



**Larry Cashman, the
Unscrupulous Schemer**

Chapter 11

Cashman's Revenge

After spending two months in the “Back of the Beyond” bathing in rivers, sleeping on straw mats in villages, getting attacked by leeches, being ambushed by rebels, and nearly dying from toxic traditional medicine elixirs, it will not surprise the reader to learn that I suffered from a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder by the time I returned to Vientiane. To recuperate from this exhausting experience, I descended into prolonged hibernation at my home. This hiatus was spent luxuriating in bed, soaking in hot baths, and occasionally venturing out to dine in French and Italian restaurants, where one could be sure that none of the food on my plate was still moving. It took several months for me to fully recover.

When I finally emerged from isolation, I met Seamus Campbell at the Vientiane Single Malt Club for an evening of whiskey drinking, cigar smoking, and unbridled bullshit. Seamus was in a particularly foul mood, complaining about the useless consultants employed by international development agencies like the World Bank, the UN, and ADB; who were constantly hired by UNDP¹, where Seamus worked. I inquired about the source of his misery.

“Cashman, my friend, I have a new consultant working for me at UNDP. In the pantheon of idiots, losers, malingerers, mountebanks, and immoral lowlifes that I have had the great misfortune to meet in this business over the years, this asshole is hands-down, the absolute worst of the lot; as hard as that may be to fathom,” he moaned.

I checked him right away. “Wait a minute, Seamus,” I said. “There’s some hefty competition for that title. Can he possibly be worse than Ricardo Montepulciano?”

Seamus, to his credit, had to think twice when he heard that name. Ricardo Montepulciano was an Italian malariologist and pedantic blowhard who was hired by the World Health Organization (WHO) to advise the Lao Ministry of Health on ways to control a malaria outbreak occurring in southern Laos. Ricardo was a professor at the University of Bologna who had fancy degrees from the finest European universities. What he didn’t possess, however, was any experience working in a developing country. Prior

¹ UNDP is the United Nations Development Program, which employed Seamus Campbell. See footnote #9 in Chapter 9 for a description of UNDP

to his assignment in Laos, Ricardo had never stepped foot in a country where malaria was either endemic or had ever caused serious health problems for the local population.

For his assignment in Laos Ricardo brought along culturally inappropriate posters and flip charts on malaria that he originally prepared in Italy; and which he subsequently used ad nauseam to explain to his Lao colleagues how one should go about controlling malaria. Lao people do not generally eat pasta, drink wine, and gesticulate wildly like the people depicted in his posters. Mosquitoes in Laos were also not the size of bats like the ones in Ricardo's flip charts. Ricardo lectured at his Lao colleagues as if they were his students in Bologna. After three weeks of this ridiculous nonsense, the Lao government decided that "enough was enough" and threw him out of the country; which was shortly followed by a bonfire lit in the Ministry of Health courtyard to incinerate all of Ricardo's posters and flip charts..

"Ricardo was a nightmare," Seamus admitted. "But, believe it or not, this new guy is even worse." To which I responded, "OK, but is he worse than that lecher and philanderer Lars Eklund?"

Eklund was Seamus' colleague at UNDP who seduced the Thai Ambassador's under age daughter, with whom he proceeded to have a steamy and scandalous affair. When Eklund's wife discovered the affair and learned that Lars and his paramour were planning to fly to Luang Prabang for a sybaritic tryst, she followed him to the airport to literally wring his neck. When she couldn't proceed past immigration barriers, she scaled the fence surrounding the runway to collar him as he boarded the plane. She was eventually apprehended by several Lao police officers and thrown in jail.

Unfazed by his wife's dilemma, Lars proceeded on his trip, where he ate too much spicy Lao papaya salad, which caused a prolapsed rectum from the uncontrollable diarrhea that resulted from this tasty repast. Lars had to be medevac'd to Bangkok, where the Thai ambassador had him arrested upon arrival for statutory rape.

"Lars was a degenerate, there is no question. But I'm telling you, Cashman, this guy is worse than Ricardo or Lars."

