

KILLERS

AND

DIPLOMATS

by

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Based on the article by
Raymond Bonner

*Note to reader, filmmakers: This story takes place in El Salvador.
Dialogue shall be spoken in Spanish when natural / necessary,
rather than as / where indicated.*

OVER BLACK:

TEXT OF A TELEGRAPH CABLE typed at rocket speed to its intended reader:

"In El Salvador the rich and powerful have systematically defrauded the poor and denied eighty percent of the people any voice in the affairs of the country.

A revolution is now underway and the United States is one of the principal actors.

There is no stopping this revolution...

What can we do to bring our resources to bear in such a way that El Salvador can succeed?

First, it is vital to understand that we cannot without the support of the Church."

FADE IN:

-- Robert E. White, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, in a cable to the Department of State. March, 1980.

OVER BLACK.

ROMERO (V.O.)
We have been abandoned by God.

SNAP UP ON

A TROPICAL FOREST - DAY

A NUN MOTORCYCLES out of a jungle along a shoddily-tarred road pungent with heat.

The biker is **SISTER DOROTHY KAZEL**, 40, American. A CROSS PENDANT bounces at her throat. **DIEGO**, 8, wrapped around her waist, peeks out from beneath her billowing habit. She speaks perfect Spanish --

DOROTHY
Hang on. Eyes shut.

A PACK OF WILD DOGS circle and prey on a STARVING MOTHER DOG, her teats drag near the ground from hunger and use.

Dorothy aims her speeding bike at the predators, driving them off so --

The mother dog escapes. For now.

ROMERO (V.O.)
The evidence is all around us.

A HILLSIDE BARRIO - DAY

PULL DOROTHY out of the jungle, civilization picking its way into view--

They ride past VENDORS and shacks. DEAD-EYED CHILDREN stare beside lean-tos, no play in them left.

Mid-day sun stripes the LOCALS glossy and dingy with sweat.

ROMERO (V.O.)
We are half-dead in our dreams.

TWO SOLDIERS hassle / distract a VENDOR over papers. A THIRD SOLDIER steals from his cart, packing a gunny sack full.

ROMERO (V.O.)
The bodies that litter our gutters.
The blood clotting in our streets.

A HALF-MAD NAKED WOMAN stumbles into the road. HER MOTHER chases her with a blanket, covers her with it, turns the poor wretch back to home. She sees the passing Sister, crosses herself. All of it causing the Nun Biker to swerve.

The little boy looks back - at the naked and half-mad. Eyes forward again, he is haunted now, too. A virus of sorts.

A CENTRAL AMERICAN CITY - DAY

Onward, Dorothy guns the motor bike --

Around MILITARY transports.

Past rubble and debris that litter the roads.

More PEOPLE have machine guns than shoes.

ROMERO (V.O.)
Gunshots tempo the beat of our
hearts, our children play with
targets on their backs.

A BEGGAR clangs an empty can for collections.

A TEENAGE SOLDIER slams his machine gun into the Beggar's stomach. She crumples, her charity spilling out.

As he chases her coins, Dorothy nearly drives over his hand to park. She kickstands her ride, glares some Jesus at him.

His indignity fails. He scurries off, another beta in the streets nursing a grudge.

She passes coins back to the Beggar, considers her destination, then nods Diego off her bike.

CHYRON:

**San Salvador, El Salvador.
March 24th, 1980**

EXT. HOSPITAL DE LA DIVINA PROVIDENCIA - DAY

Dorothy and Diego head for its chapel doors--

DIEGO
That woman. Who was naked--

DOROTHY
Is why we go to mass.

DIEGO
But how do we pray for that?

DOROTHY
How do we not?

She is so steady, so certain, holding the door open for him
and TWO STRAGGLERS. The OPENING VO now echoes from within--

ROMERO (V.O.)
Every day, now, the battlefield
spills into our homes.

INT. HOSPITAL DE LA DIVINA PROVIDENCIA - CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy and Diego shuffle past PATIENTS, VOLUNTEERS, MEDICAL
STAFF swelling the pews to listen to--

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO, 62, catches her eye, nods a warm
smile her way from his lectern -

ROMERO
We turn to Heaven, "Deliver us from
this hell." But our prayers are met
with more bullets, more shelling,
more instruments of death.

As Dorothy and Diego find seats near the back. Romero takes
a beat, to speak deeper from his heart --

ROMERO (CONT'D)
I, too, feel alone. I have
wrestled such terrors in my soul.
But God's silence? Is our
challenge now. Can we earn our
halos in defiance of repression?
And if not here, then where?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. HOSPITAL DE LA DIVINA PROVIDENCIA - CHAPEL - SAME

A VOLKSWAGEN BUG slows to idle in front of the church.

The PUG-NOSED DRIVER moves to put the VW in "Park." THE
WIREY PASSENGER with a rifle in his lap, gestures to leave it
in "Drive," foot on the brake.

ROMERO (V.O.)
To be righteous -in raw defiance-
against all the wrongs in this
human world.

The Passenger coolly steps from the VW, crosses to the door.
An ARMED GUARD spots him -with the rifle!- AND TURNS AWAY.

The Passenger takes careful aim through a TELESCOPIC SIGHT
aimed at --

ROMERO
(inside the chapel)
Faith like a wellspring of clarity
deepening our resol--

A lone GUNSHOT thunders -- **BOOM!** -- and Romero is PUNCHED
backwards by the blast, blood spraying from his heart, out
his back, on to the crucifix and altar beyond as he falls.

A split second, no more, and the chapel is swallowed in
CHAOS. PARISHIONERS in a frenzy, mobbing for the exits.

Dorothy lifts Diego HIGH OVERHEAD to avoid his being
trampled, races them both for the exit --

DIEGO'S POV: his countrymen, his church, raw and ruined from
all sides. People rushing like blood towards--

OUTSIDE

Dorothy lowers Diego in time to spot the VW being delayed by
donkeys while fleeing the scene. Sees SOLDIERS lighting
cigarettes, nonchalant, at ease. She races to an OFFICER--

DOROTHY
Call a medic! You're in charge!!

The Officer shrugs off her grip, covers his ID with his hand--

OFFICER
I am not even here.

As he walks off, Dorothy looks back to the MOB being vomited
from the church, to Diego, an 8yo boy, clinging to her
motorcycle like it's the only sanity left.

FADE TO

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - BALLROOM / COURTYARD - NIGHT

FOLLOW A TRAY OF HIGHBALLS lifted high in a cavernous room,
much like Diego but decidedly different urgency to it.

A marimba cover of "Oh Holy Night" bass-lines the MURMURS OF
A MORE SOCIAL CROWD now peeking into view -

CHYRON:

**United States Embassy
San Salvador, El Salvador.**

December 1, 1980.

SWOOP DOWN with the tray to find WAITERS replenishing canapés, ATTENDEES glad-handing conversations.

THE TRAY arrives at A HUDDLE OF DIPLOMATS pooling around Dorothy in her convent habit. **AMBASSADOR BOB WHITE**, 50s, pressed and formal, nods for some diplomatic silence as highballs are pressed into palms. No drink for Dorothy, though, and none for her friend -

JEAN DONOVAN, a soft-spoken American lay missionary, tearing a napkin at the edge of the huddle. Dorothy gently shuts this nervous tick down. Once the Waiter moves on, Ambassador White's wife, **MARY-ANN**, 50s, rallies the conversation--

MARY-ANN

No child should have to see that.

DOROTHY

And no government should stand by
while he does. Local or ours.

Her gaze locks on Ambassador White --

WHITE

It's quite- an assertion.

DOROTHY

Ambassador. I was there. The
soldiers stood by.

WHITE

Dorothy. We are guests in this
country.

DOROTHY

The church is off limits.

The group murmurs some agreement. All but **CARL GETTINGER**. At 26, he sticks out in the climber crowd of bureaucrats with A FULL BEARD and loose tie. He is flanked by, **MOLLY WILTON**, 26, nursing champagne, and, **DEREK HUGHES**, 40s, dabbing a fresh salsa stain off his tie.

CARL

But maybe -perhaps- the wrong place
for a kid as well. Don't you think?

Molly bristles. Hughes looks up, mid-dab.

DOROTHY
A hospital chapel?

CARL
In the company of radicals.

MOLLY
(sotto, trying to pivot)
Carl.

DOROTHY
Faith is always radical.

Hughes clears his throat, leans in to help out--

HUGHES
What my colleague, here, means is
that Archbishop Romero was a high
profile target.

DOROTHY
Everyone is a target here.

CARL
We can agree there. And also,
maybe, that Jesus is a bit too
abstract to be helpful in a hot
zone which begs the question - *why*
are you here?

WHITE
Gettinger--

CARL
They are a liability, sir.
(to Dorothy)
Roman Catholicism is not a
legitimate Nation-State.

Gunshots ring out from somewhere in San Salvador. Jean
startles; the rest of the huddle barely notices.

CARL (CONT'D)
See? Even the gunshots agree.

Hughes stifles a laugh. Molly tugs at Carl, leads him off --

MOLLY
Well, I could use a top off. A
pleasure to meet you both, Sisters.
(herding him off)
Carl. Those were nuns.

CARL
That explains the nun garb.
(off her look)
I need a lot more to drink.

MOLLY
That's a very bad idea.

CARL
But the only one I've got.

Molly and Carl head for the --

BAR

Molly smiles at a WOMAN beckoning from across the room.

MOLLY
Shit. I have to go listen to Liz
whine about San Salvador and her
foggy bottom husband, or I will not
get that Denmark desk.
(straightening Carl's tie)
Mingle, Carl. Exchange ideas. Be
a diplomat for chrissake.

Fuck that. Carl opts for the bar and an idle BARTENDER.

But seeing Carl approaching, the bartender grabs up a tub of
empties, and leaves his bar. Carl offers more opinion--

CARL
Oh, for fuck's sake!

DOROTHY (O.S.)
It's the beard.

Carl turns to find Dorothy approaching the bar.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Not even the locals trust Americans
with beards.

Dorothy reaches over the bar, snags a bottle of Dewars and a
couple of glasses --

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
C'mon, Che Guevara. And please
tell me you smoke.

She heads for the outdoors.

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - COURTYARD - MINUTES LATER

Dorothy pours as Carl fishes cigarettes from a pack, his eyes fix on a TV set inside the bar --

DOROTHY
Here's to strangers in foreign
lands drinking.

She downs her pour in one gulp, goes again, hand waving for his lit cigarette --

CARL
You just summated diplomacy.

DOROTHY
In a Graham Greene novel maybe.

She savors the smoke like it's her first breath of life.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
I see ten dead people a week, easy.
But Oscar Romero was my friend.
"In the name of God, in the name of
these suffering people whose cries
rise to heaven more loudly each
day, I implore you, I beg you, I
order you in the name of God: stop
the repression." That- was Romero.
Now don't be an upstart and attempt
to compete.

CARL
Look, I'm s--

DOROTHY
I don't want that. Be here to do
something, or fly your beard home.

CARL
(nods at the TV)
Well. I trained for Iran.

She studies the TV SCREEN: American Hostage Crisis, Day 338.

DOROTHY
The lives we hope to live but never
do.

CARL
It could drive a guy to prayer.

She laughs and means it. More smoke.

DOROTHY
 Here's what I didn't say to your
 boss: if the soldiers weren't in on
 it, they were certainly tipped off.
 One told me to my face--

SMASH BACK

OUTSIDE THE ROMERO'S MURDER SCENE - FLASHBACK

NEW ANGLE: The Officer again, hand over his ID --

OFFICER / DOROTHY'S VO
 I'm not even here.

THE OUTDOOR BAR

Carl takes that in. Dorothy watches the rain fall harder now
 beyond a weather-beaten awning.

CARL
 How are you even here?

DOROTHY
 I was in India. Love India. Until
 I said that one unforgivable thing.

CARL
 "God isn't real?"

DOROTHY
 Ha.

Dorothy likes to laugh. And smoke. She leans in--

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
 "The cardinal diddles kids."

CARL
 -- The Smoking Nun.

She crushes out her butt --

DOROTHY
 The Smoking Nun. And the Vatican
 IS a Nation-State. God is what's
 left when diplomacy breaks down.
 (gestures to the pack of
 cigarettes)
 May I?

He nods. And she pockets the whole pack!

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
(off his look)
American cigs, hard to get. We
also need toothpaste, soap, gauze,
antibiotics if you have. And I
know you have.

CARL
I don't personally have--

DOROTHY
Yeah, but you look like the beard-y
guy who knows his way up a skirt to
the supply closet keys.

She's got him there.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Jean and me are staying on site.
Guest quarters. Through breakfast.

CARL
And why would I stoop to such an
insubordinate act?

DOROTHY
Because you're supposed to be in
Iran, right?

Carl, too, likes to laugh. They clink drinks on that.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
But, seriously, help.

She heads back to the party.

GASPAR (PRELAP V.O.)
The Americans continue to
congratulate themselves.

EST. RADIO VENCEREMOS - NIGHT

Rain PINGS loudly on a TIN-ROOFED structure, hastily built
against the side of a rock wall.

EXT. RADIO VENCEREMOS - NIGHT

We are inside a make-shift RADIO STUDIO, third- and fourth-
hand hardware gerry-rigged to survive tropical elements.

GASPAR, late 20s, reads copy into the microphone. Behind
him, **ISELA**, early 20s, scribbles in a rush.

They carry themselves with the bone-deep exhaustion of committed activists forever on the move.

GASPAR

Their embassy holiday event is a chokehold rebuke to Salvadorans.

Gaspar looks up, questioning Isela: hurry up.

Isela slides her document to Gaspar. He reads as she continues on to the next missive.

GASPAR (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, Roberto D'Aubuisson leads another strike against insurgents tonight. His death squad caravan moving northwest --

The radio transmission continues as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. EL SALVADOR - SAME

Headlights slice through the darkness, guiding four MILITARY JEEPS through the mud.

GASPAR (V.O.)

Union leaders and students are among their targets --

INT. JEEP - SAME

ALVARO, 30s, leads the convoy of vehicles. Beside him, **ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON**, 38, rolls a cigarette. At 5'3", he's a short man with a shorter fuse. He also lights his cigarettes with a blow torch.

GASPAR (V.O.)

But every murder indoctrinates two hundred more to our cause --

D'Aubuisson jabs off the radio, lights up with blow torch.

ALVARO

It's just talk, *Chele*.

D'Aubuisson fumes. Fires some flame at Alvaro who shuts the FUCK up.

EXT. BAHARAQUE HOUSE - SAME

The caravan SLAMS to a halt before a bamboo-and-thatched roof shack. Rain gushes from the corrugated steel roof but does little to hide the same radio transmission squawking inside.

D'Aubuisson and Alvaro climb from their vehicle, head for the door. SEVERAL NATIONAL GUARDS join them.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK. The radio goes silent amidst whispers within. A moment later, MARTIN, 40s, opens the door. Behind him, a CHILD, 4, hides behind a WOMAN's legs.

ALVARO
Señor Martin Ramira?

Martin nods. His eyes find D'Aubuisson's.

D'AUBUISSON
My name is Roberto. May I come in?

INT. BAHARAQUE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Martin sits at a small table opposite D'Aubuisson. The Woman busies herself with a kettle.

D'AUBUISSON
Please. Don't trouble. We all
have enough trouble, don't we?

Her eyes query her husband, Martin --

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Wait by the wall. With the child.

The Woman nods, grabs the boys, tears welling, crosses to an empty wall.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Your son, Pablo Ramira, is a
dissident. A guerrilla.

MARTIN
Sir, my son is a good student. A
hard worker, and a--

ALVARO
Liar.

D'AUBUISSON
Alvaro. It is an emotional time.
Emotions cloud judgment. Let's say
"subversive." Pablo is subversive.

D'Aubuisson waves at a pile of books cluttering one wall.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
A propagandist. A criminal towards
his own government. I don't make the
laws, but it's criminal, these things.

MARTIN
I-- I don't know where he is.

D'AUBUISSON
But I assume that is his child,
hiding in his grandmother's skirts.

MARTIN
Please.

D'AUBUISSON
(fixed on the child)
Maybe he could tell us where papa
is. They say I have a real talent -
with kids.

D'Aubuisson squats down, nose to nose with the child--

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Do you have, maybe, an imaginary
friend? I have two, myself.

The boy is paralyzed with fear; his jaw hinge has locked--

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Want to know their names? My
imaginary friends?

