

Curfew

by

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(Inspired by real events)

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

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

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

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

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

FADE IN:

INT. HIGHLANDS - MITO VILLAGE - PEASANT HUT - DAY

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

EXT. MITO VILLAGE - DAYBREAK - DREAM SEQUENCE

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

INT. MITO VILLAGE - BEDROOM - DAYBREAK

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

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. MITO VILLAGE - PEASANT HUT - CONTINUOUS

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

LAURA

Must be the fever, Aguirre...

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

AGUIRRE
It was a white horse...

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

EDUARDO
We need to get outta here, now!

LAURA
What's going on?

EDUARDO
Senderistas are down the river...

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

CASIMIRO
Up in the bell tower, quick!

INT. MITO VILLAGE - BELL TOWER - DAY

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

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

EDUARDO(O.S.)
Hide, dammit!

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

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

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
I might just get those scumbags on camera.

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

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: PERU, 1989 - TWO WEEKS EARLY

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS ATTACHÉ
Look who's here, Ambassador.

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

BAXTER
Happy 4th of July, Ambassador!

ANTHONY
Get in there, journalist buddies are waiting...
(whispered)
President's on his way, so don't hog him!

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

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

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

Baxter navigates through the guests to meet him.

JULIO
Baxter, amigo!
(with a wink)
Listen... Some military types are chatting away... But my English isn't the best... Come with me...

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

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

Baxter shakes hands with Captain Tubino and a few others.

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

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

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

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

CAPTAIN JAMES
(perplexed)
Why Peru, then?

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

Captain James shakes his head, no war stories there.

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

Captain James stays silent, eyes cold.

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

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

BAXTER (CONT'D)

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

Baxter pauses, ensuring his point sinks in.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

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

Julio steps in, trying to defuse the tension.

JULIO

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

EXT. LIMA - PALACE OF JUSTICE - STAIRS - NIGHT

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

MINISTER

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

LAURA

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

The minister stares Laura down.

MINISTER

Which media outlet are you with?

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

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

CAPTAIN TUBINO

You know, this isn't like Vietnam was.

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

CAPTAIN TUBINO (CONT'D)

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

BAXTER

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

CAPTAIN TUBINO

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

GARDEN DOORS

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

BAR

Julio sidles over to Baxter and Captain Tubino.

JULIO

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

INT. BAXTER OFFICES - EDITING ROOM - NIGHT

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

INSERT: FOOTAGE OF THE INTERVIEW

LAURA

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

MINISTER

Which media outlet are you with?

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

END INSERT

EDUARDO

Ha, ha! Got him all flustered!

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

BAXTER

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

EDUARDO

Tomorrow? But we'll miss your farewell party!

BAXTER

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

Laura and Eduardo exchange surprised glances.

LAURA

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

EDUARDO

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

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

INT. BAXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

BAXTER

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

(Hear the answer)

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

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

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

BAXTER
Ayacucho, huh?

Baxter grabs the envelope.

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

Dorita leaves, closing the door behind her.

Baxter talks on the phone.

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

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

Baxter hunts down the remote, cranks up the volume.

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

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

INSERT: FOOTAGE - PEOPLE TEARING DOWN THE WALL

JIMENA (O.S.)
"Communism's last stand, crumblin' to bits."

END INSERT

Baxter lowers the TV volume.

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

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

BAXTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Nope, they ain't back.

END BAXTER POV

Baxter tears open the envelope.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 More than a week, maybe they're
 lost in the Andes somewhere.

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

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Damn, another power outage. Yeah,
 yeah, blackout. Just hold on!

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

INSERT: LETTER

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

END INSERT

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Still there? The landline's the
 only thing working.

BALCONY

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

NEIGHBOR 1
*Fuck, this is fucking
 bullshit!*

NEIGHBOR 2
*Sounds like another
 transmission tower got blown
 up!*

BAXTER

(on phone)

Brian, you listenin'? I need a favor.

(picking up the letter)

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

(listening)

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

EXT. STREETS NEAR LIMA AIRPORT - NIGHT

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

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

EXT. INT. STREETS NEAR LIMA AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Baxter adjusts the radio, tuning into the news.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

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

EXT./INT. STREETS NEAR LIMA AIRPORT - NIGHT

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

RADIO ANNOUNCER

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

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

TERRORIST COMMANDER

That was our comrades from the Northern Regional Committee.

The car pulls into the airport parking lot.

The three men scan the area.

TERRORIST 1
There he is.

EXT. LIMA AIRPORT - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

A MAN approaches the car window, looking inside.

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

INT. LIMA AIRPORT - NIGHT

Baxter steps up to an airline counter.

BAXTER
Flight 803, please?

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

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

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

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

Jimena stares out the window, anxious.

INT. LIMA AIRPORT - NEWSSTAND - NIGHT

BAXTER
El Comercio!

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

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

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

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

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

CUSTOMS

A CUSTOMS OFFICIAL examines Jimena's passport.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL
Peruvian, huh?

Jimena nods. The official continues his inspection.

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

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

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

He stamps her passport.

PARKING LOT

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

INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

Jimena appears with her carry-on.

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

They embrace.

PARKING LOT

BOOM. The car-bomb detonates.

INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

The SHOCK-WAVE throws them to the ground.

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

Several ALARMS BLARE. Distant GUNSHOTS echo.

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

Baxter pulls Jimena to her feet.

BAXTER
You OKAY?

Jimena nods. They sprint out of the wrecked terminal.

PARKING LOT

Baxter and Jimena dash to his car.

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

Baxter runs back to the site of the explosion.

He surveys the wounded and starts taking pictures.

Amidst the destruction, flames light up the parking area.

OUTSIDE LIMA AIRPORT BUILDING

Jimena loads her luggage into the back seat.

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

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

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

The car cruises through the deserted streets of Lima.

JIMENA
Well, this is some welcome party!

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

JIMENA
Some homecoming, huh?

BAXTER

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

JIMENA

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

BAXTER

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

JIMENA

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

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

JIMENA (CONT'D)

So, how's your treatment going?

BAXTER

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

JIMENA

What?

BAXTER

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

The car starts moving again.

JIMENA

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

BAXTER

(uneasy and annoyed)

That's not true. Back in Vietnam, our reports aired two or three times a week.

(MORE)