

AN AFRICAN WESTERN

Written by

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EXT. RURAL VILLAGE - THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC - DAWN

The sun rises over a sprawling landscape of green hills, lush jungle, and manicured fields. A vast and majestic land.

TITLE CARD: THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

A quaint village, AISSA'S VILLAGE, rests atop a hill, waking with the sun.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE STREET - DAWN

A few OPEN AIR JEEPS line the road. Sparse POWER LINES zig zag through the sky. A RADIO playing commercials can be heard through a front door left ajar.

EARLY RISERS, mostly older women, hang laundry outside on clotheslines to dry.

THREE YOUNG BOYS play soccer in the street.

INT. AISSA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

A young woman with a pure kind of beauty, complexion like midnight, AISSA (17), rises from a worn, white bed. She yawns, stretches.

She turns on the faucet at a small sink in her room. Only a few drops.

She WHACKS it. The water sputters out. She washes her face.

EXT. AISSA'S YARD - LATER

Aissa GRABS an old RIFLE from its resting place against the side of the house.

She sits at a small table, and disassembles the rifle, laying each part of the gun out methodically.

She uses a brush, cloth and a cord to clean out each part, taking pride in the work. She then rapidly reassembles the gun with military precision.

She aims against a BULLET-RIDDLED POST a mile away and shoots expertly.

The bullet chips away at the post as it hits the target.

INT. AISSA'S KITCHEN - DAWN

AISSA'S MOTHER (40s) whisks eggs over a flaming cook top.

Aissa whirls in, surprising her mother with a kiss on the cheek. Aissa's mother smiles tenderly.

AISSA'S MOTHER
Always early to rise, my little dove.

AISSA
There's work to be done.

AISSA'S MOTHER
Always is.

Aissa's sister, NAIMA (14) chipper, young girl with Aissa's clever, almond eyes, but a face that is rounder, softer, runs into the kitchen.

AISSA
Late, again.

Naima ignores her and makes her way to the kitchen sink. She proceeds to brush her teeth.

Naima's mother struggles to serve breakfast around her.

AISSA'S MOTHER
Naima! Do you mind?

NAIMA
If someone hadn't used all the water!

She shoots Aissa a dirty look.

AISSA
Maybe you should get up earlier.
Then you wouldn't be late to class!

NAIMA
It's only first greetings. No one goes on time.

AISSA
You go on time.

AISSA'S MOTHER
You'll both be fed today and that's what matters.

Aissa's mother slides them plates of steaming scrambled eggs. Naima sticks her tongue at Aissa. Aissa rolls her eyes.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD - DAY

Aissa waits for Naima.

AISSA
Come on!

Naima shuffles up, school bag hanging from her shoulders.

NAIMA
I'm just a little late.

The sisters walk to the school, Naima still dragging behind.

AISSA
A little late is still late. You
can do better than that.

NAIMA
Not everyone is perfect like you.

AISSA
I'm not perfect.

NAIMA
Seems like it.

AISSA
If you work hard, Naima, you can be
ten times better than me. You could
make it to a city.

NAIMA
You could have made it to the
biggest city in the world if you
said yes to the man from America.

AISSA
What do I always tell you, Naima?
If you want something, you have to
earn it. If you let someone give
you what you want, then they can
also take it away.

Naima takes in this advice for a beat.

NAIMA
What if they don't like me?

Aissa nudges Naima playfully.

AISSA
Impossible.

Aissa softens. She corrects Naima's posture, bringing her shoulders back.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Just sit up straight, and speak up.
Show them how bright you are.

NAIMA
You think I'm bright?

AISSA
You're my sister aren't you?

Naima grins, reassured, as they arrive at her school.

EXT. OLD BRICK SCHOOLHOUSE - SAME

KIDS ages five through sixteen hurry into the brick building.

Aissa hugs Naima and sends her off.

AISSA
Naima!

Naima looks back, expecting an order.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Have fun.

Naima smiles and runs into the school building.

INT. SUGAR CANE FARM OFFICE - DAY

Aissa hurriedly enters a thatch hut office.

A handsome man with patient eyes behind WIRE-FRAME GLASSES, AISSA'S FATHER (50), sits at the single desk tapping his watch.

AISSA'S FATHER
It's not like the Aissa I know to
be late.

AISSA
Almost late.

He checks his watch. She's right -- one minute to spare.

AISSA'S FATHER
Did you practice?

AISSA
That old post didn't stand a chance.

Aissa kisses his forehead, and grabs a MACHETE and a pair of THICK WOOL GLOVES hanging from the wall.

She bounds to the back exit, turning her head, shooting a mischievous smile at her father.

Her father chuckles to himself.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FARM OFFICE - SAME

Aissa makes her way outside. A JEEP with FIVE OLDER WOMEN, each holding machetes and gloves, waits on a dirt path.

One older woman, ARZIKI, dark, leathery skin, shouts out to Aissa.

ARZIKI
You better run, child!

Aissa hops in the Jeep and takes the last spot. She breathes a sigh of relief.

A BURLY DRIVER starts the ignition and the Jeep takes off down a bumpy road.

EXT. BUMPY ROAD - DAY

The ladies ride to work, passing vast SUGAR CANE FIELDS.

Other FIELD WORKERS are already bringing down their shining machetes on ripe sugar cane.

Arziki fixates on Aissa's hands, taking one in hers.

ARZIKI
It's really a crime to ruin those smooth, pretty hands.

AISSA
Oh, just quit it!

Aissa snatches her hand back.

OLD LADY #2
You're not cut out for this work,
Aissa. Can't even show up on time.

OLD LADY #3
Because she's a silly, little brat.
Had a good man and didn't know what
to do with him.

ARZIKI
I tell you what I'd do if I had me
a prince--

AISSA
He wasn't a prince. He was a fool.

ARZIKI
Any fool with money like him is a
prince to me.

OLD LADY #4
(shaking her head)
Hacking away in this heat when you
could have gone to America.

ARZIKI
Glad you aren't my daughter. You're
so stubborn, would've stopped my
heart long ago.

The old women laugh.

Aissa looks wistfully out at the endless mountains that
cradle the fields.

AISSA
At least my heart's still beating.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - SAME

WHACK!

The silver blade of Aissa's machete comes down hard on the
cane, snapping it in half.

Machetes rise and fall above the sugar cane as other VILLAGE
WOMEN do the same all over the field.

The sun is hot in the sky and Aissa wipes the sweat from her
brow. She is distracted by DRUMS BEATING in the distance.

A few women stop their work and look to the town.

The drums get LOUDER.

The women continue their work, apprehensively. Aissa surveys the area, concerned.

The drums are thundering, reaching a fast, angry crescendo.

Then silence.

Aissa looks again. Nothing.

BANG.

Arziki is suddenly SHOT in the head. She falls, dead.

Armed men in white uniforms, THE LIGHT CRUSADERS OF CHRIST, storm the field in a camouflaged JEEP.

Aissa drops to the ground. Her vision is blocked by the high sugar cane.

Aissa flinches at the SCREAMS and GUNSHOTS as the women in the field are SHOT unceremoniously.

SILENCE.

Aissa gently rises to peek above the cane.

AISSA's POV

Her village is in FLAMES, people are lined up and shot, their bodies tossed into a fiery trench.

Crusaders run through the huts slinging the young women over their backs and snatching anything of value.

Other Crusaders attack--

THE SCHOOL

They force out the YOUNG BOYS AND GIRLS.

We can hear CRYING, SCREAMING.

Aissa's machete falls from her hands in horror. She drops to the ground, gasping for air. Before she can catch her breath--

A CRUSADER

creeps up behind her and flings his shot gun AROUND HER NECK, tightening against her throat.

He YANKS her away from her weapon, the metal pressing hard against her neck. He tries to drag her through the field, intent on making her a bounty of war.

She THRASHES back, using her weight to throw him to the ground, landing on top of him.

The fall knocks the wind out of the attacker.

She slingshots herself upright and LUNGES for the machete.

The Crusader regains strength and TAKES AIM through the scope of the gun.

Seconds before he squeezes the trigger, Aissa JAMS a PIECE OF SUGAR CANE into the barrel. The gun BACKFIRES, sending Aissa's attacker stumbling back.

The Crusader clicks the trigger repeatedly but no bullets fire. It's useless.

Aissa swiftly STABS him deep in the chest with her machete.

He clings to life.

She struggles to rip the machete from his chest but it is caught on his rib cage. She strains, pulling with all her might. The machete REMAINS LODGED.

She backs up, takes both hands and MASHES them against the butt of the machete.

It CRUNCHES in and he falls dead to the ground, the machete permanently wedged between his bones.

Aissa gets down, and lies low, hidden in the sugar cane.

IN A TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE:

We rise over the fields to reveal Aissa's BURNING VILLAGE atop the hill.

A giant fire consumes more and more of it until there's nothing left.

We see the sun travel across the field and set into the night as Aissa's village turns to ash.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - NIGHT

DRUMS begin to BEAT again. The same angry cadence.

Aissa rises slowly. She sees the Crusaders leaving her camp.

The body on the ground attracts flies.

She takes off towards her burning village, gripping the cane, breaking the stalks.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FARM OFFICE - NIGHT

Aissa spots the Farm Office, still burning. She runs into it.

INT. SUGAR CANE FARM OFFICE - NIGHT

Aissa frantically searches through the burning remains of her father's office, tossing aside her father's blackened desk.

AISSA
(screeching, desperate)
Papa!

She gasps when she spots among the wreckage--

HER FATHER'S WIRE-FRAME GLASSES, broken on the ground.

As she crouches to pick them up, she breaks down sobbing, holding the last remnant of her father to her chest.

EXT. AISSA'S VILLAGE - NIGHT

Aissa, teary-eyed and in shock, wanders through the ruins of her town.

Buildings reduced to rubble. Clothing and other affects of her neighbors are strewn across a bloody, dirty ground.

She desperately searches the vestiges of HER HOME, now merely a heap of burnt lumber, but there are no signs of life.

All of her belongings have turned to soot.

Aissa continues on, choking on ungodly fumes emanating from the SMOKING TRENCH -- the bodies of her loved ones unrecognizable in a heap of charred, burning flesh.

Aissa is STARTLED by the sound of an ENGINE REVVING.

She moves towards the noise, ducking behind bricks.

She peeks out behind the dusty rubble and sees FOUR CRUSADERS herding all the YOUNG BOYS and YOUNG GIRLS into jeeps.

Close on one village girl, tears in her familiar eyes. It's AISSA'S SISTER NAIMA.

Aissa looks panicked, enraged, but she can't do anything, surrounded by armed thugs.

CLOSE ON CRUSADERS

MEAN, BLACK EYES survey the haul of young boys and girls. A leathery mouth sucks in smoke from a cigar.

The leader of the Crusaders, COMMANDER GABRIEL (35) exhales smoke rings. He's a black, grisly man with a mouth that snarls even when he's smiling, like he is now.

He motions languidly with his hand to hurry up.

Subservient soldiers immediately respond, quickening their pace.

One soldier is too slow.

The Commander's hand beckons the slow soldier.

The slow soldier practically crawls over, bowed in deep respect.

The Commander puts out his cigar on the soldier's arm.

CLOSE on the soldier's face grimacing in pain, a tear running down his cheek, choking back any sounds of agony.

The Commander lifts the cigar, revealing a NASTY BURN.

COMMANDER
Next time, it'll be in your eye.

Commander kicks him forward. He is much faster now.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Once we cross the southern border,
we'll unite with Christian soldiers
more worthy of my command.

The Commander catches the clever, almond-shaped eyes of Naima.

BEHIND RUBBLE

Aissa watches, tense, as the Commander walks over and speaks inaudibly to her sister.

He strokes her face with his KNIFE, then sinks it into his holster before she is lead into the Jeep.

Aissa clenches her fist, her face red with barely contained fury.

As the Commander climbs into a Jeep, THE KNIFE falls out of his holster onto the ground.

Aissa watches as they drive off.

WHEN THE DUST CLEARS

Aissa walks to the site of the Jeeps. She spots the knife glinting in the dirt.

She picks it up and inspects it. Its insignia is menacing: a skeleton on a cross. It reads:

THE LIGHT CRUSADERS OF CHRIST

Her knuckles turn white from her grip.

AISSA

I will cut you down with this.

Aissa takes off into the night, following the tracks of the Jeep, with nothing but the clothes on her back and the knife.

TITLE CARD: "AN AFRICAN WESTERN"

An epic instrumental swells, something out of a Sergio Leone movie.

A SERIES OF BREATHTAKING NATURE SHOTS:

-- Aissa, trekking through flat grasslands, following jeep tracks.

CROSS FADE TO:

-- Aissa, walking on through rolling hillsides, following the tracks.

CROSS FADE TO:

-- Aissa, climbing a steep, grassy mountain, the tracks still in view.

CROSS FADE TO:

-- Aissa, walking through the freezing, moonlit desert, the tracks leading the way. She's shivering but her eyes are fierce, determined, numb to the world.

CROSS FADE TO:

-- Aissa, stops at the edge of the jungle where the heat creates fog that grows thick. The tracks disappear as the jungle begins.

END MONTAGE.

CROSS FADE TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Aissa swiftly HACKS dense vegetation, a small, skinned rabbit CARCASS on her shoulder.

EXT. AISSA'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Aissa ties the last piece of grass tight on her makeshift tent.

She roams the flat area of the brush that surrounds her campsite, collecting leaves and twigs.

INT. AISSA'S MAKESHIFT TENT - NIGHT

She sits down in her tent and begins to work with the materials.

Aissa twists the leaves around the branches to make THREE IDOL FIGURES.

She places them in a line.

AISSA

Mother. Father. May you feel no pain and sorrow. May you look down, hopeful. May you watch fatefully as your firstborn, Aissa, avenges your death with fury. Bless my righteous journey to find my sister, your daughter. Guide me to find her still alive, and bring her to safety. I love you, always. Until we join in eternity.

She kisses two idol figures, and bows her head for a moment of silence. HOT TEARS stream down her face but she doesn't make a sound.

She places each one into the fire, the smoke rises black.

Aissa picks up the last figure, and holds it tight.

AISSA (CONT'D)

It's not goodbye yet.

INT. AISSA'S TENT - LATER

Aissa rolls over, trying to close her eyes. She clutches the idol of her sister.

TICK. TICK TICK. TICK.

She shrugs off the noise in her sleepy haze.

TICK. TICK TICK. TICK. TICK TICK. TICK.

Aissa hears it again, closer to her tent. Her eyes slowly open. This ticking is familiar. Dread crosses her face.

Aissa sits up carefully, looking around for the source of the sound. She spots--

A DEATHWATCH BEETLE

crawling along the edge of the tent.

Aissa tracks the bug as it ticks along.

AISSA

I know what you are. You will not
bring death to me tonight.

She raises her fist and SLAMS the unfortunate bug into the ground.

She wipes off the remains from her hands, relieved but shaken. She apprehensively lies down and shuts her eyes.

A LOUD CRACK. A branch breaks right outside her tent.

Her eyes spring WIDE OPEN.

Aissa gets up slowly, alert. Her hand tightens around the dagger at her side and she peers out of the banana leaf door on her tent.

The brush SHAKES near the edge of the clearing.

EXT. AISSA'S CAMPSITE - SAME

Aissa crawls out, low to the ground to avoid detection.

A HEFTY, BLACK, LUMBERING BODY emerges from the brush, huffing. It sniffs around the fire at the ANIMAL CARCASS left behind.

Aissa stealthily crawls around the tent. It disappears from view.

Then SNARLING.

Aissa looks up to see a GIANT GORILLA'S FACE staring back at her. It ROARS exposing its gleaming, sharp teeth.

It hesitates.

Then SWIPES her hard. She rolls across the ground, clutching her bloody face.

The gorilla CHARGES at her.

She quickly unsheathes her dagger and hops up in time to avoid it. It falls, smacking the ground.

She scrambles away, around the fire, keeping the smoldering flames between her and the giant beast.

The animal shakes off the fall, looks around and spots her through the floating ashes.

He circles around the fire towards her on all fours.

Aissa unsheathes her dagger, ready to strike, but maintains her distance. She looks the beast dead in the eye, making herself as big as she can.

The beast breaks eye contact and LUNGES at her across the flames, fiery embers SHOOT into the air.

The gorilla SCREAMS in pain, beating its chest.

Aissa takes advantage and BOLTS into the jungle.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Aissa runs hard, panting, through the thick African brush.

The gorilla GALLOPS with ease through the familiar terrain, GROWLING, in hot pursuit of prey.

She darts back and forth between shrubs and branches. We hear the beast fast approaching through the trembling trees.

The growls get LOUDER.

Aissa SMACKS into a TANGLE OF VINES. She cuts herself loose with the dagger but it slows her down.

The gorilla ROARS, closer.

She gets through the vines but a low lying BRANCH sticks up in her path.

She TRIPS. She hits the ground hard, and struggles to roll onto her back. She can't catch her breath.

She catches a glimpse of the full moon framed with tree branches. The dots of light that peak through the trees blur together as the branches begin to violently SHAKE.

She gets to her feet, looking for signs of the Gorilla.

Silence.

She takes a few steps. She raises her dagger defensively.

The gorilla DROPS down from the branch above her. He lands directly on her back. She collapses under him.