MARTIN
(can't take it)
He was here. But he left!!

D'Aubuisson straightens--

D'AUBUISSON
Ah. There is one friend now.
(to the boy)
See him there, inside your Grampa,
peeking out. *His name is Fear.*

Alvaro knows the bit, and opens the door now for --

THREE MEN to enter - **COLINDRÉS ALÉMAN** (30s), **EDUARDO** (20s),
and a man we will know only as **KILLER** (40s). They are blunt
objects incarnate, human weaponry --

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
 (to the boy)
 And my other friend - can you
 guess?

Martin stands. Killer shoves him so hard onto the kitchen table, it collapses beneath him.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
 (fires up his blow torch)
 His name is Death.

Whatever happens to Martin, out of frame, it sounds unspeakable --

Colindrés rips the SHRIEKING woman from the boy's hands--

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
 And what do we say to Death, mijo?
 We say, "Peekaboo. I see you."

D'Aubuisson heads out, but leaves the blow torch with Eduardo. Alvaro follows after --

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
 Peekaboo.

OUTSIDE

D'Aubuisson conducts the night air, the cicadas, and the screaming. As if on cue, the boy's scream cuts the air. It is a symphony for D'Aubuisson. He turns to Alvaro -

D'AUBUISSON
 Maybe the night screaming will
 bring "Papa" home, eh? But Alvaro?
 The radio. Tipped him off. I want
 the radio people found. I want
 them cauterized. Like a crispy
 wound.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - GUEST QUARTERS - NIGHT

Radio Venceremos plays low in the BG. Dorothy and Jean rifle a HAUL OF SUPPLIES that Carl has pilfered in his duffle--

CARL
 Toothpaste, brushes, gauze, Bactine--

DOROTHY
 We have eyes.

CARL
 "You're welcome. Glad I could help."

DOROTHY
 Oh, Jean, look: he wants a gold
 star. From nuns.

JEAN
 What about antibiotics?

CARL
 Pepto Bismal, Bactine, *Tums*.

DOROTHY
 Game-changing for bullet wounds.
 (off his shrug)
 Next time, shag a nurse.

JEAN
 Dorothy!

DOROTHY
 Jean. Let's school the boy about
 the war he's missing out there.
 (to Carl)
 Want us to tuck you in, too?

CARL
 I guess this is where I leave you
 to do more relevant nun things.

JEAN
 (distracted)
 Oh, Dottie - turn it up!

The radio. Dorothy does.

GASPAR (V.O.)
 -- we remind you again:
 D'Aubuisson's death squads are
 moving northwest. But not with
 sufficient numbers to search the
 jungles yet. Stay off the roads,
 but away from the river. They are
 also using boats.

Jean crosses herself.

CARL
 Is that Radio Vencerémos?

JEAN
 Pirate radio. Rebel dispatch.

DOROTHY

D'Aubuisson is conducting his raids again.

CARL

And they know where?!?

DOROTHY

Venceremos makes the French Resistance look like Mouseketeers.

Static cuts in. Jean turns it off --

JEAN

Every time their broadcast ends, I worry they've been found.

CARL

They're informing on death squads.
That's like playing hide and seek with the Gestapo.

DOROTHY

Look at you, one evening with us and already up to speed.
(offering a rosary)
Want a rosary for your efforts? I see your Catholic roots in there.

CARL

Yeah, no. And I'll need my duffle back.

DOROTHY

Yeah, no. It's super sturdy, and perfect for jungle terrain.

CARL

It's monogrammed.

DOROTHY

So we'll know who to pray for then.

CARL

And you're sure you're with the Pope?

DOROTHY

Aim higher, Beard-o.
And welcome to the fight.

Carl is not amused. These missionaries give zero shits.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - MOLLY'S DESK - NIGHT

Molly yawns at her desk in the bullpen, flipping through a State Department magazine, when Carl returns.

CARL

Molly--

MOLLY

'Thought you'd passed me over for a nun sandwich maybe.

CARL

Please don't ruin my night more.

He hands her back the SUPPLY CLOSET KEY.

MOLLY

What did you-- No, stop. I don't want to know.

CARL

Toothbrushes. We have hundreds. Plus, it's nuns.

MOLLY

Still. Feels like stealing.

CARL

It is stealing.

Walk and Talk them through the bull pen --

MOLLY

So I'm hiding the key now.

CARL

Good thing we don't shit where we eat then.

MOLLY

Much.

CARL

Have you heard Radio Vencerémos?

MOLLY

No habla espanol, Señor.

CARL

HABLO espanol.

MOLLY

That, too.

CARL
Shouldn't Spanish be a requisite?

MOLLY
Carl, I work where they send me, okay?

EXT. ISIDRO MENÉNDEZ JUDICIAL CENTER SAN SALVADOR - MORNING

CLOSE ON what's left of Martin's lifeless face.

WIDER TO REVEAL his Wife lies nearby - among dozens of corpses in a transport truck, guarded by SOLDIERS.

A PHOTOGRAPHER, MacHeath -everyone calls him **MAC** (Scottish, 50)- moves to snap a photo, but a Soldier shuts that down, placing a hand over the lens.

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC
I'm press.

Mac pulls back to re-frame his shot.

FIND CARL & MOLLY, passing behind the tableau, watching as the soldier RIPS the camera from Mac's hands --

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC (CONT'D)
Jesus.
(seeing Carl)
Carl! Tell this guy I'm press!
With your embassy!

They cannot see the war dead - but can smell them. Explains Molly's scarf in the morning heat--

CARL
But you're not with my embassy,
MacHeath!

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC
Fuck off with that, and play the
ally card, prat!

The guard now smashes the camera to the ground and as Mac hurries for it, uses the butt of his rifle to finish it off!

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC (CONT'D)
HEY! GOD-DAMN YOU!

CARL
Clearly, he knows some English, Mac.

EXT U.S. EMBASSY - PERSONNEL ENTRANCE - MINUTES LATER

Mary-Anne White, the Ambassador's Wife, exits the building with Dorothy and Jean as Carl and Molly enter it. Big smile from Mary Anne -

MARY-ANN

Carl. The sisters here have been telling me about all your good deeds.

CARL

They better not have.

MARY-ANN

Enough to score you some winning praise for my husband, your boss.

(to the Missionaries)

I'll fetch the car. Molly, could you help with their bags?

CARL

I can--

MARY-ANN

No, Carl. We are get-it-ourselves women around here.

Mary-Ann, Jean, and Molly head off leaving Dorothy to bum a cig.

CARL

It's a good thing you don't work for Satan.

DOROTHY

God knows better than to play against me, Comrade. Nice supply cabinet on that one, by the way.

CARL

She's hidden the key now; forget it.

DOROTHY

I made a list for next time regardless. Camel Lights, too, please. Two cartons.

She trots off, Cheshire Cat grin. Carl can't help but smirk.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - BULLPEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Walk & Talk White and Gettinger to White's office --

CARL

--Their radio channel changes but their information is solid.

WHITE

They pedal rebel war songs and Communist folklore.

CARL

So we're actively pushing this country to embrace fascism now?

WHITE

Carl. Don't annoy me with oversimplifications today.

CARL

It's not college radio, sir. They are the spine of a resistance forming. Invisible, on the move, but being heard.

WHITE

We are not chasing shadows.

CARL

Is it our position then--

WHITE

We don't have a position. We are an embassy. *Not an occupation.*

CARL

Fine, but last night, they fingered D'Aubuisson for death squadding north of here, and this morning? Bodies piled high in trucks.

White stops, and not because they've reached his office--

WHITE

Is that what I've been smelling?

CARL

Mac was snapping off photos of it - til the national guard broke his camera.

(off his look)

Think about it, who else would know but D'Aubuisson's inner circle?

WHITE

You think someone on his squad is feeding intel to pirate radio.

CARL

Or a chain of Frente rebels
watching them closely. Think of
the impact if their resistance
radio had, say-- "better intel?"

WHITE

Think of how fast your career ends if
you're suggesting we do that.

It's sucker punch math that Carl failed to calculate.

WHITE (CONT'D)

But. No harm in asking questions.
Quietly.

(off his enthusiasm)

And, Carl, *we are not an occupation.*

PULL CARL, speeding off, stoked! He rounds a corner and --

BLAM! Straight into HUGHES, knocking an English-to-Spanish
dictionary from his hands--

HUGHES

Jesus! First nuns, and now me? Who
else you gonna mow down with your
cavalier hutzpah, Rabbi Get-zinger?

Carl retrieves the book for Hughes, his semi-superior.

CARL

Sorry, Hughes. Also: not Jewish.
And it's "Gettinger."

HUGHES

So not swapping kugel recipes then
either? Whoa, hold up there,
sport! I gotta thing.

CARL

And I have another thing.

HUGHES

You're gonna make me pull rank on
you, Rabbi?

CARL

Lead on, Herr Hitler.

HUGHES

Please. I'm Pinochet at best.

INT. - A BANK OF OFFICES - US EMBASSY - MOMENTS LATER

Hughes points thru a window in a holding room door at KILLER, the deadly man from D'Aubuisson's raid last night.

HUGHES

That fuck. Refuses to cooperate.

CARL

How so?

HUGHES

No speak-a the English. Or so he doesn't say.

CARL

Hughes. I'm not an interrogator.
And you are a racist.

HUGHES

I hereby deputize you, Señor Amigo.
My bigot tendencies remain up for
debate.

CARL

Only to you.

HUGHES

Look, all you gotta do is listen.
They like to feel important, like
they have some priceless intel. Give
him a soda, a photo of Carter, and
I'll write up the useless report.

Hughes yanks open the door. Killer turns his lifeless gaze on Carl.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - HOLDING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carl is no stranger to intimidation, but Killer is far more than Alpha male machismo holding court.

The two men stare at each other in silence. Carl sips his soda. Killer's soda remains untouched. Eventually--

CARL

You're a lieutenant then?
With the National Guard?

Nothing.

CARL (CONT'D)

Could we start with a name then?

Killer's gaze now swallows him whole -

CARL (CONT'D)
Are you talking to anyone else?

KILLER
I'm not talking to you yet.

CARL
And that's why I'm about to leave.

KILLER
But don't Americans save the world?

CARL
I stopped reading our propaganda
years ago.

KILLER
Then can I talk to somebody who has
more fucking power, please?

CARL
Do you know how few Spanish
speakers we have working here?
Ignore the beard; you can trust me.

The joke falls dead with Killer who tugs a pack of smokes
from a pocket, sparks one up.

KILLER
Why your Spanish?

CARL
My mother. She's Mexican.

Killer ashes on the floor, gazes into Carl's eyes, searching.
Deciding.

KILLER
We kill mothers. We kill sons. But
I'm not at war with the mothers of
this country. Or their sons.

CARL
What are you at war with?

KILLER
They don't tell us anymore.

Killer falls down a hole inside his own head.

CARL
Did you come here to dissent?

KILLER

I put people out of their misery.
What is there to dissent?

CARL

That, as a way of life, maybe?

This strikes a nerve --

KILLER

So you come here to give us Coca-Cola then? That you make from our cola nuts.

Carl leans back, mulls shit over, then --

CARL

My boss. He runs this place. If you've got shit to say then say. Your country is dying.

SMASH TO

INT. U.S. EMBASSY BULLPEN - EVENING

Night has fallen. Carl trips over himself chasing White past cubicles through empty hallways --

CARL

Ambassador! Sir! *Bob!!*

White halts to a dead stop, turns about face on Carl --

WHITE

I beg your pardon?

CARL

Ambassador... Sir. They drew straws - to assassinate Romero. Like, played bingo for the kill shot. It was D'Aubuisson. He had his squad leaders draw straws to take Romero out.

WHITE

Carl, you missed two meetings today, and now sound like you're on blow.

CARL

Hughes stuck me with his informant. How does no one speak Spanish here anyway? But the guy is shitting gold.

(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

He squads for D'Aubuisson, knows the infrastructure of his death factory.

White considers his watch--

WHITE

My office. March.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - WHITE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Carl barely breathes as he rapid-fire speaks--

CARL

--Our guy is full-inside.

WHITE

He's not "our guy."

CARL

This guy. Walked me through the whole thing. Death squads murdering kids. The junta targeting campesinos inside of churches. Kidnapping women. And he's no fan of the resistance either. Says the Frente is also recruiting - but elementary school kids! Brutal stuff on both sides, says it's just starting, and he has a ringside seat.

WHITE

It's not ringside if he's murdering civilians.

CARL

Sir, they killed his father and brother in front of him - then gave him a choice--

(off his look)

He's asking for help.

WHITE

He's also a nationalist cutthroat who can never go on the record. Let alone, move the needle. Carl--

CARL

Sir, you asked me for nuance; I just brought it in spades!

WHITE

Unless we have proof that D'Aubuisson gave the order... Plus they've bounced him from the military--

CARL

Yeah, bounced him to run their death squads for them!! Sir! What are we talking here? A signed confession?!

WHITE

Even then. Their army won't try their own. It's a military dictatorship.

Knock-knock. Molly steps in, ravaged with upset--

MOLLY

Sir. They've found four bodies.
Seems they might be American--

She bites her lips, looks at Carl. Her eyes, welling up.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

DOZENS of BYSTANDERS, STATE DEPT, crowd around a PIT in an isolated dirt field under MAKESHIFT KLIEG LIGHTS powered by gasoline generators that sputter and smoke like old men. Sobs punctuate the din of horrified chatter.

Heading in, White, Carl, and Hughes pass TWO NUNS PRAYING --

Carl spots MacHeath with his camera, rushing at an odd angle to avoid them - and their gaze. A macabre enthusiasm in his gait though --

And then they're too suddenly upon it: FOUR BODIES left to a shallow group grave.

REVEREND PAUL SCHINDLER, 50s, climbs from the pit, moves to White, hanky over his nose and mouth, nausea and heartbreak in his eyes. He knocks dirt clots off of himself.

SCHINDLER

Maryknoll Catholic Missionaries,
all of them. No sign of their van.

ANGLE ON Carl as he glimpses -

Dorothy's face, streaked with dirt and dried blood, eyes open. The lifeless skin pulled taut against her skull--

It slams White's soul against his own spine --

WHITE

That's Dorothy Kazel. And Jean Donovan. *Friends of my wife.*

SCHINDLER

And that is Ita Ford and Maura Clarke. They were meeting them at the airport, fresh off their plane.

HUGHES

It's a popular death pit. If you want to make a show of it.

SCHINDLER

So they're warning the Church then?

WHITE

WE warned the Church, Paul. They are coming for you. *Hard.*

SCHINDLER

That's what you've got, Bob?!

WHITE

Paul. My wife's friends are dead.
*And I am suddenly in charge of
their murders.*

They're friends. The situation just settling on them as SOLDIERS roughly drag the bodies from the pit. Hard to miss their trousers and underwear bunched around their ankles.

CARL

They fucking raped them.

HUGHES

They always rape them.

As Dorothy's body is unceremoniously pulled from the pit, her rigored hand drops, clenching a rosary in it. A CRIME SCENE ATTENDANT shoves an evidence bag over the entire hand.

SCHINDLER

'Not a sacred thing left in this hideous place!

Ambassador Robert White rubs at his eyes. This shitshow job turning full circus in a night.

PRE-LAP:

PETER JENNINGS (V.O.)

The bodies of four American churchwomen have been pulled out of an El Salvadoran mass grave...

ABC NIGHTLY NEWS - ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

PETER JENNINGS addresses us directly

PETER JENNINGS
...and into the global
consciousness. The murders reflect
rising tensions in El Salvador,
where the church's liberation
theology finds itself at odds with
the right wing gov --

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - BULLPEN - DAY

The television snaps to black as it powers down. Molly steps
away from the television. Hughes steps up to Molly --

HUGHES
This isn't your living room,
Wilton; I was watching that.

Molly turns, her eyes red. This is emotional work.

MOLLY
You know the details by now, Derek.
Kinduv your job, isn't it?

HUGHES
My job is to know how the press
runs at it, so don't tell me my--

He switches it back on as White charges into the bullpen--

WHITE
Huddle! Hughes, turn that off!

Hughes does, scrutinizes Molly for any gloating. She waits
'til he turns his back.

The room gets quiet.

Carl appears like a weighty afterthought. Molly attempts eye
contact. But he is wooden and taut, deep in his head.

WHITE (CONT'D)
We've lost friends of the embassy
this week. American citizens on our
watch. State will blame Church, and
Church will blame State. Before the
geopolitical "moment" shifts back to
Iran. But these four women deserve
better. Let History quibble with
that.

