

Curfew

by

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(Inspired by real events)

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* Dialogue spoken in English is in normal text. *Spanish dialogue is in italics. Dialogue in Quechua is in bold and dialogue in Asháninka is in bold and underlined.*

BLACK SCREEN: SUPER: "In 1980, the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) launched an armed insurgency against the Peruvian state, which intensified throughout the 1980s.

The resulting conflict led to the deaths of nearly 70,000 people, the majority of whom were peasants and indigenous communities caught in the crossfire. An estimated 20,000 people disappeared during this period.

Abimael Guzmán, the leader of the organization who called himself 'Chairman Gonzalo,' was captured in 1992, significantly weakening the insurgency.

This film is inspired by events that took place during this turbulent period."

FADE IN:

INT. HIGHLANDS - MITO VILLAGE - PEASANT HUT - DAY

AGUIRRE (early 20s) tosses and turns in his sleep, drenched in sweat.

EXT. MITO VILLAGE - DAYBREAK - DREAM SEQUENCE

A MAN on HORSEBACK gallops, clutching a severed human head. He hurls it against a house window and rides off.

INT. MITO VILLAGE - BEDROOM - DAYBREAK

The WINDOW SHATTERS, and the head lands on Aguirre's bed. He wakes with a start, eyes wide, realizing it's his own head. He shoves it away.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. MITO VILLAGE - PEASANT HUT - CONTINUOUS

LAURA (early 20s) tries to soothe Aguirre, placing a cool cloth on his forehead.

LAURA

Must be the fever, Aguirre...

Aguirre's eyes shut, his breathing ragged. He looks like he's burning up.

AGUIRRE

It was a white horse...

The door bursts open, and EDUARDO (early 20s), soaked with sweat, rushes in.

EDUARDO

We need to get outta here, now!

LAURA

What's going on?

EDUARDO

Senderistas are down the river...

CASIMIRO (40s), a native-looking man in peasant clothes, steps in.

CASIMIRO

Up in the bell tower, quick!

INT. MITO VILLAGE - BELL TOWER - DAY

Eduardo helps Aguirre up the last steps of the rickety bell tower. Eduardo's carrying a hefty sack. He lets Aguirre sit on the floor.

Laura gazes out the tower window, takin' in the village.

EDUARDO(O.S.)

Hide, dammit!

Laura moves away from the window, and BAM! MACHINE GUN FIRE starts up in the distance.

Eduardo glances at his hefty bag on the floor and starts unpacking his video gear from the bag.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

I might just get those scumbags on camera.

Eduardo rises slowly, camera in hand, moving to the tower window. Laura and Aguirre wait anxiously.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: PERU, 1989 - TWO WEEKS EARLY

EXT. US AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - ENTRANCE DOOR - LIMA - NIGHT

Two burly U.S. Marines, all decked out, guard the door, with a couple of diplomats behind them.

BAXTER (50s), all spiffed up, hands his invite over, mixin' in with the other guests.

INT. US AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LOBBY - LIMA - NIGHT

ANTHONY (60s), the US Ambassador, and the PRESS ATTACHÉ (30s) finish greeting some guests.

PRESS ATTACHÉ

Look who's here, Ambassador.

ANTHONY

Baxter! Leslie Baxter! The top journalist around here! Good to have you.

BAXTER

Happy 4th of July, Ambassador!

ANTHONY

Get in there, journalist buddies are waiting...

(whispered)

President's on his way, so don't hog him!

EXT. US AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - GARDEN - LIMA - NIGHT

Baxter heads straight for the bar and pours himself a drink.

From the crowd, JULIO (60s), looking sharp, waves him over.

Baxter navigates through the guests to meet him.

JULIO

Baxter, amigo!

(with a wink)

Listen... Some military types are chatting away... But my English isn't the best... Come with me...

Julio leads Baxter to CAPTAIN JAMES (40s), dressed in U.S. Navy attire, and CAPTAIN TUBINO (50s), a Peruvian naval officer, fully decked out in uniform.

CAPTAIN JAMES
Mr. Baxter! The top war
correspondent from the U.S.! Let me
introduce Captain Tubino from the
Peruvian Navy...

Baxter shakes hands with Captain Tubino and a few others.

CAPTAIN JAMES (CONT'D)
Word is, you're heading back to New
York, retiring soon...

BAXTER
Yep, reckon I'll be stateside in
'bout three weeks...

CAPTAIN JAMES
(curious)
How many years down here in Peru?

BAXTER
About fifteen... Got out of Saigon
in a chopper... April 30, '75... My
last big story.

CAPTAIN JAMES
(perplexed)
Why Peru, then?

BAXTER
Why?
(beat)
Ever been in the thick of war?

Captain James shakes his head, no war stories there.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
(probing)
Intelligence, huh? NSC? CIA?

Captain James stays silent, eyes cold.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
The Vietnam Info Group? Our
intelligence failed miserably
there. We dug ourselves a big hole.

Baxter's words carry the weight of hard-earned experience.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

I still remember how the top American generals told President LBJ only what they thought he wanted to hear about the Vietnam War, rather than giving him their best military advice...

Baxter pauses, ensuring his point sinks in.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

You are not doing the same here with your Peruvian friends, are you?

Julio steps in, trying to defuse the tension.

JULIO

One of these days, Baxter, I'll have you on my TV show, telling all...

EXT. LIMA - PALACE OF JUSTICE - STAIRS - NIGHT

The MINISTER (60s) is surrounded by a group of journalists. Laura holds a microphone while Eduardo records the scene.

MINISTER

We busted a terrorist cell, caught five behind those tower attacks.

LAURA

What about the paramilitary group, Comando Rodrigo Franco? Rumor has it they're working with the government. Any truth to that?

The minister stares Laura down.

MINISTER

Which media outlet are you with?

EXT. US AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - GARDEN - LIMA - NIGHT

The July 4th party is in full swing. Captain Tubino chats quietly with Baxter. In the background, Captain James talks with Julio. Captain Tubino glances around, ensuring no one else is listening.

CAPTAIN TUBINO

You know, this isn't like Vietnam was.

He pauses, letting the gravity of his words sink in.

CAPTAIN TUBINO (CONT'D)

*It's more like the Khmer Rouge...
You never know who you're fighting.
We aim to occupy the territories we
wrest from the subversives. When
they abandon a village, we move in,
setting up bases in strategic
spots, ready to respond quickly...*

BAXTER

*In Vietnam, we tried that too.
Telling friend from foe? Tough job.
Mistakes happen...*

CAPTAIN TUBINO

*Yeah... just like a few days back,
up in the Huanta heights. A
military unit of ours... I think
they made a terrible mistake. A big-
time botch-up...*

GARDEN DOORS

The crowd at the entrance bursts into applause—the PRESIDENT OF PERU (40s) and the U.S. ambassador enter.

BAR

Julio sidles over to Baxter and Captain Tubino.

JULIO

*President Alan Garcia just arrived,
Baxter. Let's try to get in on the
action...*

INT. BAXTER OFFICES - EDITING ROOM - NIGHT

Laura and Eduardo review the tape of the minister's interview.

INSERT: FOOTAGE OF THE INTERVIEW

LAURA

*What about the paramilitary group,
Comando Rodrigo Franco? Rumor has
it they're working with the
government. Any truth to that?*

MINISTER

Which media outlet are you with?

Eduardo hits pause, freeze-framing the minister's face.

END INSERT

EDUARDO

Ha, ha! Got him all flustered!

Baxter appears at the door, hanging up his coat and loosening his tie. Eduardo stops editing.

BAXTER

Tomorrow, you two are heading to Ayacucho. Got a big story from tonight's event!

EDUARDO

Tomorrow? But we'll miss your farewell party!

BAXTER

No, no, it's a round trip! At most, one week!

Laura and Eduardo exchange surprised glances.

LAURA

Don't even think about another day! I already bought my dress for the party! Everyone will be there!

EDUARDO

And what are we going to do in Ayacucho? Things are really crazy over there!

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Baxter sits with the phone to his ear. The TV is on in the background, muted.

BAXTER

Yes, yes. I'm still waiting to talk to Brian... He's still in New York, isn't he?

(Hear the answer)

Ah, Ok...He must be in the newsroom or in the control room. Tell him it's urgent, please.

DORITA (50s), an indigenous woman, ditches her apron and comes out of the kitchen.

DORITA

Have you seen the envelope that was left under the door today? It's on the table. Came from Ayacucho, sir.

BAXTER

Ayacucho, huh?

Baxter grabs the envelope.

DORITA

Rushin' home before curfew, so I'm speedin' off.

Dorita leaves, closing the door behind her.

Baxter talks on the phone.

BAXTER

(on phone)

Hey Brian, something very quick. You must be very busy at the evening news with all this mess in Berlin... Listen, I'm postponing my trip to New York.

JIMENA's (late 30s) face, a striking Latina dressed like a war reporter, appears on the TV, reporting from Berlin. The Berlin Wall is crumbling in the background.

Baxter hunts down the remote, cranks up the volume.

MED. SHOT: TV SCREEN: NEWS -- The lower third reads "*Jimena Losada, from Berlin*".

JIMENA

"Today, Germany makes history. The Berlin Wall is coming down, people from the East and West crossing like it's nothing."

INSERT: FOOTAGE - PEOPLE TEARING DOWN THE WALL

JIMENA (O.S.)

"Communism's last stand, crumblin' to bits."

END INSERT

Baxter lowers the TV volume.

BAXTER

(on phone)

New York's gonna have to wait. I can't travel without getting in touch with my stringers.

BAXTER POV: Flippin' the envelope over. *"Artisanal Center Sacred Land, Quinoa, Ayacucho."*

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

(on phone)

Nope, they ain't back.

END BAXTER POV

Baxter tears open the envelope.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

(on phone)

More than a week, maybe they're lost in the Andes somewhere.

The lights go out. Baxter looks out the window—the city's dark.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Damn, another power outage. Yeah, yeah, blackout. Just hold on!

Baxter finds a candle and lights it. The letter lands on the table.

INSERT: LETTER

"Got two photo rolls snapped by your pals..."

END INSERT

BAXTER (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Still there? The landline's the only thing working.

BALCONY

Baxter steps out, dragging the phone cord. Neighbors across the street are chatting from their balconies.

NEIGHBOR 1

Fuck, this is fucking bullshit!

NEIGHBOR 2

Sounds like another transmission tower got blown up!

BAXTER

(on phone)

Brian, you listenin'? I need a favor.

(picking up the letter)

I've been told that Jimena is traveling to New York tomorrow. Is that true?

(listening)

Well, get ready. I've got something she might like...

EXT. STREETS NEAR LIMA AIRPORT - NIGHT

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

AERIAL SHOT: Baxter's car moves through the streets.

EXT. INT. STREETS NEAR LIMA AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Baxter adjusts the radio, tuning into the news.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Four transmission towers on the outskirts of Lima were blown up by the Shining Path terrorist organization...

EXT./INT. STREETS NEAR LIMA AIRPORT - NIGHT

A car with THREE MIDDLE-AGED MEN navigates through the streets, tuned into the same news broadcast.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Those towers were repaired just ten days ago, but they were hit again tonight, causing a blackout in the northern part of the city.

The TERRORIST COMMANDER (40s) sits in the front seat, turning the radio volume down.

TERRORIST COMMANDER

That was our comrades from the Northern Regional Committee.

The car pulls into the airport parking lot.

The three men scan the area.

TERRORIST 1
There he is.

EXT. LIMA AIRPORT - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

A MAN approaches the car window, looking inside.

TERRORIST 2 (O.S.)
*The green Toyota is already parked.
 Over there.*

INT. LIMA AIRPORT - NIGHT

Baxter steps up to an airline counter.

BAXTER
Flight 803, please?

AIRLINE EMPLOYEE
803? It's landing at ten...

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT walks down the aisle, checking seatbelts.
 Jimena sleeps in a window seat.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
*We're arriving in Lima, Miss.
 Please fasten your seatbelt.*

Jimena stares out the window, anxious.

INT. LIMA AIRPORT - NEWSSTAND - NIGHT

BAXTER
El Comercio!

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)
*Flight 803 from New York has
 landed. Passengers will be
 disembarking at Gate 12.*

Baxter tosses a few coins for a newspaper, skimming the front page.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "WAVE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS IN LIMA."

EXT./INT. LIMA AIRPORT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The terrorist commander and his men enter the green Toyota, checking the interior.

CUSTOMS

A CUSTOMS OFFICIAL examines Jimena's passport.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL
Peruvian, huh?

Jimena nods. The official continues his inspection.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
How long have you been away?

JIMENA
*I've been abroad for thirty years.
Left when I was five.*

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL
*This place has changed a lot,
señorita.*

He stamps her passport.

PARKING LOT

The terrorist commander plants a timed BOMB under the car and sets the clock. He quickly joins his men, and they flee.

INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

Jimena appears with her carry-on.

Baxter waves his newspaper to catch her eye, pushing through the crowd.

They embrace.

PARKING LOT

BOOM. The car-bomb detonates.

INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

The SHOCK-WAVE throws them to the ground.

Amidst shattered glass, Jimena clings to Baxter, who shields her with his body.

Several ALARMS BLARE. Distant GUNSHOTS echo.

A scene of chaos. Demolished counters, a wounded ELDERLY COUPLE struggles to stand, a BLOODIED PASSENGER sits with cuts on his face.

Baxter pulls Jimena to her feet.

BAXTER
You OKAY?

Jimena nods. They sprint out of the wrecked terminal.

PARKING LOT

Baxter and Jimena dash to his car.

BAXTER
Stay put until I get back, got it?
Don't move.

Baxter runs back to the site of the explosion.

He surveys the wounded and starts taking pictures.

Amidst the destruction, flames light up the parking area.

OUTSIDE LIMA AIRPORT BUILDING

Jimena loads her luggage into the back seat.

JIMENA	BAXTER (CONT'D)
How many dead?	Let's get out of here! Get in!

Baxter opens the car door for her, scanning the area. POLICE SIRENS and isolated GUNSHOTS can be heard.

INT./EXT. BAXTER'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The car cruises through the deserted streets of Lima.

JIMENA
Well, this is some welcome party!

BAXTER
Yeah, it's been a week of non-stop terrorist attacks. Sendero is on the offensive. And next week, they're throwing a birthday bash for their leader, Abimael Guzman.
(ironically)
Guess they found out you were paying a visit!

JIMENA
Some homecoming, huh?

BAXTER

And you're only here for a few days. Imagine if you stayed for a year... or a lifetime.

JIMENA

By the way, Matthew sends his regards. He did some kickass reporting from Berlin. He was one of the few reporters stationed in East Berlin.

BAXTER

I caught your reports too. You were as cool as ever.

JIMENA

Thanks. But I'm stuck with the Spanish feed. That's my territory.

The car stops at a red light next to an armored military car.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

So, how's your treatment going?

BAXTER

Eh, it's a mixed bag. During winter, my leg goes numb sometimes. The damn metal plate gets cold and freezes my senses. But hey, I'm popping fewer pills than before... I still...

JIMENA

What?

BAXTER

...nightmares. Yeah, but they're fading. Happening less often, you know...

The car starts moving again.

JIMENA

Matthew still remembers our time in Hanoi. He can't fathom why you've given up on reporting...

BAXTER

(uneasy and annoyed)
That's not true. Back in Vietnam, our reports aired two or three times a week.

(MORE)

BAXTER (CONT'D)

But since I've been here, every report I send gets shelved.

Jimena is taken aback by Baxter's tone.

JIMENA

To most Americans, Peru is just llamas. They don't care about us.

The car stops at another red light.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

I don't remember much about Lima. It's all a blur, a distant memory... Is the Sheraton hotel far from here?

BAXTER

The Sheraton? You're planning to stay there?

