

# Crisis in Cambodia

by  
Dan Clune

The Backpacker Kidnap and the Fall of  
the Khmer Rouge

Dan Clune

[clunepdanny@gmail.com](mailto:clunepdanny@gmail.com)

SUBTITLED CARDS:

1976: Pol Pot becomes Prime Minister of Cambodia after King Sihanouk resigns. He orchestrates one of the worst genocides in history against his own people.

1977: Pol Pot reneges on a peace treaty with Vietnam and sends his Khmer Rouge forces invade to recover Cambodian lands.

1979: The Vietnamese army take the capital Phnom Penh, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge flee to Thai and Vietnamese border regions.

1981: The international community refuses to recognize Vietnamese occupation. The Khmer Rouge retains its seat at the United Nations.

1989: Vietnamese troops withdraw leaving Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge officer as Prime Minister. He shares the position with Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

1993: Australian peace keeping forces enter Cambodia in an attempt to stabilise the country.

1994: Word spreads that Marijuana is legal in Cambodia and young western travellers flock to the country in droves.

FADE IN:

EXT/INT RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

A battered pickup truck speeds down a gravel road towards a tropical mountain range in rural Cambodia.

The vehicle turns a corner, passes a bullet riddled sign reading Ta Ney, disappears in a cloud of red dust.

NOM, a middle aged Cambodian drives the vehicle. British National DOMINIC CHAPPELL(30) sits in the passenger seat beside him.

Australia model KELLIE ANNE WILKINSON(24)and British backpacker TINA DOMINY(25)are in the rear seat.

TINA

What's he doing, why's he driving so fast?

DOMINIC

There's Khmer Rouge in the area. They're known for setting up road blocks.

TINA

You're kidding right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOMINIC

Not kidding.

TINA

But the Khmer Rouge kill people  
don't they?

KELLI ANN

They're more inclined to kidnap,  
it's the bandits you have to worry  
about.

TINA

Just how dangerous is this area?

KELLI ANN

Dominic and I have taken this road  
dozens of times. We use it when  
he's in a hurry to get back to his  
Cambodian son.

TINA

Dominic has a Cambodian son?

The truck vaults over a large pothole and Tina and Kelli Ann  
are forced to brace themselves.

KELLI ANN

His father killed his mother with a  
hand grenade after an argument. The  
boy was injured and Dominic paid  
for his treatment. He sort of  
adopted him after that.

TINA

Oh my god, what kind of country is  
this?

KELLI ANN

Cambodia seems unsafe at first but  
you learn to navigate the danger.

TINA

I'm starting to think I made a  
mistake.

KELLI ANN

Maybe we should talk about  
tomorrows New Years Eve party  
instead?

The driver navigates a bend, crests a hill, slams his foot on  
the brake. The truck skids to a halt in a cloud of red dust.

NOM

Shit!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOMINIC

What is it, what's wrong?

The dust settles and Dominic peers out the windscreen. He sees 3 old farmers vehicles parked at a road block. Local armed militia in camouflage uniforms surround them.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Are they Khmer Rouge?

NOM

They're bandits, we must go!

Nom crunches the gear stick into reverse, he jams his foot on the accelerator. The truck reverses, picks up speed.

Bandits swarm towards the pickup truck, one fires 2 bursts from his AK,47, BRRRP, BRRRP!

Bullets THWACK and PING into the pickup, the headlights EXPLODE, the windscreen SHATTERS. The vehicle jerks to a halt.

Bandits drag Nom from the truck, throw him to the ground. They kick his body, mash down on his head with their rifle stocks.

EXT. RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

Nom is dead, he lies in a bloodied heap close to the bullet riddled truck.

Tina and Kelli Ann stand together beside the truck, they are surrounded leering bandits.

TINA

I'm frightened.

KELLI ANN

They'll probably ask for money, then let us go.

TINA

Why is this happening?

KELLI ANN

Dominic will fix it, we're going to be okay.

The HEAD BANDIT questions Dominic by the side of the road. Dominic is sweaty and nervous.

HEAD BANDIT

You're C.I.A, you work for the American government.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DOMINIC

We're backpackers, our friend has only been in Cambodia for two days, check her passport.

HEAD BANDIT

Don't fucking lie to me.

DOMINIC

I'm telling you the truth, my girlfriend and I own a small bar on the Beach.

HEAD BANDIT

My country is at war, you don't belong here.

DOMINIC

Look the trucks full of supplies. Take what you want, just let us go.

The Head Bandit moves to the truck, pulls aside a tarp. There are crates of beer, bottles of whiskey, food supplies.

HEAD BANDIT

The truck and your women are already mine.

DOMINIC

Please, we're British and Australian, we just want to leave.

The head Bandit punches Dominic in the face, CRACK! He falls to his knees.

HEAD BANDIT

I should kill you now.

The Head Bandit jams his rifle barrel into Dominic's face. Dominic shuffles back, holds up hands.

DOMINIC

No, please, no...

HEAD BANDIT

I'll decide what to do after you've been interrogated.

The Head bandit lowers his weapon. He pulls a bottle of whiskey from the back of the truck, holds it up to his men.

HEAD BANDIT (CONT'D)

Take them back to camp, tie them. Tonight we celebrate the new year.

The bandits shove Dominic towards the jungle. They harass Tina and Kelli Ann to follow.

EXT. CAMBODIAN JUNGLE-DAY

Morning light filters through the Cambodian Jungle canopy. Dominic, Kelli Ann, and Tina are on their knee's in front of an abandoned sawmill.

Dominic is bruised and beaten. Kelli Ann and Tina have been raped, they're crying, their clothes are torn.

The head Bandit and 2 of his men stand behind Dominic, Kelli Ann and Tina with their rifles pointed at the back of their heads.

DOMINIC

You could ransom us, we're worth something.

HEAD BANDIT

Who would want to give me money for you Barang?

DOMINIC

I'm British...

HEAD BANDIT

Quiet!

The Head Bandit kicks Dominic, he falls forward. BANDIT 1 and BANDIT 2 watch on dispassionately.

BANDIT 1

Their governments are wealthy, maybe we should ransom them?

HEAD BANDIT

And what happens when they talk about what we did to them?

BANDIT 2

Better they remain silent.

DOMINIC

Please, don't do this.

The head bandit raises an AK47 behind Dominic's head. Bandit 2 does the same to Kelli Ann.

Bandit 1 hesitates, then points his weapon at Tina's head.

The sun rises over the Cambodian tropical jungle, exotic birds CHIRP, gibbons HOOT.

3 gunshots shatter the peaceful jungle scene, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

EXT.PHNOM PENH-DAY

The Capitol Hotel building takes up the corner of the busy city street. Iron bars cover the windows and laundry dries on the balconies.

MARK SLATER(28) British, slim and fair and JEAN MICHEL BRAQUET(27) French with dark hair, sit at a table on the pavement in front of the hotel.

The men wear sandals, singlets and cargo shorts. There's a dog eared Lonely Planet guide book on the table.

Australian DAVID WILSON(29) longish hair and handsomely scruffy joins Mark and Jean Michel at the table. He holds up a large Marijuana joint.

DAVID

This is the last of our supply.

JEAN MICHEL

We'll need another ounce before we leave tomorrow.

MARK

The tuk-tuk drivers across the street will pick a bag from the market for a five cent tip.

Mark reaches across with a Bic Lighter. David lights up the joint, he exhales a plume of smoke.

DAVID

So what's been decided, are we traveling to the beach by train or by taxi?

MARK

I'm voting for the train, Jean's undecided.

JEAN MICHEL

The train isn't safe. It's been raided by the Khmer Rouge six times in two years.

David passes the joint to Mark. He gestures at the well used Lonely Planet.

DAVID

Remember the Lonely Planet philosophy Jean. Things work out, just go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

(to Jean)

An hour ago you were boasting how you trekked the Himalayas. Now you're scared of a little train ride.

JEAN MICHEL

I heard 2 Brits and an Australian disappeared recently.

Mark passes the remnants of the joint to Jean-Michel. Jean Michel takes a long drag.

MARK

They're probably smoking pot on some beach.

DAVID

The Phnom Penh Post is reporting their bullet riddled truck has been found somewhere between here and Sihanoukville. They don't know if it was bandits or the Khmer Rouge.

JEAN MICHEL

Oh great, the same place we want to go.

MARK

Just another reason to take the train.

JEAN MICHEL

I'd rather deal with Bandits than the Khmer Rouge, what are they going to do steal our guidebooks?

DAVID

I can see where this is going.

(stands from table)

We should ask the hotel manager, get a locals advice.

MARK

Good idea.

JEAN MICHEL

Phanh it is then, whatever he says is the safest and cheapest way to Sihanoukville.

Jean Michel butts out the joint in the ashtray. He picks up his Lonely Planet guide book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mark and Jean Michel join David. They walk towards the entrance of the Capitol Hotel together.

INT/EXT BANGKOK AIRPORT-NIGHT

The Foreign Minister GARETH EVANS is second most powerful man in Australia and he knows it. He's dressed in an Italian suit, he carries an expensive briefcase, he has a neatly trimmed beard.

Gareth Evans strides authoritatively along the VIP exit of Don Mueang Airport Bangkok. He stops to greet the Australian AMBASSADOR (50) to Thailand in the corridor, they shake hands.

GARETH EVANS

Ambassador, thanks for coming down.

AMBASSADOR

No problem, welcome to Bangkok.

GARETH EVANS

I've spent a lot of time in South-east Asia, I know it well.

AMBASSADOR

So I've heard. This way minister I have a car waiting.

The politicians step through a doorway into an underground car-park. They climb into a waiting limousine and it pulls away from the curb.

MOMENTS LATER:

The Ambassador faces Gareth Evans in the back of the moving limousine.

There's a bottle of whiskey, 1 glass and an ice bucket on the table between them.

GARETH EVANS

Tell me about your counterpart in Cambodia. I expect a quick overview.

AMBASSADOR

Don't know the man well. I hear he likes a drink, has an eye for local ladies.

GARETH EVANS

Sounds like every Ambassador I've ever met. Try for a more professional summation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBASSADOR

Does his job well enough but  
Cambodia's a mess.

GARETH EVANS

Nothing's changed then.

AMBASSADOR

Sorry, I probably didn't need to  
tell you that.

GARETH EVANS

Look the man's a clown, he put his  
hand up to work in a country  
involved in a civil war. Stellar  
career move that one.

AMBASSADOR

I wouldn't envy the posting.  
(beat)  
What's he done?

Gareth Evans leans forward and fixes himself a whiskey on the  
rocks.

GARETH EVANS

What's expected, nothing. Problem  
is he'll soon be dealing with the  
world's media.

AMBASSADOR

He's involved in some type of  
scandal?

GARETH EVANS

No, they found the missing  
Australian girl. Prime Minister  
expects the story to cause a stir.

The Ambassador sighs relieved, he reaches up and loosens his  
tie.

AMBASSADOR

You're here for the Wilkinson case.  
Official visit or unofficial visit?

GARETH EVANS

It's a whatever I want to call it  
visit.

Gareth Evans waggles a finger at the Ambassadors tie.

GARETH EVANS CONTD

Do that thing up, its distracting.

AMBASSADOR

Sorry, long day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Ambassador checks his reflection in the window. He redoes his tie.

GARETH EVANS

Yes, Kelli Anne Wilkinson, 24 and until recently, missing in Cambodia.

THE AMBASSADOR

I don't understand, our government maintains the no negotiation no ransom policy?

GARETH EVANS

The girl's dead, they discovered three bodies in the jungle last week. Her families been informed, story's being released to the media tonight.

AMBASSADOR

Terrible, do they have the bastards that killed them?

GARETH EVANS

The official line is bandits.

AMBASSADOR

It wasn't the Khmer Rouge?

GARETH EVANS

Farmers with left over guns. They snatched them, got spooked, killed them. End of tragic story.

THE AMBASSADOR

Such a waste, but if the girl's deceased..?

GARETH EVANS

They're ransoming the bodies to the families.

Gareth Evans rattles the ice in his glass, he takes a sip of whiskey.

AMBASSADOR

Terrorists must be easier to deal with when the hostages are dead.

GARETH EVANS

It would seem so.

AMBASSADOR CONTD

So it'll be a short visit then, when will you leave for Phnom Penh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GARETH EVANS

I've been told to monitor from a distance.

AMBASSADOR

And where will you be monitoring from?

GARETH EVANS

You're going to be stuck with me awhile.

EXT.RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

Khmer Rouge soldiers stand in front of a derelict stilt house on an abandoned farm. They wear black uniforms, Chinese caps, red and white checked neck scarves, they hold AK47's.

Khmer Rouge war hero COLONEL RIN stands in front of his soldiers armed with a sidearm pistol. He is weather beaten and battle worn, his cheek is marred by a furrowed scar.

Two guards stand either side of Colonel Rin, one is armed with an AK47. The other, VITH VORN (35), is lithe and strong. He has a sharp machete tucked into his belt.

Colonel Rin bows to his assembled soldiers, they return the gesture. The colonel addresses them with confident authority.

SOLDIERS

The Sihanoukville train is utilized by Hun Sen to deliver weapons to the traitorous Royal Cambodian Army.

The soldiers are disciplined, well trained, they call out in unison.

SOLDIERS (CONT'D)

Ankar!

COLONEL RIN

The Sihanoukville train is used by the Vietnamese to shift spies across our lands.

SOLDIERS

Ankar!

COLONEL RIN

The Sihanoukville train is the snake Hun Sen sends to secure his control of Kampuchea.

SOLDIERS

Ankar!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colonel Rin raises a fist to his chest, pumps it out and back horizontally 3 times in the Khmer Rouge salute.

COLONEL RIN CONTD

We are Angkar!

The soldiers raise their fists. They return the Khmer Rouge salute.

SOLDIERS

We are Angkar!

The soldiers cheer. Colonel Rin pauses until the soldiers calm down, he bows to his men.

COLONEL RIN CONTD

Eat then rest, tomorrow I'll lead  
you into battle.

The soldiers return the bow, they mingle, slowly disperse. Colonel Rin turns to the guard with the rifle.

COLONEL RIN

The train is heavily armed. Make  
sure my men are rested and well  
fed.

The guard bows, moves off and Colonel Rin addresses Vith Vorn.

COLONEL RIN (CONT'D)

I would speak with you in private  
Vith Vorn.

VITH VORN

Yes Mit Bong.

Colonel Rin turns and moves towards the house. Vith Vorn follows with a hand on the hilt of his machete.

PHNOM PENH -DAY

Mark, David and Jean Michel enter the chill, and laid back, Capitol Hotel lobby, the furnishings are backpacker chic.

Two stoned backpacker's sit and play chess on a dusty board with mismatched pieces. Another backpacker sleeps in a hammock underneath a slowly turning ceiling fan.

The Van Morrison song, 'Bright Side of the Road' plays in the background.

PHANH the hotel manager sits behind a small desk in the corner. He has a round face and reading glasses perched on large ears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHANH

Good morning gentlemen, how can I help you this afternoon?

The backpackers laugh, jostle to crowd around his desk.

MARK

Good evening Phanh how are you tomorrow?

PHANH

I hope I'll be good tomorrow but that's for my Buddha to decide. How can I be of service?

DAVID

We want to go to the beach.

PHANH

You probably mean Sihanoukville, but it's not the only beach in Cambodia.

Phanh opens a draw, pulls out a brochure, slides it across his desk. Jean Michel picks it up, studies the pamphlet.

PHANH CONTD

There are 2 ways you can go, by taxi or by train.

DAVID

We're thinking of the train.

PHANH

I'd recommend the taxi, the road is safer.

Phanh reaches for his calculator, his fingers blur across the keys.

PHANH CONTD

Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville by taxi is 6,000 Riels per person, around US \$2,30 it takes 5 or 6 hours.

MARK

Can you tell us what the train costs?

PHANH

Not my recommendation, but the train is 3,000 Riels per person. It takes 7 hours, longer if it's stopped.

Phanh's fingers fly over the calculator keys once more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PHANH CONTD

3,000 Riels equals US \$1,15 that  
means you'll save...

Jean-Michel shoves the brochure between the pages of his  
lonely planet, he interrupts.

JEAN-MICHEL

Difference of \$3,45. Not much, but  
a few dollars goes a long way in  
Cambodia.

Phanh takes off his glasses. He places them gently down on his  
desk.

PHANH

Sometimes trying to save money  
becomes expensive.

MARK

(ignores the advice)  
Is it true we can ride on the roof  
of the train?

PHANH

Yes, but please be careful. There  
are many dangers in Cambodia. You  
might want to...

