

DIDIER

Written by

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Based on the remarkable true story of Didier Drogba and the Ivorian national soccer team.

EXT. DESERTED SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Gusts of wind blow over a desolate crumbling SOCCER FIELD. The crusted touchlines are hardly visible.

Two dozen IVORIAN TEENAGERS stand by a flimsy goal post. They've traded out soccer uniforms for tattered militia outfits. Their hawkish demeanor and resolute appearance tell us that today, soccer is not their purpose.

DJEDJE (15), steals our attention in the front row. His innocent eyes and vulnerable stance differentiate him from the others.

DJEDJE (V.O.)
Today is the day I die.

On the other side of the soccer pitch we see - -

ANOTHER TROOP of IVORIAN TEENAGERS, parked by the opposition goal post. Their contemporary uniforms and hostile presence is evidence that these two groups are NOT friends.

SUPERIMPOSED OVER THIS IMAGE:

OCTOBER, 2005: MATCH DAY

The tense moment is accompanied by uneasy silence.

DJEDJE (V.O.)
It wasn't always like this...I
wasn't always like this.

Both parties jeer, and provoke each other across the hundred yard pitch.

DJEDJE (V.O.)
My father always said "you can't
control how your story starts. But
if you're lucky, you can control
how it ends." In this moment I can
only think of how wrong my father
was.

The cacophony of aggression doesn't seem to be letting up.

DJEDJE (V.O.)
People say we fight because we are
different. That is why we hate each
other they say. I don't agree. I
think we hate each other because we
are the same.

Both groups continue to bark at each other like a pack of vicious dogs.

DJEDJE (V.O.)
Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe we've grown
apart so much that we have nothing
left in common.

CLOSE ON: Djedje - -

DJEDJE (V.O.)
Today will tell.

A MUFFLED CLAMOR interrupts the standoff, and takes us to-

EXT. BOUAKE STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Packed to the brim with what feels like the entire population of the Ivory Coast. Mobs of citizens flood the sidewalks as they follow a MOTORCADE in the distance.

Helicopters churn through the dry Ivorian air, circling the madness below them.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

An Ivorian pilot gets on the radio.

HELICOPTER PILOT
They've taken Ave de la Fraternite.
We'll need to find a different
entry point.

The pilot concentrates on the motorcade below.

EXT. BOUAKE STREETS - MOTORCADE - CONTINUOUS

A TEAM BUS is flanked on both sides by police cars and motorcyclists. Citizens claw at the windows; begging for a glimpse inside. We quickly realize why...

The bus is transporting the **IVORIAN NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM**.

The crowd goes mad as they lay eyes on their footballing idols. Worshiping them like deity.

INT. TEAM BUS - CONTINUOUS

Twenty four Ivorian soccer players in prematch uniforms sit quietly on the bus. Their pregame jitters are made worse by the roaring chaos unfolding in front of their eyes.

DJEDJE (V.O.)

I don't know how this day will end,
but I do know how it started. It
didn't start this morning. It
started three years ago.

One player, alone, in the back of the bus. His presence is almost hypnotic, and his intense focus betrays no emotion. His compassionate and frightened eyes tell us all we need to know. This titanic man is **DIDIER DROGBA (27)**, one of the greatest soccer players in the world.

DJEDJE (V.O.)

It started with him. Didier Drogba.

An old SPORTSCAST can be heard through MUFFLED STATIC.

SPORTSCAST (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentleman Didier Drogba,
international footballing icon, has
made his decision. Will he play for
France or Ivory Coast? Let's
see...He's pulling out the flag
now...I see red, no wait, that's
orange! And it's Ivory Coast! Can
you believe it!? He's coming home!

FLASHBACK TO:

"2002"

INT. CHARTER PLANE - DAY

Drogba stares out an airplane window at Abidjan, the capitol of Ivory Coast. A polished businessman wearing a bespoke SAVILLE ROW SUIT sits next to Didier. This is Drogba's agent, **HAROLD (40's)**, and he is NOT pleased.

HAROLD

You know last night I was
physically sick at how much money
you're leaving on the table.

(off Drogba's smile)

I swear it, Diddy. Lizzy had to
bring me some TUMS. All night, felt
like child birth.

DROGBA
 (smiling)
 Think I've made you enough money,
 no?!

HAROLD
 Have a laugh, sure! You're like a
 brother to me, I'm just still
 having a hard time wrappin' me head
 around your decision. I mean who in
 their right mind would choose
 (pointing out the window)
 That...

Drogba doesn't want to hear it.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
 Over France! I mean the reigning
 World Cup champions, mate!
 Do you know I could have gotten you
 more sponsorship deals than bloody
 Britney Spears.

DROGBA
 If anyone can find some here, it's
 you. Super agent.

HAROLD
 (whispering)
 They're bloody killing themselves
 down there, Diddy. I'm genuinely
 concerned for you and Lalla, not to
 mention the kids.

DROGBA
 (joking)
 Then buy us bullet proof vests.

HAROLD
 (aside to himself)
 Yeah, I'll look on eBay.

Harold can't believe it.

Didier's son, **ISAAC(4)** and daughter **IMAN(5)** interrupt to
 hound their father with questions.

ISAAC
 Is there going to be
 strawberry ice cream, dad?
 I'm hungry!

IMAN
 Are there toy stores in "Ivre
 Cot"?
 (presenting her doll)
 Maxella needs a new friend to
 play with.

Drogba's wife, **LALLA (27)**, intervenes to help her husband.

LALLA

What did I tell you both, huh? Your father hasn't been home for many years. He does not know what it's like now.

This silences the children. But when Lalla isn't looking Drogba emphatically nods "YES" to his kids, which puts a smile back on their faces.

The pilot opens the cockpit door.

PILOT

We'll be landing shortly if everyone would put their seat-belts on.

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Drogba and his family deplane down the ramp stairs to a FLURRY OF REPORTERS. Cameras have a field day as Drogba takes his first step on Ivorian soil in a long, long time.

REPORTER 1

Didier! How does it feel to be home?

REPORTER 2

What made you decide Ivory Coast?!

REPORTER 3

How far do you think Ivory Coast can make it in the qualifiers?

Behind them, an army of POLITICIANS stand idle, waiting to welcome Drogba home. Among them is **SIDY DIALLO (45)**. They don't come more trusting and cheerful than him.

Sidy approaches the onslaught of reporters.

SIDY

Please, everyone, if you could make your way to the hangar. Didier will hold a press conference where he will answer all your questions.

SIDY (CONT'D)

(to Drogba)

Didier. It is an absolute pleasure to meet you. Sidy Diallo, President of Ivorian Football Association.

DROGBA

Good to meet you, Sidy.

SIDY

And who are these two rug-rats?!

IMAN

I'm Iman.

ISAAC

I'm Superdupont!

SIDY

Oh, wow! I am honored to meet you
Superdupont!

(to Lalla)

Nice to meet you Ma'am.

Security approaches and escorts Drogba and his family to the hangar.

SIDY (CONT'D)

We have a quick fifteen minute
presser, a few photos, and after
we'll take you to the training
ground to meet the team. And
remember, NO politics.

EXT. STREETS OF ABIDJAN - DAY

CHILDREN race through the mud ridden streets. Wreaking havoc
past storefronts as they play soccer amongst each other.

Djedje, who we met at the beginning of the film, has the
ball. He's CLEARLY better than every other kid, and has no
problem showing it off.

He kicks the ball and it smashes right into a vendors TENT.

STORE OWNER

Get over here now you bastards!
I'll kill you!

Djedje and his friends retreat.

INT. AIRPLANE HANGAR - DAY

Sidy answers questions from reporters at the podium. Drogba
stands by ready to be introduced to the media.

REPORTER

Reports came in this morning of
ANOTHER night raid in the Marahoué
region.

SIDY
(on microphone)
Today we don't talk about politics.
Today we talk about football. And
with that, I want to introduce one
of the most feared strikers in
world football. Didier Drogba!

Drogba walks on stage and poses for the cameras.

DROGBA
(to the reporters)
Thank you Mr. Diallo. It is an
honor to be here. To be home. This
is an unbelievable opportunity, and
I can't wait to get started and
meet my new teammates.

Every reporter in the room raises their hand. Drogba picks a lucky few.

REPORTER 1
Didier. You are also a French
citizen. What made you chose Ivory
Coast over France, who are one of
the favorites to win the World Cup?

DROGBA
France has a very special place in
my heart. But Ivory Coast is my
home. I was born less than an hour
away from here. This country gave
me life. Gave my parents a home. I
owe it everything.

REPORTER 2
Ivory Coast has NEVER qualified for
a World Cup, and at the moment are
in last place in their group. Where
do you realistically see this team
finishing in the qualifiers.

DROGBA
My intention is to get this team to
perform at the highest level. I
hope to help change the philosophy
and adopt a stronger commitment to
winning.

Drogba's statement is met with little confidence around the room.

REPORTER 3

Can you comment on the political instability in Ivory Coast at the moment? What is your position on the matter, and what would you like to see done by the government and your fellow citizens?

Drogba exchanges a look with Sidy backstage.

DROGBA

I leave politics to the politicians. I came here to score goals, and that's what I will do. My focus is on football.

Sidy interrupts and takes the podium.

SIDY

Okay, that is all. Thanks for coming out.

INT. JEEP CRUISER - DAY

Sidy and Drogba sit in the back seat as they are driven through the streets of Abidjan towards the training grounds.

People line the streets hoping to catch a glimpse of the soccer star.

INT. BAR - SAME

Every street has a bar like this. Flimsy bamboo hides the rusted bar railings. Packed to capacity, locals come to drink their hardships away with low grade western alcohol. And today - to watch Drogba's "Welcome Parade" on the T.V.

An Ivorian Woman stands outside begging for signatures on a petition. The Petition reads: **"IT'S TIME TO HOLD ELECTIONS!"**

She is met with little enthusiasm.

BACK IN THE BAR -

AMADOU (40's), runs this establishment. His crude and aggressive personality is hard to ignore.

Amadou catches locals watching from the street. But, not just any locals. Northerners...And among them -

DJEDJE.

Amadou grabs his cricket bat and charges out the door.

AMADOU

Get away from here. Go! Northerners
are not welcome here! Go, now!
Scum! Read the sign.

Amadou points to a sign "**NO ENTRY FOR NORTHERNERS**".

INT. JEEP CRUISER - DAY

Sidy plays tour guide while Drogba peers out the window. But, even Sidy's optimistic disposition can't obscure the grim reality of what's in front of them.

Poverty depletes the streets. Crumbling makeshift vendor stands. Homeless families. Starving children. Hope was drained from this city long ago.

SIDY

Ah, yes. Allow me to introduce you to the new Ivory Coast. This is what two years of civil war looks like.

Drogba is glued to the window.

SIDY (CONT'D)

Most of them have ties to the North, so they were "evicted" or fired.

DROGBA

Were they violent?

SIDY

No they are peaceful people. Most of us are peaceful people, but the conflict goes much deeper than just North vs. South, you see. Muslim vs Christians. Gbagbo loyalists or Ouattara supporters. Hell, Cassava trees or plantains. Every little thing is a dispute.

DROGBA

And when are elections?

SIDY

That word is taboo in these parts. The president would never allow his fate to be decided by a vote.

Drogba is speechless.

SIDY (CONT'D)
I remember that look. I had that
same look two years ago. Welcome
home.

UP AHEAD - A CHECKPOINT...

Guarded by two IVORIAN ARMY SOLDIERS. The cruiser jeep rolls to a stop.

GUARD 1
Papers.

Everyone in the car obliges. Drogba's I.D. sends the guards into a FRENZY. Asking for autographs and photos. Drogba indulges them patiently.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)
Finally a great Southerner for the
team!

GUARD 2
Northerner's can't kick a ball for
shit.

IN THE CAR (TRAVELING) - LATER

Ivorians line the streets to welcome Drogba home. Welcome SIGNS and JERSEYS. Police keep the crowd at bay.

IN THE CROWD -

Is Djedje, and his friend **KASSI**. They wriggle their way through the roused masses to get a glimpse of Drogba.

Police recognize Djedje.

POLICEMAN 1
There's that Northern kid, again.

POLICEMAN 2
Go handle it.

Policeman 1 approaches Djedje. It's clear the two have met before, and from the looks of Djedje's face, it didn't end well last time...

The Policeman takes out his BATON and proceeds to BEAT Djedje to the ground.

POLICEMAN 1
Northern scum, go back to your
home! Get! Now!

Kassi tries to intervene.

KASSI
Stop it, please! Stop it!

Drogba has a front row seat to this barbaric act from his window.

He and Djedje LOCK EYES as Djedje's face is smashed into the ground.

This moment is as intimate as it is disappointing, and Drogba watches in complacency.

POLICEMAN 1
(to the kids)
Both of you! Get out of here!

Kassi carries his wounded friend out of the madness.

IN THE CAR - Sidy attempts to console Drogba.

SIDY
Don't let this get to you. There is a different standard of life here. There's nothing you could have done. Trust me. Focus on what you can do, and that is scoring goals!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - STREETS OF ABIDJAN - DAY

With Kassi's help, Djedje limps his way into an alley. The two tend to Djedje's wounds in silence, until -

KASSI
I can't believe we saw him.

DJEDJE
It doesn't matter, he didn't see us.

Kassi has no rebuttal.

KASSI
Fucking police. Someone's got to put an end to this.
(beat)
At least he didn't hurt your legs.
Those are the money makers!

DJEDJE

Ha! Shut up!

KASSI

I'm serious. Can you imagine what coach would do? He'd probably go down to the station and beat that cop up himself. Injuring his top goalscorer like that.

Kassi starts kicking an empty COCA COLA CAN around like a soccer ball.

KASSI (CONT'D)

But if you're injured, coach would move me up top!

He dribbles past a struggling Djedje playfully. It doesn't take long before Djedje hobbles up to join.

DJEDJE

Not on my watch, brother!

The two share a fun moment in the street, and Djedje forgets about the pain.

WALKING DOWN THE STREET - (LATER)

Kassi looks at his shabby watch. Shit.

KASSI

Fuck! We're late for practice!

DJEDJE

I need to get my cleats!

KASSI

We don't have time, come on!

The two sprint down an alleyway in a race against time.

EXT. FOOTBALL TRAINING GROUNDS - LATER (SEEN FROM ABOVE)

A practice facility in shambles. Outdated with crumbling foundations.

SIDY (O.S)

Now, while our facilities don't compare to the luxurious dressing rooms at Marseille Football Club, there is a cozy feeling to ours. What we lack in infrastructure, we make up for with charm.

DROGBA
(sarcastic)
Looks very charming.

EXT. COACHES OFFICE - DAY

An oversized Man with shaggy hair and a tight fitted Adidas track suit, inspects Drogba from his desk chair. This is **HENRI MICHEL (mid 50's)**, manager of the Ivory Coast Football team.

HENRI
You're bigger. In person.

DROGBA
Thank you. You are...the same.

HENRI
I think the camera adds a few pounds to me.

Drogba "agrees".

HENRI (CONT'D)
Listen. There's no delicate way to put this. This team is absolute shite. It's the shite of the shite, yes? It's no different than this country. Divided straight down the middle.

Off Drogba's blank reaction.

HENRI (CONT'D)
I'm not sure if you realize what you're walking into, but then again, that's not my problem. Let's just make sure you put the ball in the back of the net, yeah?

Drogba doesn't know how to respond to his rant.

EXT. DIRT FIELD - ABIDJAN OUTSKIRTS - SAME

CLOSE ON: A row of kids' CLEATS until we get to Djedje's feet. Who is BAREFOOT.

The kids sprint off the line, everyone except Djedje and Kassi.

SOCER COACH

Again!

(to Djedje)

See what happens when you show up
late.

(to the kids)

Don't forget to thank Kassi and
Djedje when you get back.

The coach throws a bag full of CONES at Djedje.

