

## THE MEETING HOUSE

FADE IN.

1 INT. DORMITORY - PRISONER OF WAR CAMP, MARCH 1945 - DAY 21 1

A gang of exhausted prisoners of war enter a dormitory and climb into their bunks. They fall silent as a HATARI (15), a teenage guard, enters. His SERGEANT (45) waits at the door.

Sub-title: ~ **The Empire of Japan, 1944** ~

JAPANESE SERGEANT  
You! Black prisoner! You are  
wanted. *Subayai*. (Quick)

MAKORONGO  
Me? Why me?

MAKORONGO(39) hauls himself out of his bunk helped by TOKI(20) his Tanganyikan compatriot. Hatari yanks him upright and grabs him by a Red Cross band on his sleeve. He leers at the Kenyan POWS, BRIGHT(20), JABU(17) and KENYAN(23), who move forward with CHUCK(27) a Californian Airman.

CHUCK  
I'm sorry, I'm so sorry pal.

MAKORONGO  
Thanks, but this looks like the  
end.

TOKI  
Not yet, surely?

HATARI  
Come! Now. Come.

MAKORONGO  
*Kwa heri. Kwa Herini. Goodbye.*

CHUCK  
Don't worry. These guys are about  
to be flattened by Allied fire.

TOKI  
Won't this camp be bombed too?

CHUCK  
We'll all be incinerated. When our  
guys bomb Tokyo it'll make Pearl  
Harbor look like a kid's picnic.

2

EXT. YARD - PRISONER OF WAR CAMP - 1945 - DAY 21

2

The flag of Japan flies above the POW camp yard.

As the Sergeant and Hatari shove Makorongo towards a wooden administration block where a DIPLOMATIC CAR is parked, Makorongo turns and speaks straight to the camera.

MAKORONGO

Operation Meetinghouse, March 1945.  
The single most horrific bombing  
raid in history. We Africans knew  
it would mean death. Back in  
Tanganyika our Meeting House was  
built with skulls of our enemies.

3

EXT. MEETING HOUSE - AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1914 - DAY 1

3

An ancient SKULL juts out of the cracked red adobe wall of an open-sided meeting house in an East African village.

HANS-WERNER(9) an attractive blond German boy turns his face to reveal a disfigurement on one side of his jaw. He jumps off the thatched roof clutching a metal TOY TRAIN.

A huge WaArusha CHIEF(34) erupts from inside to confront him.

CHIEF

What are you doing?

Hans twists away, leaps over a row of clay pots, dives under a chicken coop and avoids a barking dog on a long chain.  
Subtitle:

Goats scatter as Hans runs past a smoky outdoor cooking fire.

Sub-title: ~ **The colony of German East Africa, 1914** ~

The bare-chested Chief doubles back, squeezes between grain-stores, scoops the boy under one arm and strides off.

4

EXT. COFFEE BUSHES - AFRICAN FARM - 1914 - DAY 1

4

MGANGA, a tall African holding the stave of a witchdoctor, watches the Chief carry Hans-Werner past WOMEN in traditional WaArusha dress picking lemons. Kilimanjaro lies beyond them.

Hans spots a vulture skull hanging from Mganga's stave.

CHIEF

Keep still or your ears will bleed.

A large grey GO-AWAY BIRD squawks as it flies from a tree.

GO-AWAY BIRD  
Go 'way! Go 'way!

5 EXT. PLATFORM - MOSHI RAILWAY STATION - 1914 - DAY 1 5

The lion and eagle of German East Africa is stamped on the front panel of a locomotive that arrives at a simple station.

HASANI(40), a dignified Tanganyikan, opens a 3rd class carriage door and descends with a BUNDLE OF BELONGINGS.

YOUNG MAKORONGO(9) moves to the carriage door and looks around. He takes his father's hand and jumps down.

They walk past a uniformed Asian GUARD holding a red flag. Young Makorongo looks up at a sign reading MOSHI.

Hasani walks past the engine to find the end of the line. A GOAT sits on the tin roof of a shack, but there is no town.

HASANI  
It is quieter here than I expected.

The boiler safety valve lets off a sudden excess of steam.

As Makorongo turns to stare up at the funnel, the Guard points Hasani towards the solitary volcano of Mount Meru.

HASANI (CONT'D)  
Come my boy. Makorongo, come!  
'The flowing water of the river  
does not wait for a thirsty man'.

Hasani strides past a road sign to ARUSHA and the flag of 'German East Africa' flying on a rough hewn pole.

6 EXT. DIRT ROAD BELOW KILIMANJARO - 1914 - DAY 1 6

An African fish eagle perched on a tree watches Hasani and Young Makorongo walk down a dusty red earth road.

(O.V.) HASANI: 'See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, because the days are evil.'

(O.V.) YOUNG MAKORONGO: How can days be evil?

(O.V.) HASANI: They can be difficult. We must grasp any opportunity to do good.

The eagle takes off in front of the snow-capped Kilimanjaro.

7 EXT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA BELOW KILIMANJARO - 1914 - DAY 1 7

Hasani and Young Makorongo walk down an avenue of Jacaranda trees towards a bungalow with a wide veranda passing an East African NANNY(50) playing with Hans' SISTER(2) in the garden.

(O.S.) East African songbirds. A dachshund barks.

The bare-chested Chief sets Hans-Werner down as his father, a Prussian BARON (39) descends the veranda steps.

BARON

Hans-Werner! What were you doing at the Meeting House?

HANS-WERNER

I wanted to ask the Chief to mend my locomotive.

CHIEF

It is the village elders who need mending now.

The Chief laughs and walks off. His shadow glides across Young Makorongo, who waits on the lawn with the bundle.

The Baron strides up to shake Hasani's hand in welcome.

HASANI

Hasani - I am the cook from Usambara...

BARON

I do apologize. I need someone to help control my son.

Hasani smiles at the furious Hans, disregarding his scars.

HASANI

Is he eating enough greens?

BARON

Do you know how to make schnitzel?

HASANI

Schnitzel, the dumplings, strudel, mayonnaise! Thick mayonnaise.

BARON

Can you wait at table?

HASANI

I can wait anywhere.

Hasani hands the Baron his LETTERS of reference.

8 INT. SITTING ROOM & HANS'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - DAY 1 8

Hans-Werner storms past his mother, a Silesian BARONESS(30) wearing a high lace collar followed by a DACHSHUND.

BARONESS  
Hans-Werner, darling!

Hans ignores her, flops onto a bed swathed in mosquito netting, and flings his broken train across the floor.

9 EXT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA BELOW KILIMANJARO - DAY 1 9

Young Makorongo watches the Baron read Hasani's references as the Nanny swings the little girl onto her back and walks off.

BARON  
Do you have family with you?

HASANI  
Just Makorongo, my boy.

Makorongo sees the references being handed to the Baroness as a GROOM brings the Baron a saddled-up chestnut HORSE.

Hans comes outside to hand his broken train to his mother but she reads while the Baron mounts his horse and trots off.

BARONESS  
Not now, Hans-Werner.

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
Can I help?

Hans sees the boy of his age.

HANS-WERNER  
What do you know about trains?

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
We came from Usumbura on one.

HANS-WERNER  
Did you? Really?

Young Makorongo offers his hands. Hans sits down and gives him the toy, which Makorongo starts to click back together.

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
It hissed like a snake.

HANS-WERNER  
We have a steam engine here.

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
Do you? Can I see it?

The Baroness sees her son has found a friend.

BARONESS  
When can you start work, Hasani?

10 EXT. TALL TREES - AFRICAN FARM - 1914 - DAY 2 10

A flock of SACRED IBIS take off.

Hans-Werner runs barefoot, pushing Young Makorongo in a WHEELBARROW in the dappled sunlight beneath tall trees.

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
Faster, faster!

Hans-Werner pushes his new friend past WaArusha WOMEN wearing traditional leather aprons with laden baskets on their heads.

11 EXT. BARNYARD - AFRICAN FARM - 1914 - DAY 2 11

OOM SWANEY, a bearded Afrikaans *transporteer* in a wide-brimmed hat, adjusts a harness as WaArusha LABORERS load hessian bales onto a wagon pulled by six long-horned OXEN.

A RIDGEBACK hound looks up as Hans-Werner pushes the wheelbarrow past the Baron who fixes a pipe to a new PUMP.

The wheelbarrow halts and Young Makorongo is tipped out onto a pile of sacks stamped with the words: SISAL - ARUSHA

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
What does this say?

HANS-WERNER  
Can't you read?

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
Not yet.

HANS-WERNER  
I'll teach you.

A little African GIRL stares at Hans-Werner's scared face as he writes his name in the sand.

Oom Swaney squats in front of the Baron's new pump.

BARON

This will increase production by a hundred percent simply by pumping water from the Oosa River.

OOM SWANEY

Will the farmers downstream not suffer?

BARON

Don't you want to increase efficiency?

OOM SWANEY

What must we do if it breaks down?

BARON

There's no danger of that. It's made in Germany.

Makorongo looks up as the Baron takes out his GOLD POCKET WATCH and looks over the wagon as Hans writes in the sand.

BARON (CONT'D)

You should think of replacing these oxen with one of the lorries being imported from the Fatherland.

OOM SWANEY

How will we purchase fuel if trouble in Europe flares up?

BARON

What do you know about that?

OOM SWANEY

I'd start making plans if I were you. *'Jy krap met 'n kort stokkie aan 'n groot leeu se bal, tjommie'*  
(You better watch out)

He laughs as Hans-Werner pours sand onto Makorongo's head.

BARON

Ach, might have to nip back to Silesia for a few weeks. Don't want the British thinking they can come down from Kenya and take this country. Hans-Werner! Where's your hat? This sun will kill you.

The boys stop larking about.



HANS-WERNER

Will it? What about the moon, the stars?

BARON

Your scar tissue could flare up.

HANS-WERNER

The elders are saying the pump will anger the water spirit, Papa.

BARON

Nonsense. It's fine.

12 EXT. FIELDS - AFRICAN FARM - EARLY MORNING - DAY 3 12

A BATELEUR EAGLE soars above the farm. Its shadow falls on the two boys as they run hatless and barefoot along a track.

HANS-WERNER

Can we find a python?

YOUNG MAKORONGO

Not without risk - they bite.

HANS-WERNER

I want to catch a big one.

13 EXT. OOSA RIVER & SISAL PLANTATION - AFRICAN FARM - DAY 3 13

Hans laughs, joining Young Makorongo as they run onto a bridge over the Oosa River. They look down steep banks.

A group of WaArusha MAIDENS (7-17) collect water in GOURDS and calabashes, heaving them onto their heads.

Young Makorongo spots two PORCUPINE QUILLS at his feet.

YOUNG MAKORONGO

Look, porcupine quills! I'm going to keep these for my wife.

HANS-WERNER

Why do you want to get married?

YOUNG MAKORONGO

I like girls. We have to prove ourselves as warriors first though.

Hans touches his scared face thinking it would revolt a girl.

HANS-WERNER

I don't think the girls where we're  
going will like me. Let's find a  
python.

Hans turns to run on but Mganga approaches and leans over the  
rail to pick *msasa* pods, putting them in a goatskin bag.

YOUNG MAKORONGO

We're not allowed to go up there.

HANS-WERNER

All right - choose. There, or the  
Meeting House?

Mganga reacts to the words 'Meeting House'. Young Makorongo  
stares back at him knowing it is a venerable place.

HANS-WERNER (CONT'D)

Come on. I want to show you  
something. Quick!

Mganga silently curses the boys who run up to a sisal field.

14

EXT. SISAL SHED - AFRICAN FARM - DAY 3

14

Hans and Young Makorongo run down regimented rows of vast,  
spiky plants that throw striped shadows on their legs.

(O.S.) A traction engine and threshing machine pound away.

Hans runs ahead towards a new sisal processing shed. As the  
boys approach he has to yell above the noisy machinery.

HANS-WERNER

My father calls this machine  
'Progress'.

YOUNG MAKORONGO

Is it going anywhere?

HANS-WERNER

Mother says it's his baby.

YOUNG MAKORONGO

Because it makes a lot of noise?

HANS-WERNER

It's a de-cort-i-cator.

The Chief works out how to button his new overalls as men  
unload sisal from a SCOTCH CART harnessed to two OXEN.

15 INT. SISAL SHED - AFRICAN FARM - DAY 3 15

MR POONA (40) a turbaned Asian mechanic resembling a dung beetle, stokes the traction engine's fire with dry wood.

HANS-WERNER (O.S.)  
It bashes up leaves into stuff for  
making rope.

Metal parts of a decorticating machine whirl and grind.

WaArusha laborers sing in unison as they pass bundles of prickly edged sisal leaves into the jaws of the machine.

Young Makorongo appears at the shed door eager to see white fibers emerge and get hung up to dry on overhead wires.

HANS-WERNER (CONT'D)  
Come on! Have a go.

Hans barges past to help the laborers feed the machine.

16 EXT. SISAL SHED - AFRICAN FARM - DAY 3 16

The Baron arrives on his chestnut horse and dismounts.

BARON  
How are the men doing, Chief?

A laborer ties up the horse by its reins. The Baron glances at his gold pocket watch as the Chief joins him.

17 INT. SISAL SHED - AFRICAN FARM - DAY 3 17

Hans-Warner passes a leaf to Makorongo who feeds it into the threshing machine as the laborers sing.

Young Makorongo sees the Baron's image reflected in shiny metal as he strides into the shed with the Chief.

BARON  
Hans-Werner, you idiot! Get out of  
here at once.

Hans looks up. The laborers stop singing.

BARON (CONT'D)  
Foolish child.

The Baron starts to march Hans from the machine shed.

Young Makorongo is tugged sideways, his hand hooked to spines of sisal going into the grinders. He twists to get free.

The Chief lunges forward to grab Young Makorongo as he is dragged along the wooden chute towards the threshing machine.

The steam engine pounds on, belching smoke.

Hans looks horrified. Panic sets in amongst the workers. The blades munch away. Threshing chains pulverize the leaves.

Unaware of this, Mr Poona keeps stoking his fire.

YOUNG MAKORONGO  
No. No. Ahhhh.

The Chief grabs a large spanner.

Young Makorongo's thumb is caught by the metal blades.

The machine crunches to a halt, the spanner in its blades.

Mr Poona looks up in alarm.

