

Two Leopards

By

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The following events are fiction; The African Republic of Kamaria does not exist. No white children have been taken as child soldiers in Africa. But the stories of child soldiers are based on events that have happened. I have used two white boys, sons of missionaries, to tell the tale.

BLACK SCREEN

A boy's voice is heard in the darkness.

PETER

When I go to bed at night, I fall into a deep river of dreams that turn red - as red as blood. I see boys trying to swim across a river; hundreds of boys. As they cross, hungry crocodiles on the banks drop into the water and eat their fill. The sound I hear is the screams of dying children.

Loud screaming is heard. A light goes on.

INT.

PETER'S BEDROOM

NIGHT

PETER HORTON (14) is waking from the nightmare, screaming. He is revealed as a blonde headed boy about fourteen years of age. He is thin, small in stature, and has scars on his shoulder, chest, and arms. He is sweating profusely, and terrified by his own nightmare. His step-father, MATTHEW FRANKS (30), shakes him awake.

MATTHEW

Enough! Enough! Every night it is the same. Nobody can sleep with you in the house.

PETER

Thanks for caring. I really need a hate session right now.

MATTHEW

I did not mean it like that.
It's just that - it's so
constant - every night.

PETER

My tablets. I need my
tablets.

He takes a box of tablets from the bedside table and takes one, drinking water from a jug.

MATTHEW

Doctor says you'd be better
off without them. They are
addictive.

PETER

So? They're not cocaine. I'm
clean at last.

MATTHEW sits beside Peter on the bed and puts a comforting arm over his shoulder.

MATTHEW

You've done very well. I'm
proud of you - really.
Jonathan will be home today.
He's been discharged.
Completely dried out.

PETER

So we have a whole family at
last. You, Aunt Elizabeth, and
us. How is he?

MATTHEW

He's started to talk. Do you
know what his first sentence
was?

Peter shrugs.

It was "Where's my brother?"



PETER

That's his theme song. He was shouting it out when the rebels hit our camp. They attacked as dawn was breaking. Nobody expected it. I was awake and went bush - a call of nature. I missed the first assault wave.

FLASHBACK

EXT. MISSIONARY CAMP IN KAMARIA DAY

Voice over scenes of an African Mission. The school is ablaze, several adults, including the HORTONS, EVA (35) and MICHAEL (40), the boys' parents, are lying dead. Many bodies have been hacked to pieces. Blood and confusion is everywhere. There is a vehicle ablaze, beside it is a cameraman - his equipment has been smashed, and he lies open eyed, staring at the sky, dead. There is screaming, but Jonathan's voice is heard loudest.

PETER (V.O.)

I wanted him to shut up, so we could hide, but he kept screaming. I could have got away, if it wasn't for him. They held him at gunpoint, and I couldn't leave him, so I came out of hiding with my hands up.

Peter, in polo shirt and jeans, walks uncertainly to where his brother is being held. Jonathan wriggles from the clutches of his young captors and hugs him. Peter drops his hands and holds his little brother tightly. They are surrounded by dozens of boy soldiers dressed in camouflaged uniforms and holding AK47s. An adult comes forward. It is ZEKIEL (about 30)

ZEKIEL

So, you must be the boys with all the money. We heard about you. (cynically) Money for

the poor people of Africa.
Where is it all?

PETER

I don't know. You killed Mum
and Dad. We only came here to
make a film about opening the
school. We never hurt anyone.
We didn't deserve this. Dad
organised the money.

ZEKIEL

The newspapers said you two
boys raised it. Now, you will
raise a lot more - but it
won't be for schools. It will
be to Liberate this country
from corrupt governments, from
greedy multi-nationals, and
from economic slavery.

A teenaged boy JIRO, with 3 stripes on his arm approaches
the group.

FARAD

There is a convoy of troops
approaching about ten miles
away.

ZEKIEL

I want these boys tied up
properly. We're taking them
with us. Make the other
captives run - you know how.

About twenty African boys with their hands tied behind their
backs, race along the track. One of the slowest ones at the
back is cut down with machetes by the boy soldiers. Seeing
this, the captives run faster.

EXT.

REBEL TRUCK

DAY

Peter and Jonathan are pulled into the back of a camouflaged
truck and made to sit on one of the side seats. Ropes are
cinched around them, tying their arms to their sides, and
their hands behind their backs. They are accompanied by a



group of older soldiers. The truck drives off along the rough, dusty track. In the background is the burning missionary camp. The church is ablaze. Bodies litter the ground.

EXT. BACK OF TRUCK LATER

The boys sit beside each other on a side bench. They are tired, thirsty, hungry, and distressed.

JONATHAN

I want to pee bad.

PETER

Try to hold it. Go if you have to. It's a hot country - it'll dry.

JONATHAN

You're gross. I can't piss myself.

PETER

It's going to get worse, Jon. A lot worse... My hands are swelling up. Be brave.

He wriggles around to show the soldier sitting beside him.

Can you loosen them off a bit, please.

The soldier back-hands him across the face. Peter's nose spurts blood, and he falls onto the floor. Jonathan screams and shouts at the men, who ignore him. Peter wriggles round, but gets stomped on by the soldiers who laugh. After a few good kicks, he is hauled back to his place. The man who hit him punches him in the stomach and the boy doubles over. Then the soldier grabs his nose and pinches it to stop the bleeding. He grins at the boy and puts his hand over his shoulder, holding him almost affectionately.

SOLDIER #1

Oh, funny. So funny.

Peter freezes still. He is terrified, but leans quietly on the man who is tending him. Jonathan is a complete picture



of misery. He can't understand what is happening to them. The truck drives on and on through the bush land. Overhead, the sun belts down with unrelenting heat.

EXT. MISSIONARY SCHOOL IN KAMARIA DAY

Regular soldiers of the Kamarian army have arrived at the village. They look over the burned remains of the school. The bodies of the missionaries and camera team have been lined up on a long plastic sheet, ready for transport back to the capital and return home. CAPTAIN SONGAI looks on as the men place all the other bodies and body parts into a hut. They block the door with logs to prevent animals from getting at them. Songai talks to his 2I.C., LT. FELLAT

SONGAI

There isn't much more we can do here. Lieutenant. They've gone. Twenty boys, four girls, and the two Baptist boys. Their government will be howling for blood.

FELLAT

That's not good.

SONGAI

Actually, it is good. We can expect more equipment from the Americans, and money. We can search for the boys, but it's going to cost a lot. Searches are expensive things.

FELLAT

What if they send in troops - mercenaries.

SONGAI

Everyone is being politically correct. No government will send in troops. As for mercenaries, they are "irregular combatants". The



Geneva Convention does not
protect them.

He turns and smiles at Fellat.

We have the Americans to thank
for that idea. Clever people,
the Americans.

EXT. REBEL ARMY HQ DEEP IN THE FOREST DAY

The two boys are grabbed by the ropes around their chests and dumped off the truck. They stand surrounded by a crowd of curious boy soldiers, but their guards bark orders and the boys race off to their parade ground and line up in squads. Peter and John are prodded towards a camouflaged tent. They enter to find a large group of older men. Their leader, THADDEUS (50+) is sitting in a lie-back armchair covered by a leopard skin.

INT. THADDEUS' TENT DAY

Peter and Jonathan are brought before Thaddeus. A foot placed behind their knees makes them drop to a kneeling position before him. He looks at them with interest.

THADDEUS

You wet yourself.

JONATHAN

They wouldn't stop the truck
so I could go.

PETER

We need to go to the toilet,
and we're both hungry and
thirsty . . . Please.

THADDEUS

Please. That's good manners.
(mocking) You missed out on
Breakfast and luncheon.
(chuckles) In this army, we
get one meal a day - if we are
lucky. You will learn to



control your hunger, your
water, and your discipline.

He gives orders to one of the rebel soldiers.

Untie them. Clean them up; I
want them in uniforms - put
them in Leopard Company under
Nathaniel. Tell him to whip
them into shape. Oh - and
give them some food and water.

The soldiers grab the boys by their bonds and lift them to
their feet. They are pulled from the tent.