Ricardo Montepulciano and Lars Eklund epitomized the human trash that inhabited the international development landscape. If Seamus' new employee was worse than this rabble, I wanted to hear more and Seamus, after consuming copious amounts of Single Malt Whiskey to calm his nerves, was more than happy to oblige.

"This guy is a real asshole. He is a self-righteous, holier-than-thou blowhard who worked for some German religious NGO in the Cambodian refugee camps set up in Thailand years ago and is somehow under the illusion that this experience qualifies him as an international development expert. He is a sanctimonious, supercilious, religious fundamentalist who quotes Bible scripture when pontificating on his mission to save the poor and downtrodden of the world. He is an obsequious pansy who complains all the time about the food, his housing, his salary, and his working conditions. On his last field trip, he demanded a bed with a mattress as well as hot water for his bath, and then he panicked when the electricity went out at 8 PM."

"Well, why don't you just get rid of this clown, Seamus? It sounds like he is making your life miserable."

"I can't because his uncle is a big shot political wallah in the German government, who pulled some strings with UNDP to get the little cretin this job. You know the old-boy crony network in UNDP. This jerk has managed to finagle an official contract, so I will have to put up with him for the next 12 months. And he is not too shy to let me know that, because of his political connections, he can do what he wants without fear of retribution. Saying that he is totally useless is giving him a great deal more credit than he deserves. I wish I could find some excuse to get rid of him."

There were so many creeps and morons working in international development that I didn't give this guy a second thought..... until I heard that he was German, worked for a religious NGO in Germany, and that he had worked in the Cambodian refugee camps in Thailand many moons ago.

"That's strange," I added. "Years ago I had a run-in with an impudent little German prick in Thailand who also worked in the Cambodian refugee camps. He too was employed by a religious NGO based in Germany. He got kicked out of Thailand for his insolence. The little runt blamed me for his misfortune. To get back at me, he had marijuana planted in my household effects shipment when I moved from Bangkok to Jakarta. Then he paid off Thai Customs officials to find the stash so that they could inform the Indonesian government of my indiscretions.² I almost ended up in an Indonesian prison because of him. This whole incident caused me no end of distress and anxiety. If I ever get my hands on this Hun, I'll string him up by his balls. But that was a long time ago."

Seamus was amused by this coincidence. Intrigued by the possibilities, he asked, "I know that was a long time ago, Cashman, but by any chance do you remember the name of that jerk?"

"His name was Gerhard Beckenbauer. I'll never forget that name." When Seamus heard the name, he stopped dead in his tracks.

"Cashman, you're not going to believe this but my new employee has the same name. Unless this is a monumental coincidence, it seems that your old nemesis and my malingering employee are one and the same."



Gerhard Beckenbauer
Cashman's nemesis

Seamus showed me a photo of Beckenbauer, and it was indeed the same guy. When Seamus and I realized what we were dealing with, and the golden opportunity it presented, we immediately came to the same conclusion. We resolved right then and there to do whatever it takes to make Gerhard Beckenbauer's life so miserable that it would shortly accomplish our joint objectives; namely to get Beckenbauer to quit his job while at the same time providing me with a serendipitous opportunity to extract sweet revenge on this royal piece of shit.

It didn't take long for us to devise a workable plan. "For starters, let's send him to the Back of the Beyond in Oudomxay," I proposed delightedly. "If Beckenbauer is such a pansy and prima donna, let's see how he likes eating unrecognizable food, schlepping through the

² See Volume II Chapter 2 of the Cashman Chronicles titled "The Road to Indonesia," for a description of Cashman's ordeal with marijuana in his household effects shipment from Thailand to Indonesia.

mountains on leech-infested trails, sleeping on the floor, shitting in the woods, and drinking Lao whiskey until he's comatose."

"I love it," Seamus replied instantaneously. "But how can we make that happen?"

I was on cruise control now. My devious plan just rolled off my tongue. "You're his supervisor, right? Tell Beckenbauer that UNDP needs to conduct an assessment of the ADB project that is installing a health care system in northern Laos, and you would like him, because of his wealth of experience and expertise, to visit the project sites and prepare a report. I will handle the rest."