SOCER COACH (CONT'D)

Set up. And for the love of god
Djedje, find some shoes!

EXT. TRAINING PITCH - DAY

Drogba stands at CENTER FIELD while Henri introduces him to the team.

HENRI

Alright lads. We all know this gentleman's name. He's a proven goalscorer and we are thrilled to have him on the team. I expect everyone to introduce themselves before our session ends today. Let's make him feel welcome.

NONE OF THE PLAYERS seem happy about this.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Alright. Grab a bib. Small sided games. Losers on sprints. Go!

A colossal man nudges past Drogba and takes the last bib. This is **YAYA TOURE (22)**.

Yaya's brother, **KOLO TOURE (25, bulky)**, relishing the altercation.

So much for a warm welcome...

A young teammate helps Drogba up. This is **SALOMAN KALOU (21)**.

KALOU

Don't mind them. They're just upset you're taking the captaincy.

Drogba studies the Toure brothers.

KALOU (CONT'D)

I'm Sala. Sala Kalou.

Henri blows his whistle.

HENRI
Come on!

INTERCUT WITH DJEDJE'S TRAINING SESSION ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN:

DJEJE -

Unhampered by being BAREFOOT, megs and jukes his way through the entire team in a scrimmage. A magician on the field like a young Lionel Messi.

DROGBA -

Smashes a goal home with his FIRST TOUCH. Kalou celebrates with him.

Henri is impressed. The Toure brother's are not.

On the next play, Yaya and Kolo SLAM Drogba to the floor! Reminding him who runs this pitch. Drogba is slow to recover.

DJEDJE -

Each trick is better than the last. He paints his way down the field, with no one even close to stopping him.

DROGBA -

The next play, BAM! Another illegal foul from Yaya.

Then ANOTHER!...And ANOTHER!

With each HIT Drogba takes, Djedje scores a GOAL on the other side of town.

Henri blows his whistle to end practice - Drogba is on the ground. Not the best first day...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY

Drogba washes away the days disappointment in the shower. The Toure brothers and a few other teammates approach him menacingly.

Yaya Toure gets in Drogba's face. Domineering. The team huddle around the showers in anticipation of a fight.

YAYA TOURE
Welcome home. Deserter.

Drogba doesn't stand down.

YAYA TOURE (CONT'D)
A southie WOULD run away.

Drogba continues his shower, until Yaya SLAPS away his shampoo bottle.

He and Yaya immediately BUTT HEADS - locking like angry bulls.

TEAMMATES
Fight! Fight!

Kalou JUMPS IN and separates the two before any punches are thrown.

YAYA TOURE
This is our country, yeah? You play by our rules now.

Kalou holds Drogba back.

KALOU
(To Drogba)
Let it go.

EXT. STREETS OF ABIDJAN - NIGHT

Djedje walks home from practice. A pick up truck approaches with a dozen kids in the back, all armed with Ak-47's.

Djedje picks up his pace to avoid conflict.

The truck pulls over in front of him and **ADAMA**, the driver jumps out.

ADAMA
Not running away from us are you, Djé?

No response.

ADAMA (CONT'D)
Because it feels like you've been avoiding us ever since your father's funeral.

DJEDJE
No. I'm not.

ADAMA

He fought dying for what he believed in. He fought dying for us. For you.

Djedje listens cautiously.

ADAMA (CONT'D)

He would have wanted you to join us. And continue the fight. His death cannot be for nothing.

DJEDJE

He would have wanted me to take care of the family he left behind. Which is what I'm doing. I don't have time for revolution.

ADAMA

But you have time for football?

DJEDJE

Yes.

ADAMA

I see.

Djedje begins to walk away.

ADAMA (CONT'D)

You're not the only one who lost him that day. Remember that.

INT. CAR - DAY

Drogba drives his wife and kids down a dirt highway. Zebras and leopards scamper through the grasslands and waving plains.

The beautiful lush African wild consumes the kid's attention. Giving Drogba and his wife the seclusion needed to have an "adult" conversation.

LALLA

So? What aren't you telling me?

DROGBA

What? What do you mean?

LALLA

My love. You think you can fool your own wife. You're smarter than that.

Consumed by his own hesitancy, he finally opens up.

DROGBA

This country has changed. And it seems the people have, too. I worry I made a mistake bringing us back.

Lalla lets this admission sink in. For both of them.

LALLA

Do you remember the day we met? At University. You asked me to dinner, and I said no. You came back the next day and asked again. I said no. And then again the day after, I still said no. When I asked you why you won't give up. Do you remember what you said?

DROGBA

I don't know how to give up.

LALLA

I saw your bruises this morning. But, this team needs you. This country needs you. And if you are still the man I married, you won't give up on them.

DROGBA

I don't deserve you.

LALLA

(sassy)

Boy, you're just realizing that!?

EXT. HOUSE - OUTSKIRTS OF ABIDJAN - LATER

Drogba's car turns into a driveway.

A simple but weathered bungalow with a cozy front porch and a quaint garden by the fence. A few DOGS run to greet Drogba and his family.

Drogba's parents, **ALBERT** and **CLOTILDE**, emerge from the house, and behind them a slew of family members follow. Both families are thrilled to reunite.

Some family members are **PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED**. One has an eyepatch on. Another, scarred from a first degree burn. Some with missing limbs.

Drogba can't help but focus on the wounds as he greets family members.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

A crowded kitchen table filled with cousins, second cousins, uncles, aunts, the whole nine.

The kids play football outside.

COUSIN 1

No! No! That was you! I was hiding in the backyard!

DROGBA

Oh my god! You're right. Do you remember Dibi's face!?

CLOTILDE

I swear you boys took years off my life!

ALBERT

Please, honey. The amount of times you've said that! You'd be dead already!

The whole table laughs.

CLOTILDE

And you're all lucky I'm still standing!

A KID runs into the room. He's missing a FOREARM.

KID

Diddy, would you come play with us?

DROGBA

Of course I will. But go easy on me please.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

The kids run rampant as they try to steal the ball from Drogba. They CLING onto his legs to stop his skill. In the midst of the frolic one child is able to MEG Drogba!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

On the couch, Lalla and Clotilde have some tea. Through the window, they observe Drogba playing with the children.

CLOTILDE
He's always had such a young spirit.

LALLA
Yes. Yes he has. The kids love it. He's great with them.

CLOTILDE
And how is he with you these days?

LALLA
Somedays he's with me. Others he's with football. But I can't complain. Football has given us a great life.

CLOTILDE
Men are like stray dogs. They always lose their way at some point in life. It's up to us to guide them. Don't forget who runs a family. Don't be afraid to push him.

Lalla sips her tea, taking in the advice.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)
He'll need you now. More than ever.

LALLA'S POV: Drogba playing with the children.

EXT. PORCH - LATER

Albert watches the sunset from the porch. Drogba brings him a beer and joins.

ALBERT
(holding the beer can)
I remember when you used to sneak out of the house with these.

Drogba smirks, he remembers, too.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
How does it feel to be back?

DROGBA
Different.

Albert nods. There's not much else to say.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
Koffi. Moussa and his son. Their
wounds. Is that from...?

ALBERT
Yes. Even the innocents are
suffering. It's terrible.

DROGBA
How come no one told me?

ALBERT
We live in war. Talking to you is
the only time we get away from it.
Sometimes we need to forget. Even
just for one phone call.

DROGBA
Dad, Moussa's son. I could have
helped.

ALBERT
Moussa's son is missing an arm. But
he'll learn to live with that
challenge.
(touching his forehead)
It's this scar that is harder to
heal. For everyone.

Albert stands up to see the view from his porch.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
And that is something you are
helping with. Just being here
today, playing with him. It helps
more than you know.

Drogba joins his father. They look out onto the beautiful
Ivorian plain. Until -

IN THE DISTANT HILLS - MUTED SOUNDS of EXPLOSIONS with
flashes of red illuminating the dusky sky. Pockets of SMOKE
CLOUDS rise with it.

DROGBA
Jesus. Those are close.

Albert doesn't move.

ALBERT

No closer than yesterday's. Or last weeks.

DROGBA

You and mom can't be safe here.

ALBERT

We're still standing aren't we?

Drogba is visibly frustrated.

DROGBA

I don't know what to do here.

Albert turns to his son. The two lock eyes.

ALBERT

You have an incredible gift, son.
And an incredible opportunity here.
I'm no mathematician, but if you
add those two together, you can
achieve something very, very
special.

The two look out as the sun sets and the red hue of war
consumes the night sky.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Drogba lays restless in bed. Replaying his father's words of advice.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY

The team packs up after a training session. Kalou closes his locker to find -

DROGBA right next to him. He looks like a man on a mission.

DROGBA

Okay. Let's do this. I'm ready to
be educated.

OFF: Kalou's BIG smile.

EXT. TRAINING PITCH - DAY

The ENTIRE team are in the thick of conditioning drills - everyone except for Kalou and Drogba, who are "stretching" on the touchline.

KALOU (O.S)
First up the Toure brothers.

Drogba focuses on the Toure brothers.

KALOU (CONT'D)
You've had your run in with them.
They're from the North, and are the
best players on the pitch. Well,
until you arrived.

UP NEXT - Shooting drills. We focus on a winger, **KADER KEITA**, a slender speedster with a strong right foot.

KALOU (O.S) (CONT'D)
Keita. We call him "Popito". Don't
try and outrun him. You'll lose.
Strong ties to the gov'ment.

UP NEXT - Defensive drills. We meet **DIDIER ZOKORA**, bald, broad, and a hell of a player.

KALOU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Zokora. The only thing keeping this
team from ripping itself apart. He
doesn't take any of this North and
South crap. A great man, just not a
leader.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

The Cafeteria is PACKED with twenty five hungry athletes. Chomping down on their food as if it were their last meal on earth.

Drogba and Kalou, trays in hand, wait in line for their meal.

KALOU
Now you see, if you want to
understand your teammates, you have
to look beyond these walls my
friend. You need to get out and get
lost in the city. Because, when our
work is done for the day, THAT'S
where our life is.

Kalou DANCES in line.

KALOU (CONT'D)
Maybe even a disco, one night eh?
Haha!

Drogba enjoys this moment until he notices -

A CLEAR DIVIDE between two groups of players. Eating at opposite ends of the cafeteria with a slew of EMPTY tables in the middle.

KALOU (CONT'D)
Northies and Southies haven't sat together since the start of the war.

A FOOD ATTENDANT hands Drogba his meal.

KALOU (CONT'D)
Usually Henri or some of the trainers sit in the middle. We call it "The Gap".

Drogba takes a seat in "The Gap". The ENTIRE cafeteria takes note of this. Conversations in the room come to an abrupt halt.

KALOU (CONT'D)
What're you doing?

DROGBA
Eating.

KALOU
Did you not hear me? Southies eat over there.

DROGBA
I heard you. I'm eating here. Join me.

Everyone watches in judgement as Kalou deliberates. Finally... he takes a seat.

KALOU
What now?

DROGBA
We eat.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAINING PITCH - DAY

A heated and contentious practice match. Drogba asserts his physical and mental dominance over the game by avoiding tackles and bodying defenders to score.

ANOTHER TRAINING SESSION -

In a one on one drill with Yaya Toure. Drogba whizzes completely by him.

ANOTHER TRAINING SESSION -

Another practice match. Drogba TURNS Yaya Toure, who falls on his back in the process. The whole team erupts in laughter.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - TRAINING GROUNDS - NIGHT

Drogba packs up his belongings for the day. Kalou approaches.

KALOU

Didn't see your car in the lot.
Need a ride home?

DROGBA

I'm walking tonight.

KALOU

That's like ten miles!

DROGBA

Going to get "lost in the city"..."
Maybe even, catch a disco...

Kalou's ecstatic. Drogba's finally getting it.

INT. DJEDJE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Djedje, with an apron on, serves his younger siblings food at the table.

DJEDJE

Eat up.

His younger sister tastes his cooking. She's not thrilled.

YOUNGER SISTER

Ew! This is cold. And mom always
adds rice.

DJEDJE

Well, there's no rice. So eat. And
be thankful for once.

LATER -

Djedje cleans the dishes after dinner while his younger siblings run around the house with high blood sugar.

DJEDJE (CONT'D)
Stop it! Tiwa! Get your brother
ready for bed!

The two siblings don't listen.

DJEDJE (CONT'D)
Get in bed! Mom will kill me if you
guys aren't asleep when she gets
home.

EXT. BUS STOP - ABIDJAN - NIGHT

HENRIETTE, (mid 30's) Djedje's mother, SPRINTS toward a departing BUS. Only a few feet away, it's looking good, until - The doors SLAM SHUT just as she arrives. Henriette pounds on the door begging for entry.

The Bus Driver notices Henriette's HIJAB, and shakes his head. He leaves her, alone and without a way home.

EXT. STREETS OF ABIDJAN - NIGHT

A dangerous place. Shadows illuminated by the eerie moonlight follow you around every corner. Eyes poke out from alleyways. Hisses and WHISPERS make us feel like we're in the middle of the Jungle as opposed to a capital city.

And in the center of it all - Henriette. Holding her breath with every step she takes. Hoping for safe passage home.

A pick up truck slows down and the driver locks eyes with Henriette.

A FEW STREETS AWAY -

Drogba walks down the Hollywood Blvd of Abidjan. Neon lights, street performers, and the overflow of intoxicated youths from the hottest bars. Stimuli in every direction.

INT. AMADOU'S BAR - NIGHT

Closing time - Amadou and others are sharing some pints and having a laugh.

The landline rings. Amadou answers.

AMADOU
Bar's closed.
(surprised reaction)
Wait, really, you're sure it's her?
(MORE)

AMADOU (CONT'D)
 (beat)
 Stay close, I'll send a few now.

Amadou hangs up.

AMADOU (CONT'D)
 The Major's widow was spotted in
 Upper Bietry. Alone.

BAR MATE 1
 Walking alone in our own
 neighborhood? Lady has a death
 wish!

AMADOU
 Go handle it.

EXT. STREETS OF ABIDJAN - NIGHT

Drogba keeps his hood up to conceal his identity. He fully immerses himself in Ivorian culture. Performing a traditional ZAOULI dance with an elder woman, throwing money at street performers, and eating Attieke with the locals.

LATER...

Drogba walks down a more secluded street. Around the corner is...

HENRIETTE -

Still alone.

Until - Amadou's men approach from an alley.

BAR MATE 1
 Enjoying your stroll?

They corner her by a dumpster.

BAR MATE 1 (CONT'D)
 It's not a good look to have the
 Major's widow walking around our
 streets freely.

HENRIETTE
 I just want to get home to my
 family. I mean no trouble. Please!

BAR MATE 1
 Of course.

One man SLAPS HENRIETTE across the face! Another grabs her purse and steals her valuables. Bar Mate 1 PINS her against a wall.

At this moment, DROGBA ROUNDS THE CORNER -

His world stops as he's confronted with this barbaric reality.

Drogba RACES to the rescue.

Just as Bar Mate 1 pulls up Henriette's dress, Drogba GRABS HIM from behind and THROWS him to the floor. The other gang members immediately attack him.

Drogba gets a few punches off, but is outnumbered and THROWN to the ground.

DROGBA'S POV: Henriette grabs her purse and HOBBLES OFF to safety.

Drogba takes PUNCH after PUNCH until they pull down his hoodie. Then, they realize who they have been beating...

BAR MATE 1 (CONT'D)
Holly shit! It's Drogba!

They look at each other processing the shock. Then take off running. Leaving a beaten and bloody Drogba on the ground.

INT. DJEDJE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Djedje watches a re-run of the 1998 World Cup Finals.

An injured Henriette STUMBLES through the back door. Djedje springs to his feet.

DJEDJE
Mom? Are you okay?!
What happened!?

Djedje guides her to the kitchen table. And grabs a towel to clean her up.

DJEDJE (CONT'D)
Mom, we need to go to the hospital!

HENRIETTE
No, sweetie. I just need to sit.

