

# **Second Place of Birth:**

## **Nevis**

(Part One)

**by**  
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***Dedicated to my wife Miriam  
for her trust and support***

αω

"fear nothing, for I am with you;  
be not afraid for I am your God.  
I strengthen you, I help you,  
I support you with my victorious right hand .

...  
For I, The Lord your God,  
take you by the right hand;  
I say to you, Do not fear;  
it is I who help you, ...."

ISAIAH 41:10, 13

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## ***Foreword***

This is about a true story. As a tourist I tried to climb a volcano mountain on the Carribean island of Nevis. On my way back I slipped on a moss-covered rock where there had once been a waterfall. I fell a good five metres down into the canyon and was quite seriously injured. It took me 8 days to save myself.

My friends in Slovenia and specially in Nevis have asked me to describe my experiences and feelings during that hard time. I felt that also as an obligation to testify how important it is to pray and trust our good Lord in a situation like this.

First I have written the book in my native language and was published in Slovenia by Mladinska Knjiga Publishing House in October 2001. This e-book is the first English version and in late 2002 I plan to publish it in a paper form.

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## About the Nevis Island

It all started about a million years ago when a volcano erupted out of a turbulent sea on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean and added another island to the already existing chain of islands that was much later named the Caribbean Islands. Because the volcano remained dormant, it changed into a tall mountain that provided a barrier to the warm and humid air from the ocean, much more so than the neighbouring islands without such a peak could do. The air then condensed and formed white clouds that for a while lingered at the mountaintop and then poured rain onto the increasingly fertile ground. When much later the wild South American Indian tribes began to settle on the archipelago, they chose this island and also its larger neighbour.

Two main tribes, the Caribs and the Arawak, took turns in ruling the island. The former tribe prevailed in the end, largely because of its aggressiveness and fighting skills. Amongst other things they demonstrated their power by the ritual consumption of their defeated enemies and this is why in later times any people who ate the flesh of other human beings were named after them: the cannibals. But who knows what the Caribs called their beautiful island!

The island was given its current name, Nevis, in 1493 by the mariner Christopher Columbus (the neighbouring island of St. Kitts is named after him) who discovered the island on his second voyage to the New World. He used the Spanish word for snow, *nieves*, because the mountaintop covered with white clouds looked like a snow-topped mountain.

The Spanish, British, French, Dutch and Portuguese quickly conquered the island population and pushed it to the verge of extinction, then they started fighting each other for the wealth of the islands. In those times the size, speed and the number of guns of the navy determined the outcome of the conflicts. Huge wealth was at stake and the risks were enormous. The country that dared to send its navy to this part of the world during the autumn rainy period met with little resistance and could easily conquer a few islands in a short time. However, if the navy was caught unaware by the regular intruder into the area, the hurricane, then the whole fleet could be destroyed, as once happened to the French, who lost 17 ships and 2000 sailors during one such devastation.

In the end the imperial powers shared out their military successes at various peace conferences and in this way their colonies came into being. The island of St. Kitts was either under French or British rule, but Nevis was for most of the time a British colony. Since the British were deeply involved in defence, trading and economy, they didn't have the time or energy for manual work. For this reason they started to bring a lot of African slaves, the third race to join the island's population. The slaves on Nevis mainly worked on the sugar-cane plantations.

As the number of original Caribs decreased, though their genes still persisted in the children of mixed couples, the number of the slaves increased and soon 90 percent of the population of 10,000 inhabitants was African. Though the slaves were exploited, they didn't complain too much. When they compared their lives with the ones on the other islands, especially those ruled by the French, they could see that their lives were comparatively good. When the French attacked Nevis in order to take it from the British, who at that time did not keep the necessary protecting navy nearby, the slaves got themselves barricaded into a fortress and kept defending it even after their masters had already been defeated. By fighting so bravely, they stopped the French from becoming a strong force on Nevis, so that the British, when again in

possession of their famous navy, could retrieve the island. The British thanked their slaves for saving the island, but also discretely made it clear that they should now return the weapons and that life should go back to its old ways. The slaves complied with the demands, but also got new benefits from the British: more time to rest and better food. In this way both sides were satisfied.

When Europeans began to replace sugar cane with sugar beet there was an economic crisis on Nevis and many firms went bankrupt. As a consequence the British began to leave the island, some of them moving to the neighbouring United States. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were already very few white inhabitants and the members of the black population were increasingly taking over the important roles in society. With the end of colonialism the territory became independent and since 1983 the two islands have been joined into the state of St. Kitts and Nevis, a member of the United Nations Organisation and also a member of the Commonwealth.

Centuries ago the visitors to Nevis called the island “the Queen of the Caribbean” and today we can still use this expression to describe the island. Although tourism is the main industry, the island is far from being ruined by it, and the local people remain “unspoiled”, which is a common feature of the world’s most popular tourist destinations.

Over recent years some of the other Caribbean islands have become synonymous with mass tourism, including Slovenian tourists, but Nevis has retained its original “innocence”. Such elitist tourism is by no means easily affordable, and if, in addition, you organise your flight on your own, you will pay much more than a tourist agency would charge you. But such a holiday is worth the money; a man of pleasure will be richly rewarded. It isn’t surprising that many retired American millionaires have built beautiful houses in the remote parts of the island and that the largest proportion of the guests, staying in the wonderfully designed hotel complexes, are newly weds. For them the hotels organise special events including romantic suppers on the sandy beaches. However, in the midst of all this beauty, we again find that it is the people who remain the key promoters of successful tourism.

The locals are a self-confident and proud people (they don’t want you to take unnecessary photographs of them), however, they are kind to every visitor. One can notice the positive effects of the English colonial tradition, which is quite different from the traditions of some neighbouring islands that were under the rule of other European countries. On other islands you may be bothered by the beggars or even threatened by the criminals, but on Nevis, smartly dressed schoolgirls and schoolboys (wearing uniforms with knee-length, white socks) will always greet you. While on many other journeys begging hands follow you everywhere you go, on Nevis everybody will always give you back your change. When you find yourself walking along a street away from the populated areas, very soon a kind driver, be it one of the many taxi drivers or just a friendly local face, will stop and take you to the nearest town.

The long distance from the mainland and the lack of other strong business activities make the island look anything but a rich country. Although all the areas around the dominating mountain of Nevis Peak are connected by roads, these are usually in bad condition, full of pot holes, and sometimes also very dusty. Since the island is of a young volcanic origin, there are no hard rocks, not even enough for the production of high-quality building materials. As a result of this, the tarmac and cement are in bad condition.

The traditional houses on Nevis are more like cottages: they are very small, sometimes having just a typical single story. If you happen to be a bit intrusive, you can, while having your evening or early morning stroll, even have a peep into the houses, either through the open doors or through the windows without any glass (the tropical climate allows it).

And there are even more interesting features of the island's exterior. Nevis is inhabited by an enormous number of domesticated animals. Everywhere you go, sheep and goats will potter around your feet. They look very much alike and you can tell one from the other mainly by the tails. Donkeys graze behind every sizeable bush. In the shade, a fattened pig is tied to a tree and cute piglets run around her. Among the numerous sorts of noisy poultry, the cocks are the most attractive; no day on Nevis starts without their singing. I doubt that anybody lives on stockbreeding only; on the other hand, there can't be many people who don't have at least a sheep, a goat or a hen. And they are right in this. Why would they give up their delicious stews and roasted specialities?

There isn't as much fishing on the island as one would expect. The locals and the tourists can indulge in a variety of seafood specialities, but there is nothing left to be exported. There must be many reasons for this, but already the two most obvious ones explain the situation well: a few hundred meters away from the coast there are numerous coral reefs where huge waves roar, and which would very quickly capsize the small boats. In addition, it would be very difficult to protect larger ships against the hurricanes and heavy storms during the rainy season.

To get to the sister island of St. Kitts, the locals use sea ferries, but the spoiled tourists usually prefer five-minute flights in attractive little planes called Nevis Express. During the main tourist season, winter and spring, large tourist cruisers often come to Nevis bringing a few hundred visitors every day. It is very difficult to decide what to do in just one day: should you take your camera and head towards the picturesque capital of Charlestown, where you can visit interesting museums, like the one about Lord Nelson? Or should you rather enjoy your day on one of the typical Caribbean beaches whose biggest advantage is that they are far from overcrowded? If you appreciate long walks on pleasant, wet sand, then you can stroll for hours along a peaceful beach discovering it in all directions. It is an ideal place for collecting the shells that the waves throw up on the beach; some are as long as 20 cm. You can watch interesting pairs of animals: the pelican and the sea gull circling above the sea looking for a good fish. The pelican dives down, takes the fish in its beak and returns to the sea's surface where he wants to swallow the fish. In that moment the sea gull sits down on the pelican's back and waits for an opportunity to steal his prey. Sometimes they get involved in a psychological war for a few minutes: the pelican wants to hide his fish and pretends he has no prey; the sea gull is waiting for the pelican to open his beak, which he has to do so that the water runs out, and tries to snatch the fish.

Various palm trees, some of them bending over the sea's surface, can be an attractive sight to capture with your camera, but to a resourceful person they can also offer a true delicacy. If you manage to climb the tree, you will be rewarded with a huge coconut. Once you pluck it off the tree, which isn't all that easy, there are several ways to get to the delicious fruit and milk inside the coconut. It is possible "to stab" the coconut with an ordinary knife, but it is much easier to do it with a machete.

Modern nomads can enjoy such adventures on Nevis in a relaxed way because there are no wild animals, poisonous snakes or other dangerous creatures. There are monkeys in the

wilderness, but they are unusually shy so that it is difficult to spot them, let alone take a photograph of them. There were times in the past when man used to hunt them for food and it seems that the ancient fear of people still persists in them.

Who doesn't want to feel safe nowadays? When planning a journey, we usually also ask: What about crime? Is there a lot of it? Will I be able to walk alone, even in the evening? The expectation of safety and friendliness is the crucial issue that links all those visitors who go back to Nevis year after year. After the first experiences with the island and following the recommendations of other, more experienced, tourists, you discover that it is possible to walk alone on Nevis, that you can meet interesting people (and animals), explore, relax, swim, dive, stay out late, drink...

In short, it is an ideally safe island where nothing threatening can happen to you. Well...?

## The Day Before

It really was a dream holiday. My wife Miriam and I had agreed on this over dinner on the terrace of the Great House restaurant: the pride of the Nisbet Plantation Beach Club tourist complex. This was where we were spending our eight-day holiday. I well remembered the restaurant from the year before, due to an amusing misunderstanding when I had not been able to have a look at its interior.

For many years I have been introducing some variety into my business activities by going to a conference every year. Of the several hundred possible educational events on offer I always choose one that takes place in an interesting town. In this way I can combine business with pleasure. Several professional publications and the Internet enable me to keep in touch with state-of-the-art legal informatics; however, I feel that meeting the people who are at the forefront of this field is of the utmost importance. In previous years I had attended various fairs in Hanover, Munich, London, San Diego, Seattle, Atlanta, Chicago and Honolulu. And for 2000 I chose a conference entitled Lex Cybernatoria, at which the participants would discuss the cross-disciplinary issues of legal practice and the latest in information technology – the area that interests me most. The fact that the conference was organised on Nevis, a small Caribbean island then still unknown to me, didn't make me any less keen on attending the event. On the contrary, I always like to spend the one week per year that I can dedicate to my personal development in a pleasant environment and where I can get acquainted with new places. The conference on Nevis turned out to be very small in terms of the number of participants, but one of the most fruitful and useful I have ever attended. It was attended by various professors, business people, trendsetters and venture capitalists, mainly from the USA. We exchanged information about our work from the first to the last minute of the event, not only during the formal sessions, which were held on the open terrace of the Mount Nevis Hotel, but also beside the swimming pool, during meal times, as well as on our short trips into the surrounding countryside.

One day we agreed to have supper in the Nisbet restaurant, which was recommended to us as the best you can find on Nevis. About eight of us set off in two taxis for a gourmet's adventure. When we turned in to the Nisbet Plantation, where the slaves used to work in the sugar-cane fields, we caught sight of a beautifully arranged area and a traditional restaurant situated on a gentle rise: The Great House. We quickly noticed as we approached the door of the restaurant that most of the tables were free and our mouths began to water at the prospect of Caribbean delicacies and cold cocktails. But we were in for a disappointment: at the entrance a friendly hotel manager approached us and in a sad voice he said: "Sorry, gentlemen – no shorts allowed!" Our pleading was in vain. We tried to explain that we were a group of respectable business people and that "money was no problem", but the manager – who I now know was a Mr Don Johnson – preferred to forego the evening's profit in order to maintain a long, originally British tradition, according to which men were only allowed to enter a reputable restaurant in long trousers. As a result, we had to drive to a far-away place where, sitting on an unprotected terrace and being pestered by mosquitoes, we ended up chewing on some sort of pizza. The incident irritated me then, but later it stayed in my memory as something very positive: as a successful way of preserving traditional values. And maybe this particular memory prevailed in my mind when I was later choosing a destination for our family holiday.

And now Miriam and I were sitting in this beautiful restaurant, well protected by thick nets from the mosquitoes (though I hardly noticed any this time), and in the cool air under the big,

rotating, colonial fans we were being treated like royalty by the friendly hotel staff. To use the expression hotel does not really do it justice: the Nisbet Plantation is a complex that sweeps down from its entrance at the top of the hill to the beach. It starts with the classical, supper-only restaurant; next to it there are clubs, a reception and a small shop; further down among the well-kept meadows, flowers and palm trees you find the beautifully located bungalows for the guests. On the coast you can make use of a fantastic breakfast bar – raised above ground level, covered with a roof, but otherwise a simple, open area – a kitchen, the “Coconut Restaurant”, which is only open during the day and also includes a small bar, a swimming pool and a wonderful sandy beach. As one would expect, the supper served in the Great House is truly a ritual, an event that you really do not attend in short trousers, on the contrary, you go there in your best suit.

For families with small children the ritual starts a few hours earlier. In case you don't attend afternoon tea at 5 pm – which would be a great shame considering the rich assortment of teas, sandwiches and desserts on offer – a member of the restaurant staff will find you in your bungalow or even on the beach, just to ask you: “And what would your children like to eat this evening? You know how impatient hungry children can be when waiting for their treats. Our children, Toni and Mariansa, first mastered English in the area of food, and after a few days they were already able to order things for themselves: “Fish and mashed potatoes” or “Chicken and french fries.” (These English expressions also slipped out of their mouths at a Sunday lunch one week after our return to Slovenia, when we went to the pilgrimage centre in Brezje and later had our meal in the tourist resort of Lake Bled.) The chosen order was conveyed to the kitchen and when we brought the children to supper at 6 pm, they immediately got their meals, as did the other children whose parents had also decided to have such separated suppers. After the children had finished their food and drinks, a friendly hotel hostess came to collect them – Toni and Mariansa still remember the smiling Rozlyn – and took them to a playroom with lots of children's games and a big television. (Otherwise there are no televisions in the bungalows, which is considered to be a sign of the highest category of hotel; however, the ordinary hotel rooms on Nevis do have televisions.) The children are happy to spend time in the playroom while their parents can really enjoy the slow and ceremonial supper that starts every day at 6.30 pm. It may seem a bit unusual for the parents and children not to have supper together, but in reality it is an ideal solution. After all, on holidays we spend all day together anyway, we talk to each other and play a lot, so that both sides welcome the evening's separation. The numerous members of the hotel staff appreciate it as well, because such organisation of the evening meal makes it easier for them to keep every item of cutlery in its place, every plate positioned correctly and every glass kept full at all times.

In such moments, even after eight years of marriage, loving hands meet and Miriam and I agreed that life for us couldn't be better. Health is always our first concern and on Nevis the children got rid of all their runny noses and the other remnants of the unpleasant European winter. The two of us, already middle-aged, occasionally have minor health problems, but, thank God, it is nothing serious. Our other concern is money: apparently we have enough of it, if we can afford a winter holiday including a three-day stay in Miami, an eight-day stay on Nevis and also three-days of fun in Orlando's Disneyworld. Since we started our new family relatively late – we were both in middle age – we both had plenty of opportunity to get used to feelings of loneliness, with disappointments, a desire for children and the other secret longings of parents. We were lucky to find each other; our characters are very much alike; our values are very similar, especially our enthusiasm for the “happy family” (as we were defined by Mariansa) and our determination never to be separated.

Until then our holiday on Nevis had been wonderful, we still had three more days in front of us, and then we should head towards Orlando, the destination to which the children were most looking forward. For quite some time I had been thinking of climbing to the top of Nevis Peak on the following day, and at that restaurant table I even asked the service manager Dave whether there was any path on our side of the island leading to the mountain top. He firmly warned me against climbing the mountain on my own and referred to a dreadful case that occurred a few years previously when a tourist got lost there and spent three days on the mountain before he was rescued. I thanked him for his advice but I had my own ideas: surely that tourist wasn't such an experienced climber as I am. Of course Miriam would have preferred for me not to go climbing, but, on the other hand, she wanted me to experience the additional pleasure of seeing the whole of the island from its highest point. And, above all, she knew well my passion for the mountains and knew that I had attempted similar climbs several times before, for example, on our previous summer holiday. On that occasion I had set off from our resort on the Adriatic island of Bol to climb the mountain called Vidova gora and returned home in good time. We also thought that one advantage of this particular adventure would be the fact that after my return I would still have two days to rest in our heavenly complex of Nisbet.

We were very much in love that evening. However, I also felt a tinge of bitterness: life was so good that it couldn't get any better; it could only get worse. But I never could have guessed how dramatically our heavenly feelings would change on the following day.

## The First Day - Tony

On a lovely morning on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2001 I got up early enough to leave Nisbet before dawn. My wife helped me to finish packing my rucksack, into which we put spare underwear, a digital camera, two half-litre plastic bottles filled with water, a few pieces of bread and a packet of biscuits. I didn't protest when Miriam also "planted" some mosquito repellent in my rucksack.

Although I was fully aware that such a modest rucksack would be useless in the case of an emergency, I was at the same time certain that nothing terrible could happen to me. A year before I had also set off early in the morning from the nearby hotel of Mount Nevis and climbed the wonderful Round Hill, which is about 300 metres high. I was misled by the fact that on that occasion I had found a well-worn path leading to the top of a significantly lower peak – I assumed I would also find a similar path leading towards the 970-metre-high Nevis Peak. I knew for sure that there was a path on the other side of the mountain, coming from the settlement of Golden Rock, which we had visited a few days earlier and where I had enquired about the climbing possibilities. Hence, my conclusion was the following: I will surely be able to find a path leading out of the only settlement on this side of the mountain. And where else should it go to if not towards the mountain peak – since the whole of the Nevis island is really just the slope of a dominating mountain of the same name; the only exception is the area of Round Hill, which is separated from Nevis Peak by a flat saddle. This time I will be climbing over it to the left side of the mountain, taking just the opposite direction from the one I took a year ago. Whatever happens, I will stop climbing at midday at the latest. If I don't manage to reach the top by then, I will turn back and easily return to the hotel taking the same path. Alternatively, I can go down the other side of the mountain until I reach the road, which goes all the way round the island, and there I will hire a taxi to take me to Nisbet.

Just before leaving, my caring wife gave me a kiss and I assured her again: "Do not worry! I promise I will be back in good time, for the dinner at six, at the latest." And then I joked: "If I'm not back by then, you can start the rescue operation." Of course it never even crossed my mind that I could bring worry and uncertainty to my wife and children. I imagined their day in a completely different way: they will first have a lie in, then enjoy their big breakfast and later swim and sunbathe. In the afternoon they will wait impatiently for me to tell them all about my exciting experience and then we will all get ready for our daily ceremonial dinner.

