

DARK STREAM First Draft 25.06.2010

By

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Based on an original idea by Steff Gruber

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INT. NIGHT - JOE'S VILA / FLASH FORWARD (ELLIPSE)

HAND HEALD CAMERA - CARTER'S POV:

Armed with a pistol, agent CARTER (55) creeps by night through an empty, bombed out villa of the late colonial period (1935ish). Eerie music like that of an old-fashioned fairground organ can be heard with a lot of radio interference. The sound is like a girl's ballet box music that is also creepy and dangerous. This is caused by a radio signal on short wave, so as to keep the frequency open. This motif, a sequence of electronic notes from The SWEDISH RHAPSODY, repeats itself in an endless loop until it is interrupted, and a young girl's voice reads out numbers in groups of five.

GIRLS VOICE ON RADIO
23675 67333 43454 77676 23555
77656 80324 03453 ...

The sound contributes significantly to the strange tense atmosphere.

CARTER
(as if giving an order)
Joe! I know you are here!

He is not requesting his company, he is as if calling a subordinate officer. He pushes a door open, his arm outstretched holding his right wrist with his left hand to steady it as he surveys the room. The monotonous voice reading numbers becomes suddenly louder. The green Magic Eye of the radio receiver can be seen gleaming in the darkness. The scant light illuminates a teenage girl (LITTLE GIRL), who is lying on a simple wooden bed of native design beside the radio. It is impossible to make out whether she is dead or sleeping. Suddenly Carter is attacked from behind. JOE (JOEL CROSS, 32) presses a pistol into the back of his neck and yells,

JOE
The horror, the horror!

Carter drops the gun to the floor. Joe's mad laughter echoes through the empty villa. It is the laughter of a maniac.

EXT. NIGHT - SMALL STREAM

BOAT TRAVELING, CAMERA ON THE PROW. It is dark, it is night, the screen is black for the first few seconds until waves can be made out here and there. The sound of the outboard motor of a not 100% properly functioning engine of a small Mekong barge can be heard. Behind this popular Khmer music (haunting song of Sansi Samouth or better, female singer such as Sok Srei Sothea) sounds distantly, reaching as far as the boat.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE)

I admit I wasn't expecting Joe's attack. It scared me to death. Sure, we knew that he had gone completely nuts. And it was absolutely clear that he was expecting me. But who might have warned him - I didn't have the slightest idea...

The rising full moon is now in the center of the picture. Isolated palm trees, seen in outline, glide past on the river bank. The boat is being steered by a white man (BART). A second man crouching in the bow (Joe) can be made out. He appears to be part of the boat.

MAIN TITLE: **DARK STREAM**

CAMERA LOOKING BACKWARD. Bart smokes a cigarette kept dangerously near the fuel tank, resting his left arm over the rudder control. The engine sputters and runs out of gas, so he restarts it after a few efforts. Continuing, Bart peers ahead looking for obstacles. He pulls up the engine to avoid a fishing net. When he sees the shapes and sounds of people ahead he turns off the engine. We hear only the sound of insects and movement through the water.

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE)

...my instructions were to eliminate him. The CIA had found out that he transmitted misinformation about targets.

3 **EXT. EARLY MORNING - FLOATING VILLAGE - TITLE SEQUENCE**

BOAT TRAVELING, CAMERA LOOKING SIDEWAYS. A floating village is waking up. Women and girls dress, wash dishes, water plants, hang clothes out to dry. We hear growing activity: dogs growling, chickens clucking, babies crying, music on radios, hammers, mothers yelling after children, little birds tweeting, and many roosters calling. In the distance we hear the put-put of outboard engines.

The CREDIT TITLES proceed . Meter after meter of fish fillets are being laid out to dry on roof and barge tops. A man creates a fishing net, holding it between his toes. A nine-year-old girl sits at the prow of a wooden boat. She single paddles her younger sister, dressed in white blouse and blue pleated skirt, to school. All the women have long pony-tails. Larger boats full of things to sell (watermelons, potted flowers, live chickens in cages hanging off stern of boat) are moved by pilot standing up at the stern using a long oar.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE)
 ...that had had catastrophic effects. This was war and the penalty for someone who changed sides or run away, there was only one answer. Even so, when he disarmed me and put the gun to my head, I knew instinctively that I was not really in danger. He had other plans for me...

The women wear conical hats, colorful baggy pants and mismatched shirts. Some have scarves across their faces and long rubber gloves on.

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE)
 In early 1973 there is a state of emergency in Cambodia. The United States have officially ended the Vietnam War. At the same time, the US Air Force has begun the most severe bombings of their four-year-long attacks on Cambodia.
 The meanwhile strengthened communist rebel group, the Khmer Rouge, already control a large portion of the rural areas. Many rural inhabitants are fleeing to the cities out of fear of the bombs and the Khmer Rouge. The largest area of reception is the rapidly growing capital city of Phnom Penh.

4 **EXT. DAY - PNH - MARKET**

CAMERA ON ROOF TOP. Busy market activity in the over-crowded capital city of Phnom Penh, packed with refugees. Tents of canvass, lean-toos, public spaces converted to refugee camps. From a roof we observe Joe as he squats to examines local vegetables and dried fish at a road level stall being sold by teenage girls and women. He buys some and places them in his large locally-made woven bag. Then he stands and passes a stall where new military uniforms are being sold. Among the articles on sale are leather boots, camouflage jackets and trousers, bayonets and even a rifle. Salesmen gesture and call out to him, but he is oblivious to their solicitations.

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE)
 ...In the sixties Joe had come to Cambodia when everyone was still living in peace. Then, the neutral state the Kingdom of Cambodia had kept itself out of
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE) (cont'd)
 the wars in Indochina. Joe had worked as an ethnologist, researching the customs of the Phnong in the North-East. He lived with them. He became their friend and helper. He even married a local Khmer girl. Things had changed since then...

Two Khmer men (CIA INFORMERS) dressed in tropical weight suits and slightly-out-of-date tie widths stand at a distance from Joe drinking with straws little duong kra-op (sweet 'virgin coconuts') that fit snugly in their big hands. Joe doesn't notice him. One of the Khmer men sees Joe and taps the other on the back of the hand with his free hand. When he gets the attention of the other man he purses his lips [to 'notes': Cambodian polite way of pointing] in the direction of Joe. Joe doesn't notice them. The men exchange a few words, after which one of the two drives goes off on a motorcycle.

5

EXT. DAY - PNH - MARKET

MEDIUM SHOTS. Joe continues on shopping, as if this is a regular routine for him. In the crowd we see another Caucasian man. He is about 35 years-of-age, well-groomed, wears wire rim eye-glasses and in his shirt is a pocket-organizer with multiple pens. He looks like a 'fish out of water', even a little scared. He stops mid-stride looking worried and consults a map and continues. Joe is coming in his direction. The man cheers up upon seeing him and approaches Joe.

MIKE
 (all smiles) Hi, Do you live here?

JOE
 (avoiding someone bumping into him as they pass)
 If you call this 'living'.

MIKE
 (looking at his shopping)
 You don't have a maid? I thought all foreigners here have staff.

JOE
 (not willing to go into it)
 It's a long story.

MIKE
 Want to go for a beer?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

I have a better idea... (looking at him closer) You're not a homo are you?

MIKE

Hell no!

They walk together. Mike looks excited.

JOE

Welcome to Cambodia. What's your name?

MIKE

Michael. My friends call me 'Mike'.

JOE

I've got something to show you Mike. Got enough money on you for a good time?

Mike nods.

JOE

So, what do you do Mike?

MIKE

Air traffic control at Pochentong.

JOE

The voice in the Tower?

We hear the loud and deep hum of a big propelled aircraft. Mike automatically looks up.

MIKE

(to himself)

A C-130 VNAF, thats the South Vietnames Army...

(looking at Joe)

Sort of. It's called TAILPIPE BRAVO and we do the traffic coordination between the Army aircrafts and the private operated Ricelifts. (wipes his brow with the sleeve of his shirt) Geez, it's hot huh?

JOE

Yes. We have two seasons here - way too hot and dusty, and too hot and flooded. Hey, it's not very far but why don't we take a cyclo? I'm a little short so I don't usually take taxis...

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

How much to the beer place?

They pass a shrine where locals are offering lotus stems and incense.

JOE

Oh, you can get a lot more than beer where I have in mind. (Joe calls over two cyclos.)

Got two 500 Riel notes on you?

Mike gives him some red notes. The bicycle cyclos are in good condition and pedaled by old men in with very strong-looking legs. One has sunglasses. When Joe gets in he places the full bag at his feet. Joe and Mike continue talking as they cruise along side by side at a slow speed.

JOE

You stay at a good hotel?

MIKE

No way! I stay at the airport. We almost never come into town. Too risky.

JOE

Phnom Penh isn't dangerous.

MIKE

Getting into town sure is. I came in a rice convoy because we had to get some Embassy stuff done today. And we never travel at night. Too many Commie snipers. I have to be back at fourteen-hundred.

JOE

Plenty of time.

Mike sees an old lady releasing sparrows from a cage to a family of locals who have paid her to do so.

MIKE

(eagerly) Hey lets' set some birds free!

JOE

For not a lot of money you can have a lot more fun than that. Anyway, they're fed opium so they have to come back in a couple of hours. You wouldn't want to encourage the giving of narcotics to wild animals would you Mike?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

No, I guess not.

JOE

You direct all those big jets
that fly in here?

MIKE

Yes - without them - no food. The
good boys fly in 40'000 tones of
rice a day.

They turn down a residential street.

JOE

Ever been to a whorehouse Mike?

MIKE

I've been to Tijuana and Nuevo
Laredo a couple of times. I'm no
virgin to donkey shows.

JOE

Mexican border towns are nothing.
(Mike smiles)

JOE

(smiles back) (to both
drivers) Choup, choup! (to
Mike) Almost missed it!

They are at an entrance to a lane. Joe gets out and
motions Mike over

JOE

Don't be shy

MIKE

(with bravado) Shy, I'm not

6 **EXT./INT. DAY - PNH - SIDE STREET - BROTHEL**

Mike follows Joe through a residential street and at an
entrance to a lane he greets a fat middle-age woman
sitting alone on a folding chair. She smiles and follows
him with her eyes. Joe disappears through a dimly-lit
entrance, turns a corner, and he is in an inner courtyard.
At a wooden platform about six women, of various ages (16
to 35) gamble at Asian bingo. One woman calls out the dice
while the others cackle and shout, placing coins on their
cards. A pregnant cat with tiny kittens chasing her walks
below, crying. Along the walls there are benches and
chairs on which around twenty women are sitting. When Joe
arrives fifteen more women arrive from several rooms.
Evidently it is a brothel. The women range in age from 15
to 25 years-of-age, and some of them are very beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

Joe is immediately surrounded by four girls who relieve him of his shopping. He talks to them in Khmer. One of the girls begs a candy off him. Some women are sitting on children's level stools around an open cooking fire fed by charcoal; a woman tends a wok of steaming rice.

JOE

Ladies, I want you to meet Mike.

Another dozen women come out of surrounding rooms, swarming Mike. With this group come the younger ones.

Mike get's very nervous when he sees all the girls.

MIKE

Uhh.. these poor girls... why do they have to do this mhh... job?

JOE

The luxury of ethics they cannot afford, survival and money are there ultimate objectives.

(tries to change the subject)

So, what's your pleasure Mike? Who do you like?

MIKE

(talking about them as if they aren't there)

They all look so good. Hard to choose. How much?

WOMAN 4

Three-girls is \$10

WOMAN 5

Two-girls is \$7

WOMAN 6

One-girl is \$5

JOE

And there is even a forth option.

MIKE

What's that?

JOE

Four girls give you a bath, scrub you all over and lick you everywhere the sun doesn't shine, but no sex.

MIKE

That sounds fun. How much is that?

(CONTINUED)

JOE
5 bucks, but you have to buy each
girl a drink.

MIKE OK

JOE
Oh, and you can jack off. That's
free. Just don't come of any of
the ladies' faces because then
they have to wash their hair.
That's extra.

MIKE
(seeing a barely twelve year
old girl waking up across
the way)
Can I take her?

JOE
No, not on your budget....
Ladies, 'massa' with three girls
for this gentleman here!

They gleefully surround him, and sweetly take his hand
into the back room. Joe watches that all is in order.

WOMAN 1
(speaking Khmer, she uses
the trade not chemical name)
Joe, did you get me some
monosodium glutamate?

JOE
(speaking Khmer)
No, there is none left at the
market.

WOMAN 1
(speaking Khmer) Did you try
Phsar Kandal?

JOE
(speaking Khmer) Yes, I tried at
Phsar Chas also. Nobody has it.

WOMAN 2
(speaking Khmer)
Any sugar?

JOE
(speaking Khmer) 40,000 riel
a kilo for white sugar. I
got palm sugar for 10,000.
Even that is 50% more than
last week.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG WOMAN
(speaking formal Khmer)
Why so expensive Sir?

JOE
(speaking Khmer) Every day new
girls! Where are you from?

VERY YOUNG WOMAN
(speaking Khmer) Stung Treng

JOE
(speaking high level
Khmer) Stung Treng is under
siege, right?

VERY YOUNG WOMAN
(speaking simple Khmer)
Rockets killed my uncle and
my nephews. There was no
food. We came here to stay
with my cousin Sothea.

JOE
(speaking Khmer) You and
hundreds of thousands of
others. Yes, there is food
here. But not enough for
everyone. So the price goes
up.

WOMAN 3
(speaking English) She has
something special to sell,
Joe!

JOE
(speaking Khmer) You have a
treasure. Get a good price.
Get unbroken rice instead of
money.

Joe walks towards a door on the right side of the
courtyard.

7 **INT. DAY - PNH - BROTHEL - FUMERIE**

RED LITT room. First we do not see much, the place is very
dark, the curtains drawn. Red lights give the entire room
a rosy hue. We can almost smell the lingering resinous
fragrance which fills the room. The customers consist of
old Khmer and Chinese men and women, plus a couple of
foreigners who appear to be French or Italian. Nobody is
talking to anyone. One fat foreigner is propped up against
big pillows, eyes closed with a smile of complete
contentment on his face. The others are all lying down on
(CONTINUED)

the black wooden platform beds on finely woven padded mats inhaling on long pipes fit with small bowls, their heads under long round plum colour silk pillows.

Joe enters the room and lays down on an unoccupied platform. An old wrinkly Khmer man walks over with a tray of smoking accessories: pipe, lamp, water glass etc. Kneeling beside him, he starts to prepare the pipe for him. He molds a tiny ball of sticky brown opium paste with his fingertip over and over in the glistering flame of a little oil lamp. When it is 'cooked' he inserts it into a carved ivory pipe and hands the pipe to Joe. At the first puff Joe coughs. He sets it down on a wooden holder and the opium continues to burn long after.

Joe looks at the cup of water beside him and is fascinated by it. He turns it to see each detail of the structure and light and smiles with wide appreciation as if it is a wonderful work of art. Joe smacks his very dry lips, trying to moisten the inside of his mouth.

VOICE

(from very far)

Joe, Joe

Joe doesn't respond, he has fallen sound asleep.

8

EXT. DAY - PNH - FERRY DOCK

Ferry dock at Tonle Bassac to Chroy Changvar Penninsula. Destroyed Japanese Friendship Bridge in background [note: special affects required. This bridge has been rebuilt, but the original 1966 bridge was mined twice by KR in 1973].

The sound of a squealing pig. Pig in a poke being wheeled on the back of a bicycle through a crowd. Vendors, workers with cloths tied across the faces and passengers gather at the dusty passenger ferry entrance. Men carry sacks down to water level. Others roll bicycles down a steep plank.

People board ferry via a narrow plank with sideways boards nailed across for grip. The ferry is wooden, lined with tires on the outside, has no windows, and bears the three star flag of the Khmer Republic. Above, at the entrance to the closest shop, two monks in orange silk robes stop, to stand silently with their begging bowls in hand. A seller comes out and kneels, hands in prayer. They recite a blessing and ritually accept her offering placed in their bowls.

Joe surveys the area and sees a little boy selling sugar cane juice. He walks over.

JOE

(speaking in Khmer) One
sugar cane juice please.

(CONTINUED)

The boy struggles to crush the cane using the aluminum wheel.

JOE
(speaking in Khmer) Do you
have lime?

BOY
(Speaking Khmer)
Yes.

He takes the glass mug of the juice and drinks it standing up looking at the boy. Joe is seen from behind.

The crowd parts as he is approached from behind by the two Khmer men (CIA informers from the market.) The horn of the imminent ferry departure is seen and heard as a cut away.

Joe starts to turn. Each of the men takes one of his arms and tried to force him to get onto a remorque obviously hired for this mission. Joe tries to get free and pushes one of the men away. Quick as lightning, the other draws a switchblade and threatens Joe at his liver. Joe raises his hands in sign of surrender, and gets onto the remorque between them.

The middle aged driver in tattered clothing does not pay attention to what is happening. He has been paid to not see. The policeman in uniform nearby also does not 'see'.

9 **EXT. DAY - PNH - MOTORCYCLE RIDE**

They drive through the city, in silence, past queues of refugees at rice soup kitchens, many temporary shelters made of canvass and scrap, beggars missing limbs, stall vendors selling coconuts, bicycles with bamboo containers hanging from the side which sell fresh palm wine to people of all ages, cyclos over-packed with families, soldiers shaking down vendors, carts of charcoal. We drive past several landmarks such as Independence Monument and Wat Phnom.

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE)
We recruited Joe years ago for
our purposes. His role was to get
intelligence on the Ho Chi Minh
Trail. Why he would work for us
then, I ask myself today. Maybe
he wanted to protect his village,
because in those days the hungry
Viet Cong fighters would kill
anyone for food. Two years ago
though Joe disappeared
completely. For us it was clear
that the VC got him. Last week
though, two of our local people
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (CARTER'S VOICE) (cont'd)
 observed him in Phnom Penh. It's
 time we have a few words with
 him...

Finally the two men deposit Joe in front of the HEART OF
 DARKNESS bar in the Lake Side District.

10 **INT. DAY - PNH - BAR "HEART OF DARKNESS"**

The bar is DIMLY LIT. Out of season Christmas lights flash
 around a window. American rock music [Jimmy Hendrix: 'All
 Along the Watch Tower?'] mingles with the sound of the
 colliding billiard balls. Carter is waiting for him,
 sitting at a table drinking a beer from a glass. The bar
 is otherwise empty except for, at the back of the bar, two
 Khmer men playing billiards at a table which is
 illuminated by a low-hanging sixties-style glass lamp. Joe
 sits down at a clean formica table across from Carter,
 unsurprised at Carter's presence, and orders a drink.

JOE
 (speaking Khmer, despite
 bartender being a foreigner)
 Bia dop moi.

The Khmer men in rayon short-sleeve shirts and gold
 Buddhist medallions look over at Joe, cigarettes hanging
 from their mouths. They go back to their game,
 uninterested. Carter sits arms crossed leaning forward,
 waiting for Joe to speak first. Finally he breaks the ice
 with what he thinks is funny.

CARTER
 Hey Joe, where you going with
 that gun in your hand?
 (Joe looks at Carter
 impassively)

CARTER
 I have a message for you.

JOE
 Still an errand boy. I always
 thought a job as a delivery boy
 suited you.

CARTER
 (ignoring Joe's remark)
 The service needs your skills.

The french Bartender comes over, wipes table and serves
 bottle of beer to Joe.

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER

Voilà monsieur.

Joe takes a sip of beer direct from the bottle, and cracks his neck each way.

CARTER

We still talk about you. Did you think we would let you just walk into the jungle?

JOE

Kiss my ass Carter... What's that (indicating brown manila envelope at carter's table) - your stock portfolio?