DJEDJE
Who did this to you!?

Henriette refuses to answer.

DJEDJE (CONT'D)
Was it Southies? Amadou's men? Did
they hurt you?!

HENRIETTE
Dje. Stop. Don't go out looking for
a fight. Then you are no better
than them. Something your father
never understood...Now help me to
bed.

INT. HENRIETTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Djedje helps his mom into bed.

DJEDJE
Do you need anything else?

HENRIETTE
Yes. I need my son to get some
sleep.

He kisses her goodnight.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)
I was saved. By an angel. A man
pulled them off me. He took many
hits and fell to the ground. But, I
ran off.

Henriette holds Djedje's hand tight.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)
I hope I've raised you to be that
man.

DJEDJE
I will do anything to protect you
and the family.

HENRIETTE
He didn't protect me. He saved me.
Somehow those two seem different
tonight.

OFF: Djedje, trying to hold back his rage.

EXT. STREETS OF ABIDJAN - NIGHT

Drogba limps his way through the city streets.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - ABIDJAN - NIGHT

Djedje approaches the FORCES NUEVELLES headquarters. Several soldiers stand guard.

They wait for Djedje to stand down. His anger palpable, Djedje marches through the front doors untouched.

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Dozens of CHILD SOLDIERS smoke opium, play poker, and load Ak-47's. A fragile stronghold filled with anarchy and juvenile disorder.

Djedje walks straight up to ADAMA.

DJEDJE
I'm ready.

Adama smirks.

INT. DROGBA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Drogba looking in the mirror at his BLACK EYE.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Djedje looking in the mirror at his new TATTOO.

The letters "FN" are carved on his BLOODY SHOULDER.

ADAMA
Now you're one of us. Forces
Nouvelles.

MONTAGE -

FORCES NOUVELLES CAMP

Adama lectures his "patriots", who now include Djedje.

ANOTHER DAY - FORCES NUEVELLES CAMP

A group of PROSTITUTES enter the Forces Nouvelles headquarters ready for their pro-bono commitment to the cause.

Djedje and the other teens jaws drop to the floor. They're not boys anymore...

ADAMA (CONT'D)
 Gentleman, forget the world you
 left behind! This one is much more
 rewarding.

ANOTHER DAY - DJEDJE'S HOME

Exhausted from a full day of school and a full afternoon at Nouvelles Headquarters, Djedje is fast asleep on the couch. His younger siblings fail to shake him awake.

DJEDJE'S SISTER
 Dje. Wake up. We're hungry. What's
 for dinner?

ANOTHER DAY - SOCCER PRACTICE

Djedje's brilliance on the soccer pitch is interrupted by the Forces Nouvelles, who honk and heckle for their new recruit.

Djedje has no choice but to get in the truck. Much to the dismay of his coach, teammates, and especially, Kassi.

ANOTHER DAY - STREETS OF ABIDJAN

Kassi sees Djedje across the street with his new "friends", and waves. But Djedje purposely ignores him.

ANOTHER DAY - DJEDJE'S HOUSE

Henriette cries alone on her porch, missing her son.

ANOTHER DAY - SOMEWHERE IN THE BUSH

Target practice: Djedje and other child soldiers are being taught how to fire AK-47's.

Adama obliterates a target. He hands the gun to Djedje

ADAMA
 I promise you, once you feel the
 power of a gun in your hand, you
 will never want to let go.

The thumping sound of RESTLESS SPECTATORS begins to swallow the scene, as we **RETURN TO PRESENT DAY** - -

"OCTOBER, 2005. MATCH DAY"

EXT. BOUAKE STADIUM - SOCCER FIELD - DAY

GROUNDKEEPERS pull away the tarp covers while sprinklers pepper the glossy grass.

The stadium is EMPTY. Except for -

SOLDIERS and BOMB SQUADS comb through each seat. SNIPERS take cover behind the giant advertisements boards.

The arena feels more like a fortress than a football stadium.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

A handful of SPORTSCASTERS prepare for the pre match. Mic checks, make-up touch ups, player pronunciation, etc.

A weary SEGMENT DIRECTOR enters.

SEGMENT DIRECTOR
Everyone, let's huddle around for a
quick chat.

The vast press box now feels tight and crowded.

SEGMENT DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
I have in my hand a list of
"requests" straight from the
Ivorian Government. They've
informed us there is a good chance
there will be gunfire in the next
three hours.

The commentators and crew are SHOOK.

SEGMENT DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
If and when this happens, we are
instructed to cut away immediately.

The director lets this sink in for his crew.

SEGMENT DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
If any of you wish to leave, no one
here will think less of you, nor
will your employment here be at
risk. We all have families to think
about.

No one leaves, including the two commentators MARTIN TYLER and ALAN SMITH.

SEGMENT DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Good. Now, you all see what I see out there, and that's an army. Heavily armed and ready to strike at a moments notice. None of us here signed up for wartime reporting, but today we have. And we need to be at our very best.

The segment director stands up.

SEGMENT DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Neil, Rocco, camera movement needs to be A+ today. Becca, make sure we have eyes and ears on Drogba at all times. Remember, today, he's Brando.

Everyone understands their orders.

SEGMENT DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Marty, Alan, let's get you mic'ed up for prematch.

EXT. STAIRWELL - STADIUM ROOF - DAY

A group of Ivorian soldiers climb to the roof with ROCKET LAUNCHERS.

One soldier radios down to the ground unit -

SOLDIER (ON RADIO)

Checkpoint three, locked. Over.

Two soldiers have a private conversation.

SOLDIER 1

What do you think is going to happen today?

SOLDIER 2

I don't know. But I hope it's getting home in one piece.

INT. STADIUM - CONCESSION STANDS - DAY

Its quiet. Too quite for a stadium. Vendors fill their stands with food and soda. NO ALCOHOL.

INT. STADIUM TUNNELS - DAY

Janitors push their carts past SOLDIERS and SECRET SERVICE.

There is an eerie and threatening feeling around the grounds.

INT. PRESS BOX - DAY

Martin Tyler and Alan Smith take their seats with the football pitch behind them.

MARTIN TYLER

Well ladies and gentleman. It's the game the whole world has been waiting for. Ivory Coast. Cameroon. Who would have thought it would all come down to this. I'm Martin Tyler, here with Alan Smith.

ALAN SMITH

Thanks Marty, happy to be here. I reckon we're in for a cracker of a match. But, if the bookies have anything to say about it, this game will be over shortly after the first whistle. Cameroon is favored at eight to one odds.

MARTIN TYLER

Well, Alan, some would say those are generous odds, given the result the last time these two teams met.

ON the empty football field as MUFFLED COMMENTARY bring us to

FLASHBACK:

"2002."

EXT. STADIUM - FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The MUFFLED COMMENTARY is none other than Martin Tyler and Alan Smith.

ALAN SMITH (O.S)

The visitors have been absolutely sublime today, Marty. And to no one's surprise. Ivory Coast on the other hand, have a lot of questions to answer at the final whistle.

UNDER THE LIGHTS - Drogba and his teammates fight like wounded soldiers against tyrants of the game.

Cameroon is faster. Stronger. Quicker. Tougher. And more skilled. The scoreboard reads: 5-0

PRESS BOX -

MARTIN TYLER

Yes. Most importantly from that man right there...

DIDIER DROGBA - Sporting a BLACK EYE, can't complete a dribble, defenders swarm him like flies in a trashcan.

MARTIN TYLER (BROADCASTING) (CONT'D)

Didier Drogba does not look like the feared European striker Ivory Coast thought they were getting, does he, Alan?

Drogba loses the ball one more time before the final whistle BLOWS.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - STADIUM - NIGHT

One Ivorian player CHUCKS his water bottle across the room. The mood is grim and silent. In the center of it all -

DROGBA - - His imposing figure thaws to a beaten conscript.

DROGBA

I know none of us are happy with that performance, myself included. But those ninety minutes we just played do not define us. It's the next week that defines us. How we respond, as one.

Yaya SLAMS his locker shut!

YAYA TOURE

Bullshit! You should all be embarrassed with yourselves. Especially you. Where were you today, huh?! Back in London?

Drogba steps to Yaya.

DROGBA

I was right on that pitch. Next to my brothers. Next to you.

Kalou rises to Drogba's defense.

KALOU
He played injured, Yaya!

YAYA TOURE
Black eye an injury now? You soft,
Sala.
(to Drogba)
Did Paparazzi get too close? Hit
you in the face with their big
shiny camera?

Kalou steps in.

KALOU
He got those bruises protecting a
Northerner. A woman was attacked by
Southies last night.

Yaya is not convinced, so -

Drogba takes his jersey off. Revealing his ribcage is
horribly BRUISED with a few deep lacerations.

He's making a statement. And it works.

DROGBA
No Paparazzi. Just people like you.

With no rebuttal - Yaya PUNCHES a locker, and storms out.

EXT. VILLAGE - IVORY COAST - DAY

"Bedi-Goazon Village"

Two children hide from GUNFIRE underneath a truck. They watch
in horror as their father is SHOT DEAD and their village is
TORCHED by **Southern Pro Gbagbo forces**.

Villagers are forced to their knees and taken out one by one.

INT. UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Admiring himself in a mirror is **PRESIDENT GBAGBO**. Ordinary in
appearance, but his eyes remind us just how authoritative he
is.

He is reviewing his speech, when a Shady Advisor enters. This
is **KABEDI**.

KABEDI
 (whispering in his ear)
 The Bedi-Goazon village has been
 taken care of, sir.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
 Good. Tell the chamber I'm ready.

INT. UNITED NATIONS AUDITORIUM - DAY

President Gbagbo addresses a full assembly. Everyone listens to his emotional cry for help through translator headsets.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
 Our beloved country is being held ransom within its own borders. The domestic conflict has reached new heights in recent weeks. I am not speaking to you today as President, but as a concerned citizen for the well being of my fellow Ivorians.

Only a few seem convinced.

A Dutch representative in the audience has the floor.

DUTCH REPRESENTATIVE
 President Gbagbo, the accounts you speak of are alarming and in need of immediate action.

President Gbagbo feels a big victory coming.

DUTCH REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)
 But, we have reports of a very different story. A story that puts you at the center of the conflict. Committing the atrocities you have so publicly condemned.

We can see the color drain from the President's face.

DUTCH REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)
 And because of this disturbing new information, I motion to further investigate the origins of these human rights violations using an outside agency.

The spotlight turns to President Gbagbo while clamor erupts across the assembly.

LATER -

President Gbagbo is escorted out of the U.N Building to an onslaught of reporters and photographers. Each camera flash is accompanied by a political challenge from a journalist.

Kabedi steps in to deflect.

KABEDI

The President will not take any more questions. Thank you.

President Gbagbo jumps in his Suburban to escape the madness.

IN SUBRUBAN -

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

This needs to be handled. Quietly.

Kabedi understands.

EXT. SOUTHERN ARMY BARRACKS - DAY

Djedje sits in the driver seat of an old JEEP. Nervously awaiting his fellow comrades.

INSIDE THE BARRACKS we see -

Adama and a few others slaughter Southern army guards. They open a safe which contains boxes of GUNS AND AMMUNITION.

Adama and the others sprint out of the barracks with a few Southern Ivorian army troops in close pursuit.

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER

Dje! Start the car, start the car!

Djedje REVS the engine. His comrades jump in. All except one. Who's inches away from the car when BAM! He's SHOT IN THE BACK.

The Van takes fire. Djedje opens his car door to help his wounded friend. But, Adama has other plans as he points HIS GUN at Djedje.

ADAMA

Leave him. Drive. Now.

Life comes to a complete stop. Until - Djedje closes his door and drives off.

Djedje watches in the REARVIEW MIRROR as soldiers finish off the fallen Nouvelle.

INT. RESTAURANT - ABIDJAN - NIGHT

An elegant distraction from the ongoing war just a few clicks out. Drogba, Lalla, Kalou, and Kalou's wife enjoy the best Branzino Ivory Coast has to offer.

LALLA

No! Really, I must have been bad luck. His first game, he broke a toe. The second, a red card. The third, he scored three offside goals. I mean can you believe it? I thought to myself, no I'm done. This man can't even play football, how can he raise a family!

Laughter amongst the group.

DROGBA

See that's when I said, "OK. Come back for game four, if I don't score a hat trick, you never have to see me again".

KALOU'S WIFE

And?

DROGBA

She's here, isn't she?

LALLA

He hustled me!

The restaurant lights FLICKER and the room shakes.

KALOU

They're getting closer.

DROGBA

Gbagbo would never let them reach the city limit.

Kalou's wife studies Drogba at the table.

KALOU'S WIFE

I take it you two are Gbagbo loyalist.

Kalou interjects to preserve any last fragment of cordiality.

KALOU

Honey!

(to Drogba)

I'm sorry, forgive my wife.

DROGBA

Sala, it's fine. If you can't speak your mind at dinner, when else can you?

Drogba takes a moment to conjure a political response.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

I'm loyal to the people. And bipartisanship is key to making anything move forward.

Lalla and Kalou's wife size each other up.

LALLA

My husband has always been the more tolerant one. I, tend to see the world the way it is, where he sees it the way it could be. Who's right and who's wrong? What came first the chicken or the egg?

Lalla grabs the attention of the table.

LALLA (CONT'D)

If a good man kills a bad man, he becomes defined by the very thing he wanted to destroy. Good and Bad. Wrong and Right. The two are merely just different translations of the same word. Opinion. Now, we have thousands of opinions, but none of us shed blood for that opinion. But these men do.

The table is taken aback.

LALLA (CONT'D)

I appose Gbagbo. But I also oppose Ouattara. Neither side is perfect. Both stare the devil in the face. But, I can guarantee you the devil smiles back at each of them.

KALOU'S WIFE

(starring at Lalla)

I like her.

Kalou's wife raises her glass.

KALOU'S WIFE (CONT'D)

To no politics at the table.

EXT. FRONTYARD - DJEDJE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A pick up truck BLASTING Afro Funk Rap pulls into the driveway. Djedje drunkenly stumbles out of the passenger seat.

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER
Adama needs us early, be ready at
eight.

DJEDJE
Yeah. Yeah.

The truck reverses out, but not before its HEADLIGHTS shine on a figure sitting on the front porch stairs.

KASSI.

Djedje, willfully apathetic, lights a cigarette without greeting his best mate.

KASSI
I cooked them dinner, and switched
out your mother's bandages.

Djedje still trying to get his balance.

KASSI (CONT'D)
They said they were expecting you
four hours ago.

DJEDJE
Well aren't they lucky you came to
the rescue.

KASSI
Your mom says she can smell the
alcohol on you from down the hall
some nights.

DJEDJE
Mom's can smell everything.

KASSI
What the hell they doin' to you?

Djedje sits on the gravel. He takes a moment to himself.

DJEDJE
I need to protect my family. I
can't lose anymore of them.

KASSI

Look at you, Dje. I think they'll
lose you first.

Djedje takes a long drag from his cigarette.

DJEDJE

What are you doing here?

KASSI

Coach is worried about you. You
never come to practice anymore, and
when you do, you get picked up by
Nouvelles within ten minutes.

Djedje looks up at the night sky.

DJEDJE

Remember when we would play footy
as boys? I would always get picked
last. Even though no one on the
pitch could stop me. They picked me
last because I'm a Northerner.
Because I'm a Muslim.

Djedje puts out his cigarette.

DJEDJE (CONT'D)

Part of me has never felt at home
here. It's not until you are a part
of something else that makes you
realize you were never a part of
anything before.

KASSI

So you're going to throw it all
away? Dje, you have the talent to
make it to Europe one day. That's
what can really help your family.

DJEDJE

Kass, look around man. We're in the
middle of a war. I don't have time
to think about the future. Right
now, I'm thinking about survival.

KASSI

Without the ball at your feet, I
don't know how you survive,
brother. You might not feel at home
in this city, but I know you feel
at home on that pitch.

