

JAG

"THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE AFFAIR"

PART ONE

TEASER

FADE IN

EXT. PRE DAWN

Eight men in dirty camouflage fatigues, panted faces and heavily armed are slowly moving through the thick brush towards a compound surrounded by a 10-foot-high fence. A moonless night and a prevailing unnatural quietness adds tension to the air.

CLOSE UP

We see the men looking at each other - their eyes darting back and forth in obvious concern. **Suddenly, powerful flood lights come on making the compound and the surrounding area appear as broad daylight.** A Russian sounding voice comes over the huge PA speakers mounted on telephone poles.

CAMP COMMANDER (V.O.)

Do not move! You American whores have now been captured. Should you attempt to run you will not "appreciate" the consequences ...

(beat)

... we do not value the lives of our enemy.

WIDER ANGLE

We see men in jungle uniforms coming out of hiding places surrounding the eight "prisoners." **Several of the eight are hit or thrown to the ground as their weapons are taken away.**

CLOSE UP

Seizing an opportunity during the confusion, one of the eight, LTD. JUNIOR GRADE JOHN SHEPPARD falls to the ground and crawls under a large densely thicketed bush.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WIDER ANGLE.

Two guards spot him and drag him out by his feet - face down. **One of the guards steps on his face and another ties his arms - tight around the elbow area - behind his back.** The guards drag him with his face being pulled through the mud and over rocks towards the compound.

EXT. COMPOUND TOWER

We hear his pain - as **we tilt up** to the tower above the compound. The CAMP COMMANDER walks into view as we...

SUPER: SERE SCHOOL - NAVAL POW "TRAINING" CAMP. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MOUNTAINS. 13:00 ZULU (5am)

EXT. EARLY DAWN - INSIDE THE COMPOUND

The compound is lined with cages on stilts and dozens of black wooden boxes standing upright facing towards the center. In the cages are several prisoners - TWO WOMEN AND FOUR MEN. All have bruises and cuts in various parts of their bodies. They are beyond dirty with matted hair dressed in torn tee shirts and ripped pants. **The two woman each have a long bar across their shoulders of which their arms are wrapped up behind the bar and over it.** The guards are periodically shouting and pounding on the boxes with steel bars or heavy batons.

Off to one side is a group of small interrogation buildings - single rooms standing together all facing out to a main pathway. A horrible sounding music resembling a loud whining accompanied by high pitched instruments plays on the PA.

The eight "new" prisoners are in the center of the compound standing near **a flagpole which is flying the enemy's flag.** The men, corpsman JOE CONNERS, radio man ELLIOT SANCHEZ, weapons specialist IAN MCGUIRE, enlisted men WAYNE KIM, SAM JOWINSKI, ERIC ROBERTSON, ENS. ROBERT SUMMERS and Lt. Sheppard - are barely standing and facing the sun which is just rising over the mountains.

The commander walks into the yard. He's about 35 years old, slim, but very well built and has a diabolic look which dares you to doubt him.

CAMP COMMANDER

Welcome you whores .. you
American scum bags.

The Commander walks down the line of men. The sun is now near blinding them. As each man tries to put his head down towards the ground, a guard behind him pull his hair violently - forcing him to continue to look towards the sun. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMP COMMANDER (CONT'D)

So ... I understand that you are Navy SEALS. Such big brave men. We will see how brave you are after my men are through with you.

(Beat)

In fact ... several of you look quite attractive to my men.

LT. JOHN SHEPPARD

(Under his breath)

Pig.

The Commander is a few feet from Sheppard, but moves quickly whacking the Lieutenant with his baton in his genitals.

CAMP COMMANDER

(He continues as though nothing has happened)

First, we have some special accommodations for you ...

THE GROUP'S POV - THE GUARD AT ONE OF THE BOXES

The guard opens a box which is about three feet wide, high and deep. Inside is A PRISONER wedged onto the box, sitting on a 2-by-4 with a dirty, green burlap sack over his head, His chin is forced into his chest as the crown of his skull wedges itself against the roof. His legs are crossed but his feet are flat on the deck which make his knees point straight up towards the sky. His hands are palms up, which put them about 6 inches from his face.