Jimena nods.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Jimena! I told you, you can stay at my apartment!

Jimena speaks calmly, choosing her words carefully.

JIMENA

I've thought about it, Leslie. I think it's better not to mix work with... I don't know, things from the past...

BAXTER

But don't you see where you are? It'll be safer if we stick together...

JIMENA

Safety isn't the only issue. You know that.

BAXTER

So, what are you afraid of? Me?

JIMENA

You're twisting things, Leslie. I just want some peace...

BAXTER

Alright, you said the Sheraton, right?

Baxter abruptly turns the steering wheel and takes another street.

JIMENA

Leslie!

BAXTER

It's better if we stay together, at least until we figure out what happened to my guys, okay?

The car continues down the empty streets.

Jimena stays silent for a long moment, thinking.

JIMENA

Okay, let's go to your apartment, then. But remember one thing. I don't work for you anymore. I'm no longer your intern...

Jimena pauses.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

Vietnam was a lifetime ago.

BAXTER

I just need your help finding those two guys... That's all. I don't want to lose another colleague in this damn war.

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

CONTINUOUS SHOT: Jimena finishes unpacking her suitcase.

She then walks into the...

LIVING ROOM

...where Baxter is sipping a drink.

BAXTER

Pisco chilcano. Want one?

JIMENA

Sure. I haven't had one in ages.

Baxter heads to the kitchen to fix the drink. Jimena glances around the apartment.

BAXTER (O.S.)
Sorry about the mess...

JIMENA
I like it. It's got your vibe...

BAXTER (O.S.)
You think I'm messy?

Jimena finds old photos of them in Vietnam on the shelves, back when they were war correspondents.

JIMENA POV: She looks at a picture of the two of them in Vietnam. On the shelves is a second picture of Baxter in a military camp, with Jimmy (28), another young American journalist, beside him.

JIMENA (O.S.)
Wow! What a blast from the past! I don't remember these photos. We were so young...

CLOSEUP: THIRD PICTURE: Jimena, dressed as a war correspondent, interviewing a military man.

JIMENA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The day I arrived, they told me, "you don't belong here..."

END POV

Baxter hands Jimena a drink.

BAXTER
You were the first woman reporting from Vietnam...

JIMENA
(counting on her fingers)
Are you kidding? Jurate Kazickas, Catherine Leroy, Kate Webb...

BAXTER
I meant the first Latina woman.

JIMENA
Kate got kidnapped for months in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge, remember?

BAXTER
You still in touch with her?

JIMENA

Yeah, she joined Agence France-
Presse a couple of years ago...

Jimena picks up the photo of Baxter and Jimmy.

BAXTER

Can I ask you something?

Jimena sips her drink.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Why'd you decide to come here?

JIMENA

For the Chilcano...

BAXTER

No, seriously...

Jimena looks at him, silent for a moment.

JIMENA

We mourned for a year when Jimmy
was kidnapped and killed in the
Annamese Mountains, remember?

Baxter nods.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

Your guys are alive...

Baxter is thoughtful for a moment.

BAXTER

Thanks... thanks for coming. I
gotta call Ayacucho. Give me a
minute.

Jimena places the photo back on the shelf.

INT. AYACUCHO - CARLOS VALLE'S HOUSE - DARKROOM - NIGHT

CARLOS VALLE (50s), with indigenous features, is developing
photos. The phone rings in the other room. His DAUGHTER (12),
knocks on the door moments later.

VALLE'S DAUGHTER (O.S.)

Daddy, it's from Lima...

Valle opens the door and takes the phone.

VALLE

*Alo? Baxter, wow, what a miracle.
We're not a liberated zone yet, if
you want to know...*

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - HOME OFFICE - SAME TIME

Baxter sits at his desk.

INTERCUT - VALLE/BAXTER

BAXTER

*Ha, ha, ha. No. I need your help.
Look, I'm coming to Ayacucho
tomorrow with a colleague from New
York. She's doing a report on
Sendero...*

VALLE

*You're always diving into
trouble...*

BAXTER

*I'd like to meet with Eduardo and
Laura. They're in the area...*

VALLE

*No problem. I'll tell Chaico to
come with me to the airport. I
think he met your guys about two
weeks ago...*

END INTERCUT

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimena notices a photo on the shelf.

BAXTER (O.S.)

*Two colleagues from Ayacucho will
meet us tomorrow. They're the best
hounds in the region...*

Jimena picks up the photo.

JIMENA POV: The photo shows Eduardo, Laura, and Baxter in journalist jackets, covering a street press conference.

JIMENA (O.S.)

Is this them?

END POV

Baxter looks over her shoulder and nods.

JIMENA (CONT'D)
They look so young...

Baxter adjusts his tie, picks up his jacket, and puts it on.

BAXTER
They've been with me less than two
years. They're damn good!

JIMENA
(sipping the drink)
Good stuff... What time will you be
back?

BAXTER
An hour tops. There's food in the
fridge if you get hungry...

JIMENA
No, but I'd like to watch the video
your friends sent.

BAXTER
Don't you wanna rest first?

JIMENA
I'd rather watch it now if we're
traveling tomorrow.

Baxter goes to his collection of videotapes, picks one, and
hands it to Jimena.

BAXTER
Pay attention to the message they
sent. Maybe you can figure it
out...

Jimena takes the tape. Baxter puts his hands on her
shoulders.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
You okay?

Jimena nods and gently pushes his hands away.

EXT. LIMA INDUSTRIAL ZONE - NIGHT

In the darkness, a GROUP OF MEN unload three medium-sized
crates from a van.

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jimena is in her room, holding the VHS tape, searching through her luggage.

JIMENA
Where the hell did I leave my
glasses?

From her room, she sees Baxter going through his music collection. Baxter pulls out a CD.

LIVING ROOM

CLOSEUP: Baxter presses play on his stereo. Nina Simone's "Strange Fruit" starts playing.

He proudly shows Jimena the CD cover.

JIMENA (CONT'D)
Wow, what a gem!

BEDROOM

Jimena finds her glasses.

JIMENA (CONT'D)
Do you remember her concert at
the...

She struggles to remember.

JIMENA (CONT'D)
... at the Montreaux Jazz Festival
in Switzerland?

BAXTER
That's where we met, right?

JIMENA
What year was it? '67, '68?

BAXTER
'68. I was freelancing, covering
the student revolution in Paris,
and snuck away for a weekend.

LIVING ROOM

Jimena approaches Baxter, excited.

JIMENA
I don't even remember why I was in
Switzerland that weekend.

BAXTER
 ...running away from the police
 after the barricades, right?

Jimena heads to the VHS player.

JIMENA
 Let's see your friends' tape...
 Where did I leave it? Oh my god, I
 just had it...

Baxter walks towards her room.

BAXTER (O.S.)
 I think you left it in here...

JIMENA
 I might catch something... you've
 always been a bit slow, haven't
 you?

Baxter returns and hands the VHS to Jimena.

INT. LIMA INDUSTRIAL ZONE - WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A HEAVY CRATE drops with a thud on the concrete floor of an abandoned warehouse. MEN in hooded outfits quickly pry the crate open, revealing a cache of high-powered weapons and explosives. One of the boxes reads: "Diplomatic Pouch, People's Republic of Korea". A NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMAT (40s), observes their work.

NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMAT
 Get these sorted. We'll move them
 out by dawn.

The MEN start sorting through the contents.

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimena opens the VHS box and places it in the player.

JIMENA
 I still don't understand how I
 followed you to Vietnam... When did
 we arrive in Hanoi?

BAXTER
 In the '70s...

JIMENA

God! I'd just entered journalism school at the Sorbonne... Jesus, I was 18 years old! I don't know how your bosses agreed to take me on as an intern...

BAXTER

I didn't wanna lose you, you know...

JIMENA

But that's all in the past, Leslie.

Jimena sits on a sofa. She puts on her glasses.

BAXTER

I have to get out, before curfew.

INT. LIMA INDUSTRIAL ZONE - WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The warehouse is dimly lit, shadows stretching across the concrete floor. The large gate creaks open, revealing the minister as he enters briskly, flanked by FOUR BODYGUARDS. The minister strides purposefully towards a row of large crates. From the shadows, the North Korean diplomat emerges, a satisfied smile on his face as he hurries to greet the Minister.

NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMAT

(proudly)

Mr. Minister, it's a pleasure. As promised, our Central Committee's gift is ready for your use.

The minister barely glances at the North Korean diplomat, his focus on the crates. He motions for one of his men to open a crate.

MINISTER

Our party appreciates your support. This will be remembered.

MED. SHOT: AUTOMATIC WEAPONS protrude from the boxes. They are AKM assault rifles.

The minister's eyes narrow as he examines the rifles. He nods slightly, his face betraying no emotion.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

These will do.

The North Korean diplomat's smile widens, clearly pleased with the minister's reaction.

NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMAT

*Our comrades believe in your cause,
Mr. Minister.*

The minister nods, but his mind is clearly elsewhere, already thinking ahead.

MINISTER

*We have much to prepare. Thank you
for your... generosity.*

The North Korean diplomat bows slightly, understanding the conversation is over. The minister turns on his heel, his bodyguards following as they exit the warehouse, the heavy door slamming shut behind them, leaving the North Korean diplomat alone with the crates.

INT. LIMA - TV STUDIO - NIGHT

The TV studio is bathed in bright lights, with cameras rolling as the interview is broadcast live. The ACADEMIC (30s), dressed in a suit and tie, speaks with measured seriousness. The INTERVIEWER (30s), equally polished, listens intently.

In the background, Baxter enters the studio, scanning the room. He spots Julio, who is standing by the control area with his shirt sleeves rolled up and a loose tie, clearly in the middle of a busy night. They greet each other with a warm handshake, but Julio quickly signals for silence, pointing towards the ongoing interview.

ACADEMIC

*What's both ironic and tragic is
that while in Germany, the Berlin
Wall is collapsing, marking the end
of communism in Europe, here, we
are grappling with a communist
insurrection reminiscent of the
Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.*

The interviewer leans forward, keenly aware of the gravity of the topic.

INTERVIEWER

*But just how significant is the
threat from Sendero?*

The academic doesn't hesitate, his tone growing more intense.

ACADEMIC

*In the past two years alone,
Sendero Luminoso has executed
nearly two thousand attacks
annually—almost three military
actions every day.*

Julio and Baxter exchange a glance, the weight of the statement hanging in the air.

ACADEMIC (CONT'D)

*We're talking about targeted
assassinations, assaults on
military posts, and the abduction
of indigenous communities.*

A PRODUCER quietly steps up to JULIO, whispering something in his ear. Julio listens, nodding briefly, his expression turning more serious.

ACADEMIC (CONT'D)

*Ayacucho has been the epicenter of
these terrorist activities, but
it's spreading—slowly,
steadily—across the entire country.*

INTERVIEWER

*And the car bombs and blackouts are
still happening...*

ACADEMIC

*I believe these are the most
difficult years in our entire
republican history.*

INTERVIEWER

Do you think so?

ACADEMIC

*Let us not forget that the Tupac
Amaru Revolutionary Movement, the
MRTA, is also operating, and at the
same time, paramilitary forces,
which some link to the governing
party, are also crouching in the
shadows...Not to mention drug
trafficking.*

Julio catches Baxter's eye, signaling that it's time to go. Without a word, they both slip out of the studio, leaving the intense discussion behind.

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimena rummages through her purse, pulls out a folded piece of paper, and reads it.

INT. TV NEWS PROGRAM - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

TWO EDITORS and ASSISTANTS work quickly, prepping the show.

JULIO

The airport's an easy target, but I doubt it was them. They never claimed it.

BAXTER

You can never be sure with them.

JULIO

I caught Laura's report on Sunday—brilliant stuff. Man, I envy you. Was she with Eduardo? Damn! With reporters like that, my show could be gold.

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimena is on the phone, taking notes.

JIMENA

(on the phone)

But how can I be sure?

She pulls a folder from her purse and places it on the desk.

JIMENA POV: The face of Abimael Guzman, the clandestine leader of Sendero Luminoso, appears in an old mugshot in a booking center.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Could you repeat the name?

She takes notes.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

Remember the interview with Abimael? I know he is in absolute clandestinity, but if you do not assure me an exclusive with him... No deal, got it?

INT. TV NEWS PROGRAM CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Julio and Baxter watch the newscast.

NEWS ANCHOR 1
*Good evening. Here are tonight's
 top stories.*

INSERT: FOOTAGE OF THE CAR BOMB AT THE AIRPORT

NEWS ANCHOR 1 (V.O.)
*A car bomb exploded near the
 airport, injuring several. Police
 suspect the Shining Path.*

NEWS ANCHOR 2 (V.O.)
*Meanwhile, the President, speaking
 at the World Congress of the
 Socialist International in Lima...*

INSERT: FOOTAGE OF THE EXTERIOR OF THE GOVERNMENT PALACE

NEWS ANCHOR 2 (V.O.)
*...received strong support for his
 government.*

A phone RINGS.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
Julio, call from Ayacucho...

Julio answers.

JULIO
*Yes... What? Hold on. Don't hang
 up!*

Julio turns to the producer.

JULIO (CONT'D)
*Get this call from Ayacucho on
 air-now.*

Julio dials the internal phone.

JULIO (CONT'D)
 (looking at the monitors)
*Cecilia, breaking news from
 Ayacucho. Push it to the top.*

The NEWS ANCHOR listens, ready to adjust.

INTERCUT - News Anchor/Julio and Baxter

JULIO (CONT'D)
 (returning to the phone)
*Arturo, you're live in a moment.
 Stand by.*

NEWS ANCHOR 1
*We have breaking news from
 Ayacucho. Go ahead, Arturo.*

CLOSE ON MONITOR: A photo of ARTURO (50ish), indigenous, appears on the screen. Lower third: "Live from Ayacucho".

ARTURO (O.S.)
*This morning, the body of
 journalist Roberto Valdez was found
 near Huanta.*

Baxter's expression hardens.

ARTURO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*Sendero claimed responsibility. The
 body was mutilated—face destroyed,
 hands severed to prevent ID.*

Julio and Baxter are visibly shaken.

ARTURO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*For Channel 6, Arturo Salas,
 Ayacucho.*

JULIO
 (to Baxter)
*Savages! You sending a crew? This
 could be big for your agency...*

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

VHS fast-forwarding.

Jimena stops at a scene.

EXT. HIGHLANDS - DAY (VHS FOOTAGE)

MED. SHOT: LAURA appears in the highlands, dressed as a field reporter.

LAURA
*Okay, Eduardo? Hurry before he
 returns...Okay? Ready?*

She looks around.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Baxter, listen up. On this tape, we're sending you an exclusive. In a sequence that is on this tape...

Laura looks offscreen.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You're sure it's on this tape, right, Eduardo? Okay, there's a part that's going to be really interesting to you. If you figure it out before we get back -- Hurry up, Eduardo, there it is!

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Baxter enters, looking worried.

BAXTER

Sorry, I'm late.

JIMENA

I've been watching the tape, but haven't been able to find anything...

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Curfew started 15 minutes ago. I had to sneak out.

JIMENA

Everything seems... normal.

BAXTER

It's getting complicated, Jimena.

JIMENA

What do you mean?

BAXTER

Let me show you something...

Baxter grabs the remote and fast-forwards the VHS tape.

INSERT: TV MONITOR - VHS VIDEO being fast-forwarded

JIMENA (O.S)

There's nothing here. I doubt this tape has the answers.

END INSERT

Baxter's face hardens.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

You got this a week after losing
contact, right?

Baxter finds the scene he's been looking for.

BAXTER

Watch this...

INSERT: TV MONITOR - VHS VIDEO

Laura interviews WARA (80), an indigenous grandmother.