Sunrise followed the daybreak at 6 am (the time interval between these two phenomena is much shorter in the Caribbean than it is in Europe), I was already happily on my way, dressed in short trousers, a tee-shirt and sports shoes. I took the gently rising Upper Round Road, leading towards the saddle between Nevis Peak and Round Hill. For a while I was still walking through the town and I smiled to myself when I heard occasional snoring coming through the glassless windows. My pace quickened once I reached the unpopulated area where a year before I had first seen some shy monkeys in their natural environment. On this occasion, however, I didn't see any. When I was passing through the last settlement, situated on the saddle, I noticed that almost everybody was still asleep. At this settlement, called Fountain, I turned left and optimistically went into the jungle.

Just like mountaineers and free-climbers who long for the most difficult and technically demanding climbing route, while at the same time eagerly using every foothold and every piton, I also hoped to find a path or at least a narrow track in the jungle. I soon realised that walking was going to be very difficult and progress not as quick as I had imagined. The

tropical jungle is very dense, it consists of various plants – from low, thick grass and ferns to very tall trees, palms, creepers, cacti and other prickly plants. In addition to all these living plants, there are also a lot of remnants of dead plants around. This is because man doesn't interfere with the workings of the jungle.

You make very slow progress on such terrain, and face a lot of difficulties, especially when you walk without protective clothes (long trousers and long sleeves) and without the necessary machete. Initially, I could still find a few signs of a cutout trail where I could walk much faster. I even came across some bits of an old trail-marker that was made of coloured strings tied to tree branches that were already decaying. Such marks are psychologically very encouraging because they fill you with optimism: you believe yourself to be on the right path, seeing that somebody else had walked on it before you. My plan was to follow those signs, because I thought that they would lead me towards the mountaintop and keep me safe. However, my expectations proved to be too optimistic. Readers who have ever walked on tidy, well-marked routes will recall that even there they could get lost very quickly. I used to be a mountain trail marker and whenever I drew the round, red-and-white signs, I had to be especially careful to place them at tricky turns where mountaineers could easily make a mistake and get lost. But in the jungle everything was overgrown and I found it very difficult to find those decaying strings. I gave up in the end, realising that my initial plan had come to nothing.

As the slope became steeper I began to get tired and thirsty. The first bottle of water was nearly empty. I began to suspect that I would run out of water, but I hoped that I would already be on my way back when this happened and I would be able to comfort myself with the thought of a cold beer waiting for me in the first settlement at the foot of the mountain. However, it was getting increasingly clear to me that this trip wasn't going to be as trouble-free as the one I had made a year ago when I climbed Round Hill. My lightweight sports shoes were anything but appropriate; I could have twisted my ankle at any turn. Once I even fell into some sort of hole, which must have been a result of the decaying roots of a large tree. I grabbed hold of the ground at shoulder level, but my legs dangled into emptiness. Then I realised for the first time that a serious accident could happen and that I would find it difficult to get out of it on my own. It was already after ten o'clock and I knew that I probably wouldn't reach the top of Nevis Peak from this side of the mountain. But I wished to climb at least to the level where the forest thinned out and where I could have some view of the coast.

The name Nevis has its origin in the Spanish word for snow: the mountain is, for most of the year surrounded by white clouds that spring up when the hot Atlantic air hits the mountain, cools down and begins to condense. These clouds often bring rain and this is the reason why the mountainous Caribbean islands are more overgrown and fertile than the flatter ones. The top of Nevis Peak is almost always covered with a white hat and photos of the mountain without its white top are very rare. I knew that what looks like a cloud from a distance turns into fog when you approach it. Hence, I never expected to have a good view from the top of the mountain.

At about 11 am the wild forest began to thin out and I slowly began to get a view of the mountaintop. I found myself standing on a crest that reminded me of Little Triglav (the lowest of the three peaks of Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain), which meant that I was on the peak next to the main Nevis Peak. My plan now was to go down a bit and then climb the bare slope until I got to the top, which was right at the edge of the clouds. But I was mistaken in my assessment of this bare slope because I was thinking about it in a European way. My

conclusion went like this: if the slope is green, but without trees or bushes, then it can only be grass. And it should be easy to climb a grassy slope. But already after a few steps I found out that a green surface can be a lot more than just grass, bushes or trees. This was some sort of “quick grass”: a very thick greenery, strongly interwoven and on average up to a metre and a half tall. I was sort of swimming on it, which was very tiring. I first had to pull my leg out of the greenery, lift it as high as possible, push it about a metre forward, throw forward my whole body and then pull the other leg towards me. I also had to supplement all these gestures with hand movements similar to swimming. The distance of a few hundred metres that separated me from the cloud and the mountaintop was also very steep, so that I was making very slow progress. To make matters worse, I also got several nasty scratches.

As the time was getting closer to midday I knew that I wouldn't get to the top. I still thought I could do it in an hour, but that wouldn't be keeping to my initial plan to stop climbing at 12 o'clock. I wanted to stand by what I said. So, I thought, let's go back.

However, I didn't like the path that I was on and because I remembered from the map that on the other side of the crest the beach was closer to the mountain, I decided to make my adventure more interesting by going down that side. In this way I was going to get further from the hotel and wouldn't be able to walk back to it, but that shouldn't be a problem: on every Nevis road you can find a taxi or at least a friendly local driver. I thought: Surely somebody will take me back to Nisbet and then.... First I will take a shower. No, first I will go to the beach and get into the sea to disinfect my scratches. No, first I will have a large beer, or maybe I'd rather have one of those delicious Caribbean cocktails? And then off to dinner with my family...

There is really something masochistic about mountaineering, especially Alpine climbing: we try to climb a mountain in the most difficult way possible and end up exhausting ourselves. But at the same time we are happy to find a shortcut, level ground, an easy descent and, above all, a mountain hut where we can find shelter and rest.

Hence, I found it quite normal that Nevis Peak presented me with so much hardship and inconvenience, but I really enjoyed only the first hour of my walk, that was before I entered the thick jungle – but that's what mountaineering is all about. And now I only had one goal in mind: to return to the valley as soon as possible and be back in the luxurious hotel complex of Nisbet.

So is it strange that I soon found myself in a dry riverbed? Once per year, in the rainy season, heavy storms rush towards Nevis, as well as to the other Caribbean islands, and pour enormous amounts of rain on the ground below. The water first runs in streams; these streams later flow into the canyons and here water begins to demolish everything that is in its way. This is why the canyons are the only places without any long-lasting plants. After the rainy season, only moss, grass, tall ferns and other annual plants begin to grow among the large and small stones of the riverbed. This means that walking along such riverbeds is relatively easy: you don't have to waste your energy in moving away the branches and creepers or avoiding fallen trees.

In the beginning I thought that the riverbed would make my descent into the valley really easy as well as saving me from a lot of effort and scratches. However, it turned out that my conclusions were wrong – and I feel I should share this knowledge with the readers of this book.

As you follow the canyons they tend to become increasingly deep and steep. Small waterfalls are replaced by big ones; small pools change into huge basins where, in times of high water, huge rocks and trunks of fallen trees are tossed about. At the beginning of the canyon I was still able to jump easily over the rocks, but later I often had to bend down and use my hands. I had to start climbing again.

I became thirsty and hungry so I had the last drink of water from my second (and last) bottle and ate a few pieces of bread. I reckoned I would reach the valley in an hour or so and could keep going without water and food until then....

But then I took a step that changed my life forever. When I noticed another hollow about five metres down from me, I realised that I was standing on a spot that is the top of a medium-sized waterfall during the rainy season. The rock below the water is always the smoothest right at the top of the waterfall, and in my case it was also covered with moss. When I tried to approach the edge of the hollow to assess how I could descend to bypass this barrier, I suddenly slipped on the moss and plummeted into the hollow. As I fell I felt several serious pains, especially in my right leg, then I found myself at the bottom, lying among big rocks and decaying trunks. The wound on my thigh was about 15-cm long and bleeding. Blood was also coming from both my elbows, and I had acquired a few more scratches.

The fall was a big shock to me. My first thought was whether my bones were broken. Hence, I immediately, though with some difficulty, got up and thanked God that my bones were still intact. However, my whole body was shaking and I understood that I was in very bad shape. Before the fall I was already very tired, thirsty and hungry – and now all of that was compounded by serious shock. The wound on my leg became very swollen and I was afraid it would become septic because my whole body was very dirty, sweaty as well as being covered with mud, bits of grass and moss. I had no water left with which to clean the wound, so I comforted myself with the thought that the bleeding would soon stop since no large vein was damaged. However, it wasn't an innocent wound because it later took a very long time to heal; and if I touch the spot now, while writing these lines three months after the accident, it still hurts.

What could I do then? The situation definitely demanded a clear and rational analysis. Hence, I sat down again and said an Our Father, the Hail Mary and a Glory be (these three prayers also helped me on all the following days) which calmed me down a great deal. Then I reasoned like this: my Creator is apparently still kind to me because I could easily have been killed during a fall like this one, simply by hitting the hard rocks at a slightly different angle. I hope this was a warning only; maybe a warning against my further pride at having such a good life? However, I accept the warning and will, later, rethink the ways of my life. But now I need to know how to get out of this mess.

Let's see: above me is a five-metre wall from whose top I have just fallen down and I have no intention to go back to it. So, what else is there? In spite of the pain in my leg I walked across the bottom of the hollow, the size of two sitting rooms, and to my horror I found out that at one end it continued into another hollow, at least three times deeper and completely impassable. The side walls of my hollow were in some parts thickly overgrown with plants and 20 to 30 metres high. One wall was completely vertical, the other was even sloping inwardly. My conclusion went like this: I can never get out of this place on my own. I can see I won't be back in Nisbet by 6 pm. Poor Miriam, she will be sick with worry. I'm really

ashamed because she will now have to ask the rescuers to go and find me. But this is the only solution. At least for today. It is after 5 pm now, at 6 pm it gets dark and in these tropical places the night comes very quickly. So I will have to camp here.

I didn't need to check the contents of my rucksack because I knew how little I had taken with me. Only now I realised how careless it was of me not to take at least a knife, a torch, or a telephone. This must have been the so-called "guide's syndrome": guides will always tell everybody what necessary equipment to take into the mountains, but when they set off climbing themselves, they aren't always so consistent. They believe that nothing bad will happen to them, or, in the event that an accident does happen, that they will somehow find a solution to get them out of the tricky situation.

I could guess that the night would be cold, so I immediately started preparing some sort of nest. I tore off several pieces of various plants and made my bed at the bottom of a wall, believing that it would provide me with some shelter. My underwear was very damp, so I took it off and put on my spare shorts and two spare tee shirts. I spread the damp white underwear over the dark rocks in the hope that the rescuers could see it from the air. I knew that I should try to attract their attention in some way. It is interesting to note that the underwear didn't get dry for several days, so I left it there for the remainder of the time.

Then I focused on my biggest problem: a lack of water. I was already noticing significant signs of dehydration caused mainly by exhaustion, but also due to the wounds, pain and stress that I had just experienced. My mouth was completely dry and was getting very sticky; I could feel the pulsing of the vein in my neck and had pains in my heart. I looked around but couldn't find anything to drink. Even though there was a centimetre-deep puddle of water at the bottom of the hollow, it was all covered with green slime and full of some sort of snails and other small creatures. My plastic bottle was empty; however, I was glad that I had kept at least one empty bottle – I had put the other one on a stick beside my previous path in order to encourage other climbers that would perhaps come this way, as I was encouraged by those coloured stings tied to the tree braches. I felt that without any liquid I wouldn't be able to hold out for much longer. I remembered that in such cases one's own urine could be useful. Although I wasn't quite sure that I would really drink it, I peed into the bottle, closed it and put it away to cool down. I was able to postpone the first consumption of urine for a while because of a pleasant discovery: when I rummaged again through all the rucksack's pockets, I found a miniature bottle of Jagermeister. Oh, how I enjoyed it! My mood improved a lot, probably also because of the alcohol in the drink.

My mood was soon to change again because, to my great horror, I discovered that I had lots of company in my hole: when I moved a decaying trunk a swarm of mosquitoes flew into the air. There were hundreds of them. The last thing I needed then was to be attacked by all those mosquitoes during the night. How grateful I was to my wife for "planting" that mosquito repellent in my rucksack during the last moment before my leaving. First I wanted to apply it on my arms, but that caused a smarting pain because my arms were already all scratched and cut. Instead, I decided to apply it only on my clothes, mainly on my brimmed hat, hoping that the smell would at least keep the mosquitoes away from my face. Later it turned out that they weren't at all intrusive at night: they were flying around me, I could hear their buzzing, but only very rarely did one of them sting me.

As it grew dark I was forced to go "to bed" because it was becoming more difficult to find my way among the big rocks, gaps, and piled up trunks. (I wouldn't want anybody to think that

my hollow, apart from its size, had any other resemblance to a sitting room.) I also decided to sample my urine before it got too dark.

I didn't fancy the prospect at all. On the contrary, I found it utterly repulsive and I was afraid that I would be sick immediately and unable to pour any more of the much-needed liquid into my mouth. I decided to use a psychological trick: I will try to imagine that I am in a lively pub somewhere in Scotland where beer flows like water, then quickly pour it into my mouth and imagine I am drinking the best beer on earth. This is roughly how I actually managed it. It was really good that the urine had cooled down in the mean time (and on subsequent occasions I practiced the same technique). I opened the half-litre bottle, which was almost full, focused on the fictional picture in my mind, brought the bottle to my mouth and, in one go, poured all of its content down my throat. Agghrr. Yuk. Yuk. Disgusting! But I didn't throw up. And in just a few minutes I felt the beneficial effect of this desperately needed liquid.

I sat down in my nest, put my feet into the rucksack, covered myself as best I could with big leaves and calmed down. I felt then that I really had a lot time for thinking. I can't say whether I had ever done so much thinking before.

To begin with, I said the whole rosary (the Hail Mary, 50 times; and Our Father, 5 times). Again, I can't say whether I had ever before said the whole rosary on my own (saying it in church, together with other believers, is a different matter). I knew: my life is in Your hands and it is Your will how this will end. At that time I didn't yet think of death, of not getting rescued. My main concerns were not to cause Miriam too many problems and to get enough rest when back in Nisbet, before our flight to Orlando. And I also felt that my dear family was at that moment praying for me and my safe return: My guardian angel, be always with me...

The night then dragged in the same way as all the following ones. I got very little real sleep. Soon I was shaking with cold. The pains were becoming worse. I could feel every stone beneath my body as well as the damp soil. A child of Western civilisation, I didn't feel comfortable any longer sleeping outdoors and I was sure that the dampness would cause me long-lasting rheumatism. But there was nothing I could do about it, at that moment I had no alternatives.

The night drags on and on. I'm cold, I'm shaking...

It is very dark and my movements are very limited. I can partly turn around, but only on those parts of my body that haven't been wounded. I have to remain in my nest where I can still partly cover myself and keep my feet in the rucksack. If I wandered away, I could very quickly step into a gap, fall in and get injured again. But my bottle with its bright top is close to me so that I can feel for it and use it for a call of the nature.

The cold bites my bones and maybe only the shaking "warms me up" a bit. I wonder whether I could sleep better if it was warmer? As it is, I now have loads of time on my hands and I can't help but fill it with a lot of thinking. My mind keeps wandering off to various times and places, but mainly it drills deep into my self. I often switch between the dialogue with myself and a monologue with Him, who is all around me. I have never in my life philosophised so much or seen life from such a completely different perspective.

What was, until yesterday, the most important thing in my life? If I had asked myself this question before, I would probably have started listing rather complex social issues like a good

marriage, wonderful children and prosperity, which allows us to have such a lovely annual holiday. Well, I would have surely also added good health to the list. We usually say that these are the most important things in life. And I still believe it's true. Nevertheless, my list of important things has changed today, it has got closer to the values that my ancestors had centuries ago.

Food is important! Water even more so! And protection against the cold: clothes and shelter. If I try to imagine the situations of other victims (which I now find easier than ever before), I find there is something even more important than water: the air that we breathe. I could, for example, live without water for many more hours, but buried miners or people caught under the water would be faced with an even bigger problem: a lack of oxygen. They could survive for only a few minutes.

These basic needs have been the driving force of any civilisation. However, due to different conditions in various parts of the world, the pace of the progress was also different. The people who wanted to survive in continental climates of harsh winters had to provide themselves with much more than those who were never cold and didn't even need to wear clothes. Once the basic needs were satisfied – after man had eaten, drunk and rested – then he was able to start planning other things. As the questions “why” and “how” appear early in a child's vocabulary, philosophy and religion appeared at the dawn of mankind. No society has ever survived without them.

Usually, we perceive the details of everyday life as ordinary and uninteresting, we rush past them without paying any attention to them. However, in a different situation the same details take on a new meaning and become much more important.

Take, for example, this five-metre wall, on which I slipped today and which prevents me from going back to my family. The law of gravity functions mercilessly and still threatens me, it might drag me down even further, which could be very painful or even fatal. If the wall was a few degrees less steep, I could easily climb out of this hole, leave the place, and forget it forever. As it is, the wall threateningly stretches above me and has a hugely important role in my life. If by tomorrow I don't manage to get out of here, or the others do not rescue me, I will really be in big trouble. Then I would surely be prepared to exchange my Volvo for twenty metres of strong climbing rope.

Can the accident I have just experienced also be beneficial in some way? Yes, it must serve a purpose. If nothing else, I am in such close contact with nature, closer than I have been for a long time, and I doubt that this year I would otherwise be experiencing any such intensity of feelings. I do sometimes go to the woods with the children (though in Slovenia this has recently become less appealing because of the ticks), but that involves only walking; and it's not even demanding walking because we usually just follow the well-worn paths. But here I explore every inch of the rocks, the decaying trunks and, above all, the small plants that, to me, are almost like living creatures.

I am also getting acquainted with my body in a new way. I had never before suffered such wounds. Neither had I ever before experienced dehydration. And how irrelevant the food seems to me just now! By nature I am more of a bon vivant than an ascetic, and I don't remember when I last went to bed without my supper. I will find out tomorrow how noisily my stomach will be rumbling.

However, this event will surely leave more traces on my mind than on my body. I have always been fully aware of the transient nature of our lives; I felt very strongly about it on several occasions, but those feelings were more the results of my speculation about the issue than of an experience. However, here I had just experienced a brush with death (I can't say whether it happened yesterday or today, because I can't check the time in the darkness), and I'm sure that many more interesting, maybe even dangerous, things will again happen to me tomorrow.

Our lives are limited by time, a dimension that I will here become more familiar with. Within our civilisation, we constantly play with time and often try to trick it. We possess numerous objects and chemicals with which we attempt either to speed up or slow down the time. But here I have no such aids; no shortcuts are available. I will have to go through every second of this night and if sleep keeps avoiding me, it will be a very long one.

Didn't I have occasional premonitions that something bad might happen to me? Like other happy people, I have often said to myself in the past few years: How wonderful life is! Will it last? Do I have the right to such happiness when so many people are unhappy? Maybe the time has come when the long period of a happy life is over.

Questions, questions. What if something really bad is in front of me? Will I be strong enough for it? What a silly question. Of course I will do the best I can to get out of this with the fewest possible consequences. However, there are, of course, only two options: either I will manage get out of here, or I won't.

The worst thing about the latter option is the fact that I would then lose my beloved ones, not to mention, make them unhappy. Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems to me that I would accept death much more easily if I had no children, wife and mother. I remember an incident from Parliament when I uttered some words for which I was later mocked. I didn't plan those words; they just came out of me spontaneously, while I was standing at the lectern during one of the tense and emotional discussions on the secession of Slovenia. At that time I said: "I would even give my life for Slovenia!" Now I know that dying isn't a matter that could be discussed like this, not even during the important historic moments like the ones I have just referred to. Instead of talking, action is needed; and this may sometimes also include the sacrifice of one's life. Nevertheless, I should emphasize that I didn't say those words casually: I was prepared to give my life so that my dear Slovenia could finally, after many centuries, become a free and equal member of the international, mainly European, community (then we were still threatened by communism and the Yugoslavian Army). When I analyse the background of that event, I also have to add one crucial fact: I wasn't married then and had no children. Today, I wouldn't be prepared to die for my country; and I believe that most other parents feel the same way. In my heart my children come first, my country comes second.

