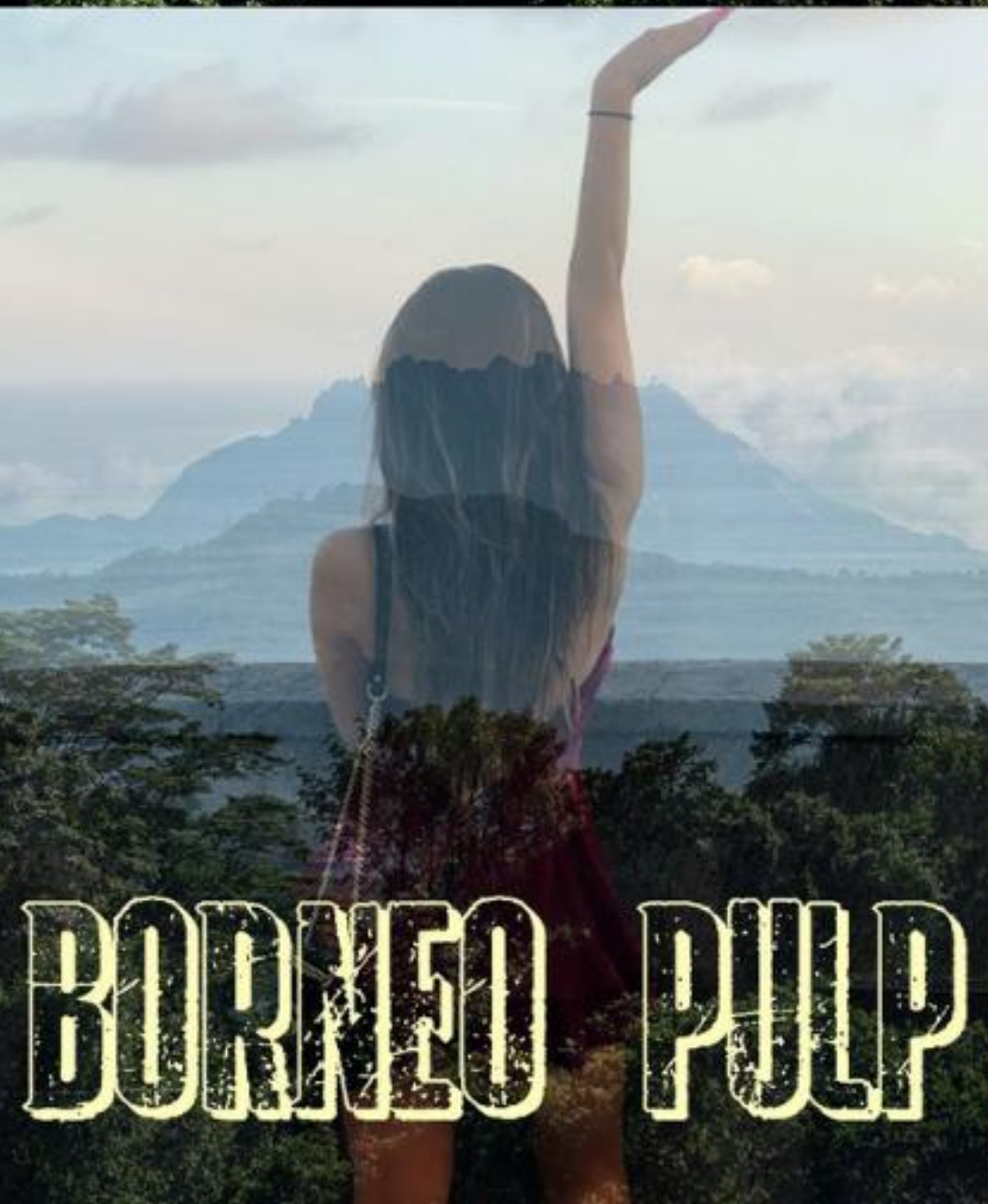


JOHN FRANCIS KINSELLA



BORNEO PULP

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John Francis Kinsella

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Author's Note

Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he's been given. But up to now he hasn't been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wild life's become extinct, the climates ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day.

Anton Chekhov

Uncle Vanya, 1897

## PROLOGUE

The sweat poured off him as he pulled the heavy body through the undergrowth. It was much heavier than he could have ever imagined, rivulets ran down his arms and onto his hands making it difficult to get a firm grasp on the thick wrists that slipped slowly through his fingers as he pulled.

Stopping to take his breath, he plunged his hands deep into the warm sand, which stuck to his moist skin giving him a better grip. He looked up, to the left and right along the beach, it was deserted; simply the movement of the palms that waved lazily against the tropical sky. He laboured on, there was no time to lose.

He had pulled the body into the dense undergrowth, over a small rise well away from the beach, few people ever strayed that far from the sand, especially at that time of the year. He paused and looked at the body, it lay like a giant turtle or some other aquatic creature slumped down on the ground, helpless...and dead.

With an effort he pulled off the soiled trunks and then the wristwatch, he looked carefully at the body...no rings or chains. The sunglasses were back on the beach. He stood back letting the undergrowth spring back into place, pushing the vegetation with his foot to make sure the body was well covered.

He then made his way back to the beach, pulling the shrubs and plants into place where his path was visible, smoothing over the tracks in the sand. With luck nobody would come that far along the beach for days and there was even less chance of them going far into the thick vegetation.

He recalled what Colonel Supramanto had told him: in the tropics putrefaction sets in almost immediately after death; left in the open the body would be black and bloated, almost unrecognisable within twenty-four hours. If it was not soon discovered, the heat, insects, and land crabs with their powerful claws, would quickly do their work.

Wading into the sea up to his chest, he washed off the sand and

sweat. He still had time to change his mind he thought as he looked out over the warm sea.

A hand touched his shoulder, he started violently.

‘Mr Axelmann, Mr Axelmann!’

He was trembling as he turned his head...trying hard to get his orientation. There was a pretty girl, she was wearing a flower coloured sarong and a purple orchid in her black hair. Who was she...he struggled to gather his thoughts; a prickling sensation of fear took hold of him.

‘Who...what?’

‘Mr Axelmann, I sorry, you must fasten your seat belt we’re going through a turbulent zone,’ the girl said smiling softly. He could make out the dim lights of a plane’s cabin.

Yes! That was it; the panic quickly subsided as he took hold of himself. He had dozed off, but even in his sleep he could not get the terrible images out of his mind. He looked at his watch; it was seven o’clock in the morning Indonesian time, almost fourteen hours since he had left the body on the beach.

‘Bring me a Scotch and soda,’ he said hoarsely to the hostess pulling himself up in his seat and grasping around for his seat belt. Then he realised only another couple of hours or so remained before the flight was scheduled to arrive in Zurich.

‘Sorry make that a coffee,’ he said forcing a smile and trying to appear as normal as possible. He would need a clear head on arrival; it was not the moment for whisky. As soon as the ‘Fasten Seat Belts’ sign went off, he would wash and shave; look respectable, that was it.

He peered through the window into the dark, there were no clouds, he realised that it must be the jet stream bumping the huge plane about. As he numbly gazed into the night sky he thought back to his first meeting with Brodzski in Paris.

## Chapter 1- A DOOR OPENS

John Ennis parked his Citroen V6 on the quai du Point du Jour. He could see the hoarding indicating Nautique Croisière, a Parisian company specialized in river cruises. That evening a cruise and private diner party had been organised aboard a luxury bateau-mouche, *Chante le Vent*, along the Seine and through the heart of the historic city.

The day had been hot, very hot. It was half past eight and the temperature hung in the low thirties. The sun still shone fiercely through the broad leaves of the plane trees that lined the banks of the river.

The evening traffic had been very light. It was near the end of August and most Parisians were enjoying the last days of their summer vacation, sunning themselves on the beaches of the Mediterranean or Atlantic coasts. As for the foreign tourists, most were flopped out in their hotel rooms recovering from the day or preparing for dinner.

As Ennis wandered across the quay, he saw there was no hurry, he was early as always. Martti Kivikoski was standing there at the foot of the gangway, chatting to one of the early arrivals. Through the broad windows of the boat Ennis recognised two of the girls in charge of the evening's organisation.

He had been invited to the dinner-cruise at the suggestion of Tapani Hakkala, President of the Finntech Group, a Finnish multinational. John Ennis headed Finntech's sales and marketing in its French HQ.

Following the restructuring of the company, he had found himself in suspended animation. Finntech had progressively become bigger and richer, but somehow, Ennis had been forgotten in the last of the endless reorganisations of the group.

He had returned from his holidays the week previously to the grim realisation that he was not part of the new organisation. There was a lurking feeling that it would be another of those turning points in his



life. He could not avoid the depressing thought that his career was beginning to seem like a long story of jumping from one uncontrollably complicated situation to another, created neither by his design nor choosing.

Ennis tried to comfort himself with the thought that he had little to really complain of; after all it was the luck of the draw. He would survive, as he always had survived the waves of change that seemed to sweep through business and industry in regular cycles.

He nevertheless felt that time was catching up on him. His forty-third birthday had just passed and lasting success seemed to be as elusive as ever. Ennis was a good talker, good at convincing people with new ideas, the result was that he did not know how to refuse a challenge, and as a consequence found himself parachuted into a series of impossible no win situations.

Forty-eight people had been invited to the dinner cruise on the Seine. The restaurant of the Chante le Vent was arranged with eight beautifully laid out tables, five to the quayside and three to the river side. A cocktail table was also set out with drinks and canapés, against one of the long windows overlooking the river.

As he stepped down into the restaurant, he saw Marie, Laxell's assistant. She put a drink into his hand and elatedly described the events of the day outlining the evenings programme. She had been given the responsibility of making the detailed arrangements for evening and was both nervous and excited. Laxell had sternly insisted that it was not an everyday event that such elevated personalities be invited together to Paris by the group and warned there should be no hitches.

Glancing up through the boats window, Ennis saw the green diplomatic number plates of a large black chauffeur driven Volvo. It slowly descended the ramp to the quay and turned in a broad semicircle towards the gangway. He made a sign to Kivikoski, it was the Ambassador. Almost at the same moment up on the main road, where he had parked his car, a blue coach was just pulling in.

The 'boys' had arrived, just like a works outing. Boys was not the exact word; their average age was over fifty, whilst the doyen of the

group was certainly in his seventies.

They were the boys from Finntech. They included important shareholders and their representatives, CEOs, presidents and vice-presidents together with honoured guests including the Ambassador of Finland in France and even more distinguished the Mayor of Helsinki who had deigned to join the outing.

Many of them looked a little worse for wear. Einari Laxell had zealously organised the programme with a breakfast call at five thirty that morning. One part of the group had spent the day visiting the cellars of Cognac and the other had been guests of the Mayor of Beaune, nearby to one of Finntech's recently acquired manufacturing units, conveniently not far from the good tables and vineyards of Bourgogne.

Looking at them, there was no doubt that they had all indulged to a large measure in sampling the famous wines and spirits of those regions. In spite of that, they were still in relatively good form, ready for the next round. Ennis knew a few of them personally; others he was familiar with from photographs in the company's news magazines, the rest were unknown.

With momentary stiff Finnish formality, they shook hands, announcing their names, one after the other, then quickly headed for the cocktail table.

Tapani Hakkala arrived. His face was red from the heat and wine, and with the fixed look of worry that he often wore. Ennis suspected that he was uneasy with the heavy responsibility he held as a high executive officer of the company, he would have been no doubt happier amongst his old colleagues as a simple engineer, but force of circumstance had projected him upwards, just as Ennis regretted he himself had been pushed sideways.

The quay slowly slipped away and the boats air-conditioning struggled with the unusually high temperature. Through the noise of animated talk and clinking glasses, he chatted with Tapani. Small talk about one thing and another. He had decided he would wait to see of his own personal position was brought up.

‘So John, the reorganisation is taking time, people will have to be

a little patient!’ He placed his drink on a table and lit up a Marlboro.

Ennis waited, letting him develop his ideas, slowly, as Finns often did.

‘As a matter of fact I wanted to see you to talk over a couple of things, but unfortunately this doesn’t seem to be the place,’ he said with a weak smile, pensively glancing around.

‘Let me think, when will you be in Helsinki next? Is it possible to be there in the second week in October? Yes, that’s best, October. Look, call my secretary tomorrow and confirm that date.’

‘Okay, that’s fine with me, I’ll call her tomorrow,’ Ennis replied forcing back the questions he would have liked to ask.

‘So, that’s that! Let’s enjoy our evening,’ Hakkala said looking out the window. The boat surged passed the Statue of Liberty and glided into the shadows of the Pont de Grenelle.

The meeting with Tapani Hakkala in Helsinki would be his last opportunity. Ennis supposed that he had at least been lucky on that point. He had worked closely with Hakkala some years previously. They had spent many long evenings drinking together on business trips, but that was before Tapani had arrived at the heady position of president, in a company of many thousands of employees.

The Finntech Group was Finland’s leading forestry products and engineering conglomerate, a sprawling multi-national with it’s headquarters in Helsinki. Ennis was based in their prestigious Paris offices where he was one of their many overseas specialists.

Some days later, he received a fax from Hakkala confirming their meeting in Helsinki. His feelings were mingled with the doubt that it could be some kind of thank you and farewell, a final kiss off. Perhaps, he imagined, Hakkala had preferred to do it personally, for old time’s sake. It was true that they had maintained a friendly but rather distant contact, in spite of Hakkala’s high rank. He visited Paris a couple of times a year, taking time to lunch with Ennis, or a few beers together, talking over business trends, common friends and company small talk.

The Finntech Group head quarters were situated behind the 19th

century Russian style, domed, Lutheran church, in the heart of Helsinki. It was about ten minutes by taxi from the Inter-Continental Hotel, over roads and tram tracks covered with frozen snow. The temperature was minus fifteen degrees centigrade, unusually cold for mid-October in Finland.

The weather could not have been very much worse, Ennis thought stepping out of the taxi, his thin-soled leather shoes crunched and slithered over the snow-covered pavement. The sharp icy wind crept around every corner of his Burberry, as he cautiously negotiated the icy flight of steps, up to the modest door on the side of a conventional and unimposing mid-seventies office building.

Ennis announced himself at the receptionist's window. It would have been more in place in a railway station ticket office, than the entrance to the head office of a multi-billion dollar group.

He took the lift to the seventh floor, leaving his hat and coat in the lobby where the staff and visitors shed their heavy winter coats and over shoes, he then reported to Hakkala's secretary, who announced his arrival.

'Hello there John! Come in, take a seat, not too cold for you I hope?' Hakkala said with a large toothy grin, amused as always at the discomfort of a southern European in the harsh Finnish winter.

Hakkala was a tall man, like many Finns. He chain smoked Marlboro, Ennis sometimes thought that he even looked like a Marlboro man. He was in his early fifties, a rugged serious face, perhaps a little long, with his eyes set a trifle closely together.

His office had an imposing conservative style. The furniture dated from the beginning of the twentieth century, in rich deep red mahogany. It had been inherited from one of the companies that had been absorbed. It was heavy, very heavy, designed for a long dead Nordic capitalist, well before the days of Scandinavia's democratic socialism, equality and hyper-taxation.

Hakkala's secretary reappeared holding a silver tray with a fine white bone china coffee pot and service, and a plate of Danish pastries.

'Have some coffee John, you look like you need it!' he said

laughing and standing up to pour the coffee. Ennis squirmed in the deep leather armchair, adjusting his tie and patting his hair into place, not yet sure whether to look happy or serious, trying hard to look relaxed.

‘There’s been a lot of changes hasn’t there?’ Hakkala paused and then with a questioning smile said, ‘How are people taking it?’ He had often used Ennis as a sounding board following changes in the organisation.

‘Well, most people are pleased with the changes,’ he replied cautiously, trying to avoid looking at him too long in the eyes and stretching for his coffee, which Hakkala’s secretary had placed on a low table by his armchair, almost out of arms length, forcing him to reach out in a precarious fashion.

Hakkala continued his general line of conversation, asking about different persons that they mutually knew, as they sipped their coffee and ate the pastries.

‘So! I understand that you haven’t been fixed yet in the new structure?’ he said leaning back.

‘No.’ Ennis replied, feeling even more uncomfortably, shifting in his seat.

‘Do you know Brodzski?’ he paused and then added, ‘Antoine Brodzski of Papcon?’

‘Yes,’ Ennis replied hesitantly, surprised at the question and change of subject.

‘Well?’

‘No, not really, I mean I don’t know him personally, you know, I’ve met him on different occasions, at conferences and trade fairs. Apart from that just by reputation,’ he shrugged.

‘Do you know about his project in Indonesia?’

‘Yes, well...at least I understand he goes there quite a lot, most of his business has been in Asia, in the developing countries out there. I believe he’s making a feasibility study for an Indonesian project’

‘That’s right,’ he paused, drawing deeply on his cigarette and appearing to reflect. ‘We’ve been contacted by the Banque de Berne, whom we know well, they have proposed that we participate in a

consortium with Brodzski, to develop his project.'

Ennis listened to him, uncertain of what he was leading to, or how Brodzski's firm could be linked to his own situation.

'Well,' he said, not without some gravity, 'we have decided that we are interested in this project, since the South East Asian region is an important area for our group.'

He then paused, looking at Ennis rather intensely for a reaction, Ennis waited, he sensed that it was wiser to let Hakkala develop his idea and not interrupt his train of thought.

'As you know John, the Russian economy is in trouble! In the past, some years back now, we had as much as thirty percent of our business from them, just recently it's dropped to almost nothing though now it's beginning to show some signs of picking up! That's why we've developed a policy of diversification in recent years, buying into companies in the European and North America.'

Ennis thought to himself impatiently, this is all very fine for a lesson in economics, but what's in it for me?

Hakkala looked at him, as if he were weighing him up, he seemed to take a breath, Ennis sensed that he was coming to the point, it was a critical moment.

'As you know John, in our new organisation unfortunately there is no ready made place for you at the moment!' he said slowly and paused.

Ennis felt his heart sinking, an acidic taste gathering in his mouth, he wondered what he meant by moment.

'However!' he paused again, carefully tapping the ash from his cigarette into a crystal ashtray. Ennis felt as though his heart was in his mouth. 'We need a man, to look after our interests, in the consortium that is to be formed for Brodzski's Indonesian project!'

Ennis held his breath.

'John, you're experienced in that region of the world, your knowledge of our industry and with the French would be an important factor for our involvement and success.'

Ennis felt an excitement rising in him, an exhilaration, a confusion of thoughts flashed through his head, he was saved and not only that,

he was being offered a challenge that was worthy of his talents and experience. He felt recognition and gratitude towards Tapani. He had been plucked from a very uncertain future.

Suddenly, snapping out of his revelry, he saw Hakkala looking at him seriously, waiting for a response.

‘What do you think?’ he said placing his both hands flat down on the on the table in front of him, fixing Ennis with a frown.

Ennis waited, it was the moment to say something intelligent, his brow knit with concentration but there was blank, no inspiring ideas came out.

‘If you are asking me to handle this business, I would be very pleased!’ He finally blurted out, and as that was all he could muster, there was nothing else he could do but put on his best look of seriousness and confidence.

‘Good! I thought that it would please you,’ he said smiling broadly as though he was pleased with himself. ‘We have in principal allocated a budget, it’s all in this report together with the project outline, Kalle Punkari will go over that with you when we have finished here. One important point, you will have full responsibility and will report directly to me, and only to me, no matter whoever else in the company becomes involved.’

Ennis nodded taking a mental note of Hakkala’s words.

‘Our object is to ensure Papcon’s success, their success is our success, your role is to work with them as though you were one of them, following Brodzski’s directives.’

Ennis had wondered if he was not embarking on another impossible task, but he pushed the nagging idea from his mind; in any case whatever happens he now had breathing time.

‘Another point-I hope that you don’t mind-but you will be located in Papcon’s office, it’s on avenue Matignon in Paris, that was agreed with Philippe de Berne, very nice according to what I’ve heard... expensive,’ he added with a slight disapproving frown. ‘You’ll be introduced to Papcon next week, on Wednesday morning in Paris, after you’ve spoken with Philippe.’

He stood up and stretched out his hand in a slightly melodramatic

fashion.

‘Good luck John, don’t hesitate to contact me if there’s any problems. By the way I’d like you to make me a monthly report, no copies, just between us.’ Then curiously he winked.

That’s it then, Ennis thought to himself, as the fear of rejection was already slipping away and he reflected over what Hakkala had told him of his new role. In fact he had told him very little, he would have to do some serious digging for background information before he met Brodzski, it would look better if he was armed with the right answers to his questions and avoided any subjects Brodzski disapproved of.

Five days later Ennis met Philippe de Berne, at the headquarters of the famous Banque de Berne in Paris, on boulevard Haussman, not far from the Opera Garnier.

After a brief discussion with the aristocratic banker, he was introduced to Louis de Montferrand, who was responsible for the banks day-to-day relations with Brodzski’s firm.

De Montferrand explained to Ennis that he looked after the Papcon account and also a company they had formed jointly for the development of the project, Indopap S.A., in which Banque de Berne held half of the shares. They were also leaders of the embryonic banking pool, which would have the management of the loans necessary for the project financing.

He announced to Ennis that a lunch appointment had been fixed with Brodzski at Le Boeuf sur le Toit, nearby to Papcon’s offices.

In the taxi, de Montferrand filled him in on Brodzski’s background. He confirmed what Ennis had already checked out, he was a young sixty four years old, born in Algiers, the son of an army engineering officer, member of an old French Jewish family. His ancestors had immigrated to France from Middle Europe shortly after the French revolution.

Brodzski was the President and principal shareholder of Papcon, an engineering firm that he had created, specialised in the development of forest industries, mostly pulp and paper mills, for the third world countries. He had a most persuasive personality and promoted his



business by convincing investors to join him in the extraordinary opportunities that he alone had the exclusivity, through his privileged relations with presidents and ministers. He offered his investors vastly profitable contracts in the potentially rich and unexploited regions of the world, where raw materials were abundant and free to those who had the foresight and courage to take up the challenge.

Ennis, like many others had been, was almost mesmerised by Brodzski in that first meeting, as he enthused over the potential of Indonesia, responding to Ennis's own genuine earnestness. Ennis saw in his eyes the glow of a deep force and for a moment he suspected Brodzski held an almost fanatical belief in his own destiny, that he would seize at any price, but Ennis was too elated by his own enthusiasm to linger over the significance of that.

Brodzski, with an eye on Finntech's participation, had little difficulty in deciding Ennis would make a good member of Papcon's team; that he could work closely with himself and Christian Axelmann, his right hand man and financial director.

Ennis for his part felt an instant rapport with Axelmann, who struck him as sincere and open minded, a person uninterested by petty details, at ease and sure of his own success.

Papcon's offices were what Ennis had often aspired to, when compared with the spartan Scandinavian model that he had become familiar with. It was pure luxury, oriental carpets, mahogany and leather upholstered furniture, paintings and tapestries decorated the walls and corners. His own new spacious office overlooked the avenue facing the Champs Elysee gardens.

The Barito River was one of the huge broad muddy streams that drained the Island of Borneo, running from the high mountain range in the north and emptying into the Java Sea, just beneath the equator. The Indonesians called their part of Borneo Kalimantan, from the Javanese meaning River of Precious Stones. The Barito ended its journey to the sea in one of its five provinces, South Kalimantan.

It had not been easy to find a decent map of Borneo. However, Ennis finally tracked one down at the National Geographical Centre

on rue Boetie, off the Champs Elysee. The map was rudimentary, very rudimentary. He had scrutinised it very carefully for a good couple of hours on his desk. It was as if by peering at the green contours of the map he would discover Borneo's secrets. He wondered what it held for him. He had the strange premonition that his life was about to undergo a profound change.

During those first weeks at Papcon, he got to know Brodzski and his business and finances. He was relieved to learn that they had solid financial resources, for at least two or three years and their standing in the industry was good.

Ennis soon became aware that the Barito project, as it had been named, was to be the culminating point in Brodzski's life work and ambitions, it was to be the vehicle that would bring him the recognition he craved, felt was his due, and deserved. Ennis suspected that nothing would stop him from achieving his goal.

Almost nothing could be seen through the window of the Garuda DC9, just the greyness of the clouds that swept by and the rain that streaked across the glass in horizontal lines. It was the peak of the rainy season.

They were still at an altitude of a two or three hundred meters as the plane made its final approach to Bandjarmasin airport. At that instant Ennis was not at all convinced they would get down in one piece as the plane was violently buffeted by the wind.

Some minutes later the ageing DC9, was slammed with an unusual force onto the runway by down-shear. They felt their survival was nothing less than miraculous, though they hoped and supposed that Garuda pilots took that kind of weather in their stride.

The plane taxied to a jumble of low wooden and concrete buildings, splashing through the vast expanses of water that had accumulated on the runway and parking areas. Clouds of steam rose from the tarmac nearer the buildings, which were built on slightly higher ground and where the heat of the sun, which had made its appearance was quickly drying off the rain.

As they stepped out of the plane, they were hit by the heat and

humidity. It was just before midday local time, they had lost an hour travelling eastwards to Borneo from Jakarta, into another time zone.

They were both a head or so taller than the average Indonesian, with considerably paler complexions. In their Jakarta hotel there had been quite a large number of Europeans, but in Bandjarmasin airport, as they glanced around, they realised that they were probably the only specimens in the town.

Axelmann in his disparaging manner could not avoid remarking that it was not unlike the Parisian Metro in summer. They made their way around the puddles, through the milling crowd of disembarking passengers and ground staff, to the arrivals entrance and baggage claims area.

It was a gigantic free for all; the bags, which were being dumped through an opening in the wall, were set upon by a horde of porters, passengers and their friends.

Ennis looked up through the open window, the sky was already clearing, heavy grey clouds clung to the summits of the nearby hills and smaller white clouds drifted slowly through the treetops on the slopes like fog patches. A mysterious calm seemed to reign on the densely forested hills. On a red laterite road just beyond the perimeter of the airport, a couple of Toyota Landcruisers could be seen slowly bumping by. It was evident that beyond the momentary scramble in the airport, life in Kalimantan had not the same urgency as in Jakarta.

The passengers departing for Jakarta were already making their way out to the same aircraft, which would soon leave for the return trip. The link with Jakarta and the rest of the world would be gone; Ennis was filled with a strange feeling of isolation; he really was at one of those distant frontiers.

Borneo was an almost mythical island. Even at the end of the twentieth century, little information filtered in or out to the world at large. What happened in London or New York was irrelevant; to the local Dayak population those cities were on a distant planet.

Ennis suspected that if anything went wrong, then it could be fatal; a car accident and we'll probably die of gangrene, or God knows what else before they can get us back to civilisation, he thought to

himself grimly.

Glancing sideways at Axelmann, he saw that he also was a little pensive. 'What's his name again?' he asked looking over the heads of crowd.

Ennis did not reply, the crowd around the baggage had started to disperse, it was time to collect their own bags, which were already about to disappear in the hands of two slight but wiry looking porters, who shouted something which was incomprehensible in the general hubbub.

Ennis made them urgent signs to wait. He went outside to the parking area, where a collection of minibuses and four wheel drive vehicles stood waiting. Their drivers lingered nearby, several of them whom he supposed to be taxi drivers, made signs to him.

'Shit there's nobody here!' he mumbled half to himself and half to Axelmann, 'We could take a taxi to the hotel but I don't even know what it's called!'

'We could go to the Forestry Departments office?'

'Yeah.'

'Mr Ennis! Mr Ennis!' a voice called. He turned around, and saw a relatively tall, bucktoothed, wiry haired Indonesian. He was dressed in a tan coloured, government official's safari suit, with brass emblems on the lapels of the open shirt collar. He held out his hand limply.

'Selamat datang! Welcome to Bandjarmasin!'

They shook hands with the newcomer.

'I am Sucipto, from the Forestry Department. We have been informed by the Ministry of your arrival and have made arrangements for your trip,' he smiled.

They felt relieved; they were not stranded after all. He led them to a Nissan microbus, winding his way through a dense colourful crowd of travellers arriving at the small airport. They were Moslems, as were over ninety percent of all Indonesians, leaving on their first leg of a long pilgrimage to Mecca.

The pilgrims were accompanied by their friends and relatives for that important and personally unique event. On their return home,

their respective status, as members of the community would be elevated, the title Hadji being bestowed on them.

The terminal building was grossly undersized, as was the parking area. They made their way around the parked vehicles, Axelmann glancing in dismay at the scene, as if regretting his decision to explore Kalimantan. He had the creeping feeling, that it would have been better to have limited his reconnaissance to the swimming pool and gardens of the Borobudur Hotel in Jakarta and its opulent surroundings.

The seating arrangements of the Microbus were designed for local morphology. Their knees were tight against the backs of the front seats. Sucipto had seated himself next to the driver.

He turned towards them, his arm resting on the back of the bench seat, 'You will be staying in a hotel outside of town, about fifteen kilometres, it is the best!' he smiled proudly. 'It is also very practical because it is near our office. This afternoon and evening you may rest and tomorrow you shall meet my Director.'

They both nodded and smiled politely.

'We have only been briefly informed by Jakarta about your mission, so you will be able to tell us the details, what you need, how we can provide you with assistance.'

The microbus pulled into the driveway of the hotel. It looked colourful in the intense light, a single story building surrounded by a garden of luxuriant plants that separated the driveway from the main road. They announced themselves at the reception, filling in their registration forms as the driver unloaded their bags and carried them into the lobby.

'Everything is okay! So, I will say goodbye, tomorrow morning I will pick you up after breakfast, about nine o'clock.'

Sucipto shook hands with them and left.

A boy brought their luggage to the rooms, which surrounded a small courtyard. In the centre was a neat but densely planted garden and a series of stone footpaths that led to the rooms. Standing in the middle of the garden was a large ornate cage, in which a long tailed monkey shook the bars and screamed at the newcomers.

The rooms were simple, each with its own veranda overlooking the courtyard. The boy handed over the keys, explaining with signs how the air-conditioners worked and left. The two rooms were adjacent to each other. Ennis stepping out onto his veranda called to Axelmann.

‘Hey Chris, how’s your room?’

‘I’ve seen worse...but not very much!’

‘Did you hear the noise from the air-conditioner, it’ll be impossible to sleep with it...and probably without it.’

‘Let’s see if they have a bar in this bordel!’ Axelmann said doubting that they could have such luck.

There was no bar as such, but there was a fairly civilised looking coffee shop, although it did not look like it had too many customers. The air-conditioning was set to the maximum, to point of making them feel uncomfortably cold. They ordered beer and a juice, communicating with few words to one of the ever-smiling waiters. They then sat silently absorbing their new surroundings.

‘It’s only for a week,’ Ennis said trying to reassure Axelmann.

‘It’s a week too long,’ he replied sulkily. ‘In any case this is nothing more than play acting,’ he added.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Nothing, it doesn’t matter,’ said Axelmann lifting the juice to his lips, looking around him in a dejected manner.

‘Did you see those cockroaches in the crapper?’

‘It’s normal in these places.’

‘Maybe it’s normal, but it’s not normal that I have to be with them!’

It was four thirty in the afternoon and it looked as though the rest of the day would be long. There were no comforts in their rooms. The hotel stood alone on the side of a road that came from the airport in one direction, and in the other it looked as if it disappeared into the jungle covered hills.

Their only possibility was to visit Bandjarmasin. The front desk ordered a Nissan microbus for them. From what they had observed at the airport and on the road to the hotel, minibuses were the main

form of local public transport, a mixture of bus and taxi.

Bandjarmasin was the provincial capital, with a population of about two hundred thousand inhabitants, and it appeared as if they had all decided to be on the streets of the town at the same moment that afternoon.

The microbus wove between cars, trishaws, bicycles, carts, porters and every other kind of transport. The traffic gave the impression that it moved according to no distinct rules.

The road was riddled with potholes, full of thick black fetid water; it was strewn with broken fruit, coconut shells and an indefinable assortment of rotting debris. The air was filled with an incredible variety of pungent odours.

It was already twilight, darkness had fallen very quickly. Naked light bulbs harshly lit the rickety stalls and shops. The microbus pulled into a small square, where the buildings had a slightly more permanent appearance.

The pavements consisted of raised boardwalks, where vendors squatted on their haunches before their wicker panniers, laden with strange looking fruits and vegetables.

‘Town centre! Bak,’ the driver said. ‘I wait you here.’

They had already learnt that Bapak or simply Bak was a polite form of address; occasionally Tuan was employed for a higher-ranking person or foreigner. Ennis vaguely seemed to remember Tuan from Joseph Conrad’s novel *Lord Jim*.

The noise from the hawker’s loudspeakers advertising their pirated music cassettes and the general hubbub of the crowd was quite astonishing. The whole place seethed with life, unlike anything they had ever imagined, it was another universe, nothing that they had ever seen or heard could have prepared them for the cultural shock that awaited them that day in Bandjarmasin.

They walked along the boardwalk, gawking at the scene, returning remarks in impromptu exchanges of Pidgin English and laughing back at the friendly and curious Indonesians. It was a bewildering kaleidoscope of noise and colour. In the dark sky, lightning zigzagged and large drops of rain started to fall.

An hour later at the hotel, after a struggle with their bathroom showers, they met for dinner. They had no other choice but to dine in the coffee shop, ordering imported steaks from the menu without a too great difficulty in communicating. Bread was a little more difficult. Looking at the menu Ennis was pleased to recognise the Indonesian word, which by pointing he indicated to the waiter. Some minutes later, in addition to the steak and fried potatoes, to their surprise, they were served with a continental breakfast, complete with bread, marmalade and coffee. For a change, the waiters looked on poker faced.

‘They haven’t got a fuckin penny! How are they going to finance a billion dollar forest industry complex? Did you see that place, I mean it’s more underdeveloped than the Middle East!’ Axelmann suddenly cried in despair.

His family were German Jews, who had escaped the holocaust. Curiously, he had been born in Stuttgart, some time after the war. Ennis never learnt what the family was doing back in Germany at that time, but Axelmann had told him that they moved to France soon after his birth. Although his parents were German, they had discouraged the use of the language at home, which was perhaps why his German was no more than passable.

Axelmann had had a French upbringing, but there were strong undertones of his parents German and Jewish Central European cultural heritage. To his organised mind, the Levant, was his vision of underdevelopment, he did not even consider Israel as a very desirable place to live, for him it was too full of contradictions and above all, too oriental.

They had left Paris the previous week, following a series of preparatory meetings and discussions on how the project should be developed with Philippe de Berne. As minority shareholders in Papcon and equal partners in Indopap, their recommendations were to be taken seriously.

It had always been Brodzski’s style to hand out minority shareholdings in Papcon to potential investors in his projects, on preferential terms, as he liked to describe them, which was to say at



many times their real value. The carrot being a share in the future contracts, corresponding to the business sector of the investor. It was natural that the investor also had the privilege of participating in the project development costs!

The Banque de Berne at that time led a pool of banks, supplying French government guaranteed loans for Brodzski's principal contract at that moment, a complete industrial complex, constructed under Papcon's direction for the Government of Cambodia, in the suburbs of Phnom Penh. A splendid gift at the expense of the French taxpayer.

Construct a billion dollar forest industry complex in the swamps of Borneo! It was not the first time that financiers and engineers had joined forces to exploit the natural riches locked into distant jungles. In the capitals of Europe, a convincing man such as Brodzski, could still persuade financiers of fortunes to be won, and engineers of challenges to their skill and imagination, that they had only ever dreamed of.

The following morning Sucipto picked them up with the Landcruiser, and set off in the direction of the Forestry Departments office.

'There is a mill here!' Sucipto suddenly announced.

'A mill?' replied Ennis somewhat surprised.

'Yes, we can visit it if you like, it's not too far.'

'A paper mill!'

'Yes, we can go there first,' he continued, 'my Director, Rami Latif, he's visiting a logging camp in the forest, he will not be in his office before twelve o'clock.'

Sucipto took their agreement for granted, as they turned into the only stretch of dual carriageway in Kalimantan. He pointed over to the right hand side of the road, at a long low modern building surrounded by newly planted trees. A large sign with thick brass letters in relief announced;

## DEPARTEMEN KEHUTANAN

### KALIMANTAN SELATAN

‘Our office, Forestry Department,’ he said proudly.

He turned left at a roundabout, according to roughly painted signpost it was in the direction of Martarpura. After another ten kilometres, they turned again.

They approached what looked like a plantation of mature pine trees, planted in neat rows. A little further on was what appeared to be a group of derelict industrial buildings.

Sucipto parked the Landcruiser and they walked over to the abandoned plant. It was surrounded by a sagging wire fence. At the main entrance, a security guard, who recognised Sucipto, opened the gate and let them in.

They wandered aimlessly around, gaping at the rust covered tanks and destruction that had been wreaked by tropical vines and stranglers, entwining the steel and concrete structures.

Sucipto surprised them by announcing that a group of local Chinese promoters would be investing a large sum of money to renovate the plant and put it back into production.

A fat chance of that, thought Ennis, as he observed Axelmann struggling with a length of decaying steel pipe that had snagged his white trousers.

The plant was called Martarpura Paper Mill, a relic that had been constructed not long after World War II, in reparations by the Japanese.

The mill had been operated in that desolate backwater by the state, under the Ministry of Industry, slowly forgotten and neglected over the years by Jakarta, operating in an ever increasing spiral of losses caused by the high cost of raw materials and imported chemicals.

During the war, the Japanese had discovered the existence of large natural stands of a species of southern hemisphere pine trees, called *dacrydium* by botanists. *Dacrydium* was highly estimated by papermakers for its valuable long cellulose fibres, which constituted

the essential raw material for paper making in the Martarpura mill.

Finally, the mill had been closed down for lack of new investment and forgotten. It was not until the rising cost of imported paper and domestic demand that longsighted promoters such as Brodzski had been attracted to the industry, where they had sensed the coming needs and opportunities. The same logic had prompted local promoters into thinking of restarting the mill as a viable operation.

To those who knew Brodzski well, it was not too clear, where exactly the opportunity lay, certain unkindly said that it was in the willingness of people like Philippe de Berne to finance his ambitions.

The knowledge that non-commercial species of tropical wood could be transformed into great profits as pulpwood, for papermaking, was not a generally known fact. Wood was abundant in the tropical forests of Borneo, but only valuable hardwood species were worth exploiting for furniture and veneer, the remainder did not excite the imagination of the timber companies. Ton for ton, the price of pulpwood was comparable to that of oil on the world market. With the right kind of investment it was green gold!

Axelmann half-seriously joked to Ennis, that if Brodzski succeeded in his venture, he would become a latter day Raja Brooks in that doubtful paradise.

Brodzski's project appeared to have a good start in bringing together the partners they needed. The money necessary was available to carry out the technical and financial studies required to demonstrate the feasibility of the project. That was the key to open the way for the investors and industrialists needed to back the development.

Axelmann had calculated that in the initial phase, eight million dollars would be needed, for exploration of the forest, technical studies, marketing tests and the financial analysis necessary to confirm the viability of the project.

Brodzski had confided to Axelmann and Ennis, that they would share in the rewards, in return for the sacrifices and efforts that would be required of them over the following eighteen months, the time that he estimated would be necessary, to obtain the green light from all

parties, including the government of Indonesia.

The origin of the project went back to the visit of an official French delegation, which had been invited to Jakarta by the Indonesian government, for the promotion of the country's industrial development programme.

Philippe de Berne had been a member of that delegation. Even in those distant islands, the legend of his celebrated banking family's name had preceded him. He was more than a legend; he was richer than Rothschild, he was a de Berne.

Times had changed, though he was rich, very rich, it was not on the scale of his nineteenth century predecessors. The bank was small, even compared to the lesser known of the French banks, and was a dwarf compared to Credit Lyonnais and its contemporaries.

The Foreign Minister of Indonesia, at that time, who had received the delegation was, Idris Hendra. His long experience in diplomacy as Ambassador to Washington and London had made him an internationally known figure. He had descended from an old Javanese noble family. His participation in the struggle against the Dutch, and then the Japanese, had provided him with immaculate credentials, as one of the founders of modern independent Indonesia that followed centuries of colonisation.

During the visit of the delegation Philippe de Berne had gravitated towards Idris Hendra, they sympathised in spite of the apparent differences between them. One being a Moslem and the other a Jew, but in that country, such differences were of a philosophical and fatalistic nature, in their almost mystical universe the origins of a man were part of his destiny.

It was natural, that Hendra invited de Berne to invest in the development of his country's industrial future, where the potential could be described as fabulous for those who had the foresight. De Berne had been enchanted by the mysteries of Java, as had many others before him. He returned several times to visit his new friend and his newly discovered world; together they explored its vast possibilities for investment.

De Berne was a banker and a rich man, but he was not an industrialist, neither could his family's merchant bank take great risks. They were not philanthropists and had not acquired their fortune by imprudent investments.

He sounded out his close business friends and his advisers, who told him, that outside of the volatile and risk laden petroleum industry, Indonesia had not much more readily exploitable resources than their immense forests.

It was then he recalled to mind Antoine Brodzski, who had successfully negotiated the contract for a new forest industry complex that included a complete paper mill in Cambodia, in which the Banque de Berne was the leader of the banking pool, financing the project, underwritten by the French government. It was an excellent contract, not too big, about one hundred million dollars, very nice profitable business and above all with guaranteed payment.

He called Brodzski, in the hope of interesting him in Indonesia. For de Berne, Brodzski was by reputation, what could only be described as an industrial adventurer of the old style in Asia. He combined intelligence with carefully calculated risk, opening new opportunities for profits where conventional investors were afraid to venture.

Brodzski was flattered by the compliment; he was too good a businessman and opportunist to refuse a proposal by de Berne. Within days, he was on a plane to Jakarta to meet Sigit Budiman, the personal assistant of Idris Hendra.

Axelmann was Brodzski's financial director. His role in the Barito project was to put together the financial plan necessary for the feasibility study, liaising with bankers and financial institutions both in France and overseas.

The name of de Berne on a project, managed by Brodzski and his team, fresh from their success in Cambodia, would guaranty that there would be no shortage of potential partners.

Ennis represented Finntech's hopes and their investment in the development of the industrial complex. Brodzski flattered his powerful partner by accepting their proposal, appointing John Ennis,

Finntech's man, as the project development director. He would manage public relations and promotional activities, coordinating the human and business resources needed to get the project to the signature of contracts, logically followed by its construction and production start-up.

Ennis discovered a real understanding with Axelmann in the short time that had passed since they had met, they realised that they shared many ideas and ambitions in common and not the least was dimension of the opportunity that had opened before them. They soon recognised the fact that they wielded considerably more influence than they had initially imagined. There were two reasons, the project size, estimated to be in excess of one billion dollars, and the power of favour that could be bestowed on the candidates for partnership and future contracts.

Brodzski was sixty-four years old. They calculated that if he controlled his indulgence in alcohol and tobacco, not to mention his very active sex life; stimulated by several willing and demanding young women, and the ever-present stress he thrived on, he would have no difficulty in seeing the project into the construction phase, without undue concern over his health.

It could not have been said that neither Ennis nor Axelmann truly believed, deep down, in the certainty of the projects success at that precise point in time, it was too intangible. On the other hand, they did not disbelieve in the possibility of success - as promoters it was their task to sell the concept, find the partners and investors and transform Brodzski's hopes and desires into reality.

By an unspoken understanding, they each determined their respective roles. Brodzski imposed only one explicit objective success! It was certain that if they achieved their objective, they would be richly rewarded.

Vast sums of money would flow through Papcon, and Indopap the shell company that had been created as the vehicle for the project development.

There would be fees, commissions and payments of every form made to Indopap. When the future mill owners took over the project,

once all agreements had been concluded and the main construction contracts were ready to be placed, Indopap would be quietly put to sleep.

In all, Ennis calculated cynically, between the feasibility and the construction phases, there were five years work ahead for Indopap, and why not himself...if all went according to Brodzski's plan.

## Chapter 2 - BANDJARMASIN

They rode back silently to Bandjarmasin in the Toyota, where Sucipto had told them that the Provincial Director of the forestry department, Rami Latif, had invited them to lunch.

Their visit to the Martarpura paper mill had a depressing effect on them and especially on Axelmann. The assembly of decayed buildings seemed like abstract surrealism, in the chaos of the tropical vegetation, which appeared to be winning the struggle against industrial man's first efforts to establish a colony in that remote backwater.

Rami Latif liked to laugh, for an Indonesian laughing and smiling were part of his country's culture. Every smile had its meaning, and for the foreigner it was indispensable to correctly interpret each smile, if he was to avoid potentially embarrassing misunderstandings.

In Latif's case, they discovered his laughs also expressed a natural exuberance. He was a man who enjoyed life, he was an extrovert. His pleasure in showing his visitors the sights of Bandjarmasin was demonstrated by the extravagance of his gesticulations.

The restaurant was called the Blue Diamond. It was simple, but with the necessary luxury of air-conditioning, heavy condensation obscured its windows and the tables were covered with plastic tablecloths. It was the best in town and quite naturally it was Chinese.

In Indonesia, Chinese had not quite the same connotation as in Europe, it meant of course the ethnic Chinese population, but they were not recent immigrants, many had been there for countless

generations. However, they lived apart, retaining their separate identities. In total more than three million ethnic Chinese lived in the country.

Rami Latif ordered the speciality of the Blue Diamond, one-day-old chicks, crispy grilled and dipped into a mixture of salt and pepper, which they ate with their fingers. That was followed by a mass of boiled crabs and giant prawns, accompanied by fluffy boiled rice and washed down by with iced tea and Bintang beer.

Ennis talked about their plans and Rami Latif suggested that a closer look at the rivers and forest areas would be a good introduction to the region; he proposed that they commence by exploring the river the following morning.

The wide river that ran through Bandjarmasin, the Martarpura, was dark and deep, with a swift current that swirled and bounced the floating debris and vegetation on the waves. The river traffic was dense, craft of all types from the simplest pirogues that were buffeted in the wake of the fast river taxis, to river buses and cargo junks. They were all loaded with wares of almost every description, fruit, vegetables, wood and furniture, drums of petrol and bales of textiles.

The Martarpura twisted through Bandjarmasin, and then joined the Barito River, which emptied into the Java Sea. The Barito was one of the many huge rivers draining the Muller and Penambo mountain chains that straddled the equator. The mountains were covered by dense rainforests where the climate varied little throughout the seasons, with almost five to ten times the annual rainfall of that in Western Europe.

Borneo, over seven hundred and fifty thousand square kilometres in area, one-and-a-half times the size of France, was covered with vast primary forests, broadly classified, according to the specialists, into three types, dry and wet forests, and mangrove forests. The mangroves lay on the coast, submerged in brackish waters, a strange almost impenetrable forest separating land and sea.

The population density was very low, with most of the inhabitants living in the coastal towns and villages, or on the banks of the many rivers in the interior.



Villagers often travelled for many days from the interior in their small boats, to sell their wares and buy provisions in the coastal towns. The rivers were the lifelines of the region for the inhabitants and for the logging companies that exploited the rich primary forests of the interior.

Huge rafts, composed of hundreds of giant hardwood logs, the very pillars of the rainforest, bound together by rattan cords, navigated their way down the tributaries and rivers to the sea. In the estuary of the Barito, many kilometres wide, ships from Korea, Taiwan and Japan loaded and transported the logs to the plywood and sawmills in distant ports of the archipelago. They also illegally exported the logs to foreign destinations in Asia.

The rafts, almost at the end of their journey at Bandjarmasin, were completely waterlogged, often totally submerged, floating just below the surface of the water. The wiry Indonesian raftsmen, who spent most of their lives on the river, stood on the rafts watching the shore. It was as though they were performing a miracle, barely ankle deep on the submerged logs in mid-stream, gazing at the crowds and traffic in the town, where buses and trucks pumped black clouds of diesel fumes into the air as they laboured under loads that they were never designed to carry, along the banks of the river and over its bridges.

The visitors were driven to one of the many landing stages on the riverbank, where two motorboats were waiting to take them on their exploration trip. It resembled a chaotic bus station, where crowds of passengers disembarked, laden with their bags and bundles, from the river buses and ferries. The air was filled with the noise of the bustling crowd and from the boats motors churning the grey-green water, from which damp blue smoke rose and swirled above the waves.

They watched a Japanese traveller climb onto the quay from a boat that was fitted with two powerful outboard motors. He was probably the manager of a logging camp, who looked as though he was returning home on leave after a long stay in the jungle. His face was burnt almost black by the fierce tropical sun. He was equipped as

though he had been on a long expedition deep into the forest. A motor was lashed to the deck of the boat amongst drums of fuel, a standby in the event that one of the two outboards broke down far from civilisation. His baggage was enough for a whole village, he was unshaven and dirty. Only the apparent quality and style of his dirty clothes indicated that he was a foreigner.

They descended with Rami Latif and his adjutants onto the jetty, like visiting dignitaries, pretending to ignore the stares and embarrassed laughs of the colourful crowd - embarrassed for them - so big, so white and so clumsy.

‘Christ it stinks!’ muttered Axelmann.

He looked nervously at the boats bobbing in the wash against the rotting timbers of the jetty, which Latif had pointed to with his thumb. Axelmann together with Ennis clambered into the first boat followed by Rami Latif, whilst Sucipto and the representative of the local port authority boarded the second.

Sucipto’s boat took the lead, making a wide turn, churning up a deep wake on the river, heading with a burst of noise from the motor in the direction of the new bridge and then downstream towards the Barito.

The boat accelerated rapidly, it sat low in the water, which increased the sensation of speed, they seemed to hurtle through the dense river traffic. Weaving around pirogues that were almost swamped, slipping around half submerged logs and overtaking the huge rafts, which were up to one hundred metres long slowly making their way down the last twenty kilometres to the coast.

The noise of the wind whistled in their ears, the slapping and buffeting of the water and the roar of the motor made conversation almost impossible. The river was lined with wooden houses on piles, linked together with fragile boardwalks. There were houseboats of every shape and size. Whenever they passed closed the shore, they were greeted by astonished smiles and waving hands.

Further down the river, they were met by the incredible sight of sailing ships, real sailing ships with full riggings of every size and form, their crews looking like modern day versions of Dayak pirates.

It was as though they had entered another age, the scene was straight from the pages of William Faulkner or Somerset Maugham. They passed wooden junks laden with sawn timber as they entered the Barito. Anchored in the stream, were ocean going ships from Korea and Taiwan taking on cargoes of wood. There were tankers from the state oil company Pertamina, bringing in oil and gasoline, coastal freighters with cargoes of rice and flour for the province.

They were at first astonished and then amazed by the sights of the centuries mixed together against a backcloth of tall coconut palms. The aluminium-covered domes of mosques reflected the sunlight above the wood tiled roofs of the riverside houses suspended precariously on their pilings. There were the slipways of the traditional boat builders, who with simple tools carved their hulls from the huge hardwood trunks, which had been rafted from the nearby forests, in the tradition of their ancestors.

They turned upstream on the Barito, where the wooden houses that lined the riverbanks slowly gave way to rice paddy and coconut plantations. These were then succeeded by dense patches of river palms that grew on the waters edge and thick undergrowth overshadowed by tall trees.

There was little movement, except for the water birds that rose as the outboards approached, or an occasional pirogue that advanced slowly hugging the riverbank. The scenery soon became monotonous, apart from a family of monkeys that watched them suspiciously, before returning to their foraging. The boat had slowed down; there was certain stillness, only the burbling noise of the motor in the water.

‘How far is it to the next town?’ Axelmann asked Rami Latif, who looked a little surprised at the question.

‘What town?’

‘I don’t know! The next one?’

‘Mr Axelmann! In that direction,’ he said pointing north, ‘the next village is probably Bandar Seri Bagawan!’

Axelmann looked blank.

‘You know where that is?’

He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

‘Its in Brunei, more than one thousand three hundred kilometres to the north, in a straight line, more than double that if you’re crazy enough to go by land. There are a couple of villages, Buntok and Muaratewe before the mountains, then jungle and nothing else.’

‘Nothing else?’

‘No nothing, except maybe some orang-utans,’ he said throwing back his head and laughing.

‘Do you want to see anything else?’ he asked questioningly

‘No, I don’t think there is any more we can see today,’ said Ennis.

They returned to the hotel. In the cool and quiet of coffee shop, which they had began to appreciate, over drinks of beer and juice, they questioned Latif and Sucipto on the nature of the forest and the existing logging operations.

These were the local experts; they had been with the department since leaving university, where they had graduated in forestry. They should know everything, backed up by their team of specialists.

Unfortunately, nothing was further from the truth. Their knowledge of Bandjarmasin, local government and business was excellent; after all they lived and worked in the region. Their theoretical knowledge was considerable, but simple questions, on the species of such and such a tree, or for example, the habitat where certain species could be found, caused long and confused discussion.

They slowly became aware, that in reality, Rami Latif and his team were desk experts. To them the forest was an area to be avoided if possible, left to the villagers and to the loggers; the forest was a hostile and even dangerous place.

That evening, left to their own means they went over their plans for the following day, after caring for their sunburn. They had been surprised by the intensity of the sun and had been fairly badly burned on their head and arms. Ennis soothed his with a lotion that he had had the foresight to have brought with him, the burns were compounded by an extraordinary number insect bites.

‘Listen, maybe we should call it a day and return to Jakarta?’ Axelmann said, hoping Ennis would agree.

‘Maybe we’re not really up to this, a couple of city types like us, but at least were seeing what conditions here are really like.’

‘Good! We’ve seen what it’s like let’s book our flight back.’

‘No, hang on a moment, the feasibility study is going to cover forestry resources. But for our own knowledge we should look a bit closer whilst we’re here.’

‘I’ve had enough!’

‘Listen another couple of days, we won’t regret it, and I know it’s tough but it’s not that bad, let’s order a decent steak and have a few beers then we’ll feel better.’

They discussed using a light aircraft or a helicopter to get a better look from the air. Sucipto had said he would check out the possibility of contacting Elf, the French petroleum company, who were exploring for oil on the west coast near Tanjung, he seemed to remember that they had a couple of Puma helicopters.

After a restless night with little sleep, troubled by their sunburn and the stifling heat, they met early for breakfast. At eight Sucipto arrived, he walked into the dining room looking very pleased with himself. He had been in contact with Elf, and had learnt that at midday the regional manager would arrive at Bandjarmasin airport. He was due to pick up a representative of Pertamina arriving on a visit from Jakarta.

They drove out to the airport at eleven and were in luck. Jean-Jacques Jaulmes was delighted to meet somebody from Paris; he quickly agreed to fly them up to one of their base camps where they were conducting seismic exploration.

They would over fly the forest, which would give them a good idea of the terrain. Elf’s base was not far from a Korean logging operation, to which Sucipto could organise a visit.

It was cramped and noisy in the helicopter, but the camp was only two hundred kilometres to the north, as the crow flies about one hour’s flying time.

There was an excellent view as they flew at a height of about three thousand feet. They saw the Barito, a great stream that sparkled in the

sunshine, which flowed southwards from the horizon, to the east and west was vast carpet of green.

On the banks of the river could be seen an occasional cluster of wooden houses with small boats moored in the stream. They turned east and the river fell behind them, there was nothing more but the limitless forest and the hills that rose ahead of them in the distance.

Ennis could not help thinking, that if they came down in the forest, they would never be found. They would plunge through the canopy of the huge trees that rose almost sixty or seventy meters above the floor of the forest, and disappear into the twilight of the dense vegetation with its steaming heat, amongst the strange animals and insects that lived there.

After almost one hour's flight, Ennis, realised that only field seasoned foresters could undertake a survey objectively. Rami Latif and his staff could only provide logistical support. They would require hardened specialists. They had seen nothing but endless forests, no roads, no towns, just a few clusters of huts on the banks of the streams and rivers, in other words a real and certainly hostile wilderness.

They then saw a clearing, which the helicopter circled and then landed. Nearby was Elf's base camp. There were a few timber buildings, like army barracks, with a motley assortment of machines and vehicles parked nearby.

At least they would see what it was like on the ground and Axelmann, marvelling at the unlimited forest, finally admitted that a visit to the logging operation would be a useful experience. They were driven to the camp in a four-wheel drive Toyota, over a slippery undulating track, about ten kilometres distance from the Elf base.

Kim Chun Lee, the camp manager, welcomed them as his guests for the night. It was almost six thirty and darkness was falling as they were shown to their rooms in the camps guesthouse, which were of the greatest simplicity. The camp was a compound formed by three timber dormitories and a fourth barrack like building, the administrative centre.

They showered in Indonesian fashion, using a large plastic ladle,

which they filled from a tub, poured and splashing themselves with the water, it was at air temperature, but it was wonderfully refreshing after the heat and transpiration of the day.

They ate a simple dinner in the guesthouse dinning room, where Kim joined them. His English conversation was rudimentary, but he made up for it with a steady supply of cold beer. Their meal was then followed by a friendly and impromptu table tennis tournament.

Kim told them he had organised a visit to a logging area for the next day and proposed a sortie into the jungle, where they could see dacyrdium stands that were suitable for pulpwood, which Sucipto had said existed in the area. Axelmann was not at all enthusiastic at the prospect, but appeared to have accepted that there was no turning back for the moment and put on a brave face.

The night was hot; there was no air-conditioning in the guesthouse. Fortunately for them most of the mosquitoes were kept at bay by the netting over the windows and the double doors, the few mosquitoes that did get through reeked havoc on the soft white bodies of the two Europeans.

Throughout the night, they were awakened by the throb of the camps generator, and the clicking and whirring noises of large insects that were attracted by the camp lights that burnt continuously. At irregular intervals, the larger insects collided with thudding whirs and the cracking noise of their hard wings against the timber slats of the room's walls. With the stifling heat, noise, insect bites and sunburn, sleep was almost impossible.

The next morning they took a Toyota down the logging trail, to a low lying area of wet forest, which appeared to be a staging post for the huge trunks of the huge hardwoods that had been felled at some distance in the interior of the forest.

In the clearing there was a narrow gauge railway track, supported on logs that lay on the swampy ground. A small train carried the heavy logs from the interior of the forest to the staging post.

Kim explained to them that from that point, the wood was transported by truck, to a river branch some ten kilometres further south, where the log rafts were assembled and then floated two

hundred kilometres to Bandjarmasin, a journey of ten days.

The railway tracks were not exactly straight, or even flat. The tracks zigzagged into the distance, undulating as the train advanced, giving it the appearance of a living creature. A ramshackle wood fired steam locomotive, almost like a hobby train, pulled the convoy of logs, attached by heavy chains onto bogies, over the rails.

The Dayak foresters, that Kim had arranged to guide them through the jungle, were waiting at the railhead; the four small dark men were dressed in an attire that seemed out of place for the heat and humidity of the forest.

‘Look at the way they’re dressed!’ Axelmann exclaimed.

‘It must be the latest fashion here to wear French berets,’ said Ennis amused.

‘The plus-fours are great too,’ Axelmann sniggered.

The guides wore long socks with their trousers tied by string just below the knees, their long sleeved shirts were buttoned up to the collar and the berets pulled well down over their heads, around their necks they wore brightly coloured scarves.

‘Have a good day! See you later, about six o’clock,’ Kim said as they clambered onto a flat wagon coupled just behind the locomotive.

‘It’s about six kilometres to the logging area.’

The train rattled off at a speed of about eight kilometres an hour, swaying as the sleepers gave under its weight, over the waterlogged path that had been cut through the forest.

They observed in a detached manner how the new vegetation pushed its way upwards like a green wall on the jungle on both sides of the track. A maze of climbers seemed to hang like a curtain on the broken branches of the trees. The sun was hot and already high. The guides laughed pointing to the forest and an occasional bird rose in flight as the convoy approached.

After about forty-five minutes, the train reached the end of the line and they gingerly stepped down onto the soft waterlogged ground.

Huge logs, of up to one-and-a-half metres in diameter and fifteen meters long, lay ready to be loaded by the slightly built workers. Logs weighing many tons were manipulated almost entirely by muscle



power, with the aid of chains and simple hand operated winches.

The guides after exchanging a few words with their friends collected their canvas rucksacks and pointed to a barely discernible pathway leading to a gap in the undergrowth making signs to the Europeans to follow. They followed with more than a little trepidation.

Once in the cover of the forest the fierce humidity hit them like a heavy punch, leaving them gasping for breath. The temperature in the twilight under the dense canopy, which towered almost sixty metres above them, was like an oven. The insects hovered in dense swarms, alighting on their arms and faces, even entering their mouths and nostrils.

The guides advanced at a brisk pace, as the pair struggled to keep up with them over the treacherous floor of the forest. One moment a foot was balanced on a root or a dead branch and the next they were knee deep in the stagnant black water that filled the irregularities of the ground. The mass of stranglers and creepers that hung from the trees in profusion frustrated their progress.

This is not like fuckin Tarzan, Ennis thought to himself, seizing a rotten vine, which immediately broke in his hand plunging him forward once again knee deep in the unknown murky pools of thick water. The living vines were covered with razor sharp thorns, more than an inch long that tore the skin from their fingers.

It was almost impossible to breath. They had been in the forest for about an hour and the guides were no longer visible, hidden by the vegetation. They thrust forward desperately following the noise ahead of them, as their lungs pumped for air and their hands cast about for support as the long fingers of panic groped at them.

They had quickly realised that it was to be no ordinary outing. The clothes that the guides wore protected them against the thorns and insects. An hour on the tennis court, or a couple of lengths of the hotel pool, had not prepared them physically for an endurance test of that intensity.

After two hours of extenuating effort, they hauled themselves onto a bamboo platform, about four metres by four and one metre off the

ground, erected in a small clearing. The guides indicated to them that they could rest and take refreshments.

They looked at each other and were astonished at the transformation, in just a couple of hours in the jungle, the two well dressed tourists, in their Hugo Boss slacks and Lacoste polo shirts, had been transformed into the bedraggled exhausted wrecks of a Hollywood 'Lost in the Jungle' style B movie. Their shoes were waterlogged, their slacks sagged, saturated with slimy water from the floor of the rainforest, their shirts and arms were streaked with transpiration and dirt, their hair tousled and their glistening faces haggard with the strain.

'I can't go on!' Axelmann moaned desperately, as if to confirm Ennis' mental impression.

He painfully stood up on the bamboo platform, unfolding himself slowly, as if to emphasise his condition, he moved one of his feet and dropped! Like a hundred weight sack of rice, through the loosely bound poles, stopping brutally, suspended by his crotch across a stout bamboo truss.

There was a moment of suspense, and only when they saw he was more shaken than hurt, the tenseness of the atmosphere was broken, the guides together with Ennis broke out into screams of convulsive laughter.

They drank the warm colas that the guides produced from their rucksacks, fighting off the hoards of insects that were drawn by the transpiring bodies and the smell of the sweetened drinks.

The guides explained, in pidgin English, that they had made about two kilometres, which was one kilometre an hour, and they had about the same distance to go.

The two of them sat silently calculating, two more hours, if the guides were right, with the same distance to go back, they had at least six more hours march. They looked numbly at their watches, it would be seven in the evening and dark when they returned, if, they could maintain the same pace. They did not want to loose face in front of the guides and made signs to continue, in the desperate hope that maybe...the terrain would become a little less difficult.

After another hour, they questioned one of the Dayaks on how much progress they had made, about two kilometres from the starting point where they had entered the forest, was the reply. They realised it was impossible and halted, calling the other guides and explaining that they wished to return. The guides were not happy, they had been told to bring the Belandas to the dacrydium grove and they were afraid of a reproach from Kim.

After an animated and incomprehensible discussion between the guides, one of them agreed to return, whilst the others pressed on into the forest for a reason that they could not understand. Almost three hours later, they both flopped onto the platform of the one of the flat wagons, physically and mentally exhausted by their experience.

They sat in silence; Ennis inspecting the insect bites on his arms, which were already swelling, the filth of his Lacoste polo and cream trousers. His lightweight tropical shoes had proved to be no match for the sharp spikes that reached up from the floor of the jungle, he felt lucky that they had not completely penetrated the soles.

Axelmann had been more fortunate; the dense mat of hair on his arms had prevented the major part of the mosquitoes from getting to his skin. He was exhausted, being a little overweight compared to his friend and by his profession less prepared for rough and ready conditions. Ennis, an engineer, was a little more accustomed to the occasional surprises and difficulties that arrive from time to time to those engaged in construction projects in strange lands.

The train waited for another couple of hours until the other two guides appeared smiling from the forest, carrying on their shoulders freshly sawn logs. They were about fifteen centimetres diameter and one metre long. DACRYDIUM!

That evening, as they sat over a beer, after another dinner of boiled rice and fried chicken, they reflected soberly over their experience.

‘I wonder if it’s really possible to know what’s in that jungle?’ Axelmann thought aloud.

‘The local people such as the guides do, that’s for sure, but people like Rami Latif never go into the forest like us today,’ Ennis replied.

‘I’ll bet that even Kim here hasn’t been much further than us, for one thing it’s almost physically impossible.’

‘Yeah, that’s probably why they all live on the river banks that we saw from the helicopter.’

‘The only people who really know the interior are the forest people, the Dayaks.’

‘What about the specialists who do forestry surveys, like ORSFE in Paris, they must go in there?’ asked Axelmann.

‘That’s right, they do, but they depend on local guides to help them, it’s not possible otherwise.’

‘In any case they’re a bunch of weirdoes spending months in the forest like they do,’ Axelmann laughed grimly.

‘And you have to believe what they tell you in their reports’

‘Of course, you can’t imagine the bloody board of directors of the Banque de Berne going into the jungle to verify the details for themselves, they’d end up worse than us!’

‘Fucked!’ said Ennis.

‘Yeah.’

‘Here comes Kim.’

He arrived in the dinning room of the guesthouse wearing a broad grin on his face, as if to say I tried to tell you.

‘Did you enjoy your experience?’ he said with a knowing laugh.

They made a brave effort at trying to laugh it off, but in spite of their clean cloths, their swollen faces and arms eloquently told all.

‘Tell me Mr Kim,’ said Ennis, ‘do you go into the jungle yourself?’

‘Not if I can help it,’ he paused, looking at the white plastic fan that rotated lopsidedly on the ceiling. ‘I’ve been here for two years in all and I’ve never been further than the rail head more than twice, just to visit the felling areas.’

‘Is it the same as where we were today?’ asked Axelmann.

‘No, not exactly, they are work areas where the guides have identified the species and the trees to be felled. Roughly speaking, they select one, two, or maybe three trees per hectare. The bulldozers then go in cutting a path to the selected trees, which are felled by

chain saws, the tops and branches are lopped off and then they are hauled out to the rail loading point.'

'Can we see that before we leave?' asked Ennis.

'You've got to be bloody well joking!' exploded Axelmann in French.

Kim did not understand the words, but he clearly got gist of Axelmann's exclamation and laughed.

'Don't worry Mr Axelmann, before you leave you can see some logging, you can go to one of the dry areas by jeep, you don't even have to get out of the Landcruiser if you don't want to, it'll only take about an hour.'

'Shit!' exclaimed Axelmann in resignation.

'Relax,' said Ennis and then looking at Kim replied, 'Yes, we would like that if it's no trouble.'

That night, the mosquito and insect bites that they had counted by hundreds reeked havoc. To make matters worse, their bowels started to churn as an attack of diarrhoea set in. It was impossible to sleep with the noise of the camp generator that thudded endlessly through the night. They were up, tired, at six and took their breakfast of rice porridge and Nescafe in a glass. They then left for the dry logging area at six thirty, just as the sun rose.

They passed through the recently logged over areas. Secondary forest had already sprung up where the sunlight fell freely in the clearings. The light encouraged the growth of dense creeping vegetation and species that the botanists called pioneers. In maybe fifty years, or more, if left alone the forest would recover from its wounds, slowly returning to its natural state of permanent equilibrium, climatic climax!

Already, huge logging trucks laboured under their loads, over the slippery tracks cut into the jungle. The jeep slipped crabwise around the monsters, which gave way to neither man nor machine as they thundered to the assembly point on the banks of the river.

The visitors arrived in a preparation area, amongst an assembly of very temporary wooden buildings and huts, surrounded by machines and equipment parked in disorder, under repair and maintenance.

Kim jumped out of the jeep leaving his place to a foreman, who guided the driver towards a recently cut swath in the jungle. The jeep bumped over the debris of vegetation and after ten minutes or so they stopped, the foreman made a sign to them to step down.

They then proceeded by foot, to a point where the loggers were preparing the felling of a giant hardwood, supported by broad buttresses at its base. It rose from the jungle floor, an enormous pillar, as straight as a marble column, supporting the roof of the forest far above them.

Two small dark men manoeuvred an enormous chain saw, which they were starting with a pull-cord, like on an outboard motor. They pulled briskly on the cord several times, until the saw started with a harsh reverberant metallic hammering that echoed through the forest, and a cloud of blue smoke rose through the flickering half light.

They cut a large vee notch into one of the buttresses, through to the trunk of the tree. They then proceeded to the opposite side and cut a larger vee into the trunk at a lower level, then returning to the original cut, they started to saw horizontally into the trunk.

Their muscles strained standing out like hard cords, the transpiration from their faces soaked the scarves of cloth wound around their heads, protecting them from the projections of bark and wood chips thrown out from the saw, as it bit into the living matter. When they had cut within a foot or so of the point of the vee, which had been cut from the opposite side, they stepped back and cut the motor of the chain saw, and watched...and waited....

Nothing happened! Then almost imperceptibly, a trembling movement was detected in the higher branches that reached into the upper canopy. The movement accelerated, slowly at first, with a creaking noise that developed into a painful ear breaking screech and a final thunderous crescendo as the tree, sixty meter high, maybe one and a half centuries old, crashed towards the floor of the forest.

What was even more terrifying for them was that the trees upper branches, which were totally meshed into the canopy of the surrounding forest, tore down the whole canopy for dozens of metres around, ripping down the smaller neighbouring trees and all living

matter within a radius of thirty metres or more, in a shower of leaves, twigs and branches.

It was as if the sky had fallen down, it was difficult for them to hold their ground, not ceding to their instinctive impulse to panic. The earth shook as the tree ended its almost never-ending fall and then silence. The loggers looked at them and smiled in professional pride. The silence did not last long, a giant yellow bulldozer with Kawasaki marked in large black letters on its radiator ploughed with a monstrous roar into the carnage, to disentangle the tree by brute force from all of its living appendages. The noise was terrifying the giant machine tore into the vegetation; its tracks and arms clanking like the hammers of hell. The driver high in his seat, he was totally oblivious to the two frightened men or anything else in his path.

‘Let’s get the fuck out of here!’ screamed Axelmann turning to escape. ‘I’ve had enough of this shit to last me a life time!’

He turned looking desperately for the jeep. Ennis followed him, this time without arguing, enough was enough. Jakarta seemed like a distant paradise, never again would they criticise any momentary shortcomings in the services of the Borobudur Hotel, which at that moment was transformed in their minds into a haven of comfort and tranquillity.

### Chapter 3 - BACK IN PARADISE

Night was falling as a dilapidated Toyota taxis turned into the floodlights of the luxuriant flower skirted drive of the Borobudur hotel, large winged insects flickered in the headlights of the taxi.

At the brilliantly lit main door, the smart evening crowd waiting for their chauffeur driven cars looked on with curious amusement as Axelmann, cursing the uncomprehending driver, fought with the battered door of the taxi which could no longer be opened from the inside.

The tall turbaned Indian doorman, in his resplendent scarlet

uniform, stepped forward and opened the door disdainfully as Axelmann and Ennis contorted themselves, struggling to get out of the small taxi. Leaving their baggage to the porters, they took the escalator up to the hotel reception on first floor. In their dirty sweat stained cloths, unshaven and sunburnt, they surveyed the lobby as they check-in.

‘Thank Christ for that!’ Axelmann declared with bewildered relief, and then looking around exclaimed, ‘What have they bloody well done with our bags now?’

At that moment, a short Frenchman, elegantly dressed in a white polo shirt and white slacks, stood up and stepped forward. From his seat in a lobby armchair he had been observing them for some moments.

‘You look like you have been travelling!’ he said with a playful smile and holding out his hand.

It was Paul Branet, a life long friend of Brodzski, who had spent the best part of forty years in South East Asia. He had commenced in French Indo-China, until the war forced him out together with the other so called planters, after the defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu. They had realised that it was the end of an era. Branet as many others had headed down to Malaya and Indonesia, to rebuild their lives and to seek fortune under the then promising Soekarno regime, in the early years of the sixties.

‘Well we’ve just returned from Kalimantan,’ replied Ennis. ‘A real hell of a place, we’re glad to be back to civilisation, right now were looking forward to a real shower and a good cold beer.’

‘Listen, I know you would like to relax now,’ said Branet, he paused and then added with a serious air, ‘but I think we should get together to talk about your project. Tell me, are you free at lunch time tomorrow?’

Ennis half nodded.

‘Okay, well let’s meet here in the lobby at about twelve.’

‘Fine.’

Branet bid them good evening and took off in the manner of short Frenchmen of his class, his head held high, strutting like a bantam



cock.

‘What does he want?’ asked Axelmann.

‘No idea, I just want to have a real shower and get to the bar,’ replied Ennis.

The Borobudur was the watering hole for the French in Jakarta, a luxury hotel and was possibly amongst the finest in Asia, named after the monumental twelfth century Hindu temple of Borobudur, on the south of the island of Java, near the ancient city of Jogjakarta.

Ennis surveyed the exotic gardens from his seventeenth floor room, the floodlight tennis courts, the pale blue shimmer of the brightly light Olympic sized swimming pool, and the soft lights of the Indonesian Garden restaurant. They were all surrounded by several acres of greenery, umbrella palms, huge tropical trees with epiphytes and other plants hanging in the dark folds of their limbs. The branches swayed in a brisk evening breeze, the lighting throwing long shadows that wavered on the well-trimmed lawns of thick grass.

Ten minutes later as Ennis emerged from the shower, wrapping himself in the hotel bathrobe, the telephone rang, he was surprised that anybody knew they were back, he picked up the receiver.

‘Hello! Oh, Sigit, nice to hear from you, how are you?’

Sigit Budiman was the personal assistant of the Vice President. He represented Idris Hendra’s personal interests in the pulp mill project.

‘Did you have a good trip?’

Sigit could not have remembered when he himself had last visited Kalimantan or any of the other distant and underdeveloped provinces of his vast country. In fact he could no longer remember what anything was like outside capital or outside of the heady entourage of the Vice President, and his largely ceremonial functions.

‘Listen John, something important has come up. Tomorrow is Sunday, I’ve already an engagement, but we could meet early on Monday morning, I’ll be in the hotel sauna at six thirty, you know at the fitness centre, could you meet me there with Axelmann?’

‘Sure, no problem Sigit, fine, see you Monday morning, bye.’

Shit! Thought Ennis, who detested early morning starts, but if Sigit said it was important then it could not be avoided.

An hour later seated at the Pendopo bar, Ennis shivered, under a stream of cold air, almost freezing he thought. It was unbelievable how low they could set the air-conditioning. His face prickled under the sunburn, he looked like a grilled tomato. He felt good, in clean freshly pressed clothes and thought to himself lifting the cold beer to his lips, this is more like my style.

He turned and saw Axelmann stride in, he was wearing a white silk shirt, the top buttons opened showing a hirsute chest and a gold medallion suspended on a thick gold chain. It appeared out of character, but he was inclined towards a rather flashy style when out of his business uniform. He took the stool next to Ennis and ordered an orange juice, he only rarely drank alcohol.

The two of them could have been almost mistaken for brothers. They were only separated by about five years in age, both were of a similar build, perhaps Axelmann weighed a few kilos more, and whilst Axelmann was fair haired, Ennis was prematurely grey almost white, it gave him surprisingly younger appearance, especially when set off against his sunburned skin.

Over a light dinner in the coffee shop, they decided that Axelmann would visit the Commercial Section at the French Embassy on the Monday morning to check out Branet's background in Jakarta, whilst Ennis visited Bogor, taking advantage of the early start they would get after the meeting with Budiman. Ennis would take up the invitation of Wolfgang Kubler, to visit the Forestry Centre at Bogor with the French forestry specialist Henri Marcillac, then calling on Dr Philippe Touzan, one of the resident foreign specialists at the Research Centre for Tropical Forests.

