

WELCOME TO PARADISE

TWO WISELY PEOPLE SEARCHING FOR PARADISE

JIM HESS

SAMPLE PAGES

WELCOME TO PARADISE

Two Lonely People Searching for Paradise

Jim Hess

The characters in this book are purely fictional. The incidents and dialogue are not to be constructed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

COPYRIGHT @ 2020 BY JAMES E. HESS

ISBN:978-1-7347481-2-3

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED UNDER INTERNATIONAL AND
PAN AMERICAN COPYRIGHT CONVENTIONS.
PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES BY

JAMES E. HESS

Published by
The Old Paths Publications, Inc
TOP@theoldpathspublications.com
www.theoldpathspublications.com

ABSTRACT

Two lonely people have a chance encounter which leads them to love and adventure in the Middle East. In their quest to find happiness they face peril and adventure that threatens their lives in Petra and Israel. They face terrorists and Bedouin tribes that transport them to another world.

THE AUTHOR



Jim Hess is a licensed marital and family therapist. He has traveled extensively to many places in the world as a minister and consultant. Jim also works with military bases in the United States and locations overseas. He may be reached at:

hessjim703@gmail.com

Photo of the author by David DePiazza.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – John	7
CHAPTER 2 – JOHN & INGRID	22
CHAPTER 3 - INGRID.....	36
CHAPTER 4 - JOHN.....	46
CHAPTER 5 – INGRID & DAVID.....	59
CHAPTER 6 - JOHN.....	64
CHAPTER 7 - David & INGRID.....	67
CHAPTER 8 - DAVID	80
CHAPTER 9 - INGRID.....	86
CHAPTER 10 - DAVID	91
CHAPTER 11- INGRID.....	95
CHAPTER 12 - JOHN.....	102
CHAPTER 13 – Ingrid & Alma	106
CHAPTER 14 - JOHN.....	112
CHAPTER 15 - INGRID.....	118
CHAPTER 16 - JOHN.....	126
CHAPTER 17 - INGRID.....	128
CHAPTER 18 – John.....	135
CHAPTER 19 - Ingrid	138
CHAPTER 20 - John	142
CHAPTER 21 - Lydia.....	148
CHAPTER 22 – John & Ishmael.....	152
CHAPTER 23 - Ingrid	156
CHAPTER 24 – John & Ishmael.....	160
CHAPTER 25 – John & Ishmael.....	164
CHAPTER 26 - Ingrid	173
CHAPTER 27 – John and Ishmael	176
CHAPTER 28 - Ingrid	181
CHAPTER 29 - John	186
EPILOGUE.....	192

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my children who are the inspiration for my work and travels.

SAMPLE PAGES

CHAPTER 1 – John

John was not sure where he was, so many faces so many places. He'd had this feeling before. As he sat in a restaurant or a café, he often found himself trying to figure out just what city he was in.

Finally, he remembered he was in Bruges, Belgium. The sun was setting as he finished his main course at the small sidewalk café in the beautiful, ancient city. Handsome Patrician houses, impressive churches, and exquisite works of art are quiet testimonials to its glorious history. The canal flowing through the center of the city reflects the image of old buildings, churches, and homes. Boats float gently by filled with wide-eyed tourists, their cameras clicking. The old town center comes alive each day as residents hurry to the shops. Housewives scurry about on their bicycles to purchase fresh bread, vegetables, and meat for evening meals as tourists gaze at the sidewalk artists, vendors, and other activities taking place in the open city square.

What a romantic scene, John thinks as he sits in the quaint little café eating dessert. He can't remember being in a town that has so much character or such wonderful tasting desserts. The aromas from a variety of exotic foods being prepared in the kitchen reach John. John glances at his watch and realizes that it is already dark at home in Denver, Colorado.

During the summer, the sun does not set until almost 10:00 pm in this part of the world. In his work as a management consultant, John travels to many parts of the world working for companies that manufacture military equipment.

