

# BAYSIDE

FALL 1987

The photograph is yellow, brown and ripped. The man in it is young. His beard is long and incomplete...the sideburns don't connect with the chin. The olive green uniform is large and loose, the rifle seems to drag his shoulder down. But he is there forever, Malcolm thinks, against a background of mountain and valley and river. It is there that he belongs.

Rebelde.

"Find him," she says in the soft accent of Miami, "find him and bring him." She lays out the bills before him.

Long nails and sun dress. She, too, is young, younger than the photograph, younger than the rebel.

"Find him and bring him," she says again before the door slams shut and the questions begin.

## II

"Yeah, yeah, he was one of El Caballo's head honchos, a student leader, head of the uprising in the central mountains. But I thought he died in prison somewhere," El Duro chews his gum loudly. Baggy pants, beeper, imitation Ray Ban sunglasses. He pockets the money, smiles. The smile of an informant.

"So tell me, Malcolm, my man, since when do you get involved in politics?"

## III

She is old, the woman. Old and wrinkled and torn. She looks out at the bay. He has no beard in the photograph she holds. He is clean shaven, bright eyed, easy smile. He is young, too young.

"Su hijo, senora, somos amigos de el, lo estamos buscando," says El Duro softly, gently stroking her hair.

"Mi hijo esta muerto," the tear comes undone, lands on her dress.

Her son, she says, is dead.

#### IV

Ven/ por senderos y caminos aun sin  
caminar/ Ven abrazame hoy para que no venga la  
manana/ Tierra/ Mar/ Aire/ Ven, abrazame hoy/ dame  
esperanza.

(Come/ through paths and roads as yet  
untread/ Come, embrace me so that morning does not  
come/ Land/ Sea/ Air/ Come, embrace me, give me  
hope.)

It is old, too, the poem. Written on  
cigarette paper, dirtied and bloodied.

"He had no ink in prison," says the Human  
Rights activist, "so he wrote it with his blood."

"Did he survive the prison?" Malcolm asks.

"We know he was released, two years after  
his sentence was completed.

#### V

Camino hoy solo por donde ayer camino un  
pueblo/ que queda hoy pero amargura y triste  
resonancia/ estruendo de fusiles y corazones/ Jose  
Antonio. (Today I walk alone by where  
yesterday walked a people/ what is there left  
today but bitterness and sad echoes/ the clamor of  
hearts and rifles/ Jose Antonio.)

The publisher is short, pudgy. Fat red  
cheeks and dirty blond hair.

"The poetry is bad, but there is depth,  
understanding. With a little bit of work perhaps  
he could have turned out something important. He  
came to get the check we owed him for the  
royalties on his book, but we haven't heard from  
him since."

#### VI

The banker's office overlooks the city. A  
large glass door leads into an open balcony. The  
three piece suit fits just right, the hair is  
combed to perfection.

"Yeah, he was always a hot head. One time  
back in Havana, we went into a night club looking  
for Senen, the chief of the secret police. We'd  
been told he was there with his mistress. Well,  
he wasn't. So you know what the crazy bastard

did?" loud laugh, sip of lemonade "he sees this captain, sitting with his family at a table...we don't know who it is, mind you," loud laughter, longer sips of lemonade, "so he goes up and shoots him...right in the head. Crazy fucking bastard."

"Have you seen him?" Malcolm asks.

"Yeah, about a year ago. But my financial situation isn't too good, you know, I couldn't help him."

## VII

Six months. That's what it took the papers to reach Malcolm. Six months for the papers to clear National Security under the Freedom of Information Act. A jumble of blotted names and edited phrases.

"Contact established within the regime. Individual adamantly opposed to the system. Willing to participate in drastic action."

The date, 1965.

## VIII

The film is black and white. The sound is horrible. It is a trial. A military trial. The judges are wearing olive green fatigues. He is balding at this stage of his life, balding and beardless. He wears a simple white shirt and khaki pants. His head sinks into his hands when the death sentence is given. Loud applause and cheers from the audience. Then the Leader walks in. Tall and proud and overbearing. He wraps his arms around him.

"The Revolution is benevolent. It forgives your attempt on my life. The sentence is commuted to twenty years in prison."

In 1966.