She struggles to turn around and face him but his weight is overpowering.

The Gorilla grabs her head in both palms and SMASHES it into the ground.

Aissa grips tight on the dagger, reaches around and STABS the gorilla in the leg. He yelps in pain, letting her head drop.

She flips around underneath him. His eyes loom large and red.

He ROARS and gnashes his teeth, but she shoves his face away.

She's losing strength rapidly, its snarling mouth ready to maul her face, dripping saliva on her quivering hand.

With her free hand, she SHOVES her fingers deep into the leg wound.

The Gorilla releases her, BEATING its chest, howling into the black night.

Aissa jumps to standing and PLUNGES the dagger as fast as she can into its body.

The Gorilla begins to SCREECH, swinging its mighty arms at Aissa. She DUCKS. She STABS indiscriminately.

The Gorilla keeps SWIPING her, scratching her, leaving her bloody.

She hoists her dagger and in one swift motion STABS it deep into the GORILLA'S EYE.

The gorilla STOPS, stumbling to all fours.

Aissa pants, recovering, and watches as the screeching beast collapses onto the ground, dead.

A few seconds pass. Still no movement. Aissa approaches the Gorilla and leans down over it.

We see the Gorilla's remaining blank eye, staring off, dead.

Aissa PLUCKS the dagger from the Gorilla's face and SLICES it from top to stern.

EXT. AISSA'S CAMPSITE - DAY

Aissa is hard at work. Her face bears the scars of the Gorilla's claws.

The GORILLA PELT hangs from a tree.

Useless guts stain the dirt. Gorilla meat cooks over a rekindled fire.

EXT. TUNDRA - DAY - LATER

Aissa roams through the high grass. Her items weigh heavy on her back. Sweat drips into her eyes.

She looks to the east and spots a GIANT, SPRAWLING tree with tentacle branches like Medusa.

Excitement crosses her face. She licks her lips and hastens off in its direction.

Aissa reaches the tree. She frantically cuts a piece of bark from it. She bites into it but spits out dry wood.

She reaches for a nearby leaf and plucks it down. She cuts the tip of the leaf and turns it up like a canteen.

ONE SMALL DROP of moisture falls onto her lips.

She moans, dejected, the dry leaf fluttering to the ground.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY - LATER

Aissa wanders, tired, through the brush. She looks worn from the day. She stops to catch her breath. She hears--

TRICKLING WATER. Somewhere close by.

She stands completely still, sensing the direction.

She runs towards the source, darting through the trees. The sound of a rushing stream grows louder.

EXT. JUNGLE WATERFALL - SAME

Aissa makes her way through the foliage and is struck in awe by a WATERFALL.

At the foot of the waterfall is the most beautiful pool of deep, cold, refreshing water Aissa has ever laid eyes on.

She is already tossing her pelt, idol and dagger to the ground, and running to the pool.

She THROWS herself in. She laughs, gulping the water greedily. She divines in her good fortune.

Aissa swims under the waterfall, emerging behind it, letting the water rush down her back. She wipes the water from her face and throws her head back in ecstasy.

When she opens her eyes she sees FOUR BLURRY FIGURES through the curtain of water.

Aissa dives under the waterfall and swims under water, undetected. She maneuvers out a few feet to get a better look.

She raises her head just above the water line. Only enough to breathe.

THE SHORELINE

All of the figures wear long, red robes and stand around her gorilla pelt. One figure reaches down to inspect it.

Aissa dives under the water and swims around to the far side of the pool. She gets out, creeping along the bank towards the robed intruders.

She crouches down silently and grabs a HEAVY RIVER ROCK.

Aissa creeps further along the bank, keeping the figures in sight.

She comes up a few feet behind the kneeling figure and raises the rock to strike.

HOODED FIGURE

Calm, now. That rock is of no use to you, child.

Aissa hides the rock behind her. The Hooded Figure stands and faces her. She removes her hood.

A WRINKLED, TIME-RAVAGED FACE stares back at her. This is HIGH SISTER ALMA (90s).

HIGH SISTER ALMA
 This is a big pelt. Fully grown.
 You must be very strong to kill
 such a beast.

The other Hooded Figures turn to face Aissa. They remove their hoods revealing sweet, old faces, smiling at her. HIGH SISTER EBERI (60's), HIGH SISTER AKILI (70s), HIGH SISTER KALI (80s).

HIGH SISTER KALI
 Your body shows the scars of that battle. Your face is marked with victories past.

High Sister Kali reaches to touch Aissa's face, her hands spotted with old age. Aissa flinches. High Sister Kali smiles broadly and retracts her hand.

HIGH SISTER EBERI
 You're bleeding, even now.

Aissa looks at her leg. Blood drips down.

High Sister Alma bends down, picks up the Idol Figure of her sister.

HIGH SISTER ALMA
 That wasn't your only battle. Your soul is scarred with many wounds. You carry an idol of our faith. You are a believer, I can sense it.

Aissa nods.

HIGH SISTER AKILI
 We are sisters in the gods. Let us tend your wounds.

HIGH SISTER KALI
 We will care for you. Help you find your way.

HIGH SISTER ALMA
 You must never lose your faith, child, even in the darkest times. You are on a righteous journey.

Aissa's eyes spark.

AISSA
 I am on a righteous journey.

HIGH SISTER ALMA

And you are weary, thirsty, hungry.
 This is no place for a girl. You
 know well the beasts that roam
 these parts, and not all of them
 are animals.

HIGH SISTER KALI

Have you seen the full moon?

Aissa nods.

HIGH SISTER ALMA

It is the eve of the Blood Moon.
 The Blood Moon brings out the
 nature of our destinies. It's a
 sign our paths should cross.

HIGH SISTER EBERI

We will give you wine, dress your
 wounds, give you a proper bed.

HIGH SISTER ALMA

Don't make the mistake of
 overconfidence. You have been
 lucky, but luck always runs out in
 the bush.

Aissa considers, she surveys their smiling, old, kind faces.

She DROPS the rock.

EXT. HIGH SISTERS' VILLAGE - DUSK

The laughter and good spirits of a festival carry through the air. Lanterns glow in the night.

The High Sisters lead Aissa, now bathed and dressed in a white robe, through the VILLAGE -- an alcove filled with tents, communal fires and off-road vehicles on dirt roads.

They approach a LARGE WOODEN CABIN in the center of the village, seeping golden light.

It's warm and inviting, and Aissa allows herself to relax.

INT. LARGE WOODEN CABIN - DUSK

A group of MUSICIANS play drums and flutes, and a pretty, YOUNG GIRL sings an entrancing melody.

Aissa is led through the bustling dining room. An enormous, wooden table seats many VILLAGERS, and many YOUNG GIRLS, all dressed in the same white robes.

Roasted ducks, rabbits, and other seasoned prey line the table. Aissa's mouth waters as delicacies of all kinds are served in heaping portions.

The villagers drink ale and wine, and all are merry.

Aissa is seated at the table next to all the other girls.

A conspicuously beautiful girl, ZALIKA (16) is seated next to Aissa. She is bright-eyed. Innocent and pure as fresh snow. Something about her clean spirit draws us in.

She turns to Aissa, smiling with enthusiasm. Aissa ravenously devours the meat on her plate, all but ignoring her.

ZALIKA

I'm Zalika.

Aissa grunts, mouth full.

AISSA

Aissa.

ZALIKA

Where are you from?

AISSA

(mouth full)

Bambisi.

Aissa chews like an animal. Zalika, hopeful, pestering, persists.

ZALIKA

So... why are you here?

Aissa swallows, washing it down with wine.

AISSA

I'm... on a righteous journey.

ZALIKA

Me too! That's what the High
Sisters told me anyway. A righteous
journey. It sounds important.

Aissa pauses her gluttonous feast.

AISSA

The Crusaders have my sister. They
slaughtered my village, my parents.
It's more than this.

Aissa waves her hand to signify the festivities. Zalika grows solemn.

ZALIKA

But how will you find them?

AISSA

I followed their tracks for miles
and miles until they disappeared in
the bush, but they're headed south
to the border... I will find them.
That is my only journey.

ZALIKA

My village was also destroyed by
the Crusaders. My parents are still
alive, but as last born, I can only
hope to do my sacred duty.

AISSA

What is your duty?

Zalika smiles, gazing dreamily into some fantasy world.

ZALIKA

Well... First I need to work on my
presentation. The High Sisters say
that the first ten seconds are the
most important. I hope I walk out
with the moonlight on my left.

Zalika turns to show Aissa her left side while presenting a
CHARMINGLY CROOKED SMILE.

ZALIKA (CONT'D)

But the best part, the very best
part, is my betrothed. He will be
handsome, and wealthy. And he will
make sure I always wear the best
silks. Oh, I love him already.
We'll live in a big house, all
brick and wooden floors, and we'll
have land and I'll never have to
work the fields again.

AISSA

That does sound nice. I hope you
find him.

Aissa sips her wine. Zalika politely eats her own dish.

High Sister Alma stands up.

HIGH SISTER ALMA
(bellowing)
WORSHIPERS OF THE BLOOD MOON!

The Villagers BANG on the table.

HIGH SISTER ALMA (CONT'D)
It is time. High Brother Davu will
bless this holy night.

A Cloaked Figure next to High Sister Alma rises to his feet. He removes his hood, revealing a face that is fully decorated in red henna-like tatoos, this is HIGH BROTHER DAVU (40s).

HIGH BROTHER DAVU
Welcome, brothers and sisters. You
are all here because this evening
is a rare gift from the gods. A
chance to renew and replenish. You
all have been chosen for a higher
purpose. A calling that most can
only dream to achieve. Tonight you
will fulfill the destiny of the
Blood Moon. And you will attain
ultimate happiness.

Davu grabs his golden goblet.

HIGH BROTHER DAVU (CONT'D)
I raise my glass to you, treasures
of the bush.

He raises his glass to toast. The girls raise their glasses with him. Zalika is delighted by the speech.

HIGH SISTER ALMA
It is our duty to shepherd the
chosen into the Valley of the
Light. But first comes darkness.

We watch from Aissa's point of view as a BLACK BAG suddenly comes down over her head.

OVER BLACK

Aissa flies into fight mode. She grips tight on the hands that keep the bag over her head.

She writhes under the bag, she can't draw breath. She chokes on fumes that taste of chemicals.

Faint screams and thudding can be heard all around her, feet scuffle in the dirt.

Aissa struggles a few more seconds then loses consciousness.

INT. VILLAGE TENT - HOURS LATER

We can only see black for a moment before the bag is removed, revealing a bright, out of focus scene.

The tent materializes as Aissa's eyes adjust to the light.

It is full of the young girls from the feast. Each are chained to chairs that line the tent wall.

SISTER WIVES work to ready the girls for the ceremony.

Aissa looks down and discovers that she is also chained. The High Sisters in red robes paint red designs on her arms and legs. Another begins painting her lips red.

AISSA

Where am I? What are you doing to
me?

Aissa struggles against her restraints.

HIGH SISTER ALMA

You were chosen, Aissa, for the
very highest honor.

High Brother Davu approaches.

HIGH SISTER ALMA (CONT'D)

You will be one of us now.

AISSA

I can't stay here! My sister--

HIGH BROTHER DAVU

Your sister is long gone, sold into
the brothels.

High Brother Davu grabs Aissa's jaw, examining it.

HIGH BROTHER DAVU (CONT'D)

And if she's as pretty as you are,
she'd be given to a war lord as a
trophy. Don't be naive. You are
lucky, the gods have blessed you.

AISSA
Where is my knife?! Where are my things?

High Brother Davu's tone turns darker as he looks Aissa up and down.

HIGH BROTHER DAVU
You have nothing. You can do nothing. And if you defy us, you will be cut. Some men prefer their women without their "male" parts. I guarantee you won't feel the same.

He kneels down and licks her foot. She CRINGES.

HIGH BROTHER DAVU (CONT'D)
Besides, red looks great on you.

He exits the tent.

EXT. MAKESHIFT AUCTION STAGE - NIGHT

Aissa and the girls, in white robes and chains, are dragged onto the stage. Zalika grabs Aissa's hand, assuring.

ZALIKA
Don't worry, Aissa, this is all part of it. Don't fight it. It will be wonderful in the end.

Aissa pulls her hand away.

AISSA
I wouldn't be so certain.

The girls are lined up on stage and the women in red STRIP the girls' robes off, leaving the girls naked on the stage.

Even Zalika seems shocked, terrified. This wasn't the ritual she had come to look forward to.

THE AUDIENCE

The leering eyes of mostly OLD MEN in the audience, looking to make a purchase. Some point and make obscene gestures toward the stage.

THE STAGE

Zalika GASPS, startled, as one YOUNG GIRL standing next to her is immediately grabbed and hauled off stage, auctioned off.

THE AUDIENCE

Wealthier men sit behind curtained cabanas, bidding on the women in secret.

The men down below throw up their hands to bid on each of the girls.

THE STAGE

Girls, some in tears, are prodded and made to show off their bodies.

Zalika looks around, scared, trying to cover herself and doubting everything she'd ever been taught.

THE AUDIENCE

The wealthy man behind the curtain shakes hands with TWO MEN, exchanging MONEY.

THE STAGE

Aissa is SNATCHED from the group, her white robe thrown over her shoulders.

Aissa finds Zalika's fearful eyes, still naked on the stage.

INT. WEDDING TENT - NIGHT

Aissa is dressed by the women in red, put into a wedding garment, powdered, her make-up touched up.

HIGH SISTER ALMA
Your suitor, our husband, is one of
the wealthiest in the land. He will
give you many houses, and sons if
you are worthy.

They smother her in jewelry, placing a delicate ring on her finger.

High Sister Alma wraps her robes over her shoulders, and kisses her on the forehead for luck.

HIGH SISTER ALMA (CONT'D)
You will do well to please him.

EXT. WEDDING CEREMONY - NIGHT

Aissa is presented by the women to a cheering crowd. She is escorted down an aisle.

The "Blood Moon" hangs high, its red ring foreboding in the night.

A lecherous, wrinkled, UGLY OLD MAN waits at the end, with his THREE OTHER WIVES (30s, 40s & 50s), who support him.

Aissa looks furious, but remains silent, still in chains, still no escape in sight, surrounded.

High Brother Davu brings Aissa's hand to her suitor. He wraps their hands in white cloth, then he holds a DOVE up in the air.

The crowd CHEERS.

He STABS the dove, blood running down, staining the white cloth that binds Aissa's hands with the man who purchased her.

The old man smiles at Aissa, revealing years of bad hygiene. He definitely doesn't floss.

Once the cloth is soaked red, TWO GUARDS CARRY Aissa inside a "Marital Tent."

INT. MARITAL TENT - NIGHT

Aissa is tossed on the bed. The guards exit.

She quickly looks around, jumps up, scanning the room for useful items.

She spots something and dives for it.

She freezes when a SHADOW walks across the tent.

Her "suitor" enters as she collects herself, and stands near the bed.

He takes off his shirt, and unbuttons his pants, chuckling to himself. He is ancient.

He grabs her arm to pull her closer. She resists the embrace, even in chains, clutching something under her robes.

OLD MAN

You're so pretty, I bet you have
sweet nectar running between your
thighs...

Aissa grimaces as he kisses her neck, ripping her dress and robes.

The robes fall on the bed. A RUSTY METAL OBJECT peeks into view.

He pushes her onto the bed and climbs on top of her, heaving, breathing heavy.

In a quick motion, she grabs a rusty TENT STAKE from under her robes, turns, and STABS him viciously in his side, piercing his lungs.

He tries to cry out but only blood spurts from his mouth.

She pushes him off of her and onto the bed. Aissa removes the stake, blood pouring onto the sheets.

Aissa holds the stake high and drives it deep into his throat.

The old man's eyes widen, shocked. He takes his last struggling, gurgling breaths and expires.

Breathing heavily and hearing the party outside, Aissa contemplates her next move as he bleeds out on the bed.

It almost looks like the "marriage" was consummated.

EXT. MARRIAGE TENT - SAME

Aissa escapes, tearing a hole in the back of the cloth tent.

She peers around to see if it's clear and crawls through.

TWO GUARDS stand in front of the tent, patrolling.

She takes off in the opposite direction.

The guards come upon the hole in the tent, examining it quizzically. Aissa is no longer in sight.

EXT. VILLAGE COMPOUND - SAME

Aissa frantically searches for High Brother Davu's tent, wearing only the tattered, bloodied remains of her "wedding" dress, her hands still loosely chained together.

She passes a group of Sister Wives dancing around a fire. She dodges them behind an empty tent.

She runs through the maze of dwellings. She finally sees a tent decorated with a brightly colored tapestry, one that matches Davu's markings.

INT. HIGH BROTHER DAVU TENT - SAME

Aissa enters the tent, she spots her GORILLA PELT hanging from one of the beams. She stands on her tip toes to grab it when she sees--

HIGH BROTHER DAVU walks out from behind a Japanese folding screen, his robes open.

He admires himself in front of a full length mirror. We see now that he is a EUNUCH.

He slowly brushes a tattered black wig he wears. A large STACK OF BILLS clutter the vanity in front of him.

Aissa freezes.

Brother Davu spins around, clutching his robes, and spots Aissa standing barefoot and bloodied before him.

He quickly re-ties his robes and points a black GUN at her.

