

A P O C A L Y P S E N O W

Original screenplay by John Milius.

Inspired by Joseph Conrad's "HEART OF DARKNESS".

This draft by Francis Ford Coppola.

December 3, 1975.

This is an early version of the screenplay. It's quite different from the final version but very interesting anyway. It includes f ex The French plantation scene, which was actually filmed, but later cut from the movie.

1 PRIMEVAL SWAMP - EARLY DAWN

It is very early in the dawn - blue light filters through the jungle and across a foul swamp. A mist clings to the trees. This could be the jungle of a million years ago.

Our VIEW MOVES CLOSER, through the mist, TILTING DOWN to the tepid water. A small bubble rises to the surface; then another. Suddenly, but quietly, a form begins to emerge; a helmet. Water and mud pour off revealing a set of beady eyes just above the mud. Printed on a helmet, in a psychedelic hand, are the words: "Gook Killer." The head emerges revealing that the tough-looking soldier beneath has exceptionally long hair and beard; he has no shirt on, only bandoliers of ammunition - his body is painted in an odd camouflage pattern. He looks to the right; he looks to the left; he looks INTO CAMERA, and slowly sinks back into the swamp, disappearing completely.

Our VIEW HOLDS, We begin to HEAR natural, though unrecognizable JUNGLE SOUNDS, far off in the distance. We PAN TO REVEAL a clump of logs half submerged in the swamp; and part of what seems to be a Falstaff beer can in the mud. A hand reaches out, and the beer can disappears. As we TILT UP, we NOTICE that the log is hollow and houses the rear of a M-60 machine gun, hand painted in a paisley design.

Now the VIEW MOVES AWAY, ACROSS the ancient growth, PAST the glimmer of what seems to be another soldier hiding in ambush, wearing an exotic hat made from birds and bushes. ACROSS to a dark trail where the legs of those in black pajamas move silently across our ever TIGHTENING VIEW. Their feet, boots and sandals leave no impression; make no sound. A slight flicker of light reveals a pair of eyes in the foliage across the path, waiting and watching.

The VIEW PUSHES ALONG WITH the Vietnamese, MOVING FASTER

AND FASTER WITH them, until suddenly, directly in front about ten feet away, an enormous AMERICAN clad in rags and bushes and holding a 12 gauge automatic shotgun casually at his side, steps in front of them. He smiles laconically, and BLASTS OUT FIVE SHOTS that rip THROUGH US. By the second shot, the whole jungle blazes out with AUTOMATIC FIRE.

Out VIEW TURNS as the men around us are thrown and torn, screaming and scattering into the jungle. More AMERICANS appear; unexplainably, out of the growth. It is now that we fully SEE the bizarre manner in which they are dressed. Some wear helmets, others wear strange hats made from feathers and parts of animals. Some of them have long savage-looking hair; other crew-cut or completely shaved; they wear bandoliers, flak jackets, shorts and little else. They wear Montagnard sandals or no shoes at all, and their bodies and faces are painted in bizarre camouflage patterns. They appear one with the jungle and mist, FIRING INTO US as they move.

The soldier we saw earlier emerges from the swamp, dripping mud, his MACHINE GUN BLASTING FIRE.

We begin to move quickly with one Vietnamese, breathlessly running for his life; we MOVE INTO the jungle with him, only to be impaled on a large spear of a smiling AMERICAN painted and wearing feathers like an Indian. OUR VIEW FALLS WITH him to the ground, STARING UPWARDS, as FLAME and EXPLODING MUD scatter above us. Men scream and die around us. The screams amid the GUNFIRE and EXPLOSIONS are piercing and terrible, as though the jungle itself is frightened.

An AMERICAN wearing a jungle hat with a large Peace Sign on it, wearing war paint, bends TOWARD US, reaching down TOWARD US with a large knife, preparing to scalp the dead.

OUR VIEW MOVES AWAY, along with the running sandals of a Vietnamese soldier, MOVING FASTER AND FASTER, only to be stopped by still another of the savage-looking AMERICANS with primitive ornamentation, wearing only a loin-cloth and green beret. He opens his flame-thrower directly ON US and the NVA soldier and we are incinerated in flame, bright psychedelic orange-red flame. Outrageous, loud, electric ROCK MUSIC OVERWHELMS the SOUNDTRACK :

MAIN TITLE : APOCALYPSE NOW

2 TITLE SEQUENCE

The CREDIT TITLES proceed as the FLAME CONSUME US, growing more intense, brighter, more vivid, purifying; transforming into an intense white heat that we can barely

look at, like the sun itself.

Then it EXPLODES, breking apart, and shattering once again. It begins to cool, as the TITLES CONTINUE. It is as though WE ARE MOVING through the white center of cooling flame, forming a spinning web, and becoming more distant. The TITLES CONTINUE.

We are MOVING TOWARD planetary nebulae; MOVING through the stars; MOVING closer to the Earth. We can BARELY HEAR the MUSIC now.

We MOVE CLOSER to the earth; beautiful, covered in clouds, as though SEEN from a satellite. The TITLES CONTINUE.

We are MOVING CLOSER to the earth; through the soft clouds, close enough that we can MAKE OUT the Western Hemisphere; CLOSER to North America; CLOSER, to America, then California; Los Angeles, STILL CLOSER to the odd, finger-like shapes of :

3 EXT. MARINA DEL REY

The VIEW finally SETTLES ON a partically luxury cabin cruiser harbored at a particular dock late in the day.

