

BLACK HAND INCORPORATED

(Teleplay Episode One: '*BLACK HAND INCORPORATION*'))

By Derek Edward Griffiths

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ OFFICE, 1980 DAY

A smartly suited grey-haired man, GARY BANOMENA, sits at a large desk in a small office. The surface is inlaid hand-tooled leather with an old style blotter over it. A small window with frosted glass shows heavy rain and low daylight. It might be a Victorian scene, the furniture and fixtures are old-world and elegant apart from a black Bell Bakelite telephone.

Gary regards a circa 1970s miniature tape recorder which is playing back a conversation. We see he is not an old man but prematurely grey.

Unknown voices on the tape are clearly plotting an assassination. One speaker is a confident company representative setting out terms. The other is a very nervous client talking about the habits of the intended victim.

A file is open before Gary which contains various photographs of an older well-dressed man. Some are professionally taken corporate portraits cut from a company portfolio, others clearly secretly-taken surveillance.

Grainy photos show the man leaving a modern corporate headquarters building, getting into an expensive car, going into a residential mansion, assorted shots on the street with the man unaware, some very close.

Gary reads a paper we see is a contract. Despite the business language it is clearly a death warrant. Each page is marked with *Black Hand Incorporated's* secret company logo.

As the recorded conversation concludes he switches off the machine and removes the tape reels, putting them in a small plastic case. Gary puts the contract and tape reels and photos back in the folder, closes it. He goes to an elegant old filing cabinet and puts the file in, locks it securely and leaves the office.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ CORRIDOR, 1980 DAY

Gary walks down a long claustrophobic brick corridor, passing cramped institutional-sized rooms. He comes to an archway and enters a much larger chamber.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ MAIN OPERATIONS ROOM, 1980 DAY

Large chamber is lit by frosted glass skylights but full of shadows, clearly not in use for a long time. A vintage ticker-tape machine stands on a table.

1980-era cutting edge technology machines fill the operations room. There is a Telex and teleprinter station, a facsimile machine printing out a transmitted document and an early self-assembled kit computer visibly hooked up by cables to its own telephone modem line.

The monitor of the computer screen shows a live feed of changing stock prices and text news items. There are file-boxes of early floppy disks in plastic cases set next to the computer. A wide screen dominates one wall, a television picture projector facing it. Bookshelves against another wall are empty and forlorn. Other furniture and equipment are piled up here and there, the place clearly no longer in regular use.

Gary looks at his watch and waits for a moment to come, nods to himself. He then switches on the TV projector just in time to catch a news bulletin at noon from a New York City local station. The date given is in 1980.

Lead story is the public assassination of a corporate chairman a few minutes previously at an open shareholder's meeting. Some of the photos of the victim are the same portraits Gary was looking at in the file. Gary nods with satisfaction, turns as the ticker-tape machine clatters into life.

Examining the tape Gary sees the shares of the company headed by the slain chairman have nosedived in value. He smiles then turns, startled by a low rustling noise.

A trench-coated and hatted figure stands silhouetted in the archway. We cannot see the man's face in the shadows. Gary stops short, clearly recognising him.

GARY BANOMENA

I always knew they'd send their best.

Unhurriedly the man draws out a pistol with a long silencer and expertly aims it at Gary, shoots.

Gary is hit by the single shot and falls.

CEILING POV

Gary is sprawled in the exact middle of a huge floor mosaic of the *Black Hand Incorporated* secret company logo.

GARY (VO)

Mother of Mercy, is this to be the end of Gary Banomena?...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. OFF CAMPUS STUDENT APARTMENT, INDIANAPOLIS, 1964 NIGHT

On a TV screen the closing moments of the 1931 gangster movie *Little Caesar* play, and the character Rico delivers his final line starting 'Mother Of Mercy'. As the movie's final credits begin we see we are in a modest student apartment circa 1964 with political and pop star and miscellaneous posters of the time on the walls.

Four young men, GARY BANOMENA, DAG ULKÖLN, WARKENTIN WESTGATE and SURVIND JUGGERGHAZI, (of Bengali Indian descent), sit watching the movie on a portable TV. A low table in front of the TV is crowded with snacks and glass soft drink bottles.

A late night TV presenter identifies an Indianapolis local station. He says goodnight and signs off to the Indiana state anthem, it is 2am by the station clock.

Gary is visibly the youngest. He gets up, switches off the TV.

GARY:

Old cinema's the best cinema. No one matches Ed Robinson in *Little Caesar* there. Thirty three years old that movie, and still pure genius.

The other guys murmur agreement, raise soft drink bottles.

SURVIND:

Or Paul Muni in *Scarface*. Sharing a student flat with you is an education in itself, Gary.

WARKENTIN:

Thank god for the TV graveyard shift, Trucker. But I have to turn in soon. Classes tomorrow.

(Survind's nickname is clearly 'Trucker'. Like his flatmates he has a strong American Midwestern accent.)

DAG:

Warkentin, could you carpool us all over to the college pharmacy before parking tomorrow? I have to get my depression medication.

GARY:

You sound depressed about it, Dag.

They all laugh.

DAG:

They're prescribing codeine for me now. I have to sign for it. Hate being in this 'Special Medical Needs' category guys, seriously. Half my class treats me like I'm a leper or something.

GARY:

Tell me about it. I've managed so far to keep it a secret I'm stereotyped and categorised by the System as 'Hyperactive'. I have to take some sedative called Ritalin. Plus go to these psychiatric sessions in town once a week for some new-fangled thing they call 'anger management therapy' because I had these rage attacks in school when I got bullied.

SURVIND:

Whenever I complained about the bullies at my private boarding school, I usually found the principal sided with them. Then I learnt their fathers mostly owned the place.

GARY:

Yeah, typical. What do they expect if the Young Overgrown Goons try to follow you home or to your bunk almost every day? Then I made the mistake of letting the Ritalin thing slip in high school. Everybody called me a junkie from the eighth grade onwards. So we are officially a leper colony of four.

They all laugh wryly.

WARKENTIN:

In our own little off-campus ghetto.

SURVIND:

Whereas I inherit about one million food and germ allergies from my honoured Bengali parents and can't eat in the student canteen. Luckily my mother taught me a lot of good cheap vegetarian recipes. We do all right with our own kitchen, don't we?

The others nod and raise their soft drink bottles to Survind/'Trucker' in a salute. While they are all talking Gary picks up a briefcase standing beside a small table in front of the TV set and puts it down carefully.

DAG:

You've saved our lives with that incredible healthy food. And it's so cheap, too. I think it's helped my depression a lot more than the medication. All the meat we eat at home sinks me down, but I can't hurt my mom's feelings saying so.

WARKENTIN:

Same for me. Now I've tasted something different so good, I wonder sometimes why we're so crazy as a whole for food that gives us heart disease and cancer and stuff. I need to get my Lithium medication tomorrow morning too. I curse that stuff. It makes my hillbilly stomach boil. College nurse is always after me to gulp it down right there and then so she can mark me down on the form. Gonna be a crowded college drug store tomorrow.

SURVIND:

Gary, you are looking very pleased with yourself over there.