HIGH BROTHER DAVU
I told you to give up hope.

Brother Davu clicks the safety off of the gun. Aissa steps closer.

In her periphery, she spots the idol of her sister on the stand next to him.

Brother Davu follows her gaze. A smile creeps across his face and he grasps the IDOL of Aissa's sister. He throws it at her feet.

HIGH BROTHER DAVU (CONT'D)
You should have this. It's all you
will ever see of your sister, a
token to take to your grave.

AISSA
It is you who should give up hope.

Aissa leans down and grabs the idol, eyes never leaving Davu. He readjusts the gun in his hand, unsteady.

HIGH BROTHER DAVU
What a shame. Beauty like yours
unclaimed, unused. Only the
naturally beautiful can afford to
be so ungrateful.

She RUNS towards him, enraged, a mad expression fiercely etched across her face.

Brother Davu SHOOTS the gun. The bullet ricochets and misses.

She KNOCKS him off his feet, and TACKLES him to the ground, his black wig flying off. She STRADDLES his frail body.

He struggles desperately, flailing his arms, trying to get her off.

He yelps as she grabs his HEAD, lifting it

HER FACE FURIOUS, she SLAMS his head into the ground angrily, like the gorilla, over and over, until his skull cracks open like an egg.

She FORCES her thumbs into his EYE SOCKETS, deeper and deeper until only two BLACK HOLES remain.

A puddle of blood grows around him.

She grabs his GUN from his now lifeless hand and stands, spitting on his corpse.

She rummages through his chest and finds her dagger. She holds it up, examining the gleaming steel, and the symbol of the Light Crusaders.

EXT. VILLAGE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Aissa stealthily navigates her way through the village, the GORILLA PELT on her shoulders. She spots the exit in the distance where the village becomes the jungle.

She darts to freedom when she sees--

ZALIKA

crying, is dragged by two guards into a marital tent. A figure waits inside.

Aissa stops dead in her tracks.

CROSS FADE TO:

EXT. AISSA'S VILLAGE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

SCREAMS ring out from the burning village, flames rising from the rooftops.

Naima is dragged off by Crusaders. Her eyes wide with fear.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. VILLAGE COMPOUND - NIGHT

The look in Aissa's eyes shows us her decision.

INT. MARITAL TENT #2 - NIGHT

ZALIKA'S POV

AN OLD MAN thrusting and shoving on top of her.

Sweaty, grotesque, grunting. He is not the man of her dreams.

A GUN SHOT blasts and--

HIS HEAD EXPLODES.

Zalika SCREAMS, shocked, as chunks of brain matter and specks of blood fly onto her cheek.

What's left of the old man's head hangs limp, scorched flesh on top of her.

Reveal behind him, our heroine, Aissa, holding the gun at point blank range, her chains shot off.

AISSA

Get up.

ZALIKA

You killed him! You just shot him--

Aissa drags her out from under him. Zalika grabs the bloody sheet, wrapping it around her.

TWO GUARDS rush into the tent, and are shocked by the gruesome scene.

GUARD #1

Stop murderer!

Only a few feet away, Aissa shoots them both with ease, right in the forehead. They fall to the ground.

Aissa grabs a second gun from Guard #1's corpse.

ZALIKA

Where are we going?

Aissa grabs Zalika's hands, still chained together. Zalika is terrified as Aissa shoots a bullet at the ground, right through her chains.

The chains drop to the floor.

AISSA
You can keep asking stupid
questions or you can get out of
here alive.

EXT. MARITAL TENT #2 - NIGHT

A PASSING WOMAN IN RED spots the two girls as they exit the tent, Zalika covered in blood.

WOMAN IN RED
(screaming)
GUARDS! GUARDS!

Aissa quickly slits the woman's throat. Blood GUSHES out and she collapses to the ground, silenced.

AISSA
Here!

Aissa tosses the smaller gun to Zalika. She inspects it, bewildered.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Point and shoot.

Guards swarm the tent. Zalika stands frozen in the carnage around her, unable to react.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Like this.

Aissa GRABS her arm and pulls the trigger, shooting GUARD #1 in the head.

Aissa stands ready, Zalika cowers behind her, holding onto her arm.

The Guards close in on them.

Zalika closes her eyes and SQUEEZES the trigger with both hands.

She hits GUARD #3 and GUARD #4 and they EXPLODE backward from the impact.

GUARD #5 manages to break through the gunfire and reach Aissa.

Aissa roundhouse kicks Guard #5 in the head and brings him to the ground with her legs wrapped around his neck.

She slams him into the ground and cuts his throat without hesitation.

Another guard lunges at her from behind but she turns and stabs him in the chest.

The last guard retreats, then BANG. He falls, shot, Aissa's smoking gun aimed in his direction.

Zalika stands holding her gun outright with her eyes closed. She opens one eye, cautiously.

Aissa rushes to her side.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Can't imagine how many you'd hit if
you'd open your eyes!

They hear shouting guards in the distance. Women wail over the dead.

EXT. VILLAGE COURTYARD - SAME

Aissa and Zalika run towards the jungle through a panicked group of old men and young women.

Guards follow them, hot on their trail.

Zalika is shooting at her pursuers. Her eyes are open. She's learning.

Aissa feverishly looks around for a viable escape from their attackers.

She sees an OBESE OLDER MAN forcing a YOUNG WOMAN into a DILAPIDATED TRANSPORT VAN parked on the opposite side of the yard.

Aissa shoots Zalika a look.

AISSA
The van.

Zalika nods and they make a run for the vehicle. Aissa weaves through the crowd as they try to stop her.

One man reaches for her pelt, but she--

CUTS HIS HAND OFF.

He WAILS in pain, retracting his stubbed arm.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Nobody takes anything from me ever
again.

The Obese man sees Aissa coming towards him and stops struggling with the Young Girl. The Girl bolts off in the opposite direction.

He's distracted as Aissa charges at him, and THROWS her knife.

He drops like a sack of potatoes, KNIFE wedged in his forehead.

Aissa's hand reaches down and yanks the knife back.

INT./EXT. PASSENGER VAN - CONTINUOUS

Aissa climbs into the driver seat, hunting for the keys. They drop down from the visor. She starts the engine and looks at the passenger seat.

NO ZALIKA.

AISSA
Shit!

Aissa looks through the windshield and sees a group of women has Zalika trapped in the middle of the courtyard. Guards approach to see what the commotion is about.

Zalika screams out from her human imprisonment.

Aissa slams her foot into the base board of the van. It SCREAMS forward, throwing dust everywhere, heading straight for the crowd.

People jump out of the way, if they can.

At the last second she veers to the right and opens her driver side door.

Metal CRUSHES bone as the women surrounding Zalika are plowed down by the car door.

Zalika is left standing as villagers run for their lives. The van comes to a screeching halt. Aissa flings open the passenger door.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Come on!

Zalika daintily steps over the dead bodies and enters the van. She hops up and Aissa peels off before she can close the door.

They roar off into the night as villagers run for their lives.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAWN

The rusty, old van sputters. Black smoke billowing from the exhaust pipe. The van slows to a stop.

Aissa exits. She opens the engine and chokes on a cloud of smoke.

AISSA
It's shot.

Zalika, exiting the van, looks sad, guilty.

ZALIKA
I knew something like this would happen! We've cursed the Gods and now they will punish us!

Aissa turns to Zalika.

AISSA
What they did to you could never be the work of Gods. What they did to you was simple, human greed. If anyone has cursed our Gods, it is them.

Zalika nods, only half believing Aissa.

ZALIKA
But what are we going to do?

AISSA
We're going to walk.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATE MORNING

Zalika looks worse for wear. Aissa charges along, like a soldier on the battlefield.

ZALIKA
I'm tired.

AISSA
We'll sleep when we get there.

ZALIKA
...I'm thirsty.

AISSA
We'll drink when we get there.

ZALIKA
Where is 'there'?

AISSA
Be quiet, Zalika. There are
militias in the jungle and they
WILL be looking for us.

Zalika walks silent. Then she can't help herself.

ZALIKA
(whispers)
Come on, tell me where we're going.

AISSA
I told you -- we're going to get
the Big Gun. Then it's to the
southern border.

ZALIKA
We already HAVE guns.

AISSA
Not little guns, Zalika. I have big
vermin to kill. I need the Big Gun.

ZALIKA
Kalashnikov?

AISSA
Bigger.

ZALIKA
HK416?

AISSA
Bigger.

ZALIKA
You mean... you must mean...

AISSA
I want their loved ones to watch as
I lay metal into their faces, until
they can no longer recognize who
they are. Until their souls flee,
not sure what they inhabit anymore.

Zalika looks at Aissa in stunned silence. They walk for a few beats, Zalika trailing behind.

ZALIKA

I might know someone who can get
you the gun you want...

Aissa stops in her tracks.

AISSA

Who? Take me there.

ZALIKA

I... I don't know. They're really
dangerous...

Aissa marches to her, grabs her by the arm and looks her mean in the eye.

AISSA

I saved your life. If you want to
keep it, you'll tell me everything.

Zalika nods, meek. Aissa releases her.

ZALIKA

I don't know if they live there
still. I knew a boy ten years
ago... he was a good friend to me.
But his parents were arms dealers
and the village wouldn't have them,
so they moved to a compound across
the jungle, on the outskirts of a
small trading post. I hid in their
truck when they left, not wanting
to leave him, and I stayed at their
armory until my parents found out.
They were furious.

Zalika allows herself a small, defiant smile, but it fades away.

ZALIKA (CONT'D)

I haven't seen him since. I could
take you there, but it's far from
here, even with all the way we
drove. It could take all day and
all night to get there. And they
might be long gone.

AISSA

If they have the gun I need, it
would be worth a thousand days and
nights on foot. Show me.

EXT. ARMS DEALER COMPOUND - DAWN

Aissa and Zalika come upon a makeshift camp built of corrugated steel. A shanty town, but luxurious compared to the last village.

As they get closer, they see a COUPLE, arguing.

Watkin Wyk (late 30s) a thuggish, South African white boy, SMACKS a passed out, AMERICAN TOURIST (40s) in safari gear with a frying pan.

TOURIST POV

Watkin peers down, confused.

WATKIN
Dammit, I always fokk this part up!

Anri Wyk (30s) an equally thuggish, pale pixie of girl with white-blonde hair, screams at Watkin in frustration.

ANRI
Hit him again!

Watkin hits him again.

ANRI (CONT'D)
Oh, that'll do I guess.

Anri cuts his throat, drains his blood into a sack.

Watkin looks up and spots Aissa and Zalika watching, still in their bloodied "wedding" garments.

Zalika looks terrified. Watkin jumps to standing, wielding the frying pan.

WATKIN
Who da fokk are you?!

Anri looks up, pissed, concerned.

ANRI
Yeah! Who da FOKK are you?!

Aissa shoves Zalika forward.

ZALIKA
Um, hi Mr. Wyk. It's Zalika. Me and Elian used to play together?

Anri and Watkin stare at Aissa and Zalika trying to remember.

ANRI
Oh my fokkin' god! Little Zali! Is
that you?

Anri wraps her in a warm embrace.

ANRI (CONT'D)
Look at you! What happened, baby
girl? You're covered in blood!

Zalika hugs her back tight. She begins to cry.

Anri shares a look with Watkin. He shrugs.

ANRI (CONT'D)
Come in, cherrie, Anri will take
care of you.

INT. WATKIN & ANRI'S SHACK - DAY

Anri cooks something questionable in the frying pan.

Strange artwork, CROSSES and ANIMAL SKULLS decorate the steel
walls.

ANRI
Elian is going to be so happy to
see you. It's been very long.

Aissa and Zalika sit at a table with Watkin. They have
showered and been given fresh clothes, Americanized t-shirts
and jeans. Aissa's Gorilla pelt is draped over her shoulders.

ZALIKA
I have missed Elian. Very much.

Anri places a pitcher of thick, blood red liquid on the
table.

ANRI
Tell me, little Zali, what makes
you cry so?

Zalika tries to hold it in, but can't help but break down
again.

ZALIKA
The Crusaders burned our village...
and I was sent to the High Sisters
to be married. But it was horrible!
And Aissa saved me from them. But
my parents will never take me back
once they hear what I have done.
(MORE)

ZALIKA (CONT'D)
I've betrayed their wishes. Now I
can never go home...

Anri wipes Zalika's tears.

ANRI
You always have a home here, sweet
girl.

AISSA
You can't stay here. The Crusaders
are burning villages to the ground,
all the way to the southern border,
and they will burn you too.

ANRI
I think we should be fine.

AISSA
You don't know these savages.
You're not safe. No one is safe
until Gabriel and his army are
stopped.

Anri takes notice of Aissa's determination.

WATKIN
I decide what is safe.

ELIAN WYK (17) a white South African boy, handsome, but rough
around the edges, like a young Clint Eastwood, walks in.

Zalika's eyes light up and she springs to her feet, hugging
Elian.

ZALIKA
Elian!

Elian returns the excitement.

ELIAN
Zalika? Is that really you?

ZALIKA
I never thought I'd see you again.

ELIAN
I can't even believe you're here.
When was the last time?

ZALIKA
Almost ten years ago, hiding in
your armory, begging mother to let
me stay.

ELIAN
She never liked us. She was always mean.

ZALIKA
She still is... I'm so happy to be with you all!

Elian moves closer to Zalika, gazing at her warmly and taking her hands in his. Electric.

ELIAN
I'm happy to be with you.

A beat as Elian and Zalika smile at each other.

AISSA
I heard you have guns.

Aissa breaks up the reunion.

A TENSE MOMENT as the hosts take offense to her bluntness. Looks like Watkin might make a move but he starts to chuckle.

WATKIN
You came to see a fokkin' show?!

Watkin SLAMS his hand on the table loudly. He exits. Aissa follows, Zalika trailing behind.

INT. GUN ROOM - DAY

Watkin opens the metal doors to reveal WALL TO WALL GUNS.

MACHINE GUNS, SHOT GUNS, PISTOLS, KNIVES, BULLETS, KEVLAR VESTS. The Holy Grail of weaponry.

And set aside, in a special case, is THE BIG GUN. The biggest, meanest, sharpest machine gun you've ever seen.

With a weapon like that, Aissa might stand a chance.

Aissa can't help but stare. Watkin follows her gaze.

He removes the Big Gun from its precious case. It's more impressive up close.

WATKIN
Beautiful, isn't she? Nick-named The Big Gun cause it's a big FOKKIN' gun. *Eight hundred and fifty rounds in less than a minute, easily the fastest anywhere.*
(MORE)

WATKIN (CONT'D)

Light weight and easy to aim with up-to-the-minute stabilization technology. But it's the hollow point bullets that make sure you can't lose. She can really fok someone up.

Aissa's eyes grow large.

WATKIN (CONT'D)

You planning to fok someone up?

ANRI

Quit toying with the girl. Show it to her.

Watkin holds the Big Gun in his arms like a baby. He flips it around and points it directly at Aissa.

Anri squeals with glee.

Aissa stands still, defiant. She pushes her chest into the nose of the gun. Zalika clutches her arm.

Watkin lowers the weapon. He laughs uproariously.

WATKIN

I'm just fokkin' with you. No need to be so serious. You want to touch the gun, pretty cherrie?

Aissa nods.

ANRI

Well, then you need to give us somefin'. We don't give guns away for free.

Aissa reaches into her jeans pocket and drops the jewelry from her "wedding" into Anri's hands. Anri sifts through it.

ANRI (CONT'D)

Pretty, but fake. This won't buy you the Big Gun.

Aissa's face drops with disappointment.

Watkin twists his mustache, examining Aissa.

WATKIN

That pelt... is that--

AISSA

A gorilla.

WATKIN
Shit. That's pretty fokkin' dope.

ANRI
I bet you'd look really fresh in a
fokkin' gorilla coat, Watkin!

WATKIN
Ok. That's the price. Your gorilla.

Aissa hesitantly removes the massive gorilla fur. She hands it to Watkin. He SNATCHES it, throwing it on.

He showboats, smiling wide, revealing his gold teeth.

ANRI
Fokkin' fresh, Watkin. Like a king.

WATKIN
I am the fokkin' king!

Watkin beats his chest like a gorilla, chases Anri around playfully. She giggles. He catches her, kissing her. They get lost in the moment.

AISSA
...the gun?

Watkin stops kissing Anri. She giggles.

WATKIN
Yes! The gun. Don't worry, it's
still here, cherrie.

Watkin holds the gun out. Aissa reaches out for it. Before she can grab it--

SHOUTING from outside.

Watkin yanks the gun back out of instinct.

HULKING NIGERIAN ARMS DEALERS storm through the armory door.

Zalika SCREAMS, Aissa pushes her and Elian out of the way of the attacking Nigerians.

NIGERIAN #1 grabs Aissa by the hair and drags her to the ground. She uses her dagger to stab his BIG TOE.

He stumbles and Aissa regains traction. She turns to face him.

He KICKS her square in the chest and she goes TOPPLING into a gun rack. He inches towards her, ready to kill.

Elian and Zalika cower, out of sight from the Nigerians, behind a gun rack. Zalika tries to peak out but Elian holds her back. He motions to a corner at the opposite end.

Aissa quickly grabs a pistol from the gun rack and puts down her attacker. He falls. She crouches behind the gun rack, shooting Nigerians from cover.

