



**Lost Innocence**  
**Part One**



**'The Accused'**  
**Simon Palmer**

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Cover design by James Hollister at Pixel fox  
Photography by Bordin Vamanond  
Models: Chris Wegoda and Narmfah Fn'z

Edited by Dan O'Shea, Tracey Hale, John Daysh and Alan Hoff

Content Edit by James A. Newman  
Copy Edit by Richard Ayres and John Daysh  
Final proof read by Alasdair McLeod

Additional material and writing assistance from Alasdair McLeod, Conrad Jones, John Mathews, Stephen Leather, Mitchell Blake, Warren Olson, Greg Noonan, Barry Palmer, James A. Newman, John Daysh and Alan Hoff



## **Reviews**

I liked *Lost Innocence* so much. It showed the real importance of family and how to deal with problems in different ways. I was interested in the private life of the character Nigel and his personality as a father, grandfather and a wonderful lawyer as well.

*Lost innocence* is the kind of story that lingers in your soul, long after you put it down. Nigel did a masterful job of portraying a lawyer and investigator at the same time. This is such a thrilling story of the contemporary human heart and is portrayed so very intimately. It's a very clever concept with insightful observations and the deft hand of a skilled suspense writer.

It unfolds with so much spellbinding excitement, unceasing surprise and the riveting detail that are the hallmark of the writer, Simon Palmer.

This book is really un-put-down able. It has enthralling characters and a mesmeric plot.

### **Maritza Martez**

A fast-paced novel based on events unfolding in Bangkok, has me eagerly looking forward to Palmer's next work.

### **Warren Olson**

**Author of *Thai Private Eye***



**LOST INNOCENCE PART ONE 'THE ACCUSED'****ONE**

**I WAS** lazing on the golden sands on the south-west coast of Thailand, the blazing sun beating down on my body. The view as I gazed out over the vast expanse of the Andaman Sea was breath-taking. The subtle, salty scent of the ocean engrossed me; the serenity of the still blue waters only broken by the sound of the waves lapping against the rocks.

I reached for my bag, searched for my book and was about to begin the latest Conrad Jones crime-thriller, when my eyes met those of a struggling hawker. She was well covered up and wore an old, straw hat over a tired, bronzed face.

A sharp pang of sympathy rattled inside of me. I didn't have the heart to wave her away and found myself pointing to some fruit that I didn't really want. I dug deep for some change, paid and smiled as she handed me some sliced melon in a bag with a pointed stick. She thanked me, gathered up her wares then strolled off on her way down the beach.

I returned to my book and was surfing through the pages when it suddenly felt hot. Can we turn it down to tropical? A bead of sweat rolled down my nose, stopped then dropped onto a page. I wiped it away, squinted up at the sun and strained my eyes. A rank stench in the air then aroused my attention and looking around I couldn't tell what that was or where it was coming from.

My parched throat and desert-dried lips cried out for water. I scrambled in the sand for my bottle, but couldn't find it. I stretched down for my things - my

bag was gone and so were the melon and my book. I lay back for a moment when the back of my head brushed up against somebody's feet. I turned to apologize, but couldn't be more shocked; the beach was now packed. So many dirty, stinky, bodies, lying crammed together within so little space.

I covered my ears as a cacophony erupted in a language I didn't understand. Then the stench struck again. It was stronger than before and this time I recognized it. It smelt like human waste mixed with stale sweat, repulsive body odour and cheap cigarettes. I glanced around to see who was smoking; everybody was.

Something smooth and oily ran under my right hand. It felt like a cockroach, it was a cockroach. I shuffled back and watched it scuttling off. I thought it was gone, but then another appeared and then more. I brushed them away and what was once golden sand was now a dark, hard, filthy floor. My body started to tremble - my nerves were on edge.

I glanced up at the sky but all I could see now, was thick black smoke. I coughed uncontrollably until the smog finally cleared and several stained panels emerged with flickering strip lights. It was as if the sky had transformed into a ceiling of a filthy, neglected cell, crammed completely to capacity.

Trauma and terror possessed me as I realized I had to face this reality and deal with the torment all over again. My mind had been playing tricks on me, creating a mirage of a beach, a mirage of freedom. I was in the worst-place-in-the-world. I was in a Thai prison. I was in Hell.