Gary has been quietly opening a briefcase on a small table in front of the TV, clearing away the snacks. He lifts out a small device and places it in the centre of the table.

GARY:

I got a result, guys.

DAG:

No hitches?

GARY:

It went just like you said it would. Those nosy federal cop goons never suspected a thing. Ironic, because I think one of them was CIA.

DAG:

They didn't say, did they? My dad is something in The Agency. He does high level debriefings or something. But he always describes himself as just another civil servant.

SURVIND:

These federal men were interviewing you over your graduate term paper, not so?

WARKENTIN:

Pretty reactionary.

GARY:

The college dean reported me himself. The creep didn't like a sardonic paper like I wrote.

DAG:

'The Practical Economics Of Political Homicide'. Just reading the title, anyone can tell it's a joke.

GARY:

My tutors didn't think so. The dean practically called me a communist subversive. Didn't like the way I described the free market economics of assassination. He left me alone with those two spook guys. They grilled me for over an hour with no witnesses. I missed morning classes. Listen to this...

Gary switches on the tape recorder and it plays back part of a dialogue where Gary confidently talks back to two men interrogating him over his term paper's contents, which are described as rates for political murders and the need for an international agreement to regulate them. The discussion is very tense but Gary holds his own. At one point he is

threatened with arrest or prosecution. Gary switches off the machine, removes the reels and gives it to Dag.

DAG:

Unfortunately it's inadmissible as evidence.

GARY:

I know, but good to have. Maybe some dynamite for the future. Thanks for the loan.

DAG:

Keep it, Gary. My dad gets replacements all the time. He keeps losing them. I'll give you some spare reels for it. You can buy them at Radio Shack, but that's another official secret.

Gary is touched.

SURVIND:

I've read the paper. I think it could work as a viable business plan.

GARY:

Imagine all of us as professional hit men.

They all look at each other, the moment passes, they laugh.

WARKENTIN:

We'd better turn in Toot Sweet, or we really will be the living dead tomorrow.

They get up, head for their rooms and switch off the light.

TITLES: 'GRADUATION DAY, THREE MONTHS LATER'

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS UNIVERSITY CAMPUS GREEN, 1964 DAY

Graduation ceremonies have finished and students in black gowns and caps mill around with family, celebrating.

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin stand apart, briefly alone, holding diplomas. Gary is furious and points at his diploma.

SURVIND:

I'm sorry, Gary. This is unjust.

GARY:

I know it was the dean. He deliberately had me graded down to near the bottom of the economics class. I had the marks to be an honours student. Just because my paper offended him.

DAG:

It's bad. But hard to appeal.

WARKENTIN:

At least you've got the degree, though.

GARY:

It's not enough to compete with, not the way I planned. Guys, I'm sorry but this is too much. I've got to clear out.

Gary stalks away. The others look after him sadly.

DAG:

It's bad, Trucker. Gary deserves better. Where are you headed?

SURVIND:

Back to Gary, of course.

They all catch the joke and laugh.

SURVIND (CONT):

Meaning our home town, which is also called that. Gary himself always makes a joke of it. His parents were immigrants like mine. They gave him the town's name when they arrived.

DAG:

I've got a job offer in New York at an investment bank. I'll miss you guys.

WARKENTIN:

I'm going to be working at this new TV station in Corydon near where I grew up and they're expanding through the Midwest.

SURVIND:

While I have a wage slavery offer at a pharmaceuticals lab in my hometown. It seems we're at the parting of the ways.

WARKENTIN:

I've got a funny feeling though that we'll all meet again somehow. Right in my bones.

The three look at each other - Warkentin is known to have a kind of second sight. They clasp hands.

SURVIND:

Let's see where life takes us, my friends. And watch over Gary.

WARKENTIN:

Amen to that, Trucker.

They all repeat 'Amen'.

INT. EXPRESS TRAIN SLEEPER CAR, 1965 NIGHT

Gary and Survind, both in pyjamas, sit in a tiny train compartment with two bunk beds against the wall, watching the night landscape go by. Gary has a New York newspaper casually in his hand. Lights of a city appear, far away in the dark.

SURVIND:

So we go to New York to find our fortunes.

GARY:

Yep, we'll be there by dawn, Trucker. Those lights are Pittsburgh.

SURVIND:

I had to leave secretly. My parents couldn't understand why I hated my first job so much and wanted to see more of the country.

GARY:

I didn't tell mine. They were so disappointed I didn't graduate with honours. Hate sneaking away but I couldn't face telling them.

SURVIND:

I've only ever travelled to Chicago before. America is so vast with so much to discover.

GARY:

Yeah, we're an empire now. We even rubbed out one of our own Caesars a couple of years ago in Dallas. Just like the Romans used to do. New York is gonna be our Rome.

SURVIND:

That sounds fearsome.

GARY:

Better than just staying at home wondering 'What If'. It'll be tough, so let's stick together.

SURVIND:

Agreed. I have a business major and a first in applied chemistry so I'll try those fields.

GARY:

Doubt I'll even get a foot in the door with a bottom of the barrel economics degree, but I'll find something somehow.

SURVIND:

Take heart, Gary. You're smart and we're young and it's a good time to be. Our country is growing. Our greatest city surely has a place for us somewhere.

Gary shows Survind his newspaper, he has been circling ads for shared apartments in the Want Ad section.

GARY:

Yeah. And the first ordeal of it is getting ourselves settled. I got this when we stopped at Madison, its yesterday's edition so we can compare it with this morning's paper when we get there.

SURVIND (reading):

Here's a cheap one. Shared studio, location Blackwell's Island?

GARY:

That's in the East River between Queens and Manhattan. Could be a good location.

SURVIND:

If the morning edition still has it listed,
let's try that one first.

They lean their heads back and doze as the train races on.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 DAY

A grizzled unshaven large burly man in an undershirt, the landlord, opens the door. Gary and Survind stand in the corridor behind him carrying their suitcases. The studio is almost identical to the train compartment they were in with two bunk beds filling one wall, a tiny kitchenette and main room with a deal table and two chairs.

LANDLORD

Bathroom's down the hall. No visitors and no noise after 10pm. You're alone up here on the top floor and it's quiet. Make sure things stay that way. Payphone's in the lobby downstairs. Two months cash in advance.

GARY:

Fine. We're in.

Gary gives the landlord a sheaf of dollars and they awkwardly haul their suitcases in past him. Landlord goes back into the hall, there isn't room for three people in the place.

LANDLORD:

Come down in an hour before I start drinking and we'll sign the lease. I don't give receipts. Keep the rules and you'll be OK.

GARY:

Sure.

Landlord turns to go but then back, looking at Survind.

LANDLORD:

And tell Prince Sabu over there no sorcery or snake-charming. This is a god-fearing slum.

Landlord chuckles at his own joke as Gary closes the door.

SURVIND:

Welcome to New York.

GARY:

Creep's asking to fall off a tall fire escape.

SURVIND:

I'm used to it, Gary. The private school my parents sent me to was a lot worse.

GARY:

Two months of rent have finished me off.

