

YOUR TURN

Written by

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INT. BLACK ROSE CLUB - NIGHT

A trendy club. Lively Ugandan music plays loudly. It is crowded enough for many walking across the dance floor to spill their drinks as dancers bump into them.

Three men are drinking at the bar:

GEN. OMARI, 40, a cold, heavy-set bald man. He is an unusually brutal man dripping with sadism, fearless, enveloped by a dark presence.

CAPTAIN DIALLO, 25, is a thin, jovial bespectacled man with a moustache. He's handsome, and drunk.

JACOB, 18, is buck-toothed and easy-going is a scrawny young man. Jacob is a classic example of the Dunning-Kruger effect, where dumb people think they're smart. Naturally he wears a Yale t-shirt. He is very likeable though.

Gen. Omari's brother, Jacob is sitting next to Omari.

OMARI

Did you pay him back last week?
Fucking hate that Biko cocksucker.

JACOB

(stalling)
Mmm hmm.

Omari slaps Jacob across the head.

OMARI

Why the fuck did you go to a loan shark?

JACOB

(stunned)
Because I owe you money, too.

OMARI

You think they fuck around? Take IOUs?

JACOB

I paid him! Lay off!

A bartender, TIM, brings a shot of whiskey to OMARI.

TIM

On the house, general.

OMARI

Thank you. But while you're at it, could you just bring the whole bottle?

TIM

Johnny Walker?

OMARI

Yes.

TIM

Right away general.

Tim scans behind him and grabs the bottle, brings it to Omari.

OMARI

(cools off as quickly as he got angry)

Hmm. Very well, Jacob.

(suddenly laughs, points at JACOB'S shirt)

Yale huh?

JACOB

Yes.

OMARI

Where'd you get it, genius?

JACOB

(looks down at his shirt)

It's a designer brand. Mom got it for me. What's so funny?

OMARI

It's a university, dumb ass. And I am laughing at the pure irony of it. You, who didn't finish grade school and can barely write.

JACOB

(insisting, getting irritated much to OMARI'S delight)

University? Bullshit! Yale is a designer brand for athletes! You can see it on all kinds of t-shirts, sweaters and sweat clothes. Damn, you're stupid!

A stone-faced Diallo chuckles hard at that, and is trying hard to hide it.

OMARI
 (smiles)
 Very well. Whatever you say.

JACOB
 (scans around bored, then
 points)
 Look Diallo! Macy! That woman
 across the bar is looking at you at
 you all "come hither" like! You
 should talk to her!

Across the bar there is a very obese woman of 21, MACY, in a tight black dress with heavy cleavage. She has a LAZY EYE, looking at the handsome Diallo and smiling invitingly. She is giggling with her friends, blowing a kiss when he looks her way. She is drunk. Drunk as in she doesn't give a fuck if she's rejected, she's just going to throw it out there in case it sticks.

DIALLO
 No. Not just every lady may partake
 of my anaconda-like ambassador of
 vaginal good cheer.
 (downs and drops his empty
 shot glass on the
 counter)
 Besides, I don't think I could love
 a woman that can't look me in the
 eyes.

OMARI
 Ha!

A pregnant pause.

JACOB
 Can I ask you guys a serious
 question?

OMARI
 Sure.

JACOB
 How do I know if my girlfriend's
 baby is mine?

OMARI/DIALLO
 Is the baby white?

JACOB
 (sheepishly)
 Yes.

OMARI

Then it's not!

JACOB

I don't think Mary would lie to me,
is all.

OMARI

Isn't her boss a white man?

JACOB

Yes.

OMARI

It's probably him. Everyone in the
Congo is blacker than night. Look
at you. You're black as an
eggplant!

DIALLO

You take a DNA test?

JACOB

Yes. Says I'm not the father.

OMARI

So? There's your answer.

JACOB

But tests can lie. There's a .1
percent chance it can be wrong,
therefore that is the exception
that breaks the rule. That means it
can lie. Do your research!

Omari and Diallo look at each other and shake their heads.
He's a terminal cuck.

OMARI

(puts his hand on his
brother's shoulder)

Jacob, I love you and all, but I
have to tell you something. You're
a special kind of stupid. You're a
kind of stupid that retarded kids
in protective helmets point at and
make fun of. You're the kind of
stupid featured in medical
journals. You're a black hole of
stupid that sucks in all stupid
from the universe until it
collapses and expels new universes
of stupid.

JACOB
Let me get this straight.

OMARI
Yes?

JACOB
Are you trying to say I'm stupid?

OMARI
Correct.

JACOB
(shakes his head slightly,
defiantly)
Well I'll have to disagree with you
on that. Mary wouldn't lie to me
and never has. She has a dead white
grandmother that can account for
this. Glad to see you respect me,
brother.

DIALLO
Well, does it matter if the kid is
yours or not?

Jacob seriously mulls it over.

JACOB
No. I guess not.

OMARI
Then just accept it, cuck. That,
and the fact that your other three
kids might not be yours.

INT. BLACK ROSE CLUB ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A mysterious thin man of 18, TOMMY enters, a CAP lowered over his face. His clothing is black. He sits close to JACOB and orders a shot of whiskey. The WHISKEY is barely brought to him when he gulps it down, then he quickly pulls out a BERETTA and shoots Jacob in the back of the head.

Jacob slumps and falls forwards, surprised eyes open. Blood is spurting on the bar from his exit wound on the right temple.

The CROWD starts SCREAMING and running for the doors.

Tommy runs, like a rabbit, navigating through the panicked club. The bartender, Tim, grabs his SHOTGUN from under the counter.

TIM
(to crowd)
GET DOWN! GET DOWN!

The crowd drops to the ground. Tim fires at Tommy.

Tommy is too quick and Tim had only managed to fire at a closing EXIT door, filling it with shotgun pellets.

Omari and Diallo go after him, desperately running pushing people aside, guns drawn, shooting.

EXT. BLACK ROSE EXIT DOOR - ALLEY - NIGHT

Outside, a young female ACCOMPLICE was waiting on a MOTORCYCLE for TOMMY. By the time Omari and Diallo can get to them they are far off in the distance. Still, they fire until their clips are empty.

A large black DOG near the door is chewing on a large bone when it stops suddenly upon being startled by the shots. It returns to the bone when the shooting stops. Diallo goes to open the door. The dog, in the way, growls and barks menacingly.

Omari approaches the door. The dog stops barking and backs up, tail between its legs, whimpering. It runs off. Like many of his ilk, dogs literally cower and whimper around him in fear when he passes by.

INT. BLACK ROSE CLUB - NIGHT

GEN. OMARI and CAPTAIN DIALLO head back inside to the body of JACOB. OMARI gently lifts JACOB's bloody HEAD and kisses his brother on the forehead.

BARTENDER
I called an ambulance.

OMARI
(nods)
Jacob! Jacob! I fucking warned you!

Very unlike the unemotional OMARI, he begins to weep. He then suddenly stops, straightens his uniform, as if now aware of what it means to be a general. He has to be stoic, unemotional, under ANY circumstances. He dries his face with his hands and sleeves. The tears just made him that much angrier.

Diallo stands helplessly at his side.

OMARI (CONT'D)

We're going to kill that bastard
and whomever sent him, Diallo. Kill
them and all their families. I will
bring an unspeakable hell to them
all. I promise.

Diallo nods. Knowingly.

DIALLO

I know, sir.

INT. JABARI'S HOME - NIGHT

JABARI BIKO, in white shorts and polo shirt, is a thin but athletic man of 35. He is watching TV that night, a movie, the animated old SNOW WHITE. Seated with him and eating popcorn are his three children, ZOLA, 3, TARAJI, 5, and a boy, AADAN, 7.

Adaan grabs the remote and pauses the movie at the part where SNOW WHITE is encased in glass, holding a bouquet of WHITE ROSES, despondent SEVEN DWARVES around her.

AADAN

I have to go to the bathroom. I
will be right back.

ZOLA

Hurry!

TARAJI

Can't you hold it?

AADAN

(quickly rising from the
couch)

Are you crazy?

Jabari's wife is a ravishing woman with a button nose in a paisley dress named ZENDAYA, 35. She was a former nurse, but fell in love with Jabari. She is a good and attentive mother, very loving. Her hair is naturally straight, and presently in a bun. She sits in a recliner, also engrossed in the movie. It's movie night, being Saturday, but even Zendaya didn't notice how late it is.

ZENDAYA

(rubs her eyes, looks at
her watch)

Children it's very late. It's
almost 1 a.m. We can finish the
movie tomorrow night.

TARAJI
But it's movie night!

ZOLA
Yes! I want to watch it! Please?

ZENDAYA
(after a beat)
Just this once then.

ZOLA
Taraji, is she really dead?

TARAJI
Yes. I have been to her grave in
Disneyland. They have a big grave
at the castle and she is buried
there with her dwarves.

Zola's jaw drops, and she starts crying.

ZOLA
Mother can we visit her?

ZENDAYA
Just watch the movie, dear. Taraji,
stop teasing your sister.

Jabari notices the CLOCK on the wall from the sofa and it reads 12:45 a.m. He seems very bored with the movie. He gets up and heads for the kitchen. The kids don't even notice him rising.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Restless, Jabari opens a KITCHEN DRAWER and grabs a TAROT deck. He heads for the kitchen table and sits down.

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - NIGHT

After a moment of practiced shuffling, Jabari lays out his 15 card spread. As he draws card after card he becomes more concerned.

He draws the TOWER card, and he pauses. It is a card which shows a tower being struck by lightning. It is also on fire.

JABARI
(V.O.)
Chaos...

He next draws the DEVIL card.

JABARI (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 Enslavement.

He draws the THREE of SWORDS.

JABARI (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 Grief, suffering, sadness,
 heartbreak...

Jabari rises for a moment to grab a BEER. He opens it and takes a long drink. He sits back down.

He draws the TEN OF SWORDS. Jabari struggles to remember.

JABARI (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 Final ending.

His final card is DEATH.

JABARI (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 Loss, grief, end of a cycle. A
 final ending.

Jabari sighs nervously.

JABARI (CONT'D)
 (V.O.)
 Good thing it's all bullshit! Total
 bullshit.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

From the kitchen Jabari hears the sound of a troop carrier outside. He enters the living room and peeks out the window for a moment, then sits back down on the couch.

The DOOR is broken down suddenly and a DOZEN TROOPS storm into his house. Omari walks in.

TABOR
 Get down on the floor! Now! Get
 down on the floor!

ZIKA zip ties Jabari as the other troops have Jabari at gunpoint. Omari questions Diallo.

OMARI
 That him?

DIALLO

This is the address.

Omari approaches Jabari and begins to question him. There is no suggestion of mercy in his eyes, no reason, only rage. Pure rage. He is sweating, mouth frothing. Spittle flies from his lips.

OMARI

Biko. Why did you kill my brother, Biko? How much did he owe you? Who did you send for the job?

JABARI

(shaking his head)
You have the wrong man! I am only a doctor!

OMARI

It will go much better for you if you confess! I will spare your family. You have my word.

JABARI

Please, you have the wrong man! I am only a doctor! Please don't do this! You can check at the hospital! Call them!

Jabari points to a FRAMED PICTURE with hospital STAFF.

OMARI

(calms down a bit)
So you are a doctor. What kind?

JABARI

A trauma surgeon. Why would a doctor murder your brother?

OMARI

Money, perhaps. A gambling debt, perhaps. Money talks in this world.

JABARI

I don't gamble!

OMARI

Tell me, doctor. You save our soldiers' lives, or the enemy's too?

JABARI

Both.

OMARI

I really don't like that. You, treating the same enemy that kills our men. Our boys. Two of our boys were raked down by M-60s this morning, cut in half. We shot the gunner but his friends took him. I'll bet you or your friends treated him. Saved him.

JABARI

Your men must have killed him then! I didn't treat any soldiers today, just a boy who stepped on a land mine and lost his leg!

Omari looks around the living room. He sees a large CROSS. There is a BIBLE on the COFFEE TABLE.

OMARI

Christian?

JABARI

Yes.

OMARI

So you're Jesus now. You heal the sick. You know, now I have my doubts. Maybe you weren't the killer.

JABARI

Correct! I am not! I swear!

OMARI

It doesn't matter, really.

JABARI

Why?!

OMARI

I'm Muslim. I hate Christians.

Realizing there is no reasoning with him, JABARI begins pleading desperately with a new approach

JABARI

Alright, alright! I killed your brother. He owed me money, like you said!

Omari nods. He draws closer, and presses his GLOCK 19 to his forehead.

JABARI (CONT'D)
 PLEASE SPARE MY FAMILY! Like you
 promised! Just kill me! Please
 spare my family! Please, I beg of
 you! Just kill me! You swore!

OMARI
 Fuck you.

Omari shakes his head coldly, speaks to the TROOPS.

OMARI (CONT'D)
 Gather the family and tie them up.
 Gag them except for Jesus here.

Omari's troops gather the family, zip tie them. Omari points
 to two child soldiers, MICHAEL, 15, and ADISA, 10.

OMARI (CONT'D)
 Kill the girls and wife first. Make
 him watch what he did.

JABARI
 Please! I'm begging you! Just me!

The boys's EYES are expressionless, sunken. Vacant. They have
 eyes like that of a dead fish. No life is in them. They are
 very used to killing. They do as they are told and open fire
 on the family.

OMARI
 (points)
 See what you did?!

JABARI
 (tears of rage and snot
 now streaming down his
 face)
 I'm going to kill you! In this
 lifetime or the next! I swear!

OMARI
 Kill him boys.

They aim their weapons at Jabari and open fire. A short three
 round burst each.

Omari sees Jabari is somehow still alive and on his knees,
 slumped back a little, with shallow breathing as he chokes on
 his blood. Omari approaches and shoots him between the eyes.

