September 1948

# 26 September 1988 — Jakarta Post Newsroom

Sabam Siagian, managing editor of the Jakarta Post, assigns Cameron, an American graduate student on a internship, to interview his friend Petit Muharto about his experiences running the Dutch blockade with Bob Freeberg.

Sabam Siagian, a well-groomed, middle-aged Indonesian who is managing editor of the Jakarta Post, the nation’s leading English-language newspaper, assigns Cameron, an American post-grad student on a one-year internship, to interview his long-time friend Petit Muharto. As a captain in the Indonesian Air Force during the post-war struggle for independence, Muharto had been the co-pilot of RI-002, a war-surplus C-47 owned by American veteran pilot Bob Freeberg chartered by the Air Force to run the Dutch-imposed blockade around the territories claimed by the newly declared Republic of Indonesia.

Cameron, an American in his mid 20s, stands at the desk of a middle-aged Indonesian man in the Jakarta Post newsroom. Cameron points to a sheet of paper on the desk and lectures the older man in a condescending manner about mistakes in English grammar. Sabam Siagian, a distinguished Indonesian middle-aged man wearing a freshly pressed Safari suit, walks past, seeing the annoyance on the reporter’s face. Cameron sees Sabam and follows him into his office. Inside the cramped office, Sabam sits at a desk, almost disappearing behind precariously balanced piles of folders and documents and starts searching for something. Cameron tries to pitch a story idea, but Sabam waves him off, reminding the American that he is a foreigner working in a technical capacity, and not an accredited correspondent. The government is very strict on this matter, he says. Then Sabam relents, looks through his papers, and pulls out a card, handing it to Cameron. He explains that his old friend, Petit Muharto Kartodirdjo, a former Air Force officer, has an interesting story to tell about an American blockade runner who mysteriously vanished on 1 October 1948. The coming Saturday will make the 40-year anniversary of the disappearance. Since this is only a feature story in a weekend edition about a historical incident, there is no harm in letting Cameron do the interview. Besides, Sabam continues, no one else has time to spare.

# 28 September 1988 — Muharto living room

Cameron meets Muharto, a dapper, energetic Indonesian man in his  
late sixties, at his tidy residence in a Jakarta suburb. Muharto recounts his exploits in RI-002 in such vivid detail that Cameron can clearly visualize the events Muharto is describing starting with a surprise telephone call he received at Maguwo Airbase in Jogjakarta on June 1947.

# 1 June 1947 — Muhartos office Maguwo

Muharto receives a telephone call in Air Force headquarters in Jogja from and army base in Tasikmalaya, telling him that a foreign pilot has landed on a remote beach and has said his name. Suryadarma, the Air Force commander, orders him to Tasik to investigate.

Petit Muharto sits at his desk. An airman approaches his desk and speaks (without saluting first) that he someone wants to speak to him on the telephone. Muharto looks surprised, stands and walks to a neighboring office, where the only telephone in the building is kept. He listens intently, discerning only a few words through the crackle of static: “Tasikmalaya base”, “Foreign pilot”, “Captain Petit Muharto”.

Muharto walks to another building, to the office of Suryadarma, the commander of the Air Force. Muharto explains that an officer at the Tasik army base had reported an unknown cargo plane making an emergency landing on a nearby beach, and that the foreign pilot had spoken his name. Suryadarma grins, saying: “Must be one of your foreign flyboy friends”, and sends Muharto to Tasik to investigate.

# 7 June 1947 — In the air

Flying to Tasik in a refurbished Japanese aircraft, whose pilot had only first seen an airplane a few months previously, Muharto takes his mind from possible catastrophe by recollecting his experiences during his blockade runs three months previously, wondering which pilot it might be.

Muharto tells Cameron that he flew to Tasik in a powerful, open-cockpit monoplane flown by a pilot barely out of his teens and who had not even seen an airplane until the previous year. During the 30-minute flight, Muharto pondered who the American pilot might be, and decided it must be Bob Freeberg. He remembered meeting Freeberg two months before when he accompanied the third blockade run he had organized with the Manilia-based CALI charter airline.

En route to the location, Muharto remembers the foreign pilots he had commissioned for blockade runs earlier in the year, and decided it must be Bob Freeberg. The other pilots had treated the flights as purely commercial assignments – the crew had even included a flight attendant, Miss Brown, a comely Filipina. But Bob had been willing to undertake risky tasks on the return leg, including a test land on a jungle air strip and dropping paratroopers into a highland town. Only Bob, Muharto decides, was both the high level of skill and total lack of fear to fly into a hostile environment unannounced and to land safely on a remote beach.

# 31 March 1947 — CALI aircraft cockpit

On the third blockade run, with Bob Freeberg as captain, the overcast sky forces Muharto to navigate by asking Bob to fly low enough to follow the railway line to Jogja.

Muharto stands in the cockpit between Bob and his co-pilot, guiding the aircraft by landmarks he has seen twice before on previous blockade runs. But today, overcast obscures the terrain save tops of the volcanoes poking through the clouds. Miss Brown, a comely Filipina who, incongruously, is the stewardess on what is basically an illegal flight, hands Muharto a cup of tea, then looks at the solid overcast with obvious concern.

Bob points to the peaks and asks if there is any high ground in between. Muharto thinks for a moment, then replies: I don’t think so. Nothing above a few hundred meters. To Muharto’s horror, Bob noses the aircraft down through the overcast, emerging perilously close to the terrain. Muharto gulps, and frantically looks for any type of landmark. He sees a rail line that he knows will lead them through valleys and plains all the way to Jogja. He tells Bob to follow that line, and Jogja appears a few minutes later, to Miss Brown’s great relief.

# 31 March 1947 — Maguwo airfield

In Jogja, Muharto introduces Bob to Suryadarma, who thanks the American for his assistance, and asks him to perform some risky tasks on the return leg. Bob grins and readily agrees.