Diplomats squirm, uncomfortable with hard facts and his gaze.

WHITE (CONT'D)

But, for now, history works for us,
here, at State. Fuck communism,
fuck jingoism, fuck coup d'etats.

"Fuck" is not a word one often hears in staff meetings --

WHITE (CONT'D)

Ideology never sat down to dinner
with me - but those churchwomen
did. And they had one fixed
agenda: to make life easier for
human beings living in this squalid
Hell. It's times like this that I
almost wish we were Church - if
only for the homilies. But we are
State. We are God's errand boys on
this one.

The room murmurs reactions. White's words fortify Carl.

WHITE (CONT'D)

Hughes, you'll run point.
Gettinger, you're his second. We
find the men who did this. And we
make them look History in the face.

INT. WHITE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

White paces behind his desk, not as confident as we've just
seen him. Carl and Hughes clock the pacing --

CARL

It was a nice rally cry, sir.

WHITE

Only if we mean it.

HUGHES

Or can even pull it off.
(off White's look)
We have no clue, no leads--

CARL

I might have a--

HUGHES

Do I need to remind us we have a
new administration coming in?

WHITE

The cowboy B movie star? Who can forget him? More white hat approach to an antique Red Scare.

HUGHES

He won by a landslide.

WHITE

Don't blow a load on my desk, Hughes. We know Reagan's your guy.

HUGHES

C'mon! Carter has so shit the bed!

WHITE

But he did understand the appeal of Communism to the hopeless. Reagan will only make a boogeyman out of it. Kennedy pulled the same shit, and led us straight into 'Nam.

HUGHES

The Soviet Union--

CARL

--isn't China isn't Iran isn't here.

WHITE

Tattoo that inside your eyelids, gentlemen, as we course correct into willful political misdirection.

HUGHES

How about we wait to see IF Reagan is really that guy?

WHITE

MY WIFE drove those women to the airport. *Eleven hours later, they were raped and shot in the head.*

That sobering fact shuts down all debate --

WHITE (CONT'D)

Carl, you're on leads then.
Hughes, you can-- jerk Reagan's dick -*picks*- as he appoints them.

Carl clears his throat, suppressing a laugh. Hughes will not soon forget that.

WHITE (CONT'D)
 All press runs through me.
Dismissed.

EXT. GRAVESITE - MORNING

Carl studies the gravesite near the airport, notes the planes; one, wheels down, coming in.

The isolation of the spot. The noise overhead.

And the barrio of shacks and lean-to's in the distance.

Hunh. He walks towards it now.

EXT. BARRIO - MOMENTS LATER

Poverty in all directions punctuated by malnutrition and addiction. THE PEOPLE avoid Carl's gaze and trajectory.

He aims himself at a VENDOR selling snacks. The Vendor pretends he doesn't see Carl, standing right at his stall!

Carl looks down, notices his embassy badge has fallen free of his suit pocket, swings from his neck. He tucks it back inside. Still, his clothes expose him in every way.

And so Carl pretends to shop --

CARL
 Is there anyone I could talk to if
 anyone would talk?

The Vendor is impressed with the discretion and candor and Spanish. He nods at a WOMAN SELLING SHAWLS.

She nods back, indicating, "okay."

Carl takes this in as the Vendor holds out TWO PACKS OF COOKIES --

CARL (CONT'D)
 One is fine.

Nope, take two. Carl pays - and walks them over to--

THE SHAWL SELLER sits in her stall. Carl offers her the cookies. She passes them back to her TEENAGE DAUGHTER, breast feeding an INFANT, TWO KIDS play at her feet in a makeshift kitchen inside the stall.

The Seller begins laying out shawls for him --

SHAWL SELLER

You come from the boneyard. And
stink of death.

CARL

My friends were killed there. All
four were raped.

SHAWL SELLER

Rape is what they do. Gave me a
grandchild.

Carl studies one boy, sucking on his cookie, now clutching
her skirt. He is getting nowhere with her 'til --

CARL

They were nuns. Missionaries. One
of them was my friend. She watched
them murder Romero.

That lands.

Her hands shake as she begins to lay out MORE SHAWLS, all
BLACKS and REDS --

Suddenly, OTHERS approach the stall. A flag has been raised.

SHAWL SELLER

We will tell you what we know. And
you will never come here again.

INT. - A RESTAURANT NEAR EMBASSY PLAZA - AFTERNOON

PUSH Carl for White's regular table. Hughes and another
diplomat, J. MARK DION (40s), dine with him. Dion has an
organic info-gathering gaze beneath an unassuming demeanor.

WHITE

Carl. *Sit.*

DION

(off his hesitation)

More people notice if you stand.

Carl sits. Dion nods, unassuming, back down in his plate.
White indicates they're all friends--

WHITE

Tell me.

CARL
They heard women singing then
screaming - then gunshots - around
nightfall.

DION
Singing?

CARL
That's what they said. It syncs up
with the autopsy near-time of death.

HUGHES
No one thought to investigate?

A tone-deaf, callous question--

WHITE
Hughes, Carl's has the floor. Eat
a flauta.
(to Carl)
That it?

CARL
I think they used road blocks -
and, maybe, a check point. One of
the vendors said traffic stalled to
a crawl all afternoon. He
remembers their van because--

EXT. - A CONGESTED MARKET STREET - LATE AFTERNOON FLASHBACK

Dorothy abandons the drivers seat of A WHITE VAN to buy four
sodas from a CART VENDOR. Horns blaring behind them. Jean
in the van, riding shotgun, yells out--

JEAN
Dorothy! It's moving!!

DOROTHY
Jean, an inch is not moving!
(to the vendor in Spanish)
'Cold as you got. The weather is like
a Mother Earth hot flash today.

The Soda Vendor laughs passing her sodas.

INT. - A RESTAURANT NEAR EMBASSY PLAZA - AFTERNOON

WHITE

Sounds like Dorothy. By the way,
your buddy, Mac the Knife, beat us
to the crime scene apparently. The
Vatican paid a steep price to keep
his photos off market.

(to Dion)

Their missionary fundraising has
seized up overnight.

HUGHES

Don't fuck with the Pope's money.

WHITE

The Catholics do a lot for these
countries.

DION

But you don't see their Swiss Guard on
the ground here managing war crimes.

WHITE

There is that.

CARL

Sir, I mostly came to tell you that
they found the van.

WHITE

(bounding up)

Shit, Carl! We could fill in gaps
in the car!

(to Dion)

Forgive us, Mark. Enjoy lunch.

EXT. EL SALVADOR - ROAD - DAY

Carl, White, Hughes and a CREW OF LOCALS and EMBASSY STAFF
swarm a BURNT OUT VAN. Char and blistered paint reveal the
van was subjected to a most vicious fire.

SCORCHED HYMNALS, CLOTHING, TORN UP SUITCASES are splayed out
beside the van. FORENSIC TECHS going through it.

HUGHES

We've got hymnals, clothes,
rosaries. And, oddly, some
American contraband: band-aids,
toothpaste, Nyquil--

Carl tries looking surprised.

WHITE

I want the guns. Bullet casings.
Army issued serial numbers.

HUGHES

Then I would redirect us back to
the crime scene.

WHITE

This is also a crime scene.
Indulge me.

Hughes heads off. White and Carl discover Mac taking
pictures of them and the scene from a grove of trees --

WHITE (CONT'D)

Handle that.

CARL

On it.

EXT. - GROVE OF TREES - MOMENTS LATER

POV: Carl walks directly at Mac spoiling his shots --

CARL

Who's tipping you off?

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC

Now, I matter? You sod!

CARL

Mac. I can live with mosquitoes -
when they don't spread disease.

Fuck this. Mac is livid, packing up --

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC

Well, I am syphilitic with
Capitalism. Go, USA!

Carl nabs Mac's camera, swings it repeatedly into a tree!!

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC (CONT'D)

You bloody fucking pirate!

CARL

I will have you tailed, tapped, and
tormented until you're paranoid by
default -or- you can run all your
intel by me, starting now.

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC
Wank off, Yank. And you're paying
for the camera.

CARL
No, MacHeath. We are America with
war dead today. Fuck around and find
out what soft power can do.

Carl leaves the Scotsman savage but shook.

As he swaggers back to White, nodding approval towards him,
he sees --

Hughes by the burnt-out van pondering Carl's half-charred
duffle bag before--

Placing it neatly in an evidence bag. FUCK. FUCK. FUCK.

INT. - CARL'S APARTMENT - SAN SALVADOR - NIGHT

Carl and Molly lie spent on the floor. Did not make it to
the bedroom this time. Carl grabs his cigs which she hates.

MOLLY
Shit. So did he say something?

CARL
Hughes can barely remember my name,
let alone work out my monogram.

MOLLY
But what if we got them killed?

CARL
Over toothbrushes and Bactine?!
Goddammit, I need an angle in here.

MOLLY
(beat) So I know a guy.

CARL
We all know a guy.

MOLLY
But I really do. And he knows
everyone. And we used to fuck.

CARL
This is oddly turning me on.

MOLLY

He's a total shit, Carl, but--
spectacular cock.

(off his look)

Calm down, you're good. He camps
out at Barmarisol. And he is super
bad news. He's also ex-Mossad.

CARL

So a mercenary.

She nods.

CARL (CONT'D)

And, just like that: full boner again.

MOLLY

Jesus, you diplomats are juveniles.

He pounces on her like a teenager further proving her point.
But, life during wartime, you get it where you can.

EXT. SAN SALVADOR - DUSK

Carl walks through the street, past GROUPS OF MEN WITH GUNS
slung over their shoulders.

Feels like all eyes follow him.

EXT. BARMARISOL - NIGHT

Carl squares up to the façade of a dilapidated bar. A low
din of music emanates from inside.

INT. BARMARISOL - CONTINUOUS

The music is much louder now, but no one pays it much mind.
It covers the sound of Radio Venceremos. A group of OLD MEN
cluster around a small radio to listen intently.

They all give Carl stink eye as he heads to the bar. A guy
nearest the radio moves to turn it off--

CARL

Leave it. I prefer real news.

A few eyebrows raise as he nods for a beer from the BARKEEP
who obliges him - and settles on a barstool to listen with
the old men. Doesn't take long--

IDAN (O.S.)
Your Spanish is worse than mine.

A SCRUFFIAN now sits near Carl. Like out of the shadows, this guy. His name is IDAN (30s, handsome, Israeli) --

CARL
Actually, it's not.

Idan laughs. Flags the barkeeps for shots --

IDAN
(speaking English now)
I have six languages.

CARL
And a mythological penis, I hear.

IDAN
Ha. So you are Molly's new shag.
Why does she tell her men this?

CARL
Connoisseurs like to brag.

Idan roars with laughter. Flaming shots arrive. Idan downs his, fire and all.

IDAN
So now we tag-team the best brothels
in Central America.

Carl lights a cig off his shot before tossing his back --

CARL
Or drive through the jungles to
find Radio Vencéremos.

That straightens Idan's spine--

IDAN
You, Americans. All fucking, no
foreplay.

CARL
I'll finger you on the drive.

Carl signals the barkeep, "Four more." Idan likes this guy.

IDAN
Sadly, you give me too much credit.

CARL
Don't play me for a dumbass, or
you'll ruin our good thing.

IDAN
We have a thing now?

CARL
BIG thing.

Idan howls.

IDAN
I like braggarts.

CARL
And I like tour guides who drink.

Their laughter drowns out the music -and radio- in the bar.

EXT. BARMARISOL - LATER

Idan pisses against a wall. Carl leans against another, and, truth be told, it is propping him up. These guys are soused.

IDAN
You don't want to see it?

CARL
You know what I want to see.

IDAN
You don't know what you're asking.

CARL
Except that I do.

IDAN
You could lose your job.

CARL
Or my life.

Idan turns to him, somewhat sobered. And slaps the shit out of Carl. Now Carl is also somewhat sober. They eyeball each other. Half-Mexican-Israeli standoff. Then--

IDAN
Why? Out with it.

CARL
The junta crossed the line with
these church women they killed.

IDAN

And they will kill you on sight just for saying it out loud.

CARL

American civilians are the hardline for us. Missionaries are the hardline for the Vatican. And your radio pirates are suddenly swimming in good will by the very nature of being on the other side.

He sizes Carl up--

IDAN

Well. Boy scouts are shitty lays anyhow. But it will take me time to broker this. Be ready in a heartbeat.

(off his nod)

Come. I'll drunk drive you home.

He crosses his fingers for good luck. Carl laughs. It's been a most productive bar crawl.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Idan sits in the drivers seat with Carl beside him. They pass his turn.

CARL

Idan. You just missed my turn.

IDAN

I did.

He reaches past Carl's legs for the glove box. A PISTOL catches Carl's eyes inside, but Idan rummages for something else: a BLACK SACK. He tosses it in Carl's lap -

IDAN (CONT'D)

Put it on.

CARL

Jesus Christ.

IDAN

I said be ready in a heartbeat.
Put it on.

After a beat, Carl tugs the sack over his head. Idan produces a gun from his person, nuzzles Carl's cheek with it.

IDAN (CONT'D)

You peak, the bag fills with your
brains, and I ass rape your corpse.
Part of me hopes that you peek.

EXT. EL SALVADOR - SAME

We follow the truck out of Carl's neighborhood towards the wet mountain countryside looming like a reckoning.

DEEP JUNGLE

Idan's truck slows at a mangled end of road. He kills the engine, walks to the passenger door, tugs Carl from his seat.

IDAN

Caravan now. Hold my shoulders.
Once we get deeper in, you can take
off the hood.

Carl reaches blindly for Idan. They Congo-line into the--

TROPICAL FOREST

The sound of forest things and dripping water keep Carl company as Idan leads him over gnarled roots, past overgrown vines, and the trunks of ancient trees.

Finally they stop. Idan nods for Carl to go back under the hood. As he does, Idan moves past and reaches for a fallen palm frond.

He tugs the frond away to reveal a jagged piece of sheet metal, part of a large structure hidden in the overgrowth.

Idan bangs on the sheet metal in code.

After a moment the sheet metal slides aside. Isela stares blankly at Idan and Carl, an automatic weapon on her hip.

ISELA

What the fuck is this, Idan?

IDAN

He is help.

ISELA

I didn't order help.

IDAN

Just the kind of friend I am.

ISELA
 (to Carl)
 Speak.

CARL
 My name is C--

ISELA
 (to Idan)
 American. State or CIA?

CARL
 State.

ISELA
 Your profession legitimizes
 everything we fight to defeat.

CARL
 But when they come for our people,
 we are on the same team.

For a second, it looks like she might shoot both their faces off. Until she turns, and disappears inside the structure.

INT. RADIO VENCEREMOS - CONTINUOUS

The THAP of heavy raindrops sounds on the shelter's corrugated tin roof. Gaspar is focused on their transmission console. He takes in Carl, scowls, goes back to his work --

ISELA
 Stop with the looks. We are moving
 anyway.

Idan helps himself to booze.

Carl fixates on Gaspar, fiddling with his tech --

CARL
 Your oscillator-- see? It isn't
 connected to your driver.

Carl walks past Isela to connect two elements of the radio. The machine whines and screeches awake --

CARL (CONT'D)
 And you'll want to replace that
 condenser, too, but, for now--

-- and, on cue, the signal clears.

CARL (CONT'D)
 That should hold. For a day.
 (off all their looks)
 My dad and I built ham radios for
 fun. What?

ISELA
 (to Idan)
 Give us some privacy, yeah?

IDAN
 Play nice.

Idan steps outside. With the booze.

CARL
 You have our attention. You
 frighten D'Aubission. And your
 intel is good. But it's chicken
 scratch at best.

GASPAR
 What are you offering?

CARL
 The first question in diplomacy is
 "What do you want?"

Gaspar pulls a blade from his belt. Isela stays his hand --

CARL (CONT'D)
 The nuns. The Americans. They
 were killed, covered up.

ISELA
 Welcome to Salvador. You're one of
 us now, America.

CARL
 That's exactly my thought - and
 D'Aubission's considerable mistake.
 Whether he ordered it or not, his
 jackals are too wild.

ISELA
 Do you understand what hypocrites we
 would be to raise questions -to ring
 funeral bells- for American nuns?

CARL
 Even when it's the thing
 D'Aubission most needs to
 disappear?