Watkin is locked in a battle with the BIGGEST NIGERIAN, buff, ferocious, a shark with legs. They struggle for the Big Gun.

He overpowers Watkin, flinging him to the floor, and takes the Big Gun. He STOMPS his boot on Watkin's head, keeping him down.

BIGGEST NIGERIAN
 When you first got into the trade,
 I tolerated you. You stayed out of
 my way. Now you're in my way.

The Biggest Nigerian inspects the weapon, taken aback by its magnificence.

BIGGEST NIGERIAN (CONT'D)
 Can't deny your quality. But you're
 not expanding south. In fact,
 you're not expanding at all. You're
 imploding.

He finds the correct hand configurations, points and aims at Watkin's head.

The Big Nigerian is half a second from blowing Watkin's brains out when--

Anri grabs a SICKLE from the wall, and in one graceful swing DECAPITATES the Big Nigerian.

His head falls to the floor with a thud.

WATKIN
 Tight.

Anri swings again and CHOPS a Nigerian in half, his torso falling to the floor.

Watkin plucks the Big Gun from the dead arms of the Nigerian, and gets to work, gunning down their attackers.

It's wildly impressive.

Anri fights alongside Watkin, slicing any Nigerian soldier who gets near.

MORE NIGERIANS flood the gun room.

Watkin lets out a thunderous battle cry as he SHOOTS DOWN the oncoming attackers.

He writhes as he is hit by enemy bullets, but it doesn't slow him down.

Anri grabs a FLAMETHROWER from the wall and showers FIRE on the horde of Nigerians. Men run, engulfed in flames.

The fire quickly spreads to the wooden beams, and the compound begins to burn.

WATKIN (CONT'D)

Oh shit!

Elian peeks out from the gun rack. The Nigerians are distracted with Watkin and Anri in a FULL ON GUN-FIGHT

ANRI

Elian, Go!

Elian crawls along the back wall, Zalika following, towards the corner and lifts a TILE from the ground.

Aissa looks across through the fight and sees THE DISTURBED TILE Elian lifted.

Aissa crawls over and slips the tile out of place to reveal a SMALL UNDERGROUND TUNNEL.

She wiggles through. Her hand hits the tile as she descends, and it SHATTERS.

One Nigerian hears the noise and spots Aissa disappearing into the floor.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Aissa DROPS down the narrow, vertical opening.

She tumbles to the ground, into a larger channel. Light shines through at the other end. She runs toward it.

Faint yells from the armory echo in the tunnel. It escalates.

BANG. BANG. BANG.

Aissa RUNS.

EXT. WATKIN AND ANRI'S CAMP - SAME

Aissa bursts into a clearing. She sees Elian tending to Zalika under a neighboring tree and angrily marches over.

She snatches Zalika away from Elian like a disobedient child.

AISSA
We are leaving.

Zalika resists.

ZALIKA
Not without Elian.

AISSA
He isn't part of the plan.

ZALIKA
There is no plan, Aissa! You're as lost as we are!

They hear footsteps racing down the tunnel. The Nigerian Arms Dealers flood out of the tunnel towards the trio.

ELIAN
We need to move!

Elian grabs Zalika's hand and takes off. Aissa whips around to see Zalika dart into the jungle.

She takes off after them. The Nigerians follow close behind.

EXT. DEEP JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Elian runs like a gazelle through the dense greenery, Zalika struggles to keep up.

Aissa RUNS for her life, trailing behind them. She looks over her shoulder and sees the Nigerians close on her heels.

Close enough to GRAB HER WRIST.

Aissa is YANKED through her attacker's legs. She screams, but quickly flips around and STABS the Nigerian in the back of the knee.

He drops to the floor, WAILING in agony.

Aissa scrambles to standing as the others nearly catch her.

She takes off, dodging Nigerian gunfire. She almost catches up to Zalika and Elian when Elian guides Zalika down a SHARP RIGHT TURN.

Registering, Aissa corrects her path, barely making the turn, and avoiding a GIANT BED OF LEAVES.

She notices its oddly precise arrangement as she SLAMS sideways into a tree.

The Nigerians are feet away from Aissa when they FALL FLAT. They struggle to get up, everything they grab sinks.

Nigerian #1 tries to shoot his gun, but it's clogged with what we're realizing is QUICK SAND.

ZALIKA
(shouting)
Aissa! Aissa!

Elian runs over to help Aissa up. She shrugs him off, pushing herself to standing.

ELIAN
We have to hurry, I don't know how long it will hold them.

The trio runs off into the dense jungle.

EXT. CRUSADERS OF CHRIST CARAVAN - NIGHT

NAIMA crouches with other girls in a cage that is being carried by soldiers.

The Crusaders beat their drums to the same angry rhythm.

The cage comes to a halt and the drums stop in time.

COMMANDER GABRIEL climbs out of his Jeep. He walks back through the group towards Naima's cage.

He grips either side of the cage bars, looking up and down at each of the scared girls.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Shh. It's ok. No harm will fall to you while you are in my care.

He snaps his fingers.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
In fact, we are going to celebrate
in your honor. It's not every day
we come across such beauty.

Commander Gabriel reaches through the cage and strokes one of the girl's cheeks. He looks into Naima's eyes.

HIS JAGGED SMILE.

Soldiers carry in a BADLY BEATEN MAN tied to a wooden CRUCIFIX. His screams are muffled because his mouth is crudely sewn shut.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
When I found you girls, your souls
were lost. You were destined to die
a thousand fiery deaths in Satan's
torment. We saved you from that
fate, and you should find your
hearts filled with gratitude.

The girls' gaze follows the man as he is lowered in front of them.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
To make sure you understand, and
are truly grateful, I am going to
show you what happens when you
don't believe.

The soldiers start hammering the crucifix into the ground.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
This man... this man is a pagan and
a sodomite.

The prisoner screams as his hands are NAILED to the cross.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Each village of sinners we burn,
each Unforgiveable we slaughter
brings us one step closer to our
holy goal.

He raises his hands to the heavens.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Our war has just begun. May the
Lord bless our sacred journey to
restore Africa in His name.

Other Crusaders unload firewood from the jeeps in the caravan. They place it at the base of the crucifix.

Commander Gabriel yells out to his troops in a thundering bellow.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Crusaders!

The crowd cheers.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
CRUSADERS! What happens to
Unforgiveables?

CROWD
THEY BURN!

The caravan erupts in celebration. Some shoot their guns.

Commander Gabriel turns to the girls.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
That's right. They burn.

A woman in ALL WHITE, face obscured, emerges. The Crusaders immediately KNEEL.

CROWD
ALL HAIL THE WHITE WITCH!

The WHITE WITCH (30s) lights a TORCH and hands it to Commander Gabriel.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
May the Almighty have mercy on your soul.

WHITE WITCH
Amen.

Commander Gabriel tosses the torch at the base of the crucifix. The firewood ignites and engulfs the infidel.

He rips through the wire stitching on his mouth. BLOOD CURDLING SCREAMS.

Commander Gabriel crouches down next to the cage. He grabs Naima's face through the bars, kissing her sloppily.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
You don't want to burn.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Aissa bounds ahead as Zalika rushes to keep up and Elian keeps a safe distance.

AISSA
I don't trust him.

ZALIKA
He can help us, Aissa! He's an arms dealer, he knows where to get the Big Gun.

ELIAN
You're wrong, Aissa.

AISSA
Wrong about what?

ELIAN
Me not being part of the plan. I am the plan. You need the Big Gun to face the Crusaders. I can help you get it.

Aissa turns abruptly to face Elian.

AISSA
Your parents. You just let them die? Where is your honor?

ELIAN
It was my mother's wish. I know if my parents have perished, they would want me to live on in their name. They wanted me to bring Zalika to safety and have a chance at life.

Aissa is silent.

ZALIKA
He saved my life, Aissa.

Zalika grabs Elian's hand.

ZALIKA (CONT'D)
He makes me feel... like I have a home. He makes me feel *safe*.

Elian gazes at Zalika, truly taking in her beauty for the first time.

Aissa witnesses their moment and softens.

AISSA
How can you get the Big Gun?

ELIAN
Our supplier is in the Congo. If we can get there, we can get the Big Gun.

Aissa contemplates for a beat.

AISSA
We'll travel to the Congo, to your source. But if you're lying, even the Gods won't be able to help you.

EXT. JUNGLE - LATER

The trio continues trekking in a particularly dense part of the bush.

A CRYING BABY

wails faintly in the distance.

ZALIKA
Did you hear that?

Zalika tip toes off in the direction of the sound.

Elian and Aissa share a worried, confused look, following.

Zalika pushes through branches, the cries getting louder.

Zalika GASPS as she sees an INFANT in a basket in a small clearing.

Aissa watches as Zalika walks closer. She goes to touch it, to comfort it.

AISSA
DON'T!

An ARMED CHILD #1, 10, appearing out of nowhere, CRASHES the butt of an AK into Zalika's head, knocking her out cold. The child drags her into the jungle.

Aissa reacts, her hand flying to her knife but they are suddenly surrounded by ARMED CHILDREN, pointing weapons.

Elian puts his hands up. Aissa shoots him a disdainful look.

EXT. JUNGLE - LATER

An ARMED CHILD #2, 8, SHOVES Aissa forward with the butt of his gun.

Elian walks obediently.

A MANGY CAMP emerges in the distance. Make-shift dwellings, soldiers of all ages in dirty clothes patrol with guns.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - DAY

Aissa SLAMS to the ground as she is thrown into a DIRT HOLE about ten feet deep.

Elian and Zalika are already crouched in the dirt. Aissa pulls herself to standing, her eyes frantically searching for a way out.

The two Armed Children guard the prisoners at the edge of the hole.

Zalika looks stunned, flushed, apologetic.

ZALIKA

I'm sorry... I'm so sorry... I thought the baby would die in the bush.

AISSA

Sorry's no use to us. Because of your kindness, my sister's going to die!

ELIAN

It's okay, you didn't know.

AISSA

What happens when they decide they don't need prisoners? Our enemies only have to pull the trigger.

Aissa slides down the dirt wall to the ground, defeated. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out the idol of her sister.

AISSA (CONT'D)

This could really be over... I might never see her again.

Aissa's eyes well with tears.

ZALIKA

Don't say that.

She rolls the idol through her fingers, examining it.

AISSA

Maybe I should have left her with
the High Sisters. They don't
require sense.

Zalika looks hurt.

ELIAN

She cares. She's a good person.

AISSA

You know where good people wind up?
Here. In a cage. The bad people
always beat the good people.

ZALIKA

That's not true.

AISSA

I've never seen a good person win.

Aissa looks sad, thinking of her own demons.

ELIAN

It's not about being a good person
or a bad person. It's about who has
the guns.

OUTSIDE THE HOLE

Armed Child #1 holds a gun, his small body weighed down with
sheets of bullets. He smiles, waving to a friend, his dimples
show.

Rebels gather, all heavily armed, many young boys, too young
to hold guns.

Women, frightened looks on their faces, are led in chains
into tents.

Armed Child #1 gushes cheerfully to the younger, Armed Child
#2.

ARMED CHILD #1

We're going to the palace by the
sea. The pretty White Witch will
bless us all. And we will all
become Light Crusaders of Christ.
Fighting in HIS name. Part of
COMMANDER GABRIEL'S army!

ARMED CHILD #2
I want to go to a palace.

The REBEL LEADER yells out a wild call. Silence overtakes the busy, crowded campsite, all eyes on the Rebel Leader.

REBEL LEADER
Today we travel south to the sea.
To The Palace of The Light
Crusaders of Christ. We will join
them to create an army that is
INVINCIBLE!

The crowd ROARS with applause.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)
Today, Christian rebels everywhere
will join in resistance! We will
not be crushed under the thumb of
Islam, we will not be tainted with
the pagan worship of the hillsides.
We will forge in blood a NEW
AFRICA! A peaceful Africa! A
Christian Africa!

The crowd SHOOTS bullets in the air, yelling and cheering.

The Rebel Leader lifts a goblet of red wine.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)
To a Christian Africa.

He slowly brings it to his lips, about to take a sip.

CRASH

A bullet RIPS through the glass, it shatters instantly.

A second later a bullet RIPS through the Rebel Leader's skull. He hovers then drops.

The crowd pauses, unsure how to react. Then the Armed Child #1 screams at the top of his lungs.

ARMED CHILD #1
GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS!

The Rebels spring to action, they OPEN FIRE in the direction of the government soldiers.

GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS, in camouflage and military decoration, RETURN FIRE. Soldiers drop, wounded, crying out in agony.

THE HOLE

Aissa is alert, already looking for ways out of the hole.

AISSA
We need to go now!

Aissa digs her fingers into the dirt attempting to climb. She makes it part of the way before the dirt CRUMBLES in her hands and she falls down HARD on the ground.

The three stare up at freedom.

OUTSIDE THE HOLE

The Armed Children guarding them hear the commotion. They look scared but aim their weapons and FIRE out at the Government Forces.

GOVERNMENT SOLDIER #1 charges at them. Armed Child #2 fires his machine gun, stumbling back from the recoil.

The Government Soldier's CHEST EXPLODES. He screams.

The older Armed Child #1 pats him on the back.

ARMED CHILD #1
See? Christ will guide your gun.

The Armed Child #2, reassured, takes aim.

Before he can squeeze the trigger a bullet KNOCKS him back into the open pit.

THE HOLE

Aissa, Zalika and Elian dive out of the way of the falling child soldier.

Armed Child #1 runs to the edge of the pit and sees his friend dead at the bottom.

Elian locks eyes with Armed Child #1. Armed Child #1, realizing the new threat to his life, quickly aims the gun and fires off a round.

It misses.

Elian jerks the gun from the dead Armed Child #2's hands and SHOOTS Armed Child #1.

He stumbles, trips into the hole. His bullet-ridden body limp.

Zalika chokes back tears, seeing the children's lives expire in front of her. But there's no time for mourning.

Elian grabs her, lifts her to his shoulders and Zalika clutches the dirt, dragging herself out of the hole.

Aissa grabs her TREASURED KNIFE from the body of Armed Child #1 and Elian gives her a leg up.

Elian pushes her up and Zalika grabs her hand, pulling her to standing.

Aissa drops to the ground, on her stomach, holding her hand as far as it will reach for Elian.

TWO REBELS SPOT them escaping and RUN towards them.

Aissa's desperate face pleads with Elian.

AISSA
Hurry!

Elian tries to grab Aissa's hand but it's too far away.

The Two Rebels are a hundred feet away. One shoots his gun. A bullet skims Zalika's arm, she falls back against a tree.

AISSA'S HAND

outstretched, grasping.

ELIAN'S EYES

fierce, frightened.

Elian grabs Aissa's SWEATY PALM, but keeps SLIPPING.

He grabs her hand with both of his and pulls hard. Aissa falls forward but manages to pull him high enough to GRIP the ground.

Elian is almost out. He grips his hand on the edge of the hole to balance his weight, but the dirt slips from beneath him, he loses his footing.

The Rebels are fifty feet away. Aissa rethinks, quickly.

AISSA (CONT'D)
THE GUN!

Elian, moving fast, grabs the gun and tosses it to Aissa.

Seconds before the Rebels slaughter them, Aissa lays lead into their chests, riddling them with bullet holes.

Aissa now holds the butt of the gun out to Elian. He swiftly grabs hold and Aissa PULLS with all of her might.

Elian's scrambles up and over the ground, finally out.

Aissa RUNS for the jungle. Zalika, wounded, slumping against the tree, can barely move.

Elian runs, grabs Zalika in his arms and follows Aissa out of the camp.

The booming gunshots of civil war echo throughout the camp.

EXT. JUNGLE - LATER

Aissa, Elian and Zalika forge ahead through the brush.

Zalika rubs her arm where a LARGE SCAB has formed.

Aissa begins to push the pace and walks far ahead of the other two.

ZALIKA
Aissa, hold on!

Zalika tries to catch up with her but Aissa still outpaces her.

ZALIKA (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

AISSA
That was too close. It's time we say goodbye and you go home. I will find my own way and you must find yours.

Aissa starts to walk off on her own. Zalika follows.

ZALIKA
You won't survive the jungle on your own -- I won't let you kill yourself!

AISSA
My sister needs me and you're slowing me down.

Elian runs and catches up to Aissa, grabbing her shoulder.

ELIAN
You need us. To cross the border.

Aissa stops, considering.

AISSA

I can do it on my own. Nothing will keep me from my sister.

ELIAN

You don't have papers. You're from an outsider village and you're of the old ways. If you're lucky, they'll lock you up for a week then turn you around. Unlucky, someone might find your torso in a ditch.

AISSA

How can you change that?

ELIAN

My parents were gun smugglers. I have ways.

AISSA

I can sneak in easier alone.

ELIAN

Maybe... but maybe you're caught and your sister is murdered before you get to her. Or maybe you're murdered, right there, for your religion. Or... you can come with us, safe travel guaranteed, get the Big Gun and you can go into battle with a real chance of winning.

Zalika pleads with Aissa.

ZALIKA

You can't do it all by yourself!

AISSA

Your recklessness almost cost my sister her life.

ZALIKA

And we won it back by helping you escape, think of the hole, if it wasn't for us, you would still be in it!

AISSA

If it wasn't for you, we never would have been captured. I care for you, but you're weak, Zalika. You're a prisoner of tradition. I can't risk her life again.

