

Ana's Playground

by
Eric D. Howell

ANA'S PLAYGROUND follows intersecting stories of human connection told through the eyes of children living in separate conflict regions, and how their lives are brought together through the efforts of a war journalist and a woman seeking to adopt a child.

ericdhowell@me.com /// 612.819.6587
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INT./EXT. FIFTH FLOOR CITY APARTMENT (CHICAGO) -- DAY

The blurred image of a city skyline comes into focus. An ocean of grey tones. Rain drops on a window refract a line of illuminated brake lights from the TRAFFIC JAM below.

INT. MIDAMERICA INSURANCE TOWER (CHERYL'S OFFICE) - DAY

The Mona Lisa smile of ANA (12). A snapshot photograph taped to a 20th floor window. It's as if she's floating. Distant THUNDER. Beyond the photo is the horizon with the Chicago skyline in the distance. A phone RINGS. *

CHERYL (O.S.)

Risk management, this is Cheryl.

CHERYL BRADFORD (40's) sits atop her desk in a glass walled office pulling on a pair of sneakers. Nearby is her young assistant TINA (28) taking notes on a pad.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Hello Cindy. Absolutely. You're exactly correct, however the quote does not cover employees on the previous policy, only new hires after the first of the year.

Cheryl HITS the mute button.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

How the hell did she get my direct number?

TINA

That's not possible, unless....Oh my God, she's inside the building!

Cheryl throws a stress ball at her then hits the mute button.

CHERYL

I agree. It is a completely valid point and one that was made during the teleconference. Cindy, I'm actually heading to the airport at the moment.

(Pause)

That's right.

(pause)

Yes, there is a war going on there at the moment, that's why I'm going. Getting this right is a priority to me. Do you remember my assistant Tina?

TINA

(whispering)

NO!

CHERYL

She's been working on some ideas for this. I'll make sure she's in touch by end of the day.

(pause)

Sounds great. Thank you Cindy.

Cheryl hangs up.

TINA

I can't believe you. I get your office then.

CHERYL

No, you don't get my office. My office will sit empty and lonely until I return.

She pulls Ana's photo and finishes stuffing a backpack.

TINA

You're gonna be a mom. You no longer have time for an office like this. This is for young, unencumbered over-achievers who deal with problem clients.

CHERYL

Over-achiever?

TINA

Young and unencumbered at least.

Cheryl pulls a stack of binders and hands them to Tina.

CHERYL

These need to be summarized for the manager's meeting. Now you're just overworked, underpaid, and behind schedule. Least you're still young.

An INTERCOM interrupts.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Your cab is here.

CHERYL

Thank you Tom.

TINA

Are you nervous?

CHERYL

Of course not.

TINA

You're a kick-ass, independent, well-educated woman. A perfect role model for an eleven-year-old girl. What's not to love?

Cheryl grabs her backpack and roll-on bag, then exits.

CHERYL

You still can't have the office.

INT. MIDAMERICA INSURANCE TOWER (CHERYL'S OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS

She leads Tina through a maze of cubicles.

TINA

Who's picking you up?

CHERYL

The adoption agency will have someone at the airport. Bye Tom.

The RECEPTIONIST and a few CO-WORKERS wish bon-voyage.

TINA

Make sure you exchange money before you get on the flight. You have your passport?

CHERYL

Believe it or not I've actually traveled before.

TINA

Mexico and Costa Rica don't count.

CHERYL

Of course they count.

TINA

Wait. I have something...

Tina DROPS the binders in a cube and emerges with magazines.

TINA (CONT'D)

Economist, New Yorker, Vogue, People.

CHERYL

The perfect mix of smart and smut.

Super model AMELIA DAINES on the cover of VOGUE. We'll meet her later. Tina offers a small bag.

TINA

And this. Trailmix, earplugs, blindfold.

Clearly an agenda. Cheryl capitulates.

CHERYL

Fine. Use my office.

TINA

Yes!

EXT. MIDMAERICA INSURANCE TOWER -- MOMENTS LATER

Cheryl approaches an awaiting taxi. The advertisement atop the cab reads TRUMAN INDUSTRIES.

The sound of a SOCCER GAME (in Spanish) fills the cab. She SHUTS the door. The glass tower reflected in the window.

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT -- NIGHT

A center spread of Amelia Daines and husband TRUMAN ARMSTRONG on a tray table. Cheryl is asleep with a blindfold.

EXT. WAR-TORN CITY STREET -- DAY

Wisps of ANA'S hair escape her black knit cap. Her features are beautiful, a bit boyish. She waits. Her finger stretching and clenching. Her eyes narrow and...

She bursts into action, leaping sideways to catch a soccer ball with a powerful SMACK. She lands and snaps the ball back to her opponents in this pick-up game of street soccer.

The ball races toward ALEC and SASHA, young teenagers, protected from cold by layers of threadbare clothing. Alec, the smallest of the three, foot-stops the ball. With a spin and a jive, he shoots. The ball blasts across a devastated city street, toward their goal, a door frame with neither door, nor building attached.

A professional soccer match REVERBERATES from a loudspeaker high on a pole. The commentators SPEAK in a BALKAN dialect.

An 8-year-old girl plays with a doll. This is MIRA. She sits next to the goal, oblivious to her surroundings.

THUMP! Ana snags the ball and rifles it back. Sasha SWEEPS it up and dribbles down the street preparing for an assault. Ana waits, confidently adjusting her finger-less gloves.

Alec switches allegiances and now defends the goal. Sasha sets the ball and prepares to kick off. The CHANTING of the crowd matches the action. Alec TAPS the ball and...

AN EXPLOSION followed by rapid GUNFIRE erupts nearby. They freeze and search for the source. Gauging the danger.

The REVVING engine of a TRUCK as it rounds the corner. Its rear fender engulfed in flames as it CAREENS through a pile of rubbish. A MAN in the back FIRES an automatic weapon.

Sasha and Alec race for cover behind an abandoned vehicle. They SNATCH UP a duffel bag. Ana grabs Mira. Concrete shards and sparks OVERWHELM the area as the truck draws fire from its unseen adversary. Bullets RICOCHET everywhere.

As they crouch in this makeshift bunker Ana passes out pink squares of bubble gum which they stuff into their mouths. The intense BOMBARDMENT continues until, as quickly as it began, the conflict FADES. They listen.

Ana emerges from the bunker and places Mira on a perch.

The boys SWEEP AWAY the bullet casings under their feet. A FRESH BODY on the street behind them.

Sasha readies. Ana defends the goal. POP! The ball shoots through the air. Ana dives...THUD! A fantastic block.

The ball sails through the air and over a large steel fence.

SASHA
(in dialect)
What the hell Ana?

ANA
You kicked it!

With caution, they approach the fence and peer through bullet holes. All dialogue is in DIALECT with no subtitles.

ANA (CONT'D)
Shit.

SASHA
Who's going?

Ana pulls out a coin. The boys pull out coins of their own. They flip. A look between them. It is decided.

EXT. WAR TORN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Ana hands Mira a small WHITE chess pawn.

ANA
Hold this until I get back.

Ana kisses her forehead. A moment as she gazes through the opening in the fence. The CHANTING CROWD from the soccer game provides encouragement. A deep BREATH, then she enters.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - SAME

Inside a shell peaceful courtyard. Her movement is tense. She finds a blood stained bag of groceries and rolls a can of food to Sasha. Then another.

A bullet WHIZZES by, missing her by inches. Concrete SHATTERS on the wall next to her. Ana DUCKS for cover.

A look back to Sasha - his angered gaze tells her to keep going. She pauses, then RACES into the playground. BULLET HITS chase her across.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

Casings EJECT from a rifle as it LAUNCHES a barrage. The SHOTS are deafening. The Sniper's face remains unseen.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

Ana ducks and SLIDES. Her hat falls off as she finds cover. Shoulder length hair reveals the first sign of femininity.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

The sniper changes position, snaking his way through dark shadows.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

Ana spots her hat. With a nearby stick she reaches beyond her cover to snag it. THWAPP! The stick DISINTEGRATES. She recoils! A stern glance shows her annoyance.

She thinks, then grabs a nearby COKE bottle. She holds it up in the air, just in sight for the sniper.

SMASH! The bottle EXPLODES. She WINCES in pain, her finger has been cut. She pulls a handkerchief from her pocket and wraps it. Along with the hanky, several items SPILL out: a black chess pawn, a marble, a pocket knife, a disposable cigarette lighter, several pieces of gum.