INT. HIGHLANDS - NEAR MITO VILLAGE - WARA'S HUT - NIGHT (VHS
FOOTAGE)

LAURA (O.S.)

Who was it, señora? Tell us...

The grandmother, Wara, looks at the door, panic in her eyes.

WARA

*No, señorita, I saw nothing, I
swear...*

The CAMERA PANS to ROBERTO VALDEZ (30s), standing in the
doorway. The pan ends in a

CLOSEUP: He is wearing a scarf and a thick sweater.

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

*I'm an old woman... My eyes aren't
good anymore... I didn't see
anything...*

END INSERT

BAXTER (V.O.)

This is the journalist they hired
in Ayacucho as their guide. They've
just found him dead -- murdered by
the Shining Path.

Jimena is stunned. Baxter slumps, setting down the remote.
The tape continues in slow motion.

JIMENA

Oh, my God!

Baxter pours himself a drink, his shoulders heavy.

BAXTER

This damn tape's all I have.

He moves closer to the screen, staring at Laura's image. His fingers trace her face on the screen. Jimena approaches, gently comforting him, running her hand through his hair.

JIMENA

We'll find them, Leslie. Maybe they didn't hire him.

She tries to console him. Baxter is overwhelmed.

BAXTER

Sometimes I wake up seeing Jimmy's face... I couldn't save him, I swear.

Jimena's gaze shifts to the shelf, focusing on a framed photo of Baxter and Jimmy.

INSERT: The photo of Baxter and Jimmy from earlier.

JIMENA (O.S.)

This isn't Vietnam, Leslie... It won't happen again.

BAXTER (O.S.)

It was an ambush...

JIMENA (O.S.)

Vietnam is over. It's over.

END INSERT

Baxter clutches a locket around his neck.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

Your guys are alive, you'll see. You have to jump the bricks, Leslie. Jump the bricks.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MINISTER'S MANSION - NIGHT

A car enters through the gates, SECURITY GUARDS communicating via walkie-talkie.

INT. MINISTER'S MANSION - NIGHT

SANCHEZ (40s) walks briskly down the hall, handing his jacket to a GUARD.

INT. MINISTER'S MANSION - STEAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amid the steam, the minister lies face down, smoking a cigar while getting a massage.

MINISTER

Come here...

Sanchez approaches, adjusting to the thick steam as the MASSEUSE works on the Minister's back. The Minister talks to his ADVISOR, who is dressed in a robe.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

*I want three security cordons
around the Convention Center. The
Socialist International delegates
must feel safe.*

He takes a deep drag on his cigar, then spots Sanchez.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

I have something for you...

Sanchez steps closer through the steam.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Baxter and Jimena stow their carry-on luggage. Sánchez approaches.

SANCHEZ

*Chasing a big story? Ayacucho's not
exactly a vacation spot...*

BAXTER

*We'll just go for a break... Maybe
some handicrafts.*

SANCHEZ

Let me know if you need anything...

BAXTER

*(abruptly)
Will do.*

Baxter closes the compartment and sits beside Jimena. Sanchez returns to his seat.

JIMENA

Why so harsh?

BAXTER
 Can't stand him. He's a hack.
 Nobody trusts him.

EXT. AYACUCHO AIRPORT - DAY

The airplane touches down in Ayacucho.

INT. AYACUCHO AIRPORT - LATER

Baxter and Jimena walk through the airport. Valle and MARCIAL CHAICO (40s), a local journalist, wave them over. Baxter greets them with a warm hug.

SANCHEZ POV: Watching the group from across the room.

After introductions, the group heads towards the exit.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOSTEL SANTA ROSA - LATER

The jeep pulls up to the hostel. The reporters get out and enter.

INT. HOSTEL SANTA ROSA - RECEPTION DESK - CONTINUOUS

Baxter and the reporters stand at the desk.

BAXTER
 You sure you don't want to come
 with us? That guy might have some
 clues...

JIMENA
 You really think he has the photos?

BAXTER
 That's what he said in the letter.

JIMENA
 I'll wait here. The altitude's
 getting to me. How long?

BAXTER
 Four hours, tops.

EXT. QUINUA VILLAGE - CRAFTS CENTER - LATER

*

The jeep navigates the dusty streets. Valle parks, and Baxter quickly gets out and enters the craft center.

INT. CRAFTS CENTER - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

TITO (20s) is molding clay.

BAXTER

Morning, I'm looking for Eusebio...

EXT. QUINUA MAIN SQUARE - SAME TIME

Valle and Chaico wait in the jeep. Soldiers inspect a truck in the background.

VALLE

I'm worried about those two!

CHAICO

Laura and Eduardo? I doubt anything happened. Would the gringo be shopping for crafts if he thought they were in trouble?

INT. CRAFTS CENTER - COURTYARD - SAME TIME

EUSEBIO (60s) is molding clay.

TITO (O.S.)

Dad, here's the man...

Eusebio studies Baxter for a moment.

EXT. HOSTEL SANTA ROSA - SAME TIME

Jimena exits the hostel with her camera equipment and heads for the street.

INT. PARKED CAR - SAME TIME

MYSTERY POV: Watching Jimena as she turns a corner.

INT. CRAFTS CENTER - COURTYARD - SAME TIME

Eusebio slowly unwraps a cloth.

EUSEBIO

They are accusing that boy for no reason. He is incommunicado...

Eusebio shows the contents of the package.

BAXTER POV: Three rolls of film appear.

EUSEBIO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*He found them near where your
 friends were captured. But I don't
 know if they're theirs.*

END POV

Baxter takes the film rolls in his hands.

BAXTER
*Did he see them when they were
 detained?*

EUSEBIO (O.S.)
*I don't know. You should ask him
 yourself...*

Eusebio hands Baxter a piece of paper.

EUSEBIO (CONT'D)
*His name and hospital room
 number...*

BAXTER
How did you get the rolls?

EUSEBIO
*He gave them to my son. They were
 schoolmates.*

BAXTER
And how did you find me?

BAXTER POV: A handcrafted altarpiece, depicting scenes of war between peasants, terrorists, and military.

EUSEBIO (O.S.)
*Your address was on the rolls. I
 had a relative deliver my letter.*

ALTARPIECE POV: Baxter takes a close look at the details of the altarpiece.

BAXTER
Would you sell me this altarpiece?

EXT. QUINUA MAIN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Baxter exits with the altarpiece and gets into the jeep.

VALLE

Holy shit, what a nice piece! How much was it?

BAXTER

Cheap. Practically gave it away.

Nearby, HEAVILY-ARMED SOLDIERS board a military truck. The COMMANDER (30s) leads the platoon.

COMMANDER

Carlitos! Chaico! Off work already?

VALLE

We wish! Just taking the boss shopping. You?

COMMANDER

(looking around)

Delivering supplies. This mess won't be fixed with bullets alone. We need stronger government presence—more schools, healthcare...

CHAICO

You joining the Red Cross now?

Valle gestures to Baxter.

VALLE

This is Baxter, from Lima...

BAXTER

Pleased to meet you...

Valle starts the engine.

VALLE

We've got to go, Commander, before the rain catches us...

The jeep drives off, the military truck prepares to leave.

EXT. STREETS OF AYACUCHO - DAY

Jimena walks casually, stopping people to ask for directions. We hear the SOUND of a CAMERA SHUTTER. She verifies the address and heads to a church.

INT. AYACUCHO - COLONIAL CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Jimena walks slowly down an aisle, admiring the colonial art. She kneels at the altar.

RAMONA (O.S)
Are you Jimena Losada?

Jimena, startled, nods. RAMONA (40s), dressed in black with a veil, approaches.

RAMONA (CONT'D)
Come with me, please...

They head towards the sacristy.

EXT. ROAD INTO AYACUCHO - SAME TIME

The jeep heads back to Ayacucho.

VALLE
They threatened to kill us, didn't they? Shit, we received a call just yesterday. They don't want us snooping around!

CHAICO
What happened to that journalist's body was strange.

VALLE
Yeah. They buried him quickly...

CHAICO
Only his ex-girlfriend was allowed to see the body...

VALLE
You wanted to interview her, didn't you?

CHAICO
What was she going to say, man? Imagine the state she must be in.

VALLE
He had good military contacts..

BAXTER
(interrupting)
Do you guys have a darkroom?

The reporters exchange glances.

VALLE
*I've got one at home. When do you
 need it?*

BAXTER
This afternoon?

Valle's attention shifts to the road ahead.

VALLE
Shit! We're fucked!

EXT. CURVE ON THE ROAD TO AYACUCHO - CONTINUOUS

A rope blocks the road. ARMED TEENAGERS with shotguns emerge from the bushes.

TEENAGER 1
Stop! Hands up, now!

VALLE
We're reporters...

TEENAGER 3
You must be the army!

CHAICO
*We were just in Quinua buying
 crafts. Look...*

Chaico shows them the altarpiece.

VALLE
Here are our papers, see...

TEENAGER 3
What about the gringo?

Baxter, disoriented, clutches his locket tightly.

VALLE
*He's a tourist. We're showing him
 around for extra cash...*

TEENAGER 4
*The Party ordered a national
 collection today....*

Another teenager approaches with a bag. The reporters hand over money, which is quickly collected. The leader counts it and nods.

TEENAGER 1
*Long live the Communist Party
 of Peru, the Shining Path!*

CHORUS OF VOICES

Viva!!

The jeep drives off.

INT./EXT. VALLE'S JEEP - ROAD TO AYACUCHO - MOMENTS LATER

CHAICO
*Step on it! Didn't you realize? The
 military's coming!*

INT./EXT. TRUCK - FLASHBACK

In Vietnam, YOUNG BAXTER and MARINES ride a truck on a jungle trail.

MARINE 1
 The troops were right behind us...

Young Baxter and TWO MARINES look back

MARINE 2
 Shit! They're done for!

In the distance, AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE.

JIMMY
 Do we go back?

MARINE 2
 No way! We'd get caught in the
 crossfire.

MARINE 1
 Baxter!

Young Baxter is distressed.

END FLASHBACK

INT./EXT. VALLE'S JEEP - ROAD TO AYACUCHO - PRESENT DAY

Baxter clutches his locket. SOUND of AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. The jeep speeds away.

VALLE
Baxter, you OKAY?

INT. COLONIAL CHURCH - SAME TIME

Jimena exits the sacristy with Ramona.

RAMONA
I'll let you know tomorrow.

Jimena nods as Ramona heads back inside.

EXT. STREET NEAR COLONIAL CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Jimena exits to the street. Two men get out of a car and enter the church. Sanchez meets them at the door.

INT. HOSTEL SANTA ROSA - FRONT COURTYARD - SAME TIME

The reporters park and rush inside. Chaico heads to the reception desk while Valle and Baxter sit at a table. Baxter holds the altarpiece.

VALLE
Feeling better?

BAXTER
Yeah, I'm fine.

Chaico returns.

CHAICO (O.S.)
She left earlier.

BAXTER
No word on where?

CHAICO
No, but she left two hours ago...

Chaico sits with them. Baxter seems preoccupied.

BAXTER
Can you help me get ready for Huanta? My guys might still be there.

CHAICO
Gringo, you got the best detectives right here.

Valle smirks.

VALLE
When do you want to go?

BAXTER
Tomorrow.

Jimena enters, not noticing them.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Jimena!

Baxter walks over.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Where've you been?

JIMENA
(a bit dazed)
Not feeling well... Altitude,
maybe...

BAXTER
Want to rest?

JIMENA
No, it'll pass. How did it go?

BAXTER
Got a lead...
(gestures to the
journalists)
but I haven't told them yet...

They walk to the table and sit down. Jimena greets the others.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
*Keep our Huanta trip under wraps,
okay?*

Everyone nods.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
(to Valle)
*There's a young guy in the
hospital...*

He pulls out a piece of paper.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Jaime Aguirre. Can you dig into it?

INT. AYACUCHO - VALLE'S HOUSE - DARKROOM - NIGHT

Baxter mixes chemicals with practiced ease. CAMERA PAN: Photos hang drying on a line. Jimena KNOCKS on the door. Baxter hangs the last photo and opens the door slightly. Jimena steps in.

BAXTER
 These rolls were theirs, Jimena.
 The artisan was right. Look...
 shots from the trip...

He points to the photos.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 I think they're still alive. Look,
 it's a perfect sequence...

He shows Jimena the photos.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 Here's the start of the trip...

Baxter takes down a still damp photo and places it on the table.

BAXTER POV: PICTURE 1 - Laura and Eduardo with Valdez, posing by a car on a hill.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 That's the car they rented. They're
 with the guide...

JIMENA (O.S.)
 Why do you think they're okay?

END POV

BAXTER
 The sequence... check these out...

He places three more photos on the table.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 Not much, but look here...

INSERT: PICTURE 2- Laura and Valdez pose of an Andean peak.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Doesn't this look like a farewell?
 Laura hugging the murdered reporter
 -maybe when they split up to head
 into the mountains?

END INSERT

Baxter shows her another photo.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 The guide's in every shot until
 this one...

BAXTER POV: PICTURE 3 - Laura at a hut's doorway with Wara, the indigenous grandmother.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
If he was there, he'd be in this frame, right?

Baxter pauses.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's a peasant woman. Laura doesn't speak Quechua. Eduardo must've taken it. It's well-composed...

END POV

JIMENA
How'd the rolls end up with the artisan? When did they lose them?

BAXTER
The artisan's son is friends with the hospital kid. He handed over the rolls before getting admitted. Make sense?

Jimena examines the photos.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Look at these... troubling...

He adds more photos to the table. Jimena inspects them closely.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What do you see?

JIMENA POV: PICTURE 4 - Military boots on the ground in a blurry Andean landscape.

JIMENA (O.S.)
Is that a uniform?

BAXTER (O.S.)
Looks like a struggle, doesn't it?

END POV

Baxter hands her another photo.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Check this shot of Laura.

JIMENA POV: FIFTH PICTURE - A blurred image of an open camera case on the floor.

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Doesn't it seem like she's showing
what's inside? The rest are too
blurry...

JIMENA (O.S.)
A search? Military?

END POV

BAXTER
Exactly. They ran into a patrol.
The military knows something.

JIMENA (O.S.)
Well, if we're right...

A LOUD BANG surprises them.

Shit! BAXTER JIMENA (CONT'D)
What was that?

Valle yells from the next room.

VALLE (O. S.)
Did you hear that?

BAXTER
Close by.

VALLE (O.S.)
Same crap every night.

BAXTER
We'll be right out. I'm done here.

Baxter shows Jimena a film roll.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
This is the last roll. Sending it
to Lima—it's in color.

He sits Jimena down.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
I don't think the kids were with
the guide when he was killed.

From the other room, NEWS INTRO MUSIC plays.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
The only worrying shots are the
ones showing a struggle...

Valle knocks on the door.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
(to Valle)
Coming!

Baxter turns to Jimena.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
I need to interview that guy in the
hospital.

VALLE (O.S.)
Hurry! The Shining Path's on TV!

LIVING ROOM

Valle sits in an easy chair.

INSERT: TV MONITOR - Prisoners chant slogans on Fronton
island.

NEWS ANCHOR 1
They demand to be recognized as
prisoners of war...

END INSERT

Baxter and Jimena sit next to Valle.

VALLE
Unreal! First press inside Fronton!

JIMENA
Maybe no one tried before!

BAXTER
*You kidding? It's all clandestine!
They don't claim attacks.*

Baxter speaks passionately.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
They've always despised the media.

VALLE
So why now?

BAXTER

*Another anniversary of their armed
struggle's coming...*

INSERT: TV MONITOR - Abimael Guzman's face, the same photo
Jimena had.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

*...And Abimael's still in hiding...
What the hell are the police doing?*

END INSERT

Jimena shifts uncomfortably.

