

TEARS RUN DRY

screenplay by

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based on the memoir by

Patrick Kalenzi

"The tiniest ant can bring down an elephant."

– East African proverb

SUPER:

"BASED ON A TRUE STORY"

... MECHANICAL MURMURS... HISS... BZZZ... HISS...

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

BZZZ. An ancient ECG TRACES a heart beat across rolling chart paper. Its lead wires track to several electrodes dotting

TODDLER PATRICK (2) draws breath through an intubation tube, his tiny chest bobbing to the VENTILATOR'S PNEUMATIC HISS.

... HISS... BZZZ... HISS...

SUPER:

"UGANDA, 1974"

FLORENCE KAFUNIZA (20), the young mother, kneels beside Patrick's hospital bed and whispers -- whispers -- a prayer.

JOHN KALENZI (27), Patrick's father, stands in the doorway with a blank look, his attention deep inside.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

The brisk CLACK of dress SHOES on tile. A SUIT, LAB COAT, and SCRUBS swish through the underfunded bedlam of patients, a trio of PROFESSIONALS on the march.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

An ADMINISTRATOR alerts John to their arrival. Something exchanges, something agreed upon. He goes to Florence.

JOHN

... Florence...

She opens her eyes.

JOHN

They say we will owe a transfer
fee... to the mortuary... and it
will cost less to transport him in
a taxi... before he...

(touching her)

Let us bury him at home.

Her jaw clenches. Eyes fill. John turns to the impatient professionals in the doorway. No help.

JOHN
 (lowering voice)
 We spent our last shilling bribing
 our way inside. We cannot afford --

FLORENCE
 His death?

The professionals, short on time and sympathy, file in. A NURSE and DOCTOR peel electrodes and whirl down machinery as the administrator presents Florence with a clipboard.

ADMINISTRATOR
 This form releases Mulago
 Hospital from liability. If you
 are unable to sign, you may
 provide a thumb print --

FLORENCE
 What are you doing? Do not touch
 that! He is my son! He is my
 son! Get away from him! I said
stand back!

She fights them off and shields Patrick like a mother bear.

FLORENCE
He is a child.

DOCTOR
 (aside to nurse)
 Crazy Tutsi.

NURSE
 (aside to doctor)
 ... one less to deal with.

ADMINISTRATOR
 (to Florence)
 Ma'am, the polio is so advanced,
 even if he wakes from the coma, he
 will be paralyzed for life.

FLORENCE
 ... John?

But John's looking at the floor. Florence meets the professionals' cold stares and knows it's over. She shuts her eyes, salvaging an act of will from the center of the earth.

FLORENCE
 ... tomorrow... one more day. We
 shut it off... tomorrow.

Her words land somewhere between threat and plea. A brief standoff. The administrator nods to the team and they reset the equipment. The professionals CLACK out. Inconvenienced.

Florence resumes her vigil, the child's small fist tight in her grip. John places a soft hand on her back and

Little Patrick clings to life... HISS... BZZZ...

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER:

"1982
(EIGHT YEARS LATER)"

REMAIN IN THE DARK

Shushes, stifled giggles... a teasing, disembodied voice...

ROSETTE (O.C.)
Paaaatricks... oh Paaaatricks... time
to go to schooooooollll...

Light blasts on, the harsh white whacking PATRICK KALENZI, here a boy of ten (though in size he could pass for seven). He groans, the flashlight inches from his face.

Beam flips up to ROSETTE KALENZI (14), Patrick's older sister, spotlighting her goofy grin.

Patrick leaps up with a growl, playing monster, and kids squeal into the black. CLATTER of a DOOR and they're gone.

Patrick alone in the near dark, his pocket-sized frame cast in blue light from a window -- a square hole, open to the elements. And through it

The moon. He closes his eyes as if to feel its light.

INT. KALENZI HUT - PATRICK'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Match flame enters a kerosene lamp and the wick sputters to life. Patrick twists the ring, firelight blooming into the ROOM we've been in all along, no wider than its single cot.

Patrick throws on a rumpled collared shirt and shorts. He claps a pair of rugabire sandals (made from car tires), blows a sole etched with treads and fastens them on.

Looks at his two, pathetic feet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

A brown space the size of a storage shed, floor to ceiling dry mud. Florence (28 going on 50) in a bed sheet robe, tends to five younger children (ages newborn to eight).

Rosette packs two ochre sacks and directs Patrick.

ROSETTE
The sun is up, which means the bell
rings in ninety minutes, and we
have a two hour walk ahead of us...

WITH PATRICK

In a streak of dawn light. Rosette's voice DISSOLVES into his own hollow PANTING... HEART THUMPS... he endeavors to groom.

A licked thumb buffs dusty sandals. Trembling fingers button scuffed collar. Wet palms iron wrinkled khaki. He SWALLOWS.

BACK TO HUT

Rosette thrusts a bottle of milk in Patrick's face.

ROSETTE

Drink some milk. And remember to
pack one more, they will be the
last meal before dinner.

JOHN (O.C.)

(from another room)

Florence, can you come in here?

FLORENCE

One moment, John.

(to Rosette, delegating)

Do you have everything, Rosette?

ROSETTE

Yes, Mama.

Florence pushes aside a tarp and enters the bedroom with a kid on her hip. A hushed ARGUMENT.

ROSETTE

(to Patrick)

... drink.

Patrick glugs his breakfast... COWS MOOOOOO...

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

MULTIPLE MOOS OVERLAP as we get the first COMPLETE PICTURE of the family homestead, a quarter acre of land that includes:

KALENZI HUT, mud walls an extension of the yard on which it stands, with a roof of braided reeds. And beside it the

KRAAL (a pen of unhewn jungle wood), which houses twenty ANKOLE COWS, LOWING lazily in the morning. MOOOO...

EXT. KALENZI HUT - MORNING

Rosette and Patrick bound with school sacks past BAABA, their ageless grandfather, seated on the mud porch in his igitengi (a patterned, cotton robe).

BAABA
Have a good day!

PATRICK
Bye, Baaba!

ROSETTE
We will!

A dog, caught up in the excitement, trots after them.

JOHN (O.C.)
Not so fast.

They stop as if struck by the voice of God. John looms in a worn button-down and trousers; he's now in his mid-30s, but like his wife, poverty has pounded him to late middle-age.

JOHN
What are you doing with the dog?

Patrick notices it seated at his feet with its tongue out. John closes in, blocking the low sun like an eclipse.

JOHN
Dogs do not attend school.

PATRICK
... I am sorry, Dada.

The overstimulated DOG hops and BARKS. Patrick kneels, stroking and shhh-ing it to stillness. (We sense he has a special knack for this, like an animal whisperer).

PATRICK
(to dog)
Go on home now. Go on.

The dog obediently pads off. John hits his son with a final stern look and leaves.

The kids release an exhale that could melt ice.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAWN

Dense flora submerged in shade. INSECTS TRILL. Rosette hikes well ahead of Patrick, white-knuckling his school sack, wrestling with some inner dread. An ominous, animal SHRIEK.

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - MORNING

The kids break from the trees. A light hits them from the tin roof of a clapboard schoolhouse, glinting in the morning. If a feather fell on the place, it might collapse.

Rosette and a friend giggle off together. Patrick looks at the school like it's his gravestone.

MARIKO
Yo, Patrick!

PATRICK
Hi, Mariko.

Patrick greets the always-sunny RONALD MARIKO, same age.

MARIKO
You finish that, uh...

PATRICK
... fractions homework? Yes...

Mariko flashes a grin and although Patrick shakes his head, he fishes the crumpled homework from his sack.

DING DING DING DING DING.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

BRASS BELL whips a tornado of kids into rows of benches, everyone obediently facing the proverbial chalkboard.

Patrick inserts himself between two boys who make little effort to move. He peers down his row, where Mariko surreptitiously copies his homework --

MUWONGE (O.C.)
Psst! Kalenzi.

JAMES MUWONGE (14), a real bruiser, "smells" Patrick from across the aisle. He scrunches his nose and waves away the mock stench, all to the delight of his henchmen.

Patrick burns red, but summons the discipline to look. Away.

MUWONGE
Kalenzi. Hey, Kalenzi. Kalenzi.

Patrick does not look, refuses to look --

MUWONGE
Hey, homeless boy.

-- can't help but look.

MUWONGE
Daddy cannot afford an iron?

Muwonge lifts his pristine white shirt and his friends cover their mouths in laughter. Patrick flattens his own dusty uniform, boiling with embarrassment.

MUWONGE

I will see you at lunch, poor boy.

Patrick finally gives in and flicks him off. Muwonge relishes the victory. They both clam up as

A tower of a man ducks inside, a fearful silence descending with his presence. MASTER REUBEN (50s) assays the students, who sit even straighter under his gaze. He inhales and...

Sings a soft song. Tension melts as the room fills with the children's wavering rendition of the school anthem.

Patrick bathes in the soothing notes.

LATER

Reuben oversees the students exiting for lunch. Patrick reaches the threshold --

REUBEN

Kalenzi. With me.

NEARBY STUDENTS

(he's in trouble!)

Oooooooooo!

REUBEN

Silence.

The students scamper out, leaving Patrick and Reuben alone.

INT. REUBEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Reuben pries at Patrick as if inspecting livestock. Thick fingers peel apart hair, open lips, stretch an ear.

Meanwhile, Patrick looks over the scholarly sanctuary: the intimidating desk, a wall of dilapidated, second-hand books.

REUBEN

(finishing inspection)

The good news is that you have no lice. However, you are filthy, son.

PATRICK

Yes, Master Reuben.

Reuben swats Patrick's shorts, which emit a puff of dust, and gives him a good long smell. What to do with him. He goes behind his desk and rummages.

REUBEN

You must practice personal hygiene.
Dress like a beggar and end up
homeless. Dress like a pupil and
you shall succeed. Ah ha.

He gives Patrick a bar of soap, the kid so self-conscious he
could disappear.

REUBEN

That is ash soap. I always keep one
handy for cases like this. Clean
your clothes and yourself by
tomorrow, or do not come back.

Patrick smells the bar. And suddenly he could cry. Reuben's
not entirely without compassion...

REUBEN

Keeping clean will help with those
boys. And you will feel better too.

Patrick's eyes shine at the rare show of kindness. But the
formal headmaster can only handle so much emotion.

REUBEN

By. Tomorrow.
(returning to desk)
If you enter my sanctum, you leave
with a book. Be quick about it.

Reuben starts some paperwork. Patrick faces the library. He
removes a battered, seventies TEXTBOOK: The Art of Algebra.

EXT. MATRIARCH OAK - DAY

Leaves shimmer. Patrick leans on the trunk, feeling the soap,
and drinks from a sweaty bottle of milk. A flock of parakeets
flap into the treetop, snatching his attention.

His mind floats up with the birds, flitting in the oak's
green wonder. Dappled sunlight flows over him. He breathes in
the serenity, surrenders to the poetry. The peace.

SHOUTS pull him back to earth. In the SCHOOLYARD: kids share
a secret, kick a soccer ball, play in the sun. There's
Mariko, talking to two girls.

Patrick reflects on the view, aware that he's different than
the children beyond the shade, apart from their social realm.
A moment of melancholy. Alienation.

And then there's that ambiguous soap.

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - DAY

Lunch over. Children filter into the classroom's shaded door, Patrick in the rear.

MUWONGE (O.C.)

Why do all Tutsis work with cows?

Patrick stops cold, the safety of the classroom just a few steps away. Muwonge lifts himself from the wall where he leans, munching on a stick of fried meat.

MUWONGE

I asked you a question, long nose.

Patrick faces him, fists clenched. Muwonge takes his time. Tosses the polished stick. Sucks meat from his teeth. Well?

PATRICK

It is our tradition.

MUWONGE

I see...

Muwonge prowls toward him. That looming height. Shadows fall at Patrick's feet, the bully's crew gathering behind him.

MUWONGE

The problem is, those cows. They make you smell like rotten milk.

PATRICK

You are the one who smells, Muwonge.

Muwonge grins, feeding off the fighting spirit. Other students circle, sharks to blood. It's a whole crowd.

MUWONGE

(playing to audience)

You know why the Tutsis came to our country, right? Do you know?

(to Patrick)

To be our slaves.

PATRICK

We are nobody's slave. We own our own cattle!

MUWONGE

Looks like it pays well.

Muwonge pinches Patrick's filthy shirt. Onlookers laugh. Patrick swats him away, tears edging.

MUWONGE

I will do you a favor, Kalenzi. You can work for my family. We pay in shillings instead of milk. Then maybe you can afford shoes.

He hocks a LOOGIE which SLAPS Patrick's foot. Thunderous laughter. Patrick's humiliation surges, his fists itching.

MUWONGE

First you will have to take a bath. After you pass the smell test, you can be my little Rwandan. I like the sound of that. Patrick Kalenzi, my own, personal kanyarwanda!
(chanting)
Kan-yar-wan-da! Kan-yar-wan-da!

Muwonge lifts his thick arms, the vicious conductor, and the others join in.

CROWD

Kan-yar-wan-da! Kan-yar-wan-da!

The bully gets his wish. Patrick comes out swinging -- Muwonge charges back -- blocks out the sun -- grabs Patrick by the collar and PLOWS him through the

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

CRASH. Patrick explodes inside -- siding splinters -- girls scream -- Reuben tripping over himself to intervene.

But it's too late. Muwonge's boys pile in and a storm of fists swallow Patrick whole.

DOWNPOUR.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Lightning above the canopy and THUNDER in its wake. The rain storm soaks Patrick and Rosette on their trek home. Rosette cries, her tears mingling with raindrops.

ROSETTE

A girl called me a piece of 'cow ghee' and shoved me, and all the other girls stood there laughing...

WITH PATRICK

ROSETTE'S WORDS VANISH into the rain's STATIC HUM.

Patrick's eyes glint with fury, water-thinned blood trickling down his brow.

WIND STRIKES. He growls, leaning into the raging TORRENT.

BACK TO JUNGLE

A RIVER OF MUD rushes down their path and SEVERs their ankles. A coughing fit seizes Patrick.

ROSETTE
(yelling over rain)
What is wrong?

PATRICK
I cannot -- breathe!

Patrick wheezes, water spraying up his shins.

ROSETTE
Take my hand!

Rosette tows him through the mudslide, the deluge clobbering them as they climb under a

BANANA PLANT - MOMENTS LATER

Broad leaves shelter dry land. Patrick bent over, rasping for air. Rosette rubs his back.

ROSETTE
Breathe.

Patrick gasps a halting breath, then another.

ROSETTE
Big breath.

An expansive inhale. He rises.

ROSETTE
Better?

PATRICK
Mmm-hmm.

The Kalenzi kids watch the mud-river creep by. Rosette gets an idea. She rips off a banana leaf, wide as an umbrella.

EXT. JUNGLE PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Rain drops pop off covering banana leaves as the Kalenzis splash through puddles, laughing like kids in a fountain.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - DAY

Rain departed. Stray clouds meander through golden light. Patrick and Rosette shed their leaves. Patrick imbibes the dry air, sopping wet, but cleansed of the day.

JOHN
(hollering from porch)
Patrick! Cows!

EXT. OUTSIDE KRAAL - DAY

Patrick gathers two jerry cans (heavy-duty gasoline canisters) as the herd of CATTLE MOOOOO.

He takes the ash soap from his pocket, partially melted from rain, and thinks. Snags one more jerry can.

EXT. COMMUNITY WATER POINT - DAY

BROWN WATER BELCHES from a pump's rusted mouth into a jerry can. Patrick leverages his full weight to plunge the hinge.

A line of restless villagers crane while waiting their turn.

VILLAGER
We do not have all day!

Patrick miffed, crushes out cruddy water with a splash.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A strip of sepia through wild bush. A figure rounds a bend, dwarfed in the expanse.

Patrick and a circus act: two jerry cans in his free hands, one on his head. He teeters, top heavy. Short steps.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - OUTSIDE KRAAL - DAY

The HERD'S thirty MOOS. Patrick tips a jerry can and water strikes a clay trough. The cows fight for their share.

EXT. KRAAL - DAY

A stinking soup of churned dung. Patrick covers his nose and threads through the swaying alleyway of cows.

He places a hand on a cantering heifer, never breaking contact as he drops down to her udder. He shushes it as he did the dog, and it settles in the same seamless way.

PATRICK
Shhh. There you go, Rugazu.

Squirt of milk pings the bottom of a metal pail. Patrick tugs, the container filling nicely.

EXT. PASTURE - DUSK

Patrick clucks and flicks a switch against matted fur, driving the cattle to fan out among the grass.

FIG TREE - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick in the shade of the pasture's grand fig tree. He pours a jerry can into an empty pail and tosses in the ash soap with a plop.

LATER

Patrick stripped down to his underwear, pummels his clothes in the foam-filled pail. He strings out a dripping shirt and examines its very fibers. Tsks. Drowns shirt in soapy stew.

DUSK

Patrick's uniform hangs on a tree-branch "clothesline." He scrutinizes his feet. He picks at a dark-stained callus, chips off a chunk of something brown. He smells it. Yuck.

He slicks up his bare feet with soap.

MEMORY FLASH

LOOGIE SLAPS Patrick's foot to THUNDER LAUGHS which CRISS-CROSS and ECHO...

BACK TO PRESENT

Patrick scrubs his feet like Lady Macbeth, scourging an invisible stain.

LATER

Patrick finishes lathering his entire body with suds -- bubbly white from head to toe. He lifts the pail over his head, hoots in anticipation, and showers off the soap.

Brrr!

LATE DUSK

First stars of twilight. Cows nuzzle grass. Patrick leans bare-backed against the bark. In this serene landscape, a rumination untangles, the tension of the day released...

BAABA (O.C.)
 I thought your job was to milk the
 cows, not become one.

Patrick warms to the voice of Baaba, hiking up with his
 inkoni, the traditional walking stick that is his third leg.

BAABA
 My Rwabagabo.
 (surveying scene)
 Rough day?

LATER

Periwinkle sky tapers into night. Baaba and Patrick under the
 fig tree. Patrick's slumped in damp clothes, fiddling with
 the last shred of ash soap. A thoughtful pause.

PATRICK
 Maybe I should drop out.