DJEDJE

Ninety minutes a day. That's just a distraction from all the messed up shit going on. Shit you know NOTHING about.

Kassi stands up. He did his best.

KASSI

You're making the same mistakes your dad made.

Djedje sees RED and pummels Kassi to the ground. The two roll around the dry gravel. Each getting in a few powerful jabs.

Through the porch screen door we see Djedje's little sister.

DJEDJE'S SISTER

Djedje?

Djedje and Kassi unlock arms. Both slow to get up, panting like race horses.

DJEDJE

Yeah. Coming.

Djedje hobbles inside. Kassi stands still, like a bloodied statue.

KASSI

(yelling)

Who are you Djedje?! Huh?! A Northerner? A Southie? A family man? A footballer?! Huh!?! WHO ARE YOU?!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Drogba eats room service while on a phone call with Harold.

DROGBA (ON THE PHONE)

No, no we cut training short today.
Some lightning.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY

Harold hustles down Oxford St. in the pouring rain.

HAROLD (ON THE PHONE)
Mate, I'm literally walking into
the office, calling a staff meeting
so we can devise a plan to get you
OUT OF THAT COUNTRY immediately.

DROGBA (ON THE PHONE)
I'm fine Harry. Lalla and the kids
are, too.

HAROLD (ON THE PHONE)
You're a professional athlete. FINE
is the last thing you should be!
You should be on top of the world
at every bloody moment of the day.

DROGBA (ON THE PHONE)
Just like you right?

HAROLD (ON THE PHONE)
Exactly. But you know what would
make a young boy from Surrey even
happier? I need you back. I need my
teddy bear back in my arms, Diddy.
I don't like this long distance
relationship!

Drogba's focus switches to a T.V segment on AL JAZEERA NEWS.
They show a clip of the Ivorian national team being SCORED
ON.

DROGBA (ON THE PHONE)
I'll call you back.

Didier hangs up the phone.

NEWSCASTER
In other news, domestic tension is
not the only cause for concern
amongst Ivorians...The national
team have lost five in a row and
face an almost impossible run to
qualify for the World Cup.

Drogba MUTES the television, stops eating - he's lost his
appetite.

He pulls out player profiles on his teammates. Marks each
paper with NORTH or SOUTH, and then places them on his bed.

The papers are evenly DIVDED.

KIDS' LAUGHTER steals Drogba's attention. He looks out the
window.

DROGBA'S P.O.V -

A group of kids play FOOTBALL on the sidewalk with a COCONUT. Their pure joy and innocence has Drogba deep in thought.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Four hotel waiters wheel in four different orders of room service. Every cart has one giant CLOCHE, enough to hide a chicken.

They all press floor "6".

INT. FLOOR 6 ELEVATOR LOBBY - NIGHT

The elevator doors open to reveal our room service waiters. Suddenly, both elevator doors to the left and right also open to reveal MORE WAITERS, with the same room service order.

More elevators open with more WAITERS and more room service. They disperse like ants.

INT. ROOM 620 - NIGHT

Didier Zokora is brushing his teeth when he hears a KNOCK at his front door.

He opens the door to find ROOM SERVICE.

ZOKORA

I didn't order any room service.

WAITER

Compliments of Mr. Drogba, sir.

ROOM 635 -

Seydou Keita opens the door. Another waiter with room service.

WAITER 2

Compliments of Mr. Drogba.

ROOM 612 -

Yaya and Kolo Toure are greeted with the SAME ROOM SERVICE as everyone else.

ON YAYA TOURE -

As he opens the CLOCHE to find...

A SHINEY SOCCER BALL with a handwritten note.

"05:30, 536 CONTRE ALLEE ST."

EXT. ARIEAL VIEW OF CITY - MORNING

Stray dogs roam the empty streets as the sun rises over the serene landscape.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME

The ENTIRE Ivorian football team gather around a YELLOW SCHOOL BUS. No one knows why they are here at 5 A.M.

Drogba approaches from the distance.

YAYA TOURE

Are you going to tell us what we're doing here at 5 in the morning.

EXT. DIRT FIELD - ABIDJAN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

KIDS and TEENS perform conditioning drills. Among them is Cassi, leading the race. We immediately recognize this team as Djedje's OLD club team.

The coach blows his whistle, and everyone comes in for a huddle.

COACH

Listen up. We have a little surprise for you today. It should be here any minute.

Suddenly, the YELLOW SCHOOL BUS pulls up next to the field.

IN THE SCHOOL BUS -

Teammates stare out the window, stumped. Drogba stands up to address the team.

DROGBA

Today we're training with the Académie Mimo Sifcom. For those of you who don't know this academy team, let me educate you with two facts.

Drogba locks eyes with his teammates.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
They are first place in their
division. Undefeated in 22 matches.

Drogba peers out the bus window at the group of kids.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
And they are the only other team
besides us that have both
Southerners and Northerners on the
roster.

This peaks the players' interest.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
Now these kids think we're coming
to teach them about football. But
make no mistake, gentlemen. I
didn't bring you here to teach
them. I brought you here so they
can teach us.

The players digest this message..

DROGBA (CONT'D)
A hundred yards away on that dirt
field is proof. Proof that we can
become one. And if we can do that,
well, then we can be the second
Ivorian team to be undefeated in 22
matches.

IN THE BACK OF THE BUS, Zokora stands up and walks straight to Drogba. The two face to face.

A gentle nod from the two before Zokora steps off the bus.

Kalou follows Zokora. Then Keita. One by one all the teammates step out, until it's just Yaya Toure.

Yaya steps to Drogba. After a tense pause -

Yaya extends his hand.

YAYA TOURE
You remember how to play on a dirt
pitch euro boy?

DROGBA
Dirt, sand, and snow my friend.

A respectful smirk between the two.

EXT. ÉCOLE SAINT-PAUL SCHOOL - DIRT FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Titans among kids. Their GIANT, ROBUST figures tower over these young hopefults.

Drogba grabs a soccer ball from a NET OF PRACTICE BALLS.

DROGBA

So, I've heard you kids aren't too bad at football. Is that true?

KIDS

Yes!!!

DROGBA

Well, let's see what you got!

Drogba PUNTS the ball in the air. The kids CHASE after it .

DROGBA (CONT'D)

First to five goals wins!
(to his teammates)
Let's have some fun.

- BEGIN FOOTBALL SCRIMMAGE MONTAGE -

Delightful anarchy on the field. Kids SWARM whichever PRO has the ball. Their excitement makes them forget all football discipline.

LATER...

Some of the pros teach free kicks. While others explain defensive drills. A few kids take penalties on **BOUBACAR (GOALIE, 29)**.

Everyone is having a BLAST. These moments are pure and filled with joy.

LATER...

Yaya Toure and Drogba play two vs. two with Kassi and another Teen.

Drogba and Yaya link up for a GOAL. The two celebrate like they just won the WORLD CUP.

- END MONTAGE -

Across the street, in the distance we see DJEDJE - -

He's ALONE watching his old team practice.

He approaches the FENCE. That's when he realizes...

His old team is being visited by DROGBA and the ENTIRE IVORIAN NATIONAL TEAM.

He GRIPS the fence, instantly plagued with regret. Seeing in real time what could have been. Holding back tears of frustration.

ON THE FIELD -

Kassi spots Djedje in the distance. The two LOCK EYES, and for a minute nothing else matters. Not football stars. Not bad blood. Not even war.

But that minute quickly fades as...A truck full of FORCES NUEVELLES arrive to heckle Djedje.

ADAMA
Dje! Come on. Get in!

Djedje is pulled into the truck, but can't take his eyes off the practice, an opportunity he will never get again.

ADAMA (CONT'D)
Say goodbye, Djedje. This school is a dangerous place. École Saint-Paul, has been an enemy of the cause ever since Gbagbo took office. They teach lies. Educate their students with hatred against us. But soon that will all change...

KIDS (O.S)
(yelling)
Kassi! Ball! Ball!

Kassi refocuses on the SCRIMMAGE with Drogba and the others.

SOCcer MONTAGE

What starts as an innocent scrimmage against kids slowly mutates, and we are suddenly under stadium lights for a World Cup qualifier -

Drogba rounds a defender and scores a goal bottom left corner! Scoreboard: Ivory Coast 3 South Africa 0.

The crowd goes mad!

AMADOU'S BAR -

A dusted chalkboard reads "ROAD TO WORLD CUP" with two TICK MARKS. Amadou grabs a piece of chalk and adds another tick.

"III"

ANOTHER GAME -

Corner kick. Yaya Toure gets his head on it and directs it into the back of the net. Scoreboard Ivory Coast 2 Morocco 1.

ANOTHER GAME -

Kalou scores a free kick. Scoreboard Ivory Coast 3 Egypt 1.

AMADOU'S BAR -

He adds another tally on the chalkboard. "III II"

ANOTHER GAME -

Another DROGBA GOAL! Chalkboard "III III".

LONDON BOARDROOM -

Harold checks the score of the Ivory Coast game on his mobile in the middle of a board meeting. Score reads 2-0 Ivory Coast.

He FIST PUMPS in the air and the room notices it. The meeting stops.

HAROLD

Sorry. I...There was a fly. I think
I got it. Bugger.

OFF everyone's bemused faces -

AMADOU'S BAR -

Another mark on the chalkboard. "III III"

The batch of games continue and the Ivorian's keep winning.

LOCKER ROOM -

The players dance to African pop music.

PRACTICE FACILITY -

The players chase each other with water guns and ice buckets.

DROGBA HOUSEHOLD PORCH -

The Toure Brothers and their families RING Drogba's doorbell. Didier opens the door and welcomes them into their home for a dinner party.

FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS -

Adama barges in with his entourage to find the space COMPLETELY EMPTY.

ADAMA
Where the hell is everyone?

BAR/RESTAURANT -

Djedje and the other forces Nuevelles watch the Ivorians win ANOTHER GAME.

NORTHERN VILLAGE -

Pro military troops storm into a STOREFRONT with their guns up. The owner immediately throws his hands in the air.

TROOP
You do not have permits to sell!
Hands behind your back, now!

One soldier nudges another and points across the room. They lock eyes on BOXES of LES ELEPHANTES knock-off JERSEYS.

LATER -

The soldiers stroll out of the storefront with oversized knock-off LES ELEPHANTES JERSEY'S over their combat uniforms. Laughing and enjoying the moment.

SOLDIER
(to Store Owner)
Thank you!

SOLDIER 2
Don't forget to show your wife that recipe! My wife say's it's her favorite.

STOREOWNER
Thank you! I will, come back soon!

IVORIAN TEAM BUS -

The players all sing popular Ivorian hits together. Each player sings worse than the next.

The MONTAGE stops as we focus on a MATCH.

INT. STADIUM - FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

UNDER THE STADIUM LIGHTS the scoreboard reads MADAGASCAR 1 IVORY COAST 1.

The Ivorians weave passes in the opposition's half. Searching for the winner.

ALAN SMITH

Now, Ivory Coast has only three minutes left of stoppage time before their hopes and dreams of a world cup are over. They need a win, and even then. Would have to win EVERY SINGLE game left in their schedule.

90th minute. Drogba with the ball. He's about to shoot when BAM! A defender SLIDE TACKLES him to the ground.

IN THE COMMENTARY BOX -**MARTIN TYLER**

Ohh! That looked like it hurt. He looks to be in real pain there. Yellow card I reckon'.

BACK ON THE FOOTBALL PITCH -

Yaya Toure JUMPS to Drogba's defense - Getting in the defender's face. The two tussle and within seconds players on both teams join.

Yaya lends Drogba a hand.

The crowd stares in silence, they cannot believe their eyes. A Northerner standing up for Drogba, a Southerner.

ON T.V SCREENS AT HOME -

Houses watch as this scene plays out. Families share the same reaction as the crowd. Speechless.

Djedje watches with a few FORCES NUEVELLES. He, too, is stunned.

GBAGBO'S RESIDENCE -

Gbagbo puts down his tea in disbelief at what he sees on screen.

BACK ON THE FOOTBALL PITCH -

The Referee quells the altercation. Yaya and Drogba lock eyes. And for a brief moment, nothing else matters. Just like the moment between Djedje and Kassi.

A nod of appreciation is all that's needed between the two.

For the first time, they're teammates.

Sharp SILENCE hijacks the moment as Drogba steps up to take the FREE KICK. After a few deep breaths, Drogba SMASHES the ball - -

- - Over the defenders, headed straight for goal!

SLOW MOTION:

The ball curls RIGHT past the keeper into the upper right corner of the goal!

The crowd goes WILD! Drogba falls to his knees, instantly being swarmed by his teammates.

ALAN SMITH

Cometh the hour, cometh the man! It had to be! Didier Drogba, for his country! To keep alive their hopes of a first ever World Cup birth!

The referee calls the whistle. GAME OVER.

FORCES NUEVELLES CAMP -

Djedje and his fellow "soldiers" drink to the Les Elephantes' victory.

HOMES ACROSS IVORY COAST -

Families jump for joy and celebrate.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - STADIUM - LATER

In the heart of the celebrations is Drogba and Yaya Toure. The two grab each other's shoulders, and lead the team with an IVORIAN CHANT.

MARTIN TYLER (O.S.)

Something has changed within this Ivorian team, Alan. I can't quite put my finger on it, but this was a much different team than we've seen in recent years. It might be the start of something special.

INT. GBAGBO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ON T.V - - We watch the crowd roar and cheer for their victorious Ivorians.

Gbagbo pauses the telecast and turns to Kabedi.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
You see that?

KABEDI
See what, sir?

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
The people.

KABEDI
What about them?

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
Look at them. They're happy.
They're united.

Gbagbo lights up a cigar.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
It could hush some of the noise.

KABEDI
Or maybe we use that noise to our benefit. This might be an optimal time for elections, it would certainly rescue your approval ratings.

President Gbagbo laughs.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
My army rescues my approval rating.
But you're right. He is a man of the people.

The replay of Drogba's celebration appears on the T.V.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Didier Drogba. You might be of use after all...
(to his advisor)
Notify the press. I want an audience.
(to his maid)
Call my tailor. I need a new suit.

INT. KITCHEN - DROGBA'S RESIDENCE - DAY

Through the KITCHEN WINDOW we see Isaac and Iman playing in the backyard.

The kitchen phone RINGS. Lalla answers -

LALLA
(on phone)
Hello?

Her mouth drops to the floor.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - DAY

Drogba, dressed in a clean blue suit, sits anxiously in a waiting room. He looks smooth, but out of place.

He attempts a conversation with the secretary.

DROGBA
So much natural light in this room.

All he gets back is a snarky look.

His nervousness continues. UNTIL -

SECRETARY
The president will see you now.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Exactly what you would expect the office of a man who thinks much too highly of himself to look like. Achievement awards and photos of himself with other heads of state scattered across the obnoxiously expensive credenzas.

DROGBA
Mr. President, it is a pleasure to
meet you.

President Gbagbo doesn't get up.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
It seems you have become even more
popular than me in recent weeks. So
the pleasure is all mine.

Drogba flashes his award winning smile.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
I called this meeting to personally congratulate you on your recent achievements. Results have been positive and we have you to thank for that.

DROGBA

Oh, thank you sir. We are all very happy we were able to turn things around. But it wasn't just me, sir. The whole team has stepped up. It's a great group of boys we have.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

Of course. Send them my congratulations as well.

Drogba nods his head, a bit disappointed in Gbagbo's cavalier attitude.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
As you know it's a tough time for this country. And football is such a big part of life for our people. When you men walk out on that field, you represent us. And you have been doing a good job.

Drogba agrees.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
When you win. We win. Remember that.

DROGBA

I will Mr. President.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

Good. Now, time for some photos.

President Gbagbo calls in his secretary.

DROGBA

Mr. President, if I may.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

Of course.

DROGBA

The success has been a team effort. It might serve you and the country more if you share this moment with the rest of the team.

(MORE)

DROGBA (CONT'D)
 Rather than just you and I, two
 Southern Ivorians...

