

OFFSHORE ISLANDS

John Francis Kinsella

BANKSTERBOOKS

LONDON - PARIS - BERLIN

Copyright © 2018 John Francis Kinsella
all rights reserved

Published by Banksterbooks
Cover designed by Banksterbooks

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return to your favourite ebook retailer and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the work of the author.

johnfranciskinsella@gmail.com
<http://johnfranciskinsella.blogspot.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/john.f.kinsella>

For Tilla, Selma, Eléonore, Noé, Xaver, Elyias, Adèle, Camille and Antoine

Money is a singular thing. It ranks with love as man's greatest source of joy. And with death as his greatest source of anxiety. Over all history it has oppressed nearly all people in one of two ways: either it has been abundant and very unreliable, or reliable and very scarce.

John Kenneth Galbraith

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

Chapter 1 Habana

Chapter 2 Sonnen Reisen

Chapter 3 Siempre Rebeldes

Chapter 4 Santiago de Cuba

Chapter 5 A Side Trip

Chapter 6 The Cayman Islands

Chapter 7 Limerick Ireland

Chapter 8 A Caribbean Cruise

Chapter 9 Pat Kennedy

Chapter 10 Free Money

Chapter 11 David Castlemain

Chapter 12 An Interview

Chapter 13 Ciudad Cayo Saetia

Chapter 14 Women and Fast Cars

Chapter 15 A Passport to Ireland

Chapter 16 Kavanagh

Chapter 17 Castlemain in Cuba

Chapter 18 Castlemain's Dream

Chapter 19 On the Run Again

Chapter 20 At Castlemain's Request

Chapter 21 The Money Rolls In

Chapter 22 A different Vision

Chapter 23 The New Economy

Chapter 24 Ciscap Limited

Chapter 25 Another Start-Up

Chapter 26 The Bottens Handelsbank

Chapter 27 Ivan Pavlov Garcia

Chapter 28 Eriksson

Chapter 29 Les Marchands de Biens

Chapter 30 A Cargo

[Chapter 31 A Voyage of Discovery](#)
[Chapter 32 Timeshare](#)
[Chapter 33 Guadeloupe](#)
[Chapter 34 A Place in the Sun](#)
[Chapter 35 Amadis](#)
[Chapter 36 An Architect](#)
[Chapter 37 Hubert's Real Estate](#)
[Chapter 38 A Cuban Brewer](#)
[Chapter 39 Cuban Sugar](#)
[Chapter 40 Playa Esmeralda](#)
[Chapter 41 A Barter Deal](#)
[Chapter 42 Partagas](#)
[Chapter 43 A Pick-up in Antigua](#)
[Chapter 44 Back in Cuba](#)
[Chapter 45 A Visit to Paris](#)
[Chapter 46 Ortega](#)
[Chapter 47 Bad Money](#)
[Chapter 48 Crime & Corruption](#)
[Chapter 49 The Laundry Business](#)
[Chapter 50 A Finnish Sauna](#)
[Chapter 51 Miami](#)
[Chapter 52 Baranquilla](#)
[Chapter 53 Cartagena de Indias](#)
[Chapter 54 In the Jungle](#)
[Chapter 55 A Long Journey](#)
[Chapter 56 Brel](#)
[Chapter 57 The Red Arrow](#)
[Chapter 58 The Sally Anne](#)
[Chapter 59 Tallinn](#)
[Chapter 60 A Catalan](#)
[Chapter 61 Two Friends](#)
[Chapter 62 Back in Civilisation](#)
[Chapter 63 Johansson](#)
[Chapter 64 The Promoters Meeting](#)
[Chapter 65 A Happy Interlude](#)
[Chapter 66 Le Pays Basque](#)

[Chapter 67 Thalasso](#)
[Chapter 68 Bowled Over](#)
[Chapter 69 Eriksson's Sideline](#)
[Chapter 70 Saint Petersburg](#)
[Chapter 71 Riga](#)
[Chapter 72 Yaroslav](#)
[Chapter 73 Moscow](#)
[Chapter 74 A Visit to Tampico](#)
[Chapter 75 A South Sea Bubble](#)
[Chapter 76 A Little Investigation](#)
[Chapter 77 A Mafiosa in the Sun](#)
[Chapter 78 The Plot](#)
[Chapter 79 A Storm Breaks](#)
[Chapter 80 Fraud](#)
[Chapter 81 A Balsero](#)
[Chapter 82 The Roccade](#)
[Chapter 83 A Tourist](#)
[Chapter 84 A Visit to Mountjoy](#)
[Chapter 85 Sheremetyevo Moscow](#)
[Chapter 86 Back in the Caymans](#)
[Chapter 87 Five Years B&B](#)
[Chapter 88 Home](#)
[Chapter 89 Cayo Cinco Balas](#)
[POSTSCRIPT](#)

PROLOGUE

Islands, whether they are separated from the world at large by seas, mountains or deserts, have never ceased to impose their geographical limits on those who live on them. Those, whose aspirations exceed the limits imposed by their islands, have always been pushed to fulfil their dreams and hopes in lands beyond their shores.