She kisses chess pawn and places it back into her pocket.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

The sniper listens to the soccer game ECHOING through the city. Food wrappers and canned goods serve as evidence of the amount of time spent in this location.

SNIPER SCOPE POV

Ana's hiding spot is center in the crosshairs. Slowly a white handkerchief pokes up, waving like a surrender flag. The crosshairs settle on the flag.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - SAME

Suddenly the soccer game ERUPTS in a moment of excitement. Ana's attention is diverted to the game.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

The eyes of the sniper move away from his target as he is captured by the game's ACTION. A GOALLLLLLL is scored. The Sniper raises his gun, aims, and FIRES.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - SAME

THWAPP! Ana is on her feet RUNNING. Bullets chase her! Ana dodges behind a statue, barely reaching safety.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

The scope scans the statue. The only signs of Ana are strands of her hair blowing from behind.

Ana spots the soccer ball. It is out in the open and completely exposed. SMASH - a bullet just misses her head.

She winces at the cut on her head, then notices a little doll. It smiles at her. She kicks it and it CRIES. This sparks an idea.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

The SOCCER GAME has a soothing cadence. The sniper enters a new area and raises his rifle. He scans the area.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

Suddenly, movement near the statue. His sights settle on an object at the end of a stick. With a CLICK the scope increases magnification. The head of a doll on a stick. He considers.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

Ana waits as she holds the stick and doll head. Nothing happens. She holds it higher. Nothing.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

The sniper waits. He stretches sore muscles.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

Ana bobs the head up-and-down it draw attention. Nothing. She pulls the stick down with a SIGH. She makes a decision.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

The clown head slowly re-appears. The sniper LAUGHS as he spots the doll's head cupped within Ana's fragile hand.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

The sniper visibly relaxes. He stretches, then CLICKS his scope into greater magnification. He cradles the stock of the gun as he scans up Ana's bare arm.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

Ana struggles to hold perfectly still.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

The Sniper takes a deep BREATH. His BEATING heart synchronizes in time to Ana's. His finger finds the trigger. The volume and pacing of the soccer commentator BUILDS.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

Cross-hairs settle on the trembling doll head as...

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

The doll head bounces slightly from the WIND.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

The sniper's finger slowly squeezes the trigger as...

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

THAWAAP!! The clown head is plucked from her hand. She WINCES and recoils, but is instantly CHARGING for the ball.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

The cross-hairs never leave Ana as she runs towards the ball. He has an absolutely clean shot.

Ana frantically RUNS for the ball, and her life. She's in an all-out sprint as he reaches the ball. Swooping it up she continues running. THUD! She trips in a hole.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

Through the scope - Ana drops to the ground, a clear shot. She slowly raises her head and looks towards the building.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

The crosshairs move up Ana's body. He touches the trigger.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

Ana lowers her head and waits for her fate. It comes. WHIP-RING! She FLINCHES. He missed. Again, WHIP-RIINNNGG! A bullet HITS an abandoned tricycle. She looks to the building.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

Ana is unsure.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

WHIP - RING! She realizes she has been given amnesty. She picks up the ball and limps back to where she came from.

She passes the statue as a bullet HITS and DINGS off of the bronze. She smirks at the game he is playing.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

Ana limps back to safety. The crosshairs directly on her.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

Ana STOPS, locks eyes with her friends hiding nearby. Mira sits blankly. With a nod Ana turns to face the sniper.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

The sniper slings his rifle and takes a drink from a canteen, then waters a small, potted plant. He notices something outside the window and raises his rifle.

SNIPER RIFLE SCOPE POV

Ana stands in a full military salute towards the sniper.

EXT. SNIPER ZONE - CONT.

She stands like a soldier. The wind blows her hair across her forehead. Her saucer-like eyes gaze up to the Sniper.

Slowly, the face of the SNIPER emerges from the shadows of the building with a smile to reveal...

OMAR (14) has a youthful face on the edge of puberty. In full light, his eyes have the same gleam as Ana's. He raises his hand in a respectful return salute.

Ana's eyes swell with a hint of emotion.

Omar holds his respectful salute. There is a moment of humanity between these two adversaries.

A moment of sadness from Ana's eyes as...WHOOSH - a rocket is FIRED and kills Omar.

A blurred vision of flame and debris. Tears fill Ana's eyes as she salutes. Regret and reality in a single moment.

Holding an RPG launcher, Alec & Sasha celebrate. They embrace as if they've just scored a goal. Mira looks up for the first time. Dust and burning debris FALL to the ground.

Ana's eyes cure and harden as she lowers the salute. The boys repack their duffel bag full of rockets as they exit.

EXT. WAR-TORN CITY STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

The boys emerge from under the fence and cross the street. Ana and Mira follow, holding hands as they cross.

EXT. WAR-TORN CITY STREET -- LATER

A UNITED NATIONS peacekeeping vehicle sits on a corner. The SAME SOCCER GAME can be heard from the radio inside the truck.

'Blue Helmet' UN OBSERVERS stand vigil at their post. Sasha and Alec pass on the other side of the street, innocuously dribbling a soccer ball and carrying a duffel bag.

Ana and Mira walk hand-in-hand past the truck.

UN OBSERVER

Hey!

The girls stop. Fear in their eyes. He tosses something, Ana catches it. It's a piece of bubble gum. The same kind the kids shared earlier in the bunker.

Ana looks with a blank stare. Mira mimics the earlier actions of Ana by giving him a respectful salute. He returns the gesture and the girls walk off into the desolate city.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BALKAN AIRPORT (IMMIGRATION AREA) -- MORNING

Ana's snapshot photo stares at us again, now with a dog-eared corner. A hand picks it up off the floor.

Standing in the immigration line is SCOTT SIMMS (35). His face looks as if he's been in a fight. He nudges Cheryl without looking at the picture.

CHERYL

Oh, God. Thank you.

He returns to the tedium of filling out an immigration form. She throws him a glance while filling out her own form.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Do you speak English?

SCOTT

(Scottish accent)

A little.

CHERYL

Do you remember our flight number?

SCOTT

Two-six-eight.

CHERYL

Right. Thank you.

Frowning at her form, she makes another attempt to connect.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Point of origin? They mean just for this flight, right?

(off his nod)

Where are you coming from?

SCOTT
 (Disinterested)
 Africa.

CHERYL
 Fantastic. Work or pleasure?

Scott looks to her with his slightly battered face.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
 Sorry.

She notices his camera equipment.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
 A journalist?

SCOTT
 Right.

Looking to her immigration card again.

CHERYL
 Do they need an exact address for
 this?

SCOTT
 Just the name of the hotel is fine.

CHERYL
 Have you ever stayed at Hotel Astra?

SCOTT
 Well, there's no spa. But it is the
 only place in the green zone that
 hasn't been fire bombed, so I think
 you'll like it.

Behind the immigration barrier, SECURITY GUARDS open doors,
 escorting in TRUMAN ARMSTRONG, immaculately dressed, mid-
 40's, the presence of a diplomat meets business tycoon. He
 is ushered past immigration without delay.

CHERYL
 Wow, that's....

SCOTT
 Truman Armstrong. President of
 Universal Industries.

CHERYL
 He married that super-model, right?

SCOTT
 Among other things.

CHERYL
 What's he doing in a place like this?

SCOTT

I'd ask you the same. Didn't know
Americans knew this place existed.

CHERYL

Look, I'm sorry you got the shit
kicked out of you by someone or
something in Africa, but I didn't do
it. It wasn't my fault.

SCOTT

That's right. Of course it's not
your fault.

CHERYL

Meant no offense. I won't bother you
anymore.

SCOTT

You Americans learn geography by the
wars you start on television. Just
a bit odd to see you off the big
white tour bus.

CHERYL

Well it seems to me that if Europe
cleaned up its own backyard we
wouldn't need to be here. Excuse me.

She charges past Scott leaving him silent.

EXT. WAR TORN STREET -- DAY

Ana and Mira join the boys as they sit in an awaiting jeep
full of other YOUNG SOLDIERS.

Without her hat, Ana is noticeably feminine. Ana ignores
looks from the boys as she climbs onboard.

INT. JEEP -- MOMENTS LATER

Ana and Mira silently play a game of cat's cradle, blocking
out the world around them.

EXT. WAR TORN STREET -- DAY

PARAMILITARY SOLDIERS stand vigil with rifles ready as the
jeep approaches. High above, a SNIPER levels his rifle.
Soldiers circle as if looking for something.