President Gbagbo - dumbfounded by Drogba's courage...

DROGBA (CONT'D)
 Forgive me if I...

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
 No. No.
 (beat)
 You are right.

OFF: Drogba's relieved expression.

EXT. TRAINING PITCH - IVORIAN PRACTICE FACILITY - DAY

Drogba and his teammates work harder than ever. Drenching in sweat.

YAYA TOURE
 So what did the president want.

DROGBA
 To tell us to keep up the good
 work.

A few Northerners gather around Yaya.

YAYA TOURE
 Ha! Of course. No surprise he
 didn't invite a Northerner.

DROGBA
 (hiding something)
 Actually...

YAYA TOURE
 What?

OFF IN THE DISTANCE -

Gbagbo's presidential limo is sandwiched between A CARAVAN of black suburbans, approaching the facility.

A dozen NEWS VANS follow close behind.

COACH MICHEL
 I don't believe it.

The caravan pulls up to the field. Stone cold security guards emerge from the suburbans.

Reporters and their cameraman mobilize off to the side.

Drogba's teammates watch with curiosity as PRESIDENT GBAGBO steps out of his limousine.

TEAMMATES
It's the President!

Yaya is STUNNED. Drogba smirks.

President Gbagbo and his entourage make their way onto the field.

COACH MICHEL
(to himself)
Christ. I should have worn my cap.
(to the players)
Lineup lads!

Coach Michel walks over to welcome President Gbagbo.

COACH MICHEL (CONT'D)
Mr. President. What an honor it is
to have you here. I'm Henri...

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
Michel. Yes. I know who you are.

COACH MICHEL
I'm sorry, had I known you were
visiting us today, we would have
prepared something.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
No, no. Don't trouble yourself. I
sometimes enjoy making surprise
appearances. It's one of the perks
of being president.

Reporters make their way onto the field snapping photos.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
Congratulations Mr. Michel. You're
team, well, OUR team, has made
quite the turnaround thanks to you.

COACH MICHEL
Ha! Thank you Mr. President, but it
was hardly me. The lads here have a
fighting spirit and don't plan on
giving up anytime soon. Here, let
me introduce you to them.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
Yes, that would be lovely.

COACH MICHEL
Didier, come.

Didier greets the president.

DROGBA
Good to see you again, Mr.
President.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
You too, Didier.

Drogba introduces EACH teammate one by one to the president.

Cameramen have a field day.

Next up - Yaya Toure. Gbagbo extends his hand to Yaya.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
Pleasure to meet you.

The moment is still. Yaya wrestles with himself on whether to extend his hand or not.

Drogba holds Yaya in his gaze until Yaya relents and offers his hand.

YAYA TOURE
Pleasure to meet you Mr. President.

Their handshake cuts the tension and everyone relaxes.

Kabedi can see the election votes churning with each camera flash.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
Tomorrow, you play an important game. The semi-final. Ghana. The so called golden child of African football. I have every faith that come tomorrow, there will be a new golden child of African football.

The team gather for a GROUP PHOTO with the President.

The photo is SUPER-IMPOSED onto Newspapers across the country as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. NEWSTAND - DAY

Street vendors sell out instantly. The title reads "Is Football Our Last Hope?".

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Djedje and others huddle over the newspaper.

INT. DROGBA'S HOME - DAY

Lalla cuts the article out of the newspaper.

INT. AMADOU'S BAR - DAY

Amadou picks up the newspaper at the front door and pins it on the wall next to the "SPECIALS MENU".

INT. GBAGBO'S OFFICE - DAY

Gbagbo reads the newspaper with a big smirk on his face. His plan is working.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - STADIUM - NIGHT

The players gear up for the big game. Faint CHANTS from the stands are the only noise disrupting the stillness of this moment.

Drogba enters the room with the newspaper in his hand.

DROGBA

This is just a picture. Let's make it mean something more than that tonight. I know our government has let the people down. But we cannot.

Drogba locks eyes with each teammate.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

Now, lets go fight for our country.
Let's go win for our country.

INT. FIELD ENTRANCE TUNNEL - NIGHT

The bustling crowd welcomes the Ivorian National team as they walk out onto the pitch.

The WHISTLE blows and the football battle begins - -

These colossal men CLASH, contesting every loose ball. All twenty two players looking for blood, with only the REFEREE in the way.

35TH MINUTE (0-0): The crowd HOWL at a bad foul on Zokora.

70th MINUTE (0-0): Sweat drips down the players faces like rain. Henri commands his players to push up the field.

90th MINUTE + EXTRA TIME (0-0): All twenty two players are on their last fumes, including Drogba. The vicious liveliness of the game has evolved into a last man standing.

Kalou receives the ball down the left flank. He dribbles past one defender. Then another! And another!

Right by the corner flag, he crosses the ball into the penalty box.

SLOW MOTION: The ball floats in the air toward goal. With nothing in it's path. UNTIL -

DROGBA'S FOOT makes contact in a beautiful volley.

We hear the SWOOSH of the ball as it stretches the back of the net.

Drogba slides on his knees as his teammates come TACKLE him to the ground.

The referee blows his whistle to end the game.

INT. DROGBA'S HOME - DAY

Lalla and the kids jump on the couch with joy.

INT. AMADOU'S BAR - DAY

The whole bar erupts in applause.

AMADOU
Round on the house!

INT. GBAGBO'S OFFICE - DAY

Gbagbo and Kabedi applaud the victory.

KABEDI
 Seems like you'll keep your country
 after all.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

Martin Tyler and Alan Smith high five.

MARTIN TYLER
 Well Martin, it seems history has
 been made in front of our very
 eyes. Ivory Coast beat rivals
 Ghana. Now ONE GAME within World
 Cup Qualification.

ALAN SMITH
 It's magnificent Martin. Had you
 told me six, seven games ago that
 Ivory Coast would be in contention
 to reach the World Cup, I would
 have spit out my tea and had a
 laugh in your face. I mean this is
 truly one of the most remarkable
 turnarounds I have ever seen in my
 commentating career.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Celebratory scenes led by Drogba. These muddy roughed up
 warriors rejoice in their historic win.

Drogba takes a moment to watch the celebrations around him.
 Northerners and Southerners dancing with one another. Loving
 one another. Embracing one another.

This inspires Drogba - he races across the laundry strewn
 locker room and opens the back door, where - -

A host of reporters and cameramen are camped out waiting to
 interview the team.

DROGBA
 Come in. I have something to show
 you.

A dozen camera lenses focus on Drogba has he drops to his
 KNEES and throws his hands in the air.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
 Men and women of Ivory Coast from
 North, South, East and West.
 (MORE)

DROGBA (CONT'D)

We proved today that all Ivorians
can co-exist. And play together
with a shared aim. Today, we beg
you, on our knees...

Drogba looks to his fellow teammates. They follow suit and
ALL GET ON THEIR KNEES next to Drogba.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

The one country with so many
riches. Must not descend into war.

Drogba pauses.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

Please. Lay down your weapons. Hold
elections. All will be better. We
want to have fun, so put down your
guns. Forgive! Forgive!

Moved and inspired, Yaya Toure joins the chant.

YAYA TOURE

Forgive! Forgive!

A chorus of battered victors make the most honest, beautiful,
and simple plea one could ever imagine.

Reporters are taken aback by this historic moment. So much so
that their instinctual nature to interrupt are quelled by the
purity of this moment, which sits with us all.

Their pleas reverberate beyond the locker room, and into the
homes of every Ivorian.

INT. DROGBA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Lalla covers her mouth in pure shock. She understands the
significance of this monumental moment, and she couldn't be
more proud of her husband.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kabedi can't believe his eyes.

KABEDI

Mr. President.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

What?!

President Gbagbo fixates on the screen. Rattled...`

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - SAME

This moment shuts up Djedje and his fellow "comrades". For a brief second we see their innocence shine through their fake exteriors.

They're reminded they are just boys. Boys in war.

They all search the room, quiet. Looking for answers.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - STADIUM - DAY

The team dance and sing together.

TEAMMATES

We want to have fun so put down
your guns!

They start a SAMBA LINE and even invite the news crew to join. The room couldn't have a more infectious energy.

CUT TO:

NEWSCAST - THREE WEEKS LATER.

REPORTER

Today marks the first day of Ivory Coast's armistice. The countries top officials are currently deliberating in our nation's capital. Their objective, organize and guarantee peaceful elections. A surprising addition to the peace committee is Didier Drogba.

REPORTER 2

Surprising addition? It was Drogba's emotional plea on live television that led to this cease fire in the first place. If I could choose one man to be in that room. A man who has the best intentions for the people. I would pick Didier Drogba ten times out of ten. Frankly, we're lucky he's there.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

MATCH CUT: Drogba's mind wanders as he stares out the window.

He's accompanied by a slew of aged testy politicians who would rather be elsewhere.

KABEDI

We're going to need to adjust the code of conduct clause. These requirements are preposterous.

OUATTARA'S ADVISOR

Preposterous?! What about your conflict zone specifications?!

KABEDI

That is a concession we are making for YOU. We don't need the extra security forces. But your militias can't be trusted! Especially in the conflict zone.

Ouattara's advisor slams his notebook on the table.

OUATTARA'S ADVISOR

(to President Gbagbo)

How do you expect anyone to work with this man who's mind chooses to exist in delusional fallacies.

This rattles Kabedi.

KABEDI

You're lucky to be sitting here!
You...

The discussion deteriorates - everyone is on their feet and it has evolved to a shouting match.

Drogba sits quietly and he calmly pulls out a tape recorder. He places it on the boardroom table and presses PLAY.

The debate is heated and could get physical. Until Suddenly -

The sound of THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE CHEERING fills the room. We realize it's coming from Drogba's tape recorder.

Drogba's interruption is met with surprise.

Drogba presses STOP and he breaks the awkward silence with - -

DROGBA

...Sometimes when I step onto that soccer field, and hear the crowd chanting my name. I ask myself, "why me"?

(MORE)

DROGBA (CONT'D)

Why not some farmer or accountant?
I have to remind myself why...

Drogba stares at the advisors.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

Because of my skills on the ball
and my athleticism off the ball. I
was rewarded based on performance.

Everyone around the room exchange looks.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

And what about you men? Because if
politicians are rewarded based on
performance, god help me, you must
be graded leniently.

Blank expressions, everyone know's he is right.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

If I don't score goals, I am
dropped. It's that simple. You men
here today, haven't scored in a
long, long time. Years. But you are
still here. Your people still
believe in you. I still believe in
you. And it's about time you reward
them for it.

OUATTARA'S ADVISOR

Your words are moving Mr. Drogba,
but it's not that simple.

DROGBA

Why? Why is it not that simple?

No one has an answer.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

You men are so concerned about
paragraphs on a piece of paper,
you've missed your opportunity to
actually make a difference.

Drogba grabs one of the DOCUMENTS.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

These are just words. Words that
will be replaced in a few months
time. And then replaced a few
months after that.

Drogba rips up the document and presses PLAY again.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
 That is the sound of our country.
 Whatever I've listened to in here,
 is not.

Drogba PAUSES the tape recorder again.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
 Everyone in this room has a part to
 play in uniting this country. So,
 let's unite it.

Gbagbo looks on, unimpressed... He gestures to Kabedi.
 Hinting foul play is ahead.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING COURTYARD - DAY

An industrial playground. Drogba converses with a group of politicians by the capitol steps.

Kabedi approaches -

KABEDI
 Didier, may I have a word.

DROGBA
 Of course.

The two walk through the courtyard.

KABEDI
 You're quite a natural up there.

DROGBA
 Just trying to help.

KABEDI
 And helped you have. Gbagbo sends
 his thanks.

Drogba doesn't understand.

KABEDI (CONT'D)
 But we need you on the football
 field. For the first time in
 history, we have a chance to
 qualify for the World Cup. And we
 need you focused.

Drogba stops. Looks Kabedi straight in the face.

DROGBA

Just like that, huh? One honest speech in a boardroom and I'm gone.

KABEDI

It's not like that. Leave the politics to the politicians.

DROGBA

I have, and all I've seen is bloodshed and division. Listen, I'm not leaving. I made a promise to the people of this country.

KABEDI

(smirking)

Well, looks like you're already breaking promises. A true politician in the making.

Drogba uses every ounce of strength to hold back a verbal onslaught of insults.

KABEDI (CONT'D)

Just keep kicking the ball in the back of the net.

He took it too far. Drogba's heart, palpitating.

DROGBA

Why? Why are you all so scared to see this country succeed?

KABEDI

Look around you! This country gave up a long time ago. War or not. You're a fool if you think you're getting your country back. Ivory Coast is not a state anymore. It's an enterprise. Just like "Didier Drogba" is.

Kabedi leans in.

KABEDI (CONT'D)

And we are doing the best we can to keep this enterprise afloat. So spare me your heroics and naive visions of a future that will never exist. Stop poisoning the people with hope, give them what they want. Ninety minutes to forget about their miserable lives.

DROGBA

You know, in football we have a name for you. We call people like you "Diver". Someone who pretends. A fraud.

KABEDI

Don't speak to me of frauds. You turned your back on this country twenty years ago. You're the real fraud.

Drogba leans in even closer.

DROGBA

And how lucky am I to have a second chance? I hope for your sake you'll get one for yourself.

Drogba stands tall and walks away with the last word.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - SAME

From his window, President Gbagbo grins as he watches Drogba storm out of the courtyard.

LATER...

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

President Gbagbo enters with his advisor.

OUATTARA'S ADVISOR

Where is Didier?

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

He was called back to the national team, but he entrusted me to speak on his behalf.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

Lalla grocery shops in a bustling street market. Onlookers stare and whisper to each other. Some even take pictures. It's clear they know who she is.

Unfazed by the attention, Lalla continues shopping UNTIL -

She witnesses a POLICEMAN beating an OLD NORTHERNER in the middle of the street.

Lalla races over to the altercation and GRABS the policeman's hand just as he's about to strike again.

LALLA
(to the Old Man)
Go!

The Policeman breaks free from her grip, and the two have a standoff. Lalla is immediatley confronted with the reality of what she just did.

She glances at his CLUB, which could strike her at any second.

POLICEMAN
Who the hell do you think you are?

LALLA
I'm an Ivorian. Just like that man.
Just like you.

The Policeman tightens his grip.

LALLA (CONT'D)
The world is watching us now. Is
this how you want them to see you?

The two stare into each other's eyes. Until -

Lalla pushes past him and heads back into the market place.

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Djedje and other Nouvelles sit on a sofa listening to the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
Good morning Abidjan! What a
historic day in our nation. Voting
day. Many of us thought this day
would never come, but alas here we
are. If you have any questions
about where the nearest polling
station is, call or go to your
community center.

Djedje turns up the volume.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Regardless of who wins tonight, the
country is hoping the results will
spell an end to the recent
violence.

(MORE)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
It's time to unite and to "forgive"
as Didier Drogba said just a few
weeks ago. And with that I'm
starting you ladies and gentleman
off with "Where Is The Love" by the
Black Eyed Peas.

SOLDIER
Could you imagine? Peace? I forget
what that's like.

DJEDJE
Yeah, me too.

EXT. ABIDJAN PARK - DAY

Drogba plops on a park bench and looks out at the Abidjan skyline. Deep in his own thoughts.

EXT. ABIDJAN - NIGHT

We focus on an aerial view of a now quiet, peaceful city. But storm clouds are on the horizon.

INT. DROGBA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Torrential rainfall splashes. Drogba, his family, his teammates, and their families gather around the T.V.

NEWSCASTER
Reports trickling in from the United Nations have declared Ouattara as the next president of Ivory Coast. He has surpassed the number needed by the electoral commission.

OTHER NEWSCASTER
Now the question is will President Gbagbo accept these results, and we're about to find out. I'm told the president is moments away from making a statement.

The room is charged with anticipation.