In the meantime they would make the best of Saturday night in Jakarta, where the nightlife if not entirely sophisticated was at least original. There were the Tanamor and the Hotman, where certain Europeans expatriates and oilmen on the loose gathered to drink and mix with the less virtuous local girls. Whatever the style it would be a considerable change for the better from Bandjarmasin.

The next day Branet appeared promptly at midday in the hotel lobby

and invited them directly to the Entre Deux Mers, the hotel's French restaurant, where after their tribulations in Kalimantan he proposed that they eat something civilised, though the only resemblance with French cuisine lay in the language of its menu. They agreed and proceeded to the first floor where the restaurant had a splendid view overlooking the hotel gardens.

They all ordered fresh tropical fruit juice as an aperitif, avoiding too much alcohol so as not to spoil the rest of the day, and then chose their meal from the menu à la carte.

'So my friends, here's to your continued good health and success!' he said with a mischievous chuckle, lifting his glass, alluding to the possible sequels that could result from their visit to Kalimantan and their encounter with mosquitoes and the rainforest.

'I wanted to meet you to discuss your project,' Branet announced, he paused, hesitating, lifting his hand into the air, as if he were anticipating their objections.

'Antoine Brodzski and I are old friends...so old I would prefer to forget it,' he smiled. 'I think it is wise, if you will permit me, to provide you with some background information on Indonesia, to be more precise, on its forestry industry.'

Branet wore a serious expression, as if he were about to divulge some vital information. They both listened politely and patiently, but they did not expect a surprise. It was not unusual of expatriate middlemen of the ilk of Branet to boost their own personal standing by giving warnings, then proposing their services and knowledge to guide the ignorant unsuspecting newcomers through the political swamps, which they were warned were infested crocodiles and traps.

'There are two major money earners in the country, oil and forestry!'

Surprise, surprise, thought Ennis. Even the hotel parking attendant knew that.

'Oil and gas revenues go directly into the state coffers and to those at the top, via Pertamina, that's not new to you I imagine!' said Branet with a condescending smile.

'Forestry is another *panier de crabes*. The reasons are quite

simple, oil is pumped from the ground from a few wells in a concentrated number of locations, directly into the tankers owned by the state petroleum monopoly.'

He paused for effect looking into the faces of his guests, detecting signs of awakening curiosity.

'On the other hand the forest covers practically seventy percent of the territory. The trees are cut by a multitude of companies operating in a vast number of timber concessions across the country. Those concessions are attributed to diverse groups, such as the military, political and powerful business interests. Logging is subcontracted to private companies, in the majority of cases they're fronts to hide the identities of the real owners and their interests.

The revenues are channelled through an elaborate network of domestic and offshore accounts for redistribution, as you know, there are no foreign exchange controls in the country, so money can move in and out without any difficulties.'

Axelmann nodded and inquired with polite interest, 'How does this affect us?'

'It's clear that anybody entering the industry should know and respect the unwritten rules, if not, they will soon be in very serious trouble!'

'What do you recommend?' asked Ennis.

'A local partner is the best solution, somebody who is already part of the system,' he hesitated, and then continued lowering his voice. 'Remember, Sigit Budiman, and who he represents is just one part of the system, you cannot rely on him to cover all of the parties needed to successfully conclude your business...there are many more and you ignore them at your peril!'

'How does this system function?' asked Axelmann.

'The Timber Producers & Converters Association and the military, they are the two visible organisations. The military are a law unto themselves; they control quite legitimately a large number of concessions. The Association is different, it's a kind of Mafia and anybody can make a deal with one of its clans, at a price.'

The both nodded silently. Branet had interested them, giving them

considerable information for reflection.

‘The message that I’m trying to convey is, be very, very careful, if you want your project to succeed. Its no game, it’s not a western business structure with nice laws to ensure fair play. The concession holders and loggers will protect their vested interests from unwelcome newcomers and they will use all means at their disposal to fight off uncooperative outsiders...and believe me, all means!

Branet made a sign to the Maitre d’hôtel for the bill. He thanked them for having accepted his invitation and excused himself, leaving them both perplexed by his explanations. Was it a warning or was he simple trying to insinuate himself into their business, posing as the experienced old hand that they had at first suspected?

A bell rang in the distance, it was far off, the sound increased and it seemed to get nearer. Ennis opened his eyes slowly from a deep sleep, the kind of hypnotic sleep that the sultry tropical night induces, he reached for the telephone, it was his wake up call.

He liked to sleep with the air-conditioning switched off. The combination of the fatigue from the previous week, the beer at the Tanamor, as well as the cocoon-like feeling brought about by the temperature of the room, had totally knocked him out.

He looked at his watch in the semi-darkness and saw that it was six. He struggled out of his bed and slipped on a sweatshirt and swimming shorts, leaving the laces of his trainers untied and felt his way to the lift.

The sun was rising and the water of the pool was still like glass. He dropped his towel onto one of the chairs, then his sweatshirt shirt, kicked off his trainers and lazily dived into the water sending wavelets slapping against the overflow grates. A couple of lengths to wake himself up before Budiman arrived. The water was at 28 degrees, like a warm bath.

Monday morning was great in the pool, it was empty. At weekends even at that early hour there were already swimmers, later it would have been filled with hotel guests, expatriates and their families, as well as a sprinkling of Indonesian yuppies who had

developed a taste for the ephemeral western life style they observed in the international hotels.

He made his way to the fitness centre, not really expecting to find anyone there. He was surprised when he saw Sigit standing outside on the grass, a towel around his waist and his glasses in hand. He was wiggling and gyrating his hips in a curious exercise, to Ennis it looked like some kind of screwing practice, and perhaps it was.

‘Hey, you’re early,’ Ennis chuckled.

‘I woke up early, so I came right over.’

Sigit looked in good shape.

‘How’s the form?’

‘Great.’

Axelmann wandered up, looking cheerful for that early hour. He was happy; he had woken up to find that he was not in Kalimantan; a wonderful start to his day.

‘What’s pressing then Sigit? Have you had your sauna?’

‘Yeah, I’m just about ready now, let’s get something to eat, I’m beginning to feel hungry, we can talk about it over breakfast, but basically I spoke with the VP, he has decided that the project should have top priority.’

They were a little surprised. They had not really expected anything else but top priority. Nevertheless, it was comforting to know that the system was functioning. Sigit always enjoyed a hearty American breakfast after his morning exercise, especially if he was not paying. They strolled down the path towards the coffee shop whilst Sigit got slowly to the point.

‘Mr Hendra has instructed Bak Wihartjo to give you all the assistance necessary. You should contact his Director General Rudini to go over the details of the programme. If you like, I’ll fix up a meeting with him for you this week, he’s a good friend of mine!’

Sigit had many good friends; it was perfectly normal for a man who was the personal assistant to Idris Hendra, the Vice President of a nation of one hundred and seventy million people in the throes of development.

His principal function was to organise the VP’s busy schedule and

not the least his golf programme. Sigit too was an enthusiastic golfer. He also spent a considerable time on the diplomatic cocktail circuit, keeping the VP well informed of all the latest news and gossip. Axelmann frequently cracked that Sigit was incapable of anything else but golfing and socialising, which was in a sense true; after all it was his job.

His large home in the smart district of Kebayoran Baru, his weekend house at Puncak in the mountains where the air was cool, his house on one of the beautiful and exclusive coral islands in the Java sea one hundred kilometres out from Jakarta, his BMW, Peugeot, Cherokee pickup, and his wife Milas fine collection of antique Chinese porcelain, were all proof that he was successful and really at the top. As an Indonesian civil servant in the Vice Presidents service, his official salary was not more than the equivalent of one thousand American dollars a month, which hardly served as pocket money. His real income came in the traditional Indonesian manner of commissions and favours in payment for services rendered.

He had started his career, after leaving university thirty years previously, as a young journalist, and had been present with the main actors of the movement that overthrew Soekarno, after the aborted communist coup. Budiman, more by chance than by design, had been sequestered together with Idris Hendra by the putschists during those desperate days. In the events which followed, Hendra had adroitly navigated the political changes, playing the anti-communist card, and had risen under Suharto through successive government appointments to Vice President, bringing Sigit with him.

## Chapter 4 - TROPICAL FORESTS

Brodzski sat slouched behind his large black desk, there were no papers, just a simple crystal ashtray and a small white bone china coffee cup and saucer. He turned the spoon slowly in his coffee and puffed sourly on his Gauloises cigarette as he peered at Marcillac, an

ORSFE tropical forestry scientist, over the top of his thick horn rimmed glasses.

‘I agree with you, but it’s still a fact that the future of tropical rainforests is one of the most crucial environmental issues of today!’ said Marcillac melodramatically with a slightly amused expression as he noted Brodzski’s discomfort.

‘I think you’re exaggerating a little bit there Marcillac.’ Brodzski said sulkily looking to Ennis for support.

‘Not at all Monsieur Brodzski, the fact is uncontrolled exploitation has led to severe ecological disturbances, this is really a great cause for concern in scientific circles,’ Marcillac replied, looking as though he was enjoying the rhetoric.

‘Yes, but I think your forgetting that the problem is also an economic and financial one. Tropical forests provide some of the most valuable timber in the world and they provide a living for a lot of people in those countries,’ said Brodzski smiling and feeling pleased with himself, as though he had won a point.

‘Perhaps you’re right there, but the problem remains, irresponsible and excessive exploitation is a great reason for concern.’

There was a silence, they knew what Marcillac had said was at least partially true, but on the other hand it was not the complete picture.

The object of the meeting with Marcillac and his assistant Perret was to discuss the inventory and forestry operation study that Papcon had requested from the ORSFE. The Organisation de Recherche Scientifique de la Forêt Equatoriale was an independent though government financed organisation. It had been founded in the 1930s to develop the use of the tropical forests in French Equatorial Africa, basically for industrial needs. Since then its role and geographical sphere of operations had broadened, with real scientific and conservationist objectives.

ORSFE’s specialists prided themselves on their independence and their renowned expertise in the field of tropical forestry and sylvaculture. Marcillac was fencing with Brodzski; it was a matter of professional pride to establish the specialised scientific nature of his



organisation to a profit oriented industrial promoter who was obviously not used to independent attitudes from the usual grovelling subcontractors and suppliers.

‘Many international projects have been set up to protect the rainforest,’ said Axelmann in support of his President and looking to Ennis for his agreement. ‘Especially programmes to evaluate existing logging practises and find ways of controlling the use of tropical timber resources.’

‘That’s nice to hear,” Marcillac said smugly, ‘Nevertheless my friends, the conservation of the rainforest is a major challenge for modern scientific research and the development of forestry operations. As you know Mr Brodzski the density of the forest makes it very very difficult to operate without serious damage to the forest, and that’s our business.’

‘Well said Monsieur Marcillac,” groaned Brodzski in an effort to align his arguments with those of Marcillac. ‘I’m pleased to hear your concern. We have to work together, scientists and industrialists, to find solutions to these problems,’

‘Quite so, luckily for the forest tropical rain throughout most of the year in Kalimantan makes the forests inaccessible for long periods, if it didn’t there wouldn’t be anything left!’ Marcillac smiled, persisting with his lesson.

Brodzski with an air of exasperation lifted his hand in a gesture of mock despair.

‘Listen! Were not in the commercial logging business, we don’t always have to be looking on the negative side of things!’

‘But I’m being realistic and honest, whichever way you look at it, there’s an enormous amount of trees removed by the commercial timber loggers, whom you will have to work with, and don’t forget, Monsieur Brodzski, those trees are the dominants, they form the very skeleton of the forest,’ retorted Marcillac not backing down.

‘Come on now,’ Brodzski flashed, ‘you above all know that’s not exactly true, if we want to get into a scientific debate then let’s get the facts right. Of course I agree that any rainforest is very complex, trees of all sizes make up its framework and we all know that the

canopy is a community of all of the plants above the ground.'

Brodzski knew his business and was not going to be put down in front of his team by Marcillac's condescending popular science arguments.

'OK, let's cancel everything and we'll all go back to the drawing board, or perhaps you'd prefer the Middle Ages!' Brodzski replied stabbing a finger in the direction of Marcillac.

'No, no, don't misunderstand us, Marcillac is just getting the facts straight,' said Perret speaking in for the first time obviously worried by the tone and trying to moderate the discussion.

Brodzski was now sulking openly. He flopped back in his armchair sniffing his watchstrap and with his other hand fidgeting with his empty coffee cup.

'I've visited the forest myself many times over the years, even sleeping there. I know what the forest's like. We'll do all we can to ensure that the forest's ecosystem won't be disturbed,' said Brodzski trying to placate Marcillac with a little agreement and moderation.

It was Marcillac's turn to sulk.

Brodzski sniffed accepting the peace flag adding in a neutral tone so as to have the last word; 'Of course I understand the problem, what you're saying is we shall have to take precautions and we'll certainly heed your advice.'

'Antoine is right,' said Perret. 'Let's get down to some practical business or we'll be here all day.'

'We won't forget the orang-utans!' said Axelmann with a mischievous laugh.

'Let's leave the Indonesians out of this,' said Brodzski maliciously, 'were here to talk about trees...*dacrydium*, *agathis*, *araucaria*.... If you're interested that is?' he said to a deflated Marcillac.

## Chapter 5 - RESOURCES CONFIRMED

Axelmann lay at the side of the pool lazily contemplating their return to Paris and the conclusions to be drawn from their eventful trip to Bandjarmasin. It was Friday morning just after breakfast. He was taking advantage of the few hours remaining to give his suntan a final touch.

They were booked on an early afternoon flight to Singapore, so that they would have time to call on a couple of Axelmann's banking friends, and then have Saturday free for shopping.

The weekend in Jakarta had few distractions for those businessmen stuck in their hotels and who had no means of escape to the islands or the mountains. In any case Axelmann had more than enough with their adventure in Kalimantan, he was looking forward to going home.

Axelmann would be back in Paris early Sunday morning and anticipated a quite day with his friends and a decent restaurant; he was already imagining a steak, tender and extremely rare, and exceptionally accompanied by a glass of good Bordeaux to celebrate his return to civilisation.

He glanced around and saw that were already a few hotel guests relaxing in the sun. There was an airline crew and a little further on couple of local girls, whom he seemed to recognise as regulars from the Hotman, wearing revealing high cut bikinis. He made a mental note not to swim too close to them in the pool; he did not want to return home with anything compromising.

He then saw John Ennis at the pool reception, who signed in and picked up a towel surveying the lines of parasols. Axelmann made him a sign; he strolled over taking a chaise longue and flopped down next to him.

As they sunned themselves they discussed the outline of the strategy that was beginning to emerge. In order to finance the promotion of the project, they would require a substantial budget to cover the cost of the forestry inventory, to quantify the availability of

the right kind of wood, to carry out technical studies and the search for a marketing partner who could distribute and sell the mill products.

As agreed prior to their departure from Paris they prepared a fax to be addressed Brodzski in Paris who was organising a round table the following week with Philippe de Berne and a group of industrialists with whom Brodzski had worked successfully in the recent past. Their fax message was to carry an optimistic message resulting from their meetings in Jakarta and investigations in Kalimantan.

Papcon's vocation, the promotion and development of industrial projects, had been a profitable business over many years for Brodzski. The business implied a certain number of risks, but unless they dangled a sufficiently attractive carrot to their would be partners, the project would remain stillborn for lack of the funds necessary for its promotional phase.

Brodzski was a master at producing a suitable message at the psychologically right moment for his business partners, extolling the desire of some overseas government organisation to work with him. He never hesitated to invoke the name of a minister or high-ranking official, who had given him the exclusivity, or, a license to develop an important project.

Their message was to be in very clear terms. A copy of it would end up without any doubt in one of the services of BAKIN, the Indonesian Intelligence Agency, who would hopefully transmit it to all of those departments and persons concerned. Thus it would serve two purposes, it would inspire the French and it would comfort the Indonesians on the seriousness of the French developers.

To Monsieur Antoine Brodzski;

On site investigation has confirmed that raw material resources exist in Kalimantan Seletan for a pulp mill with a production capacity of 350,000 tons/year. The timber rights are negotiable and support is assured from the Ministry of Forests which will require an inventory of the standing resources. A state enterprise is proposed as joint-

venture partner. The total estimated investment is one billion dollars.

The fax was deliberately composed in a telegraphic style on headed stationary from Office of the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, thanks to Sigit, and complete with an official seal. The English was part of Brodzski's many ploys, providing him endless scope for interpretation, in the knowledge the English of his partners was often less good than they pretended.

Ennis took the paper to the hotel business centre where he had it stamped 'Urgent and Confidential' and in his presence ensured it was immediately faxed to Paris. That accomplished he returned to the pool and settled down to the more serious business of ensuring that those parts of his anatomy, which had not been exposed to the sun in Borneo, would be suitable bronzed for his return to Paris.

The morning passed agreeably as they discussed the paradoxes of Indonesia, a country where it was impossible to undertake large-scale industrial projects without a backer in top government circles.

'It's not so different to any country of the world, it's necessary to lobby political power brokers,' said Axelmann. 'The system may look different and it may work in another manner, but it's the same, somebody, somewhere, receives a kickback, or more politely if you like, a commission.'

'The difference here is that it's practically always the same pockets, that's not very democratic,' Ennis said with a laugh, pleased with his own cynicism. 'A very tight circle surrounding the President and his family. Very few important projects pass without being vetted by them. Projects that fit in with their plans and satisfy commission needs are distributed as rewards to their favourites.'

'Right, the President's wife, and their children control almost everything.'

'Even the taxi drivers are well informed of the details,' he said scornfully.

'Not forgetting Lim Sio Liong and Bob Hassan.'

'They're both Chinese, they've been his pals for decades. I saw a thing the other day in the Far East Economic Review saying that Lim

was amongst the ten richest men in the world.'

The political backer for the Barito Project was Idris Hendra, who pulled strings in the background, out of public view. He of course would be attributed a fitting percentage for his troubles. There was also his close friend the Minister of Forests, Wihartjo, and a multitude of other lesser personalities, who would also collect their rewards, proportional to their degree of importance and involvement.

'They need all the investment and development they can get, when you consider the size of the populations, and its growing by the hour.'

Axelmann grinned, bunching his fists at waist level in front of himself and rocking his hips backwards and forwards, 'It's not surprising!'

Ennis grinned and continued, 'It's as big as western Europe, thirteen thousand islands! Luckily for them, they've plenty of resources, oil and gas, as well as timber, palm oil, spices, rubber, minerals and the seas are full of fish.'

'The only trouble is they can't be transformed into income at the same rate as the population grows,' said Axelmann, and insisting on his pleasantry added; 'That's what they get for all that screwing.'

'Your trouble is that you're fuckin vulgar, you can't take anything seriously,' said Ennis testily.

'You're dead right there,' he laughed, 'I think I'll order a drink.'

'When you think that there's eighty million living in Java alone that makes it the mostly densely inhabited place in the world!' he said looking around, as though he expected to find the teeming millions at the poolside.

'And they're all earning a dollar a day.'

'Fuck their luck!' He then paused and looking serious for a moment added; 'Except Sigit Budiman his one of the privileged class, he's what you really call a fixer.'

'I heard his money comes almost exclusively from favours and commissions, I'd guess at three hundred thousand dollars a year, a lot of money here, but he's not really rich and there's no continuity guaranteed.'

‘When you think that his gardener, cook or driver earn about four of five hundred dollars a year with food and lodging, then he’s fabulously rich and they’re privileged compared to the other poor bastards.’

The waiter brought the drinks, offering them on a tray with his outstretched arm, holding his elbow with the other hand in a sign of deference.

‘The real rich are the merchant class and industrialists, Chinese, like Lim, who’ve made vast fortunes with the blessing of the President.’

‘You’re right there, but in a way it’s not as selfish as it would first appear.’

‘You’re joking!’

‘No I’m not,’ said Axelmann looking a little hurt. ‘Listen, he and his partners are all engaged in a gigantic, but not totally selfish, effort aimed at the creation of wealth and their own modern capitalistic society. When you compare it to some socialist models such as Burma or Cambodia, they’re not doing too badly.’

‘It’s been the policy of the West over the last forty years to encourage them, capital and loans, a barrier against communism. They’re one of the World Bank’s most important borrowers. Sure their economy has grown without paying too much attention to wealth distribution, or the development social equality. On the whole you’ve got to admit the results have been fairly positive. Their future is definitely better than a lot of the other less fortunate third world countries.’

‘I suppose you’re right, looking around at all the sky scrapers and shopping plazas springing up all over the place, it can’t be denied that there’s a solid middle class developing.’

In Singapore that same evening, they were joined for drinks in the bar of their hotel, the luxurious Shangri-La, by two of Axelmann’s expatriate friends, representatives of the French Indo-China Bank. It was one of the most international of French banks and had been successfully established in Asia for over a century.

It was part of Axelmann's information campaign to prepare the ground for the entry of the major French banks into the project's financing structure. He emphasised the confidentiality of their business in Indonesia, in the sure knowledge that the news would spread quickly, giving a new aura to Papcon.

They had the pleasure of name dropping, talking of Philippe de Berne, it gave them a big boost and they clearly detected the envy of the executives of the bigger but more conventional bank. Another degree of interest and attention was given to their words. Ennis sensed that Axelmann's friends could not wait to get to their fax machines to inform Paris.

The bankers responded enthusiastically, inviting them to a flashy Chinese nightclub, the Golden Dragon, where they dined and danced with the attractive hostesses introduced by the club's Mama San.

The evening was a blur, they had no idea of what they had eaten or drunk at the Golden Dragon, that had been the least of their interests. What was much more important was the considerable progress they made in the Southern Chinese dialects of their new friends, who gladly returned with them to the Shangri-La, where the two travellers passed the rest of the night in a detailed exploration of the mysteries of the East.

Saturday morning having regretfully hurried their exotic friends discreetly on their way, they proceeded on their shopping expedition in the vast modern day emporium that Singapore had become, as they exchanged notes on the nights experiences.

Late that evening seated in the Galaxy class of the Air France Boeing, fourteen hours away from Paris, they settled down to a long night.

## Chapter 6 - THE FORESTRY CENTRE

The Forestry Centre at Bogor was located opposite the main entrance of the Botanical Gardens. Sir Stamford Raffles had founded the



gardens; at the time he was the British Governor of The Dutch East Indies, during the Napoleonic wars, when the British had taken temporary custody of all Dutch possessions in Asia after Napoleon had occupied Amsterdam.

The entrance was through a huge old coach door, and under an imposingly high archway, on the corner of the colonial style building that faced the gardens. A group of sleepy guards and janitors were seated against the wall, as messengers idled smoking their Kretek cigarettes, waiting to be dispatched with urgent or important documents, which could not be trusted to a slow and inefficient postal service.

The grey walls were flaking and dirty, and had last seen fresh paint so long ago it would have been difficult to remember exactly when. It was one of the classical bastions of the Indonesian civil service. There were no sharply dressed officials, in freshly laundered tropical safari suit uniforms as in Jakarta; there was little movement apart from the lethargic flies.

In the courtyard beyond were the offices of the different sections. Jean Marcillac had been there once before, some years previously. He was not confident that they would get the data they needed, which in theory should be found in what were called green books.

They enquired for Wolfgang Kubler, with whom they had an appointment. It suited Wolfgang to meet them there; he lived nearby in a suburb of Bogor, in the mountains where the air was fresh compared to the oppressive climate on the coast, avoiding the daily struggle through the dense traffic down to Jakarta which lay on the coastal plain sixty kilometres below.

Kubler had two offices, one in Bogor, where in reality he was simply lodged in the Forestry Centre for his personal convenience, and his official base, in the magnificent new polished granite building of the Ministry of Forests in Jakarta.

They were shown through a succession of louvered swing doors to a collection of offices, which were sparse and dusty, in spite of the humidity, which was high although it was an improvement compared to Jakarta.

The short sleeved Indonesians, seated before their tea mugs and disorderly piles of dog eared papers, gave them curious glances, but were not really interested; they saw quite a few Belandas in the centre looking for information on the forestry concessions.

Wolfgang Kubler was seated in a worn but comfortable looking arm chair, under an old ceiling fan that rotated slowly dispersing in swirling patterns the blue smoke that rose from his cigarette. The lighting was dim, the air hot and heavy, the whole building had the somnolent air of the rather forgotten government service it was.

The windows were not glazed, but made from open wooden slats, like Venetian blinds, they looked onto an open corridor, a functional veranda, that ran around a large courtyard, where the red earth looked tired and worn, a few large aggressive birds, that resembled crows, pecked at the ground under an ancient multi-trunked ficus, whose massive branches shaded the courtyard from the sun.

‘There’s as many as eight hundred species per hectare!’ Kubler said looking over his thick rimless glasses; he was the cartoonist’s image of a myopic Japanese.

In spite of his name, Kubler, he was an Indonesian. One of the stories that speculated on his origins said that his grandfather was a German submarine commander, who had run aground off the coast of Java, towards the end of World War I. He had chosen to remain in Indonesia, having had enough of war, and later married a local girl. They had several children, the youngest of whom was Wolfgang, who unfortunately for some strange reason looked more Japanese than Indonesian.

Maybe it had been a Japanese submarine, Ennis thought idly as Kubler peered at him.

‘Of the eight hundred species, only a handful or so have any commercial value,’ said Wolfgang.

He went on, explaining that the majority of species were little known; even the most experienced specialists at the National Forestry Centre in Bogor could not identify them. It was only with the help of the local Dayaks and by an elaborate comparison of colloquial, commercial, and botanical names made up by long

forgotten botanists, could many species be identified.

There were just a handful of foreign botanists and researchers who were versed in the arcane details of the flora of the vast unknown rainforests of Borneo.

When those few commercially valuable trees had been extracted from a block of forest, the loggers would move on, like a predatory horde, wreaking a path of destruction through the forest, which until that instant, had been undisturbed since the moving of continents.

‘The clearings in the forest recover naturally you know. The sunlight encourages the growth of what are called pioneer species, enabling dominant trees to establish themselves, then in about fifty years the forest is more or less back to its natural state,’ Wolfgang explained in an offhanded and unconvincing manner, his head thrust back, as he appeared to try to focus them through his thick lens.

‘How many concessions are there today, in Central Kalimantan?’ questioned Ennis.

‘Well...approximately two hundred concessions, that’s to say areas that have been allocated by the Ministry of Forests to logging companies for twenty five year periods.’

‘That’s a long time!’

‘Yes, but not all of them are operated, some of them are already logged over, that means the commercial species have been removed.’

‘What about the dacyrdium we want to use for our project? In which concessions are they found?’

He laughed and fidgeted, ‘I don’t know, no detailed survey has ever been carried out, we only know from the reports of our inspectors and controllers that groves of dacyrdium exist in the dry areas of the forest. Small quantities were logged for the Martarpura paper mill when it was in production.’

‘And the other species?’

‘Let me see...there’s agathis and araucaria. Agathis is a very valuable wood today, it’s relatively rare. Only the waste, branches and tops could be used for paper pulp.’

‘Who would harvest the wood for the paper pulp mill ...the concessionaires?’

‘No,’ he hesitated. ‘No, the concessionaires are equipped with heavy machines designed for commercial wood, you know very big logs. Your project needs lighter equipment for more intensive logging. You’d need to set up a separate organisation for that purpose.’

A picture of the forestry operations necessary to supply the pulp mill with wood was slowly taking form in his mind. He realised that the forest survey, planned for the project feasibility study, would be a determinant factor in convincing Indopap’s investors of the projects viability.

If the wood was not available in the necessary quantities and at the right price there would be no project.

‘Can we see the green books?’ asked Ennis.

‘Why not!’ said Kubler, making a sign to an assistant, who appeared to be on the verge of falling asleep. He jumped up bowing forward, his appearance had been deceptive, in spite of his apparent weariness, he was at the ready for the slightest sign from Wolf.

Some minutes later the assistant returned with a stack of green books. Ennis was surprised that the books were in fact green, or at least the covers were. They were made up of cheap old-fashioned paper, printed by Roneo.

Kubler handed over one of the books to Ennis, who flicked through the pages. It appeared to consist of lists of the trees recorded in a given concession.

Kubler confirmed that the green books on the table covered one concession. There were similar books for every logging concession in the country. Each one being an inventory of the standing timber at the date it had been prepared. In the case of Barito’s proposed pulpwood harvesting area in Central Kalimantan, he explained that there were about one hundred concessions.

The lists gave the Indonesian colloquial names of the trees, the botanical names, and various other data on the mensuration of the trees. They were catalogues, inventories of the trees standing in given concessions at some past moment in time.

Glancing at the dates, he saw that the books had been printed

about ten years previously. It was evident there was little chance that the export quality timber would still be the same. Marcillac asked for the green books for the other concessions, which were slowly and laboriously produced by Wolfgang's assistant - when they were available. They quickly concluded that the rest of the other data had about the same value. The books and the data they contained were obsolete!

They found very little reference to the *dacrydium* that they were looking for. The so-called specialists gave them a blank look when they tried questioning them on the subject. It appeared that the experts had rarely, if ever, visited Kalimantan.

Marcillac then inquired about survey maps and aerial photographs, but maps were unavailable, at least detailed maps. Those produced by Kubler's staff, were not much better than those that could be bought on any street corner bookshop in Jakarta, or, found on the wall of any elementary school classroom. There were simply no survey maps available.

Kubler hopefully suggested that they obtain Landsat photographs from the USA, or from SPOT in France. However, they apologetically explained to him that the resolution of the satellite photographs would be much too low for the purpose of the inventory.

After long and insistent questioning on the aerial survey data, and wading through stacks of large dusty manila envelopes, they finally came across some surprisingly good high-resolution photographs and detailed survey maps. They covered an area near Bandjarmasin where the mill was to be built.

The officials were not willing to part with them. Wolfgang shrugged, he had no authority in the Forestry Centre and was unable to persuade them to hand over the photographs or the plans, he told Ennis they would have to speak to their director who was regretfully absent.

They left disappointed, Marcillac smugly whispered out of earshot of Wolfgang, 'I told you so.'

Their only possible consolation was that they could make a quick visit to the botanical garden, where there were informed they could

see first hand, specimens of the trees they were looking for, which they were beginning to doubt existed. First, however, they lunched in a small restaurant with Wolfgang, the speciality, a spicy lamb stew. The restaurant was set up on a pavement that bordered the noisy, dusty, main road that rose steeply towards the town centre. The stew was flavoured with a good dose of thick diesel fumes from the buses and trucks that wound their way around the becahs.

Wolfgang left at them the main entrance of the gardens; he excused himself explaining that he had some other matters to attend to in the forestry centre.

In the vast botanical gardens, a wizened guide led them to the agathis and dacrydium. The agathis was impressive, a huge tree that towered to a height of sixty metres, with small leathery oval shaped leaves, not unlike olive leaves and small dark green cones. The dacrydium was much smaller, with typical long monkey pine needle covered fingers. They gathered leaves and cones that had fallen from both trees and posed for photographs, so that they could produce the evidence back in Paris.

They then returned to bid goodbye to Kubler to thank him for his assistance before heading towards Puncak to meet Touzan. In his office Wolfgang casually announced to Ennis that it would cost them two thousand dollars.

‘What would cost two thousand dollars?’

‘The aerial photos.’

‘Two thousand dollars! That’s robbery, in any case the Forestry Departments our partner!’ said Ennis laughing with surprise, in fact he was not really surprised at all, it was a typical rip-off.

‘If you want the photos it will cost you two thousand dollars.’ repeated Wolf with a slightly embarrassed smile.

Christ! Ennis thought to himself half amused, screwed again! ‘Okay, when?’ he finally said. After all two thousand dollars was a drop in the ocean compared to what they were spending.

There was no other way; at least the photos and maps were of very high quality. They were part of a survey that the Australian Airforce had carried out fifteen years previously under an aid program for

Indonesia. There had not been a great deal of changes since that time, in any case they could not hope to obtain such good photographs without a mass of red tape.

The only detailed maps and photos of Kalimantan Tengah available would have been from the army. Wolfgang had told them regretfully for security reasons these were restricted. The army always invoked security, since Kalimantan remained a sensitive area, a hangover from the sixties.

Their next stop was Dr. Philippe Touzan's office, ten kilometres outside Bogor. It lay on a gently sloping hillside, facing the tea plantations for which the area was famous.

The temperature was just right for tea, and for the residents of Jakarta who had the means to own a weekend home in the hills, to get away from the heat and pollution of the city. Many scientific institutes had their centres there, which suited the needs of their cosseted expatriate staff.

Large butterflies danced amongst the flowers and banana trees in the tranquillity of the spacious gardens that surrounded the centres low modern buildings.

The walls of Touzan's office were lined with reference books on the scientific subjects related to tropical forests. The office was bright with the sunlight that shone through a large panoramic window overlooking the gardens. Touzan was bearded, smoking a pipe and comfortably seated in an expensive leather armchair.

The object of their visit was to seek his advice on the natural habitat of dactyldium trees and their life cycle. Little was known about the tree outside of botanical circles, apart from gardening specialists, to whom it simply was known as a tree suited to ornamental gardening. Its natural habitat was almost unknown, and any scientific knowledge of its reproduction and life cycle was practically zero.

Touzan, who was renowned for his work on the natural architecture of tropical trees, listened to them as he puffed on his pipe. He had a doubtful silent gaze, as Ennis explained Papcon's project. It took a considerable amount of persuasive effort to draw

him out.

What did he know of the trees' habitat? How could they determine the quantity of exploitable wood standing in the forest? How did its reproduction occur? What kind of fibre structure did it have?

After some reflection and some apparent inner conflict, he started to talk.

'Let me see,' he paused, 'if I have understood you correctly, you want to take out some one million cubic meters a year of this wood from Central Kalimantan! Have you considered the consequences this could have on the ecological balance of the forest?'

Jesus! Thought Ennis, this is another conservationist; we'll have to be very careful here.

'Yes that's correct,' he hesitated, 'but before we start we need the advice of specialists such as you, to guide us and avoid any costly mistakes, on the industrial or environmental aspects. In any case, our plan includes an environmental impact study.' He added hopefully.

'Yes, I've heard that before, that's what all of the logging companies say. They'll carry out reforestation! They won't damage the forest when they take out the so-called commercial wood! It's total fantasy.'

There was a pause, whilst Ennis considered his next argument. It was not necessary.

'Look, I'm personally against this kind of blindfold development, but that is my scientists conscience speaking. I'm here working for the Government of Indonesia, in their pay, and I cannot go against their policies for national development. Nevertheless, I do warn you against the type of exploitation that's destroyed eighty percent of the forests in the Philippines, and done a great deal of damage in this country, especially the deforestation for transmigration-that's just one example.'

They waited.

'Marcillac's organisation is certainly one of the most experienced for your investigations. I have to admit that they're very serious people,' he nodded grudgingly towards Marcillac.

'Thank you,' said Marcillac, surprised, but pleased. He had been



uncomfortable having his own arguments thrown at him.

The following morning, they arrived early at one of the many Hutan Industri's offices. It was situated on a wide avenue, Jalan Selemba Raya, in a run down and overcrowded building, about half a kilometre down from the Ministry of Agriculture, on the opposite side of the avenue, across a dense, slow moving stream of chaotic traffic.

Kubler had the photographs. Ennis handed over the two thousand dollars. He hoped that Wolfgang would enjoy his cut, which he would no doubt invest in his light plane. His pastime was flying and for a lowly paid civil servant he was better equipped than many professional pilots in his country.

Ennis was relieved to have some more detailed data. It was sure that the civil engineers and designers back in Paris would be pleased to have something more tangible. The same could not be said for Marcillac. His problems were still unresolved. How to cover four million hectares and identify the dacrydium groves?

## Chapter 7 - ANTOINE BRODZSKI

Papcon's offices were situated on Avenue Matignon, a very fashionable address, in a stylish modern building faced with the traditional off-white Parisian chalk stone, just two minutes walk from the Rond Point des Champs Elysee.

That impressed Brodzski's foreign and even French business acquaintances. The address had served him well over the years, but for some reason he had begun to develop a fixation about moving northwards from the city to La Defense with its Grande Arche.

The new business district of Paris was at La Defense, where the prestige tower blocks of the major French companies were located. The development of the district had commenced in the late sixties

and finally completed after more than twenty years. It was said to be one of the highest concentration of office towers in Europe grouped together on a single site.

Avenue Matignon had suited him up to that point in time; it had class, combining the old with new and conveniently located in the heart of Paris. He had a staff of some twenty highly specialised professionals, engaged in the assessment and analysis of the numerous projects, which were referred to Papcon mostly by foreign government agencies. However, much of the detail work was sub-contracted out to specialised consulting firms. Brodzski firmly believed that his experts should only look after the noblest tasks and be on constant standby for urgent missions.

Antoine Brodzski, Papcon's president, at sixty-four years old was a heavy smoker and drinker. He indulged every kinds of excess from over-eating to over-travelling. He lived on stress, even though his family doctor never ceased to underline the risks that his dangerous life style could have on his health. He liked to boast of his resistance, carefully avoiding questions about his age and condition, maintaining an appearance more suited to a dynamic and younger man. He had no desire to stimulate useless speculation about retirement and the future of his business.

Another of Brodzski's failings was his sensitivity that verged on the paranoia, becoming incensed at the slightest provocation, raging against enemies, real or imagined, and any unfortunate person who inadvertently obstructed his plans or actions, even in the most innocent way. People such as passport controllers, customs officers and policemen. Ennis had been startled to see him as white as a sheet and hyperventilating, as the result of an Indian security guard failing to recognise his importance, at a reception held in a New Delhi hotel, the guard had simply demanded to see his invitation.

He regularly consumed considerable quantities of pills, stimulants and tranquillisers to keep him awake and alert, or to help him to sleep and relax. These medications were often consumed with inconsiderate quantities of whisky, wine or beer. In his lucid moments he was persuaded to visit his cardiologist, but he was

totally incapable of following the least medical advice for more than a few days.

Behind the façade, his personal organisation was just as chaotic. His hotel room often appeared as though it had been hit by a cyclone. On many occasions Ennis had been enrolled to awake him and even dress him when he had overslept after his excesses. Ennis had observed him, as the result of a heavy drinking session on the overnight flight from Paris to Jakarta, breathing heavily and desperately like a tired old dray horse on arrival.

It was one of Axelmann's tasks to hide Brodzski's condition and to cover up his repeated antics from their business partners. There were moments when travelling, that Axelmann feared seriously for Brodzski's health, having to call the hotel doctor to administer the necessary antidotes to compensate for his excesses.

He was overweight and when he was tired the pallor of his skin gave the impression of a sick old man. He often played on this to obtain what he wanted, to extract sympathy or to simulate fatigue, whenever the going became too rough during negotiations.

None of those conditions were sufficient to keep him away from his Thursday appointments, a euphemism for his visits to an establishment in Paris, where he could pass the afternoon in the company of young women, for a few hours of soothing relaxation. He enjoyed the company of women and as a consequence was easily seduced by the ideas of almost any well brought up young businesswoman, to the point that he committed serious errors of judgement as a result of their charm.

However, his real passion in life was his business, his company Papcon, and he very rarely left the subject, except for his only serious pastime, Bridge, which he played well. It was almost an extension of his business life, in which he could pit his skill and intelligence against his opponents, often taking advantage of their company to persuade them to invest in his projects. However, in tournaments he criticised, humiliated and raged against his lesser partners and opponents, exactly as he did in business, where he could not suffer weakness or incompetence in his entourage.

In spite of his hectic and undisciplined life style, he cared for his appearance, he was a smart dresser and his carefully trimmed mane of thick white hair bestowed on him the appearance of a dignified statesman. It was especially effective in Asia, where age and experience were traditionally held in high esteem.

In Paris his daily routine consisted of holding court from nine thirty to midday, commencing with very strong black coffee and finishing with a glass of whisky before leaving for a copious lunch, always accompanied by a good bottle of wine or even two. This rendered him unpredictable for the rest of the day; he could be either euphoric or aggressive, depending on the latest business news, or the way in which his visitors had received his monologue.

That damp Monday morning at the beginning of February, Brodzski called one of his cabinet meetings to examine his plan for Barito. It was typically a one-way exchange of ideas; his key staff sat with their knees crossed and listened, only speaking when questioned. No notes were ever taken, no secretaries were ever present, and Brodzski liberally treated all those not party to his plans to a dose of scorn and insults, when he suspected they were not in concordance with his ideas.

Brodzski informed his staff of the latest events. He had not been inactive during the expedition of his men to Kalimantan. He had met with Henry Glikmann, a cousin of Brodzski's wife. Glikmann was a member of the board of Schumann et Fils, merchant and corporate bankers.

They were also the majority shareholder of a major construction firm, Travaux Publics Strasbourgeois, known as TPS, who Glikmann suggested were potential candidates for Brodzski's consortium.

Glikmann introduced Brodzski to Jean Strecker, the president of TPS, and at a luncheon Strecker had confirmed that they were interested in participating as the French lead partner in the venture-in parallel with the chemical pulp process equipment builder: Finntech, pending the results of Papcon's latest investigations in Indonesia and the receipt of a detailed project outline.

Like many other French companies, TPS, had been traditionally active in Africa and the Middle East, they had practically no recent experience in the South East Asia, which they had been avoided by choice, since the time France had ignominiously quit French Indo-China thirty years previously.

Their interest in moving into those booming markets had grown as Africa had plunged into doom and economic chaos. Papcon's project promised them a ready-made place. During the luncheon Brodzski had dangled a copy of the telex from Jakarta in front of Jean Strecker and it had had its desired effect. Strecker at once agreed to meet Brodzski and his men some days later for a briefing on the results of their on the spot investigation.

The headquarters of TPS was in the outlying grey Parisian suburb of Cergy Pontoise, a low five storey building, in a sober modern style, in concrete and glass, a rectangular form enclosing Japanese gardens. It was in this building, two thousand people worked, engineers, designers and administrative staff, on construction contracts in over thirty different countries around the world.

The trio was led by Strecker's secretary, an efficient but serious looking blond, to his office through the spacious reception area and brightly lit corridors, which were decorated with photographs of their most prestigious contracts which included; dams, bridges and airports.

Strecker's office was panelled in oak and furnished with Louis XIV antiques, designed for the genteel nobles of that epoch. It struck Ennis as somehow incongruous, to see the bulky frame of Strecker ensconced in a delicate chair, looming over his disproportionately small, elaborately carved, bureau.

Brodzski used the intimate form of address tu to Strecker since they had both attended the elite military engineering college, L'Ecole Polytechnique, founded almost two hundred years previously by the Emperor Napoleon.

'Axelmann and Ennis have just returned from Jakarta. They have confirmation the Indonesian government will accept the project!'

Brodzski said in a single exalted breath, glowing with self-satisfaction. He had never hesitated to capitalise on an event. He described Idris Hendra as representing the entire government of Indonesia.

Ennis was constantly surprised when Brodzski's business friends and acquaintances, swallowed one hundred percent of all what he told them. He was discovering that Brodzski had an extraordinary power to convince people and used his talent with devastating results.

'They want us to prepare a feasibility study and make an inventory of the forest,' continued Brodzski, 'and de Berne has accepted!'

Another astonishing declaration, since de Berne had barely had the time to absorb the report on their visit.

'You can join us if you like,' he added, changing his tone to an indifferent almost childlike take it or leave invitation.

It was evident that Strecker although a highly experienced company president, with some six billion dollars a year sales under his responsibility, was not even remotely aware of what a green field pulp mill project in the jungle could resemble, let alone get involved in its development. He did not hesitate to place his confidence in Brodzski, who had been introduced by Henry Glikmann; his friend and Brodzski's family relative. Further, Brodzski had attended the same elite engineering school as Strecker...they were old boys!

'Listen my friend!' said Strecker using his favourite opening phrase. 'We aren't in the business of mixing and pouring concrete for nothing, my fellows understand that kind of work, but building a pulp mill, I'm sorry, they don't have that kind of process knowledge. Find the right process partner, then we'll work out an arrangement together,' he smiled, indicating his agreement to Brodzski.

With the main business clear Strecker led them to lunch in their VIP dinning room, whilst Brodzski pursued his idea of the project organisation, putting an emphasis on what interested Strecker...the vast civil engineering contract. Brodzski then casually announced that the Indonesians would provide an up front equity participation of one hundred and fifty million dollars. Glancing discretely towards Axelmann, Ennis saw him lifting his eyebrows to the ceiling; no such

question had been seriously considered up to that moment in time.

From the bar Strecker personally poured the cocktails and toasted to their success, he was hooked, convinced by Brodzski, his two professional executives and their glowing presentation. They then relaxed to enjoy a full executive luncheon, cocktail d'hommard, followed by a rack of lamb, and a selection of French cheeses accompanied by very good Medoc.

As the coffee and cognac was served, Brodzski accepted a fine Havana cigar and confided to Strecker a number of unfounded tidbits of information, including the idea that the French authorities wished to encourage such a project. This had been vaguely suggested during a lunch given for him by the French Ambassador in Jakarta. It was without any confirmation from government sources at Bercy, the home of the Ministry of Finance and Department of Foreign Trade and Commerce, which controlled all French credit approvals for large overseas contracts.

'Strecker's in the bag!' said Brodzski as they left TPS, heading through the heavy traffic towards Paris. He lay back deep in the comfortable seat of his Mercedes drawing on his cigar, he was deep in thought. Then almost thinking aloud he surprised them by confiding that the next on his list would be Construction Lyonnaise.

Axelmann knew Lyonnaise well; they were old friends of Brodzski and had survived a number of his projects over the previous twenty-five years, including two of his memorable bankruptcies. They knew what they were getting themselves into.

Papcon were making money from their contract in Cambodia. Brodzski was a good risk; the knowledge that TPS would be the leading French partner in the business was comforting. It was for this reason that the CEO of Lyonnaise, Michel Lenoir, agreed to carry out a budgetary analysis of the project development costs, and appointed a project manager to coordinate with Axelmann.

Lyonnaise were specialised in the construction of heavy process equipment for industrial boiler plant. Their potential share in the project would be in the order of eighty million dollars. Joining them would be Bayonne Industries, a company from the south west of

France, manufacturers of electrical equipment. To round off the group, Lenoir promised to introduce the German company Klienner Industrie Anlagen to Brodzski, specialised in turbines and power generation equipment.

There still remained one essential element necessary to complete the consortium, assembled to finance the development costs of the project; that was the specialist engineering consultants, and they were in Finland, the only possible country in Europe, if not the world, which could provide the consortium with sufficient credibility.

Laxell, Finntech's director in Paris, organised Brodzski's meeting with the engineering consultants Kalevi Nurminen in Helsinki on Tapani Hakkala's instructions. Three decades earlier, Nurminen had founded his firm and was still its President, firmly holding the reins of power and all the shares in the business. He had built up his firm over the years becoming one of the world leading authorities in their field, with 2,500 engineers and designers. Their head office was in Helsinki with overseas branches in all countries having significant pulp and paper industries.

Laxell was a well-known figure, when it came to Finnish business and public relations in France. He had spent his life promoting Finland overseas. He had represented his country proudly for over thirty years in the Commercial Section of the Finnish Foreign Ministry before joining Finntech.

Laxell's view of the world was narrow. He was firmly convinced of Nordic superiority over Southern Europeans, and anybody else for that matter. He carried his convictions like a banner together with the fading Scandinavian reputation for quality and organisation. In unguarded moments Laxell had even been known to let slip his admiration for the thoroughness of the Third Reich, whose interests, be it for a brief period, coincided with those of Finland in World War II, against their common enemy, the Soviet Union.

His overseas appointments as Commercial Counsellor included obscure postings to Damascus and Rabat, where his main job had been to sell Finland's principal exports, forestry products, namely



timber. The needs of those Middle East and North African countries had been very modest, in fact they were amongst the world's lowest consumers.

Nevertheless, he had carefully cultivated friends among the visiting Finnish ministers. He made sure that their every need was looked after, until finally in the mid-seventies, his patience and efforts were rewarded. He obtained a posting to Paris, the present of a grateful, or perhaps, compromised minister!

The job was much the same, but certainly more glamorous, dinners, cocktails, exhibitions and guided tours, during which he cultivated business relations, carefully constituting an extensive *carnet d'adresse*.

His business had not changed-promoting Finland's forest products-but the country had evolved over the years and had also become an exporter of superior technology for forest-based industries. He considered himself organized and liked to keep his desk clean. It had always been his role to pass on information, never to act as a result of that information. He informed Finnish companies of local needs, and local companies of the availability of Finnish products, but the responsibility of buying or selling was never his forte.

As a result he was an excellent PR man, good at smiling and shaking hands. He was well known on the cocktail circuit and whenever an invitation presented itself for a dinner or lunch in good company, he was always available.

Laxell's favourite subject of conversation was the Winter War and how the Finns heroically beat the Russians. He could recount in the most remarkable detail, heroic actions in combat, and many of his listeners did not doubt for a single moment that he had done his share. They did not stop to calculate, that when Finland signed the armistice with Russia in 1944, Laxell was just barely fifteen years old.

His greatest regret was that he had been sent by his parents to spend the war on his uncle's farm, far from the combat areas, but where one summer he had seen for a few glorious instants, and fixed

forever in his memory, a squadron of German fighters flying low over the golden wheat fields in Southern Finland.

Laxell cultivated the appearance of being upright and charming, in the image of his military heroes, and in fact he was. Amongst his talents he was a good mimic. Observing soon after his arrival in France, that the French spoke quickly, he endeavoured to do likewise, with sometimes unfortunate results.

He was on occasions unwittingly maladroit. In spite of over thirty years in the diplomatic service, he could not help blurting out, without first thinking, tactless statements and opinions. His tactless subjects ranged from the underdevelopment of France, to comments that were unmistakably slanted against the Jews and in a country where the Jewish community was significant, especially in the business world. He was saved from disaster by the possible doubt that existed over the sense of his statements, as a result of his French, which was blurred by a heavy Finnish accent, and the speed of his jumbled words, which he mistakenly took for fluency

Whenever Laxell was recalled to Helsinki, it posed a problem. His first marriage had ended in divorce and he had remarried a fiery Parisienne many years younger than himself, who had not the least intention of being banished to the frozen wilderness of the steppes, as she described Finland. As a result he was left forsaken during the long periods he was obliged to spend in his home country on business, and where he was resigned to consoling himself with an endless series of gallant affaires with ever-ready Finnish ladies.

It had been through Laxell that Philippe de Berne had been introduced to Tapani Hakkala, soon after Laxell had taken over the French public relations of Finntech. It had also been through his friendship with Tapani Hakkala that he had been offered a directorship of the new company that they had formed in Paris, to develop their alternative marketing strategy, when Finnish business world realised that their business with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was at an end. Laxell knew how to flatter people and in certain circles in Paris that counted.

Finntech's Paris office was established in a stylish modern

building on the Faubourg St Honoré, in the centre of Paris. Their principal business was the importation of Finnish forestry products and machinery. The business had been slow at first but the stolid Finns were not to be diverted from their long-term objectives. Their business was of a highly cyclic nature and had only just bottomed out at the end of a long downward movement. The predicated upswing was said to be just around the corner, but it was slow in coming.

Ennis had joined them to market their Engineering Divisions products and services, promoting their process and industrial expertise for new projects in France, or, those that could be financed with French credits in the developing world.

Laxell knew Kalevi Nurminen well, one of the outstanding figures in the Finnish forest industry, a true seigneur. Like Laxell, Nurminen was nationalistic and justifiably proud of his country's achievements. The reputation his firm wielded as a world-renowned engineering consultant ensured that his benediction on a project made it almost immediately bankable.

## Chapter 8 - THE CONSORTIUM

Singapore Changi airport was overcrowded. The weather had been bad and as always with long distance flights, there was an interminable delay. Passengers reported to the airport too early and the flights were delayed longer than foreseen. Air France seemed to Ennis to be particularly affected by delays, especially when the flight originated from New Caledonia, but even when it originated from Singapore, it was late.

He was idling in the duty free shopping area, passing the time shopping for presents, looking for the latest gadgets or popular fashion accessories, which often seemed to in Singapore well before Paris.

‘Ow are you Monsieur Ennis!’

He turned around and was surprised to see a smiling Paul Branet;

sun tanned as usual, in a green Lacoste polo shirt, white slacks and white patent leather Gucci shoes.

‘*Ca va,*’ he replied, ‘and you?’

‘I see we are on the same flight,’ he said glancing at Ennis’ boarding pass that protruded from his shirt pocket.

‘Yes,’ Ennis replied trying to look enthusiastic.

Air France flight 312 took off and headed up the straights of Malacca and out over the Indian Ocean. They switched seats to be together, they were in Galaxy Class, in the hump of the 747, not especially comfortable, but that evening there were not too many passengers.

They made small talk but Branet soon switched to business. He was anxious to become involved in Barito, but at that moment he was not making much progress.

Through his well established representation office in Jakarta, he had over the years naturally developed excellent business and political relations in the country. Brodzski whilst not exactly a close friend of Branet, was always ready to listen to his rumours or any other information that could be gleaned.

It was a curious coincident Brodzski and Branet had been to the same school together, though it was not the illustrious Polytechnique of Brodzski. They had been together in junior school at the age of ten years, in the city of Toulon on the Mediterranean coast of France, over fifty years earlier.

Ennis, from his own point of view did not want Branet poking his nose into Papcon’s business and more specifically interfering with his own approach. However, he would have to humour him, because it was not excluded that he would have a role to play in the future.

It was no secret that Branet was a confidential advisor to the French Embassy in Jakarta. He regularly reported all the latest titbits of information, business and rumours, to the Ambassador and his staff especially the Commercial Counsellor of the embassy. He also provided information to the French Bank for Overseas Commerce, a state owned organisation, which financed and approved credits for French exports. He even carried the banks business card, where his

name was followed by the title of *Conseiller*, or adviser, to the bank, an honorary title designed to impress certain people.

Ennis knew that people like Branet, with their background and contacts would diffuse positive information concerning Papcon's project, if, they thought that they would get something out of it.

'I would like to see Antoine as soon as possible, as I have some important things to discuss with him on Barito,' announced Branet.

That's strictly a lot of shit, thought Ennis. Branet always used that ploy to worm his way into finding out more on what was going on for himself.

He had good friends in the Indonesian Ministry of Industry and he personally knew the Minister very well, who a very Europeanised Indonesian, who had studied and worked in Germany. The Minister, Sudarman, had risen from Director General and had become an important man, a powerful and influential government minister.

The Ministry of Industry oversaw the development of all industrial projects. However, paradoxically the Ministry of Forests, which controlled all forestry resources, sponsored Barito, and would through the state owned companies that they operated, gather the Indonesian share of the capital required for its development.

Consequently, the project required close collaboration between the two ministries. It was easier said than done, since Sudarman's ministry was sponsoring its own pulp mill project. A large project, estimated at more than a quarter of a million dollars. As a result, they were both competing for government funds. The potential conflict of interests was only too evident to Ennis.

World public opinion had always been well informed through the media on almost every aspect or development in the oil industry. People filled their cars with gas every day, used heating oil in the winter, observed the fluctuation of oil prices at the gas pumps and on the world markets, and watched with concern the evolution of each crisis in the Middle East.

Whilst aware of vast oil riches and the power game played around that essential energy resource, they were totally oblivious to the

economics of the forestry products industry and one of its main derivatives, paper. It was only in recent times that ecologist movements agitated against the cutting down of trees and promoted the recycling of paper.

Without paper modern society could not function. From education to the press and from packaging to hygiene, all of its variations were omnipresent in daily life.

Recycling of paper was however to a large degree an ecologist's myth, as far as saving forestry resources were concerned. Recycling only served to slow down the process. Paper fibres could only be recycled a few times and after each cycle they were downgraded from use in high quality papers to newsprint and finally to low grade packaging paper and board. Needless to say, hygienic papers were flushed down the drain after a single usage.

A steady supply of new fibre was needed, from trees, which were essentially planted by man in the northern hemisphere countries.

Ennis was concerned Branet would attract too much undesirable publicity to Papcon's project. Papcon already had good sponsors through the Minister Wihartjo, not to mention the Vice President Idris Hendra. In reality, they had little need of Branet's services.

He saw little use in becoming involved too deeply with Sudarman's system; it would provide the competition with more information than was necessary about the progress of the Barito project and its sources of funding.

It was never very clear what precisely interested parties such as Branet were seeking. Ennis was reasonably certain that they did not know themselves. Such people were opportunists, birds of prey, or even worse vultures, watching and waiting for the chance, either to make a kill, or get in on someone else's feast.

Nevertheless, Ennis felt that Papcon could not afford to upset Branet. He agreed that he would inform Brodzski, telling him there was an urgent matter that Branet wished to see him about.

They arrived in Paris on a fine Saturday morning. Ennis collected his baggage and slunk past the customs. They were loaded with gifts and

purchases, which his friends never ceased to cajole him into bringing back. He had also acquired some fine oriental antique porcelain to add to his growing collection.

He took a cab into town to his apartment. It was the holiday season. His first thought was a couple of days rest to recover from the overdose of cognac and lack of sleep. But before he called Brodzski to let him know that he was back, who promptly asked him over to his apartment as soon as he had the time to shower and change.

Brodzski's apartment was situated about half a kilometre from the Arc de Triomphe, on the avenue Foch. A magnificent residence of eight or nine rooms, he had bought it for a song at the end of the war. Its price had risen over the years to such a point that Brodzski had confided to Ennis, that it would make even a rich man cry with envy.

'Well what's new?' he asked Ennis. It was almost as if to say, have you signed the contract, Ennis thought.

'I've got a letter from the Minister of Forests.'

'You've got a letter!' he said with a slightly mocking smiling.

'Yes, from Wihartjo, saying that they are prepared to participate up to forty percent in the project equity, through one of their forestry organisations, Hutan Industri III.'

'Excellent!' Brodzski exclaimed. Ennis was not sure whether he was being sarcastic or not.

'There's more, they will give us the logging rights...to the pulpwood in a forest zone near to the Barito River, about four million hectares. That's for the life of the project-the payback period for the loans-about twenty years.

'That's what we had expected!' he said a little sourly. 'Where's the rest coming from?'

'The rest?'

'The rest of the equity!' he scowled.

'Oh! The remaining part of the Indonesian equity will come from the logging concessionaires who have operations in that area, they pay a special tax on commercial timber extracted for the plywood, furniture and veneer industries. The tax will go into a development fund for setting up new forestry based industries, controlled by the

Ministry of Forests.'

'Good!'

Brodzski began to relax, he looked less suspicious. He always doubted the worse news, imagining in his paranoid fashion that Ennis was working some Byzantine game, on behalf of Finntech, against him. Ennis supposing that Brodzski had reason to suspect those kinds of tricks gave him the benefit of the doubt, brushing aside any kind of momentary irritation.

'Strecker has agreed to formalise the consortium and has agreed to a budget of eight million dollars,' Brodzski announced obviously very satisfied with his success.

'Excellent news, when do we meet with him to go over the contents of the preliminary feasibility report.'

Brodzski replied that it would take place a week later, once people had returned from their spring holidays.

The first formal consortium meeting was held in mid- March, attended by Finntech, TPS, Bayonne Industries and Construction Lyonnaise. After the initial opening by Brodzski, Ennis addressed the meeting and gave them a glowing report on the project, and the imminent possibility of starting discussions with potential Indonesian private partners.

He went to explain that the Indonesian authorities were in full agreement with the plans for the development of the joint-venture project. All that was required to set the business in motion was the preparation of a preliminary feasibility report for presentation to the banks and the French authorities, who were to provide export credits. The finalised report would require a full-scale survey of the forest region, which was to supply the mill with pulpwood. After this had been undertaken, the final feasibility report together with a full description of the mill, its construction and operating costs, and manpower requirements would be completed by an independent consultant.

Papcon would then complete the report with the financial chapter, describing the financial structure of the project, working capital,



repayment of loans, cash flow and profitability projections.

Brodzski estimated that the first phase would require eight months. They could then, through the banks and financial institutions, start to mobilise the capital and enter into contract negotiations with the future mill owners.

‘Who will be the future mill owner?’ asked Strecker.

That was a good question, Ennis thought to himself. He continued smoothly with his act, painting a glowing picture of the future owner - non-existent at that point in time. He hopefully described a financially powerful Indonesian-Chinese industrial group-whom he avoided naming-bluffing that Papcon had commenced very confidential discussions with them. None of those present realised, that Brodzski had not really given much thought to that question, having being too occupied putting together his European consortium.

Brodzski followed on by adroitly bluffing his way around naming the group, and by talking of ministers and planning authorities, he concluded by saying that he would be leaving for Jakarta the following week and would discuss the subject with the Indonesian Vice President, Idris Hendra.

That appeared to satisfy those present. Ennis was relieved but could not help marvelling at the gullibility of people. He wondered why they had not asked more penetrating questions...maybe that was not cricket, or whatever game the French played.

The consortium members respected the position of Strecker, the CEO of a multibillion-dollar firm; he surely must know what he was talking about. Ennis on the other hand imagined that it was quite the opposite, and that it was Strecker who believed that Papcon were the experts. He finally rationalised that it was a case of natural professional respect and mutual confidence.

As long as the consortium were prepared to pay the costs and as long as Brodzski’s plans unfolded as promised the industrialists and backers would be satisfied. As Axelmann cynically commented to Ennis, ‘What have we to lose? Their money and their shareholders money, they can afford it!’

Ennis was beginning to learn the rules of Brodzski’s game, which

were to follow him without question, under all circumstances and never, never, put into the slightest doubt any of his decisions, above all publicly; any transgression of the rules would be instantly and severely sanctioned. He could see that if he respected those rules and if all went according to Brodzski's plans, he would be happy with Papcon and Barito for a long time to come.

Brodzski was very pleased with himself. Following the meeting, he invited his two executives to lunch at Jarasse, a well-known seafood restaurant on the corner of avenue Charles de Gaulle and avenue Madrid. It would cost the consortium five hundred dollars to start, but who cared things were beginning to look very promising.

Over the following ten days, Axelmann hammered out the draft of a consortium agreement and the shares of the respective partners leaving a part open to future members.

The initial consortium budget for the external project development costs was five million dollars, with provisions for additional expenses up to a total of eight million dollars. The members own internal costs were excluded, each one supporting their own respective expenses.

The budget, managed by TPS as the consortium leader, was to be paid in by the consortium members, including Papcon, who would contribute like the big boys, their share of the costs was to be 7,5% of the budget. It was agreed that Papcon would execute most of the external work and could bill the consortium for of all the project development costs, in advance for each quarter, including its own expenses; in other terms, Axelmann saw to it that Papcon's total costs were fully covered.

That was only the beginning. They had worked well to prepare a good agreement. Axelmann's background was business law and economics. He liked to brag that he had studied under a renowned Finance Minister, before he had entered into politics, where he had been particularly successful in managing the French economy during his term of office.

The agreement was signed at the end of March, then two days later they flew to Helsinki, where they had arranged meetings with the

paper machinery builders and the engineering consultants, Kalevi Nurminen.

Finnish engineering firms were industrial giants, diversified into fields as different as shipbuilding, oil rigs, heavy engineering and even aircraft and electronics. They owned and operated huge pulp and paper mills in the frozen interior of their forest covered country.

Ennis knew Finland well, having been engaged in the forest industries over many years whilst working for Finntech. He had many occasions to visit the country over the previous years on company business.

However, Finland was too cold and though he liked the Finns they were a little too serious for his liking. He preferred a warmer climate and the closer it was to the tropics the better. When relationships with them became tense, he could not help thinking of an enraged French customer, who had maliciously described them as fucking penguins!

It was just after five in the afternoon when they arrived at the Helsinki Inter-Continental Hotel, about ten minutes from the downtown area by taxi.

Jorgen Eriksson, a Swede, met Brodzski and his group on their arrival at the hotel. Eriksson was a senior vice president of Nurminen, who had lived in France for several years and was a Francophile; he would be on Brodzski's side. He was more open than the typical serious and less communicative Finns.

It was very cold but dry, the remains of the last snow in the downtown area had all but disappeared apart from a few ice-hardened patches on the dust and grit covered pavements. The trees and bushes in the parks looked black, as though they would never come back to life again.

'Christ it's cold,' said Axelmann looking at his watch for some reason, as though it would tell him the temperature.

'Minus fifteen! Christ! I suppose it could be worse, at least it's not snowing. Do you really want to walk?' Ennis replied, looking at the neon light that alternated the time with the temperature on the roof of

what appeared to be the Post Office building.

‘I need some fresh air, it’s stifling. Brodzski never stopped smoking on the flight or talking for that matter!’

They walked past the Sibelius Concert Hall and the Parliament building towards Mannerheimsgatan. The streets were practically empty, the traffic was thin it was only six o’clock. The trams passed by with a metallic whirr. The shops were already closed.

The next morning they skidded out over the last of the dirty and patchy winter snow to Nurminen’s headquarters, about twenty-five kilometres outside of Helsinki. They were greeted in the plain austere modern offices that the Finns appreciate, copiously decorated with plain pine panelling. Though Spartan and functional, it was well heated against their severe winters.

Kalevi Nurminen greeted them personally joined by Jorgen Eriksson. Jorgen was a pleasant individual compared to most of the others in that consulting firm. Ennis saw them as arrogant trolls, deeply engaged in the obscure art of their business.

He would not like to have been on the receiving end of their professional criticism. He felt they were not unlike high priests. He was later to discover that their reputation was a mere facade, their knowledge was collective; individually they were no more intelligent or incompetent than their less reputed competitors. At that moment however, things were a little different, the situation was reversed, and it was Papcon the customer representing the Barito consortium.

Nurminen was not a beginner in the business of designing pulp mills in distant lands. They had built mills in some outlandish places such as in Siberia, but never so big and never so exotic as Kalimantan, and never in a jungle location.

The common language was English and the common subject engineering. Ennis was at an advantage compared to Axelmann, who was neither an engineer nor a perfect English speaker; at least he did not come up to Scandinavian standards, which were high when it came to the English language.

Brodzski was a professional engineer and had certainly been good

in his younger day. At almost sixty-five he was developing a tendency to ramble on and at moments was unclear in his ideas, he did not have a good grasp of the more sophisticated technology of the day. His English had been learnt in India many years before and was highly coloured with the usages of the sub-continent, which led to a certain amount of confusion.

What Papcon wanted was a report that would give the project unquestionable credibility and was highly positive on its economic feasibility.

Nurminen was considered in engineering circles as one of the worlds leading and most dynamic international consultants in its field. They had built their reputation over a period of more than thirty years and had spread their activity to all continents. They were recognised by governments, international institutions and industrial corporations as being the leader in their field.

Brodzski's question was whether he could convince Nurminen that the Barito project was really good, or whether Papcon could get the Finns' endorsement by other means. After several years of boom, industry around the world had begun to cut back on its investments, especially the pulp and paper industry, which was in a situation of over-capacity in the industrialised countries. As a consequence, Nurminen's business had also been seriously affected by the lack of new projects.

They were short of work. Papcon arrived just at the right time with the right kind of project for Indonesia, a country rich in raw materials with its immense rainforests and other wealth in the form of vast reserves of oil and gas. Brodzski's arrival with a ready-made project was welcomed with enthusiasm. With a consortium made up of TPS and Finntech, Jorgen Eriksson half jokingly confided to Ennis that it was almost too good to be true.

As professionals, they could only work with Papcon as independent consultants, on a fee-paying basis. He discreetly informed Brodzski that he would get a very good price, if, Brodzski agreed to guarantee Nurminen the contract for the detail engineering and project management.

Axelmann together with Ennis spent the following three days negotiating with Nurminen's team, whilst Brodzski left to meet potential suppliers for the paper making machines, which represented a major part of the production equipment for the mill.

Ennis swiftly saw that Nurminen's people were excited by the business prospects with Papcon-they were hungry. The principal question was the exact price that they would ask for the feasibility report. Ennis was obliged to listen to laborious exposes conceived by the consultant's specialists to demonstrate their firm's experience and competence, to show Papcon that they would get value for money. Ennis could only think during the endless exposes, that it would have been so much simpler to be direct-by asking how much would it cost to get a favourable report.

After long tractations, they finally agreed to a price. Nurminen convinced Brodzski it was a bargain, a special price, based on the condition that Brodzski guaranteed them the contract for the detail engineering, once the main contract had been signed. Papcon had estimated the detail engineering and project management at one hundred million dollars.

Papcon spent a further day putting up a show of resistance on the pre-conditions linked to the guaranteed contract for the detailed engineering and how to assure Nurminen he would not be cheated. They finally agreed to include a secret addendum, whereby Nurminen would be appointed the main engineering designer and coordinator for the entire project, after the contract for the mill construction had been signed with the future owners.

'At what price?' Axelmann whispered to Ennis. 'That'll be interesting, Brodzski's a lousy negotiator.'

It was true like many good salesmen Brodzski had no sense for buying. To him a little over three million dollars for a favourable report from Nurminen would be mere bagatelle compared to what was to be got in the final count.

Brodzski dreamt of honours, he had already been decorated with the Legion d'Honneur, created by Napoleon as a reward for his loyal

supporters. Brodzski coveted the glory and the wealth that he knew were necessary to live out the role he had predetermined for himself, avoiding the fall into the obscurity of old age - that awaited failure.

‘I agree with your proposal,’ he said to without more ado to Nurminen’s surprised negotiator, then turning to Axelmann, he gave him the instruction, ‘Get it down on paper and I’ll sign it before we leave.’

Axelmann together with Ennis and Jorgen Eriksson spent the rest of the remaining time putting together the final terms of an agreement, and its secret addendum, binding both parties together for the feasibility study and the main contract. Axelmann paid special attention to a grand legalistic style and the length of the document, which he felt necessary for the credibility and effect that it would have on the other members of the consortium.

Eriksson and his specialist colleagues emphasised that the critical element in convincing the financial institutions, would be the demonstration that the raw materials were available at the right prices and in the quantities necessary for the life of the project. Brodzski had not forgotten that element and had already fixed in his mind that ORSFE in Paris would look after that question.

There was a method in Brodzski’s speed; the chain reaction continued. By presenting his agreement with Nurminen to Strecker, Strecker was further convinced, in spite of the fact that it was a commercial contract for services against payment with vague promises, which could only favour Nurminen.

That evening it was celebrations, they were invited to the Kalastajatorppa, a real tongue twister for the visitors, or simply translated it was the Fishermans Rest, a renowned restaurant and nightclub on the outskirts of Helsinki, in the company of Kalevi Nurminen and his team. They dined on large quantities of gravlax and vodka followed by elk and cloudberries. After dinner, they drank Koskenkorva and danced until the early hours of the morning.

Brodzski had been less successful with the paper machine builders, who had already lost a lot of money in Asia five years

earlier, when they had signed contracts in the Philippines with a company controlled by one of the Marcos cronies. There had been so much graft that finally the International Finance Corporation, a subsidiary of the World Bank in Washington, who was financing the project, withdrew. The price was estimated to be more than twice the market value for such a contract.

They had not only lost a considerable amount of money, but above all the scandal over bribes and crooked deals, which was widely publicised in the media, gave them such a bad image in Finland, that they were not ready to embark on another Asian adventure at that moment time.

But there was another aspect to their decision. Brodzski was associated with a close business friend, George Schmitz, whose family owned a paper machine construction company in Bordeaux. Schmitz held a license from the same Finnish Group that Brodzski had met and who had declined his proposal.

Axelmann knew that Schmitz did not wish to help Brodzski. He had only had only gone through the motions of introducing Brodzski to his Finnish partners. It had been a facade so that he could not have been accused of obstructing his friends business.

In fact, he had gone as far as deliberately undermining Brodzski's credibility with the Finns. He had not wanted to jeopardise his own business relations with them by recommending Papcon. If the project fell through, he would look bad, but on the other hand, if Brodzski was successful, he wanted the business to come to his own company in France, without the marketing or consortium costs.

The final stop in Finland was to Brodzski's key partner, Tapani Hakkala of Finntech. Hakkala was experiencing business difficulties following the total collapse of Finntech's Russian markets and the more general business downturn, which was having a very serious impact on the Finnish economy.

Tapani Hakkala was pleased with Papcon's progress and the consortium agreement with TPS; he now had the assurance of Nurminen's participation. Together they examined the next phase of the project and the financing arrangements.



Brodzski was a master at name-dropping. At lunch with Hakkala, he casually dropped the name of a certain Dahlqvist of the International Finance Corporation in Washington. He referred to him as my close friend. Axelmann was astonished, his mouth fell open and the piece of steak he was about eat dropped onto his napkin; as far as he knew that Brodzski had only met Dahlqvist once in his life.

‘My friend Dahlqvist has accepted our project and will participate in the capital and loans,’ Brodzski said with a nonchalant wave of his hand.

What he omitted to say was there had been absolutely no official contacts whatsoever with the IFC. No applications had been made. Further, the IFC would require a detailed analysis on profitability, raw materials and their prices, quantities, quality, and availability, but above all, the capital structure, which at that point in time was more than vague.

Hakkala, in spite of the Finns extremely cautious nature, took him at his word. Brodzski was flying high. Ennis thought that he probably believed his own words.

They left that evening for the Rovaniemi in the north of Finland where they had planned to mix business with pleasure; Brodzski had declined politely with the excuse of pressing business in Paris.

‘A Bridge tournament,’ Axelmann had whispered to Ennis.

They had been invited by Jorgen Eriksson to spend a couple of days skiing in Lapland, he had told them its our tradition to do business and get to know our partners in an informal relaxed atmosphere. They were only too pleased to get away from Brodzski and decompress a little.

## Chapter 9 - A LESSON IN PAPER

They felt tired though relaxed after the sauna, but above all were pleased to find themselves far from the cities of Europe, deep in the dark northern Finnish forests, above the Arctic Circle in a log cabin

with its simple but homely comforts.

Settled down in the curious armchairs fashioned out of elk horns and covered with reindeer skins, they sat around a log fire, eating their evening meal that consisted of thick sausages grilled on long slivers of wood, prised off the logs stacked by the fireplace, drinking beer from the bottles.

The conversation had drifted into a subject of common interest, a meandering philosophical discussion on the future of paper and its role in the world at the end of the twentieth century. Jorgen Eriksson was in full swing, waving a cigarette in his nicotine stained fingers to make a point, and holding a bottle of beer in the other hand.

‘I mean after all, what is paper? You take cultural papers for example, for texts and images, newspapers and magazines, or books, in spite of all the electronic changes around us it’s still our basic media of communication!’

‘Okay! But is it all necessary? We only use less than five percent of the information available. Information become, in a sense, an obstacle; were overwhelmed with data that ends up as a form of pollution, junk mail, email and the rest! Personally a lot of information I receive goes directly into my vertical filing system,’ replied Ennis.

They all laughed as he threw in a symbolic gesture his paper napkin into the fire, where it disappeared in an ephemeral puff of white smoke.

‘You’re right. In the past people were taught most of what they needed to know in their jobs. That’s not possible any longer, the reason is simple, the knowledge base has become too great.’

There was a pause. Eriksson flicked his cigarette ash in the direction of the fire, looking at his bottle as if to suggest it was time for another beer.

‘Today we have the possibility of being able to choose information; this gives us some control over our consumption. In spite of internet and perhaps because of it, printed matter gives us a wide variety of choice, like that we can develop our own knowledge base,’ he paused lifting the bottle to his lips.

‘Do you know for example Swedes spend more than five and a half hours a day reading, listening to the radio, or watching the television and films,’ said Jorgen. He waved his bottle in the direction of Ennis, as if it was a record to be proud of.

‘That’s fuckin normal, they’ve got sod all else to do!’ said Ennis laughing hilariously at his own sense of humour, whilst Eriksson, being a Swede, looked in a concentrated and slightly embarrassed manner at bottle he was lifting to his lips. The others joined in the laughter.

‘Sorry Jorgen,’ said Ennis, signalling by his tone that he was not at all sorry and laughed again loudly again.

Karvonen took advantage of the distraction to give his viewpoint. His heavy Finnish accent and deep voice gave the impression of reflection and seriousness to his words.

