

**KHMER AMERIKA**

(excerpt)

by

Doyle Avant

**KHMER AMERIKA** premiered February 9, 1996 at the abandoned Main Lincoln Mercury Parking Garage, in San Antonio, Texas.

Produced by Jumpstart Performance Company

Directed by Steve Bailey

Cast:

Kennedy	Doyle Avant
Phuong	S.T. Shimi
Williams	Gert Baker
Viktor	Roger Alverez
Charlie	Bill Gundry
Ensemble	Lisa Suarez
	Kitty Williams
	Ely Rios

## **KHMER AMERIKCA**

**The Place**            Wartime New York City a few years from now

### **The People**

Kennedy	An out of control bike messenger with CLEX
Williams	his friend, a fired up paramilitary guy
Phuong	an illegal alien Cambodian Guerilla a kind woman
Charlie	her partner - a whiteboy Guerilla
Viktor	a dealer of people and things
Various	Men and Women coming and going without rhyme or reason

Ideally this play should be staged in a huge collapsing rubble-strewn factory in some dangerous neighborhood where the trains don't go.

Or an abandoned B-52 bomber hanger with gaping holes in the roof and rain dripping in.

## SCENE 1

KENNEDY rides his bicycle through war-torn New York City - a place that's become Beirut, Saigon and Sarajevo on a bad day all rolled into one and set to Cambodian pop music.

Kennedy wears a small black messenger bag over his shoulder.

KENNEDY

You see that?

Yeah - sure is a lotta cigarette smoke in the air this morning.

When I was young I would see men on the street talking to themselves non-stop and I'd think - someday, that's gonna be me.

Now here I am.

And I must say, it's everything I ever hoped it would be. And more.

My name is Kennedy.  
No relation to the late President.

He looks around.

KENNEDY (hushed)

Well, that's not exactly true.  
Actually - we are related.  
But let's keep that between you and me - okay?

He swerves.

KENNEDY

Whoa - gotta watch out for those bomb craters.

## SCENE 2

KENNEDY rides. A BUSINESS MAN jogs alongside him.

MAN

I don't believe that.

KENNEDY

It's true. I never lie.

MAN

A bike messenger?

KENNEDY

Yep.

MAN

You're gonna kill yourself doing that.

KENNEDY

You'd think. But I happen to have it from well-placed sources that I *will not* die on the job.

MAN

How long you been doing this?

KENNEDY

Next Tuesday 11:15 - will make it a month.

MAN

Big moment for you huh?

KENNEDY

The biggest.

MAN

What'd you do before that?

KENNEDY

Worked at the United Nations.

MAN

Doing what?

KENNEDY

-- I'm not at liberty to talk about it.

MAN

But you quit eh?

KENNEDY

The UN? -- Yeah, didn't like being around all those exit visas. Too tempting. Besides, I don't want to run away. I want to be here when it happens. See what it really looks like. -- You know what I mean?

### SCENE 3

KENNEDY rides.

KENNEDY

The truth is I was the resident  
Radiologist at the United Nations.  
The X-Ray Man. Took interior  
shots of ambassadors and chauffeurs  
from all over the world.

I quit the morning after I tested  
positive for CLEX.

The doctor's aren't sure how it's  
gonna run it's course.

But somehow I've gotta figure out  
what's happening to me -- because  
it's only a matter of time before  
everything I say and do makes no  
sense whatsoever.

#### SCENE 4

KENNEDY rides - stops by a WOMAN staring vacantly into the  
distance. She hums BING CROSBY'S WHITE CHRISTMAS.

KENNEDY

What's in your mind?

WOMAN (clexing)

I woke up this morning - weeping.  
For all the radio batteries slowly  
running down.

Kennedy runs a finger across her cheekbone.

WOMAN

Lay there - drowning my face in red salt  
water. Sweet terror.

Kennedy catches one of her tears with a fingertip.  
He pulls a CEMISTRY VIAL from his messenger bag - drops the tear  
into the vial.

#### SCENE 5

Kennedy rides. He takes a sip from the TEAR VIAL.

KENNEDY

You see that? She's CLEX-ed.

No doubt about it.

Kennedy caps the VIAL.

KENNEDY

When I'm not delivering important  
messages - this is what I do - just  
wander around, looking for clues,

A WOMAN in the darkness - lurking in the background Kennedy.

KENNEDY

...talking to people - ...watching their  
language melt.

Kennedy vanishes.

The Woman now appears more clearly.

She's PHUONG - a beautiful Southeast Asian.

She's a GUERILLA - dressed in Viet Cong style black Pajamas.

## SCENE 6

KENNEDY stands with MAN who drinks RED WINE.

MAN

Twenty five years with my wife -  
my lover. I looked across the  
table at her. Saw a total stranger.  
An indescribably beautiful stranger.  
And I thought...

Unaware of what he's doing -

the Man tosses his WINE on KENNEDY'S face.

MAN

I can't believe this is happening to me.

He looks down at his drink.

MAN

I'm gonna get another drink - you okay?

KENNEDY

I'm doing alright.

MAN

Really? You're the luckiest man on  
earth.

MAN exits.

KENNEDY runs his forefinger over his cheek.  
He puts the wine-covered finger in his mouth.

He takes out the VIAL OF TEARS - adds WINE to it.

## SCENE 7

KENNEDY rides.

Pulls out a miniature TAPE PLAYER - talks into it.

KENNEDY

We don't really know *how* CLEX got started  
- only when.

A few years back our country went to war  
to prop up a repressive regime that  
didn't allow women to drive. They did  
however produce half the world's supply  
of pretroleum jelly.

This little adventure came at a time when  
America itself was on the brink of total  
collapse.....

The first cases of CLEX appeared with the  
war's outbreak.

Some people think this was just a  
crazy coincidence.

A gunshot rings out. KENNEDY falls to the ground - as  
though he's been shot in the head by a sniper.

SOFT RADIO VOICE

We have gunfire on the plaza.

We have gunfire on the plaza.

We have gunfire on the plaza.

Kennedy lies motionless - then rises unharmed.

