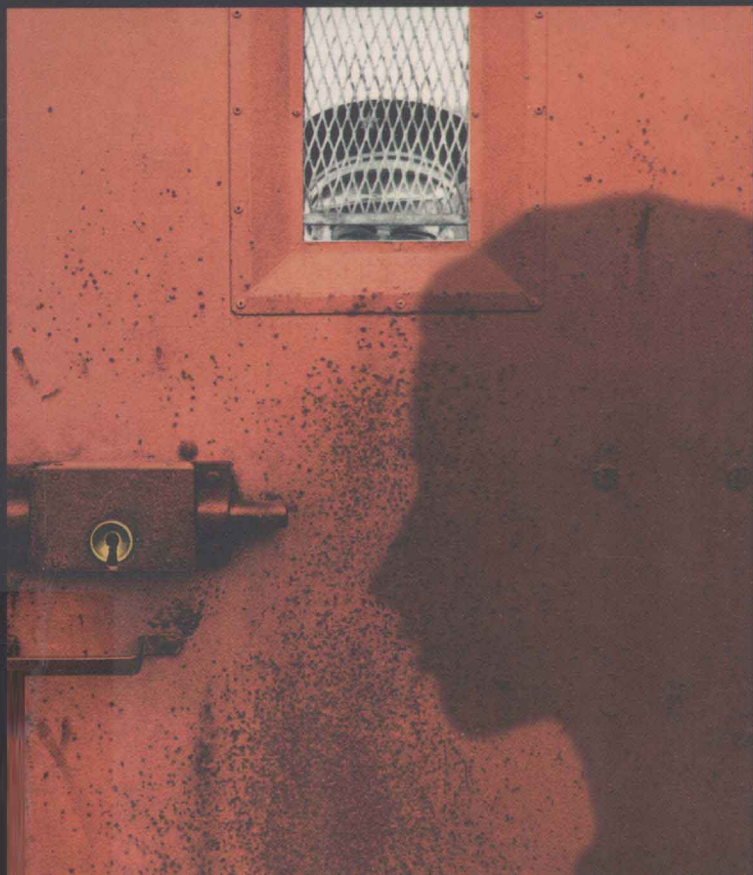


WHITE DEATH

TIM VICARY

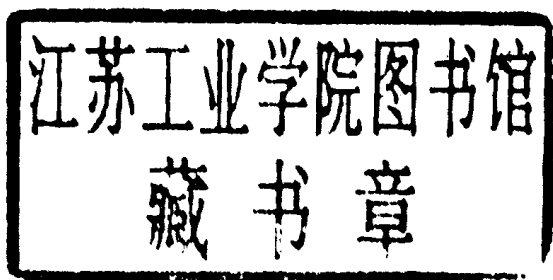


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White Death

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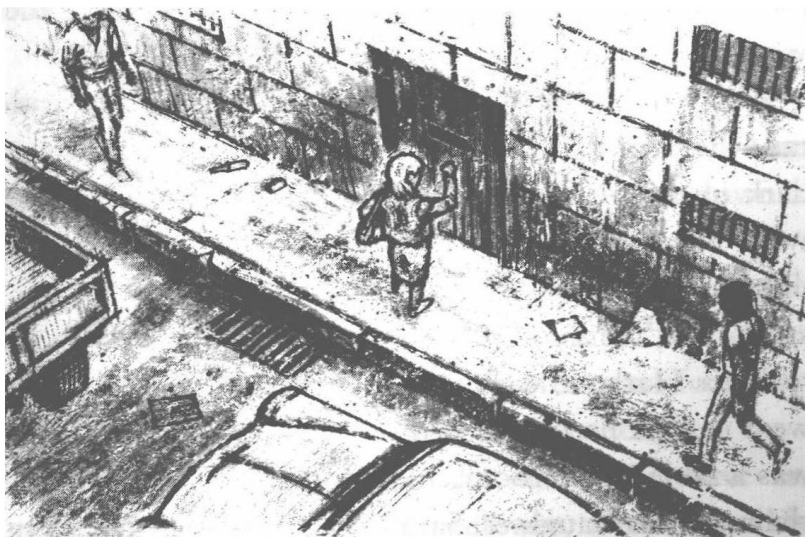
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Chapter 1

The woman stood in front of the prison. The prison was a big, dirty building in the biggest town of a hot country. The woman was very hot, and she did not like the noise from all the cars in the road. She was an Englishwoman and she did not like hot countries or a lot of noise. She was tall, about fifty years old, with blue eyes and a long face. Her face was red, and she looked tired and angry.

She knocked at the door of the prison. For a long time nothing happened. Then a little window opened in the door, and a man looked out at her.



Anna Harland knocked at the door of the prison.

‘Yes? What do you want?’

‘I want to see my daughter. It’s very important.’

‘Name?’

‘Anna Harland.’

‘Is that your name or your daughter’s name?’

‘It’s my name. My daughter’s name is Sarah Harland.’

‘You can’t visit her today. Come back on Wednesday.’

‘No! I came from England to see her today. It’s very important. She’s going to court tomorrow. Please take me to her – now!’

‘Wait a minute.’

The little window closed, but the door did not open. The woman waited in front of the door for a long time. A lot of people in the road looked at her. One or two young men laughed, but she did not move. She stood there in the hot road in front of the prison door, and waited.

After twenty minutes, the door opened. ‘Come with me,’ the man said. The woman went in with him. It was dark in the prison, and at first she could not see very well. She walked for a long time, past hundreds of doors. Then the man opened one of them.

‘In here,’ he said. ‘You can have ten minutes.’

Anna Harland walked into the room and the man went in after her. He closed the door behind him. There was a table in the room, and two chairs. On one of the chairs sat her daughter, Sarah. She was a tall girl, about nineteen years old, with big blue eyes.



Anna looked carefully at her daughter, Sarah.

‘Mother!’ she said. ‘I’m very happy to see you.’ And she got up and began to run across the room to her mother.

‘Sarah!’ Anna said, and put out her arms. But the man moved quickly and stood between them.

‘No,’ he said to Anna. ‘I’m sorry. I know you’re her mother. You can talk, but that’s all. Please sit down at the table. I am here to watch you.’

The mother and daughter sat down at the table. Anna’s hands were near Sarah’s on the table. She looked carefully at her daughter. Sarah’s dress and face were dirty. ‘She’s tired, and unhappy,’ Anna thought.

‘Sarah, what happened?’ she said. ‘We have ten minutes to talk. No more. Tell me, please, quickly. I want to help you.’



'The police stopped Hassan and me . . . They said there were drugs in my bag.'

Sarah looked at her mother. 'Oh, mother, I'm happy you're here. I wanted you to come. Mother, I . . . I didn't do it. It isn't true. Please believe me.'

'Of course I believe you, Sarah. But tell me about it. What happened? Quickly. Begin at the beginning.'

'Yes, but . . . I don't know . . . When did it begin? I don't know . . . I don't understand it.'

'Why did the police arrest you? When did they bring you to this prison?'

'Last week, I think. Yes, last week. At the airport, when we arrived . . . The police stopped us, and looked in our bags. Then . . .'

Sarah looked down at the table. 'She's crying,' Anna thought. 'She's very unhappy.'

'What happened then, Sarah?' her mother asked.

'They . . . they said there were drugs in my bag. Then they took me into a room and told me to take my dress off. They looked for more drugs, but they found nothing. Then . . . then they brought me here.'

'I see. Where were the drugs, then? Where did they find them?'

'Oh. They didn't tell you?' Sarah stopped crying. She looked up, and there was a smile on her face. But it was not a happy smile. 'The drugs were in a tube of toothpaste. A toothpaste tube with drugs in it . . . heroin . . . not toothpaste.'

'And you didn't know about it?'

'No, mother, of course not. Do you think I clean my teeth with heroin?'

Anna Harland smiled. It was difficult to smile, because she was afraid. But she smiled because she wanted to help her daughter.

'I know you don't clean your teeth with heroin. You have very good teeth, Sarah. But . . . what about Stephen? Did he know about the heroin? Did he put it in the toothpaste tube?'

'Stephen? No . . . why do you ask about Stephen, mother?'

'Well, is he in prison too? You said "us" and "our bags". Did the police arrest him too?'