18                   EXT. SISAL SHED - AFRICAN FARM - DAY 3                   18

(O.S.) Young Makorongo screams out in pain cont...

The horse panics, pulls back breaking free, and gallops off.

19                   INT. SISAL SHED - AFRICAN FARM - DAY 3                   19

The workers fall silent. The drive belt flaps round uselessly as the Chief winds back hot metal blades with his bare hands.

BARON  
Oh, No! No. Dear Heaven.

20                   INT/EXT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA BELOW KILIMANJARO - DAY 3                   20

Heavenly German music comes from a wind-up gramophone near an embroidery basket with needle and thread in a pin cushion and a small pair of SCISSORS and a pair of Zeiss BINOCULARS.

Hasani, dressed in a smart housecoat, sets down a Dresden teapot, cup and saucer next to the Baroness who reads a POSTCARD from Silesia. The dachshund lies asleep at her feet.

The Nanny pushes the pram along the garden path. GUINEA FOWL peck at the Kikuyu grass. All is calm, peaceful and orderly.

Hans pelts across the lawn without his shirt. Guinea fowl scatter. The Chief runs up with Young Makorongo in his arms.

As he rises, Hasani sees the Chief and slams down his tray.

The dachshund starts to yap as Hans runs up the steps.

HANS-WERNER

It's like what happened to my face!

HASANI

Makorongo! My boy.

As the Baroness rises, Young Makorongo's bloody hand is thrust before her eyes, bound in Hans' shirt. The dog stops yapping, the nanny gasps and the gramophone grinds to a halt.

CHIEF

We need the sticking plaster.

The Baroness drops her postcard. The dachshund licks up blood dripping onto the floor next to it.

BARONESS

Oh, my Lord, how dreadful. Lie him down here. Hasani? Hasani!

HASANI

*Memsaab.*

The Chief lays Young Makorongo on a coffee-table trunk. The Baroness removes porcupine quills from his back pocket.

BARONESS

Oh, there you are. Boiling water!  
*Lete maji moto hapa!* (Bring boiling water). Make sure it's boiled.

Hasani rushes towards the kitchen. As writing paper blows off the desk. Hans catches a sheet and picks up the postcard.

BARONESS (CONT'D)

And fetch napkins. Clean, ironed handkerchiefs. And salt! Salt.

CHIEF

Salt? Why salt?

She takes a needle and thread from her pin cushion.

BARONESS

You are going to have to be strong and courageous, my boy.

(MORE)

## BARONESS (CONT'D)

Hans-Werner! Fetch the pliers.  
Hasani, here quickly.

Hasani enters, the Baroness twists the top off a silver cruet and pours salt into water he has brought in a cooking pot.

## HASANI

Oh, *Mem*, do not cook his hand.

The Baroness grabs her embroidery scissors and throws them into the pot. She adds the needle and thread.

## HASANI (CONT'D)

*Hakuna doktari hapa?* No doctor?

## BARONESS

No doctor for miles and miles. Hold him still, keep the hand up.  
Makorongo, you are going to have to trust me. Be strong and courageous.

Young Makorongo yelps and twists as she cleans the wound.

## HASANI

*Polee polee, Memsaab. Polee polee.*  
He is just a *toto*. My first-born.

Hasani takes Young Makorongo's arm as the Chief holds his head from behind and Hans skids in with long-nosed PLIERS.

## BARONESS

How did this happen? Are you to blame Hans-Werner?

## HANS-WERNER

Sort of. Can you sew it back on?

The Baroness stares at her son. Young Makorongo's eyes widen she dips the pliers in water and begins threading a needle.

## HASANI

She does sew very neatly.

## CHIEF

And the *Memsaab* is not drunk.

## BARONESS

Drunk? What do you mean?

## CHIEF

I mean the doctor in Arusha, he is always drinking.

The Baron walks up the steps as Makorongo seems to pass out.

BARON

Are we going to lose him?

Hans and the Baroness look up but Makorongo wakes.

MAKORONGO

I never get lost.

21 EXT. PLAINS BELOW KILIMANJARO - SUNSET DAY 3 21

ELEPHANTS and their young walk across the horizon at sunset.

(O.S.) African maidens sing as crickets call.

22 EXT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA - 1941 - LATE AFTERNOON DAY 4 22

A dusty canvas-roofed LEE FRANCIS (1930's safari vehicle) rattles down the dame Jacaranda drive.

(O.S.) Burring of cicadas. African drums begin to beat.

A stuffed PYTHON stands ridged on the same veranda rising to the height of 6 feet. The armchairs are covered in blue chintz and there is an enclosed office at one end.

TONY (19), a tall, reckless Scott with sandy hair, enters with a RIFLE and sticks something in the python's open mouth. It is a small flag featuring a giraffe and a Union Jack.

Sub-title: **27 years later**

**~ The British Protectorate of Tanganyika Territory 1941 ~**

MAKORONGO (36) lights a paraffin lamp on the trunk where he was once operated. We see his badly scarred thumb.

MAKORONGO STRAIGHT TO CAMERA

I found that python for Hans-Werner  
but he never returned from Germany.  
My father was not too pleased when  
I killed it.

TONY

I'm sure it had been keeping down  
the rodent population very nicely.  
My name's Tony. Tony Mailer. Known  
for being wayward, I'm afraid.

They shake hands. Beyond them Hasani (now 68) begins supervising two farm laborers unloading Tony's car.

MAKORONGO

Makorongo. Welcome to Oosa River.  
I'm Hasani's son.

TONY

You must introduce me to the  
irrigation system. I'm officially  
on 'Police Reserve', meant to be  
getting sisal production going and  
upping food production.

MAKORONGO

How long will you be here?

TONY

No idea. The duration? All I want  
to do is go hunting.

Hasani and the laborers leave with packages for the kitchen.  
Makorongo glances at the hunting rifle and box of cartridges.

MAKORONGO

When I was small we thought the  
Germans would hunt down every  
living thing, but your English DC  
in Arusha is keen on rules and  
regulations. Licenses.

TONY

I must visit him. Does the District  
Commissioner shoot?

MAKORONGO

Only guinea fowl.

TONY

Typical Englishman. My forefathers  
came from further north.

Tony unwraps three yellow topped jars of MARMITE.

TONY (CONT'D)

Marmite from my sister Emily in  
Scotland.

MAKORONGO

Is it axle grease?

TONY

A savory spread! Delicious on hot  
toast. I'm starving. Can you join  
me?



MAKORONGO

*Eeh, Bwana*, not tonight. Tonight the drums are calling.

TONY

Is there a funeral?

MAKORONGO

A *n'goma*. It's the night of the full moon. I am expected to attend.

TONY

I wish I had a girl I could take dancing.

MAKORONGO - STRAIGHT TO CAMERA

Every mother in the district is going to be looking at me. They enjoy upholding tradition but I'm not prepared to take my clothes off.

23

EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1941 - NIGHT 4

23

Naked WaArusha warriors(20s) oil or paint their bodies. Some put on feather headdresses along with traditional adornments.

Hands beat goatskin drums.

A full moon shines. The village *n'goma* is underway. Makorongo looks around before joining Hasani and the Chief (now 61) who wears a leopardskin cape and ostrich feather headdress.

CHIEF

Makorongo! Come, have some beer.  
My daughter helped to brew this.

Makorongo shyly hides his thumb on the word 'daughter'.

HASANI

I did not think making beer was woman's work.

CHIEF

Ah, but she grew the sorghum. I threw in a dead frog.

HASANI

Tony says we should add battery acid and send bottles to Hitler.

The Chief wheezes with laughter as he pours millet beer. Makorongo's scarred thumb is revealed as he takes the beaker.

CHIEF

I leave the secrets of inebriation  
up to Mganga. Do you get pain in  
that thumb, Makorongo?

MAKORONGO

Mganga? Is he here?

Discs of wood are set into Mganga's earlobes. He is dressed  
in a ceremonial monkey-skin cloak and holds his old stave.

MERU (17) and a choir of WaArusha MAIDENS arrive in single  
file wearing leather aprons embroidered with beads and cowry  
shells. Strings of seeds, tied around their ankles, make a  
rhythmic noise to accompany their stamping and clapping.

Mganga approaches Makorongo but is distracted by the maidens  
who form a circle, and begin singing in light cast by the  
ring of small fires fed by an old lady, MAMA MBUZI (82).

The Chief points out his regal daughter, Meru.

CHIEF

There's Meru, back from visiting  
her grandmother. She's a fiery one.  
I named her after our volcano.

MAKORONGO

Kilimanjaro? She's looking  
beautiful.

CHIEF

Burns brightly but is liable to be  
explosive. Go and talk to her.

The maidens lunge forward onto one foot and back on the  
other. Glistening bodies of male warriors move around them.

The eyes of mothers look on as the near naked young warriors  
compete by jumping vertically, heads thrown back.

The maidens jump in unison, beads catching the firelight.

Makorongo moves past the warriors. As Meru glances up he  
flicks his head, inviting her to step out and join him.

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA

Meru. The girl I've been waiting  
for half my life. Isn't she lovely?

MERU

I cannot leave the dancing!

MAKORONGO

For a moment. To gain your breath.

MERU

You know touching is forbidden? My father sees it as an offense to the ancestors or something.

Makorongo leads Meru to the quiet village Meeting House.

MAKORONGO

My father will keep him busy.

The Chief laughs, intent on stirring *pombe* beer with Hasani.

MERU

Why, Makorongo, are you not amongst the handsome warriors?

MAKORONGO

Feathers make me sneeze.

MERU

I'm meant to embrace tradition.

MAKORONGO

Agh, they are not in my age grade. Meru... those boys will not be allowed to marry for ten years.

MERU

...a man must have his time of fighting - or small concerns will overwhelm him.

MAKORONGO

I would rather talk than strut around you like an ostrich.

MERU

What do you want to discuss?

MAKORONGO

Oh, Meru. I want to give you words that are straight words, not words tied up in other words.

MERU

Tell me.

Makorongo delivers an over-rehearsed, jerky speech:

MAKORONGO

Fine hopes like strong winds  
blowing through my soul. Winds that  
blow me away when I set eyes on...  
You have a sweet spirit, Meru, and  
are beautiful. Too, too beautiful.  
All I have are dreams.

MERU

Dreams or aspirations? Why not tell  
me in those straight words.

MAKORONGO

My hope is that you will join me in  
building a future.

MERU

Ah. Would this mean going far away?

MAKORONGO

No. We can stay here on the farm.

MERU

Then you first need to ask these  
things of my father.

MAKORONGO

Of course. I know, I know.

MERU

And I think the price for a windy  
future might be very high. Maybe  
too high for someone who is not yet  
a proven warrior.

24

EXT. HIPPO POOL - AFRICAN BUSH - 1941 - DAY 5

24

A HIPPO grunts and descends into water blowing through his  
nostrils. Pygmy geese take off. A waterbuck looks startled.

A soaring EAGLE looks down on two men in the vast wilderness.

Makorongo grapples with the Lee Francis' air filter as Tony  
sorts out his ammunition. He loads a .450 double rifle and  
slots four spare shots into his left breast pocket and four  
into the pocket of his sleeveless dark green shooting jacket.

TONY

That air filter only fits in a  
certain way. A bit like me, but you  
need to keep dust out of your life.

Makorongo clips on the filter. Tony can't hear his thoughts.

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA  
Why are Europeans so bossy?

TONY  
Wayward but not reckless. Learn how  
to fix engines if you want to  
survive. Always carry a spanner.

Makorongo's scarred thumb is revealed as he checks the oil.

MAKORONGO  
I need paid work.

TONY  
I know but we have to do something.  
A dead crocodile was found with a  
bangle in its stomach.

MAKORONGO  
Had it eaten someone?

TONY  
The police held it on a murder  
charge. The District Commissioner  
wants me to despatch any other big  
ones. I'm hoping to cure the skins.

They walk down the river bank looking for spoor.

MAKORONGO  
May I have the teeth?

TONY  
Crocodile teeth? What for?

MAKORONGO  
I can sell them to Mganga.

TONY  
The local witch doctor? Is he  
making dentures now?

MAKORONGO  
Agh, he uses them for magic charms.  
The idea is that the spirit of the  
crocodile makes you invincible.  
People pay a lot for that.

TONY  
It's just a protection racket.

MAKORONGO

It's good money! Crocodile have sixty-six teeth each and Mganga will pay me extra for the skull.

TONY

Don't get involved. Witchcraft is illegal throughout East Africa.

MAKORONGO

Yes, but this is just trading.

25

EXT. OOSA RIVER BRIDGE - AFRICAN FARM - 1941 - DAY 5

25

Hasani walks across the bridge over flowing water.

(O.S.) Birdsong is halted by a loud bang akin to gunfire.

Hasani turns to see a small CATTLE TRUCK lurch as it comes to a halt. VERA (48) emerges from the driving seat to study her puncture. She looks about 35 and is very attractive, wearing a shirt tucked into high waisted corduroy trousers.

VERA

Oh, no. Not another one.

HASANI

Ooo, Memsaab. Are you having a problem?

VERA

I am indeed! Is it Hasani?

HASANI

*Jambo, Mem. Habari gani?*

VERA

I thought I recognized you. I'm Vera Winter. We farm cattle the other side of the road to Arusha. As you can see I'm not going that well. Not going anywhere at all.

Hasani examines the torn tyre.

HASANI

We need *Bwana* Tony.

Vera searches under the driver's seat.

VERA

The new farm hand? I was bringing him some avocados.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

We have a tree fruiting. Do you think you can help me change the wheel? I have a spare in the back of this truck.

HASANI

It's my son who aspires to be a mechanic but I can try.

VERA

Oh, Heck! Someone's pinched my jack.

26

EXT. FARMHOUSE - 1941 - LATE AFTERNOON - DAY 5

26

The Lea Francis swerves as it approaches the farm.

Tony is teaching Makorongo to drive and use the gear stick.

TONY

Oh, no. Who's that woman?

Hasani waves as he removes the torn tyre from the cattle truck. Vera approaches Tony with a basket of avocados as he swings out of his car, tossing loose her shining hair.

VERA

Here at last. I'm Vera Winter - your closest neighbor.

TONY

Tony Maxtone-Mailer.

He reaches out to shake hands but she gives him the basket.

VERA

For you. Goodness, you're far more attractive than I anticipated.