(as though nothing had happened:)

KENNEDY

Personally though -- I'm of the  
belief that coincidence.... is a  
phenomenon that *does not occur in*



*nature.*

The Lights shift on KENNEDY.  
Again, we see Phuong - hidden in the shadows - listening.  
With her is CHARLIE (man) - another GUERILLA in black VC  
pajamas.

## SCENE 8

Kennedy rides.  
Incoming artillery falls -

KENNEDY leaps from his bike onto the ground - beside a man  
named WILLIAMS. Williams is an irregular paramilitary  
fighter. He wears a makeshift uniform and carries an AK-47  
machine gun.

Another shell explodes - right nearby.

KENNEDY

JESUS!

WILLIAMS

Nice one. -- You can kiss the USS  
Intrepid goodbye. -- Oh well, it  
was a pretty weird idea - turning an  
aircraft carrier into a tourist  
trap.

KENNEDY

Who do you suppose dreamed that up?

WILLIAMS

I don't know, but the chickens have  
definitely come home to roost this  
time.

Another Explosion - closer.

WILLIAMS

MOTHERFUCKER! Things are getting closer.

KENNEDY

Where they coming in from?

WILLIAMS

Guerrillas got their guns bout 2K from  
the River.

KENNEDY (surprised)

They took Jersey City?

WILLIAMS (nods)

Uh huh. And Hoboken's goin down before long. -- Now personally I think we oughta let em have Hoboken.

KENNEDY (smiles)  
One morning we'll wake up - see G's coming over the bridges like a buncha commuters.

WILLIAMS  
No chance. Army's mined em.  
Soon as the guerrillas reach em  
we're gonna blow those things clear outta the water.

KENNEDY (sad)  
That's a shame.  
They're beautiful bridges.  
Got that.....WPA thing about em.

Another SHELL lands.

WILLIAMS  
You scared?

KENNEDY  
Yeah. Sometimes I think I'm gonna die a virgin.

WILLIAMS  
-- Don't let that happen.

## SCENE 9

Kennedy alone. He starts to rise.  
A NURSE sneaks up from behind - pushes him down onto his face  
-- exits.

A PRIEST comes over - offers help.  
He grabs Kennedy's hand. But instead of lifting him - the  
priest checks Kennedy's palms for stigmata - then stalks off  
- praying in Estonian.

Kennedy pulls out his TAPE RECORDER - dictates:

KENNEDY  
Unlike a lot of people with CLEX,  
I know I'm losing my mind.  
I can hear it.

Kennedy CLEXES.

(eyes closed - in rapture.)

KENNEDY

`Some mornings I wake up with  
stigmata. I scoop ice off the  
ground, roll it into cherry snow  
cones that make my tongue glow.

He DE-CLEXES.

KENNEDY

See what I mean? -- Someday I'm not  
even gonna hear myself doing it.

I wish I could just be a lunatic...  
who knows he's a genius.  
But as it is, sometimes I just  
listen to what comes out of my mouth  
and all I can think is - `what the  
fuck am I talking about?'

A WOMAN jumps out - holds a KNIFE to KENNEDY's throat.

WOMAN

don't even breath!!

KENNEDY

Okay.

WOMAN

all my money -

KENNEDY

All your money?

WOMAN

TAKE IT!  
Reach into my shirt pocket!

Kennedy does - removes a roll of BILLS.

WOMAN

Pants pocket! Right straight in - don't  
go exploring around.

Kennedy takes out more MONEY.

WOMAN

That's right - okay - almost done.

Just reach right down there - little more  
hidden down in the sock....yeah.

Kennedy takes money from her sock.

WOMAN

There - now that wasn't so bad - was it?

She throws Kennedy to the ground.

WOMAN

Don't let me catch you around here again!  
Next time I'll make you..... well,  
just use your imagination.

## SCENE 10

KENNEDY gets up slowly. Talks into his TAPE RECORDER.

KENNEDY

My problem is I don't have an  
imagination.

In five years, CLEX has infected  
about three quarters of the American  
population.

At first, the epidemic was generally  
ignored - because it only seemed to  
be affecting people who were already  
a little fucked up to begin with.

This perception changed when the  
United States President began saying  
things on National TV that made it  
pretty clear the guy wasn't playing  
with a full deck.

(stops recorder)

Now I happen to think there was a lot more  
than just CLEX happening there, but hey...

(resumes recording)

Intensive research on the disease got  
underway. Within a year though, full-scale  
action-packed civil war broke out here.

After that -- well, there didn't seem to be

much point to finding a cure.

The lights shift. We see PHUONG and CHARLIE following KENNEDY. They wear dark glasses - looking pretty cool.

# SCENE 11

Kennedy rides through street vendors selling rice.  
A NEWSPAPER HAWKER appears.

MAN  
Daily World - Daily Fucken World.  
JFK lives! Spotted dancing in  
West Village Gay Club.  
Tomorrow's history folks.  
Yours for a quarter.

KENNEDY  
I'll take one of those.

Kennedy buys one - reads.

KENNEDY  
Wow.

MAN  
That's right Jack - don't fuck with the  
written word.

KENNEDY  
I sure won't.

KENNEDY continues reading.

MAN  
Hey. I wanna ask you something.

KENNEDY  
Yeah.

MAN  
How you feeling?

KENNEDY (uncertain)  
Fine.  
How you feeling?

MAN  
I'm feeling good --- about the future.  
Get those fucken rain forests cut down.

Tell ya what - this global warming's a  
good thing. Gonna do wonders for New  
York. Give it a tropical touch.  
Make everybody glow at night.

## SCENE 12

East River shore. A SHIP HORN blows.

KENNEDY stands with a WOMAN - gazing out across the water.

KENNEDY

Really?

WOMAN (blissful)

Oh yeah - I'm positive.

KENNEDY

Let me see if I've got this  
straight.

You're saying that hundreds of years  
from now - people are gonna make  
pilgrimages from all over the  
world.....to see *that*?

WOMAN

Absolutely.

KENNEDY

The Williamsburg Bridge?

WOMAN

Sure.

KENNEDY (whatever)

Okay.

WOMAN

Walk out there sometime at night -  
Then you'll get it. Lean out over the  
rail, you can see America.

