

COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE



PILOT EPISODE

(15 page sample)

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INT. UNDERGROUND CAR PARK - NIGHT

Grainy black and white footage from a security camera.

A title appears:

Monday 24 November, 1986

02.16am

Melbourne

A white Holden Torana pulls into the car park. A YOUNG MIDDLE EASTERN LOOKING MAN gets out, looks around, and walks to the boot of the car. He takes out a medium-sized cardboard box, opens the rear passenger door and places it on the back seat. He leans over it, fiddles with something, but suddenly slips. There is a massive explosion. The camera cuts to static.

OPENING TITLES - COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE

EXT. CANBERRA STREETS - DAY

Pressure Down" by John Farnham plays and a young man, FROSTY (early 20s) rides a bicycle through the streets of Canberra, wearing a Walkman. He's in a shirt and suit jacket with shorts and sneakers.

VOICEOVER

In 1986 the Woods Royal Commission determined that the Australian Security Intelligence Organization should move its headquarters from Melbourne to Canberra. Unfortunately, most of the staff refused to move with it. As such, ASIO had to recruit locally.

EXT. ASIO BUILDING - MORNING

FROSTY rides through an outdoor car park and stops under the entrance to the building. He chains his bike to a disabled parking sign.

A title appears:

Monday 24 November, 1986

09.16am

Canberra

A vintage Porsche screams up the driveway and stops in the disabled spot. BIG JOHN (Head of Protocol, 40-50, tall, intimidating, wearing a suit) leans out the window.

BIG JOHN

Oi, this is government property, mate!

CONTINUED:

Frosty takes his headphones off as Big John gets out of his car. He has a large briefcase-sized "mobile" telephone and a pager that won't stop beeping. He stares at it, annoyed.

FROSTY

Nice car!

BIG JOHN

Yeah, you can't park here. Move.

FROSTY

It's okay, I work here.

Frosty shows John the ASIO pass around his neck.

BIG JOHN

Then you definitely can't park there.

FROSTY

But this is the carpark.

BIG JOHN

Look, officers are not permitted to park in close proximity to ASIO premises to avoid being identified as ASIO personnel.

The rest of the carpark is completely empty. Across the road, ASIO officers walk out of another building's car park. It's completely full.

FROSTY

Isn't walking into a building with "ASIO" written on it a bit of a give-away?

Frosty points up at the front of the building. "Australian Security Intelligence Organization" is emblazoned above the door in bronze letters.

BIG JOHN

Just move it, kid.

FROSTY

Why'd they build a car park if we can't use it?

BIG JOHN

It's a legal requirement.

Big John gestures towards the bike. Frosty takes this as a cue and shakes it.

FROSTY

David. David Callan. But everyone calls me Frosty.

CONTINUED: (2)

BIG JOHN
 (letting go of his
 hand)
 I hope to God you're not on
 Operations.

FROSTY
 No, I just started in the
 mailroom.

BIG JOHN
 A local hire. Right.
 (sighs)
 Look son, you want to keep your
 job, move the bike.

Big John heads into the building. Frosty unlocks his
 bike.

FROSTY
 (under his breath)
 You're not even disabled.

BIG JOHN
 (still facing away)
 Not physically. Watch yourself,
 Callan. I know your name now.

INT. ASIO FOYER - MORNING

VARIOUS STAFF wait at a long security table getting their
 bags checked before being buzzed through a large steel
 door. 2 GUARDS (70s, retired military men) go through the
 bags very slowly. BIG JOHN slams his mobile telephone on
 the table and takes off his beeping pager.

BIG JOHN
 Morning Steve.

GUARD 1
 John. The DDG wants to talk to
 you.

BIG JOHN
 (showing his pager)
 Yeah I know.

GUARD 1
 What's that?

BIG JOHN
 Never mind.

GUARD 1
 I should probably take it.

BIG JOHN
 You don't know what it is.

CONTINUED:

GUARD 1

Not my job to know things. Give it.

BIG JOHN

It's fine, Steve.
(pointing at phone)
So's this.

Big John takes his pager and phone and walks up to the big steel door. Guard 1 presses a buzzer on the table and it opens. FROSTY steps up to him, smiling.

FROSTY

Hi Steve.

GUARD 1

Pass.