John finished his meal and walked a few blocks to his hotel. He tried to think of something to do to fill the empty evening hours. This had always been the toughest part of the day when working on the road - lonely hotel rooms, often watching TV in languages that he doesn't understand. And as

WELCOME TO PARADISE

European TV is quite different from American TV stations because it is more sexually explicit, John, being a Christian, had to be extra careful to avoid pornography.

John decided to go for a walk. As he strolled along ancient stone sidewalks, he admired the beauty of this fifteenth century city. When he walked past the Pralinique, famous for its mouth-watering chocolate, he was enticed by the sweet smell of candies and pastries filling the air when a woman rushing out of the shop bumped into him.

“I am so sorry,” she said. “I didn’t see you.”

“That is OK. I wasn’t watching where I was going either.” John was breathless; startled by the beauty of the woman. He was speechless as she disappeared around the corner. He stood for a moment still dazed by the beautiful green eyes of the graceful lady who had bumped into him and quickly walked away.

As John headed back to his hotel room, he recalled her features in his mind. He couldn't stop thinking about her – long blonde hair and thin figure with beautiful shapely legs, much like a model. He began to feel disappointed that he had no way to find out who she was or where she lived. From their brief encounter, he had detected a European accent.

He said his prayers and went to bed, tossing and turning for a time before finally falling asleep. His alarm woke him at 6 am the next morning. As he struggled to get out of bed, he stretched trying to wake himself up. He made coffee and picked up the paper lying outside of his room. After taking a shower, he headed down to the hotel restaurant for breakfast and then caught a cab to the client's offices to work.

Some client issues were easy enough to solve; others were more difficult. This client's situation fell into the difficult to impossible category. After several weeks of working on workflow redesigns, interpersonal issues, and human resource problems, John was anxious to go home – to the Rocky Mountains. He could hardly wait until the end of the

week when he would catch a flight and go home to rest for a few days.



When John picked up the morning newspaper, he thumbed through it, looking at the pictures and trying to understand some of the stories. As he looked at pictures in the local news section, he froze. There in the picture was the green-eyed beauty who had run into him coming out of the sweet shop. He stuffed the page into his briefcase and headed to work.

Luckily, the plant manager John was working for is an American, so communication was not an issue. Most of the other team members were from various parts of Europe. There were obvious cultural differences, communication issues, and generational differences that were hindering their ability to work as a high-performing team. John had often admitted that people having trouble communicating kept him busy with work.

After a long day, John headed back to the hotel on foot. After fifteen years of being a consultant and being on the road so much, there was little glamour left for him in traveling. As he walked along, he thought about his life – there had been so many things he had wanted to accomplish when he was young that had fallen by the wayside. He had gotten so busy making money that he had not taken time to live. He remembered the words of a friend from his youth who told him **“when you learn enough to really live, you are old enough to die.”** The longer I live the more I see the truth in those words, he thought.

Traveling had resulted in too many nights in lonely hotels, countless hours in airports waiting for flights, many flights on noisy, uncomfortable airplanes, and many rental cars, taxis, and trains. There had been too many deadlines and countless stressful meetings with dysfunctional companies. Life was passing him by.

WELCOME TO PARADISE

He had planned to get married someday, have a family, and shuffle children around to soccer and baseball games. He had always wanted a daughter who would become a daddy's girl.

As he turned the corner to the hotel, he sighed. Well maybe it's not too late; perhaps things could be different. As he rode the elevator, he thought about his greatest desire of all – having the time to work on developing his spiritual life. He had always been a believer but in the hustle and bustle of life, he had lost his spiritual focus.

John went to his room and unloaded his briefcase. He stuck the page from the morning paper under his arm and headed out to look for a restaurant. The HR manager at the plant had recommended a nice seafood restaurant to John.

As he walked along in a crowded section of Bruges, he noticed two young men who seemed to be following him. After years of traveling in foreign countries, John had learned to be aware of his surroundings. Pickpockets and thieves are rampant in foreign countries. One pickpocket appearing on a recent BBC interview had said that his ability to pick pockets was a gift from God. He went on to say that he often preyed on unsuspecting Americans because "they are all rich." Some of John's associates had been robbed over the years. John was fortunate; it had not yet happened to him.