President Gbagbo comes on the T.V

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

Good evening people of Ivory Coast. As your president I must always be a loyal soldier of the truth. And that is why, what I am about to say, painful as it may be to some of you, is a solemn duty of my office. I am here to tell you, I cannot accept the results of this fraudulent election. And neither should you. We will not stand for such corruption and neither will the great country of Ivory Coast.

Drogba shuts his eyes in disappointment. He knows what this means.

The room erupts in chatter and outrage as old habits resurface, and teammates quarrel over the same political lines as before.

Drogba looks out the window; staring into the eye of the storm.

INT. DJEDJE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Djedje rummages through his closet in search of something.

DJEDJE'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Dje!

DJEDJE

One second!

Djedje finds what he's looking for: HIS SOCCER CLEATS.

They look like a foreign object to him, but one he longs for. It's as if the cleats are calling for him, but he's too frightened to answer.

Suddenly - - a KNOCK at the window rattles Djedje.

It's Forces Nouvelles. Djedje opens the window. The kids are sopping wet from the rain.

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER

Adama called a meeting.

Headquarters. He said everyone.

DJEDJE

It's the middle of the night.

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER
Cease fire is over.

Djedje looks back at his cleats on his bedroom floor.

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Hurry up, let's go!

Djedje grabs a raincoat and jumps out the window.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER - -

Djedje's mother opens his door and finds the room EMPTY, window open. She knows where he went, and it kills her.

She notices Djedje's cleats as she shuts the door.

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Adama addresses a room full of soaking wet teenagers; Djedje included.

ADAMA
We all know why we're here. I
realize you all hoped for a
different outcome. Hoped Drogba
could have fixed all o' dis. But
now you know, for good, Drogba is
just a man, like alla' us.

Grim looks from his audience.

ADAMA (CONT'D)
Look around you. Look into your
mother's eyes. Your fallen
brother's graves. Look at the
comrade to your left. There's no
such thing as heroes boys. If
Superman existed, he would have
saved us a long time ago.

Djedje and the others all exchange looks.

ADAMA (CONT'D)
It's time we take back our freedom.
Our equality. It's time we take
back our country. For our families.
For our fallen brothers.
(looking at Djedje)
For our fallen fathers.

Adama STABS a wooden table with his COMBAT KNIFE...

...Electrifying his audience; weapons raised. Ready to fight. Ready for war.

INT./EXT. MONTAGE - THE WAR

A JUNGLE TRAIL -

NEWSCAST (O.S.)

Tensions are at an all time high these past few weeks as the country grapples with the President's decision to discredit the election results.

Adama leads troops through the heavy tropical tree brush. The teenagers sing revolutionary ballads to pass the time.

DJEDJE (V.O.)

Violence is like a bad flu. Your parents always try to protect you from it. But once someone you know catches it, then pretty soon you will to. Just a matter of time.

LATER -

Djedje takes shelter from the POURING RAIN under a tree in the middle of the Ivorian Jungle. Underfed and overworked, Djedje and his comrades bundle up against nature's elements.

DJEDJE (V.O.)

Some nights it's easy to pretend everything is okay. But other nights it's impossible. I guess in war you have to be someone else. A soldier. But somedays you can only be you. Those are the hardest days.

CITY STREETS -

A CROWD of Southerners hurl petrol bombs and smoke flares across the street at a group of Northerners, who retaliate with gunshots.

Djedje takes cover behind a building.

NEWSCAST (O.S.)

Reports confirm clashes have already begun all across the country with a few hundred casualties. Mostly underage soldiers.

Mothers and children flee for safety; hiding behind abandoned cars across the street.

CACAO FARM -

Sporadic explosive THUMPING accompanied by blitz-level gunfire introduces us to a ravaged, unrecognizable acreage turned battlefield.

TRAINING PITCH - IVORIAN PRACTICE FACILITY -

The sound of BOMBS in the distance halt the scrimmage. Drogba and the others stop dead in their tracks. Even Henri is uneasy.

OUTSIDE CITY CAPITOL -

VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS erupt outside the building walls. President Gbagbo and Kabedi watch in horror from his office window.

- END MONTAGE -

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Kabedi, rattled, SHUTS the blinds. PRESIDENT GBAGBO manages his stress with a heavy pour of WHISKEY.

KABEDI

Don't worry about them. They'll be gone by nightfall.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

They'll be back.

KABEDI

I'll add two more units to patrol.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

That won't do it.

The solution seems out of their grasp.

KABEDI

What should we do?

INT. DROGBA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Drogba arrives home and his children cling onto his legs.

ISAAC
 Dad, you need to protect us! IMAN
 The bad guys are coming!
 Drogba comforts them as best he can.

DROGBA
 Bad guys?! I was just outside,
 there were no bad guys! They all
 ran away, far away. They're gone.

Lalla approaches with a troubled face.

LALLA
 You missed a call earlier.

Lalla hands him a folded piece of paper. Drogba reads it, and shares Lalla's expression.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Drogba and President Gbagbo stare into the whites of each other's eyes. Kabedi stands idle in the background.

DROGBA
 I just want to make one thing
 clear. I came here because you said
 it would bring safety and
 prosperity to the Ivorian people.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
 I believe that's why we are all
 here.

KABEDI
 I believe we all got off on the
 wrong foot the other week. The
 peace talks were an enormous stress
 on everyone, and it seems words
 were lost in translation.

DROGBA
 I don't know about that. We all
 speak the same language here.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
 My language is peace. My language
 is for the people.

DROGBA
 It seems the people have spoken,
 and they've chosen a new president.

Kabedi attempts to ease the tension building in the room.

KABEDI

The people need to give us time to properly asses the level of interference we had in our elections. Not only against our party, but also against Ouattara.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

People are naive, Didier. You know that as well as I. No one wants to know the truth, unless the truth serves them. Blissful ignorance has always ruled the working class. And all of a sudden it seems everyone wants to pretend like truth has been their savior all these years. Truth is subjective, especially to those not in power. They know nothing of truth.

Drogba studies every word out of Gbagbo's mouth.

DROGBA

I was always taught truth is only subjective to the ones it discredits.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

Well you were educated in Europe.
This is Africa.

The two hold each other's gaze.

KABEDI

It seems we are getting off topic here. Let's focus on the issue at hand.

DROGBA

What is it you want from me?

KABEDI

Yes. See, the President and I believe another public plea from you would go a long way with the people.

Drogba is unreadable.

KABEDI (CONT'D)

It was so successful last time, we hope for it to have the same affect.

(MORE)

KABEDI (CONT'D)
And buy us, well, the government
and opposition party, some time to
repair our election process.

DROGBA
You want me to go on national
television and say what? Stop the
fighting? Trust in the government
that has let you down time and time
again?

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
(stands up)
Yes! I want you to tell them to
trust in their leader!

President Gbagbo's force swallows the room.

DROGBA
I need to speak to my wife.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
I called you as a courtesy. For all
you've done, but make no mistake,
this is not a request.

KABEDI
We scheduled a press conference for
tomorrow afternoon right here on
the steps of the capitol.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
We trust you'll do the right thing.

Off Drogba's conflict -

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Adama lectures his "Freshman Class", which includes DJEDJE.

ADA
War needs men. Strong, loyal men.
And it's time for you all to become
those men.

A dozen child faces, all blank expressions - Filled with fear
and purpose...A deadly combination.

ADAMA
I've watched you all grow into
soldiers, warriors. Heroes of the
Forces Nuevelles. You've shown me
all I need to see.
(MORE)

ADAMA (CONT'D)
And tomorrow night you will show
the rest of the world.

This speech rallies everyone, including Djedje.

ADAMA (CONT'D)
This mission marks the beginning of
a new Ivorian future. One which we
control.

Adama raises his gun, and starts a WAR CHANT. Djedje and the others enthusiastically join in and raise their weapons.

INT. DROGBA'S STUDY - NIGHT

Drogba holds his face in his giant, durable hands. The burden of responsibility seems to be getting the better of him.

His eyes wander to a photo of HIS FAMILY on his desk.

On the other side of his desk an IVORIAN FLAG hangs from his lamp.

This pensive moment consumes him.

EXT. CAPITOL STEPS - DAY

As Drogba's car pulls up, dozens of armed guards form a blockade to combat the BLITZ of oncoming reporters. Like Brad Pitt walking down the red carpet, camera's are GLUED to Drogba and his million dollar smile.

OVER THIS: we hear a SCHOOL BELL RING, which continues into -

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

We're with Kassi as school was just dismissed. Kids jump out of their seats. Everyone except Kassi, who's buried in his textbook.

KID
Kassi, come on! We're going to the river.

KASSI
I can't sorry. I need to study,
I'll be grounded if I don't ace
this.

KID

What? You going to stay here and
study all night?

KASSI

It's too loud at my house.

Kassi gets back to studying.

EXT. CAPITOL STEPS - SAME

Drogba makes his way up the steps. President Gbagbo and Kabedi watch their political puppet approach.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - SAME

Djedje stuffs DYNAMITE into duffel bags while other's fill up gas tanks.

Live footage of Drogba approaching the steps plays on the television in the background.

- - CAPITOL STEPS - -

Drogba's march is as dramatic as it is meaningful. And the whole crowd knows it.

Camera crews close in - as Drogba is moments away from addressing the nation.

- - FORCES NOUVELLES HEADQUARTERS - -

Kids throw semi automatic rifles into another set of duffel bags.

Adama watches his "soldiers" gear up, grinning like a proud parent.

- - CAPITOL STEPS - -

Drogba greets President Gbagbo before taking the microphone. The crowd cheers and applauds as they await their hero's address.

A TELEPROMPTER displaying Drogba's speech is attached to the podium. He adheres to the words written for him.

DROGBA

My fellow Ivorians. Good afternoon, and thank you for being here on such short notice. In light of recent events, I wanted to speak out on behalf of our country and all of you.

- - FORCES NUEVELLES HEADQUARTERS - -

No one is watching Drogba's address anymore. Djedje and the others load up two vans with all of their contraband and gasoline.

ADAMA

Move along, move along!

- - CAPITOL STEPS - -

Drogba continues on with his scripted speech.

DROGBA

We mustn't descend into war. We were so close to realizing our potential, but we stripped it away from ourselves. It's time we stop looking outward at the root of our problems, but rather inward. North, South. Muslim, Christian. Let us start embracing our differences rather than villanizing them. We all want what is best for Ivory Coast.

President Gbagbo is salivating with pleasure at this new pawn he has created in Drogba.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

And the only way we will get there, is by working together.

Drogba pauses and peers into the crowd. Full of desperate, hopeless citizens.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO

(Whispering to Kabedi)

What's happening?

KABEDI

I don't know.

Lalla and the kids have a front row view.

The next line on the teleprompter reads "**Undefeated in our last ten games**".

Lalla feels something is coming, but she doesn't know what.

Drogba finally makes up his mind, and **TURNS OFF THE TELEPROMPTER**.

DROGBA

Teamwork, what a simple word. Yet we make it so complicated. And for what? For our ego? For allegiances? For glory?

President Gbagbo is fuming.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

Teamwork, to me, is the sum of a collection of people doing their part to succeed. And right now we need to do a better job at helping our country succeed. Including me.

Lalla notices President Gbagbo's displeasure.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

(Turning to Gbagbo)

I have been putting my faith in the wrong people. I should have put my faith in you. Because the people of this country hold the real power.

Drogba takes a deep breath.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

In three days, our football team will face Cameroon. Win, and we will have a ticket to our first ever World Cup. We are one game away from proving that if we put aside our differences, we are capable of something extraordinary. Give us one game, one chance to show you.

Drogba and President Gbagbo exchange a look.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

I was brought here today to relay a message. Trust in your leader, President Gbagbo. But I will not ask that of you, I ask instead that you trust in your captain, me.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
(To Kabedi)
What the HELL is he doing!?

KABEDI
I don't know, but shutting him off
would cause mayhem.

President Gbagbo's anger consumes him.

DROGBA
President, I am asking you to trust
in me, too. And with that trust, I
ask you to change the venue of the
Cameroon game. I ask you to change
it to...Bouake.

A wave of absolute silence crashes over the audience. Lalla
looks at her husband in complete SHOCK. President Gbagbo
can't believe what he just heard.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
Bouake is a city in this great
country, just as Abidjan is. We've
never played in front of our
Northern fans, and I believe this
game, the most important in our
nation's history, should be the
first.

(To President Gbagbo)
So, Mr. President, what do you say?

President Gbagbo stands up and approaches the podium. The
crowd is frozen in a moment of hope and suspense.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
I say...let's water the grass at
Bouake Stadium!

The crowd goes absolutely mad with excitement.

President Gbagbo leans into Drogba's ear.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO (CONT'D)
(Waving to the crowd)
You just made a very, very big
mistake.

In the audience: Lalla is not too happy either...

INT. TOWN CAR - NIGHT

Isaac and Iman distract themselves in the back seat while Lalla and Drogba sit in an uncomfortable silence.

Lalla's muted outrage is something Drogba can no longer ignore.

DROGBA

Honey, please. Talk to me.

LALLA

Talk to you? Like you talked to me about this?! How could you keep this from me?!

DROGBA

Because I knew you wouldn't have supported me on this one.

LALLA

Your damn right I wouldn't have! Did you even think about us, your family? Do you realize the position this puts us in? Half the country thinks we're traitors now, not to mention I can't imagine the President is too happy with you either.

DROGBA

Honey, did you see the people's faces. They were cheering. For the first time they felt hope.

LALLA

Diddy, the only Ivorians who want peace were on those steps today. The rest of the country does not. You need to get that through that stubborn head of yours.

Drogba doesn't want to believe her, but part of him does.

LALLA (CONT'D)

I am not mad about what I heard on those steps. I'm mad that it was the first time hearing them. You talk about teamwork, but communication is the most important thing on this team. Without it, we're nothing.

DROGBA

My love. I am sorry. I made a mistake.

LALLA

Let's hope this mistake of yours doesn't get you, your family, or the country in any more trouble.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DROGBA'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

As the town car pulls into the driveway, it's headlights reveal a few familiar faces awaiting their arrival.

KALOU, THE TOURE BROTHERS, KEITA, along with other teammates.

They don't look too happy, but they politely greet Drogba and his family while making their intentions clear - and Drogba knows it.

DROGBA

Honey, would you take the kids inside. I'll be in soon.

LALLA

(to kids)

Who wants chocolate Boflotos?!

BOTH CHILDREN

ME!!

Iman and Isaac follow their mother inside without hesitation. Leaving Drogba alone against a pack of angry teammates.

Drogba takes a seat, the others stand, the time for pleasantries is over.

DROGBA

Before we start, I just want you all to know that I...

YAYA TOURE

...No Diddy, you don't get to control this conversation.

Drogba has no choice but to accept.

KOLO TOURE

What the hell was that? What were you thinking? Playing a game on Northern soil? Without even asking us?

YAYA TOURE

Do you know why only some of us are here?

Drogba doesn't have an answer.

YAYA TOURE (CONT'D)

Because the rest were too afraid to leave their families alone tonight. The country has gone mad, and you just put a target on all of our backs.

KEITA

We didn't sign up to change the world with you. We're footballers. You just put the entire fate of the country in our hands, without even speaking to us first!

Keita continues on his rant.

KEITA (CONT'D)

You want to be a superhero, be one. But we're not all like you, Didier. We don't need the spotlight, we don't need the awards, the trophies, we just want to play football.

KALOU

What about me, Diddy? What about all the Southerners who are going to step foot in the Bouake Stadium. For christ' sake my wife is worried I'll get shot on that field. What would you have me do, huh?

DROGBA

You will walk onto that field the same way the Toure brothers walk out at the Abidjan stadium. Or any of the other Northerners, who have been playing on Southern soil for all these years.

Drogba looks to the others.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

Now, for your families. I am sorry. It was never my intention to put you or your families in harms way, and I promise I will do whatever I can to ensure their safety.