It is large, pleasure boat: The people are relaxing in bathing suits and towels and robes. They are drinking cocktails, and snapping pictures. The boat belongs to the head of a large American Corporation, and this is his party. This man, CHARLIE, is sitting, his shirt off to catch some of the late sun. Others have their faces smeared with white suntan oil that reminds us of war paint. Charlie is going on and on :

CHARLIE

... It's crazy -- sugar is up to 200 dollars a ton -- sugar !

LAWYER

What about oil ?

CHARLIE

Food, oil --look, let me show you something. This is the economy of the United States in two years --

He takes a newspaper, draws a circle.

CHARLIE

(continuing)

This is West Germany.
(he draws another,
bigger circle)
This is Japan.
(another , bigger)

This is Italy.
(a dot)
This is Iran.
(a very big circle)
And this is Saudi Arabia... In
two years ?
(a gigantic circle)
Do you understand ?

ACCOUNTANT
What's to prevent it ?

CHARLIE
Maybe nothing. But I'll tell you,
I didn't build a two-billion-dollar
company in the last twenty years
by doing nothing. We can protect
our interests.
(pause, for a drink)
We are still the most powerful
nation in the world. Militarily.

He leans to his associates, in a half-whisper.

CHARLIE
(continuing)
You know bodyguard; he was a
captain in Viet Nam. You talk to
him, except he won't talk. This
kind of man can kill you with his
pinky. A nice quiet fella, though.

The VIEW BEGINS TO PULL AWAY from this group.

CHARLIE
(continuing)
Carries a attache case at all
times. You know what's in it ?
(another sip)
An Ingram Machine pistol.

Gradually, Charlie's voice softens as we MOVE AWAY, and a
NEW VOICE, the voice of someone thinking, COMES IN OVER it :

CHARLIE
I don't take chances, and
neither should this country.
If we're strong, we should
protect our interests, and
we should have the respect
of the world, even if it
takes another war.

WILLARD (V.O.)
Bullshit. You can kill
with the ridge of your
hand to the throat; you
can crush a skull with
your knee... but you
can't kill anybody with
your pinky.

The VIEW MOVE ALONG the guests of this small party :
Pictures being taken, some people are swimming. It is the
good life. Now WILLARD'S VOICE TRACK DOMINATES.

WILLARD (V.O.)

The attache case has been empty for three years, but it makes him safe to think there's a machine pistol in it.

I don't like automatic weapons. They jam.

I saw a friend of mine get ripped open because he flicked his M-16 to automatic, and it jammed. How much money did the contractors make on the M-16 ?

Our VIEW IS MOVING through the people on the boat; some reading, flirting, drinking.

WILLARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

He likes to hear stories about Nam. I tell him I can't; they're not cleared. The truth is he wouldn't understand.

We can now SEE A MAN with his BACK TO US, looking the opposite way. An attache case resting near to him. We MOVE CLOSER.

WILLARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

There's no way I can tell them... what really happened over there.

I wouldn't've believed it if someone'd told me.

We are now RESTING on his back. Occasionally, he sips from a beer, but we cannot see his face.

WILLARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

There was only one part that mattered -- for me, anyway. I don't even know if I remember all of it. I can't remember how it ended, exactly -- because when it ended I was insane.

DISSOLVE TO :

4 EXT. A STREET IN SAIGON - DAY

A Saigon boom street in late 1968. There are bars and shops for servicemen; the rickshaws, the motorbikes. Our VIEW MOVES TOWARD one particular officer; B.L. WILLARD , in uniform, a Captain of the Airborne, followed

by four or five Vietnamese kids trying to shine his shoes and sell him things.

WILLARD (V.O.)

But I know how it started for me -- I was on R. and R. in Saigon; my first time south of the DMZ in three months. I wasn't sure, but I thought this guy was following me.

Willard looks back.

5 HIS VIEW

an American CIVILIAN.

6 MED. VIEW

Willard ducks into a bar.

7 INT. THE SAIGON BAR - DAY

Not much in this place -- a bar, linoleum flooring, a few tables and chairs, and a juke box. The lounge is fairly crowded. Willard takes off his cap and walks quietly past the soldiers at the bar. Some of them, catching sight of his ribbons, stop talking as he moves by.

An INFANTRY CAPTAIN enters the bar, buys a couple of drinks and approaches Willard's table.

CAPTAIN

How about a drink ?

WILLARD

Sure, thanks.

He sits down at the table with the drinks.

CAPTAIN

Winning the war by yourself.

WILLARD

(he calls for the waiter)
Part.

CAPTAIN

Which part is that ?

WILLARD

My part.
(TO THE WAITER)
Beer, with ice and water.

CAPTAIN
That's good gin.

WILLARD
I'm sure it is, but I had hepatitis.

CAPTAIN
Delta ?

WILLARD
No.

CAPTAIN
North ?

WILLARD
Yeah. Way north.

CAPTAIN
What unit were you with ?

WILLARD
None.

CAPTAIN
Rangers, eh?

WILLARD
Sort of.

The JUKE BOX starts BLARING. Annoyed , Willard looks over his shoulder.

CAPTAIN
Were you Longe Range Recon --

WILLARD
No -- I worked too far north for LRRP.

