

MEMORANDUM

~~THE WHITE HOUSE~~

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~
~~CONTAINS CODEWORD~~

January 3, 1972

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT:

Military Situation in Laos: The Communists have launched heavy artillery attacks against friendly casualties causing morale problems. Since December 31, [redacted] fired more than 300 rounds into the [redacted] All ordinance and building of the [redacted] The airstrip is still [redacted]

MIDNIGHT AT THE CARAVELLE

dam activity in the Long Tieng area has been limited to scattered clashes totaling over [redacted] The ir-

ORIGINAL TELEPLAY BY RUDI O'MEARA

been deployed [redacted] reports of size-

EPISODE ONE: "SUMMER STORMS"

U.S. Ambassador has approved the evacuation of all U.S. dependents. [redacted] was taken in May when enemy rocket attacks [redacted] were expected.

Yesterday DaNang air base U.S. Air Force EC-47

aircraft received [redacted] damage was reported to several [redacted] One U.S. [redacted] was slightly injured.

BASED ON ACTUAL EVENTS

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~
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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Section 3.5
FOR PAC Review 11/12/13
By MLH NARA, Date 11/30/15

14- We have had 10 years of total control of the air. The result = zilch. There is something wrong with the strategy or the Air Force. I was wrong. There is no way to win this. Air operations in Laos, Laos etc after

MIDNIGHT AT THE CARAVELLE

Episode 1: "Summer Storms"

Written by
Rudi O'Meara

Based on Actual Events

EXT. DISTRICT 1, SAIGON - DAY

The frenetic bustle of *Quach Thi Trang* roundabout.

SUPER: SAIGON, VIETNAM, JUNE, 1970

Vespas, tuk-tuks, rusted Citroëns, and hulking buses vie for position amid a sea of fast-moving PEDESTRIANS.

The air is monsoon-heavy and tinged with blue-gray smog. Garish hand-painted billboards hawking Perlon dental cream, Bata shoes, and Lambretta scooters shout from every corner.

A MAN in a crisply-tailored gray suit strides through the throngs. This is THIERRY GIRARD (mid-30s, fine features, pale skin, inscrutable eyes).

The CAMERA ZOOMS in on him tightly - the focus wheeling in and out for a second before --

SNAP. SNAP. SNAP. A reflex camera shutter fires.

We're watching through a long lens from a high rooftop.

As if sensing our gaze, Girard pauses, bends toward the grassy plaza in the middle of the roundabout.

At the center of the plaza, a tall iron statue of a man on horseback. Surrounding the statue are a series of angular steel benches, most empty.

Suddenly, a WOMAN in a form-fitting white dress and a conical *Nón Lá* woven reed hat steps down from the plaza and makes a beeline toward Girard. We can't see her face.

Girard pauses, lights a cigarette.

SNAP. SNAP.

The woman speeds up. A bus grinding gears momentarily blocks our view before --

SNAP. SNAP.

Girard reaches into his jacket, passes the woman something small and metallic - about the size of a cigarette case.

SNAP.

She takes it, barely moving a muscle - magician effortless - and continues past him, into the street.

Pausing, Girard looks to his left and right, takes a long, slow drag, moves toward an empty bench.

SNAP. SNAP.

He sits, reaches up to flick a bit of tobacco off his tongue, crosses his legs confidently.

A man at ease amid chaos of the city. Like he owns it.

SNAP.

Or else he's just tracking the ass of the woman in white.

Out of nowhere, a YOUNG VIETNAMESE MAN in western garb approaches swiftly.

SNAP. SNAP. SNAP.

They nod to each other like old friends.

SNAP.

Without sitting down, the young man passes Girard some sort of parcel. This one's a bit larger than the one Girard passed to the woman.

We ZOOM IN tight - trying to get a good look at it - but before we can, it's safely tucked inside Girard's jacket.

SNAP. SNAP.

Doffing his ash, Girard turns to the man, says something we can't hear. The man smiles, nodding, before --

BOOM!

A huge EXPLOSION rocks the roundabout.

The CAMERA WHIPS AROUND desperately - our view obscured by smoke and the chaos of people running scared. Cars and bikes swerve every which way.

BOOM!

A second smaller explosion rings out.

An olive drab American Army transport truck sits blown to bits and smoldering in the street. The green canvas arched over the bed, ripped to shreds.

A single AMERICAN G.I. stumbles out of the cab on fire. His ears are bleeding. His glasses shattered.

No one runs to the rescue. There are no sirens. No fire brigade. Only the counter-clockwise chaos of traffic struggling to reorganize itself.

The camera SWERVES back toward the bench. But Girard is gone. Nowhere to be seen.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE, SAIGON - DAY

A clean-cut young LIEUTENANT with a scraggly mustache chases two armed MPs out of a steel Quonset hut barracks and onto jet-black, freshly-paved tarmac.

The light is blisteringly bright.

DAVID

Wait a minute. Hold on!

The MPs take a hard right, moving fast.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Why me?!

This is DAVID CAMPBELL (20s, a fresh-faced kid new in-country). He struggles to keep up with the MPs.

Both of his brand-new boots are unlaced.

MP #1

Hell if I know, boy.

DAVID

But I just...

(tripping)

...I just got here!

MP #2

You don't say.

In the distance, rows of Huey helicopters stretch off into the distance - their rotors shaking slightly as a Douglass A-4 Skyhawk rockets down the runway, taking off.

MP #1

(over jet wash)

Good a time as any to bust your cherry!

Both MPs turn toward a stretch of low concrete buildings that seem oddly flimsy. A command center not built to last.

MP #2

Here's a little tip. Don't address the Major General unless he addresses you first.

David reflexively runs a hand through his recently-buzzed hair and nods, making mental notes.

MP #1
If anyone else from J2's there,
keep your mouth shut and listen.

MP #2
And watch out for anyone in civies.
CIA. Not to be trusted.

DAVID
What?! Why?

Both MPs stop dead at the closed entrance to the building as another jet takes off in the distance.

Above the sandbagged door hangs a sign that reads:

HEADQUARTERS 525th MILITARY INTELLIGENCE GROUP

The first MP shoulders his rifle, opens the door.

MP #1
Up the stairs, left down the hall.
Third door on your right.

David, his mind a whirl, hesitates.

MP #2
And tie your fuckin' boots, boy!

The MPs both stiffly salute him. He salutes back awkwardly (not yet a practiced move) and cautiously steps inside.

INT. MI HEADQUARTERS, ENTRANCE - DAY

The door SLAMS shut behind him. And David is instantly wrapped in an oddly airless SILENCE.

The roar of jets, rotors, and jeeps is gone. All that remains are the HUSHED ECHO of distant voices and the steady RAT-TAT-TAT of faraway typewriters.

The entire space seems deserted. Not a soul in sight.

David takes a step forward and pauses, remembering his boots. He bends to tie them and the door behind him opens again quickly - filling the space with DIN once again.

In charges a tall, tanned man with a shaggy mop of hair, aviators, an untucked Hawaiian shirt, and gabardine slacks.

This is CIA Junior Station Chief CALVIN TAYLOR (30s, former Rand, smooth as silk even with his 5:00 shadow).

He tilts his aviators up, regards David curiously.

CALVIN
You must be the new kid.

David drops his laces, prepares to salute.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
(grinning)
No, no. Finish up.

Calvin reaches into his shirt pocket for a pack of Camels, shakes one to his lips, waves the pack at David.

David wags his head side-to-side while tying his boots.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
And, whatever you do, never salute
me. Makes me feel all...
(lighting up)
...funny inside.

David stands, tugs his brand new shirttails straight.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Now, c'mon. Time's a wastin'.

Calvin pockets the Camels, throws an arm over David's shoulder, ushers him toward the stairs.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
McMillan'll get a kick outta us two
showing up together! Thick as
thieves already.

INT. MI HEADQUARTERS, BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

A darkened room lit only by the beam of a projector and the harsh midday sun creeping in under yellowed blinds.

An Ektacrome slide drops into the carousel. KA-CHINK! A face flashes across the silver screen at the head of the room.

We recognize him instantly. The man from *Quach Thi Trang*.

MCMILLAN (O.S.)
Thierry Arthur Girard.

A stone-faced mountain of a man steps into the light. This is Major General BARRY MCMILLAN (late 30s, grizzled, stern, no-nonsense).

At the sight of Calvin, McMillan's face falls.

MCMILLAN
How many times do I have to tell
you, boy? When I say 1330, I
fuckin' mean it!

Smiling, his arm still draped over David's shoulder, Calvin
kicks the door shut behind himself.

CALVIN
Sorry, boss. Long night at the Rex.

MCMILLAN
(re: the cigarette)
And put that goddamn thing out.
Show some respect.

CALVIN
Jawohl herr kommandant.

Calvin lets go of David, bends to snuff out his cigarette.

Frozen, his mind racing, David stands stone still for a beat
before remembering to salute.

MCMILLAN
There we go.
(saluting back)
Take a lesson, Calvin. Have a seat.

David looks to Calvin. Calvin winks, gesturing. And the two
of them move toward a pair of empty seats.

McMillan turns back to the screen. None of the other SHADOWY
OFFICERS in the room say a word.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
As I was saying.

He lifts his pointer to the screen, advances through a
series of slides shot from the rooftop.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
(pronouncing it 'theory')
Thierry. Fuck! Why do all these
frogs have such frilly names?

DAVID
(perfect inflection)
Thierry.

McMillan pauses, looks for an instant like he's going to
javelin David with his pointer.

Instead, he turns back to the screen. It's the moment of the hand-off to the woman in white.

MCMILLAN

Girard. The wayward son of the former French Trade Minister. A slimy, false-front fucker. Running daddy's import/export operation. Married twice. Divorced twice. Last one hasn't been seen since.

He advances a couple more slides to the passing of the parcel in the roundabout.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)

Thinks he owns the joint. Works every angle. Dark side *and* light.

David raises his hand, like a kid in school. Nobody pays him a lick of attention - other than Calvin, who smirks coolly.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)

We have reason to believe he's been trading in stolen American weapons and ammunition. Selling our own anti-aircraft missiles to the VC, NLF, and PAVN in trade for drugs.
(beat)
Heroin. Grass. Smuggled in from Laos.

DAVID

Where we've been bombing.

Somewhere in the darkness, one of the SHADY COMMANDERS chimes in, monotone:

SHADY COMMANDER

We can neither confirm nor deny--

MCMILLAN

(interrupting)

Drugs sold *back* to our GIs in the field at a premium.

The screen freezes at the moment the US Army Truck explodes.

Someone to the left of the screen unceremoniously pulls one of the blinds open. It FLAPS loudly up, fills the space again with light.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
(toward David)
I hear tell you were part of the
so-called peace movement back at
Notre Dame before you joined ROTC.

David nods, runs a hand again over his buzzed scalp.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
Your daddy probably told you it'd
be a surefire way to avoid getting
your number called, huh?

David draws a breath to speak.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
Well, kid. Welcome to Saigon!

McMillian advances to a slide that appears to be a cribbed
duplicate of Girard's passport photo.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
We want you to infiltrate his
organization. Befriend him. Win him
over. Collect as much intel as you
can without attracting attention.
Go deep. We'll dig you back out.
When the time comes.
(beat)
Any questions?

Silence. One of the shadowy officers COUGHS.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
Calvin here'll be your handler,
such as he is.

David turns back toward Calvin. Calvin grins, tosses David a
leather wallet. He catches it awkwardly.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
Check into the Caravelle. Girard's
a regular at the bar on the roof,
Saigon Saigon. Generally from
around midnight, on.
(beat)
You play tennis?

David slowly opens the wallet.

In it, we catch a glimpse of an ID with David's picture on
it. He pulls it out. The name is different. An alias.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)

Report to the offices of "Time" next Monday, first thing. Bureau chief there, Stanley Cloud, owes us a favor. You'll be writing under the byline: David Johnston.