Frosty holds out the pass around his neck. The Guard pulls it closer so he can read it.

FROSTY

(choking)
It's me, Frosty. You've seen me every day for the last month.

GUARD 1

Not my job to remember things.

He lets go of the pass. Frosty tries to catch his breath.

FROSTY

I would've thought that's your only job.

Guard 1 points at his Walkman.

GUARD 1

I'll need that.

FROSTY

I don't think you'd like my music.

GUARD 1

Tech services have to pull it apart and make sure it's not a recording device. You'll get it back at the end of the day.

FROSTY

But I only just got it. What if they break it?

Guard 1 shrugs.

FROSTY (CONT'D)

Not your job.

CONTINUED: (2)

Guard 1 smiles and Frosty reluctantly hands over his Walkman. He puts it in a tray that says "Tech Services" and hands Frosty a small paper ticket.

INT. BIG JOHN'S OFFICE - MORNING

ANGELA (Coordinator of Operations, early 40s, wearing an 80s power suit) and GERARD (Deputy Director General, early 60s with grey hair and a pristine suit) are sitting watching a small colour TV. On it, a female reporter is standing outside a building cordoned off by police.

REPORTER

In the early hours of this morning, an explosion ripped through this office building in Caroline Street, Melbourne. Police have evacuated everyone within a one hundred metre radius. Fire crews have confirmed that it was not a gas leak but police refuse to comment on what caused it. At least one person is believed to have been killed...

BIG JOHN enters.

BIG JOHN

Morning Gerry. Angela. Why are you in my office?

GERARD

You've got the biggest TV. Oh, and we need your expertise.

BIG JOHN

(pointing at TV)
This is hardly a head of protocol problem.

ANGELA

That's what I told him.

GERARD

Stop bickering. I've already got the Attorney General halfway up my arse. What do we know?

ANGELA

A device exploded in the underground carpark at 2.16am. One dead, no ID.

GERARD

(pointing at the TV)
Christ, Tits McGee there just told me that. Give me something interesting.

CONTINUED:

BIG JOHN

That's way outside office hours.
I'm guessing it went off
accidentally.

ANGELA

Yes that's what I was about to...
There's CCTV footage.

GERARD

Great!

ANGELA

But the AFP have it and are
refusing to share.

GERARD

Christ, what powers do we actually
have in this fucking country!?
(pointing at TV)
Which one's our guy?

ANGELA

We don't have a guy.

GERARD

What do you mean we don't have a
guy?!

BIG JOHN

We should have a guy.

ANGELA

It's still a crime scene. The AFP
handle it first.

(To BIG JOHN)

That's Protocol, John.

GERARD

The AFP handles drug dealers and
diplomats. We handle terrorism.
This is God-damned terrorism!

INT. MAILROOM - MORNING

FROSTY walks into the mail sorting area holding a coffee
and throws down his satchel. Everyone is running around
photocopying papers and loading files onto a trolley.
SLUGGER (a large stocky man in his 40s who specializes in
efficient mail distribution and intimidation) spots him.

SLUGGER

Where the hell have you been,
Frosty?!

FROSTY

I got caught in traffic.

CONTINUED:

SLUGGER

It's Canberra. There is no traffic.

FROSTY

Well, I had to keep moving my bike. Some big guy in a Porsche...

Slugger goes to yell again.

FROSTY (CONT'D)

I made you a coffee.

Frosty hands the coffee he's been sipping to Slugger. Slugger ignores it.

SLUGGER

Don't lie to me, Frosty. You're shit at it. Grab your trolley and get going. These files have to be upstairs now.

FROSTY

Can I finish my coffee first?

Slugger glares at Frosty. Frosty takes his trolley and coffee and leaves.

FROSTY (CONT'D)

Well if I spill it, it's your fault.

INT. BIG JOHN'S OFFICE - MORNING

GERARD is still watching the TV. BIG JOHN is sitting at his desk flipping through papers. ANGELA walks in with fresh printouts.

GERARD

So who was the target?

ANGELA

According to the building register there's a dentist, a theatrical agent, a Turkish diplomatic mission and an Israeli importer.

GERARD

Oh Christ! Not the Israelis.

BIG JOHN

I'd lean on the dentist.