CAMP COMMANDER (V.O.)

A few hours in there and I'm sure you'll all be most cooperative ... the most it ever gets up to is 130 degrees.

(Beat)

Back on the group.

CAMP COMMANDER

But, if you're not "cooperative" - we have a lot more fun things we can entertain you with.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS FORMS OF TORTURE OVER A 48 HOUR PERIOD

CUT TO:

EXT. MORNING

Lt. Sheppard is being forced towards a black box. He's not going easily. The box is opened and a 12 inch 2-by-4 and a rusty bucket is thrown at him. We see him "placed" in (taking the position of the prisoner we saw earlier). A sack is put over his head.

The guard is closing the box door.

GUARD

(In a bad Russian accent.)

Your back will not touch the wall behind you, and your knees and elbows will not touch the walls. Your ass won't come off the wood. You know what the coffee can in front of you is for - if you think you can hit it.

CUT TO:

EXT. EARLY AFTERNOON

Ens. Robert Summers and Navy SEALs Ian McGuire and Elliot Sanchez are being brought out of their boxes and sprayed with a fire hose - which propels them backwards onto a barb-wired fence.

CUT TO:

EXT. EARLY EVENING

Lt. Judy Rinwald (one of the woman in the cages) is in the middle of the compound on her knees. Several of the guards are standing around her - laughing and taunting her with a cup of water. One of the guards is slowly pouring water from a pitcher on the ground just outside her reach. We see she is desperate. As she once again reaches for the cup, a guard lets her put her hands around it. Suddenly, the Camp Commander walks up to her and knocks the cup away before she can put it to her lips. He slaps her hard in the face and knocks her body to the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. LATE EVENING - INSIDE THE COMPOUND

Navy SEALs Joe Conners, Walter Kim, Sam Jowinski, and Eric Robertson are being forced to go around the compound on their knees.

We see a determination on their faces as we pull back to see a full view of them inside the compound. **A TIME LAPSE TO DAWN.**

EXT. DAWN - INSIDE THE COMPOUND

Conners, Kim, Jowinski, and Robertson are still moving around the compound on their knees. We push in and see that their knees appear bloody and caked with dirt. They can barely move - dirty sweat is pouring down their faces and body. Each time they try to stop, a guard shouts in their faces.

CUT TO:

EXT. EARLY MORNING

Lt. Sheppard is removed from the box - unable to stand, unable to see, and apparently having difficulty breathing. He drops to the ground and we see that the area just above his tailbone is raw and swollen. He's kick and then hundreds of ice cubes are thrown on him as he's forced to his feet.

CUT TO:

INT. EARLY AFTERNOON

Through the windows of a building we see Ens. Summers and Lt. Sheppard being interrogated. The sweat is pouring off them. They can barely hold their heads up, but the guards are relentless. We see a guard force Ens. Summers up on his feet as another guard takes a large flat paddle, pulls down his pants, and whacks him on his bottom.

CUT TO:

EXT. EARLY EVENING

All of the CAMP PRISONERS (about 35) are in the center of the compound. Everyone looks in various stages of being comatose. Their eyes are devoid of emotion. Until ... a guard, holding a large pot, walks near them, stops and throws the contents of the pot onto the ground. As a stringy, watery "stew" flows across the mud, the prisoners throw themselves onto the ground - trying to scrap some of it into their mouths before it mixes completely with the dirt.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Surrounded by the guards, the eight Navy SEALS are being sprayed with several fire hoses. The guards are wearing warm jackets. The Seals are wearing only shorts and we can see the deathly chill by the color of their faces.

CUT TO:

EXT. EARLY MORNING - AROUND THE FLAGPOLE

CLOSE UP

An American flag is in one hand of the Camp Commander. With the other hand he flicks open a lighter and starts to light the flag.