KENNEDY

Kinda dangerous isn't it?

WOMAN

Well that's the beauty of it.  
Once you get out there - anything  
can happen.

KENNEDY

I like *that*.

WOMAN

It's exquisite.  
Pure pitch - post modern ruins.  
Grey fog on cold steel.  
Poisoned black water caressing  
capsized barges.  
Abandoned sugar factories - and a  
million burnt out bedroom windows.

I tell you - it's so perfect --  
sometimes all I wanna do is jump.

### SCENE 13

KENNEDY rides.

He replays what the woman said on his TAPE RECORDER.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I tell you - it's so perfect...  
sometimes all I wanna do is jump.

KENNEDY

I listened to her very closely.  
Everything sounded okay, but I could  
see the CLEX flicker across her  
face.

-- People say the guerrillas have  
that flicker.

The lights shift - revealing PHUONG and CHARLIE still on  
Kennedy's trail.

KENNEDY

They say that's why they're doing  
such horrible such...

Shifts into CLEX RAPTURE.

KENNEDY

*exquisite* things to people's bodies....  
out in the countryside.

He looks down at his HAND - flexes it. Talks to it.

KENNEDY

Hey. What'cha doin down there?

Suddenly, Kennedy's HAND flies up and slugs him in the face.

The bike swerves.

CHARLIE wolf smiles.

PHUONG's face is perfectly blank.

#### SCENE 14

KENNEDY rides.

The SAME PRIEST who stared at Kennedy's hand earlier appears.

PRIEST

Peace brother.

KENNEDY (unsure)

Uh...peace.

PRIEST

You recognize me?

KENNEDY

I think so.

PRIEST

What's your name?

KENNEDY

Kennedy.

PRIEST

Hello Kennedy - my name's Frank.

KENNEDY

Hey Frank.

They shake hands. The priest quickly glances at Kennedy's palm again, though subtly this time.

PRIEST

Could I ask you something?

KENNEDY

Sure - anything but relationship advice.

PRIEST

-- Have you asked the lord to come into your life Kennedy?

KENNEDY

Uh -- not that I can recall.



PRIEST

And why is that?

KENNEDY

Guess I was worried what I'd be getting myself into.

PRIEST

I hear ya.

KENNEDY

I mean is it the old `mi casa es su casa' thing? -- Because all I've got is the one futon and I don't think it'd be such a hot idea me and the Lord sleeping together there in the same...

PRIEST

Let me tell you something Kennedy.

(checks for eavesdroppers)

Ever feel like your life's a bad movie -- and somebody's got a large calibre gun to your head, making you watch it?

KENNEDY

-- Not before now.

PRIEST

Well, try it.  
And remember, you bought the ticket.  
You bought the popcorn. You can watch it  
-- or you can walk outta here.

KENNEDY

I'm not so sure I can walk out. See...  
(whispers)  
I'm afraid of snipers.

PRIEST

Don't worry.

The PRIEST takes out a bag of COMMUNION WAFERS --  
does the cross, slips one into Kennedy's mouth.  
Puts another into his own mouth.  
A gunshot rings out.  
The PRIEST falls back dead -- wafer sticking out of his mouth.

Kennedy removes it, takes a bite. Takes out his CLEX VIAL --  
crushes the rest of the wafer into the mixture.

Rides off.

# SCENE 15

PHUONG and CHARLIE follow KENNEDY who rides his bike.  
Kennedy picks up his TAPE RECORDER.

KENNEDY  
Every day, I talk into this thing -  
Then rewind it and listen to CLEX  
slowly taking over up here.

(he taps his head)

KENNEDY turns on the PLAYER - listens to a RECORDING.

KENNEDY'S VOICE  
I always set my alarm clock for two a.m.  
so I can check my fingerprints.  
Make sure nobody's taken mine and put  
someone else's in their place.

One night the alarm didn't go off -  
but I woke up anyway.  
Saw that this hand...

(raises RIGHT HAND)

had Henry Kissinger's prints.  
And this hand here....

(holds up LEFT HAND)

was perfectly smooth. --  
I went back to sleep. -- Next morning  
I looked at my hands again -- and  
everything was pretty much back to  
normal.

He turns OFF TAPE RECORDER.

KENNEDY  
I'm hoping that somewhere in all  
this, I can catch some phrase...  
a clue to the cure.

Because if I could cure CLEX,  
maybe the fighting would stop...

Gunfire outside.  
Kennedy's eyes dart to it. He starts to smile - stops.

KENNEDY  
If that *is*... what I really want.

Sometimes I imagine Peace... and it just seems like way too much time on your hands.

KENNEDY vanishes.

CHARLIE THE GUERILLA moves into the light.  
He reaches into his Viet Cong pajama shirt -  
pulls out a LARGE X-RAY. He hands it to PHUONG.

As she looks at it - we hear:

BBC RADIO announcing the Fall of Phnom Penh.

## SCENE 16

KENNEDY approaches WILLIAMS the PARAMILITARY GUY.  
They bow to each other in a formal Asian greeting.

The men face off - commence a game.

Hey K. WILLIAMS

'Sup Williams? KENNEDY

Chillin. WILLIAMS

SLAP. Kennedy absorbs the blows stoically.

You? WILLIAMS

Heatin. KENNEDY

Say, I was listening to the BBC a minute ago. WILLIAMS

Anything exciting? KENNEDY

Yeah, in that understated undersexed English kinda way. WILLIAMS

(SLAP)

Some kinda massacre in Brooklyn last night. -- This old janitor on his way to work this morning discovered the bodies in the park. Thirty young fit black guys with their genitals cut off...

(SLAP)

Hanging by their ankles from oak trees.

KENNEDY

Who did it?

WILLIAMS

Who knows?

(SLAP)

Guerrillas passing for army.  
Or army boys passing for G's. --  
Hell, maybe the black guys did it to themselves.  
Staged their own fucken massacre.

WILLIAMS slaps and misses. Kennedy's turn.  
He raises his hands into the air.  
He stares at Williams for a long moment - motionless.

KENNEDY

There own massacre huh?  
Wow.  
That's..... that's genius.