ANGELA

Sir, it's the same M.O. as the Israeli Consulate and Hakoah Club bombings in Sydney 4 years ago.

CONTINUED:

BIG JOHN

I reckon they were after the
Turks.

GERARD

Your old friends?

BIG JOHN

More than likely.

ANGELA

Who's the coordinator of
operations here?!

BIG JOHN

Come on Ange, it's got JCAG
written all over it.

ANGELA

The Justice Commandos For Armenian
Genocide use guns. They shot the
consul general then we intercepted
a shipment of pistols they ordered
and Keverian was arrested. They
don't have the skills to make
bombs.

BIG JOHN

Well not very well, obviously.

GERARD

John, I want you on this.

ANGELA

(exasperated)

The Armenian genocide was 70 years
ago! Right now we've got Israel
making nuclear weapons to use
against the Arabs, Syria and Libya
freaking out, and Abu Nidal
blowing up synagogues all over
Europe. Why would the target be
Turks? (pause) Fine. So are we
going to tell the AFP?

BIG JOHN

Of course not.

GERARD

Yes.

Angela and Big John stare at Gerard in shock.

GERARD (CONT'D)

We'll run a false flag operation.
Convince the AFP the target was
the Israelis and we can go after
the Armenians on our own. And get
all the credit. How many groups
can we feed them that hate Israel?

CONTINUED: (2)

ANGELA

Well there's Abu Nidal, the PLO, PFLP, DFLP, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, Kahane Chai-

GERARD

Who?

ANGELA

Fundamentalist Israelis who attack other Israelis.

BIG JOHN

Sucks when your own people hate you.

GERARD

Doesn't bother me. Put together a dossier with every group we've got. We'll drown those AFP fuckers with information.

BIG JOHN

Do you want to let the media in on it too?

ANGELA

On operational knowledge?!

GERARD

Definitely. That'll put even more pressure on the Feds to act on it.

BIG JOHN

Voluntary or leak?

GERARD

If we start volunteering information they'll know something's up. I'll call the Attorney General and shadow AG. Between those two idiots, the whole country'll know within the hour.

ANGELA

The AFP won't be happy if they find out we're withholding information.

GERARD

They're not happy or I'm not happy, Angela - it's a simple choice. Now get out both of you. I need to make another call.

BIG JOHN

But this is my office?!

CONTINUED: (3)

Gerard picks up the phone and starts dialling. Angela goes to leave.

ANGELA

A word in my office, John.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

FROSTY is pushing his trolley along the upper halls of the building, sipping his coffee. Some of it spills on one of the files. He tries to wipe it off but it just makes things worse. He takes the file out, wipes it on his shorts, puts it back and keeps going.

INT. ANGELA'S OFFICE - MORNING

ANGELA storms into her office. BIG JOHN enters. She closes the door behind him.

BIG JOHN

That suit looks great by the way.
The shoulder pads make you look-

ANGELA

Shut up. The Armenians?!

BIG JOHN

What? It's too small a target for anti-zionists.

ANGELA

Maybe it's all they can do after security increased on all the clubs and consulates. And it's exactly the same level of incompetence as those bombings. You just want it to be JCAG because they were the last operation you worked on.

BIG JOHN

Honey, I'm sorry but you're wrong. I was co-ordinator of operations for a long time and-

ANGELA

That's it, isn't it? You don't think I can do the job.

BIG JOHN

What?! No. I just think you should've told me you wanted it before you took it.

ANGELA

You left the position.

CONTINUED:

BIG JOHN

So we could have a child. That was the plan, remember?

ANGELA

That was your plan, John. Not mine.

BIG JOHN

You never told me you had a plan.

ANGELA

"Need to know", honey.

This reminds Angela. She opens her handbag and fishes around for her contraceptive pills.

BIG JOHN

You lied to me... to get my job. That's cold. And kind of hot.

Angela swallows her pill.

ANGELA

Anyway you wasted all your pay on that stupid Porsche.

BIG JOHN

Well that's my baby until I get a proper one.

Big John goes to leave.

ANGELA

Where are you going?

BIG JOHN

I'm going to talk to the Armenian desk.

ANGELA

Damn it, John, this is my operation!

Angela pushes past Big John and heads off down the hall, leaving him holding the door. Big John looks back and sees Angela's contraceptive pill sheet still on the desk. He looks down the hall after her, pauses, then goes back and steals the pills.

