

THE SERPENT

EPISODE ONE

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SHOOTING SCRIPT

Blue Amendments - 25/08/19
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1

INT. HOTEL SUITE. IMPROVISED STUDIO. FRANCE - DAY 83

1

A TV NEWS CREW setting up in this suite of hotel rooms. *

They are preparing for an INTERVIEW of some kind, due to be *
conducted on TWO, AS YET EMPTY, CHAIRS. *

Over all this, a DATELINE peels on to the screen. Letters *
ROTATE around in the manner of an old SPLIT-FLAP DISPLAY -- *

21ST JULY, 1997. PARIS, FRANCE. *

Meanwhile, PRODUCERS and TECHNICIANS scurry between CAMERAS *
and banks of MONITORS. Various images on those monitors - *
compiled news footage, hard to discern for now, but here -- *

A pre-recorded introduction from NEWS ANCHOR, MALCOLM DOBBS. *
As we travel through the preparations, HEAR HIM -- *

DOBBS *

In 1976, Charles Sobhraj was the *
most wanted man in the world, *
hunted by police for a string of *
unsolved murders. His alleged *
victims were mostly tourists, young *
Europeans and Americans traveling *
through Asia on the so-called *
hippie trail. He would befriend *
them, rob them, and steal their *
identities. *

Through the preparations we travel, finding our way through *
to where A MAN sits in front of a mirror, lit for hair and *
make up. *

Beside the mirror, another monitor on which this man watches *
Malcolm Dobbs continue -- *

DOBBS (CONT'D) *

Later - many would be found dead. *
Drowned, poisoned, stabbed. And *
sometimes burned alive. *

(then) *

Tonight Moira Callaghan tracks him *
to Paris for the first television *
interview with the man known as: *
The Serpent. *

CUT TO: *

2

INT. HOTEL SUITE. IMPROVISED STUDIO. FRANCE - DAY 83

2

A man's face. The INTERVIEWEE. Early 50s, mixed racial *
ancestry. Is he Asian? Indian? Other? Whichever, he is a *
sleek shard of ice: CHARLES SOBHRAJ. GENTLE **FRENCH** ACCENT --

CHARLES

The question first is whether I
committed murder.

Beneath him, a DATELINE peels on to the screen. Letters
ROTATE around in the manner of an old SPLIT-FLAP DISPLAY --

21ST JULY, 1997. PARIS, FRANCE.

Opposite him, an appalled INTERVIEWER, MOIRA CALLAGHAN --

CALLAGHAN

And did you?

CHARLES

The courts have decided - no. I
have faced trials; I have faced
allegations. And the courts - they
have decided.

CALLAGHAN

I'm not asking you a legal
question, I'm asking you whether or
not you have committed murder. Have
you?

Charles - letting that repeated question land once more. *Is he a murderer? Is he?* The casual insolence of him.

We FREEZE on his face. A man there to study. Go CLOSER. So close that the anatomy of it blurs and OBLITERATES --

[N.B. The Episode One interview sequence ends here - the following to be shot as additional interview material for episode 8]

CHARLES

Yes, but the courts have decided.

CALLAGHAN

That doesn't answer my question, does it?

CHARLES

No. But that is my answer.

A beat. A long beat. Then --

CALLAGHAN

Are you a dangerous man?

CHARLES

*(his smile)
I don't think so.*

Another beat. Callaghan - her professionalism tested by sheer outrage --

CALLAGHAN

There are those who would say that you got away with it.

CHARLES

Yes. That is what Time Magazine said. But perhaps it is true. After all, I cannot now face trial anywhere in the world.

RUN TITLES.

3

EXT. SOI BANDENG. KANIT HOUSE. BANGKOK - NIGHT 24

3

Another of those SPLIT-FLAP DISPLAYS spins fast back through the years: **27TH NOVEMBER 1975. BANGKOK, THAILAND.**

Where a *Tuk-Tuk* flies through the neon night. Two YOUNG WHITE WOMEN and an ASIAN MAN (AJAY CHOWDURY, 21) pull in by a sign: KANIT HOUSE. Beyond - a swimming pool. And a PARTY --

AJAY

Come on.

The two girls - laugh giddily. Follow him into this swarm of HIP, GORGEOUS YOUTH. Among which, check various OTHER FACES we'll come to know: DOMINIQUE, NADINE, REMY.

And, emerging to greet his guests: **Charles Sobhraj**. Open necked shirt. Hair worn long. And younger. Much younger --

CHARLES

Welcome.

AJAY

This is Alain. Who I told you about.

The girls - about to introduce themselves. But --

CHARLES

Wait. Let me guess. Deutsche?

She - her delighted confirmation. So --

AJAY

It's a thing he does.

CUT TO:

A LITTLE LATER: Charles - engaged in conversation with ANOTHER GERMAN GIRL, she holding on his every word, as --

CHARLES

I grew up in Paris. But I know Hamburg very well. I used to buy Mercedes Benz.

(MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)
And drive them overland to sell to
Indian Film Producers in Bombay.

CUT TO:

WITH: an earnest, and greatly impressed, YOUNG MAN --

CHARLES (CONT'D)
I was in Tehran when the CIA
overthrew Mossadegh. For a while
afterwards I ran guns for the anti-
Shah underground.

BACK TO:

POOLSIDE: with the first German girl again. Takes her hand --

CHARLES (CONT'D)
My childhood home of Saigon is now
in ruins. I think all Asia will be
communist by the end of the decade.

But not so serious after all, he smiles --

CHARLES (CONT'D)
So we must enjoy the party while it
lasts.

CUT TO:

LATER STILL: to ROARS OF ENCOURAGEMENT, Charles removes his
shirt to reveal a torso of lean, hairless power. He looks to
Ajay. Who - hard as he can - punches Charles in the stomach.

Charles doesn't even flinch.

CUT TO:

LATER: from the happy throng, Charles looks up to the
balconies of the apartment block, where --

Up above, on the top floor, a WOMAN looks down on him. Even
from this distance you can see how beautiful she is.

So he makes his excuses. Dances up a stairway. And across the
landing to where the door to **APARTMENT 504**, stands open and
in it, that same woman, speaking **French** --

MONIQUE
*He threw a glass at me. / Il m'a
jeté un verre au visage*

MONIQUE, 29, and catastrophically in love with Charles.

CUT TO:

4 **INT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. BANGKOK - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 24**

4

Charles - moving to a kitchen cabinet to reveal: MEDICINE. **Large** jars of white powder. Pill bottles, liquids. Turns backs to where Monique warms a saucepan of MILK.

Charles taps out five or six pills on the counter. Uses the heel of a bottle to GRIND THEM INTO A FINE POWDER. She pours the milk into a mug. He stirs in the powder.

CUT TO:

5 **INT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. SPARE BEDROOM. BANGKOK - NIGHT 24**

5

Where a man stands on a bed. He wears an open shirt, an AMBER BEAD NECKLACE and his underpants. VITALI HAKIM, 30s. Long haired, moustached, fevered and very distressed.

VITALI

Alain. What's wrong with me? I can't stop... I'm burning up. You got to get me to a hospital, man...

Charles and Monique - on a tray: clean flannel, a glass, cold bottle of water, and an enamel mug with that hot milk in it.

CHARLES

It's okay my friend. You're safe.

Vitali - falling back. Hugs himself. So Charles - noting a smashed glass by the wall - goes to sit beside him --

VITALI

(the glass; Monique)
Monique - I'm sorry, honey.
(to Charles)
I'm just - I'm really scared, man.

Charles - Eyes passing over where a PAPERBACK lies on a ledge above the bed. It's called **Oil Politics**. Next to it, a small, triangular, PURPLE ALARM CLOCK. Then, gently, sweetly --

CHARLES

Sshh. I know how you suffer. Lie back. We must take the fever down.

That cold water - poured on to the clean flannel, he uses it as a cold compress on Vitali's forehead, faces, arms. And Monique - stepping forward with that mug of milk --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

See? Monique has made you some warm condensed milk.

Vitali - the desperate hope in his eyes. Looks to her --

MONIQUE

It will ease the stomach cramps.

CHARLES

She was a nurse, you know?

And so Vitali allows Charles to help him drink. Then --

VITALI

Will you call Steffi? My lady's
gonna worry.

CHARLES

Ssh. Yes. We will call her.

And, so pacified by the reassurance and the contents of the
milk, Vitali now gently goes to sleep. A beat. **French** too --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

*Bring me his bag, darling. /
Chérie, apporte-moi son sac.*

Obedient, Monique does so. A TAN HOLD-ALL. Hands it to him.
He removes a PASSPORT. A **Turkish** passport. Inside: VITALI'S
FACE and name: **VITALI HAKIM**. But then, not especially moved --

MONIQUE

*That's a lot of money. / Ça fait
beaucoup d'argent.*

She's right. Within the bag - **MANY TIGHT ROLLS OF US DOLLARS**.
But this is a condemnation. Switches to **English** again --

CHARLES

Yes. It was for heroin. To take
back to Europe and sell to other
hippies.

CUT TO:

5A

INT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. BANGKOK - DAY 25

5A

THAI FAMILIES, HIP KIDS, RAJNEESHIS, GAWPING TOURISTS. The
odd gaggle of US AIR FORCE UNIFORMS. Through it all, this
couple walk. Barely any luggage, they are MAJESTIC.

CUT TO:

6

INT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. BANGKOK - DAY 25

6

Charles alone at a table with VITALI'S PASSPORT He has a
small tube of GLUE, the stub of a BLACK CANDLE, and a POCKET
KNIFE. Uses the pocket knife to ease off VITALI'S PHOTOGRAPH.

Now he uses a cigarette lighter to soften BLACK WAX into a circular ball. This he now PRESSES HARD INTO THE EMBOSSED SEAL of Vitali's passport until the imprint has taken.

Next - from a wallet he assesses a series of PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPHS. All of himself. He selects one. Note the different parting, the heavier frames.

Now he uses the glue to stick it into the passport next to Vitali's name. And - using that softened black wax - he stamps his photograph with the Turkish seal.

BACK TO:

6A

INT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. BANGKOK - DAY 25

6A

That couple. Charles and Monique. Check him: he is different somehow. His glasses have heavier frames. The way he parts his hair. It's subtle. But powerful.

TANNOY
*China Airlines Flight 23 to Hong
Kong is now boarding at Gate 12.*

Charles, Monique - waiting their turn while their fellow passengers show tickets and passports to an AIR STEWARDESS. As they approach the front of the queue, Charles takes out two passports, hands one to Monique.