As the aircraft is being unloaded and refueled for the return to Singapore, Muharto introduces Bob to Suryadarma, who thanks him for his assistance. Then Suryadarma takes Muharto aside and tells him that this will be his last blockade run. An Indian businessman has offered to link India with the Republic with his own Dakota, VT-CLA, and has the full support of the Indian government. Muharto is both pleased at this display of crucial international support, and dismayed that once again he will be desk-bound. However, thanks to Bob, his last flight will be a memorable one.

# 31 March 1947 — Karangendah Airfield

Muharto asks Bob to make a test landing on a refurbished wartime airstrip designed for smaller aircraft such as fighters. Bob happily complies, and sets the Dakota down with only a few meters to spare on the runway. Muharto introduces Bob to Santoso, the base commander.

Before takeoff on the return trip to Singapore, Muharto asks Bob if he can attempt a landing on a refurbished Japanese airstrip at Karenengah. Bob readily agrees. They circle the strip and Bob ponders the attempt. Muharto asks if he can land a plane this size. Bob replies that he did this all the time in the war. He can “land on a dime and give you a nickel change.” Then Muharto asks if he can take off again. Bob replies: “I certainly hope so. We seem to be smack dab in the middle of nowhere.” Bob lands. and Santoso, the base commander climbs aboard to meet them. After a short conversation, Santoso exits, and Bob takes off, the wheels finally lifting off the runway a few meters before the end.

# 31 March 1947 — CALI Dakota cockpit

Bob uses his wartime aviation skills to parachute Air Force engineers and their gear to a bull's eye landing on a pot-holed highland airstrip they are tasked to refurbish.

The CALI Dakota flies over the Bukit Barisan mountaintops, and drops into a valley toward the town of Bukittinggi. At Muharto’s direction, Bob passes low over an airstrip, which is plainly full of potholes and unusable. The co-pilot leaves his seat and goes to the cargo compartment, motioning to Miss Brown and Muharto to sit down far from the door. The two other passengers are donning parachutes and preparing to jump. The co-pilot wrenches open the door, and scraps of paper and cardboard swirl as the air stream enters the cabin. The two parachutists jump out the door. Muharto looks out of the window behind him, sees the parachutists land squarely on the airstrip, and remarks on Freeberg’s piloting skills.

# 8 June 1947 — Tasik Army Base

In Tasik Muharto meets Pang Soeparto, the junior army officer who telephoned him, who takes him (and two barrels of aviation fuel) to the beach at Cikolong. As soon as Muharto sees the beach, bookended by two rivers and the gap between the water and palm trees scarcely more than the Dakota's wing span, he knew that, of all the pilots he had met, only Bob Freeberg had the skill to make that landing.

Muharto meets Pang Suparto, the army officer who had telephoned him, and together they take two barrels of aviation fuel to the beach where Freeberg is stranded. On seeing the beach, Muharto is astounded that Freeberg was able to land there safely.

Muharto tells Cameron that in Tasik he met Pang Soeparto, the junior army officer who telephoned him, who takes him (and two barrels of aviation fuel) to the beach at Cikolong. He tells Cameron that as soon as he saw the beach, bookended by two rivers and the gap between the water and palm trees scarcely more than the Dakota’s wing span, he knew that, of all the pilots he had met, only Bob Freeberg had the skill to make that landing.

# 9 June 1947 — Cikolong Beach

Bob tells Muharto that his Dakota is stuck in the soft sand. Muharto rallies the hundreds of villagers who have gathered for the spectacle of the foreigner and his giant aircraft to tear apart their houses and use the woven bamboo walls as a makeship runway. The Dakata takes off with Muharto on board and heads to Jogja.

Arriving on the beach, Muharto learns his hunch was correct. Bob, a large, pleasant-looking man in his mid twenties, greets Muharto with his usual infectious optimism. He shows Muharto his Dakota, which, though undamaged, is trapped in the soft sand. A Dutch aircraft had been spotted out to sea a few hours before; Muharto knew that another could pass overhead at any moment. He tells the assembled villages that Bob is a friend who will help them in the struggle against the despised Dutch. But first, he will need their help to get the aircraft off the beach before spotted by a Dutch patrol. At Muharto’s direction, the villagers literally tear their own houses apart, laying the woven bamboo walls along the sand to fashion a makeshift runway. The Dakota, with Muharto on board, takes off and heads toward Jogja.As Muharto and Pang walk over the soft sand toward the Dakota, Muharto can see that he was correct. It is Bob Freeberg, who is digging the sand from around one of the wheels. Muharto sees that the Dakota is undamaged but stuck in the soft sand. They first try to fashion a runway from coconut fronds, but the leaves disintegrate under the wheels of the heavy Dakota. Buy this time hundreds of villagers had arrived to witness the outlandish spectacle. Muharto looks around the village, and notices that most houses have walls of woven bamboo. He gets an idea, climbs with Bob onto the wing of the Dakota, and launches into an impassioned speech saying that this brave foreigner is our friend and will help us drive the despised Dutch from our land. The villagers cheer, and Muharto is joined by Pang, the army officer, who tells the assembled crowd to, literally, tear their own houses apart to lay the bamboo mats on the sand. A few hours later, the Dakota, which Muharto on board, takes off and flies away, the mats flying backwards in the propeller backwash.

# 9 June 1947 — Maguwo Airfield Jogja

In Jogja, Suradarma commissions Bob to fly a cargo valuable quinine to Manila and return with medicine and other goods. To forestall possible problems with authorities in Manila Muharto suggests that they paint a registration number, RI-002, on the unregistered war-surplus Dakota.