It is important how a man dies. Lying in this hollow, I have to think about all the possible outcomes of this situation – the worst of them is surely death. I'm afraid of the form that this dying might take. Will it last very long? Will I suffer a lot of pain? Will I be delirious or will my conscious remain intact? Will death come during my sleep so that I won't be aware of it, or will I be watching myself passing away until the last breath? So far I have been lucky in my life: apart from a sore, twisted ankle, I have never had any severe and long-lasting pains. How will I survive the whole ordeal? Another silly question, isn't it? Either I will survive it, or I won't. I don't want to scream with the pain, but if it gets too much I may not be able to

resist it. I will leave it to my body to set the pain-threshold, and focus my mind only on crucial matters – those that can get me out of this situation.

Irrespective of what will follow, I already know now that our trip to Nevis has brought a new dimension into my life. This is, by any measure, a big experience (I don't want to use the expression adventure). I will try to remember as many details as possible so that I can later pass on my experience to other people and, above all, so that I will keep it all in my memory. A lot is still in front of me, and maybe one day I will have to give an account of this.

My very thought takes me back to God. I believe that my fall hasn't been accidental: You wanted to interrupt the flow of my life as it is now and send me a message. Will I be able to understand it? Will I be able to make use of what You are trying to tell me?

## The First Day - Miriam

For Miriam the day could have been quite pleasant and peaceful, even though Tony went on a solo trip. The hotel complex of Nisbet Plantation Beach Club provided every possible comfort for adults and children. After a luxurious breakfast she could have taken Toni and Mariansa to the clean and safe swimming pool where they so much liked to swim (they even preferred it to the beautiful, sandy and unspoiled beach that was only a few metres away). With the children playing on their own she could have rested on a comfortable poolside lounger and browsed magazines. The lunch would have been only a few metres away from the pool, in the restaurant that is partly on the beach, with its tables on the sandy ground and under the big wooden parasols, and with its excellent waiters and waitresses. In the afternoon they could have taken a rest in our bungalow that had a name: Indian Castle, instead of a number. It was surrounded by exotic bushes, palms and flowers so that it allowed us a peaceful rest. There wouldn't have been much time left for another swim because at 5 pm they would have gone for the traditional English tea. This ritual wouldn't be so popular with the children if it only included tea. But when the guests gather around the tables, in the shade in front of the Great House restaurant, they aren't just offered more than 20 different sorts of tea, but also small sandwiches of various flavours, fresh biscuits, other pastries and cold drinks. It would have been more than enough for the children to keep them going until dinner when their father was expected back and the family would have been together again....

But for Miriam the day turned out differently. A feeling of uncertainty had persisted with her since before 6 am, when Tony had left. The day before she had helped him pack a small number of items into his rucksack (he had refused to take more with him). At night she didn't sleep well, she heard him wake up several times, checking whether it was time to get up. After he left in the morning, she went back to bed, but couldn't sleep again. She felt restless, wishing the clock would quickly change to four or five o'clock in the afternoon when they could all be together again.

The healthy lifestyle in the middle of winter – lots of walking, swimming, fresh air and lovely food – was very good for the children, so they slept well and long. This is why they didn't set off for their breakfast before 9 am.

On the way from the bungalow towards the breakfast terrace, walking through the palm tree park, they met the waitress Violet who was rushing towards the Great House restaurant. She asked Miriam: "And where is your husband?" When Miriam told her where Tony had gone, Violet asked in surprise: "Surely he went there with a guide, didn't he?" Miriam said he hadn't and Violet's face suddenly got very serious, as if expressing some ancient fear of the mountain: "What, he went up the mountain on his own? That wasn't a sensible thing to do. The mountain is dangerous." These words, of course, increased Miriam's worries and restlessness.

Toni and Mariansa had, by this time, grown very familiar with the workings of the breakfast terrace. Both children really enjoyed having the beautifully folded serviettes ritually spread out on their laps by the restaurant staff. Of course, the serviettes didn't stay there for long, while their mother was ordering food, they rushed off to the special fruit corner. Although there were many different sorts of fruits, some familiar, others unknown to them, but all neatly peeled and decorated with small flags, Toni filled his plate with strawberries, whereas Mariansa took a few pieces of watermelon. Choosing the cornflakes was much more difficult for them because the choice was much bigger than at home. And from the variety of fresh

fruit juices, they chose their favourite apple juice, which they had tried many times before. Right on time, the always smiling waitresses brought a basket full of freshly made, deliciously smelling toast on which the children's mother spread different sorts of marmalade, taking it from the cute little jars. Only at the end of this one-hour meal did Miriam finally find time to have her own breakfast that had been served on the warmed up and tastefully decorated plate. Then she also took the time to admire the sea birds diving into the water only a few metres away from where she was sitting. The pleasant breeze on the open terrace provided constant music by moving the special, carved percussion instruments hanging from the ceiling. Their sounds created an atmosphere one can never forget.

In such an environment the time passes very quickly and it is by no means your ally when you only have eight short days at your disposal. By the time Miriam and the children got back to the bungalow to brush their teeth, put on their swimming costumes, apply the suntan cream and take all the equipment they would need by the pool, the time was already close to eleven.

While the children played in the water, all three of them remembered their father who, they thought, would also surely need to cool down in that heat – he must be really struggling on the way up the mountain, which they can see clearly, even from the swimming pool. Fortunately, he will certainly have a good view from the mountaintop because today only a few small clouds are surrounding Nevis Peak.

Miriam also wanted to be in full view of the mountain so she chose a lounge facing Nevis Peak. She was too restless to read a book. Out of sheer habit, she put a magazine on her lap, but her eyes kept wandering towards the mountain, as did her thoughts and worries. She felt that this time Tony didn't set off on his hike with his usual ease, that he did it more because he had previously decided to do so: to conquer the peak that had attracted him for such a long time. Soon after their arrival on Nevis he got a bit ill, his temperature was higher than normal and he still hadn't fully recovered from it. If only he could stay safe and out of trouble, she thought. He does have a lot of mountaineering experience, but he has never before gone into the jungle. Fortunately, there are no poisonous snakes on Nevis! Well, he is sensible enough not to take any risks in the jungle, especially now when he is wearing only short trousers and sports shoes. And as far as I know him, he won't leave us to worry right up until six o'clock. Normally he is punctual and he knows that we would worry a lot if he didn't return on time. Still, why did he have to say those words: "If I'm not back by six, you can start the rescue operation." Surely, it was just because he was joking, and also because he was determined not to take any risks and save enough time for his descent. It's good that such days of our holidays are the exception. Usually, we are together all the time and only rarely does Tony want to do something that takes him away from us for a few hours. A similar thing happened last summer on the Adriatic island of Brač, when he also set off at daybreak towards the Vidova gora mountain. Like today, he left the hotel on foot and without knowing exactly where he would climb. He got back in the morning, even before we had set off towards the beach. He was tired and sweaty, but very happy, bringing us a lot of new impressions and interesting photographs. Well, let's hope the same will happen today!

Water makes you so hungry! As soon as Toni gets tired of constant jumping and diving and Mariansa stops splashing, their mother has to offer them biscuits, which will keep them going until lunchtime. And the drinks are plentiful, served by the numerous hotel staff. One of them is "on guard" at the beach, asking the guests unobtrusively whether they would like a drink. The refreshing orders are then served very quickly, and always with a lot of ice.

In order to cheer herself up, at least a little, Miriam joins the children in the swimming pool. Toni and Mariansa accept her with enthusiasm, and immediately they want to show all sorts of new swimming skills and tricks to their beloved mother. Toni's range of jumps into the pool has grown quite extensively. It is a pleasure to see him so suntanned and healthy while back at home the weather is probably quite cold and dull. It's amazing how good the children feel with all this sea air and water. Not only has Toni got rid of his constant colds and sniffing, but his skin has improved a lot as well. Back home, his skin was always very dry. Every evening his father had to apply olive oil to it, yet by the morning the skin would be dry again. But here no trace of this nuisance can be seen. For the first time his skin is smooth, moist and well tanned.

Since their father isn't here today, their lunch will be simpler and served to them on the beach. As soon as his mother allows it, Toni dashes towards the palm trees and finds his favourite round table, the one with a lot of shade. Once he has been joined by his mother and Mariansa, the popular waitress Glendina comes to greet them. At Nisbet the waiters and waitresses not only serve you, they also like to chat and joke, especially with the children. Toni and Mariansa don't even have to check the menu because by now they already have their favourite dishes. Their English has improved as well, so that they can order for themselves: Toni chooses chicken and french fries whereas Mariansa wishes to have fish and mashed potatoes. And of course, Toni will also have apple juice while Mariansa asks for a coke.

After lunch Miriam doesn't glance so much in the direction of the mountain any longer, but more towards the Indian Castle bungalow. For a few times during their afternoon swim she tells Toni: "Have a look at our bungalow to see whether daddy has arrived." Toni has good eyesight, but he can't spot his father.

Miriam tries to comfort herself by thinking: Well, it is still too early. Then she wonders: Still, maybe he has finished his trip a bit early, so that he can have a swim in the sea before dinner. I'm sure he will be very sweaty and dirty. I will prepare fresh clothes for him so that he can immediately take a shower and get changed. After that he will definitely enjoy a cold beer.

Like Miriam, the children also become full of expectations, though they don't yet have any worries. "When will daddy come?" the three of them keep asking and they also have to find their own answers: "He will probably be back by five because he wouldn't want to miss the tea, or at least before six, so that he can have a shower and dress properly for dinner."

Miriam is getting very restless and as she also wants to prepare everything Tony will need on his arrival, she tells the children they will return to their bungalow earlier than on other days. Toni and Mariansa are looking forward to seeing their father again and telling him all about their progress in the swimming pool that day, so they immediately obey their mother and together they slowly start to carry all their gear towards the bungalow.

First they have showers, and then they slowly get ready for the dinner. Mariansa chooses the dress for herself whereas Toni puts on what his mother has chosen for him. Miriam is getting increasingly anxious, she glances nervously through the windows in the hope of spotting her husband. However, he doesn't appear.

Just before six o'clock Miriam decides to tell the hotel staff about her worries. As she meets the waitress Roslyn near their bungalow, Miriam immediately shares her worries with her. The concerned reactions of everybody who she tells that Tony has gone to the mountain on

his own, makes her decide to risk her husband's bad mood at learning that she had panicked unnecessarily in the case he does return before six. She knows that on Nevis it gets dark immediately after six and that Tony hasn't got a torch or matches. Hence, she will take a risk and make sure that, if needed, the rescue starts as soon as possible.

Roslyn immediately gets in touch with Mr Lynell Nolan, the head of the security service at the Nisbet complex. This tall, black gentleman has been well trained for this post. He was born on Nevis, and after his high-school graduation he joined the police: The Royal St. Christopher – Nevis Police Force, where he stayed for seven years. In 1972 he moved to Canada where he again got a job with the police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Force. After serving for 25 years he retired and returned to Nevis. However, he was still too young and energetic for the life of a pensioner, so he opened the Noles Boutique and the Noles Framing Service, a workshop for picture frames. In addition, he also became a columnist with the local newspaper called *The Leeward Times*, and in February 2001 he took over the post of the chief of the security service at Nisbet. Every morning he takes a group of girls who would like to lose weight on a demanding run, then he spends most of the day in the Nisbet complex; if required, he can also accompany guests to the other parts of Nevis.

Nolan takes the information about a missing hotel guest very seriously and decides to start the rescue operation immediately after six in the event that Miriam's husband hasn't returned by that time. He knows that on a few occasions in previous years a tourist got lost while trying to climb the mountain, and each time the consequences of the accident were quite alarming. Once the rescue team had to look for a missing person in the jungle for as long as three days.

When Miriam returns to the children she is no calmer, but at least she feels a bit better because she has done what she could to start a rescue operation in case Tony did have an accident on the mountain.

Later, Miriam and the children have dinner at a table, above which an old clock is hanging. The hands of the clock seem to move very quickly towards seven. It is night outside, but there is still no sign of Tony....

“Where is daddy?” is an expected question. “He hasn't arrived yet, but he will soon be here,” is the answer Miriam will have to repeat in different ways again and again over the following days to the children whose faces will grow increasingly serious, with gaping mouths and eyes wide open.

In the Great House restaurant hardly any of the guests knew that one of the meals wouldn't be served that evening. The news that one guest, the gentleman with the spectacles and the two lovely children, hadn't returned from the mountain, spread quickly among the hotel staff, but they acted in a professional manner and continued their individual tasks, leaving other urgent activities to those in charge. The people responsible for this were Don and Kathie Johnson. This friendly couple, an enterprising Canadian and his American wife, took over the management of Nisbet a few years before and today they can be proud of an entirely renewed hotel complex that is beautifully maintained. Their business runs successfully and smoothly, so that now they can themselves enjoy some of the luxury that they offer – at a price – to the most demanding guests. However, they are still heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the hotel. Apart from other responsibilities, they also organise the social activities for the guests (this is mainly Kathie's task). When the staff are serving meals to the children, Don would sometimes suggest certain specialities to the parents such as chopped-and-fried banana

wrapped in bacon. Kathie occasionally joins a table when she feels that the guests would like to talk about Nisbet and Nevis. A lot of the guests visit the hotel year after year, so many are old friends of the Johnsons.

Nolan immediately informed the hotel managers that one of the guests, who had set off towards the mountain that morning, had still not returned. They decided to get in touch with the person most capable of giving them advice in these situations: a guide with specialised knowledge of the Nevis Peak mountain, Jim Johnson. When Jim learned about the problem he knew it might be serious and straight away he jumped in his Jeep and set off for Nisbet.

The bridge near the entrance to the Nisbet complex had been badly damaged during the previous rainy season and a new bridge was under construction. As a result, the main road was blocked just a few hundred metres away from Nisbet. In order to avoid taking a long detour, most drivers simply stopped (or turned round) before the bridge and went by foot to the complex. This was why Miriam thought that any taxi that might bring Tony would drop him off before the bridge. During the dinner she often went out, and in the darkness she was watching this temporary parking place. But at this time of the evening very few vehicles arrived and even fewer passengers got out of them. Once she saw a male figure getting out of a taxi, only to be disappointed when she noticed that, unlike her husband, the man was wearing long trousers. Where are you, Tony? Did something bad happen to you?

Mariansa sometimes also wanted to go out to check with her mother whether daddy was coming. So they both stood in the darkness... Nothing, nothing... The mosquitoes began to bite them, especially Mariansa, so they turned back towards the hotel. Just then a Jeep arrived. The driver opened the window and Miriam recognised Mr Nolan and the guide Jim. They were going to start searching for her husband, but weren't sure how to call him over the megaphone. "Should it be Tony, Anton...?" they asked Miriam.

The atmosphere was very tense and Miriam was still listening to the sounds coming from the parking place. The windows of the restaurant had no glass, so that she could hear every car that stopped out there. That evening a smallish exhibition of semi-precious stones for sale was on display in the restaurant lobby. The lady who was selling the stones showed a lot of understanding for Miriam's worries and tried to comfort her. Once Miriam heard the sound of a car door being closed and the voices of the people that were getting out of it; one of the voices sounded just like Tony's. She jumped to her feet, saying: "It's him!" However, when she looked out she realised she was mistaken.

After the dinner she took the children back to the bungalow and helped them get ready for bed. Of course, none of them felt like sleeping, but Miriam insisted on their evening habits so that she could keep herself busy, and also because there was nothing else she could have done that evening. When both children were washed and dressed in their pyjamas, they sat down on the bed and prayed solemnly for their daddy. They had said the prayer "my guardian angel, watch over me" several times before, not always with the same personal involvement and intensity, yet, this time Toni and Mariansa clearly spoke every word of it and understood its meaning. On this occasion they repeated the prayer two more times, which calmed the children down so that they soon fell asleep. Miriam made a Sign of the Cross over them then went towards a window with its raised roller blind. She was standing there for a long time staring into the night... Did something happen to Tony? Did he break his leg? She could imagine dozens of other possible accidents.

Tony, where are you? What has happened to you?

Just before midnight somebody knocked at the door. Miriam jumped up and opened it to find only Mr Nolan who regretfully, though calmly, told her that they hadn't found any trace of Tony. They were going to continue the search at dawn the following day.

## The Second Day - Tony

If I began by describing my second day in the hollow from six o'clock in the morning I would be leaving out quite a few long hours of suffering. That first night and every one of the subsequent nights all seemed very long to me. For a few times I maybe dozed off for about 15 minutes, but for the rest of the time I was shaking, thinking, looking into the sky, turning around (though only a little) and waiting, waiting, waiting – for the so-much-desired next day. The daylight also brought with it higher temperatures, and my hopes for salvation were renewed.

The main problem was the cold. On Nevis, like anywhere else in the Caribbean, for most of the year the daytime temperature is 27 or 28 degrees Celsius. However, after the nightfall, and especially if the night is windy or rainy, it gets cold, so that even by the coast one has to put on a shirt with long sleeves, or perhaps a warm cardigan. I don't know what the temperature was in my hole, which was at an elevation of about 700 meters, but it must have been much lower than the temperature on the coast. For a few times the cloud encircling the mountain brought with it fog and wind to where I was lying.

There wasn't enough level ground around me, so I had made my nest in a smallish hole that was full with stones. I made my bed by putting some greenery over the stones, which meant that I had at least a bit of a base, and used the rest of the leaves for my “blanket”. I always had to lie in a curled-up position, and only on my back because there wasn't enough room for me to stretch out on my front. Sometimes I could turn onto my left side, but never onto my right because my right thigh was still very painful. Every time I turned the leaves fell off me and it took me quite a long time to put them back over my body. The two things that protected me the most from the cold were my rucksack, into which I put my feet, and the tee shirt that I wrapped around my knees. Two or three times a night I had to get up to “replace” the liquid in my plastic bottle. Before nightfall, I had placed my full bottle close to me. Now, the first thing I had to do was to empty it (I no longer had any problem with the taste of the liquid), then I again urinated into it, covered it with the top, and put it back in its place.

After the first night, daybreak came at six o'clock, I began by stretching out my sore arms and legs, and then I had a more systematic look around my new “dwelling”. The hollow was spread out in different directions and was very “untidy”; there wasn't enough level surface to put down a chair (not that I had one). The water had deposited a lot of very smooth rocks, some were huge, a few metres high. Under and between these rocks, tree trunks were decaying and among them various plants were quickly sprouting: from moss and thin grass to palm-like trees that were a few metres high (I later learned they are called “traveller's trees”). The fern, exactly the same as we find in Slovenia, was the most suitable for making my bed. The configuration of the ground was very uneven – during the day I could only move around on hands and knees, whereas during the night any moving away from my nest, which was made at the bottom of one side wall, would have been impossible.

I checked again the precipice leading towards the other hollow and became convinced that it was completely impassable for somebody without a rope. Just to stand on its edge was dangerous because it was very smooth and covered with moss, like the one above me from which I had slipped the day before. The two sidewalls were partly overgrown, but very steep, even overhanging, so that I couldn't have tackled them without any protection. This part of the canyon was so narrow that high above me I could see a tree trunk that had crashed down on one side of the canyon and got caught by the wall on the other side. It looked like a

footbridge, and I wondered whether the rescuers could perhaps use it to tie a rope to, and then throw the rope down to me. No, I thought, it would be better if they could come down to me on a rope using the same spot from which I fell, and then help me climb out of the hollow. I doubted that they could save me with a helicopter because the canyon was so narrow that the swinging rope could get caught against a wall, and the helicopter crew would then be in danger.