WIDER ANGLE

The eight SEALS are watching as the lighter is brought up to the flag. Lt. Sheppard **snaps** - and lunges at the Commander. He has him on the ground before anyone can react. **INSTANTLY - the enemy's flag comes down and the United States flag goes up and the PA system plays the first bars of "Oh Say Can You See."**

CLOSE UP

With complete hatred in his face, Lt. Sheppard is choking the Camp Commander as though he were squeezing the life out of a small rat. We can see the Commander unable to move as several sets of hands come into the picture to remove Lt. Sheppard.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT I

JAG HEADQUARTERS - DAY (STOCK -SUMMER)

SUPER: 1530 ZULU, JAG HEADQUARTERS, FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA

HARM (V.O.)
 SERE School ... Survival-Envasion-
 Resistance-Escape. Not one of my
 fonder memories sir.

INT. JAG OPS - ADMIRAL A.J. CHEGWIDDEN'S OFFICE -DAY

COMMANDER HARMON RABB, JR. and MAJOR SARAH MACKENZIE are sitting in chairs in front of Admiral Chegwidden's desk. ADMIRAL A.J. CHEGWIDDEN is standing behind his desk looking out the window. LIEUTENANT BUD ROBERTS is standing off to the side of the desk.

The Admiral's tone is unusually firm - to the point of trying to control an underlying emotion.

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

No Harm - nor mine. But, no matter how bad the experience, we didn't try to kill a non-commissioned officer in the process.

HARM

No ... but I thought about it sir.

ROBERTS

(To anyone in general)
 Who exactly attends this mock POW school?

MAC

All aircrew and Navy Seals Bud. Which is why you and I haven't had the "privilege" of going.

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

Lieutenant Junior Grade John Sheppard seems to have snapped. Which is a shame ... his records indicate that he would have made one hell of a SEAL.

He hands Harm Lt. Sheppard's file.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARM

Three days of maneuvers in that God-forsaken land. No sleep and no food - except for what you can catch. Then orders to "liberate" prisoners from a POW camp ...

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

... knowing that no matter what you do, you're going to face hell first hand.

HARM

Followed by three days of torture ... easy to happen sir.

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

But - it's never happened Harm, And, there are plenty of fail-safes in place to make sure it doesn't.

HARM

Yes sir. Three days of classroom instruction up front - but that's somehow of little comfort when you're there.

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

But, every man and woman in there knows that they're going to get out - no matter how bad it gets.

MAC

But sir, isn't the idea ... to convince them without a doubt ... make them *believe* they're are in the hands of the enemy?

Harm has been reviewing the file.

HARM

(Looking down at the file.)
That's basically what Lt. Sheppard said in front of the review board in Coronado. That ... "when he saw the Camp Commander start to burn the American flag ... he knew without a doubt that he had to do something to protect his country."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

This court marshal is not going to be good for the Navy ... nor the country, once the press gets a hold of it.

ROBERTS

You're right sir. Congresswoman Latham will have a field day with this.

MAC

With the attention finally focused on rebuilding the military - this incident won't help anyone.

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

(much softer, for the first time)

And ... a well educated, high trained young man's career is on the line.

HARM

And his life sir, if he goes to prison.

ADMIRAL CHEGWIDDEN

The three of you are leaving this evening for the Navy SEAL base in Coronado. Lt. Sheppard is sequestered there. Talk to as many witnesses as you can. Although most of them have been sent back to their units - Rear Admiral Jones requested several to stay in San Diego until you have a chance to interview to them.

They all respond with a "yes sir" and leave.

JAG OPS - DAY

Harm, Mac and Bud are outside the Admiral's office. GUNNERY SERGEANT VICTOR GALINDEZ is on the phone nearby.

ROBERTS

But, if it's "survival," "evasion," "resistance," and "escape" ...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBERTS (CONT'D)
where does the "resistance and
escape" come in sir.

HARM
(smiling)
Bud, like any enemy - they expect
you to play only by their rules -
no matter what the "job
description" says.

MAC
That's the problem ... can the
military really have it both ways
Harm?

HARM
I'm betting yes - but, that's
what we're going to have to find
out.