INT. SMOKING ATRIUM - DAY

Two officers, KEN and PUTTY, are smoking in an open glass atrium in the middle of the ASIO building.

KEN

Now all the good stuff's happening down in Melbourne.

CONTINUED:

PUTTY

I know. I want a bombing.

KEN

I told them we shouldn't have moved up here.

PUTTY

Yeah. But this is nicer than standing out on St Kilda Road.

FROSTY pushes his mail trolley past the glass. He sees Putty and waves. Putty awkwardly waves back. Frosty stops, leaves the trolley and walks into the atrium.

PUTTY (CONT'D)

Oh no.

KEN

Who's that?

PUTTY

The mail boy. He never shuts up...
(to FROSTY)
Hey Frosty, got anything for me?

Putty points at the trolley.

FROSTY

Probably. Can I get a smoke?

PUTTY

Don't you have your own?

FROSTY

They're two bucks a pack. Who can afford that?

KEN

You should probably give up.

FROSTY

Yeah. Hey, did I tell you I broke up with Sonia?

PUTTY

Who?

FROSTY

The girl I was in that play with.

PUTTY

Ummm... okay.

FROSTY

Yeah, I mean she was incredible. Great actor too. But after the play, I don't know, she seemed kind of-

CONTINUED: (2)

PUTTY

Frosty, you should probably finish delivering those files. We need to know the latest on the bombing.

FROSTY

What bombing?

Putty shakes his head.

KEN

I'll just grab the files myself, shall I?

FROSTY

Cool! Saves me a trip.

Ken and Putty head out of the atrium and go through the trolley. Frosty continues smoking.

INT. BIG JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

GERARD and ANGELA are watching another news report.

REPORTER

Police have confirmed that the explosion this morning was an attempted bombing. Sources believe an Israeli company was the target, prompting fears of repercussions. Security around Jewish schools and synagogues has been increased and-

GERARD

God bless the Attorney General!

COLLINS (female Asian-Australian officer in her mid 20s) enters.

COLLINS

Big John told me you wanted a briefing on the Armenians.

BIG JOHN enters.

BIG JOHN

No I didn't. I just asked you to bring up the files.

(to ANGELA)

How'd you go with your leads, Angela?

ANGELA

(deflated)

The main Abu Nidal, PLO and Hezbollah players are all out of the country.

CONTINUED:

Big John smiles smugly.

GERARD

So what evidence do we have that links Baradian's group to this cock up?

COLLINS

There was a gathering at Baradian's over the weekend. We've got photos.

Collins holds up the photos and Big John reaches for them. Angela snatches them from Collins' hand before he can. She starts flicking through them.

ANGELA

Mousheg... Hagop... Pakrat... wow, he's put on weight... Who's this?

COLLINS

We don't know.

Angela turns it over and reads "Unknown" and a date.

ANGELA

This is all you've got?!

COLLINS

Yeah, it's not much.

GERARD

Not much?! Try four fifths of fuck all.

ANGELA

Up until now Baradian's group's only used guns. The explosives are a step up. If this is the only new face on the scene he could be that step.

BIG JOHN

That's what I said?!

FROSTY enters with his mail trolley and starts filling the in-tray and emptying the out-tray.

GERARD

Who the fuck's this? And why's he wearing shorts?

FROSTY

Oh hi, I'm Frosty. I'm in the mail room.

Frosty holds out his hand. Gerard, Angela and Collins ignore him. Big John shakes his head.

CONTINUED: (2)

GERARD

And you're going around dressed
like that?!

Frosty looks down at himself.

FROSTY

What's wrong with it?

GERARD

What would people think about ASIO
if they saw you like this?!

FROSTY

I didn't think you wanted people
to think ASIO when they see me.

Gerard ponders this. It's a good point. Frosty sees the
photo in Angela's hand.

FROSTY (CONT'D)

Hey, it's Greg!

Everyone stops and stares at him.

FROSTY (CONT'D)

I went to school with him.

(beat)

Guess I'll go then.

Frosty grabs his trolley and goes to leave. Big John
closes the door and blocks the exit.

BIG JOHN

You're not going anywhere, Callan.

END OF SAMPLE PAGES