On the other hand, I was sure that the rescuers could use a helicopter to spot me from the air, at least in relatively bright and cloudless conditions. I kept my white (and still wet) underwear spread out on the dark rocks. I also tied a white plastic bag to a long stick with which I would wave to the rescuers. For just one hour, between midday and 1 pm, my hollow was exposed to the sun and for these occasions I prepared a few shiny objects so that I could attract their attention by reflecting the light. I hoped that the rescuers would already be looking for me from the air that day – and that they would find me. I was sorry to think that I had lost another day that I could otherwise use for swimming and enjoying Nisbet, but, I thought, the most important thing was not to miss the reserved flight to Orlando.

I decided to have a small breakfast – not so much because of hunger, but simply because I knew I needed to renew my energy. I had brought with me a packet of biscuits and I decided to eat a few. However, my attempt to do so made me panic for the first, and fortunately for the last, time during my compulsory stay in the hollow. When I put a dry biscuit into my parched mouth and started to chew it, the pastry tried to absorb the moisture from my mouth, but there wasn't any. The food got stuck in my mouth and when I tried to swallow the biscuit, it also got stuck in my throat so that I couldn't even spit it out. In addition, the dry crumbs entered my windpipe and I found it difficult to breathe. I knew I quickly had to get rid of this lump. I took another biscuit, soak it in urine and then sucked it. By the time I had cleared my throat and windpipe, my desire to eat was gone and a few biscuits remained in the packet until I got out of my hole – and maybe they are still there.

I realised that food wasn't essential. My 78-kg body had enough reserves. A few years before a colleague from the Parliament, Lojze Peterle, had told me about his voluntary fasting that sometimes lasted up to ten days. Then I found it hard to imagine not eating anything for one whole day, let alone for several days. I believed I would suffer from unbearable pains in my empty stomach and I would quickly die. I also remembered Lojze telling me that fasting could be without any harmful consequences, but only when you consume a lot water or other refreshing drinks.

While I was waiting to hear the first sounds of the rescuers, I tried to find a way of obtaining a liquid other than my own. The hollow was located at the edge of the rain forest – the clouds encircling the peak sometimes came down to this part of the mountain – so I expected to have some rain soon. Hence, I made myself busy by finding some objects that would help me collect a few extra decilitres of water. I found some very wide and almost metre-long leaves that seemed perfect for this purpose. I placed some of them so that the water from the leaves would run into two plastic bags, and the others in such a way that they would hold the water.

Soon I could hear a sound, but it wasn't coming from the rescuers. There was a plane in the distance, most probably one with a small engine and propeller. Such planes were used for transporting tourists from the nearby airport in Basseterre situated on the neighbouring island of St. Kitts to the New Castle Airport on Nevis. On my first visit to the island I had been surprised to find out that such flights took only five minutes. The Nevis Express is a nice

feature of this small island because it saves tourists at least an hour, which they would otherwise need to cover the same distance by ferry. I believe they belong to the category of sports planes, which have only eight seats for the passengers. Being stuck in that hole, I was egocentrically assuming that it would be logical for the rescuers to look for me with those Express planes. However, although I kept hearing the sounds, they never got close enough for me to grab hold of the long stick and start waving with my improvised flag. Since the sounds repeated at regular intervals, a shadow of doubt was cast over my initial hopes. I began to suspect that I could only hear the planes as they went about their regular daily flights. For the whole day I focused my attention on the sounds coming from the sky. Sometimes I could hear a louder sound, but never one belonging to a helicopter, which I so eagerly wished to hear. I thought I was probably only hearing the bigger passenger planes on their way towards St. Martin, just flying over Nevis in order to approach the airport in Basseterre.

Do I have the right to expect the rescuers to look for me with the planes that were needed for other regular services? Is my recklessness a good enough reason for an extensive rescue operation organised by people who have other jobs to do? The answer immediately occurred to me was: Miriam will ask for it and certainly convince them to do so. She must be so worried by now, and she will do everything possible to find me. Yes, I can certainly rely on my wife; if renting a helicopter is needed, she will rent it. It is so comforting to know that in a situation like mine, out there you have somebody you can really rely upon.

That day there was nothing else I could do to get rescued and had plenty of time, so I decided to document what then still seemed to be only an adventure. I had with me an excellent Kodak 290 digital camera, which also allowed me to record sound messages (interestingly, these took up much less memory than the pictures). I had first tried it the year before and brought back many beautiful photos from Nevis. I had with me three memory cards: two of them held as much as 32 MB. One was already full, the second was half-full and the third one was still empty. I knew that the battery wouldn't last long enough to allow me to use all the memory that I had, but I was sure that I could take a few dozen photos and a similar number of sound recordings. So I started: first I took a photo of my wounded leg, which looked quite horrible. Its appearance was even worse than the actual pain: the swelling on my right thigh was at least five centimetres thick, though fortunately it was not septic. Using the automatic shutter release, I next took photos of myself sitting in my nest, which I didn't even bother to tidy because I was so sure I would leave my "apartment" that day. I also took several photos of the fatal wall to document my accident, which I could later show to everybody. Optimism was still my prevailing mood, so I felt no need to say anything into the camera. I thought I would anyway soon be able to tell the rescuers in person what had happened to me. Well, the rescuers...

It is already afternoon and there is still no sign of them. If they are going to be this late, then the rescue operation will continue until late at night. Will I then not be able to enjoy any of Nisbet again, since we already plan to leave for Orlando tomorrow? That would be a great pity...

I hope that Miriam hasn't told my mother, who is back home waiting for us on her own, anything about this accident. The day before my planned climb up this mountain I had talked to her over the phone and told her I wouldn't call again on the following day, but promised to be in touch again on the day after, which is today. Miriam will certainly call her, but I hope she won't mention any of this. We can explain everything to her later when the danger has passed.

The time passes. I have nothing to do, so I am just lying down and saving my energy. I also watch the rare animals that live here with me. Colibris are frequent visitors: they whiz past me at such high speed that they produce an unusual sound similar to snoring. When I heard them during the night I thought there were some big animals nearby, but now I can see that it is these harmless creatures that produced the sound. The nearby jungle above me is swarming with various other birds, which I can hear better than I can see. On the ground and between the plants there are several insects – all of them are quite harmless. Sometimes I spot those monkeys that I so much wished to see at the beginning of my climb: here they are also very shy. I have a feeling that they noticed me much earlier than I noticed them and that they are afraid of me. However, in the evening they become very playful and start flinging things around, sometimes these things end up in my “apartment”.

It's growing dark. Does it mean the rescuers won't find me today and I will have to prolong this compulsory camping? Will my teeth chatter through another night in this nest? It seems likely. In this case I have to gather more leaves and make my bed better than yesterday.

To spend two days without food and water in the wilderness is no longer a harmless adventure. Dear God, you saved me from death during my fall, but apparently it is Your will that I remember this event for ever. Is there any other, deep message in all of this? Is there a warning? I am praying. I haven't prayed this solemnly for a long time. Actually, for a long time I haven't felt Your almightiness this intensely. You can save me and You can condemn me. I am humble at Your presence.

Having so much time on ones hands triggers some strange ideas and various associations in the mind. While pondering my fate, I often unintentionally began to search for my own guilt, which might have caused this misfortune.

Since my childhood I have respected the belief that we should never feel too certain about the things to come: on many occasions the very things we claim will never happen to us, do happen in the end. Had I perhaps caused my bad luck the other day by jokingly saying the words: “I hope not to see you again!”?

This is what happened: Two days before my unfortunate climb, Toni's eyes became inflamed and he was crying a lot because of the smarting pain. While crying he also started to rub his eyes and that made the pain even worse so that his tears were pouring down his face. My wife and I first thought that a splinter got stuck behind his eyelid, but it soon became clear to us that his eyes were inflamed due to a lot of diving in the chlorinated swimming-pool water.

During the children's dinner we asked to see the hotel doctor, but we had to wait for him for some time because he had to drive from the faraway city of Charlestown. Dr Jacob Chandy was a very kind and experienced doctor, who brought with him the appropriate medicines (the drops, a cream, as well as the tablets). We gave some of them to Toni immediately and kept the rest to use in accordance with the doctor's precise instructions. The fee of one hundred dollars didn't seem too high considering that the doctor had to drive to our hotel in the evening and that it also included the costs of the medicines.

When at the end we were courteously saying good-bye to each other, something put a few humorous words into my mouth. I even told the doctor I was going to make a joke and then I

said: “I hope not to see you again!” Of course I was referring to Toni, and the doctor understood that I just wished that my children would be well, and not need his help again.

Still, how inappropriate the words sound now: “I hope not to see you again!”

Have those very words taken revenge on me?

Oh, how badly I need a doctor now!

And I shouted out of my terrible hole: “Doctor, I hope to see you again!”

The only luxury I can indulge in while lying in this hollow is on a spiritual level. My thoughts can fly wherever I wish them to go and I can think about anything. I bet millions of slaves and prisoners comforted themselves in the same way while dominating masters or jailors were all around them, able to take away from them almost everything, including life, only their freedom to think remained.

In order to forget the cold I make a conscious decision to think about a topic that truly interests me and is also important for my country. I don't need much time to find out that one such topic important to me is politics. However, in a country in transition the politics are quite different from the politics in other, more established countries.

The paradox of all politics is that on the one hand most of the people ignore it, it is unpopular or even despised; on the other hand, it is in the centre of everything that happens in a society and without it not even the smallest local community can exist, let alone the whole state. In general, people can say nothing good about politics, and they constantly criticise politicians. At the same time, they like to watch them every day on the main TV programmes, and a large number of candidates compete for every vacant political post.

It is a fact that organised life needs decision-making, and that democracy, as it was developed by the ancient Greeks, is the most appropriate, or the least harmful, frame within which we can take decisions and ensure the best possible role of an individual in society.

What I am most interested in, and would now like to play with mentally, is the relationship between the right and the left in politics. Though it is now trendy to deny this division and replace it with completely new terms (and in many countries the political situation really isn't so simple that we could quickly identify their parties as either left or right), I am convinced that this polarisation is as much a “necessary evil” as is democracy itself. This is really a natural law: whenever we divide a group of people into two parts, one of them will always have a tendency towards the left and the other towards the right.

In a society with a free exchange of information and uninhibited social relationships (here I am taking into consideration only the healthy social environments) people will spontaneously opt for one of the political sides: they can do this only in their minds, or alternatively, they can show their loyalty to one side by voting for it, or even by becoming a member of a particular party. The parties, as well as the voters, can also claim to be in the middle, between the two polarised political sides, but even such groups will inevitably consist of their left and right groupings, and will, in the course of time, swing from one direction to the other. Undoubtedly, in a real democracy both sides are equally legitimate. It is ideal if, in a society with a strong democratic culture, the dialogue between the two sides can be carried out

tolerantly and within a frame of precisely defined rules. In such a case different parties are opponents, but not enemies.

Revolution represents the most serious threat to such democratic societies; in a revolution, violence replaces argument. I remember how puzzled I was at my grammar school (though I wasn't allowed to express it) when the teachers told us that the proletarian dictatorship was a logical and inevitable change in the history of mankind. There must still be a lot of old textbooks on the subject stored away in old attics, but I still find it as difficult as ever to understand those times. As a teenager I even looked up the word "dictatorship" in various dictionaries, and in all of them I found a negative explanation, based mainly on its rejection of democracy. However, according to our teachers, the proletariat had a right to it.

In my homeland the proletariat seized power in the same way as in many other, mainly Eastern European, countries. To put it bluntly: the political elite, called the communists, claiming to act on behalf of the proletariat, seized power, and in this cunning way gained political control, wealth and fame. The proletariat continued to toil in the factories and in the fields, while its representatives enjoyed their stolen wealth and sailed around on their yachts (as is still the case in Cuba, North Korea and other countries with a similar regime).

In Slovenia this hi-jacking of democracy had terrible consequences. From 1945 to 1990 the proletarian dictatorship infringed citizens' basic rights, prevented free enterprise, hindered normal economic development, suppressed religious practice, destroyed traditional Slovenian values and crippled the up-bringing of children and the education of the young. A whole generation lived and died under this oppression.

It is understandable that in all those decades the ruling class, with the help of the education system and the monopolised media, completely changed and distorted the way of thinking and subdued traditional values. Among other things, it also corrupted our notions about the division between the left and right in politics: the left was a synonym for progress, while the right was seen as reactionary and evil. The people on the political left were automatically respected as expert workers; the ones on the right were treated as dilettantes. (The members of the opposition that were elected to the first Slovenian parliament also suffered from being labelled like this when confronted by the experienced "experts".) Even ten years after our liberation the distorted belief about the superiority of the political left remains. And only about two years ago did certain political groups dare declare themselves as being on the right.

I have always been a pronounced, though not an extreme, rightist (I hope to remain one for many more years). An extreme rightist is just as dangerous as an extreme leftist. When, in 1989, I attended an excellent seminar that the (right-wing) European Democratic Union organised in Vienna for the newly emerging political parties in Slovenia, the organisers also prepared for us lectures about the dangers of extremist right-wing politics. The speakers explained the nature of extremism in a way I will always remember: they told us that the line connecting the left and right political poles is not straight, but it takes the form of a circle – if we follow the line from the top of the circle on either the left or the right side, we always end up at the point where the extremes of both sides meet. The same idea was conveyed by a theatrical production called *Under Prešeren's Head* that was produced during the time of socialism. During the performance an actor snapped at the contented audience that was applauding in the safe darkness of the dark theatre: "Communists or fascists – you are all the same."

While talking to myself now, in this cold, can I, a convinced rightist, objectively explain the essence of the left and right wings? In doing this, I shouldn't base my argument on the practices of politics and parties in those countries where, due to certain historic developments and national influence, the left parties behave as the right parties or vice versa. To answer my question I have to consider the basic human values and characteristics of different people. Then I will find out which mutual beliefs join the left- or the right-wing people.

A first glance at the different political programmes might suggest that the rightists are more individualistic than the leftists. However, after considering the personal nature of both, I believe that the truth is just the opposite. As a private person, a leftist is much more individualistic; to him the most important issues are personal independence and freedom, and he will always emphasize liberal values. If God is authoritarian, the leftist finds Him inaccessible or even thinks that God rejects and limits him. When a leftist isn't forced to follow religious hindrances and the society (the nation) isn't his most important preoccupation, then he also has more freedom in his personal life and he is more relaxed about various moral dilemmas, like family and sex.

As a private person the rightist is more closely connected with other people, he accepts that rules are needed in any human community, and he is also more prepared to give up the rights of an individual so that the community as a whole can function better. To a rightist, religion is more acceptable or even necessary because it includes numerous rules that regulate the behaviour of a society. The rightist can be humble in his relationship with God without having his pride diminished. The society, the nation and God demand consistency that pays him back (or takes revenge on him) by giving him strong moral impediments and a feeling for sin.

I think I can guess what political decisions the two different brothers will take in their later life, provided they act on their own free will. The boy who is livelier, who likes to travel around, is pleased with himself when he is a bit naughty, and prefers singing to serious thinking, will probably turn out to be a leftist. On the other hand, the boy who is quieter and more reserved, who respectfully greets his elders and likes to spend his time reading books, will be a rightist. However, the crucial thing here is that both boys are equally valuable and unique.

The division between the people with left- or right-wing inclinations can be easily disguised by factors other than individual characteristics – the main one is certainly one's up-bringing. The parents with strong political beliefs usually bring up their children to have personalities with the same political profiles because they can plant their values into the children at an early stage. So it often happens that after the period of teenage rebellion, the children accept the values of their parents even when they aren't in line with their own personal inclinations. I admit that I, too, would like to take my children into the direction that I consider to be the right one. While doing this I will even cheat a little by using the ability of Toni's right hand as a metaphor: as his right hand is slightly more skilful and more useful than his left hand, so is the right wing more efficient in the areas of politics and economy.

It is high time, after so many decades, that the Slovenian right-wing politicians find the equal place they are entitled to have. Is it at all normal that after 45 years of the leftist dictatorship, and in a time of free democracy, all our leading politicians are still from the left block (there were only a few short-lasting interruptions to this left-wing dominance)? How many more times in future free elections will Slovenes again elect a left-wing candidate as the President of the Republic? At least for the sake of political culture it should now be the right wing's

turn to hold the presidency. Our boat will capsize if we continue to load it only on the one side.

The reasons for the political distortion that we experience in Slovenia are very clear and similar to the situations in other transition countries. In the decades of dictatorship the governing clique subdued the majority of capable young people, brainwashed them, brought up generations of skilful leftist ideologists and recruited them to fill all the important posts in the media. After the introduction of democracy all these people kept their positions (at that time no other people were available) and now they continue to swamp the public with false information. Those rare, capable people who had managed under the previous regime to resist the tempting or threatening ideas of the government and had given up normal careers, appropriate to their capabilities, later became the targets of the mocking media reporters, victims of cleverly planned political traps or sheer media ignorance. And the worst thing of all is that the previous clique, now acting under the cover of new political labels, has managed to smuggle its loyal members into the new political organisations (in particular, the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia called Demos). In this way they could bring about fights and personal rivalry to undermine the new political parties (in Slovenia these were called the Spring parties).

If the Spring parties in Slovenia don't manage to unite for the purpose of winning the next parliamentary election and offer Slovenian voters a solid right-wing alternative, then, at least at the presidential election, where the candidates are much more transparent, the voters could choose a right-wing candidate. In this way they would set up a minimum political balance, which would coincide well with our imminent entry into the European Union. This event will mark the final transformation of our country into a healthy state, the end of the transition period and the beginning of a new and, I am convinced, prosperous period.

I would really like to be alive to experience such important changes, as well as so many other wonderful and interesting things that life can bring to us.

## The Second Day - Miriam

When Miriam opened her eyes at first light she realised that the dream holiday had changed into something completely different. She knew something terrible must have happened to Tony. Where has he spent the long, cold night? – Miriam wondered. Had he come to a settlement or met somebody, he would surely have phoned so that we wouldn't be so worried. Since he hasn't done so, he must have had a serious accident; maybe he has hurt his leg...

She felt anything but fresh, yet Miriam got up and got ready for the new day because she expected the rescue operation to start very soon. And so it did: at 6.40 am Mr Nolan came to the bungalow and told her about the meeting he had had at 6.00 am with Steve Tyson and Leon Lescott at which they had divided the first tasks among themselves. Tyson and Lescott had already set off towards Prison Farm, the only state institution of its kind, because its manager, Mr Liburd, offered his help over the telephone.

At 6.15 am Nolan also called the local New Castle Police Station and informed the policeman, Glasford, about the failed search on the previous evening and about the plans for that day.

Nolan needed Miriam to tell him as much as she could about the route her husband was taking on his way to Nevis Peak, so that the search operation could focus on it. Miriam wasn't able to give him any precise information, because Tony hadn't told her much about his plans, neither had she thought of asking him more about his route. She could only remember that a few days before they had visited the highest settlement called Golden Rock, where Tony had enquired about the routes leading to the mountaintop. They had taken a taxi to Golden Rock because the place was on the other side of the island, too far for them to walk there. However, she knew for sure that Tony had planned to start his walk at Nisbet and go past the hotel Mount Nevis, where he had stayed the year before, and from where he had set off one morning on a short trip towards a smallish hill, the one with an aerial on its top.