TONY

Sorry?

Makorongo looks on discreetly while unpacking the firearms.

VERA

I was hoping you might be able to help me with a young horse.

TONY

How naughty? I'm intrigued.

VERA

I like the challenge of breaking in young colts.

Vera's sapphire engagement ring catches the sunlight.

TONY

You have to be careful. These plains are full of holes. Anteaters mainly. And warthog.

VERA

I don't think one should let little problems like that get in the way of what you want to do in life. Come up to my farm when you have a moment. It'll Be fun.

27

EXT. HIPPO POOL - AFRICAN BUSH - 1941 - DAY 6

27

A WARTHOG rolls in a muddy hollow. A family of ZEBRA look at Tony who lowers his binoculars and takes up his rifle.

Makorongo uses a machete to point out footprints.

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA

See here... fresh spoor. *Mamba*, a big crocodile with a full belly. It slid into the river.

Makorongo and Tony look across the water but can't see it.

TONY

One that size would have huge teeth. What do you need money for?

MAKORONGO

Breeding stock.

TONY

Cattle?

MAKORONGO

Ten heifers I can put in calf.

TONY

Aww, she must be some lady. How does she feel about the prospect of being sold?

MAKORONGO

She wants to put the price up!



TONY

She doesn't mind?

MAKORONGO

No! It's a matter of honor. A high price proves how much she is worth. The money - or cattle - are kept in case anything happens to me before our sons can protect her.

A lone male elephant looks at them from the other side of the bank before sloshing itself with river water.

MAKORONGO (CONT'D)

A girl wants to be highly regarded. This gives her dignity. If I pay good money, I will never lose her. Besides, her father is our chief. Negotiations are revered.

TONY

Well, you'd better make a down-payment before someone else beats you to it...

Tony uses his binoculars to spot a crocodile lying on a sandy riverbank with its mouth open. The teeth look impressive.

A Go-Away bird squawks at them from the trees.

GO-AWAY BIRD

Go-way, go-way.

The CROCODILE runs into the water. Tony lowers his rifle. Makorongo has failed to spot both bird and reptile.

MAKORONGO

I need binoculars!

TONY

The Army might equip you with a pair. Have you thought of joining up before Hitler makes slaves of us all? The training's great. You'd be at the wheel of a lorry in no time - I'd rather like to follow my brother into the Royal Air Force but am being promoted within the police. All I can hope is that the uniform might impress the girls.

MAKORONGO

Do you not have a better way of letting a woman know you value her?

TONY

A diamond ring would help. Not sure  
how I'll find any around here.

28

EXT. SISAL SHED - AFRICAN FARM - 1942 - DAY 7

28

The threshing machine fire is stoked by Mr Poona (now 68).

The Chief works at the drying racks as female laborers pass  
behind him to hang pale sisal fibre from wire like washing.

Meru rushes up, beside herself with worry, to find she has to  
raise her voice over the sound of the machinery.

MERU

Why? Why did you have to put him  
forward for conscription?

CHIEF

You have changed your way of  
speaking. I understood you did not  
think Makorongo was good enough for  
you, my girl.

MERU

He is kind and thoughtful, has  
interesting ideas.

CHIEF

I want to see a man with money  
asking for your hand, Meru.

MERU

Can he not serve with the Eastern  
Africa Police?

CHIEF

Like Tony? You have to be 'long  
like a telegraph pole to qualify'.  
Over six foot three.

MERU

There must be other tasks. We need  
Makorongo here. Please, don't send  
him to war. He has no wish to be in  
the fighting.

CHIEF

I must gather many men. All of  
Tanganyika, all of Kenya and the  
countries to the west are putting  
their best athletes forward.

The threshing machine stops suddenly. There is silence.

MERU  
(Still shouting)  
It's not our war.

CHIEF  
I count it an honor. The men are up  
for adventure. They want to travel,  
handle rifles and wear glory.

MERU  
But the army is calling for youths.  
Makorongo is different, older.

CHIEF  
Do you not want a proven man?

MERU  
He has no interest in guns or tight  
uniforms. Silly hats.

CHIEF  
The Sergeant is short of men who  
know how to drive a motor car...

Mr Poona comes out and puts down a large spanner with an  
unusual groove slashed across it. The Chief stares at it.

CHIEF (CONT'D)  
...for those who know how to doctor  
a lorry. There is no doubt that  
Makorongo would benefit.

Meru leaves to hide her tears. The Chief picks up the spanner  
he used to save Makorongo's life years ago.

29

EXT. CATTLE BOMA - VERA'S FARM - 1942 - DAY 7

29

Long-horned BORAN COWS bellow. A BULL paws the ground,  
kicking up red dust while CATTLE EGRETS hop around.

Two MASAI HERDSMEN with bright cloth knotted over their  
shoulders whistle as they muster cattle into a *boma* (pen).

Vera examines a cow and calf that have swollen eyes.

VERA  
Why didn't you tell me the cattle  
have sore eyes? They must be in  
pain.

A herdsman looks on silently.

VERA (CONT'D)  
Keep this calf aside. I'll treat  
the infection myself.

Tony drives up in his canvas-roofed Lee Francis as Vera strides over to help a cow in labour, penned in a crush at one end of the *boma*. Her cattle truck stands next to it.

VERA (CONT'D)  
The men here say I have the eyes of  
a vulture but I wasn't even sure  
you were around.

TONY  
Vera. Are you all right?

VERA  
Thank you for coming. I wasn't sure  
my note would find you.

Tony begins to examine the cow.

TONY  
It looks urgent.

VERA  
I thought I could manage but  
there's been so much on. The rains  
are late, the Masai have burnt my  
hill pasture, I have no grazing  
left, and my husband is still with  
his regiment in Mombasa.

TONY  
Wasn't he under official orders?

VERA  
That's not the only thing he's  
under. He's gone through all our  
money. Left me with nothing. Do you  
know, he took our dogs with him?

The Masai herdsmen pick up on the word 'money' and slip away.

TONY  
But your bruises are healing?

VERA  
I loathe, hate and detest him. He  
never did anything but sit on the  
veranda and trim his ridiculous  
mustache.

TONY  
I wanted to come up sooner.

VERA  
Don't you have to join the war-  
effort or something?

There is a bellow as the cow makes her presence known.

TONY  
I'm officially on 'Farm Supply'.  
Make the most of me while you can.

VERA  
Thank you. I think this calf must  
be in a breach position.

Tony grabs a rope, approaches the cow and rubs her flank.

TONY  
Vera, it could get be rough living  
out here alone.

The cow experiences a contraction. Tony heaves on birthing  
ropes, taking the strain with his back.

VERA  
I'll be fine.

TONY  
Think about moving down to my house  
for a while. Hasani will be around.  
It would be more secure - and a lot  
more fun.

VERA  
I could get fuel to pop over if  
it's in an official capacity. Do  
you need help with your accounts?

Soon a newborn calf is being licked into life by its mother.

TONY  
Both girls very much alive.

VERA  
Another nine heifers and I could  
buy myself a wife.

30 EXT. AFRICAN FARM BELOW KILIMANJARO - 1942 - SUNSET DAY 7 30

The snow-topped peak of Kilimanjaro looks purple.

Meru leads Makorongo up the hillside past the butternut in her *shamba* (garden) to watch the sun set over the plains.

Egrets fly home to roost against the reddening sky.

They look down on a line of cattle being driven into their *boma* for the night by a Masai herdsman.

MERU

Are you sure?

MAKORONGO

Don't worry. I won't be under fire or killing anyone.

MERU

But you're leaving soon.

MAKORONGO

We are only going to Tanga, the port on the coast. I'd like to see the sea.

MERU

Bring me back a coconut.

Makorongo and Meru's heads touch in silhouette as they mutely say goodbye and turn to look towards an uncertain future.

31

EXT. OLD GERMAN FORT - ARUSHA - 1942 - DAY 8

31

A wind-up gramophone plays the regimental march of the King's African Rifles as a RECRUITING SERGEANT (47) yells orders.

Sunlight glints off his a cap badge. Heat shimmers the scene.

RECRUITING SERGEANT

First time you are wearing boots?  
You will need them! You are in the  
K.A.R - the King's African Rifles.

He stands in front of Makorongo and 30 young Tanganyikan Warriors in K.A.R. uniform with blue puttees and shiny boots.

The Recruiting Sergeant sees Makorongo hiding his damaged thumb and nods to Mganga who stands under a black umbrella.

Mganga looks back at Makorongo before counting coins into a leather PURSE which he gives to a waiting WaArusha YOUTH.

RECRUITING SERGEANT (CONT'D)  
 Stand in line! A-tennnn-shun!  
 Forward March! Left, right, left  
 right, left, right, left, right...!

The recruits march off watched by a group of SMALL BOYS.

32

EXT. ARUSHA TRAIN STATION - 1942 - DAY 8

32

(O.S. CONT'D) Regimental march of The King's African Rifles.

The Recruiting Sergeant and his K.A.R. recruits are followed by the small boys as they approach the railway station.

Five *MASAI MORAN* (warriors in their 20s) in red *shukas* (cloaks) & ochre hairstyles lean on spears by the entrance.

RECRUITING SERGEANT  
 Left turn! Left right, left right,  
 left right! Company halt.

Sweating but alert, Makorongo and the recruits are brought together under the flag of Tanganyika Territories where Oom Swaney (now 64) off-loads logs of wood from his ox-wagon.

A younger ridgeback hound lying across his driver's seat reacts as Vera drives up in her cattle truck with Hasani. The Chief, Mr Poona, Mama Mbuzi and women from the farm stand on the open back with Meru. A CORD is wound around her hands.

HASANI  
 Will we be in time?

The small boys climb up one side of the truck while the Chief descends. The youth slips Mganga's purse into his hand.

Tony, in the uniform of an Assistant Police Officer, draws to a halt in a POLICE VEHICLE loaded with camping gear.

Makorongo sees a 6'5" POLICE ORDERLY seated next to him.

MAKORONGO  
 If only I had been taller!

Tony watches Vera leap from her cab to be confronted by a STREET VENDOR as he is greeted by the Chief and old Mr Poona.

TONY  
 They're off to your part of the  
 world, Mr. Poona.

MR POONA

We came with the railways - they go with the railways.

CHIEF

Are they being sent overseas? I was not made aware of that.

MR POONA

To Ceylon for training! Then who knows?

CHIEF

We thought they would be patrolling our border with Kenya to the north.

Meru darts past and puts the cord in Makorongo's hands.

MAKORONGO

Meru! You've come.

MERU

May the spirit of the crocodile grant you protection.

MAKORONGO

Here, give these shillings to your father for your bride-price. It's not enough, but I'll save my pay.

He tries to hand her the silver coins and a small purse.

MERU

Keep them - I can wait.

MAKORONGO

You must get it to him.

MERU

No, no. You will need the money. I can wait.

WOMEN AND BOYS

*Kwa heri. Kwa Herini.* Goodbye.  
(Goodbye to you all.)

MAKORONGO

Meru, I have to leave.

Vera sees Meru's tears, but joins Tony who is being pestered by the street vendor.

TONY

*Hapana, Hapana* (No, no).



VERA  
You didn't take *Kingi Georgi's*  
*shilling?*

TONY  
The D.C. wants me to serve on the  
home front.

VERA  
I haven't seen you in uniform  
before.

TONY  
Don't look too closely.

VERA  
How could I not?

TONY  
They got the measurements wrong.  
The lining to the pockets failed  
and my truncheon fell down one leg.

He pulls at the front of his jacket as she peers inside.

VERA  
*Fortiter et Fideliter.*

TONY  
I don't know what you mean.

VERA  
Strength and courage.

33 EXT. PLATFORM - ARUSHA RAILWAY STATION - DAY 8

33

The steam train whistles, the funnel belches smoke.

The Recruiting Sergeant marches recruits under an 'ARUSHA'  
sign, followed by Mr Poona, Vera, Hasani, Meru and others.

RECRUITING SERGEANT  
Right turn! And halt! Company board  
train.

Makorongo looks towards the engine, then back at Hasani.

CHIEF  
Why are they being sent east?

TONY  
Those in command reckon they'll  
have resistance to malaria.

CHIEF  
Is it hot there?

TONY  
Sweltering. The Allies are  
recruiting thousands of West  
Africans hoping they can stand the  
humidity.

Tony catches sight of Vera waving to the young recruits.

CHIEF  
I've asked Makorongo to look after  
the young ones.

TONY  
It's good. They'll see the world.

CHIEF  
You are not accompanying them?

TONY  
I wish I was.

Makorongo climbs into a 3rd class carriage and turns to look  
at Meru's gift. In his hand is a crocodile tooth on a cord.

Vera joins Tony on the platform, gabbing his arm for support.

VERA  
I just pray they'll all return.

As the locomotive pulls away, the WaArusha women ululate in  
farewell. Meru waves, hands outstretched in front of her.

MERU  
Take care! *Kwa heri. Kwa Herini.*

MAKORONGO  
*Kwa heri. Kwa Herini. Goodbye.*  
(Goodbye to you all.)

34 EXT/INT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA - 1942 - AFTERNOON DAY 9

34

(O.S.) Birdsong fills the garden.

A bowl of lemons sits on a table. Vera stands outside Tony's  
office pulling off her gloves to reveal her engagement ring.  
She straightens this, spotting the stuffed python.

VERA  
'The serpent in the garden.'

Tony, in uniform, walks in with a covered basket. His police vehicle is parked on the lawn, next to Vera's cattle truck.

TONY

Our best crop yet and we probably won't be able to export it.

VERA

Don't worry; the troops are sure to need feeding. You'll make a fortune out of citrus and maize.

TONY

My book-keeping is way behind, I'm afraid. Shoddy.

Tony offers Vera the basket. She starts untying the lid.

VERA

What's this?

The bundle moves. Vera finds a fluffy white PUPPY inside.

TONY

I was looking for a cattle dog but thought he would keep you company.

VERA

Oh! What a sweet little thing. He's adorable. Do you know where you are being posted?

TONY

Me? I'm off to Narok.

VERA

Narok? It's the back of beyond.

TONY

HQ for the Masai Mara. I can't think why. I was due to sort out Italian prisoners of war in Somalia. North-east Frontier stuff.

VERA

But the Mara must be your favorite place on earth.