"Sounds great!! What else do you have in store for him?" Seamus asked while smiling from ear to ear.

"I'll ask Palomede Jupien to accompany him on the trip. Palomede has been everywhere and seen everything in Laos. He'll take Beckenbauer to the wildest, most inaccessible, most dangerous, and least civilized areas with the fiercest hill tribe people. I'll let the Wild Men of Oudomxay know that we're sending a clueless dolt up there who needs to be schooled on the miseries and irregularities found in the Back of the Beyond. If Beckenbauer survives this trip, he'll be begging you to terminate his contract so that he can leave Laos as fast as possible."

In a matter of days Seamus and I put together what we thought was an excellent plan. When I told Palomede about our scheme, he eagerly jumped on board. The Wild Men of Oudomxay didn't need much convincing either. Sending Beckenbauer up there was like giving red meat to a pack of hungry wolves. They couldn't wait to sink their fangs into him.

When Seamus ordered Beckenbauer to go on the field trip, he initially demurred; but when Seamus told him this order came from the top and they wanted Beckenbauer for the job because of his superior skill set, he immediately acquiesced. When Beckenbauer demanded that he must have access to all of the amenities while on the trip, Seamus reassured him with a wry smile. "Don't worry, Beckenbauer. You will be wined and dined like visiting royalty and enjoy the finest of local accommodations."

The plan called for Palomede and Beckenbauer to be gone for four weeks. Because of the poor telephone network in Laos at the time, we knew that any reports on their progress would be sporadic at best. After the first week we vaguely knew that the two travelers had indeed visited the most remote areas, that Beckenbauer was consuming inordinate amounts of Lao whiskey, and that the Wild Men of Oudomxay were exposing him to their most boorish behavior. Other than that there was radio silence on their whereabouts and adventures.

After two weeks I received a call from Palomede. He had already returned to Vientiane.

"Why are you back so soon? Where is Beckenbauer? How did the trip go?" I inquired.

"So you want to know Beckenbauer's whereabouts....well he is presently in jail up in Oudomxay," Palomede replied nonchalantly, with the satisfied demeanor of a man who had just completed a job well done.

"In jail!!!!" I screamed elatedly. "How the hell did that happen?"

"Meet me at our office tomorrow with Seamus and I'll tell you the whole story."

Seamus and I couldn't wait to hear what happened. We arrived at my office early the next day and proceeded to order some Lao coffee with sweetened condensed milk and French crullers, one of Palomede's favorites, to loosen his tongue. Palomede had a big "shit eating grin" on his face when he entered the room.

"It sounds like you had a successful trip," I began. "We're anxious to hear all about it."

Palomede also seemed eager to begin. "First, my dear friends, let me preface my remarks by saying that Gerhard Beckenbauer is clearly one of the biggest assholes I have ever met. Now I understand why you two hate him with such a passion. And, by the way, he is also a first class pussy. On the flight to Muang Xay³ he let me know that he expected a hotel room with hot water and air conditioning. Apparently he was unaware that there is no electricity in Muang Xay. Accordingly, I obliged by putting him in the Sanxay (pronounced SAN-SIGH) Guest House, which in addition to having no electricity, has no running water, no mattresses on the beds, and no screens on the windows.

"Bounphone, the Chief of the Oudomxay Provincial Health Office, met us at the airport, accompanied by three scurvy-looking staff. Since Beckenbauer can't speak a word of Lao, I told Bounphone, right in front of him, that this was the sucker you wanted schooled. Bounphone rubbed his hands together, like he was about to partake of a sumptuous meal. 'Follow me,' he smiled. 'I have a strange feeling that this will be a great deal of fun.'

"We arrived at Bounphone's home straightaway. There was no furniture, of course, just a mat on the concrete floor, where he motioned for us to sit in a circle. Momentarily, he reappeared carrying a five liter jar of 'Bong Ya,'⁴ the Lao traditional medicine containing various and sundry reptiles and arthropods soaking in copious amounts of Lao-Lau (Lao rice whiskey). If one looked carefully at the jar's contents, it was not difficult to notice a long snake, a tarantula, several scorpions, and a few huge palm beetles floating about in this highly prized local cocktail. It was one of the nastiest mixtures I've ever seen.