ZALIKA
Then teach me, Aissa.

AISSA
I don't know if that's possible.

ZALIKA
Those kids -- those little
children... no one is safe. I know
now that what I wanted was never
real. I have nothing, Aissa, no
home, no children, no money,
nowhere to go. And if I ever hope
to have any of that, first we must
fight to make it safe.

Aissa softens under the full weight of their plight.

ZALIKA (CONT'D)
You took it upon yourself to save
me from that place... Let me try to
be a hero instead of another
victim. Let me help you find your
sister.

Zalika grabs Aissa's hand. Aissa looks down, touched, giving in.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATER

The three travelers gaze ahead as the border appears over the horizon.

TITLE CARD: THE CONGO

EXT. BORDER WALL - SIMULTANEOUS

The border is drawn by a twenty foot high concrete wall.
HEAVILY ARMED GOVERNMENT GUARDS patrol back and forth.

A line of IMMIGRANTS wait to cross through the small, chain linked fenced opening.

Guards rough-handle the travelers. They take any worthwhile personal items and throw them into LARGE BINS.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SIMULTANEOUS

Elian spots one particular guard, EDGAR (50), from their hiding spot. He is a small, portly, balding Australian man with GIANT GLASSES.

ELIAN
Him.

Elian points out the guard to the group.

EXT. BORDER WALL - LATER

Elian leads the girls up to the border opening. Other guards notice that they are not in line. Border Guard #1 attempts to stop them.

BORDER GUARD #1
Halt! Get in line with the others!

Elian keeps walking forward, nonchalantly.

ELIAN
No need. I'm here to see Edgar.

Edgar the guard notices the commotion from behind the fence. He recognizes Elian and rushes over to help.

EDGAR
That's enough.

Border Guard #1 backs off but remains suspicious. He tightens his grip around his gun.

Edgar walks over toward Elian and the girls. He ushers them through a side entrance of the gate, then into a tiny shack.

INT. EDGAR'S BORDER OFFICE - SAME

Edgar rushes them into the small office and shuts the door.

EDGAR
What the hell are you doing, Elian?

ELIAN
I got into a bind and had to bring some friends along.

EDGAR
You risked too much coming here.
This isn't how we do business.

ELIAN
Didn't have a choice. I'm assuming the same deal applies.

Edgar looks at Aissa and Zalika. He looks back to Elian.

EDGAR
Fine. But you'll have to wait until sunset. I can't guarantee safe passage otherwise.

ELIAN
Thank you.

EDGAR
Don't thank me yet.

INT. OLD RAILROAD CAR - NIGHT

Darkness except for the light of one candle. The trio sits around in silence, waiting.

The door opens. Edgar greets them.

EDGAR
Ride's here. Hurry, you don't have much time.

EXT. BORDER CROSSING - SAME

Edgar leads them out back to a running VAN.

HUGE, BLACK FIGURES lurk from behind the van. They are the Nigerians.

Aissa is the first to see them.

AISSA
(shouting)
The Nigerians! It's a trap!

Edgar GRABS Elian, SHOVES him in the back of van.

Aissa grabs Zalika and RUNS.

Before they can get anywhere, a TOWERING NIGERIAN appears in their way. They spin around but several more appear behind them.

They are overpowered, bound, and thrown into the back of the van.

ELIAN
You sold us to the Nigerians!?

EDGAR
I go where the money flows, mate.
No hard feelings.

A NIGERIAN #3 hands Edgar some money.

NIGERIAN #3
And the girls?

EDGAR
Consider that a personal gift from
me.

The Nigerian #3 smiles, his teeth bright against the darkness.

EXT. VILLAGE RUINS - DAY

The Crusaders stand around a decimated village. Their war drums ringing in the air.

Naima and the other captures are still in a cage, guarded by Crusaders near the caravan.

A Crusader leads a line of CAPTURED WOMEN, daisy chained together, through the wreckage.

Commander Gabriel takes a look and waves the women forward.

THE CAGE

Naima and the girls see the new crop of women led in front of the commanding officers. Naima leans forward against the bars to get a better look.

COMMANDER GABRIEL

inspects the girls one by one. He is quite impressed.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
You were right. THESE girls are
precious. Good job, soldiers.

Commander Gabriel looks at the cage.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
But... so many new mouths to feed.
Perhaps we need to do some
housekeeping. OUT.

Crusaders open the cage and force the terrified girls out.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Line up.

The girls scurry into line, Naima included.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
I am like Noah, choosing the finest
specimens for the master, Christian
race, as all the heathens perish.

He inspects each girl. He grabs GIRL #1's face.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Take this beauty. A fine example of
the classical, North African
female.

Commander Gabriel then point blank shoots GIRL #2 in the face. She drops.

GIRL #3 runs away, screaming, crying. He shoots her too. She drops.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
This is very upsetting.

He rubs his forehead with the butt of the gun, frustrated. He continues walking along, surveying girls.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Why these pagan whores resist my
will I'll never understand. I am a
LIVING GOD!

Commander Gabriel goes down the line shooting three girls in a row.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
If I bless you with death, you take
the blessing.

He stops at Naima.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
You will be good, won't you?

Naima nods her head.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Good.

Commander Gabriel shoots the girl next to her. Naima trembles.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Does that frighten you? Make your
young body quiver?

Naima nods, shaking.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
You come with me.

Two crusaders GRAB Naima and take her away. She's bewildered, but doesn't scream.

INT. NIGERIAN'S VAN - NIGHT

Aissa, Zalika and Elian sit bound together in the backseat. Nigerians surround them on all sides, heavily armed.

Aissa tries to wiggle out of her binds. Elian catches her eyes, shakes his head "No."

NIGERIAN #3
We'll get a nice sum for these three. Be rid of the boy, and we're rid of his family for good.

ELIAN
You don't want to get rid of me.

NIGERIAN #3
You're bad for business -- the son of a rival arms dealer? We'd kill you right now if you weren't so pretty. You'll fetch good money as a boy-whore.

ELIAN
I am not my parents -- I have no interest in the arms trade. I can be of value to you.

NIGERIAN #3
Of course you would say that now that we have you in chains.

ELIAN
I'll prove it to you.

NIGERIAN #3
Nothing could convince me.

ELIAN
Even my trade route?

The Nigerians look at each other.

NIGERIAN #3
You'd give up your source?

ELIAN

You know we have better weapons. I can tell you how to get them.

NIGERIAN #3

Or we could just torture you and take the information.

ELIAN

They won't even let you into the compound without me. There's a secret stockpile. Only our family knows the location. They deal to us. We deal to the rebels.

NIGERIAN #3

Ok, pretty boy, you have a deal. I will spare your hides and you will take us there.

ELIAN

First you take off the chains.

Elian's chains clink as he holds his hands out.

EXT. ABANDONED SCHOOL - NIGHT

Aissa, Zalika and Elian are shoved out of the van and into an OVERGROWN SCHOOLYARD.

The faint lines of a handball court and a broken basketball hoop. A FADED UNITED NATIONS banner hangs tattered on a chain link fence.

Nothing else around for miles. Just empty desert.

INT. SCHOOL MAIN BUILDING - SAME

Elian leads them into the main building.

Old classrooms line either side of the hallway. Crumbling boxes with the UN insignia sit on weed-covered desks. Dust everywhere.

They pass into the--

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - SAME

Drunken PEACEKEEPERS in bright blue uniforms stumble out of a CORRUGATED TIN DOOR.

The sounds of drunken fighting and laughing echo in the courtyard.

The Nigerians follow Elian inside.

INT. PEACEKEEPER BROTHEL & SALOON - NIGHT

TRAFFICKED BOYS AND GIRLS as young as twelve are chained to the walls, drugged almost to the point of losing consciousness on dirty mattresses. Thin, cheap curtains divide them.

Some curtains are closed, occupied by grunting Peacekeepers.

Elian walks past, his eyes avoiding the atrocities before him. Aissa and Zalika follow, dragged by Nigerian #1 and #2.

The group reaches a PEACEKEEPER #1 (60) a towering, haggard man.

Peacekeeper #1 doesn't speak, just counts out a thick stack of money. He looks up from the stack and sees the towering Nigerians.

He stops the group.

PEACEKEEPER #1
They can't come in here. We don't
allow their kind.

He shoots a look at Nigerian #1. The Nigerians finger their weapons, offended.

ELIAN
Do you know who my parents are? I
am Elian Wyk. If they find out you
turned me away, they will demand
your head. On a spike.

The Peacekeeper winces in disgust.

PEACEKEEPER #1
I'll let Paul know. Follow me.

INT. PEACEKEEPER BROTHEL & SALOON BACK ROOM - NIGHT

The Nigerians enter, tense, on the offensive. Elian follows.

ELIAN
They will serve you.

NIGERIAN #2
They will serve us, or we will make
them serve us.

Paul, (40) a big, brutish, skinhead in a blue U.N.
Peacekeeper uniform, enters the room.

He puts his index finger and thumb together and WHISTLES.

The Nigerians turn.

PAUL
See, all dogs respond when I
whistle.
(to Elian)
This is not our agreement. You know
we don't allow animals indoors.

ELIAN
It might be time to diversify your
trade routes.

PAUL
I don't need you telling me how to
run my business.

ELIAN
Not telling, suggesting. They have
access to areas of the Congo that
we've been trying to get at for
years. Why not take this
opportunity?

PAUL
Why not keep them all to yourself?

ELIAN
My parents are dead, Paul. Consider
it our final business. I'm cashing
out.

PAUL
I guess I could consider it. I've
never sold to one of them before,
but they are the ones doing most of
the killing.

Paul turns to the Nigerians, who stand outraged but composed.

ELIAN
If you could put aside your...
differences for the moment and
think about the money--

PAUL

Not everything is about money. Sure peacekeepers buy whores from the rebels, and sell guns to the militias, but deep down we're just trying to save The Dark Continent from itself. We can't be tainted by it, if we're going to fulfill our burden as civilized men.

NIGERIAN #2

Civilized men recognize that money is the same color wherever you go.

PAUL

Oh! The Beast speaks. Maybe you are a different breed. So tell me, what makes you different from all the other darkies?

ELIAN

Paul.

Nigerian #2 steps forward, grinning his toothless grin.

NIGERIAN #2

No it's okay, let me answer. See the difference with us is--

Nigerian #2 YANKS his gun up and OPENS FIRE, blowing Paul backward, ripping apart his chest. The other Nigerians follow suit, wreaking havoc with their machine guns.

Peacekeepers react to the ambush and return fire. Some of the Nigerians are shot, fall to the ground.

The room erupts into an all out bar room brawl, bullets flying everywhere.

Aissa drops to the ground, crawling towards the back of the room as the Nigerians and Peacekeepers kill each other.

Elian waits, crouched by a door scanning the crowd for his friends. Aissa almost makes it to him when--

WHAM!

A Peacekeeper knocks her in the head. She KICKS his shins, he doubles over. She grabs the gun in his hands and uses his own gun to bash his face in.

Aissa yanks the gun back and puts a bullet in his head, ending him.

Peacekeepers RUN at her.

She sprays fire indiscriminately, taking out both Nigerians and Peacekeepers.

ELIAN

Come on!

Zalika picks a gun off a dead Nigerian and crawls over to the trafficked boys and girls, still chained to the walls, cowering away from the gunfire.

Zalika takes aim at a YOUNG GIRL, chained like the rest. The Young Girl shields her face, whimpering.

Zalika SHOOTS.

The Young Girl looks down, surprised to be alive, as her chains fall to the ground. Zalika tosses her the gun. The girl grasps it, shocked.

ZALIKA

Free the kids. Kill the rest.

Zalika then runs to Elian. A bullet GRAZES her thigh. She yelps, but it doesn't slow her down.

She joins Aissa and Elian and they take off down a hallway.

INT. PEACEKEEPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Elian leads Aissa and Zalika through a labyrinthine system of hallways.

AISSA

How are we going to find the guns in here?

ELIAN

I've been here a million times.

Elian turns around the corner and skids to a stop, backing up when he sees ARMED GUARDS standing outside the room.

ELIAN (CONT'D)

That's it. There are guards.

Without even looking, Aissa shoots around the corner.

AISSA

Not anymore.

Elian looks. Three guards lie on the ground, full of bullets. A fourth struggles down the hallway, then slumps, dead.

They run down the corridor.

INT. PEACEKEEPER GUN ROOM - NIGHT

An old kindergarten classroom. Guns of all kinds are stacked against the wall haphazardly. What it lacks in presentation it makes up in sheer quantity.

Elian grabs an assortment of guns and bullets and throws them into a supply bag laying on the floor.

He hands a gun to Zalika. She takes it with a newfound confidence.

Aissa looks around, awestruck. She spots THE BIG GUN. In fact, many of them, just laying against the wall in a corner.

She grabs two, slinging them over her shoulder and wraps herself in bullet magazines.

AISSA

With this, I will avenge my parents. With this, I will save her.

HEAVY BOOTS STOMP down the corridor.

Three Armed Peacekeepers storm the room.

Elian takes care of the other TWO PEACEKEEPERS coming through the door with TWO UZIS. The third takes aim at Zalika.

Zalika blasts him away before he can get off the shot. He FLIES against the wall.

Aissa laughs in surprise.

AISSA (CONT'D)

Well, look at you.

Elian steps over their bodies and exits the room, Aissa and Zalika follow.

INT. PEACEKEEPER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They run through the hallway. Elian spots a door at the far end.

He bolts toward the door as PEACEKEEPERS chase them down the hallway, firing.

Even Zalika is shooting with ease, taking them out one by one.

Then Zalika suddenly slows down. Her gun slips from her hand.

AISSA
Zalika! Run!

Zalika COLLAPSES. Aissa tries to get Zalika up.

Elian sees what has happened and turns back.

The Peacekeepers CLOSE IN ON THEM.

Elian reaches them, swiftly lifts Zalika in his arms and runs.

Aissa stops, turns, holding up THE BIG GUNS. She FIRES, bullets EXPLODING from her superior weapons. Bullet casings circle around her.

Aissa runs to the door, and as she flings open the exit doors, we see ALL of the Peacekeepers lie dead and bloody in the hallway behind her.

EXT. REAR OF SCHOOL - SAME

Elian, Zalika and Aissa make it out into the open. They see TWO BORED HORSES tied to a rusty bike rack.

More Peacekeepers STORM through the door.

The trio bolts toward the horses, bullets WHIZZING inches from their heads.

Aissa flings her guns onto one of the waiting horses. It bridles at the cargo. She mounts the horse.

Elian throws the supply bag onto the second horse, hoists Zalika on back and gets on.

The three ride off, peacekeepers cursing them as they disappear into the night.

EXT. SAVANNA - NIGHT

Firewood CRACKS in a fire. The night sky is filled with stars, brighter out here.

Zalika rests next to Elian, who strokes her head.

ELIAN
Are you feeling any better?

ZALIKA
Better than Aissa's sister. Better
than all those children...

ELIAN
You scared us back there.

Aissa takes inventory of their haul. They have the arsenal of a small army.

AISSA
She's weak from hunger and thirst.
We'll hunt tomorrow.

Zalika coughs spasmodically but recovers.

ZALIKA
It's nothing.

The three sit in silence for a beat, soundlessly praying for Zalika's return to good health.

Elian turns to Aissa.

ELIAN
How do you plan to get her back?

AISSA
That's what the Big Gun's for.

ELIAN
There's a lot more of them than
there are of you.

AISSA
Never underestimate tactical
advantage. Plus, I'm an amazing
shot.

Aissa aims an assault rifle from their stock pile, then flips and re-holsters with ease.

ELIAN
And modest.

AISSA
No room for modesty in battle.
Maybe that's something you need to
learn.

ELIAN

How'd a country girl like you learn
how to shoot anyways?

AISSA

Where I'm from, you only need to run once to learn how to shoot a gun. The first time we ran I was six years old. The Crusaders destroyed my village, but they weren't as strong. Not as many. The only reason my family survived is because of the rusty, old rifle my dad used to protect the chickens. He could barely use the thing but that's all that stopped my story from ending there. From then on, he made me and my sister practice every day. It's funny, when the day actually came, it was no help at all.

Elian stares at the ground, bitter at the course of their lives.

ELIAN

I'm alone now, too. I grew up around guns, was raised with guns, and it made no difference.

AISSA

A lot of times, evil wins.

ELIAN

But not this time?

AISSA

Maybe if my sister was weak, more innocent, then she would perish. The world would break her like a twig. But my sister is brave. My sister is cunning. My sister...

ZALIKA

...Is like you.

Aissa tears up as she describes her best friend in the world, the pain of her loss becoming concrete.

AISSA

She's alive. I know it.

INT. PALACE OF THE LIGHT CRUSADERS OF CHRIST - NIGHT

A STEAMING HOT MEAL

is placed before a nervous Naima. She's dressed in jewels, bathed and perfumed.

Across from her Commander Gabriel stares intently. He watches her move like a hawk watches a sparrow.

Naima looks down, afraid to make eye contact. She cuts a tiny piece of BLOODY MEAT, bringing it to her lips. She bites into it hesitantly.

Commander Gabriel sips his wine never allowing his eyes to leave her. He holds his meat with his hand, rips it with his teeth.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
You like the meat?