## SCENE 17

CHARLIE watches on as PHUONG holds the LARGE X-RAY up to the light. It's a cranial shot.

CHARLIE

Well - I think we've got our man.

PHUONG

You're positive?

CHARLIE

Absolutely. --  
So - you know what to do?

PHUONG

Yes.

CHARLIE

Remember, no....

PHUONG (impatient)

Casual contact -- I know.

CHARLIE

Just leave the signal at the drop  
point when you're finished.  
We'll evac you outta there. --  
All set?

PHUONG

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Good.

(seductive)

Remember this guy only *looks* harmless.

PHUONG

Yeah alright -- I got it.

CHARLIE

I'm gonna miss you.

Take care of this as quickly as you can.

The sooner you're done - the sooner we  
can....

He takes her in his arms - presses his body into hers.  
They kiss. It's pretty sexy stuff.

## SCENE 18

VICTOR the DEALER works the streets.

VIKTOR

Okay girls - let's look alive!  
Let's *look* like we care!

VIKTOR works the PEDESTRIANS who scurry guiltily past.

VIKTOR

Got gasoline, tri-ex, AK-ammo,  
KFC crispy -  
S'up guy - need a date?

Man hurries on.

VIKTOR

Well have a nice motherfucken day.  
 Got instant breakfast - blackout  
 curtains Christmas Lights, STP Blood  
 Treatment. Do unto your *motor* right  
 - it'll do unto you right.

Another MAN enters.

MAN (clexed)  
 Outta time line. Simon says `put your hand  
 in your head'. Simon says `daylight savings  
 is an delusion'. Simon says `who the fuck  
 is Simon anyway?'

VIKTOR  
 I know what you need.

Takes a VIAL out of his coat -- filled with red powder.

VIKTOR  
 My man, this is the good stuff looking at you  
 here. Pure uncut freeze-dried type O.  
 Just add water -- and it's out with the old  
 and in with the new. Shit worked for  
 Keith Richards, it'll work for you.

The man buys and goes.

VIKTOR  
 That's right.  
 Let's you and me talk coherent tomorrow.

PHUONG enters - watches VIKTOR. He spots her.

VIKTOR  
 Hey baby, s'up.  
 You need?  
 Or wanna *be* needed?

PHUONG  
 All of the above.

## SCENE 19

KENNEDY stands covering his head with a soggy newspaper.  
 A torrential rain falls. He tentatively sticks his tongue  
 out -- tastes the rain. He takes out his CHEMISTRY VIAL -  
 adds a little rain to his mixture. Smells it - caps it.

The rain subsides - slowly becoming an occasional drip.

KENNEDY

My kitchen sink has dripped for six months now. I know that I could take out a wrench and fix it in a few seconds.

But I just can't bring myself to do it.

You see - if I stopped the dripping, the whole building might fall down around me. -- And I don't want that to happen.

You have *any idea* how long it takes to find an apartment in this city?

VIKTOR the DEALER slinks out of the shadows.  
He also covers his head with a newspaper.

VIKTOR (seductive)

Hey pal?

KENNEDY

You know me?

VIKTOR

I do now.

KENNEDY

Really? What am I thinking?

VIKTOR

That you'd like a woman.

KENNEDY

-- Oh, I must be wanting one without even realizing it.

VIKTOR

That kinda thing happens....  
What sort you lookin for?

KENNEDY

You tell me.

VIKTOR

I gotta nice oriental girl - half chink, half Malay - little Java action thrown in there -- the best of the slanted world.

KENNEDY

Sounds like a woman and a half to me.

VIKTOR

She *is* that.  
Hundred Deutsche Marks.

KENNEDY

You selling her?

VIKTOR

Sell, rent, lease to own --  
call it what you will.

KENNEDY

For a hundred marks.

VIKTOR

That's right.

KENNEDY

And how long would that make her mine?

VIKTOR

As long as it takes.

## SCENE 20

KENNEDY's dilapidated East Village Apartment.

PHUONG sits on the bed watching Kennedy.  
He moves toward the bed.

Phuong nonchalantly takes out a SWITCHBLADE and flicks it open --  
cleans her fingernails.

PHUONG

How much you pay?

KENNEDY

Hundred marks.

PHUONG (laughs)

You blew a hundred D-Marks to get me  
in the sack?

KENNEDY

Well, that uh... that wasn't exactly  
the plan.

PHUONG

No? What was the plan?

KENNEDY

I dunno.  
I thought I'd just sorta.... see



what happened.

PHUONG

-- That's the worst line I've ever heard.

KENNEDY

Really? The worst? --

How long have you *lived* here?

PHUONG (calm)

Let me get one thing straight. I don't clean. I don't cook. And I don't fuck.

KENNEDY

-- -- Okay.

Kennedy moves to kitchen.

KENNEDY

I'm gonna make some soup.  
You want some?

PHUONG

What kind?

KENNEDY (reading the label)

New Campbells flavor - just hit the shelves. Hanoi Style Fish and Rice.

PHUONG (shrugs)

Yeah, what the hell?

KENNEDY

That's the attitude you gotta have.

Kennedy starts the soup.

KENNEDY

What's your name?

PHUONG

Phuong.  
Who are you?

KENNEDY

I'm Kennedy.

PHUONG

Like John F. huh?

KENNEDY

That's right.  
(hushed)  
Just between me and you,

I actually *am* him.  
I'm his reincarnation.

PHUONG  
You swear?

KENNEDY  
Why would I lie?

She looks him over.

PHUONG  
Gotta say - you were a lot better  
looking the last time around.

## SCENE 21

Phuong sleeps. KENNEDY paces nervously.  
He falls to the ground as though shot by a sniper.  
PHUONG wakes up.

KENNEDY  
Sorry - I thought I heard somebody  
touching a trigger.

She goes back to sleep.  
KENNEDY tiptoes away - turns on his TAPE PLAYER.

KENNEDY'S VOICE  
CLEX is - very - *highly* - contagious.  
I'm not really sure how I caught it.  
Got a couple of theories though.

Might have been kissing that woman  
selling Vodka at the Lithuanian  
street fair.

