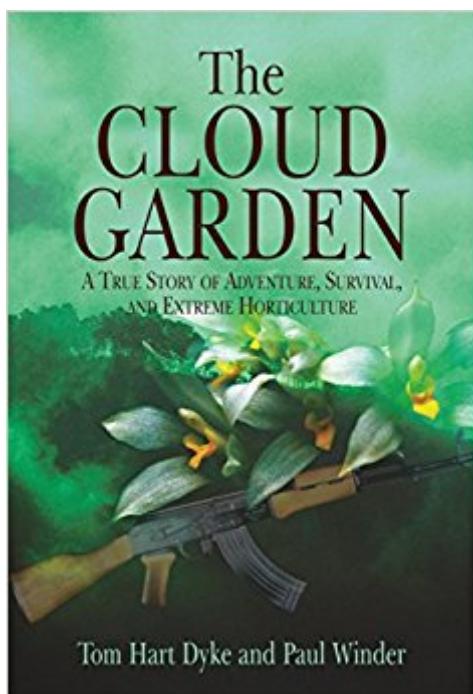


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# The Cloud Garden: A True Story Of Adventure, Survival, And Extreme Horticulture



## Synopsis

Kidnapped by terrorists, held hostage at gunpoint, two flower-hunting Britons live to tell their amazing tale.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The 16,000-mile Pan-American Highway runs from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, interrupted only by the 54-mile Darién Gap, a dense jungle along the Panama/ Colombia border. Few cross this lawless wilderness, where drug traffickers and guerrillas hide out. When British botanist Dyke and London banker Winder met in Mexico four years ago, they teamed up to tour the Gap, despite the region's danger. Dyke hoped to find rare orchids, while world traveler Winder sought a new challenge. After six days, they were ambushed by a guerrilla group near Colombia. Held hostage, they encountered flesh-eating worms and considered escape possibilities, amusing themselves by nicknaming their captors, listening to BBC World Service and entertaining the guerrilla camp with a performance of Eric Idle's "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life." The fun was short-lived. Baffled by Tom's orchid-hunting enthusiasm, the kidnappers believed the two were CIA agents or drug dealers and came from great wealth. When a \$3-million ransom was requested, the authors refused the demands and were eventually released with no explanation. Written with humor and suspense, this is a vivid account of their nine-month ordeal. Dual first-person viewpoints are seamlessly spliced together, and the format provides a prismatic presentation of contrasting attitudes, allowing each author to comment on the other. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"The 16,000-mile Pan-American Highway runs from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, interrupted only by the 54-mile Darién Gap, a dense jungle along the Panama/ Colombia border. Few cross this lawless wilderness, where drug traffickers and guerrillas hide out. When British botanist Dyke and London banker Winder met in Mexico four years ago, they teamed up to tour the Gap, despite the region's danger. Dyke hoped to find rare orchids, while world traveler Winder sought a new challenge. After six days, they were ambushed by a guerrilla group near Colombia. Held hostage, they encountered flesh-eating worms and considered escape possibilities, amusing themselves by nicknaming their captors, listening to BBC World Service and entertaining the guerrilla camp with a performance of Eric Idle's "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life." The fun was short-lived. Baffled by Tom's orchid-hunting enthusiasm, the kidnappers believed the two were CIA agents or drug dealers and came from great wealth. When a \$3-million ransom was requested, the authors refused the demands and were eventually released with no explanation. Written with humor and suspense, this is a vivid account of their nine-month ordeal. Dual first-person viewpoints are seamlessly spliced together, and the format provides a prismatic presentation of contrasting attitudes, allowing each author to comment on the other."-- Publishers Weekly"Readers will find themselves turning pages and delaying dinner while Winder and Dyke slowly blossom into the heroes of their own misguided adventure."-- BookPage

The book's topic caught my interest as did a good magazine review. (The copy we purchased from .com was without pages 118 to 179 so check before you begin to read. .com was great and sent us a replacement volume which also was missing the same pages. We finally found a bookstore that exchanged it for a correct version.) The story here is about two young men who choose to hike into the guerrilla held The Darien Gap between Panama and Columbia. The gap where there is no longer any Pan-American Highway. At the end of their telling (I'm not giving anything away, after all the authors wrote the book so you know they survived) the authors make the comment that the British press caught on to the story because of Tom Hart Dykes love of flowers. It was the "hook" all newspapers look for in such stories, and that is also the hook they use in telling their story. But you not going to learn much about Orchids from this story is told in parallel first person narrative which centers on their immature decision to tempt fate and danger and then tests their ability to survive. In a strange way the book reminded me of Jon Krakauer's excellent "Into the Wild" about a youth who graduates from College and ends up alone, dead in the wilds of Alaska. Both books share that same desire to decipher why some young males make such choices. Overall I would recommend

the book as an interesting first person adventure, but it is strangely lacking suspense and I really was let down that we really learn nothing about the band of guerillas who hold them captive. I certainly missed that insight which is so strong in the novel "Bel Canto".

I have no idea how Tom Hart Dyke and Paul Winder survived this horrible ordeal. Me? I would have killed myself just to get the heck out of all the heat and humidity let alone being somewhat charming and cajoling to the folks who kidnapped me and constantly threatened to take my life. But these fellas seemed to be guided -- somehow -- in that they had enough influence over their captors to be allowed to leave a situation where many others might have never returned from. Good for them and a good read, too. I especially liked how the book was set up to give each one a voice to a situation they were both facing. Interesting to see both takes on it. Glad I sent for it and read it. A wonderful look into the human spirit and strength. Cheers!

Amazing story but the narrative structure is a little clunky

Exciting, surprising.

I went to panama and read this book on vacation. I couldn't put it down! such a great adventure of the two guys and really captivating to read. I hope they make a movie out of it someday!

An interesting travel story of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and then getting very lucky. Here is the basic concept: "lets go some place really remote and dangerous and look for rare flowers..." Too strange to be fiction.

I got this a while back but still haven't read it. It sounds very interesting, I always like an adventurous story. Since I keep getting notices to review it, here you go.

Being an absolute plant fiend and traveler, Tom and Paul really went to the wall with this adventure. They knew there was an absolute possibility of extreme danger. They went anyway. Kidnapping in Columbia is no laughing matter. Establishing their identity beyond what the guerillas wanted to believe was difficult. All the while, I was hoped they would not give the guerillas information to make things worse, but Tom is honest to a fault. They have an intuitive way of collaborating together in the telling of the story. The book is written from both their points of view, which sometimes is hilarious -

though serious as hell. I would highly recommend the book to anyone who loves adventure, travel and of course plants! I would also recommend visiting the Lullingstone Castle web site if you want to know more about the tremendous garden that Tom Hart Dyke has developed. [...]

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