He turned the corner to see if the two men were still following. They were, so he darted into a bakery. The smell of pastries and freshly baked goods was mouth-watering. How often he had wished that he could find pastries like these in America.

John noticed that the men had stopped outside the door, waiting. John looked around the shop to see if there was another exit. He noticed a side door and walked out, careful to make sure the men did not see him. He continued to look behind him for several blocks and finally felt confident that he had lost them. He took a deep breath and continued looking for the restaurant.

CHAPTER 1: JOHN

He was unsure of whether he was going in the right direction since he had taken the detour through the bakery. He stopped several people to ask for directions before he found one who could speak English. He eventually found the place and was seated at a table with a good view of the street. He enjoyed watching the people pass by. After ordering a fish that sounded like sea bass, he relaxed and sipped a glass of Diet Coke, better known as cola light in Europe. The restaurant was decorated with beautiful paintings by local artists, many of which were for sale. He remembered that he still had the morning paper with him, so he opened it to the page with the photo of the green-eyed mystery lady. His waitress could speak a little English, so he asked her about the lady in the photo. "Oh sir," she explained, "she is one of our local TV news anchors. Her name is Ingrid Bauer. She is very famous here."

"Thanks," he said, as he wrote the name on the back of one of his business cards and put it in his wallet. After a nice dinner, John walked back to the hotel, intentionally going by the Pralinique shop just in case Ingrid might be there again, but not this time. The smell of fresh chocolate was so enticing that he went in and selected a variety of chocolates to take with him. As he walked on to the hotel munching on chocolate, he tried to figure out how he could see Ingrid again.



When John woke the next morning, he realized that it was Friday and tomorrow would begin another weekend for him away from home. After another busy workday, he caught a cab to the hotel and started packing an overnight bag for a weekend trip. John had decided to catch the train to Amsterdam. He had not been there in quite a while, and he always enjoyed the excitement of the bustling city.

Early the next morning, John walked to the train station, purchased a ticket at the automatic machine, and caught the express to Amsterdam. The view along the way was breathtaking. The countryside was dotted with small cottages,

WELCOME TO PARADISE

windmills, and dairy farms, most of them framed by a rainbow of tulips. Tulips everywhere, and they are so beautiful, he thought.

When he arrived in Amsterdam, he strolled to the center of the city. He was amazed at all the activities going on around him. The ancient stone streets had been in place for centuries, bordered by a river on one side and buildings on the other. The house where Ann Frank lived and wrote her diary in World War II was just down the street. Some of the buildings had survived the war, but many more had been destroyed. He thought about how magnificent European cities would be today had World War II not taken place and destroyed so much. As he walked down the street, he saw a man in the city square stripping down to a G-string while a woman videotaped him performing a seductive dance. This kind of behavior was common in Amsterdam. Many people consider it to be the world's capital city of sin.

A few blocks further, John took a seat at a sidewalk café, ordered an espresso, and watched people passing on foot and bicycles. Bicycles were everywhere. Most of the locals used them as their primary means of transportation around the city.

Suddenly, a violent blast erupted and shook the ground under John's feet. He was stunned. Someone ran past him toward the train station yelling, "A bomb; it's a bomb."

He heard sirens and saw ambulances turning the corner. A bomb! Surely there weren't terrorist attacks here in Amsterdam.

John got up and walked around the corner and saw black smoke billowing from a shopping mall near the train station. Police were already on the scene and starting to tape off the area. Soon after, medics arrived and began helping the wounded. John saw the wreckage of a car that had been driven into the mall. It appeared to be the source of the bomb. The smell of explosives lingered in the air. Debris from the

blast was scattered out into the street. People were crying, and workers were removing bodies on stretchers.

The site was total pandemonium. John turned to walk away and stumbled over something. When he looked down, he discovered he had tripped over the body of a young woman. Her eyes were open with the blank stare of death and she was covered in blood. John felt the greatest sense of fear he could ever remember. How could this be; how could this kind of thing happen? Since the attack on the World Trade Center a few years ago, he knew no place in the world is totally safe, but this was so hard to witness.