EXT. PARADE GROUND AREA DAY

A crowd of boys, mocking and teasing them, surrounds Peter
and Jonathan. Suddenly, the boys attack and overwhelm the
two - giving them a sound beating with sticks, kicking them
with feet, and pounding them with fists. They are left on
the ground, bloody and bruised.

EXT. PARADE GROUND AREA LATER

Leopard Company has 5 patrols; each patrol has three
sections with 9 boys in each. Peter and Jonathan have been
put into A patrol in the front line, where Nathaniel, (16)
the company commander, can keep an eye on them. The boys
are dressed in camo uniforms of jungle brown. All the child
soldiers carry unloaded AK47s.

The boys are put through basic drill movements - attention,
stand at ease, and rifle drill. Then they are told to make
a Right turn and march. The company is well drilled, and
Peter manages to keep in step. Jonathan is all feet, and
trips up. Nathaniel, the Company Commander pulls him out of
line and shows him how to march properly.

NATHANIEL

Come on, mission boy. You
must march properly. Put your
left foot first - then swing
your right hand at the same
time. This is so the person
behind you doesn't kick into
your feet.

JONATHAN

I'm scared.

NATHANIEL

What for? You not the first
boy with kaki feet. Come on,
try. Left. Left. Left,
right, left. That's better.
Keep on. Back to line and
keep up.

Jonathan finds his rhythm, and Nathaniel smiles at him.

EXT. ROPE TRAINING DAY

The boys are made to climb up ropes and reach the top of a
climbing frame some twenty feet above the ground.

EXT. LAND MINE TRAINING AREA DAY

The boys are being taught how to place mines into the
ground. There are boxes of them, primed and ready.

ZEKIEL

Now that you've dug your
little holes, put the mines
in, and cover them up. Now -
gently - remove the safety pin
and step back. Don't hang
around.

There is a loud bang, and one of the boys looks startled.

Lucky for you we took the
explosives out. You're dead,
soldier. And just for making
that little mistake, drop!

The boy drops to the ground.

(To the other boys) Teach him
a lesson. Give him a good
belting.

The rest of the boys belt into him with sticks and boots.
He screams, but they have no mercy.



ZEKIEL

Enough. He's had his
punishment.

Looks down at the boy who is trembling with pain and fear.

Be more careful, next time.
Make another mistake, and I'll
let them kill you.

EXT. PHYSICAL TRAINING AREA DAY

The boys do exercises to strengthen themselves for any hard work they have to do. It is a bit too much for Jonathan, who sits back puffed with exertion. Nathaniel and his sergeants grab the recalcitrant boy and tie his elbows tightly behind his back. It is the dreaded 'tabay' torture. they pull the rope over a high tree branch so he is standing on his tip-toes. Peter tries to stop them, but they set on him and punch him senseless. He is dragged over to the tree and tied similarly.

EXT PHYSICAL TRAINING AREA NIGHT

The boys stand helplessly tied under the branch. There is no sleep for them, and the mosquitoes have a great time.

JONATHON

They're going to kill us.

PETER

I don't think so, Jon. They
want us for ransom, I think.
Don't stop hoping. Keep
praying. Jesus will help us.

EXT. PARADE GROUND AREA DAY

Peter and John, with other boys being punished, are made to run the gauntlet between lines of boys equipped with sticks and belts. They are soundly beaten, then forced to line up with the others in their platoons.

Nathaniel walks along the line of boys in the first platoon. He stops in front of Peter and Jonathan.



NATHANIEL

Think you are better than us?

He punches Peter in the stomach, and the boy doubles over. Jonathan turns to remonstrate with him, but decides discretion is the better part of valour and looks firmly to the front at attention. Peter, while winded, stands up at attention, breathing heavily. Nathaniel smiles and takes his place in front of the company.

That's better. Self discipline. That's what I want.

Leopard Company marches off with the two boys, exhausted, but unable to slacken off for fear of more punishment.

EXT BUSH TRAINING DAY

The platoon members walk through swamps up to their armpits in water and crawl through thick mud - all with their rifles held up over their heads to keep them clean.

EXT. GROUND TRAINING DAY

The boys crawl along the ground, using their knees and elbows, while carrying their rifles in their hands. They go low underneath coils of barbed wire. One of the boys JIRO (11+) moving behind Peter, manages to talk to him

JIRO

You are in our bunkhouse next to me. My name is Jiro.

PETER

I'm Peter. My brother is Jonathan. We call him Jon.

JIRO

Hello, Jon.

JON

Hello. How old are you?

JIRO

I'm eleven years old, I think.

They've reached the end of the assault course, and manage to take a break. Suddenly, there is a disturbance on the edge of the camp.

VOICE

(shouting in the distance)

RUNAWAYS!

Four boys run across the field, heading for the surrounding scrub. Peter recognises them as boys from the school his mission sponsored.

PETER

It's Luke and Mark. I can't recognise the other two.

JIRO

They won't escape. Cheetah company will intercept them. Look - Nathan's using his radio.

JONATHAN

Do you like Nathaniel?

JIRO

He's our company commander. It doesn't matter if I like him or not. I obey his orders.

In the distance, we see the runaways have been caught by Cheetah company. There is a melee of dust, as they are brought down.

EXT.

PARADE GROUND

TWILIGHT

Four companies of the rebel army have been drawn up. Four hundred young men and boys watch as the runaways are tied to poles that have been dug deeply into the ground.



There is silence as a small camouflaged Land rover utility drives up. Thaddeus gets out with two of his commanders. He walks along the line of stakes, and signals to Nathaniel, who goes over to him. They talk for a while, then Nathaniel returns to Leopard Company and orders Peter and Jonathan to accompany him. The boys walk over to Thaddeus. Their faces are coloured with bruises and scabs from fight wounds.

NATHANIEL

Salute him, boys.

Peter and Jonathon salute. They put their hands down and stand at attention. He looks at them carefully, checks their uniforms and AK47s, then smiles warmly.

THADDEUS

He is teaching you boys well.
We'll make soldiers of you
yet.

PETER

We're Christians. We can't
kill anyone.

NATHANIEL

Sir. We can't kill anyone,
Sir.

He pulls his hand back to hit them across the face, but Thaddeus intervenes.

THADDEUS

Not now, Nathaniel. I think we should improve their attitude. Tell Jiro to hack the one on the left to small pieces - feet first, then his knees, then hands, arms and finally, his head.

PETER

(Desperately) But that's Luke. He's never done anyone any harm. He's a really good kid



- one of our best students . .

.

Nathaniel has signaled Jiro who walks over to the boys bound to the stakes. We see Peter's expression of horror as the screaming boy is executed. Jonathan cries and covers his face. The screaming from the stake stops. Jiro comes over and wipes blood from his machete before putting it in its jungle green canvas scabbard.

JIRO

Prisoner executed, Sir!

THADDEUS

Give me your machete.

Jiro complies, and Thaddeus hands it to Peter.

Do you know the name of the next boy?

PETER

His name is Martin.

THADDEUS

I have a task for you, Peter. You can kill Martin. Chop his feet off, then his hands, then his head. Take your time about it. Do what Jiro did.

PETER

No way. I couldn't do that. It's plain murder.

He hands the machete back to Thaddeus. In the background, Luke's body is carted away.

THADDEUS

You will learn that I never take "No." for an answer, boy. Nathaniel, tell your sergeants to take Jon out to that stake and tie him to it.



Peter is held firmly as two men drag Jonathan, shouting and screaming for help, to the stake. He is tied to it. Luke's blood is still on it, and the crying boy is covered with the gore.

THADDEUS

Nathaniel, cut Martin free and give him your machete. Tell him that if he kills Jonathan, I'll see that he goes free. We'll take him back to his village. If he doesn't kill him, I'll blind him and stake him out on a soldier ant's nest.

Nathaniel goes out to the stakes and talks to Martin, then cuts him free. Thaddeus gives Peter his machete again.

THADDEUS

Believe me, Martin will kill Jon; but you have a chance to save him. Off you go. Run!

Peter runs desperately towards Martin who is lifting his machete for a killing stroke at Jonathan's throat. Peter tackles him from behind.