The Dakota lands in Jogjakarta, where Suryadarma commissions Bob to fly a cargo of high-value quinine to Manila and return with essential medicines and spare parts. The war-surplus Dakota is still unregistered, so to forestall potential problems with Philippine authorities, Muharto suggests that the designation RI-002 be painted on the tail. Bob protests that since his is the first aircraft registered by Indonesia, it should be RI-001. Suryadarma explains the RI-001 is being held in reserve for a future presidential aircraft, which cannot be owned by a foreigner.

# October 1947 — Presidential Palace Jogja

Muharto takes Bob to meet Soekarno . At the presidential palace. As was  
his custom in private conversation, Soekarno treats Bob as an equal and  
urges him to stay and help the struggle.

# 17 October 1947 — RI-002 in flight

Bob drops paratroopers into the Kalimantan forest. This is the first time in an aircraft for all, so Bob gives a pep talk to the terrified troopers, translated by Boedi.

Bob drops paratroopers into a Republican area. It was the first jump for everyone, and many are terrified. One soldier pulls his ripcord, spilling his parachute on the deck. He swears it was an accident, but others grip their cords, possibly ready to do the same. Boedi reports the situation to Bob, who turns the controls over to Moeljono and goes back to the cargo area. With Boedi interpreting, he gives the soldiers a pep talk, telling of his own terror flying in the war. The soldiers all agree to jump. Boedi watches as the parachutes drift down and are enveloped by the endless forest.

# November 1947 — Hotel Merdeka Dining Room Jogja

On the day the GOC members leave Jogja, Bob invites Boedi and Muharto to join him for dinner at the Hotel Merdeka. He is embarrassed  
when a waiter insists he be served the last can of American corned beef  
left behind by the COG delegates.

# 30 November 1947 — RI-002 at Maguwo

Freeberg, Muharto and Boedi fly Republican officials to Manila to meet  
with United Nations representatives in the hill town of Bagiou. The delegates, who are all prominent figures in the Republic and have cosmopolitan backgrounds, treat Bob with as much respect as do the hero-worshipping common people of Jogja.

# 28 September 1988 — Muhartos Living Room

Muharto tells Cameron that he flew with RI-002 until May 1948, when he was promoted to Major and assigned to a desk at headquarters. He saw little of Bob after that, but was looking forward to having Bob as guest of honor at his wedding in October. But three weeks before the wedding he was devasted to learn that RI-002 had vanished on a mission.

Muharto tells Cameron that in May 1948 he was promoted to Major and assigned administrative duties in Air Force headquarters. Thus, he was not able to accompany RI-002 on another crucial mission, carrying President Soekarno, who called Bob “our American friend”, on a month-long morale- and fund-raising tour of Republican areas. But they had kept in contact, and Muharto looked forward to Bob attending his wedding on 24 October. Then, on 2 October 1948, Muharto learned that RI-002 had vanished while transporting a ton of Republican gold from Java to Sumatra. Muharto explains that nothing was known of the crash, and the Dutch authorities denied all knowledge. In April 1979, Muharto says, farmers searching the remote mountainside for arable land stumble across aircraft wreckage. Muharto shows Cameron photographs taken by Air Force field investigators.

Seven weeks before Bob was to be guest of honor at Muharto’s wedding, RI-002 vanished while transporting a quarter ton of gold to safety in Bukittinggi. Muharto explains that nothing was known of the crash, and the Dutch authorities denied all knowledge. In April 1979, Muharto says, farmers searching the remote mountainside for new land stumble across the wreckage of an aircraft.

# 28 September 1988 — Muhartos living room

Muharto explains that he became aware of the discovery of the crash  
site, wholly by accident, some five years previously. He wrote to his contacts  
in the Air Force and to the officers who participated in the crash-site  
investigation, but received vague, non-committal replies --- or only  
silence.

# 19 April 1977 — Mount Punggur

An Air Force team investigating the crash site find a few human remains, confirmation that it was RI-002, but no sign of the gold cargo.

Two farmers lead the investigation team to the wreckage on the rugged mountain slope. The team finds fragments of a wing with the faded letters: RI-00, and rusted airplane parts, including a dynamo, part of the radio set, with a bullet wedged between the windings and armature.

There are a few fragments of human remains, which the soldiers reverently dig from the earth and wrap in cloth. They also find two empty wooden crates labeled with the name of a gold mine in Java, but a thorough search of the area does not find any trace of the gold itself. However, Sulaiman, the team leader, notes evident that a sizable group had set up a field camp as they had done. They had been here recently, Sulaiman assumes, as the rapid vegetation growth in this tropical rain forest would have obliterated all signs of their presence in a few months. Two wiry men dressed in shabby clothes lead a squad of airmen and their officer, Lt. Sulaiman, through a forested hillside to the wreckage of RI-002. The airmen set up camp and search the area. They find fragments of a wing with the faded letters: RI-00, other airplane parts, including a dynamo with a bullet wedged between the windings and armature. There are a few fragments of human remains, which the soldiers reverently dig from the earth and carefully wrap in cloth. The also find two empty wooden crates labeled: “Gold”, but a through search of the area does not find any trace of the metal itself.

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# 29 July 1977 — Teluk Betulu Air Force base

In an otherwise empty hanger, five coffins draped in Indonesian flags  
lay on a platform. A sixth coffin, larger than the rest and without a  
flag, rests on a separate platform. A flatbed truck pulls in to the  
hanger and a a squad of airmen, all silent and respectful pick up each  
of the coffins and place them on the truck. But they leave the sixth  
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# 28 September 1988 — Muhartos Living Room

Muharto tells Cameron that the sixth coffin, presumably containing Bob’s  
remains, could not be buried with the others as a foreigner cannot be interred in a cemetery for national heroes, however much he may deserve the honor himself through his services to the nation.  
  