CUT TO:

6B

EXT. THE COROLLA/JEWELRY STORE. CHINATOWN. BANGKOK - DAY 25B

A WHITE TOYOTA COROLLA parked up. Charles at the wheel, Monique in the passenger seat. They are dressed in THE SAME CLOTHES as they are for their trip through the airport.

Monique is opaque, glacial behind SUNGLASSES as Charles climbs out. In his hands THAT TAN HOLDALL.

He crosses to the store. Where a very beautiful young Thai woman: SUDA ROMYEN opens the door for him. She - a look to where Monique sits in the car. Monique who does not meet her gaze even for a moment.

No matter. Suda follows Charles inside.

CUT TO:

6C

INT. JEWELRY STORE. CHINATOWN. BANGKOK - DAY 25

6C

A FELT JEWELRY WRAP - RUBIES AND SAPPHIRES within. Charles counts money from that holdall as, curious --

SUDA
These are U.S. Dollars, Alain..

CHARLES

A new investor. He's Turkish. But
wants to sell them in Ibiza.

Suda - suitably impressed by that, but --

11

INT. HOTEL ROOM. HONG KONG - DAY 26

11

Where Charles stands, naked but for his shorts, looking out over that view, as a TAILOR now helps him into a NEW SUIT.

Monique - draped decorously in a chair. Drinks more champagne. Watches.

CUT TO:

12 **EXT. BAZAAR. HONG KONG - DAY 26**

12

Beneath the puzzle of street signs and electricity wires,
FOLLOW THE TWO OF THEM. CHARLES in that beautiful new suit.
Monique in a devastating two-piece. OVER which, hear the
gentle, persuasive cadence of her voice --

*

MONIQUE (O.S.)

*

Our home is in Bangkok, but next
summer we will open offices in
Paris and Zurich.

*

*

*

*

CUT TO:

13 **INT. HOTEL SUITE. HONG KONG - DAY 26**

13

The city spread out beneath them through the high windows of
this hotel suite, Charles and Monique conduct business with
three or four CHINESE BUSINESSMEN.

*

*

*

A JEWELRY WRAP displays those RUBIES AND SAPPHIRES, as --

*

CHARLES (CONT'D)

*

We have our own network of couriers
throughout Asia and Western Europe.

*

*

*

MONIQUE

*

Which is how we're able to offer
such - attractive prices.

*

*

*

One of the businessmen. A look for Monique - who smiles her
devastating smile. A look for Charles --

*

*

CHARLES

*

They are young travelers, mainly.
Happy to help us avoid any - import
duties. If you follow my meaning.

*

*

*

*

The Businessman does. And opens a briefcase of his own.
Within: even more cash.

*

*

CUT TO:

14 **INT. BAZAAR. HONG KONG - DAY 26 (MOMENTS LATER)**

14

Charles, Monique - moving through the bartering, gaudy
frenzy. Go with them until Charles stops. Seen something.
Monique - stopping too now. Sees what Charles sees --

A YOUNG MAN. DARK SKIN but he's a WESTERNER. Currently
showing a pair of broken SPECTACLES to a CANTONESE OPTICIAN.
Right now they're held together by MASKING TAPE.

They watch the young man, his confused retreat at the
Optician's stream of Cantonese.

Then, Charles is leading her over. The young man - stopped
now at a rank of display - doesn't even hear them coming --

CHARLES (O.S.)
Who are you buying for?

The Young Man - his eyes up for this stranger's enquiry.
Gentle eyes, overgrown stubble, cut off jeans and sandals.
His name is WIM BLOEM. He's 24. Smiles for Charles, smiles
for Monique --

WIM

Oh. I'm not really buying.

That DISPLAY CABINET. Within: RINGS. Sapphires, Rubies,
Diamonds. But Charles - one of his gifts --

CHARLES
You're Dutch?

WIM
Yes.

A beat. He cocks his head. Studies Wim. Then --

CHARLES
But you are not entirely *kwailo*,
are you? You are like me. No?

WIM
My father is from Indonesia.

CHARLES
Mine is Indian. But listen to me:
and I am French. It can be
confusing, no?

Wim - a shrug and smile of his own; *maybe*. Then --

CHARLES (CONT'D)
I'm Alain.
(she)
My wife, Monique.

And here is a BUSINESS CARD. It reads: **Alain Gautier. Gem Dealer. 504 Kanit House, Soi Bandeng, BANGKOK.**

WIM
Willem. Wim.

Then Charles - conspiratorial, his new friend. Those RINGS --

CHARLES
Don't you want to know the cost?
Which?

Wim - his bashfulness. But he points at a DIAMOND RING.
Monique - she smiles for him, conspiratorial --

MONIQUE
Then you are buying for someone.
(then)
What's her name?

WIM
Lena.

Charles - beckoning the JEWELER over --

CHARLES
I want to see these.

The Jeweler - unlocks the display cabinet and brings out the case in question. From his pocket, Charles produces a LOUP.

Examines the ring. Puts it back. Eyes the Jeweler who produces a calculator. Jabs figures into it. Passes the calculator to Charles.

Charles shows Wim the number there. Wim blanches. So Charles jabs more figures into the calculator.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

If you'd like, I'm certain I can
break him down to - this:...

But Wim - clear it's still too much. Deeply embarrassed --

WIM

Thank you. Sorry. I should go...

CHARLES

My friend.

(Wim stops)

How long have you been gone from home?

WIM

One year.

Charles and Monique - a look of respect for that --

MONIQUE

You haven't run out of money yet?

WIM

Well: we've been - sensible.

CHARLES

Nothing too extravagant: like diamond jewelry.

WIM

Right.

And they all laugh a little. Before --

MONIQUE

But still - you want to tell Lena you love her.

Wim - for a moment, he's triangulated between them. Not quite sure what to say. So --

CHARLES

If I told you I could have you made a sapphire set in diamonds on a platinum ring for half what I just showed you. What would you say?

CUT TO:

15

INT. SQUALID HOSTEL. BEDROOM. HONG KONG - EVENING 26

15

HELENA 'LENA' DEKKER (23) - washes her UNDERWEAR in a sink, and, *Dutch* --

LENA

Where are they from? / Waar komen ze vandaan?

Wim lies on a filthy mattress, writing in a DIARY, a paper-backed EXERCISE BOOK. He's not entirely sure, **Dutch** too --

WIM

They live in Bangkok. She's Canadian. And he's French. I think. But Indian too, he says. / Uit Bangkok. Hij is samen met z'n vrouw. Zij is Canadees. Maar hij is een Fransman. Geloof ik. Met Indiaas bloed, zegt-ie.

LENA

We didn't come out here for jewelry. That money could keep us going all the way to Kathmandu. Maybe even Kabul... / We zijn hier niet om juwelen te kopen. Met dat geld zouden we tot Kathmandu kunnen komen. Misschien zelfs tot Kabul...

WIM

We've got to go home some time. / We zullen toch een keer naar huis moeten.

LENA

Really? You want to go home? / Echt? Wil je naar huis?

WIM

Not home so much. Just whatever's next. For you and me. / Niet per se naar huis. Gewoon naar de volgende plek. Voor jou en mij.

Lena - slow; hearing him. Maybe it freaks her a little, but --

WIM (CONT'D)

A flat. A houseboat maybe. Just Somewhere we can be together. All the time. / Een etage. Misschien een woonboot. Gewoon ergens waar we bij elkaar kunnen zijn. De hele tijd.

Lena - whatever her slight resistance, she loves him. Smiles at that thought --

LENA

Like an old married couple, then./ Als een oud getrouwd stel, dus.

Wim - just a shrug for that. And then a smile --

WIM

We can just tell them no./ We
kunnen hun aanbod ook gewoon
afslaan.

CUT TO:

16

INT. NIGHT CLUB. HONG KONG - NIGHT 26

16

Wealthy Chinese and sleek Westerners. Into which - feeling horribly underdressed - walk Wim and Lena. See, beyond: Charles, the beautiful Monique, sat at a bar. Charles waves. Monique stands.

CHARLES

Here they are.

MONIQUE

And you are Lena.

Lena a little look for Wim - *she knows my name?* But Monique takes her hand --

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Mon dieu: you're so pretty.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER: the four of them sat together, Charles pushes a RED JEWELRY BOX across to Lena --

CHARLES

There's no obligation..

Lena opens it. A SAPPHIRE RING SET IN DIAMONDS. It gleams at her. So --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Try it on.

So Lena does. It thrills her. She gazes at Wim. Turns back to Charles and Monique --

LENA

It's still a lot of money.

Monique - a hand across the table to reassure her --

MONIQUE

We understand.

(to Charles)

They don't need to decide now, do they?

Charles - easy for her. For Lena. For Wim --

CHARLES

Of course not. We're going to see you in Bangkok, yes?

Wim - happy about this --

WIM

Well yeah, I hope so.

LENA

Are you sure it's okay for us to
stay, Monique?

*
*
*

MONIQUE

(again, that easy
reassurance)
Of course it is.

*
*
*
*

CHARLES

Our home is always open to our
friends. We have a spare room, a
pool. Hot water.

*
*
*
*

Wim, Lena - the appeal of that. She looks at that beautiful
ring again. Monique watches her. Gentle. Meets her eyes and
smiles --

*
*
*

MONIQUE

Let him buy you the ring, Lena.

*
*

Lena - a smile, a look to Wim. Who beams for her --

*

WIM

Well, what do you say?

*
*

Lena - a delighted laughter. She takes his hand and pulls him
away on to the dance floor.

*
*

Leaving Charles and Monique alone. They consider each other,
drink their cocktails, and watch the two young Dutch dance

*
*

FADE OUT.

17

EXT. DUTCH EMBASSY. BANGKOK - DAY 48

17

A SENTRY POST. A SIGN: **Ambassade Van Het Koninkrijk Der
Nederlanden**. Teams of THAI GARDENERS tend lawns and ponds.
All of which lead up to the peace of this white stone
building. Another **SPLIT-FLAP** rolls us **forward** to --

21ST FEBRUARY 1976, EMBASSY OF THE NETHERLANDS, BANGKOK. TWO MONTHS LATER.

CUT TO:

18

INT. DUTCH EMBASSY. BACK OFFICES. BANGKOK - DAY 48

18

A smartly dressed Thai administrative secretary: LAWANA (late 20s). She is bespectacled. In all things DILIGENT AND POLITE. Although, oddly, in her hands she currently holds --

A SPORTS HOLDALL and a TENNIS RAQUET in a press --

LAWANA
Mr. Knippenberg?