The two boys roll in the dust. Peter gets in a good punch, but Martin belts him across the head with the flat of the machete. Peter is stunned. Martin gets to his feet and staggers towards Jonathan. He lifts the machete.

Peter struggles to his feet, grabs his machete from the ground and strikes into the back of Martin's skull, and the boy falls. Dead. Peter cuts Jonathon free and holds him.

THADDEUS

(To Zekiel)

Whatever happened to Christian Martyrs, I wonder. Let the little missionary go. Kill the others ... We must set a good example, or everyone will want to run away.

INT. LEOPARD COMPANY BUNKHOUSE NIGHT

The boy soldiers have had a tough day. Most of them have curled up on their bunks - a makeshift collection of beds in the long grass-roofed bungalow. A small lantern is alight and in the darkness, some of the boys are playing cards. Some are smoking. A few have bongos. Nathaniel walks along the line of beds making sure the boys have settled. He sits on the bed next to Peter, who has a new black eye, and hands him a small bottle of liquid.

NATHANIEL

Drink this. It will help you to sleep.

Peter is deeply depressed. He really doesn't care any more. He takes the bottle and swallows the contents, choking as the strong alcohol hits his throat.

PETER

What is it?

NATHANIEL

A tonic. Rum. I see you've cleaned up your little brother.

Jonathan in brown blood-stained underwear, sits still on his bed, His camouflaged uniform has been washed and hangs to dry. He is staring at the lantern. He hardly moves. His right hand is trembling slightly.

PETER

He isn't speaking, and he just sits there.

NATHANIEL

Sleep with him tonight. Hold him tightly. He will be fine in the morning.

PETER

Do you want me to sleep with my brother? Get real.



NATHANIEL

I told you to hold him tight -
like a mother. He needs to be
hugged. I didn't tell you to
fuck him. Stupid boy.

EXT

SHOOTING RANGE

DAY

The boys are being shown how to shoot with the AK47s. They have five rounds each - not much, but it's all the rebels can spare. Some of the boys from the school have joined them. They look at Peter with slightly concealed contempt. Jonathan is back to his old self. Jiro is making sure he can sight properly.

JIRO

We don't spray the enemy and
waste bullets. The rifle is
accurate with single shots.
Squeeze to where it nearly
fires. Then make sure your aim
is true, breathe in, and
finish the squeeze.

There is the crack of a shot being fired. Jiro looks at the target and smacks Jonathan on the back.

JIRO

Well done. You hit the
target.

There is another crack as Peter fires. Jiro looks interested.

JIRO

You've used rifles before.

PETER

At Grandpa's farm. We hunted
rabbits.

JIRO

That is good, because we will
be recruiting more soldiers



later today. Ashkara village
is rich in boys.

They look at him, uncertain as to what to do.

Tomorrow we are attacking a
convoy. An NGO is taking
supplies to Ammara. It is
escorted, so we'll go in
strength.

PETER

(Shaking his head.)

There's no way I'm taking part
in robbing a truck Convoy.

JIRO

You don't have to if you don't
want to. We'll tie you to a
tree by the road and they can
rescue you - with some of the
boys from the Mission School.
They tell tales, those boys -
your machete skills.

The light dawns as Peter realises he'll be charged with
Martin's death.

PETER

Bastards! Fuck you all.

INT KAMARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE DAY

GENERAL MAROSSA puffs heartily at a large Cuban cigar. He
is well dressed in a light tan suit, cream shirt and blue-
black tie. Deep in an armchair is the U.S. Consul, Fred M.
Carlson, with his secretary Karen sitting at a desk taking
notes.

CARLSON

You believe the two Horton
boys are alive, General?

MAROSSA

There is no doubt that they
are with the rebel army,



Mister Ambassador. We think they are to be ransomed. We know the rebels kidnapped many boys from the school. They've become rebel soldiers. Maybe the two American boys will be made soldiers.

CARLSON

So - where are they hiding them?

He takes a chocolate biscuit from a tray on the coffee table.

MAROSSA

The problem with Africa is that it is a big country. Central Africa is even bigger. And the closer you get to the ground, the bigger it becomes.

CARLSON

So what does it take? We could put the cavalry in.

MAROSSA

On horseback?

CARLSON

They use choppers in the twenty-first century.

EXT. ROADWAY IN KAMARIA DAY

The boys are lined up before the attack on the village. They are being issued with tablets before the battle. Peter looks at his, but Nathaniel tells him to take them.



PETER

What are they? Why do we need
medicine?

JIRO

Bubbles. Take them, or you'll
be in trouble. They make you
fight.

NATHANIEL

You don't need to know what
they are. They are for
courage, that's all.

JIRO

It's ecstasy. We always use
it before a fight. It makes
you feel good in a battle

Peter swallows the pills and drinks them down with water
from his canteen. Jonathan looks at him and giggles. He is
slightly stoned. Peter, sick of his brother, takes a punch
at him, but Jonathon ducks out of the way.

INT KAMARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE LATER

MAROSSA

There's no way we could permit
foreign troops on our land,
Mister Consul. What we need
is armaments and equipment.

CARLSON

We have plenty of that.

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE DAY

The Leopards conduct a raid on the village, racing through
with drawn machetes, driving people into the bush land. Wild
camera shots as the boys run through the bush. The sound of
shooting.



Peter and John drop for cover as defenders shoot at the raiders. There are a few loud explosions. The boys walk into the village with their AK47s at the ready. Bodies lie on the ground in pools of blood. Crying village boys are rounded up into a group and tied with ropes. The houses are burned down. Corpses litter the ground.

Peter and Jonathan help Leopard Company to move the boy prisoners, loaded up with stolen goods, along the track towards the rebel camp.

MAROSSA (V.O.)

With all due respect, Mister Consul, we prefer to pick and choose from suppliers. What we really need is some very old fashioned American Dollars. There is a private bank which deals with these matters.

CARLSON (V.O.)

I'm sure there is.

INT. KAMARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE LATER

MAROSSA

I have taken the liberty of putting the name of the bank and a suitable amount on a piece of paper in this envelope.

His tongue touches his top lip in a subtle signal. He smiles genially, and hands an envelope over to Carlson, who takes it and puts it in his pocket. The men look at each other as Carlson realises they are being bribed.

CARLSON

I'm used to doing business in Africa, General. You think this amount will help you find the rebels and rescue our little citizens.

He stands and signals to Karen, who joins him. They move towards the door.

MAROSSA

Nothing can be guaranteed, Mr. Carlson. Unfortunately. Thank you for calling. I'll see you out.

EXT. ROADWAY WITH CONVOY DAY

A convoy of food and supplies is traveling along a dirt highway. There are four trucks, followed by a truck with regular Kamarian soldiers. Suddenly, there is a tremendous explosion. A rocket propelled grenade strikes the guards' truck. As it explodes, the other vehicles turn Right and come to a stop in a defensive circle. Soldiers on those trucks spill out and take up defensive positions. There is the crack of rifles, and the growl of automatic rifle fire as Cheetah Company moves forward to take the trucks. Several boys are shot and fall screaming, or moaning as bullets tear into them. Wild images of running through grass and bush, the crack of rifles, bursts of machine gun fire. The chatter of AK47s. A grenade is thrown into the protective circle of trucks. Suddenly, there is the sound of a helicopter. Leopard Company hits the dirt to take cover. Peter and Jonathon, in camouflage face paint, work seamlessly with the other boys. The chopping sound of its engine is unmistakable. It passes over Leopard Company, which is now lying in hiding. The chopper pauses over the top of them, searching the area. Nathaniel signals with his hand, and an older boy with an anti-aircraft missile takes a kneeling position on one knee, lifts the tube onto his shoulder, and fires. The helicopter's tail fin is damaged, and it whirls around, trying to regain control. It lands nearby, and troops in green berets jump out, firing in the general direction of Leopard Company. Jiro moves to a kneeling position to get a better aim, but is hit in the chest. He lies on the ground, screaming. The men are well trained and very dangerous. As they move forward, Peter and Jonathan open fire, We see an oncoming soldier's face. A bullet hole appears in it as we hear the sound of the shot. Jonathan also aims towards the face - the one part not protected by body armour. The other soldier falls. The rest retreat in the face of withering return fire from the boys. Peter cautiously crawls on his elbows to where the soldier lies. He is not dead, but is screaming in great pain. Peter puts his AK47 to the man's head and we see

Peter's wooden face as we hear the sound of a shot. The man's screaming stops.