He reaches into his shirt pocket for a cigarette, and the Captain leans over the table to light it for him. Willard notices the CIVILIAN on the street has glanced in the bar, then enters and sits down at a table by the doorway.

CAPTAIN
That's quite an array of ribbons...

WILLARD
Let's talk about you.

CAPTAIN
I was an FO for the 25th.

WILLARD

Tracks ?

CAPTAIN

Yeah.

WILLARD

Fat. That's real fat.

CAPTAIN

Sometimes.

WILLARD

At least you always have enough water. How many gallons does each one of those damn things carry ?

CAPTAIN

Thirty -- sometimes fifty.

WILLARD

You know, I can remember once, getting back below the DMZ -- and the first Americans we ran into were a track squadron. I just couldn't believe how much water they had. We'd been chewing bamboo shoots for almost a week, and before that, for two weeks, we'd been drinking anything -- rain water, river shit, stuff right out of the paddies. And there were these guys standing by their trucks spilling water all over. I could've killed them.

(solemnly)

I swear to God I would have, too, if ...

CAPTAIN

I didn't know we had units up there in North Vietnam.

WILLARD

We do.

CAPTAIN

How long were you up there ?

WILLARD

A long time.

CAPTAIN

A year ? Waiter another beer.

WILLARD

I go up on missions. Listen

Captain, buy me all the beer
you want, but you better tell
that asshole over there you're
not going to find out anymore
about me.

Willard glances over his shoulder and indicates the
Civilian. The Civilian is given a sign by the Captain.
He rises and comes over to the bar.

WILLARD
(continuing)
What do you want ?

CIVILIAN
(indicating the Army jeep)
If you're B.L. Willard, 4th Recon
Group, we'd like you to come with
us.

WILLARD
Whose orders ?

CAPTAIN
Headquarters 11 Corps -- 405th
A.S.A Battalion -- S-2 --
Com-Sec -- Intelligence --
Nha Trang.

WILLARD
Who are you ?

CIVILIAN
The agency.

Willard looks at the Civilian a moment, and then walks
roght out toward the jeep without saying another word.
The Civilian follows.

8 EXT. HELICOPTER - DUSK

A darkly painted "HUEY" ROARS over low paddies and jungle
before emerging onto an open plain. It crosses a barbed
wire and sand-bagged perimeter and lands in a heavily
fortified, concealed compound.

WILLARD (V.O.)
They took me to some place outside
Nha Trang... Intelligence Headquarters
for all operations in South East Asia.
I'd worked for Intelligence before --

Armed men jump from the Huey -- among them Willard. A
large camouflaged cover is moved, revealing an underground
corridor -- they enter.

9 FULL SHOT - UNDERGROUND PLOTTING ROOM

A door swings wide -- Willard steps through and comes to attention, blocking the view of the room. A strange reddish light pervades. The room is covered with plastic maps and filled with smoke.

The whole place has been hewn out of the ground itself and there is a sense of the cut-back jungle growth slowly reclaiming it.

WILLARD

Captain B.L. Willard, G-4 Headquarters,
reporting as ordered, sir.

COLONEL (O.S.)

Okay, Willard, sit down.

Willard sits in a chair that is set in a center of a bare concrete floor. Across from him, around steel desks and tables sit several men. The nearest one, a COLONEL puts his cigar out on the bottom of his shoe -- behind him sits a MAJOR and a seedy-looking CIVILIAN.

COLONEL

Have you ever seen this officer
before, Captain Willard ?

He points to the Major.

WILLARD

No, sir.

COLONEL

This gentleman or myself ?

WILLARD

No, sir.

COLONEL

I believe on your last job you
executed a tax collector in Kontum,
is that right ?

WILLARD

I am not presently disposed to
discuss that, sir.

MAJOR

Very good.

He turns to the Colonel and nods his approval. The Colonel gets up and goes to a large plastic map.

COLONEL

You know much about about Special Forces;

Green Berets, Captain ?

WILLARD

I've worked with them on occasions
and I saw the movie , sir.

The officer smiles at this.

COLONEL

Then you can appreciate Command's
concern over their -- shall we say
'erratic' methods of operation.

(pause)

I have never favored elite units,
Captain, including your paratroopers
or whatever. Just because a man
jumps out of an airplane or wears
a silly hat doesn't give him any
privileges in my book -- not in
this man's army.

MAJOR

We didn't need 'em in Korea --
no sir, give me an Ohio farm boy
and an M-1 Garand, none of this
fancy crap -- no sir.

CIVILIAN

(stopping him)

Major.

COLONEL

We have Special Forces A
detachments all along the
Cambodian border. Two here and
another one here -- twelve or
fourteen Americans -- pretty
much on their own; they train
and motivate Montagnard natives;
pick their own operations. If
they need something, they call
for it, and get it within
reason. What we're concerned
with is here.

10 CLOSE VIEW - ON THE MAP

COLONEL

The A detachment at Nu Mung Ba.
It was originally a larger base,
built up along the river in an
old Cambodian fortress.

The area has been relatively
quiet for the past two years --
but --

11 MED VIEW

COLONEL

... Captain, we know something's
going on up there -- Major --

The Major looks at some papers in front of him.

MAJOR

Communications naturally dwindled
with the lack of V.C. activity,
this is routine, expected ... but
six months ago communication
virtually stopped.