SURVIND:

But we have a kitchen. I have enough to cover the rest for awhile. Shall we clean the place up and make it home?

Gary smiles and they shake hands, roll up their sleeves.

GARY:

You bet, my friend. Let's do it and then cruise the job ads. I have some dimes left for the payphone.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY, 1965
MORNING

Gary and Survind, reading Want Ads from their newspaper, take turns feeding dimes into a lobby pay telephone and making job

enquiry calls. Each of them circles ads as they alternate calling and scanning the ads. The Landlord's apartment is on this floor. He lingers in the doorway nearby watching them, drinking occasionally from a whiskey bottle and looking at them balefully.

INT. ASSORTED NEW YORK OFFICES, 1965 DAY

Gary attends a succession of interviews, clearly unsuccessfully in each case. Passing days are indicated by a clock or calendar and INTERCUT with his hand circling more newspaper job ads, and crossing others out.

INT. UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF ACHILLE ENTEBBE, 1965 DAY

Gary sits nervously in a cheap ill-fitting suit across a large desk from ACHILLE ENTEBBE, a large well-spoken African black man with a powerful personality and winning smile. We see he has a copy of Gary's paper on Political Homicide and indicates it to Gary.

Outside a large picture window is the vista of the East River and Blackwell's Island, New York beyond in 1965.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

You have an unconventional way of thinking and writing your ideas, young man.

Gary is visibly very nervous - he wants this job desperately.

GARY:

Uh, yes, Mr Entebb. My college dean actually sent that to you when you queried my degree?

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

In fact I telephoned him and he advised me strongly against hiring you. He called you a subversive and possible, and I quote, '*goddam pinko liberal sympathiser*'.

Gary is crushed, he senses the job interview slipping away.

GARY

In class they told us to think unconventionally. So I did something similar to Jonathan Swift's essay *A Modest Proposal*. That's a satire on cannibalism. I chose privatised assassination as my subject and they practically expelled me.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

So you came to New York full of fire and ambition. What led you to apply to me?

GARY:

I read your article in the Wall Street Journal about state agricultural land grabs in the Kingdom of Iran. The way you showed up food supply as a political weapon against minorities really amazed me.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

It amazed the Shah of Iran in the wrong way as well. I have received threats over that article, and others in the subject.

GARY:

Yeah, the way I see it there's no point keeping your head down about the real issues of the day. Important things and truth mean something.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

So do sober and consistent hard work. My statistical and research publishing office is not an idealist's talking café, young man.

Gary thinks the interview is over and looks down despairingly, then picks up his briefcase and rises.

GARY:

Sorry to have wasted your time, sir. Maybe I'll try teacher training.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

But you have not wasted my time. I am hiring you. Idealism and intelligence against prevailing opinion are precisely what we need here. You will report to the administrative office at eight tomorrow morning and fill out the necessary documents. You will begin work here at nine. Be ready to labour harder than you ever imagined.

Gary looks up, astonished and gratified.

GARY

Sir, I don't know what to say.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

Welcome to my team, Mr Banomena. Make a start by learning my name's native pronunciation. A hard 'e' at the end will make it correct.

They both smile.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND APARTMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR, 1965
NIGHT

Gary comes up the stairs carrying a paper bag of groceries, happy and smiling. He frowns seeing a fire door hanging off its hinges, evidently recently damaged. The fire escape is visible and there is a strong draft in the corridor.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 NIGHT

Gary comes in. Survind is cooking a vegetarian meal on a hot plate. As Gary puts away the groceries Survind sets out two delicious looking bowls of stew. They sit to eat.

SURVIND:

So, what news from the Banomena labour exchange?

GARY:

Cain't hardly believe it, but I actually got in. An internationally respected statistical scientist hired me on the spot. The pay isn't huge but it's enough. Something must finally be going right.

SURVIND:

It was only a matter of time, Gary. We're in the big city now, not Indianapolis. Your bigger ideas will get the attention they deserve.

GARY:

Thanks. How's work over at that importer's?

SURVIND:

Luckily I'm an expert on Bengali food brands from working in my father's store back home. One of the dealers he buys from hired me. I've already scored some good bulk buying deals for them. I even got a raise today for it, so both of us are doing well. But it's not exciting.

They grin and shake hands over the table.

GARY:

Well, let's hope life doesn't get too exciting.

SURVIND:

By the way, I forgot to tell you. I saw our old friend Dag at a distance on Wall Street just the other day...

Suddenly there is a loud harsh knocking and they look at each other. Gary gets up and opens the door, the landlord is there, visibly hung-over, shivering in his shirt sleeves.

LANDLORD:

You're rent's due.

GARY:

No, it isn't.

LANDLORD:

And somebody broke the fire door out there.

GARY:

Do my friend and I look big enough to do that?

SURVIND:

You've been drinking again. I heard you shouting and wrenching it off the hinges earlier.

Landlord murderously glares at Survind.

LANDLORD:

Watch your mouth and watch your step, Sinbad.
And your rent *is* due next week so don't be late
or you soon will be.

Gary closes the door as Survind clears away the plates.

SURVIND:

It's hard to live like this.

GARY:

I know. I wish I had time to look but the job is going to be hard with long hours. At least this way we can save for something better.

SURVIND:

Finding our fortune isn't quite as simple as I thought it might be.

They grin wryly but then wince as they hear the landlord deafeningly launch into a rude song going down the stairs.

INT. UNITED NATIONS OFFICES OF ACHILLE ENTEBBE, 1965 DAY

Gary works in a busy statistics and research office with other idealistic-looking juniors, overseen by a smiling Achille Entebbe.

Months pass marked by an office calendar. Staff celebrate the publication of reports and articles by Achille Entebbe.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 NIGHT

Gary and Survind, each in their bunk beds, talk in the near dark. Waxing and waning light and traffic noise and voices from the city outside play through the apartment.

GARY:

Trucker?

SURVIND:

Yes, Gary?

GARY:

Do you ever talk to your folks back home?

SURVIND:

Every fortnight or so. They always want me to come back. I can't make them understand why I left. Why I need to be free.

GARY:

I haven't talked to mine since I came here.

SURVIND:

They will be fearing for you.

GARY:

Been bothering me, the way I left home. It's late but I'll try calling them.

Gary gets up, switches on the light, picks up some change from a bowl on the tiny deal table, puts on a dressing gown and goes out.

Survind smiles to himself, he approves.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY, 1965 NIGHT

Gary says goodbye and hangs up the phone, clearly just having spoken to his parents successfully. As he turns towards the narrow staircase he starts up.

The landlord stands in his apartment doorway in briefs and an undershirt with a whiskey bottle, clearly having been listening to the whole conversation. When Gary moves towards the stairs the landlord intercepts him with surprising speed and blocks his way, smiling sardonically.

LANDLORD:

That was touching. Calling the old pigsty you came from back home?

Gary visibly restrains his temper. We see for the first time just what an extent of murderous rage he might be capable of. A look of death in his eyes as he sizes up the landlord.

GARY:

You normally spy on people's private conversations?

LANDLORD

Yep. Saves time instead of opening their mail. You don't sound happy about it, barnyard boy.