John grabbed his overnight bag and walked several blocks to find a hotel – hopefully one on a side street where no car could drive into it. He finally found a place and sat for hours in his room, numbed by what he had just witnessed.

He picked up his cell phone, wanting to call someone back home for comfort. He stared at the phone as he thought about whom he could call. It finally occurred to him that there was no one at home he felt comfortable turning to for support at a time like this. He was suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness. He put the phone down, looked at his watch, and decided to try to get some sleep.

Sometime later, he awoke to the sound of sirens wailing in the street, so he picked up the remote and turned on the TV. He wanted to see if BBC might be reporting on the bombing. Thank God for BBC, a worldwide news service in English. **“Reporters are converging on Amsterdam from all parts of Europe. Hamas is suspected,”** the reporter was saying, **“however, no one has claimed responsibility at this point.”**

Eventually John fell back to sleep but was again awakened by a nightmare about the woman whose body he had stumbled over at the site of bombing. He heard a noise outside his window, so he got up and walked over to look out. As he pulled back the curtain, he saw someone leading a woman down the sidewalk. She was bent over, sobbing. John

WELCOME TO PARADISE

wondered if she had lost a loved one in the bombing and thought about all the heartache in the world today. He went into the bathroom and splashed water on his face. Then, he decided that he would go back to the bombing site, mostly out of curiosity, but also because he was too keyed up to sleep.

He continued to listen to the BBC special report as he dressed to leave the hotel. They were reporting twenty-five people injured and at least fifteen more killed by the blast. Authorities were still sifting through rubble, and they expected those numbers would rise.

As John walked outside, it felt as though a chill had fallen over the shocked city. People seemed to be walking around aimlessly. The normal party atmosphere was gone. Police were everywhere, keeping an eye out for other attackers.

John walked past the house where Anne Frank and her family had lived while hiding from the Nazis. He saw the church on the corner with a small statue of her outside. He also saw the clock on the church that Anne looked at every day from her tiny bedroom window.

Anne Frank had lived in fear of an enemy that she could see. So many people today are terrorized by enemies that they can't see until it is too late. This city, like so many cities in our world, has seen its share of terror and fear.

John paused outside a large cathedral. He thought about how many beautiful churches he had seen while traveling the world. He slowly walked over to check the front door to see if it was unlocked. The knob turned easily. He stepped inside and paused while his eyes adjusted to the evening light coming through the stained-glass windows. Moving slowly, he walked to the front of the sanctuary, knelt at the communion table, and said a prayer for the innocent victims of the bombing and their families who were hurting so much tonight. He also said a prayer for himself – a prayer for direction, and guidance, and a prayer that he had prayed since childhood – a prayer that God would lead him to

CHAPTER 1: JOHN

paradise in this world and the world to come. John had always believed that we could have a bit of paradise here on earth, but he also knew that it didn't come easy. He knew that it required a lot of work and a strong faith in God.

His mind wandered back to the memory of a large church he had seen in Strasburg, France a few years earlier. He had learned that had taken over two hundred years to build that church. In his travels, he had seen many beautiful churches in many parts of the world. Some of them had beautiful, rare paintings and sculptures. He had seen one in Argentina that had amazing mosaic floors.

As John ended his prayer and reflection, he slowly got up and walked back out into the street. "Oh God," he whispered, "help me find your will for my life." My life has not been what either one of us wanted, he thought. I work, make a comfortable living, and save a little. But I want to feel I'm making a difference in this world.

John thought about how many times he had investigated the faces of corporate leaders over the years and said to them that they needed to find balance in their lives. How can I make that statement to others when I don't feel balance in my own life? He thought about this more and more as he continued walking on to the scene of the bombing.