## IX

El Duro knows how to drink cafe. A quick gulp of cold water, three rapid sips, and the dark, bitter substance is down his throat. Malcolm is less experienced. He stands, coffee cup in hand, staring off into the sky.

El Duro grins.

"So, Malcolm baby, they tell me that that

last job really fucked you up, that is wound up snowing inside your nose..."

El Duro chuckles loudly, intentionally obnoxious. It is a game to him after all, a game of probing and testing. A game learned as a child.

Malcolm does not take his eyes away from the sky. He is silent, grim.

"I wonder what it's like, Duro, to have a dream and spend a whole life time fighting for it."

El Duro chuckles again.

"Look at this asshole we're chasing. That's how you wind up. Broken and running and lonely. Not me, brother. I ain't got no dream but gold chains, good food and nice pussy."

Malcolm leans his head back, stretches his arms and yawns.

"Duro," Malcolm says, his icy tone unchanged, "don't ever mention that job again."

El Duro does not chuckle.

X

The prison is grey and white and sometimes very lightly blue. The men are bandana clad, jumpsuit clad or yellow prison uniform clad. They are hundreds stuffed into a place where they cannot possibly fit. And yet they do not touch. Inmates do not touch.

The scars crisscross his face. The right eye is white, devoid of pupil. He speaks slowly, deeply, intelligently. El Duro translates.

"He says that he'll help, but he needs a good word to the parole board, maybe a little financial consideration with his family..." Malcolm nods. Promise him anything, he's heading for the chair anyway.

"He says that he worked for external intelligence. He was sent here during the Boatlift, told to penetrate the drug rings. He had another mission as well...to keep tabs on that guy you're looking for. El Caballo told him that, personally. Says he couldn't get him for the first time 'cause the world was watching...but that the cabron would pay anyway."

XI

We, the students of the University, convinced that only the armed struggle can lead our country to democracy and social justice, take to these hills, where our forefathers fought for national independence..."

Ten pages follow. Ten pages of dreams and hopes.

"He wrote it under the moonlight, in the hills, the first night after they landed," says the University professor.

XII

Senate Intelligence Committee Hearings, 1976.

SENATOR LOCKLEY: How long were you involved with the Agency, Mr. Crowder?

CROWDER: Fifteen years, sir.

SENATOR LOCKLEY: Under whose authority did you sanction the assassination?

CROWDER: I merely followed orders, sir, I was a soldier.

SENATOR LOCKLEY: Even though you were aware that the President had expressly forbidden operations of this type?

CROWDER: Yes, sir.

SENATOR LOCKLEY: But you led him to believe you would?

CROWDER: Yes, sir.

SENATOR LOCKLEY: Why?

CROWDER: To divert enemy intelligence from more sensitive intelligence gathering operations we were carrying out at the time.

SENATOR LOCKLEY: You knew, then, that the plan could not succeed.

CROWDER: Yes, sir.

XIII

Her lips are burgundy. Her nails long and also burgundy, the skirt falls to her knees. She is tired, she says. Tired of the streets and the hustlers and johns. Twenty five years in the trade is too long.

"Si, si, he's old and bald. I've seen him coming out from the apartment alley. He's always neat. Always says buenos dias. He's a nice old man."

The apartment is neat. Neat but empty. He's long gone. Only a photograph remains, on the dresser.

It shows a table, in a restaurant. Food and wine and fifteen young men. Clean shaven and dressed in light colors. They smile. In a corner of the photograph a date is written. 12 March 1957.

El Duro looks at the photograph and is unusually quiet.

"They're all dead, Malcolm. Only he remains alive. They all died the next day...the thirteenth of March."

#### XIV

The banker has a large pool in his house. He can raise or lower the bottom with an electric gizmo.

"It was a crazy and stupid plan and we were all crazy and stupid fools. We determined that the quickest way to end the bloodshed was to assassinate the dictator. So they attacked the Presidential Palace. That was like attacking Fort Knox with BB guns. Funny thing was that they almost made it. Four of them made it to the fourth floor, where El Indio's office was. They hurled three grenades inside but they didn't explode. Only four men made it out alive. Forty others died."

The banker is silent. His lemonade is forgotten.

#### XV

She is there first thing in the morning. Her sunglasses on, her black hair loose and free over her shoulders. She wears designer jeans and a pink polo. She also has a ring, University of Miami alumni.