BAABA
 Not because of one stupid bully?

PATRICK
 ... I do not see the point.

BAABA
 The point is the unbendable pride
 of the Tutsi!

A phrase that means nothing to Patrick. He scoops some dirt
 from the ground, lets it sift through his fist.

BAABA
 Why do I call you 'Rwabagabo?'
 (getting nothing from him)
 When you were two years old, you
 contracted polio and fell into a
 deep coma. All the doctors said you
 would die and that, even if you
 lived, you would be paralyzed. They
 insisted on removing your life
 support, but your mother, my
 stubborn daughter-in-law, said 'No.
 Tomorrow. We shut it off tomorrow.'
 And what happened the next day?

FLASHBACK - TODDLER PATRICK

Comatose in a hospital bed... opens his eyes.

BACK TO PRESENT

PATRICK

... I opened my eyes.

BAABA

When your parents brought you home,
I looked into those same eyes and I
knew. This child, this child saved
himself. This is a special child.
An audacious child. A Rwabagabo...
within a week, you could stand on
your own two feet.

Patrick plays with his dirt, lost in the blues. Baaba flings
his igitengi over his shoulder.

BAABA

What do you want to be when you
grow up?

A common question for an American child rings to Patrick like
pure absurdity.

PATRICK

... a cattle keeper. What else?

BAABA

The possibilities are more vast
than this horizon!
(thinking)
What is your best subject in
school?

PATRICK

Math.

BAABA

There you are. You could be a
pharmacist, an engineer, an
architect.

PATRICK

You are dreaming.

BAABA

So dream with me. What will it be?
What about one of those men they
send to the moon?

PATRICK

An astronaut?!

BAABA

Or something else. Anything you can imagine.

PATRICK

...

BAABA

Ugh, you are terrible at dreaming. How about this. You are so set on becoming a cattle keeper, what if you learned to treat animals, like that doctor who heals our cows?

PATRICK

The veterinarian.

BAABA

It appears to pay well. And I could understand it in my old ways. So? What do you say?

PATRICK

A veterinarian...
(really imagining)
... I think I would like that.

BAABA

Good man. Cow doctor it is.

PATRICK

You are ridiculous.

They share a chuckle.

BAABA

Rwabagabo, such a career... would lift us all... if you want it, really want it, you have everything you need... right here.

Baaba touches Patrick's head with his inkoni. Patrick affected, rubs the depleted ash soap...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. KALENZI HUT - PATRICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

... and its last remnants crumble onto the floor. Patrick wipes off the residue. Has a thought.

He cracks open The Art of Algebra -- its hardcover dangling by its last thread -- and reads.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Patrick scribbles in the textbook, solving exercises...

By lamplight in his BEDROOM.

Leaning on the KRAAL.

Below the oak in the SCHOOLYARD.

Surrounded by kids in the LIVING ROOM.

Among cattle in the PASTURE.

And under the reeds of the HUT PORCH.

INT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Patrick at his desk, ignores Reuben's lecture and tackles a question in The Art of Algebra.

He circles his solution and shuffles through the book's back matter. He reached the end.

A moment of private pride... shadow falls. The mountainous headmaster, eyes narrow with suspicion.

Reuben holds out a hand. Busted. Patrick gives up the book.

DING DING DING DING DING.

INT. REUBEN'S OFFICE - DAY

School's out. HUBBUB of kids outside. Reuben reviews The Art of Algebra behind his desk. Patrick timidly enters.

PATRICK

... you wanted to see me, sir?

The master directs Patrick to a low stool. He takes an immediate interest in his lap.

REUBEN

(reading cover)

'The Art of Algebra.'

(presenting a page)

This is your handwriting?

Patrick glances at him, back down.

REUBEN
 (flipping through)
 No? Well, it appears that some
 primary student taught himself...
 secondary algebra... in a week.

He snaps it closed and Patrick flinches. A beat. Reuben opens another thick BOOK, African Legends, and slides it over.

REUBEN
 This is the story of Kintu and
 Nambi.

Patrick peers down at a LITHOGRAPH of a robed man reaching for a woman in a windswept gown.

PATRICK
 (turning page, to himself)
 ... the father of all people.

REUBEN
 What was that?

PATRICK
 It is the creation myth of the
 Baganda tribe. Sir.

REUBEN
 You know it. Good. Read.

Patrick leans in to see the print.

REUBEN
 (patience thinning)
 You may start with the first
 sentence.

PATRICK
 (reading)
 In the begging --

REUBEN
 Beginning.

Patrick squints. The sentences drift and tangle. He feels Reuben's stare, presses a finger under the first line.

PATRICK
 (reading)
 In the beginning there was one man
 named Kintu.

Reuben rises from his seat, observing Patrick, and walks around the desk.

PATRICK
 (continuing)
 He lived with his cow, which was
 his only source of --

REUBEN
 Enough.

Patrick stops. Reuben's loitering behind him.

REUBEN
 Tomorrow, the school is hosting a
 reading contest between the top
 three Primary Sevens in their
 class. One of them had to withdraw
 at the last minute. You will be her
 replacement.

PATRICK
 But I am only Primary Four --

REUBEN
 (ignoring him)
 You and two other students will
 read that story to a live audience
 and a panel of judges will pick the
 winner. Be ready to present it with
 word-perfect accuracy by noon.

Patrick and the brick of literature. Reuben wanders to a
 small window, without a pane of glass.

REUBEN
 Do you like it here?

PATRICK
 Sir?

REUBEN
 My school.

PATRICK
 ... I like learning.

REUBEN
 There are people in this county,
 powerful people, who plan to shut
 it down at the end of the year. If
 that happens, those who can afford
 the fees will transfer to Baale
 Primary. As for the rest of you,
 your education ends here.

Reuben lets this sink in. Touches the wall.

REUBEN

I have spent three decades within these walls. When I arrive in the morning, I do not see a school, but a... cathedral... of incremental miracles...

A strange, true phrase. Reuben chuckles softly.

REUBEN

All they see is a shack in the woods.

He drops his hand. Notices Patrick staring.

REUBEN

The County Chief will be one of the contest's judges. The most important judge. If you can impress him with your abilities, he might give us the funding we need to survive.

The book feels heavier than when their meeting began. And that's before Reuben stacks a huge book on top of it.

REUBEN

This is the Oxford English Dictionary. Look up every word you do not know and use the phonetic alphabet to teach yourself pronunciation.

PATRICK

The fu-net-?

REUBEN

You are a fast learner, Kalenzi. Make us proud. That is all.

Reuben's already back to some paperwork. Patrick hauls his homework to the door.

REUBEN

Kalenzi. You better be prepared.

Patrick shudders. And leaves.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - KRAAL - DUSK

Patrick squats, cow flanks all around him, the book of African legends stuck in his pants. He squeezes an udder while fighting a calf as it presses for the teat.

PATRICK

Get away. Away!

He shoves the calf with a force that startles the animal. The book slips from his pants and plops in mud.

PATRICK
Stupid cow!

COW belts a baby MOO. Patrick stabs fingers into his eyes.

EXT. PASTURE - DUSK

Sky like a sapphire. Cows graze. Patrick collapses under the fig tree and, at long last, cracks open the book. He reads maybe a sentence before having a thought.

MEMORY FLASH

The PASTURE at twilight. FAST ZOOM IN on a spotted cow (NGABO), a humanity in its big brown eyes.

BACK TO PRESENT

Patrick runs into the herd, swirling in every direction.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - MULBERRY TREE - DUSK

Beside the hut. John lounges the length of its twisting trunk, a bottle of liquor near empty. He sings and tosses dried berries at birds in the dirt.

Patrick arrives, book in hand, spooking the birds to flight.

JOHN
Patrick, my boy, my eldest son.

PATRICK
(breathless)
Ngabo is gone.

JOHN
Oh my boy, my boy. Come, sit. It is a beautiful night.

John hums his lullaby. Patrick gets in his face.

PATRICK
Ngabo. Our cow. I cannot find her.

JOHN
(running fingers down
Patrick's cheeks)
You were dead you know? Gone to God. Then a miracle...

PATRICK
We do not have time for this! Ngabo
is --

JOHN
Missing!

John's smile drops to a shrug. A pull from the bottle.

PATRICK
You knew.

JOHN
You think I do not count my own
herd? I found out this morning.

PATRICK
She is the second cow this month.

JOHN
And we have no better chance of
getting her back than the first.

PATRICK
We can at least report it.

John scoffs. The naive kid.

JOHN
Report it. Sure. First thing in the
morning, we go to the County Chief,
and do you know what he will want?
A bribe worth more than the
stinking cow.

PATRICK
So we find out who stole her and
take her back ourselves.

JOHN
Easy as that!

For John, the conversation ends there. He departs, mumbling
the tune in his head. Patrick steals the bottle from him.

JOHN	PATRICK
Hey!	We are living day to day as it is. How long can we last without her? A week?

Patrick locks in on John's wandering eyes. John takes the
bottle and throws back a splash.

Patrick wants to say something more, but what? He looks at his muddy book, back at his dad, swaying without a care.

PATRICK
... find the cow.

Something about Patrick's tone stirs John, who focuses long enough to see him walk away.

INT. PATRICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Patrick's face suspended in the dark, lit with lamplight, eyes darting in a fever over the book of legends, an inner war frothing into sweat and mumbling.

LATER

Patrick awakes. The lamp's oil-starved flame. The book on his lap, open dictionary beside it.

A slow exhale. He readies the legend... concentrates...

PATRICK
(reading)
In the beginning, there was one
man, named Kintu.

PATRICK'S IMAGINATION - EXT. MYTHIC SAVANNAH - NIGHT

Grasslands like waves of silver under kaleidoscopic stars. WHOOSH. Patrick APPEARS, disoriented.

PATRICK (V.O.)
He lived with his cow, which was
his only source of food.

DEEP in the plains, a dot of fire outlines an acacia.

EXT. KINTU'S CAMP - NIGHT

Patrick (as KINTU) squats by the fire wearing a robe. The Kalenzi's spotted cow, Ngabo, is tied to the primeval tree.

PATRICK (V.O.)
One day the King of Heaven, Gulu,
sent his angels to steal it.

Fire shadows flutter into sentient shapes that swarm the COW. A baleful MOO. Patrick in SLOW MOTION strains and...

EXT. HEAVEN - DAY

... stumbles into an infinite cloudscape. A face forms within a churning cumulonimbus, heat-lightning eyes and dour grimace, a pagan god the size of Kilimanjaro. GULU.

PATRICK (V.O.)

Gulu promised to return the cow...

MOOOO. A ghostly cry, the COW caged in a kraal made of lightning. Patrick shields his eyes.

PATRICK (V.O.)

... if Kintu could pass his tests.

EXT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Tables of the laughing damned, African aristocrats in vivid robes feast on rice and beans and meat.

PATRICK (V.O.)

The first test was to eat a tremendous amount of food...

Patrick cranes to fathom a heap of food that broke through the hall's vaulted ceiling, a storm gathering above.

PATRICK (V.O.)

... all on his own.

He samples a single brown bean.

LATER

Patrick ballooned like Violet Beauregard, gnashes on grub, loose scraps tumbling down his globular belly. He moans.

PATRICK (V.O.)

When he could not finish it, ants came to help him.

HALL SHAKES LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE -- PLATES AND GLASSWARE CLING AND CLANG -- FOOD AVALANCHES AS --

A TRILLION FIRE ANTS spawn from the walls and BURY the food-mound in a quaking blanket.

The feast flattens to a spinning bone.

EXT. ROCK FIELD - DAY

Patrick in a mist-soaked landscape of jagged boulders.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Next, Gulu ordered him to make fire
out of rocks.

Patrick atop the highest boulder, stacks a pile of slender stones as "logs." He cracks two rocks together like flint and steel, but they only chip over the hopeless kindling.

PATRICK (V.O.)
When he could not complete his
task, lightning came to his aid.

COLUMNS OF ELECTRICITY CHARGE IN THE MIST -- POWERFUL SABERS
THAT ATOM-BOMB BOULDERS. FLAMING STONES rain down and IGNITE
Patrick's PYRE like it's bathed in gasoline.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Kintu faced many more tests.

EXT. HEAVEN - NIGHT

A Dune-sized basilisk weaves through the cloudscape, plunging
and emerging in great hissing arcs.

Patrick ready with a machete. Hydra bares its fangs, eyes
flashing yellow. Patrick leaps and pierces its slick skin.

PATRICK (V.O.)
He passed them all.

Snake withers. Patrick extracts the blade, body drenched in
acid-green blood, and raises it in the air like a demigod.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Gulu agreed to release the cow. But
Kintu had one, final request.

EXT. WHITE SPACE

Patrick suspended in searing whiteness. RUSH OF WIND. A
GODDESS materializes, flawless and beckoning. NAMBI.

PATRICK (V.O.)
He asked Gulu for his daughter's
hand in marriage, the goddess
Nambi. Gulu agreed.

They float together, fingers touching like God and Adam.

PATRICK (V.O.)
However, Gulu warned them to leave
heaven before his jealous son,
Walumbe, returned.

EXT. BLACK

Patrick, Nambi and Ngabo huddle in lightning-spiked black.
Animalistic CLICKS... a primordial RUMBLE...

PATRICK (V.O.)
They were too late.

Demon-red eyes emerge from the depths and an ancient mouth
CREAKS open, baring rows of blood-dipped fangs. WALUMBE.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Screaming villagers flee Walumbe's red eyes, which pulse in a
gyre above. Liquid black pours from the sky.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Walumbe followed them back to
earth. And ever since that day, he
has wreaked havoc on mankind.

The pure evil expands, darkening the land, its SHADOW FLASH-
FREEZING villagers into standing corpses.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Walumbe invented war, disease, and
all misery. He was the great
progenitor of death.

DRIFT over pillars of salt, eroding in the wind; the
haunting, preserved-dead of Hiroshima, Pompeii...

PATRICK (V.O.)
Walumbe was Heaven's final curse;
on Kintu and Nambi, and their
children, and their children's
children, and their children's
children's children...

INT. PATRICK'S BEDROOM - DAWN (PRESENT)

Daylight burns in Patrick's bloodshot eyes.

PATRICK
(reading)
... and everyone living today.

Knock knock.

JOHN (O.C.)
Patrick? Can I come in?

John opens the door. Patrick's back to him, flips a page.

JOHN

... I got you something. For the contest. Your mother told me about it.

He places a box on the cot. Patrick glances at it.

PATRICK

You are not coming?

JOHN

I found out who stole Ngabo. Karim saw some men taking her into town.

PATRICK

Who are they?

JOHN

Some Nyara tribesmen from Misanga.

PATRICK

... are they dangerous?

JOHN

Why don't you open your gift?

Patrick opens the box to a pair of brand-new leather sandals. He removes them like an antique string of pearls and smells them. So fresh, so new, so nice. His eyes wet.

PATRICK

They are perfect.
(finally facing him)
Thank you.

John warmed by his gift's success. Taps the doorway.

PATRICK

You are not going to do anything...
she is a cow. She is not worth --

JOHN

She is not a cow, she is a
principle.
(then)
Good luck today.
(then)
I am proud of you.

He closes the door. Patrick straps on the snug sandals, the most beautiful things he's ever seen.

REUBEN (V.O.)
One at a time, you will step on
stage and read the legend out loud.

INT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - REUBEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Reuben a general addressing his troops.

REUBEN
First Steven, then Patrick, then
Muwonge.

Patrick in a row of three, looks past a reedy kid named
STEVEN to Muwonge, who throws him a cocky smile.

REUBEN
No. Steven, you will go first, then
Muwonge, and Kalenzi will go last.

Patrick smiles back at Muwonge, whose lip curls.

REUBEN
The winner of the contest will
receive a trophy and have the honor
of reading this poem.
(handing them copies)
You will have an hour to review it
before we begin.

STEVEN
Sir?

REUBEN
What.

STEVEN
I lost the book?

Reuben's glare might kill the kid... SLASH OF LIGHTNING...

EXT. MATRIARCH OAK - DAY

DOWNPOUR smashes the canopy. Patrick studies the poem below.

REUBEN (V.O.)
A panel of judges will decide which
of you read best.

He catches a drop on his neck. Looks up from the paper.

PATRICK'S POV - JURY-RIGGED STAGE

Outside the school. Rain surprises an audience of villagers
taking their seats. They unsheathe banana leaves for cover.

REUBEN (V.O.)
 The most important judge of all is
 the County Chief. You will know him
 when you see him.

A bodyguard opens the backdoor of a sleek car and the COUNTY CHIEF (a haughty man in a suit) steps out like a celebrity among his entourage.

REUBEN (V.O.)
 Whoever wins, it is imperative that
 you impress him.

Blooming umbrellas swallow him from view.

ON PATRICK

His curiosity out there with the Chief.

REUBEN (V.O.)
 The future of this school is in
 your hands.

Patrick hears rustling, the poem shaking in his grip. He presses the paper flat on the book's hard cover. And reads.

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - STAGE - DAY

Punishing sun. Patrick presses sweat from his brow. Polite applause. Steven steps down from a PODIUM, bell rung, and collapses into a seat next to Patrick and Muwonge.

REUBEN
 (at podium; into mic)
 Thank you, Steven. That was... our
 next contestant is James Muwonge.

Muwonge sniffs Patrick as he passes and makes a stink face. He claims the podium and transforms into a model student.

MUWONGE
 (into mic)
 Thank you, Master Reuben. And thank
you, honorable judges. This story
 is one of my favorites...

WITH PATRICK

Words ZAP to SILENCE. Patrick scans the judges. The County Chief chuckles at something Muwonge says. Leans forward.

Patrick shuts his eyes. He fidgets, shining with sweat, holding down vomit or a scream --

LATER

Loud applause. Patrick sucks air, startled to the present. The entire village is on its feet, including the County Chief, who's clapping over his head.

Muwonge bows like it's Broadway and pats Patrick as he sits.

MUWONGE

(aside to Patrick)

Next time, kanyarwanda.

REUBEN

(taking podium)

Thank you, James, and well done!
Now, as a last-minute addition, I
have invited a Primary Four student
to participate in today's
competition. Please put your hands
together for Patrick Kalenzi!

Patrick hikes across the stage like it's Everest and he just ran out of oxygen. He reaches the podium and opens the book.