Horrid memories of this living nightmare began to resurface; that first day when the cell door swung

closed; the complete helplessness of being locked up. I couldn't have been more terrified as three heavily tattooed guards with shaved heads and beer-breath had taken a hold of me, dragged me outside, held me firm and stripped me. I hadn't struggled. I'd just stood there naked; the fear of being raped had restricted any movement. I was bent over by two guards while the third parted my butt-cheeks, reached in and shoved his latex covered finger up as far as he could. I jerked forward, stifling my screams as somebody squeezed my balls, hard – it hurt. They had supposedly been checking for drugs but more likely just enjoying the sadistic infliction of pain.

A coughing fit brought me back to the present and I glanced up to see a thick blanket of smoke circling above me. Prisoners were smoking then dropping their smouldering butts between the cracks in the floor. They lay, still burning below me, smoke drifting up as I feared burning alive or suffocating from smoke. My throat felt sore and my pounding heart continued beating through every inch of my being. I needed water. I needed to get out.

I was the only foreigner or *farang* as we were known here and although we were packed in so tightly, I had never felt so alone. The heat was so oppressive and the stench was so rank, that I almost threw up - twice. A creaking noise distracted me and glancing up I saw a worn-out ceiling fan wobble as it spun round. It was hanging on by two rusty screws and looked like it could fall at any time. My sweat-dampened clothes clung to my body and the pain of lying on such a hard, wooden floor was horrendous. It was thick with dirt, covered in blood stains and other stains I couldn't identify and didn't dare to try.

Most of the others had a bed-roll to sleep on; I only had the floor.

Bugs continued to torment me; it seemed they were waiting for me to sleep or die so they could feast on my body. I fought them off but it was exhausting and futile. Some sampled my blood while others defecated, leaving foul traces of their presence. My mind began playing tricks on me; it was as though even when they weren't there, I could still feel them crawling all over me.

A man with a faded tattoo of an eagle on his chest was holding a syringe and sucking something into it. He stuck a needle into his friend's arm, drew some blood, then combining the two substances, he injected the mix back into the emaciated arm; all the while his friend gazed, sickly into space.

After several long, drawn-out hours, the yelling subsided and I noticed most of the others trying to sleep. The thick fog of smog was beginning to clear and my fear began to yield to fatigue. As I closed my eyes, images of my family calmed me and for the briefest moment I had escaped. Amidst all this chaos, the thought of them may have been the only thing keeping me from going insane. I fell asleep.

A wave of guilt crashed down and woke me as I thought about my mother. It was her rule that this being the first time I was away, I would ring her every Wednesday. With all that had happened this week, I had forgotten to phone home.

**TWO**

**LOUISE WAS SITTING** in her spacious kitchen with her hands wrapped around a hot mug of caramel coffee. An attractive woman in her fifties, she had grape-green eyes and sunset-yellow hair.

Her husband burst in, eyes darting all over the room. "I'm late and I can't find my keys."

Stan had short, bear-brown hair, Sinatra-blue eyes and a bent nose. He was of a similar age to his wife, had taken reasonably good care of himself and had retained his boyish looks and charm. "Lou darling - have you seen my keys?"

She rolled her eyes. "Try the coffee table."

He rushed out and returned moments later, jangling his keys triumphantly. He leaned over and planted a kiss on her cheek. "What ever would I do without you?"

She didn't reply.

"Is everything okay dear?"

"Michael didn't call me yesterday."

"Should he have?"

"Yes, every Wednesday. I told you that."

"He probably just forgot."

"I'm sure you're right, it's just—"

"What?" Stan asked, waiting for a chance to sneak a peek at his watch.

"It's so unlike him not to call."

"Then call him, dear. There's no harm in that."

"I did already; no answer. I hope he's okay."

"Try him again later....I really must run."

Stan waited for the approving nod from his wife then slipped out of the door.

**THREE**

**TIME STOOD** still and sweat dripped off my body as I fell in and out of consciousness; this had to be one of the longest, most uncomfortable nights of my life. I shuffled around, trying to sleep and just as I was finding some peace, a piercing bell rang loudly in my ear. The others woke; the unbearable cacophony erupted once more and seemed even louder than before. Everybody reached for their cigarettes, lit up, took a long drag then blew smoke up into the air.