COLONEL

About the same time -- large numbers
of Montagnards of the M'Nong descent
began leaving the area -- this in
itself is not unusual since these
people have fought with the Rhade
Tribe that lived in the area for
centuries. But what is unusual is
that we began to find Rhade refugees
too -- in the same sampans as the
M'Nongs. These people aren't afraid
of V.C. They've put up with war
for twenty years -- but something
is driving them out.

MAJOR

We communicate with the base
infrequently. What they call for
are air strikes, immediate --
always at night. And we don't
know what or who the air strikes
are called on.

WILLARD

Who ?

MAJOR

You see, no one has really gone
into this area and come back alive.

WILLARD

Why me ?

MAJOR

Walter Kurtz, Lieutenant Colonel,
Special Forces. We understand
you knew him.

He puts Kurtz' dossier in Willard's hand.

WILLARD

Yeah.

COLONEL

He's commanding the detachment
at Nu Mung Ba.

The Colonel gets up and walks over to a tape recorder,
flicks it on. The recording is first STATIC -- the
AIR CONTROLLER then asks for more information on target
coordinates -- it all sounds very routine, military.
Then a frantic VOICE comes on, talking slurred, like
someone dumb, except very fast.

VOICE (ON TAPE)

Up 2 -- 0 -- give it to me quick --
Mark flare -- affirmative damn --
Immediate receive -- hearing
automatic weapons fire man ...

GUNFIRE is HEARD and a lower, slower VOICE in background.

SECOND VOICE

Blue Delta five
This Big Rhine -- three
Need that ordinance immediately
Goddamn give it to me immediate
Christ -- Big Rhino --
Blue God -- Delta damn -- goddamn.

A heavy BURST of AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE -- INSANE LAUGHTER
-- STATIC, and faintly, very faintly we HEAR HARD ROCK
MUSIC -- more STATIC -- suddenly a low, clear VOICE
peaceful and serene, almost tasting the words.

THIRD VOICE

This is Big Rhino six -- Blue Delta.

MAJOR

That's Colonel Kurtz.

KURTZ (V.O.)

I want that napalm dropped in the
trees -- spread it among the
branches.

We'll give you a flare -- an
orange one -- bright orange.

(STATIC)

We'd also like some white phosphorous,
Blue Delta. White phosphorous, give
it to me.

STATIC interrupts -- the Major turns the machine off.

WILLARD

I only met Kurtz once.

CIVILIAN

Would he remember you ?

WILLARD

Maybe.

COLONEL

What was your impression of him ?

Willard shrugs.

CIVILIAN

You didn't like him.

WILLARD

Anyone got a cigarette.

The Major offers him one; they wait as he lights up, thinks.

WILLARD

(continuing)

I thought he was a lame.

COLONEL

A lame ?

WILLARD

This is years ago, before he
joined Special Forces, I guess.
We had an argument.

COLONEL

About what ?

WILLARD

I don't know. He was a lame,
that's all.

COLONEL

But why ?

WILLARD

He couldn't get through a
sentence without all these
big words; about why we kill.

COLONEL

Well, he's killing now.

WILLARD

Maybe.

CIVILIAN

What does that mean ?

WILLARD

Maybe it's not Kurtz. I don't believe he's capable of that. I just don't believe it.

COLONEL

It's got to be Kurtz.

CIVILIAN

The point is that Kurtz or somebody attacked a South Vietnamese Ranger Platoon three days ago. Last week a Recon helicopter was lost in the area -- another took heavy damage -- direct fire from their base camp.

WILLARD

Our Recon flight ?

CIVILIAN

Ours.

WILLARD

Touchy.

CIVILIAN

You can see, of course, the implications, if any of this -- even rumours leaked out.

WILLARD

You want me to clean it up -- simple and quiet.

CIVILIAN

Exactly -- you'll go up the Nung River in a Navy P.B.R. -- appear at Nu Mung Ba as if by accident, re-establish your acquaintance with Colonel Kurtz, find out what's happened -- and why. Then terminate his command.

WILLARD

Terminate ?

CIVILIAN

Terminate with extreme prejudice.

12 FULL VIEW - ON THE DELTA

A waterway leading out to the ocean -- it is broken and divided into hundreds of channels, islands, water farms.

A Navy patrol boat (P.B.R.) is waiting by a dock area.

This is small, light craft, very fast, and heavily armed. Its men stand at attention in a small and simple military ceremony. Willard approaches them in battle-dress: Tiger suit, full field pack, forty-five, helmet, M-16. The boat commander salutes Willard.

13 MED. VIEW

We hear the introductions faintly, UNDER Willard's VOICE.

WILLARD (V.O.)

I met the P.B.R. crew; they were pretty much all kids, except for Phillips, the Chief -- Gunner's Mate Third Class L. Johnson -- Lance Johnson; Gunner's Mate Third Class J. Hicks -- The Chef -- Radio Operator Second Class T. Miller; they called him Mr. Clean.

WILLARD

Chief, try to keep out of where we're going -- Why we're goin' and what's gonna be the big surprise.

CHIEF

All right with me, I used to drive a taxi.

WILLARD

Let's go.

The Chief nods. They all break formation and jump aboard and otherwise go about their work.

The twin diesels kick up -- and the boat moves away from the dock. The Chef jumps aboard; Lance mans the forward twin fifty-caliber machine guns -- they wave to the guards on the dock and move away into the complexity that leads to the ocean.