"Since Beckenbauer doesn't understand Lao, Bounphone stood right in front of him, pointed to the 'Bong Ya', and said, 'If he drinks enough of this stuff, it will kill him. If you truly want to, we can finish him off tonight.'

"I translated that as 'the Provincial Chief is offering you his finest local brew as a token of his friendship. You will honor him in his home if you drink with him.' Beckenbauer had no choice but to drink up.

"We started drinking at 4 PM. It was great sport watching the Wild Men of Oudomxay beseech, badger, and bully Beckenbauer into drinking more.... and more..... and more. He chucked his cookies when they offered him a scorpion for a snack, and pissed his pants twice. He was suffering acute alcohol toxicity when I dumped him in his room at the Sanxay Guest House a few moments before midnight."



The Sanxay Guest House, Beckenbauer's accommodations in Oudomxay

³ Muang Xay is the capital city of Oudomxay Province

⁴ "Bong Ya" is a highly regarded Lao traditional medicine made from different types of insects and reptiles soaking in Lao rice whiskey. The longer the contents soak in the Lao rice whiskey, the better. Bounphone's "Bong Ya" had reportedly soaked in rice whiskey for six months. Most Lao rice whiskey was consumed within two weeks because of the high demand. Hence Bounphone's "Bong Ya" was considered aged and highly desirable.

“This is great stuff, Palomede,” I interjected. “But how did Beckenbauer wind up in jail?”

“I’ll get to that in a minute. Let me continue.

“The next morning we headed towards the mountains at around 7 AM. Beckenbauer was still paralyzed from his night of drinking when we literally poured him into the back of the pickup truck. Beckenbauer may have done you a bad turn in in Thailand, Cashman, but if you could have seen his misery on that seven hour trip in the back of a pickup truck, bouncing over the mountains on rutted roads to Pakbeng while he recovered from acute alcohol poisoning, it was sweet revenge. He was reeling and moaning during the entire trip.

“For the next week, Beckenbauer was exposed to all of the hardships and indignities found in the remote areas of Laos. You should have seen his face when the villagers in Ban Kheng gave him a barbecued rat on a skewer for his lunch. They didn’t even bother to skin it. Or when our truck got stuck in the mud and Beckenbauer had to get out and push. His entire body was covered with mud from the spinning tires, and he had to jump into the nearest river to bathe. After a week of this, he was begging our team to return to Muang Xay.

“When we finally returned to Muang Xay, however, Bounphone had an idea for another prank. He would take Beckenbauer to the discotheque, have the usual entourage of young ladies brought to the table, then have the police raid the ‘theque’ and arrest Beckenbauer for consorting with underage women. Bounphone knew all the police in Muang Xay and they agreed to hold Beckenbauer overnight in jail to give him a scare, and then release him the next day.

“But the strangest thing happened at the ‘theque.’ When they brought the girls to the table, Beckenbauer asked if they could bring him one of the young boys serving as waiters instead. Always anxious to accommodate the sexual preferences of their customers, the ‘theque’ management brought over one of the waiters for Beckenbauer. When the police raided the ‘theque’ as planned and found Beckenbauer with a young boy, they arrested him for consorting with an underage male. That’s a pretty serious offense in Laos and even Bounphone couldn’t get him out of jail the next day. When I left Oudomxay, Bounphone thought he could have Beckenbauer out of jail within several days, at which time he would send him back to Vientiane.”

Seamus and I were delighted with the outcome of Palomede’s escapade. Not only was Gerhard Beckenbauer experiencing the hardships of northern Laos, but he was now also languishing in a Lao prison. Our scam was working perfectly.



