Esteban."

"Esteban," Steve murmured glancing at the baby. What a mess of complications this small group is. "If we assume there are rebels who shot down the plane," he said quietly. "they'll come back and they will be after Catava. Most of these people cannot move let alone travel through the jungle. Tomorrow Danny, Catava and I will go for help. You stay here with the wounded."

Pedro's eyes widened a little. "You're not serious. It would be very easy to be lost in the jungle and never be found. There are all kinds of dangers that you know nothing about."

"You have a better idea? Shall we all just stay here and await the rebels who will shoot us all? We have only twelve shots, Pedro. Twelve. If Catava is not here when they come, they may leave you alone. You can let them think he died in the plane. No one could determine an identity of those bodies. And how many of these people can wait for help for several days?" Steve looked away from him. *Why am I trying to reason with him? He's a priest; he doesn't have a clue about the real world.*

Pedro looked down at the ground. There was nothing he could say to argue with the tall urban policeman, but he wished there was. He felt helpless just sitting by and waiting for these poor souls to die. "I received The Call when I was a boy," he murmured. "God told me I would save people from the fires of hell." He gave a soft smile and glanced at McGarrett. "I never saved any one - till today. Snatched them from the flames of this earthly hell - only to have them die now."

McGarrett's gaze met the dark eyes of young priest. He did not have much use for religion, but tried to hold respect for those of the cloth, although he suspected most of them fleeced their flocks regularly. *So is he going to give me the preaching line now? Is he going to suggest that God will swoop out of heaven and miraculously rescue us? What a plan to absolve us from responsibility for ourselves. Maybe young Pedro here is still idealistic and hasn't learned that there is no charity on earth, good is done plotting something in return be it donations, reverence or misplaced trust. Always an angle. How does someone as sincere as Pedro turn into...* Steve's thoughts were blessedly interrupted by a movement in the brush. Instantly his gun was out, his body tense and alert.

Danny parted the leaves and stepped into the clearing, unconcerned that Steve's gun was pointed at him. "I made a trip to the local grocery," he remarked. On the end of the sharp stick were three small rodents, each about a pound in weight.

"What are those?" Pedro asked.

"Paca," Danny replied. He stooped near the fire, pulling the animals from the stick and started the skinning process with the rapidly dulling penknife.

"Look like rats," Steve commented.

Danny grinned. "They are. Got a knife? Good, help me do this."

There were no complaints from those able to eat regarding the fare of the few bites of meal. There was not much meat on the small animals, but anything was welcome. Pedro tried to pulverize a small amount and feed it to Esteban, but had little success. The infant had no teeth and knew nothing except sucking. "This baby needs milk," Pedro stated. "Maybe you should take him with you when you go in the morning."

Steve did not reply. "We need a watch tonight. Who is able to stand a two hour shift?"

"I will," Carlos declared. "I cannot see, but my ears are like those of a bat."

"How about you and the padre here?" Steve suggested. "First watch. Danny, you and Catava take the second. Raphael and I will do that last." He placed his gun into Carlos' hands. Danny held his out to Pedro who gasped and refused the weapon.

"Take it, Pedro," Steve snapped. "The rest of us need to try to get a little rest."

"Some rest," Danny muttered. "That baby will cry all night."

Juan seemed to have taken it on himself to care for Esteban as much as the pain from his broken bones would permit. He spoke no English but Pedro informed Steve and Danny that Juan and his wife had a young set of twins at home. He was accustomed to infant care. They did what they could to swaddle Esteban in clothing recovered from the crash in hopes that it would settle him and keep him warm. Those able to move about used what they could find to provide comfort and warmth to those who were immobile. The ground was hard, the air cold and the baby cried periodically. No one could sleep well.

By the time Steve estimated it was time for his shift, he had slept only in small naps. He found Pedro kneeling by Tomas, holding his hand and whispering prayers with him. Even unable to speak Spanish, Steve could identify prayer even in Spanish. "*Dios te salve María, llena eres de gracia, el Señor es contigo, bendita tú eres entre todas las mujeres, y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesús. Santa María, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros pecadores ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte. Amén,*" Pedro's gentle tenor voice carried through the group, the carnage amongst them and the jungle.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen, Steve's mind ran through the liturgy from childhood that no longer meant comfort to him. He hunched close to the small fire, trying to gather warmth and listening to the natural sounds of the night. The jungle was never silent and he could only recognize a little of the night music around them. He wondered about jaguars and snakes.

Pedro came over and sat down beside him. "Tomas is dead," he declared quietly.

Steve nodded. "I'm sorry, Fa - Pedro."

Pedro held his hands out for the warmth of the flame. "I feel so useless."

"You are probably accomplishing more than anyone else here. Your presence and comfort means a lot to them," Steve replied. "Why don't you get some rest?"

He shook his head. "I can't. There is no time for sleep." He sighed and glanced at the darkness around them. "Time for sleep enough when this is done."

Steve nodded. *How often have I had that thought during a difficult case.* He placed another small stick on the fire. There was silence for some time.

Finally Pedro muttered. "Funny, my mother did not want me to be a priest."

Steve did not answer.

"She wanted me to be a cop."

He gave a thin smile. *Am I going to hear his life story? Ah well, there is nothing else to do.* "My mother wished me to be a priest," he answered.

Pedro chuckled. "The problem with being a priest is that people always know who you are by your dress, even if they do not know you by name. They watch you. You cannot make mistakes, you are supposed to be God to them. You are held to a higher standard that is very difficult to meet."

Steve was silent, contemplating the difficult life of law enforcement where an officer was known by his uniform. A mistake could result in allegations that burned through the media and crucified a police officer before the truth was ever heard. A higher standard, to uphold the law - to play God.

"You have a family?" Pedro asked, rubbing his hands.

"A sister," he replied, trying to maintain his detachment. What is Maryann going through right now?

"I have two sisters, a mother. Two brothers both dead. One died when I was very young. My other brother, Manuel was killed when he attempted to stop a man from beating his wife. He was seventeen at the time." He stopped. "Mama wanted vengeance and wished for me to become a lawman. But vengeance belongs to the Lord. When I was still in Florida I would go to the prison to serve communion to my brother's killer."

The crackling of the fire was the only sound for some time as Steve considered the irony of the young priest. He recalled the living small living room in Virginia, the framed photo of his father in uniform, the folded American flag and the day he told his mother he was going to serve in law enforcement and take the vengeance denied him in his father's murder by ensuring the law would be served as long as he

carried a badge. It had been an ideal - the law could never be perfectly served and judgments were rarely infallible. And vengeance had never really quite been satisfied.



"Good evening, is your father at home?" Governor Jameson asked at the doorway of Chin Ho Kelley's modest home.

Susie, Chin's adolescent daughter, flushed with shock. *The governor is standing at my house! Oh my goodness!* Trying desperately to look nonchalant, she stepped back from the door. "I'll get him," she announced and literally ran to the back yard where Chin was cutting the grass.

Chin hurried to the door, wiping the sweat on a rag. *What has happened that was too important to call about? Does Jameson just drop in on Steve like this?* "Good evening, Governor," he said, also trying to hide his surprise at the governor's presence. "I'm sorry for my appearance I was cutting the-

Jameson waved his concerns aside. "Chin, we need to talk."

Chin graciously showed Jameson to the couch, aware that eight young pairs of eyes were watching from around the corner. "I would have come to your office," Chin commented in mild embarrassment as his wife appeared in the door and offered a cold drink.

"No thank you," Jameson responded to her, the slow revelation coming over him that he had never done something like this before. The sobriety of his mission settled on his features.

Chin sat down opposite Jameson expecting to hear of some unusual event that had happened in Honolulu that would require the skills of Five-0. He had prayed that things would stay routine while Steve and Danny were gone. He wondered if the peace of the last four days was about to end. *At least Steve is due back tomorrow.*

Jameson rubbed his hands together. "Chin...this is very difficult to tell you..."

Chin blinked. *This sounds more like visits officers make to tell families a loved one has died.* Fear suddenly gripped his heart.

"The plane from Bogata - it's missing - disappeared from radar over the Andes."

Chin sat frozen, openmouthed. What was being said was beyond believing. "Missing?" he managed to murmur. "Steve and Danny?"

Jameson, his own pain etched across his face, gave a slow shake of his head. "I don't know. It disappeared round noon their time. There are teams looking, but the Colombian search and rescue isn't certain about where they were."

Chin had done the quick math of time zones in his head. "Twelve hours ago," he murmured. "It has already been twelve hours." He uselessly contemplated that twelve hours ago he had been taking his morning shower. *Could two of the closest people to me died while I was taking a shower?* He glanced over at his wife, standing in the doorway, a hand pressed to her lips. "What of Steve's sister and Clara Williams?"

"I have sent messages to them," Jameson offered. "Right now all we can do is wait."

Chin stared down at his hands. *Is that really all I can do? Must I stay here and attempt to run this department?* The memory of his first meeting with Steve flashed before him. *Steve was still active in the Navy and wore his officer's uniform, but there had be a trustworthiness about him that was unusual. He looked you in the eye. He had been devoted to the welfare of Hawaiians, not just the rich landowners. He is godfather to my youngest. And Danny ... that little boy Clara used to dote on until he ran away from home three times before he was ten. He always came here. Not to Andy and not to the Morgans. He always came here. He is like one of my own children.* "I need to go to Colombia," he said quietly.

"Chin, there really isn't anything-" Jameson started.

Chin looked up, a fire in his eyes. "I have to do this. MaryAnn and Clara won't be willing to sit at home and wait - neither am I. Unless you feel the department must stay manned-"

"No, I - I'm sure that Kono can handle it. I can request HPD send Ben Kokua and Duke Lukella to help him. But-" Jameson stopped. *I wish I was going myself.* "-I'll see you are on the next flight to Bogata."



The light came late into the valley as the mountains on either side blocked the warmth of the sun from penetrating the thick jungle. The small fire was little more than graying embers. Humidity permeated everything, dripping from foliage, dampness clinging to clothing, matting hair. Even feet inside of soggy shoes were aching.

Esteban was crying again without consolation.

Danny rose from where he was huddled under a tree and walked over to where Esteban wriggled on Juan's lap. Juan had made no motion to care for the boy since his crying had started several minutes before. Williams squatted down before the man and touched the pale skin. It was cold. He picked up the baby, who quieted immediately, hopeful for attention. Danny placed his right hand over Juan's half-open eyes and gently closed the eyelids.

"Danny?" Pedro asked, noting the action.

"He's dead, Father," Danny commented, turning away from Juan.

Pedro blinked in shock. "It was just his legs."

"Shock. He died during the night from the shock," Danny said quietly, registering little emotion about the event. He handed the baby over to Pedro.

Still stunned, Pedro settled Esteban on his shoulder and patted the baby's back.

Danny, knowing he should find something kind to say, but uncertain of what it was, added softly, "He probably died in his sleep - maybe." He turned and walked over to McGarrett. "You okay this morning?"

McGarrett rose from the fire, stretching out his aching legs. "Wake up Catava. We'd better be moving."

Pedro spun towards him. "You are really going to try to hike out of the jungle?"

"Yes, we really are," Steve replied emphatically.

Danny crossed over towards Catava, noting the other survivors as he went. Raphael was already awake and Carlos sat at near attention, the small .38 still clutched in his hands, his sightless eyes seeking for alien sounds. Danny supposed the bodyguard had been awake all night. Phillippi, the man with internal injuries lay motionless next to the last survivor, Don, who had never yet regained consciousness. Catava lay curled on his side on the ground next to Carlos asleep. Danny bent down and touched his shoulder.

Catava startled awake immediately.

"McGarrett, you and I will hike out of here for help this morning if you are up to it," Danny declared.

Catava did not hesitate. "Of course."

Carlos also started to rise.

"At ease, Carlos," Danny remarked. "Not you."

Carlos' English was limited, but he understood enough to know he was to be parted from the man he had sworn to protect. He began to protest.

Both Catava and Pedro began to reason with him in Spanish, first addressing the obvious problem of Carlos' vision, then the importance of speed. When Carlos still did not yield, Catava declared loudly: "*Usted no trabaja para mí más.*"

Stunned, Carlos blinked once, then said nothing.

"That was effective. What did he say?" Steve muttered.

"He fired him," Danny remarked.

Steve gave a single nod, deciding to keep that tactic for some future time. He glanced around.

"Leave one weapon here." He pointed to the gun in Carlos' lap. "But you get it." He gestured to Raphael.

The man nodded and quickly took the weapon. Carlos offered no protest.