Naima nods.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Speak, girl.

NAIMA
Yes. I like the meat.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Eat.

Naima cuts another piece of meat.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Put it in your mouth.

Naima puts it in her mouth.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
I like to think it gives me luck
when I eat the flesh of the
conquered.

Naima spits the meat out in disgust and the Commander rises throwing his chair across the room and GRABS Naima by the neck. She chokes.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Is something wrong?

Naima struggles to shake her head 'no.'

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
You don't like the meal I've given
you, you worthless, pagan whore!

Commander Gabriel PUNCHES Naima across the face, BREAKING her nose. She is thrown to the floor, her hand clutching her bloody face.

Commander Gabriel marches over, the piece of bloody meat in his hand. He crouches down by Naima.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
You will accept your Lord's bounty!

He grabs Naima's hair, forcing her to stare up at him. She slowly opens her mouth. Commander Gabriel SHOVES the meat into her face.

She chews, eyes more and more determined and devours the entire human steak.

Commander Gabriel raises to standing, amused.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
That's much better, Naima.

Commander Gabriel walks over to his wine, chugs all of it.

Naima crawls over to him and KISSES his dirty boot. She looks up at him. Commander Gabriel smiles.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

TITLE CARD: ZAMBIA

Elian, Zalika, and Aissa ride through the simmering, endless desert. Zalika looks worse for wear, conscious but barely able to sit up on Elian's horse.

ELIAN
She needs water.

ZALIKA
I'm fine.

ELIAN
You're sick and we need to get you water.

AISSA
Once we get to the oasis we can try and find help. It shouldn't be too far from here.

In the distance--

A COLORFUL PARADE OF REFUGEES

march along, singing a jubilant song of triumph.

ELIAN

Look! There are people traveling.
Maybe they can help!

AISSA

It's a mirage.

ELIAN

I'm going to check it out.

Elian kicks his horse and gallops off, Zalika on back. Aissa follows, skeptical.

EXT. DESERT PARADE OF PEOPLE - DAY

Elian rides up to the train of REFUGEES. It is clear they carry all that they have in the world.

Elian spots a woman, RAHEL (35) who looks kind.

ELIAN

Hey! Stop! Please, stop!

Rahel stops, reluctantly.

ELIAN (CONT'D)

Where are you headed?

RAHEL

To the Refugee Camp in Zambia. The Crusaders destroyed our village.

Aissa, not far behind on horseback, pipes up.

AISSA

The Crusaders?

MEANWHILE

An elderly woman CHIKE (60) traveling with the group spots Zalika on the back of Elian's horse, looking extremely ill.

Chike approaches her. She inspects Zalika's face, her throat.

Aissa steadies her horse and questions Rahel.

AISSA (CONT'D)
The Crusaders destroyed my home
too. How long ago were they in
these parts?

RAHEL
The night of the Blood Moon.

AISSA
Do you know where they are going?

RAHEL
People from other villages will be
at the Refugee camp. Maybe they
will know. The Crusaders have been
destroying our villages, taking our
children and building their army
all over. They're stronger than
ever.

Chike approaches Aissa.

CHIKE
Your friend needs help. She is not
well. She needs to come with us.

INT. CHIKE'S REFUGEE TENT - NIGHT

Zalika lies on a makeshift bed on the ground. Chike cuts up a mixture of herbs. A clay pot full of BUBBLING LIQUID sits on a small fire.

Chike hums a strange melody while she works.

Elian sits next to Zalika, holding her hand. Aissa watches the proceedings from a corner, critical but hopeful.

Chike takes half of the chopped herbs and puts them into a mortar. She grinds them into a THICK PASTE. The other half she places into the boiling pot.

Chike sticks her finger into the paste in the mortar. Chike chants loudly as she rubs her fingers down Zalika's nose and forehead.

Chike pours the boiling herbs into two mugs. She hands them to Aissa and Elian.

AISSA
What's wrong with her? Will she be
alright?

CHIKE

Her spirit is weakened from the sickness. She will need your strength as well as her own. Drink every drop and join your strength to hers.

Chike chants as they drink the bitter liquid.

CHIKE (CONT'D)

All of it.

They finish, grimacing, and Chike takes their mugs.

A MALE REFUGEE steps forward.

REFUGEE

There is nothing more to be done. She is in the hands of the Gods now. Please, eat something.

Aissa and Elian look hesitant to leave.

ELIAN

I need to be with her. I need to keep her safe.

REFUGEE

Please, Chike will take good care of your friend--

ELIAN

I'm not leaving her side.

The Refugee nods, understanding, and beckons Aissa. Aissa warily follows.

CHIKE

I'll give you some time together.

Chike exits. Elian strokes Zalika's face, the quiet and intimacy of their first moment alone charging the atmosphere.

Zalika turns her heavy head to take in the sight of the boy she's loved since childhood.

ZALIKA

Is it true you've thought of me all these years?

ELIAN

Every night. Every day.

ZALIKA

Even with the High Sisters, when I closed my eyes and saw the man in my dreams, it was you.

ELIAN

Maybe all of this happened because it's our destiny to find each other again.

Zalika laughs with bittersweet joy.

ZALIKA

I really hope so. That's all I hope for.

Zalika suddenly becomes serious, and clutches Elian's arm.

ZALIKA (CONT'D)

Never leave me, Elian!

Elian leans over and touches his lips to Zalika's, kissing her softly, with all the love he has in his heart.

ELIAN

I'm right here. And I'll never leave you again.

Zalika wraps her arms around him as tight as she can.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Aissa walks toward a roaring camp fire where many broken families gather for a sense of community.

Aissa spots Rahel, the woman from earlier. She takes a seat next to her around the fire.

RAHEL

How's your friend?

AISSA

She's doing better.

RAHEL

My prayers are with her.

An older, FEMALE REFUGEE hands out makeshift bowls.

She hands one to Aissa. She ladles stew into her bowl.

AISSA

Thank you.

Aissa eats hungrily.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Do you know where the Crusaders
were headed?

RAHEL
I heard the rebels talk about a
palace by the sea. They've been
gathering troops all around the
region, burning non-Christian
villages to the ground.

AISSA
The palace by the sea... Do you
know where it is?

RAHEL
They can't be too far from here.
There are many abandoned diamond
mining towns along the sea in
Namibia. Many had palaces built for
the colonial mine owners. They
would watch from their palaces as
their slaves cut diamonds from the
Earth. But soon, better diamonds,
cheaper to cut, were found in other
parts. Now all the palaces are full
of sand... If you want to find
them, they can be found. The
Crusaders are not hiding.

AISSA
I will find them. It's only a
question of when.

Rahel places her hand on Aissa's.

RAHEL
You have a strong spirit. This
pleases the Gods. They will support
your righteous journey.

AISSA
My journey is righteous. But I will
kill them all, with or without the
favor of the Gods.

INT. TENT - DAY

Zalika wakes. She stretches, yawning. She smiles when she
sees Elian curled up on the floor beside her bed.

EXT. TENT - DAY

Zalika peeks out, still smiling. Aissa waits outside, dressed. The horses are tied out front, their belongings packed on top.

Chike stands behind Zalika.

AISSA
There you are. How are you feeling?

Zalika responds enthusiastically, though she still looks weak.

ZALIKA
I'm fine! I feel wonderful!

AISSA
That's great news.

Elian emerges from the tent, dressed.

ELIAN
You should rest, Zali. You were ill just last night.

ZALIKA
We have to find Aissa's sister, we can't waste any more time.

AISSA
She's right. We need to move on today.

She turns to Chike.

AISSA (CONT'D)
We owe you a great debt.

CHIKE
A kind soul will always find help with me.

Chike hands Zalika a bag. She looks inside to find medicinal herbs, clothes, cans of food, and a pot.

Zalika throws her arms around Chike and squeezes her tight.

ZALIKA
Thank you, for everything.

CHIKE
Do as I instructed and pray to the Gods, my child.

Elian helps Zalika onto his horse. Chike turns to Aissa.

CHIKE (CONT'D)
Be safe on your journey. And
Aissa.... Beware false friends.

Aissa pauses, deciphering Chike's message, then nods and mounts her horse. Aissa kicks the horse, it bucks and gallops off. Elian and Zalika follow.

The group is out by less than half a mile when they spot in the distance--

A DUST STORM

raging towards the refugee camp. Aissa yanks her reigns and raises her hand to test the wind. Nothing.

She looks harder into the horizon. The dust storm moves with incredible speed. This is a man-made creation.

The storm descends upon the camp. Young boys beat bucket drums on horseback. This is the Christian rebel group that tossed our trio in the hole.

They THUNDER DOWN upon the camp with lightning speed, slicing anyone in their path. Refugees SCATTER in all directions, fleeing as the Rebels open fire.

Some of the more equipped Refugees FIRE their weapons into the incoming storm.

OUT AND OUT WAR breaks out.

Aissa, Zalika and Elian witness the violence from afar.

AISSA
Protect Zalika. I'll be back.

ZALIKA
You're not leaving me here! I'm strong enough to fight.

ELIAN
Where are you going?

Before they can protest, Aissa drives her horse right into the storm.

Aissa pulls out THE BIG GUN. She takes aim and SPRAYS FIRE across FIVE CHRISTIAN REBELS who ride through a CLOUD OF DUST.

Their horses emerge, but no riders.

Aissa turns and is KNOCKED off her horse by a Christian Rebel.

She whips around, gun in hand. The dust creates low visibility.

The Christian Rebel springs on Aissa and knocks the Big Gun to the ground. He HITS her, she stumbles back but regains her footing.

She charges at him, but he catches her momentum in a headlock and forces her to the ground. She goes down on her stomach. The rebel tightens his grip. Aissa can't break it.

A SINGLE GUNSHOT

pierces through the dust. The Christian Rebel falls, dead, trampled into the sand by his escaping horse.

Zalika emerges on her horse holding a smoking gun, Elian on back. She smiles, self-assured.

Aissa locks eyes with her, proud, and for a moment Zalika turns into Naima. Aissa blinks and Zalika is Zalika again.

THE CHRISTIAN REBELS BEGIN TO RETREAT

Aissa grabs her Big Gun, tossed in the sand. She sees a Rebel on horseback, dragging a young REFUGEE GIRL behind him by a rope tied to the horse.

Aissa takes aim, shoots and hits the Rebel in the shoulder. It knocks him clean off his horse. The horse bucks, stopping.

Aissa quickly grabs the reigns of the Rebel's horse, Zalika and Elian follow on horseback.

Aissa removes the rope from the Refugee Girl's waist, still attached to the Rebel's horse, and wraps it around the fallen Rebel's NECK, like a leash.

The Refugee Girl runs for her life.

Aissa mounts the Rebel's horse, and begins to walk the horse, yanking the Rebel with her. The Rebel screams in pain, struggling against the tight grip of the rope.

AISSA
You're going to tell me everything.

The Rebel wails, unable to breath. Aissa picks up the pace and the rope TIGHTENS around the Rebel's neck.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Don't feel like talking?

Aissa kicks her horse and it begins to TROT, fast. The rope nearly breaks the Rebel's neck as he runs to keep in speed.

EXT. DESERT OASIS - LATER

Aissa slows her horse, still dragging the captured Christian Rebel behind her into the lush, palm-tree-dotted oasis. Elian and Zalika follow, not far behind.

Aissa comes to a clearing and halts her horse. She dismounts, stone-faced. She makes her way toward the scruffy prisoner, rope burns on his neck.

She cuts the rope from the horse and takes it in her hands. She wraps it around her elbow tight.

Aissa prods the Crusader with her gun to rise. He struggles to get up.

AISSA
If you aren't going to use those
legs then you don't need them.

Aissa jams the nose of the gun into one of his KNEECAPS. She SHOOTS. He yelps and buckling to the ground. She pulls him up, leading him to a PALM TREE TRUNK.

Aissa takes the rope slack and wraps it around the trunk multiple times.

Zalika and Elian stay back at the edge of the clearing, dismounting their horse.

Zalika, seeing Aissa with the prisoner, starts to walk over to help but Elian grabs her hand.

ELIAN
Let her do this on her own.

The Christian Rebel, worn from being dragged and shot, does not put up much of a fight.

Aissa stands back, inspecting her handy work. She grabs her prisoner by the hair.

AISSA
I spared your life for one reason,
and one reason only. You are going
to tell me where the Crusaders are.

The Christian Rebel manages a meek laugh. She strikes him VICIOUSLY across the face with the butt of the gun. He falls silent.

AISSA (CONT'D)
That's the trouble with your kind.
You don't respect your enemies. I
will ask you again.

Aissa takes her foot and presses it into his GROIN.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Where are they going?

The Christian Rebel groans in pain. He spits bloody teeth at her feet. Aissa presses harder. He moans, high pitched, in pain. But still no words.

Aissa removes her foot. The Christian Rebel looks up at her.

CHRISTIAN REBEL
Stupid girl.

AISSA
What did you say?

CHRISTIAN REBEL
Stupid girl! You can do whatever you like to me. But once they find you they won't just kill you. Someone like you will get special attention.

Aissa holsters her gun and reaches for her dagger. She grabs his WRIST tight.

Aissa takes the dagger and DIGS it into his thumb nail bed. He VOCIFERATES in agony. She digs deeper and slowly twists the knife, the screaming increases.

The nail POPS off and into the forest bed.

AISSA
Where is the palace?!

Tears run down the Crusaders cheeks but still he does not break.

Aissa removes the dagger from his thumb. She grabs his face, and with the dagger in her right hand holds the point inches away from the Crusaders EYE.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Do you think they will take you
back with one eye?

He doesn't move.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Let's find out.

Aissa pushes the knife in closer.

CRUSADER
WAIT!

Aissa pulls back the knife, she smirks.

EXT. DESERT OASIS - SAME

Aissa walks her horse out of the clearing where Elian and Zalika are waiting. They run to meet her.

Behind her Elian sees blood dripping from the CUT THROAT of the Crusader, still tied to the palm tree.

AISSA
We're going to Namibia.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

EPIC MONTAGE

TITLE CARD: NAMIBIA

The Western Theme from the opening credits lifts and swoons as--

-- Aissa, gallops along the vast, golden desert, mountains and rock formations mighty in the distance.

-- Elian riding not too far behind, Zalika's arms wrapped around him.

-- The three trot along a mountain side, the sun setting in the distance.

-- The trio walk their horses through a narrow, DANGEROUS MOUNTAIN PASS. The ground hundreds of feet below.

-- The trio come upon a CLIFF, the sun is swallowed by the darkness of the night. The stars begin to twinkle in the sky.

-- Aissa looks beyond the cliff, she sees A WHITE PALACE sitting by the sea, waves crashing against it. Torches are lit in the windows, one by one as day turns to night.

EXT. CLIFF - NIGHT

A CAMPFIRE reflects in Aissa's dark, fierce eyes as she stares at the palace.

Elian sits by the fire, roasting a can of beans.

Aissa turns, jerking her SHOTGUN upright.

A glass bottle sits atop some rocks.

Aissa points, shoots, SHATTERS the glass bottle with ease. She tosses the gun to Zalika, who catches it, ready.

AISSA
Practice makes perfect.

Aissa gets up and shows Zalika the right posture. Places her hand in the right position on the gun.

AISSA (CONT'D)
You're gunna watch him, watch his hands. Bring it UP. Like this.

Aissa brings her gun up to shoulder height.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Aim with both eyes open. Look through the viewfinder.

THROUGH THE VIEWFINDER:

Zalika sees the bottle move in and out of the cross hairs.

AISSA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Steady your hand. Don't forget to breathe.

Zalika exhales slowly, the viewfinder steadies on the target.

BACK TO CLIFF

Zalika adjusts her posture and the position of her hands on the gun.

AISSA (CONT'D)
Remember, squeeze, don't pull the trigger.

She looks through the viewfinder.

Her finger SQUEEZES the trigger.

CRASH. The bottle explodes, shards of glass flying.

Zalika jumps up and down. She hugs Aissa. Aissa lets a small, rare smile cross her lips.

AISSA (CONT'D)
See? You can do anything.

Aissa's smile fades, remembering her sister.

As Zalika looks over, searching for signs of Aissa's pride in her, she looks just like Naima. Aissa hugs her, as if embracing her sister.

Elian calls over.

ELIAN
Dinner's served.

EXT. CLIFF - LATER

The three devour the beans, sitting around the camp site. The fire crackles.

ELIAN
What are you going to do when this is all over?

ZALIKA
All I want is somewhere to go home to... I want to build that home with someone I love.

Zalika gazes at Elian fondly. He smiles at the thought.

Aissa keeps eating her beans.

ELIAN
(to Aissa)
What about you?

Aissa looks up from her plate.

AISSA
Huh?

ELIAN
The future. What do you plan to do after?

AISSA

There is no future yet. For me, the future begins when I find her.

Elian nods. Zalika grows quiet, eating her beans.

AISSA (CONT'D)

The horde that slaughtered my village took only a day. And that is one group from one region. They're building an army to conquer all of Africa.

ELIAN

They'll never achieve that.

AISSA

But they will die trying, and they will leave Africa mutilated in their wake.

Aissa looks at their stock pile of guns.

AISSA (CONT'D)

No one gives you a future. It's up to us now, if we want it, we have to take it.

EXT. CLIFF - MORNING

Aissa straps her guns to her horse, and mounts it.

