

105 AND RISING:
The Fall of Saigon

"The temperature in Saigon is 105 degrees and rising."

-- Code broadcast on Armed Forces Radio to signal
the final evacuation of American civilians from
South Vietnam on April 29, 1975.

Written by
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CREDITS OVER BLACK:

SUPER: The White House. August 3, 1972.

Damning recordings from the Nixon Tapes:

NIXON (V.O.)

Let's be perfectly cold-blooded about it. I look at the tide of history out there, South Vietnam probably is never gonna survive anyway.

SUPER: President Richard Nixon

NIXON (V.O.)

Can we have a viable foreign policy if a year from now, or two years from now, North Vietnam gobbles up South Vietnam?

KISSINGER (V.O.)

If Saigon's collapse looks as if it's the result of South Vietnamese incompetence.

SUPER: Secretary of State Henry Kissinger

KISSINGER (V.O.)

If we now sell out in such a way that, say, in a three- to four-month period, we have pushed President Thieu over the brink, it will worry everybody. So we've got to find some formula that holds the thing together a year or two... a decent interval after which no one will give a damn. Vietnam will be a backwater.

END CREDITS./FADE IN:

TIGHT ON: PHOTO of Career Diplomat GRAHAM MARTIN (60's).

YOUNG AIDE

The guy's a fossil.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. KISSINGER'S OFFICE, WAR BUILDING, WASHINGTON DC - DAY

A dossier with the photo clipped to the front lands in front of **SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER**. Shrewd. Cynical.

Paranoid. With presidential attitude. If any one person "owns" the Vietnam War, it is Kissinger.

He sits at a table with a YOUNG AIDE and a SENIOR AIDE.

YOUNG AIDE

He lost a son there in '68. Word is he never recovered.

SENIOR AIDE

This is Saigon we're talking about. We need someone stronger.

KISSINGER

You're both wrong. Martin is perfect.

SENIOR AIDE

He's old, desperate and emotionally compromised.

KISSINGER

And that gives him his one superlative quality: he is the only man in America who wants to stay in Indochina longer than we do.

(to Young Aide)

Set up a meeting. Make him think he's a long shot.

INT. BEDROOM, MARTIN HOME, BETHESDA, MD - DAY

The flesh-and-blood **GRAHAM MARTIN** (60's), tall but slightly bent, looks through his suits. Slightly nervous.

His **WIFE** comes in, selects a tie.

MINUTES LATER

He checks himself in the mirror, fully dressed. She admires how he looks. Makes a small adjustment to the tie. Places palms on his lapels.

She gives him an encouraging kiss: "Go get 'em."

INT. KISSINGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Martin prostrates himself before an impassive Kissinger and the snot-nosed Young Aide.

MARTIN

I get that our continued presence in Vietnam is unpopular. Even distasteful to some.

(MORE)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

But the war's legacy remains in the balance; decisive actions must still be taken. I've made a career of foreign service. These are the moments why, and I can think of no better... no other... way left for me to honor my boy Glenn.

Martin takes a large gulp of water: he's been monologuing.
Gauges Kissinger's reaction: quickly disappointed.

KISSINGER

Let's not kid ourselves, Graham. This isn't like your ribbon-cutting work in Italy or Thailand. Whoever they approve, Congress will turn straight around and advocate to shut him down and drag him home.

MARTIN

Casualty Officers have made 58,000 next-of-kin calls in seven years. Not one to politicians on the Hill. They don't appreciate what's at stake. But I do.

KISSINGER

Forgive this Secretary of State, his poor diplomacy skills. I'm saying: maybe you are too old for this fight.

Young Aide turns up one side of his mouth in snide enjoyment.

MARTIN

Sometimes age is an advantage. In my case, it means I'll hold nothing back because I've got nothing else left to live for.

KISSINGER

You understand, even if you perform admirably, the country will want someone to blame.

MARTIN

If being the lightning rod for criticism of those actions takes a personal toll on me, well that pales in comparison to what was asked of Glenn and the others.

Kissinger nods to his aides. "See. I told you."

KISSINGER

Thanks for coming by today Graham.
I'll get back to you.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

A series of NEWSREEL CLIPS featuring the "greatest generation" of Newscasters: Cronkite, Brinkley, etc.:

-- January 1973. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho sign a Cease Fire Agreement in Paris. Nixon declares: "Peace with honor."

-- May 1973. Troops returning stateside. Total number of troops remaining in Vietnam reduced from 200,000 to 100,000.

-- June 1973. Graham Martin appointed the new Ambassador to South Vietnam, replacing Ellsworth Bunker.

-- June 1973. Congress passes the Case-Church Amendment prohibiting US military activity in Southeast Asia.

-- October 1973. Congress approves \$1.1 Billion in aid to South Vietnam. Down from \$2.2 Billion the previous year.

-- August 1974. Nixon resigns over Watergate. South Vietnam loses their greatest advocate.

-- September 1974. Total number of troops remaining in Vietnam reduced from 100,000 to 50,000.

-- October 1974. Congress approves only \$700 million in aid to South Vietnam.

-- February 1975. North Vietnamese Army breaks the terms of the peace accord by crossing the border unchallenged into South Vietnam.

EMBEDDED REPORTER (V.O.)

(bombastic)

South Vietnamese by the tens of thousands looked to the skies beseeching: "Where are the great American bombers to protect us?"

-- White House Press Room. President Ford walks away from Reporters.

EMBEDDED REPORTER (V.O.)

Their pleas met with but a mighty silence from Washington

-- March 29, 1975. NVA attacks coastal Da Nang, South Vietnam's second largest city. THOUSANDS OF LOCALS crush the docks, fighting to escape by boat.

EMBEDDED REPORTER (V.O.)

A silence too soon broken by the
 footsteps of approaching North
 Vietnamese ground troops.
 Destination: Da Nang.

Desperate Civilians throw themselves onto BARGES, already teeming to capacity. Many young and elderly fall into the water, crushed to death between steel hulls and stone embankments. Panic-stricken Parents TOSS CHILDREN at retreating boats with catastrophic results.

On the Tarmac at Da Nang Airport, a SWARM of South Vietnamese, on scooters, motorcycles and foot, chase after a taxiing World Airways plane. Men cling to the stairs as the plane gains speed. The Flight Crew helps four of them on board, but two others fall away.

A speeding Motorcyclist drops a GRENADE under the left wing. An EXPLOSION tears away metal. Others hold to the wheel well as the plane takes strenuous flight. At a thousand feet, a final hanger-on drops from the sky.

END MONTAGE.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

INT. BAR, OFFICERS CLUB, HONG KONG - "CONTINUOUS"

The DA NANG IMAGES play on the nightly news showing on a TELEVISION above the bar.

Tight on an exhausted **DA NANG CONSULATE GENERAL AL FRANCIS** returning to Saigon's river port from Da Nang via garbage barge. Text under image provides his name. He weakly waves off Reporters' questions.

The set is visible from adjoining

DINING ROOM

As **CAPTAIN JIM KEAN** (35), in Marine service uniform, watches from the edge of his chair. Meal untouched.

His wife, **ROSANNE**, returns from the ladies' wash room. "Date Night."

KEAN

The news used to lead with Vietnam.
 Now it's a blurb before sports and
 weather.

Rosanne stifles a sigh and sits down. This is all-too-familiar.

ROSANNE
 Let's talk about something else.
 Less about work...

...then repositions her chair to block her husband's view of the television.

ROSANNE (CONT'D)
 (pointed)
 More about Rosanne and Jim. For example--

KEAN
 (off TV)
 That's what the boys in DC were counting on. If you can't see it, it's not happening.

Rosanne puts her own news in a mental back pocket.

ROSANNE
 And what, exactly, is "happening?"

KEAN
 The country's blowing up. Just because we lit the fuse two years ago, doesn't mean I can't hear the explosion.

ROSANNE
 The war's over. For the rest of us anyway.

KEAN
 We made promises to protect those people.

ROSANNE
 Two tours. Couple purple hearts rattling around your sock drawer. I'd say you did your part.

Kean gets that faraway look so familiar to her.

KEAN
 For all the good that did.

This makes him too sullen for her taste. She gamely pivots:

ROSANNE
 (modeling her hair)
 That's what I'm beginning to think about my new hairdo.

Kean appraises her, brightens somewhat. Rises.

KEAN

Sorry. Gets me worked up. I need some air.

ROSANNE

(not fooled/not unkind)
Make it a double.

He kisses her on the cheek.

ROSANNE (CONT'D)

You want to volunteer for hazard duty, there's always the broken washing machine.

She watches him head for the bar. Even smiles when Jim flashes TWO FINGERS at the BARTENDER.

Rosanne grows more curious when Bartender pours two separate shots (not a double). Explained when

BAR - CONTINUOUS

Bartender walks to other end of bar. Addresses **COLONEL SLOCUM**, finishing a drink with a Colleague.

BARTENDER

The gentleman over there bought your next round.

Kean salutes, then displays the whiskey like it's a game show prize: "If you want it, come and get it." Slocum shakes his head... and capitulates.

DINING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Rosanne downs her wine. Signals WAITER for the check.

BAR - CONTINUOUS

Kean points to the television.

KEAN

With Da Nang falling so easily, they'll move on Saigon next. And that'll be that.

SLOCUM

(deflecting/off drink)
Poor form, playing to a man's weakness.

Slocum enjoys the first sip.

KEAN
(pressing)
I should be there, Gil.

SLOCUM
It's a lost cause.

KEAN
We've still got fifty Marines
guarding the embassy. My Marines.

SLOCUM
Everyone's climbing over each other
to leave and you want to go back
in.

Kean doesn't reply. Either can't or won't.

SLOCUM (CONT'D)
I'll think on it.
(off Kean's
disappointment)
Well, your dad would applaud the
effort anyway. Saw him pull stunts
like this in the Pacific.

KEAN
Guadalcanal. Midway. He came home a
hero.

SLOCUM
(downing drink)
You came home. That oughta be
enough.

Kean turns to see Rosanne paying check.

SLOCUM (CONT'D)
What's she think of this?

KEAN
She knows who she married.

CUT TO BLACK.

AN OVERHEAD LIGHT SNAPS ON...

INT. UTILITY ROOM, KEAN HOME, HONG KONG - DAY

Kean, wearing KHAKIS and a GOLF SHIRT, examines the broken washing machine. He tests the input hose: water from an open tap TRICKLES out...

EXT. BACK YARD, KEAN HOME - DAY

Kean digs out a hole to expose the underground WATER LINE.

INT. LIVING ROOM, KEAN HOME - DAY

Rosanne watches from behind the curtains of the picture window as

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Kean has now dug a TRENCH, following the pipe to where a ROOT has busted through the clay pipe.

A PORTABLE RADIO plays BBC coverage of the latest events from Vietnam.

LATER

The back yard is a disaster area. In addition to the ten-foot trench, an old STUMP that caused the problem has been half-way removed.

Rosanne comes and sits down on the stump.

ROSANNE
(off the mess)
It's been nice having a man around
the house these past few months.

The BEEP of a car horn. Surprising Kean but not Rosanne.

ROSANNE (CONT'D)
Guess it was too good to last.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Kean turns the corner and registers a DRIVER picking up a PACKED SUITCASE from the front step. Bringing it to the Jeep.

KEAN
(grateful)
This is my last chance to go back.

ROSANNE
Maybe you never left.
(beat)
Just promise me you won't do
anything foolish. Sock drawer's all
full.

KEAN
I promise.

He kisses her good-bye. The kind of kiss that prompts the Driver to turn his back.

ROSANNE

Go on now.

(pushing back tears)

I miss my husband. Do me a favor,
find him and bring him home.

Kean kisses her one last time. Then heads to the Jeep. Looks back:

KEAN

Your hair. Looks nice.

INT. HOLD AREA, C-80 CARGO PLANE - NIGHT

Kean has the entire hold to himself. A Co-Pilot pops his head back:

USAF CO-PILOT

Buckle in, sir.

INT. HOLD AREA, C-80 CARGO PLANE - DAY

The ubiquitous rice paddies of Vietnam pass by the window.

EXT. TARMAC, TAN SON NHAT AIRPORT, SAIGON - MOMENTS LATER

Kean steps off the plane and into chaos.

TEXT ON SCREEN: **Saigon. April 18, 1975.**

Hundreds of WESTERNERS and SOUTH VIETNAMESE wait and/or fight to board outbound planes.

As Kean walks among them, there's a distinct feeling of a salmon swimming upstream.

A very young looking and gung-ho South Vietnamese Driver, **MUNG**, greets Kean with an enthusiastic, imprecise salute. Grabs Kean's duffel.

MUNG

You have cigarette, Major?

Kean, surprised, fishes out his pack. Offers one to Mung.

KEAN

It's Captain for another week.

MUNG
 Yes, sir...
 (winking)
 Major, sir.

KEAN
 You old enough to smoke?

They reach their car. Mung throws Kean's duffel in the front, gets behind the wheel.

MUNG
 I'm not old enough to drive.

INT./EXT. SEDAN, STREETS OF SAIGON - DAY

Mung drives the Embassy vehicle. Sitting on a phone book. Talking a mile-a-minute in butchered English.

Kean in rear, not listening, looks out at the hectic streets.

MUNG
 City very busy.

Locals watch them pass with a combination of grumbling, desperation and undisguised anger. Kean rolls up the window... then down again. Unsure what posture to take.

A FRUIT SELLER leans in window. Shoves papayas in Kean's face...

KEAN
 No. No, thank you.

...as a STREET URCHIN reaches in the opposite window and GRABS KEAN'S SUITCASE. Takes off running.

KEAN (CONT'D)
 Hey!

Mung shrugs with a sheepish smile.

MUNG
 City very busy.

Kean rolls the windows up again.

EXT. NORTH GATE, US EMBASSY, SAIGON - DAY

Mung pulls up to the compound. A two-acre square dominated by the 6-story Chancery, a block of smaller administrative buildings, a large parking lot and adjacent swimming pool.

A GUARD leans inside. Checks Kean's credentials.

GUARD
 Welcome to America's last foothold
 in Vietnam, Major.

Guard waves to Other Guards, who open the gates.

KEAN
 (to self)
 It's Captain...

EXT. PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY - CONTINUOUS

Mung parks beneath a huge tamarind tree.

INT. FOYER, CHANCERY - DAY

Kean ENTERS. Surprised to see nobody guarding the building.

REC ROOM - DAY

Kean pops his head in. He exchanges salutes with **NCOIC SGT. JUAN VALDEZ** (30's), the mustachio-ed senior station officer, standing and watching a TELEVISION.

VALDEZ
 NCO in charge, Sargent Juan Valdez,
 at your service.

KEAN
 Jim Kean. Would've expected to see
 a bit more security, given the
 situation.

VALDEZ
 Ambassador's orders. Business as
 usual.

KEAN
 Where is he?

VALDEZ
 Doing his same tired act.

Valdez nods to the TELEVISION:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, SAIGON - SAME TIME

Ambassador Martin, looking pale and dyspeptic from a bout of pneumonia, puts on a brave face for the cameras as he addresses an INTERVIEWER's questions.

MARTIN
 I want to assure you. We are not
 leaving. Come to my house.
 (MORE)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You'll see my wife and I haven't moved a stick of furniture.

INTERVIEWER

Then why did your Congress not approve additional money for our country last week?

MARTIN

It's true, the \$700 million aid package was defeated. But President Ford will be asking for \$1.2 billion next fiscal year.

INT. REC ROOM, CHANCERY - CONTINUOUS

KEAN

"Next year?"

VALDEZ

(unfazed)

My shift calendar doesn't go beyond next week.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

INTERVIEWER

And what of the rumors that important Vietnamese are being evacuated on American planes.

MARTIN

No Vietnamese are being allowed to leave the country with the exception of American spouses and their dependents. That's all.

INT. REC ROOM, CHANCERY - CONTINUOUS

VALDEZ

Glad you're taking over, to be honest. I can't get through to the man.

INT. WAITING AREA, MARTIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kean ENTERS. Approaches **SECRETARY**.