Beckenbauer languished in this Lao Prison

But there was no sense for us to stop now. Seamus and I decided to take this scam to the next level. We would get two of our confederates in Laos to pose as senior UNDP officials from the regional office in Bangkok, who would confront Beckenbauer for his malfeasance when he returned to Vientiane and scare him to death. With the rogues' gallery of misfits and charlatans masquerading as our colleagues in Laos, finding two such individuals would not be difficult.

Pete Youngman and Toby Suykerbuck would be perfect for the next caper.⁵ Pete Youngman, the brawny South African who looked like a gangster, would play the UNDP bad cop who would badger, threaten, and menace Beckenbauer. Toby Suykerbuck, the mild-mannered Belgian, would play the UNDP good cop who would coddle, comfort, and console Beckenbauer. The fact that neither worked for UNDP was no concern of ours. When they were done with him, either Beckenbauer would quit or he would be on his way back to Oudomxay for another round with the Wild Men. When I proposed this gambit to Pete and Toby, both agreed immediately.

Several days later, after Beckenbauer was released from jail and was returning to Vientiane, Seamus Campbell, with Pete and Toby in tow impersonating UNDP fat cats, was at the airport to meet him as he disembarked from the plane. They whisked him to the airport departure lounge, where I was disguised unobtrusively as a tourist heading to Luang Prabang. They sat Beckenbauer down close to me so I could observe the proceedings. It also allowed me to confirm that he was the same snake in the grass with whom I had a run-in years ago in Thailand.

Seamus spoke first. "I don't know if you realize it or not but you're in big trouble, Beckenbauer. Your dalliance with that young boy and subsequent arrest has created a diplomatic incident for UNDP.⁶ These two gentlemen from the UNDP Regional Office in Bangkok had to come to Vientiane to intercede at the highest levels of the Lao government to get you out of jail. If it were up to me, I would have left you to rot there, but your uncle in Germany insisted that we try to get you out. What do you have to say for yourself?" Toby and Pete were decked out in their finest toady-wallah suits for this masquerade.

"This is all a mistake, a misunderstanding," Beckenbauer blabbered. "That boy was just sitting next to me taking a short rest while clearing our table when the police barged in. I was concerned he was dehydrated, so I offered him a drink."

"That's a lie," Pete Youngman shouted. "We have five eyewitnesses who say you spent two hours with that boy with your hand between his legs."

Pretending to be insulted by Beckenbauer's apparent willingness to prevaricate, Pete rushed toward Beckenbauer, grabbed him by his shirt collar, stood him up, and screamed in his face, "One more lie like that and I will twist your neck so hard your lips will become your eyebrows, then I will sew your ass to your face."

Beckenbauer was trembling when Pete put him down. Pete continued brusquely. "You are finished with UNDP. Pack your bags and get on the next flight back to Germany," Pete shrieked, accompanied by his most frightening scowl. Pete had no authority to do that, of course, since this was all a hoax, but it was fun watching the terrified look on Beckenbauer's face.

⁵ See Volume 2 Chapter 9 "The Wild Men of Oudomxay," where Pete Youngman and Tobu Suykerbuck were introduced.

⁶ In fact, there was no incident because this was all a ruse. Beckenbauer's arrest was never reported to the Lao government or UNDP. A clandestine bribe to the Lao police in Oudomxay kept the entire matter confidential.

That's when Toby Suykerbuck, the apparent good cop, stepped in. "Let's all calm down now. This affair has caused everyone enough trouble, especially our friend Beckenbauer here. There is a better way to resolve this problem to everyone's satisfaction without creating more diplomatic fallout."

Toby proposed that we give Beckenbauer another chance. "I suggest that Mr. Beckenbauer should return to Oudomxay with Palomede and complete his assignment. If he can patch things up with Bounphone and the provincial authorities, mollify the police, and produce a decent report, I will personally intercede with the big shots at UNDP so Beckenbauer can remain in Laos." I exalted in this delicious irony, as Toby didn't work for UNDP nor did he know anyone at a senior level in UNDP.