Ana avoids their stares. Her hair flows in the breeze. A
soldier named PETRIC pulls her from the Jeep.

MIRA

Nooooo!

ANA

Let go of me.

Sasha holds Mira back as Petric DRAGS Ana away. Alec grabs onto Ana's arm. Without hesitation Petric FIRES three shots into Alec's chest.

A Soldier RAISES his rifle to the JEEP DRIVER and yells a command. The jeep RACES away, leaving Ana behind.

INT. JEEP -- SAME

Sasha is in shock as he checks for signs of life in Alec. Mira gazes out as she gets further and further from Ana.

SASHA
Here - stop here!

The jeep reaches a clearing and STOPS. Sasha gently pulls Alec from the jeep and does what he can to revive his friend.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Alec! Alec!

He looks into the face of the dead boy as if to say goodbye. He looks up to the jeep. Mira is gone. He looks back to see the tiny girl running back towards the city.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Mira!

Mira's tiny figure runs towards the grey, fortress-like city.

EXT. HUNGARIAN AIRPORT (CURBSIDE) -- MORNING

Cheryl maneuvers her way through a CROWD of desperate taxi DRIVERS. Several hands try to take her bags.

TAXI DRIVER
Taxi. Taxi! Where are you going Miss?

TAXI DRIVER 2
I have the best car in the city Miss.
Let me take your bag.

CHERYL
No. I'm fine thank you. Thank you,
no.

YOUNG BOY (9) approaches her with a dirty face and big eyes. He is selling lottery tickets.

YOUNG BOY
Lotto? Lotto?

CHERYL
No. No thank you.

YOUNG BOY
Miss English. Lotto.

CHERYL
No. I don't want any.

She finds a payphone, picks up the receiver and examines the instructions to place a call. A VOICE from behind her.

SCOTT
Taxi? I - have - limousine.

CHERYL
(aggravated)
I'm fine, thank you.

SCOTT
Good price!

CHERYL
No!

She turns to find Scott smiling slightly. She turns back.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
Go away.

SCOTT
Those things don't work.

Scott is amused by her determination as she drops a few coins into the phone. After clicking the receiver, she gives up and looks to Scott, eyes narrowing.

CHERYL
What?

Scott holds his hand out in a conciliatory gesture.

SCOTT
Scott Simms. Pretentious European asshole.

CHERYL
Is that an apology?

SCOTT
Yes.

CHERYL
How do I make a phone call then?

Scott retrieves the returned coins from the phone.

SCOTT
First, you'll need more of these than you can carry.

Cheryl scans the area and lifts her backpack to her shoulder.

CHERYL

Great. A car was supposed to meet me here.

He lights a cigarette and offers one.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

I gave it up.

SCOTT

You're in the Balkan now. Smoking is required by law.

Cheryl drops her pack and takes the lit cigarette from his mouth.

CHERYL

Can't even remember why I quit.

SCOTT

Nagging spouse.

CHERYL

Boyfriend.

SCOTT

Is there any other reason to quit?

A smile between them.

CHERYL

Think that's when I stopped swearing too. Fuck.

SCOTT

He didn't want to join you in this holiday wonderland?

CHERYL

He's dead. I'm here to adopt a child since I couldn't have one with him.

SCOTT

(soberly)

You're not kidding, are you?

Cheryl exhales the days tension in smoke. A black, Russian made LADA pulls to the curb. The driver is TEDIC, a large, gregarious man in his late 50's.

TEDIC

Taxi?!

Cheryl jumps at the chance. Tedic smells money. The SOUNDS of a soccer match from inside the car.

SCOTT

God. I am an ass. I'm really sorry.

Tedic moves quickly for his large frame as he loads her bag into the trunk.

TEDIC
Your friend too?

SCOTT
(pleading)
I'm at the Astra as well.

CHERYL
(to Tedic)
No. I have to make a stop before
the hotel.

SCOTT
I don't mind.

Scott holds out for a change of heart. She looks to Tedic.

TEDIC
It's okay, I can take both.

Cheryl shows Tedic a folded hundred dollar bill. Tedic smiles.

TEDIC (CONT'D)
Sorry. Have a nice day.

Cheryl smiles to Scott as she drops into the back seat.

CHERYL
Thanks for the smoke. And yes, I
was kidding about the dead boyfriend.

Tedic DRIVES off. Scott turns to see the crowd of eager CAB DRIVERS that he is left to deal with.

SCOTT
Fucking Yanks.

INT./EXT. TEDIC'S TAXI / CHILD RECOVERY CENTER -- DAY

A large school-like building is being renovated as Cheryl arrives in Tedic's taxi. A SOCCER MATCH on the radio.

A sign: CHILDCORPS - PROMOTING A CHILD'S RIGHT TO PEACE.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (OFFICE) -- SAME

LENA FADEN (30) hugs a telephone receiver to her ear while rifling through paperwork. She has a SOUTH AFRICAN accent and her face is completely covered in theatrical makeup ala Charlie Chaplin.

LENA
(On phone)
Peter. Peter....Stop for a minute so
I can understand what you're saying.

Lena carries a conversation while signing papers, filing, and finishing off a croissant. Cheryl peeks in through the door and Lena invites her in with a look.

LENA (CONT'D)

(On phone)

Okay. Has he eaten yet? - What is that? - Well turn it down I can hardly hear you.

She rises from her chair in full "Tramp" costume.

LENA (CONT'D)

(On phone)

That's fine. But he's going to eat something before coming here, right?

She holds a small recycle bin to the edge of her desk and SLIDES a heap of papers into it. A handsome African man peaks into her office. This is Serge (32).

SERGE

We're ready for you.

She, nods, hands him the bin and he leaves.

LENA

Wait! No not you Peter. Is he there with you now? Try to get him to go to eat at the hotel first.

Serge stops. She glances into the recycle bin - pulls a piece of paper back out, examines it, places it on her desk, then shoos him away.

LENA (CONT'D)

Doesn't he want to sit with his wife for a bit? I promise - You won't get in trouble. Just don't act like you're stalling....Oh good. See, problem solved. Yes, she is beautiful, that's why she's a super model. Don't stare at her. Good. Okay. What's the score? Yes! And remember that's ten pounds sterling, not Cifa. Call me when they're back in the van. Bye.

She hangs up. White makeup has rubbed off onto the phone. She wipes it off, smearing it back onto her face.

LENA (CONT'D)

Hello.

CHERYL

I'm Cheryl Bradford. I'm here about Ana Suljevic.

Cheryl brandishes an official looking document. Lena goes into memory recall as she gathers her cane and bowlers hat to complete her Chaplin costume.

LENA
Suljevic...I know the name...

Cheryl shows her Ana's picture as she exits into the hall where the noises of gathering CHILDREN echo.

LENA (CONT'D)
Oh yes. She's one of our runaways.

CHERYL
Yes. Her family was killed last year.

LENA
I meant that she ran away from us.

CHERYL
What? When?

LENA
About three weeks ago.

Lena exits, Cheryl follows.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (CENTRAL CORRIDOR) -- CONTINUOUS

Lena hands out name tags to various STAFF MEMBERS as they pass in the hall. Cheryl tries to keep up with her as she makes her way through the facility.

CHERYL
I spoke with someone at the adoption agency last week. They said that I could pick her up here. I have papers for her.

LENA
The agency no longer exists I'm afraid.

CHERYL
Mr. Tallick. He's been my advisor for months.

LENA
There is no Mr. Tallick working with us. When the war broke out we ceased all adoption efforts. Did he ask for your banking information?

CHERYL
Yes.

LENA
Did you give it to him?

CHERYL
Of course not. But, I have papers.
Look.

LENA
They aren't real.

CHERYL
But Ana...I have letters from her.

LENA
The girl is real and so are her
letters. And she probably believes
you are coming to save her. Your
Mr. Tallick is in a lucrative
business, you were smart to not give
him your bank info.

Lena approaches a JANITOR who is painting a door. She pins
a name tag on him.

LENA (CONT'D)
(Croat)
Thank you for getting to this.

He nods politely. Cheryl continues her passionate pursuit.

CHERYL
I have all of the documentation.
She was in your care? How can you
be so glib?

LENA
Do I look glib to you Ms. Bradford?
I can only take care of the ones
that want to be here. Ana clearly
didn't.

Lena continues onward.

CHERYL
Then where? Where did she go?

Cheryl follows her into...

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (ART ROOM) -- CONTINUOUS

This room is a creative space set up for children. Various
works in progress, from finger-paintings to clay sculptures.