HERMAN KNIPPENBERG, 31. SHIRT, TIE, CLEAN-SHAVED, SHORT HAIRCUT. Preoccupied by a piece of CORRESPONDENCE, but sees Lawana now. The sports gear too. Swears, in *Dutch*, then --

HERMAN

How long ago did the others leave?

Lawana - perhaps she doesn't want to say. So --

HERMAN (CONT'D)

That long?

(deep frustration)

You see: the diplomatic pouch arrived. And there is an - anomaly here I ought to...

And so he shows it to her: a SCANNED XEROX --

HERMAN (CONT'D)

A xeroxed letter forwarded by the Foreign Office in The Hague. It was meant to come in two parts. See? Here is the cataloguing number. This gentleman, Mr. Hilgers, is asking for help in locating his sister-in-law and her boyfriend. They were meant to come to us here to renew their passports and apply for visas. But they did not.

(beat)

To help us he also enclosed an accompanying package of holiday photographs and letters home. That package has not arrived. Two young people - potentially missing. But how can we help find them if we've lost their damn photographs?

LAWANA

Perhaps - if you left it with me?

Herman - evidently not the greatest of delegators, would rather not, but Lawana shows him the sports kit again, and --

LAWANA (CONT'D)

It might take an hour to get across the city, sir.

CUT TO:

19 **OMITTED**

19

20 **INT. EMBASSY CAR. HIGHWAY. BANGKOK - DAY 48**

20

Mayhem. TRAFFIC JAMMED TIL THE END OF TIME. Amid which - the Embassy Car. Yotin - his speed forgotten now, as in back Herman smokes, drums his fingers on the window sill and --

HERMAN

What do they say?

He means a THAI NEWSCAST playing on the radio --

YOTIN

They talk about the Communists,
sir. In Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia.
They ask if Thailand might also
fall to revolution.

HERMAN

Well it might improve the traffic.

And he turns his eye to where, on the other side of the road, a band of four or five WESTERN BACKPACKERS mosey on down the street, all suntans, long hair and free smiles. Then, terse --

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Yotin, it started at 4 and it's
already quarter past.

(beat)

Surely it would be quicker to walk.

YOTIN

(worst idea in the world)

No, sir.

But Herman - once an idea is fixed in his mind --

HERMAN

Yes. This is Athidhaya Road. The
Athletic club is only three or four
blocks north...

YOTIN

But, Mr. Knippenberg...

HERMAN

I can't just sit here, Yotin.

And with that - sports holdall, tennis racquet and briefcase in hand, Herman sets off.

CUT TO:

21 **EXT. STREETS/MARKET/KLONG. BANGKOK - DAY 48** 21

Herman - his racquet, holdall and briefcase, heading down narrow sois he goes. All he can to remember his bearings.

Crosses a still waterway: a klong. Stops. Checks his watch: 16.30. Finds himself faced now with:

A MARKET. No tourist destination, this. Nothing for Herman to buy here. It's a market for those who have nothing. Herman - sweating. What on earth has he got himself into? He's completely lost.

Stops now as, the world seems to silence. And the MARKET-PEOPLE - they all know what's about to happen. Bring their belongings beneath cover. AS THE HEAVENS OPEN.

CUT TO:

21A **OMITTED** 21A

22 **EXT. ATHLETIC CLUB. TENNIS COURTS. BANGKOK - DAY 48** 22

Herman - squelching along by various TENNIS MATCHES. Each court has a SCOREBOARD announcing the match-up. So, **Sweden vs France**, or **Japan vs Argentina**.

See the diplomatic classes at play. Plenty of BOOZE. Multi-ethnic, elite, transactional. Men and women; drink and sex. And Herman - the only man still in his work clothes, nodding a polite and embarrassed hello here and there, as --

ANGELA (O.S.)

Herman!

Netherlands vs Great Britain. Where a young woman - ANGELA KNIPPENBERG, 27 - waves from the court, shoots him a *where-the-fuck-have-you-been*, then goes on with the game.

Among the SPECTATORS - an austere looking VIETNAMESE WOMAN and TWO OLDER MEN. All of them people Herman wishes to serve and impress, so his current lateness ill-advised. **Dutch** --

HERMAN

Ambassador. I am very sorry, but the traffic was - unbelievable. We did not move a yard in 30 minutes and then - the rain. My God. / Meneer de ambassadeur. Het spijt me ontzettend, maar het was ongelooflijk druk op de weg. We kwamen een half uur lang geen meter vooruit en toen ging het stortregenen. Mijn god.

AMBASSADOR FRANS VAN DONGEN, 50s - tennis whites, slug of liquor over ice, turns to his neighbour. Moves into **English** --

VAN DONGEN

This is Knippenberg. My Third Secretary. Knippenberg, this is Giles Easton - my opposite number with the British.

Herman - a little shy, a little awed. Offers his hand --

HERMAN

Good afternoon.

Easton - barely registers him. But shakes his hand. Not that Herman is overly worried. Much more to focus on here --

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Hello Mrs. Van Dongen.

She - CATHERINE VAN DONGEN, 40s, high born, Francophone Vietnamese - an assessing look for Herman. Doesn't think he's up to much. Smiles icily, as --

EASTON

(too loud)
Good shot!!

Easton means Angela. So, explaining to him --

VAN DONGEN

That is Mrs. Knippenberg.

Catherine - she doesn't even look at Herman, but --

CATHERINE VAN DONGEN
I told Angela she should play with
De Jongh. As you were late.

Angela's partner De Jongh - lithe, tall, SMASHES the ball.

HERMAN
Yes. Good idea. He's a very good
player.

CATHERINE VAN DONGEN
(chill disapproval)
Angela cut her hair. It's very
short.

HERMAN
I think - the heat.

VAN DONGEN
You didn't tell me she was learning
Thai, Knippenberg.

HERMAN
Didn't I?

VAN DONGEN
(for Easton)
To add to the four or five other
languages she already speaks. If
she wasn't German, I'd offer her a
job.

Which was meant for Angela who - between games - is changing
ends, moving past them. Quick kiss hello for Herman, and --

ANGELA
If you weren't Dutch, I might take
it.

Van Dongen - was that an insult? He sours briefly. But
everyone else laughs, so he laughs too. On the game goes.

Until, Herman, sensing his opportunity, removes that SCANNED
XEROX from his briefcase, and, EAGER FOR APPROVAL --

HERMAN
Ambassador? May I - speak with you
briefly. On a consular matter?

VAN DONGEN
I thought the office was shut.

Herman - a little laugh for that. But, the XEROX --

HERMAN
I believe it is urgent, sir. Two
young Dutch backpackers.
(MORE)

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Their families haven't heard from them in over two months.

Silence. Clear from Van Dongen's face that Herman's diligence will not be rewarded. This is loud and designed to humiliate -

VAN DONGEN

Knippenberg - when did you last speak to your mother?

Which strikes Herman like a knife. Wants to answer. But --

VAN DONGEN (CONT'D)

And does she write letters declaring you missing?

Catherine laughs, Easton laughs. As does anyone else in earshot. On court, Angela sees Herman blush as --

VAN DONGEN (CONT'D)

It's not your job to go chasing after longhair bums. If it's for anyone, it's for the Thai police. Pass it on to them if you're so concerned.

Herman - floored. Performs a dutiful retreat --

HERMAN

Yes Ambassador.

EASTON

Oh: Good. Shot. Good shot!!

Angela - another killer volley has secured the game. Applause. And Herman now watching as Angela receives the fulsome congratulations of the Van Dongen's.

ANGELA

What was all that?

HERMAN

Oh: nothing.

Angela - she's on his side. Angry for him --

ANGELA

They were *laughing*.

HERMAN

We all laughed.

(affects breeziness)

Two missing Dutch. Worried family.

But - police matter, apparently.

Angela - not buying this nonchalance for a minute --

ANGELA

My mother warned me about this. He takes his work too seriously, she said. He will never take the day off to make love to you on the 15th floor of the Siam Point.

HERMAN

Well, it only has eight floors. So technically, she was correct.

Which makes Angela laugh, as beyond, to great drunk roars -
DE JONGH THROWS A YOUNG THAI WOMAN INTO A SWIMMING POOL.

FADE OUT.

23

INT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. BANGKOK - MORNING 29

23

Our SPLIT-FLAP rocks **back** through the months and days until:
11TH DECEMBER, 1975. TWO MONTHS EARLIER...

And the usual migrating scene. TRAIL FREAKS; TOURISTS; THAI FAMILIES; VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. And here, bobbing through the crowds: TWO TALL BACKPACKS in BRIGHT DUTCH ORANGE.

Wim Bloem and Lena Dekker. Filling out LANDING CARDS. On which - beneath ADDRESS WHILE IN THAILAND, Lena is writing:
THE SANTA CRUZ HOTEL.

WIM

(Dutch)

Why are you writing that down? They said we could stay at their place. / Waarom noteer je dat? Ze zeiden toch dat we bij hun konden logeren?

LENA

It's too much. Too generous. / Het klopt niet. Te royaal.

But here's an IMMIGRATION OFFICER. So they hand over their PASSPORTS, VISAS and their LANDING CARDS.

See the PAGES OF THEIR PASSPORTS as the OFFICER hunts for a space to stamp. OTHER STAMPS, OTHER VISAS. **Sri Lanka; India; Nepal; Indonesia; Malaysia; Hong Kong; Macao...**

A page found, he STAMPS IT. And KEEPS ONE SECTION OF THEIR LANDING CARDS, and hands THE STUB BACK. As the two of them move on through into ARRIVALS now --

WIM

Hotels are expensive. Alain and Monique's is free. / Hotels zijn duur. Bij Alain en Monique logeren is gratis.

LENA

*That's what I mean! We don't know
him! / Dat bedoel ik nou! We kennen
hem niet!*

This last cut off, however. By --

AJAY (O.S.)

Lena? Wim?

Wim, Lena - startled by: AJAY. Around his neck he wears: AN
AMBER BEAD NECKLACE. (**Vitali Hakim's Amber Bead Necklace.**)

AJAY (CONT'D)

I'm Ajay. Alain sent me. I work for
him.

Wim, Lena - a look to one another. *Is that weird?*

AJAY (CONT'D)

In the business. The gemstones.

WIM

How did you know it was us?

AJAY

(their packs)

Well - there's the Orange.

(beat)

And that of course...

He means the ring. The SAPPHIRE on Lena's finger. She smiles.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Let me help you with your bags.
We're all expecting you!

LENA

We were going to head to the Santa
Cruz first?

AJAY

The Santa Cruz? No. Alain wouldn't
allow it. Not for his friends. That
place gets worse by the week. The
bathwater comes straight out of the
canal. People get robbed.