(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

The man who makes everything -and everyone- disappear. We need him - and his jackals- making mistakes. You need better intel. And I have it in spades.

GASPAR

Isela! He would never risk exposing America to us!

CARL

I have an informant who was in the room with D'Abuission. When they drew straws. To assassinate Óscar Romero.

Okay, that's a big get.

ISELA

It is a rumor.

CARL

It is not. And he wants to be heard.

GASPAR

(disbelieving)

Let Idan bring him then.

CARL

Not without me. and only in exchange for intel on the nuns. Shake the Cubans, the Nicaraguans. Wake the entire FMLN.

GASPAR

See?! He is just more Americans striking deals for themselves!!

ISELA

No death squad officer would do such a thing.

CARL

Who do you have to be to shoot children in the face? *Even jackals tire of war.*

Carl looks deep into Isela's soul, a stand-off of sorts.

ISELA

Bring me this jackal, and we will burn the airwaves for your nuns.

EXT. SAN SALVADOR - BARRIO - PRE-DAWN

The sun is just bruising the night sky as morning fog seems to cough up the outskirts of San Salvador ahead. Idan's truck idles beside a copse of overgrown foliage.

INT. TRUCK - SAME

Idan tugs the hood roughly from Carl's head.

IDAN

What did you promise them? Besides this informant?

CARL

(not playing)

Why do they trust you? Playing all sides?

IDAN

Don't ask schoolboy questions! You need to locate and convince your asset!

CARL

And I will.

IDAN

Says the schoolboy handing the guy his own death warrant. Fuck me, I hate schoolboys! You get everyone killed.

Truck in gear, he roars ahead.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - ATRIUM - DAY

TIGHT ON Jimmy Carter's face. It tilts to the side, then falls from frame. After a beat (and a countdown)...

MAN (O.S.)

On three... one, two - threeee.

...It is replaced by Ronald Reagan's rictus grin.

WIDER TO see Carl rush past the two MEN swapping presidential portraits out. Carl slows, takes this in, then hurries onto--

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - UTILITY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carl approaches a door labeled RECORDS, reaches for the knob but it won't turn. Gives it a harder shake, locked tight --

HUGHES (O.S.)
Increased security.

Carl turns to find Hughes watching him.

HUGHES (CONT'D)
New president, new times. Saddle
up, Rabbi.

CARL
Just pushing visas. I'll go proper
channels then.

Hughes nods, new suspicion in his eyes.

HUGHES
White's asking to see us, by the way.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - WHITE'S OFFICE - DAY

White glares at the new portrait of Reagan on his wall.

WHITE
Reagan and Al Haig are so far up my
ass they're chewing my dinner for
me. *I need answers.*

HUGHES
There's considerable evidence the
nuns were subversives. Dissidents.

WHITE
Oh, there is not. And I will
bounce anyone home for championing
that crap. Gettinger, where are we
with leads?

CARL
I-- uhm...

WHITE
Jesus! Do better, you fuckwits.
Both of you. OUT.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - BULLPEN - DAY

Carl approaches Molly at her desk --

CARL
Remember the keys you hid from me?
I need you to unhide them, please.

She coldly hands him a memo--

CARL (CONT'D)
Who inventories supply closets?

MOLLY
The Reagan Administration.

CARL
Looking for what?

MOLLY
Communists, for starters. We are
fucked. And Hughes is in charge of
the fucking, apparently. If you
own a copy of Marx, burn it stat.

CARL
Well, White is in charge of Hughes.
And I need something from Records
that will help White tremendously.

MOLLY
Or fuck me over endlessly.

CARL
You've never complained before.

She swats him hard. He writes a name down for her anyway,
and delivers it with puppy dog eyes.

MOLLY
You're gonna owe me.

CARL
I live to owe you, Goddess.

She smiles flatly, quite impervious to him.

INT. RADIO VENCEREMOS - NIGHT

Gaspar sits behind the venceremos microphone. Isela finger
counts down from three to one, flips a switch and a red light
illuminates on the broadcasting device.

GASPAR

Good evening. There have been a thousand cuts to the spirit of our nation. None have cut so deeply as the execution of Archbishop Romero.

MONTAGE TO:

INT. D'AUBUISSON'S CHAMBERS - SAME

D'Aubuisson sparks a hand rolled cigarette with his blow torch. The radio's reportage plays as he takes a deep drag.

D'AUBUISSON

Turn it up--

Killer reaches for the radio, twisting the volume dial.

GASPAR (V.O.)

Though many suspect his assassination was the work of Roberto D'Aubuisson and his rabid death dogs, the notion remains hearsay. *Until now.*

D'Aubuisson's rakes his desk with his lit blow torch!

INT. WORKMARISOL BAR - SAME

Idan and others huddle around their contraband radio, drinking in silence, listening -

GASPAR (V.O.)

We will present evidence soon from D'Aubuisson's inner circle.

Idan stops mid-drink, stares at the radio.

GASPAR (V.O.)

That not only was he responsible, he had his men draw straws for the honor of slaughtering our beloved Romero.

IDAN

Mother. Fucker.

INT. D'AUBUISSON'S CHAMBERS - SAME

D'Aubuisson snuffs his cigarette out on his smoking desk, missing his ashtray by a mile.

He then murders the radio with said ashtray barely missing Killer's head. Killer remains inscrutable.

KILLER

Sir.

D'AUBUISSON

You're going to be so busy your armpits will reek of slaughter.

KILLER

Sir.

Killer, stone-faced, follows him out.

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Grime, dirt, and Salvadoran sweat slough off Carl, his body limp in his bathtub. Almost dozing - when -

A SOUND, not ordinary. His eyes flash open.

Again. *Fuck*. Floorboards. He looks to the door.

Goddammit, ajar. And worse. Maybe a shadow? He looks around for a weapon.

There's a plumber's friend. And a straight-edge razor. Fine. Plans matter in El Salvador.

He rises from the tub, one foot out of the tub when--

IDAN BLOWS THROUGH THE DOOR!

CARL

Jesus FUCK!

Idan nabs the bath curtain and, in kill-skill maneuvers, tangles Carl in it, and kicks him back in the tub.

UNDERWATER

Shower curtain, Carl, and thrashing bath water until -

Carl emerges sputtering from the water facing a Baretta 9mm.

Idan strokes Carl's beard with the gun.

IDAN

Straws.

(beat)

(MORE)

IDAN (CONT'D)

I step outside two minutes and you tell them D'Aubuisson drew straws?!

CARL

Cuz he did. It's called earning trust.

IDAN

You gave them an atom bomb when they barely earned a scalpel! FUCK!

Carl eyes the straight edge.

CARL

Idan. You're overreacting.

Idan sweeps up the straight edge - and now razor and pistol meet Carl from two angles-

IDAN

And you're underperforming. But I'm going to let you live a bit longer - to watch the body count you've ramped up.

CARL

They killed nuns.

IDAN

They kill children, too! Or must they only be American to be interesting to you?

He moves to pistol whip Carl, but Carl holds firm--

CARL

This forces America off the sidelines. Optics we cannot ignore. And I would think an Israeli could understand that: how a Pearl Harbor incident drives us past the gridlocked to the gates of another Auschwitz.

IDAN

Oh, yes, always at the ready with the Yankee Doodle Dandy. You have fucked this with your school boy spy games! *Watch!*

He paces now, wild with rage. A deep breath then--

IDAN (CONT'D)

If I have to kill you, I will kill you.

And he goes. Carl relaxes his bravado, scared shitless.

EXT. EL SALVADOR - BARRIO - NIGHT

Chickens and night animals mewl as Killer moves in deadly silence through a desolate barrio.

Killer approaches a small Baharaque and finds Alvaro rolling a cigarette on the building's porch. Alvaro looks up from his tobacco, a mere nod that Killer is there, then blankly returns to the cigarette.

ALVARO

So he's decided it's me then?

Alvaro continues tightening his cigarette.

ALVARO (CONT'D)

Does it ever bother you? To be another man's limbs?

Alvaro sparks his cigarette, the glow illuminating his face.

ALVARO (CONT'D)

We only serve because the alternative is worse. Next time, maybe, he comes for y--

POP. A firecracker blast from the muzzle of Killer's pistol sprays Alvaro's grey matter on the wall behind him.

ALVARO'S BROTHER (O.S.)

Alvaro?

Alvaro's body slumps to the side as Killer enters the Baharaque door.

POP. A flash illuminates the inside of the house followed by a THUD.

TIME LAPSE TO:

EXT. EL SALVADOR - BARRIO - MORNING

Alvaro's corpse gathers flies. A wild pig eats his bare arm.

WHITE (V.O.)

Rumors persist regarding Roberto D'Aubuisson's involvement in the assassination of Oscar Romero.

FLASH. Alvaro immortalized.

The next FLASH startles the pig off. MacHeath enters frame, camera in hand --

Takes a closer photo of Alvaro's death grimace --

WHITE (V.O.)

The implication that an ally of the government of the United States of America would have a hand in that atrocity is, quite simply, preposterous.

MacHeath enters the open door of the house. MORE FLASHES within, like the gun going off.

Two pigs with bloody snouts run out, squealing.

WHITE (V.O.)

Conjecture such as this has no basis in verifiable reality, and it presents an enormous risk to your efforts. We have faith that your esteemed team are pursuing every possible avenue related to the identity of Romero's actual assassin.

Carl enters the frame, studies Alvaro's corpse --

Gets a bit closer and the stench wrenches him back fast. He covers his mouth --

WHITE (V.O.)

And that you're making every effort to insure the discretion of your employees.

MacHeath returns to the porch, swatting at flies --

The two men lock eyes. This is something new in El Salvador, and they know it --

WHITE (V.O.)

Everyone in Washington eagerly anticipates confirmation that the investigation into the deaths of those American churchwomen is proceeding as planned.

PULL them further from the house for cigarettes and shock. The early sun rising like a cannon ball in the sky.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - WHITE'S OFFICE - DAY

White continues reading a CABLE aloud to Hughes and Dion, seated on the other side of his desk.

WHITE

"President Reagan and I both understand the enormous pressure you must be under at the moment, and as such have dispatched Frederic Chapin to step in and assist. Best wishes, Jeanne Kirkpatrick."

White sets the memo on his desk with precision, but he is red faced with fury.

DION

They want a facelift that fits their forgone conclusion.

WHITE

That Socialists are so bad we should get in bed with Fascists?

HUGHES

It's not socialism, it's communism. We know the Soviets are here. Dominoes of these backwards countries could topple straight up to Texas!

WHITE

That was our excuse in Korea - and Vietnam. But Communism evolves into facsimiles of Stalin; it's a place marker for tyranny and eating its young. Socialism is different.

HUGHES

Goddammit, the Russians--

WHITE

The Russians. Have you even met Russians? They're not terribly likable unless they're drunk off their asses, and then no one will follow them further than the bar!

Dion guffaws. But Hughes can't let it go--

HUGHES

Reagan, Haig, they're not asking for truth--

WHITE

"Sir."

HUGHES

Sir. They're asking for something
that could double for truth.

White stares at Hughes, speechless. Then--

WHITE

I refuse to lie for the political
convenience of the newly-formed
Reagan administration.

The door cracks open, Carl peeks in.

CARL

Sir. You wanted to see me?

WHITE

Hughes, out. Rabbi, sit.

Hughes leers at him, goes.

WHITE (CONT'D)

Reagan's lit up by the radio
rumors. We need to know who they
are, and who's feeding them
information.

CARL

I'm working every angle imaginable--

WHITE

So you're fucking me, too.

CARL

Sir?

WHITE

You bring me this raffle for
Romero's head story, suggest
feeding it to Resistance Radio, and
now its blaring stateside? Get us
on the same page pronto - or we'll
define "sedition" for you.

Fuck.

CARL

I--

WHITE

I'm not asking if you've made direct contact. That might actually be treason. *Are we clear, Carl?* We are solely focused on justice for nuns.

Okay, well-- shit.

CARL

So my family vacations in Florida. Not far from the swamps. 'Fuck if I know why. But, one summer, these two kids? They go missing. So the authorities haul these antique cannons to the swamp and fire them off 'round the clock.

WHITE

And eventually the bodies float up.

DION

It's called dragging the swamp, kid.

CARL

'Cuz the sound vibrations shake everything loose. To rise to the surface. So I figured, maybe, pirate radio could work like that.

Both men exchange looks, impressed, horrified--

WHITE

Carl--

CARL

Sir. I just came from a crime scene with MacHeath. Two death squad officers. Clean bullet holes right through their skulls. I think they're starting to turn on themselves.

WHITE

Son. I'm not sure I wanted you this smart.

CARL

But, sir, the Salvadorans want the truth. We want the truth. *And we already know roughly what that truth is.*

WHITE

But the "we" here at State just changed political hands! Truth has become an ideological problem for all of us.

He hands Carl the telegram from Kirkpatrick--

WHITE (CONT'D)

Read.

Dion and White exchange looks. It's a death spiral now.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - MOLLY'S DESK - DAY

Molly refuses to look up from her paperwork, despite Carl looming over her--

MOLLY

Not now, Carl. I'm busy.

CARL

What if I promise it's work related, sex-related, with some light espionage thrown-in?

She looks up, thoroughly intrigued.

EXT. SAN SALVADOR - EVENING

Molly and Carl walk through the humid evening air towards a plaza of restaurants and bars --

MOLLY

Did I just see Idan?

CARL

You did. *Don't look back.*

MOLLY

Is he following us?

CARL

He is.

MOLLY

Okay, I am not down for a tag shag with you assholes.

CARL

Definitely not, but I suspect Idan is.

MOLLY
Idan would fuck farm animals in a
pinch.

CARL
True.

MOLLY
So what is this plan?

CARL
Several plans. Starting with drinks.
(off her look)
Molly. I am not into men, but he
is, and you are, and that is
proving useful to State.

MOLLY
Patriot-tits up!

She squeezes his ass. He squeezes hers back, and steers her
for a sexy hole-in-the-wall where MARIACHIS PLAY.

Idan enters frame, intrigued and amused.

INT. MARIPOSA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

This is as close as San Salvador gets to urban-chic
nightlife, substitute Mariachis for a jazz combo.

FIND CARL, MOLLY, & IDAN at a corner booth, pitchers of Tic
Tack and tamarind flowing. Empty Pilsener bottles, too.

IDAN
Just say. Whose is bigger?

MOLLY
Not about bigger, 'bout prettier.

IDAN
I love a beauty contest. La
Señorita and the Six Shooters.

CARL
SEX shooters.

Idan howls. Carl pushes a shot at him. He slams it back,
wipes his thirsty lips--

IDAN
Show us a tittie.

MOLLY

If the Mariachis know Donna Summer,
maybe I will dance.

IDAN

I have Bad Girls at my place. Not
bootleg.

MOLLY

But you don't have that bartender.

CARL

I'll grab the Mariachis, a fresh
round, and a pee.

IDAN

Hurry up, a beauty contest awaits!

Carl heads off, revealing he's not as looped as they are.

INT. MARIPOSA RESTAURANT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Carl scans the tiny bathroom for a window, slightly ajar,
above the nearest toilet. He checks a stall, locks the door,
then climbs up to the window.

EXT. SAN SALVADOR - STREET - NIGHT

Carl moves quickly, almost giddily, down the dark street.

A SUPPLY TRUCK passes slowly. Carl leaps on for a ride.

INT. LAZARO'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Carl steps into a dark, smoky bar. Through the dim light he
spots Killer, skulking with a drink in back.

Carl approaches the bar, signals for two Pilseners. He turns
to find Killer is jaw-deep in his face.

KILLER

Follow me. Now.

Carl follows Killer into the --

BACK ROOM

Where Killer quickly, roughly SLAMS Carl against the wall,
forearm in his throat.

KILLER
How did you find me?

CARL
We keep files on the squads.

KILLER
They will machete me apart then
toss me in steel drums of acid.

CARL
They might. But we won't. Listen,
you've already jumped.

The sad trap of his life pressurizes his insides.

KILLER
They are talking about me. On the
radio.

CARL
You want to be heard? I set it up.

KILLER
I killed a man -a friend- and his
brother - because you opened your
mouth.

Jesus. Carl has seen his actual handiwork.

CARL
--You came to us. I'm following
your lead. My boss is fuming.

KILLER
The radio man. He doesn't know.

CARL
They want to know. They want you
on their radio. Speaking truths.

KILLER
And what does that get me?