JOANNE (48) wears an art smock. She pulls paper from the
recycle bin and places it with unused side up into a basket.
She exchanges with Lena - the recycle bin for a name tag.

LENA
 (To Joanne)
 Is that enough?

JOANNE
 Perfect, thanks love.

LENA
 Hopefully as far away from here as possible.

CHERYL
 I can't believe you're being so cavalier about this.

LENA
 It's how I get through the day.

Lena continues out the door into an adjacent room.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (GALLERY ROOM) -- CONTINUOUS

On the wall is series of thumb-tacked children's drawings, photos, and paintings. Lena primps a coffee and pastry table that has been set up for guests along the far wall.

CHERYL
 How are you allowed to operate like this? Who holds you accountable? Where's your compassion?

LENA
 I am surrounded by innocent souls that have been horrendously violated. My compassion is reserved for them, not you.

CHERYL
 I see.

LENA
 Look, thousands of forced migrants fled in this direction. We were already at capacity, we took in as many as we could. Some to refugee camps - some of them stayed - and some of them went back.

CHERYL
 Do you remember Ana?

Lena gazes at the photo again.

LENA
 She had a lot of attitude.

Cheryl smiles in agreement.

CHERYL

She does.

LENA

Well, when I was her age and full of angst, I went out at night to break windows at my school.

CHERYL

I smoked pot for two years.

A surprised look from Lena.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

I had brothers.

A connection.

LENA

My point is, I really don't see her sitting this out caged up in a refugee camp. She probably went back into the city. I'm sorry, truly. I have to go and be funny now.

She hands the photo back to Cheryl.

LENA (CONT'D)

Help yourself to coffee.

Lena exits. Cheryl is left alone in a sea of child art. Crayon renderings of executions and devastation. Cheryl gives a final glance, SLINGS her pack over her shoulder and exits.

A crayon drawing of a girl standing in the center of a destroyed building. Bombs are falling from overhead. We slowly move in to the girls's frowning face...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (COMMONS AREA) -- DAY

Mira sits with a thousand yard gaze.

The wash of WALLA from the 200 CHILDREN sitting on the floor of this communal space. LAUGHING, PLAYING. Controlled chaos.

A quick game of chase is broken up by a counselor. This is SHEILA (35), a stout and jovial Arab woman. She manages to sweep up a BOY as he rushes past.

SHEILA

(Farsi)

I don't think so little one. You sit here.

Children sit in groups of different ethnicities. Each group has a COUNSELOR that speaks in their native language.

These kids are normal aside from a few that have visible injuries.

COUNSELORS of different ethnicities finish rounding up children as Serge enters. The children QUIET to hear their counselors translation of his words.

SERGE
Good morning children!

CHILDREN
Good Morning Mr. Adu!

SERGE
I have exciting news for you today.

Serge gives the counselors time to TRANSLATE.

SERGE (CONT'D)
We have a special visitor today.

Lena emerges in full Charlie Chaplin character. LAUGHTER. She hobbles around the kids as if curious about them.

SERGE (CONT'D)
This visitor is VERY nosy. He is coming to see what all of you are up to. He is a friend of ours and we want him to feel welcome.

Serge notices that Mira is disinterested and unaffected.

SERGE (CONT'D)
He may want to talk to you - he may have questions for you - And, if we're lucky he may want us to sing for him. What song do you think we should sing for him?

Counselors translate. Kids SCREAM out the names of their favorite songs.

SERGE (CONT'D)
How about...

Serge STARTS A SONG and is quickly overpowered by ENTHUSIASTIC VOICES. Mira sits in the crowd, unaffected.

On the wall behind him is a poster. A large logo and words that read: CHILDCORPS - PROMOTING A CHILD'S RIGHT TO PEACE

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STREET VENDOR'S SHACK (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

The same CHILDCORPS poster with ARABIC writing. A SOCCER MATCH on a flickering TV. Atop the counter are TRUMAN INDUSTRIES cell phone cards.

We may notice the same brand of gum that Ana had earlier.

JAMAL (15), has a kind heart with teenage cockiness. He examines the offering of cell phones, then looks away to...

Across the street is a BOY on top of a large pile of debris. TARIQ (7), TUGS at a piece of CHROME that crowns the pile.

This is a refugee camp. Densely packed, dilapidated, ramshackle houses line the narrow dusty, unpaved streets. Weak and malformed, houses lean on one another for support.

OSAMA (62), the store owner, emerges from the rear of the shack. Dialogue is in Arabic with subtitles. Jamal motions towards the television.

JAMAL

Think we'll be eliminated?

Osama shrugs as he places items into a bag. A conspicuous nod as he hands it to Jamal. Jamal returns the nod and exits.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Jamal exits and inconspicuously pulls an envelope from the bag and tucks it under his shirt. He looks up in time to spot a beautiful GIRL in a BLUE SCARF smiling as she passes.

He smiles back in awe. His attention returns to Tariq.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Forget it. Come on, we have to get home.

Tariq refuses with a nod. Jamal is not amused. Using SIGN LANGUAGE, he SNAPS at him.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

It's garbage Tariq. We have to go.

Tariq again nods in refusal. Jamal gives in.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP STREET (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

Jamal shoulders a small bicycle. It's a wreck, the handle bars are twisted, rims bent and the tires are shredded rubber. Tariq, elated, BOUNCES close on his brother's heels.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP ALLEYWAY (GAZA STRIP) -- MOMENTS LATER

Jamal kneels, back against a wall at the edge of the alley. He glances around to see that the coast is clear. Tariq is content as he examines his bike.

JAMAL

(signing along)

You're on guard duty.

Tariq salutes just as Mira did, then stands alert.

Jamal retrieves the letter and OPENS it. He reads. A smile. Eyes widen. He FLIPS the letter and continues. His face deflates as he discovers something within the letter.

A ROAR as armored vehicles pass. A stark image of the boys in silhouette against massive military trucks passing.

Jamal frantically hides the letter under his shirt. He peeks around the corner.

The Vehicles stop at a home. A WOMAN, 40's, emerges from the front door and SHOUTS at them. SOLDIERS yank a MAN out of his home. The woman CLUTCHES onto his arm. A struggle.

Anger in Jamal's eyes. He's seen enough and leads Tariq hurriedly down the alley.

INT. JAMAL'S HOME (DINING ROOM) -- LATER

A stack of flat bread and a platter of food. Dinner is ready. ZIA (35) kisses her small child SAFA (2) as she snatches an olive and brings it over to her husband. This home is a hodgepodge of various materials. Seams and cracks leak light.

KASIB (42) sits in a chair reading a newspaper. He is missing a leg and uses a rudimentary prosthetic. Zia places the olive in his mouth and kisses him on the forehead.

ZIA

Come to the table.

She helps him out of the chair.

KASIB

Your cooking is what I have missed the most.

The front door BURSTS open. Tariq rushes to hug father. Jamal sets the bike inside next to the door.

KASIB (CONT'D)

Where have you two been?

JAMAL

They took Mazhar!

Kasib pushes Tariq to the table.

KASIB

Sit down, sit down.

ZIA

I don't want that in the house, Jamal!

Jamal rushes in and kisses his sister's forehead. He pulls a bottle of soda from the bag and places it on the table.

JAMAL

I'll move it after dinner. We saw them - they pulled him right out of his house.

ZIA

Where is the kerosene?

JAMAL

(deflecting)

They were out.

Jamal speaks to his father as if sharing important news. The family begins to eat.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

I think they're doing a sweep. Maybe they will come for you father.

KASIB

I've done nothing. I have nothing to fear.

ZIA

Out of kerosene?

JAMAL

I went to three places - everybody was out. Mazhar was a good fighter, wasn't he father.

KASIB

Yes, and look what it got him. Look what it got me.

JAMAL

You're a hero.

KASIB

I am no hero, Jamal.

ZIA

Don't lie to me. Where did you go?

JAMAL

Ask Tariq! We went to three places and everybody was out of kerosene.

ZIA

You were near Mazhar's house?

JAMAL

Yes, of course, that's what I'm telling you.

Kasib passes a dish of food to Jamal.

KASIB

They had plenty of kerosene yesterday.

Jamal takes food, but doesn't pass the food along.

JAMAL

But not today. Papa - They went into his house and took him. Something must be happening.

ZIA

Where did you buy the soda?

Tariq eyes his brother and holds out his hand to take the dish. He's hungry and impatient.

KASIB

What do you mean?