EXT. AMBUSH SITE LATER

Stores are being loaded into rebel trucks, which are camouflaged and equipped for the rough country. Wounded child soldiers are being bandaged. The dead lie unattended, but their weapons are salvaged. The group of volunteer truck drivers sits on the ground - under guard with hands on their heads. Wounded members of the helicopter crew are amongst them. Peter and Jonathan are hard to recognise as their faces are painted with camouflage paint and they are hard to recognise. What they have forgotten, is that their hands are not painted. We see them in close-up. One of the women notices that there are two white boys with the young soldiers.

INT. AUNT ELIZABETH'S HOUSE N.CAROLINA DAY

ELIZABETH (28+) is sorting through a box that has just arrived via a trucking company. It contains a few personal effects, and diaries - the last personal bric-a-brac of Eva and Michael. She takes a diary from the box, flips a couple of pages, and puts it aside.

There is a videotape - salvaged from the smashed camera. She switches on her VHS player, and puts the tape in. It is raw footage. Peter and John, in Polo shirts and jeans, are standing in front of the mission school.

PETER

And the money we raised has helped to build this school for all the children.

JONATHAN

So they will all get a good Christian education. We need more money to buy books and pencils.

The camera switches position. There is a bit of 'fuzz' on the screen. The film would be edited later. The shot clears once more.

PETER

But the main thing is to employ teachers, and this is expensive, even in Kamaria.

The screen goes fuzzy again, and we see the village in uproar in dim light as the rebels attack. The cameraman has obviously filmed the action and we see a large adult soldier looming towards him with a machete. There is confusion as the camera lies on its side and we see a woman being shot from behind. An African boy, wearing camos, about twelve years old, is revealed as the shooter. Then the tape goes fuzzy once more. Elizabeth stands with her fist clenched to her mouth. She has just seen the raid on the mission station.

INT. REBEL FIELD HOSPITAL HUT DAY

Jiro is propped up in a bed that has its back legs on two bricks to lift it. His chest is bandaged. Peter and Jonathan are visiting him. They are pleased to see he has survived. Beside him on another bed is BUTU (12) who is dying from a gunshot wound to his lower jaw. It is packed with bandages and field dressings, but the bleeding cannot be controlled. Jonathan, stoned, is sucking ganja from a bong.

JIRO

The round went right through me. Nathaniel says I'll be better in a couple of weeks.

JONATHAN

We got the soldiers who shot you. We lost twelve. Thirteen if we count Butu.

PETER

Thaddeus says we've got enough food for a couple of months. He wants to move it somewhere safer in case we get attacked here.

Nathaniel enters the tent and walks over to the boys. Peter and Jonathan stand to attention. They salute him, and he returns it, then puts his hand into his pocket and pulls out a set of sergeant's stripes.

NATHANIEL

I watched you carefully
yesterday. You did well,
taking on those commandos.
Devra was killed, so I want
you to take his place. Can you
sew these on?

PETER

I can sew. (cheeky grin) Which
way up do they go?

NATHANIEL

Point down.

realizing he is being 'had'.

You're joking with me.

He takes Jonathan's bong and sucks on it.

Good shit.

Hands it back.

PETER

Joking - Is that OK?

NATHANIEL

I don't mind. I can take a
joke.

He steps toward Peter and holds him in a brotherly hug.

You are one of us, now. A
leopard. I will look after
you, and some day, you will
take me to America. Yes?

Peter looks up at the taller African boy and sees that he is serious. He returns the hug.



PETER

If we ever get out of this
shit hole, I'll want you to
come too.

Nathaniel steps back and salutes crisply. Peter stiffens
and returns the salute. Nathaniel looks at Jiro.

NATHANIEL

Get well soon, soldier.
That's an order.

JIRO

Yes, Sir.

Peter and Jonathan watch as Nathaniel leaves. There is a
disturbance behind them, and the boy, Butu, in the bed
beside Jiro begins to fit, then slumps and is still. Peter
feels his carotid pulse and looks at Jonathan.

PETER

Thirteen.

EXT. AUNT ELIZABETH'S HOUSE DAY

A taxi draws up and Aunt Elizabeth stands while the driver
loads the back with her cases. We notice a "For Sale" sign
on the house, with a diagonal sticker across saying "SOLD"
in black letters. She gets in, and the cab drives off.

EXT. AIRPORT LAPOOTOO (CAPITAL) DAY

An aircraft is landing at airport. Passenger alight,
including Elizabeth.

INT. THADDEUS TENT REBEL CAMP DAY

An African civilian NESTOR (35) accompanies a nervous
European BORIS (40) into the tent. They are carrying a
large, heavy box. They put it on a table and open it.
Thaddeus looks inside - a very large amount of money in U.S.
Dollars is seen.

NESTOR

This is the right stuff, eh,
Thaddeus? I told you we could
get it.

THADDEUS

It certainly looks good.

He takes a bundle, unwraps it, and carefully examines a
note. Then he takes one note and wipes it across another
piece of paper. It leaves a mark. He is satisfied.

I have sent for the boys.
They will be happy to be going
home.

BORIS

The American Consul will make
arrangements for them. It is
all arranged.

The men turn around and look as Nathaniel enters with
Jonathan and Peter - now wearing cargo pants and polo shirts
- stuff taken from the convoy. In the background, Thaddeus
is searching the box. Peter and Jonathan don't have any
luggage, but place their AK47s on a side table. They stand
at alert and salute Thaddeus. He smiles at them, and hands
each an envelope.

THADDEUS

Discharge papers. You boys
have been demobilized. These
gentlemen are here to take
both of you to Lapootoo and
from there, you go home.
Stand easy.

PETER

Thank you, Sir.

JONATHAN

And from me, too, Sir. Thank
you.



Thaddeus walks behind the boys and ruffles their hair with his hand. He seems to be genuinely sad to see them go.

THADDEUS

There is one small detail,
boys. These gentlemen have
spent a huge amount of money
to ensure your release. They
don't want you to run off.

Nestor produces two pairs of handcuffs and secures the boys hands behind their backs. Boris ushers them from the tent and gives a half wave to Thaddeus.

BORIS

Spend it in a good cause,
Thaddeus.

EXT. LANDROVER LEAVING REBEL CAMP DAY

We see the vehicle trailing dust as it heads off towards the East.

INT. LANDROVER DAY

Peter is in the front passenger seat. Jonathan sits in the back with Boris. The boys are furious that they have been restrained.

PETER

Why the handcuffs? We'd be
crazy to run off. You're
rescuing us, aren't you?

BORIS

Put up with it, Kid. You
aren't out of the woods yet -
not by a long shot.

JONATHAN

Who are you guys, anyway? Arms
dealers?



NESTOR

Business men. Soldiers of
fortune.

The men smile at each other. Boris takes a satellite phone
from his pocket and dials a number.

BORIS

With the accent on 'fortune'.
and we aim to collect it.

(Into phone) Target is clear.
Repeat, clear. We're on our
way. ... Right.

(to Peter) Thaddeus got a
million dollars for you. We
aim to get a whole lot more.
Your Church in America is
raising many more millions of
dollars at this very moment.

He puts the phone away.

PETER

You've kidnapped us? For
Ransom? You're both fuckwits.

NESTOR

Cruel world, isn't it? Just
when you thought you were
home, free. Actually, you are
both very lucky. The money
box contains a homing device,
and Thaddeus is going to have
a very interesting afternoon.

JONATHAN

Homing device? Is it like a
small black plastic box the
size of a cigarette lighter?

BORIS

Yes.

The boys look at each other. Peter squirms around to look
at his brother.

PETER

(mutters) I wondered why he
put it in your pocket.

Boris grabs Jonathan and finds the homing beacon in his back pocket. He opens the window and throws it out.