KEAN

Captain Jim Kean to see the Ambassador.

(waving his orders)

I have orders to serve under his command.

MARTIN'S SECRETARY
 (sizing him up)
 He's not in.

KEAN
 Light's on.

MARTIN'S SECRETARY
 You want to make me say it, I'll
 say it. He's not in for you.

KEAN
 I'm Commanding Officer of the
 Marine Security Guard Battalion and
 Ground Support Force Commander
 Southeast Asia.

She's not particularly impressed.

KEAN (CONT'D)
 (sheepish)
 Soon to be Major.

She sighs, lowers her eyes. Returns to her paperwork. Nods
 towards door marked: **AMBASSADOR GRAHAM MARTIN.**

MARTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Martin listens to a SPEECH on the radio at low volume. Desk
 littered with cables, coming and going.

KNOCK on door. He ignores it. Kean eventually opens and walks
 in.

KEAN
 Captain Jim Kean.

MARTIN
 (without looking)
 I didn't call you, Captain.

KEAN
 I thought to report as soon as
 possible.

He hands ORDERS to Martin, who drops them in an inbox without
 a glance. Beside the inbox is a framed MEMORIAL PHOTOGRAPH of
 a YOUNG MAN.

Martin looks at Kean for the first time.

MARTIN
 I mean, I didn't call you to
 Saigon.

KEAN

Fifty Marines against the entire
North Vietnamese Army didn't strike
me as a fair fight.

MARTIN

(sizing him up)
And you're the one man who can
balance the scales?

Kean is tempted to say 'yes', but deflects:

KEAN

More like, you can use all the help
you can get.

MARTIN

I've met my share of military men
looking for a fight. We don't need
heroes, Captain. We need diplomacy.
Understood?

KEAN

Yes, sir.

MARTIN

That means discretion. Not
headlines. My job, and yours by
extension, is to resolve things
quietly. So all you need to know is
that I've got the situation well in
hand. And all I need to know is
that you're not going to stir up
trouble and you can follow orders.

Martin continues staring at him, demanding a response:

KEAN

Yes, sir.

INT. SITUATION ROOM, CHANCERY - DAY

Kean addresses a room full of **MARINES**; individuals we'll get
to know but for now they feel to us (and to Kean) like a
single immutable entity. They eye Kean with guarded interest.

VALDEZ

Everyone's here, Major.

KEAN

Thank you, Sargent. It's good to be
back in Saigon. I'm glad to see the
embassy in--

A Marine, **BENNINGTON**, raises his hand. Kean nods.

BENNINGTON

We're getting conflicting reports about the fighting up north. Can you fill us in?

KEAN

The Ambassador's military advisor provides you with a daily threat assessment. I refer you to that.

The deflection has the opposite effect Kean hopes, and the floodgates open. Marines barrage Kean with questions:

BAUER

There's a rumor the VC's have infiltrated the White Mice.

NORMAN

Is Bien Tho under attack?

SCHLAGER

If Saigon falls, what are the contingency plan?

FRAIN

What's the sitrep, Major? Just level with us.

Kean can feel all eyes upon him. He dares not meet their collective gaze:

KEAN

We need to focus. Our primary responsibility is to protect the Ambassador and his operations. So let's go over your current protocols. Sargent?

Valdez shares the men's disappointment. Hesitates briefly before complying:

VALDEZ

Yes, sir, Major--

SCHLAGER

(dismayed)

It's Captain Kean.

(to Kean)

Isn't that right, sir?

KEAN

That's correct. Carry on, Sargent.

VALDEZ

Twelve men are assigned to
Ambassador Martin's personal
detail...

As Valdez continues, Kean allows himself to scan his
Marines... and sees the disappointment on each and every
face.

INT. HALLWAY, CHANCERY - NIGHT

Gevers helps Kean set up a COT.

GEVERS

We weren't expecting you, sir. No
room at the inn, as it were. But we
can displace one of the Privates.

Kean keeps making up his bed.

GEVERS (CONT'D)

Wouldn't you be more comfortable at
a hotel, sir?

KEAN

I'm not wasting our limited time
and resources shuttling to the
Colonial and back.

GEVERS

Can I at least help you unpack?

Kean pulls out his wallet and slips it under the pillow.

KEAN

Too late.

LATER

Kean sleeps uncomfortably on the cot and in his golf clothes.
Tossing. Cheek to pillow, he feels the lump beneath.

He sits up. Reaches for the wallet underneath. Pulls out a
PHOTO of Rosanne.

COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Kean stands by as Norman puts through a call.

Out the window, Kean spots a familiar face:

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

DA NANG CONSULATE GENERAL AL FRANCIS waits with a suitcase.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

Kean heads for the door.

KEAN
(to Norman)
Never mind.

INT. KEAN HOME, HONG KONG - NIGHT

Rosanne runs to the PHONE. PAPERS in her hand.

ROSANNE
Jim?

But the line is dead.

ROSANNE (CONT'D)
Hello?

She hangs up. Key words on the papers in her hand can be read: "**Blood Work**" and "**Pregnant**".

EXT. PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY - NIGHT

Francis steps into the back of car. An upbeat Mung behind the wheel.

KEAN (O.S.)
Al--

Francis turns, drunkenly surprised to see a friendly face.

FRANCIS
Jim. Didn't know you were in
Saigon.

KEAN
You know me and burning buildings.

FRANCIS
Then you get what a shit show this
is.

KEAN
Don't worry. We'll get ours home.

FRANCIS
Christ, Martin hasn't told you?
(shaking head)
Of course not. The intelligence
reports from Da Nang since evac
tell the whole story.
(MORE)

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
 Civilians slaughtered by the
 thousands for working with us. Told
 the Ambassador in no uncertain
 terms: Saigon's gonna be far worse.

KEAN
 What did Martin say?

FRANCIS
 Said I must be mentally exhausted.
 Ordered me stateside. That son-of-a-
 bitch won't let anyone tell him
 what to do. Which would be fine
 only he's not living in reality.

Francis stumbles getting in to the car.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
 (RE: stumble)
 You missed one helluva going away
 party.

Kean closes the car door for him. Hands another cigarette to
 a grateful Mung.

KEAN
 (to Mung)
 Makes sure he gets on that plane.

Mung gives him a terrible salute, starts the engine...

FRANCIS
 Cable room. Sixth floor.

...and drives out the gate.

INT. HALL, SIXTH FLOOR, CHANCERY - NIGHT

Kean tries the door marked: CABLE ROOM. Locked.

WAITING AREA, MARTIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kean rummages through the Secretary's drawers. Finds a KEY
 RING.

TIGHT ON: Kean's hand, key in lock. Twist and CLICK.

INT. CABLE ROOM - NIGHT

Kean, seated, sifts through INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS on Da
 Nang. PHOTOS and first-hand accounts of the atrocities:
 summary executions, massive desertions and labor camp round-
 ups.

The full force of the human damage hits him hard.

INT. MARTIN'S STUDY, AMBASSADOR'S HOME - NIGHT

Martin listens intently to RADIO, where a man gives a speech in Vietnamese to occasional APPLAUSE.

Martin's Wife leads Kean inside. Kean waits until she's retreated before

THWACK.

Kean drops the large folder on Martin's desk.

KEAN

This is the list of valued human assets in Da Nang considered at-risk in the event of an NVA occupation.

As Kean turns pages, one in three is crossed out with a fresh RED X.

KEAN (CONT'D)

You can see what's transpired in only a week.

(tapping file)

That's Da Nang. One notebook. Saigon is a room of filing cabinets filled with names. 20,000 in all. Men and women who helped the U.S. fight the war. Add their families and we're looking at 100,000 people who, even now, count on our protection from summary execution or rehabilitation camps.

MARTIN

Do you have a point, Captain Kean?

KEAN

I'd like to go over evacuation procedures for these folks.

MARTIN

That won't be necessary.

KEAN

We can't just leave them behind when the time comes.

MARTIN

We won't leave them behind.

KEAN

Sir?

MARTIN

Because we won't be evacuating.

Kean studies Martin: "The man's serious."

KEAN

I've been reading Al Francis' intelligence reports. 100,000 ARVN troops surrendered when their officers cut and ran. The country's second largest city fell in a day.

MARTIN

I'm well aware of recent events.

KEAN

Then you understand it's happening, sir. The entire country will belong to the North.

MARTIN

That is your considered opinion, is it, after a day in-country?

KEAN

No. That was my opinion after ten minutes. These files only confirmed it.

Martin steadies his gaze on Kean.

MARTIN

Saigon will never fall.

KEAN

With all due respect, that's only your opinion.

MARTIN

No, it's my responsibility. Washington trusts me to make the right call, and I intend to stand my ground. Listen to this:

Martin turns up the radio again. An impassioned Viet voice belonging to GENERAL KHIEM fills the room.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

That's General Khiem. The Silver Tiger. He's admonishing all his countrymen who would turn tail.

Martin listens. Likes what he hears. Turns down the radio again.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

He will hold the Mekong Delta with 200,000 American-trained troops armed with American-made weapons. And if our Communist neighbors to the north still don't get the message, we have 80 SAC B-52s at Utapao Air Base, Thailand to say it louder. They can be flying missions over Hanoi in 12 hours.

Kean struggles to keep his control: "The man has lost his mind."

KEAN

What if Thieu fails to deliver? We made promises to protect these people.

MARTIN

Your job, the primary job of all Marines here is to protect me.

KEAN

Yes, sir, but--

MARTIN

As far as I'm concerned that means helping me do my job, which is to save the country of South Vietnam. To that end, keep your opinions to yourself. There's no need to raise the alarm and it's vitally important we set an example for the remaining Americans and the rest of the city. So it's business as usual. That's an order.

EXT. AMBASSADOR'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Kean shuts the door behind him. Leans back against it in disbelief: "What the hell just happened in there?"

EXT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT - ESTABLISHING

INT. BAR, RED LIGHT DISTRICT - NIGHT

Kean, Valdez and **MAY LI**, Valdez's Girlfriend, sit at a table while a DOZEN MARINES flirt, drink and joke nearby, occasionally throwing a skeptical eye in Kean's direction.

KEAN

I get the diplomat thing, but I think Martin actually believes what he's saying.

VALDEZ

That's the Ambassador.

KEAN

He's making a tough job tougher.

VALDEZ

A job you volunteered for, remember?

KEAN

That's me. The good soldier.

VALDEZ

That just might be your problem, right there.

Valdez doesn't know how right he is. The point hangs in the air until a WAITER comes over with a DRINK for Kean.

KEAN

I've got one already.

WAITER

It's from your men.

Kean eyes the straw-colored drink with suspicion.

KEAN

What is it?

WAITER

They say it is an Arnold Palmer?

The Marines at the bar all LAUGH. Some mime golf swings. Point to Kean's clothes. Kean puts on a smile, raises the glass to them, but knows he doesn't have their respect yet.

VALDEZ

They figured you were here to make this a military operation. They'll get over it.

Kean consider his Marines more seriously.

KEAN

What're we working with?

VALDEZ
I'll introduce you.

KEAN
No time for all that. I can gauge
enough from a nickname. Every
Marine's got one.

Valdez points out each guy:

VALDEZ
(off **STEVE SCHULLER**)
Steve Schuller. Broke every
Physical Training score we had. For
that, he's called PT Monster.

It's obvious why. Schuller is country strong.

VALDEZ (CONT'D)
(off **BOBBY FRAIN**)
Frain is the Body Beautiful.

The good-looking Frain, with a physique to match, flirts
effortlessly with the best LOCAL TALENT.

MAY LI
(teasing/to Valdez)
That's what I would call him.

Valdez gives her a soft elbow to the ribs in return.

VALDEZ
(off **BENNINGTON**)
Bennington's Black Market.
Resourceful as all hell.
(off **BAUER**)
Bauer's Mr. Clean. Stick Ass when
he's not around.
(off **SULLIVAN**)
Sully. Mike Sullivan. He's Rock
Steady. I gave him that one.

KEAN
What do they call you, Top?

VALDEZ
Just Top.

MAY LI
What is wrong with Top?

VALDEZ
(to May Li)
Every NCOIC's called Top, baby.

KEAN

With a punch line like Juan Valdez?
 (off Valdez's
 shrug/encouraging)
 No, it's good. Means they respect
 you. And the cherry boys?

Kean refers to a pair of fresh-faced 19-year olds: **JUDGE** and **MCMAHON**, doing their best to catch up on the jokes flying around them.

VALDEZ

Judge and McMahon? No time. Just
 arrived in-country a few days ago.
 I'm stationing them at the airport.
 Simple checkpoint stuff.

KEAN

Why in hell is GenCom still drawing
 tags for here, anyway?

VALDEZ

Replacements. Had to send home the
 four Marines from the Da Nang
 consulate. Night terrors.

They go silent, thoughts turning to the same shit coming to Saigon. May Li rises to end the tension.

MAY LI

Another round?

As she heads to the bar:

KEAN

She should get out of Saigon. But,
 hey, it's not my place.

VALDEZ

Funny, she told me the same thing.
 (troubled)
 Won't leave without her parents.
 She's stubborn and proud, like the
 whole damn country. North and
 south.

EXT. TARMAC, SAM PAT AFB - NIGHT

Silver-haired **SOUTH VIETNAMESE GENERAL KHIEM** arrives by Jeep.

He moves toward a waiting helicopter. It takes eight men to carry four bags. Two men to a bag.

An eager **AIR FORCE PILOT** heads across the tarmac to fly the helo. He is stopped by **PILOT BUI**, a dashing, magnetic figure wearing a silk aviator's scarf.

PILOT BUI
I will escort General Khiem.

One bag hits a pole and makes a METALLIC CLUNK. Bag rips open to reveal GOLD BARS.

AIR FORCE PILOT
We all want the reward and a place on an American ship.

PILOT BUI
Not me. I will come back.

AIR FORCE PILOT
(skeptical)
Yeah? How do we know?

PILOT BUI
Because today South Vietnam needs pilots not gold.

With that, Pilot Bui hops into the cockpit.

EXT. BAR, RED LIGHT DISTRICT, SAIGON - NIGHT

The Marines, their female Companions and May Li stumble out.

Their LAUGHTER drowned out when a group formation of HU-1 "Huey" Helicopters passes low overhead.

FRAIN
What the hell?

BENNINGTON
That's the Silver Tiger. General Khiem. Bugging out. Heard it from some DAO boys inside.

Kean watches the helos disappear to the east, then pulls Valdez aside.

KEAN
The North is coming, whether the Ambassador believes it or not. Inform the men to be in the situation room at 0700.

INT. SITUATION ROOM, CHANCERY, US EMBASSY - DAY

The Marines settle, some gingerly/hung-over, into chairs.

KEAN

Yesterday, you asked me several questions regarding the NVA and South Vietnam's defensive preparedness. Unfortunately, and I'm relaying the Ambassador's instructions: I am not to provide you with my personal view of the military situation facing us.

That same skeptical look from the Marines. Kean pauses, makes a mental deal with himself to cross the Rubicon, then LOCKS THE DOOR and plunges in:

KEAN (CONT'D)

So I've asked Frank Snepp to give you the SitRep. His opinion. Not mine.

The Marines perk up.

KEAN (CONT'D)

You might have seen Frank haunting the corridors of the CIA floor--
(deliberate "mistake")
I mean the cultural attache floor.

Warming to Kean, the Marines LAUGH. So does **FRANK SNEPP**, a crew-cut Agency veteran.

SNEPP

(relaxed)

Embassy's a cozy place. I don't think I'm fooling anybody. Howdy gents.

Snepp uses a MAP to reinforce his comments. Drawings indicate change in North Vietnamese positions over the past 45 days.

SNEPP (CONT'D)

Charlie was gearing up for a two year campaign. But victories have come so fast, he's looking to take Saigon before monsoon season.

Snepp spots a sheepish Private Judge start to raise his hand.

SNEPP (CONT'D)

(answering)

That's a week from now. Tops.

Judge lowers his hand.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAIGON - DAY

COLUMNS of NVA Divisions on the move.

SNEPP (V.O.)

