

SAMPLE

HEART OF DARKNESS

**A Film Screenplay
Adaptation
by
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**Based on the Novella
of the same title
by
Joseph Conrad.**

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HERE

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BISCUITS

EXT/INT. CHIEF ACCOUNTANT OFFICE, MAIN STATION - AFT, 1872.
Black ink on clean white paper. Numbers in tables.

We hear groans (O.V.)

The CHIEF ACCOUNTANT sits on a high stool at his desk, concentrating on his precise documentation - marking up goods bought and sold, the daily weight of ivory.

TRADER OWNERS shout (O.V) with the usual CRACK of a whip.

A sick FAILED AGENT, 40s, groans on a truckle bed, covered in a white soiled sheet, a tin water bowl at his side. He prays against the flies and the fever that will kill him.

The Chief Accountant nibbles a biscuit, flicks crumbs from the page. His desk is impeccable - inkblots, pens, pencils, company forms, a letter opener, framed lithographs.

Shelves above the desk hold stacks of official letters, all neatly bundled and arranged. He gazes out through the window fram into the wreckage of the station below.

YOUNGER MARLOW sprawls, sweats, swats flies, toys with his whip, considers the Chief Accountant across the room.

MARLOW (V. O.)

It was backbone. The achievement
of character. And he was our
Company's Chief Accountant.

The Chief Accountant squints ahead - a commanding view of the station that goes all the way down the hill, across the compound, to the wharf. He drops the pen into its inkpot.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT

The groans of this sick person
distract my attention. And without
that it is extremey difficult to
guard against clerical errors.

Marlow/Y gets up to leave.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

Eh...One day. In the interior.
You will no doubt meet him.
Mr. Kurtz.

Marlow/Y stops with a practiced smile.

YOUNGER MARLOW

And who is...our Mr. Kurtz?

The Chief Accountant pauses. He has his smile too.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT

Another agent. But not like this one.

He waves his letter opener with smiling contempt at the Failed Agent, its ivory end confuses his eyes.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

You like this, eh? We all like this!

He stands, gestures for Marlow/Y to stop, steps back to his desk, reaches up an account book and approaches Marlow/Y.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

He is a very remarkable, eh,
person. Shall we say?
In charge of a very important
trading post. Back there.
In the true ivory country.

He hands over the thick ledger book. The word *KURTZ* is on the cover. Marlow skims it.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

He sends us as much of the
stuff as all the other
agents put together.

Marlow/Y smiles, a true picture emerging.

Suddenly a commotion, we hear yelling, swearing (O.V.). A whip CRACKS, the Sick Agent yells in panic.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

When one has got to make correct
entries, one comes to hate these
savages. Hate them to the death.

The COMMOTION fades. Marlow/Y stands, returns the book. They share the view of the cover - that word *KURTZ*.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

But when you see Mr. Kurtz, tell
him from me that everything here is
satisfactory. From me. Duty!

Marlow/Y exits, the Chief Accountant accompanies him.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
Oh, he will go far. Very far.
He will be a somebody in the
Administration before very long.
They above - the Council in Europe

They stop. The courtship continues.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
You know them...back home.

Marlow/Y nods, the Chief Accountant touches his arm.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
Like...they mean him to be.

He returns to his desk, places the Kurtz ledger book on its
shelf, takes up his biscuit. Marlow/Y looks back.

MARLOW (V. O.)
The homeward-bound agent was lying
flushed and insensible.
The other, bent over his books,
was making correct entries off
perfectly correct transactions.

He has read the room and his place in the scheme of things.

A POSTAL CARRIER appears, knocks on the wooden frame.
The Chief Accountant looks up from his work, nods.

The Postal Carrier enters, walks across the room and hands
over a batch of letters from his satchel. He wears the
standard ragged uniform, rifle, leather sandals.
He isn't starving, so he is doing well.

The letters are passed, but one falls, then picked up.

Marlow/Y sighs, gazes down the hill.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (O.S)
Kurtz! He will go far. Think on it!

EXT. DECK OF THE NELLIE - NIGHT, 1902

The NARRATOR looks deeply into the river just a few feet
below. There is nothing out there, just darkness.

He turns to his NELLIE CREW, closing their cardgame,
standing, stretching their legs, taking in the night air.

MARLOW is up too, stretches his arms to the black sky,
reaches up as if to grab a star from the Milky Way.

MARLOW

The next day I left that station at
last. With a caravan of sixty men.
A two-hundred mile tramp.
Paths, paths everywhere spreading
over the empty land.

He circles the deck passing one-by-one the ACCOUNTANT, the
LAWYER and the NARRATOR. The CEO/CAPTAIN disappears into
his cabin.

MARLOW (CONT'D)

Through the long grass, through
burnt grass, thickets, ravines,
stony hills. And nobody.
The population had cleared
out a long time ago.

The Narrator tracks every word Marlow says.

The CEO/Capatain returns with a whiskey bottle and food
packets. He drops them on the table - biscuits.

The Accountant reaches over for the bottle.

END of SAMPLE