OMARI (CONT'D)
 No, my friend. It won't be a death
 in my lifetime.

(MORE)

OMARI (CONT'D)
(to TROOPS)
Bring the gas cans! Torch this
place!

The troops pour GASOLINE from a couple of green five gallon tanks on the bodies and around the house, on the FURNITURE, CURTAINS, CARPET, WALLS, and then Michael sets it on fire.

INT./EXT. BATHROOM

A windowless BATHROOM, where Aadan was hiding. He heard the endless gunfire downstairs. He is trembling, knees buckling. SMOKE is pouring in from under the DOOR. He waits until the voices stop. He grabs a TOWEL and runs it underwater. He covers as much of himself as he can.

Aadan opens the door and there is fire and smoke all around him. He begins to choke from smoke inhalation. He drops to the floor and crawls.

POV: Aadan is crawling around the fire, down the fiery STAIRS. He makes his way downstairs. He is coughing very hard throughout. SMOKE is blinding him, the blinking becomes more rapid, his eyes blurry with tears.

INT. LIVING ROOM

POV: There is FIRE all around Aadan. He sees it is impossible to exit from the front door, which he can barely make out.

He looks behind him. The fire has engulfed the kitchen, too. The back door is not accessible either. The smoke grows denser, layering at the ground level. Aadan is fading to black. He keeps struggling to maintain consciousness. Aadan looks to his right and sees his family is dead, burning. As he crawls he notices his skin is peeling off in strips.

He gets up, stumbling about, immediately set on fire. The FRONT DOOR. He screams in agony, flailing in a hellish dervish.

EXT. JABARI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In minutes the house is fully ablaze. SCREAMING of Aadan in the house. He stumbles out the door. His hair, ears and shirt are burned off. His face is charred black. He drops just outside on the PORCH, rolling around, trying to extinguish the flames. The writhing slows. He is soon mercifully dead.

MICHAEL
We missed one.

Omari's soldiers watch from outside, boarding the TROOP CARRIER. Omari and Diallo are the last to board. They watch the house burn.

OMARI
 (spits on the ground)
 We'll find him. We'll find Biko.
 We're going to kill every Biko we
 can find.

FADE OUT.

SUPERIMPOSE: 3 months later

AERIAL VIEW: BRAZZAVILE, CONGO - DAY

POV: A HAWK is flying. Through its eyes we see as it flies through the CITY for a minute or two until we arrive outside at a HOSPITAL. The hawk perches on the ledge of a 4th floor window. It pauses, looks inside. It flies away.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

In the RECOVERY ROOM, a young mother, very pretty, round faced and freckled. HIBO, 30, is holding her newborn son. She is a quiet woman, and there is much tenderness in her. She is the kind of woman children are drawn to.

Next to her is the father, CHIMA, 40. He is a professional man in glasses. He is dressed well, in blue suit and tie. He is a handsome man, boyish. He's an accountant. His voice is very deep, and there is a manifest kindness and good nature to him.

HIBO
 What shall we name him, Chima?

CHIMA
 Your idea. Anything but after your
 father.

HIBO
 What's wrong with my father's name?
 Chad is perfectly fine.

CHIMA
 Hibo, even he hates the name. He
 will never forgive us if we name
 his grandson Chad.

HIBO
 (to baby)
 I suppose.

(MORE)

HIBO (CONT'D)
 Then we shall name you Amari, my
 boy, which means "possesses great
 strength."

Hibo kisses the boy. Then she hands the baby to the father so
 he can hold him.

CHIMA
 (smiles)
 He looks like you.

A beat.

CHIMA (CONT'D)
 Look, he has a birthmark on his
 forehead. It is perfectly round.

Hibo looks. The BIRTHMARK is very pale, about the size of a
 dime and circular.

HIBO
 I noticed, honey. Amari, isn't it
 nice to be out? You can stop
 kicking now.

CHIMA
 He did kick a lot, didn't he? Never
 saw anything like it. Neither did
 the doctors.

SUPERIMPOSE: Five years later

INT. AMARI'S ROOM - NIGHT

AMARI, 5, is a very bright child. He shows much tenderness to
 all around him. He has made many friends. He prefers reading
 to toys and knows English, German, French. As learned as he
 appears to be, he tends to hold a very deep grudge when he is
 wronged.

AMARI
 Zendaya! No!

Amari is tossing and turning, he is drenched in sweat. His
 HAIR is moist. He begins screaming and wakes up, shaking. His
 parents come rushing in to see what's wrong.

CHIMA
 (worried)
 Son, what's wrong?!

AMARI
 (touching his birthmark)
 He killed my family. He killed me.
 I was innocent!

HIBO
 Who killed you?

AMARI
 The general!

HIBO
 It's ok, son. It's ok. It was just
 a bad dream.

AMARI
 It was real. It happened. I know it
 did.

Chima faces Hibo and whispers.

CHIMA
 That's the third time this week
 alone.

HIBO
 Yes.

HIBO (CONT'D)
 (to Amari)
 Come. You can sleep with us
 tonight.

Amari gratefully gets out of bed, takes his mother's hand,
 and follows his parents out the door.

INT. AMARI'S HOME - DAY

Hibo is cooking dinner. Amari walks into the kitchen.

AMARI
 My other mother, Imani, could cook
 well too.

HIBO
 (shocked)
 Your other mother? Well, what did
 she cook for you?

AMARI
 Wat.

HIBO
That spicy Ethiopian stew? I love
it!

AMARI
Yes, it was wonderful. The mom I
had before you lived in a nice
house, too.

HIBO
Are you saying you really had a
past life?

AMARI
Yes. I remember all of it, mostly.

Hibo has a look of concern and turns off the STOVE. She looks
down to Amari, lifts him, and carries him to the living room
couch.

INT. LIVING ROOM

HIBO
Sit down, son.

She sits Amari down next to her.

HIBO (CONT'D)
What do you remember?

AMARI
I used to be a doctor. I saved a
lot of people. A lot of soldiers. I
had a beautiful wife named Zendaya.
I had three children, two girls and
one boy. We were very happy.

HIBO
What else do you remember?

AMARI
(somberly)
I remember how I died. I was killed
along with my family. That's what
my nightmares are all about.

HIBO
What was your name?

AMARI
Jabari. I was 35 when I died. They
burned down my house.

HIBO
Is there any way to confirm this?

AMARI
Yes. Talk to my mother Imani. I know where she lives.

HIBO
Maybe we can... maybe we can see...

Hibo looks like she is really mulling something over. She shakes her head.

HIBO (CONT'D)
No. There's no need. Son, go to your room and go play with your toys, read a book or something. I have to call your father.

Amari does as he is told, and runs happily up the stairs. Hibo heads to the phone and calls Chima at work.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The phone rings and Chima answers it. It's Hibo.

INTERCUT BETWEEN CHIMA AND HIBO

CHIMA
Hi honey. I'm kind of busy right now. Is it important? It is? What happened?

HIBO
You might find this more interesting than accounting.

CHIMA
I'm listening.

HIBO
Amari is still convinced he is a dead man. I am really concerned. I am afraid this is quite serious. What should we do?

Chima thinks hard and rubs his brow, then sighs, leaning back in his chair. He taps his pen on the desk.

CHIMA
Hibo I think it's time we take him to a child psychologist.

(MORE)

CHIMA (CONT'D)

See if you can get an appointment
for tomorrow.

EXT. NORTHWEST MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - DAY

A nice professional building, two-storied. Hibo enters with Amari.

INT. WAITING ROOM - ZURI'S OFFICE - DAY

Hibo is filling out forms. Another MOTHER of about 25 waits with a singing, rambunctious young, MARCEL. He is playing with building blocks in the corner, singing a Ugandan pop song, spelling his name.

A portly, pleasant woman, ZURI, 40, opens the door. She is bespectacled, dressed professionally in a grey pantsuit. Zuri is a born skeptic. Very kind though. She wouldn't let you see she thinks you're spouting bullshit if her life depended on it. To her, science is dogma, and that's fine with her. Her heart is big. She loves children. She is extremely intelligent.

ZURI

Is Amari Budd here?

Amari raises his hand.

AMARI

I am.

ZURI

Well you're a handsome young man!
Would you like to come with me?

AMARI

(looks to his mother, as
if asking for permission)
Mother?

Hibo rises and brings Amari to her.

ZURI

Oh no. I just need to speak with
Amari. Could you please wait out
here, Mrs. Budd?

Hibo pauses, then finally lets go of Amari's hand.

HIBO

Yes, yes, of course. Amari, please go with her. It will be fine. I will wait right here for you.

Zuri takes Amari by the hand and walks him to her office.

INT. ZURI'S OFFICE

The two enter Zuri's modest office. There is an ornate desk and a couch, and two office chairs. Zuri seats Amari on the couch. Beside him is a TEDDY BEAR, which he picks up curiously, then ignores. He looks bored.

Zuri grabs her writing pad and takes a seat in an office chair in front of him.

ZURI

My name is Zuri, Amari. It's very nice to meet you

Amari nods.

AMARI

Thank you.

ZURI

Amari, I hear you have been having bad, recurrent dreams. Could you please tell me about them?

AMARI

No.

ZURI

Why not?

AMARI

Because you won't believe me.

ZURI

But what if I do?

AMARI

You won't. Nobody does. They think I'm crazy. My parents think I'm crazy. That's why I'm here with you today. They all think I am crazy. But I am not!

ZURI

Try me. Give me a chance.

AMARI

No.

ZURI

It's okay then.

Zuri thinks for a moment, then tries a different approach.

ZURI (CONT'D)

Does it make you feel sad or angry
when people don't believe you?

AMARI

It makes me sad. Very sad, and
angry too. I am not a liar!

ZURI

Do you think you lived a past life?

AMARI

(nods)
Ye. Ta tawilokh.
("Yes. Let us play.")

ZURI

(lifts brow)
Beena? Len parmooyeh.
("Pardon? I don't
understand.")

AMARI

Yat moo? Itlee iqara qatak.
("You know what? I respect
you.")

Zuri smiles.

ZURI

Beena. Bayit hayaranokh?
("Thanks. Can I help
you?")

Amari nods.

AMARI

Eloiasemet. Meryen. Hon skeedah.
("Please. I am sick. I am
sad.")

ZURI

Amari, eloiasemet hayiree. Tliqla
dounya ilee.
("Amari, please help me.")

A beat.

ZURI (CONT'D)

(softly)

Bassa.

("Enough.")

That's about as much as I know. Do you mind if we speak English now?

AMARI

Sure.

ZURI

Did you have a past life in the middle east?

AMARI

Yes, in the time of Jesus. I saw the Lord turn the water into wine. I was at that wedding. My name was Josiah then. I can recall it clearly... walking in the desert, my sandals burning in the sand in the blistering heat, the Romans, their pagan brutality...

ZURI

Please, continue...

Amari covers his face with his hands facing his lap, as if it's too much to take in. There is a long pause. Then he can no longer remain serious. He chuckles, then bursts into laughter.

AMARI

I'm messing with you Zuri. I just love learning languages. I'm sure I totally mangled my Aramaic.

Zuri laughs. He got her.

ZURI

You had me going there. But let's get serious. What do you remember about this past life that you say you had, the real one, as you say? What were the good things?

AMARI

(nostalgic)

My mother Imani. She was very beautiful, very happy. She was a great cook. Very funny and kind. Everybody loved her.

(MORE)

AMARI (CONT'D)

She was a good grandmother and my children loved her very much. I can even prove she is real.

ZURI

How?

AMARI

You can call her. Can I borrow your pad?

Zuri hands it over.

ZURI

Be my guest.

Amari writes a number down and hands it back.

AMARI

Her name is Imani Biko.

ZURI

What was your name?

AMARI

Jabari.

ZURI

How old were you when you died?

AMARI

35.

ZURI

How did you die? Is that what your dreams are about?

AMARI

That's what my nightmares are about. I was tied up and I was killed with my family by soldiers. They set my house on fire. I could see it from outside, even though I was dead. I saw my boy burned alive on the porch.

Amari is silent for a moment. His expression soon changes. He is very afraid, anxious. His eyes widen, he starts to twitch. He is suddenly re-living the trauma...

AMARI (CONT'D)

Watching my girls pee on themselves because they were so afraid. My children were so afraid.

(MORE)

AMARI (CONT'D)

Watching my wife next to them,
crying. And I am helpless, begging
for their lives. Watching them die.
The bullets wouldn't stop. I tried
lying to the general to save them.
I lied to him... about something.

Zuri begins writing on her pad for a minute. She bumps into her desk while leaning back and a container of pens falls off, scattering on the floor. Amari, easily startled, jumps up in his seat. He is breathing heavily, sweating. He glares at Zuri for scaring him.

ZURI

Sorry about that.

Zuri gets on the floor to pick up the pens and container. She places them neatly together and puts the pens back on her desk. She sits down, and starts writing.

POV: Looking over her shoulder, we see she has written and underlined "TRAUMA" and she also writes "disassociation." She has also written "refer to Dr. Adebayu."

AMARI

(angrily, unsettled,
crying)

The man responsible was a general named Omari. Omari called to two children and told them to kill us. Their eyes were cold. They had killed many times before, I knew it. Their eyes were glazed, expressionless. It seemed neither fun or upsetting to them, just like they were cleaning their guns or sweeping the floor.

Amari pauses. It seems like it happened that morning to him.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Dr. Zuri, can I have a drink of water?

ZURI

Oh, it's just Zuri, dear. And yes, forgive me for not offering you some when you came in.

Zuri goes to a black MINIFRIDGE by her desk and gets a bottle of water for Amari. She hands it to him.

AMARI

Thank you.

ZURI

You were saying?