A column of least ten, maybe fifteen, NVA divisions are fifty miles north. Between 100,000 and 150,000 professional, battle-hardened soldiers. They outnumber the ARVN three to one.

BRIDGE in the far distance. This will be our benchmark for NVA's progress.

SNEPP (V.O.)

They're fanning out around the city. By the time they reach Vu Long bridge, they'll have Saigon in a stranglehold.

INT. SITUATION ROOM, CHANCERY - CONTINUOUS

SNEPP

Another thing, a significant number of VC cadres and NVA forward artillery observers have already infiltrated the city. Some have been apprehended wearing South Vietnamese army and police uniforms.

BAUER

What about this hammer-and-anvil strategy we've been hearing about?

Snepp flashes Kean a "What the hell?" look as Norman elaborates:

NORMAN

(naively hopeful)

That maybe Thieu let the NVA get this close so he could drop a few divisions behind their lines and crush them against the city's defenses.

Snepp can't suppress a LAUGH before recovering.

SNEPP

If Thieu had the resources, which he doesn't, he would have tried that in Da Nang. No. Saigon's going to fall.

Kean nods to Snepp in thanks then feels the room get quiet before he takes control:

KEAN

But before it does, we're going to be Marines.

There's general positive MURMURING among the Marines. This is what they've been wanting to hear.

KEAN (CONT'D)

That means getting as many at-risk Vietnamese out of here as possible.

Snepp takes the opportunity to unlock the door and EXIT.

KEAN (CONT'D)

I can't and won't make an order of this. So if anyone has a problem, feel free to speak up.

A brief silence before skeptical Schlager pipes up:

SCHLAGER

No, sir, Major. No problems.

With everyone on the same page, the mood changes: "Let's get down to work."

KEAN

Evacuation plans were drawn up two years ago. Code name Flash Storm. The name has since been compromised and the situation on the ground, as demonstrated by the chaos in Da Nang requires a complete re-thinking.

Kean nods to Valdez, who places an overlay on the MAP to show evacuation plans.

KEAN (CONT'D)

As before, signal will go out on Armed Forces Radio. But the new plan is code named Operation Frequent Wind.

SCHULLER

The plan must really stink.

Schuller, the PT Monster, enjoys getting a few SNORTS of laughter from his fellow Marines.

INT. STAIRWELL, CHANCERY - SAME TIME

Martin passes Snepp on Fourth Floor landing.

MARTIN

Fourth floor isn't your usual
haunt.

SNEPP

Howdy, Graham. Don't tell anyone
but spooks have a lousy sense of
direction.

Snepp flashes a sheepish grin and heads upstairs. Martin looks down the fourth floor hallway from where Snepp has come...

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

KEAN

The operation includes four options. Option One involves commercial aircraft, so that's now out. Two is a continuation of fixed-wing evac from Tan Son Nhut using military C-141 and C-130's only. Three involves a sea lift from the Port of Saigon but after the tragedy on the Da Nang docks, that's a non-starter.

BENNINGTON

You said four options, Major?

KEAN

Option Four is a helicopter lift from the Airport.

Sounds of SKEPTICISM flood the room.

MARINES

Never gonna happen./C'mon,
Major./Helos?/etc.

SCHULLER

Might as well empty a tub with a
thimble.

Kean displays a MAP on wall that explains Option Four.

KEAN

We'll stage in the World Airways
hangar, that's still in good shape.

(MORE)

KEAN (CONT'D)

Then shuttle over to the tennis courts where we can get three Sea Stallions landing at the same time. Helos will rendez-vous with the 7th Fleet, which has already taken up position in the South China Sea, 40 miles off Vung Tau. Embassy personnel will be short-hopped to the airport by birds landing in the parking lot. Any questions?

MARTIN (O.S.)

I can think of a couple.

Kean pivots to see Martin in the doorway. Kean steps more directly between Martin and the incriminating map.

KEAN

Just going over some logistics, sir. Familiarizing myself with operations.

Martin takes a good look around the room. Finally EXITS. Kean addresses his men again:

KEAN (CONT'D)

Put your affairs in order...
(quietly/off Martin/door)
...then back here for business.

INT. MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

Duane Gevers gets married to his SWEETHEART.

INT. BAR/BROTHEL, RED LIGHT DISTRICT - DAY

Bobby Frain rounds up PROSTITUTES, including some from the previous evening.

FRAIN

Let's go ladies. Much as it pains me to see you go, the Commies won't treat you with the same affection.

PROSTITUTE #1

How will we live in America?

FRAIN

You'll do just fine. Trust me.

Some of the Prostitutes want to stay. There's a tug-of-war between the two groups, ENTREATIES and a lot of TEARS but Frain eventually leads the evacuating ladies downstairs and outside.

EXT. BROTHEL - CONTINUOUS

Frain calls to NGUYEN, the tailor.

FRAIN

You, too, Nguyen. Grab some needle
and thread. I'm gonna need suits
stateside, too.

Everybody piles into a MINIBUS. Those staying behind wave and cry.

EXT. TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT - DAY

Frain pulls up in the Minibus "brothel on wheels".

Thousands of Vietnamese join the Americans and Third-Party Nationals trying to leave.

US Air Force Cargo Planes land empty and take off full.

INT. HANGAR, TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT - DAY

Mike Sullivan waits in a long and chaotic line with his IRANIAN WIFE and their 4 year-old DAUGHTER.

Sullivan checks his watch. Anxious.

SULLIVAN

I've gotta get back to the Embassy.
(off his Wife's anxiety)
We'll try again tomorrow.

At the other end of the line, Private Judge fights to keep order as he processes Vietnamese for transport. He spots Sullivan leaving.

MOMENTS LATER

Sullivan and his family EXITING.

JUDGE (O.S.)

There you are!

Sullivan turns to see Private Judge. Judge grabs Sullivan's Wife's suitcase.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

The plane's waiting.

PROCESSING DESK

Judge quickly stamps some papers.

Sullivan and his Wife kiss and embrace. Not wanting to say good-bye.

Judge gives the deeply-moved Sullivan a shy smile then personally walks Sullivan's Wife to the next plane waiting to take off, carrying their daughter on his shoulders.

INT./EXT. US EMBASSY - DAY

Kean and Valdez walk the perimeter, instructing Bauer and Bennington where to position machine guns nests.

EXT. ROOFTOP, CHANCERY

Schuller stokes an INCINERATOR as Gevers grabs shovelfuls of paperwork from huge piles of Embassy FILES.

GEVERS

Gotta be twenty years of files to
destroy before Charlie gets here.

SCHULLER

(mock solemn oath)
No name left behind.

Harder to burn objects are placed into chemical burn cans.

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE, CHANCERY - NIGHT

Martin on satellite phone...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KISSINGER'S OFFICE, STATE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON - DAY

...with Kissinger.

MARTIN

You assured President Thieu at the
time of the accords -- and I have
subsequently reiterated the promise
on several occasions -- that we
would re-commence bombing runs over
Hanoi the moment North Vietnam
violated the peace terms. We are
well beyond that, Henry.

KISSINGER

That was Nixon's promise. President
Ford has taken a different
approach.

MARTIN

But if he understood the situation here--

KISSINGER

The President will not be asking Congress to dust off Operation Linebacker.

MARTIN

(biting hard)

I was hoping for better news.

KISSINGER

This is where your skills come in, Mr. Ambassador. A diplomatic solution remains the best possible outcome.

MARTIN

There is thought that the Soviets can use their influence in Hanoi to rein in General Dho. I'll make enquiries through the French Ambassador.

KISSINGER

God's speed, Graham. The President and I are counting on you to avoid the embarrassment of a total pull out.

The muted CLICK of an overseas disconnection.

Martin lapses into COUGHING until he's distracted by COMMOTION outside his window, Martin can see:

EXT. PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY - DAY

Kean oversees Marines gathered around the huge TAMARIND TREE. Schuller CHOPS away with an axe. He makes little impression on the ten-foot diameter trunk.

SCHULLER

Shit.

KEAN

If we need to shuttle personnel to the airport by helo, this is our only landing zone.

Martin, agitated, EXITS the Chancery now using a CANE. Moves as quickly as his frail body allows. Grabs the AXE from Schuller's hand and throws it to the ground.

MARTIN
What's all this?

KEAN
(quick to lie)
Need to keep your transport options
open, sir.

Martin suspects there's more going on. Makes a gut call:

MARTIN
The tree stays. The people of
Saigon see us take down this tree,
it will be seen as a sign of
weakness.

KEAN
We're past symbols, sir.

MARTIN
Symbols always matter. The flag.
The eagle. And this tree. It's a
symbol of American strength. Of
commitment to the people. Take away
this tree, you might as well remove
the flag. The people of Saigon will
notice and there will be widespread
panic.

Kean and his Men grow uncomfortable as Martin loses himself
to bombast.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Anyone touches that tree, they will
be court-martialed.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF SAIGON - NIGHT

North Vietnamese soldiers make camp. Bringing forward long-
range artillery guns and mortars.

INT. LOCK ROOM, EMBASSY - NIGHT

Schuller and Frain ENTER and make for a PILE of VIETNAMESE
CURRENCY.

FRAIN
You sure about this?

SCHULLER
It's not stealing, it's investing
in the local economy.
(off Frain's look)
(MORE)

SCHULLER (CONT'D)
 Okay, it's stealing... but
 nobody'll ever know.

Frain accepts this. Starts grabbing piasters.

EXT. LOCK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gevers walks by as Frain and Schuller EXIT, stuffing their pockets with the CASH.

GEVERS
 (Vietnamese)
I don't see a thing.

INT. BAR, RED LIGHT DISTRICT - NIGHT

Schuller and Frain are far-gone wasted. LOCAL GIRLS on their lap. They lavish piasters on everyone until their pockets are empty.

First to notice are the Girls, who abruptly drop their attention. Head off for richer prospects.

SCHULLER
 Guess that's it.

EXT. PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY - NIGHT

Schuller and Frain pass the tamarind tree. They both look at the tree, and then each other.

Schuller finds the axe, where Martin left it. Goes to the back of the tree, shielded from Martin's windows, and takes a drunken WHACK.

SCHULLER
 That's for those bow ties and your
 wife's little dog.

Frain grabs the axe. WHACK.

FRAIN
 That's for not letting me date your
 daughter.

WHACK.

FRAIN (CONT'D)
 And that's for not letting me date
 the other one.

They look at the tree. Still no progress.

SCHULLER
C'mon. We've got detail.

INT. LIVING ROOM, AMBASSADOR'S HOUSE, SAIGON - NIGHT

An anxious, tight-mouthed Martin reaches into a cabinet. Grabs a bottle of wine. Thinks better of it and pulls out a SPECIAL BOTTLE, wrapped in cloth.

Through a slightly open door, **MARTIN'S WIFE** packs and holds back tears. Her SHIH TZU under her feet.

Martin puts on his "game face" turns to face the **FRENCH AMBASSADOR**

MARTIN
(French)
*I have a grave favor to ask,
Jacques.*
(English)
I need you to approach the Soviets.

Martin's Wife knows her cue to exit. She sweeps up the Shih Tzu in her arms and EXITS.

INT. HALLWAY, CHANCERY, US EMBASSY - 0400 HOURS

Silence. Kean sleeps on his cot.

The jarring RUMBLE of distant ROCKET ATTACKS jolts him awake.

EXT. ROOFTOP, CHANCERY - NIGHT

Burn Squad. Sullivan and Gevers already stare to the northwest, shovels in hand, as Kean ENTERS from the fire stairs.

Together they witness the onset of massive MORTAR and ROCKET BOMBING of Tan Son Nhut Airport. Five miles away.

KEAN
It's started.

SULLIVAN
Who we got over there?

Sullivan turns for an answer. But Kean is already GONE.

INT./EXT. TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT - SAME TIME

Violent EXPLOSIONS rip through hangars and fuel depots amid the all-night evacuation.

Mortar rounds blast deep CRATERS in the runways. Hundreds of waiting Vietnamese evacuees run for cover of concrete bunkers.

Kean's senior posted Marine, Bauer aka "Mr. Clean", frantically wraps his wire-rim glasses around his ears and screams into his radio:

BAUER
("incoming!")
Whiskey Joe! Whiskey Joe!

RADIOMAN
Took a hit to the staging center!
We've got casualties!

Bauer adjusts to the chaos, readying his M-16:

BAUER
(into radio)
We've got men on the wire...

Another ROCKET hits the roof of a hangar. Splintering wood and corrugated metal.

Bauer runs through smoke-filled air, towards the perimeter of the airport.

CHECKPOINT #1

Bauer finds Corporal Lamar Holmes splayed on the ground, clutching his knee and bleeding from his head.

BAUER
Holmes, can you walk? Holmes?!

Holmes just stares blankly. Shell-shocked.

Another BLAST and a FIREBALL as the fuel tank ruptures on an American C-130 plane. Burning oil and debris litter the nearby runway.

The wall of fire lights the scene in front of Bauer. And his heart jumps into his throat as he stares towards:

CHECKPOINT #2

Now nothing more than a whole in the ground.

Bauer starts tearing at twisted chain link and sheet metal. He spots a pristine MARINE BOOT... holding a leg severed at the shin. Nearby, a singed metal flak jacket burned into a torso with no limbs.

Nearby exploding BULLET ROUNDS send Bauer belly-first to the dirt. What he thought was enemy fire come from a burning ammo dump.

But from his prone position, he spots PRIVATE JUDGE staring back. Lifeless face drained of blood.

TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT - 0500 HOURS

Kean jumps from an Embassy vehicle driven by his driver, Mung.

AIRPORT MARINE
We're two short.

KEAN
Do a roll call and--

Bauer approaches.

BAUER
Don't bother. It's Judge and
McMahon.

KEAN
Jesus. The newbies.

A silence fills the space.

Kean turns to make a quick, professional scan of the situation.

A final cargo plane makes a desperate attempt to take off amid the continuing rocket attack. It gets hit; wreckage further blocking the cratered runways.

KEAN (CONT'D)
Get the Ambassador on the horn.

Kean watches as 100 yards away, across the tarmac, SOUTH VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE OFFICERS commandeer Huey helicopters at gunpoint.

Communications Marine brings Kean a crank phone.

KEAN (CONT'D)
(grabbing phone)
Sir. It's no longer possible to fly
fixed-wing aircraft.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. AMBASSADOR'S HOME - DAY

Martin puts on his boots. Phone cradled to his chin.

MARTIN

Don't give me a conclusion,
Captain. Just an assessment.

KEAN

We've got cargo planes destroyed on
the tarmac. Oil fires. And incoming
mortar rounds. The airport's a shit
storm.

MARTIN

I better see for myself.

KEAN

The situation's self-evident, and
leaving the embassy at this time is
more risk than--

MARTIN

Not a word of this to anyone. I'm
on my way.

Kean hears Martin CLICK off. CURSES under his breath.

EXT. STREETS, SAIGON - DAY

Martin driven in his armor plated Chevrolet Impala.

Three Marines in the car, including Bennington, stare out
their windows. Fingers on triggers.

EXT. TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT - 0700 HOURS

Martin ARRIVES, crosses paths with the BODY BAGS holding
Judge and McMahon. He's quickly ushered inside:

INT. DEFENSE ATTACHE OPERATIONS HQ - CONTINUOUS

Upstairs. With a wide view of the airport. The light is
better now. Kean can see the full extent of the smoldering
damage.

Martin, escorted by Bennington, joins him.

MARTIN

(anxious)
Mrs. Martin and Nit Noy?

Kean looks to Bennington: "Nit Noy?"

BENNINGTON
Mrs. Martin's shih tzu.

Kean bites his lip.

BAUER
(overhearing)
They got out safely an hour ago,
sir.

They all watch one brave South Vietnamese AIR FORCE PLANE circle the airport, laying down protective fire against advanced NVA positions.

MARTIN
Well, we still control the airport.

KEAN
The runways are unusable.

MARTIN
Not once you clear that debris.

KEAN
That'll only invite another mortar
attack.

MARTIN
But can you do it?