‘Yes, well, the paper making process as we know it today is relatively old, it’s only undergone relatively few major changes during its last two hundred year or so of history. Of course the production capacity and the speed of the machines have increased a hundred times.’

Ennis interrupted, ‘Sure, but is the raw material supply capable of following the demand?’

Karvonen continued, ‘I think so, the world-wide availability of conifers for paper making is of course limited, as you know this has led to a general increase in the use of hardwoods and non-wood fibres, such as sugar cane residue or straw in certain parts of the world.’

‘I know and that’s why in the last decades, the use of tropical hardwoods has developed, according to some people its increasing at a destructive rate!’

Eriksson shrugged his shoulders as if he disagreed but did not want to make a special point of it.

There was a silence, the fire flickered and cracked.

‘What about computers and all that, won’t they change demand,’ said Axelmann avoiding the subject of tropical forests, finding a point that he was familiar with.

‘No I don’t think so...but perhaps instead of thinking of the so called paperless office, maybe we should think of the less paper office, because computers continue to use a hell of a lot of paper!’ he smiled. ‘So, we think papers got a future and what’s more a good one,’ said Eriksson justifying his firm’s future.

‘The great thing is that papers made from a renewable source, wood, and for the moment there’s no substitute for many of its uses, such as toilet tissue,’ added Karvonen.

‘The Arabs get by!’ said Axelmann smirking.

Eriksson ignoring the sniggers quickly continued to avoid any further scatological remarks.

‘Besides that noble product, there’s also corrugated boxes, and printing and writing papers. I don’t have to tell you that growth is strongest in the newly industrialised nations in the Far East. When you think about it, the oldest surviving written records are Assyrian cuneiform clay tablets, about five thousand years old. It’ll be difficult to kick the habit, especially when you realise that there are papyrus in the British Museum that date back four thousand years.

‘Where some of your reports should be Jorgen!’

They all laughed again, Jorgen was becoming the whipping boy, and Ennis enjoyed that immensely, having spent many years having to listening to Nurminen’s specialists’ overblown opinions.

‘Yeah, actually it was a Frenchman, Nicholas-Louis Robert, who invented the paper making machine. He even applied for a patent in 1798,’ Ennis said pursuing the history lesson.

‘Yes, but only thirty or so paper making machines were built in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, and they only produced a few tons of paper a day, which I suppose was a lot then,’ said Eriksson.

‘We did Jorgen, and I suppose you’ll now tell us that new machines are now producing more than two thousand tons a day.’

‘I’m glad you’ve done your homework John,’ said Eriksson rather testily.

‘I did, and a little more on some other simple facts, each of those machines is consuming as much as six thousand tons of wood, or

sixty thousand trees, which is about sixty hectares a day!’ Ennis went on pissed off at the Swedes imagined superiority.

‘So what!’

‘So what! The world’s consumption is two hundred and fifty million tons a year, that’s about five hundred millions tons of wood, five million hectares of forest, equal to about one fifth of Finland’s forest and wooded land. Every five years, a forest the size of Finland disappears. Sure there’s reforestation, but is that the right direction?’ Ennis was surprised at his own vehemence.

‘That’s all that ecologist and green shit, those people don’t know what they’re talking about!’ said Eriksson disgustedly.

‘I can tell you that in Finland, the timber growing stock remained stable with intensified management and sylvaculture there’s been an enormous improvement since the sixties!’

‘Let me stop you there! I think you’re forgetting part of this has been due to draining your peat lands to make way for forestation programs,’ injected Ennis.

Eriksson shrugged, he could not deny that.

Ennis continued. ‘It’s not as rosy as you think, the pictures a little less bright when you consider the acidification of the Finnish forests, causing defoliation of trees. I read recently that some specialists reckon it’s not far from twenty percent for moderate to severe defoliation, sure that isn’t fatal, but you can’t deny that heavy pollution and defoliation are the first signs of death in the forest.’

‘Okay, let’s talk about something else,’ said Axelmann, becoming bored and irritated by the subject he knew little about.

They paused sipping their beer, looking into the fire, as if seeking answers.

‘We’ve developed a program for reforestation with the Indonesian government,’ Karvonen said slowly, waiting for their reaction.

‘A piss in the ocean, I’m sorry to say.’

‘Tell me John, whose side are you on anyway?’

‘I just like arguing, let’s have another beer,’ he said with a smile.

‘Good idea, it’s time for the ice hockey match anyway.’

They stood up relieved to change the subject and went to the

kitchen, in search of another carton of Lapin Kulta export beer. Karvonen vastly relieved, zapped the TV for the Finnish-Swedish ice hockey derby.

They returned to Paris in excellent spirits, having achieved almost all of their objectives, with the sole exception of an agreement concerning the papermaking machine.

Brodzski met Strecker and informed him that it was all in the bag. What he did not tell him was that Axelmann was negotiating a risk policy with the French Export Insurance Agency, which would guaranty cover against financial loss related to the project development costs, in Papcon's favour, if for some reason the project did not go ahead.

With the insurance cover Papcon could raise fresh funds from its banks and notably from Banque de Berne, guaranteed by the policy, which covered the costs in the case of loss. If the project went ahead the costs were simply added to the contract price, and the banks were reimbursed.

Brodzski, with the financial input from the consortium plus the funds de Berne would advance against the insurance policy, could count on several millions of dollars to fund Papcon's expenses, for all the phases of the work up to signature of the contract, without ever having to put his hand in his own pocket.

Brodzski promptly voted himself a rise in salary and not being a selfish man in money matters, did the same for Ennis and Axelmann, with a substantial boosting of expenses available for travel and entertaining.

That evening they celebrated their success with an extravagant dinner, at one of the most exclusive restaurants in Paris, Taillevent. Their exuberance was only slightly damped by Brodzski's monologue, reliving his past successes and expounded his theories on business and politics.

After dinner Brodzski left the two younger men, who continued their evening at La Place, a private late night disco and drinking club, where they could breathe freely and relax after the pressure of the

day. Eying the girls on the disco floor, they discussed the events of the last days and both came to the conclusion that age was beginning to show signs of catching up on Brodzski. His faux pas, exaggerations and endless monologues seemed to be dangerously on the increase. To them he was old and they had started to envisage his retirement, which they reasoned could not be that far into the future.

They acknowledged that Brodzski was excellent at the Paris end. But they would have to limit his exposure to the no-nonsense Finns who would soon they would joined by a German group. It was becoming complicated and required careful handling, making sure that each and every partner and business associate was happy.

Klienner Industrie Anlagen was Germany's electrical giant; besides washing machines and household goods, they built power-generating plant for industry and were amongst the world's leaders. The whole Barito forest complex would require an eighty-megawatt electrical power generation plant that was equivalent to supplying a modern town of a quarter of a million inhabitants.

The consortium needed to spread the project risk, industrially and financially, to satisfy the French financial institutions, as well as to enhance their credibility as a truly international consortium. Klienner Industrie Anlagen, whose knowledge and success in Indonesia were irrefutable, would be an ideal partner.

Edouard Michel was Klienner's engineering business manager in France. He was based in their Paris branch office not far from Brodzski's own address. Michel was well known in the industry, a sober and attentive executive. He was always alert, on the look out for new opportunities, especially in the field of large projects, which were favoured by European governments, who backed them with highly attractive financial packages, and by doing so indirectly supported their national engineering industries.

When Brodzski called, inviting Michel over to his office, who was only too pleased to hurry over. When he was told of the consortium line up, there and then he called the firm's headquarters at Stuttgart, Germany. They immediately agreed that Heinz Reinbold, their

specialist, in that field fly into Paris the following Monday morning for discussions.

Reinbold was an old hand in large international construction projects. He had a very philosophical and pragmatic approach to business, based on the concept that if he was not present he could never be successful, and in any case, even if he was present, he could not win all the time.

His favourite pastime was reciting the latest limerick from his large repertory as he smoked a Sobrane, his favourite brand of Turkish cigarettes, a habit he had acquired during his long stays in Iran and the Middle East for Klienner. He was fifty years old, but Ennis would not have given him more than forty.

As with the Finns, Reinbold could not take major decisions anticipating the approval of his board. However it was not the practice of Klienner Industrie Anlagen to pay project development costs, other than those of its own organisation, but in view of the consortium line up, he saw there was an exceptional opportunity, and undeniably the consortium was starting to look very convincing.

## Chapter 10 - FAMILY BUSINESS

The Gao's were part of an old and highly respected family of Taiwanese capitalists. Taiwan, the Republic of China as opposed to the Peoples Republic of China, otherwise known as Mainland China or Communist China, was a modern society with a relatively free economic system, even though it was not an entirely democratic one.

The Gao's were a native Taiwanese family; they had preceded the arrival in 1949 of the two million Mainland Chinese, refugees who had fled the regime of Mao Zedong, after the communists had won the long civil war against Chiang Kai Shek's nationalists. The conflict had raged between different factions since the fall of the last imperial dynasty in 1912, when Sun Yat Sen was nominated as the first president of the newly founded Chinese Republic.



The founder of the industrial and business empire, the Yu Mei Tang Corporation, was S.C.Gao's great-grandfather. He had been born nearby the southern Taiwanese city of Kao Hsiung in 1860. He was a wealthy landowner, whose rice paddies had been farmed by landless peasant labourers as far back as anyone could remember.

When the S.C.'s great-grandfather inherited the family estate in 1890, he had completed his studies in Shanghai and Peking, and had already assimilated progressive ideas carried by the wave of modernisation that had unfurled from the west.

Taiwan was then a distant and unruly province of a decadent and disintegrating China, embroiled in the turmoil at the end of its last imperial dynasty, attacked by invaders from the west, and menaced by the Japanese from the east.

The large subtropical island, which the Portuguese had called Formosa, meaning beautiful, lay at the crossroads between east and west to Japan, and from north to south between the great treaty ports of China. Foreign ships and adventurers from all lands frequented its lawless ports.

It was under these conditions the young Gao decided to set up his first factory, to produce sugar from the cane that grew abundantly in the hot humid climate of the island.

In the beginning, his young industry was not a success and suffered great difficulties. The islands economy was constantly disrupted by the lawlessness that then reigned. The provincial imperial administration in Taipei, forgotten by distant Peking, was totally corrupt and ineffective.

In 1892, an incident occurred, which was to change the fortune of the Gao family and the future of Taiwan.

The Japanese Empire with its burgeoning economy and industries was seeking new markets, and power, not unlike the western models they emulated.

Their natural choice had been territorial expansion to the north, where they were in direct confrontation with Imperial China over the control of Korea. It was part of the great carve up of China starting with its vassal states, by the colonial powers.

The recently modernised Japanese fleet, with battleships and cruisers built to western designs, met the Chinese Imperial fleet, which had barely changed over the centuries, in the Yellow Sea. The result was that Japan inflicted a cruel defeat on China, not only in military terms, but also in pride and in race.

The so-called ‘dwarf barbarians’ from the east had humiliated the Middle Kingdom. They demanded reparations in recognition of Chinas defeat and errors. These reparations were in the form of the unconditional secession of the islands of Taiwan, and the Pescadores to Japan.

The Imperial Government in Peking was in no position to negotiate, and Japans occupation of Taiwan commenced. The Government in Tokyo immediately integrated Taiwan into the Japanese administrative structure. Taiwan was organised on Japanese lines. Officials and businessmen were dispatched from Tokyo, to transform Taiwan into a modern Japanese Prefecture.

The arrival in Kao Hsiung, of law and order and a structured local government, changed the Gao family’s prospects almost overnight. Business improved and the sugar factory prospered with new and stable markets in Japan. They also acquired access to engineering knowledge and machines, from the new Japanese industries that were attracted to Taiwan, and the prospering ship repair yards that were springing up along the islands west coast.

The industrial activities of the Gao family grew, extending into other areas related to the by-products of sugar. One of these was paper, necessary for packaging their products, which was manufactured from bagasse, the waste fibre from the remains of the crushed sugar cane.

The prosperity of the family grew over the years. Their solid conservative background, as rural landowners, steered them clear of the endless speculation of the city businessmen, whose fortunes rose and fell overnight.

They opened their first branch office in Taipei for the sales and distribution of their manufactured products. They the bought sugar cane crops from the nearby farmers, dictated conditions and

controlled prices. They organised transport and distribution and influenced local government. The large banks that recognised a good investment courted them.

Japan had brought prosperity to Taiwan, but at a price. They had imposed their language in schools, their culture and system of administration.

The Taiwanese resented the Japanese presence, but they were forced to accept the changes under the threat of severe penalties for resistance and disobedience from the occupiers.

The situation on the mainland of China was barely encouraging. The turmoil of revolution was followed by civil war, as the successors of the Qing dynasty began their struggle for the control of power, under leadership of Chiang Kai Shek, and the communists, under Mao Zedong.

The western powers took advantage of the situation to increase their humiliating demands for new treaty ports and concessions, whilst the Japanese sized Manchuria for themselves, setting up a puppet state.

Then World War II came, and after its initial success Japan was defeated. It was a devastated nation and its colonial possessions were returned to their rightful owners. Taiwan was returned to China, which was no improvement for its people, after the suffering and privations of the war, in which their sons and their industry had been pressed to serve under the imperial banner of the rising sun.

The ancient disorders soon returned when the incompetent and corrupt Nationalist administration was re-established on the island. However the days of Chiang's government on the mainland were numbered as the communists gathered force and advanced. Finally, in 1949 Chiang 'temporarily' evacuated the Nationalist government to Taiwan.

Lao Gao had struggled to maintain the family business afloat, but the shortage of materials and spare parts, as well as markets, after five years of a war that had expropriated the production of their mills, had bled the business dry.

Once again, distant events were to change their fortunes and

destiny. The arrival of Chiang and his two million followers, bankers, businessmen, intellectuals, adventurers, as well as a constant fear of invasion by the communists from the mainland, transformed the economy of the island into a capitalistic fortress.

The development and economic miracle of Taiwan was underpinned by American dollars, it was a bastion against the encroaching communist menace for the free world.

The defeat of the Nationalists and the shock of the communist take-over, was followed by the Korean war, which mobilised industry, supplying the western armies in their fight against the spectre of communism, which they feared would overflow into all countries of the region.

The Gao's family business prospered once again and grew, and when Lao Gao passed away his son Xiao Gao succeeded him. The years of the economic miracle were followed by spectacular growth. In Vietnam the war brought misery to its peoples and more wealth and prosperity to Taiwan and the other countries of the American camp in Asia.

In 1975, the still conservative grandsons, finally heeding Chiang Kai Shek's exhortations, to export and develop their businesses and commercial relations in future markets, began to look overseas for opportunities.

They were excluded from Communist China and its zone of influence for obvious reasons, and from Japan and Western markets, because of the sophisticated needs of those markets. The Gao's paper products were not up to standard, they had not yet reached the quality necessary for more discerning consumers.

They therefore looked to the regional markets of South East Asia, and were met halfway by the diaspora of overseas Chinese, who in turn were seeking partners from whom they could acquire products and technology, but at a level compatible with the development of their own adopted countries, as well as partners who could participate in their industrialisation through investment.

It was at this moment that Gao's eldest son S.C.Gao was recommended to Jani Sutrawan, a Jakarta businessman and a member

of the overseas Chinese community. His business reputation and money had been made in timber and forestry operations, through his links with influential members of the government and high-ranking army officers.

S.C.Gao knew of Sutrawan indirectly, through their separate business dealings with the Guo Min Pulp Mill in Taiwan. Sutrawan shipped raw material, in the form of pulpwood from his forest clearing operations in Indonesia, to the Taiwanese pulp mill. Whilst Gao bought paper pulp from Guo Min, where his family were also a minority shareholder. They had no direct business relations with Sutrawan and what was more, there had never been any specific reason to develop them.

Both S.C.Gao and Sutrawan spoke the same Chinese dialect, Hokkienese, which was spoken in Taiwan and in the mainland province of Fujian across the straits from Taiwan. Apart from that shared language, they had extremely different backgrounds and personalities.

Gao's family had been steeped in traditions of Confucian philosophy and filial respect. They carefully cultivated their family wealth and investments, whilst Sutrawan had started life as a rice porter in the port of Surabaya. He had risen from that lowly position, with the instinctive genius of many of the overseas Chinese entrepreneurs, to become a rich industrialist and also a great spender and playboy.

At that time the Indonesian Governments policy was to encourage investment in the development of the paper industry, to supply the needs of the expanding education system and government services. Sutrawan saw the opportunity of creating an association with Gao. Firstly Sutrawan would have a protected market, importing the raw materials in the form of paper pulp from Taiwan then converting it into finished paper products, protected by customs tariffs on imports. Secondly he could continue his expansion through the development of a locally based paper industry, enjoying a monopoly, which guaranteed him handsome profits.

They thus came to an agreement, to construct in joint-venture a

paper mill. For an initial investment of only ten million US dollars, the mill was built with the possibility to extend its capacity fourfold as the market need grew.

Gao and Sutrawan were wise, in the sense that they did not want to carry the total risk for the investment, nor for the loans that were needed to set up the mill. Gao set out to involve the Taiwanese government in the business, not directly, but rather through the aid of the Taiwanese Eximbank, a state institution designed to aid exports on the American model.

The second partner was the semi-state owned producer: Guo Min Pulp Company, in which the Gao family owned a significant minority holding through Yu Mei Chih Paper Co.

The design of the mill and its main machinery came from Taiwan, financed by a generous loan from the Eximbank. Local Indonesian subcontractors, essentially friends of Sutrawan, supplied the buildings and civil engineering. Guarantees were set up through a series of arrangements with the Bank of America and its Taiwanese branches.

When the new mill started production, the raw material, paper pulp, came from Taiwan...this however, was not entirely exact, since the wood to make the paper pulp originally came from Indonesia, from Sutrawan's forestry operations. The tropical hardwood was shipped to Taiwan, at less than twenty dollars a ton. The wood was cut from his mangrove and forest clearing operations in Sumatra and then transported to Guo Min's mill at Taitung, on the East coast of Taiwan. There the wood was transformed into paper pulp and exported back to Indonesia with a high added value, at a price of 500 dollars a ton.

The newly created company in Indonesia was baptised Bintang Agung by Sutrawan. They transformed pulp into printing and writing paper, which was sold to their distributors at about 1,000 dollars a ton. The initial production was fifty tons per day, bringing in 17.5 million dollars a year. When the mill was extended to its full capacity, it would reach 70 million dollars.

The mill was built for a quarter of the price it would have cost in

Western Europe, and was completed in half of the normal time.

The investment was highly profitable. It was manned almost entirely by Taiwanese engineers, who worked day and night and were paid only five hundred dollars a month, with one annual leave each year of two weeks, returning to visit their families in Taiwan.

The unskilled and semi-skilled labour force was Indonesian, paid between fifty and one hundred dollars a month. Needless to say Sutrawan's men, who were all Indonesian-Chinese, provided the management.

Ennis first met S.C.Gao in Taipei. Brodzski had figured out that they could not set up the project without an operator; one who had local knowledge and who understood the region and its business methods. The operator could supply the skilled staff to operate the mill at a reasonable cost, once it came into production.

Europeans and Americans were not prepared to support the living standards and conditions in those remote regions for long periods of time, because of the isolation and lack of basic comforts.

Specialists from France or almost any other Western European country would only expatriate themselves providing the conditions were right. That was to say, that they live as latter day colonial masters, in sumptuous residences provided with the staff worthy of an English Lord, to cook, clean, garden and chauffeur their cars, with international schools for their children, and regular trips back home in business class. That cost their employers three or four hundred thousand dollars a year, compared to the Taiwanese company man at maybe ten or fifteen thousand dollars.

Brodzski had learnt that the Taiwanese were becoming active in that type of operation. He also knew that Banque de Berne had a branch in San Francisco, not surprisingly named The Bank of San Francisco, which had established a representative office Taipei.

Ennis faxed a certain Steinberger for assistance, who replied that they could arrange a number of appointments with business people in Taipei. Amongst those were S.C.Gao, who Ennis had never met, and the Taiwan Sugar Company with who he once had contacts in the

past.

When Ennis arrived in Taipei he discovered a bewildering city, as any other European or American arriving there for the first time. The air was filled with a fine haze of dust that rose from the never-ending building and road construction works, which had started slowly in the early fifties and continued since at an ever-accelerating pace.

The traffic was intense and appeared to advance with a disconcerting degree of anarchy, combined with that extraordinary Chinese sense of practicality. The traffic police gave the impression of directing the endless stream of vehicles with the sole intention of preventing the overstressed drivers from an excess of improvisation.

Taiwan was in reality a Chinese province, which had escaped communism. There was relatively little outside influence, especially from the West, in spite of their long and close relationship with the USA. Anything American in appearance was superficial and deceptive.

The population spoke two languages; Mandarin and Taiwanese, the former being the official dialect of Mainland China. Ennis at once discovered that few people spoke a comprehensible English once outside of hotels and business circles. English was spoken in the upper levels of companies engaged in overseas trade. French and other European languages were as obscure to the average Taiwanese as would Hokkienese or Sichuanese have been for a European.

Ennis was overwhelmed by the extraordinary profusion of advertising and signs, a mad competition to attract the eye, but which only succeeded in drowning the senses. The street names were in Chinese, and hotels and restaurants were known by their Chinese names.

As his taxi headed into the town centre towards the Hilton, he was invaded by the kind of sinking feeling that accompanies the knowledge that a hopeless task lies ahead. It did not strike him as the ideal place to find the kind of people who would understand his objectives. He figured that his only hope would be the man at the Bank of San Francisco, whom he hoped would help him through what looked like an impossible obstacle course, he would certainly



be an old hand at guiding ignorant foreigners through the business and cultural maze of Taipei City.

Ennis felt lost, his elementary knowledge of Chinese Mandarin simply led to confusion, his familiarity with cities like Hong Kong was of little help to him in what seemed like depressingly insurmountable difficulties. His effort to communicate with the taxi driver failed, the driver simply looked blankly ahead and seemed to grasp the wheel of his taxi a little tighter, he certainly had other worries that day than trying to understand the incomprehensible words of his foreign passenger, who did not even make the effort speak a civilised language.

The Hilton Taipei was a dreary hotel, paying nothing more than lip service to the Hilton group's reputation in other Asian capitals. His first thoughts were to get out of Taipei as quickly as possible, back to one of his preferred westernised havens.

The following morning, after some difficulties he found the Bank of San Francisco. It was housed on the first floor of a down in the mouth looking local bank, which certainly did not appear to be amongst the leaders in the local banking profession.

Steinberger greeted him with an air of puzzled curiosity. He was a young man of about thirtyish. He affected the standard pin stripe style with light coloured horn rimmed glasses, as preferred by bankers and assiduously cultivated by their younger executives.

'Well, er, Mr. Ennis what can I do for you?' he asked, looking doubtfully at a copy of the telefax that Ennis had sent him. It was as though it was the first time that he had ever seen it.

Ennis outlined Papcon's relations with the Banque de Berne hoping the name would spark some interest. That of course fell flat; he was in one of their offices, even if it was a distant branch.

'My secretary has prepared a list. I have called some of the companies to inform them of your visit,' Steinberger said almost disinterestedly. 'I suggest that you contact them to fix up some appointments.'

Ennis was forced to conclude that his visit did not appear to be very high on Steinberger's list of priorities that day, and that was

about as long as his discussions with the Bank of San Francisco lasted.

As the French say *demerdez-vous*, Ennis thought consoling himself. Fifteen minutes later he was back on the street in the dust and heat trying to hail a taxi. He returned to his hotel room to consider his next step.

As was often the case when Ennis found himself in an impasse he was forced to sit back and analyse the situation using his intuition to seek a solution, something that had served him well in the past.

He carefully checked out the list and moving down the names one by one trying to determine who was who, finally stopping at a certain S.C.Gao, whose name bore the title Vice President. He called the number and Gao's secretary informed Ennis that he was present that morning.

Gao received Ennis in his offices located in the business section of Taipei. It was the Yu Mei Chih building. He had after a brief telephone conversation agreed to meet Ennis and had arranged for him to be picked-up at his hotel. The car was a late model black Cadillac with a uniformed chauffeur; it was more fit for a Chicago mobster than the head of a conservative business empire. Ennis was whisked smoothly through the traffic and in a matter of minutes in Gao's offices.

Gao was a plump, smartly dressed man in his early forties. His smiling friendly appearance bordering on the jovial was misleading. Ennis later found him to be a serious, competent, no nonsense businessman. Gao was highly critical of frivolity in business, or for that matter in just about any other area.

He did not drink and was certainly not a womaniser. Gao's greatest pleasure consisted of testing the culinary delights of his country's inexhaustible variety of cuisine. It was his pride, like many other Chinese of good family, to perpetuate the great diversity of the arts, culture and traditions of his country.

Gao was intensely proud of the achievements of the Republic of China, in addition, and not without lacking a little modesty, his own technical and scientific knowledge.

Over lunch in a smart Shanghaiese restaurant, decorated with elaborate gilded carvings depicting scenes from Chinese mythology, Gao suggested that Ennis contact a certain Jani Sutrawan in Indonesia, a business associate and explained that they jointly owned a paper mill on the outskirts of Jakarta. Ennis first wondered whether Gao's company could co-operate in Papcon's project, but on reflection decided to follow Gao's suggestion by first meeting Sutrawan.

Gao went on to suggest that before leaving Ennis visit his mill in Kao Hsiung. He described with evident pleasure the background of the Gao family's industrial group, Yu Mei Chih, an eighty million dollar a year company, in the business of paper making and publishing.

## Chapter 11 - A CULTURAL INTERLUDE

Gao was evidently pleased with the reaction of Ennis to his firm's achievements in the paper industry; it was a compliment coming from a European specialist. His curiosity had been aroused by the project that Ennis had described to him; if Western investors were interested in building a mill in Borneo, then it was worth learning more. Gao insisted that Ennis join him for dinner that evening, taking advantage of his short stay in Taiwan to pursue their discussions in greater depth.

The next day greatly relieved to have a promising potential partner in view, Ennis decided to relax. He did not believe it would be useful to call the other persons on his list; opening too many parallel contacts could confuse the issue. Ennis had the feeling that he had found what he had been looking for. The last thing he wanted to do was vex Gao, it was necessary to proceed with discretion as he had an instinctive feeling that Gao was the right partner, who appeared to play straight and obviously expected those he did business with to do the same.

Ennis decided that he would take the opportunity to explore Taipei, visit some of its museums and monuments. He had begun to realise there was more to see under that noisy, polluted exterior, than first met the eye.

Taipei housed one of the most extensive and valuable collection of Chinese art treasures in the world. They were brought to Taiwan by Chiang Kai Shek in 1949, when he fled the mainland, after his defeat by Mao and his communists.

First Ennis decided to buy a guidebook. He could find that in the hotel shopping arcade at the book shop, amongst the travel agents, tailors, jewellers and antique dealers that were typical of luxury hotels. Customers in the Hilton arcade were few; the majority of them came mostly for newspapers and postcards, or, like Ennis a guidebook.

The shop owners passed the time of day waiting for the elusive customer; at the ready, standing in their doorways, waiting for the slightest sign of movement. As Ennis passed a tailor wished him good morning, inviting him into his shop with a gesture of his hand, he smiled back politely saying that he was not in the market for a made to measure suit that day.

The window of the Antique Gallery caught his eye, after all he was going to the museum and what he saw would be a foretaste, he stopped concentrating his attention and admiration on a green Celadon dish, when a voice broke his thoughts.

‘Song Dynasty.’

He looked up; an attractive Chinese girl was smiling at him.

‘Song!’ he returned.

‘Yes Song,’ she said laughing.

‘Do you know something about Chinese antiques?’ she said.

‘Well, yes a little bit.’

‘Then you should visit the National Museum.’

‘That’s just what I was planning to do.’

‘Are you American?’

‘No, I’m English, I live in Paris.’

‘Oh, Paris, I never been there, it must be a beautiful city.’

‘Yes it is.’

‘How long are you here for?’

‘Oh, just a couple of days.’

‘That’s a pity you will not see very much.’

She described the museum and its treasures. She introduced herself Zhang Li Zhen, adding her friends called her Lily.

Lily told him that her family owned the Antique Gallery. Her father, a well-known collector and specialist in oriental antiques, owned galleries in several major cities of the Far East as well as in San Francisco and New York.

She then told him that she had studied History at Taipei University and was now learning her father’s business, though admitting it was very quiet in the Gallery. She was talkative and very amused by his knowledge of Mandarin Chinese and interest in Chinese art.

‘Why don’t you let me show you the museum?’ she said suddenly.

‘The museum?’ said Ennis surprised.

‘Yes, you said you wanted to visit it, didn’t you!’

‘Well ... you have your Gallery to run.’

‘That’s no problem, it’s very quiet today.’

‘Really?’

‘Yes, really,’ she turned picking up her handbag and keys. ‘Let’s go then,’ she said grabbing his arm.

Ennis had not thought that she was serious and it took some minutes of laughing and joking before he realised that she was not pulling his leg. Only when she produced a key and locked the door of the Gallery, ushering him out, did he realise that she was not joking.

They took a taxi outside of the hotel. Lily gave directions, laughing and joking in fun alternately with the driver and Ennis.

Once in the Museum, Ennis observed that Lily was a strangely attractive girl, taller than the average Taiwanese, with a strong face, more of the heroic style he remembered from Chinese revolutionary posters than pretty; her black hair thick and shinning.

He was soon admitting to himself that antiques had become relegated to a level of secondary interest as they toured the museum, as he discovered more about Lily and her family.

Curiously Lily's father knew the Gao family, and many other people in the business world of Taipei. With the creation of wealth from commerce and industry, many of the old and also the more recently wealthy families, were concerned about the loss of culture and traditions.

Their society with rapid industrialisation and the new wealth it had created had developed a faceless and imported image, a reflection of the less attractive aspects of western and in particular American culture.

Gao had already spoken to Ennis of the problem, he was proud that his company's printing division had produced some of the finest art books published by the National Museum, and the excellent reproductions of water paintings on the traditional art paper of China. Lily's father had acted as consultant and had written the preface to a number of the books.

The dined together in a small typical restaurant in the hustle and bustle of the market place, off Chung Chang South Road, where Lily had explained, the best of Chinese cuisine could be found at very reasonable prices, she was not a snob and did not believe fancy restaurants were the only places where good food was to be found.

'Tell me about yourself John!' she said.

'What is there to say?'

'You know what I mean, your family....'

He knew what she meant, women eventually got to that question.

'I'm divorced.'

'Oh!'

'Yes, you know in my business I'm always on a plane at the other end of the world.'

'Do you have children?'

They walked amongst the crowds arriving at Chinese temple, which she insisted on showing him. Worshippers bustled around the statues of divinities, some of whom appeared very fierce, whom they bowed to in prayer holding smoking joss sticks in the points of their fingers. The smell of incense and the smoke from burning prayer sheets and offerings hung heavily in the warm air.

‘Yes I do, there’s two, but it’s a long story.’

‘Do you want to tell me?’

She made an offering of a few coins and received from one of the temple guardians a horoscope for Ennis. They laughed a lot as she deciphered the characters of horoscope, which predicted good health and fortune in new ventures and friendships.

‘If you like, I suppose it’s the kind of story of people drifting apart, changing....’

He knew deep inside that he had been a lousy husband over the years, and he was saddened but not too surprised by the result.

It was soon after their separation that Hakkala had asked him to join Brodzski. It was an arrangement that suited him perfectly; much of his time would be spent in Jakarta or Singapore, far from his painful experience in France.

As they returned to the hotel Ennis felt the day had ended in an anticlimax; it was not the kind of story to make a woman enthusiastic. Lily took his hand and leaning towards him whispered, ‘I’m sorry it’s not my business, I should not have asked you about that.’

She dropped him off at his hotel after she had made him promise to meet her the following evening, calling her as soon as he returned from his visit to Kao Hsiung with Gao.

Two days later he left Taipei after making last call to Gao and promising that he would meet Sutrawan in Jakarta. He then dropped by at the Gallery to say *au revoir* to Lily, who seemed a little sad and appeared to doubt his promise to come back soon.

She had insisted on driving him to the airport. They had only passed two evenings together, but it seemed that they had, in those short moments, crossed the frontier between a casual encounter and the feeling of uncertainty, the sign a deeper understanding between two persons.

Lily then made him promise to look out for antique Chinese pottery and stoneware recovered from an ancient Chinese trading vessel wrecked off the coast of Java, at Tuban, many centuries previously. The antique illegally recovered from the wreck had been

appearing on markets in Jakarta and was it her Lily's excuse for a promise to return to Taipai.

## Chapter 12 - RICE PORTER MAKES GOOD

When Jani Sutrawan stepped down from the ancient steamer in the steamy port of Surabaya on the north east coast of Java, Japan and the United States of America had just entered into World War II.

His real name was Swee Swee Boon; he was just fifteen years old and had left forever his hometown at Fuchow on the South Eastern Seaboard of China in the Province of Hokkien. He had left behind the grinding the poverty and the war against the Japanese, which had raged continuously since they had invaded China in 1936.

He was indentured to a distant uncle, whose family had established a small business as rice merchants in Surabaya at the beginning of the century. He was mature for his age, full of natural self-confidence, but spoke his Chinese dialect to the exclusions of any foreign language, or dialect for that matter, which was not unusual for the son of a modest family.

He had joined the *qiaohua*, or overseas Chinese, as they were called. Like many young men for generations before him, they left their homes not only as indentured labourers but also as small shopkeepers, later to become merchants and businessmen. They ran the South East Asian economies under the colonial masters, the British, French and Dutch who then dominated the region.

The local indigenous populations toiled the rich soil whilst the great trading houses reaped the profits through a multitude of middlemen, who were often of Chinese origin. They were set apart from the locals and the ruling class, in a social no-mans-land.

The Chinese often benefited from the advantages of their relative wealth and better education. Many were experienced with foreign languages and in commerce. On the other hand they frequently suffered violence as the victims of the local population, who vented



their frustrations and resentment pent up under the oppression of colonial powers by attacking the Chinese and their property.

Centuries of domination were about to arrive at an abrupt end, as the Japanese, another Asian race, were poised to sweep out white colonialism forever, replacing it with their own imperialistic ambitions in the guise of their Greater Prosperity Sphere.

Young Swee Swee had been oblivious to the great movement of history that flowed over him. The Japanese invasion of China had at first been far away to the north in Manchuria, and then suddenly they were menacing Shanghai. His family's concern had been with their own economic survival in the turmoil of the competing forces within China, where communist or nationalist war lords came and went, plundering the towns and villages, destroying the economy and uprooting the populations who fled to the cities.

Fuchow was one of the great treaty ports controlled by the British. The Boon family were city dwellers, who had earned their living from a small but declining commerce in that port, where the pressure of war had ruined their honest, traditional business.

Swee Swee Boon was the proverbial seventh son...he was so far down the line he needed all the luck he could get. He was unaware that fortune had smiled on him that day his parents announced the news that they could no longer support him.

The meagre living that the family eked out was being encroached upon daily, powerful hongcs forced the profits of the family business down to the level of slavery. The news from Shanghai had been bad as the Japanese extended their war. It was best for the family that he leave for Indonesia where he could earn a small wage, which his uncle would send to the boy's parents back in Fuchow, to aid them in their plight.

He had left Fuchow on a tramp steamer as a working passenger, a rare opportunity. The voyage lasted eight weeks, as the old freighter called at ports along the South China Sea, down through the Philippines and the Moluccas until it finally docked in the great port of Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies.

Not speaking a word of Javanese, was not an obstacle, he soon

discovered that his own countrymen were numerous in that city. His uncle immediately put him to work as a rice porter, in the labour gangs he employed unloading ships from Saigon, Bangkok and the great cities of the north, which exported the precious produce of their rich farming lands, to the teeming millions of Java, the most densely populated island on earth.

Swee Swee worked hard, sweating under the heavy loads and the heat of the equatorial sun; he quickly learned the hard way to defend himself with the muscles he had developed from the almost forced labours that he grudgingly accepted for the sake of his parents.

He was a boy not without intelligence and realised that Indonesia offered infinitely greater opportunities than his troubled and impoverished homeland.

He quickly learnt Javanese, the language of East Java, and then Bhasa the lingua franca of the Dutch East Indies. He discovered a latent talent that would enable him to rise above his peers, his ability to communicate and his capacity for hard work, which did not pass unnoticed by his uncle.

He had barely moved up to tallyman, when the Japanese invaded Java, sweeping out the Dutch and three hundred years of European colonialism, to the great joy of the Javanese. They brought with them promises of independence, but these were short lived as the Japanese war needs imposed harsh conditions on the local population. They soon started to commandeer food, oil, timber and other resources for their war effort.

As the war progressed the economic difficulties grew. Swee Swee then discovered handsome profits could be made buying and selling rice on the black market that thrived in Surabaya, and he did not hesitate to seize the opportunity.

He had no particular feelings of love or hatred for the Japanese, whom he saw as another one of the many layers of authority that had always existed above him that he feared and respected. He carefully avoided all contact with them. He was unconcerned about war and politics, as most of the population, who understood little of the reasons for the war. Surabaya was far from the battle zone, with

hardly more than a few shots fired during the course of the whole war.

In spite of the risks, his black market business thrived, expanding into tobacco, alcohol and gasoline. By the time the defeat Japanese were defeated he had already accumulated a considerable capital and experience for a young man of barely twenty years old.

Indonesia declared its independence on 6 August 1945, but its previous colonial masters, the Dutch, despite the humiliating ejection by the Japanese, a crippling war, and occupation in Europe had not yet understood that their reign was over.

The British as victors, through their alliance with the USA, were also unready to accept their own changed status and that of their old ally and competitor in the region. Together with the Dutch, they invaded Java in 1947, disembarking at Surabaya where they met with a fierce resistance from the newly independent Indonesians, who had no intention of returning to the old system.

Swee Swee quickly realised that his future lay in Indonesia. His newly acquired wealth and position were in danger, more from the Belandas, than from the Indonesians. The Dutch represented competition and control, whilst the Indonesians needed talents such as his to run an independent economy, exporting their timber and spices and importing rice and food.

During the resistance against the Dutch Swee Swee had won the respect and friendship of the young Sudarmono, the Indonesian freedom fighters regional commander, who was to become the second most powerful man in Indonesia, as the Secretary of State under President Suharto some twenty years later. Swee Swee ran guns and ammunition and supplied the fledgling army with food and clothing.

When the Dutch were finally forced to admit that their role in the country was over, Swee Swee was richly rewarded, in 1950, by contracts from the army and regional government, in recognition for his services.

As their friendship grew, Sudarmono, acquired a forestry concession of over 200,000 hectares in Kalimantan Selatan, soon

after the attempted communist coup in 1965, and confided its management to Swee Swee.

Swee Swee was fortunate, that part of Borneo had been untouched by the confrontation, when Soekarno opposed the British with his claims to Sabah and Sarawak in the north and a silent jungle war took its long course.

The logging companies confined their operations to the South East of that huge island, shipping logs to Japan, Taiwan and Korea, to the veneer plants and sawmills for the payment of a pittance to the Indonesian government.

The profits were vast. Trees perhaps two hundred years old, containing as much as fifty or more cubic metres of commercial timber, delivered alongside ship, were worth several thousand American dollars. The cost of felling and transport to the coast was as little as one tenth of that price.

In the wake of anticommunism most Chinese living in the country adopted Indonesian names and Swee Swee Boon became known as Jani Sutrawan. He broadened his business activities, entering into lucrative operations with the Japanese in the early sixties, as their country rose from defeat and once again spread their sphere of newly won economic influence into South East Asia.

He continued to consolidate his relations with his other wartime army friends, who had risen in rank and began to wield power and influence within their system of trust and loyalty.

Sutrawan became their front man, investing their money and operating their businesses, in a system where the Indonesian army controlled within its normal legitimate activities many businesses. This system functioned within the framework of its mission of defence and protection of the state, with full government authorisation.

Those businesses paid wages to the army and financed its daily needs of food and other supplies. Astute businessmen, such as Sutrawan, were entrusted to carry out many of the financial and commercial operations for the generals and their staff, whose training and background had not equipped them for the role of business

managers. Whatever the reason, they preferred to concentrate on the military aspects of their careers.

Sutrawan, as many Asian businessmen, was obliged by tradition to make business a way of life, and inseparable from entertainment and pleasure. Without an intricate network of friends and relations at all levels of society he could not succeed. He learnt to entertain lavishly and spread his money, buying influence at all levels of government and authority.

In 1968, Indonesia had been caught in the whirlwind of a Chinese communist inspired attempt to overthrow the government, following the disastrous failure of Soekarno's economic policies. The Chinese community together with those suspected of communist links, were targets for mob violence throughout the country. It is estimated that as many as half a million persons met their deaths.

The Chinese community was particularly hard hit not only because of suspected links they may have had with Communist China, but also for reasons of jealousy. The Chinese controlled a large part of the country's economy at all levels, but especially at the very visible level of the small traders and shopkeepers, which made them easy targets for the mobs.

Sutrawan, as many others, was forced to seek temporary refuge abroad. His hometown, Fuchow, in Mainland China was then caught in the throes of the Cultural Revolution and he turned to Taiwan, a natural refuge for Sutrawan, a Hokkienese, who spoke the same dialect as that of the islands native population. Once again he did not miss the occasion, cultivating and enlarging his circle of business friends, whilst waiting for the situation to return to normal in Indonesia.

In spite of resentment against the Chinese, the Indonesians were not yet sufficiently experienced to develop all aspects of the country's economy. After the situation had returned to normal, the government, under the new President, Suharto, allowed the Chinese to return and re-establish their businesses.

The majority of Indonesia's population was Moslem. There also existed a Christian minority of about five percent, as well as smaller

Hindu minorities, mainly on the island of Bali. Animist cults also existed in a great many of the outlying islands and remote regions of the country. According to the national philosophy of Pancasila there was no state religion.

The Moslems had general considered that commerce and certain liberal professions, such as law and accountancy, were not compatible with the tenets of Islam. The Chinese were excluded from government service because of their non-Indonesian origins and consequently took up the only professions that remained open for them. The result was that over the years the wealth of the Chinese grew, through their business and commerce, as the poorer uneducated Indonesian classes looked on, with a sense of exclusion and often an understandable envy.

The government's attitude was to pay lip service to public opinion, whilst the politicians took advantage of the gains to be made in cooperating, behind the scenes, with the Chinese.

The Chinese had also the added advantage of their overseas network of relations and business contacts throughout South East Asia and even as far as the West Coast of the USA, and Europe.

The major consequence of the turmoil in Indonesia had been the forced resignation of Soekarno, its first president, under pressure of the army, following the murder of seven army generals, which was resulted in the nomination of General Suharto as the new President of Indonesia.

The task that faced Suharto was a daunting one, as the country's economy had all but collapsed. It was not the moment to reject the only people qualified to run a large part of the business and commerce of the country's economy, and make it prosper. The men in power did not hesitate to quietly encourage the Chinese to return, whilst bowing to public opinion through the introduction of laws that made life difficult for many of the less privileged Chinese.

Indonesia had a vast reserve of natural resources; it was endowed with oil, gas and other resources in abundance, such as timber, rubber, tin and agriculture. The world demand was great and the country soon controlled its inflation, aided by the USA with generous

loans from the World Bank. The West, at the height of the Vietnamese war, feared the domino effect, which seemed very real in view of Indonesians strategic importance and economic potential.

Soon after Sutrawan's return the economy was booming and the newly founded state oil company Pertamina was tapping huge wealth through its wells and new refineries. With the first world oil crisis and the explosion of oil prices, Indonesia with its oil reserves became the target of western investment and businessmen soon flocked to the country to join in the bonanza to be reaped.

Sutrawan's wealth grew, as did his international reputation. Foreigners seeking local partners for their investment projects were eager to meet him, as not only did he have capital, but he also had powerful friends in high government places. He knew his way through the administrative maze of the country's bureaucracy, paying careful attention to the needs of the middle and lower functionaries.

One success followed another; soon he counted amongst his investments the largest wood panel factory in the country in joint-venture with Taiwanese, textile mills with Singaporeans, motor vehicle tyres with Koreans, and electronic components with Japanese.

Sutrawan was encouraged by his political friends to invest in a paper mill in the late seventies. The country needed printing and writing paper. He turned to his friends in Taiwan, Guo Min who proposed that they both join together with the Gao family.

The arithmetic was simple, Sutrawan added value at each phase, cutting the wood in Indonesia, shipping it to Taiwan, where it was transformed it into paper pulp, which they exported through a Hong Kong trading company, shipping it back to Indonesia for paper making, at world market prices. The result was substantial tax free profits all round.

It was an unlikely combination, Sutrawan a newly rich industrialist risen from humble background, and Gao's old established family with its business stretching back almost a century, backed by the weight of a semi-state owned Taiwanese company.

Sutrawan supplied the local knowledge and the Indonesian

markets, Gao the production skills and technology and the Taiwanese banks the loans. As in all his ventures, Sutrawan invested little but his reputation and his political contacts, which he exchanged for a financial stake in the equity.

The structure had become Sutrawan's standard method in creating joint-ventures with foreign investors. He operated from a position of strength, he was on his home ground, in effect he was buying and they were selling, and he could dictate his own terms and conditions once the business was underway.

The Taiwanese did well in the system, supplying the machinery and equipment for the paper mill. Once production had got underway they also delivered the paper pulp to the mill, providing a pipeline to divert profits overseas to Hong Kong, and naturally through the bank the Sutrawan and his friends operated in Indonesia and overseas, the Surabaya Mas Bank.

Indonesia had a so-called open economy, with virtually no foreign exchange controls, for those Indonesians who could influence the system and for foreigners. This permitted the free movement of monies, which encouraged investment and the growth of the country's international trade and commerce. It also enabled the rich like Sutrawan to put their accumulated wealth into overseas tax shelters and havens, as a hedge against frequent and large devaluations of the Indonesian Rupiah.

Ennis had gravitated to Sutrawan, thanks to S.C.Gao, attracted by his group's qualifications as a potential joint-venture partner. Papcon had sought a partner with three essential qualities; political influence to obtain support for the project, financial power, the road was long and costs would be great, and a partner already well established in the local forestry and paper industries.

The knowledge and experience of such a partner was vital for the bankers. There was in addition an unspoken point, the need to have partners open to Papcon's way of thinking, a person who would lose no sleep at night in bending a few rules. Sutrawan had all of those qualities and certainly a few more that they had not even thought of.

S.C.Gao had informed Jakarta that Ennis would contact them.



However, once in Jakarta it was easier said than done. His calls ran up against a barrier designed to protect Sutrawan, filtering all newcomers and keeping out unwanted intruders.

It was a certain Danny Lau who determined who met Sutrawan, he was his right hand man; if Lau felt that a person had some business potential he first discussed it with Sutrawan, who if he agreed instructed Lau to set up an informal meeting. Danny Lau was a short effervescent Hokkienese, whose family had fled the communist take over in China in 1949 to Indonesia, where he arrived as a young boy with his father in 1950.

Danny Lau finally returned his calls and messages left with Sutrawan's secretaries. After a brief conversation Lau said he would report to Sutrawan. Later that same day he called back and asked Ennis to be on stand by in the lobby at seven thirty, it was a signal that was to become very familiar.

It was the first visit Ennis made to the Jakarta office of Sutrawan. The 'office' was the Blue Ocean, a cavernous Chinese restaurant and nightclub. Two dance orchestras seated on a rotating stage, took it in turns to accompany a series of pretty Chinese singers, between a succession of nightclub acts, magicians, jugglers and acrobats. For those night clubbers who paid the taximeter, there was no shortage of pretty dancing partners, who could be chosen by numbers, through a large glass window. The girls then joined their customers at their tables for the evening.

In the semi-darkness Ennis was led by Danny Lau to one of the large round Chinese style tables, which as far as he could make out in the dim light was already surrounded by a several men, all of whom were Asians. Danny quickly introduced the confused Ennis, through the noise of the music and the bustling of waiters, to the other guests, quickly announcing a string of incomprehensible names.

He informed Ennis that Sutrawan had not yet arrived, but not to worry, he would soon be there. In the meantime they drank warm Chinese tea in glasses that Danny poured from a large ornate teapot.

Thirty minutes later Sutrawan arrived. He was a man of an age

that was difficult to fix, and as with many Asians he appeared younger than his age, he looked to be about forty-five, though probably much more thought Ennis. His hair was swept back and lacquered down, an energetic man with a force of character that was projected to those around him, as he smiled and waved to his friends. He knew everybody and everybody knew Sutrawan.

Danny very tactfully explained to Ennis that the first thing to be understood was that in the office and on all such occasions, no one ever talks about business, except in the most indirect manner. Relations were being cemented by the very presence of his guests, serious business was left to more discrete moments, before or after, when a few words were sufficient to transmit a request or a need, or to give acceptance or refusal. Danny simply acted as interpreter.

Ennis soon found that the main function of the office meeting was to laugh, eat, drink and dance, and if there were any real problems an appointment could be fixed for the next day. In most cases this was delegated to Danny or one of his lieutenants.

The favourite drink of Sutrawan's was Hennessy XO cognac, at over one hundred dollars a bottle, in the duty free in Singapore. Sutrawan, with his personal fortune estimated at some fifty million dollars never forgot, or could forget the misery and poverty of Fuchow, or his sweated labour as a porter in the Port of Surabaya, when a few Rupiah meant the difference between starving and eating, balked at the ruinous prices in restaurants and night clubs of his favourite drink, which was tripled or quadrupled.

It was one of Danny's informal functions to ensure a steady supply of XO for all occasions, and friends and members of Sutrawan's entourage were encouraged to stock up with at the duty free shops each time they passed through the airports of Singapore, Hong Kong or Taipei.

Ennis was amused at what French connoisseurs of cognac could have learnt from the Chinese of Hong Kong or Singapore, who had developed to a fine art the consumption of the spirit. It was drunk in approximately the same manner as the French would have drunk wine, by the glass and in about the same quantities.

That first evening was particularly memorable; Jakarta was in the middle of the Asian Film Festival. The Blue Ocean was crammed with personalities from the Asian cinema world. Sir Run Run Shaw, the Hong Kong film magnate, made a spectacular appearance in the lights and the cameras of the television reporters. Asian cinema Stars were present in force, as Sutrawan stood out surrounded by a flock of starlets and flashy Taiwanese nightclub singers.

The cognac flowed and bottle after bottle appeared on their table produced as if by magic from Danny's hidden reserve. Ennis was soon in a slightly intoxicated daze after returning each toast proposed in his honour as a western guest. He had imagined that he had become accustomed to oriental entertainment, but that evening was a new experience. To his embarrassment, on returning from a visit to the mens room, he sat mistakenly at another table and happily continued to drink the cognac of the other party without realising his error, until Danny came to rescue him apologising to the revellers at the other table, amid much embarrassed laughter and leg pulling.

Ennis never did find out who Sutrawan's guests were that evening. He vaguely understood that they were from Hong Kong and Taiwan. There was not much English spoken, just laughing and drinking, between an endless flow of steaming dishes of Chinese food, followed by a stream of hostesses, who took turns to dance with the guests.

The evening was long; they did not leave the Blue Ocean until after two in the morning. Sutrawan took Ennis in his chauffeur driven Mercedes and dropped him off, as an honoured guest at the Borobudur. He could barely remember getting to his room and he did not wake up until ten the following morning.

Ennis had a business philosophy, which was particularly well suited to business relations with Sutrawan. He preferred travelling alone for different reasons. One being that many executives, and especially the French, felt deeply engaged by the obligation of presence in their jobs, even fifteen thousand kilometres from their offices. Most were up, shaved and dressed in suit and tie, taking breakfast at eight every morning, even when they had no particular

appointment scheduled for the day. When they were busy, and when the last meeting of the day had ended, they estimated that their job was complete and headed home, to their hotel room.

To Ennis it seemed that they had little or no imagination, no curiosity or desire to see what they would discover if they accepted their hosts invitations, by develop less superficial relationships.

The other reason was that surprisingly the French did not drink, of course they drunk a cocktail, one or at the very most two, and naturally a little wine with their meals. However, they drank less and less of the traditional cognac after dinner, which seemed to have become a custom reserved solely for foreigners. He knew that the French were not social drinkers, at least in same the sense that many of their European neighbours were. They could not compete with those to the north, or the British and Americans, not overlooking the Australians, where not to enjoy several good beers was quite frankly odd.

Ennis was of the opinion that the French considered, in their Cartesian manner, that it was *trop ennuiant* or a waste of time, to pass an evening in the company of people such as Sutrawan. They figured that a polite lunch in the formality of the French restaurant at the Hilton or Mandarin was what was required, and to everyone's taste, almost as business entertainment was not really necessary at all.

For them spending an evening with their business partners, who spoke an incomprehensible English, where they the French had little chance of participating in the conversation, or being obliged to avoid conversation on the only subject they had in common - business - was unsupportable.

## Chapter 13 - UNLIKELY PARTNERS

At the end of a wet and windy month of June in Paris, Ennis flew out to Taipei together with Axelmann. They had by then signed up both the Finns and Germans, the result was a formidable line up of first

class international businesses that formed the Barito consortium. It only remained for them to finalise their agreements with the Taiwanese and then Sutrawan in Jakarta.

On arrival they were pleased to find the weather in Taipei much warmer compared to Paris, however they soon regretted the change, the sweltering humidity hung high in the nineties. They checked into the Ritz Hotel and called S.C.Gao. To their surprise he informed them that Sutrawan was in town, for the official opening of a new luxury hotel, where the Gao family had some vague financial connections. Gao invited them as his guests to the ceremonies that were to take place the following day.

Ennis then called Lily, she was not at home or at the gallery, he left a message with his room number at the Ritz, and then left for Gao's offices.

Gao was clear and straight forward, he would not enter the consortium, but on the other hand was prepared to immediately sign a letter of engagement to take on the management of the mill on its completion and to market its products in all of Asia and Oceania. The only difficulty was his insistence that the prices be fixed in advance, an impossibility given the cyclic variations of pulp prices on the world market.

They finally agreed that they would be indexed on North American export prices for paper pulp in US dollars, with a fixed scale of commissions and with a promise that Gao's machinery manufacturing works be given a share in the subcontracting. In fact Gao had nothing to lose, management for a fee, marketing on a commission basis and a slice of the subcontracting. It was nothing less than a gift offered to Gao on a silver platter.

They returned to the Ritz nonetheless satisfied with Gao's engagement that was what Brodzski had wanted, even if the conditions were largely favourable to the Taiwanese. However, the agreement with Gao was part of the bait to lure a different kind of customer.

With the main business settled, they agreed to meet him for the opening of the Shangri-La Palace Hotel, where he promised them a

more interesting afternoon.

At three o'clock prompt they were picked by Gao's limousine. They were amused by the Cadillac and imagined that they would make a great impression by arriving at the hotel like VIPs. They could not have been more wrong, at least fifty such limousines were snarled up in the traffic in and around the main entrance to the hotel and its underground car park. It was more like an annual gathering of the Yakuzi, the Japanese organised crime syndicate.

Their driver finally abandoned the idea of leaving them at the main entrance, forcing his way around the mass of cars, cursing the other drivers, and drove directly into the hotel garage. There they spent another fifteen minutes lost, until Gao found them. They took the lift up to the main lobby where a dense crowd of guests was milling around in what appeared to be an incredible confusion and cacophony.

They were the only Europeans present in the spectacular lobby and were soon located by Danny Lau who directed them to Sutrawan's group. After a long series of incomprehensible speeches by important looking elderly men who they supposed were shareholders, politicians, bankers and other dignitaries, they toasted to the successful future of the hotel. They were then invited as guests to Sutrawan's table in a vast cavernous banquet hall on the lower ground floor of the hotel. The hall was decorated with red and gold garlands and a blaze of extravagant flowers from well-wishers, each bouquet seeming to want to out do the next.

At their table conversations remained polite with little allusion to business; it was evidently not the place, much too public. Sutrawan grinning almost evilly whispered to Ennis that everything had been settled and agreed between Gao and himself. He confirmed that he would meet them in Jakarta the following week for detailed discussions on the arrangements.

They politely listened to another incomprehensible succession of speeches in Chinese, whilst Axelmann stabbed at the never-ending stream of delicacies that were placed before him with his chopsticks that he used as spears.

Gao had told Ennis almost as a warning that Sutrawan was a play boy, but up until that point he had appeared to be nothing more than a good host to his guests, though he seemed to delight in laughing at the antics of Gao, who tried to avoid Sutrawan, preferring his own serious Taipei business clique.

They finally returned to the Ritz happy to have escaped the never-ending inauguration. As they stepped out of the Cadillac, Ennis looked at his watch, it was only ten thirty, the afternoon had been long and they needed some light relaxation. They walked up the marble steps of the hotel entrance, wondering how they would spend the rest of the Friday evening, the doorman, dressed in Ritz style opened the door with a smile.

‘John!’

Ennis looked up surprised. It was Lily.

‘Well, hello!’

To his surprise and consternation she launched herself at him, embracing him with both arms around the neck, kissing him on the lips. He stepped back pushing up his glasses. Axelmann looked on with an air of astonishment.

Ennis made the introductions, as Lily told him that she had received his messages, she had tried to catch him but he had been too elusive. As for herself, she had been at an antique fair in Taitung, a city on the coast to the south of Taipei. They made their way to the bar and sat down to decide their program for the remainder of the evening. She suggested the discotheque at the Hilton, laughing and explaining that it was generally lively and that perhaps Axelmann could find a friend.

They returned very late to the Ritz having lost Axelmann. Lily proposed they pass the weekend together with a visit to the mystical Mount Ali Shan, a spectacular 3,997 metre high peak, situated in the Taiwan’s national park, in middle of the range of high mountains that ran from the north to the south of the island.

In Jakarta the following Tuesday morning Ennis received a message from Danny Lau, who transmitted Sutrawan’s invitation to lunch and

requested that he be on standby in the lobby at midday. Lunch was in a Chinese restaurant called the Jade Dragon; it was situated next to a long line of doubtful looking massage and go-go bars in a seedy area of the city.

When they arrived Sutrawan was already present with several other persons. They were seated at a round Chinese table with a revolving centre; it was already loaded with food. Ennis saw the guests reaching out with their chopsticks and helping themselves from the steaming dishes. Sutrawan stood up beaming and greeted Ennis like an old and important friend grasping him by the hand and the elbow, offering him a seat on his right hand side, pouring him a large glass of cognac.

As they ate, Sutrawan confirmed to him, that he had recently constructed a new paper mill on the outskirts of Jakarta at a place called Tangerang. In addition he owned a pulp mill in Sumatra, a mill producing over one hundred thousand tons of wood pulp a year.

Ennis felt his hopes sinking; nobody had spoken of an existing pulp mill in Indonesia; it seemed to his dismay that Sutrawan was more than likely a competitor, than a potential partner.

‘What kind of pulp?’ Ennis asked him trying to hide his disappointment.

‘Short fibre, mixed tropical hardwoods,’ Sutrawan proudly replied. “We dismantled a complete mill in Taiwan and rebuilt it in the jungle, very low price!”

‘Interesting,’ Ennis said, then after a moments reflection replied, ‘Our project is for long fibre pulp!’

Sutrawan was surprised; to his knowledge long fibre wood did not grow in Indonesian forests, at least not in any significant quantities.

‘How come?’ he said with an expression of disbelief.

Ennis quickly discovered that Sutrawan had never heard of *dacrydium*, which Brodzski believed existed in large quantities in the forests of South and Central Kalimantan. It was a revelation for Sutrawan and Ennis saw that his curiosity had been aroused.

Sutrawan was interested in any project provided there was no direct conflict of interests with his existing joint-ventures, if the project was



complementary, then it could always be of interest.

Sutrawan knew the pulp business and whilst in his own mill Bintang Agung produced pulp, it was exclusively short fibre grade, to which had to be added long fibre pulp for making good quality paper. The long fibre pulp he imported from the USA or Scandinavia supplying his paper mill and its price was over forty percent more expensive than his own pulp or that he imported from Taiwan, which included hidden profits creamed off in Hong Kong.

The Indonesian paper industry was growing rapidly; they needed four hundred thousand tons of paper a year, excluding packaging and sack papers. Their mills had commenced paper making with imported wood pulp, a semi-finished product.

The result was that the country was importing about 200 million dollars a year of paper pulp, plus another 150 million dollars of newsprint, packaging and paperboard.

The market was growing at a rate of about ten percent annually and would continue to do so for a long time in view of the country's large population of 180 million. With an illiteracy rate of thirty percent, the country needed paper as one of the main supports for its education and literacy program.

Indonesians consumed about three kilos per person each year compared to the one hundred and sixty consumed by Europeans. It was not difficult to see why banks and industrialists were so interested by investments in the country's forestry industries.

In fact it was precisely for that reason that Antoine Brodzski had brought together his consortium of highly specialised industrialists. He knew his business well and had taken the decision to ensure there was a place for himself, sharing in the fortune that was to be made in the rapidly expanding economy of Indonesia.

Sutrawan told Ennis he would like to see the pre-feasibility study and the method that had been used for estimating the standing stock of wood in the forest. He also wanted to know who Brodzski's contacts at government level were, and what his own role would be, if he decided to invest in the project.

Ennis accepted his invitation to visit his paper mill the following

day to continue discussions, then joining him for dinner that same evening.

Sutrawan's paper mill had been well designed to the needs of Indonesia. It had been conceived based on Gao's long years of experience in Taiwan. It was a small-scale old-fashioned version of a European mill, equipped with what Ennis considered quaint technology. The whole investment had been about ten million dollars for the first stage, and for the future extension of the mill, which would more than double its capacity; the total cost would not exceed twenty million dollars.

Ennis saw at once that the level of technology would be one of Papcon's major problems. European engineers only thought in terms of technical excellence and gigantism. It would be difficult for Scandinavians, conditioned by their own modern industrial standards, to design or conceive a plant that to their minds was forty years out of date, without the refinements required for cosseted workers, who were conditioned by their unions to demand work comforts, which certain did not even enjoy in their own homes.

The result was that the cost of a European designed mill was several times greater, though better equipped, than a Taiwanese or Korean mill, and even the Japanese could design and construct a modest, low price mill, if that was what their customers wanted.

Ennis praised Sutrawan's mill, telling him it was an excellent model, though it could be seen to lack certain refinements by international industry standards. He formulated his observations in the most discrete manner that he could muster, as he felt it important to mark the point to justify certain future options.

Ennis joined him that evening for dinner in a Japanese restaurant; it was a farewell party for staff returning home after a two-year mission in Indonesia. They were seated in Japanese fashion at a long low table in a private room, separated from the rest of the restaurant by the traditional bamboo and paper walls.

The Sake and Cognac flowed whilst the guests joined in a kind of Karaoke, without the least restraint, each singing popular songs from

his own country. Ennis regretted not having learnt the words of a single song, but not for long, he realised that those present would never know whether he sung in French, German or any other European language. He sang, simply improvising the words of songs that he vaguely knew, with his versions of Danny Boy and My Way to the delight of Sutrawan.

The dinner developed into a three-cornered cognac-drinking match between the Taiwanese paper makers, the Japanese from a panel board manufacturing company and Ennis, encouraged by Sutrawan with cries of Gan bei. The young men had a certain macho air, they boasted their ability to resist the effects of XO, after each toast the glasses were turned upside down by the drinkers, to prove that they were really empty.

A series of challenges were launched and in the final round Ennis remained facing a fierce looking Japanese aged about thirty. Incited by the cries the other guests, they clambered up onto the middle of table in their stockinged feet, eyeing each other, like a pair of Sumo wrestlers looking for grips, holding half pint glasses of cognac, whilst the others shouted drunken encouragements.

On Sutrawan's signal there was silence. They lifted their glasses and slowly started to down the XO, watching each other carefully to avoid drinking more than necessary if the other showed signs of weakness. The Japanese ran into difficulties as the halfway point neared, his eyes bulged with effort and revulsion, he had reached his limit, with the cognac overflowing from the sides of his glass and running down his chin and onto his Batik shirt he suddenly made desperate signs, he could not go on and abandoned the match staggering off the table, mopping his face that shone with transpiration and cognac.

Ennis had won and to drive the point home, to his own surprise and that of everybody else, he downed the rest of his glass with a grin of triumph.

He had made himself an instant reputation and entered into legend, in the eyes of Sutrawan and his friends. He waited for the inevitable kick from the cognac, expecting it at any moment; he had

drunk almost a whole bottle in the space of two or three hours.

He vaguely remembered having read of people dropping dead after such exploits, and after a suitable interval he excused himself and walked carefully to the mens room, hoping that in Roman fashion he could avoid the worse by throwing up the mass of cognac that lay like a time bomb in his stomach.

However, he had not counted on the high class service of the restaurant; the toilets were luxuriously appointed, with female attendants in white kimonos, who waited behind him with steaming hot hand towels at the ready whilst he went through the motions of urinating.

He looked desperately around at the cubicles, but after carefully studying them he realised that they offered no escape, the attendants would certainly hear his attempts at vomiting and would no doubt hurry to tell the restaurant manager, who in turn would immediately inform Sutrawan that one of the guests was having difficulties.

Ennis returned to the banqueting room to face the music, he smiled nonchalantly; the alcohol was beginning to take effect. Suddenly, to his immense relief, the party broke up, much earlier than he would have expected, towards eleven. He was soon back in his hotel room, where almost at once he fell into a deep sleep, awoken the next morning by the bright sunlight that streamed into his bedroom, he looked at his watch, it was just after nine. To his great astonishment he had passed the night without the least problem, he felt almost no after effects apart from a slight feeling of light-headedness.

## Chapter 14 - BUSINESS FRIENDS

Ennis followed Budiman out to the tee for the first hole. It was early, just after seven to be precise; a slight haze was clearing, burnt off by the already hot sun, giving way to a fine still Saturday morning. Sigit Budiman had invited him to a round of golf at Pondok Indah, a smart

golf club on the outskirts of Jakarta, used by wealthy local businessmen, politicians and certain expatriates.

Out on the course it was a good occasion for them to talk about sensitive matters, without the risk of being overheard, also a means for Ennis of having a good couple or so hours of uninterrupted discussion with Sigit.

‘Tell me Sigit, what’s Sutrawan’s background?’

‘I know him only by name and reputation, Jani Sutrawan, his Chinese name is Swee Swee Boon or Kim To Boen. He first became known after 1965, with Orde Baru, that’s the New Order year. He’s got several joint-ventures with major Japanese industrial groups.’

‘What about forestry or paper?’

‘I’m not exactly sure, but Sutrawan is involved in several sectors, timber, plantations, mining, import-export, real-estate and banking business. I understand he’s also President of the Board of Trustees of a Hong Kong finance company.’

‘So he’s a successful businessman!’

‘Sure, he’s also got some good friends at the top including Sudarmono, the Sultan of Johor and he’s also the Chairman of the Indonesian Badminton Association.’

‘How did he make it then?’

‘Well that’s a long story, but basically it became clear that he was closely linked with military in late sixties. He had the agency for General Motors, but then he lost it for some unclear reason to another Chinese, Sutowo. He was also involved in the clove monopoly, but he also lost that to Liem Sio Liong, I suppose he was backing the wrong general somewhere.’

‘What happened then?’

‘Well he still has some powerful friends, he built his group on extensive forestry concessions, which had been under the control of the military.’

‘The army?’

‘Yes, it’s not unusual, you know they have their own resources and businesses, unfortunately they’re not that good in business and they normally tie in with some group to run it for them.’

‘That’s normal then?’

‘Yes, for example another group owned by Widjaya controls the palm oil industry with Liem Sio Liong, in joint ownership of Bimoli and Sawit Melindo.’

‘Widjaya? They’re in forestry and paper too?’

‘Yeah, they’re into everything.’

‘Oh! I remember now, wasn’t that the Widjaya in the Bank scandal?’

Budiman laughed.

‘I see you’ve been swatting up on the murky financial dealings of the Jakarta business world.’

Ennis smiled and nodded.

‘It wasn’t Widjaya, it goes back a few years, in 1980 the entire board of directors of the Bank Bumi Daya resigned after charges of corruption, credits of over eight hundred million dollars were overdue, and allegations that a former director, illegally provided forty five million dollars to a Chinese businessman, a certain Boen in return for payments.’

‘Boen! Didn’t you say that was another name for Sutrawan?’

‘Yes, but it was never clearly shown that it was linked to Sutrawan and was quickly hushed up.’

‘It’s not surprising, nearly every day there’s accusations of some kind of fraud or misappropriations in state corporations in the Jakarta newspapers.’

‘Yeah! Indonesian generals and their Chinese business associates, for example under the patronage of Bulog several private business groups have flourished, they’re mostly Chinese capitalists with long standing connections to Kostrad. It’s a good example of what is called the cukong system, in which Chinese businessmen fulfil the role of financiers to military in return for access to licences, credit monopolies and political protection. That’s exactly what Sutrawan does.’

‘Is it good to get involved with him then?’ asked Ennis with a worried look.

‘That’s up to you-I mean Brodzski-I wouldn’t recommend it.’

He swung at the ball and Ennis watched it disappear down the fairway.

‘Let’s go,’ said Sigit handing his club to the caddy who followed them.

‘There are so many scandals, one of the biggest was the Pertamina affair, the President Director, Ibnu Sutowo, allowed loans to be raised without the authority of the Board of Supervisors. He approved the purchase of tankers from an American ship builder General Dynamics, at a price of 150 million dollars, when the same type of ship was available from Norway at 100 million.

Time magazine had reported that tanker contracts were padded by as much as forty percent. In addition most oil contracts contained a thirty percent clause providing a substantial private commission for officials of the company.’

‘Whilst we’re on that Sigit, what about our arrangements?’

‘What do you mean!’ he said with an offended look of surprise at being mixed with such a bag of scandals.

‘Well...I mean we should have some contingency plans in the case of accidents.’

‘Accidents!’

‘Yeah, you know what I mean like when Thahir died.’

‘What’s that got to do with us?’

‘You know...when he died his widow withdrew forty five million US dollars from his personal account from the Chase Manhattan, and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in Singapore.’

‘So!’

‘She was prevented from withdrawing a further thirty five million by a writ from the Indonesian government.’

‘I still can’t see what that has to do with us?’

‘Well Thahir’s money was derived from commissions for the Krakatau contract.’

‘Thahir was part of a large network including Sutowo, Suharto family, and Liem Sio Liong.’

‘We wouldn’t like something like that to happen to us.’

‘Don’t worry, we’ll look after that.’

‘Sutrawan’s definitely involved with the military. Most important thing in their system is the relationship between the state, the military business and capitalist class, both domestic and international.’

‘How does that help?’

‘Despite the politically derived resources the military can draw on, the bulk of military businesses remain small, under-capitalised and struggling, generally they only start to prosper after entry into joint-ventures with Chinese or international capitalists.’

‘I see.’

‘Yes, it’s only the Chinese or foreigners who can provide the capital and management, who can turn these assets into real profits.’

‘That’s how Sutrawan works then.’

‘Right, and nowhere is this better illustrated than in the forest industry.’

‘That’s how it ties in then with his military connections.’

‘Yes, the military have been remarkably successful in obtaining logging concessions, their contributions in joint-ventures have been the concessions themselves, in return for a share of the profits generated from their exploitation.’

‘What about the restrictions on logging?’

‘There’s the problem now! The government has restricted unprocessed log exports and force logging companies into building plywood factories, saw mills, and pulp and paper manufacturing. A lot of logging concessions are idle and others are being forced into amalgamations to raise capital for investments.’

‘I see, so that’s why they’re interested in pulp and paper all of a sudden.’

Sigit laughed, ‘As Antoine would say, you’ve understood everything all in one go.’

A few days later after relaxing and sunning himself Ennis returned to Paris. He was more than pleased with the results. They had now had made good progress with the Indonesian partners, needed for operating the future mill and marketing its products. Partners who were acknowledged as competent and already established in the pulp



and paper industry, who would give added weight and credibility to the project in broader Indonesian government circles through Sutrawan's powerful political relations.

## Chapter 15 - A JOINT-VENTURE

Bintang Agung was one of Sutrawan's joint-ventures in partnership with the Gao Group. They were the owners of a pulp mill built in Perawang, Riau province, in lowland central Sumatra. It was just over one year since the mill had begun production with a capacity of 100,000 tons a year; small for a modern pulp mill. Danny Lau confided to Ennis that an expansion was about to be launched that would bring the production up to 300,000 tons a year.

'After that we shall continue with our program, to raise Bintang Agung's pulp production to one million tons!' he said with pride and satisfaction. Lau had what could only be described as a megalomaniac vision of the future; everything he talked about was big.

Their mill expansion program would place a high demand on the company's wood supply organisations. They were creating large plantations; they called them timber estates, which were necessary for the development of the company's raw material resources. Bintang Agung had started their tree plantation program five years previously, however, were struggling as a result of their lack of knowledge and experience, forcing them to extend their wood harvesting by clear-cutting into their concessions of natural forest.

The object of the pulp wood plantation project, was to guaranty the long term supply of raw material to their mill, to replace mixed tropical hardwoods from their logged over forest concessions, by establishing fast growing hardwood plantations of acacia and eucalyptus providing a renewable wood fibre resource.

The company had established five thousand hectares of plantations and they planned to plant eight thousand each year. They had been

established on old forestland that had been transformed into scrub and grassland, their intention was that the plantations would be progressively extended to zones created by shifting cultivation and logged over sites.

Kalevi Nurminen's forestry specialists advised them on soil improvement, computerised forestry mapping, genetic selection and plantation management.

Lau explained they were also developing a tree nursery with a planned capacity to produce enough tree seedlings necessary to provide harvestable trees after twelve years. The nurseries would when they reached full capacity supply plantations programmes of about twenty thousand hectares a year. The total plantation programme when completed would cover 180,000 thousand hectares.

It was unprecedented in South East Asia, but Lau said the creation of renewable forestry resources was vital for the development of Indonesia's forestry industries and conservation in the long term. Bintang with Nurminen's specialists had forecast that *acacia mangium* could turn out to be the eucalyptus of Asia.

The program represented another two thousand square kilometres of rainforest replaced by vast monocultures whose effect on the regional ecology was unknown and very unpredictable, land that could never again be regenerated as rainforest.

Hardwood trees that had taken two hundred years to reach maturity, irreplaceable giants, were felled for the production of low-grade plywood and throw-a-way chopsticks, for hygiene conscious Japan. The remaining forest would then be clear-cut for pulpwood. For the simply reason that wood was cheap and readily available, given away in the form of almost free government concessions with negligible labour costs and no social responsibilities for the workers.

There existed barelands where fast growing tree plantations could be developed, but that required real investment and in the meantime the unique rainforests were being mined in the same manner as non-replaceable mineral resources.

The lack of a home based industry and capital to create one, forced the Indonesia to import paper products from Scandinavia and the

North America. It was in the interest of the industrialists of those countries to maintain the status quo, as long as they had sufficient of wood resources from their native forests to supply their own mills and export the products of those mills overseas, thus amortising their existing investments.

Companies such as Atlantic Forestry Industries and Kentucky River Pulp of the USA had obtained vast forestry concessions, against the promises to build paper mills and other wood processing plants, in remote provinces of Indonesia. They exploited the rich forests, natural deposits of timber, extracting the high-grade wood, without little intention of fulfilling their part of the bargain, until finally the Indonesian government withdrew the concessions.

Sutrawan had been the first to build an economically viable paper pulp mill in the country, though over the years smaller plants had been set up, such as that built by the Japanese in Martapura. His mills were not large by western standards, but his partner being the prudent Taiwanese led by Gao, preferred to advance slowly in their first steps into Indonesia. When Ennis met Deny Lau for the first time, the mill had just started production and Bintang Agung had only relatively recently begun looking seriously at the question of forestry resources over the long term, with the intention of setting up plantations.

Their mill needed to harvest enough wood to produce one hundred thousand tons of pulp annually. That was about four hundred thousand cubic meters of mixed tropical hardwood a year, or almost million small trees, equal to the deforestation of over ten square kilometres of natural forest every year. That area would then be planted with new trees. Gao had explained that it was considerably less than that lost to shifting cultivation - and it would be constantly regenerated by new planting.