Beckenbauer bought the whole package and, with a sigh of relief, happily accepted this alternative. Then Seamus Campbell delivered the *piece de resistance*. "I will agree to this arrangement on one condition — that Beckenbauer can repair our relationship with the Oudomxay provincial government officials, which is in tatters because of his gross improprieties. The best way to do that is to treat them to an evening at the 'theque.' There is nothing they like better than relaxing and dancing at this local waterhole. To guarantee that this is done correctly, Beckenbauer, I will even provide you with the money to take everyone to the 'theque'."



The counterfeit bills that sealed Beckenbauer's fate

And with that, Seamus pulled out six counterfeit \$100 bills that he had received as souvenirs from the UNDP project aimed at finding and destroying North Korean counterfeit money,⁷ and handed them over to Beckenbauer. "This should be enough to ensure that everybody has a great time," he said....and to seal Beckenbauer's fate. With that gratuitous gesture, Seamus Campbell pounded the last nail into Gerhard Beckenbauer's coffin.

Much to his consternation, Beckenbauer was on the flight back to Oudomxay that same afternoon, with Palomede Jupien tagging along as his handler. I asked Palomede to call me as soon as Beckenbauer got into some trouble. It didn't take long. Three days later, I got a call from Palomede. I could sense the delight in his voice.

"Cashman, you and Seamus are going to love learning what has happened to your friend Beckenbauer! When we arrived in Muang Xay, I took Beckenbauer right over to see Bounphone, whom I alerted in advance of our imminent arrival. Bounphone played his role perfectly. He feigned offense at

⁷ Seamus had used the souvenir counterfeit US \$100 bills on a previous occasion, when he and Cashman traveled to Oudomxay to negotiate the construction of hospitals and health centers. See Vol. 2, Chapter 9, "The Wild Men of Oudomxay."

Beckenbauer for getting arrested and gave him a tongue lashing in Lao for his impudence, which I translated word for word with great amusement. You know how fearsome Bounphone can be.”

I had seen Bounphone at his menacing best many times. His appearance was terrifying, in no small measure due to his huge beer belly, small pointed head, and the oozing hemangioma under his mandible which distorted his face. If a coward like me was scared to death the first time I met Bounphone,⁸ a pansy like Beckenbauer had surely left some brown stains on his underwear after a Bounphone lambasting.

I let Palomede continue. “Beckenbauer was appropriately chastened by Bounphone’s harangue. Being the little snake that he is, Beckenbauer sucked up to Bounphone with prodigious apologies to ameliorate Bounphone’s presumed ire. Promising that there would be no further transgressions on his part, Beckenbauer became predictably obsequious and invited Bounphone and the other Wild Men of Oudomxay for a night at the ‘theque’ the following evening to show his appreciation for their understanding.

“Well, Gerhard Beckenbauer was at his groveling best the next night at the ‘theque.’ Unlike his previous visit, this time he entertained a female companion. He made sure the glasses were always filled with cheap whiskey. He danced the Lam Wong so much he was actually getting good at it. When it came time to pay the bill, he generously offered to pick up the tab. He laid the six counterfeit \$100 bills on the table like a high roller.



Lao police raiding the discotheque after Beckenbauer passed counterfeit \$100 bills

“About 15 minutes later, the police raided the ‘theque’ and arrested Beckenbauer for passing counterfeit bills. I hadn’t told Bounphone about this part of the plan, so he was as surprised as everyone else when Beckenbauer was carted away. It seems that the ‘theque’ had a previous incident with guests passing counterfeit money,⁹ so now it scrutinizes all payments made with US dollars.”

“Where is Beckenbauer now?” I inquired.

“Bounphone checked with the police, who informed him that Beckenbauer had been shipped to the Ministry of State Security in Vientiane for interrogation. When they are finished with him, they will probably deposit him in a Lao prison for an indefinite period.”

⁸ See Volume 2 Chapter 9 “The Wild Men of Oudomxay” for Cashman’s first meeting with Bounphone.

⁹ See Volume 2, Chapter 9 “The Wild Men of Oudomxay” where Cashman and Seamus paid the bill at the “theque” with counterfeit \$100 bills and barely escaped with their hides intact.