JONATHAN

He's fast, that Thaddeus.
Fingers like lightning.

Nestor slows down. The road has climbed a hill. There is a steep cliff to one side, and a drop off on the other. A huge tree has been felled across the roadway. Nestor stops. There is a tremendous explosion behind them. Boris opens his door and jumps out. Nestor follows. They run from the vehicle, back along the road. Handicapped by his cuffed hands, Peter manages to undo the door and he jumps out. Jonathan awkwardly opens his door, and joins Peter next to the vehicle. They look at the side of the road which drops away sharply. Peter doesn't hesitate.

PETER

Follow me, Jon.

He jumps down the steep slope. There is another explosion above them as the car is hit by a missile. Rocks and stones roll down after the boys, who fall backward to prevent themselves being swept down the slope. They watch as a jet thunders over them, but they are covered with dirt and dust. Above them, the vehicle burns.

They see Boris and Nestor attempting to run to safety. A low flying aircraft strafes the men as they run, and they die in a hail of bullets. From behind the hill, there is the sound of bombs falling and blasting the camp.

JONATHAN

They were supposed to be
aiming at the homing device.

PETER

I'm not an expert at aircraft,
but those aren't Kamarian.



There is a shout from below, and Jiro appears with the boys from Leopard Company. They wave at Peter and Jonathan. Soon the boys are surrounded by their friends.

PETER

Where did you come from?

JIRO

Thaddeus told us to cut that tree down and block the road. (grins) He wanted us to rescue you. We don't waste good soldiers to that scum.

He assesses the two boys, noting their handcuffs. Then he shouts orders.

Spread out and search for the handcuff keys. They might be in their pockets.

The patrol sections are methodical. A boy returns with part of the steering wheel column. The keys are still in the lock. It doesn't take long for the two boys to be released. The Horton boys are relieved to be back with their friends.

PETER

They got the camp, anyway. Bad luck.

JIRO

So - they got the tents and some of the supplies. We hid a lot of stuff. Everyone is away doing things, Cheetah Company is raiding for more recruits. Lion Company is carrying food to the hide-outs.

A boy brings a black object over to the boys. Peter recognizes it straight away. It is the satellite telephone. Ruggedly constructed, it has survived being tossed onto the road. It works. Peter pockets it.



PETER

I know it's dangerous, but we should go back and see if there are any survivors. Once they've bombed the camp, they'll leave.

The boys agree and start the long walk across country towards the camp which is easily found via the rising columns of smoke rising from the ruins. Although demobilized and in civilian clothes, Peter takes charge.

EXT. BURNED OUT REBEL CAMP EVENING

The boys walk around the camp looking for anything to salvage. A fire is going, and they have managed to find some stores to make a meal. A line of bodies has been placed alongside of the headquarters tent. Thaddeus and his commanders are dead. The latched box has been blown over, but has survived. Bundles of dollar bills are revealed inside. Peter shares them around and the boys stuff their pockets full of money. Some survivors who fled into the bush for cover are returning.

Cheetah company, with Zekiel has rejoined them after their raid. Zekiel goes around the boys collecting the money back from them, but letting them keep some of it. They have a dozen new boys in the truck. Lion Company has salvaged weapons - mostly from dead soldiers. Nathaniel has survived. His arm is bandaged, and his face has a few surface wounds, but he is not badly hurt. He greets the two boys warmly. They are pleased to see him.

NATHANIEL

We were expecting the Rebel Divisional Commander to come tonight. Thaddeus wanted us to join them. Be part of their army.

ZEKIEL

I don't expect him now

Peter hand him the box with the remaining dollars. Zekiel puts it into the truck.



PETER

What did he want?

ZEKIEL

The general attack on Lapootoo starts on Thursday - at noon. We were to be a part of it.

NATHANIEL

We were going to join the other rebel divisions this week. We can still join up with them.

JONATHAN

So - they'll have to stop now.

Nathaniel laughs and ruffles Jonathan's head.

NATHANIEL

Don't over-estimate our importance, Jon. We are only four companies of boys. Our main job is to fetch and carry for the real army. That's how they will use us.

PETER

Could we get to Lapootoo by Thursday?

JIRO

It's too far.

Peter takes the 'phone from his pocket.

PETER

We could always order a yellow cab.

ZEKIEL

Don't waste the battery. That could come in very useful. Thank you.



He holds his hand out, and Peter gives him the phone.

We shouldn't stay here. They
might send a force in to
reconnoiter.

NATHANIEL

What about the new boys?

ZEKIEL

They can come with us

PETER

No rough stuff. We'll train
them on the move. I don't
expect trouble from them.

ZEKIEL

They haven't got anywhere else
to go. Everyone should get to
sleep if they can. We leave
at Three a.m.

INT. WARRAMBE HOTEL NIGHT

Elizabeth is sitting in the lounge drinking cordial with a
couple of journalists, SAM MEYERS(25+) and MATTHEW
FRANKS(30) who are sipping cocktails. They are interested
to know she has come to Africa to search for her nephews.
Their conversation is casual - she isn't giving interviews.

SAM

The only information we have,
is that the boys may be alive.

MATTHEW

They may have taken part in
that raid on that NGO convoy.

ELIZABETH

No way. They're Christians.
They wouldn't do anything
illegal - I know them.



SAM

The rebels have had them for a year. They could be completely converted by now, Jesus or no Jesus.

ELIZABETH

I came when I heard about the convoy being attacked. The witness did say she saw two white boys with the militia. I couldn't believe it. They came out here to build a Christian school. It took them months of fund-raising.

MATTHEW

The war-lords who take child soldiers use torture, drugs, beatings, indoctrination; and all sorts of pressures are applied to new recruits. If they have joined, I'm sure it isn't their fault. It'd be a form of Stockholm syndrome. Brainwashing. They're only kids. Who knows what they've been through?

ELIZABETH

I've got the chance to go with General Marossa tomorrow. They're searching a camp that was bombed. We might be able to find some clues there.

Matthew orders another round of drinks from the waiter.

SAM

Any chance we could come along?



MATTHEW

Marossa owes us a few favours.
We've given him a good press.

ELIZABETH

No harm in asking, I suppose.

INT. CARGO AIRCRAFT DAY

The general has ordered his troops to reconnoiter the camp. They fly into the area in a small cargo aircraft that can use an area of flat ground to land. Elizabeth, Sam, and Matthew sit with soldiers spread along the length of the plane. Two jeeps are tied down in the center. It is noisy, and they can't really talk to each other.

EXT. BURNT OUT REBEL CAMP SITE. DAY

The two reporters are taking photographs of the line of bodies neatly laid out. Whoever tidied up after the raid didn't have time to bury anyone. Some of the bodies are boy soldiers, many of the dead boys were in the camp hospital.

MAROSSA

You will note that there was
no red cross on this building.
From the air it would have
been like any other.

SAM

We understand that, General.
The world has no time for
anyone using child soldiers.

ELIZABETH

A few of the boys wore
Christian crosses. I know
Peter and John had one each,
but ...



MATT

Sam's found something. They had a blackboard for training. It shows a section.

They examine the board. It isn't the best condition, but there is a list of names on it.

ELIZABETH

That is cursive writing. "Sergeant Peter Horton" - it's him. He was here. No sign of Jonathan's name anywhere?

SAM

We'll keep looking. They left after the camp was bombed. I'm surprised there aren't more bodies.

They take another walk around the ruins of the camp. Hanging on the branch of a tree is some clothing. Sam recovers it and hands it to Elizabeth. She looks at the name tags above the pockets. The names Peter and Jonathan are clearly visible.

ELIZABETH

They don't run to multiple sets of camos in this army, so I guess they're in civvies. That would be T-shirts. Where would they go?

MATTHEW

Only one place they could go. Lapootoo. With their leadership structure destroyed, the boy soldiers have become a rag-tag army.

ELIZABETH

How many boys?

SAM

Three or Four hundred. What
with A.I.D.S., civil war,
corruption and poverty.
Kamaria's not going anywhere.
The rebels seem to be winning.

General Marossa finds them. He is satisfied that the raid
has been a success, but is genuinely concerned that they
have not found the two American boys.

