

A person with long hair, wearing a dark jacket and pants, stands on a rocky, reddish-brown mountain ridge. They are looking towards a vast, misty valley. In the background, majestic snow-capped mountain peaks rise against a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is one of a high-altitude, rugged landscape.

ESCAPE
THROUGH THE
ANDES
A N O V E L

THOMAS M. DANIEL



**ESCAPE
THROUGH
THE ANDES**



A NOVEL

Thomas M. Daniel

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Cover photograph by the author. Mount Mururata from the road to Palca, Bolivia, 1970.

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*For Janet, Ginnie, Steve, Laura, and Bruce,
who lived with me in Bolivia.*

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ESCAPE THROUGH THE ANDES

PROLOGUE

FEET POUNDING ON COBBLES, breathing hard—panting and gasping—we rounded the corner and ducked into an alley. Our pursuers raced on past the alley. We had lost them. Escaped—for the moment.

“Whew!” Leaning forward with hands on my knees, I caught my breath. “That was close.”

“Yeah!”

“But we’ve lost them, I think.”

“*Esta vez*, but they’ll keep after us.”

“And we’ll keep running!”



PART I



LA PAZ, BOLIVIA, 2007

I FOUND A CORNER TABLE in the bar at the Hotel Europa in La Paz. There were not many people in the bar. A middle-aged couple at a table across the room from me. A few well-dressed men at the bar, and one table with five similar men crowded around it. Businessmen, I judged. Well, I thought, that's what I am supposed to be—a businessman. I was wearing the dark blue suit in which I had traveled, minus the necktie. One of the young waitresses, suitably attired in a short dark skirt and white blouse and wearing spike-heeled shoes, approached me. Rosa Maria, by her name tag. “¿A tomar?” she asked.

“*Si. Un pisco sour.*” I replied, ordering the drink I was supposed to be drinking when my contact person appeared.

“*Claro. Pronto.* Of course. Right away.” She went to the bar to get my drink for me.

I sipped my pisco sour, hoping to drag it out until my contact arrived. He should be along any minute, I thought. My watch said the 6:30 *rendez-vous* hour would soon be passed.

“¿*Cacahuates?*” asked Rosa Maria, as she put a small bowl of peanuts on my table. I took the peanuts, tossed a couple into my mouth, and squirmed in my seat. I wondered when and whether my contact, whoever he might be, would show up. And what would I do if he did not?

Rosa Maria returned with my check. “*Su cuenta, Señor. Firmamela, por favor.*” As requested, I signed the check. “*El numero de su habitación,*” she said, pointing to a space on the bottom of the check. Room 414, I entered. Then, leaning close to my ear, she said softly in unaccented English, “I am your CIA contact person. I will come to your room just after seven-thirty, when

my shift here ends.” She took the signed check to the cashier and turned to assist another customer.

Well, I thought, that was slick. I ate a few more peanuts, finished my pisco sour, and headed up to my room.



PART II



CLEVELAND, OHIO, 2007

“PAUL? PAUL MORGAN?”

I turned in my chair. “Dave! For heaven’s sake! What brings you here? What a surprise!” I rose to my feet and stuck out my hand to shake his. “Great to see you. But how come? I mean, welcome here.”

“Am I intruding? Just busting in like this?”

“No, no. Of course not. Well, I have this grant proposal to finish up, but.... Anyway, the deadline is not until next week. Come in. Sit down.” I pointed to the one side chair in my small office.

My office was indeed small, and there was only a single visitor chair—a scoop-shaped, black, plastic one. I am a professor of medicine at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), based in the Department of Medicine at University Hospitals of Cleveland. I have a research program and a laboratory in the Wearn Research Building, a wing added onto the hospital. My office was intended to be a small instrument room for the laboratory. Since no other space was offered to me, I moved in a desk and established myself there. Mostly, however, I piled papers and unread journals on the desk and worked at what should have been an instrument counter along the back wall, which is why I hadn’t seen Dave Swenson enter.

There were bookshelves above my desk-counter. There were no books on the bottom-most one of them—only piles of papers waiting for my attention. Taped to the walls were data tables and hand-drawn graphs and charts. Important stuff. Important to the grant renewal proposal upon which I was working when Dave arrived. Successful grant applications require not only good ideas but solid preliminary data. Solid, yes, but also sufficiently “cutting

edge” to excite a peer review panel of experts in one’s field. Solid and cutting edge and hopefully exciting data from my laboratory were manifest in the tables and charts on my office walls. I was finding ways to include them in my proposal.

I study immune responses to the germ that causes tuberculosis (TB). How I became interested in this disease, a disease that is rapidly disappearing in the United States, is another story. I blame an army assignment taking care of soldiers with TB. That studies of this disease have taken me to parts of the world still plagued with the “Captain of Death” is yet another story. Having once set my sights on the disease that causes the most infectious disease deaths in the world, I found my innate wanderlust ready to take me to the parts of the world where TB lurks. My studies of tuberculosis have been and are tales of adventures told in stories of my research life, stories revealed in papers published in biomedical scientific journals. And stories recounted in proposals for grants in support of my work.

The human body has two sets of immune mechanisms for dealing with such unwanted invaders as disease-causing germs. Those mechanisms that are evoked by tubercle bacilli are prototypes for what immunologists call cellular responses. Cellular because they are mediated and effected by special cells as opposed to antibodies, which defend us against many other and more common infections. My laboratory-based studies of these cells and what they do when challenged in laboratory systems are complemented by studies in persons suffering from tuberculosis. And those latter, people-based studies have taken me to Bolivia. There is a lot of TB in Bolivia.

Dave Swenson had been my roommate at Yale. He had musical talent. He played the carillon in Harkness Tower. I trudged up the hill to the science buildings; I had no musical talent, although given enough beer, I enjoyed singing. While I followed graduation by going off to medical school at Harvard, Dave went to Georgetown for a graduate degree in International Affairs. He then took a job at the State Department, or so I understood. I was totally ignorant of what he did at the State Department.

I supposed he worked in Washington and maybe was assigned to other posts some of the time. Our Christmas card exchanges always went to his home in Virginia, however. Other than those Christmas cards, we had not kept in touch. Surprising, since we had been close college friends. But then life—at least my life—was busy, and so Christmas cards were all the contact I had maintained with most of my college classmates.

“What brings you to Cleveland? Hey, it’s great to see you. Where are you staying? How long will you be in town?”

“Actually, I came to see you! I’m staying on your campus at the Glidden House. I go back to D.C. tomorrow.”

“Well. I’d invite you to our house for dinner, but Susan is in Chicago for an art show—she has really made it in the art world—so there’s just me at home at the moment. And I’m a terrible cook!”

“No problem. Let me take you out to dinner. Some place where we can talk.”

“Fine by me. We’ll go out, but it will be my treat.”

“We can argue about that,” Dave said. “But I have an expense account for this trip, so my bosses at the U.S. Gov. will treat us.”

Jennifer, the senior one of the two technicians working my lab, came to the office doorway, paused for a moment, and said, “Sorry to interrupt. The gels are finished and in a tray to incubate overnight. Everyone else has left, and I’m headed out. Okay?”

“Yes. Sure. See you tomorrow.”

“Good night. I will be a bit late tomorrow morning. My dog has developed a problem that is mysterious to me, and I need to take her to the vet.”

“Okay. Have a good evening.”

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THE MAD GREEK is a Cleveland Heights landmark. It sits at the top of Cedar Hill, a short distance from University Hospitals and the CWRU campus. Susan and I live in Cleveland Heights,