DISSOLVE TO :

14 FULL VIEW - STORMY SEA

The boat slams through the heavy sea ; hurtling off the top of a wave and crashing full into the trough of another.

15 MED. SHOT - BOAT COCKPIT - WILLARD AND CHIEF

Willard holds on to whatever he can -- he looks very pale. Water crashes over the bow and drenches everyone. The Chief mans the wheel and the ENGINES WHINE. Lance climbs

back from his position. He looks at Willard, who just stares ahead into space, swallowing.

DISSOLVE TO :

16 LONG SHOT - BOAT DUSK

The dusk is spectacular through the broken storm clouds -- the sea is calm again.

DISSOLVE TO :

17 VIEW ON THE BOAT - PROCEEDING UP THE COAST

The Chief is at the helm -- Willard approaches him.

CHIEF

The Delta closes off to us about ten miles out of Hau Fat. We'll be able to pick up some supplies -- bit I think there are only two points we can draw enough water to get into the Nung River. It's all Charlie's turf from there on out.

WILLARD

We're gonna have some help to get in the river. You know these waters, Chief ?

CHIEF

'Bout six months ago I took a man up to Lo Mung Bridge. He was regular Army too. Shot himself in the head. I brought his body back down.

WILLARD

Shot himself. What for ?

CHIEF

Beats me -- the sun was too much for him, or the mud. Who knows ?

Pause, looking at Willard.

18 CLOSE SHOT - ON WILLARD

Suddenly, his attention is diverted -- there is a slow buffeting, as if the air around them is being sucked out and replaced quickly. The boat shakes slightly. There is a distant ROLLING NOISE like interrupted thunder. All

the men have stopped whatever they're doing -- stand up and look out toward the shore and the green jungle hills beyond. The buffeting and NOISE CONTINUES -- they all stand silently -- suddenly it stops.

WILLARD
Arch light.

CHEF
I hate that -- Every time I hear that noise something terrible happens.

CHIEF
Anybody see some smoke ?

CLEAN
Too far inland.

LANCE
There they are.

He points up to the sky.

19 FULL SHOT - ON THE SKY

Way up -- past any clouds and barely discernible, we SEE the black silhouettes of four B-52 bombers, their vapor trails streaming white against the dark blue sky.

CLEAN
Charlie don't ever hear 'em. Not till it's too late -- don't have to hit you neither, concussion'll do it for a quarter mile or better. Burst your ears -- suck the air outta your lungs.

20 FULL SHOT - BOAT - CREW

They are looking up. Willard sits down, unconcerned. He takes out the dossier given him by ComSec. He flips through the letters and other documents.

WILLARD (V.O.)
The dossier on A detachment had letters from Kurtz' wife and the wives and families of his men. All asking where to send future mail, understanding the necessary silence due to the nature of their work -- None of the men had written home in half a year.

Occasionally, in the b.g., we FEEL the terrifying buffeting

of the distant B-52 BOMBING.

21 CLOSE - ON WILLARD

studying, examining a report.

22 MONTAGE - PICTURES OF KURTZ

Kurtz' face evolves through the various stages of his career as represented in the pictures in the dossier, as Willard reads :

WILLARD (V.O.)
Lieutenant Kurtz has shown a dedicated and well-disciplined spirit. He is a fine officer, combining military efficiency -- with a broad background in the Humanities, the Arts and Sciences ...

Another picture of Kurtz in Germany, standing next to the 161st Petroleum Supply Group sign.

WILLARD (V.O.)
(continuing)
... He views his military career as the dedication of his talents to bringing our values and way of life to those darker, less fortunate areas in the world.

A SHOT of Kurtz at jump school.

WILLARD (V.O.)
(continuing)
... I feel Captain Kurtz' request for Special Forces training is highly unusual in regard to his past humanitarian concerns, and his somewhat liberal politics, though I can see no reason to deny it.

A CLOSE SHOT of Kurtz with Green Beret on in the Vietnam jungle. His face is blank and vacant.

WILLARD (V.O.)
(continuing)
... We feel Major Kurtz' need to bring a sense of Western culture to the backward peoples of these areas will be of use in accordance with our 'Vietnamization' programs ...

MOVE IN TO Kurtz' empty eyes until the photograph is just a BLURRED MASS OF DOTS.

DISSOLVE TO :

23 EXT. HAU FAT - AN ADVANCE STAGING AREA

WILLARD (V.O.)

One day later we came to an advanced staging area along the coast. This was our last chance to pick up supplies before approaching the mouth of the Nung River.

The VIEW OF THE COASTLINE leading up along the long loading docks at Hau Fat, an advance staging area for operations "Brute Force" and "Mailed Fist."

Everywhere are tents -- oil drums -- sandbagged bunkers -- helicopters -- tanks -- guns -- men. Nobody builds advanced staging areas like the Americans.

As the P.B.R. approaches the docking area, Lance notices something.

LANCE

Hey.

They look as a Chris-craft speeds by pulling a fancy water-skier who waves as he slaloms by. The men just look at one another.

24 VIEW ON THE DOCK

The P.B.R. pulls in -- the men scan the busy surroundings.

CHIEF

Lance -- I want you to go with the Captain an' get three extra drums of fuel and maybe scrounge some more 50 caliber.

LANCE

Yeah -- look at those uniforms.