Seamus and I were ecstatic to hear this news. Our plan had worked perfectly. Gerhard Beckenbauer was history and his ignominious arrest and detention was sweet revenge for me. But Seamus and I wanted to see the little snake squirm a bit more.

“I have an idea for the *tour de force*. Let’s pay him a visit at the Ministry of State Security,” I offered.

“That’s impossible!!” Seamus replied emphatically. “The Ministry of State Security is the Lao Communist Party’s inner sanctum. It is an impenetrable fortress.”

“Have no fear, Seamus. I have two buddies in the Ministry of State Security. With a well-placed bottle of good whiskey or two, I think they will bring us in.”

I had met Seng and Keo at the Ministry of State Security, when they interviewed me to obtain my official clearance to work in Laos.¹⁰ After we settled outstanding issues at the interview with an appropriate bribe, Seng, Keo, and I became good buddies. From time to time we would go out drinking, with me picking up the tab, of course. It was advantageous to have friends in the Ministry of State Security. You never knew when you would need them in a place like Laos. Well I needed their assistance now.

When I went to see Seng and Keo with my proposal, I brought each a bottle of expensive whiskey. Only this time I remembered to put a \$50 bill in each whiskey box to enhance their appreciation and to assure their acquiescence. When they saw the \$50, they smiled as if to say, “Cashman, you’ve finally learned your lesson.”¹¹ With a bottle of whiskey and fifty bucks in their pockets, they happily agreed to bring Seamus and me to see Beckenbauer in the Ministry of State Security detention center. We brought Toby Suykerbuck and Pete Youngman along for good measure.

Beckenbauer was sitting handcuffed and despondent on a chair in an interrogation room, not dissimilar to the room where I was interviewed by Seng and Keo when I first arrived in Laos. Toby, Pete, and I sat behind the two-way mirror to watch the proceedings as Seamus entered the room.

“You are a fucking disgrace, Beckenbauer,” Seamus shouted. “First you were consorting with young boys, now you’re passing counterfeit bills! Your ass is



The interrogation room at the Lao Ministry of State Security

¹⁰ See Volume 2 Chapter 9 “The Wild Men of Oudomxay” for Cashman’s interview at the Ministry of State Security with Seng and Keo, two Lao Communist Party apparatchiks who became Cashman’s good friends.

¹¹ See Volume 2 Chapter 9 “The Wild Men of Oudomxay.” During Cashman’s interview for his clearance by the Lao government, Seng and Keo were incredulous that Cashman brought whiskey into India without the good sense to include a monetary bribe in the whiskey boxes when they were inspected by the Indian customs officials.

in the wringer and not even your uncle can save you now. It looks like you will be spending a long time in a Lao prison.”

At first Beckenbauer was excited when he saw Seamus, as if redemption and liberation were possibly at hand. After receiving Seamus’ reprimand, any expectation of deliverance faded from Beckenbauer’s miserable visage.

“Are you out of your mind?” Beckenbauer screamed. “You gave me those bills. Didn’t you know they were counterfeit?”

“How dare you insinuate that I gave you counterfeit bills. You’re not only a counterfeiter. You’re a liar too.”

Exasperated by Seamus’ intransigence, Beckenbauer retorted, “Well, those two senior UNDP officials from Bangkok are witnesses. They will confirm that you gave me the money and I’ll claim that I had no idea it was counterfeit. You’re the one who will be in big trouble, Seamus.”

“You mean these two guys?” Seamus replied as he motioned for Pete and Toby to enter the room. They were no longer dressed in their UNDP finest. Rather they wore shorts, sandals, and tank tops, their customary Vientiane attire.

Watching Beckenbauer’s jaw drop when Toby and Pete entered the room was worth the price of admission. Then Seamus addressed our two accomplices. “This loser says I gave him some counterfeit \$100 bills and you were both witnesses. Do you know what he’s talking about?”

“I never met this little douche-bag before,” Pete said. “And I hope I’ll never see him again,” was Toby’s rejoinder.

Beckenbauer could see something was amiss, but he continued, “You can’t do that. I will have the German government contact UNDP in Bangkok where you both work and they will force you to recount what transpired.”