"Father, I'd recommend getting everyone out of the open - maybe into the plane. If the rebels who shot the plane down get here first, maybe they won't find you. If they do, try to convince them Catava's dead."

Pedro hesitated.

"I realize you have an oath about falsehoods," Steve hastened to add, "but if rebels think you are lying, they will start killing everyone alive trying to get someone to tell them where he is. So try to be convincing." He stuck his own pistol into his belt. "Danno?"

He nodded. "Let's go." He knew that this first step was crucial. To head off in the wrong direction was be certain death for them all, yet there was no way to determine beyond doubt which way to go. The best choice was to act like he knew, so he did.

Steve followed, placing Catava between them, strongly suspicious that Danny did not really know where they were going, but he admired the junior detective for not betraying that to them. *At least we can maintain the façade of hope.*



Chin Ho Kelley had been to the Far East several times. He'd seen San Francisco on a dozen or so occasions and even New York once. He had never seen South America. He wondered if the impressions provided by B rated movies would be of any help. If they were no more accurate than American movie depictions of Asians, played by made-up Caucasians with fake epicanthic eyelids, he suspected these renditions to be totally useless. The lighting aboard the flight was subdued, encouraging passengers to sleep. The Boeing 707 had left Honolulu just before 10PM and was now passing over Los Angeles after five hours - having picked up two hours by crossing time zones. He gazed out of the plexi-glass portal at the lights of Los Angeles in the distance. The dawn was just starting to pinken the sky beyond the low mountains to the east. Moments later, the black night and the ocean were left behind as the plane raced towards the rising sun and the Sierra Madres were visible briefly before cloud cover shielded the earth from view.

The stewardess passed quietly down the aisle gently offering travelers a light breakfast. People began moving sleepily through the cabin, most of them used to the exhaustion of time change in flight. It seemed just a short time later the stewardess again made her trip down the aisle, this time advising passengers that they would be arriving in Houston shortly and they needed to go to their seats. As she passed Chin, the seatbelt line blinked melodically on. "Your seatbelt, Sir, we are preparing to land," she said out of habit, but his was already in place.

Chin exited the jet ramp into the terminal, glancing at his watch and took a moment to adjust the time from 6:00AM to 10:00AM. He had seven hours before his flight on to Bogata. He was stiff and anxious. Aside from a brief nap of exhaustion, he had not slept. He stepped into a small coffee shop, ordered a large hot tea that the service person seemed to have trouble providing, and a Danish. *I need to be strong. I know Clara Williams and she is a tough old cookie, but this is her child. It will be different. I have never met Steve's sister. I know she is a newly-wed and her husband's name is Tom Whalen. If she's of the stuff her older brother is, she'll also be pretty tough. But these are both women - it is my duty to protect and support them. And is there a chance Steve and Danny survived? I suppose there is always a chance. There's no one I'd more expect to get out of an inescapable situation than either one of them and together - if it can be done, they'll do it.*

No words had passed amongst the three men as they made their way single file, Danny first, then Catava and Steve last. The sun was up and as cool as the night before had been, the jungle was now a sauna. The humid moisture and sweat caused the fabric of their clothing to stick to their skin and perspiration dripped from their faces and arms. Hunger and the unspoken nagging suspicion that they might be headed in the wrong direction dampened their spirits just as much. After three hours, they paused to rest.

Steve's head hurt more than he wished. With each throbbing beat of his heart, the pain created spots before his eyes and the sweat had caused the deep gash to begin to weep serous fluid down his cheek. Catava's broken arm was severely swollen and they unwrapped, and rewrapped the splint to provide better circulation.

As they sat down to rest McGarrett gazed upward towards the thick canopy of leaves. "Can't get a bearing on the sun," he remarked. "Too dense."

Danny turned his attention upwards and nodded. "Hard to know."

"If this is the valley I think, we must keep the mountains to the right and left, the afternoon sun to the left," Catava murmured. "We keep going down and come to Magdajeno Rio. Grande - big river. Hard to miss."

"Hard to miss, huh?" Steve muttered exchanging looks with Williams.

"And assuming we're in the Valle del Magdalena," Danny commented. He wiped sweat from his forehead onto his sleeve.

Steve watched a small bright green lizard scamper up the tree and disappear above them. "We need to find the sun." He got to his feet. "I'll climb up there and see what I can find."

"I'll do it," Danny offered. "Your head-"

McGarrett cut him off. "I said I'd do it." *I should let him do it. Maybe that's why I want to do this.* He's been acting like I need protecting. I am in charge here. I need to do this to remind Catava if not Danny. He handed Danny his pistol.

Danny wrinkled his brow. "Are you sure?"

Ego mildly bruised, Steve turned his back. His height was helpful as he could easily grasp the lowest branches and pull himself up into the tree. He began the slow ascent. The climb was harder and more exhausting than he had anticipated, but he was determined to give no sign of his weariness.

The foliage was thick and in just a matter of moments, the tree's leaves and branches had blocked Steve from view. Danny turned towards Catava, about speak, but there was the sudden sound of squealing monkeys in the treetops and footsteps approaching. Catava needed no prompting to duck into the heavy underbrush with Danny.

As the sounds of people escalated, Danny gripped Steve's pistol, hoping they would not need it anxiously hoping it would be a search party.

A noisy group of crudely dressed Colombian men appeared through the brush laughing and joking amongst themselves. This small clearing that had been inviting to Steve and his group was also attractive to them. The eight men paused, milled around together and shared a drink from a canteen between them. They chatted noisily in Spanish, poking and jostling each other.

Danny glanced at Catava who frowned and shook his head, fear in his eyes.

Danny knew these guys were not good news. *Are they looking for us? For the plane? Did they just happen to wander in here? This is a pretty big jungle, could anything just happen by accident?*

Several of the men plopped down on the ground, again sharing the canteen. The one in charge, obvious by his spread legged stance, hand on hip, and automatic rifle shouted angrily at them.

One gave a weary wave of the hand, refusing to move.

He shouted again, more angrily. When the tired men again refused, he fired the rifle, the automatic setting sending twenty-five rounds up into the trees.

Steve had also heard the approach and now as bullets and whizzing up around him, he crouched against the tree, hoping to avoid being hit.

Danny winced in alarm, aware there was nothing he could do and hoping Steve would find a way to stay hidden.

The leader of the group shouted again, firing a second stream of ammunition upward and cursing at his men.

Steve cursed as well, grabbing hold of the tree trunk. The bullet-riddled, weakened branch beneath his feet suddenly snapped without warning. He made a valiant effort to catch himself, managed to grab hold of a second branch as he dropped which broke his fall slightly before breaking as well and he landed with a loud thud in the center of the Colombian group.

Suddenly all eight of the men were on their feet shouting angrily, waving weapons in a general scene of pandemonium.

Steve, the air knocked out of him made only one attempt to escape during the panic to find the muzzle of the leader's M16 square in his face. He glanced up and the man gave a broad, controlling smile through his cigarette.

Danny gripped the gun, fear and anger plan.

Catava winced. "Bad thing," he whispered.

The rebel leader quickly regained control of his men and motioned two of them forward. They grabbed McGarrett and dropped him unceremoniously in sitting position against the tree.

Steve was quickly trying to determine his own status - he seemed uninjured except for a few scrapes and the roaring headache the fall had not improved. *What do they want? What do they already know?* If Danny and Catava and smart they are already making tracks out of here.

The rebels were yelling and shouting at each other, gesturing towards him, pointing around. Catava motioned Danny. "They going to know he's from the plane. We need to go." Danny studied the expression on the leader's face. Of course he knows Steve's from the plane where else would he be from? "We're getting him back, Catava," he muttered hotly, "I won't leave him." "This our chance. They will start looking for us any minute," Catava whispered hotly. The rebel leader poked Steve's shoulder with the barrel of the gun and asked him a question in Spanish. Steve looked at him blankly and did not reply. He restated the question more angrily, jamming the gun a bit harder against Steve's chest. "English," the Five-0 chief muttered. "I don't understand you." That started new murmurings amongst the group. The leader gave a grin and tossed away his cigarette butt. He asked another question in Spanish. Catava glanced at Danny. "They want to know where the plane is. He buying us time with his life, we go," Catava whispered urgently. Danny glared at him. "I won't leave him," he replied hotly. "You have six shots - there are eight men - with automatic rifles!" Catava whispered hotly. Danny tried to shut out Catava's argument. He remembered how he'd been screamed at in boot camp. A young naïve eighteen year old he had attempted to rescue his partner in a training exercise.

"You think this is the fucking Marines, soldier?! You wanna be a Marine, boy?! You a good man? We don't want good men here. We want survivors! The man down knows he will pay for your freedom with his life! You let him!"

Steve was trying to play stupid while assessing the strengths and hopefully weaknesses of his captors. The weaknesses seemed few. "American," he said quietly. They all turned to him. "*Americano?*" one asked. "Yes," Steve said more enthusiastically, "Americano. I am an American. Big government. Lots of money." They murmured amongst themselves, glancing once again to their leader. "*Americano,*" the irritated leader muttered, less impressed. "*De nada.*" "Lots of money," Steve repeated emphatically. "You take me to the Americans. They will give you lots of money. Buy - buy a car. New gun. Lots of guns." One of the men made a remark and a few of them giggled. The group began gesturing and arguing with their leader again. "They want the money," Catava whispered. "He wants the plane." Danny fingered his gun, wondering if he were to take out the one closest to Steve, could Steve grab the rifle and even the odds. He knew he needed to wait a little longer. The leader raised a hand slightly and called for silence. The rag-tag group of men fell back in fear. He spoke to Steve. "Americano? You plane?" He raised his arms in a charade of the plane flying. Steve gave no response. The leader's expression deepened into frustrated rage. "*¿Dónde? Huh?*" He pointed one direction, then another and another. "*¿Dónde?*" Steve lifted his eyebrows and gave a shrug. "I don't know. They all died. I'm lost." The leader's smile faded to a snarl. "Plane!" he shouted more angrily waving the rifle towards his captive. Steve shrugged helplessly. The leader disgustedly turned his back on McGarrett and muttered. "Mátelo." He pointed to two of his men and motioned the others to follow. He called back orders to bury the body so searchers looking for the plane would not find him and headed away, the other five men behind him. Steve did not need a translation to know what was happening, but the odds were changing. In just a moment there would be only two rebels left, each armed with an M16. Steve glanced at the two left behind knowing he had to get them to come close. "You take me to the Americans for money?" he asked hopefully, feigning simplicity. One gave an apologetic semi-smile and shrugged. He raised his rifle. "Hey!" Steve pulled the watch off his wrist and waved it. "Look. Swiss watch. Let me go and I'll give you the watch." Maybe they are too dumb to realize they can kill me and take the watch, too.

The second one stepped timidly closer, glanced at his partner, then lowered his weapon and reached to snatch the watch. In the same instant he reached, Steve kicked his leg out, knocking the man's feet from beneath him. The rebel dropped his gun, landed on the ground where Steve yanked him back as a shield.

The other rebel, swung his weapon up then suddenly crumbled as a single shot exploded through his right shoulder. He lost his weapon, collapsing to the ground. Steve gasped in surprise.

Danny and Catava burst into view. Steve released the unarmed rebel who staggered to his knees, begging for mercy, the watch still dangling from one hand. Catava picked up the rifle of the wounded man, shot him in the head, turned and shot the pleading one who collapsed lifeless before the other two could issue a word.

"We wanted them alive!" Danny shouted angrily.

"What, you going to take captives?" Catava snarled and handed the smoking rifle over to Steve.

"We could have made them show us the way out of here!" He declared. "That was the idea, remember? To get out of here?"

Catava waved a hand. "No matter. They better off dead."

Danny turned speechless towards Steve who shook his head and handed one rifle to him. "He wanted us to leave you," Danny muttered.

"Not surprised," Steve replied and placed a hand on Danny's shoulder. "Thank you." Steve started to turn away, then remembered: "I want my damned watch back." He walked to the dead man and grabbed the watch from the limp fingers. "We need to go back to the plane."

"What?" Catava said in frustration.

"They'll be looking for the plane. They will find it," Steve answered.

"We need to get to help," Catava said stubbornly.

"And when their two partners don't show up, what then?" Steve added. "They will know I am still alive - and perhaps had help. Their leader wasn't stupid. The only chance we have right now is the element of some surprise - they don't know we are here quite yet."

Catava bit his lip uncomfortably. "And do you think they are alone? Huh? That those six dogs are all there are? Do you think we can fight the entire FARC with these?" He pointed to the pistol and rifle. "We out run them, we no follow them!"