Muharto’s expression as he finished his reminiscences convinces  
Cameron that he regarded Freeberg as a close friend, and is seeking  
closure about his mysterious disappearance. Muharto finishes by saying,  
wistfully, that his is sure many people know more about the mystery of  
RI-002 than they are telling.

Muharto tells Cameron that the sixth coffin, presumably containing Bob’s remains, could not be buried with the others because he was a foreigner. Muharto explains that he became aware of the discovery of the crash site, wholly accident, some five years previously. He wrote his contacts in the air force and to the officers who participated in the crash-site investigation, but received only vague, non-committal replies – or only silence. Muharto’s expression as he finished his reminiscences convinces Cameron that he regarded Freeberg as a close friend, and is seeking closure about his mysterious disappearance. Muharto finishes by saying, wistfully, that his is sure many people know more about the mystery of RI-002 than they are telling.

# 29 September 1988 — Jakarta Post Newsroom

Syd Jardine, a burnt-out Old Asia Hand who is senior copy editor for the Jakarta Post, tells Cameron that his story on Bob Freeberg needs more historical context, and suggests he do additional research at the new National Library.

In the Jakarta Post newsroom, Cameron finishes the first draft of the Muharto interview, then hands it to Syd Jardine, a disheveled, chain-smoking, older American sitting at the adjacent desk. After reading it, Syd tells Cameron that the article is good, but a bit thin, and needs more context to be understandable to the Post’s foreign readership. Syd suggests Cameron go to the national library and read the book *Recruit to Revolution*, which has a chapter on Freeberg, and all the historical background Cameron needs.

# 5 October 1988 — Library Reference Section

At the National Libary, Cameron meets Julia, a final-year student using her fluency in Dutch and English to assist in cataloging the historical publications archive.

Cameron visits the National Library. Using his Jakarta Post credentials, he is admitted to the limited-access reference section, an archive of publications and books dating back to colonial times. He is greeted, in fluent English, by Julia, an attractive, bookish Indonesian woman in her early twenties. Julia finds the sole copy of *Recruit to Revolution*, which, like all items in the collection, cannot be taken from the premises. Cameron settles down to read the book and take copious notes of the historical background of the struggle as seen through the eyes of the author.

At the library, Julia, a grad student working in the reference section, retrieves the book for Cameron. He is not allowed to take the book from the reading room, and so stays for several hours, making copious notes of the historical background of the struggle as seen through the eyes of the author.

Because Julia has the best English of the staff, she is also informally the person delegated to attending to foreign visitors. Julia finds the sole copy of Recruit to Revolution, reminds Cameron to be careful not to rip the pages of the volume, which is starting to deteriorate.

# February 1948 — Bukittinggi

In \*Recruit to Revolution\*, John Coast describes Freeberg as “America’s Best Ambassador” after their first meeting. Nevertheless, he notes that American officials in Batavia, who wanted Indonesia to remain in Dutch hands, disapproved of his activities.

experiences as a diplomatic consultant. He advised both Soekarno and Hatta, and talked to American diplomats at length about the situation. His conversations indicated that many Americans were sympathetic to the Indonesian struggle, but the American government itself preferred that the archipelago remain in Dutch hands for the time being as a bulwark against encroaching communist influence from the north.

Coast also remarks on his encounters with Bob Freeberg. He found him to be enigmatic, though modest and seemingly decent. He described Freeberg as .

# 5 October 1988 — library canteen

Julia and Cameron have coffee in the library canteen. She says that she is in her final year of university, and hopes to get a scholarship to do her post-grad overseas. In the meantime, she was hired by the library because of her fluency in written English and Dutch. Julia also casually mentions that her father is a general.

He asks Julia where he can get some coffee. No liquids are allowed the reading room, so Julia says she was just about to take a break herself, and invites Cameron to join her in the canteen. As Cameron drinks his coffee and Julia her tea, After two hours Cameron asks if he can get some coffee. Julia says that no food or beverages are allowed in the reading room, and offers to escort him to the library canteen. They chat over coffee, Julia tells Cameron that she is in her final year, and is doing her undergrad thesis, She is hoping for a scholarship to study overseas. In the meantime, because of her fluency in both Dutch and English, Julia has been hired to help organize the publications collection of the new national library. Julia casually mentions that her father, who is a general in Army Intelligence, probably knows all about him, to Cameron’s consternation.

Julia asks Cameron about how he likes living in Indonesia. Cameron replies that he loves it, except for one annoying habit. Indonesians always ask how old he is, where he is from, and whether he is married. Cameron says that this is too personal to discuss with some random stranger. Julia replies that Indonesians consider such inquiries to be meaningless pleasantries, like “How are you”, or “What’s new”. She then assures Cameron: Don’t worry, I won’t bother you. If I want to know anything I’ll just ask my dad".

At Cameron’s quizzical look, Julia smiles and explains that her father is a general with the the Army’s Intel section. Though Julia is plainly teasing him, Cameron nonetheless gulps down his coffee and says he should get back to work.

# 3 October 1988 — JP newsroom

The day the story about Bob Freeberg appears, Sabam berates Syd for sneaking an amusing tone-perfect translation of a lurid sex-crime story from a local paper into the Post. He then praises Cameron for the Muharto story, saying that his old friend was delighted.

Sabam strides into the newsroom, brandishing a copy of the paper, and approaches a disheveled, chain-smoking older American sitting at the desk adjacent to Cameron. Sabam points to an article headlined “Ladyboy Molested By Sex-Crazed Gang”, and says: “This is a family newspaper!”.

Sabam then turns to Cameron, still holding the paper, and points to another page with a photo of Bob Freeberg. He says that Muharto was delighted with the article. Cameron agrees that was an intriguing story, and says he would like to do some follow-up research. Sabam nods in agreement, saying “On your own time, of course” and suggests he start with a book he had recently stumbled across in the reference section of the new national library. He writes the name of the book in the margin of the paper in his hand, leaves it on Cameron’s desk, and returns to his office.