KEAN
("Yes, but...")
Frequent Wind. Call it, sir.

Martin seems to be wavering... But they're disrupted by a SQUAWK.

NORMAN (O.S.)
(on squawk box)
I've got the Secretary of State for
the Ambassador.

MARTIN
(annoyed/pivoting)
Your orders were to talk to no one.

KEAN
("not my fault")
CoC picks up our chatter.

MARTIN
(to Norman/into mic)
Patch him through.
(MORE)

MARTIN (CONT'D)
 (into mic)
 Henry.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KISSINGER'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON DC - DAY

Kissinger nods to his Secretary, who shuts his door.

KISSINGER
 Graham. What's going on? I
 understand the airport's been
 attacked.

MARTIN
 (non-committal)
 All is calm at present.

KISSINGER
 (careful)
 I rely entirely on your assessment
 of the situation. If you need to
 call for Frequent Wind, then I will
 accept this distressing news. But
 understand this: the win here is
 the appearance of an orderly
 withdrawal of non-essential
 personnel, and the flag still
 flying over the embassy.

MARTIN
 (into mic/looking at Kean)
 If the runway can be re-opened, my
 men can do it.

Martin hangs up. Kean has his orders. He doesn't like it. But there it is.

KEAN
 (to Bauer and Bennington)
 Come with me.

EXT. GATES, US EMBASSY - 0800 HOURS

A CROWD has already started to gather. Schuller and Schlager eyeball them warily.

Valdez comes over.

VALDEZ
 We've gotta keep the embassy
 screwed down tight. Anyone gets
 in's just another we gotta get out
 again.

SCHULLER
 (to crowd)
 Go home. Closed. Closed.

But few in the Crowd move off.

EXT. OUTSIDE CONTROL TOWER, AIRPORT - DAY

Kean does his best to attempt clearing the debris. A group of Marines work fire hoses attempting to put out the fiery cargo plane.

Kean gets behind the wheel of a truck. Joins others to push smaller vehicles off the runway.

But SNIPER FIRE opens up from several different positions. Shoots holes in Kean's vehicle. All the drivers flop to the ground, roll under their trucks for safety.

Kean locates the source of some of the shots: an NVA sniper in an advanced position atop one of the neighboring roofs.

Kean uses hand signals to position a Marine Sharpshooter. Then Kean exposes himself, opening fire on the Sniper's position, allowing the Marine Sharpshooter to make a clean hit.

KEAN
 Let's get back to it.

Kean is the first back behind the wheel of his truck. The others follow suit. One eye on the nearby buildings.

EXT. FRONT GATES, US EMBASSY - DAY

Martin returns. Miffed to find the gates closed. The Crowd has increased to several hundred Vietnamese. Some carry suitcases full of possessions.

Martin checks his watch: frowns.

As the gates open for the Impala, Martin taps the Driver on the shoulder with his cane:

MARTIN
 Stop.

Martin rolls down his window and addresses Schuller:

MARTIN (CONT'D)
 What's going on?

SCHULLER
 Top's orders.

MARTIN
Nonsense. It's just another
Thursday.

Schuller eyes the large, restless Crowd.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
And put the rifle away. Calm is
contagious.

SCHULLER
Yes, sir.

Martin's Impala drives on inside. Schuller and Schlager exchange a look. They keep the gate open and signal the Crowd to come forward.

The Crowd doesn't need to be told twice, as they push inside quickly past the Marines.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Kean assesses the scene: smoke rises from the last plane fire finally extinguished. The final vehicle has been pushed off the runway.

KEAN
Well, that's one clear.

BAUER
Still pretty ruttet.

KEAN
Let's scrounge some sheet metal or
plywood. Lay 'em across. Best we
can do under the--

KABOOM! A new barrage of very accurate MORTAR FIRE rains down. Every ducks for cover.

It's over nearly as fast as it begun. But a fresh round of burning debris and deeper holes have crippled the runway.

Kean surveys the damage: all his work has been erased.

EXT. AIRPORT PERIMETER - DAY

Mung practices blowing smoke rings. Jumps into "business mode" when he sees Kean approaching.

KEAN
We're heading back.

EXT. STREETS, SAIGON - MORNING

Mung drives Kean, Bennington and Bauer. They notice the general restlessness and angry stares, each preferring not to mention it out loud.

As they pass a Western Hotel, they spot an American Photojournalist, **JOHN BEINECKE**, laden with cameras, and a VIETNAMESE ASSISTANT flagging them down.

Mung stops.

KEAN

Where you headed?

BEINECKE

We're bugging out. Couple of the AP guys picked up shortwave chatter from the airport.

KEAN

Then you should know that's not an option. Hop in.

As the two men get in:

BEINECKE

Where are the vans? This is supposed to be an evac pick-up site.

KEAN

We're not evacuating.

Beinecke has a hard time processing this.

BEINECKE

("Am I missing something?")

The city's under attack.

INT. EMBASSY VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

As Mung drives on.

BEINECKE

We need to go by the Colonial? The AP guys'll be stranded for sure.

KEAN

How many are there?

BEINECKE

No more than three.

Kean sizes up the sedan. It's going to be cramped.

KEAN

Okay.

EXT. COLONIAL HOTEL - MORNING

Mung pulls up into a chaotic scene. The AMERICAN JOURNALISTS are being antagonized by a group of YOUNG VIETNAMESE. More Vietnamese Youths are looting nearby.

Mung stops the car. There are SIX Journalists. Three stuff inside the car. The other three stand on the old sedan's running boards.

But the RIOTERS surround the car. A few ROCKS strike the car. The windshield cracks.

Beinecke starts snapping photos. Kean knocks the camera down.

KEAN

You're not helping.

As the Rioters gain confidence and come closer, a NATIONAL POLICE OFFICER in white gloves and white helmet (one of the "White Mice" referred to in the sitrep meeting earlier) emerges from the crowd.

He DRAWS HIS GUN.

BEINECKE

Christ. We heard VC's had penetrated the Whie Mice...

But the White Mouse swings his gun on the Rioters.

WHITE MOUSE

(to Crowd)

Stay back!

(to Kean)

You go to Embassy?

KEAN

That's right.

WHITE MOUSE

You will not make it this way.

He jumps onto the car's running board.

WHITE MOUSE (CONT'D)

I take you.

EXT. STREETS, SAIGON - MINUTES LATER

The Embassy car makes slow progress along the streets, getting increasing attention from the local population.

NARROW STREET

Mung drives the over-stuffed car down a narrow street. Several vehicles pull up behind them, blocking their retreat. From all directions come another, larger ANGRY MOB.

They are trapped.

The White Mouse gets out of the car. Starts trying to reason with the Mob but, even with GUN DRAWN, it's clear there's no calming them down.

The Mob overruns the White Mouse and surrounds the car.

Some start grabbing at the Americans. Others rock the car. They notice Mung with them.

RIOTER
(RE: Mung)
*He works with the Americans! Even
now!*

Rioters grab at Mung. Kean does his best to protect his driver but there are too many.

They pull Mung from Kean's grasp and out of the car. A GUNMAN produces a PISTOL.

PFFT. The Gunman shoots Mung in the back of the head. Dead.

The lifeless young Driver consumes Kean's vision.

Then the mob turns towards Kean and the Journalists. They rock the sedan. Grab the Americans. Yank Kean from the front seat. ROPES are thrown over lamp posts.

Then the REVVING of a nearby engine.

FAR END OF BLOCK - CONTINUOUS

The White Mouse has hot-wired an abandoned BUS. Leaning on the HORN he blasts into the crowd. Forcing them to scatter.

Kean helps Beinecke and the other Journalists get on board.

The White Mouse reverses the bus, tears down the narrow street clipping parked cars. BULLETS chasing them.

The bus SMASHES through the blockade of cars at the end of the block.

MAIN STREET

The White Mouse GRINDS into first gear. The bus lurches forward and away from the furious Mob.

EXT. FRONT GATE, US EMBASSY - MORNING

The banged-up bus drives through the gates.

Kean is first out the door. The grounds are already a quarter full with 1,000 Vietnamese and their belongings. More streaming through the gates.

Kean addresses Schuller:

KEAN
Why's the gate open?

SCHULLER
Ambassador's orders.

KEAN
(off crowd)
That makes them our responsibility now. And there's no getting them across town.

The White Mouse is the last out of the bus.

KEAN (CONT'D)
Thank you. For everything.

WHITE MOUSE
Of course, my friend.

KEAN
Listen to me. There isn't much time. You need to get your family. Bring them back here right away. I'll make sure you get out.

WHITE MOUSE
Thank you. But no. I can not do that.

KEAN
You're a South Vietnamese police officer. The NVA will not hesitate to shoot you. Understand?

WHITE MOUSE

I understand. But this is my home.

Impressed into silence, Kean can only watch as the White Mouse disappears into the crowd.

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE - 1100 HOURS

Martin button-holed by his DEPUTY and Secretary.

SECRETARY

You've received several cables from Washington.

DEPUTY

I've run out of ways to stall the Vietnamese. They want to know our next move.

Kean ENTERS.

MARTIN

If you're back that means the airport's re-opened.

KEAN

It's pointless.

MARTIN

I told you to--

KEAN

Anyone plans on leaving Saigon, it's helos from there and helos from here. No more options. No more time.

MARTIN

I need you to do your job. Isn't that what you came here to do?

Kean heads for the door. Shaking his head in dismay.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

One more thing: the two dead Marines.

KEAN

("They have names.")
Judge and McMahan.

MARTIN

Not a word to HQ on the matter.
They'll order our withdrawal and
Frequent Wind will initiate by
default.

KEAN

They have families.

MARTIN

And they'll be notified in good
time. Right now, I need room to
maneuver. And that means re-opening
the airport.

Kean puts hand back on handle but can't turn the knob.
Clearly conflicted. Then turns around. Defiant.

KEAN

I won't do this any longer.

MARTIN

Excuse me?

KEAN

I won't follow more orders that
make the situation worse.

MARTIN

(to Secretary)
Give us a moment.

The Secretary heads back to her desk.

KEAN

(to Deputy)
You too.

Deputy looks to Martin, who nods wearily.

MARTIN

You will address me with deference.
I am the United States Ambassador
to South Vietnam.

KEAN

And I respect your authority, sir.
I do. But not at the expense of
reason or compassion. No longer.

MARTIN

You'll do your job or you'll be
removed.

KEAN

Let me tell you about doing my job. On my second tour here, I was in charge of an artillery battery on Hill 712, above a village called Ah Luoc. Real strategic position. My job was to control the hill at all costs. When the VC attacked, which they did every couple weeks like clockwork, I cut them down. They'd arrive with wire tied tight around their biceps and above the knee, to slow the inevitable bleeding. But cut them down we did. And when we'd find a weapons cache in the village at our back, we did our best to find who was responsible. I did my job. And what I got was a box full of photos back home of former friends who are either dead or unwilling to talk to me. The conclusion I came to was I didn't do my job well enough. So, yeah, I came back for more. To get it right. But I'm tired of being a good Marine.

Kean goes to the window.

KEAN (CONT'D)

Look outside. Really look.

Martin finally does. Sees the rising fear and chaos among the gathered people.

KEAN (CONT'D)

We have lost. And now we are leaving.

Beyond the walls, a group South Vietnamese SOLDIERS strip off their uniforms and toss them away.

KEAN (CONT'D)

All we can do, the only thing left to do, is take as many of these people with us as possible.

Martin looks away from the window. Heads wearily for the door. No acknowledgement of Kean or his words.

Kean watches him go: "I've lost him."

EXT. CHANCERY BUILDING, US EMBASSY - MOMENTS LATER

Bennington follows Martin outside and catches up inside

GATE

Schuller and Schlager try to keep ARRIVING VIETNAMESE entering in an orderly fashion.

BENNINGTON

I have orders to keep you on the grounds, sir.

MARTIN

And when you can't?

BENNINGTON

To follow you.

MARTIN

(annoyed)

Just stretching my legs.

Martin does an about face. Bennington keeps his eyes on him until the Ambassador disappears around some low-story out-buildings.

INT./EXT. MAINTENANCE BUILDING, EMBASSY - CONTINUOUS

Martin ENTERS.

Heads down a hall then fishes out a key and unlocks what looks like a storage closet.

STORAGE CLOSET

In the rear of the small room is a METAL DOOR. Martin slides back a heavy bolt and steps into

EXT. COURTYARD, FRENCH EMBASSY - CONTINUOUS

French flag on a pole.

INT. AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE, FRENCH EMBASSY - DAY

Martin and the French Ambassador. Martin drops heavily off his cane and into his chair.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR

The Soviets have declined to get involved.

MARTIN

They might posture that way but their interests go deep here. Maybe you missed a signal.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR

(tight)

I don't think so. They were rather blunt.

MARTIN

They don't want to overstep the Chinese if it means getting tripped up.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR

There is nothing left I can do.

MARTIN

You must take another swing at them. Pick up the phone, tell them you have more--

FRENCH AMBASSADOR

("We're done here.")

There is nothing left.

Martin rises slowly. Painfully.

MARTIN

Nothing but follow your dusty playbook, you mean. Find a stronger nation to take up a fight you're too tired to keep fighting yourself.

(reaches door)

Too bad there isn't one.

EXT. FRENCH EMBASSY - DAY

Martin steps out onto the street. Walks away from the American Embassy. Needs to gather his thoughts.

EXT. PLAZA, SAIGON - DAY

Martin sits on a bench. Smokes a cigarette despite his shitty lungs. COUGHS heavy.

Two SMALL BOYS across the square LAUGH and chase a pigeon around a fountain. Martin watches transfixed until the BOYS' MOTHER comes to an open window and calls them inside.

EXT. FRONT GATE, US EMBASSY - DAY

With a bit more giddyup in his tired legs, Martin strides past a perplexed Bennington: "How the hell'd he get by me?"

INT. HALL OUTSIDE COMMUNICATIONS ROOM, CHANCERY - DAY

Norman sees Kean walking past.

NORMAN
Major, sir.

Kean backs up.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
I've got your wife.

Kean ENTERS. But is intercepted by:

MARTIN'S SECRETARY (O.S.)
The Ambassador wants to see you.

Kean turns.

MARTIN'S SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Immediately.

She's giving him the stink-eye.

KEAN
(to Norman/RE: Rosanne)
Guess I'll be seeing her soon
enough.

Kean follows Martin's Secretary down the hall.

NORMAN (O.S.)
I'm sorry, Mrs. Kean, I can't track
him down...

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE, CHANCERY - DAY

Kean ENTERS.

KEAN
I suppose you're gonna declare me
mentally exhausted, like Al
Francis.

MARTIN
(gentle)
Sit down.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

My son, Glenn, took shrapnel to the spine in '67. Died in medivac. I vowed to make his death and the fifty-eight thousand other American kids count for something.

KEAN

(off photo on desk)
Good looking kid.

Martin picks up the PHOTO OF THE YOUNG MAN.

MARTIN

That's my other son. Gaye. Car accident. Wanna tell me which makes less sense?

KEAN

Glenn and the others were fulfilling our promise to help these people.

MARTIN

And that's what I've been trying to do. Find a way to keep the country together.

KEAN

The country is lost. The people can still be saved.

MARTIN

(maybe coming around)
My superiors aren't interested in saving Vietnamese lives.

KEAN

From here to the end, we do what's right. Not what's ordered.

MARTIN

(all in)
That will require diplomacy.
(conceding Kean's role)
And some heroes, too.
(punching intercom)
Get me General Carey aboard the Blue Ridge.

EXT. USS BLUE RIDGE, OFF THE COAST OF VIETNAM - ESTABLISHING

INT. CONTROL ROOM, USS BLUE RIDGE - DAY

An agitated **GENERAL CAREY** (50's), by-the-book from his crew cut to his polished shoes, grabs a phone handed to him by a Crewman.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE - DAY

MARTIN
(into phone)
General Carey. I'm ordering
Operation Frequent Wind. Option IV.

GENERAL CAREY
Jesus. Helos from the airport?

MARTIN
And the embassy as well.