VALLE

*Last sighting was fifteen years
ago...*

BAXTER

*He's never coming out... That
bastard's holed up in the jungle...*

INSERT: TV MONITOR - Senderistas parade with flags.

VALLE

*Will the government meet their
demands?*

BAXTER

*Not before the Socialist Summit! No
way!*

(sarcastic)

*Prisoners of war? They're fanatical
killers...*

END INSERT.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Any word about the hospital kid?

VALLE

*They've got eyes on him day and
night...*

BANGING ON THE FRONT DOOR interrupts them. Valle heads to the
balcony overlooking the street.

LUCHITO (O.S.)

Don Carlos, don Carlos!!

EXT. AYACUCHO - VALLE'S HOUSE - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Valle opens the balcony door. LUCHITO (10) is in the street, visibly shaken.

VALLE
Luchito, what's going on?

LUCHITO
They bombed the house, don Carlos... Come quick...

	VALLE (O.S)	LUCHITO (CONT'D)
What?		<i>They blew up the house, don Carlos...</i>

EXT. AYACUCHO - CHAICO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Baxter and Valle arrive at Chaico's house in the jeep. The front door is blown apart. Chaico, carrying his DAUGHTER (8), who's bleeding from the head, quickly gets into a CAR with her.

	VALLE (O.S.)	CHAICO
	<i>Marcial! What happened?</i>	<i>Follow me to the hospital, Carlitos!</i>

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - LATER

Chaico rushes down the hospital corridor with his daughter, followed by Valle and Baxter. They turn into the emergency room.

EMERGENCY ROOM

THREE NURSES are at the reception desk. Valle strides ahead.

VALLE
We need a doctor, now! Look!

	CHAICO	NURSE 1
	<i>I am the father...</i>	<i>Come with me... The rest of you can sit in the waiting room.</i>

Chaico and a nurse enter a room. Baxter and Valle wait in the emergency area.

VALLE
We asked for police protection two weeks ago—nothing! We get death threats daily!

BAXTER
Who did this?

VALLE
*Could be Shining Path, the army...
 it's a warning...*

Valle looks at the nurses.

VALLE (CONT'D)
 (to nurses)
How long will it take?

NURSE 2
At least an hour...

Baxter sits on a bench, pulls out a photo, and studies it in silence. He joins Valle at the window.

BAXTER
Look at this...

Valle studies the photo for a second.

VALLE POV: Laura and Valdez pose in front of a car, high in the Ayacucho hills.

VALLE (O.S.)
*Don't fuck with me! They were with
 Valdez? When was this taken?*

END POV

Baxter takes back the photo, staring at it.

BAXTER
*Eduardo took it. It's from a roll
 the hospital kid had. That's why I
 need to talk to him.*

Valle is surprised, then thinks it over.

VALLE
You mean the kid incommunicado?

Baxter nods.

VALLE (CONT'D)
 (pauses)
Want to give it a shot?

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDORS - MOMENTS LATER

Valle and Baxter move quietly through dark hospital corridors, searching for the ward where prisoners are treated. A POLICEMAN stands guard in a corner.

VALLE
(whispering)
I'll distract the cop...

INT. DOORWAY TO PRISONERS' WARD - CONTINUOUS

Valle engages the policeman in conversation. Baxter seizes the moment and slips into the ward.

INT. PRISONERS' WARD - CONTINUOUS

Baxter moves silently among the SLEEPING PATIENTS, his eyes scanning for Aguirre's bed.

PATIENT 1 (O.S.)
Who you looking for, señor?

BAXTER
Jaime Aguirre. Know him?

PATIENT 1
Last bed on this row...

Baxter approaches quietly. Aguirre is asleep, an oxygen tube in his nose, his leg bandaged. He looks frail. Baxter gently nudges him awake, whispering.

BAXTER
Don't be scared, kid. Eusebio Chuquipuna sent me. You know his son, Tito, right?

Aguirre relaxes slightly at the mention of the name.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Listen, the cops could be back any minute. I need your help.

The SOUND OF BOOTS echoes closer. Both men hold their breath, the tension thick.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Those journalists you met, Eduardo and Laura—they work for me. I'm a journalist too.

Baxter pulls out a notebook, his hand shaking slightly as he starts taking notes.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Where did you meet them?

AGUIRRE

I met your friends in Mito. I told them I was trying to hide... because of what happened in Ajomarca.

BAXTER

Ajomarca, you say?

Baxter scribbles in his notebook, his face tight with focus.

AGUIRRE

(pauses, swallowing hard)
An army patrol... they mistook the peasants for Senderistas.

Baxter's eyes narrow as a memory surfaces.

BAXTER

A terrible mistake...

AGUIRRE

They killed them all... children, women, old people. Gathered everyone in the school and bombed it. As they ran out, burning... they gunned them down.

Baxter's grip tightens on his notepad, the horror sinking in.

BAXTER

Why would they do that?

AGUIRRE

Revenge. A few days earlier, the Senderistas ambushed a patrol in a nearby village... killed several soldiers..

Baxter's breath hitches, the realization heavy.

BAXTER

And my friends... Eduardo and Laura... what did they do?

AGUIRRE

When I told them, they wanted to go to Ajomarca, to report... but from Mito, it's a long walk.

Aguirre pauses, the memories visibly paining him.

AGUIRRE (CONT'D)

I was too sick to take them. My leg... it was broken, infected. Your friends... they helped me. The fever kept me down for days.

Baxter glances at Aguirre's bandaged leg, the weight of the situation pressing on him.

AGUIRRE (CONT'D)

We stayed in Mito... hiding... until the paramilitaries came.

Baxter's eyes widen, a mix of disbelief and fear creeping in.

BAXTER

Paramilitaries? In that area?

AGUIRRE

They weren't Shining Path or military...

Baxter glances anxiously at the door, then back to Aguirre.

BAXTER

(voice trembling)

What happened to Eduardo and Laura?

AGUIRRE

We tried to hide in the bell tower... but the paramilitaries... They slaughtered the whole village. We saw everything... I'm the only witness...

BAXTER

(urgent, desperate)

Are they alive?

Aguirre's voice is barely a whisper.

AGUIRRE

I don't know... They were taken alive...

BAXTER

What about you? How did you survive?

AGUIRRE

I was left for dead. They dumped me in the square. Villagers found me days later, took me to the medical post.

Baxter glances around, wary of their precarious situation.

BAXTER

You're in good hands now...

AGUIRRE

I hid the rolls of film under some rocks. The ones you have now.

Aguirre pulls Baxter closer, urgency in his eyes.

AGUIRRE (CONT'D)

Listen...Your friends hid a videotape in the bell tower...

BAXTER

Where?

AGUIRRE

In the bell tower... they recorded everything...

Baxter nods, his resolve hardening. He knows what he has to do next.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - LATER

Chaico exits with his daughter, now bandaged, followed by Valle. They get into Chaico's car. Moments later, Baxter joins them, and they drive off.

INT./EXT. CHAICO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

BAXTER

How's she doing?

CHAICO

Four stitches.

VALLE

How are you, mamita?

The girl curls up in her father's arms.

VALLE (CONT'D)
 (to Baxter)
Did you get to talk?

BAXTER
*I need to tell you the real reason
 I'm here...*

The car weaves through Ayacucho's dark streets.

INT. HOSTEL SANTA ROSA - ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Baxter arranges his belongings. Jimena looks concerned.

JIMENA
 Tomorrow? It'll have to be in the
 afternoon. I've got an appointment
 in the morning...

BAXTER
 What do you mean?

JIMENA
 I'm promised info on your friends'
 whereabouts... by someone...

BAXTER
 Yeah? Who?

JIMENA
 A woman. She's asked me to keep her
 identity secret...

BAXTER
 Jimena, seriously? You met a
 stranger, won't tell me who, and
 now you're keeping secrets?

JIMENA
 This is like old times, Leslie! My
 independence always bugged you!
 Want me to file a report on
 everything I do?

Baxter is taken aback by her sudden anger.

JIMENA (CONT'D)
 I'm just asking to delay the trip a
 few hours for this interview.
 That's all!

Baxter exhales, calming down.

BAXTER

Alright, your call. But be careful.
We're in the hot zone...

EXT. AYACUCHO MAIN STREET - DAY

Jimena walks down an empty street and hears FOUR SHOTS. TWO TEENAGERS round the corner, running towards her. Jimena hides in a colonial house.

ANONYMOUS VOICE (O.S.)
They killed her...

VOICES ON OFF (O.S.)
That's them, get them...

A CROWD chases the teens. Jimena emerges and sees a circle around a body on the ground. It's Ramona. From the crowd, EMMA (25) in sportswear, approaches Jimena.

EMMA

Let's go over here...

Emma leads Jimena a few meters away. They turn the corner.

EMMA (CONT'D)

*You were supposed to meet her,
right?*

Jimena is caught off guard.

EMMA (CONT'D)

*Don't worry. We have a message for
you.*

Emma slips Jimena a folded piece of paper.

INT. AYACUCHO - HOSTEL - STAIRCASE - LATER

Baxter exits his room and runs into Jimena.

JIMENA

Leslie, we need to talk. C'mon,
over here...

CORRIDOR

Jimena leads Baxter down the corridor to a secluded corner.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

Your friends are in the navy's
hands, Leslie. They're at a base,
three days from here...

BAXTER
Where, exactly?

JIMENA
The navy's deployed along all the
jungle rivers...

BAXTER
That's off. Aguirre said he saw
them in the mountains!

They pause as a HOSTEL EMPLOYEE passes by. Once alone, they
resume.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Shit! But is your source reliable?

JIMENA
Absolutely.

BAXTER
You've gotta understand -- I can't
just flip a coin...

JIMENA
Best to split up. I'll head to the
jungle; you hit the highlands.

BAXTER (O.S.)
You can't go alone, Jimena. You
don't know the area.

JIMENA
Neither do you, Leslie! You haven't
been here since the war started,
have you?

Baxter remains silent, visibly frustrated.

EXT. HIGHWAY IN THE HIGHLANDS - DAY

Two cars navigate the rugged landscape. Valle and Chaico are
in the jeep, Baxter and Jimena in the other car.

INT./EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Baxter drives in silence, tension thick in the air.

BAXTER
Let's meet back in Ayacucho in six
days, no matter what.
(MORE)

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Enough time for you and Chaico in the jungle and me with Valle in the mountains. Assess, then return. Sound good?

INT./EXT. JEEP - SAME TIME

Valle and Chaico argue as they drive.

CHAICO

There's nothing out there, man. I know the area...

VALLE

They're messing with her...

EXT. HIGHLANDS - CROSSROADS - LATER

The vehicles stop at a crossroads. Chaico joins Jimena in her car, while Baxter switches to the jeep with Valle. The cars drive off in opposite directions.

INT./EXT. JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Baxter and Valle continue through the highlands.

VALLE

Chaico knows this place inside out. Trust me, he knows everything...

BAXTER POV: A PEASANT (50) stumbles down a slope, struggling to stay upright.

BAXTER (O.S.)

Stop, stop!

END POV

Valle reverses as Baxter jumps out to assist the distressed peasant.

PEASANT

**They tried to kill us all, taitito!
Fifty terrorists!**

VALLE

What happened?

PEASANT

They raided our village this morning, called us army snitches, shot at us! Twenty bodies in the square, taitito.

Baxter, catching bits of the conversation, looks to Valle.

BAXTER

What's he saying?

VALLE

Sendero killed twenty peasants over that hill.

BAXTER

Let's go!

EXT. HUALLAPAMPA VILLAGE - MAIN SQUARE - DAY

Bodies lie on rough stretchers in the village square, surrounded by grieving PEASANTS. Women weep and sing funeral hymns in Quechua. Baxter films the scene, capturing the raw emotion.

THROUGH BAXTER'S CAMERA VIEWFINDER: Women mourning, bodies on the ground, children weeping.

END CAMERA VIEWFINDER

Baxter continues filming as Valle finishes interviews and approaches. A HELICOPTER is heard approaching.

VALLE

They used machetes. Looking for the village Governor, accused him of collaborating with the military.

A military helicopter prepares to land over a soccer field.

Baxter clutches a locket tightly in his fist.

EXT. HUALLAPAMPA SOCCER FIELD - LATER

FIFTEEN HEAVILY ARMED SOLDIERS, led by the COMMANDER, disembark the helicopter with the village GOVERNOR (40s). Baxter and Valle arrive.

COMMANDER

(to his soldiers)

Two at the entrance. The rest, sweep the area!

(MORE)

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
*I want no surprises. Bring me the
 bodies! Fifteen minutes!*

The Commander notices the reporters and approaches.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
How'd you get here before us?

VALLE
*We were nearby when we heard about
 the massacre, Commander...*

Baxter and the Commander exchange nods.

COMMANDER
Did you just get here?

BAXTER
About half an hour ago...

COMMANDER
*If I didn't have orders to evac the
 wounded, I'd sweep this whole area!
 It's crawling with terrorists,
 Carlitos!*

Soldiers load the wounded onto stretchers and into the helicopter.

Baxter films the chaos as peasants try to board, only to be blocked by soldiers.

COMMANDER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Move it! We don't have time!

Baxter approaches Valle and the Commander.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
 (to the Governor)
Is that all?

The Governor waves to the reporters.

GOVERNOR
*Two more, Commander. What about the
 relatives? They want to accompany
 the wounded.*

COMMANDER
*Damn it! I don't know if we'll all
 fit. Okay, one per wounded!
 Sergeant, stay in the village. If
 any terrorists show up, shoot!*

The Commander and six soldiers board the helicopter, which takes off.

VALLE

*Too bad he's getting transferred to
Lima.*

The helicopter disappears behind a mountain.

EXT. HUALLAPAMPA - LATER

Baxter and Valle load their equipment into the jeep and drive off.

The governor watches them leave.

GOVERNOR

Inocencio, get the horses ready.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - HOSTEL - NIGHT

The reporters arrive at a small-town hostel and enter.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - HOSTEL - NIGHT

A teenager carries their bags to their rooms.

JIMENA

I'm not eating tonight.

CHAICO

Rest. Want me to wake you tomorrow?

JIMENA

No need. I'll wake myself.

JIMENA'S ROOM

Jimena unpacks, placing a hand-drawn map of San Francisco village on the table and studying it.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Simple huts line the riverbank.

INT. RIVERBANK HUT - NIGHT

ABIRERI (55) sits in a candle-lit room with his wife, CHABIÑA (40s), brother-in-law, AÑANTSINTENKARI (20s), and son, CHABAKA (18), who sharpens a spear. All wear traditional Ashaninka clothing. Chabiña paints her brother's face with war paint.

ABIRERI

If you leave, Chabiña will die of grief.

AÑANTSINTENKARI

I must find the shaman in the forest. Ayahuasca will guide me.

ABIRERI

They're killing the Ashaninka like dogs. No one will take you in, only our ancestors' spirits.

CHABIÑA

You've lacked nothing here.

AÑANTSINTENKARI

Last night, I heard the Chicuco's cry.

Chabiña and Abireri exchange worried glances.

ABIRERI

Who will help with the boat if you leave?

After a silence.

CHABAKA

I will.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - MAIN STREET - SAME TIME

Jimena knocks softly at a door and enters a darkened room.

EXT. HUALLAPAMPA - HILLTOP - SAME TIME

FOUR HORSEMEN armed with rifles gallop towards an indigenous village.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimena sits at a table with Emma and a STRANGER.

EMMA

One of the conditions was that your friend would be with you... Do you know where he is?

JIMENA

No idea.

The stranger nods at Emma.

EMMA

Okay. Go to the agreed place, but we can't guarantee anything.

EXT. HUALLAPAMPA - WARA'S HUT - NIGHT

Hooded horsemen dismount and kick in the hut's door, bursting inside.