Cameron picks of a copy of the newspaper on his desk, turns a page, and reads aloud: “And then the rapists took their turns to quench their unnatural desires with the body of the hapless transvestite hairdresser.” The article carries the byline: “Our Reporter”. Cameron asks the American, Syd, how he gets away with it. Syd replies that he and Sabam go way back. Sabam’s biggest worry is that Cameron or another foreign copy editors are not sufficiently familiar with the fine points of Indonesian culture and history, and will let something slip through that will rile some high official. Sabam relies on Syd as the last pair of eyes before it all goes to press.

“Doing proper journalism in Indonesia is like walking a tightrope,” Syd says, “and I’m the safety net.” Syd then turns away and takes a metal flask from his desk drawer. There is a slight tremor in his hand as he pours a splash from the flask into his coffee, replaces the flask in his desk, and goes back to work.

Sabam storms out of his office, slams a copy of the paper in front of Syd. He points to the headline: **Ladyboy Molested By Sex-Crazed** **Gang**, and shouts: “This is a family newspaper!”

Sabam then turns to Cameron, now calm and composed, and says that Muharto was delighted with the article about Freeberg and RI-002. Cameron thanks Sabam for the praise, and says that he would like to do more research into the story as a basis for a grad-school paper when he returns home. Sabam agrees it would be an interesting and challenging research topic, and wishes him luck. As he returns to his office, Sabam turns back to Cameron and says: “On your own time, course. And don’t involve The Jakarta Post. You don’t have a research permit so keep it quiet.”

After Sabam returns to his office, Syd tells Cameron that Sabam is right. The government does not like journalists or academics reexamining the past. If the fate of Bob Freeberg remains a mystery, they must think it is for good reason, perhaps to avoid questions about what might have happened to the gold.

# 3 October 1988 — Muharto living room

Cameron visits Muharto to help solve the mystery of RI-002. Muharto is delighted, and suggest they begin with a visit to Jogjakarta, where pieces of the RI-002 wreckage is kept.

Cameron visits Muharto to say that he would like to help Muharto finally solve the mystery of RI-002. Muharto is delighted, saying that a good place to start would be the Aviation Museum in Jogjakarta, where the items recovered from the RI-002 wreckage are stored. In addition, he could visit his spiritual advisor there to seek supernatural blessing for a successful outcome of their endeavors.

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At the library, meets Victor, a retired journalist for the colonial-era \*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad\*, who tells him of his experiences trying to solve the mystery of RI-002 from the Dutch perspective.

Cameron receives a message at the Jakarta Post from Julia suggesting he visit the library again the following day. He does so, and Julia introduces him to Victor, an older man, disheveled but still dignified, a retired journalist. Victor tells Cameron of his experiences reporting on the activities of the colonial government for his newspaper, the , the leading newspaper of the Dutch East Indies and the voice of the *Indos*, people of European or mixed heritage who had lived in the archipelago for many generations. He relates humorous anecdotes of the frustration of colonial authorities with foreign blockade runners like Bob Freeberg, who they regarded as common criminals. In Bob’s case, no one was surprised at the news that RI-002 had vanished with a small fortune in gold.

# October 1988 — Library parking lot

When the library closes, Cameron and Julia discover that they each have arrangements to meet friends at the nearby Hotel Borobudur. He offers her a ride on his vintage Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Cameron and Julia discover that they are now headed to the same destination: the Hotel Borobudur, a nearby luxury hotel, where she will meet friends in the coffee shop, and he a mate at the bar. Cameron offers Julia a ride. She accepts, and is nonplussed when he takes her to an army surplus Harley Davidson motorcycle in the parking lot. During the thrilling ride, she briefly grabs Cameron’s waist, to her embarrassment.

# October 1988 — Hotel Borobudur

Cameron drops Julia at the front entrance to the hotel, impressing her friends, who decides that he must be rich.

Cameron pulls up at the hotel entrance, impressing Julia’s friends, who are waiting for her by the door. Cameron drives away to park his Harley, while Julia and her friends go to their event, a birthday party for another general’s daughter where the gifts include a house and a car. The friends press Julia for information about Cameron, and suggest that since he rides a huge motorcycle, and is a *bule*, he must be rich, teasing her that since her father, unlike other generals, does not give his daughter unlimited amounts of money, she needs a rich boyfriend. Cameron and Julia walk into the lobby of the Hotel Borobudur together, where her friends are waiting. Julia introduces Cameron to them, then he walks toward the bar. Julia’s friends grill her about the bule, with Julia insisting that they are not even friends, just new acquaintances. The friends, who are all *anak jendral*, insist that Julia should go out with him. All bule are rich, they say, and maybe with his money Julia can finally come with them on shopping trips to Singapore.

# October 1988 — Mount Merapi

Cameron accompanies Muharto to a village on the upper slopes of the  
Merapi volcano to meet Muharto’s spiritual advisor, Mbah Maridjan. The  
three hike the steep incline to a shrine, effortlessly in the case of  
the sexagenarian duo, but with some difficulty by their companion, some  
four decades their junior. Cameron watches respectfully as the two  
intone Islamic prayers, then lay Hindu-style floral offerings at the  
shrine to the gods of the fire mountain.

Cameron accompanies Muharto to a village on the upper slopes of the Merapi volcano, to meet Muharto’s spiritual advisor, Mbah Maridjan. The three hike the steep incline to a shrine, effortlessly in the case of the sexagenarian duo of Muharto and Maridjan, but with some difficulty by their companion, some four decades their junior. Cameron watches respectfully as the two intone Islamic prayers, then lay Hindu-style floral offering at the shrine to the gods of the mountain.