25 FULL SHOT - PARADE GROUNDS - TROOPS

A platoon drills in the hot, lazy sun; they are clean and pale, in contrast to Lance and the others, just off the airplane.

CHIEF

Poor bastards, have a long year

to go.

The troops turn and march TOWARD US with six weeks of Advanced Infantry Training to back them up.

26 FULL SHOT - DOCK - P.B.R. - CREW

They are tying up at the dock -- a young SERGEANT is filling cut papers concerning them and talking with Willard.

SERGEANT
I don't know anything about these papers, sir.

WILLARD
They're in order -- it's perfectly clean -- just check with ComSec-Intel like I said.

SERGEANT
Well, you know I don't have the priority to do that, sir. It says here not to contact Com-Sec-Int. Who's your commanding officer ?

WILLARD
Right now -- I am.

SERGEANT
Well who the hell verifies that ?

WILLARD
I do.

He signs it quickly, leaving the Sergeant totally confused.

CHIEF
No shit -- what's all the activity for around here ?

SERGEANT
The show --

WILLARD
What show ?

SERGEANT
Big show in the parade grounds this noon -- some boss stuff --

WILLARD
This -- Bob Hope or the like --

SERGEANT
No sir, I think -- this'll be a

little bit different --

CHIEF

Where's it gonna be ?

He points --

27 FULL SHOT - PARADE GROUNDS - PEDESTAL

A large, well-built pedestal has been erected -- this is surrounded by a deep moat filled with punji stakes and garnished with concertina wire. It is empty --

DISSOLVE TO :

28 FULL SHOT - PARADE GROUNDS - TROOPS

The entire area around the pedestal and right up to the wire is mobbed with seething American fighting men. Some of these boys have just gotten here -- others have been in the jungle for months. All have one thing in common, to see and if possible grab an American girl. Their need far surpasses that of the run-of-the-mill rapist, pervert, or child-molester. To counter their need of course are the moat, punji stakes and barbed wire -- but implementing this are seven "riot control positions" equipped with the latest in teargas launchers, attack-trained German shepherds and assorted psychological warfare aides. Even so armed, the great mass of wild men are right up to the wire.

29 FORWARD AREA

jammed in the crowd

CHEF

It's really too much -- I mean
I've collected every picture of
her since she was Miss December.

CLEAN

Yeah -- you can really get hung
up on them like the cat in the
Delta.

CHIEF

What cat ?

CLEAN

One that went up for murder -- he
was an Army Sergeant.

CHIEF

I never heard about that.

CLEAN

Yeah -- he really dug his Playboy mag, man -- I mean like he was there when it arrived -- He just knew.

CHEF

So what happened ?

CLEAN

He was working A.R.V.N. patrols and had one a them little cocky gook asshole Lieutenants -- anyhow, the Lieutenant took his new Playboy one day, sat on the end of the dock, and wouldn't give it back.

CHEF

Yeah -- typical A.R.V.N.

CLEAN

Then went too far -- he sat there and starts mutilating the centerfold. Poking pins in her an' all that. Sergeant says, don't do her like that. You leave your shitty little hands off that girl. Gook Lieutenant says Fuck you in Vietnamese -- Sergeant says, don't do that again. You'll wish you hadn't. Then he stood up, flicked his iron to rock and roll and gave the little zero a long burst through the Playboy mag. Man, it blew him clean off the dock -- Hell, just the magazine was floatin' there all full of holes.

CHIEF

They nail him for it bad ?

CLEAN

He's in the L.B.J. -- didn't give him no medals or nothing --

In the b.g., we begin to HEAR a SWELL of TWO THOUSAND MALE VOICES; the ENGINES of four helicopters approaching. All heads turn skywards while one descends onto the pedestal kicking up a lot of dust and general resentment. On the nose and doors of the black Huey are painted large Playboy rabbits. Finally the blades are trimmed and a strange silence descends over the men. The door of the copter slides partially open -- two young Green Berets step out with M-16's to varied catcalls. When this abates a young, extremelly well-dressed man emerges. He is the epitome of a Hollywood AGENT. Hair is combed impeccably and free of dandruff -- clothes are formal but hip -- shoes are shined -- Quite some dude -- his

presence causes some stirring but seems to strangely quiet the man.

He walks over to the microphone.

AGENT

I'd like to say hello from all of us up here, to all of you out there. All of you who've worked so hard during Operation Brute Force -- Paratroopers -- Infantry -- Airmen -- Medics -- Marines -- and Sailors. And I want you to know that we feel proud of you and know how hard your job is. To prove it -- we've brought some entertainment we think you're gonna like: The Playmate of the Year and her two runners up !

He pulls open the door and three unbelievably beautiful sex playmates in fringed go-go outfits leap out and start dancing to the Creedence Clearwater Revival singing "Suzy Q."

30 MONTAGE ON THE GIRLS AND MEN

VARIOUS SHOTS as the girls dance in an incredibly erotic manner -- smiling.

The faces of the G.I.'s pass -- their jaws drop -- some look almost horrified. Chef is hypnotized -- Mr. Clean cries. Chief mouths unspoken obscenities with sentimental tenderness.

Others grab the air in front of them. With each movement their need increases by the square.