Drogba stands up.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

I didn't want this either. I wanted to come home, play some football, and show my family where I came from. But sometimes what you wanted, doesn't matter. We have become much more than just the national football team, and I know you all know that. We've become the only living proof to this country that we CAN coexist. Whether we like it or not, that's where we are.

Drogba looks out into the distance.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

We have a chance here. Not to make history, but to give Ivorians the strength to make their own history. I'm not doing this for personal glory, trust me. My government wants to put me in prison, my wife wants nothing to do with me, and I am staring at a group of men who want to kick my ass.

A few of the men chuckle.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

I'm doing this because we have a real opportunity here, and what kind of men would we be if we didn't take it. There's two ways you will look back at this night. It will either be the night you chose to do nothing out of fear, or it will be the night you chose to do everything out of hope.

Everyone takes this powerful moment in.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eerily quiet, the house is motionless as Drogba and Lalla lie fast asleep.

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Isaac wakes up and tiptoes into the -

- KITCHEN -

He pours himself a glass of MILK when something grabs his attention out the KITCHEN WINDOW.

EXT. FRONTLAWN - HOUSE - NIGHT

TWO MEN jump out of a car with the engine still running. They make their presence known.

MAN
(screaming)
Stop trying to control our country.
Go back to France!

They hurl SMOKE GRENADES that smash through the kitchen window, and it explodes right next to ISAAC, who falls to the floor.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Drogba springs to consciousness, and sees the car drive off from his bedroom window.

- HALLWAY -

He races to the kid's room, only to find Iman. Lalla only a few feet behind breaks down at the sight of Isaac's empty bed.

DROGBA
Isaac! Isaac! Where are you?!

ISAAC (O.S.)
(Struggling)
Dad! Help!

Drogba SPRINTS toward Isaac's voice.

- KITCHEN -

The room is filled with smoke. Unable to see a foot in front of him, Drogba slowly advances forward.

DROGBA
Isaac!

ISAAC
Dad!

Isaac extends his hand and it immediately finds Drogba, who carries his son's wounded body out of the room.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lalla sits in the back seat consoling her two frightened children while Drogba drives.

Drogba checks the rearview mirror and sees Lalla's cold resentful stare.

INT. JEEP - NIGHT

Djedje's is wedged between two soldiers in the back seat.

The Jeep paves it's own trail through the thick brush of the Ivorian Jungle.

We are deep into the debauchery and militancy of the Forces Nouvelles - - We feel as uncomfortable as Djedje does.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Parked with their location secured - Forces Nouvelles begin unloading the GASOLINE CANS and DYNAMITE.

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER
Niko and Mo you take the north
building, I'll take the South, Dje
you take the Gym.

Djedje's nerves and morals take over.

DJEDJE
Hey. Somebody's got to stand watch.

Off the Nouvelles consideration -

DJEDJE (CONT'D)
I'll do it.

FORCES NOUVELLES SOLDIER
Okay. Mo, take the gym.

Djedje is overcome with relief.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Kassi, asleep with his face planted on an open textbook.

The RUCKUS outside awakes him. He scrambles to the window where he sees - -

THE FORCES NOUVELLES - He panics when he realizes he has no escape plan.

Matters get worse as a few Nouvelles approach the classroom. Kassi looks desperately for a place to hide.

EXT./INT. - CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Nouvelles edge closer to Kassi's classroom, with two gas cans in hand.

NOUVELLES SOLDIER
Man let's get this done quick, I
got my girl waiting at home.

NOUVELLES SOLDIER 2
Don't worry, this shit will burn
fast. Old as hell.

They KICK OPEN the door to find - -

An EMPTY classroom.

NOUVELLES SOLDIER
Let's gas it.

We find Kassi, hiding underneath the TEACHER'S DESK covering his mouth while the Nouvelles drown the place with gasoline.

NEARBY ON SCHOOL PREMISE -

Djedje patrols the school grounds. He avoids turning his eyes to the destruction.

Later...

OUTSIDE - Nouvelles start firing their guns into the night sky, howling at the moon.

KASSI'S CLASSROOM -

The GUNSHOTS startle KASSI, which breaks his cover.

NOUVELLES SOLDIER 2
You here that? Someone's in here...

NOUVELLES SOLDIER
Man, no one's here. Do you see
anyone!? Come on.

Soldier 2 raises his gun, slowly approaching the TEACHER'S DESK.

Kassi's breathing intensifies, he knows he's caught.

Soldier 2, now only a few steps away. So close, the soldier's shoelace drags across Kassi's hand.

Out of nowhere - Another Nouvelle BARGES into the classroom.

SOLDIER

Come on, everyone out! Flames are up. Let's go!

Soldier 2 isn't ready to leave just yet.

NOUVELLES SOLDIER

(to Soldier 2)

Come on! You want to burn to death?!

Soldier 2 caves, and the two sprint out of the classroom.

And in that moment, Kassi is saved. Or so he thinks...

Soldier 2 closes the classroom door, and CHAIN LOCKS it from the outside.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

We see the ENTIRE SCHOOL up in flames. The Forces Nouvelles celebrate like hooligans. Amongst them - - Djedje, who is disillusioned by it all.

He wanders away from the festivities and takes a front row seat to the MASSIVE BONFIRE OF DESTRUCTION he helped create.

Djedje notices MOVEMENT in one of the windows. He goes in for a closer look. And that is when he sees - -

KASSI - BANGING on the window as flames besiege the classroom.

KASSI

HELP! HELP!

The flames begin to consume the classroom.

DJEDJE

KASSI! KASSI!

This familiar voice gives Kassi hope.

KASSI

Dje?

DJEDJE
Yes! Hold on, I'm going to get you
out!

KASSI
Dje! Hurry please!

Part of the ceiling CAVES IN - blocking the window as an exit point.

DJEDJE
Kassi, go to the other side!

Djedje runs around to the other window, but it is COMPLETELY engulfed in flames.

KASSI
What do I do?! Djedje!

Djedje scrambles for another solution.

Inside - the classroom is quickly turning into Dante's Inferno.

KASSI (CONT'D)
I'm trapped! Djedje! Help!

DJEDJE
I'm going to get you out of there!

Djedje runs to the front door, but it's CHAIN LOCKED by the other Nouvelles.

Djedje grabs a large rock from the ground and proceeds to smash it against the chain.

FLAMES SPIT through the crack in the door. Djedje covers his face and continues to hammer the lock.

KASSI
Djedje! Hurry!

DJEDJE
Hold on!

He's making a dent, but not big enough...

KASSI
I'm not going to make it!

DJEDJE
Don't you say that!

Kassi is swarmed by flames. Time is up...

KASSI

Ahhhh!!!!

DJEDJE

Kassi, no!!!

Suddenly the ENTIRE roof caves in on Kassi. The sheer force of the collapse propels Djedje in the air.

We lose Kassi to the pile of RUBBLE that sparks like a wildfire.

Djedje regains consciousness, and desperately looks for his fallen friend.

DJEDJE (CONT'D)

Kassi?! Kassi?! Please! Kassi,
where are you?!

The grim reality is beginning to settle in for Djedje. His friend is gone, and with it his last shred of innocence.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Drogba's parents help unload the car while Lalla takes the kids inside.

Albert and Drogba share a moment on the porch.

ALBERT

Are you guys okay?

DROGBA

I don't know.

ALBERT

No one said this would be easy.

Drogba takes a moment to himself.

DROGBA

The look on Isaac's face. A father should never see that face, and it's all my fault.

ALBERT

There are a lot of things fathers should not have to see in this country. But we do everyday. What matters is that you saved him.

DROGBA

But did I? Who knows what I've brought him into. Maybe everyone's right. Maybe I took this all too far.

ALBERT

I'm not going to sit here and pretend I have the answer for you. Maybe you have taken it too far, maybe you haven't. That's a judgement you unfortunately have to come to on your own. But we are here for you. We are a family and together we will get through this, whatever the outcome.

Albert pats his son on the back before walking inside, leaving Drogba alone with much to contemplate.

INT. KITCHEN - DROGBA RESIDENCE - DAY

Drogba sees a limo through the kitchen window bearing the PRESIDENTIAL SEAL. He goes outside to investigate.

EXT. DROGBA RESIDENCE - FRONTYARD - CONTINUOUS

A Secret Service guard emerges from the vehicle and opens the back door.

Drogba climbs into the limo.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

REVEAL: President Gbagbo.

The two sit in silence for a beat. Until -

GBAGBO

I hear you had a little bit of trouble last night.

DROGBA

Was that your doing? Was it?! I swear to god. My son was almost killed.

GBAGBO

Mr. Drogba, if it were my doing there wouldn't be an "almost".

Drogba's rage subsides. For now...

GBAGBO (CONT'D)
The whole world is watching you.
Didier Drogba, the savior of the
Ivory Coast.

Drogba doesn't follow.

GBAGBO (CONT'D)
How would the world like to know
this "savior" of theirs is involved
with the narcotics trade, or arms
dealing?
(Off Drogba's blank
expression)
It would be a shame to ruin such a
beautiful reputation and career.

DROGBA
What!? No one would believe you.

GBAGBO
I'm the government, Didier. I have
means to make anything believable.

Drogba is taken aback by this threat.

GBAGBO (CONT'D)
You win this game, and I can assure
you, I will no longer be an ally.
And you know what happens to my
enemies.

DROGBA
Why? Why are you so against a
united country? Are you that afraid
you will lose power? When you were
young, you wanted to make a
difference for the people. This is
your chance.

GBAGBO
When I was young, I was naive. I am
the President now, and I know
what's best for this country. And
it certainly isn't listening to a
peasant boy turned footballer.

Drogba's anger is barely contained. Gbagbo let's him cool down.

GBAGBO (CONT'D)
I forgot how emotional athletes
get...Good luck tomorrow. You won't
need it.

The secret service guard opens the door and escorts Drogba out.

The weight of this game is beginning to take it's toll.

INT. DROGBA RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - SAME

Lalla watches her husband exit the limousine as her concern for this situation deepens.

EXT. DROGBA HOUSEHOLD - BACKYARD - DAY

Drogba sits outside; absent, consumed by his choices while his children run rampant in the grass.

INT. DROGBA HOUSEHOLD - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Drogba's inner conflict remains increasing with every moment. He can't hide it. Lalla can no longer ignore it.

LALLA
Diddy, you haven't said a word all day.

No response.

LALLA (CONT'D)
Diddy?

Snapping back into the moment -

DROGBA
I'm fine.

LALLA
You need some sleep. Come to bed.

DROGBA
I will, soon.

Lalla's attempt fails.

The lights go off and Drogba is left in the darkness.

EXT. STREETS OF ABIDJAN - NIGHT

Drogba conceals his identity with a hat as he walks the streets of Abidjan. Not even the NEON lights nor the playful patrons can mask the bleak picture we see.

Drogba's mind wanders as aimlessly as his feet.

EXT. PARK - SAME

A soccer ball SMASHES into the back of the net. We see Djedje on the soccer field, alone - tears rolling down his face. He walks towards goal and grabs the soccer ball. He takes another SHOT at the goal.

And another. And another. Pounding them into the back of the net.

Suddenly he punts the ball high in the air and drops to the floor. Wrestling with himself and the gravel below him, we watch as Djedje enters the next stage of grief, anger.

OFF IN THE DISTANCE - Drogba wanders into the park; witnessing Djedje's complete and utter collapse.

DROGBA

You're not landing on your shooting foot.

Djedje can't believe his eyes when he notices Drogba.

DJEDJE

How do I do that?

They can feel each other's pain behind their tender eyes.

This moment is intimate and uninterrupted.

UNTIL -

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER (O.S.)
DJE! DJE! That you!? We've been
looking everywhere for you, man!
What the hell? Come on, man!

DROGBA

How about we meet here tomorrow
night, and I'll help you fix that
landing foot.

DJEDJE

If we're both still alive tomorrow
night.

Drogba nods as Djedje wipes off his final tears.

FORCES NOUVELLE SOLDIER (O.S.)
 Come on Dje! What the hell, man?
 Let's go!

Djedje picks up the ball and before he can say thank you, Drogba disappears.

EXT. ABIDJAN - DAY

The sun rises over the Abidjan skyline. The streets are quiet today, even the birds in the trees don't want to sing.

OVER THIS: **"OCTOBER, 2005. MATCH DAY"** appears on the screen.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S)
 Today is the day, everyone. Match day. I know a lot of us out there are scared. Scared for many reasons. All we can do is pray and root our Elephantes to victory!

INT. DROGBA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Drogba fixes his tie in the mirror. Lalla hands him his blazer. The two embrace each other.

DROGBA
 It's going to be okay. Trust me.

LALLA
 I'm trying to.

INT. KITCHEN - DROGBA'S RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Drogba says his goodbyes to his children.

DROGBA
 Isaac, you take care of mom and Iman while I'm gone.

ISAAC
 But I want to come, we come to all your games.

DROGBA
 Not this one. Too dangerous.

IMAN
I can take care of myself, Dad. And
Mom. And Isaac.

DROGBA
I know sweetie. You three will all
take care of each other, okay?

Drogba squeezes his family goodbye one more time.

INT. TEAM BUS - DAY

Coach Henri and Drogba are the only two on the bus.

Later... A few medical staff enter.

Later... Nothing.

Later... Drogba looks at his watch.

DROGBA
Are we sure they all had the right
time?

HENRI
Yes.

Drogba's battle seems to be over before it started...

MOMENTS LATER - Drogba hears footsteps approaching the bus. The footsteps belong to KALOU, who enters the bus.

He and Drogba share a nod of appreciation as Kalou makes his way to the back. Drogba is overcome with delight. But there are still twenty three more players to go...

Moments later - One by one the rest of the teammates pour into the bus.

Only two players missing - THE TOURE BROTHERS.

HENRI (CONT'D)
Alright, we all here.

DROGBA
No, we're missing two.

Just as the words leave his lips, Yaya and Kolo enter the bus.

YAYA TOURE
Nope. All here.

Drogba embraces both Yaya and Kolo.

KOLO TOURE

We all know you don't track back.
Someone has to play defense if
we're going to win.

Drogba smiles. Humbled and emotional. The bus departs.

LATER: Looking out the bus window, Drogba is re-inspired by the raw beauty of his homeland, until he notices a BILLBOARD with Gbagbo's conniving smile plastered on it.

The billboard reads "**A PRESIDENT FOR THE PEOPLE**".

Drogba's mood suddenly shifts as he is reminded of the tough decision he must make.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BOUAKE STADIUM - LATER

We are now in caught up to present day where the first scene of the film took place.

The team bus crawls through a thick crowd of supporters.

The intensity and sheer volume of people is unmanageable. The weight of the crowd forces down the perimeter fences.

Soldiers respond to the breach in full force. Shields up and batons ready.

SECURITY GUARD

(on Walkie)

We don't have much time left out here. We need to open the doors.

EXT. STADIUM - BACK ENTRANCE TUNNEL - DAY

The TEAM BUS enters the underground VIP entrance. Special Opp troops immediately escort them off the bus.

TROOP LEADER

Everyone, Move! Move! Follow our lead.

(on Walkie)

They're on the move.

Drogba is last to exit, until he sees -- Kalou, in the back of the bus. Hesitant to get up.

Drogba approaches him.

KALOU
What if this doesn't work, Diddy?

Drogba takes a seat next to Kalou.

DROGBA
What if it does.

INT. STADIUM TUNNELS - CONTINUOUS

Special Opps escort the team to the dressing rooms. Drogba trails behind them, and behind him...

KALOU.

INT. BLACK CAR - SAME

SECRET SERVICE agents sit in the front seat. One listens on his ear piece.

SECRET SERVICE
Team has entered the stadium,
safely, sir. We are thirty minutes
out.

REVEAL: President Gbagbo and Kabedi in the back seat.

PRESIDENT GBAGBO
Good, good. Turn the radio on.

THROUGH THE CAR SPEAKERS we listen to Martin Tyler and Alan Smith's PRE MATCH show.

