

# **The Reluctant Tycoon and Other Miscreants**

**Byron Bales**

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By Byron Bales

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**The Family Business**  
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**Oriental Salt**  
**MORE Oriental Salt**  
**Oriental Salt 3**  
  
and  
**Some Called It Paradise**  
*An American Saga*

**About the Author**

Byron Bales, born in 1942, hails from St. Louis. At 15, he dropped out of school and began working a number of jobs, one as a surveillance spotter for a detective agency. He joined the Marine Corps at 17, and traveled throughout Asia with the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) in the pre-Vietnam era, and later in the Caribbean with the 5<sup>th</sup> MEB (Marine Expeditionary Brigade) during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Returning to civilian life in 1963, he continued working as an investigator, and became licensed in New York State and California, also registered his entity in the Kingdom of Thailand. He is married and retired to Southern Thailand where he writes detective

thrillers and Tales of the Inscrutable; Stories of Asia-Pacific, many detailing the Pacific War. He also continues to handle occasional assignments in Asia. He can be reached through [Author@ByronBales.com](mailto:Author@ByronBales.com)

# **The Reluctant Tycoon And Other Miscreants**

**By**

**Byron Bales**

**PROLOGUE**

**Vail, Colorado**

**If you've never studied** the skeletal system, or haven't been thumped around by a chiropractor, you probably aren't aware of how easy it is to break a person's neck. Separate the flexible C1 from the inflexible C2 vertebrae, and there you have it. Easier than Alan had imagined, despite having wrestled in high school.

He wasn't prepared for his wife's delicate neck. Snap! Just like that. And it was done. Her system shut down in less than a heartbeat, and her head drooped like putty, her body slumping down in his folded arms where she hung like a wet towel on a laundry line. Her eyes still open. In surprise, maybe.

A strange sensation, it was. He'd hurt a few guys before: a broken bone here, cuts, lumps, and bruises there, but he'd never killed anyone.

He hiked her limp body up, facing the tree, held her head high, chin first, and slammed her face and chest into the pine as hard as he could. Something else broke. Good. He laid her body at the base of a tree and then sat down, braced himself against another tree and, with both feet, kicked her rib cage near the spine with the strength of a mule.

He then wrapped her body around the base of the pine tree, and looked at her face. There were chipped-off bits of frozen bark in her hair, a few small flakes sticking to her bloody face, and her broken nose.

Not much blood. Of course not. When her vertebrae snapped, her heart had stopped—hence minimal blood. But enough.

He looked back up the ski trail. No one yet, but he needed to hurry. He tried to remove her left ski, but couldn't because of the dense snow frozen to the quick release, packed so hard it was a thick chunk of ice. Goddamn cold up here on the mountain. Add a recent light snow to that, and a skier barreling down at forty, fifty miles an hour, and yeah, sure, the booted foot was an instant ice cube. But a runaway ski would make it appear as though the impact had been so powerful that it tore her ski from the boot.

Nervously, he looked back up the trail. Thought he heard a scream of exhilaration from a skier flying down the Highline. Must hurry.

He struggled but couldn't budge the release until, finally, the catch sprang open. But the strap was still around the boot and it too was packed solid with ice.

Hurry. People were coming. Without thinking, Alan nervously kicked his own release and his ski dropped from his boot. He ripped the strap off and pushed the ski away, watched it glide down the slope between trees—before he realized that had been stupid! Virginia's left ski was still on, and one doesn't wear three skies! He'd have to take hers and that put him right back where he started—getting her goddamn strap off. He nearly panicked until the clasp finally released and her ski dropped off. He put her ski aside and then twisted Virginia's left leg back awkwardly to where it almost wrapped around the tree.

Amazing it is; just how many skiers hit trees. He thought for a moment about his brother, Alex.

There was little snow right here under the tree, but his and Virginia's tracks came right up to this point, two trails clearly delineated in the snow right to this spot.

It would appear as though she struck the tree and he'd followed, of course stopping to assist her. He needed to obliterate the tracks somewhat. Confuse things. Other ski tracks would help, and he'd stomp around in his boots, make certain there was a confusion of tracks.

Shouldn't be long before the skiers he heard would pass this way. The Highline was an expert trail, same as this cut off; Roger's Run, and despite the light snow this afternoon, not many skiers passed this trail so late in the day. He'd seen that yesterday, when he made his excuses to Virginia after lunch, came up here alone, picked the place for its desolation and vantage point. Expert skiers wanted fresh trails, not snow packed by a thousand skiers tramping the slopes down all day, and few intermediate skiers would attempt feats beyond their ability. Many of these declines dropped at forty-five degree angles, some even steeper.

He sat down next to her body. His wife of three years. Almost felt sad. Well, let's not go that far, Alan, old boy. He's hold his grief for the funeral, and he wasn't planning to stay around any longer. Others could mourn her. He looked at his wife's face. She'd wept as she needlessly confessed her indiscretion with that bastard, just cried her eyes out at the thought of Alan leaving her. She'd been...yep; here comes someone around the bend now. A man. And another skier. Yes; it was a man and a woman. They came into view, shooting around the dogleg a half mile up the trail. Excellent skiers, concentrating on the trail. Might not even see him off to the side. He jumped up and limped with one ski on, using Virginia's other ski like a crutch to push himself through deep, powdered snow, out onto the skiers trail. He waved his arms frantically, screaming wildly. Impossible to miss him.