CARL
A big sonic boom that rocks the whole
U.S.A. It's a pretty big upper hand.

Killer likes the sound of that, releases Carl to find his
breath again.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - ATRIUM - DAY

FREDERIC CHAPIN, 40s, stands upright beneath Reagan's portrait like there's a lightning rod up his ass. His affable smile is designed to put victims at ease.

CHAPIN

He looks good up there. Brings some order to the shit show, now, doesn't he?

WHITE

Or just brings more shit show. To be determined.

Walk & Talk them to Chapin's office --

CHAPIN

Bob. Secretary Haig wants our best foot forward on this.

WHITE

When has CIA been our best foot in matters of State?

CHAPIN

Since we lost Vietnam.

WHITE

CIA started 'Nam, Fred.

CHAPIN

Kennedy started 'Nam.

WHITE

Kennedy: also a shit show. I'd hoped Reagan might be different.

CHAPIN

Bob, give him a chance. All we need is a statement. Tell people the truth about the churchwomen.

WHITE

And what might that be?

CHAPIN

They were subversives. How else do we interpret the contraband found with their bodies?

WHITE

By not interpreting for starters.

Bob and Chapin slow in front of an empty office.

CHAPIN

They were aiding enemies of state.
Their deaths were tragic but not a
surprise given the tension here.

WHITE

How many wars have we worked, Fred?
The Church sides with victims.

CHAPIN

And has made plenty of their own.

WHITE

Goddammit. Why is the United
States of America supporting a
genocidal nun-killing junta?

CHAPIN

Because some things are bigger than
nuns. I hear your wife drove those
women to that airport. Maybe you're
too close on this, Bob.

(referring to the office)

This is me, I presume?

He enters the office, closes the door on Bob White.

EXT. SAN SALVADOR - NIGHT

Idan holds out a hood to Killer. Carl holds his in his hand.
Killer balks at it--

IDAN

And please also hand over the gun
in your boot.

Killer looks to Carl--

IDAN (CONT'D)

He follows the same rules you do.
And gave me a ripe case of blue
balls while doing it.

Killer snatches the hood. Idan heads for his ride, annoyed.

KILLER

I may have to kill him.

CARL

It would be quite the death match,
I assume.

IDAN
 (at the truck)
 Ladies. Let's put on our pretty
 hats, please, and walk into the
 jungle.

INT. RADIO VENCEREMOS - LATER

The radio set up has changed since the last visit. The dimensions of the space and arrangement of the hardware is entirely different.

Gaspar yanks the hoods off of Carl and Killer's heads. Carl clocks the different layout.

CARL
 It's different.

ISELA
 Always.
 (to Killer)
 You are the informant.

Isela gestures him to an empty chair and microphone.

ISELA (CONT'D)
 Sit. Your voice will be altered.
 (to Gaspar)
 Show him.

Gaspar demonstrates into Killer's mic; his voices reverbs with vocal distortion --

GASPAR
 Americans suck dicks.

Slight smile from Killer (a lot for Killer)--

IDAN
 I wish.

CARL
 Shit. Did not think of that.

ISELA
 Americans only think of themselves.
 (to Killer)
 The microphone is your friend.
 (her hand on his shoulder)
 By talking, people understand each
 other.

Isela turns to face Carl and Idan.

ISELA (CONT'D)
Salvadorans only. Wait in the brush.
The mosquitoes will keep you company.

EXT. RADIO VENCEREMOS - LATER

Carl and Idan toss their cigarettes when the lean-to's door shudders open and -

Killer steps out. Isela and Gaspar follow. There's a lightness to all of them, a communal understanding somehow. They've been through so much.

ISELA
His words exceed his looks.

CARL
You say what you wanted?

Killer owes Carl no answer.

CARL (CONT'D)
And me?

ISELA
You? Are not here.

Idan swallows a laugh. She turns to go--

CARL
Information about the churchwomen.
The guns used to kill them?

ISELA
Those guns are gone. Disappeared.

CARL
Disappeared where?

ISELA
To where guns go when they are
disappeared. Ask him.

CARL
No. I bring him; you give me intel
on the churchwomen.

ISELA
I don't do deals with Americans.

Idan laughs openly now. All the distraction that Killer needs to BREAK HIS ARM AND STEAL HIS WEAPON --

Idan writhes in pain on the ground.

IDAN
Holy FUUUUUUUUCK!!!

Killer trains his gun on Isela and Gaspar --

KILLER
Did you get what you want?

ISELA
This war is not over so no.

KILLER
But did we play our parts?

Idan's good hand goes for a knife on his person. Killer stomps on his other arm with his boot --

KILLER (CONT'D)
I am good to break both.

Idan settles down.

KILLER (CONT'D)
None of you are in control here.
This is the muscle of El Salvador.
So if we are nothing then why are
America and other countries swarming
to be here? All there is in the
world are things to trade. And still
stupid people get in the way of it.
Do you have information he wants?

ISELA
No.

CARL
Did you even bother to get it?

ISELA
No.

IDAN
Schoolboy errands! You punk!!

Killer grinds his heel on Idan's arm--

KILLER
You speak and only horseshit shits
out. Where are you even from, hey?

He grinds harder--

CARL

Israel.

KILLER

A postage stamp in a desert warring
over dead religions. At least, we
have coffee to trade!

(to Isela and Gaspar)

He brought you a deal. That you
took. And you give nothing for it?
*Do you not see -in your very
actions- how Salvador came to make
war with itself?*

He shoots Gaspar stone dead, a neat hole through the head.

ISELA

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

She cradles his skull pumping blood on her clothes --

KILLER

Now, you have paid.

Carl is stunned.

KILLER (CONT'D)

You will play my interview morning
and night for two weeks. And we
will see what that is worth.

(to Idan)

And you will help her bury her
brother. Since you caused his death.

(to Carl)

Get his keys. Now.

(to Isela)

And you. Don't let his death be a
waste or you are no sister.

He is the scariest thing she's ever seen.

INT. - IDAN'S JEEP - MOMENTS LATER

Killer drives. Carl sits in shock.

CARL

Was it your plan? To kill them?

KILLER

To kill him.

CARL

The voice of Radio Venceremos.

KILLER

Yes.

CARL

Why?

KILLER

Because my commander will be happy.
Americans will be happy. And El
Salvador still gets informed.

CARL

That-- that is not how it works!!

Killer slams on the brake. Carl nearly goes through the
windshield --

KILLER

How is it not diplomacy?

CARL

You shot him in the fucking head!

KILLER

And broke Israel's arm for the fun of
it.

CARL

He will come for you for that.

KILLER

He will come for YOU for that. He
respects me now.

CARL

You set me up!

KILLER

You set you up. I just took the
shot.

Killer now turns the gun on him --

KILLER (CONT'D)

Get out of the truck. And don't
piss your pants. Fear piss smells
wretched and just makes me angry.

EXT. TROPICAL FOREST - LATER

Carl walks in front of Killer through the uneven forest. His
eyes well up. It's hard to see.

KILLER

That's a--

Tree. FUCK. Carl can't take it; he spins on his captor.
Killer can see how brave he's trying and failing to be.

CARL

Why out here? So animals can eat me?

KILLER

Why do you care about the
churchwomen?

CARL

They believed in helping and got
raped for it. It haunts me, right?
Did Dorothy watch each murder?
Like I just did?!

KILLER

Depends on who was in charge.
Sometimes you just want it over.
Sometimes a way to have fun.

CARL

Fun? FUN!?!?!?

Killer cocks the hammer on his gun --

KILLER

Do you not understand this is war?
Even the radio girl. At best, it
just brushes your worlds.

CARL

--the scale of this-- it's numbing--

KILLER

The guns disappeared early. They
always do. It's disappointing, but
disappearing is proof that the
junta wanted them gone.

CARL

You mean they were targeted?

KILLER

Probably.

CARL

Why?

KILLER

They are offering too much hope.

CARL
And they raped them because--

KILLER
They could.

Killer now extends the gun to Carl. Carl doesn't understand.

KILLER (CONT'D)
You don't know how to shoot. You must.

Carl cannot fathom what is happening--

CARL
You're not going to-- ?!

KILLER
Take it.

Carl doesn't want it. Not ever. He's spinning, distraught, processing none of it. Too fast, too much--

CARL
But why? *Why would you put me through that?!*

KILLER
You're outside it until you're not.
Now take the gun.
(beat)
Or I use it.

Finally, Carl takes it.

CARL
All I could think about was my mom.

KILLER
Yes.

Carl hunches over, sobbing, gun hanging in his hand.

Killer watches, waits. It's a hazing he knows all too well.

INT. WHITE'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Mary-Ann watches from the door frame. Bob aims a thousand-mile stare at the NY Times crossword puzzle.

MARY-ANN
Even ambassadors need sleep.

WHITE

Five letter word for "Surrender."

MARY-ANN

Wives.

A meaningful chuckle. A moment between them then--

WHITE

Haig's up my ass. It's not pretty.

MARY-ANN

And still he runs back to work.

WHITE

They want me to lie. I can't do it!

MARY-ANN

Oh, the things we can't do, Ambassador White. Everything here, weighed down with purpose, with raw calculation and engineered etiquette. Dinner party convos as code. Fork to the left, gun on the right. Miss Manners as Jean LeCarré. I practice authentic smiles in my sleep.

WHITE

Mary-Ann, please don't make this about you.

MARY-ANN

Darling, I haven't been anywhere near the surface of my own skin for two years now. We go to bed listening to gunfire and shrieking in the streets then congratulate ourselves on patriotic duty. I know the talking points before I know what I actually think. But I made a friend in that nun. She was funny. And refused to let me be just another diplomat's wife. Dorothy, my Dorothy -not yours- she said, "For whatever reason, movies and shopping were taken from us. From me by the Church, and you by the State." That woman knew I needed a friend here. She knew I was a gunshot or martini away from irredeemable alcoholic. And, still, I put on that brooch, this dinner, more rouge. Smiling at men who are murdering little children out there! Serving them canapés and finger croissants.

(MORE)

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)

They raped my friend -who saw me!- out of my depths, pretending to have a spine here. Clinging to the arm of my husband like he was the last moments of civilization we have left in the world. They shot her and her friends in the head. Did she watch them be raped, Bob? Or did she go first? Because, you know, she would have hated going first - leaving any of those women in blind torment. And you talk to me about things that you cannot do?! *All we do here is lie.*

WHITE

Mary-Ann. I'll take us home.

MARY-ANN

Robert. What is home after this?
Who do we even be with our children?

The things breaking between them. Ice shelves collapsing into a dead sea. He is shredded; she's exhausted--

MARY-ANN (CONT'D)

It's "faith."

WHITE

Wh-- what?

MARY-ANN

A five letter word for "Surrender."

She goes.

ANGLE ON White puzzling his crossword world anew.

EXT. TROPICAL FOREST - NIGHT

BANG!

The loud blast of a gun shakes trees and sends bats breezing over the skyline. Carl aims at a tree, thirty yards away.

KILLER

Shoot between breaths. Like a stutter disrupting a sentence.

Carl tries again. **BANG.** Killer laughs.

KILLER (CONT'D)

So. Not a natural.

Carl hands the gun to Killer, who takes aim and -- *POW!* --the bullet shreds the tree.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Keep the gun. *And practice.*

He heads for the truck. Carl considers the heavy metal in his hands.

EXT. SAN SALVADOR - SAME

Killer walks through the darkened streets of the city, the changed yet gravelly sound of his voice emanates dimly from inside buildings he passes --

KILLER (V.O.)
(via radio)
There is no liberty on either side of it. We all point one finger with the remaining three aimed at ourselves.

INT. D'AUBUISSON'S CHAMBERS - SAME

D'Aubuisson seethes at the sound of Killer's voice echoes from a NEW radio.

KILLER (V.O.)
D'Aubuisson wishes he was important.
Terror makes him someone he is not.
Why else does he fetishize killing?

INT. MARISOL BAR - SAME

Idan -in a cast- listens to Killer's testimony.

KILLER (V.O.)
And the rebels use us as deftly as the government uses them.
Oligarchs insist they are on the Christian side of things.
Christians insist God has no hand in it. But there are no heroics anywhere. No savior communists or redeeming junta.

INT. - CHAPIN'S OFFICE - SAME

Chapin sits listening. HIS MALE SECRETARY, a sinister, officious-looking company man, translates in English lowly.

KILLER (V.O.)

(via radio)

And when all is lost, Rebels AND
Government, simply reach out for
more. Recruiting our children to
pay the high price of war. Widow
makers, orphans. We are a
Motherland to the stillborn. It
only depends on what deceiver
speaks when and how violently.

Chapin grows grimmer by the word.

INT. RADIO VENCEREMOS - DAY

Isela sits by the broadcasting equipment. She is hollowed to
the core of her being, wearing sensible clothes still but all
black. She listens as if every hearing delivers deeper
levels of meaning --

KILLER (V.O.)

There are no sides. Only people in
varied states of survival. Most of
us just waiting to die.

She flicks the RED LIGHT off and we --

SNAP TO

EXT. SAN SALVADOR CLEARING - NIGHT

Carl practices firing. His aim is improving.

INT. D'AUBUISSON'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Killer's flinty gaze is undisturbed by D'Aubuisson.

D'AUBUISSON

Tell me again, while this betrayal
still broadcasts, how you ended
this Radio Venceremos?

KILLER

I tracked Alvaro and his brother to
their meeting. Killed the radio
man first. Followed Alvaro home.

D'AUBUISSON

Then why does this broadcast
continue to play? For nearly two
weeks! What is my proof?

KILLER
That the same broadcast continues
to play.

D'AUBUISSON
Sir.

KILLER
Sir.

D'AUBUISSON
So there are others then?

KILLER
Leaks? Or radio men?

D'AUBUISSON
If you weren't so skilled at
killing--

KILLER
I'm clear on my value to you.

D'AUBUISSON
Be clear there's an end to it also.

Killer nods.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Assemble the squad leaders tonight.

INT. WHITE'S OFFICE - DAY

White dictates a cable to HIS SECRETARY as she types.

WHITE
In my remarks to the press, I have
followed the guidance of the State
Department to the letter. However,
the evidence we have is that the
Salvadoran government has made no
serious effort to investigate the
killings of the American churchwomen.
(beat)
I will take no part in a cover-up
suggesting otherwise.

She looks up. A grave moment between them.

WHITE (CONT'D)
It's okay, Shirley. I'll put in a
good word. Promise.

Her eyes fill with tears. He clears his throat, nods her back to her task, turns away --

WHITE (CONT'D)
Conclude with "These women were decent, committed, and true. And deserve better as America citizens."

Bob looks out the window at a world he will leave. Shirley's shoulders quake with suppressed sobbing as he does.

EXT. FIRING RANGE - DAY

NATIONAL GUARDSMEN at target practice. A YOUNG RECRUIT struggles to load his magazine. Killer approaches.

KILLER
Aye, *fuck*. You ever touch one of these before?

The Recruit is pissing his pants scared of this guy.

Killer cuts in, deftly moves through the motions, demonstrating proper technique for the load. He positions the boy --*no older than sixteen*-- gestures for him to fire. The rounds scatter, but mostly hit the target 100 yards away.

Killer is impressed.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Practice loading. You don't leave this range 'til you're faster than me.

The kid nods.

Killer continues down the line, adjusting shooters. In between loud reports, his attention is drawn to a group of GUARDSMEN laughing. Eduardo leads the conversation.

Killer strolls by, keeping his eyes on the recruits. The conversation is muffled, but we pick up a few words --

EDUARDO
Word is they were crying like little children, except this one nun bitch, singing, saying Romero and Jesus were watching.

Killer continues on, taking note.

EXT. TRAINING CAMP - DUSK

Killer approaches Eduardo, heading off-duty.

The Kid Recruit sits out on the range, loading, re-loading.

EDUARDO
You leave him out here all night?

KILLER
He has to do all of it, or he
survives none of it. Who told you
this story? About the nuns and
Romero?

Eduardo goes white.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Eduardo, relax. We all gossip.
(getting close)
Whisper the names in my ear.

Eduardo, freaking the FUCK out, does this.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Let's go get the boy.

They walk to the recruit. Killer grabs up an automatic
weapon and rounds as they go.

The kid looks up as they approach.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Feeling confident?

The kid's fingers are blistered from learning--

EDUARDO
Aye, mijo! You amateur.

KILLER
(to Eduardo)
Show him--

Killer hands Eduardo the automatic and rounds.