Steve squared his jaw. "Our responsibility is to get the survivors out alive, not just YOU out alive. We need to go back for them." *Catava knows who these rebels are. He did not tell us that. What else does he know about them? Now is not the time to ask.*

Danny refastened the safety on the rifle. "We're better armed than before. If we get lucky we can perhaps intercept those guys before they ever get to the plane. Let's go."

The three of them headed off into the jungle at a pace about twice as fast as they had followed earlier hoping to retrace their path to the plane. They had left markers before for leading a search party back and hoped they would be enough to help them, but not clear enough to guide the rebels.

It took about an hour for them to cover most of the trail back through the jungle, but it was clear the rebels were traveling nearly as fast as they were and Steve feared that the trail was being read. They came within earshot of the plane and could hear voices raised and shouting.

"They beat us here," Catava whispered, panting from his exertion.

Steve motioned to Danny and they separated to opposite sides of the area.

The rebel leader was standing over Carlos who lay sprawled on the ground insisting Catava was dead and that the body had burned. The leader did not believe him.

Raphael was lying in a pool of blood, Danny's pistol in the hands of one of the commandos who along with the other four members of his band were spread out across the small site as their leader strutted before the survivors.

The leader focused on Pedro and fired off a series of threatening questions, waving the rifle around. "You want me to kill them? You are a priest; you do not lie. Where is Catava?"

Pedro fearfully spread his hands. "He is not here. These people are weak and injured. Do you think Carlos would ever have left the side of Catava? Most of the passengers from our flight burned in that plane." He pointed to the blackened hulk. "May God rest their souls. Perhaps you can look for this Catava in there."

The leader gave him a slow side-wise glare, trying to decide if he should believe him. "Catava has no use for you," he muttered to Carlos in Spanish. "Now you like the others of our people - useless to him

and abandoned. Where is he? Huh?" He kicked Carlos backward to the ground and continued to stomp on him over and over as the man cried out in pain.

Steve glanced over at Catava who held Steve's gun. Catava glanced back, fury burning in his eyes. *Good, maybe there is loyalty in him to someone.* Steve looked across the clearing, unable to see Danny. There are four automatic rifles and Danny's revolver amongst the six rebels. Steve wrestled with the strategy of shooting or waiting longer. He wished he could see Danny.

The leader had stopped kicking Carlos mostly because he was tired. He leveled his rifle on Carlos to fire, but when the shot sounded it was from the gun in Catava's hand and the leader suddenly pitched over. The rebels began screaming and shouting, firing their weapons randomly as Pedro tried to scramble away. Montalvo and a rebel both reached the fallen leader's rifle at the same instant, Montalvo losing the race. The rebel shot him. Steve and Danny stepped out from opposite sides. Catava charged into the chaotic scene, screaming in fury as he came firing the pistol until it clicked repeatedly, out of bullets, but he had managed to shoot and wound the man who had just shot Montalvo. Leaving the automatic on the M16 turned off, Danny stepped forward into view as one of the rebels leveled his weapon on Pedro who was diving for Esteban. Danny aimed at the rebel, squeezed the trigger and the gun jammed. The rebel accurately assessing Danny as a greater threat than the priest, swung his weapon towards him, already firing. Steve jumped forward and dropped the man with a single shot. The two remaining would-be assassins fled into the jungle.

An eerie noisy-quiet settled over the group. Catava's victim lay on the ground moaning; the baby was crying; but the sounds seemed muffled compared to the gun blasts before. And the shots had frightened away any birds and creatures for the moment.

Catava bent over the wounded rebel shouting at him and demanding where his friends were hiding and who they were.

The man murmured some kind of response that did not satisfy the ambassador who waved the empty gun threateningly in the man's face.

"Catava," Steve snapped. "Let him be. See to your friend Carlos."

Catava gave a nod and stepped back, recognizing that for the moment he needed Steve's good graces. He moved over to Carlos. Pedro scooped up the crying baby. Steve checked both Montalvo and the rebel he'd shot. They were both dead. As he rolled over the rebel he noticed a machete in the man's belt. Recalling Danny's words earlier, he took the sheathed weapon.

Danny paused to inspect the jammed rifle - it was hopeless. He emptied the few rounds of ammunition from it, tossed it aside and picked up the one that had nearly killed him moments before. He turned as Steve extended the large knife and, with a small grin, gave a nod. The machete could be more useful than two rifles.

"You came back," Pedro said in surprise to Steve.

"You all must come with us right now," Steve told him. "The rebels will be back and they'll be ready for us."

"How can we travel?" Pedro asked. "Look at us." He waved a hand across the scene. It was a valid point.

Steve doubted Carlos could travel. Don, had never regained consciousness. Should we just leave him? There was a baby they would have to carry - and it would cry. He hesitated.

Danny had heard the conversation. "We can fortify ourselves here, but then what? They will just keep coming back. We no longer have enough people to send a few and still protect everyone. We killed two of their men the first time, two here. You think they will forget that?"

"Three," Steve remarked, as he stooped to check on Catava's victim who had become ominously silent. "If we're caught on the trail we won't stand a chance."

Danny wiped the dirty sweat from his forehead. "Search team?"

Steve glanced at Catava who was still crouched next to Carlos. *How desperately will his people search for him? Have they already written him off and moved their loyalty to the next most powerful figure?* And he recalled that Catava had called their pursuers the FARC earlier. "Catava, who are these people hunting you?"

Catava glanced up at him. "They are a group of hoodlums that are trying to overthrow our system of government."

That response was well rehearsed, Steve thought. "Who are they?"

"FARC. *Las Fuerzas armadas revolucionarios de Colombia.*"

Steve did not think he needed a translation but glanced at Danny. "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," he muttered. "We don't know how long before the rebels return with reinforcements, but they will come. The better organized they are, the greater threat."

"Communists," Catava declared as though that said it all, then added. "You Americans, they are your enemy, too."

Color rose in Danny's neck and he suddenly blurted angrily. "I don't give a flying shit about their politics or yours! We're not part of this game, Catava. These wounded people, that little baby are not part of your game. The innocent shouldn't have to pay while you fight over real estate." He stormed angrily away.

There was a moment of stunned silence. Steve had not seen Williams upset often and in this kind of explosive rage never.

Catava, the only one who seemed unflustered by the action gave a quizzical look. "What is *this real estate*?"

Pedro cleared his throat and glanced around, trying to get back to the task at hand. "And what of Don? Do we carry him?"

"We leave him," Steve said tensely, still trying to absorb the moment before.

"Leave him!" Pedro seemed aghast. "What if he should awaken?"

"Those that can survive come now or we all die," Steve insisted. *There is no room for negotiation here as much as I wish there was.*

Pedro glanced at Carlos and Phillippi. "What of them?"

Phillippi called to the young priest. "I am dying, Father. Do not die for me. Allow me to die for you and enter into God's presence."

Steve made no comment, but thought, *Phillippi understands. Perhaps he can make this young idealistic priest see the light.*

Danny, having withdrawn from the group was routing through clothing in luggage, one thing there seemed no shortage of, and was creating a sling of sorts to carry the baby. He was trying to calm himself, surprised at his own outburst and now not willing to face anyone. He wanted to stay out of this conversation. Leaving the weak behind was correct, but it was painful to admit and as long as he could stay away from the discussion he would.

"We are soldiers." The drill master's voice had echoed across the Arizona canyon. "There is nothing else for us ever. We will all die for our country. To do less will be dishonor."

There was a slight hot breeze off the desert. In spite of it, Danny had felt goose-bumps on his arms. "Yes, drill master," he shouted with the five other trainees.

"You rely on no one. Not your mama, not your partner, not your leader. You are your leader. You live only for the mission. And if the mission's success means you die - you die. No tears, no flowers, no heroes. You are not here to be a hero." The tall man clasped his hands behind his back and walked down the short row of five teens. He stopped before Danny. "You gonna die for your mission? Williams?"

"Yes, Drill Master," he answered loudly, not looking the man in the eye.

"You gonna die for your mission?" the drill master shouted again inches before his face.

"Yes, Drill Master," he shouted back.

The man chuckled. "You'll shit your pants first." He motioned towards the tall heavy-set man beside Danny. "Now he's a real man. Get a good look at him, Williams. You're the weakling - you feel too much. You'll never make the grade."

Danny did not look at Kevin Rueter...

...Eighteen months later Rueter would accidentally kill Tom Banks in an ambush in rural Mexico. The official Mexican statement had been that they were going to arrest Communists who had killed an American, but in the end a peasant family and their commander would die. Danny and Kevin would spend three weeks fighting their way back to US soil.

"Catava, you go," Carlos whispered, "but do not leave me alive for them to find. Kill me please."

"No!" Pedro intervened. "You must not!"

Catava glanced at the priest. "I know it is a sin, Father, but I see no other way. If the rebels get him, they will torture him. Better to die painlessly now. God will understand."

Pedro, panicked, turned to Steve. "Stop him. Surely you need every bullet we have! Carlos, you must be able to travel. We can give you a little time."

Catava glanced from Steve to Danny, the former gave no indication of response, the latter looked away still ignoring the topic. "Carlos is like a son to me. I need one of you to do this," Catava pleaded.

Danny ignored him, still intent on the baby harness.

Steve glanced at Danny, then Catava. Killing someone in cold blood was not something he wanted to consider, either. "Catava, is there any chance he can travel? He needs to try."

Catava turned back to Carlos. "Yes, you must try, my friend." He knelt down next to Carlos again encouraging him to attempt to get to his feet.

Danny finished tying knots and crossed over to Pedro. "Here, try this on. Carry the baby as long as you can. Steve and I need to be free in case we are attacked."

Pedro nodded. "I understand. I will carry him all the way if need be." Between them, they managed to slide Esteban into the snug fitting sling against Pedro's chest. For the moment, Esteban quieted, the closeness consoling him. "We must find food for him," Pedro commented.

Danny sighed. "Fresh out of wet nurses and goats, Pedro, but if I see any, you'll be the first to know." He approached Steve. "Help me get Phillippi into the plane where he will be more comfortable."

Steve wanted to take him aside, ask if he was all right, ask what in hell had happened a few minutes ago, but Danny's look was one that suggested he would not have replied if asked and Steve decided to allow the moment to pass - for now.

Between them, they lifted the dying man. Phillippi courageously attempted to conceal his agony, but it was clear he was suffering as they lay him on some arranged cushions out of the sun amongst the twisted metal.

Catava stepped up into the gapping opening in the fuselage of the craft. "It no use. Carlos..." He stopped talking, his voice choked with emotion.

Steve motioned Danny. "Let's get him in here, too."

Carlos was a large, muscular man. Moving him inside the craft was difficult and exhausting. Both Steve and Danny were panting and soaked with sweat by the time they had complete the task. There was no question but that Carlos could never have handled the trail. "*Mi muerte. Ahora,*" Carlos begged, gripping hold of Danny's arm.

He gently pulled free. "*En el tiempo.*"

Steve and Danny stepped out of the plane back into the daylight where the slight breeze against their skin was mildly refreshing even in the high humidity.

"We need to be getting on," Steve commented.

"Just a second," Danny replied and taking the prized machete stepped away from them into the jungle.

He was gone about five minutes that Steve counted off impatiently, beginning to wonder how long it would take the rebels to regroup. *Now they have a lot to be motivated about. They hated Catava before for whatever reason, he's now killed their leader, we've killed four others of their group. They will be out for vengeance and blood.*

At last Danny returned with two sections of stalk and a collection of leaves. He handed one stalk to Pedro. "*Aqua de sipio,*" he commented taking the other stalk to Phillippi and Carlos. Each of the stalks contained about two cups of water. He carefully gave each man something to drink, then pressed the small, dark leaves into Carlos' hand.

"*¿Qué?*" Carlos murmured.

Danny leaned close to him and spoke quietly into his ear in stuttering Spanish.

Steve knew the hushed sentences were not on his account, he didn't know the language anyway. So much for instructions to the bathroom, Steve thought. For the flash of an instant he wondered if Danny would ever trust him. He pushed the thought away.

At last Danny straightened. "He wants to see the priest before we leave."

Pedro nodded, paused for a moment before entering the craft, genuflected, then knelt by the dying men who were about to be left behind. "*Per istam sanctan unctionem et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid.*"

Steve gritted his teeth. *Now we will need to wait for these men to pray one more time with Pedro.* He did not like the further delay, but could understand it. He could faintly hear the litany and the Latin prayer.

"He praying for them?: Danny murmured quietly.

"Sacrament of Extreme Uncion," Steve answered uncomfortably, "or as close as he can get to it. For them - and us."