ALAN SMITH (O.S)
Pundits across the world are saying
that the Ivory Coast doesn't have
what it takes to overcome Cameroon.
What do you have to say to that?

DROGBA (O.S)
I say, judge our team when we leave
the stadium tonight, not before.

MARTIN TYLER (O.S)
Now, Didier, I've read reports that
there have been threats to you,
your family, and other players and
their families...

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIA BOX - SAME

Drogba is interviewed by Martin Tyler and Alan Smith.

MARTIN TYLER

...Threats if you lose, and threats if you win. Can you confirm this? And if these are true, how can you possibly go into this game with a clear head.

DROGBA

I've received threats all my life. Mostly from defenders on the pitch. But I still score. I've never listened to threats
(looking into the camera)
I won't start now.

This COMBATIVE STATEMENT to Gbagbo makes Drogba's intentions clear...

ALAN SMITH

Alright, you heard it here ladies and gentleman. Don't threaten this footballer! Didier, it was a pleasure speaking with you, and good luck out there.

DROGBA

Thank you, both.

Camera's go offline and the set lights turn on.

Martin and Alan approach Drogba.

MARTIN TYLER

Whatever happens out there, we just wanted to say what you're doing, it's special.

Drogba shakes their hands before departing.

EXT. DESERTED SOCCER FIELD - DAY

We are back on the abandoned soccer field from the first scene of the film - -

Djedje and the Forces Nouvelles are still squared off against Southern troops on the other end of the field.

A truck pulls up with a pile of guns in the bed. The southern boys pick their weapons.

On the other side of the field - Djedje and the Forces Nouvelles open a chest full of firearms.

Djedje and a fellow Nouvelle exchange concerns.

NOUVELLES SOLDIER
We're out numbered and out gunned.

DJEDJE
Did you expect different?

NOUVELLES SOLDIER
My hand won't stop shaking.

Djedje looks down and grabs the soldier's shaking hand.

DJEDJE
Now mine won't either.

For a brief moment we see the soldiers for who they really are - scared children.

EXT. BOUAKE STADIUM - SAME

Northern Militia and Government troops CLASH outside the box office.

Tear Gas and smoke bombs are thrown to stop the violence.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - STADIUM - DAY

Ivorian players trickle in one by one. Their nerves consume them. No one speaks, no one would even know what to say.

INT. GREEN ROOM - STADIUM - DAY

Sports reporters are in a frenzy as they strap bullet proof vests to their chest.

EXT. STADIUM ROOFTOP - DAY

Snipers load their rifles.

INT. AMADOU'S BAR - DAY

Amadou, expecting the worst, boards up the bar door and nervously surveys the outside through the window.

INT. DROGBA'S FAMILY RESIDENCE - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

Lalla and the entire Drogba family gather around the T.V. Dread consumes Lalla's whole being. Clotilde notices and grabs her hand.

EXT. DESERTED SOCCER FIELD - DAY

The standoff continues. Djedje's nerves start to kick in with the rest of the Nouvelles.

Adama steps out onto the battlefield to address his men.

ADAMA

My fellow Ivorian warriors. Today will mark the end of this war. The end of suppression. But we must spill blood for it. Because our freedom our humanity is worth dying for. And our cause will make us INVINCIBLE!

This rallies the Nouvelles. Everyone except Djedje, who watches in horror at the calamity of what's ahead.

Djedje peels off from the group, and sneaks into the JUNKYARD next to the pitch.

EXT. JUNKYARD - SAME

As discreet as he can, Djedje rummages through piles of OLD ELECTRONICS. Unclear on his motive, we follow Djedje as he inspects each heap of garbage.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - STADIUM - DAY

Drogba enters the dressing room, the air is thick with dread - it's lifeless, still, bleak.

Players retreat into their own minds, playing out their darkest fears of what is to come.

Even Yaya Toure has gone offline.

Drogba takes a moment to himself. Closes his eyes, and braces for the decision he's about to make.

DROGBA

Last night my daughter asked me what a "Civil War" is.

(MORE)

DROGBA (CONT'D)

I got about two sentences into explaining it when she stopped me and asked if it was okay if she didn't join. I didn't have the heart to tell her right now she doesn't have a choice.

All of his teammates sit and stand in silence as they take in this reality.

DROGBA (CONT'D)

Soldiers, street vendors, waiters, businessmen, wives, children... And athletes. We're all a part of this war whether we want to be or not. Every day is a battle. At this rate my daughter and all of your children will grow up and inherit this war. And become soldiers, just like we are.

EXT. ENTRANCE TUNNEL - STADIUM - NIGHT

Drogba's speech continues over the opening movements of the game -

Illuminated by the stadium lights -

Les Elephantes slowly walk out of the tunnel.

DROGBA (V.O)

I wish I could say it doesn't matter if we win or lose. But today, it does matter. These next ninety minutes are not about football. They're about the Ivory Coast. Our home.

The Ivorians take the pitch - and line up next to a monstrous Cameroon squad.

DROGBA (V.O) (CONT'D)

Today we fight for our country. Today we show our people that there is NOTHING we can't do if we are united.

The stadium begins to rumble with life and energy.

DROGBA (V.O.)

Today we wear our jerseys to prove
that North, South, Muslim,
Christian...we are all Ivorians,
and together we can do the
impossible.

The Cameroonian sing their national anthem with stone cold faces. Emotionless.

Next up is the Ivorian National Anthem...

Drogba and the rest of the team wrap their arms around each other, and belt out their anthem at the top of their lungs.

THE ENTIRE CROWD join in. The sheer acoustics of fifty thousand strong singing alongside brings tears to the players.

MARTIN TYLER (O.S)

I don't believe it. For the first time in...I want to stay ten years, the crowd is singing their national anthem. What a special moment this must be for the players.

EXT. JUNKYARD - SAME

Djedje has found what he's been searching for - A RADIO.

No sign of life, until...we HEAR static. Djedje fiddles the nobs until we hear a muffled Martin Tyler and Alan Smith through the speakers.

Djedje grabs the radio and sprints off toward the field.

INT. STADIUM - SAME

Cameroon players and the Ivorians shake hands before taking their positions on each side of the field.

ALAN SMITH

I'm not going to lie Marty, this is the first time in my commentating career I actually have goosebumps for kick off.

MARTIN TYLER

Me as well, Alan. I can only imagine what the Ivorians must be going through.

ALAN SMITH

And the Cameroonian for that matter. Alright, we're a few seconds away from kick off here at the Stadè Bouake.

Drogba calls his teammates in for one final huddle.

DROGBA

Let's fight like hell. And if we win, I promise you, it will be our last fight.

EXT. DESERTED SOCCER FIELD - SAME

The Forces Nouvelles rally behind Adama, chanting to provoke the government troops. The government bark right back.

IN THE DISTANCE - Djedje sprints towards center field. He breaks through the Nouvelles front line and past Adama.

The government troops prepare for an attack, but Djedje STOPS in the middle of the field.

He places the RADIO at the kick-off. He looks both factions in the eye.

Djedje's resolute stance paralyzes both the government troops and his fellow Nouvelles.

Sinking his knees to the ground, Djedje turns up the volume so everyone can hear MARTIN TYLER and ALAN SMITH.

RADIO

And we are under way ladies and gentleman!

As we INTERCUT:

THE STADIUM -

The Ivorians kick off. The THUMPING from the stands is deafening.

THE DROGBA HOUSEHOLD -

Lalla, the kids, and Drogba's Parents gather around the television. All of them holding hands.

AIRPLANE -

Harold watches the game on his staticky telecast.

THE STADIUM -

Cameroon is in complete control twenty minutes into the first half. Their forward takes a shot from outside the post -

It's OFF THE BAR!

ALAN SMITH
OFF THE POST! Wow, what a curling effort.

DESERTED SOCCER FIELD -

The echo of Martin and Alan's lively sportscast propel both sides to inch closer to the radio.

Weapons still razed, but their attention, now elsewhere.

THE STADIUM -

Almost halftime. Drogba latches on to a Kalou through ball. He beats a defender and FIRES A SHOT! It's headed for the back of the net - -

But Cameroon's goalkeeper has other plans. His outstretched arm makes a fingertip save.

President Gbagbo looks on from his BOX SUITE with a big grin on his face.

AMADOU'S BAR -

The match is on the big screen. The patrons WAIL at the chance. So close.

AIRPLANE -

Harold slaps his tray, spilling his Perrier.

HAROLD
Wanker! For fuck's sake!

DESERTED SOCCER FIELD -

Nouvelles and government troops throw up their hands in frustration.

A brief moment between both groups - as they agree on something for the first time.

THE STADIUM -

50th minute. The game is rough. Slide tackles, ripped shirts, elbows to the face. If it weren't for the soccer ball, this would be a UFC fight.

A Cameroonian defender TAKES OUT Keita. He falls to the floor, screaming in pain.

The referee calls over the medics, it's bad. Drogba runs to Keita's side.

MEDIC
He's broken his ankle.

Keita's cries of pain overshadow the entire stadium's clamor.

Keita looks Drogba in the eyes.

KEITA
I'm sorry brother.

DROGBA
Don't be. You made history tonight.

KEITA
Not yet, we haven't.

Drogba looks around the stadium. Thousands of IVORIANS wait in suspense together. As one. The moment sinks in.

Drogba helps carry Keita off the field.

Drogba calls his teammates in for a quick huddle.

DROGBA
Kolo, they took out our brother.
Let them know what we think about
that. Yaya, let's push left, their
right back can't keep up with Sala.
The rest of us, we just have to
keep playing our game.

Both North and South factions are chanting together in the stands.

DROGBA (CONT'D)
(pointing to the crowd)
Do you hear that? They're doing
their job up there. Now, let's do
our job down here. Thirty more
minutes to get our country back.

The huddle explodes with energy and motivation.

THE DROGBA HOUSEHOLD -

Lalla's anxiety is infectious. The whole family retreat
inward. Slow breathing, hyper aware.

AMADOU'S BAR -

Amadou notices a few Northerners trying to watch the game
from the street.

He deliberates for a moment. And then -

AMADOU
(to the outsiders)
Hey, you guys!

The Northerners are about to run off, fearing Amadou's rage.

AMADOU (CONT'D)
No, no. Get in here.

Shocked, the Northerners accept his invitation.

AMADOU (CONT'D)
But you have to buy a drink, or
you're out.

They order PINTS.

IN THE STADIUM -

80th minute. The game is nearing it's end. It has been a back
and forth pinball match between the two.

MARTIN TYLER
Boy, a tie here would cost them the
ticket, Alan. And it seems to be
headed that way.

ALAN SMITH
Yup, never know in football. But
not much time left.

DESERTED SOCCER FIELD -

Both the Government troops and Forces Nouvelles are HUDDLED around the radio. Looking like one big team rather than two opposing factions.

Their ears are glued to the speakers. Their weapons on the floor.

IN THE STADIUM -

90th minute. Three minutes of stoppage time is all that's left and the game couldn't be more open.

Another minute goes by. The battle continues...

Another minute...

UNTIL - Drogba is FOULED ten yards outside the box.

THE STADIUM ERUPTS. And so does -

Drogba's family, Harold, Amadous's Bar, Djedje and the whole lot.

MARTIN TYLER

Well, wouldn't this be a Cinderella story, Alan. I don't think anyone would disagree though, it's a long shot. Literally and figuratively.

ALAN SMITH

A bit too far for my liking.

Drogba lines up to take the free kick. A WALL of Cameroonian stand between him and the net.

The referee blows his whistle.

Drogba takes one final look at everyone in attendance. The stillness of this moment extends throughout the entire country.

Drogba runs up and SMASHES the dead ball.

The world stops as we watch this ball spin PAST THE WALL OF DEFENDERS towards goal.

ALAN SMITH (CONT'D)

Oh my god, is it...

We share this moment with Amadou's bar, Harold, The Drogba Family, and Djedje and the others as they wait in the deepest suspense of their lives.

The ball gets closer and closer to goal...

The goalkeeper dives across the goal line. The two on a collision course. Except this time, the keeper --

CANNOT GET TO IT IN TIME.

The soccer ball FLOATS INTO THE BACK OF THE NET!!!!

The referee BLOWS HIS WHISTLE - that's GAME.

MARTIN TYLER
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT!?

ALAN SMITH
My god! It was written in the stars. The Stadium is absolutely shaking, and it's all because of that man right there, Didier Drogba.

MARTIN TYLER
And just like that, Ivory Coast is going to their FIRST EVER WORLD CUP!

Drogba falls to his knees and throws his hands to the sky. The stadium ERUPTS in PURE JOY.

Everyone except President Gbagbo...

Drogba locks eyes with President Gbagbo. He kisses the Ivorian crest on his jersey and smiles, but the President turns away. Sulking in his defeat.

Drogba's teammates pile on him in celebratory manner.

THE DROGBA HOUSEHOLD -

The whole family embrace each other on the couch.

IMAN
He did it! He did it!

LALLA
(in tears)
He did.

ISAAC
We're going to the world cup!!!

AMADOU'S BAR -

The bar is RAINING in BEER. Like a tropical hurricane of alcohol and celebration.

The Northerners from earlier hand Amadou cash for their drinks. But Amadou hits their hand away.

AMADOU
Forget it! It's on me!

He and the Northerners join in on the drunken celebrations.

AIRPLANE -

Harold can't contain his excitement. He jumps up and kisses the male steward on the mouth!

IN THE STADIUM -

Soldiers hoist IVORIAN flags from their tanks. The press go WILD. The entire field has become a circus, and everyone wants their ten seconds with one man; Drogba.

Yaya Toure and Drogba hold each other ever so tight.

YAYA TOURE
We did it!

DROGBA
We did.

DESERTED SOCCER FIELD -

The Government troops and Nouvelles celebrate together. Singing, dancing, and cheering.

GOVERNMENT SOLDIER
World Cup! World Cup!

NOUVELLES SOLDIER
We did it! We did it!

In the midst of all this excitement, Djedje takes off his shirt and slowly hands it to one of the Government child soldiers.

This action STUNS everyone and haults the celebrations.

The young government soldier contemplates how to reciprivate.

He looks around at his contemporaries for guidance before cautiously pulling off his shirt and handing it to Djedje.

Before long other FORCES NOUVELLES peel off their shirts as well and hand them to their opposition, who also return the sentiment.

Exchanging "Jerseys" just like at the end of a football match.

A profound silent moment.

One that echoes through the heats of every Ivorian.

DJEDJE (V.O.)

Many people don't know our story.
We all have our own stories to tell
in life. Some sad some happy. And
every once in a while one that
changes you. The way you see
things. The way you wake up. I
share my story with Didier, and he
shares his with me...

We pull out to a birds eye view of the abandoned soccer field.

DJEDJE (V.O.)

Today is the day I die. I die as a
Northerner, and I am reborn as an
Ivorian.

Djedje and the others fade away... and are replaced with -

A MOUNTAIN OF BURNING GUNS in the center of the soccer field.

SUPERIMPOSED OVER THIS IMAGE:

"THE IVORIAN GOVERNMENT HELD A CEREMONY, WHICH THEY CALLED THE FLAMES OF PEACE. THEY BURNED WEAPONS TO SIGNAL THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR. THEY HELD THE CEREMONY ON A SOCCER FIELD TO SYMBOLIZE THE INFLUENCE FOOTBALL HAD ON THIS MOMENT."

"NEWS OUTLETS ACROSS THE WORLD CALLED THIS GAME..."

"THE MATCH THAT ENDED A CIVIL WAR"

"IN 2012 ON THE GRAHAM NORTON SHOW, DROGBA WAS ASKED HOW HE FELT ABOUT PLAYING AN INTEGRAL PART IN THE END OF A BLOODY CIVIL WAR IN HIS HOME COUNTRY".....

"HIS RESPONSE: IT WAS THE BEST GOAL OF MY CAREER".

FADE TO BLACK: