

“I’ll never forgive you for this....”

She had fallen on some scuba diving equipment; aware that she could do nothing, she made no attempt to get up. She began weeping silently, carried away by despair and pain. The tears that ran down her face were not of rage or hatred, but resignation and pain—pure suffering. For a moment, it must have crossed her mind to just hurl herself into the sea, in an attempt to swim up to the boat where her daughter was, but she soon realized how absurd that would have been; all that would have happened is she would have drowned in the middle of the sea or they would have seized her too.

He knew that he had to make the most of that opportunity. The goddess of

fortune had never been that generous to him, and, although he had shown his most bitter side once again, at least he had given them a chance. He had one chance: if it went wrong, his life would be cut short once again, something he had almost gotten used to—but, if it worked, he would be able to escape. He would have a new opportunity to start again. For that reason, he couldn't afford to take any risks; no, he wouldn't fall into the same old trap.

He calculated that the police would reach the boat in a few minutes, and then he would be able to test his theory. He could just make out Leire in the distance, blithely lying on the deck of the boat.

The Coast Guard took a few minutes

more to draw up to the boat in which Leire, unaware of what was in store for her, remained, carried away by the powerful melody of *Tannhäuser*. They were too far off now to make out anything clearly, just some blurry shapes climbing up the stern ladder. Nevertheless, they could imagine perfectly what was going on: Leire's surprised and incredulous expression, her frantic search for them and her fear upon finding that they were no longer there, that they had escaped. Then the police in their savagery, their zealous search of the entire boat, all under Leire's surprised and watchful gaze.

He knew right away he had made the right decision: they would not be followed. He collapsed onto the wooden

board which served as a makeshift seat and looked at Inés, who was lying on the floor, weeping, or sobbing rather, but was unable to feel anything, not the slightest bit of regret. His heart had been empty for a long time. They had escaped, which was the main thing; that meant they had a new opportunity, which he wasn't going to waste. His only worry was where to take the motorboat, where the best place to moor was. For a few moments he hesitated, not knowing whether to head for the coast or continue towards Africa, towards Morocco. In just a few seconds, he immediately understood how absurd that dilemma was. There was no doubt. Although their passports were not in order, it was easier to bribe a Moroccan

official than slip away on any of the solitary beaches in Barbate or Conil. It was difficult at that time, in the mid-fifties, for an almost six-and-a-half foot tall, blond, blue-eyed American man to go unnoticed for long on the coast of Cádiz.

While they were crossing the strait, Leire was being taken to the police station in Algeciras. I never found out what happened between that moment and the time I met her. However hard I tried, I never managed to get anything out of her about those three days. Like so many other times, I was left only with curiosity.

The first day I saw her is still fresh in my mind, though it was many, many years ago. She was so relaxed when she walked