Nolan understood that the hill Miriam referred to could only be Round Hill, which wasn't a part of the central volcanic mountain of Nevis Peak, but a much smaller, and really the only other, "mountain" on the island. He concluded that if the tourist had headed from Nisbet past the hotel Mount Nevis, he must have chosen the route called Upper Round Road. This would first take him through the settlement and later along the uninhabited terrain towards the saddle stretching between Nevis Peak on his left and Round Hill on his right. Nolan also knew that in the settlement of Fountain Village, situated on the saddle, Tony had had two options: to turn left towards Nevis Peak or to turn right in the direction of Round Hill, as he had apparently done on that short trip the year before.

He asked Miriam to check which documents Tony had left in the hotel. He needed the photograph and personal details from Tony's passport so that the rescuers would know who they should be looking for, and perhaps also for the preparation of a missing-person flyer. Nolan also asked Miriam to give him a few of Tony's clothes, mainly the ones that hadn't been washed, so that the sniffer dogs from the Prison Farm would know his smell. Miriam gave him everything he required.

When asked whether Tony would choose to climb a well-trodden route or something off the beaten track, Miriam answered that, being a rational man, he would have chosen a well-trodden and marked route. She thought that had he climbed the mountain off the beaten track he would have surely hired a guide, especially as he knew there were a few guides on Nevis.

Nolan considered his last question to be of the utmost importance, so he asked it, in a slightly rephrased form, for a few more times. Since Miriam didn't have an exact idea about the locations of the places on Nevis, and in particular the distance between the hotel and Golden Rock, and since she mentioned for a few more times how Tony had enquired about a climbing route in Golden Rock, Nolan left with an impression that the search should be started in the area around Golden Rock, especially because there were no marked routes leading from the Nisbet side of the island to the mountain.

Nolan informed Steve and Leon about his decision and these two men, together with a group of prisoners who volunteered to help the rescuers (Samuel James, Trevor Hector, James Allen, Philmor Seaton) and ten sniffer dogs went towards the area of Golden Rock where they began the search.

On his way towards the hotel reception, Nolan was approached by a Nisbet employee, Leroy Nisbett, who told him that at about 6 am on the previous day he had met a person who matched the description of Mr Tomažič, on the Upper Round Road heading towards Fountain Village. This piece of information made Nolan doubt that Tomažič had really chosen to start his climb from Golden Rock.

On a small island like Nevis, alarming events are rare, so Nolan decided at 7.00 am to inform the prime minister, Mr Vance Amory, about the missing person and the actions taken so far. However, when he phoned the prime minister, Mr Amory's wife answered the phone-call and told Nolan that her husband wasn't on the island because he was attending a parliamentary session on the neighbouring island of St. Kitts. Mrs Amory also told him that she was expecting her husband to phone her shortly and promised she would pass on the important information to him.

As an experienced security officer, Nolan knew that he should get in touch with the officer responsible for dealing with such a crisis, Llewellyn F. A. Newton, a disaster-preparedness coordinator. It is understandable that on Nevis the word disaster mainly refers to disastrous hurricanes that can occur during the rainy season, but at the same time Mr Newton and his team were also in charge in the event of other exceptional situations. Nolan informed Newton about the Tomažič incident at 7.10 am and one hour later Newton phoned him back telling Nolan that he had done everything necessary to start an official rescue operation. He was going to be personally in charge of the operation while cooperating closely with others, mainly the Nisbet employees and the police officers from New Castle and Gingerland.

As early as 9.15 am Newton came to Nisbet, where the first meeting of the head rescuers was held in the Coconut Restaurant. Apart from Nolan, the other participants were the guide, Jim Johnson, and the inspector, Austin Lescott, together with three other police officers. They quickly discussed all the urgent matters and decided how to organise the operation that day: apart from searching in the area around Golden Rock, they were also going to search around the settlement of Fountain Village, situated on the saddle. There they would go in both directions: left towards Hog Valley and right towards Spring Hill.

In the meanwhile, Miriam started a new day that wasn't much different from the following seven days. More than anybody else she wanted the search for Tony to be as intense as possible and she would have liked to be involved in it, however, she also had to stay with the children. She even suggested to the head rescuers that she should join them, but they thought it would be better for the children to stay with her instead of being with people they didn't

really know. The other rescuers' argument was the fact that Miriam didn't have the experience needed for a search on dangerous terrain. On the one hand, she so much wished to hear the comforting news that her husband had been found, on the other, she got a chill each time the telephone rang, thinking: Will I now hear the worst? In addition, she had to conceal her enormous worries from the children – had she not done that, the situation for all of them would have been even more difficult. As it was, the children remained unburdened with the problem. Miriam tried her best to continue the lifestyle they had got used to over the previous days.

When Toni and Mariansa woke up that morning, their first question was: “Why hasn't daddy come back yet?”

“I don't know, sweethearts, I really don't know, but I'm sure he is all right. Maybe he has sprained his ankle and has to wait for the rescuers to come and bring him back on a stretcher...”

“Will it be today?”

“Yes, your father will surely be back today.”

It is interesting to note that on the following days Nolan was comforting Miriam in a very similar way: “Of course it is very likely that your husband is alive. It had happened before that somebody was missing for several days, but in the end the rescuers found him alive.” A few days later he added more details to his account of the previous accidents: “There were cases when people spent a whole week in the jungle and were still rescued in the end.” However, he began to feel increasingly uncomfortable at the end of the first week. He thought that Miriam wouldn't believe her husband could survive any longer than this in jungle.

At the breakfast the waiters and waitresses were specially kind to the Tomažič family because the news about the missing guest had already spread among the staff, though not yet among the other guests. That's why Toni and Mariansa laughed more than on other such occasions, whereas Miriam only had a few bites of food. She was constantly staring at the silhouette of the mighty mountain stretching right in front of them. Tony is there somewhere, but where? Is he suffering? Is he hungry and thirsty? Maybe wounded? Some thoughts were even darker, but Miriam was pushing them out of her mind.

She thought the best thing for the children would be to spend the morning at the swimming pool. So she told everybody that they could always find her either at the pool or in their bungalow. They spend the mornings on all the following days in the same way. Whenever there was an important telephone call for Miriam, the staff came to collect her, or they simply put the call through to the telephone nearest to her. When the children weren't in the water, they were playing on the sand of the nearby beach or they asked their mother to read to them. It was good that a few days before the children and their father started the second Harry Potter book, which Toni particularly enjoyed listening to.

When it was close to 2.00 pm, Miriam became even more nervous because that was the time for her to call Tony's mother in Slovenia. Her mother-in-law is old and walks with considerable difficulties, so the decision to leave her alone was a difficult one, but they arranged for her to get food and other necessary help while they were away. During previous holidays she got used to the custom of receiving a phone call from her family every day at

7.00 pm Slovenian time. This meant a lot to Tony's mother and it was good for the family to know that she was well. While on holidays this time, they also phoned her every day; because of the time difference it always had to be at 2.00 pm local time. However, there was an exception: last Tuesday Tony told his mother he wouldn't call her on the following day because he was planning to go on a trip. Instead, he was going to call her on Thursday. Hence, that day Tony's mother must have been waiting for the phone call, but Tony couldn't phone her and Miriam couldn't bring herself to do it either – she didn't want to lie to her, but telling the truth to her mother-in-law was even more difficult. She could even have a heart attack, Miriam thought. I will take some risk and wait until tomorrow when I won't have to conceal the bad news any longer.

Miriam's mother was much younger and healthier, but still, Miriam couldn't tell her the bad news either, so she decided not to call Slovenia at all that day. The mothers couldn't help them in any way, but a phone call would surely make them worry a lot.

This decision spared Miriam a lot of painful explaining, but it also increased the burden she was carrying. Had she confided in her mother, she would have probably had a good cry and then perhaps felt a bit better.

The Nisbet staff looks after their guests well, among other things they also help them organise their arrival and departure. Hence, that day an employee, Steve, approached Miriam and reminded her that their flights to Orlando, planned for the following day, were uncertain. The decision to cancel the flights wasn't difficult: even if Tony had been brought back that instant, they still couldn't have simply packed and left for Orlando on the following morning. So she handed the flight tickets over to Steve to cancel them.

The Nisbet management, especially Kathie Johnson, did their best to help Miriam bear the heavy emotional burden. For this purpose they also brought in Dr Judy Sonnenberg, a professor from the neighbouring American medical university, which had just that year been opened on Nevis. Kathie introduced Dr Sonnenberg as her acquaintance and an American compatriot to Miriam over their afternoon tea. A trained psychologist, Judy performed her role so well that Miriam didn't realise until the end of her stay on Nevis that she was getting the necessary therapeutic help; she simply accepted Judy as a compassionate friend that approached her in an unobtrusive way, making it easy for Miriam to confide in her and giving her a lot of comfort and encouragement. All of this was possible mainly because of Judy's warm, straightforward personality and her readiness to fully devote herself to another human being. She didn't find it difficult to sit up with Miriam late into the night, help her put the children to bed or even assist her with some other urgent tasks.

In the meanwhile, the search for the missing person continued. The policemen, various volunteers and, above all, many members of the Nisbet staff, were walking in the lower parts of the two mountains, Nevis Peak and Round Hill, calling out the missing person's name and seeking possible new details about the tourist from the local people. The temporary coordination committee, chaired by Newton, was also trying to find a more efficient way of organising the rescue operation, which would mainly be searching from the air. However, there was no helicopter on Nevis. There were, of course, small planes, but they weren't suitable for low flying, and were all the time used for regular flights. Newton called the head of the rescue service on St. Kitts, Mr Edmead, and asked him whether it would be possible to get aerial help from the US Coast Guard, the best-equipped organisation of its kind. The officials from St. Kitts did send a request for help, but received a reply that the US Coast

Guard did not have the authority to carry out a rescue on the mainland. The French authorities from the island Martinique also refused help. Newton and Nolan then agreed that on the following day they would try to get a helicopter from American authorities.

Traditionally, the formal dinner in the Great House restaurant is, on Thursdays, replaced by a barbecue on the beach, so Miriam, Toni and Mariansa were obliged to attend it though they weren't in the mood for such events. Already at afternoon tea, Judy kept them company, and she stayed with them during the barbecue as well. Considerate restaurant staff – the always-smiling Roslyn was especially popular with the children – were bringing food to the family as they sat in a quiet corner. On a few occasions they also brought them news about the rescue operation, unfortunately, each time it was bad news. That night there were many more mosquitoes on the beach than usually, and Mariansa seemed to be their favourite target. The family, therefore, soon had to leave the barbecue and seek shelter in their bungalow.

Before sleep they all prayed for their father, holding the Rosary that Tony's mother had given to them just before this journey with a wish that they would use it often and pray for a safe return.

At 9.30 pm the children fell asleep and Miriam positioned all the window blinds in such a way that she could see out – she knew that she would be awake for most of the night staring into the direction from which her Tony might come.

Her heart trembled when, after 11.00 pm, somebody knocked at the door. But it was only Roslyn, who was finishing her work at the barbecue dinner, and just wished to say a few more comforting words to Miriam. She told her that a lot of people were looking for her husband and that in the morning she had also been looking for him in the area around her village, called Buttlers, crying out: "Anton! Anton!"

"Thank you, good Roslyn, thank you, good people."

"Good night. I hope they will find Tony tomorrow."

## The Third Day - Tony

The third day also began well before daylight. Since I was lying on my back for most of the time, I can clearly remember my view of the sky surrounded by the silhouettes of both canyon walls. These were, especially towards the top, thickly overgrown, and in some parts the plants grew together over the middle of the canyon, forming interesting shapes in the dark. Right from the beginning the image to me looked like a portrait of a young man, and as time went by this impression became even stronger. My hollow was sometimes quite dark, especially when the passing clouds covered the sky; on other occasions it was very bright with the light coming mainly from the growing moon. When the monkeys were at their most lively and noisy I could occasionally see a moving figure for a split second. The sounds they were making were loud, and close enough to frighten anybody. However, I remained rational and calm, knowing that there were no big animals or beasts on the island, and I didn't let my imagination scare me with eerie questions about when and why they were so close and mysterious.

I preferred to focus on the wonderful singing of the birds and insects. I have to say that the night sounds in the jungle are beautiful and full of mystery. I knew some of them, mainly the sounds of the cicadas and crickets, from the Adriatic coast where I usually spend my summer holidays. But there were also other, very different, sounds coming from the birds, mainly the parrots. I was especially attracted by a sound that, I believe, must be typical of Nevis. I still don't know which creature makes it, but the sound is surprisingly similar to the sounds that the Nevis musicians produce when playing the steel drums. The Caribbean islands are the world centre of a diverse, ethno-pop music that includes European, African and American elements. The music from Nevis usually isn't included on the compilation CDs, though it certainly deserves to be. I find the music of Nevis one of the most original features of the Caribbean. One explanation as to why it isn't so popular around the world may be the fact that it is mainly instrumental music.

During the nights I had to spend in that hollow I came to believe that the music must have been created in an attempt to imitate that wonderful and mysterious night sound coming from the Nevis forests. I can't describe this sound; I can only say that its monotonously nostalgic tune evokes melancholic and romantic feelings in me. It has a calming and comforting effect, and in other circumstances it would probably have sounded like a pleasant lullaby.

And how badly I needed the comfort! The third day was breaking and I began to understand that what was happening to me wasn't a minor accident, but a serious incident that would leave a lasting mark on my life. I thought to myself, if they don't find me today, I might easily die in this hole. I began to see my situation in a different light: will I have to seek reconciliation with God and take leave from this world? Once again, I started my day with a prayer: Father, for you all things are possible; let this chalice pass from me!

How I would welcome the morning sun to warm me up! But I can't expect it before midday, and even then it will only reach me if there are no clouds above this part of the mountain. No, there won't be much sun today – I can feel the raindrops. What if my only dry clothes – the two tee shirts and a pair of shorts – get wet? They certainly won't get dry by the evening, and if I have to sleep out here again tonight I will freeze to death in those wet rags.

Logical thinking showed me there was only one way out of this situation: I quickly took all my clothes off, wrapped them in my rucksack, and squeezed the rucksack under a rock. Well,

I thought to myself, in a situation when people would normally put on more clothes to keep them warm, I have to take everything off and expose my body to the rain and wind. How drastically my position in the world has changed in just a few days! And what shall I do now? Shall I stand up, lie down or crouch naked in the rain? Most importantly, I have to stretch out my tongue and catch a few drops of water. Soon the rain is bucketing down on me. I notice that the water is filling the leaves and plastic bags that I have prepared for this purpose. Finally I will have a drink of water again.

As the rain falls, I crawl gingerly to one of the plastic bags and have a few sips of water. Oh, how good it feels! This is certainly much better than that brownish liquid that I “recycle” every few hours. However, I soon realise that the collected water isn’t quite clean. At the bottom of my “containers” there is some sort of sediment made up of various bits of plants. I understand that because the canyon is so narrow the rain doesn’t come down in a straight line, but bounces off the tall branches and leaves up there between the two walls. When the raindrops trickle down the leaves, Mother Nature “plants” a few things into the water, mainly the seeds that have to spread around in a variety of ways. I only hope there are no animal “implants” that would upset my bowels. To avoid such a problem, I filter the collected water through my white vest. Each time I pour the water through it, the vest becomes dark with all the bits that get caught on its surface. Something tells me this water will cause me problems.

And so it does! When the rain stops after about fifteen minutes I dry up a bit and put on my clothes – but immediately I have to take them off again due to strong cramps in my stomach. I realise I have got serious diarrhoea. This is the last thing I need: to lose the so-much-needed liquid in this way. But it’s exactly that – I have to find a place for my toilet. Should it be in the most distant part of my dwelling? No, I was careful enough to take into account the possibility of a longer stay in my hole and the night-time calls of nature. I knew that in the dark I couldn’t move far from my nest. Hence, I emptied my bowels only a few metres away, into a gap between two rocks. And I certainly did empty my bowels well! The contents were pouring out of me. I knew I was losing a lot more liquid than I had just consumed, and so I decided to stop this practice.

That day I focused my attention on the sky and the faraway sounds. Those were suspiciously similar to the sounds I had heard the day before, which made me think that I was hearing only the planes on their regular flights and that the air rescuers weren’t on their way. Maybe they will walk up here, I thought. In my anticipation of their arrival, I often cried out: “Help! Heelp! He-elp! Na pomoč! Hello!” Then I listened to hear if somebody was calling me, but all I could hear were the echoes of my cries. I was puzzled: How come they aren’t here yet? Nevis isn’t that big, and Miriam must be urging them to look for me. Well, maybe the sports planes aren’t suitable for low flights because they would have to avoid mountain ridges and several clouds. Or, maybe there is no helicopter on the island. In this case they will perhaps bring one from a neighbouring island ...

I thought that in the meantime I could check again to see if it really wasn’t possible to get out of that hole on my own. Can I climb downwards? – I asked myself. Not even in my dreams: the canyon is far too deep and slippery. What about the sidewalls? They are too vertical to climb. Only the part where I fell down is perhaps a possibility. I give it a try, but I soon stop, thinking: Even if I don’t fall off immediately, I will surely fall after the first three or four metres. I’d better wait; they will find me eventually.

In the meantime the weather cleared up and at midday a few, much needed, sunrays shone on me. I waited for them on one side of the hollow and then followed them, as they were moving towards the other side. There, I had to take leave of them after just one hour. I could see that the sky above my part of the mountain was still quite clear so that the rescuers could spot me from the air, if they flew over. I listened hard all the time, even when I dozed off a bit. I had hardly slept at night, which meant that I was far from fresh and rested, and therefore I had a few naps during the day.

I became very excited when, at about 2.00 pm, I finally heard a distant sound – this time quite different from the sounds of the planes. I knew it was a helicopter. They are looking for me, I thought. Salvation is close! I jumped to my feet, grabbed hold of my long stick to which a white plastic bag was attached, made sure that everything else was in place and waited, waited ... Yes, the sound is coming closer! It is very strong. This must be a very big helicopter. Now, what is this? Is the sound going away? Well, just for a short time, then it grows louder again. Of course, they must be surveying the area. Can I already see it through the narrow opening of the canyon? No, not yet. But it is very loud, so it must be low ... I can see it now. Yessss! I see its profile. It is round and has a long tail. I wave and shout though the men in the helicopter can't possibly hear me: the noise of the engine wouldn't allow it. Can they see me? – I wonder eagerly. If they look in my direction then they will surely see me as I can see the windows of the helicopter. It is gone ... It flies away. Well, it will come back, – I encourage myself. And next time it will come even closer. My excitement reaches a peak. I rest a bit, so that I can later wave and shout again. What will they do once they spot me? I don't think they can descend into here or attempt to rescue me directly from the helicopter by using a rope. They will probably first make a sign to let me know they have seen me. Maybe they will also throw something to me. It is possible that they have prepared packs of drinking water so that I could first have a good drink. Yes, that would be the best thing. Then they will perhaps inform the other rescuers, so they can reach me on foot, and bring the ropes and to help me climb out of the hollow. But that will take time. Well, I can wait as long as I know they have found me. I only need to know they have found me.

But they haven't found me yet. The helicopter has been away for too long ... When will it be back?

Nothing. Nothing. I can't hear any encouraging sound. And the time passes. Did they run out of fuel and go back to fill up? I soon realise that nothing more will happen today. It will soon be 6.00 pm, when night falls. Tomorrow then ...

I was very disappointed; but I was even more hopeful than before. My thoughts went like this: If they have managed to come so close today, they can do the same tomorrow. However, our trip to Orlando will come to nothing. Will we have to change our plan so that we can at least catch our trans-Atlantic flight home from Miami? Will we do that or am I just kidding myself?

Only then I realised that I shouldn't have any illusions. I was involved in a very serious accident and the situation was extremely dangerous. Maybe I won't survive this at all.