JAMAL

They didn't ask any questions, they just took him. I've heard rumors. Maybe he knows what it is.

Tired of waiting, Tariq POKES Jamal's hand with a knife. Jamal releases the plate.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Ouch, knock it off.

Tariq smirks as he now has the plate of food.

KASIB

(sternly)

Rumors? What do you know Jamal.

Zia looks to photos on the wall. A YOUNG MAN'S photo hangs prominently. This is ESSAM (18). She looks to Jamal.

JAMAL

Nothing. Just rumors, that's all.

ZIA

You've heard from your brother.

KASIB

Essam?!

Jamal deflects. Kasib is visibly disturbed.

JAMAL

Of course not, Papa.

ZIA

You're lying Jamal.

JAMAL

Mama. How can you...

Zia snaps her hand out to him.

ZIA
Give it to me.

JAMAL
(innocently)
What?

ZIA
Give me the letter.

JAMAL
Mama, I just went to get kerosene...

KASIB
JAMAL!

Everyone freezes. Kasib's anger is palpable.

JAMAL
It's nothing. I don't have anything.

KASIB
Stop. Think for a moment Jamal.
Before you utter one more lie.

Jamal thinks, looks to his father, then reluctantly hands the letter to Zia.

KASIB (CONT'D)
You're a fool Jamal. They are looking
for him. They are watching you.
They are watching all of us.

ZIA
You put us all in danger. Do you
want your father back in prison?

JAMAL
Of course not! I was very careful.
Nobody saw me. I promise.

Zia reads the letter.

KASIB
What does he say?

Zia's looks blankly to Jamal.

KASIB (CONT'D)
Zia! What is it?

ZIA
He is to be a martyr.

KASIB
Oh, God.

Kasib stands and paces, full of distress.

JAMAL

You see! He is doing something. He is making a difference for us...

ZIA

You will not do this Jamal! I nearly lost my husband and now a son.

Zia rises and pulls Essam's photo off of the wall.

JAMAL

What are you doing?

ZIA

You will have nothing to do with Essam. He no longer exists.

Jamal is outraged.

JAMAL

He is my brother! Put it back up!

ZIA

Sit down Jamal!

Jamal tries to grab the photograph.

JAMAL

No. Put the picture back up!

ZIA

He's out.

Zia SMASHES the photo on the floor.

JAMAL

What are you doing! Are you crazy...

KASIB

Quiet!

Again, everyone freezes. Kasib peers out a window. The sound of APPROACHING trucks.

ZIA

Kasib I will not let them take you again.

KASIB

Quiet.

Horrific anticipation fills the room as the sound BUILDS. The whole family is frozen. The sound FADES.

Relief. Kasib locks eyes with Jamal. A glare of suspicion.

KASIB (CONT'D)

How long have you been lying?

Jamal is afraid to answer. Kasib launches into an adjacent bedroom and begins to TEAR it apart.

JAMAL

Father no!

Zia quickly grabs Jamal by the ear. Jamal is powerless.

ZIA

What have you done, Jamal?

Zia's tone disarms Jamal. RANSACKING noises come from the room. Safa CRIES. Tariq is afraid. He rushes to hug his mother's legs.

ZIA (CONT'D)

Sit down Tariq!

She sternly lifts him and plops him into a chair.

ZIA (CONT'D)

Stay there!

The NOISE from the room becomes more violent, then STOPS. Jamal swallows. Kasib emerges from the room. In his hand are a handful of letters. He approaches.

KASIB

You have the arrogance to bring this into our life?

Jamal backs away from him.

JAMAL

I'm sorry father. I didn't tell you because I knew you'd be angry.

Kasib throws the letters into his face.

KASIB

This is your reason? My anger makes you lie? Where did you learn to be a coward?

A beat.

JAMAL

From you! I learned to be a coward from you.

ZIA

Jamal! Watch your mouth!

Zia unloads on Jamal. She begins frantically HITTING and SLAPPING at him.

ZIA (CONT'D)

Get out! Get out of my home!

Kasib is heartbroken as he watches his son ushered out. As he reaches the door, Jamal STUMBLES over the bicycle.

JAMAL

This is no home! It's a prison.
I'm never coming back!

He untangles himself and THROWS it out the door as he leaves.

EXT. JAMAL'S HOME -- CONTINUOUS

Jamal runs away from his ramshackle home. Zia retreats in disgust. Tariq rushes to the door to watch his brother.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP CHECK POINT (GAZA STRIP) -- EVENING

Jamal runs until he approaches the HEAVILY FORTIFIED UNRWA camp exit. SOLDIERS and check identification of PEDESTRIANS. Jamal slows, then sprints towards towards them.

SOLDIERS raise rifles at the possible threat.

SOLDIER #1

STOP!

Jamal runs. The Soldiers prepare to fire. Jamal cries as he runs. Finally he drops to his knees, defeated.

SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)

Are you fucking crazy? Open your
shirt! Open it.

As Jamal reclaims his breath, and RIPS his shirt open for the Soldiers. Jamal rises and walks away from them.

SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)

I will fucking shoot you next time.
Huh? You got it?

Something catches Jamal's eye. A perfectly good bicycle tire sits atop a garbage pile.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (SEWING ROOM) -- DAY

Mira gazes out a window as groups of CHILDREN learn how to sew. Serge approaches her.

SERGE

Hey Mira. You don't like to sew?

Mira shakes her head.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 Would you like me to show you how?

Mira holds up fabric with a perfectly sewn patch on it. He examines it in surprise.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 This is very good. Very good. Would you like to do something else?

Mira shakes her head, 'no'.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 The other counselors are worried about you. They think that you're sad. Are you sad?

Mira shakes her head, 'no'.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 I think that you are a smart girl who needs something more challenging than this. Am I right?

She is unresponsive. He tosses the swatch over his shoulder as if it were garbage.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 Come on.

He exits, Mira grabs her small white chess piece from the window sill and follows him.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (CENTRAL CORRIDOR) -- DAY

Mira and Serge walk the length of the corridor.

SERGE
 I have a very busy day today and I need your help. Do you know what a grounds keeper is?

Mira shakes her head.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 A grounds keeper is like a goal keeper in football. A goal keeper takes care of the net, right?

Mira gives a nod.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 A grounds keeper takes care of a building. She makes sure that doors are locked, that lights are turned off when nobody is using them.

Serge picks up a piece of paper on the floor.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 She makes sure that things are tidy
 for our guests. She keeps an eye
 out for any fires. Do you think
 that you can do a job like this?

Mira nods.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 I don't think so. You don't look
 like a grounds keeper. Where is
 your uniform?

Mira looks at her clothes with dismay.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 I think I have an idea.

Serge unrolls a small, orange, goal-keepers shirt.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 Do you think this would work as a
 uniform?

Mira's eyes light up as Serge pulls it over his head. Serge
 pulls out a small flashlight.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 And this. A grounds keeper must
 have a flashlight.

Mira nods in agreement as she takes it from him.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 Now, I need you to do something for
 me at five-o'clock.

Her eyes widen as Serge shows him a gold door key hanging
 from a small medallion.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 It's very important. Can I trust you
 Mira?

She looks Serge directly in the eyes and nods.

MIRA
 You can trust me.

Serge smiles, then motions for her to follow him.

EXT. BALKAN CITY ENTRANCE -- DAY

A mass of PEOPLE congregate at the front door of a small,
 concrete building. Many of them desperately examine a posting
 board that is covered with photos of missing people.

This is a meeting place where families attempt to reunite. SENTRIES and ARMORED VEHICLES guard the entrance to the city perimeter. A BOY sells TRUMAN INDUSTRIES PHONE CARDS.

Cheryl emerges from inside the crowded building and pushes her way through the human wall towards Tedic's taxi.

INT. TEDIC'S TAXI -- DAY

Tedic sits listening to the SOCCER MATCH when Cheryl OPENS the door and DROPS into the back seat.

TEDIC
Have they seen her?

CHERYL
(distant)
No.

Cheryl gazes out the window in thought. Tedic is unsure.

TEDIC
Maybe one of the refugee camps?

Cheryl continues with her gaze.

CHERYL
I need to get into the city.

TEDIC
Don't be silly. There is a war going on. Past the fence is anarchy. It's too dangerous.

CHERYL
Take me in, or I'll find somebody who will.

TEDIC
You don't even know where to begin to look. It is a ridiculous idea....

Cheryl OPENS the door and gets out without a word to him.

TEDIC (CONT'D)
(Panic)
No! Missus Bradford....