Wim, Lena - their filthy t-shirts. The grime under their
nails, the trail exhaustion. Wim shrugs for her.

CUT TO:

24 **OMITTED**

24

25 **I/E. THE COROLLA/KANIT HOUSE. SWIMMING POOL. BANGKOK - DAY 259**

AJAY

He changed my life, you know? I
mean - I had nothing.

The White Corolla - turning off this street and down the *soi*
to Kanit House. Where Ajay pulls up in this small car park.
Climbing out, shouldering their packs

LENA

So how did you meet?

AJAY

He picked me up the day I got out
of prison.

Wim, Lena - *what!!!*? And Ajay - seeing them. Hoots --

AJAY (CONT'D)

You two. You should see your faces.

And so they smile, as --

AJAY (CONT'D)

Come on. This way.

And he leads them away, into a courtyard, reveals to them: a
SWIMMING POOL. The birds in the trees. A little garden. A
magical little retreat from the world.

Two or three BEAUTIFUL YOUTH lounging happily about. (One of
them: DOMINIQUE RENELLEAU, 21.) And here, stepping out, the
King and Queen of this beautiful court: Alain and Monique --

MONIQUE

Wim! Lena! You made it!

CHARLES

My friends! Welcome to Kanit House.

With MONIQUE - watching Lena. Her shyness, as --

AJAY

I'll take your bags upstairs.

But here's Wim - watching Lena too. Her uncertainty, so --

WIM

(to Ajay; a smile)

Hold on a moment, will you? Thank
you.

Ajay stops. A look to Charles, who flicks a signal for him to
do as Wim asks. Ajay does so.

So Wim goes to Lena - leads her a step or two away. Close,
entirely loving; **Dutch** --

WIM (CONT'D)

*I promise you it's okay if you want
to go to the hotel. Just say and
we'll go.*

Monique - she doesn't understand the words, but she
understands the loving care she's witnessing, as...

Charles - perhaps he's seeing it too. Perhaps he fears he
might lose them. So --

CHARLES

Dominique? Will you bring some cold
towels and Lime Soda for Wim and
Lena.

Dominique - perhaps a little cowed, but, happily enough --

DOMINIQUE

Of course.

Away he goes to where there's an outdoor kitchen beneath a
flowering pergola. From within a fridge - the cold towels and
a jug of the juice, as...

Back with Lena and Wim. She, who turns to Monique, and --

LENA

Are you sure it's no trouble,
Monique?

Monique - Charles watching her, so she takes her shades off
to show Lena her eyes --

MONIQUE

None. We've been expecting you. But
you must do what makes you most
comfortable, Lena.

Lena - her smile for that. The two women beaming sympathy for
one another. And then here's Dominique - so sweet, himself,
those cold towels, the refreshing juice.

Lena looks at Wim. Smiles bashful confirmation for Wim, and --

LENA

It's so kind of you.

CUT TO:

26

INT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. SPARE ROOM. BANGKOK - DAY 29

26

Wim and Lena drink their water, take in: the clean white
sheets on the bed, the fan whirring, the immaculate ensuite.

A few items, left behind by previous guests. A cute little
PURPLE ALARM CLOCK, a thick PAPERBACK, *Oil Politics*, and in
the corner of the room, Vitali's - empty - tan HOLDALL.

CHARLES

We'll wash your dirty things for
you, if you give us your packs?

WIM

It's all dirty...

CHARLES

Then we will wash it all. Won't we,
Dominique?

(Dominique nods, shy)

And if you want to keep your
valuable things in the safe, just
ask.

(then)

Now - wash, rest. There is soda and
beer in the fridge. Potato chips.
Fruit. Whatever you want. Make
yourself at home.

CUT TO:

27

INT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. VARIOUS. BANGKOK - DAY 29

27

Lena - gasping for joy as the hot waters hits her body in the shower. Wim joins her. They wash each other's filthy hair.

LATER: Wim - padding into the kitchen. The fridge. The cold drinks promised. Two beers. Presses the cool glass to his neck. Drinks. Walks back to their room --

WIM

Hey. I got you a [beer]... / Hé, ik heb een biertje voor je...

But he silences. Because Lena is fast asleep. So he puts the drinks down. Takes his spectacles off. Places them beside that alarm clock. And climbs in beside her.

CUT TO:

28

I/E. 504 KANIT HOUSE. VARIOUS. BANGKOK - DAY 29

28

Wim - waking up suddenly. Reaches for his glasses. And finds he is alone in the bed. On a table beside the bed - there are two piles of clean laundry. From which he chooses a t-shirt.

Pads out of the room and into the apartment. Where he finds: Charles sat at a table with two BUYERS. Kids like him, really. Jeans, suntans, sandals. Charles smiles, open, as --

WIM

Have you seen Lena?

CHARLES

Pool, I think.

Wim - moving to the balcony. A view down to where Lena floats in the pool, happily talking to Monique, who sits on the edge her feet playing in the water. Wim turns back in, as --

Charles concludes a deal for FIVE FAT SAPPHIRES. A whole pile of CASH counted out for him. Handshakes. Smiles and backslaps. And they are gone.

Leave Charles to join Wim out on the balcony. Passes him a fresh cup of coffee. A cigarette --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Sleep well?

WIM

Like a child.

CHARLES

I'm pleased.

CUT TO:

28A

EXT. KANIT HOUSE. SWIMMING POOL - DAY 29 (CONTINUOUS)

28A

Monique - considering the guileless affection of Lena, happily in the pool, her elbows up on the ledge, and curious about this glamorous older woman --

LENA

Are you French, Monique?

Monique - perhaps privately she wishes she was, but she smiles pleasantly enough --

MONIQUE

Quebecois.

Lena - a squint for that. Monique has to explain --

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Canada. The French part.

LENA

Oh. Right.

(then)

It's amazing, isn't it, the friends you make when you're far from home. It's the best thing about it, I think.

MONIQUE

Yes.

A beat. Lena and Monique - aware of Wim and Charles up on the balcony above --

LENA

Alain is French.

MONIQUE

Yes.

LENA

Then can I ask how you ended up here together?

Monique - perhaps it's a question she asks herself --

MONIQUE

I came for a holiday. Just two weeks, I thought. A holiday with a man I had just met. I said to myself - I'll see how I feel when it's time to go home. If I still - like him as much...

LENA

But you didn't go home...?

MONIQUE

I did not.

She looks up - sees him. Turns back to Lena and smiles with the heady romance of it --

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

He made it impossible for me.

Lena - enjoying her story. But then --

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

And you two?

LENA

We were friends. And then we were best friends. And then...

A shrug to finish the logic. But Monique won't allow her the silence. She wants to know --

MONIQUE

Then what, Lena?

Lena - feeling Monique's interrogation. It makes her shy --

LENA

I don't know. It just felt natural. Easy. Like - breathing.

Monique - whatever the truth of her relationship with Alain, she certainly doesn't relate. So, to help her --

LENA (CONT'D)

It wasn't - romantic, like you and Alain.

MONIQUE

Well: you're adorable together.

BACK TO:

28B

EXT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. BALCONY - DAY 29 (CONTINUOUS)

28B

Charles and Wim - up on the balcony --

CHARLES

You two are going to get married, yes?

WIM

She's not marrying anyone else,
that's for sure.

CHARLES

I'll tell you a secret. You can't
tell anyone else. Not so long ago,
I had none of this. Monique and I
were living out of a suitcase in an
awful hotel. She'd come on holiday
and decided to stay but I only had
money left for a week... I thought:
she's going to leave me.

WIM

So - what happened?

CHARLES

I made a friend who introduced me
to a mine out in Chantaburi. We did
a deal for as many sapphires and
rubies as they could pull out of
the earth for me. And here we are.

A beat. The sun. The pool beneath. Monique. Lena. Then --

WIM

Lena says she doesn't care about money.

CHARLES

Of course she does. She's young.

A long beat. Charles judging something here --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

And she doesn't face the same - challenges you do.

Wim - a look for that. Charles smiles --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I know what it's like, Wim. Back in Europe. When you're like us. There's two men applying for the same position. And they choose the white one.

Wim - hearing him. Looks at his hands. Looks back at Charles

WIM

It happened to my father his whole life.

Charles - an arm on his shoulder. Empathy for that --

CHARLES

So it's different. When you think about what the future holds... it's different for you than it is for Lena.

(beat)

And you do think about the future don't you?

WIM

All the time.

CHARLES

This is a bit embarrassing. Because - I don't want you to think of me as this: capitalist pig. But I want to help you.

WIM

I don't see you like that at all.

CHARLES

Those stones you saw me sell just now? Only two of those - you could sell in Amsterdam for fifteen thousand guilders.

Charles - letting the significance of that land. Then --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Every man must one day make a home.
Say to himself: this is who I love,
this is where I live. This is who I
am.

(beat)

But to get there. Men like you and
me - we must take our opportunities
when they come.

FADE OUT.

29

INT. DUTCH EMBASSY. BACK OFFICES. BANGKOK - DAY 49

29

SPLIT-FLAP **forward: 24TH FEBRUARY 1976. TWO MONTHS LATER.**

Around them, the offices are all clearing out for the weekend. Men and women with packed bags and short trousers. Goodbyes being shouted. The Thai staff leaving too.

But here is Lawana. Herman sat opposite her. Watching keenly as she speaks, in **Thai**, into the telephone --

LAWANA

... yes, from the Dutch Embassy. On behalf of Third Secretary Herman Knippenberg. We have received a missing persons enquiry...

(MORE)

LAWANA (CONT'D)

*/ ka, jaak sathantooth Dutch na ka,
jaak thaan le-kha-nu-gaan-three
khun Herman Knippenberg, ja kor
sorb tharm rueng book kon hai nhoi
ka...*

And she stops. Interrupted by a stream of **Thai** back at her. Whatever the context, she's very disappointed --

LAWANA (CONT'D)

I am very sorry, Mr. Knippenberg.
But they ask us to call back after
the holiday.

HERMAN

But that's - three days.

And there they sit. Lawana - sneaking longing looks out the window to where all her friends and colleagues are leaving for the day. Which, at length, Herman understands. So --

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Go on, Lawana. Thank you.

LAWANA

Thank you, sir.

So she takes her bag. And a smile goodbye, she leaves Herman alone. To rock back in his chair. Consider the office. And that TELEX. Which he reads again. Feels impatience rise, as --

Out the window, Lawana leaves for the day on her bicycle. So Herman picks up the 'phone. Dials. Here's the line connect and ring. And ring. And ring. Until, just as hope dwindles --

SIEMONS (O.S.)