Then takes Eduardo's gun off him--

KILLER (CONT'D)
First one to load lives.

Eduardo is horrified, livid--

But the boy is already loading.

EDUARDO

Wait. WAIT!

The boy is done in seconds.

Killer shoots Eduardo in the face.

Killer looks at the kid --

KILLER

Learn something new every day.

He walks off. The kid shakes, covered in fresh blood.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - WHITE'S OFFICE - DUSK

White packs his office. Carl knocks.

CARL

Sir? What the hell?

WHITE

Shut the door.

Carl steps in, does as ordered--

CARL

It's unprecedented.

WHITE

It's not.
Changing of the guards.

White reaches into a box for a bottle of scotch, two glasses.

WHITE (CONT'D)

And Americans died here.

CARL

Not because of us.

White pours them each a couple fingers.

WHITE

When I came to State, younger than you, I thought Cold War diplomacy was the Rubicon of hypocrisy. We knew we had to cross it, but they were godless. We were justified.

CARL

And now?

WHITE

They're still godless. We are compromised. 'Just the cost of hypocrisy.

CARL

You told them no.

WHITE

I went one better: I told them who they are.

He considers Reagan's photo still unhung on the wall.

WHITE (CONT'D)

He's a juggernaut, that one. I've seen it before. In Kennedy. Good guys in search of bad guys. Which usually means they're not such good guys. Diplomacy isn't about finger-pointing.

CARL

Then why hunt for their killers?

WHITE

Because facts are the best leverage for diplomacy, son. And roundly difficult to argue with.

White grimaces, slugs back the last of his scotch.

WHITE (CONT'D)

But Reagan -like Kennedy- will lean on liars and lies and his big personality. We have a saying at Foggy Bottom: "Get off on the wrong foot, you'll land on it, too." Keep your eye locked on Central America, kiddo. I promise it will be his quicksand.

CARL

Sir. I've also been lying to y--

WHITE

No. You are doing what renegades are expected and hired to do. *Keep it up and tell no one.*

A small moment between them -but- sentiment is frowned upon at the State Department.

WHITE (CONT'D)
Dismissed.

CARL
Sir.

INT. - A GUINEOS WAREHOUSE / JUNGLE SETTING - EVENING

D'Aubuisson surveys THIRTY OR SO OFFICERS. They are clumped into five groupings of six. Some smoke cigars. He stands at the center of these clumpings, addresses them --

D'AUBUISSON
You are happy with these new squad
leaders you have chosen for
yourselves then?

The men stomp their boots, cheering, testosterone high.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Step them forward then.

One man steps forward from each group now. Killer is one of them. D'Aubuisson averts his gaze, "No favors here." He nods at his GUARDS to bring five hemp ropes forward, bound with lassos at the end.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
(full Showman now)
Squad Leaders. You will harness
yourselves in these ropes.

Fuck. The Leaders step inside of the lassos.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Your team will pick up the slack -
binding you together.

Each team does so. The lassos tighten naturally around each squad leader's waist now.

Killer's instincts are on high alert. He positions the rope carefully, lower, around his hip bones --

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Our mission has been betrayed by
squad leaders in the past. A very
disappointing experience, *my*
brothers.

His eyes settle on Killer now--

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
But I am now studying Japanese
Management style. To spice it up,
yes, with some Salvadoran flare?

Sensing their cue, the men jeer, laugh nervously.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Feel the rope taut with your
trusted leader there, yes?

The ropes tighten more --

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
Now pass your rope to the group on
your left.

FUCK. This happens, too.

What was a straight-ish star pattern of leaders rope-bound to
their groups with D'Aubuisson mid-center emerges as a crooked
starfish around him.

And, with great flare, D'Aubuisson plucks up a machete from a
nearby banana pile, walks it to the center of the circle -

And strikes it down -hard- into the floor --

It vibrates erect in the wood, a Salvadoran sword in the
stone, death squad-style.

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
The first leader to reach the
machete and cut the other leaders
down will not only receive money
and time off, but the authority to
choose new leaders for every team.
So, you see, the stakes are very
high, no?

He waits only a beat for their shock to set in then--

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
GO!!!

Instantly, all five leaders are pulled hard to the floor.

One loses a front tooth -

One gashes open his brow -

Killer has landed like a cat on all fours. He judges the
distance to the machete then considers his group dragging
back harder on him still - and then -

He spins to his feet and runs directly AT this group --

Beating the living SHIT out of them: elbows, sucker punches, knees, anything that works.

He is a feral fiend gone apeshit on them.

ONE BRUTE gives him a hell of a time, chewing a cigar as he does --

Killer yanks the cigar from the Brute's mouth and stubs it out in his eye.

The other men, bruised, shocked, shrink back, realizing Killer is no longer a "friend."

Killer races for the machete, shimmying out of the rope as he goes. One leg free then --

BLAM! He hits the ground hard!!

He turns to find D'Aubuisson himself has pulled the rope taut on his one leg. Killer nods some respect then--

Seeing all the Squad Leaders struggling to reach the machete -
- but not as close as he is --

Killer rips off his boot, and chucks it hard at D'Aubuisson's head.

D'Aubuisson dodges the boot, livid, but homicidally amused.

It gives Killer the edge he needs to get free of the rope--

Killer grabs up the machete and -

In a crude gladiator move caves in the skull off the squad leader nearest him --

As he frees the machete from bone, he looks to D'Aubuisson, rabid with blood lust --

KILLER

This is what you want, Chele? Me
killing good, loyal men? All
killing machines loyal to you?!

He stalks to THE NEXT LEADER, desperate to get free of his lasso before Killer destroys him --

As Killer raises the machete, bit of a backhand to it --

BLAM!

REVEAL D'AUBUISSON AND HIS SMOKING GUN aimed at the sky.

D'AUBUISSON
 (addressing all of them)
 If you cannot want life this much
 then you cannot kill for El
 Salvador!

Abject horror, relief, conformity, and testosterone BURST
 FORTH TO CHEER Killer's victory!

Killer stands in the midst of them walking his feral mind
 back to some mainframe of sane again.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - CHAPIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Chapin sits primly behind his desk. His sinister Male
 Assistant stands close at hand --

The office is filled with mid to upper level State
 operatives. Carl, Hughes, and Dion are among them --

CHAPIN
 Chain of command is simple. I
 report to Jeanne Kirkpatrick, she
 to Secretary of State, Alexander
 Haig. Haig to President Ronald
 Reagan, and Reagan reports to God.

HUGHES
 So Reagan is God then?

CHAPIN
 And brownie points go to Mister- ?

HUGHES
 Hughes, sir.

CHAPIN
 Thank you, Mr. Hughes, for setting
 our new standard. I want you all
 to take note: dirtying your piggy
 snouts at the trough of pecking
 order is the job here.

CARL
 (sotto voce to Dion)
 Trough aka Reagan's ass crack.

Hughes, overhearing, has no stomach for dissenters --

HUGHES

And what about the bag found in the church women's van, sir? American-issued medical supplies in it?

FUCK.

CHAPIN

Up the chain of command it goes, Mr. Hughes. And why we refer to all direct reports as "our superiors."

Ooooo, Mr. Sinister Male Assistant is liking that call-out. A few hands shoot up now--

CHAPIN (CONT'D)

Questions go where, Mr Hughes?

HUGHES

Direct reports, sir?
(off Chapin's look)
"Our superiors."

Chapin nods, officiously pleased. Mr. Sinister herds everyone out. Like sheep.

Hughes shoulders Carl out of the way for a fast exit --

HUGHES (CONT'D)

I will see you later, Rabbi.

CARL

Definitely not my superior.

A couple guys laugh. Hughes fumes off.

DION

(rolls up on Carl)
The game just tilted, kid. Watch your back now.

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Carl, wears a towel, trims his beard in his medicine cabinet mirror, when he hears a CREAK foreign to his apartment.

But he's ready this time. Nabs his revolver at the ready.

He listens at the door, slows his breathing. Then--

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Carl pounces into his living area to startle --

MOLLY

A gun? So it's true then.

CARL

Moll. Call first. 'All I ask.

MOLLY

What the fuck have you gotten me
involved in?

He's perplexed, unprepared, so she throws a paperback at his
head --

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I swear to Christ, Carl! Even Bond
girls know what he does for a
living!

CARL

What in the fuck, Molly?

MOLLY

Are you CIA?!

Okay, now he's laughing. She throws another book at him --

CARL

Molly, Goddammit!

MOLLY

Hughes seems to think so. The
nuns, the informant. I saw Idan on
the street today - in a cast!
Wouldn't even look at me. *Idan was*
Mossad. No one puts Mossad in a
cast, Carl!

CARL

Can I dress, please?

MOLLY

No. This is how I want to remember
you: flaccid, in a towel, with a
handgun. There's a fine line between
stubborn and stupid, and I have a
strong sense you've crossed it. If
you get disappeared like--

CARL

Like the churchwomen?

MOLLY

So this is about nuns? That you
ridiculed once at a Christmas
party?!

He considers that legitimately--

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Carl!!

CARL

Maybe it's about not wanting to sit
at home stateside wondering if any
of the news I'm reading is true.

MOLLY

And that's worth getting yourself
killed over?!

CARL

Technically we work for Americans.
Who haven't a fucking clue what we do
here!

MOLLY

No, we work for the people that
they voted into power to keep them
protected and comfortably clueless.

CARL

How is that any different from here
then?

MOLLY

For starters, we mostly follow the
rules.

CARL

For now. These are fragile things,
political systems.

MOLLY

Especially when you're determined
to play all sides of them!!

(beat)

Look, you're a great fuck, but I am
suspected of espionage now. *And*
subversion.

CARL

Hughes is an asshole and an idiot.

MOLLY
 Idiot or not, Hughes is still here,
Bob White is not.

Fair point. She packs up the clothes she keeps there.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
 There's a world where this doesn't
 go your way, Carl.

CARL
 Baby, I am so sorry I scared y--

MOLLY
 Scared me?! Oh, Carl. Please.
 This is not that romantic moment.
 Have you smelled the dead bodies?
 I just came here to pick up my
 clothes.

CARL
 So we're done then?

MOLLY
 I mean, I transferring to a Denmark
 desk Friday.
 (off his shock)
 I'm just seeing the world 'til I'm
 bored with it. It's not like
 there's a future for women at
 State, Carl.

CARL
 Jeanne Kirkpatrick might dispute
 that.

MOLLY
 Jeanne Kirkpatrick is a cunt. Read
 her missives.

She walks to him, kisses him sweetly --

MOLLY (CONT'D)
 Try to stay alive, Carl. For your
 sake.

CARL
 Okay. Then-- try to stay-- ??

MOLLY
 "Comfortably clueless." Enjoying
 lopsided news stories.
Don't be in one.

She grabs up her bag, crosses to the door --

CARL
Molly. Can I ask one last favor?

MOLLY
If you drop that towel, buddy, you
WILL insult me.

CARL
I need you to loot a handheld tape
recorder for me.

MOLLY
Now why would I do that, Carl?

CARL
Because these people aren't as
lucky as Americans, are they?

Goddamn him.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAINING CAMP - DAY

Killer watches as TEENAGED BOYS AND GIRLS run through muck
with heavy satchels on their backs. The degree of their
exertion is matched only by the resolve in their eyes.

He notices they're slowing down, becoming distracted--

He turns to find D'Aubuisson and his HENCHMEN.

He glares back at the Teenagers, his gaze scarier than
D'Aubuisson. They kick it back up to speed.

He walks to --

D'AUBUISSON
The radio has gone silent. I need
you up in the hills now.

Killer nods dispassionately, salutes admirably. D'Aubuisson
turns to go, turns back--

D'AUBUISSON (CONT'D)
I gave you money, time off. So why
are you here?

KILLER
If we want to win, they need to
live.

D'AUBUISSON
Some of them anyway. Eh, Señor
Machete?

D'Aubuisson laughs heartily, his Henchmen join in. Killer is
a folk hero suddenly.

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Another embassy PARTY, pockets of conversation. Carl drinks
alone in the blue-pallor glow of the TV at the bar --

On it, Jeanne Kirkpatrick speaks to reporters--

KIRKPATRICK (ON TV)
The U.S. is proud of its ongoing
relationship with El Salvador. The
communist crisis is one of our top
priorities, and we're committed to
aiding the people of El Salvador.

A GAGGLE OF DIPLOMATS nearby, cheer, hail her from a corner.
Hughes, among them, gloating.

Carl returns to his whiskey.

IDAN (O.S.)
You smell like feces.

Carl discovers Idan, sports coat slung over his cast --

CARL
That's a dashing way to hide your
monster ass-whooping, Mata Hari.

IDAN
But I will have the last laugh -
when I fly home to Israel.

CARL
Good Lord, you're an asshole.

IDAN
Most realists are. I see the wheel
of fortune has turned, here, at Day
Camp America.

CARL
(referencing TV Kirkpatrick)
Blame that bitch for starters.

IDAN

But they blamed your ex-boss,
threatening Reagan with sabotage,
insubordination. Hughes is
spreading it everywhere. Yentas
are less prone to gossip.

CARL

It's a farce. And Hughes is a
puppet.

IDAN

It's all half-truths and puppets in
our business, school boy. But the
job security is solid.

CARL

Why are you even here?

IDAN

I just told you: business is
booming.

Idan nods past Carl, to D'Aubuisson entering the grand room
with **GENERAL CARLOS CASANOVA**, laughing and glad-handing their
way towards Chapin.

CARL

(stands)

Is that--?

Idan shoves him back down--

IDAN

We come to kiss the ring of
America's new hypocrites.

D'Aubuisson, the General, and Chapin slime each other with
charm and posturing as they greet each other --

CARL

Loan me your gun.

IDAN

Sip your drink. Find some pussy.

CARL

He's a butcher, Idan!

IDAN

He's a hydra. 'Nine more where he
came from, my friend.

CARL
How are we friends?

IDAN
Because you are useful. Like you
were to your church ladies.
(off his shock)
You are a mascot and a jinx and a pawn
here. Embrace it. Whatever you
disrupt will find new ways around you.

He turns to go, turns back. An afterthought that is not.

IDAN (CONT'D)
Word is D'Aubuisson wants your
informant dead but his profile has
sky-rocketed too high. Something
about a Herculean task, lassos, - and
a machete. He ships out soon on a
killing spree. Gone for months,
rumor is.

CARL
And what the fuck do I do with that
intel?

IDAN
Something chaotic and government-
toppling, I'm hoping.

CARL
Not even a jinx could bring down
this government.

IDAN
Was I was speaking of El Salvador?
You Americans are hilarious.

He leaves Carl, fuming, then walks right past --

Hughes sucking up to Chapin and D'Aubuisson shamelessly.

Hating this, Carl heads to Photographer MacHeath who is
flirting with a WAITRESS --

CARL
Why aren't you taking photos of
all this bullshit?

PHOTOGRAPHER MAC
Same circus, different clowns.

CARL

Take the photos, Mac. They're worth a fortune soon, trust me. And may buy you an entire army of cameras.

A moment between them, collaboration beyond nations. And MacHeath raises his camera.

Carl swipes a bottle off the bar then stalks out.

EXT. - STREET TO LAZARO'S BAR - NIGHT

Carl stumbles for Lazaro's bar, drinking. Out of nowhere, Killer bum-rushes him out from under a streetlight into --

EXT. - A DARK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Killer arm twists Carl against a wall, piles of garbage --

CARL

You're wasting machismo! Intel says D'Aubuisson wants you dead.

Killer releases him, goes for a cig -

KILLER

That's not intel. Just common sense.

Carl straightens himself out. Sort of.

KILLER (CONT'D)

Why are you so drunk?

CARL

'Cuz you're fucking scary.
(off his -slight- smile)
And I think I've signed your death certificate.

KILLER

El Salvador signed my death certificate. You're a small piece of machinery.

CARL

Get me the names of the soldiers who killed the church women.

KILLER

Why?

CARL
Because my people are saying the
nuns were Communist sympathizers.

KILLER
Why?

CARL
Because we hate communists more
than fascists.

KILLER
Then you are as dumb as we are.

CARL
But if you get me the names of
their killers then we can burn the
whole thing to the ground.

He offers a mini-tape recorder--

CARL (CONT'D)
Tape me their confessions, we can
do even more.

KILLER
I have the names. I've requested
their ringleader for my squad raids.

CARL
Wha-- WHY WOULD YOU WAIT TO TELL ME
THAT?!?