DAVID

That's it, we're catching the  
train.

MARK

Sihanoukville here we come!

DAVID

Thanks Phanh, I take the trash out  
for you.

David shoves Mark and they wrestle. They stumble away from  
the desk.

MARK

Who you calling trash?

Jean Michel places his fingertips to his forehead. He bows  
traditionally to Phanh.

JEAN-MICHEL

Aw-koon.

PHANH

(returns gesture)  
Your welcome young man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Jean Michel trails after his friends. Phanh's concerned eyes follow him as he leaves.

FARM HOUSE-DAY ·

The single room interior of the farm house is run-down and rustic. Wood walls and floor, heavy beams crisscross the ceiling.

There's a wooden table and 2 battered chairs. Vith Vorn sits across from Colonel Rin, he smokes a cigarette.

VITH VORN

It was a good speech Mit Bong.

COLONEL RIN

They're skilled soldiers, but sometimes motivation is useful.

VITH VORN

Your men do seem disciplined.

COLONEL RIN

The train is heavily armed, it's necessary to use well trained men. You on the other hand.

VITH VORN

It's true, I am experienced in subtler forms of war than combat.

COLONEL RIN

Commander Noun Paet asked me to bring you along on this mission, he would like you to become a soldier.

VITH VORN

We're from the same village, our parents are family.

Vith Vorn ashes his cigarette on the floor. Colonel Rin rubs at the scar on his cheek, watches him distrustfully.

COLONEL RIN

I understand you served at Tuol Sleng security prison S21?

VITH VORN

I served where I was ordered to serve.

(beat)

Didn't you also receive orders to visit Phnom Penh.

COLONEL RIN

I underwent political training, but I'm a soldier, my men are soldiers.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL RIN (CONT'D)

Your war has been very different to ours.

VITH VORN

War is war, people die, not so different.

COLONEL RIN

The prison was used for torture, Cambodians were executed.

Vith Vorn takes a long drag, he blows smoke in the colonel's direction.

VITH VORN

They were enemies of the state, but still, I was little more than a guard.

COLONEL RIN

Your lack of battle experience remains a concern.

VITH VORN

I've killed before, I am capable.

COLONEL RIN

I know, people talk, you have a reputation.

Vith Vorn stubs out his cigarette on the floor with a combat boot.

VITH VORN

My father used to say, people give, don't be in a hurry to take. Cambodia is a country full of rumours Mit Bong.

COLONEL RIN

Regardless, tomorrow you'll remain in the rear until the battle is concluded.

VITH VORN

If that's what you want, is there anything else?

COLONEL RIN

I was ordered to train you as a soldier, that's what you'll become. There is nothing else.

Vith Vorn stands and bows, he strides to the door. Colonel Rin places a hand on his sidearm, watches him leave.

EXT.PHNOM PENH- AFTERNOON

Mark and David exit the hotel lobby, they move to the table they occupied earlier.

American backpackers, JANE, TAMMY and STEVE, (25) drink coffee nearby. They're casually dressed for the humidity. There's an ounce bag of marijuana on their table.

MARK

I should be able to take some cracking pictures.

DAVID

It's a 7 hour trip, you'll probably get stoned and fall off the roof.

Mark and David sit. Jean Michel moves to the table after them. He holds up the brochure.

JEAN-MICHEL

The train to Sihanoukville leaves at eight, we'll have to be at the station early.

DAVID

Whoever gets up first should wake the others.

MARK

Now you're just inviting trouble...

Tammy overhears the conversation, she turns and joins the discussion.

TAMMY

Sorry to interrupt, but did you say your heading to Sihanoukville?

MARK

Yep, by train tomorrow.

TAMMY

I've heard its dangerous.

MARK

We're going to ride on roof. The first sign of trouble and we'll jump off.

Jane and Steve turn their chairs to face David, Jean Michel and Mark's table.

JANE

An American woman was kidnapped from that area last year.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVE

Melissa Himes, she was an aid worker from North Carolina. The Khmer Rouge held her hostage for over a month.

DAVID

No offense, but Americans are a high risk category when it comes to kidnapping.

MARK

Yeah, kidnappers don't bother with Australians. They're too tight to pay the ransom.

David gives Mark a shove. Mark gives David the finger, Steve laughs.

STEVE

Seriously, you should go by taxi. The train travels past the Elephant Mountains. There's a Khmer Rouge stronghold down there.

MARK

I'm looking to take some pictures of the Cambodia countryside, the roof of the train is perfect.

TAMMY

(to David)  
And you, what's your reason?

DAVID

The adventure, and then relaxing on Sihanoukville Beach with a spliff when the journey's over.

TAMMY

If you want pretty beaches you should head over to Thailand.

DAVID

I came up that way, Malaysia, Thailand, then Cambodia, I might finish up my holiday in Burma.

TAMMY

You sound experienced, travel wise I mean.

David nods, he gestures at the bag of Marijuana on the American's table.

DAVID

I love traveling, any good?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TAMMY

Best the Golden Triangle has to offer.

DAVID

Mind if we join you?

TAMMY

No Worries mate.

INT.CAPITOL HOTEL - NIGHT

A street light shines through a gap in the curtains, baths the hotel room in soft light.

David gets out of bed in boxer shorts. He feels around for his clothes, stumbles into a table. Tammy wakes up with a start.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

David is that you, what are you doing?

DAVID

I have to leave right away.

David steps into shorts, he pulls a T-shirt over his head.

TAMMY

Why not stay a little longer.

DAVID

I need to catch the train.

TAMMY

It's Cambodia, the train will be late.

DAVID

I'm sorry, I can't let my friends down.

TAMMY

I understand David, it's a backpacker's life.

David leaps onto the bed and Tammy drapes her arms loosely about his neck.

DAVID

Thank you for last night.

TAMMY

It was fun, we should do it again sometime.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVID

Thailand?

TAMMY

Thailand.

Tammy reaches for a small gold pendant that David wears on a chain.

TAMMY CONT'D

Regarde St Christophe et va-t-en rassure.

DAVID

What was that, what did you just say?

TAMMY

Sorry, my father's Spanish. Look at Saint Christopher and go on reassured. You're wearing his medallion.

DAVID

My mother gave it to me before I left. Said it would bring me luck.

TAMMY

Saint Christopher is the patron saint of travelers, it's good she gave it to you.

David kisses Tammy on the cheek. He pulls away and steps off the bed.

DAVID

I have to go, you have my details, promise you'll keep in touch.

TAMMY

Promise, but only if you promise to be careful on that stupid train.

DAVID

I will, and don't worry, we'll catch up on my way back home.

TAMMY

I'll be waiting on that Thai beach.

David turns and walks towards the door. Tammy calls out and he stops.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

David, be careful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DAVID

Always.

David smiles confidently, he winks at Tammy, slips through the door.

EXT.PHNOM PEN-DAY

Cambodian peasants and farmers sit patiently on the station platform while they wait for the Sihanoukville train.

Jean Michel sits away from the crowd with his back to a column. Mark rests on his backpack with his camera on his chest. David speaks into an battered old pay phone.

The train's locomotive WHISTLES and air brakes HISS as it pulls up to the platform. A steel plow is welded to the locomotive to deflect explosions.

Soldiers lounge in machine gun nests on the front and last carriage. They watch commuters crowd into carriages, scurry onto the roof.

Jean Michel and Mark stand and sling backpacks over their shoulders. Jean Michel calls over to David.

JEAN MICHEL

David we need to go!

DAVID

I'll be there in a moment.

MARK

He'll catch up.

Mark and Jean Michel push through the crowd and move towards the train. They reach a ladder between the carriages, begin to climb to the roof.

David hangs up the phone, throws his backpack over his shoulder, runs for the train.

Jean Michel and Mark watch David navigate through the crowd. They wave and call out to get his attention.

JEAN MICHEL

David up here, hurry.

MARK

You'll need to climb.

DAVID

Here Jean, catch this.

David lobs his backpack up to Jean Michel. Mark reaches down to help David climb up the side of the train.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARK

Take my hand, I'll pull you up.

David takes Mark's hand, he scampers up the side of the carriage and rolls onto the roof.

DAVID

Thanks.

Mark helps David to his feet and Jean Michel joins them.

JEAN MICHEL

You nearly missed the train. Who'd you call?

DAVID

I had to call my mother, she worries.

JEAN MICHEL

No, you didn't call your mother?

DAVID

Why?

JEAN MICHEL

You can't call mothers just after sex. It's like a rule or something.

DAVID

Bullshit, that's not a rule.

MARK

Definitely a rule, there needs to be a days grace period between sex and mother calls.

Mark and Jean Michel smirk. David shoves Mark softly in the chest.

DAVID

You put him up to that.

MARK

Nope, Jean thought of it all by himself.

DAVID

Yeah, well, you're both just jealous.

Mark chuckles, he turns and he pumps his fist in the air and calls out.

MARK

Sihanoukville or bust!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Jean Michel and David also pump their fists, they hoot and whistle.

EXT. TRAIN ROOF-DAY

MOMENTS LATER

Jean Michel, David and Mark sit amongst the Cambodian peasants crowded on the roof of the train. They rest on their backpacks in the middle of a carriage. They're one car from the back of the train.

The locomotive's whistle blows and the train chugs forward. Jean Michel gestures at the gold pendant David wears hanging on a chain.

JEAN MICHEL

You shouldn't show that on here.

DAVID

Why not?

JEAN MICHEL

These people are just farmers, but they've been through years of war, they're very poor.

DAVID

Thanks my mother would kill me if I lost it.

David unclasps the chain. He pulls a pair of jeans from his backpack and slides the pendant into the pocket.

DAVID CONTD

My safety box, don't tell anyone okay.

JEAN MICHEL

Your secret's safe with me.

MARK

(interrupts)  
What's he doing?

Mark points to an old man on his knees further up the carriage.

The old man touches his forehead with fingertips, then places his palms on the train's roof three times. He begins to chant tunefully.

DAVID

Looks like he's blessing the train, maybe he's a monk?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MARK

Monks wear orange robes don't they?

DAVID

They do in Thailand.

JEAN MICHEL

He can't be a monk. Pol Pot banned Buddhism, then he ordered all religious leaders in Cambodia to be executed.

The other passenger's shuffle to their knee's, bow their heads, and place their palms together in prayer.

The passengers join the old man's mantra and the haunting chant echoes out over the train's chugging engines.

MARK

The other question is why do they need to bless the train?

Mark lifts his camera. He takes pictures of the old man and the passengers praying.

EXT.RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

There's patchy scrub either side of the train tracks. Stately sugar palms stretch skyward from the red Cambodian mud.

The Sihanoukville Train CHUGS around a blind corner, blows its whistle and startles a loan water buffalo. The animal breaks and runs besides the tracks.

The 3 backpackers sit together on the carriage roof and sway with the motion of the train.

Jean Michel wears Ray-ban sunglasses, he rests on his backpack. David points out the running buffalo to Mark.

DAVID

That's Cambodia right there.

MARK

He's really moving.

Mark lifts his camera from his chest and snaps a series of pictures. David takes a joint from his pocket and lights it up.

Jean Michel sits up and fusses with his backpack. He pulls out a guide book and flicks through the pages. David notices the cover.

DAVID

Is that a different Lonely Planet, how many guide books do you have?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JEAN MICHEL

I have two, this one's written in French.

MARK

(lowers camera)

It must be interesting to read the same information in two different languages.

JEAN MICHEL

At least I'm able to read.

DAVID

(to Mark)

He got you there, here take this, it may ease the pain.

David passes the joint over to Mark. Mark takes a puff and exhales a cloud of bluish smoke.

JEAN MICHEL

(to David)

I just want to know how many elephants are left in the Elephant Mountains.

MARK

Would you like us to stop the train so you can count them?

JEAN MICHEL

The amount's important, there's not so many wild elephants left in Southeast Asia.

MARK

That's why the Cambodians paint numbers on them like football players. Don't worry, they should be easy enough to count from here.

JEAN MICHEL

No, of course this cannot be true?

DAVID

The Elephant Mountains got their name because of their shape Jean.

JEAN MICHEL

Thank you David, I did not think of that.

Jean Michel leans forward and whacks Mark across the shoulder with his book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

Marks splutters laughter around the joint. David and Jean Michel also laugh.

No one notices the armed Khmer Rouge soldiers who emerge from the scrub behind the train.

EXT.RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

A lone Khmer Rouge soldier crosses the train-line in front of the train. He moves quickly into scrub further along the tracks.

The RCA SOLDIER on the front of the train screams a warning in Khmer.

RCA SOLIDER  
Khmer Kraham!

The solider raises his AK-47 and he fires off a couple of rounds, BRRRRRT! BRRRRRT!

The mined tracks 15 feet in front of the train explode in a whoosh of sound, BA-BOOM! Red dirt and rubble explode skyward, cascades down.

The train's brakes SCREECH and it's carriages SHUDDER, it grinds to a halt just short of the newly formed bomb crater.

The earth trembles behind the last carriage and, KA-BOOM! Red dirt surges upwards, deluges down upon the rooftop passengers.

A Cambodian peasant jumps off the train's roof, he lands and runs towards the scrub. Gunfire rattles, BRRRRRT! The man tumbles into the red dirt.

A barrage of gunfire bursts from the scrub either side of the train. Bullets BUZZ and HISS, they CRACK and SNAP into the carriages.

The RCA Soldiers on the roof of the train spray bullets across the scrub, BRRRRRT! BRRRRRT! A Khmer Rouge Soldier behind a bush falls dead.

Khmer Rouge soldiers emerge from the scrub and charge the train. They drop to their knees, raise their rifles and return fire, BRRRRRT! BRRRRRT!

The RCA Soldier on the roof of the train shakes as bullets pummel his body. He falls from the carriage, CRUNCHES onto the hard gravel.

More Khmer Rouge soldiers race from the scrub. They swarm towards the train, fire their rifles, BRRRRRT! BRRRRRT!

The old man who led the chant catches a bullet in the throat. He rolls from the train's roof, flops to the ground dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

The Khmer Rouge soldiers fire indiscriminately. Windows SHATTER and carriages ROCK as they're ripped to shreds.

Commuters try and escape from a carriage door, they're met with gunfire, their corpses pile by the side of the train.

Jean-Michel lies on the carriage between David and Mark. He covers his head with his arms as bullets BURST and POP through the roof.

David and Mark are pale and petrified, they face the back of the train. David screams over the gunfire.

DAVID

We have to move! We have to get out of here!

MARK

Where can we go? I'm not going down there!

David searches for safety. Mark flinches when a bullet punches through the roof close by.

DAVID

What about the sandbags?

MARK

Okay!

DAVID

Jean we need to run to safety, you have to come with us!

Jean shakes his head no under his arms. David grabs him by the back of his shirt.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You're coming Jean.

There's a barked order below the train, a lull in the firing. David screams at his friends to...

DAVID (CONT'D)

Move!

David drags Jean Michel up, Mark follows. They run across the roof of the train carriage carrying their backpacks.

The backpackers sprint towards the sandbags, bullets WHIZ by, they SMACK into the carriage. Jean Michel uses his backpack for protection.

David shoves Jean Michel over the sandbag wall, follows him inside. Mark dives after them and he rolls to safety. Bullets THUMP into the barrier, THAP! THOP!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

David's puffed, he sucks down air. Mark buries his head in his hands, he swears.

MARK

Fuck, Fuck, Fuck.

Jean Michel stares at a dead RCA soldier beside him. He gingerly places his backpack over his blank glazed eyes.

Outside the firing continues, picks up tempo. Bullets WHIZ past, PING off the train, THWACK into the sandbags.

Guns RATTLE, orders are CALLED OUT, dying and wounded passengers CRY and SCREAM.

The terrified backpackers cower, hug their knees, bury their heads.

EXT.TRAIN ROOF-DAY

LATER

The gunfire slows but sporadic SHOTS can be heard. The intermittent ORDER, the occasional distant SCREAM.

Jean Michel peers over the sandbag wall and he sees a Khmer Rouge soldier facing away from the train.

Jean Michel's(POV). Vith Vorn stands astride a prone man. The man begs for mercy, tries to crawl away on his elbows.

Vith Vorn raises his machete and it glints in the sunlight. He swings the blade downwards and the man's pleas abruptly stop.

Vith Vorn wipes the blade on the dead man's shirt, he turns toward the train. He smiles, his face is spattered with blood.

Jean Michel drops back into the sandbags, he retches, covers his mouth to muffle the sound.

MARK

What is it, what happened?

Jean Michel lowers his face into his hands, he sobs. Mark looks over at David.

MARK (CONT'D)

What are we going to do?