Belgique.

HERMAN

Mr. Siemons? It's Herman Ker-
nippenberg. I sit on the
Intergovernmental Narcotics Liaison
with you.

SIEMONS (O.S.)

Oh? Which one are you?

HERMAN

I provide the research figures.
From the National Criminal
Intelligence Service.

SIEMONS (O.S.)

Again: Which one?

HERMAN

Excuse me?

SIEMONS (O.S.)
Nation!

HERMAN
Oh: Dutch.

SIEMONS (O.S.)
Then what can I do for you, my clog-
wearing friend?

CUT TO:

29A

EXT. HAWKER STALL - DAY 49

29A

Amid the hum and clatter of this Hawker Stall, meet: PAUL SIEMONS, 62. One of only two white men here, he slurps from a vivid red soup. Ponders something. Then --

SIEMONS
You know they're not technically
your problem...?

Herman, the other white man here, sat opposite. A shrug --

HERMAN
If they're here, they're here
illegally.

Siemons - an eye for that, then --

SIEMONS
And what does the First Secretary
say?

HERMAN
The Ambassador says it's for the
police. But the police are on
holiday.

SIEMONS
(his laughter)
I'll bet they are.

Herman - a shrug. Looks to Siemons. Waits. So --

SIEMONS (CONT'D)
They expect great things of you, I
imagine.

HERMAN
Pardon me?

SIEMONS
You have a - 'Masters Degree'?
(Herman does)
What in?

HERMAN
Advanced International Studies.
Taken at John Hopkins, Bologna and
Washington.

SIEMONS
You did well?

HERMAN
A 'distinction'. Look, Siemons...

SIEMONS (CONT'D)
(OVER him)
And now you want to fuck it all up.

Herman - quizzical. But Siemons only wipes his chin, and --

SIEMONS (CONT'D)
Good for you!
(beat)
Now you want to find them? Then pay
attention.
(so)
First: did they even get here?

CUT TO:

30-31 **OMITTED**

30-31

32 **I/E. EMBASSY CAR/STREET. BANGKOK - NIGHT 49**

32

Herman - in the backseat, watching a jet ROAR overhead as,
night-falling, his car drives on its way to the airport.

A ROADBLOCK. A POLICEMAN gestures for them to get out --

HERMAN
I am a diplomat. Dutch Embassy. My
papers are in my briefcase.

CUT TO:

33 **INT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. IMMIGRATION. BANGKOK - NIGHT 493**

Various IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS - stood in a row, arms folded.
Considering something, so --

SIEMONS (O.S.)
If they did, there will be
documentation. Landing cards.

And find Herman - stood hopefully in front of them --

HERMAN
Two Dutch. They left Hong Kong on
11th December.
(MORE)

HERMAN (CONT'D)

I would be very grateful if you'd
check your records.

Yotin translates. And Herman writes the names down for them:
BLOEM, WILLEM; DEKKER, HELENA.

So an Official moves to a high filing cabinet. Rifles
through. Then produces TWO LANDING CARDS. See those
HANDWRITTEN NAMES: **Bloem, Willem; Dekker, Lena.**

CUT TO:

34

EXT. KNIPPENBERG HOME. BANGKOK - MORNING 50

34

Leafy diplomatic quarter. A team of GARDENERS tend mature
beds and shrubs and an ornamental pool, as --

SIEMONS (O.S.)

Next - you check all the major
Poste Restantes. Bangkok; Chiang
Mai; Phuket.

CUT TO:

35

INT. KNIPPENBERG HOME. BANGKOK - MORNING 50 (CONTINUOUS)

35

A MAID, KANNIKA, clears breakfast away as Herman and Angela
study that original XEROX, those LANDING CARDS. And a
TELEPHONE in front of them --

HERMAN

What do you think?

ANGELA

I think it's disobedient.

HERMAN

I don't speak the language, Angela.

ANGELA

No you don't.

And so she smiles. Reaches for the phone. Faltering **Thai** --

ANGELA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Good morning. I'm calling from the
Dutch Embassy... / Sawaddee ka, di-
chan tho jaak sathantooth Dutch na
ka...*

CUT TO:

36

INT. POSTE RESTANTE. THAILAND - DAY 50

36

YOUNG WESTERN TRAVELERS thronging with Thai locals. They sit in booths placing telephone calls, and queue for where a long series of PIGEON HOLES contain LETTERS and TELEXES.

ANGELA (O.S.)
*We are looking for any
 correspondence you may be keeping
 for a Mr. Bloem. B-L-O-E-M... / Rao
 yaak sorb tharm jod mhai korng khun
 Bloem, B-L-O-E-M*

A Thai MANAGER, is on the phone. Transcribes the name. Moves to one of those pigeon holes, marked by the letters **BL**.

Removes a stack of correspondence. Varying degrees of age. The addressee clearly marked, however: **W.S. Bloem**.

BACK TO:

37

INT. KNIPPENBERG HOME. BANGKOK - MORNING 50 (MOMENTS LATER) 37

HERMAN
 He never collected them?

ANGELA
 Six Air Mail letters via Amsterdam.
 They're forwarding them.

Herman, Angela - the worrying implications of that --

HERMAN
 They were - regular correspondents,
 Mr. Hilgers says. But Lena Dekker's
 mother's birthday went by and she
 didn't even send a card.

In his hands, a Landing Card. Beneath **Address whilst in Thailand** - someone's written: **THE SANTA CRUZ HOTEL**. So --

HERMAN (CONT'D)
 Did you ever hear of this place?

ANGELA
 One of those traveler hostels. It's
 where I go to buy your pot.

Another beat. Both of them know their next move. So Herman is up. Collects a set of car keys and tosses them to her --

HERMAN
 I don't smoke pot.

CUT TO:

37A **OMITTED**

37A

38 **INT. SANTA CRUZ HOTEL. BANGKOK - DAY 50**

38

The Santa Cruz. Iconic staging post on the Freak Trail. Juke boxes and studied Americana. And Herman and Angela. HIP KIDS stare at them like they're from space.

HIP RECEPTIONIST

Who are you, man?

HERMAN

(his ID)

I'm from the Dutch embassy. My credentials.

Somewhere someone says the word *CREDENTIALS* and someone else *LAUGHS*. Angela *GLARES* at their rudeness. But Herman lays out those Landing Cards.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Do you see? Santa Cruz Hotel.
Please. I'd appreciate it if you
could check for their names.
December. 11th or 12th.

Receptionist - a shrug. Flicks through a REGISTRATION BOOK.

HIP RECEPTIONIST

I never saw those kids here, man.
See for yourself..

Herman - scanning the dates and the names. No sign of them.

TRAVELER (O.S.)

Hey Company Man! You done? Or do
you need a Xerox?

CUT TO:

39 **I/E. THE MAZDA/THE SANTA CRUZ HOTEL. BANGKOK - DAY 50**

39

Herman, Angela - emerging, making for the Mazda, and --

HERMAN

They landed in Bangkok. But never
made it to their hotel. Where did
they go?

ANGELA

Perhaps they didn't stick to their
schedule, Company Man...

FADE OUT.

39A **OMITTED**

39A

40 **I/E. SANTA CRUZ HOTEL. COURTYARD. BANGKOK - DAY 17**

40

The same place Herman and Angela will, in due course, come looking for answers. But our SPLIT-FLAP sends us **backward: 17TH OCTOBER 1975. FOUR MONTHS EARLIER.**

Here, now, find: Charles and Ajay, sat out by the courtyard swimming pool, quietly observing the YOUNG TRAIL FREAKS.

AJAY (O.S.)

They're just all so - *poor*.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Not all of them. Many only make themselves *look poor*.

AJAY

(following)

They don't wash. They wear rags. But they carry hundreds of dollars in traveller's cheques...

CHARLES

See her for example.

Across the way, into the Reception Area, where this young white woman approaches the desk. Pendants; sandals; backpack; TASSELLED NEPALESE SATCHEL across her body --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Her clothes are washed. Her skin is white, her hair is clean. She just landed.

AJAY

And won't have spent a bean yet.

CHARLES

You're a fast learner, Ajay. Did anyone ever tell you that?

AJAY

You're the first.

CUT TO:

41 **INT. SANTA CRUZ HOTEL. RECEPTION. BANGKOK - DAY 17**

41

Where that same girl they watched is now at the counter, rifling through that SATCHEL for her documentation.

Removes a faded PAPERBACK of an English translation of the Buddhist text **The Tibetan Book Of The Dead**, and finally locates: Her PASSPORT and TRAVELER'S CHEQUES.

Glimpse her passport for a moment. It might be familiar. It's the same passport on which Monique travelled to Hong Kong. See the name there for one moment: **Teresa Knowlton**.

And meet the woman herself, smiling broadly for that same Receptionist. Her name is TERESA KNOWLTON, 21. She's - American, a child of her age, certainly. But there's a calm about her.

And realising now that someone is waiting in line for her --

TERESA

Hey. Sorry, sister. I just got in.
Bad lag.

CELIA WILSON: English, blonde, fey. Atop a ragged pack, she's tied an Afghan Coat she either bought in a Kabul market, or from a Kings Road boutique. She smiles back --

CELIA

No hassle. How long are you staying?

TERESA

Heading to Nepal. Tomorrow.

Celia - considering her, then --

CELIA

Do you want to split the room?

CUT TO:

41A **OMITTED**

41A

42 **EXT. BOAT. KLONGS/TEMPLES. BANGKOK - DAY 17 (LATER)**

42

Teresa and Celia - on the deck of a boat as it cruises down peaceful canals. Past fishing shacks and boatmen, monitor lizards, floating market sellers, white stupas. Sprawling vegetation. Catfish splash to the surface for flies. People are swimming, fishing, doing laundry.

A VAST RECLINING BUDDHA impossibly crammed into the puzzle of walkways and dwellings. And the two women - taking it all in. Until Celia produces a rolled cigarette from a TRAVEL POUCH.

She lights it. Offers it to Teresa. Who declines. Which for Celia is evidently a bizarre choice. But --

CELIA

You ever make it to Afghanistan?
(Teresa hasn't)
That place is far out.
(MORE)

CELIA (CONT'D)

Even the pigs are hip. In Kandahar,
one of them gave me and my old man
a piece of hash big as a fist.

TERESA

Where's he now, your old man?

CELIA

I left him there. With a daily
supply of black tar heroin and a
view of the Hindu Kush.

Teresa - the water going by. Her own memories --

TERESA

That's very sad.

CELIA

(a shrug; *maybe*. But..)
Hey: you're not a Jesus Freak are
you?