Trees that produced the best pulp, for strong papers, were conifers. They were rare in tropical regions of South East Asia. The only conifers, which were indigenous to Borneo, were agathis and dacruidium.

The agathis was a magnificent tree of up to sixty meters in height

one and a half metres in diameter for mature specimens. The foliage was concentrated at the crown of the tree, leaving a long straight bole free of branches, making it easy work for chain saws. The wood was too valuable for paper pulp and was reserved for veneer and furniture industries at a price of over 250 dollars a cubic meter.

The *dacrydium* was of the same family that people commonly called monkey pines, which decorated many a garden in Europe. It was much smaller than the *agathis* and grew on sandy subsoils, they grew in groves and could be harvested at a reasonably economical cost.

What was not known was exactly where the *dacrydium* grew and what volume of standing wood was available for exploitation. There were no maps, neither was there any experience for calculating its harvesting costs.

It was crucial for the viability of the Barito project, that the existing *dacrydium* stands were sufficient in quantity to be capable of supplying the mill for the initial twelve to fifteen years of its existence, the time necessary for the plantations to reach maturity. The plantations could then take over as the source of raw materials after the natural forest resources had been depleted.

At that time, the only pulpwood cut in Indonesia was that which Sutrawan extracted in Sumatra for his own mill or exported to Taiwan. This wood was termed as mixed tropical hardwood, which was to say a heterogeneous mixture of the trees that coexisted in the luxuriant tropical forest, several hundreds of different species.

The wood was considered low quality, as a consequence of constantly varying mixture of tree species, and more generally the poor paper making characteristics of its fibres. Long fibre pulp was essential for making most kinds of paper; it gave paper strength, even if its proportion in the mix was as low as ten percent. To produce it locally, would have required plantations, needing years of experimentation, and twelve or more years of growth, until the trees reached maturity and were ready for harvesting.

Such plantations had been started in Java, on the only land that had been available, poor hilly terrain nearby the town of Cijulang.

The results were good but the wood was too expensive for pulp making because of the high cost of harvesting over a difficult terrain.

An investor, who controlled forestry concessions with a standing stock of natural long fibre wood species, count on revenues worth a total hundreds of millions of dollar, enough to pay comfortable pensions to a legion of politicians and industrialists. The tragedy was that the sole objective of many of those investors, who controlled the exploitation of the forest, was to provide for their own comfort and retirement plans, ignoring the question of future responsibility by continuing blindly in their plans as many had done before them.

If the investors succeeded in one way or another, to get their millions out before the rainforests were transformed into disastrous barelands, they would be laughing all the way to their offshore banks.

They certainly did not risk going to jail, or floating belly up in Jakarta's vast seaport of Tanjung Priok, as did their infinitely poorer compatriots...when their sins caught up on them.

## Chapter 16 - AN OVERBEARING FRIEND

Jean Strecker was a powerfully built man, looking younger than his sixty odd years, head of the second largest civil engineering and construction company in France, Travaux Publics Strasbourgeois.

TSP employed over thirty thousand people. Their head office was located in the suburbs of Paris, and their construction sites could be seen all over France and in many countries overseas.

Strecker liked to tell people, that if the ratons were excluded, they counted only about three thousand real employees. The ratons he contemptuously referred to were the mainly North African immigrant workers on their construction sites.

During his long career, Strecker had spent more than ten years running one of the company's subsidiaries in Venezuela. It was there, that he had adopted, probably unconsciously, the style of a certain type of South American.

He sported a narrow Zorro type moustache and wore dark broad shouldered suits with trousers tapering to narrow bottoms, and rather pointed black shoes. Because of this appearance and his forceful manner, he was nicknamed behind his back El Bandido by certain of the Indonesians.

Strecker as the CEO of a large powerful company had a steam roller attitude, making it clear that TPS, the leader of Brodzski's consortium, was graciously bestowing on Indonesians the benefit of their superior technology and vast experience.

He could not, or would not, try to appreciate, or understand the position of the Indonesians on the question of their participation in the project equity. Strecker's attitude was summed up by the idea that all considered, a hundred or so million dollars of equity, for a country the size of Indonesia was a mere trifle.

Ennis felt disappointment and surprise at Strecker's attitude. He acted like a conquistador in a newly vanquished territory, but unfortunately. Ennis was not the only one who had remarked and was dismayed by Strecker's arrogant manner.

Ennis had no particularly partisan feelings towards the Indonesians when it came to business. He wanted the success of the project, as much as anybody else, and probably more so. It was evident that the other consortium members had invested in the project for the same reason as TPS, who would have the most to gain, which was why Strecker's attitude was particularly difficult to understand.

TSP was accustomed to dictating their own terms and conditions in their traditional markets in the French speaking countries of West Africa, or in South America, perhaps Strecker had not realised, that the situation was different in Indonesia.

It seemed to Ennis that if anybody was going to ruin up the arrangements that had taken so much effort to put together, it would be Strecker. He was inflexible, and appeared to expect a lucrative contract signed and sealed by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, endorsed by the French government to be handed to him on a silver tray.

Ennis had difficulty in appreciating why Strecker did not appear to understand the subtleties of the negotiations. Perhaps because he had always worked on government contracts in France, for highways or public works, or on overseas projects sponsored by the French government, backed by aid or soft loans to their ex-colonies or political friends.

Contracts had been attributed to TPS in France by local government authorities, where prices were arranged in advance, with substantial commissions, which often financed-illegally-interested local political parties with almost standard percentages built into the generous prices.

Since the formation of the consortium, TPS had gradually awoken to the potential of the South East Asian market. They had established an expatriate representative in Jakarta, Jan Pieter Michaelsen who was a Belgium Flammand, to develop other business relations in the booming construction market.

Ennis had met him on many occasions, on consortium business and had learnt that after an optimistic start by Michaelsen, TSP was having difficulties. This was mainly due to Strecker's unwillingness to comply with local business practices, but partly because of Michaelsen's lack of experience. His qualifications had been unfortunately limited to the management of TPS customer service in France. Strecker had felt that he was a good company man, but the fact that he had no experience in managing international business relations did not seem to count.

Michaelsen explained to Strecker that their lack of success was due to the Indonesians who evidently did not understand the enlightened business methods of TPS. Ennis had the impression, that this had been an excuse for his lack of an early breakthrough, but some days later after discussions between the consortium led by Strecker with the Indonesians, he had begun to understand the difficulties.

Axelmann pointed out the problem to Michaelsen but unfortunately it was not in his interest to tell his boss where he was going wrong, he was a company man.

Strecker sat upright on the edge of a leather couch, in front of a low coffee table facing Wihartjo, in the Ministers official reception chamber. Strecker was holding his cigarette, in his rather effeminate manner, by the extreme ends of his finger tips, however, there nothing effeminate in his hands, they were very large for a man, who had never had the need to do the least manual work during the past thirty years or more of his life.

Strecker had studied at the Ecole Polytechnic, the same as Brodzski. As Heinz Reinbold frequently liked to snigger 'same school' aping Brodzski.

Polytechnicians were reputed for their Cartesian approach. Unfortunately, they often presented logical solutions to illogical problems. Their motto was *A la patrie, la science et la gloire*, very nice Ennis thought to himself when he listened to Brodzski's or Strecker's theories-but for Napoleon's era.

Ennis, like many other people in France, sometimes felt that such elites plagued the country. Not for the same reasons. His feelings resulted from his Anglo-Saxon upbringing. The only thing Cartesian in French society, for Ennis, was the certitude that nothing in their behaviour or in their institutions appeared, at least to the casual foreigner, to follow any clear logic.

France was, he knew, not unlike any other industrialised society. In political and economic affairs, decisions and their consequences were mostly illogical and unforeseeable; otherwise, the world would quite simply have been an easier place to live in.

Ennis had been criticised for a sometimes-simplistic business approach. He had always tried to coax people around to his way of thinking. If that did not succeed, then he tried if possible to accommodate their ideas. Whichever the result, his idea was to get agreement gradually, painlessly, slowly drawing them into a consensus. He did not feel that there was anything unethical in that method, no force or coercion was applied.

If for various reasons, the results were not as positive as expected, he figured that decisions could always gracefully reversed with a



little flexibility. Maybe, it would cost some money, but after all, people had made their choice of their own free will, though perhaps on occasions with a friendly little coaxing.

When on occasions he was confronted with people who were totally opposed to his ideas, or he sensed antipathy, he immediately avoided them, knowing that they could never reach a working agreement. He knew that the world was full of other more reasonable people, with whom he could always find a satisfactory arrangement.

That sort of consensus was used in Indonesia society, a kind of friendly persuasion, where forceful attitudes were very embarrassing and avoided at all costs.

After all the time spent and efforts to bring the partners together, he mused to himself, here was Strecker seated in front of Wihartjo obviously creating a majestic fiasco, reversing months and months of careful efforts to build an feeling of mutual trust and confidence between the two sides.

Wihartjo looked on, with the enigmatic mask of a Javanese mystic, watching a child laboriously and forcefully explaining his desires. Strecker described, in execrable English, his plan for the raising of the equity on the Indonesian side, as he waved his filter tipped cigarette with one hand, and scribbled figures on a note pad with his gold plated pen held in the other.

It was very simple; the Indonesians should put in 120 million dollars in equity; provide financing for all the local work of civil engineering. This included the construction of a vast concrete raft, to support the mill, an island in the middle of the rice paddies, on the edge of the Barito River. For which a further sum, estimated at about 150 million dollars, would be needed for the main civil engineering.

Ennis felt his blood pressure rising as he observed the dammed Bandido Strecker, who did not appear to understand that everybody, including Wihartjo, were simply trying in their different ways, to create an extraordinary industrial complex in the heart of the rainforest of Borneo. The objective being to exploit its riches for the benefit not only for its investors, but all those who would find jobs and a better life, not forgetting the contribution it would make to the

economic development of Indonesia.

The Indonesians wanted financing, which was all too evident from the very start, they could raise part of the funds needed for the investment, but the new company, and its owners would have to raise another part. The remainder, they planned to get from outside sources, the Asian Development Bank or the International Finance Corporation. If, the Indonesians could put together 270 million, or about twenty five percent of the total investment as Strecker wanted, then they could go it alone, dispensing with the consortium.

Wihartjo, after a long pause, said so to Strecker, and for a Javanese, quite bluntly. He then politely suggested both sides examine in more detail the financial aspects of the project, so that he could put forward more concrete proposals to the government.

It had already been tacitly agreed, that the Indonesians had to build the equity from bankable assets such as pulp wood resources, timber concessions and land. These would be evaluated from the standing stock of timber, the land required to build the mill and the long-term contracts they could negotiate for the pulp sales.

For the first time, Ennis saw Sutrawan mop his brow; he seemed to switch off, as Indonesians do when their problems became too difficult.

The day was lost and the only thing left for them to do was to gracefully retire, waiting for the storm to pass, returning some days later with a new face saving idea. But no, Strecker laboured on in his broken English, insisting on calling the Barito the Rio Barito.

He thinks he is still in God dammed Venezuela, Ennis fumed as Strecker ploughed on; very oblivious to the grim impression he was creating.

Strecker's English was so bad and seeing the puzzled looks on their faces, he was finally forced to turn to Ennis for translation, speaking to him in French. It gave Ennis the opportunity to intimate that they should take time out to think over Strecker's suggestions, as they were getting a little bogged down. It seemed to come as a surprise to Strecker, who looked around questioningly; finally, it slowly penetrated, when he saw the blank expressions.

Riady had that bemused look on his face, which when translated into English said, help!

As they left, Riady took Ennis to one side and he needed to get an explanation for the steamroller tactics of Strecker.

‘You know John, I really can’t understand these TPS people, they really don’t seem to know what they are doing!’

‘Yeah.’

‘It’s lucky that Wihartjo is our friend.’

Ennis waved his hand in dismissal, replying to Riady to forget it for the moment. There was no need to seek confrontation, they would have plenty of time to think over the problem and come up with a solution during the following days. They had planned a last inspection of the mill site as well as its alternatives over the following few days with a view to finalising their choice.

Riady returned with Ennis to his hotel suite. He had insisted it was important that Ennis understand certain essential facts on how the concessions operated to avoid upsetting the interests of certain parties in Kalimantan. He was seriously worried after observing Strecker’s lack of sensitivity and blundering tactics.

Riady described how Indonesian army units operated as semi-mercenaries in the pay of concessionaires, obeying orders in the interest of their officers. It was easy; the army possessed all the means necessary, communications, transport, arms, training and alibis.

As mercenaries in the employment of their senior officers, their job was to police and protect the loggers. It was difficult to say exactly from whom, it was certainly true that there were occasional incidents; troubles with the local forest peoples or even isolated camps robbed by bands of Dayak pirates.

The army acted as a private police force in the absence of conventional state authority. There were little or no permanent police units in those remote areas and the provincial governors, wisely, ignored the activity of the army. The police in the towns such as Bandjarmasin or Sampit possessed very few patrol boats and no

planes or helicopters.

When it became obvious that the forestry industry complex would introduce foreigners into a large region, the loggers who exploited the army's concessions became worried. They loggers operated their concessions as private fiefdoms, controlling almost every aspect of daily life, not only economically but also administratively. They controlled transport, supplies, telecommunications, and even the movement of peoples.

The few villagers that continued their ancestral life and customs, lived outside of the system, but, as soon as they became dependant on non-traditional activities, they were drawn under the control of the loggers.

Colonel Sudianto was against Barito, it infringed on his territory. His division had controlled several concessions in Central Kalimantan for over thirty years. Ever since he had been named Regional Commander, he supervised the concession area under his control efficiently and profitably, as his own private domain.

He had spread his influence across Central Kalimantan, selling his services as a mercenary to almost every other active concessionaire; even the local forestry department officials were in his pay. They were all deeply suspicious of all outsiders, especially of those who did not understand their rules.

The men in the government administration from Jakarta passively accepted the army's rule, it was part of an age-old system, they always sought consensus, avoiding confrontation, and it would have been politically unwise to go against the military. The army as official concession holders, worked closely with the forestry department, observing most of the rules and regulations. The forestry department left them alone, ignoring the under-declared or illegal export of whole logs and other irregularities.

Since the governments ban on the export of whole logs, the Forestry Department controlled the cargoes and movement of ships between the loading points on the rivers and the transport to sawmills in different parts of the country.

The ships were loaded, but after they weighed anchor, there was

no way to control trans-boarding of cargoes on the high sea or prevent ships stopping in Singapore or the nearby Malaysian states, to unload all or part of their cargoes. The seas between the islands were Nusantara, ours, but neither the government nor the customs authorities had the desire or means to control every ship in their waters.

Harvesting of pulpwood did not interest the army, the prices were too low, no margins, too much hard work, and too many controls and inspections by difficult customers, industrialists whose culture the army did not understand. In any case, they realised, they were not equipped to undertake that type of logging.

Colonel Sudianto and his commanding officers arrived at the conclusion that they had no need of a pulp mill that harvested wood in their territory. If there were to be a mill, it would have to operate on raw materials from plantations, which was no problem for the army. They could even participate in the development of the plantations, but logging large quantities of pulpwood, over their territory was a threat and unacceptable to them.

In Bintang Agung's mill in Sumatra, the army controlled the wood supply, by contract for forest clearing operations under the government's transmigration projects. It was clear-cutting, which as the name indicated denuded the land of all trees large and small. It slotted nicely into the commercial wood operations, coming after the extraction of the valuable commercial timber. Barito, on the other hand, planned very selective logging, extracting only *dacrydium* and *agathis*, operating in all concession areas, with the emphasis on tight price control and efficiency.

Sudianto had decided that they would resist the Barito development. Their strategy of defence would be based on delaying tactics, five years at least. He had been told that the mill would take three years to build. There was three years supply of wood in existing plantations on Pulau Laut, an island within easy reach of the planned mill, which left five or six additional growing years for new plantations to reach productive maturity.

There would be no head-on confrontation; they would work

quietly through Regional Command and through Staff Headquarters in Jakarta. Strong arm or scare tactics would be sparingly used, only if the need arose to show the Belandas their error. They did not wish to attract unnecessary attention to themselves from the foreigners and their interfering press.

Colonel Sudianto was confident; he knew very well that the best strategy would be through delaying tactics, his territory and world was an ideal terrain for fighting a war of attrition and delay. The Belandas were always too impatient and would be defeated by the attrition, time and cost. Nevertheless, the moment had come to give a warning to the Belandas and their friends.

His men were carefully placed to watch the foreigners closely, following their every movement. Muliyadi of the Ministry, in Jakarta, reported on each new development on Sutrawan's side, whilst his own men reported on the movements of the foreigners.

Sudianto had watched and studied carefully over the months the progress of Barito. He had an open mind; he was not against development and progress, his sole objective was to protect his own and the army's interests. As the forestry survey had advanced, his men had even provided assistance as part of his intelligence gathering process.

After his men had analysed the preliminary forestry report, the first warning signals had started flashing. His foresters demonstrated to him that it was impossible to deliver wood to the mill using selective cutting methods at twenty dollars a cubic metre.

When at last, a copy of the consortium's feasibility report arrived, he called a crisis meeting. It confirmed his worse fears; the Director General of Forests, Rudini had gone as far as promising, that the reserve funds, that had been set aside by and belonged to the concessionaires, be invested as capital to build the mill.

Sudianto was totally against the use of those funds for a foreign project over which he would have no control. The army preferred smaller investments, in their own selected projects, saw mills, plywood mills and wood panel plants.

His men knew nothing about pulp and paper making; there would

be too many Belandas involved. He accepted the Chinese and could even tolerate the Japanese, they were not so different and they were reasonable men, not as selfish or arrogant as the Belandas, and their objectives converged with his own. He did not trust the Belandas, but above all, he realised that he and his men knew little or nothing about the technicalities and complexities of operating a vast pulp mill.

He would help them to make their plantations, but not supply the wood from his forest concessions or invest in their mill. He instructed his men to obtain copies of all new reports and data made by the Belandas consortium and their friends.

Early the following day Ennis left for Kemarin Airport with the consortium team, where they were to take a domestic flight for Bandjarmasin. The airport lay within the sprawling urban area that formed the endless suburbs of Jakarta.

The flight was scheduled at six thirty; check in time was one and a half hours before take off. It was important not to arrive late at check-in, the computer booking system was rudimentary, it was supplemented by a manual list which resulted in a first come, first served system.

Any official with pull, or wealthy traveller with a fifty thousand Rupiah note, could be guaranteed of a seat. Those who checked in early ran less risk of being bumped off their flight; it was the unlucky tail enders who often found to their dismay that they had been bounced off the overbooked flight.

In order to be at the check in early, they needed to leave the hotel at about four in the morning. In those circumstances, Ennis and his hard drinking friends did not bother going to bed. They spent the night at the Tanamor club, drinking. That evening he felt a good solid drink was justified, he could see that there was going to be no easy consensus between the consortium members, either foreign or Indonesian and the Ministry.

As they drank, they watched the other customers lunging from time to time through the smoke and noise towards the doubtful looking exotic flowers that frequented the club, seated at the bar,

which was awash in beer. It took little persuading to get them onto the dance floor, where they gyrated in a lecherous ritual, preliminary to negotiations on the arrangements for the remainder of the night.

Ennis' own experience told him one or two of the girls started to appear attractive after a couple of drinks. As for the others it would require a lot more beer.

## Chapter 17 - THE OFFICE

The fact that Ennis had never visited Sutrawan's regular hour's office in the months that he had known him was strange. He had always met him either in his hotel suite when travelling, or in one of his favourite restaurants, more notably the Blue Ocean nightclub in Jakarta.

He had asked himself many questions about Sutrawan, a man that he had grown to appreciate and even admire. There was no doubt about his wealth and influence. Ennis had visited his paper mill at Bekasi. His huge modern panel board factory, situated just outside of Jakarta, which was one of the biggest in the country.

That hot, very wet, January morning at the height of the rainy season, Ennis felt very curious about what waited him as he climbed into Riady's Landcruiser. As they drove out past the Presidential Palace, he wiped away the heavy condensation that the high humidity and air conditioning formed on the windscreen, using a perfumed paper tissue from the box that lay on the dashboard.

He had always regarded the palace, as a fine but not over extravagant edifice. He had been received by Idris Hendra in the Vice Presidents office and surprisingly he had remarked at the time the palace was very lightly guarded, when compared to palaces of presidents he had seen in other developing countries. It seemed to him to be a sign of stability in the country.

They then turned right down Gadjah Madja, a wide avenue named after a national hero; a nauseabond canal ran down the centre separating both sides of the avenue into distinct city districts.



Riady drove in the direction of what Ennis soon recognised as the Chinese section of the city. The traffic was dense and slow, and in spite of an indescribable lack of discipline somehow kept moving. The air was unbelievably polluted with fumes and noise. They passed the Blue Ocean - the out of hours office - on the right hand side; it looked different during the day, less attractive, and an uncomfortable feeling of embarrassment ran through him as he noted the dilapidated appearance of the building, which looked like some kind of an oversized dive.

There was an extraordinary mixture of vehicles, becaks, bicycles, hand drawn carts and porters pushing barrows. The motorbikes seemed to take extravagant risks as they dodged in and out between the cars and buses. The worn becak drivers took advantage of every stop to rest their tired worn out bodies. On the pavements, the teeming crowds milled in kaleidoscope of chaos. The mini-buses were packed to cracking with their colourful cargoes of passengers, whose faces wore glazed looks as they stared unseeingly through the grimy windows.

After what seemed an eternity of stops and starts they arrived in the old city centre of Batavia. The mass of traffic was snarled up around the main square, which lay in front of the old town hall and the central railway station. They turned left into what appeared to be a restricted traffic area, where Riady paid for the entry at a tollbooth. Restricted did not signify less traffic, simply that they were entering a paying zone.

The barrier swung up and they rolled over a bridge, which crossed an oily-still stinking canal, then turned right into a dense crowd of porters who were carrying, pulling or pushing immense bales of textiles and other goods.

The area became increasingly dilapidated. Ennis felt his heart sinking, as Riady announced with a sly pleasure, 'We're almost there,' it was evident that they were not about to visit the smartest business district of the city.

After skirting around an enormous pungent mountain of rotten garbage in a grim narrow street, they arrived in front of an

uninspiring three or four-storey building, which housed what appeared to be a distributor of motor vehicle tyres. He then knew they had arrived he recognised the name of Sutrawan's Korean joint-venture partner. He tried to - but could not - imagine inviting Strecker or another of the Europeans to the building.

Riady squeezed the Toyota into the parking place indicated by an old broken down parking attendant. Ennis then followed him into the building, winding his way amongst the stacks of tyres. He could make out, in the feeble light emitted by a single naked light bulb, several elderly Chinese squatting on their haunches, smoking cigarettes in the reeking smell of rubber dust and tyres that pervaded in the stock room.

They climbed two or three flights of wooden stairs, past cheap worn offices, partitioned by panels of veneered plywood then turned into a short narrow corridor. Riady entered into one of the offices.

'Bak Sutrawan is there?' he asked pointing to a door.

'Sudah,' replied one of the secretaries, a slim neatly dressed Chinese girl.

He knocked and they entered the office; Sutrawan was on the phone behind a large modern desk with a shining black lacquered top, decorated by silver framed photographs and trophies for different Badminton exploits.

On the walls were photographs of Sutrawan, shaking hands of various dignitaries and politicians. A large centre place was given to those photos of him with President Suharto of Indonesia. He was speaking Chinese, Hokkienese, which Ennis had come to recognise and smoking one of his ever present Kretek cigarettes, shedding a shower of sparks every time he waved his hand, shouting and giving orders over the phone, fiercely as in a Chinese opera.

'Hello John!' he shouted putting down the phone, smiling as he stood up, leaning out and stretching his hand over his desk, in an invitation to Ennis, to sit on a long black imitation leather couch against the wall facing him.

'Bob, ask the girl to bring glasses!'

'So what do you think of my offices? They're not luxurious, but

people feel at easy here, it's Indonesian style,' he said with a happy grin. Through the windows, covered with a film of condensation provoked by the air-conditioning, Ennis had a view of a three-storey building that faced them. Rusty air conditioners rattled, suspended precariously from blackened steel frames, and water continuously dripped down the green slimed facade. He was uneasy; it was not the kind of office that he was used to, he felt foreign.

'Here, have an XO!'

'Gan bei, drink up young man!' he said lifting his glass.

'So John, James Gunung is coming over and will join us for lunch, he's my attorney, have you met him before?'

'No.'

'Never mind, he will help us draw up the draft agreement. Tomorrow we will be going to Taipei, you're coming with us!'

'Right.'

'We're going in the Falcon.'

'Fine.'

'You know where to go at the airport? We're leaving at and ten, sharp!'

The glass of XO contained a massive dose. Ennis sipped the cognac smilingly, hiding his apprehension at the effects it would have. At that moment the door opened and a well-dressed Chinese in his forties walked in. He was good looking with an athletic build.

'John, this is James Gunung.'

'Hi John! Nice to met you,' he said with a refined American accent, holding out his hand and smiling broadly.

Ennis learnt that Gunung was a Harvard educated lawyer. He was as smooth and sophisticated as any Boston lawyer could be. He exuded natural charm and intelligence, making Ennis a little uneasy. He remembered a past colleague, who had had a similar background and education, and he recalled his questioning, that cut delicately like a surgeons knife, probing for the untruth whilst comforting the patient with soft words.

Ennis felt as though James could read him like an open book. His accent was perfectly natural and apart from his well-proportioned

Chinese features, he could have been a typical well-bred upper class American Wasp.

Gunung had been born in China. His grandparents had quit the country during one of the traumatic upheavals of the revolution to settle in Indonesia. They were wealthy merchants who had escaped with their wealth intact, and had prospered through judicious investments. In the tradition of many wealthy overseas Chinese, they had ensured that their son obtained the best class education in the United States.

Sutrawan and James were total contrasts. One was the smooth product of a wealthy education, the other, a self made man, who had succeeded against almost overwhelming odds, in a country where the poor were trodden into the rice fields of sweat and hard labour.

Contrary to Sutrawan's relations with Gao, the two men appreciated each others complementary qualities, and James gave his counsel in a kind and respectful manner, to his rich friend and client.

‘So John, you are with the Banque de Berne!’

Sutrawan had informed everybody of his connection with the bank, getting pleasure from his association with that name. Ennis could not disappoint Sutrawan by telling James Gunung that de Berne was a minority shareholder of the Papcon. Nevertheless, he was irritated by the constant reference to them, who in any case were no longer playing an effective role in the business.

‘Not directly, they are one of the Papcon's shareholders and carry out a banking role for us.’

‘I see,’ he replied indicating by his tone his grasp of the situation.

‘We can talk over lunch!’ interrupted Sutrawan, ‘Drink up John!’

They spent another half an hour labouring through the dense traffic before arriving at a disappointingly drab Chinese restaurant. It was on an adjacent block to the Hong Kong Bank Building, which also housed the offices of the Commercial Counsellors office, an annexe of the French Embassy.

They were directed up to a private room reserved for them on the first floor, it could have been at best be described as very nondescript. The meal was grim, a style of Chinese cuisine that was

not to Ennis' taste, an undefined variety of marinated shellfish, steamed white fish and prawns with oyster sauce. He would have been happier with grilled or fried fish...if he was cornered into eating fish at all.

'So John we are to prepare an agreement?' James said to him whilst Sutrawan joked with waitress.

'Do you have a draft?' asked Ennis.

'No, we haven't prepared a draft,' he replied, then turning the question. 'Maybe you are the best person to prepare something? The basic agreement is that the Agung Group represents the consortium, for a commission in the case that we are successful in concluding the business. You know something fairly standard...except there will be a confidential clause. Any commission received will be reinvested as capital in the pulp mill company.'

Ennis nodded, he could see no objection to that arrangement.

'The Agung Group, in the non-confidential part of the agreement, will represent the consortium as its local partner. They will have a share of 7.5% in the capital. They will be the local private investor.'

'The project equity will be three hundred million dollars, which is roughly one third of the price to build the mill, the commission on the total mill price is 2.5%, that makes a 7.5% share in the equity,

'Correct,' said James reflecting.

'Okay then! I will prepare a draft, which will be ready for Mr Brodzski's next visit when it can be signed. As soon as it is ready, I will fax it over to you. Is your fax confidential, I mean do many people have access to it?' he asked.

'No. There's no problem there,' Gunung replied, 'No problem at all, it's in my practice, so nobody but my staff will see it.'

'Fax me back any modifications, so that we can firm it up as soon as possible, if there any last minute changes they can be carried out here when Mr. Brodzski comes, then it will be registered at the Public Notary's Office after signature.'

Ennis was glad to get back to the hotel so that he could sleep off the cognac. He had a dull headache remembering he had fixed a game of squash at six.

## Chapter 18 - THE JET SET

The white Falcon jet awaited them on the tarmac. Bill Waites, the captain was already at the controls with the engines whining. His co-pilot, Tom Ling, waited for them at the gate accompanied by two airport officials, one for passport formalities and the other customs control.

The small group followed each other, in turn, up the five or six steps of the aircraft's retractable ladder. They took their places in the cabin, settling down into the comfortable seats. There were nine in total, four white leather armchairs, two on each side. Behind them facing towards the aisle, ranged on one side was a three seat sofa, and on the other side separated by a bar, were two seats, also in white leather.

The meeting in Taipei had one official objective for Wihartjo; it was the quarterly meeting of the Asian Timber Producers & Converters Association. Sutrawan had laid on the transport. It was the custom for top industrialists to provide first class transport and services for ministers. This enabled them to get together at thirty thousand feet and away from prying eyes to discuss their affairs and settle certain questions in a discrete and relaxed manner.

This occasion would permit them to meet the Minister to settle a number of outstanding questions that had remained vague concerning the share structure and commissions to be distributed to different parties.

The hostess, Cindy Chang, was dressed in a sharp Yves Saint Laurent outfit, with a short mini skirt, held at the waist by a wide black belt, decorated with YSL motifs, in gold studs.

Sutrawan could not resist a lecherous smile as she passed before of him to secure Wihartjo's seat belt. He grinned at Brodzski, who was seated opposite, giving him a wicked wink.

The Falcon accelerated down the runway, and lifted off at a steep

angle, climbing into the fluffy cumulus clouds that drifted across Kemarin Airport.

There was a series, of short, sharp, irregular bumps, before they left the clouds behind, reaching the clear blue sky. The jet continued its climb, turning to the right, out over the Java Sea towards the north-east, following their flight plan in the direction of Taipei. The cruising altitude was 35,000 feet; the estimated flying time was four hours.

Sutrawan light up a Bentoel, and made his way towards Cindy who was already preparing refreshments, Champagne for the French, juice for the Indonesians and Danny Lau, and a large XO for himself. He stopped next to Ennis and sat down.

‘You know John if you want something...anything... just ask me, if it is money or something else don’t worry,’ he said softly.

It was a frequent question, to which Ennis always replied by thanking him graciously, assuring him that if ever he was in need something, he would of course come to him. Sutrawan smiled and patted him on the knee pleased to know all was well.

‘Yesterday, I met the Vice President and he would like us to go quickly. He knows we are with Bak Wihartjo in Taipei, it is important that business is concluded rapidly. Next year there will be elections and we should tie everything up before then. There will be no change at the top,’ he said waving his hand at the absurdity of such a thought, ‘but in the election year there are no decisions either, so we will lose time.’ He then dropped his voice looking a little serious, as if he had something difficult to say.

‘We must also get the details into writing, our arrangements, normally we don’t write these things down,’ and he pointed his cigarette at Ennis, ‘but you Westerners do! So we feel better when dealing with men like Strecker, when it’s written down on paper.’

Ennis nodded in agreement, that would be no problem, and it would even comfort Brodzski, who liked things on paper.

‘Good! We will meet Mr Gao on Monday and Danny will bring Rudini to see his mill, with Wolfgang Kubler.’

He returned to his own seat and released it from the landing and

take off position, pivoting it at an angle towards the aisle, the others followed him.

He spoke deferentially to Wihartjo, in Indonesian, whilst Brodzski commented on the view below to Rudini.

Behind them, Axelmann pulled out, from his black crocodile skin document case, the draft agreements. He went over the last modifications with Ennis and Danny Lau; it was more for the form, as they had agreed the final points the previous day.

About one hour out from Jakarta, Cindy Chang served them a cold luncheon and champagne, after which Brodzski and Wihartjo settled down for a nap as Sutrawan joined Ennis and Axelmann to chat.

It was settled. Gao would undertake the distribution of the mill products, and the commission rates had been fixed. The prices would be indexed on the going world market price. Any other position, from their point of view, would have been unacceptable, and even suicidal.

Over the previous eighteen months period, they had seen the price of market pulp slide down from 850 dollars to 500 dollars a ton. It was impossible to agree to a minimum price, as Gao had insisted, he knew the business well enough to realise that it was an unrealistic demand.

Gao, as a buyer of wood pulp for his own paper mills, would never have agreed to a fixed price from one source, when he knew he could buy it cheaper at spot prices on the open market.

It was hot in the jet, and Sutrawan asked Cindy to tell the captain to lower the cabin temperature, the XO and champagne were beginning to take effect.

Almost four hours after leaving Jakarta, they commenced their decent to Taipei City Airport, which had the advantage of being near the downtown area. It was used as the domestic airport and for executive jets; the newer Chiang Kai Shek International Airport some forty kilometres outside of the city received the international flights

There were heavy clouds, and Bill Waites informed them over the information system, that the ground temperature was a sultry 34°C, with the humidity in the nineties. It was three o'clock in the afternoon; Taipei was one hour behind Jakarta time.



The Falcon landed with a bounce, and after breaking, it turned and taxied towards the executive aircraft reception area, at the end of the main passenger terminal building.

The formalities in Taipei were stricter than in Jakarta, with full customs inspection and passport controls. Gao was there to meet them, as well as the protocol officer from the Indonesian diplomatic mission. They only succeeded in accelerating the formalities to a limited degree, in spite of the presence of Wihartjo, a high-level government minister, whose visit was unofficial.

Sutrawan had arranged transport to pick-up Wihartjo, the largest Mercedes he could lay his hands on, one of Scarface Fung's cars.

The arrangements at the airport were confused by an unforeseen complication-the presence of the Indonesian Embassy protocol officer, who had also planned to collect Wihartjo. He had an advantage in that he could, as a member of the diplomatic staff, enter the restricted section of the arrivals reserved for VIPs.

He snatched Wihartjo from under their noses. The Ministers arrival in Taipei City turned into a car chase comedy as they tried to catch up and follow the embassy car. Sutrawan puffing furiously on his Kretek shouted instructions to the driver in Taiwanese.

Wihartjo was incensed, but could only respect the Embassies initiative to avoid an incident. He later complained to the Ambassador that even ministers could not be left in peace for an unofficial visit.

Sutrawan's group finally headed into Taipei City's downtown area, having given up trying to follow the embassy car. Brodzski with the others followed helplessly in Gao's American limousine unable to make the Chinese driver understand the uselessness of following the farcical chase.

They were booked into the Presidential suite, at the New Mandarin Palace, which comprised seven bedrooms with a conference room, lounge and bar. Wihartjo, for privacy, as a minister had his own separate suite, a member of the Indonesian Government, should not be publicly seen too close to Sutrawan.

They first planned to rest up, and then Gao would join them for

discussions and an early dinner. Wihartjo did not return until later than planned that afternoon, he had been ambushed into a lunch with the ambassador.

Taiwan and Indonesia enjoyed good relations and there existed a significant commercial exchange between the two countries. Most of this business was conducted through overseas Chinese, who helped smooth the way as many Indonesians lacked international experience and were often lost overseas.

Sutrawan arranged sumptuous entertainment for his guests and partners, outdoing even his most extravagant competitors in that domain, whilst Gao, as low key and frugal as ever, fulfilled with diplomacy and courtesy his essential obligations.

Gao had departed as soon as business was completed to the satisfaction of all those present and dinner was over, not wanting to be a spoil the arrangements he knew had been made for the rest of the evening by his disapproving presence.

The group relaxed with the arrival of the company that Sutrawan had laid on. Even Wihartjo, who was normally inscrutable, soon warmed up to the attractive and discrete Chinese girl that Sutrawan very discretely introduced to him.

Gary Lawford, a tough Texan, was Agung's internal technical consultant and construction manager. He was in Taipei for technical discussions with Gao's staff, had joined the party for the dinner; he was a professional and his job was a tough one. He managed the construction of the Agung Groups major projects, leading negotiations with their foreign suppliers. It was rumoured that he also looked after Sutrawan's dirty business in real estate investments in the USA, without too much concern for the rules. He had been in Taipei on one of his regular visits for discussions with their Taiwanese subcontractors.

Lawford was moulded for the job, he was about five eight and wore platform cowboy boots, his piercing blue eyes were set in a deliberate tough guy look with his lips tightly pursed, to assert the image he studiously projected.

Ennis suspected that in reality he was a little unsure of himself. Lawford was constantly trying to reassert himself, through a demonstration of workaholism, or, by shouting down one of his lesser colleagues or collaborators. Ennis remembered him shouting down Kalevi Nurminen's specialists.

'I'm the god-damned customer! When I say I want it like that, I god-damned well want it like that!'

He was an actor, dropping off his jacket that he often wore loosely hanging over his shoulders, to dramatise a moment, rolling up his shirt sleeves, swinging his light frame around in a heavy weight manner. He held his Ray Bans in his hand when he made a point, showing his perfect large teeth when he smiled trying to hide the force of his decisions. Rarely, he let slip one of his real naive friendly smiles, forgetting for an instant the tough guy veneer; he was constantly worried about the nice guy coming out.

After Wihartjo had retired to his room, Lawford complained he was hungry; he could not stomach Chinese food. Ennis took the opportunity for a break from Sutrawan's company and invited Lawford to a good imported American steak at the hotels Steak House, which was more to Lawford's taste. He had already discovered Lawford's reputation as a hard drinker, living out his image. He started normally enough, with a Scotch, then the wine, at the end of the meal he ordered a large Drambuie. They then returned to the suite where the party was in full swing, and where Lawford continued with the Drambuie.

'Listen John!' he said still remarkably sober, 'I was in the marines, I served in Vietnam. I just want you to know that I like you...but if you ever cross me I'll kill you!'

Ennis was a little startled as he looked into those steely blue eyes. He was not sure if it was the odd behaviour of the strange personality or whether he believed the Hollywoodian menace.

'Where can we get a real drink in this joint,' Lawford suddenly said aggressively. 'Let's go to the god-damned Singapore!'

Lawford was uneasy in the luxury of Sutrawan's extravagant suite and his friends. He needed something more down to earth that

recalled his days in Saigon. They left the suite as the last of Sutrawan's company slowly drifted towards their rooms in the arms of the girls. They took a taxi to the Singapore. It was a little after midnight when they arrived. It was crowded, full of smoke and smelling of cheap perfume. Lawford pushed his way through to the bar shouting his order above the noise of the music and the crowd, a double Drambuie.

Ennis observed the usual mixed crowd seeking excitement and exoticism away from their Westernised hotel cocoons. He recognised one or two of them, hotel regulars and expatriates.

A few minutes later Lawford was dancing with a small pretty faced girl, his arms raised and with hips gyrating, he leered at the girl, who giggled, she did not care, she had found a customer.

He continued to drink his Drambuie; he was a real soak and was beginning to show aggressive signs. It was almost four when they dragged him out of the bar shouting and pulling his friend with him.

At the New Mandarin Palace, Lawford weaved his way across the hotel lobby to the lifts and disappeared to his room, supported by his girlfriend for the night.

The next morning Gao returned joining them in Sutrawan's suite. Together Danny Lau and Thomas Lee they were to finalise the details of the agreement with Gao, defining the role of his company, Yu Mei Chih Paper. The agreement stated that he would have the exclusive management of the mill as industrial operator, appointing his own executives and technical staff. They would be remunerated from the mill earnings and would receive each year a bonus payment based on the company profits. In addition, Gao would have exclusive rights to marketing the mills products in all export markets.

The Agung Group, Sutrawan's own company would have the exclusive rights to marketing the products in their home market.

The key points being quickly settled, they then agreed on the commissions to be distributed to the politicians and government officials. A total of seven percent was to be put aside for that purposed, in addition a number of honorific but paid directorships in

the company were reserved for the minister and certain of his staff.

Gao would also contribute ten percent of the equity, which would be financed through orders for machinery and services subcontracted to him and his Taiwanese subsidiaries. The agreement was approved without any further drafting, the modifications were hand written on plain paper and all parties signed the document with Danny Lau and Thomas Lee as witnesses.

Ennis could count on Brodzski to respect the terms of the agreement, but he had misgivings about Strecker. In any case, he argued to himself, the arrangement ensured the marketing of the mill products and all commissions would return back into the project in the form of equity.

The discussions were concluded in a businesslike manner. Brodzski satisfied with the outcome left for Paris. With considerable relief that things had gone as planned, Ennis quit the hotel and joined Lily. They planned spend the weekend together and get away from Taipei. The Friday afternoon they drove to Sun Moon Lake, a picturesque resort situated in the centre of the island, a favourite destination for honeymooners. After the pressure of the previous days, he could relax with Lily acting as guide visiting the temples and tourist attractions that surrounded the mountain lake.

They returned to Taipei on the Sunday evening booking into the New Mandarin. The weather had changed, a typhoon was forecast, and was expected to hit the island during that same night, though the weathermen were uncertain as to the exact path of the typhoon.

The next morning Ennis was awoke by the sound of heavy rain and wind. The view from his room onto the avenue below was unlike anything Ennis had ever seen; the palm trees that lined the avenue were bent by the wind, their fronds almost sweeping the furious torrent of water that rushed down the street carrying debris of all sorts in its passage.

Hoardings, air conditioners, aerials and tanks had been ripped from buildings and were mixed with mass of unidentifiable wreckage blown by the wind. The streets were deserted. He called to Lily who

ignored his excited beckoning; she had seen it many times before. He went to the bathroom and in passing he picked up the newspaper that had been slipped under the room door together with a sheet of hotel notepaper. The paper informed the guests on details of the typhoon and the Taipei City's decree, declaring that all activities, both private and public, were suspended for twenty four hours in the interest of public safety. The radio and television would inform the public of further announcements.

Ennis called the airport and was informed by a recorded message that it was closed. He turned to Lily what asking he could do. 'Come back to bed there's nothing to do, for two days,' she replied pulling him towards her.

He switched on the TV for the local news in English. The typhoon was practically stationary, just off the east coast of Taiwan; no improvement in the weather could be expected for at least 24 hours.

There was nothing to do, it was midnight in Paris, later he would attend to his travel arrangement, in the meantime he took Lily's advice, slipping between the sheets against her smooth warm body.

## Chapter 19 - NEIGHBOURS

They were both very tall men, of almost the same age. They had known each other all their lives, having grown up on neighbouring farms. Their families were large wealthy land owning farmers, who worked extensive forestlands in addition to their cereal and pasture holdings. The relations between both families were what could be called most cordial, though there had been generations of neighbourly competition between them.

Both sons were the youngest of their respective families, each having several brothers and sisters. The two had entered into engineering school in the early fifties, when their families decided that farming would no longer be able to support all the members of the family.

After graduation, by chance they had both entered into the same promising medium sized mechanical engineering firm, near the town of Wasa, situated on the coast of the Gulf of Botnia. The firm prospered and grew during the fifties and sixties, driven by the demands of the neighbouring Soviet Union, which still nurtured hopes for the future of the country's centralised economy.

The Finns understood the Russians, who paid cash, and profits rolled in whilst Tapani and Jaakko learnt the business and rose in the ranks. There was no significant long-standing industrial tradition in Finland and even fewer sons of rich industrialists. Within a generation, the two country boys held the reins of a multi-billion dollar industrial giant, Finnish Heavy Industries, which after being acquired by the banks, had grown through mergers, extending its activities to, saw mills, plywood mills, pulp and paper mills, and owners vast tracts of forest land where they harvested the wood and hunted elk.

In the fifties, the many Finns were poor workers or immigrant labourers in Sweden; they were looked down upon by the Swedes as peasants, as were the Irish in England in the not so distant past. But hard work born of a harsh climate and solid Lutheran principals in a thriving economy had raised them to a level undreamed of by their fathers. Their business acquisitions and markets had spread beyond Scandinavia to Europe, and further to North America. They then turned their attention to exploring the exotic markets of South America and the Far East.

They remained in their traditional business sectors, the forestry based industries of wood, pulp and paper, and the machinery needed by that industry to transform wood into profits avoiding risky diversification.

Success had brought problems; rising standards of living and education had brought increased costs and higher expectancies. The Finns became renowned for their forest based technological expertise and the high quality of their workmanship. Exports became more sophisticated and their reputation grew, they earned respect for their business integrity and reliability. They also exercised great caution,

only dealing with those who could pay cash, giving little credit to the poor or the uncreditworthy of the world.

At the same time the cost of the raw materials from their forests grew, gone were the days of the rude woodsmen who hewed the timber by hand in all weather. The forest workers had become accustomed to nothing less than sophisticated all weather timber harvesters with heating, air conditioning and radio-telephones, a thirty six hours a week, holidays in the Canaries and imported European and Japanese cars, in spite of an economic crisis menaced them.

They negotiated cheap wood for their pulp mills from the Soviet Union; high operating costs in Finland had made their pulpwood too costly, it was no longer as attractive as in the sixties. They were also reaching the limit of their exploitable forest resources and further extensive harvesting would not only menace their economy but also their way of life in the long term, the golden days were numbered.

On the sixth floor of their solid and modern, but unpretentious headquarters, they debated the future development of their raw material sources, assisted by extensive market studies that had been produced by their own specialists, and renowned consultants such as Kalevi Nurminen.

‘Unfortunately Tapani, our plywood business here in Finland is no longer viable, of course we have the know-how and our wood is good, but there is simply not enough of it.’

‘Not to mention costs,’ he replied drawing dourly on his Marlboro.

Jaakko, was the Chief Executive Officer of the holding company and Tapani the President of their three billion dollar a year machinery division.

‘So what about Indonesia, what are your conclusions?’

‘It can serve us in two ways, firstly its vast reserve of high quality timber and low labour costs,’ he paused.

‘And two?’

‘Two is our machinery division...linked with the financial resources from the SKP bank and our wood marketing division.’

‘Go on.’



‘We make a joint-venture with a suitable partner, influential, solid, without too much know-how, we sell them the machinery with a financial package and then we market the products in Europe.’

‘Good, a profitable organisation at each phase is essential, without investing fresh money, only our know-how.’

‘Who do you have on the ground?’

‘We’ll work through a company with whom we have acquired a lot of experience on the Papcon project, it’s called Bintang Agung.’

‘Isn’t that the local joint-venture company on the Barito project?’

‘That’s right.’

‘How is the Barito project going?’

‘Well if I’m honest I suppose that its struggling a bit, there’s a capital problem.’

‘Is there any way we can give it a push?’

‘I’m working on it.’

‘Good!’

They took their mid-morning coffee and biscuits as they normally did, continuing their discussions on Barito. It was beyond the scope of Finntech’s activities to invest capital in industrial projects outside of their group. Their main shareholders the SKP Bank and the Polar Insurance Company vetoed all investment outside the groups own needs. Finntech’s vocation was manufacturing pulp and paper products, and the construction of industrial plant and machinery.

‘We’ve bent the rules a little bit before now to help our business,’ Jaakko said with a wry smile, ‘if you have some way the push things a bit it will help us.

‘I’ll think of something...our prospects over the next couple of years are not too bad, but they could be better, a few hundred million or so of new business at our Wasa machinery works, wouldn’t look bad.’

‘Look at the offsets!’ Jaakko winked and lifting his coffee cup he toasted the idea.

Tapani returned to his office, picked up his telephone, and asked his secretary to call Einari Laxell in their Paris office.

## Chapter 20 - WHISKY ON ICE

Ennis peered through the window of his room into the half light and saw a whitish grey world punctuated only by the forms of a few pines and birch in the near and middle distance. To the left he could make out another log cabin, some fifty meters away. The snow had drifted up to the edge of his window; it had continued to fall all through the night. In the parking place, their Chevy was a smooth white form, topped out with about thirty centimetres of fresh snow.

His throat was feeling sore; he had no doubt caught a chill from the cold dry northern air the previous evening. It's just the kind of place I've always dreamt of for my old age, thought Ennis, shivering at the thought of the cold outside.

Ylasjarvi, was about 150 kilometres inside the Arctic Circle and on that March morning the mercury was a little under minus fifteen degrees centigrade, the snow was still falling and at an almost horizontal angle.

Thank God, it's well heated, he said to himself as he opened the room door and made his way towards the kitchen, where he could smell the aroma of fresh coffee.

'Hi there! Have some coffee,' said Eriksson, his greying hair hanging in a mess over his forehead. He set a mug on the table, carefully avoiding that the ash from his Marlboro did not fall into it.

'Sleep well?'

'Great.'

'See the snow?'

'Is it possible to ski in that?' asked Ennis.

'No problem, of course it's possible, we can ski on anything!'

Ennis had been hoping, after what he had seen outside, that the ski outing would be put off.

Breakfast had been laid out for them on the table in the dinning room; it was typically Scandinavian, ham, sliced sausage, cheese, canned fruit salad, cereals, milk and orange juice. In the background, CNN news was announcing the details of another of those never

ending Middle East crisis, and Axelmann was hunched over his mug sniffing suspiciously at the coffee.

‘Do you know John, this cabin is built from dead trees?’ Jorgen suddenly announced.

‘Well I didn’t think they were living,’ Ennis replied waking up and laughing hilariously at his own wit.

‘Seriously, they were already dead when they cut them down, perhaps for as long as one hundred years, from the natural forest areas of Lapland.’

‘They still exist?’

‘What!’

‘Natural forests!’

‘Sure they do, though there are less and less. Look at that tree out there!’ he said pointing through the window.

Ennis saw a naked, lead grey tree, its bark had long disappeared, it was smooth, lifeless. A few paces away were living pines, the ochre red of their trunks contrasting with their dark green needles.

‘That’s dead?’

‘Yes, its been dead a very long time.’

The cabin, if it could be called that, was in reality a well equipped bungalow, designed for the harsh northern winter conditions, disguised as a traditional log cabin, constructed from ancient wood that had stood dead for more than one hundred years, preserved by the arctic climate and pure air.

After breakfast, they pulled on their ski suits and took the Chevy driving over a winding track to the ski lifts, about three kilometres from the cabin. As Jorgen purchased their ski cards, Ennis saw that there was a mere handful hardy skiers, slowly hiking-their skis on their shoulders-towards the lifts.

Following the line of skiers they arrived at the lifts and hitched onto the T-bars that towed the skiers to the summit of the hill that dominated the slopes. The wind gnawed at them as they were slowly towed upwards, their unprepared leg muscles strained as their skis skidded, weaving menacingly over the icy ruts. On reaching the top, they dropped their T-bars in a scramble and then leaning against the

wind, they pushed their way across the exposed plateau.

The wind moaned and Ennis felt the cold biting into his cheeks. In spite of his thick snow gloves his hands started to feel the chill, his skis skittered over the hard ice that was exposed by the gusting wind, the fresh surface snow had been carried away by the wind to form drifts against mounds, which were probably outcroppings of rock. On the communications tower that dominated the plateau the snow had grown in monstrous forms.

‘I feel like fucking Scott of the Antarctic!’ he said turning to Axelmann who was struggling along behind him.

‘Who?’ his voice was lost in the wind.

‘Scott of the fucking Antarctic!’ he shouted.

‘You got the wrong place, this is the Arctic.’

Axelmann made a sign with his hand pointing down; he then turned sharply around on his skis and without any further hesitation headed down the slope, in long curves throwing small bursts of finely powdered snow, towards the restaurant-bar three kilometres below.

It was just the right moment to take something hot inside of them, to ease the bitter cold that had started to penetrate through their ski suits. Once inside the restaurant they joined Jorgen Eriksson, who they saw already comfortably installed at the bar, with a large of glass beer, lighting a cigarette.

‘You look like you are enjoying yourselves,’ he said laughing. ‘Here, let me offer you a hot grog, don’t worry we have a warmer program for tonight and when we get back to the cabin we’ll start with a sauna.’

Axelmann lifted his eyes to the sky as he took the steaming grog that Eriksson offered him.

‘There’s girls?’

‘No, no, you got it wrong the Finnish sauna is for your health!’

‘Well a nice looking girl would do a lot for my health right now,’ said Axelmann.

‘Okay, tonight at the Whiskylumpolo!’

‘What’s that?’

‘A discotheque.’

‘There’s girls?’

‘You’re obsessed. Sure, it’s about 35 kilometres from here, around the other side of the mountain.’

After a light lunch they returned to the cabin, where the sauna had already been heated up. Following Eriksson’s example they took a shower, then timidly holding a square of stiff paper, to cover their nudity, they entered into the plain pinewood sauna.

‘That paper is to sit on! You know hygiene.’

‘I see,’ Ennis muttered, ‘they don’t want us farting on their sweet smelling pine benches.’

‘If you like,’ said Eriksson, as if he were giving up hope on the two philistines, who were beyond appreciating the finer aspects of Finnish tradition.

The temperature was about 70 degrees centigrade. Eriksson threw a ladle of cold water onto the heated stones, and with a sharp hiss a scorching cloud of steam billowed up, making them gasp for breath.

‘Are you sure this is good for you?’ said Axelmann, who normally tried to avoid high temperatures and was already perspiring profusely.

‘Well providing you don’t have a weak heart it’s okay. You know one of the best things is to roll in the snow afterwards.’

‘Not fucking likely,’ retorted Ennis. ‘Where’s the beer?’

‘That’s outside, where we cool off.’

‘Let’s do that.’

They left the sauna for the adjoining room, where a crate of Lapin Kulta beer stood waiting for them.

‘Lapin Kulta, that means Lapp Gold,’ said Eriksson opening a bottle and handing it to Ennis.

They sipped their beer directly from the bottle, and seated themselves comfortably in the large wicker easy chairs that furnished the room, recovering from the combined thermal shocks of the day.

‘Well perhaps we should talk a little about the feasibility study,’ said Eriksson. ‘Have you been able to read the draft completely?’

‘Yes, it looks fine...there’s just a couple of small points that should be clarified, we’ve made some notes on our copy, I’ll give it

to you after.'

'Good, Markku Partanen is going back to Helsinki in the morning, he can bring it with him and have the modifications made. You can bring back a finalised copy with you to Paris.'

'That's perfect!'

The snow was still falling that evening as they headed out in the direction of the Whiskylumpolo. Rudi, Nurminen's process manager was driving, he was a Bavarian, he had already drunk a couple of large beers, which according to the strict laws in Finland was well above the limit. He carried a Saudi Arabian driving license, just in case he was stopped, it was his conversation piece. He drove like a German, snow or no snow, with his foot on the floor.

Ennis sat on the front seat hypnotised, half with fear of the accident which he was convinced was imminent, and half by the whiteness of the world that was unfolding before them. The ubiquitous snow blanketed the road ahead, it looked hard, like frosted ice; it rose up over the banks on the side of the road, and covered the trees on the edge of the forest. Rudi was a good driver and the Chevy, a four-wheeled drive with spiked snow tyres, did not budge a single centimetre from his predetermined track. The road was narrow and from time to time a bus or a truck loomed out of the darkness and passed them in a whirling cloud of white powder.

It was about thirty minutes to the Whiskylumpolo, around the other side of the mountain. The road rose and fell, from time to time they were forced to slow down or stop for reindeers, the size of very large dogs, that stood in the middle of the road caught in the headlights of the Chevy. The animals moved off into the birch and spruce, their hooves slipping on the smooth snow that covered the road, but only after Rudi had sounded his horn several times, swearing loudly at them in German.

Soon they saw the lights of the Whiskylumpolo flickering through the trees, then the road broadened out as they left the woods.

'Here we are, over there,' Jorgen said pointing to a large car park, full of snow covered cars and pick-ups. It surrounded a large modern

resort hotel, a huge neon sign shone brightly, announcing the Whiskylumpolo.

Inside, the disco was packed with a mixed winter sports crowd, aged from twenty to sixty. The lights were low and through the thick cigarette smoke, they saw a dense crowd of dancers swaying to a popular love song, sung by a plump blond accompanied by a four-piece band.

They made their way towards a long S shaped bar that wound its way diagonally across the discotheque. Pushing through the throng to the bar, they ordered drinks, large beers for Jorgen and Rudi, and whisky sodas for the others, Axelmann took a coke. With their drinks in their hands, they scanned the scene, anxiously trying to locate unattached girls in the dim light; they were not disappointed and were soon dancing and changing partners. They enjoyed the evening dancing, drinking and laughing, lingering to the small hours, close to their disco partners, in eternal hope of an instant conquest.

The ride back to the cabin was much quieter than the outward trip; they were in varying degrees of fatigue and inebriety. It was almost four and they were barely aware of where they were as they collapsed into their beds. They were soon dreaming of the rendezvous they had fixed at the bar the next evening with their new friends.

Early the next morning equipped with cross-country skis, they left the cabin with Jorgen Eriksson and Pieter Dahlqvist. They followed in the tracks made Eriksson's skis in the fresh snow. They had about two kilometres to go to the pick up point, where a helicopter would bring them to one of the peaks, in a nearby range of low lying mountains.

The morning sun was shining brightly but the temperature was minus fourteen degrees centigrade. The overnight snow hung heavily on the pines, sparkling in clear light that filtered through the branches. They stored their skis in the baggage compartment and clambered into the helicopter. The pilot switched on the ignition and the motor started, whining slowly, a cloud of powder snow rose into the air, projected from the blades of the rotor, which turned slowly

gradually picking up speed. Eriksson gave the thumbs up sign to the pilot and the helicopter lifted out of the clearing, rising over the trees and headed east towards the sun.

The forest below seemed petrified, the coating of snow appeared to be fixed to the landscape like the frost in a freezer. They could see an unchanging picture stretching to the horizon, the dark form of trees and then more trees, punctuated with open patches of snow-covered land. There was no clear horizon; it became a greyish-blue blur where the hills blended into the sky. There was no sign of human life, no roads, no houses, no smoke, and no cars.

‘We will fly about sixty kilometres to those hills over there,’ shouted Eriksson pointing vaguely to a white ridge in the distance ahead of them. ‘It’s about seven hundreds meters altitude...not so high.’

They looked into the distance and simply nodded the noise was too loud for any intelligible reply.

‘It will take only about twenty minutes,’ he said fumbling with a map that he had taken from his pocket.

‘Its about eighty or ninety kilometres through the forest back to the cabin, about six or seven hours including a stop for lunch...a good part is down hill,’ he had added down hill so as not to discourage his guests, whose faces showed their surprise.

‘I thought it was just a couple of hours,’ shouted Ennis over the noise.

‘Don’t worry.’

They landed in a flurry of snow and unloaded their skis and knapsacks, hurriedly carrying them away from the helicopter, which promptly took off after a peremptory wave from the pilot and disappeared back in the direction from which they had just come.

They quickly put on their ski caps and gloves, fastening their jackets tightly. The wind was as sharp as ice as it cut through them, stinging their faces, cold to the point that it was difficult to breath.

‘It must be under twenty up here,’ said Eriksson with some relish. ‘It’s good for hangovers.’

‘Let’s get our skis on then.’



They slipped the knapsacks onto their backs and fastened their skis making last adjustments. Then pushing on their sticks followed Eriksson as he turned into the wind and headed down the slope, over the icy hard snow that had been uncovered by the gusting wind.

They were not used to cross country skis and had difficulty in turning and braking on the slope, it was not at all like the prepared slopes in the resorts of Switzerland or the French Alps, which they were more accustomed to. It took a considerable effort over the trail Eriksson traced across the fine snow, which resembled a desertic wilderness, permanently whipped by the wind, forming mini drifts with streaks and ridges, reminding Ennis of the dunes he had seen on the edge of the Sahara. They were soon trailing some fifty or more meters behind Pieter, who stopped waiting for them.

‘It will be easier after this first part, it’s the steepest,’ he shouted pushing on.

After a short distance, they left the higher slopes of the hill and arrived at the tree level where the going was easier, the slope was gentle and the ground was almost flat. There was no distinct trail; they followed in the tracks made by Pieter, who appeared to know where he was going.

It felt a little less cold; the efforts they had made in their thick ski suits had warmed them up. The only noise that could be heard was the whishing of the skis in the snow and their own panting, as they kept up with the brisk pace set by Pieter. Jorgen Eriksson in spite of his bulk seemed to follow with very little effort, unaffected by his heavy smoking and drinking.

Their path gently turned through the forest and they settled into the rhythmic arm and leg movements skiing in the grooves the Pieter had made in front of them, their breathing had slowly recovered to an almost near normal effort.

The snow was less sticky than on the hill where the temperature had been lower now, their skis slid easily through the snow; it was just under minus ten degrees centigrade. The branches of the spruce bowed under the weight of the fresh snow. The monotonous black and white landscape was only contrasted by the ochre trunks of the

piners.

There was no apparent life in the forest, although Eriksson had assured them that there were reindeer and even elk in the region. They saw no birds, but by careful observation, Ennis saw from time to time the tracks in the snow, and even the small round droppings of some small animal.

They had been going for just over an hour, when Eriksson announced they would make a pause for a smoke and coffee. They had each been supplied a large thermos filled with hot coffee, and a small bottle of cognac, with a supply of sandwiches.

‘These trees here are probably two hundred years old you know,’ he said with a wave of his hand. The forest that surrounded them was a mixture of pine and birch trees.

‘Some of the big ones could be three hundred and fifty years old,’ he said pointing to a large red pine. ‘This is a northern climax forest, quite different to Indonesia,’ he laughed, ‘but the ecological principal is the same, climatic climax. This is a natural park area, it has never been logged or disturbed, except for a few skiers like us. When a tree falls down, its left there where it has fallen, everything is left exactly in its natural state. The rules are very strict for visitors. In any case this area is so far off the beaten track that not more than a few hundred people come here each year.’

They intensely appreciated their coffee, which they held cupped in both hands for the warmth, sipping it slowly.

‘How far have we come?’ said Axelmann, with an edge of hope in his voice.

‘I would say about fifteen kilometres,’ Pieter replied.

‘Fifteen kilometres!’ Ennis said with some surprise, ‘I would have thought more than that.’

‘It’s not bad, at this rate it will take about four more hours without stops, if we keep up the same pace.’

‘Christ!’ exclaimed Axelmann, ‘we’ll be half dead at this rate.’

Eriksson laughed sending a cloud of cigarette smoke and vapour into the cold air.

‘Don’t worry your doing fine, you’ll soon forget about

distance...but I have to say tonight you'll probably have some problems with your legs!'

There was a noise in the trees and a little off to their left a movement, they saw three reindeer looking at them with what appeared to be curiosity, their legs sunk deep in the snow almost up to their chests, one of them had only one antler. They were a creamy white in colour. After a moment, the animals turned and with what seemed to be laborious jumps they ploughed through the deep snow off into the forest, in a flurry of powdered snow that fell from the branches of the spruce.

Ennis and Axelmann laughed with surprise and pleasure in experiencing the closeness of nature and the animals of the forest.

'We'd better be going, you'll probably see quite a few more of those today and maybe an elk if we're lucky!' said Pieter.

They screwed back the lids of their thermos flasks and set off again, settling down to the rhythm in a mindless effort.

The blue sky had become leaden, just a pink lining on the low black hills ahead of them. It had started to snow.

'How far have we to go?' Axelmann asked Jorgen.

'Just over to those hills,' he said pointing to the west. 'The temperature is dropping; the wind is blowing from the north. Look! You can see the snow building up on the tree trunks, only on this side, that's how we know the direction of the wind, when it's from the north it's colder.'

Jorgen pulled out his mobile telephone and called the cabin asking the driver to meet them in two hours on a forest road, saving his two friends from the really hard part of the remaining distance.

## Chapter – 21 CREATIVE FINANCING

Laxell called John Ennis, he needed to meet him to talk about counter-trade between France and Finland, suggesting that they meet for lunch at Le Boeuf sur le Toit, the seafood restaurant on rue du

Colisée that runs parallel to the Champs Elysée.

It's not easy," said Ennis uncomfortably. 'It's a pity but Papcon doesn't have any capital of its own to invest. The Indonesians and the consortium members-especially Strecker-seem to be slow at getting their check books out.'

'So we understand.'

'If we had something to prime the pump, then I'm sure it would be easier. What about Finland? Finntech is a big company,' said Ennis in a forlorn hope.

Laxell bowed his head, as he always did when faced with a difficult question, he fidgeted, moving his knife and fork about the table, as though they were not well aligned.

'Yes, you know our position, were not bankers.' Then he smiled. 'That's just what I wanted to talk to you about, maybe we have a solution.'

Ennis waited with interest, whilst Laxell accepted the menu that the Maitre d'hôtel had presented to him.

'We've been thinking about that last point, you know priming the pump as you put it.'

He ordered aperitifs, two Kirs, a finger of cassis, a liquor made from black currants, topped up with white wine.

'Finland is a customer of France,' Laxell started slowly as Ennis irritably wished he would get to the point.

'We're buying defence equipment; you know radar systems, fighter aircraft, coastal patrol boats and things like that.'

Ennis made an effort to look interested, but he could not see the link.

'Well the Finnish government has a counter-trade clause in their defence contracts. It means that the French companies have to buy an equivalent value of goods from Finland.'

Ennis nodded in agreement, he knew that such a clause was a fairly common arrangement in government purchasing, although he had thought that such dealings were limited to developing countries.

'So, I've been in contact with Leopard Aerospace and Aquitaine Dynamiques, they're manufacturing radar systems and aircraft and

are in the process of negotiating defence contracts with Finland-big contracts, almost four billion dollars. Their problem is to place business for compensatory purchases with Finland, either directly or indirectly. They both have divisions specialised in counter trade.'

'I see,' said Ennis who was now interested but still wondering how it was connected with Indonesia.

'They can help Finntech to get certain contracts we are in the process of negotiating!' he paused and moved nearer to Ennis continuing in a lower voice.

'If a deal can be worked out, a triangular arrangement, they will pay a commission to Finntech, an agent or to anybody else that we care to nominate.' He paused again looking at Ennis to see if he was following.

'A commission?'

'Yes, it's built into the prices whether it's used or not, so we just have to arrange that it's used, if you understand me?'

Ennis nodded, it was noisy, but he had the general idea of what Laxell was saying and sensed its importance.

'I have spoken with Tapani, he has accepted that Papcon collects this commission and use it for Barito, if they can work with Leopard and get the business to Finntech. I don't have to say this is extremely confidential and nothing will appear in writing, in any case Leopard will deny their knowledge of any agreement if ever anything happens, so will we for that matter.'

Ennis held back, he needed time to absorb this news, which seemed too good to be true.

'In the arms business, there's a lot of profits and price padding. This allows for all of the special payments needed to grease the rails. I suppose that in the end the government pays, with the taxpayers' money. In this case we can say it's in the pursuit of further business.'

They had ordered a plateau of seafood, garnished with oysters, crabs, shrimps and other shellfish. As they started the ritual work of extracting the edible parts as Laxell described in detail the workings of the system.

'In this particular case it will be Leopard. I'd like to introduce you

to Henry Koslowski, who looks after the Finnish market for them; his office is on avenue Foch. We'll fix up a dinner with him.'

'What kind of contracts do Finntech have in mind?'

'Well, we have a two or three and they're in quite an advanced phase of discussion. Two are for Morocco, one for a pulp and paper mill and another for a fertiliser plant. The third is for Indonesia, for an offshore oil rig. They're pretty big contracts.'

Ennis was listening carefully as he began to get the idea.

'We are very well placed, and a push in the right direction is all that's needed to conclude these contracts. That's Leopards job. They say they can look after that without any problem. The total value of both contracts would be in the order of about eight hundred million dollars!'

'What's the commission?' Ennis asked carefully in a low voice.

'Well it's negotiable. Theoretically the commissions are limited to between one and a half to two percent, our government does not approve of this kind of transactions, too suspicious and it's the taxpayer who pays in the end.

'In practice though, the French, if they think it helps them to get the arms deal, can be very generous, they'll pay between five and ten percent.'

Ennis whistled softly, he knew that in the arms trade it was common practice to pay large commissions.

'You know the Americans pay more!' Laxell laughed.

The struggled with their crabs concentrated in their thoughts.

'It will be up to you to work out a suitable arrangement, in fact we don't really want to know. You, indirectly as a Finntech man, will act as a technical and marketing consultant in this business. Leopard will arrange for the commissions to be paid to any place indicated to them.'

Ennis made a quick calculation five percent of eight hundred that was forty million dollars, two hundred and forty million Francs. He took a quick gulp of his Entre Deux Mers. That was a very large sum of money for a commission! Ten percent was eighty million! As capital it was more than enough to prime the pump and for Papcon it

was a fortune.

‘You should understand this money is to be used as part of the capital for the project. We are not asking for any written obligations, as I said, we don’t even want to know about the details. On the other hand, we will see to it that our contracts will be adequately padded to recover part of that as profits for Finntech, and naturally the Finntech share in the equipment supply contract should not be subject to price reductions or discounts, that’s the only thing we are asking for!’ he said laughing. Ennis realised that he was serious.

Ennis nodded that he understood.

They returned to Laxell’s office, he called Leopard, and a dinner was fixed with Koslowski. Laxell also gave Ennis the names of the persons to contact at Finntech who were handling the business for Morocco and Indonesia.

The Finns would fill him in on the background of the business, and he would inform them of the role of Papcon, who would be seen as a political agent, with the contacts necessary to procure the contracts. The commission arrangement with Leopard would be most confidential; in no case were the other Finns, who would become involved during the course of the business, to be party to that knowledge.

Laxell reiterated the most confidential nature of the arrangement, in which there could be no risk of compromise. Their action could be very badly taken by the Finnish authorities and the French could not be implicated in any scandal. He suggested the utmost caution, leaving to Ennis the responsibility of informing Brodzski at his convenience.

Ennis prudently decided not inform Brodzski or Axelmann at once. He would await the outcome of his discussions with Koslowski and the Finns. He wanted to have the maximum background information and be sure that Laxell’s proposals were serious.

Koslowski was a Pole; he had arrived in France with his parents in the late fifties. He still had a very slight hint of an accent, but otherwise he was thoroughly French. He was friendly but gave the

appearance of a sort of casual disinterest in the offset business, as though the subject bored him and that he had heard it all before.

He confirmed what Laxell had already explained. Laxell had approved Papcon or their nominee as the receiving party for commissions or payments which would be made in the case of success, paid into any bank in any country of their choice without any other justification than the conclusion of the contract with the Finnish government and receipt of the contractual down payment.

There would be absolutely no link with Finntech or Finland. Leopard would pay for services rendered, consulting fees or similar commissions.

What was important for Leopard was that Finntech signed the contracts in Morocco and Indonesia, and that these contracts were accepted by the offset committee in Finland, whose responsibility was to approve the eligibility of the contracts presented to them for compensation.

It was essential to demonstrate that it was Leopards intervention that had been instrumental in the conclusion of the contracts, for material or services, which were not in the traditional Finnish sector of basic forestry products, paper or wood.

Koslowski explained to Ennis that Leopard Aerospace was heavily engaged in civil, military and telecommunications sales in Morocco and Indonesia.

They had an important commercial presence in both countries, which gave them leverage in government and decision making circles. This was necessary since in the different contracts under consideration, the purchasers being state owned or state dependent companies.

In the case of Indonesia, it was a mixed joint-venture project, sponsored by the Ministry of Mineral Resources and an Australian oil company, for an offshore production platform. The Ministry issued the licenses and a state owned company held a minority share.

Leopard would arrange commission local payments to ensure that the ministers in both countries signed the contracts with Finntech.

Papcon would have its own position enhanced by appearing to



introduce an independent investor who would put up equity capital for the project. The investor would in reality be an offshore company set up by Papcon, managing the commissions through a reputable international investment bank. They would appear as an independent investor, showing the way to the consortium and larger banks and finance institutions, whose large organisations and slow decision-making processes were hindering the projects progress.

The magnitude of the commissions was sufficient to galvanise Ennis into action. In his mind he started to explore the opportunities that such a sum of money could create, both for the project and for his personal needs.

## Chapter 22 - A BANKER IN HONG KONG

The French Indo-China bank had been established in Hong Kong for over one hundred years. As its name indicated, the banks business had originally been founded on the needs of the then French colonies in the South East Asia and Frances trading comptoirs in Imperial China.

Their offices were located in Swire House, a thirty floor tower on Hong Kong Island next to the Mandarin hotel on Connaught Road.

Although Ennis liked the Mandarin and it would have been more practical for him, he preferred the Kowloon side of Hong Kong, there were fewer offices and the general atmosphere was easier going, though there were more tourists. It also gave him the excuse of indulging in the pleasure of riding the Star Ferry across the straights to Central Quai and the business area of the colony, on Hong Kong Island.

He stayed at the Peninsular Hotel; it was expensive and highly over rated. Nevertheless, he enjoyed the ride in one of their Rolls Royce limousines, which the hotel used as shuttle service to and from Tai Tak airport into Kowloon, for their guests.

That morning the weather was fine and clear with a very slight

breeze. There was a feeling of spring about as he walked out of the Peninsula and strolled past the Space Museum down Salisbury Road to the Star Ferry terminal. There he entered the second-class ramp and paid two HK dollars at the turnstile for the short ride on the Morning Stars lower deck for the ride across to the island.

His appointment was at nine thirty, and he found himself with the tail enders of the morning rush hour. They were typical of office workers that could be seen almost anywhere in the world, except that in Hong Kong the Chinese office workers had a starched, uniform appearance. Perhaps it was because of their attire, short-sleeved shirts and slacks for the men, the women mostly in blouses and black straight skirts, only the odd chic businesswoman adding some colour, dressed in a smart designer suit.

The occasional pin stripe was for the higher ranking managerial staff. There were one or two Europeans in suits, real Brits. The majority of Europeans opted for first class on the upper deck. Ennis preferred the lower deck, a boyish pleasure he thought, being nearer the water; he leaned over the rail and watched the grey waves swirling by.

He never ceased to marvel at the extraordinary sights of Hong Kong harbour. Junks mixed with lighters and cargo ships, the eternal criss-crossing of the ferries and hovercraft. The remarkable and ever changing skyline set against the surrounding hills. In the background a 747 of Cathay Pacific lifted slowly into to sky. There was the ever-present odour of the sea mixed with indefinable Chinese smells.

He was a little early and stopped by at the Mandarin to take a coffee in the lobby and read a newspaper. The appearance of the guests and visitors recalled to Ennis images of the City of London, men attired in British style blue pin stripe three pieces, carrying black brief cases and holding copies of the Times of London.

Ennis observed disdainfully the sheep like appearance of the crowd, before realising with unease that he wore the same uniform. He had been careful that morning choosing his clothes, remembering to conform to their dress codes of the banking fraternity. It made them feel more at ease, believing they were with one of their own

species.

Ten minutes later, he walked over the pedestrian bridge that crossed Ice Street that linked the two buildings. He then took one of the lifts to the 21st floor, where announced himself to the receptionist.

‘Good morning, I have an appointment with John Howard.’

‘Ah, yes, he is expecting you, please come in.’

Well that makes a change at a bank; someone is pleased to see me, Ennis smiled to himself. In reality, it was not surprising after the night he had spent together John Howard in Taipei the previous week.

It was one of those curious accidents of fate that had introduced John Howard to Ennis in Taipei. Sutrawan had arranged one of the regular drinking parties that he liked to hold with his clan. It had commenced in the presidential suite of the New Mandarin Palace in Taipei, a vast lodging of over four hundred square meters with seven bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, and reception rooms. The group included all the cronies Thomas Lee from Manila, Robbie Tan from Singapore, Danny Lau, Scarface Fung from Taipei, Sammy Sung from Vancouver and several others.

Ennis came up from his relatively modest executive suite to join the group. It was just before seven in the evening and he was about to sip his first XO, when the doorbell rang. There were no formalities, being nearest to the door at that moment he did the welcoming act.

‘Hello, is this Mr Boon’s room?’ said the new arrival cheerfully. He was European of about forty years old, blond, good looking in a dark blue business suit.