Elian helps Zalika onto her horse. She waves him away and attempts to mount the horse herself. Elian looks on proud, grabbing his bags.

Zalika suddenly falls off her horse, landing in a crumpled pile.

Elian runs to her. She looks up, frightened.

BLOOD

oozes from her EYES, EARS, NOSE, and MOUTH.

She touches her face, blood pouring all over her hands.

ZALIKA

What's happening to me?!

Aissa jumps off her horse, hurrying to Zalika. She shares a fearsome look with Elian.

Zalika struggles to standing, stumbling against Elian, holding him, blood streaming, soaking his clothes.

She looks wildly into Elian's eyes.

Elian puts his arms around her, desperate to save her.

AISSA
(quiet)
The sickness.

Elian holds Zalika close.

ELIAN
Zalika... We need to do something!

AISSA
There's nothing we can do.

Zalika tries to speak but spurts blood, horrified.

ZALIKA
Elian... Don't....

Aissa grabs Elian's arm. He shoves her away HARD.

AISSA
Drop her! The blood! Take off your shirt!

ELIAN
I won't let her die! I won't leave her!

AISSA
There's nothing we can do! The blood will kill you!

Zalika looks up at Elian, her eyes becoming more peaceful as she drips into an ever-growing puddle of blood.

ZALIKA
Elian... Save yourself.

ELIAN
But... but I love you, Zalika...

Zalika gazes into Elian's eyes, sad, giving up. She raises her hand weakly, stroking his cheek. She smiles.

Then COUGHS VIOLENTLY, choking on her own blood. Elian holds her closer, ignoring his own fate.

ZALIKA
I love you...

Their eyes remain locked until the very last breath.

Zalika's soul escapes, her body lifeless in Elian's arms. Elian breaks down sobbing, continuing to hold on even after she's gone.

Aissa bows her head in respect, her eyes filled with tears.

EXT. CLIFF - LATER

Aissa sets fire to ZALIKA'S BODY underneath a bed of twigs. Elian removes his shirt, tossing it into the flames.

They sit quietly, watching yet another loved one perish in smoke.

ELIAN
She shouldn't have died.

AISSA
A lot of things shouldn't happen.
But they do.

ELIAN
She did nothing wrong. She survived
and was getting better. She didn't
deserve it.

AISSA
The world is cruel. The virus can
deceive you. I only hope you
haven't sacrificed yourself, too.

ELIAN
Why does it matter? We will be
slaughtered come nightfall.

AISSA
With the guns we have we can--

ELIAN
You really think so, Aissa? You
said it yourself, you've never seen
good win.

AISSA
And you said it's not about good or
evil, it's about guns.

ELIAN

Even guns can fail you. They have an army...

AISSA

You want to live in a world run by the animals who destroyed my village? Zalika's village? If it weren't for them Zalika would be alive today, happy, in her home, with her parents. She never would have been sent to the High Sisters and that bastard wouldn't have raped her. She never would have gotten sick. Don't let her die in vain. There are thousands of girls like Zalika, Elian. The Crusaders want to conquer all of Africa. Imagine how many more will die if they win.

Elian stares at Zalika's body, no longer visible in the billowing, black smoke.

EXT. CRUSADER COMPOUND GATE - NIGHT

Aissa and Elian, fortified with all manner of weaponry, climb the steep rocks up from the sea to the IRON GATES that protect the Crusader Compound.

Their horses are tied up behind them, back on the shore of the moonlit ocean.

As they get closer, we can spot several PATROLLING GUARDS surveying the perimeter of the gate.

Elian spots TWO GUARDS on roof tops. They scan the horizon periodically. He quietly points them out to Aissa.

Aissa takes note.

The gate SWINGS OPEN, revealing the compound.

The CRUSADER COMPOUND is a dusty ghost town, an abandoned diamond mining city losing the battle of time.

Historic TRAIN CARS and Colonial HOUSES half buried in the sand are now lit with the activity of Crusader soldiers.

THE PALACE looms over the train cars and houses-turned-barracks beyond the small, sand-filled city.

Aissa spots--

A WHITE CARGO SUPPLY TRUCK approaching the gate on a narrow, sandy service road that bleeds into the desert.

Aissa takes a single silencer pistol from her armaments.

Aissa fires TWICE. Silently.

ON ROOF TOPS

The guards fall gracefully from their posts.

ON THE GROUND

The Patrolling Guards on the ground take notice of the commotion and wander over.

Aissa re-holsters her gun.

With the guards distracted, Aissa and Elian sneak behind the truck, shielded from the view of Patrolling Guards and the SECURITY POST on the other side.

The DRIVER in the truck chats idly with the GATE GUARD as he hands him his papers.

ON THE ROOF OF THE TRUCK

Aissa hoists herself onto the ROOF of the truck. She peers over and observes Elian struggling to follow her but he cannot get leverage. She reaches down to help him up.

THE GATE

The Gate Guard exits his security post and does a quick inspection of the vehicle. He peeps around the back of truck just as Elian's foot disappears over the ledge.

THE ROOF OF THE TRUCK

Aissa LIFTS Elian ON TOP right before the Guard makes it to the back of the truck. Elian throws himself down flat.

THE GATE

The Gate Guard waves the truck through the gate.

EXT. CRUSADER COMPOUND - SAME

Aissa and Elian ride the roof of the truck until it comes to a stop at the barracks. They barely breathe.

CRUSADERS pour out of the barracks to greet the truck, excitedly anticipating it's arrival.

The Drivers of the truck get out and head to the back. They open the lift gate to reveal SEVERAL DOZEN KEGS OF BEER.

The Crusaders PUSH IN to help unload the precious cargo. They hoist kegs above their heads.

Aissa and Elian wait until the last Crusaders disappear into their dwellings with the beer.

Aissa peaks over the edge of the truck to check for danger. All clear.

She climbs down from the roof of the truck. Elian follows.

Aissa and Elian carefully navigate their way through the compound, looking for clues.

They peek into one brightly lit DWELLING.

THROUGH WINDOW

A few Crusaders chug beer and cheer loudly as they watch a soccer game on a small SATELLITE TELEVISION.

OUTSIDE

Aissa and Elian spot a group of THREE CRUSADERS coming their way. They dart behind a SAND DUNE.

CRUSADER #1 chugs beer from a plastic cup. He smacks his lips.

CRUSADER #1
I never thought I'd taste the stuff
again. God, war makes a man miss
beer.

CRUSADER #2 claps in agreement. CRUSADER #3 scratches his groin, under a heaving belly.

CRUSADER #3
All we need now are the whores.

The three men laugh.

CRUSADER #1
Plenty of them down in the mine.

CRUSADER #2
Commander Gabriel says we'd be good
Christians to sow our seed into the
heathens. Let them receive the
spirit and bear Christian sons!

The Crusaders pass them, laughing. A few beats later Aissa and Elian follow.

EXT. ABANDONED DIAMOND MINE - NIGHT

The Crusaders approach the entrance to a long forgotten DIAMOND MINE.

CRUSADER #1
We got some real pretty ones now.

Crusader #1 cranks a lever, bringing a rusty MINE CAR to the forefront.

CRUSADER #3
A soldier's greatest reward for battle.

The Crusaders chuckle.

Crusader #1's chuckle becomes a muffled, gurgling scream as his THROAT IS CUT from behind.

Crusader #2 readies his gun but Elian is already behind him, twisting his head until his neck BREAKS. He drops to the ground.

Crusader #3 runs, but he's drunk and he's fat and doesn't get far. Aissa THROWS her knife.

It lands smack in the back of his skull. He TEETERS under his shifting weight and TOPPLES OVER.

Aissa walks over and plucks her dagger from his head, wiping the blood off on the Crusader's shirt.

Aissa returns to the MINE CAR. Elian already sits in it.

ELIAN
Let's find your sister.

Aissa jumps in and the mine car ZOOMS down a steep track.

INT. ABANDONED DIAMOND MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

The car SHOOTS through a twisting, whirling tunnel, high above the ground.

Wooden beams hold lanterns that reflect on the unrefined diamonds. They glimmer in the bedrock.

After what feels like a mile-long ride, the car slowly loses momentum, coming to a halt.

Aissa and Elian exit the car where the tracks end.

A GIRL CRYING echoes through the chamber.

Aissa and Elian follow the sound.

INT. ABANDONED DIAMOND MINE ATRIUM - NIGHT

Aissa and Elian enter an Atrium carved high out of the rock. Organ music reverberates from the walls, played by a SLAVE GIRL.

Other SLAVE GIRLS in black tunics huddle along the back wall, chained.

Aissa's eyes search for Naima in the line of girls, but she is no where to be found.

The girls turn their gaze to the center of the room where--

A woman in an all white habit, THE WHITE WITCH (30s), BEATS the CRYING GIRL (18) mercilessly. The girl's black cloth RIPS as the whip strikes her.

Aissa ventures closer and the woman turns her head revealing--

ANRI'S SINISTER SMILE.

ANRI
Your tears are the tears of your
dying gods.

Anri brings down her whip HARD on the bloody, bare back of the Crying Girl.

ANRI (CONT'D)
They please me, so I will ensure
they keep flowing.

She holds the whip high and STRIKES her again. Flesh splits under the impact.

Aissa pauses, stunned by the scene before her. Elian strides forward, unafraid of the woman in white.

ELIAN
I brought you the Unforgiveable,
mother.

Anri drops her whip, turning. The Crying Girl scampers away.

ANRI
Son!

Anri turns sickly sweet, embracing Elian.

ELIAN
I brought her here, as you asked.

Anri snaps her fingers. GUARDS SEIZE an unsuspecting, shocked Aissa.

ANRI
My son, your father perished in battle. But we will avenge him. Those Nigerians will suffer dearly before I end their worthless lives.

ELIAN
I believe in your vengeance, mother.

Anri strokes Elian's head. He lays his head against her breast, intimate.

Aissa struggles against her captors.

AISSA
TRAITOR! You've betrayed Zalika!

ELIAN
Zalika could have been saved. I would have made her my queen and taught her the ways of the light. She would have been safe here. But your darkness got her killed.

Elian lingers for a moment on his mother's breast, then walks to Aissa. He strips her guns, throwing them over his shoulder, though she remains wrapped in magazines.

Aissa looks disgusted with his betrayal.

AISSA
The Crusaders got her killed!

ELIAN
Your heathen magic drew the sickness. Only the one true God can heal. You sent her to that hell!

AISSA
How could you? How could you support the people who killed Zalika's family?!

ELIAN
I am loyal to my mother. And only
to her.

ANRI
If we want a Christian motherland,
there will be casualties. This is
Africa, there are no clean hands.

SERIES OF FLASHBACK SHOTS:

EXT. LITTLE WHITE CHURCH - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG ANRI (14) bright, eager eyes in a white habit enters a little, white church with dozens of young, white girls in white habits.

ANRI (V.O.)
When I first arrived in the Congo
as a young girl, I was naive, a
Dutch Christian missionary sent to
save the Dark Continent.

INT. ANRI'S ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

In a sun-soaked room, Anri lays on the bed, reading her blue bible.

ANRI (V.O.)
I thought with my little, blue
bible I could change this place.

Anri kisses the cross hanging by a silver chord around her neck.

ANRI
But it changed me.

EXT. LITTLE WHITE CHURCH - DAY - FLASHBACK

A group of ARMED MEN raid the little, white church.

SCREAMS sound from inside.

INT. LITTLE WHITE CHURCH HALLWAY - DAY - FLASHBACK

Armed Men GRAB Missionaries, throwing them onto their shoulders, ripping their white habits.

INT. ANRI'S ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Anri cowers in her bed as a man approaches her, menacing.

She GRABS a hot, lit candle and throws it into the man's face. He SCREAMS as the hot wax, fire and glass maim him.

EXT. LITTLE WHITE CHURCH - DAY - FLASHBACK

The church is ON FIRE, big angry flames raising into the blue sky.

On the side of the church, Anri jumps out of the second story window. She falls with a sickly CRACK. She limps away, blood on her white habit, unnoticed.

ANRI (V.O.)
I lost my faith.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Anri and Watkin fire machine guns into an oncoming group of Armed Men, wild grins on their faces. Bodies drop.

ANRI (V.O.)
I wanted to kill them all. I met Watkin. He helped me and I loved him. Then came my sweet Elian.

Little Elian (10) peeks out behind his parents. Anri smiles at him.

ANRI (V.O.)
We realized then that we didn't need to kill them. With our help, they'd kill each other. So we started selling guns.

Elian clings to Anri as she and Watkin kiss passionately, all of the Armed Men dead on the ground.

INT. CHURCH - DAY - FLASHBACK

Anri hesitantly enters a church, empty save for a few souls. Scattered light rays from a dusty stained-glass window give her an ethereal glow.

ANRI (V.O.)
One day, a strange feeling came over me and I found myself once again in the house of the Lord.

A young Commander Gabriel, dressed in a priest's uniform, preaches to YOUNG BOYS at the front pew. Anri approaches. Commander Gabriel catches her eye.

ANRI (V.O.)
And that's when I met him.

Commander Gabriel stops preaching, walks straight to her. He holds out his hands. Anri takes them.

Anri is so moved, silent tears stream down her face.

ANRI (V.O.)
He gave me back my faith.

EXT. CRUSADERS COMPOUND - DAY

Throngs of soldiers cheer before Commander Gabriel and Anri, now dressed as the White Witch. Trucks full of weapons are unloaded and given out to the soldiers.

ANRI (V.O.)
And I gave him an army.

Anri blesses Commander Gabriel with THE DAGGER that is now in Aissa's possession.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. ABANDONED DIAMOND MINE ATRIUM - NIGHT

Anri's eyes wistful, she stares off.

ANRI
Lord Gabriel saved me. Maybe he
will save you. But above all, Lord
Gabriel will save Africa.

ELIAN
I think she will learn much from
Commander Gabriel.

The guards chain Aissa's hands.

The Slave Girls begin to sing an abridged version of the Hallelujah Chorus, accompanied by the organ. The sound of the music echoes through the amplifying walls of the cave.

Four Crusaders carry Commander Gabriel, in his crisp, white uniform, on a black throne.

Walking beside him is NAIMA, dressed in a white wedding garment, decorated, her face bruised.

Behind them, A PLATOON OF THE COMMANDER'S FIERCEST WARRIORS follow.

One crusader pulls a lever and an enormous OCULUS opens in the ceiling, shining down a concentrated beam of moonlight, refracted through a COLOSSAL DIAMOND.

The Crusaders set the thrown down with great care and reverence, beneath the oculus, illuminating Commander Gabriel like the god he thinks he is.

Naima kneels by his feet, bowing her head. All the crusaders follow suit, dropping to their knees, bowing their heads.

The organ music comes to a close and the captured girls stop singing on cue.

Anri approaches Commander Gabriel. She kneels.

ANRI
Lord Gabriel, may I seek your attention?

COMMANDER GABRIEL
You are my White Witch, you may have my attention whenever you desire it.

ANRI
An Unforgiveable snuck into our camp plotting to kill you. I thought you might want to decide her fate personally. GUARDS!

The guards drag Aissa to the center.

Aissa's head hangs low as she's shoved in front of a massive, iron crucifix. BURNT SHACKLES hang from the cross.

The Guard grabs her face, forcing her head up. Aissa notices Naima. Naima's eyes grow WIDE WITH FEAR as she recognizes Aissa.

Elian watches Aissa closely as her eyes light up, worried, completely focused on Naima. Elian senses a connection.

ANRI (CONT'D)
You will kneel before our Lord of Lords, King of Kings.

The Guards let Aissa go. She does not kneel.

One guard KICKS her in the back of the knees. She goes down to the ground.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Defiant, little girl. Where did they find her?

ANRI
Elian brought her. She's a murderer of good Christian soldiers throughout the land.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Is that so?

AISSA
I will murder you next.

Anri SLAPS Aissa hard across the mouth. BLOOD trickles down her lip.

Commander Gabriel laughs. He rises from his throne.

Anri hands Commander Gabriel the knife Aissa has carried with her on this journey.

ANRI
Your blessed dagger. The brazen thief stole it.

Commander Gabriel admires it, then sheathes it. AISSA'S TREASURED KNIFE, now safely back in the Commander's sheath, flashes beneath his robes.

Commander Gabriel looks Aissa up and down. He comes closer, lifting her chin gently to look into his eyes.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
You may stand.

Aissa stands up, nose to nose with the Commander. Her face remains stoic.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Look at these eyes, so full of hate, so full of passion! What will it take to kill that passion, I wonder?

ELIAN
I know how.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Son of the White Witch, step forth.

Elian approaches the Commander.

ELIAN
The girl is in search of her
sister.

Elian points to Naima.

ELIAN (CONT'D)
SHE is her sister.

Naima, hearing this, struggles to remain still, unfeeling.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Ridiculous. There were no survivors
from her village.

ELIAN
There was one.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Naima, speak!

NAIMA
I know not the Unforgiveable. Let
her burn for her wicked deeds.

Aissa puts on a good show.

AISSA
That poor girl is not my sister.

ELIAN
Then I guess it wouldn't concern
you if I shot her.

Elian draws his gun on Naima. Naima gasps, shutting her eyes. Aissa freezes, not sure how to react in her chains.

Commander Gabriel raises his hand up.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
That will be enough, Elian.