TERESA

(a laugh for that)
Noooo. I just... I've been there.
The junk. Not the view.

CELIA

Then: why Nepal? If you're, like -
clean... I know that fascist Nixon
made them ban dope, but this Head I
met in Varanasi said Kathmandu is
still - Freak Nirvana.

TERESA

I'm not going to Kathmandu.

CELIA

Then where are you going?

Teresa - chooses not to answer that. Her hands play in the
water. Celia lets it go. On they cruise. Until, that smoke --

CELIA (CONT'D)

You sure you don't want to get
high?

Teresa - considering Celia. Looks out over the prow as they
push from the khlung and out on to the Chao Praya River.

TERESA

Why get high, Celia?

The boat bucks in the current as the view opens out. The
river traffic, the shattering light, the golden palaces, the
soaring stone of the great pagodas. Teresa's great grin --

TERESA (CONT'D)

Look at it all. Isn't it a trip
already?

CUT TO:

43 **I/E. TEMPLE COMPOUND. BANGKOK - DAY 17**

43

Teresa and Celia - on foot now. Through this temple compound. Row upon row of serene Buddhas. The enormous mystery of a reclining Buddha, dazzling bejewelled stupas.

Teresa steps through threshold after threshold. Slips off her sandals and enters the temple. Beautiful frescoes on every wall. A few monks at prayer, including a very young initiate.

Teresa - consumed. Celia forgotten, sunshine refracting off the golden rooftops, something pulls at her. Sound distorts and fades. For a moment, she might faint --

CUT TO:

44 **EXT. PASTURES/MONASTERY. NEPAL - DAY 19 (TERESA'S VISION)** 44

Expanse of green pasture beneath snow caps and open sky. The wind shifts in the grass as the BACK OF A YOUNG WOMAN moves into frame. She walks away from us, a pack on her back.

And now here: THE MONASTERY. A MONK by a doorway. Somewhere THOSE PRAYERS AND CHANTS are still heard as the door opens.

BACK TO:

45 **EXT. TEMPLE COMPOUND. BANGKOK - DAY 17**

45

CELIA

Teresa? TERESA.

Teresa - STAGGERS out of the temple. Shaken. Back from wherever she went. And the concern of --

CELIA (CONT'D)

Woah. You were gone, my girl.

CUT TO:

46 **EXT. KNOWLTON HOME. SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT 17**

46

A modest but much loved porch. Where, asleep in an armchair, a book fallen on her lap, an ELDERLY WOMAN: EMMA KNOWLTON. She wakes now at the sound of A TELEPHONE.

CUT TO:

EMMA

Listen sweetheart. It wouldn't be natural if you weren't - apprehensive. But if I thought it wasn't a good thing... I would have said. But it was clear to me it was. The first day you came home. Just like it was clear that soon enough you'd be leaving and going back again.

Teresa - so grateful, for a hundred other things besides --

TERESA

You saved my life, you know?

EMMA

Come on Teresa.

Teresa - her laughter, finding lightness now --

TERESA

You did! I swear. I'd be dead - a thousand times if it hadn't been for you.

(beat)

I love you, Grandma.

Waiting, waiting for the line to deliver the return. Then --

EMMA

I love you too, Teresa.

CUT TO:

49

EXT. POSTE RESTANTE. BANGKOK - DAY 17

49

Teresa - the comfort found from her grandmother, smiles at the sight of Celia. She's reading Teresa's copy of **The Tibetan Book of The Dead** --

CELIA

You know: this is - out there.

TERESA

Maybe you should hang on to it.

CELIA

Maybe I should come with you.

TERESA

(her laugh)

You don't mean that.

CELIA
 Seriously. Maybe you're like - my
 spirit guide.

Teresa - a smile, a shake of the head --

TERESA
 C'mon. I need a drink.

CELIA
 Oh, so you drink, then?

CUT TO:

50

EXT. SANTA CRUZ HOTEL. COURTYARD POOL. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17 50

High up on one of those BALCONIES, a young AMERICAN BOY has
 climbed up on one of the BALUSTRADES in a G.I. HELMET --

AMERICAN BOY
 B52 BABY! HERE I COME HO CHI MINH!

And he jumps, soars and BOMBS INTO THE SWIMMING POOL. Cheers
 and jeers and the wild, wild night. Through which: Teresa -
 her SATCHEL still over her shoulder - heads for the bar.

Slaps down cash for two cold beers and a whisky shot for
 herself. Which she drinks in one. Turns away to find --

Celia talking to A MAN. Who's flirting with her. **IT IS AJAY
 CHOWDURY**. Teresa - a moment of jealous desire. Listens as --

AJAY
 Really: it'll be a cool scene. Hip,
 you know. Not like the tourists
 here. You're looking for something
 more - authentic, right?

Celia - maybe she picks up something here, a suspicion --

CELIA
 Listen man - save it for the next
 two girls you pick up...

AJAY
 The next two girls won't be you
 two, though.

Teresa - she laughs loud for that. Whatever suspicion Celia
 may feel, Teresa does not. Or at least chooses not to.

CELIA
 Seriously, we're heading to Nepal
 first thing tomorrow.

Teresa - perhaps she's not so keen to brush him off --

TERESA

But that's tomorrow, right? Not tonight.

AJAY

There's a pool. Bring your bikinis. You can swim. Or don't bring your bikinis, and still swim.

Celia - that instinct of hers pricking ever harder --

CELIA

C'mon Teresa. Let's drop him.

But Teresa is enjoying the overt flirtation. So, nothing unkind here, she steps to Celia, and quiet --

TERESA

Celia, honey. Let me tell you where I'm headed, okay? It's a Buddhist monastery. I was there a year ago and I'm going back again. But to live there now.

CELIA

What? Like: a *nun*?

TERESA

Not '*like*'. Actually a nun.

(beat)

There's a whole bunch of things I don't get to do again, okay? So I want to do them now.

CUT TO:

51

I/E. TUK-TUK/504 KANIT HOUSE. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17

51

Ajay and Teresa, her SATCHEL, her backpack crammed in beside them. Their Tuk-Tuk arriving by that sign: **KANIT HOUSE**.

TERESA

What's his bag, this friend of yours?

AJAY

He's a gem dealer. Cool, like I say.

TERESA

Gems. Right. Very monastic, Teresa.

Up stairs and here they are: **APARTMENT 504**. Ajay smiling for various people, leading her in to this entirely groovy scene. Everyone's gorgeous, hip, sun-tanned.

Definite **Francophone** element. **Serge Gainsbourg** on the stereo.

And here - slicing through it all like a shark, MONIQUE.
Dressed to kill. Teresa's never seen someone quite so
sophisticated. But she smiles for her, and --

MONIQUE
Who's your guest, Ajay?

TERESA
I'm Teresa.

MONIQUE
(her devastating smile)
Welcome.

AJAY
Monique. It's her place.

And away Ajay goes. Seems his work is completed. Not that
Teresa understands what the work is, so --

TERESA
Are you the gem dealer, Monique?

MONIQUE
(her smile)
I am not. He is the gem dealer.

And she points to where, across the room, watching them,
listening to Ajay's explanations - is CHARLES SOBHRAJ.

FADE OUT.

52

INT. ROYAL SIAM POINT HOTEL. BANGKOK - DAY 51

52

SPLIT-FLAP **forward: 27TH FEBRUARY 1976. FOUR MONTHS LATER.**

Louche scene. Thai waitresses, Asian businessmen, wealthy
westerners. And diplomats. Amongst whom, at the bar, pair of
fat whiskies, certainly not their first, find Siemons, and --

HERMAN
... it was a Goggomobil, the
tiniest car you ever saw in your
life. My brother Theo and I, we
painted a sign on it: Holland,
Istanbul Express. And drove all the
way to Izmir. It was 1962 and I was
18.

Siemons - listening. Enjoying the story, and --

SIEMONS
Wait. Aren't you still 18?
(a look from Herman)
(MORE)

SIEMONS (CONT'D)

I'm serious. Does your wife tell
you? You have the face of an angel.

But then here, homing in on them, another man: LAVER, 40s
Bottle of beer clutched in one hand, tie askew. Greatly the
worse for drink. Herman dislikes him on sight, as --

LAVER

Siemons. Hoy. Who's your
girlfriend?

Siemons laughs. Shakes the man's hand, and, for Herman --

SIEMONS

Laver. Australia.

HERMAN

Oh: like the tennis player...

LAVER

Nothing like, mate. More's the
fucking pity...

Herman squints at that. Which Siemons enjoys --

SIEMONS

Knippenberg the Dutch.

HERMAN

You say it - Ker-knippenberg...

LAVER

How long you got left, Ker-
nippenberg?

HERMAN

Left?

LAVER

Before you go home?

HERMAN

Quite some time. We only arrived
six months ago.

LAVER

We?

HERMAN

My wife.

LAVER

Jesus. Good luck with that.

Siemons - chuckling away; steers the chat on --

SIEMONS

Knippenberg has lost a couple of longhairs and it's troubling him.

LAVER

Peace and love, right, Knippenberg?

HERMAN

(gentle)

Well: they're someone's children and they're missing.

LAVER

They're workshy hobos.

Herman - he's had a bit to drink, so this defence is more impassioned than it might normally be --

HERMAN

I disagree. What they do is hard work. No five star hotels, no air conditioning, no drivers. They live off what the people they travel amongst live off...

LAVER

Well lets get them all a fucking medal, shall we. The Living In Squalor Medal.

(beat)

I'll tell you what's hard. It's men like Siemons here: dropped into the middle of the Congo, with nothing but his mates and his rifle..

Herman looks to Siemons, who neither confirms or denies, as --

LAVER (CONT'D)

It's young boys flown from peaceful outback farms to die in the Vietnamese jungle. Boys. Brave fucking boys. And what do these beatniks do? They show up here with nothing but a toe-ring and herpes and expect us to dig them out of the shit..

Herman - had enough of this fellow. Looks to Siemons in exasperation, but Siemons' attention has drifted --

SIEMONS

Gentlemen. My apologies. Will you excuse me one moment. Duty calls.

And he's across the floor to a booth within which this tall, drunk aristocratic man - COUNT MICHEL-ANDRÉ JURION, 30s - sits with TWO very pretty YOUNG THAI WOMEN.

He has an arm around each of them, and people are staring. Siemons - talks to the man, and clearly in strong terms.

Laver - rocking back and forth. Enjoys the scene. Then --

LAVER

I'll tell you a story about longhairs. It's a good story - once you get to the end.