PATRICK'S POV - BOOK OF LEGENDS

A wet veil BLURS the page, which looks miles away.

BACK TO STAGE

Patrick squeegees the sweat out of his eyes, his leg teetering with anxiety.

The crowd murmurs, confused by the delay. The County Chief yawns, checks a fat gold watch. Reuben radiates impatience.

Patrick looks OUT.

PATRICK'S POV - FLORENCE

At the very back of the crowd, glowing like an angel in her colorful, kitenge dress. She smiles with an intimate nod, a gesture of permission: you can do it.

SMACK.

BACK TO STAGE

Patrick lifts a HAND from his neck, an obliterated mosquito in his palm. He closes his fist around the bug. Ready.

PATRICK
 (reading)
 In the beginning, there was one
 man, named Kintu...

And his tale is so lofty that it SOARS into the
 SKY

A tranquil blue... sun streaks by... LINGER in the expanse...
 then TUMBLE all the way back down to

EXT. STAGE - LATER

PATRICK
 (finishing story)
 ... and everyone living today.

A pause. Nothing happens. Patrick leans into the mic.

PATRICK
 The end.

SPEAKERS SQUEAK... scattered claps... which multiply. The
 audience surges to its feet!

PATRICK
 ... thank you. Thanks.

LATER

Contestants stand by while the judges confer. It's a heated
 discussion, the Chief audibly raising his voice at his
 colleagues. At last, a judge hands a folded paper to Reuben
 (the "winner's envelope") and the Chief is not pleased.

REUBEN
 (at the podium)
 Parents, teachers and distinguished
 guests. We have a winner.
 (unfolding paper)
 Patrick Kalenzi!

Booming applause. Florence jumps up and down.

FLORENCE
 That's my son! That's my son!

Patrick blinks and double checks with Reuben: is this real?
 Reuben lifts the trophy: yes! The kid's on cloud nine as he
 crosses the stage -- blows Muwonge a kiss -- and notices the

County Chief cross his arms like a pouting child. The sight bothers Patrick, and he can't shake the feeling even as he accepts the trophy. Applause fades.

REUBEN
(into mic)
And now this young man, a proud
product of our village school, will
present a poem.

Reuben relinquishes the spotlight. The poem's on the lectern, ready to go. It's an eager audience now, they're really with Patrick, all except that stubborn Chief.

REUBEN
(smiling for the audience)
Patrick, it is time to read.

Patrick stares at the Grand Poobah, who finally meets his eyes. Yeah? He looks down, past the poem, at his new sandals. Sparked with unruly confidence, he lifts the POEM

and theatrically TEARS it in two! The audience gasps!

REUBEN
(sotto, to Patrick)
Have you lost your mind?!

PATRICK
(into mic)
I do not need to read the poem.
(then, to County Chief)
I have it stored in my head.

The Chief is intrigued. Reuben stares Patrick down when he sees it behind the kid's eyes. A hardness. A certainty.

REUBEN
Go on.

Patrick claims the stage, the crowd in the palm of his hand, and recites from memory.

PATRICK
Tools that teach us to be great...

FACES IN THE CROWD

Listen. Still.

PATRICK (O.C.)
... come from birth. A son, a
daughter.

And as Patrick regales the audience, we SLIDE into a
MONTAGE

of John's JOURNEY to take back their stolen cow.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - DAY

John empties a liquor bottle in the yard and washes his hands
with a jerry can. Slicks his face, slaps his cheeks.

PATRICK (V.O.)
From a parent who toils to nurture
them.

EXT. FIELD BEYOND HOMESTEAD - DAY

John searches through tall grass, turning and turning...

JOHN
Ngabo! Ngabo!!

... until he's back at the starting point, hands on hips.

PATRICK (V.O.)
We are tasked.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HUT - DAY

John knocks and a neighbor answers. They exchange words. The
neighbor points up the street.

PATRICK (V.O.)
The land is ours.

INT. VILLAGE OF MISANGA - BAR - DAY

Hard men drown their sorrows in the dark. Rectangle of light
exposes the bleak scene, a silhouette in the doorway.

PATRICK (V.O.)
And the thoughts are ours too.

John stirs dust motes and reaches a pack of drunks, red-eyed
in the leaking daylight, a BIG GUY and his buddies. They see
John and snigger. John's whole being winds tight.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Then, what do we do?

John taps the Big Guy's shoulder.

JOHN
I am looking for my cow.

BIG GUY
Your wife is at home, Tutsi.

The Big Guy's buddies laugh and he shows John his back. John taps him three more times.

JOHN
Give her back.

Big Guy no longer amused. He rises, a mountain of a man, and his buddies join him.

BIG GUY
Or what, kanyarwanda?

John CLOCKS Big Guy, who rebounds fast -- HOOK WRECKS JOHN'S FACE. The backup converges -- FISTS BARREL -- John fighting like an alley dog -- a hard man to bring down -- but the UNCEASING BLOWS bend him to the ground.

PATRICK (V.O.)
What becomes of us when we falter?

SHOES take over -- SOLES STOMP LIKE PISTONS -- BONE CRACKS -- John spews blood --

EXT. PASTURE - EVENING

Patrick brandishes his trophy to Baaba, who lifts it with a whoop... sees something concerning in the distance...

BAABA
... something is not right.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Amidst trauma and tension...

ON A DISTANT DIRT ROAD

John leans on his bicycle, limping like a zombie.

PATRICK (V.O.)
... we will remember.

WITH PATRICK

As he leaps a fence and blunders through a field of shrubs.

ON JOHN

A human five-car pileup, losing steam, losing everything, hears then sees

JOHN
Patrick...

PATRICK (V.O.)
We will regret.

He croaks, arms outstretched, his bike clattering to the road. He falls into Patrick and they wilt to the ground.

PATRICK
Help! Somebody help!

PATRICK (V.O.)
We will wonder.

... MOMENTS BLINK BY...

BAABA AND PATRICK

Sling John across their shoulders.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Now, my fellow fathers.

FLORENCE

Tumbles into the HOMESTEAD YARD and screams.

PATRICK (V.O.)
My dear mothers.

ON JOHN

As the entire family supports him.

PATRICK (V.O.)
My strong brothers.

FLORENCE

Touches John's gashes, weeping.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Let us train them.

JOHN

Lowered into a chair.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Be that it may take.

PATRICK

Hyperventilates, a cyclone of activity around him.

PATRICK (V.O.)
Bring what is tried.

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - STAGE - DAY

MONTAGE ENDS. Patrick at the podium, silence in the air.

PATRICK
It works when you teach them, teach
them, teach them.

The last word lands like a needle in a church.

A bold clap. Then another. And more and more as the applause
mounts into stomps that SHAKE THE STAGE!

Patrick in awe, SEES: Florence dancing; Reuben, wiping a tear
from those stoic eyes.

He beams. Then remembers something. He seeks out the

County Chief, who lifts his considerable weight and... joins
the standing ovation, his smile broad as the savannah!

Reuben notices this too and connects with Patrick. He offers
a subtle, profound nod.

SMASH BACK TO:

INT. KALENZI HUT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

JOHN'S BLOODY TRAUMA: children screech, Baaba lifts his
eyelids, Florence prays at his feet.

Patrick swims through the carnage, gasping for air.

EXT. KALENZI HUT - DAY

Patrick breaks through the door and keels over, suffocating.
He sucks air... chokes subside... he breathes. Spits.

He rises, eyes out there, far beyond the homestead, the
thousand-yard stare FIXED as we

DISSOLVE TO:

PATRICK - THREE YEARS LATER

In the DISSOLVE, the ten year old STRETCHES into ADOLESCENT PATRICK (13). Those chestnut eyes, once overflowing with wonder, meet a hard world with equal hardness.

SUPER:

"1985
(THREE YEARS LATER)"

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Daylight at the foot of space. A WIDER SHOT reveals that Patrick's holding his sister's hand, GRACE (5), and staring at a taxi idling in the DIRT ROAD that hugs the homestead.

John opens the passenger door for ROSETTE (now 17). She looks at Patrick; an impulse in the hesitation, a longing.

GRACE
Where is Rosette going?

PATRICK
The Buruli District. Dada found her
a husband in a good home.

His answer confuses Grace. Nothing about this seems "good." Rosette lowers her eyes and bends into the cab. Grace slips his grasp and totters to her sister.

	GRACE	PATRICK
Rosette!		Grace!

Grace reaches Rosette, who pets the girl, reassuring. John circles cab's far side. Meets Patrick's eyes over its roof.

A long look between them.

John joins Rosette in the back and the old hog curls away, grey light catching her empty gaze behind the glass.

Patrick kneels by Grace, crying where they left her.

GRACE
Why did you let her go?

PATRICK
That is how the world works.

GRACE
... will I go away too?

Patrick can't bring himself to lie and he's close to tears himself. He pulls her in and she cries in his arms.

Over her shoulder, he spots Florence in the doorway of the hut, wiping her hands with a rag.

TAXI'S GROWL winnows in the distance. She disappears inside.

Patrick holds Grace tighter.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Patrick crunches his way through the jungle, his sadness burrowing into righteous anger. CRACK.

LIGHTNING SPLITS SKY and rain lands like an anvil. He takes refuge under a banana plant, snaps off a leaf...

MEMORY FLASH

Rosette offers Patrick a banana leaf, wide as an umbrella...

BACK TO PRESENT

Patrick tears the leaf in two and howls into the downpour. He splashes to the ground and keens.

Then, like a miracle, the rain stops. Light hits Patrick's face and his crying disperses into a delirious guffaw.

Patrick kneels in the draining mud, mad and wild, cycling between laughter and tears. He raises his arms to the sun.

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - DAY

Patrick unravels from the jungle into a line of excited kids. The winding queue funnels into the completely renovated

VILLAGE SCHOOL, the size of a city block, with a bright brick wall and rippling, corrugated roof. Reuben greets arriving students like a gracious host.

A CRY. MPANGA (13), a stalky boy with a badge that says "prefect," FLOGS a kid with a flexing CANE.

PATRICK
(intervening)
Leave him alone, Mpanga.

MPANGA
Fuck off, Kalenzi. He is late and I
am the Head Boy.

PATRICK
School has not started.

MPANGA

You think you are smart, long nose?
Maybe you are late too.

PATRICK

Call me that again.

MPANGA

You heard me, you slender, long-
nose piece of shit!

Patrick blocks the cane and lands a PUNCH. A fast crowd
gathers, kids cheering for violence.

Mpanga and Patrick fight for the CANE like it's The Gun in an
action flick. Patrick twists it free and LASHES.

Mpanga hits dirt. Huge cheers for the fallen boy, far from a
crowd favorite. Patrick CRACKS the CANE like a whip.

MPANGA

Stop! Stop it! You win! I give up!
I give up!!

Mpanga curls into a whimpering ball, but Patrick's vengeance
makes him deaf. The crowd of kids grows uneasy, recoiling
each time Patrick STRIKES and STRIKES and STRIKES --

REUBEN

Kalenzi!

The rattling boom shocks Patrick from his trance. He sees
Mpanga, lit with animal fear; the cane, streaked with blood.

INT. REUBEN'S OFFICE - DAY

A varnished desk. Patrick across from Reuben, eyes downcast.
Reuben contemplates him like he's dinner.

REUBEN

You are suspended. One week.

PATRICK

That is not fair! He --

REUBEN

Not fair? I could expel you for
what I saw out there!

Patrick's anger grabs him by the throat. He chokes up.

REUBEN

This is the last time, you hear me?
The last time.

(MORE)

REUBEN (CONT'D)

One more incident like this and I will not protect you anymore.

(barely containing fury)

You have perfect grades. Perfect scores. You get a hundred percent on every test. I write special tests just for you, tests the other students could never complete. You meet every academic challenge I throw at you. Meet and master. Then one idiot calls you a name and you transform into this... bully.

The word smacks Patrick across the face. Bully? Patrick? Reuben spits out an exhale.

REUBEN

This is your last year of primary school. What are your plans after graduation?

PATRICK

... I am going to raise cattle with my father.

Patrick sounds like he's reciting. Reuben takes a sheet from a drawer and slides it to him.

REUBEN

There is a high school in Kampala.

Patrick reads over the

ADMISSION FORM

Film of dust like it's never been touched, its heading punched in the cracked letters of a broken typewriter:

"KAMPALA HIGH SCHOOL
APPLICATION FOR LOWER SECONDARY"

BACK TO OFFICE

REUBEN

Senior year, every student in Uganda takes a test. Those who score in the top three thousand in the country receive a full scholarship to Makerere University. You are smart enough to earn that scholarship. To do that, you need to attend high school.

Patrick thumbs the form.

REUBEN
What is your dream, Patrick? Your
real dream.

PATRICK
(looking down, softly)
... I thought that one day... I
might become a... veterinarian.

He glances at Reuben for his reaction.

REUBEN
(laughing involuntarily)
A veterinarian! I did not expect
that.
(seeing his embarrassment)
That is a fine dream... I know that
you are ashamed of your past --

PATRICK
You do not know anything.

REUBEN
-- but you are not the only one
who has seen the inside of a
thatched hut.

It's as if Patrick's seeing Reuben for the first time. A
silence hangs there, heavy as their histories.

PATRICK
... high school costs money though.
There are fees.

REUBEN
Yes, there are fees. Sixty thousand
shillings over six years.

PATRICK
That is the price of ten cows! Half
our herd!

REUBEN
You can pay as you go. Start by
finding enough for the first
trimester, a little more than three
thousand shillings, and take it
from there.

It's still a demoralizing sum.

PATRICK
Three thousand shillings. Where
would I get that kind of money?

REUBEN

That is a good question. You have a year to answer it.

They look at each other. Patrick returns the admission form.

REUBEN

Keep the form. You will need it.

Reuben believes in Patrick -- and it's infectious.

EXT. DIRT ROAD OUTSIDE KALENZI HOMESTEAD - DAY

Overcast. Patrick approaches the mud bungalow that is his home, colorless as the slate sky.

Then there's the beckoning spine of that long dirt road.

EXT. VILLAGE OF MISANGA - DAY

Patrick traverses the village of boarded buildings and reaches the porch of a

INT. BAR - DAY

The cavernous room (where John took his beating). Regulars watch Patrick scuttle by like an invasive species.

John works a tumbler at the end of the bar. A RADIO spews a static-laced speech by Uganda's President, MILTON OBOTE.

OBOTE (V.O.)

My fellow citizens, Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army seek to destroy the independence we fought so hard to achieve...

JOHN

By killing us in cold blood!

John's had a few, and his outburst causes Patrick to slink into the shadows. He observes his dad: a bag of bones in ragged clothes. He looks unhoused. Unhinged.

OBOTE (V.O.)

... I am here to assure you that we will defeat the rebels with our mighty army, the Special Forces.

JOHN

Your mighty army of murderers!

Patrick senses the bar flies stir, hostile to John's editorial. He drifts into the light.

OBOTE (V.O.)
We gained independence from
colonialism and today the Special
Forces defends our sovereignty...

JOHN
Turn it off, turn it off! I cannot
listen to anymore of his bullshit!

The stone-faced BARTENDER wipes a glass.

JOHN
(to bartender)
I am a paying customer and I say
shut that garbage off.

Bartender calculates the path of least trouble. He clicks the RADIO to a cheery Bugandan FOLK TUNE. Tension ripples away.

Patrick approaches.

JOHN
Patrick. What are you doing here?

Hi, Dada. PATRICK

JOHN
My, you are getting tall. Look at
you, you are almost my height.
(to bar)
This is my boy, Patrick! My eldest
son!

No one in the bar gives a shit. John's mood sours.

PATRICK
Can I talk to you?

JOHN
You finish your chores?

PATRICK
I graduate from primary school this
year and Master Reuben thinks that
I, I might do well in high school.

Patrick places the admission form on the bar. John sips.

PATRICK JOHN
I could even earn a scholarship- There is a drought.

PATRICK
(flustered)
What?

JOHN
A drought? The community pump is
spitting dust. Which you would
know, if you did your chores.

PATRICK
... I am sorry.

JOHN
We are taking the herd to the Nile.
We leave tomorrow.

PATRICK
How long will we be gone?

JOHN
Are you listening? The district is
dry and we have to water the cows.

PATRICK
For the whole season?

JOHN
Unless you want them to die of
thirst, yes.

PATRICK
But what about school?

JOHN
... Lord help me with this
child. I am talking about
family. Putting milk in our
bottles, food on our table-

PATRICK
And waragi down your throat.

JOHN
You forget yourself.

John KNOCKS over his STOOL like it's a bona fide bar fight.

JOHN
Icubahiro. Customary respect. Never
speak to me like that again, boy.

Patrick is almost as tall as him. They face off, eye to eye.

BARTENDER
Do we have a problem?

Patrick looks at the bartender, back at John, pregnant with words that would finish him off... instead, he snatches the form and flees before John can see him cry.

JOHN
(calling after him)
And graze the herd!

Patrick vanishes, leaving John with a sticky feeling.

EXT. COMMUNITY WATER POINT - DUSK

Patrick shoos away a murder of pied crows from the pump, sets a jerry can and pulls the lever. SPIGOT COUGHS DUST. He thrusts the lever up and down.

PATRICK
Come on... come on... come on!

LEVER JAMS. Patrick PUNTS the jerry can with a BUNK.

EXT. PASTURE - DUSK

Cows graze. Baaba and Patrick play mweso (a mancala-like game) in the shadow of the fig tree. Baaba scoops coffee beans and plops them down a row of wooden pits.

BAABA
And that, my Rwabagabo, is the
game. Another one for the old man!

He claps his hands in victory, very pleased with himself.

PATRICK
Who is Yoweri Museveni?

Baaba fastens on a poker face and casually resets the beans.

BAABA
... where did you hear that name?

PATRICK
That does not answer my question.

Baaba plays deaf.

PATRICK
Why does everyone treat me like a
child?

BAABA
Because you are a child.

PATRICK
I am thirteen.

BAABA
You are a man?

PATRICK
Who is he?

BAABA
It is not for your age.

PATRICK
I am old enough to know our people
are scared. That you are scared.

Baaba dropping beans...

PATRICK
I am old enough to let you win at
this stupid game!