‘Yes, come in, I’m John Ennis,’ he said introducing himself.

‘I’m John Howard.’

Ennis was surprised because Sutrawan did not have many European acquaintances, except for one or two Americans who from time to time in Jakarta joined the group.

Thomas Lee made the formal introductions, announcing John Howard, from French Indo-China Bank in Hong Kong, and Ennis

from the Banque de Berne.

Here we go again, Ennis groaned to himself. He did not mind when that was announced to a Taiwanese, who would not have known the difference, but to a senior banking executive from French Indo-China, it could be a little bit embarrassing. He immediately clarified the information to Howard explaining that he was with Papcon, which was only linked by a minority share holding to Banque de Berne.

‘Papcon is specialised in industrial promotion and development. We’re not in the banking business,’ explained Ennis smoothly.

As a banker, John Howard was not at all disappointed by that news; on the contrary, he found it a useful introduction, a potential business opportunity. Industrial projects need loans and financial services; he was there to provide them.

He explained to Ennis that he was banks business development director in Hong Kong, managing new corporate accounts in the whole East Asian region, which included Indonesia, and that he had been trying to get an introduction, to Sutrawan’s gang, as he called them, for a long time without success. In fact, this would be his first out of business hours meeting with Sutrawan himself. When Howard discovered that Ennis frequented the inner sanctum he figured out that he could be useful, whilst a similar thought ran through Ennis’ mind, meeting a key person from the French Indo-China in such circumstances would ease future relations.

At first Ennis had imagined that Howard would be a bore, as they made conversation around business subjects. To his surprise, he quickly discovered that Howard was quite unlike his more staid banking colleagues. He was fun loving and did not make the excuse that he would have to leave the party early because of a business appointment the next morning. He was quick to laugh and was completely at ease among Chinese.

That evening was arduous, even for hardened members of the Sutrawan clan. Scarface Fung had arranged a dinner party at one of his hotels in Peitou, a resort area, twenty kilometres to the north of the city. Many years previously, during the Korean and Vietnamese

wars, it had been a notorious vice area of Taipei city. Times had changed, and it had been transformed into a sedate tourist area, offering golfing weekends and relaxation, the visitors were mostly Japanese tourists and businessmen.

Peitou still had a good number of nightclubs and restaurants that offered floorshows and dancing. Vice had not entirely disappeared, it had become much more discreet and catered to an up market Japanese and local clientele.

Scarface Fung was a powerful member of one of the biggest Chinese secret societies, Taiwan's equivalent of the Japanese Yakuza, or Mafia. Fung controlled the largest trucking and transport company on the island and with the complicity of the police ran a number of rackets, which included gambling and prostitution. He was called Scarface with reason; above his left cheekbone was a scar that ran to the bone, showing a white crescent, half-a-centimetre wide and about three long. Ennis felt that danger radiated from Fung.

He was the owner of the hotel to which he had invited them that evening. A feast had been laid on with attractive hostesses and a five-piece band, in a private banqueting room on the first floor. They arrived in a small fleet of black Cadillacs, already in high spirits after their warm up in Sutrawan's suite. Ennis rode with Howard in the leading car, flattered as privileged guests by Sutrawan and Fung.

During the thirty minute ride Fung confided to them both in his broken English, that if ever they were in trouble with the police in Taiwan, they had simply to mention his name and everything could be arranged. Ennis never had the opportunity to test the validity of his claim, but he had not the slightest doubt that it was true.

Fung's hotel had two hundred rooms, and seemed to be mostly frequented by Japanese tourists, there were no westerners. It catered for middle to upper class tourists and by the island's standards was very comfortable.

Once in the hotel, John Howard was joined an attractive but wild looking Chinese girl, whom he obviously already knew, which puzzled Ennis. She was far from the type of girl that he imagined Howard would like to be seen with, dressed in a loud leopard skin

patterned off the shoulder dress that clung to her shapely body. Her hair was long black and tousled. Howard in his pin striped bankers suit introduced her to Ennis, as if she were the Princess of Wales.

‘John, this is Mei Li, Mei Li this is John,’ Ennis had the greatest difficulties in suppressing a burst of laughter.

He explained without the least sign of embarrassment that he had met her a couple of evenings previously, when he was out with Thomas Lee’s friends. Mei Li did not speak English too well, but she made up for it in Chinese. She was the life and soul of the party. To the great amusement of them all, she hung on to John Howard as if she had the intention of never letting him go.

Howard, after initially giving the impression of being a staid British bank manager, soon let his hair down after a few drinks, and was obviously stimulated by Mei Li. The bottles came fast and furiously and the evening rapidly turned into a drunken riot, and a wild Karaoke. John Howard joined the band on the small stage, accompanied by Mei Li in a bawdy version of I did it my way, to the encouragement and ribald shouts of the party, and to the great pleasure and enjoyment of Sutrawan.

In between drinks, Howard managed to tell Ennis that he was returning to Hong Kong the following afternoon, suggested that they get together the following week to talk about business.

It was by an odd coincidence that they had several things in common, including the fact that they both had both married French women and had lived in France for many years. Howard had been transferred to Hong Kong, where he had lived for four years. His wife, like many French women, kept a short leash on her man, the result was that on his occasional trips to Taipei he took the opportunity to let his hair down. He was also well out of sight of the conservative banking community of Hong Kong, where rumours and stories travelled fast.

One week later in Hong Kong, Ennis felt that he had made a good friend. But as he followed the perfume of the attractive receptionist down the carpeted hallway, Ennis started to have doubts, he

wondered if Howard would be different now that he was back on his home ground, as people sometimes were.

‘Hello John, how are you, great to see you, it’s good you could make it to Hong Kong.’

There was none of the sheepishness that might have been expected, Ennis was pleased to see that he had not changed at all.

‘That was a wild evening we had in Taipei last week,’ he said laughingly, ‘when I got back I hadn’t recovered from the booze and was still feeling lousy, and on top of that I had a reception at the embassy followed by a dinner, my wife was highly suspicious of what I had been up to in Taipei.’

‘I had a couple of days to sleep it off luckily,’ Ennis replied.

He was not the least bit embarrassed by their shared knowledge of that evening.

‘Would you like some tea or coffee?’

‘Coffee.’

‘How long have you known Sutrawan, John?’

‘Well it’s about three years now.’

Ennis explained how he first met Sutrawan, he told him exaggerating a little on how long he had known him and the exact details of their business relationship. He outlined the consortium arrangements and described the Barito project, explaining that they were in the process of setting up the banking pool to finance the construction of the project.

Ennis did not miss Howard’s sharpened interest; it would be a personal coup for Howard, if he could introduce the French Indo-China into the project on Sutrawan’s side. He explained to Ennis that the Paris end was not his business, though Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur reported to him. The latter being their main branch in the South East Asian region, and Jakarta a representative office run by Patrick de Verre, who, so far had not been involved in the Barito business.

‘You know John our business in Hong Kong is the most important in the Far East, in fact this office coordinates all activity in the Far East,’ he paused reflecting, then went on. ‘What I’m interested in, is developing business relations with Sutrawan’s Bank Surabaya Mas,

and his finance company Weihao Finance here in Hong Kong. There's also Gao's company in Taiwan, and in Thailand where he is building a new mill. '

Ennis saw his eyes sparkling at the thought of the business prospects, which could be developed with Sutrawan.

'If I could become involved on the Indonesian side we could certainly help in structuring the equity and loans, we could, in cooperation with de Berne, organise Sutrawan's part from Hong Kong, which would avoid a lot of complications in Paris.'

Ennis described how the Taiwanese, together with Sutrawan had worked with the Bank of America, but most of their non-loan business was handled by Sutrawan's own bank, Surabaya Mas. It was certain that a lot of hot money from Taiwan and Indonesia and was laundered by the bank, principally from illegal logging, which was then transferred to more respectable banks and recycled into clean operations and investment loans.

It was not that clear at that point in time how French Indo-China could fit into the business, but Ennis felt instinctively that through John Howard there was an advantage to be gained, relative to the slow moving Parisian banks, with their narrow vision of business that was tied to domestic politics.

He decided to pursue the idea and try to determine the exact motives behind his introduction to John Howard by Sutrawan. He strongly suspected that it was no fortuitous accident, without any doubt there had been some oriental match making.

The Timber Producers & Converters Association of Indonesia held its annual conference at the Hilton Hotel in Jakarta. It was presided by Jani Sutrawan the association's chairman who was considered by many as the timber king of Indonesia, he was also Chairman of the Bintang Agung Group and the ASEAN Timber Producers Association.

Sutrawan's special relationship with the army generals, which went back to the famous Diponegoro Division and Kostrad, had provided his main political base for business. He had become, on



behalf military business concerns, deeply involved with Japanese and Taiwanese companies in logging and forestry concessions.

Riady, together with Ennis, were guests of Bintang Agung. They were seated in the front row facing the panel, which included Sutrawan's competitor Bob Husino, and the Minister of Forestry Wihartjo.

Sutrawan standing at the rostrum opened the proceedings.

'Gentlemen plywood not so long ago exports from Indonesia were just two hundred thousand cubic meters; these have now risen to eight million cubic meters. In the Philippines, plywood production has declined, to two hundred thousand cubic meters.

'This means that Indonesia is the biggest exporter in South East Asia, exporting four times more than all of its neighbours together!' He stopped and smiling and puffed on his Kretek, the audience taking the cue broke into applause.

Sutrawan went on with his presentation describing the development and growth of the plywood industry in the country. The industry had started its real development in the eighties and its expansion had been very fast. There were now over one hundred producers with an annual production of eight million cubic meters, about twenty percent of the world's plywood production with about seven million in exports, or eighty percent of the world trade.

Ennis had heard the story before; he glanced around at the audience and saw a grey haired man with a tanned weather beaten face, seated on the other side of the centre aisle staring at him.

Sutrawan droned on with his industry jargon whilst the guests fidgeted flicking through their printed programmes.

Looking around again in the direction of the grey haired man, Ennis saw him wave his hand, in a hello sign.

Finally Sutrawan concluded his speech to a relieved audience and a round of hearty applause and a coffee break was announced. Ennis left Riady as he headed towards the refreshments, where he then saw the grey haired man holding a cup of coffee, and who turned towards him.

'Let me introduce myself, my name is Ohlsson, you're John Ennis

I believe?’

Ennis nodded.

‘I’ve heard a lot about you.’

‘Oh!’ said Ennis surprised.

‘I’m interested in forestry, let’s take our coffee with us, we can sit down over there.’ He pointed towards a corner giving Ennis no chance to refuse.

‘As you know John, you don’t mind if I call you John...good! What your boss has said is interesting. Scandinavian wood has become increasingly expensive, and increasingly difficult to harvest. Your factories have become less and less profitable...so you’ve decided simply to sell or shut down a whole series of plywood plants.’

‘First he’s not my boss, but I suppose you’re right,’ said Ennis grudgingly, unsure of what Ohlsson wanted.

‘In Finland you must use every single cubic centimetre of wood, so, the plywood mills should be next to the pulp mills, which is not actually the case, because the pulp mills are on the west coast of Finland and the plywood mills in the East.’

‘You seem to be well informed.’

‘Yes, as I said, forestry is my interest, tropical forestry! Although what goes on in Scandinavia is not unfamiliar to me, I’m a Swede.’

‘I see.’

‘Certain Finns have discovered that wood exists in other parts of the world. For example, here in Indonesia, where there are virgin forests, and wood is plentiful with large diameter trees, well adapted to the manufacturing techniques of plywood production.’

Ennis nodded, looking uneasily at his watch. Ohlsson continued unperturbed.

‘Those same people have realised that the Indonesians want to develop their forestry production and exports. You know Indonesia is supposed to have strict rules, with the minimum diameter for felling fixed at fifty centimetres, that’s selective cutting. They’re supposed to operate in twenty-year cycles, so that there is reforestation by natural regeneration,’ he smiled.

‘So?’ Ennis asked in a slightly hostile manner.

‘Well, forests alone cover about one hundred and fifty million hectares in Indonesia, of which only fifty to sixty million are accessible. The specialists have calculated that the potential harvest is seventy million cubic meters of wood a year, based on an estimated annual growth increment each year. That’s a lot of money, isn’t it?’ Ohlsson smiled.

‘If you like.’ Ennis wondered what he was getting at, and at the same time he wanted to get away from him.

‘Yes it is, in Finland the total land surface is thirty three million hectares with forests covering two thirds and the annual harvest of round wood is about forty five million cubic metres.’

‘I see, but what’s your point,’ said Ennis making an effort to hide his impatience.

‘Bear with me the time to drink our coffee,” he said with a kindly smile. ‘But to cut a long story short, the average Finnish birch has a diameter of twenty five centimetres, with a remaining core after peeling for plywood of seven centimetres, whereas an Indonesian meranti hardwood has an average diameter of eighty centimetres, leaving a core of twenty,’ Ohlsson smiled.

He looked at him with fixed smile, ‘...and?’

‘My question is this, is it for the future good of Finland, or any other developed country, to exploit the long term interests of Indonesia for their own selfish short term objectives? The Finns they know absolutely nothing about this country, or its peoples and forests.’

Ennis was completely taken by surprise, he had not expected to be confronted by a...he could not put an exact label on Ohlsson...perhaps a forester-ecologist?

‘Let me ask you straight, what’s your particular interest in this matter?’ Ennis asked carefully.

‘I’m a botanist, my special concern is for tropical forests. My friends and I are deeply concerned by the development of forest industries in this country. Look John, this is not really the moment, let’s met again. You’re at the Borobudur, so am I, let’s say tomorrow

for lunch.'

'I'm not sure....'

'Don't worry, I'll call you tomorrow morning to confirm it.'

Ohlsson stood up stretch out his hand to Ennis and then disappeared amongst the conference delegates as Riady arrived.

'Who is that?' said Riady.

'I don't know,' said Ennis perplexed.

## Chapter 23 - HIGH JINKS

Ennis meet Meihua at the Musro, a discotheque near the Borobudur Hotel. He had already remarked her there mixing with foreign businessmen and certain local political personalities.

That evening Ennis, through a beery haze, imagined that she resembled Lily in a strange fashion. Like one of those Communist Chinese posters showing a heroine of the Red Army, strong, proud, defiant with her long black hair in the wind, perhaps like Gong Li. Though there was not very much that could be described as revolutionary at the Musro at two in the morning.

He should have been in bed long ago, but as usual, he was drawn like a moth to the flame. She was not tall, in fact she was the very opposite to Lily, but nevertheless strikingly attractive in a kind of troublesome way, and by her very nature attracted to all the wrong kinds of men.

Inevitably, she returned to his hotel suite. They sat on his bed smoking and drinking as they talked into the night, she told him that she knew Sutrawan, which he did not find altogether surprising. What was more interesting to Ennis was that she talked of Sudarman, whom she said she knew well, and was clearly not exaggerating.

Ennis was not sure that he was in his best form that night, considering the amount of alcohol he had consumed, but Meihua had another agenda, she was in control and it was though she wanted give him an experience he would not forget.

She achieved the result that she had no doubt wanted and had no difficulty in getting him to take her out the following evening, suggesting dinner at the Lotus Chinese Restaurant in the Jakarta Hilton, she had expensive tastes.

On their arrival at the restaurant she was immediately, but discretely recognised by the maitre d'hôtel, Ennis keeping a low profile. Meihua wore a designer outfit that she had bought in Singapore with matching shoes and a matching handbag. She was given surreptitious glances by the men whilst the women pretended she did not exist. They had a discrete table and once they were settled in and had ordered their meal and drinks, Ennis understood that she had something on her mind.

'You know John, I can help you with your business,' she said as the waiter placed their drinks on the table.

Ennis was surprised, he had got used to hearing a lot of those offers for help, but from a girl like Meihua it was strange.

'What do you mean Meihua?' he said.

'I can help you with Sudarman.'

'With Sudarman!' he said uncomfortably, glancing around at the nearby tables. 'How?'

'I know his brother.'

'So do I.'

'Well I can tell you, I know him better than you ever will.'

Ennis had met Sudarman's brother in Taipei. Soetomo had been there on a visit from Hong Kong, and they had spent a couple of evenings out in the company of Sutrawan.

It was funny; Ennis remembered Soetomo had asked him to recommend an accommodating girl in Taipei. He had been puzzled as to why Soetomo had asked him; perhaps he needed to keep a low profile. Ennis imagined that he should have been more in his own element; after all he was an Asian, and even more Chinese in appearance than Indonesian.

He was the Consul General for Indonesia in Hong Kong. He had previously been Attorney General in Indonesia, but he had been posted to key position to watch over the activities of certain rich

Chinese businessmen, whose businesses stretched to that banking centre and where many of the covert arrangements had been made for the President's family.

It had also been rumoured that Soetomo had been involved in what was referred to in Jakarta as a sentimental affair, with an unsuitable young woman, whom he had refused to forsake, which had embarrassed the first family.

Ennis had no further news from Meihua; her friends told him she had left for Singapore to visit her family, and no doubt for a shopping spree he imagined. Then unexpectedly she resurfaced, calling him from the hotel lobby, appearing at his door a few moments later.

'Hi! How are you John?'

'Great, you're looking good.' he said complementing her outfit as the waft of her perfume excited him. She dressed a little flashy; she liked to attract attention, catching men's eyes.

He offered her a drink and she helped herself to a Seven-up sitting down on the couch, her skirt riding up to show her thighs.

'So what's new!' he said trying to concentrate on her reply.

'I spoke to Soetomo,' Meihua announced nonchalantly.

'What!' he said standing up.

'You know the brother,' she looked into her glass.

'What did you speak about then?' said Ennis feeling a surge of annoyance.

'This and that,' she paused and then added sharply. 'You know what we talked about.'

'And what did we talk about?'

'About Soetomo's brother,' she said sipping the Seven-up.

Ennis tried to remember what they had talked about, the worst thing he could think of was Meihua telling Sudarman that he was screwing the little whore, which would look great for his image.

She could see by the puzzled and worried look on his face that his memory needed refreshing.

'About the project, he said he would talk to his brother, you know, the minister.'

Jesus fucking Christ! thought Ennis. 'But I didn't ask you to do that!' he said angrily.

'Don't worry, they agreed to help.'

'Jesus Christ, what kind of shit is this!' he said turning and walking across the suite.

'Look, the brother wants to speak to you and he asked me to tell you its okay,' she replied raising her voice.

'When?'

'This evening,' she said looking at her watch. 'He'll be here in about an hour!'

'Great! Great! What are we going to talk about?'

She stood up and walked over to Ennis, who was shuffling papers and pens about on the bamboo lacquered writing table in an agitated manner. She slipped her hand over his shoulder and kissed him on the cheek.

'Don't worry,' she whispered in his ear.

Almost exactly an hour later, the phone rang. Meihua picked it up and spoke quickly in Indonesian. Three or four minutes later the doorbell rang and she opened it to Soetomo.

The meeting didn't last long, Soetomo quickly came to the point, things could be arranged at a price and for certain concessions, he would look after everything and there would be no direct contact or discussions with the minister.

## Chapter 24 - THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ennis stood up and smiled as he closed the green leather cover of the Executive Summary. He had completed his examination of the final version of the feasibility study, three kilos of paper with annexes and plans. It had been delivered the previous day by express courier to Papcon from Kalevi Nurminen Consulting in Helsinki.

He walked around his desk; he sensed a deep feeling satisfaction. Lighting a cigarette, he drew deeply and contemplated the view over

the Seine. The form of the project was finally fixed; it had become tangible, solid, as if the glue had set. The multiple facets had been described in the smallest detail, the study was impeccable, every foreseeable point had been covered, at least so it seemed.

Brodzski was expected shortly and Ennis would present him with the results of almost eighteen months work and study by Nurminen's technical, economic and marketing specialists. The latest data and ideas had been assembled and integrated into the documents from sources in Europe, Indonesia and Taiwan. Its contents had examined and re-examined, subjected to a multitude of modifications and reflections, before the final draft had been approved for printing.

The study contained the full description of the Forestry Complex, comprising a saw mill, a panel board plant, a pulp and paper mill, complete with a power generation plant, a port for ocean going ships and a whole new town, complete with housing, a medical centre and a school. Included were the technical specifications, the analysis of the raw material requirements, the complete range of products, and an estimation of all construction and operating costs.

The only document that remained to be added was the financial analysis and cash flow plan over the pay back period of the loans. That was to be finalised by Papcon.

The inputs were simple, on one side of the balance sheet were the costs; the wood and chemicals, the construction cost of the mill, amortised over a predetermined number of years and the cost of labour and maintenance. On the other side were the revenues, the sales of the pulp, paper, panel board, and wood products.

To arrive at figures that would please the bankers and investors was a fine art. It could have been compared to playing a musical instrument, and Axelmann was a virtuoso. The theme was the investment, and the variations that could be played were the cost of the raw materials and the estimated selling price of the end products, set a payback period that met accepted international banking and industrial practice.

Each of the key variables could be varied within limits, without going against the accepted standards. An acceptable result could be



arrived at, either by increasing the selling price of the marketable products, or by decreasing the cost of the wood.

Determining the price of the mill products over a twenty-year period was pure crystal ball. Over the ten previous years the curve showing the variations in the market price of wood pulp looked like a roller coaster, it had risen from 350 to 850 dollars a cubic metre, and had then fallen back down to 400.

Ennis had prepared a series of graphs, extrapolated from statistics assembled over the previous thirty years produced by the FAO. In spite of the cyclic rises and falls, the market trend over the last forty years showed that worldwide demand grew at a regularly pace, a little more than two percent each year.

Over the total period, it could also be seen that the average price in constant dollar terms was stable. He chose a bullish estimation, not enough to be openly criticised by the specialists, but enough to give a positive edge to his calculations. The tactic was to catch the market on the rise; each cycle lasted eight or ten years, five rising, two falling and about two in the doldrums. At that moment, they were in the latter two phases, which gave them four years to build the mill, coming on stream just in time to catch the upswing.

The price of the wood was based on ORSFES estimates, the result of their studies over a terrain that had never been exploited for pulpwood, and which was unverifiable. Ennis had argued for lower estimates during the preparation phase, supported by Sutrawan's staff led by Bob Riady.

Axelmann produced a brilliant report, with lengthy references to Nurminen's study, and the ORSFES forestry inventory and exploitation study. Couched in the high language of finance, talking of equity ratios, interest rates, cash flow and the rate of return on investment; the kind of language that banks and financial institutions appreciated.

In all it was an impressive document bound in real leather, the title printed in gold letters. It consisted of several volumes, covering each of the specific areas of the report, together with architect's perspectives of the buildings and layout plans of the mill site,

engineering plans showing the production lines, process flow diagrams, and maps of the forest areas. There were photographs of similar mills, which would serve as models, photographs of trees, rivers, ships and even the animals of the forest that were to be protected.

They were immensely pleased with the results of their work. In Papcon's splendid new boardroom at the Tour Adriatic, Brodzski was presented the full set of leather bound volumes entitled Barito Forest Industries Complex Feasibility Report.

'For your signature Monsieur le President,' smiled Axelmann.

The effect was all they could have desired. Brodzski beamed with pleasure, he was like a child under the Christmas tree as he fondled the smooth leather covers.

'Champagne!' he joyfully shouted to Hardin through the open door. 'Open the bar!'

Hardin hurried in smiling with relief on seeing Brodzski's excellent disposition. She opened the bar and took out two chilled bottles of Veuve Clicquot, and set a tray of champagne glasses on the table.

'Formidable, congratulations,' he said, his hands raised in benediction. Then seizing a bottle of Champagne, he deftly tore off the wrapping and eased off the retaining wire, then with an accomplished movement of his wrist sent the cork flying across the room.

They all laughed with pleasure, it was a great moment of relief and satisfaction after months of hard work and waiting.

'They will not refuse us! They cannot refuse us!'

More corks popped and the Champagne was served to the small gathering, which was then joined by the other members of the staff. Their future and prosperity would be assured by the efforts that had been transformed into the report, which was destined to be the principal annexe to the fat contract for the construction of the complex.

'To our success,' said Brodzski lifting his glass, they joined him in the toast, confident in their future prosperity.

‘You’re leaving when?’ he asked Ennis, returning to reality.

‘On Monday.’

‘You’re bringing the feasibility report with you for Wihartjo?’

‘Naturally Monsieur Brodzski, plus a copy for Sutrawan and a copy for Gao.’ said Ennis smiling.

‘And Axelmann?’

‘I’m presenting it at the Ministry of Finance here in Paris next week. When Ennis returns we’ll fly together to the International Finance Corporation in Washington to open negotiations.’

‘Excellent, we have to step up the pressure now, enough time has been lost, we have to complete the list of investors.’

It was just one week before Christmas when they boarded the TWA flight at Charles de Gaulle airport, bound for Washington DC. They had fixed their first meeting with the IFC’s director for Asia, Per Dahlqvist, Brodzski’s friend, or at least that was what he had been telling people around the world for the previous eighteen months. Axelmann had told Ennis, Brodzski had met him once in Paris, some years before, when Dahlqvist had been on a trip to Europe to talk about IFC financing at an international conference.

The IFC was a subsidiary branch of the World Bank, which had been created after World War II to aid war ruined countries reconstruct their economies with the help of low interest loans.

The Bank provided loans and aid, whilst the role of the IFC was to actively participate in the capital of newly created industries, as well as providing linked loans at an interest rate that was much more favourable than that offered by commercial banks.

Brodzski had naively explained to the consortium that the IFC would be willing to participate in the equity to the extent of ten percent, which was unfortunately completely erroneous. What Ennis had found extraordinary, was that they accepted his word, without the slightest visible doubt.

Any one of them could have received in the post, on request, an IFC annual report, which would have clearly shown them, that the IFC had never participated, since its creation, in more than five

million dollars in capital, and with linked loans to a total of about fifteen million.

Ten percent of the equity in Barito represented thirty million dollars. The equity represented the investment, which was to be paid in by the various investors, would serve as the down payment on the construction contract for the pulp mill, and the working capital needed to operate the mill.

The remainder of the costs, or seven hundred million dollars, was to be raised as loans, a very considerable challenge to the promoters.

Ennis regretfully realised that it was a remarkable demonstration of how people, even supposedly highly responsible professionals who represented the consortium members, could be duped into believing almost anything. He suspected that Kalevi Nurminen knew, but was not going to tell a good customer, that he was wrong.

Both Axelmann and Ennis were aware of the IFC position, but they were not about to openly contradict Brodzski. They had decided to wait and see, perhaps there would be some fortuitous for change of policy. In the meantime, another solution would have to be found to solve the problems of raising the equity and loans.

What they were sure of, was that if, the IFC did not participate to the degree that Brodzski had imagined, then it was not unrealistic to hope they could accept to invest a token 2%, five or six million dollars, which would provide Barito with a seal of approval, from an important internationally recognised financial institution.

That would be especially important in the eyes of the conventional bankers, and the respective governments of the consortium member's countries. They would respect the integrity of the IFC's judgement, based on their specialist's analysis of the viability of the project.

That was to be the main object of their visit to Washington. They had to convince the IFC, that the Indonesian government fully backed the project, with money, and had strongly desired the IFC participation.

Dahlqvist's office was situated in one of the World Bank buildings on the famous H Street. A modern, but bland, red brick building, just

a block away from the Banks headquarters. As to be expected the Bank was a bureaucratic organisation on a world scale. It counted amongst its staff, citizens from the multitude of nations that constituted the banks shareholders. Each person, having reached the Mecca of bureaucracy and secure employment, with all the fringe benefits that went with a job in Washington, respected the unwritten rule of the universal civil servant, to defend their status quo shoulder to shoulder, against all those who threatened their precious sinecures.

Dahlqvist was a Norwegian, a mild friendly man in his early fifties. His team was composed of ubiquitous Indians from the sub-continent, as well as Americans, Brits and representatives of the third world. His main functions were in broad terms public relations, they could not have been seriously called marketing or promotional activities, little effort was required, since there were many more customers than was money available.

Papcon's meetings commenced with the IFC team that morning in December; the atmosphere was friendly as they ran up to the Christmas holidays. After preliminary discussions, they took a sparse World Bank lunch. Axelmann declaring with a smirk as they washed their hands in the men's room, 'anything designed to be eaten by so many nationalities, could only be inedible, especially prepared in Washington.'

That afternoon they presented their report on the feasibility of the project. The IFC emphasised the importance of accurate price estimates for the raw materials, the quality of the products, but to their general surprise declared that the project, could not be the child of greedy promoters.

Axelmann vigorously proclaimed that Barito represented the needs of a vast developing country, and that Papcon's interests were Indonesia's interests. They were in Washington at the request of their government partners, the Ministry of Forests through the state owned Hutan Industri, to whom they were acting as consultants for the development and the diversification of the forest industries.

The World Bank, as a Washington based organisation with the USA as the major shareholder, was very susceptible to public opinion

and scientific advice. They had begun to take serious note of the rainforest conservationist movements and their warnings. They would as a result require additional guarantees on selective cutting in the forest using non-destructive techniques and reforestation.

They informed the IFC that forestry inventory that had been carried out by aerial, survey by flying strips and noting the types of forest, and especially *dacrydium* when it grew in groves. The survey was scheduled to be completed by an on the ground check, strip by strip by ORSFE foresters, over the next four or five months and Papcon would naturally submit it to them.

They left Washington sure that the IFC had given them a fair hearing and were open to participation, providing, that the consortium could meet their conditions. It was obvious that they had to project the consortium as acting on behalf of the Indonesians, at their demand.

Axelmann understood that they would have to provide suitable window dressing, asking the Indonesians to make the official approach. It was indispensable, that the consortium avoid an open call for international tenders, which would which would be totally against their own interests and those all the other parties concerned who had financed the development from their own resources.

They stopped over in New York on the way back to Paris for their shopping; it was only three days before Christmas. They were booked into the old fashioned Biltmore above Grand Central Station. They shopped and relaxed in the unique Christmas atmosphere of New York. However, their main subject was to figure out how they were going to present the strategy that was unfolding in an acceptable way to Brodzski.

They had observed in recent weeks that Brodzski's behaviour was becoming a cause for concern. Their plans risked going badly awry, if they could not control his erratic actions. His growing tendency to exaggerate, in an businesslike manner, almost any aspect of the project simply to impress his listeners was beginning to raise eyebrows

Brodzski was riding high and was not going to be told how to

develop his project. They would have to proceed with the greatest caution, they needed him, though whether Brodzski realised he needed them was another question.

## Chapter 25 - REFORESTATION & WISHFUL THINKING

That weekend Hardy had persuaded Martin, that they should do a little of their own journalistic investigation, convincing a very reluctant Ennis to join them. He agreed mainly to keep an eye on them, to avoid overstepping their agreement with the Forestry Department who wished to avoid sensitive issues.

They had rented a Jeep and planned to go up Martarpura, then on to Barabai, about one hundred and twenty kilometres further north on the so-called trans-island highway. The highway was mostly an unsurfaced track, which crossed more than one thousand kilometres of dense jungles to Pontianak, on the west coast of Kalimantan, with its only branch swinging east to Samarinda on the opposite coast. To the north was Kota Kinabulu, the capital of the Malaysian State of Sabah, which some people said could be reached over the highway, more than one thousand two hundred kilometres over a mostly unexplored jungle covered mountain range, which terminated in the extreme north with the four thousand metre high peak of Gunung Kinabulu.

Their guide and driver, Hasan, who came with the Jeep, had been recommended by the hotel manager at the Miramar. Hasan spoke passable English; he was a short, round, lively individual, who had jumped at the opportunity of making a few dollars from the Perancis.

After leaving Martarpura the road started to climb, skirting the foothills of a mountain range, the Pegunungan Meratus, which culminated at 1,892 meters with Gunung Besar. The road was surfaced but not in a particularly good condition, they bumped along slowing down as they passed through a few rare villages, where the small children pointed at them, laughing with surprise and

astonishment at Hardy, half hanging out of window with his camera turning, the dogs barked and the chickens scuttled off the road squawking as they passed.

‘We wanna see ze barelands wit ze new cultivators,’ shouted Hardy to Hassan, who smiled and nodded his head enthusiastically, though only half understanding.

He could not for the life of him figure out why the Perancis wanted to see the barelands, as for the cultivators, he was completely lost as to what they meant. He did not want to disappoint them, they were without any doubt important men, and above all, he saw no need to upset his clients who seemed to have plenty of money to spend.

From time to time, they crossed a logging truck as it rumbled past them raising a cloud of red dust. It was the dry season and the roads were in a relatively good condition. The loggers worked at full speed, in less than a couple of months more the roads would be almost impracticable and logging operations would be suspended, or in the best case, very much slowed down as the rains set in.

Barabai was like the other villages that they had passed through, a little bit bigger, but just as uninteresting. They decided to continue on a few kilometres further to Pagat, which according to their map was the last village before the mountains about twenty kilometres further on. The road had changed into simple track and the forest fell away behind them, giving way to a vast uninterrupted pale green expanse of grassland, which rippled before them in waves driven by the breeze.

They stopped and climbed out, Hardy perched himself on the footboard of the Jeep, stretching up for a better view over the tall grass, called *alang-alang*. He swung his camera up and started to pan half heartedly across monotonous landscape, behind the Jeep he could see smoke rising above the trees, which marked the edge between the forest and the grassland, beyond there seemed to be an access road possibly to a logging area.

They were disappointed there nothing dramatic, no story, just grass and mountains beyond the forest. They got back into the jeep



and indicated to Hassan to drive towards the clearing and the smoke. Under the harsh sunlight, which reflected off a laterite track, a small Kawasaki motorbike slowly wound its way noisily around the bumps and holes, the rider waved to them.

The track led into a corridor of trees. Suddenly it opened out onto a surrealistic landscape over which hung a pall of acrid smoke. The earth was blackened by fire, dotted with the broken stumps and the corpses of trees, whose naked branches reached up as hands in despair to the sky.

It was an apocalyptic scene; men and women, blackened by the soot from the fires, carried heavy branches, others pulled on ropes attached to one of the larger trees, which lay at a strange angle across a tangled mass of smoking wood.

Over to the left, about fifty meters away to one side of the clearing, stood a small group of huts, roughly built from odd pieces of wooden planks, their roofs fashioned from old engine-oil cans and cardboard boxes. There were a few dirty children, the smaller ones completely naked, and a silent dog. From the ground that had been prepared to one side of the clearing, a scattering of bright green shoots already appeared out of the blackened ground. They had stumbled on one of the many tragic examples of the destructive and permanent deforestation by the poor, and the relentless encroachment of the barelands on the forest.

‘What is this, where do these people come from?’ Martin asked Ennis.

It was unlike anything of the easy going people they had seen over the previous week, it was true that Bandjarmasin was not a model town, but most of its population were adequately housed by local standards and well fed, there were schools, mosques, shops, electricity and services, filled with smiling people.

‘These are transmigrants,’ replied Ennis.

‘Trans what!’ said Hardy as he pulled off the lens cover.

‘Transmigrants from Java or Madura,’ said Ennis, but Hardy had already plunged into the smoke and ash his camera aimed at the scene of desolation.

‘They’re immigrants from Java, who need new fertile land to grow their food, so they clear it by cutting down and burning everything in sight,’ Ennis explained, thinking of what they would do with the story.

‘Well it seems like something is growing there,’ said Martin, waving doubtfully in the direction of the sparse bright green shoots of hill rice, which were pushing through the ash covered ground of the rough new field that had been torn from the forest.

‘The problem is that within about three years the land is exhausted,’ Ennis explained hopelessly. The land, once it had been denuded of its forest cover, was leached by the heavy tropical rains. The nutrients in the soil carried away with the rainwater to the streams and rivers, or deep into the earth leaving the land practically sterile, where only hardy grasses like *alang-alang* could survive. The subsistence farmers then moved on, burning the next plot of forest for new land, and hewing wood to build new shelters, the old ones being abandoned, firewood to cook their food and to make their tools.

‘The result is the barelands that you have just passed through.’

‘Can’t they plant trees or something?’

Ennis tried to describe that on such barelands, the result of shifting cultivation in many tropical countries, governments had developed tree plantation programs and in certain regions of the world, such as in Kenya, they had achieved a degree of success, where aid and development organisations had planted 150,000 trees.

‘These people you see are not Dayaks, or other natives of Borneo, they are poor transmigrants who don’t know this land, which is not like the fertile volcanic soil of Java.

‘I’m sorry to say its like treating cancer with a fuckin aspirin. Without educating and training for these poor people, they can’t protect and conserve their environment, it’s hopeless. This must start with the governments, only the administration and public services can implement the programs. The poor don’t even know what ecology is, it’s not their problem. In many regions only the old people remember when there were thick forests, when there were animals,

fruit and sufficient food for everybody.'

'Is it a government policy, I mean transmigration?' asked Martin.

'That's right and according to some people it's applied sometimes with force.'

'But why?'

'That's not too complicated you know. With a population of over one hundred and eighty million in a country of two million square kilometres, that's about ninety people to the square kilometre. It doesn't seem to be over populated compared to countries in Europe, like Belgium or Holland, where they have a population density of one hundred people to the square kilometre.'

He paused, watching Hardy and Jean-Pierre filming, whilst Hassan was in discussion with one of the poor transmigrants, it was probably the headman and he was pointing to Hardy.

'But when you realise that more than eighty million are on the island of Java, its mind boggling when you think that Java represents only five percent of the land surface of Indonesia, that's about eight hundred to the square kilometre and here there's only seven.'

Hassan came over with the headman, who smiled shyly, his large uneven white teeth standing out against his soot blackened face transpiring from the heat.

'This is Bak Soemarsono, he is the head of the village, I have told him you are from Jakarta, he would like a present from you.'

'What kind of present?' said Ennis, thinking he was at least direct.

'Up to you Tuan, maybe money.'

'Okay,' said Ennis dipping into his back pocket and taking out a ten thousand Rupiah note, which he offered to the headman.

'*Terimah kasih banyak,*' he said accepting the note in both hands, held together in a prayer like gesture.

'He would also like some gasoline.'

'Do we have any spare?' he asked Hassan.

'Yes Tuan, I have a jerry can.'

'Can we give it to them?'

'Yes Tuan.'

They exchange some words and the headman pointed to the huts.

‘He wants to offer you something to drink.’

‘Thank you,’ said Ennis nodding in agreement.

They walked over to their humble huts, as Ennis continued his explanation.

‘With the highest population density in the world, Java is a vast political and human problem. The Indonesian government has tried to attenuate it, by a program of transmigration to the vast under inhabited provinces in Borneo, Sumatra and Irian Jaya, each of which is larger than France, with just a few million inhabitants.’

The children gathered around them and two of the women were given instructions to prepare coffee, as Hardy offered around his Gauloises cigarettes.

‘You know this is kind of a long history, it started with the Dutch in 1905, now government policy has programmed millions of people for transmigration to the empty regions, entire communities and villages are transported to distant provinces, sometimes thousands of kilometres from their homes. It’s like landing on another planet for them,’ Ennis told them.

‘Ask them where they originally come from?’ said Martin to Hassan, who in turn questioned the headman.

‘Central Java Sir.’

‘How long have they been here?’

‘Three years now.’

‘Do they have any money?’

‘Just a little, his two brothers have found jobs working in the logging concessions, but it’s not enough, there are more than thirty people in this group.’

They nodded as they listened to the story, sipping the weak coffee in small glasses that the women had offered them, on a biscuit tin cover, used as a tray.

‘Its like the early settlers in the American West, no return ticket, succeed or die,’ said Hardy filming them as the sipped their coffee and smoked, whilst the children and dog looked on.

‘They arrive with the basic needs to set up their new homes, enough rice to see them through to their first harvest, as well as seeds

and tools, but without the tissue of intercommunity life that they had known at home, you know, no roots. The government gives each family a few acres of land, but don't think it's like traditional farm lands,' Ennis paused and dug into his pocket, he pulled out a roll of mints, which he offered to the children.

'They can do what they like with the land?' Martin questioned.

'Yeah, but that's much easier said than done, they have no construction materials and they abandon their prefabricated houses after a couple of seasons when the rice yield falls off, and then move on. They've no roads, markets, schools, places of worship, everything has to be created. In some of the really remote regions, their only link is by radio. If they're lucky they're supplied during the initial period by the Indonesian Airforce C5 cargo planes, which had originally carried them to Borneo,' Ennis continued.

'I see, so survival is their only preoccupation,' interrupted Hardy.

'Exactly, you're dead right there and the problems of protection of the environment and wild life are furthest from their thoughts. The jungle is to them a hostile force, which they have to push back to win survival for their families,' replied Ennis.

'Just as the new Americans had done two hundred or more years ago, felling the forests, wiping out the vast herds of bison and other wild life, destruction of the habitat of the American Indians and even the genocide of the Indians themselves,' added Martin.

'I suppose you could say that,' replied Ennis, 'the new lands of the transmigrants, are in regions which maybe a decade or less back were virgin rainforests. They'd been licensed out as timber concessions to logging companies, who over the years had carried out selective logging. That is the extraction of the commercial timber species, used as veneer for the furniture industry, or wood that can be peeled for the production of plywood panels,' Ennis paused as if he was tired of trying to justify the world.

Martin took over. 'That's exactly what we saw in the Korean logging camp, three or four very big trees each hectare, another twenty or so smaller trees of no commercial value come down with them when they fall and are left to rot on the ground. Then the

bulldozers go in, knocking everything down everything in their tracks. Finally they complete the job, clearing all vegetation and even scrapping the top soil off, to open access roads for their logging trucks.'

Ennis was a little surprised by his aggressive tone but he could not deny what they had witnessed.

'Yes, I suppose the forest has been pretty seriously damaged, but after a relatively short time if there is no further disturbance, when the loggers have left, new plants and trees start to grow again.'

It was called logged-over forest covered with secondary growth, after thirty years or more the forest appeared to have almost completely recovered. Maybe a hundred years latter it would reach its original state of equilibrium.

The problems start when the transmigrants moved in, or with the setting-up of industries such as panel board plants, then the logged over or disturbed forest areas are clear-cut. That meant they were razed to the ground, squandering natures heritage. In the case of the mills, the owners generally promised that the forest would be replanted. The reality was that they never had been, and secondary forest took over. In the case of transmigration the land was turned over to farming and was lost forever.'

A great many of the transmigrants abandoned their new settlements and lands after a few years. It was too difficult for them without backup, nearly all the programs were badly managed and they quit, leaving behind them new barelands, migrating to the coastal towns such as Bandjarmasin, which grew at an extraordinary rate. Others became subsistence farmers moving on to neighbouring areas, cutting and burning new sections of forest, totally uncontrolled.

The visit to the barelands demonstrated the sad results of mans senseless expansion, forests that in just a few years had been transformed into an unending horizon of grassland, uninhabitable either by man or wildlife, apart from a few birds and insects, the source of seasonal fires that swept with regularity across Borneo.

They returned to the Jeep and rode back to Bandjarmasin. There

was little conversation; they had been sobered by what they had seen. Nature's fabulous creation literally wiped of the face of the earth by mans inability to manage his inheritance.

'And what about you?' asked Martin pointedly.

'Me?' said Ennis surprised.

'Yes, Papcon and Finntech, your project is not exactly a conservationist's dream, it will only worsen the situation,' he said accusingly.

'I don't know,' replied Ennis turning away as if to avoid the subject.

'It's like a silent war-man against nature,' said Hardy. 'I've reported on many minor wars and conflicts, when peace returns they reconstruct the roads and buildings-but here there's no way back.'

## Chapter 26 - PARIS

Wihartjo arrived in Paris in full pomp with his Director General and the key staff from the Ministry of Forests, the Indonesian group also included Sutrawan and his team from Bintang Agung. In addition Sutrawan had invited, for the ride, two of his wealthy and close friends, the Philippino, Thomas Lee, and the Singaporean, Robbie Tan.

Gao arrived directly from Taipei, the following day. As usual he was alone, low cost and low profile, compared to the noisy Indonesian group, which totalled sixteen people.

The high point of the program was to be the official signing of the joint-venture agreement for the construction of the Forestry Industries Complex, between the Indonesian state owned company Hutan Industri and Papcon on behalf of the consortium,.

The signing ceremony was to take place at the Indonesian Embassy, in the presence of, His Excellency the Indonesian Ambassador, recorded for posterity by photographers and reporters, with news teams from the main French and Indonesian television channels.

It was to be a grand event, the culmination of two years work and studies to demonstrate the feasibility and bankability of the project.

The group was booked into the Inter-Continental Hotel, on rue Castiglione, in the centre of Paris. Papcon had organised the programme down to the smallest detail, including a fleet of limousines to drive them to the different ceremonies and receptions that had been organised. Sutrawan and his friends organised the entertainment with the assistance of the embassy protocol officer...including a string of attractive and available girls.

The first formal event on the programme was Strecker's invitation to Wihartjo, Sutrawan and the Ambassador, in the company of the representatives of the consortium, to a high Parisian style lunch at Laurent, a celebrated restaurant on the Champs Elysee Gardens, which was considered by certain to be one of the finest in France.

Sutrawan, replied by an invitation the following day to Le Doyen, it was a restaurant of similar standing and lay in the gardens on the other opposite side of the Champs Elysee, it had been suggested to him by the protocol officer, who to avoid a faux pas chose a repeat of the French invitation. The main dish on the menu in each of the restaurants and at every other invitation was lamb. Riady, prompted by the Indonesians, diplomatically asked whether lamb was a special delicacy in France, suggesting if not, they would appreciate a change.

The restaurants had been informed by the ever efficient protocol officer and Strecker's staff that the guests were Muslims, and afraid of offending their Islamic customs, they had carefully instructed each Maitre d'hôtel that pork and any other suspect food be excluded from the menu. They also instructed that alcohol be served in modest amounts, all to the great dismay of Sutrawan and his Chinese friends, and the general indifference of the Indonesians.

The evenings programmes took place in a much more congenial atmosphere, not only was the menu Sutrawan's choice but also the alcohol and rest of the evenings entertainment. He was faithful to his routine, which never varied, it was Chinese restaurants then back to his suite, drinking XO well into the night, with the girls to care for their every need.



The next day the signing ceremony was carried out a great pomp, presided by the Ambassador in the grand salle of the splendid Empire style embassy. They were seated at a long felt covered table, under the flags of Indonesia and France, and the glare of the lights aimed at them by the television crews. Brodzski was in his glory; as the documents, in leather folders, were circulated for signatures, first to Wihartjo, then himself, followed by Sutrawan.

Filled with the glow of their success, they left France in a euphoric mood on the Sunday morning, taking off from Paris, Charles de Gaulle Airport, for Washington DC where they arrived at Dulles International Airport in the early afternoon, losing only a couple of hours taking into account the time difference.

They were booked into the Washington Hilton nearby the celebrated Watergate. The Hilton was a sober edifice in the chilly early March weather, with few weekend guests.

Their meetings with the IFC were scheduled for the following morning, when they the planned to start with a formal presentation of the Barito Project and the results of the feasibility study. It was to be followed by discussions on their application for IFC participation in the capital and loans.

The large group made their way by several taxis to the World Bank Building, on H Street. Their number caused some confusion at their arrival before they were directed to the conference room on the fourth floor, where Dahlqvist was waiting to welcome them.

Fortunately, a large room had been reserved for their meetings. Excluding Thomas Lee and Robbie Tan, who were not official members of the group, the party's ranks had swollen to eighteen with the arrival of the Finns and Germans.

Ennis opened the proceedings, with the formalities of introductions and presentations of the Indonesians parties, government and private, followed by the consortium members. There was a relaxed atmosphere of friendly confidence, even though the IFC staff was a little embarrassed and surprised by the visitors numbers, which they had not anticipated.

At the end of the morning, a lunch was prepared in a private dinning room. They were a little cramped, but the friendly atmosphere of the lunch was felt to be a positive sign, with Dahlqvist warmly wishing the group success in their venture.

After lunch, they all returned to the Hilton, feeling pleased with the morning's discussions and in a good mood decided to explore Washington. Ennis was caught between the Indonesians arrangement and that of the Consortium members. They finally separated into several groups, because of the unwieldy size of a single party. Axelmann joined Ennis and they headed in the direction of the White House, whilst Brodzski preferred to take a nap in his room to recover from the time difference. They congratulated themselves on the smooth organisation; it was practically in the bag.

The next morning, they returned to the IFC offices at ten. They had programmed a technical presentation and working meeting with Dahlqvist's specialists. James Bergstein, an investment analyst, a brash young American, whose speciality was forestry industries, which included pulp and paper, chaired it.

The meeting started well enough, but Bergstein soon showed that he was as cold and insensitive as his name suggested. With all the lack of finesse and diplomacy of an American, playing out the role of the universal public servant wielding his institutional authority, and without the slightest consideration for the rank of the persons seated before him, a respected minister who was a member of the government of one of the World Banks shareholders, he aggressively attacked the project, demolishing it slowly, the plantations, the loggers, the financing, the markets and the partners, both private and government.

The pain on Wihartjo's face was great, whilst Sutrawan did not hide his dismay his mouth open and the ash from his Kretek falling the blank writing pad set before him.

Brodzski after his initial surprise counter-attacked, growling like a pit bull that had been provoked.

Bergstein's worst knock was reserved for the consortium members. In a barely veiled accusation of profiteering, he pulled their

project to pieces for lack of real capital, declaring that the ten percent participation, proposed by the consortium, was nothing more than excess profits built in to the price. It was true, a common ploy was known to all parties in such projects.

Bergstein chose to totally ignore the needs and wishes of the Indonesians, desperately short of investment capital, to create an industry to exploit their natural resources for the growing needs of their vast and growing population, and to replace expensive imported pulp coming mainly from the USA.

The Indonesians as the other potential shareholders were not completely naive; it was evident that the mill price was padded. They had not the financial means or the choice but to proceed in that manner, as they and their neighbours had done on their long road to industrial development and modernisation. Investors asked themselves, what industrialist or manufacturer would invest his capital on low returns and high risks, there had to be an incentive which was in effect the low capital to be paid in dollar terms. The real capital was the forest and the low cost human resources of Indonesia.

It was another case of Washington based institutions imposing American capital structure and business ethics in a world that was a galaxy removed from their own, as they had, to their regret, on so many previous occasions.

The meeting collapsed in disgust and embarrassment. They were overwhelmed by the extraordinary lack of experience and diplomacy of Bergstein, and the manner in which he addressed long established and successful industrialists such as Gao and Sutrawan, who employed thousands of workers in their manufacturing plants across Asia, and the brutal humiliation he inflicted on a senior Minister of the Indonesian Government before all those present.

They returned to the hotel, breaking down into their respected groups, heading for the bar or to their suites. They were shocked, in the best case, they had been thrown out, and even worse it seemed that their project had been thrown out. Two years work had been turned upside down in two hours; they felt they had been set up.

Dahlqvist had diplomatically disappeared.

It must have been planned, Riady muttered darkly to those who cared to listen.

The soonest to recover was Wihartjo, adopting a philosophical face saving attitude, saying that they would find other sources of financing, as they had in the past, and as they would in the future.

Sutrawan agreed with him. They were recovering from the shock and anger, at their out of hand rejection by an American, who understood nothing of their world, in his own artificial universe of a Washington, dictating his conditions to a so called developing nation, an old culture, which had existed before Columbus had set foot in the new world. Their deception soon gave way to anger reinforcing their will to fight back and defend their efforts and plans.

The Europeans were depressed, especially the Finns, who lacked a certain flexibility of imagination to imagine anything but the collapse and abandonment of the project, accepting rejection for its face value without fighting back.

Brodzski was not only deeply embarrassed but furious, accusing all of those around him of betrayal, especially Ennis, forgetting that Dahlqvist was his own good friend.

The party hurriedly broke up to lick their wounds in private, with each of them booking the earliest flight home. They parted with terse goodbyes and vague suggestions for their next meeting.

Ennis remained with Sutrawan who was scheduled to leave for the West Coast, they promised an early meeting after consulting with the other parties on the next move. Brodzski departed to Paris furious in the company of a puzzled Strecker.

## Chapter 27 - A FRIENDLY WARNING

It was on the edge of the lake, formed by a hydro-electric dam, that he saw the diamond prospectors for the first time. They were about twenty-five people, who according to Sucipto were a family group,

which included children and old persons. He explained that such a group could glean in a year a couple of carats of gem quality diamonds, which would be cut or sold in the market at Martarpura. Added to those valuable stones would be a few carats of low value industrial diamonds.

With shallow pans, they sifted earth and fine gravel from the water on the banks of the lake. The headman carefully guarded the meagre results of their efforts wrapped in a small piece of cloth in his trouser pocket; the diamonds he showed to Ennis appeared to be nothing more than small pieces of vulgar gravel that could be found on the roadside anywhere.

‘Who are these people?’

‘I told you, diamond prospectors,’ Suctipto replied with a smile.

‘I mean where do they come from?’

‘I don’t know.’

Ennis asked the headman, who spoke a little English.

‘My father lived in the forest over there,’ he said pointing to the bank of the lake in the distance.

The lake was man made and the surrounding hills were known as the barelands. The whole area, hundreds of square kilometres had been deforested and deserted before it was flooded after the construction of the dam.

Ennis looked in the direction where the headman pointed; there was not a single tree.

‘We lived there from the time of our fathers’ fathers and their fathers’ fathers,’ he said. ‘The loggers destroyed our forest and the transmigrants sent by the government burnt our trees to plant rice.’

The old man smiled sadly, showing his blackened broken teeth.

‘We are forest people, you call us Dayaks. We could never leave our ancestral lands, but we could not survive without our forest. The diamond merchants from Martarpura now pay us to prospect in the lake.’

He returned with his head bowed to his family. Their life forever transformed to scraping the soil and panning the gravel in search of the Belandas dreams.

They pushed on; Sucipto promised Ennis a visit to the diamond market on their return. After what he had seen his enthusiasm was dimmed, it was like many things in that country, there was a large gap between dreams and the reality.

The next morning Sucipto and his driver picked Ennis up from the Miramar in the Landcruiser. They left Bandjermasin in the direction of Martarpura, the weather was already hot and humid, from the appearance of the sky it was unlikely that they would have rain over the next hours. The minibuses, which occasionally passed them at breakneck speed, overtaking the groups of people on foot heading towards the local markets, caused him to close his eyes more than once even though he had become used to the scene.

‘Mr John, you will see some nice diamonds, but they are very expensive.’

‘What’s expensive?’

‘You will see.’

‘Baik.’

The driver parked the Toyota alongside the minibuses waiting in front of the parade of shops opposite a large green. Curious passers-by paused joining the bystanders to stare at the Belanda as he stepped down from the vehicle. They walked down one of the side streets between the vendors of colourful tropical fruits and vegetables squatting by their wares. As they passed, women and girls giggled behind their hands, covering their white powdered faces.

The smell of the overripe and rotten fruit was overpowering, he avoided stepping in the black slimy patches of wet decaying rubbish that was scattered on the roadway. They stepped onto the boardwalk and turned into a street, where a group of men were huddled together in discussion.

Sucipto approached them and speaking in Indonesian asked them to see some diamonds. As if by some special signal, one of the men stepped forward and approached them taking from his pocket a small wad of white tissue paper, which he held in the palm of his hand and commenced to very carefully unfold it.

There were two diamonds each of about half a carat sparkling on the white tissue.

‘Ask him how much,’ he said.

A rapid exchange was followed by a pause, then Sucipto after some further moments of discussion, during which Ennis suspected he was negotiating his commission, turned and announced to with his large toothy smile, ‘Four hundred thousand, Bak.’

It was about one hundred and eighty dollars, which seemed very reasonable for two stones totalling one carat. His knowledge of diamonds limited, he asked to see more. Another seller produced a stone of about one and a half carats, a rather yellow colour.

‘Six hundred thousand Sir,’ he said in English producing a small magnifying glass.

‘No flaws,’ he said thrusting the glass into his hand. ‘Take a look, its very pure.’

The group of onlookers that had gather around for the show was attracting more attention. Ennis feeling uneasy with the gathering crowd and suggested to Sucipto they visit the factory he had talked of.

They left the group, who though a little disappointed, did not pester them. They took the high street in the direction of the bridge that crossed the Martapura River. They did not cross the bridge instead turned to the left down a steeply sloping side road, which led down to a row of ramshackle wooden buildings along the riverbank.

After about a hundred metres they stopped before a timber godown and entered through a large door. In what was a general office area Sucipto asked for the manager whom he said he knew. Martapura was his hometown and he knew almost everybody.

The manager arrived, a small, round, moustachioed local, who with a broad smile immediately showed them into the factory area. About thirty or so diamond cutters were working on what looked like old-fashioned gramophone record players. The rotating discs was lubricated with water and an arm with a fine gripping head rested on the turning disc, in the grips were the rough diamond, which was being cut, a simple age-old technique. The stone was repositioned

from time to time, to present another facet to be ground on the abrasive disc, which Ennis learnt was coated with diamond powder.

The diamond prospectors brought their stones to the cutting factory either to be sold, or, cut for a price. They were then sold in the local market place or sent to Jakarta. The buyers were mostly Japanese or other foreigners, visiting the forestry concessions operated by their companies in the jungle. Professional gem traders from Holland or Hong Kong were also regular customers, the manager explained to them.

He then gave them a quick course on what to buy, the colour, purity and price, showing them a few samples of different stones. It was not easy when faced with such a large choice, but it seemed that the diamond merchants were trustworthy.

With the short lesson, they returned to the market and after a series of negotiations, Ennis bought five thousand dollars worth of diamonds. He would get one mounted in Hong Kong for Lily, the others he would keep for the moment. He hoped that he had made a good choice and the diamonds would have a significantly higher value back in civilisation, if it proved to be worthwhile, he thought; it could provide be an amusing little business.

That evening he was invited by Nat Nurimba, once again to the Blue Diamond restaurant, it was by local standards the best, though its prices were extravagant, he enjoyed the food and it was certainly a change from the Miramar's restaurant.

Mat Nurimba, the director of the Forestry Department, had been given the go ahead from the ministry in Jakarta, for a fourteen million dollar forestry plantation experiment, which would be the forerunner of large scale plantations that were needed for pulp mills.

The standing stock of natural long fibre species was not without limit. Papcon's forestry specialist, Bernard Clerc, had calculated that the mill could be assured of a continuous supply of plantation wood for a period of about twelve years. The wood from the plantations would then have reached mature. At the same time, the natural wood availability would fall off sharply.

Mat was in a euphoric mood, the experimental plantations were



the biggest forestry investment ever for the province, outside of logging operations in the concessions and the plywood mills.

Normally the government services were onlookers and rarely had direct control of business. The only possibility to supplement their meagre incomes was through the money distributed by the generosity of the logging companies for services rendered.

Mat Nurimba would now be giving the orders and handing out money. He had full financial control and he would see to it that he and his friends were well served. Ennis was worried about Mat Nurimba's managerial skills, he knew a part of the money would disappear, the question was how much, it was certain with Mat Nurimba's flamboyant character, he would undoubtedly be more than generous.

He had deliberately invited Ennis as a foreigner in a public place, as part of his program to demonstrate his increased importance to local business people and politicians.

'So, Mr Ennis, I understand that you have made some interesting investments.'

Ennis with a groan reminded himself how impossible it was to keep a secret there.

'Yes, I have bought some diamonds for my friends.'

'Good, we have all made some good investments this week. What do you think of the plantation site?'

'It looks good, it will bring good business to the local economy.'

'Perhaps you will let the minister know, we have selected a good program and I will make it a success,' he said pointing energetically at his own chest with his thumb, almost jumping up and down in his chair, wearing a broad and almost threatening smile.

Suddenly he changed his tone and leaned towards Ennis.

'Whilst we are talking, let me give you some friendly advice Mr John,' he looked furtively around and lowering his voice he added, 'not everybody here is your friend, there are many loggers who do not welcome your mill, so please keep a low profile as you say.'

He finished with a loud laugh and a broad smile, attacking the fruit, which had arrived on the table, leaving Ennis suddenly puzzled

and disturbed.

## Chapter 28 - ILLEGAL LOGGING

Ennis met Ohlsson as he came through the felt lined doors of the amphitheatre. He was one of the first out at coffee break. As usual he was dressed in a rumpled safari suit with his iron wood walking stick in one hand and a roll of conference papers in the other.

‘So I see you were sitting at the back Lars, near the door?’

‘Why not,’ he said grinning, ‘I always sit at the back, I like to keep a low profile in this kind of happening. Too many snipers.’

‘Anything interesting?’

‘Same old stuff as usual. You know this kind of conference is for the timber producers and forest industries, its almost entirely commercially oriented, nothing scientific or fundamental, I’m not saying that its totally bad, but its not my kind of thing,’ he said disappointedly.

‘Well you knew that in advance.’

‘Sure, sure.’

They were attending the World Forestry Congress at the Palais du Congress, in Paris. The French President, followed by a crowd that included ministers and other dignitaries, had opened it in full pomp. There were delegates from every country of the world that possessed forests, or that intended to plant trees, presenting learned papers on conservation, selection and exploitation, and vaunting their national achievements.

The fact was, that they were not doing very much in the majority of cases. The politicians only paid lip service to the real problems. It was good public relations to be seen active in environmental promotion, especially for trees and forests, which almost any voter could understand and appreciate.

‘Let’s go and sit down somewhere quiet,’ Ohlsson said taking Ennis by the elbow.

‘We can go to the coffee shop in the hotel lobby,’ Ennis suggested.

The conference centre was connected to the hotel by long carpeted shopping arcades, luxury shops, where the delegates from the poor third world could spend their aid money. It led to the lobby of the Hotel Concord Lafayette, part of the vast complex. The coffee shop was situated in one corner of the cavernous lobby; a mid-morning calm reigned after the daily departures and before the new arrivals. They took a quiet corner table and ordered coffee.

‘Listen John, I thought over what you told me about your next expedition, I think I will join you.’

‘Excellent Lars, I’d be delighted to have you along.’

‘But don’t forget what I told you, I like to keep a low profile,’ he said with a smile.

‘Oh!’

‘Yes, you know I’ve been investigating the effect of illegal logging. This trip will give me an opportunity to look around...in a general manner of speaking,’ he said with a sly wink and then adding, ‘don’t worry there’s no locked filing cabinets in the jungle.’ He laughed and pulled out his pipe.

‘I see,’ Ennis said shrugging. ‘In any case, as far as I am concerned, there won’t be any problem.’

‘Let me give you a little background,’ he puffed on his pipe lighting it up and blowing the sweet smelling smoke in a cloud towards the ceiling. ‘We suspect some of the loggers in South Kalimantan, are front companies for a certain unscrupulous Hong Kong trading company, with links back to Jakarta. They’ve been up to a lot of crooked things for some time now in Malaysia, more specifically in Sabah but also in Indonesia.’

‘Tell me about it then,’ Ennis said sipping his coffee and encouraging him.

‘As you know John, my main interest is in the conservation of the rainforest, not as a curiosity, but an asset for humanity and for solid scientific reasons. The legal aspects of log poaching don’t really interest me, but it is means to an end.’

Ennis nodded listening to Ohlsson carefully.

‘Investigating the problems of illegal logging not as... err,’ he paused looking for a word, ‘a detective. As I said that doesn’t interest me. What I need is to be able to distinguish between government reporting and the reality of the situation.

Organised illegal logging is taking place on a large scale, everybody knows and is ignoring it. I’ve got to alert public opinion, by that I mean international public opinion.’

‘So what can you find out by coming with us?’ said Ennis.

‘Well, I’ve received confidential information, that puts a new light on the organisation of illegal logging in Kalimantan and East Malaysia states in the north.’

‘That’s interesting; you mean that you think this is going on in South Kalimantan?’

Ohlsson laughed: ‘My dear John, I don’t think, I know, let me explain. There’s a lot of people - you know disgruntled businessmen and employees - who know of my activities that have been reported in the press quite a lot recently, not so much here in Indonesia, but in the foreign press, in Singapore and Hong Kong - they’ve written me letters, and sent me photocopies of documents-clearly showing systematic breaches of forestry and revenue laws are taking place.

‘Let me repeat I don’t care a dam about that, but in order to corner these boyos, I need the cooperation of the authorities. If they think laws are being broken, which mean they are losing revenue, they will act much quicker than if some obscure species of animal or plant is disappearing.’

‘I see, why you don’t turn that information over to the authorities.’

‘Its not that easy, those logging companies owners are more slippery than a bag of snakes and in cahoots with the officials who cover up the tricks that they use such as under-declaring the volume of log exported.’

‘How does that work?’

‘Well it means low quality reject logs are being delivered to local sawmills, to help cover up the disparities.’

‘Reject logs?’

‘Yes, they are low quality logs with defects that affect their commercial value and have been rejected by the buyer. They are usually sold to local sawmills at low prices, because these are heavy government penalties for unsold timber, you can’t just go around sawing down trees for the fun of it.’

‘Reject logs make up for part of the difference in illegal timber not declared. Sawmills must pay delivery charges and royalties for reject logs that have hardly any commercial value and sometimes do not even exist.’

‘Don’t exist, what do you mean?’

‘Well they are virtual logs, they report they have delivered them to the sawmill, you know false declarations.’

‘What about the sawmills then?’

‘Many sawmills accept this, because the loggers own the sawmills or are the major shareholders. The minority shareholders are against this because they are local people and never see the profits, which disappear to Hong Kong or Singapore.’

‘Can’t they do anything?’

‘It’s very difficult, you know it’s a small world out there and trouble makers can easily be made to disappear in the jungle. But that is why many local people and small businessmen are against the illegal loggers, who are often foreign or Jakarta babas, who are depleting the regions forests and their reserves.’

‘I see but how does this tie in to our visit.’

‘I’m coming to that, the information I have got has confirmed with solid facts that illegal logging in Borneo is rampant and has foreign connections.’

‘So what are you doing about it?’

‘I’ve transmitted information to the authorities in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, which shows that the logging quotas over the last four years have greatly exceeded the permits approved by the forestry departments. For example in Malaysia, in the state of Kelantan, quotas have been estimated to have exceeded as much as three hundred percent of the quantities permitted.’

‘What do they say to that?’

‘You can imagine many of the local authorities, forestry department people and concessionaires have denied this, but the authorities have said that abuses would be checked, for example in Malaysia by the National Forestry Council, which monitors logging limits.’

‘Is that effective?’ asked Ennis.

‘I’m sorry to say no, such measures do very little to tackle the illegal logging problems. The actions of the state bodies have always been long and inefficient and in any cases open to corruption. What I have to do is give this information to the press.’

‘The foreign press?’

‘Right, for example I’ve received a letter from the ex-manager of a timber group in Sabah, he says that his former employers are engaged in illegal logging activities on a large scale. They had changed the species and measurements of logs in the areas where they were extracted, so that they avoid paying full royalties on the logs.’

‘So what have you done?’

‘I went to see this man and according to his information, the group operates through front companies, which have carried out contracting. These front companies are responsible for tropical timber being felled illegally and shipped from Sabah.’

‘So the state doesn’t know.’

‘Sure they do, but they’re powerless, it costs the state millions of dollars in lost revenues, the loggers should pay royalties to the state for every cubic metre of wood exported.’

‘How much timber is involved.’

‘He told me that he personally was involved in the felling of about four hundred trees in reserve forests areas in Sabah. Where the felling of trees is prohibited!’

‘It’s like poaching.’

‘You’re dead right there, it is poaching!’

Ennis waved to the waitress and paid the coffees, then they strolled slowly back to the congress centre.

‘This fellow said he had no idea that it was illegal. That’s pure rubbish, but of course he has to protect himself. He reckoned the

value of the illegally felled timber at over one million dollars. In another case, he said that the owners of the companies had bribed Sabah Forestry Department officials to falsify the species of the trees felled. Instead of registering the trees as valuable commercial timber, they were recorded them as low grade timber, to avoid paying higher royalties.'

'More profits and tax avoidance.'

'Yes, based on the difference between royalties for the high grade commercial timber and low grade timber. He said they had avoided paying millions of dollars when they shipped the timber from Sabah.'

'What about the laws, is there any legislation on illegal logging, I mean what are the penalties?'

'Sabah's Forest Act of 1968 calls for the seizure and forfeiture of any logs falsely documented. There's a penalty of up to ten times the export royalty for authorised export, or attempted unauthorised export, of logs.'

'I see.'

'Other company employees have given us information about the group's illegal activities and we have informed the police who has taken steps to raise the matter with the federal governments Anti-Corruption Agency.'

'How do those people react?'

'I'm sorry to say that in certain cases it's ended up in violence and probably murder, you know the money involved is enormous. In one incident, a Sabah based sawmill operator asked for police protection after a person linked to this group had stabbed him. Fortunately it was not that serious, he was lucky, others have not been so lucky.'

Ennis of course knew that things were not as clean as they should be, but was shocked to hear of violence and murder.

'Does Borneo Timber Corporation ring a bell?'

Ennis said nothing.

'Their front companies are controlled from Taiwan by a certain Thomas Tan. He's lived in Australia for many years. Made a fortune in shady dealings with East Malaysia's and Indonesia's timber industry.'

He paused and waited for a reaction from Ennis.

‘Are you sure those names don’t mean anything to you John?’

Ennis nodded slowly: ‘They’re friends of Sutrawan.’

‘Tan is the master mind behind the front companies close to Golden Timber and Borneo. Tan, through nominees, is the majority shareholder those companies.’

‘Has anybody tried to speak to Tan? I mean if all this is known, why they don’t just arrest him?’ asked Ennis a little defiantly.

‘It’s not so easy he now lives in Taiwan and has an Australian passport, he’s almost untouchable because it’s so difficult to build up a case against him and there is little cooperation between the different governments.’

‘Naturally he’s denied that he’s linked to or coordinates the activities of these companies in any way. When our people spoke to him in Taiwan he simply said, “I have no relationship with these companies.”’

Ennis waited.

Ohlsson growled angrily, ‘My arse he doesn’t! What we are sure of is that Tan is, or has been, the managing director of several Singaporean based companies. He is also thought to control several dozen companies in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia through front men.

In addition to Borneo Timber, Tan and his nominees carry out their business in Sabah and Kalimantan through about twenty other companies. All are involved in timber business.’

‘I seem to remember now, there was some kind of fraud in Taiwan.’

‘You’re right, your boyo was indicted for fraud in a case that involved a group of Taiwanese, who imported timber from Hong Kong. Nine individuals were charged in the case, in which banks were swindled out of several million dollars. Serves the dam banks right, it’ll teach them to look closer in future. Anyway, they had arranged a letter of credit from the banks to back their purchases. But the proceeds from the letter of credit were split among the various parties, not used to repay the banks of those whom they



bought the logs from.'

'I remember reading about that, but are you sure it's the same Tan? That's a fairly common Chinese family name.'

'He's the same one. There's no formal diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Malaysia. That made it impossible to extradite Tan, who has Australian nationality anyway! The bastard says he was aware that he'd been charged in the Taiwan case, but he denied involvement in any fraud.'

They walked up the steps to the exhibition centre showing the security officers their passes; they strolled around looking at the stands of the different participating countries. At the Indonesian national stand they admired the girls in their brightly coloured national costumes explaining to enthusiastic visitors their government's policies on conservation and the strict legislation on the export of hardwood. At the same time the commercial representatives were explaining the advantages of joint ventures in Indonesia to potential investors.

Ohlsson continued his description of the fraudulent organisations and the operating methods of the loggers, as they looked at the activity on the stand. They were short of brochures, one of the girls with a regretfully smile explained to them that they had not arrived in time for the conference.

'A gang of Tan's cronies are using a complicated system of bribes and kickbacks, obtaining false export and shipping documents for logs loaded at East Malaysian ports. Those logs are exported to Japan, China, Taiwan, South Korea and other markets.'

They then looked at the statistics on the FAO stand, which were impressive.

'Look at that, when you consider that Malaysia exports three billion dollars worth of tropical timber, that's about thirteen percent of its total export earnings, a lot of money John!'

'Yeah, I've seen those figures before, more than half of Sabah's revenue comes from forestry activities, that's several hundreds of millions US dollars.'

'Each year, Sabah and Sarawak export more than twenty million

cubic meters of logs. That doesn't include processed logs, such as sawn timber, plywood, veneer and mouldings.'

'There won't be any forest left by the time they're finished with it.'

'And what about you John! That's the pot calling the kettle black.'

'We're different; we'll replant what we take out.'

'Don't pull my leg John.'

'Okay, okay, go on with your story.'

They walked through the exhibition area of the Congress, admiring the neatly laid out stands, designed by public relations companies to project an image of harmony between the forest industries, the governments of the different exhibitors and nature.

'I know that illicit logging practices in East Malaysia are taking place, without the knowledge of all of the top state officials, but forestry and customs officials, particularly in Sabah, are involved and receive huge bribes from the loggers. The officials are too busy banking their kickbacks in Hong Kong to worry about conservation, they're not going to kill the golden goose.'

'You won't believe it, but this all goes back as far as 1914 John, then a government body was created to protect the states forests and to regulate forestry activities. It was also responsible for collecting revenue from such sources. Logging activities and timber exports started in Sabah in 1879.'

'There's never anything new!' Ennis shrugged.

'It's the governments who are the prime instigators of most of the problems that exist, it's their short term economic objectives and revenue needs.'

'If you say so Lars,' said Ennis a little wearily looking at his watch.

'I haven't finished yet John, hear me out, it concerns you as well as me.'

Ennis nodded as they pushed on with their visit to the exhibition.

'Just one last thing, a calculation! The cargo capacity of outgoing timber carrying ships in Sabah is between 4,500 and 8,000 cubic metres; it depends on the availability of chartering ships, buyer's

requirements and local log supplies. The total market value of the logs carried varies at any given time according to the species, quality and seasonal fluctuations in prices. Certain types of logs can fetch over one hundred and fifty dollars a cubic metre. The less commercial species are about sixty dollars a cubic metre.

‘Assuming that the prices per cubic metre of all timber exported from Sabah range from eighty to one hundred dollars, and that an average timber carrier has a capacity of six thousand cubic metres, each shipload of illegal timber exported is worth around half a million dollars. Fifteen ships of pirated timber leaving Sabah every thirty days, would amount to a monthly cargo value of as much as ten million dollars.’ He paused looking for a reaction. ‘By the time that timber reaches its final destination its estimated annual market value is several hundred million dollars.’

‘That’s big money, but please don’t presume they’re all my friends Lars!’ said Ennis glancing at his watch again. He had heard Olsson’s insinuations before.

‘It’s the same in Sarawak, in East Kalimantan, and in Sumatra. In all regions where enforcement of forestry regulations is not vigorously applied. The ability of loggers to keep their illegal activities going is solely due to collusion with government officials, a point that apparently has been used successfully to convince businessmen to cooperate with such operations.’

‘Look Lars, I’m sorry but I’ve got to be going, I’m having lunch with Hutan Industri and Danny Lau.’

‘Just you remember John, you’re a partner of the people I’ve just mentioned!’

Ennis shrugged, he had become used to Ohlsson’s barbs. If Papcon and the other did not develop pulp mills in Indonesia then others would, he rationalised to himself.

‘Are you going to the cocktail this evening?’

‘I suppose so.’

Ennis pushed his way through the crowd towards the buffet; he needed a glass of something to revive his forces and a sandwich. It

had been a long day. The conference had attracted people from many backgrounds in addition to the specialists. It had become a media event presenting the good and the bad according to the journalist's whims. It was hot under the lights, the crowd thronged around the tables laid out with food and drinks.

He finally spotted Ohlsson talking to an attractive young woman Lars had introduced him to in Jakarta. Her family owned an old Sabah trading company. Her great-grandfather, half Chinese and half Kadzan, had established the family business at the end of the 19th century in Kota Kinabulu. Her name was Jenny.

'Oh, there you are,' he smiled to Jenny and nodded to Ohlsson who had started to stuff his pipe with fresh tobacco, pulled from an old leather pouch with his rough, tobacco stained, fingers.

'Look, I've got to be getting off, a meeting,' Ohlsson announced with a sly smile. 'I'll leave you two young people together.'

Ennis started to protest, but he'd already turned heels and disappeared into the crowd of fashionable Parisians, delegates from the poor African and Asian countries, the businessmen and functionaries.