31 FULL SHOT - PEDESTAL - GIRLS - MEN

They crush forward starting to scream -- men fall on the wire -- the guards in the "riot control positions" forget -- the attack dogs are trampled. The mob as one surges forward onto the wire. Men scream and fall into the moat, which is filling up fast. The Agent sees this all as he has seen it before. He casually pulls the pin of a smoke grenade; the girls retreat into the copter -- he follows, then the two Green Berets. The ROTARS WHINE -- the black Playboy Huey lifts off just as the first crazed men reach it. They grab frantically for the wheels, but miss. The Huey wheels up into the blue sky, leaving them all below.

Such are the ways of war.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. FULL VIEW - DAY

The P.B.R. moving further up the primitive coastline. There are few signs of civilization; no villages, no boats -- just the overwhelming presence of the jungle.

WILLARD (V.O.)
Two days out of Hau Fat, there was nothing but us and the coastline. I felt like I had set off for the center of the earth...

Suddenly, Chief looks out, ahead.

CHIEF
Smoke !

WILLARD
Where ?

They all turn. Chief points up the coast.

33 FULL SHOT - THE COASTLINE

A thick train of black smoke rises from the green jungle.

WILLARD
Black smoke ... secondary burning.

The Chief grabs field glasses.

CHIEF
Yeah -- fishing village -- helicopters over there. Hueys, lots of 'em.

WILLARD
First Air Cavalry. They're the ones gonna get us into the River.

34 FULL SHOT - THE BEACH AND VILLAGE

A vast field of devastation -- smashed and smoking palm trees -- deep, ragged craters -- gutted and burning huts -- shattered sampans and bodies washing around in the surf.

35 MED. SHOT - BEACH - WILLARD AND CREW

They wade through the water to the beach where they are met by a heavily armed group of men.

Overhead jets swoop by FIRING ROCKETS, the NOISE drowning

out Willard's attempt at conversation with some of the men.

We can't hear any of the talk, but we notice that the Sergeant turns up to a particular Huey, and points to it.

36 FULL SHOT - HELICOPTERS

Three Hueys swoop in low -- they are heavily laden with machine guns -- rockets and loudspeakers. The two outside copters hover, while the center copter lands, raising a lot of dust. It cuts its rotors and the other copters pull up and off to the side. Two armed soldiers jump from the doors and stand with guns ready. Then a tall, strong looking man emerges. He wears a well-cut and neatly-stretched tiger suit. It is COLONEL WILLIAM KILGORE -- tough looking, well-tanned, with a black mustache.

He crouches over, holding his hat in the rotor wash. It is no ordinary hat but a L.A. Dodgers baseball hat. He walks out, and then stands to his full immense height and with his hands on his hips he surveys the field of battle. His eyes are obscured by mirror-fronted sunglasses.

KILGORE
(bellowing)

Lieutenant: Bomb that tree line
back about a hundred yards -- give
me some room to breathe.

A Lieutenant and radio man nod and rush off.

37 CLOSE VIEW ON WILLARD

He was not quite prepared for this.

38 VIEW ON KILGORE

turning to his GUARDS

KILGORE
Bring me some cards.

GUARD
Sir ?

KILGORE
Body cards, you damn fool --
cards !

The soldier rushes over and hands him two brand new packages of playing cards wrapped in plastic. Two other soldiers get out of the copter and walk over. They are well-tanned and carry no weapons. They seem more casual about the Colonel than anyone else. The Sergeant walks

up, leading Willard, the Chief and Lance.

WILLARD
(formally)
Captain B-L. Willard, sir -- 4th
Recon Group -- I carry priority
papers from Com-Sec Intelligence
11 Corp -- I believe you understand
the nature of my mission.

KILGORE
(not looking up)
Yeah -- Na Trang told me to
expect you -- we'll see what we
can do. Just stay out of my way
till this is done, Captain.

He cracks the plastic wrapping sharply -- takes out the
deck of new cards and fans them. The Colonel strides
right past Willard with no further acknowledgement. The
others follow,

39 TRACKING VIEW

The Colonel walks through the shell-pocked field of
devastation. Soldiers gather around smiling; as Kilgore
comes to each V.C. corpse he drops a playing card on
it -- carefully picking out which card he uses.

KILGORE
(to himself)
Six a spades -- eight a hearts --
Isn't one worth a Jack in this
whole place.

The Colonel goes on about this business.

40 TRACKING ON KILGORE

moving through the corpses, dropping the cards.

On of the two tanned soldiers rushes up and whispers
something to him. He stops.

KILGORE
What ? Here. You sure?

The soldier points to Lance, who immediately puts down
the card he was holding. Kilgore strides over to the
young man, who almost instinctively moves closer t
Willard.

KILGORE
(continuing)
What's your name, sailor ?

LANCE
Gunner's Mate, Third Class --
L. Johnson, sir.

KILGORE
Lance Johnson? The surfer?

LANCE
That's right, sir.

Kilgore smiles -- sticks out his hand.

KILGORE
It's an honor to meet you Lance.
I've admired your nose-riding for
years -- I like your cutback, too.
I think you have the best cutback
there is.

LANCE
Thank you, sir.

KILGORE
You can cut out the sir, Lance --
I'm Bill kilgore -- I'm a goofy
foot.

41 VIEW ON WILLARD

His entire, top priority mission has been put in the
background.

KILGORE (O.S.)
This is Mike from San Diego and
Johnny from Malibu -- they're good
solid surfers -- none of us are
anywhere near your class, though.

Lance blushes, sort of mumbling thanks.