Patrick flips the board, spilling beans everywhere. Baaba
regards him with unwavering calm.

BAABA
Your ears are too big for your
head. Always have been.

Patrick clearly won't let it go. Baaba rotates his inkoni,
dusk in its waxy side.

BAABA
Museveni is the leader of a
guerrilla group that calls itself
the National Resistance Army. The
NRA. The government has formed a
counterinsurgency unit, the Special
Forces, to kill anyone associated
with the rebel cause.

PATRICK
Tutsi.

BAABA
The NRA is full of our people, yes.
But President Obote is paranoid
that all of us are involved... I
fear that none of us are safe, that
this could all lead to another...

Baaba breaks off, the unspoken word spooking him to silence.

PATRICK
Another what?

Baaba shakes his head, holding back.

BAABA
(a sad smile)
I know that you let me win at
mweso. You do it to make me happy.
And I play along to make you happy.
What is wrong with that?

PATRICK
I am ready for a real game.

BAABA
Our history is not a game.

There's a tonnage of pain under Baaba's firmness; a profound, complex feeling that baffles Patrick.

PATRICK
I am sorry, I only meant --

BAABA
As I said, it is not for your age.

He rises, ancient ghosts swirling in his head.

BAABA
(to himself)
Not for his age, no. Not for his
age... not for his age...

He ambles away with his inkoni. Patrick pinches a coffee bean. What did he just walk into?

EXT. DIRT ROAD OUTSIDE KALENZI HOMESTEAD - DAWN

A marigold morning. Patrick and John tap switches and bend a train of cows onto the road. One veers away and Patrick presses it back in line, sandals skidding across dirt.

JOHN
Keep them together, Patrick! We
have no time to chase strays.

PATRICK
I know.

John grabs Patrick before he can walk away and assaults him with the urgency of the thing.

JOHN

They are sick with thirst, which means we must water them by tomorrow. It is thirty kilometers to the Nile and after we arrive we have to build our camp.

PATRICK

I said I know.

Patrick rips free and catches up with the cows. John sighs. He spots someone he knows and waves.

OVERHEAD SHOT - ROAD

Lines of cattle file onto the dirt-way; fathers, brothers, and sons driving their herds in an EPIC EXODUS...

JUNGLE

Men muscle cows over slick trails...

SCRUBLAND

... HACK dry vines with MACHETES...

PAPYRUS SWAMP

... cajole cattle through swampland...

SETTLEMENT

... and filter into a MAKESHIFT VILLAGE along the

NILE

The ancient water, a silver infinity spanning the horizon.

EXT. KALENZI CAMP - LATE AFTERNOON

A wooden spear thrusts into dirt and drives like a nail. DUNK DUNK DUNK. Patrick drops his flat HAMMER-ROCK and tugs the branch, testing its firmness.

John whistles a chipper tune and lashes another branch horizontally between two like posts. Patrick, irked by his dad's song, stabs another sharpened branch into the earth.

LATER

John scrapes open a wooden gate and Patrick taps the herd into the newly built KRAAL, like the one at their homestead: a fence enclosure of jungle wood stuffed with brush.

LATER

Patrick hauls a tree trunk to a stand while John ties a bundle of grass. John glances at Patrick, who meets his eyes.

They look away.

LATER

A grass-thatched roof crowns a circular hut frame. John supervises as Patrick BENDS a length of CANE around its base.

Patrick grimaces, straining... CANE GROANS...

JOHN

Easy...

Patrick's grip slips. ROD springs off the frame and WHIPS John in the shins.

JOHN

Agh. What did I say?

Patrick rebuked. Both ticked off.

EXT. BANK OF NILE - DUSK

Patrick plunges his arms into a shallow brown eddy and salvages a dripping hulk of weedy mud. He drops it onto a slab of bark and hoists it, a waiter with a tray.

EXT. KALENZI CAMP - DUSK

Patrick dumps the mud onto a heap next to John, kneeling by the hut frame. John smashes it into bands of stacked cane (a future wall) and trowels it flat with his palm.

Patrick spaced out. A look from John. He drags the bark to fetch more muck.

LATE DUSK

Night nips. John and Patrick stand before the COMPLETED HUT: smooth brown walls rise to a cone roof of spiny grass.

John jostles Patrick's head. Patrick smiles despite himself.

INT. THATCHED HUT - NIGHT

Patrick lands with a swish on the bundle of dried grass that is his bed. INSECT CHITTER brings him to his elbows. Through the doorway: the moon doubles in the Nile's waters.

A snore. John a grey hump in the night. He snorts. Shifts. Patrick lies back, a wink of moonlight in his eyes.

EXT. PASTURE BY NILE - DAY

Blast of sunlight. A mass of CATTLE in the hundreds BAWL in a bulging line. Patrick steadies agitated cows while John takes directions from a shouting HERDSMAN.

HERDSMAN

Bring five down at a time! My man
will draw you water!

Patrick's attention lifts to the herd BEHIND them, manned by a NYARA tribesman with bloodshot eyes. He chews a stick of grass and stares at them with contempt.

The man's weird energy distracts Patrick.

JOHN

You take the first five while I
stay with the herd! Patrick!

Patrick switches the cows ahead, looks back to see the Nyara still staring, Patrick thinking it's just so odd.

EXT. BANK OF NILE - DAY

A man up to his chest in the current rips out a chunk of river with a bucket and lifts it up to Patrick on the bank.

Patrick spreads light brown water across a ten-foot clay trough. The cattle elbow in and drink. He shields his brow.

PATRICK'S POV - PASTURE

Nyara points at John and whispers to a friend. They laugh.

BACK TO PATRICK

Disquieted.

EXT. KALENZI CAMP - DUSK

Anxiety in the air. Patrick pulls a cow's teat while John monitors. He yanks and yanks, but yields nothing. He looks at John, focused and edgy, yanks teat once more and --

SQUIRT -- milk lasers into the pan!

They grab each other in clumsy celebration.

EXT. FIRE PIT - NIGHT

A warm campfire meets warm company, a fraternity of Tutsis singing a traditional Rwandese song!

Joyous harmonies underscore brisk CLAPPING, the melody set to the rhythm of sticks DRUMMING jerry cans.

John's in the center of the party, swinging a bottle of waragi, arms over his friends as they cry their tune.

Patrick's seated by the fire, content to watch, when the music ignites into a synchronized dance!

John's had enough of the shy son. He pulls Patrick to his feet and together they fall in with the stomping line.

LATER

The song ends with a cheer!

JOHN

My boy, Patrick, can sing ikivugo!
Kafuuko, bring out the umubanda!

KAFUUKO (40s) unveils the bamboo flute to great fanfare.

Patrick demurs, but he's grinning, and they know they've got him. He takes the stage and it's pandemonium!

Respectful silence descends. Patrick nods and Kafuuko whistles a simple, minor-key TUNE.

Patrick closes his eyes. A rapid, discordant poem emerges, somewhere between song and rap; he glows, the affirming verse contrasting with the flute's staccato melancholy.

The song hypnotizes the crowd. John brightens with a pride so intense he could weep. Patrick finishes in time with the flute and for a moment there is only the crackling fire.

Loud applause! Patrick opens his eyes to his dad, who kisses him smack on the head. He offers Patrick the waragi. Patrick hesitates, but what the hell? He takes a swig. The men cheer!

EXT. JUNGLE - DAWN

Patrick stacks jerry cans of milk onto Kafuuko's waiting bicycle. Kafuuko pedals off with a wave.

PATRICK

Say hello to Baaba!

SUPER:

"THREE MONTHS LATER"

EXT. KALENZI CAMP - FIRE PIT - DAWN

Patrick finds John by the fire pit strapping on a pair of car-tire sandals. He tosses Patrick a bottle of milk. There's an ease in their movements. Rhythm, routine.

A smile between the men -- and Patrick looks like a man, with a muscular frame forged from a season of labor.

JOHN

I have good news. We drive the herd home tomorrow.

Patrick noncommittal, drinks. John cinches up his straps.

JOHN

I have something for you.

HUT - MOMENTS LATER

John emerges from their hut and presents Patrick with an inkoni. Deep mahogany, caramel finish. It's a masterpiece.

JOHN

Kabanda made this inkoni for me.
For you. It is fig with a wood-oil finish.

Patrick rotates the knob, illuminating a singed MONOGRAM:

"PK"

He touches his branded initials. John interprets his son's silence as reverence, and he's pleased.

JOHN

We have a long day.

PATRICK

Dada... I want to go to Kampala High School... can we talk about it tonight?

JOHN

... of course. Of course we can.
(then)
I have to gather some things, I...
I will meet you by the kraal.

Patrick fails to read his dad's true thoughts and he's ebullient as he leaves. Did that just happen? He gives his inkoni a spin and looks back in disbelief at the HUT.

John in the doorway, angled enough to spy a liquor bottle touch his lips. Patrick's happiness gives way to concern.

EXT. PASTURE BY NILE - DAY

That blasting sun. Disjointed BRAY of a hundred CATTLE. Patrick and John box in their snorting, stomping cows.

PATRICK
(shouting)
What is wrong with them today?

John squints at the bright sun, then down to the

BANK OF NILE

The Nyara tribesman tends to a line of ankole bulls as they vacuum water under clacking, sky-bound horns.

BACK TO PASTURE

The herd surges, John and Patrick losing their grip. A runt of the group slips free.

PATRICK
We lost, Kyasha!

John chases her. Patrick compresses the cows with his inkoni.

EXT. BANK OF NILE - DAY

The runaway nuzzles between two bulls drinking from the trough. John catches up as the Nyara stomps over.

NYARA
Control your cow, long nose.

JOHN
(startled by his
intensity)
There is no need for names, sir. I
apologize.

NYARA
I do not need an apology. I need
her snout out of my water.

Nyara spits at John's feet. John doesn't want any trouble. He draws the cow away. The Nyara shadows him.

ON PATRICK

Torn between the unfolding conflict and the herd.

BACK TO BANK

John tugs at the cow, the Nyara barking in his ear. The OTHER HERDS' CLAMOR douses the exchange with napalm.

NYARA
Cows need discipline. Order.

JOHN
I know how to tend a herd.

NYARA
Are you speaking to me?

JOHN
Do not tell me how to tend my herd.

NYARA
You could not tend a banana tree.

John crushes his free hand into a fist.

NYARA
Why do I bother? Stupid immigrant.

JOHN
(facing him)
What did you call me?

WITH PATRICK

PATRICK
No, Dada, what are you doing?

BACK TO BANK

NYARA
You are a dimwitted foreigner, who
cannot even care for his cattle.
You want to know how to treat a
cow? I will give you a free lesson.

Nyara picks up a rod of loose BAMBOO and...

NYARA
This is how!

SLAMS it into the heifer's ribs! COW WHINES.

John flashes with chaotic rage (hitting a Tutsi's cow would be like kicking an American's dog).

JOHN
Never touch another man's cow!

NYARA
A real man controls his herd!

WITH PATRICK

Abandoning their cows...

PATRICK
No no no no no no no no.

BACK TO BANK

Their WORDS ESCALATE and Patrick arrives (he's not alone -- the Nyara's kinsmen circle with machetes and several Tutsis back up John, tapping inkonis like police batons).

JOHN
You are a bigot!

NYARA
And you are a woman!

JOHN
I will break you in half!

NYARA
I will bury you!

The shoves begin.

JOHN
Dog!

NYARA
Cockroach!

JOHN
Coward!

NYARA
Raaaargh!!

Nyara rears up and -- TACKLES JOHN! TRIBES COLLIDE IN
MEDIEVAL BATTLE -- INKONIS BASH -- MACHETES SLICE --

WITH PATRICK

A kinsman's blade rains down -- Patrick ducks and CLOCKS him with his INKONI. Lights out. But there's no time to think as

Another kinsman attacks! Patrick spins and BLOCKS the MACHETE with his STICK -- kinsman leans, inkoni locked like a crossbar, the blade inches from Patrick's face.

WITH NYARA

Throttling John in a ground puddle. John gasps for his life as Nyara pumps him up and down.

NYARA
Tutsi cockroach!

John stabs his thumbs into the Nyara's eyes and CROTCH-KICKS him off -- Nyara flounders -- John BOOTS him into the trough and stuffs his face into cow water.

Nyara gurgles. John yanks out his glistening head...

JOHN
How do you like it, huh? Huh?

... and bulldozes him back into the deep.

WITH PATRICK

Steps aside and the kinsman's momentum grounds him. He POUNDS him with the INKONI -- UMPH!

He sees John drowning the flailing Nyara...

PATRICK
... no.

... and rams him off! John flops onto the TROUGH, which SHATTERS -- hemorrhages water -- John splayed in the wreckage-

JOHN
What are you doing?!

PATRICK
You could have killed him!

JOHN
He belongs in Hell!!

Patrick frightened by this tormented stranger when -- the Nyara rises, dripping, and spins his machete.

NYARA

Boy.

Patrick readies his inkoni. His fear sparks a smile.

NYARA

Kanyarwanda.

BOY (O.C.)

Nyara lunges --

Help!!!

BOY'S PLEA cuts through the mayhem as -- TWO BULLS CLASH -- spooking the MEGA-HERD of unattended cattle!

STAMPEDE THUNDERS THROUGH THE BATTLEFIELD. Kinsmen and Tutsi dodge steer and corral their blending herds.

The Nyara peels off. John follows, but Patrick blocks him.

PATRICK

Let him go!

JOHN

Get your hands off me.

John burns with betrayal and a bloodshot rage that drives Patrick back... and back...

Patrick in the EYE of the CATTLE-STORM, connected by an invisible thread to his panting father as he stares, just stares, with that pounding, wounded gaze.

EXT. KALENZI CAMP - KRAAL - DUSK

John drives the last cow into the kraal and Patrick lashes the gate closed. The exhausted men rest on the fencing.

Patrick waits for John to speak, but he just leans there, looking vacantly at the herd.

EXT. FIRE PIT - NIGHT

Patrick seated opposite his dad, who's nursing his faithful waragi. They stare at the campfire's flames.

PATRICK

I want to talk about high school.

(John sips...)

I said, I want to talk about --

JOHN

How much?

PATRICK

... sixty thousand, but I --

JOHN
The price of ten cows.

PATRICK
-- only need enough for the
first trimester. If we sold one-

JOHN
And after the first term, we would
sell another, and then another.

PATRICK
You said we could talk about it.

JOHN
And I say that high school is not
for you.

PATRICK
Then what is for me?

JOHN
... you may think you are above a
cattle keeper --

PATRICK
I am not above anyone --

JOHN
-- but I am still your father --

JOHN
-- and you will show me some
respect! Icubahiro.

Patrick shuts his mouth.

JOHN
Your place is with the cattle. You
will help me with the herd, as I
helped my father, and he helped his
father. It is a noble tradition.

PATRICK
... I think you are afraid.

A scoff from John -- but it's mixed with confusion.

PATRICK
...afraid of my... possibilities...
that my life could be.....

JOHN
Go on.

Patrick takes up his inkoni, ashamed of the truth.

JOHN
I am trying to protect you.

PATRICK
Protect me from what?

JOHN
God, son!
(SHATTERS BOTTLE)
We are Tutsi! Rwandan refugees! You
talk of high school, what is next?
Makerere University! A life beyond
Uganda! A career in the United
States! These are not for us, and
dreams that big can... crush a man.

John sinks back into his log. His life. Fire and water mingle
in Patrick's eyes. He speaks matter of factly.

PATRICK
You will not pay for high school.

JOHN
Patrick...

PATRICK
Icubahiro. You are my father, you
made your choice, and I respect it.

An ambiguous pause. John eyes him...

PATRICK
(rising)
You are wrong. I do not think I am
above a cattle keeper... I know it.

Patrick spears his INKONI in the FIRE!

JOHN
(from his depths)
No!

PATRICK

Walks away, the fire diminishing in the night.

JOHN
(receding)
Patrick! Patrick, come back here!
(shouting)
Patrick!

BACK TO JOHN

In the throes of the blazing FLAMES, helpless as the
lacquered "PK" FLARES... and smolders into ash.

EXT. SAVANNAH - DAY

The filthy cattle-train mars wondrous grasslands. John in the rear, disconcerted as he watches

Patrick, with a look of diamond-hard determination, leading them through sun and wind.

EXT. KALENZI HUT - PORCH - DAY

A cerulean sky. Baaba and Patrick seated under the reed-spiked awning that covers the humble porch.

PATRICK

When did he become...

He displaces some dirt with his sandal.

BAABA

The curse of the Tutsi affects us all in different ways. You must fight it with ambition... somewhere along the way, John... my son...

Baaba closes his eyes. Lets a breeze grace his face.

PATRICK

Why are we cursed?

BAABA

(mumbling)

He is young, much too young.

PATRICK

Dada gave me an inkoni.

BAABA

... he did?

PATRICK

Baaba, please. Talk to me.

Baaba screws his inkoni's point into the porch.

BAABA

... our story is the right of every man in our tribe. Man, not boy. If you accept this inheritance, you give away your childhood, and once that is gone...

Patrick meets Baaba's stare, somewhere between man and boy.

INT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Children take a test. Patrick struggles to focus. WHAM. A tower of PAPERS smothers his desk.

REUBEN
Last term's work.

Patrick opens his mouth to ask a question, but Reuben's already reviewing another test.

Patrick tugs at his collar, heat rising from his neck.
LAUGHTER. He looks back to see

RONALD MARIKO (13), the friend who copied his homework as a kid, flirting with a receptive girl.

Patrick's eyes drop to Mariko's brand-new Nikes.

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - DAY

Children buzz in every direction. Mariko leads a pack of boys. Patrick catches up, hugging his pile of papers.

PATRICK
Mariko, wait up!

Patrick trips and papers twirl away. He chases them down like a dork as Mariko dabs the cool kids goodbye.

MARIKO
(coming over)
What up, Kalenzi? I heard you did battle at the Nile. Some of these fools said you killed a guy.

Patrick snags a paper right by Mariko's shoes.

PATRICK
(rising with his stack)
... those are nice.

MARIKO
Cool kicks, huh?

PATRICK
Can I ask where you bought them?

MARIKO
(smiling)
You mean, how did I afford them.
That is kind of classified...