As John approached the site, he suddenly stopped and listened. He was certain he had heard a familiar voice. He looked in the direction where he thought he had heard it and his jaw dropped. There she was - Ingrid Bauer, the reporter from Belgium. She had probably taken a flight to get here to report on the bombing. He stared at her thinking, what is it about her? I don't even know this woman, and I am breathless when I see her. He watched, motionless. She was talking about the attack in a language that was foreign to him. John thought to himself, I wish I had studied more languages in high school and college. Spanish was not enough. I wish I could communicate in other languages with people that I meet and work with.

WELCOME TO PARADISE

John waited several minutes for Ingrid to finish her report and get off camera. When she handed the mike back to her cameraman, she started to walk in his direction. He waited until she got closer and called out to her. "Ingrid!" He had no idea what to say when she stopped in front of him.

"Do I know you?" she asked.

"We met briefly in Belgium when we ran into each other at Pralinique Chocolate Shop. Do you have a few minutes? Would you like to get a cup of coffee?"

Ingrid looked around as she thought for a moment. At last, she said, "OK."

John went on. "I saw your picture in the newspaper and learned your name after running into you at Pralinique. My name is John Martin."

"Hi John," she said as she extended her hand and shook his. "I do remember almost running over you coming out of the candy shop. I am so sorry."

"No need to apologize," he said. "You made quite an impression on me." Ingrid blushed slightly and smiled as they sat down at a small table outside a coffee shop. "I just wanted someone to talk to. This bombing has been so disturbing," John said. He looked at her for a moment lost in her eyes, almost missing her response.

"Yes, it is frightening. It seems there are no safe places left in our world today. Did you see what happened?" she asked in her reporter tone of voice.

"No," he replied. "I was around the corner when I heard the blast. So, I ran to see what the noise was and stumbled over a body." He ran his fingers through his hair as he continued. "There were so many injured people and such chaos that I didn't know what to do. When the police arrived, we were all forced to move back while they taped off the scene."

Ingrid didn't say anything, but her eyes spoke volumes about her concern and shock.

CHAPTER 1: JOHN

“After a while, I left to find a hotel and watched news reports on the bombing. I finally decided to come back here to see the extent of the damage for myself. I only came to Amsterdam for the weekend and never expected to witness such an event. And I especially didn't expect to run into you here.”

They ordered coffee and sat in silence for a while. When the coffee arrived, they sipped on it and spoke little. The small cups of espresso were so strong that John had to add some hot water to weaken it. The shop was cozy and overlooked the river running through the city. John was so lost in Ingrid's beauty that it he struggled to think about what to say.

Ingrid said, “This reminds me of a bombing I reported on a couple of years ago. I think this one is worse because there are more victims.”

“I don't know how you do it. I don't think I could stand to see the devastation and loss that you must see often in your work,” he responded.

“John, you are obviously an American. Where is your home?” she asked.

“I grew up in a small town in Montana, went away to college in Colorado, fell in love with the Rocky Mountains, and settled there,” he replied. “I always enjoyed traveling, so I chose a profession that would allow me to travel. As a result, I've seen a great deal of the world. However, I still love to go home to the Rockies and relax. Amsterdam is one of my favorite cities to visit, so here I am,” he continued.

“Yes,” she said slowly, “here you are.” Before she could say anything more, her cell phone started ringing. One of the worst inventions of our lives, John thought. Ingrid closed her phone. “Well thanks for the coffee, John. I must go. They want an update. It was nice talking to you.”

With that she got up and headed for the sidewalk. She turned and gave him a smile and a slight wave. John was disappointed. He wanted more time to talk to her. He wanted

WELCOME TO PARADISE

to get her phone number and arrange a meeting later. But she was gone just as quickly as she was at the chocolate shop a few days earlier.

He thought, what is so compelling about her? He believed from his years of studying psychology and personalities that she was a loving, compassionate person; the kind of woman he had always been attracted to. He could hear it in her voice and see it in her eyes. He could tell by their brief encounter that she was an unusual and special woman. Yet they were so different, he thought. John felt he was so logical, rational, and mechanical. She functioned so much more on a human level. Maybe that is why I have been so lonely, he thought to himself. Perhaps I need a higher level of sensitivity in my life. Women seem to want men to be more sensitive, he mused.