GENERAL CAREY
(alarmed)
The embassy? Mr. Ambassador, a
thousand moving parts make that
impossible.

MARTIN
Nevertheless, those are the facts
on the ground. When can I expect
evac to commence.

GENERAL CAREY
(unhappy/off watch)
1400 hours.

MARTIN
We'll be ready.

Martin hangs up.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
(to Kean)
Let's hope this works.

"WHITE CHRISTMAS" MONTAGE:

Kean walks down the hall to

COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Norman jumps to attention.

KEAN
Frequent Wind. Call it in.

Norman, surprised and excited, grabs a land line.

INT. RADIO STATION, SAIGON - CONTINUOUS

A phone RINGS. The American STATION MANAGER picks it up.

STATION MANAGER
Radio Free Vietnam.

NORMAN
Christmas has come early.

The Manager nearly drops the cigarette from his mouth. Hangs up. Then flips through a stack of 45's until he finds what he's looking for: Bing Crosby's WHITE CHRISTMAS.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

All the Marines assemble.

KEAN
When the shit hits, everybody runs for the American flag. And that's here. We'll be looking out our window at an Alamo-type situation.

The Marines go quiet. Digesting the news.

INT. HALL, RADIO STATION - SAME TIME

Manager walks down a hall, and stops outside the window below the ON AIR light of

STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

A DEEJAY looks through the glass wall and goes pale when he sees the Manager holding the record to the glass.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

KEAN
I don't know what's coming over those walls. Or how it's coming. But I can promise one thing: when it does, we will fight like Marines.

INT. STUDIO, RADIO STATION - SAME TIME

The DEEJAY cues up the record with shaky hands on the open, second turntable. He fades down the volume on the first turntable, interrupting a Peggy Lee standard.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

KEAN

And if we have to, we will die like
Marines.

INT. STUDIO, RADIO STATION - SAME TIME

DEEJAY

And now for the weather. It's 105
degrees and rising here in Saigon.

He starts up White Christmas. Grabs his personal effects and runs out.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

KEAN

(loud)
Every Marine a rifleman!

A ROAR fills the room.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

RADIOS all across the city broadcast Bing Crosby crooning
WHITE CHRISTMAS.

This signal was an open secret. Not only did the Americans know it, but so did all the Vietnamese. Chaos engulfs the city.

SAIGON SHOPS -- SHOPKEEPERS close abruptly. Locking their doors against the coming chaos.

SAIGON STREET -- A SQUAD of South Vietnamese INFANTRYMEN squabble among themselves. Several throw down their rifles and walk away.

GATES, US EMBASSY -- Schuller, Schlager and Sullivan close the gates against a tide of approaching Vietnamese waving documents and money. PROTESTS go up.

MESS HALL, US EMBASSY -- Frain and Bauer do weapons checks.

ROOFTOP, CHANCERY BUILDING, US EMBASSY -- Gevers shovels
PALLETES OF US DOLLARS into the incinerator.

WALL, US EMBASSY -- Norman and Babel establish machine gun nests at strategic corners.

BUNK ROOM, US EMBASSY -- Valdez packs a few belongings, including photograph of May Li.

VIETNAMESE APARTMENT -- May Li, her AGING PARENTS and SISTER with two INFANT CHILDREN gather with a few other families around a RADIO at a Neighbor's House.

PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY -- Marines HOSE DOWN the grounds.

KEAN

Sea Knights on the roof pad for the Americans and Jolly Green Giants down here for the locals. The water'll keep us from choking on kicked-up debris.

ROOF, US EMBASSY -- Schlager and Gevers paint a bright yellow "H" inside a circle on an elevated section of the roof.

SCHLAGER

(off their handiwork)
Why not just put a big bull's eye on there for Charlie while we're at it.

PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY -- Kean oversees the tamarind tree finally cut down in parking lot. Gas-powered chain saws lop off large branches. Chains hitched to two trucks rip away the stump.

Marines CHEER as Martin watches from his office window.

Frain cups his hands, shouts in Martin's direction:

FRAIN

Timberrrrrrrrr!

END MONTAGE.

EXT. SAIGON - DAY

Aerial view of streets. Like ants approaching the embassy from all directions.

EXT. GATES, US EMBASSY - DAY

Increasing chaos. Desperate LOCALS climbing over razor wire or slipping in whenever the gate is briefly opened.

Schuller, Schlager and Sullivan do their best to maintain order, but they're on the losing side.

SCHULLER

This is crazy. We should've bugged out months ago. What're we still doing risking our necks for these ungrateful bastards? Look at them. Half of 'em want to slit my throat.

SCHLAGER

Count me among them, if it'll shut you up.

SULLIVAN

They're scared is all.

SCHULLER

I'm only saying, let them fix their own damn mess.

KEAN (O.S.)

And what mess is that, Sargent?

They didn't see him approach.

Major.

SULLIVAN

Major.

SCHULLER

KEAN (CONT'D)

(to Schuller)

One we helped make.

SCHULLER

Yes, sir.

Kean distributes CHECKLISTS to the Marines.

KEAN

Here's the story. We can't save the whole city. But we're going to get out as many at greatest risk as possible. Anyone comes to the gate on this list gets through. Plus immediate family members. These people have risked everything to openly collaborate with us over the past fifteen years. They stay behind, they're as good as dead.

SCHLAGER

(under breath)

Goes for us, too.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL, US EMBASSY - DAY

Kean confers with Gevers, who occasionally stops to speak Vietnamese to some of the thousand plus locals gathered already.

GEVERS

Got 'em in sticks of 50, Major.

KEAN

Good. But tell them to ditch the bags. No weight in the birds that isn't breathing.

GEVERS

I've tried explaining, but they won't part with 'em. Some folks are backing their arguments with guns.

KEAN

Toss everything into the pool. Weapons, too.

GEVERS

They're already using the pool to, uh, relieve themselves.

KEAN

All the less likely they'll jump in after their stuff.

GEVERS

Roger that.

They turn skyward at the first sounds of what will become the familiar THRUMMING of incoming HELICOPTERS.

INT. "LADY ACE 09" CH-46 HELICOPTER, ABOVE SAIGON - DAY

The TAK-TAK-TAK of small-caliber bullets clipping the fuselage. Relatively young CO-PILOT white knuckles it.

Veteran **USAF PILOT GERALD "GERRY" BERRY** (30's), coolly at the controls.

BERRY

Go ahead. Ask.

CO-PILOT

(distracted by bullets)
What?

BERRY

Everybody asks. I got two.

CO-PILOT
 Captain?

BERRY
 DFC's, man. Distinguished Flying
 Cross. Gold star in lieu of the
 second.

CO-PILOT
 We're taking flak, sir.

BERRY
 That's rifle fire.

Louder EXPLOSIONS ending in smoke puffs near the helo.

BERRY (CONT'D)
That's anti-aircraft.

Berry deftly puts the helicopter into a steep bank.

BERRY (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 My brother-in-law's got a second
 star. Never shuts up about it.

EXT. AIRSPACE ABOVE CHANCERY ROOFTOP - DAY

Berry brings in his dual-rotor CH-46 SEA KNIGHT heads for the roof. 44 feet long, 7 feet wide and capable of a 12-ton takeoff weight.

EXT. ROOF, US EMBASSY - CONTINUOUS

Berry guides "Lady Ace 09" to a perfect landing on the yellow "H".

EXT. AIRSPACE ABOVE PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Another helicopter, this one a massive CH-53 JOLLY GREEN GIANT reaches the parking lot. THUMPING a 78-foot single rotor. 88 feet long, 14 feet wide and capable of a 20-ton takeoff weight.

With remarkable skill, the CH-53 performs a 100-FOOT STRAIGHT VERTICAL DROP landing squarely on the freshly painted "H" next to the tamarind stump hole.

EXT. ROOF - SAME TIME

Kean is there to meet Berry. They shake hands through the pilot-side window.

BERRY
Any chance I'm bringing out the
Ambassador per orders?

KEAN
In good time. Got some other cargo
first.

Berry sees the Evacuees crowding around the pool below.

BERRY
We've got you boys covered.

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

Frain addresses the waiting Americans.

FRAIN
First 40! With me!

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY - DAY

Bauer comes to Berry's open window. Yells over the ROTOR
NOISE.

BAUER
Any trouble?

BERRY
(shrugging)
Took some rifle fire. Kid's stuff.

Frain leads the 40 Americans on to the roof. Bauer directs
them up Lady Ace 09's lowered skiff.

EXT. PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY - SAME TIME

Gevers guides the first "stick" of 50 Vietnamese to the back
of the Chinook. They scurry up the opened tail.

The stick is fully loaded. The pilot begins to lift off. But
sees Kean burst from the Chancery, frantically waving him
back down.

The Pilot drops the helo hard to the ground as Kean, running
from the Chancery, and Gevers converge at his window.

PILOT
(frantic)
What the hell's wrong?

KEAN
You took to the air too easy.

PILOT
(calming/confused)
Sir?

GEVERS
We've got 50 on board, sir.

PILOT
That's my max payload.

KEAN
(delighted/correcting him)
50 Americans. These guys live on
rice and bean sprouts. Not one of
them breaks 120 pounds. We can get
another 20 on board. Let's go!

Gevers yells to the next stick of waiting Vietnamese, waving:

GEVERS
The next twenty.

KEAN
(to Gevers)
Re-organize the rest into sticks of
70. We'll get 40% more out!
(practically kissing him)
40%!

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Valdez keeps track of overall numbers on a CHALKBOARD.

Helos: 2
US Remaining: 1,960
SV Evac'd: 70

And so the evacuation begins.

BAUER
Any word from your girl, Top?

VALDEZ
Not yet...

INT. NEIGHBOR'S APARTMENT, SAIGON - DAY

May Li and Family talk together while NEIGHBORS have been
having a conversation in the kitchen.

MAY LI'S FATHER
*The Communists can't be any worse
than the Capitalists.*

Elder Neighbor returns to their group.

ELDER NEIGHBOR

We are sorry but May Li is no longer welcome here. She will bring trouble to those around her when the Communists arrive.

May Li rises to leave.

MAY LI

We must leave this place.

Her family stays put.

MAY LI'S MOTHER

Saigon is our home.

MAY LI'S SISTER

You only want to be with your American boyfriend.

MAY LI

I want a place to live without fear. That's not here.

MAY LI'S MOTHER

Because the Americans came and destroyed everything.

MAY LI'S FATHER

We have no reason to trust them.

May Li EXITS alone.

INT. MAY LI'S HOME - DAY

May Li gathers up clothing. Stuffs a few bags. Artillery rounds SHAKE the building. Electricity goes out.

She lights an OIL LAMP, which gives her an idea...

EXT. STREET, SAIGON - DAY

May Li's Sister, Mother, Father and Nieces walk home from Neighbor's House. Two American Chinooks fly low overhead, taking evacuees to safety.

FIREMEN rush past them from behind.

The family follows Firemen around the corner and see:

MAY LI'S HOUSE - DAY

A FIRE now under control but the damage has been done. May Li stands in front with the luggage she collected.

MAY LI

Now we must make a new home.

As the family processes May Li's arson::

MAY LI (CONT'D)

*I don't trust the Americans either.
But Juan is a good man. He will
help us.*

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Kean knocks as he enters. Martin clearly expecting him.

MARTIN

Where have you been? You need to
hear this.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CULTURAL AFFAIRS OFFICE, FIFTH FLOOR, CHANCERY - DAY

CIA Officer Frank Snapp stuffs the last files into a brief case, while Marines gather the rest of the documents.

Kean and Martin ENTER.

SNEPP

(to Marines/off docs)
Shred the rest.

MARTIN

Tell him what you told me.

Snapp EXITS to

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kean and Martin in pursuit.

SNEPP

Our intelligence lines are badly
compromised but we're picking up
chatter from General Dung's camp.

STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

SNEPP

The sense is that he's planning to enter the city at 6pm and attack the embassy. Mortars. RPG's. Worse than the airport.

Kean and Martin follow Snapp upstairs and onto

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY - CONTINUOUS

An Air America Huey Helicopter waits. Rotors WHIRRING.

SNEPP

You'll have to be out by then.

Snapp waves his hand "adios" and gets on the helo.

KEAN

I can't clear this place in three hours.

SNEPP

If you don't, Dung will.

They watch the last CIA officer leave Saigon.

Martin looks down below at the swimming pool area. It remains packed with more than 3,000 Vietnamese.

MARTIN

We can't just leave them behind.

KEAN

If there's an attack at 6PM, we need only Americans on every chopper from here out.

Martin can't take his eyes off the Vietnamese: "Still so many to save." Looking at them in daylight gives him a thought:

MARTIN

What if there isn't an attack at 6PM?

KEAN

You heard Snapp.

MARTIN

I heard him say he's got "the sense" Dung is going to attack. He doesn't know for sure.

KEAN

I doubt Snepp wants us to parse his words so closely.

MARTIN

I met Dung once. In Paris. He's vain. And power hungry--

KEAN

There's too much at stake for speculation--

MARTIN

If Dung attacks tonight, that means the city falls during darkness. The world reads of his victory but there will be no photographs. No news footage. The first war to be fought on television, would end on radio. I don't think that's how the General, who wants to announce that he sent the world's greatest power running, sees this playing out.

KEAN

Graham, if you're wrong, hundreds of Americans might die.

MARTIN

Me among them. I understand. But if I'm right, we can save thousands more South Vietnamese.

KEAN

It's your call, Mr. Ambassador.

Martin thinks it over. Making this kind of call is why he joined the foreign service 40 years ago.

MARTIN

Dung wants to maximize the publicity for winning as much as our brass wants to minimize it for losing.

KEAN

Alright. Then we evac as many people as we can before dawn. Deadline be damned.

Martin nods, agreeing to take the gamble.

EXT. GATE, US EMBASSY - DAY

Kean approaches his Gate Marines: Sullivan, Schlager, and Schuller. Schlager stuffs the list of high priority evacuees into Sullivan's hands. Annoyed.

KEAN

What's going on?

SULLIVAN

The list is shit. Maybe a hundred checked off so far.

SCHLAGER

List or no list, Major, these folks are flat-out desperate.

KEAN

Okay, new rule. Use your judgment. But you let 'em through that gate, it's a promise that the US Marine Corps will protect them. So every one you plan on saving better be more worthwhile than the nine you turn away.

He scans their faces. Convinced they get the picture.

KEAN (CONT'D)

Alright then.

Kean leaves.

SULLIVAN

Okay, Marines. Time to triage.

SCHULLER

Time to play God, you mean.

EXT. GATE, US EMBASSY - DAY

An old EMBASSY WORKER (seen briefly earlier) arrives.

SULLIVAN

(recognizing him/waving)
Diehm Vu. Welcome.

DIEHM VU

Mister Sullivan, sir.

SULLIVAN

Get in here.

Sullivan clears a path through the gate. Then Sullivan spots the ROPE tied around his waist.

Tethered behind Vu, snaking through the Crowd outside the walls are his RELATIVES, tied together in a long chain. Sullivan can't see the end.

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
How many are with you?

DIEHM VU
Forty-five.

SULLIVAN
(gently)
This is too many. You can only bring ten.

Diehm Vu looks back at his extended family. Tears well up in his eyes.

DIEHM VU
Please. I have so many...

SULLIVAN
It's the best I can do.

Diehm Vu grows increasingly distraught.

DIEHM VU
I can not live with making such a choice. They are all my family.

SULLIVAN
I'm sorry. There's no other way.

DIEHM VU
Please. You choose, Mister Sullivan.

SULLIVAN
Me?

DIEHM VU
Please.

It's Sullivan's turn to look with distress along the string of family members.

SULLIVAN
(reluctantly)
Your wife. Your daughters and any grandchildren.

DIEHM VU
Very well. Thank you.

Diehm Vu begins speaking to his Family. CRIES erupt immediately from everyone. Diehm Vu acts as decisively as possible. But Sullivan can't watch any more.

Motions to Schlager to join Schuller running point.

SULLIVAN
(exiting/making up excuse)
I need to check on rations.