AMARI

They tore my family to pieces with their AK-47s. They emptied their guns, and reloaded their banana clips. I was looking at my wife. A bullet had torn through her cheek, a molar hanging out. There was so much blood.

(touching his left cheek tenderly)

Right there. I was a doctor. I know what such a gun could do. My little daughter Zola had a terrible wound in her thigh. A bullet had shattered her femur and splinters of bone had exited the wound. I became so angry. So angry. I just wanted to die by then.

ZURI

(engrossed)

Can you remember more? Where you glad you were dead?

AMARI

Yes. You see, after I was shot there was a brief moment of blackness. Then I was floating. I could see things from the ceiling. I saw my body, slumped back and to the right. There was a bullet hole between my eyes and a large exit hole in the back of my head, about the size of a man's fist. My brain and blood were on the carpet behind me. On the couch. Blood and scalp too. Hair.

(beat)

I floated down towards my family. I tried to touch them, caress their cheeks, hug them. But I looked down and saw I had no arms. No body. I became very, very sad. I knew then for sure I was dead. I was sad not for my sake, but for theirs, because I couldn't touch them, me being dead and all. By some miracle I noticed the shallow breathing of Zendaya, my wife. She was still alive!

(MORE)

AMARI (CONT'D)
 (tears begin flowing down
 his cheeks)

ZURI
 (offering Amari a box of
 Kleenex, which he
 gratefully accepts)
 What happened next?

AMARI
 (wiping his tears)
 Omari put his gun back in his
 holster. His rage was still there.
 He was standing over me, smiling.
 He didn't get his man. He would
 simply continue searching. He just
 wanted to kill that night. This was
 an evil man. Some people say there
 is no good and evil. They say we
 are all in some sort of grey area
 and that we all have good and evil,
 and are capable of great good and
 great evil. That is so stupid it
 makes me wonder if they themselves
 are evil. Evil is the absence of
 light, the absence of God. Omari
 was evil.

ZURI
 Yes, he was. I agree.

AMARI
 I looked over at my body. I'm dead,
 I thought. I'm dead.... Zendaya was
 still alive when they set her on
 fire!

Zuri begins to write rapidly on her pad. She fills up the
 first page. Then begins the next.

ZURI
 Do you recall where you were
 buried, by any chance? What was
 your full name?

AMARI
 (nods)
 I was buried at Spencer Gardens
 here in Brazzaville. My full name
 was Jabari Anaan Biko.

Zuri writes it down. Underlines it.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Zuri and Amari step into the waiting room. Hibo smiles.

ZURI

Mrs. Budd, everything went well. He is a wonderful child. He is gifted, playful and kind.

HIBO

He is. The school counselor says he has a very high IQ. He knows three languages: English, French, and German. I think he is working on another.

Zuri laughs.

ZURI

So that explains it.

Zuri approaches Hibo as Amari drops a People magazine and is distracted with an intake form. He reads it with interest.

ZURI (CONT'D)

I think you should call me tonight.

HIBO

Is everything alright?

ZURI

Yes, but I have a lot more questions. We need to talk about a few things.

Zuri looks at Amari as he finishes reading the intake forms, and grabs brochures on ADHD.

HIBO

Very well then.

ZURI

(heading back to her office)

If you are not in a rush you don't have to leave just now. Let your child play awhile. Or just read...

HIBO

Okay.

ZURI

Have a great day, Mrs. Budd. It was a pleasure meeting you and your lovely child.

INT. AMARI'S HOME - NIGHT

Hibo is talking to Zuri on the phone. She looks concerned.

INTERCUT BETWEEN ZURI AND HIBO

ZURI

Hello Mrs. Budd. How are you?

HIBO

I am fine. What did you discover? What do you think?

ZURI

There are some things that concern me. First and foremost he seems to exhibit signs of trauma.

HIBO

TRAUMA? Like what? We don't spank Amari!

ZURI

No, no. The past-life memories are too real for him. He also said he remembered his mother Imani from when he was Jabari. He even gave me her number. After the session I called the number and a woman named Imani answered...

Hibo lowers the phone. She is ashen. She picks it up again.

HIBO

Please explain.

ZURI

It's a bit complicated. Let me refer you to a psychiatrist.

HIBO

No. I don't think that is a good idea. He is only five years old. He is too young to be taking medications.

ZURI

Well, give it some thought. He may benefit from something to help him sleep. He clearly needs sleep. Also, I'd like to see him on a weekly basis. Same day and time. Is that okay with you?

HIBO

Yes, yes. That's fine.

INT. DR. ADEBAYU'S OFFICE - DAY

Hibo is in a chair facing the doctor as he writes his prescriptions.

DR. ADEBAYA, 50, is gray-haired man of medium build, sleeves rolled up on his white shirt, black tie hanging loosely. He is a quiet man. His office, much larger than Zuri's, is cluttered with many, many books and journals. He has a kind demeanor but also likes to have it his way, at all costs. He is a smart man and very modest. He smokes a pipe. On his desk is a placard that reads "SMOKING ONLY."

DR. ADEBAYU

Sorry for the smoke, Mrs. Budd. But you can read the sign here.

Hibo smiles.

HIBO

Strangely, I like the smell. Reminds me of my grandfather.

Dr. Adebayu laughs. He smiles warmly.

DR. ADEBAYU

Mrs. Budd I have two prescriptions for your son. Take them at bedtime. The first one is for Trazadone. It will help him sleep. The second is an anti-psychotic, Clozapine. That should stabilize him a bit.

HIBO

Thank you doctor.

DR. ADEBAYU

Do not worry Mrs. Budd, for I am a wise man.

HIBO

Really?

DR, ADEBAYU
I know I am wise because I know
that I know nothing.

HIBO
(confused)
That doesn't seem reassuring.

DR. ADEBAYU
It means I will help your child,
Mrs. Budd, because I will use all
possible measures to help, known
and unknown. Read Socrates.

HIBO
I prefer Dear Abby.

Dr. Adebayyu tries to stifle his laugh but soon can't. He
bursts into hysterical laughter.

HIBO (CONT'D)
(dead serious)
What's so funny?

DR. ADEBAYU
(straightens his tie,
regains his straight
face)
Nothing. Nothing is.

Hibo takes the prescriptions, gets up, and walks away. She
stops at the door, turns around, smiles and winks.

HIBO
My minor was philosophy.

INT. AMARI'S HOME - NIGHT

Hibo is with Amari. She is giving him the pills to help him
sleep, and the other to help stabilize him.

HIBO
This will help with the nightmares,
son.

Amari nods. He takes the pills and drinks from the glass of
water.

HIBO (CONT'D)
Now go to bed, son. You will be
alright.

EXT. SPENCER GARDENS - DAY

Zuri is looking at directions on a slip of paper, looking for a plot. She seems lost. She sees a GRAVE DIGGER, 65, thin, haggard. His face has been beaten down by the sun. He has a jovial affect. Zuri approaches him.

ZURI

Excuse me sir, but can you tell me
where this man is buried?

The grave digger stops working, as if relieved he has a moment's respite from digging in the blistering heat.

GRAVE DIGGER

(looks at paper)

You just missed it. It's right
behind you two rows. Right where I
am pointing.

ZURI

Thank you so much sir.

GRAVE DIGGER

My pleasure!

Zuri walks back two rows. She looks around a bit, then stops. She looks down at a grave, well kept, fresh flowers around it.

The GRAVE reads JABARI ANAAN BIKO born April 13, 1958. Died July 17, 1993.

Zuri is shocked, unbelieving.

ZURI

This can't be. No, this can't be.
He's fucking with me.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Hibo and Amari head into the market. She grabs a shopping cart and seats Amari in it.

INT. SUPERMARKET

Hibo stops to examine the produce. Amari looks around, bored. Suddenly, while his mother examines produce Amari points matter-of-factly to a thin, lovely gray-haired woman of about 69 who is weighing a bag of apples. It is IMANI.

Imani is a lonely woman that seems beaten down. There is a deep sadness in her eyes, no longer the happy, cheerful woman Amari remembered. She is wearing a long black dress. She looks like a ghost that is unaware of the living now, because the living are unaware of her.

AMARI

That's my mother! My old mother!
Imani!

Hibo shakes her head vehemently. She is noticeably disturbed, and quickly leaves the market, leaving the cart.

HIBO

(tears flow down her
cheeks)
Please stop that Amari. Please. It
really hurts me.

AMARI

I'm sorry, mother. I didn't mean
to.

HIBO

I know, son. I know.

INT. ZURI'S OFFICE - DAY

Zuri looks for a number in her client list. She finds it. She makes a call.

INTERCUT BETWEEN ZURI AND HIBO

ZURI

Hello Mrs. Budd. This is Zuri. I
know this is strange to ask but I
would like to see Amari twice a
week. Can you manage that?

HIBO

Has he gotten worse? What's wrong?

ZURI

No. He is fine. Better than fine. I
just need to know more details
about his case.

HIBO

It is expensive, Zuri. We are on a
limited budget, frankly.

ZURI

Don't worry, Mrs. Budd. I will do it pro bono from now on, all sessions. Free of charge.

HIBO

You would do that? Please, I couldn't!

ZURI

I insist.

A beat.

HIBO

I couldn't. That would be taking advantage of you.

ZURI

Please, I insist.

There is a very long pause. It seems very uncertain what Hibo will decide.

HIBO

Okay. Thank you Zuri. Let's do that.

INT. DR. ADEBAYA'S OFFICE - DAY

Zuri and the doctor are discussing Amari's case. The doctor looks intrigued, attentive, glancing over Zuri's notes. He rubs his chin, lights his pipe, and looks attentively at Zuri.

DR. ADEBAYA

Do you still think it is some form of disassociation? Didn't he lie to you about a past life in the middle east, where he said he was a man named Josiah?

ZURI

He did. It was a joke. He wanted to undermine his credibility. A part of him was and is resisting treatment. But he cannot fake it well. He was honest about the joke and he is an honest soul at heart. And then his past life as Jabari, that is corroborated by his family and his detailed account, very detailed.

DR. ADEBAYU

I see.

ZURI

So I am not so sure now. So much of what he says is true. In fact all of it is. He'd have to be playing the most elaborate, brilliant and cruel prank otherwise. Besides, his parents insist he remembers a past life in his nightmares. Sometimes when he is awake, too.

Dr. Adebayau looks puzzled. He takes off his glasses and rubs his bloodshot eyes.

DR. ADEBAYA

Zuri, it is an unusual case but not unprecedented. We have never handled a case like this, to be sure, but in many countries in Asia, and the middle east, there are many cases of children who remember past lives. They tend to have traumatic deaths in common. There is a psychiatrist, Dr. Ian Stevenson, who has been studying such cases for decades. His cases are very compelling.

ZURI

How so?

DR. ADEBAYA

He interviews the children to see if he could verify the past life. Do they remember their families? They go to them and often recognize the child as the deceased. Children remember every detail of their deaths. For instance, a child might remember he was shot to death. They check the autopsy records of the dead man. These children often have birthmarks in the exact place of their fatal wound. One child he interviewed claimed he was shot in the chest by his neighbor. The autopsy revealed the dead man was killed with a shotgun blast in the chest. News clipping note the neighbor was tried and convicted.

(MORE)

DR. ADEBAYA (CONT'D)

That boy had a large birthmark over his heart, and several smaller birthmarks around it, the size of shotgun pellets.

ZURI

(nodding)

Amari claims he was shot between the eyes. He has a birthmark on his forehead.

DR. ADEBAYA

We may have to re-asses his case completely.

ZURI

Doctor?

DR. ADEBAYA

Yes?

ZURI

I went to the grave today. Jabari Biko was real.

DR. ADEBAYU

Perhaps it is all real. This is a world of manifest miracles. Perhaps he's playing with you. He is a very smart kid and has the wits to do it.

ZURI

True. I administered an IQ test...

DR. ADEBAYU

Isn't five too young?

ZURI

Not if you can talk, read and write. He can. His IQ was 148.

DR. ADEBAYU

Remarkable... Oh, wait. Before I forget, let me give you a number.

ZURI

What number?

Dr. Adebayu hands her an index card.

DR. ADEBAYU

Call him. It's Dr. Ian Stevenson's number from the psychiatric facility of the University of Virginia. It's in the United States. He may help you more than I can on this. Regardless, keep me updated. I will keep doing my best.

INT. AMARI'S HOME - DAY

Hibo is preparing Amari for a trip. She is stuffing his backpack with water, lunch and snacks.

HIBO

You ready for a trip?

AMARI

Where are we going mother?

HIBO

We are going to your old mother's house, if you remember it. You can remember how to get there, can't you?

AMARI

(excitedly)

Yes! Yes, I can! Let's go! I want to see her!

HIBO

Write down the direction, or tell me them.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

The BUS pulls up and opens the door. Amari and Hibo get on board. She pays the fee and the two sit down in the crowded bus.

EXT./INT. BUS - DAY

AMARI

It's about forty minutes away, I think.

HIBO

And her name is Imani, right?

AMARI

Yes.

INT. IMANI'S HOUSE - DAY

A knock on the door. Imani gets up from the couch where she was knitting. She answers. At the door is a flustered young woman and a very happy boy.

AMARI

It's me mother!

IMANI

(angrily)

That's not funny, young man. My son is dead.

(to Hibo)

Is this how you raise your child?

Is this how you play with him?

Shame on you!

AMARI

I was your son Jabari.

IMANI

He's dead!

AMARI

No I'm not! I was Jabari. Now I am Amari.

Imani tries to slam the door shut. Hibo puts her foot in the door just in time.

HIBO

Please ma'am. We have traveled a ways. I think you need to hear this. You really do.

Imani finally opens the door and lets them in. She points to the couch.

IMANI

Please, sit down. Make it quick. You have five minutes.

(to Amari)

Now, where did we bury my son? What cemetery?