DAVID

I'll take a look, just try and stay calm.

David edges up the other side of the sandbag wall and peers over the side of the train.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

David's(POV). A group of soldiers mingle by the side of the train. One of them gives an order and points to the roof.

Two Khmer Rouge soldiers walk to the carriages, they begin to climb.

David silently drops back down into the sandbag barrier, he whispers.

DAVID (CONT'D)

They're coming.

EXT.TRAIN ROOF-DAY

Two fresh faced teenage Khmer Rouge soldiers walk along the carriages. They bark orders at survivors, gesture with rifles for them to climb down from the train.

The frightened passengers bow and shuffle nervously past the teenage soldiers.

One of the soldiers points at the sandbags, they make their way to the back of the train.

The backpackers hide in the sandbags, they're pale and sweaty, they whisper apprehensively.

MARK

We need to surrender, try and buy our freedom.

DAVID

Do we have anything to bribe them with?

Mark reaches up slowly. He takes off his camera, holds it up to show David.

MARK

This may help.

DAVID

But you love that camera.

MARK

They would steal it anyway.

Jean Michel retrieves his backpack from the dead soldier. He rummages around, takes out a carton of cigarettes and whiskey flask. He passes the bottle of alcohol to David.

JEAN MICHEL

I thought we may need these for bribes.

DAVID

Well done Jean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

We should move slowly, keep our hands raised.

DAVID

Get ready to stand in three.

David counts off with his fingers. They stand together, hold out their individual items.

MARK

We want to surrender.

The Khmer Rouge soldiers are caught off guard. They scream out a warning, raise their rifles threateningly.

The backpackers are terrified, they slowly lift their arms above their heads.

DAVID

You can take what you want, just let us go.

JEAN MICHEL

Please we just want to leave.

The Khmer Rouge soldiers glance at one another. They laugh, lower their weapons slightly.

The child soldiers move towards the backpackers waiting nervously in the sandbag barrier.

EXT.RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

There's a large bomb crater in the red mud beneath the twisted wreckage of train tracks. Khmer Rouge soldiers loot the bullet riddled train carriages.

There's a group of Cambodian peasants huddle under guard. Their belongings are piled in a parked bullock cart.

2 old Vietnamese men and an old Vietnamese woman with a colourful scarf are separated from the Cambodian prisoners. They're tied together with rope bound around their wrists.

The backpackers stand away from the other groups. They are shackled together with manacles around their ankles, their backpacks have been emptied and the contents piled neatly before them.

Colonel Rin stands in front David, Jean Michel and Mark, he sorts through their passports.

Vith Vorn stands behind the colonel with hand resting on the hilt of his machete, he smirks at the backpackers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL RIN  
When I call your name you'll  
answer.

(beat)  
David Wilson, Australian?

David raises his hand. He shuffles nervously in his shackles.

DAVID  
Here.

COLONEL RIN  
Mark Slater, British?

MARK  
Here.

Colonel Rin walks over to stand in front of Jean Michel.

COLONEL RIN  
And you're French?

JEAN MICHEL  
Yes, I'm from France.

COLONEL RIN  
Do you have any idea what the  
French did to this country?

JEAN MICHEL  
I know we protected...

COLONEL RIN  
Protected!

Colonel Rin slaps Jean Michel across the face, CRACK!

COLONEL RIN (CONT'D)  
My king sought French help and your  
government took what they wanted  
then turned my people into slaves.

JEAN MICHEL  
I'm not so sure of the history, it  
was a long time ago.

COLONEL RIN  
Was it, look over there Frenchman,  
do you see the dead?

Colonel Rin grabs Jean Michel by the hair. He forces him to  
look at the line of bodies piled near the train.

COLONEL RIN (CONT'D)  
War and death is the legacy of the  
French, that is what your people  
brought to this country.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JEAN MICHEL

I don't know what to say, I'm  
sorry.

VITH VORN

Sorry?

(scoffs)

You should not have come here  
Frenchman.

Colonel Rin shoves Jean Michel away. Jean Michel stumbles in  
his chains and David and Mark steady him.

COLONEL RIN

He's right, the Khmer have a long  
memory, it was foolish for you to  
come here.

Colonel Rin moves to stand in front of Vith Vorn. He  
addresses all three backpackers.

COLONEL RIN (CONT'D)

You now belong to the Khmer Rouge,  
you'll be expected to march for the  
next six days.

The backpackers look down, they shuffle nervously, remain  
quiet.

COLONEL RIN (CONT'D)

You'll be well treated but my men  
will shoot you if you try and  
escape. Do you understand?

DAVID

We understand.

COLONEL RIN

Good.

(to Vith Vorn)

I'm leaving for Phnom Vour, have  
someone take their belongings to my  
vehicle.

VITH VORN

Yes Mit Bong.

Colonel Rin moves to the backpacker's belongings and he picks  
up the bottle of whiskey. Vith Vorn shadows him.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Will I be left in charge?

COLONEL RIN

No, the hostages are too important,  
there's been a change of plans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VITH VORN  
Commander Paet assured me.

COLONEL RIN  
I am in command here and that is my  
decision.

VITH VORN  
Yes Mit Bong.

COLONEL RIN  
You may oversee the last leg of the  
journey when they arrive at the  
mountain safely.

Vith Vorn places his hands together and bows to the Colonel.

Colonel Rin half-heartedly returns the gesture. He turns and  
strides away.

Vith Vorn places a hand on his machete, his hard eyes follow  
the colonel as he leaves.

EXT.RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

A bullock cart loaded with plunder moves slowly down a dusty  
track.

Khmer Rouge soldiers put out small fires in a field, they  
empty cooking pots and prepare to leave camp. The Cambodian  
hostages huddle together and watch silently.

Jean Michel, Mark, and David sit under a sugar palm with  
their ankles shackled. A Khmer Rouge soldier watches over  
them.

Vith Vorn follows the old Vietnamese woman with the colorful  
scarf over to the backpackers. He shoves her and she stumbles  
forward with a bottle of murky water and a bowl of food.

VITH VORN  
Feed them hag.  
(to backpackers)  
We march all day, you need to eat.

The old woman crouches. She places the food and water in  
front of Jean Michel.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)  
They told me to cook for you.

JEAN MICHEL  
(in Khmer)  
Aw-koon.

The old woman smiles kindly at Jean Michel but she shakes her  
head no.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OLD WOMAN

I'm Vietnamese, in my country we  
say, cam on ban.

JEAN MICHEL

Sorry, I thought you were  
Cambodian.

Vith Vorn lifts a booted foot and he shoves the old woman on  
the shoulder. She falls roughly in the dirt,

VITH VORN

I didn't tell you to talk mother of  
whores.

OLD WOMAN

Forgive me Mit Bong.

Vith Vorn takes out his machete, levels the sharp blade at  
the old woman. She looks up at him afraid.

VITH VORN

Get up you filthy Vietnamese bitch!

OLD WOMAN

I'm sorry Mit Bong.

The old woman slowly gets to her feet. She places her palms  
together and bows low.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm old and stupid Mit Bong, please  
forgive me.

VITH VORN

Today you are lucky, leave me while  
you still have your head Vietnamese  
dog.

The old woman shuffles away backwards. Vith Vorn ignores her,  
returns his attention to the backpackers. He points his  
machete at the food.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Pick it up and eat.

JEAN MICHEL

I can't eat, I have dysentery.

Jean Michel leans forward to look at the food. He sees 3  
small burnt pieces of meat, a handful of rice. Mark leans  
over and reaches for the bowl.

MARK

We need to eat Jean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

VITH VORN

I did not ask, that was an order.

Vith Vorn flicks the bowl over in the dirt before Mark is able to take it. He grinds the food into the mud with his boot.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Bon appetite.

The backpackers stare at the ruined food stunned. Vith Vorn chuckles, he addresses the guard.

VITH VORN CONT'D

Unshackle them. We march in 5 minutes.

The guard steps forward and roughly yanks Jean Michel to his feet. David snatches up the bottle of water and he and Mark stand.

EXT. PHNOM VOUR -DAY

Phnom Vour, (Vine Mountain) fortress is located on an escarpment halfway up a tropical mountain.

Limestone cliffs rise up around a jungle clearing. Concealed bamboo huts are positioned around the edges of the area. They're covered in tropical foliage and camouflage netting.

Political chieftain and ruler of Phnom Vour, COMMANDER PAET(50) is a rustic tough farmer with greying hair.

Commander Paet and Colonel Rin stroll across the clearing. The Commander swings a thin, polished bamboo stick, he carries it wherever he goes.

COMMANDER PAET

Zone Commander Sam Bith is pleased, he sends his congratulations.

COLONEL RIN

He's pleased by the number of dead, the amount of destruction. The more brutal the battle the better the victory as far as he's concerned.

COMMANDER PAET

The hijacking also had political motivation, the capture of the westerners adds effectiveness. He's informed Pol Pot of our success.

COLONEL RIN

Pol Pot should also be informed that my men fought bravely, they did as they were commanded.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

COMMANDER PAET  
And Vith Vorn?

COLONEL RIN  
He became involved in the battle  
despite my orders.

COMMANDER PAET  
Sometimes he's impulsive.  
(beat)  
You left him in charge of the  
hostages as I requested?

COLONEL RIN  
I've given command to my own man.  
He's been ordered to march them too  
hard, feed them too little.

COMMANDER PAET  
And Vith Vorn?

COLONEL RIN  
He's been told to confine his blood  
lust to the Vietnamese.

Commander Paet stops and turns to the colonel. He taps his  
stick in hand annoyed.

COMMANDER PAET  
Vorn's difficult, but he has his  
uses. I have plans for his future.

COLONEL RIN  
I've allowed him to bring the  
hostages up the mountain. But I  
maintain, they're too valuable to  
put at risk.

COMMANDER PAET  
Perhaps, we'll see if they're the  
boon they promise to be.

Commander Paet continues on across the clearing. Colonel Rin  
points out a camouflaged hut close to the jungle.

COLONEL RIN  
Your share of the ambush has been  
stored in my hut.

RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

Khmer Rouge soldiers crowd Cambodian hostages onto the cargo-  
bed of an old farmers truck.

The Vietnamese prisoners stand away from the truck they're  
bound with rope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The backpackers sit in a barren field chained to a sugar palm, they share a bottle of murky water. They look dirty and tired from long days marching.

DAVID

Where do you think they're taking the Cambodians?

MARK

Maybe the government paid their ransom?

JEAN MICHEL

Shh, he's coming.

The backpackers stop talking, they turn to watch Vith Vorn walk towards the Vietnamese with his machete in his hand.

Vith Vorn takes the rope binding the Vietnamese. He leads them behind the truck.

JEAN MICHEL (CONT'D)

Do you think the Vietnamese are also being released?

DAVID

The borders close, maybe they'll just send them across.

MARK

How close is the border?

JEAN MICHEL

My Lonely Planet stated the Elephant Mountain range was 45 km from Vietnam.

MARK

If the borders that close maybe we should think about escape?

Mark passes the water bottle. David takes it from him and has a mouthful.

DAVID

What, hobble away in our chains?

MARK

I mean during the day, while we're marching.

DAVID

We should be patient. The Khmer Rouge held the American woman for a month, but in the end someone paid her ransom and they set her free.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JEAN MICHEL

A month seems like such a long time.

MARK

What about the three that went missing, the bullet riddled pickup?

DAVID

We don't know if they were kidnapped by the Khmer Rouge or bandits.

JEAN MICHEL

(interrupts)

What do you think he's done to them?

Mark and David turn to look. They see Vith Vorn rounding the side of the truck followed by 2 soldiers. The Vietnamese are absent.

JEAN MICHEL CONT'D

Why wouldn't they also ransom the Vietnamese?

MARK

We don't know what happened to them Jean.

DAVID

David's right, don't over think it.

Vith Vorn strides towards the backpackers with his machete in his hand. The backpackers fall silent while they watch him approach.

VITH VORN

We're 3 days from Vine Mountain. You'll need to be careful of land mines and booby-traps.

Vith Vorn stops in front of the backpackers, he casually cleans the blade of the machete.

VITH VORN CONTD

We're no longer burdened by the Vietnamese, so we'll march day and night.

Vith Vorn unfurls his cleaning cloth. The backpackers gasp, they stare horrified.

Backpackers(POV). The old woman's scarf billows on the breeze. The once brightly colored shawl is stained black with wet blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Vith Vorn scrunches up the scarf. He throws it at Jean Michel.

VITH VORN CONTD (CONT'D)  
For you Frenchman, a memento.

The scarf hits Jean Michel in the chest, flops into his lap. He shrieks and pushes it away.

VITH VORN CONTD (CONT'D)  
Don't be concerned. They were  
Vietnamese, they're less than dogs.

Vith Vorn chuckles, turns and strides away. He calls over his shoulder.

VITH VORN CONTD (CONT'D)  
We march in 5 minutes.

The guards step forward and drag the manacled hostages to their feet.

INT. PHNOM VOUR - DAY

Commander Paet sits with Colonel Rin at a table in his hut. The loot from the train hijack is piled in a corner.

There's cigarettes, a gold watch, a wad of dirty money in front of the commander.

Colonel Rin pours whiskey into dusty glasses. The men pick up their glasses. They perform a Cambodian ritual by pouring a drop of whiskey onto the floor.

COLONEL RIN  
Will Pol Pot claim responsibility  
for the hijack?

COMMANDER PAET  
No, he needs to remain in the  
background if he intends to retain  
the protection of the U.N.

COLONEL RIN  
Then we should expect no  
interference?

COMMANDER PAET  
He'll distance himself, but he has  
as many eyes as a pineapple. He  
will be monitoring.

COLONEL RIN  
Soldiers from the Royal Cambodian  
Army were killed. We'll need to  
prepare for a backlash.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colonel Rin doesn't drink alcohol he puts his glass aside untouched.

Commander Paet downs his whiskey in one gulp. He stands and walks over to the stolen pile of loot.

COMMANDER PAET

Troops would need to be sent to either Kampot or Kep. The towns people will keep us informed.

Commander Paet inspects his share of the loot. He lifts a pile of clothes and a delicate gold chain falls to the floor.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

What's this?

(Picks up chain)

A man and a child, a good gift for my niece.

COLONEL RIN

The spoils have already been separated, it's yours to keep.

Commander Paet slides the chain into his pocket. He moves back towards the table.

COLONEL RIN CONTD

The countries involved supply military aid to the Hun Sen government. We should expect the Generals to make trouble.

COMMANDER PAET

Don't concern yourself. They've attacked before, we're safe on the mountain.

Commander Paet places his empty glass in front of the colonel. He sits down, picks up and inspects the gold watch.

COLONEL RIN

Then I'd discuss the ransom demand. We only received rice and motorbikes for the American aid worker.

Colonel Rin pours for the Commander, he slides the glass over.

COMMANDER PAET

I've demanded fifty thousand in gold for each long nose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL RIN

And my recompense? I lost 2 men,  
I'll be expected to compensate  
their families.

COMMANDER PAET

The hostages haven't even arrived.  
We can discuss your reward when  
I've confirmed their value.

COLONEL RIN

I'd discuss it now. I seek only  
what I deserve.

Commander Paet places the watch on his wrist. He leans in  
conspiratorially.

COMMANDER PAET

Transporting gold has risks. Theft  
is easier to explain than  
compensation.

COLONEL RIN

What are you suggesting?

COMMANDER PAET

I intend for you and your men to  
guard the shipment. If a raid  
occurs, then a shortfall could be  
rationalized.

COLONEL RIN

I'd need to choose trusted men for  
such an undertaking?

COMMANDER PAET

Then your agreed? We can work  
together to achieve our desired  
goals.

Colonel Rin doesn't answer, he raises his glass instead. The  
men touch glasses.

Commander Paet finish's his drink. Colonel Rin tips his  
whiskey onto the floor under the table.

Commander Paet stands and pockets the money. He picks up the  
cigarettes, gestures at his loot.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

I must go, I'll send someone to  
collect my things, have them  
brought to my farm.

Colonel Rin also stands, he walks Commander Paet to the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COLONEL RIN

Don't concern yourself, I'll have them sent.

COMMANDER PAET

And you'll ensure nothing goes missing?

COLONEL RIN

My men are soldiers, not thieves  
Commander.

Colonel Rin opens the door of the hut. He guides Commander Paet outside.

INT. BANGKOK BAR - DAY

The bar is large, dimly lit and afternoon empty. One barman cleans glasses, a young uniformed Thai waitress serves.

Gareth Evans sits alone at a table in the corner. He nurses a whiskey and ice.

The Ambassador walks into the bar. He looks around, makes a beeline for Gareth Evans's table.