He turned to Jenny who seemed just as put out by his sudden departure. She pointed towards the buffet.

'What's your plans?' Ennis asked as they struggle to get a refill. 'Are you hungry?'

'Well apart from being starving, I'd like to see a little of Paris.'

'Then let's get out of here or we'll both starve to death. There's a restaurant called the Entrecote around the corner, if we go now we should just make it before the crowd.'

She smiled and nodded in agreement.

'Then I'll show you Paris.'

She grabbed his arm and they made their way out into the bright September sunlight. The restaurant was just a five minute walk; a small queue had formed at its door, a curiosity in Paris, but it had been like that for as long as Ennis could remember. The food was good, unchanging and inexpensive.

'Lars is a real eco-warrior,' said Ennis.

‘Yes, but I’m afraid he’s right.’

‘I suppose so,’ said Ennis reluctantly.

‘Have you ever heard of Pramoedya Ananta Toer?’

‘No.’

‘He’s one of Indonesia’s most famous writers. He spent fourteen years in such a prison, a penal camp on the Island of Buru. Today he lives as a non-person since he was released in 1979. His books have been banned by the Suharto regime, only recently two young men got seven and eight years prison for possessing and selling his books.’

‘As yes. Now I remember. His book *This Earth of Mankind*,’ said Ennis ‘Sigit Budiman recommended it to me by, I found it in the bookshop at Singapore airport.’

‘Well he represents all that’s wrong in Indonesia, corruption, nepotism and all the rest. The problem is Indonesians still feel that the Suharto regime was responsible for getting rid of communism, twenty five years after the attempted coup that led to Soekarno’s downfall.’

‘I’m not that too familiar with the story.’

‘In September 1965 when the *Parti Komunis Indonesia* tried to take over, more than half a million people died in the anti-communist witch hunt that followed, and was applauded by us in the West, who even went as far as encouraging the Indonesian military to do eliminate the communists and their sympathisers!’

‘Sigit told me a bit about it.’

‘You see the anti-communist sentiment in Indonesia is difficult for foreigners to understand. But even now the government is introducing legislation concerning communist sympathisers past and present. They reckon that even today there are eighteen million former *Parti Komunis Indonesia* members at large in the country, and some think they have the potential to make a comeback.’

The wine and salad was served as Jenny continued her story.

‘Believe it or not, there are still people in prison from that time-1965! Did you know there’s a prison south of Jakarta, where three of the persons involved in the attempted coup are still detained, including Soekarno’s former foreign minister, Subandrio. Hundreds

of other less prominent PKI members are imprisoned in remote areas of the country.

‘What’s worse, from time to time, one of the many prisoners condemned to death after the attempted coup in 1965 is executed, as a kind of reminder, an example, the most recent was in 1989.’

‘Many Indonesians are hypocrites. They pay public lip service to the government, whilst they read banned literature and watch banned video films.’

‘Yes, the kind of stuff that circulates freely amongst the educated upper classes.’

‘Did you know Pramoedya is a specialist on the Chinese in Indonesia? His books have been translated and published all over the world,’ said Jenny. ‘He published a history of the Chinese in Indonesia in 1960. In 1965, he escaped the mobs, only to be picked up by a military dragnet, with some estimated ten thousand lawyers, artists, musicians and writers he was carted off to Buru.’

‘That’s awful.’

‘Let’s talk about Paris.’

‘I suppose it’s better than Indonesian politics,’ he said with a smile.

They finished their meal and set off to enjoy the rest of the fine late summer’s evening with a tour of the Marais and the Latin Quarter.

## Chapter 29 - THRILLS AND SPILLS

The driver turned off the surfaced road onto a rose coloured logging track with the Landcruiser throwing up a cloud of fine dust behind it. The track led to a Korean logging camp that lay some seventy kilometres further into the jungle.

The sun was bright and shone with its full equatorial intensity; it was almost at the vertical in the sky and the light reverberated off the dense foliage of the undergrowth, which crowded the roadside.

The track was relatively smooth. The driver, used to negotiating the ruts and potholes, drove fast. Ennis held onto the bar of the dashboard, which he only then realised was obviously designed for that purpose. Riady was in the back with his brother, they were silent, their heads nodded and they offered little resistance to the sleep that was pulling at them after a heavy lunch.

In a second jeep, close behind, were Lars Ohlsson and Antonio Suarez, they had joined them at the last minute. Ohlsson had finally made up his mind to get a close look at the Korean camp and logging area. Suarez hoped to glean some technical data on logistics from the concessionaires.

Antonio Suarez, a Brazilian specialist in pulpwood plantations and tropical silviculture, had accumulated a broad experience in pulp mill projects constructed in his country under very similar conditions to the Barito project. He had been hired to join the Papcon team to compensate for their own lack of knowledge and that of the Indonesians in the creation and development of pulpwood plantations.

It was half an hour since they had left the village restaurant. They had eaten a copious lunch of grilled chicken and rice. The lunch had been washed down with Bintang beer, cooled with large lumps of uneven ice, hewed from a block of frozen water, the origins of which were doubtful. It had been simple but tasty. They had eaten the village chicken with their fingers, buzzed by numerous flies, and watched through the open door and windows by curious children.

The Korean concessionaire, through its Indonesian company named Sungai Barito Pty, operated the logging camp. Ennis had met the owners with other concessionaires at a meeting the previous week in Jakarta.

He recalled that the representatives of Sungai Barito from the outset the outset of the meeting had been poker faced, in contrast to the usual friendly Indonesian smiles. Ohlsson suspected them of bending the rules and as the meeting progressed; their mood became outright hostile, as pointed questions were asked on their methods

and statistics concerning their operations and exports.

The concessionaires had not been happy for several reasons. There was first, the prospect of their having to participate in the capital of the mill, with their own money-a levy introduced by the Ministry, which was paid into a reserve investment fund to finance new forestry industries-an arrangement proposed by Wihartjo. The second was the idea of a parallel operation in their concessions, using their roads and their infrastructure.

In reality, it seemed that the loggers were certainly more afraid of being spied on, in their illegal operations. Declaring only part of the timber that had been felled, exceeding the restrictions imposed by the Forestry Department, depriving the government of royalties on the logs.

Sutrawan had provided the small group of visitors to the logging camp with a couple of his strong arm guards, who were also sleeping off their lunch in the second Landcruiser not far behind them.

He had been worried about their safety. Explaining to Ennis, he was concerned by the possibility of intimidation from local people, who could probably do no more than hinder them, in the hope of extracting a few dollars.

Ennis was not too worried; he knew that Indonesia was not a country where violence was an everyday event. Its rare, but most common, form was transmitted to the English language, by the word *amok*, which described the sudden shift to extreme violence, when one or more persons resort, or are driven to, a kind of lunatic and bloody violence.

He suspected that Sutrawan's precautions were for other reasons, but he pushed the thought from his mind, reasoning that it was exaggerated.

Ennis had nevertheless sensed at that last meeting, an underlying hostility, a feeling that they were resented as intruders, that they would be resisted. They were not wanted.

The situation was totally opposite to all that they had been led to believe over the previous two years by Wihartjo and Sutrawan.



Maybe they too, had been not suspected such a reaction from the concessionaires. Ennis was surprised; the Forestry Department was normally well informed, through a good information feedback system, from the provincial governor's office, the army and a network of friends and business relations amongst the loggers.

The concessionaires were well organised with a strong lobby opposed to the introduction and implementation of the new laws controlling their logging operations. They had the money and influence to buy all the support needed to ensure that the laws were ineffective.

Dark clouds had started to form; a storm was brewing up. Ennis saw the driver eyeing the sky from time to time with a worried expression on his face. The first large drops of rain started to streak the red dust across the windscreen. The driver switched on the wipers, which squeaked noisily over the glass, transforming the dust into a thick uneven paste.

'It's raining!' Ennis heard Riady's voice from behind, he turned to see him sleepily stretching and peering ahead. Riady then spoke rapidly to the driver, who did not immediately reply. There was a silence, only the noise from the rain that was falling heavily, tapping hard against the windscreen.

'Anything wrong?' asked Ennis.

'Maybe!' said Riady as the driver finally replied to his question. 'He says the tyres are not so good, worn! It's the dry season, and they haven't bothered to replace them, he said that they're very smooth.'

'What difference does that make?' said Ennis, sensing that it was not a flat they were worried about.

'If heavy rain continues, we could have a problem on this road.'

It was already raining heavily; the driver had reduced his speed, leaning over the wheel for a better view of the track ahead.

'We should have taken the other jeep, it has better tyres.'

They were soon sliding in the ruts, as the rain fell in torrents. The driver, sticking his arm through the flap window waved the second jeep to overtake. They were down to little better than a crawl as the

second jeep passed them, throwing up a shower of mud that splattered across their windscreen.

The road was cut into the side of the hill and it rose and fell as it followed the lie of the land. Within minutes, it was transformed into a quagmire of thick red mud, making it increasingly difficult for the driver to negotiate the slippery slopes.

Suddenly the rain stopped, as quickly as it had begun. The sun was shining again, sparkling on the wet leaves. The second jeep had disappeared from view. It would take a couple of hours, before the road dried again.

They descended yet another hill, the engine whined with effort, as the jeep slid into the soft waterlogged red mass at the bottom of a gully. The driver accelerated, ploughing ahead through the mud, hoping to gain enough momentum to climb the slope ahead. They were out of luck, after ten or fifteen meters the engine stalled with a jerk and the jeep started to slide slowly backwards.

‘We’ve got a problem!’ Riady said, as if they did not know.

‘We’ll have to get out, he’ll never get up the hill with us inside!’

They gingerly stepped out into the mud, Ennis walking on the points of his shoes to the rough grassy verge of the road. The driver gunned the motor, throwing up a wall of mud and water, in an attempt to climb the slope.

It was no use; the jeep did not make the least progress. It simply slipped, slithered and whined, with a cloud of steam and mud thrown out by the spinning wheels.

‘What do we do now?’ asked Ennis.

‘Walk! We walk to the next crossroad. The driver says there’s a company check point there,’ Riady replied, with a fatalistic expression on his face.

‘They’ll have to come with another jeep and use the winch to tow him out of this.’

They walked to the top of the slope and saw the road stretching ahead; it was straight and almost flat. In the distance, they could see Ohlsson’s jeep, stopped on the side of the road. They waved, but they were either too far away, or the others were not looking in their

direction.

They started walking, the going was heavy; the sun was directly over their heads. It was hot and steam rose from the large puddles. Their shoes were soon heavy, thickly coated with the sticky red mud. As they neared the other jeep, they saw that it was parked at an angle, the bonnet was open. Suarez was standing to one side with Ohlsson, as he saw them, he lifted his hands to the sky, indicating that they had a problem.

‘Probably waterlogged, the rain!’ Riady offered his explanation. They were about one hundred meters away.

Ennis decided before joining them he needed to relieve himself. With his inborn British modesty in such matters, he stepped into the wet undergrowth and finding a likely spot proceeded to aimlessly spray the vegetation whilst glancing at the rampant tangle of green climbers. He had a good view of the road, there was no hurry and he took his time.

A moment later, the deep rumble of a heavy motor drew his attention-help was arriving he thought. He saw the dark form of a heavy truck in the distance, a logging truck. It was making its way towards them, travelling fast, very fast.

Riady was then about one hundred meters away from the parked jeep. His brother and Suarez stepped back from the road, as they saw the truck. They lifted their arms to wave it down.

Things happened very quickly, the truck neither slowed down, nor did it pull over to avoid the jeep, it appeared to accelerate, as it roared towards them.

Riady did not know whether to run for cover, or run towards the jeep, whilst Ennis struggled with his fly.

The truck struck the jeep with an enormous crash of shrieking metal and breaking glass, it thundered by in a fountain of mud and a choking cloud of diesel fumes.

Ennis could clearly make out the driver, in a black tee shirt crouched over the wheel, his teeth clamped together, wearing a pair of gold rimmed sunglasses.

Ennis ran towards the jeep, which had been thrown onto its side,

overtaking Riady, whose mouth was open gasping for air, and seemed to be trying to shout something at the same time.

The driver was lying in the thick grass. Ohlsson helped Suarez who was kneeling and cradling his elbow. Riady's brother was leaning against the roof of the jeep, holding his head in his hands, which were covered with blood.

Riady helped his brother, speaking in Indonesian. Ennis, seeing that Suarez was not seriously hurt, turned his attention to the driver who was unconscious. He was bleeding slightly from the forehead and Ennis saw that his left trouser leg was glistening with blood.

'Jesus fucking Christ!' said Ennis shaken. 'That bastard did that deliberately!'

Only he and one of the army men were in any condition to go for help. They set off in an urgent jog in the direction of the crossroad, which according to Riady was about one or two kilometres away.

More than an hour later, they were in the infirmary of the Sungai Barito logging camp. The driver's injuries were serious; he seemed to have several fractures to his left leg. After examination and first aid, the camp's medical assistant confirmed the diagnosis; luckily, it did not appear that his days were numbered, as long as he was got to hospital quickly.

Riady's brother had been struck on the head by the edge of the motor hood. He needed a dozen stitches to his scalp and was in a state of shock.

The guard had lacerations to his right arm, and probably a fractured leg, that would need to be x-rayed at Bandjarmasin, as would Suarez's elbow. The rest of the injuries required stitching and bandages, as well as anti-tetanus injections and precautions against the risks of tropical infections.

They looked a sorry sight. The camp manager, who was sullen and barely cooperative, almost accusing them of causing the accident, did not help the situation. The logging truck he declared was not one of theirs, which Ennis doubted very much.

Ennis was forced to invoke the name of the Minister with threats, to persuade the camp manager, to radio a helicopter to transport them

back to Bandjermasin.

One thing was certain: they would not be visiting the logging operations of Sungai Barito that day!

## Chapter 30 - A LESSON IN THE JUNGLE

They sat around their small camp fire where they had brewed a pot of thick coffee. The temperature was in the high twenties; there was just a slight hint of a breeze that mixed the smoke from the fire and from Ohlsson's pipe. Ennis had opened a half bottle of Hennessey XO and poured a drink that they sipped from their tin mugs.

They had set out on an expedition to explore the forest in region surrounding the Inti Indorayon pulp mill, near Lake Toba in North Sumatra. The mill had been built by Sukanto Tanoto and inaugurated by President Suharto in 1975. The raw materials for the production of rayon were supplied by soon to be depleted pine plantations, a tragic omen for the surrounding regions primary forests where the mill planned to start clear-cutting.

Lars Ohlsson, a renowned but unorthodox botanist, had spent the greater part of his life in research on rainforest ecology. He had struggled for thirty years, in South East Asia, trying to convince successive governments of the need to establish real conservation programmes, to save the rainforests as an irreplaceable treasure house of genetic diversity.

He was a founding member of an exclusive and somewhat mysterious conservationist movement, the Valhalla Club, dedicated to preserving the rainforests and all the plants and creatures that lived in them. The club had been founded in Sweden many years earlier, it had since enrolled many eminent scientists, naturalists and rich philanthropists from several different counties. They were apolitical, maintaining a very low profile, keeping well away from the mainstream ecological movements, and especially political groups who tried to get on the ecological bandwagon. They avoided the

green movements whose success in industrialised countries had resulted in a broader political engagement, dispersion and career building.

Ohlsson's unique goal was the protection and conservation of the rainforests and the peoples who had traditionally lived in them. He and his friends had vowed to achieve their aims by whatever means necessary.

Ennis after their first meeting in Jakarta had soon become a friend of Lars Ohlsson. They had formed a sincere relationship, in spite of their very different goals. He respected Ohlsson, as a father figure, for his learning and experience, which he shared with those around him in a kindly way, unselfishly without fear of competition, in the knowledge that its diffusion would help his life long cause.

Ohlsson sipped his cognac, as he described his passion for the rainforest and its incredible variety of life, which he called biodiversity. He used the term to describe the different ways in which the plants and creatures of the forest lived in a vast and complex but fragile system of interdependence.

'You know John, it's essential to understand what this means, it's the variety of these species of plants, animals and insects, or the number of their species, and the variation within one of these species, that give them-and us-the possibility to adapt to new conditions which arise, for example changes in climate'.

Ennis understood what he meant, as he scratched yet another bite, from one of the infinite variety of winged creatures that preyed on him.

'All of these plants and creatures interact together and form what we call ecosystems. For example one of these giant hardwoods, that you are so eager to cut down, is an ecosystem and can support up to five thousand different species of insects, birds, animals, plants, fungi and microbes.'

He pointed to an enormous hardwood with the huge buttresses which formed its base, around its massive trunk vines thicker than a mans waist wound their way up disappearing in the canopy forty metres above their heads.

‘Within the ecosystem of that tree, communities of different plants and animals live together. They interact in an incredibly complex and interrelated structure, where every link depends on the other. Even as I talk to you now, these links are being broken and the delicate structure is being broken down in rain forests across the world not only by loggers and developers but also poor disinherited peoples seeking to survive in a world which appears to have abandoned them.’

Ohlsson had persuaded Ennis to join him for his two-man expedition to monitor first hand the loggers’ progress in the Sumatran rainforest. They were in intimate contact with the living forest, observing how it lived and breathed, rather than by the artificial in-vitro processes employed by many modern botanists.

It had enabled him to observe, in areas that he had studied for over many years, the progress and effects of logging and shifting cultivation on the forest.

‘Do you follow me?’ he said questioningly. ‘The constant loss and the threat of losing species, has lead us biologists, over the years to accumulate sufficient scientific material, to show the world that the incredible variety of life that exists in tropical rainforests is being devoured daily to satisfy mans stupidity, disappearing for ever.’

‘Sure I follow you Lars, it’s just that at this moment I wouldn’t really be to disturbed if a few of the insect species around here became rapidly extinct.’ said Ennis scratching furiously.

Ohlsson laughed: ‘They need food like you and I, seriously though, you know that the rainforests contain a wider variety of life than any other habitat on our planet and our understanding of it is essential to our future existence. We must do everything in our power to protect this living laboratory of nature, which will help us to solve and understand the very source of many of our human problems.’

As they sat talking in their small bivouac, dwarfed in the buttresses of the giant tree, shafts of light streamed down through the canopy, thirty or forty metres above their heads, illuminating the smoke from their fire, reflecting a pale blue fog, that drifted slowly into the depths of the forest. The air around them was saturated with

the smell of the damp earth, and rotting vegetation, mingled with the smoke of the burning wood.

‘For us Europeans, brought up and live in temperate regions, the incredible diversity of life in the rainforests is almost unimaginable. We are used to our northern forests, where single species of trees such as oak or pine dominate. In most tropical rainforests, no single species dominates, an enormous diversity of plants exist side by side.’

Ennis nodded sipping the cognac from his mug; it was a profoundly moving experience for him, deep in the heart of nature’s kingdom, in the company of such a unique and learned guide.

‘Did you know John, in this area of Sumatra there are over two hundred species of trees and lianas with a diameter of...say plus ten centimetres diameter in a single hectare of forest, and 25,000 species of seed bearing plants in this region alone, compared to a mere 1,250 species for the whole of the British Isles’.

Ennis nodded, lighting a coil of slow burning mosquito repellent, in the forlorn hope that it would give some relief from the swarms of insects that were attracted to him.

‘Listen John, I know that this is difficult to absorb and understand, but the local tribes of forest dwellers in these regions understand so much better than we do, the use of a very large number of these plants. They conserve the forests around them using only the minimum necessary for their needs, whilst we outsiders are lost by the diversity, and we destroy the forest replacing it by monocultures. They live in what we could call a primitive affluence, in harmony with their nature, not wanting to destroy it or change it as we constantly do. They have an abundance of food in the form of game and fish, medicinal plants, materials for making tools and building shelters.’

The light was beginning to fade as the evening approached; the air was filled with a cacophony of strange insect sounds that rose into an unbelievable crescendo, making it necessary for Ohlsson to raise his voice to be heard.

‘Twentieth century man lives in cities and what they call nature,



the countryside, is in reality a very profoundly modified environment, it bears almost no resemblance to the original ecosystems that existed in our countries just a few centuries back. City dwellers of modern Europe or America, just don't know what a natural forest is, even those who have often visited their so called forests, which are essentially man made, except for perhaps the remoter regions of Canada.'

'Are you advocating that the forests be simply left to nature, for a few scientists like yourself?'

'No of course not, instead of preserving the rainforests as untouchable reserves, they should be exploited by the forest peoples, who can harvest their products without the wholesale and inept destruction by the subsistence farmers or loggers. The rainforest could produce perfumes, cosmetics, nuts, fruit, rubber, exotic wood, medicines, palm oil and spices.'

As darkness set in the fireflies dotted the night blinking like a myriad of stars. The noise was continuous, it was unreal. Ennis had never experienced a world so different to all that he had known. It was totally unlike the logging camps slums, where nature had been abandoned to the chainsaw and the outboard motor.

'I want to show you this world before it disappears forever, I want you to understand what industries like that you intending to build will do to the lives of the people here, how their heritage will be destroyed, your heritage, my heritage and our childrens.'

They ate with relish the goulash soup from cans they had heated over their campfire, it was not a cordon blue dinner, but they were hungry and tired after their hard trek.

'Just think of farms in Western Europe today, their solid farmers with their plump healthy wives, farming the lands that they have farmed for hundreds of years. When we look at them, we think we are going back to our roots. The truth is that agriculture in modern Europe is nothing more than a gigantic industrial complex, feed with chemicals fertilisers and insecticides, the land being merely a support for that process.

'It progresses by ripping up the remaining hedgerows, ploughing

the fields with huge machines, sowing highly selective hybrid plants, spreading huge quantities of artificial fertilisers, irrigating the fields with water pumped from deep down in the earth, spraying the crops dangerous insecticides, breeding animals that are as fragile as race horses, that couldn't survive ten days without mans help, your idyllic image of pastoral England is pure fantasy!

Ennis nodded, he was beginning to feel sleepy, in spite of a nagging worry that those threatened animals out there in the night, might just see him as part of their food chain.

He would certainly have been more comfortable with an explanation at Medan, but he had promised Jenny to go with Lars Ohlsson, and though he would never admit it, he enjoyed the boy scout aspect of camping in the forest and the sense of freedom, no telephones, no meetings. Their only priority was their trek up to Lake Toba, and the thrill of being alone in the dense forest.

'I'm sure you will support us John. Jenny has told us that you are sympathetic to our aims. I believe you're too sensitive a person to condone the harm that is being done here in Indonesia and Malaysia.'

They strung up their mosquito nets and hitched their hammocks. Ennis could smell the embers of fire that still glowed in the dark. He felt the living forest around him, the plants, insects and animals. He felt he had the disturbing privilege of glimpsing life as it must have been before mans arrival, he felt uneasy, it was alien.

He lay in his hammock, pulling his mosquito net over him, listening to the night. He soon slipped into a deep sleep, as the warmth of the strange forest night enveloped him.

The next morning they rose with the first light and after brewing coffee they packed their material and were on their way. Ohlsson resumed his nature lesson in the half-light of his huge overbearing lecture hall.

'Just about five hundred kilometres from here is the mill your friends at Bintang Agung have built, and now they want to clear 150,000 hectares to expand their mill to one million tons a year.'

Ennis made an effort to listen objectively and impartially to

Ohlsson criticism of the forest industries.

‘You know what that means! They also intend to develop monospecies plantations, eucalyptus and acacia. They’ve now chosen a new species, five years ago it was gemilina. If you look at Sutrawan’s company brochure a few years back, it was something else, they’ll try anything, without the least concern for the consequences, except their short term profits, worse than that they’re totally ignorant. Most of the decision makers have little or no education in forestry and no knowledge whatsoever of the rainforest, their only motivation is profits, quick profits.’

‘Yes, I remember visiting their first small mill in a place called Tangerang, about thirty kilometres outside of Jakarta. They had planted a few dozen gemilina in the garden in front of their offices. Danny Lau and the Taiwanese told that gemilina was the future, that they would plant thousands of hectares of this miraculous tree.’

‘Yeah, I can remember that.’ Ennis laughed to him, remembering how comical he had thought it was at the time seeing the spindly saplings.

‘And what happened?’ asked Ohlsson.

Ennis shrugged, he knew that nothing had happened, apart from a lot of talk, it was window dressing to satisfy the forestry department, to obtain licenses for new logging areas.

‘I remember the much talked visit by the press to Jambi, it was followed by an article in the industry’s magazine Pulp and Paper International reporting that they had planted 3,000 hectares of eucalyptus and acacia.’

‘Where are they now?’ asked Ohlsson. ‘The target was reported to be four thousand hectares a year, from seedlings produced at their new nursery, designed to supply 125,000 hectares of plantations’.

‘The truth is that they are more than ten years behind their original program, you can’t believe these people. Plantations cost money, but that’s not everything, there’s the knowledge factor. They just don’t have the experience or the know-how, in fact nobody in this part of the world has.’

He paused and a pained look overshadowed his face. ‘I wish they

were successful with their plantations - you know why of course?’

Ennis nodded encouraging him to explain.

‘If they were successful with plantations they would leave the forest alone. Its twelve years since they started supplying pulpwood to the mill in Taiwan and then their own mill. Each year they’ve consumed one million cubic metres of pulpwood, and the same amount for the power generating plant boilers. Over twenty million cubic metres, one hundred thousand hectares of forest, gone forever!’

‘What about Aracruz in Brazil or the plantations in the Congo, they’ve been successful.’

‘Yes, but what about them? Firstly they have cost one hell of a lot of money and secondly they are still monocultures.’

‘So.’

‘The money means political backing, state support, public money a lot of it and long term planning, it takes years to realise such plantations. I’m not saying that it doesn’t work. Aracruz is the proof that it can work, but don’t overlook the long term effects, but here, in Indonesia they’ve missed the boat at a critical time.’

‘What about monoculture’

‘Monoculture only uses fast growing trees, that’s their main criteria, just look at any press interview with the owners, that means vast clear cuts, requiring heavy machinery, chemical fertilisers and pesticides.’

‘And the selection of species for the plantations?’

‘You introduce a new species that is not native to these regions; it takes decades of selection, developing hybrids, testing, to determine the right variety of tree. What effect will it have on the local ecology? What about parasites, insects, disease? Look at what happened at Picop in the Philippines!’

‘Yeah, I was there after the typhoon.’

‘Yes, a good part of their 100,000 hectares of plantations were destroyed in one night; planted with trees called *albizia falcata*.’

‘Yes, I flew over that area a few days after the typhoon, from the air it was as though somebody had emptied a giant box of matches over hundreds of square kilometres, the trees had snapped at about

three or four meters from the ground.'

'That was due to the culture of a species not adapted to local conditions and not adapted to monoculture! They planted trees, not suited to a climate where typhoons frequently occur, especially on the pacific coast of Mindanao. Every decade or so, there is an exceptionally destructive typhoon which hits that coast.

'It takes decades, maybe even centuries, to select the right species. Those foresters took trees whose natural habitat is in West Africa, where such storms do not occur. The normal habitat of these trees is like I described earlier, in climatic equilibrium with a great diversity of other trees and plants of different ages.'

'I can see what you mean, the big trees form a protective shield for the smaller trees.'

'Correct, even the creepers and lianas hold the whole thing together, though that doesn't mean to say trees don't get blown down, they do, but not like in Mindano, where hundreds of thousands of hectares of trees were blown down in one night.'

'Here in North Sumatra, the plantations were made some thirty years or more ago and have been very successful, but do you know why?'

Ennis had difficulty replying as he gasped for breath struggling to keep up, puffing and wheezing behind Ohlsson. The going was hard as they followed the wet slippery trail. The air was cool and damp in the pine forest, the trail rose slowly as they advanced towards the mountains that could be seen from time to time through the clearings.

'It's easy here, at one thousand meters altitude!'

'Easy?' panted Ennis

A thick ground mist carpeted the surrounding forest; the air was damp and heavy. As they walked through the ground vegetation they were sprayed with the heavy dew kicked into the air by their boots.

'That's right, easy, because at one thousand meters the climate is not unlike the southern temperate climates. The ecosystem is different compared to that on the coast, down at Medan. Here its a lot like in the southern states of the USA, a mild climate with a lot of rain and cold nights, so there are natural populations of certain

varieties of pine.'

'I see, you mean it's within the realms of known sylvaculture.'

'Yes! Its like we've been doing for hundreds of years, it doesn't present too many problems outside of our present scope of knowledge, and the trees planted here are natives to the region.'

Inti Indorayon was near Aceh, six kilometres from the little town of Porsea, near Lake Toba, half a kilometre from the river Asahan. They used wood from the aging pinus merkusi plantations, which surrounded the 150,000-ton a year pulp mill. The mill manager had told the press, that they would use mixed tropical hardwoods from the natural forest when the existing pine ran out. Then they would switch their supply to 150,000 hectares of new plantations of pinus merkusi and eucalyptus-which was still in the planning phase.

They were at 920 metres above sea level, in a temperate tropical climate on a coarse volcanic sandy soil. They could already see the erosion, on the hilly terrain after clear-cutting of the plantations, and the effects of acid water from the mill bleaching plant, which should have been collected and neutralised. Ennis knew that Finntech that had supplied the bleaching plant, and that the mill had omitted much of the environmental protection equipment, to save money.

Lars told him that 2,500 cubic metres a day of wood were trucked up to mill, over rough cut roads in the natural forest, opening up the way for the poor farmers, whose primitive shifting cultivation methods would continue the destruction started by the loggers and pulp producers. The mill imported by road each day, from Belawan on the coast 250 kilometres away, 100 tons of salt, 25 tons of sodium sulphate, 60 tons of limestone. In the opposite direction 500 tons a day of pulp was transported to the port. Every day, day in day out, including food people equipment and other supplies, that's over 200 heavy vehicle movements in an area which had been almost entirely virgin forest only a couple of decades ago.

'You see John, this is a classical example of how they neglect all advice, and they now intend to use the natural forest, they will exploit it like a mine, and then when the mine is exhausted what will they do? Abandon it, leaving a derelict ruin behind them for future

generations!’

## Chapter 31 - THE BARELANDS

In the mountains, about one hundred kilometres to the north of Martarpura, they set up camp. Their objective was to collect data, soil and botanical samples to determine the suitability of the region for reforestation. The failure of the first attempt at setting up tree nurseries for reforestation, which had been launched almost two years previously, had been put down to the embezzlement of funds by Rami Latif.

Marcillac was to examine the technical reasons for the failure so as to avoid the same mistakes in the future. Ohlsson was present to record the disaster and to alert the world authorities and institutions for need of urgent action through treaties and legislation.

It had not been so simple, the plantations had started out successfully enough, but apart from the lack of funds, the result was the almost total failure of the trees that had been planted.

The barelands as the name suggests, was uninhabited, no cultivation, no trees, and consequently nobody to protest about its use.

The ground had been prepared by previous generations of loggers and shifting cultivators who had left the soil naked and exhausted.

The natural forest that surrounded the barelands fell away in a matter of fifty metres, giving way to a vast undulating landscape covered with thick *alang-alang* grass. The only relief was an empty road that wound its way into the distance.

They sat on the remains of a long dead tree listening to the buzz of the insects. A slight breeze set the tall grass moving in ripples.

‘That soil is practically sterile,’ said Marcillac pointing to the red earth.

The laterite soil was a mixture of alumina and iron oxides with very little else. The red colour was typical of tropical soils that had

been formed under conditions of unimpeded drainage and due to an abundance of iron oxides.

The soil had been once covered with a peaty mat of organic matter, and a downward removal of iron compounds and clays. The quantity of humus had been small, which was normal in tropical forests, under rainforest cover the laterisation had been prevented from proceeding to its furthest extent.

The humus had also maintained the fertility of the soil. It contained large amounts of plant nutrients, which as they became mineralised were added to the upper layers of the soil. These were then washed down into the deeper layers of the soil, where they were absorbed by the roots, carried up to the leaves and the stems and back down to the humus when the leaves and the plants died.

‘Look!’ he said as he let the dry red earth run through his fingers.

‘Its just dust and gravel, there’s practically no organic matter in this soil.’

A continuous cycle of life and death perpetuated the forest, but there in the barelands the cycle had almost come to a stop, practically the only plant that grew on that denuded leached soil was the hardy grass. Thirty years before, the earth would have been covered with a dark brown humus, a black mass of partially decomposed organic matter mixed into the soil; it maintained the fertility and the water retention in the soil. In that way, the vegetation counteracted the downward leaching of soluble substances and brings them back to the upper layers.

The team from the Martarpura Forestry Department, with the hired help, carried the baggage to a campsite one kilometre from the lake and set up the tents under the eyes of Soetrisno. It would take them a couple of hours to straighten things out and set up the field kitchen.

In the meantime, Marcillac and his men after examining their equipment and baggage, set out to survey the surroundings under the hot sun. They transpired profusely, the humidity was in the nineties; the weather conditions were exactly what should have favoured a luxuriant mass of vegetation.

In the rainforest climate, where surface water is low, water tends



to flow down into the soil, carrying with it the soluble nutrients, which are continually washed down into deeper layers of the soil and removed by the water as it flows to natural collection areas in rivers and streams.

One of the most important features of rainforest soils is their low level of plant nutrients. In fact, it is a contradiction, that rainforest vegetation should be so luxuriant and that leached and impoverished soils of the wet tropics bear such extraordinarily prolific forests, compared to the richer soils in savannahs or much less luxuriant forests.

‘You know John it’s the rainforest itself that sets up the processes that counteracts the impoverishment of the soil, there is a closed cycle of plant nutrients,’ Ohlsson explained.

The soil under its natural cover reaches a state of equilibrium in which its impoverishment progressed extremely slowly. On the other hand, plant nutrients are continuously released by decomposition of the bedrock, the trees roots reach down to these and suck up the nutrients.

Some of those substances are fixed in the hard material of the plants, others remain dissolved in the sap but in the end, they are all recycled to the soil by the death and decomposition of the plants.

‘Dust to dust, ashes to ashes, its here that you understand the meaning of that, death and resurrection, it would have gone on for almost ever if man hadn’t broken the cycle,’ Marcillac told Ennis solemnly.

They walked back down to the lake, leaving the help to organise the camp. From time to time, a bird lifted out of the grass, there were few insects. The warm wind blew softly as they looked towards the distant deep greens hills that rose on the other side of the lake. An island emerged out of the water here and there, surprisingly covered with dense vegetation in contrast to the grass-covered hills; even a few dominant trees towered up like lonely sentinels. On the lakeside the two men stood silently looking out over the water, the wind whistled softly over the surface lifting light ripples. There was eeriness, a sense of abandonment.

In the past, the soil had been continuously enriched in nutrients sucked up by the roots. It was strange though; the majority of the roots, including the feeder roots had been in the upper layers of the soil.

In mature soils the wealth of the nutrients was mostly stored in the living vegetation and the humus, which were linked together in an almost closed cycle. The decay of the bedrock deep beneath the soil made up the small losses.

Such a closed cycle made it is easy to understand why the soil, which had once supported a dense rainforest, had become barren, very soon after the land had been cleared and planted by the shifting cultivators.

It was the explanation for the barelands; nature's delicate balance had been upset. The Forestry Department had made a futile and incompetent attempt to recreate a forest-a man made forest-one that would have needed an artificial life support system.

When the original forest had fallen under the axe, the reserve of nutrients had disappeared with the wood or released into the soil. Burning and exposure to the sun had destroyed the fragile layer of humus.

'As I once read, the capital of the forest was sold off, at give away prices, a heritage lost forever in a spree that lasted two or three years,' said Marcillac. 'Before it was like those hills over there,' he pointed to the dark green undulating cloud-covered skyline, draped by a dense forest.

'Let me explain to you, climatic climax is generally regarded as the unchanging equilibrium of the forest, that's relative to the human time scale of course, on a geological time scale all forests will gradually change.'

'That's a little difficult to grasp in one go,' Ennis said visibly absorbed in thought.

'That's understandable in a layman,' Ohlsson said with a wry laugh, 'but when politicians, financiers and industrialists start to squander our common heritage, then I'm sorry to say it becomes very sad and concerns us all.'

## Chapter 32 - TELEVISION AND OUTBOARDS

The outboard advanced slowly in the afternoon heat, following a branch of the Barito River, searching for the main stream that led down to the sea. Although the river and its branches were clearly indicated on the map, it was obvious that they were lost. Their guide did not bother to look at the map; he was incapable of reading it. The branch they had taken was perhaps the Kuin Kecil, which should have been five branches down from the last bifurcation in the river.

The boatman shut down the motor and the boat rocked slowly on the waves created by the wake that washed back from the banks. There was an almost total silence except for the hum of the insects and the occasional cry of a bird or monkey.

Brodzski was haggard and perspiring heavily, his white hair stood up and the tee shirt stuck to his bulging stomach. He had not shaved for two days and in spite of his continuous exposure to the sun, his skin was white as ever. A plain Gauloises cigarette hung from his lip and small pieces of black tobacco stuck to his chin, in the corners of his mouth yellowish flecks of spittle had formed.

At sixty seven and in his condition it was no place to be lost, up a god-forsaken river in Borneo. The previous night he had drunk a more than an advisable quantity of cognac, by the time he had been ready for bed he had almost emptied the bottle. He had not slept well on the simple camp bed of the guesthouse.

The windows were covered with mosquito netting, which would have been effective if they had been well nailed to the wooden frames, they were as useful as an open door. The mosquitoes attracted by the prospect of a good meal had poured through the opening and the soft skins of the Europeans been severely bitten by the insects. Ennis had always been careful to take his quinine tablets, which unfortunately did nothing to alleviate the mosquito bites that he scratched furiously the whole night.

It was three days since they had arrived in the area, to finalise the choice of the mill site. Their goal had been to satisfy the investors that there was no other viable coastal site for the mill. A site where the wood rafts could arrive at the quay and the pulp could be loaded directly onto ships, without having to negotiate the smaller rivers of an inland site.

Brodzski, the father of the pulp mill project, had insisted on being there for the record. He had always personally selected the sites for the mills that he had built in the past. He had set the scene so that he could declare his site at Martarpura suitable site for the pulp mill, in the presence of local dignitaries, the members of the consortium and their Indonesian partners.

He had paid for a television crew from Paris to be present; they were to record the event for their programme 'Man of the Week'.

Everything had commenced in good spirits a few days before in Jakarta, where they had waited patiently as Riady negotiated with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Communications for authorisation to film in the area. It was simply a question of a couple of extra days, and the TV team had no objection, relaxing by the hotel pool during the day and in some of the less reputable bars by night.

George Marie, the business news commentator from Canal One, led the TV team. Claude Brechingnac represented the business press from the leading daily Parisian financial, *Le Tribune des Finances*, covering the binge at Papcon's expense.

The good atmosphere in Martarpura soon degenerated and become tense as Strecker argued with Brodzski over the potential logistical problems of the site that Brodzski had originally selected. It had been a reasonable choice when Brodzski had first envisaged the project, when the plan was for a small mill of 150 tons a day. Three years later it had become quite different, the logistics of a 1,000 ton a day mill excluded the choice of Martarpura.

It was obvious to Strecker that the existing infrastructure was insufficient and the additional traffic and pollution to the towns of Martarpura and Bandjarmasin would be unacceptable. Brodzski

sulked, as it became evident that one of the alternative sites would have to be considered. Strecker's typical diplomacy did not help as he proceeded to explain why.

'Listen my dear Brodzski, it stands to reason the original site is unacceptable, nobody in his right mind is going to agree to transporting millions of tons, fifty kilometres up and down the Martarpura River for the pleasure of it!'

Brodzski's programme went badly wrong when Strecker finally declared that they would explore the estuary of the Barito River for an alternative site. It was easier said than done, where the river joined the sea, it was almost twenty kilometres wide.

Neither their boatman nor the pilot spoke English, Riady acted as interpreter for Strecker, who asked directions from the Indonesian engineers who accompanied them from the governor's office, they smiled and pointed in different directions. After some discussions, they decided to continue down the same branch and the boatman restarted the motor. They advanced slowly as the black water washed sluggishly against the sides of the boat. The river palms leaned out over them, dead trees and driftwood bobbed in the black stream.

As the river broadened out they accelerated, and from time to time, the boat hit a sunken log that floated unseen just below the surface of the water. Riady suggested politely to the boatman in Indonesian to go easy, as they would damage a propeller if they went to fast, he simply grinned broadly and continued without any perceptible change of speed.

They continued for about forty minutes, until a small sandy beach appeared. It looked like a suitable place to stop and take their picnic lunch, Riady signalled to the other boat, which followed at about fifty meters distance to join them. They clambered out onto the white sand. A slight breeze was blowing in from the wide expanse of water; they were probably very near the open sea. They spread out exploring the beach up to the line of vegetation, which formed a dense barrier between the sandy beach, which was in fact a finger of dry land that bordered the mangrove forest that lay beyond.

There was no shade and Brodzski decided that he would take his

lunch in the boat where it was a little less hot. The boatman had erected an awning where he could at least sit down in reasonable comfort, shaded from the burning sun.

Riady with the governors men got out the lunch boxes and distributed beer and soft drinks, there was cold chicken and rice wrapped in banana leaves, for desert were bunches of rambutan, a lichey-like fruit covered with a hairy skin and crawling with ants.

The cameraman, Patrick Michel, filmed the scene for the TV coverage, it looked good to him, courageous industrialists and engineers braving hard conditions for the sake of French exports, disembarking on a distant tropical beach, led by the adventurous businessman, Antoine Brodzski.

Ennis looked at Brodzski as he lay flopped out on the bench seat, his head back against the side of the boat, his mouth hung wide open, several insects lazily buzzed around in the prospect of a meal.

Ennis turned and saw Riady waving to him about one hundred metres further down the beach; he had appeared out of an opening in the thick vegetation, where he had gone to explore with one of the governors engineers ten minutes earlier. He was with two elderly men who appeared from their dress to be local people, Ennis made a sign indicating to the others to follow him in the direction of the new arrivals.

Nestled in the dense tangle of mangrove swamps beyond the beach, was the tiny village of a group of people who called themselves Orang Laut, or sea people. The village was a collection of tottering huts on stilts, lined with crab traps cobbled together from rattan, hanging out to dry with old fishing nets. A few naked children played amongst the chickens and yapping puppies in a fog of smoke that rose from slow burning wood fires.

It was a picture of another age, the women hid shyly behind the open doors of their huts; they were bare breasted, the children half in fear and half in astonishment screamed at the unexpected appearance of the strangers with the tall Europeans, the likes of whom they had never seen before.

The villagers had little contact with the outside world. Their only

means of transport was by boat to the log loading station, a few kilometres down the river, where an access road had been constructed.

They eked out a traditional living, fishing and catching crabs, selling a part of their catch to the recently arrived loggers for cash to supplement their meagre needs. Cash gave them the means to buy a second-hand outboard motor and a transistor radio, as well as gasoline, canned food and beer.

The headman told them that life had become increasingly difficult. In the past, they had collected rattan and wild animal skins, which they sold every few weeks, in a large village twenty kilometres down the river. There they bought rice and other necessities.

Times had changed, the Orang Laut could not compete with the people who had arrived with the logging camps, who hunted with more sophisticated means and collected rattan with ease from the tree felling areas. The villagers did not possess power saws and other modern tools; they had only recently saved enough money to buy their outboard motor.

The headman invited his unexpected guests to his modest hut and offered them coffee, the weather beaten construction rocked on its pilings as the heavy men seated themselves on a rattan mat. Ennis glanced around at the scanty assortment of tinned foods and bottles, which rattled on the rickety shelves.

The traditional necessities were few as the villagers slowly became dependent on the material products from the outside world. It was certain that their ancestral life would not survive much longer and the men would be forced by their new circumstances to work as lowly paid labourers with the loggers.

As they looked around, signs of the twentieth century were evident including the Japanese made outboard motor, which had replaced the hardwood paddles to propel their narrow boats.

They knew nothing of electricity or running water. They bathed and refreshed themselves in the stream that ran to the nearby sea. Their drinking water was collected in large earthenware jars, handed down through generations, which were the common property of the

villagers, as were almost all other belongings.

They were a hardy people, who had lived in a precarious harmony with the mangrove forest for generations, alongside the leeches and dengue carrying mosquitoes, living off the fruits of the forest and sea.

They were a fishing community and Strecker quickly realised that their knowledge of the sea and the coastal waters could be of invaluable assistance. The headman explained, smiling broadly, showing the stubs of his blackened teeth, that the currents were fast and dangerous for those who did not know them. There were many drifting sandbanks that lay just below the surface of the water, which were navigational hazards for ocean going vessels. The coast was frequently swept by strong winds and even dangerous encounters with sharks were not unusual for the fishermen.

They were accustomed to their way of life; they ate pig, monkeys, snakes and monitor lizards with the rice they bought in the village upstream. They were not Moslems he told them, he was not ashamed to say that he was not circumcised; they had their own beliefs.

The villagers had never known schools or mosques, they had never known doctors or taxes, they had only heard of those things in recent times in the larger villages and on the radio. They had led their simple life undisturbed by the problems of the twentieth century, or the benefits of modern medicine and education.

The visitors left the village leaving cigarettes, beer and drum of gasoline. Reinbold always resourceful gave the children a couple of packets of peppermints. They had seen another world, which left a vivid impression of a way of life that they were changing, with industry, deforestation and pollution.

It was one thirty already, they had left the camp at ten that morning. Ennis figured with nightfall at six they had not much room for manoeuvre. They gathered their cameras and maps, waking Brodzski they clambered back into the boats.

Strecker and Reinbold were in the second boat with Rudini, they still seemed to be enjoying the outing. Reinbold was laughing with his Sobrane cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth, he was



pointing out something of interest to Strecker.

They continued downstream and soon the river widened, there were more fine white sandy beaches, not quite like the postcards of Bali, but littered with masses of natural debris, fallen palms, dead vegetation, coconuts and seaweed. They navigated along the east bank until the estuary of the Barito gave way to the open sea, where in the distance they could see the surf breaking on the sandbars.

They followed the coast for another five kilometres, hoping to discover another site, their boat rising and falling with the waves, as they surveyed the monotonous landscape. Indicating the beach the boatman turned towards land and without difficulty, he deftly beached the prow of the boat on the sand.

On the beach again, they examined with aimless curiosity the debris that they had seen from a distance, there were masses of strange nuts of all kinds, many five or more centimetres in diameter, there was an incredible variety of seashells. Very few people had ever landed there, apart from the locals who perhaps took shelter when the weather turned rough.

They looked out to sea there was not a boat in sight, just the line of the surf, maybe a kilometre out. It was no different to the other places they had seen previously. The wind had become stronger but there were no menacing clouds on the horizon. Riady translated the boatman's explanations that it was a windy coast and the local fishermen avoided it. There was nothing else to see and they headed back to the Barito River, where apart from the occasional log that they hit jerking the boat in the water; the ride was a lot smoother than the bone jolting buffeting on the sea.

They returned to overnight to the Forestry Department guesthouse, which lay on the riverbank, about ten or twelve kilometres downstream from Bandjarmasin. They washed off the sweat and dirt of the day, with five gallon cans as make shift showers or pouring water from a large plastic tub that stood on one side the broad veranda, a spectacle for the local children who had gathered to watch with amusement the large white bodies of the Belanda.

They ate rice and chicken with cold beer - it never varied - on the

veranda in the early evening twilight, lit only by a couple of naked bulbs. It was relatively cool compared to the heat of the day and they soon relaxed enjoying their beers.

After dinner, the cognac appeared and they got around to discussing the results of their explorations over the last days. They agreed that the coastal area did not appear to be suitable as an anchor point for sea going cargo vessels and lightering also appeared to be ruled out, because of the sandbars that followed the coast.

Riady had invited a couple of the local villagers, who explained that kapal laut, the larger ocean going ships anchored in mid-stream, few ships docked at the small port in Bandjarmasin, where only small tankers and cargo ships could be unloaded. It was the reason why log rafts were floated further down the Barito where they were loaded onto the ships at anchor.

It seemed that the only suitable site in the region was between Bandjarmasin and the mouth of the Barito, on what were then rice fields. The land could be bought for a low price; it was flat and the river navigable along its banks.

The principal disadvantage was the poor resistance of the soil. The construction would be costly. The piling required to underpin the concrete raft on which the main structures of the mill would be built would need ten thousand concrete piles, twenty five meters long, to be driven into the soft alluvial soil. The piling alone would cost twenty or thirty million dollars.

Brodzski shook his head and Strecker shrugged his shoulders.

‘The sub-soil in Martarpura is much better suited for the construction, there’s solid bed rock just below the surface.’

‘I agree, but don’t worry we can solve that problem, were civil engineers, that’s a one time cost. You can’t build the mill in the middle of Martarpura. The site here is cheaper and better from a logistical point of view, transport requirements will on the other hand remain with the mill for the whole of its life.’

Ennis saw why Strecker was in favour of that site, apart from the technical and logistical questions, he imagined Strecker rubbing his hands at the thought of his share in the civil engineering contract

increasing by twenty or thirty million dollars more.

Brodzski was furious, he was not at all ready to give in so easily, he argued against the additional cost of the Barito site, but he was already outvoted. Reinbold sided with Strecker, as did the Finns. They had spread the maps on the table, amongst the glasses and bottles, under the feeble lights that flickered as the small diesel generators of the guesthouse stuttered from time to time.

‘In Martarpura there’s existing infrastructure and workers,’ said Brodzski. ‘It’s near the airport and the river will supply the millions of litres of water needed for the process plant.’

‘The infrastructure is inadequate and the volume of fresh water demand would be too great for the river during the dry season,’ retorted Strecker.

‘Mr. Brodzski I’m sorry, but I must agree with Mr. Strecker!’ said Reinbold, ‘You are right that the Barito site is costly, but the logistics are against the Martarpura site.’

Hakkala who had been silent for most of the time, apart from the occasional question intervened.

‘He’s right, in the last few days we have seen the sites proposed by the men who have spent months investigating the problem. We don’t have much choice, the Barito site is not the best for building a big mill, but, from the logistical point of view we have to accept it as superior to the original site at Martarpura.’

Brodzski sat back crossing his arms, then he fumbled for one of his Gauloises, which he lit, then drained his glass of cognac and lifted his hands in the air.

‘If that’s what you think, what can I say!’ he almost whispered, his voice trembling.

## Chapter 33 - DEFORESTATION

It was nearing the end of the afternoon as they sat talking and drinking beer in a small eating-house, on the road that twisted down

from the dam. They had spent the day visiting the sad remains of the plantations that had been started three years earlier. The plantations had been abandoned, far from the prying eyes of outsiders, a sinister family secret, hidden from all, that is with the exception of John Ennis, who had been an unwitting accomplice.

Ohlsson slurped his beer directly from the bottle; it was his third; Yoshimura looked at Ohlsson through his thick glasses, a strange look, as though he was inspecting a curious creature.

‘The world’s population already exceeds six billion and doesn’t look like it’s going to stop growing for anybody, but let me tell you that the lungs of this planet are shrinking at an incredibly alarming speed,’ he paused as if he had an inspiration, ‘even worse than mine!’

‘What’s new Lars?’ said Ennis, as though he were needling him.

‘Every single year, forty million acres of forest disappear, that’s an area about the size of England and Wales if you want to know!’

‘No, not today.’

Marcillac and Suarez pretended to ignore them; it had been a long hot day.

Ohlsson laboured on as usual, oblivious to Ennis’ remarks.

‘People should understand that forests are a fundamental link to our planets ecological system, they produce our oxygen, play a vital role in the way our water is recycled.’

He stood up and fumbled his way out to the back, his hand on his fly. They could hear him shouting behind the thin wall of platted palm leaves and the splashing, as he urinated into the planks.

‘The disappearance of the vegetation leads to soil erosion and floods,’ he mumbled to himself as he observed the results of his efforts.

‘Why don’t you tell him to calm down a bit John,’ said Marcillac, he had enough of Lars Ohlsson’s antics for one day.

‘Leave him alone he’s okay.’

‘He’s right though, if you stop joking it’s the forests that provide home and shelter to wild life, its the forests that support the genetic diversity and heritage of the planet,’ said Yoshimura, moping as if he had been infected by the depressing atmosphere that had sunk over

them.

‘Where’s that fucking driver!’ said Suarez, ‘we’re not going to stay here all day.’

Their Nissan had broken down and the driver had been gone for more than an hour, he had disappeared on the back of a motorbike that he had waved down.

‘Why don’t we talk about something serious then.’

‘We are, what Lars was saying is that wood is an important source of energy and raw materials, especially in the less developed areas of the globe, like here.’

‘We know that were not ignoramuses.’

‘Well maybe Thierry doesn’t know it all,’ he said looking in Boisnier’s direction.

Boisnier shrugged his shoulders and lit up an almost half broken Bentoel that he pulled from his multi-pocketed shirt.

‘I don’t mind, after all I’m here to learn something.’

‘Well what about this for a fact, every year almost two billion cubic metres are harvested by man for fuel, and about the same quantity for industrial and household purposes?’ said Marcillac.

Ohlsson came back in and sat down, he wiped his brow and looked at his watch.

‘Not only that, but more than two hundred million people live in the rainforests around the world,’ Yoshimura chipped in.

‘It’s true what he’s saying, forests and forest products play a primary role, supplying basic human needs of whole populations, not to speak of their contribution to the national economy of most developing countries like here,’ he waved his hand vaguely over his shoulder.

Ennis caught a glimpse from the side of his eye of the serving girl, who was watching them wide eyed, half out of curiosity and half out of fear, as they shouted angrily and swigged their beer.

‘A great many of man’s basic needs are traditionally provided by forests; fuel wood, food, fodder, timber and medical products. The forests even provide direct and indirect revenues from resources and tourism.’

Suarez joined in; 'As a professional forester, I endorse that, properly managed forests provide safeguards against damage to the environment, by that I mean soil, climate and water resources.'

'Well said!' Ohlsson shouted tapping him on the shoulder; 'If you can't beat the bastards join them.'

'Shut up for Christ's sake, be serious for a moment, you know there's plenty of international programmes that exist to manage forest resources.'

'Such as what for example?' asked Boisnier showing interest.

'Such as the World Bank, the UNDP and other organisations. They use expatriate specialists in fields such as forestry, pollution control, planning and industrial advisers, with local experts in ecology, environment and socio-economics,' said Marcillac.

'Well coming back to my business, the world consumption of wood for the pulp and paper industry was five hundred million cubic meters a decade ago, now its soon expected to reach seven hundred million that's a growth rate of one percent a year,' said Ennis

'Good for you John, you'll get the anti-greens man of the year award,' said Ohlsson, nursing his beer.

'All right Lars, you can talk, you're the one who should try to be to be serious for a moment!'

'Get stuffed John, in your traditional wood producing countries in the northern hemisphere, you've reached the maximum cutting rate for many reasons.'

'They're not mine, but go on anyway!'

'The main problem is the lack of regeneration in Canada, or development of sylvaculture in the USA. In Western Europe forest damage due to pollution has limited production.'

'What about Scandinavia?' said Marcillac looking at Ohlsson.

'What about it, I'm not ashamed to point the finger at home. Today in ecology conscious Scandinavia, owners no longer want to sell their wood or build new polluting mills.'

'Yeah, so they're exporting their pollution, sweeping it under the carpet.'

Suarez looked at his watch; there was no sign of their driver. He

made a sign to the girl for another round of beer. It was hot; it looked as though a storm was brewing up. There were flashes in the darkening sky as night was falling.

They continued their argument becoming increasingly irritable with their wait; the novelty of the bar had worn off as the lights attracted swarms of insects.

‘We in South America have had good results with fast growing eucalyptus which have been successfully introduced in plantations,’ said Suarez.

‘Yes, but that required lots of fertilisers that pollutes ground water and rivers, not to talk of the insecticides and weed killers.’

‘What I would like to know, being fairly ignorant in these matters, is, when did all this begin?’ said Boisnier.

Ohlsson taking the cue jumped in, it was one of his favourite subjects.

‘Ah, that’s a good question, when did it all start? Well Thierry, it goes back a long way, ever since primitive man was a hunter or gathering food in the forest. He didn’t chop down trees, except perhaps to make his dugouts for the river, but when he started to cultivate the soil about ten thousand years ago it was the start of deforestation!’

There was a silence, they listened, and then they could hear the first drops of rain on the platted palm leaf roof.

‘When the first farmers started to grow cereals and other crops, they needed to clear the forest to make fields, they used fire to clear the forest in prehistoric times and they’re still doing it today. It was and still is an efficient method for poor peoples with simple means.’

He looked at Boisnier to see the effect, who simply nodded encouraging him to continue.

‘In the beginning, the population of the planet was very low, so the effect of clearing the forest was relatively unimportant. Between 400 BC and 800 AD the world’s population was somewhere between 150 to 250 million, compared with more than 6,000 million today, and double that in fifty more years!’

‘Back then, the population was concentrated in the regions where

the great civilisations were born, in the eastern Mediterranean, in India and China.

‘Those civilisations, with their agricultural societies, caused the first great large scale deforestation on the earth, from Gibraltar to Southern China. Many of those cradles of early civilisations are buried today under the sand of deserts!’

‘What about today, what’s the rate of deforestation, do you agree with Lars?’

‘That’s a difficult question! The estimations are lousy, there’s no reliable systematic monitoring, and everybody lies!’

‘Don’t ask me!’

‘Oh!’

‘No, being serious, this is because in most poor developing countries, forestry industries are vital sources of revenue, so they give false information. They want to avoid criticism and upsetting public opinion at home, and especially abroad in the industrial countries, who either give them aid or buy their timber.’

‘What are the statistics on deforestation, I mean how fast is it happening?’ said Boisnier.

‘According to our estimates we reckon that about six hundred million hectares were lost between 1976 and now, that’s around twenty two million a year!’

‘That’s incredible?’

‘You have to realise that the main reason for deforestation is the pressure on forests by growing populations, they need to clear land for agriculture, its the old story of uncontrolled shifting cultivation, plus the ever increasing demand for fuel wood and timber.’

The light flickered; a swarm of insects circled the lamps that swayed in the draft pushed in by the coming storm. The humidity must have reached saturation point, the faces glistened in the weak light. They took on a haggard appearance, as the strain of the day and their long wait started to tell.

‘Not only that, there’s also a huge increase in livestock and grazing, plus the need for new land for urban and rural settlements.’

Ennis smiled perking up, and taking advantage of Ohlsson’s



argument to demonstrate his industry was far from being the sole party to blame for the damage caused to forestlands. 'So you agree it's not industry that does the most damage, more than half of the forests cleared in the tropics every year are the result of shifting cultivation by the landless farmers.'

'I don't disagree with that John,' said Ohlsson, 'In countries like Indonesia, Brazil, India, where the number of subsistence farmers grows uncontrollably, the available cleared arable land decreases and so more new forest areas are cleared.'

'It's a fact that clearing forests for agriculture and resettlement is the second most important cause of deforestation. All of those poor subsistence farmers and villagers totally depend on wood as a source of energy for cooking and other needs, what else can they use? That's the third most important cause of deforestation and forest degradation.'

'Can't this be stopped?'

'Clear-cutting for shifting cultivation means instant deforestation, perhaps it could be stopped, but that's not the main problem, most deforestation happens gradually. Over grazing, repetitive burning for grazing and unauthorised felling of timber leads to deforestation.'

'It's galloping demography. For example do you know that the growth rate of the total population in the tropical countries from 1975 to the present has been more than two and a half percent each year? The population pressure is the greatest disaster of all. In tropical forest countries, it has doubled over that period of time with the developing countries accounting for ninety percent of that increase.'

'In the developing countries already one billion people are living below subsistence level on livestock that is grazing freely, or on crops that are grown by shifting cultivation.'

'You only have to look at the Philippines,' interrupted Ennis.

'Yes. In the Philippines in 1800, the forest coverage was ninety five percent and the population two million, two centuries later it's the reverse, the forest is two percent and the population ninety five million.'

'A human disaster!'

They sat wearily pondering the troubles of the world, forgetting for a moment their own minor problems. The noise of a vehicle approaching snapped them out of their stupor. Then they saw the headlights through the trees at the bend of the road and a minibus bumped into view. There was a cheer and they collected their bags as Ennis dug into his pocket to pay for their food and drinks.

They crowded into the minibus; it was cramped and lurched off at a slow place on the wet road that was criss-crossed by streams of muddy water that sparkled in the headlights.

In the background Ohlsson droned on. Ennis doubted if any of the others were listening. Then there was silence, just the rain battering the windscreen and the motor whining each time they surged through a torrent that flowed across their road.

They were woken up by lights of Martarpura ahead announcing they would be back to the relative comfort of their hotel in Bandjermasin in twenty minutes or so.

## Chapter 34 - A GAMBLER

The looked out over the view towards Paris. Avenue Charles de Gaulle cut a line directly towards the Arc de Triomphe. The Eiffel Tower, over to the right, seemed to reach out of the greenery of the Bois de Boulogne. Almost directly below them, the Seine sparkled in the sunshine.

Brodzski smiled, he was pleased with himself, no, he was delighted. This was what he deserved, it was natural, and the only pity was that it had come a little bit late in life for him.

He looked at Axelmann and Ennis, competent men who respected him, and knew how to carry out his instructions without bothering him with the details.

He did the thinking. He determined the grand lines, provided the imagination, they simply implemented his ideas. He was the great architect, surveying the world from the thirty-fifth floor of the Tour

Fiat.

‘What do you think Mr Brodzski?’ asked Axelmann.

‘Very good, excellent, when do we move in?’ said Brodzski approvingly.

‘We can move in at the end of next month, to be exact the first of June, five weeks from now.’

‘Have you already signed?’

‘No, not without consulting you.’

‘Let’s get it done then, see if we can move in earlier.’

The new office space covered a bit more than seven hundred square meters, one complete floors of the tower, in the business district of La Defense. It was a prestigious location. Brodzski had decided to relocate Papcon’s office, as part of his plan to upgrade their image, so that it corresponded with his ambitions for the company and himself, as one of the outstanding leaders in the French engineering industry for forest industries.

His success in Cambodia had filled the company’s bank account. He had a full order book for contracts, feasibility studies and various reports for a number of foreign governments for their industrial projects, reforestation and market studies.

He was riding the crest of the wave, carried along by his own success, although many of his friends and even his detractors whispered that he should retire whilst the going was good. However, Brodzski was a gambler, in more ways than could be imagined. He wanted recognition, a constant challenge, he needed to prove and prove again, that he was equal to the best or even better.

Brodzski had always felt handicapped by his origins, a deep down resentment. He had been born in Casablanca, the son of a military engineer, where he spent his childhood. During his early youth he had lived in the South of France, in the garrison town of Draguignan in Provence.

As a boy, he had not been of a very strong nature. In the uncertainties and the political climate of the thirties, he had felt rejected by his classmates. His family was Jewish. As a result, he had

become by circumstances introverted, and had centred his interest on his studies. He obtained brilliant results, and gained entry into the illustrious Ecole Polytechnique in Paris, where he qualified as an engineer in the late spring of 1940.

He was conscripted into the army and was captured by the Nazis during the debacle in 1940, then transported to a camp in Germany as a prisoner of war.

Because of his Jewish origins, he had no choice but to escape. After a courageous flight through occupied France, he arrived in Bordeaux during the early winter of 1941. To his stupefaction his ex-commandant, to whom he had reported, refused to assist him and even went as far as recommending that he turn himself in to the Nazis. For the rest of his life he bore a burning resentment for the way in which he had been abandoned by the establishment. He was a Jew and would always remain a Jew.

He spent the following three years in non-occupied Vichy France, then when the Nazis took occupied the rest of the country he went into hiding and joined the resistance, where he stood out for his courage and daring plans.

After the war he created his own engineering consulting firm in the fifties and seeing the pressing need for paper in the emerging third world as the European colonies gained their independence. By his originality and willingness to take risks in new markets, he made a name for himself building industries in exotic and distant India, Thailand and Indonesia.

A brilliant engineer, he paid little attention to banks and accountants. He rarely accepted advice; he was incapable of self-restraint and regularly overstepped the financial capacity of his company, leading to strained relations with his backers. By the time he formed Papcon he already had four bankruptcies behind him.

With Papcon, he applied the hard earned lessons of the past by listening to his banker, Philippe de Berne, on whose insistence Chris Axelmann joined the company as Financial Director. Axelmann guided him through the world of financial management and banking, providing a steadying influence on Brodzski.

Axelmann was also a Jew, it was difficult to say if this was the reason, but Brodzski had a total trust in him, some people even said that Brodzski saw him as a son in-law and his successor.

‘What’s the rent?’ Brodzski asked Axelmann. He posed the question with a hint of embarrassment and annoyance. He detested questions on money matters, but he felt obliged to show an interest in the subject.

‘They’re asking a million a year, that’s excluding charges of course.’

‘Can we afford it?’ asked Brodzski. This time looking indecisive and a little anxious.

Axelmann laughed; ‘No, but the Barito consortium can!’

That pleased Brodzski; he was never fond of looking at reality in the face and was reassured when Axelmann went through the charade of pretending that it was not Papcon who would foot the bill.

Brodzski’s real skill and natural talent, lay in his ability to convince those that were drawn to him, believe that he was capable of realising their dreams, opening the door to a world, where business was easy and fortunes were to be made without the implications that went with more mundane affairs.

They lunched at Jarasse on avenue de Madrid, one of his favourite restaurants Brodzski felt that they should celebrate their decision. They discussed furniture and decorations for the new office. They talked about the success of the Cambodia business; the last shipment was due to leave at the end of that same month.

Every thing had gone like clockwork and the last contractual payment would be made. It would bring in forty million dollars of which eight million would go directly into Papcon’s reserves. That would cover their operating costs for the next eighteen months or so.

After lunch, Brodzski excused himself, and took a taxi towards Boulevard St Germain near the Latin Quarter. It was Thursday afternoon; he had his weekly appointment at an establishment that he had frequented for twenty years. There he indulged his fantasies, which had lately consisted of a long afternoon sleep, after a bottle of champagne and a moment of pleasure.

He often liked to explain to his friends and staff, that when a man was no longer interested in women then he was finished; perhaps it was his own self-justification.

Axelmann was equally pleased. However, he did not lose sight of the fact that the new offices, and the cost of the small but expensive organisation, were becoming increasingly heavy.

Brodzski's spending had increased significantly over the last year. He enjoyed the princely right to first class all the way, the frequency of his trips increasing as the duration and effectiveness decreased.

That in itself was not important but it was the luxurious life style he had adopted, there was the Jaguar and chauffeur, the maids, the summer house on the coast, the gardener, the champagne, his daughters and their expensive whims, not forgetting his many friends and relatives who were taken on as consultants for exorbitant fees.

Papcon's real income came from its major contracts. The consultancy work just covered a little more than its costs; it was mere window dressing complained Axelmann. He was not fooled by the highflying ideas of Papcon's engineers.

The commissions for the Finnish defence contracts had been finally paid. They were banked in Singapore, reserved for their investment in Barito. The money was placed in deposits that were theoretically secure, controlled by the signatures of either Ennis or Axelmann as stipulated by the agreement with Finntech, out of the reach of Brodzski's whim. The funds were necessary to prime the pump as the Finns said, when they got to the phase when the company was constituted as mill owner. In the worse case, it would be their personal insurance policy.

It was over two years since Papcon had signed the Cambodian contract, it would be another year before they could hope sign the Barito contract. He considered his principle task was to very carefully manage their resources. Certainly it was the consortium that was footing Papcon's bills-for the moment-but that could not go on eternally.

## Chapter 35 - BANKS AND REAL ESTATE

De Berne could have weathered one crisis, but not two. The crash on the Paris Bourse was the consequence of a persistent recession in the country, and a real estate scandal on top of that was too much. The bank, as many others, had been naively and unwittingly embroiled in financing a series of property developments against unsecured loans and fictive guaranties. They had become seriously overextended and were saved by the intervention of the Bank of France, if saved was the word. The family lost control of their bank and after its forced takeover by the French Indo-China Bank de Berne was of little further practical use to Brodzski.

Ennis had initially hoped that there was something positive in the changes, as a result of his friendship with John Howard. Unfortunately that was far from being the case. The new shareholders were more concerned with cleaning up the banks bad loan, than being involved in any further speculative business.

It was precisely at that moment Jean-Yves Lombard appeared at Brodzski's side like the proverbial saviour. As head of the Lombard Finance, he had put the idea into Brodzski's head that considerable funds were available from the United Arab Investment Bank. Lombard reasoned that since Indonesia was the nation with the world's largest Islamic population, there was no reason why the UAIB could not be persuaded to participate in the equity.

He could arrange that through his personal connections, however there was a price, which Brodzski was glad to pay, Lombard would have a seat on the board of directors of Papcon, with a minority shareholding.

Axelmann vigorously opposed Lombard's entry into the company and made it very plain to Brodzski. He tried to warn him of how Lombard had been embroiled in more than one doubtful financial affair with Middle East banks, but his arguments were dismissed as fanciful, a sign of resentment at the idea another financial man, a banker, entering the firm.

Brodzski, as a result of the difficulties encountered in putting together the Barito banking pool, had started taking more decisions personally without consulting his staff. A challenge and a threat had been placed before him; in the short term Papcon's financial position was good; the company still had a healthy bank account. Though if new revenues were not quickly generated or Barito's problems were not resolved, then a serious cash crisis would be on the horizon before the years end. Barito was absorbing too much of Papcon's financial and human resources, with no early end in sight.

Brodzski had become impatient with Christian Axelmann and John Ennis, and because of that was ready to listen to sycophants and new faces like Lombard, who were always near at hand. The two were powerless, as Brodzski had arranged that all major his decisions were endorsed by his compliant shareholders, giving an appearance of full approval. To Axelmann's great regret the more serious shareholders had begun to take their distance, often excusing themselves from board meetings, giving Brodzski a free hand.

They were placed before a *fait accompli* when Brodzski announced that Lombard had been given a place on the board of directors, and at the same time nominated as special adviser to the President, Brodzski. It became increasingly evident that their ability to influence Brodzski's decisions was slipping.

Together, they set about drawing up a plan, which could be implemented in the event that Brodzski turned against them, as they had started to suspect for some time. Regardless of whether the project went ahead or not, they would be assured of their own personal financial situations. Axelmann's patience had been stretched to the limit by Brodzski's attitude and his growing arrogance not to speak of his extravagant spending.

'Lombard is a crook, he's only interested in what he can get out of it for himself.'

'Its normal, he's going to look after his own interests,' Ennis said, 'he's not a philanthropist, but as far as were concerned we'll end up with nothing after all the effort we've put into this.'

They started to explore the ways and means of transferring part of



the monies in the Singaporean banks to other offshore accounts, to be used by them in the event that the situation turned sour. However, it was agreed that nothing was to be implemented until it was clear that it was really necessary.

Lombard's office was situated on the quai Anatole France, opposite the Louvre, on the left bank of the Seine, in a magnificent building that had been recently reconstructed, maintaining the fine old stone facade which had been designed in an elaborate architectural style that dated back more than two hundred years. The interior was ultra modern, the ground floor housed a collection of fine antique shops that served a clientele, from both France and overseas, who could afford the old paintings and rare antique furniture reserved for wealthy connoisseurs.

His office suite was located on the same floor as that of a leading Parisian stockbroker and the representative office of the Swiss Credit Bank. Lombard had not selected that location by chance but by design.

Jean-Yves Lombard was the son of an old French banking family, whose bank had been nationalised by the socialist government after World War II. He had led a very varied career moving around in the major French banks. In his last previous position he had been euphemistically excused from his functions, carrying the can for a well-protected director in a loan scandal in the mid-eighties. He had engaged a good lawyer and subsequently won his case and was awarded a substantial compensation. He was then engaged as director of a private bank, the Banque Levantine. The directorship was however, a poisoned gift, which a banking executive under normal circumstances would have never accepted. Lombard had little choice after having been quietly put on the banking blacklist by the more established banks - the touch of scandal was indelible.

The Banque Levantine was in turn rocked by a series of scandals perpetrated by its Lebanese and Kuwaiti directors, who saw it as their own personal piggy bank. The Bank of France finally intervened withdrawing their banking license. Lombard was not abandoned, he was well cared for by his Arab friends, he was said to have been be

intimate to too many compromising secrets. He maintained a considerable number of valuable contacts and business relations in the Middle East, and into the bargain he once again hit the jackpot once again with royal compensation.

Lombard was burnt out in the traditional banking circles. His only option open was to set up a financial services company, since his total knowledge and experience was based on banking and financial services. He was backed by close and wealthy friends. Lombard International Finance was born with Lombard as the President Director General; his board of directors was composed of close friends, including Xavier de Cubsac, famous for his cognac, and other relations from the fringes of the banking world.

The vocation of Lombard's firm was the take over old, ailing, businesses for a nominal price; they then stripped them of any marketable assets and pumped up the business with an injection of fresh capital, finally selling it off at a handsome profit as soon the books were passable. In larger operations Lombard International did not finance the take-overs with their own capital, but found the necessary funds in the Middle East and other offshore financial centres, through the network that he had established with the defunct Banque Levantine.

When Brodzski had been introduced to Lombard and learnt of his close links with the Arabs, and his extensive relations he maintained in the banking world, he immediately saw an opportunity to be seized. Axelmann was not of the same opinion, he did not favour business with the Arabs and besides he considered Lombard as belonging to a grey area of the banking and financial world.

Axelmann recounted hair-raising anecdotes on Lombard's past disasters. Whether they were true or not, Ennis could not be sure, since the French business world thrived on rumours and such stories. As a technical and marketing man, he saw the banking world as an unfamiliar maze.

Once Brodzski's decided a person such as Lombard could serve his business aims, he proposed that he join the Papcon on his board of directors, proposing a shareholding on favourable conditions.

Lombard, impressed by Papcon's consortium of international companies created for the Barito project, he quickly accepted Brodzski's offer.

He invested a quarter of a million dollars, via Lombard International, in Papcon. However, he was more astute than his predecessors; he made a condition that Papcon pay him a retainer fee on a monthly basis, for his services as special adviser to the President. Over a period eighteen months he received in fees the equivalent to the investment made by Lombard International.

Lombard International was specialised in areas that larger better known finance organisations avoided, he was successful and maintained a very discreet profile. It was not his style or interest to draw unwanted attention.

Brodzski's made the announcement of Lombard's appointment whilst Axelmann was absent in Jakarta with Ennis. They had no choice but to accept his decision, any open opposition would have jeopardised their own situations. They sensed that Brodzski was side tracking from the original objectives that they had agreed, and sensed that he was setting a new course without very much concern for the engagements he had undertaken with them.

How long would it be before Brodzski divulged to Lombard the existence of the secret Singapore accounts, if he had not already done so? They decided to initiate a contingency plan, realising that Brodzski with backing and encouragement from Lombard would not hesitate to drop them if it suited his purpose.

Their first move was to protect the Singaporean accounts. They provided the banks with additional instructions, so that the movement of funds of over one million dollars was conditioned by a set of confidential codes. It was a simple step, since it was Axelmann who had originally chosen the banks in Singapore and set up the arrangements, whilst Ennis covered the transfer of funds to accounts from the defence contracts with the tacit acceptance of Finntech.

The management of bank accounts had been entirely left to Axelmann. The codes were not transmitted to Brodzski, who with his signature could if necessary withdraw up to one million dollars from

any one of the four accounts.

## Chapter 36 - INSURANCE AND GANGSTERS

August in Taipei felt like a vast sauna, the least physical effort resulted in a flood of perspiration and an enormous lethargy invaded the whole body. A tropical storm was brewing as Ennis arrived at the Mandarin Palace where Lily was waiting to meet him. She looked ravishing in an off the shoulder summer dress that only tall women seemed wear to the full effect. Her shoulders were golden and full and in spite of the oppressive heat she looked fresh, there was just the slightest glow of transpiration on her face and shoulders that gave her skin the appearance of satin.

‘Ni hao qin ai de,’ she said speaking with the soft musical voice of the Chinese upper class, rising and falling in perfect tones. Her depth of her smile betrayed her feelings, she was genuinely pleased to see him, a fact he found hard to believe, after all she had the whole world to choose from, he naively thought to himself.

He planned to spend a week in Taiwan. They had decided to visit Ali Shan to relax, a mountain park that few western visitors ever got to see, almost always disappointed by Taipei, with its heat and traffic to the point of wanting to get out as soon as possible.

First was priority was the meeting that Sutrawan had arranged with his cronies, he had insisted that Ennis be present. He had said to him, pointing a stern finger, ‘I command you to be there!’ With a theatrical fierceness, like the face of a king commanding his courtiers in Chinese television movies. Ennis realised he was not joking, he really was commanding him to be there, an order which he had little difficulty accepting as it coincided with his plan to spend some time with Lily.

Nevertheless, he was curious, for some time Sutrawan’s impatience with his European partners had been building up, he was becoming exasperated. Brodzski’s tactics were getting them

nowhere, and the Indonesians were beginning to seriously doubt Papcon's capability of raising the capital.

It was just as difficult for the Indonesian to comprehend the Byzantine inter-company politics of the Europeans as it was for Ennis to understand the Indonesians.

'Look,' he told Lily, 'first I have to see Sutrawan and his friends, I hope you don't mind.'

She knew what he meant, an interminable dinner and drinking, during which a few words to the initiated could mean an awful lot. He was beginning to understand some of the subtleties of those dinners, though when they insisted in talking in Taiwanese he was completely lost. He doubted the usefulness of the Mandarin Chinese that he had taken so much effort to learn. More than seven hundred million Chinese spoke Mandarin, but for business and secrets the overseas Chinese always reverted to their dialects, which few westerners ever managed to master, with the possible exception of Cantonese. Many overseas Chinese business people spoke as many as five languages, leaving the ignorant wai guo ren totally at their mercy.

'Mei you guan xi,' it does not matter, replied Lily. First business then holidays. It seemed to Ennis that she accepted men's role in business easier than many western women would have done. Perhaps it was because the Chinese realised that the prosperity of the family depended on the success of their businesses. They knew that life was not easy. The Chinese had lived in a hostile environment for more than four millennia; their larger family concept demanded a greater submission of the individual than in the small Western family units.

The meeting for dinner was in a very unremarkable restaurant, in a private room on the first floor. The manager and staff behaved in an excessively obsequious manner towards them, it went beyond that of a restaurateur receiving his wealthy regulars. Ennis was right in suspecting that the owner was one of the clients of Scar Faced Fung's protection rackets.

Ennis simply hoped that it would not last too long; he wanted to get back to Lily in a reasonably sober state. He had enough with

smiling, drinking OX cognac and eating things, which he often disliked or even recognised. He enjoyed Chinese cuisine, but his taste tended more to the crispy well-spiced pork, and poultry dishes, as opposed to the steamed and fish dishes that Sutrawan preferred.

He did not recognise the guests of Scarface, but they seemed like the usual tough characters that associated were with him. Ennis always had the sneaking suspicion that one day he could end up in a barrel limbless, deaf, dumb and blind, if ever they suspected him of having crossed one of them. They politely ignored him after the introductions and they concentrated on Sutrawan and Fung.

As the dinner progressed, the conversation became more intense with the occasional glance in Ennis' direction. Then Sutrawan announced to his astonishment that his friends were interested in the Barito project.

Ennis hoped that he had retained his surprise but he doubted it, he could not think why they should be interested in such business, it was obviously out of their class, in any case their participation was all to questionable, after all in plain English they were gangsters.

Sutrawan went on to tell him that they were invited to lunch the next day at the Hong Shing Insurance Company.

Shit! Thought Ennis, wondering how he could politely excuse himself. Insurance! That was furthest from his needs right then. He could see from Sutrawan's face there was no way out.

Abruptly the dinner finished, it happened like that from time to time, without any explanation, it seemed like business had been concluded, each one of them suddenly had something else more important to do.

Ennis was left struggling with his cigarettes and drink like a child who had not been following in the classroom.

Back at the hotel suite, Sutrawan called for drinks and told Ennis to call Lily, which he did, feeling like a well-trained domestic animal.

'Drink!' Sutrawan shouted offering him a glass. He seemed to be relieved and pleased with himself.

'The Hong family is very rich and powerful John. Tomorrow you must impress them as they are willing to help in the project.'

At such moments Ennis simply said yes, he was completely lost and there was no point in attempting instant understanding.

‘They are willing to put up equity, over one hundred million US!’ said Sutrawan. ‘Tomorrow you must put on a big show and talk about de Berne and the French Indo-China Bank, you know, and the Barito Consortium, convince them the project is good.’

Fine, he thought with resignation, but what authority do I have to negotiate or take a position with these people? I don’t even know who they are, and what does S.C.Gao think of these people?

Ennis could see himself being drawn into something that he was not sure he could control, but for the present there was no way out. The worse he could do for the moment was to listen.

He could not afford to upset Sutrawan. Finally with difficulty and feigning tiredness Ennis worked his way out and left with Lily returning to his own suite. It looked like they could not leave for Ali Shan until after the lunch date the next day with Hong Shing.

The next morning they rose early and took breakfast in the nearby market at a small food stall, seated at a rickety plastic table, on wooden stools. In spite of the appearance, the food smelt good. The morning was still relatively cool with a hint of freshness in the air. They ordered crispy Chinese doughnuts wrapped in a deep fried muffin-like sandwich, which they ate after dipping the sandwich into a bowl of sweet soya milk. Ennis enjoyed the simple pleasure and the noisy friendliness of the market, seated amongst the bright colours of the vendor’s stalls and their extraordinary arrays of fruit and vegetables.

After brief stop at Lily’s Antique Gallery, to say hello to her plain but bubbling cousin, they made their way over to the central station where they booked seats on the late afternoon train.

Ennis then headed back to the hotel to change for lunch and was in Sutrawan’s suite at eleven forty five. Danny Lau opened the door; he was in full swing preparing for their departure to the Hong Shing Insurance building. No drinks, Sutrawan was finishing his watery rice porridge, a late breakfast. Ennis had tried it, being his breakfast guest on many occasions. Sutrawan invited him to take a bowl, which he

did, being polite but also because he knew that it would act as a retardant for alcohol, if there was to be any drinking.

They were driven over to the Hong Shing Insurance Building. Ennis not being sure of the exact arrangements resolved to simply listen and let the events unroll. Sutrawan was always rather subdued at that time of the day, tired after a long nights drinking and fornicating, probably more tired from the drinking than the rest - unless he was superman - as he liked people to believe.

Ennis discovered that the Hong Shing Insurance Building was over twenty floors high, it was an impressive building located on a prime site in the Taipei City business area. They rolled up in the usual procession, they were all together nine persons in the Cadillacs, including two of the gangsters whom he had met in the restaurant the previous evening. They could have fitted into two of the limos at a pinch, but Sutrawan wanted to arrive in style.

They were greeted by one of the managers waiting in the lobby who led them to a private lift that they took to the twenty-second floor where to his surprise they stepped out into another lobby, much more impressive than the public entrance on the ground floor, this one was private and a lofty three stories high.

In front of them, Mr Hong stood waiting before a huge block of polished white marble engraved with the company logo and a column of bright red Chinese characters. Hong was accompanied by his senior staff that Ennis soon learnt included two of his sons.

For the first time Ennis was surprised to see Sutrawan a little uncomfortable, like a provincial in an ill-fitting suit, cap in hand before his seigneur. In spite of his wealth Sutrawan was a relatively small fry compared to the Hongs, from Indonesia, a poor undeveloped country compared to Taiwan, he was evidently one of the socially inferior nouveau rich. The Hongs had a solid history of wealth and political connections, going back to pre-war days on the mainland when Chiang Kai Shek's nationalist government was in power. The Hongs had managed Chiang's family finances and continued to do so after his death and immortalisation, under the almost dynastic presidency of Chiang's son and his successors.



Ennis, as always took his cue from Sutrawan, and went through the formality of bowing and paying obsequious respect to such wealth. There was a difference between the president of a company, appointed by its shareholders, and a man who personally owned, and had paid for - one hundred percent - the twenty stories that lay beneath his feet. In Asia the respect that was due was even greater.

They were shown into a private banqueting room, prepared in a princely style with an extraordinary display of fresh flowers under the sparkling light of crystal chandeliers. It betrayed tradition and severity, even the flowers were sober and stiff, there was none of the parvenu extravagance of Sutrawan's overseas Chinese friends. This empire was built on solidity and continuity.

Ennis was placed next to Hong Xiao Wing, the second son of Hong. Hong went through the preamble of politely toasting the guests, with a light Chinese white wine, just sipping from the glasses. Sutrawan then speaking in Mandarin Chinese described the Barito project, then translating into English and asking Ennis to describe the details of the European consortium.

'So Mr Ennis, your project is in need a financial partner!' said Hong in a surprisingly direct manner, his voice was low and firm, tinged with a slight American accent. Ennis could feel that the full attention of the nineteen or twenty people seated around the table was focused on Hong, and then all eyes were turned as one towards him, waiting for his reply.

'We are certainly interested in any serious offer for participation in our Barito project,' Ennis replied politely.

'We are serious people,' Hong replied in a slightly mocking tone, amused by the thought that anybody could even consider thinking otherwise.

'We have studied your project. Mr Sutrawan has confirmed that the Indonesian government is prepared to back it. We have also consulted our friend Mr Gao and Yu Mei Chih Pulp and Paper, so we are satisfied by the quality of the project and the work you have accomplished. What I would like you to do Mr Ennis is to inform your partners in Europe of our interest. Mr Sutrawan has informed us

that we can rely on your discretion, so please discuss the details with my son, who is also a Senior Vice President of our organisation. We will expect you to inform us of the European position in fifteen days from now.'

Ennis could feel the penetrating eyes. He made an effort to avoid swallowing or showing any external signs of feeling or emotion; he tried to appear inscrutable in a true Chinese manner, and replied, 'Thank you for your interest Mr Hong. I will certainly inform the partners as soon as I return to Paris. We shall come back to you promptly with our reply.'

Hong held his wine glass with the fingertips of both hands and offered a toast to his guests, looking directly at Ennis.

'To our future success!'

Ennis thought, if we haven't decided anything yet, then they certainly have.

They were driven back to the Mandarin Palace. Sutrawan was in a pensive mood; Ennis said nothing, waiting for him to comment on the meeting, but all he would repeat was, 'Hong is a very powerful man!'

Later that afternoon Ennis saw Sutrawan briefly in his suite, he looked a little more relaxed and told him know that it had been a successful meeting. It was now up to Ennis to convince the consortium and warned he could not fail; otherwise Sutrawan would lose face with the Taiwanese.

It was evident that the Taiwanese role in the project was becoming increasingly important. However, Ennis did not think they could undertake such a project alone, though it seemed that they were prepared join the consortium, if only to take advantage of the European credits. Their objective was to acquire greater experience in international construction and engineering, on a scale that they had not been able to achieve up until that time, because of the risk and lack of credits in dealing with Indonesia. He realised that the ambitions of the Taiwanese, pushed by their government were not to be underestimated.

There was however a nagging suspicion about Fung's probable

links to the Taiwanese concessionaires and perhaps by extension to the Hongks.

## Chapter 37 - VOLCANOES AND REGENERATION

‘Guess who I met on the flight?’ asked Jenny.

‘No idea.’

‘Guess?’ she said playfully.

‘Don’t play games, tell me,’ he was more interested in her closeness than play the guessing game.

‘All right then, I met Lars Ohlsson,’ she said laughing and disentangling herself from his arms.

‘Lars!’ he replied with interest. ‘How is the old bugger? What’s he come down for?’

‘He’ll tell you, he’s here, I said we’ll met him in the bar after he’s checked in, I hope you’ve got nothing on for the weekend?’

‘The weekend?’ he said slightly puzzled. ‘It’s a holiday here, at least it’s a long weekend. Tuesday is Merdeka day, you know - Independence Day - most offices are also closed on Monday.’

‘I know,’ she said.

‘All right, let’s go over to the bar and see if Lars is there.’

They walked arm in arm to the bar, at the opposite end of the huge lobby of the Borobudur Hotel, past the check in area, and the lounge where businessmen seated in armchairs talked of their projects and hopes.

Lars was there sipping a beer, he had a slightly weary look on his tanned face; it was lined with the wrinkles of a lifetime in the sun. As always he looked rumpled and somewhat scruffy, he was a typical bachelor, living most of his life out of suitcases. Ennis often thought that Ohlsson cultivated his look, his worn safari suit, the heavy iron

wood walking stick and his old desert boots.

He supposed that was Ohlsson's idea of what a botanist should look like; he had to admit that he looked the part, even if it was a little bit Edwardian.

'Why hello John!' exclaimed Ohlsson in his Swedish accent, that reminded Ennis of Cardiff mixed with Melbourne. He swung off his bar stool and held out his hand. 'Nice to see you.'

It seemed that it wasn't his first drink of the day, no doubt he had been taking advantage of the drinks on the flight in from Kuala Lumpur, an old Scandinavian tradition thought Ennis.

'Sit down, let me offer you a beer.'

'Nice to see you Lars.'

'Here, let's sit down over by the window,' he said pointing over to the corner, where through the smoked glass window they could see the magnificent gardens of the hotel. They took a seat and Ohlsson called the waitress-a charming Indonesian girl in traditional costume-he ordered three beers.

'So, did Jenny tell you about my little expedition?'

'No,' he said slowly looking at Jenny.

'I tried to tell him but you know what he's like he never listens to anybody,' she said with a wicked smile.

'Okay! Okay!' said Ennis lifting his eyes to the ceiling.

'Never mind, I'll tell you, an old friend of mine, Neil Whitman, he was a pilot with Qantas before he retired early, forty eight not bad eh! Well he's got a boat, a sailing boat, two masts, twenty five meters. He's over at Carita beach at the moment, you know its almost facing Krakatau on the Sunda Straits, opposite the south coast of Sumatra. There's also three young English guys, geologists, they'll join us for the trip to Krakatau, they want to say they've been there.'

'I've never been there but I've heard about it. There's a kind of beach hotel there, I've heard it's a bit basic, a few people have been out there for weekends.'

'I don't know what the beach place is like, but that doesn't matter, the reason it interests me is scientific. I've never been to the volcano and it's a reference for botanists.'

‘Botanists?’

‘Yes, I’ll tell you about that later, but the question is, would you like to join me on this little expedition, well leave from Jakarta tomorrow afternoon, its about two hundred kilometres, four hours by car. We’ll stay at the beach hotel overnight and leave at dawn on Saturday for Krakatau on Neil’s boat. We plan to camp on the beach, using the boat as a base and come back on Tuesday evening, we should be in Jakarta about midnight.’

‘Sounds great!’

‘So you agree?’

‘Sure.’

‘Excellent, let’s have another beer,’ he made a sign to the waitress who took his order with a dazzling smile.

‘Tell me about Krakatau then.’

‘Well it’s a long story but an interesting one,’ he sipped his beer and lit his pipe as Ennis settled back comfortably in his chair.

‘I think you know about the volcano?’

Ennis nodded

The Krakatau Beach Hotel was exactly as Ennis had suspected, its apparent lack of certain comforts was not an understatement. It was run by a German, Gert Sachs who catered mainly for the young hippy style of tourist, travelling on a lean budget. The accommodation consisted of simple timber framed bungalows, with platted palm leaf roofs and poor plumbing.

It was not exactly the Club Med; it was tatty and disappointing, not quite the way Ennis had hoped to spend the weekend.

Ohlsson chatted with Gert Sachs at the reception, who in spite of the obvious handicaps of his hotel was enthusiastic and friendly, he told Lars that the Australian, Neil Whitman, had gone out to pick up last minute provisions with his girl friend, he expected them back at any time.

‘Neil has booked you rooms in our hotel,’ said Sachs with pleasure and self-satisfaction. ‘You can fill in these cards then I’ll show you to the rooms, this evening I have arranged a special dinner

for you all in the hotel restaurant.'

They checked in and Sachs accompanied them to their bungalows along a boardwalk over the sand, their bags carried by a young Indonesian. Sachs opened the door and once inside Ennis saw that it was even more rudimentary than he had imagined, the description hotel was exaggerated, however, it was reasonable clean and the wooden floor was well swept, though a stale odour of damp hung in the air of their bathroom.

They had more than a fair share of insects of every kind, not to mention suspect smells that wafted in from time to time, depending on the drift of the wind.

'So, I suppose that you will want to relax and take a shower. I'll see you later,' Sachs said with a slightly embarrassed smile as he bowed his way out of the room.

'Well we've seen worse,' Ennis exclaimed to Jenny putting his arms around her waist and kissing her on her nose.

'Don't start complaining now, this is a scientific expedition,' she replied.

'Shit, that's what it's called then, I'd had other ideas for our weekend,' he replied pulling her very close to him.

'You'd better take advantage of our bed here then, because for the next few days we'll be really roughing it. Here take a shower and cool off!' she said pulling herself free and looked into the bathroom; it was an Indonesian version, with a tub of water and a large plastic jug for douching.

Ennis was half asleep; the irregular crash of the waves on the beach had disturbed him. The air in the bungalow was stifling and, in spite of its open structure it seemed to have retained the heat of the day. The bed was hard and his head felt sore and heavy from too much beer. His irregular sleep that was in no little way the fault of Neil Whitman, who seemed to have a remarkable capacity to drink and talk, encouraged by Ohlsson and the geologists.

None of that seemed to have disturbed Jenny, whose only movement was her quiet rhythmic breathing.

He vaguely heard a gentle but persistent knocking and made a numb effort to put his thoughts, he looked at his watch, it was 5.30, the knocking seemed to be coming from the bungalow door.

‘Okay! Okay!’ He answered as he sat up and swung his legs over the side of the bed, he paused and held his head in his hands for a long moment, then he gently shook Jenny.

‘Time to get up.’

He felt his way to the bathroom and switching on the light he remembered it would be a cold shower.

‘Oh God, that’s all I need now,’ he thought.

The knocking on the door started again.

What the fuck do they want now, he thought, he felt queasy and as the knocking continued softly and more urgently he went to the door and opened it.

A young man holding a breakfast tray stood in the half-light.

‘*Selemat pagi tuan, makan pagi.*’

‘Oh! *Selemat pagi,*’ he returned the greeting and made way as the young man entered and placed the tray on a low table and then bowed out.

In the meantime Jenny had slipped out of bed and was already in the bathroom.

Ennis resigned himself to pouring the thick coffee *tubruk* into one of the large glasses set on the tray; he sipped it and added two lumps of sugar.

Sachs then appeared at the door looking a little haggard.

‘Hello there,’ he said with a weak smile, ‘quite a night.’

There was a slight cool breeze that wafted through the open door, giving some relief to Ennis, who stood holding the towel around his waist and his coffee in the other hand.

‘How’s the weather?’

‘A very light morning breeze, but the sea seems to be very smooth.’

Ennis stepped out onto the veranda, there was something strange about the early morning in the tropics, dawn was just breaking and the sea was like glass. He could see the Fidji anchored about fifty

meters off the shore and he could make out a barely discernible movement as it moved to and fro with the lazy draw of the small waves, which seemed to have the consistency of thin oil.

‘Yeah, it doesn’t look too bad.’

The fresh air acted like a miracle, clearing the heaviness from his head, though he still felt like he needed a couple of hours more sleep.

‘Selamat Pagi Bak!’ A soft musical voice said and he felt the warmth of Jenny as she slid her arms around his waist.

‘So, they’re getting the last things on board and you’ll be ready to leave in about half an hour or so,’ said Sachs, politely turning and taking his leave.

Ennis showered, then they threw their affairs into their bags and strolled barefoot down the beach towards the Fidji anchored about twenty metres offshore, where a couple of the boys from the hotel were loading a small inflatable dingy fitted with an outboard that bobbed gently with the movement of the sea.

‘How’re yuh doing?’ Neil Whitman’s voice boomed out raucously.

Ennis looked up and saw Whitman standing on the prow of the Fidji, full of life.

‘Where’s that drunk Ohlsson?’ he shouted.

‘Probably still sleeping, I suppose,’ called back Ennis.

‘You’d better get your arses over here quick, were not waiting about all day,’ laughed Whitman over the side.

They waded into the sea towards the dingy, threw their bags in and then clumsily scramble over the side, as a lone wave lifted it high in the water and the boys struggled to hold it steady. One of them lithely slipped into the dingy and with a deft movement started the outboard and turned towards the Fidji.

Whitman stowed their bags and offered them mugs of hot coffee. They stood a little unsteadily, familiarising themselves with surroundings on the deck of the Fidji. Ennis looked around admiringly, he had not really looked very closely at the boat the previous evening as they had caroused at the beach bar, and its vague outline had been barely perceptible in the dim lights of the hotel.



It was a thirty metre ketch; its two masts towered above the deck. Through the long windows, set into the side of the raised cabin he saw that the Fidji was comfortably fitted out with spacious living quarters. Ennis was not much of a sailor and apart from the occasional weekend invitation boats were not his thing.

The beach now moved gently and they had a clear view of the coast beyond, it rose in a series of fairly steep hills covered with thick vegetation and trees. The bungalows of the hotel looked bleached by the sun, there was not much movement apart from the small group at the spot where the dingy had returned and beached.

‘Where the hell is that old sod Ohlsson?’ said Whitman belching loudly. Ennis laughed, noting the can of beer that had appeared in Whitman’s hand.

‘Six in the morning and you’re already on the beer.’

‘You’re wrong there pal,’ he said laughing, ‘I haven’t left off since last night!’

On the beach they could now make out a bedraggled figure trailing a bag, whilst one of the boys was trying to indicate the direction, pointing towards the boat.

‘Looks like Lars,’ said Mel, Whitman’s girlfriend, who appeared at the helm looking fresh and healthy, a real Australian beauty.

Ennis could not help looking back at Neil, he was very tall but he had one helluva gut, he thought, a witness to his heavy contribution to the Australian Brewers Group. He supposed Mel must at least think the boat was appealing. Lars had told them that she had been a hostess with Qantas when the two of them decided that they had seen enough of airports and civilisation

Krakatau is a small volcanic island in the middle of the Sunda Straits between Java and Sumatra. Today it is commonly called Anak Krakatau; in Indonesian it means baby Krakatau. It was torn from the womb of the volcano Perbuatan on the 26 August 1883 in a gigantic explosion that ripped the island apart. The explosion was heard as far away as Sri Lanka and Australia, the volcano split in two and the caldera collapsed and sank into the sea.

Originally the island was about nine kilometres long, five wide, and the volcano and was believed to be extinct. It rose to over eight hundred metres and the whole island was covered with luxuriant vegetation.

It had begun erupting in May of that same year and the activity gradually increased until it reached its terrible climax on 26 and 27 August, when the final eruption occurred.

‘Maybe you don’t know John, but the re-colonisation of the island of Krakatau, by trees and plants, is considered to be one of the most spectacular examples on record. Its original vegetation was entirely destroyed by the great eruption of 1883,’ Ohlsson told him.

He had commenced one of his professorial lectures, which he launched into from time to time on unsuspecting victims. However, on this occasion Ennis felt that he would enjoy it, as he looked at the edge of the otherwise taught sails that flapped from time to time as the wind turned and the Fidji rose and fell on the waves.

‘Yes, I’m familiar with the great disaster when the volcano erupted, I think about 36,000 people killed by the eruption and the huge tidal wave that it set off.’

‘Yes, well, what the object of my trip is to see for myself this re-colonisation. It’s been the subject of an enormous volume of scientific literature. Another reason is that the subject has unfortunately become one of those endless disputes that exist in the scientific world, because of the many conflicting theories held by the botanists.’

‘You should know Lars you’re one of them.’

Ohlsson continued, ignoring the jibe. ‘The big question is whether or not any of original vegetation on the island survived the eruption.’

‘It seems unlikely that anything survived, after what I’ve read of the eruption, it was perhaps the biggest explosion in human history.’

‘Maybe, and the early visitors to the island believed that it was the case, but in 1929 a botanist named Backer put forward his theory that questioned this assumption, he said that at least some of the original flora could have survived, such as roots or seeds and perhaps spores, in shelters or in the soil, on parts of the island which were not

explored until years after the eruption. Whether the destruction of the fauna had been complete was questioned by other scientists.'

'What was it like before the eruption?'

'We know nothing about the nature and composition of the vegetation and there is no reason to, it was totally without interest until the eruption, but no doubt it was tropical rainforest similar to that in nearby Sumatra.'

'That's logical.'

Ennis looked back towards the coast, which was now just a line on the horizon, there was a steady wind, not enough to break the waves but it produced a fairly heavy swell.

'Bordering the shore before the eruption, there were certainly the typical kinds of littoral plant communities you could expect, higher up on the mountain different types of rainforest would have been found, probably what we call Submontane and Montane rainforests.

'The island literally collapsed as a result of the eruption and the peak split in two, although its highest point still remained. The surviving parts of Krakatau were covered with pumice stone and ash to an average depth of thirty meters and a new area of almost five square kilometres was added to the southern coast.

Ennis whistled, 'Thirty meters of ash, that's a lot of ash.'

'Yes, it certainly is, during the period of volcanic activity the bulk of the vegetation was destroyed. As I said, until recently all investigators agreed that after the eruption the island was completely devoid of all life, and any plants or animals found there after the eruption must have been carried there by the sea or by the wind.

'The vegetation of two adjacent islets, Verlaten Island and Lang Island, was destroyed at the same time. On Sebesi Island, which is about twenty kilometres from Krakatau, the vegetation was also very seriously damaged, but not completely destroyed.'

'What happened after the eruption?'

'After 1883, there was no further major volcanic activity. Heavy tropical rains soon cut deep gullies in the layers of ash and pumice the covered the island and as they did they uncovered the seeds of plants which had lain dormant under the ash.'

‘Did anybody visit the island after the eruption?’

‘Yes, there was a fellow called E.Cotteau who visited Krakatau in May 1884, he found that it was still a barren volcanic desert, the only living thing he saw was a spider, which was probably carried there by the wind.’

Whitaker took it in turns at the helm with Mel, who took the opportunity of a pause to get out a pannier of sandwiches that the hotel had prepared and several bottles of cold beer; it was after ten and the sea air had stimulated their appetites. As they ate and drank watching the seabirds that followed them as Lars Ohlsson continued his story.

‘When the botanist Treub arrived in June 1886, there was already quite a lot of vegetation growing. He described the difference between the flora that he found on the beach and that which he found in the interior of the island.’

‘Isn’t that normal, I mean the seeds and plants brought by the sea will grow on the beach.’

‘That’s right, on the beach he found several species of flowering plants, in addition he found the seeds of a number of other species. These were nearly all the kind of species that are commonly found on recently emerged coral islands and that are common in these tropical regions.

Beyond the beach the most common plants were ferns. The flowering plants he found were scattered and far less numerous than the ferns. Treub was not able to go very far into the interior of the island and did not go back until many years later.’

‘What did he find then?’

‘When he went back in 1897, the vegetation had gained a lot of ground.’

‘That’s fascinating, but what’s your interest or what’s the general interest in this specific case.’

‘It’s easy John, I and other botanists, who are concerned about the state of nature in this part of the world, are seriously worried about nature’s capacity to reconstitute itself after catastrophic events.’

‘Catastrophic events, what’s that got to do with today.’

‘You’re not getting the message,’ he said with a certain emotion in his voice, ‘you’re missing the point, we are at this moment living in perhaps the most disastrous epoch in man’s history. Don’t you see what you people, what industry is doing to the forest, forty five percent of the mangroves have disappeared in this country in the space of a few years, and that wasn’t done by shifting cultivation, they were and still are the biggest by far in Asia. But at this rate, by the end of the century all that will remain will probably be a few miserable kilometres of natural parks.’

Always getting the blame, thought Ennis.

‘We want to know if nature can reconstitute itself and under what conditions. A century ago there was a vast reserve of seeds, plants, insects and animals to re-colonise areas like Krakatau, and today I ask you what would happen.’

Ennis shrugged his shoulders.

‘What will happen in the Philippines after the eruption of Pinatubo?’

Ennis did not reply, suddenly there was a loud but dull explosion, they all turned to the western horizon, where they saw a vertical jet of white smoke in the sky rising above the grey blue form of an island, it was Krakatau.

‘What the hell was that?’ shouted Whitman.

‘The volcano!’ said Ohlsson in a nonchalant fashion.

‘The volcano, you didn’t tell me the fuckin this was still alive! Jesus Christ man!’

‘Don’t worry, they’re only small eruptions.’

There was another crack and streamers of white smoke arched slowly through the distant sky.

‘What about my bloody boat,’ screamed Whitman.

‘Dont worry, I tell you its nothing,’ he said looking to the three English specialists for support.

The bearded one replied, ‘No he’s right, it’s really nothing, there probably won’t be anything more now for a few days.’

Whitman was not reassured; taking a beer from the icebox he sat down by one of the winches and looked worriedly towards the

horizon.

‘How far are we away now?’ said Ennis trying to change the subject.

‘About six or seven miles I’d say, about an hour at this rate, if we don’t get hit by a fuckin ball of fire,’ Whitman said testily.

‘Don’t fret you old bastard,’ said Ohlsson trying to smooth him.

‘Really Lars, nobody told me that that dammed thing was still active.’

‘Don’t worry Neil, nobody’s been killed there for over a hundred years.’

‘Well I don’t want to be the first, and I don’t want any of that shit falling on my boat.’

They all laughed relaxing a little bit after the initial surprise.

‘What’s it throwing up anyway?’ said Ennis to Ken Hawkins the geologist.

‘Well it’s mostly pumice and stuff like that, nothing really big, more noise and smoke than danger,’ he said with a serious expression, telling them that it was his expert opinion.

‘I hope you boys are right,’ said Whitaker.

Anak Krakatau was a smoking grey cone of cinders and pumice that rose out of the sea, flanked by dense green vegetation at its base. They anchored about twenty metres offshore. Whitaker lowered the yachts inflatable dingy into the smooth water. Lars clambered over the side followed by Mely. They paddle the dingy to the beach, which was not composed of sand as it had appeared from the distance, but fine white pumice.

Ennis dived into the water from the deck of the Fidji and swam to the shore, Hawkins followed him. The water was silky smooth and very warm. The lumps of pumice stone that floated about astonished Ennis. They miraculously bobbed around on the gentle swell.

Their idea was to explore the island with the boat serving as their base over the two days they planned to remain. After an hour they had assembled their material necessary for the investigation on the beach. The island was small, in reality it was the rim of what had remained of the crater but it was growing slowly day-by-day, already

reaching a height of three hundred metres.

Hawkins and his two friends had planned to climb to the summit of cone and invited Ennis together with Jenny to join them. He estimated a couple of hours or so would be sufficient. They intended to take temperatures and measure the concentrations of carbonic and sulphuric gases. Ohlsson told them that he would explore the lower levels to study the vegetation and collect specimens.

The going was easy to start with, but as they progressed the angle became steeper. Hawkins pointed the way ahead, avoiding the blowholes, where hot sulphurous gases escaped from the volcano. He tested the ground as he progressed making sure it was solid, explaining that dangerous cavities existed below the sometimes-fragile surface.

As they advanced the ground became less stable, it was composed of loose cinders and ash, two steps forward then sliding one step back. The temperature of the ground had increased, because of the heat from the volcano and also the sun. They panted heavily and pressed on. Ennis looked behind; the beach seemed to lie far below the steep slope. He felt uneasy thinking of the eruption that they had seen just a few hours earlier.

Jenny was oblivious to any dangers and pushed on with Hawkins as Ennis fell back. When they arrived at the summit, it was a disappointment for Ennis, an anticlimax, the other side of the slope fell away some fifty metres before rising again to a much steeper cone, the real volcano. It had been hidden by the secondary and smaller cone that they had just climbed. Ennis had enough and made his way back down. Hawkins pushed on with Jenny; they were tiny forms, like insects, as they continued their climb to the top on what appeared to be an almost vertical slope.

It was almost dark when they returned to the beach, where Whitaker had set up a barbecue and a camp table for dinner. After plunging into the warm sea to refresh themselves, they settled down with beer and ice that had been brought from the Fidji. Jenny talked excitedly about her exploit as the geologists described what they had seen to Ohlsson.

They talked late into the night, before settling down to sleep under the stars the filled the tropical sky. Ennis was soon sleeping deeply, in spite of the nagging worry of the dangers and uncertainties of an eruption that had pursued him that evening.

## Chapter 38 - VISITORS

Sutrawan casually suggested they fly to Bali for the weekend and Jenny jumped at the idea. His excuse was he had some business to settle there and wanted to get away from the noise and heat of Jakarta. The plan was to leave on the Saturday morning and they agreed to meet at the airport and taking a regular flight on Garuda to Denpasar, about an hour's flight from Jakarta.

They were then surprised when Sutrawan had left a message the Friday afternoon inviting them both to the Nusantara nightclub for dinner the same evening. He had asked them to meet him there at eight o'clock. Ennis was curious as to why they had been invited, he had seen Sutrawan only the previous day, and he had mentioned nothing.

Ennis had been to the Nusantara there several times before, there was a good restaurant with a small dance floor and every evening an attractive resident singer with an excellent group of musicians entertained the dinners until the early hours.

They took a taxi to the Nusantara Building; the nightclub was on the 24th floor. The building, Ennis had heard, was owned by Japanese, it was not surprising as it housed the representative offices of many internationally well know Japanese companies. They took a private lift directly to the 24th floor, where the hostess welcomed them with a dazzling smile. She told them that Bak Sutrawan's party had not yet arrived, and suggested that they wait at the table that had been reserved for six people or alternatively at the bar.

They were early as usual, Jenny remarked, and decided that the bar would be more appropriate, where they headed for a before diner



drink waiting for Sutrawan, and curious to know who the other guests would be.

As they sipped their drinks they looked out into the darkness over the city. Beyond the reflection of the candles in the panoramic windows, they saw the lights of some of the nearby high rise buildings. The lights of Jakarta were unlike those of many other cities; they were soft and from the Nusantara seemed to be very far down, they were like the lights of a vast sprawling village.

The noise of the traffic on the avenue below, Jalan Thamrin, was almost inaudible, the lights of the cars seemed to move very slowly.

From where he was seated at the bar, Ennis could see from the corner of his eye the restaurant lobby, where the lifts arrived. He glanced in that direction from time to time, keeping a look out for Sutrawan.

After a short wait he appeared out of the lift, smiling, his thick black hair slicked down, his muscular torso filling the grey silk batik shirt, he ushered in his guests, a cigarette in his hand and his diamond studded gold watch sparkling in the lights of the lobby.

Ennis could see that there were two attractive young women, who did not appear to be Indonesian, and a man he seemed to recognise as Nat Somchai, a Thai. He remembered having briefly him met once or twice before. Sutrawan looked around and the hostess nodded in the direction of the bar, Ennis waved, and they went to greet Sutrawan.

‘Hello John,’ he said, pumping Ennis’ hand and then kissing Jenny on the cheek.

‘Let me introduce you to Nat, I think you have met before, yes?’

They shook hands, whilst the girls stood demurely to one side.

‘And this is Siriphen and.....’ He struggled trying to pronounce the other name.

‘Visavarunee,’ Nat helped him out, as the girls giggled with embarrassment.

‘I’m sorry Thai names are so difficult, and this is Jenny.’

Sutrawan spoke raspingly, telling them he had caught chill and was loosing his voice.

Nat was on a visit to Jakarta. ‘Business and pleasure,’ he said with

a wink, it was evidently more pleasure than business. His girl friend, Visavarunee, was a picture of Thai perfection, beauty and class, clearly from a very good family background. Her friend could have been described as perhaps a little plain, but certainly not unattractive, like Visavarunee she too had class.

They were seated by the hostess, at a table next to the musicians, adjacent to the small dance floor. The headwaiter took Sutrawan's order for drinks, a bottle of Hennessy XO for the men, a cola for Jenny, with juices for Visavarunee and Siriphen.

'We shall cook our own dinner!' said Sutrawan laughing as he ordered the main course, a Shabu Shabu, what was sometimes called a Steam Boat, filled with a vegetable broth and heated by live coals until the broth was on the verge of boiling. Then fresh spring onions, oriental cabbage leaves and cubes of soya pâté were all carefully stirred into the broth by Sutrawan. The guests then took with their chopsticks thin slices of red raw beef, presented on two enormous dishes, placed on the table between each of the three couples. They then stirred the meat with their chopsticks lightly in the broth until it suited their taste .

A delicate operation, if they were to avoid being burnt or splashed by the boiling vegetable broth, which dripped from the meat held by the chopsticks. They laughed a great deal, enjoying themselves as the music played in the background. Nat recounted amusing stories of their last two days in Jakarta; he spoke perfect English, as did his two girl friends.

From time to time, Sutrawan shook hands with a friend, who arrived in the restaurant, or waved to another, at the same time looking after his guests, serving them meat and drinks. He paid particular attention to Siriphen, who intrigued him, especially as she was alone; it was a challenge to his power of seduction.

The nightclub singer hovered near their table, asking for requests, which they wrote on small slips of paper, whilst Sutrawan joked, asking Nat to sing. Nat replied by laughing promising he would sing later. From time to time Sutrawan with great amusement whispered remarks in Chinese, concerning Visavarunee, to Jenny who laughed a

lot.

Sutrawan was always the master of surprises; he mixed people together like an alchemist, with unexpected results. Ennis by then knew him well; he waited for the moment, which was not long in coming.

‘John, you know my friend Lee?’

‘Soetero?’

‘No, Lee from Hong Kong Allied.’

‘Yes, of course,’ Ennis was surprised and alert.

‘You met him in Australia.’ It was a statement of fact.

‘Yes, he was introduced to me by a friend from one of the banks.’

‘Well he called me, you know were old friends, were selling Kawasaki forest machines together.’

‘Yes he told me.’

‘Did he talk to you about the clear cutting contracts for transmigration in Central Kalimantan?’

Ennis’ puzzlement must have been clear on his face, he had not heard of such contracts.

‘They’re in Borneo, Central Kalimantan, our future concessions,’ He said with a smug smile.

‘Oh!’

He made an exaggerated wink, telling him that they would talk about it the next day, during their trip to Bali. He announced Nat and his two friends would join them.

‘Gan bei-drink up young man-sing Nat,’ Sutrawan tried to shout, but it was a hoarse croak.

Nat was one of Sutrawan’s mysterious friends, he was one of those people born with all the luck on his side, he was wealthy, good looking and intelligent, a perfect playboy. Nat was the President of the Thai Olympic Committee, and more extraordinary the Vice Rector of the University of Bangkok.

Sutrawan amongst his many engagements, was the president of the World Badminton Association, and had been working hard for the next Olympic program. Nat was one of his many contacts in ASEAN. He was a close friend of Thailand’s Prime Minister, a

useful friend in a country where Sutrawan's partner Gao, was also investing heavily in the pulp and paper industry.

Nat took the microphone; Ennis had observed that he had consumed a good amount of XO; he was a little concerned about what might follow.

He was surprised. In fact astonished, was more his reaction. He had feared the worse, but he could not have been more wrong. Nat was an accomplished nightclub singer; he could have been a professional. His repertoire was nothing less than extraordinary, from Frank Sinatra to Julio Iglesias. He enchanted his audience with his charm and style, as Sutrawan glowed in the pleasure and success of his friend.

They enjoyed their evening; it was perfect, almost magic. The next day they would leave together for Bali, and already anticipated the pleasure of being together.

They waited for Sutrawan's car at the entrance to the Nusantara Building at street level. His Kretek glowed as he drew deeply on the cigarette, the breeze sending a shower of sparks into the warm air; it appeared like a halo around his head. He distributed largess to the doorman and the parking attendant as his driver opened the doors of the Mercedes for them.

His voice was rasping, he laughingly made signs, like a mute, indicating to them to squeeze into the car, four in the back and two in the front with the driver, they laughed a lot, a little tipsy with drink and pleasure.

Sutrawan was becoming desperate at his lack of success with Siriphen and the two girls were increasingly amused by his efforts.

Ennis and Jenny were dropped off at the Borobudur; they said goodnight, Jenny telling Sutrawan to take care of his cold, whilst blowing him a kiss.

On arrival at Denpasar airport, on the island of Bali, they found a small delegation waiting for them, they looked serious, and perhaps, as Ennis thought, a little sinister.

It was not surprising, since the leader was the Provincial

Commander of the National Security Police. Ennis recognised the kind he was, an army man, who was no doubt linked by mutual trust to Sutrawan, through a complicated network of favours that were constantly given and returned. Sutrawan paid a great deal of attention and effort, to maintaining and privileging his network.

Colonel Supramanto was typical of the moustachioed military men in Indonesia, well fed with an air of silent confidence, slick and not unsurprisingly tough. They exchanged greetings, in a businesslike manner. Sutrawan continued a discrete exchange as Supramanto accompanied them to the two cars, waiting to take them to the Hotel.

The Bali Beach Hotel was at Sanur Beach, about twenty minutes from the airport, where Sutrawan had an eight-room suite. Ennis had to admit to himself, that he was curious about Bali. He had avoided what he saw as a tourist trap up to that moment in time, he was almost proud to say he had never visited that tiny exotic island, with its two and half million population whose religion was Hindu-plus half of the Australians from Sydney during the tourist season.

Another point of interrogation that lay in the back of his mind, was why Sutrawan had invited him, it was not simply for the pleasure of his company. That was sure, because whilst Sutrawan travelled extensively, there was always a business reason lurking in the background, even if he mixed it with his apparent pursuit of pleasure.

It was part of his business philosophy, providing an environment that was propitious to the development of friendship and the creation of lasting bonds with his partners. It also helped to determine whether his circle of friends and relations accepted the newcomers. Those they rejected were rejected by Sutrawan.

Nat was a long-standing friend, perhaps he was merely entertaining him for the weekend. There was another serious reason, which was that Sutrawan simply wanted to screw Siriphen's friend, who represented a particular challenge, being of a good family and being relatively shy, she was different to the nightclub singers and hostesses, whom he normally pursued.

They settled into one of the rooms of the sumptuous suite, which although Ennis found spacious was nevertheless stifling having

Sutrawan so near. He felt that he was Sutrawan's creature, unable to relax, called to keep him company whenever he opened the cognac. His room phone rang, it was Sutrawan.

'Hey John come and have a drink!'

They found him perched at the bar in the main reception room of the suite.

'Have a drink,' he said waving a bottle of XO. He looked tired and pale.

'So how are you? Did you speak with Danny?'

'About what?'

He shrugged, 'About the plantations? By the way John what's Suarez doing?'

Ennis was surprised at the question; he did not understand what Sutrawan was getting at.

'I don't know, I mean he's supposed to be preparing a plan for replantation, timber farms and all that.'

'Has he said anything unusual to you?'

'No,' Ennis hesitated, 'he's just said that things are a bit slow, the plantations would probably be late.'

'Listen John, don't worry about the plantations, Danny is working on that. In any case if the plantations are late we'll do the same as we have done at our Bintang Agung pulp mill.'

Ennis looked questioningly.

'We'll use the logged over forest, clear-cutting like I told you the other evening, no problem there's plenty of wood there,' Sutrawan laughed pouring a large cognac for Ennis. 'Hey, drink up!'

So that was it. It was not more than a couple of weeks since Suarez had expressed worries that Bintang Agung's plantation programme was having difficulty. It was his diplomatic way of saying that they were almost non-existent. They were ten years behind in the selection of trees; just a few thousand hectares had been planted.

Ennis felt strangely hollow, he suddenly realised that what Ohlsson and Jenny had been preaching was probably true. He felt disappointment with Sutrawan a hint of a force that he had not

previously sensed before.

‘Hey John, I’m going to relax a little,’ which meant that he intended to sleep for two or three hours.

‘Tonight you are invited to the Balinese theatre, its here in the hotel gardens, I’ve seen it all before,’ he laughed, excusing himself. ‘After the driver will bring you to the restaurant, I’ll meet you there for dinner.’

The two Thai girls looked pleased; they did not want to miss any of the tourist attractions whilst they were in Bali.

‘So be in the lobby at six, now I suggest you take a rest!’ he looked at Ennis and Jenny with a wicked smile.

Ennis smiled back, but thought to himself, what does he think we do, fuck all the time, and then on reflection he admitted to himself, well I suppose we do, at least part of the time.

They had a couple of hours and decided to look around the hotel, the gardens were magnificent, and they were big, very big. There were tennis courts near to the beach, which were practically deserted. As they stood on the edge of the beach looking at the sea, one of the tennis attendants struck up a conversation with them.

‘What’s down there?’ said Jenny, waving to where the beach curved away to a point in the distance.

‘Nothing,’ he told them. ‘It is nice for a walk, but there are no villages nearby, just the beach, it’s quiet, best to stay here. If you want to see more, go to Sanur or Denpasar, a big town,’ he said with a proud smile.

They walked hand in hand down the beach, Jenny was wearing a one piece swimsuit with a light almost transparent batik sari pulled around her shoulders, to protect her from the sun, she did not value a tan as did European women, she preferred her skin natural, dark skin was for peasants.

They walked for almost an hour before turning back; there was almost nothing on the beach apart from a few stray dogs.

The theatre was a replica of a Balinese temple, built in dark volcanic stone, carved with scenes from Hindu mythology; it was open to the

sky. The five of them were seated in front of the stage, the girls chatted in excited anticipation of the show as they looked at the stage on which were scattered deep red exotic blooms. It was cleverly illuminated with long dark shadows, giving it a dramatic effect, it was night and occasionally the sky was lit by flashes of lightning on the horizon.

The show was moving and dramatic, recounting in a spectacular dance, one of the great legends of the Ramayana to the hypnotic music of the Gamelan. Ennis had to admit that he enjoyed it; the mystic traditions of Bali lived up to their reputation, even if some had been invented for the benefit of the twentieth century tourist industry.

After the show they returned to the hotel reception, arriving just as large drops of rain began to fall, the driver was waiting to take them to a restaurant where Sutrawan was waiting for them.

They were disappointed by the restaurant, it was plain and uninteresting, an anticlimax after the theatre. Sutrawan was already installed in a sombre corner, with Supramanto, the National Security Police commander.

The restaurant that was not especially full, it was not surprising. As the dinner wore, on Sutrawan seemed to be more engaged than normal in a deep tête-à-tête with his police friend, speaking an Indonesian, which Ennis had great difficulty to understand, not only because of Sutrawan's rapidly disappearing voice but because they were not speaking in Bhasa, but a mixture of Javanese and Bhasa with some Balinese thrown in.

In the relatively dim light of the open-air restaurant, the police chief took on a serious and sinister look.

'John!' Sutrawan suddenly said in English. 'Supramanto here can help you in Kalimantan'

Ennis was taken by surprise.

'Supramanto is with the Security Forces, his brother's unit is responsible for logistics for the army command in Kalimantan.'

Ennis animated interest, although he could not directly see where this unexpected proposition was leading.

'All movements, in and out of the country, have to be controlled



by the security forces. In our project in Kalimantan, we shall be moving people and materials directly to and from Singapore each month, according our permits from the Central Bank, the Minister of Industry and the BKPM.

His brothers unit that provides security and issue permits for all movements in and out of the province.'

'I see,' Ennis murmured, waiting for him to arrive at the essential point.

'Supramanto's son will be going to study at Brisbane University next year, he'll require assistance, so I have promised him that you will help,' he beamed. 'His brother is with the Airforce Transport Command in Kalimantan, so shall be able work with him for transport questions.'

Ohlsson had explained to Ennis that such military men provided cover for many illegal-logging operations in concessions controlled by the army and their friends. The very fact the Supramanto was a friend of Sutrawan seemed to point in that direction, and the not so subtle introduction of his brother was confirmation.

Supramanto relaxed and smiled, that problem was out of the way, it was clear that some deal had been agreed; Ennis' presence had been necessary as some kind of witness and proof of their engagement. He had been unwittingly used by Sutrawan to spread his hold on clear cutting for pulpwood to Kalimantan.

Sutrawan's voice had almost disappeared, and Supramanto started talking in excellent English, turning the conversation to a subject that he was more familiar with, police work on the island of Bali.

He surprised them, talking of drugs, vice, robbery and violence, which he explained occurred almost exclusively amongst the transient tourist population and which was often perpetrated by marginals who had illegally overstayed their visa period. His job seemed to be that of a cop anywhere, but, with the added responsibility of keeping things under wraps, avoiding bad publicity in the media for the tourist trade.

He turned out to be very amusing and enjoyed drinking with them. They finally settled down and stayed until quiet late listening with

eyes wide open to Supramanto's unusual and interesting stories, some of which were quiet gruesome. It was eleven when he was called over his radio on police business; he excused himself and left the table.

They returned to the hotel as Sutrawan made signs that he was tired; he had lost his voice completely.

Three days later Ennis left for Manila to discuss details with the Asian Development Bank. On his returned to Jakarta, after ten days absence he called Sutrawan and was informed he was out of town. The ADBs specialists were due to arrive in Jakarta ten days later, to go through the draft agreements and Sutrawan's presence, as local partner was necessary.

After several unsuccessful attempts to get Sutrawan, he finally got through to Danny, who said he could not talk over the phone and suggested that they meet for lunch at a Japanese restaurant that he knew Ennis liked.

'Bak Sutrawan is in Boston.'

'In Boston!' said Ennis surprised; there had been no talk of Boston when they were in Bali.

Though Ennis was not informed of all of Sutrawan's movements, he felt sure that he would have mentioned a trip to Boston to him whilst they were in Bali together.

'Yes, to Boston, he's been having trouble with his throat, he can't talk and he went to Singapore.'

'Singapore?'

Danny laughed, 'Don't look so worried its nothing, enjoy your Tepanyaki.'

'Is he ill then?'

'No nothing serious, you know here in Jakarta, if people have anything they go to Singapore, so Bak Sutrawan went to Singapore.'

'What did they say then?'

'They said he lost his voice,' he laughed again. 'That was easy to diagnosis, they said he should see a specialist and as he was going to Boston anyway for the Badminton Association to talk about the next

world championship, he decided to see a specialist there,' Danny said shrugging his shoulders.

'When will he be back?'

'In a couple of weeks.'

Ennis was a little bit uneasy; it was unlike Sutrawan to be ill. It did not look right and Ennis suspected that he was avoiding him for some obscure reason.

He would be away for two weeks, just when he was needed for the ADB visit. Danny was running the business whilst Sutrawan was in the USA and Riady was looking after the pulp mill project.

The trouble was that when Sutrawan was away, everybody looked after their own personal interests, their own pet projects, and the main business tended to get second seat. It was a critical moment and Sutrawan's presence was important as only he could make any important decisions.

Sutrawan did not return as scheduled and the meeting with the ADB took place with Riady being present. Riady informing him that Danny had flown to Boston, that was too much for Ennis, a waste of time. The ADB representative left without any real progress being made.

Ennis flew to Taipei; it was exactly one month since he had since he had last seen Sutrawan in Bali. A rumour was now making the rounds that Sutrawan would be away for several weeks. Ennis was perplexed; he had been getting pressure from Paris to find out what was going on if anything, as Axelmann could not keep the banks on hold indefinitely, they should be at least given some dates.

He took the lift up to the fourth floor in the Mei Chih building and was shown into the waiting room by the receptionist. The waiting room was reserved for important visitors; in reality it a trophy room, an example of pure Chinese kitsch, where the company displayed the gifts made to the Gao's over the years. Ornate clocks in glass cases, engraved shields and elaborate flags.

He received the traditional glass of hot water and as he sipped it, remembering the first time he had been treated to the ritual, he had

thought that they had forgotten the tealeaves.

The wait was longer than normal. Gao arrived in his busy-busy down to business manner. He was dressed in his usual well-cut blue pin stripe, Japanese style, business suit, wearing a white shirt and a sober tie. Normally he was friendly and smiling. This time he wore a fixed and serious face.

‘Hello Mr Ennis.’ He always started on a formal step, before settling into a more familiar style.

Ennis had always used the formal style of addressing him-Mr Gao-he did not know his familiar name, though certain foreigners called him S.C., initials for Sho Chung.

He got down to serious matters at once.

‘You know that Sutrawan is seriously ill.’ It was more of a statement than a question.

Ennis replied with an expression of sympathetic interest, the information was nothing new, he convinced himself that Sutrawan had nothing serious.

‘They have diagnosed throat cancer.’

He hesitated, between shock and mild disbelief, knowing that the differences in life style of the two men had more than once created mutual antagonism. Gao in the conservative Chinese Confucian tradition considered Sutrawan as a hua hua gong si, a spend thrift playboy. Sutrawan, who had worked his own way to riches, from the tough life of a Surabaya rice porter, considered Gao, the son of an old moneyed family, as a soft daddy’s boy who could not drink and who disapproved of Sutrawan’s friends and life style.

‘He is having chemio-therapy treatment in Boston, I’m sorry to tell you that there is no hope, he will be returning to Jakarta at the beginning of the month.’

Ennis was lost for words he was torn between his friendship for Sutrawan and the heavy consequences his incapacity could have for their business.

‘You must inform your friends in Paris and find a new partner,’ he said coldly and patronisingly. There was a strong hint of I told you so.

Ennis left with a dry bitter taste in his mouth and the sickening feeling he had lost.

## Chapter 39 - BAD NEWS

After ten days in Paris Ennis had relaxed, things were quiet it was the summer lull. The office was half empty with the start of the vacation period. It was just after ten thirty, time to step out for a coffee and get some air. He strolled down Avenue Matignon to the Publicis Drugstore on the corner, bought a Herald Tribune and selected a table in the café that looked across the avenue to the gardens. He sat down and observed the movement on the opposite pavement where the stamp collectors and dealers had set up their small stalls for the weekly market.

Ennis ordered an espresso and unfolded his paper, keeping an eye opened so as not to miss any attractive girl that passed. It was early July, the weather was fine and clear, the normal urgency of the French had been suspended for two months. The office had been quiet since he had arrived in Paris and that was the way he wanted it to stay that way until it was time to return to Singapore.

The newspaper held no surprises, problems in Russia, Middle East peace plans, and the election campaign preparations in the States. He turned the pages, half glancing at the miscellaneous news; a small headline caught his eye in World Briefs, 'Corporate Jet Lost in Borneo'. He immediately focused his attention on the details.

Searchers suspended their hunt for a twin engine Gulfstream II jet at nightfall Wednesday after it disappeared on a flight from Kota Kinabulu to Jakarta, aviation officials said. Air traffic control lost contact with the plane owned by Gunung Mas just after two in the afternoon Jakarta time. Indonesian Airforce jets and Army helicopters began a search for the jet. The plane was carrying high-level officials from the Ministry of Forests and businessmen. The

search will resume early Thursday they said.

He quickly pulled some coins from his pocket, which he left on the table and hurried back to the office.

‘Look!’ he cried waving the newspaper at Axelmann and shouting to his secretary to put an urgent call through to Indonesia. It was five in the afternoon in Jakarta and he might just catch Riady before he left his office.

In less than five minutes Riady was on the line.

‘Hi, it’s John.’

‘You’re calling about Wihartjo!’

‘Wihartjo!’

‘Yes, his planes missing.’

‘Christ! It was his plane, what happened?’

‘Don’t know, he was flying back from a meeting in Kota Kinabulu and they went missing over Kalimantan.’

‘Who was with him?’

‘Rudini and Wolf.’

‘Jesus Christ! When did it happen?’

‘Yesterday midday.’

‘When will they have some details?’

‘You know what it’s like in that area, nothing, thousands of miles of forest, the army’s searching for them.’

Riady promised to let them know as soon as he had any news. Ennis was shaken, it was bad news, very bad, it could not have been worse, they were due to sign the agreements in less than two weeks, agreements with the concessionaires, which had been negotiated after so many difficulties. If Wihartjo and his team disappeared it would be a disaster, who would sign?

Axelmann lifted his hands and shook his head, more bad news; it was as though the project was jinxed.

‘That’s all we needed.’

‘Where’s Brodzski?’

‘Don’t tell him until there’s confirmation.’

‘Where is he?’

‘I don’t know, he’s got a lunch appointment, it’s Thursday, after he’ll disappear for his weekly rendez-vous, he won’t be back today.’

‘Okay, let’s wait until tomorrow, maybe there’ll be some news then.’

Ennis knew that there was very little chance. The jet had disappeared over twenty-four hours previously. It would be like trying to find a needle in a haystack; maybe a small prop plane could, with a good deal of luck, find a landing spot and survive, but not a jet.

He tried to analyse what it would mean, it was not too difficult. If Wihartjo and his close staff had been killed, the forestry department would be headless. A new minister would certainly be nominated within a couple of weeks, no doubt a politician, who would need time to study all the details before engaging his signature on a document that involved hundreds millions of dollars.

It would mean endless delays, probably renegotiation as the concessionaires had been practically forced into the agreement at gunpoint. It would depend on who was nominated as the new minister.

It was another three days before the scattered wreckage was sighted by an army helicopter, on a hillside near Mount Raya in the Schwaner Mountains in the dark heart of Kalimantan. There were no survivors.

## Chapter 40 - SINGAPORE

It was six o’clock when Ennis met gao in the lobby of the Dynasty Hotel. Gao was serious and business like, his face was closed. They left directly taking a taxi to Queens Hospital, a huge complex somewhere on the edge of the city.

At the hospital’s main desk a white clad receptionist gave them Sutrawan’s room number and instructions on how to get to it. The complex was impressive, but above all huge, inhuman. After what

seemed to be an endless series of corridors and lifts, they arrived at another reception area, where they were told to wait for the other visitors.

Robert Tan, Soetero Lee and two other friends of Sutrawan's arrived shortly after. They were to be met at the reception Danny Lau who was already with Sutrawan.

Three months had passed since Sutrawan had been out of circulation, three months of mystery and suspense. Ennis, to his dismay and astonishment had experienced the very greatest difficulties in obtaining any precise information. He had first been informed that Sutrawan had gone to Singapore, then he was told he was in Boston. Sutrawan was then rumoured to have returned to Jakarta. Danny Lau finally informed him that he was being cared for at the Queens Hospital in Singapore.

The mystery had started in Bali when he had complained of nothing more than a bad throat. At the end of June, three weeks later, the last time Sutrawan had visited Europe, he had almost lost his voice. It was nothing more than a persistent summer cold, he had explained, nothing remarkable and Ennis had not given it another thought, too much smoking.

When Ennis tried to reach Sutrawan in July, Danny simply explained that he was undergoing treatment and would soon be back on his feet. Ennis saw nothing very unusual in that, people do get ill from time to time, and in Indonesia those with money often went abroad for treatment.

As the days passed Ennis inquired about his health, but was given evasive answers. At first he suspected that he was being avoided for some unexplained reason, or perhaps Sutrawan was in some kind of difficulty, or maybe he had had second thoughts about Barito and was distancing himself from the business.

When he inquired to Sutrawan's friends or business acquaintances as to the nature of his problem, they replied that they were unsure, or that it was nothing to worry about. Rumours then started to circulate that he was being treated for an unidentified illness. Then the word Aids was mentioned. It was too easy, Sutrawan was a notorious



womaniser, he pursued any female that passed within arms length, enjoying a very varied sex life.

Ennis dismissed the rumours out of hand, it was impossible, his rich and powerful rich was beyond the reach of anything could affect lesser mortals.

As the weeks wore on it slowly started penetrate into his mind that something serious was wrong. Brodzski asked Ennis provocatively where his friend had disappeared; Ennis suspected that he had been listening to Branet's poisonous gossip.

It was in Taipei when finally Gao announced that Sutrawan had an incurable throat cancer, that Ennis realised the problem was much graver than he had imagined.

That evening in Singapore, Ennis would finally learn the truth. The visitors made nervous small talk whilst they sat waiting; they spoke in short whispers, glancing around from time to time worriedly, like long absent sinners in a church.

The head nurse appeared and made a sign to them to follow her. They stood up, nervously stretching their legs and straightening their trousers, then followed a couple or so steps behind her, along the corridor in the severe blue-white fluorescent light, through the frosted glass swing doors. They were met unexpectedly by Mrs Sutrawan; she was a contrast of colour against the stark white background. She wore a smile, a surprisingly pleasant smile, it was an Indonesian smile, it was difficult to translate its meaning, but Ennis took it as a sign of resignation and courage. He felt relieved, as they all politely shook hands with her, she seemed to put them at ease, and then Danny appeared.

'Hi!' he said to each of them individually and shaking hands, his normally buoyant tone was absent, he was subdued, though his warm sincerity was still there.

'Come this way.'

He led them to 429, Sutrawan's room, which at first glance seemed to be like a hotel suit, though more antiseptic, white and functional. There was a small lobby, where Ennis stood behind Thomas Lee and Gao. To one side there was a bathroom and toilet,

they moved forward nervously, shuffling like timid guests into what looked like a reception room, there was a TV, a couch, a coffee table and a couple of easy chairs.

They followed Danny towards an alcove, there was another door, it was slightly ajar, leading to the bedroom.

Danny knocked gently and then backed away awkwardly, excusing himself in Chinese; a nurse was backing out pulling a wheel chair into the room.

She adroitly pivoted the wheelchair in a single movement so that it was then facing them. At first Ennis could not believe what he saw, in the chair was a small and wizened old man with very sparse white hair, he painfully lifted his hand and tried to speak, only a hoarse incoherent whisper came out, the old man tried to smile.

Ennis thought there must have been a mistake; they were in the wrong room.

It was Sutrawan.

He looked a hundred years old, only a few strands remained of his thick shiny black hair, his eyes were sunken and his mouth trembled, slightly open, as though he was chewing something, he could not have weighed not more than thirty or forty kilos. He was dressed in old-fashioned striped pyjamas and a thick red dressing gown that was open.

They stayed about ten or fifteen minutes at the most, putting on an act of trying to behave normally. There was nothing to say. Ennis was shaken. Then the nurse whispered something to Danny. He turned to them and softly said that Sutrawan was tired.

Sutrawan feebly lifted his hand in a sign of adieu.

They quietly murmured their final goodbyes and filed silently out of the room as the nurse turned Sutrawan's wheelchair towards the bedroom.

They left the hospital subdued and quietly bid each other goodbye. It was not the time to dine, drink or celebrate, as they done together so many times in the past.

Ennis accompanied Gao to the line of waiting taxis and they returned without a word to the Dynasty. Gao shook his hand at the

hotel entrance and as he took his leave he turned and said sternly.

‘Tell Mr Brodzski he will need a new partner!’

Ennis returned grimly to the house on Cluny road in silent contemplation, it was just a few days before Christmas and he was due to return to Paris where he intended to take a few days holiday.

Two weeks later as he sat in his office at La Defense, he gazed out at the heavy grey January sky, trying to put his thoughts together, when Brodzski walked in and dropped a fax onto his desk.

‘Your friend Sutrawan’s dead!’ he said with a clearly discernible air of schadenfreud, mixed with what Ennis suspected as smug triumph.

Ennis picked up the telex and slowly read it, it was brief, a death notice that had certainly been prepared in English on behalf of the family by Danny and dispatched to all of Sutrawan’s friends and business acquaintances across the world.

He was numb, in such a short space of time, a friend, a business partner, a man he had admired, had fallen ill and disappeared.

Ten days later back in Singapore Ennis tried to pick up the pieces. He analysed the possible candidates to replace Sutrawan. Theoretically his company could continue, but without a strong leader it would be difficult, Sutrawan had owned one hundred percent of Bintang Agung, his sons were too young to take over. In a very short time the family would probably sell out their interests - but to whom, that was the question.

‘Somebody to see you,’ said Mrs Tang tapping lightly on the door.

It was Suarez. He walked into the room smiling, the smile was apologetic, embarrassed.

‘Come in Antonio, sit down, what will you drink?’

‘A beer will be fine,’ Ennis made a sign to Mrs Tan to bring two beers.

They walked onto the veranda.

‘What’s on your mind then Antonio?’

‘Listen John I’ve made some decisions, I think we should sit down and talk about it.’

They took a seat on the veranda.

‘Well to go straight to the point, I’ve decided to return to Brazil.’

‘Oh, that’s a bit unexpected, why?’

‘You know the way things have been going, all of these delays and problems. Now that Sutrawan’s dead... basically I’ve been offered a new project to handle.’

‘In Brazil?’

‘Yes, it’s a new mill, a joint-venture between Canadians and Brazilians.’

‘They’ve got money?’

‘Yes, also they’ve already got forty thousand hectares of pine plantations in Santa Catarina State on the Rio Negro, that’s about five hundred kilometres south of Sao Paulo.’

‘Well I suppose it’s like home for you.’

‘That’s about it,’ he said smiling.

‘Is it a big project?’

‘Its small compared to Barito, they plan to make an investment of about one hundred million dollars, practically no infrastructure to be built, private capital and normal project financing. No soft loans.’

‘No soft loans?’ said Ennis wistfully.

‘No.’

‘When will it go ahead?’

‘Very soon, when they get the approval from the shareholders.’

‘So when do you intend to return?’

‘As soon as possible, once I’ve settled a few things, there’s nothing more for me to do here John.’

‘As you like. How come the investment is so low?’

‘It’s almost a mono-product mill, cheap wood, ready biomass for the power boilers, cheap labour, simple plant, no heavy infrastructure, minimum environmental considerations.’

‘Biomass, waste wood from harvesting...saw mill waste?’

‘Yeah, plus non-commercial wood collected from forest areas.’

‘Natural forest?’

‘I suppose so.’

‘Who’s going to build it?’

‘It’s a consortium, same set-up, you know civil engineering, electrical contractors and process equipment suppliers with an operator and banks.’

‘And of course the politicians, who will approve it.’

‘Of course.’

‘Where’s the mill site then?’

‘About fifty kilometres up the Rio Negro. The offices are in a place called Joinville, on the coast.’

‘Well Antonio, I can’t stop you, there’s sure to be delays here, like you said. If it doesn’t work out there and we get our act together here you’ll be welcome back anytime.’

After Suarez left, Ennis could not help thinking of a sinking ship. Who would be the next to quit, Gao! Hutan Industri!

## Chapter 41 - DAYAKS

A group of six or seven men climbed out of the Landcruiser, they were fierce looking, they were Dayak forest workers. Ennis could see at least three of them were carrying pahangs, large machetes normally used for clearing undergrowth in the forest; one of them with long hair and a Mexican style moustache stepped forward. In his hand he held a filthy jute sack tied with an old piece of string, he threw the sack on the floor, no word was spoken, they waited.

The Dayak stepped forward and bent over, his pahang in his right hand, and deftly cut the string, with his left hand he took the sack by one of the corners and pulled it sharply, a blackish ball or lump fell on the ground. Ennis concentrated his regard on the object, trying to distinguish what it was.

He gave a gasp, it was a head, a human head, the same man pushed it with the tip of his boot, it rocked and rolled slightly, coming to rest on one side.

Ennis felt his stomach heave and his bowels weaken.

‘Jesus Christ Almighty!’ said Ennis lowly, ‘It’s Soetrismo.’

He had recognised Soetrisno's buckteeth and his curly hair, which was now matted and dry, stuck against his skull.

'Who are these men, what has happened, where did they come from?' he shouted to those near him.

He turned sharply and ran towards the camp manager's office where he had last seen Riady.

'Riady, Riady!' he shouted at the top of his voice.

Riady appeared at the door, blinking in the bright sunlight, with a perplexed expression on his face looking at the apparent distress of Ennis.

'What's wrong?' said Riady hesitatingly.

'Soetrisno has been killed, his head is there,' he said pointing to the group that was gathering at the entrance to the camp.

'What do you mean?' he said walking towards Ennis.

They both half ran towards the group.

'Killed, who has been killed?'

'Soetrisno!'

Riady pushed through the crowd, looking on the ground as though he expected to see a body; Soetrisno's head was still lying in the same place. The onlookers stared silently at the head, it now seemed small, the eyes were half closed, they were like black slits, flies were crawling over the face.

Riady spoke sharply in Indonesian; 'What happened, who found this?' The man who had brought the sack stepped forward.

'We found it in the forest Bak, by the side of the road about five kilometres from here.'

'The villagers on the river near the rafting point found it and gave it to the logging workers.'

'Where did they find it then?'

'I don't know.'

'Ask them then for Christ sake,' said Ennis angrily.

Riady started talking to them there was a long exchange.

'We better go to the village, they,' he said point at the men with the pahangs, 'don't know.'

'Right let's go.'

They jumped into their Landcruiser, taking with them two of the men who had brought Soetrisno's to the camp. The village was five kilometres from the camp and they were there in ten minutes, Riady pulled up at the foot of a rickety stairway leading up to a long house.

It was a typical of a river side village in Borneo, a few long wooden houses on stilts, built on the edge of the river, with shaky string walkways joining them together, probably a couple of hundred or so people lived there.

Night was falling as a young man showed them to the headman's house; the light was weak as they were beckoned to enter. Ennis could make out several old men crouched in a semi-circle, smoking thick cigarettes rolled in wild tobacco leaves and drinking from small glasses.

Riady bowed to what Ennis supposed to be the headman and exchanged greetings pointing with his thumb to Ennis. The old man smiled politely showing his black teeth several of which were missing; his eyes glinted in the feeble light of an oil lamp. Ennis could see that one of his eyes was white, glaucoma.

'Ask him about Soetrisno'

'That's what I'm about to do'

There was another exchange.

'What did he say?'

'He said he doesn't know Soetrisno'

'Ask him about the head'

'He said it was found down there this afternoon,' pointing to the walkway, 'hey gave it to the loggers who had stopped by to eat.'

'Who put it there?'

'He doesn't know'

They returned to the camp where the manager radioed to the police at Bandjarmasin to inform them. Soetrisno's head was placed in a plastic bag and put in the refrigerator of the guesthouse.

'Who killed him?' Ennis asked Riady.

'How do I know,' he replied.

'You must have an idea, why?'

'There are many things you don't understand here,' he paused and

looked at Ennis, ‘you remember the accident?’

‘With the logging truck?’

‘Yes, well it probably wasn’t an accident.’

‘Yes we guessed that,’ he stopped as if thinking hard, ‘you mean that this could be linked with that.’

‘It is, it’s a warning to you.’

‘To me!’

‘Yes, you represent the foreigners here, that’s all that matters to them and they want you to go.’

‘Who?’

‘It’s complicated, but the tribal people.’

‘The tribe people!’

‘Yes, they have very superstitious beliefs and the loggers use them, by putting ideas into their heads, they have probably told them that you will bring evil spirits to the area.’

‘Evil spirits, that’s crazy.’

‘Not at all, for the villagers here in the forest spirits are very real, remember most of those old men you saw were hunters as young men and they hunted not only animals.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘The oldest were certainly head hunters.’

## Chapter 42 - DOWN TO EARTH

I don’t understand John, you are so materialist,’ Jenny complained. ‘I mean just look at you, your gold Rolex watch, your designer clothes, it’s so artificial.’

Ennis shrugged; ‘What’s that got to do rainforests?’

‘It’s your whole approach to life, you are totally detached from nature and your origins. We know what it was like here just a few years back and we can see what is happening, we don’t want a replay of what has happened in the Philippines.’

‘Maybe,’ he said sourly, ‘but what about the people, they need



jobs and material things.'

'That's right but not necessarily your consumer society, which devours everything that comes within its grasp.'

'Do you have an alternative?'

'Yes, we do, we do not reject progress but not at the expense of our traditions, our way of life and the destruction of our environment.'

'Okay! Okay!' said Ennis.

'It's not okay, take your project for example, there is not one of your specialists who has the least idea what effect your project will have and what's worse they don't care!'

'We've done an environmental impact study.'

'God help me!' said Jenny violently, 'you don't know what your talking about, that's just window dressing, you cannot know what the impact on the environment will be, because not one of your so called experts can show a similar project in the world where the effect has not been disastrous for the local ecology.'

'Okay let's change the subject.'

'Like hell were going to change the subject, face up to the facts, you know them only too well, you've told me enough times about the disastrous results of the plantations, about the illegal logging and the wholesale destruction in the forest operations.'

'Well, what do you want me to do? What can I do!'

'You can start by admitting that what I'm saying is true.'

'I admit that there is some truth in what you're saying, but I can't change the world.'

'But don't you see John, you are changing the world, for the worst, you can at least restart, begin again, then others will follow.'

'It's up to the politicians, it's they who decide. Start with your own country, your own state, Sabah.'

'You're right, and we are trying hard. The mill there is being built, it's too late to stop it, but we will try to stop other mills setting up. Our Chief Minister is fighting for our independence, you know that his brother is being threatened by the Federal Government.'

'What could I do, if I wanted to do something?'

‘You could stop the project if you wanted to, you could find a way, by foul means if necessary, we don’t care.’

‘It’s not so easy, and what about me, I can’t live off love and thin air.’

‘You don’t have to John’.

‘I would have to.’

‘We could find a way, we don’t depend on that project to live’.

‘I do.’

‘What about all that money that you’ve told me that you’ve got stashed away in Singapore?’ she said with a sly glint in her eye.

‘That, unfortunately, is not mine’.

‘You’ve worked just as hard as the others for that, I don’t see why you couldn’t have your share.’

‘Well that’s one point of view.’

‘Think about it John, think about it.’

‘I’ll think about it if it makes you happy, in the meantime we have a dinner date with Ohlsson - and I hope he’s not going to tire us with the same subject.’

Boredom had set in as they whiled away the time, waiting for a decision from Bob Suwondo, whose was at last concluding the drawn out negotiations with Sutrawan’s family for the acquisition of the Bintang Agung Group, which was without a leader since his death. They had worried enough and had finally fallen into a lethargic numbness. There was no more energy or enthusiasm left to discuss the future of the project any further.

The phone had stopped ringing. Suarez passed the time at Cluny Road with Ennis, he would be leaving soon. There was little to do but sun themselves, drink beer and eat at the nearby hawker centre at the top of Orchard Road.

‘Hey look at that John!’ said Antonio. He rocked gently in his chair reading a week old edition of the Asian Wall Street Journal in the garden.

The article reported that an oil company, Ameroil, with a Swedish pulp company, Scancel, was to undertake forestry plantation trials in

Irian Jaya, the western most part of Papua New Guinea.

It said that initial trials would be made with eucalyptus, using a few hundred hectares that had been planted on land they had acquired near a town called Sorong. If the trials proved economically successful, they intended to develop a long-term plantations programme with the long-term goal of creating sustainable pulpwood plantations.

‘I thought that project was dead.’

‘Not according to this.’

‘Let’s have a look at that,’ Ennis said taking the paper and spreading it on the garden table.

The article detailed the critical factors for the evaluation of the trials, the size and location of any future plantings, the growth rates achieved the prevailing investment conditions and the availability of suitable land.

The trials would be conducted in line with Aerial’s environmental guidelines for forestry.

‘That’s nice of them, considering they’re completely new to the business,’ he said aloud.

Natural forest areas would not be cleared to make way for plantations. In planning and operating the trials, Ameroil said the greatest care would be taken to protect the environment and monitor the effects of the plantations.

Natural forest and wild life areas would be conserved and consultation would take place with interested local and national bodies with regard to environmental matters and community issues.

‘They’re full of shit.’

Karl Sorenson a spokesman for Scancel in Stockholm says, it has no immediate plans to build a pulp mill in Indonesia, but with costs rising alarmingly in Scandinavia the possibility of such an eventuality cannot be ruled out.

‘They never admit to anything, they’ll be accused of exporting pollution and environmental problems.’

‘Sorenson, I know that guy, what’s he doing in Jakarta anyway? He knows nothing about forestry beyond the few acres of land he’s

got somewhere in the frozen north.'

'Maybe he's on one of those Swedish package tour flights that got lost looking for Las Palmas!'

'Listen to this!'

'Those Ameroil guys' interests in forestry started in 1980, with the purchase of an abandoned plantation in Indonesia, where pine trees were established.'

'I seem to remember Riady talked about them nosing around here about that time.'

The first discussions were held with the Indonesian government three years ago, and led to the granting of an official approval to proceed with the feasibility study for the plantation project and the prefeasibility study for a pulp mill, the report continued.

'That's the first I've heard about that,' said Ennis knitting his brow.

The project is being developed in close cooperation with Hutan Industri a state owned company.

'Bastards they didn't say a thing.'

'Well I don't know about that, but if they're serious in Indonesia maybe I could try to join them!

'Rats leaving a sinking ship

'Dont be like that John, one door closes and another one opens, here have a beer, come on,' he said going to the refrigerator on the veranda.