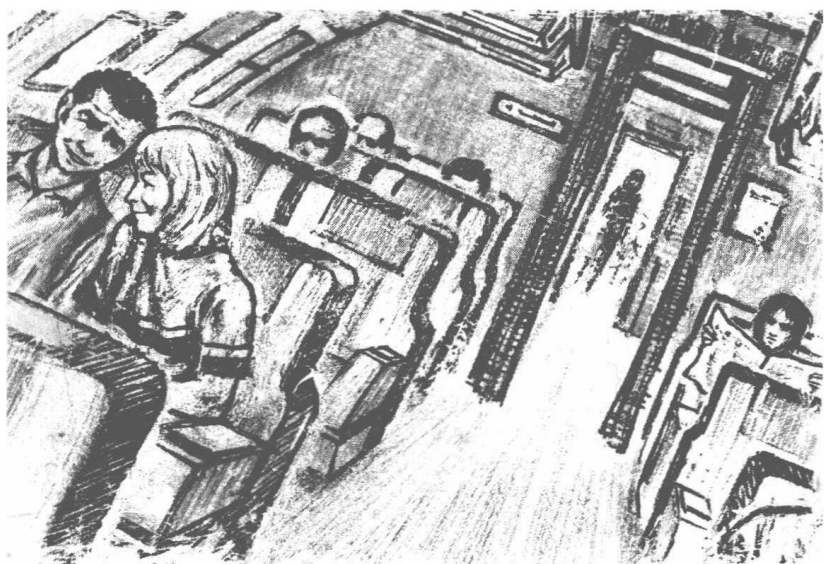
'Oh . . . no,' Sarah's face was unhappy. 'No. I wasn't with Stephen, mother. You see, Stephen and I . . . well, we aren't friends now. I left him about two months ago . . . and then I met Hassan.'

'Hassan?'

'Yes. I was with Hassan at the airport. Stephen was on the plane too – I don't know why – but he wasn't with me. It's Hassan – he was with me. Hassan's important to me now, not Stephen.'

Anna looked at her daughter. 'I see. And did the police arrest this Hassan too? Is he in prison?'

'Yes, he is. They arrested him but I can't see him. I asked them. I wanted to see him. But they said "no". Mother, I'm sure Hassan didn't know about the heroin. He's a good man . . . he didn't know, I'm sure.'



Stephen was on the plane too.

‘Then why was the heroin in your bag, Sarah?’

‘I don’t know, mother . . . I don’t know.’

The man looked at the clock in the room. ‘I’m sorry, Mrs Harland,’ he said. ‘But that’s ten minutes. It’s time to go.’

Anna Harland stood up slowly. ‘All right,’ she said. ‘But don’t be afraid, Sarah. I’m coming to the court tomorrow.’

‘Yes, mother,’ Sarah said. ‘Thank you. The police are bringing Hassan to court tomorrow too, I think. You can see him there. He’s a good man, mother, and . . . I’m sure he didn’t know about the drugs.’

‘Perhaps,’ Anna said. She walked slowly to the door, and then stood by the door and looked at her daughter

again. 'Sarah . . . you are telling me the truth, aren't you?'

Sarah began to cry again. 'Yes, mother, of course I am. I always tell you the truth, you know that.'

Anna smiled. 'Yes, Sarah,' she said quietly. 'Yes, I believe you.' She went through the door and the man went out after her.

Sarah sat quietly at the table in the room, and looked at her hands. 'Yes,' she thought. 'I told you the truth, mother. I always tell you the truth. But I didn't tell you everything . . .'

 She put her head in her hands.

Chapter 2

Anna Harland left the prison and went to talk to the police. She waited a long time in a small office, but after an hour a policeman came into the room. He was a big man, about fifty-five years old, with brown eyes and a nice smile. He moved very slowly and quietly.

'Good afternoon, Mrs Harland,' he said. 'My name is Detective Inspector Aziz. I . . . arrested your daughter three days ago. I'm very sorry for you. This is a very unhappy thing for a mother . . .'

'It's a very unhappy thing for my daughter, Inspector,' Anna said angrily. 'Because she didn't do it. She's innocent, you know. She knows nothing about those drugs.'



'My name is Inspector Aziz. I arrested your daughter.'

Detective Inspector Aziz looked at her carefully for a minute. He did not know many English women. 'She has an interesting face,' he thought. 'Very blue eyes, and a long nose. She is not afraid of me, and she is not crying. Perhaps she wants to know the truth. Perhaps she can help me, too.'

'Well, Mrs Harland,' he said slowly. 'It's difficult for me. Is your daughter telling the truth? Is she innocent? Because the drugs were in her bag, you know.'

'I know,' Anna said. 'But she was with a young man . . . Hassan. She doesn't know him very well, I think. Tell me about him, please. I want to know.'

Inspector Aziz smiled. 'All right,' he said. 'But first, tell me about your daughter. Why was she on that plane? Why did she come to this country? Tell me.'

Anna Harland looked at him. 'He's a nice man,' she thought. 'He listens to people. Perhaps he wants to help. Perhaps he can understand Sarah.'

'Do you have daughters?' she asked.

'Yes,' the Inspector answered. 'Two.'

'Then perhaps you can understand,' Anna said. 'Sarah is nineteen. She finished school last year, and she worked for six months in a hospital to get some money. Then she and her boyfriend, Stephen, visited a lot of countries. They went to Greece, Turkey, India, Australia – and now they're here. They're young, and they want to see new countries and new towns and new people. That's all.'

'I see,' the Inspector said. 'But sometimes young people do things – bad things – because they are in a different country and they need money.'

'Not Sarah,' Anna said. 'And not heroin. Sarah worked in a hospital, and she knows about heroin. She knows it can kill people. I'm a doctor, and she wants to be a doctor, too.'

'I see,' the Inspector said again. He looked at her, and thought, but he said nothing.

'Now,' Anna said. 'Tell me about this young man, Hassan.'

'All right,' the Inspector said. He took some papers from the table and began to read to her. 'But we don't know very much about him. He's a rich boy, from a good family. His father has two or three shops, I think.'

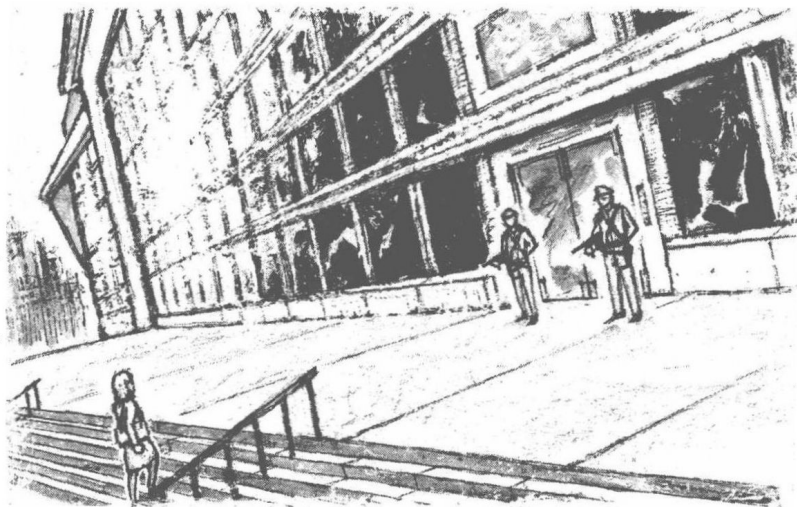
And the police in his town know him, too. Last year his father gave him a new car – a very fast car. And . . . listen to this! One day he hit a police car, and the police car went into the river! What a story! His father bought a new car for the police. His father has a lot of money.'

The Inspector smiled, but Anna looked unhappy. 'Oh dear,' she said. 'That's not very good.'