CARTER

I have no profit from this war. This is a war against evil.

JOE

Your bombs do not discriminate. How many innocents are dying for every VC and Khmer Rouge hit?

CARTER

I don't like this either Joe. But you can't join the enemy because of the casualties of war.

JOE

Not me. But US attacks are the biggest boost to recruitment to join the reds.

Carter opens the envelope and puts several LARGE BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS on the table. The pictures show Joe naked, in unmistakable sexual activity, together with young Asian women.

CARTER

Your dad still live in Idaho, Joe?... He's still disappointed you never became a pastor like him, is he Joe?' (Carter is trying to provoke him.) You'd be defrocked anyway now wouldn't you?

Joe is restraining his anger.

CARTER

Bet he's never even seen a stag film, eh Joe?

(CONTINUED)

With a threatening sweeping gesture, eyes steady on Carter, Joe knocks the glasses and bottles off the table, and starts to get up. The billiard players look up from their game. The foaming yellow beer spills on the photos and on to Carter's trousers. While standing, seething Joe sees through the mess an image that perks his interest. He crocks his head to see the photo on the level.

JOE

(Joe smirks with nostalgia.)
I'm going to keep this one!

CARTER

I have copies.

JOE

Publish them in the STARS AND
STRIPES for all I care.

Joe starts to go in the direction of the WC. The two Khmer men look to Carter as if to say 'shall we prevent him from leaving the room or follow him?' Carter indicates there is no need. His expression suggests he knows Joe will not try to escape. Joe goes to the sink and stops in front of the broken stained mirror. Joe looks at himself long and hard.

11 **INT. DAY - PNH - BAR "HEART OF DARKNESS" BATHROOM**

MONTAGE (seen in the mirror). Dissolve in B&W photos of a happy Asian looking girl-child on her birthday, an the young mother at the beach, etc. Four to five images slowly superimpose over each other - entirely happy memories, of minor incidents and occasions also, of fun times, tender, moments and silliness.

Returning to 'reality' we see (in the mirror) the lines on his face, the creases, the crow's feet, etc. Joe turns on the faucet, extends his hands under it and taking a full two hands worth splashes his face with water as if to brace himself for what he is doing, fully conscious and ready to pay the price.

12 **INT. DAY - PNH - BAR "HEART OF DARKNESS"**

He returns to the bar. Joe sits down again.

CARTER

I knew I could convince you.

JOE

You had nothing to do with it.

13

EXT. DAY - PNH - LAKE SIDE DISTRICT

A crowd of people is pressing through the narrow alley of neighborhood such as Lakeside. Oxen cart with pottery, lotus seed sellers, locals carrying big wicker baskets half-full of fruit. Right off the road, barely within distance for safety, skinny men sit on their haunches inserting long wires into people's ears sitting on the curb. In their handy kit the men have numerous wires with different fuzzy and pointed ends. They poke and twist to clean ears of impromptu clients. Handcarts piled high with second-hand household goods, live clucking not entirely healthy-looking tethered chickens, motor cycles with foreign aid marked crates, and bicycles are all struggling to get through the crowd. Most of the motor cycles are occupied by entire families, as many as five persons together. Old people, children, orange-robed monks, babies, dogs in arm or in wire baskets, pig in a poke squealing, schoolgirls in uniform. No helmets.

A military jeep belonging to the Cambodian government army (FANK), with soldiers holding AK-40 guns sitting on the tailboard, tries to force its way through the crowd, honking loudly. As people make way for the vehicle, Carter and Joe are squeezed up against a house wall.

14

EXT. DAY - PNH - FLOATING RESTAURANT

Floating restaurant on Phnom Penh's Boeng Kak Lake or "Riverside". In the background there gleams the gilded cupola of the big Dubai Mosque.

CARTER
(to Joe) No hamburgers here
huh?

JOE
Why would you want to eat
American food here? It's five
times the price, poorly done and
your girlfriends won't eat your
leftovers.

CARTER
I haven't had any for five years.

JOE
That explains your waist.

Silent to begin with, the two men are eating the local Vietnamese dish Luc Lac. Fishing boats pass in the distance. Also in the background workers in flip flops are unloading clearly marked sacks of foreign aid rice from several idling trucks. The radio plays a playful song by Sansi Samouth. The men are drinking beer.

(CONTINUED)

CARTER
(calling out to proprietor,
a small Khmer woman)
Change to the AFTN channel will
ya?

RADIO (V.O.)
...the US Senate has voted to cut
off funds for the bombing of
Cambodia. Due to continued
bombing of Laos and Cambodia, the
House voted 219 against 188 for
the first time to cut-off
Indochina funds...

JOE
Did you hear that, Carter?
So you will not be needed here
any longer...

CARTER
Don't believe everything you
hear. That's just politician chit
chat. They have no idea about the
reality here. And they change
there opinons daily. We have to
do our job regardless of what
some burocrats may think.

JOE
Hwo is we? The CIA, the Army?

The two men are interrupted by a girl of about ten years
passes the bridge which leads to the restaurant. She
carries a heavy basket from a cloth around the neck,
making her walk and bend strange. She looks around and
decides to approach Joe and Carter.

BOOKSELLER GIRL
You want to buy? Postcards,
travel book, Angkor Wat guide...

CARTER
(making fun)
'Cigars, cigarettes...'

JOE
(looking into her basket)
Got any novels?

BOOKSELLER GIRL
"Transparent Things" by (looks at
the book and slowly reads)
Vladimir Nabokov.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

What year?

BOOKSELLER

This year. I buy this morning.

CARTER

(motioning for her to not leave)
No thanks sweetheart.

JOE

Newspapers?

BOOKSELLER

"Le Monde", monsieur.

JOE

Just what I was looking for

Bookseller gives it to him.

JOE

(to Carter) You pay. And the
novel too. Deduct it from my
salary, if you must.

BOOKSELLER

(in Khmer)

Thank you sir.

She leaves with a bounce in her step.

CARTER

I didn't know you could read
French.

JOE

Make a note of it to be put in
your files.

He slides the newspaper under his plate, patting it down
to absorb some grease.

15

EXT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY

Joe arrives at US Embassy, a three-storey white-washed building surrounded by a high wall and screens designed to intercept missiles and large flood lights on even in the daytime hours. The compound has several interior concrete walls, barbed wire and large flood lights on even in the daytime hours. At each corner are two sandbag soldiers with light artillery or machine guns. A chalk line is drawn 15 feet around the perimeter as a 'no go' zone. Three MPs guard the front gate. He is known to them so they don't search his bag and let pass to the security kiosk.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
 (speaking to the young man
 behind bullet-proof glass)
 Hi Forster.

GUARD
 ID

Joe shows ID and signs in. The gate magnet is released for him to enter.

Joe walks past the inner concrete security perimeters, past an unused building, then through a short-cut via a two storey one that looks like an office building of a school.

16 **INT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY**

Inside it is as if suddenly one is no longer in S.E. Asia. A signboard advertises the recent new year pot luck party: 'cupcakes by Doris.' Someone has pinned a photo of their pet chihuahua announcing that veterinary treatment was successful for 'Skippy'. Going upstairs is a connecting corridor to the Embassy proper, an emergency escape route in fact that JOE is entering the wrong way (sign: 'this way only' - the opposite direction) But at a guarded steel door he buzzes and is let in anyway. On the opposite side of the door the decor changes dramatically. We are entering the corridors of power. Filing cabinets are wood rather than steel. The upholstery is high quality. Even the art is real - in this case US oil paintings of landscapes from various regions of the USA. The ash trays are cut crystal. The wood mahogany. Carter is entering the room just after Joe.

CARTER
 (trying to hold back a
 smile) You able to find the
 Embassy OK?

JOE
 (smiles as if to say 'smart
 ass')

JENNIFER (JENNY), 21-23, red-head, buxom, petite frame, slightly French-looking, and dressed a bit more sophisticated than embassy work requires, the secretary of US Ambassador's political adviser WILLIAM HARBIN. Sitting typing at an electric typewriter in the antechamber to the "secure room" of the American Embassy. Jenny has an air of confidence and good humor. Carter enters, Joe follows.

CARTER
 Hi honey, key to cold room please

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

(ignoring his familiarity)
You'll have to wait for Mr.
Harbin.

CARTER

Jenny, did you know that
breathing in humid air expands
one's lungs?

Carter looks at Joe as if he will be impressed. He leers
at Jenny's breasts.

CARTER

Are they the same size as when
you started working here?

JENNY

You know Carter... (searches for
a file) it did not expand your
brain so far. (finds it) But
there is probably not much there
that could be expanded.

Jenny continues her work, not looking up.

Harbin arrives, oblivious to what has just transpired. He
looks mature, professional and not a little bit
preoccupied with stressful details. He carries several
file folders. He does not greet the others. He asks Jenny
for the key and opening two locks, gesturing all in, they
enter. He locks the door from the inside and flicks on
three switches: air-con, lights and a light to signal any
other Embassy staff that the room is occupied.
We see a

CLOSE-UP of the red light, discreetly on Jenny's desk. A
binder labeled "JOEL (JOE) CROSS" is removed by Jenny's
hands.

17 **INT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY - SOUND-PROOF ROOM**

Joe sits with Harbin and Carter in the surveillance-proof
windowless room. The padded walls resemble those of a
recording studio. In the background a large radio
apparatus and decoding equipment of recent manufacture can
be seen on a table.

HARBIN

Good to see you again Joe.

Carter drinking coffee, he holds up a mug and raises his
eyebrows.

Knock at the door.

(CONTINUED)

HARBIN
(not moving) Yes?

JENNY
(placing a cup in front of
Harbin)
Your Sanka Mr. Harbin.

HARBIN
(takes a sip)
So, here we are again. (sets
cup and saucer aside)
Anything I can do for you
Joe?)

JOE
(tactlessly) You could tell me
whether it's true that the Khmer
Rouge mortars that bombarded
Kampong Cham last week were
American?

CARTER
(dimissively, looking away)
Leave politics to the
diplomatic corps Joe.

JOE
I don't care about politics. I
just like to know who is killing
who.

HARBIN
Even if the munitions were made
in the USA, it doesn't follow
that we supplied them to the
enemy. Lon Nol's highest ranking
officers are key players in the
black market.

Harbin looks at Carter as if to say 'I'm getting nowhere.
Help me out.' Carter goes to the map.

HARBIN
We want you on board again Joe.

CARTER
(looking at Harbin for the
OK to begin. Harbin nods)
You're aware that the reds
control 85% of the
countryside.

HARBIN
We're having difficulties getting
co-ordinates on targets in the
field (looks at him
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARBIN (cont'd)
searchingly) You know the
countryside, the jungle.

CARTER
North Vietnamese army in the
North (points it out) and
North-East, Viet Cong on the
Eastern border (ditto), Khmer
Rouge everywhere else.

HARBIN
The Khmer Republic is in nominal
control of most of the provincial
capitals and here in Phnom Penh
of course. Downtown anyway.

JOE
Yeah, someone from Pochentong
filled me in.

CARTER
The food situation is getting
critical. We have over 700,000
refugees in a couple of cities.
(he points out Kompong Thom, Siem
Reap The population in Phnom
Penh has tripled, from 600,000 to
2 millions now. The only place
that's close to safe is
Battambang (he points it out) and
that's only because everybody
needs its rice so it's off
-limits for military activity.

JOE
How about Kampong Saom?

HARBIN
The port of Sihanoukville is in
the hands of the reds. They have
supplies coming in from there
Nord Vietnamese allies now almost
daily to be transported through
Cambodia to communist forces in
South Vietnam.

CARTER
For now. - Do you slowly see the
big picture, Joe?

JOE
I guess, with the bombing you try
to stop the supply-chain to the
Vietcong...

(CONTINUED)

HARBIN

...exactly!

JOE

But we just heard the news on AFTN, the senate voted against more funds to be spent on the Indo-China conflicts... the U.S. Government stopped the bombings...

HARBIN

That's the official version. We have our instructions directly from President Nixon. I do not have to tell you, that this kind of information is highly classified, never been said and will not leave this room?

Joe nods. And seems to be in deep thoughts.

HARBIN

Our Problem is the cities keep getting attacked by the Khmer Rouge from the countryside. Couple of times a week we get shelled - rockets, mortars...

CARTER

We don't know the changing positions of the enemy.

JOE

Let me guess. You want me to ascertain them.

CARTER

Yes. Not everywhere of course, just in one region.

JOE

Which region is that?

CARTER

North-east.

Carter show's it on the map.

JOE

You want general position or something more?

CARTER

Co-ordinates, as exact as possible.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

What's your idea how I would move around, determine co-ordinates, communicate with you, etc.

HARBIN

That's your business. Tell us what you need. We won't tell you how to do your job.

CARTER

You'd have the Air Force at your disposal. You'd call the shots, literally.

JOE

I work alone, of course

CARTER

If you prefer.

JOE

I do (said like 'this is not negotiable' and I certainly can't work with you)

HARBIN

It would mean sending co-ordinates and target information as often as you can.

JOE

Civilian or military?

HARBIN

You know as well as I do that the US Air Force doesn't bomb non-military targets... we need to know where the Khmer Rouge are hiding and where the Vietcong pass through Cambodia.

Joe chokes on his coffee.

CARTER

You'd also be instrumental in choosing which enemy targets our bombers strike and which we ignore.

HARBIN

Yes, prioritizing. Same job actually you did for us two years ago.

(CONTINUED)

CARTER

Same region too.

JOE

When do I leave?

HARBIN

Settle all the details will you
Carter?

Carter takes Joe to the door and releases the security
lock.

CARTER

(whispering out of earshot of
Harbin) Leave the village girls
alone. But don't take one of your
brothel-girls with you. You don't
know where their loyalties lie.

JOE

(Ironically) You wanna come with
me? Bring your camera. You might
have the chance to add some new
pictures to your collection.

CARTER

(all business again)
So we meet tonight, I bring the
ONE-TIME PAD, maps etc.

JOE

Don't forget my salary! In cash
and in small notes, please.

18 **INT./EXT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY**

CAMERA OVER THE SHOULDER Carter looks down from the window
at an acute angle and sees Joe, who is just crossing the
square in front of the building. Carter steps back.
The CAMERA PANS UP AND ZOOMS SLOWLY OUT. The skyline of
Phnom Penh is seen. At the far distance we see columns of
smoke and hear the thunder of mortars.

HARBIN (O.V.)

Are you sure he's the right man
for the job?

CARTER (O.V.)

No, but he's the best we have.
Guerrilla tracking,
counter-insurgency,
communications.
Still, my gut instinct is he
needs to be kept on a very short
leash. I don't trust him Bill.

(CONTINUED)

HARBIN (O.V.)

Can we trust anyone 100%?

CARTER (O.V.)

He has local family you know.

HARBIN (O.V.)

That's new to me.

CARTER (O.V.)

His Khmer wife and daughter were both abducted four years ago. Presumably living with Khmer Rouge against their will. If you ask me, the chances are minimal that they are still alive. That makes Joe vulnerable.

HARBIN (O.V.)

It also makes him highly motivated to work for us.

CARTER (O.V.)

Just for revenge?

HARBIN (O.V.)

You're not a family man Carter, so maybe you see things a bit too simple. But I don't need to tell you to keep an eye on him. Watch him closely.

CARTER (O.V.)

When I meet him again tonight I'll look for any indications it's not prudent to go ahead.

19

EXT. NIGHT - PNH - AVENUE CHARLES DE GAULLE

Joe passes by the Cinéma "Khmara". He stops and looks at The billboard announcing the Film "Enfer sur les Philippines" an American film about a battle of Bataan dubbed in French. An other poster advertises the film "La Chanson de Demain" a Shaw Brothers film of a Hong Kong romance. First Joe starts to walk towards the door, than he decides against it. Women and children and some soldiers in uniform enter the Cinéma when Joe walks on.

Then we hear the unmistakable noise of a bomb exploding. Joe looks back and sees IN SLOW MOTION how the door of the Cinéma is blown to the street. People follow screaming and pushing falling over each other on the ground. Someone must have thrown a grenade into the Cinéma. Despite Fire and smoke steaming out of the door, Joe runs into the house. He returns caring a little girl whose body is full of grenade fragments and lays her gently on the ground. Than he rushes into the Cinéma again.

FADE TO BLACK.

20

EXT. NIGHT - PNH - BROTHEL DISTRICT

CAR TRAVELING. Carter and Joe in the back seat. The camera looks through the side window of a car which is driving down a dark street of pink-lit simple wooden shacks. On the roadside dozens and dozens of girls can be seen standing in front of each shack. As cars pass their faces are lit up and their long black hair shines. Through the doors one sees a girl bouncing an infant boy on her knee, one brushes her wet hair, another sits on a low chair eating noodles. Two Chinese men in their fifties on separate cyclos talk with six or so girls who quickly surround them. One of the men cranes his neck beyond the crowd and points out a girl eating but it is indicated by their response that meal time is sacrosanct. Two local men in military uniforms in an idling parked taxi are negotiating with three working girls who lean over into their car window.

JOE O.V.

(recognizing an 18ish hooker getting on a cyclo) Oh my god, that's Peu. I remember her from five years ago. Looks like she's still popular

CARTER O.V.

I'm doing the math Joe.

Three girls approach the open car window of Carter and Joe. Despite being dressed as prostitutes there is something unconvincing about their attire, manner and makeup that suggests just college-age girls in from the countryside to make some money rather than hardened professionals.

CARTER O.V.

Do you think they're local girls?

JOE O.V.

They're always from out of town. But nowadays a lot of them are refugees.

(the girls get to the window) Well, hello ladies.

PROSTITUTE 1

Massa boom-boom?

CARTER

(leaning forward) What you do?

(CONTINUED)

PROSTITUTE 1
 (counting on her fingers)
 Massa gooz, boom-boom gooz,
 yum-yum gooz

CARTER
 How do you now they won't steal
 your money?

PROSTITUTE 1
 You no like, no pay money

JOE
 They have mama-sans, they don't
 steal.

PROSTITUTE 2
 (whispering)
 Short-time. \$1.

JOE
 See anyone you like?

CARTER
 (to driver)
 Drive on...

Joe makes a face to girl like 'so, he's not interested,
 maybe see you another time'.

The car drives on slowly. Further on is a larger
 cinderblock house with even more girls lined up outside.
 Last year's Chinese New Year poster is still on the door.
 They look Vietnamese.

PROSTITUTE 3
 (runs up to car, puts her hand on
 Carter's arm resting on
 rolled down window)
 I love you, you love me.

JOE
 How's this one?

CARTER
 (said jokingly)
 You sound like a pimp.

Joe smiles.

Sight and sound of incoming missile in distance, going in
 opposite direction far away. No one takes notice.

PROSTITUTE 4
 (offering some of her
 deep-fried insects) Two
 girl? (looks back at the
 others laughing)

(CONTINUED)

CARTER

Do you have twins?

PROSTITUTE 4

I no understand. (She calls over
in Vietnamese for another girl.)

Senior hooker in her late thirties comes from inside.

SENIOR HOOKER

What you want?

JOE

Two girl sister, look same-same

SENIOR HOOKER

No have... You want nice girl?
Come inside Sir. Look.

She is trying to open the car door. It is locked.
Driver sighs uncomfortably The car continues past the
girls at a walking pace, without stopping. Carter turns
his neck and looks back as they continue on.

CARTER

Boran, stop the car. (he takes a
few seconds) Stop! Wow, why
didn't we see her before?

Joe looks back too. They are looking at a long-legged tall
woman of about 21 with a sensuous sway back)

JOE

She does it for you huh?

CARTER

(Still looking) Indeed she does.

JOE

Well, it's a guy.

CARTER

Are you sure. It's kind of dark
to tell..

JOE

100%

Carter falls back despondent.