Or taking a sip of Mike Ahn's beer  
at Vasselka's. I mean we're talking  
about someone so around the bend  
he's sneaking up on himself.

Or maybe from Jeremy - the dementian  
jazz poet who used to stand on St.  
Marks Place muttering soft mad  
genius into the warm summer night.

`Blue saxophone fog floating  
down yesterday's fire escape.'

Yeah, I *know* he had it. And believe me,  
casual contact is all it takes.

I walked past Jeremy in the rain  
one night... and the whole world changed.

A SAXOPHONE plays a blues version of White Christmas.

## SCENE 22

A mortar round falls.  
Kennedy hops up.  
Phuong wakes.

KENNEDY  
I'm gonna go get some coffee.  
You want some?

PHUONG says nothing.

KENNEDY  
OJ? --  
Carrot Muffin. --  
Maybe a little spoken language?

KENNEDY gives up - starts to go, stops.

KENNEDY (embarrassed)  
Look - I know I bought you and all but,  
  
you don't have to stay.  
You can leave anytime you want.  
I mean I'm not trying to kick you  
out or anything.

PHUONG  
That's good. Because I'm moving in.  
From now on - this bed - is mine.  
That bike - is yours.

KENNEDY  
Oh.....well uh - just....make  
yourself at home. Anything you  
want while I'm out?

PHUONG  
Mtik sohn.

KENNEDY  
Mtik sohn? What's it look like?

PHUONG

Just ask the guy. He'll know.

Kennedy walks to the door..... lingers.

KENNEDY

Are you after my Astrud Gilberto records?

She looks at him - puzzled.

KENNEDY

How about my Jackie O Life magazine collection?

No. Wait, I know. You want my bike.  
That's it, isn't it?

PHUONG

*What* are you talking about?

KENNEDY

I guess I'm trying to figure out what your angle is.

PHUONG

Angle?

KENNEDY

Why you're sticking around.

PHUONG

That's simple. I'm *sticking around* because I need your help.

KENNEDY

Jesus, you are in trouble.

PHUONG

That's right. And you're gonna help me. Help me find something.

KENNEDY

Really? What?

PHUONG

The same thing *you're* looking for.

A way to make all that Blue Saxophone fog go away. --

You talk in your sleep.

KENNEDY

I have to.

I've got a lot to say.

### SCENE 23

KENNEDY and PHUONG interview a MAN with CLEX.  
The Man is busy folding newspaper pages.

KENNEDY

You remember when you caught it?

MAN

Course - don't you?

(no answer)

I didn't do anything wrong.  
I got tested and was negative.  
So I locked myself up in my house to  
stay clean. Ate canned food - boiled  
all my water - kept the curtains drawn.  
Whole year like that. --  
But I made one big mistake.

PHUONG

What was that?

MAN

Didn't cancel my subscription to the  
Daily World News. One morning I forgot  
to put on my gloves before reading it.

Touched some newsprint - the ink ran onto  
my fingertips - the poisoned word.

I can still see it. Big front page  
story announcing that Phnom Penh was  
gonna host the 2002 winter Olympic games.

Hey, sounded reasonable to me.  
They'd built an ice rink, a ski  
lift and everything.

The Man holds up three ENORMOUS NEWSPAPER HATS.  
He, Phuong and Kennedy put one on.

MAN

I thought - maybe I should try to  
get some tickets to that - you know  
- take a little Christmas vacation

...get out of the house for awhile.

Everybody nods at each other knowingly.

We hear sounds from a CAMBODIAN WORK CAMP.

A Khmer Rouge soldier shouts into a megaphone - urging the people to dig FASTER, dig for the PEOPLE, dig for ANGKA.

#### SCENE 24

KENNEDY rides his bike - making deliveries.

PHUONG and CHARLIE follow his progress from the rooftops.

They have 2-way radios, binoculars.

PHUONG

Subject is proceeding up Park Avenue.

CHARLIE

Mark.

A MAN walks up, listening to his WATCH.

He drops it onto the ground - smashes it, drops it into Kennedy's MESSENGER BAG.

MAN

Take this to the natural history museum for me.

KENNEDY

Broken?

MAN

Obsolete. Look...  
Time doesn't move that way anymore.

Nowadays - it goes cot cit, cot cit.

The MAN vanishes.

Kennedy continues riding.

CHARLIE

Woman approaching -- nine oclock.

PHUONG

I got her.

A WOMAN appears near Kennedy.

WOMAN

I got a message I need to send.

Kennedy takes out a writing pad to take it down.

KENNEDY

Go ahead.

Woman whips out a GUN - aims it at Kennedy's head.

PHUONG

She's got a gun.

CHARLIE

Roger that.

Charlie takes out a RIFLE.

WOMAN (to Kennedy)

If I shoot you now - it'll be purely casual contact. My heart's just not in it. I'm pulling the trigger *and* cleaning my oven.

Kennedy writes it all down.

KENNEDY

Okay - who you want that sent to?

WOMAN

Hank. Kissinger.

K I S S

The WOMAN starts to pull the trigger.

CHARLIE

We got a shooter.

PHUONG (to Charlie)

Hold your fire! She's bluffing!

CHARLIE fires his rifle.

The WOMAN's hand go to her forehead. Bloody.  
Amazed -- she falls, dead.

PHUONG (hushed)

Goddammit.

Not noticing -- Kennedy starts off again.

A GUY on ROLLERBLADES pulls up alongside him.

MAN

Whatcha got today?

KENNEDY

Who knows? Diamonds heading to Zurich,  
execution orders, love letters - I don't  
even wonder.

The ROLLERBLADER peels off.  
Kennedy sees something in distance.

KENNEDY

Hey - will you look at the *Fins* on  
that Cadillac!

Kennedy closes his eyes - rides with no hands.

CHARLIE

Subject has closed his eyes.  
Riding on feel.

PHUONG

Roger.

KENNEDY (CLEX-rapture)

Yessir - makes me think it's only a  
matter of time before Jesus comes  
back as a diner waitress and brings  
a set of caddy fins right to  
everybody's table.  
Now *that* would save us.

ROAR of an ENGINE.