Schuller opens the gate for Vu and His Family, who enter. But the Crowd reacts and one of Vu's Daughter gets pushed backwards. She SCREAMS for help.

Schuller wades into the Crowd to get her.

An angry ARVN REGULAR gets in Schuller's face.

ARVN REGULAR
You leave us! You shit! You shit!

Schuller pushes him aside and grabs hold of Vu's Daughter.

Schlager, joined now by Gevers, do their best to maintain security at the open gate, but dozens of people leak past them.

As Schuller turns back towards the gate, he is BAYONETTED by the ARVN Regular. The steel point plunging into the Marine's side.

Gevers surges into the Crowd. He BASHES the ARVN Regular in the head with the butt of his rifle. Blood instantly pours from the man's head as his eyes roll back and he drops into the crowd. Alive or dead, we'll never know.

Bennington grabs Vu's Daughter and Schuller stumbles back inside, as Schlager closes the gate.

PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Schuller, seated, examines his side. He sticks TWO FINGERS up to their SECOND KNUCKLE inside the deep wound.

Kean is now standing over him.

KEAN
You're out on the next bird.

Schuller pulls a RAG from his pocket and stuffs it inside the hole.

SCHULLER
I'm good, Major.

Kean eyes him suspiciously.

SCHULLER (CONT'D)
Got a job to do, sir.

KEAN
(after weighing it over)
Alright. But you're off the gate.
Head to the roof. Report to...
damnit.

BABEL
Bauer, sir?

KEAN
Right, Bauer. You'll help him guide
in the helos.

Kean's already on to the next fire: another skirmish at the gate. More people slip through. Kean heads over to

GATE - CONTINUOUS

KEAN
Lock it up!

SCHLAGER
Sir?

KEAN
New rule! Lock it up, now! We can't
keep going out there.

Schlager puts a massive BOLT LOCK on the gate, right in front of **LOH PAT**, one of the many desperate to leave but who lack paperwork.

The anxiety of the crowd rises yet another notch.

BABEL
How're we gonna get anyone else in?

KEAN
Schlager. Over here.

Schlager meets Kean at part of the fence, where another Marine has spotted a Westerner.

Kean stands on top of Schlager's shoulders and reaches over the top of the fence. The Westerner gets boosted up from the outside and grabs hold of Kean's hands.

Up and over the Westerner scrambles. Drops safely inside the Embassy.

KEAN (CONT'D)
That's how.

Kean spots May Li pushing her way through the crowd outside.

KEAN (CONT'D)
Somebody better get Top.

EXT. FENCE NEAR GATE, US EMBASSY - MOMENTS LATER

Valdez runs to the fence.

VALDEZ
May! May!

May Li hears him, redirects away from the gate, fights through a thinner section of the crowd to reach him. But the crowd is still big enough to keep jostling her.

MAY LI
John!

VALDEZ
You're alright now. Let's get you inside.
(to Babel)
Give me a hand.

Babel approaches...

MAY LI
No. I can't.

...Babel backs off again, giving the lovers room to work things out.

VALDEZ
It's easy. We just lift you over.

MAY LI
But my family.

She cranes her neck to see them. Valdez, taller, has a better view:

ACROSS THE ROAD, NEAR GATE - CONTINUOUS

May Li's aging Parents, Sister and tiny Nieces stand back from the edge of the crowd.

FENCE - CONTINUOUS

VALDEZ

I can't leave the grounds. But
bring them here.

MAY LI

It is too dangerous for them. They
are weak and afraid.

Valdez grabs her hands through the chain link. Partly just to
keep her from being pushed away by the "current".

VALDEZ

Please, May.

MAY LI

I made them come this far. I can't
leave them now.

VALDEZ

And I can't leave my post. I would
go with you, baby--

He shakes the chain link in frustration. She strokes his
hand.

MAY LI

I know, Big John.

VALDEZ

(softly pivoting)
No one calls me that.

MAY LI

(teasing)
You need a good nickname.
(beat)
We will be together again. I
promise.

Valdez closes his eyes for an anguished beat. Then fishes
around in his pocket and hands May Li a set of KEYS.

VALDEZ

Take my Jeep if it hasn't been
jacked. It's out front of Marine
House. You need to hurry. Don't try
the port, it'll be worse than here.
Go to the SV air force base at Lap
Sam. Find a plane, a helicopter,
anything.

MAY LI

I will.

VALDEZ

When you reach the fleet, you tell them to find me.

MAY LI

Alright.

May lets go of his hand and starts drifting back into the crowd.

VALDEZ

Lap Sam! Don't forget!

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF SAIGON - DAY

The NVA Army rolls past abandoned and destroyed South Vietnamese military vehicles and equipment.

A road-side sign in Vietnamese advertises for a Motorcycle Store, complete with map to its location Central Saigon and the distance: **6KM**.

EXT. 7TH FLEET, 40 MILES OFFSHORE - DAY

Berry pilots the Lady Ace 09 as it reaches the carriers and support ships in international waters.

INT. LADY ACE 09 - DAY

Berry spots one of the small four-passenger HU-1 "Huey" helicopters coming upon him. He makes a quick maneuver to find clear space.

CO-PILOT

(off Huey)

Air America?

BERRY

Nope. South Vietnamese pilot with an evacuation plan of his own. Can't exactly blame him.

CO-PILOT

How many Hueys they got?

BERRY

("Things are gonna get ugly up here.")

Hundreds.

EXT. 7TH FLEET, 40 MILES OFF THE COAST - DAY

Complete chaos in the skies and on decks.

A constant flow of South Vietnamese Huey Pilots guide their birds on a one-way trip to reach the fleet.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - DAY

One of the Huey's BUZZES the deck. SQUAWKING in Vietnamese from its PA system. Carey's EX-O nearby.

GENERAL CAREY

What do they want?

EX-O

I think they want to land.

GENERAL CAREY

They can't land here! We're in the middle of a military operation.

EX-O

They barely have enough fuel for the one-way trip. They're gonna escape or die trying.

General Carey assesses his options then:

GENERAL CAREY

Alright. Set 'em down. They're turning our air space into a demolition derby.

EX-O

Yes, sir.

The first Huey lands. More line-up to follow in her wake.

EX-O (CONT'D)

Get her off the deck!

US DECKHANDS frantically drag the Huey on its skiffs to the ship's edge. Then PUSH IT OVERBOARD.

Soon, Hueys land wherever and whenever possible. The same fate is repeated for each landing Huey.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING - 1759 HOURS

Kean verifies the time on his watch: one minute to witching hour. 6PM. He and Valdez scan the city limits to his north and west, looking for signs of an aerial attack.

INT./EXT. US EMBASSY - SAME TIME

Martin at his desk. Schuller and Schlager at the front gate. The whole place goes completely still. The Marines hold their collective breath.

EXT. ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Kean sees the second hand sweep past the top of the hour... All round him stop and stare at the sky...

The silence maintains. Kean exhales when...

CRASH. Kean jumps out of his skin:

Next to him, Bauer has just reached the roof from the stairwell and slammed the METAL DOOR behind him. Kean and a half-dozen Marines standing nearby stare slack-jawed at Bauer:

BAUER
(confused)
What?

While the Marines give Bauer shit, Valdez looks to Kean.

VALDEZ
Guess that means we've got until
sunrise.

KEAN
By then we'll be gone.

EXT. FRONT GATE, LAP SAM SOUTH VIETNAM AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

May Li and her family reach the base in Valdez' Jeep. They all get out.

The gate house has been abandoned.

MAY LI
Come on.

She ENTERS

LAP SAM AFB - CONTINUOUS

The place is already looted and deserted.

There is nothing here. No one here.

MAY LI'S SISTER
No way forward. No way back.

MAY LI
I'm sorry.

But everyone is too tired to leave.

The quiet is cut by a distant ENGINE WHINE, growing louder. The family watches as a JET FIGHTER lands at the distant end of the runway and taxis towards them.

Pilot Bui, scarf waving, hops from the cockpit onto the wing. Then jumps to the ground. He takes a look at the plane: ripped to shreds. Then off the desertion around him:

PILOT BUI
(to self)
Cowards. I'll fight alone if I must.

He runs over to a wheeled gas tank. Opens the tap: bone dry. He kicks it in frustration.

He sinks to the ground. Defeated.

MAY LI
Excuse me.
(he offers no reply)
Excuse me.

PILOT BUI
(ignoring her)
South Vietnam is gone.

MAY LI
We are South Vietnam.

This finally gets his attention. He turns to look at her. Struck by her beauty.

MAY LI (CONT'D)
You can still help us to leave Saigon.

PILOT BUI
You and everyone else. The pilots have all left. Everyone has gone.
(skyward)
Cowards! The country needed you!
(to May Li)
(MORE)

PILOT BUI (CONT'D)
*They took all the aircraft.
 Anything they can fly.*

MAY LI
What about that?

Pilot Bui follows her outstretched arm in direction of:
 An American CH-53 HELICOPTER.

PILOT BUI
*The ailerons are shattered. They
 can't fly it or they would have.*

MAY LI
What about you?

PILOT BUI
 (still proud)
I can fly anything.

INT./EXT. CH-53, AIRBORNE - DAY

Pilot Bui, May Li and Family over the Pacific.

Pilot Bui jabs at the FUEL GAGE as it rides empty.

PILOT BUI
You said forty miles.

MAY LI
Yes.

PILOT BUI
You better be right.

EXT. USS COOK - DAY

A Destroyer Class ship. All towers and step-back decks with no room to land anything but a single small Huey.

One such Huey, ripped to shreds with one landing skid askew, touches down.

It's hemorrhaging gasoline and oil. Emergency Crews rush over as the evacuating Air America Pilot and his Vietnamese passengers jump from the busted helo.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - SAME TIME

Half a mile away, General Carey observes the chaos with powerful binoculars.

His eyes catch sight of something that prompts him to lower the binocs:

GENERAL CAREY
Who in hell is that?

Into the chaos on the USS Cook storms Pilot Bui's CH-53. It's five times the size of the little Hueys.

GENERAL CAREY (CONT'D)
He wants to land a Cadillac on a pool table!

The USS Cook's Deck Flagmen wave him off furiously. There's no safe place to land his big bird.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PILOT BUI'S CH-53 - SAME TIME

Pilot Bui struggles to keep the bucking helo relatively stable.

PILOT BUI
(off Flagmen)
No fuel to find another ship.
(to May Li)
Open the door.

May Li and her Sister step to the edge of the open helo side door.

USS COOK CAPTAIN
Get the nets!

EXT. ABOVE THE 7TH FLEET - DAY

Berry heading back for another run spots the action on deck of the USS Cook.

BERRY
Jee-sus. We better see how this plays out.

EXT. DECK, USS COOK - DAY

Cargo netting is hustled into place beneath the rollicking Chinook. May Li and her Sister pantomime an argument beneath the SCREAMING ROTORS. May Li finally pushes her Sister out.

She lands safely in the netting.

Then May Li's Parents drop to safety.

Finally, May Li holds her infant Niece above the net. As she releases the child, the Chinook bucks violently. The child arcs through the air... and into the arms of a Marine.

May Li looks to Pilot Bui.

PILOT BUI
Go on! I'll be alright.

May Li jumps into the net.

Pilot Bui guides the Chinook away a safe distance. Balancing a few precarious feet over the waves.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LADY ACE 09 - SAME TIME

CO-PILOT
What's he doing?

BERRY
(impressed)
Stripping off his flight suit while
on the back of a bucking bronco.

INT. PILOT BUI'S CH-53 - CONTINUOUS

Pilot Bui takes his scarf and ties it between the steering stick and the instrument panel.

He cinches it tight, and the huge helicopter banks violently to the left. Pilot Bui slides out the open door.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Pilot Bui drops into the water, disappearing from sight as the Chinook crashes into the sea above him. Rotors breaking, sending flying twisted metal in every direction, including broadside the USS Cook.

A POOL OF RED LIQUID gathers where Pilot Bui was last seen.

CO-PILOT
Fuck.

BERRY
(off liquid/"It's okay.")
That's not blood. That's Hydraulic
fluid.

Sure enough, Pilot Bui finally resurfaces. Offers up a jaunty salute.

EXT. DECK, USS COOK - CONTINUOUS

A CHEER goes up from all topside as a Rescue Skiff is sent to pick him up.

A smiling Berry banks his helicopter away towards the mainland.

BERRY

The guy's even better than my
brother-in-law.

EXT. US EMBASSY - DAY

A CH-53 lands on the roof. A CH-46 takes off from the parking lot.

EXT. GATES, US EMBASSY - DAY

Kean oversees the chaos at the gates.

The DISH WASHER from the red light bar (also seen briefly before) reaches the fence. He speaks no English. He hands a grubby, old folded note to Schlager.

DISH WASHER

Please? Yes?

Schlager reads it as Schuller watches.

SCHULLER

What gives?

SCHLAGER

The guy used to bus tables at the
officer's club in Da Nang. It's a
letter of thanks from some captain.

SCHULLER

Jesus.

SCHLAGER

(to Dish Washer)
I'm sorry. No.

He tries pressing the letter back into the Dish Washer's hands, but the Vietnamese guy won't take it back.

DISH WASHER

Yes? Please?

Gentle pleading on both sides. This back-and-forth could go on forever. Schuller has to intervene, brandishing his M-16.

SCHULLER
 (heart not in it)
 Get out of here! Beat it!

The Dish Washer finally slinks away. Schlager can't watch.

SCHULLER (CONT'D)
 (unsure)
 He'll be alright.

SCHLAGER
 (even less sure)
 Yeah. He'll be fine.

Kean spots Martin, shadowed by Bennington, and walks over to intercept them. Bennington shakes his head for Kean's benefit: "I couldn't stop him."

KEAN
 Sir, where are you going?

MARTIN
 The residence.

Kean glances at the roiling crowd outside the gates.

KEAN
 That's not a good idea.

MARTIN
 Good, bad. Makes no difference.
 I've got sensitive material in the
 house safe. A contact list. A
 hundred names.

KEAN
 (not unkind)
 You should've destroyed them days
 ago.

MARTIN
 I let hope get in the way.

KEAN
 I'll send some men.

MARTIN
 It's my responsibility. I'm going.

Kean nods. Understands where Martin's coming from.

KEAN
 Bennington. Grab a detail. Escort
 the Ambassador.

BENNINGTON
But the gate...

MARTIN
Never mind the gate.

EXT. COURTYARD, FRENCH EMBASSY - MOMENTS LATER

Bennington and three other Marines escort Martin through the secret door from the US Embassy.

Bennington CURSES under his breath: "That's how he tricked me the last time."

EXT. STREETS, SAIGON - DAY

Martin, Bennington and the Marines walk a deadly quiet, abandoned street.

A few curious LOCALS follow at a distance.

They reach:

EXT. AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - ESTABLISHING

INT. BEDROOM, AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAY

Martin opens a combination safe, pulls out the LIST and some other papers. Marines get to work preparing small THERMITE CHARGES.

LIVING ROOM - DAY

Martin takes a final wistful look around. Runs his hands over the piano. Even plays the right hand part of a concerto.

Through the curtains Bennington can see a CROWD gathering on the street and heading to the front door.

BENNINGTON
Sir? Is there a back door?

Martin grabs a small, ivory PAGODA.

MARTIN
There's something better.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. GARAGE, AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAY

Martin and the Marines admire a mint condition 1963 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL. Two small AMERICAN FLAGS flank the hood.

BENNINGTON

Maybe the flags are a bit too...
provocative?

Martin sadly snaps off one of the flags.

EXT. STREET, OUTSIDE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - MOMENTS LATER

The garage door opens and out rolls the Lincoln, skirting the crowd.

The Thermite Charges BURST into chemical fire inside the residence.

INT. LINCOLN CONTINENTAL - DAY

Bennington behind the wheel. The other Marines and Martin, pagoda in lap, squeezed inside.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. STREETS, SAIGON - DAY

As the Lincoln advances, a new crowd thickens. Gets more hostile.

Someone throws a brick at the windshield. Shattering it.

MARTIN

(calm)
Keep going.

Bennington bears down behind the wheel.