AMBASSADOR

Thanks for coming down.

GARETH EVANS

You said it was important.

AMBASSADOR

It is, but it's also been a tough day and I could use a drink.

The Ambassador holds a finger up to the barman. He pulls out a chair and sits.

GARETH EVANS

Situation with your secretary, marital problems, your sons come out of the closet. I don't want to hear about it.

AMBASSADOR

Nothing like that, but you're not going to like what I do have to tell you.

GARETH EVANS

What I don't like is discussing business in public.

AMBASSADOR

We're fine, this is my local, I hold meetings here all the time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARETH EVANS

That's what I'm worried about, just remember, no restricted issues.

AMBASSADOR

No problem, now my information isn't officially confirmed, but I thought you'd want to hear it right away.

The waitress arrives with a glass of beer, she places it on the table.

The Ambassador smiles his thanks. He waits for her to leave, continues.

AMBASSADOR (CONT'D)

A train was hijacked in Cambodia a few days ago. Three western backpackers were on that train. We believe one of them was Australian.

GARETH EVANS

God damn it!

(beat)

Okay verified or not, tell me what you know.

AMBASSADOR

The backpackers shared their travel plans with a group of Americans who were on their way to Thailand. They contacted my embassy when they heard about the hijacking.

GARETH EVANS

Do you have anything else?

AMBASSADOR

We also checked with their hotel manager in Phnom Penh, he confirmed they were travelling to Sihanoukville on the same day.

GARETH EVANS

The others, what are their nationalities?

Gareth Evans rattles the ice in his glass, he sips at his whiskey.

AMBASSADOR

French and British, my people are checking with their embassies as we speak.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GARETH EVANS

Were the Khmer Rouge involved in the attack?

AMBASSADOR

Appears so, there's a report that two of their soldiers were killed.

GARETH EVANS

Identified by their uniforms?

AMBASSADOR

Red checked scarves to be exact.

GARETH EVANS

Problem is the scarves were widely used before Pol Pot turned them into a fashion accessory for psychopaths.

Gareth Evans finishes his drink. He holds up the empty glass to show the barman.

GARETH EVANS CONT'D

My concern is it may be a ruse by Hun Sen and his handlers.

AMBASSADOR

My understanding is the Cambodian Prime Minister is backed by the Vietnamese.

(beat)

You think they could have been seeking American hostages?

GARETH EVANS

Exactly, Pol Pot is the biggest threat to Vietnamese control of the country. But his Khmer Rouge is still sanctioned by the United Nations.

AMBASSADOR

I had wondered why Pol Pot had never faced a war crimes tribunal.

GARETH EVANS

That may change if the Americans thought he was responsible for ordering the kidnapping one of their nationals.

AMBASSADOR

His protection from prosecution would dry up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Gareth Evans sips at his whiskey. He notices the waitress returning, he holds up his hand.

GARETH EVANS  
Possibly, but we should stop  
it there.

AMBASSADOR  
(interrupts)  
So the CIA are coercing the  
UN to shield a gang of mass  
murderers, are they seeking  
revenge over the Vietnamese  
War?

The waitress puts down the whiskey glass. The Foreign Mister glances at the waitress, he shakes his head and stands.

GARETH EVANS  
That comment is the reason I don't  
hold meetings in public.

Gareth Evans picks up his glass and he gulps down his whiskey.

GARETH EVANS CONTD  
This is your bad news and your  
local bar. You can put the bill on  
your expense account.

The Gareth Evans slams his empty glass down. He strides away from the table.

EXT. PHNOM VOUR - NIGHT

The low fat moon radiates a spectral light through the tropical canopy of jungle trees.

Mark, David and Jean Michel huddle asleep in a clearing. They're chained to the trunk of a Banyan Tree.

The backpackers are awakened by a boot to the back and a gun-barrel to the face. They're dragged to their feet by GUARD 1 and GUARD 2.

GUARD 1  
Stand up, move!

GUARD 2  
Get to your feet!

Vith Vorn looms in the background like a dark and shadowy ghou. The blade of his machete gleams maliciously in the moonlight.

VITH VORN  
I warned you what would happen if  
you tried to escape.

MARK  
We didn't do anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DAVID

We were sleeping.

VITH VORN

Silence, you were trying to escape!  
(to guards)

Unshackle the prisoners from the tree but leave their ankles chained together, bring them.

Vith Vorn moves toward a path that leads from the clearing. The dark trail is overhung with tropical foliage and thick vines.

VITH VORN CONTD

Line them up over here, hurry, it will be daylight soon.

The soldier's hurry the hostages over to Vith Vorn. They position Jean Michel at the entrance, Mark in the centre and David last.

VITH VORN

We call this area Vine Mountain because most of the pathways are overgrown and impenetrable.

Guard 1 and Guard 2 move either side of the frightened men. They cock their weapons with a metallic, CLICK.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Our mountain stronghold has been attacked by the American backed South Vietnamese Army, the Unified Vietnamese Army and the Royal Cambodian Army, all were unsuccessful.

Vith Vorn moves up and down the line. He addresses each of the backpackers in turn.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

The jungle, our guerilla fighters, and the tigers that roam this area were not the only hinderance these armies faced.

Vith Vorn stops beside Jean Michel. He smiles cruelly in the darkness.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

These mountain pathways are also littered with land-mines and other booby-traps.

Vith Vorn places a hand in the middle of Jean Michel's back He gives him a slight shove forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

VITH VORN CONT'D  
Go ahead, try and escape.

Jean Michel staggers a step. He stops, turns back to Mark and David.

JEAN MICHEL  
David, Mark, I don't want to go any further, I'm afraid of the land-mines.

VITH VORN  
(to guards)  
Prepare to shoot the prisoner if he continues to disobey.

Guard 1 and Guard 2 step up to Jean Michel. They level their rifles at the back of his head.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)  
My men won't hesitate to follow my orders, you'd be wise to do the same.

MARK  
Move Jean, they're going to shoot you.

JEAN MICHEL  
David, what should I do?

DAVID  
Do it Jean, just move slowly and watch where you step.

JEAN MICHEL  
But it's dark, I can't see...

VITH VORN  
Do as your friends suggest or you will die where you stand.  
(beat)  
Now move!

Jean Michel shuffles forward. Mark and David follow, they hobble after him.

Guard 1 and Guard 2 walk behind the prisoners with their AK47's leveled. They harry them to keep going, to move faster.

Vith Vorn steps in behind the group. He follows at a safe distance.

The group move through the jungle. They crash noisily down the path in pre-dawn darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Jean Michel whimpers quietly, he glances back at his friends, he's terrified.

JEAN MICHEL

Why are they doing this to us?

MARK

Just keep moving Jean.

JEAN MICHEL

But I'm afraid Mark...

Jean Michel turns back to the path. He fumbles past a low hanging palm frond.

Jean Michel's front leg buckles, he inhales sharply. He clutches at his knee, his pain registers.

Jean Michel's torturous SCREAM rises above the canopy, it SEARS across the coming dawn like a blistering hot blade.

EXT.PHNOM VOUR-DAY

The sun rises past the dawn and bright morning light glistens through the lush green jungle canopy.

David is shirtless, Jean Michel's sweat covered head is in his lap.

Jean Michel moans painfully, he writhes in agony. There's a large and sharp bamboo spike protruding through a bloodied wound in his foot.

Mark kneels shirtless at Jean Michel's ankles. He wets his T-shirt with a bottle of cloudy water. He dabs gently at the gruesome wound.

Vith Vorn looms close enough to enjoy Jean Michel's agony. Guard 1 and Guard 2 hover with their weapons ready.

JEAN MICHEL (CONT'D)

Get it the fuck out of me Mark!

MARK

I'm doing my best, I have to clean the wound so I can see.

DAVID

Try to keep still Jean.

Vith Vorn steps forward. He leans in to speak to David and Jean Michel.

VITH VORN

As you have discovered Phnom Vour is dangerous. There's no chance of escape.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

DAVID

Why did you do this to him?

VITH VORN

Because I have no authority to kill him.

DAVID

Fuck you.

VITH VORN

(shrugs, speaks to Mark)  
You need to clean the wound thoroughly. They smear the spikes with shit to cause infection.

Mark glances up at Vith Vorn, but otherwise ignores his remark. He dabs gently at the wound and Jean Michel jerks his leg back.

JEAN MICHEL(OS)

Fuck, fuck!

MARK

I'm sorry Jean, I'm doing my best.

David uses his T-shirt to wipe sweat from Jean Michel's face, he reassures him softly.

DAVID

It will all be over soon, take deep breaths, try not to move.

Jean drags in a ragged breath, he exhales, winces in pain.

Mark puts his wet T-shirt aside, he takes hold of the spike, looks up and mouths a silent warning to David.

David nods his understanding. He leans in, grips Jean Michel firmly by the shoulders.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Close your eyes Jean, he'll be finished soon.

JEAN MICHEL

Please, just do it!

Mark slowly pulls the bamboo spike from Jean Michel's foot. Blood spurts and oozes over his hand as the spike slides free.

Jean Michel thrashes about, he screams savagely in pain.

Mark slips the spike free of Jean Michel's foot. He throws it into the jungle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

Jean Michel closes his eyes, his head lolls, he slips into unconsciousness.

MARK

That's all I can do.

Mark breaths a sigh of relief. He stems the bleeding the wet T-shirt.

David gently wipes Jean Michel unconscious face in his lap.

DAVID

Mark got it out Jean, you're going to be alright.

Vith Vorn scoffs, he turns and walks away. He calls to his guards over his shoulder.

VITH VORN

When they've finished bring them back to camp. We march in one hour.

INT. THE LODGE-NIGHT

PAUL KEATING Australia's Prime Minister is in the Australian Prime Minister's Canberra residence known as the Lodge.

Paul sits behind his oak desk surrounded by his infamous collection of antique grandfather clocks. He looks up when his PERSONAL ASSISTANT knocks on his open office door.

PAUL KEATING

Yes, what is it?

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Your call sir, the British Prime Minister is on the line.

PAUL KEATING

Okay, I'll take the call in here, please close the door.

Paul waves his personal assistant away. He waits for the door to close, he snatches up the phone.

PAUL KEATING (CONT'D)

Prime Minister, thanks for returning my call.

INT.10 DOWNING STREET-NIGHT

Intercut: Paul Keating and John Major talking on the phone.

The British Prime Minister JOHN MAJOR sits in his dimly lit but opulent home office. He sips tea from a delicate china cup in front of a crackling fire, listens to the call on a speaker phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

JOHN MAJOR

Hello Paul, we have a lot to discuss, this hostage crisis has caught everyone off guard.

PAUL KEATING

The press here have labelled it the 'Backpacker Kidnapping'. How are things from your end?

JOHN MAJOR

President Mitterrand agreed with your request, but only in part. Officially we stand by the no negotiation no ransom policy. Unofficially, we're willing to disburse the funds.

PAUL KEATING

Wonderful news, if we work together we should be able to apply enough pressure on Prime Minister Hun Sen...

John Major pours tea into his cup from an ornate silver pot, he interrupts.

JOHN MAJOR

You don't understand. We've spoken to the Americans and we agree with their stance. We can't be perceived to be dealing with terrorists.

PAUL KEATING

We both know they supplied the ransom for their aid worker.

JOHN MAJOR

So I believe, unfortunately with all the media attention this case has generated...

PAUL KEATING

It'd be convenient if the media focus was on a government other than your own?

JOHN MAJOR

I'm not going to answer that Paul, but I would be correct in stating that you have a large number of armed forces in Cambodia?

Paul looks across the room. He notices the second-hand on one of his grandfather clocks has stopped moving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

PAUL KEATING

Yes, my Foreign Minister played a role in the signing of the Paris Agreement, but it came with a commitment to help keep the peace.

JOHN MAJOR CONTD

I've been fully briefed on Minister Evan's achievements.

(beat)

With that success in mind, surely, you would have an interest in ensuring a discrete diplomacy.

PAUL KEATING

We were counting on the combined effort of our three governments.

Paul Keating gets out from behind his desk. He makes his way over to the grandfather clock with the portable phone receiver.

JOHN MAJOR

Let's face it, your government has been trumpeting your triumphs in Cambodia for the last two years, perhaps it's time to pay the piper.

PAUL KEATING

It's a little unfair to expect us to do all the heavy lifting.

JOHN MAJOR

Don't sound so bitter Paul, it'd be a damn shame if your peace keeping troops were ousted over a diplomatic debacle.

(beat)

History is cruel to politicians who reach too high and come up too short.

Paul opens the clock face. He winds the second hand backwards around the face three times.

PAUL KEATING

You'll have to excuse me, it's past midnight here. Thank you for your time Prime Minister.

JOHN MAJOR

Your Foreign Minister may want to suggest to Hun Sen that he keeps his generals in check. Good night Paul.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

Paul Keating sighs disappointedly. He returns to his desk and hangs up the portable phone.

EXT. MELBOURNE - DAY

The area in front of the suburban house is crowded with neighbours. Reporters congregate underneath a large eucalyptus tree.

David Wilson's parents and his brother TIM WILSON stand in a marquee in front of a picture of the families 5 children.

They're about to stage a press conference, a homemade banner asks for donations.

A well dressed female PRESS AGENT walks over to speak to David Wilson's father PETER WILSON.

PRESS AGENT

The questions will start as soon as you're ready, good luck.

PETER WILSON

I'll put up with questions but I want to talk about the fund raiser. It's the reason we're here.

PRESS AGENT

I understand Peter. Don't worry, they'll be sympathetic.

The press agent signals the waiting media, camera's flash, questions are called. One question is audible over the other eager voices.

JOURNALIST (O/S)

What's the latest news, is David okay, have you been able to speak with him?

Peter Wilson taps a microphone, he leans forward to answer.

PETER WILSON

We'd appreciate being allowed to speak with David at any opportunity. We hope the people holding David will allow us to make a call.

JOURNALIST(O/S)

Have you heard from the other boys families?

PETER WILSON

Mark Slater's father sent us a letter from England.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

PETER WILSON (CONT'D)

He's as concerned about his son as we are about David.

JOURNALIST(O/S)

Mrs Wilson, when was the last time you heard from David?

Mrs Wilson bends to the microphone, stops halfway. She sobs, places her hand over her mouth to stop herself crying.

Peter Wilson Places a protective arm about Mrs Wilson's shoulders, he answers for her.

PETER WILSON

David called and spoke to us before he boarded the train.

Mrs Wilson begins to cry, she hurries from the Marquee. Peter Wilson watches her run to her two daughters embrace, he leans into the microphone.

PETER WILSON (CONT'D)

Please understand, this is a difficult time for my wife, for my family.

(beat)

Next question please.

JOURNALIST(O/S)

Is the government keeping you informed and do you think they're helping David's situation?

PETER WILSON

They let us know what they can. We have no choice but to trust they know what they're doing.

JOURNALIST(O/S)

American Melissa Himes was kidnapped by the same terrorist group. She was then released after 42 days. Do you expect a similar time frame?

PETER WILSON

I don't know, I'm glad she's okay, but I'm here to talk about David and our fund-raiser.

JOURNALIST(O/S)

What about S.A.S involvement? Is it true you're holding secret talks with a retired special forces captain?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

Peter Wilson flinches like he's been slapped. He points angrily at the journalist.

PETER WILSON

Don't you realise a question like that could get my son killed?

The journalist lowers his eyes to a pad and writes notes.

PETER WILSON (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you people, don't you have any sense at all?

Peter Wilson turns away, he addresses the other journalists.

PETER WILSON CONTD

My family have started a fund-raiser to pay the ransom demand, donations can be made by calling the TV station. Please, help us bring a young Australian home.

The stress suddenly takes its toll on Peter Wilson. His knees buckle slightly, he clutches at his chest.

TIM WILSON

Dad are you okay?

Tim Wilson steps forward and places an arm about Peter Wilson's shoulders. He whispers, but his words are picked up by the microphone.

TIM

You've said enough dad, go to mum, make sure she's okay.

Peter Wilson acknowledges his son, he moves towards his wife and daughters.

Tim takes the podium, the reporters call questions. Tim holds up a hands, waits for quiet. The journalists hush.

TIM (CONT'D)

My family miss my brother very much and we'd like to be together in this difficult time.

(beat )

I'll answer one more question.

The crowd of journalists erupts, everyone fires questions. Tim points at a FEMALE JOURNALIST.

FEMALE JOURNALIST

Tell us about David, do you get along, is he a good older brother?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

Tim takes a moment to think about his older brother, he smiles.

TIM

Yeah David's a good guy. Out of all us siblings, he's the protective one.