This is a story that tells of the ambitions of men, both great and

small, seeking to realise their brief dreams by whatever means fortune had given them.

Economic forces, driven by a market frenzy caused by the explosion of the Internet and information technologies, created phenomenal gains in virtual money. At the same time inconceivable sums of money derived from crime and drugs were generated by criminal organisations, and then processed and legalised through the world's banking and financial institutions.

For those who controlled that vast flood of money, virtual reality was never so real, close to dreams of empires and palaces on far away beaches, where the winners could profit from their gains, virtual or real, but in any case ephemeral.

Chapter 1. Habana

Depending on how one looked at it, it may or may not have been a good augur. For John Ennis it was nothing more than an amusing anecdote that the baggage porter told to each new arrival. Their rooms were located on the sixth floor, the whole of which they were told had been rented year round by Al Capone at the height of his infamous career. Capone had been just one of the many figures of organised crime of his time who had been drawn to Cuba by the lawlessness that then reigned.

That period was known as Cuba's age of decadence. It was presided by Fulgencia Batista. Until his election in 1940, as President of Cuba, he had been an important figure in Cuban politics behind a series of puppet presidents. He stepped down four years later, then, after a period in Florida, he returned to Cuba, where he was again elected as president in 1952 and 54, presiding over a brutally oppressive regime. After provoking the Castro revolt, Batista fled the island to the Dominican Republic December 31, 1958. The following day Castro took over Cuba.

Mobsters such as 'Lucky' Luciano and his partner the Jewish godfather, Meyer Lansky were also amongst the Mafiosi who had

controlled hotels and casinos in Havana, and what was to become, half a century, later the modern tourist resort of Varedero.

Batista and Lansky were said to have been so close that they were almost like brothers. In 1953, Batista appointed Lansky as his personal advisor on gambling reform. The American gangster then proceeded to transform Havana into a tropical Las Vegas.

The reign of corruption, gambling and prostitution ended with the flight of Batista and the arrival of the young revolutionary Fidel Castro. Castro installed forty years of fruitless revolution that bled dry a country that was already in a calamitous situation.

With the new millennium, impoverished and in a state of advanced decay, Cuba was ready for the next infernal swing of fortune's pendulum. From the nearby mainland and islands, patiently watching and salivating, a new deadlier version of organised crime prepared itself for the feast, aided and abetted by the international banking system equipped with the most modern technology and condoned by serious government.

The Hotel Sevilla was a splendid edifice built in 1908, near the historical centre of Old Havana, just off the Prado. John Ennis browsed through the hotel brochure as he sat on the toilet; it described the recently renovated hotel in grand style. He had to agree, both from the external appearance and that of the spacious lobby with its elegant Spanish colonial style furnishings, where fine classic blue and yellow ceramic floor tiles brilliantly reflected the light cast by the crystal chandeliers. It was certainly grand, although his initial encounter with the plumbing seemed to indicate that it was not only the architecture that was turn of the century Moorish style.

Their Air France flight from Paris had been uneventful. On arrival they had been met by a smiling Havanatour representative, who had them transferred efficiently to their hotel in a modern air-conditioned taxi.

He together with Paul Carvin formed a team of no-longer very young freelance journalists, who, with nothing better on hand, had accepted a reportage for the Banque de Credit National, a leading Parisian bank, to garner the pages of its quarterly magazine. John

Ennis handled the journalistic content and Paul Carvin the photography. They had worked as a team for more years than they cared to remember, scrambling from one story to another with a light to cynical vein to their reports, which had won them a modest reputation.

They were delighted, two weeks all paid in advance in the Caribbean sun, after a bitterly cold Parisian winter and a miserably damp start to the spring, it could not have been more welcome. Business had not been exactly booming since the end of the last Middle East war and the Indonesian elections. They had no desire to get involved in another war zone - much too dangerous. They preferred good hotels and bars, and specialised in crisis development or redevelopment after the crisis. The shooting part was for heroes and they had no desire to be the subject of a first page tribute to a bloody and quickly forgotten end.