# 16 October 1988 — Aviation Museum Jogjakarta

Muharto takes Cameron to the Air Force museum in Jogja, a re-purposed  
hanger filled with decommissioned aircraft and other exhibits, which stir vivid memories of Muharto. In the curator's office, Muharto handles the dynamo with the bullet lodged in the windings, and has a mystical vision of RI-002 in the seconds before the crash.

Muharto takes Cameron to the Air Force museum in Jogja, a re-purposed hanger filled with decommissioned aircraft and other exhibits. Muharto points to a model of the Zogling training glider, and tells Cameron of training village boys who had never seen an airplane to become skilled pilots in mere weeks. Muharto seeks out the curator, who invites them into his office. Muharto asks the curator to retrieve scraps from the RI-002 wreckage stored at the museum. One of the items is the dynamo with the bullet inexplicably lodged in the windings. Muharto picks it up, and from his point of view, the room around him fades into mist. The room comes back into focus, and Muharto sees the concerned faces of Cameron and the curator. Muharto places the dynamo back into the storage box and says, in a wavering voice, that they will miss their train back to Jakarta if they don’t hurry.

# 1 November 1988 — JP Newsroom

Syd complains about the quality of the financial articles produced by the JP reporters in the run up to capital market deregulation. Sabam decides to assign Cameron to interview foreign financial experts and write incredited background articles.

Cameron tells Sabam that this might be an interesting story, and might be a suitable subject for his master’s thesis. He asks Sabam’s permission to use the Jakarta Post credentials to interview prominent people who might be able to fill in details. Sabam agrees, reluctantly, and admonishes Cameron to keep to questions to historical events, and to not touch any subject that might be considered current news.

Back at his desk, Cameron tells Syd of his suspicion that CIA was here right at the the beginning. Syd lights a cigarette, takes his flask of whiskey from the desk drawer, pours a splash into his coffee, and then into the coffee cup on Cameron’s desk, and says: “You have no idea…”

Sabam asks Cameron to prepare a series of articles about the coming capital market deregulation which will be run, without a byline, as background. He will be allowed to use JP credentials interview foreigners only for these articles.

Cameron tells Syd of his assignment, and, in a sardonic voice, asks if he can write articles that are “boring” enough to be financial reporting. Syd lights a cigarette, takes his flask of whiskey from the desk drawer, pours a splash into his coffee, and then into the coffee cup on Cameron’s desk, and says: “This whole deregulation thing will be anything but boring. Let me tell you about what’s really happening with the stock market.”

# October 1988 — Boedi living room

Cameron meets Boedi when he hosts a reception for visiting academics, and discovers that he had been radio operator of RI-002. At Cameron's urging, he tells amusing anecodes of his days with RI-002 to his guests.

The organization sponsoring Cameron’s internship invites him to attend a gathering of visiting academics in the cultural and tourism field. The host is Boediardjo, a former Air Force officer and government minister. In the spacious reception area of his colonial-era mansion in Menteng, Jakarta’s most-exclusive neighborhood. Cameron is impressed by the European and Indonesian artworks covering the extensive wall space, and by the McIntosh tube amp and Quad speakers denoting a true, and well-heeled, audiophile. Boedi recognizes Cameron as the writer of the Jakarta Post article about Bob Freeberg, inquires about Muharto’s well-being, and informs Cameron that he had been the radio operator of RI-002 until July 1948. Cameron is taken aback, and asks for an interview. The other guests must leave soon after dinner to catch an early flight, so Boedi invites Cameron to stay behind.

Boedi begins by describing Bob as one of the most patient, unflappable persons he had ever met. Smiling, Boedi remarks that this was a necessary quality for flying with Indonesians during the early years of nation hood. During colonial times, the Dutch had only admitted a handful of native sons into flight school. So even Air Force officers had had little hands-on experience with actual aircraft, as Captain Muharto proved when Bob asked him to sit in the co-pilot seat as they approached Manila on the first flight of RI-002.

# 10 July 1947 — RI-002 cockpit in flight

Bob invites Muharto to sit in co-pilot seat and assist him with the flap controls during the final approach to Manila. But when Bob gives the command, the nervous Muharto pushed the levers to the full causing the Dakota to make a dramatic drop. Bob instantly repositions the levers, and gently reminds Muharto to not pass the half-flaps setting until they see the runway.

Approaching Manila, Muharto sits in co-pilot seat. Nervous, he mishears Bob’s instructions, and deploys full flaps, causing the Dakota to make a dramatic drop. Bob instantly corrects the setting, and gently reminds Muharto to not pass the half-flaps setting until they see the runway.

# 12 June 1947 — Tom Lee Kitchen

Over breakfast at Tom Lee's house, Tom reads the newspaper headlines  
about "Fearless Bob Freeberg" and his "Javanese Crew". One article  
reports that the Dutch are laying claim to the valuable quinine cargo as  
the "Javanese Crew" are "subjects of the Dutch Queen". Boedi laughs, but  
Muharto is outraged.

# 20 June 1947 — courtroom Manila

Bob and Muharto attend their first court session to decide who owns Dutch representatives take them to court over possession of the quinine cargo.

Their lawyer, Salipada Penatun, who is also a sitting senator with extensive high-level contacts, lays out the legal justification for ownership of the quinine, then lets Muharto give an impassioned plea, claiming that the money from selling the quinine will buy medicines and other essentials unavailable in the besieged capital. The Dutch counter by calling a plantation expert to testify that the Republic does not have the capability to process quinine, so the drug must have been produced in a Dutch-owed factory before the war. Muharto jumps to his feet, ready to protest this insult to his people’s technological skill, but Penatun motions for him to sit down, then calmly tells the judge: “A foreigner is not qualified to discuss the internal matters of the sovereign Republic of Indonesia.” The judge considers this, obviously with some sympathy, and adjourns the session.