Mariko sucks his teeth. Appraises his old friend.

EXT. VILLAGE - ALLEYWAY - DAY

Mariko and Patrick in a narrow footpath.

MARIKO

I hop a train to a town called
Kamwenge in western Uganda, buy
some potatoes and sell them here.

PATRICK

Potatoes?

MARIKO

Shh! What are you, a snitch?

He shoots a paranoid look at the street. A goat shuffles by.

PATRICK

(lowering voice)
... where do you sell them?

MARIKO

Up in Baale. Buy low, sell high.
That's business, man.

He is so freaking cool.

PATRICK

I want in.

MARIKO

Get out of here.

PATRICK

Why not?

MARIKO

This is a criminal enterprise.

PATRICK

I thought you bought the potatoes.

MARIKO

Train hopping, trafficking goods
without a permit. You are going to
be a doctor or some shit.

PATRICK

I need the money for high school.

MARIKO

Oh, those fees. How bad?

PATRICK
Sixty thousand.

MARIKO
Man, that is like ten cows! There
aren't enough potatoes in Africa.

PATRICK
I only need to fund the first term,
about three thousand shillings.

MARIKO
... I have cleared that.

PATRICK
(desperate)
So you will hook me up?

Mariko laughs. Cool lingo isn't Patrick's forte.

MARIKO
You need start-up capital to buy
inventory. The market is wholesale,
so a minimum of five.

PATRICK
Hundred?!

MARIKO
Pay money to make money. Today is
Friday, I leave tomorrow. Last trip
of the season.

PATRICK
... can you spot me?

MARIKO
I spent all my profits on shoes.

It's looking bleak. Mariko gives Patrick a pity-pat.

MARIKO
(sauntering off)
First railroad crossing south of
Baale at dawn. Get your half, you
can come. See you tomorrow. Or not.

And he's gone. Patrick kicks dirt into a wall.

INT. KALENZI HUT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A kerosene lamp casts hearth-light over the kids, spread over
cowhide and eating cassava.

Florence wipes a mouth, picks up a scrap of food. Patrick stares at John's Dad Chair in the corner. Empty.

LATER

Kids sleep all over the floor. Florence weaves a sisal basket. Patrick barges in and defiantly sits in John's chair.

(They speak low throughout, so as not to wake the children).

FLORENCE

That is your father's chair. He
will not be happy if he comes back.

PATRICK

If.

Florence ignores his tone. Minds her weaving.

PATRICK

... I asked if he would pay for
high school in Kampala.

She lowers her basket and looks at him.

FLORENCE

(brightening)
High school in Kampala?
(then)
I can only imagine what he said.

PATRICK

... I found a way to cover the
first term... a business selling
produce with, um... Mariko.

FLORENCE

(too loud)
Ronald Mariko?

A kid stirs.

FLORENCE

(mouthing)
Is it illegal?

PATRICK

No, nothing like that... but I need
start-up capital for inventory.

FLORENCE

Inventory.

PATRICK
(sheepish)
Pay money to make money.

Florence knows he's not telling her everything...

PATRICK
Mama... this is my chance.

FLORENCE
... how much do you need?

PATRICK
Five hundred shillings by dawn.

FLORENCE
Patrick.

PATRICK
We have no savings?

FLORENCE
... we did...

She glances at the door. And he understands.

FLORENCE
Oh, Patrick...

PATRICK
(wry grin)
Maybe he is right. There is nothing
wrong with cattle keeping. It is
a... noble tradition.

Florence has had enough. She departs into her bedroom and
returns with a small, walnut box.

FLORENCE
For the last year, whenever we sold
some milk, I have been hiding some
of the profit, so he could not...

She shakes away a feeling and hands it to him. It contains a
stack of banknotes. Patrick touches them like a shroud.

FLORENCE
It is only four hundred. Not as
much as you need --

But Patrick has her in the hug of a lifetime.

FLORENCE

Goodness!

(laughing, then)

This is my emergency fund. You will pay me back --

PATRICK

Every shilling.

FLORENCE

... milk the cows before you go? In case...

The empty chair. He agrees.

EXT. KALENZI HUT - PRE-DAWN

Patrick steps into the night, the hut's glow at his back. John stumbles up looking like Mr. Hyde.

JOHN

... wher' you goin'?

PATRICK

(hiding cash)

Somebody has to milk the cows.

John steps next to Patrick in the doorway. Patrick stiffens, the ball of bills in his fist.

JOHN

I milk the cows.

John bores into Patrick with real menace... then forgets it. He staggers into the hut's light. Patrick releases a breath.

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING - DAWN

Blue sky expands. Patrick on his father's bike, skids to a stop in front of a vandalized railroad crossing sign.

MARIKO

(approaching)

Cutting it close. Get the money?

Patrick out of breath, hands Mariko cash.

MARIKO

(counting it)

... this will not be enough.

PATRICK

So we negotiate. Like businessmen.

MARIKO

... man.

PATRICK

It is my family's last shilling.

Mariko's not so sure. Patrick's pleading look...

HILL - MOMENTS LATER

A litter-flecked hill. The boys on their haunches. HORN BLARES, a turquoise-colored TRAIN ENGINE closing in.

MARIKO

It will take us twenty-four hours there and back.

PATRICK

We do not return until tomorrow? My mother will be furious!

MARIKO

(yelling over ENGINE)
What did you say?

PATRICK

I said, my mother will be --

TRAIN HORN STIFLES "furious" and the massive MACHINE CRASHES BY. Mariko breaks into a run.

Too late to bail? Patrick curses and sprints.

WITH TRAIN - MOVING

Patrick catches up, the train a step too fast. Mariko snags a latch and tosses his sacks into an open cargo car.

He reaches for Patrick -- Patrick cries out -- forearms clasp! They swing into the

INT./EXT. CARGO CAR - DAWN

and flop onto their backs, surprised they made it. Eyes meet across the floor... and they crack up. Mariko swats sawdust from Patrick's hair and Patrick slugs him in kind.

BAABA (V.O.)

Our story is the right of every man
in our tribe.

FLASHBACK - EXT. KALENZI HUT - PORCH - DUSK

BACK with Baaba and Patrick on the mud porch.

BAABA
 Man, not boy. If you accept this
 inheritance, you give away your
 childhood, and once that is gone...

Patrick meets Baaba's probing stare...

PATRICK
 I am ready.

BAABA
 (a bit sadly)
 Very well.
 (then)
 In the early twentieth century,
 Rwanda fell under Belgian rule. We
 called them the Bazungu.

MONTAGE

Baaba's history UNDERSCORES a Ugandan ODYSSEY.

INT./EXT. CARGO CAR - DAWN (PRESENT)

Mariko and Patrick brace themselves in the shaking doorway,
 kings of all they see.

BAABA (V.O.)
 Our new masters forced us to labor
 for their profit.

MARIKO
 Kamwenge here we come!

They howl and beat their chests.

LATER

Patrick and Mariko dangle their feet out the door, having the
 time of their lives. OUTSIDE the dense jungle THINS TO

ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE

of scattered hamlets...

BAABA (V.O.)
 We grew their coffee. Harvested
 their crops.

... that in turn MELT INTO

OPEN SAVANNAH

A high-noon sun.

BAABA (V.O.)
And they whipped us raw as mules.

INT./EXT. CARGO CAR - LATER

Mariko unwraps a pancake from a piece of cloth. They snack.

BAABA (V.O.)
One day, the Bazungu issued ethnic
identity cards. They categorized
Rwandans by one of two words.

AFTERNOON

Patrick leans on the door frame, admiring emerald mountains.

BAABA (V.O.)
Hutu. Or Tutsi.

He checks on Mariko. Passed out, covered in crumbs. Funny.

BAABA (V.O.)
They severed us into competing
races to divide and rule us all.

Patrick closes his eyes and inhales the whole horizon.

BAABA (V.O.)
In 1959, Hutu peasants revolted
against the Tutsi-led monarchy.

LATER

Mariko nudges Patrick, asleep on the sawdust.

MARIKO
Kalenzi, come check this out.

BAABA (V.O.)
They wielded the weapons of the
Bazungu...

They balance their way to the door and a

CEMENT CIRCLE

floats by, a monument with a commemorative BANNER:

"EQUATOR"

BAABA (V.O.)
... and slaughtered thousands of
our kind.

BACK TO CAR

MARIKO
We're in the middle of the world!

Mariko heads inside. Patrick ignited with wonder.

BAABA (V.O.)
As bodies piled up, their so-called
revolution spiraled into genocide.

A sprinkle of rain. Patrick shivers.

LATER

Rain dumps into the open bed, just short of the kids huddled
in a corner, burlap sacks up to their necks.

BAABA (V.O.)
We fled to Uganda as refugees. We
were lucky. We only lost our homes.

Mariko twitches in his sleep. Patrick peers

OUTSIDE

Charcoal storm clouds dust distant hills with rain.

BAABA (V.O.)
Others lost their entire families.

ON PATRICK

Swimming in an aquifer of thought.

BAABA (V.O.)
All because of words, words,
printed on a paper card.

FLASHBACK - EXT. KALENZI HUT - PORCH - DUSK

Baaba and a metric ton of sorrow.

BAABA
Ah, Rwabagabo, our people have
suffered so much, I am all out of
grief... I long to weep... yet my
tears run dry...

A smile to mask a heartbreak *de profundis*.

BAABA
Always remember: we are the
children of kings.
(MORE)

BAABA (CONT'D)
Resilient, powerful, and blessed
with wisdom. Promise me you will
remember.

INT./EXT. CARGO CAR - AFTERNOON (PRESENT)

A spell of cold. Patrick nestles, closes his eyes...

PATRICK
(barely a whisper)
... I promise.

... and sleeps..... PEOPLE SHOUTING.

EXT. KAMWENGE - LATE AFTERNOON

MONTAGE SHATTERED by throngs of traders bartering before open
shops that overflow into the streets.

Mariko and Patrick push through a wall of humanity, Midtown
Manhattan multiplied by livestock.

INT. MARKETPLACE - LATE AFTERNOON

The teeming hangar. Shouts ping-pong as buyers negotiate with
farmers hawking heaps of produce.

The crowd bumps Patrick and Mariko against a kiosk. A POTATO
GUY weighs a crate of potatoes on a cast-iron platform scale.

POTATO GUY
(adjusting beam)
... two hundred kilo, one thousand
shilling.

PATRICK
His foot is on the scale!

Guy removes his foot and quickly adds more potatoes.

POTATO GUY	PATRICK
Bad scale, bad scale. Nice	... bad scale!
potato. Irish.	

Mariko and Patrick have to laugh. Mariko flashes cash.

MARIKO
Two for nine hundred and we forget
the 'bad scale.'

Mariko indicates a wandering policeman. Potato guy sniffs.

EXT. KAMWENGE OUTSKIRTS - TWILIGHT

Fertile hills of homesteads. Patrick and Mariko bound. They'd be skipping if not weighed down by four, fat sacks.

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING - DAWN

The train totters through the home crossing. Mariko drops out and Patrick tosses him a sack.

EXT. VILLAGE OF MISANGA - MORNING

Patrick and Mariko walk their bikes, sacks slung over their seats, goofing off. They quiet down.

There's no one in sight. No signs of life. They proceed through a village of dystopian nada.

PATRICK

... do you smell that? Something is burning...

MARIKO

It's the end of the world, man. We should sneak into someone's hut.

ENGINE POPS. A Soviet military TRUCK stops up the street. Curious, they take a step in its direction...

TWO SOLDIERS in maroon berets unload, strapped with FAL battle rifles. DOOR SLAMS ECHO through the ghost town.

SOLDIER 1

Hello, boys!

SOLDIER 2

We need to talk to you!

MARIKO

Should we --

PATRICK

Run.

They drop their bikes as -- soldiers FIRE MACHINE GUNS -- Patrick dodges but -- BULLETS SHRED MARIKO -- SACKS MAULED WITH WET KAPOWS -- Mariko's vacant eyes --

PATRICK

Mariko!!

GUN SPATTER at his feet. He runs.

EXT. END OF VILLAGE - DAY

Patrick rounds a bend and collides with a barrier of heat -- a block of BLAZING HUTS. Black pillars pour from grass-fueled FLAMES, a vision out of Hell.

TRUCK PEELS INTO VIEW. A third soldier appears atop the cab, mounts a BROWNING MACHINE GUN and COCKS IT.

Patrick stuck between gun and fire, death and death, nowhere to run -- MACHINE GUN SPEWS METAL -- Patrick dives into the

FIRE

A suspended moment in the sonorous BLAZE -- like being underwater, if it were made of FIRE and --

EXT. FIELD OF SUGARCANE - DAY

-- breaks through, slapping plants aside as -- BULLETS SLAUGHTER stalks in his wake.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Patrick springs onto the road. FURTHER DOWN soldiers press PISTOLS into the heads of three kneeling boys.

ASYNCHRONOUS POPS -- boys fall limp -- Patrick jumps into a

EXT. FIELD OF MAIZE - DAY

THUNDER. Darkening skies. Patrick whips through rows of corn.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

Patrick drenched, hits the fig tree, feet on dry ground.

Breathing slows to choking cracks to sobs that explode into a mighty scream -- LIGHTNING RIVES SKY.

Patrick ventures into the storm.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - KRAAL - DAY

MOOO. Spooked COWS JANGLE their KRAAL. Patrick hobbles by and-

EXT. YARD - DAY

-- comes to a halt. The homestead is packed with refugees.

He marches into the masses, numb, activity sweeping past: a man adds jerry cans to a line; a woman piles sacks of cassava; another fills sisal bags with cornbread.

BOOM SHAKES THE CAMP -- refugees cower, then resume in double time. Hustling, stacking, organizing.

John yells something to a man over the DIN. The man nods with the energy of a salute and runs into the drizzle.

ANOTHER BOMB DROPS, inciting screams.

JOHN
Everybody stay calm! We leave in
fifteen minutes!

PATRICK
Dada...

JOHN
Patrick... oh my God, Patrick!

John swarms Patrick in a hug, touches his chest and face --

PATRICK
They shot him.

JOHN
Who?

PATRICK
(BOOM at the same time
as:)
Mariko.

JOHN
Who?

PATRICK
Ronald! They killed Ronald!

The boom subsides and his words resound through the yard.
Everyone turns to MARIKO'S MOM, cradling cornbread.

MARIKO'S MOM
... my Ronald...?

Cornbread tumbles and she collapses, unleashing a keen to
wake the gods. Women support her -- the mother thrashing --

JOHN
Where did it happen? When?

PATRICK
Misanga. Just now.

JOHN
How long ago? Specifically.

PATRICK
... ten minutes?

JOHN
 (to everyone)
 The Special Forces arrived in
 Misanga ten minutes ago! We have
 five minutes before they get here!

A flurry of panic -- MARIKO'S MOM WAILS --

JOHN
 (to Patrick)
 You are not coming with us.

PATRICK
 What? Why?

JOHN
 The NRA, the National Resistance
 Army, you know the rebel group?

PATRICK
 ... Baaba told me.

JOHN
 They blew up a bank in Baale and
 robbed the police station. Obote
 used it as an excuse to send in the
 Special Forces. They claim that the
 NRA is an army of children. That is
 why they shot Mariko. And that is
 also why you have to leave.
 (grabbing his shoulders)
 We are going to hide in the jungle
 while you escape to the Busoga
 region beyond the Nile. The war has
 not reached it yet.

PATRICK
 ... what about Baaba?

JOHN
 (hesitant)
 Your grandfather is stubborn --

PATRICK
 You are abandoning him?

JOHN
 We have no time to discuss --

FLORENCE
 (running from hut)
 Patrick! Thank the Lord!

Florence squeezes her baby. Senses something in the air.

FLORENCE
 What is going on?

JOHN
We talked about this, that when
Patrick came back --

FLORENCE
No no no no --
Every district is affected by
this war!

JOHN
He is not safe here, Florence.
If he stays, they will kill him
like they killed Mariko!

FLORENCE
... Mariko?

She tracks Patrick's sightline to Mariko's Mom, bawling in a
cluster of her friends.

FLORENCE
... Patrick will be safer with his
family.

WITH PATRICK

Their ARGUMENT FADES. Patrick HIT with FLASHES of refugees:

MARIKO'S MOM, mouth open in a silent scream; WRAPPED BABY
cries in its mother's arms; TWO MEN argue -- a shout and a
shove; TODDLER clutches a wooden toy truck.

Patrick cranes upwards, blinks at the sky's muted light. Rain
drops poof off his face, blank with insanity --

SMASH BACK TO YARD

JOHN
Hold yourself together!

John flings an arm and knocks Florence into a pile of burlap
sacks. She lies there, bewildered. The stunned refugees.

JOHN
(to everyone)
The Special Forces will be here any
second and you are chewing cud like
cows in a kraal. We know they are
capable of murder. They had no
problem killing a Tutsi. One of us.
Just a kid. And they will bring
more than death on their rampage...
if you want to survive, you will do
as I say, no questions asked.
(scanning for dissent...)
Men take jerry cans, women gather
children, and all free hands carry
food. You have one minute.

The refugees whipped to order. John dares Florence to defy him... instead she takes a child's hand and gets to work.

JOHN
(clasping Patrick,
forehead to forehead)
Listen to me. This group is like a
herd of cattle: big, loud and slow.
You will be like a hyena: fast,
quiet and clever. Do you remember
the way to the Nile?

Patrick nods, rainwater running down his face.

JOHN
(carving map in the mud)
Busoga is on the other side. Follow
the same path we took...

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Fast-moving legs swish through bush. Patrick drives faster and faster in a state of adrenaline-infused exhaustion.

DUSK

Patrick lands on a tree trunk and takes stock of the provisions in an ochre sack: a bottle of Pepto-Bismol full of milk and a soil-coated sweet potato.

He tears the potato in half, gouges out orange meat and washes it down with milk that quenches like water.

NIGHT

Moonlight on Patrick, slick with salt, eyes closed.

A distant ROAR.

Patrick jolts... holds his breath..... ROAR.

He runs.

MORNING

Light fragments flow over Patrick, marching through the green void. Dark with dirt, blood-red eyes.

And again that awful ROAR.

LATER

Patrick harnesses all his effort to lift his legs for each. And every. Step. ROAR.