CHARLIE

Truck approaching -- twelve oclock.

The TRUCK HORN blares.  
Charlie picks up grenade.

CHARLIE

Taking out the driver.

PHUONG

NO!

Charlie fires -- phfump sound.



Explosion.  
Truck Crashes.

Phuong is devastated.

Kennedy opens his eyes -- looks at his hands in horror.

KENNEDY  
Oh god, my hands are dirty.

## SCENE 25

Kennedy's apartment.

PHUONG's alone. She rifles through Kennedy's stuff.  
She takes photos with miniature spy camera  
Finds an old LIFE MAGAZINE - 'Assassination in Dallas'

CHARLIE  
Red leader, this is Phoenix, over.

PHUONG pulls out WALKIE-TALKIE.

PHUONG (into radio)  
Go ahead Pheonix.

Lights up on CHARLIE in a trench coat.

CHARLIE (into radio)  
Meet me at the Beacon Theatre.  
Ten o'clock show.  
Center Section. Third row, fifth seat.  
I'll be eating a medium bucket of  
popcorn. Salted, not buttered.

## SCENE 26

BEACON THEATRE

A film plays.  
'The GREEN BERETS' - starring John Wayne.

CHARLIE sits facing us -- watching the movie, munching popcorn.

Phuong joins him.

CHARLIE  
Well? -- Is he getting any closer?

PHUONG  
To losing his mind?

CHARLIE  
To *uncovering* something.

PHUONG  
Not really.

CHARLIE  
Then lets speed it up, shall we?  
Make sure you keep steering him to people  
with information.

PHUONG  
Right.

CHARLIE gets up to go. PHUONG starts to follow.

CHARLIE  
No - let's leave separately.  
Just sit and watch the movie awhile.

PHUONG  
What is this shit?

CHARLIE  
You kidding me?  
The *Green Berets!* John Wayne classic.  
Vietnam flick made before the game was  
even over. -- The Duke was one fucken  
prescient genius. Only guy with the  
vision to see that the war'd be won or  
lost in Southern California.

PHUONG (incredulous)  
You guys lost 'Nam in *California*?

Furious, Charlie stands up, shouts:

CHARLIE  
Hey!! We didn't lose *Jack-shit!*

PHUONG  
Sorry, my mistake.

Charlie realizes he's attracting a little attention, sits.

CHARLIE

The fuck you think?? 'Nam was about  
territory? Dominoes? Stopping the  
spread of Communism?!  
Wake up!

Nam was about *movies*. As the 50's were  
windng down, Hollywood was quickly running  
out of good gook pictures. By 1961, we'd  
just about Bridge over River Kwai-ed  
ourselves to death.

So we sent our boys over there to the Nam to  
fight for a new story.

And if you'll just step into any video store,  
I *think* you'll see that we *got* it.  
We won that baby.

## SCENE 27

KENNEDY stands by his window - nervously scanning the street  
outside.

PHUONG

Whatcha doing?

KENNEDY

Just checkin the fifth story windows.

(turns to her)

I wanna ask you something.

Is it true what they say?

(she waits)

The guerillas.  
slaughtering people out in the  
countryside.  
I've heard stories of bodies....by the  
thousands.

*What* are they doing?

(beat)

PHUONG

They're fighting a war.  
A war of liberation.

KENNEDY

And what exactly do they think they're  
liberating?

PHUONG

The country.  
The city.

They neighborhood.

KENNEDY looks out the window - onto the East Village.

KENNEDY (incredulous)  
They wanna liberate *this* neighborhood?

PHUONG  
They want to liberate *you*.  
Free your mind.

KENNEDY  
I'm speechless.

PHUONG  
Is this just a momentary thing or  
are you entering a whole new phase  
here?

Kennedy picks up the newspaper.

KENNEDY  
Don't worry, it's just momentary.  
See, I'm reading this morning's Daily World  
News. Where is it?  
(looks for article)  
Here we are:

Yesterday evening, VKI Guerillas overran  
Langdon North Dakota.  
According to eye witness, guerilla forces  
lined up hundreds of captured civilians,  
measured them em with a yardstick and shot  
anyone over five foot six..."

(stops reading)

Now being 5'11 and a three quarters myself --  
you can imagine that *this* doesn't make me  
feel too liberated.

PHUONG  
You just don't get it.

KENNEDY  
I don't *wanna* get it.

PHUONG  
Don't you?

KENNEDY  
-- Have they got it?

PHUONG

Who?

KENNEDY

The Guerillas. Have they got it?

PHUONG

Got what?

KENNEDY

What are we *talking* about here?  
The virus. Are they CLEX-ed.

PHUONG

*They* don't think so.

What do *you* think?

KENNEDY slips into a CLEX FIT.

KENNEDY

What do I *think*?

Well, I think these are some hip hop  
happening high-speed chase action-packed  
times here.

Yessiree Bob, I think I know why the  
Guerrillas shove see-through crazy straws  
into people's eyeballs and suck them dry.  
They want them to see.

They want them to stop crying.

Because they know that your heart --  
is really right here.

SLOW MOTION:

Kennedy holds up Phuong's knife, flicks out the blade.  
A rushing sound.

Kennedy thrusts the point toward his eyes.  
Phuong flies across the room, knocks the knife away.  
Backhands Kennedy's hard across the face.

A sound brings us back to normal speed.  
Phuong caresses the side of Kennedy's face.  
She kisses him.

PHUONG

Don't leave me.

KENNEDY  
-- Why are you here?

PHUONG  
To stop you.

KENNEDY  
To stop me?  
Or put a stop to me?

She pulls away.

KENNEDY  
No, don't answer that.

Looks at her eyes.

KENNEDY  
There's Hershey's chocolate in your  
eyes Phuong. Just keep watching me  
and I'll never go hungry.

He licks her eyelids.

## SCENE 28

A BARBER SHOP. Kennedy sits in CHAIR - wrapped in white -  
shaving cream lathered on his face.

We hear the RADIO NEWS.

DJ  
This is AM 1010 WYOY New York News.  
Give us ten minutes, we'll wreck  
your world.