GARY:

What's your big fat problem, ugly man?

The landlord is surprised by Gary's defiance and snarls.

LANDLORD:

I've seen a hundred, a thousand like you.

GARY:

This me is the last one you're going to meet.

LANDLORD:

Little country rat talks tough. You can't come to the big city with one big idea and make it.

GARY:

I'm getting a really big idea right now.

The landlord balls his fist and rattles the bannister, he has dangerous strength. Gary is intimidated but stands his ground.

LANDLORD:

And it'll be your last. Just remember you were warned. This city will chew you both up. Go

back where you came from while it's still in a mood to let you.

Gary walks slowly and deliberately up to the landlord and looks him straight in the eye.

GARY:

You've given me a lot to think about.

Landlord smiles crookedly and moves out of Gary's way, goes in and slams his door very loudly so that the bannister shakes.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 NIGHT

As Survind sleeps, snoring slightly, Gary sits in his bunk hunched up, sleepless and silent and thinking hard.

INT. SERIES OF GOVERNMENT AND CORPORATE OFFICES, 1965 DAY

Gary interviews government officials and corporate executives about agricultural policies and subjects carrying only a notebook. However we see that he is secretly using the miniaturised tape recorder Dag gave him years before to tape his interviewees.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 NIGHT

Working on a portable typewriter, Gary carefully takes down a transcript of a tape recording, listening to the device's tiny speaker intently as Survind watches.

INT. UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF ACHILLE ENTEBBE, 1965 DAY

Gary sits across from Achille Entebbe, who reads from one of Gary's reports, visibly impressed.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

Some remarkably candid reports. You must have the sound equivalent of a photographic memory. I could almost believe you are secretly recording your interviewees.

Gary grins with his secret.

GARY:

I think they talk more when they see I'm just a junior, sir.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

No longer. I am appointing you as my assistant from this moment with an appropriate raise in salary. I am genuinely impressed, Gary.

Gary is moved, he deeply respects his boss.

GARY:

Thank you. I won't let you down, sir.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

From this moment call me Achille. We will be working even more closely and I do not stand on ceremony.

GARY:

Achille, I'll make sure you don't regret it.

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

I have watched you closely Gary, and trust you as I would a brother. But the job will not be without its dangers and you must consider them before you accept.

GARY:

Dangers?

ACHILLE ENTEBBE:

When you first joined I told you I received threats. Powerful rulers abroad have put a price on my head for criticism of their regimes. You might be placing yourself at risk.

GARY:

Screw the tyrants, Achille.

They both smile.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND APARTMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR, 1965
NIGHT

Gary comes up the stairs, happy and carefree. He frowns slightly seeing the fire door is again wrenched off its hinges and there is a continuing draft in the corridor.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 NIGHT

Gary comes in and stops short in surprise, Dag Ulkoln and Warkentin Westgate are there with Survind, all eating at the tiny deal table. Both Dag and Warkentin look hungry and careworn. Warkentin gets up and hugs Gary.

WARKENTIN:

Hey stranger, we're all refugees in the big city now.

GARY:

Dag, Warkentin, it's great to see you! What's the story?

DAG:

I'm afraid it's the breadline. I got canned by the investment bank. I was set up for insider trading by a partner and they got rid of me.

WARKENTIN:

I got brought over to work in a new network TV station here but they went bust. Dag and I met by chance. Survind saw us on the street a few hours ago and brought us back.

SURVIND:

Old friends should always feast together.

GARY:

Survind gets us food practically for free. You guys be here anytime you need a meal.

They are all silent for a moment - friendship renewed. Gary sits down on the bottom bunk.

DAG:

So you've got a job at the UN?

GARY:

Yeah, I even got promoted today. What are you guys going to do now?

WARKENTIN:

I don't want to go home.

DAG:

I know a way to rip off the investment bank in revenge. With Warkentin's help we could do it.

Survind is visibly interested.

SURVIND:

How so?

DAG:

Wire transfer fraud. I know a way to break into the bank's overseas electronic accounts by telephone. From the inside I can divert funds.

WARKENTIN:

And I know how those systems operate. I can fix it so Dag makes the money just disappear into a dummy account. Clean it out fast, we're rich.

SURVIND:

That would give us seed capital. We could start our own business. I hate my own job so all three of us are in the same boat. I was walking back here when I saw Dag and Warkentin, Gary. Somehow I knew it was providential.

Gary mulls this over.

GARY:

New York's a harsher and harsher town.

SURVIND:

I was thinking of founding my own import company. We could make a killing.

GARY:

I don't know about getting mixed up in fraud and robbery, though.

WARKENTIN:

I understand Gary, you don't need to be. But it would help if Dag and me had an emergency hideout before we leave.

Survind laughs wryly.

SURVIND:

Listen to us criminal conspirators.

They all chuckle.

GARY:

Okay, this is your bolthole. Just one thing...

There is a sudden violent pounding on the door.

LANDLORD (BEHIND DOOR):

What the hell's going on in there? What's all those voices?!

Gary goes to the door, tries to talk in a reasonable tone.

GARY:

Nothing. My friend and I are just talking.

LANDLORD (BEHIND DOOR):

Goddam it, open up or I'll break it down!

Gary opens the door, the landlord looks at them hatefully.

LANDLORD:

I told you no visitors. What is this, a local faggot chapter gathering or something?

Gary is close to the landlord, bristles but controls himself.

SURVIND:

Just a couple of friends down on their luck, sir. Once they've finished their meal they'll be on their way.

LANDLORD (SNEERING):

You feed them afterwards too, black boy? How sweet. How sick. I know what you faggy freaks get up to.

Tension in the room rises, even Survind is irritated.

SURVIND:

There is no need for that kind of talk.

LANDLORD:

You dirty queers get back to the sewers in Greenwich Village where you belong!

Gary moves behind the landlord menacingly.

GARY:

Don't talk to my friends like that. I won't warn you again.

Gary is visibly close to losing his temper. The landlord spits on the floor and balls his fists.

LANDLORD:

Well, thus spake the faggoty ringleader!

Gary finally loses his temper and roars with rage. With unexpected strength he seizes, armlocks and spins round the landlord, knocking his head on the doorframe. Gary hauls the landlord into the corridor and runs him down it.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND APARTMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR, 1965
NIGHT

Gary runs the landlord straight through the broken open fire door and over the fire escape. He falls silently and there is a crash below of a body onto pavement, silence.

Survind and Dag and Warkentin come into the corridor, amazed at what Gary has just done. Survind goes cautiously out onto the fire escape. There are few other buildings nearby and all of them have dark windows.

Far below the body of the landlord sprawls in a small brick wall-enclosed yard set just behind the building. No one passing the wall could see by accident, only from a window. Survind comes back inside and they all listen. Silence outside is unbroken. Survind guides Gary back into the studio with the others and the door shuts quietly. Ominous silence continues.

EXT BUSY NEW YORK STREET, 1965 DAY

Gary, clearly not having slept well, is suited and coated for work and walks with the other hurrying commuters. He buys a newspaper at a stand. To his dismay he sees a smiling photo of Achille Entebbe on the front page and stops short.