JOE

I won't tell anyone.

They drive along in silence. Carter is shown thinking.
The travelling continues in an other, smaller brothel
street.

(CONTINUED)

CARTER

Do you prefer Khmers or
Vietnamese?

JOE

Depends. For great sex -
Vietnamese. But for a good time
outside of bed I much prefer
Khmers.

CARTER

Maybe that's because you can have
a normal conversation with them.

JOE

That's part of it. But they are
warmer. More like a girlfriend.
With a Vietnamese girl they never
let you forget that you are a
client.

CARTER

That could be an advantage...

JOE

Not for me. I'd like to have at
least the illusion that I could
fall in love with the girl.

A huge truck loaded with pigs is stuck in the mud and hinders the car from proceeding. The pigs laying on the platform have there legs bound with ropes very tight to there bodies. The squealing of the pigs is unbearable. Carter winds up the window in disgust. The Car cannot move. Around the car girls squeeze there faces on the car windows. Some make kisses like a cleaning fish sucked onto the glass of the aquarium. Carter's voice has a sudden change in pitch, higher almost fearful.

CARTER O.V.

In 1968 I was stationed in Nha
Trang, I went with on night
patrol in the heavy rain. At one
point I lost track of my squad. I
couldn't call out. I squatted in
my poncho to take a shit. When I
reached out for my rifle which I
had leaned against a tree it
wasn't there. I completely
emptied myself in fear. I looked
up to my side and there he was.
The VC was standing there within
touching distance, couldn't have
been more than 5 foot and he
looked sixteen years old. And the
strangest thing is that while he
had his own rifle pointed at me,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CARTER O.V. (cont'd)
 he left me finish. He took me to
 a camp of four other gooks, and
 the next day into VC-controlled
 village.

JOE O.V.
 Did they give you 'the
 treatment'?

CARTER OV
 I lost track of how many kinds.
 Lasted three days. Lots of
 people, including women and
 children, were looking on as I
 was tortured. And when the
 Vietnamese cut into my skin with
 bamboo skewers, you know what,
 Joe? - They giggled. Yes, they
 laughed, they thought it was
 incredibly funny! (Carter points
 to the girls) ... Always when I
 see these Girls I ask myself the
 question if one of them was there
 at the time!

The trucks finally starts moving again. The car continues
 past the girls at a walking pace, without stopping.

FADE TO BLACK.

21 **EXT. EVENING/NIGHT - COUNTRY ROAD**

CAR TRAVELING. CAMERA LOOKING OUT FRONT WINDOW. Joe is in
 a car in the front seat with his driver BORAN, traveling
 to the countryside on the dusty red country road. The
 vehicle passes through a small village, past a sala
 (pavilion) then leaving the village itself overtakes an
 oxen-cart which is loaded dangerously high with
 ammunition. The wooden green painted Boxes show Chinese
 lettering. To the right and left of the road, a few
 scattered groups of palm trees leave an open view of the
 bright green rice fields. Shape is seen in the dark, then
 the headlights reveal a roadblock. The car approaches a
 lowered barrier. The driver, a young Cambodian, slows
 down.

22 **EXT. NIGHT - ROAD BLOCK**

On the right is a watchtower, entirely made of bamboo, as
 is the barrier which crosses the road and extends a meter
 beyond. The watchtower has a spotlight that does not work
 because there is no electricity from the generator below .
 The bamboo is a combination of mixed pieces of green and
 yellow pieces. A handsaw and axe leaning nearby suggesting
 (CONTINUED)

it has been constructed recently. The construction is strong but imperfect in design - some pieces being too long, and there is no consistency between how many times plant material has fastened the joints. It looks as if it was built by several teams operating independently. Two youths, both in badly fitting shirts, rush to meet the vehicle. The other young men hold back giggling. The oldest youth brandishes his rifle, the other holds it over his shoulder like a broom (butt high) until the aggressive one calls him to be more soldier-like.

KR LEADER
(Speaking Khmer)
Get out!

They get out in a measured pace and put their hands meekly above their heads. He brandishes his weapon to indicate they should put their hands up higher.

KR SOLDIER
(Speaking Khmer)
Papers!

Joe gestures to inside his shirt, showing that he doesn't want to be shot for going for a weapon.

KR SOLDIER 2
Thep.

Thep, a boy of barely 12 years old, walks over and shyly, almost apologetically, unbuttons Joe's shirt and reaches in, feeling around. The Khmer boys laugh nervously. We see BORAN'S piss running down his pant leg onto the dry ground. Joe leans forward so Thep can remove the bag around his neck on a string.

BACKGROUND. Straightening up he notices a group of boy soldiers bringing two wounded men his way. One is heavysset. They are carrying them roughly, with no concern for their injuries. Their hands and feet are bound with wire. They are joking in Khmer about their condition.

BOY1
(speaking in Khmer softly)
He's heavy. He's getting a lot
more rice than we are.

BOY2
(whispering in Khmer)
Did you get his watch?

BOY3
(speaking in Khmer)
Be quiet.

(CONTINUED)

KR ROADBLOCK LEADER
(speaking in Khmer)
Where are you coming from?

The leader inspects Joe's papers. He is trying to impress the other boys.

JOE
Phnom Penh.

KR LEADER
(speaking Khmer)
Turn around!

Joe faces against the wall, hands up.

KR LEADER
(speaking Khmer)
Where are you going?

The moaning of the wounded captivs is audible.

JOE
(speaking Khmer)
Pardon me, I can't hear you. (we
hear his heart beating)

KR LEADER
Where are you going?

JOE
I am taking my friend to look for
his brother in Stung Treng.

KR LEADER
(speaking in Khmer) (to other
soldier)
Comrades, search the car...

BACKGROUND: The boys motion for Boran to open the trunk. They pull out his pockets and he tries to maintain a semblance of dignity. A youth shines his torch into the trunk and looks through a few pieces of clothing and a notepad, slowly turning the empty pages. Another youth shines his torch throughout the car's interior. We see Buddhist amulets and decaying jasmine blossom hanging from the rearview mirror, a bobbing dog head ornament behind the rear seats, and a used red Cambodian scarf. He finds a white bag with RED CROSS insignia printed on it in the back seat. He slams the car door. He takes the bag to the leader.

The leader rummages through the bag, pulls out some pills, and then throws it aside to a junior boy.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

(speaking in Khmer)

Take some. This is a pill for a common affliction, when your food is not clean. (pointing with his chin towards the moaning men on the ground)

Shall we take your wounded to the hospital? It is on our way.

SOLDIER 1

(speaking in Khmer)

They are not 'our' wounded. They do not even deserve the cremation grounds. Fucking Vietnamese. We did not invite them to come to our country. We will let them die slowly...

He strikes one man with his boot and spits on the ground.

KR LEADER

Give me all your money.

JOE

(In Khmer, addressing the leader)

We have no quarrel with you. Your enemies are our enemies.

Joe gives him some bills he fishes out of his pockets.

The leader points his rifle to Joe's head, impulsively, uncertain and nervously.

KR LEADER

How would you know who our enemies are?

JOE

Please help the wounded or at least shoot them.

KR LEADER

(shouts)

Get out of here! Get out of here!

Joe slowly walks backwards to the car so he can always see the soldiers eyes. So does Boran. The two men get in slowly. Bowing theyre heads fearfully Boran drives away. Boran is sweating profusely and shaking.

EXT. NIGHT - COUNTRY ROAD

The driver Boran and Joe continue to drive north-west. Deep in the country, no sign of any houses around, they see a body in the middle of the road as if he has rolled onto the road. The man wears no shirt, torn trousers and one shoe. Boran stops. Joe gets out into the headlight view. He kneels down and listens for breathing. The man moves semi-consciously. Joe sniffs his breath and coughs, reacting that it is the strong aroma of alcohol. Boran gets out, leaving the door open. Joe is waiting holding the man by the calves. Boran takes the man by the shoulders and with some difficulty they carry the man to the side of the road. Boran goes back to the car and leaves a bottle of water beside the sleeping man. Joe finds the other shoe (damaged from having been run over), shakes off some little stones, and leaves it beside him also.

They proceed. Joe turns on the car radio and adjusts the dial to AFTN. Before he does we hear snippets of Chinese and Vietnamese, as well as several Khmer stations. He settles on a popular American jingle:

AFTN RADIO

Mr. Clean gets rid of dirt and
grime
And grease in just a minute
Mr. Clean will clean your whole
house
And everything that's in it

News extract: Nixon or Kissinger
denying the carpet bombing {or
Paris Peace Accord?}

Joe turns off the radio. A strange hum builds up after a while. As they get closer we pass smouldering bomb craters and scorched fields. In places the roads are covered with abandoned or destroyed vehicles. A team of oxen lay stiffly twisted, their tongues out, entrails falling out of huge wounds. People walk along the road stunned as if in a trance, having soiled their trousers in fright. The car brakes. An old woman with the short shaven head of a nun, sits on the side of the road sobbing. She wears a blackened white cotton blouse and a colourful silk sarong, plus formal scarf across her chest as if she has just come from a celebration. Boran gets out, and leaving the door open, tries to help her up. She is oblivious to him. A man chases a grunting pig across the road. The sound of looters at a house. People carry a body seeping blood and with great effort (failing the first time) heave it onto a cart.

Shortly before they reach the provincial capital of STUNG TRENG, a group of twelve girl-soldiers cycle towards the car on the opposite side of the road. They look serious -

(CONTINUED)

more serious than men, more serious than adult soldiers. Three of them have AK-47 machine guns slung around their shoulders. They are ten to thirteen years-of-age. Several wear Mao caps, others wear medium-length hair, combed. Boran slows to car to a crawl to gawk at them in disbelief. Only one is in uniform. She is 11 years-of-age and wears a blue Khmer scarf and Mao cap.

BORAN

(leaning out of the car window,
speaking in Khmer, laughing)
Hi girls!

Boran applies the brake. All the girls, except the very youngest, whose legs are too short for their bicycles, stop in unison.

Without checking for traffic (none is heard), the only girl in a black uniform comes over. Boran and Joe look straight ahead, not at them at all. We hear only cicadas and him gulping. The leader walks around the car, starting with the rear, more to make a show than inspect it. She moves in front of the car. The stark headlights accentuate show her to be very dark-skinned and beautiful. She tries to peer into the front seat. Accidentally Boran touches the windscreen wipers. They make a strange sound as they whipe over the dirty windshield. The girls wild looking eyes are seen.

BACKGROUND. A bushfire illuminates the sky. The girls vanish as fast as they came into the jungle.

24

EXT. NIGHT - JETTY

From a bridge we see fishermen's boats made fast to the river bank. They are brightly coloured and bear talismanic eyes on the prow, making them look like creatures. Some have hanging lamps glowing in the bow. Families eat rice silently in the covered areas of the boats. We hear Vietnamese. A mongrel dog comes to the edge of a boat and wagging its tail, growls and makes a sound of claws scratching the surface. A narrow boat with a patched cloth awning and raised outboard motor is trying to make its way through the congestion of larger boats. In the stern BART stands maneuvering the boat with a long pole. Joe looks Bart's way, catches his eye, then ascertains the best way to get to him in the chaotic jumble of boats. Walking on a narrow landing stage Joe's feet make a creaking sound. Bart extends his hand across the water and pulls Joe in.

BART

Good to see you Joe.

JOE

So, what have you been doing all this time, Bart?

(CONTINUED)

BART

What's it been, two years?

JOE

Yeah, about that.

BART

Lots of passengers but they don't pay! My compensation is my life. They all need me.

Joe jumps on the boat.

JOE

Take me home.

Bart exits to more open water, lowers the rudder, and starts the engine in one go.

25

EXT. NIGHT - SMALL STREAM

BOAT TRAVELING. The boat now travels up the Mekong, finally continuing into a narrow tributary. Night has fallen, and the dimly lit villages of stilt houses glide past. From time to time we see men at the front of their houses, working on boats on the bank. Children run along the bamboo walkways when they see Bart's boat. A few women are taking their evening bath in sarongs. Bart again turns off into an even narrower side branch of the river. The men have to bend down repeatedly as they pass through tunnels of giant palm fronds.

BART

(Not looking at Joe, he is steering the boat with concentration)

You're American, come on.

Joe tries to assist in looking for any obstacles in the water, he is leaning over looking into the water.

JOE

Yes, of course. My father was the pastor... (signals to slow down, then false alarm, continue) of the American Baptists' mission in Kilchberg near Zurich. For a while when I was a kid I went to school in your country.

BART

I am glad to be out of Switzerland. Best thing I ever did in my life.

Switzerland, America, England -
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BART (cont'd)
it's all the same. Orderly,
sensible and safe.
(Bart lights up a cannabis
cigarette, one home-rolled.)
I have more freedom here in
Indochina, even as a foreigner.

JOE
Because you are a foreigner.

BART
No one is looking over my
shoulder. No one is checking if I
am doing the speed limit, if I
have the buttons on my shirt done
up incorrectly. When I write my
sister and brother in Geneva,
they don't understand what I tell
them. So I have stopped writing.

JOE
How long have you been away from
home?

BART
This is my home now. I left
Europe in 1970, at the beginning
of the civil war here. Some
French Legionnaires on holiday in
Marseilles told me about their
life in Djibouti and Shanghai. A
two hour conversation over beer
convinced me I was in the wrong
kind of place. Anywhere
Christian, white and at peace.

JOE
So, you are an in self exile.

BART
Sort of, I guess. First I made
myself believe that I didn't come
for the war. I am a coward and
lazy. But now I think I am more
honest about my motivation to
come here. One can be romantic as
well as cynical about war. Maybe
there is a magical attraction
about tragedy and misery.

JOE
When death is close it is like a
magnifying glass to emotions and
feelings. Love is deeper.

(CONTINUED)

BART

I came for the absence of taboos that a war zone brings. It's kind of a jailbreak...

What brought you here? Or is that secret?

JOE

Not at all. I came before the war to continue my studies as an ethnologist in the field. I told my father I could now breathe free, that I loved this place of oppressive heat, corrupt constabulary and unhygienic markets. My father told me I have no morality. He questioned my very sanity.

BART

My father is dead. When he died I felt a great sense of relief. I did not have to try to meet his expectations any more.

JOE

Mine unfortunately is still alive. He writes me every three months or so and tries to convince me to return. Return to what? Return why?

They pass a solo house on stilts. A woman sits on the outdoor area cooking on her haunches. A small girl rocks an infant in a hammock.

BART

What have you been doing since I saw you?

JOE

Surviving. Pimping, actually... and working as security guard for the girls. You know some of the clients wouldn't know how to behave and would physically abuse the girls.

They pass below a fragile-looking bamboo bridge. Three boys look down upon them, waving.

BART

Joe, have you read Thornton Wilders' The Bridge of San Luis Rey?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Yes, I have.

BART

Do you believe in providence - a power that directs everything?

JOE

Since my daughter and my wife have been kidnapped by the Khmer Rouge, four years ago, no. Not only do I not believe in fate, I do not believe in God. It would mean that God is a cruel trickster. No, it is easier to not believe in anything.

The two men are quiet until the boat is coming to shore.

BART

We'll meet again.

Joe takes a big rucksack and a white canvass bag with the Red Cross insignia. He departs into the jungle to the sound of insects.

26

EXT. EARLY MORNING - VILLA

The picture is white. White as an empty canvas. Pure projected light.

WIDE ANGLE. It is very early in the morning. Thick swathes of mist give the landscape a ghostly air. A few tall palms tower over the jungle in places. On the nearby hill a big building can be made out. From the distance it looks like a villa of the Art Nouveau period. In actual fact it has been built more recently, and is just a reminiscence of colonial days. But the extreme humidity has made the building age rapidly, so that it gives the impression of having sat on this hill in state since the beginning of time.

A ruined villa in the jungle. Fruit trees and overgrown property that has not been tended for many years. The sound of bees and beetles. Plants sprout from the stairs, roots grow along the walls. An entire wall is missing in one room, due to missile fire.

Joe comes to a formal stone entrance and opens a wrought iron gate that creaks. He leaves it open. He walks up the stairs to the front entrance.

27

INT. DAY - VILLA - ENTRANCE

The door is open. Evidence of a fire on the patio suggests that someone has squatted there some months ago. Joe enters the front door. The large entrance hall has a flooring of stone tiles in a chessboard pattern. A huge staircase winds up in a grand entrance but the lobby is desolate and ugly. He walks up the stairs, looking up hopefully. Upstairs, he makes his way through the empty villa. Old wooden furniture lies dotted about, and there are other household articles on the floor. Hesitantly, he looks into a small room.

MONTAGE: A 5-6 year-old girl in a French-style frilly party dress picks up a stuffed teddy bear from a dresser and cuddles it, dancing around the room.

Next, we see the teddy bear still on the dresser and Joe picks it up. He takes it to the window in the front room, facing the sun, where he raises the shutter. The light shows that Joe is in tears. He puts the bear on the ledge. It falls over. He continues his exploration of the house. The house has been looted some time in the past - ornamental pieces and fixtures are missing. The roof in one room is broken. The walls are mildewy in much of the house. Broken basket chairs stand in one corner. Joe leaves his bags in one of the bedrooms, and goes out onto the balcony.

28

EXT. DAY - VILLA - BALCONY

Joe stands on the balcony. His gaze wanders over the thick jungle spread out before him. The country is hilly, and in one direction mountains can be seen. An iridescent silvery river winds its way through the vegetation with its many thousand shades of green. To the west a second, much nearer river can be seen, with the bluish smoke of household fires hovering over the water. On the bank a small village can be made out, a kampong on stilts. The sounds of various kinds of birds and the chopping of wood can be heard all the way up to the villa.

29

INT. DAY - VILLA

Joe enters a bedroom carrying his rucksack and first-aid kit bag, which he drops with a thud on the floor. The room is medium size of even proportions with two windows. There is no glass but both have wooden shutters open. The ledges are wide. The wooden shutters are closed but allow enough light in the room for Joe to see. The door is missing, the hinges intact, its molding hardwood. The ceiling is high, two and a half times the height of Joe. A metal ceiling fan hangs still from the center of the room. A simple large wooden platform bed is against the wall. On the platform is an Asian-style (roll up kapok) section

(CONTINUED)

mattress, rolled up. Joe unrolls it, places it on its side to pat the dust away, and places it back down on the bed. On the same wall that the bed is at is a low built-in stone shelf. A ginjo (common lizards smaller than geckos) burps its characteristic sound, four bursts in a row. Joe peruses the room.

Hanging from the wall at the foot of the bed, above a green tin storage box, is a white mosquito net that Joe extends in order to surround the bed, by stringing extensions against three more nails in the walls.

He lies down on the bed despondent and looks up at the fan for a long time without moving.

Joe raises his head and sees a twig broom stood up in the corner. He forces himself up, and picks it up sighing. He sweeps out most of the room. Getting his rucksack he extracts a pile of books and ranges them on the built-in wooden ledge in the wall: Graham Greene, Lawrence Durrell, Henry de Montherlant, Vladimir Nabokov, Paul Bowles, Edgar Allen Poe, Joseph Conrad and Novalis. A thick black Bible, finally, prevents the books from tipping over.

UNKNOWN WOMAN
(calling from garden)
Joe, Joe!

30

EXT. DAY - VILLA - BALCONY

The CAMERA LOOKS DOWN FROM THE BALCONY in the direction of the repeated call.

He races out of the house towards a slender petite Khmer girl with very long hair of about 15 years-of-age (KIA). The two embrace passionately, and Joe whirls Kia in a circle through the air. We see their action as a sort of dream-like spinning. The two return to the house arm in arm.

KIA
How long you back for Joe?

JOE
Not sure.

KIA
Enough time to continue the English lessons?

JOE
I always can make time for my favorite girl.