Killer smiles.

KILLER
If I don't send for you in one
week, I am dead.

CARL
SEND for me?!?

KILLER
I intend to kill so many Frente
that D'Aubuisson leaves me out
there forever.

CARL
How do I justify--

Killer wags the mini-tape recorder at Carl--

KILLER
Your jobs are easy. Stop whining.

EXT. EL SALVADOR - FOOTHILLS - DAY

Killer and several men, including **COLINDRÉS ALEMAN** (more later), stand at the base of an oceanic fog rolling over the mountain tops.

KILLER
Let's go.

He heads into the fog, into the brush. They are swallowed whole by El Salvador.

MONTAGE

-- Killer and Colindrés force A FAMILY from their home in the middle of a deluge. Children cry. Father pleads. Killer lights his cigarette under a wide-brimmed hat - then Colindrés'.

-- Killer and Colindrés trade flasks and stories in a pepper tree grove, their breath smokes in the evening chill.

-- A TEENAGE REBEL GIRL with an American assault rifle fires wildly at a military transport truck; gunfire ricochets inside it. So loud, she doesn't hear Killer walk up behind her to blow her right off the screen REVEALING COLINDRÉS. Both smirk around their cigars now.

-- Killer, Colindrés, and THEIR UNIT slog through the sodden rainforest... to a different day with scorching sun... and another night, ripe with moon and mosquitoes. And through it all, the two men growing tighter.

INT. - EMBASSEY BULLPEN - DAY

Carl watches SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER HAIG (CUE FOOTAGE) testify to Congress with his colleagues on TV. He seethes with each sentence of testimony.

INT. - CARL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A phone rings in Carl's apartment.

And rings.

And rings.

Frantic footsteps then Carl bursting through his door, sweating staining his work clothes from the run.

He bangs the shit out of his knee getting to the phone --

CARL

Yes?! Yes. Okay. Okay. (Yes.)

We've never seen him this hopeful.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - MARK DION'S OFFICE - DAY

Carl sits across from MARK DION, number 2 at the Embassy now.

DION

San Vicente?! Come on!

CARL

It's twenty-five miles.

DION

Twenty-five miles to an army artillery with a target on your back. I suppose you haven't talked to Chapin.

CARL

We were told to ask "our superiors."
(off his look)
And Chapin will not sign off on this.

DION

And you think I'm the pushover?

CARL

I think you and Bob White were friends.

DION

Bob knew the rules.

CARL

Well, apparently Secretary of State Haig doesn't even know the LAW when he suggested to Congress -under oath!- that the nuns' vehicle ran a roadblock and exchanged gunfire with the Junta!

DION

Christ, Rabbi, keep your voice down! What is with you?

CARL

Those women were raped and murdered
in a ditch. Why does their homeland
get to piss on their sacrifice for
the sake of political convenience?

DION

(doing the math)

You're going to need a car. And a
driver. And some goddamned bullet
proof windows. So you're going to
need MY driver. And if you come
back empty-handed, I'll report that
you stole it.

CARL

And if I don't come back at all?

DION

I'll say you were the Communist.
We all know it was you that raided
our supply closet, Carl.
(off his look)
You seriously didn't think we knew
that?!

Carl smirks, extends his hand, grateful. MUSIC CUE: TALKING
HEADS "LIFE DURING WARTIME."

INT. - CARL'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Carl packs a knapsack like a college kid late for Spring
Break. But he remembers the gun Killer gave him.

TALKING HEADS

Heard of a van that is loaded with
weapons,
Packed up and ready to go.

EXT. - SAN SALVADOR AIRPORT - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Dorothy lugs duffels to the van as Jean continues to shout
and celebrate her reunion with THEIR FRIENDS, **ITA and MAURA.**

TALKING HEADS

Heard of some grave sites, out by
the highway,
A place where nobody knows.

Dorothy at the van considers the luggage space. Rearranges
Carl's monogrammed bag preciously before loading the duffles.

EXT. EL SALVADOR - MORNING

A REINFORCED BLACK SEDAN slices through dense jungle, rooster-tailing dirt.

TALKING HEADS

The sound of gunfire, off in the distance,
I'm getting used to it now.

EXT. - SAN SALVADORA AIRPORT - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Dorothy steers the van with Jean shotgun away from the airport and into San Salvador.

TALKING HEADS

Lived in a brownstone, lived in a ghetto,
I've lived all over this town.

Ita and Maura take pictures with instamatic cameras in the back seat. The camera flash annoys the fuck out of Dorothy.

INT. SEDAN - SAME

-- the song plays inside the car. Carl sits in the back, checks his knapsack. The gun Killer gave him is there.

TALKING HEADS

This ain't no party, this ain't no disco,
This ain't no fooling around...

MARCO, 40s, no nonsense, steers -

MARCO

(shouting over the music)
I like your music. It's like they know Salvador!

CARL

Yes. Could you turn it down, please?

MARCO

No. It IS Salvador!

INT./EXT. - THE VAN / MARKET STREET - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Jean buys everyone wide-brimmed hats through her passenger window from a PUSH CART MERCHANT.

She passes them back to her friends.

Dorothy rolls her eyes, but appreciates the enthusiasm.

INT. - SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Carl spots a blockade on the horizon, sits up taller --

CARL
That's a death squad.

MARCO
But diplomat plates!

Unh-hunh. Carl moves the gun to his sock.

INT./EXT. - THE VAN / A CONGESTED MARKET STREET - AFTERNOON

Dorothy climbs into her driver window to get a better view.

She climbs back in, looking grim.

JEAN
What? Dottie, what?!

Dorothy shakes Jean off --

DOROTHY
It's fine.

It's not. May be death squads.

INT./EXT. - SEDAN / ROAD BLOCK - MOMENTS LATER

Marco TURNS THE MUSIC OFF as he slows for the blockade. An **OFFICER** approaches as he rolls his window down.

OFFICER
Out of the vehicle.

Marco moves to step out of the vehicle.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Not you. Him.

Carl nods and steps --

OUTSIDE THE SEDAN

The Officer grips the machine gun slung across his torso --

OFFICER
American, yes?

CARL
(flashing a press badge)
Journalist, yes.

OFFICER
But American?

CARL
Yes.

MARCO
I'm not allowed to let him out of
my sight.

OFFICER
We allow. You are shit.

INT. GUARD VEHICLE - LATER

Carl sits in the back of a Guardsmen's Truck. The Officer sits shotgun. HIS DRIVER downshifts the vehicle, approaching a CHECKPOINT. In the distance is a fortified COMPOUND.

OFFICER
(to CHECKPOINT GUARDS)
We have the American.

The checkpoint officer waves the truck past.

EXT. SAN VICENTE - ARTILLERY - MOMENTS LATER

A DOG SNARLS and BARKS as the Officer yanks Carl from the truck, spins him against it, places Carl's hands on the roof.

CARL POV: eyes scan the horizon, every direction, men with guns, watching him. Boxes of munitions. Stockpile of guns.

In seconds, Carl is being yanked off the car. Killer cigar-deep in his face. He smacks him hard --

KILLER
You are late!

OFFICER
And brought a gun.

Killer takes this from the Officer, examines it.

KILLER
This wouldn't kill a mosquito out
here.

Everyone near him laughs.

INT. ARTILLERY - HOLDING CELL - DAY

Carl waits in a dank cell. Yelling and gunfire from outside echoes off the walls. Carl jumps as the door opens. Killer enters alone.

KILLER
FMLN are close. Shelling will
start soon.

CARL
I came as soon as I could. And I'm
gonna need to hear it.

Killer is not amused, but presses play on the MICRO-CASSETTE
RECORDER --

KILLER
(via the tape)
I won't allow them to fuck you. If
I see any shit go your way. I will
give you my car, gas. Do you
understand?

ALEMAN
(via the tape)
They-- they say the man who shot
Romero stabbed out his own eyes.

Off Carl's look --

EXT. A BOMBED OUT CHURCH ON A ROAD - DAY

COLINDRES ALÉMAN, 30s, sits under a tree with Killer, sharing
a flask. It's idyllic save for the conversation --

KILLER
I know him. He still has his eyes.
Colindrés, look at that chapel. We
have even broken God here.

ALÉMAN
My mother. All she has now is the
Savior.

KILLER

Mothers don't go to war; they can still afford God. You know my story: my brother, my father. "The peasant dead," they call us.

ALÉMAN

I can't look at a Madonna. The Virgin sees what I am.

KILLER

We are our own confessors now. Warrior-priests, yes?

ALÉMAN

How can we be priests?

KILLER

Because we kill as often as God.

Aléman runs his hand through his hair, driven to near-madness by a man he thinks is his friend --

ALÉMAN

I issued the order.

KILLER

The order?

ALÉMAN

To route communists. The Church IS subversive. Threats to national power. And we are trained to deal with threats, aren't we?

KILLER

What did you do?

ALÉMAN

We took extreme measures to silence communists. And set an example.

EXT. - SAN SALVADOR AIRPORT - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

A different angle of Dorothy loading duffles in her van, Jean elated to reunite with Ita and Maura, dancing an old friends jig, airport souvenirs in hand.

REVEAL COLINDRÉS ALÉMAN watches them intently behind the steering wheel of a Toyota Jeep.

As Dorothy closes the van, and the ladies pile in, Aleman speeds past. His vehicle is filled with FOUR MEN.

EXT. AIRPORT AREA - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

A GUARDSMAN, **CRUX PICHES**, watches A TOYOTA JEEP barrel toward his checkpoint. The Jeep slows, Aléman leans out, hollers over the engine's roar -

ALÉMAN

Give the next cars a thorough
inspection. Stop traffic dead.
But there is a white van, yeah?
Let it through. Then no one else
for an hour.

Piches salutes. FOUR GUARDSMEN sit in the TOYOTA Jeep with Aléman, all are dressed in civilian attire. The men are **CARLOS PALACIOS, FRANCISCO RECINOS, DANIEL RAMIREZ** and **JOSE CANJURA**.

ANGLE ON Piches, locking eyes with Palacios.

EXT. AIRPORT - MINUTES LATER

Dorothy's White Van crawls towards the checkpoint where a small SUV is already stopped.

TWO GUARDSMEN frisk THREE PASSENGERS. Another GUARDSMAN rifles the SUV, their luggage, tossing clothing to the street with utter disdain.

Crux Piches intent on the van, waves them through with impatience.

INT. WHITE VAN - LATER

Jean looks back to the SUV, shocked at how easy that was--

JEAN

Why not us?

DOROTHY

I don't know.

JEAN

God is blessing our mission,
ladies. Feel His Grace upon us!

But now Dorothy notes something further ahead. She slows.

DOROTHY

Shut up, everyone. *Shut up.*

Ahead, Aléman and his crew have blocked two lanes with their jeep. They approach the van now, arms outstretched.

ANGLE ON DOROTHY, zeroing in on the men.

JEAN
They're not--? Are they?

DOROTHY
I do the talking. It's fine.

INT./EXT. VAN - SAME

Dorothy rolls the window down. Aléman leans against the car. The other guardsmen flank the van's sides, swarming it.

ALÉMAN
Who are you?

DOROTHY
We're Americans. From the church.

ALÉMAN
Going where?

DOROTHY
We have hymnals. Mission literature.

ALÉMAN
Out. OUT!

EXT. VAN - SAME

Aléman and the others dismantle the van, sifting the women's belongings on the ground. Clothes. Bibles. Aléman reaches for a ROSARY tossed in the dirt, holds it out to Jean --

ALÉMAN
And this is for what? Protection?
To keep devils away?

DOROTHY
To remind us.

ALÉMAN
(spinning on Dorothy)
This cheap, trinket shit? To
remind you of what?

DOROTHY

That we are never alone. God sees
us and loves us. Even you, even
now.

ALÉMAN

Get back in the van.

Dorothy relaxes, relieved. It worked. Then--

ALÉMAN (CONT'D)

(to Recinos)

You, Canjura, Ramirez, ride with
them. Follow us. We head toward
Zacatecoluca.

DOROTHY

But we aren't going to
Zacatecoluca.

ALÉMAN

But you are loved. And never
alone. *So trust God then.*

He throws the rosary at her. She catches it with a deft
hand.

EXT. A ROAD TO DIE ON - LATER

The sun sets on these American women. They are lined up,
some thirty feet from their van.

Aléman and his crew have further ransacked the vehicle.
Palacios tears pages from hymnals.

ANGLE ON ITA, watching pages scatter in sunset gusts of wind.
Tears well in her eyes. She knows.

They all know. Jean looks to Dorothy. Dorothy opens her
hand to reveal the rosary in it, proof of who they are -

Then she looks straight ahead and hums the melody to "*Here I
Am, Lord.*"

Soon, all four hum, softly. Devoutly. Through tears.

ALÉMAN

You shut your fucking mouths.

But they do not. And not out of defiance: they are meeting
their Lord.

They sing the words now--

THE FAITHFUL WOMEN

I will go, Lord
 If You lead me
 I will hold Your people in my heart..

As Aléman screams obscenities in their faces, A CHORAL
 ARRANGEMENT overtakes where they are forced to leave off -

Because --

-- Recinos kicks Ita to her knees.

-- Brute hands rip the collar off Jean's blouse. She
 clutches only for her cross -not her clothes- and is struck
 hard for it!

-- One by one, the women are thrust to the ground.

-- Hands rip a pair of slacks and cotton panties down.

-- Maura weeps so hard on bended knees that her tears drop
 like rain on the mud where she will end soon.

-- Dorothy's eyes move up to the darkening sky.

-- Aléman removes a gun. Draws it to the back of Dorothy
 Kazel's head. She STILL sings around blood, bile, and drool--

KILLER (O.S.)

And then?

BACK ON

EXT. A BOMBED OUT CHURCH ON A ROAD - DAY

Killer watches Aléman so intently. He has been this man,
 fighting off torment with nowhere to run inside his own skin.

ALÉMAN

A fire, a shallow grave, and a
 place for the guns.

KILLER

You wanted them found. Why?

Aléman's lips quiver, his eyes flood with tears--

ALÉMAN

To let the Church know -forever-
 that they have failed us. *God has*
no power here.

He collapses into sobs. Killer's hand finds the heaving shoulder of his brother-in-arms.

KILLER
I wonder if it is true though.

His free hand snakes into his satchel to turn off the mini-cassette recorder.

FADE TO:

INT. ARTILLERY - HOLDING CELL - DAY

The spokes of the tape *click-click-clack* to the end.

Carl switches it off, overcome, overwhelmed --

CARL
All I could think of was my mom.
All they thought of was the Lord.

KILLER
Women, they make life. I suspect
men take it to even that out. But
I have killed children; men are
fooling themselves.

CARL
-- what will you do?

KILLER
What I am trained to do. And you
will do the same.

He slides the recorder to Carl --

KILLER (CONT'D)
You have your hard facts. Their
names. And a superpower backing you.

CARL
How do you have such faith in us?

KILLER
You trained us. *To fight.*

And, as even that's making sense--

BOOM! The room QUAKES, SHUDDERS. Plaster rains from the ceiling in hard chunks and dust.

KILLER (CONT'D)
They're here.

Carl nabs up the tape recorder. It is gold to both men. The dulled sounds of gunshots THUD from outside.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Don't die.

Killer throws Carl at the holding cell door. Carl tucks the player inside his jacket. Killer draws his gun--

INT. ARTILLERY - HALLWAY - SAME

-- A tank mortar has ripped open a wall in the corridor.

SOLDIERS are flowing out, some wounded, some freaking, some dead or dying out.

POV: Outside the ripped-apart wall, SOLDIERS and INSURGENTS fire American-made assault rifles at each other with little regard for who's on the other side of their sites.

Killer shoves Carl's head down, grabs an automatic weapon from dead hands, and runs them along the far wall --

On the other side of the hole, Killer shoves the PISTOL he first gave Carl back in Carl's hands --

KILLER
Practice is over. You or them now.

They arrive at a front door. Smoke and blasts of bright white gunfire choke out their view beyond it.

INSURGENTS and GUARDS fire rounds at one another with little regard. Bullets scream through the air, spew debris off the structure, grind through the walls.

Carl starts to head out. Killer grabs him back --

KILLER (CONT'D)
Back exit, shithead.

He tosses Carl through swinging double doors into --

A MESS HALL

Full of windows. They slump-run through an epic gauntlet of shoot-out, sheering glass as dangerous as the bullets.