Lead story describes how Achille Entebbe was found dead the previous night, apparently a hit-and-run accident. There is a full page obituary and speculation he was murdered deliberately for his campaigning. Gary's expression hardens. He turns in the opposite direction he was walking, clearly having abandoned the idea of going to work again.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY, 1965 MORNING

Drawn and pale and upset, Gary comes back to the lobby carrying a small paper bag of groceries and the morning newspaper. He walks straight into two huge tough-looking police officers talking there. As the cops look narrowly at him he puts down the grocery bag.

COP ONE:

You live here, kid?

GARY:

I did. I mean, yes, I do.

COP TWO:

What do you know about your late landlord?

GARY:

He liked tearing fire doors off their hinges.
Juggled anvils for fun, or something.

The cops look at each other, amused.

COP ONE:

You're a gifted smart aleck, boy. But this is
no joke. There's been a...

GARY:

Death. Yeah, I know.

Both cops pay closer attention, immediately suspicious.

COP TWO:

What do you mean, you *know*?

Gary realises the cops don't suspect him, changes his tone.

GARY:

You said 'late'. The usual word for deceased.

The cops are visibly reassured.

COP ONE:

That we did. Your less than charming landlord
took a dive off the fire escape last night. You
hear or see anything?

GARY:

No, I just tune it out.

COP TWO:

Looks like he got drunk and fell off. Should have done it years ago. We got complaints about him all the time.

GARY:

Uh, what happens now?

COP TWO:

Your home life's gonna be a lot quieter.

The cops laugh mordantly and Gary quickly joins in, the tension disappears.

COP ONE:

He was part of a group of owners. The others will get a new superintendent in here pretty fast, I guess. That's it, boy. You can go.

Another cop comes into the lobby and reports the landlord's body has been loaded onto an ambulance. The cops go out, Gary is alone. He can't believe he's gotten away with it, picks up his bag of groceries and heads up the stairs in a daze.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 DAY

Gary comes in, the apartment is empty. He puts the grocery bag on the tiny deal table, takes out the newspaper. He starts reading the long obituary of Achille Entebbe. We see the article is by Michael Tumesne. After reading only a few paragraphs Gary breaks down and cries.

He puts the newspaper down and clearly thinks furiously. He then gets up, takes some dimes out of a small bowl on the table and goes out of the apartment.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY, 1965 DAY

Gary dials a number and the voice of Dag Ulkoln answers.

GARY:

Dag? It's Gary. I want to be in on your plan with Warkentin and Survind. I have an idea for how to use the seed capital. I want to put it in front of you all at our place tonight.

Dag agrees but sounds reluctant. Gary hangs up the phone.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND STUDIO APARTMENT, 1965 NIGHT

Gary and Survind and Warkentin and Dag are crammed into the tiny apartment again and the two visitors look at each other, hardly believing they're back here after recent events. Gary looks different, gaunt and harshly determined. He puts his portable recorder on the table and starts it, surprising everyone, stands up while everyone else sits awkwardly.

GARY:

This is for the official record. Thanks for coming. You're all thinking this is the last place any of us should be, right?

SURVIND:

Well, just a bit, Gary.

GARY:

We're as safe as John F Kennedy Junior.

Everyone laughs, tension is lifted a little.

GARY:

Anyone else here ever killed?

WARKENTIN:

I nearly murdered a farmhand taunting me on my dad's land. I was only nine but strong even then. That's why I have to take Lithium.

DAG:

My dad let me use his rifle for game season hunting when I was thirteen. I shot another hunter. We thought it was a deer moving. We got out of there fast, my dad destroyed the rifle and we never talked about it again.

SURVIND:

I have never told anyone else this. My mother ran away from Bengal with my father to escape her young apprenticeship to a professional poisoner. She taught me how to avoid poisons in food. Which means I could be an even bigger expert poisoner myself with my knowledge of chemistry. It's been a temptation at times.

GARY:

If we didn't trust each other closer than brothers, we'd never dare say any of this.

They all look at each other. It's true.

WARKENTIN:

Where's this leading, Gary?

GARY:

We all got away with it. I got away with what you all saw just last night.

DAG:

How so?

GARY:

I came back this morning because I knew my own job was gone. Cops assumed that late landlord creep had just fallen by himself because he was a known drunk. Case closed. And now we really are all in the same boat.

A pause as Gary lets the words hang in the air, choosing his moment.

GARY (cont)

We could kill professionally.

Dag and Warkentin and Survind look at each other, amazed. Survind visibly thinks hard as he glances back at Gary.

SURVIND:

Years ago, I said I thought your term paper held a viable business plan. I still think so.

DAG:

You're serious?

WARKENTIN:

We bump off what people, exactly?

GARY:

The Establishment. Top people in the business world. Anyone who's such a liability to their company or colleagues that they're willing to pay to have them assassinated.

SURVIND:

How would we advertise contract murder?

GARY:

We call it 'executive removal'.

DAG:

My dad has a whole closet at home full of secret manuals and protocols books from both

the CIA and FBI. They're all about criminal and espionage detection. And killing techniques.

WARKENTIN:

I've met a lot of freelancers in broadcasting who do private surveillance and bugging stuff on the side. I know who could help us. I can also get top of the range equipment cheaper.

SURVIND:

With my business major I could ensure good administration.

GARY:

All of us have talents just right for this. I know we can make it work. Dag and Warkentin, you can get us the seed capital to start up. We'll train ourselves to kill right under the nose of the authorities. And incidentally make our fortunes back from corporate America, establishment creeps who've ripped us all off.

They all look at each other again, not quite convinced.

DAG:

Corporate America didn't kill the man you worked for. Trucker just got laid off. It happens every day.

GARY:

It happens every day because betrayal is an everyday thing. All of us have been betrayed one way or another, right?

(long beat)

WARKENTIN:

Yeah.

DAG:

Yeah.

SURVIND:

Yes.

GARY:

Let's work for ourselves instead. Never betray each other.

WARKENTIN:

You've thought this through. I can see it.

DAG:

What really brought this on, Gary?

GARY:

This morning I had what Carl Gustav Jung called an epiphany.

SURVIND:

Death of the internationally respected statistics scientist and humanitarian campaigner Achille Entebbe whom you worked for?

WARKENTIN:

You sound like his obituary, Trucker.

They all laugh, getting into taking the idea seriously.

GARY:

When Achille hired me he said powerful rulers overseas wanted him dead. Well, one of them succeeded. Bad money in the hands of bad men really does make the world go round. At the same time I want a piece of it too.

SURVIND:

We will have to become bad men, my friends.

DAG:

Being a good boy only got me standing in line at the unemployment office.

WARKENTIN:

Me too. Somehow I can see that this will work. I'm in, Gary.

SURVIND:

And myself. I'm sick and tired of asking on bended knee for jobs that don't pay. It's time to carve out our own.

DAG:

Okay, that makes all of us.

Long beat as they all think hard about it.

SURVIND:

May God and my people's ancient gods save us all.