They sat around the dinner table chatting about the world in general and about the events of the last weeks. Jenny had suggested that they all get together that evening, taking advantage of Ohlsson's presence in Singapore with two of his friends, James O'Shea and Miguel Mariano. They members of the Valhalla Club, who had recently formed an association whose aims, were to mobilise public opinion in support of the conservation of South East Asian regional forests, baptised the Rainforest Conservation Society. Its actions were to include the boycott of tropical timber in the developed countries.

They had finished dinner, which Ennis had helped Jenny prepare,

lightly cooked fresh vegetables from the local market, boiled rice, lacquered duck, crispy fried chicken, soft boiled pork with beer and black tea, followed by fresh mangoes and rambutan.

Led by Ennis they picked up their glasses and stepped out onto the veranda, the dining room had started to feel chilly with the blast of the air-conditioning. Outside Ennis was pleased to feel the soft warm air, though he was obliged to switch on the ceiling fan to please the others. The settled down in the rattan chairs whilst Jenny brought a bottle of chilled Australian white wine and several bottles of cool Singa beer from the kitchen.

Apart from the slight breeze from the fan the evening was still and clear, they could see the glow of light in the sky in the Orchard Road direction and heard the distant rumble of the traffic. In the shadows of the garden the form of the umbrella palms could be seen and over to the left the huge crooked branches of an unidentified tropical giant dominated that side of the garden, it had without doubt been there long before the house had been built back in the thirties.

Miguel was forty-one, the son of a wealthy Philipino-American family who had lived in San Francisco since before the World War II. The family still had business interests in the Philippines, mainly in plantations. He had been a brilliant student completing a masters degree in plant genetics at UCLA and then graduating in anthropology and economics at Columbia.

He had fought for two decades without success against the disastrous deforestation of the Philippines and the economic calamity that it had brought to the poor of his country.

He been confronted with overwhelming opposition from business and corrupt political interests, especially the logging lobby, and he had on several occasions received threats to his life,

‘So what’s the news from the Philippines Miguel, any results?’ asked Lars.

‘If it wasn’t so serious I’d say you’re joking, I’m really very sorry to say back home its finished, I don’t have to tell you that there are practically no more primary forests, the little that is left will be gone within five years, there’s nothing we can do.’

‘Is it really that bad?’ asked Ennis.

‘Yes, very definitely yes, today there are only eight hundred thousand hectares, twenty percent less than last year and in the thirties there were seventeen million hectares.’

‘I thought that logging had been banned in many provinces.’

‘Sure, and starting next year logging will be banned in the remainder of the primary forest.’

‘Well that’s positive,’ said Ennis questioningly.

‘Unfortunately illegal logging continues and it is perpetrated by members of the Armed Forces, as well as local officials and their relatives. Corruption and the lack of forest wardens, only one for every three thousand hectares, an impossible task.’

‘The logging lobby and the association of logging concessionaires have even taken the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to court, its incredible but true.’

‘They don’t care a dam, they’re interested in money, fucking money, I’m sorry, I’m doubly sorry because my family is not without guilt and I’m one to talk, living in the lap of luxury.’

‘What Miguel is saying is entirely true,’ said Lars, ‘for example a logging moratorium was imposed in the island province of Samar and is still in force. That province was ravaged by the loggers, creating terrible poverty for the local population who had no other economic activities than the traditional exploitation of the forest, which is infinitely less disastrous.’

‘What about the loggers?’

‘What about them, they’re pirates, they pillage and leave, the forest resources have been incredibly under priced compared to their real value, the forests are irreplaceable.’

‘And plantations’

‘They’re a joke,’ said O’Shea, ‘they talk about reforestation, about planting tens of thousands of hectares each year, you know what that means?’

Ennis shrugged it was his business to know, he was weary of their constant criticism, but in front of such distinguished specialists it was best to let them get on with it.

‘It takes ten minutes to floor a three hundred year old giant, it takes tens minutes to scrape the soil and stick in a goddamned nursery seedling, and then what happens?’

Ennis shrugged again feeling uncomfortable as they all looked at him.

‘I’ll tell you what happens,’ said O’Shea forcefully, ‘in the Philippines and many other tropical countries most of the plants die or are waning, in the best natural conditions in the tropics the survival rate is low, under-financed reforestation cannot work miracles.’

‘Irreparable loss of primary forest can’t be compared to marginal gains in plantations, it takes a successful plantation up to twenty years to become productive,’ Miguel said.

‘I thought that trees reached maturity after only ten years or so,’ said Ennis.

‘Sure, but don’t confuse an individual tree with the success of a plantation, that’s another story, remember the barelands of South Kalimantan, they started there twenty years ago, where are they today?’

Ennis looked into his beer, he knew the answer, they hadn’t produced a single tree, it was a political charade, it was not that they had not tried, they had, but as O’Shea said it was not as easy as sticking a seedling in the sun baked soil.

‘We estimate that the rainforest in the greater part of South East Asia will have definitely and irreversibly disappeared I another ten or fifteen years.’

‘It’s quite incredible, these forests have existed for some 70 million years in their present form and in thirty or forty years man and his greed and ignorance will have destroyed this incredible work of nature forever,’ said Ohlsson.

‘I couldn’t agree more and when we think that the real exploitation of these forests began on a large scale only after World War II, it’s a real disaster, our stupidity has squandered one of the most priceless heritages of our planet.’

‘In only ten or fifteen years the rainforest will have become like

the Panda, just a few isolated parks kept artificially alive for tourists or scientists.

‘Almost ninety percent of the genetic pool of the planet gone, destroyed!’

‘The business world and it’s corrupt ignorant short lived politicians don’t care a dam, why should they, they’re there for graft most of them. You only have to look at the record; they refuse to address the real problems, galloping population growth, economic growth in the form of window dressing, as industrialised nations like Japan literally pilfer the heritage of these developing countries.’

‘Maybe it was always like that, when you look at the many deserts of North Africa and the Middle East and you consider that in historical times these were fertile regions, you can see what ignorant exploitation can do.’

‘Of course, we were certainly not the first, but we have their experience to look back on, after all we are supposed to be scientifically aware of the consequences of this situation.’

‘The thing is what can we do, politically we don’t stand a chance even in the western democratic societies people have only recently become aware of the dangers of their actions.’

‘We have to use all means at our disposal,’ said Ohlsson.

‘Even foul means,’ added Jenny.

‘Were not going to become terrorists are we?’ said Ennis mockingly.

‘Why not, our cause is certainly more noble than one of those never ending disputes as to who owns a few miserable square kilometres of fly blown desert,’ she replied.

‘Listen it’s not my fault.’

‘No, but you must admit you’ve never thought for a second about the future of the local population, apart from a couple of thousand jobs or so.’

‘You know the way those people think.’

Ennis knew only too well, thinking of the attitude of specialists back in Europe. Their view on non-productive environmental protection, capital loosing, as one of them had recently put it, with no



thought to the forced expenditure of nature's capital.

'What can we do then?' said Ennis, standing up to get out of the line of fire.

'First we have to stop or delay all forestry industry projects,' said Miguel.

'My God, what will these people do for a living, or more to the point what will I do for a living,' exclaimed Ennis lifting his arms into the air.

'You can help us John, we need an ally with industrial experience, you know our idea is not to keep the forests as an exclusive reserve for scientists and wealthy tourists but to imitate nature living in symbiosis with the forest, a mutually beneficial relationship, think about it John,' O'Shea said proposing an alliance to a very doubtful Ennis.

'Don't worry we'll find a way so that you won't starve,' he said laughing and putting his hand in a fatherly manner on Ennis' shoulder, breaking the tension. He stood up stretching and looking around for the beer, whilst Jenny soothed the discomforted Ennis with her caresses.

## Chapter 43 - THE OASIS

Brodzski was in good form when he opened the door; he was knotting his tie and was still without his shoes.

'Come in, come in, I've just a couple of things to do. You understand English better than me,' he said laughing. 'Look! The hotel doctor gave me these things to sleep a little better-jet lag!'

He showed Ennis a small dark coloured medicine bottle, it was full of pills, and he pointed to the label.

'What does that say? Not only is his English ambiguous, but he doesn't know how to write either. I'm not sure if it's one each three hours or three each hour,' he moved his head back a little, then forward, as if he were trying to focus clearly on the handwritten

instructions.

Ennis knew strictly nothing about medicines. He prided himself on never taking the stuff, but in order to keep Brodzski happy he took the bottle and studied it, sitting down on the only chair free of the incredible mess in his suite. He could never understand how Brodzski always managed to look well groomed, his trousers were always perfectly pressed, he was always clean-shaven and his thick white hair neatly combed.

Ennis examined the bottle, it was true that the writing was the typical scrawl of a doctor, but it seemed not too complicated, one tablet every three hours in case of prolonged insomnia, there did not seem any doubt to him as to the clearness of the instructions.

He placed the bottle on the night table, at the same time trying to formulating in his head a suitable reply, it was best not to contradict Brodzski especially that particular evening, he turned to where he had been standing, but he had disappeared into the bath room.

As he looked around the room he could not miss seeing the empty bottles of beer and at least two bottles of whisky were visible, one about half empty and the other almost empty. Brodzski never attempted to hide the bottles in his room; he did not think there was anything to hide. He never imagined that there had been any excess, and Ennis supposed that it was the contrary. Brodzski had generally controlled his intake of alcohol very well. He had even criticised others for their dependence on drink and pills, but recently it seemed to Ennis that his drinking had started to get out of control, perhaps it had been the stress and worry.

On his bedside table there was a myriad of bottles and boxes of medicaments of every description. Ennis had already seen it before, but he would never forget the first time that he had seen Brodzski's collection.

He came out of the bathroom and slipped on a pale blue jacket. 'We're early?' he questioned. 'They're sending a car?'

'Yes, at seven thirty.'

It was not the same as with Sutrawan. His successor, their new partner Bob Suwondo, was a completely different personality. He did

not differ in the royal treatment he served up to his foreign guests and partners, except that perhaps his invitations were more formal, there was a hint that entertaining was more of a business formality, rather than pleasure or a way of life as it had been with Sutrawan.

That evening they were invited to the Oasis. It was almost like a play back, but what did it matter, Ennis thought to himself philosophically, at least they had a new partner to bankroll them and give their credibility a new sparkle-the road back had been long and difficult.

They took the lift down to the lobby, inspecting themselves in the mirror and were satisfied with what they saw. Almost as soon as the stepped out of the lift Danny Lau appeared like clockwork, exactly on time, it was like old times, same story, just some of the actors had changed.

‘Hello Mr Brodzski,’ he said with the rising and falling tones of his American-Chinese accent. ‘Hi John,’ he said turning and stroking Ennis’ shoulder, in one of his favourite gestures, ‘Where’s Mr Lombard?’ he looked around. Lombard was waiting at the head of the escalator, he was always punctual, he had already checked out of the hotel and would leave directly for Paris on the night flight after their dinner.

‘Mr Suwondo will met us in the restaurant, he’ll go directly. He was with Mr Haryono earlier this afternoon discussing the details of the forestry permits.’

Haryono was the new minister of forestry who had been appointed after Wihartjo and his close staff had been killed in their plane crash in the Schwaner Mountains.

They took the escalator down from the main lobby to the entrance where Deny asked the attendant to page his car at the parking desk and heard his voice boom over the car parks loud speaker.

The Oasis was perhaps the oldest and most famous restaurant in Jakarta; it had been founded by a wealthy Dutchman many years back, in his beautiful and stately colonial residence. It was renowned for it’s famous rijstafel, one of the traditional dishes of Indonesia, which consisted of an extraordinary variety of exotic dishes of rice,

meat, fruit and spices. Each dish was individually carried to the tables, balanced on one hand at shoulder level, by a long line of local beauties, barefooted and dressed in traditional costume, providing a permanent scene of local colour in graceful movement.

Suwondo was already at the centre of their long table, set to one side of the main dining room, chosen so that his guest would see the colourful coming and going which was one of the restaurants main attractions.

Ennis calculated that there would be twelve or fourteen guests, including Minister Haryono and his new Director General. They themselves were the first guests to arrive.

The restaurant resounded with the music of a Batak group from North Sumatra, playing guitars, it was reminiscent of the mariachis of Mexico; the men were small, dark and moustachioed, not unlike Pancho Villa. They wore embroidered capes and each of them carried a menacing looking Kris tucked into his waistband.

Glancing around he saw the girls serving the other tables. He admired their sparkling smiles, the brightly coloured exotic flowers set in their shining long black hair, their multicoloured sarongs setting off the coffee cream colour of their smooth shoulders and the delicate gliding movements of their small feet - well not all of them - some had heavy feet he remarked, they had probably never worn shoes.

Suwondo stood up, he was a tall well built man, he extended his hand and warmly welcomed Brodzski and then Ennis, inviting them to be seated.

Ennis saw Marie Isitahib and Benoit Lamerte, from the local representative office of the National Credit Banque de Paris, who had just arrived. He saw that Marie Isitahib also wore a flower in her hair; he grudgingly admitted to himself that she did not look too bad. Suwondo and Brodzski, both in the exaggeratedly gallant fashion, went to meet her.

Haryono arrived and according to protocol he was seated to facing Suwondo next to Brodzski, while his director general was on Bob Suwondo's right, and naturally out of deference to the only woman

present, Marie Isitahib, was placed on his left. She was the representative of Brodzski's latest bank. The lead bank of the pool, that Lombard had meticulously engineered and which would finance the purchase of the mill by the operating company, from the consortium, whose role was to construct and delivery the mill in full operating conditions.

The Maitre d'hôtel took their orders for cocktails, whilst they made polite conversation, sampling an assortment of exotic appetisers that had been placed before them whilst waiting for the drinks.

The drinks were served, and Bob Suwondo proposed a toast to their partnership and success. They lifted their glasses in response, Brodzski positively glowed with satisfaction and pleasure, it was a great moment as they approached the long awaited conclusion.

The project had resumed its course after a series of almost catastrophic events; it was a miracle that they were assembled there at that table, with an almost fresh and enthusiastic team. They were a few short steps from the constitution of the operating company and the signature of the different agreements and contracts, between the shareholders for the constitution of the Indonesian operating company with its capital paid up, and banks for the loans needed to place contract with the consortium for the construction of the whole mill complex.

The conversation then turned to Brodzski, being the guest of honour, and with his whisky comfortable in his hand he settled down to recounting one of his innumerable anecdotes concerning a long forgotten minister he had known. It was his way of illustrating his long experience in high places.

Bob Suwondo was smooth and played the perfect host. He was not a talkative man, he was rather a listener and he listened with attention to Brodzski, prompting him at the right moments with the right questions. During the dinner Danny played his continuing role of organiser, making signs to the maitre d'hôtel, ensuring that each of Suwondo's guests were served with exactly what they wanted.

A multitude of dishes were served with good French wines.

Brodzski indulged himself as the perfect guest, sampling every dish that was placed on the table with relish, encouraged by Suwondo and Danny. The food was excellent, and the atmosphere perfect with old consortium partners happy with the unexpected relief at having finally found a suitable successor to Sutrawan.

Long live the king, thought Ennis reflecting stoically on the short memory and lack of human sentiment in men and their business.

The dinner passed quickly in an ambience of satisfaction and pleasure without any untimely incidents, it had been perfect, an excellent augur to the future.

The following day Brodzski would initial the agreements with Suwondo. The rescue operation had been completed; Barito was back on the rails after months of doubt and difficulties. Bob Suwondo's arrival on the scene and last minute acceptance to take Sutrawan's place, been a gift from the gods, it had been almost too much to hope for; it still seemed almost too good to be true.

They left the restaurant in an effusion of mutual enthusiasm and congratulations. It was ten o'clock as they parted, quite unlike a Sutrawan dinner, which would have continued late into the night. Brodzski wished Lombard a good flight, leaving him in last minute discussions with his two bankers and Axelmann who joined him in the hotel limousine that had been booked to drive him to the airport, where his Air France flight to Paris was scheduled to leave just after midnight. Brodzski was driven in Bob Suwondo's limousine to the hotel; Ennis and Branet followed in Danny Lau's Mercedes.

In the hotel lobby after Suwondo's departure, Brodzski proposed that they take a nightcap in the Pendopo bar. It was just ten thirty; still a little early to turn in. Brodzski was flushed with success. He ordered drinks including a whisky for himself and commenced to reminisce with Branet on the friends and enemies they had known, on the difficulties that he had always overcome in face of great odds.

There was no stopping Brodzski, he ordered another round of drinks, puffing on the large cigar he had collected at the Oasis.

Ennis began to despair that his moment of nostalgia would go on forever, he was beginning to feel tired after the dinner, his face felt

the rictus induced by the fixed smile he had worn throughout the whole evening.

They laughed as Brodzski called for another round of drinks, Ennis was cornered, he was part of the audience, and there was no way he could escape. The waiter set down the drinks and Brodzski took a large swig from his whisky.

‘It’s not a bit hot here?’ he said placing his glass on the table.

It was quite the opposite; the Pendopo bar was always a little chilly with it’s overpowered air-conditioning system, especially late in the evening, when it was set at full power to evacuate the dense haze of tobacco smoke.

Brodzski loosened his tie and took out his pocket-handkerchief to wipe his forehead; he continued his story, a little wearily.

He called the waiter again and asked for a glass of water with ice, which he sipped alternately with his whisky. He continued encouraged by Branet’s laughs. It was well after midnight when Ennis sneaked a glance at his watch. Brodzski had begun to look tired and his face seemed to have become pale.

‘Listen I think we’ll call it a day, we can’t overdo a good thing. I’m going to my room, you’ll have to excuse me I think it’s the stress and fatigue,’ he croaked, at the same time pushing himself up from the armchair with some effort.

‘I’ll accompany you,’ said Branet, Ennis said he would follow and called for the bill, signing it to his room.

The hall was very long and he caught up with them just as they crossed the main lobby, Brodzski weaved slightly as he walked. It was always difficult to tell whether it was his bad leg, his age or overindulgence in the whisky.

They took the lift to his suite. Brodzski fumbled in his pockets for the key with one hand, and with the other supported himself from the door pillar. Ennis took his gently took his arm which trembled, and helped him, feeling in his jacket pocket where he found the room key, and opened the door. Branet assisted Brodzski holding him by the elbow to the rattan sofa, where he flopped down heavily, he was breathing hard and pulled weakly at his tie and collar with shaking

hands, he was looking not at all well.

‘Are you well Antoine?’

Brodzski made no sign, his eyes were almost closed.

‘You’re not well old fellow, I think we’ll call a doctor,’ said Branet looking at Ennis for agreement.

Brodzski said nothing as Ennis undid his tie for him, his mouth hung open and small beads of transpiration formed on his forehead and ran down into his eyebrows.

Branet picked up the telephone and dialled the hotel operator.

‘I hope we can get somebody at this time of the evening, it’s already past midnight.’

Brodzski looked like a sick, helpless, orang-utan, Ennis thought as he looked at the old man. His mouth hung open, traces of spittle stuck in the corners of his lips; his face wore a blank expression. His condition was starting to look serious. Branet talked urgently on the phone to the operator, who replied that the hotel doctor would be called immediately, but as it was Saturday evening, it could take a little time.

Ennis suggested to Branet that they help him to the bed. He weighed a ton, it was almost farcical as they struggled to lift him, Branet was a small man and Brodzski an almost dead weight of eighty-five kilos. They staggered under his weight to the bedroom and literally dumped him on the bed, he rolled over and vomited.

‘Christ! This is more serious than I thought,’ Ennis said to Branet.

‘No, I think he’s tired, probably drunk too much.’

‘I’m not so sure.’

‘Call for the doctor again, tell them it’s an emergency.’

Ennis went to the bathroom, bringing back two large towels and a smaller one that he had ran under the tap. He wiped his face with the wet towel, Brodzski was completely out. The odour was overpowering, he covered the vomit with the other towel.

‘What do we do now?’ Ennis asked.

‘Dont panic,’ Branet replied as he picked up the telephone, he asked if the Doctor was on his way, ‘he’ll be here in about ten



minutes or so.'

Brodzski's breathing was very shallow. Ennis felt for his pulse, it was difficult to find, it wasn't surprising, Ennis thought as he felt the faint beat.

They unbuttoned his shirt and loosened his belt and trousers; so that he could breathe easier. Ennis switched the air-conditioning on to the maximum. The bell rang; Branet went to the door and opened it to a slight well-dressed Indonesian carrying an attaché case.

'I'm Doctor Sutini,' he announced as Branet let him into the room.

He went to the bed in a business like manner, and leaning over Brodzski he lifted an eyelid with one hand, and felt the jugular for his pulse with the other.

'He's been drinking?'

Branet replied that he had eaten well and had drunk, but not excessively.

'He's under medication?' he questioned glancing at the array of medicaments on the bedside table.

'Well I think that he's been taking something to sleep, but I don't know what else.'

'I think we're going to have him taken to the clinic.' It was a decision rather than a suggestion, 'I can't say what the problem is, but he needs observation and care, I'll call for an ambulance if that's all right with you,' said Dr Sutini.

He used the phone and made an outside call, asking for an ambulance at once.

They accompanied Brodzski to the Thamrin Polyclinic, in the ambulance, it's sirens wailing in the heavy late Saturday night traffic. The Polyclinic was located in a modern building nearby the Sheraton. The ambulance pulled into the entrance of the emergency service, where he was quickly wheeled away by the night staff. Ennis answered questions in the admission service and was then led to the waiting area. After about an hour, they were shown to a private room on the third floor, where Brodzski was installed in bed, several tubes were already protruding from his mouth and nose.

Another person was with Dr Sutini; from his identification badge

they saw that he was also a doctor.

‘Mr Ennis, I’m sorry but it looks like Mr Brodzski is rather poorly, it’s a little bit early to say precisely how serious his condition is as we do not know his medical past record, and he’s not a young man.’

Shit, Ennis thought glancing at his watch as if that would help, it was just after two in the morning, he had not seen the time go by. He looked at Branet hoping he would know what to do.

‘In any case gentlemen, there’s nothing we can do tonight, except keep him under observation. We’ll see again in the morning, he’s comfortable for the moment, not in good condition but he’s resting,’ the other doctor said.

Well he’s the doctor he should know, thought Ennis resignedly.

‘What time should we come back in the morning?’

‘Call me at nine, my name is Sutini.’

They left the room and took a lift to the ground floor; where they got into one of the battered taxi and returned to the hotel.

‘Okay, let’s go and find Axelmann...maybe we should inform Madame Brodzski?’

‘No, it’s late,’ he said looking at his watch, it was after two thirty, ‘wait until the morning it’s not that dramatic for the moment, and look, I’m tired after all of this, perhaps you can fill Axelmann in and call me tomorrow.’

Ennis was a little surprised; it was as if Branet was trying to avoid too much involvement. In case he too felt tired to argue and there certainly wasn’t much more they could do that night. He called Axelmann who seemed to be in a profound sleep.

Ennis was woken by the call he had ordered at seven thirty. He looked out of his window onto the dark green trees in the gardens below and contemplated the day ahead. He wondered if had dreamt the events of the previous evening, the phone rang again, it was Axelmann.

‘*Bonjour, ça va.*’

‘*Oui, ça va.*’

‘Let’s meet for breakfast in half an hour; I can tell you all the

details, then we'll go directly to the clinic.'

'What happened did he fall down...was drunk or something?'

'No, it's more serious than that.'

'Did you already call the clinic?'

'No, we'll go directly after we've had some coffee.'

They arrived at nine and were about to enquire at the reception when Dr Sutini walked out of the lift.

'Good morning Doctor, we've come to see Mr Brodzski, how is he?'

'Hello, let's sit down over there a moment.'

They sat on in a corner of the waiting area, a little distance away from the other visitors.

'I'm sorry to say, Mr Ennis, it appears more serious than we may have thought, Mr Brodzski has suffered from a stroke, and for the moment he has not recovered consciousness. I'm very sorry. Would you like to see him? It will have to be very brief.'

The room was cool, clean and white, there were plastic tubes everywhere, the blinds were almost closed and a respirator amplified his low breathing. Brodzski's face was relaxed, smooth, almost young looking, too young. Christ, he thought to himself, it's really bad, w're fucked, he not coming out of that soon, if at all.

They simply stood there helpless, they sensed with sudden realisation the dramatic turn of events.

Jesus fucking Christ, what a moment for this to happen, just my bloody luck, what will happen without him, thought Ennis, at least the Ohlsson will be happy, he bitterly rationalised.

Ennis glanced at Axelmann he was as just as lost. Sutini looked on with a professionally detachment, though ready with a sympathetic understanding, he had seen the same scene so many times before.

What do we do now, Ennis asked himself again, he needed time to think. In any case there was nothing to do at the hospital. Everything would now be stalled; all that work for this, the project was cursed with bad luck. Now all the rats will want to quit the boat and what about the bloody money?

Back at the hotel, Ennis gently probed Axelmann, but he was not very talkative. Ennis saw that he was thinking and probably wanted to get his ideas together before he spoke.

In any case there was not any time to loose, Ennis told him so. The others would soon be onto them, knowing that there was a lot to be gained or lost. Brodzski at his age was not going to make a miraculous recovery, if they looked at things realistically. Ennis thought that the Indonesians and Taiwanese would take a fatalistic attitude as they had with Sutrawan and the others, but the Europeans, especially the French had put a lot of money into the business and would want action.

Brodzski was the catalyst, without him the consortium members would fight and squabble. Lombard was not liked, the Finns would want out. At Papcon there would be a struggle for succession-if the business continued.

Axelmann already probably had his eyes fixed on succession. But what was more important was the money! Axelmann and Ennis were the only ones who knew all the details of the seed money banked in Singapore. Finntech would certainly want to get their hands on that as well as a few others.

They went to the hotel coffee shop and found a discrete corner. The morning rush was over, they ordered coffee and toast and Ennis again tried a little gentle forcing it was not the moment to be diplomatic and hold back.

‘Let’s put the cards on the table,’ Ennis started, ‘he’s looking bad, he’ll probable have to be flown home if he is going to get any decent treatment, and his wife will naturally want him home not in a hotel 15,000 kilometres away.’

‘Sure.’

‘What’s going to happen to the business now, we have to decide who will take over, what about you?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘We’ll we have to decide now, we can’t leave things up in the air.’

‘We should take some time to think.’

‘No, because if we don’t act quick, somebody else will do it for us.’

‘Yeah,’ Axelmann replied indifferently.

It was not easy and Ennis pushed on.

‘Look if you don’t do something Strecker or Lombard will, and maybe not in our favour. I’ve put a lot into this, not to speak of Finntech, and so have you, we are in a strong position, I will back you.’

‘What do you suggest?’

‘Well I think we should inform all persons concerned that you have taken over as acting Managing Director, and that all partners here and in Europe have been informed. That will forestall any sudden decisions, it’ll give us breathing time to put our follow up together.’

‘We’ll tell them Brodzski has been hospitalised, but we don’t have to tell them all the details, from the business point of view everything is in order, the agreement with Suwondo doesn’t depend just on Brodzski, it’s with the consortium. Whatever happens though, there’s no way Suwondo will sign until it’s decided who legally represents Papcon and the consortium.’

He did not say anything, he stirred his coffee, and then he took a breath.

‘Okay, I agree, we’ll be screwed if we don’t, we should also try to keep Brodzski here.’

‘What?’

‘Keep Brodzski here, it’s reasonable, he’s probably too sick to travel in any case, but the important point is that he is the President of the company and the company’s articles of association don’t allow for any particular action in the case of illness of the President. There has to be a shareholders meeting to decide what to do, but myself as acting Managing Director, we can carry on for at least a couple of months, before the shareholders can get a quorum together. Papcon is important but it’s not their sole consideration, but remember Brodzski was the prime mover, there will be a vacuum and I suppose they will let us carry on whilst they think it over.’

‘So if Brodzski is hospitalised here, the drama is almost out of sight out of mind, what about Savio and Micaletto.’

‘Savio’s in Cambodia and we’ll inform Micaletto last, it’ll be too late for him to do anything.’

‘Okay, first we have to inform his family, then I’ll fax the shareholders individually and confidentially, without over dramatising the event. You inform the consortium members that we are continuing here. I’ll be back in Singapore, as planned next week. You go on to Melbourne as planned and we can meet on you’re way back.’

‘What about Brodzski?’

‘Madame Brodzski and his family will look after him. I’m not going to get too involved with all of that. I’ll see Doctor Sutini and inform him that he shouldn’t be moved until the family is here and gives instructions. Budiman will help them out.’

‘Shall we call Branet and all of the others?’

‘Yes, tell them the signing is postponed, but let’s play it down, call Madame Brodzski in a couple of hours time, there’s no point to get her out of bed, it’s only five in the morning back in Paris.

After lunch they visited Brodzski again. His situation had remained stable but he was still unconscious. They had contacted and informed everybody concerned. The flowers and get well telegrams had already started to arrive, it was too bad that he couldn’t read them he would have enjoyed the attention that he was attracting, and for once it was kindly.

Later that afternoon Ennis went down to the tennis courts; he needed to let off some steam, to get in some exercise after the last twenty-four hours. The telephone had not stopped ringing and with all the arrangements needed for Brodzski’s family it had been more than hectic. Axelmann was still trying to contact Strecker and the others who had left for their own business.

As he hit the ball against the practice wall he felt the tension slipping away, he relaxed, trying calmly to analyse the situation. Things had started to progress for the first time since Sutrawan had

died. The last months had been spent salvaging the project, with new partners, building up confidence in the restructured consortium. Only a couple of days back it had begun to look like they had succeeded, but everything had been plunged back into uncertainty again. What had become certain, was that there was no way Suwondo would sign any agreement after Brodzski's stroke, it was a bad omen for the project after all the other problems, in the best case there would be another waiting period and anything could happen.

As usual the sun was hot and the humidity was in the high nineties. He stopped and sat on the bench and thought about the money that was lying in those Singaporean bank accounts...and whose pocket it was likely to end up in.

He figured that a stroke at Brodzski's age would be fatal, at least as far as business was concerned. What would happen to Papcon was unpredictable, Brodzski had been the undisputed leader, it had been his creation, most of the agreements had been made on his instigation and on the confidence that people had had in him. Would those agreements fall through? The company was facing serious financial difficulties; they had been counting on Barito's revival to get the cash flowing again.

The thought of the money in Singapore returned again. In any case nothing could be done until they knew how bad Brodzski really was, he had surprised them by bouncing back before.

As Ennis thought about the money he could not help thinking that he had worked as hard as anybody to build the project, and the fact that the money was there was due to Finntech and not Brodzski. If he recovered sufficiently and decided to pull the money out to shore up Papcon or for his family, there would be a serious crisis with Finntech, then Ennis could say goodbye to all the plans that he had built up.

He could not rely on Finntech, Hakkala had invested a lot of money without results and had taken risks, he could no longer count on his continued support. Laxell was about to retire and would return to Finland. Ennis realised, and not for the first time, that he was on his own.

What was Axelmann's position? He had no doubt already started working things out, it was probably the reason why he preferred Brodzski in hospital in Jakarta for the moment, but that situation was not guaranteed to last for long. If Axelmann could obtain the support of the other shareholders, maybe he could take over Papcon and get things going again.

Ennis found it difficult to put his ideas together. There was no one he could turn to for advice. The transpiration ran off his face, maybe the workout had not been such a good idea, he thought as he stood up and hit the ball against the wall, the ground was hot, and the harsh light reflected off the dark green vegetation that surrounded the court hurt his eyes. It was not fun any more, he collected his towel and walked to the bar, it was empty, and he pulled up a stool and ordered a beer.

If only he could do something with that money, it would make things much simpler, but it was impossible, he had thought of it many times before.

Things had changed that Sunday evening, there had been a redistribution of the cards, if Strecker and the others controlled the company, he would not even end up back in square one, he would no doubt be looking for a job.

Brodzski had acted always with total independence, much to the chagrin of his shareholders and investors, whom he had gathered around him over the years with so much success. Both Ennis and Axelmann had enjoyed a free hand in interpreting his instructions, they had benefited from his total confidence, in reality they had been his real partners.

There was nothing to ensure that situation would continue under a new leader if Brodzski was permanently out of action. Ennis had to admit to himself, they had all thought in a way, that Brodzski would continue forever. Now there were all the signs indicated that the end of his reign had finally arrived.

He signed the chit for the beer and wandered dejectedly back to the garden entrance. He had enjoyed the life he had led over the last two or three years or so and realised that his situation was about to



change for the worse in the very short term.

‘Paging Mr Ennis! Paging Mr Ennis!’ The metallic voice of the paging system echoed around the gardens, he accelerated his pace and hurried into the chilly air of the lobby, there was probably ten degrees difference in temperature. He picked up one of the house phones and announced himself to the operator. It was not an incoming call, there was a message. He walked over to the concierge and who gave him an envelope containing a message that had been phoned in about a quarter of an hour earlier, he was requested to urgently go to the clinic.

Christ! The thought ran through his head that Brodzski had died. He went quickly to his room and showered, dressed and then left the hotel taking a taxi to the Polyclinic.

The receptionist told him to go directly to Sutini’s office, where the secretary showed him in at once.

Sutini was wearing a grave expression.

‘Mr Ennis, I’m sorry to ask you over urgently, but it’s important.’

Ennis braced himself for the bad news.

‘Mr Brodzski has recovered consciousness.’

‘That’s excellent news,’ he said, strangely disappointed not knowing whether to smile or not.

‘I’m sorry it’s not as good as it seems, unfortunately he is paralysed.’

‘Paralysed?’

‘Yes I’m afraid so, he cannot speak either.’

‘Oh!

‘Yes, we can go to his room.’

Sutini led him to Brodzski’s room, opening the door slowly, as though he was afraid of making a noise.

Ennis was an apprehensive at what he might see. He had never liked hospitals. He was anxious that he might transmit his own fears to the person who was suffering.

Sure enough, Brodzski’s eyes were open; he gave no sign of recognition. Ennis looked at Brodzski’s hand, which lay on the white bed cover, it looked frail and trembled slightly, he moved his eyes

slowly and without expression. His skin was white and slack. They waited motionless for a few moments.

‘Mr Brodzski! Mr Brodzski!’ Ennis said softly, there was no response, he repeated louder, ‘Mr Brodzski!’

‘I’m sorry he cannot hear you,’ Sutini made a sign that they leave the room. In the corridor they sat on one of the white wooden benches.

‘The paralysis may pass,’ he said wearily, ‘it’s too early to say, but I think we should be prepared for the worse. Mrs Brodzski will have to be gently told of the seriousness his condition. I recommend he return to Paris, as soon as he can be moved without aggravating his condition. I am sure he can have better treatment in France,’ he finished regretfully.

Axelmann met Madame Brodzski at the airport; her daughter Celine, a hard faced woman in her early thirties, accompanied her. They were tired, but Madame Brodzski was courageous and business like. She had spent the best part of her recent years expecting that something like that was likely to happen. She more than anybody knew the excesses of her husband and the risks he ran at his age.

They drove directly to the Polyclinic, where they remained with Brodzski for about an hour before checking into the hotel. They had already made arrangements in Paris with the Papcon’s insurance company to repatriate Brodzski. Later, Ennis learnt from the clinic, that same afternoon contacts had been made with a hospital in Singapore, and early the next morning a Singaporean specialist would arrive to examine him. There was little else that he could do, except provide some practical assistance to Madame Brodzski, as for Brodzski himself; he had become a family affair.

Axelmann agreed later that evening that he would continue to Australia as planned, taking the direct overnight Qantas flight to Sydney the following evening. He planned to attend the meeting with the Asian Development Bank, which was important, it would take a couple of days, in any case business had to continue until a shareholders meeting could be called, when that would be depended on the diagnosis of the doctors, after all the shareholders could not

declare him finished before he really was, in the meantime he was still President of Papcon.

The next morning, they accompanied the Brodzski's to the clinic; after being informed that the specialist had arrived. A preliminary examination was carried out and it was confirmed what Sutini had already diagnosed. Brodzski had experienced a cerebral blockage resulting in a generalised paralysis, it was too early to predict whether the paralysis was permanent or not. His condition appeared to have stabilised and he could be repatriated to France within a few of days without risk of aggravating his condition.

The Brodzski's wished to spend some time together and were left alone. Ennis took a taxi back to the hotel and left the hotels Mercedes with the driver to wait for the Brodzski's.

Before leaving the hospital Ennis had caught Sutini in his office, he wanted to question him on the normal sequence of events in such cases; he would not have another chance. Sutini was naturally unwilling to give a long-term diagnostic; he could not predict the development of Brodzski's case. However, he explained that in most cases, persons of Brodzski's age, would have great difficulty in recovering their full faculties, it was possible, but regretfully very rare.

Ennis pushed Sutini, insisting on Brodzski's specific case. Finally he reluctantly admitted that in view of his general physical condition, which had not been helped by tobacco, drink and stress, in the best case, he would almost certainly remain permanently handicapped...in a permanent vegetative state. In the worst case he had at the most maybe two or three months, depending on the care he received.

So that was it, at least it was clear. Ennis thanking him for all that he had done and his frankness said goodbye. He left with the sobering news, it was confirmed beyond all doubt, that the whole situation had dramatically changed.

As for Brodzski's family, they would not be long in casting around with a view to saving what could be salvaged from the business that Brodzski had created, which maybe they did not realise, he no longer owned and could no longer control for his own

advantage.

‘So what do we do?’ Ennis said to Axelmann.

He shrugged.

‘I don’t know, but in any case forget Brodzski he’s finished!’ Axelmann said cynically, he didn’t need a medical opinion. ‘We’ll continue for the moment, I’ll clear up the remaining points here and return on Sunday, we can meet somewhere, but let’s keep it quiet. I’ll call you from Melbourne on Friday evening to confirm it, but as I said keep it between the two of us,’ he paused, ‘what will you do now... go back to Singapore?’

Ennis nodded he would return to Singapore, but he wondered what Axelmann had meant by for the moment.

## Chapter 44 - A BALI BEACH

It was a Friday afternoon, the last rays of sunshine shone through the edges of the heavy dark clouds on the horizon. Ennis sat in the large rattan armchair that he had grown to like on the veranda of the house on Cluny Road. The weather had felt heavier and more humid than usual after several days of heavy rain, in all it was the depressing end to a very depressing week.

He had spent the afternoon waiting for Axelmann’s call, which was beginning to seem like it would never come. He turned his beer slowly in his hand and examined in a melancholically the condensation that formed on the glass, he was feeling deeply dejected. Since the death of Sutrawan things had gone from bad to worse, Barito now seemed to be on the point of collapse.

What was more disturbing to Ennis was that Axelmann’s attitude had taken a subtle turn for the worse with the latest disaster, as though he had given up hope and was directing his interests to his own personal needs. They jointly supervised the funds that had been placed on deposit in four Singaporean banks. Ennis had begun to suspect that Axelmann had been making plans for the future of the

money that excluded him. It looked as though Axelmann was slowly but surely distancing himself from Ennis.

There had been no distinct signs; Axelmann had outwardly behaved as though there was nothing unusual. It was more a feeling of an almost imperceptible falling off in the confidence, if not friendship, which had developed between them both since Ennis had joined the Papcon team.

Ennis wondered if he was not being a little bit paranoid, but his experience told him to trust his feelings, there was no doubt that he was being subtly avoided, not only by Axelmann but other people seemed to be perceptibly taking their distance from him.

He concluded that in the very close future some difficult decisions would have to be made, or he would be pushed to out as new faces manoeuvred into place in the struggle to succeed Brodzski, and more than likely with the help of Axelmann. He deeply resented the feeling of betrayal; he did not understand how Axelmann could go back on his unspoken word. Yes, for Ennis in a strange way he felt it was a question of friendship and trust. He himself would never have gone against the mutual respect that formed the basis of their cooperation, even if at that moment he had no tangible reasons for suspecting that Axelmann had.

He turned over in his mind the options open to Axelmann. He tried to fathom out what his interest was in siding with his Parisian banker friends, perhaps he was making a deal with Lamerte. Brodzski was no longer capable of making any decisions, Sutrawan was dead and Hakkala in a much weakened position.

It would have been so much simpler if Axelmann had been straightforward, an arrangement could have been found to suit them both.

Vague ideas began to take shape in his mind for a plan to pre-empt Axelmann. Maybe he could transfer the money to a safe place where Axelmann could not dispose of it at will, that would be difficult, he had no justifiable reason to do that and Axelmann would be informed almost immediately of the details of any transactions.

He tried to figure out ways of moving the money to Zurich and

then to a series of other offshore accounts, but Axelmann would certainly be able to easily trace the movements; it would be difficult to simply disappear with the money. His considered using his own personal account at Swiss Credit as a starting point, he had already used the account in transmitting commissions on several previous occasions. It would be quite simple to give instructions to the different banks where funds were held, transferring them to Zurich and then moving the money out to a temporary account in some suitable bank.

Whatever action Ennis took, he would be immediately suspected, as only he apart from Axelmann, now that Brodzski was incapacitated, had the authority to issue instructions to the banks

He could only inform his bank in Zurich to expect funds on a short-term basis, and move then transfer them to another account on receipt of his instructions. In the meantime he was tormented by his total lack of control of the situation; his only course was to try to get to the bottom of things face to face with Axelmann. He was main the obstacle to resolving the dilemma.

The ringing of the telephone startled him, he jumped up and went into his office through the French windows and picked up the phone, it was Axelmann calling from Sydney.

‘John?’

‘Yes.’

‘Hello, I didn’t recognise your voice, can you hear me okay.’

‘Yeah, no problem, you’re still in Sydney?’

‘Melbourne, I’m just getting ready to leave.’

‘Okay, I’m booked on a flight to Jakarta at nine this evening.’

‘Is there something special then?’

‘Not really, I’m going to see Budiman tomorrow morning to sound him out on the situation, he’s off to Tokyo on Sunday for a week, so I’m stuck there for the weekend.’

‘Listen then, I’m on the overnight flight from Sydney this evening, it’s going through Denpasar, I was thinking of getting in a stopover of a couple of days sunshine before going on home, it’s been wet and cool here in Melbourne.’

Ennis listened, he did not suggest anything, he would let Axelmann decide what he wanted to do, there was a pause.

‘Why don’t you meet me at the Bali Beach tomorrow evening or Sunday morning, I think we have a few things that we have to talk about.’

The idea of going to Bali for the day was not his idea of fun, but it was essential if he wanted to meet Axelmann and thrash things out with him, before he got in too deeply with his friends back in Paris, he had little other choice.

‘Sunday morning will be fine,’ he replied.

‘Good, I’ll see you in the hotel.’

Ennis arrived at the Bali Beach Hotel carrying a bag with his tennis racket and a few essentials, he had no intention of staying longer than necessary. He looked briefly around the lobby, it was ten in the morning and he had lost one hour, Bali was one time zone behind Jakarta. He saw that the hotel was quiet; the Australian winter season had just started, in another three weeks the hotel would be overflowing. He checked at the desk for Axelmann’s room number and called him on the house phone, he was not in his room. Ennis walked out to the pool, where he found him sunning himself on a chaise longue. Almost immediately he sensed that Axelmann seemed to be in some kind of a mood. He complained his flight had been delayed several hours and he had obviously not been getting the service that he had expected in the hotel.

‘What are we going to do this morning then!’

‘Let’s get in a game of tennis, I need to unwind,’ said Axelmann, then adding. ‘I haven’t had breakfast yet, let’s do that first.’

He handed Ennis his room key, who took his bag to the room.

It was almost twelve when they arrived at tennis courts, there were no players, just a couple of ball boys, who were lounging and passing the time under the shade of a large tree next to the changing rooms. Axelmann signed on and declined the services of the ball boys.

The sun shone fiercely, it was not really the most advisable time of day for playing tennis, the weather was hot, exceptionally hot, even

for Bali. Ennis suggested that perhaps they should wait until the sun was a little lower in the sky.

Axelmann shrugged, making aggressive swipes with his racket, indicating that he was ready. As usual he attacked the ball as though he were in the final of a grand slam tournament. Ennis played defensive avoiding over exertion in the heat; it was the only possibility, since he could not avoid playing without upsetting him. It must have been 34°C and even hotter in the full sun, which was almost directly over their heads. After about thirty minutes play Ennis suggested that they take a pause, but Axelmann had the bit between his teeth. He continued volleying with all his force until he was almost dropping.

‘I’ve had enough,’ he said finally, picking up his towel, he signed the chit to his room and almost staggering, walked to a shady poolside corner and flopped down into one of the chaises longue. There were just two couples at the other end of the pool; it was lunch time and too hot for the few tourists staying at the hotel.

They pulled off their tennis shoes and shirts. Axelmann looked around in an agitated kind of manner; the tennis had not the relaxing effect hoped for.

‘What are we going to do, have you got your swimming trunks?’

Ennis nodded downwards to indicate he was wearing them.

‘Me too,’ said Axelmann, pulling off his tennis shorts.

‘Let’s walk down to the beach, I haven’t really seen what it’s like in this trou de macaque!’ said Axelmann standing up.

Ennis half-heartedly followed him, it was about fifty or so metres to the beach, where parasols of woven palm leaves were aligned on the sand, which had been neatly raked, waiting in vain for the absent tourists. The beach was empty with the exception of an elderly attendant who observed them disinterestedly from a distance.

They walked to the edge of the sea. Axelmann stopped and then taking a short run dived into the light waves and swam for a dozen or so yards, before returning to the beach.

‘That’s better, let’s take a walk along the beach,’ he made a sign towards the point in the distance at the end of the beach, which



curved away to the east.

They started walking; at the hotel perimeter the neatly raked beach gave way to more natural sand with low outcroppings of porous volcanic rock. The waters edge was lined with natural beach debris, seaweed, dead leaves, palm branches and the occasional coconut.

Axelmann talked about generalities, he talked without getting to any specific point, and perhaps he was avoiding it. They had been walking for about thirty minutes or more and the hotel complex had shrunk into the distance behind them.

He sat down on a small hillock of grass-covered sand that demarcated abruptly the limit of the water line and the vegetation. The beach was not wide, maybe fifteen or twenty metres.

‘Your friends look like they’ve deserted the ship, don’t they!’ said Axelmann suddenly.

‘What do you mean?’ said Ennis puzzled.

‘They’re not going to honour their contract... Suwondo and company.’

‘I think they will,’ replied Ennis calmly, though he doubted it.

‘No they won’t.’

‘Really!’

‘It’s finished anyway!’ said Axelmann raising his voice.

‘What do you mean?’

‘The whole business was rubbish,’ he said angrily, ‘in any case I think you’re wrong.’

‘Hmm,’ muttered Ennis kicking at the sand.

‘Your partners were lousy anyway,’ retorted Axelmann.

‘Everybody seemed to think they were okay, it’s only you who says they were lousy partners.’

‘No they were just playing along to gain time, to build their own project.’

‘I can’t accept that.’

‘Too bad.’

‘Well what are we going to do anyway?’

‘Forget all of this.’

‘What about that Singapore money!’ Ennis blurted out.

‘That belongs to Papcon,” he said slowly.

‘No it belongs to Finntech!’

‘That’s what they think...but I suppose we could come to some arrangement...say five hundred thousand US.’

Ennis was surprised, he had not expected a proposition, but it was evident that Axelmann did have other ideas about that money, and was prepared to make a deal.

‘That’s not much!’

‘Well I suppose we could double that.’

‘Who are we?’

‘Are there any other matters,’ he said waving the question away.

‘It depends.’

‘Do you agree?’

‘Let me think about it.’

‘So it is a question of money,’ he said wiping his forehead with the back of his hand. ‘It’s too hot.’

‘Well it’s not the best time of the day to walk in the sun.’

‘When is the best time to walk then?’ he replied sarcastically and aggressively, thrusting his chin forward.

Ennis did not reply.

‘Okay then, I’m going into the water to cool off.’

He waded into the waves his arms raised in front of him, when the sea arrived at his crotch he plunged in and started to crawl, lifting his head every three or four strokes to breath, his arms rising and falling heavily.

Ennis watched him, he felt depressed it was not going at all as he had hoped. Axelmann definitely had something on his mind, but he was holding back for the moment, as if he had needed to provoke an argument to get it out.

He saw that Axelmann had stopped, he was waving to him and Ennis waved back without enthusiasm, Axelmann waved again. Fuck him, he thought, he was not in the mood to play, he listened to the waves and watched the coconut palms swaying slowly in the breeze, there was no other movement or noise apart from the occasional buzz of an insect.

Axelmann started swimming back to the beach, it was several minutes before he staggered out of the water, gasping, he practically collapsed onto the white sand, just beyond the waves, and lay there.

Ennis thought, serves him right he's knackered. He lay there five minutes or so, as the sun dried the seawater off his back and then picking himself up he painfully made his way towards Ennis.

'I don't feel too good,' he groaned.

Ennis shrugged then he replied, 'Lie down for a bit in the shade, take it easy, it's hot.'

Axelmann moved into the shade by a thicket of short palms, he flopped down. Ennis looked at him, he had worked himself into a real state, overdoing it. He stood up in disgust and walked towards the warm sea feeling the rough hot sand under his feet; it was his turn to cool off. He would have preferred the pool it was cleaner, at least it felt so, he didn't like the sand and imagined strange fish and sea creatures lurking in the shallow water. He did not feel the freshness he had hoped for in the sea and he soon felt the heat of the sun on the crown of his head.

Returning to the beach he glanced over at Axelmann. He was asleep face down on the sand, he left him alone, he was obviously in need of a rest. The thoughts of what he would tell him ran through his head as he lay drying off in the heat, the salt made a prickling sensation as though his skin was tightening over his body.

The time passed and he started to doze under the shade of a palm. When he looked at his watch again he saw to his surprise that it was already after three, it was time to start thinking about making a move back.

He turned his head and glanced over at Axelmann, he saw his mouth open in a lewd kind of way, he lifted himself onto one elbow and looked again leaning forward, as if to get a closer look, he was startled at what he thought he saw, it seemed as though was a swarm of flies were buzzing around Axelmann's head. He stood up abruptly and took a couple of steps forward; he could now clearly see numerous flies near his head, there were even flies on his lips.

As he looked closer he saw Axelmann's face was twisted as in

pain and was a very deep red colour, it was not sunburn, he was very still, his left hand lay contorted under his chest.

Ennis suddenly felt cold, he shivered, he put his hand on Axelmann's arm and pushed, there was no reaction, he pushed again harder, and then with both hands.

My God! he thought as he pushed again.

He felt for his pulse, nothing, he felt a wave of shock, he sat down looking at Axelmann. He stood up, his immediate thought was to run to the hotel for help, it was at least twenty or even more minutes away, but he could not leave him like that.

He checked again as if he was perhaps mistaken, he had not seen many dead bodies before, but there was no doubt Axelmann not breathing, he was dead and very dead!

Ennis was no doctor, but he knew that Axelmann had had a massive heart attack. There was nothing to be done. He had been dead for nearly half an hour.

He sat down again, he could not believe it, he was filled with guilt, he had not been pleased with the recent turn of events, but he would have never wished for that.

He sat thinking for several minutes and his thoughts inexorably turned to the finality of the situation, it was finished, finished he repeated to himself, years of efforts gone on this beach, there was no way he put it all together again. He had known already deep down when Sutrawan had died that it was finished, but he had hung on in the hope, there was no other choice, he had to follow Brodzski. His hopes fell then rose again after Brodzski's stroke, he could have continued with Axelmann, but he had other ideas, now he was gone, dead, nothing would ever be as it was before.

He lifted Axelmann's arm, it was heavier than he could have imagined, he looked around him, nothing else had changed, the only thing he could see apart from the trees was the hotel in the distance.

An idea took form in his head and mechanically without thinking he removed Axelmann's watch and medallion, his ring was more difficult, he spat on the finger for lubrication. With an almost premeditated thoroughness he turned down Axelmann's shorts and

looked at the label Made in Australia, he checked if there were any pockets, nothing.

He then pushed his way into the thick undergrowth, inspecting it for a likely spot, returning to the body he grasped both arms by the wrists and drawing them over Axelmann's head he pulled, he was heavy, very heavy, it required a great effort, the transpiration poured off his arms and chest. In a backwards movement he dragged the body towards the undergrowth and pushing aside the plants and branches, he pulled Axelmann into the dense vegetation. He turned the body over face up and then stepped back, letting the plants to spring back into place, with a few deft movements he arranged the branches so that the body was completely covered. He looked carefully at the undergrowth, nothing was visible, it looked like any other part of the three kilometres or so of beach back to the hotel.

He was breathing heavily after his efforts as he smoothed the patches of sand carefully with a fallen palm branch that had been disturbed by their presence, then swept away the traces made as he had dragged his body into the undergrowth.

He looked up and down the beach, nobody, and turning towards the hotel he glanced back once more; nothing remained to show that they had been there.

He walked into the sea and then slide into the water and swam slowly in the direction of the hotel, after about a hundred yards he came out of the water and continued, keeping close to the vegetation walking very slowly so as not to attract any attention, keeping to the rocks so as not to leave any footprints, he noted that there were no traces of their earlier passage. At the halfway point he threw Axelmann's watch as far as possible into the sea and then at further intervals he then threw the ring and medallion into the undergrowth.

Once he was back at the hotel pool he saw nothing had changed, maybe there were one or two couples more, he picked up the rackets slipped on his trainers and the room key that Axelmann had left inside his racket cover. He took the towels discretely rolled them around Axelmann's shorts and trainers and then walking slowly returned to the room, in a wing that was a separated from pool by a

group of bushes and flower beds. He was relieved that he did not need to pass through the central reception area.

He opened the room door and put the 'Do not disturb' sign outside and then closed the door with the security lock.

He sat in one of the armchairs and looked at the bed working out his plan. It was necessary to move quickly, to leave the hotel as soon as possible. He picked up Axelmann's bag and looked inside; his wallet was there together with his flight ticket and passport, there was also fold of travellers checks. He looked inside the wallet; there were the usual credit cards, drivers licence, identity card and the rest. Scattered around the room were some reading matter, a toilet bag, and a few other items.

He opened his passport, the date of issue was some twelve months previous, in his picture he wore glasses, his favourite Ray Ban style, his hair was relatively long, he was suntanned giving the photo a sombre tone. He was two years younger than Ennis. Instinctively he went to the writing table and took out his own passport which he had left in the room with his own affairs on his arrival, he looked at his own picture, it was a fact that he looked slightly older, though the difference was not so great, especially if it were an Indonesian was looking at the photo. Axelmann's eyes were blue, his were grey green, his hair was blond, and his own was prematurely grey. Ennis' height was 1.78 metres his was 1.81 metres, he replaced his passport on the writing table, what difference did it make, he was dead ... dead! He could not absorb the reality of it, but nothing could change it.

It was just after five, Axelmann was booked onto the 11.15 flight to Singapore and then to Paris the next day. He then carefully checked the room for any trace of his presence, there was nothing in the drawers or the waste paper bin, he then looked at his own papers, no record of his arriving apart from his own plane ticket, there was no trace of their meeting. He unpacked Axelmann's suitcase and then repacked it being very careful to check every single item for name labels and papers bearing Axelmann's name. There were names tags on his clothing and papers that he put to one side with his own

affairs, which he then packed into his own overnight bag.

He calmly took a shower and dressed, putting on the white slacks that Axelmann had worn that morning and his black silk shirt, before leaving the room he slipped on Axelmann's Ray Bans and checked the signature of the travellers checks, it would not be the first time he had copied the signature, signing in his place.

He looked around the room once more and took a towel, which lay across the divan, wiping the furniture, just in case, to remove his fingerprints. For an instant he thought that maybe he had been reading too many novels. He left the bags inside the door.

He then opened the room door, looked up and down the corridor making sure he was not seen leaving the room, then carefully closing the door and leaving the sign Do not Disturb carefully in place. He then proceeded to the reception area; at that time of the afternoon most guests were in their rooms or the bars cooling off, there was little movement.

Discretely he crossed the lobby his head down looking at the floor to avoid any eye contact with the persons he crossed. He left his bags with the bellboy. At the cashier's desk he asked for the bill, which was efficiently printed out and handed over to Ennis with a formal disinterested smile, he pretended to examine it and then presented Axelmann's credit card, signed the Amexco slip and the cashier gave him his copy in an envelope.

As he turned around he saw the bellboy with his bags.

'Taxi Sir?' he said.

Ennis nodded and made his way towards the hotel entrance.

'Mr Axelmann, Mr Axelmann!' His heart jumped and he turned slowly.

It was the cashier: 'Your credit card Sir'

Ennis sighed with relief and took the credit card with a nervous smile.

He arrived in Singapore a little after midnight local time, the airport was busy as usual with night flights, he joined a long queue at the immigration control, which was absorbed with the usual Singaporean

efficiency. With the crowd the passport controller was more concerned with the landing card he had filled in than his appearance. He picked up the bags and then took a taxi to the Orchid hotel which was convenient for the business area of the city and far enough from Cluny Road.

The next morning was Monday. He made a series of rapid visits to the four banks where they held accounts and gave instructions to transfer almost all of the funds in each account to the Swiss Credit bank in Zurich, there was no problem, he used Axelmann's signature, and he presented Axelmann's passport in each case as identity to the young Singaporean Chinese bank officer, who simply checked the name, with a mere glance at the photo.

The same evening he flew with Swissair to Zurich arriving at six thirty the next morning, where he went through passport control. He had been worried that the Swiss would be more thorough in inspecting the passport, but at that early hour there was no more than a perfunctory glance at a European passport.

He proceeded to baggage claims carrying his own hand baggage, collected Axelmann's bag from the carousel, and after carefully removing the flight tag deposited it in the left luggage office, he had no intention of collecting it.

It was still early, he walked over to the departures building and took a coffee and waited for the airline offices to open. He then booked a one-way flight to Dublin on Aer Lingus in the name of Patrick Ryan for two o'clock that same afternoon, after which he took a taxi to the Swiss Credit Bank in Bahnhof Strasse, in the downtown area of Zurich.

At the banks reception desk he requested his contact person, Mr Stamm, a very stiff Swiss, who handled the account that Ennis held with the bank. There were no names simply numbers, ensuring his full anonymity. He was informed that his account had been credited with the funds transferred from Singapore the previous day. He then gave his order for the totality of the sum to be transferred, on their receipt of his instruction, to the bank and account named therein. His order would be transmitted to them by telefax with necessary



instructions within the next two days. Once the transfer had been carried that account would be closed.

The flight arrived at dusk over Dublin Bay, to the left was the Black Mountains and on the right hand side the wintry lights of Dublin. The plane was buffeted by the wind that always seems to be blowing on the flight path down to the International Airport. He presented the French passport and was waved through without any further formalities.

At the tourist information he made a reservation at the Conrad Hotel, where it seemed there was no particular rush in spite of the cut rates being offered during the winter season. He then took a taxi to the hotel, which was just off Shaftsbury Square in the city centre.

## Chapter 45 - BACK IN PARIS

It was a Tuesday morning when he walked along the tree lined esplanade to the Tour Adriatic and entered through the glass doors into a huge lobby, an artificial courtyard complete with plants and a water fall. The receptionist, a peroxide blond in her late forties, was deeply occupied with the daily chore of sorting a pile of morning mail, comparing the envelopes with a list of names on a computer terminal. She looked up suddenly and flashed him a good morning smile.

‘Bonjour Monsieur Ennis,’ she greeted him, it was as though he had not been absent for the last four weeks.

He crossed the lobby to the lifts, it was quiet, a little too early for the crowd, he pressed the button for the 24th floor. Looking at his watch he noted it was twenty five minutes to nine, he went to his office, it just a dozen paces away, to the right of a broad spiral stairs leading down to the twenty third floor, the oval corridor was wide, very wide and the offices curved around it on both sides face to face.

His office was almost opposite that of Brodzski’s secretary, Eva

Hardin. She was not bad looking, in fact sometimes she even looked attractive, unfortunately to Ennis' view she believed Brodzski's idea of his own exaggerated importance and had consequently elevated her own status to an appropriate level.

There had been moments, when Ennis had thought that she was a common little bitch, transplanted daily for eight hours from her distant and dreary east Parisian suburb. That was whenever she had deliberately obstructed him as she often had in the past; he was pleased by the thought of her embarrassment in the new situation.

Her door was partially closed, preventing him from seeing if she was there, it would have been early for her, she had two young children and was normally not there before a little after nine. In any case he did not want to be seen for a few minutes, time to look on his desk at the latest faxes and messages, there was nothing special.

He then wandered back into the corridor and looked into the other offices and at his watch again, it was twenty to nine. His own secretary Marie-Paule never arrived before nine fifteen. He pushed open the door of Hardin's office, nobody, on her desk were some faxes and telexes, he flipped through them, they were all from the middle of the previous week.

Next to her office was the fax, telex and photocopy room. He checked the latest arrivals that still lay in the tray of the fax machine. The first was dated Friday from Axelmann's hotel in Sydney; he picked it up and gave it a rapid glance before folding it and quickly stuffing it into his pocket. It had simply announced that he would be back at the beginning of the week. The second was the last message he had sent himself from Jakarta, it evident that things were quiet, normally the number of messages would have been greater than that.

He took the lift down to the ground floor and walked to the Longchamp, a cafe restaurant a couple of minutes down the esplanade; it was their local since they had moved into the tower. He greeted the barman and ordered a small coffee with cream and a tartine, a slab of buttered French bread.

He then went to the men's room down a narrow flight of steps to the basement where he went into the cubicle locked the door and

took the fax from Axelmann out of his pocket.

It was short and to the point just informing the office of his imminent return, nothing else. He carefully tore it into small pieces and flushed it down the toilet, as he watched them swirl around and disappear, he noticed his heart was beating fast, he flushed again after waiting a couple of minutes, thinking about his flight to Dublin for the same evening.

Ten minutes later Savio walked into the café, always looking like the company president that he aspired to be, with his camel hair coat casually hanging over his shoulders and his Sean Connery beard neatly trimmed.

‘Hey! Hello there!’ he said with a pleasant smile seeing Ennis and advancing with his hand outstretched, they shook hands. Ennis sipped his coffee and ate his tartine whilst Savio ordered a strong black express.

‘What’s new?’ Ennis asked.

‘You tell me,’ he said laughing.

‘Well is Brodzski back?’

‘Yes, he arrived Thursday morning...I’m afraid he’s had it,’ he said with a grimace.

‘What do you mean?’ Ennis thinking not for the first time that Brodzski was dead.

‘He’s in a coma, completely paralysed.’

‘Did you see him?’

‘No,’ replied Savio shrugging.

‘He was already like that in Jakarta.’

‘They say that in the best of cases, if ever he comes out of the coma, he’ll be totally paralysed for the rest of his life,’ he paused looking fatalistically into his cup of dark coffee, ‘which wont be long in any case.’

They paid and went back up to the office; Hardin had arrived, looking less buoyant than she did normally. She asked if he had any news from Axelmann.

‘No,’ Ennis replied casually avoiding looking at her directly. ‘The last call I had from him was in Singapore, from Sydney. He said he’d

be back sometime this week,' he continued after a pause, 'Have you any news from him?'

She replied that there was no news.

Savio together with Ennis walked into Brodzski's large office, they sat down looking silently at Brodzski's empty leather armchair. It was from that same chair on avenue Matignon and then in the Tower that he had held court over the last years. They had listened to his pontifications on every subject ranging from French politics to industrial development in the third world.

'So, what's the situation in Paris?' Ennis repeated to Savio.

'Not very much reaction, surprisingly enough. I've tried to find out the position of different people, but the only question they seem to be interested in is our financial situation.'

'Well how is it?'

'Were okay for about another couple of months at the best, it depends on whether or not the consortium continues to pay it's share of the costs.'

He lifted his shoulders in a Gallic shrug.

'I think TPS will probably take over, they will buy Brodzski's shares.'

'If they don't pull the plug.'

'Why?' he said with a hurt look. 'It would be best for us all if they took over...what about Axelmann, what does he think?'

'It's difficult to say,' he replied as it flashed through his mind that Axelmann didn't think any more, 'we'll see as soon as he's back...in a couple of days or so.'

They spent an hour or so talking over different scenarios as people came in and out to say hello and listen. Ennis was surprised; it was as if the company had stalled. In the past, after a prolonged absence of Brodzski things seemed to run down and only on his return did things liven up again, this time it would not be the case.

He supposed, as they had often discussed, that Papcon was not much more than a one-man show, he and the rest of them had simply played supporting roles or walk on actors in Brodzski's show.

Nobody was especially concerned by Axelmann's absence; it was

not unusual for him to be out of contact with the office for several days. In any case nothing more seemed to run according to past rules.

It would be some days before they had any signs from Indonesia concerning Axelmann, if anything happened at all. Ennis now had to prepare his own planned absence.

He joined Savio for lunch and feigned a headache with stomach trouble and fatigue; he said that he would take the afternoon off to visit his doctor and rest.

Ennis returned home and called his doctor who asked him over to his surgery, after a brief examination he suggested a few days rest and prescribed a mild medication. Ennis had visited him in the recent past for similar problems after long trips and it had become a sort of routine.

He returned to his apartment took his car and drove to Brussels. From there he took a direct flight to Dublin, where over the next couple of days he would lay the foundations for his future.

## Chapter 46 - THE OLD COUNTRY

The pleasure of deep relaxed sleep hung heavily on him, as he luxuriated in the comfort and warmth of the king sized bed in his room at the Conrad hotel in Dublin. He was in no hurry, it was four days before Christmas, he had another two days before returning to Paris. He looked at luminous dial of his watch and saw that it was just before eight in the morning. He fumbled for the light switch and then for the remote control of the TV, catching the news on BBC television, the morning talk program overflowed with holly and mistletoe.

In contrast to the biting outside temperature the warmth and comfort of the hotel gave him a feeling of childlike satisfaction, with a sense of security, especially at that time of year with an air of goodwill and well being.

He felt a deep sense of relief, the previous days had been unreal, a

nightmare, the ever-present anxiety that accompanied him was receding, and he was beginning to feel normal again. He had begun to accept in his mind that Axelmann's death had been natural; there was nothing that he could have done. The distance that now separated him from the lonely spot on the beach was great. If the body had been found, it would have had to have been quick, but probably it would never be found, he rationalised. He repeated to himself that putrefaction started almost instantly in the tropics, especially in the rainy season, the insects and animals, not to speak of stray dogs, would take care of any evidence that could identify him. Just another body for the understaffed local police.

He pushed those thoughts from his mind, as he hesitated between ordering breakfast from room service or going down to the coffee shop. He went to his room door to pick up his morning copy of the Times of London that had been slipped under the door. From the headlines Ennis saw that more trouble was brewing in the Middle East, he flipped over the pages to the financial columns and checked out the exchange rates, the FTSE index was down 12 points. He picked up the phone and ordered tea, it was better to wait in the room for the call that he was expecting around 9.30, then he would go down to breakfast.

As he showered, he made a few mental calculations based on the day's dollar rates and then thought over his program for the next couple of days. After breakfast, he would stroll over to the bank.

Maybe he should checkout his reservations with Aer Lingus, but on second thoughts he realised it was not necessary. He had a first class booking and there was no reason that anything would change, apart from the usual Christmas delays or perhaps Dublin fog.

He drank his tea with one eye on the TV and the other in the newspaper. It was still dark outside, it appeared damp and misty under the yellow streetlights, the traffic was building up and the lights in the offices opposite were coming on as the early birds arrived.

The TV announcer came on with the South East London traffic news, a bit useless in Dublin; he announced that it was 8.53 with

precision. He would soon get his call. He checked through his papers and slipped them into a large envelope, he was allergic to brief cases of all kinds.

The previous day he had taken the precaution of buying some winter clothing, just the minimum, under vests, a cashmere pullover, an Irish tweed hat and a Burberry raincoat, that was sufficient and necessary.

As he slipped his new cashmere over his head the telephone rang, it was 9.12 on his watch, a bit early for the bank especially in Dublin. He picked up the phone and fumbled with the remote control of the TV to mute the sound.

‘Hello.’

‘Hello, is that Mr Axelmann?’

‘Yes.’

‘Good morning, this is Tom O’Brien of the Allied Irish, it’s perhaps a wee bit early, but I thought I would catch you, maybe you were planning to go out.’

‘Oh that’s no problem.’

‘Well if you have time this morning you can drop by and I can see to things personally, we have the papers from Mr Stamm, everything seems to be in order.’

‘Good, I’ll drop by at 10.30, I have one other two other matters to attend to first.’

‘Fine Mr Axelmann, I’ll be waiting for you. Bye for now.’

He put the phone down and with that in order; he decided he would go down to breakfast in the coffee shop. He had not expected any problems from Walter Stamm, Ennis had faxed him all instructions on the Tuesday afternoon from his apartment in Paris, with the appropriate codes, confirmed by a very laconic phone call.

The coffee shop of the Conrad was relatively quiet, but by precaution, he took a corner table so that he could see all the comings and goings. He ordered a full breakfast with bacon, eggs, sausages, black pudding and Irish home made bread with tea. He then started to examine seriously his copy of the Times. The waitress was a typical rosy cheeked Irish lass, it was obvious that she was a beginner, so he

would give her the benefit of the Christmas spirit, there was no reason for him to play Scrooge.

He made a few more calculations on exchange rates, Swiss Francs to dollars, not that it made much difference, he was more concerned about the quality of the breakfast, it would probably be a long time before would be tasting a real Irish breakfast again.

It was walking distance to the Allied Irish, just across the square, down Grafton Street, almost opposite Trinity College. He decided to walk; he was well wrapped up in his newly acquired winter clothes that would keep out the cold. Dublin was a truly provincial city in the nicest way, that innocent friendly manner of Dubliners made it agreeable, there was no real rush and there was always time.

Tom O'Brien gave him his best professional bankers smile, asking him into one of those smallish customer meeting rooms, which they seem to prefer in banks.

‘And how are you today Mr Axelmann?’

Ennis smiled blankly, for a moment it did not occur to him that O'Brien words were directed at him.

‘Oh! Fine, fine,’ he said quickly after the hesitation.

‘Is Dublin treating you well?’

‘Yes, everything is just perfect,’ he replied.

‘It’s your first time I think you said.’

‘No I’ve had the pleasure to make one or two visits before.’

‘I wish I could speak French like you speak English Mr Axelmann.’

Ennis smiled as modestly as he could, quickly changing the subject.

‘Ah yes, if you would excuse me, I have one or two papers for you to fill in.’

Ennis walked back to his hotel feeling decidedly pleased with himself, everything was in order, the money was safely deposited in an offshore account, permitted under the Irish banking regulations, in a couple of weeks he would return it to Switzerland to a new account.

Now, he thought, I’m going to relax and enjoy Christmas, putting out of his mind the misfortunes of others, there was nothing he could



for poor Brodzski and Axelmann.

‘Fuck their luck!’ he thought, suddenly realising that he had won. He slipped a ten-pound note into the hand of a cold looking beggar, who looking at the note could not believe his eyes.

‘God bless ye Sir!’ the beggar gasped, wishing that there were more such American gentlemen in the world. Only an American could be that rich and foolish, he thought, stuffing the note into his pocket as he headed around the corner to a scruffy pub.

## Chapter 47 - A SORRY STATE OF AFFAIRS

The old cage lift creaked as it rose to the fourth floor of the fine nineteenth century Hausmanian building where Ennis had rented a small office. Two months had passed and he had was in the throes of setting himself up as a consultant once Papcon had filed for bankruptcy.

His nerves were still a little frayed. Since his Christmas trip to Dublin he was still pursued by a vision of police waiting for him, at his apartment, in the office, on the street, anywhere.

For a short while it he was floating in a kind of unreal dread, he felt that hidden people were watching him, waiting for the right moment to move in. He was swallowing more of the tranquillisers the doctor had prescribed for him than were necessary, to push away the images and fear that were omnipresent in his mind.

He pulled himself together, all he needed was a little time, if he kept cool, controlled his nerves, he could look forward to a very pleasant and comfortable life for many long years to come. The money now safely banked in Switzerland was his reward, though it would perhaps be necessary to face some tense moments over the next weeks. It was simply a question of time.

It did not however prevent him from wishing he could be transported to some point in the future once the initial drama had faded, with the passage of time and when those who could have

pointed the finger at him were occupied by other affairs. He knew that the pressure of time would wear the sharp edge off any investigations.

After all, he rationalised, I've not killed anybody, Axelmann had died a natural if premature death, the fact that I'd abandoned his body on the beach was not a real crime.

He calculated that they would have not found the body until the next day, at the very earliest. But more likely later, and probably not at all. He had left nothing on the body, there were no clues with which it could be identified, and in any case, he reasoned nobody had been reported missing.

He had gone over the details in his mind a hundred times. According to the hotel register Axelmann, as hundreds of other guests, had checked out unremarked and without incident. If records were investigated, they would simply show that he had been through passport control at Denpasar and taken an international flight via Jakarta to Singapore. There he had stayed overnight and departed with the daily Swissair flight for Zurich the following evening, where he had disappeared without trace.

Ennis himself had entered Indonesia at Jakarta and had theoretically had not left the country for five more days, the only thing linking him to Bali was the domestic flight he had taken. However, there was nothing to connect his visit to Denpasar with Axelmann's disappearance in Zurich.

He supposed that a real sleuth could eventually do that, but his experience of Indonesia told him that such a possibility was highly unlikely. He remembered Sutrawan's police friend telling them of the foreign drug addicts and homosexual deaths in Bali, which were not infrequent occurrences, and the local police lacked the means and the manpower to investigate those cases as deeply as they would have liked to.

In any case with witnesses and those who could provide clues scattered to the other ends of the world at the end of each week, it would be an impossible task. The Indonesian authorities rejected the participation of any foreign agencies investigating tourist crimes on

their territory as interference in their internal affairs. The lethargic and overloaded bureaucracy of the country soon condemned any investigation to years of red tape and legal procedures, then finally to a dusty shelf, if any conclusions were ever drawn it was long after the case had lost its urgency in Europe.

Ennis continued his reasoning; if in the unlikely event an autopsy was quickly carried out on the body, before the soft tissue had deteriorated, it would show death by a heart attack, otherwise there would be nothing to indicate foul play. They would be looking for persons reported missing and Axelmann had not been reported missing until the New Year, and that was in Paris, not Indonesia. By the time they traced him to the hotel in Bali it would be weeks, and all they would learn was that he had checked out on the Sunday and left the country.

The airlines would confirm that he had left and had passed through immigration on arrival in Singapore, where he had stayed overnight, departing on Swissair flight to Zurich the next day.

All trace of Axelmann ended in Zurich after he had deposited his baggage in the left luggage at the main railway station, which for unknown reasons was never collected.

Savio had reluctantly started to check on Axelmann's whereabouts between Christmas and the New Year, a difficult task, since he could have been anywhere for the year end festivities. It some time before the French Embassy in Jakarta replied they had checked the major hotels, immigration and airlines; all indicated he had left the country.

He had not returned to his Paris apartment. The French police were reluctant to list an adult male as a missing person as there was no immediate reason to suspect foul play. However, the fact he was the financial director of Papcon aroused certain suspicions in view of the company's financial situation.

Ennis was the first to be surprised when accusations were made against Axelmann by Brodzski's family, who were surprised to learn of the Papcon's sorry state of affairs, something that Brodzski had been careful to hide from them. It was a just short step to suspecting Axelmann of some unsavoury manipulations for personal gain.

Poor Axelmann's name was blackened by certain of the shareholders and consortium partners, no doubt to hide some of their own irregular business, but what that was did not matter a dam to Ennis as it all provided an unhopd-for diversion.

-THE END-

### Author's Note



Since this book was first written huge pulp mills have been built across Indonesia, eating into the ever dwindling rainforests. At the same time tree plantations have remained, for the most part, the pious wish of politicians, victims of their own transitory existence.

To this a new disaster was added that of oil palm plantations which have totally destroyed vast swaths of rainforest and its natural treasures.

The rest of the remaining rainforests of Indonesia will have soon disappeared under the chainsaw, the consequence of both legal and illegal logging, shifting cultivation, transmigration, uncontrolled forest fires and oil palm plantations. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can reverse this situation.

John Francis Kinsella



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