Once I was done coughing my lungs out, I wiped my eyes then started to stretch. Startled by several offended bugs, dropping from my shorts, I watched, shocked as they hurried away in different directions. My head was still sore from the heat and my aching body was now suffering as much as my nerves.

It wasn't long before the cell door slowly opened and three surly guards stood at the entrance. The inmates finished their smokes, rose and packed away their things into the corner of the room. I had nothing; not even a pair of flip-flops for my feet.

We were filed out and escorted through a dark, dingy hallway until arriving at a metal doorway that had more locks than Fort Knox. It was unlocked then pulled open with a creak. We stepped single-file down some broken steps to a yard and were met with the harsh humidity of Bangkok. My feet were black from the dirt and burnt on the hot stone of the sun-scorched yard. I took a breath of foul air. It tasted of shit, smelt like rotting garbage, but it was still good to be outside.

I saw some small, metal sheds to the left, an overcrowded rubbish area to the right and at the back

were suspended troughs filling with water. I licked my lips and tried to control my raging thirst.

Following the others into a cramped dining shed, I took a metal tray and got in line. Two inmates, one with a ripped ear, the other with acne, stood behind a small table and dished out what they referred to as food. I was served a small scoop of brown rice with tiny squares of cabbage. Finding a table on its last legs, I brushed away some lively ants and sat alone. The rice smelt of burnt rubber, the cabbage was tasteless but it was food and I was famished.

After breakfast I walked over to the back of the yard, found a plastic bottle and filled it up from the trough. Warm, dirty water ran down my arm as I drank. It tasted like cat's-piss, but it was water and I was parched.

The others were stripping off, taking a bowl from a man with brown hair and beady eyes then stepping over to the troughs to wash. Following suit, I pulled off my sweaty clothes and stood naked feeling eyes on me. I tried to hide my modesty with my bottle and made my way over. 'Beady Eyes' held out his hand. I shook my head. He grunted, took a pen, scribbled something on his hand then handed me a bowl with a crack down the middle. I nudged my way in amongst the naked bodies and held my place. I reached up and scooped a bucket of water. It wasn't clear or clean and smelt like a sewer.

I was about to splash the water over myself when I felt a strange tickling sensation on my foot. I backed away and witnessed a huge, greasy black rat dashing off. I screamed, the others laughed - my wash was over before it had begun. I returned the bowl to 'Beady Eyes,' climbed back into my clothes

and stepped away from the crowd.

I came across a cracked piece of mirrored-glass glued to the wall and stopped, saddened by the image that greeted me. My eyes looked heavy and tired; the blue had faded to grey and wrinkles I hadn't had before were now stretched over my forehead. My face was filthy and my hair seemed thicker, probably from the dirt.

Wondering what we were supposed to do now, I observed the others. Some were sat on the floor playing cards, others were gambling; throwing stones against the wall, some were sleeping on the floor like strays and others stood around talking.

As the sun grew stronger, I could feel it burning the sides of my arms and jabbing at the back of my neck. The Thais were unfazed but I was concerned and searching for shade. There didn't seem to be any shade and the sheds were now locked, so I resorted to sitting on the floor with my head down; one hand fending off mosquitoes, the other protecting my skin. It wasn't long before I grew hot, hungry and lonely. I feared sunstroke, starvation and insanity.

It felt like hours until the sheds were unlocked. I stumbled in for some food and was served some watery, vegetable soup by 'Ripped Ear.' It tasted of a sickly, sour-stew and smelt like gasoline. I finished quickly to avoid the taste, stepped over to the trough and filled my broken bottle.

It wasn't long before we were summoned back inside. I followed the others to our cell and it was made clear that we should return to the exact same spot as before. I remembered roughly where I'd sat; searched for my neighbour, but couldn't find him. Everybody was now in their place but me.