Eventually, the car can make no more progress. Rocks the car. Succeeds in ROLLING IT OVER.

Bennington and the other Marines pull Martin from the car. Form a tight diamond around him and manage to rush him inside the

INT./EXT. FRENCH EMBASSY - DAY

REAR COURTYARD

Martin, clothes roughed up and skin scraped, stands with the French Ambassador. Martin assembles his remaining stamina to present a vestige of his best diplomatic self:

He uses two hands to present the ivory pagoda to his fellow Ambassador.

MARTIN

You always had an eye for it.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR

Nothing gets by you. Thank you, my old friend.

MARTIN

I'm sorry for my behavior earlier.

I'm not used to losing.

("The US")

We... are not used to losing.

With that, Martin steps through the metal door built into the brick garden wall. Bennington and the Marines have already passed through.

Once through, the French Military weld the door shut from their side.

EXT. SAIGON - SUNSET

The under-layers of the growing clouds glow purple as the sun drops in the west.

EXT. ABOVE SAIGON - NIGHT

A four-man SUPPORT HELICOPTER lays down suppressive machine gun fire as it escorts one of the evac Chinooks towards the Embassy.

It takes heavy damage from ground fire. The helo, coughing smoke, turns sharply to the east.

SUPPORT PILOT (O.S.)

(into mic)

We are hit! We are hit! Lady Ace

02, you're on your own.

LADY ACE 02 PILOT (O.S.)

(into mic)

Roger that.

EXT. USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

The Support Helicopter limps for home.

Berry flies in with latest load of embassy evacuees. He watches as the Support Helo loses control and PLUNGES INTO THE ROLLING WATER.

COMMUNICATIONS GRUNT (V.O.)

(on deck loudspeaker)

Launch search and rescue. Repeat.

Launch S and R.

A Rescue Helicopter is dispatched.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

General Carey listens in.

PILOT (O.S.)
Got visual on two men. Repeat.
Visual on two.

The two men in the water are so busted up, they can't reach for the rescue cradle.

The Rescue Copter Pilot lowers the bird, dangerously, until the skids are COMPLETELY UNDERWATER. His CREW bodily pulls the two men on board; they SCREAM in pain from nasty compound fractures in their legs.

Then the pilot STRAINS the bird to lift it back out of the water.

By the time it's back on deck, General Carey is there as well. The helicopter continues to shed salt water as the two injured men are littered past him.

GENERAL'S AIDE
Four went down, sir.

GENERAL CAREY
(RE: darkness)
We were pushing our luck. Mayhem
and darkness don't mix. Send out
the word.

A Second Rescue Helicopter searches in vain for the lost Pilot and Co-Pilot.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING, US EMBASSY - NIGHT

Darkness falls. A CH-53 loads up.

CH-53 PILOT
I'm last up. We're sitting ducks
for Charlie. Either that or we'll
crash into each other.

Kean grabs Pilot's Headset.

KEAN
(into headset)
This is Captain-- Major James Kean.
(MORE)

KEAN (CONT'D)
 You let me worry about the
 situation here. Just keep those
 birds coming!

There's no reply. The Pilot gently takes back the headset.

CH-53 PILOT
 It's no good, sir. Everyone's
 grounded.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING - NIGHT

Largely quiet, except for distant light arms FIRE. Kean kicks at the loose gravel under his feet. Frustrated. Pulls out his wallet. The PHOTO of Rosanne has slipped half-way out, bent and torn.

Valdez taps at the chalkboard with his chalk. Itching to move the numbers up.

Helos: 30
US Remaining: 458
SV Evac'd: 1,552

They look down at the South Vietnamese by the pool, who remain patiently in their sticks.

VALDEZ
 What now?

KEAN
 I wish I knew.

Bauer approaches Kean.

BAUER
 Sir, you might want to check on the
 Ambassador.

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE, CHANCERY BUILDING - NIGHT

Kean enters and anxiously watches a DOCTOR look over Martin, who RASPS, COUGHS and spits phlegm on the couch.

MARTIN
 This is a waste of time. I need to
 get back to work.

KEAN
 (to Doctor)
 How bad is it?

DOCTOR
Pneumonia. Bronchial infection. He
needs hospitalization.

MARTIN
I'll be alright.

DOCTOR
What you'll be is dead without an
immediate course of powerful
antibiotics.

KEAN
Why don't you lie down for a while?
Get some rest.

Martin tries to rise.

MARTIN
Nonsense.

Kean gently but firmly pushes him back down to sitting. He's
too weak to resist anyway.

KEAN
Quit trying to muscle in on the
hero stuff. Stick to diplomacy.
(Martin's unconvinced)
Not kidding, sir, if you die,
you'll only make this situation
worse.

Reluctantly, Martin lies back down fully on the sofa.

MARTIN
(stubborn/tired)
Duly noted. Now beat it.

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

The chaos of the day has also given way to quiet here.

INT. OFFICER'S QUARTER, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

Pilots sleep wherever possible. Some, including Captain Berry
scarf down C-rations. General Carey ENTERS.

GENERAL CAREY
How're you boys doing?

General round of "Fine, sir."

BERRY

Sir, if you don't mind my saying,
we should be in the air.

GENERAL CAREY

You've flown eight straight hours.
FlightReg says you're done. On top
of that, enemy fire means running
lights only. It'd be like flying
with your eyes closed.

BERRY

One thing that comes from flying
the same route for eight hours,
sir: I can do it with my eyes
closed.

GENERAL CAREY

Mistakes will be made, son. I'm
sorry but I can't allow it.

General Carey moves on to talk to other Pilots.

BERRY

(to self)

Mistakes have already been made.

Berry shakes awake his Co-Pilot.

BERRY (CONT'D)

Let's go.

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

Berry and Co-Pilot beeline for Lady Ace 09. A SIGNAL MAN gets
in the way.

SIGNAL MAN

All birds are grounded.

BERRY

Yeah I heard that.

Berry shoves him out of the way. Gives his helo a loving pat
on the fuselage and jumps into the cockpit.

Other Pilots see what he's doing. Chug down their coffee and
food. Prepare to follow Berry back into the night.

EXT. PARKING LOT, US EMBASSY - NIGHT

Kean discusses the situation with Valdez.

SCHULLER (O.S.)

Major!

Kean looks up to the Chancery roof. Sees Schuller waving his hand and pointing to the Eastern horizon.

SCHULLER (CONT'D)

Incoming birds!

Kean looks around the landing zone.

KEAN

They can't see shit to land.

(to Marines)

Every vehicle. Here. Now!

Kean directs Marines as they scramble all available vehicles. They encircle the landing area and shine their headlights.

INT. LADY ACE 09 - NIGHT

The landing zone is impossible to locate. Then suddenly HEADLIGHTS illuminate the "H" from all sides.

ROOF - NIGHT

Schuller and Gevers stand on the helipad with flares. Immediately, they are under attack from sniper fire coming in from all directions.

GEVERS

Shit!

They drop the flares and duck for cover.

GEVERS (CONT'D)

We need a better plan.

SCHULLER

You think?

HELIPAD, ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Gevers lies on his back astride the landing "H". As the next Chinook approaches, he strobes a flashlight pointed skyward.

He waits until the copter is a mere feet above him before quickly rolling off the platform. He nearly lands on Schuller, a huge grin on his face.

GEVERS

Now that's a plan!

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING - NIGHT

Martin tracks down Kean who huddles with Valdez around the chalkboard.

KEAN

What the hell are you doing up,
sir?

MARTIN

(ignoring him)
How're we doing?

VALDEZ

(unhappy)
Well.

KEAN

Too well.

VALDEZ

(off Kean's puzzled look)
We're running out of Americans.

The chalkboard numbers have been written and erased dozens of times:

US Remaining: 300

MARTIN

That's the kind of day it's been.
Even good news is bad news.

VALDEZ

Another ten helos roof-side and the
American evacuation will be over.

MARTIN

They'll call me in and shut us
down.

KEAN

Not with more than 2,000 Vietnamese
still on our lawn.

INT. CANTEEN, THIRD FLOOR, CHANCERY - NIGHT

Kean ENTERS.

Journalists, including Beinecke, mix with Embassy Staff and the remaining Businessmen. These are the last three hundred AMERICAN CIVILIANS.

Kean stands on a table.

KEAN

Can I have everyone's attention?
 (room quiets down)
 You may have noticed a few thousand
 folks outside looking to hitch a
 ride stateside. And I know decent
 folks like yourself would want to
 help them out. But the top brass
 doesn't necessarily see it that way
 and the only leverage I have is
 you. So what I'm asking is: help me
 slow-play our hand.

BUSINESSMAN

That plan works 'til it doesn't.
 Then where are we?

FAMILY MAN

I've got a wife and two kids back
 home. You want to give them a call
 and explain why I missed my ride?

KEAN

Most of you have worked side-by-
 side with these folks for several
 years. You want to call their wives
 and their kids and explain why
 their dads won't be coming home at
 all?

There's silence until:

BEINECKE

Get us out, Major, but take
 whatever time you need.

Kean nods his appreciation. Then waves to the door.

KEAN

This should help the time pass
 quickly.

Marines wheel in all the EMBASSY LIQUOR. A WHOOP goes up.

BEINECKE

If you'd led with the booze you
 wouldn't've needed the speech!

EXT. POOL, US EMBASSY - NIGHT

Gevers barks out orders to the Crowd *in Vietnamese*. Forty
 Vietnamese follow Kean inside

INT. CHANCERY - NIGHT

Kean leads them up the stairs. Kean stops at

CANTEEN, THIRD FLOOR

The Vietnamese look inside. Puzzled.

Down to 200 Americans but the place is now RAUCOUS.

Someone's improvised a sign that says "Last Bar". Hundreds of bottles of alcohol cover the mess tables and everybody's drinking, telling war stories, etc.

10 Americans are waiting to join Kean's procession. The rest of the Americans toast to their evacuation.

The 40 Vietnamese and 10 Americans follow Kean to

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY - NIGHT

Bauer loads them onto the waiting Sea Knight.

INT. "LADY ACE 09" - CONTINUOUS

Berry gets a thumb's up from Kean. Lifts his "Lady Ace 09" into the air.

East he flies across Saigon. Muted STACCATO bursts of small arms fire follow them. Occasional SHRACK of a bullet striking the metal fuselage.

Then QUIET once it reaches the water. Just the sound of the helo blades.

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

Berry lands. Drops the tail gate.

General Carey is among those watching as Vietnamese burst out onto the deck. Just the 10 Americans among them. His countenance darkens.

GENERAL CAREY

Where are the goddamn Americans?

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE, US EMBASSY - NIGHT

Martin's Aide hands the half-dead Martin a TELEGRAM.

MARTIN'S AIDE

From the Secretary.

Martin reads: **This is FINAL evacuation! Americans only!**

MARTIN
Prepare a reply.

MARTIN'S AIDE
Begging your pardon, Graham, but I don't think Henry's asking for a reply.

MARTIN
Nevertheless...

Martin's Aide grabs a pen and paper.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
(dictating)
Understood. Will keep Americans flowing. Full stop.

Martin enjoys this little moment of statecraft to which he was born.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
(to Aide)
Would you agree the Americans are "flowing"?

MARTIN'S AIDE
(impressed)
Like molasses, sir.

MARTIN
Better destroy the cable equipment after you send it.

INT./EXT. CHANCERY BUILDING, US EMBASSY - NIGHT

Another "stick" of 40 Vietnamese are combined with 10 remaining Americans and other Westerners, then guided up the fire stairs towards the roof.

On the roof, Bauer oversees the filling of the helos. Each waiting pilot asks him the same question:

BERRY
General Carey wants to know how many Americans left.

Bauer nods towards Valdez' Chalkboard. Valdez has just updated it to read: **US: 200.**

BAUER
Two hundred.

Valdez POCKETS THE CHALK and walks away.

QUICK PILOT MONTAGE:

This repeats itself several times as Sea Knights land.

-- Pilot #1 checks the board: **US: 200**

-- Pilot #2 checks the board: **US: 200**

-- Berry lands again and checks the board: **US: 200**

Berry cracks a knowing smile.

BERRY
(to Bauer)
I'll pass it on.

Follow Lady Ace 09 back into the skies towards

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

Berry stands before General Carey:

GENERAL CAREY
God dammnit! The number never
changes!

BERRY
Must be some stragglers still
reaching the embassy, sir.

GENERAL CAREY
Don't play cute with me, son. Those
Marines are marching to their own
tune, and I'm pulling the plug.

INT. KISSINGER'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON DC - 2 PM LOCAL TIME

Kissinger speaks to General Carey.

GENERAL CAREY
I share your concern, Mr.
Secretary. This is the number we
are getting from our pilots.

KISSINGER
The President wants this operation
completed. Right. Now.

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

An exhausted Berry finishes wolfing down some chow as he
inspects his Lady Ace 09 and Deck Hands re-fuel her.

General Carey prowls the deck with his Entourage. Grabs Berry by the lapels of his flight jacket.

GENERAL CAREY

You like to fly at night? Fine.
Bring out the Ambassador. Now, god-
damn-it. If the Corps isn't duly
impressed by my stars and bars, you
should know this comes straight
from the White House.

BERRY

Yes, sir.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING, US EMBASSY - 0300 HOURS

Schuller lies flat on his back, lighting the descent of Berry's Lady Ace 09. Schuller rolls out of harm's way -- getting good at the job.

Schuller gets back on his feet. Approaches Berry when he sees the pilot's serious, dour look.

BERRY

I got my orders. Time for the
Ambassador to leave. And the rest
of you Marines immediately after.

SCHULLER

We still got more than a thousand
folks downstairs.

BERRY

If it were up to me... But like I
said, I got my orders.

SFX: POP of a champagne cork.

INT. "LAST BAR", FIFTH FLOOR, CHANCERY - NIGHT

EMBASSY STAFF and JOURNALISTS, led by Beinecke, are getting good and drunk on the remains of the Embassy's alcohol supply.

BEINECKE

(finishing a bottle)
Leave nothing for the enemy!

Schuller finishes informing Kean and Martin.

SCHULLER

Pilot up top's not lowering the
gate until he has the Ambassador.
(MORE)

SCHULLER (CONT'D)
 (to Martin)
 I'm sorry, sir. He means business.

There are still thirty hearty, drunk Americans waiting around, including Beinecke, Martin's Aide and an Older Embassy Worker or Journalist.

Kean looks at Martin, so weak he can barely stand:

KEAN
 (to Schuller)
 Tell him: "The Old Man'll be right up."

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING - NIGHT

Berry watches from the cockpit as the "Ambassador" is escorted by Martin's Aide and an ENTOURAGE of other Drunk Embassy Officials.

Kean gives the "Ambassador" a salute as the Entourage joins the Vietnamese Refugees on board Lady Ace 09.

Then Kean approaches Berry as the bird powers up for flight.

BERRY
 End of the road, Major. Sorry.

KEAN
 Thanks to you and your boys. We had a good run.

Berry gives him the thumb's up and takes off.

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

Berry brings Lady Ace 09 to ground. He gets out and salutes a waiting General Carey.

BERRY
 I've got the Ambassador, sir.

General Carey stands tall and waits for the Ambassador to disembark.

The Older Embassy Worker/Journalist stumbles down the helo's rear ramp with his drunken mates. General Carey, puzzled, turns to Berry.

BERRY (CONT'D)
 He's a bit in the sauce, I'm afraid.

General Carey turns crimson, seething with anger.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

Berry enters sheepishly. General Carey hands him a headset.

BERRY
(querulous)
This is Lieutenant Gerry Berry.

PRESIDENT FORD (O.S.)
(through headset)
This is President Ford.

Berry stops himself in the middle of saluting his non-visible Commander-in-Chief.

BERRY
Sir? Yes, sir!

PRESIDENT FORD (O.S.)
One Gerry to another, you bring me
Ambassador Martin. No delay, son.

BERRY
No, sir. Absolutely not, sir.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING, US EMBASSY - MORNING

Gray light. Schuller guides in Lady Ace 09 yet again.