KIA
(laughing) Your favorite girl or your only girl, Joe?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Here (he picks a flower and puts
it in her hair looking at her
sincerely)

He picks her up matrimonial style and carries her into the house. We see her face looking up at him. The two return to the house as they talk.

31

INT. DAY - VILLA

The villa kitchen is austere by western standards. It has ceramic sink that is part of a two-level storage shelf. A wooden cabinet of three shelves with screened doors holds kitchen containers, a chopping block and a few pots and utensils. There is no table and no chairs. A rolled up reed mat stands in the corner.

Kia opens the shutters. The morning light floods in. She sees a mango tree below.

KIA

I planted a mango tree last year.
We'll have mangoes in a few
years.

JOE

Did you get many papayas from the
garden this time?

KIA

My mother was very happy with
them.

Joe takes a bamboo pole with a feather end that is almost as tall as the ceiling to brush cobwebs away from the corners of the ceiling.

JOE

(speaking as he works) How is
your mother?

KIA

She is old and sick. Her bones
ache. She misses my father.

JOE

And your relatives?

KIA

Only one cousin and a
brother-in-law are left. Most of
my male relatives have either
gone to the cities or joined the
Khmer Rouge.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

So, who controls your village now?

KIA

We do.

JOE

I mean, who has the most guns? And do the Khmer Rouge have much support in your village?

KIA

It depends how they behave. Six months ago they controlled the village. They tried to force communal dining, breaking up families and worse. So all the men gathered them all up and killed them. Then there was a change in leadership, a big apology. But a week later Lon Nol's men came. There was a fight and they won. They left a few soldiers. Everything is OK now...

JOE

How did you know I was coming back?

KIA

I didn't. I come here a couple of times a week to water the mango trees.

JOE

Is the spade still here?

KIA

Supayd?

JOE

The square shovel.

Armed with a folding spade, Joe goes out of the house.

32

EXT. DAY - VILLA - BEHIND HOUSE

Behind a tree a green cobra is lying in the sun. Seeing Joe it raises its hood. Joe chases it away with his spade, and then digs a hole on the spot where it has been lying. In just a few digs, he unearths a metal casket. We hear the chanting of the monks coming from the nearby village.

33

EXT. EVENING - VILLA - IN FRONT OF HOUSE

In front of the house burns a fire, on which Kia and a few other girls and children from the village are cooking soup. The mood is relaxed. Kia is evidently very excited and happy to see Joe again. Movement is heard in the jungle nearby. Joe pulls out and cocks his pistol. Kia looks at him and shakes her head, smiling in the direction of the sound. A gloomy-looking young Khmer of some 17 years of age (SARIT) comes out of the darkness to join the company. Kia jumps up nervously and pulls him towards the fire.

KIA

Joe, this is Sarit.

JOE

(folding his hands at his chest
in traditional Khmer greeting)
Cham Reapsuel, you must be Kia's
brother

KIA

No silly, he's my fiancé.

Joe blanches. Sarit returns the Khmer gesture of greeting, looking at him suspiciously.

34

EXT. DAY - VILLA - ROOFTOP

Joe lays out a wire (not visible from below) on the roof along the gutter. He then guides a black coaxial cable along the ledge of the dilapidated balcony. A roof tile comes loose and rattles along the roof. An alarmed animal [unique to Cambodia] in the jungle bolts away.

35

INT. EVENING - VILLA - UPPER ROOM

Joe sits on a reed mat in the upper room of the villa. The large window has all the shutters open. The floor is made of damaged tiles. On the floor is a red and gold Chinese wooden household ancestor altar with gilded colored paper cones and an empty stained-red glass, plus an incense burner with the residue of many old sticks. He opens the tin box he retrieved from the garden and removes a radio from it. Using a hand crank, he activates the small generator in order to charge the battery and then connects the antenna cable to the transceiver. Joe then puts headphones on. A green Magic Eye comes slowly to life. Typical shortwave sounds of spherical interference become audible. Joe turns a Bakelite knob until the theme, *The SWEDISH RHAPSODY*, is heard. A look at his watch tells Joe that it is almost midnight. A Little Girl's voice is heard and reads out numbers in groups of five.

(CONTINUED)

GIRLS VOICE ON RADIO
 65466 74888 12677 09900 00006
 64783 12878 66734...

Joe writes down the numbers in a black moleskin booklet.

36

INT. EVENING - VILLA - BED ROOM

Joe is lying on his Cambodian wooden platform bed on his belly and deciphering the radio message using a ONE-TIME PAD. A noise of Kia's footsteps catches his attention.

Kia comes into the room and takes Joe's pad from his hand, placing it away from them. She throws her arms around his neck and looks him in the eyes expectantly.

KIA
 Lesson me.

Joe takes her face in both hands and kisses her passionately, then speaks after a very long kiss.

JOE
 Kiss...

KIA
 (questioning tone)
 Kiss?

JOE
 I am kissing you.

Joe bites her lower lip playfully.

KIA
 Kissing

JOE
 (gesturing future tense with finger)
 I am going to kiss you

He does so, briefly.

KIA
 "gongtokis"

JOE
 (kisses her briefly)
 I have kissed you

Afterwards gesturing past tense.

KIA
 "havkisd"

(CONTINUED)

JOE
 (getting bored with grammar)
 You taste good!

KIA
 (teasing)
 You taste bad!

JOE
 (kissing her again)
 Hmmmm, very bad.

KIA
 (swooning, barely audible,
 not believing a word she
 says)
 Very bad. You are a very bad man.

Kia's long midnight blue-black hair caresses Joe. They slowly descend onto the bed. Frogs and cicada noise in the distance. A gecko swallows a fly. The CAMERA PANS slowly along the walls of the room. It suddenly stops and frames the open door which leads to the balcony. The Camera travels slowly out to the balcony, showing a beautiful view of the landscape, illuminated by the glare of bombs being dropped in the far distance.

37 **EXT. DAY - JUNGLE**

Joe slashes his way through the jungle. He wipes his forehead of sweat. From behind a clump of trees, he observes with his binoculars activities that we can hear none of due to far distance. A group of about twenty black clad young men and women sit in a circle listening to a wildly gesticulating officer. Every so often they respond enmass, fists in the air, yelling a few words in unison.. A girl stands makes a statement and is applauded. Moving his view about 100 meters away he sees a man of 35 years-of-age tied to a tree. He is light-skinned, could be Sino-Khmer, wearing underwear only. His face is bruised and bloodied. A black clad soldier, barely 15, is haranguing him, barking at him. The man is shaking and not answering. The man reacts with a scream to some action we cannot see. However, the screams can not be heard due to the distance.

Joe points his binoculars at the lower edge of the sun. The image turns a glistening white.

38 **INT. DAY - VILLA - UPPER ROOM**

Early golden morning light filling the room, the mosquito net has been gathered up above the bed. Joe sits in undershirt and worn khaki trousers reading a military-grade map on the floor on a woven mat. A stream

(CONTINUED)

of light flows across the maps he has spread out. When he changes position of the map it makes a brushing sound as it slides against the coarse matting. He picks up another map, of a different scale, and compares the two, going back and forth between them. His look says 'I can't decide here, I have to go into the field, and it's not going to be easy'.

Next, he pulls up his legs to sit crossed legged, arms around his knees, considering his next move. He reaches over to his rucksack and takes two small metal canisters that fit easily into his hands, setting them aside he folds up both maps and places them in his rucksack. Joe stands in one movement, without using his hands, which demonstrates his strong legs and back muscles. He walks towards the hall with the containers. He passes the bedroom and we see a glimpse of the TEDDY BAER in passing. He drips with perspiration. The song THE SOUND OF SILENCE sung by PAUL SIMON issues from the speaker of his short wave receiver, from BBC WORLD NEWS SERVICE.

BBC WORLD NEWS

[Adoption of the "War Powers Act"
- Congress dealt President Nixon
a stunning setback when it voted
to override his veto of
legislation limiting presidential
powers to commit US forces abroad
without congressional approval.
Congress, with the Vietnam War
and the showdown over continued
bombing in Cambodia behind it,
was anxious to reassert its role
in the conduct of the country's
foreign affairs.]

39 **INT. DAY - VILLA - ENTRANCE HALL**

Echoey sounds of Joe's footsteps in hall due to non-sound absorbing materials of the house. The hall is in very poor but not destitute condition. The ceiling is falling down in places. But the lighting, décor and angles room of is not depressing. The mood is more one of being at ease, like a boy camping and not having to behave domesticated. We see the broken glass panes of ornamental exterior windows. Near the large balcony, still inside, is a mirror which has been set precariously on top of a narrow built-in ledge. It is missing one corner. Joe stands in front of the mirror and sets the containers down side by side.

He takes off his A-shirt. With some difficulty, he opens the first container and taking some medium color paste applies an even coat over his entire face. From the second container Joe takes black paste and applies a small amount to the center of his forehead, nose, cheekbones and chin, rubbing in the edges. He looks at the containers and realizes he is missing one (light color) and takes some

(CONTINUED)

dust from the ledge on his fingers and applies it to the shadow parts of his face.

He does the same routine to his hands and neck, less meticulously. He looks at himself in the mirror and adds some black to one earlobe. He walks back to the bedroom, puts his boots on and laces them up.

40

EXT. DAY - JUNGLE

Joe makes his way through the jungle. He wears a civilian sunhat, long sleeve camouflage shirt and carries his rucksack on his back. On his belt is a combat knife. His back and underarms are drenched with sweat. As he walks he occasionally stumbles on roots but quickly catches himself.

We hear birds unheard in previous scenes. The jungle is thick and steaming hot. Sweat drips down Joe's face. He stops to drink a very small amount of water from the aluminum canteen kept in his rucksack, then leaning against a tree at a hill top he uses his binoculars to survey across a stream below. Within seconds he is slapping at red ants. He takes his shirt off and wipes his torso and arms with his shirt until he thinks he is clean of insects. Putting his shirt on, buttoning the cuffs tighter, he tries again. Focusing his binoculars Joe sees several trees across the way that look like they have been cut down. Not certain, but possibly - just a hint. He surveys the area and sees no other clues of activity. Cautiously, he approaches, stopping every ten then five meters to re-evaluate. He measures his steps carefully, testing the weight below and looking for booby traps. When he reaches the stream he looks everywhere before stepping out and exposing himself. First he throws a piece of wood out into the stream. When he hears no reaction from any quarter he enters the stream with his canteen in hand and fills up. He returns to the bank and pours it over his head, washing his face. He looks again across the river. It sounds dangerously quiet. Iridescent blue and green dragonflies flutter about near the surface of the water. Venturing out again, he refills his canteen and proceeds across. Hearing a sudden shrill sound he squats down low in the water, making sure he hunches over his backpack to not wet his rucksack. It is the cry of a large bird of prey flapping above. When it passes, he looks at the bank at the fewest stones, the easiest place to embark, and avoids it choosing a rocky place instead. Still he is walking hunched over. He moves quickly up to a group of trees when he hears a crack below his boot. He stops in his tracks cold. We hear his rapid heart beat growing louder. He slowly reaches around to unsnap his knife and ever so slowly feels centimeter by centimeter under and around his boot to see if all is well. It is only a loose branch.

Pulling his binoculars out Joe looks with his new closer vantage. He sees a pile of dry leaves and goes over to investigate. He finds an old dead branch and lying on the

(CONTINUED)

ground he sweeps the leaves off carefully. Because he needs to be far away and he has no leverage it is very difficult. We see him straining to do this seemingly insignificant act. Soon it is evident that the ground has obviously been disturbed. He gets his spade from his rucksack and digs.
Flash forward fifteen minutes... Five feet below ground the sound of a spade hitting metal. Joe hand digs out a green metal case. Brushing it off he sees Chinese writing on it. It is an ammunition case. He finds other articles in the pit such as charcoaled wood, human feces and bamboo wrappings with residue of rice.

Joe hears an abrupt loud sound in the distance. it is a flying fox descending from a tree to a clearing in one fell swoop. While following the flying fox across the clearing with his eyes he catches the glimpse of something blue. For a fraction of a second he sees a girl with long black hair waering a blue t-shirt. She disappears behind a royal palm.

41 **EXT. NIGHT - JUNGLE**

The light becomes less. Joe looks for a suitable space between two palms at which to string the ultra-light hammock he pulls from his rucksack. He sets it up and hangs his rucksack from a branch. Joe lies down with his boots and falls asleep quickly in the rapid tropical sunset. The sky soon becomes brilliant with stars.

42 **EXT. DAY - VILLA - IN FRONT OF HOUSE**

Joe sits in a tucked up sarong on the front steps to the villa in the afternoon light. Kia is kneeling two steps below him, so her face is at groin level where he has several leeches attached.
CLOSE-UP. With a burning cigarette, pointing at a leech on Joe's leg she comes very close to his skin.

JOE
Ouch ! - That hurts!

KIA
(ignoring Joe's whimpering)
Do you get leeches often Joe?

JOE
Well, It's the height of the rainy season. We're in the middle of the jungle...

KIA
...Joe, you should not wander through the jungle.

Kia is burning another leech.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Ow!

KIA

It is very dangerous.

JOE

I sure know that, snakes and wild boar. - Do you sometimes go into the jungle?

KIA

That's not what I mean Joe

KIA

Why should I go into the jungle?

JOE

Do you?

Instead of answering Joe's question she comes with the burning cigarette at a leech very close to his skin again. She gets up in a rush and starts to leave feigning boredom. Joe grabs her by the wrist. He sees Sarit standing in the background and let's go of her.

43 **INT. NIGHT - VILLA - UPPER ROOM**

It is night. Joe sits in the upper room of the villa. His face is only lit by the "green eye" of the radio. He is occupied with transmitting coordinates by Morse code when he freezes upon hearing a sound. He switches off the radio transmitter with a slow movement. He draws a pistol. It is dark in the room.

Sarit storms breathlessly up the stairs to the first floor and calls for Joe. Joe approaches him without the weapon.

SARIT

Kia is sick. Come quickly.

Joe grabs a canvass bag with the Red Cross insignia and follows Sarit down the stairs.

44 **EXT. DAY - KAMPONG (RIVER VILLAGE)**

The huts of the villagers are built on bamboo poles in the river. They are connected to each other by bridges and footbridges. Individual fires in metal bowls spread a ghostly light. It is not clear whether the environment or the light is swaying. Joe follows Sarit over the footbridges.

(CONTINUED)

NEIGHBOURS

(speaking in polite Khmer to
Joe)

Cham reapsuel

JOE

Cham reapseul

The people greet Joe respectfully. The children laugh and tug at his hand. The cackling of geese and clucking of chickens can be heard. The waves lap against the poles; the entire village sways in this rhythm. A boat steered by a boy has just landed at the landing stage and is tying up. Joe follows Sarit on the front end of a footbridge to a little hut standing on poles over the river.

45 **INT. NIGHT - KAMPONG - RIVER VILLAGE HOUSE**

On the inside of the hut, Kia is lying on a colorful piece of cloth on the dark hardwood floor. Her hair shines, wet from sweat. When Joe greets her, Kia briefly opens her eyes and tries to orientate herself with a glassy look. Joe takes a fever thermometer out of his bag. Kia has a high fever and since she appears to be freezing

JOE

(looking at Kia as he
speaks, in Khmer)

Blankets!

Women standing around immediately bring two.

JOE

Som Te Kdau (hot tea please)

Joe takes an antibiotic tablet from his bag and gives it to Kia. Sarit stands at the doorway, distant as if a remote stranger.

SARIT

(speaking anxiously, more to
himself than Joe)

Kia slap ot-de (Kia can't die).

Joe goes out with him onto the landing stage.

46 **EXT. NIGHT - KAMPONG - JETTY**

Joe and Sarit sit on the footbridge, Khmer scarves around their necks. The full moon casts a bright light on their faces.

SARIT

(asking for reassurance)

Will Kia be OK?

(CONTINUED)

JOE
(speaking without
confidence) Yes.

SARIT
I will die without Kia

Joe grasps Sarit by the shoulder to comfort him, as if they will will her to live. Dogs start barking.

JOE
(lightening up) She will not
die.

Suddenly, they hear the loud noise of helicopter blades. People look out from their windows searching the sky for what it is. A curious boy points out to an excited friend what he sees coming.

Two American combat helicopters approach in low flight along the river. We see more the silhouette and the action than the people on board - machine guns extending out of the carriage, missiles pointed their way. The closer they come the louder the noise, the stronger the wind and the more terrified the villagers become. The water is whipped up, tearing off laundry and scattering it. The reed window coverings of the stilt houses flap repeatedly. Corrugated tin roofs bang. An old man stunned immobile on a small boat grabs onto a pole in the river for stability.

Joe looks up, his scarf fluttering wildly.

Then they both men cover their ears. Joe and Sarit hurry back to the hut. The entire village is in panic over the impending bombing. Even after the helicopters have passed the sound continues.

After one minute the entire sky shines in a red light; only a few seconds later, the ear- splitting noise of bombs exploding in a village 5 kilometers away is heard. A baby reels feeling a shock wave then wales.

SARIT
(to Joe in the hut,
desperately) Why are they
doing this?

JOE
(speaking in Khmer)
Everybody go! Take nothing.

A woman grabs her whimpering pet dog and runs about confused. A father, already with an infant child straddling his side, grips the arm of his infant son and hauls him up to straddle his other side, and he runs awkwardly away, looking for someone else.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN 1 OV
(in Kmer) Get your sister!

MAN 2 OV
(in Khmer) Don't take all
this stuff, leave it! Hurry!

Sarit picks up from her mat the much weakened Kia. Sarit's parents join him and they all flee for cover into the adjoining jungle with the others.

The village is suddenly deserted. But it is still lit by the red fire of burning villages some kilometers up the river.

47 **INT. NIGHT - VILLA - JOE'S BEDROOM**

Joe lies on his bed sweating, the mosquito net over him is half-open. He stares at the ceiling where the old ventilator, previously still, turns to the roar of helicopter propellers.

Joe drinks isolated swigs of Mekong-Whisky from a bottle mostly finished, his head straining to lift itself up a few centimeters. Then he lets himself fall in order to stare at the ceiling again. Detonations and shots can still be heard from outside.

48 **EXT. DAY - KAMPONG - KIA'S ROOM**

Joe visits Kia in her village. She is already feeling better. Sarit is beaming.

SARIT
You took Kia's sickness

Joe smiles, taking credit only because it makes Sarit feel better.

JOE
She will survive and you will
marry her one day.

49 **EXT. DAY - KAMPONG - RIVER**

Late afternoon. River by the jetty. Pure white ducks swim by quacking. Dragon flies flit about. Very young girls, naked except for cheap necklaces of pearls and simple gold earrings, are playing and laughing in the river. They are doing a sort of call and response by clapping the surfaces of the water with cupped hands. From below or beside, but certainly underwater, we see tiny fish nibbling at the toes of the girls. The camera hears a different kind of sound from underwater (the more bass underwater version of
(CONTINUED)

both the clapping and laughter.)

Next we see Joe, in US white underwear holding his breath under water and looking at the group of girls moving their legs. We see Sarit swim past. He wears a tucked-up blue checkered sarong. Compared to Joe, he is stronger, more skillful in the water, more male somehow. He grabs a piece of damaged burned wood that drifts by in the current. Joe watches him carrying it underwater. Joe comes to the surface and gasps for air. Sarit comes without much effort to the surface with the piece. It is carved, splintered and blackened. He places it on the platform but stays in the water.

JOE

I recognize that design from one of the Phnong villages in Mondulkiri. Can I see it?

Joe swims over to examine it.

SARIT

Which one - the ones bombed by the Americans last week?

JOE

(said absent-mindedly as he looks at it closely)
By Lon Nol's airforce...