John watched as Ingrid disappeared into the crowd. He finally got up and walked down the street by the same town square where a few hours earlier a man had stripped in front of his lover's camera. The square was now filled with young people milling around. Since drugs were legal here, it was not uncommon to see people stoned out of their minds. Drug deals occurred on a regular basis in public.

As he was leaving the site of the bombing, police and rescue personnel were encouraging people to leave the area and giving instructions on what to do if they were trying to get information regarding loved ones. They weren't letting anyone near the scene.

It was getting late so John headed back to the hotel. His room contained a small TV, bed, and nightstand. Not many creature comforts here, he thought.

The next morning, the sun was shining brightly through the window of his hotel room when he woke up. Sunday morning in Amsterdam - the sky was blue, the tulips were in bloom, and the street was quiet. John walked over to the window. He noticed how much litter remained in the streets after all the upheaval the night before. The garbage collection

carts were overflowing with beer bottles. Very few people were in the streets; only a few were riding bicycles at this early hour. John was always amazed at how many people in Holland rode bicycles.

John decided that he would like to attend a worship service, so he looked through the local phone book and found the address of a church that appeared to be close to the hotel. He remembered how churches had been filled after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York. He wondered if the same thing would occur here. After showering, he headed to the hotel's front desk to get directions. As he walked through the streets on this crisp, clear morning he was aware that the peace and presence of God seemed to surround everything.

He found the church. Its beautiful architecture was very impressive. As he entered the sanctuary, he walked across lovely mosaic floors. He picked up a headset so he could hear the service in English from a translator and took a seat where he could have a view of the entire room. The service had not begun, so he bowed his head and started to pray. "God, please give me balance in my life." He had decided that he needed a greater sense of purpose and meaning in his life other than work. **"Work should not be the number one thing in a person's life,"** he thought.

While he was contemplating this, John felt that God was speaking to him and reminding him that balance was something he really could control. He should learn to prioritize how he spent his time between work, family, community, and his spiritual life. And of course, he needed to spend time taking care of himself – exercising and doing things that were important to him. This was the area of his life that he usually neglected. As he left the church, John realized that the bombing apparently had little impact on people's need for spiritual support. The church was not very crowded. It looked like the usual small group he had always seen in European churches. After the service, he went back to the hotel to check out and then headed for the train station. It was time for him to head back to Belgium and to work.



The train ride back to Bruges was uneventful. As he looked out the window, he saw lots of small farms with large windmills in historic towns. He wished that he had more time to visit this area. As he thought more about it, he decided it was time to take some measure of control of his life. He got off the train at the next stop in the town of Haarlem, Holland. He wanted to visit a place that he had read about many years earlier called the Beje, or the Hiding Place.

Since 1837, the Ten Boom family had operated a clock and watch shop on a street corner in this town. Descendants of that family - Corrie Ten Boom, her sister Betsie, and their father Casper - had created a small hiding place in their upstairs living quarters where they hid Jews from the Nazi Gestapo during World War II. Eventually, the family was discovered and captured and sent to a Nazi concentration camp called Ravensbruck. Corrie survived Ravensbruck, but all her family members perished. Corrie traveled the world after the war to the keep alive the spiritual heritage of the Ten Boom family and their love for God and His people.

John took a cab and stopped close to the Beje. He got out and walked down the street in the direction of the watch shop. On the way, he entered a nearby cheese shop and sampled some of the world's greatest cheeses. He wished there were a way have some of the cheeses shipped home to Colorado but knew it would be too difficult.

As John walked into the clock and watch shop, he learned that the Ten Boom family no longer owned it. However, the current owners had kept the shop much like it had been during the war. The upstairs living quarters had been preserved in its original condition for almost two hundred years and were open to public viewing. John paid the small fee and walked upstairs. He was amazed at the small size of the Hiding Place, but he felt a special connection to God as he viewed the place that had provided safety for so many Jewish people so that their lives were spared.