RIDER 2

Eulogio, Eulogio! Son-of-a-bitch!

RIDER 1

Fucking terrorist!

INT. HUALLAPAMPA - WARA'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

One of the men holds a torch. Wara and her granddaughter, URPI, cower in the dim light.

RIDER 2

Where the hell is Eulogio?

WARA

He's not here, papacito. He left ten days ago.

A rider grabs Urpi from Wara's arms.

WARA (CONT'D)

Please, it's just my granddaughter and me...

Another man yanks Wara by the hair.

GOVERNOR

If he shows up, we'll kill him.

EXT. HUALLAPAMPA - WARAS HUT - CONTINUOUS

As they leave, the last man throws the torch at the hut. It ignites, and Wara and Urpi cry as flames consume their home.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - DOCK - DAYBREAK

Emma waits by the riverbank. Jimena arrives, exchanges a few words with Emma, and boards a canoe with KATARI (40s), the boatman. Abireri and Chabaka watch from a distance. The boat drifts down the peaceful river as Sanchez approaches Emma.

EXT. OFF THE HIGHWAY - DAYBREAK

Baxter studies a map.

BAXTER
(pointing)
How far from here?

VALLE (O.S.)
At least a half-hour walk.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - RESTAURANT - DAYBREAK

Chaico enters and approaches the owner.

CHAICO
*Morning. I'm looking for my
colleague... She's about thirty...*

Sanchez enters with Emma.

CHAICO (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Sanchez! When did you get here?

SANCHEZ
(surprised; confused)
*Just now. I've got an interview
with Major Perales, the military
chief here...*

Sanchez joins Chaico, leaving Emma behind.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)
*After last night, I thought you'd
be lying low...*

CHAICO (O.S.)
*No way. They'd need dynamite to
 scare me off...*

Chaico stares at Emma.

CHAICO (CONT'D)
I know you from somewhere...

EMMA
 (nervously)
*I don't think so. I'm not from
 around here...*
 (to Sanchez)
See you later.

Emma leaves. Abireri and Chabaka enter and sit nearby.

ABIRERI POV:

CHAICO
*Remember that young woman with the
 gringo? Seen her around?*

Sanchez shakes his head. Chaico turns to the OWNER (50s).

CHAICO (CONT'D)
Sure you haven't seen her?

OWNER
What's she look like?

CHAICO (O.S.)
*About thirty, taller than me. Looks
 like a gringa...*

END POV

Abireri listens, intrigued.

OWNER
*Haven't seen her, señor. Try the
 other restaurant around the corner.*

CHAICO
Thanks. I'll check it out.
 (to Sanchez)
*That girl just now reminds me of
 someone... It's on the tip of my
 tongue.*

Chaico heads for the door, then suddenly stops.

CHAICO (CONT'D)

*That's it! Emma, Emma Rodríguez.
She was Valdez's girlfriend—the
reporter who got murdered...*

SANCHEZ

Are you sure?

CHAICO

*I saw her at the morgue in
Ayacucho. She was there to identify
the body...*

SANCHEZ (O.S.)

Maybe you're mistaken.

CHAICO

I never forget a face, man. Never!

Chaico waves goodbye and exits.

Abireri whispers to Chabaka, who quickly leaves.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - STREET - DAYBREAK

Chaico walks away from the restaurant.

CHABAKA (O.S.)

Sir, sir!

Chaico turns to see the young man approach.

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

*My father wants a word. Says it's
urgent.*

CHAICO

Your father? Who is he?

CHABAKA

*He'll be at the dock soon. He wants
to meet you there..*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - DOCK - LATER

Birds fly over the calm river. Chaico and Abireri talk.

CHAICO

*You sure? I don't think she'd go
alone...*

ABIRERI

*Not many people come here, señor.
Only the military. Never seen that
woman before. Blondish hair, right?*

Chaico nods as Abireri loads food into his boat.

ABIRERI (CONT'D)

She went with Katari...

CHAICO

Have they gone far?

Abireri shrugs.

ABIRERI

I can take you if you want.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO VILLAGE - HOSTEL - CHAICO'S ROOM - LATER

Chaico finds his room ransacked, camera and equipment missing. Furious, he SLAMS the DOOR on his way out.

EXT. MITO - OUTSKIRTS - HILLTOP - DAY

Baxter and Valle reach the crest overlooking Mito. Weary, they survey the scene—a few adobe houses, a modest chapel with a small bell tower rising above the barren landscape.

BAXTER

Looks like a ghost town...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - VILLAGE DOCK - DAY

Chaico arrives at the riverbank where Abireri and Chabaka wait. He boards the boat.

CHAICO

Think we'll catch up with them?

ABIRERI

*They've got an hour's lead, but I
heard where they're headed. Three
hours from here...*

(to Chabaka)

***Take those potatoes to your mother.
I'll be back this afternoon...***

Abireri pushes his boat downstream and hops in.

EXT. MITO SQUARE - DAY

Baxter and Valle walk among recently burned houses. In the distance, DOGS sniff the ground.

VALLE
It's a mess, dammit.

Valle heads to the far end of the village. Baxter spots the abandoned bell tower.

VALLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Anyone here?

Valle enters a house. Baxter moves toward the bell tower.

EXT. MITO SQUARE - BELL TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Baxter finds the door to the bell tower chained shut. He tries to open it but fails.

Wara watches silently from her doorway. Baxter leaves his video equipment on the ground.

WARA POV: Baxter searches for something, returns with a medium-sized stone.

END POV

BAXTER MEDIUM SHOT: He hammers at the chain until it breaks.

WARA POV: sees that Baxter begins to climb the stone stairs.

END POV

INT. MITO SQUARE - BELL TOWER - CONTINUOUS

BAXTER POV: Narrow, dark stairs lead upward.

END POV

In the bell tower, Baxter kneels and digs through dried corn husks on the floor. He uncovers the video cassette and examines it, his hands trembling.

LATER

Baxter leaves the cassette on the floor and rushes out of the bell tower.

EXT. MITO SQUARE - BELL TOWER - CONTINUOUS

At the doorway, Baxter retrieves his video equipment but notices something.

BAXTER POV: Wara watches him, Urpi clinging to her. They look terrified.

END POV

Baxter hurriedly climbs back up the bell tower stairs.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Chaico and Abireri advance slowly down the river.

ABIRERI

*That lady talked with your friend
at the dock. Then a man joined
them, and they chatted for a while.*

Chaico is intrigued by Abireri's story.

INT. BELL TOWER - SAME TIME

Sitting on the floor, Baxter inserts the cassette into his camera, plugs in an earphone, and plays the tape.

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY (CAMERA FOOTAGE)

THROUGH THE CAMERA VIEWFINDER - HOODED MEN storm the village, FIRING GUNS into the air.

MASKED MAN 1

Everybody to the fucking square!

The men kick in doors, dragging WOMEN, CHILDREN, and the ELDERLY out of their homes.

Others drag a man, Casimiro, to the center of the square.

MASKED MAN 2

Motherfucker!

CASIMIRO

**We didn't do
anything, papacito!**

WARA

**Leave him alone, he hasn't
done anything wrong.**

Masked Man 3 drags Casimiro by the hair.

MASKED MAN 3
**This guy's an informant for the
 terrucos! People's trial!**

Villagers scream in opposition.

MASKED MAN 3 (CONT'D)
**You'll see what happens to
 snitches!**

Masked Man 3 SHOOTS Casimiro in the FOREHEAD.

A WOMAN rushes forward, yanking off the man's hood -revealing
 the GOVERNOR.

The Governor kicks the woman and SHOOTS her in the CHEST.

The peasants scatter, but the hooded men stop them. Enraged,
 the Governor fires into the fleeing crowd.

Smoke from burning huts rises into the sky.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Chaico eyes the river's current anxiously.

ABIRERI
*We'll catch them soon. Katari's
 boat is older, no more powerful
 than mine.*

Chaico notices another river mouth.

ABIRERI (CONT'D)
*What'd I tell you? That's the
 ravine—they had to detour there.
 (murmuring to himself)
**My brother-in-law's got to be
 nearby...***

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY (CAMERA FOOTAGE)

THROUGH THE CAMERA VIEWFINDER - Hooded men gather the
 peasants, leading them away from the square amid weak cries
 and weeping.

MASKED MAN 4
**Take them all to the communal
 house!**

WARA	VILLAGE WOMAN 3
What are you going to do with us?	Have mercy, we've done nothing wrong...

A hooded man signals to the bell tower and then the camera drops sharply to the ground.

From an unusual angle, Laura looks pleadingly at Eduardo; Aguirre sits on the ground, anguished.

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Baxter slowly removes the cassette, tears streaming down his face.

INT. BELL TOWER STAIRS - SAME TIME

Valle climbs the stairs and finds Baxter sobbing.

VALLE
What the hell are you doing, man?

Valle glances around, spotting the cassette on the floor. Baxter clutches his locket tightly.

VALLE (CONT'D)
Some hooded men were asking about us last night... We need to move!

EXT. RIVER - NARROW RAVINE - DAY

Moving with the motor off, Abireri scoops burned oil from the water.

ABIRERI
They're not far...

THREE GUNSHOTS echo in the distance. Abireri suddenly starts screaming.

ABIRERI (CONT'D)
Añantsintenkari!!

CHAICO
Shut up, what are you doing!!!!

AERIAL SHOT: The ravine and jungle below.

ABIRERI (O.S.)
Añantsintenkari!!!!

Frightened birds scatter from the trees.

EXT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Baxter and Valle exit the bell tower, dismayed. Baxter carries the videotape and his camera.

Urpi watches silently.

VALLE

Have you seen your Granny, honey?

URPI

She went to the cemetery...

Baxter leans against the wall, visibly shaken.

EXT. MITO - DAY

From a distance, Wara gestures for Valle to come closer. Valle approaches her.

BAXTER POV: Wara speaks to Valle, signaling something, then leaves. Valle sets down his gear, removes his jacket, and begins digging.

END POV

Baxter rushes over.

EXT. VILLAGE CEMETERY OF MITO - CONTINUOUS

BAXTER

What did she say?

VALLE

There's something here...

Impulsively, Baxter helps Valle dig through the damp soil.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

Jimena spots something floating in the water—it's a body. Katari pushes it away with an oar. Jimena takes photos. Four decomposed bodies appear. Katari pulls out a small hunting rifle, scanning the riverbank. Jimena is visibly frightened.

EXT. VILLAGE CEMETERY OF MITO - DAY

A few homeless dogs sniff around the gravesites. Suddenly, Baxter hits something hard.

BAXTER
There's something here, look...

He begins to sift through the dirt.

Baxter uncovers a leather case, opening it to reveal a camera and two battered lenses. The cassette chamber is empty, but he finds a roll of exposed film in the dirt. Baxter and Valle exchange sad glances.

Later, Valle finds a blood-splattered leather jacket and shows it to Baxter.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
(Moved)
This was Eduardo's...

Valle pulls Eduardo's press card from the pocket and hands it to Baxter.

BAXTER POV: The photo on Eduardo's press card.

END POV

Silently, tears roll down Baxter's face. Regaining composure, he stands.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Let's talk to that old lady.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

Chaico and Abireri listen to the jungle sounds.

CHAICO	ABIRERI
<i>You can't shout like that...</i>	<i>Añantsintenkari is my brother-in-law...</i>

ABIRERI (CONT'D)
Listen...he moves like a snake...

In the distance, something floats on the river's surface.

CHAICO
What's that-logs??

As they approach, they discover four bodies floating. Silence envelops them, broken only by the boat's movement. Abireri uses his oar to inspect the faces.

ABIRERI
(muttering)
Añantsintenkari?

The corpses are Ashaninka warriors with painted faces.

ABIRERI (CONT'D)
They were killed yesterday or today...

CHAICO
Any word of an attack?

ABIRERI
*Terrorists, drug traffickers
-they're always here, señor...*

He pushes a corpse out of the boat's path.

ABIRERI (CONT'D)
The natives are slaves now.

CHAICO
No resistance?

ABIRERI
(makes a helpless gesture)
They have no weapons.

CHAICO
I'm worried about my friend...

EXT. MITO SQUARE - DAY

Baxter and Valle carry the objects found in the cemetery.

EXT. WARA'S HOUSE - DAY

They knock on Wara's door. No answer.

VALLE
Let's just go in...

INT. WARA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The two reporters pause as their eyes adjust to the dim light. Across the room, Wara hugs Urpi, who weeps quietly. Valle approaches and gently consoles them.

VALLE

Don't be afraid, mamita. Tell your little granddaughter not to worry.

WARA

Last night, they burned our little house on the hill.

VALLE

Tell us everything.

WARA

We came here to hide. Everything we owned is gone...

Baxter sets up his video equipment and starts filming.

VALLE

I'm the godfather of one of Casimiro Lloque's sons. Do you know him?

WARA

They killed him, too, papacito.

VALLE (O.S.)

When did it happen?

WARA

A week ago. They said they were from Sendero. They gathered us all in the square, papacito.

Wara starts crying.

WARA (CONT'D)

They were looking for my son -- to kill him!

VALLE (O.S.)

Who's your son?

WARA

The mayor. That's why they wanted him. But he escaped and is hiding in Huamanga. "Piece of shit terrorist," they said.

VALLE (O.S.)
Did you see our friends?

EXT. MITO SQUARE - DAY - FLASHBACK

A hooded man looks up at the bell tower.

MASKED MAN 1
There's someone up there!

Three hooded men rush toward the bell tower.

MASKED MAN 2
Get them!

The men storm the narrow staircase, forcing Laura and Eduardo down.

END FLASHBACK

Wara sobs.

WARA
There were three of them, but one got away.

Valle listens intently.

WARA (CONT'D)
They took the other two away. "They must be terrorists," they said.

VALLE
Do you know who they were, mamita?

WARA
"We'll kill you," they told me, papito! "We'll kill you if you say anything!"

VALLE
Don't worry, mamita. We can take you to Huamanga to meet your son if you want.

WARA
It was that bastard Eudocio. I saw him when my daughter pulled off his hood. That's why they killed her...

VALLE
Who is Eudocio, mamita..? Do you know him?

WARA
He's the Governor of Mollepampa...
He burned our hut last night...

EXT. WARA'S HOUSE - DAY

Baxter and Valle exit the house, scanning the area.

Urpi watches as they walk away.

INT./EXT. JUNGLE - NEAR TIBURIA VILLAGE - BOAT - DAY

From the boat, Jimena spots bodies scattered among the foliage, all in Ashaninka clothing. She snaps several photos. Other naked bodies are decomposing, some face down in the mud, others hanging from branches above the water.

The boat slowly looks for a place to dock.

JIMENA POV: A sign on a faded cloth tied between trees reads:
 "THIS IS HOW GOVERNMENT DOGS DIE."

END POV

KATARI
*I don't think anyone's left,
 señorita. We should keep moving...*

They reach the riverbank. Jimena steps out of the boat, but Katari stays onboard, visibly scared.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Baxter and Valle walk along the Andean heights toward Ajomarca.

VALLE
Let's dig over there.

EXT. JUNGLE - TIBURIA VILLAGE - MAIN STREET - DAY

Jimena walks among burning huts, taking photos.

POV - JIMENA: A body hangs from a tree in the village center with a sign around its neck: "THIS IS HOW INFORMERS DIE. LONG LIVE CHAIRMAN GONZALO."

END POV

Birds of prey circle above, and dogs fight over remains.

Jimena cautiously enters one of the cabins.

INT./EXT. JUNGLE - TIBURIA - VILLAGE HUT - DAY

Inside, the main room is in disarray. Through the hut's cracks, Jimena sees a silhouette outside. Nervously, she steps out.

An injured ASHANINKA GIRL (12) looks at her, pleading. Her dress is stained with mud, and her face and arms are scratched. Jimena helps her stand and leads her into the hut.