MAROSSA

No luck?

Sam shakes his head.

ELIZABETH

Some traces. They were here,
General. They must be on
their way to Lapootoo.

MAROSSA

The rebels are joining up to
have a crack at the capital.
We have reports of small
battles here and there. It's
a bit like sweeping fog. We
hit them here or there, but
they crop up somewhere else.

SAM

President Nyandi seems to
think the army will be
sufficient protection.

MAROSSA

Quote me, and I'll feed you to
the crocodiles. Nyandi is a
bloody fool. His family has
become rich by roting
everyone... He ignores poor
people. He has no moral
sense. He is so greedy, that
he lacks any judgment.



ELIZABETH

Even to the point of using
child soldiers?

They walk back towards the plane which is ready to take off.

MAROSSA

Don't be naïve. This is
Africa. Boys join the army
because they get fed every
day, have a place to sleep,
and they get looked after.
The Kamaria Government does
not recruit anyone under the
age of fifteen.

He helps Elizabeth up the rear ramp into the fuselage.

MAROSSA

In Kamaria, that is a young
man. By the time he is thirty,
he will probably be dead from
old age, malaria, syphilis, or
aids. Whatever.

EXT. EN ROUTE TO LAPOOTOO DAY

The boys of Leopard Company have taken cover in the long
grass as the plane carrying Elizabeth and the reporters
flies overhead towards the capital. Zekiel, Peter and
Jonathan pull a camouflaged tarpaulin off the truck.

ZEKIEL

They had a good look at the
camp. That means they think
we aren't operational.

The boys have organized themselves to carry their supplies
on long poles between two of them. Other boys carry their
rifles - some boys are loaded down by two or three AK47s.
Some carry ammunition boxes, mortars, and missiles.

Everyone shares the load. They aren't marching, but rather
- strolling along in an easy-to-manage cluster. Nobody is
hurrying, but they are moving surprisingly quickly.
Nathaniel, Peter and John are the forward scouts. They

carry their rifles only, and are spread out to make sure the path ahead is clear.

Zekiel drives the truck ahead, but it is a slow journey across country. In the back of the truck, he carries the heavy boxes of food, water bottles, and two disassembled field guns.

PETER

We need to get more transport.

NATHANIEL

There is a town, Koputo, about thirty kilometers ahead. We might find trucks there.

JONATHAN

Are we going to buy them? We have enough money.

NATHANIEL

I think we might ask them to donate to a worthy cause.

INT.

WARRAMBE HOTEL

NIGHT

Elizabeth, Sam, and Matthew are having a light supper. The dining room is busy, with many having fled to the city due to strife in the outlying areas.

SAM

The rebels hit Burrunjali last night. They carved up the local defense forces.

ELIZABETH

That's down South, isn't it? Peter and John aren't involved.

MATTHEW

The only town the boys could enter is Koputo. It's on a direct line from the camp to



here, and it's always been a place for rebel sympathizers.

SAM

How come?

MATTHEW

It's a tribal thing. Solutoos versus Pedari. African politics - you could do a thesis on it.

ELIZABETH

If we went to Koputo, we could intercept the boys. We could find Peter and John.

SAM

Whoa there! Not a good idea. We aren't locals. Anyone could figure us for 'enemy'.

ELIZABETH

But you guys get about. You're press - foreign journalists.

SAM

I'll tell you a trade secret. We do not go out of our way to end up in trouble spots. We aim to get there after the action. Burning buildings and bodies - good TV.

ELIZABETH

I guess I'll have to get a local driver and head North to Koputo on my own.

SAM

On your own?



MATTHEW

No way.

ELIZABETH

Way.

Thanks for all your help.
It's been really nice knowing
you . . .

EXT. OPEN 4WD CROSSING BUSHLAND DAY

Elizabeth is at the wheel, Sam and Matthew are in the back of the vehicle. The passenger is an African guide. They are well on the way to Koputo.

EXT. NORTHERN ROAD INTO KOPUTO DAY

Zekiel is driving the truck. It has been converted into a "Technical" with one of the field guns assembled onto the back, protruding over the cabin. The stores have been offloaded and there is now a platoon from Leopard Company. 30 boys armed with AK47s, some with R.P.Gs. All are carrying the wicked bush machetes. Peter and John are in the cab. Nathaniel is on the rear, looking out over the cabin and shouting directions.

They are approaching a road block with Kamarian Regular troops. The truck stops, and the boys jump off the rear, taking up positions to surround the checkpoint. The soldiers are nervous. There are not enough of them. They race towards an army vehicle, pile in, and head for town leaving the road open. Their retreat is a bit comical, and Peter smiles.

PETER

No welcoming committee?

ZEKIEL

Let's hope it stays that way.

The boys pile back on, and the truck heads for the Industrial area of the town.



EXT TOWN CENTRE DAY

Word has got around that the rebel army has arrived. People are evacuating via the streets, getting away as fast as they can. Elizabeth, Sam and Matthew park their vehicle in front of the Police Station.

Sam and Matthew film the proceedings.

EXT. CAR YARD DAY

Zekiel has purchased eight trucks, which are lined up with African drivers. Nathaniel and the Leopards swarm onto the vehicles ready to leave as soon as they are refueled. He pays the salesman from the box of cash that was salvaged from the ruined camp.

SALESMAN

I hope you have many happy hours of fun with these vehicles, Sir. They have guarantees - all of them. And I shall do all the paper-work tonight.

ZEKIEL

Do not worry, Seth, We'll collect the paperwork tomorrow, eh?

There is a slight disturbance from the boys. They have noticed a 4wd vehicle with three Westerners approaching.

It is Elizabeth, Sam, and Matthew, who are looking for the boys. They drive up, and Elizabeth gets out of the car and walks towards them.

ZEKIEL

Who the hell is this?

Peter has seen the car and recognises his aunt. He scrambles from the truck to stop anyone shooting.



PETER

No. They are OK. Tell the boys to put their weapons up. Zekiel, I know the lady.

He slings his rifle over his back. And walks towards her.

JONATHAN

It's Aunt Betty. What the hell is she doing here?

He follows Peter, and the three have a family hug as they greet each other.

ELIZABETH

Praise the Lord. You're both alive. Thank you, Jesus.

PETER

It's so good to see you, Aunt Betty. I never expected you. What are you doing here?

ELIZABETH

I came to find you. We thought you were dead.

JOHN

This is Zekiel, and Nathaniel.

Elizabeth holds her hand out to shake hands with the old soldier and Nathaniel.

ELIZABETH

I'm Elizabeth, their Aunty. Have you looked after my nephews?

ZEKIEL

All the way.

NATHANIEL

Me, too. I'm their Company Commander.

At the military reference, Elizabeth is a bit flustered, but Peter comes to the rescue.

PETER

Actually, Thaddeus de-mobilised us, so technically, we're no longer soldiers, but we are here, with the guys.

ZEKIEL

They are both very competent. (pointedly) I would be very sorry to lose them.

It is a moment of high tension. Elizabeth fiddles with her leather belt. Two 5-carat diamonds are in her hand. She hands them to Zekiel.

ELIZABETH

I took the risk of smuggling these into Kamaria. They are very high quality gem stones - worth a small fortune.

Zekiel takes the diamonds and puts them into his leather wallet. He pats the two boys on the shoulder.

ZEKIEL

As Thaddeus said. You are both demobilized. Have a safe trip home.

Peter realises that his war is over. He looks sadly at Nathaniel, who is sad to see his two friends are leaving. Peter and John hand over their rifles and machetes to him. He hands them to Jiro, and gives the boy a quick hug.

PETER

We'll meet up again, Nathaniel. I want you in America. Somehow, we'll get you there.

NATHANIEL

We all must dream, Peter. Safe
journey.

Peter and Jonathan get into the 4wd with Sam and Matthew.
The men are in the front of the vehicle, so Peter and John
can sit in the back with their Aunt.

EXT. ROAD TO LAPOOTOO DAY

The vehicle is traveling South towards the capital.