As fast as his large frame allows, he leaps from the car.

Through the rear window Tedic catches up with her. He pleads. Cheryl walks away. Tedic negotiates. She offers a few bills. Tedic refuses. She walks. Tedic concedes and takes the money.

They both climb into the cab. Tedic SLAMS his door shut.

TEDIC (CONT'D)
Fucking Americans.

Cheryl SHUTS her door and Tedic DRIVES off.

EXT. JAMAL'S HOME -- DAY

A bicycle sits upright and upside down with a new wheel. Jamal attempts to force the chain onto the sprocket.

Tariq quietly observes his brother's frustration. Kasib emerges from the house. Jamal keeps his focus on the bike to avoid his father. Tariq reaches in to help.

JAMAL
Leave it Tariq!

Kasib crouches next to his son, picks up a screwdriver, uses it as a lever, SPINS the sprocket, and the chain quickly aligns. The wheel TURNS.

KASIB
Finesse requires patience.

Each find it difficult to look at one another.

JAMAL
Thank you.

Jamal and Kasib set the bike upright and Tariq excitedly climbs on. Jamal signs a warning.

JAMAL (CONT'D)
(signing)
Watch for cars.

Tariq nods with a smile and Jamal lets go. Jamal and Kasib silently watch Tariq. A corrosive VOICE from inside the house.

ZIA (O.S.)
Kasib! I need soap!

A clashing interruption of the quite moment.

KASIB
(Deadpan)
Ahhhh, you see?...Finesse.

A GIGGLE from Jamal. Finally a look to each other.

KASIB (CONT'D)
Your mother needs soap. I need chocolate. Is this something that you can do without creating trouble?

Jamal nods. Kasib gives Jamal some coins.

KASIB (CONT'D)
Something for Tariq as well.

JAMAL

Thank you father.

Jamal rushes off alone. Kasib watches with compassion, then is nearly run over by a GIGGLING Tariq.

INT. REFUGEE CAMP STORE (GAZA STRIP) -- LATER

An open air stand. The STORE OWNER (55) watches an ARABIC news program. Jamal enters and is immediately enraptured by the supermodel on the television, AMELIA DAINES.

AMELIA

...The land grab has to end. And the terror has to end. Temporary refugee camps have been turned into permanent slums. Until we look at the reasons behind...

STORE OWNER

Always a Hollywood actor or idiot model. Never anyone who actually matters.

JAMAL

At least she's saying something. She's beautiful.

Eyes glued to the T.V., Jamal places some soap on the counter.

STORE OWNER

Beauty. That's all they offer. We need better actors to get anyone in the west to notice. She just likes to have her picture taken.

Jamal watches Amelia closely.

STORE OWNER (CONT'D)

These are all just pictures of people who want good publicity. Those images serve them, not us. Do you hear me?

JAMAL

What?

STORE OWNER

Those people only care about themselves. We need stronger images to make things change for us. It is the only way.

Jamal nods with understanding. He pockets his candy and carries a new bar of soap in his hand.

JAMAL

Thank you.

He turns just as a flaming bottle of gasoline DROPS on the street! Flames ERUPT. SOLDIERS chase protesters. The Store Owner PULLS down the garage door to protect the store.

STORE OWNER
Through the back. Go home! Stay
off the streets.

He PULLS Jamal to the back door.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP ALLEYWAY (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

Jamal is thrown into this back alley. He races through a narrow maze of back alleys and corridors. He spots a YOUNG MAN as he is captured by a SOLDIER. Jamal RUNS opposite!

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Jamal SCURRIES into a GROUP of SOLDIERS. A SOLDIER aims at him. He ducks back into the alley as a tear gas bomb files overhead. It LANDS in front of JAMAL, SPEWING out gas. He leaps over it and runs.

EXT. REFUGEE ALLEYWAY/STREET -- CONTINUOUS

He emerges onto the street into a group of BOYS confronting SOLDIERS. They THROW rocks. Jamal is frozen. The boys scramble to find ammunition. A boy BUMPS him, KHALIL (16). A devilish grin before throwing a rock at a SOLDIER.

Smoke grenades DROP in front of them. The air thickens, giving cover to the soldiers as they begin to charge. The boys RETREAT. Khalil TRIPS and falls to the ground.

Jamal's reflexes snap as he throws his soap at an approaching Soldier, JOSEPH (18). Joseph flinches as he is hit.

Khalil has time to rise to his feet. A quick acknowledgement of solidarity then they split - running off through the smoke in different directions. Joseph gives chase.

As Jamal runs away from the danger he develops a smile.

INT. REFUGEE CAMP SCHOOL (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

Inside, children sit on the floor filling the room to the brim. A TEACHER distributes textbooks from a box.

TEACHER
Please share your new book with the
person next to you.

Stamped on the boxes is the UN LOGO and U-N-R-W-A. Lining the walls are various teaching aids, PALESTINIAN flags, pre-occupation maps, and portraits of men, likely Martyrs.

Jamal and Tariq stand in the second row outside the building. Jamal does his best to pay attention. Tariq doesn't.

A textbook is passed to Jamal. He kneels and opens it.

Tariq is drawn to the colorful book. A map of ISRAEL.

JAMAL

(signing)

This is where we live.

Tariq shows no interest. He reaches in and flips to a random page. A photo of a Giraffe. Tariq GIGGLES.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

(signing)

Stop it Tariq.

With backs turned to the overcrowded school, Jamal pages through the book with his little brother. Due to their position, they are facing...

A nearby mosque where we see a group of men in WHITE ROBES and CAPS congregating in the arched doorway.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP CARPENTRY SHOP (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

Kasib is a focused craftsman checking the fit of a decorative, wood-carved rose. He carves minor adjustments. Perfect fit. His eyes shift as he notices something inside the shop.

An OLD MAN (70) emerges from the back office followed by FOUR MEN. A NERVOUS MAN wears a suit. The Old Man kisses him as he is escorted out the back. He glances to Kasib...

Kasib quickly averts to mind-his-own business.

JAMAL (O.S.)

It's too small.

Jamal and Tariq stand nearby. Tariq holds a bowl of food. He holds the flower onto the chair to get another look.

KASIB

Too small? It's perfect.

Jamal shrugs.

KASIB (CONT'D)

What do you know? Maybe you can make one better?

JAMAL

I don't know how.

KASIB

Then you must learn.

Kasib tosses the wood rose to Jamal.

KASIB (CONT'D)

Copy this one.

JAMAL

With what?

Kasib finds a scrap of wood and hands it to him.

KASIB

There. Make a good one and I'll use it for the other side.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Exactly what we need! God grants us another generation to carry the tradition.

JAMAL

Hello Assaf.

KASIB

Is that my dinner?

Tariq hands him the food.

KASIB (CONT'D)

Come, sit with me.

OLD MAN

Learn your father's craft Jamal.
Jobs are very difficult to find inside these walls.

*

A look between the men verifies that the message is clear.

JAMAL

I will.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP BORDER (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

Kasib leans against a wall eating. Next to him is Jamal. Tariq plays with a soccer ball made of rags.

Before them is a small open field on the edge of camp. Just beyond the field is the razor wire fence that separates them from the city. Kasib watches Tariq.

KASIB

You are a good brother Jamal. And a good son.

JAMAL

I'm sorry I put us in danger.

KASIB

This! Ha - You don't even know what any of this is about. Your mistake was telling me a lie.

JAMAL

I'm not a child. I understand everything that's going on here. I know why we are made to live like this.

KASIB

Oh, good. Will you tell me then? I've spent my life in this place and I still don't know why.

JAMAL

I'm serious. I want to fight for our freedom like you did.

KASIB

Of course you do...

JAMAL

And like Essam does.

KASIB

Think for a moment. Do you think that your brother's death will result in anything of use?

JAMAL

Of course. It will send a message. It will send stronger pictures.

KASIB

What did losing my leg do? It gave me a limp - nothing else. I'm the only one who remembers that picture. Essam is being used by madmen who have lost touch with God. It is best for us to remember him as he was.

JAMAL

I can't believe you. You have given up on our home.

KASIB

Jamal, listen...

JAMAL

No! I thought you were a hero, but Essam is the hero. You're just a coward because you've given up!

Kasib grabs his arm. Jamal is shocked silent.

KASIB

Listen to me. I want you to fight.

KASIB (CONT'D)

But this is not what you should fight for. I want you to fight for something else. Not just for dirt and rock.

JAMAL

What do I fight for then?

KASIB

Something that is rarely experienced in places like this.