SARIT

(hands behind his head, floating supported by the platform)
Sent by the Americans. Paid by the Americans. Armed by the Americans.

JOE

(not willing to be drawn into a political discussion)
It's a shame.

Joe is giving up on floating unsuccessfully and trying to bring up a sore point in a civil manner

SARIT

My aunt's brother-in-law trades with one of those villages

JOE

(expresses sudden pain. Sarit looks at him like 'what's the matter?')
Stubbed my toe on a rock. It's not very deep here is it.

Joe tosses piece of wood to Sarit.

(CONTINUED)

after catching it, he goes to stand on a rock testing every move of his feet.

SARIT

He was there on one of his monthly visits near the border. He didn't survive.

JOE

I am sorry to hear that.

Joe dives under to take another look at the girls. He looks around and can't see them anywhere. He surfaces and clears his eyes.

SARIT

(driving home his point)
It wasn't just him.

Sarit throws the piece at Joe in an ambiguous motion that could be a playful 'catch' or more.

JOE

Of course there were other casualties...

SARIT

(putting it in specific terms)
Thirty died. Plus many more injured. Do you know how many VC were killed in Plei Loh?

JOE

(looking around for a distraction, sighing then giving Sarit his full attention)
I don't know. How many?

He throws the piece of wood back to Sarit.

SARIT

Five. Only five. My cousin was aware of who was hiding in the village. It was no secret to anyone living there. But to kill five innocents to kill one enemy - is this the American idea of how to fight a war?

JOE

(trying to put a 'happy face' on it)
I am glad at least some survived.

Joe swims out away.

(CONTINUED)

SARIT

(follows him, he won't
change the subject)
Joe, I don't mean this
personally, but... life was
better for Cambodians before
foreigners came here you know.

JOE

Bullshit. Sorry to burst your
bubble Sarit, but Cambodia's
history is a history of
foreigners. Until a few hundred
years ago Siamese was the
language of court. Vietnam and
Thailand both have ruled here.
Don't they teach you that in
school? And it wasn't until the
French colonized that the ruling
class cared a rat's ass about
people in the country. You have
an idealized image of Cambodia,
my friend.

SARIT

Are you my friend?
(looks at Joe searchingly)

JOE

(changing subject, avoiding
his gaze)
What do you have to be proud of?

SARIT

We have Angkor.

SARIT pulls himself up to the platform, sitting legs in
the water, gazing out romantically.

JOE

Exactly what I am talking about
Sarit. (He joins Sarit to sit
with legs drawn up) What have
Cambodians done 'lately'? Anyway,
Angkor was built by slaves.
Monuments to royal glory and a
parasitical class of priests and
monks - Hindu and Buddhist both.
Cambodians have to stop living in
the middle ages.

Sarit is feeling around under the platform while he
half-listens.

JOE

(continuing)
We westerners had reformations
and revolutions in the 16th and
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (cont'd)
18th centuries. It's time
Cambodia had a change Sarit.

Sarit pulls out a large water snail and places it upside
down on the platform beside him.

JOE
Hmmm, that's a good one. Do we
have chilies?...

SARIT
I can find a substitute in the
forest, but real chilies, no.

JOE
(getting back on track)
It's long overdue. If nobody
kicks your ass hard you Khmers
stay stuck in the past.

SARIT
(smiling, not being able to take
this criticism entirely
seriously) You sound like Saloth
of the Khmer Rouge leadership.

JOE
He's going by 'Pol Pot' now
according to the news I hear. And
if you think collateral damage is
bad where the Air force is
cleaning out, try living in the
Western Zone controlled by the
communists. 'Free zone', my ass.

SARIT
I'm more worried about the
Vietnamese. (feels some more for
snails) Now that they have come
into our country will they ever
leave? (struggles to dislodge
another snail) We have the Viet
Cong and the NVA controlling 9
provinces. My nephew says they
are very organized.

Sarit pulls off another snail with a growl and
accidentally pushes Joe into the water

JOE
(laughing)
So, you know something.

SARIT
I know a lot more than you give
me credit for. When all is said
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SARIT (cont'd)

and done, you are American. You come here, throw your money around, slap us on the back as your buddies. (Joe is smiling) But you also expect us to do business American style. You are disappointed when we want to sleep in the hottest time of the day! When consideration is called for we can't give a gift without being accused of corruption. When respect is deserved or wise you call it 'kow-towing'. We are Asian. We are Khmers! The Japanese might have treated us as inferiors instead of equals but at least we shared the same soul.

JOE

(getting out of the water again)

What has this got to do with the political and military situation in Cambodia?

SARIT

Everything!

Sarit pushes him back into the water.

SARIT

People in the countryside, they are not so terrified about Khmer Rouge guerrillas, or even about having their villages torched by troops from any side. It is the US bombs they fear. You don't want to get your hands dirty and you are decimating us. (Sarit looks at Joe wondering if he should say anything then looks up as he speaks. The clouds are dark) How do I know you're not bringing the bombers to our villages?

JOE

(looks startled, as in 'where did 'that' come from?', treading water looking up at Sarit)

I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that Sarit. Pilots make mistakes...

Joe gets up from the river with a look that says 'I am getting out now, stop this game'.

(CONTINUED)

He takes the closest sarong and tosses it further away as a sort of 'why should I help you?'

SARIT

(getting irritated)

This is not a mistake. We have done nothing to the USA.

Joe sits down wet and exasperated.

JOE

The Ho Chi Minh Trail in Eastern Cambodia - you can that neutrality? The Communists are using Cambodian territory as bases to attack the sovereignty of Southern Vietnam. This is not being 'non-aligned'

Black clouds rumble periodically.

SARIT

Many people are joining the Khmer Rouge because they want peace. Maybe I will too.

JOE

(pointing his finger at Sarit)

You won't do that Sarit because you love Kia too much.

Sarit picking up a snail and looking at it as if to assess its value for the cooking pot.

SARIT

I also love my country. Prince Sihanouk does too.

JOE

(slicking water off himself) I do not know if Sihanouk is a devil or a fool. You, Sarit, are neither. (stops in order to make a point) And anyway, Sihanouk is far away, exiled in China. So, Cambodia is kingless. The Khmer Rouge will not return Cambodia to an Angkor paradise of farms and canals that never existed anywhere except in fantasy. You must know that. (grabs a further away sarong) They are Maoists using the Prince. And they are ruthless.

(CONTINUED)

SARIT

How can you be sure?

JOE

They took my wife and my daughter.

SARIT

Where are they?

JOE

I don't know. (trying to smile)
They might be dead for all I know. Three years ago both were kidnapped by these revolutionaries you admire so much (said with a kind look not as a criticism).

Wind whips up, rain begins suddenly. It rips at the surface of the water. Sound of thunder.

The men hear lightening and retreat into the house.

50

EXT. EARLY MORNING - JUNGLE

Just after dawn blue smoke hovers over the low-lying campsite. There is no wind.

BINOCULAR POV: Four men make their way from the camp to an area behind a small ridge. Two black-clad soldiers hold onto the shirt scruff of a man and walk him out, arms tied behind his back. Another man follows carrying a long stick with a robust end. He drags it along the ground absent-minded as if bored, occasionally hitting a piece of branch or a rock he comes across. As they come to the ridge of the hill the escorts link their arms to the man snug as he finds making his way up and over it difficult. He looks weak. The man is pushed to his knees and his neck falls. Then he starts up as if to flee. A brief kick to his side by one of the guards topples him. His face lies on the ground. He says something. One of the guards brings over a stone and places under the man's head, like a pillow. The other raises his bludgeon and brings it down full force. The man does not move at first. Then his face reacts with a twitch and a sneer. With the second blow the man's head bounces. With the second whack the jaw breaks. With the third blood flows from the nostrils onto the ground. It takes five whacks for the skull to crack. A grey substance the consistency of butter seeps out of the fictures.

Joe puts his binoculars down, shaken. He sits in the shade on a hill observing with his naked eye the activity in the vicinity 300 meters below. As he wants to pick up the binoculars again Joe moves his hand to readjust his

(CONTINUED)

position and it touches another hand. Joe freezes. The hand does not move. Joe withdraws his hand and swallows. He turns his neck smoothly over to the person at his side. It is Sarit. Joe looks both relieved and annoyed.

JOE

How did you find me?

SARIT

I have been following you from when you left.

Joe hands him the binoculars. Sarit experiments with the adjustments and surveys the area below.

BINOCULAR POV: He sees a truck driving along and stop near an open field. Two armed soldiers get out, pull the back gate down and summon the passengers out. Ten passengers are ordered to move to the edge of a recently dug pit with piles of dirt nearby. They do not need to be told to kneel. Three young men with wooden bats come over. One kneeling man adjusts his hair, another is losing his balance due to the stress. We do not see the executions this time.

Sarit puts the binoculars down.

SARIT

Who are these animals? They don't look Vietnamese.

JOE

You know who they are.

Sarit looks again with his binoculars. The soldiers are pushing, kicking, carrying, and rolling the victims into the pit. One man is still alive and tries to grip the ankle of one of the soldiers. The youth does not take it seriously and dismissively releases himself. He is buried alive with the others as the soldiers fill in the pit.

SARIT

Khmer Rouge, but why?

JOE

Don't ask me.

Joe brings out his notebook, notes date, time and observations. They get up and cautiously leave the area creeping backwards.

EXT. DAY - VILLA IN FRONT OF HOUSE

Joe and Sarit return from reconnaissance and are walking up the zig-zag hill path to the villa. When they are very near the top shapes of people are seen.

SARIT
(seeing people through the trees)
Looks like you have visitors.

Waiting at the villa is a man of about 32 years with a girl of approximately 12 years-of-age. As Joe approaches the man stands up respectfully and has the girl do the same.

JOE
(still walking up the hill,
whispering to Sarit)
Do you have any idea what this is
about?

SARIT
No

JOE
Will you interpret for me please?

SARIT
Sure.

GIRL
(putting her hands together)
Cham reapsul

SARIT
(speaks in Khmer to girl's
father, mostly listening, then
turning to Joe)
She is from Heychroub 5
kilometers south. Some Khmer
Rouge soldiers are hiding in the
village. So, they are afraid of
an attack by the Americans. And
he thinks that because you're
American you could keep them way.

The man looks at Joe impassively.

JOE
What does he want me to do about
it?

Sarit speaks again to the man.

The man gestures to his daughter, hand open, as in 'you understand', but without malicious intent, resigned.

(CONTINUED)

Joe reacts with a 'go home' gesture and disappears into the house.

SARIT
What is her name?

FATHER
Srai Neah

The girl slowly follows Joe into the villa. Sarit and the father leave without further words.

FADE TO BLACK

52 **EXT. NIGHT - KAMPONG - ESTABLISHING SHOT [1974]**

FADE IN FROM BLACK

LONG SHOT FROM ACROSS THE RIVER: Dark except for almost new moon. We see about twenty stilt houses. Despite simplicity and not much colour, rich textures of wood, water and shadow. In foreground several boats tied to poles at each house except Kia's which has a small jetty. Wind makes boats rock.

INSERT: **One year later, June 1974**

Everyone, except at one house, is asleep, with only smoldering/minimal lamps in a few houses. A dog sleeps at one house, a bird cage is covered at another. The bustle of sound at one house (Kia's) predominates. The door to the porch facing the river is lit brightly. We see very brief snippets of movement back and forth, people organizing festive clothing, carrying ceremonial items, carrying food.

53 **EXT. NIGHT - KAMPONG - JETTY**

Kia is sitting in front of her house on a stool at the end of the landing stage, along which

HUNDREDS OF CANDELS are set up and lit the scene.

She is being prepared for the wedding ceremony. Her face is being made-up elaborately: almost a centimeter of white make-up is applied. Her long hair is made into an artistic high coiffeur. Then she is dressed in a royal-styled robe. Kia is almost unrecognizable.

54

EXT. AFTERNOON - KAMPONG - WEDDING KIA-SARIT

The wedding ceremony takes place on a large field with pavilions. In the main pavilion there are three stages. In the center are the bride (Kia) and groom (Sarit) on chairs. They are dressed like royalty. Kia wears gold earrings and a yellow shawl with golden thread patterns. Sarit is dressed completely in white. On their right are five Theravada Buddhist monks in orange robes. On the couple's left close family. In another pavilion are musicians who playing their homemade "Kseh diev's" (a string instrument with a gourd as a resonator reminiscent of the pipe zither Thailand) and small drums. After blessings with rice and flowers by a village elder, the monks start chanting in chorus (during time in the ceremony those gathered remain silent, every other time they are gay and talkative).

The wedding couple feed each other fruits while a photographer sets up his camera on a tripod. More and more people come to the festive area and line up to greet the wedding couple. Sarit, clothed completely in white, takes his place next to the bride in front of the table of presents and they kneel with a sword between their outstretched arms. The guests tie strings around the wrists of both bride and groom.

After this, they eat at the long tables, set up extra for the occasion. It seems as if the village has become rich overnight: dozens of bowls with delicious fruit and sweets are passed around. After the feast, Joe brings a large wedding cake from the house. The people clap hands and exult. Soon they begin line dancing ramwong.

55

EXT. NIGHT - KAMPONG - WEDDING KIA-SARIT

WIDE ANGLE of the wedding feast location. Hours have passed. Guests are partying. There are balloons and streamers. The music is loud. Some people are drunk and making fools of themselves. Kia and Sarit have joined the dancing.

Across the way we see a person coming towards the party. Very slowly, the shape comes into focus and she is close enough for us to see that it is a LITTLE GIRL. The girl moves through the unkempt grass and flowers closer.

The Little Girl of about eight-years-of-age, she is as if sleep-walking. She wears a thoroughly soiled torn boy's shirt missing a cuff and several buttons. Her tossed hair reaches to her shoulders. There are bits of plant material in it. There is no reaction on her face to the festive group she moves towards. It is as if she is coming in from another world, a feral child, someone escaped from a mental asylum.

(CONTINUED)

A group of young boys playing ball see her and laugh to callously themselves about her, throwing their ball at her mockingly. One of the matrons sees the Little Girl and, in holding up her formal silk sarong, purse in hand, goes to see what is going on. This matron is over 55 years-of-age and overweight.

MATRON

(in Khmer)

Where are you going little girl?

When she reaches her the Little Girl ignores her and keeps moving to the party. The matron runs after her, back in the direction of the party, solicitous.

MATRON

Little girl, can I help you?

The girl stops and standing still listens to the music.

MATRON

(Calling to her family)

Thina, bring me some cake.
Some fruit too.

She takes the little girl by her unclenched hand and brings her towards the party, looking a little self-conscious. She stops, pulls a hankerchief from her bag and wipes the girl's face. It is not dirt. It is a bruise.

Joe is at the party but not part of it. He is sitting alone on a chair looking out into the jungle. He has a glass of whiskey in his hand. There is a bottle on the ground beside him. He catches a glimpse of the matron and girl and looks closer. He gets up leaving the glass and goes toward them.

We see Joe weaving through the crowd, bumping into a few people, looking very stressed, trying to compose himself. He gets close enough to the matron and the girl to recognize a face and stands there dumbstruck. The matron is bending down speaking to the girl who is not reacting. Joe stairs at the girl.

The matron looks up with a tentative smile. Joe walks over and put his hand on the girls' shoulder, exceptionally gingerly, as if he is afraid she is not really there and is testing to see if it is a dream.

MATRON

Joe?

JOE

I will take her, leave her
to me.

(CONTINUED)

MATRON
(confused)
Ah, OK.

He picks her up and leaves the party stunned, holding her high up in his arms, looking a bit insane himself as if he has found some lost prize.

We hear the sound of the wedding music become more distant and the jungle sounds growing as he moves effortlessly up the path to the villa. A warm light glowing in the villa is the last shot.

56 **INT. DAY - VILLA - FRONT POARCH**

The interior rooms are lit only by moonlight. A heavy rain folowed by blizzards and thunder starts.

Joe sets the girl cautiously down on the Hollywood swing. He enters the house and reappears with a burning candle.

With the candelabra in his hand he looks at the Little Girl, at every space on her face, at every speck in her eyes as he would inspect her.

He strokes her cheek. She does not respond.

Joe takes her clenched fist but she does not release it. He takes her other hand but it is limp in his. He looks at her torn fingernails and curls her fingers into his folded hands, bringing her hand to his nose and inhaling her fragrance begins to rock in the swing.

We see the swing from the BACK like jail.

MID SHOT He sits her elegantly on the seat of the swing and starts to unbuttons her shirt. looking through the metal bars of the swing Joe's face (LOOKING TOWARDS CAMERA) is behind bars now too.

We see her little body FROM BEHIND She is neither shy nor keen. It is as if it has nothing to do with her. After taking her blouse off, he sits her down and takes off her torn trousers. Getting no response, he stands her up on the swing sideways, unclips the front of her trousers and unzips them. They fall down. She is wearing no panties. He looks at her in horror, immediately biting the back of his hand and holding back the sympathetic pain as he churns, his chest heaving, eyes red. She has several welts on her buttocks that are 3-5 cm long. He holds his hand over them, wanting to feel the seriousness of the injuries, which are obviously old, but does not. He dips to put his arm around her waist and her unclenched hand falls on his shoulder and reaches out to rest on his chest.

57 **INT. DAY - VILLA - FRONT POARCH - SHOWER**

In the corner of the poarch there is an improvised 'shower': Joe is pouring water from a bucket.

Joe lathers the soap between his hands and washes her tenderly. The only sound is that of him scooping up the water and bathing her from head to toe. She behaves like a doll and does not show any reactions.

58 **INT. DAY - VILLA - UPPER ROOM**

A Cambodian cot with sheets lies in the rays of the moonlight in the upper room, which is also where Joe's working table and his radio equipment is.

The Little Girl is sleeping sound under a white sheet while Joe sits by her bed drinking Nescafe. At a side table is an empty glass with water. Joe watches her sleep.

Every five or so seconds we see a different moment in the night. While she stays more or less in the same position, he is in many - pacing, kneeling by her bed adjusting her sheet, staring at her from his chair, standing at the foot of the bed looking at her, leaning against the door as if despondent, looking out to the river below, and mostly drinking coffee and absorbing her every moment of sleep.

The pattern of the moon's circuit through the sky follows his changes throughout the night.

It is early morning and the Little Girl is still lying on her bed under a mosquito net. Joe watches her thoughtfully for a long time. Quietly, in order not to wake her, he puts the teddy of his daughter next to her.

59 **EXT. DAY - KAMPONG - HEAVY RAIN**

Road corner in the village where the three traders have their stalls. It is pouring rain so hard it is difficult to see. The muddy road is flowing with rivulets. Tree frogs hop along. A few people dash across the road for cover covering their heads with whatever they have handy. The canvass awning at a trader's stall sends forth an ongoing gush of water that spews out onto the muddy street.

JOE

Kia, unfortunately I have to go away for a couple of days tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

KIA
How long will you be gone?

JOE
Like I said, a couple of days. I do not know exactly. Would you take care of the Little Girl while I'm gone?

KIA
OK, don't worry.

JOE
In fact, don't take your eyes off her. She is very traumatized by whatever the Khmer Rouge did to her. Will you promise me that?

KIA
(Making the Asian swear chesture putting her hands together on face level)
Yes.

JOE
She likes rice and water. Maybe you can try fish too or watever she will eat... Make sure her mosquito net is...

KIA
(interrupting)
...I know how to take care of her.

JOE
What can I bring you from the city?

KIA
"Rouge pour la Khmer" (smiles and turns away).

60

EXT. DAY - BART'S JETTY

Joe arrives at Bart's Jetty.

BART
I should warn you Joe. I heard that it's dangerous now to go downstream.

JOE
This time it's urgent. I have to go to Phnom Penh and I have to be back soon because someone is
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (cont'd)
waiting at my house who needs my
help. Will you risk your life
twice for me?