GUNNY
Lt. Roberts - there's a call
coming into your office.

Bud acknowledges him with a nod and moves toward his office.
Harm and Mac move pass Gunny's desk and stop near the elevators.

MAC
Well, I think I'll take this
opportunity to pack. Southern
California is going to be a lot
more inviting than DC at this
time of year.

HARM
Planning to pack your bathing
suit Mac ... both halves?

Harm is aware that Gunny has heard his comment as well. Pleased
with himself, Harm turns to go towards his office as Mac starts
to push to elevator button.

MAC
(just loud enough for Gunny
and Harm to hear)
I'm not taking requests Commander
- no matter how hard you plead.

With that, the elevator door opens and she gets on.

Harm has looked back at Mac and now Gunny is looking directly at
him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GUNNY
She's good sir. Very good.

HARM
(a shy smile)
Oh ... that she is Gunny.

Harm turns back in the direction of his office.

CLOSE UP

HARM (CONT'D)
(to himself)
And when she's not ... she's
still good.

CORONODO ISLAND, CALIFORNIA (ARIEL VIEW)- DAY

SUPER: 1530 ZULU, US NAVAL BASE, CORONODO, CALIFORNIA

INTERROGATION ROOM - US NAVAL BASE - EARLY MORNING

Harm, Mac and Bud are in a small but comfortable looking room. Bud is just finishing pouring coffee and handing it to Harm and Mac when there is a knock at the door.

HARM
Thanks Bud.
(louder)
Come in.

Lt. Sheppard comes in - stands at attention and salutes.

LT. SHEPPARD
Lieutenant Junior Grade John W.
Sheppard, sir.

HARM
(returning the salute)
At ease Lieutenant. Have a seat,
would you like a cup of coffee?

LT. SHEPPARD
(sitting)
No sir. Thank you sir.

HARM
Lieutenant, this is Major
Mackenzie and Lt. Roberts.

LT. SHEPPARD
Ma'am ... Lieutenant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAC

Lieutenant, we've read the transcript of the review board as well as your record. Can you tell us what brought you to the point of attacking a NCO?

LT. SHEPPARD

(guarded)

I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I don't think I can ever convey what went on those three days - if you haven't been there.

MAC

Try.

HARM

Look Lieutenant, I *have* been there ... but, first I want you to understand - we're not here to pass judgement. We're not the review board - and you're not in front of a court marshal - yet.

LT. SHEPPARD

Yes sir.

(beat)

We approached the camp ... were captured. My men were pretty much running on empty by that time. We knew what we were facing. I'd told my men that if hundreds of others had survived - we could too.

(beat)

We're SEALS ... America's elite force. That's what they kept telling us in the classroom. The rules were simple ... tell your captors as little as possible; keep your moral up no matter how excruciating the physical and mental torture; escape if possible, don't fight back and during interrogation, act as if you were a willow tree.

MAC

A willow tree?

For the first time you can see the experience by the emotion on his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LT. SHEPPARD

Yes ma'am. That's when you're getting the crap pounded out of you and you're not allowed to defend yourself - from either open-handed slaps or close-fisted blows ... you just "bend." Give them just enough information to last through the experience, but don't break.

(beat)

I believed them in the classroom.

HARM

Why did you break Lieutenant?

LT. SHEPPARD

Sir ... I was beaten and put in that box for God knows how long.

HARM

(looking at the file in front of him)

It was twelve hours and twenty minutes.

LT. SHEPPARD

Right commander - a lifetime. That music playing all the time - the stench inside my box of blood ... and everything else. The unrelenting pounding on the box - and that heat ... unbelievable heat. I could hear men crying. Officers, enlisted men, husbands ... brave men. When they finally took me out - well ... even then I swore to myself that the enemy wasn't going to break me. I told myself that nothing could get much worse.

MAC

The enemy ... they were the enemy to you now?

LT. SHEPPARD

Oh yes ma'am. Oh yes.

ROBERTS

Why didn't you try to escape ... as a way of fighting back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LT. SHEPPARD

We were told that they want you to escape - and that they actually leave openings so that you can. But, that never happened to us. In fact, they kept us pretty separated - especially me. They just never let up.