AMARI

Spencer Gardens.

Imani says nothing, but continues a line of questioning.

IMANI

What were the names of my grandchildren?

AMARI

The names of my children were Zola, Taraji, and Aadan. My wife's name was Zendaya. The children loved you very much. You made them dinner almost every night.

IMANI

What did you do for a living?

AMARI

I was a doctor. When I was five I flew off the swing set and broke my arm. You took me to the hospital and a doctor put a cast on me. Right then I told you I wanted to be a doctor when I grew up. After we left you took me to get some ice cream.

IMANI

Yes, vanilla ice cream, your favorite.

AMARI

You know my favorite. Mint and chocolate chip. You bought it every week when I was a child.

IMANI

(getting unsettled)

What was your nickname as a boy?

AMARI

Bones, because I was so skinny.

IMANI

(finally growing very convinced)

Your brother. What does he do? What is his name? What are the names of his wife and children?

AMARI

Akua. He is a lawyer. His wife is Afia. He has one child, now he should be a grown man, Emeka. Do you believe me now?

Imani begins to cry.

IMANI

You are my son. Come here boy!

She reaches for Amari and embraces him tightly.

IMANI (CONT'D)

(to Hibo and Amari)

I would be honored if you stayed
for dinner. You must try my Wat.

AMARI

My favorite! Yes, mother! Let's
stay for dinner. You will love her
Wat!

Hibo nods.

HIBO

Okay.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Hibo is staring quietly out the window. She is pensive. Amari
is leaning against her, asleep.

HIBO

(to Amari)

You were Jabari. You were. I'm
sorry I doubted you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD - BRAZZAVILLE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Amari is now a schoolboy of ten. He is walking with his two
friends to school, ABDALLA, 10, and BAMIDELLE, 9.

ABDALLA

Sorry I couldn't make your party. I
decided to keep the birthday gift I
got you.

AMARI

I knew it.

BAMIDELLE

How old are you now?

AMARI

Ten.

AMARI (CONT'D)

You know, I think I'm going to flunk math. I am really bad with numbers.

ABADALLA

It's easy. Don't worry. You can come to my house to study with me.

AMARI

Really?

ABDALLA

Yes!

AMARI

Thank you!

Amari stops to kick at a can.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Hey, you know what? I think Bamidelle likes Ola.

(to Bamidelle)

Don't you Bamidelle?

BAMIDELLE

What, me? No I don't! You're crazy!

ABDALLA

I think you do. That's what I hear.

AMARI

Ewww. Girls!

The children burst into laughter.

BAMIDELLE

No I don't! Shut up!

Bamidelle thinks for a moment, then decides to turn the tables.

BAMIDELLE (CONT'D)

You know what? Maybe I do like girls, especially Ola. At least I don't like boys. Amari, I see the way you look at Abdalla and his booty. You want to kiss him don't you? You want his booty!

AMARI

(flustered)

I don't like boys! Fuck you!

BAMIDELLE
Then you like girls.

AMARI
(confused, shakes his
head)
I don't like anybody. I don't like
either!

BAMIDELLE
Slut!

AMARI
(feeling challenged)
Well, uh, well... Your mama got an
ear on her forehead and when she
gets mad she goes like this:
(puts his palm on his
forehead and shakes his
head)
"I don't wanna hear it! I don't
wanna hear it!"

ABDALLA
Bamidelle, your mama so stupid she
sits on the television and watches
the couch.

BAMIDELLE
Your mama so stupid she fell out
the window and fell up!

ABDALLA
Iron is iron and steel don't rust
but your momma got a pussy like a
Greyhound bus!

BAMIDELLE
Your momma so nice she bakes me
cookies. In the nude.

AMARI
What? What the fuck?

A long line of MILITARY VEHICLES rumbles by, distracting
them. MARCHING TROOPS alongside.

A dusty troop carrier full of KAMWINA NSAPU militia pulls up
next to them. It stops. SOLDIERS jump out, firing their
weapons in the air.

FEMI, 35, is a muscular captain, bearded.

FEMI
Grab the boys!

Amari and Abdalla freeze in their tracks. They immediately grab Abdalla and Amari before they could run.

Bamidelle makes a run for it. A CHILD SOLDIER of about 15 carefully aims his AK-47. Bamidelle is about 100 yards off.

A burst of gun shots.

EXT. RAINFOREST - DAY

Bamidelle runs desperately into the forest. Three shots. Another shot. He stumbles and falls forwards on his face, stops moving.

EXT. ROAD - BRAZZAVILLE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The frightened children are packed into the carrier. A general, cigar in mouth, emerges from the passenger seat and he approaches the back of the truck. He inspects the new batch of child soldiers. Amari sees him and he trembles, ashen with fear, mouth agape. It is Omari!

OMARI
I am going to make men out of you!
You will be great soldiers! I
promise! You will be my creation!

CUT TO:

EXT. RAINFOREST - DAY

Bamidelle lays prostrate on the ground, motionless. Face down. He moves his fingers. Then his head. There is a massive black and blue knot on his forehead. His head is bloody. He looks down and sees he hit his head on a rock, which knocked him out completely.

He is breathing heavily, listening. He carefully gets on his knees and turns around. Nothing. Silence fills the air. He rises completely. They're all gone. Bamidelle breathes a sigh of relief.

He starts walking towards the road, carefully, making his way back home.

INT. TROOP CARRIER - DAY

Amari is seated next to ADE, 16. Ade is a mean-spirited youth, pock-faced, aggressive. A natural bully. He sees ripe pickings in Amari.

ADE
What's your name?

AMARI
Amari.

ADE
I like you. I think we're going to have to initiate you into our club. Would you like that?

AMARI
I don't know. Is everyone initiated?

ADE
No. Only those we like.

AMARI
What happens?

ADE
You just have to do a dare. That's it.

DIKO, age 31, tall, lean, muscular, is listening in on the conversation. He glares at Ade.

DIKO
Hey boy, stay away from these losers. They're bad news.

ADE
Shut up Diko. Mind your own business.

DIKO
Watch how you talk to me. I could use an excuse to kick your filthy ass.

EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT

Diko is having dinner. He sees the boys leading Amari into the rainforest. He is struggling to break free.

EXT. RAINFOREST - NIGHT

Soon, the sound of a boy crying and teens laughing pierces the night. Amari's underwear and pants are dropped around his ankles and he is bleeding from the rectum. He is enraged and totally humiliated.

AKPAN, 15, has a gold front tooth and crooked, gapped yellow teeth. He is a killer by nature. He has a scarred and perverted dark soul.

KWASI, 17, is a follower, only there to follow the rebels.

The two boys are holding Amari up against a tree. Akpan has already zipped up his pants.

Diko hears the commotion and comes. Ade is behind a weeping and screaming Amari, unzipping his pants. Diko tackles him and begins ruining his face.

The boys try to dog pile him but cannot prevail against the muscular opponent.

Ade gets the most punishment. Diko breaks his jaw and, knocks out two front teeth. He kicks him in the head, stomach, and the balls until he doubles over in fetal position and vomits from pain.

ADE

(staggering)

You can't get away with this. I'll report you for that. You can't hide this.

DIKO

And I'll report you three pedos for raping a little boy.

(helping Amari)

Get your pants up, little brother. They won't bother you anymore.

SUPERIMPOSE: SIX MONTHS LATER, JANUARY 29, 2003

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Advancing troops approach the outskirts of a village. The enemy opens fire, a dozen troops fall. They fall on their bellies and begin firing back, some seeking cover behind the bodies of dead or dying comrades. Bullets pump into the bodies. There is virtually no cover but the dry grass.

LUCIEN, 30, drops alongside Amari and asks him to feed him ammo for his M-60.

The enemy is deeply entrenched in a field before a village.

Lucien grabs a baggie from his pocket and pouring some on his hand, he snorts it.

LUCIEN
Here, snort this. It will make you
stronger, braver.

AMARI
(takes some)
What is it?

LUCIEN
Brown-brown. Gunpowder and cocaine.

AMARI
That actually works?

LUCIEN
We swear by it.

Amari snorts it and soon starts to feel the concoction.

AMARI
(V.O.)
We had a lot of cocaine. Maybe the
cocaine and the smell of the
gunpowder supplemented each other.
I just remember the smell of
gunpowder all around us really
charged me up, made me hyper-
aggressive.

Amari is distracted by a general, GEN. BUCK NAKED, 50, as he fully undresses.

AMARI (CONT'D)
What is he doing?

LUCIEN
(seeing Amari is focused
on the general)
Oh that. Watch this...

Buck Naked starts running into the gunfire, oblivious to danger.

EXT. M23 TRENCHES - DAY

M23 soldiers see him and stop firing. They are shocked and some are even afraid.

EXT. FIELD - VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The troops are rallied and start running to catch up to the general.

LUCIEN
Stay here, Amari. Don't move.

AMARI
Why aren't they firing?

LUCIEN
They see he has no fear. They are afraid of him. They think he has a special power to make him impervious to bullets.

AMARI
Does he?

LUCIEN
Maybe. They always stop firing and flee in fear.

Sure enough, the soldiers in the trenches begin to retreat as Buck Naked's soldiers quickly advance.

AMARI
So why did you tell me to stay here?

LUCIEN
You'll see.

Buck Naked is about 90 yards from the trenches. Suddenly he is blown apart.

LUCIEN (CONT'D)
Soldiers are scared shitless of him. But mines aren't. We tried to warn him.

Buck Naked had trapped M23 in a pincer movement. They are encircled. While attempting to retreat, M23 runs into his troops. They drop their weapons and raise their arms.

MAJOR MAYAMIKO, 30, arrives to inspect the prisoners.

MAYAMIKO
You don't all have to die today. You don't have to die at all. You do, however, have to clear the area of mines.

The prisoners form a line and begin looking for mines. Two have maps of where they are. Many mines are disarmed, but other soldiers don't fare so well, setting them off in random explosions.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Buck's troops enter. There are still people in the village. They shoot everyone in sight. A pregnant woman, ABANA, 22, is raising her arms, begging.

ABANA
Please don't kill us!

Ade approaches her.

ADE
What is your name?

ABANA
Abana.

ADE
Why should we spare you?

ABANA
Because I am with child!

ADE
We're not going to kill you.

Adan drops to her knees and kisses Ade's hand.

ADE (CONT'D)
How far along are you?

ABANA
Nine months.

Ade smiles.

ADE
You're going to be fine.

EXT. KINBASA - DAY

A march into the ruins of a city with soldiers on tanks, armored carriers, marching alongside the vehicles. They stop to send an advance party into the city.

Amari looks around.

AMARI
 (to comrades)
 I'm going to take a shit. Be right
 back.

There is something strange in Amari's eyes. Like he has set his mind to something, but it makes him sad. He finds an isolated spot, puts his weapon in his mouth. He closes his eyes and fires. Nothing. The trigger is jammed. He tries again.

At that instant a soldier is zipping up his pants when he sees Amari. TABOR is an athletic man of 27, jovial. He was a school counselor before the war. He loves to laugh at anything. He finds everything funny. He has a world view unlike anything Amari has seen before: this is a good world if you choose to perceive that was so. So Tabor does. He also uses wicked gallows humor. He runs to him. Amari stops, startled.

TABOR
 You sure you know what you're
 doing, dumb ass?

AMARI
 Mind your own fuckin' business.

TABOR
 Then take the safety off, fuck
 head.

A sheepish Amari notices the safety was indeed on. He takes it off.

TABOR (CONT'D)
 Don't let them win, Amari.

AMARI
 Let who win?

TABOR
 The demons.

AMARI
 They already won. I was part of
 something very evil today. Very
 evil.

TABOR
 Did you participate?

AMARI
 I was there. I shot fleeing
 villagers.

(MORE)

AMARI (CONT'D)

That's something I have been forced to accept. But the woman today, and her baby...

TABOR

What happened?

AMARI

It was that sick fuck Ade. He teased a pregnant woman about sparing her life when he never intended to.

TABOR

What did he do?

AMARI

That woman was about 9 months pregnant. He took his knife and split her belly open. The baby dropped to the ground. He cut the umbilical cord, told the mother to pick it up but she couldn't. He had severed her muscles so she could barely stand. So he picks it up and puts it in her arms and starts screaming "shut it up! Shut it up now!"

A beat.

AMARI (CONT'D)

She tried in vain. She was weeping hysterically, rocking the baby and trying to shush it. It wouldn't stop crying. So Ade grabs the baby and says "you're doing it wrong" and puts the baby on the ground. He grabs his machete and cuts the baby in half. It stops crying. He then forces the mother to kneel and he beheads her. It took five strikes to do it. Her head rolls to my boots. I lose it and begin to vomit. You know what?

TABOR

What?

AMARI

That all was bad enough, but before she died she looked directly in my eyes. She must have seen that I was hurting for her.

(MORE)

AMARI (CONT'D)

She started crying, grateful. I could see it in her eyes. She knew I felt bad about this, very ashamed. But I could do nothing. Nothing. And we did other unholy things in the village.

TABOR

Like what?

AMARI

We made a boy rape his mother. He begged us to kill him after. So we did... We castrated an old man... and then beheaded him. We did all that! We did!

TABOR

Amari, listen to yourself. You keep saying we did this, and we did that. Did you personally tell that boy to rape his mother? Did you kill him after?

AMARI

No.

TABOR

Amari, I have never seen you kill a man. You always wait for others to shoot first and then fire high or short, never hitting anyone. I know you. You're just a kid. You have never killed anyone, have you?

AMARI

No, not until today.

TABOR

It's not in you to kill, Amari. You yourself would rather die first. That's what makes you good. That's what makes you special. Your conscience burns for deeds you never even did. Amari, that boy Ade, who killed the pregnant woman, he is pure evil. Pure evil. But you're not. Ade should be the one with the gun in his mouth, blowing his brains out. Not you! Are you going to tell me you deserve to die more than Ade?