Gary takes out a sheaf of papers and puts them on the table, indicates the last page where there are four spaces for signatures.

GARY:

We'll protect ourselves. I've drawn up a company charter. Details and specific roles we'll nail down later. Meanwhile Dag, Warkentin, we need that seed capital. So go out and get it. Survind and I will find a secret base to work out of and organise everything else. Sign and date here.

Each of them sign and date the form, Gary last. Survind reads the title page and smiles.

SURVIND:

An interesting name to give our clients.

GARY:

We call ourselves *Black Hand Incorporated*. And this is our first day of operations. Colleagues.

They all shake hands and look at each other. The beginning.

FADE

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ OFFICE, 1966-1967 DAY

We see the leather surface of Gary's office desk with an old style blotter. Beside a desk calendar that changes its display to match their dates, we see a succession of new editions of national USA newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

Each one of them is a front page headline or an obituary page for a senior corporate executive or chairman. Some have been shot dead or otherwise murdered. Others are described as having died of various medical causes or food poisoning. Number of editions increases until the pile is several inches high. The progression of dates on the desk calendar shows a full year has passed into 1967. Gary's hands lift the newspapers away.

Beneath the pile of newspapers on the desk blotter we see several papers. One is a new 'Executive Removal' contract, another is an open file of surveillance photographs of a distinguished-looking suited older man. He is clearly an intended target. Beside this is a New York firearms license and a private shooting range membership card, both in the name of an alias Gary will be seen to use. Gary's hand reappears and places a steel revolver and box of ammunition over them.

INT. GREENWICH VILLAGE CAFÉ, 1967 DAY

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin sit in a booth together as a waitress clears away their plates. Another sets an open bottle of beer in front of each one of them.

All of them are crisp and trim and well groomed, in business suits and leather shoes with expensive coats and briefcases beside them, smart professional men. Clearly doing well at their chosen trade. Each lights a cigarette except for Gary. We come into a conversation already in progress. Gary moves his hands, describing a job.

GARY:

...I mean, it was almost too easy. We were alone in the express observation car since it was way after bar hours. I'd brought my own supply and cups and shared it with him on the sly. All I had to do was drug his drink, pick the lock on the door to the open air deck outside and push him over the rail. No one saw a thing. It was almost exactly like *Double Indemnity*.

SURVIND:

All the obituaries said he was alone at the time of his mysterious fall from the train. Well done, Gary.

WARKENTIN:

Isn't *Double Indemnity* playing next week at the Little Rialto over in Greenwich Village?

DAG:

Yep, double-featured with *White Heat*.

GARY:

Classics both. I like it when an important job goes smooth and nothing goes wrong. Not like those movies. And definitely not like Yellowstone Park a few weeks ago.

They all grimace, remembering.

WARKENTIN:

Yeah, that got pretty heavy when the targets shot back. Then those soldiers on a hunting holiday with them got involved too.

DAG:

You can't plan for freaky coincidences like that. Lucky we brought the bazooka.

GARY:

Yeah, a couple of shots from the thing finished the problem. That was inspired, Trucker.

Survind grins boyishly.

SURVIND:

Our quartermaster friend over at the Fort Hamilton armoury in Brooklyn has been generous. He's also offering us a mortar with spare parts and two boxes of shells at a good cash price.

They all look at each other, nod.

GARY

Yeah, we can seriously use that. Get him to file all the serial numbers off first.

Survind quickly makes a note of this in a business diary.

WARKENTIN:

It's frightening how easy it is to get guns and Army weapons in this country.

DAG:

They're making so many for Vietnam and blowing the hell out of the rest of the world it's practically a domestic buyer's market now.

SURVIND:

As long as we're discreet, I think I can get us just about anything portable.

GARY (playfully):

Maybe an ICBM?

SURVIND:

Well, we're not quite at the ballistic missile level yet, my friends. But sooner or later we're going to need the nuclear option.

They all laugh, raise their beers to each other and clink their bottles together in a mutual toast.

GARY:

Here's to aggressive commercial expansion. Opportunity is where you shoot for it.

They drink, finish their beers, pick up their briefcases and leave the café. Survind deftly hands something unseen to the waitress who served them. The waitress looks after him and smiles. It's a tip for twenty dollars, a crisp new bill.

EXT. GREEWICH VILLAGE STREET, 1967 DAY

In the BACKGROUND, Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin come out of the café they were in. They walk a short distance to an adjacent repertory movie theatre named *The Little Rialto*. Its overhead marquee announces a double feature of actor Edward G Robinson films: *The Sea Wolf* and *Scarlet Street*. They all go into the small cinema and the door shuts behind them.

In the FOREGROUND, we see an older and alert-looking man taking a newspaper out of a street vending machine. He opens the paper and we see he is reading an article with a by-line

carrying a grainy photograph of him. The article speculates in detail on a possible private contract murder organisation targeting senior executives in corporate America.

The older man is MICHAEL TUMESNE, a journalist. He has not seen or noticed Gary and the others. He nods as he reads his article and then walks off in the opposite direction down the street.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ MAIN OP'S ROOM, 1967 MORNING

It is early the next day. The operations room has a fully stocked library, the ticker-tape machine is busily printing out prices from the New York stock exchange. An expensive all-bandwidth radiogram set plays a morning news program with the events of the time at low volume. An office coffee machine percolates audibly.

There are items of equipment like you would find in a modern newsroom of the time. One teleprinter clatters, printing out updates from newswire services. Another is printing out stock updates from stock exchanges internationally. This all feels like an up-to-the-minute business enterprise.

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin sit around a large oval Victorian oak table covered with files and papers. Each of them is reading Michael Tumesne's article from the previous day's edition of the newspaper.

A reel to reel tape recorder stands on the table near Gary. Suddenly Gary slaps his newspaper down angrily and the others look up. Gary switches on the tape recorder, giving the date and time after looking at his watch.

GARY:

Company memorandum for the record. One death warrant for this Michael Tumesne character. I'll pay for the job myself.

The others smile, Gary doesn't really mean it, but they're all rattled by the article.

SURVIND:

He's one of the most respected investigative journalists in this country. He's done his research and describes an organisation very close to what we actually are.

DAG:

He names three of our executive removal jobs as suspicious. All classed as accidental deaths by different coroners where they happened.

WARKENTIN:

And he's claiming the Kansas City street shooting we did on that plastics company chairman was planned. Even the FBI thought it was some hippy tree-hugging crazie.

GARY:

Yeah, waiting around all day for the creep in that sheepskin coat and mukluks practically boiled me alive. How could Tumesne have worked it out?

SURVIND:

Clearly he's been following up his suspicions for some time. He's found out about the company debts and other internal scandals that led to each of those jobs.

DAG:

Definitely the guy's a danger to us.

WARKENTIN:

If he goes on this way.

SURVIND:

We *could* declare him an Executive Removal.

They all look at each other. GARY shakes his head.

GARY:

I want to, but I was joking before. We can't. FBI and all the other cops really would have to admit we exist then.

SURVIND:

So far as we know, no one is taking Michael Tumesne seriously. We just need to be careful and make sure things stay that way.