They had two objectives in Cuba, first and most important, as it paid the bills, was a glossy reportage for the bank's magazine, the BCN Quarterly Review, published for its well heeled gold and platinum credit card holders, seeking adventure in the comfort of five star hotels, cocktails and cigars. Then, secondly, there was the somewhat remote possibility of a pre-crisis story on the imminent downfall of the Castrist Revolution.

A couple of days collecting information from the Agence France Press and Reuters databases in Paris had given them a good starting point. They had heard all the usual stories of an exotic Cuba that had become a fashionable destination not only for tourists, but also writers and political observers as the end of Castro's reign inevitably approached. Fashionable it was. Its music, cocktails, cigars, sunshine and easy sex. What was behind all that? What had become of the revolution and its heroes? Was there something brooding behind the Wim Wenders smiling images of indestructible old men, improvising their wonderful Afro-Cuban rhythms in the smooth style of the Buena Vista Social Club? That would really be of interest to the national and international press. Maybe there was a good story to be told!

Of course the Cuban community of Miami, the gusanos, or worms

as Castro liked to call them, was informed daily of every event of political or economic consequence that occurred back home in Cuba, the smallest or even most secret piece of information filtered out, in spite of the fact that practically all overseas contacts and communications had been virtually impossible for ordinary Cubans.

Regular and detailed information on the political situation reached Miami via the privileged overseas Cubans, who travelled without restriction regularly to and from the island, or, from the tragic boat-people known as balseros, defectors from the revolutionaries paradise, who came from every level of Cuban society, groups of individuals and families, risking their lives in make-shift boats and rafts trying to reach the promised land of the mighty dollar.

Paul was French and liked to add the qualification 'Pied-noir'. His family had been French immigrants or colonists who after generations in Algeria had been forced to quit after that country's independence, first to Morocco and then finally back to France, a country he knew little about when he arrived at the age of eleven years. He spoke not only French, but also fluent Spanish, which had been one of the imported languages of Europe's North African colonies.

John Ennis, a journalist, had long accepted Paris as his base from where he led a nomadic life, the bane of his profession. He was a Dubliner who had learnt to appreciate France and call it his home.

Although both men were professionals with long careers behind them, travelling to almost every corner of the world where news was in the making, they had never made the kind of noteworthy scoop required to bring them into the big league of star reporters. They were part of the innumerable faceless men and women who made their precarious living filling the pages of the myriads of newspapers and magazine that lined the shelves of news-stands in shops, stations and airports around the world.

In short, except for a miracle - which was not about to happen - they were not candidates for a Pulitzer, or any other prize for that matter. Life had become for them an endless search for new experiences, new horizons, and an incessant paper chase, which no longer had any real sense, another country, another hotel, another bar, and another

story.

Before leaving Paris, they had set out a rough plan for their trip, which consisted of visiting typical tourist sites and resorts, restaurants and bars, not forgetting sampling the country's celebrated cigars or listening to its music.

As Ennis showered, he remembered the rocambolesque adventures of Jim Wormold, the vacuum cleaner salesman in Graham Green's 'Our Man in Havana'. The story had started in the very same hotel, named the Biltmore-Seville, where Wormold met the spy Hawthorne in room 501. Cuba had been the inspiration of more than one strange story, both in the past and the present.

The water temperature was uneven and as he attempted to adjust it, struggling with the worn mixer, he heard phone ringing.

Fuck! he thought, it's Paul, who was in the next room, 619. He's probably got his fuckin camera in his hand and ready to go.

"Oiga!"

"Amigo, you're ready!"

"I've just got in the *putain* shower!"

Paul laughed. "Bon, in two minutes, I'll knock at your door."

Paul never missed the least occasion to record on film for posterity an unforgettable place or face. Photography was not just a job for him, it was a passion, which came before almost all other things, except as he insisted – friendship - and even that had to wait from time to time.

They studied the city map in the vast cool lobby, where they admired from a distance the patio bar with its fountain, resisting the temptation of a quick drink before leaving the hotel. Once out of the hotel they turned right and following the map headed in the direction of the cathedral.

In other circumstances Paul Carvin could have been confused with a member of an expedition, about to embark on a voyage of discovery, dressed in khaki and wearing safari boots. The worn tunic, which fitted snugly over his ample torso, was covered with pockets that bulged and bristled with all the accessories of a photographer, it was a uniform chosen to inform the casual observer that he was dealing with a professional.