AMARI

No...

TABOR

Then put the gun down. Ade will get his. Karma is real. He will. I know it. Do not spit in God's face by killing yourself.

Amari considers the situation, and puts the gun down. He starts to weep quietly. Tabor sits next to him, and puts his arm around his shoulder.

EXT. KINBASA CITY - DAY

Amari marches alongside Tabor.

AMARI

Tabor, you were a counselor. Can I ask you a question?

TABOR

Yes.

AMARI

There is so much death and suffering and evil. Like what I told you about today. Why does God allow that, if he is so good? Or to let men grab babies from their mother's arms and smash their heads against a wall? You know I was there, too, last week. I can't get that sound out of my head... how it popped like a flat tire. Our own men do that. How can you view the world in such a positive light?

TABOR

God doesn't allow that. He prohibits that. But we have free will. We are all God's children, and like our children, they will have free will. Whatever evil they commit is not to be blamed on you. So it is wrong to blame God.

Tabor stumbles. He had tripped on a body.

AMARI

Watch your step.

TABOR

I see the world in a positive light because I have to. Look at what you're focusing on: evil. You may not believe there is good anywhere at all, but there is. How you choose to perceive the world affects your mood, cognition, your ability to fight. You're a bright kid. You read a lot. Do you know what confirmation bias is?

AMARI

No.

TABOR

Confirmation bias is when you believe something, bad or good, wrong or right, and your mind cherry picks facts to confirm your bias. It can be useful or negative, depending on how you use it. In the negative sense, a man that sees only evil in this world will see evil facts that confirm his bias. As a result, his perception will be clouded with darkness and he will be unable to see the good things right in front of him. Hence, depression. Like you with the gun today.

Tabor grabs a Marlboro and lights it up. He takes a deep drag, blowing smoke rings.

TABOR (CONT'D)

A man that only sees good things, the optimist, will cherry pick facts that confirm his bias that the world is good. He will be unable to view the world darkly which in the end, is a good thing. He is generally happy.

AMARI

What about the realist?

TABOR

They are not in a good position either.

(MORE)

TABOR (CONT'D)

A realist relies on scientific dogma, rigid unchanging belief systems that don't account for the real world, where known "facts" are often upturned or rejected, to be replaced by new ones. The realist believed that earth was the center of the universe, that germs didn't exist, all because experts said it was so. In the end they are as fucked as the pessimist because they are blind to new truths and resistant to change.

AMARI

Makes sense.

TABOR

Your perception is your reality.

EXT. HOSPITAL - RUINS - DAY

The troops head into a bombed hospital. A shell of a hospital barely remains standing. A hail of ARTILLERY SHELLS blast into the area.

INT. HOSPITAL RUINS - LOBBY - DAY

A severely wounded man in a GURNEY, Diko, and over him is a young medic, VALE, a pimply boy of 17.

Diko's chest is exposed. He is wheezing with every desperate breath. His INTESTINES are hanging out, being held in place by Diko. A large piece of shrapnel had hit him and severed his abdominal wall.

FLASHBACK

Jabari in the OR, working on a flat-lining patient. A soldier with his arms missing. A CHILD of 4 or 5, crying. LEG missing, intestines pouring out. Jabari working desperately to save her. Jabari pushing the same patient in a wheelchair, to her happy mother. Zendaya in bed next to him, stroking his hair.

END FLASHBACK

Amari sees a pool of dripping blood under the gurney and he quickly examines his friend Diko. He approaches Vale angrily.

AMARI

What the hell are you doing?

VALE

Working on his lung. It's collapsed.

AMARI

He'll die bleeding before that!
Can't you see his femoral artery?

Amari takes off his belt and applies a tourniquet. He applies pressure to the wound on his right leg.

AMARI (CONT'D)

His femoral artery is nicked! Vale, if you could, apply hard pressure here, above the bullet hole, to stem the bleeding.

CLOSE IN on a very bloody WOUND. Blood is pulsing out gently now. Vale applies pressure to the wound.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Need access, clear view.

Amari gets his knife, and cuts his pant off to the waist to see the injury. He makes an INCISION gently over the bullet hole, spreads the incision apart, and finds the nick in the artery, soaking up the pooling blood with his own bandage so he can see. He clips it with his thumb and forefinger.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Let's get him to the OR. This IS a hospital.

AMARI (CONT'D)

(as they wheel him away)
Diko, do me a favor?

DIKO

(whispers, closing his eyes)
What?

AMARI

I need you to help me, Diko. Don't fall asleep. Stay awake. Can you do that?

DIKO

(nods)
I can't breathe.

AMARI

Vale? Could you help him?

VALE
I'm right here.

Amari motions to the CHEST AREA.

Vale stops the gurney for a moment. He approaches the CHEST WOUND and cuts a small hole with a scalpel. He takes a PEN out of his pocket and removes the contents, making it a hollow tube with a small rounded ending. He makes a SMALL INCISION over the left lung, then plunges the pen into Diko's chest wound about a half inch.

The sound of AIR BEING EXPELLED from the hole in the pen is heard. The CHEST RISES. Air fills up the lung again.

They rush again. Amari seems to know where the OR is already.

Vale grabs some surgical tape, and tapes the pen in position haphazardly, as best as possible.

VALE (CONT'D)
Diko, I want you to please hold
this in place until we get to the
OR. Keep holding it.

A grateful Diko takes several deep breaths. They arrive at the OR, burst inside.

DIKO
I can breathe now. But my leg... I
can't feel it.

AMARI
You will, and then some. We got
you. We just have to stop the
bleeding first. You have lost a lot
of blood. What is your blood type?
Do you know it?

DIKO
AB-.

AMARI
(smiles)
PLASMA! This man is AB-. He can
take any blood! Find any blood or
plasma you can, Vale! Get all the
antibiotics you can! And get
morphine! Get as many bandages as
you can! And get an IV stand! Most
of this is here. I have to stop the
bleeding.

VALE

I have morphine in my bag there.

AMARI

He'll really need some.

The soldiers scramble, look for the items.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Does anybody have some Crazy Glue?

They shake their heads no. Tabor raises his hand, bringing an IV stand to Amari.

TABOR

We may have some in the trucks. Let me ask.

VADIUM, 20, runs in with boxes of bandages and a bag of plasma and blood. Amari feels the bags, surprised.

AMARI

They're chilled. Thank you Lord.
Thank you hospital generators.

Vale immediately starts the IV using the blood. The medic returns to working on his chest. VALDEZ, 25, runs in.

VALDEZ

(trouble pronouncing the
bottle)

Got some antibiotics. Ceftri...?

AMARI

Yes, close enough. Grab a syringe.

Valdez does so, and he motions to Vale to inject him.

AMARI (CONT'D)

40 cc's of Ceftriaxone. Stitches.
Where are the stitches?

VALE

I'm out.

AMARI

(aloud)

Can anyone find me some stitches
and suture?

Soldiers scramble again. In minutes they arrive with stitches. Valdez arrives first, holding two boxes.

VALDEZ

Two boxes here. Absorbable or non-absorbable?

AMARI

Absorbable.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Valdez, hold down some heavy pressure where my two fingers are.

SHELLS hit the HOSPITAL, and the floor rocks. A deafening sound. BOOM! A DIRECT HIT. The wall adjacent to them crumbles down. It was the wall facing the street. Debris falls from overhead, mostly ceiling tiles, and dust envelopes them.

Amari is knocked off of Diko. Vale held fast, Diko almost falling off the hospital bed. Amari scrambles back.

Their ears are ringing. Amari can't hear Vale. Vale's lips are moving, he is repeating the question over and over. Amari shakes his head.

He points to his ears and shakes his head.

AMARI (CONT'D)

I can't hear you! Keep talking!

Amari finally hears the faint sound of Vale's voice over the profound ringing.

VALE

Casualties?

Amari looks around.

AMARI

No!

Returning quickly, Amari guides Valdez slightly above the wound. Valdez does as he is told. Amari takes the STITCHES and begins to carefully thread the SUTURE. It is extremely difficult. He has a bad tremor now from the adrenaline.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Vale, thread that! I can't!

VALE

Sure.

Vale threads the suture and hands it to Amari.

VALE (CONT'D)

Sure you can do this?

AMARI

No. Have you ever stitched an artery?

VALE

No.

AMARI

Then let me try. If I can't do it I will let you try.

Amari motions Valdez aside and begins stitching the ARTERY shut. It is nerve-wracking work. Sweat pours down his brow and face, dripping on the patient's wound. He wipes his brow with his sleeves. His fingers tremble more and more as he gets closer to the wound. He starts breathing deeply, holding it in, exhaling, repeating. His fingers slowly stop trembling. He continues stitching.

Moments later he is done.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Let go now, Valdez.

A BLOOD FLOW and PULSE returns. Weak at first, but then better and better. Amari checks closely to see there is no leak. The cut is sealed.

VALE

You got it?

AMARI

I got it. Diko, you awake?

DIKO

Yes.

AMARI

Good man! You're going to make it.

Tabor returns excitedly with CRAZY GLUE in hand. He waves it at Amari.

TABOR

Found some Crazy Glue in a truck glove box!

AMARI

Thanks!

TABOR

What did you want it for?

AMARI

To seal a cut. I was going to use
it if we couldn't find stitches.

YAKOV, 30, arrives. He is carrying two bags of blood, O+.

YAKOV

Got some O+.

AMARI

Give it to Vale there.

Noticing the first bag is near empty, Vale prepares another
IV. He takes the old bag off and replaces it with new BLOOD.

Amari finally grabs some latex GLOVES and now examines the
GUT WOUND. Diko holds in his guts with one hand and the pen
in the other. Amari moves his hand gently aside. He inspects
his intestines carefully and feels around for shrapnel, feces
or damage. He pulls his hand out.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Looks like the shrapnel just sliced
the abdominal wall, Diko. Lucky
you.

(to Vale)

Vale could you get the surgical
stapler?

AMARI (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

No excreta. No sign of sepsis yet.

VALE

What? You sure?

AMARI

(V.O.)

His temperature seems normal. Pulse
weak. Expected from the blood loss.
No chills. No clammy skin, no
shortness of breath now.

Amari begins to staple the 8 inch wound closed.

FADE OUT

EXT. CITY OF KINDAMBA - DAY.

A small town in Congo, shelled extensively by M23 and Kamwima
Nsapu.

A long procession of TANKS, TROOP CARRIERS and ARMORED CARRIERS. The street is narrow, the vehicles rumble by slowly.

EXT. CHARLES DE GAULLE STREET - DAY

The lead TANK hits a mine. It blows off its TREADS. The men inside survive, crawling out to see what happened.

The tank soon creates a TRAFFIC JAM.

TAAVI, a handsome young driver of 28, exits the tank to escape the heat. He is wearing no shirt, and stands outside by AMARI in the searing heat. He removes his HELMET and takes off his canteen. He pours water into his helmet.

TAAVI

They are going to take a while. May as well shave.

He starts to SHAVE with a POCKET MIRROR, dipping his razor into his helmet to get it wet.

TAAVI (CONT'D)

Hey Amari. I hear you had a good time playing doctor. How the fuck did you know all that, you, not having pubes and all?

AMARI

How would you know unless you looked, pedo? How is Diko?

TAAVI

Recovering nicely. Getting fucked by hot nurses. So how did you know all that? Seriously.

AMARI

You wouldn't believe me.

TAAVI

Try me.

AMARI

I was a trauma surgeon in my past life. Can't remember all of it, just bits and pieces. I really could have messed things up. I could have killed him.

TAAVI

He was going to die, anyway. You did the right thing.

AMARI

Thanks.

TAAVI

And I was a unicorn in my past life.

AMARI

Told you that you wouldn't believe it.

TAAVI

Didn't say that. Makes sense actually. Diko should have died there but you saved him. Why don't you ask to be a medic, give Vale a hand?

AMARI

Just might do that. Tired of killing. Just want to help people.

Amari looks around curiously. Listening.

AMARI (CONT'D)

There are no birds out. It's quiet today.

Taavi finishes shaving.

TAAVI

Hey little man. Doc. I got this thing on my balls I need you to look at.

AMARI

They itch?

TAAVI

Yeah man, matter of fact they do, a lot.

AMARI

Let me take out some lower ribs. Then you can reach to lick your own balls.

SERGEANT GABLE draws near to inspect the damaged tank.

GABLE

What the fuck are you ladies doing?
Help out with the tank crew.

TAAVI

(stands at attention)
We were awaiting further orders,
sir.

AMARI

(nods)
Yes, sir, we were.

Gable moves to the other side of the tank to talk to the crew and disappears. Taavi and Amari feign an attempt to work hastily with the crew. Taavi looks, watches for Gable to walk away.

TAAVI

Fucking Gable. Aunty Mable Gable.
Or how about just Mable?

AMARI

Mable.

TAAVI

I am a genius. The MAN at doing
this! I am the King of Nicknames!

AMARI

You are indeed.

Femi arrives to inspect the progress. He looks like he was going to yell in his face.

TAAVI

(not noticing him)
Captain Phlegmy says not to worry
too much. Reports indicate this
town had been mopped up a week ago.
He s-

Taavi's head explodes in a silent, pink mist. About 2 seconds later we hear the .50 cal shot.

FEMI

SNIPER!!!! 6 o'clock!

Amari scrambles for shelter under the tank, face covered in blood and brain tissue, oblivious to the same. He spits a piece of pink brain tissue out of his mouth.

SOLDIERS rush to cover close to the walls, behind tanks, vehicles or under the windows, or rubble. Most aim south firing for effect.

Femi gets cover behind a tank and looks for buildings where it could have come from. He sees one. Femi sees an apartment off in the distance with his binoculars.