He listens, eyes wide. It's closer.

A flock of birds showers upwards... silence... ROAR.

He hobbles to a shaded space -- snarls in vines -- thorns shred skin as he ANNIHILATES his way into a

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Soft breeze. Low grass. In the center: a mango tree. Sunlight sparkles off its dripping fruit.

Patrick staggers, spellbound -- a tree from Eden, the Tree of Life -- when the unseen LION CANNONS OUT A

ROARRRRR!

EXT. MANGO TREE - DAY

Patrick slips up the tree and scurries to a high branch.

Checks below.

Lonely grass shimmers in the wind.

LATER

Patrick splits open a mango. It's infected with fruit flies. He retches and chucks it.

He scrapes out the final layer of sweet potato and taps the last drops of milk onto his tongue.

LATER

Patrick nods off -- twig snaps -- he catches himself.

Smacks his face.

DUSK

Patrick's eyes droop. MILK BOTTLE slips his grip and CLATTERS through branches. He wakes with a bolt.

Somewhere the LION ROARS.

Patrick roars back.

... a rattling GROWL.

Patrick cackles. Losing his mind.

NIGHT

Patrick monitors the clearing, silver in the night.

Feels moonlight. He finds a foothold and climbs.

EXT. MANGO TREE SUMMIT - NIGHT

He reaches the tree top, which lords over the clearing with a crisp view of the jungle's canopy, an ocean of black surf.

There's nothing between Patrick and the naked moon. And the hugeness of it, up there...

Patrick's awe cracks. He cries -- tears of exhaustion and delirium and mourning; for Mariko, for poverty, for dreams as massive and distant as that planet.

It's a baleful cry, from the depths of his depths, which mutates into a braying release.

He hiccups, sniffing like the child that he is, and scoops out a final sob. He lies back on the highest branch.

Regards the splendid, neutral moon.

EXT. MANGO TREE - MORNING

Patrick nods off again, losing the fight. Eyes close and he falls -- PIN BALLS off branches -- somersaults down to --

EXT. CLEARING - MORNING

-- and LANDS flat on his back. Wavering groan. Eyes swim.

... faint BARKING.

Patrick mumbles, the concussion pummeling him where he lies, only vaguely conscious of the three inquisitive DOGS.

PATRICK'S POV - UP

Blue sky DARKENS. A heaping FIGURE angles his(?) head.

Curious.

But the CURTAINS CLOSE as

PATRICK

no choice in the matter, shuts his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

SLOW FADE IN:

INT. SEMPA'S HUT - MORNING

Patrick in deep sleep, a new health in his complexion. DOG BARKS wake him from a nightmare... and into another one. He throws off an animal hide. He's stripped to his underwear.

What the...? He burrows into his filthy clothes. Smoke drifts by. He can make out a rhythmic metal SHINK. SHINK. SHINK.

He gets his bearings: a fire pit of dead embers, a stack of animal hides -- and a spear. He grabs it.

EXT. SEMPA'S HUT - MORNING

Patrick steps into a small junkyard: litter, torn fabric, old jerry cans -- and that billowing smoke.

What did he just exit?

He takes in the HUT, sutured out of grass and found plastic, with an incongruous, house-like door. SHINK.

He pulls up his shirt to block the smoke and readies his spear. Proceeds through this alien planet.

EXT. CLEARING - MORNING

Sunlit. Flowing grass. Patrick hears HUMMING.

The figure stands by a live smoking-hut wearing animal hide. Greasy hair cascades down to bare legs. He examines a KNIFE and swipes it with a HONING STONE. SHINK.

SNARLING DOGS materialize out of the grass.

FIGURE
(without turning)
Ka chini.

The dogs heel. Patrick raises his spear.

PATRICK
Who are you?

FIGURE
So, tree boy can talk.

The man finally faces Patrick and he's terrifying: bare-chested under a dead-animal cloak, a massive hunting knife. He smiles with a moist black mouth. This is SEMPA.

PATRICK
(faltering)
I said, who are you?

SEMPA
Who am I? Who are you?

PATRICK
What -- where am I?

SEMPA
Tree boy trespass on Sempa's
hunting grounds. Sempa bring tree
boy to Sempa's village.

Patrick looks around. There's the ramshackle hut...

SEMPA
(reading his mind)
Sempa only one in Sempa's village.

PATRICK
You are Sempa.

SEMPA
Tree boy not too bright.

Sempa runs a finger along his BLADE, gives it another swipe.
SHINK. Patrick aims his weapon.

SEMPA
(relax)
If Sempa want kill tree boy, Sempa
kill tree boy last night.

PATRICK
Maybe you want something else.

SEMPA
What something else?
(understanding)
Ohhh.
(laughing)
Tree boy not Sempa's type.

PATRICK
(muttering)
Tree boy.

Patrick's suspicion carves into Sempa, who's remarkably calm.
Sempa speaks slowly so 'tree boy' will understand.

SEMPA

Sempa see tree boy fall. Sempa
bring tree boy to village. Sempa
give tree boy water and clean tree
boy's cuts. So many cuts! Then tree
boy sleep. Tree boy very tired.

The matter settled, Sempa SHINKS his BLADE.

PATRICK

(lowering spear)
The name is Patrick.

SEMPA

A white man's name.

PATRICK

A Christian name.

SEMPA

What Patrick's last name? Smith?

PATRICK

Kalenzi.

SEMPA

... where Patrick Kalenzi from?

PATRICK

Outside Misanga.

SEMPA

Kalenzi from Misanga... like John
Kalenzi.

PATRICK

John Kalenzi? Is my father.

SEMPA

Ah! John Kalenzi buy Sempa drink!
Sempa visit village every year to
see accountant.

(off his look)
What?

PATRICK

Nothing.

SEMPA

John Kalenzi's son! Why Patrick
Kalenzi not say so?

And before Patrick can react, Sempa has him in a bear hug. Patrick squeaks from the pressure, gets one whiff of the hunter and gags. Sempa releases him and bows.

SEMPA
Sempa Seguya.

PATRICK
(blocking nose)
Bice to beet you.

Wagging dogs surround Patrick and sniff his every crevice.

SEMPA
(introducing dogs)
This Muyizi, this Kasubi and
this... this one no have name.

PATRICK
Good boys.

SEMPA
Girls.

PATRICK
Girls.

SEMPA
No. One boy.

PATRICK
Okay.

SEMPA
Small world, Uganda. Hm.
(then)
Sempa and Patrick Kalenzi hunt
antelope. Bring spear.

He leads the way across the clearing, dogs hopping behind him. Patrick hesitates, but he has nowhere else to go.

PATRICK
I have never been hunting!

SEMPA (O.C.)
(far away)
Patrick Kalenzi need eat!

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Sempa retrieves a ball of moldy netting from under a log and hands half to Patrick. They pull apart the fiber threads.

SEMPA
... why Patrick Kalenzi so far from
home?

PATRICK
I am traveling to the Busoga
region.

He wants to move on, but can feel Sempa's curiosity.

PATRICK
The government sent the Special
Forces to our district and they
are... killing boys.

SEMPA
Patrick Kalenzi lose someone.

PATRICK
... a friend. Mariko.

Sempa leaves it there. They untangle the net in silence.

LATER

They survey a great wall of netting hung across the jungle
like a loose, chain-link fence. Sempa blows a shrill whistle.

The dogs fly into the forest.

DUSK

The darkened jungle. Patrick and Sempa squat by their net.
Sempa's alert. Patrick might pass out from hunger.

DOGS BARK. Sempa unsheathes his knife. Game time.

Patrick wipes water from his face, the spear in his wet grip.
He tracks the BARKS as they BOUNCE around the jungle.

The dogs funnel an ANTELOPE into the hanging net -- it PLOWS
forward and tangles to the ground!

Sempa presses a knee on its neck.

SEMPA
Patrick Kalenzi kill dinner!

PATRICK
Me?

SEMPA
Antelope suffer! Do now!

The antelope kicks for its life -- DOGS YIP --

SEMPA
Sempa cannot hold!

PATRICK SEMPA
Where do I -- Here!

Antelope thrusts -- Patrick battle-cries and stabs!

He staggers backwards... the antelope twitches... slackens.

Sempa turns over its head, eyes glassy with death.

SEMPA
Swift spear.
(cheery)
Sempa make stew.

Sempa hums a tune and gathers up the nets. Patrick stares at the beast he murdered, the spear snug in its heart.

INT. SEMPA'S HUT - NIGHT

Patrick and Sempa sit by a fire and dip posho (cornbread) into bowls of antelope stew. They wolf down their meal, smacking loudly, and share a smile of guilty pleasure.

LATER

Dinner over. If they wore belts, they'd loosen them here. Patrick takes in the hut, painted with firelight. WIND hits a HOLE in the roof, an oculus to the stars. It whistles.

SEMPA
(explaining)
Sempa's skylight.

Patrick nods, charmed by this eccentric man. WIND trembles the HUT. He rubs his arms, nippy. Sempa tosses him a hide.

Patrick gives the blanket an inconspicuous whiff. It smells... fresh. He wraps himself.

PATRICK
... why do you live out here,
Sempa?

SEMPA
Sempa like this village.

PATRICK
But Sempa's the only one in -- his
village.

SEMPA
 (on the contrary)
 Sempa's village very full. Dogs.
 Antelope. Stars.

Sempa smiles at the sky, back at Patrick.

PATRICK
 You never get lonely?

SEMPA
 ... Sempa try live in Misanga...

PATRICK
 People can be so cruel.

SEMPA
 This is human.

PATRICK
 ... you do not sound angry.

SEMPA
 Sempa anger fly away long time ago.

Sempa pantomimes a shadow-puppet bird, which "flies" up the wall. Patrick chuckles. But he's bothered.

SEMPA
 Sempa live as Sempa. Full belly.
 Clear eyes. Short memory.
 (meeting Patrick's eyes
 over the fire)
 Dignity come from here.

Sempa presses a palm to his bare chest and it hits Patrick like a bull's eye.

PATRICK
 That is easy for someone like you.

SEMPA
 What is like Sempa?

PATRICK
 You live in the wilderness. My
 people fight for dignity every day.
 We face bullies and bigots and
 enemies --

SEMPA
 The only enemy is hate.

PATRICK
 (persisting)
 The Special Forces executed my
 friend. They are scouring the
 jungle for my family, threatening
 the lives of everyone I know.

SEMPA
 ... Patrick Kalenzi in pain.

PATRICK
 It is not about... finding dignity
 in your heart solves nothing and
 living alone in the jungle is...
 cowardice.

He's ashamed the moment he says it. Sempa's gracious gaze.

SEMPA
 Patrick Kalenzi want kill men who
 kill Mariko.

PATRICK
 Yes.

SEMPA
 Then how Patrick Kalenzi feel?

PATRICK
 ... satisfied.

SEMPA
 ... like after stew?

It's a genuine question. Patrick contemplates his empty bowl.

EXT. LOOKOUT OVER NILE - DAY

The Nile shines like a great, golden mirror below. Sempa
 plants a spear, Patrick beside him.

SEMPA
 The river Nile.

PATRICK
 ... it looks like the ocean. Not
 that I have ever seen the ocean.

SEMPA
 Hey, what you call river that look
 like ocean?

Is Sempa really telling... a joke?

PATRICK
... I do not know. What?

SEMPA
A river.

Sempa looks at him like, "what else would it be?," and Patrick's charmed all over again.

PATRICK
Sempa, about last night, I am sorry
I called you a --

SEMPA
Sempa make Patrick Kalenzi gift.

Sempa gives Patrick an ANTLER TIP, a lion carved in its side. The intricate artwork captures Patrick.

SEMPA
(pointing spear)
Patrick Kalenzi go to bay.
Fisherman take to Busoga.

PATRICK
... escape to Busoga. Hide in the
jungle. Flee from Rwanda...
wherever we go, it follows. The
curse of the Tutsi...
(thumbing lion)
There is only one way to break it.
We must stand our ground...fight...

A breeze disturbs the grass.

SEMPA
Patrick Kalenzi want go home.

PATRICK
... will you be alright?

SEMPA
Sempa live as Sempa.

A wordless, warm exchange. They embrace. Patrick gags at the smell -- and on the other side, Sempa gags too -- but they overcome it and close their eyes.

EXT. JUNGLE - DIRT CLEARING - LATE AFTERNOON

Patrick in a clearing with signs of life: a torn sisal bag, an overturned jerry can, a fly-flecked sack of cassava.

He kicks a rock, exposing the toddler refugee's toy truck. He spins a wheel, his mind spinning too.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - DUSK

Patrick arrives in the windswept yard, barren as a cemetery. The hut's door hangs from its hinges.

PATRICK
Mama...? Dada...?

INT. KALENZI HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick runs inside -- John's overturned chair, the bedroom curtain on the floor, Patrick's whole world spiraling --

PATRICK	FLORENCE (O.C.)
Mama! Dada!!	Patrick?

Florence darkens the doorway.

EXT. YARD - MOMENTS LATER

The family crowds Patrick in the yard. Kids squeal. Florence kisses and kisses and kisses her son.

JOHN (O.C.)
Hello, son.

The family parts. John.

PATRICK
I disobeyed your orders, Dada --

John crushes Patrick in his arms.

JOHN
(in his ear)
I am so sorry.

PATRICK
... where is Baaba? Is he --

BAABA (O.C.)
Alive and kicking?

And Baaba's there, wearing his age well as ever.

NIGHT

Neighbors clap. Florence and other women sing a Rwandese tune in buoyant harmony while dance-stomping around a fire.

Baaba and Patrick meander the festivities' edge. They see John by the fire. Someone offers him liquor. He declines.

PATRICK
... he seems well.

BAABA
I am very proud of your father. His leadership saved many lives.

PATRICK
He said the NRA took the district?

BAABA
We cannot celebrate yet. The government set up checkpoints north of Baale and their soldiers are launching brutal raids.

Two kids run by with lit sticks.

PATRICK
... why did you stay behind?

BAABA
You sound angry with your grandfather.
(sharing a smile, then)
After the Hutus forced us from Rwanda, I swore I would never run from another enemy.

PATRICK
The Special Forces never found you?

BAABA
Oh, they found me. I was enjoying a nap by the mulberry tree when they woke me up, the hoodlums.

PATRICK
They could have killed you, Baaba.

BAABA
Ah, even they are not so shameless as to kill a sleeping old man. They did try to interrogate me.

PATRICK
Interrogate you? Did they hurt you?

BAABA
They asked me questions in Swahili... I answered in Rwandese.

Baaba glances at Patrick and they break into laughter.

PATRICK
They could not understand a
thing?

BAABA
They were furious! And the best
part, their leader, their leader
said -- he said, 'forget it, the
old man is crazy!'

They collapse, literally holding their sides.

DREAM FLASH

BULLETS SHRED MARIKO -- life sucked from his eyes --

INT. KALENZI HUT - PATRICK'S BEDROOM - PRE-DAWN

Patrick jerks up. Haunted.

MOMENTS LATER

The burning lamp. Patrick in his school uniform, drops the
pile of last term's homework on his cot.

He fans out the wrinkled worksheets. Sighs.

EXT. DIRT ROAD OUTSIDE KALENZI HOMESTEAD - MORNING

Patrick crosses the road with his sack. SINGING reaches him,
as if from a chorus. It draws him like a siren song.

EXT. CROSSROADS - MORNING

Patrick joins a crowd of villagers clogging the cross street
and harmonizing "Omoto wa Waka" in pitched a cappella (a
revolutionary anthem we'll hear often).

He pushes his way to the front and meets a parade of
guerrilla soldiers his age, thrusting AK-47s as they sing.

The villagers pour in behind them. Patrick pulled along.

EXT. MISANGA - VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

The parade comes to a stop and singing dies away. Patrick in
the masses, anticipation rippling as

A mustachioed man in a black beret claims a platform flanked
by stone-faced soldiers. LIEUTENANT SIAD (50s) talks into a
mic'd LOUDHAILER (megaphone), which amplifies his VOICE.

SIAD
N-R-A oye!

CROWD

N-R-A oye!

SIAD

Hello, wananchi, people of this land! I am Lieutenant Siad and we are the NRA.

(charming)

In case you did not know that.

A gush of laughter.

WOMAN IN CROWD

You rescued us from the Devil!

Rumblings of agreement, which Siad closes down with a fist.

SIAD

We have defeated the Special Forces in Baale District and Obote's fascist army is on the run. However, our enemies still thirst for the blood of true patriots.

(a wave of murmurs...)

I come to you with a request. You have given us food and supplies, and for that we are grateful; now, we need soldiers. There is a checkpoint ten kilometers east of Misanga where the brave may enlist.

(crowd quiets)

You think I ask too much? Obote will not surrender until his last man falls. He will fight until annihilation. Give me your husbands, give me your brothers, give me your sons, and together we will win this war! N-R-A oye!

CROWD

(chanting, continuous)

N-R-A oye! N-R-A oye! N-R-A oye!...

SIAD

(sweeping audience)

Do you have the courage to take back your country? Do you have the will to fight for your life? Do you have the strength to save your family? Then...

(to Patrick, intimate)

... you can be a hero in the NRA.

Patrick mesmerized, joins the booming chant, fist in the air.

PATRICK
N-R-A oye! N-R-A oye! N-R-A oye!

Siad spins his beret into the crowd and Patrick snatches it!

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - DAY

Patrick reaches the empty campus at a full run.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Patrick arrives and the students all look. Reuben mid-lesson.

REUBEN
(surprised, relieved)
Mr. Kalenzi. Welcome back.
(remembers himself)
Will you require a desk?

Giggles. Patrick awkwardly takes his seat.

EXT. KALENZI HUT - PORCH - DUSK

Patrick helps John rehang the broken door.

PATRICK
(smell from open doorway)
Mmm. Chicken and plantains.

JOHN
Your favorite. Hammer.

Patrick hands it to John and he STRIKES a nail.

PATRICK
... there was an NRA parade in
Misanga this morning.

JOHN
(stops hammering)
This morning? I thought you went to
school.

PATRICK
... I caught it in passing.

Satisfied, John continues to POUND.

PATRICK
There were a lot of Tutsi among the
rebels... a lot of boys my age.

JOHN
Screwdriver.

