Valparaiso to Concepcion

A door opens and the silhouette of a man enters a darkened apartment.

A light comes on.

Steve Piasecki leaves the door ajar as starts walking down the short hallway toward the living room.

The living room, rectangular in shape, is more like an office than a living room. A gray Whitman sofa purchased at Raymour & Flanigan in Springfield sits along the long wall to the right. Steve picked it out because it’s 90 inches long. Therefore, he can stretch out and take a nap on it without folding his legs.

A coffee table sits in front of the sofa. But the sofa and coffee table are the only pieces of actual living room furniture in the room – unless you count the big-screen TV mounted high on the wall on the opposite side of the room.

To the left of the TV screen a desk butts up against the wall. A file cabinet sits to the right of the desk and a tall bookcase sits to the left of the desk.

A look at the bookcase leaves little doubt about Steve’s focus ─ *In Cold Blood* ... *The Godfather* ... *The Carpetbaggers* ... *Born to Be Wild* ... *Helter Skelter* ... *Silence of the Lambs* ... *Compulsion* ... *God’s Pocket* ... *Mitigating Circumstances* ... *Rosemary’s Baby* ... *Cape Fear* ... *Nightmares in Pink* ... *The Black Dahlia* ... *Mr. Majestyk* ... *Glitz* ... *The Adventurers* ... and *The Valachi Papers*.

A black leather executive chair, the kind that both leans back and swivels, sits in front of the desk and completes the workstation.

Steve’s imagination is still running wild. He wants to rekindle what he overheard from his rider while the details remain fresh in his mind. So he goes right to the executive chair and sits down. A printer and a laptop sit on the desktop, along with a standalone twenty-two-inch computer monitor.

Steve opens the laptop and both screens come alive. Next, he opens Excel and creates a new file “drug clues.” Then he complies a list as he recalls one detail after another.

* ship left Chile
* from Concepcion
* yesterday - date?
* arrived Valparaiso
* today - date?
* how long to get ready?
* 13 days - date?
* 6,000 kilos ready in 12 days - date?
* ready for what?
* Villanova Center shopping center
* Tesoros de Mexico
* Mexican drug cartel?
* which one?

The list gives him a lot to do.

He goes online to Google Chrome. He doesn’t like Google, but it’s usually the best browser for his purposes.

The first item on his list is “ship left Chile.”

He types “chile geography” into the browser.

When Google responds, he clicks on “maps” and a map of Chile appears on the screen. It’s a long, narrow country

The next item on his list is “from Concepcion” but he doesn’t see Concepcion on the map. He clicks the plus sign to enlarge the map but still doesn’t see Concepcion. Two more clicks on the plus sign to enlarge the map twice more – but still no Concepcion.

“What the fuck,” he mumbles.

He closes that tab, opens a new tab and types “concepcion chile” – and there it is.

This map shows Concepcion about halfway between the southern tip of Chile and its northern border with Peru. To the left of the map are several photographs of Concepcion. Underneath the photos, text points out that Concepcion is a city in central Chile and that it’s part of the most heavily industrialized region in the country.

Although it wasn’t much of a stretch, Steve’s hunch was correct. Concepcion is a city in Chile.

The next item on his list is “yesterday - date?”

He double checks the calendar, then opens Word and types “Ship left Chile from Concepcion on TUE MAR 26” on a new file.

Next on the Excel list is “arrived Valparaiso.”

He types “distance from concepcion to valparaiso” into his keypad and a map appears showing a straight line between the two cities – 273 miles apart by air. Valparaiso is another seaport in Chile, north of Concepcion and just below the Peruvian border. Due to the nearly straight configuration of Chile’s coastline at that point, the line between Concepcion and Valparaiso looks to be pretty much the same distance by air or by sea.

He adds “Ship arrived in Valparaiso on WED MAR 27” to the Word file, then “273 miles from Concepcion to Valparaiso” underneath.

After he inputs those three entries he’s looking at:

1. “Ship left Chile from Concepcion on TUE MAR 26
2. Ship arrived in Valparaiso on WED MAR 27
3. 273 miles from Concepcion to Valparaiso”

He types “speed of container ships” into the keypad and Google responds with “between 16 and 25 knots per hour.” He types “knots to mph” and a conversion chart pops up. A quick calculation gives him a range between 18 and 28 miles per hour.

Using the calculator on his phone, he averages those two speeds and gets 23 miles per hour. He divides the 273 miles between Concepcion and Valparaiso by 23 miles per hour and estimates that a container ship can easily sail from Concepcion to Valparaiso in around 12 hours.

That verifies what he thinks he heard. The ship left Concepcion yesterday and arrived in Valparaiso today.

He clicks the minus sign twice and reduces the size of the map until he can see the northward progression of South America from Chile – to Peru – to the small country of Ecuador – on to Colombia – and all the way up to the Panama Canal. If a cocaine shipment is coming to Philadelphia by sea, the ship must pass through the Panama Canal.

He leans back in his chair and stares at the map. He starts to picture the ship’s path and something jumps right out at him. It’s almost 4,000 miles between Concepcion and Cali. That’s what the 13 days to get ready must be about. They have 13 days to get the 6,000 kilos of cocaine ready before the ship arrives in Cali.