(beat)

I would like to be with my family. Please, help us get David home.

Tim holds up a hand to thank the journalists. He walks away from the microphone and towards his waiting family.

EXT. VINE MOUNTAIN - DAY

The sky is overcast, lightning flashes, thunder rumbles. The backpackers sit on a slat bed inside a bamboo shelter. They are haggard and tired, they've lost weight.

Colonel Rin and Commander Paet walk across a clearing towards the backpackers hut, they're followed by Vith Vorn.

David and Mark see the Khmer Rouge soldiers coming, they stand in front of the hut.

Jean Michel remains on the slat bed, he's feverish, he has dysentery.

Colonel Rin and Commander Paet and Vith Vorn come to a halt in front of the hut. Colonel Rin introduces the hostages to Commander Paet.

COLONEL RIN

This is David Wilson Australian, Mark Slater British, and the sick one is the Frenchman, Jean Michel Braquet.

COMMANDER PAET

He looks weak.

(to Jean Michel)

What happened to your foot Frenchman?

Jean Michel moans softly, doesn't answer. David and Mark answer for him.

DAVID

Jean stepped on a booby-trap.

MARK

His foot is infected, he needs antibiotics. We had first aid kits in our backpacks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL RIN  
Unfortunately, medical supplies are  
hard to come by in Cambodia.

Colonel Rin turns and glances at Vith Vorn. Vith Vorn shrugs.

VITH VORN  
I didn't see their medical kits  
when I unpacked their bags.

COMMANDER PAET  
(intervenes, to hostages)  
I'm in command here, you may  
address me if you have a problem.

MARK  
Jean's feverish, he needs medical  
attention.

COMMANDER PAET  
He's French. What do I owe him  
apart from suffering?

DAVID  
Why does his nationality matter?

Lightening streaks across the sky, thunder rumbles in the  
distance.

COLONEL RIN  
There's bad blood between the  
French and the Khmer. Our king  
asked for their help and they ceded  
our traditional lands to the  
Vietnamese.

COMMANDER PAET  
The French took what they wanted  
then they used their power to tear  
our country apart.

DAVID  
Jean's just a backpacker, he  
doesn't know your history.

COMMANDER PAET  
Silence!  
(beat)  
Abandoned French mansions litter  
the coast not far from here. I  
could march your friend to view  
their rotting castles.

DAVID  
You can't, you'd kill him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COMMANDER PAET

Can't I?

DAVID

You're responsible for his care, he didn't choose to be taken hostage.

Commander Paet swings his stick at David. He smacks him hard across the ear, CRACK!

David slips in the mud and falls to his knees. Commander Paet puts out his hand to Vith Vorn.

COMMANDER PAET

Your weapon.

Vith Vorn passes his machete to Commander Paet. Commander Paet places the sharp edge of the blade against David's neck.

COMMANDER PAET-CONTD

We use this tool to remove obstacles, are you going to be an obstacle Australian?

David holds his injured ear, glares angrily at Commander Paet.

DAVID

We're only asking for medicine.

MARK

David stop!

Commander Paet applies pressure and blood trickles onto the blade.

COMMANDER PAET

Your holiday's over, you need to be very careful...

Colonel Rin steps up to Commander Paet. He places a hand on his shoulder.

COLONEL RIN

Foreign governments rarely hand over gold for dead hostages.

Commander Paet considers, he reluctantly lowers the weapon. He passes it back to Vith Vorn.

COMMANDER PAET

(to David)

Consider yourself lucky Mr Wilson.

Lightening flashes, thunder rumbles, a light rain begins to fall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VITH VORN  
A storm Commander.

COMMANDER PAET  
We need shelter, come with me Vorn.

Commander Paet turns and strides away. Vith Vorn follows his commander across the clearing.

Colonel Rin watches Commander Paet and Vith Vorn leave. He turns to David.

COLONEL RIN  
My soldiers are my first concern  
but I'll see what I can do about  
antibiotics. You can stand.

DAVID  
Thank you.

COLONEL RIN  
The Commander's decided you'll work  
on his farm. You'll leave within  
the week. Is there anything else  
you need?

MARK  
Antibiotics are what's important  
right now.

COLONEL RIN  
Alright, it's about to rain, go  
join your friend.

David and Mark head back to the hut. Colonel Rin turns and hurries across the clearing.

Lightning arcs across the sky, thunder BOOMS, tropical rain deluges down.

INT. BANGKOK-DAY

Gareth Evans is in his office at the Australian Embassy Bangkok. He sits at a desk in front of an old fashioned I.B.M box computer.

Polaroid pictures of the hostages are scattered about his desk. There is a cassette deck playing a tape, David's voice crackles from the speakers.

DAVID (ON TAPE)  
We're being well looked after. We  
get three meals a day and we're  
allowed regular exercise...

Mark voice interrupts David, he disguises his message with a strong English accent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK (ON TAPE)  
Mum, dad, don't listen to the  
government, just do what you feel.

The phone rings and Gareth Evans switches off the cassette  
player. He picks up receiver.

GARETH EVANS  
Prime Minister.

PAUL KEATING  
Gareth, we have a secure line.

INT. THE LODGE - NIGHT

Intercut: Between Paul Keating in The Lodge home office and  
Gareth Evans in the Bangkok embassy office.

Paul Keating sits behind his oak desk surrounded by his  
clocks. There is a pile of newspapers on his desk.

PAUL KEATING (CONT'D)  
We need to talk about the Wilson  
case. I'm taking heat from the  
press. You received the dispatch?

GARETH EVANS  
I was going through it while I  
waited. Why's my name being bandied  
about?

PAUL KEATING  
Because of your efforts with the  
Paris Agreement.

Gareth Evans pulls a bottle of whiskey and a glass from a  
desk draw, pours himself a whiskey.

GARETH EVANS  
What the fuck do peacekeeping  
forces have to do with hostages?

PAUL KEATING  
They know you're an hour from Phnom  
Penh. They're asking why you didn't  
take the first flight over.

GARETH EVANS  
I think I'll pass, I can already  
picture the grubby little generals  
with their hands out.

Paul Keating picks up a newspaper, the headline reads: THE  
BACKPACKER CRISIS WEEK 3.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL KEATING

The press are reporting that you've got enough influence within the Cambodian administration to get things resolved.

Paul Keating folds the paper over and places it back on the pile.

GARETH EVANS

They're peddling rainbows, searching for scapegoats, it's what they do.

(beat)

How are the negotiations going?

PAUL KEATING

We've promised Prime Minister Hun Sen an increase in military aid. He's assured us the hostages are his first priority.

GARETH EVANS

It's bullshit, he couldn't give a fuck about three backpackers who were foolish enough to catch a train to a war zone.

Gareth Evans angrily swipes the photographs onto the floor.

GARETH EVANS (CONT'D)

The truth is he has no real control, the Communist Party of Vietnam call the shots, but they're holding back for some reason.

PAUL KEATING

I did wonder why they didn't go after the Khmer Rouge as soon as the train was hijacked?

GARETH EVANS

I believe they want Pol Pot to claim responsibility, and they hope the C.I.A will put him up to it, they're playing a game of chess.

PAUL KEATING

It takes more than one side to play chess.

Gareth Evans downs his whiskey, he reaches for the bottle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GARETH EVANS

The C.I.A seem to be using Pol Pot to fool the Vietnamese into revealing their control in Cambodia.

PAUL KEATING

The hostages are pawns in a much larger game.

GARETH EVANS

Exactly, the U.N are protecting Pol Pot for the moment, but...

PAUL KEATING

(interrupts)

But if he incriminates himself in the train hijacking, or the ransom demands, Hun Sen can go after him with impunity.

Gareth Evans spies a photograph by the leg of his chair, he bends down and picks it up.

GARETH EVANS

Then despite his past as an officer in the Khmer Rouge, the new Prime Minister is perceived as a hero internationally while the Vietnamese continue to rule from the shadows.

PAUL KEATING

There's a lot at stake.

GARETH EVANS

Yes, unfortunately these young men have stumbled into a shit storm.

Gareth Evans turns over the photograph and he looks at the hostage photograph. He see's David sitting in a hut with his arms about his knees. He has a hollow accusatory expression.

GARETH EVANS (CONT'D)

You realize we have to be careful how much further we involve ourselves in this?

PAUL KEATING

So how do we handle the press?

Gareth Evans taps the Polaroid picture of David Wilson on the edge of the desk.

GARETH EVANS

We smack the puppy and teach it to sit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PRIME MINISTER

I'm all for showing them who's in control but how would you suggest we do that?

GARETH EVANS

Tell them to back off because a young Australian's life is at stake. Then publicly claim it's a safety issue and refuse to make any further comment.

Gareth Evans places the picture of David face down on his desk.

PAUL KEATING

We're worried we'll put a price-tag on the head of every Australian traveller if we cave in to their demands?

GARETH EVANS

Exactly, shut them out, console the family, wait and see what happens.

PAUL KEATING

We'll have to send someone over there to keep up appearances.

Gareth Evans leans back in his chair. He places a polished shoe on the desk.

GARETH EVANS

The Ambassador to Poland could use a tropical holiday.

PAUL KEATING

Might just work, get him over.

GARETH EVANS

Already in process, he flies into Bangkok tonight. You may want to inform the media before you bring the shutters down.

EXT. KAMPOT TOWN - DAY

The port town of Kampot was established beside the slow flowing Preak Kampong River. The Elephant Mountains loom majestically beyond the riverbanks.

Journalists drink coffee in outdoor, French style colonial cafes that line a wide boulevard.

Vith Vorn sits with an ENGLISH REPORTER at a table on the pavement. He's casually dressed as a guide, his machete has been replaced by a hunting knife in a sheaf.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

The Reporter wears a pale blue cap emblazoned with the word PRESS. He holds a pen, there is a note pad in front of him.

REPORTER

Tell me about the hostages health,  
are they well?

VITH VORN

Your Englishman and the Australian  
are in good health. The Frenchman,  
not so good.

REPORTER

Jean Michel Braquet, what's wrong  
with him.

VITH VORN

The heat, the mosquitos, how would  
I know? Life in the jungle is  
difficult, and the French live  
pampered lives.

The Reporter scribbles notes on his pad. The peaceful atmosphere is shattered by the low rumble of diesel engines.

The Reporter and Vith Vorn look up the street. They see military vehicles turn a corner and roll nosily down the thoroughfare.

The trucks are crowded with soldiers, they tow camouflaged field-gun artillery on stout trailers.

Vith Vorn slides the knife from the sheaf on his belt. He shows it to the reporter.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Don't call out or attract  
attention.

REPORTER

Whoah, I'm with the press, I don't  
chose sides.

VITH VORN

Keep it that way or suffer the  
consequences.

Journalists sitting outside cafes leave their tables, they scramble to line the boulevard. They shout questions at the soldiers, take pictures.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

We need to get away from here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

REPORTER

Maybe you're overreacting. Hun Sen's deputy chief of staff said troops were being sent to Kampot to protect the foreign press.

VITH VORN

Describe the insignia on the side of the trucks.

The reporter looks over Vith Vorn's shoulder. He peers at the insignia of a passing truck.

REPORTER

There are red, yellow and black shields. Then what looks like a ancient Khmer Archer shooting an arrow skyward.

VITH VORN

They're artillery troops, Hun Sen wouldn't send them to protect foreign reporters.

REPORTER

So why are they here?

VITH VORN

They're General Math Cheala's men, they're here to attack the mountain.

REPORTER

No way, they wouldn't, fuck you're serious.

VITH VORN

They won't attack while journalists are in Kampot. They'll be rounded up and escorted back to Phnom Penh first.

REPORTER

But what about the hostages?

VITH VORN

Artillery shells don't distinguish between skin colour.

Vith Vorn snatches the reporters blue press cap. He pulls the peak down to cover his face, he stands up from the table.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

We're leaving, pay the bill, remain casual.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

The Reporter drops some cash on the table, he picks up his note pad and gets out of his chair.

REPORTER

Where are we going?

VITH VORN

Follow me, if we're stopped and questioned, I'm employed by you as a guide.

Vith Vorn walks away from the cafe, the reporter follows.

REPORTER

Wait I need to know how this will affect our agreement.

VITH VORN CONTD

I must take you away from Kampot.

Vith Vorn leads the Reporter into a side alley. They move away from the street and stop in the shadows.

REPORTER

You promised a hostage interview, that a radio would be delivered to my hotel.

VITH VORN

You'll have to go into hiding. When we receive authorization, a transmitter will be delivered. Hurry, I have to warn my commander.

Vith Vorn takes the Reporter by the arm. He leads him down the alley.

EXT-COMMANDER PAET'S FARM-DAY

There's a small banana plantation, rice paddies, a row of eucalyptus trees on Commander Paet's farm. He sits on the balcony of a wooden stilt house, sips ice tea, watch's workers in a field.

The workers are under guard, some plough the field with hoes and shovels. Some of the workers build a waist high heavy wooden fence.

David, Mark and Jean Michel work on the fence in a group. They're conspicuous because of their height and hair colour.

Commander Paet is interrupted by his niece. She carries a plate of Durian Fruit.

CHANN(15)wears her sleek black hair tied back in a loose ponytail. David's gold pendant glitters on top of her white and buttoned up blouse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

CHANN

I thought you may be hungry uncle.

COMMANDER PAET

You take good care of me Chann.

The Commander reaches for a slice of Durian. He holds it up to show Chann.

COMMANDER NOUN PAET

And others it would seem, is this the same fruit you left hanging underneath the hostages hut niece.

CHANN

(shy, guilty)  
How did you find out?

COMMANDER PAET

You were seen and I was informed.

CHANN

They're hungry, I felt sorry for them.

COMMANDER PAET

I keep them that way for a reason Chann.

CHANN

I understand, I am a foolish girl.

COMMANDER PAET

I told you to stay away from the long noses, how should I react to such behaviour?

CHANN

I apologise, I have shamed the memory of my father and my mother.

Chann places the plate down and gets to her knees in front of Commander Paet. She puts her fingertips to her forehead, bows at his feet.

CHANN (CONT'D)

I am ashamed that I have dishonoured you uncle. You should not be sympathetic.

Commander Paet's expression softens. He takes Chann by the shoulders and raises her to her feet.

COMMANDER PAET

What you did was dangerous, but I'm indulgent. Join me, I would speak with you kaunosrei, (niece).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

CHANN

Thank you uncle.

Chann sits beside her uncle, she folds her hands in her lap demurely. Commander Paet gestures at the workers.

COMMANDER PAET CONTD

Can you see them, the long noses are soft, they have never known work.

CHANN

Why do you punish them uncle?

COMMANDER PAET

I do not punish, I teach.

CHANN

I don't understand, what lesson are they learning?

COMMANDER PAET

Our country has been invaded by the Thai's and the Vietnamese since the time of Angkor. The Khmer were also enslaved by the French and we were carpet bombed by the Americans.

CHANN

Our history is full of suffering, why are we treated so badly?

COMMANDER PAET

Our enemies have always thought of us weak. We must show them we able to protect ourselves, to fight back.

Chann picks up the platter of durian fruit, offers it to her uncle. He takes a small slice.

CHANN

This is why the Red Khmer fight from your mountain.

COMMANDER PAET

That is correct Chann, you have always been a good student, it is why I sent for you.

CHANN

What is it uncle?

COMMANDER PAET

I believe it's time for you to attend school in Thailand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

CHANN

(claps excitedly)

Oh my Buddha, please are you  
telling me the truth?

Commander Paet smiles at Chann indulgently, he pats her  
thigh.

COMMANDER PAET

Tomorrow you'll come with me to  
Vine Mountain. Soon we will travel  
together through Vietnam and on to  
Thailand.

CHANN

Thank you father, please and thank  
you all in together and all at  
once.

COMMANDER PAET

You may take one bag daughter, but  
you must be ready to leave tomorrow  
morning.

EXT. PAET'S FARM-DAY

Jean Michel, Mark and David are hot and sweaty, they work in  
ankle deep water and mud. They're building a heavy wooden  
fence in a field on Commander Paet's farm.

David lifts a wooden beam and he moves towards Jean Michel  
and Mark. He notices Jean Michel put down his mallet and  
slump against the fence exhausted.

DAVID

Jean, what's happened, are you  
okay?

JEAN MICHEL

I've had enough, I can't take this  
anymore.

David glances at the guards and sees they're busy talking. He  
leans the beam against the fence.

DAVID

You have to keep going Jean, you  
need to stay strong.

JEAN MICHEL

I'm not like you and Mark, I'm not  
strong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

DAVID

You should try and focus on something other than what's happening. Mark has his bad jokes, I think about my family.