TONY

It's hardly a battlefield.

VERA

My husband told me it was crucial in the last war. Strategically.

TONY

Back then it was on the German-British frontier. The Kenyan border ran right through it. Nothing but wild animals there now.

VERA

I'm so jealous. The wildebeest migration will be starting soon.

TONY

I know, I know. I must report for duty. Don't want to be late.

Tony takes Vera in his arms, puppy and all, but she disentangles herself.

TONY (CONT'D)

Will you come and see me?

VERA

At the Police Head Quarters?

TONY

In the Mara. Camping.

VERA

And leave my cattle?

TONY

Well, stay here for now. It's best. For you, I mean. Quick question -

VERA

Umm?

TONY

Won't you think of marrying me?

VERA

Sadly, I'm already spoken for. And under oath to forsake all others.

TONY

I thought you didn't let little problems like that get in the way of what you want from life.

VERA

I'm too old, my darling.

TONY

Who says?

VERA

Hasani. The Chief. That Mganga fellow you call Fan Belt. They'd be highly disapproving. You need a nineteen-year-old with child-bearing hips.

TONY

Mganga? Ah, spare me.

VERA

No, my darling. You don't want to be stuck with a dribbling old woman complaining about her arthritis.

He turns back to face her and takes her in his arms.

TONY

Listen, Vera. Now is now.

He kisses her.

We live now.

He kisses her.

Here and now.

VERA

And now is all we'll ever have.

She wraps her arms around him and kisses him back.

35

EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 10

35

A bomb explodes near a bridge crossing a tropical river.

(O.S.) Mortar fire, shelling & Brewster Buffalo planes.

A Red Cross armband. Makorongo's face is contorted, as if in pain, but it is he who wears the armband over his uniform.

A shell explodes in dense jungle.

Makorongo carries a folded stretcher and case of dressings under dripping date palms to a WWII Red Cross ambulance.

Sub-title:                   ~ Burma, 1943 ~

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA  
 Brewster Buffalo planes. We didn't know it would be this bad but I've made a good friend: Singh, although I call him Song. Wants to be a surgeon. Has a beautiful wife and three little ones back in India.

SINGH (35), a turbaned paramedic, treats an INJURED ALLIED SOLDIER. Behind Singh stand pack MULES, a AUSTRALIAN OFFICER (25) and cheery but exhausted ALLIED SOLDIERS, pouring with sweat.

Two AUSTRALIAN SIGNALMEN use a field radio. Allied Soldiers lead mules laden with light cannons down rainforest slopes.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
 Have you fellows got anything for dysentery? 'gypie tummies?

Singh dresses a combatant's head wound.

MAKORONGO  
 Nothing, sir. We are waiting for supplies.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
 Anything we can eat? My chaps are starving.

Makorongo takes an old sweet tin from his pocket and offers the Australian Officer an assortment of fried grasshoppers.

MAKORONGO  
 I fried up some insects. They make good snacks, keep me going.

He eats one to show they are edible.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
 I'd hate to deprive you.

There is a commotion on the ground. Singh carries his medical bag over to another injured serviceman.

MAKORONGO  
 Look out!

The wounded man kicks out. He's a JAPANESE OFFICER equipped with binoculars and rubber boots that divide at the big toe.

MAKORONGO (CONT'D)  
 Feet like an ostrich.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
One of the prisoners wanted for  
questioning. Needs to be watched  
I'm afraid. Not a happy chappie.

MAKORONGO  
No, sir.

The Australian Officer looks around for his men.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
We need help. Oh, there you are.

A CORPORAL and a SOLDIER approach.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)  
I'm leaving a couple of my men with  
you to guard this little souvenir.  
Don't leave without military  
escort. Okay?

SINGH  
Yes, sir.

Singh removes the prisoners' personal items.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
It's all very tricky in these  
parts. The enemy could be anywhere.

SINGH  
These might prove useful, sir.

Singh shoves the Japanese binoculars in his medical bag as  
Makorongo begins to cough, his chest giving him pain.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
All yours. Watch out for displaced  
civilians clogging the roads and  
find someone to treat that cough at  
the Field Dressing Station.  
Cheerio!

The Australian Officer leaves his soldiers to guard the  
injured Japanese Officer and strap him to the stretcher.

SINGH  
I really don't know why we bother  
to save these blighters. Hold his  
arms before he kills himself.  
They hate to lose face, the Japs.

MAKORONGO  
Have his elders passed judgement?

SINGH

The Samurai sword of his ancestors  
has been lost. A Japanese Officer  
sees capture as despicable. It is  
to become like one of your insects.  
Let's get him into this tin. One,  
two, three. Up!

They push the stretcher into the back of the ambulance. The  
soldiers climb in and close the doors. A mortar falls nearby.

MAKORONGO

I don't know if we'll make it to  
Casualty Clearing.

Singh runs towards the cab and takes a front seat. Makorongo  
swings into the driving seat but fails to start the engine.

SINGH

First save the life of this  
ambulance.

Makorongo grabs a spanner and leaps out to open the hood.

MONKEYS chatter from a tree, unsure where to hide.

Makorongo coughs, unclips an air filter and shakes out grit.

SINGH (CONT'D)

Here's our escort.

Makorongo cheerfully waves his spanner at an armored car.

36

EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1943 - EVENING DAY 11

36

Woodsmoke curls as an OLD MAMA turns mealie-corn cobs on  
coals. Little CHILDREN play, naked except for beads round  
their tummies. CHICKENS scratch around.

Meru smiles as she pounds corn in a wooden tub using a long  
pole. Her harvest of maize is piled on a wooden sleigh.

She looks up at noisy WEAVERBIRDS making pendulous nests.

The Chief comes out of his hut as WaArusha ELDERS gather.

Meru realizes Mganga, dressed in a European suit, is waiting  
at the Meeting House where he shakes the Chief's hand.

CHIEF

*Habari gani?* Are you well?



MGANGA

*Habari njema*, but I don't sleep so well these days. It's this heat.

Mganga scratches himself, watching Meru add more corn.

MGANGA (CONT'D)

Your daughter?

CHIEF

My eldest, Meru.

MGANGA

I like to see a hardworking woman adhering to tradition. Most attractive.

Meru pounds her grain in its wooden container.

CHIEF

You have a comely wife, along with one on the coast?

MGANGA

I have three wives, but what man doesn't seek another? I like a bit of excitement and variety, being well fed and provided for. The aim is to accumulate healthy sons. You will be sure to have many grandchildren to look after you in old age. Meru looks fecund.

CHIEF

She is promised to Makorongo, son of Hasani. He hasn't yet paid the bride-price but we are hoping he will return from the East with much gold.

MGANGA

I paid a little money to ensure he was sent there.

Meru stops working.

CHIEF

I didn't realize...

MGANGA

The old saying goes: 'If you want a good crop you must first pull the couch-grass from the field.'

CHIEF  
Couch grass?

MGANGA  
Unwanted weeds, you know. Unwanted  
encroachment.

37 EXT. STEEP HILLSIDE - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 12 37

A flurry of gunfire. The Australian Officer and his soldiers,  
return shots from a muddy path halfway up a hillside.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
Unload the cannon! Morrison!

The corporal turns towards the nearest MULE. There is more  
gunfire from the other side of the valley.

The mule is hit in the ear and rears up, pulling back. The  
handler loses his grip. It gallops off carrying the cannon  
and nearly bashing a very young Kenyan soldier of the K.A.R.

KENYAN  
Jabu!

KENYAN(22) hauls JABU(15) to his feet and drags him up the  
slope. The two Australian signalmen struggle up after them.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICER  
This way! Keep in line.

The Australian Officer is followed by K.A.R. Tanganyikans  
with Kenyan, Jabu and another from Kenya called BRIGHT(19).

JAPANESE INFANTRYMEN almost comically camouflaged with leaves  
break out of thick jungle with their long bayonets fixed.

They force the Allied soldiers onto a rock promontory above a  
deep ravine. Jabu looks down to see there is no escape.

A JAPANESE INFANTRY OFFICER (27) smiles.

38 EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 12 38

(O.S.) Distant rattle of automatic fire and thud of mortars.

Makorongo drives the ambulance in a different direction from  
before. He passes an overturned, burnt-out Army truck to find  
himself behind an OX CART driven by two SMALL BURMESE BOYS.

In the back of the ambulance wounded AUSTRALIAN TROOPERS  
brace themselves as it lurches from side to side.

Singh examines the captured Japanese binoculars in the cab.

SINGH

What has happened to the escort we  
had yesterday?

Makorongo glances at the field glasses he'd love to own.

MAKORONGO

Their fuel pump has gone. They  
can't even spare a motor cycle.  
I was ordered to drive on.

He starts to cough, unable to pass the ox cart.

SINGH

It's because we are carrying  
wounded Australians, rather than  
high-ranking prisoners.

MAKORONGO

Let's just get them to the nearest  
Field Dressing Station.

He misses a BURMESE CYCLIST and slides past the ox cart.

SINGH

Try not to kill anyone else on the  
way.

Makorongo reaches for the crocodile tooth Meru gave him.

SINGH (CONT'D)

Is that meant to be for good luck?

Makorongo sees in his wing mirror that the little boys on the  
ox cart are safe and nods, bringing the charm to his lips.

39

EXT. WATERFALL - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 12

39

Drifting mist reveals a Burmese pagoda that stands by a  
waterfall cascading into virgin rainforest.

The Japanese Infantry Officer stands with a hand on his  
Samurai sword. The two Australian Signalmen are followed by  
five K.A.R. Tanganyikans with Kenyan, Jabu and Bright.  
Japanese soldiers, with long bayonets fixed, press them on.

MONKEYS leap along a branch. BIRDS take flight.

The Allied soldiers trudge eastward through vegetation. The  
Japanese Infantrymen chivvy them over a high bridge.

A stone temple god looks down from a shrine as mist clears.

40 EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 12 40

Makorongo and Singh wait in the cab of the ambulance as families of INDIAN REFUGEES trudge towards them with wailing children, domestic animals and an old lady in a handcart.

A shell hits a paddy field above them spraying water as civilians run for cover. A man slides, falling in the mud.

Singh grabs the Japanese binoculars as they fall from the dashboard while Makorongo switches on the windscreen wipers, grinds into gear and drives on, mud flying from his wheels.

41 EXT. AFRICAN HUT - OOSA RIVER - 1943 - DAY 12 41

Bamboo grows by the river. A pure white goat is held on a sisal rope by a small African HERD BOY (9) outside a dilapidated hut. Mganga hands Mama Mbuzi coins.

Beyond them, Meru, with the village Maidens and THREE GIRLS, finish collecting river water in gourds and calabashes.

Mganga shoves the Herd Boy forward.

MGANGA

Take the animal down to my shrine.  
Don't let it escape.

The Herd Boy tries to lead the goat past the line of maidens as they come up from the river with water on their heads.

Meru sees the goat, catches Mganga's eye, and looks down.

MERU

Mganga.

MGANGA

You are looking very beautiful  
today. I hope you are going well.

Mganga strides towards Meru, eyes roving over her body.

MGANGA (CONT'D)

I like to see a woman carrying  
water back to the homestead. Are  
you brewing beer by any chance?

Meru freezes. A Maiden giggles but a calabash of water belonging to one girl drops to the ground and smashes.

The goat jerks and runs off. The herd boy opens his hand to reveal a rope burn. Tears roll down his face as he cradles the wound. Mganga cuffs him over the head.

MGANGA (CONT'D)  
Catch the goat.

The herd boy does not move. Mganga gathers his skirts and runs off after it himself, sandals slapping the worn path.

42 EXT. BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 13 42

Droplets glisten on the 20" blade of a bayoneted rifle. The eyes of the Japanese Infantry Officer blink back the rain.

Armed Japanese infantrymen advance, east to west, through dripping vegetation in absurdly camouflaged tin hats.

43 INT. RED CROSS TENT - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 13 43

Wounded Allied SOLDIERS lie in a dripping Field Dressing tent. An Australian MEDICAL OFFICER (45) examines a patient. A pretty NURSE (24) passes with an enamel jug and bedpan.

MEDICAL OFFICER  
Hasn't that ambulance returned yet?  
I need to get this chap out of  
here. He's skin and bone.

The nurse looks towards the entrance, listening to rain.

44 EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - BURMESE VILLAGE - 1943 - DAY 13 44

It is raining hard. The ambulance is stuck in mud at a precarious angle near a Burmese village.

The wounded Australian soldiers wait inside as Makorongo jacks up a rear wheel. Singh shoves bamboo under the tyre.

The paddy fields are deserted except for an ancient BURMESE FISHERMAN (85) with a long pipe & wide straw hat fishing from a traditional boat. He watches them without making a move.

Makorongo takes the jack round to the cab. He starts coughing but heaves himself inside and tries to start the vehicle.

Singh finds a plump, blood-sucking LEECH on his leg and pulls it off. The tiny wound streams with blood.

45 EXT. RED CROSS TENT - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 13 45

Rain falls on a red cross on the canvas roof of the Field Dressing Station. Red Cross trunks are stacked up outside.

The section of Japanese Infantry in tin hats emerge from the jungle bearing rifles. They cross puddles in two-toed boots.

46 INT. RED CROSS TENT - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 13 46

(O.S.) Clap of thunder and heavy rain falling on canvas.

The nurse hears thunder as rain pours onto the tent. It drips onto her as she helps a feverish young soldier to drink. The Medical Officer has a stethoscope on a patient's back.

MEDICAL OFFICER

And take a deep breath... Is that  
the ambulance?

The Japanese Officer and his section of infantrymen storm in. The nurse sees only her patient's alarmed face as she is bayoneted from behind.

MEDICAL OFFICER (CONT'D)

We're Red Cross!

Japanese infantrymen bayonet the Medical Officer, INDIAN ORDERLIES and every patient in every bed.

47 EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 13 47

Makorongo drives in torrential rain. Singh staunches the flow of blood from his leech bite while clutching the binoculars.

SINGH

Isn't that artillery fire?

MAKORONGO

Just more thunder.

SINGH

In what direction is the fighting?

MAKORONGO

At this stage, the enemy could be  
anywhere. There is no front line.

48 EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - RED CROSS TENT - 1943 - DAY 13 48

Makorongo turns the ambulance to the Field Dressing Station.