Patrick gives it to him. John secures a hinge.

PATRICK
(checks inside, lowering
voice)
What would you say... if I joined
the NRA?

John drops the tool in surprise as --

FLORENCE
An outrageous question!

-- Florence bodychecks Patrick into the yard!

FLORENCE
Have you lost your mind, boy? Are
you insane?
(wheeling on John)
And you just looked at him like a
brainless heifer!

JOHN	PATRICK
I had no chance to reply!	They have momentum, Mama --

FLORENCE
(arctic temperatures)
Momentum. You want to throw away
your future... for momentum?

PATRICK
I want to protect my family.

FLORENCE
By having your head shot off?

Patrick gulps.

FLORENCE
(to Patrick)
You will join the army over my dead
body and --
(to John)
You will never say that word again.
Not in my house.
(between them)
Am I understood?

They study the ground like chastened school boys.

FLORENCE
I did not hear you.

PATRICK
Yes, Mama.

JOHN
Yes, Florence.

FLORENCE
(dignified)
... dinner is served.

She stomps into the hut.

JOHN
(hushed)
Can you keep your voice down?!

PATRICK
She hears everything...

INT. PATRICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lamplight. Patrick in his cot, traces the lion carving from Sempa. Grazes its mane. Scratches its teeth.

He puts it aside. Takes up the black beret; that captivating, coarse wool. He tries it on. It fits nicely.

He picks up a found MIRROR SHARD and has a staring contest with his own REFLECTION:

A soldier cut from broken glass.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Patrick with the beret, tiptoes through sleeping siblings. He opens the door with excruciating care -- HINGES SQUEAK.

FLORENCE (O.C.)
Where are you going?

He hides the beret and faces Florence, tying her nightgown.

PATRICK
... I have to go to school early.

FLORENCE
On the weekend?

Shit.

PATRICK
We have a football tournament, so we are putting in extra practice.

FLORENCE
Since when do you play football?

PATRICK
Master Reuben recruited me.

FLORENCE
(walking)
... I will make you breakfast.

PATRICK
No!
(startling her, then)
I already had some cassava.

Florence looks at him, his back against the exit. He tucks the beret into his pants.....

FLORENCE
(yawning)
Have a good day. I love you.

She flips aside her bedroom curtain. Gone.

PATRICK
... I love you.

EXT. CROSSROADS - DAWN

Tall grass whispers. Patrick reaches the crossroads. To his right: village lights. To his left: magenta foothills.

He heads their way.

EXT. REBEL CHECKPOINT - MORNING

Sun above the horizon. Young soldiers smoke by a Land Cruiser pickup truck. Patrick arrives. They flick away their butts.

INT. LAND CRUISER PICKUP TRUCK - MORNING

Patrick climbs inside the truck bed. Tailgate slams shut. The meek RUGAMBA (10) sits there in a stupor.

PATRICK
... nibite, shaa?

RUGAMBA
(lighting up)
Nibyiza! You are Tutsi.

Excitement blossoms between them. They shake.

PATRICK
Patrick.

RUGAMBA

Rugamba.

PATRICK

When did you arrive?

RUGAMBA

... my father kicked me out of the hut this morning. He says the army will make me a man.

PATRICK

... how old are you?

RUGAMBA

Ten. How old are you?

Patrick disturbed. The ENGINE coughs to life.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Rain. MUGISHA and KAHWA (teen soldiers) lead Patrick and Rugamba through the industrial barracks.

MUGISHA

I am Mugisha, this is Kahwa, but you can address us both as 'sir.'

A TRUCK splashes to a stop. Soldier-boys unload, singing the familiar "Omoto wa Waka," and keelhaul a naked POW through the mud. The savagery stops Rugamba in his tracks.

PATRICK

(collecting him)

Try not to look...

INT. TRAILER - DAY

A smoke-filled room. RADIO CRACKLES. Mugisha and Kahwa escort the damp recruits inside. The fog parts to

Lieutenant Siad smokes behind a desk of guns, grenades and pangas (machetes), and fiddles with a TRANSCEIVER RADIO.

PANICKED SWAHILI BLOWS OUT THE SPEAKERS -- BOMBS AND GUNS -- CRASH AND SCREAM..... WHITE NOISE.....

Siad snaps off the radio, unaffected, and looks at Mugisha as if wondering how he'd pair with wine.

MUGISHA

Afande Siad, sir! We have brought you two --

SIAD
 Kurutus.
 (Mugisha swallows)
 Dismissed.

MUGISHA
 Sir, yes, sir!

KAHWA
 Sir, yes, sir!

Mugisha bumps Patrick as they leave. Siad walks around his desk and blows smoke in the 'kurutus' faces.

SIAD
 Welcome to the NRA. I am Lieutenant
 Siad: Allah, Muhammed and Quran.
 Clear?

PATRICK/RUGAMBA
 Yes, sir.

SIAD
 (correcting)
 'Sir, yes, sir.'

PATRICK/RUGAMBA
 Sir, yes, sir.

SIAD
 Louder.

PATRICK/RUGAMBA
 Sir, yes, sir!

SIAD
 Again!

PATRICK/RUGAMBA
Sir, yes, sir!

SIAD
Goddamnit!

Siad grabs Rugamba by the throat and flattens him against the trailer wall. The shocking violence paralyzes Patrick.

SIAD
 (to Rugamba)
 Are you prepared to die for your
 country?

RUGAMBA
 (choking)
 Sir -- yes --

He closes Rugamba's throat -- eyes bulge --

PATRICK
Sir... you are hurting him...

Siad drops Rugamba coughing on the floor.

SIAD
(turning on Patrick, to
Rugamba)
You. Out.

Rugamba stumbles out the door. Siad and Patrick.

SIAD
You are a bold boy.
(long pause)
Why did you join the NRA?

PATRICK
Sir, the Special Forces attacked my
village, sir!

SIAD
A vigilante.

PATRICK
... I, I saw you speak in Misanga.

Patrick presents Siad with the soggy beret. The lieutenant
squeegees it. Grey water patters onto the carpet.

SIAD
Black berets are for afandes.
(tosses hat aside, then)
What is the NRA's Ten Point
Program?

PATRICK
Sir?

SIAD
Chairman Yoweri Museveni --
(indicating framed, black-
and-white photograph)
-- drafted a Ten Point Program to
reform this country. Recite it.

PATRICK
Sir, I do not know it --

SIAD
(mock surprise)
Oh, you do not know it? What is
your name, kurutu?

PATRICK
Sir, Patrick Kalenzi, sir!

SIAD
Tutsi.

PATRICK
Sir, yes, sir!

SIAD
So, the cattle keeper wants a gun
to protect his people.

PATRICK
... yes, sir.

SIAD
That is the problem with recruiting
hicks, Kalenzi. You cannot see
beyond your little tribe.
(moving closer)
I think I will place you on the
front-line. Real revolutionaries
could always use a human shield.

Siad, very close, examines Patrick's pores.

SIAD
(low)
Our goal is to liberate Uganda by
exterminating the vermin that run
it. Can you grasp that concept, or
is your head too stuffed with ghee?

PATRICK
Sir, I understand, sir!

Siad lifts a pistol under Patrick's chin. He shuts his eyes.

SIAD
(even lower)
If I find out you have another
agenda...
(COCKS PISTOL)
... clear?

PATRICK
... sir... yes... sir...

Siad scrutinizes him... pause stretches to deadly lengths...

SIAD
(pulling gun)
Soldiers!

Mugisha and Kahwa rush in. Patrick exhales his entire life.

SIAD
 Show the kurutus to their huts.
 (flash of old charm)
 Kalenzi the Tutsi. We will make a
 killer of you yet.

They guide a sick-looking Patrick out the door.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAWN

Night clings. Patrick, Rugamba and other child soldiers stand in formation wearing hand-me-down fatigues. Siad presides.

SIAD
 We will now recite the Ten Point
 Program! Mugisha!

MUGISHA
 (stepping from line)
 Point one: Democracy! The NRA will
 establish a democratic government!

MONTAGE

INTERCUT WAR GAME with soldiers shouting the Ten Point Program at the BARRACKS.

WAR GAME - FIELD

A platoon of soldiers stands at attention before an open field, bayoneted AK-47s across their chests. Patrick and Rugamba share a look of uncertainty. Siad raises a GUN...

SIAD
 Advance!

... FIRES. Soldiers storm the field -- a barbaric footrace -- Patrick and Mugisha at the head of the pack!

BARRACKS

KAHWA
 Point two: Security! The NRA will
 ensure the safety of every Ugandan!

WAR GAME - FIELD

SIAD (O.C.)
 Crawl!

BANG. Soldiers drop to the dewy grass and crawl.

Rugamba lags. Patrick has an impulse to help, but Mugisha's edging ahead. He slithers on, fighting for first place.

BARRACKS

SOLDIER 3
Point three: Unity! The NRA will
promote ethnic harmony!

WAR GAME - FIELD

Siad arcs a GRENADE LAUNCHER in the air --

SIAD
Run!

-- THUNK -- RPG SHRIEKS THROUGH SKY!

BARRACKS

SOLDIER 4
Point four: Defense! The NRA will
safeguard Uganda's sovereignty!

WAR GAME - SWAMP

Patrick and Mugisha arrive at a putrid swamp of black vegetation. They cover their noses.

SIAD (O.C.)
Advance!

-- THUNK -- RPG HISSES -- they THRASH into the MARSH.

BARRACKS

SOLDIER 5
Point five: Self-sustainment! The
NRA will build a modern economy!

WAR GAME - SWAMP

Mugisha knocks Patrick over with a SPLASH. Patrick stares daggers, shedding vines as he gives chase.

BARRACKS

SOLDIER 6
Point six: Social Services! The NRA
will invest in public assistance!

WAR GAME - HILL

Patrick and Mugisha uncoil from swamp and sprint up a hill --
THUNK -- RPG VAPORIZES ACACIA TREE -- they roll -- rebound --

BARRACKS

SOLDIER 7

Point seven: Corruption! The NRA
will eliminate abuse of power!

WAR GAME - PLANTATION

SIAD (O.C.)

Hold!!

Patrick beats Mugisha to the arbitrary finish line, some ten
yards from a stand of eucalyptus trees (enemy "soldiers").

Patrick's smug smile. Mugisha glares. The others file in.

SIAD (O.C.)

On my order...

Soldiers CHARGE RIFLES with a collective KER-CHUCK.

BARRACKS

SOLDIER 8

Point eight: Inequality! The NRA
will win the war on poverty!

WAR GAME - PLANTATION

SIAD (O.C.)

... fire!

-- FULL-AUTO FIRING SQUAD DISMANTLES TREES -- SPLINTERS GUSH-

BARRACKS

SOLDIER 9

Point nine: Alliances! The NRA will
foster regional collaboration!

WAR GAME - PLANTATION

SIAD (O.C.)

Charge!!

Berserk soldiers swarm the tree stand -- BAYONETTES GORE BARK
as they -- MINCE TREES LIKE HUMAN WOODCHIPPERs!

BARRACKS

RUGAMBA
(struggling)
Point ten... ten...

Siad about to explode --

PATRICK
(stepping from line)
Point ten: Centralization! The NRA
will merge private and public
sectors into a unified economy!

SIAD
(turning to Patrick)
How will we realize this vision?

PATRICK
Sir! With a dedication equal to
that of Commander Museveni,
including, if necessary, the
sacrifice of our lives! Sir!

Siad smiles with approval as we CUT BACK TO

WAR GAME - PLANTATION

A sodden Rugamba trudges to a stop, frightened as
Patrick, in a white rage, MANGLES his man to a stump.

EXT. BONFIRE - NIGHT

MONTAGE ENDS. Mugisha sulks as Patrick and comrades sing the
effulgent "Omoto wa Waka" around the fire. Patrick notices

Siad. Beyond rippling heatwaves. Watching him in the night.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Soldiers gather in a moist warehouse. Siad drops two coils of
nylon rope beside a rusted chair that's bolted to the floor.

SIAD
Tomorrow, our company will launch a
surprise assault on the Special
Forces' stronghold at Kitwe. Many
of you will die. Some of you may be
apprehended. Before we deploy, I
must teach you a final lesson: how
to handle torture.
(beat)
Kalenzi. Have a seat.

The others look at Patrick like "dead man walking." He puts on a brave face and sits. As Siad lectures, two assistants tie Patrick's wrists with the nylon ropes and run them around twin concrete pillars (which they will use as anchor points to stretch Patrick's arms like he's on the rack).

SIAD

If capture is imminent: remove your uniform, discard your equipment, and blend with the population. If you do not have time: play dead, run, or commit suicide. You must do everything in your power to avoid ending up... in a room like this.

(beat)

If caught: remain silent, reveal insignificant truths, and feed them false information... they will torture you to death. For the sake of your comrades' lives, you must hold out until the end.

(to a bound Patrick)

There is no technique for withstanding torture. It is an act of pure will.

Siad nods to the assistants, who prepare to pull.

SIAD

(going into character)

We have intelligence that the NRA plans to attack the town of Kitwe. When is the attack?

(Patrick silent...)

Tighten the ropes.

The assistants pull and the ropes constrict around the pillars. Patrick's arms spread taut.

SIAD

I will make this easy. Confirm what we already know. The NRA plans to attack Kitwe, yes?

PATRICK

I am a kurutu. What do I know?

They exchange a smile.

SIAD

Tighten.

Ropes scrape concrete. Nylon chokes wrists.

PATRICK
(grunting)
Mmmf.

SIAD
Our source says that a --
(grinning)
-- careless lieutenant shared the
battle plan with all of you.

PATRICK
Your source is wrong.

SIAD
How many soldiers are in your
platoon?

PATRICK
(thrown)
I do not know --

SIAD
You cannot count?

PATRICK
Twenty --

SIAD
Tighten!

PATRICK
(straining)
Ugh -- thirty -- thirty-five!

SIAD
Where is the attack coming from?

PATRICK
I told you, I know nothing!

Siad SLAPS him across the face. The room gasps.

SIAD
Say that again and I will tear off
your arms.

PATRICK
We are coming from every direction.
North, south, east, west. You do
not stand a chance.

SIAD
(enjoying the game)
Tighten.

ROPES CREAK around the pillars. Patrick growls, his shoulders edging toward dislocation.

SIAD
Why did you join the NRA?

PATRICK
Wha -- what?

Siad SLAPS him.

SIAD
You have shoveled me bullshit. I want the real reason.

PATRICK
Because -- they are criminals!

SIAD
You are here for justice.

PATRICK
Yes!

SIAD
Like a superhero.

PATRICK
Ye -- yes!

SIAD
Speak up.

PATRICK
I am here for justice!

SIAD
Tighten!

Ropes slither -- Patrick shrieks --

SIAD
Why did you join the NRA?

PATRICK
Stop! Please!

SIAD
Answer the question!

PATRICK
I am here -- I am here --

SIAD
Spit it out!

PATRICK
To -- defend my family!

SLAP.

SIAD
No more lies! The Special Forces
killed your people, and you are
here for revenge. Now say it.

PATRICK
Please -- I beg you --
SIAD
Tighten!

PATRICK
(bloodcurdling)
Noooo!!! I am here for revenge! I
am here for revenge!!

SIAD
I do not want your vengeance!

PATRICK
What do you want from me?!

SIAD
I want your hate.

Siad closes in, a psychotic gleam in his eyes.

SIAD
Justice. Family. Revenge. These are
human words. Our enemies are not
humans. They are vermin.

This idea appears to take. Patrick's face darkens, Siad
nodding at this progress.

SIAD
Why did you join the NRA?

PATRICK
To kill.

SIAD
A human word.

PATRICK
To -- exterminate.

SIAD
Say it again.

PATRICK
To exterminate the vermin!

SIAD
All of them?

PATRICK
Sir, yes, sir!

SIAD
Why you are here, soldier?

PATRICK
I am here to -- wipe them off the
face of the earth!

Patrick writhes like a feral animal in its shackles. Siad closes his eyes, satiated in some deep way.

SIAD
... release.

The assistants drop the ropes and Patrick lurches onto the floor. Siad lifts Patrick's chin.

PATRICK'S IMAGINATION - WALUMBE

Stares at us with those demon-red eyes... BREATH RATTLES... blood-coated teeth spread into a Cheshire smile --

MATCH CUT TO:

MIRROR IMAGE OF PATRICK

-- and his glowering, clockwork-orange grin.

Siad fits a black beret onto his pupil's head.

SIAD
Afande Kalenzi.

EXT. CONCRETE LOT - DAY

A theater of slabbed concrete stages a geometric invading force: platoon after platoon in perfect formation.

Patrick's all cold focus in his black beret. Rugamba's burdened by his gun. Siad paces, crossed with ammo belts.

SIAD
In one hour, we will attack the
town of Kitwe.

MONTAGE

Siad's MONOLOGUE underscores the company TREK TO KITWE.

EXT. CONCRETE LOT - DAY

Platoons climb into a fleet of idling trucks.

SIAD (V.O.)
Your orders are simple.

INT. LAND CRUISER PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Patrick sits by Mugisha. They exchange a professional nod.

SIAD (V.O.)
Kill every single man.

Rugamba shivers in a corner. Pisses his pants.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Trucks invade an empty village. Soldiers debark en masse.

SIAD (V.O.)
Some of these tricky bastards will
play dead.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Bayonets cleave spotted light. A boundless line of soldiers stalk through shade.

SIAD (V.O.)
If you see a body twitch, shoot it
in the head.

EXT. RUSHING CREEK - DAY

Soldiers sink into the frigid depths, AKs above their heads. Patrick's teeth chatter, but his eyes are unfazed.

SIAD (V.O.)
The outcome of this war is on a
razor's edge.

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Soldiers emerge dripping and hike up a hill.

SIAD (V.O.)
Eradicate the enemy before they
murder Uganda.

EXT. HILL ABOVE KITWE - DAY

Soldiers crouch below the crest. Patrick coiled for attack.

SIAD (V.O.)
Erase them, gentlemen, and our
victory will live for all time.

FLASHBACK - EXT. CONCRETE LOT - DAY

BACK with Siad and his platoon.

SIAD
Show them your power and take the
town of Kitwe!