Herman - the whole scene creeping him out. But --

LAVER (CONT'D)

Had a pair of murder victims on a Thai cop mortuary slab... Aussie hippy kids, Ker-nippenberg. On their fucking hippy trip.

Beyond: The Count stands. Gesticulates. On goes Laver --

LAVER (CONT'D)

They'd been - killed, set on fire, their faces disfigured. Found in a ditch 58 Ks south of the old city at Ayutthaya.

HERMAN

That's - awful. I thought you said it was a good story?

LAVER

You have to wait to the end, don't you?

(sudden, enraged segue)

I mean: did they think a minute of their old folks back home? Did they bollocks!

Herman - despite the man's roaming distraction, there's a thread of something here, winding itself into him --

HERMAN

What happened to them?

LAVER

They were fucking distraught, mate. What d'you think?

HERMAN

No. Of course. I meant - the two travelers.

Laver - distracted now by the contretemps beyond. The Count, the two women, being guided from the premises by Siemons --

LAVÉR

You ever go to bed with two women
at the same time?

Herman - his eyes on the scene the man's hands all over the two women. Not immune to such temptations, but --

HERMAN

No. I.... No.

But here is Siemons, returning, all smiles and apologies --

SIEMONS

Forgive me. A Belgian. Permanent
attaché to the Belgian government's
ambassadorial mission to the
Kingdom of Thailand.

Herman - smiling considerably. Turns back to Laver again. Wants to talk further. But Laver has gone.

SIEMONS (CONT'D)

But there are some guests our
people may openly bring to the Siam
Point and others they may not.

There! Herman sees him: Laver making his swaying exit.

HERMAN

Wait. Where's he going?

SIEMONS

Worrying about the curfew.

HERMAN

Aren't you?

SIEMONS

I'm staying right here until
morning.
(more whisky; his smile)
See it through with me, Cloggy.

HERMAN

I'm sorry, Paul.

But before Siemons can object, Herman has bolted.

CUT TO:

Laver - swaying, hailing a taxi. But --

HERMAN (O.S.)

Mr. Laver. A good story, you said.
Why good? How? The two Australian
travelers.

Laver - trying to bring the story back into focus --

LAVER

Johnson and Rosanna Watson.

HERMAN

That was their names?

LAVER

That's who the cops thought they
were.

HERMAN

But they weren't?

LAVER

Told you it was a good story!

And here it is - the thread Herman's been following --

HERMAN

Then - your bodies... You still
have no name for them?

LAVER

No! Not mine. Not my bodies. Not
any more, mate. Someone else's
problem.

HERMAN

Whose?

LAVER

Whose what?

Herman - patience blown, he snaps --

HERMAN

Whose problem? Whose problem are
the two **unidentified** bodies? Where
are they? Whose murder case is it?

LAVER

Alright. Keep your hair on you
little fucking mouse with clogs on.
(beat)

It's.... The Western District
Division. No - wait - Eastern.

HERMAN

Eastern. You're sure.

LAVER

Eggs are eggs, mate.

HERMAN

And the Australian Couple. Where are they now?

The taxi - Laver falls in. Shuts the door. Only he can't. Herman's holding it open. The DRIVER starts to complain: *Curfew! Curfew!* But --

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Where, Laver?

LAVER

What I've been trying to tell you, mate. They just showed up. Been on some island in the Andaman Sea - two months living on fish heads and coconuts... I mean - Christ. Stupid fucking hippies.

FADE OUT.

54

INT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17

54

SPLIT-FLAP backward: 17TH OCTOBER 1975. FOUR MONTHS EARLIER.

Young, hip good times. Amid which - Teresa is making good on her need to let her hair down. She is DANCING WILDLY with that young Frenchman, Dominique. Until --

TERESA

C'mon. Lets go sit.

Dominique - no second invite needed. Follows her to this couch, where they both collapse, and --

TERESA (CONT'D)

Wait, wait... hold on a sec... I got to..

From her satchel: A distinctive TRIANGULAR PURPLE ALARM CLOCK. (**NOTICE IT. It was sat once on a ledge above the bed in the spare room.**) Makes a show of SETTING IT --

TERESA (CONT'D)

Seriously: 7 a.m. Soon as it rings, I'm sorry. But I gotta go.

Dominique - maybe he's sad about this. Which she likes. So --

TERESA (CONT'D)

You know - and this is weirder than it ought to be: I never once went to bed with a Frenchman.

Dominique - blushing deep. They're about to kiss. But, here --

CHARLES (O.S.)
Dominique?

Their moment broken. Charles stood above --

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Monique asks if you'll bring up
more ice.

Dominique - Teresa's allure as nothing to his deference, so --

DOMINIQUE
Of course. Excuse me.

TERESA
(can't quite believe it)
Sure.

And he goes. Leaves her with --

CHARLES
Now: you are Teresa?

Teresa - trying to compute this quick shift. But Charles is undeniably attractive; fiercely compelling. So --

TERESA
I am.

And he sits beside her --

CHARLES
And you are American?

TERESA
I am. You're French too, right?

CHARLES
Some, yes.

TERESA
What about the rest?

Charles - pleasant, easy laugh for her joke --

CHARLES
A little of this. A little of that.

CUT TO:

A LITTLE LATER: Charles - all good humour and flirtation for Teresa, no great challenge. But --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

If you're going to be a nun, you won't need all those travelers cheques, you know?

TERESA

The money's not for me, Alain... It's for the monastery.

CHARLES

You renounce the world entirely...

TERESA

Not the world I renounce, but the folks who run it.

Charles - a shrug, a mournful smile --

CHARLES

Then I will mourn your departure.

Teresa - laughing at the naked flattery, so --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

On my heart. You are too young to lock yourself away, Teresa. Too young, too beautiful; your life too full of - opportunity.

Teresa - her eyes flick to where Monique stands, not overly possessive it seems, so --

TERESA

With you, you mean?

CHARLES

Did Ajay tell you what I do?

Teresa - did she read this wrong? Is he not hitting on her?

TERESA

It's gems, right?

CHARLES

Yes. I buy. I sell. And from time to time, others sell for me...

TERESA

Others... you mean me?

CHARLES

You could do very well. Make even more money to take to your monastery.

Teresa - really, the thought just too silly --

TERESA

I'm not going to smuggle gemstones
for you. I'm taking vows.

His smile - gentle, no judgment --

CHARLES

Well - you are taking vows, and yet
I find you here openly offering
yourself to my friend Dominique.

TERESA

I'm not a nun yet.

Charles - considering her, then - a decision --

CHARLES

In which case - may I ask: have you
been to - what shall we call them?
The nightclubs here?

Teresa - far from shocked, heavy with irony --

TERESA

You mean the stage shows, Alain?

CHARLES

Well?

TERESA

I have not.

CHARLES

Then - on this last night, before
you retreat from the world -
perhaps you should.

Teresa - the gauntlet thrown down, she smiles for him.

CUT TO:

54A

INT. 504 KANIT HOUSE. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17 (MOMENTS LATER) 54A

Teresa - she and Charles making their way out of the
apartment. Heading directly for where Monique stands by the
door in pleasing chat with Ajay and various other GUESTS.

Monique - who now sees them. And visibly prepares herself to
leave with them. Puts out a cigarette. Falls into step, but --

CHARLES

No, Monique. You must stay with our
guests. Ajay will come.

Teresa - watching Monique's face. The briefest slap of hurt
and anger landing there, but then it's gone. She covers --

MONIQUE

Have fun, Teresa. It can be quite a
shock the first time.

Teresa - her own sudden embarrassment, but --

TERESA

Sure. Thanks Monique.

CHARLES

Au revoir mon ange.

And he and Monique kiss. Hot, performative. For the benefit
of the world as much as themselves.

CUT TO:

55

I/E. 504 KANIT HOUSE. BALCONY. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17

55

Monique - moving back through the party to the balcony
beyond. Stood there she can see below to where Teresa is
shown into the Corolla and they leave. Then, **French** --

NADINE (O.S.)

*You don't get jealous, Monique? /
Tu n'es pas jalouse, Monique ?*

Monique - turning, considering the woman in front of her.
NADINE GIRES. 22. A genuine warmth and joy in all she does.
Monique smokes, shrugs, smiles --

MONIQUE

*It is Alain. It is who he is and I
don't want him any different. /
C'est Alain. C'est qui il est, et
je ne voudrais pas qu'il soit
different.*

NADINE

*You know: you're too sophisticated
to be Canadian! / Tu es bien trop
sophistiquée pour être canadienne.*

Which Monique likes. So Nadine offers her hand. Draws her
back into the party to dance. Dominique reaches the top of
the stairs, carrying an ice bucket and enters the party too.

CUT TO:

56

EXT. GO-GO BAR. NEON STREETS. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17

56

DANCING! GIRLS! LIVE SHOWS! Strip-lit exhortations: All
around - expats, diplomats, US air force personnel. Touts,
transvestites.

The Corolla - parked up. And Charles - holding his hand for Teresa. She takes it, as a cluster of WHITE MEN come barging past. Almost knock her off her feet.

On instinct, she clutches for her satchel. Perhaps she feels the first flicker of apprehension. But in they go.

CUT TO:

57

INT. GO-GO BAR. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17

57

Teresa - any bravado she may have had fast vanishing. She scans the place as a HOSTESS walks them through: the audience almost exclusively WESTERN and MALE. And --

CHARLES

During the war - this was where the CIA liked to come. Now - it is mainly diplomats. The men of many nations. Finding their comfort where they can.

Here they are now: a run of stools by a catwalk runway.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(to the Hostess)
Champagne.

Teresa - Every step she takes, she's regretting the last --

TERESA

And a lemonade.

Here come those drinks. Then, at the far end of the runway, a curtain parts and a THAI WOMAN steps out. Teresa - already uncomfortable. But Charles hasn't finished his aria yet --

CHARLES

You have much in common with them, I think. A Californian girl, going to live in Nepal and study Tibetan Buddhism.

Teresa - a shake of the head, mirthless laugh --

TERESA

Rich coming from you, Mr. Little of This, a Little of That.

CHARLES

(that soft smile)
Oh I would go home if I could, Teresa. But I can't, you see. It is - a great sadness to me.

Teresa - no idea what he means, his voice so gentle. And everything in her starting to reject this place as --

The Woman now has A SNAKE AROUND HER NECK and is beginning a dance, a STRIPTEASE. The snake and the woman's body. Charles - watching Teresa, her growing disgust, as, JOINING THEM --

AJAY

What's that like, you think? Every day. You think she gets bored?

TERESA

I think I'd like to go now.