BART
I'm a coward, as I told you
before. But I tell you, I'd
rather die here than going back
to these taboos and musty
restrictions I left behind.

JOE
Good wording!

BART
(laughing)

So, hop in!

Joe climbs into Bart's boat. It rocks and Joe almost falls
overboard.

JOE
I have been thinking about our
conversation about faith and all
that...

BART
...so you've changed your
outlook?

JOE
Maybe I have. I think now that
there is such a thing as destiny.
Some power, good and bad, is
behind all this. You know I found
something which is worth living
for.

BART
So you found love at last.

JOE
What makes you think that would
be the reason?

BART
(recites)
"The things greater than all
things are
The first is Love, and the second
War.
And since we know War may prove,
Heart of my heart, let us talk of
Love!"

(CONTINUED)

JOE
Rudyard Kipling ?

BART
Yes.

Bart takes Joe to a bigger boat which will take him further downstream to Phnom Penh

61

EXT - EARLY EVENING - KRAETIE - DOCK

The dock is quiet except for the sound of the rough engine of the rusty cargo ship ZINGOLA, which sits in the oily waters of the Mekong River.

Joe quickly climbs the access plank. He goes straight to the wheel house in a route that keeps him out of any lights from the dock. Above the water line of the ship there are numerous holes obviously caused by bullets and one large hole from a missile that has been cosmetically covered with riveted aluminum. Outside the wheel house a crew of five dark Khmer men sit cross-legged on the floor wearing American size helmets and flak jackets - mostly unfastened.

Hearing a mortar round, they huddle closer together. The skipper is a lean short thirty-year-old mixed-blood Cambodian with intense eyes. Three mongrel dogs sit panting in the crowded wheel room. A dog whines. Seeing Joe, the skipper puts on his merchant marine cap.

SKIPPER
I am Vuthea. You must be Simon.
You have something for me?

Joe nods and hands him a large stuffed envelope. The skipper peeks in the envelope and roughly counts the wads by hand next.

He takes Joe to a lockable steel compartment door near the engine room. Unlatching two of the ship locks on the door he opens it with a loud creak. Cockroaches scuttle away. The closet-size room is full of working pipes and electrical wires. In a small unused space is just enough room for a torn mat with blanket and a large bottle of water, plus a flak jacket and helmet. A small hatch looks out to the river

SKIPPER
Sorry for room.

JOE
Where is our military escort?

SKIPPER
Of course.

(CONTINUED)

The skipper takes him to the end of the ship and motions over the edge. Joe can see nothing. The skipper motions again. Looking closer to the ship Joe sees a PT boat with two awfully young Khmer men and a mounted machine gun. They wave up at him. The skipper leaves looking sombre. Joe walks about the deck examining rust holes and several significant missile fire holes that have been patched improperly. Suddenly, he feels the vibration of the boat as the engine is revved. Crew release the ropes and among shouts the boat leaves dock.

The skipper leaves. Joe stoops and enters his hiding place uneasily. Suddenly, with a loud noise he feels the vibration of the boat as the engine is revved. Securing a stable position he sits secure, looking confident about his abilities to carry out his task.

After a few moments Joe goes to the port whole to view the passing sights... the abandoned wharves and docks, the bombed out bridge, the busy river traffic such as fishing boats.

62 **EXT. DAY - EVENING - MEKONG**

We see the ship from outside from a distance, including the port whole Joe is looking out of.

63 **EXT. DAY - PNH - MARKET [1974]**

CAMERA ON ROOFTOP: Phsar Kandal, shot from four floors above from east side rooftop. It is morning so the sun is behind the camera. In the center is a Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist shrine. Surrounding that are four concentric narrow lanes of many shops. Except for the pay-as-you-go WC there is no communal roof. Each has a temporary awning or umbrella cover from the shade so we see only snippets of color and movement in between the mismatched brown and blue canvasses - a patchwork of roofs. Every four or so shops has folded down its umbrella roof or fold-out awning due to the depressed economy.

INSERT: Phnom Penh, August 8, 1974

Never the less a steady buzz of activity can be heard - the sounds of windowshoppers, the bells of cart vendors on the periphery trying to attract customers to their miserable offerings, guards with whistles shoing away beggars, the loudspeakers from a funeral far across the block on the western side of the market. On the southern and western side, all around are the up and down two to four-story buildings of the standard Cambodian shophouse width, thus making splashes of vertical colors at odds with each other. On the northern side is a government warehouse being suspiciously unloaded with a plethora of goods from an army truck.

EXT. DAY - PNH - MARKET

Walking quickly because a new outpouring of rain looks evident, he arrives at a tuk-tuk stand where he meets an old acquaintance (BILL). Bill is nearly 70, his posture stooped, his head almost bald, he wears bifocal glasses and a wristwatch. He has a paunch. Bill's shirt is a tan safari one, with epaulets and two big front buttoned pockets. His trousers are wrinkled baggy medium brown. He carries a mustard-colored Buddhist monk's student bag. We can see the shape of books and bananas inside. He holds an old acoustic guitar.

JOE

Bill, well, Jesus H Christ, where have you been?

BILL

Laos, before that Ratanakiri, before that Bangkok. For a year before that...

JOE

I meant how are you?

BILL

Had to go into the hospital for a strangulated hernia. Almost killed me.

JOE

Where you going now?

BILL

Anywhere you are Joe.

JOE

Let's share a tuk-tuk.

Joe negotiates, we do not hear. Both men get in opposite each other. The tuk-tuk drives through a crowded side street. The two men have to shout at each other in order to be heard over the street noise.

JOE

Are you still writing your songs?

BILL

Remember? I've a new one...

(starts singing)

Ho Chi Minh is a real nice guy.
He live [sic] in the heaven on a
yellow star.
Ain't no use to pray to God no
more.

The Viet Cong killed God in war.
o Jesus Christ kiss my ass as you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BILL (cont'd)

lay upon your cross.
The Mother Mary wacked you off.
And you went to heaven in orgasim
[sic] thought.
Who started the Vietnam War -
It was J.F.K. and his whores.
Who was a great big son of a
bitch -
It was L.B.J. and his fix.
Who is fucking up Cambodia -

It was Richard M. Nixon and his
dick.
I ain't got no money.
I ain't got no shoes.
But I got my A.K-47 in use.
So mirror, mirror on the wall.
Whose the most beautiful of them
all -
Mirror, mirror, on the wall.
The N.V.A. outclass [sic] them
all.
So Yankee, Yankee
Kiss my ass.
You just ain't got no class.

JOE

Very patriotic, Bill.

BILL

How great?

JOE

Great, great.

BILL

\$20 great? I am a bit short at
the moment...

JOE

As we all are. How much do you
need?

BILL

20 dollars. ... 15...

JOE

Nice guitar. 10 for the guitar.

65 **INT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY - AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE**

The Ambassador's very large teak desk and matching leather
backed chair are placed against the wall in the center of
the room. Small photos on the desk facing the chair are of
personal nature - Dean's wife and children, his mother,

(CONTINUED)

and a casual one of Prince Siri Matak with the Ambassador at a private party. On the desk is a brass name plaque with a folksy phrase, an elegant but simple pen holder, a small bronze Cham drum, a coffee mug with department of state seal, and a leather stacked office organizer with several letters and documents.

A fringed US flag stands in the corner, another small one as a desk stand. Behind the desk on the wall is the embassy seal of the USA. The horizontal wooden blinds are drawn, the lamps shades are crème, the colors of the room are subtle - this creates a warm, rich feel. On a side display cabinet are baseball mementos, souvenirs from Belgium (pewter peeing boy) and art objects from Togo and France among others. A Menorah and degrees from Harvard and Sorbonne are placed on the top shelf with photos of the ambassador shaking the hands of various academic and government personages. There is a glass of water on a cork coaster at his side and the Ambassador casually sits on the edge of his desk while he dictates a telegram to his secretary Jenny who sits across the room in an armless upholstered chair, her legs crossed. He is informing the White House about the situation in Cambodia.

The door is open a third of the way. Joe enters. Dean stands up from the edge of his desk and is a little annoyed.

JENNY

It's considered polite to knock on the Ambassador's door even if it's open.

AMBASSADOR

We're about done here Jenny. The meeting starts in the conference room in ten minutes. Excuse me Joe.

Joe with his newly bought guitar over one shoulder closes the door.

AMBASSADOR

(looking at Jenny,
dictating)

Mr. Kissinger... scratch that...

Mr. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, After four years of continuous war in Cambodia and with fighting contained in Vietnam and a settlement reached in Laos, it is questionable whether the Khmer people are willing to continue this struggle much longer. War weariness has set in. If the Cambodian conflict

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AMBASSADOR (cont'd)
is to be resolved through other than military means, this alternative route should be explored sooner rather than later. The economic, political and military problems will get out of hand and bring down Lon Nol's regime. Even continued American assistance at present levels will merely delay the outcome. Time is not on our side in Cambodia."

66 INT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY - CONFERENCE ROOM

The conference room does not have a lot of extra room compared to the Ambassador's office but it is not cramped either. A rectangular table with unupholstered armless chairs could seat a dozen. The lighting is fluorescent. A color television is on a high rolling stainless steel stand at the front of the room. Jenny, Carter, Joe are present, waiting for the Ambassador to join them. Jenny has a yellow steno pad and pen in hand.

HARBIN

Gentlemen, pardon, ladies and gentlemen, let's start.

JOE

(tapping the table with his fingers)
What's next?

CARTER

The shit has hit the fan. The Khmer Rouge get stronger from day to day actually from hour to hour. If you wanna know my opinion we need ground troops now.

HARBIN

At this point I agree with you one hundred percent, but I guess that is not up to us to desicde...

JOE

What's the purpose of this meeting? I had lot's of problems coming down here, actually the boat was attacked several times, it's a miracle that the missiles did not cause more damage.

(CONTINUED)

The Dialog is interrupted by the Amabassador entering the room. He takes his place at the head of the table.

AMBASSADOR

(looks at his watch)

Jenny, the news...

Jenny turns on the TV (AFTN channel. We see President Nixon giving his resignation speech.

NIXON

Good evening.

This is the 37th time I have spoken to you from this office, where so many decisions have been made that shaped the history of this Nation. Each time I have done so to discuss with you some matter that I believe affected the national interest.

In all the decisions I have made in my public life, I have always tried to do what was best for the Nation. Throughout the long and difficult period of Watergate, I have felt it was my duty to persevere, to make every possible effort to complete the term of office to which you elected me. In the past few days, however, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing that effort.

As long as there was such a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion, that to do otherwise would be unfaithful to the spirit of that deliberately difficult process and a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future.

But with the disappearance of that base, I now believe that the constitutional purpose has been served, and there is no longer a need for the process to be prolonged.

To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both the President and the Congress in a period when our

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NIXON (cont'd)

entire focus should be on the great issues of peace abroad and prosperity without inflation at home.

Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow. Vice President Ford will be sworn in as President at that hour in this office.

I regret deeply any injuries that may have been done in the course of the events that led to this decision. I would say only that if some of my judgments were wrong--and some were wrong--they were made in what I believed at the time to be the best interest of the Nation.

They have been a time of achievement in which we can all be proud, achievements that represent the shared efforts of the Administration, the Congress, and the people.

We have ended America's longest war, but in the work of securing a lasting peace in the world, the goals ahead are even more far-reaching and more difficult. We must 'complete a structure of peace so that it will be said of this generation, our generation of Americans, by the people of all nations, not only that we ended one war but that we prevented future wars.

We have unlocked the doors that for a quarter of a century stood between the United States and the People's Republic of China. We must now ensure that the one quarter of the world's people who live in the People's Republic of China will be and remain not our enemies, but our friends.

To have served in this office is to have felt a very personal sense of kinship with each and every American. In leaving it, I do so with this prayer: May God's grace be with you in all the days ahead.

(CONTINUED)

Everybody in the room sits quiet digesting the news. The Ambassador and Harbin are visibly shaken. No one wants to break the stunned silence.

Carter speaks first:

CARTER
The shit has hit the fan now on
several fronts...

JOE
Yeah we are friends now with the
Chinese. If I remember correctly
they are supporting the Khmer
Rouge... so we might as well
change sides now...

AMBASSADOR
Gentlemen, I have to go, you
understand...

The Ambassador gets up and leaves the room in a hurry.

HARBIN
(speaking to Carter and Joe)
Can't say I'm really surprised.
But damn it all.

JOE
...this motherfucker...

HARBIN
(interrupting Joe)
...Gentlemen. You have a right to
your opinions. But our work goes
on. We work for the
administration of the government
of the United States.

HARBIN
(to Joe)
The reason we wanted to have you
here is the following: we are
interested in a Khmer Rouge
officer. He calls himself GENERAL
DUCH. He must be the worste of
them all. We have information
that he lives in your
neighborhood.

CARTER
You have to lay a beautifull egg
in his nest, which we will ignite
by remote control from an
overfling B52 when you tell us.

67

EXT. DAY - PNH - DOWN TOWN - RAIN

Lost in thought about the recent events, Joe wanders aimlessly through the streets of Phnom Penh, finally reaching the KHEMARA CINEMA on Avenue Charles de Gaulle. Now it is boarded up. The walls are burned in part and a section of the roof is missing. The building is falling into itself. Old movie posters remain in tatters in smashed display cases, one of a Khmer film with DY SAVETH. An other poster advertises the German film ALICE DANS LES VILLE by WIM WENDERS. On a torn down onesheet big letters announce ARABIEN NIGHTS by PIER PAOLO PASOLINI. A rat scurries through the rubble being chased by a stray cat.

He walks along until he suddenly finds himself stopping mid-stride, recognizing a smell as he walks. He is in front of the brothel in which he used to live just a year ago. Heavy rain begins.

68

INT. DAY - PNH - BROTHEL

As Joe enters, he is immediately recognized by the women in the house. The mama-san has aged. The bar looks the same, just shabbier. It is hard to hear because of the intense rain.

MAMA-SAN

Joe, where you go?

JOE

I'm here now

NEW PROSTITUTE 1

(to Joe)

You go short-time?

JOE

Ah, fresh blood, I see Meng.

MAMA-SAN

Many new girls in from countryside. But no tourist customers, Joe! Just FUNK soldiers.

JOE

Do they pay well?

MAMA-SAN

Not really. They bring things they steel. But we feel safer with them here.

JOE

(mocking being shocked)

Are you saying that officers of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (cont'd)
the Khmer Republic are common
criminals?

MAMA-SAN
No, the officers bring good
quality stuff. Kraft Dinner, even
Kotex!

JOE
Sangthip, Meng

Hearing voices, Joe entering the enclosed and sees Mike
seated, surrounded by girls. He walks up to him.

JOE
Let me guess - had to see the
embassy?

MIKE
Well, yes, sort of...

JOE
Glad to see you hear. You bring
the girls work and money.

Joe greets the girls individually with his eyes)

MIKE
Yes, they live under terrible
conditions, some are starving.

JOE
But you're a humanitarian right?

MIKE
Are you making fun of me?

JOE
No, not at all.

Mama-san brings Joe his rum.

JOE
What happened to all the rice you
are flying in?

MIKE
The DC-8 cargo planes have only a
capacity of 96'000 pounds. Three
planes making 3 trips each equals
to 621'000 pounds per day which
is (thinking) 4'347'000 pounds a
week. With 3 million people
living in Phnom Penh now that
make less than half a pound of
rice per person per week! (more
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
to himself) Some people even
refuse to eat our rice...

JOE
(interrupting Bill)

... that's because they hate the
taste of it. Cambodians are very
fussy about the flavor and
quality of their rice. Normally
there would be eight grades of
rice and numerous varieties.
Cambodian housewives like to
select the most suitable rice.
American rice is tasteless, and
you don't cook it right...

MIKE
...but we have to cook it. If we
give the rice out uncooked it
would end up all in the black
market!

JOE
Instead of just 20% of it. Yep, I
admire your courage. You take a
lot of personal risks to make the
dangerous ride through enemy
territory to come and see the
girls. Very brave of you.

MIKE
(laughs uneasily)
Well, you see our life in the
Tailpipe Bravo bunker on the
airport get's very lonesome. And
we have lots of 'bunnies
incoming'...

JOE
'bunnies incoming'? I could use
some more 'bunnies' incoming
here. They're getting a bit stale
here.

MIKE
'Bunnies' is a codeword. We use
it to warn the pilots over the
radio. I shouldn't have used the
phrase. Please forget you heard
it OK?

It means the airport is now more
and more under enemy fire. The
frequency of mortars and rockets
fired by the Khmer Rouge

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
increases daily. Ground personnel
have been injured and two people
killed... But we have to stay
there. Who would direct the rice
lifts safe to the ground?

JOE
The rice lifts and the American
army supplies. More bombs,
weapons and death.

MIKE
I would not know about that. But
we have to fight the red's don't
we?

JOE
Will you come with me for a pipe?

MIKE
Ahem.. I like this better, (he
puts his arms around a 21
year-old woman who looks totally
bored) I'll go with this girl.
Remember, I have to be back at
the airport at fourteen hundred.

JOE
I am more interested to have my
brain cleared (pointing
emphatically but playfully to the
door of the fumierie) from all
this misery. This playground of
diversion (he gestures to include
the entire place) is essential
for my survival. (He finishes his
rum) See you later, Mike.

69 **EXT. DAY - PNH MARKET**

It is early evening. Joe is negotiating with a market
stall holder.

Joe holding a bright red lipstick, we hear the 'pop' of
the cap.

JOE
(speaking Khmer)
Do you have something more
suitable for a teenage girl?

The Chinese vendor (woman) shows him three others.

(CONTINUED)

VENDOR
(speaking Khmer)
Like you Sir? For your wife, Sir?
Daughter? Girlfriend?

Joe does not answer to this inquiry.

VENDOR
(speaking Khmer)
Where does she live? Here in
Phnom Penh?

JOE
(speaking Khmer)
Why do you want to know?

VENDOR
You know that in red territory
wearing any makeup is forbidden?
- Very dangerous!

JOE
That would be 85% of the country!

VENDOR
Do you like these?

JOE
What else does a girl use?

The vendor shows him some compacts and mascara pencils,
given too much choice he asks for help.

JOE
You select some for me.

JOE
(speaking Khmer)
You make a set. Make a bunch of
different sets.

We see Joe continuing shopping at nearby stalls. He buys a
small CASSETTE RECORDER and some recorded music TAPES for
a Dollar. Near the stall, hot duck eggs are being sold
from a cart. The duck embryos can be seen through cracks
in the eggs. The driver advertises his products through a
loudspeaker that has been attached to the cart.

LOUDSPEAKER
...Pong tea khon, Pong tea khon,
Pong tea khon , Pong tea khon...

As Joe passes the cart, he sees Jenny at a vegetable
stall. He watches her for a few seconds doing her
shopping, before going over. Jenny handles a motley bunch
of Chinese broccoli.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
Get 'em while they're available.

JENNY
(surprised)
Oh, Hi Joe.

JOE
Jenny.

JENNY
How are you Joe?

JOE
I'm OK (touching some vegetables)
Next month, next year will we
have fresh vegetables?

JENNY
I have them now. (smiles) Will
you walk me home Joe? (said out
of interest in his company, not
fear of danger)

Joe and Jenny walk together towards her flat near the
market.

JENNY
(pointing at his cassette
recorder)
Do you like music?

JOE
Actually I do. A lot. Our
sing-and-song writers...

JENNY
like?

JOE
(letting Jenny look into his
plastic bag, where the cassette
player and some tapes are
visible) Joan Baez, Bob Dylan,
Paul Simon... and here (smiles at
his find): Lori Liebermann.

JENNY
Didn't she write the song Killing
me softly famous now by Roberta
Flack?