FEMI (CONT'D)
 (kneeling, grabbing
 Taavi's shoulder gently)
 Sorry Taavi. That shot was meant
 for me.

Femi gets his map and sat phone, starts calling in coordinates. Immediately ARTILLERY SHELLS start hailing on a distant APARTMENT BUILDING.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT RUINS - DAY

Omari is interrogating three zip tied PRISONERS. He grabs the first one.

OMARI
 How many in the building?

PRISONER 1
 I don't know.

Omari slaps him hard, bursting his lip.

OMARI
 How many?

PRISONER 1
 I don't know.

Omari is having no more of this. He turns around and looks for TADEAS, 25, who is by a dusty Toyota PICKUP TRUCK with a .50 cal mounted to it.

OMARI
 Tadeas! Get a tire and gas!

OMARI (CONT'D)
 Sure you don't know?

PRISONER 1
 I don't know.

Tadeas soon returns with a TIRE and gas.

OMARI
Put the tire on him.

Prisoner 1's eyes widen. He shudders in fear, knowing full well what this means.

Amari is watching, transfixed. He wants to but he can't look away.

AMARI
(V.O.)
Despite everything I had already seen this time I truly needed to look away. But I couldn't. I was just frozen there.

Tadeas puts the tire over the prisoner. It fits him tightly. He pours gas around the tire.

OMARI
How many in the building?

PRISONER 1
I will die whether I tell you or not. So go fuck your mother in the ass, like everyone else does!

OMARI
Light him up, Tadeas.

The tire bursts into flames. Black smoke rises. Prisoner 1 starts screaming in agony. He finally collapses, rolling around on the ground as if it could somehow extinguish the fire.

CLOSE IN: Amari's frightened eyes.

FLASHBACK

Aadan on the porch, rolling around trying to extinguish his flames.

FLASHBACK ENDS

The other prisoners watch in horror.

PRISONER 2
There's two. Two.

OMARI
(to writhing and kicking Prisoner 1)
See, boy, that wasn't so hard. You didn't have to die this way.

OMARI (CONT'D)
 (to PRISONER 3)
 That true?

PRISONER 3
 Yes. Two.

Omari motions the prisoners to kneel.

OMARI
 Kneel.

They seem grateful they are going out this way. Omari shoots both in the back of the head.

INT. APARTMENT RUINS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amari enters with Femi to see a dying SNIPER, arm missing from a shell. Omari enters.

OMARI
 Taavi got it easy. He didn't suffer. You will.

Omari kicks the sniper.

OMARI (CONT'D)
 Amari, get Vale and fix him up.

AMARI
 Yes sir.

INT. APARTMENT RUINS - BEDROOM - DAY

Amari passes by a BEDROOM. The door is closed. Beside it is a dead soldier with an AR-15, clearly an M23 soldier, a saucer-sized hole in his belly. He was apparently guarding what was inside. Amari hears something. Whimpering. A shush.

Amari gently opens the door, very wary of the enemy possibly being inside. He motions for backup with his fingers and as three men arrive he kicks open the door.

Inside is a family of five. JONAH, 35, WINNIE, 30, and three children, MINA, 6, ANNE, 9, and MARK, 11. Hostages.

AMARI (CONT'D)
 Relax, we're not here to hurt you.

JONAH
 We had no choice. They forced us to hide them.

WINNIE

We had no choice.

Omari enters. He looks around and focuses intently on Jonah.

OMARI

You had no choice? Everyone has a choice, to do what's right or wrong. What you did is wrong. You harbored the enemy. A capital offense. Either they kill you or we do. That's your choice. You already made it your choice. They won't kill you so...

Jonah is ashen. He shakes his head wildly.

OMARI (CONT'D)

Sergeant Zack. Get the other boy.

SERGEANT ZACH returns with Abdalla.

OMARI (CONT'D)

Amari, Abdalla. Tie them up.

Amari and Abdalla grab their zip ties and do as they are told. They bind the family members but Amari starts with Jonah.

AMARI

(whispering to Jonah)

I'm sorry. This wasn't supposed to happen.

They are lined up against a wall. The children weep. The mother is stoic, Jonah stares angrily at Omari.

OMARI

Amari, Abdalla, you're men now.
Kill them.

Abdalla aims, his gun unstable in his nervous hands. Amari's gun jams. Abdalla fires wildly, missing all of them.

OMARI (CONT'D)

You did that on purpose.

Omari shoots Abdalla in the head, without a flinch. Amari fixes the jam. He aims at the family. Tears begin to stream down his cheek. He is unsteady, an eternal pause ensues. Amari looks at his best friend Abdalla by his side as blood runs to his boots.

OMARI (CONT'D)
You want to die too?

Amari fires. He empties his gun.

AMARI
No sir.

AMARI (CONT'D)
(V.O.)
I would never be the same again. I
looked at Omari and knew I hated
him that much more. He took
everything I was, all good in me
was now gone. I was like them now.

Omari points to the living room.

OMARI
Amari, go help the sniper. I want
him alive.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The sniper's bleeding has stopped. Someone has bandaged his
wound.

SNIPER
(weakly)
Not hostages... they were not
hostages.

Amari kneels over him.

AMARI
What is your name?

SNIPER
Mohammed.

AMARI
You will be alright, Mohammed. Our
doctors treat all wounded.

The sniper nods gratefully.

AMARI (CONT'D)
You in pain? Shoulder and back must
hurt like hell.

The sniper nods, winces.

AMARI (CONT'D)
Let me give you something for that.

Amari grabs his medic bag. He gets a bottle of morphine and a syringe. He fills the plunger with enough for an overdose. He injects the sniper.

The sniper's eyes close almost immediately. He stops breathing.

AMARI (CONT'D)
(to Omari)
He's sleeping.

Omari nods, walks away.

AMARI (CONT'D)
(V.O.)
Fuck you Omari. Vengeance is mine.

EXT. CHARLES DE GAULLE STREET - DUSK

The traffic jam has cleared, the blown tank removed. The march continues north. SLOW RUMBLING of tanks and vehicles.

EXT. APARTMENT RUINS - DUSK

A shaken Amari marches on through the rubble trying to keep to the tanks. This day has changed him. He has a THOUSAND-YARD STARE now, that blank, unfocused stare of detachment and disassociation.

AMARI
I'm going to gut you Omari. I'm
going to gut you like a fish.

INT. RICKY'S BAR - DAY

A near empty dive bar. Amari and NELSON, 25, sit at a table. The bartender, MARY, 35, is voluptuous and funny. She is straight-haired, light-skinned and popular. Her hair is dyed blue. She is wearing a white top that flatters her cleavage. Her jeans are tight, and almost look painted on. Mary is also married. Men fall in despair, knowing that, that she's married and not available anymore. And she knows how to mix a drink. Mary walks over to the jukebox and picks Pat Benatar's "Love is a Battlefield." She has it play three times.

Nelson calls out to POOL PLAYERS.

NELSON
Hey! Hey!

Clearly money is involved, wads of cash are on the table.

NELSON (CONT'D)
You gonna be done with that game soon?!

POOL PLAYER
(disinterested)
Play some cards instead. We're busy.

A drunk Amari and Nelson will try to forget the day, or at least numb themselves. Both have a whiskey in hand, having finished three each. Amari is chain smoking. Nelson is eating peanuts.

MARY
You gentleman fancy a cocktail? I see you've almost finished those whiskey shots.

AMARI
Sure Mary. What do you recommend?

MARY
An Adios, Motherfucker. My specialty.

AMARI
Sounds good. I'll have one.

NELSON
I will take one too.

Mary winks at Amari, then tends to other customers. They watch her walk away.

AMARI
Why does she always wink at me? Think she loves me?

NELSON
Look at that. She is amazing.

AMARI
Yes, I guess she is very pretty. But maybe she doesn't have the same effect on me as you.

NELSON
Why? You like men? Boys?

AMARI
Because I'm ten fucking years old! I can't even cum, stupid.

NELSON
I stand corrected.

AMARI
So you hate The Godfather. What is wrong with you?

NELSON
I just thought Caddyshack was better.

AMARI
Two different genres, my man. You're supposed to pick something similar.

NELSON
Caddyshack was an action drama. Like when that Irish girl gets pregnant and cries. That was sad.

AMARI
You're hopeless. What about horror? The Exorcist?

NELSON
Dr. Zhivago was better.

AMARI
Well, it was also a good movie, to be sure. Not horror.

NELSON
Yes it was. It was scary.

AMARI
That was not horror! You could have said something like The Omen or something.

NELSON
The Omen? That was a love story. Not scary.

AMARI
A love story about the anti-Christ? You're fuckin' crazy.

NELSON
And you're an idiot. What about the boy's nanny who would do anything for him? That was an undying love.

(MORE)

NELSON (CONT'D)

Or the housekeeper who hanged herself at the mansion party for Damien?

AMARI

Whatever.

NELSON

Best movie ever?

AMARI

The Key with Sofia Loren and William Holden. You?

NELSON

A movie people actually heard about: Santa Claus Conquers the Martians. It starred a very young Pia Zadora. 1964 classic. The Martians kidnap Santa Claus because there is no one on Mars to give their children presents.

The cocktails arrive. On her tray are two blue cocktails, nicely presented with a cherry and lemon wedge. Mary serves an Adios, Motherfucker to each, flirting.

MARY

Here you go boys. Enjoy.

AMARI

Thank you Mary. Very kind.

NELSON

Yes, thank you Mary.

Mary walks off, looking at her watch and singing along to Pat Benatar's "Love is a Battlefield." She is perfectly in tune.

AMARI

(tastes drink)

Hmm! It's sweet. It's good. Can't taste any alcohol. This is gonna get us so wasted. Best comedy?

NELSON

That's easy. Brian's Song.

AMARI

A movie about a football player with cancer?!

NELSON

It had some funny jokes. What's your vote?

AMARI

The Jerk.
(beat)
Best action movie?

NELSON

My Dinner with Andre.

AMARI

A movie about two old farts having dinner. You're fucking with me.

Nelson smiles wryly. He motions for Mary. She SMILES and promptly comes.

NELSON

Mary may we trouble you for some playing cards?

MARY

Yes, you may. I will get them right now.

Mary comes back with a deck, leaves with a bow.

Nelson begins to shuffle, dealing five cards to himself and Amari. Amari waxes somber.

AMARI

(softly)
I liked Taavi, man. Why'd he have to go out like that?

Nelson puts the cards down, nods.

NELSON

I liked him too.

AMARI

He was funny. Made fun of my hairless ball sack. I didn't mind. It's true. It's not like he was lying.

NELSON

What did you like most about him?

AMARI

His humor. He had a stupid nickname for everybody. I was Mammary.

(MORE)

AMARI (CONT'D)

Femi was Phlegmy. Omari was Atari.
Diallo was Pee Aloe.

Nelson raises glass to a Taavi in the sky. Amari too.

NELSON

To Taavi.

AMARI

Hey Nelson.

NELSON

What?

AMARI

We're never gonna get out of this outfit, this war, are we? Not alive. Or if not we are going to get old as fuck, like Omari's withered fat ass, and still be doing this.

NELSON

I don't know. Maybe. Amari?

AMARI

What?

NELSON

You're depressing as fuck. Shut the fuck up.

FADE OUT

EXT. REMOTE ROAD - DUSK

TWO TANKS and several other military vehicles are passing by. Amari is in full army gear, his AK-47 over his shoulder, into the direction of battle. He's marching alongside the tanks. His eyes are dead, lifeless, buried in their sockets.

CUT TO:

Amari is marching for a while with Tabor before something catches his attention. To his left there is a body, a M23 CORPSE 1. Amari notices the CORPSE'S face is missing, only a hole remains.

They pass by a dead soldier, enemy CORPSE 2, a disembodied head with limbs scattered about.

TABOR

My assesment? Separation anxiety.

Hundreds of flies feast over them.

Amari marches forward and more and more enemy bodies lay ahead.

Amari looks expressionless. He knows he is a dead man too.

MORTARS and ARTILLERY explode near them. One of them lands directly ahead, sending men and limbs flying. They keep moving. Amari sees a pair of LEGS fly near him.

Up ahead, Amari sees a man on the side of the road, twenty feet near a crater. MOVEMENT!

The man's lower torso had been blown away. It is 100 feet away.

Amari sees the doomed man and suddenly stops. He recognizes him. It's his friend Valdez. It is a surreal scene. Valdez is still very much alive, lucid. He is pulling his intestines back into his body, even though much of them remained in the lower torso.

Recognizing Amari, he calls to him.

VALDEZ
(crying out, pleading)
Amari, doc, come here, please!
Please! Don't leave me here!

Amari, throwing caution to the wind, steps out of formation and holds Valdez in his arms.

AMARI
My God, you're alive!

VALDEZ
Water! Please! Water!

Amari gives him his CANTEEN. Valdez is insanely thirsty. He is trying to drink it all at once.

VALDEZ (CONT'D)
(in shock)
My legs. I won't have children,
will I? I don't care. Where are my
legs?

Amari points. He looks. He winces. His mangled LOWER TORSO is about a hundred feet away, by the road, looking like bloody khakis and boots on a pair of mannequin legs.

VALDEZ (CONT'D)
(seeing them, strangely
serene)

Oh no.

(he drinks thirstily
again, water flowing down
his chin)

AMARI
Slowly, Valdez, slowly.

VALDEZ
Why?

AMARI
Because you'll die.

Valdez tries to give the canteen back.

VALDEZ
Here. Thank you, doc.

AMARI
Keep it.

VALDEZ
Do I have a chance? Can you help
me, like you helped Diko?

AMARI
No, my friend. But I can give you
something.
(Amari grabs some morphine
from his bag)

AMARI (CONT'D)
Would you like to sleep now?