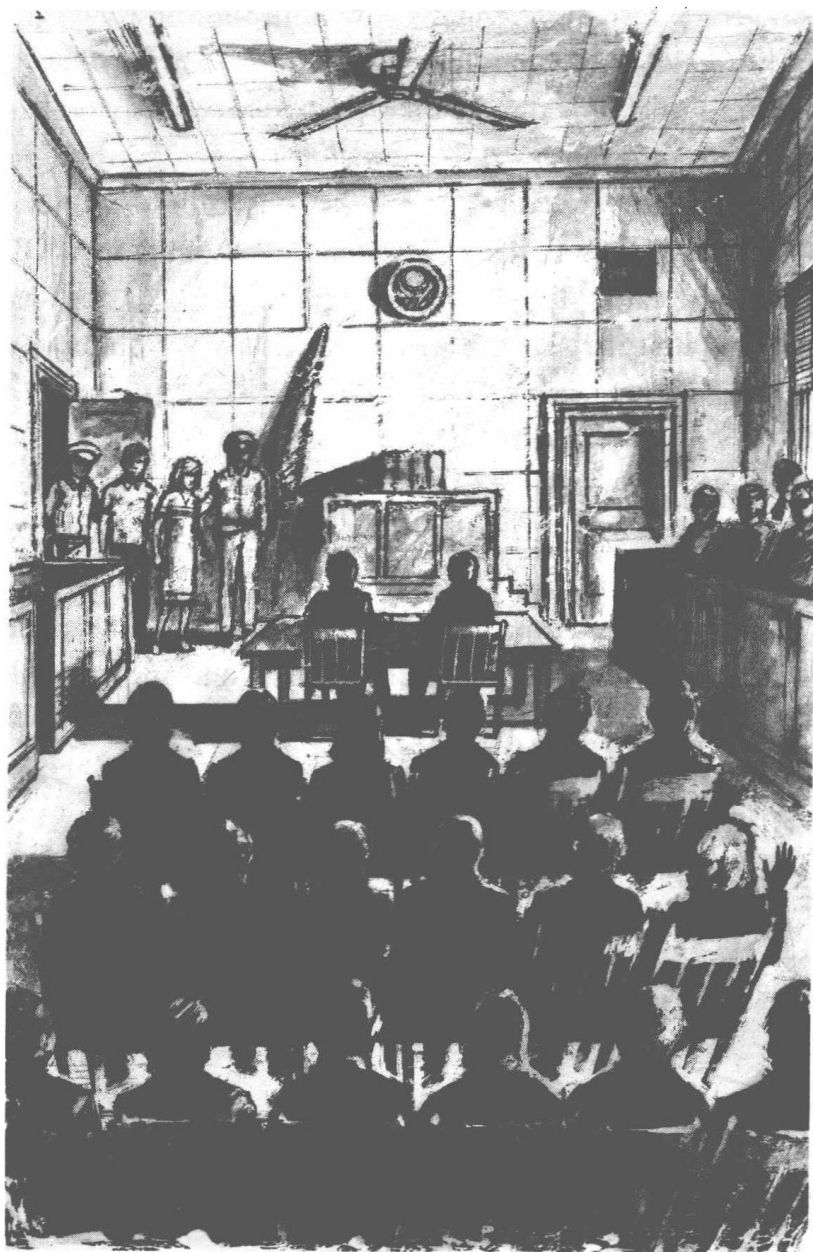
'No,' he said. 'It isn't good. But this story about the heroin is worse. Much worse. I don't like this story.'

Chapter 3

Next morning, Anna Harland went to the court. She was first there. She sat in the courtroom and waited.



Next morning, Anna Harland went to the court.



Sarah looked across the courtroom and saw her mother.

A lot of people came in, and she saw a man and his wife. 'Perhaps they're Hassan's father and mother,' Anna thought. But she did not want to talk to them.

The lawyers came in next, with a lot of papers. They sat at a table in front of her, and talked quietly.

'Those two lawyers,' Anna thought, 'they're old friends. But one of them wants my daughter to die, and one wants her to be free.'

After the lawyers, the jury came in – twelve people, men and women. They sat down and watched the lawyers. They looked at Anna, and then talked quietly about her. 'These people don't look very important,' she thought. 'But they are the most important people here. They're going to say "she did it" . . . or "she didn't do it". And then Sarah comes home to me . . . or she dies.' She watched their faces carefully.

Then some policemen came in. Inspector Aziz saw Anna and smiled at her. But Anna did not talk to him, because Sarah came in at the same time. She looked afraid, and her face was very white. She looked across the courtroom, saw her mother, and gave her an unhappy smile.

There were two policemen behind Sarah, but Anna did not look at them. She looked at the tall dark young man next to Sarah – Hassan!

'He's about twenty years old,' Anna thought. 'He's very tall. But he has a nice face, and very beautiful dark eyes. Sarah likes him, and I can understand that. But he