This just in: Nicolae Ceceascue's  
former Palace fool reportedly  
spotted working in East Harlem  
Barber Shop -- shaving a 5'11 and  
three quarters white guy.

Now for the weather. Take a look  
out your window. -- You see that?  
Gonna be like that all fucken day.

MILOZ the BARBER - walks over - starts shaving Kennedy with a  
lethal looking straight razor.

MILOZ

Not exactly a Palace Fool. Palace  
Stand-up Comic was more like it.

KENNEDY

How was that?

MILOZ

It was okay. Say this much for it,  
you know what your life's about.  
Keep Nicolae laughing...

Miloz changes into routine -- playing to audience:

MILOZ

How many peasants does it take to stage a  
decent massacre?  
How many you got?  
How many rumanian feminists does it take to  
screw in a 100 watt lightbulb?  
We don't have.... 100 watt lightbulbs.

(Hey, you know where I can get 100 watt  
lightbulbs?)

But serious folks -- now I'd like to sing you  
a little song from my country.

he sings a verse.  
turns back to Kennedy:

MILOZ

....or else.

KENNEDY

Sounds like a high pressure job.

MILOZ

That's right. The day before I started,  
my predecessor told a joke that fell flat --  
ended up eating his own entrails - over and  
over and over again..... Get it?

KENNEDY

Yeah, okay, I get it. -- So, were you  
always able to come through in the clutch?

MILOZ

Oh sure.  
Sometimes you need a gun to your head to  
keep your mind moving/sharp.  
(thinks)  
In fact, you always need a gun to your

head.

Miloz shaves KENNEDY in silence.

KENNEDY

I hear Ceceascue had some kinda  
Transylvanian Syphilis. That's why  
he was so fucked up, did all that  
crazy shit.

Miloz laughs appreciatively.

MILOZ

That's good.

(shakes head)

No - Niki's mind was clear as a bell...  
Everything he did was very carefully  
thought out. -- It was *you people* who  
gave Ceceascue Syphilis - to keep  
yourselves from going crazy.

## SCENE 29

PHUONG sits on a bench - hidden behind a NEWSPAPER.

CHARLIE THE GUERILLA enters carrying a BUCKET of DRY ICE -  
providing them with a little fog cover.

CHARLIE

Did Kennedy talk to Niki's court  
clown?

PHUONG

Miloz.

CHARLIE

Fine. Well what did Miloz tell him?

PHUONG

A gun to your head is the best kind  
of artistic inspiration.

CHARLIE

Did Kennedy take it to heart?

PHUONG

I doubt it. He had that bad look in  
his eyes. I think deep down he was  
hoping Miloz would let slip the  
razor and slit his throat.

CHARLIE



Sorry Jack. You're still with us.  
 (to Phuong)  
 Under no circumstances is this guy  
 allowed to terminate himself.  
 He doesn't die until I say so.

### SCENE 30

KENNEDY and PHUONG sit on a BLANKET, picnic-ing.  
 She tears off some bread.

KENNEDY  
 Cheese?

She looks at it - grimaces.

PHUONG  
 You trying to kill me?!

KENNEDY looks closely at it.

KENNEDY  
 Yesiree bob - got a little spontaneous  
 generation happening here.  
  
 That's the trouble with some of this  
 french cheese. Sometimes it's *supposed*  
 to smell like that.

He tosses it off-stage.  
 KENNEDY holds up some pate'.

KENNEDY (with difficulty)  
 How bout some of this -- foi....

PHUONG (nice accent)  
 Foie grois.

KENNEDY  
 Yeah, that.  
 Where'd you learn to do that?

PHUONG  
 Cambodia.

Kennedy looks sheepish - like he should have asked about this a long time ago.

KENNEDY

Those French were everywhere huh?

We hear artillery, gunfire. PHUONG nods toward it.

PHUONG

They *sure* were.

KENNEDY

So... how do you like it here  
in the land-o-opportunity.

More gunfire.

PHUONG

I've seen better.

Pause.

KENNEDY

There's something I'd really like to  
ask you. And you don't have to  
answer if you don't want to. Okay?

PHUONG

Okay.

KENNEDY picks up an ORANGE.

KENNEDY

How do you say orange in Khmer?

PHUONG

kroj bpoh saht

KENNEDY

Bread.

PHUONG

num bphang

KENNEDY

Water.

PHUONG

dtuek.

KENNEDY

A stranger...  
sitting at the Amnesia Cafe, hiding  
behind cigarette smoke and dark glasses,  
waiting for a woman to whisper in his  
ear: the perfect words.

PHUONG

Plaehk jom laek ong kuy cafe, lia!k krowy  
bah rey psaehtng neu!ng tngay vaehn-dtah  
jah!m ni!-yia y knoh! dtro jiak bpiak  
kjo!s.

Pause.

KENNEDY

Okay. -- I had a funny feeling it  
was something like that.

Nearby - A MAN screams. A burst of machine gun fire silences  
him. Two PARAMILITARY WOMEN drag a HIS BODY on.

WOMAN 1

Man, these officers at HQ -- bout to drive me  
crazy -- acting all polite -- don't wanna  
give orders, just wanna ask questions.  
Would you mind blowing up that arms depot?  
Could you please take this guy out and shoot  
his ass? Do you think you could find a  
place to put these decomposing bodies?

WOMAN 2

They know the answer -- so why they keep  
*asking?*

WOMAN 1

Yeah. I mean who the fuck they think I am  
-- *Bobby?*

WOMAN 2 (agrees)

Maybe so.....  
(suddenly puzzled)  
Who the fuck is Bobby?

WOMAN 1

You know -- that guy plays horn for James  
Brown.

WOMAN 2

Oh, *him*.....  
(pause..... puzzled again)  
So why you feel like Bobby?

WOMAN 1

Cause James is always saying:  
BOBBY, CAN I TAKE EM TO THE BRIDGE?

WOMAN 2 (got it)

Now *that's* a rhetorical question.

WOMAN 1  
Right? Then James asks him *again*!

WOMAN 2  
BOBBY, CAN I TAKE EM TO THE BRIDGE?

WOMAN 1  
Uh huh.