Having left the hotel block, the two reporters were surprised by the crumbling decay of what had been once elegant buildings, which at first glance looked picturesque. In the streets, ancient, but gaily painted American cars gracefully glided past, rolling unevenly over a maze of potholes, they were no less than wrecks, which by some miracle were still in running order.

Smiling black girls dressed in fluorescent Lycra shorts and body suits passed by, their ample backsides swayed as they walked on ungainly platform shoes. Most of the locals seemed to be particularly relaxed, some tending to the repair of their cars, others lounging in their doorways watching the world go by. They were much poorer, and considerably less European than the two newly arrived visitors would have expected.

It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon in Havana and in Europe 10 o'clock in the evening.

Chapter 2. Sonnen Reisen

At that same moment, John Ryan was checking into the Sheraton Hotel at Frankfurt International Airport. He hauled a regulation size carry-on bag on wheels. He paid cash in advance, mumbling that he had misplaced his credit card. The stiff blonde receptionist checked his passport and gave him a cold once over as he signed the registration card. He shrugged and decided not to waste his breath on any unlikely explanations. He knew only too well that it was unusual for international travellers not to use plastic in that class of hotel, but Frankfurt he reasoned was accustomed to strange travellers. It would have been unwise to use one of the several cards contained in an inside flap of his wallet.

The next morning he took breakfast early, checked out and headed across the foot bridge into the passenger terminal. After a seemingly endless series of check-in zones and shopping areas he found the desk he was looking for.

‘Sonnen Reisen’, Sun Travels, an airport travel agent specialised in

cheap last minute flights for tourists not particularly concerned about their holiday destination. There was no crowd; the Easter holiday rush was another few days away. He stood in line behind the only two other travellers, a couple of young back-packers who were discussing a flight to India with the sales girl. His eyes ran down the list of destinations available that day, hand written in large black letters with a marker pen on a white plastic notice board.

Singapore...no, that reminded him too much of the Barings scandal, Mike Leeson had ended up with a three or four year trip to Changi Prison. New York...not that either, the Yanks had put a lot of money into 'Swap'. Mexico...didn't sound bad, he mused thinking of Mariachis, on second thoughts he remembered having heard stories about it being dangerous for tourists and foreigners.

Cuba...hmm, he vaguely recalled being told that it had a certain run down charm from Tony Arrowsmith back in Dublin, a business friend, more of an acquaintance. He mentally rephrased 'friend' in the conditional, at least he had been a friend. Arrowsmith was involved in the hotel business in the Caribbean. Kavanagh recalled him talking of beaches, cigars, rum and exotic women, but also and not least he had mentioned it as being not far from those very useful offshore banking havens.

"Cuba?" he said aloud without thinking.

"Ya! It is possible," replied the sales girl with an encouraging smile, "One thousand two hundred marks for the round trip - ten days, with two nights and breakfast included in Santiago de Cuba."

"Sounds good," he replied without consciously distinguishing the difference between Havana and Santiago de Cuba. After all why not, he thought to himself, it can't be more than just a hop from there to meet Martin Wender in person.

"You'll need a tourist card."

"A tourist card!" he replied snapping out of his reverie.

"Don't worry, you can get it on arrival, a few dollars will see to everything."

"What passport do you have?"

"Irish."

"No problem. It's a Lufthansa charter flight with Condor, leaving at

11.30 from terminal B, check-in starts in half-an-hour. You'll take it?"

"Okay," he nodded thinking it's as good as anything I'll find today.

She made out the ticket and hotel voucher, then Kavanagh paid in cash and headed towards terminal B to the check-in.

As he tried to decipher the signs to his boarding gate, he suddenly had a misgiving, remembering Arrowsmith's link with Cuba. He was involved in a tourist complex called the 'Cayo' something, near a place called Holguin, or a name like that, financed by the BCN with Castlemain, perhaps that could make a problem he thought. I'll just have to keep my wits about me, whatever happens I'd better avoid that place, wherever it is - just in case.

Chapter 3. Siempre Rebeldes

Cuba was in a strange state of limbo. From appearances, a casual observer could not be blamed for thinking that the country looked as though it had just emerged from a ruinous period of war and privation.

The enigmatic revolutionary, *El Lider Maximo*, had brought his country to economic collapse and disaster. He was no hero, just another idealist who had backed the wrong horse. He was not the only one to have believed in revolution, equality, communism and the Soviets and he was not the only one to suffer its consequences.