Pedro knelt beside each man, took the confessions and prayed. At last he rose with a quiet. "*El Dios la bendiga.*"

"Carlos, try to stay alive, my friend," Catava encouraged his bodyguard. "We will send back help quickly."

Carlos merely nodded, tightening his grip on the small leaves in his hand.

As they started away from the wreck Steve commented to Danny. "What did you give him?"

"Herbs," he replied in one word.

Steve wanted to ask what kind of herbs but decided he would not have wanted to know the answer any more than Danny would have wanted to admit it. "We need the most direct route out of here," he said instead.

Danny nodded, machete in hand. "We can make our own trails now."

"We must go to the river," Catava supplied. "The sun to our faces and downward."

Steve paused and exchanged glances with Danny. "Won't the rebels be expecting that?"

"Expect or no. The only way," Catava replied.

"What about over the mountain?" Steve asked gesturing in the opposite direction. "Does that take us back towards Bogata?"

Catava's eyes widened, the sweat glistening on his skin making him appear more desperate than he was. "Too risky. River at the bottom of both ridges. We do not know which ridge we hit. Second ridge - we just make it harder. Long climb up, long climb back down."

"We were still gaining altitude - probably we hit the first ridge," Danny suggested.

The four of them stood for a moment, each wanting to make the decision and take the lead, but uncertain that his comrades would follow. "You all Americanos - we vote," Catava decided diplomatically. "How say each? I vote to the river."

Steve did not hesitate. "The mountain."

Pedro glanced at Danny hoping he would speak first. When he did not Pedro said quietly. "The baby is getting weaker. Maybe he is sick. The river."

Danny glanced from Catava to Steve, feeling the piercing glare of his superior's gaze. *No doubt Steve wants me to cast a vote with him. Then we are in dead-lock. Does he see that? But I think Steve is right. Maybe there is more than right to be considered.* "The river," he murmured, wincing internally.

If Steve was disappointed or angry it did not show. "The river it is," he agreed.

Danny passed close to him and whispered. "The baby *is* sick."

Steve wished Danny had not felt a need to explain himself, but at the same time wished he would - and that he would be honest. *I wanted to bring him here to help establish a better working relationship. We have hardly accomplished that. He saved my life when he could have run, but now he sides with the others. I don't understand him. I wish I did not need to. I have never worried about understanding Kono or Chin. I always knew what to expect from them, and they from me. There was none of this guesswork.*

Danny stared ahead into the dense jungle growth, sweeping the machete back and forth as necessary to clear the path. He wanted to be consumed with the task of blazing the trail, keeping alert for the rebels or snakes, but his mind would not go beyond the drama of voting against McGarrett. *I should have agreed with him. He was right. Why didn't I? Would Pedro have changed his mind? Would Catava have given in? Would we still be standing back there trying to make a decision?* He stopped to hack repeatedly at an unyielding branch. It was good therapy. *We left those men back there to die. It would be good if I could make myself believe that they will some survive and a rescue party will find them.* He could still recall the look on Carlos' sightless face when he had given him the leaves and told him what they were. *Peace - he was at peace. I had given him back the control of his life - the control to end it if necessary. What peace can there be in dying?*

An hour later, they were all exhausted, the baby was crying fitfully, and rain was closing in. The trees seemed alive with monkeys leaping and screaming at them. Anyone trying to find them would only have to follow the primates.

"We need some rest and shelter for the baby," Pedro suggested.

Danny nodded and, although his arms were weak from the constant beating of branches, he turned to chop some large leaves from the banana tree close by that Steve and Catava wove into a kind of roof that was completed just as the rain began in a torrential downpour. They huddled under the shelter of leaking banana leaves as the darkness closed in around them. There would be no fire to keep away the wild animals or provide comfort. They were all soaked to the skin, tired and uncomfortable. Esteban cried fitfully with a

whiney moan that sounded unhealthy. He moved less and less and had not wet a diaper since they had left the plane site.

"He is growing weaker. We must find something to feed him," Pedro said urgently. He had been attempting to drizzle water into the baby's half-open mouth, but Esteban made no effort to suck or swallow.

"At daylight we can try to give him some of the banana," Danny suggested. "But they aren't ripe. I don't know how good it will be for him."

Steve wondered what else daylight would bring. The jungle blackness was nearly total. They could not even see each other inches away let alone an attacker. Hopefully their hunters would be as blind as they. Leaving Pedro to huddle with Catava and Esteban beneath one shelter of woven leaves, Steve and Danny wove a second several yards away. Then, sitting back to back, each with a rifle in hand, they prepared to stay awake another night and keep watch.



Chin was met by a Mexican official who politely steered him into a waiting room that was occupied by the others who waited. He recognized Clara Williams immediately, always the picture of control, even in this trying moment she was strong, clear-headed and proud. The other younger woman quickly introduced herself as Steve's sister MaryAnn Whalen and Chin noted a facial resemblance between her and her brother.

"Steve has told me wonderful things about you," MaryAnn provided with a smile.

Chin returned the polite handshake, doubting Steve would ever have mentioned him at all. It is just something to say, he thought and felt sorry for her. MaryAnn was clearly less confident than Clara and the worry showed in her eyes.

The final occupant was an elderly gray-haired man in priest's frock. Father Ramonee shook Chin's hand quietly and explained he was awaiting word on a young priest who had been aboard the flight. "Many of the families are waiting in the other room," he explained. "They are - much less reserved about their grief. The airline thought it wise that we Americans wait here."

Chin had no opinion, and not familiar with South American responses, just nodded. "Any news?"

"There are several search teams on foot, two planes and an American helicopter have looking by air - but the jungle is so dense," the priest shook his head. "Like needles in a haystack. The last known position of the plane is in very rugged and difficult to access area."

Chin gave a single nod. Expression of emotion wasn't high on his list either and he chose to keep the pain inside, away from these near strangers and away from his conscious thought. He poured a cup of coffee since tea seemed to be unavailable. It was very strong; he assumed coffee drinkers would have liked it. *Steve would have liked this. He always made Navy Coffee, strong and black. The secretary always added water to hers to weaken it. Kono adds milk. Danny used to add milk and sugar, but somehow over the last year had started drinking it black like Steve. He was always trying to make an impression on Steve, although he would have denied it.* And he did not want to make this trip. Chin caught his thoughts. *I'm thinking about them like they are dead. They aren't dead.*

Clara gave him a knowing smile. "You've had a long trip, Chin."

He gave a stiff nod.

She patted the soft couch. "Sit down. Tell me all about your family. How are the children doing? And your wife?"

Gratefully, he did just that. The news on eight children would give all of them some time to adjust to each other. Both Father Ramone and Maryann listened as though this was the most important news of their lives. And perhaps for the moment it was: News of the living and of life beyond these dusty walls and pain that could for however briefly stop the thoughts of intolerable waiting and fear.

After Chin finally ran down, Clara beamed proudly. "They sound so wonderful! You have a beautiful family." She glanced at Maryann. "You'll have a family like that one day."

Maryann managed a soft smile. "I don't think I shall have eight children."

Clara gave a small giggle. "God gives us the little brood he wishes, isn't that so, Father?"

Father Ramone gave a nod. "That he does, Ma'am."

An executive from the airline stepped through the doorway and all four of them rose, hope in their eyes. The man's expression was tense. "The teams have done all they can for today. Night has fallen. The sky is overcast. Perhaps tomorrow."

"I intend on going on to Bogata," Chin declared.

The executive did not even blink. "Out of the question."

"I want to go to Bogata," he repeated firmly.

"The flights have been stopped until we find the plane and determine why it crashed," the executive said in deliberate patience.

"You have shut down the airport?" Chin asked.

"The airline has stopped service temporarily," the man replied. "We are doing all we can to find your friends," he said as though he had said this many times lately.

Chin sat back down amongst the others. "I am going to Bogata," he repeated.

"You can't," Maryann said quietly. "I tried to get them - but ... " She shook her head.

Chin glanced from her to Clara to Father Ramone. "The airline isn't flying but there must be other planes."

Maryann blinked, not following him.

"We have money," Chin motioned towards Clara, "we have the language," he pointed at Father Ramone. "There must be a pilot here somewhere who would like to earn a few US dollars."

Ramone gave a knowing smile. "Yes, of course."



Danny and Steve each dozed occasionally, but were too wet and uncomfortable to drop into sleep. Each could feel the heartbeat of the other at his back, each movement of muscle, every breath taken. It was an unusual experience for neither was of the intimate nature. Each was being forced to consider the other as a living, breathing being with personal thoughts, feelings - apart yet so much alike.

"We need to make the river tomorrow," Danny murmured finally.

Steve wondered if Danny had been looking for a way to start conversation. "It may not be the end, but just the next step. The FARC is likely to patrol that river."

"You thought we should take the mountain," Danny answered.

Has this been on his mind? "Yes, I did. I still do. But that is no longer an issue, Danno. We are where we are." He wanted to sound open and accepting. *I really want to shake him to his boots for not getting them to take the mountain with me. We might have been rescued by now if we'd gone over the mountain.*

"Catava would have fought us. We need him."

"Need him? He needs us," Steve remarked.

He could feel Danny turn slightly. "Really. So we could have had both his militia *and* the FARC gunning for us?"

Steve was silent for a moment. "We would have dealt with it."

Dealt with it? Like we are dealing with it now? Attempting to survive half by luck, half by chance?

Danny remembered the fear of hiding and running, fear a vehicle on the road, a child who appeared in the brush, anything that moved...

Reuker had panicked as they ran. Danny could hear his breathing - it sounded almost like crying. He needs to shut up! They will find us! They had run blindly into the Mexican jungle praying for nature and darkness to hide them. Eventually it had.

They stopped, dropped to the ground beneath the shelter of shrubbery, for a time the only sound that of their panting.

"Banks was dead?" Reuker finally murmured.

"Yes," Danny gave a one word answer.

"That family - the woman and child..."

Danny did not want to think about them. "Shut up, Kevin."

"How are we going to get out of here?" Kevin whispered. "We're lost."

Danny glanced through the foliage towards the moonless sky. "Not lost...just misplaced. We find north and we go home."

"That family - did we kill them, Danny?" Reuker whispered intently.

Danny tried to keep his mind from replaying the moment when they had broken through the door; the shots, the screaming - firing into the darkness with no idea what lie in there. *Did we kill those people? Did we kill our partner?*

"Did we, Danny?"

He physically pushed Reuker away. "I don't know. You have enough energy to talk, so let's get going." He got back to his feet and headed for clearer ground to get a reading from the stars.

Danny shifted his hips on the uncomfortable ground. "You did your time in the Navy, right Steve?"

"Yes," he replied, mildly surprised at the sudden personal question.

"Spend all of your time at sea?"

"All over actually," he replied. "I worked for Naval Operations. We were at war in Korea. I was there for a time." I suspect he is going somewhere with this, but where?

"Ever have your unit cut off?"

"Yes." His response was quiet. Steve remembered the freezing cold night that had taken the lives of two of the six members of their squad. One stepped on a land mine - an instant death. The other died of exposure. The other three died in the firefight that erupted with they were ambushed the next day. The Marine unit set to help them had never arrived... *I know of the feeling of being alone, the feeling that help will not come - the feeling that I will survive by my own wits. The fear that I will survive, but alone...* "You are not the only one that has ever faced a tough spot, Danno. The team members trust each other even if it doesn't turn out like you want."

"I wouldn't know anything about that," he answered bluntly. "Command betrayed us, the nationals betrayed us, we betrayed our commander, then we betrayed each other." He hesitated, then impulsively pushed his usual stoic caution aside. As the drizzling tropical rain spattered on the knitted banana leaves, he told of how Tom Banks had died; how Kevin Reuter and he had fought their way out of Mexico; how Reuter had spent most of the time trying to weave a careful story that would protect him once they returned to the states. "Neither of us knew whose shot killed Tom or the civilians. But Reuter was determined it wasn't him. He claimed it over and over until I was pretty sure I'd killed Tom. Firing into the dark - not even seeing what I was shooting at - I did not know. I could not know." He paused. "In the end Kevin was telling a review board I killed Tom. He did not know that operations had already investigated the incident. Sent one of their best." He gave a half chuckle. "They sent Marten Camp, the guy who enlisted me. It was Reuter's bullet that killed Banks."

At the mention of Camp's name, Steve had perked up.

"But - I've always wondered." Steve could feel Danny's deep sigh against his back. "You'd have to know Camp. Things always turn out the way he wants them to. I have always wondered if he reported the truth."

I do know Marten Camp -- better than Danny thinks. And he is right - Camp will never reveal the truth if it makes him look bad.