Halfway through, Killer sprays fire back. The whole ordeal is deafening to Carl.

Killer maneuvers Carl towards a --

KITCHEN

But bullets ricochet within - off every metal surface and pan. It's a deathtrap for sure.

Killer thinks better of it -

Shoves Carl into a --

HALLWAY

He pulls a grenade from his belt, de-keys it with his teeth, tosses it into A MEN'S ROOM then -

Body shields Carl against the wall as --

BOOM!! THE BATHROOM AND ITS DOOR SPLINTERS TO HELL --

DESTROYED BATHROOM

Water everywhere but with a clear path to outside --

KILLER
You see it?

Carl does.

A TRUCK like a private Zion waiting for them, beyond the water-doused plumbing wreckage.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Get to it. Get under it. I'll
meet you there.

Killer explodes out of the water deluged bathroom into the clearing, his gun blazes a flood of its own. It's like a Bullet Ballet.

Bullets whiz around Carl as he sprints for cover of the truck at the brush edge of the artillery encampment.

TRUCK

Carl crawls beneath it, wet, panting, waiting.

Rebel legs run past his view -
And then all shot to hell. Their bodies fall hard.
ONE DYING REBEL locks eyes with Carl.
He raises a pistol at Carl.
Carl raises his back --
The Rebel takes careful aim - and -
His forehead caves in.
Killer and gun smoke are there now, beside Carl --

KILLER
Be faster than that.

CARL
You have the keys?

KILLER
We can't drive out. Have to walk.
Through the brush. Over there.
Now crawl. Like a snake.

Carl does, covering his head as he goes --
Wicked, inconceivable war trauma stuff.
Gunfire, explosions, and screams continue to swell.
Carl looks back: Killer is nowhere in sight.
Carl makes it to the brush, presses himself against the base
of a tree. He has a moment now to take the battle in.
POV: *As real as war gets.* Unfiltered, not glamorous,
cowardice and courage and lunacy on parade.
And then he hears it: a whimper. Frail and scared.
Carl scans the jungle growth to find the source:
A CHILD, no older than 12, shot in the shoulder. Blood
oozing from his wound.
Carl inches towards the wounded boy when --
A GUARD with a machine gun finds him first.
Carl's eyes go wide. Fuck that. He raises his gun and--

The Child draws his OWN GUN and shoots the Guard in the liver. The Guard shrieks in rabid pain.

Carl GASPS, alerting the child, who spins his weapon on Carl.

Carl raises his hands, gun in it; a surrender on all fronts.

But a nearby explosion, knocks the boy to his knees. He looks up, eyes raging at Carl.

Carl lurches into the brush as the child soldier gives chase.

Carl races deeper into thick jungle, Child in pursuit.

BANG!

A bullet CHEWS INTO a tree by Carl's head.

Carl trips.

The TAPE RECORDER tumbles out of his jacket.

BANG!

Another shot and Carl falls forward, diving for the cassette.

Carl's on his hands and knees, crawling through the shrub with the Child Soldier looming towards him.

Carl lunges for the tape recorder, grasping it just as the Child Soldier STEPS ON CARL'S ARM, pinning him to the ground.

Carl twists round to face his bizarre death.

The injured child takes careful aim at Carl's head. Sheer glee on his face - and -

SNAP!

Killer slams his rifle down on the child's taut arm.

The boy tumbles to the ground, wailing, suddenly a child again. The arm as broken as it gets.

Killer takes up the boy's gun. Rips a knife hanging from his hip, too, then kicks him in the butt.

KILLER (CONT'D)

You lost. Go home. Tell your
father -if he is living- that you
killed four of my men today.

(to Carl)

You have it?

Carl checks his swollen grip. His hand is coiled around the recorder and cassette.

KILLER (CONT'D)
Get moving. That way.

They disappear behind battle smoke and thick green.

EXT. - DIRT ROAD - LATER

Fatigued, soaked in sweat, Carl and Killer emerge from the jungle. The sound of the battle might be inexplicable daytime thunder at this distance. They walk in silence then--

KILLER
You go that way. There's a village. Find a cab driver named Jaime. He will take you to a place in San Salvador to make copies. Go!

CARL
But how did you explain me? An American? To your death squad?

KILLER
We also use informants.

CARL
I-I-I don't-- understand.

KILLER
You trained us. *No one is better at war than Americans.*

And then Killer is gone.

Carl takes in the jungle, the thunder in the distance.

Then turns towards the village, and runs like hell.

MATCH FOOT TREAD TO

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - CHAPIN'S OFFICE - DAY

The click of the cassette at the end of its tape. The mini-cassette player, covered in muck and blood.

REVEAL CHAPIN, HIS SINISTER ASSISTANT, DION, and HUGHES.

HUGHES
This is --

CARL
Undeniable.

HUGHES
Inadmissible. Without your
informant in court.

CARL
Do we work for truth or
technicalities here?

HUGHES
It's not that simp--

Finally, Mister Sinister Assistant speaks up --

MISTER SINISTER
Are you a superior anywhere in this
conversation, sir?

They all look to Chapin now, silent as snow and even more
inscrutable.

INT. - AN EMBASSY HALLWAY - LATER

Hughes follows Carl out of the meeting --

HUGHES
Hey.

Carl keeps walking --

HUGHES (CONT'D)
Hey.

CARL
Hughes, it's over. Back off!

Hughes catches up to him, strong arms him into --

INT. - DEBRIEFING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Possibly the same interrogation room where it all started
with Killer -

HUGHES
We're on the same te--

CARL
Nothing you could do would ever
intimidate me. Do you understand?

HUGHES
Gettinger. Calm down.

And something about Hughes is unnervingly changed.

CARL
Now, I'm "Gettinger?! Not "Rabbi?"

HUGHES
Carl. We are very impressed.
At the company.

CARL
The company?

HUGHES
Yes, Carl. I'm authorized -when
recruiting- to inform you that I'm
with the company.

CARL
The company?

HUGHES
Yes, Carl. CIA.
And we are very impressed.

Carl just stares at him then--

CARL
Oh, hell, no. Fuck that!

HUGHES
We're dead serious.

CARL
And here I was thinking you
couldn't BE a bigger asshole. Holy
shit, Hughes!

HUGHES
Planting seeds then. Zero
pressure. We'll be in touch.

Hughes turns to go, then turns back--

HUGHES (CONT'D)
But please know we have safeguards
in place should you attempt to
thwart my cover - or our work here.

Big smile, not Hughes. And then, upon opening the door--

HUGHES (CONT'D)

See ya 'round, Rabbi. I still think
you've checkmated yourself with that
informant bullshit.

(from down the hall now)

Dumbass!

Carl just stands there, amazed.

INT. BARMARISOL - NIGHT

Idan is tonsil-deep in a DRUNK LADY, too distracted to see--
Carl, standing there, startles Idan off her and his stool --

IDAN

'Fuck you want?

CARL

For starters, the CIA off my back.

Idan cups the woman's breast before nodding her off -

IDAN

And how will that happen when CIA
signs your checks?

CARL

Hughes is not my boss, dickhead.

IDAN

But Frederick Chapin is.

(off his look)

Ha! You didn't know, schoolboy?!
You think I'm protecting Israel's
interest in sugarcane and shrimp
here? *We don't even eat shrimp!*

CARL

I need to speak to Isela.

IDAN

We're more likely to start eating
shrimp!

CARL

I have the names of the soldiers
who murdered those churchwomen.

IDAN

Names are nothing. They are
rumors, whispers in farts! The
only win is--

CARL
(holding it up)
A confession. On tape.

Idan's eyes betray his shock. That is radical.

INT. RADIO VENCEREMOS - NIGHT

Rain pings the tin roof where Carl, Idan, and Isela meet --
She considers the tape before her --

CARL
They hold every card: guns, laws,
money, prisons, international aid--

ISELA
My brother would say, "Even the
grave diggers are theirs."

IDAN
Be your brother now. It's time.

CARL
Be better than your brother.
Survive.

ISELA
And who listens to women?

CARL
Other women. Frightened children;
this whole country is that now.
Catholics pray to the Madonna more
than saints, more than Christ.

ISELA
What is this God you all chase?

CARL
Maybe it's just History -
swallowing us whole.

Her fingers twist the cassette spokes taut, deciding -

ISELA
I will play it every day and every
night for two weeks. As once
prescribed. Then we see.

Great. Fuck, yeah. Victory has many shades.

INT. NATIONAL GUARD COMPOUND - CAFETERIA - DAY

PALACIOS shovels soup, eating with an intensity of focus normally reserved for court ordered hard labor.

Palacios looks to the door frame, where **FOUR ARRESTING LIEUTENANTS** stand, staring at him. Crux Pinche, the guard from the airport checkpoint, is with them. He nods, points at Palacios.

Palacios tries to run.

EXT. NATIONAL GUARD COMPOUND - GARAGE - DAY

CONJURA works beneath an old TRUCK, hands slick with car grease, cigarette dangles from his mouth.

Suddenly, FOUR PAIR OF MILITARY POLICE BOOTS are there. His cigarette falls from his mouth, almost sparking a fire that he panics to put out.

INT. NATIONAL GUARD COMPOUND - BARRACKS WASHROOM - DAY

RECINOS and RAMIREZ stare at the FOUR ARRESTING LIEUTENANTS, both caught mid-shave.

Recinos drops his razor in the sink. The CLATTERING SOUND echoes throughout the washroom.

Ramirez races for a stall, locks himself in!

EXT. NATIONAL GUARD COMPOUND - DAY

FROM BEHIND we see Aléman on the ground, his face pressed against the scope of a RIFLE.

PAP! PAP!

ALÉMAN POV on the target, getting shredded by gunfire.

ALEMAN
See that? A kill shot.

FOUR SILHOUETTES of the arresting lieutenants fall over him. He looks up.

They blot out the sun.

ALEMAN (CONT'D)
We are the priests now. Fuck off.
I'm absolved.

One officer steps on his hand to release his rifle. Two more drag him off by his feet --

ALEMAN (CONT'D)
I'm absolved, God damn you! I'M
ABSOLVED!!

INT. RADIO VENCEREMOS / VARIOUS - NIGHT

Isela checks the radio system's inputs and power set up. Everything in place, she moves to the microphone.

A final check of her script for transmission, then --

Flick.

She turns on the tower, the red light beams she is live.

ISELA
On December second, 1980, four
American churchwomen were raped and
executed on a dirt road outside of
Chalatenengo. Their murders, ordered
by Roberto D'Aubuisson, sanctioned by
General Vides Casanova, have bound El
Salvador and the United States of
America by blood.

INTERCUT:

-- D'Aubuisson, seethes with a cigarette and a blowtorch.

-- Hughes sits with Chapin and Mr Sinister in Chapin's office. His eyes lock on the embassy portrait of Ronald Reagan presiding over this lurid mess.

-- Idan sits in Bar Marisol, drinking with the old men, testing his arm finally free of its cast.

-- Carl is drawn away from his typewriter in his apartment by the sound of her voice. Suitcases and boxes testify that he is leaving this place where gunshots sing more than birds

-- And finally, several GUARDSMEN scrub themselves in a creek that swirls red and brown with blood. Killer is among them, blending in - listening to their jungle ghetto radio.

ISELA (CONT'D)
Their murderers have been found and
will stand trial for their crimes.
Their overlords still run free.

Back to her now --

ISELA (CONT'D)
Radio Vencéremos will make them less
free.

EXT. ISIDRO MENÉNDEZ JUDICIAL CENTER - DAY

D'Aubuisson and General Casanova exit Judicial Center where A
PACK OF JOURNALISTS wait --

JOURNALIST
Señor D'Aubuisson! What do you say
to the Americans blocking aid now?

D'AUBUISSON
It's no way to treat a friend.

Isela slices through the crowd, hand in her jacket --

ISELA
Chele.

D'Aubuisson turns. Does he know her? She knows him.

ISELA (CONT'D)
What will you say to God then?

She removes the object from her jacket - not a gun; a
contraband tape recorder.

D'AUBUISSON
I will ask Him where He has been.

FADE TO.

INT. THE PALM RESTAURANT - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

A din of polite chatter and soft muzak blanket DC's POWER
BROKERS, drinking their lunch.

CHYRON:

Four months later. D.C.

FIND CARL, out of place, waiting for--

WHITE (O.S.)
Christ, this place is uptight.

Carl discovers Bob White, more refreshed and rested than
we've yet to see him.

WHITE (CONT'D)
And I see people I despise.
Let's do pupusas? I know a place.

INT. EL TAMARINDO RESTAURANT - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

A small, noisy, crowded pupuseria, fringe of D.C. White and Carl sit in a corner, plates piled high --

WHITE
The Averell Harriman Award for
"creative dissent." That's big shit.

CARL
Strange to get an award you can
tell no one about.

WHITE
Welcome to the underbelly of
"civilized," son.

CARL
It's like pressing your face
against glass, being home.

WHITE
Feeling guilty a bit?
(off his nod)
That won't ever change now.

CARL
They still haven't gone to trial.

WHITE
Your pupusa is getting cold.
(off his anguish)
Pimentel at FBI wants them as bad
as you, Carl.

CARL
But do you think they'll go to
trial?

WHITE
I think you forced Reagan to cut
funding for their entire operation.
That's a big get, kiddo.

CARL
But it just brings their people
more harm!

WHITE

Do you know who coined the term
"banana republic?" O. Henry. The
most ironic storyteller in American
letters. What you have done--

CARL

Is a drop in the bucket.

WHITE

In the ocean. Scale up if you're
gonna go there.

CARL

I thought -maybe, sir-- you'd know
what to do with myself?

WHITE

Son. You're on the other side of
the mirror now. There's no putting
you back. Ever.

White fishes a rosary from his breast pocket, drops it on a
clean plate--

CARL

Was that hers?

WHITE

(nods)

'Snagged it from evidence the day I
shipped out. Maybe it's a tether
you need more than me.

CARL

She would have said, "It's chunks
of wood on a string."

WHITE

She also would have said, "The
fight never ends."

Beat.

CARL

I think about him. Out there. All
the time.

WHITE

He's dead, Carl. Or will be.

CARL

I don't know that.

WHITE

You do.

And in that moment, finally - Carl does.

INT. COMMERCIAL BUS - SAME

Killer chews on a cigarillo. There is a softness to his eyes now, some spark of soul growing back.

He fans smoke from his eyes. Rolls down his window to air the cab out -

That's when he spots it -

A TRUCK up ahead, stopped in the road, blocking all lanes.

SIX MEN wait, ready with guns. Maybe guerrillas, maybe soldiers. *Doesn't matter anymore.*

He reaches between his seat, instinctively, for his gun as he starts to slow down then -

He inhales smoke through clenched teeth -

And speeds up his truck.

POV: ALL SIX MEN OPEN FIRE DIRECTLY ON THE CAMERA, BULLETS, BLOOD, TRUCK PARTS, WINDOW SHIELD, AND SPARKS - HEAD ON!

And then smoke.

Only smoke. Like Heaven's first clouds. Or brimstone fumes straight from Hell.

OVER THE SMOKE:

CHYRON (one line at a time):

On May 24, 1984, Colindres Aléman and his four Guardsmen finally stood trial.

It lasted 19 hours across an entire day.

The jury -two women and three men- returned a verdict at 4AM.

Guilty on all counts.

The first military conviction in the twelve year Civil War.

The UN estimates that 75,000 civilians were killed in El Salvador's Civil War and found that 85% of the atrocities, killings, kidnappings, and torture had been the work of government forces - army, paramilitaries, and death squads.

Countless others were "disappeared." Their bodies have never been found.

On March 25, 1984, Roberto D'Aubuisson, "Champion of the Death Squads," ran for president of El Salvador as leader of the ARENA Nationalist Party that he founded.

He received 46% of the vote.

He was defeated by José Duarte of the Christian Democratic Party with 53% of the vote.

D'Aubuisson cited US interference and blamed election fraud for his defeat.

Duarte was eventually confirmed to be a CIA asset.

Radio Vencéremos accused both men of untold war crimes.

Archbishop Óscar Romero was canonized by the Vatican in 2018.

There are currently fifty nations with a dictator or authoritarian regime ruling their people to this day.

Europe is home to one dictatorship.

Three remain in Latin and South America.

There are eight dictatorships in Asia.

And seven in the Eurasian region.

And twelve spanning from Africa's northern region to the Middle East.

FIN.

One might also scroll the name of every dictator including "President" Xi" at film's end.