Singh looks up as BIRDS fly from trees screeching. He clutches the Japanese binoculars.

Makorongo sees the birds and slams on the brake pedal. Singh waves him on but Makorongo is listening.

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA  
This isn't normal. Birds do not fly  
in rain.

Makorongo crunches into reverse gear and turns the ambulance.

49 INT. BACK OF AMBULANCE - RED CROSS TENT - 1943 - DAY 13 49

The wounded Australians are jarred as the ambulance tilts.

50 EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - RED CROSS TENT - 1943 - DAY 13 50

SINGH  
What are you doing?

MAKORONGO  
There is something bad here. We  
must get away.

SINGH  
But it is a Field Dressing Station.

Makorongo stops and opens his door to look down. The print of a Japanese two-toed rubber boot fills with water.

MAKORONGO  
Spoor like an ostrich.

51 INT. RED CROSS TENT - BURMESE JUNGLE - 1943 - DAY 13 51

(O.S.) Revving ambulance. Rain falling on the canvas roof.

The bayonetted nurse lies across the body of her patient. Still conscious, she looks towards the entrance of the tent.

The Japanese Infantry Officer hears the ambulance and turns.

52 EXT/INT. AMBULANCE - RED CROSS TENT - 1943 - DAY 13 52

Makorongo throws his gear lever into first gear.

His wheels spin in the mud as the gears squeal.

Makorongo double de-clutches and the ambulance lurches off.

Singh sees the Japanese Infantry Officer emerge from a tent.

Makorongo gets the ambulance back on the track but it slides into a long packing case, which cracks open spewing bed pans.

His boot hits the accelerator pedal but the vehicle stalls.

Armed Japanese Infantrymen run up behind the ambulance, followed by the armed Infantry Officer who leaps a puddle.

Makorongo turns the ignition key, churning the starter motor.

Japanese Infantrymen fling open the back of the ambulance. They bayonet the sick Australians and pull out their bodies.

JAPANESE INFANTRY OFFICER

*Kono sharyō ga hitsuyōdesu.*  
(We need this vehicle.)

Makorongo grabs a spanner but Infantrymen force him to stand under the Red Cross on the side of the ambulance with Singh, arms out-stretched. Rain runs down their faces like tears.

JAPANESE INFANTRY OFFICER (CONT'D)

*Kono enjin o shidō sa semashou!*  
(Get this engine started!)

A Japanese Infantryman attempts to start the ambulance but, while the starter motor turns, the engine won't fire.

Singh points to his Red Cross armband.

The Infantry Officer sees the Japanese binoculars, yanks them off Singh and gives a clear hand signal to an Infantryman.

Singh is bayoneted through the heart.

A rifle is aimed at Makorongo but the Infantry Officer raises his hand, then points at his large spanner.

JAPANESE INFANTRY OFFICER (CONT'D)

*Īe! Kare ni enjin o shidō sa sete kudasai!* (No! Get him to start the engine!)

Makorongo opens the bonnet and uses his spanner to hit the starter motor. As the ambulance's engine fires up, the Infantry Officer registers his usefulness.

JAPANESE INFANTRY OFFICER (CONT'D)

*Kokujin no seibi-shi o tsurete kite kudasai. Watashitachi ni wa kare ga hitsuyō kamo shirenai.*  
(MORE)



JAPANESE INFANTRY OFFICER (CONT'D)  
 (Bring the black mechanic with us.  
 We might need him.)

The Infantry Officer shoves Makorongo backwards. He nearly falls onto a dead Australian but is hauled into the ambulance by two Infantrymen who slam shut the door.

53 EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1943 - SUNRISE - DAY 14 53

Dawn breaks over the African farm. Blue wood smoke rises from thatched huts, a little DOG stretches, a ROOSTER crows.

The maidens walk in single file with tools balanced on their shaven heads. They pass under a beehive slung in a tree.

Meru is the eldest, leading the group. The other girls break into song, but she doesn't have the heart to join in.

Mganga eyes her while coiling up telegraph wire.

54 EXT. QUARRY & YARD - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - DAY 15 54

A whistle sounds, an explosion goes off, rock is blasted. Mechanical winding gear adds to the sound of quarrying.

Sub-title: ~ The Empire of Japan, 1944 ~

An EAGLE soars over a POW camp from yard to quarry looking down on European captives, most wearing hats or caps, who use levers to force slabs of white oya stone from the rock-face.

A NORWEGIAN SAILOR and Chuck, the American Airman, load stone into a trolley on a rail line overseen by Hatari, the guard.

A canvas roofed TRUCK packed with new prisoners of war drives past a sign and through gates into a yard where the Sergeant hoists a red and white flag of Japan up a flag pole.

Hatari jogs toward his Sergeant. Chuck and the Norwegian Sailor grab a chance to rest. They look towards the latrines where they can just see Kenyan, Jabu, Bight and Toki working.

55 EXT. YARD & LATRINES - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - DAY 15 55

A PRISON COMMANDER(57) and a female, civilian TRANSLATOR(53), watch Makorongo and other POWs descend from the truck.

PRISON COMMANDER  
 New workers. Is good, but how we  
 feed them?

Kenyan, Jabu, and Toki walk out of latrines (fenced with rotten bamboo) with buckets of excrement swinging from yokes.

(O.S.) Quarry winding gear and stone being loaded.

Kenyan breaks into a fit of coughing and is forced to set down his bucket. Excrement sloshes onto his torn uniform.

56 EXT. QUARRY - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - DAY 16 56

The Norwegian Sailor diligently loads stone. Chuck looks up to see a European prisoner drilling into the rockface.

Two DUTCH SOLDIERS prepare to lay explosive charges.

57 EXT. YARD & LATRINES - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - DAY 16 57

The Japanese Sergeant strides up to the coughing Kenyan and slaps him around the face. Jabu and Toki step back to avoid him and let new POWs from Burma queue up for the latrines.

JAPANESE SERGEANT

*Speedo, speedo! Kuri! Kuru Bakaro.*

Makorongo stares at him as Hatari pushes him into the queue.

HATARI

*Hagu. Hagu. (Go, go.)*

Hatari kicks Kenyan over and jogs off towards the quarry.

Kenyan looks up from the ground, his face covered in muck but he sees Makorongo and smiles broadly.

KENYAN

A brother K.A.R! Welcome!

There is an explosion in the quarry. Kenyan covers his head.

58 EXT. QUARRY - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - DAY 16 58

(O.S.) Echo of explosion hitting the high quarry walls.

The Norwegian Sailor and Chuck loading stone into a trolley look up to see the quarry wall crumble. Chuck runs off but the sailor's sea-boots slip on rubble and he slides downhill.

High up, a massive piece of rock splits from the quarry wall.

It falls on the Norwegian Sailor. His face fills with pain as the quarry falls silent.

59

EXT. YARD &amp; LATRINES - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - DAY 16 59

Work at the latrines continues while European prisoners queue up. Makorongo and Kenyan hurry past them, weighed down by full buckets hanging from their yokes.

KENYAN

We are somewhere near Tokyo.

MAKORONGO

Tokyo? In Japan?

He coughs revealing the crocodile tooth around his neck.

KENYAN

Along with thousands of captured men. You came over in a ship?

MAKORONGO

Like cattle, packed in the hold with no light. No water for days.

KENYAN

It seems all the men here have been sent to the front. They use us prisoners as slaves in mines, factories, at the docks.

MAKORONGO

Where are you from?

Human excrement splashes from the buckets as he coughs again.

KENYAN

Kenya. I was born near Mombasa on the coast. The damp here is worse than Burma. It sits on your chest.

MAKORONGO

How can they make us do this work when we eat no more than cabbage that comes from the sea?

KENYAN

Oh, my friend, this is good.

MAKORONGO

Good? Do you Kenyans have no values? We carry excrement.

KENYAN

It is not going to explode.

The Sergeant and Hatari laugh as they walk past.

Kenyan bows to them. Makorongo tries to bow but starts coughing. His buckets land on the ground with a thud.

The Sergeant is splashed. He looks at Makorongo with disdain.

SERGEANT

*Aeso! Aeso! (Icebox! Icebox!).*

60

EXT. AFRICAN MARKET - ARUSHA - 1944 - DAY 16

60

Small piles of ripe tomatoes lie on cloth under a mango tree.

Live CHICKENS are brought into town by the now cheerful Youth on a bicycle. Meru notices him as she makes her way through the market carrying a loaded basket of sorghum on her head.

A GRANNY greets Meru while scooping peanuts into a woven *kiondo* bag for a GIRL (17) with a baby on her back.

Goat meat is barbecued by the side of the road. An ERRAND BOY zig-zags past holding up a scrap of paper.

An Asian TAILOR works at his sewing machine. Meru looks up, attracted to hanging lengths of PRINTED FABRIC.

Mganga watches her from his *dawa* (medicine) stall stocked with aloe leaves, tortoise shell, dried lizards and herbs. He lays out bracelets made from twisted copper wire.

61

EXT/INT. YARD & AESO CELL - POW CAMP - 1944 - NIGHT 16

61

The Sergeant lets Hatari force Makorongo across the yard and push him into an *aeso* (a concrete room four foot square).

His arms hit the far wall. He can neither stand nor lie down.

HATARI

No like work? You stay here. No blanket! No water! Plenty food.

Hatari thrusts a box at Makorongo who is obliged to take it as the Sergeant slams shut the metal door and bolts it.

Makorongo peers inside the box. It contains the Norwegian's legs severed off below the knee.

62

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - 1944 - DAY 17

62

Steam rises in front of Hasani's face as he smooths one of his house coats with a charcoal-heated iron.

(O.S.) Police vehicle arriving.

Hasani looks up.

63

INT/EXT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA & OFFICE - 1944 - DAY 17

63

The white DOG, now quite large, looks up from its basket.

Vera works at the farm accounts, a steaming cup of tea nearby. She sees Tony walking towards her in police uniform.

VERA

Tony... I've missed you.

TONY

Vera. You're safe. Thank God.

VERA

Have you managed to learn any Masai?

TONY

Afrikaans. I've been working with the *transporteers*.

VERA

What's happened? You don't seem yourself.

She offers him her tea but he pours himself water from a jug.

TONY

It's been happening a long time. The reason I was sent to the Mara was horrific. Sorry, but I couldn't write about it.

VERA

Is there some ghastly detention camp there?

TONY

No, no. I was commissioned to shoot game.

VERA

Problem animals?

TONY

No. Antelope and zebra. In huge numbers. To feed the troops.

VERA

Oh, I know. All my Boran cattle have been commandeered - as well as your milk cows, I'm afraid. The War Office have given you a receipt but no money... has arrived...

TONY

We then started taking anything on the hoof. Thousands of animals. Hundreds of thousands. Until the air was blue and the sky black with vultures. The meat was sent by rail to ships waiting at Mombasa.

VERA

Food for the troops?

TONY

Much of it was sent to Somalia to feed the Italian prisoners of war. I did what I could but with endless delays... We had an outbreak of anthrax. It killed my assistant.

VERA

That nice young man? The tall one?

TONY

It could have been Makorongo.

VERA

Your friend?

TONY

He would have wept. We've taken great herds from the plains of East Africa. Ancient lineages lost forever. It was mass slaughter in the end. Horrific.

VERA

My love. Don't blame yourself.

TONY

They want me to go back for more.

VERA

How much leave do you have now?

TONY

I am not on leave. Is Hasani about?

64 EXT. MEETING HOUSE - AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1944 - EVENING 17 64

A yellow weaverbird brings grass and hangs underneath his nest to weave it into the base.

The Old Mama sits with her legs straight out in front of her weaving a *kiondo* grain bag. Mganga walks towards the Meeting House. His long earlobes wobble as he watches Meru at work.

Meru sweeps the yard with a reed broom, one arm behind her back. Naked children scatter as Tony drives up in his police vehicle. They mill around as he gets out, looking for Meru.

Tony doesn't yet see the Chief or Mganga sitting under the Meeting House thatch, watching him.

Meru stops working to greet Tony with polite deference.

TONY

Meru?

MERU

*Jambo, Bwana.*

TONY

*Habari gani?* (Are you well?)

MERU

*Habari njema, asante.* Yes, I am well thank you, *Bwana*. We did not know you were home.

TONY

It is only a short visit.

Tony takes an official, K.A.R. LETTER from his uniform.

TONY (CONT'D)

Meru, I bring bad news. I have already informed Hasani. I think Makorongo would have wanted me to tell you too.

Beyond them, Mganga laughs like a hyena and lights a roll-up.

Tony lowers the type-written letter, and stares at Mganga.

MGANGA

These should treat your rheumatism. My business is coming along. Copper is a much sort-after metal.

The Chief frowns. Mganga assumes he is disagreeing with him, but the Chief can see the K.A.R. letter and hear Tony.

TONY

Makorongo has been reported  
'Missing in Action'. We do not yet  
know... (if he has been taken  
prisoner of not but the odds are  
not good, I'm afraid.)

MGANGA

Do you disagree? I am doing well,  
accumulating a fine herd of long-  
eared goats. Would you agree to  
twelve females in kid?

CHIEF

Twice that would be too low for the  
daughter of a chief.

Meru looks at a fallen weaverbird nest. A child picks up the  
blue speckled eggs that had been inside. One is broken.

65 INT. AESO CELL - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - NIGHT 17 65

Moonlight falls through the grid of the aeso. Makorongo lies  
on the cement floor. He coughs, unable to stretch out.

(O.S.) African singing.

Clasping his legs for warmth, Makorongo closes his eyes.

66 EXT. RIVER BANK - AFRICAN FARM - 1914 - DREAM SEQUENCE 66

Young Makorongo and Young Hans' faces are reflected in an  
irrigation furrow passing the original farmhouse. Makorongo  
scoops clear water into his mouth while Hans catches frogs.

Bees hum around a cleft high in a tree. Young Makorongo  
climbs up to it with a hooked stick tucked into his shorts  
and a smoking weaverbird nest wrapped in green reeds.

Bees buzz. Hasani(40) waits below with a leather container.  
Young Makorongo stuffs a chunk of honey comb into his mouth.

Young Hans catches a fish as Hasani sweeps a sandy path in  
the garden followed by Young Makorongo looking for spoor.

HASANI

When the rains come, snakes walk.  
We need look out for their spoor.

YOUNG MAKORONGO

Why do people get so mean?