# 21 September 1947 — RI-002 cockpit in flight

RI-002 returns to Jogja, flying non-stop to conceal the presence of Captain Espina. They reach Java after dusk, with landmarks difficult to discern in the gloom. After some hesitation, during which tension rises in the cockpit, Muharto draws upon a vivid schoolboy memory to identify a range of hills and guides the aircraft to Jogja.

RI-002 returns to Jogja with their clandestine passenger, Captain Espina. The need for secrecy compels Freeberg to fly non-stop from the southernmost military airfield in the Philippines to Jogjakarta. Bob installs a spare fuel tank, but high winds deplete the reserve delay contact with Java until after dark. Muharto has difficulty identifying landmarks in the gloom, and tension mounts in the cabin as the fuels gauges slide toward empty. Finally, Muharto draws on the vivid schoolboy memory of his classmates describing a range of low, rounded hills near Jogja as female breasts. He orients himself by the landmark geographic feature and guides Bob to a safe landing in Jogja. RI-002 flies between the volcanic peaks of Java, which throw ominous shadows over the land in as the sun sets. Since the presence of Captain Espina could not be revealed, RI-002 was forced to fly non-stop from Manila, extending the range with a spare fuel tank installed in the cargo hold. That was now empty, as well as the wing tanks. Freeberg asks Muharto to identify landmarks with increasing urgency. Muharto peers out the window, unsure of what can barely make out in the gathering gloom. Finally, Freeberg almost shouts: “Dammit Muharto! Where are we? You should know! This is your country!” A nervous laugh escapes Muharto’s lips, as usual for an embarrassed Javanese person. Muharto looks out the cockpit window again, and again laughs, this time in delight at a schoolboy memory. Muharto has spotted a line of low, rounded hills that he and his school mates called, naturally, the “Susu Seribu”, the Thousand Breasts. With this vivid memory trigger Muharto can clearly visualize the relevant page in his school atlas. Now with authority in his voice, he tells Freeberg: “Fly toward those hills, turn to the west and follow them until the last one, then turn back north and fly for 30 kilometers.” A few minutes later, RI-002 lands in Maguwo, the engines sputtering to a halt as it rolls along the runway.

Finally, in September we flew back to Jogja. Boedi tells of tension in the cockpit as Muharto prevaricates. Then finally, Muharto comes through. He asks Boedi about the hills in front of them. They agree they are the susu seribut that they tittered over in middle school. We arrived long after dark. We could not announce our arrival. Our radio was working, but the spare parts needed for the base radio was our cargo cabin. As we approached, all the lights in the city flickered out. Then points of light, flashlights pointed skyward, appeared throughout the town. These were Dutch sympathizers, signaling what they thought was a Dutch aircraft, a reminder that not all Indonesians were on our side. We had to get the runway lights on. I told Bob about the signal a CALI crew had used on the first blockade run, playing with the propeller pitch and speed controls to produce an undulating drone, like a low-pitched siren. Bob did this, and a few moments later the runway lights blazed on, and we landed.

# October 1988 — Tanamur

Julia and Cameron party with her friends at the Tanamur. The friends want to go next to an after-hours place, where girls are admitted free but men must pay a steep cover charge. Because of his tight budget, Cameron must demur, and Julia is embarrassed for her new friend.

Julia and Cameron meet her friends at the Tanamur. All talk excitedly about studying overseas. The girls want to go to an after-hours club in Kota. Girls get in free, but Cameron has to pay a steep cover charge. Cameron looks uncomfortable, Julia makes an excuse.

# October 1988 — Hotel Hilton

Julia goes on a date with Eric, the son of a friend of her father, a successful businessman. Eric reveals that their fathers are joining forces with an American venture capitalist to artifically inflate the value of his father's company for the sale on the capital market.

Julia goes on a date with Eric, which as set up by her father. Eric dominates the conversation with boasting about the deal their respective fathers are making with a Bruce Rappaport-style American stock hustler to sell his father’s company at an inflated price after the capital market is deregulated. Julia objects that this is corruption, something General Eddy has never done during his career. Eric dismisses her concern, stating that: “It isn’t corruption to take money from foreigners.”

# October 1988 — Julia House

The day after her date with Eric, General Eddy hints that the business deal with Eric's father will provide him with enough funds to send Julia to graduate school in America, fulfilling her dream.

General Eddy asks Julia about her date with Eric. Julia does not want to tell her father that she finds Eric an egoistical bore, so she says that a relationship would be impossible because he will shortly to America for post-graduate study. At that Eddy smiles, and tells Julia that she could do the same. Julia counters it would be too expensive, but her father says not to worry.

# September 1947 — Madras Curry Manila

Muharto attempts to pay for their meals at Madras Curry, explaining that  
it is an honorarium for the talk to the lady lawyers. To his surprise,  
Bob chastises him for "taking money for nothing".

# August 1947 — AB Bar Manila

Bob Walters complains to Boedi about his business dealings with Bob Freeberg.

The gregarious and charismatic Boedi had been wholly accepted by the Aviation Brotherhood, the freewheeling foreign pilots seeking their fortunes or reliving wartime adventures in often-dangerous charter flights into remote areas of the region. Over drinks in the AB bar, Boedi learns more about Bob, particularly the recognition by his peers that he is the most skillful and courageous aviator in Southeast Asia. Boedi also learns that Freeberg is in considerable financial difficulty, and is in a legal battle with another aviator, Bob Walters, his partner in purchasing the aircraft now known as RI-002. Walters is scathing in his condemnation, calling Bob a thief and a con man.

# October 1947 — Bangkok

Bob flies two Indonesian aviators to Bangkok, who will purchase RI-003 and fly it back to Jogja. Bob is detained by Thai authorities at the insistence of Dutch diplomats, but is released soon afterward in a tacit recognition of the legitimacy of the new Republic of Indonesia.