CALVIN

(piping in)

We've found it's easier to stick you with your *actual* first name, on the first go-around anyway.

(beat)

More... natural.

David stares at the ID, taking it all in warily.

MCMILLAN

The agency's been ghost publishing under that name for a good couple years. "New York Times", "Life", "Fortune". You name it. So, you aren't likely to draw too many eyeballs.

(beat)

Unless you can't write for shit.

McMillan presses a button and the image of a woman we haven't seen yet fills the screen. She's wearing fatigues and has two Leica cameras slung around her neck.

CALVIN

(toward the screen)

Nadia Schröder. German. Long, kinky history. Some say she's the only member of Baader-Meinhof to go Scott free.

Calvin stands, approaches the screen.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Possibly because her father's the head of the FIS. Possibly because she's just, well, *sneaky*.

(beat)

Girard's current squeeze.

MCMILLAN

Get to know her. Charm her. But watch your back.

David raises his hand. Someone turns off the projector.

DAVID
I'm sorry, sir. But... why me?

CALVIN
Because you sure as hell don't
belong here! And because, well, you
look the part, kid.

MCMILLAN
And you speak a little French. And
your name's David. And you write,
right?

David nods absentmindedly, slides the ID back in.

McMillan strides across the room toward him.

MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
My daddy served under your grandad
in the Atlantic. Tough sonofabitch!

McMillan reaches out to shake David's hand.

MAJOR GENERAL MCMILLAN (CONT'D)
Shame about your daddy's whole deal
at *Tanchon* though. Failure of
intelligence, if you ask me. But
that's why you're here, ain't it?

DAVID
Sir, I--

McMillan lets go of David's hand.

MCMILLAN
Glad you are, son. Glad you are.
(beat)
Any questions?

David STAMMERS:

DAVID
What, uh... what was in the truck?

McMillan grins, pushes past him toward the door. The rest of
the shadowy officers wordlessly withdraw.

MCMILLAN
Opium, son. Opium!

The door GRINDS open and SLAMS shut, leaving David and
Calvin alone in silence.

MCMILLAN (O.S.)

It's on you to find out where they
got it!

Grinning, Calvin shakes out another cigarette. His eyes wash
over David like those of a snake surveying its prey.

CALVIN

What are you?
(lighting up)
A 42-long?

INT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, LOBBY - DUSK

Dressed in a snug, 42-long linen suit, David nervously
crosses the ornate, vaguely Art Deco lobby of the Hotel
Caravelle - his new home away from home.

The CLAMOR of traffic on the streets outside is muted - like
the sound of a LAPPING WAVES.

Inside, BOSSA NOVA echoes over hidden speakers. Clusters of
EXPATS, JOURNALISTS, DIPLOMATS, and OFFICERS ON LEAVE chat
in HUSHED TONES.

Not a soul in sight seems to notice David. Like the
Lieutenant said, he has the look. Fits right in.

David cuts a line toward the reception desk carrying a small
leather duffel, a typewriter case, and a wood tennis racket.

CONCIERGE

(in subtitled French)
*Good evening, sir. How may I be of
assistance?*

DAVID

(also in French)
*Good evening. I, uh, have a
reservation under the name...*
(taking a breath)
...Johnston. David Johnston.

The Concierge flips open the reservations log.

CONCIERGE

Ah, yes. Here we are. How was your
flight, sir?

DAVID

(pulling out his wallet)
Good. Uneventful.

CONCIERGE

As one prefers these days, yes?

(beat)

Passport?

David pads his jacket pocket, pulls out a forged US Passport, cracks it open (as if to double check that it's the right one), hands it over.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Thank you. One moment please.

The Concierge takes David's fake passport and ducks through a pair of louvered doors.

In the distance, David hears FAINT LAUGHTER and turns to see a thicket of REPORTERS hovering like hungry hyenas around a woman in combat fatigues.

It's woman from the slide show. Meet: NADIA SCHRÖDER (late 20s, lithe, chiseled, the aloof air of a bird of prey).

NADIA

(in accented English)

Don't get me wrong, a firefight with a Martini is one thing. But from the rooftop, it is too far. Over the smog, you can barely smell the cordite.

A smattering of POLITE LAUGHTER. Then:

CONCIERGE (O.S.)

(back to French)

Here you are, sir.

David wheels around to find the Concierge handing him back his closed passport.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Or we could always hold it for you here. In the safe.

David takes it back.

DAVID

No, no. That'll be fine.

CONCIERGE

(grabbing a pen)

How long again will you be staying with us?

DAVID
I, uh...

CONCIERGE
(writing)
Indefinitely. Perfect.

The Concierge drops his pen, grabs a key, hands it to David.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)
My name is François. If there is
anything we can do to make your
stay more pleasant, please feel
free to let me know.

David takes his key. It's oversized and tied to a heavy red
silk tassel.

DAVID
Thank you. Thank you very much.

CONCIERGE
Of course. It is my pleasure.

As David turns to go, he briefly makes eye contact with
Nadia. She smiles knowingly. He breaks first.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)
Oh! And I am sorry. I nearly
forgot. You have a message!

The Concierge spins around, pulls a small sealed envelope
from a grid of numbered slots, hands it to David.

DAVID
Thank you.

CONCIERGE
À bientôt monsieur.

DAVID
(palming the letter)
Merci. À bientôt.

As David moves toward the elevators - deliberately not
looking back toward Nadia - he flicks the sealed envelope
open, thumbs out a small card on hotel stock.

In hastily scribbled script it reads:

WHATEVER YOU DO DON'T FUCK HER. -CAL

David crumples the card, shoves it into his pocket before
pressing the elevator call button.

INT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, ROOM - DUSK

With the DIN of traffic still wafting up from *Lam Son Square* down below, David lies half-dressed on his crisply-made bed surrounded by mimeographed press clippings.

He's staring up at a spider near the ceiling. The spider is busy meticulously mending a fine, gauzy web.

Across the room, warm light spills through the tall glass windows to the street. Dust swirls through the humid air.

Reaching across himself, David picks up one of the coppied articles, throws his feet to the floor, stands.

He walks slowly toward the windows, reading.

Over his shoulder, we can barely make out the byline:

DAVID JOHNSTON

Down on the street below, cars and pedestrians swirl like choreographed dancers. A city he has yet to know.

INSERT MONTAGE:

To the driving beat of "Tình Ta Như Lúa Đơm Hoa" by the Vietnamese Queen of Soul, Carol Kim, we watch as:

-- David lifts his battered Rolex in his darkened room to see that it's nearly midnight --

-- David threads his way toward the rooftop bar at the hotel, scanning for anyone familiar --

-- David pulls up a seat at the bar in a totally different outfit and gesture for the bartender --

-- David strides from the bar toward the open-air rooftop drinking a martini and dressed differently again --

-- David pauses at the rail in another outfit and turns to see Girard seated alone, lighting a cigarette --

-- David eyes a differently-dressed Girard from a new vantage point on a different night, now drinking a G&T --

-- David lifts his battered Rolex again just outside the bar, dressed more formally but noticeably unshaven --

-- David sidles up to the bar again in yet another outfit, his weary eyes continuing to scour the room --

-- David does a double-take (dressed more casually again) as Nadia and Girard breeze by, chic and unawares --

-- David turns back to the bar (back in his first outfit, now sweat-stained and wrinkled) clearly loosing his nerve --

-- David gestures toward the bartender (again wearing a yet another get-up) and dejectedly orders yet another drink --

END MONTAGE.

INT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, ROOFTOP BAR - LATER

David sits in silence, stares into a scotch and soda,

In the distance, we can make out a differently-attired Girard pulling out a chair for Nadia (back in fatigues).

Carol Kim still ECHOES on, over tinny speakers.

DAVID
(into his scotch)
He's right. I don't belong here.

Two empty bar stools down, a BLITZED PATRON bellows loudly toward a DRUNKEN REPORTER:

BLITZED PATRON
(slurring)
Aw, for fuck's sake, Pete! You
don't wanna get mixed up in that
shit. That's fucking trouble, man!

Still staring into his beer, David stiffens slightly - as if welcoming any distraction from his repeated failures.

DRUNKEN REPORTER
(Australian accent)
No, no, no. You're reading it all
wrong, mate. Mark my words, as soon
as the Yanks are driven outta here,
they'll be on to Afghanistan. Them
or the Soviets. Take your pick.

BLITZED PATRON
Pffft.

DRUNKEN REPORTER
(ignoring him)
And, why you might ask? One word:
opium. After Laos, after the Golden
Triangle, who's the world's second
largest producer?
(MORE)

DRUNKEN REPORTER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Afghanistan!

David's eyes narrow slightly.

DRUNKEN REPORTER (CONT'D)

Oil, minerals, gold? Uh-uh. In a world full of pain, it's poppies, mate. That's where it's at. That's why they're here. That's why our friends in the CIA...

BLITZED PATRON

Friends?!

DRUNKEN REPORTER

...are mucking about dropping pigs and rice into the jungles of Laos and snatching up all the land they can get. Why? To become the world's largest producer of opium, of course! Corner the market, carpet bomb anything that stands in the way. Fucking disgusting!

BLITZED PATRON

Disgusting. Bartender? Two more!

(beat)

What was I saying?

Disgusted with himself, David fishes around in his pocket for some cash, tosses it up onto the bar, turns to leave.

This time, he doesn't even bother to glance back at Girard.

INT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, ROOM - NIGHT

It's another night, another outfit. And David is sprawled out over his tangled mess of a bed. The once tidy room now more closely resembles the posh cage it's become.

The glass door to his deck is open and the CLAMOR of the city fills the room with light and sound.

David, bleary-eyed, lifts his wristwatch. It's barely 7:00 PM. He SIGHS, drops his arm.

DAVID

I'm not cut out for this shit.

Suddenly, from out on the deck, the FLUTTER of wings. David sits up to see a single dove standing on the rusted steel handrail, COOING.

David lowers his feet quietly to the floor, stands, strides slowly toward the door. The dove doesn't move. Instead, it just calmly tracks David with its eyes.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Hey, now. What're you doing here?

As he passes the bureau near the door, David grabs a single saltine from an open packet on a long-abandoned room service tray - crushing it in one hand while pressing the door open.

Still, the dove doesn't budge.

EXT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, DECK - NIGHT

David steps cautiously out onto the deck with an open palm extended - the palm with the crushed cracker.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You hungry?

The dove hesitates, spinning around like a tightrope walker.

DAVID (CONT'D)
C'mon now. Go ahead. I won't...

Unexpectedly, the dove leaps from the handrail and up onto David's bare wrist.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(a little stunned)
...hurt you.

The dove bends to peck at the bits of saltine and we --

FLASH TO:

INT. NOTRE DAME, MAIN BUILDING - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Surrounded by throngs of SHAGGY COEDS, a much younger and much rougher-looking David stands with his back to a cadre of ADMINISTRATORS in dark suits and black cassocks.

DAVID
(impassioned)
If we don't act now - if we don't stand against this war and everything it represents - if we don't fight every federal action on this campus now, violently, and with one voice, well, then...

David spins, scours the room for even a glimmer support.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 ...the suppression of liberty and
 autonomy will never, ever stop!
 Here or there. Or anywhere!

One of the stern-looking administrators behind him leans
 toward a man in a cassock, WHISPERING.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 I say, what a shaken world needs
 now is more fucking shaking!

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, DECK - NIGHT

Suddenly, the dove leaps from David's arm and loudly wings
 its way back into the darkness.

DAVID
 (resignedly)
 Exactly.

He dusts the crumbs from his palm, turns, steps back into
 the room. Pausing at the bed, he snatches up his room key
 and bolts for the door.

A man on a mission.

EXT. TU DO STREET - EVENING

David strides from the lobby and out onto the sidewalk, his
 suit coat draped over one shoulder.