Danny hesitated, took another slow deep breath that Steve could feel as well as hear. "You, everyone thinks it gets easier the longer you're in -- but it just gets harder. I was trained to kill. Guess I never lived up to my potential. I've always known that there might come the day...came real close a time or two in hand-to-hand. But you know who you are fighting then. No mistakes. The idea of blindly firing away and possibly hitting the innocent...I never want to feel that way again."

Steve's mind with fitting the pieces together that had been a mystery to nearly two years: Reluctance to trust his partners; refusal to use a firearm even when close combat was riskier; most importantly, a lack of faith in his superior. "We are a team this time, Danno," Steve commented. He could feel another emotional sigh through his back. "We will stand together. You can count on it."

"I know, Steve," His tone, if it lacked conviction, contained hope.

As soon as light permitted, Danny and Steve left the others and a foraged for anything they could eat for strength. They returned with a small collection of tubers, several very green plantains and some

amaranth leaves. The banana was crushed into a mush that Pedro forced into Esteban's mouth. As the baby made some attempt to eat the fruit, Pedro gave a smile and nod.

"We make to the river today," Catava commented. "You see, there will be help there. People travel the river."

Steve shook his head slightly. "Let's hope the right people." He ran a hand through his dark wet hair that flopped back against his head. The headaches were not as severe, the soaking rain had washed most of the old blood away to where it now stained his once white shirt. The gash on his head was now surrounded by deep black bruising.

Danny helped Pedro lift Esteban back into the makeshift sling. "You want me to carry him for awhile?" Danny offered.

"No, this I can do," Pedro replied. "I'm afraid that as we near the river, we will be a greater risk. You will need to keep your hands free."

Danny agreed. They started off again.



"Who's the lady with the money?" Frank Fletcher turned from the small plane, hands on hips, his grease rag still held in his left.

"That would be me," Clara declared bravely, stepping forward.

"US cash, right?" Frank demanded, taking no account of her age or stature.

She held out the fistful of bills. "You'd better get us in to Bogata."

Frank grinned and scratched his unshaven face. "At your disposal, my lady." He bowed and motioned towards the door of the plane. He found it comical that a housewife, grandmother, oriental and priest were traveling together. Quite an odd party to say the least. But their money was green and that was good. He had not had a good legal fare in several weeks. Drug and gun smuggling took its toll on a man's nerves after a while.

They got on board, Maryann glancing around nervously. "It seems like a very small plane," she murmured to Chin.

He gave a quiet smile. "It will get us there," he replied confidently, but inwardly cringed. It did seem very small.

Frank got into the pilot's seat and started the engine. He listened to it for a moment or two, played with some knobs, then gave a grin and a brave thumb-up. "And away we go."

The lift-off from the Mexico City airport was an adventure in itself. Compared to the relative quiet and smoothness of jetliners, the small plane seemed to bounce around like a ping-pong ball.

"Weather's a bit clouded over in Colombia," he called back to them as they traveled southeastward. Should be looking better by the time we arrive. Get comfortable, it will take a couple of hours."

Comfort did not seem to be something that would be easily found on the small plane, but Chin did what he could. Maryann and Clara had nestled against each other - Maryann dozing, Clara staring out of the window in anticipation. Father Romero was squeezed next to Chin in prayer.

Chin wasn't entirely certain of what they would do once they arrived in Bogata. He was fairly sure the Colombian authorities would not be happy about their presence, but even if their company only served to speed up the search it would be enough. He was completely aware that Clara Williams had put up more money for this little trip than he made in a year. Although he had known her for years, that also was intimidating.

"What do you mean telling me how to raise my nephew?" A bold and angry Clara had demanded, hands on hips on Chin's front step eleven years earlier.

"I'm not trying to tell you how to raise him," Chin had managed to reply, barely lifting his eyes to meet her blazing ones. "I thought you would want to know."

"Why isn't Danny telling me this himself?" Considering her small stature, her fury was still formidable.

Chin tried to maintain his patience. *Because he was afraid of the angry display she's showing me right now.* "He thought you would object."

"Object! Of course I object! He doesn't belong off in the military somewhere. The military got his father killed. I can stop this, you know. I can march right down to that recruiting office."

"No, Clara, you can't," Chin interrupted quietly. "He is eighteen, he has made his choice. He is doing this for good reasons."

"Well, I forbid it." Her fists were tight at her side.

Chin felt pity for her. *She needs him more than he needs her. She sacrificed her career for him - he may be sacrificing his life for her and she will never know it.* "He's already gone, Clara," he said gently.

She gave a little gasp. "That can't be. He would never leave without - without..." Sudden tears choked her throat. "Doesn't he love me?"

Chin stepped forward and placed a comforting arm around Clara's shoulders that suddenly sagged in sorrow. "More than you can imagine. You will just have to trust him in this."

Chin glanced up, Clara's eyes met his. He looked away.

"What are you thinking about, Chin?" she asked softly, just barely over the noise of the propeller. He shook his head.

"They are going to be all right, Chin. I just know it. You'll see."

She always did have a way of making reality as she wished it to be. He noticed Maryann hug herself more tightly. And Maryann sees reality for what it is. I can tell she believes her brother is dead. Which reality is more painful?

MaryAnn McGarrett had not always enjoyed her childhood. Her father died when she was only eight, her mother had fallen apart never to totally recover and Steve as older brother had assumed the role of parent for her until he left for the Naval Academy when she was 14. She recalled hating him for abandoning her. It is hard to imagine a world without my older brother.

"Maryann?" his voice had echoed over the hollow phone line. "Are you there?"

"Yes," the young teen had sobbed into the phone.

"I told you I wouldn't forget you. Happy Birthday."

"Um-hum," she replied, trying to halt the tears.

"What did you get for your birthday?"

"Mama bought me a new dress," she replied.

"Did you get the book I sent?"

"Yes," she replied enthusiastically. It was a book about horses. She had always loved horses.

"I love you, Hone. I will always be there for you."

He has always called on birthdays and holidays. But he wasn't there for my wedding. He couldn't help it, but it was awful not to have him there to give me away. He was so upset about being gone. He has always been so protective of me. Now it's my turn to protect him - even if it is only what is left of him.



As they traveled lower, the air got heavier, hotter and the mosquitoes unbearable. There were welts covering every inch of skin showing on each man. They were so exhausted that they could only walk about ten minutes without resting. Esteban rarely fussed anymore as he was carried along by Pedro, his small arms dropping out of the sling limply from time to time.

They stopped again to rest, swatting bugs off their sweaty skin.

"I don't hear monkeys anymore," Catava murmured cautiously.

Almost as he spoke they were suddenly surrounded by automatic gunfire. They all dropped and dodged for cover as shots shattered branches and slammed into tree trunks around them.

Steve spun under the cover of shrubs, firing several careful and well-timed rounds, but unable to determine if they were effective.

Danny had rolled the opposite way, Catava another ten yards from him. "Give me the rifle!" Danny yelled to Catava, knowing the man with a broken arm could not fire the M16 with any accuracy.

Catava, gripped the weapon tighter, then suddenly rolled out of sight beneath greenery.

"Catava!" Danny attempted to dodge after him.

There was a shout - and a booted foot stepped heavily down on Danny's outstretched arm, pinning him on his back. "No mueva." The man spun around, keeping his foot on Danny's arm shouting that he had caught one. Nine other armed men came from the shadows and trees yelling and jeering.

Steve could see Danny from his hiding place. Their eyes met and Steve could read the fear beneath the resolution in Danny's look. Steve glanced around, looking for Pedro and Catava, but did not seem them right away. Then he spotted Pedro huddled over the baby in the brush. *Where is Catava? He has the other gun.*

One of the men came close and Danny recognized him from the plane. The man launched into a long explanation of how Danny was an American who had been one of the ones who killed his brother and friend. He wanted them to kill him on the spot.

Several of the others disagreed - wanting their commander to make the decision; believing an American could be worth something; authorities were looking for them and that could mean money. The argument persisted several minutes before the one on Danny's arm waved his rifle at the men who backed away.

Danny had used the time they argued to try to develop a strategy. He knew he could get a swift leg up and kick the genitalia of the man on his arm. The man would stumble, Danny could get his gun and probably shoot him and one other before they responded. By that time Steve would be able to take out at least two more. But that was only four. During that five seconds or so, one of the remaining six was bound to target him, and once Steve fired they would find him as well. There are too many of them.

The man stepped off Danny's arm. "*¡Arriba!*" he ordered, jabbing a rifle barrel against Danny's shoulder. He slowly started to get up, but the man pushed him roughly to his knees. He turned and shouted into the air. "*¡Oigame! ¡Salga ahora!*"

"English," Danny muttered to him.

He spun and slammed the butt of the rifle into Danny's left eye, knocking him off his knees flat on his back. The left side of his face and eye swelled instantly. Blood ran down from a cut opened above his left eyebrow.

The man shouted again. "*¡Venga ahora o yo lo mato!*" Some of his partners began shouting angrily at him. He rammed Danny in the stomach with the rifle butt. Danny gasped in pain, curling doubled on the ground, memories of the beating Carlos took springing to mind. Attempting to recover, he looked at Steve, less than twelve feet away under the cover of foliage.

Failing to gain a translation, Steve was still pretty sure the man was threatening to kill Danny. He fingered his weapon torn in fury. *So close, but too far. Am I going to sit here and let them beat Danny to death the way Carlos was stomped? Danny did not leave me before. I will not abandon him now.* He knew from Danny's glare that his junior officer was not expecting heroism.

Go, Steve. Take them and go.

The rebel kicked Danny twice in the chest, then issued a sneer, stepped over him and using the rifle as a club, slammed the butt into his victim's left kidney.

Danny issued a grunt, gritting his teeth against the pain. When his eyes opened, they were still focused on Steve's, the same determined message in them.

Steve glanced over at Pedro through the thick ground cover, but the young priest had not moved. *This is a replay of this morning, the roles switched.* McGarrett glanced around at the odds, coming to the same conclusion about the numbers that Danny had. No way to take them all. *Where is Catava? He must have the other weapon. He could make the difference.* But Steve could not see Catava; he wondered if the Colombian dignitary had had his fill of his American protectors and fled. *Danny wants me to leave him. How can I do that? It is sure death.*

The new round of argument had died down. A different man shouted. "Americans. You here. Come now. We have food. We take you to Americans for money." He gave a nod and a grin, expecting a response.

The empty jungle answered him.

One of the men cursed in Spanish. Another man came over and tied Danny's hands tightly together with clothesline, then motioned him to his feet.

Danny got up slowly, testing the bonds and finding them tight. As he rose, he lost eye contact with McGarrett and prayed his superior would not attempt to rescue him. *I took that chance last time, but it was different. There were fewer rebels that time. Steve isn't going to take this kind of a risk with so many of them.*

"*Vayamos*," the one in charge ordered his men. One grabbed hold of the rope that tied Danny's hands and they slipped off into the jungle nearly as quickly as they had appeared.

Steve resisted the urge to follow them immediately, waiting in hiding for several minutes. *I have to follow them, but they may have left a spotter behind. I can let Catava and Pedro head to the river. I need to follow Danny.* At last he slowly slipped out of hiding, not having seen or heard Catava. Pedro was still huddled under the bush. "Pedro," Steve whispered to him then crept under the shrub and touched the priest's shoulder.

Pedro issued a sound of pain. "Steve," he whispered.

Steve rolled him over, noting how he had managed to lie protecting the baby beneath him. Esteban gave a little cawing sound. Pedro's white shirt was saturated in blood. McGarrett quickly pulled away the sling, laying the infant to the side.

Pedro's skin was pallid, his breathing gasping. "I've been shot. I am dying, McGarrett," he whispered.

Steve frowned, knowing the assessment to be true. *I have no way to treat him, no way to help him. No way to get him out. All I can do is comfort him.* He half cradled the dying man on his lap, knowing that he was going to have to spend the time helping a man through death instead of helping another man live.

Pedro was already only half-conscious. "*Miserére mei, Deus: secundum magnam misericordiam tuam...*"

Steve recognized the request for Last Rites instantly; his mouth went dry.

"*Miserére mei, Deus...*," Pedro whispered in prayer again, trying to reach into his pocket unsuccessfully.

Steve was awash in the religion of his youth -- the memories of a dead faith. *Can I possibly administer last rites to a dying priest? Even if I believed...it has been so long.* He pulled the rosary from Pedro's pocket and placed it in the young man's hand that was already growing cold.

"*Gloria Patri, et Filii, et SpirituiSancti.....*" Pedro gasped, his fingers trying to play over the beads.