VALDEZ
(knowingly)
Yes, please.

Amari injects him with an overdose of morphine.

AMARI
Look, I'm sorry, very sorry, but I
have to go.

VALDEZ
(eyes closing)
I know. God be with you, Amari.

The SOLDIERS continue to march, ignoring Valdez but indifferent to Amari's attempt to help. Amari gently lays Valdez down from his arms and steps back in line.

NELSON

He's only half the man he used to be. You know he's a dead man, right? Why did you even bother?

AMARI

Damn. I know two hated each other but show some respect! He was my friend. I would do the same for you.

NELSON

(smiles, shakes his head)
You're not going to make it through this. Too soft.

AMARI

You don't get it. We are already dead. We are all dead men.

A STREAM of SOLDIERS, TANKS, TRUCKS, TROOP CARRIERS and hundreds of troops, head back from the front. Many WOUNDED. The troops are terrified. They are marching double time. Some are running.

Diallo is in a JEEP approaching them, heading in the opposite direction. He goes down the line, unsettled, motioning with his finger to turn around.

DIALLO

FALL BACK! We've been ambushed! Get back to base camp! TURN THE FUCK AROUND!

The TROOPS halt, and turn around.

EXT. BASE CAMP - DUSK

The troops have barely arrived at the camp and the M23 army is at the perimeters. Mortars and artillery explode relentlessly in the camp. SOLDIERS are running out of the barracks and running to the perimeters.

While everyone else is rushing to battle, Amari notices Omari has already shit himself. He is running back and forth into the LATRINES, clearly suffering from diarrhea but trying to fight nonetheless.

EXT. PERIMETER #5 - AMARI'S FOXHOLE - NIGHT

Amari and Nelson are in their position. Nelson mans the CLAYMORES and Amari an M-60.

Amari opens fire. TEN ENEMY SOLDIERS are coming in from 90 feet away.

Nelson quickly sees them. Once in range he blows the claymores and they burst into pieces. Amari turns around to see if they're surrounded.

AMARI
Nothing behind us...

EXT. PLATOON CP - PERIMETER #2 - DUSK

Omari is barking orders, holding a map and calling his sat phone for support. He holds his belly, bending over. Amari sees him in the distance, and he is hypnotized.

Omari is running back into base. He is heading for the latrines.

EXT. PERIMETER #5 - AMARI'S FOXHOLE - NIGHT

AMARI
(under his breath)
You're mine, motherfucker!

Amari holds his stomach and pretends he is sick too.

AMARI (CONT'D)
Nelson, man, I'm in really bad shape. I'm gonna shit myself!

NELSON
So shit yourself!

AMARI
No.

NELSON
Then go! Just don't shit near us!
I'll man your gun.

AMARI
(holding his abdomen
tight, feigning diarrhea)
I will be here in a minute.

NELSON
You have five minutes! We can't spare anyone!

AMARI
Take my grenades, just in case!

EXT. PLATOON CP - PERIMETER #2 - NIGHT

POV: Amari runs to the toilets. CRATERS are all about. BODIES, and pieces of them, are everywhere in camp. He sees a body on the top of the BUNKER, eyes open, his face an expression of terror. Dying men, mangled, some crying for their mothers.

His rapist Akpan has his foot blown off. He's on the ground, rolling and moaning.

AKPAN
Mamma! Mamma!

AKPAN (CONT'D)
Amari, help me! Please!

AMARI
Calm down. I will help you.

Amari fires into his crotch.

AMARI (CONT'D)
Feel better? I do.

CLOSE IN: Femi as he stumbles for his left ARM. He grabs it, holds it tight.

FEMI
(panicked)
MEDIC! GET A MEDIC! AMARI!

Amari ignores him, keeps running.

EXT./INT. LATRINES - DAY

Running quickly, Amari heads into the latrines and sees Omari as he is relieving himself. Amari looks around to see if they are alone.

He runs to stand in front of Omari. He is too surprised to grab his weapon.

AMARI
Hands up motherfucker!

Omari slowly raises his hands. Omari is facing a boy of ten. He is staring down the barrel of an AK-47.

OMARI
 (whispers)
 Is this what I created?

Tears of rage are now streaming down Amari's face as he holds his weapon unsteadily in his hands.

AMARI
 You killed me before I was born,
 Omari, when I was an innocent man
 named Jabari.

Amari's voice is cracking, suddenly getting deeper and deeper, like a grown man's.

AMARI (CONT'D)
 I was born about ten years ago and
 when I was Jabari you made me watch
 as you killed my family.
 (voice cracking)
 You shot me in the head.

Amari points to his birthmark.

AMARI (CONT'D)
 You shot me right here.

Amari is now fully channeling Jabari's deep voice. He roars

AMARI (CONT'D)
 I told you my revenge would be "in
 this lifetime or the next." I meant
 your lifetime, not mine!

OMARI
 (in total disbelief)
 I didn't kill an innocent man,
 Amari. You killed my brother! You
 admitted it!

AMARI
 I lied to save my family!

OMARI
 You killed my little brother,
 Amari.

AMARI
 (enraged)
 IT'S JABARI! You knew I was
 innocent! My family was innocent!
 (pointing at him)
 You admitted it!

OMARI
That's a lie!

AMARI
Your turn!

Amari fixes his bayonet rapidly, making sure to keep aiming. Omari struggles to raise the gun at his side as he does. Too late. He plunges it into Omari's belly, a SIGH OF OOZING BELLY GAS expelling as he does. Amari is gutting him like a fish.

He fires his weapon on full automatic. CLOSE IN: Amari's FACE, his EYES. Unblinking, FLASHES of light on his thousand-yard stare.

Amari empties his clip. He grabs another and reloads.

He fires again. Amari looks down as urine approaches his BOOT. Omari has pissed himself. Omari's chest is a gaping hole. Little is left of his head.

AMARI (CONT'D)
(V.O.)
His face... that odious, terrible face that made me sick to my stomach, that made me tremble with fear and was the subject of countless nightmares, it was finally gone. Some say revenge leaves you feeling empty inside, like you will always grieve over the fact that you can't bring back the people you lost. But that day I was satisfied.

Silence.

Amari runs back out, he grabs two guns and multiple banana clips from the dead soldiers. He heads back to his position.

EXT. AMARI'S PERIMETER - NIGHT

Amari jumps back into his foxhole. Nelson hands him back his weapon. He looks very nervous.

NELSON
Took you long enough!

AMARI
I'm sorry. Nelson, we are being totally overrun. We are surrounded.

NELSON
(wearily)
I know. We are so fucking dead,
Amari.

EXT. PERIMETER #6 - TABOR'S FOXHOLE - NIGHT

An RPG hits the foxhole. MAWULI is blown to pieces. Tabor screams.

TABOR
MEDIC!

Amari rushes to his side and examines him. Tabor is riddled with large pieces of shrapnel, his leg is gone. He is bleeding to death. He is coughing up a lot of blood, with a sickening DEATH GURGLE as he tries to breathe.

AMARI
You're going to be ok, man. Hang
on.

Amari rushes to apply a tourniquet on his leg, bandage his wounds.

TABOR
Flesh wound right?

AMARI
Yes.

TABOR
(coughing, spitting blood)
I'm gonna die, aren't I?

AMARI
Perception is reality. Is that what
you choose to believe? What you
want to believe? That you will die?

TABOR
(nods)
Honestly? I want to die. I was
never afraid of death. I was afraid
of life.

AMARI
(takes his hand)
You're a pussy.

Tabor looks down at where his leg used to be.

TABOR
Hey.

AMARI
What?

TABOR
Hey...

AMARI
Yes?

TABOR
You have my permission to make fun
of me after I die. Just make it
funny. You were never as good as
me. I'll be watching, from up
above.

EXT./INT. CAMP - NIGHT

REINFORCEMENTS arrive and begin to break through the
encirclement. There is a fierce, desperate battle and hand to
hand fighting.

CUT TO:

WOUNDED soldiers flow in. They have pushed back and repelled
M23. M23 are lined up on their knees. They are EXECUTED by
Diallo, one by one. He kills about 20.

INT. LATRINES - NIGHT

IKE, 17, enters the latrines, then runs out.

IKE
The general is dead! Someone has
killed the general!

Diallo hears the commotion. He asks Ike what happened as
troops scramble to the latrines.

IKE (CONT'D)
Someone shot the general. Omari is
dead in the latrines.

Diallo runs to the latrines and pushes the soldiers aside. He
approaches the body of his friend.

DIALLO
(enraged)
LOCK DOWN THE CAMP!

Amidst the commotion, Amari sees an opportunity to escape.

EXT. RAINFOREST - NIGHT

Amari runs into the RAINFOREST. He is careful to do it unnoticed.

EXT. BASE CAP - NIGHT

DIALLO
(to troops)
Line up for a head count, now!!!

The TROOPS are lined up and Diallo reads from a long list to see who is present. He compares them to the long list of the dead. Eventually he gets to Amari, who doesn't answer.

DIALLO (CONT'D)
Round up a search party! Get the search dogs and split up into three groups! It's Amari! Amari can't be far from here!

EXT. RAINFOREST - EAST - NIGHT

Amari is running through the forest. Then he stops after a while to catch a breath and rest. He soon hears BARKING German shepherds and troops coming after him.

They're too close. He has to fight. Amari aims for the dogs. Fires a burst of three rounds. A dog howls. The other draws even closer, 90 yards away. He aims again. Another burst. The second dog howls. Now he fires back at the soldiers, hitting two. Bullets whiz by him, some hitting the dirt near him, or splintering trees where he tries to find cover.

He gets up quickly, and gets moving again.

EXT. RAINFOREST - WEST- NIGHT

There are TROOPS in front of him, and behind him. As they see him they begin firing, an athen Amari begins running again. The TROOPS begin to spread out.

AMARI
(V.O.)
How can they see me? How did they come so fast?

A shot hits his HELMET with a dull thud, knocking him down. He removes his helmet and examines his head, looking for blood. There is none. There is only a hole and exit hole in the helmet. He quickly puts it back on, relieved, gets up and starts running again.

Amari is a small target, and he finds a tree with enough space to cover and conceal him. He covers himself in foliage and lies in wait. He will take them on one at a time, or die trying.

Ade approaches. He appears weary of searching. He stops with MANDLA, 30. He grabs a cigarette and lights it up. They cannot see Amari, but he can see them in the moonlight.

POV: Amari takes aim, breathes, holds his breath, and fires 4 shots, hitting both before they know what hit them.

Amari escapes his cover, and looks for another ambush point. He finds none. He keeps running.

EXT. STREAM - NIGHT

Amari approaches a STREAM and he quickly wades through neck deep water, holding his gun above his head. Bullets hit the water near him. He moves downstream until the gunfire fades.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAINFOREST - NIGHT

Amari continues walking through the rainforest. He hears a CLICK and completely stops, petrified.

POV: His BOOT is frozen in place.

AMARI

(V.O.)

It all took place in less than a second. I stepped on a mine. Time stood still.

FLASHBACK

Hibo tucking him in. Abdalla giving him his laptop. Chima taking him to work. Zuri laughing with him. Iman serving him dinner, tears in her eyes. Hibo and Amari visiting Jabari's grave, laying flowers on it.

END FLASHBACK

AMARI (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I froze there, waiting for the mine to go off. You see it's not like in the movies. After the "click", if there is one, the mine explodes in real life. I was a dead man.

The sound of SOLDIERS approaching from all sides. They are drawing closer and closer. The firing starts again. They see him. A round hits a tree next to him. Then a second. Amari closes his eyes and steps off the mine...

Nothing. Amari stumbles forwards, and runs as fast as he can. Getting up, he runs blindly.

AMARI (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

God was watching out for me. The mine was poorly buried, disarmed or defective.

Desperate, Amari climbs a tree, hiding high in the branches. The SOLDIERS approach him. They look around carefully, for what seems to be an endless amount of time.

Amari can hear familiar voices.

NELSON

I just can't believe it was him.
Last person I would expect.

KWAMI

Those are always the ones. My God,
did you see what he did to Omari?

NELSON

Yes. Definitely won't be an open
casket burial.

KWAMI

Think he'll make it out of here?

NELSON

No.

The SOLDIERS move on.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAINFOREST - DAWN

Amari is finally satisfied he is not in danger anymore. He makes his way down the tree, then starts walking.

Amari, exhausted, sits against a tree. He stares into space.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Amari sits alone, having a beer. Omari walks in and sits in front of a startled Amari. He smiles.

OMARI

You can't get rid of me that easily.

AMARI

I just did. You're dead.

OMARI

Am I?

The door opens, flooding the room with white light. Abdalla enters, smiling warmly as he sees his friend Amari. He orders a soda. The bartender, an astonishingly beautiful woman of 25 named SALLY, strikes a dreamlike figure. She is white. Her hair blonde, long and in a bun. She is very pale with deep blue eyes, she is very out of place here. She's in jeans and a white top.

ABDALLA

Just a soda, please.

SALLY

Of course.

More white light. Tobar enters the bar and waves at Amari.

TOBAR

Amari. You're early.

AMARI

Early? What do you mean?

Tobar orders a drink at the bar.

Ade follows soon after. He looks at Amari, disinterestedly. Amari's friends shun him, so he is forced to sit alone.

Taavi enters. He waves at Amari, sits with Tobar, Abdalla and Valdez.

TAAVI

Come, little man. Come sit with us.

Taavi, Tobar, Abdalla and Valdez look on at Amari. Valdez smiles warmly, waves him over.

Tobar shakes his head and motions for him to stop. He does so sadly, as if to say "don't move, stay there."

Amari sits still. He shakes his head.

AMARI

I'm fine here, thanks.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Where are we?

OMARI

(laughs)

You will never get rid of me,
Jabari.