"Have you found him?" she asks.

"Why do you want him?"

"I owe him a life."

"Whose?"

"Mine."

Malcolm leans back. Grins.

"He's got other people looking for him. Dangerous people. How do I know you're not one of them?"

"He's my father."

XVI

Senate Intelligence Committee Hearings,  
1976

SENATOR ARMSDALE: And this man, this individual who was promised support...he was highly placed in the Regime?

ARMENIO: Yes, he was...he was a former ambassador to Spain, former Minister of Health, one of the few survivors of the attack on the Presidential Palace in '57. A very popular figure nationally.

SENATOR ARMSDALE: And he contacted you?

ARMENIO: Yes, we knew each other from way back. From the first days of the Revolution, when I was Minister of Agriculture. He contacted me in Spain.

SENATOR ARMSDALE: And you and your case officer, you both trusted this man who had been instrumental in bringing the Regime to power, this man who...

ARMENIO: I also fought in the Revolution.

SENATOR ARMSDALE: was a suspected...

ARMENIO: Communist? The Revolution was never communist, it was...

SENATOR ARMSDALE: Agrarian reform and nationalization of...

ARMENIO: You wouldn't understand, you wouldn't understand in a million years.

SENATOR ARMSDALE: You trusted this man with a mission that could have threatened the national security of the United States?

ARMENIO: What do you want from me?

SENATOR ARMSDALE: What did your case handler, Phil Crowder, instruct you to do?

ARMENIO: To promise him full American support for the conspiracy.

XVII

The banker sits alongside Malcolm, hurling down the I-95 expressway at 90 miles an hour. It's midnight on a moonless night. The pudgy banker in this three piece suit wonders porque carajo he got into a '68 Camaro with a crazy gringo with a pony tail.

And the Banker answers himself. Because underneath the three piece suit and the diamond studded Rolex, he's still a young law student itching for a gunfight and a Revolution. Because gringo here is excitement...and there are certain things a man can never take out of his system.

"You know," Malcolm says, icy tone, "I swallowed that bullshit you fed me that you were just one more poor rich boy, sporting a Rolex and riding a Mercedes but up to his neck in bills.

"But you know, asshole, you ran for office a year back and I looked up your financial disclosure statements..."

Malcolm turns the car around, across the median and into the next lane, against oncoming traffic. He turns the lights off and increases his speed.

"Man, you crazy mother fucker, what the fuck are you doing?"

"Where is he, goddammit?" Icy tone.

"We're gonna die, cojones!"

"I already did." Malcolm is expressionless.

"The warehouses by the airport, cojones, the fucking warehouses!"

XVIII

They stand in semi-circle around him.

El Duro, chewing gum loudly, intentionally obnoxious.

The banker, shaking and sweating, muttering excuses to his comandante. Malcolm, hands in pocket, head back, staring off into the warehouse's ceiling.

The girl at his knees, trembling and crying.

The old man is bald and yellow brown now.  
No beard, no sideburns, no mountain, no valley, no  
rifle, no olive green fatigues.

Only fifty-five. Elderly at fifty-five.  
He does not speak. Not to El Duro nor to  
the greasy, pudgy man in a three piece suit who  
babbles apologies nor to the girl who holds his  
hand and cries and calls him father.

He asks for his mother and the photograph  
he left behind.

The photograph of the fifteen young men.  
"What do you want with me?" he asks

Malcolm.

"Nothing. My job is finished."

"Then I'm leaving."

"You want nothing to do with me, then,  
huh? Nothing to do with me?" She screams, angry  
and bitter and sad.

He stands unflinching.

She turns and walks away, silently proud.

"Wait!" The old man calls.

She stops, but does not turn.

"When they threw me in the Hole, and  
darkness swallowed me, you kept me alive."

He walks over to her, strokes her hair.

"I dream of what it would have been like  
to raise you, and play with you, and cry with  
pride for you...but I am not that. And there is  
too much you would never understand."

"Give me a chance," she asks, a tear  
rolling down her cheek.

"There is too much, mi vida."

She walks away again, her head raised, the  
tears defiantly held back. Malcolm catches up  
with her, puts his arm around her.

She brushes it away and walks out into the  
night.

Malcolm crosses his arms and stares out  
into a moonless sky.