EXT. ALONG THE PATH TOWARD AJOMARCA - DAY

Baxter and Valle finish burying Eduardo's belongings.

VALLE

Perfect. No one will notice.

(to Baxter)

Let's keep going.

They walk on.

INT. JUNGLE - TIBURIA - VILLAGE HUT - DAY

Jimena cleans the girl's face with a cloth.

GIRL

(crying)

They killed them one by one, señorita. "We're not wasting bullets on dogs," they said...

Jimena listens, absorbed in the girl's story.

GIRL (CONT'D)

They threw my father's body in the river. I saw it all. I hid among the dead, pretending...

JIMENA (O.S.)

How many were there?

GIRL

A bunch. They took all the boys... My little brother...

JIMENA

Let's heal your wounds. Let me see what I have...

GIRL
*...they are taking them to the
 mountains to become guerrillas...*

A distant MOTORBOAT sound sends the girl into a panic.

GIRL (CONT'D)
That's them. I'm sure it's them!

She bolts out of the hut, fleeing through the brush. GUNSHOTS echo from the riverbank.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Baxter and Valle look down on Ajomarca from a hill.

VALLE (O.S)
*Those bastards... looks like they
 wiped it out!*

They descend quickly.

INT./EXT. JUNGLE - TIBURIA - VILLAGE HUT - DAY

Jimena hides in a corner as DOGS BARK and VOICES SHOUT outside.

JIMENA POV: Through the slits, she sees two figures against the light.

END POV

One figure bursts through the door.

JIMENA
Chaico!

They embrace. Abireri stands guard at the door.

JIMENA (CONT'D)
Did you see the girl?

They step outside, searching.

JIMENA (CONT'D)
She's the only survivor...

ABIRERI
No one's here. Only vultures...

CHAICO

*This was the first village to form
an indigenous self-defense group.*

JIMENA

What's that?

CHAICO

*They organized to defend against
the terrorists.*

ABIRERI

*But they had no weapons. Just
arrows and machetes.*

CHAICO

*(looking at Jimena)
Why did you come alone? Why didn't
you tell me?*

Jimena motions for him to be quiet, needing a moment to gather her thoughts.

EXT. AJOMARCA VILLAGE - DAY

Baxter films a street in Ajamarca.

THROUGH THE CAMERA VIEWFINDER: He pans across a burned-out shack.

BAXTER (O.S.)

Something terrible happened here.

EXT. JUNGLE - TIBURIA - VILLAGE HUT - DAY

JIMENA

*I have an interview with some
Shining Path leaders in the next
village...*

Chaico is stunned.

CHAICO

*What! With the leaders? Are you
sure?*

Chaico paces, deep in thought.

CHAICO (CONT'D)

Does Baxter know about this?

Jimena shakes her head.

JIMENA

We've planned this for three months. One of our reporters infiltrated a connected group... Anyway, that's not the point. We got a contact in Ayacucho...

Chaico listens, concerned.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

That contact was murdered yesterday, but his comrade survived. She asked me to come.

Jimena waits for Chaico's reaction

JIMENA (CONT'D)

They're waiting for me in the next village...

Jimena tries to sound convincing.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

They asked me to come alone and not tell anyone the reason for my trip...

Chaico thinks, growing angry.

CHAICO

So you have no clue where the guys are... This has all been a farce...

Jimena struggles to control her anger.

JIMENA

They promised to help find the guys after I interview Chairman Gonzalo...

CHAICO

*Chairman Gonzalo? You mean Abimael?
(sarcastic)
Ha! An interview with Abimael?*

JIMENA

Can you imagine? It would be a world exclusive!

CHAICO

Impossible! Abimael wouldn't be hiding in the jungle—he's sick, needs daily meds!

JIMENA

I'm getting that interview. No matter what.

CHAICO

(irritated)

Okay, let's assume you're right. But tell me—who did you talk to in San Francisco village?

Jimena hesitates.

CHAICO (CONT'D)

I know this area, Jimena! I work here!

Chaico grows more frustrated as Jimena listens, thoughtful.

CHAICO (CONT'D)

This is no-man's-land. Terrorists, narcos, military—everything's here. And do you know what they've done to the natives? They've turned them into slaves! Did you hear me? Slaves!

Chaico's anger builds.

CHAICO (CONT'D)

The terrorists conscript them, the narcos use them as mules, and for some in the military, they're cannon fodder.

Abireri approaches.

ABIRERI

We can't stay long, sir.

Chaico ignores him, continuing to vent.

CHAICO

Entire villages decimated. And you're telling me you have a world exclusive? Look at these bodies! Over twenty people—murdered! Will that make your news channel? We only make international news during a coup or a massive earthquake!

Jimena is visibly upset by Chaico's tone.

CHAICO (CONT'D)
So don't give me the "secret source" bullshit! I have a right to know, dammit!

Chaico waits for a response, but none comes.

CHAICO (CONT'D)
Last night, you spoke with Emma Rodríguez. Do you know who that woman was?

Jimena shakes her head.

CHAICO (CONT'D)
She's the one who identified Roberto Valdez's body. Emma was his girlfriend! I saw her at the morgue. Want to know something else?

Chaico checks the area, ensuring they're alone.

CHAICO (CONT'D)
It's strange that she, who should hate the Shining Path, has suddenly become a terrorist.

Jimena walks in silence, confused.

JIMENA
I don't know what to say...

ABIRERI
Señor...

Chaico calms down, gently taking Jimena by the arms.

CHAICO
Let's think this through. How the hell are we getting out of this nightmare?

EXT. AJOMARCA - STREETS - DAY

Baxter and Valle explore a bombed house.

INT. BOMBED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Among the charred remains, Baxter finds something that catches his eye. He picks it up with a handkerchief and examines it.

BAXTER
Phosphorous...phosphorous bombs.

INT. HOSPITAL - FLASHBACK

CLOSE UP: AGUIRRE

AGUIRRE
They killed them all...

END FLASHBACK

Valle examines the bomb remnants. Baxter picks up several cartridges and shows them to Valle.

BAXTER
Look, FAL cartridges. Only the army uses these.
(looks around)
This was a fucking massacre...

INT. HOSPITAL - FLASHBACK

CLOSEUP: AGUIRRE

AGUIRRE
An army patrol... they mistook the peasants for Senderistas. They killed them all... children, women, old people. Gathered everyone in the school and bombed it. As they ran out, burning... they gunned them down.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. JUNGLE - TIBURIA - VILLAGE DOCK - DAY

Jimena loads her equipment into Katari's boat. Chaico, waist-deep in water, pushes the boat into the current before climbing in. The boat moves swiftly.

CHAICO POV: He glances back at Abireri on the dock.

CHAICO (O.S.)
Come back for us in three hours...

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF AJOMARCA - DAY

Baxter and Valle exit a bullet-riddled home.

BAXTER

A military friend mentioned hearing about "a terrible mistake" around here. That's how they put it - "A big-time botch-up..."

Valle listens, intrigued.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

They thought terrorists were here, so they decided to cleanse the area. Then they realized... these were just peasants. Innocent people...

VALLE

So you sent Eduardo and Laura to investigate...

Baxter nods.

BAXTER

But we did not know the exact location of the massacre....

Baxter looks at the debris around him.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Here it was.

They pause, hearing QUECHUA FUNERAL SONGS in the distance.

BAXTER POV: Atop a hill, a procession of PEASANTS carries six corpses on their shoulders.

INT./EXT. RIVER NEAR TIBURIA - BOAT - DAY

Jimena and Chaico navigate the river. Jimena is on edge, unnerved by the SQUAWKING OF BIRDS and the dense, mysterious landscape around them.

EXT. AJOMARCA - HILLTOP - DAY

Baxter and Valle reach the hilltop, meeting the indigenous procession.

Baxter begins filming as Valle starts interviewing.

VALLE

What happened?

PEASANT WOMAN
The terrorists killed them...

VALLE
Are there more bodies?

PEASANT 2
We pulled them from a mass grave...

PEASANT 1
**There's another grave in
 Concepción...**

The group moves on, and Valle surveys the row of bodies.

BAXTER
What did they say?

VALLE
*We need to go to the other village.
 There's another mass grave there.*

EXT. JUNGLE - QUIMARO PITARI - DOCK - DAY

INDIGENOUS WOMEN wash clothes in the river as the canoe approaches the dock.

KATARI
 (to Jimena)
*They said someone would meet you
 here, but I don't see anyone. We
 should head up...*

EXT. JUNGLE - QUIMARO PITARI VILLAGE - DAY

Twenty huts form a circle, with smoke rising from rustic stoves in the clearing.

KATARI
Wait here...

Jimena looks around, snapping pictures.

Jimena looks around, snapping pictures. Katari returns with SIMON (40s) and a young SETTLER (18). Simon, wearing a sweaty, faded polo, eyes Chaico with suspicion.

KATARI (CONT'D)
*This is Simon. He's who you're
 looking for...*

Simon shakes Jimena's hand, still watching Chaico warily.

EXT. CEMETERY - MASS GRAVE - DAY

PEASANTS continue to unearth bodies. A dozen victims lie on rough wooden stretchers, with relatives RECITING FUNERAL LITANIES.

Baxter begins to film the scene.

INT. JUNGLE - QUIMARO PITARI - HUT - DAY

Jimena sips water while Chaico waits, expectant. Simon, eyeing Chaico uneasily, sits with the settler beside him.

SIMON

We thought you'd come alone. I doubt they know you brought someone...

CHAICO

Don't worry about me. They've always let me work in peace.

Simon studies Chaico in silence.

SIMON

(to Jimena)

This young man will take you to the base...

EXT. CEMETERY - MASS GRAVE - DAY

Baxter continues filming as more corpses are unearthed.

EXT. JUNGLE - QUIMARO PITARI - MAIN SQUARE - DAY

The reporters, Simon, and the settler leave the village, disappearing into the dense jungle.

EXT. CEMETERY - MASS GRAVE - DAY

A MAN pulls another body from the grave. A PEASANT WOMAN, recognizing her daughter, throws herself on the body, overwhelmed with grief.

Microphone in hand, Valle approaches a group of women.

THROUGH THE CAMERA VIEWFINDER: Baxter starts taping.

VALLE (O.S.)

What happened, mamita?

OLD INDIGENOUS WOMAN
Terrorists killed my son...

The OLD WOMAN weeps inconsolably. Baxter gestures to Valle to leave.

VALLE
 (quietly, to Baxter)
Let's head to the other village...

EXT. YANACANCHA VILLAGE - MAIN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Baxter and Valle move through the CROWDS in the streets toward the main square. Bodies are lined up in the square, with SEVERAL PEASANTS looking on.

When Baxter finishes filming, he approaches Valle, who's been interviewing people.

BAXTER
What did they say?

VALLE
There are more bodies in the school.

BAXTER
Where?

VALLE
Down that road. Ask around.

BAXTER
Find some witnesses...

Baxter walks off, and Valle resumes his work.

EXT. YANACANCHA VILLAGE - SCHOOLHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The schoolhouse is modest, a one-floor building. On the street, TWO BOYS play war with sticks.

BAXTER
Do you know where the school is?

The boys stop playing, exchanging looks.

BOY 1
There's no school anymore. They killed the last teacher a year ago...

BOY 2
Now it's the morgue...

Baxter enters the school.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Baxter walks down a corridor leading to a small courtyard. He stops at one of the rooms, peering inside.

BAXTER POV: Two plastic-covered corpses lie on a rustic table, lit by candles.

END POV

Baxter moves to inspect the second room.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - ROOM - DAY

A body lies on a table, covered with a plastic sheet tied with four candles. Just as Baxter turns to leave, a breeze lifts the plastic, revealing a pair of sneakers.

Baxter sets down his equipment and approaches the table, slowly lifting the plastic sheeting off the face.

EXT. YANACANCHA VILLAGE - SCHOOLHOUSE - SAME TIME

One of the boys peers through a window.

BOY POV: Baxter, in complete shock, stares at the uncovered body.

EXT. JUNGLE PATH - CONTINUOUS

The group follows the settler, who widens the path with a machete. The CACOPHONY OF THE JUNGLE is loud above their heads.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - ROOM - DAY

Baxter gently wipes the dried mud from Laura's face.

BAXTER
(mumbling)
You're coming back with me...

EXT. JUNGLE - MUDDY PATH - DAY

Chaico looks up at the sun through the leafy treetops. His feet sink into puddles and quagmires, while the settler navigates nimbly. Jimena struggles, slipping on the muddy path.

SETTLER

Shhh..!

VOICES, FOOTSTEPS, and the SOUND OF MACHETES cutting through the path grow nearer. The group quickly hides in the bushes.

EXT. YANACANCHA - MAIN SQUARE - DAY

Valle finishes an interview with a local peasant, surrounded by BYSTANDERS.

A TEENAGER pushes through the crowd and whispers to Valle. Without hesitation, Valle grabs his equipment and follows the teenager out.

EXT. SOMEPLACE IN THE JUNGLE - DAY

Jimena and Chaico remain hidden in the bushes. The settler, armed with a rudimentary shotgun, is poised to shoot.

JIMENA POV: Through the dense foliage, a SHINING PATH COLUMN advances, carrying a stretcher with a wounded man.

END POV

The guerrilla column passes, oblivious to their presence.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Valle hears a low murmur from one of the rooms. He reaches the doorway.

VALLE POV: He sees Baxter clinging to Laura's body.

VALLE (O.S.)

Oh, my God!

END POV

Valle approaches, gently caressing Laura's hair, trying to pull Baxter away. Baxter resists, holding her tighter.

VALLE (CONT'D)
*Come on, Leslie, we need to
 leave...*

Valle tries to drag Baxter to the door, but Baxter violently breaks free.

BAXTER
 (furious)
*You think I'm just gonna leave her
 here in this shithole?*

BAXTER POV: He notices a boy peering through the window.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
*What the hell are you doing
 there..?*

END POV

Baxter, enraged, throws something at the window. The boy flees. Baxter storms to the window, shouting.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 Fucking murderers! Here I am,
 dammit, here I am!

Valle pulls him away from the window.

VALLE
 (raising his voice)
*Calm down! They're after us, don't
 you get it?*

Baxter, tears streaming, looks back at Laura's corpse.

VALLE (CONT'D)
There's nothing we can do!

Baxter, clutching his locket, slides down the wall, devastated.

EXT. YANACANCHA - MAIN SQUARE - DAY

The Governor and his men dismount, talking to the driver of a parked pickup truck.

GOVERNOR
**Let me know if you see those
 motherfuckers!**
 (to his men)
Move fast, dammit!

They search the crowd for the reporters.

A WHISTLE from afar catches the Governor's attention. Someone points toward the other end of the village.

The Governor and four men jump into the truck and drive off.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - ROOM - DAY

Baxter is hugging Laura's body again.

VALLE

Come on, we have to leave.

BAXTER

I can't leave her alone...

VALLE

The Governor and his men are looking for us...

BAXTER

I'm staying...

Frustrated, Valle confronts him.

VALLE

Listen, if you want to die here, be my guest! I won't follow in your footsteps...

Baxter looks up, confused by Valle's intensity.

VALLE (CONT'D)

I'm not interested in an exclusive. I want to see my wife and kids again.

Valle points at Laura's body.

VALLE (CONT'D)

Was it worth it? Were their lives worth an exclusive? I'm not willing to risk my colleagues' lives. Can you say the same, Baxter?

Baxter, taken aback, listens.

VALLE (CONT'D)

I thought you were a real reporter. Everyone said you were a hero in Vietnam. But those who knew you when you first got to Peru...

(MORE)

VALLE (CONT'D)
*we saw you were all messed up from
 that war...*

Valle presses on, relentless.

VALLE (CONT'D)
 (ironic, biting)
International Journalism Award...