"*Per sacrosáncta humanae reparatiónis mystéria remittat tibi omnipotens...*" Steve murmured, surprised at how easily he could recall what he would rather forget. "*Deus omnes praeséntis et futúrae vitae paenas, Paradísi portas apériat, et ad gáudia sempitérna perdúcat.*"

Pedro pressed the rosary back into Steve's hand and tried to fold Steve's finger's over it. "Keep," he managed to whisper.

"Father, this is yours," Steve started to protest.

Pedro just gave a quiet smile. His features grew calm, peaceful. He very slowly relaxed and gradually went limp. There was a heartbeat for a minute or two longer although the lungs filled with blood no longer attempted to breathe, then the young heart dedicated to God stopped.

McGarrett reverently lay the empty body down, barely able to breathe himself. *I have seen the innocent die before, this is nothing new. But he was a priest...* Steve looked at the rosary in his hand. He had severed his ties with religion years before; he saw no need to dabble in what he considered to be superstition and ritual for the faint-hearted. *Pedro was not faint-hearted. He died protecting a dying infant to whom he owed nothing. A child whose mother is dead, who will without a doubt end up as an abandoned life in some nameless orphanage to grow up as a nameless peasant and live out a meaningless life - if he survives at all. Pedro might have made a difference in hundreds of lives and he is dead. Did he waste his life? I hope not.* Steve struggled to pull his mind back to the issues at present. *I have to care for this baby, I have to find Danno and rescue him.*

Esteban made little cawing sounds, more alert than earlier, attempting to get Steve's attention. As Steve picked him up, he gave a weak, fussy cry. Steve wrapped the make-shift now blood-soaked sling about himself and secured Esteban inside. Steve carefully slipped the rosary into the fold of the sling. The baby continued to fuss. He glanced around. *Catava is not here.* He ran, taking one rifle with him.

Steve picked up the remaining rifle, knowing it contained only seven rounds and started in the direction Danny's captors had gone.



As Chin had suspected, the Colombian officials were not happy with their arrival. They first cursed the pilot, threatening to impound his plane, but he shrugged and told them it was a paying fare, he was just a business man.

The senior official then confronted the small group. "Bad thing for you to come here," he announced. "We spend all our time searching, now we have to spend it caring for you."

"We don't need any care," Clara snapped.

He hesitated, his upbringing called for him to give respect to women and the elderly - Clara was both, but he felt little respect. "Mother," he said, trying to be calm, "it is not safe for you here."

"Poppycock," she answered with a wave of her hand.

He flexed his jaw and glanced at Chin. He had never met an Asian before. "You speak English?" he asked of him.

Chin gave a tolerant grin. "All my life." He extended a hand. "Chin Ho Kelley, Five-0, State Police, Hawaii."

"Aha. Commander Alejandro Hura," the officer replied accepting the handshake. "You must make these civilians leave."

Good, I am not viewed as a civilian, Chin thought with inward satisfaction. "Give me a moment," he replied and drew the priest and two women to one side. "Father, perhaps it would be more comfortable if you all waited at the church in town. I assume you would be welcome there."

Father Ramone hesitated.

"If there is anything that is needed for any survivors right now, it's prayer," Chin added before the priest could make a comment.

"We did not come this far to be pushed away!" MaryAnn protested.

"MaryAnn," Chin murmured close to her. "You did not expect to take off into the jungle did you? Certainly the church just a few blocks away will be close enough. And perhaps these men will let me go with them if I can show I have some authority with you."

Clara snorted. "Chin, really."

He frowned, trying not to show his feelings. "Clara, you know I am right." His eye met hers.

Slowly she lowered her gaze and looked away. "You will tell us right away."

"Immediately," he assured her.

MaryAnn, overruled, gave a nod.

Father Ramone gave a nod and allowed an officer to direct him towards the phone to call the church.

Squaring his shoulders, Chin turned back to Hura. "Okay, they go with the priest. I go with you."

Hura blinked, then gave a reluctant nod.

"What is the status of the search?" Chin demanded. I have a little power, might as well maximize it.

"Our teams continue to search for the plane by air and on foot. A helicopter located part of the wing this morning. He pointed to a spot on the map. We are concentrating in the area near the valley."

There came a shout from outside Hura's command post as a young officer ran in announcing in a rush of Spanish that the plane had been found.

"You bring us good luck," Hura commented to Chin. "Let's go." Hura pointed towards a chinook helicopter that had just been started, it's two rotors slowly beginning to turn in unison. They climbed aboard as the engines began to rev and in moments, the spin of the blades intensified. Even before they had fastened their seatbelts, the craft was lifting off as the chopper headed towards the crash site.

Chin felt his heart racing even faster than the chopper blades. *What will we find? I have been to a plane crash site once before - not a pretty sight and it was just a small four seater Piper. This is a DC4 - it held over seventy souls. Seventy. And it has been two days. Can I bear to encounter Steve and Danny's bodies and the condition they may be in? Can I bear to not find them? Is there any chance at all that they survived?*

The plane was not visible from the air due to the heavy jungle growth; it was a team on foot that had reported the finding. They had not reported survivors. Even as the chopper descended to land, the plane was not evident until the last few moments, then disappeared from view again as the helicopter set down about a quarter mile away in a small clear spot.

Each step towards the wreck increased both anticipation and dread. Chin, still in a suit, was not dressed for jungle hiking, but made no complaints. Even before they reached the site, the smell of rotting death greeted them. They all pulled handkerchiefs to cover their noses and mouths, but it did not help much. Chin looked anxiously around the scene, torn between hoping to find his friends and not wishing to find them amongst the corpses.

"Anyone alive?" Hura asked through his cloth of one of the soldiers.

The man pointed inside the aircraft.



The FARC unit kept a quick pace through the jungle and Danny struggled to keep up with. Exhausted, starved, thirsty and hands tied, he stumbled several times, each time to be beaten with rifle butts as he staggered back to his feet. After close to an hour at nearly a jog, they came to a small village that had obviously been built to support their group.

There were several small woven roofed and thin plywood sided dwellings where small children and women stood in the doorways peering out at the group as they arrived.

A woman came out and embraced one of the rebels, who returned the affection in somewhat embarrassed fashion.

A second woman stood, hands to her lips, as the men walked past. It was evident she was looking for someone - someone who was not there. "*¿Dónde está Alberto?*" she called out pleadingly. The men ignored her. She began to wail the loss of her husband as several women and children gathered around her.

Danny was surprised that this seemed like a village of families more than a revolutionary camp. He could smell food cooking over a fire and his stomach rolled. The man who had led the group took hold of the rope leash and led Danny into an open covered pavilion area where another man huddled over papers on a table.

"*Emmel, tenemos a un preso,*" the man reported glancing at Danny.

Emmel looked away from his paperwork. "Well." He straightened in the chair. "Prisoner, huh?" he remarked gazing at Danny, then frowned. "Geraldo, you always beat your prisoners?"

Geraldo seemed not to have a good understanding of the English and Danny knew the question was for him. *Of course Geraldo always beat his prisoners.*

Emmel pointed to a metal chair. "Sit. *Geraldo, alimento.*"

Geraldo nodded and left. Moments later a young girl appeared and timidly handed a plate of beans and rice to Emmel. She paused, making eye contact with Danny and gave a timid curious half smile.

Danny returned the quiet smile.

Emmel gruffly waved the child away, glanced at Danny, then pushed the plate into his still bound hands.

Resisting the urge to gulp down the food even though tied, Danny remarked. "I cannot eat with my hands tied."

Emmel gave a broad smile. "I guess not." He untied the rope. "There. You eat now." He shoved his cup of weak tea towards Danny as well. "How you come to be in the jungle?"

Danny ate two bites before replying. "I was part of an adventure team, I got lost."

Emmel chuckled. "Adventure team? Were you having a good adventure?"

He did not reply as he ate. The food hitting his empty stomach was like heaven. He paused to wonder about Steve and the others. *They were still hungry. If I get away I must take them some food. How will I know where to find them? The river?*

"Did you hear the news? Bad plane crash. You know anything about this?" Emmel asked enjoying the one-sided conversation. "Hum. There some Americans on that plane. You American wandering in jungle." He leaned close to Danny. "I think you on that plane, yes?"

Danny took a drink of the tea, grateful he had not been offered water. At least he knew the tea water had been boiled. He belched. "Thank you for the meal."

"Ah, a most gracious prisoner," Emmel said with a smile. "And I will be the gracious host. Tell me, who else survive that crash? I lose several men lots of shooting they tell me. You did not do all that shooting, eh? If you did, you killed three of my friends at the plane and two in the jungle." Emmel toyed with a nine-inch combat knife, digging the tip into the tabletop. "Tell me, American, you kill five of my men?"

Danny looked down at the dirt floor, knowing there was no acceptable answer.

Emmel nodded. "You see? Now, you have others with you. I know you travel with Romero Catava. Americans do not understand except what they get. Catava promises big money to American business men. Our money. The people's money."

"I don't make policy for the Americans," Danny commented. "I'm just a tourist going home."

Emmel played with his knife again, this time fingering the edge. "Do I look like a fool to you?" He suddenly lunged forward placing the blade at Danny's neck.

He gasped, trying to look unmoved, the cold steel sharp against his hot neck.

"All the news is about Americans on that plane. One priest, two policemen. You do not look like a priest." He removed the knife and rested placidly back in the chair once again, fingering the blade with his thumb. "What shall I do with you, huh?"

Danny did not reply right away. There was silence except for clucking chickens and buzzing flies. Finally, wanting to look as though he had given this great thought Danny suggested: "You want money. You give me to the Americans they will be very happy. You will be a hero. They will give you money. Kill me and they will send the army and kill you."

Emmel gave a half-smile. "Americans send army to Asia. They will not come here over one man."

"America has many armies. Some travel like you." He kept a steady gaze eye to eye with Emmel. That got his attention. He scowled, taking a moment to glance at the jungle around him.

"Much better to be the rich hero." Danny was hopeful that his reasoning was making sense to Emmel.

Emmel rose from his seat and walked out into the open common area shouting for his men. As they rapidly assembled he demanded where the rest of the Americans were. He wanted them found and brought to him immediately. The men began talking and arguing, but Emmel was without question in charge. He turned back and motioned Danny to join them.

He cautiously walked down to the group, aware of every person's move.

"You tell them where your group is. I bring them here - feed them, care for them - we take all of them to the Americans."

Danny hesitated. *Do I know where they are? What of Catava?* Then he thought of Esteban, not likely to live another day. His gaze drifted over one of the women seated in a doorway nursing a small infant. "What of Catava?" he asked.

Emmel frowned. "He is Colombian, not your matter."

"I won't turn someone over to you to kill," he replied.

Emmel chewed the inside of his cheek. "I think," he said quietly in Danny's ear, "you are not in position to bargain, eh? What if I tell my men you are C - I - A?"

Danny did not move.

"They kill you - slowly. They cut off your fingers, toes, ears. If you do not die from that, they cut off more valuable pieces of you. You live only if I decide it, *comprenda?*"

Danny gazed steadily at Emmel, trying to look fearless. "*Luna kou `elemu,*" he murmured.

Emmel squinted. "Eh?"

Danny did not repeat '*up your ass*' in Hawaiian, Spanish or English. He had accomplished the break in the mood and stolen control for just that moment. He stood in emotionless silence.

Emmel broke the stare first. "Aye," he waved a hand to bush away the importance, then in a remarkably friendly fashion placed a hand on Danny's shoulder and said quietly. "I will be generous to your friends - but Catava is mine."

Danny stood silently, making no comments.

"Now," Emmel murmured. "You take us to them. If you fail, you will not feel the remorse for long, but long enough." He scooped up an AK47.



Steve had lost the trail of the rebels. They had traveled much more quickly than he could hope and were stealth enough to travel through the jungle without leaving a trail. At last, he sat down to rest, adjusting the sling where Esteban slept fitfully. It was hot, but the baby's skin was even hotter and flushed. *How much longer can I go on?* He noticed a small hollowed stick that still contained an ounce or so of rainwater from the night before and drank it down thirstily. *I told Danny that the team would stand together. There is little I can do to help him now.* He could feel exhaustion and hopelessness crawling like some reptile up his body. The urge to just stay here and give up was overwhelming. *There were thirteen living when we started, now there is just me and this baby who will not live much longer. Will I be the soul survivor again?* He could remember the elation of surviving, the bitter anger and remorse at living when others died. *Why did I live? Why am I alive now? I stayed alive because I had the desire to. I must have that desire again. I can still do something to help Danno. I just need to find him. The way to find him is to find a rescue team - and maybe that will be at the river.* He swatted at bugs, trying to find the energy to rise. The jungle was alive with the sounds of nature; he squatted where he sat listening, unable to move. *I have to move, but I cannot.* His attention was taken by a colorful snake moving slowly amongst the leaves a short distance away. Its skin glistening as it moved silently without seeming to take note of the humans nearby. The thought suddenly struck him that the snake was food.