Oblivious of the need for people to get by Jenny and Joe
are blocking the way.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

I like blues and folk too. Have you heard 'Universal Soldier' by Donovan?

JOE

Yeah, he's okay.

(laughs)

A bit out of tune, sometimes...

After they have arrived in front of Jenny's flat they still do not want to part.

JENNY

Will you play me some of your tapes Joe? The view from my terrace is wonderful.

JOE

That sounds great.

Jenny pulls out some sneakers from her bag. She balances on one foot until Joe offer his arm to help her. She puts her dress shoes into her bag. She looks up to her flat on the third floor. The stairway is narrow steel, barely enough for her hips to pass. It goes up in two flights. She goes ahead and he follows. At the top they get to a painted ornamental steel gate. A small cat greets her eagerly through the bars.

JENNY

Hi Raily! (She hands her bag to Joe) Would you?

After opening the gate with her key, she picks up the cat and snuggles it.

70

EXT. EVENING - PNH - JENNY'S ROOF TERRACE

The balcony is about 5 X 8 meters. Numerous flourishing palms are potted in blue ceramic pots. A rattan love seat has an add-on kapok cushion with orange cover. Jenny sits on the large seat, leaving room for Joe. He sits for much of the conversation on a second satellite rattan chair. In between is a glass-top rattan coffee table with a few women's magazines from the USA plus the Messenger, a local French-language Catholic magazine.

JENNY

Mind if I smoke?

(motioning for a pack of Virginia Slims)

I smoke two cigarettes a day...

Keeps me slim... Do you smoke

Joe?

(CONTINUED)

JOE
No

JENNY
Filthy habit.
(extinguishing it, looks at
Joe for a reaction)

JOE
(picking up the magazine)
I didn't know...

JENNY
...that I'm Catholic? Boston,
Louisiana, Florida... I've been
around Arch Diosece speaking.

JOE
...that you could read French.

JENNY
Not really, I'm just a student at
the Alliance Francaise twice a
week.

Joe gets up and walks towards the balustrade. Jenny joins
him.

JOE
(looking down to the streets
below)
So this is where you live,
Jenny... actually quiet
beautiful. All to yourself?

JENNY
(blushes)
Yes.

JOE
My life is completely different,
I have a villa...

JENNY
...and lot's of girls, I know.

JOE
(looking straight into
Jenny's Face)
How would you know?

JENNY
Harbin has a big file on you. My
job is to keep all the files
up-to-date. I am his secretary,
remember?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

So you must also know time and date when they will drop me, feed me to the enemy?

JENNY

(stepping closer to Joe)
I do know that you live a very dangerous life.
(changing the subject)
Is it true what they say about you?

JOE

You mean the womanizer part? No, of course not.

Jenny is laughing.

JOE

Look at my eyes Jenny. (Joe laughs and holds her face between his hands)
Could these eyes lie to you?

JENNY

...oh I wish I could believe you (blushes again).

JOE

(let's go of her)
No Jenny, I live a very staid life. There is only one woman in my villa and that is an autistic 8 year old little girl they brought to me from a Khmer Rouge torture camp. She does not speak, has not reacted to anything. She seems to be immune to noise, smell, heat or cold. And as far as I can tell does not feel anything. But I sincerely love her. I don't know why but she is all I have. And I am all she has.
(holds her by her sholders)
Jenny, do me a favor: Please do not put this in my file or tell it to anybody, OK?

They would sooner or later use this information against me or against the little girl and I don't want to expose her to new nightmares. She had enough of them.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

(misty-eyed)

Oh, I would never ever do that.

Joe lets go of her and walks over to a table where he placed the cassette deck. He puts in a cassette and pushes the play button.

The sentimental song KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS SONG by Lory Liebermann is playing.

LORI LIEBERMANN

I heard he sang a good song
 I heard he had a style
 And so I came to see him
 To listen for a while
 And there he was, this young boy
 A stranger to my eyes
 Strumming my pain with his
 fingers
 Singing my life with his words
 Killing me softly with his song
 Killing me softly with his song
 Telling my whole life with his
 words
 Killing me softly with his
 song...

JENNY

But Joe, I know more than I
 should... Please do not place
 that bomb into General Duchs
 camp. It is an impossible task,
 and it will kill you. Everybody
 in the political section (of the
 embassy) knows that nobody could
 do that, especially not a non
 Asian!

He holds Jenny tight while they are listening to the Song. Above the Skyline of Phnom Penh we see the light traces of Khmer Rouge rockets hitting some poor suburban quarters.

LORI LIEBERMANN

I felt all flushed with fever
 Embarrassed by the crowd
 I felt he found my letters
 And read each one out loud
 I prayed that he would finish
 But he just kept right on
 Strumming my pain with his
 fingers
 Singing my life with his words
 Killing me softly with his song
 Killing me softly with his song
 Telling my whole life with his
 words

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LORI LIEBERMANN (cont'd)

Killing me softly with his song
 He sang as if it he knew me
 In all my dark despair
 And then he looked right through
 me
 As if I wasn't there
 But he was there, this stranger
 Singing clear and strong
 Strumming my pain with his
 fingers
 Singing my life with his words
 Killing me softly with his song

JOE

Jenny, I must go now, I have to
 catch a boat which should bring
 me up the Mekong.

JENNY

Please don't go. Please stay here
 for tonight. It is much safer on
 the river during the daytime.

JOE

I have to. Remember the Little
 Girl. Keep the recorder and the
 tapes, can't get batteries where
 I live anyway.

JENNY

I have an idea, if I hear of
 anything which would bring you
 and the girl in danger I will
 find a way that this song is
 played on the number station.

Joe doesn't reply. His body language suggests, 'thanks for
 your concern over my safety, but I have to go now.

FADE TO BLACK

71 **INT. DAY - VILLA - JOE'S BEDROOM**

Morning. Joe is asleep with the radio on, as if he fell
 asleep listening to the radio.

AFTN RADIO

According to the US Embassy in
 Phnom Penh, Cambodia is now
 completely surrounded by Khmer
 Rouge troops. All road routes to
 the capital city are blocked.
 Supplies coming in by barge have
 been halted for the moment.
 Civilian relief by humanitarian

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AFTN RADIO (cont'd)
 organizations is coming in six to
 eight times a day by air...

Kia and a group of young girls show up. They burst noisily into Joe's room, rousing him from his deep sleep and jumping on his bed. His reaction can not be seen, the girls are all over him.

72 **INT. DAY - VILLA - FRONT POARCH**

Joe is dressed in a pair of shorts and flip-flops. He is shaving at the concrete well which is full and has a set aside rusted steel cover.

CLOSE UP. He is looking into the mirror set up for shaving. We see Kia in the background in the mirror, coming in and out of focus, according to who emphasis of who is speaking and listening.

JOE
 (speaking as he shaves)
 Where are these girls from?

KIA
 Surrounding villages

JOE
 Why so many girls today?

KIA
 (kidding)
 They all want to sleep with you.

JOE
 You send them all back today.

KIA
 Later... ok?

73 **INT. DAY - VILLA - LIVING ROOM**

When Joe returns to the living room he is surrounded by five or so girls. They press themselves up against him urgently, bouncing up and down excitedly. They have searched his things and discovered the make-up.

One girl is applying blush with a brush on her friend's cheek, another is thickening the eyelashes of a younger girl. They are very excited and happy.

GIRL 1
 (holding lipstick, speaking
 Khmer)
 Joe, do me.

(CONTINUED)

Joe opens the tube and tries to start applying it. He fumbles and is ill-confident.

JOE
(speaking Khmer)
Um, I've never done this
before...

He looks around for someone more experienced and calls over someone who looks talented at doing it.

JOE
You, what's your name?

GIRL 2
Chantee.

JOE
Can you do this for me?

KIA
(to Joe holding handles of
cabinet)
Joe, is it OK if we use the stuff
in here?

JOE
I don't mind. The things don't
belong to me. I doubt the
previous owner is coming back.

She opens two sets of double doors, each having a built-in mirror on the insides. The four mirrors immediately reflect the girls' faces in awe.

Kia browses to dozens of western women's silk dresses, chiffon skirts, linen blouses, long gloves, silk scarves, high heel shoes and sandals, and hats of all styles, sizes and seasons.

The girls jostle to get at the clothing. Kia hands out many garments to everyone. The girls scream with excitement, some gleefully sharing the contents, others fighting over the best items. The girls strip to their underwear and greedily try everything on, despite all the garments being many sizes too big.

They pose, experiment with layers, dress each other up, pretend to be ladies of leisure (and ladies of pleasure).

Joe sits on the window-sill and watches them enraptured. Some come over to him and want his appreciation. He switches items to make them look their best. They do not always agree with his choices and do it as they wish.

74

EXT. EVENING - VILLA - ENTRANCE

Joe is sitting on the steps in front of the house playing guitar, doing simple chords. He is surrounded by the dressed-up girls in high heels, hats and silk stockings, to whom he is mock serenading. Joe looks at them and makes to every one of them an admiring remark.

JOE

Oh, this is beautiful..
 ...look at you!
 This is very special - using
 makeup for the first time?!
 Wow, what a beauty!

But you have to go home now
 girls, it's getting late.

The girls disappear into the house while Joe hums to some cords on his guitar. One by one they leave the house and run away, waving at Joe.

75

EXT. EVENING - VILLA - FRONT POARCH

On the patio is a steel Hollywood swing made to fit three people on each side. It is round and playful in design. In the past it was painted rainbow colors but almost all of the paint has gone. Kia is sitting swinging gently on it, hands folded between her legs, looking at Joe. He is picking up the girls' clothes they have left scattered on the floor in a jumble.

KIA

It's time for me to go home.

JOE

Do you have an appointment?

KIA

Sort of. My husband is waiting.

As she replies, Joe carries over a bunch of girls' clothing and places it on the unused seat on the opposite side of Kia.

JOE

(as a statement)

So you can't stay a while.

He continues gathering clothing and returning to spread them to create a padding on the seat. He steps outside the swing.

KIA

(looking at him perplexed,
 as in 'what are you doing?')

(CONTINUED)

It's late and I don't want
to return in the dark. (she
wants to get up)

Joe stands outside the chair holding onto each side of the
entrance. He starts swinging it back and forth.

JOE
(begging)
Please stay.

KIA
No, Joe. I can't. I'm a married
woman

JOE
I would have married you Kia.

KIA
But you didn't Joe.

Joe stops swinging and comes inside to sit down beside
Kia.

JOE
I would have Kia.

He puts his arm around her shoulder. She moves toward him,
and rests her head against his shoulder.

KIA
Would you have Joe?

JOE
Yes. Would you have said yes?

KIA
No, because I couldn't marry a
man who would disappear for two
years. I wouldn't know if you
were coming back.

JOE
(He strokes her hair and
inhales her fragrance.)
I am here now. You are here...

KIA
(looking up)
Sarit must never know. He would
kill you.

Joe kisses her and they embrace for a long time. They hold
each other while she looks out, tears welling up in her
eyes. Joe takes her by the shoulders. He dries her tears
gently. Kia sits there eyes closed and Joe takes her by
the shoulders and moves her to the other side of the swing
(CONTINUED)

where the clothing is spread out. The tears begin to fall and he proceeds to unbutton her blouse one button at a time.

Exposing the top of her chest, she is dripping in sweat. She snuffles and begins to bawl. He quickly kisses her and she responds by throwing her arms around his neck almost choking him. He stumbles and the swing shakes.

He rips open her blouse - the sound of the seams ripping is incredible.

He cups her breasts in his hands and snorting like a man obsessed encircles her areoles with his tongue. Kia is heaving, tears long gone. The sounds she is making are ambiguous - is she delirious with desire or terrified of consequences? Is she devouring him or being raped?

He slips his hand down her sarong and looking straight into her eyes carressing her. Her eyes widen and her eyebrows rise. Her breath quickens. He is panting. Joe's eyes are intense.

He takes her out of what remains of her blouse and throws it over the back of the swing. Then he stops and marvels at her beauty. He runs his hands over her narrow brown shoulders, down her slender but shapely arms. She is breathing fast, misty-eyed.

Suddenly as if inspired by something that must be done, Joe stands up and places each of his arms above his head holding on to the top of the swing. And he gyrates. She looks up at him and unbuckles his belt.

The swing swings... After a while he is shaking his head and it does not mean 'no'. He pulls her up and himself kneeling unwraps Kia's sarong. We see her perfect body in profile, her high firm buttocks, and breasts pointing to the stars.

Kia bucks and wraps her legs around his face. Seen straight on from below Joe's grips her miracle of a tiny waist and then starts kneading her smooth butt.

Then he pulls her off him and standing up sets her down on the pile of clothes, spreading her legs wide. He places one foot in each direction. Once she is stable, he kneels again and bites her navel, his nose twitching.

Next he runs his tongue up in one non-stop lick to her mouth, along the way slowly tracing every contour detour: ribs, nipples, neck, chin, etc. This takes several minutes. Just before he ends on her mouth he bites her lower lip and pulls her up by that alone until they stand there quivering and jerking like fish caught in a net.

The orgasm is long and intense.

76

EXT. NIGHT - VILLA - FRONT POARCH

In the corner of the poarch Kia is pouring water from a bucket over herself and soaping herself down.

Joe is picking up some of the scattered clothing left from the dress-up.

JOE
Here, take these. You look
gorgeous in this blouse.

Kia gets dressed in a hurry, grabs a lipstick from the swing and leaves the balcony. Kia, walks in the direction of the narrow jungle path that leads from the villa down to her village. Her blouse is not buttoned all the way to the top. Before she disappears to the dark looking wood in the background she turns around and blows a kiss towards Joe.

KIA
Ah! See you tomorrow Joe.

JOE
I love you.

KIA
I love you.

77

EXT. NIGHT - JUNGLE PATH

Kia walks frivolously from the villa to her village.
POV: From within the jungle, eyes follow Kia.

The POV moves forward toward her. Kia is next shown walking along the path.

Four young soldiers in their black Khmer Rouge uniforms step in front of her path in a threatening manner. Six others come out of the jungle to stand behind her, blocking her escape. Some of them have weapons which they are pointing at her.

Kia stands still looking more defiant than terrified.

The leader is about Kia's age and encircles her, examining her appearance, paying special attention to her makeup and unbuttoned blouse. He personally searches her, rather more slowly than necessary. He discovers in her clenched hand a tube of lipstick.

SOLDIER
(in Khmer)
Comrade Guards!

A soldier each takes an arm of Kia and walks her away and she resists physically.

(CONTINUED)

KIA O.V.
Screams, after a moment it is
abruptly muffled.

78 **INT. NIGHT - VILLA UPPER ROOM**

Joe is sitting by candlelight at a wooden desk on the upper floor. While the Little Girl sleeps on a mattress beside him, he is occupied with transferring coordinates from a slip of paper to a map. However, he does not measure these points but he determines them at random by throwing a 9mm pistol shell onto the map. These points are all located in uninhabited rain-forest areas. Using one-time pad, he then encodes the longitudes and latitudes, finally transmitting the resulting numbers via the radio.

79 **INT. NIGHT - VILLA JOE'S BEDROOM**

The morning sun is hidden behind the trees. Joe is sweeping the balcony of dried leaves.

CAMERA LOOKING DOWN. Joe is looking down to where Sarit is. With wild hand gestures, Sarit signals Joe to come at once.

SARIT
(angrily) Kia, Kia!!

JOE
(looking over the balcony)
What's going on?

80 **EXT. DAY - VILLA - IN FRONT**

Wearing only a sarong, Joe joins him in the garden, cocking his head to one side as if to say 'what's the problem' and is ready for an argument.

SARIT
(holding his finger up for
emphasis)
I know Kia is with you!

JOE
She is not.

SARIT
I know she is.
(grabbing him enraged)
You can't fool me any more Joe.
She didn't come home last night.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

But she left here... yesterday.

SARIT

Then where is she?

A small boy tugs aggressively at Sarit's trousers.

Joe and Sarit both look at the boy.

BOY

(intens)

Come, come.

The boy leads them down the path and off the trail to behind a large rock. As they turn the corner we see the horror in the eyes of Sarit.

81 **EXT. DAY - VILLA BEHIND HOUSE**

Kia is lying dead under the tree wearing the outfit from the day before. Flies buzz about her body. Her blouse has been ripped open and her breasts cut with a knife.

CLOSE-UP: Kia's eyes wide open, her face written on sloppily with lipstick as an insult.

The sight of her causes Sarit to scream and Joe to howl.

They grasp onto one another ferociously.

Joe throws himself on the dead body. When he gets up again, his chest and hands are covered in jelly-like congealed blood more black and red. Sarit is pulling his hair back against his skull in a manic gesture.

He is the first to regain his composure and he holds the hysterical Joe in his arms. Joe can hardly breathe.

BACKGROUND The Little Girl walks impassively past the dead body and picks flowers.

82 **EXT. DAY - CHURCH RUIN**

Joe is uncovering the overgrown entrance to an old Norman style church. He cuts away the undergrowth and clears away the debris by hand, apparently enjoying the austerity. His scratched hands and sweaty body suggest that he has been busy with this task for several hours. Because the roof of the church is missing, the interior of the building is also completely overgrown. Joe makes his way to the altar and throws himself on the ground in front of a stone cross.

The Little Girl is standing in the entrance-way with the sun on her back. In a voice that sounds like a barking dog, she shouts out communist slogans of the Khmer Rouge:

(CONTINUED)

LITTLE GIRL
Anka is the father of the
oppressed!

83 **EXT. DAY - VILLA - BALCONY**

EXTREME LONG SHOT: A procession of hundreds of monks in orange silk robes winds at an oblique angle down from a hill beside the village.

We can hear their chanting from a distance. The sun is rising brilliantly.

The entire village and more has gathered for Kia's funeral. The color, movement and sound of the ceremony looks more like a festival of pure love than an expression of grief. Everyone moves in unison and the chanting is in perfect harmony.

84 **INT. DAY - WAT**

SLOW PAN: The urn containing Kia's ashes is standing on a small altar. The simple jar is surrounded by a gilded Buddha statue, flowers and incense sticks.

Wat murals of hell and heaven: people being boiled alive, being cut in half, having red-hot pokers shoved up their rectums, pustules erupting on the skin, being eaten alive by barnyard animals, having ravenous appetites but no mouths, freezing naked, having boiling oil poured down their throats etc.

PAN to heaven: angels showering flower petals on people, lying on luxurious beds, being fed the finest fruits and drinks, being carried in chariots to heaven, topless heavenly dancers entertaining, walking and talking with the gods, celestial musicians playing on classical instruments, everyone beaming with good health, happiness, prosperity, strength, etc.

SUPER IMPOSE TO:

85 **INT. DAY - VILLA - STAIRCASE**

SUPER IMPOSE from previous scene: freshly made child's drawings on the wall of the staircase.

STEADY CAM: we glide along the walls while looking at the drawings: a girl tied to a tree being tortured by stick-men; a woman being beheaded by a machete; a combat helicopter dropping bombs, etc.

The drawings are by the Little Girl, who is depicting her experiences in the camp. The Little Girl is so engrossed in her drawing that she does not notice Joe as he approaches. He watches her for a while as she draws. When she has finished drawing, Joe takes her by her hand and leads her away.

86 **INT. NIGHT - VILLA - JOE'S BEDROOM**

Middle of the night. Full moon. Loud sound of insects and frogs, but not soothing ones.

Joe tries to block them out with hands to his ears. He tosses and turns. An empty bottle of Thai rum stands by his bed and he is working on a second one. The book THE QUIET AMERICAN lies on the bed beside him.

Joe is unshaven, sweating and looking like he has not slept properly for 2-3 nights. He gets up, goes to the window, almost falling on way, spreads his arms wide to as if welcome being shot or testing the limits of the space. The noise of bombs and gunfire fills the room.