JAMAL

What?

The soccer ball SMACKS the wall between Jamal and Kasib. Jamal LAUGHS at his fathers overreaction. Kasib pushes Jamal back as he rises. Jamal SPRINGS to his feet.

A pick-up game of football starts between father and sons. LAUGHTER bellows as they SCRAMBLE to out-maneuver each other.

INTERCUT WITH INTERIOR OF CITY BUS -- DAY

The girl from earlier, in the blue scarf, watches as the Nervous Man climbs onto the bus.

Jamal steals the ball from Kasib. Then Tariq STEALS!

The Nervous Man walks along the center aisle, face solemn. His hands clenched inside his pockets.

Jamal has been duped by his brother who quickly takes a shot at the wall. SMACK! He dances around as if he has scored.

TARIQ

GOOOOAAAALLLLLLL!!!!

Kasib lifts Tariq like a hero. Jamal dances in celebration.

A FLASH of light in the distance... Then a CRACK of a roaring EXPLOSION. They freeze. The trio stands in awe as they watch a cloud of smoke rise from a distant city bus.

People scramble. SIRENS go off.

Horror fills Kasib's eyes as Jamal and Tariq stand hand-in-hand with him. The silhouetted trio stand behind razor wire - watching the horrific scene unfold on the other side.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP HOME (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

The blast ECHOES, Zia emerges from her hodgepodge house, holding Safa tightly. A look of horror at the smoke billowing above distant rooftops. People clear children from the street as if a storm were rolling in.

EXT. BUS BOMB SITE -- DAY

The moment after debris settles around the devastated bus. Shell-shocked civilians emerge. A BLUE SCARF clings to a flaming piece of twisted steel.

AUDIO OF A NEWSCAST:

REPORTER (V.O.)

...The unidentified suicide bomber blew himself up after boarding a bus full of evening commuters. Five are reported dead with up to twelve others critically wounded.

PARAMEDICS begin to arrive at the horrible scene.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP STREET -- DAY

The youthful face of Joseph stares directly through us. We can still see the child, until he pulls on his helmet, shoulders his rifle, then boards a military vehicle.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP HOME (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

Zia scans the area for her family. A group of BOYS rush past her. Among them is Khalil who makes eye contact with her.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP MONTAGE (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

A NEWS MONTAGE. IMAGES OF RESCUE WORKERS HELPING VICTIMS. IMAGES OF A MILITARY ROLL OUT AND DEPLOYMENT. PEOPLE RUNNING.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The bombing was the third since both sides declared a cease-fire in June.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP STREET (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

Kasib runs through the streets with his boys in hand. Military vehicles stampeding in the background.

SOLDIERS usher YOUNG MEN at gunpoint while others breach the front door of a home.

REPORTER (V.O.)

...Authorities believe that the attacker came from a nearby camp that has been a home to many past bombers.

A soccer game plays on a television in a store window. On the street, Kasib, Jamal, and Tariq dodge around people.

NEWS IMAGES & AUDIO of the REPORTER - TANKS, TROOPS AND HELICOPTERS DEPLOYED. YOUNG BOYS THROWING ROCKS AT TANKS. A HELICOPTER FIRES ITS ROCKETS INTO A NEIGHBORHOOD.

A ROCKET HITS THE YOUTH CENTER NEXT TO THE CARPENTRY SHOP.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP HOME (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

An attack helicopter HOVERS over Zia as she cradles her child. The giant war machine contrasts the fragile image. Dust SWIRLS. Fabric of her dress undulates as the helicopter fires its rockets into the distance.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP STREET (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

Kasib and his sons reach the end of an alley. Jamal notices Tariq's untied shoe lace.

JAMAL

Father, wait.

He bends to tie it, allowing for a moment of rest.

KASIB

Your mother will be worried until she sees your faces.

JAMAL

Father...Was it him? Was it Essam?

KASIB

(A beat.)

No.

Jamal looks to his father for confirmation.

KASIB (CONT'D)

It was not your brother. Stay close to me.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP HOME (GAZA STRIP) -- LATER

Zia sits with Safa in her arms. Kasib approaches with his two boys. The family draws together.

KASIB

Jamal - Change out of your school clothes.

He looks kindly to Jamal and hands him a small pocket knife.

KASIB (CONT'D)

Come back and I'll teach you how to carve that rose.

Jamal beams. He rushes towards the door but stops as a military truck SLAMS on the brakes. Jamal lock eyes with one of the soldiers, instant recognition - it's Joseph.

JOSEPH

Grab that boy!

In an instant Jamal RUNS away. Tariq instinctively follows his brother. Kasib tries to grab him.

ZIA

Tariq!

KASIB

(To Soldiers)

Leave him alone!

The Soldiers chase the boys.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP ALLEYWAY (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

Jamal races through a narrow corridor. He glances back to see Tariq following.

JAMAL

What are you doing?!

Joseph and another Soldier round the corner. No time! He grabs his brother's hand and continues running.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP ALLEYWAY (GAZA STRIP) -- CONTINUOUS

Jamal and Tariq weave in and out of obstacles. They pass an OLD WOMAN who tips a motor-scooter in the path of the soldiers. Joseph LEAPS over and gains on the boys.

An open door offers an escape route. Jamal SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT just as Joseph and his partner reach it. Joseph shoves on the door. It's locked. BANG-BANG-BANG. He fires into the lock, then kicks the door open.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP STREET (GAZA STRIP) -- CONTINUOUS

Jamal and Tariq BURST out and race across a street, dodging into an alley as a bus CROSSES. Joseph and his partner emerge unsure which direction to follow. They charge across into a different alley.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP ALLEYWAY/STREET (GAZA STRIP) -- CONTINUOUS

Jamal and Tariq reach the mid point of the alley and stop. SOLDIERS at the end of the alley spot Jamal and Tariq. Suspicion. Jamal thinks. He looks behind - no sign of Joseph.

The soldiers get a RADIO call and move towards the boys.

JAMAL

(signing)

Go back. Go!

Tariq runs back the way they came. Jamal keeps his eyes on the soldiers as he backs away from them. He turns to run and sees Tariq has reached the street.

SLAM! In a violent instant Tariq is STRUCK by a vehicle. Jamal reels. Tariq's body lays motionless in the street.

Jamal screams as he looks for signs of life. He cradles Tariq in his arms. Jamal shakes uncontrollably as PEOPLE gather to help him.

A MAN steps in and listens for a heartbeat. Hands pull Jamal out of the Man's way. Jamal struggles, but gives in.

INT. REFUGEE CAMP HOME (GAZA STRIP) -- AFTERNOON

Zia lays in a heap in the middle of her home. Kasib kneels over her, trying to console. They are silhouettes as light spills through gaps of the walls that surround them.

Jamal paces around them. Numb. He can hardly contain the emotions welling inside his skin. Rage builds. He rushes outside. Kasib rushes after him.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP HOME (GAZA STRIP) -- EVENING

Kasib watches his son run off away from his home.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP HILLSIDE (GAZA STRIP) -- EVENING

The sky grows dim as Jamal gazes past the razor wire.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

They build walls around our homes,
then shoot missiles at us.

His hands on the handlebars of Tariq's bike. With a shove the bike ghost-rides down a hill. He fights tears. The Old Man leans in, WHISPERING into Jamal's ear.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

We fight back with the only weapons
we have so that the world will hear.

The bike travels a distance before it CRASHES. Jamal stands alone. Images jump-cut as he paces. The Old Man with him. Then he is alone. He clutches and SHAKES the fence.

He SCREAMS. He listens to WHISPERS.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And yet the world sees them as the
victim. They don't hear us.

He SMASHES the chair that Kasib built. Jamal on his knees.

OLD MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What do you think this means Jamal?

The Old Man leans in close to Jamal's ear.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

It means that we are not shouting
loud enough. God has given us a voice,
yet many refuse to use it.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP CARPENTRY SHOP (GAZA STRIP) -- EVENING

The YOUTH CENTER next to the carpentry shop is scorched and
burned. The carpentry shop is untouched. The SOUNDS of a
television dominate. The voice is of Amelia Daines.

AMELIA (V.O.)

I'm not a politician. I'm a daughter,
a sister, a wife, a mother.

The Old Man finishes his prayers. Jamal watches him.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I appeal to my government, and to
your government to correct this
horrible situation.

The Old Man pulls up his mat and OPENS the front door.
He nods to Jamal.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Your brother spoke loudly. Very
loudly. So did your father, once.