JEAN MICHEL

I miss my father, but that only makes it worse, I have nothing David.

David gestures at the row of eucalyptus trees in the next field.

DAVID

Do you see those trees over there, back home we call them gum trees?

JEAN MICHEL

(shades eyes, looks)  
They are eucalyptus, their hard wood is prized as a building material.

DAVID

Eucalyptus trees are indigenous to Australia, my parents have one in their front yard. When I see them I'm reminded of home.

JEAN MICHEL

I grew up in the city, I can see only trees.

Mark checks on the guards. He moves closer to Jean Michel and David.

MARK

When I look at them I see my parent's council digs in Corby Northamptonshire, rather depressing actually.

DAVID

See what I mean, bad jokes.

MARK

(shrugs)  
Well, unless you've been there.

DAVID

(to Jean)  
You like books Jean, why not write one in your mind? You're having a unique experience, people will want to know about all of this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

MARK

He's right Jean, this isn't forever. Eventually someone will pay the ransom. We have to stay strong until that happens.

Jean Michel straightens slightly. He smiles at Mark, pats David's shoulder.

JEAN MICHEL

I think I am lucky to have such good friends.

A guard notices Mark, Jean Michel and David talking. He barks out an order in Khmer, points his rifle in their direction.

David picks up the wooden beam. Jean Michel and Mark return to their work on the fence.

38. EXT.BANGKOK-NIGHT

38.

The Ambassador to Thailand escorts the AMBASSADOR to POLAND (40) through the V.I.P exit of Bangkok's Don Mueang Airport.

The Ambassador to Poland is a handsome and confident high achiever. His tailored suit is fashionable, his slicked back hair is perfectly trimmed at the collar of his starched white shirt.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

I had a colleague fax through the Foreign Minister's curriculum vitae. Honours from Oxford in philosophy, politics and economics, he's an academic lawyer and a Queen's Council.

AMBASSADOR

You should bring it up, his ego could use the deference.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Still, what he achieved in Cambodia was entirely impressive. Working with him must be a insightful experience.

AMBASSADOR

Yeah, it's like having a scorpion take up residence in your shoe.

The two ambassadors step through the exit and enter the underground car-park. They move towards a waiting limousine and climb inside. The vehicle pulls away from the curb.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Gareth Evans sits across from the two Ambassadors in the back of the moving limousine. There's a whiskey bottle, ice bucket and glasses on the table in front of him.

GARETH EVANS

Sorry we had to convene like this,  
I didn't want you to miss your  
connecting flight.

(beat)

Can I offer either of you a drink?

AMBASSADOR

No thank you, and I understand you  
have a lot to get through, so  
please continue without my  
involvement.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Maybe I will have a drink, it was a  
long flight.

Gareth Evans places ice cubes in two glasses, he pours whiskey.

GARETH EVANS

On the rocks okay?

AMBASSADOR POLAND

On the rocks is fine.

The Ambassador to Poland places his briefcase on his lap. He opens the case, shuffles through his files.

AMBASSADOR POLAND (CONT'D)

I read about your success in  
Cambodia. If you don't mind me  
asking, how did you accomplish so  
much in such a dangerously corrupt  
country?

GARETH EVANS

I checked any general I had to deal  
with had an opposable thumb first.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

I see, so the generals were  
difficult then?

GARETH EVANS

Most of them are corrupt and  
uneducated brutes, however, they're  
much better than the pathological  
murderers on the other side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gareth Evans slides over the Ambassador to Poland's whiskey glass.

GARETH EVANS (CONT'D)

Okay let's get at this, you have the briefcase and the suit, do you have the acumen they suggest?

(beat)

Why not begin with the back-story.

The Ambassador to Poland closes the lid of his briefcase.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

The three western backpackers were kidnapped by a Khmer Rouge Colonel. He led a raiding party of 20. 13 were killed, 30 locals taken hostage, 3 Vietnamese murdered.

GARETH EVANS

I'm seeking an in-depth brief, not football stats. Tell me about the colonel.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Colonel Chhouk Rin is famous for leading the offensive that ousted the South Vietnamese Army from Kampong Province. Severely wounded and considered a Khmer Rouge war hero.

GARETH EVANS

The three day skirmish is known as The Battle of Kep. The colonel had half his foot blown off and he continued fighting, carry on.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Colonel Rin was then ordered to the capital phnom Penh for political training. However, he was too much of a soldier to become a well-behaved agrarian socialist.

The Ambassador places his briefcase on the floor. Gareth Evans rolls the ice in his glass.

GARETH EVANS

He was then returned to the area where he was raised to work with political Commander Noun Paet.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Their base is known as Phnom Vour or Vine Mountain.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBASSADOR POLAND (CONT'D)

The soldier and the politician spent the next 16 years increasing party membership and launching terrorist attacks.

GARETH EVANS

Very successful partnership, especially when it's measured in terrorist years.

(beat)

Okay I've heard enough.

The Ambassador to Poland reaches for his whiskey, he takes a sip.

GARETH EVANS CONT'D

What your files don't tell you is that a third of the population of Cambodia was butchered by a madman, and that most survivors are either bitter, cunning or both.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Thanks for the advice. What exactly do you need me to do?

GARETH EVANS

Recently Lieutenant General Math Cheala took over a town at the base of Vine Mountain. I want you to meet with him, take him out for a meal, pick his brain and report back.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Seems like a lot of effort to bring me all the way here so I can invite a general to dinner.

GARETH EVANS

It's important, we need to know if he intends to attack the mountain stronghold.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

I understand, the hostages lives would be put risk, how dangerous is the area?

GARETH EVANS

You're being sent to Kep a quaint town on the Gulf of Thailand that was once referred to as the St. Tropez of Southeast Asia.

(beat)

Ambassador?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The Ambassador to Thailand continues to look out the window.

AMBASSADOR

Location of the kings holiday residence, French villas by the ocean, pepper plantations, the restaurants do a fine peppered crab.

Gareth Evans looks at his watch, he downs the remainder of his whiskey.

GARETH EVANS

There you go, buy yourself a nice bottle of wine and think of it as a paid holiday.

(beat)

Hope you don't mind, but I'm getting out up ahead.

AMBASSADOR POLAND

Will I be able to liaise with your office? I figured we'd be working together, it's the reason I accepted the assignment.

GARETH EVANS

My office is stepping out, you can report back to the Ambassador here.

The limousine pulls-over and Gareth Evans shakes hands with the Ambassador to Poland.

GARETH EVANS (CONT'D)

The Ambassador will escort you back to the airport. Good luck, and I know you'll do fine.

Gareth Evans acknowledges the Ambassador to Thailand with a nod. He exits the vehicle and closes the door. The limousine pulls away from the pavement.

EXT. KEP CAMBODIA-DAY

Bullet riddled and abandoned French chateaus line a winding boulevard between tropical mountains and a rocky coastline.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL MATH CHEALA is being driven to meet Colonel Chouk Rin in a jeep convertible. His vehicle is followed by a truck carrying R.C.A soldiers.

Math Cheala has steely grey hair, he wears aviator sunglasses and a uniform with gold lapels and an array of medals.

The vehicles turns into and parks in a property containing an abandoned French colonial villa that is being taken over by jungle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Math Cheala steps from his jeep, he's flanked by armed soldiers. He strides towards the villa as his soldiers spread out and get into position in the surrounding jungle.

INT. ABANDONED VILLA - DAY

Colonel Rin waits inside the abandoned villa with two Khmer Rouge soldiers.

The walls are graffiti stained and smoke damaged. There's a weave mat, dusty wine bottle and mismatched glasses on the floor.

Colonel Rin peers out a window. He watches Lieutenant General Math Cheala and his soldiers arrive.

Colonel Rin turns to his men and nods warning. The Khmer Rouge soldiers get into position either side of the entrance, they prepare their weapons.

COLONEL RIN

Don't engage unless commanded. If it escalates into a fire-fight hold until reinforcements arrive.

Colonel Rin listens to Lieutenant General Math Chela's soldiers get in position outside the room. There is the sound of whispered orders and guns being loaded.

Colonel Rin takes his pistol from his holster. He checks its loaded.

COLONEL RIN CONTD

We're in here, and we're armed. Send in one man, and we'll surrender, send in two men and we'll fire.

MATH CHEALA (O/S)

I am Lieutenant General Math Cheala of the Royal Cambodian Army. You requested we meet Colonel Rin.

COLONEL RIN

Thank you for coming Lieutenant General. We have important issues we need to discuss.

MATH CHEALA (O/S)

You have a reputation for integrity Colonel, I am willing to come inside alone.

COLONEL RIN

You may enter Lieutenant General.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Colonel Rin gestures at his men to lower their weapons. He puts his pistol into his holster.

INT. ABANDONED VILLA - DAY

MOMENTS LATER

Lieutenant General Math Cheala and Colonel Rin wait while the Royal Cambodian Soldiers disarm the Khmer Rouge guards. They watch as they are bundled outside the room.

MATH CHEALA

Your men will be treated well.

COLONEL RIN

Thank you, should I also surrender my weapon.

Colonel Rin takes his pistol from its holster, makes to hand it over. Math Cheala waves the weapon away.

MATH CHEALA

Keep it, we should begin our discussion with trust.

COLONEL RIN

A good place to start, shall we sit.

Math Cheala and Colonel Rin sit across from each other on the weave mat. Colonel Rin pours two cups of wine.

MATH CHEALA

I want to thank you for saving Kep from the American backed South Vietnamese.

COLONEL RIN

Above all else I serve my country and my king.

MATH CHEALA

King Sihanouk is a skilled survivor. You have a similar reputation.

COLONEL RIN

Reputations are overrated, I like to think I'm good at solving problems.

Colonel Rin Passes Noun Paet a cup of wine. He picks up his own cup and pours a drop on the floor.

COLONEL RIN CONTD

When I was sixteen I joined the Khmer Rouge with four friends.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

COLONEL RIN CONTD (CONT'D)

They're long dead, but they still  
visit my dreams.

MATH CHEALA

The biggest wound of war is the  
loss of those we love.

Commander Noun Paet also pours out a drop of wine, he takes a sip from his cup. Colonel Rin sips from his cup and puts it aside.

COLONEL RIN

I want your help to defect to the  
Royal Cambodian Army.

MATH CHEALA

You've been with the Khmer Rouge a  
long time. You must have good  
reason?

COLONEL RIN

Phnom Vour is twenty kilometres  
from the Vietnamese border and gold  
is an efficient currency.

(beat)

Commander Noun Paet has asked me to  
receive and protect the ransom  
shipment.

Math Cheala takes a cigarette and gold lighter from his pocket.

MATH CHEALA

You fear he plans to hijack the  
gold and betray you?

COLONEL RIN

Betray and blame. He's never been  
generous but he presented the  
assignment as a gift.

MATH CHEALA

If you defect and Phnom Vour falls,  
it will cripple the Khmer Rouge.  
You'll never be forgiven.

COLONEL RIN

Pol Pot's revenge casts a full  
shadow and Noun Paet and I have  
worked together a long time. I'll  
be guilty of betrayal either way.

MATH CHEALA

You change sides for protection?

Math Cheala lights up his cigarette, he exhales a plume of smoke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

COLONEL RIN

I've lived in the jungle for years  
I can protect myself. But I also  
have a wife and five children.

MATH CHEALA

I understand the need to protect  
your family. What is the price you  
place on your assistance?

COLONEL RIN

I want an area of land where my  
family can live, the power to  
safeguard them. A similar rank in  
your army would be sufficient.

MATH CHEALA

Then I'll need you to send your  
family to Phnom Penh until the  
mountain is taken.

COLONEL RIN

I'd need a guarantee they'll be  
safe.

MATH CHEALA

Let them be guarantee for us both.  
Honour your promise and they'll be  
protected and returned.

Colonel Chhouk Rin puts out his hand. Colonel Rin takes it  
and they shake.

COLONEL RIN

I give you my word as I take yours.  
Keep them safe and I'll give you  
the mountain.

EXT. PHNOM VOOR-DAY

Two bored soldiers guard Mark, David and Jean Michel sit in  
their open bamboo hut. The hostages are tired and ragged,  
they're shackled by their ankles, chained to one of the huts  
uprights.

Jean Michel is in the onset stages of malaria disease. He  
shivers and sweats, his face is pallid, he sways back and  
forth.

Commander Noun Paet approaches the hut with Vith Vorn at his  
side. The commander's niece Chann trails behind.

VITH VORN

My commander would address you, pay  
attention.

(beat)

Please go ahead commander.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMMANDER PAET

I have good news for you,  
information you'll want to hear.

Commander Paet waits for a response. Jean Michel shivers and stares blankly. David and Mark lower their eyes and remain silent.

VITH VORN

They ignore you Mit Bong.

COMMANDER PAET

What is wrong with them?

VITH VORN

They need to learn how to show you  
respect?

COMMANDER PAET

Not now Vorn...

Chann arrives at Commander Paet's side and interrupts. She gasps when she sees the hostages condition.

CHANN

They've lost so much weight uncle.

COMMANDER PAET

Please remain quiet Chann, you're  
young, you don't understand.

CHANN

I'm sorry, I forget my place.

Chann lowers her eyes and allows her hair to cover her face. Commander Paet focus his attention back on the hostages.

COMMANDER PAET

The French Red Cross have offered a  
small down-payment on the ransom.  
I've accepted it as an indication  
of optimism for a future outcome.

Jean Michel looks up at Commander Paet with a vague, barely lucid expression.

JEAN MICHEL

Is it true, will I be released  
soon?

COMMANDER PAET

They sent me a stipend for food and  
medicine. I would expect complete  
payment before that happens  
Frenchman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JEAN MICHEL

Please, when will I be able to go  
back to France?

MARK

At least your country thinks your  
worth something Jean.

JEAN MICHEL

Do they, are you sure Mark?

Mark doesn't answer. Jean Michel lowers his eyes, he rocks  
slowly back and forth.

VITH VORN

The hostages seem ungrateful Mit  
Bong.

COMMANDER PAET

I've done what I can to help, why  
am I repaid with disrespect?

VITH VORN

Who'd know how the Long noses  
think?

David lifts his leg into the hut and adjusts his manacle. He  
grimaces when it rips off a scab on his ankle.

DAVID

This is just bullshit.

COMMANDER PAET

Careful Mr. Wilson, you remember  
what happened last time.

DAVID

Jean has malaria, you have some  
money, why not let him go..?

David is interrupted by a loud, shrill and discordant  
whistle. Vith Vorn looks up nervously.

VITH VORN

What is that sound Mit Bong?

COMMANDER NOUN PAET

Quickly, we need to leave, Chann  
come with me, run!

Commander Paet places a protective hand on Chann's shoulder.  
He guides her to run across the clearing. Vith Vorn and the  
guards follow.

David, Mark and Jean Michel huddle together slightly. They  
glance around nervously, they wait frightened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

An explosion rocks an area of jungle close by and a palm tree is uprooted and it cartwheels through the sky.

Dirt and rocks fly upwards, mud sprays outwards. The explosive red wave engulfs the backpackers hut.

David is blown back onto the others, they sprawl into the hut, a jumbled mess of arms and legs.

Mark David and Jean Michel clamber to the ground, they scuttle under the bamboo slat bed. The backpackers scream with fear as artillery shells explode around the clearing.

INT. AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY BANGKOK - DAY

Gareth Evans relaxes in his embassy office, he hovers over a golf ball with a putter. There's luggage in the room, a golf bag by the sofa.

Gareth Evans is interrupted by a knock on the door, he calls out.

GARETH EVANS

If you have a good reason for interrupting you may enter. If you're here to waste my time walk away now.

Gareth Evans hits the golf ball gently and it strikes the side of a practice putting cup and rolls away.

GARETH EVANS (CONT'D)

Shit!

The Ambassador to Thailand steps inside the office carrying a file. He glances at the golf bag.

AMBASSADOR

I didn't know you liked golf.

GARETH EVANS

I don't, I hate it.

AMBASSADOR.

I see, well I'm sorry to interrupt your practice session but something important has come up.

The Ambassador walks over to the desk and he sits. Gareth Evans moves to his golf bag and he dumps the putter inside.

GARETH EVANS

What's changed, or more importantly, why wasn't I informed something had changed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

AMBASSADOR

We couldn't make contact, you've been off the radar.

Gareth Evans moves over to his desk. He pulls out his chair and he sits down.

GARETH EVANS

My wife flew in unannounced and we spent a few days at an island resort.

(beat)

Enough of the hearts and flowers, what's going on?

AMBASSADOR

Noun Paet's second in command has defected from Vine Mountain with one hundred and fifty soldiers.