I stepped over the others, looked around and finally found my guy. I knelt down, eased back into my patch of dirty floor then felt something crawling up my leg. I shook off an angry cockroach and gained the attention of an old guy with oily hair and a flat, boxer's nose. He was sitting with a lady-boy who wore heavy make-up over a masculine face. She had anorexic legs, scrawny knees and was kitted out in a short, sleazy, red dress.

"You want blow job?" 'Boxer's Nose' offered.

I shook my head as 'Scrawny Knees' lowered her eyes to my groin. 'Boxer's Nose' laughed, slipped down his shorts then pulled 'her' head down onto him. He fixed his eyes on me as 'she' sucked him. I looked away.

Another man with a bushy beard was scooping up bugs from the floor, tossing them into his mouth and then swallowing them whole. If he missed, they ran down his beard to escape. He was quick, he would catch them, follow the same routine and they'd eventually meet their fate.

A prolonged churning in my gut along with bowel movements alerted me that I had to go. This would be my first time to use 'the hole' and I wasn't looking forward to it. I rose to my feet, stepped over the others and arrived at the dirtiest, smelliest hole I'd ever seen. Bugs were everywhere. I kicked them away, they came back – I gave up. I held my nose, took another look - I couldn't go. I was about to return to my place when my bowels rumbled then roared. I turned back, slipped down my shorts and folded my body into an undignified squatting position. I balanced, closed my eyes and tried to ignore the attention I was getting from the others.

Distracted by some strange, screeching noises beneath me, I dreaded to think what it was, clenched my bowels with urgency and finally managed to evacuate them.

Concerned by the thick, runny texture of my stool, I was more disturbed by the lack of any toilet paper, but blown-away by the half-filled bucket of water placed to the left. It smelt as if a dead animal had died inside and was decomposing at the bottom - it probably was.

My legs began to shake then ache from all the squatting and I knew I had to end this episode somehow. After a slow count of three, I quickly wiped my backside with the back of my hand, dunked it in the bucket, twice, shook it dry then pulled up my shorts. I stepped over the others, slightly relieved and returned to my place.

After another long night and very little sleep, I found myself out in the yard. Breakfast had been dreadful and the bugs as restless as ever. I'd spent most of the morning brushing them away then feeling completely exhausted, I'd fallen asleep.

I was in the midst of a dream when I was awoken by someone kicking at my feet. I wiped my eyes and glanced up at a heavily tattooed man through the rays of the sun. He was stocky and had a mean-looking face with blood-shot eyes - he looked high.

I thought it best to turn away but when I did, he started screaming at me in Thai. My heart raced as another tattooed man turned up with uneven eyes, black teeth and a bent nose. He glared down at me with a hostile stare and smiled evilly as the other Thai continued to scold me.

The shouting suddenly ceased. I scanned the yard

for a guard – no guard. Unsure of what they wanted; I listened as they talked. ‘High’, then pulled down his shorts and hung his manhood inches from my face. Reaching for the back of my head, he took a firm grip and pulled me into position. I held my mouth shut tight and turned my head away. ‘Black Teeth’ made a fist and struck me hard on my head – it hurt. I reached up to protect myself and was almost crying as I waited the inevitable, too afraid to fight.

I was struck again – it stung. I turned my head to face ‘High’ and felt the tip of his manhood rub up against my lower-lip. My mouth stayed shut. I closed my eyes and braced myself – nothing happened.

I heard some Thai spoken but it wasn’t from my attackers, it was in a softer tone. I opened my eyes and saw a *farang* was now sat on the floor next to me. He pulled out a pack of cigarettes and offered it to the Thais. ‘High’ pulled up his shorts, snatched the whole pack then strolled away with ‘Black Teeth.’

The *farang* turned to me, raised his hand to my shoulder and squeezed it gently. “Are you alright?”

I sat there still shaking. “I will be.”

“Take a minute to calm down.”

I rubbed my eyes. “Thank you for saving me.”

“No problem mate. What’s your name?”

“I’m Michael.” I reached out my hand to his. He took it and shook it. “I’m John.”

He had a sympathetic, honest look about him, fair hair, deep brown eyes and a small, firm build. I guessed by the light wrinkles on his forehead and the occasional grey hair that he was in his forties.

“Where did you come from?”

“I was moved from another cell.”

“How long have you been here?”

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