“UNDP? Bangkok? What is this idiot talking about, Seamus?” Toby responded. “Neither of us has ever worked for UNDP. I didn’t even know that UNDP has an office in Bangkok. And if I did, that’s the last place you would find me. There are better things to do in Bangkok than hang out at a UNDP Office.”

A look of horror overtook Beckenbauer as the realization of his predicament began to sink in. Then Seamus added, “And there’s someone else I want you to meet, Beckenbauer.”

That’s when I entered the room. “Hello Gerhard old boy,” I greeted him in the most condescending manner. “I haven’t seen you since you were tossed out of Thailand 16 years ago.”

He recognized me immediately. “Cashman!!!! What are you doing here?”

“I am doing the same thing you did when you had marijuana placed in my household effects shipment to Indonesia and alerted Thai Customs officials. Did you think you were going to get away with that? My dear friend, whether you realize it or not, it’s now payback time and you are in deep shit. I don’t normally make predictions but I foresee some jail time in your future. I hope you rot in a Lao prison.”

When he saw me, Beckenbauer understood that this whole affair, from the misery he encountered on his field trip to Oudomxay to his arrest at the “theque” for consorting with the waiter to his arrest for passing counterfeit bills, was a sting operation, and that he was the object of the sting. Beckenbauer was furious he had fallen for the scam.

“You won’t get away with this. I’ll tell the police what happened and you’ll all be in trouble. I want to speak with somebody at the UNDP Office. I want to contact the German Embassy,” he demanded.

“You can speak with whomever you want,” I interrupted. “The only people who know anything about our little caper are in this room, and we’ll deny having any knowledge of it. You have been charged with committing a serious sex offense as well as passing counterfeit money, and are being detained in a high security facility by the Lao Communist Party. Who do you think they’ll believe?”

Beckenbauer’s horror at his predicament was soon replaced by despair. Realizing that there really was no escape route, the little runt started to grovel. “Cashman, don’t let me go to a Lao jail. I could die there. Have you no compassion?”

“Sure Gerhard. I have about as much compassion as you did when your little stunt planting marijuana in my shipment nearly landed me in a Thai or Indonesian jail. They’re even worse than a Lao jail. At least in a Lao jail, they allow one hour per day to dance the Lam Wong with your fellow inmates. And according to Palomede Jupien, you have become quite adroit at dancing the Lam Wong. You’ll soon become a popular item in jail.”

“Palomede was in on it too?” he gasped. “He was my last hope.”

When Beckenbauer realized how completely he was duped, and that he would be left to his fate, he became irate. He screamed expletives and obscenities at us as we bid him adieu and left the room. And then Seamus Campbell stuck his head back in the room and said, “By the way, Beckenbauer, you’re fired. And you owe me six hundred dollars, which I will have deducted from your last pay check.”

Unfortunately, Gerhard Beckenbauer did not rot in a Lao prison. But he did spend a year in jail in Laos while his toady uncle and the German government negotiated his release. The Lao government eventually deported him back to Germany on the condition that he was blacklisted from all international organizations ad infinitum and that he never return to Laos. The German government did prosecute his worthless ass for passing counterfeit bills, but the jail where he ended up was like a country club compared to a Lao prison.

Several apparatchiks from the Lao Communist Party came to speak with Seamus and me about Beckenbauer. My buddies, Seng and Keo, alerted me in advance of their visit. We had whiskey and Lao-Lau on hand when they arrived, which were consumed in abundance prior to any discussions. We denied everything, of course, which was fine with them. By the time we finished drinking and bullshitting, they forgot why they had come to talk to us in the first place. The whole thing was handled Lao style.

Seamus and I, however, were pretty happy with this outcome. Our little ploy had achieved our joint objective — Beckenbauer was no longer making Seamus’ life miserable working for UNDP and I had extracted sweet revenge on a truly despicable individual who had once tried his best to screw Larry Cashman. And as the avid reader already knows, nobody should mess with Larry Cashman! This threat usually backfires on mebut at times it actually works out in real life!