(beat)

So, by the morning of the third day ... when I saw that goon start to burn our flag ... I ... I ... I knew that if it cost me my life, I had to kill that bastard.

(beat)

I don't remember much after that - until I realized that several guards were holding me and someone was spraying me with a hose.

Harm and Mac look at each other ...

CLOSE UP

On Mac's an incredulous look we ...

CUT TO:

OUTDOORS MARINA VILLAGE, SAN DIEGO - MIDDAY

WIDE ANGLE

Harm, Mac and Bud are carrying their food trays to an outdoor table. We can see the San Diego coast line in the background.

HARM

For many years they didn't even allow SEAL teams to go into SERE camp together. One team actually took over the POW camp and held the guards as prisoners ... until the Admiral in charge of warfare operations went in and told them that the game was over.

MEDIUM SHOT

The three sit at a table.

ROBERTS

Great! I mean, how embarrassing, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARM

No Bud, you're right. It was great - and embarrassing. Rumor has it that someone we all know and love was a part of that infamous SEAL team.

MAC

Admiral Chegwidden!

HARM

It's only a rumor.

They enjoy the moment.

ROBERTS

(salting his hamburger)
Sir, is that why they kept Lt. Sheppard's team separated?

HARM

(putting ketchup on his fries)
Well, I suspect so Bud. But, we'll have to find out. Several of the instructors who were guards that day are here on temporary reassignment.

Harm hands him one of several files he has with him.

ROBERTS

Do you want me to talk to them?

HARM

Find out as much as you can Bud. Meanwhile, Mac and I are going to interview some of the key witnesses.

MAC

Listening to Lt. Sheppard it appears that he was given special treatment "above and beyond" the call of duty.

HARM

Mac ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAC

No, listen Harm. I'm all for the military preparing us as much as they can - God knows, I needed every bit of experience I had in Desert Storm. But, let's look at the facts. First, he was in a box hours longer than you said no one is in for more than a few hours. Then, he was never given an opportunity to escape - or even be with any of the other prisoners - team or no team.

ROBERTS

(about to bite a hamburger)
Add to that, no sleep for six days and no food for three.

MAC

Then - he attempts an act that is no different than one which we give medals for in war when a man throws himself on a grenade.

(beat)

And ... don't you even dare imply that I don't know what I'm talking about because I haven't gone to SERE school.

With that she dips her french fry in a small cup of mayonnaise.

HARM

Mac ... you know better than that.

(beat)

Did ... you ... just dip your fry in mayonnaise?

MAC

(matter of factually)

Of course.

(quiet, but with logic)

Harm ... can we disgrace a man for doing the very job we've trained him for?

WE HOLD ON HARM

As we hear ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAC (V.O.)
Just tell me Lt. Rinwald ...

CUT TO:

INTERROGATION ROOM - US NAVAL BASE - AFTERNOON

A similar room to the one we saw before. Mac is interviewing Judy, a pilot who was at the camp.

MAC
... what happened, as far as you can tell.

LT. RINWALD
Major, there's not much I can add to what I told the review board. It was hell - we knew it would be. They didn't disappoint us.

MAC
You were there in the courtyard when Lt. Sheppard attacked Petty Officer Van Ordan?

LT. RINWALD
I was in the cage they were so fond of keeping me in. I could see what was happening - Van Ordan started to light the flag and Lt. Sheppard went after him. If you want to know how I felt - it was the only moment of happiness I had known in four days.

MAC
But ... you never would have done anything like that?

LT. RINWALD
(avoiding the answer)
Look - the experience was humiliating, degrading and painful. Woman pilots have only been going to SERE school for about a decade. So, are they harder on woman - of course they are. But ... isn't the enemy?

MAC
So ... they're only harder on women?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LT. RINWALD

Oh, no. If a man comes in with an "attitude" - they sense it right away. It's no different than any other school. They'll knock it out of them pretty fast. But ... at SERE ... after awhile ... everything's personal.