His eyes follow the tangle of traffic - horse-drawn
 carriages, delivery trucks, open-topped Jeeps ferrying GIs
 ON LEAVE, smartly-dressed YOUNG WOMEN striding in pairs.

In the distance, stands the ornate façade to the Opera House
 opposite the hotel.

From behind, a FAMILIAR VOICE:

PETER (O.S.)
 (Australian accent)
 If I didn't know any better...

David wheels around to see a deeply-tanned, balding man in a
 bright white polo shirt - the now relatively more sober
 Aussie from the night before.

PETER (CONT'D)
 ...I'd say you were CIA.

This is PETER SURREY (30s, weathered, jaded, battle-tested).
He thrusts a hand toward David.

PETER (CONT'D)
But they'd be smarter than to put
you up here dressed like that even
with the bulletproof glass!

David takes his hand firmly.

PETER (CONT'D)
Peter Surrey, Associated Press.

DAVID
David Johnston, "Time".

Peter lets go of his hand, smirking.

PETER
Yeah, I heard. Welcome.
(beat)
You hungry?

David nods, seeming relieved to finally be able to answer a question honestly.

PETER (CONT'D)
C'mon.

EXT. CONTINENTAL PALACE HOTEL - NIGHT

Together, David and Peter make their way across the square toward the Continental Palace Hotel.

Unlike the Caravelle, The Continental exudes an antiquated French colonial charm. Something ripped straight out of a Graham Greene novel.

PETER
Sure will be a shame to see all
this... *splendor* fall.

DAVID
How so?

PETER
Just a matter of time, my friend.
Until it all comes crashing down,
like everything else.

David veers toward the entrance to *Café la Hien*, The Continenetal's street-level restaurant where a series of EMBASSY TYPES cluster at smart-looking tables.

PETER (CONT'D)
I give it three years. Maybe four,
tops. And I've been here since
before the French lost at *Dien Bien*
Phu so I know of which I speak!

He pauses, eying David curiously.

PETER (CONT'D)
Where do you think you're going?

David gestures weakly toward The Continental.

PETER (CONT'D)
Bah! That place is swarming with
spooks. Lovely for breakfast.
Atrocious for dinner.
(beat)
This way...

David nods, falls back in next to Peter.

PETER (CONT'D)
Only way to know a country and its
people is to dine with them. Drink
with them. Where they do.

INT. BẾN THÀNH MARKET - NIGHT

Peter and David sit hunched over steaming bowls of *Bánh Canh*
at a crowded seafood stall inside a bustling market.

The place is a riot of color and sound.

PETER
See now, that's where we differ,
you and me.

Peter reaches for a sweating bottle of beer.

PETER (CONT'D)
As Uncle Ho said:
(taking a swig)
"You kill ten of us, we kill one of
you. But in the end, you will tire
of it first."

David, his mouth on fire, grabs his beer too.

DAVID
Jesus, so hot!

Peter nods deeply.

PETER
French couldn't hack it. Neither
will your lot. And you know why?

David shrugs, gulps down beer.

PETER (CONT'D)
Because, this is *their* homeland.
Their birthright. The harder anyone
tries to rip it out of their hands,
the harder they'll fight right
back. Man, woman, *and* child.

Peter digs back into his soup.

PETER (CONT'D)
But that's what we're here to
document, right?

DAVID
I suppose so, yeah. I mean--

PETER
Cover the conflict from the inside,
out. Show the world what's *actually*
going on over here.

David nods - his mouth still on fire.

PETER (CONT'D)
When does Stanley have you starting
anyway?

David looks at his watch, remembering to himself: *Girard,
midnight, terrace bar, Caravelle.*

DAVID
Stanley?

PETER
Cloud. Bureau Chief. Your boss!

DAVID
Oh, right. First thing Monday
morning.

PETER
Well then, we have our work cut out
for us.

INSERT MONTAGE:

To the off-beat sway of of "Keep a Cool Head" by Desmond
Dekker and the Aces we watch as:

-- Peter shouts a drink order at a frantic bartender inside the packed *Tu Do* Nightclub --

-- David, already three sheets to the wind, stumbles down *Rue Catinat* (AKA Freedom Street) after Peter --

-- Peter grooves on a dancefloor crowded with G.I.s without spilling a drop of his whiskey --

-- David shoves his way through the throngs inside the Texas Bar, trying to get another bartender's attention --

-- Peter cups his hands to light a joint before passing it to David outside a neon-lit strip club --

-- David gags out clouds of smoke while trying to slyly sneak a glance at his wristwatch --

PETER (PRE-LAP)

What, got somewhere better to be?

END MONTAGE.

EXT. RUE CATINAT - NEAR MIDNIGHT

David STAMMERS. Peter frowns.

PETER

C'mon, man! Surely you're not flagging on me already.

DAVID

No, I just... I--

PETER

And don't tell me it's jet lag!
Because you flew in from Okinawa
last Thursday.

This seems to instantly sober David up a notch.

But before he can reply, David sees a series of BLACK CLAD FIGURES leaping from rooftop to rooftop above them.

DAVID

What the...

Peter gazes up and shrugs nonchalantly.

PETER

Yeah. Vietcong.

David reflexively lets one hand drift to where he'd normally find a holstered sidearm. Peter notices.

PETER (CONT'D)
Nothing to worry about, mate.
Mostly just couriers, smugglers,
and spies. Been moving through the
city for years like it's their own
private elevated six-lane highway!

Peter tugs David with him back across the street. David
distractedly passes him back the smoldering joint.

DAVID
You seem to know an awful lot about
me already, don't you?

PETER
I'm a journalist! It's my job.
(beat)
You, on the other hand...

He takes a prodigious draw off the roach.

PETER (CONT'D)
(exhaling)
...have a lot to learn, my friend.
Thus, a nightcap on the roof is
order. Should be very, very...
illuminating as they say.

They bend back toward the hotel.

PETER (CONT'D)
What floor you on, by the way?

David still seems fixated on the idea of Vietcong foot
soldiers sprinting with impunity through the city. Or, maybe
he's actually never smoked grass this jungle-fresh before.

DAVID
What floor?

PETER
Of The Caravelle.

Peter passes David back the joint. He reluctantly takes it.

DAVID
God, this stuff is strong!

PETER
You'll get used to it.

David takes a tentative drag - exhaling a bit too quickly.

PETER (CONT'D)
No, no, no! Deeper. Hold it in!

David tries to pass the joint back. Peter won't take it.

PETER (CONT'D)
Americans, Puritans all!
(beat)
Go on!

David nods, taking another longer drag and holding it in.
Their eyes lock. Peter smiles, counting the seconds.

PETER (CONT'D)
Alright.

David exhales, GAGGING again.

PETER (CONT'D)
That's more like it.

He snatches the joint back. David clears his parched throat.

DAVID
(hoarse)
Five. Fifth floor.

PETER
Oh, no, no! That'll never do.

Together, amble on.

PETER (CONT'D)
Five's bad luck. Bombed back in
'64. Thankfully, pretty much all of
us were on assignment up north.
(beat)
Otherwise, it would've been a
bloody bloodbath!

INT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, ROOFTOP BAR - CONTINUOUS

To the tune of "I've Got A Feeling" by Baby Washington, we
GLIDE back through the packed Saigon Saigon rooftop bar
behind David and Peter.

Tonight, the place is shoulder-to-shoulder JOURNALISTS -
nearly all men. It's a literal who's-who of print
journalists, TV reporters, and battle-hardened cameramen.

Eyes agog (and already a little bloodshot), David follows
Peter out onto the terrace.

That's when we see him.

Girard is seated next to Nadia (who's wearing fatigues again). He's clad in a smart-looking light gray suit. And he holds a lit Gitanes in one hand.

They're both gazing out toward the hills where tracers streak through the sky and mortar blasts RUMBLE and BOOM.

Catching sight of Peter out of the corner of his eye, Girard turns, smiling broadly.

GIRARD
(heavy French accent)
Well, if it isn't our strapping
outback leprechaun.

PETER
(bowing deeply)
Mon cher Monsieur Girard.

Girard reaches across himself with his free hand to shake Peter's. Nadia keeps her eyes glued to the ongoing FIREFIGHT in the distance.

PETER (CONT'D)
Permettez-moi de vous présenter...

He steps aside, gesturing David's way.

PETER (CONT'D)
Cloud's newest addition.
(beat)
David... David... David...
Oh, heavens. What is your last name
again?

Trying to stay cool, David reaches a hand out toward Girard.

DAVID
Johnston. David Johnston, "Time".

Girard takes his hand gently, not standing.

GIRARD
Welcome, Monsieur Johnston.
(beat)
Thierry Girard.

PETER
Pretty much owns this corner of The
Caravelle.

GIRARD
And everything else within eye-
shot.

NADIA
(distantly)
In your dreams.

GIRARD
Please, please. Join us. You are
just in time for the fireworks!

NADIA
Shhh!

GIRARD
Don't mind her. She's all nerves.

David and Peter move for the two empty seats at Girard's
table - David trying hard not to let his eyes fix on Nadia.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
Happens every time she's headed
anywhere remotely off limits.

NADIA
(under her breath)
Halt die Klappe.

Girard SNAPS his fingers toward a passing WAITER. He
immediately swerves toward them.

GIRARD
(leaning in)
But you know that already don't
you, Peter?

The waiter steps up, interrupting:

WAITER
Oui, Monsier Girard?

GIRARD
(to Peter and David)
Gentlemen?

PETER
White Horse.
(beat, to David)
Neat.

DAVID
Uh... Gordon's martini, up. Olives.

WAITER
(to Girard)
Sir?

Girard makes a quick sweep with his free hand, signaling two more of the same for himself and Nadia.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Oui, Monsier.

The waiter departs and Girard bends toward David.

GIRARD
Well, David. Welcome to a front row
seat to the long-awaited collapse
of western democracy.

Pointing toward the distant battle with his lit cigarette,
he smiles contentedly - like a man proudly surveying his
domain, his creation.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
You just missed the gunships.

DAVID
Is it, uh, always like this?

GIRARD
Quite often, yes. More lately.
Mortars are now more common than a
spilled martini.

Peter leans toward Nadia.

PETER
We all set?

NADIA
0700. *Tan Son Nhut*. Johnny?

PETER
Don't worry. Handled.

She nods.

GIRARD
So, what is your story, young
mister Johnston?

David struggles to clear his fogged-up mind.

DAVID
Uh, born in Milwaukee. Raised in
Colorado. Majored in Journalism.
Notre Dame. Work mostly freelance -
"Fortune", "Life" - before pulling
this assignment.

Girard stares at him, as if waiting for more - something of consequence, meaning.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 Military family. Father was a mean sonofabitch. Mother was a saint. She's passed now. But he's so goddamn stubborn, he'll probably outlive us all.

Girard smiles, exhaling.

GIRARD
 (lifting his drink)
 Well, my friend, if you stay under Cloud's employ for long, your father might just as well be right.

A loud, low BLAST drowns him out. And a bright orange FIREBALL lights up the distant hills.

Nadia turns to grab her drink - finally seeming to notice David (and perhaps recognizing him from the lobby).

NADIA
 Since when did the hotel start housing junior CIA operatives?

David's face goes flush. The waiter obsequiously returns, delivering Peter and David's cocktails.

PETER
 See! He does have that air about him, doesn't he?

Nadia takes a gulp, her eyes washing over David.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Sadly, he's just more of Cloud's cannon fodder.

NADIA
 (to David)
 Words or pictures?

David clears his throat, reaching for his drink.

DAVID
 (lifting his glass)
 Words.

NADIA
 Well then...

She turns back to the jungle.

NADIA (CONT'D)
 ...you should come with us
 tomorrow. See what is *really*
 happening up-country.

David takes a sip, the gin burning on the way down.

GIRARD
 Do you play tennis, Mr. Johnston?

David looks like a fighter getting rope-a-doped.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 Tennis, do you play?

He nods, sets down his glass.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 Good. Then that's settled. Join me
 at my club in the morning. *Cercle*
Sportif. Say, 10:30?