Bob flies Halim and Iswandi to Bangkok. They will fly a recently purchased Avro Ansen airplane back to Indonesia, where it will become RI-003. Freeberg is detained by Thai authorities at the request of the Dutch. However, the Thais can find no evidence of wrongdoing, as so release him, to Dutch fury.

# December 1947 — RI-002

During a routine radio contact with Jogja, Boedi is told that Ining and Mas Ded were found dead of gunshot wounds at Ining's house. Muharto reports the incident to Major Primitivo, who accuses Muharto of being a communist and Mas Ded being complicit in Ining ’s death.

# November 1988 — Caltex Office

Cameron interviews Julius Tahija, who admires his writings about the capital market and so is open and opinionated. At the end of the interview, Cameron asks about his experiences as adjudant to General Spoor.

# January 1948 — KNIL Headquarters

Julius witnesses Spoor raging about the news that RI-002 seemingly had assited Espina to smuggle guns into Indonesia. He vows to end the blockade runs by any means nescessary.

# November 1988 — Tanamur Back Bar

Cameron and Julia disagree.

# April 1948 — Manila

At a party in Manila, Muharto is appalled when one of Bob's housemates  
boasts of shooting down own squad leader. He decides to not tell Bob of his plan to smuggle gems into Manila to be traded for sidearms.

At a party in Manila, Muharto is appalled when one of Bob’s housemates boasts of shooting down his own squad leader during the war in Europe. He tells Boedi that he doesn’t think Bob’s friends are entirely *bona fide*, and worries what might happen if Bob tells them.

Boedi not to mention the gem smuggling to Bob, who might tell the roommate. that he will not tell and other general debauchery. He decides to not tell Freeberg about the smuggled gems in case his roommates find out.

# April 1948 — Manila Airport

Filipino commandos enter RI-002 and open a compartment under the floorboard of the flight deck, taking out a bag of gems. But they hear the approach of a guard, and hurry out, leaving the hatch cover slightly ajar.

Muharto and Boedi report to Jogja on the RI-002 radio, then Muharto is the last to leave RI-002. Boedi goes on ahead, Muharto stops to talk with a Philippines army officer waiting in the hanger. Some time later, when all the lights around the hangar have been extinguished, the officer enters RI-002 and emerges a short time later with a small package in his hand.

Major Primitivo Muharto and Boedi report to Jogja on the RI-002 radio, then is the last to leave RI-002. Boedi goes on ahead, Muharto stops to talk with a Philippines army officer waiting in the hanger. Some time later, when all the lights around the hangar have been extinguished, the officer enters RI-002 and emerges a short time later with a small package in his hand.

# April 1948 — Manila Airport

Bob enters the RI-002 cockpit and immediately discerns that someone had been there the previous night. He angrily confronts Muharto.

Bob returns to RI-002 the following morning and is instantly aware that someone had rummaged around his beloved Dakota the previous night. He angrily confronts Muharto, who tells him about the deal with the jewels to buy guns, and adds: “The jewels were entrusted to me by my government,” “They are my sole responsibility. This has nothing to do with you.” Bob replies: “Damn you, Muharto! It has everything to do with me! I’m the captain—responsible for whatever happens on my ship, whatever she carries. If you get caught, I also go to jail!”

# 30 May 1948 — Bukittinggi

The starboard landing gear collapses just as RI-002 is about to take  
off. Nevertheless, Bob and the airstrip crew right the craft,  
repressurize the hydraulics, and take off as Dave Fowler shakes his head  
in dismay.

In Bukittinggi, Dave Fowler looks on in shock as the right-side landing gear collapses just as RI-002 is planning to take off. Bob grins, and says: “You know how it is. 99 times out of a hundred you can get away with it.” Fowler replies: “I guess this was the 100th time.”

Bob and the ground crew jack up the wing on blocks as Bob resets the gear, then walks along the wing checking for cracks. He sees one sizable crack, kneels down to inspect it, then shouts to Fowler that “it will hold”, Bob goes back to the cabin, fires up the engines, and takes off while Dave Fowler shakes his head.

# June 1948 — RI-002 cockpit

During the Soekarno Tour, Bob refuses Soekarno's order to land on what Bob judged to be an unsafe runway. Soekarno insists, saying: "To as I say. I'm the president!" Bob replies, in a measured tone: "Indeed, sir. Down there you are the president. But up here, I'm the captain."

Bob flies low over a town where an important regional leader lives to determine whether he can land RI-002 safely on an overgrown grass airstrip. Bob decides not to risk the safety of his passengers, which infuriates Soekarno. He demands that Bob land on the strip, declaring: “I’m the president!” Bob replies, pointing downward: “Down there, sir, indeed you are the president. But up here, I’m the captain.”

# June 1948 — Sumatra Airfield

Soekarno gives a speech near where RI-002 had landed. Soekarno points to  
Bob resting in the shade with Boedi under a wing and says: "Here is a  
foreigner, but he is on our side."

Soekarno Tour props up support for the independence struggle and to raise money to purchase a presidential aircraft, to be named RI-001.

# November 1948 — Library

Cameron receives a lengthy letter from Dave Fowler through Frank Reuneker. He reads it to Julia.

# September 1948 — Hotel Merdeka

Over whiskey with Fowler, Muharto, and Boedi at Hotel Merdeka, Bob complains about Suryadarma and some of his staff, saying they want this or that but never follow through. He says that many Indonesians (present company excepted) would cut off their nose to spite their face.

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While flying a group of international journalists to Jogja under cover of darkness, Fowler believes he spots fighter planes tailing him while his radio operator hears traffic on Dutch military frequencies. When he looks again, the fighters are gone.