MAC

Did you ... have an attitude?

LT. RINWALD

(a burst of demonic laughter)
Oh no! If a woman comes in with any confidence ... I can't even imagine what would happen ... and believe me, my imagination has been stretched to the limits.

MAC

So ... you didn't take advantage of that luxury.

LT. RINWALD

(contemplative)
Look, you asked me -
(beat)
would I do something like that? I don't think so - but we'll never know will we. I did a lot of things at SEER I never thought I would. Each of us was living in our own private hell. It's moment to moment survival.

MAC

Lt. Rinwald, I understand, but the issue ...

CLOSE UP

LT. RINWALD

(cutting Mac off, she leans in closer)
Okay Major - I'll play it straight with you. You want to know if I think our "instructors" had private agendas. You bet they did. Most of them have been in the field as SEALS. And now ... they get to play G-o-d-s. What a winning combination!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LT. RINWALD (CONT'D)
 But, anything, *anything* they do
 is in the name of "training us."
 (beat)
 How, in the world, do you defend
 against that?

HOLD ON MAC

As we ...

HARM (V.O.)
 Petty Officer Wong, you were the
 second in command, under Petty
 Officer Van Ordon?

CUT TO:

INTERROGATION ROOM - US NAVAL BASE - AFTERNOON

Same room Harm was in earlier in the morning. With him is Eugene
 Wong - a man we saw a lot of in the camp as a guard.

WONG
 Yes sir.

HARM
 (looking at papers in front
 of him)
 How long have you been in the
 Navy?

WONG
 Almost 15 years, sir.

HARM
 How long have you been assigned
 to warfare operations at the SERE
 camp?

WONG
 Only a few months this time. I
 was an instructor there a couple
 of years ago, before I was
 assigned overseas with SEAL
 Team 5.

HARM
 Has the instruction at the camp
 changed in that time?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WONG

Yes sir. It always changes. It's the only way to keep the men and women coming through "surprised."

HARM

Surprised?

WONG

Yes sir. We tell each group that comes through not to tell what goes on - but, you know human nature sir. We change what we do and how we do it every few months.

HARM

Right - keeps them on their toes. Do you change the basic classroom preparation?

WONG

No sir. They're all told the same thing. They know generally what to expect.

(beat)

They certainly know to grab their pants if they think they're going to lash out ... sir. We drum that into them.

HARM

I see. Then, they're all given the same experiences?

WONG

Absolutely sir.

HARM

No food - no rest - physical punishment. But - each is treated fairly within those guidelines ... equal time in the box ... opportunities to escape?

WONG

(somewhat cocky)

Look sir - we don't punch a time clock! We're there to make sure we save their lives. If that means a little extra treatment to someone whose "asking" for it ...we do what we have to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARM

And did Lt. Sheppard "ask" for it?

WONG

Yes sir. Every once in awhile we get an officer
(he realizes his "faux pas")
- or an enlisted person - who thinks they're that getting through SEER school is a slam dunk. They're the same guys out in the field who put your life in danger.

HARM

And ... you're there to correct them before they get out in the field?

WONG

Yes sir. Correct them or get rid of them. That's our job.

HARM

So, Lt. Sheppard was a "bad" SEAL.

WONG

Yes sir.

HARM

And, you could tell that right from the beginning - when you captured him?

WONG

(with a sense of pride)
Yes sir. It never takes us long. And he proved it - he broke the military code of conduct.

HARM

So, you proved that he would have been out of control in the field?

WONG

(slightly agitated)
With all due respect sir - he proved it. We just gave him the opportunity to do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARM

(fed up at last)

Look Wong ... this is a man's
life. I'm trying to find out if
"a little extra treatment" sent
him over the edge at a time it
wasn't warranted.

(very intent)

And ... I'm going to find out if
you and your other playmates
purposefully erased the line
between upholding military
conduct and raw human survival.

(beat)

All due respect, accepted, Wong.

We hold on Wong - who no longer seems quite so cocky - as we ...

FADE OUT.

END ACT I