WARKENTIN:

Trucker, we're so low profile we're all practically in the gutter.

They laugh.

DAG:

My dad has his CIA pals visiting all the time. He knows some top FBI guys too. He wants me to join the Agency so he keeps introducing me to people. I think I can get us a line into whatever gossip there is about who thinks what.

WARKENTIN:

I know some experts who could help me bug Tumesne's phone at his newspaper office. I can put a reliable tap on his private home phone myself. Just give me a couple of days.

SURVIND:

Knowing Tumesne's movements and work in progress will help us. We have to be prepared to act on any emergency.

Gary points at the tape recorder.

GARY:

Agreed. What we do need to know is whether he's got any kind of hard evidence. Trucker and me will do a policy review. Identify anything we operate that this hack could latch onto.

WARKENTIN:

I'll get you every heavy breather call he makes.

DAG:

If just one federal pig oinks about us, I'll find out. These guys all talk to each other.

They all relax, they've got a plan.

SURVIND:

And with that I think it's time for lunch. I have a pot simmering in the kitchen. One of my mother's vegetarian Bengali recipes.

All four smile and get up and head out of the operations room towards the brick archway entrance, talking as they go.

WARKENTIN:

Is that the one with like fifteen different kinds of beans?

SURVIND:

Yes, and an unusual mix of four curry powders. It brings out all the flavours in the beans, but has to cook properly over a day.

DAG:

I never ate food before that energises me like that. And it's so cheap.

SURVIND:

Always listen to your local Indian, Dag.

GARY:

Food's our cheapest weapon too. It took care of half the executive board for that defence contractor. The other half of them paid for the job. We made them pay for the staff uniforms too, remember?

SURVIND:

One of our best scores so far, Gary. Fortunately for us all, I left the curare poison ingredient out this time...

They all laugh.

FADE.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ STAFF KITCHEN, 1967 DAY

Survind dishes out ladle's-full of a delicious looking multi-coloured-bean stew to Gary and Dag and Warkentin who line up with bowls. They sit down at a small table with only a single overhead lamp. They eat hungrily and refill their bowls, especially Warkentin, who can't get enough of it.

The kitchen and dining room is tiny, a back-pantry. The cooking range is an old Victorian black iron wood fired stove. Old brick walls are covered with a collage of photos taken from gun and survivalist magazines.

Prominent on the wall is a poster sized copy of Roy Lichtenstein's '*Smoking Gun*'. We see it is a print signed by the artist as a limited edition.

Gary's face suddenly lights up and he puts down his spoon.

GARY:

Trucker, in addition to being sensationally delicious, I think this must be brain food.

SURVIND:

Nefarious idea, Gary?

GARY:

You bet. Guys, review if you please our process for reaching out to prospective customers.

INT. COMFORTABLE BEDROOM NIGHT

The large palatial bedroom is that of an older married man, 'CARMICHAEL'. Framed college sporting photos, wedding pictures and company board commemorative glossies hang on the wall. A large desk with a filing cabinet sits against another wall.

Fast asleep, Carmichael, patrician and respectable-looking in expensive silk pyjamas, is suddenly rudely awoken by a ringing phone on the bedside table. His wife beside him stirs but does not wake up.

Carmichael is startled and frightened for some reason. He has been dreading and hoping for this call and stares at the ringing phone. With trembling hands he picks up the receiver and listens.

DAG (VO):

Normally we start by secretly contacting board members of companies with secret debts and other scandals. Mostly at home.

Carmichael talks into the receiver hesitantly, but then more confidently and conspiratorially. He's interested.

WARKENTIN (VO):

I get their private home phone numbers. Make sure our calls are untraceable. We work on the targets one by one. We put together a deal or they walk away. Or we let them think they can.

Carmichael puts down the phone and looks pensive. He glances uneasily at his wife as she stirs again.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ OP'S ROOM, 1967 NIGHT

(Continuous)

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin all sit at a circular planning table. Each wears a large set of high-fidelity headphones connected into the same telephone which is wired up to a big reel-to-reel recording device. Gary pushes a switch and the reels abruptly stop. They have clearly been recording the conversation with Carmichael.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ STAFF KITCHEN, 1967 DAY

Gary takes a last mouthful of stew and savours it.

GARY:

It's worked for us so far, but I've changed my mind. We need a way to get all of a given board or group in the same place. Put over the proposition to them simultaneously. Then they can all follow up on it at the same time. For that we'll need a legitimate cover plan.

SURVIND:

We're listening.

GARY:

You are gonna love this. Listen...

As Gary talks, Survind clearly doesn't love it.

INT. EXPENSIVE NEW YORK HOTEL, 1967 NIGHT

Survind is dressed in a white Indian style tunic holding forth using a fake Bengali accent to an audience of over a hundred distinguished-looking men seated at a group of dinner tables. He puts everything he has into the act, but we can tell he isn't enjoying it. Despite the gales of laughter his goofy pratfalls are getting, his eyes frown.

Buffet heated food serving stations line the walls, crammed with exotic East Asian foods and delicacies. Posters and packets of Indian and Bengali food are everywhere. A clear advertising campaign. Survind makes jokes on himself, energetically hawking the delicious-looking food being served.

Gary and Dag and Warkentin stand out among the predominantly Asian waiters, all of them dressed in outlandish Arabian Nights costumes. They put menus in front of the guests. One of the guests is Carmichael from the earlier scene.

We see there is an unusually detailed questionnaire included with each menu. Some guests pay visibly close attention to the questionnaires and take a great deal of trouble to fill out the boxes.

Gary and Dag and Warkentin alone collect the completed questionnaires. They disappear into the back with Survind as he is applauded by the guests, who appreciatively eat.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ MAIN OP'S ROOM, 1967 NIGHT

Still in their costumes from the hotel dining party, seated at their circular planning table, Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin pore over the questionnaires, separating them. There is a small pile on their own.

DAG:

I learned about this from one of my dad's CIA spook pals. If you want to recruit killers and mercenaries for overseas from here, Want Ads are often used. Certain key words in certain combinations. If someone sends a reply using the same words in one sentence, it signifies interest.

WARKENTIN:

We've got twenty-five here like that.

SURVIND:

Out of just over a hundred guests. Each of those men attending were from the biggest companies and industries in the country. One private foreign dinner party.

GARY:

Costing us some leaflets and stamps and wholesale food for the result. I believe this is what's called increasing our stake-hold, gentlemen.

They shake hands over the pile of separated questionnaires.

SURVIND:

All we have to do is maintain terror in our clientele and things should go smoothly.

EXT NEW YORK STREET NEAR SUBWAY STATION, 1968 EVENING

Dark is falling. A well-dressed man, 'Carmichael', is walking towards a subway station staircase. Suddenly he stops short and raises his head, alert like a hunted animal.

Carmichael sees Dag and Warkentin across the street clearly pursuing him, dressed in trench-coats and hats and sunglasses. He spins around and sees Gary and Survind even closer, almost on either side. They too are in the trench-coat outfits.

Carmichael quickens his pace and races down the subway entrance steps past 1968 political posters for Richard Nixon. Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin swiftly pursue.