He spits on the ground.

VALLE (CONT'D)
What good did those awards do you?

Valle gets in Baxter's face.

VALLE (CONT'D)
*The only way out is to avoid
 getting caught. If we escape, we
 can tell the world what happened...*

Valle grabs Baxter's equipment, slinging it over his shoulder.

VALLE (CONT'D)
*If you want them to catch you, I'm
 not stopping you!*

Valle heads to the door, but stops, looking back.

VALLE (CONT'D)
Tell me one thing before I go...

VALLE POV: He stares at Baxter.

VALLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*What did you find in the bell
 tower..?*

A heavy silence from Baxter.

BAXTER
*They were up there during the
 massacre. They recorded
 everything...*

END POV

VALLE
Oh, my God..!

Valle pulls Baxter off the ground.

VALLE (CONT'D)

*Let's go, we'll come back for her
later.*

Baxter looks at Laura's body one last time.

Valle takes a photo from the doorway.

EXT. PATH IN THE JUNGLE - DAY

The settler uses his machete to widen the narrow path.

EXT. YANACANCHA - SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

AERIAL SHOT: The paramilitaries park in front of the school, then exit the pickup truck. Led by the Governor, they enter the building.

EXT. JUNGLE - HILLTOP - DAY

CLOSEUP: MACHETE - A machete hacks into the bark of a tree with violent force.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF YANACANCHA - DAY

Baxter and Valle drive down the road in tense silence.

EXT. YANACANCHA - SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

AERIAL SHOT: The paramilitaries place Laura's body in the truck's bed, start the engine, and drive off, leaving a cloud of dust behind.

EXT. JUNGLE - HILLTOP - DAY

Jimena and Chaico reach a jungle clearing. They observe a camouflaged military camp in the distance.

The settler signals them to wait, then disappears into the dense foliage.

Chaico turns to Jimena.

CHAICO

*Wait here. I'm going to take a
look...*

Chaico disappears into the jungle. Jimena looks around nervously, snapping a few pictures. Moments later, she follows Chaico into the thick underbrush. It's getting dark.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE HIGHLANDS - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Baxter and Valle walk along the edge of the road, their faces lined with exhaustion.

EXT. SOMEPLACE IN THE JUNGLE - NIGHT

Jimena stops by a pond, listening intently to DISTANT VOICES and the BARKING OF GUARD DOGS. A GROUP OF MEN with flashlights moves toward her through the trees. Jimena quickly submerges herself in the pond.

UNDERWATER SHOT: Jimena holds her breath, her eyes wide.

JIMENA POV: Flashlights sweep across the water, searching.

END POV

Jimena surfaces slowly, but a flashlight immediately catches her face.

EXT. THE HIGHLANDS - GORGE - NIGHT

The paramilitaries finish digging a grave. They remove Laura's body from the truck and throw it into the pit.

INT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - JIMENA'S CELL - NIGHT

The door flies open, and Jimena is thrown to the ground. As the men leave, she hears SOFT KNOCKING on the cell's calamine walls.

CHAICO (O.S.)

Jimena...

JIMENA

Marcial?

Jimena presses her face to the wall.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

Did they ask about Baxter too?

CHAICO

They thought I was him. But don't worry. I told them we were reporters.

JIMENA

Do you think they'll let us go?

CHAICO

We'll have to wait until tomorrow. We'll explain then. But they don't seem like military...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - DAYBREAK

ESTABLISHING SHOT: Fog dissipates as BIRDSONG fills the air.

INT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - CHAICO'S CELL - DAYBREAK

Chaico searches the cell walls for a crack, trying to see outside.

CHAICO POV: He spots a group of ASHANINKA NATIVES transporting cocaine bundles to a hut, guarded by ARMED MEN.

END POV

Chaico hears two men enter Jimena's cell.

PARAMILITARY 1 (O.S.)

Hey, time to meet Camion...

CHAICO POV: Through a slit, he sees Jimena being dragged out.

EXT. ASHANINKA VILLAGE - HUT - DAYBREAK

CLOSEUP: An OLD WOMAN paints the face of a YOUNG ASHANINKA with war colors using vegetable roots.

INT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAYBREAK

Jimena is bound to a chair, her face bruised. Three HOODED MEN surround her. CAMION (40), leads the interrogation with a menacing presence.

PARAMILITARY 2

Where's your colleague, the American?

PARAMILITARY 1

*That bastard's got a noose waiting
for him.*

Camion steps closer, slapping Jimena hard across the face.

CAMION

*You're gonna talk, or I'll kill you
myself, you hear me?*

JIMENA

I don't know where he is...

Another vicious slap from Camion. Jimena collapses to the floor. He yanks her back up, gripping her hair.

CAMION

Where is he? Speak!

Jimena, battered and exhausted, can barely stay conscious. Camion slaps her again, and she finally faints.

CAMION (CONT'D)

*Get her ready. We string them up
tonight. Let's see if she can
handle the cattle prod...*

INT. MINISTER'S MANSION - DAYBREAK

The minister, in a white gown and smoking a cigar, paces while speaking on the phone. Two BODYGUARDS, his ADVISOR, and a RADIO OPERATOR stand by.

MINISTER

(to Advisor)

*Green-light quashing the riots.
Republicans handle Lurigancho. The
Navy takes Fronton.*

The RADIO emits STATIC from the corner.

ADVISOR

What about the gringa?

MINISTER

(thinking)

Make her talk. Whatever it takes.

He takes a deep puff of his cigar, visibly tense.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

And finish the job with the other one. She's the bait. The gringo will come for her.

INT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - JIMENA'S CELL - DAYBREAK

Jimena is thrown into her cell by TWO HOODED MEN. The door slams shut.

CHAICO POV: Through the cracks in the wall, Chaico watches her slump to the floor, trembling from the abuse.

EXT./INT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - CHAICO'S CELL - DAYBREAK

A jeep pulls up to the base. FOUR MEN get out. From his cell, Chaico watches them, his eyes narrowing as he recognizes someone.

CHAICO POV: It's VALDEZ, accompanied by Camion.

END POV

Chaico stares in disbelief. From her cell, Jimena whispers.

JIMENA (O.S.)

They're looking for Baxter. They want him dead.

Chaico peers through another crack.

CHAICO POV: Valdez gestures toward Chaico's cell, giving orders.

CHAICO (O.S.)

Can you see outside? Look through any crack you can find.

INT. JIMENA'S CELL - DAYBREAK

Jimena crawls to a corner, finding a crack in the wall.

JIMENA POV: She sees the center of the camp.

CHAICO (O.S.)

You see that guy in the red shirt?

Jimena gets a clear view of him.

CHAICO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*That's Valdez. The reporter who was
 supposed to be dead. That's him.*

THREE MEN gather around Valdez, receiving instructions.

CHAICO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That piece of shit fooled us all!

Jimena watches Valdez enter the barracks with his men.

CHAICO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*That woman you met... she set us
 up!*

END POV

Jimena's eyes widen as realization sets in.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHLANDS - DAY (VHS FOOTAGE)

LAURA
*Baxter, listen up. We're sending
 you an exclusive on this tape...*

INT. WARA'S HUT - NIGHT (VHS FOOTAGE)

Laura interviews Wara.

LAURA (O.S.)
Who was it, señora, tell us...

Valdez enters the room. The grandmother looks toward the door, terrified.

WARA
*No, señorita, I didn't see
 anything, I swear...*

The camera pans to the door.

CLOSEUP: Valdez is standing there.

WARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*I'm an old woman, my eyes don't
 work so well anymore... I didn't
 see anything, I swear...*

END FLASHBACK

Jimena pulls back from the crack, panicking.

EXT. ROAD TO MITO - DAYBREAK

Valle struggles to start the jeep's engine. After a few tries, it roars to life.

EXT./INT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - CHAICO'S CELL - DAYBREAK

Chaico paces, then peers through another crack as VOICES approach.

CHAICO POV: Valdez, with TWO MEN, walks toward Jimena's cell. Before entering, Valdez pulls the hood over his head.

VALDEZ (O.S.)
Get up, we're going for a walk...

END POV

Chaico shifts to another crack for a better view.

CHAICO POV: Valdez forces Jimena into a jeep.

JIMENA (O.S.)
Where are you taking me?

VALDEZ (O.S.)
Just get in!

END POV

Chaico quickly shifts position.

CHAICO POV: Jimena climbs into the front seat. As Valdez is about to join her, an ARROW pierces the driver's throat.

EXT. PARAMILITARY CAMP - DAYBREAK

Valdez and the others dive for cover behind the jeep. Jimena crouches low in her seat.

VOICE (O.S.)
The Asháninkas are attacking!

MED. SHOT - Camion bursts out of the barracks, firing a machine gun. One of his men drops after being hit with a poison dart..

MED. SHOT - Añantsintenkari, with a painted warrior's face, leads the Asháninkas in the assault.

MED. SHOT - Jimena ducks, trying to protect herself.

MED. SHOT - Chaico shouts from his cell.

CHAICO (O.S.)
Jimena, run! Get out of here!

MED. SHOT - VALDEZ hears Chaico's shouts.

WIDE SHOT - BATTLEFIELD Amid the chaos, Jimena bolts from the jeep and disappears into the jungle.

INT. CHAICO'S CELL - PARAMILITARY CAMP - DAYBREAK

Valdez kicks in the door, glaring at Chaico.

CHAICO
*You fooled us all, you
motherfucker.*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATH IN THE JUNGLE - DAY

Jimena, exhausted, stumbles toward the riverbank. She hears the ENGINE of a boat approaching and hides in the bushes, watching intently.

INT./EXT. JEEP - DAY

The jeep winds through the streets of Ayacucho.

VALLE
*It's best if you stay at my
friend's house. I'll check the
hostel.*

BAXTER
*If they haven't returned, you're in
charge of getting Jimena on the
first flight out.*

Valle stops the jeep, steps out, and knocks on a door.

EXT. AYACUCHO - JOAQUIN'S HOUSE - DAY

JOAQUIN (60), answers the door. Valle introduces Baxter before driving off.

INT. AYACUCHO - LOS ANGELES BARBER SHOP - DAY

Valle enters the salon, where ANGEL (50) listens to the RADIO. His daughter, ESPERANZA (12), cleans razors. The shop is empty.

VALLE

Angel, I need a favor. It's urgent.

Angel signals for silence, pointing to the radio.

RADIO (O.S.)

"The Navy and Republican Guard are deploying troops to the prisons, now under Shining Path control..."

ANGEL

Finally! We're getting rid of those terrorists...

VALLE

Look, don Angel... I need your daughter to help me out...

EXT. JUNGLE - RIVERBANK - DAY

Jimena hides, hearing a distant shout.

ABIRERI (O.S.)

Añantsintenkari... Añantsintenkari!

Jimena frantically searches for the source. She spots the river through a clearing.

JIMENA POV: She sees Abireri in his boat, yelling.

ABIRERI (CONT'D)

Añantsintenkari!

INT. AYACUCHO - VALLE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Esperanza knocks on Valle's door. SUSANA (30s) answers.

ESPERANZA

Your brother sends this note. He's with my dad...

SUSANA

He's back? Thank God!... Mom! Calico is back!

INT. LOS ANGELES BARBERSHOP - DAY

Valle watches Susana and Esperanza enter the shop. Susana rushes to her brother, relieved.

SUSANA

*Mom's been worried sick, Calico!
The house is under constant
watch...*

VALLE

*Have you heard from Chaico? Did he
call his wife?*

SUSANA

*He was supposed to yesterday but
hasn't.*

VALLE

*If Chaico or Jimena show up, take
them to Joaquín's house, okay?*

EXT. JUNGLE - RIVERBANK - DAY

Abireri lifts Jimena into his boat, water up to her knees.

INT. JOAQUIN'S HOUSE - LATER

Baxter scrutinizes a photo taken by Eduardo.

CLOSEUP: Eduardo and Laura with Valdez in the highlands.

VALLE (O.S.)

*Valdez came from Lima about a year
ago...*

Baxter's eyes linger on the photo, deep in thought.

VALLE (CONT'D)

*Our colleagues here say he had ties
to the military and the narcos..*

BAXTER

*(lost in thought)
I sent them... I'm the one to
blame...*

Valle checks his watch, snapping Baxter out of his reverie.

VALLE

We need to go. Martinez is waiting.

EXT. AYACUCHO - HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE - DAY

A plaque at the entrance reads: "HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE."

INT. AYACUCHO - HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE - DAY

Baxter and Valle sit across from MARTINEZ (45), who examines the photos on his desk.

BAXTER

I'm heading to Lima tomorrow. I've requested a personal meeting with the chief of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces.

Martinez looks up, concern in his eyes.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

I'm handing over all the evidence. Then I'm calling a press conference...

MARTÍNEZ

You know you've made some powerful enemies, right?

Martinez pauses, choosing his words carefully.

MARTÍNEZ (CONT'D)

Your TV report... it led to the capture of the cartel boss in this region.

BAXTER

And this is about my guys! Of course, I'm going to make a fuss!

MARTÍNEZ

We see countless cases every month. Most go nowhere because the victims stay anonymous... But you're a journalist. This is different.

Baxter hands over a report, his expression resolute.

BAXTER

Here's a copy of everything. If you don't hear from me by tomorrow night, release it.

Martinez nods solemnly, understanding the gravity of the situation.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AYACUCHO - DAYBREAK

A PANORAMIC VIEW of the city at dawn, nestled among the hills.

INT. AYACUCHO - JOAQUIN'S HOUSE - DAYBREAK

Baxter, haggard and exhausted, swaps floppy disks on his Toshiba T1100 laptop. Valle bursts into the room, visibly agitated.

VALLE

Bad news, gringo. They're watching the hostel.

BAXTER

What about your house?

VALLE

No idea. I slept at my sister's, but they're sniffing around there too.

BAXTER

Did you check on my ticket?

VALLE

You can't leave today. The plane's full, but...

Valle hands Baxter an envelope.

VALLE (CONT'D)

Got you a flight for tomorrow. The ticket's under another name, but it should work.

Baxter examines the ticket, nodding.

BAXTER

Thanks. I hope I can use it.

Baxter thinks for a moment, then looks up.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Can you get me access to the editing room again?

VALLE

Are you nuts? You need to lay low!

BAXTER

If I finish the report, I can get it on Julio's Sunday program. It airs tomorrow at 8 p.m.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AYACUCHO - LOCAL TV STATION - EDITING ROOM - DAY

Baxter edits his report, focused and determined.

INSERT: MONITOR WITH BAXTER'S REPORT

BAXTER

"The two journalists witnessed a massacre in the highlands of Ayacucho..."

END INSERT

Baxter continues to edit, the tension in the room palpable.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DOCK - TRUCK STOP - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Jimena disembarks from Abireri's boat at the dock. They exchange a few words before she hurries off.

B) She navigates the streets of the city with purpose.

C) She stops at a truck stop on the outskirts of town.

D) From a distance, she talks with one of the drivers of a parked truck.

E) She climbs into the cab of one of the trucks.

INT. AYACUCHO - JOAQUIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Baxter sets his video equipment on a table as Valle enters.

VALLE

You finished?

Baxter nods.

BAXTER

*I need to go back to see that guy
at the hospital... Maybe he knows
where Eduardo's body is buried.*

VALLE

Are you insane? It's almost curfew!

Suddenly, the house plunges into darkness. GUNSHOTS and EXPLOSIONS echo in the distance.

VALLE (CONT'D)

*Shit! They blew up a transmission
tower! That was close...*

Baxter heads to the balcony, followed by Valle.

BALCONY

Few passers-by flee down the empty street.

VALLE (O.S.)

What the hell's going on?

VOICE 1

It's the Shining Path!

VOICE 2

They're attacking the prison!