WOMAN 2  
Like what's Bobby gonna *say*?

as Bobby -- SHOUTING:

WOMAN 1  
"Motherfucker, I told you ONCE we ain't goin  
to no damn bridge, so you BEST stop asking  
me."

They drink, think. Pause.

WOMAN 2  
Yeah..... Bobby never says that.

WOMAN 2 notices something.

WOMAN 1  
What is it?

WOMAN 2  
Nices shoes, huh?

WOMAN 1  
Oh yeah. Comfortable too.  
I bought the same ones last week.

Kennedy hops up and goes over to the dead body - looks down at  
the shoes.

KENNEDY  
She's right. They are nice shoes.

### SCENE 31

KENNEDY walks down the street.

MAN enters - puts on swimming goggles. Swims.

KENNEDY

Nice day.

SWIMMER

It's not too bad.  
Be better if it wasn't so choppy.

KENNEDY looks around - uncertain.

KENNEDY

What'cha up to?

SWIMMER

Oh you know - same old thing.  
Swimming to Czechoslovakia.

KENNEDY

I gotcha.  
How far you have to go?

SWIMMER

I'm trying not think about it.  
It'll just depress me.  
How bout you?

KENNEDY

What d'ya mean?

SWIMMER

Where you headed?

KENNEDY (uncertain)

Oh... just sort of floatin around - you know  
what I mean.

SWIMMER

I know *exactly* what you mean.

The Man swims on.

PHUONG creeps on quietly -- watches.

The Man looks up at Kennedy.

SWIMMER

You know you....  
Nah - you're just gonna think I'm crazy.

KENNEDY

Hey, it's okay.

SWIMMER

I think I know you from somewhere.

KENNEDY

You do?

SWIMMER (snaps fingers)  
Now I remember who you are.  
You're Jesus.

KENNEDY  
Really???

SWIMMER  
Sure!

KENNEDY  
Oh....  
How'd you recognize me?

SWIMMER  
Hey - come on!!  
I mean think about it.....

SWIMMER points to KENNEDY's shoes.

SWIMMER  
You're walking on water.

Lights down on everything except KENNEDY.  
Music swells from THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

Slowly, KENNEDY raises his arms - as though CRUCIFIED on the CROSS. A beatific expression comes over his face.  
He's just about to ascend....

Suddenly Kennedy flings his arms down and waves off the music.

KENNEDY  
No no no no no no!  
I don't think so.

Only thing I have in common with Christ  
is I've got people following me.

KENNEDY anxiously looks behind him.  
Phuong leaps for cover.  
A small patch of REFLECTED LIGHT from a MIRROR moves across the floor -- then vanishes.

KENNEDY (forced nonchalance)  
Whoa - You see that?  
Building right behind me - fifth floor window.

He indicates where with his eyes.

KENNEDY

Can we all not look at once.

Serb Sniper.  
Got his sights trained right here.

KENNEDY points to the back of his head.

KENNEDY

It's alright. See, I'm not really worried - 'cause this guy's not gonna pull the trigger til until I walk out of the movie.

### SCENE 32

KENNEDY moves through a wild rush of wartime street life.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

GOOD MORNING AMERICA!  
This is radio Haili Salah-sify --  
jah rastafari, every loving, ever fearful,  
every sure -- Salaise-I the first!!!

Yah mon.

In Kigali, the Rwandan Government announced the departure of relief ships destined/bound for New York City. The five converted oil tankers....

have been filled with 20 million barrels of Virus free blood and plasma.  
New York Health Officials are prepared to drain and replace the blood of half the city's CLEX infected population.

Whether the clean blood will stem the CLEX-tide, or even arrive before the city falls, remains to be seen. Either way this is Rita Tosh, for JPR

Kennedy listens in on clumps of people talking nervously.

WOMAN

The Bloodboats.

MAN

On their way.

MAN 2

I hear they're anchored just off the coast.

Just waiting there. All that sweet blood.

MAN 3

It's a lie. I'm telling you, the ships are empty.

WOMAN 2

They're not empty. But they ain't got no blood either. They're full of mental patients and terminals. Gonna dump em on us.

A WOMAN walks past KENNEDY with a SHOPPING BAG.

WOMAN

Merry Christmas.

KENNEDY

Uh... Merry Christmas.  
-- Say, what do you hear about these blood boats?

SHOPPING WOMAN

Anybody thinks his boat's coming in has got a reality deficit disorder.

She pulls out a beat up UMBRELLA -- pops it open.  
Kennedy looks up into the sky, puzzled.

SHOPPING WOMAN

We will however, be having a very white Christmas.

KENNEDY

Thinks it's gonna snow?

SHOPPING WOMAN

No - sky's about to fall in.  
Any minute now gonna have big shards of it coming down - picking up speed all the way. Don't wanna get caught in that. Shit'll make you *real blue*.

Anxious, Kennedy starts to move on.

SHOPPING WOMAN

Hey, in your spare time....

KENNEDY

Yeah?

SHOPPING WOMAN



You ever kill a man?

KENNEDY

Of course not.

SHOPPING WOMAN

Oh I think you *have*.

Killed em without even knowing.

Unseen by Kennedy, A MONK enters with a can of gasoline.  
He empties it over himself.     Sits.

SHOPPING WOMAN

Without even thinking about it.  
You probably kill someone every morning  
before your first cup of coffee.

KENNEDY

I don't drink coffee.

The MONK distracts Kennedy.

MONK

Hey pal.

KENNEDY

Yeah?

The Monk puts a cigarette to his mouth.

MONK

Got a light?

KENNEDY

Sure.

Without thinking, Kennedy pulls out a Zippo lighter, flicks the flame to life.     He takes a step forward, then notices the gasoline.

SHOPPING WOMAN

Now it's time to do it with your own hands --  
see what you're doing.

And besides, the guy wants it.  
Some kinda buddhist martyr shit.  
What are you waiting for?  
He'll give you everlasting life.

Kennedy stands motionless -- stunned.  
The woman knocks the lighter out of Kennedy's hand.  
It falls to the floor.  
The monk roars up in flames.

ONSCREEN: The Buddhist Monk burning in Hue, Vietnam.

End of Excerpt