HASANI

Men get vicious when out-numbered  
or eaten up by fear.

Hands beat African drums as the dream becomes a nightmare.

Young Makorongo flings dry Acacia branches on a fire in late afternoon light. He looks through smoke to watch Hans thread fish onto a stick. The Baroness walks along the river bank.

BARONESS

Be strong and courageous my boy...

Meru puts out her hand and is given the crocodile tooth. She is in the same patterned cloth as she wore at the station.

MERU

I can't wait, can't wait any  
longer.

The tooth burns Meru's hand like acid. She throws it in the water. A green water spirit spins and swallows it, roars like a snake and rears up turning into a snapping crocodile.

67

INT. AESO CELL - POW CAMP - 1944 - NIGHT 17

67

Makorongo wakes from his dream, sweating, and feels for his crocodile tooth charm that he brings up to his lips.

(O.S.) African drums beat. The distant call of a jackal.

Makorongo rolls over but hits his limbs on concrete.

68

EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1944 - SUNDOWN - DAY 18

68

(O.S. CONT'D) African drums beat.

Maidens huddle in blankets around a cooking fire. The Chief gestures for Meru to sit. Mama Mbuzi rakes the embers. Hasani stares into the flames. Meru kneels between them. Mganga is absent.

MERU

Can I ask something of you, Mama?

Mama Mbuzi nods.

MERU (CONT'D)

The goat. Your white goat.  
The one I saw Mganga buy from you?  
What did he want it for?

Mama Mbulizi looks at the full moon as a fruit bat flies by.

Hasani glances at Meru who stares back at him.

MAMA MBULIZI

What do you want from life?

69 EXT. PLAINS BELOW KILIMANJARO - 1944 - NIGHT 18 69

A herd of elephants cross against the setting sun, the young following their mothers in single file.

A JACKAL sniffs the air. HYENAS wait in the long grass.

O.S. CONT'D MAMA MBULIZI

Mganga calls on powerful forces.

Ignore them at your peril.

The elephants move on.

70 EXT. HILLTOP - 1944 - NIGHT 18 70

Mganga draws a knife. It's sharp blade catches the light.

O.S. MAMA MBULIZI

Spirits are not restricted as we are  
yet they demand so much. Too much.

(O.S.) A jackal howls.

Mganga clutches a struggling individual. His face twists in concentration. The body in his grasp is the white goat.

(O.S.) African drums resume their distant beating.

71 EXT. PRISON YARD - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - NIGHT 18 71

(O.S. CONT'D) The beat of African drums.

Makorongo is held up like the goat by the Sergeant. Hatari ties his thumbs as if crucifying him on a bamboo pole.

The Prison Commander taps two fingers while pacing up and down. His civilian translator, adds notes in oriental script to a concertina pad. She wears traditional wooden shoes.

PRISON COMMANDER

You no eat! You no hungry? Why you  
have injured hand?

Hatari adjusts a pulley so Makorongo's toes touch the ground.

The Commander sees the rope bite into Makorongo's old scar.

PRISON COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
Good! I study behavior of African  
man. Next time we see you eat well.

Hatari raises a bamboo cane.

PRISON COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
No, no. I first must measure.  
Please record detail.

A pair of calipers loom in front of Makorongo's eyes.

The Commander measures the width of his nose. Calibrations  
are noted down by the translator. The Commander then takes  
measurements of his lips, ears and head, feeling his hair.

PRISON COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
*Uxeito* (Wait!) Wait, I want to see  
something. I have heard it  
reported...

The Commander unsheathes a knife and slices through  
Makorongo's shorts.

PRISON COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
No tail at all! I thought all black  
devils had tails. He must be  
beated. (sic)

MAKORONGO  
Why?

PRISON COMMANDER  
Why? Huh! One: For wrong thinking.  
Two: Looking arrogant. Three:  
Infringement of discipline. Grave  
offense against Emperor.

Hatari beats Makorongo across his legs with a bamboo cane.

72 EXT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA BELOW KILIMANJARO - 1944 - DAY 19 72

Rows of clean bandages, medical implements and bottles of  
ointment stand on clean white linen in the sunshine.

The shaggy white dog plays with a piece of cotton wool on  
Kikuyu grass in front of the farmhouse.

Vera sits behind a table, administering First Aid. Her queue  
of patients include a HUNCHED OLD MAN and Warusha women. A  
baby peeks from a *kanga* tied around his mother's back.

Mama Mbuzi waits with the herd boy as Vera treats his hand.

VERA

This wound must have been festering  
for sometime.

Hasani walks out of the house holding a glass bowl of  
steaming water. The herd boy looks up at him.

Hasani looks back at him through the steam.

HASANI

Oh. My son!

VERA

Is he your boy, Hasani?

HASANI

No, he just reminds me of...

Little children watch, fascinated as Vera turns the water  
purple by adding iodine and dips her cotton-wool into it.

VERA

This will hurt I'm afraid.

HASANI

*Maji kali.* (Fierce water) You must  
be strong, my child.

The herd boy reacts as the iodine stings. Whilst treating the  
wound Vera looks up to see Meru has arrived.

HASANI (CONT'D)

Ah *Memsaab*, this is Meru.

VERA

Meru, how are you?

Meru curtsies.

MERU

*Mem.*

VERA

The nurse in Arusha has been sent  
off to war, so you'll have to put  
up with us, I'm afraid.

MERU

*Mem.*

VERA

Are you sick, Meru?

Meru shakes her head. Hasani looks down.

MERU

I have come to you asking for...

Vera leads Meru across the lawn, leaving Hasani to bandage the herd boy's hand.

VERA

Is it a woman's problem?

This gives Meru confidence, igniting the fire within her.

MERU

Yes. It is. Of sorts. I am asking for a loan.

VERA

A loan?

MERU

I need to borrow cattle to pay my own bride-price.

73

INT/EXT. MGANGA'S SHRINE - 1944 - DAY 19

73

Mganga squats by a smoky fire inside his hut, which is full of glinting bottles and filthy jars of *dawa*. Flies buzz around as he ties a charm to a BABY WITH SMALLPOX.

The girl seen at the market holds her sickly child while the GRANDMOTHER extracts coins tied in the corner of her faded cotton wrap and counts them out for payment.

Mganga taps his fingers, insisting she pays more.

74

EXT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA BELOW KILIMANJARO - 1944 - DAY 19

74

Meru wraps her *kanga* (shawl) around her.

MERU

I cannot be joined to that man. He has other wives. Women are sent to him when they cannot fall pregnant.

VERA

Ah, I always wondered... they stay for a month? Or two?

MERU

As the daughter of a chief, I can only marry an elder, but he is old. Nearly as old as my father.

VERA

Forgive me, but why is your father contemplating this if you are not happy about it?

MERU

To him it is an honor. Mganga is highly revered. He cannot see that for me it would be a kind of slavery.

VERA

But...

MERU

My father has bad debts. They are pressing on him.

VERA

I'm afraid I don't have funds.

MERU

You must! Surely? They do not need the shillings. The payment can be in livestock. It will just be until Makorongo returns from the war.

VERA

Look - come with me.

Meru follows Vera as she strides off with her dog.

75

EXT. BOMA BY FARM STABLES - FARMHOUSE - 1944 - DAY 19

75

A MARABOU STORK, resembling an undertaker, stands on bare earth in the cattle yard. There are no cows.

VERA

I too have a sore heart. I only have half a tank of fuel left in my truck and my milk cow has been taken to feed the troops.

MERU

I fear Mganga has set a curse on Makorongo.

VERA

Don't worry. Love is stronger than any curse.

MERU

A curse strong enough to kill him?

VERA

We cut him off from it. Leave that to me. I'll enjoy visiting Mganga.

The women walk back across the lawn, followed by the dog.

MERU

I was too young to understand when Makorongo spoke of dreams, the dreams he had for us. But his vision was of building a future together, the two of us.

VERA

It's good to dream. At times it's the only thing that keeps you going.

MERU

This separation has given me a longing for Makorongo. Deep feelings I have not known before. I need him, long for his return.

Vera sees Hasani bandaging the boy's hand.

VERA

He's is Hasani's son isn't he?

MERU

His only son.

Hasani releases the herd boy. A charm is tied to his ankle.

76

EXT. MASAI MARA GAME RESERVE - 1944 - DAY 19

76

Tony, armed with a rifle & side-arm, climbs a rocky outcrop with a MASAI TRACKER. His police vehicle stands below them.

Tony reaches the top. An African plain lies before them but no hoofed animals can be seen. The tracker points to vultures soaring in the distance and lowers down to one brown speck.

Tony raises his binoculars.

A young WILDEBEEEST CALF stands against the skyline, bleating.

Tony can see no other game. He guesses his work is finished.

77 EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1944 - LATE AFTERNOON 19 77

A mongoose on a termite mound watches Meru as she walks home alone, clasping her *kanga* around her for comfort.

As she approaches the village, Meru walks past an the Old Mama shutting up her chickens in a little hut on stilts.

Fires burn, smoke drifts. The Chief sits with his elders in the Meeting House. Meru passes them silently, enters her grandmother's *rondavel* and closes the door.

78 INT. DORMITORY - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1944 - EVENING DAY 19 78

Makorongo lies on his front holding his crocodile tooth charm. Kenyan looks down from the bunk above as Chuck examines his bruised legs, inadvertently exposing his burns.

MAKORONGO

Did they shoot you down?

CHUCK

Yep. Plane caught fire. Couldn't get out fast enough. Found myself bobbing about in Japanese waters. None of my crew survived.

MAKORONGO

A good friend of mine had to live with a scared face. Not easy.

CHUCK

I received cold seawater treatment. The men who fished me out were a bit rough, but hey, I'm alive. What's that you're holding?

MAKORONGO

It reminds me of someone special. I need to get back to her.

CHUCK

She'll be fine.

MAKORONGO

I'm not so sure.



CHUCK

How are you going to get off an island like Japan? Try to escape and they'll decapitate you.

KENYAN

And we will have to eat your head.

79

EXT. MGANGA'S SHRINE - 1944 - DAY 20

79

Mganga is twisting copper wire to make bracelets.

A Go-Away bird squawks from the trees alarming a large MONGOOSE twisting around in its dirty cage.

Mganga looks up as Vera drives up in her cattle truck, learns out of the window, takes out her wallet and counts notes.

VERA

Are you the one who has the power to sell curses?

Mganga rises, thinking he has a customer.

MGANGA

I am he.

VERA

A curse strong enough to kill a man?

MGANGA

That would cost you a lot of money.

VERA

Are you sure it will work?

MGANGA

A curse will activate once I have made a sacrifice.

VERA

I see.

Vera stuffs the money back, puts her truck into gear and drives off in a cloud of dust leaving Mganga nonplussed.

80

EXT. MAIZE FIELDS - AFRICAN FARM - 1944 - DAY 20

80

The Chief supervises women bringing in the maize harvest. Vera descends from her cattle truck to greet him.

VERA

Good afternoon to you, Chief.

CHIEF

*Habari njema.* I am well. How is it with you?

VERA

My eyes are the eyes of a bird today. But my mind is working like the that of a she-elephant. Please understand that I have come here to tell you that neither the bird nor elephant want to cause offense.

CHIEF

How is it that I can help the elephant?

VERA

I need you to call a meeting of the elders. Please invite your *mganga* to attend. The one Bwana Tony calls Mr. Fan Belt.

CHIEF

Mganga?

VERA

It's a matter for the police.

81 EXT. PRISON YARD & LATRINES - POW CAMP, JAPAN 1944-DAY 20 81

Hatari lights a bonfire while Makorongo, Kenyan, Jabu, Bright and Toki demolish the latrines' dilapidated bamboo fence.

Kenyan tosses rotten wood onto the flames, which crackle as Makorongo takes his crocodile tooth from around his neck.

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA

I must get rid of this thing.

KENYAN

Doesn't it remind you of someone special?

MAKORONGO

Yes, but it comes from a bad source.

Makorongo throws the tooth into the embers and looks away.

The tooth bursts into green flames that flare up. Distorted by the heat-haze, resembling a writhing crocodile.

KENYAN

Whoa! The spirit of the crocodile.

HATARI

*Speedo, speedo.*

Makorongo exhales, feeling as if a weight has been lifted. When he fails to move, Hatari tries to belt him with his rifle butt yet stops, distracted by the green flames.

MAKORONGO

Gone. I am free of it.

Hatari belts Makorongo who falls into the ash.

HATARI

*Furio... Furio. Furio. Furio.*

Hatari kicks Makorongo before jogging off, leaving him to stare at the dents made by his boots in the sand.

An EAGLE soars above the quarry looking down on the scene.

Makorongo lies on his back watching the majestic raptor.

82

EXT. MEETING HOUSE - AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1944 - DAY 20

82

Printed fabric is shaken out.

MGANGA

I have bought a gift. Something to tempt a fine young woman.

Meru looks up from her cooking fire. Mganga is holding the exact length of patterned cloth she'd admired at the market.

Meru looks towards Asha but he ignores her, swishing flies with a wildebeest tail mounted on a stick.

Hasani and the elders wait in the Meeting House. Some open tobacco pouches, surprised as Vera drives up and enters.

Meru rises to go into her grandmother's *rondavel* but stops by the door as Mganga takes a seat next to Asha.

Vera shakes hands with the elders but Mganga won't touch her.

83

EXT. PRISON YARD - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1945 - DAY 20

83

Makorongo and Bright use bamboo rakes to make curved paths. Jabu extracts rubbish from under huts to burn on the fire.

The Commander nods with approval as Kenyan and Toki bring down barrowloads of newly cut white stones.

Hatari jogs down the raked paths, kicking aside a stone. The Commander slaps him and leaves with his translator.

Kenyan notes their different footprints.

KENYAN

Hatari leaves distinctive spoor.

Re-energized, Makorongo nods as he outlines a curving path with his rake. Jabu brings him some torn, labelled packing.

JABU

Look what I've found.

BRIGHT

Yeah! The guards must be pillaging Red Cross parcels. Were there any letters with this? Any food?

JABU

I'll see what else is there.

MAKORONGO

Great. These rocks are perfect. I like this sharp face.

KENYAN

Freshly cut. A good size for throwing. They're from the tunnel Chuck and his gang are digging.

MAKORONGO

I fear that tunnel is to be our communal grave.