He was born a wealthy sugar plantation owner's son. At first he became a lawyer and then a revolutionary, overthrowing the corrupt, but typical Latin American dictatorship of the fifties.

Fidel Castro had not been a communist when he arrived in Havana in January 1959 as a young barbudo hot on the heels of the ousted Batista regime, and perhaps he had never been a communist; that would remain a question for future political analysts and historians. As events developed in those early years, Castro had certainly imagined that he could manipulate the Soviets against the Yankees. However, Moscow saw Cuba at best as a symbol of revolutionary

communist fervour and in the worse case merely a Cold War pawn in their struggle with the West.

In any case Castro was drawn into the East-West confrontation where he had little or no control of the events that were to result in the Missile Crisis. He became the target of the Kennedy administration's wrath and that of successive presidents of the USA. Castro was seen as the prime menace to the regimes dominated by the United States in the war against communism in Central and Latin America, where Castro's lieutenant, the charismatic Che Guevara, fomented trouble and idealistic revolutionary struggle.

With the development of ties to Moscow and the American embargo, Cuba became totally reliant on the Soviet block for the export of its primary product, sugar, as well as its imports of oil, industrial plant, manufactured goods, services, technology and just about everything else.

With the collapse of communism the consequences for Cuba were in many ways no different to that of the other Soviet satellites, but in certain ways were worst as a result of the continued survival of *El Lider Maximo*. There was no way Castro could be forgiven for the lese majesty and the perceived treachery to the USA. Cuba had a choice, either get rid of Castro or rot in its cane fields, before any change of policy could come about.

The USA, it seems, did not hold a permanent grudge against the Cuban people for whom it offered asylum to those who braved the waves of the Atlantic to reach Florida, across the 150 kilometres of sea that separated Key West from the north coast of Cuba. The result was a thriving community of six hundred thousand Cubans in the USA mainly living in Southern Florida.

By 2000 Cuba had become dependant on the yearly one billion dollars of transmittals from its expatriates in Florida, twenty times as much as it earned from the export of its celebrated cigars, the import of which was forbidden in the USA.

Their other industry was tourism, which counted on two million visitors for the year 2000. The tourists were in preference parked in golden ghettos with sun, sand and mojitos. Contacts between Cubans and tourists were kept to a strict minimum.

It was a long way from the revolutionary rhetoric of Che Guevara, who at the end of the twentieth century had become a legend, on a par with John Lennon - twenty dollar Tee shirt heroes. Whilst Fidel Castro, sporting his beer belly, had become an ageing tyrant with Parkinson's or Alzheimer's lurking in the background, ready to take over at an opportune moment.

His succession would be left to a struggle between second class socialist minded politicians, doubtful Miami capitalists or the Mafiya, ready to divide the carcass of the people's revolution with the other vultures that would be present at the meagre feast.

Che had the good fortune to die a hero, he was still adored by Cubans and many others, sacrificed at the symbolic age of 33 by Imperiums Americana, worshipped as a people's hero, a modern Christ.

Castro's greatest risk would be going the way of Ceausescu, if by chance a wild spark carried by the wind inflamed the Cuban people, weary of his oppressive regime and their continued privation.

Chapter 4. Santiago de Cuba

At first they gave the 'Bodeguita del Medio', a bar famous for its celebrated literary and intellectual patrons such as Hemingway, a cursory glance, it merited no more than that, now a mere tourist trap according to the guide book. Then on second thoughts curiosity got the better of them and they decided a quick look and a Daiquiri would do no harm. Once installed in the bar Paul could not resist the temptation of fixing the scene on film with a couple of furtive camera shots.

An hour later they arrived in the Plaza del Cathedral. It was still light but hot and either the Daiquiris or the six hour time difference with Paris were beginning to have its effect. They took a table on the terrace of the nearest bar, which was situated on the corner of the square and by all appearances another tourist trap, but the sound of music had attracted them.

There was a small group of musicians ensconced on a narrow podium in the corner of the terrace; they were rendering their version of Compay Segundo's song 'Chan Chan', which for the two visitors just off the plane had the effect of instantly transforming the tourist brochure images into reality, as it had done for many others before them.

Paul lifted his hand and made a sign to the waiter and ordered "Dos mojitos!" in his vaguely Castellian accent. He beamed when his order for the popular cocktail was accepted without the slightest hesitation by the waiter, who responded with a friendly smile. It was by no means the first or last time that two pale faced Gallegos with cameras would order mojitos. What was of more importance to the waiter was the necessity to encourage a good tip in dollars from the freshly arrived tourists.