With a quick strike, he hit the snake with the butt of the rifle, it transformed into a coiling, writhing serpent. With two more blows, it was dead. Not completely certain the best way to eat it, he picked some of the skin away and bit into the raw flesh. Watery fluid ran over his hands and he hoped he was not ingested some kind of poison, but he kept gnawing away on the snake.

Half an hour later, hands covering with sticky fluid, he did the best he could to wipe them on his slacks and rose with a renewed sense of purpose. *We head for the river.* He prayed it would not be much farther. The ground beneath his feet had been growing steadily softer, the undergrowth getting thicker. He missed the machete that had vanished when Danny was taken.

The weight of the baby pulled on his shoulders, the smell of old blood was attracting insects and Steve wondered what else. He had not seen a jaguar since the accident and hoped the good luck would hold. He had only six shots left and would not have liked to use one on a wild animal. He glanced down at Esteban who gazed back through half-closed disinterested eyes -- the look of the eyes of the old, not the eyes of a child. He gently patted the child's back hoping to provide some bit of comfort. The only sound the baby uttered was an occasional raspy cough.

He heard a sound and stopped. Yes, it was the deep sound of fast moving water. *The river!* Steve hurried ahead, scrambling over obstacles of fallen trees, scrub brush and rocks, getting faster and faster as the sound grew and swelled. It would be glorious to fall into the open arms of rescue teams, but he could not believe that would happen. He parted some large rubber tree branches and it was suddenly before him. The large, muddy brown river flowing northward towards the ocean was impressive under any conditions. It was easily a fifty yards across, cutting through the mountain. Steve was only about ten feet above it, but a cliff rose majestically to his left. He breathed a sigh of relief that he had not approached it from above. The steep cliff would have been nearly impossible to climb down. The river narrowed towards the right twisting from sight. Certainly there would be settlements in that direction.

Panting and sweating from the exertion, Steve sat down to rest for a few minutes, waiting to see if any kind of traffic would appear along the right and whether it would be friend or foe. He loosened the sling and examined the baby. With the change of position, Esteban whined and coughed.



The group of FARC with Danny in their midst left their camp traveling with almost as much speed as they had earlier. The rope had been retied around Danny's wrists, the other end tied to the belt of Geraldo

who seemed to think it was a bit of a sardonic joke. Emmel was towards the rear, AK47 posed and ready all the time.

The men seemed to travel the route effortlessly, used to both altitude and the exercise. Danny had been exhausted after the first hike. He had trouble keeping up now. Geraldo kept tugging the rope and calling back for him to keep up, periodically intentionally taking the difficult path just to watch Danny struggle. After a near run for about twenty minutes, the group suddenly stopped.

Danny leaned against a tree, gasping for breath, trying to wipe perspiration from his face. The left side of his face was swollen and throbbled from the blow earlier. His ribs ached from the kicks he'd received.

"You," Emmel called out stepping over to him. "Where from here?"

"What?" Danny replied, between breaths.

"Where are they?"

He straightened some. "Hell, I don't know where *we* are. How should I know where *they* are?"

"You say the river."

Did I? I don't remember saying that. "So?" he replied.

Emmel spun him around to face the other direction. "Rio Magdalena."

Danny gasped. They were at the top of a nearly 100 foot cliff. Beneath them the chocolate colored river spread out, rushing for the sea. He noted immediately that it was wide and quick moving and, hopefully, deep.

"Where now?" Emmel repeated.

The rope was still tied to Geraldo's belt. Danny tugged it gently, getting a little closer to the edge. The Colombian militant moved with him, but looked nervous. Danny took two more steps closer to the edge motioning Geraldo to come with him.

This time, Geraldo did not move.

Danny noticed a slight movement below the cliff to the right. It can't be. He heard a faint cough of a child.

Emmel heard it too. "*¡Escuche!*" he shouted running forward, creating a small pandemonium amongst his men.

Steve looked up from the bottom of the cliff hearing men's shouting voices. *Is it a rescue team?* He knew better than to assume that. He could not see much from where he was, buried himself more deeply into the brush, one hand lightly over Esteban's mouth. *Do not cry now!*

Danny took the moment and the only opportunity he saw for both freedom and distraction. Tugging on the rope, he got Geraldo's attention back. "Come, look," he commented drawing the man closer to the edge.

Geraldo came a little closer.

"Come closer," Danny said and pointed towards the river. "See, there? See?"

"No, see," Geraldo admitted, his brow knit as he looked across the cliff, taking only one step closer.

The rope between them was lax, actually touching the ground. Danny glanced at the distance he had to go. "You'll have to come closer to see," he commented, taking Geraldo's arm.

The rebel pulled away from Danny's touch, stepping closer to the edge.

"Let me give you the best view," Danny muttered, then broke into a full speed run towards the edge of the cliff, a distance of about six feet, clearing it just before the rope snapped taut.

Geraldo issued a panicked scream, loosing his balance as he was pulled forward. Another of the rebels reached to grab him, but missed.

Danny plunged towards the water, trying to get his feet downward, but became quickly entangled in the rope, knowing that his former captor was just a moment or two above him. He prayed the water was as deep as it looked. He hit the water hard and was almost instantly slammed by the full weight of the falling Geraldo. He hit a rock at the bottom of the river with his right knee, but not as hard as he would have feared.

Steve both saw and heard the splash and knew that two men had gone off the cliff. That could only be one thing. *How high was that cliff? Certainly Danny wouldn't jump. It's suicide.* He strained to see what was happening in the water, but not give their position away.

The men at the top of the cliff were shouting and began shooting into the water.

Danny, entangled in the rope and the flailing limbs of the panicked Geraldo struggled desperately to free himself. He broke the surface, just as a bullet hit the water next to him. Geraldo came up beside him, grabbed for him, and he ducked under the man using him as a shield. Geraldo, unable to swim, grabbed hold of Danny's head, trying to climb upward out of the water over his prisoner, ignoring the bullets were peppering the surface of the river. The two men, roped together in a life and death battle had already been gripped in the current and would carry them away from the cliff in just a matter of seconds. Geraldo suddenly stiffened, then went limp - shot by one of the men above. Danny ducked beneath the water again, trying again to free his hands. The eddy beneath the surface was quicker and the water turbulent from rocks along the bottom. They began to move faster.

The rebels were running and scrambling down the steep cliff, following the body of Geraldo laying facedown in the river. It would take them several minutes to climb down. Steve gathered the baby into his arms and picking up his rifle, ran ahead over the rough terrain, keeping the body in view. Until Danny gets free from that man, they will be able to find him easily. And it won't take long for the body to come an anchor instead of a buoy.

Danny surfaced for air, realized for that the instant he was out of sight and no longer a target. The wet knotted rope was tight about his wrists. The only way to get free would be to cut the rope. As the river swept them on, he tried to pull the bleeding body closer to see if Geraldo had a knife.

Danny collided with a large submerged rock with the same already injured right knee, letting out a shocked cry as the pain fired up to his hip and down to his toes. He slammed into a second rock across the ribs. The river's speed was still increasing. Desperately, he grabbed at Geraldo's belt buckle and began working it open. The roar of the river was increasing, the river narrowing as it began to work through a ravine. Rocks were rising up through the water, others just submerged beneath the water, and he could hear the tell-tale throaty roar of churning water. We are headed for rapids. He got the belt open and pulled with all his might. It did not come free. He would have to pull it from each loop. They entered the white foaming water.

No longer able to focus on the belt, Danny fought to keep his head above water and away from hitting a rock. There were outcroppings of rocks from the shore and he attempted to grab hold of something to pull himself from the water, but the speed and weight of Geraldo's body snatched him away before he could get aground.

Steve had hurried along with banks as quickly as he could, keeping one eye on the men who were being drawn rapidly farther ahead in the water, the other eye on the foliage behind hoping not to be overtaken by the FARC. He was out of breath, sweat poured off him. He paused a moment and also heard the roar of rapids.

The churning water yanked Danny one way, dead Geraldo the other, the rope snapped taut with violent force pulling Danny backward through the current for a moment, dragging him underwater. They were thrown back against each other a moment later, rope once again tangling amongst limbs of the living and the dead. They were swept over a flat rock and dropped to the next level, banging against rocks as they went. The rope ensnared in a root and the two men were slammed together face to face. Danny stared into the bloody face of Geraldo, tried to pull himself away as the water surged over them making breathing almost impossible. He felt the root give, he moved a little, then the rope wrapped around his foot, pulling him beneath the surface. He struggled in a near panic - it seemed the dead man was grabbing him, holding him down. He couldn't breathe, couldn't think. The root broke free.

The force of the river lifted him back above the surface.

The large rocks seemed to have been dropped into the river here like some careless giant child's play blocks. Several piled up in small heaps, others just beneath the water's surface as the racing water flushed over them. The deep channel in the center of the river was interrupted by a large flat rock with a column of mounded rocks poking above the surface about two feet on either side.

The churning current slid the knot of men over the smooth face of a large rock. The rushing water was less than six inches deep, looked like a shining glass surface against the rock face, but was deadly on the far side as the flow converged with the hundreds of gallons of water rushing around the immovable objects to either side creating a downward spiraling vortex.

The body of Geraldo rolled over the rock first, plunging headlong into the large odd depression in the surface. Danny, his bound hands clawing for a finger-hold on the slick rock tumbled after. He kept hold

of the edge of the rock for a split moment - just long enough to realize if he went under, he would not come back up. The water closed over his head.

Something had hold of his tattered aloha shirt from the back, the T-Shirt beneath suddenly went tight against his neck and throat, but he was pulled backward against the vacuum-like pull. He got his face out of the water as an arm wrapped under his chin and right arm from behind, still pulling against the powerful drag of the vortex. The spinning water pulled the rope weighted by the 200 pound body tight against his hands, tearing flesh and cutting the circulation.

"I've got you, Danno," Steve's voice assured him. Steve huddled against the rocks trying to keep Danny above the surface with one hand, the rifle ready in the other, gripping the rocks with all his might to keep from being dragged into the water. "Your friends are right behind us," he murmured.

"A knife," Danny gasped.

Steve shook his head. It took all his might to just keep Danny's head above water as the suction and dead weight threatened to pull him in. Steve saw one of the rebels out of the corner of his eye and wondered how long it would be before the Colombian saw them. He tried to move the rifle, but knew he would be unable to aim with any kind of accuracy and still hold onto Danny. He could feel the pulse racing in Danny's neck under the grip of his arm.

Danny tried to pull back to get the rope off his hands, but the drag from the water was so hard, it took all his arm strength to keep from dislocating his shoulders. He could not feel his hands. Any chance of slipping the rope over them had vanished about the time he and Geraldo had hit the water.

There were shouts from the men running down the riverbank, still about a hundred yards away. One fired a shot.

"Let me go," Danny gasped, spitting water. "Save yourself." Above the ringing in his ears he could hear the drill master:

"You live only for the mission. And if the mission's success means you die - you die. No tears, no flowers, no heroes. You are not here to be a hero. You gonna die for your mission? Williams?"

"Yes, Drill Master."

"The man down knows he will pay for your freedom with his life! You let him!"

In spite of the desperate moment, Steve cracked a half-smile. "Not a chance." He ducked as a bullet whined off the rock surface beside him. He gripped the rock surface tighter with his knees and turned the rifle in his right hand. He fired one shot in the direction of the approaching men. They scattered for cover under the trees. *That just bought us a minute or two.* He pulled harder. *The only possibility is to pull him out. What then? There is a heavy dead body on that rope.* His mind played out the impossible fantasy of shooting through the rope to free Williams, the both of them managing to duck through the rocks and somehow get back to where he's hidden Esteban...

...a second shot struck the rock much closer than before.

Steve fired a second shot, but as he did, he lost his grip under Danny's arm and Williams slid out of his grasp. Frantically, he grabbed into the water, getting a hold of the edge of the back of the shirt collar, pulling with all his might and fear, staring at Danny, face-up just beneath the surface, mouth open, blue eyes staring back at him through the water, the shirt tight against his throat. The abused shirt collar tore.

Steve twisted the back in the T-shirt into his fist, till it could stretch no more. *If he doesn't drown, I'm strangling him.* He could see that Danny kept trying to find a foothold, kicking with his feet, but was rapidly losing energy. His face was purple-red.