The blackout engulfs the whole city. The two reporters go back inside.

LIVING ROOM

Valle lights a candle. Baxter grabs his tape recorder and heads for the door.

VALLE

You're crazy!

BAXTER

I've got to go to the hospital!

VALLE

*No way! You'd have to pass the
prison!*

EXT. AYACUCHO - NEAR PRISON SQUARE - NIGHT

Baxter cautiously advances down an empty street. MACHINE GUN FIRE and EXPLOSIONS pierce the night. He stops at a corner.

BAXTER POV: A truck is parked against the prison wall, prisoners climbing down into the street, rushing toward it.

Prisoners begin to climb down one of the prison walls into the street and rush toward the truck.

VOICE 1

Long live the armed struggle!

VOICE 2

Long may it live!

VOICE 1 (CONT'D)

Long live the Communist
Party!

END POV

From a balcony, a NEIGHBOR shouts down to Baxter.

NEIGHBOR 1

Hide, they're killing all the cops!

Baxter ignores the warning, continuing forward as sporadic EXPLOSIONS light up the night.

INT. AYACUCHO - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Baxter moves stealthily through the darkened ward. Two frightened nurses run past him.

NURSE 1

*Hide, hide! The Republican
Guard is coming!*

NURSE 2

*Call the Doctor! Call the
Doctor!*

When the nurses rush past him, Baxter grabs one by the arm.

BAXTER

What's going on?

NURSE 1

*Hide! They're taking revenge for
the prison uprising!*

NURSE 2 (O.S.)

Come on! They're in the corridor!

Baxter follows the nurses, urgency in his steps.

INT. AYACUCHO - HOSPITAL - PRISONERS' WARD - - NIGHT

Baxter and the nurses enter another ward. He helps them find a hiding spot before slipping toward the door. FOUR SOLDIERS burst in, weapons drawn.

HANDHELD SHOT: MOVING WITH SOLDIER'S BOOTS - GROUND LEVEL

SOLDIER 1
*Where are the fucking
 terrorists?*

SOLDIER 2
*Speak up, dammit! What room
 are they in?*

A nurse, MARIA, tries to stop them.

NURSE MARIA
*You can't go in there! This is a
 hospital!*

One soldier fires, and Maria falls to the floor, lifeless.
 The soldiers move on, determined.

SOLDIER 3
*Let's go! I think it's around the
 corner!*

INT. AYACUCHO - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Baxter rushes to Maria's body, dragging it behind a corner
 before hiding in another room.

INT. AYACUCHO - HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A DOCTOR and TWO ASSISTANTS rush in. Baxter hands them
 Maria's body.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
 Come with me, quickly. I know a way
 out.

BAXTER
 How do I get to the prison ward?

INT. PRISONER'S WARD - NIGHT

Baxter frantically searches among the dead. He finds Aguirre,
 naked, with gunshot wounds. He cradles the dying man, tears
 in his eyes.

BAXTER (O.S.)
 Don't worry... Everything will be
 okay...

Aguirre's breath fades, his final words a whisper that Baxter
 strains to hear.

Aguirre dies in Baxter's arms.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
 Come on! We have to go, now!

Baxter lays Aguirre down gently and follows the doctor, his resolve hardening with every step.

INT./EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

From the cabin, Jimena spots another truck approaching in the opposite direction. The driver signals urgently for them to stop. Both trucks come to a halt, side by side.

DRIVER 1
*They are seizing all the trucks.
Turn around now!*

He drives off without waiting for a reply. Jimena's driver hesitates.

DRIVER 2
*Get out, señorita. I don't want
them taking my truck...*

JIMENA
We're just a few blocks away!

The driver opens the door, insistent.

DRIVER 2
Please, get out!

Jimena reluctantly exits, watching as the truck speeds away.

EXT. AYACUCHO - STREETS - NIGHT

Baxter moves through the shadows, sticking close to the walls. Distant shouts and explosions echo through the night.

EXT. AYACUCHO - OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Jimena, alone and disoriented, walks through the deserted streets, fear gripping her.

INT. AYACUCHO - JOAQUIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Valle enters, carrying Baxter's luggage. A dim lamp casts flickering shadows across the room.

VALLE
*You were lucky, gringo... You
escaped hell.*

Baxter takes the altarpiece from his luggage, examining it carefully. Unseen by Valle, he hides a VHS tape inside it and closes the small doors of the ornament.

VALLE (CONT'D)

*If you can't get on the plane,
don't worry. We'll drive to Lima...*

INT. AYACUCHO - VALLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

By the light of a small lamp, Valle's sister opens the door for Jimena.

SUSANA

*Señorita! Oh, my God, how did you
get here alone? Come in, come in!
We were so worried.*

JIMENA

Where are they?

SUSANA

At Joaquín's house...

JIMENA

Are they close?

SUSANA

Just a few blocks away...

JIMENA

*I have to see them... Can you take
me?*

SUSANA

*It's dangerous, señorita! The
senderistas stormed the
prison—hundreds of prisoners have
escaped! There's fighting all over
the city!*

JIMENA

I have to see them!

SUSANA

*May God watch over you... Just a
minute, I'll put on something
warm...*

Susana hurries up the stairs.

EXT. AYACUCHO - JOAQUIN'S HOUSE - LATER

The two women move cautiously through the darkened streets. They reach Joaquin's house and knock softly on the door.

JOAQUIN

Susanita! What are you doing here?

SUSANA

You see what kinds of things Calico gets me into, Joaquín... Look, this is the woman they were expecting...

JOAQUIN

Come in, come in...

SUSANA

Go on in, señorita. I'm heading home, Joaquín...

JOAQUIN

(to Jimena)

Go upstairs. Your friend's in the first room on the left...

Jimena enters the house.

In the blackout, Susana crosses the street and stops in an alleyway, gazing at the window of Baxter's room, softly lit by a lamp.

SUSANA POV: Through the window, she sees Baxter, backlit, as Jimena enters and embraces him. Their shadows entwine, casting dramatic, shifting shapes on the wall like a shadow play.

We see, through their shadows, moments of tension and heated exchange, with gestures of confrontation.

END POV

Susana watches the window one last time, then continues on her way.

INT. JOAQUIN'S HOUSE - BAXTER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimena crouches in a corner, sobbing quietly. Baxter paces the room, gripping his locket tightly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AYACUCHO - DAYBREAK

PANORAMIC VIEW: The city emerges from the fog, bathed in the first light of dawn.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AYACUCHO - STREETS - DAYBREAK

A car stops at the airport entrance. Baxter, Jimena, and Valle step out.

INT. AYACUCHO AIRPORT - DAY

They join the line at the departure counter. Baxter carries the handmade altarpiece under his arm.

VALLE POV: From the second-floor corridor, Valle spots the Governor, accompanied by TWO PARAMILITARY SOLDIERS.

EXT. AYACUCHO AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

A plane from Lima touches down on the runway.

INT. AYACUCHO AIRPORT - COUNTER - DAY

VALLE
(to Baxter)
I'll check us in. Stay here.

Valle pushes through the crowd to the counter.

EMPLOYEE
*I'm sorry, sir, the plane's full.
You're on standby.*

VALLE
*But I was told there wouldn't be a
problem...*

EMPLOYEE
*I understand, but there's nothing
more I can do. You can't board...*

Frustrated, Valle heads back to Baxter.

VALLE
We're on standby. Plane's full.

INT. AYACUCHO AIRPORT - ARRIVAL GATE - CONTINUOUS

A GROUP OF JOURNALISTS arrives from the capital. One of them spots Baxter.

REPORTER 1
Leslie! What are you doing here?

Baxter turns, startled, as the group approaches.

REPORTER 1 (CONT'D)
(to the group)
Look who we've run into!

Baxter's eyes dart nervously.

BAXTER
(to Valle, quietly)
Don't say a word about anything.
(to Jimena)
Stay in line, Jimena.

Jimena inches closer to the front of the line.

Baxter greets the journalists with a forced smile.

REPORTER 1
You're not leaving, are you?

REPORTER 3
Were you in the shootout?

REPORTER 4
Things are fucking crazy in Lima, too!

REPORTER 3 (CONT'D)
Do you know anything about the prison? Is it true that Comrade Edith was in charge?

Baxter watches the movements of the paramilitary force.

REPORTER 1
There's a press conference at the military headquarters. We'll see what they have to say!

BAXTER
How long are you planning to stay?

REPORTER 2
Leaving tomorrow, right?

REPORTER 1
Just a few photos and interviews. We know what to expect.

REPORTER 3
(to Valle)
Hey, can you help us out?

Valle glances at Baxter, uncertain.

BAXTER

That would be great! He's done with us!

Valle looks surprised.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

(to Reporter 3)

Give me a sec, I'll convince him.

Baxter pulls Valle aside, guiding him back to Jimena.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

They'll give you some protection.

VALLE

But what if you can't travel?

BAXTER

If I'm grounded, we'll hold our own press conference here. And tonight, we'll drive to Lima.

Valle hesitates, then nods.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

There's no way they'll do anything with all these witnesses.

They share a silent, understanding look before embracing. Jimena steps forward, hugging Valle.

Valle joins the journalists as they prepare to leave the airport.

INT. AIRPORT BOARDING GATE - DAY

Chaos erupts at the gate as passengers argue over the few available seats.

INT. AIRPORT ENTRANCE - COUNTER - DAY

A MILITARY GUARD enters, pushing the Commander in a wheelchair. They line up next to Baxter and Jimena at the airline counter.

EMPLOYEE

I told your friend—you're on standby.

COMMANDER (O.S.)
 (loudly, cheerfully)
*Looks like we'll be traveling
 together!*

Baxter and Jimena turn, surprised.

BAXTER
What happened to you?

COMMANDER
*Just a scratch. A bullet grazed me.
 This was in the jungle. Two days
 ago we freed about a hundred
 Ashaninka who were prisoners of
 Sendero. They had them as slaves...*

BAXTER
*For a moment I thought you were
 also in last night's fighting.*

COMMANDER
*No, no. The army wasn't involved.
 When we go in, nobody escapes. Last
 night, it was the Republican Guard.
 It got ugly...*

BAXTER
*I didn't realize things were this
 chaotic... so many armed
 confrontations...*

COMMANDER
*Lima's heating up too... But to
 win, we need the people on our
 side.*

His tone shifts to a more serious one.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
*I saw Carlitos outside. He
 mentioned you were having trouble
 traveling. Is that right?*

BAXTER
*We're on standby. This is my
 colleague, Jimena.*

Jimena and the Commander shake hands.

COMMANDER
*You know what? I have an extra
 confirmed ticket.
 (MORE)*

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

My wife was supposed to use it, but she rescheduled. You can have it.

BAXTER

Are you sure?

COMMANDER

Not a problem! It'd go to waste otherwise...

The Commander hands Baxter the ticket.

BAXTER

(to Jimena, quietly)

No time to lose. Take this with you.

Baxter hands Jimena the altarpiece.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Give it to my secretary. I'll stay back with the reporters.

COMMANDER (O.S.)

See you on the plane, then...

BAXTER

Absolutely!

Baxter removes his locket and gives it to Jimena.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Take this too. It's been with me for years...

Jimena takes the locket and tries to hug Baxter.

Baxter places the ticket on the counter.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

She's traveling with the Commander.

The employee looks briefly confused.

COMMANDER

Hurry up! Don't cause trouble for me.

The employee initials the ticket and hands it to Jimena. As she turns to hug Baxter one last time, the crowd jostles her.

Jimena is pushed toward the exit by the crowd, waving goodbye to Baxter.

EXT. AYACUCHO - AIRPORT RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jimena walks briskly toward the plane, pausing to open the locket.

INSERT: LOCKET

A photo of young Baxter and Jimena from their Vietnam days.

END INSERT

She quickens her pace to catch up with the Commander. He stops as she says something to him and hands him the altarpiece.

INT. AIRPORT GATE - AYACUCHO - CONTINUOUS

Baxter picks up his bag and walks slowly to the exit.

JIMENA (O.S.)

Leslie!

Jimena runs up to Baxter and they embrace.

JIMENA (CONT'D)

The Commander has the altarpiece.
He'll deliver it today.

BAXTER

You're going to miss your flight to
New York...

Jimena returns the locket to Baxter.

JIMENA

This will continue to be our good
luck charm. And let me tell you a
secret... I was born here. I'm from
Ayacucho.

They share a heartfelt hug.

INT. TV STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Julio gazes at the altarpiece on his desk. The producer approaches with a VHS cassette.

JULIO

This is cued up, right?

PRODUCER

Already set, sir.

Julio opens the altarpiece, takes out the VHS box, and inserts the tape.

A phone rings.

PRODUCER (CONT'D)
It's the human rights lawyer.

Julio answers the call.

JULIO
When are you coming? This is a nightmare...

INT. AYACUCHO - HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE - SAME TIME

INTERCUT - JULIO / MARTINEZ

Martinez speaks on the phone, looking out his window at peasants holding signs with photos of missing relatives. Among them are Wara and Eulogio.

MARTINEZ
We're leaving by car in thirty minutes. We'll arrive by morning with several witnesses. The old woman who witnessed the murder is here...

END INTERCUT

INT. TV STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The phone rings again.

JULIO
Come straight to the station...

PRODUCER (O.S.)
It's the minister, señor.

JULIO
I need to take another call.

INTERCUT - JULIO / MINISTER

Julio listens, frustrated.

JULIO (CONT'D)
What do you mean? All reporters who have been in Ayacucho have confirmed this!

Julio signals the producers to hurry up.

JULIO (CONT'D)
*I knew them. They were my friends.
 Don't you get it?*

Julio listens to the minister.

JULIO (CONT'D)
*Alright, I'll follow your
 instructions. When are they coming
 for the tape?*

MINISTER
They're at your station now.

The Minister slowly hangs up, exhaling deeply. His advisor stands beside him.

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

Julio sits, disheartened, with his head in his hands.

JULIO POV: The altarpiece looms above his desk, its miniature figures depicting the Andean war.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
What do we do, don Julio?

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

The newscast theme plays.

NEWS ANCHOR 1
*Good evening. Laura Coster and
 Eduardo Pineda, reporters for an
 international news agency, were
 murdered by paramilitary forces
 linked to drug traffickers in
 Ayacucho...*

NEWS ANCHOR 2
*And the corpse, presumed to be
 journalist Valdez, has been
 identified by forensic police as
 belonging to another victim.*

INT. TV STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The phone continues to ring. Julio signals to ignore it.

NEWS ANCHOR 1

We have an exclusive report from ATN correspondent Leslie Baxter, who has been missing since yesterday, along with colleague Jimena Losada. Police are still searching for them...

Baxter's report begins.

INSERT: BAXTER'S REPORT - MONITOR

BAXTER

"The two journalists witnessed a massacre in the highlands of Ayacucho..."

PAN TO REVEAL and ZOOM to the ALTARPIECE.

ALTARPIECE POV - The control room is seen through the altarpiece's perspective. The miniature figures face the chaotic scene. The phone keeps ringing while we read a

SUPER:

"In the early 2000s, more than thirty high-ranking Peruvian military commanders were accused of crimes including extrajudicial executions, drug trafficking, corruption, and the illegal surveillance of political opponents. Nineteen of them were convicted and imprisoned.

Additionally, seventy-four former government officials, judges, legislators, and businessmen were arrested on a wide range of corruption charges.

Former President Alberto Fujimori, who governed from 1990 to 2000, was tried and convicted of crimes against humanity. He was controversially pardoned in 2017, but the pardon was later annulled, and he remained in prison until his release on medical grounds in 2024.

As of today, two former presidents are in prison, awaiting trial on charges of corruption and promoting coup d'états.

The current president is also facing serious allegations of illicit enrichment and crimes against humanity."

THE END