GARETH EVANS

Let me guess, Lieutenant General Math Cheala thought he'd take advantage of the situation by launching an attack?

AMBASSADOR

Nutshell yes, he's bombing the stronghold day and night.

Gareth Evans opens a draw and he takes out a whiskey bottle and a couple of glasses, he pours himself a drink.

GARETH EVANS

I thought it would come to this. Would you like a drink?

AMBASSADOR

Not right now, there's more I'm afraid. Pol Pot's thrown his cap in the ring.

GARETH EVANS

Perfect, what did the smiley school teacher prick have to add to an already fucked up situation?

AMBASSADOR

He made a speech on Khmer Rouge Radio, demanded a halt to all military aid.

The Ambassador picks up the file and shows it Gareth Evans.

AMBASSADOR CONTD

The transcript, our voice analysts have confirmed his identity.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FOREIGN MINISTER

Read it, but only what's important.  
I'm in no mood to hear a despot  
blathering on about socialists and  
capitalists.

The Ambassador places on his reading glasses. He opens the file and reads aloud.

AMBASSADOR

The three foreigners will be  
released if their governments stop  
sending all kinds of assistance to  
the two-headed government.

Gareth Evans scoffs and the Ambassador looks up from his file.

AMBASSADOR (CONT'D)

What does that mean, two-headed?

FOREIGN MINISTER

Prime Minister Hun Sen shares his  
position with King Sihanouk, but  
Pol Pot knows His Majesty is little  
more than a figure head. Continue.

AMBASSADOR

All military personal sent by these  
governments must be dispatched to  
their home countries at once.

FOREIGN MINISTER

They're peacekeeping forces for  
fuck sake.

(beat)

Look, I expect its the same old  
rhetoric, just read me veiled  
threat.

The Ambassador turns a page, he traces his finger down a couple of lines, reads aloud.

AMBASSADOR

If the foreign governments agree  
the problem will be solved, but we  
forcefully demand the problem is  
solved within fifteen days.

(beat)

The rest of his speech is little  
more than boasts and blame.

The Ambassador closes the file and takes off his reading glasses. He reaches for the whiskey bottle and glass.

AMBASSADOR (CONT'D)

I think I'll have that drink now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

GARETH EVANS

Pol Pot must have been missing the attention. He's gone and done exactly what Hun Sen was hoping for.

AMBASSADOR

So what happens next?

GARETH EVANS

Phnom Vour is one of Pol Pots last bastions of power. Hun Sen now has the excuse he needs to tear down the mountain stronghold.

AMBASSADOR

And the hostages are caught in the middle. What are the political ramifications if they're harmed, or god forbid, worse.

The Ambassador pours a small amount of whiskey in his glass, he changes his mind, tops it up.

GARETH EVANS

Domestically, Cambodia's awash with corpses, so what are three more dead bodies? Internationally, Hun Sen will shed crocodile tears while claiming he was protecting Cambodia.

AMBASSADOR

It all just seems so heartless for the hostages and their families.

GARETH EVANS

Reminiscent of the Khmer Rouge you might say. Hun Sen was a former officer.

Gareth Evans downs his whiskey. He reaches for the bottle and refills his glass.

GARETH EVANS (CONT'D)

What about our man on the ground, what does he have to report?

AMBASSADOR

He fled as soon as the shelling started, he tried to get in touch, but...

GARETH EVANS

He fucking what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Gareth Evans kicks his waste paper basket and it flies across the room.

AMBASSADOR

He said he confronted Math Cheala,  
but he didn't take any notice.

GARETH EVANS

Tell me what was discussed.

AMBASSADOR

Cheala said he was there to take  
the mountain. That the long noses  
were no longer of any consequence.

GARETH EVANS

Just what you'd expect from a  
fucking Cambodian general.

(beat)

Has the Prime Minister been  
informed?

AMBASSADOR

I was waiting for your return.

GARETH EVANS

Have your secretary get him on a  
secure line.

The Ambassador gets up and he walks to the door. He turns to Gareth Evans before he steps outside.

AMBASSADOR

For what it's worth, I'm sorry it  
all went to hell.

GARETH EVANS

Thank you, but save it for the  
families. There going to need your  
sympathy a lot more than I do.

Gareth Evans watches the Ambassador step through the office door. He downs his whiskey and reaches for the bottle.

EXT.PHNOM VOUR-DAY

Vith Vorn and Commander Paet walk across the clearing towards the hostages hut.

VITH VORN

The Frenchman failed first. He has  
malaria, the jungle has beaten him.

COMMANDER PAET

Malaria is brutal, it causes the  
brain to swell, destroys the mind  
with migraine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

VITH VORN

Long noses are not as resilient as the Khmer. They can't handle the conditions we endure.

Vith Vorn and Commander Paet come to a halt in front of the hostages hut.

Jean Michel lies in the bamboo hut, he's feverish with malaria, he mumbles deliriously.

David and Mark are dishevelled and dirty they're secured to their hut by a long chain. They work in a shallow hole digging a bomb on the edge of the jungle.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Look at him lying there while his friends work.

COMMANDER PAET

(chuckles)

You have no sympathy in you Vorn.

VITH VORN

Not for the French, he typifies his race.

Vith Vorn ambles closer to the hut, he leers down at Jean Michel. David and Mark stop digging in the distance, they turn to watch.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

What has happened to you Frenchman?

Jean Michel's eyes flicker with recognition. He shuffles feebly back on the slat bed.

JEAN MICHEL

Reste loin de moi le diable.

VITH VORN

(to Commander Paet)

His brain must be broken. He thinks I am the devil.

COMMANDER PAET

Leave him Vorn, he doesn't need your help to die.

VITH VORN

Don't worry, it'll all be over soon.

Vith Vorn smirks at Jean Michel, he returns to Commander Paet's side. They move towards David and Mark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

COMMANDER PAET

Your friend has gone from one illness to another since he arrived here.

DAVID

He was fine before he was forced to march down a track...

Mark places a hand on David's shoulder to stop him from saying too much.

MARK

We think his foot injury may have weakened his immune system.

David turns away to conceal his anger. Mark continues in a measured tone.

MARK (CONT'D)

Jean is feverish most of time now, he desperately needs malarial medicine.

COMMANDER PAET

We have been through this before Mr. Slater.

MARK

I know, and I am only asking for your help because malaria is a lethal disease.

COMMANDER PAET

I could supply the medicine tomorrow, but I would need something in return.

DAVID

What do you want?

COMMANDER PAET

I've arranged for you to be interviewed. I want you to plead with your governments to intervene and stop the artillery attacks.

MARK

We want them stopped as well, but we also have a request.

DAVID

We need to be unchained from the hut, the chains hinder us when we try to reach the shelter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

COMMANDER PAET  
And you will seek a halt to the  
bombing?

MARK  
Yes, if you unchain us.

COMMANDER PAET  
Release their shackles Vorn.

VITH VORN  
You're sure Mit Bong?

COMMANDER PAET  
Do it Vorn, I doubt they'd have the  
energy to escape after digging all  
day.

Vith Vorn bows slightly, he moves to the collar attached to  
the hut. He bends down to undo the padlock, notices something  
hanging under the slat bed.

VITH VORN  
What is that?

Vith Vorn reaches under the hut and retrieves a plastic bag.  
He stands and carries it back to Commander Paet.

COMMANDER PAET  
What is it Vorn, what did you find?

VITH VORN  
It looks like a bag of fruit Mit  
Bong.

COMMANDER PAET  
Chann.

Noun Paet snatches the bag from Vith Vorn. He turns and  
strides across the clearing.

Vith Vorn watches him leave. He turns to Mark and David and  
he smirks.

VITH VORN  
I think the chain can remain in  
place a little longer.

INT/EXT. PHNOM VOOR-DAY

Chann prepares a meal for her uncle in his hut. She has her  
back to the door. The door opens and Commander Paet steps  
inside holding the plastic bag.

COMMANDER PAET  
Chann.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chann turns and she smiles at Commander Paet in the doorway.

CHANN

I thought you might be hungry uncle

COMMANDER PAET

I warned you not to disobey me  
Chann.

Commander Paet slams the door. He advances angrily towards Chann.

Chann edges backwards and away from Commander Paet, she's nervous and confused.

CHANN

Uncle what is it, what is wrong?

COMMANDER PAET

You would defy me again?

Commander Noun Paet slams the plastic bag down on a table and it splits open to reveal Durian Fruit.

COMMANDER PAET CONTD

You're dishonourable daughter!

Chann glances at the fruit. She looks up and glares at Commander Paet.

CHANN

It is you who is dishonourable. You chain men like dogs, what you do to them is wrong.

COMMANDER PAET

What do you know of war daughter?

Commander Paet steps forward and he slaps Chann hard, WHACK!

Chann gasps hurt and surprised. She clutches her cheek glowers at Commander Paet.

CHANN

Daughter! You would strike me and call me daughter?

Chann rips David's chain from her neck. She throws it at the commander.

CHANN CONTD

You're a monster, you're not a father.

COMMANDER PAET

I've been too soft with you, you need to be taught a lesson!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Commander Paet rushes forward and slaps Chann again, WHACK! Chann is knocked sideways, she sprawls to the floor.

CHANN

Please uncle, don't hit me anymore.

Chann looks up at Commander Paet, there's tears in her eyes, blood trickles from her nose.

COMMANDER PAET

I'm sorry Chann, but you should not have disobeyed me.

Chann scrambles up and she runs for the door. She races outside and slams it shut.

Commander Paet stares at the door regretfully. He swipes plastic bag of fruit off the table and slumps into a chair.

Commander Paet notices Chann's pendant on the ground. He picks up the chain, buries his face in his hands.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

What have I done?

Outside the hut an artillery shell WHISTLES shrilly as it falls from the sky. Commander Paet doesn't take any notice of the ominous sound.

The artillery shell lands and detonates close to the hut, KA-BOOM!

The force of the explosion buffets the bamboo structure, the door bursts open and dust and debris blasts inside.

Commander Noun Paet lurches to his feet. He stumbles for the door through dust and smoke.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

Chann!

Commander Paet looks around frantically, another mortar shell explodes close to the hut. He ducks and covers, he's engulfed in red smoke and dust.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

Chann!

The smoke clears and Commander Paet sees two of his soldiers hunched over Chann lying prone in the clearing.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

Chann, no, Chann!

Commander Paet races towards Chann and the soldiers. A shell explodes close by and red dust and mud rains down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Commander Paet drops to his knees. He crawls towards Chann's lifeless body.

The soldiers move aside and Commander Paet cradles Chann's head to his chest.

COMMANDER NOUN PAET

Chann no, what I have I done?

Artillery shells explode around the clearing but Commander Paet doesn't take any notice. He rocks his dead niece back and forth and he howls mournfully at the sky.

INT. CAMBODIAN FARM HOUSE-DAY

A RADIO OPERATOR wearing old style headphones sits at a table in the wooden Cambodian stilt-house. He fiddles with dials on a large army issue radio salvaged from the Vietnam War.

Vith Vorn sits at the table watching. The English Reporter sits beside him with a note pad and pen.

ENGLISH REPORTER

I'd like to ask you background questions while he prepares the transmitter.

VITH VORN

Go ahead, but I can't promise I'll answer.

ENGLISH REPORTER

Has anyone been injured in the artillery attacks so far?

VITH VORN

We've lost a few soldiers, but most of the fatalities have been innocents, a fifteen year old girl was killed recently.

ENGLISH REPORTER

There are children on Vine mountain?

The English Reporter scribbles in his note book. He waits with his pen poised.

VITH VORN

Phnom Vour stronghold has existed for sixteen years. There are small communities and farms in the mountains, many of our soldiers raise families.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ENGLISH REPORTER

And they don't consider it a dangerous environment to bring up children?

VITH VORN

It's only dangerous when the Royal Cambodian Army launches random artillery attacks day and night.

ENGLISH REPORTER

What about supplies, how do you feed these families.

VITH VORN

Most Khmer Rouge were farmers before they became soldiers, they know how to till the land, but we also trade with towns people from Kampong and Kep.

ENGLISH REPORTER

But you mentioned the mountain is covered in land-mines, full of booby-traps.

VITH VORN

There are pathways in and out, they are a well guarded secret.

Vith Vorn and the English Reporter are interrupted by a shrill ear-piercing sound from the transmitter, then radio static.

RADIO OPERATOR

Be prepared, we've made contact.

The English Reporter picks a piece of paper off the table, he shows it to Vith Vorn.

ENGLISH REPORTER

Have you changed your mind about what I can ask?

VITH VORN

I don't have the privilege of changing my mind.

ENGLISH REPORTER

These questions are a little generic.

VITH VORN

They were written by my commander.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ENGLISH REPORTER

Okay, sorry, I'll ask the questions  
you supplied.

The Radio Operator passes the English Reporter a pair of  
battered headphones and a microphone on a stand.

RADIO OPERATOR

We're ready, put these on, speak  
into the microphone.

The English Reporter puts on the headphones. He leans into  
the microphone.

ENGLISH REPORTER

Hello, hello, can anybody hear me?

EXT.PHNOM VOUR-DAY

Mark and David sit in their bamboo hut watching a radio  
operator twist dials on an old-fashioned transmitter. Jean  
Michel lies on the slat bed, he's sweaty and feverish.

Two guards stand by a palm tree a short distance away smoking  
cigarettes and chatting.

The radio operator flicks a switch and the transmitter  
crackles to life. The English Reporters voice can be heard  
through static.

ENGLISH REPORTER (O/S)

Hello, hello, can anybody hear me?

The radio operator turns up the sound, he gestures at Mark  
and David to begin. He walks over and joins the guards by the  
palm tree.

Mark leans forward and speaks into a microphone on a stand.

MARK

Hello, I'm Mark Slater, I'm  
British.

ENGLISH REPORTER (O/S)

Hello Mark, I'm also British, I  
work for the Times in London, I'd  
like to ask you a few questions.

MARK

Please do, we want our families to  
know we're okay.

ENGLISH REPORTER (O/S)

Are you being treated well?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

David tap's Marks leg and he gestures at the guards caught up in conversation. Mark nods his understanding, he goes back to the microphone, speaks quietly.

MARK

No, we're awoken at five am then forced to work until dark. When the sun goes down we have no light or protection from the mosquitos.

ENGLISH REPORTER

I see, but your receiving three meals a day?

MARK

We're fed pumpkin and rice, there's never enough to go around, we're hungry all the time.

ENGLISH REPORTER(O/S)

I've been informed you have shelter from the artillery attacks?

MARK

They chain us together. When the bombing starts, we're forced to shuffle to a hole in the ground. We're scared, terrified.

DAVID

(quietly interrupts)

They need to stop the bombing, it's as if they're trying to kill us.

MARK

Every bomb is like a nail in our coffins.

Jean Michel sits up and leans forward. He's delirious, he speaks loudly.

JEAN MICHEL

We're going to fucking die here. I'm too young, I'm an innocent person.

One of the soldiers hears the excited tone and looks over at backpackers.

Mark gently pushes Jean Michel away and he slumps back on the slat bed.

David smiles, waves casually at the guards. The soldier grunts and goes back to his conversation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ENGLISH REPORTER(O/S)  
That was the French backpacker,  
Jean Michel, is he okay?

MARK  
He has malaria, he's very sick.

ENGLISH REPORTER(O/S)  
Is he receiving medicine, some type  
of treatment?

David checks on the guards. He leans close to the microphone,  
speaks quietly.

DAVID  
Jean's in trouble, we all are. Our  
hope fades every day.

ENGLISH REPORTER (O.S)  
You're David, the Australian. It's  
good I've spoken with all of you.  
I'll let your families know...

DAVID  
Please, tell my family I love them.

MARK  
Me too, let them know I miss...

The transmitter crackles with static, the lights dim, the  
radio dies.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Fuck!

Mark takes hold of the volume knob, he twists it back and  
forth.

One of the guards notices. He points his rifle, orders him in  
Khmer to stop what he's doing.

INT. ABANDONED FARMHOUSE-DAY

Vith Vorn watches from a window of the wooden Cambodian stilt-  
house as two Khmer Rouge Soldiers lead the English Reporter  
to a pickup truck outside.

Commander Paet enters the room from a side door, he wears  
Chann's pendant on a gold chain. He's pale and drawn, the  
loss of his niece has taken a toll on his wellbeing.

Vith Vorn turns to Commander Paet and bows slightly. He  
gestures at the table and chairs.

VITH VORN  
Please sit Mit Bong, you look  
tired.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COMMANDER PAET  
It's a difficult time.

VITH VORN  
You took very good care of Chann.