INT NEW YORK SUBWAY STATION TUNNELS & PLATFORMS, 1968 NIGHT

The station is one with multiple lines converging with a labyrinth of tunnels and platforms. Clearly familiar with them, Carmichael dodges in every direction to avoid Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin. They keep him in sight.

The chase is prolonged and complicated. Tension and suspense rise and rise. Carmichael repeatedly seems to lose his pursuers, only for one or several of them to simultaneously catch sight of him again and all of them resume the pursuit.

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin each unpleasantly surprise Carmichael in the wrong place at the wrong time just as he thinks he has found an escape route. Skilfully the four relentlessly box Carmichael in and funnel him deeper and deeper into the station.

Finally Carmichael is cornered on a lonely deserted platform at the bottom of the station. Carmichael is prepared to try fleeing down the tunnel but skilfully blocked for the last time. We see from the opposite side of the platform as Gary and the others draw pistols and prepare to shoot.

An express subway train suddenly passes by without stopping. It blocks our view of Carmichael's death. Simultaneously, it drowns out the harsh sound of repeated gunshots.

When the train passes Carmichael is prone on the platform closely surrounded by all four looking down at his bullet-riddled body. Unhurriedly they turn into the exit tunnel.

GARY:

I hate it when they try to blackmail us back.

EXT NEW YORK STREET NEAR SUBWAY STATION, 1968 NIGHT

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin file cautiously back up out of the station entrance but there is no police activity, only usual commuters rushing by.

They briefly wait at a nearby bus stop until an express bus pulls up and they get on with other passengers.

INT. NEW YORK COMMUTER BUS, 1968 NIGHT

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin each sit at a separate window seat in a row of four, staring straight ahead. Although the bus is crowded each seat beside them remains empty.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET, 1968, NIGHT

The bus pulls up outside the *Little Rialto* repertory cinema in Greenwich Village where they've gone before. Gary and Survind

and Dag and Warkentin step off the bus and head into a bookstore nearby.

INT. GREENWICH VILLAGE BOOKSTORE, 1968 NIGHT

A large modern late-opening store of the time. Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin all browse in different sections of the bookstore. Gary looks at psychology and philosophy, Dag in the Crime Fiction section, Warkentin in electronics and Survind in Business.

Unseen by the others Survind discovers something in the 'New Publications' section and buys four copies at a separate till. They meet again and go out of the bookstore.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET, 1968 NIGHT

Each carrying a bag of purchases with the bookstore monogram on it, the guys exit the store and head for the *Little Rialto* repertory cinema whose marquee advertises an evening double feature of classic *noir* thrillers.

INT. LITTLE RIALTO REPERTORY CINEMA LOBBY BAR 1968, NIGHT

A tiny stainless steel bar serves themed cocktails. A smartly dressed barman shakes a cocktail mixer and sets out drinks.

Gary and the others drink nearby at one of a couple of small tables against the back wall. They have just finished watching the advertised double feature and are talking movies.

Bags with their assorted book purchases are set under the small table. Lobby is hung with framed vintage classic movie posters, mainly *noir* and gangster films.

Wall behind Gary is entirely black, painted with a stylised enormous yellow hand referencing the original poster for Fritz Lang's murder thriller 'M'. Gary raises his cocktail glass.

GARY:

I'd like to toast that creep we just executed. What was his name again?

WARKENTIN:

Carmichael, some big wheel at Northfork Insurance.

DAG:

Flat tire now, Warky.

SURVIND:

I think the rest of our more careless clientele will get the message now.

GARY:

Yeah, we have the best customer retirement plan there is. No fuss, no wait; no right of appeal.

They all laugh and drink the toast, draining their glasses. Survind loves the cocktail.

SURVIND:

Delicious. What did you call this, Gary?

GARY:

Double Hangman Special. Old Kentucky Hangman bourbon, crushed lime and very finely ground infused pepper. Cuts right across the palate. Old timers say it's the last thing you should drink before you die.

Survind smiles.

SURVIND:

Let's make it our drink, then.

Survind signals the barman authoritatively.

SURVIND:

Four more please.

The barman comes over with four more cocktails, deftly clears the previous four glasses. Survind hands him a twenty dollar tip, the man's eyes go wide briefly. He nods his gratitude.

SURVIND:

Quality and professionalism should always be well-paid for, agreed?

GARY:

Amen, Trucker. That's why I'm paying each of us twenty-five thousand for that somewhat regrettable job just now. It comes out of our capital reserve, but we'll make it back fast enough. The Daumler Motors job that came through the old grapevine this morning will cover it nicely.

They all raise their new glasses and clink them together.

DAG:

Business is brisk. We have a fly in the ointment, though.

WARKENTIN:

Yeah. I've got a new tape that all of us have to hear.

GARY:

Is this who I hope it isn't? Michael Tumesne?

Warkentin nods glumly.

WARKENTIN:

Him again. I intercepted something where he's talking about investigating us to an editor at Associated Press.

SURVIND:

Speaking of which, I'm afraid there's worse news...

(Beat)

Survind reaches into his bookstore bag under the table and pulls out a thick new paperback with a death's head-and-dollars cover, entitled '*NECROBIZ: An exposé study of Death Industries in modern America*' by Michael Tumesne. He hands a copy each to Gary and Dag and Warkentin, who grimace as they see the name on the cover.

GARY:

It had to happen. More detail about us, right?

SURVIND:

I picked these up when we were browsing. I didn't want to create a response in the bookstore. I read a newspaper review of the book. It mentions Tumesne has a chapter in this speculating on secret contract murder organisations and their methods. Much more researched than the article by him we read. Review implied he may even have gathered some hard evidence.

They all look at each other, worried.

GARY:

Okay, let's get back to base and listen to that tape right now.

INT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND BHI HQ MAIN OP'S ROOM, 1968 NIGHT

Gary and Survind and Dag and Warkentin, still in their trench-coats, sit at their circular planning table listening to a reel-to-reel tape recording of a phone conversation.

In the dialogue Michael Tumesne talks to a senior editor at Associated Press and describes his suspicions about the existence of *Black Hand Incorporated* or contract murder organisations like it.

He names some of the locations and jobs Gary and the others have mentioned in various conversations. He accurately believes they were all the actions of one organisation. Tumesne asks for an investigation budget to pursue enquiries for a major newspaper exposé. He is promised the budget, but the senior editor is audibly not quite convinced.

Phone conversation ends with Tumesne declaring he has already gathered some actual evidence and believes they are canvassing jobs through directly contacting senior executives. He mentions he has some sworn statements to that effect, names some of the executives and then the conversation ends.

Gary switches off the tape recorder and they all look at each other meaningfully.

GARY:

Sounds like the late Carmichael was just the first breach of contract. Do we need to vote on this?

The others shake their heads.

GARY:

This will be a priority operation. Lateral threats require lateral thinking. We're going to do something entirely new.

Survind and Warkentin and Dag look at Gary expectantly.

GARY:

From today, *Black Hand Incorporated* adopts an enhanced media strategy.

FADE TO BLACK.