And she steps from her stool to make the point. ONLY TO IMMEDIATELY STUMBLE. Ajay stands. Steadies her.

AJAY

Woah! Take it easy. I got you, Teresa.

But Teresa shakes him off, fixes Charles. Something becoming suddenly and frighteningly clear to her --

TERESA

What have you given me? You think I'm an idiot? You think I don't know how a downer comes on..!?

(LOUD now)

Hey! Help! This guy's name is Alain, he's Ajay, and they have dosed me. You hear! They spiked me!

(Ajay's hands)

Get off me, man. Fuck you. Fuck you. Hey: help me! Do something!

Charles doesn't like this. Offers CASH to a MANAGER, and --

CHARLES

Too much champagne.

CUT TO:

58

EXT. NEON STREETS. BANGKOK - NIGHT 17

58

Ajay brings the car around. Teresa slumps against Charles --

TERESA

Please. Come on. No.

CHARLES

You draw attention to yourself, Teresa. It's not prudent.

CUT TO:

59

I/E. THE COROLLA (TRAVELING). BANGKOK - NIGHT 17

59

Charles driving; Ajay beside. Teresa in back. The sedative flooding her, she watches powerlessly as Ajay removes her passport and counts the travelers cheques from her satchel --

TERESA

Take it. Take it all. Please.

CHARLES

(pleasant enough)

Won't the monastery miss it?

Teresa - no idea what to say to that. So --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You cannot buy your way off the wheel, Teresa. It is very American of you to think otherwise. And as you may know, Americans do not prosper in this part of the world.

(a beat)

If you want to be a real Buddhist you ought to think like one. The end of one life is only the beginning of another.

Teresa - something to say, but her muscles won't let her sit up. From the stereo, a familiar song. **The Troggs: Girl Like You**. For a moment, Teresa sings along. **Ba-ba-bam-baba**. Then --

TERESA

You ever take acid, Alain?

CHARLES

Drugs are the sickness of your generation, Teresa.

TERESA

Well I did. A lot. At home once, in my grandmother's attic room. It was - very strong. But once I had - settled into it. I saw myself as I was before I became myself. The lives I had lived before I began this one. There were three. I walked my way back through them. Til I came to the first.

Teresa - following the roadside lights going by. The last of them. The night gone black as the Corolla leaves the city. And Ajay - turning back to her. Listens with true curiosity.

TERESA (CONT'D)

My very first life. And then I passed back through that as well.

(MORE)

TERESA (CONT'D)

Until - I wasn't American, I wasn't a girl, I didn't have hair or skin or blood. I was just: a thought. A starburst. A caress of sound on a still ocean.

And she's gone. Whatever ability she had to fight or protest the advancing morphia tide, it's gone. She's out.

On the car goes. Through green wilderness as now, from the East, skies are lightening. Beyond, the ocean is silver.

CUT TO:

60

EXT. THE COROLLA. BEACH. NEAR BANGKOK - DAWN 18

60

Deserted. Parked up where forest meets sand, Ajay hauls Teresa's pack from the trunk. Throws it down by the car. In back of which, Teresa is breathing slowly, eyes like glass.

He moves to where Charles sits on the bonnet, smoking. Lit only by the sky and the beams of the car's headlamps. But --

AJAY

Where shall we leave her?

Charles - pondering something. Then points out to sea. Ajay - evidently he's surprised by this. Surprised and a little frightened too. Does Charles mean what he thinks he means?

CHARLES

She's seen a lot. Where we live. Your name. My name. And you saw - she's not afraid to complain...
(a beat)

She will be only - another reckless Westerner, who took drugs and went swimming.

Ajay - the logic of it is one thing, the actuality another. So Charles gestures for him to come sit beside --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Once, I stole a taxi in Peshawar. I wanted to take it to Teheran, you see. The driver refused so I had to dose him too. I put him in the trunk but after some time, he awoke and began to moan and thump. It was upsetting the other passengers. So I stopped at a river in a forest and I took him out and only - helped him into the river. It took only a - decision. To be free of judgement. Mine. God's. It was all entirely - without tragedy.

AJAY

Did they come looking for you? Did they catch you?

CHARLES

No one has ever caught me, Ajay.

(a beat)

We can do it together. It will be something we will always share. As long as we live, I will think of you. And the sunrise we will share once it's done.

Ajay. The spell spun. He nods shyly. Almost seduced.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Well then.

And he extinguishes his cigarette. Moves around to the back of the Corolla. Finds Teresa looking up at him --

TERESA

Are you going to hurt me?

CHARLES

(his voice, so kind)

No. Better than that.

CUT TO:

61 OMITTED 61

62 I/E. LOCAL BUS/RURAL NEPAL - DAY 19 62

Scenes of pastoral bliss. Deep valleys; impossible Himalayan peaks. Amid which, a local bus rattles along.

Inside, find: Celia Wilson. THE ONLY WHITE PERSON on it. In her hands: Teresa's **Tibetan Book of the Dead**.

Inside: a handwritten inscription: **Teresa Knowlton; San Pedro; Summer '74**. Beneath: **But what's ownership anyway?**

TERESA (V.O.)

This person is going from this world to the other shore.

CUT TO:

63 OMITTED 63

64 **EXT. PASTURES/MONASTERY. NEPAL - DAY 19**

64

Annapurnan pastures. Celia, pack on back, moves into frame.
It is the vision Teresa had in the Bangkok temple.

TERESA (V.O.)
*She is suffering greatly. She is
entering existence after existence.
She has no protector, she has no
allies.*

Celia - at the crest of this hill, she sees it - the white,
the gold, the prayer flags flying above: the monastery. There
is a MONK stood in the doorway. Her lovely face in rapture.

TERESA (V.O.)
The light of this life has set.

CUT TO:

64A **EXT. GULF OF THAILAND - MORNING 19**

64A

A FISHING BOAT. Sole FISHERMAN aboard. And - KRUMP - his boat
connects with something: a CORPSE floating on the tide. A
woman. Naked but for a bikini. **IT IS TERESA KNOWLTON.**

CUT TO:

65 **OMITTED**

65

66 **INT. KANIT HOUSE. BEDROOM. BANGKOK - DAY 32**

66

SPLIT-FLAP **forward:** 14TH DECEMBER 1975. TWO MONTHS LATER.

And -- DDRRIINNGG!! Shrill, horrible. A familiar purple alarm
clock. TERESA'S ALARM CLOCK. Sat on a ledge above a bed.
Beside: A PAIR OF MEN'S SPECTACLES. Wim Bloem's spectacles.

And Wim himself. Waking. Reaching for them, his mind astray.
From a bathroom - the sounds of A WOMAN BEING SICK. His eyes
swim as Lena emerges. Her eyes implore him for relief.

CUT TO:

67 **INT. KANIT HOUSE. LOUNGE AREA. BANGKOK - DAY 32**

67

Wim and Lena - disoriented, frightened, as --

LENA
What's wrong with us?

In front of them - Monique. Sat on a sofa, a small WHITE DOG
on her lap.

LENA (CONT'D)

Monique?

But Monique can't meet their eyes. Something fracturing here,
she only stands, and --

MONIQUE

Frankie. *Viens*.

And she walks from the apartment, the dog following. Out to
the balcony where she only smokes and turns her back in the
room. Leaves Wim and Lena to consider --

CHARLES

I'm sorry to say you've been
unwell.

Charles - that sleeker, smarter incarnation. Hair shorter,
clothes more expensive. Kind as ever he was --

CHARLES (CONT'D)

But we are going to take care of
you, I promise.

FADE OUT.

68

I/E. THE MAZDA. ROYAL SIAM POINT HOTEL. BANGKOK - NIGHT 51 68

SPLIT-FLAP **forward: 27TH FEBRUARY 1976. TWO MONTHS LATER.**

ANGELA

Taxi for Knippenberg!

Angela - at the wheel of the Mazda as it pulls up next to --

HERMAN

You took your time.

So Angela drives away again. Twenty yards. Stops. Gets out --

ANGELA

You know - any time you want to
learn to drive, I would entirely
support that decision.

And he - contrite. Hangdog. Walking toward her.

HERMAN

I'm sorry. I'm an asshole.

ANGELA

You're not. But you can call Yotin
if you want someone to bark at.

And he - climbing in beside her. Very serious now --

HERMAN

I can't call Yotin. No one at the Embassy can know what we're about to do.

ANGELA

And if we're caught? If you're caught? What? Stern rebuke? Or the chop?

HERMAN

(genuinely uncertain)
I suppose it depends what happens now.

Angela - a smile, a hand through his hair. She kisses him --

ANGELA

It's very cold in Holland right now. Have you thought about that?

CUT TO:

68A **OMITTED**

68A

69 **INT. BANGKOK EASTERN DIVISION. BANGKOK - NIGHT 51 (LATER)** 69

Herman and Angela - waiting in silence. Until finally a door opens and a UNIFORMED COP emerges. In his hands: a POLICE CASE FILE. He speaks to Herman in **Thai** as, translating --

UNIFORMED COP

tarnng nhuay kor song kwarm pra-tha-na-dee hai than tooth duay

ANGELA

I think he says... the Division extends its compliments to the Dutch Ambassador.

Herman - smile of gratitude, as that File is handed over.

CUT TO:

69A **I/E. THE MAZDA. BANGKOK EASTERN DIVISION. BANGKOK - NIGHT 51** ~~69A~~

Herman and Angela - walking out of this looming building. Heading toward where the lonely Mazda is parked, and --

HERMAN

Did you tell them I actually was the Ambassador?

ANGELA
I didn't know the translation for
Third Secretary.

Herman - a look for that as they both climb into the car.
Angela starts the engine. And Herman opens that file. Reads.
And the world freezes for him. His face pales --

HERMAN
Turn the engine off.

ANGELA
Herman: the curfew...

HERMAN
Damn the curfew. We have immunity.
Turn it off.

Angela - doing it. Turns to what he shows her: **The CRIME
SCENE PHOTOGRAPHS**. This in particular: a CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPH
of a PART-BURNED WHITE BRA. There's SCRIPT on the label:

IT READS **MADE IN HOLLAND**. It's the same bra we once saw Lena
Dekker wash in a squalid Hong Kong hostel bedroom. Angela -
seeking his eyes. There's no lightness in her now --

ANGELA
Herman.

HERMAN
It's them.

CUT TO:

69B-70 OMITTED

69B-70

70A EXT. THE COROLLA. BEACH NEAR BANGKOK - DAY 18 (FIRST LIGHT) 70A

Where Charles sits alone now. The sun rising for him.

END EPISODE ONE