

## FROM *WATER FALL* BY KEIR FARRELL

**Water Fall is a conspiracy thriller written in 2017 and inspired by the accelerating destruction of the forested slopes of the Andes and the interests of big business, international crimes and geo-politics**



Image by Wkidesign/Pixabay

Wet to the bone though he was, and weighed down by a hundred pounds of gear in his rucksack, Jack McCrae still cut an imposing figure. In the gloom of the bruise-dark sky and torrential rain, each flash of lightning lit up his streaming wet, military poncho and made his six-foot frame appear even broader than it was. His movements were confident; his pace measured. Even the water that drummed and crashed as it fell, and that cascaded from his **bush hat** when he bent his head to watch the treacherous track, did not slow the young man down.

He strode purposefully along the trail, resigned to the discomfort, paying close attention to his footing, and deliberating the best way to keep dry in the rainforest. Since transitioning from the cold, dry, brightness of the Peruvian **altiplano** to the warm and humid forested slopes of the Andes, this was the worst tropical thunderstorm he had experienced. Not only that, but in earlier downpours he had been able to find some shelter, whereas now he was on an exposed ledge that curved crazily around the hills and valleys stretched out before him. The barren track of stone and mud was about the width of a donkey cart, with a sheer cliff face extending above it on one side, and an impossibly steep ravine clawing at it on the other. Cut through the fringes of the largest forest on earth, the path afforded not a single tree for shelter. So he just walked on, deep in thought.

**bush hat** A type of soft, wide-brimmed hat often used in forest and jungle

**altiplano** A term used for high plains occurring in the Andes

The poncho had worked well for the first five minutes of the storm, but the rain came down so hard it simply bounced off the ground and soaked everything underneath. With the

heat generated under the waterproof fabric, he soon found himself sweating, and everything he wore was quickly saturated with either precipitation or perspiration. Ponchos, he decided, were not a serious piece of kit.

“Still, only another three thousand miles to the Atlantic,” he said aloud, summoning a mental map of his planned route along the Amazon. He smiled at the thought, revelling in the idea of the hardships to be endured and the extreme physical and mental demands that would be placed on him in the months ahead. This was the right place for him. He felt the deafening solitude wrap itself around him and knew that here, alone, his life was measured only by the simple decisions he made for survival. He depended on no-one, and no-one depended on him. Success meant another day, or another step; failure meant death. His smile faded, and his jaw muscles tightened against a sudden flash of anger that blazed in his eyes. *His* death, and his death alone.

He blinked away the distracting thoughts, and decided that this would be a good time to make sure his GPS worked in these extreme conditions. He reached up, pulled the little unit off his shoulder strap, and brought it out from under the poncho. As he pressed the button to wake the screen, he felt a tiny buzz of vibration. For an instant he thought it was the GPS, but then he felt it again, more strongly. He stopped walking and stared down through the rain at the path. Another pulse of movement. A longer one. Two more. Then the whole mountain seemed to shake.

He felt himself losing balance on ground that was suddenly moving, lurching, cracking. It was like trying to balance on a trampoline with someone else bouncing on it. He staggered closer to the cliff face and pressed himself against it, but the shaking was getting worse. It was so bad now that he could hardly stand. A large crack opened beneath his feet. He jumped to the left and watched as the crack widened in a fraction of a second, and tore up the trail to his right. A huge section of it slid away, breaking apart and tumbling down the ravine.

He moved further left, to get as far as possible from the gap, but just as he thought he had reached a safer point, a boulder the size of a fridge crashed down onto the path, and more cracks appeared under his feet. They radiated out in an instant, left and right, and the ground began to disintegrate. He felt the trail collapse beneath him, and then he was falling. A lightning flash gave him a momentary glimpse of the whole abyss opening up below him, and then he hit something hard. He was spinning around, being carried down the ravine. Now he was face down, and he felt himself being smothered in a deluge of mud and water. He tried to turn, struggling to breathe. He sucked in a great lungful of air, and then something smacked into the side of his head and he felt the world slipping away. The noise and the shaking and the lightning faded.

Peace. Quiet. Darkness.

LANGUAGE TAGS: metaphor, hyperbole, short sentences, adjectives, punctuation, contrast, imagery, alliteration, personification, analogy, tone, register, irony
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