INT. WARRAMBE HOTEL NIGHT

The boys have been checked over by the local doctors and
pronounced fit. They have showered and changed, and are
enjoying their first real meal for over a year. Sam and
Matthew are at a separate table, and the dining room has a
few foreign workers and guests that have come in from
surrounding areas. Elizabeth is trying to be subtle with
her questions.

ELIZABETH

So, child soldiers. Did you
do any fighting?

JONATHON

Not much. Two or three
battles - mostly raids - that
sort of thing.

He finishes his soup by putting the bowl to his mouth and
drinking it. Elizabeth tries not to notice. Peter has
picked up a piece of chicken with his hand and gnaws at it.

ELIZABETH

You both are going to have to
make a lot of adjustments to
being back in civilization.

PETER

I guess. Sometimes, I think
Africa is more civilized than
America.

ELIZABETH

Explain, please.

PETER

If you don't have a lot of money or material goods, then the next best thing is people. Here, people - your friends - are your wealth.

ELIZABETH

Did you kill any people?

PETER

Some. If someone's shooting at you, you shoot back. This isn't Kansas.

(break)

It's a war out there, Betty. People get killed. Some of the boys in my platoon were shot down in front of me. What did you expect me to do?

ELIZABETH

Pray?

PETER

I'm sorry, but Jesus left me a long time ago. He wasn't there when the mission school got burnt down. He didn't help us when Mum and Dad were killed, and we got captured. He didn't step in when I killed Martin. That was hand-to-hand combat with one of the boys from our school.

JONATHAN

He was trying to cut my head off. Peter saved me.



PETER

Funny that. I stopped praying from that moment. My first kill. I can still feel the machete going into the back of his skull.

Elizabeth has nothing to say. She lets Peter talk - get it out of his system.

JONATHAN

They tied me to the stake where Luke was chopped to bits. That's a slow way to die. First the feet, then the hands, then the legs, and last it's the head.

The cold, matter-of-fact way that he recounts the story is unnerving. Elizabeth listens in shock.

PETER

I could have watched Martin cut Jonathan to pieces and prayed for Jesus to stop it, but he wasn't there, so I had to stop it.

Elizabeth has heard enough. She puts her hand up to stop Peter, but he ignores her.

It isn't true, any of it. It's what we get brainwashed with as little kids. Gentle Jesus, meek and mild. It's all bullshit. There's dust, blood, guts, and a lot of noise. That's reality. That's a battle. Jesus pisses off and leaves you to it.

JOHN

You need a bong, Peter. You're too intense. You don't have any ganja, do you, Aunt Elizabeth?



Jonathan takes a plastic packet containing small capsules of white powder from his pocket and hands a capsule to Peter, who opens it, pours it into the palm of his left hand and sniffs it. Then he leans back, sighs, and relaxes - high.

PETER

(sighs) Thanks, bro. I needed that.

ELIZABETH

What is it?

JONATHAN

Coke. I liberated it from Thaddeus. He was dead, so it didn't matter. It's good shit. Want some?

Jonathan breaks open a capsule and sniffs. He relaxes, stoned as he is hit with the effect. A waiter comes over with deserts. He puts them on the table.

WAITER

I can get you 'Ice' Forty dollar.

ELIZABETH

No thanks. We seem to have enough. . . Whatever it is.

PETER

(to waiter) 'f it's all the same to you, we'll have two rum and cokes. Aunt doesn't drink. Bring her a soda-lime and tonic.

Peter looks up at Elizabeth. He is slightly bleary eyed, but talks well enough.

PETER

Sorry, Aunt Elizabeth. You come all this way to rescue us, and we don't thank you



properly. You thought you were getting two nice little missionary Baptist boys, and you got us instead.

Behind them, a group of police have entered the dining room. One of them points to the boys, and the officers come over to the table.

POLICE SERGEANT

Are you - Peter and Jonathan Horton?

PETER

Yes. What do you want?

SERGEANT

There are warrants for your arrest as 'illegal combatants' in the matter of the NGO Convoy that was attacked by Rebels six months ago.

PETER

Not again. We only just got rescued from that shit, and you want to arrest us!

He jumps up and swings a fist at the sergeant, but there are too many police, and he is handcuffed behind and led towards the door of the dining room with Jonathan in cuffs behind him. The boys do not go quietly.

They shout and yell as they are taken, and Peter swings off his feet and kicks some tables over. Diners and food go everywhere. The sergeant has had enough and swings his rubber baton.

Horrified, Elizabeth can only watch as the boys are bundled out of the room. Sam, with great presence of mind, has taken his mobile phone and filmed the incident.



INT. ELIZABETH'S SUITE NIGHT

She paces back and forth, furious. Sam and Matthew are trying to console her.

SAM

I've phoned the Consul. He'll get onto it right away. Mat, any word yet - where they've taken them.

MATTHEW

Nothing. There's some talk of a secret 'interrogation centre' but nobody's talking - least, not to us.

INT. CARLSON'S CONSULAR OFFICE NIGHT

He is phoning the main embassy in Kenya.

CARLSON

President Nyandi is desperate, Bob. His foreign minister has vanished - talk is, he's behind the rebels. We'll try to get some consular staff to see the boys, but we don't know where they're being held.

He puts the phone down, and talks to his secretary, Karen.

CARLSON

The press at home is going ballistic. First, we rescue those two boys, then this klutz of a president has them arrested? He is not making many friends in high places.

KAREN

But if they did take part in that raid on the convoy,



hasn't he got the right to
arrest them?

CARLSON

Convoy - convoy - You have to
look at the big picture,
Karen. Convoy be damned.
Find out where they are. I
want to know. Call in a few
favours.

INT. INTERROGATION CENTRE - PRISON CELL NIGHT

Peter and Jonathan lie on the concrete floor. There are no beds or blankets, so they huddle together. Peter's cheek is blackening after the blow on the head. He has light concussion, but is otherwise OK. The light goes on, and two men in army fatigues enter the room. One of them pulls Jonathan to his feet. He says nothing, but they drag the boy out and shut the door. Peter stares at the wall. He feels totally helpless. He looks at the door and fingers it, but there is no way out. Suddenly, there is the intense sound of Jonathan screaming.

The noise goes on and on, rising in intensity. Then it stops. Peter goes to the door and belts on it with his hands, but nothing happens. Then there is another scream, and another. Peter puts his hands onto his ears and sits down against the wall. The screams continue.

INT LAPOOTOO POLICE STATION DAY

Elizabeth and Sam are trying to get sense out of the officer on duty.

ELIZABETH

They were arrested by police
last night. They put up quite
a show. Nearly wrecked the
dining hall.

OFFICER

If it was the anti-terrorist
squad, we wouldn't have any
jurisdiction over that.

They'd be taken somewhere else.

ELIZABETH

Where, exactly?

OFFICER

That, I don't know, Miss - Mrs.?

She turns to Sam, who can only shrug. He hasn't found anything, either.

ELIZABETH

Let's go back to the consul and see if he has found anything out.

INT.

PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM

DAY

Peter and Jonathan have been well worked over. Their faces are a picture of black and blue bruises, bloody noses and mouths, and their backs have the black and blue stripes of blood blisters. They stand against the wall, hands cuffed to rings above their heads. They are wearing blood-stained briefs that are filthy with brown and yellow stains. The floor under their bare feet is wet and soiled.

INTERROGATER

All we need to know is what the rebels are planning. You have given me your name, rank, and they didn't give you numbers. What sort of an army is it? A rabble of lost boys without leaders, without discipline, without training. You really think a rebellion of such scum will work?

PETER

My name is Peter Stanley Horton. I'm a sergeant in the Kamaria Liberation Army. I don't have a serial number.



JONATHAN

(struggling) My name is Jonathan Willis Horton... I'm a corporal . .in the Kamaria Liberation Army. . . I don't have a serial number... either.

INTERROGATOR

Broken records. Haven't you anything else to say? Look, you can both go back to your dear Aunt Elizabeth. She is searching for you. She has been to the police. She is now at the Consul's office.

PETER

What day is it?

INTERROGATOR

Thursday. Tomorrow will be Friday.

Jonathan faints, but one of the guards sprays him with a water hose. The boy regains consciousness and struggles to get to his feet. He slips, and the interrogator orders the guard to stop hosing.