As if I wanted to demonstrate how I was coming to terms with reality, I picked up a sharp stone and started to chisel the words "Day 3" into the wall. I thought that if they found me only after my death they would at least know how long I had survived and that they could have saved me if they had come earlier. Before nightfall I described the past events and my

current situation into my digital camera that could make sound recordings. With the automatic shutter release, I also took a photo of myself showing three fingers.

When I realised that the stone I had picked up for chiselling was very useful, I approached my fatal wall and started removing the moss from it. I was doing this more out of some kind of vengeance than in any attempt to start climbing that dangerous wall. However, in order to “work” higher up the wall I had to pull myself up a bit; and to ensure that in the event of a fall I wouldn’t hit hard rocks I rolled a few decaying tree trunks to the base of the wall.

Before I could make my bed I had plucked more leaves from all around my hole, but then I began to worry that I would soon run out of fresh leaves if I was going to continue using them up like this. What’s more, my concern for nature awoke in me. I began to think, that each time I should take only a few leaves from the plants instead of pulling them out without any plan. In this way I would leave some fresh leaves for other days and use them then if necessary.

Just before nightfall I experienced another small joy. In the thickest part of my dwelling I found a few samples of a very useful, few-metre-high plant, which I named after my Slovenian hometown: Domžale plant. After having had a better look at it, I could see that the lower part of its stalk consisted of special small ventricles in which water was stored. I took one stalk and later, when I turned in for the night, I slowly began to chew it. That night and on the following day, I had to go to the toilet so often that in the end my bowels were completely empty.

That night dragged on even more than the other nights. I kept my wristwatch on all the time, but only rarely could I see its hands. In the meantime I was only guessing how much time still separated me from the daylight I longed for so much. I prayed a bit, I thought a bit, I dozed off for a while and had a few dreams, I moved around a bit in my “bed”, got up, “replaced” the liquid in my plastic bottle, went back, covered myself with the leaves, dozed again, later I looked into the sky, rearranged the leaves on my body, dozed off ... And look: the day is breaking, soon it will be bright enough for me to tell the time from my watch. What could the time be now? It must be two, maybe even three in the morning. Then the moon appears so that I can finally look at my watch ... This can’t be true! It is only a quarter to nine in the evening. This night is going to be very long. I am cold. I don’t try to stop the shaking of my body; on the contrary, I’m even reinforcing it in the hope that the shaking will warm me up, at least a bit.

When I wake up once again, I am really quite sorry that I have woken up because in the last fifteen minutes I had the most beautiful dream. In it I could see my relatives and friends in the most wonderful surroundings; and they were all so kind and good. As if I had been in heaven ... I believe that many people have died in exceptional circumstances (on the snowy mountains or in the Arctic) with a smile on their faces, just like the little match girl.

I would like to fall asleep again and have the same dream, but I can’t do it – the sleep and dreams don’t return to me again.

And when I can’t sleep, I think, think ...

I find this hole, in which I am held against my free will, utterly unpleasant and repulsive. However, the hole is entirely natural and, in spite of all its dangers, innocent and so full of life in the middle of the blooming and sweetly-scented nature. I don’t yet feel the presence of

death and I believe that even if I do feel it later, it won't be as terrifying as it can be in certain circumstances that are manipulated by man.

How much more terrifying and utterly unjust it must have been for the tens of thousands of innocent Slovenes who, AFTER the Second World War, were killed in Slovenian hollows. And they weren't killed by some evil, foreign soldiers, but by their fellow countryman. I can't help thinking about my poor uncle – my mother's brother, France Vodlan. We still don't know in which hollow his bones lie rotting.

My mother hid the truth from me about her brother until I was fifteen-years old. In a similar way, thousands of other Slovenian parents had to hide the truth from their children. Had the children known it and mentioned any of it at school or to their friends, they could have become labelled forever and their lives would have been even more difficult. I know a woman of my age whose mother never told her when, how and why her sister was killed. All her life the mother kept the painful secret to herself and only now the daughter understands why she so often found her mother crying alone.

Among her six brothers, France was my mother's favourite. Of all the boys, he was the most considerate and protective towards his little sister who, as the only girl in the family, always had to fight for her place.

He was a trained shoemaker; a keen athlete, he fell desperately in love a few times and was at the peak of his youth when the Second World War broke out. The Germans occupied the part of Slovenia where my mother's family lived and soon the resistance against them was organised. A few of my mother's brothers were mobilized to join the German army, others were deported to Austria, but France voluntarily joined the partisan fighters in 1943. (Under the leadership of communists, the partisans fought against the occupying forces and also for the social revolution.) Until the end of the war, France stayed with the Second Company of the so-called Šlander's Brigade. Since he was stationed in the area around his home, my mother often visited him, bringing him food and clothes. On those occasions they also often got involved in deep conversations, which meant that my mother got an insight into the development of the resistance, as well as into her brother's moods and beliefs.

They both soon understood that the "ordinary" partisans were being badly abused. Their leaders, the well-organised communists, were pulling all the strings and the leaders' prime aim wasn't the liberation from the occupying forces: they wanted revolution and to take power. Very early on the communists began to behave in a very arrogant and violent way and didn't allow any other form of resistance against the occupying forces. Any forms of resistance that weren't in line with the main strategy were explicitly forbidden, and those fighters that weren't subordinate to the communist rulers were killed. Hence, during the Second World War there was also a brutal civil war taking place in Slovenia.

At the beginning of the war all the partisans were sleeping and eating under the same conditions, but soon differences began to emerge: the meals for the leaders were richer and tastier than the meals prepared for the others. France was becoming increasingly puzzled by all of this; at first he was still naïve, and it took him some time to see through the communist conspiracy. I was deeply moved when, years later, my mother repeated the words France had once said to her: "You know, Mitska, I believe Slovenia will be liberated, only I won't be able to enjoy its freedom – I feel I will die before that time."

He did live to see the end of the war – but it didn't bring him liberation, instead it brought him a cruel death. By early spring 1945 he became fully aware of what the communists were plotting and, as a result, he left the partisans. He didn't want to demonstrate his break with the partisans in a particularly emphatic way, but when he fell ill with malaria he joined the home guard, who looked after him. (The so-called home guard was a group whose main aim was the fight against communism.) Though he had no real wish to join the other side – the home guard was then in anything but an enviable situation – he sought refuge with them in order to save his life (otherwise the partisans would have killed him). However, during those last days of the war, he certainly didn't hurt, let alone kill, anybody. My mother believes that he never killed anybody during his two-year involvement in the war.

When, at the beginning of May 1945, the country became “liberated”, he was immediately arrested and taken to a camp near Ljubljana, where people were gathered just so that they could later be slaughtered. With the frantic sounds of victory celebrations still coming from the distance, thousands of victims of the Slovenian civil war spent their last days in the inhumane conditions of that camp. My mother kept in touch with France during the month of May and the first half of June. She could send him her regards through some kind acquaintances and got the same in return – none of them dared to say anything else.

Soon the slaughtering began, and it can't be compared with anything else in the history of our nation. During the whole four years of the war there hadn't been any such large-scale killing as we experienced after the war. The only aim of this horrible act was to exterminate the members of any political opposition, and in this way the communists got rid of most of the people who could prevent them seizing power. Without any legal procedures the new political leaders killed tens of thousand members of the home guard and other political opponents, together with their family members, including a lot of children.

The most tragic and ironic part of this story lies in the fact that most of these political opponents initially managed to escape from Slovenia through the tunnel that links our country with Austria. There they surrendered to the victorious western allies, but the British Army, using the pretence of sending them to Italy, packed them into cattle trucks and sent them back to Yugoslavia where they were seized by the partisans. My uncle was spared the “trip” to Austria, however, he was killed, along with other victims, at one of the mass execution sites whose locations are now finally known to the Slovenian public.

How inhumanely and brutally did the intoxicated killers treat the desperate prisoners! After the decision to kill them was taken – and that decision must have been made at the highest political level – its execution was treated only as a difficult logistical problem. The main question was where to put thousands of bodies. The executioners remembered that some parts of Slovenia were rich with special geological features, deep sinkholes, into which they could throw the dead bodies. Since the transport of dead bodies is much more complicated than the transport of live ones, they organised special trains and trucks that took tens of thousands of victims, at precisely planned intervals, to the killing sites.

Every one of them must have known that they were going to be killed: before getting on a train or truck, they had to take off all their clothes and with sharp wires they were tied together in pairs. Before leaving, the executioners pulled several gold teeth from the mouths of the victims, took from them even the smallest items of their property and humiliated them in various other ways.

In the forests of the so-called Kočevski Rog, the soldiers of the new regime drove their fellow countrymen out of the trains or trucks, put them in lines in front of the holes, which were a few tens of metres deep, and machine-gunned them so that the dead or wounded bodies were toppling into the depths of the holes. They were landing on top of each other, many of them still alive. They were gasping for breath, swallowing or throwing up blood and trying to remain at the top of the pile by pushing away other bodies. Every few hours the executioners took a short break to rest and reload their ammunition, and then some of the victims exchanged a few whispered words among each other, careful not to break the deadly silence that was filled with horror.

How is it possible that we know all of this? It's because, in spite of very strict security measures, some of the captives managed to escape. They went abroad and there they told the story of this atrocious crime.

The victims that were lucky and skilful enough managed to dig their way up towards the top of the pile consisting of hundreds of bodies. There they lay low, using the limbs of other bodies to protect themselves so that they could even survive the final evening explosions with which the executioners wanted to cover the bodies and hide forever the evidence of their evil acts. After a few days, when an unbearable stench of decaying flesh and blood spread around in the summer heat, the guards became less attentive. Then, during the night, three or four people managed to climb out of the abyss by using the leaning trunk of a fallen tree. Naked and wounded, they crawled off into the night.

Man can be so much more cruel and malicious than nature; and those unfortunate people, though surrounded by hundreds of fellow sufferers and being in the heart of their homeland, must have felt so much more unhappy, deserted and forgotten by the world than I feel now on this small Caribbean island. My suffering has been caused by a series of unfortunate events; theirs was caused by sheer hatred and malice.

The present Slovenian leaders haven't been able to completely conceal these events from our recent history from the people. However, they are trying hard to minimise the importance of these events. I know this because of my own experiences in the area: for a few years I chaired a committee investigating the slaughter that took place after the war in my hometown of Domžale. The members of those parties that continued the politics of the previous regime were constantly trying to hide facts from the committee, or were taking the right to decide who among the dead victims deserved to be remembered and who was a national traitor because of his supposed collaboration with the Germans. Only with great difficulties did we manage to put together a list of about 280 local victims, and during that process I got acquainted with many very tragic stories.

I can recall an interesting example that illustrates how merciless the political rulers were even when they decided on the posthumous reverence – a custom that every decent society has respected for thousands of years. I think it was in 1944 that the partisans killed a young man from the village of Dob, next to Domžale, who had right-wing patriotic views, and buried him in a meadow near a forest. After the “liberation” his parents and brothers wished to move his remains to the cemetery in their village, but for several years the local authorities continued to deny them the right to do so. One night, five years after the war, the brothers finally took the courage to dig up the remains of the deceased and hide them in the basement of their home. When a few years later the father of the killed man died, the family made use of the fact that the father had a leg missing and put the remains of the dead brother in the empty place in the

coffin. The father and son were then buried together. The family told me that at the meal after the funeral they enjoyed having an extra glass of wine marking, in this way, the occasion when they successfully tricked the authorities that hadn't allowed them to carry out the most basic customs of any culture. From then onwards the family was much more at peace on the annual All Souls' Day (even the name of this traditional Catholic holiday was abolished by the new regime and replaced by the Day of the Dead) when standing at the grave which, though bearing only the name of the father, also held the remains of the brother.

The ghastly events that took place in the intoxicated euphoria created by the people who, at the end of the war, happened to be on the winning side, are still not sufficiently well known to the rest of the world. Among another things, this is also due to the feelings of guilt of the British authorities that still don't admit they made a fatal mistake. The President of Yugoslavia, the cunning Marshal Tito, must have already then managed to trick the British, as he later managed for decades to skilfully play the role of an amiable and enlightened dictator, and whose funeral in 1980 was attended by the cream of international politics.

It is a well-known fact that in May and June 1945, Tito already had a firm grip on power throughout the whole of Yugoslavia by forcing the military and civil institutions to submit to a completely centralised form of politics. We can't even imagine that a very expensive operation, during which tens of thousands of war prisoners were executed, could have been carried out without Tito's explicit agreement or even his order. We can also be certain that the Slovenian communist leadership, chaired by Edvard Kardelj, was fully aware of, and also in agreement with, the executions organised in Slovenia. And this systematic violence, which denied Slovenian people their basic human rights, wasn't only a short, turbulent, post-war period, but a process that lasted for many years. Even in the fifties, Tito still maintained a concentration camp – the closest one to Western Europe – situated on the Croatian island of Goli otok (the barren island). There he kept his political opponents and thus, in the middle of the most beautiful Adriatic Gulf, this small island turned into a true hell for its prisoners.

It is sad that even today there are still streets and squares in some Slovenian towns that are named after Tito, and that in the capital, Ljubljana, the monument dedicated to Kardelj still boasts in front of its citizens.

It is also sad that the new Slovenian state still hasn't got enough courage to make use of its legitimate legislative institutions – like the courts, prosecutor's office, police – with which to start, at least symbolically, the charges against the main figures of the previous clique that committed crimes during or after the war, or gave orders for mass killings. Ironically, at the same time, a Slovenian court is successfully leading a case against a member of the wartime home guard, accusing him of killing one person. If he gets convicted – while none of the communists responsible for the war, or post-war, mass murders, is brought to court – it will be an utterly unfair abuse of jurisdiction for political purposes.

However, time will find an appropriate place for everything, if not sooner, then a little later. The school textbooks will then place Tito next to Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin.

I am certain that the Slovenian wartime organisation, the home guard, will one day be rehabilitated. I believe that it was one of the most splendid and noble movements in our history (later Demos bore the same qualities). I understand that on every side of the war there are individuals who use the lawless circumstances to feed their vile inclinations. The crimes spurred by such conditions were committed on both sides: the partisan and the home guard.

The post-war propaganda managed to use a few such cases in order to accuse all political opposition of holding distorted and dangerous views. And this attitude has been maintained until the present time. However, the truth about the basic issues is slowly, yet persistently, coming to light.

What other movement or idea could be more legitimate and worthy than the home guard? Every individual has the right to protect his or her home, property, loved ones and homeland. This, and only this, was the mission of Slovenian home guard. Its members didn't follow any other ideology – be it fascist, nazi or multi-ethnic – they were committed to the protection of Slovenia and its traditional values. It is understandable that right from the beginning the members of the home guard saw the communists as their main enemies because they wanted to change the country completely, and made Slovenia join the movement known as the Communist International. Even before the Second World War, the communists represented the main threat to Slovenia. Many far-seeing politicians in Slovenia realised this fact very early on, but they were unable to convince their fellow countrymen to unite and form a strong political movement to act against the danger that was coming from the east.

Time has proved that communism was the biggest threat to Slovenian society. In recent centuries, no other tyranny has enslaved our country so totally and caused so much mental and material damage as communism. If the ideas of the home guard had been put into effect (for which the home-guard members themselves weren't strong enough), then in 1945 in Slovenia, as in Western Europe, a period of true freedom would have begun: the right-wing political movement would have introduced democracy – not a forty-year-long dictatorship.

Today, the members of the home guard are mainly criticised for their collaboration with the occupying forces, as if that had been the focus of the movement. The main motive of the majority of its volunteers was deeply patriotic, others joined for practical reasons: they wanted to fight the increasing violence of the communists and through them also the partisans. One proof of their sincerity can be found in the lyrics of the beautiful home-guard songs that every honest (and religious) patriot would today still enjoy singing. The home guard's political and military leaders probably also made a few tactical mistakes, but that doesn't change the fundamentals of the home-guard movement, which remains one of the tragic moments of Slovenian independence. I believe the time will come when the unjust negative labelling of this movement's big idea will be removed at last after many years. And this will also have to include a solemn national occasion attended by the most senior representatives of the Slovenian state.

It may be that because of the tragedy in my family – the unnecessary death of my uncle France – I am not impartial in this matter. However, I can't prevent myself from thinking how unjust it is that the communists (and now the leftists) have been accusing the home guard of collaboration with the occupying forces when communism itself was all the time synonymous with collaboration. Even before the war, the communists worked exclusively in accordance with the instructions of the Communist International, and during the war they were mainly carrying out the orders that came from Belgrade or Moscow. The traditionally servile attitude of Slovenian politicians towards the Serbian leadership continued into the 1990s, until our new right-wing coalition severed links between the Slovenian politicians and their Belgrade patrons. “Nomen est omen” – the expression “partisan” wasn't chosen by chance; it means “a party member” and so it is clear that the main aim of the partisan movement wasn't the fight against the occupying forces but the introduction of a social revolution. If their aim had been different, the partisans could have fought under the traditional Slovenian three-coloured flag,

not under the red star of the Russian Revolution. Having said that, I also wish to express my deep respect and admiration for all those honest partisans who, just like my uncle, joined this movement because they believed that they were in this way fighting for the freedom of their nation.

It's been such a long time since I last thought about these issues ...

Maybe my accidental fall into this hollow hasn't been such a disaster: here I have the time to reawaken my memories and decide whether, in the future, I would want to share them with anybody else. For now I don't intend to burden my children with all those atrocities, but when they are old enough to understand I will tell them everything I know. Future generations should be aware of past events, irrespective of how cruel they were.

This is the attitude that Germany adopted after the war and it proved to be very useful for the development of the whole society.

Slovenia will also have to bite the bullet.

## The Third Day - Miriam

On the third day of Tony's disappearance Miriam knew she should phone Slovenia to tell their close relatives about the accident. She was still hesitant about telling it all to Tony's mother who couldn't help them in any way, but could be seriously affected by the news. The first person Miriam decided to call was Zlata Tavčar, the company manager of IUS SOFTWARE, who was, as a co-founder of the company, closest to Tony and most likely to be able to help. Just a week before she had received the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce Award for the best economic performance of a company in 2000. The award had been presented to Zlata at a ceremonial event, which Tony had regretted so much not to be able to attend, and after the ceremony she had left, together with her family, for a much-deserved holiday: skiing in Italy. They were due to be back that very evening; therefore, Miriam decided to phone Zlata at 2.00 pm Nevis time.

As on the previous days, the Nisbet staff again did their best to help the concerned family to get through the difficult moments of uncertainty. For Miriam, Nolan was the main source of information; in addition, that day she also received news from Newton, the coordinator of the whole operation, who came to see her in the morning. Newton told Miriam that, in addition to other ways of searching, they were also using a helicopter that day. This important piece of information gave Miriam new hope that the search would be successful this time. Newton also added: "I have already arranged everything necessary in the main hospital of Charlestown, so that its staff will be ready to admit your husband as soon as the rescuers bring him back because he will surely need immediate medical care."

Oh, if only it would really be like this, Miriam thought. Then she waited – hour after hour – to hear the news that Tony had been found. However, no such message reached her.

By then the news about the missing tourist had spread all around the island and quite a few people came forward claiming that they had seen Anton Tomažič two days before, on the Wednesday. A few of those claims closely matched the previous reports, according to which, at about 6.00 am, the tourist had been on his way towards the settlement of Fountain Village, situated on the saddle. Some had seen him on the street, others had caught sight of him from their homes (like Leonard Skeete and Joseph Liburd), but none of them was able to say whether, on reaching the saddle, the tourist had turned left or right.