WILLARD
My orders are from Com-Sec
Intel -- B.L. Willard, 4th Recon --

KILGORE
Just hold up a second, Captain --
I'll get to you soon enough --
We've got things to do here.

Willard eats it, for now. Kilgore puts his hand on
Lance's shoulder, and continues flipping the cards in-
discriminately on the bodies as they talk.

KILGORE
(continuing)

... we do a lot of surfing around here. Like to finish up operations early and fly down to Vung Tau for the evening glass. Have you ever surfed the point at Vung Tau? I liked the beach breaks around Na Trang a lot -- good lefts.

He passes a twisted gun emplacement with about five bodies -- sprinkles cards all over them.

KILGORE
(continuing)

... we keep three boards in my Command Huey at all times. You never can tell when you're gonna run into something good. I got a guy in Cam Rau Bay that can predict a swell two days in advance. We try to work it in.

He stops at a particularly wild-looking Viet Cong who has died with his mouth agape -- staring wild-eyed in horror at the sky. Kilgore pauses.

KILGORE
(continuing; to himself)
Hell, that's an Ace if I ever saw one.

He puts the card in the gaping mouth.

42 CLOSE VIEW OVER THE VIET CONG

We SEE the Colonel and the others walk off -- the dead Viet Cong and card are in the immediate f.g. The card has the shield of the CAV printed beautifully, and above it the motto: DEATH FROM ABOVE.

KILGORE
Where've you been riding, Lance?

LANCE
I haven't surfed since I got here.

KILGORE
That's terrible -- we'll change that -- I'd like to see you work -- I've always liked your cutback; got a hell of a left turn, too.

DISSOLVE TO :

43 EXT. THE HELICOPTER - MED. SHOT

Willard is sitting with Kilgore on a couple of chairs by a table set up in front of the command copter.

Everywhere we SEE armed men, sandbags, barbed wire, oil drums etc. Hueys are constantly ROARING over. ARTILLERY BOOMS in the far distance. Kilgore looks at the map.

KILGORE

Why the hell you wanna go up to Nu Mung Ba for?

WILLARD

I got bored in Saigon.

KILGORE

What's the furthest you been in?

WILLARD

Haiphong.

KILGORE

Haiphong? Shit, you jump in ?

WILLARD

No. Walked.

KILGORE

What'd you do for supplies?

WILLARD

(he shrugs)

Mercenaries -- agents, traitors -- they put out caches.

KILGORE

Can you trust them?

WILLARD

No. They put out two or three for every one I needed. When you get to the one you'll use, you just stake it out. If something feels wrong, you just pass it up. On one mission, I had to pass up three and ended up living on rats and chocolate bars.

KILGORE

Nu Mung Ba. Last I heard, Walter Kurtz commanded a Green Beret detachment at Nu Mung Ba.

WILLARD

When did you hear?

KILGORE

'Bout a year ago? Is Kurtz
still alive?

WILLARD

Who knows.

KILGORE

Seems to me he got himself
fragged. i heard some grunt
rolled a grenade in his tent.
Maybe a rumor. Helluva man --
remarkable officer. Walter
Kurtz woulda been a General
some day. General of the Army.
Shit, Head of the Joint Chiefs
of Staff. Did you knew Kurtz?

WILLARD

I met him.

KILGORE

Don't you agree?

WILLARD

He musta changed !
(pointing to the map)
I got to get into the Nung
River, here or here.

KILGORE

That village you're pointing at
is kinda hairy.

WILLARD

Hairy ?

KILGORE

I mean it's hairy -- they got some
pretty heavy ordnance, boy --
I've lost a few recon ships in
there now and again.

WILLARD

So? I heard you had a good bunch
of killers here.

KILGORE

And I don't intend to get some of
them chewed up just to get your
tub put in the mouth of the
goddman Nung River. You say you
don't know Kurtz?

WILLARD

I met him.

KILGORE

You talk like him. I don't mind taking casualties, Captain, but I like to keep my ratio ten to one in this unit -- ten Cong to one.

WILLARD

You'll find enough Cong up there.

KILGORE

What about this point here?

He puts his finger on the map.

KILGORE

(continuing)

What's the name of that goddamn village -- Vin Drin Dop or Lop; damn gook names all sound the same.

He motions to one of his surfers.

KILGORE

(continuing)

Mike, you know anything about the point at Vin Drip Drop?

MIKE

Boss left.

KILGORE

What do you mean?

MIKE

It's really long left slide, breaks on the short side of the point -- catches a south swell.

LANCE

Nice.

Willard looks at Lance -- then at Kilgore.

KILGORE

Why the hell didn't you tell me about that place -- a good left.

(to Willard)

There aren't any good left slides in this whole, shitty country. It's all goddamn beach break.

MIKE

It's hairy, though. That's where we lost McDonnell -- they shot the hell out of us. It's Charlie's point.

KILGORE
How big it is?

MIKE
Six to eight feet.

Kilgore gazes out across the parked helicopters.

KILGORE
(to himself)
A six-foot left.

Willard nudges Lance -- who gets the idea.

LANCE
Boss. What's the wind like.

MIKE
Light off shore -- really hollow.

WILLARD
We could go in tomorrow at dawn
-- there's always off-shore wind
in the morning.

CHIEF
The draft of that river might be
too shallow on the point.

KILGORE
Hell, we'll pick your boat up and
lay it down like a baby, right
where you want it. This is the