INTERROGATOR

You can't even stand up straight. You cannot last long. Tell us what we want to know. It isn't your fight. The men who kidnapped you and killed your parents are the enemy, not us. We want to be your friends.

JONATHAN

Some fucking friends. Tell them squat, Peter. This is why the rebels want to get rid of this scum.

He manages to get back on his feet, pulling himself up by his hands. His strength is returning.

INTERROGATOR

Put them back in their cell.
We will start again in an
hour. Perhaps they will be
more helpful then.

(break)

Clean this place up. We'll be
using the electric shock
machine on them. It loosens
tongues very quickly.

The guards take their cuffed hands from the hooks on the wall and drag them out towards their cell. The interrogator goes to the cupboard at the rear of the room and pulls out some wicked looking electrical equipment.

INT

CONSULAR OFFICES

DAY

Carlson is taking Morning tea with his staff. Elizabeth and Sam are sitting with the others as they all have coffee, tea, and cookies. The banter is light, but serious.

CARLSON

We know their interrogation
centre is part of the Kamarian
Prison. It's on the outskirts
of Lapootoo. We can't even get
close to it. They won't let
us near. It has two thousand
prisoners, most are liberation
rebels and there are some
members of the opposition.

ELIZABETH

Even with all this going on,
our government backed Nyandi.
He's a despot. A tyrant.



CARLSON

Better the tyrant you know than the rebels you don't. If this lot gets in, we could be faced with massive problems. They are known socialists. They'll want to nationalize the oil fields.

ELIZABETH

(acidly with sarcasm) and give the money to the poor, I suppose. That's terrible.

CARLSON

Our air force has managed to get permission for a C-27 Spartan to land at the airport and evacuate our civilians if things here get tight. The rebels have surrounded the capital. There's no way out overland.

ELIZABETH

An army of boys?

CARLSON

Anything but. These guys are mature, hardened soldiers - whatever everyone has thought. The story about the boy soldiers was used to put everyone off the scent. Nobody could take an army of children seriously. While they were grabbing the news, the real army was training in the republic next door.

SAM

So - all this was just a decoy?



CARLSON

No. Child soldiers are involved in the war. They are used to carry stuff into battle, and even fight, but they aren't the main force. They're just a sideshow.

There is a knock at the door. Karen admits Matthew.

MATTHEW

Got some news. Not good, I'm afraid. The boys are in the interrogation centre. It's within the jail. They're getting a rough time, according to a couple of guards I've corrupted.

ELIZABETH

They can't torture children!

CARLSON

We don't know what is happening, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

We can pray for them, Joseph. I'll ask everyone here to pray to our Lord for their safe deliverance.

She puts her hands together, and everyone around the table joins her as she prays.

ELIZABETH

Lord Jesus, I know in their hearts, Peter and Jonathan are really good boys. Do not desert them in this hour of their trial. Support them and help them, Lord, and bring them to freedom and back to us and you.



ALL

Amen.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM DAY

Peter and John are secured with four pointed ties onto old metal bed frames that stand against the wall. They are spread-eagled helplessly, waiting for interrogation to begin. The interrogator approaches with a large cable attached to wicked looking crocodile clips.

INTERROGATOR

Do we have to go through with this? I'll start on your little brother. He screams louder than you do.

PETER

What's the time?

INTERROGATOR

Noon. Midday.

He attaches the crocodile clips to metal near Jonathan's feet. The boy whimpers in expectation of pain. There is no sound from outside.

EXT. STREET NEAR INTERROGATION CENTRE DAY

Elizabeth, Matthew and Sam are sheltering behind a 4wd vehicle while they reconnoiter the jail. Behind them, boys in camouflaged uniforms are sneaking about in the background.

MATTHEW

Something's going on back there. We'd better move.

SAM

No. We're better off staying put. If we move, we could be shot.

One of the young soldiers runs over to them. It is Jiro

JIRO

Aunty Elizabeth. You seem to
be everywhere. Keep your
heads down.

Looks at his wrist-watch.

It is almost midday.

ELIZABETH

Jon and Peter are in there.

JIRO

We know. Our eyes and ears are
everywhere.

INT. INTERROGTION ROOM DAY

The interrogator is making final adjustments to his electric
shock apparatus.

PETER

Lord Jesus, forgive me for
everything I've done. I don't
know if you exist or not. I
guess I'm praying for a sign
from you. Deliver us from the
evil ones. And if we die
today, bring us to you, Lord.
Amen.

INTERROGATOR

I don't think he's going to
help you. Tell us what we
want to know.

There is a terrific explosion outside. The walls crack and
the lights go out as the power is cut. Then there is the
unmistakable sound of heavy artillery outside. Crunch after
crunch of shells landing. Cheering can be heard from all
over the prison. The rebels are attacking.



PETER

I've decided to tell you. The rebel army is due to attack Lapootoo at twelve noon Thursday. Today. They are a real army with tanks and mobile artillery. About two divisions. You're all fucked. Thank you, Jesus.

A spray of bullets is fired into the room. The guards and other men don't wait around, but flee. The walls continue to shake and there is the sound of nearby shooting. Jonathan's bed frame falls with the wall shaking. He is lying helplessly, on his back as bits of the wall begin to fall. There is dust, smoke, and noise everywhere.

A few moments of complete silence, and some soldiers enter the room. They are Nathaniel, Jiro, and Zekiel. Elizabeth, Sam, and Matthew, crouching, also enter. Sam is filming. Elizabeth and Matthew release the boys. It is a time of quiet rejoicing amidst the hell of war. The sound of battle recommences.

EXT. JAIL YARD DAY

The prisoners are being released from the cell blocks. Matthew carries Jonathon out into the bright daylight. Peter can walk, and is supported by Elizabeth. Sam continues to film. There is action everywhere, and he is in TV heaven.

PETER

There's one thing we've got to do, guys. On your knees, Stay put, Jon.

Elizabeth Sam and Matthew kneel. Surprisingly, Nathaniel, Jiro, and Zekiel join them.

PETER

You really do exist, Lord. I have been blind. When I



really needed help, you came -
in power and might as you
promised. What a blast! I
couldn't believe it. Thank
you, Jesus.

Amen.

ZEKIEL

He had a bit of help. An
anti-aircraft hand launched
missile took the jail gate
out.

PETER

Maybe so, but Jesus helped you
get it there. You just didn't
know about it.

INT. SPARTAN AIRCRAFT HEADING HOME DAY

Jonathan and Peter are wrapped in bandages to cover their
cuts and bruises. Jonathan is on a drip and being attended
by medics. Mute from shock, he stares at the ceiling. Peter
is in better shape. Elizabeth and Matthew are sitting by
his stretcher. Sam is sitting nearby with his precious
camera gear.

PETER

He found us, Aunt Betty. I
felt him coming, and there he
was. I didn't see him or
anything. Just felt him -
like a giant's foot pounding
the earth. Kaboom!

ELIZABETH

I think you've had an
epiphany.

(break)

Joe Carlson said that
President Marossa has given
both of you pardons, so you
won't have to face prosecution
over that convoy, or anything
else you might have done.

PETER

Hey - he was the rebel leader.
We were his soldiers. African
politics. More twists than a
bowl of noodles.

INT. PETER'S BEDROOM DAWN

Peter is now wide awake. He is dressed in a checked shirt over a t-shirt, and jeans. The boy looks out of the window at the gentle rolling farmland outside. It's quiet in the country, and he has found peace. Matthew enters with a cup of chocolate.

MATTHEW

Drink this, then come down to
breakfast. Liz rang. She says
she'll be here with Jon. by
morning tea.

PETER

You miss her, don't you?

MATTHEW

She's a rock. To think I had
to go to Africa to find her.

PETER

(grinning) To think - she went
to Africa to find us, and she
found you as well.

He puts an arm around Matthew's waist.

It worked out pretty well
after all.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF FARMYARD. LATER

We see Elizabeth driving up to the farmhouse. She gets out with a young boy. It is Jonathan, now healed and lively. The new family is together at last, and they greet each other with a family group hug as end titles show over the quiet farmlands.

END



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