COMMANDER PAET  
She was my daughter.

VITH VORN  
I never asked, what happened to her  
parents?

COMMANDER PAET  
They suffered the same fate, only  
the bombs were delivered by  
American planes.

Commander Paet shuffles to the table and he slumps wearily  
into a chair.

COMMANDER PAET  
You've ensured the reporter will  
reach Phnom Penh safely?

VITH VORN  
I chose competent men, they've also  
been told to shadow him while he's  
in the capital.

COMMANDER PAET  
How long will it take him to write  
the article?

VITH VORN  
He assured me he'll file his story  
within two days.

COMMANDER PAET  
Good, I need it to go out as soon  
as possible.

VITH VORN  
You listened to the interview?

COMMANDER PAET  
I sat with the transcriber, a  
copy's on its way to Pol Pot.

VITH VORN  
I thought it better to stop him  
before he went too far.

Vith Vorn pulls out a chair. He sits across from Commander  
Paet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

COMMANDER PAET

It doesn't matter, Pol Pot intends to shift blame, we only need him to report the risk of the artillery attacks.

VITH VORN

And the ransom?

COMMANDER PAET

There's been a change of plans.

VITH VORN

The only certainty in war, what needs to be done?

COMMANDER PAET

Choose two men that are expendable. Then transport the hostages to my farm after the article is printed.

VITH VORN

Yes Mit Bong.

Commander Paet stands from the table. He shuffles towards the front door and Vith Vorn follows.

COMMANDER PAET CONTD

Make sure you're not intercepted. The hostages have one final purpose.

VITH VORN

I understand, I'll see you in the next few days.

Vith Vorn opens the door of the stilt house. Commander Paet and Vith Vorn step outside.

EXT.THE ELEPHANT MOUNTAINS-DAY

The rising morning sun casts light through the canopy of jungle trees. Gibbons hoot, birds call, crickets chatter.

There's a pickup truck parked by the side of a winding gravel road. The vehicle is hidden in shadows, a tarpaulin covers two large wooden crates in the cargo-bed.

The wildlife is quieted by the a thwack, thwack, thwack, of an expertly swung machete. Palm fronds part and a Khmer Rouge soldier steps through the jungle foliage.

The Khmer Rouge Soldier drops to one knee with his rifle ready. He motions over his shoulder for his companions to follow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Vith Vorn steps from the canopy with his machete. He marshals David, Jean Michel, and Mark to the back of the pickup truck.

Another Khmer Rouge soldier moves to the pickup trucks cab. He climbs inside and starts the engine.

Vith Vorn pulls aside the tarpaulin and reveals the two wooden crates, a hoe and two shovels. He gestures to David to climb in the cargo-bed.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Climb between the crates, lie still and remain quiet.

DAVID

Where are you taking us?

VITH VORN

You'll find out soon enough, get inside.

Vith Vorn grabs David by his shirt, he pushes him into the tailgate.

DAVID

I don't trust you.

VITH VORN

I don't care, remain quiet, move now.

David climbs into the cargo-bed and he turns and helps Mark up. Together they reach down for Jean Michel.

JEAN MICHEL

David where are we going?

DAVID

I don't know Jean.

MARK

Relax Jean, everything is going to be okay.

David and Mark help Jean Michel, he climbs into the cargo-bed.

VITH VORN

I'm taking you back to Commander Paet's farm to work, it's a thirty minute drive, now lie between the crates.

Mark, David and Jean Michel lie down between the crates. Vith Vorn gestures to one of his men and together they cover the hostages with the tarpaulin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Do not talk. I'll be riding with you.

Vith Vorn climbs up into the cargo-bed and he places on a straw hat and makes himself comfortable.

The soldier climbs into the passenger side of the pickup trucks cab.

The truck sprays gravel as it pulls away from the shoulder and motors away.

INT.RURAL CAMBODIA-DAY

Vith Vorn drives the truck over a bumpy gravel road on the outskirts of Commander Paet's farm. Commander Paet sits beside him, he wears Chann's pendant.

COMMANDER PAET

You've taken them to the location I showed you?

VITH VORN

Yes, I have them working, they think they're digging a bomb shelter.

COMMANDER PAET

And the guards can be trusted.

VITH VORN

They're efficient enough, but I doubt the hostages have the will to attempt escape.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Good, the interview has been published, it's time.

VITH VORN (CONT'D)

Why is the article so important?

Vith Vorn slows down the vehicle. He drives down a small side road in scrubland.

COMMANDER PAET

Pol Pot wants the blame placed on Hun Sen's artillery attacks.

VITH VORN

They died in an explosion, there are no identifiable remains?

COMMANDER NOUN PAET

Yes, the location must remain secret, we can have no mistakes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Vith Vorn brakes and the truck skids to a halt, he idles the engine.

VITH VORN

Do you want me to deal with the guard.

COMMANDER· PAET

Send them back to the mountain. I've hidden a motorbike, let them take the truck.

VITH VORN

You're not worried they'll talk?

COMMANDER PAET

I've arranged a road block not far from here. They'll never have the chance.

(beat)

Drop me up ahead, it's a good day for a walk.

Vith Vorn slows the car to a stop. Commander Paet opens his door and steps outside, he leans back into the cab.

COMMANDER NOUN PAET

The clearing's about ten minutes from here. Don't do anything until arrive.

VITH VORN

I'll wait Mit Bong.

COMMANDER PAET

Good, I'll see you soon.

Commander Paet closes the passenger door. He stands in the scrubland and watches Vith Vorn drive away.

EXT. NOUN PAET'S FARM - DAY

Commander Paet casually walks through scrubland on his way to meet Vith Vorn. He swings his stick at tropical vegetation as he passes.

The commander pushes past a low hanging palm frond. He hears Jean Michel's distant screams in French, he stops to listen.

JEAN MICHEL (O/S)

S'il vous pla·t, nous ne m,ritons pas cela.

VITH VORN (O/S)

You were trying to escape.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JEAN MICHEL  
Laisse moi seul diable!

Suddenly a gunshot reverberates loudly. Nearby a flock of birds rise noisily from the branches of a large mango tree.

COMMANDER PAET  
Vorn!

Commander Paet picks up his pace, he jogs hurriedly around a corner. More screams are carried on the breeze, he does not stop to listen.

VITH VORN (O/S)  
Stay where you are, do not move!

MARK (O/S)  
Don't do this!

VITH VORN  
Prepare yourself.

MARK  
Fuck you!

There is a another loud gunshot, it resonates across the scrubland.

Commander Paet, hurries around a clump of trees and he charges into the clearing. He see's Vith Vorn standing with a levelled rifle.

Jean Michel and Marks lifeless bodies are sprawled face down in the mud beside a shallow hole and pile of dirt.

David kneels next to his friends, his head is bowed, his hands are tied behind his back.

Commander Paet drops his stick. He takes out his pistol, points it at Vith Vorn.

COMMANDER PAET  
Stop what you're doing Vorn!

Vith Vorn lowers the rifle, he turns and faces Commander Paet.

VITH VORN  
You said you wanted them taken care of.

COMMANDER PAET  
It was supposed to appear they died in the bombings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

VITH VORN

They tried to escape, what could I do?

Commander Paet looks down at the lifeless bodies of Jean Michel and Mark. He notices their hands are tied behind their backs.

COMMANDER PAET

You can't be trusted.

VITH VORN

I was trustworthy enough to bring them up the mountain.

COMMANDER PAET

Yes, and you didn't get that right. Hand over your weapon.

Commander Paet steps forward and reaches for Vith Vorn's rifle. Vith Vorn hesitates, he hands it over reluctantly.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

VITH VORN

I confiscated it from the guards.

COMMANDER PAET

I should have known better.  
(gestures at David)  
Stand him up.

Vith Vorn places his hands under David's armpits. He hefts him to his feet, positions him in front of Commander Paet.

Commander Paet shoulders the rifle, he looks into David's eyes. David stares back defiantly.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

I'm impressed, I expected more fear.

DAVID

I expected nothing from you.

COMMANDER PAET

It was your government who failed you.

DAVID

I know who is responsible.

Commander Paet holsters his pistol. He looks past David and nods at Vith Vorn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

Vith Vorn reach's for his machete, he slides it from his belt.

COMMANDER PAET  
Goodbye Australian.

David lowers his eyes and notices the gold Saint Christopher pendant on Commander Paet's chest. He closes his eyes and remembers.

Start Flashback:

INT.MELBOURNE AIRPORT-DAY

David's with his family at the departure gate of Melbourne's International Airport.

David has his passport and boarding pass in his hand, his backpack is slung over one shoulder.

DAVID'S MOTHER places a gold chain and pendant around David's neck.

DAVID  
What is it?

David's Mother kisses him on the cheek. She steps back to admire the Saint Christopher Medal.

DAVID'S MOTHER  
It's a gift, it will keep you safe.  
I love you David.

DAVID  
I love you too Mum.

David looks down at the pendant and smiles. He lets it fall, steps forward and embraces his mother.

End Flashback:

Vith Vorn stands behind David, he arches his back and swings his machete.

The blow strikes David above the shoulders and he falls to his knees. His eye's spring open with shock.

David exhales slowly, he sways back and forth. He closes his eyes and he remembers.

Start Flashback:

David and Peter Wilson face each other at the airport, father and son shake hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

PETE WILSON

Just have fun and stay out of trouble.

DAVID

I will dad, don't worry.

Peter Wilson pulls David close and gives him a firm hug. They pull apart and Peter Wilson looks into his sons eyes.

PETER WILSON

I need you to do two things. Call your mother once a week and make sure you come home safe.

DAVID

I promise dad.

Peter Wilson places his arm around David's shoulder. They turn and face the rest of the family.

End Flashback:

Vith Vorn steps up to David with his machete raised above his head, he swing it downwards.

The second blow of the machete strikes David with a dull thwack.

David grunts painfully, he falls face forward in the mud and remains still.

Start Flashback:

David stands with his brothers and sisters at the airport, they laugh and jostle one another. David speaks to his brother Tim.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'll be home soon, then you and me can go travelling together.

TIM

That will be awesome.

DAVID

Yeah it will, but you'd better start saving right away.

David places his arm around Tim's shoulders. He playfully ruffles his brother his hair.

End Flashback:

Vith Vorn raises the machete for another strike. Commander Paet reaches out and grabs him by the arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

COMMANDER NOUN PAET  
Enough, he's dead.

Vith Vorn lowers the machete slightly but he keeps it raised, he turns to Commander Paet.

VITH VORN  
We should make sure...

COMMANDER PAET  
Enough, it's finished!

Vith Vorn and Commander Paet hold each others stare for a moment. Vith Vorn looks away, he slides his machete into his belt.

VITH VORN  
Yes Mit Bong.

COMMANDER PAET  
We can't allow them to be found,  
the hole needs to be deeper.

Vith Vorn nods, he casually walks over and he picks up a shovel.

EXT.NOUN PAET'S FARM-DAY

Commander Paet walks Vith Vorn down a track in the scrubland on his farm.

Vith Vorn is sweaty and dirty, he's been exerting himself, burying the bodies of the dead hostages.

VITH VORN  
I acted on impulse, I should have  
waited for you to arrive.

COMMANDER PAET  
Have you heard of Pol Pot's  
personal guard?

VITH VORN  
I've heard they're brutal and  
ruthless.

COMMANDER PAET  
Few have disobeyed Brother Number  
One and lived.

VITH VORN  
The hostage's bodies will never be  
found.

COMMANDER PAET  
You should hope so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

Vith Vorn stops Commander Paet. He points at thick black smoke rising on the horizon.

VITH VORN

Your roadblock seems to have been a success.

COMMANDER PAET

It needed to be done, still I'm losing men rapidly.

VITH VORN

What fate awaits the traitor Chouk Rin.

COMMANDER PAET

He will be hunted for the rest of his life.

Commander Paet and Vith Vorn come to a narrow path leading off the track. Commander Paet gestures at a clump of bushy scrub down the pathway.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

The motorbike is parked in behind that bush.

Vith Vorn nods, he casually moves down the track. Commander Paet gives him a moment to gain distance before he steps onto the path and raises the rifle to his shoulder.

COMMANDER PAET (CONT'D)

Vorn!

Vith Vorn turns surprised, he takes a moment to register what's happening. He reaches for his machete.

VITH VORN

You would do this to me, to your family?

COMMANDER PAET

Pol Pot would have no witnesses.

Vith Vorn steps towards Commander Paet, he draws his machete.

VITH VORN

Fuck you!

COMMANDER PAET

Goodbye Vorn.

Commander Paet fires, smoke and light explode from the barrel of his rifle, KA-BOOM!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

The bullet takes Vith Vorn in the chest and he stumbles backwards. He clutches at his heart, his legs collapse, he slumps to his knees.

Commander Paet marches forward, he places the rifle barrel against Vith Vorn's forehead. He pulls the trigger, KA-BOOM!

The back of Vith Vorn's head explodes, he is flung backwards, a red mist rises.

Commander Paet throws the rifle into the bush. He takes Vith Vorn by the wrists, drags him into the scrub.

INT. AUSTRALIAN SUBURB - EVENING NEWS

The logo for a Victorian News Channel is on the screen of an old nineties style television in a suburban lounge-room. The exciting beat of news-music plays.

An ANCHOR WOMAN appears on-screen sitting in front of photograph of David Wilson, she reads from a teleprompter.

ANCHOR WOMAN

Today in Melbourne hundreds of mourners turned out for the funeral of murdered backpacker David Wilson.

News footage rolls, there's an inner city chapel, a flower covered hearse, mourners laying tributes.

ANCHOR WOMAN (V/O) (CONT'D)

In late July the Australian backpacker and two travel companions were kidnapped off a train in rural Cambodia.

There's stock news footage of the crowded Sihanoukville Train waiting at Phnom Penh Train Station.

ANCHOR WOMAN (V/O) (CONT'D)

They were held captive for over two months, then executed before Vine Mountain stronghold fell under the control of the Royal Cambodian Army.

News footage rolls of Khmer Rouge prisoners being marched in restraints by Royal Cambodian Soldiers.

ANCHOR WOMAN (V/O) (CONT'D)

Unfortunately the family of David Wilson were informed of his murder when Prime Minister Paul Keating mistakenly offered condolences before they had received news of their son's fate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A stock news photograph of Australia's Prime Minister Paul Keating appears on screen.

ANCHOR WOMAN (V/O) (CONT'D)  
Australia's Foreign Minister Gareth Evans attended today's service in his place and he had this to say.

News footage rolls of Gareth Evans standing in front of the chapel with his wife. He is being interviewed by a REPORTER holding a microphone.

REPORTER  
Can you add anything to what we already know about the backpacker tragedy.

GARETH EVANS  
No specifics, but we failed at the end of the day, and that's a tragedy for all of us.

REPORTER  
Do you believe you did all you could to help David Wilson and his family.

GARETH EVANS  
There's nothing more the Australian Government could have done. I genuinely don't believe there were any other options available at any step along the way.

REPORTER  
Would you be willing to go on record and say the, No Negotiation, No Ransom policy failed?

GARETH EVANS  
Sorry no more questions.

Gareth Evans waves the reporter's microphone away. He walks through the chapel door with his arm about his wife.

There's the audible click of a remote switch being pushed. The picture on the television screen collapses to a pinpoint of light, becomes blank.

FADE OUT:

SUBTITLED CARDS:

The capitulation of Khmer Rouge Troops controlling Phnom Vour Mountain disintegrated the influence of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. The terrorist group never held great power in country again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Bodies of the 3 backpackers were found in a shallow grave one month later. It is not known why Mark Slater and Jean Michel Braquet were shot while David Wilson was executed by blunt force trauma.

Within weeks of the hostages being found, Australia announced an increase in military aid to Cambodia.

The parents of all three backpackers sought justice for the next 20 years. The pressure they applied to their respective governments helped bring the main perpetrators of the train attack and hostage drama to justice.

Commander Noun Paet went on the run after the fall of Vine Mountain. He was captured and sentenced to life in prison and he died in jail in February 2008

Vith Vorn was formally charged with murder but he disappeared and has never faced trial. It has been speculated that he was executed because he knew too much.

Colonel Chhouk Rin was sentenced to life imprisonment for the attack on the train. He lost an appeal where he claimed he was a soldier involved in a war in 2005.

Pol Pot, the man responsible for the genocide of 1.5 million people by execution, torture, starvation and disease was never brought to trial. He died in his sleep on April 15, 1998, at age 72 due to heart failure.

In 2013 and after a thirteen-year Colonial Inquest it was ruled the Australian Government did all it could to secure the release of David Wilson.

The End.