

PART 4:

ACT 6: ARRIVAL

November 1978. Congressman Leo Ryan arrives with a delegation of Concerned Relatives, an NBC camera crew and several news reporters to Guyana to investigate allegations of abuse in Jonestown.

Jones hosts an event at the central pavilion to welcome his guests, however, amid the “celebration”, one member, Vernon Gosey covertly slips a note meant for Ryan to Don Harris, a NBC reporter, requesting his urgent help in leaving the Temple with another member, Monica Bagbey.

Tension rises as the community finds out that there’s a way to escape. Ryan’s delegation hurriedly leaves on November 18 after Ryan emerges with blood on his shirt, clearly stabbed. Fifteen Temple members seized their chance to leave, and Jim Jones didn’t even react, sending ripples of fear across the community.

Voices echoed that there was no need for concern on Jonestown’s PA system, while aides of the Peoples Temple prepared a large metal tub with Flavour Aid laced with countless poisons.

As the members of Ryan’s delegation boarded the two airplanes, Jonestown’s armed guards arrived and began firing at them, while Larry Layton, one of the Members who had “left” drew a weapon and began shooting inside the other airplane, a Cesana.

Five people were killed at the airstrip: Congressman Ryan, Harris, Brown, *San Francisco Examiner* photographer Greg Robinson, and Temple member Patricia Parks.

However, future congresswoman Jackie Speier, NBC crew members and newspaper reporters survived, with many renegades escaping into the jungle for survival.

ACT 7: HORROR

Later the same day, Jones is informed that his task force was unable to kill all of Ryan’s party. Jones concluded that the escapees would tell America of the attack and the military would besiege Jonestown. The atmosphere was already heavy, as if the clouds knew what was foreshadowing before the announcement even came.

A message crackled through the loudspeakers.

Everyone should meet at the central pavilion. Immediately.

People gathered around the central pavilion, sensing and knowing something had gone very wrong. Indeed, something WAS very wrong. Families kept close together and rumours spread like wildfire about what may have caused the impromptu meeting.

Jones arrives with a voice so calm that members' fears are instantly confirmed. He tells them that Congressman Ryan was dead and that America would soon come to take over; destroy their precious home. He told them that "revolutionary suicide" was the best solution. That there was no future for them except the one he had planned.

Some tried to reason with him. Christine Miller tried to convince to try something else; going into hiding, escaping, anything else than doing the unimaginable. But Jones insisted, telling them that this was the best for them and that remaining alive was more frightening than any other possibility. At that moment, they all realised that what was going to happen was not a **choice - but predetermined destiny**.

Armed guards surrounded them, sealing their fate and serving them with cups that drained all hope. Their worst nightmare played before their eyes, and there was nothing anyone could do about it.

Survivors later described the scene as a moment of turmoil and pain - with people acting out of coercion and years of conditioning to believe that disobeying Jones' rules led to doom. The central pavilion that represented belonging and unity had transformed into a gruelling site where humanity was stripped of its greatest treasure. Where everything was destroyed

Tim Carter, sent on an errand that could indisputably save his life, heard the sounds of screams and sobs on his way out and when he returned, the sound of silence echoed through him worse than noise would ever do. Just 24 hours and everyone was gone.

"I can honestly say that never once in my mind did it occur we're all going to die," he said. "Because 24 hours after that dinner and show, literally 24 hours later, everybody was dead."

At sundown, 918 lives were lost, including over 300 children, at the hands of one man - a community that once hoped for a better life suddenly shattered, families torn apart in a single evening, and a nation left in shock at such a great loss.

ACT 8: REFLECTIONS

Jonestown isn't just another story of human tragedy but a stark reminder of how trust can be manipulated when power goes unchecked. Nine hundred and eighteen people - all seeking belonging, safety or a new start, lost their lives mercilessly because one man's desire for power and control went too far. This challenges us to ask ourselves: How do we recognise when guidance becomes manipulation? How do we protect ourselves and our communities from blind trust and obedience?

A few people managed to survive, escaping into the jungle or leaving before the final orders were made. Most of them, including Tim Carter, lost their families and spent their lives sharing their stories, warning others of unchecked power and unquestioned authority.

Remembering Jonestown isn't just about looking back-it is about honoring the lives lost and learning from the past to ensure that such mistakes are never repeated again. That we have a shared responsibility in protecting our communities and ensuring that power never goes beyond the limits of accountability and trust.