Elian lowers his gun, still keeping an eye on Aissa.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
This girl is to be the virgin
vessel of my holy bloodline. She is
chosen. I will hear no more talk of
her unfaithfulness. You have served
your Lord well. Now your prisoner
will burn. Take her to the cross.

Elian yanks Aissa toward the Crucifix. Aissa rapidly throws her chains around Elian's neck, using him as a human shield.

In less than a second she pulls with all her strength and his neck snaps.

He collapses, DEAD.

Anri SHRIEKS, the piercing sound BELLOWS through the arena. She points her long, pale finger at Aissa.

GUARDS SWARM AISSA, awaiting orders.

ANRI
Gabriel! I beg you...

Anri still screams. CROCODILE TEARS flood down her face.

ANRI (CONT'D)
Let me kill her myself.

Commander Gabriel nods. Naima looks on, horrified.

The Crusaders form a circle around Anri and Aissa. One Guard pushes Aissa into the center of the circle.

Aissa spots her BIG GUN just out of reach on Elian's body laying at the edge of the circle.

An EXECUTIONER in all black steps into the circle, handing Anri a gruesome, medieval AX on a long pole.

Anri swings the ax skillfully back and forth, stalking her prey.

Blade outstretched, she RUNS at Aissa.

Anri spins the blade and SWIPES her. Aissa screams, falling backward against guards as the sharp blade slices her skin, blood flowing down her arm.

The guards push her forward to the ground.

Anri lets out a pained BATTLE CRY and SLAMS down her blade at Aissa. Aissa JERKS her chains into its path. The blade cuts her chains, freeing her, before it sticks in the ground.

Anri struggles to dislodge the blade.

Aissa rolls onto her back and KICKS Anri square in the chest. Anri flies backward, taking the ax with her, stunned by the blow.

Aissa scrambles to standing, squatting in battle stance.

Anri CHARGES at her, eyes red with hatred.

Anri SWINGS the ax at Aissa's neck but Aissa CATCHES the metal pole in her hand and grips it with all her might.

They struggle for the weapon. Aissa kicks Anri in the legs. Anri loses her grip and falls back against the guards.

The Executioner immediately tosses Anri a SPIKED MACE.

Aissa circles her with the ax, careful of Anri's next move.

Anri swings the mace, Aissa flings it back with her Ax.

Their weapons COLLIDE as they struggle to land a hit. They clash in the air.

Aissa's ax strikes Anri's mace, sticking into the wood. Anri pulls the mace back, yanking the ax hard out of Aissa's hand, flinging it to the ground.

Anri raises the mace. Aissa flinches, backing away towards the edge of the circle.

Anri laughs coldly at Aissa's reaction.

ANRI (CONT'D)
You came halfway across Africa, and
now you will die for NOTHING!

She lunges toward Aissa, mace ready to swing like a baseball bat. Aissa DIVES out of the way.

CRUNCH.

The mace lands in the temple of one of the guards. Anri quickly removes it and turns to attack Aissa.

Aissa is too fast, she grabs the fallen ax. As Anri raises the mace, Aissa sinks the ax into her belly.

Anri stumbles backward from the blow, dropping the mace. She looks down at the blade in shock.

Aissa frantically crawls backward, out of the way of Anri's attack radius.

While the guards tend to their dead comrade, Aissa grabs the Big Gun on Elian's body, just behind the dead guard.

Anri reaches for the ax in her belly and begins to pull it out, unconcerned for the blood spewing from the wound.

Anri removes the ax and stumbles toward Aissa, slowly raising the ax in the air.

ANRI (CONT'D)
(shrieking)
I will slay you, evil beast!

Aissa whips around to face Anri. She holds the Big Gun, loaded and cocked.

She pulls the trigger.

Anri flies backward, ax still raised. The SPRAY of Aissa's fire HITS Anri hard, knocking her off balance.

Her body spasms, filled with bullet holes.

Blood leaks out of a hundred wounds, staining her white dress red as she melts into the floor.

Aissa turns toward Commander Gabriel looking him wildly in the eye.

AISSA
GABRIEL! I have killed your White
Whore, now I'm coming for YOU!

Commander Gabriel, aghast, points at Aissa.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
Kill her!

The Crusaders in the circle aim their weapons.

Pistols, shotguns, semi-automatics, guns that only get off a few rounds a minute, guns that are SLOW in comparison to Aissa's magnificent piece.

Aissa drops to duck as bullets fire.

She quickly spins and fires, taking out the dozen guards in the circle, her gun SPLATTERING BULLETS in every direction, *eight hundred and fifty rounds a minute*.

Men drop instantly, falling at the hands of her superior weapon, torn apart by hollow point bullets.

Commander Gabriel grabs Naima by the arm and hurries out of the room, disappearing down a MINE SHAFT, followed by FOUR CRUSADER GUARDS.

Aissa turns to run after the Commander but the Crusaders tighten their ranks around her. One of the guards grabs her shoulder and throws her to the ground.

She looks up in time to see him raise a RIFLE TO HER HEAD. She FIRES the Big Gun, shooting his arm CLEAN off.

He falls to the ground in shock, writhing and twisting, blood SPURTING from the missing limb. His hand still holds his gun, twitching on the ground.

Aissa turns and stands to face--

THE REMAINING CRUSADERS

DESCENDING upon her, guns and machetes raised. Aissa eyes the mine shaft Commander Gabriel ran down and breaks for it, dodging their bullets and firing back at them.

INT. ABANDONED DIAMOND MINE SHAFT - SAME

Aissa runs for her life down the narrow tunnel, Crusaders fast on her heels.

Bullets wiz by her head and slam into the soft rock around her.

She screams as she is HIT with a bullet in the shoulder.

WHEELS SCREECH against metal, Aissa turns and sees--

THE MINE CART.

Waiting at the rickety platform. The battle cries of the horde get louder, echoing around her.

She vaults into the cart and presses a green button on the cart's lever.

The cart LURCHES forward, slowly picking up speed, the Crusaders CLOSE IN.

Crusaders RUN through the tunnel after the cart.

They aim their guns, and fire at will.

Aissa DUCKS inside the cart, bullets RICOCHET off the metal. She quickly reloads her gun.

She waits for a lull, then rises out of the cart and unleashes a BARRAGE OF BULLETS on the Crusader army.

One Crusader spots an old breaker box in the rock wall of the cave. He takes aim through the chaos and shoots it, sending sparks flying, cutting the power.

Aissa lunges forward as the cart comes to an abrupt halt. She yanks on the lever desperately, Crusaders CLOSE BEHIND, but the cart doesn't budge.

She leaps out of the cart and RUNS up the narrow, precarious tracks, now a hundred feet above the ground.

Crusaders CHASE her, drawing fire.

MASSIVE, JAGGED ROCKS CRASH down from the cave ceiling as Aissa turns to MOW DOWN the incoming Crusaders, single file.

They FALL from the tracks, a hundred feet into the abyss below.

The following wave of soldiers TRIP on their corpses, losing balance and falling to the same fate.

Her gun EXPLODES BULLETS at lightning speed.

As the closest crusaders drop, more storm towards her, only to disintegrate under the blast of her gun.

Aissa looks up and spots a glimmer of MOONLIGHT at the end of the tunnel. Almost out.

One Crusader breaks through the carnage and SNATCHES HER ANKLES from underneath her.

She SLIPS off the tracks, and CLINGS to the rails.

Aissa hangs on to the dilapidated wooden boards by the edges of her fingers. She dangles over the darkness.

Aissa struggles to pull herself up onto the tracks. Her grip begins to slip as the Crusader stands over her, raising his MACHETE for the kill.

Aissa's eye catches a moving shadow on the ceiling. A STALACTITE swings back and forth above their heads.

The Crusader inches closer. He holds the machete against her throat.

Crusader gunfire sparks off towards her. One bullet strikes the wobbling stalactite. The jagged rock DROPS, IMPALING Aissa's attacker.

Aissa grapples along the steel underlay of the mine tracks. She reaches a stable area, then hoists herself back onto the tracks.

She turns to face her enemies as they get CLOSER.

No mercy as she WIPES OUT the last of the Crusader soldiers. SHOCK fills their faces as LIFE ESCAPES them, bodies falling left and right.

She does not stop firing until the clips are empty.

Their bodies are left UNRECOGNIZABLE by the carnage.

After all is said and done, Aissa is the only warrior standing, dirtied, beaten but alive.

She runs towards the light.

EXT. CRUSADER DIAMOND MINE - SAME

Aissa emerges bloodied but determined. The compound is empty, the rest of the Crusader army drunk in their dimly lit barracks.

Aissa reloads her gun and sets her eyes on--

THE PALACE, lit in the night.

INT. THE PALACE - NIGHT

Aissa enters, leaving bloody footprints on the marble floor. FOUR CRUSADER GUARDS lie dead on the floor behind her

She carries only the Big Gun.

Aissa looks around for any signs of life. She hears a rumbling behind a closed door. She draws her HAND CANNON, on the offensive.

The door flings open. A SLAVE GIRL runs out of the room. She doesn't even notice Aissa as she flees.

Aissa flinches but does not shoot.

INT. PALACE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aissa peers inside the vacated room. It is empty except for a tattered mattress and an oil lamp. She moves on.

INT. THE PALACE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aissa makes her way through the upstairs hallway, listening for any signs of movement.

A FAINT SCREAM.

Aissa moves swiftly through the corridor towards the sound. She reaches DOUBLE DOORS. She tries the handle but the doors are locked.

Aissa presses her ear to the door. She can hear the muffled voices of Naima and the Commander.

INT. COMMANDER GABRIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Naima crouches in the corner, cut and bloodied.

NAIMA
PLEASE!

The Commander SLAMS her into a dresser. She SMACKS her head on the way down but remains conscious. She attempts to crawl away.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
I thought I might be able to
destroy the pagan soul in you.

Naima whimpers, hiding behind a night stand. Commander grips the dresser by both ends and FLIPS it upside down. He throws it into the wall, BREAKING IT, shards of wood flying.

Naima cries.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
But now I see, I must destroy you
to destroy the pagan soul. Just
like the rest!

INT. THE PALACE CORRIDOR - SIMULTANEOUS

Aissa sits crouched outside of the bedroom doors. She takes the Big Gun and WHIPS it over her shoulder.

She makes her move.

With the butt of the gun she smashes the lock and kicks in the doors.

INT. COMMANDER GABRIEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aissa CRASHES into the room, the BIG GUN READY.

The Commander aims his gun at the disabled Naima.

Aissa aims her gun at Commander Gabriel's head.

AISSA
Drop your gun. Now.

Commander Gabriel cannot hide his shock. He keeps his gun pointed at Naima.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
You are something special. You must have killed a hundred guards. It makes sense. I knew God wanted to test me.

He strokes Naima's face with the gun.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
He sent you, Devil. But I'll not be pulled into the flames.

Commander Gabriel hoists Naima by her waist, still pointing the gun at her head.

He suddenly turns to shoot Aissa. She beats him to the draw but misses her target.

Her bullet RIPS through his EAR, BLOWING IT OFF. Gabriel SCREAMS, clasping the hole where his ear used to be.

He drops Naima in the process. She falls, woozy from her head wound.

He gets off a round of his own that bounces off the back wall.

The Commander stumbles around, disoriented. Blood GUSHES from his ear wound, throwing off his balance. He palms the wall.

Aissa takes advantage. She runs and slides on her side, knocking the COMMANDER off balance with her feet. Commander Gabriel CRASHES to the ground.

Caught off guard the Commander's GUN tumbles to the floor.

The Commander grabs for his gun but Aissa KICKS the gun halfway across the room.

Adrenaline-charged, she jumps up, ready for an attack.

He looks up and sees Aissa standing over him. He tries to slingshot himself up but she CLOTHESLINES HIM back to the floor.

Aissa drops down on his stomach, straddling him.

She WHIPS out her BIG GUN. She takes aim but the Commander grabs the gun nozzle.

They struggle for control of the gun.

Enraged, Commander Gabriel PUNCHES her dead in the jaw, sending Aissa stumbling backwards, the Big Gun flying out of her hands.

He stands up, regaining strength, and staggers to Aissa.

Gabriel takes Aissa's head in his hands and KNEES her in the temple. She collapses on all fours, breathless.

Commander Gabriel walks over, undoing his pants. He crouches over her and licks her face as he wraps his GIANT BICEPS around her neck.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Your fear tastes good.

Aissa CLAWS his arm trying to release the grip.

She rocks up and back and FLINGS the Commander onto his back, flipping him over. He smacks the ground.

Aissa quickly SNATCHES the CRUSADER DAGGER from his holster.

She RAISES the dagger and LUNGES at his head. He GRABS her before she can strike and SLAMS her into the wall. She tumbles to the floor.

He grabs her legs and drags her towards him but she WRIGGLES out from his grip and KICKS him in the face, sending him back.

Aissa jumps up, dagger still in hand. She charges at him, the rage of her revenge written on her face.

They parley IN HAND TO HAND COMBAT.

Aissa attempts to land the dagger anywhere on the Commander's body. He blocks her at every turn.

She raises her leg to kick him but he grabs her foot. She ELBOWS him in the jaw.

The Commander shifts his body weight and CATAPULTS Aissa into the STAINED GLASS WINDOW on the opposite wall. A giant crack forms.

She falls like a swatted fly, incapacitated. She groans.

Commander Gabriel stumbles up and over to Aissa, covered in blood.

Aissa sits MOTIONLESS.

He leans in slowly, like he is about to plant a kiss on her but instead wraps his hands around her neck. He squeezes tight.

Aissa wraps her hands around his and tries to pry them off, but she's exhausted. He's too strong.

She WHEEZES, loses strength.

Suddenly, the Commander's BODY FLIES sideways CRASHING through the cracked, stained glass window.

He lands on the TERRACE, arms outstretched like Jesus. MASSIVE BULLET HOLES SMOKE from his side.

Colored glass rains down around his battered face. He twitches, in a pool of blood.

AISSA'S POV

The room is fuzzy. A soft figure leans over her. It's Naima, holding the BIG GUN.

NAIMA

Aissa!

The figure slowly comes into focus. Aissa recognizes her friendly face. Naima drops the gun next to Aissa.

Naima, crying, throws her arms around the sister she never thought she'd see again. She weeps into Aissa's chest, Aissa cries in relief as she holds Naima close, strokes her head.

AISSA

It's okay. It's okay. I'm here now.

NAIMA

He-- He did--

AISSA

Forget it. We move on like we always do.

Naima nods, wiping her tears and helps her sister to standing. She sees the dagger on the floor, picks it up and hands it to Aissa.

NAIMA

Finish it.

They look at each other and then at the shattered window. Aissa clutches her knife.

EXT. COMMANDER GABRIEL'S TERRACE - SAME

Aissa climbs onto the broken window sill and stares down at the Commander. He GASPS for air, lifting his head to look at her.

COMMANDER GABRIEL
You don't understand... they
deserved to die!

She jumps down on top of him and DRIVES the knife into his EYE. He screams.

COMMANDER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
No! AWAY, away Demon! It burns! It
BURNS!

Blood pours from Commander Gabriel's open mouth. His body is still. The Commander is dead.

EXT. CRUSADER COMPOUND - DAWN

Aissa and Naima drag the COMMANDER'S CORPSE through the palace doors.

Aissa steps over the dead bodies of her enemies.

EXT. DIAMOND MINE - DAWN

CAPTURED GIRLS, led by Naima, walk shell shocked out of the diamond mine. They strain their eyes in the sudden brightness.

EXT. CRUSADER COMPOUND BARRACKS - DAWN

Aissa opens the door to a barracks of YOUNG BOYS chained to their beds.

The light wakes them. A few look up.

EXT. CRUSADER DWELLINGS - DAWN

Aissa watches as the newly freed soldier boys and slave girls enter the dwellings of the last crusaders alive, wielding knives.

INT. CRUSADER DWELLING - DAWN

Spilled beer and plastic cups litter the floor of the barracks as the Crusaders snore in their beds.

The boys and girls enter.

They swiftly and silently cut the throats of their captors.

One after another, the drunk Crusaders bleed out, fast asleep. BLOOD runs into the spilled beer.

EXT. CRUSADER COMPOUND - DAWN

Aissa rides a gallant, black horse. Commander Gabriel, nailed to a crucifix, is dragged behind her.

Naima rides at her side on her own horse.

Behind them is a new army of young girls and boys. They are covered in jewels and gold, some on horseback, some in jeeps. They all hold guns.

Aissa turns her horse around, addressing them. The abandoned compound BURNS behind her.

A group of young people help erect the iron crucifix.

Aissa brings her horse around to the front addressing the crowd with Gabriel's corpse behind her. His remaining eye is wide open and terrified.

AISSA

Sisters, brothers. I have slaughtered your tormentors. See them lifeless, limbless on the ground. See Commander Gabriel BURN.

Aissa throws a match and the cross IGNITES, MELTING his flesh from his bones.

AISSA (CONT'D)

We will take back what they stole from us. We will take back Africa.

Pan over the fierce, crying, cheering faces of the rescued youths. They FIRE their guns into the air with jubilation.

Aissa nudges her horse, it BUCKS UP and GALLOPS off. Naima and the new army follow Aissa's command.

Africa's majestic beauty ahead, the sun rises on a new day.

THE END