

Cleaver



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"In the autumn of 2004, shortly after his memorable interview with the President of the United States and following the publication of his elder son's novelised autobiography, cruelly entitled "Under His Shadow", celebrity journalist, broadcaster and documentary film-maker Harold Cleaver boarded a British Airways flight from London Gatwick to Milan Malpensa, proceeded by Italian railways as far as Bruneck in the South Tyrol and thence by taxi, northwards, to the village of Luttach only a few kilometres from the Austrian border, from whence he hoped to find some remote mountain habitation in which to spend the next, if not necessarily the last, years of his life." Thus opens Tim Parks' new novel and masterpiece. Overweight and overwrought, London's most successful journalist abandons home, partner, mistresses and above all television, the instrument that brought him identity and power. His quest: to climb above "the noise line," to get beyond the e.mail and the mobile phone and the interminable clamour of the public voice of which he himself was such a master. Weeks later, snowed in at five thousand feet, harangued by voices from the past and humiliated by his inability to understand the gothic peasants he relies on for food and whisky, Cleaver discovers that there is nowhere so noisy and so dangerous as the solitary mind.

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