BERRY
The real ambassador this time. No
tricks.

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE, CHANCERY BUILDING - MORNING

Martin hunched over his desk. WHEEZING. Gaunt. He should be in a hospital.

He gets up. Takes down the photo of his dead son. Replaces it with a MAP OF HANOI.

Kean KNOCKS then ENTERS.

MARTIN
(off map)
Might as well make them feel at
home when they get here.

Kean shows Martin more respect now than at any previous moment in their interactions.

KEAN
It's time, sir.

MARTIN
There are still evacuees in our care.

KEAN
About 400. Forty South Koreans, the rest locals.

MARTIN
Only seven more flights. I'll tell Henry.

Martin reaches for the phone, forgetting it was cut hours ago. Gets the dead line.

Kean gently takes the phone from Martin. Hangs it up.

KEAN
The Vietnamese, they'll keep coming over the walls and through that gate as long as we're here, Mr. Ambassador. But time's run out.

MARTIN
We failed them.

KEAN
We did everything we could with what was left to us. You should be proud.

MARTIN
I will be hated.

KEAN
Not by me. Not by my men or anyone else who saw you today.

"LAST BAR", THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

The last Embassy Workers and Journalists shuffle out, including Beinecke. Taking the remaining alcohol with them.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Valdez takes down the EMBASSY FLAG.

As Martin and Kean reach the roof, Valdez hands it to Martin. Salutes.

MARTIN

Thank you, John.

The last American Civilians board the CH-53. No room for the Marines.

KEAN

(breezy/off Martin's look)

We'll be right behind you. Just gonna turn off the lights.

Martin's AIDE helps him towards last space on Lady Ace 09. Martin first waves him off, but accepts the assistance anyway when it's needed to get him on board.

Valdez and Kean watch Berry take off.

KEAN (CONT'D)

(to Valdez)

Send up the flare. Time to take the finger from the dike.

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - 0330 HOURS

A STAR CLUSTER FLARE goes up into the gloaming.

ON THE WALL - SAME TIME

Norman and Babel look to the sky, then to each other.

As casually as possible, first Babel, then Norman remove the firing pins from their machine guns and back off the wall.

FRONT GATE

Schlager and Frain stagger their retreat. Word quickly spreads through the jittery Crowd.

SWIMMING POOL

A couple of Marines leave. Gevers remains posted all alone. The 400 waiting evacuees watch him carefully.

Gevers tries to make reassuring eye contact with as many people as possible. But their fear threatens to sink him.

GEVERS

(to no one in particular)

I gotta take a leak.

Gevers "casually" heads towards the Chancery. Once out of their sight, his face caves in to guilt and wretchedness.

CHANCERY

The 50 remaining Marines form three concentric rings around the entrance.

There's a moment of odd quiet as the Vietnamese, both inside and outside the embassy, digest the situation.

Kean holds his heart in his mouth. Waiting.

A time-bomb goes off inside all the Vietnamese at once. Loh Pat lets out a visceral SCREAM of panic and anger.

OUTSIDE THE GATES

The mob crashes through the gates and swarms the compound like World War Z zombies.

KEAN

Inside!

The other Marines retreat into the Chancery.

Valdez, Bauer, Frain, Schlager, Norman and Bennington remain outside to hold back the crowd.

Frain grabs the eight-foot STEEL BEAM used to bar the Chancery door, hoists it on his shoulders and swings it around and around, keeping the crowd at bay.

He knocks over several men.

Valdez and Schlager pull him inside the Chancery, where the beam is used to bolt the mahogany double-doors.

INT. LADY ACE 09 - MORNING

Berry flies the CH-53. Martin, sick and exhausted in the cargo hold.

The helo reaches the coastline:

CO-PILOT

And we are wet.

BERRY

(into headset)

This is Lady Ace 09. Tiger. Tiger. Tiger. The tiger is out of the cage.

INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL, USS BLUE RIDGE - MORNING

A CHEER goes up. General Carey takes congratulations.

COMM OPERATOR
Roger that, Lady Ace 09.

INT. FIRE STAIRS, CHANCERY - NIGHT

Marines race upward, locking the security door on each floor behind them.

Norman stops on

5TH FLOOR - NIGHT

He sets off THERMITE GRENADES among the communications equipment.

FIRE STAIRS - NIGHT

Norman runs up the final flights. Bursts onto

ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Where he SLAMS the door behind him. And bolts it shut.

In the commotion, it wasn't obvious but now it is: THERE ARE NO HELICOPTERS.

KEAN
They'll come for us.

INT. PRESS ROOM, THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Kissinger heads to the podium to address the gathered PRESS CORP.

KISSINGER
Ladies and Gentlemen. I am relieved to report...

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - NIGHT

Lady Ace 09 lands. Carey shakes a weary Martin's hand, before the Ambassador is placed on a stretcher.

KISSINGER (V.O.)
...that Ambassador Martin has safely and successfully left our embassy in Saigon without incident.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY BUILDING - NIGHT

Kean and his Marines scan the skies in vain.

KISSINGER (V.O.)

There are no more US
representatives on the ground
there, and the American presence in
Vietnam is now officially over.

With no more helos in sight, Kean turns his attention to his men.

KEAN

Okay. Weapons check. Ammo check.
Inventory the rest.

The Marines inventory their meager ammunition. Valdez checks in with Kean.

VALDEZ

Now I see why you're in those
civvies. Gonna blend right in with
that rabble down there when the
time comes.

KEAN

What, and give you an excuse to
shoot me for getting you into this
mess? I don't think so.

VALDEZ

Then I guess we're stuck with each
other.

KEAN

Guess so.

EXT. CHANCERY - NIGHT

The crowd pounds on the mighty doors, unable to bust through.

Loh Pat looks around. Pushes himself out of the crowd. He locates a FIRE TRUCK which he hot wires. He BLASTS the truck's siren. The crowd disperses and he smashes the fire truck straight into, and through, the Chancery doors.

INT./EXT. CHANCERY - NIGHT

The mob floods inside and up the stairs.

INT. FIRE STAIRS, CHANCERY - NIGHT

The weight of the crowd easily busts the security doors on each floor of their hinges.

INT. ROOF, CHANCERY - NIGHT

The mob reaches the steel-enforced door that opens on to the roof.

The door has a glass viewing portal roughly 2' x 1'.

Schuller stands guard on the roof. Makes a big deal of brandishing his rifle.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Schuller can see their faces: some furious, some desperate, some pleading.

The mob, including Loh Pat, smashes the small window.

HANDS thrust beseechingly and threateningly, through. Some try to unlock the door. Schuller pushes their wrists down onto the broken glass shards.

Hands retreat in pain, only to be replaced by other hands. Schuller throws tear gas grenades through the window, as needed, to temporarily subdue the crowd. It's not pleasant work, and it effects the normally stolid Marine.

ROOF - 0530 HOURS

The scene has grown momentarily quiet.

Still no helos.

Valdez works a bulky CNK "Clink" handheld radio.

VALDEZ
(into Clink)
Task Force 47, this is the US
Embassy. Over.

Valdez presses the headphones to his ear,

VALDEZ (CONT'D)
(into Clink)
Roger that. Standing by.
(to Marines)
They're sending more helos. Just
had to refuel.

Sullivan looks at Gevers/off Valdez: "What the hell is he doing?"

SULLIVAN

You know that tin can's got a range
of maybe 5 clicks, right Top?

VALDEZ

Hold a sec...

(pretending to receive
message)

The fleet says they're coming for
everyone but you, Rock Steady.
They're making you the new
Ambassador.

Schlager LAUGHS. Sullivan doesn't find it so funny.

ONE HOUR LATER

The mood has grown somber. Then a distance WHIRRING.

EXT. ROOF, CHANCERY - NIGHT

A single CH-46 arrives on the roof.

It's immediately clear to Sullivan:

SULLIVAN

Only one chopper? Not gonna be
enough.

Kean looks to the skies for another helo. Then back to
Sullivan, who shakes his head: "I don't think so."

Kean grabs Valdez.

KEAN

Your best nine men. Everyone else
on board.

As Valdez starts to move off, Kean grabs his sleeve:

KEAN (CONT'D)

Have 'em leave their weapons with
us.

Marines board the helo. As it takes off, we are left with the
LAST 11 MARINES:

KEAN, VALDEZ, SULLIVAN, BAUER, SCHULLER, SCHLAGER, NORMAN,
GEVERS, BABEL, FRAIN and BENNINGTON.

FRAIN

Finally, some goddamn peace and
quiet.

But nobody laughs.

LATER

Everything left with their own thoughts. Scattered across the roof.

Sullivan takes the chalk from Valdez' Board. Doesn't bother erasing the **US: 50**. Just crosses out the "50" and writes "11" next to it.

Valdez gives up his radio act. Chucks the worthless metal over the roof edge and sits next to Kean.

KEAN

I do two tours. Following orders that cost a lot of people their lives. So this time I go my own way, thinking I can save some for a change. Only that makes me just another asshole giving orders that just might cost ten more good men theirs.

VALDEZ

You feel good about those tours?

KEAN

Nope.

VALDEZ

You feel good about what you did today?

KEAN

Yeah.

VALDEZ

So does every Marine on this roof.

Kean looks over the Marines under his command, believing Valdez's words.

VALDEZ (CONT'D)

You're a decent soldier. You're a better man.

At that moment, from his seated position, Kean sees the South Vietnamese flag LOWERED from nearby Do Trang Bridge. Kean jumps up and moves to the roof edge:

DO TRANG BRIDGE

The final shreds of the South Vietnamese army scatter as the NVA streams across the bridge and into the city center.

ROOF

Frain checks the action on his M-16.

FRAIN

Don't know about the rest of you,
but I'm not going down without a
fight.

SULLIVAN

And you figure that's your call,
Private?

KEAN

No, Frain's entitled to his
opinion. You all are. This hasn't
exactly been a chain-of-command-
type deal from the get-go and all
I've done is back you all into a
corner. So you boys take a vote.
Majority rules.

Frain scrounges some pebbles. Hands them around. Kean walks over to Schuller, after the Private has "voted" with his pebble in Frain's helmet.

KEAN (CONT'D)

(off wound)
How's the pain?

SCHULLER

Nothing next to the idea we've been
forgotten, sir.

(off Vietnamese)
I get it now. Why we're still here.
No matter what happens, it's been
an honor.

Kean gives him a "thank you" pat on the back. Then turns to Frain:

KEAN

What's the damage?

FRAIN

(counting pebbles)
It's unanimous, sir.

KEAN
 (to Marines/off Frain)
 You heard him, men.

Everybody prepares their weapons in earnest. Finds a good location to fend off either an attack from the street, roof door or the sky. Options are limited.

DAWN - CONTINUOUS

The Marines last shred of protection, darkness, erodes as the sun threatens to rise over the horizon.

EXT. VU LANG BRIDGE - SAME TIME

The NVA Army is across. And now but a block away.

EXT. ROOFTOP - SAME TIME

Valdez, anxious, looks to Kean: "What do we do?" Kean betrays nothing.

Sullivan hears it first...

The faintest WHIR. Then, a dark speck on the horizon slowly resolves into an incoming CHINOOK.

KEAN
 How about it, boys? Ready to go home?

The CH-46 lands on the roof. Schuller throws a few more gas canisters through the door window. Buying time to join the others at the helo.

The mob bursts onto the roof. Swarm towards the helo pad.

INT. CH-46 - CONTINUOUS

Schuller doesn't have it in him to gas the Vietnamese any more. So Schlager releases the remaining gas canisters, only the ROTOR WASH causes the gas to fill the helo instead.

The pilot struggles to take off. Valdez falls out of helo. Nobody notices. But Kean does a headcount...

KEAN
 (screaming over rotors)
 Where's Valdez?!

Valdez's HANDS are spotted clinging to the half-closed ramp. Babel and Bennington pull him inside.

Helo finally takes off, leaving Loh Pat and the mob grasping at air.

EXT. SAIGON - DAWN

Over the city the helo flies. Kean sees the city on fire. And an NVA tank crash through the Presidential Palace gates.

EXT. OVER PACIFIC OCEAN - DAWN

Kean sees the fuel gage reading EMPTY.

KEAN

We're running on fumes.

CHINOOK PILOT

(laughing)

We've been bare-assing it for 19 hours straight. Low fuel doesn't even register on the white knuckle scale.

EXT. DECK, USS BLUE RIDGE - DAWN

The helo comes to rest.

Kean and his Marines set foot on the deck. Met by General Carey.

Kean salutes.

GENERAL CAREY

Are you Major Kean?

KEAN

Yes, sir.

GENERAL CAREY

Not some imposter?

The General betrays no amusement.

KEAN

No, sir.

GENERAL CAREY

That was some fine work.

KEAN

Just doing my job.

GENERAL CAREY

(pushing)

"Just following orders."

KEAN
Something like that, sir.

General Carey gives a slight nod, then heads off as a smiling Captain Berry approaches.

Kean smiles back, extends his hand and... WHUNK. Berry clocks him across the chin with a right hook.

BERRY
You lying asshole.

Then Berry smiles again. Wraps his arm around him affectionately.

BERRY (CONT'D)
Now let's go find a drink.

LATER

Valdez watches May Li arrive from a Transport Boat. Her Family behind her.

They embrace.

VALDEZ
Good to see you, baby.

MAY LI
Good to see you, Big John.

Valdez doesn't protest the name. Now he owns it.

He looks over her family. He's moved to see: they're tired, weak and without possessions of any kind. But they made it.

INT. SICK BAY, USS BLUE RIDGE - DAY

Kean finds Martin in bed. Completely spent. On an IV drip.

MARTIN
How'd we do?

KEAN
Best we could.

MARTIN
No. How many we save?

Beat.

KEAN
More than six thousand souls.

Martin can barely process the number.

KEAN (CONT'D)
 Won't bring your son back.

Martin closes his eyes to rest.

MARTIN
 But not bad for a day's work.

PHONE BANK

Kean stands in line with others.

COMMUNICATIONS GRUNT
 Number?

KEAN
 The first is--

COMMUNICATIONS GRUNT
 One call per person.

KEAN
 Well, I gotta make three.

COMMUNICATIONS GRUNT
 One per man. General's orders.

KEAN
 I'm making three.

COMMUNICATIONS GRUNT
 (off long line)
 Fine. You wanna tell them that, be
 my guest.

The Grunt is surprised when Kean takes him up on the suggestion:

KEAN
 (to room)
 I'm going to make three calls.
 First to my wife, who I just found
 out is pregnant and the next two to
 the parents of the last Marines to
 die in Vietnam, promising I'll get
 their bodies home. Anyone got a
 problem with that?

SILENCE fills the room.

KEAN (CONT'D)
 (to Grunt/taking phone)
 I'll make the calls myself. And if
 you wanna tell the General, be my
 guest.

The Marines enjoy a much-needed LAUGH as the Grunt backs off.
 Kean finishes dialing.

KEAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Hey babe... No, I'm fine. Heard you
 got some big news...

FADE OUT.

TEXT OVER BLACK

"In the largest helicopter evacuation in history, 1,373
 Americans and 5,595 Vietnamese were carried to safety over an
 18-hour period."

PHOTOS OVER BLACK of each of the last 11 men out, alongside
 the actor who plays them. Accompanied by TEXT of their real
 names and ranks.

TEXT OVER BLACK

"Captain Gerald "Gerry" Berry received his third
 Distinguished Service Cross and second gold star for
 leadership and bravery during the evacuation.

Master Sergeant Juan Valdez lives in Oceanside, CA and is
 President of the Fall of Saigon Association.

Ambassador Graham Martin retired two years later. When he
 died in 1990 at the age of 77, his wife said: 'He started
 dying that day in 1975. It took fifteen years to finish the
 job.' He is buried in Section 7 of Arlington Cemetery along
 with his son.

Jim Kean retired in 1983, achieving the rank of Lt. Colonel.
 He died in 2008 at the age of 66, survived by his wife and
 three daughters."

PHOTO OVER BLACK of the last 11 Marines in the hold of the
 helicopter as they left Saigon on that final morning.