The mojitos arrived, cocktails of rum, in preference Havana Club, freshly pressed lime juice, a spoon of sugar and a sprig of fresh mint topped up by sparkling water in a tall glass. They quickly down the drinks and ordered two more whilst listening to the music, which only fuelled their ardour to further explore Old Habana before dinner.

It was merely a foretaste to them of what was to come, though it was not in a tourist bar, however good, they would find the authentic Cuban atmosphere of the legendary Trovas. They set off in the direction of Plaza Vieja following an itinerary indicated in their guide book. That would be enough to give them an idea of the attractions of Old Havana before commencing some serious exploration the following day.

Ryan disembarked from the Condor flight and followed the crowd into the terminal building. On the roof of the building the sign read 'Aeropuerta de Santiago de Cuba'. He joined one of the lines, the longest, which was forming before the passport control booths. A little observation would be useful before he confronted the official. At a first glance it looked rather similar to that he had seen on a trip to Moscow.

He began to vaguely understand that perhaps this was not Havana. He had been seated next to an elderly German couple who spoke

little or no English, which had limited any exchange to polite smiles. After the flight had left Frankfurt he had eaten the plastic meal and had immediately fallen asleep, relieved after the built-up stress of the previous forty eight hours.

As the line slowly advanced, he tried to observe the procedure at the booths from where he stood without being too obviously curious. After ten or fifteen minutes he had almost reached the yellow line. A young couple was having difficulties. A disembodied hand appeared from the window of the passport control booth indicating to them they should return to the line.

They were smiling and shrugging their shoulders, signifying to those next in line to proceed to the passport control. They offered a slightly worried explanation to the others waiting in line.

Ryan strained to listen. They spoke in German and his German was almost zero. He got the words in English 'tourist card'. A feeling of anxiety started to manifest itself inside of him, he hoped the girl at Sonnen Reisen had had her facts right.

What would happen if he was put on the return flight? He tightened his grip on the handle of his carry-on bag which reminded him of another problem.

When a uniformed official appeared a few moments later and took the passports of the young couple, he spoke to them softly in an accented but clear English.

"You have no tourist card! Please follow me to the office, it will cost you fifty dollars each!"

Ryan sighed with relief. A question of dollars, he could soon fix that.

Twenty minutes later he emerged from the same office, his passport with the tourist card inside, firmly clasped in his hand. He headed past the baggage delivery point towards the exit where he anticipated the customs inspection. There was nothing, no customs control - nothing - to his very great relief.

The automatic doors slide open and he stepped into the sunshine where he was surprised by a welcome committee in the form of a line of exotic girls, dressed in feathers and high cut sequined body suits showing off some of the longest legs he had ever seen, flashing their

toothy smiles at the new arrivals. One of them handed him a brochure and he joined the other somewhat bewildered tourists who were being dispatched to their different hotels.

He felt a new chapter opening as he stepped into the minibus destination the Hotel Casa Grande.

The airport was not far from the city and as they entered the built up area he was surprised by the scene that unrolled before his eyes, it resembled that of a 1950 Humphrey Bogart film. The few cars that he saw were mostly old American models from the very same period.

The houses and buildings were seriously dilapidated Spanish-Mexican style. The people had a South American look with which he was vaguely familiar from TV news reports and films, though many of them seemed to be a lot darker skinned.

The people they passed on the streets seemed to be poor though they did not look miserable or unhappy. Their clothing was correct and clean. There seemed to be a lot of older people. He noted that the streets and pavements were remarkably clean.

The hotel was a turn of the century edifice recently renovated and operated by a French chain. At the top of the steps that led up to the lobby he saw a large terrace bar, overlooking a square, where people were seated enjoying drinks amongst potted palms.

On arriving in his room on the third floor, he opened the window overlooking the leafy gardens of the square, the heart of the colonial city. He checked the map in the tourist magazine he had found on the coffee table identifying the square as Cespedes Park, renamed Plaza de la Revolucion, to the left was the Catedral de Santa Ifigenia with its twin bell towers and Renaissance facade, opposite was the sixteenth century house of Diego Velazquez.

The late afternoon sun shone on the strollers. Here and there children ran frivolously playing their games as do children all over the world. A small collection of people listened to a group of musicians seated in the shade projected by the broad trees. Older people sat on the long stone benches that formed a low wall surrounding the square.

The scene was idyllic, peaceful and relaxed, evidently nothing of

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