Girard lifts his nearly empty glass, turns back to the still
 churning firefight in the distance.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 I've been *dying* for a worthy
 adversary.

BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

Three mortar concussions ECHO across every nearby building.

EXT. CERCLE SPORTIF - MORNING

Dressed in ill-fitting tennis whites, David strolls through
 the bizarrely pastoral old Saigon sports club carrying his
 tennis racket.

Gorgeous colonnaded pavilions abut aquamarine swimming pools
 lined with sunbathing BEAUTIES and DEFENSE DEPARTMENT
 HEAVIES in aviators and swim trunks.

In the distance, palm trees sway. In no way would anyone
 expect that armed conflict is currently ongoing barely 15
 kilometers away from this mirage-like Eden.

Up ahead, David sees a face that stops him dead in his
 tracks. It's Calvin - his CIA handler.

He's shirtless and quaffing a fruity rum drink, reclined on
 a chaise in the sun.

David doesn't know what to do with his eyes.

Calvin, smiling, nods his way subtly (almost admiringly) and yanks a chunk of pineapple from the rim of his glass, takes a greedy bite.

David bends toward the tennis courts. Instantly, we hear:

GIRARD (O.S.)
There we are. Splendid!

David wheels around, to find Girard waiting for him just inside the nearest caged-in court.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
I was worried that either a) you had a hard time finding the place, or b) Peter had convinced you to head off with him and the ball and chain to the deepest darkest jungles of Laos.

David ducks in the open chain link gate. Girard leans toward him with a cupped hand, WHISPERING for effect:

GIRARD (CONT'D)
To get to the bottom of why US Intelligence is trying to diminish my entrepreneurial spirit.
(beat, louder)
And unfairly disrupt my supply chain!

DAVID
She AP, too?

Girard wags his head, steps away, stretches.

GIRARD
She works for no one but herself.
(doing a deep bend)
But you've been freelance before.
You know how it is. Your own base interests come first.

David slowly unscrews his wooden racket cover.

DAVID
Yeah. I do kinda miss that.
(beat)
Say, I, uh... I dunno how worthy an adversary I'll be today. Feels like my head's on fire!

GIRARD
Don't worry. That's just Saigon, my
friend.

With his racket over one shoulder and a fresh ball can under
one arm, Girard slowly strolls toward the net.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
(over his shoulder)
Serve or receive?

DAVID
Serve?

GIRARD
Bien sûr.

Girard tosses him the can of balls. David catches it like
it's a grenade with a pulled pin.

INSERT MONTAGE:

-- David slowly, warily, bounces a single ball up and down
four or five times with his left hand --

-- Girard, crouched, sways side-to-side in the far court
like a cat waiting to pounce --

-- David tosses the ball into the air and then wails a
smoking first serve just barely over the net --

-- Girard lunges, slides, stabs at the ball - his face
registering a flicker of glee --

-- David jogs nimbly cross-court and slices an elegant
backhand return --

-- Girard sprints to close the gap, leaping into the air and
walloping a sizzling backhand --

-- David skids across the clay as the ball kisses the line,
taking an odd bounce --

-- Girard, at the net, smiles contentedly as David's
blistering return snags the net --

END MONTAGE.

Girard bends to fish the ball out of the net and flick it
gracefully back to David.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
Where have you been all my life?!

EXT. CERCLE SPORTIF, TENNIS COURT - LATER

Drenched in sweat, David and Girard approach the net, hands-out as a single ball rolls to a stop behind David.

GIRARD
Mon dieu my friend! I think you
 sell yourself short.

They clasp hands. David's got his racket in his left hand - which is pressed to his glistening thigh, as if to hold himself up.

DAVID
 (gasping)
 Jesus. What is that? Five, four?

GIRARD
Oui. Sixth set?

DAVID
 I don't have it in me!

GIRARD
 You do. You're just being kind.

Girard lets go of David's hand.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 Next time!

Strolling toward an open duffel on the side of the court, Girard bends, pulls out a towel, tosses it to David.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 And now, we drink!

EXT. CERCLE SPORTIF, BAR - DAY

Toweled off but still winded, David sits next to Girard at a small white table under a bright red umbrella.

A WAITER places two tall gin and tonics before them.

DAVID
 So, what brought your father here
 in the first place? To Vietnam, I
 mean.

GIRARD
 (taking a sip)
 My, my. You are curious.

DAVID
Well, I *am* a journalist.

GIRARD
But are you though?

David nearly gags.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
I mean, I read a few of your pieces
last night. And I have to say...

He gestures toward a SECOND WAITER for menus.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
...they conveyed the distinct
impression of being written by a
collection of amateurs.
(beat)
No consistent voice whatsoever.

David STABS at the lime in his drink.

DAVID
(crunching ice)
Well, I, uh... I'm working on that.

He clears his throat.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(riffing)
Assignments. Different editors.
Different publications. Different
angles, subjects.

The second waiter delivers menus.

GIRARD
No need to be defensive.
(beat, smiling)
But either way, you're in good
hands with Cloud. He'll whip you
into shape! You start tomorrow?

DAVID
Yep.

GIRARD
Then dinner. My house!

DAVID
Oh, no. I couldn't.

GIRARD

You must. Remember, I'm a bachelor
at the moment!

Just over his shoulder, David spies Calvin slowly lowering himself into the swimming pool backward - eyes fixed on the back of Girard's head.

GIRARD (CONT'D)

And if Cloud doesn't smell stale
Romanée-Conti on your breath first
thing Monday, he'll never respect
you. Not even in the slightest.

EXT. CHEZ GIRARD - NIGHT

Changed and showered (and full of barely tamped-down apprehension) David stands on the front steps of a hulking, bright white French Colonial two-story villa.

The place is enormous. All ornately-carved columns, graceful arches, elaborately filigreed wrought iron. A vision from another era frozen in amber.

Suddenly, the door SWINGS open revealing Girard.

GIRARD

(re: the house)

Don't blame me. Blame my father and
his epic disillusion of grandeur!

(beat)

Come in! Please.

INT. CHEZ GIRARD, GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Not saying a word, David follows Girard across the threshold and in looking like a man in a trance.

The interior of the house is jarringly dissimilar to the finery of the façade.

Every tall, arched window is covered in floor-to-ceiling sandbags. The only illumination radiates palely from cut crystal chandeliers.

The entire floor - every room - is wholly devoid of furniture. Darkened sections of parquet floors suggest long-missing Persian rugs, sofas, tables, and chairs.

DAVID

(his eyes adjusting)

Love what you've done with the
place.

GIRARD
 Partially my father's fault.
 Partially a wartime precaution.

Girard leads him toward a central staircase with finely-carved balustrades.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 When Father lost his nerve and
 abandoned ship, he put me in
 charge.

Girard begins ascending the stairs.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 But then he promptly had every
 stick of furniture - every
 painting, every vase - shipped back
 home to Paris. Greedy bastard.

INT. CHEZ GIRARD, STAIRCASE - SAME

From the top of the stairs, we can hear a famous recording of the Puccini aria "Nessun Dorma" ECHOING in the distance.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
 So, we've taken to doing most of
 our living upstairs. Or at The
 Caravelle, of course.

INT. CHEZ GIRARD, SECOND FLOOR - SAME

David follows Girard past a series of interconnected rooms, all furnished in jarringly modern fashion.

Vividly colored, plastic fantastic icons of mid-century design abound. As do gigantic silver gelatin prints of stark black-and-white combat photographs.

DAVID
 Turandot?

GIRARD
 You know your Puccini! I would not
 have guessed that.

David pauses at one of the photographs. Unframed like the rest, it hangs from clips attached to clear monofilament tied to nails in the molded plaster picture rails.

DAVID
 These hers?

GIRARD
Nadia's? Yes. The only art I will
allow, such as it is.

David leans close to the photograph. Towering above, a young
Hmong boy proudly clutches a smoking M-16 knee deep in a
rice paddy while the village behind him burns.

DAVID
Beautiful.

GIRARD
Terrifying.
(beat)
Thinks she's Robert Capa or some
such. Ironically, Father was with
him when he died in *Thái Bình*.
Landmine. '54.

Girard makes a beeline for an ultra-mod rolling bar cart.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
Martini?

David stays staring at the photograph.

DAVID
(distantly)
Why not?

GIRARD
Father was only about four or five
meters away. Could very well have
been him.

Girard lifts a martini shaker. It beads silver sweat.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
Which would have, of course, made
my life infinitely simpler!

INT. CHEZ GIRARD, DINING ROOM - LATER

It's way later, and both men are more than a little drunk.
They sit opposite each other over the remnants of a meal
apparently prepared and delivered by invisible servants.

The opera is gone - replaced by Jazz. Art Blakey's "Are You
Real" CRACKLES and POPS over boxy Dieter Rams speakers.

A cluster of very expensive bottles of burgundy dot the
table, all nearly empty.

DAVID

My dad was pretty much the same.
Imperious. Overbearing. Quick to
anger. Slow to forgive.

GIRARD

What did you say he did, for a
living?

DAVID

He was a military man. Navy. Korea.
Followed in my Pops' footsteps. Hew
was a U-boat hunter during
lend/lease. World War II.

Girard tips his cup.

GIRARD

I imagine neither of them are
altogether thrilled with your
chosen profession.

David nods, taking a sip.

DAVID

Nope. Women's work, says Pops.

Girard points distractedly toward one of Nadia's photos.

GIRARD

Nadia would gleefully concur. Well,
not gleefully. Vehemently.

David reaches for the nearest bottle, lifting it to the
light before pouring out the last of it.

DAVID

And what is it you do for a living?

Girard eyes him briefly - as if the question is somehow some
sort of affront. Below them.

GIRARD

Really?

DAVID

What?

The two of them stare at each other for a tense moment.

Girard suddenly stands. The chrome legs of his dining chair
SCRAPE loudly across the parquet floor.

GIRARD
Americans, all the same. Always
defining one by their chosen
profession.
(beat)
More wine?

Girard disappears into the kitchen in the distance.

DAVID
Nope. Can't.

Perhaps remembering how far beyond his depth he is, David
tosses his napkin up onto the table and stands.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I got work tomorrow! First thing.

GIRARD (O.S.)
Fine. Suit yourself.

We can hear Girard pulling a bottle from a shelf regardless.

GIRARD (O.S.)
And it's import/export.

Girard reemerges with a bottle of cognac.

DAVID
(pushing his luck)
Of what?

GIRARD
Anything the world will allow.

Reaching across himself toward the bar cart, Girard grabs
two snifters.

GIRARD (CONT'D)
Even with CIA's meddling.
(beat, coyly)
One more for the road?

David reluctantly relents.

INT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Looking worse for wear, David steps up to the lobby desk to
retrieve his key. The concierge recognizes him immediately.

CONCIERGE
Good evening, Mr. Johnston.

For the briefest of seconds, David looks like he's about to correct him - before:

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)
You have a message.

DAVID
Thank you.

The concierge grabs the room key and another tiny sealed envelope, spins, hands them both to David.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Good night.

CONCIERGE
Good night, sir.

We TRACK with David as he heads toward the elevators, pocketing his key and tearing open the envelope.

He lifts the card inside and slows, taking a quick look around the empty lobby. It reads:

DON'T LET HIM FUCK YOU.

In the lower right hand corner is a tiny hand-drawn arrow. David flips the card over, revealing:

ALTHOUGH, YOU DO MAKE A LOVELY COUPLE. -CAL

David crumples the card, slams his fist against the elevator call button.

INT. TIME MAGAZINE, SAIGON BUREAU - MORNING

Seated in bunches inside the sweltering nerve center of "Time" Magazine's ramshackle Saigon Bureau are a handful of equally hungover JOURNALISTS and PHOTOGRAPHERS.

The walls are covered in tattered maps, fragments of articles, calendars, proof sheets.

The air is thick with cigarette smoke and the exhaust fumes being dragged in by an overtaxed air conditioner.

At the head of the room stands Bureau Chief STANLEY CLOUD (late 30s, gruff, thick glasses - a hard-boiled, no-nonsense, old-school journalist).

CLOUD

So, yeah. 100% stonewall from DOD and the Joint Chiefs vis-a-vis covert support for General Pao and his troops in their fight against the Pathet Lao, even though we've had boots on the ground all over Laos - north and south - since before the supposedly hush-hush bombing even started.

David sits opposite Cloud in the middle of the room, looking like he'd rather be back in bed. His face is pale and his eyes are still bloodshot.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

And, well, I don't know precisely how to put this gents. But AP's aiming to scoop us. Blow the lid off the whole deal with or without confirmation off-the-record.

REPORTER #1

Surrey?

Cloud nods.

REPORTER #2

Of course.

CLOUD

Apparently, he hitched a ride with Schröder on one of the Girard's private fleet of Hueys.

He turns toward a detailed map of the Golden Triangle - pointing to a section of mountainous Laotian jungle.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

To somewhere right about here. In the northern section of Region Two. Thankfully, Johnny got wind of it. And, well, loose lips sink scoops.

REPORTER #3

What the hell's he thinking? Everybody and their uncle knows US AID's just a CIA front. There's no news there.

CLOUD

Yeah, well...

He pauses, reaches for a lit cigarette smoldering in a nearby ashtray brimming with butts.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
 ...gotta keep ol' Pete and Girard's
 prickly pear *überfrau* from beating
 us to the punch.

At the second mention of Girard, David finally perks up.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
 I need a volunteer to join Johnny.
 (exhaling)
 Duck in on Air America...

Everyone assembled GROANS.

CLOUD (O.C.)
 ...to document their valiant
 efforts at helping Pao's forces put
 down the Lao rebels and stop the
 red tide, yadda, yadda, yadda.

David abruptly raises his hand. Every eye in the room shoots his direction.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
 Wait. Who the hell are you?!

DAVID
 Johnston. David.

Cloud just stares at him.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 The new guy.
 (beat)
 "New York Times", "Fortune",
 "Life". Flew in from Okinawa
 Thursday.

CLOUD
 (somberly)
 Oh, right. You.

David's face tightens as he realizes he has literally no idea how much Cloud knows about who he *actually* is.

After a beat:

CLOUD (CONT'D)
 Nope. No way, no--

David cuts him off:

DAVID
I know them both. Surrey and
Schröder. Girard too. In fact--

Cloud cuts him off.

CLOUD
How the hell could you possibly--
(beat)
Ah, the *fucking* Caravelle!

He looks past David to a YOUNG MAN taking notes in the back of the room.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
(to the young note taker)
Remind me to stop putting fresh
meat up in that snake pit. Place is
crawling with deviants and double-
crossers.

DAVID
I'm 100% on-board. Whatever it
takes, I'll do it.

Everyone else SCOFFS dismissively.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Seriously. Try me.

Cloud stabs out his cigarette. David grabs his notebook.

CLOUD
Alright then. Head to *Tan Son Nhut*.
(clarifying)
The airbase.

DAVID
I know it.

CLOUD
1300 hours. Johnny'll meet you
there.

David looks up. *Johnny?*

CLOUD (CONT'D)
Shooter. Good egg. Local.

David nods, jotting down a quick note.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
He's lined up a quick in/out with
some shit bird Air America ace.
(MORE)

CLOUD (CONT'D)

He'll drop you at a Hmong training camp, nip on over to *U-Tapao*, refuel, and pick y'all up on his way back.

(beat)

See what you see. Take copious notes - proper attributions, coordinates, place names - and let Johnny do the rest. You got a decent recorder?

David nods, still scribbling.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

I want a max of 4,500 words on my desk by Wednesday morning. And, since it's Laos, and we're not *actually* supposed to be there, we'll have to run everything you write by JSOC once you get back.

(beat)

Focus on the re-supply efforts. Feeding the starving population, disrupting V.C. supply lines, rescuing downed pilots, et cetera.

(crossing his arms)

Should be a puff piece cake walk right up your alley. But, if you want, ask Jesse there for a sidearm.

DAVID

(to his notebook)

No need.

Silence. David looks up.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I, uh. I have one.

CLOUD

(to the room)

See gents. Now, that's the Notre Dame fighting spirit for ya!

(to David)

Vita, Dulcedo, Spes.

David stares back, racking his brain for the English translation of his alma mater's Latin motto.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

Life, Sweetness, Hope.

(MORE)

CLOUD (CONT'D)

(beat)

Three things you'll soon realize
are in short supply over here, up-
country especially. Not to mention
in fuckin' Laos!

INT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, ROOM - LATER

Moving quickly, David packs his bag. On the bed before him
are scattered essentials: a tape recorder, notebooks, a .45
pistol, a box of shells.

The expression on his face is hard to read as he moves. Half
fear, half excitement. Equal parts apprehension and the
thrill of the hunt.

EXT. HOTEL CARAVELLE, ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

With his satchel slung over one shoulder and a duffel
hanging from one arm, David hails a taxi.

A battered blue Renault 4CV veers toward the curb and David
throws open the door, ducking inside.

DAVID

Tan Son Nhut. Please.

TAXI DRIVER

Yes, sir.

David slams his door shut. But the door opposite him
suddenly bursts open. It's Calvin. He slides right in.

CALVIN

(to the driver)

Trên đôi. Cảm ơn.

David SIGHS. Calvin shoots him a quick grin.

CALVIN

Told McMillan you were the right
move. You're doing great, kid!

The driver guns it back into traffic.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I mean, even with your history.

DAVID

(peevied)

I have no idea what you could
possibly--

EXT. NOTRE DAME CAMPUS - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Carrying a portable bullhorn, David runs for his life with a pack of bloodied and beaten PROTESTERS while National Guard TROOPS close in from every direction.

DAVID

Hurry! This way! Before they--

A SHIRTLESS HIPPIE in tight-fitting bell-bottoms HOLLERS back, on the run:

SHIRTLESS HIPPIE

Don't listen to him, man. He's a fucking rat! A plant!

A BEARDED BEATNIK carrying an upside-down protest sign SHOUTS over one shoulder:

BEARDED BEATNIK

WHAT!?

SHIRTLESS HIPPIE

His granddad's a fucking Admiral or some bullshit!

END FLASHBACK.

INT. TAXI CAB - DAY

Calvin smiles, radiating his usual off-the-charts hubris.

CALVIN

I feel for you kid, I really do.

Calvin turns toward his window.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Never quite fit in anywhere. And
Protesting a war you knew nothing
about? You should be ashamed of
yourself.

A long moment of angry silence swells over the DIN outside.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

But now look at you now! Waist deep
in the muck just like the rest of
us, at long last.

Sweating, Calvin shakes out a cigarette, offers one to David. David waves him off, still miffed.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

You're welcome, by the way. If it wasn't for me, you'd be researching cures for crotch rot while running signals intel up on Monkey Mountain. Instead, here you are living it up at The Caravalle.
(blowing smoke)
Nice work with Cloud, by the way.

DAVID

How much does he know?

CALVIN

About what?

DAVID

About me! Who I am!

CALVIN

Nothing. Jesus! Can't trust the press. You should know that!

(beat)

Speaking of, watch yourself with Johnny. He's a dirty little fucker. Been selling secrets to the other side for years.

DAVID

Do you know everything anyone does around here?!

Calvin touches the tip of his nose with the fingers holding his lit Camel.

CALVIN

I'm your handler. I handle. Now...

(hushed)

Pete's a problem. Thinks he's doing God's work, shining a light on the evil doers. But he's too close to Girard and Schröder. They're both playin' him.

The news hits David like a slap in the face.

DAVID

I, uh... why?

CALVIN

To corner the market by making CIA look bad. The freaking dingo.

David glares at him. *None of this makes a lick of sense!*

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 (by way of explanation)
 Girard wants him to smear the good
 work we're doing to help the Hmong
 fight the fucking communists! So
 that he can get back to calling the
 shots. You know, import/export.
 (beat)
 Do what Cloud says. Toe the line.
 Counter the narrative. And if you
 run into those two...

The taxi swerves to avoid a CYCLIST - throwing David roughly
 into Calvin.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 ...watch yourself.
 (pushing him off)
 She'll sure as shit slit your
 throat with a gleeful grin.

David, regaining his composure, looks away.

DAVID
 (distantly)
 She doesn't seem the grinning type.

The taxi slows at a tangle of traffic bunched up at a
 crowded intersection.

CALVIN
 True. But, don't worry. You got
 this nailed.

The taxi stops and Calvin throws his door open again.

DAVID
 Wait!

CALVIN
 Just head up there. Get the lay of
 the land. Then get the hell out.
 (miming typing)
 Live to tell the tale!

With that, he leaps out, kicks the door shut behind himself.

In the front seat, the driver gives David a quick glance via
 the rear view. Something in his eyes suggests he's
 eavesdropped on millions of similar conversations.

EXT. TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE, MAIN GATE - MIDDAY

David hops out of the cab, hands the driver a wad of cash, turns toward the GUARDS as the gate. One of them is one of the MPs from earlier.

Instead of saluting, he feigns not recognizing David at all.

MP #1

Papers.

David hands him his forged passport and press credentials.

MP #1 (CONT'D)

Where you headed, kid?

DAVID

Uh...

Suddenly, from inside the gate, we hear a voice:

JOHNNY (O.S.)

(lilting accent)

New guy! You're late!

David turns to see a rail-thin VIETNAMESE MAN with jet-black hair, two Nikons around his neck, and a lit cigarette dangling from his lips.

This is JOHNNY (aka Liem Xuan Hahn, 20s, puckish grin, eyes that have seen too much).

DAVID

Sorry. Traffic.

The MP passes David back his papers, signals to another guard to open the gate.

As David ducks his way through, Johnny's eyes fall to his bulging bags.

JOHNNY

(more American than Viet)

What'd you do, steal all the soap
at The Caravelle?

David reaches his free hand out. Johnny takes it, shakes it while tugging David with him, away.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Johnny, I presume.

JOHNNY

Not what you expected, huh?

DAVID

Nope.

JOHNNY

Don't worry. Happens *all* the time!

Johnny CACKLES like a hyena. And, together, they take a hard bend across the crowded runway.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You're lucky Stockwell's still holding. He's not normally this... patient!

EXT. RUNWAY - MIDDAY

Up ahead, a MAN in a bright orange *Guayabera* shirt, white shorts, and Chuck Taylors stands in front of an idling blue and silver Pilatus PC-6/H2 turbo prop plane.

This is STOCKWELL (30s, blonde hair, blue eyes - a classic California beach bum).

With his cigarette holder, amber aviators, and Moondog drawl, he sticks out like sore thumb on base.

STOCKWELL

(loud, over the engine)

Well, fuck a frickin' duck! Since when'd Cloud start hiring Cub Scouts for the covert beat?!

David STAMMERS.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)

Well, c'mon then. Chop, chop! I got a payload of porcine parachutists to pick up!

David's eyes drift to the plane. It's literally the smallest craft on the field. And, like Stockwell, it seems vividly out of place.

More commuter rust bucket than combat aircraft, the Pilatus is emblazoned with the bright blue Air America mark in swooping Art Deco script.

Stockwell YANKS up a pair of yellow wheel chucks and throws open the rear door.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)

(still to David)

You carrying?

David stares at him blankly.

JOHNNY
(clarifying)
Are you armed?

David nods.

STOCKWELL
Good, 'cause where we're headed, it
can get pretty fuckin' gnarly
pretty fuckin' fast. Especially
during daylight hours!
(beat)
Hop in.

Stockwell offers him his free hand. David doesn't take it.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
That's right, save the pleasantries
for the return trip. If there is
one.

The floor of the plane is riddled with bullet holes.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Free air conditioning!
(beat, to Johnny)
What'd he expect? The Pan Am
fuckin' Clipper?!

INSERT MONTAGE:

To the tune of "Un Jour Comme un Autre" by Brigitte Bardot,
we watch the plane:

-- Taxi past a Huey helicopter being slowly emptied of body
bags by a couple of GRUNTS --

-- Fall in behind a camouflaged Douglas AC-47 Spooky gunship
speeding up for takeoff --

-- Rev its single prop while, inside the cockpit, Stockwell
quickly tests the flaps --

-- Take off and climb quickly above the chaotic jumble of
the bustling airfield --

-- Bank north through the low-hanging afternoon thunderheads
before heading directly into the sun --

-- Dip in and out of the clouds while sections of Napalmed
jungle streak by below --

-- Dive lower and lower as the we cross over the border into Laotian airspace, off limits --

END MONTAGE.

INT. AIR AMERICA TURBO PORTER - CONTINUOUS

At the helm - with the jungle ripping by through the windscreen ahead - Stockwell SHOUTS into his headphone mic:

STOCKWELL
(to Johnny)
Why ol' Pete would wanna go pokin'
around in our business is beyond
me! Especially with that fuckin'
Nazi bitch. She's just bad news!

Seated amidst a jumble of stacked wooden crates and long metal boxes, Johnny snaps pictures out the window while David does his best to tamp down his anxiety.

DAVID
(to Stockwell)
Our business?

Johnny SNICKERS to himself over the CLACK of his shutter.

JOHNNY
Man, you are green!

Stockwell banks a steep turn.

STOCKWELL
(to Johnny)
You sure this kid's legit?

Johnny shrugs his shoulders, eyes away.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
(still to Johnny)
Well, either way, I bet Pete didn't
ask you along because he didn't
want you to get snared by the
Pathet Lao. For your own sake!

Stockwell bends the plane hard left. The wheels are barely clearing the treetops.

DAVID
Do we have to fly so low?!

STOCKWELL
 (again to Johnny)
 Skinny fuckers would flay you like
 like a white-lipped viper and grill
 you over a low flame!

Johnny LAUGHS out loud again.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
 (still to Johnny)
 Anyway, dude. You're gonna dig this
 landing. Less than 250 meters.
 Straight up! Jungle on both sides.
 Basically a controlled stall!

DAVID
 (also to Johnny)
 Are you catching any of this?

JOHNNY
 (turning)
 Cloud was right. This is above your
 pay grade!

Looking down, David points, SHOUTING:

DAVID
 What is all this junk?

Eyes on the treetops, Stockwell SHOUTS back:

STOCKWELL
 Officially?

David nods, holding on for dear life.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
 White rice!

DAVID
 Unofficially?

Johnny turns toward David, winding his camera.

JOHNNY
Hard rice.

David squints at Johnny, his face lit by the light strobing
 up through the bullet holes in the floor.

From the cockpit Stockwell BARKS:

STOCKWELL
Guns and ammunition, dude!
Grenades. Mortars. For our old pal
General Pao.
(beat)
We're off the record, yeah?

David nods.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
CIA's been arming Pao's troops
since '54! Summer comes, the Pathet
Lao move in with the help of the
North Vietnamese Army and the VC.
Gobble up land. The rains come,
they retreat. We bomb the shit out
of 'em and they just keep comin'.
So now Pao's got a good 30,000
Hmong troops all dug in, armed up,
fat and happy. Rarin' to go!

DAVID
To do what exactly?

Stockwell shoots Johnny a quick glance. *Who is this rube?*

STOCKWELL
Win! Keep the dominoes from
fallin'. What the fuck else?

Johnny pops the back of his Nikon open, yanks out his
exposed roll.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
Listen, whoever the hell you are,
if I see a peep of what I just said
pop up in that fuckin' rag--

BANG! BANG! BANG!

A barrage of SMALL ARMS FIRE ricochets across the belly of
the plane. Shards of metal and bits of leather and wood go
flying every which way.

Johnny's exposed roll hits the ceiling and bounces, away.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
God fuckin' dammit!

Stockwell throws the plane into a steep dive. David braces
with both hands and both feet. Johnny slams his spent Nikon
shut, fumbling for the strap to his other camera.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
Show some respect!
(over the engine)
Stop shooting up my baby!

Through the windscreen up ahead, we can see a single FLASH
and then a gust of SMOKE shoot up from the trees.

JOHNNY
(too calm)
S-75.

STOCKWELL
I got it...

Stockwell yanks the yoke back, too late.

BOOM!

A Russian-made S-75 rocket ricochets off fuselage and
explodes just beyond the wing - outside Johnny's window.

The fireball sends glass and aluminum smashing through the
cabin. Johnny is knocked instantly unconscious.

SCREAMING at the top of his lungs, Stockwell does his best
to right the plane.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
Come on, darlin'!

Crates of rifles and boxes of ammunition tumble and churn as
the plane does one tailspin barrel roll and then another.

STOCKWELL (CONT'D)
Brace, brace, brace!

The last thing we see is a swiftly-approaching tangle of
trees before:

THWACK! THWACK! BANG! BANG! BOOM!

The plane shreds its way through the forest - filling the
cabin with smoke, dust, and burning foliage as it skitters
to a stop upside-down on the jungle floor.

At first, SILENCE. Then, as if on cue, the clamor of BIRD
SONG and the normally pastoral DIN of the jungle.

David and Johnny - both unconscious - dangle like rag dolls
from their safety harness. Up front, not a peep from
Stockwell. His arms hang lifelessly down.

Outside, the CRACKLE of fire. Burning fuel. And, eventually, the far off RAT-A-TAT of light machine gun fire.

David suddenly comes to with a GASP! His eyes scan his surroundings lazily. In a daze.

But then, more GUNFIRE. AK-47s. And his training kicks in.

He slams one hand hard against the latch of his harness. It unbuckles - sending him falling to the roof of the plane.

Outside, flames flicker.

DAVID
(hoarse)
Stockwell, Stock--

He catches a glimpse of Stockwell's mangled body. Blood-covered Chuck Taylors.

More GUNFIRE. Getting closer.

David jumps forward, slaps Johnny's harness latch. His body crumples to the ceiling with a metallic THUD.

David wheels around, catches sight of his satchel. He quickly snatches it up, feels inside for his pistol.

Right next to Johnny's body rests a wooden crate with its lid blown off. David kicks the lid clear. M-16s. At least a dozen of them.

He grabs one, scoures the ceiling for ammo. Finding a matte green metal box, he flicks it open. Full magazines.

He seizes one, slams it into the rifle, and yanks the charging handle back and forth - arming the M-16.

Then, spinning, he kicks open the gnarled door to his right, grabs Johnny by the collar, tugs him with him outside.

One finger on the trigger guard. Surprisingly pro.

EXT. JUNGLE HILLTOP, NORTHERN LAOS - CONTINUOUS

David pulls Johnny well clear of the wreckage, turns, grabs the ammo box, tosses it free, and then scampers, crouched, to the tail of the plane.

There, he falls to one knee, lifts the rifle.

In the distance, we can make out four or five PATHET LAO SOLDIERS - all on the run uphill toward him.

They're no longer firing - seemingly convinced no one could have survived that crash.

Behind him, Johnny GROANS.

DAVID
(over his shoulder)
Shhh...

David closes one eye, sucks down a couple quick breaths to slow his booming heart, and calmly takes aim.

BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG!

Working swiftly left to right, he clinically dispatches each of his pursuers.

Silence.

He leans out, scans the steep hillside. Not a peep. No one else to be seen.

JOHNNY
(barely audible)
Who are you?!

David spins back around, grabs the ammo box, safeties the rifle, and charges up to the front of the plane - which is now nearly fully-engulfed in flames.

Using the butt of his rifle, he SMASHES the fractured glass window to the cockpit, trying hard not to look at Stockwell's disfigured body.

He reaches in, feels for anything map-like. A manifest, flight plans, a log - anything.

His smoke-smudged hands emerge with fistfuls of papers and he swivels back toward Johnny.

DAVID
Can you stand?

Johnny just stares back, puzzled.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Can you stand?!

Johnny nods, saying nothing. David leans down and throws an arm out. Johnny waves him off, pushes himself up.

JOHNNY
(pained)
Where'd you learn to shoot like
that?

DAVID
Like Stockwell said, Cub Scouts.
(urgently)
C'mon. We gotta get outta here.

His cameras still dangling from his neck, Johnny puts some weight on his right leg, winces.

JOHNNY
I'm starting to think maybe we have
more in common than I imagined.

Together, they charge uphill. Slowly at first, then faster.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DUSK

David, still on the move, stumbles from the trees and out into a clearing brimming with poppies.

Waist-deep and spouting vivid purple blossoms, the flowers permeate the entire exposed ridge.

DAVID
What the hell is this?!

Still favoring his right leg, Johnny emerges from the trees, smiling broadly.

JOHNNY
(still in pain)
You want short version or long?

David surveys their surroundings in the fading light.

DAVID
Short.

Johnny steps forward, plucks a single poppy pod.

JOHNNY
All of this is CIA. They've been
hush-hush using the Hmong to grow
poppies to make heroin to get money
to buy rice.
(beat)
Hard rice. And white. There's a
whole generation who are going to
be pretty surprised to learn that
rice doesn't grow in the sky!

David falls in behind Johnny, all-ears.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Pao used to be able to fly opium out using Royal Lao C-47s from the south. But the Pathet Lao messed that up. So they've been using Air America to fly smaller shipments day and night from factories all over the high country - into Thailand first, then to Vietnam. Sometimes, all the way back to the good old US of A! All just to pay for a fight your Congress doesn't want to bankroll any longer.

DAVID

So, Air America...

Johnny rolls his eyes, CACKLING.

JOHNNY

...is a CIA front? Bingo greenhorn!

DAVID

And they're working with Girard?

JOHNNY

No, against! C'mon, keep up!

Pausing, he points up and to their right - where, on the next ridge, we see another vast clearing and what appears to be a narrow, steeply-pitched landing strip.

Next to the strip stands a barn-like metal structure.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That's where we were headed! A poppy factory! But you already knew that, didn't you Mister CIA?

DAVID

Please.

JOHNNY

Don't play dumb with me, whatever your actual name is.

(beat)

You shoot too good to work for Cloud full-time on the books!

EXT. FAR HILLSIDE - LATER

Moving fast as the light leaves the sky, David clutches the M-16 with one arm and his satchel with the other - trying his best to not make a sound.

Behind him, Johnny ducks and weaves, his camera straps crisscrossing his chest like bandoleers. He's got David's pistol pointed skyward in one hand.

The slope is steep and the vegetation, thick. Almost as thick as the clouds of mosquitoes swirling all around them.

Suddenly, in the distance, we hear VOICES speaking Hmong.

David stops dead, crouches down. Johnny does the same.

EXT. FAR HILLSIDE - DAVID'S POV

Through the underbrush, we see two HMONG SOLDIERS in fatigues and purple berets smoking outside the metal building we spied earlier.

American-made M-16s dangle over their shoulders.

The rolling door to the building behind them is wide open. Warm amber light flows out of it.

Beyond the door, we can barely make out the silhouettes of dozens HMONG WORKERS meticulously trimming poppies with a studied precision. An assembly line.

EXT. FAR HILLSIDE - BACK ON DAVID AND JOHNNY

Johnny nods, quietly grabbing his camera. David waves him off, lifts his M-16, flicks the safety.

Johnny reaches a hand forward, places it on David's shoulder, shakes his head. *Careful, rookie.*

All of a sudden, TWO SHADOWY FIGURES lurch out of the thicket of vines behind them. One of them HISSES:

PETER
Johnston?!

David wheels around, stunned to see Peter and Nadia standing side-by-side in the jungle. Both are armed.

PETER (CONT'D)
The *fuck* are you doing here?

Suddenly, from behind David:

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The Hmong Soldiers open fire. Bright red tracers zip and bounce through the canopy, just overhead.

All instinct, David lunges forward, throws his body between Nadia and the soldiers.

BANG!

A fourth shot clips him in the shoulder, spins him around.

In the darkness, he and Nadia share a brief moment of stunned recognition before --

BANG!

A fifth shot hits Peter square in the chest - blowing him backward into the vines.

Barely flinching, David lifts his rifle, returns fire:

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Both soldiers fall. SILENCE. Then:

JOHNNY
Bad idea, new guy.

Instantly, a BLINDING SPOTLIGHT fills the jungle with light.

And a brigade of well-armed HMONG INFANTRY come charging out of the building, firing randomly.

Johnny quickly (and showily) drops David's pistol, lifts both arms, places both hands behind his head.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
(over his shoulder)
Nadia. Fancy seeing you here.

David, bleeding, drops his rifle.

But Before he can say a word, he's uncereemoniously SMASHED in the face by the butt-end of a Hmong soldier's M-16.

CUT TO BLACK.

ROLL END CREDITS --

To "Paranoid" by Black Sabbath.

THE END

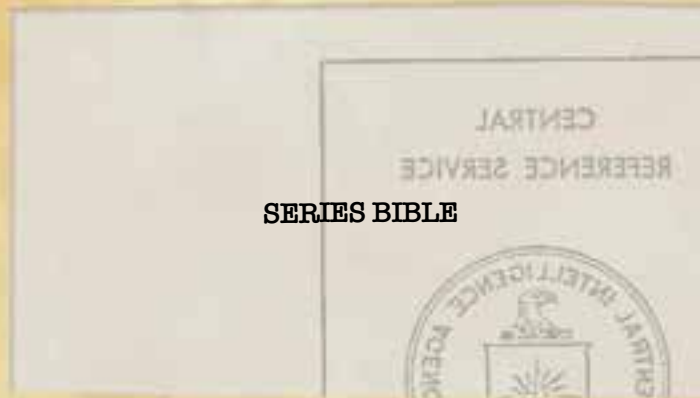
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MIDNIGHT AT THE CARAVELLE

SEASON ONE



THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN... *

VIETNAM TASK FORCE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Section 3.5
for PAC Review 11/12/13
By WTH NARA, Date 11/30/15

TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE



SECRET

E.O. 12958, Sec. 1.5
NSC Memo, 11/20/78, State Dept. Guidelines for Review of
By: HSM, NARA, Date: 3/9/00

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MIDNIGHT AT THE CARAVELLE

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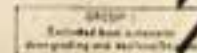


WARNING

This document contains an overview of the backstory behind a forthcoming
limited drama series. Many details herein are based on actual events.
However, some of the names have been changed—for reasons which
shall become immediately obvious. Of course, the following also contains
many, many spoilers. So, if you'd rather, feel free to read the pilot instead.

TOP SECRET

NO FOREIGN DISSEM





HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY
525TH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE GROUP
SAIGON, VIETNAM

FEBRUARY 1970

SUBJECT: ~~THE STORYLINE~~

"Midnight at the Caravelle" is an eight episode hour-long true-crime spy thriller set during the closing stages of the war in Vietnam.

The series follows an idealistic young military intelligence officer (and former war protester) as he slips deeper and deeper into a double life of espionage and crime after being tasked with infiltrating and taking down a drug smuggling ring led by an enigmatic (and charismatic) French businessman.

Think: the social commentary and spectacle of "Apocalypse Now", the deceit and deception of "Donnie Brasco", and the classic suspense of Graham Green's "The Quiet American".

Tense, cinematic, and deeply rooted in character, "Midnight at the Caravelle" is a love letter to the golden age of 1970s American cinema—a marriage of human drama, political intrigue, and existential angst.

Read on to find out more...

Major General

Mr. Miller

Commander
Operation Chimera

↓ ↓
CONTINUED - OVER

3
1 - Mr. DeLoach
1 - Mr. Wick
1 - Mr. Sullivan
DATE: 3/8/67

1 - Mr. C.D. Brennan
1 - Mr. D. Wells

should have C.D. Brennan

Tolson _____
DeLoach _____
Mohr _____
Casper _____
Callahan _____
Conrad _____
Felt _____
Gale _____
Rosen _____
Sullivan _____
Tavel _____
Trotter _____
Tele. Room _____
Holmes _____
Gandy _____



Areas in which Communist-led rebels are challenging government authority.



Areas in which Communist-instigated guerilla attacks have recently occurred.

URGENT INFORMATION

SECRET

March 17 1975



CAMBODIA

PNOMPENH

SAIGON

Nha Trang
Dalat



NO FOREIGN DISSEM

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

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ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 1-19-01 BY SP4 JJC/mk

CARAVELLE HOTEL
SAIGON, SUD VIETNAM
03271970 1731

SUBJECT: STRUCTURE

MIDNIGHT AT THE CARAVELLE WILL BE STRUCTURED LIKE A
FEATURE FILM.

THERE WILL BE A CLEAR BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END —
OFTEN INTERSPERSED WITH FLASHBACKS AND FLASHES
FORWARD THAT WILL HINT AT OUR LEAD CHARACTER'S FUTURE
MISSIONS (AND ULTIMATE BETRAYAL).

ALL OF OUR MAIN CHARACTERS WILL HAVE THEIR UNIQUE
INDIVIDUAL ARCS. AND EACH WILL HAVE THEIR OWN SECRETS
- WHICH WILL OFTEN PLACE THEM INTO DIRECT CONFLICT WITH
ONE ANOTHER.

THE COMPACT YET EPIC NATURE OF THIS PROJECT WILL ALLOW
US TO TARGET BOTH IN-DEMAND AND UP-AND-COMING TALENT
FOR EACH KEY ROLE.

FOR INSTANCE: ROBERT PATTINSON OR TIMOTHEE CHALAMET
FOR DAVID, VINCENT CASSEL OR MATHIEU ALMARIC FOR
GIRARD, FRANKA POTENTE OR DIANE KRUGER FOR NADIA, AND
DAVID HARBOUR OR SAM ROCKWELL FOR CALVIN.

ALSO, WE'RE IMAGINING GUY PIERCE OR JOEL EDGERTON FOR
PETER AND SIMU LIU OR JOHN CHO FOR JOHNNY.

REGARDS,
[REDACTED]

McCrack Special

No Objection To Declassification 2007/05/25 - NLS-002R-70-1-1-1	
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY Intelligence Information Cable	
25X1	
PAGE 1 OF 10 PAGES	
ACT ONE:	EPISODES 1-2
<p>Our first two episodes will introduce David Campbell (AKA David Johnston) and his initial mission—to infiltrate and take down a drug smuggling ring lead by Thierry Girard. After many unsuccessful attempts to make contact with Girard (and his lover, freelance German war photographer Nadia Schröder), David eventually falls in with Aussie AP stringer Peter Surrey. As it happens, Surrey knows Girard (perhaps a bit too well) and eventually introduces the two men. Slowly, they begin to bond. Meanwhile, Nadia and Surrey head off to Laos on a hush-hush reporting mission. At the insistence of both David's CIA handler, Calvin Taylor, and his editor at "Time", Stanley Cloud—David pairs up with Johnny, a Vietnamese war photographer, and hitches a ride on an Air America plane headed into Laos to deliver food (and weapons) to troops secretly sponsored by the CIA. On their way, their plane is shot down over poppy fields which may or may not belong to Girard—and are eventually captured (along with Nadia and Surrey) by Ford, a rogue Army Colonel and his Hmong army. To escape, they'll need to band together, set their differences aside, and risk it all.</p>	
ACT TWO:	EPISODES 3-5
<p>In a harrowing escape from Laos, David saves Nadia's life—and is eventually welcomed back to Saigon with open arms by Girard. As thanks, Girard offers David a lucrative role in his organization. Much to Calvin's consternation, David initially refuses. But, when his article revealing the CIA's covert war in Laos is rejected by Cloud (for fear of alienating his own CIA sources) David returns to the Caravelle to drown his sorrows. Cut adrift and questioning everything, he finds himself sliding back into Girard's orbit (and Nadia's bed). Soon, David begins acting more and more like the man he's been sent to take down—participating in previously unimaginable acts. While on assignment with Surrey and Johnny covering a covert US Army incursion into Cambodia, David has a moment of clarity. Maybe the whole thing—the CIA, the mission in Vietnam, Girard's operation, "Time"—maybe all of it must burn. He returns to Saigon and the Caravelle shell-shocked but enraged. After learning of the shootings at Kent State (and Nadia's suspicious disappearance), he decides to redouble his efforts to bring the whole system down from the inside.</p>	
ACT THREE:	EPISODES 6-8
<p>Our final act begins with the ultimate reversal. Back in Laos, still working for Girard (while secretly plotting to tear down his organization), David discovers something that rocks him to his core. Should he believe Girard (and Surrey) and continue to fight to expose the CIA's criminal agenda? Or is Girard simply using him to bolster his own sway in the region? Or is Girard actually working covertly for the CIA? In the end, David winds up betraying the man he once loved, selling out the man whose integrity he once held beyond reproach, and nearly committing treason against the country he swore to defend from all enemies, foreign and domestic. Only Calvin—who's actually been the one pulling the strings the whole time—comes out unscathed. And, over drinks at midnight back at the Caravelle, Calvin tosses David an envelope full of compromising photographs of him with Nadia (who Girard may have had murdered in a fit of jealous rage)—as well as a dossier on his next target.</p>	

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE DATE: 31-Mar-2011

A. 11

SUBJECT Tone & Style

From [Signature] Date 14 June 19 70

Following is a brief overview of the tone and style of "Midnight at the Caravelle"

Cutting back and forth between the lurid, seamy streets of 24/7 go-go Saigon, the verdant poppy fields of Laos, and the menacing jungles of Cambodia, the visual style of "Midnight at the Caravelle" will be lush and immersive. The pacing will be swift, the framing dynamic, and cinematography will be vivid and arresting.

Since "Midnight at the Caravelle" is set largely in 1970s Saigon, the series will showcase myriad period details—manual typewriters, Nikon cameras, Huey helicopters, Vespas, Citroëns, and French colonial architecture, etc..

And while this story will dive deeply into what the waning days of the Vietnam war actually felt, sounded, and looked like, the art direction will never distract from the deep personal, moral, and political struggles that each key character endures.

The soundtrack will be similarly period. But this is not your average 'Cue the Creedence' Vietnam-era set of tunes. "Midnight at the Caravelle" will feature needle drops that crisscross genres—from Puccini to bossa nova, Art Blakey to Brigitte Bardot, The Zombies to obscure hits from the 1970s Saigon soul scene.

Imagine a tone and style inspired by the work of both Francis Ford Coppola and Jean-Pierre Melville (with a little Patricia Highsmith added for good measure).

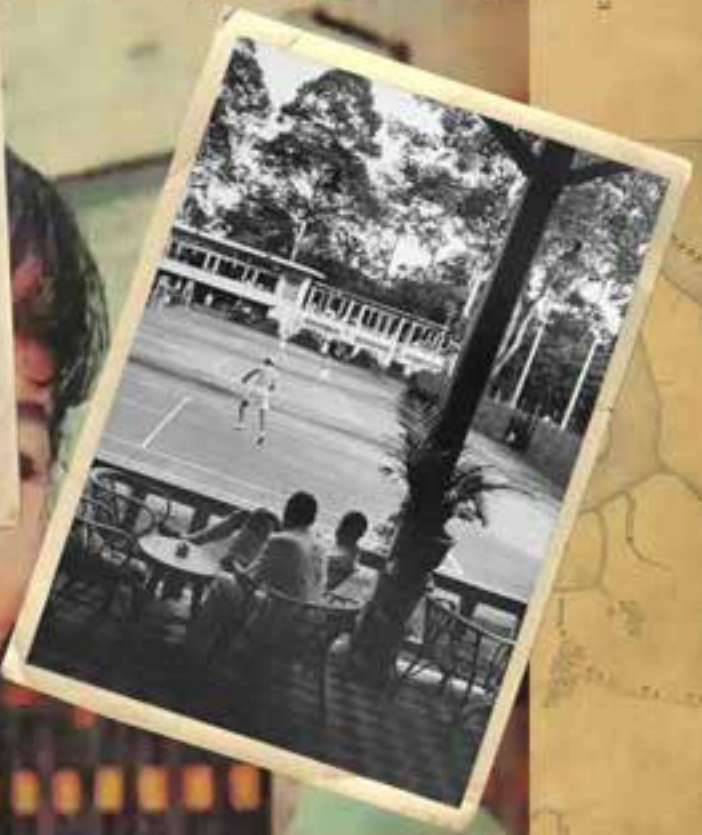
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TURNER, CIA 28 JAN 1978
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Reason C 78-4 pg. 1 Review on
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E.O. 12958, Sec. 1.5
NSC Memo, 11/29/94, State Dept. Guidelines for Review of
NSC 6800, NARA, Date 2/1/00



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Le Service de Cadastre
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~~TOP SECRET UMBRA~~
TIME
The Weekly News Magazine



SKYLINE RIDGELINE

LACS
PLAIN OF LARS AREA

THIS MAP IS CLASSIFIED
~~SECRET SPOKE~~

~~TOP SECRET UMBRA~~

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *

DOCID: 4133032

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~~TOP SECRET~~

THE ~~GOOD~~ GUYS

3/00/664-73
09 JANUARY 1973
2000Z
NSA/TA
NSA/HCF-TRAA
(SEA SIGSUM 7-73)



David Johnston (FKA Campbell)

Early 20s, a fresh-faced kid new in-country, David has the off-axis air of someone who joined the ROTC to avoid getting drafted and ended up in Saigon instead. He's a military brat and anti-war protester. A young man in search of himself.



Peter Surrey

Early 30s, a seasoned Australian war correspondent who's been covering the conflict since before the French pullout, Surrey's seen it all. He likes his Glenfarcias 25 neat. And, like David, he's surprisingly handy with an M-16.



Major General Barry McMillan

Late 30s, career Army, McMillan is a West Point grad whose exploits in-country have yet to live up to his father's U-Boat hunting days in The Atlantic. He's a straight shooter who can't stand having to work with Calvin and his CIA freaks.



Johnny (aka Liem Xuan Hahn)

Mid-20s, the first 'local' journalist on the payroll at "Time", Johnny is willing to do almost anything to get the shot. With his ever-present Nikons and his cutting wit, he might actually be a double-agent secretly funneling intel to the NVA.



Stanley Cloud

Late 30s, gruff, Stanley is David's boss and the Saigon bureau chief of "Time" Magazine. He's got the hard-boiled, no-nonsense call it like it is vibe of an old-school print journalist. And he may or may not know that David is a reluctant CIA plant.

Approved for release by NSA on 07-22-2014, Transparency Case# 65886

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~~THE BAD GUYS~~



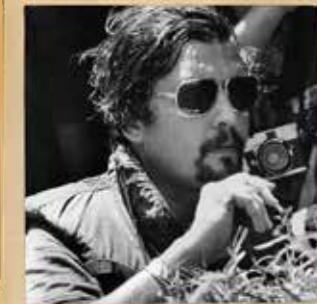
Thierry Girard

Mid-30s, the youngest son of the former French Trade Minister, Girard is a louche playboy holdover from the former war. Suspected to be trading US anti-aircraft missiles to the VC, NLF, and PAVN for drugs. Opium mostly. And grass.



Nadia Schröder

Late 20s, lithe, chiseled, Nadia has the aloof air of a bird of prey. She's a battle-hardened war photographer in the mold of Robert Capa. And, at least according to Calvin, she's the only suspected member of Baader Meinhof to go Scott free.



Calvin Taylor

Maybe 30. Former Rand. Smooth as silk even with his 5:00 shadow. Calvin is Peter's CIA handler—and a consummate pro at playing both sides against the middle. Never salute him. He say it makes him 'feel all funny inside'. Not to be trusted.



Stockwell

Early 30s, a beach bum crop duster from the somewhere along California's central coast. Stockwell is an Air America pilot who, with his cigarette holder, amber aviators, and surfer dude drawl, sticks out like sore thumb on base.



Ford

Early 40s, a hard-as-nails (if completely unglued) former special operations advisor sent to Vietnam during the Kennedy administration. A dirty trickster and power-hungry double-dealer, he'll do anything to stem the red tide.

~~THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS CODEWORD MATERIAL~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Le Monde



7. COCHINCHINE — Saigon - Théâtre



HOTEL CARAVELLE
SAIGON
SUD VIETNAM

07 May 1970

SUBJECT: THE CARAVELLE HOTEL

The Caravelle hotel itself will be a character in this series. Opened on Christmas Eve 1959, the Caravelle was the first hotel in Saigon to feature bullet proof glass, air conditioning, and its own private generator. It was a hub of communication (and a hive of intrigue) well before the war.

During the 1960s, the hotel was home to the Australian Embassy and the Saigon bureaus of NBC, ABC, and CBS. And the hotel's rooftop bar, Saigon Saigon, was known as the go-to watering hole for journalists, CIA spooks, decorated officers, and black-market traders alike.

In the later stages of the war (as depicted in this series), dramatic firefights were often visible from the rooftop terrace. And, as Girard (a regular most nights from midnight on) points out, tracers, mortars, red flares are now 'as common as a spilled martini'.

Starkly modern (especially as compared to 'straight out of Graham Greene' Continental just across the Square), the Caravelle serves as both David's hunting ground, his oasis after time spent under fire in the jungles of Laos and Cambodia, and his own luxe personal prison.

Oh, and remember those photos taken of the last helicopter leaving the US Embassy after the fall of Saigon? Most of them were taken from the roof of the Caravelle.

Sincerely,

D.

Dictated Not Read

SANITIZED
Authority: ARC 100-17-1
By: SAW NARA, Date: 8-15-11



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523-119-FYI (T25)

SUBJECT: WAR/CRIMES

REPORTS HAVE SURFACED THAT "MIDNIGHT AT THE CARAVELLE"
IS A CRIME SAGA WRAPPED IN A WAR STORY. WELL, THAT
PRETTY MUCH SUMS IT UP.

UNLIKE OTHER MORE EXHAUSTIVE DEEP DIVES INTO THE
QUAGMIRE THAT WAS U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM, THIS
SERIES FOCUSES INSTEAD ON THE TRUE-TO-LIFE CRIMINAL
UNDERWORLD OF 1970s SAIGON - AND THE CIA'S HAND IN
CULTIVATING IT.

IT'S A TALE OF DECADENCE AND DEPRAVITY, DECEPTION
AND DESIRE - ALL SET DURING A YEAR WHICH SAW BOTH A
DRAMATIC RAMP UP IN SECRET CIA-FUNDED OPIUM PRODUCTION
IN LAOS AND AN ILLEGAL INCURSION (AND BOMBING
CAMPAIGN) IN CAMBODIA.

BOTH EFFORTS - WHEN EVENTUALLY UNCOVERED - IGNITED A
WITHERING FIRESTORM OF PROTEST AT HOME AND EVENTUALLY
HASTENED THE DRAMATIC WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES.

HOWEVER, THE FULL EXTENT OF THE CIA'S ILLICIT CONDUCT
AND COVERT OPERATIONS HAS YET TO BE FULLY DISCLOSED OR
ACKNOWLEDGED.

UNTIL NOW.

--2109Z

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority NSA letter 8/21/98
By 1054 NLF Date 11/4/98



This work sheet contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C., Sections 793, 794 and 795, the transmission or the revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

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FM 23-9

FIELD MANUAL

RIFLE,

M16A1



Upper and lower receiver groups.

① Removing bolt carrier

Figure 19—Continued.

Note. Do not fully seat the handguard at this time (1, fig 22).

(3) Step 3. Fit the other handguard in the same manner.

(4) Step 4. Grip the partially installed handguards tightly at the base to fully seat the handguards (2, fig 22).

Note. It may be necessary to use a device (dummy cartridge) to pry the slipring down. Position the device under the tang of a serration on the barrel nut and pry downward against the slipring (3, fig 22).

12

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MARCH 1970

TAGNO 001114

Figure 14. Removing the charging handle.

400



On Guard in Ohio. Colluding, militant demonstrators at campus of Ohio State University in Columbus stand their ground as national guardsmen hold fixed bayonets to their throats. A force of 1,200 troops and police clashed with about 1,000 demonstrators in the early morning hours of May 4. Other police personnel did not intervene.



FINAL

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

10¢

Vol. 51, No. 266 New York, N.Y. 10017, Friday, May 1, 1970 WEATOP: Family photo, and 1/10/10, 10/10/10

NIXON SENDS GIs INTO CAMBODIA

Washington, April 30 (AP Wire Service)—Several thousand American troops moved toward the Vietnam-Cambodian border on orders from President Nixon tonight to attack the Communist main headquarters.

25 miles inside Cambodia. The U.S. force is expected to stay in Cambodia for six to eight weeks. "This is not an invasion of Cambodia," Nixon declared in a nationally televised address from the White House. Further story on page 1.

INCOMING
MESSAGE

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

104
~~SECRET~~

PRECEDENCE (ACTION)

FLASH

PRECEDENCE (INFO)

FLASH

NOFORN

Z 042158Z

FM CTG 72.1

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INFO RUMFZK/J8RM/CTG 77.5

RUMFZK/H3WX/CTG 77.6

TURPCR/DIRSNA

RUMGCR/COMUSMACV

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Authority OSD Ltr 3/15/00

By mg, NARS, Date 4/6/00

~~SECRET~~ NOFORN

SUBJECT: FRANCHISE OPPORTUNITIES

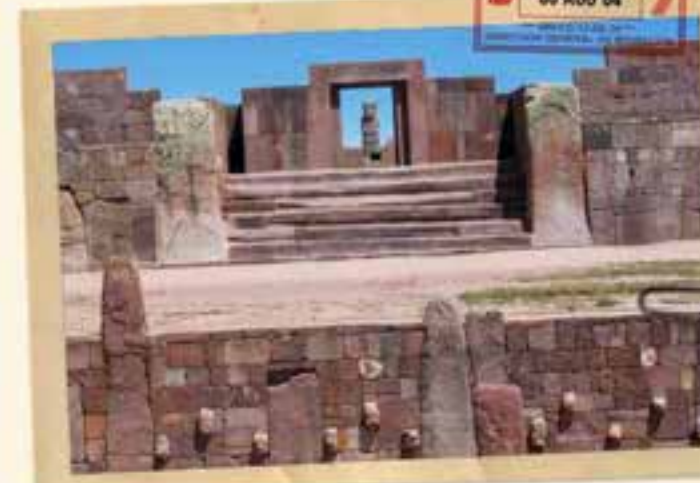
1. LET IT BE KNOWN THAT - SPOILER ALERT - THE PROTAGONIST OF "MIDNIGHT AT THE CARAVELLE" PLAYED AN INSTRUMENTAL, HANDS-ON ROLE IN A BOTCHED COUP ATTEMPT IN BOLIVIA WHILE ON ASSIGNMENT IN 1984.

2. THIS WOULD IMPLY THAT OUR PROTAGONIST'S INVOLVEMENT (RELUCTANT OR OTHERWISE) WITH THE CIA CONTINUED LONG AFTER THE EVENTS OF SEASON ONE.

3. THIS BEGS THE QUESTION: ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANSION TO FUTURE SEASONS?

THE ANSWER IS: YES.

~~SECRET~~ NOFORN



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JCS 1 DEC 83 58

REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

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Original Teleplay
by
Rudi O'Meara

rudi@rudiwithaneyeye.com
(415) 806-9527

257019

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