KENYAN

And kill us alive?

MAKORONGO

In days of old, the Masai would seize young men of the WaArusha and had them digging wells to extend their grazing. Once the cattle were watered, the Masai killed the men they'd enslaved in order to keep the location of the wells secret.

84

EXT/INT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA - 1945 - EVENING DAY 20

84

Golden light floods the garden. Tony, in dusty police shirt and shorts, walks onto the veranda.

Vera emerges from the office with her white dog.

VERA

You're back. What's happened?

TONY

Simply no more zebra left. There is nothing left. No grazing animals, no lion, only jackal and hyena.

VERA

I've missed you.

He takes her in his arms and kisses her.

TONY

I've missed you every second of every day. You know you have never looked so beautiful.

VERA

And you are just the man I needed.

Vera draws Tony back towards his parked vehicle.

TONY

I am delighted. You know what I've heard, in the back of beyond?

VERA

What's that?

TONY

I gather you are free to marry.

VERA

Oh, yes. The divorce came through. It's not very exciting.

TONY

Would you be looking for another husband by any chance?

Tony tries to take her in his arms again.

VERA

Actually it's a policeman I need right now. Quite badly.

TONY

Oh no, why?

VERA

I've got trouble with a fan belt.

TONY

A mechanical problem?

VERA

I'm joking. That Mganga fellow you call Fan Belt. The one with the long ears.

TONY

What about him?

VERA

I need to get rid of him. Quickly.

85

EXT. PRISON YARD - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1945 - DAY 20

85

Makorongo and Kenyan work swiftly, using sharp white stones to edge paths that Bright smooths with a bamboo rake.

CHUCK

This looks very neat. Will the Commander add plants?

MAKORONGO

Maybe a flowering cherry? He's keen on adding more of these ornamental stones you sorted out. This one stands in memory of my good friend Singh, not that the Commander knows that.

Toki creates ridged gravel around large standing stones as Bright rakes over footprints, smoothing sand near the rocks.

CHUCK

But why make the place look nice?

TOKI

My mother rakes paths so she can tell if snakes are around.

BRIGHT

Jabu has started to track the guards. He can even tell how fast the delinquent one is moving.

KENYAN

We can use these rocks as missiles.

CHUCK

Against rifle fire?

KENYAN

Better than nothing.

MAKORONGO

My intention is only for the rocks  
to catch the light, like this.

He reflects light onto Chuck's face and into Kenyan's eyes.

CHUCK

What, and just look pretty?

Makorongo nods, standing back to see the camp transformed.  
His shining rock garden has become a place of beauty.

86 EXT/INT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA - 1945 - EARLY EVENING DAY 20 86

The white dog looks towards the veranda steps.

POV dog: Vera quarreling with Tony near the vehicles.

VERA

... why can't you charge Fan Belt  
with murder?

Tony and Vera walk towards the dog.

TONY

How can I arrest anyone for the  
death of a man in the Far East,  
killed in battle? It's ridiculous.

Vera bursts into tears, storms past him but stops when she  
sees a toothless crocodile skull by the steps.

VERA

What's this? Did you leave it here?

TONY

No, you're right. Someone's got it  
in for us. I'll chuck it in the  
river. We need to quash these  
curses once and for all.

87 EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - TOKYO, JAPAN - 1945 - NIGHT 20 87

Armed Imperial GUARDS patrol a bridge to an illuminated castle reflected in still water and framed by cheery trees.

(O.S.) Sounds of an ostentatious party within the palace.

88 INT. RECEPTION HALL - IMPERIAL PALACE - NIGHT 20 88

Japanese officials meet diplomatic guests. An German *Oberst* (COLONEL) resembling the Baron covers his jaw with one hand as he explains his mission to a JAPANESE LADY in a kimono.

COLONEL

My engineers are looking into providing Japanese submarines with Messerschmitt engines.

The Colonel overhears the Prison Commander in conversation with a bespectacled GERMAN ENGINEER.

PRISON COMMANDER

Our young men are at the front. We found 'way to increase manpower efficiency by identifying captives with useful skills. You must come to inspect the stone garden our black prisoners have built at the quarry. Not far to drive. You'll see a bit of Japan.

The engineer is disinterested, but the Colonel intervenes.

COLONEL

I would be most interested.

The Prison Commander bows, eager to make an impression.

89 INT. DORMITORY - POW CAMP, JAPAN - 1945 - EVENING DAY 21 89

Makorongo and Kenyan return tired and dusty from their work with Toki and Jabu supporting Bright who falls into his bunk, one eye half-closed due to swelling from a new cut.

KENYAN

Hatari has worked out that Bright is more gentle than the rest of us.

CHUCK

What's the Swahili word for brain?



KENYAN

*Bongo.*

CHUCK

Hey, that's brilliant. Don't let him into your *bongo*.

KENYAN

He won't wait to be invited.

CHUCK

You know that they put the inadequate soldiers in charge of us? The delinquents and psychos they can't use on the front? And as shortages cut in, these guys are not getting enough to eat.

MAKORONGO

What do they mean by '*furio*'?

CHUCK

They shout *furio* at you?

KENYAN

To each and every one of us.

CHUCK

Take no notice. Ignore them.

MAKORONGO

Tell us what it means?

CHUCK

That you are the lowest of the low.

KENYAN

This is not something new.

CHUCK

Yeah, but when they declare *furio* it means that you aren't going to live more than six months.

MAKORONGO

No?

CHUCK

Like, you're not gonna get out of here.

Chuck walks to the door of the dormitory.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
 None of us will. Brains or no  
 brains. The US bombing is gonna  
 start soon. It has to.

The Sergeant and Hatari burst in, shoving Chuck aside.

SERGEANT  
 Prisoner Toki-WaArusha!

Toki stands frozen in terror, thin and child-like.

HATARI  
 You come first for aeso, black man,  
 then for questioning. On suspicion  
 of wrong thinking. We go. Now!

Toki trips, but is dragged out of the dormitory by Hatari.

MAKORONGO  
 Hold your heart. Be strong.

90 EXT. YARD & AESO CELL - POW CAMP, JAPAN - EVENING DAY 21 90

Hatari marches Toki across the yard to the aeso.

91 EXT. QUARRY & YARD - POW CAMP, JAPAN - EVENING DAY 21 91

A DIPLOMATIC CAR flying small Nazi flags drives through the  
 quarry, bringing the German Colonel towards the prison yard.

The Sergeant opens the prison gates revealing the orange  
 globe of the winter sun. The smart saloon car drives through.

The Colonel emerges from the car, tall & clean-shaven with  
 short hair, wearing gloves and a greatcoat with high collar.  
 As he glances up to see Hatari shove Toki into the aeso, he  
 can see Hatari is underage but not that Toki is African.

COLONEL  
 Young boys.

The Colonel is greeted by the Prison Commander who bows to  
 the German salute. Halyards slap against the flag pole.

PRISON COMMANDER  
 Welcome to Imorit Prison, Colonel.

COLONEL  
 Commander. It's a pleasure to be  
 here and see what you are up to.

The Colonel looks at the Japanese flag flying high.

PRISON COMMANDER

We hear you work with Imperial institutions. Are you in Tokyo for much time?

COLONEL

A matter of days. I am here with the Führer's military delegation.

PRISON COMMANDER

Ah, yes. Did you enjoy a good journey?

The Prison Commander begins to show him the camp.

COLONEL

Amazing. We flew from Germany to Japan with only five landings to re-fuel.

PRISON COMMANDER

Ah! I hear of your flying Junk.

COLONEL

*Jünkers*. I understand your prisoners of war are proving useful?

PRISON COMMANDER

We are proud to show the German Reich around model prison.

COLONEL

I see they've been building paths. In interesting shapes... They look almost like...

92

INT. DORMITORY - POW CAMP, JAPAN - EVENING - DAY 21

92

The walls are so thin every word can be heard by Makorongo who listens with Chuck as Kenyan and Bright talk in Swahili.

MAKORONGO

No, he's going work it out...

KENYAN

*Nakatka doktari...* I think you need a doctor for this eye.

BRIGHT  
*Sisi hakuna doktari hapa.*  
 (We have no doctor here.)

CHUCK  
 Hush! It seems we have a sightseer  
 from the Third Reich.

KENYAN  
 Has Hitler come to Tokyo?

CHUCK  
 Well, it's not your Great-aunt  
 Maria.

O.S. PRISON COMMANDER  
 All captives accorded best possible  
 treatment. They unanimously express  
 appreciation...

93

EXT. DORMITORIES - POW CAMP, JAPAN - EVENING DAY 21

93

The Commander leads the Colonel on past rows of dormitories  
 followed by the Sergeant as a gang of dust-covered prisoners  
 from the quarry enter Makorongo's dormitory.

PRISON COMMANDER  
 ...of Japanese magnanimity,  
 grateful to Imperial Government,  
 for the just and good treatment  
 accorded to them..

O.S. BRIGHT  
*Lete maji hapa, tafadhali.*  
*Mimi nataka maji.* (I need water.)

The Colonel stops to listen.

PRISON COMMANDER  
 We plan to have prisoners at one  
 hundred and thirty different sites  
 in Japan.

COLONEL  
 Excuse me, Commander, but I've just  
 heard Swahili being spoken.  
 Do you have any East Africans here?

The Commander pauses, before issuing a command.

PRISON COMMANDER  
 We have blacks.

COLONEL  
Can I see them?

PRISON COMMANDER  
Of course. *Shippo no nai kuroi*  
*akuma o tsurete kite kudasai.* (Bring  
me that black devil with no tail.)

94 INT. DORMITORY - POW CAMP, JAPAN - EVENING DAY 21

94

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA  
"A new era is coming into being  
reflecting wisdom and benevolence  
of mighty Emperor..."

The Sergeant enters, catching this mockery. Other prisoners remain motionless waiting to hear what is wanted.

SERGEANT  
You! Black prisoner! You are  
wanted! The Meeting House! Now!

The Sergeant strides over and yanks Makorongo to his feet. Jabu has to help him up. Hatari arrives to drag him out.

Kenyan, Bright and Jabu group together, unable to help.

CHUCK  
I'm sorry, I'm so sorry my friend.

MAKORONGO  
*Kwa heri. Kwa Herini.* Goodbye.  
(Goodbye to you all.)

95 INT. COMMANDER'S OFFICE - POW CAMP, JAPAN - EVENING DAY 21 95

The Colonel is helped out of his greatcoat and nods in greeting to the civilian translator who mutely bows her head, hands clasped. The Prison Commander remains standing.

(O.S.) A whistle, and noise of quarrying starts up outside.

As the Colonel removes his cap and gloves, the Sergeant opens the door and Hatari shoves Makorongo in front of the desk.

The Colonel takes a seat and checks the time. Makorongo spots the Baron's gold pocket watch.

The Colonel glances at the prisoner, but has no recognition. The Commander digs in a filing cabinet for paperwork.

COLONEL

Tell me, what regiment are in?  
Where do you come from?

Makorongo looks up into his eyes. The Colonel appears and sounds exactly like the Baron but with a disfigured jaw.

MAKORONGO

I come from, from a sisal farm on  
the Oosa River in Tanganyik... what  
you know as German East Africa.

COLONEL

What are you doing here?

MAKORONGO

'Flowing water does not wait for a  
thirsty man.'

Hans-Werner the Colonel slowly recognizes him.

COLONEL

Makorongo! What are you doing in  
this place?

PRISON COMMANDER

Tell me, please, what you talk  
about?

Makorongo looks up. Hatari seizes his arms, jerks him from the chair and tries to force him into a prostrate position.

The Colonel pushes back his chair, turning to the Commander.

COLONEL

I have to explain that this  
Tanganyikan should not be here.

The Commander frowns, unable to grasp the language.

TRANSLATOR

Kono genjūmin wa koko ni irubekide  
wanai. (This native should not be  
here.)

PRISON COMMANDER

Why not?

COLONEL

Were you fighting for the British?

MAKORONGO

No, I was given an ambulance. I  
drove for the Red Cross.

COLONEL  
The International Red Cross?

MAKORONGO  
We once saved a Japanese officer.

The translator is amazed.

COLONEL  
Sorry Commander, but this man is not in the correct place. He must be extradited without delay. We cannot have personnel from the Red Cross serving jail sentences.

The Colonel takes out a small blue book and a fountain pen.

TRANSLATOR  
*Kare wa shūjin o shakuhō suru yō shuchō shita.* (He insists the prisoner be released.)

COLONEL  
We must stick to the rules. Tokyo agreed to adhere to the Geneva Red Cross Convention of 1863... In 1929 the... I have it written here.

PRISON COMMANDER  
What? So then! Prove this man's identity!

Makorongo indicates that he has no papers.

COLONEL  
Excuse me but I've known Makorongo for nearly thirty years. He is a German citizen who has simply been enslaved by the enemy.

PRISON COMMANDER  
Higher Authority would require positive identification.

The Colonel is stumped. Makorongo closes his eyes in defeat.

COLONEL  
You would be very much in danger of losing face if you were found to be holding a Red Cross worker. It could cause diplomatic problems.

The Commander flicks his hands in command. The Sergeant opens the door for Hatari to remove Makorongo.

PRISON COMMANDER  
No go. Need to see proof.

The Colonel raises his hand. He pulls at his right thumb.

COLONEL  
Look at the prisoner's right hand.  
It was caught in farm machinery  
when he was a boy.

TRANSLATOR  
*Shūjin no oyayubi ni nanika mondai  
ga arimasu.* (Something is wrong  
with the prisoner's thumb.)

Hatari lifts Makorongo's thumb above the table.

COLONEL  
My mother had to sew it back on.

The Commander, who has seen the thumb before, starts  
shuffling papers, looking down his list of prisoners' names.

PRISON COMMANDER  
*Kanren suru shōsai o kakitomemasu.  
Shūjin no kaikyū to shimei,  
kokuseki, Sekijūji-sha dōnyū*  
(Take down the relevant details;  
rank and full name of prisoner,  
nationality, deployment...)

MAKORONGO  
I cannot go, Hans-Werner.

COLONEL  
What is wrong?

MAKORONGO  
I cannot leave the others from our  
regiment to suffer here.

The Translator looks amazed. A shocked silence follows.

There is a knock at the door.

COLONEL  
What others?