87 **EXT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY**

Foreground of US Embassy, background chaos of Phnom Penh under siege, the beginning of the occupation by Khmer Rouge. Sound of repeated mortar fire. Fires in background of several burning houses. Crash of artillery landing in a house and exploding, sending tiles and bricks flying, screaming people running away.

INSERT: April 12, 1975 Bodies litter the sidewalks. An ambulance is hit and slides across the road to plow into a fire hydrant. Armoured personnel carriers of Khmer Rouge in far distance headed for Monivong. A family stands on the side of the road hands up in surrender, waiting for someone to surrender to.

88 **EXT - DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY**

Embassy from inside compound to gate: Marines, armed with M-16s stand firm holding people back who are trying to enter. Mob of people pressing against gate, many holding papers which they try to shove through chain-link fence. Dozens of papers on ground having been tossed over the wall or shoved through the fence - pleas for asylum. People try to bribe young-looking Marines in full dress uniform with jewelery and cash. An additional portable barbed-wire barricade is brought in by more Marines.

89 **INT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY - HALL**

Telephones ringing almost non-stop in the background. People walk back and forth briskly, a few run. People look confused and frantic. Everything is under control... sort of. Harbin is on two phones simultaneously, one cradled on his shoulder, one to his ear.

(CONTINUED)

HARBIN

Jacob... Jacob? Damn it!...
 Martha, please reconnect me to
 General Steinman in U-Tapao
 (takes the other phone) Colin...
 yes... of course... We made
 documents for the wives as
 well.... I know it's not standard
 procedure, but closing down an
 entire Embassy isn't either. And
 these aren't regular enemies...
 Well, it's done now.

A man in shirt and tie uses a shredder to destroy papers stamped 'top secret'. Occasionally, a staple gets caught and he unplugs the machine to hand remove the jammed item. Jenny is busy ferrying boxes of documents in between the personal offices of Dean and the document destroyers.

HARBIN

Jenny, we have staff to do that.
 I need you at my side.

JENNY

Yes, Mr. Harbin.

Jenny hands over her box to a female Khmer staff member and gives her brief unheard instructions. Harbin and Jenny talk, seen at a distance. We do not hear their words above the cacophony.

An American staff member stands waiting to ask Harbin a question. When Harbin is finished what he is doing he looks at the staff person.

STAFF MEMBER

(to Harbin)

What'll I do with the C-4
 reports?

HARBIN

Let me see He takes them and
 skims the content. He pulls one
 out. He marks with a big black
 'X' with his marker.

HARBIN

Burn!

(going back to his phone
 call)

... Can I use your name on 'no
 exceptions'? I'm not saying I'll
 use it, but if I get in a tight
 spot, I want to be able to say
 from where my instructions came.
 It wasn't my decision Colin...
 OK, I'll say a superior.

(CONTINUED)

A nerdy-looking man is using a demagnetizer to render 8" floppy disks unusable. Men in suits with walkie talkies are black marking documents before they even get to the eyes of the destroyers. A decorated Colonel stuffs documents into briefcase.

A female American staff member is trying to stuff an oversized Khmer souvenir of a wooden carving into an undersized bag. Despondent, she gives up.

HARBIN

(on phone again)

How *are* we? Olmsted was medivacted to Bangkok last week. We don't know if he'll make it. Deputy Keeley just returned from treatment for his bleeding ulcer and is now packing his one bag after two years stationed here. My blood pressure is 200 over 95. And the Khmer Rouge are at our doorstep. That's how we are.
(he hangs up)

At the Embassy. Staff are busy with the final preparations for evacuating the Embassy. Documents are being destroyed. Others being stuffed into suitcases.

90

INT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY - SOUND-PROOF ROOM

The Ambassador, Harbin and Carter talk in the secure room.

HARBIN

I'm getting reports that Joe's co-ordinates are totally wrong.

CARTER

Really?

AMBASSADOR

You sound surprised. Satellite imagery tells us in after targets tell us that there is no evidence of KR every having been in vicinity.

CARTER

Perhaps they've moved on

HARBIN

In every case?

CARTER

Is there any other plausible explanation?

(CONTINUED)

AMBASSADOR

(ignoring Carter's remark)
Listen to this: According to
airforce headquarters in Khon
Khaen, our own base across the
border in Thailand was bombed
three days ago. Fortunately they
or better we missed the main
tract, no casualties...

HARBIN

The action was based on Joe's
message. No, he's gone bad. Take
him out. This is an official
order.

CARTER

I have seen satellite pictures
bevor, not very relieble, can't
see a damn thing... Why the
change?

HARBIN

It's not a change. He was
unreliable from the start.

CARTER

why the change?

HARBIN

because there is evidence that he
is not on our side anymore. Why
are you so stubborn? He was not
your friend?

CARTER

Hell no. It's just I think he
deserves an official military
trial.

AMBASSADOR

As you may guess I a have a
million things to do since we
evacuate the place any minute.
Good bye and good luck Carter.

He gets up and leaves the room.

HARBIN

(to Joe)
How would you bring him to
Thailand for a trial? You think
he would just follow you there?
No way.

(CONTINUED)

CARTER

(sounding frustrated)

Since it looks that we lost the war here, we might as well just forget about him.

HARBIN

First: we did not loose any war because there was never a war for us here. We just helped allies. Second: He is way to dangerous. He knows far to much about our organization and clandestine operations in the field. As it looks to me he has gone completely insane. He will tell everything he knows to the Khmer Rouge. No, you have to do the job.

Telephone is wringing Harbin picks up the receiver.

HARBIN

Hello.....Okey.....
Okey. Thanks Peter, Bye
(to Joe)

Speaking of the Devil. This was our boy in Utapau. He just filled me in on a report they got this morning from a B52 pilot. He says that they could ignite the bomb Joe was supposed to bring into Duchs camp. They observed from the plane that a huge region of the jungle is in flames.

CARTER

So he did do the job, after all...

HARBIN

How do you know? Maybe he placed the bomb in the middle of nowhere-land.

CARTER

Ok. I try to go upstream now. I see you in Thailand ore elsewhere...

Carter gets up and leaves the room without saying goodbye to Harbin.

91 **INT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY HALLWAY**

Through a crack in the door to another room, Jenny can be seen giving a Cambodian a tape with instructions that cannot be heard. She stresses the importance of her words with emphatic hand gestures.

92 **EXT. DAY - PNH - U.S. EMBASSY - BACK YARD**

Sounds of city and neighborhood being bombarded: screeching rockets above, machine gun fire, shells whistling in and exploding a few blocks away, people yelling just over the compound walls, rumble of tanks getting louder, the 'pop' of small arms. No sirens.

Very close a shell explodes and the tiles fly into the US compound, frightening a few office workers in short sleeve shirts and ties (still), who are drenched with sweat and very perturbed.

Sound of human movement among rubble next door.

KHMER MAN
(OV, speaking Khmer)
Go into the shed with Peu!

KHMER WOMAN
(OV, speaking Khmer)
Where is Bunthou?

Sound of wall collapsing, of bricks falling in a cascade.

KHMER WOMAN
Vanna!
(hysterically)
Vanna!!!

The compound has scattered office furniture, discarded hard drives of computers from 1972 with holes drilled in them, papers flying in the breeze, and suitcases in the middle of nowhere, apparently forgotten. At a guarded back door to the compound people are frantic distraught.

STAFF MEMBER 1
My wife is at our apartment. She wanted to wait until the last minute. (shock of a shell nearby. He covers his ears in pain) ... She is handicapped. I have to go get her.

MARINE
Be back in two hours. The helicopters should start leaving by then.

The guard opens the door to let this American and the last Khmer Embassy staff members leave the Embassy building. Armed American Marines point their weapons at several Khmers who try to get in.

93 **INT. DAY - U.S. EMBASSY - AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE**

The Ambassador is sitting in his own office reading a letter outloud to Harber:

AMBASSADOR

Thank you very sincerely for your letter and offer to transport me towards freedom. I cannot leave in such a cowardly fashion.... I never believed for a moment that you would abandon a people which have chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection, and we can do nothing about it. You leave, and my wish is that you and your country will find happiness. But, if I shall die in my country that I love, it is too bad, because we are all born and must die one day. I have committed this mistake of believing in you, the Americans. Please accept, Excellency, my dear friend, my faithful and friendly sentiments. Prince Sirik Matak.

The two men look at each other.

94 **INT. / EXT. DAY - U.S. EMABASSY**

WINDOW VIEW. The Ambassador stares out from his window at the adjacent soccer field, which is being secured by US Marines. Several CH-53 helicopters are ready for evacuation. People of various nationalities have gathered on the soccer field to be evacuated. Everyone has exactly one bag of belongings with them. While the Marines and embassy personnel assist the passengers boarding, the Americans wave to the Khmer children watching the evacuation.

CHILDREN

(shouting out to the embassy personnel)

OK, bye-bye, OK bye-bye.

With a pair of scissors, the Ambassador takes down the American flag from the flag pole behind his desk.

95 **EXT. DAY - U.S. EMABASSY**

VIEW FROM ROOFTOP. On foot, and with the American flag under one arm, the Ambassador approaches the landing site, where Jenny is already expecting him. Along with the other embassy workers, they both board the last helicopter and leave Phnom Penh.

The Khmer Rouge shells the site and shoots mortars into the group of onlookers who watched the evacuation.

96 **EXT. DAY - PNH - MEKONG PORT**

Carter arrives at a wharf. He looks at names on prows. Crew are preparing her to leave on one boat. Recognizing the name, he boards, and immediately the boat cast off.

97 **EXT. DAY - MEKONG BOAT**

Without speaking to anyone Carter finds and takes from a canvass bag a fisherman's cap and boots and puts them on - they have obviously been placed for his stage use. He rubs some soot from a canister on his face to reduce the glare of his fair skin. He tries to make himself look busy by joining the crew in their activities. The boat travels north (sun on left side).

98 **INT. NIGHT - VILLA UPPER ROOM**

Joe sits in his room on the upper floor. The Swedish Rhapsody is playing through the speakers of a small radio. He is in the process of jotting down groups of numbers being transmitted, when the broadcast is suddenly interrupted. After a brief moment of elliptical noise, the song KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS SONG is broadcast.

99 **EXT. NIGHT - JETTY**

Carter comes across Bart at his pier.

CARTER

Hi. Can you take me upriver?

BART

Depends...

CARTER

I need to warn our friend upriver as soon as possible.

BART

I can tell him. What does he need to know?

(CONTINUED)

CARTER

The Khmer Rouge have take Phnom Penh, they control the country now. All foreigners have left.

BART

I can tell him that.

CARTER

OK. Please tell him I have a personal message for him from his father. If he tracks me down after I found a way to cross the boarder. I can tell him in person. It's probably not important but I can't give it via a third party. Never mind (he turns to walk away.

BART

Wait. Where does his father live?

CARTER

Idaho, of course.

BART

Get in.

100 **EXT. NIGHT - VILLA - BALCONY**

From his balcony, Joe watches bright orange and red flares as they fall above the jungle.

INSERT: **17 April 1975**

They slowly parachute down towards the jungle and bathe it in a moment of brilliant light. The eerie lights are reflected in Joe's eyes.

101 **INT. NIGHT - VILLA (CONT. SCENE 1)**

Armed with a pistol, Carter is creeping by night through the empty, villa. The eerie music of the SWEDISH RHAPSODY can be heard with a lot of radio interference. The music, repeats itself in an endless loop until it is interrupted, and an young girl's voice reads out numbers in groups of five. The sound contributes significantly to the strange tense atmosphere.

CARTER

Joe!

He pushes a door open, and the monotonous voice reading numbers becomes suddenly louder. The green Magic Eye of the radio receiver can be seen gleaming in the darkness.

(CONTINUED)

The scant light illuminates The Little Girl who is lying on a simple wooden bed of native design beside the radio. It is impossible to make out whether she is dead or sleeping. Suddenly Carter is attacked from behind. Joe presses a pistol into the back of his neck and yells,

JOE
The horror, the horror.

Joe's mad laughter echoes through the empty villa. It is the laughter of a maniac.

Carter drops his weapon.

Joe directs him to sit on a stool next the sleeping Little Girl, using his pistol like a conductor's baton. Joe kicks Carter's weapon into a corner.

JOE
It's all over, Carter. I've been waiting for you.

CARTER
So, you're going to kill me Joe?
Tit for tat.

JOE
If you make a mistake, I sure will. But that's not what I meant. No more bombings, no more war, everything will be back to normal. (He laughs) You and I both are going to go to hell. But you'll get the choice punishments.

CARTER
And why is that do you suppose?

JOE
You didn't see through the helping hand to the imperialism. You never stopped practicing the Monroe Doctrine gone wild. Even now, you haven't stopped (he points his gun as if to say 'don't try to escape before I'm through'). 'Manifest Destiny', what an excuse for colonialism.

CARTER
It's not like we were the first...

JOE
For 500 years, Asia has had us:
the Portuguese, the Spanish,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (cont'd)

Dutch, the French, the British and the Americans. Whether we were good masters or bad masters, we took what was not ours. The French had boulevards, brothels and bars. We had bombs, bullets and bullshit.

CARTER

And the Khmer Rouge. Torture, trials and tea? You want to live under them? Next they'll be knocking at your father's door in Idaho.

JOE

I doubt it. It might take four years or forty, but eventually they'll be tossed too. The Khmers, the Vietnamese, the Chinese and the Koreans - they'll get back on track.

CARTER

So you would leave them to suffer for another half a century

JOE

Yes, if that's what it takes. It's not our job. They have to find out for themselves, to make their own way.

CARTER

So, I will be on my way too.

JOE

Not so fast.

CARTER

You said you weren't going to kill me.

JOE

(waving the pistol to say 'no')

I want to hear you admit you were wrong.

CARTER

At the point of a gun hardly counts.

JOE

(turning the aim of the pistol away)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (cont'd)
Sure it does. You don't have to
fake it Carter. The good old US
of A let you down.

CARTER
We failed Cambodia.

JOE
Lesson Cambodia - failed!

He shoots out through the open window, shocking Carter.

JOE
And why did we fail?

CARTER
Because we lost.

JOE
No, no... You know the answer
Carter.

CARTER
(fumbling with his words,
because he can't figure out
if Joe is playing a
dangerous game or plans to
kill him)
Yes, yes, I do... Of course, I
do.

JOE
We have committed atrocities,
turned paradise into hell, and
traumatized the people here for
generations to come. Look at her!
This innocent girl (he uses his
other hand to show her sleeping
still) And I can't even help her.

For the first time Joe looks distraught beyond measure.

JOE
I have a job for you, Carter. And
you have to do it good.

You take this Little Girl with
you across the border to
Thailand.

CARTER
I bring her to the Red Cross
Camp? For treatment?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

No one has treatment for what she has seen. For what we have done to her.

CARTER

It could work.

JOE

Would you take her?

CARTER

Why don't you take her yourself.

JOE

You have forgotten why you came to see me?

CARTER

(showing understanding)

What is her name?

JOE

She has no name. I call her Little Girl.

Joe trowls his pistol at Carter. Carter catches it and puts it on the table next to him.

JOE

Okey. Not at gunpoint now: will you do it?

CARTER

You know, I never liked you Joe.
(thinking and looking at the sleeping child)
But you have my word as an American officer: I will do the best I can.

102

EXT. DAY - VILLA - ENTRANCE

The Little Girl is standing next to Carter glaring into infinity. Joe takes her little hand and makes her hold the teddy bear. Than he hands the white canvas bag with the Red Cross insignia to Carter.

JOE

...her belongings.

CARTER

I guess I will not see you again Joe. Good bye.

103 **INT. DAY - VILLA UPPER ROOM**

Joe goes back inside the house. On the map, Joe's location is marked with an X on a mountain with the description "VILLA". He calculates the coordinates. He writes them down on a piece of paper and sends them via radio.

104 **EXT. DAY - JUNGLE**

Carter and the Little Girl are on the move through the jungle and narrowly escape the hail of bombs from a helicopter patrol by fleeing across a suspension bridge. The bamboo frame collapses in a burning heap into the river.

105 **EXT. DAY - VILLA BALCONY**

Looking in direction of camera, Joe stands on his roof looking ahead and waiting.

Suddenly, helicopter blades become louder. He stretches out his arms as far as possible like Jesus being crucified, closing his eyes.

Three large helicopters flying directly towards him. Cut to gunners' POV: Helicopter machine guns aim at him and open fire. Joe collapses. Side WA shot: Two helicopters pass over. A third helicopter shoots a missile into the villa. The villa is ablaze within seconds.

106 **EXT. DAY - THAI BORDER**

VERY LONG SHOT. It is a hot, sunny day in the border region between Cambodia and Thailand. Maria crosses the railway bridge to Thailand with the well-worn white Red Cross bag slung across her shoulder from which Joe has given her medicine in the past.

107 **EXT. DAY - VILLA**

The strong monsoon rains have transformed the scorched villa into steaming ruins. The melody of the secret transmitter is audible through the rain. The SWEDISH RHAPSODY is interrupted: the voice of the young woman reads numbers aloud in groups of five.

EXT. END OF DAY - FLOATING VILLAGE - KAMPONG LUONG

TV antennas above houses which float on oil drums.

INSERT: **35 years later**

Fluorescent lights attracting swarms of bugs at a bright green floating café run by Vietnamese mother and her adult child. Children holding badminton racket-like tools shake at nets spread taut in order to release very small caught fish. Some buildings are actually boats - with everything a household needs: cooking area, toilet, flowers and covered area for sleeping.

CARTER O.V.

At the same day, on April 17th, 1975, when I should have had eliminated Joe, Phnom Penh was invaded by the Khmer Rouge. The 20'000 soldiers had an average age of 13 years. Only fourteen days later the North Vietnamese Army took over Saigon. We had lost the war against communists on all fronts. After a five-year lasting war in Cambodia, the Americans left the country in a state of chaos. Since 1969 they had dropped over 500'000 tons of bombs on the country. In addition to 3 million refugees and hundreds of thousands of casualties, the war also drove many Cambodians into the army of the communist rebels. The Khmer Rouge, under their leader Pol Pot, carried out a reign of terror over the next four years, killing approximately two million people...

A fat Buddhist nun does her evening prayers at her ritual drum at the floating blue pagoda. A girl uses her mobile phone to SMS while heading home in a small boat being paddled by her little sister. Young boys swing in green hammocks on boats that rock as a speed boat passes, creating waves. Teenage boys and girls cut and gut fish and put them in bright red plastic coolers. Lamps hang from fishing boats as smiling mothers hang babies bums over the water to plop-plop-plop.

CARTER O.V.

...I often think back to the time I spent in Cambodia. I think I can understand now why Joe had fallen in love with South East Asia. Unfortunately I did not realize it back than...

(CONTINUED)

Families sit for meals of rice and chicken. An old man drinks tea while looking out to sea. Chinese-Khmer boy plays with his PlayStation attached to a car battery. Carpenters hammer the upturned bottoms of boats. Shopkeepers close up the metal gates of floating shops. Brother and sister remove dried fish from the roof of a house. Radios at a repair shop play Vietnamese popular music while a small man tinkers with an opened computer. An old lady without teeth washes dishes in the lake.

CARTER O.V.

...I remember the intense colours, the smell of the jasmine petals which were sold by street kids.

I still hear the chanting of the Monks, the strange sounds of the jungle. I even envy Joe for the many girls who whispered to his ears that they love him.

Years later I learned that the little girl I brought to the Thai border returned to Cambodia as an adult, working as a school teacher.

Maybe the only purpose of me being in Southeast Asia was to save that one little girl.

FADE TO BLACK

As we present the END TITLES we hear from far away the main theme of the MUSIC score .

THE END