A resounding hurrah -- SEVERED BY SCREAMING MISSILE --

BACK TO PRESENT

MONTAGE OBLITERATED AS -- HAILSTORM OF RPGS WASTES SOLDIERS
ACROSS THE FRONT!

SIAD
Advance!!!

Soldiers shout murder and pour down the hillside!

WITH PATRICK

BATTLE suffocates to SILENCE... he sleepwalks through VAGUE
MAYHEM... MUFFLED BOOMS...

SMASH BACK TO REAL TIME

MACHINE GUNS RATTLE -- ROCKETS ROAR -- RPGS THUNDER --
Patrick barrels down the hill, leading the charge!

EXT. RUBBLE WALL - DAY

The platoon takes cover -- BULLETS SPARK --

SIAD
Buffalo and Gorilla Squads cover!
Leopard and Hornet Squads advance!
Kalenzi, take lead!

The covering soldiers prepare their AKs as Patrick leads his
squads to the wall's edge. Rugamba hugs his rifle.

SIAD
On my order...

RUGAMBA
Mama! I want my Mama!

PATRICK
Rugamba! We are advancing!

SIAD
... now!

Soldiers UNLEASH HELLFIRE! Patrick drags Rugamba into the

EXT. TOWN OF KITWE - AVENUE - DAY

Coated with white dust. Patrick and squads break through a sulfurous cloud -- the soldiers choking --

PATRICK
Hornets right! Leopards with me!

The squads hobble as -- BROWNING MACHINE GUN MOWS THEM DOWN --
KAHWA SHOT DEAD --

PATRICK	MUGISHA
Take cover!!!	Kahwa!!

-- KABOOM -- ROCKS SHOWER -- three survivors dive behind a
BUILDING

Patrick PEEKS at the trail of minced corpses -- pulls back as--
FIRE CHOPS EDGE -- Rugamba and Mugisha freaking out --

MUGISHA	RUGAMBA
Fuck! The fuck happened?! They	They killed them! They killed
knew we were coming they fucking-	them! Oh God oh God oh God oh-
-- ZIP.	

Mugisha grabs his chest. Lifts his palm. A red dot spreads.

PATRICK	MUGISHA
... Mugisha? Mugisha!!	... give me...

He dies. Rugamba makes a break for it -- ZIP ZIP ZIP --
torques into rubble -- clutches guts --

RUGAMBA
Mama! Mama!!!

ZIP! BULLET SPLITS NECK -- Rugamba slumps -- ZIP ZIP ZIP --
Patrick ducks below a

MOTORCYCLE

-- GUNSHOTS HIT ENGINE -- CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

Shooting stops... metallic CLINK... CURSE and ECHO...

Patrick aims over the seat, one eye closed, steady breath.

PATRICK'S POV - THREE-PRONGED SIGHT

... SCANS RUBBLE... LOCKS ON FIGURE smacking his rifle.

Figure looks AT US -- and runs.

PATRICK

-- SPRAYS BULLETS. Missed. He sneers. Pursues.

EXT. RAZED NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

GUNFIGHT audible from the avenue. Patrick stalks a labyrinth of destruction... enters a cratered HOUSE...

... HEART THROBS... he steps on a singed rug... past a smoking bureau... and meets HIMSELF IN A

MIRROR -- figure darts by!

Patrick swings and -- CHISELS RUINS -- CLICK. He swaps out fresh ammo, which sticks.

PATRICK

Load, load...

Magazine indexes, Patrick already moving.

EXT. STREET - DAY

An earthen street of abandoned storefronts. Patrick rasps, AK guiding him. He spots crimson droplets in the dirt...

Tracks the trail to the mouth of a

CONCRETE ALLEY

The figure pants against a wall, obscured in shadow.

PATRICK

Throw out your weapon!

No response. Patrick POPS A SHOT. An FAL rifle skids out.

PATRICK

Sidearm!

Pistol spins into view. Patrick kicks the guns aside.

PATRICK

Move where I can see you!

FIGURE (O.C.)

Fuck you, kanyarwanda.

Something about that voice... Patrick steps closer...

PATRICK
... come into the light. I will not
ask again.

Figure scoots into angled sunlight...

PATRICK
... Muwonge?

MEMORY FLASH - EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL - DAY

Muwonge hocks a LOOGIE which SLAPS Patrick's foot. THUNDEROUS
LAUGHTER, Patrick's humiliation surging....

BACK TO PRESENT

JAMES MUWONGE (18), maroon beret, squints in the sun.

MUWONGE
... Kalenzi... you have grown.

Muwonge coughs, wincing, and tightens a cloth tourniquet
strangling his thigh. Patrick tightens his grip.

MUWONGE
... so. What now?

PATRICK
You killed my friends.

MUWONGE
First battle?

PATRICK
You shot them --

PATRICK
-- in cold blood.

MUWONGE
And you shot me.

PATRICK
... stand up.

MUWONGE
It does not have to be like this --

Patrick SHOOTS the wall. Muwonge grunts to his feet.

EXT. STREET - DAY

High noon. Patrick leads Muwonge at gunpoint into the street.

PATRICK
On your knees.

MUWONGE
(kneeling, in pain)
... we go way back, Kalenzi. We did
not always see eye to eye --

PATRICK
You beat me up every day.

MUWONGE
We were kids.

PATRICK
... why? Why did you do it?

MUWONGE
No idea.

PATRICK
That is not an answer.

MUWONGE
I honestly do not know.

Patrick FIRES at the ground.

MUWONGE
Okay! Okay, maybe... I am built
that way. It was never personal.

PATRICK
It could not be more personal.

MUWONGE
... so that is it, then. Capital
punishment for the bully.

PATRICK
You are also the enemy.

MUWONGE
I am the same as you, soldier. A
cog in the machine.

Is that doubt creeping in?

MUWONGE
Kalenzi. Patrick. Look around. This
is not you. Shooting an unarmed man
in the street.

PATRICK
I wonder what you would do.

MUWONGE
My point exactly. You were always
better than me.

PATRICK
... how many people have you
killed?

PATRICK	MUWONGE
How many civilians? How many	Oh, come on.
Tutsi? How many cockroaches died	This is war!
at the end of your gun?	

MUWONGE
What do you want me to say?

PATRICK
The truth.

MUWONGE
The truth and you let me live?

Patrick stone silent. Muwonge calculates. A thin grin.

MUWONGE
The truth? Not enough...

SIAD
(marching up street)
Kalenzi! Where have you been?

PATRICK
... I have a prisoner, sir!

SIAD
(noticing Muwonge)
Kill him. We broke through.
Company's converging at the armory.

PATRICK
Sir, I, I know him.

SIAD
No prisoners. Make it quick.

PATRICK
Sir, yes, sir!

But Patrick hesitates.

SIAD
When I train a killer I expect him
to deliver, son.

MUWONGE
Go easy, Lieutenant. It is his
first time.

PATRICK
Shut up.

SIAD
Finish it. Now.

PATRICK
Sir, yes, sir!

Patrick's finger won't budge. Siad unsheathes a Škorpion machine gun pistol.

SIAD
I have given you an order, soldier.
Either you kill that prisoner, or
by Allah, I will execute you both.

Patrick taps the trigger, lines of sweat down his face.

MEMORY FLASH

Muwonge, MASSIVE in memory, whips up the crowd of kids.

MUWONGE
(chanting)
Kan-yar-wan-da! Kan-yar-wan-da!

BACK TO PRESENT

SIAD	MUWONGE
No more games, boy! Exterminate!	You heard the man. Do it. Do it!

Patrick stares down the sight --

MEMORY FLASH

Patrick swings -- Muwonge charges -- blocks out the sun --

BACK TO PRESENT

SIAD	MUWONGE
Do not fuck with me! End him!	You want it so bad, take it!

Siad COCKS PISTOL -- Patrick blinking fast --

MEMORY FLASH

CRASH! Muwonge PLOWS Patrick into classroom -- siding
splinters -- girls scream --

BACK TO PRESENT

SIAD	MUWONGE
Waste this sub-human scum!	On with it! Shoot me! <u>Shoot me!</u>

PATRICK
I will do it!

Patrick and that seductive trigger...

PATRICK'S IMAGINATION - EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Walumbe's demon-eyes pulse above the village... those bladed, blood-soaked teeth...

He surfaces and for the first time we SEE HIM IN FULL, an avenging god in the UNMISTAKABLE FORM OF

PATRICK. Leers down at fleeing villagers -- LIQUID BLACK POURS -- EXPANDING EVIL FLASH-FREEZES

BIG MAN who beat up John... NYARA from the Nile... SOLDIERS who shot Mariko... and finally the

ANTELOPE Patrick killed... another pillar of salt, eroding in the wind, EYELIDS SEALED SHUT --

MATCH CUT TO PRESENT

-- Muwonge's CLOSED EYES...

MUWONGE	PATRICK
I am ready... I am ready...	I will do it... I will do it...

Patrick presses trigger -- a centimeter that spans a lifetime-

SIAD	PATRICK
Time's up.	Wait!

Patrick shields Muwonge! Siad roars and -- EMPTIES HIS CLIP!

TTTTTTTTRRRRRRRRRRRRRAT!

Silence.

The smoking machine pistol.

Muwonge opens his eyes. Patrick lowers his arms.

Nearby: a truck frame. Peppered with hissing holes.

Patrick looks at Siad. They stare at each other.

SOLDIERS arrive.

SOLDIER 1
Are you alright, sir?

SOLDIER 2
We heard gunshots.

SIAD
Take these traitors to transport.

Soldiers gather the prisoners.

SIAD
(grabbing Patrick)
I am going to court-martial your
Tutsi ass into oblivion. You will
die in a cell so far underground,
not even the Devil will find you.

He rips off Patrick's beret and spits in his face.

EXT. HILL ABOVE KITWE - DAY

Soldiers force Patrick and Muwonge up the hill of the initial assault. CHEERS and celebratory GUNSHOTS ring below.

Ironically, Patrick has never looked more free. He breathes in the sky, filled with a beatific peace. Feels eyes on him:

Muwonge, fascinated and a little disturbed, as if Patrick's an abstract concept he'll never understand.

Patrick, the philosophical POW, allows himself a grin.

He absently steps on a CAR DOOR and -- KAPOW -- it CATAPULTS into the air and hurls him headlong into a TREE -- THUD.

Patrick falls limp, his ear leaking blood.

FADE TO BLACK.

... "OMOTO WA WAKA" RISES... MUTED... FAR AWAY...

FADE IN:

INT. ARMY CLINIC - DAY

Patrick's eyes open. He blinks. Sits up. He's in a cot, one of dozens lining the empty clinic.

SUPER:

"1986"

He touches a crown of gauze. Tracks a catheter to an IV bag. A tube hugs his face. He peels out the nasal cannula.

Breathes.

SINGING penetrates. He peers out a grimy WINDOW.

PATRICK'S POV - VILLAGE STREET

A V-Day celebration. People sing the revolutionary anthem, dance on cars, party in the street.

NURSE (O.C.)
Someone is feeling better.

BACK TO CLINIC - MOMENTS LATER

A NURSE cleans a stitched gash on Patrick's forehead.

PATRICK
... where am I?

NURSE
An NRA clinic. You stepped on a car door covering a landmine and the explosion threw you into a tree. You sustained a severe concussion and have been in and out of consciousness for weeks.

Patrick processes this. The SONG in the street.

PATRICK
Why are they celebrating?

NURSE
You must be the last person in Uganda to find out. We won. All hail Museveni.
(leaving)
I will bring you some food.

Patrick exhales. Astounded.

DUSK

The fading celebration. A metal food tray, licked clean. Patrick in fresh bandaging, throws back a pill.

SIAD (O.C.)
Hello, Kalenzi.

Siad in the doorway. Patrick swallows the pill with a gulp.

MOMENTS LATER

The clinic awash with dusk. Patrick braces himself in the presence of Siad, seated on the adjacent cot.

SIAD
... how are you feeling?

PATRICK
Fine, Afande.

SIAD
There is no need for protocol.

PATRICK
What do I call you?

SIAD
A long time ago, my friends called
me Abdullah.

PATRICK
... are we friends?

Siad removes his beret. Rubs a receding hairline.

SIAD
... I wanted to be a history
teacher... when I was about your
age, my father gave me a book on
the history of Africa... did you
know that the word 'Swahili' comes
from Classical Arabic? In the
Middle Ages, East Africans traded
with merchants from all over the
Islamic world. They called us, *as-*
sawahili, 'people of the coast'...
in the fifteenth century, we even
established diplomatic relations
with China. Gifted the Emperor a
live giraffe... can you imagine?
This long-necked wonder, from the
other side of Creation, dazzling
the Imperial Court of Beijing...

CHEERS well outside. Siad listens. A beat.

SIAD
What do you want, Patrick?

PATRICK
... to go home.

SIAD
That is already arranged. What is
your dream?

PATRICK
(recalling)
... I wanted to be a veterinarian.

Siad considers this.

SIAD
We are going to set up free Kadogo
Military Schools.

PATRICK
My mother would never allow it.

SIAD
She sounds formidable.

PATRICK
She is terrifying.

SIAD
Well, where would you go to school,
if you could?

PATRICK
... Kampala High School?

SIAD
Do you know the fees?

PATRICK
Sixty thousand shillings.

SIAD
... ten cows.

PATRICK
(surprised he knows this)
Forgive me, sir, but are you Tutsi?

SIAD
My grandmother on my mother's side.
(standing up)
As for fees... consider them paid.

Patrick's so floored he cannot speak.

SIAD
Come on then. I am taking you home.

MOTORCYCLE - MOVING

Siad drives, Patrick in back, empires of clouds above.

EXT. KALENZI HOMESTEAD - LATE DUSK

Florence on the porch, swathed in gloom. The motorcycle rolls in. Patrick goes to her... it's as if he's a stranger...

PATRICK
... Mama... Mama, I am home.

FLORENCE
... Patrick... oh, Patrick!

And she has him in her arms.

FLORENCE
I am so angry with you.
(touching bandaging,
seeing Siad)
You. What did you do to him?

Florence hurls rocks at Siad. He skedaddles with a VROOM!

FLORENCE
Go on, run away! Coward!

Patrick secretly enjoyed that. Florence's anger drains away. She slouches, freighted with sadness.

PATRICK
... Mama?

INT. JOHN AND FLORENCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kerosene glow. Patrick lifts a white bed sheet. John. Resting in eternal peace. Florence in the doorway, looks away.

PATRICK
... when.

FLORENCE
Yesterday.

Patrick closes his eyes.

FLORENCE
He felt sick all week. Headache,
sore joints... I was cleaning when
I heard this... scream...
(beat)
I found him by the mulberry tree...
fighting... I held him in my lap...
(beat)
He called out a name... your
name... and took his last breath.

Patrick lays a trembling hand upon John's brow.

EXT. FIELD BEYOND HOMESTEAD - DAY

Drizzle. Mourners whimper around a plain wooden cross. A priest gives the eulogy. Patrick isolated in his grief.

LATER

Funeral over. Mingling. Rosette finds Patrick. She is visibly pregnant under a black kitenge dress.

PATRICK

Rosette...

They embrace. He notes her belly with a look.

ROSETTE

... we are at seven months.

She indicates a young man in a suit. Reuben steps up.

ROSETTE

Talk later, okay?

She squeezes him and joins her spouse. Reuben and Patrick.

REUBEN

... I hear the army offered you
some sort of scholarship?

PATRICK

The term starts Monday... but I am
so far behind...

REUBEN

Though I am loathe to admit it,
sometimes the best education
happens outside the schoolhouse. I
hereby pass you. With high marks.

Reuben's cutting him slack? The old master offers his hand.
They smile and shake.

DUSK

The guests have assembled around a fire in the yard. Only Patrick and Baaba remain by the grave (Patrick holds a box).

A drawn silence. One mourns a father. The other, a son.

A MOO from the kraal. The herd has dwindled.

BAABA

... he started selling them after
you left... he said it was to pay
for your schooling...

PATRICK

... who will milk them now?

BAABA

Your brother David is older than
you when you started. And one day,
you will provide more than milk.

The three-legged man hikes to the fire.

Patrick alone with the cross; its crudely carved LEGEND:

"John Kalenzi"

He kneels before the grave. Dense with words. Too dense.

He opens the frayed box and removes two desiccated leather
sandals, the pair John gave him all those years ago.

He places them on the cracked soil... can't let them go...

Lets them go.

EXT. BAALE BUS TERMINAL - DAY

A SIGN in a mini-bus's windshield: "Baale-Kampala." Florence
hands Patrick a suitcase. He wears a collared shirt, slacks
and dress shoes. All grown up. He files inside the bus.

FLORENCE

Say hi to Auntie Jona!

INT. MINI-BUS - MOVING

Crowded with pressed professionals. Patrick seated by a
window, opens his suitcase to the antler horn Sempa gave him.

He feels it for a moment. Tucks it away. Blows dust off the
Kampala High School Admission Form and fills it out.

Two YUPPIES peruse newspapers behind his back.

YUPPIE

(referring to Patrick)
Smells like rotten milk.

They chortle. Patrick looks at them. The look is neutral yet
firm, almost curious, devoid of hate and hurt. It's just...

A look.

It unsettles the yuppies. They return to their papers.

Patrick peers out the window, past his REFLECTION, to a gliding landscape of farmland... thatched huts...

And there, in the glass, we spy the faintest smile.

CUT TO BLACK.

EPILOGUE

"Patrick graduated from Kampala High School and received a full scholarship to Makerere University, where he earned a degree in Veterinary Medicine."

"After graduation, Patrick moved to Boulder, Colorado and started his own practice. He has two kids with his wife, Sharon, and the Kalenzis remain a fixture of the community."

"Yoweri Museveni has been President of Uganda since the NRA's victory in 1986. Watchdog organizations have criticized him for multiple human rights abuses."

"In 1994, Hutu militias in Rwanda killed an estimated one million Tutsi civilians. It remains the most lethal genocide since the Holocaust."

"In 2004, Patrick purchased his mother some land and built her a new home. He also financed his siblings' educations, giving them a pathway out of poverty."

"The World Bank estimates that there are over 700 million people living in extreme poverty, defined as anyone surviving on less than \$2.15 per day."



"This film is dedicated to them."

THE END