Jabu in tattered KAR uniform, enters holding up a yellow-  
topped jar of Marmite and half-burnt Red Cross parcel boxes.

JABU  
Sir, I found this on the bonfire.



COLONEL

And how old are you? What's going on here?

MAKORONGO

Servicemen not receiving their Red Cross parcels.

96 EXT. AIRFIELD - TOKYO, JAPAN - 1945 - EVENING DAY 21 96

A Jünkers plane takes off above traditional wooden buildings.

97 INT. JÜNKERS AIRCRAFT - TOKYO, JAPAN 1945 - EVENING DAY 21 97

Toki, Jabu, Bright & Kenyan look down to spot Imorit Prison. They see paths Makorongo made from white rocks catching the evening light. They clearly spell out letters P.O.W.

MAKORONGO

Chuck mentioned something about his next mission.

KENYAN

You have been thinking like an eagle.

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA

Operation Meetinghouse. It promises to be the largest bombing raid in history. I couldn't let Chuck get burnt a second time.

98 EXT. SKY OVER TOKYO, JAPAN - 1945 - EVENING DAY 21 98

On the opposite horizon, B29 Superfortress bombers close in to commence bombing the ancient city.

99 EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - TOKYO, JAPAN 1945 - EVENING DAY 21 99

Armed IMPERIAL GUARDS patrolling the bridge to a castle framed by cheery trees hear US planes and see bombs drop.

100 EXT. SKY OVER TOKYO, JAPAN - 1945 - EVENING DAY 21 100

A B29 Pilot looks down, spotting the POW camp from the air.

B29 BOMBER PILOT

Prisoner of War camp below. Our boys will be down there.

His plane shears away to drop a bomb beyond the camp.

101

INT. JÜNKERS GERMAN AIRCRAFT - 1945 - EVENING DAY 21

101

COLONEL

P.O.W. - I thought there was something odd about those paths.

MAKORONGO

It was you who taught me to write in the sand.

COLONEL

So I did.

MAKORONGO

What do we tell our senior officer when he asks how we were flown out of Tokyo?

COLONEL

That you have a reckless friend.

MAKORONGO

Do you not work for Hitler?

COLONEL

Avoid telling your superiors this, but the last decade has been dangerous for aristocrats from my region. You knew my mother. Both she and my little sister would have been sent to labour camps if I'd refused to join up. All I can do is merge with the greenery and 'grasp any opportunity to do good.'

MAKORONGO

How is your father?

COLONEL

Papa insisted on going to the Western Front and died in 1915.

MAKORONGO

I am sorry.

COLONEL

I'm just glad we haven't lost you too. We'll be landing in Silesia soon. Once on level ground we will have no contact. Until I reach Tanganyika of course. Then...

MAKORONGO

Thank you for sticking your neck  
out for us.

COLONEL

What is life without risk? It would  
be no fun at all.

102 INT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA BELOW KILIMANJARO -1945- NIGHT 21 102

(O.S.) Clicking sounds of cicadas, fruit bats and nightjars.

Tony hands Vera a *kiondo* bag, watched by the white dog.

TONY

I've bought you a peace offering.  
Hardly diamonds but fashionable. I  
had to take a bit of a risk, but...

Vera unwraps a pair of beautifully made crocodile shoes.

VERA

Oh, Goodness. Thank you! I haven't  
had anything new since the war  
began. Nothing pretty like these.  
Nothing so chic or glamorous!

TONY

You realize being married to me  
will be pretty grim: no going back  
to Europe, no concerts or dances...

Vera slides her feet into the shoes.

VERA

I think we're a perfect fit.

Tony pulls her into his arms.

TONY

We are. I just don't know where I  
can find you an engagement ring.

103 EXT. JÜNKERS AIRCRAFT - AIRFIELD - SILESIA - DAY 22 103

(O.S) Aircraft engines roar then suddenly cease.

As steps are wheeled up to the newly-landed Jüнкers aircraft  
the Colonel emerges in his greatcoat to find the airfield  
covered in the snow. All is quiet. A Nazi flag hangs limp.

Sub-title: ~ **The Province of Silesia, Germany, 1945**

Time on his pocket-watch is checked as it starts snowing.

Makorongo, wearing a blanket like a scarf, joins the Colonel as snowflakes fall. Their breath looks like smoke.

COLONEL

Snow - it muffles the sound.

MAKORONGO

I've never seen it before.

COLONEL

You have. It's been lying on the peak of Kilimanjaro all your life. Take these so that you can look at it when you reach home.

The Colonel, so in need of friendship, hands over his Zeiss field glasses. Makorongo has always wanted a pair.

MAKORONGO

I am sorry. Really, I cannot...

COLONEL

I'll ship them to you.

MAKORONGO

How did you know I was at the camp?

COLONEL

I heard Swahili being spoken soon after I arrived, but it had never occurred to me that you would be attached to the armed forces.

MAKORONGO

We have to prove ourselves as warriors before we can marry.

The German engineer and his two DRAFTSMEN emerge from the plane clutching instrument cases and rolls of blue-print Messerschmitt plans as the Colonel puts away his binoculars.

COLONEL

Thanks to these engineers, new submarines will grant us victory.

The engineer turns to stare at Makorongo. The Colonel slaps him on the shoulder, dislodging his spectacles.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

You must know these craftsmen, from what will soon be German East Africa, have been carving stone in the most ingenious ways. Very impressive when seen from the air.

As the engineer and draftsmen descend the steps, Makorongo touches the Colonel's arm in farewell.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

The Red Cross will take care of your repatriation from here on. You will be transported to their HQ in Cairo and then on south. A long journey, but I envy you.

MAKORONGO

Will we see you on the farm?

COLONEL

When Germany wins back East Africa, I'll bring my mother out. She was very fond of you.

Kenyan, Jabu, Bright & Toki file down the steps.

The Colonel returns the salutes of two uniformed DRIVERS in long winter coats. Their grey STAFF CARS billow exhaust fumes. Footsteps crunch leaving black footprints in the snow.

104 EXT. STEAM TRAIN - TANGANYIKA - 1945 - DAWN DAY 23 104

As dawn breaks, a steam train crosses an East African plain dotted with acacia trees. It flies the Union Jack.

Makorongo comes to the window and gazes up at an EAGLE soaring in the sky, a symbol of liberation.

105 INT. STEAM TRAIN - TANGANYIKA - 1945 - DAWN DAY 23 105

Makorongo is joined at the train window by Toki and Kenyan who look out over the plain where wild animals graze.

A herd of GIRAFFE walk past the flat-topped acacia trees.

A WARTHOG with three piglets trots through long grass.

A male OSTRICH runs right past the train window.

MAKORONGO

No need for field glasses.

KENYAN

You will be home soon. And all  
being paid for by this Red Cross.

Kenyan flops down on the seat beside Jabu and Bright.

MAKORONGO

Hans-Werner might have made them an  
attractive donation. I am afraid  
you three will end up a little way  
from where you live.

KENYAN

Didn't you tell the *Oberst* that we  
are from Kenya?

MAKORONGO

Did you want to stay in that  
quarry?

KENYAN

Ah now, did you trick him?

MAKORONGO

I might have said something about  
growing up under the shadow of  
Kilimanjaro.

Makorongo looks briefly to camera.

MAKORONGO - TO CAMERA

It was Hans-Werner who assumed that  
we were all from his old colony.  
I only ever claimed my friends were  
from East Africa, which is true.

BRIGHT

I think you might just have  
hoodwinked a Nazi officer.

JABU

Undoubtedly a man of importance,  
but he removed his uniform for us.

MAKORONGO

Come to my village, to meet my old  
father, then we will work out how  
to get you three over the border  
and home to Kenya.

106

EXT. OOSA RIVER &amp; SHAMBA - 1945 - EVENING - DAY 23

106

A herd of elephants walk down to the water to drink. Their reflections are caught by golden light.

A large elephant caresses a smaller one with its trunk.

Makorongo strides up to Meru's *shamba* holding a COCONUT.

MERU

A coconut? Makorongo? You've found me a coconut!

MAKORONGO

I asked if I could help drive the train on the final leg. It enabled me to disembark at Usa River.

MERU

It is you. You look half-starved.

MAKORONGO

Thin but happy.

Makorongo takes Meru's hand in his and whirls her around until she falls into his arms, giddy and laughing.

MERU

Where've you been?

MAKORONGO

To the end of the world.

MERU

What was it like?

MAKORONGO

Horrible.

MERU

We thought we'd lost you.

MAKORONGO

I never get lost.

Needing to pat his chest to confirm that she is not dreaming, Meru finds the crocodile tooth pendant missing and smiles.

MAKORONGO (CONT'D)

It's gone I'm afraid.

He tries to take her in his arms but she keeps him back.

MERU

As are my fears. Will you marry me?

MAKORONGO

I didn't want to rush you.

MERU

Rush me? I've been waiting more than two years.

MAKORONGO

Are you sure? Are you free?

MERU

I am my own woman now.

MAKORONGO

Will you have me?

MERU

Will I?

MAKORONGO

Will you?

MERU

You must know I am free to say, Yes or No or Maybe.

MAKORONGO

No?

MERU

Yes. Yes not No. Yes, I will. Right now I cannot think of a finer dream - and I don't care how many cucumbers you tread on.

Makorongo looks down to see he has trodden on her vegetables.

MAKORONGO

Oh no! Your plants.

He clasps her to him until she has to speak to his chest.

MERU

There will be complications.

MAKORONGO

I don't care.

MERU

And it might cost a lot.



MAKORONGO

We'll make a plan.

MERU

Are you sure?

MAKORONGO

We just need to look at things from  
a different angle, from above.

107      EXT. STATELY HOME (*SCHLOSS*) - SILESIA - 1945 - NIGHT 23      107

Moonlight shines through pine trees illuminating a Schloss in the snow as a grey staff car pulls up next to an SS vehicle. The headlights are switched off and the car door opens.

The *Oberst's* boots scrunch up the steps as fresh snow falls.

Hans walks into a warmly lit hall, closing the heavy front door behind him. The brass knocker shines in the moonlight. It is formed in the shape of an eagle.

The Baroness (now 60) pours tea into the same Dresden cups with silver spoons she used in Africa and hands them to two SS Officers in black great coats standing by her log fire.

BARONESS

Hans-Werner, darling. These  
officers bring news of your next  
posting. It sounds...

COLONEL

Don't tell me. The Eastern Front.

108      EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1945 - SUNSET DAY 24      108

A feast, is being prepared. The Old Mama coaxes fires where goats are roasting. The Chief stirs a pot of millet beer.

Mr Poona, Oom Swaney and his ridgeback dog arrive in his ox-cart loaded with baskets of fruit, tomatoes and onions.

(O.S.) Crickets call, thunder rolls.

The only men between the ages of 17 and 50 are Makorongo, Kenyan, Jabu, Bright and Toki clad in their demob suits.

MAKORONGO

The thunder sounds like shelling.

CHIEF

It's good to be blessed by rains at a feast.

MAKORONGO

You must meet our Chief.

The Chief greets each man in the traditional manner.

CHIEF

We are so pleased you are all here. I want to know by what way you travelled back from the ends of the earth. We want to know about the *ndege*, the airplane, and what the ladies were like.

MAKORONGO

I would quite like my father to be here first.

CHIEF

Where is he?

MAKORONGO

Still working. I think he is perhaps far too loyal.

109

EXT/INT. FARMHOUSE VERANDA - 1945 - SUNSET DAY 24

109

(O.S.) African drums and singing at the village *n'goma*.

The python looks down on Tony as Hasani enters with the white dog. Tony watches the cattle truck lurch off down the drive.

TONY

Who's that?

HASANI

Mganga has bought the old cattle truck but I'm not sure he knows how scarce fuel is.

(O.S.) Rumble of thunder.

TONY

Rain's coming. That's good.

HASANI

Ah, not tonight, Bwana.

TONY

Yes, of course. You'd better go on ahead. We'll see you there.

Tony turns and follows Hasani into the house with the dog.

110 EXT. MEETING HOUSE - AFRICAN VILLAGE - 1945 - SUNSET DAY 240

Beads flash in the firelight. With much giggling the maidens rub oil onto Meru's shaven scalp. She pretends to resist.

Tony and Vera in her crocodile skin shoes arrive holding a parcel as a boy runs fast through the crowd.

Makorongo greets Vera as Toki takes Kenyan, Jabu and Bright to stamp around a big fire where the maidens resume singing.

TONY

A package arrived for you today.

He hands Makorongo a box marked ZEISS - JENA.

MAKORONGO

From Zeiss? What does that mean?

TONY

That if this war ever ends you'll be equipped for a new career as a safari guide.

MAKORONGO

Is it a dust filter?

As Makorongo opens the case light glints off a new pair of German binoculars with his name engraved on them.

The drummers beat, rising to a crescendo.

Meru finds Makorongo who formally takes her hand and leads her towards the Meeting House where his POW friends gather.

(O.S.) Crack of thunder.

MERU

You have had your time of fighting?

MAKORONGO

Indeed we have!

TOKI

You could honestly say we are proven warriors.

JABU

*Kingi Georgi* has given us shillings  
for the time we were held captive.  
More than I have ever seen.

MERU

Paid and given this nice suit.

A number of small boys including the little Herd Boy drive  
eighty goats through the crowd and into a new boma.

MERU (CONT'D)

So many goats?

MAKORONGO

For something of great value.

MERU

How did you find such a lot?

MAKORONGO

I bought them from a man with long  
ears eager to purchase a cattle  
truck. Said he's off to the coast.

HASANI

To avoid being arrested for  
stealing telephone wire.

Meru smiles as rain starts to fall heavily.

TOKI

They say that if it rains at a  
wedding then all the tears that  
need to be shed will be shed and  
there will be sadness no more.

The Chief comes over to thrice shake Makorongo's hand. Meru  
tries to hide her smiles but looks over the herd of goats as  
Mama Mbuzi offers up beaded jewelry in a woven basket.

Makorongo adorns his bride with a porcupine quill necklace.  
Tall flames leap behind them, defying the rain.

~ END CAPTIONS ~

127

**This true story was told by Makorongo and Tony when they 127  
visited Jabu in Kenya in 1986.**

**Vera was 29 years older than Tony. They were married for more  
than 30 years. The stuffed python outlived them all.**

FADE OUT.