However, the information that was crucial to the subsequent search operation – and in comparison with which the reports about Tomažič's morning direction sounded entirely irrelevant – came from Westbury Village. It was there that the father of Mr Wigley, the policeman, had presumably seen Tomažič on Wednesday AFTERNOON at about 4.30 pm. A black, middle-aged lady, Winnefred Herbert, from Westbury Village, confirmed Mr Wigley's report. She told the rescuers that on Wednesday afternoon she had met, in front of her house, a white gentleman on his way back from the mountain heading towards the beach. Her description of the tourist was so convincing that even Miriam, after talking to the lady, was sure that Mrs Herbert had seen Tony. The lady described a middle-aged tourist wearing a beard and spectacles, dressed in short trousers and a tee-shirt (in the right colours), carrying a rucksack on his shoulders and a bag, which could have been a camera bag, in his hand. She added that they had even got involved in a longish conversation: jokingly Winny had asked the traveller whether he would marry her, to which he had replied that he was already married with two children and that, in the hotel, the family was waiting for him to come back after his one-day trip. When Miriam asked for more details about the tourist the lady also said that he

had several grey hairs in his dark beard, which again corresponded well with Tony's appearance.

Since Westbury is located to the RIGHT of the saddle at Fountain Village, it seemed logical that any further search operation should focus on Round Hill, which is separated from the main mountain of Nevis Peak by roads and other settlements. Hence, on that day, and for a few more days, even more people were involved in surveying the forests, bushes and the beach area of Cades Bay – all located in the lower part of the island belonging to Round Hill – in an attempt to find any trace of the missing tourist. Who would have focused on the high central area of Nevis Peak after receiving such precise information, confirmed by another person, about Tomažič's whereabouts in the opposite direction? It seemed obvious that Tomažič had successfully returned from Nevis Peak and had, at the end of the day, been on his way down towards the coast.

This was the reason the helicopter, which the Nisbet management was finally able to hire for three hours from the island of Antigua, didn't spend much time in the air around the dangerously foggy mountaintop. It only made a few circles there, and some around the extinguished volcano crater; it flew as much as the clouds pressing against the mountain allowed, and then moved away to carefully search the area of Round Hill. The lookout in the helicopter was Nikki Johnson, the wife of the guide Jim Johnson; Nikki was also a guide.

Back in the hotel, Kathie and Don Johnson arranged for another visit that would help the Tomažič family remain calm under the difficult conditions. That afternoon two Catholic priests came to see them: the local Father George and his colleague who ran the parish on the neighbouring island of St. Kitts. Only three percent of the inhabitants of Nevis are Catholics, and the majority of them are white people. As a result, the hotel managers correctly assumed that a Catholic priest was the right choice for their European guests. And so it was: no one could have given them more comfort than Father George. In an unobtrusive way, this pleasant Irish priest started a conversation with Miriam and in the meantime also got close to the children. Instead of offering a sermon based on theory, he was asking them real questions, then listening carefully to what the family was telling him and occasionally made his own comments about the recent events. He was also interested to know whether Tony was a religious man and Miriam assured him that he certainly was. Because of this they very quickly found that they spoke the same language. Just before leaving father George blessed them and prayed with them for Tony's safe return. He also told them that the churchgoers of his parish would keep praying to God, asking for a favourable outcome, and he promised to come back to them, which he did do on the following days.

After talking to the priest Miriam felt strong enough to phone Slovenia. She decided she would first try to talk to Zlata. She phoned IUS SOFTWARE believing that the experienced and always-friendly business secretary, Mojca Pintarič, would help her find the company manager who, as Miriam knew, was still on her leave. That turned out to be rather difficult because Mojca, too, was on leave. That week, Slovenian schools had winter holidays and a lot of people were away with their children, so Miriam couldn't even talk to the manager of the partner company, the GV Publishing Group, Slobodan Sibičič, who was skiing in a Slovenian winter resort. After several attempts, Miriam finally got the number of Mojca's mobile telephone. Mojca told her that Zlata and her family were due to come home at about 7.00 pm local time and so Miriam decided she would call back later.

While waiting for Zlata, Miriam had to make another difficult phone call: she phoned her mother, Slava Kranjac, and told her immediately that Tony had been missing for three days. Naturally, her mother was shocked, and they talked about when and how to tell the news to Tony's mother, who would, that evening at 7.00 pm, be waiting more eagerly than normally for the telephone call – on the day before she had, for the first time, been waiting in vain, getting increasingly worried about all four travellers. Miriam asked her mother to phone Tony's mother and tell her that the family couldn't get a connection from Nevis to Vir, but that they were alright and would phone her on the following day. Miriam's mother agreed straight away that this was a better solution than upsetting the frail and lonely, 85-year-old lady with the news that something very serious had happened to her only son, who had been lost in the jungle for three days. Miriam's mother later did what she and her daughter agreed on, and in this way she also took over some of the heavy load that until then Miriam alone had been carrying. As for Tony's mother she could spend two more days in the same way she had spent the past two weeks: in anticipation that she would soon be able to hug her two grandchildren again and feel free from her usual worries that were with her each time the family went on a journey. However, being deeply religious, the old lady fell asleep each night while praying for the safety of her loved ones.

When, soon after 2.00 pm, Miriam was finally able to speak to her friend Zlata, she burst into tears. She told Zlata that something terrible must have happened to Tony because he had gone missing and the rescuers had been looking for him for three days. It was for the first time that Miriam could cry and release some of the fear that had accumulated in her. Zlata was as shocked as if the news had been about one of her relatives – in the past 12 years she had been very close to her business partner, Tony. They were together every day: at work, for lunch and often also at gatherings of both families. Together with her husband, Dejan Stančič, who was also employed at IUS SOFTWARE, and two small daughters, they had just returned from a weeklong skiing holiday; even before they could find the time to unpack, the shocking news hit them. Zlata asked Miriam about the mountain that Tony had climbed, then about the rescuers and the way in which the rescue operation was organised. She knew she needed a few minutes to collect her thoughts and talk the matter over with Dejan, so she told Miriam they would soon call her back. Practical as she is, Zlata also asked Miriam whether she had enough money, and told her not to hesitate to spend it on the costs of the rescue operation, and she could even borrow some money if necessary. Zlata was sure that her colleagues would be quick at helping Miriam find the extra funds needed for Tony's rescue. Miriam thanked her and told her that she had almost no money because she couldn't cash in the traveller's cheques that had Tony's signature. She also added that until then money hadn't been a problem because she had been simply adding the daily expenses of their stay at Nisbet to the family bill kept by the hotel. She thought, however, that she would probably need the money to hire the helicopter and the other expenses of the rescue operation.

Instead of opening the mail and tackling various other household tasks that usually need to be done after returning from a holiday, Zlata and Dejan sat down at their table, tried to collect their thoughts, and decide on what actions they should take. They realised that of the people in Slovenia it would have to be them who would carry the biggest load when it came to handling this critical situation. They also thought of Miriam's brother, Niko Kranjac, who would also be capable of helping them. They both knew Niko well, as they often met him over lunch. Hence, they phoned him and found out that Niko had also just learned of the shocking news. They all agreed that Niko would come to see them on the following morning so that they could discuss the matter and make plans for the future.

In the meantime, the news about the missing tourist spread among other Nisbet guests who were all very kind and considerate towards Miriam and the children. That afternoon Kathie brought another two kind ladies over to Miriam, both from the Nevis Tourist Association. All four women talked in the entrance hall of the bungalow while the two children were playing outside on the grass. By then, Miriam and Kathie had become very close, almost intimate, friends because they had already exchanged several experiences associated with their family lives.

That evening Miriam told Kathie about the suggestion that Zlata had made during their telephone conversation. Though Zlata is a very rational person, she had thought that the rescuers might also want to seek help from a dowser or another person with similar skills. Referring to the Slovenian proverb “when in need, the Devil will even feed on flies”, Zlata had concluded that any technique, including a paranormal one, would be worth trying in order to find Tony. Miriam had promised to ask about such a possibility. Kathie knew about the activities of the American Society of Dowsers and also that some of its members were specialists in searching for missing persons. Without any hesitation she phoned New York, and soon got the names of two such people. One of them was famous for solving several mysteries, especially ones associated with kidnapping and other criminal acts. However, the lady had recently given birth, so she wasn’t available. Nevertheless, one of this lady’s colleagues was able to temporarily take over the matter and asked Kathie to fax a map of Nevis to him. After that, he soon expressed his belief that the missing guest was lost in the area called Eden Brown. Though the area was far from close to the places that Tony had wanted to climb, the Nisbet staff still checked this area, but they never found anything.

After several attempts, Kathie finally managed to get in touch with the main dowser of the society, Ginette Matacia-Lucas. During their telephone conversation, the lady said to Kathie that she found the case very interesting and would be happy to deal with it if her involvement in the matter could be organised so that it would suit her maternal duties. Thus, they agreed that, by using Federal Express mail, Kathie would send her a map, a photo of the missing person and 400 dollars. They also agreed to get in touch again on Sunday, at 12.30 pm, provided the mail reached Ginette on the following day.

One hour before dinner, the much-liked Roslyn visited the Indian Castle bungalow to find out what the children would like to eat that evening. Their father being away, the family had all their evening meals served at the same time, and in that room of the Great House restaurant that was reserved for the children – only that the family ate there a bit later than the other children. As a result of a lot of exercise and fresh air, the children ate well, but Miriam was glancing sadly towards the central hall of the restaurant where other couples were sitting and where, only a few days before, she and Tony had had such a pleasant (their last?) evening.

A little later, there was another sad occasion that stirred the emotion of everybody in the restaurant. When Miriam and the children were leaving the room it seemed that their loneliness had already become a routine, that there was little hope the night might bring a happy end to their unfortunate story. Toni and Mariansa politely said “Good night” to the deeply moved guests.

On the way towards the bungalow, they were looking into the sky wondering whether their father was watching the same stars ...

And in their beds they said their regular prayer: My guardian angel, be always with me ...



## The Fourth Day - Tony

The fourth day starts with an unpleasant surprise, which at least brings some variety to the endless night: I feel the raindrops on my skin. It's especially important that at night my clothes don't get wet. I have no other choice but to quickly take off my shorts and two shirts and put them in my rucksack to keep them dry. It is pouring with rain. I open my mouth and hope that this time nothing harmful will find its way into my bowels, which have, by now, settled down a bit. I even joke to myself about the situation by standing like I do when I take a shower. It will do me good to get washed, though I have to be careful not to scratch the wounds that have just healed. While touching my body during this shower I realise that I have already lost quite a bit of weight; however, there are still enough reserves around my waist and elsewhere. I like being in the rain because it's a bit warmer than the air. Although when the rain stops and I have to dry myself, I get cold again.

I put on my clothes and don't really know what to do with myself because my nest is now completely soaked with water. The crushed greenery on which I sleep has started to rot and begun to attract various insects, therefore, I decide to air it and renew it that morning.

When finally the day breaks at 6.00 am I notice that the leaves of the undamaged plants glitter with the raindrops that cling to them until they fall to the ground or evaporate into the air. They seem so clean that I can't stop myself from sucking them. Every little drop does so much good to my parched mouth and cracked lips! Again I find that I will have to be more careful when using the plants in my modest habitation. In future I shouldn't pull out the whole of the

plant, but pluck only a few leaves each time to allow the plants to recuperate. If I use up the leaves too quickly, the plants will stop providing me treats like these tasty little raindrops.

However, "picking" the drops, which are hanging from the leaves, is quite a demanding task. If I touch a plant too firmly, all the drops immediately fall to the ground. It takes a lot of patience and gentleness – like when approaching a woman. So, here on Nevis, I'm forced to practise gentle kissing. First I steal the drops from the longest leaves or twigs, and then I try to move my head closer to the stalk without touching the other twigs. If I'm not careful, all the drops fall to the ground at once. I begin to talk to the plants. To the most attractive ones I give names – beautiful female names.

Will I ever again embrace my wife Miriam? She is so close, only a few kilometres away, yet so far from me. Just now she is taking the children to breakfast. Toni will start it with a plate full of fruits, mainly strawberries. Mariansa will take a long time before she decides which delicious sort of oat flakes she will take. Friendly waitresses will offer them freshly made juices of various flavours. Miriam will order the speciality of the day. Which one is on offer on Saturdays? Knowing the preferences of Toni and Mariansa, the staff will also bring a basket full of toast on which Miriam will spread butter and different marmalades. Enough: I shouldn't be thinking of food. For me, breakfast time is usually an opportunity to read the morning newspaper that comes to Nisbet by fax from London and New York.

But this is now only a dream and I have to face reality. So, let's see what I've got here. First, I chisel the words "Day 4" into the wall. Then I remember that yesterday the rescuers were looking for me from a helicopter, but flew over me only once. Surely, they will continue the

search today, but it is not certain that they will notice me. Should I, for all that, try to climb out of here on my own by scaling this wall? Well, at least I can try.

After a thorough mental preparation I put on the sports shoes, put on my rucksack and tackle the wall. The first two metres aren't problematic, especially because I had already removed the moss from that part of the wall. However, only with extreme efforts can I pull myself up another metre, but there I can't find any handholds and no crevice into which I can put my foot. After a few minutes of uncomfortable and tense pressing against the wall I start to shake. A few centimetres away from my face I can see only the smooth and mossy upper part of the wall. I remove more moss with my hand, but then I realise that I should stop climbing. A fall from here could already be very dangerous, in spite of those decaying trunks lying at the bottom of the wall (or maybe just because of them). Maybe one of the trunks hasn't yet decayed and I could get impaled on splinters. I must get down; I can never climb this wall. Now that I have already survived three days in the hollow, I prefer to wait down there for some more time, until the rescuers find me, instead of getting badly hurt or even killed. So, I carefully climb down, take off my rucksack and my shoes, and take a rest.

Two or three more times that day I make similar attempts to climb the wall...

What else can I do to save myself from the hollow? Of course I could draw the attention of the rescuers with smoke. But how can I light a fire? By rubbing dry wood, by using a flint stone or a lens. With the Scouts we learned how to do it and today I will try it out.

There are no suitable stones. The island was a volcano, and the stones are soft rather than hard. So, I decide to use the wood – like I have seen it work in TV documentaries. I have plenty of wood here, but it isn't very dry. Hence, I split a few biggish trunks so that I can get to the wood that isn't wet. Next, I find a hard stick and start rubbing it against the wood inside the trunk. Ouch! My hands are wounded and sore, so I can't do it like this. I have to try something else: I pull a strong string out of my trouser belt to make quite a firm bow. I tie the ends of the string round the stick and start moving the bow backwards and forwards. How simple it seemed in the film, and yet how difficult it is for me. I would need two more healthy hands to do this. I realise that "I can't make bread from this flour"; in other words, I can't make any fire or smoke with this wood.

Every hour I shout out for help for a while, which exhausts me quite a lot, and by mid-morning I am already very tired. Maybe I should try "plan three" now – making use of the only sunrays that I get in here: I will try to light a fire by using a lens.

I failed again and, as a consequence, my morale was pretty low. My ears were pricked all day, but I never heard a sound that could have come from a helicopter. I could only hear those distant sounds that were always the same and were obviously the sounds of the regular flights over the island. I couldn't understand why the rescuers didn't fly again in the sky above me; I thought it very likely they would notice me this time. Is it possible that they already stopped the rescue operation? – I wondered. I hope not, as I am still alive, waiting for them. It is true that I am in bad shape, wounded and exhausted, but also still full of hope that I will be saved. I still hope to get my life back!

More and more it seemed to me that I would have to find my own way out of the hole, which meant I would have to go back to that awful wall. Since my sports shoes were wet, dirty and worn out, I thought it would be too dangerous to use them for climbing. At the same time I

knew I would need them desperately once I got out of the hole because I would then have to continue my way through the jungle. For this reason I threw both my shoes, one by one, up to the ground above the wall. The wall was so high that I had to hurl the shoes up a few times before I succeeded. Then they were waiting for me up there, in case I managed to climb out of the hole.

I knew that climbing would be easier if the surface wasn't mossy, so I decided to remove as much moss as possible and, at the same time, also try to chisel a few small, but useful steps into the wall. Routinely, I climbed the first three metres and started clearing the wall at this point. The work was very tiring and my newly awoken enthusiasm began to fade again. I simply didn't dare to start climbing the fourth metre of the wall. The instinctive fear of the height was reinforced by the memory of my recent experience of falling off the wall, due to which my bones were still very sore.

Again I decided to give up climbing and wait for the rescuers. But as before, a half-hour rest helped me renew my strength and off I went up the wall again, where I stayed for about 15 minutes. The last thing that I tried that day was leaning a decaying trunk against the wall in the hope that it would help me climb out of the hole, but I failed. Some trunks were already too dilapidated to be used for climbing; others were solid enough, but too heavy for me to move, especially since my strength was on the wane.

I was surprised that I was still passing a considerable amount of urine. It was, however, becoming increasingly dark, and after consuming it I no longer had any direct signs of dehydration. Nevertheless, I was thirsty all the time, especially when exerting myself physically. Hence, in the evening I had the last two Domžale plants from my "greenhouse". I thought I should prepare a stalk before I turn in for the night and later enjoy chewing it while lying on my back. Thus, when I again settled down in my bed, I placed the previously plucked stalk against the wall or a nearby branch, then I bit into it, turned it around and bit again; after that I had to chew it for a while until I was able, with the greatest delight, to suck the liquid out of the plant's fibres. The water in the root seemed free of any other substances, which I found most agreeable – I didn't fancy any other tastes or smells. By consuming the water I also cleaned my teeth a bit. Though there can't have been many traces of food left on my teeth I still felt that I was very dirty and smelly. My wife later admitted that when she first saw me at the hospital she noticed that my teeth were yellow (later the colour vanished). And it didn't seem odd that, after our first hug, Toni avoided further contacts with me. If for no other reason, I must have had an unpleasant smell because of the consumption of urine that left traces on my beard and shirt.

The night fell quickly. Oh, how I hoped it would also end quickly. I positioned my tired body into a slightly renewed nest and looked up at the familiar silhouette. In the darkness, I could again see the contours of the young man's head. But, look – the picture is changing: more and more it reminds me of a skeleton's skull ...

That night, for the first time, I accepted the possibility that I could meet my death in the hole. And with that awareness in my mind, I had to rethink my life again: My soul isn't burdened with serious sins. I have committed some minor sins, but have already confessed them and repented for them. My life has mostly been good and rich, especially in the last ten years. During that time I was involved in the successful political project of Slovenian independence, together with true friends and good colleagues we created a flourishing and profitable company and, most importantly, I got married, although late in life, and raised a wonderful

young family. I couldn't have found a better wife than Miriam. I could never have had a better boy and a lovelier girl than Toni and Mariansa. We love each other very much and have so much fun together. And my 85-year-old mother is always so good to us – she will die of sorrow over the death of her only son.

And yet, maybe it is Your will, oh God, that I leave them all. You must know why. You are almighty and all knowing. You can save me as well. I know that I can't trick You with my promises. The only thing I can do is beg You, as my loved ones must be begging You, as many other people, mainly here on Nevis, must be begging You. I can feel their prayers. I feel the positive energy they are sending me.

My God, I feel You all around me. My faith has never before been so solid and deep.

If I live through this I will remember everything I feel now. I will tell others about it. To those who have doubts, I will say get rid of them, because God exists. God is infinitely good and he can do anything. However, his ways are sometimes beyond our comprehension and this difficulty has shaken the faith of many people. But to me, the death, which is perhaps very near now, will bring His light even closer. I accept everything, my dear God, I even accept the fact that you will separate me from my beloved family. Only You know why it has to be like this.

If I live through this I will remember all these thoughts and be assured that God has saved me. If I live through this I will commit myself to special deeds – in thanks, and in memory of my salvation.

The night hours are passing very slowly; even the minutes seem very long ...

Fortunately, the cold doesn't increase my pains. The wounds to my leg, both hands and on my back are very sore, though they are, thank God, healing well. In addition, all my muscles are sore and numerous scratches and abrasions are smarting.

At night, when I start to shake with cold, the pains in my wounds are somehow subdued, "frozen" and postponed until the morning because the cold then becomes the prevailing trouble.