Having no choice, Steve let go of his weapon by propping it against the rock, and reached down with his other hand. He got a grip under Danny's arm and pulled Danny's head above the surface again. The rifle slid from the rock and splashed into the river and vanished.

Danny was coughing, each cough bringing spasms to his over taxed arm muscles. With two arms around him, Steve was able to keep him out of the water to nearly his shoulders as they huddled against the rock, awaiting what now seemed to be the inevitable. "Let go or we both die," Danny gasped. "Let me go."

Steve gritted his teeth. "I never cared much for being the sole survivor," he answered. *Is there anything left I can do?*

There was the sudden thundering deep rhythm of whop-whop so intense it vibrated the water around them as a Chinook helicopter seemed to suddenly drop from nowhere, Colombian soldiers in the open doorways firing at will into the trees along the river. The rebels fled back into the cover of trees as the

chopper dropped close to the bank, six armed men leaping to the ground and charging after them. Steve and Danny both watched, openmouthed in disbelief as the chopper kicked up whirlwinds of mist and dust. It continued to hover a moment, then another man jumped to the bank. The man in a black suit looked in no way prepared for the jungle and was running across the slippery trail of rocks out into the river towards the two men stranded in the rapids.

Chin did not take time for pleasantries, but upon reaching them, slid down next to Steve, reached out into the frothing water to locate the binding rope and with a mighty sweep, sliced through it the large machete borrowed from the chopper pilot.

The weight instantly fell away and Steve pulled against the greatly reduced vortex feeling elation as Danny came free. They both dropped backward into the rocky outcropping, exhausted, Steve's arms still wrapped around Danny's chest, and lay there, too exhausted to move.

Chin carefully cut the rope away from Danny's bruised and bleeding hands. "You boys okay?"

Steve gazed up at him, totally unable to comprehend how Chin came to be here. "Boys?" He could feel Danny shaking and wondered if he was doing the same.

Chin, ignoring his soaked suit and soggy shoes waved towards the chopper. "Steve, are there others?"

"A baby," he replied, still overwhelmed at both the near disaster and sudden rescue. "On the shoreline...he's sick."



Steve barely remembered the short trek to the chopper. He allowed the chopper crew to wrap him in a blanket although it was over ninety degrees. He could dimly hear the coughing cry of Esteban to which he had become so attuned. *Good, they found the baby. He's alive.* He glanced over at Danny, also mummified in a blanket, but Danny's eyes were closed.

Chin squeezed onto the metal bench of the chopper next to Steve.

"We owe you a suit," Steve remarked.

Chin grinned and wrung out the hemline of the jacket. A small stream of water puddled onto the floor. "Good, it was old anyway."

"How did you find us?"

"They found the plane. Two men alive. One in a coma, the other Catava's former body guard. He told them you all were alive. He did not know how you had gone, but thought Catava would have headed over the mountain although it was more dangerous."

Steve blinked in surprise recalling Catava's insistence that they go to the river.

"We took the chopper over the ridge of the mountain and found Catava there."

"Catava went over the mountain?" Steve questioned in unbelief.

"He told us you all had gone to the river. He went back over the mountain hoping to draw the rebels away from you."

Steve shook his head a bit sadly. "He planned it," he muttered. "He got Carlos to go along with it. We were the decoy so he could make his escape over the mountain uninhibited." He wanted to be angry with Catava, could not find the energy to do so.

A Colombian soldier with a first aid kit knelt down to examine Steve's head wound. It seemed like forever since the plane crash that had created the injury. The man started to put peroxide that stung onto the cut. "*Usted se sentirá mejor pronto,*" the soldier offered in comfort. "*¿Recuerda usted algo acerca del choque? ¿Había cualquier otros sobrevivientes con usted?*"

Steve did not know what he wanted and just looked at him. The chopper suddenly gave a loud whine and with a stomach wrenching jerk shot skyward headed back towards Bogata.

"*¿Me puede oír usted?*" the medic asked, forgetting his patient did not speak the language he was concerned about medical complications that would make Steve unable to reply. The soldier glanced over at another Colombian. "*Quizá él no es muy listo. O quizá él tiene el daño de cerebro.*"

The second soldier issued a small smile at the medic's questioning Steve's intelligence.

From the depths of the craft came an unexpected response. "*El no habla español, usted engaña. El es mi hermano y un héroe. El respeto de la exposición para el hombre que se arriesgó su vida para todos nosotros,*" Danny, suddenly alert, declared, anger replacing exhaustion in his expression.

A third soldier pushed the other two away angrily. "Many sorry," he issued to Steve in broken English. He waved again at the two soldiers who scrambled back onto their metal seats of the craft. "They no English."

Steve glanced from Danny to Chin and then the new soldier and nodded. He looked back at Danny. "A lot of words to ask for the bathroom. I would have thought we'd both pissed enough back in those rapids to hold us a week."

Danny gave a half smile, leaned his head back and closed his eyes.

Steve touched the arm of the soldier. "What did he say?" He motioned his head towards Danny. It seemed odd to ask a national to interpret what his partner had just said. *Partner? I hope so.*

The man glanced at Danny then back to Steve. "He said you are a hero. You risked your life. He called you his brother." The man stepped away back to his seat.

Steve looked at Danny, knowing he had heard the exchange. Danny did not move, but Steve noticed the half smile had lingered on his lips.

Steve knew that airlift back to Bogata would not be long and it wasn't. It seemed somehow ironic that it took less than fifteen minutes. *We were fifteen minutes from safety. Fifteen minutes - by air anyway.* He glanced out of the bay door as Bogata came into view, white against the green jungle. Moments later he picked out the ribbon of runway at the airport. The helicopter hovered momentarily, then zeroed in on the airport terminal. Steve could see several people coming towards them.

"Um, MaryAnn and Clara are here," Chin suddenly announced.

"What?" Steve asked in surprise. "Here? In Colombia?"

He gave a quick nod. "They were worried."

"Of course they were worried, but-" Steve hesitated. He glanced at Danny who had not opened his eyes. He wondered if the junior detective was awake. "Danno."

"I heard," he answered, opened his eyes and sat up a bit straighter, also glancing out of the bay opening. He gave a half smile. "Price you pay for getting into a place crash, huh? They're going to be very emotional."

No kidding. Steve decided giving a response to the obvious was not necessary. For a moment he felt a twinge of guilt at having frightened MaryAnn so badly.

The Chinook settled down lightly onto the runway right outside of the terminal, the pilot cutting the engines almost instantly so that the large rotating blades very quickly came to a halt. By the time Steve and Danny could be helping from the craft, MaryAnn Clara, tailed by a host of media including the Associated Press were upon them.

Chin tried to block the way, permitting only the women through, but was only partially successful.

MaryAnn grabbed her brother in a fierce hug tears springing to her eyes. "I was so frightened for you!" she exclaimed, noting his bandaged head, but choosing not to speak of it. "I thought I'd never see you again." She wept.

Clara embraced her nephew. "I knew you'd be all right, I just knew it," she affirmed, smiling proudly at him. In spite of her more reserved character, she blinked back her tears. "I knew you'd be fine."

She need never know just how close we came to not making it, Danny thought, trying to return her hug, but his arms were so tired, he could barely lift them.

"McGarrett!" The press parted as Catava strode through the group. The ambassador spread his arms wide, a toothy smile across his face. "You are here at last! They find you as I had hoped."

"We aren't all here," Steve replied somberly. "Pedro Ortiz is dead."

"The priest?" Catava blinked in surprise. "A great shame. You see," he added loudly enough for the press to hear, "those rebels are not really of the people; they are just trying to bring their Communist ways here and destroy our good democratic government. They even kill a priest!"

Steve did not see the connection between Ortiz' death and Colombia's government, but let the comment pass. He shot a warning glance towards Williams that told him to do the same.

"This time we get them, McGarrett," Catava continued. "This time they pay."

Catava, you really need to stop talking, Steve thought ruefully.

"The ones that were ambushing you, trying to kill you when the soldiers who saved you arrived - our army followed them, found their rebel camp. We sent reinforcements and destroyed the camp."

"You *what?*" Danny commented, recalling the village of women and children.

Catava smiled for the cameras. "Those rebels will not put fear into other innocent visitors," he declared gesturing towards the southwest where a thin column of blank smoke was rising into the blue sky the other side of the mountain top.

Steve glanced at Danny again. "Not now, Danno," he added quietly.

Williams ignored him. "Rebel camp? What rebel camp. It was a *village*, Catava - a village of women and children. You blew up a village of innocent people! Those rebels are long gone into the jungle!"

The cameras are rolling, don't embarrass him in front of his people. Steve gripped Danny's elbow fiercely, knowing Williams could not miss the message.

Catava never missed a beat. He shrugged and smile. "My young friend has suffered a great deal. You must excuse him."

"*Excuse!*" Danny picked out the AP team. "Go there. Get them to take you there! You'll see for yourself!"

By now Steve thought he might twist Williams' elbow off if he did not stop. "Not now," he growled quietly at Danny's side. "That is *enough.*"

Danny's angry gaze met the icy steel blue one of McGarrett, then Danny dropped his eyes.

Catava, a little unnerved by this time nodded placidly to the press. "Yes, when it is safe we will arrange for inspections if anyone would like. Please forgive him. This has been a terrible couple of days for all of us."

Father Ramone stepped forward before anything else could be said, suggesting that the party complete their journey to the mission hospital where they could receive proper care. Steve followed him towards the waiting minibus, leaving Chin to move Williams along.

"Chin," Danny muttered, anxiety on his face. "They don't know -- they have to know. They have to care."

"Danny," Chin murmured, pulling him towards the minibus, "I know it probably is as you say - but it is also already too late."



Danny and Steve had been provided with clean clothes from the stores at the mission. The clothing was poor quality hand-me-downs that were threadbare, but they were clean and dry. Having showered, their wounds were redressed, the two sat side by side on the old stuffed sofa in a parlor of the mission. It was quiet, the stucco walls kept out most of the street noises and the high ceiling and fans kept the temperature at an acceptable level. There was an oriental carpet of subdued colors spread across the hardwood flooring and on the walls were paintings of St. Christopher, the Blessed Virgin, and a crucifix.

Steve was uncomfortable around the icons of his memory, but found himself thinking about Pedro Ortiz. *I know that for some people these things provide them foundation and comfort. I would rather rely on the concrete of everyday that I can see, feel and touch, but Ortiz made this all just a little more believable. He was the exception.*

The door opened and Father Ramone entered. "The report on Esteban is that he will recover. The mission will attempt to locate his family, but we are told that no one arrived in either Bogata or Mexico for his mother or him. The search will go on, but there may be no family. We will become his family. He will not be abandoned to the streets." He held out his hand and dropped the rosary into Steve's. "I believe Pedro wanted you to keep this. I would like to thank you for being with him in the end."

Steve fingered the beads for a moment, recalling those last moment's of young Pedro's life once again. He put the rosary back into Ramone's hand. "Give them to Esteban. Let him grow up remembering the man who died for him." He remembered Pedro's desire to save souls. "Pedro completed his mission. Maybe it will live on in Esteban."

Father Ramone turned back with a nod. "You would make a fine theologian, McGarrett."

He gave a quiet smile. "My mother thought so, too."

A plane is coming from the United States in the morning to return you and your families to America," Ramone told them. You are welcome to spend the night here at the mission."

"Thank you," Steve replied.
Ramone nodded and left. Silence closed over the parlor once again.
Steve and Danny rested back on the soft pillows of the couch, both gazing up at the cracked and yellowed plaster ceiling.
"Steve."
"Yes."
"Catava made it."
"Yes."
"And he rescued us."
Steve paused. "In a manner of speaking."
"Then he arranges for the murders of a village full of innocents."
Steve did not give a reply.
Danny did not speak again right away, then finally said: "Pedro died. That doesn't seem fair."
"No, it doesn't," he agreed.
"Steve, you know there's an old saying about someone who saves a life."
Steve glanced at him, cocking an eyebrow.
"That the person doing the saving is responsible for the life he saves."
Steve forced a quick grin. "Gee, I've heard that a bit differently. The one saved owes his life to the rescuer and becomes his servant forever."
"Hum," Danny replied and glanced away.
"Either way, I think we're even," Steve concluded. "Unless you'd like us to be responsible for each other and servant to each other for life."
Danny did not reply right away. *Yeah, maybe that is just what I want.* "Steve."
"Yes."
"When we get back...." He hesitated. "There's a letter from me on your desk. Don't read it."
"What?" Steve asked in mild curiosity.
"There's a letter. Don't read it."
Steve gazed up at the ceiling and smiled. "Okay, Bruddah."

End