AMARI

Where are we?

Omari starts to laugh harder.

OMARI

You're a killer now.

Sally brings them both a drink.

SALLY

On the house.

AMARI

(to Sally)

Where are we?

SALLY

You don't know?

AMARI

No, I don't. Where are we?

SALLY

Here.

Sally points behind her at a large blue flickering neon sign. It reads "HELL."

The door opens again. More white light floods in. NELSON enters last. He orders a drink and waves hello to Amari.

AMARI

Bartender, is everyone in here
dead?!

Sally smiles, and nods.

INT. HUT - DAY

Diallo kicks Amari awake. He had been sleeping on the ground after collapsing from exhaustion. He is now staring down a gun barrel.

DIALLO

Get up! Get up!

Amari gets up slowly, totally defeated.

DIALLO (CONT'D)

Why did you do it Amari? Why?

AMARI

He killed my family. And you were
there, too.

Soldiers grab him and force him to kneel. Diallo grabs a machete and strikes Amari hard in the back of the neck. His head is severed in one sharp, painful fell swoop.

POV: Amari. A short fall, his face strikes the ground ignominiously and his head rolls. His head stops only to stare straight at his headless body, blood spurting out of his neck. Diallo grabs him by the hair. Amari is staring into Diallo's triumphant face.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAINFOREST - DAY

Amari wakes up for real this time, screaming. He looks around him, trembling, sweating. He is alone. His neck is in pain. He can't move his neck. He had pinched a nerve.

He gets up quickly, and continues moving. He eventually sees a highway.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Amari remembers this highway.

AMARI

(V.O.)

I know where I am now. M23 controls this.

Amari walks along it, then changes his mind. He decides to keep it in view by hiding in the rainforest nearby, hiding when he sees traffic or people. He does it just in time. A TROOP CONVOY is coming down the highway. He scrambles back into the rainforest.

Amari sees Nelson approach.

Amari can't bring himself to fire. He lowers his weapon. So does Nelson.

They refuse to fire on each other. Nelson catches up with Amari and they begin to walk together.

NELSON

I'm lost Amari.

AMARI

We are on a road controlled by M23.
We are about 100 miles north of
Brazzaville.

NELSON

Is that where you are headed?

AMARI

Yes.

Enemy troops open fire on them. They run for cover. They wait for the shooting to stop.

Nelson begins to walk. Amari follows. He winces in pain and is soon holding his right side. He examines his hand and sees a lot of blood.

NELSON

I'm hit, Amari.

Amari grabs a bandage from his med kit and treats him as best as he can.

AMARI

Just keep applying pressure.

Nelson soldiers on, and walks, holding his side. Talking to Amari.

NELSON

Do you have anything for pain?

AMARI
I'm out, sorry.

NELSON
Where am I hit?

AMARI
It's a gut shot, Nelson. It's not good. We need to get you help. I'm out of morphine and antibiotics.

NELSON
Gut shot? That's what I thought. I was hoping it was a lower rib or something. Here. Take my ammo.

Amari takes his ammo, knowing where this is going.

AMARI
Just talk to me. Talk to me about movies.

NELSON
Oh that shit again.

AMARI
Then talk to me about that bartender you like.

NELSON
Okay. Yeah, her. My baby... I look at her, and after the awe, there is a tremendous sadness that comes over me.

AMARI
Why?

NELSON
I think she is an artist's muse. And I guess I'm sad because I am not an artist. I wonder what it would've been like to wake up to her. To watch movies together and have her scared, holding me close. To shower with her. To make love to her. To grow old together. What our children would look like...

A beat.

NELSON (CONT'D)
On second thought, let's talk about movies.

(MORE)

NELSON (CONT'D)

This really does make me want her to the point of a deep pain in my chest.

AMARI

Okay. Ever see Ben Hur?

NELSON

Who hasn't? I loved that movie. Funniest shit I ever saw.

AMARI

Man, you're a nut. Ever see The Graduate?

NELSON

Yeah. I would so bone Anne Bancroft.

AMARI

Her daughter was much, much more beautiful. You're crazy.

NELSON

What can I say? I like a little gray in the pubes.

AMARI

Talk to me about something that you look forward to after this war.

NELSON

Seeing my family again. My parents, siblings.

AMARI

But they're dead, Nelson.

NELSON

I know.

They walk for about two miles. A weak Nelson stumbles, taking his hand off the bandage. Blood pours out. A lot of blood.

Nelson's face is very, very pale. He is sweating profusely. He stands up weakly, groaning as quietly as he can. Amari helps him apply pressure again.

NELSON (CONT'D)

I smell like shit, Amari.

AMARI

The bullet pierced your guts.

Amari puts Nelson's arm around him and attempts to hold him up but he is too heavy.

NELSON

Just let me down, Amari. I'm tired.
Let me rest.

AMARI

No, we have to keep moving. Please
Nelson, I don't have any friends
left. They're all dead.

Nelson finally collapses and stares into the sky. He's shivering.

NELSON

I'm cold, Amari. My teeth are
chattering. Did it get cold?

AMARI

No, Nelson. You're in shock.

AMARI (CONT'D)

Nelson?

NELSON

I'm tired...

Nelson stops breathing. Amari looks into his eyes. He's seen this stare before, too many times.

Amari has a moment of silence over his body, and moves on.

AMARI

(V.O.)

I thought about the dream in bar.
How everyone in there was dead. I
knew I was next.

AMARI (CONT'D)

I guess I'm really next, Nelson.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRAZZAVILLE - NIGHT

A weary Amari walks into the city. He is not far from home now.

EXT./INT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

A BUS pulls up and Amari enters. He pays and takes a seat. The bus drives off.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Amari takes off his helmet again. He examines the holes again, then holds it on his lap.

AMARI

Thank you God. Thank you.

EXT./INT. AMARI'S HOME - NIGHT

Chima and Hibo awaken to the sound of someone knocking at the door.

HIBO

(very groggy)

It's 2 am. Chima can you get the door please?

CHIMA

This better be fuckin' important.

Chima goes to answer it. He opens the door to find a very weary Amari. He collapses on the floor in exhaustion.

AMARI

I didn't run away. The soldiers took me when I was walking to school. It took me this long to escape.

Chima is ecstatic. He embraces the boy and lifts him in his arms.

CHIMA

Hibo, come down! Now! Someone wants to see you!

INT. AMARI'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A curious Hibo comes down the stairs into the living room. She sees Amari and is shocked. Tears of gratitude and happiness run down her face as she runs over to the boy. She kisses him profusely.

HIBO

Amari, what happened?

AMARI

I was abducted by the army. They forced me to kill. They changed me, mother. They changed me.

HIBO

How?

AMARI

They made me kill innocent people, mother. I am evil now.

HIBO

(shakes her head
vigorously)

No, son. You are not. That's not you. They forced you.

Amari is half-asleep now, struggling to keep his eyes open.

AMARI

Mother, I am so tired. I just want to sleep right now.

HIBO

You must be hungry though. Please have some dinner first.

AMARI

No mother. I just want to sleep.

HIBO

Okay. Rest, son. Get some rest.

Chima lifts Amari and takes him up the stairs. Hibo follows.

INT. AMARI'S HOME - AMARI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Amari drops into bed, on the duvet. He is too tired to change clothing and decides to sleep in his bloody uniform.

Hibo removes his boots, then his socks. His FEET are blistered and bleeding. His toe nails are a reddish black, large burst blisters are bleeding.

HIBO

Chima, honey, could you grab me some disinfectant and bandages please? For his feet? And a bowl of soap and water?

CHIMA

Be right back.

Chima heads downstairs.

Hibo caresses Amari's hair. He stares into space. It's that thousand-yard stare again. She kisses his forehead.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM

Chima grabs disinfectant and bandages from a cabinet. He takes a bar of soap.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Chima grabs a bowl and fills it with water.

INT. AMARI'S ROOM

Chima is soon back. He gives the items to Hibo.

Hibo cleans Amari's feet. She tenderly washes and bandages his feet. She looks at him and he is fast asleep.

INT. AMARI'S ROOM - DAY

Amari stirs awake. He looks confused. He looks at his uniform. He sees his mangled feet are bandaged and his boots and socks are laid neatly aside the bed.

AMARI

What is this?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chima and Hibo are at the kitchen table, having coffee. They see Amari.

CHIMA

Afternoon son! How are your feet?

HIBO

Amari my love! How are you feeling?

AMARI

(limping)

Why am I wearing this uniform? Why is it all bloody?

HIBO
(surprised)
You don't remember?

AMARI
No. What year is it?

HIBO
2003.

AMARI
Look I don't remember anything. I
don't remember the last year. It is
all black.

HIBO
(concerned)
You were abducted by the army
eleven months ago.

AMARI
How did I get back here?

CHIMA
We don't know.

HIBO
Do you remember your previous life?

AMARI
What previous life?

HIBO
When you were Jabari.

AMARI
(lips quiver as he tries
to maintain himself, then
full on weeping)
Jabari?! Who's that? I don't
remember anything!! Who am I?
Mother what's wrong with me?!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hibo dials the phone. Zuri answers.

HIBO
Zuri? This is Hibo Budd. You used
to treat my son.

ZURI

(O.S.)

Yes, of course. Wonderful child. An amazing case. How can I help you?

HIBO

God has blessed us. He's back. But he doesn't remember anything.

ZURI

(O.S.)

I have an opening today at 5. Can you bring him in?

HIBO

Yes, of course. We will see you then.

A knock on the door. It's Bamidelle.

BAMIDELLE

Your mom called us. I heard you were back.

AMARI

Yes, I am. But I don't know from where. I don't know what happened. But I remember you.

His friend looks puzzled. Amari embraces him warmly, tightly.

INT. ZURI'S OFFICE - DUSK

Amari is sitting attentively on the couch. He looks strange out of his uniform. He is wearing loose tennis shoes to accommodate the bandages, and wearing black slacks and a short-sleeve light blue shirt. He has a haircut now. His face is clean. This time he is holding the TEDDY BEAR tightly.

ZURI

Hi Amari. I haven't seen you in a while. Would you like some water?

AMARI

Please, ma'am.

Zuri grabs a bottle of water from her mini-fridge in the office. She takes one for herself as well. She gives one to Amari.

ZURI

Like I said, it's wonderful to see you again, Amari.

AMARI

(puzzled)

This is the first time I have seen you. Are you sure you've met me before?

Surprised, Zuri puts her pencil on her yellow pad. She looks concerned.

ZURI

I have been treating you for five years.

AMARI

I must be really sick then, with my memory.

ZURI

So you don't remember anything? How far back can you remember?

AMARI

I draw a blank. My life seems a blur. Last night I came home in a bloody uniform. I had a helmet with a hole in it. Why? Where was I? All I can remember is the smell of shit and cordite. I can smell it, faintly, on my uniform.

ZURI

Cordite?

AMARI

Smokeless gunpowder. It smells like popped firecrackers.

ZURI

Did your parents bring the uniform?

AMARI

My mom did.

Zuri calls the receptionist.

ZURI

Marcy, dear, this is Zuri. Could you please call in Mrs. Budd?

ZURI (CONT'D)

Let me see your hands.

Zuri examines his hands, looking for callouses. She finds them. And an M1 Thumb, an injured black thumbnail, from a Garand rifle.

ZURI (CONT'D)
Your hands are calloused, rough,
like those of a ditch digger.
You're a muscular boy now. What
happened to your hands?

AMARI
Don't know. That's why I'm here, I
guess. To find out.

A knock.

ZURI
Please come in.

Hibo step in. She has her purse and a clear plastic bag.
Inside is the UNIFORM and helmet.

ZURI (CONT'D)
Is that the uniform?

HIBO
Yes.

ZURI
Could I have it?

Hibo hands it over.

ZURI (CONT'D)
(grabs it)
Thank you Mrs. Budd. You can step
outside now. Be there in a bit.

Zuri examines the uniform patches. She sees one. KAMWIMA
NSAPU, 23rd INFANTRY. She shudders. AMARI BUDD. The uniform
is indeed bloody. She examines the helmet.

AMARI
What's that?

ZURI
This helmet here. Someone shot
through it. Remember anything?

AMARI
No, but I do think that thing is
pretty cool.

ZURI
I guess it is.

AMARI
Nobody can tell me who I am. I showered and my feet were blistered badly, and a mess. They bled. They still hurt. Wanna see? I'll take the bandages off. It actually looks gross, but is still kind of neat. Like taking off a scab, you know.

ZURI
(laughs)
No, Amari, thank you. I believe you.

AMARI
Who am I?

ZURI
I am sure answers will come in time, Amari. How about your dreams?

AMARI
What dreams?

ZURI
The bad ones.

Amari tries to remember. He thinks hard.

AMARI
I had a dream last night. But it wasn't bad.

Zuri writes in her yellow pad, rapidly.

ZURI
Tell me.

AMARI
I was walking along a road traveled by many, many people. As far as the eye could see. There is a lot of green grass and many fat cattle graze, white roses adorn the road. The air is cool, sky is blue, the weather is perfect.

(beat)
A man and his family walk up next to me. It is a doctor, his three children and his wife.

(MORE)

AMARI (CONT'D)

She was very beautiful, straight-haired and angelic, in a dress and white sandals. "Amari," the man said to me, "you have done well. You are a good boy and will be a great man."

ZURI

Do you recognize them?

AMARI

No.

Amari smiles from the dream. He opens his water bottle and takes a long drink.

AMARI (CONT'D)

His family looks at me, smiling, like they know me. They nod. "You are a good man. No one can take that from you." "Who are you?" I asked. He smiled wide and answered "you." They start to walk ahead of me as I tried to make sense of his answer, and in the blink of an eye they are soon far off in the distance. They disappear in a fog. I wake up.

FADE TO BLACK.

END