Why do I have to be in this awful situation? Is it my punishment for not obeying my mother when she advised me against this journey? I could now say that I am sorry for not obeying her, but that would be just a trite phrase. My mother had also advised me against several other journeys that all ended with my safe return. I understand that she is worried about us all and would prefer us to always stay in the safety of our home. My wife and I, of course, can't accept that, but we are fully aware of our responsibilities whenever we set off on a journey (which happens very rarely).

It would be insincere of me, and utterly unnecessary, to say to myself: "Oh, I'm so sorry to have come to this island of Nevis." We have to accept the past and take it for what it is. Regretting our past actions can sometimes have a positive, comforting effect, but in most cases it leads to traumatic self-accusation. Being aware of the mistakes we have made in the past is useful only if it helps us avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

Speculating about what could have happened differently is completely unproductive; in such cases we just play with our imagination and we can direct our thoughts in any direction we want, either negative or positive. For example, I can choose to say that it was

GOOD that the First World War broke out; that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy disintegrated; that Yugoslavia was set up; that this new state, though consisting of several nations, had a single army; that Niko Kranjac came from Dalmatia to serve in the army in Slovenia; that in Rakek he met Slava Pirc; that they got married; that Miriam was born to them; that I met Miriam; that we got married; that I got my son Toni and daughter Mariansa. If the First World War hadn't broken out and the monarchy hadn't disintegrated, history would have taken a completely different course. Other people would have met and married each other and perhaps I wouldn't have been born.

Alternatively, I can say that it was

BAD that I attended the grammar school; that I met my school mate France Jamnik; that he influenced my decision to study law; that I became a lawyer; that I subscribed to the lawyers' mailing list; that in this way I learned about an invitation to a conference on Nevis; that I attended the conference a year ago; that I found the island so attractive I wanted to come back a year later with my family; that I was tempted to climb Nevis Peak; that I got stuck in this hole. If I had trained as a carpenter, I would now be at home, trimming my hedge.

Bullshit, I wouldn't trim any hedge! I might have enlisted in a different regiment in the army and not have served in 1975 in Raška, but in 1971 in Slavonski Brod, in that very unit that was, on 22 October, sitting in the truck that was involved in the road accident in which all those soldiers died ...

Was I destined to have this accident here on Nevis? Does destiny exist? For Christians the answer to this question is clear, and recorded in the Bible: God gave Man free will and this is incompatible with any predestination. While I am here struggling for my life, I am, more than ever before, aware of the possibility and the importance of personal decisions. When, tomorrow morning, I look again at the mighty wall of my hole, I will freely, and possibly for several times, decide whether I should climb it, risking a dangerous, maybe even fatal, fall, or whether I should be more careful and trust that help is coming. My instincts tell me that I do have the ability to decide for myself, that my future hasn't been predestined. I quite enjoy this vast freedom. I enjoy knowing that I can act in accordance with my own free will. And if I, being in this very restricted environment, can feel so much personal freedom, how much more freedom is at the disposal of the people out there!

If I am right, and I believe I am, then any form of superstition and fortune telling is without foundation. I have never believed in astrology, as I have always found it illogical (mainly because it contradicts the laws of nature) that particular constellations of stars, that are characteristic of our time of birth, could in any way influence our lives in the present, let alone in the distant future. I wonder how this could be done – can every one of the millions of stars send some invisible rays and messages through the universe and through the buildings that man has created and in this way influence a newly born baby? Astrologists say that in the first moments after its birth a child absorbs information that will stay in his or her body for decades and influence his or her character in the years to come. If children are really so sensitive, then I suggest we should worry more about the functioning of the air-conditioning

system in the delivery room, the sounds coming from the room next-door or about the number of active mobile telephones that are close to newly born babies.

Similarly, I don't believe in horoscopes because so far nobody has managed to convince me that they can be explained in a logical way. The fact that people born under the same astrological sign presumably have similar characteristics is the closest one can get in an attempt to provide any proof in favour of horoscopes. However, I explain this phenomenon in a different way: I find it logical that the children that were carried and born in the same season possess certain similarities – yet, this can only be true in those parts of the world that are subject to big changes in the weather for the different seasons, like the differences between winter and summer.

I do not object to people reading various horoscopes as long as they do it for fun and don't take the contents too seriously. And since I do not believe in fate or in the possibility of foretelling the future, it is logical that I find every form of fortune-telling morally unacceptable. Those people who do it for money should reconsider their activities and realise how harmful they could be: their customers trust them and, in order to follow the fortune-tellers' advice, they might make the wrong decisions that will bring negative consequences into their lives. Fortune-tellers should be aware of the big responsibility they take each time they discuss the future with their clients.

So why has astrology survived throughout the history of mankind? I think that its existence is a result of peoples' primary, in modern times often subconscious, need to transcend everyday reality. Those who don't believe in God want to believe in some other spiritual principle. This shows us that there are really very few absolute atheists: people need some sort of faith.

The messages of astrologers and fortune-tellers are normally very general so that they can later be interpreted in various ways. If I had gone to see a fortune-teller before our journey to Nevis and asked her to foretell our future, she would have said something like: "Generally it will be a successful journey, but be aware of poisonous insects and other animals that can bite you and especially your children. You will run into minor problems at one airport, but your return home will be safe." Since I am rather sceptical about fortune telling, I would have assessed that the lady hadn't told me anything important and I would have quickly forgotten about the whole incident. However, if I was susceptible to fortune telling, I would have tried to think of other similar cases in which the actual events had confirmed the predictions of the fortune-teller, and would also have been prepared to discuss the issue with other people.

The fortune-teller might also have told me this: "The beginning of the journey will be good, but later the life of one of you will be in danger. Though help will come quickly, the consequences of the event will be with you for a few more months." If I hadn't had this accident, I could believe that the fortune-teller had referred to an incident in Miami when, at a set of traffic lights, one of the children ran into the road too quickly. We all got very scared, but I managed to pull the child back at the last moment. If I wanted to agree with the fortune-teller, I would argue that, due to the shock in Miami, the child might wet the bed for a few times in the future months. However, since a serious accident did happen to me, I could now believe that the fortune-teller was absolutely right.

People only talk about fortune telling when its predictions have at least partly come true; they don't mention other occasions, which are much more numerous, when the predictions don't come true. I have never heard any passionate report that would go like this: "Imagine, the

other day I went to a fortune-teller who told me this and that – and none of it came true.” People quickly forget about wrong predictions and false horoscopes, and in this way they can create an impression that predictions are generally correct. However, if we admit that only some predictions are in accordance with actual events, then we have to conclude that the fortune-tellers are only guessing at the future. As we know, guessing doesn’t provide us with reliable answers, so we shouldn’t take it too seriously.

But what can I say about my belief that right at this moment certain people out there are sincerely praying for me? Shouldn’t I, following the same cold logic, deny the possibility of God’s intervention and the impact of a prayer, as I deny astrology? Certainly not, religion is a completely different issue. Almighty God created our world; therefore the laws of nature cannot in any way contradict the will of God and His involvement in everything that surrounds us.

I pray again. At first solemnly and aloud, but once I begin to fall asleep, I only now and then whisper some more words of my prayer.

The night is so long. Have I been asleep for a while? Probably not more than for about fifteen minutes ...

What was I thinking about? I remember: I was wondering why I have to be in this awful situation.

If I’m not here as a result of fate, is it because God is punishing me? That maybe so, but in that case the punishment isn’t in proportion to my sins. Could it be God’s finger? A warning? By all means, I deserve one. If for nothing else, then certainly for my pride and selfishness – for thinking only about myself and my family.

Alright – I accept the warning and humbly admit my vanity. I will remember this experience. I will bear it in mind.

I try to be as honest as possible to myself, as well as to God. But what if I will later again forget the resolutions I have made this evening? I have this familiar feeling that Christians always have after confession: we would like to repent sincerely and make a firm decision not to sin again, alas, we also know that we have been through the same experience a hundred times before, and each time have sinned again ...

I have to make sure that I will remember these good resolutions in years to come. It will surely be easy to remember the event itself, but more difficult to keep in mind today’s thoughts and firm decisions. I have to think of some act, which will demonstrate my determination to remember this whole experience.

Thus, I decide that, if I survive this accident and if my health permits it, exactly a year from now, and each subsequent year, I will fast for one week in order to remember these moments and have some extra time for the so-much-needed reflections on the world and my place in it. Already now I can tell that I will enjoy fasting – because I will have access to an unlimited quantity of water.

## The Fourth Day - Miriam

Early on that Saturday morning, Miriam found that the search for Tony was at its most intense, at least as far as the number of people involved in the operation was concerned. Saturday not being a workday, meant more volunteers could respond to the media appeals to join in and help the rescuers. These volunteers were then walking from house to house trying to find more information about the missing tourist. When searching through the wilderness, some of them were also using the dogs that the Prison Farm had lent to them. On that day between 8.00 am and 4.00 pm, the prison volunteers, together with the dogs, searched the whole Hog Valley Trail.

In the morning, the two Catholic priests called at the bungalow. Father George was very encouraging and told the family that over 30 soldiers from St. Kitts had also joined the rescue operation. They were members of the St. Kitts Army Reserves, with exactly the right training background: they had been trained for search operations in the jungle. Father George also said that the soldiers were equipped with machetes, which were necessary for making progress through the thick wilderness. Miriam and the priest exchanged several optimistic thoughts, believing that “these expert soldiers will surely find Tony today...” Later, at mid-day, Miriam saw the soldiers, dressed in their camouflage uniforms, taking a rest in the shade in front of the hotel entrance. She understood that it must have been very hard for them to search, in that heat, through the jungle, but seeing them back to Nisbet so soon, she also realised that they couldn't have looked for Tony on Nevis Peak. The hotel management prepared sandwiches and refreshing drinks for the tired soldiers, while the main rescue operation was still in progress in the area around the village of Westbury and down towards Cades Bay.

In the early afternoon, Zlata phoned from Slovenia and told Miriam that, late into the night of the previous day, she and Dejan were trying to plan how to get involved in the rescue operation and help the family in this difficult situation that might be going on for a few more days. She also told Miriam that Niko had decided to fly over to Nevis, as quickly as possible, to see his sister, nephew and niece; and added that Dejan might join Niko as well. Miriam agreed that in a situation that demanded a lot of contacts with the various people responsible for the searching, it would be best to have both men on Nevis.

Practical Zlata expressed her doubts about the possibilities of flying to Nevis straight away: on Saturdays the travel agencies were closed and, in addition, it would probably be difficult to book a journey consisting of more than two connecting flights in such a short time. However, Zlata assured Miriam that they would all try their best, mainly relying on the resourcefulness of Mojca, the firm's business secretary, to find a way of flying to Nevis as soon as possible. They would also prepare the money needed by the family, which they could, if necessary, transfer even before the departure to Nevis.

Miriam wished to know whether Zlata thought she had done the right thing, not having told Tony's mother about the accident. Zlata agreed that Tony's mother shouldn't be involved at that point and assured Miriam that no news about the accident had so far reached Slovenia, which meant that Tony's mother couldn't hear about it from any other source.

In the same way that Zlata comforted her friend, Miriam later tried to comfort her mother. During their telephone conversation Miriam understood that her mother was very upset because of the accident that had happened to her son-in law, with whom she had always been on very good terms. She told Miriam she hadn't been able to sleep the night before. Miriam

had to comfort her by saying: “Do calm down, mother. The rescuers will find Tony. A lot of people are looking for him and from today onwards a group of specially trained soldiers are involved in the rescue operation. They use machetes and can advance very fast through the jungle.”

“But what do you think has happened to him?” asked Miriam’s mother.

“I think that he has perhaps broken his leg and can’t walk, so he has to wait for the rescuers to find him and bring him back. Or, maybe he has lost his glasses and is making progress very slowly.”

“Could it be that somebody attacked him and robbed him?”

“I don’t think so, there is almost no crime on Nevis. There are neither wild animals nor poisonous snake here. In addition, the nights are never so cold that he couldn’t survive them.”

When somebody has an accident, even a fatal one, the local newspapers report on it briefly, but after that life goes on and people are no longer interested in the consequences of the tragedy. However, in the event that an accident remains unresolved for a time, during which the tension caused by the uncertainty is increasing, the whole affair will attract a lot of media attention. That also happened with Tony’s accident. The news about the missing tourist spread from Nevis and St. Kitts to other Caribbean islands and soon also reached the international media. More and more, Miriam felt its presence, as the reporters began to phone and visit her. That day at noon she gave her first extensive interview to a reporter, Paula Warner, who was asking Miriam about her family, about Tony’s capabilities and habits, about his behaviour at the time of his departure and about the feelings of the rest of the family while waiting for Tony to return.

While Miriam was speaking into the microphone the children were playing by the swimming pool, this time under the supervision of the hotel manager herself, Kathie Johnson. Naturally, Toni and Mariansa were missing their father, but, as children’s hearts fortunately can’t be overwhelmed with sadness and concern for a long a long time, they were also laughing a lot and enjoying themselves. By then, they had already acquired new skills: Toni had learned to dive and swim underwater and Mariansa was well on the way to begin swimming without the help of water wings.

When, after breakfast that morning, they had set off from their bungalow towards the swimming pool, Miriam again had to answer the children’s usual questions: “When will daddy come back? Will the rescuers find him soon?”

“I think they will bring him back today or tomorrow,” Miriam tried to calm them.

“But if they don’t, then you will be a widow ...,” Mariansa concluded frankly. Miriam felt as if somebody had slapped her in the face.

In Slovenia, Tony’s colleagues and friends were organising themselves so that they could help him and his family. Niko called on Zlata and Dejan, and together they decided that the two men should travel to America together, even though it meant that, at home, Zlata’s work load would be doubled: apart from her job and a lot of organising, she would also have to look after her two daughters. During that weekend Niko also had to get permission to take this

sudden leave from work, where his colleagues would miss his daily contributions to the work effort.

Dejan looked for possible flights by searching the Internet. He found it quite easy to reserve the flights on the Web, but the problems appeared when he wanted to finalise all the details of the journey. He realised that he couldn't do that without the help of a "classical" travel agency. For this he needed Mojca, the business secretary, who had a reliable colleague working at the Kompas travel agency. Mojca also got in touch with her various other contacts to collect information about all the necessary actions – the most urgent one was to find the right people at the Slovenian Foreign Ministry who had to be informed about the accident. Unfortunately, that wasn't possible until Monday morning.

Though the coordinator, Newton, was formally in charge of the rescue operation and several police officials were involved in its organisation, Mr Nolan, the head of the security service in Nisbet, was really the key figure in the search for the missing tourist. He was entrusted with this position because of his long years of professional experience in Canada. He regularly briefed his two employers, Don and Kathie Johnson, about all the important details of the operation, and, if time permitted, he also briefed Miriam. Being aware of the importance of the statement that Winnefred Herbert had given with so much certainty, Nolan called on Miriam to discuss further details with her. Nolan believed that the foreigner that Winny talked to couldn't have been anybody else but the missing guest Tomažič.

Nolan told Miriam about the tourist that Winny had met and asked more questions about Tony's health: Was he completely healthy? Did he have a tendency to suffer from an infarct? Would he withstand a sudden cooling of his body in case he decided, while being still hot with the exertion, to have a refreshing swim after an exhausting daylong trip? Because of the negative results of the most recent search around Westbury, Nolan focused his attention mainly on the area leading down towards the beach. In spite of that, the coordination committee didn't entirely give up the search around the central mountain – that day they were especially active in that area because of the increased number of rescuers.

Miriam almost envied Nolan for being able to spend some time out there in the search areas. She told him about her feelings and asked if she could help with the search operation. Nolan tactfully refused her, explaining there were plenty of locals who knew the area well and were prepared to help the rescuers. He thought that the best Miriam could do was to look after the children and maintain contacts with Slovenia, which were just then becoming increasingly intense.

In order to do something concrete, Miriam turned to Kathie again so that they could try out Zlata's suggestion to seek help from the dowzers. Kathie told her that she had already got in touch with the lady dowser in New York who was most likely to help them because she had, in the past, successfully helped in several similar cases. Kathie also told Miriam it had already been agreed that, for a small fee, the clairvoyant from New York would try to find Tony's location on the map of the island and, most importantly, assess whether he was still alive. This is why Kathie had faxed a map of Nevis to New York.

The news about the involvement of the dowzers was a topic of conversation over dinner, at which calm Judy had joined Miriam. Like Miriam and Judy, every other rational and well-educated person would have been sceptical about the possibility that somebody could find out (guess), from such a distance and only by using a small swinging object, the location of a

missing person. However, a spark of hope, spurred by the New York news, was so strong and refreshing that for the first time Miriam could sleep well – and the sleep brought her wonderful dreams about a reunion of her family ...

## **Thanksgiving:**

I thank to the numerous employees and volunteers who were looking for me, specially to the Disaster Preparedness co-ordinator Mr. Llewellyn F. A. Newton, soldiers from St.Kitts, policemen from Nevis, Canadian ship crew, pilot Steve Gray and his crew of the Caribbean Helicopters, Antigua, all of the Nisbet Plantation Beach Club staff with Cathie & Don Johnson for the true involvement, care and help to my family, specially to the chief of security Mr. Nolan, assistant director Mr. Leon and Mr. Steve, head of the anti-drugs service Mr. Austin with his team, the Catholic, Methodist and Anglican priests for their prayers, services and consolation, to dr. Singh and the wonderful staff of the Alexandra Hospital in Charlestown, to Judy Sonnenberg and Nikka von Liemandt (with her family) for helping my wife and the kids.

## About

This ebook may be freely distributed. Feel free to distribute this ebook from your website, use it as a gift to gain new subscribers or even include it as a bonus with any products you may be selling.

If you want to read the rest of the story (Part Two), you will be able to purchase the complete book for the price of \$8. I shall let you know when it is ready.

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The Tomazic Family



The Author at the beach in Nevis



«Our House» in Nisbet



Don and Kathie Johnson as the Hoteliers of the year 2002



Mr. Nolan



Nevis Peak in clouds

**MISSING PERSON**



**REWARD**

**E.C \$10,000 REWARD FOR INFORMATION  
LEADING TO FINDING MR. ANTON TOMAZIC.  
WHO'S PICTURE IS SHOWN ABOVE.  
PERSONS WITH ANY INFORMATION PLEASE  
CALL THE NEAREST POLICE STATION OR 911.**

Reward leaflet that was distributed in Nevis

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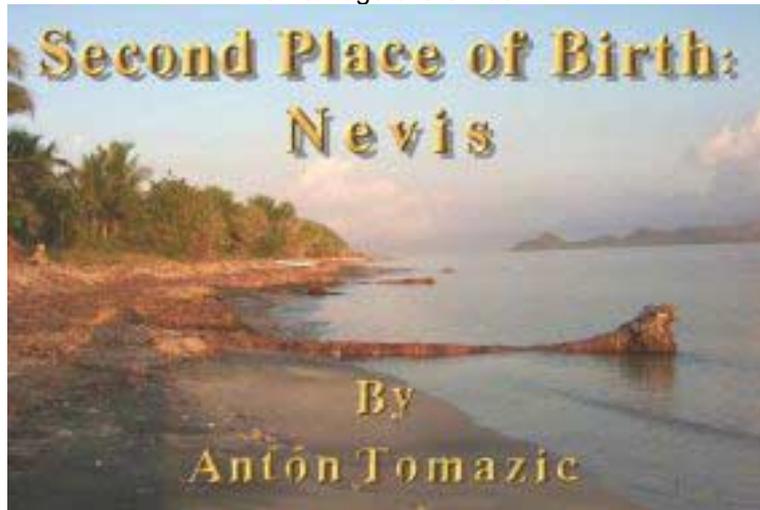
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