INT. STREET VENDOR'S SHACK (GAZA STRIP) -- SAME

Kasib waits as the Store Owner fills a bag. A television
NEWSCAST features Amelia. Kasib is glossed over. Solemn.

AMELIA (V.O.)

We must look beyond the hideous
actions on both sides.

Kasib gazes at the TV, then notices the CHILDCORPS poster.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If we do not, there is no hope for
any of us. If we are to get beyond
this, we must ensure security for
children on both sides of the wall.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP HILLSIDE (GAZA STRIP) -- EVENING

The Old Man stands behind Jamal.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Where is your voice? What will you
say? How loud will you be Jamal?

The Old Man bows his head, then walks away, leaving the figure
of Jamal standing alone, a world of grey around him.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE (THE BALKAN) -- NIGHT

Headlights approach. A stack of weapons is illuminated. A businessman named JAVOCK PARYAVI (37) waits. The van STOPS. Two FIGURES emerge. Backlit by headlights, faces stay in darkness as they inspect the guns. Dialogue is in Croat.

A Man lifts a heavy machine gun. An edge of light reveals this is the man who abducted Ana, Petric.

PETRIC

Anything over 10 kilos is too heavy.
I'll take everything else. We'll
make up the difference in ammunition.

JAVOCK

Done.

Petric nods to a Henchman who SLIDES OPEN the van door.

Light flickers as several figures cross in front of headlights. Backlit locks of long hair reveal the horrific deal that is being made.

Five YOUNG GIRLS step across the line of weapons, into another Van. Ana's face peers out as the SLIDING DOOR IS SHUT.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (STORAGE CLOSET) -- DAY

An illuminated light bulb. A small hand reaches to grasp the dangling chain. Fingers stretched, its just out of reach.

Mira PUSHES a small box to the center of the room. With a STEP UP she easily reaches the chain and PULLS it. Darkness.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (BOYS DORM ROOM) -- DAY

Mira scans each bunk as if she were a drill sergeant. She CLICKS a locker door shut and pushes a crease out of a bed. A final look back as she FLIPS the light off.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (WOOD SHOP) -- DAY

CHILDREN work on various projects. Mira spots a piece of scrap wood on the floor, picks it up and places it on a bench next to an older CHILD. A nod between them and she exits.

EXT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (SOCCER FIELD) -- DAY

Mira approaches the field with a bag full of soccer balls. She DUMPS the balls out onto the ground.

CHILDREN enter from both sides in a full sprint for the balls. They dash out onto the field to play. Mira walks back towards the building with a nod to Sheila and another COUNSELOR.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (CENTRAL CORRIDOR) -- DAY

Mira walks the corridor looking into the BUZZING classrooms as she passes. CHILDREN are involved in painting, sewing, computer skills, etc. She reaches the end of the hall and looks up to a clock on the wall. It reads 10:37.

She compares the clock to her wrist where a clock face has been drawn with permanent marker. Two arrows represent hands indicating five o'clock.

EXT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER -- DAY

Colorful flags of various countries attempt to brighten the two story concrete building. A SPUTTERING car STOPS.

An OLD MAN emerges from the driver's seat and opens the rear door. He extends his hand, offering it to his passenger.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (INFIRMARY ROOM) -- DAY

Opaque glass in a door blurs the outline of two FIGURES on the other side. VOICES mumble. Muddy shoes dangle from a child sitting atop an examination table. Lena ENTERS.

LENA

(Croat)

Hello. Welcome. What is your name?

A boy, RAFI (8) stares at Lena with defiant resolve.

LENA (CONT'D)

(Croat)

My name is Lena. It was nice of that man to look after you, wasn't it?

His blue eyes pierce through dirt and grime on his face.

LENA (CONT'D)

(English)

Don't like to talk?

Lena pulls a towel from a drawer and wets it.

LENA (CONT'D)

Probably tired of strangers like me trying to be your best friend.

Rafi moves away as Lena tries to wipe the dirt from his face.

LENA (CONT'D)

(Offering the rag)

Okay love. You do it.

He takes the rag and cleans his face.

LENA (CONT'D)

(Croat)

You're going to stay here for a few days until we can find a new home for you.

Rafi continues to clean. Lena points to her own face.

LENA (CONT'D)

Missed a bit.

He responds by wiping at the indicated spot.

LENA (CONT'D)

Good.

He is unsure of Lena as he hands the rag back. With an open palm, as if feeding a horse, Lena offers him a piece of gum. *(This is the same gum given out by the UN Soldiers)*

Rafi's eyes travel from the gum, to Lena's eyes. He doesn't want it.

LENA (CONT'D)

I bet you're starving.

(Croat)

Are you hungry?

No response.

LENA (CONT'D)

Well, let's see if we have any clean clothes for you and we'll get you fed.

Lena OPENS a closet and digs through a box of clothing. Rafi JUMPS from the table. Lena pulls a small sweater out.

LENA (CONT'D)

(Croat)

Do you like this?

He responds by simply accepting the sweater.

LENA (CONT'D)

Good. Let's see what else we have...

Rafi calmly turns and walks out the door.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (INFIRMARY OFFICE) -- CONTINUOUS

Rafi emerges from the infirmary room and SHUTS the door behind. He PULLS the desk chair over to the doorknob and swiftly wedges it, pinning the door shut.

He reaches into a large jar on the desk, retrieves several candy suckers, then exits.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (ENTRANCE) -- DAY

Rafi RUNS from the office and travels the length of the corridor, searching for an escape route. He rushes to the door and PUSHES on it, but it's locked.

He sits down and wraps his feet in the sweater. With a swift mule-type kick he STRIKES the glass with THUD.

A second KICK. Then ANOTHER. One more and the GLASS pops out of the frame and BREAKS as it lands outside. He unwraps the sweater, throws it over the broken glass and crawls out.

EXT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (ENTRANCE) -- CONTINUOUS

Rafi crawls out but stops. He looks up and knows he's busted. Standing above with crossed arms is Mira.

INT. HOTEL ASTRA (BAR) -- NIGHT

Cheryl studies a map at a table in this modest hotel bar. A safe place for relief workers, journalists and diplomats to congregate. A soccer match PLAYS on the TV.

SCOTT (O.S.)

I have to warn you, I'm in a relationship.

CHERYL

You mean the one with your self?

A bit drunk, Scott can't help but smile at her wit.

SCOTT

Sure you're not from Glasgow?

CHERYL

Chicago.

SCOTT

May we join you?

Scott takes a seat as a WAITER delivers her drink.

CHERYL

I'll have another, please.

SCOTT

What is it?

CHERYL

If it had vermouth it'd be a martini.

SCOTT

(to waiter, in dialect)

A double. Lovely cab ride from the airport. Sat with a beautiful American woman from Chicago.

CHERYL

Strange to see one of them off the big white tour bus.

SCOTT

We really hit it off once we got past me being an arrogant prick.

A smile is exchanged.

CHERYL

You had it coming.

SCOTT

Agreed. Now, how can I help you find whatever it is you're looking for on this sorely outdated map?

CHERYL

Okay. Where you would go if you were a twelve-year-old girl in a war-zone with no home.

Scott spots Ana's photo on the table and examines it.

SCOTT

Fuck. You're serious this time?

CHERYL

Unfortunately, yes.

SCOTT

A relative?

CHERYL

Almost. I have adoption papers that are apparently useless.

Scott can sense her despair.

SCOTT

Fuck the papers. Find the girl. She has no chance in this place.

CHERYL

Yes, of course. How?

SCOTT

If she's in the city there are about three places you're likely to find her, or at least somebody that knows where to find her.

CHERYL

Then what? I can't take her with me. I can't stay here.

SCOTT
What's her name?

CHERYL
Ana Suljevic.

Drinks are delivered.

SCOTT
Nobody on this planet is speaking
her name other than you.

CHERYL
Come on...

SCOTT
I've spent a lifetime telling stories
of kids like this all over the world.
The fucking wars are all the same.
Some asshole convinces a group of
assholes to go and take everything
from another group of assholes.
Living among the assholes, are kids
like Ana Suljevic.

CHERYL
A little myopic don't you think.

SCOTT
The assholes will not stop. There
is nothing more important than getting
Ana Suljevic out of this God damn
war.

Scott pulls a pen from his pocket and orients the map.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
It's the only thing you can do to
save yourself.

CHERYL
From what?

SCOTT
From being an asshole.

Cheryl feels a glimmer of inspiration.

CHERYL
Thank you.

SCOTT
Don't. You've no idea where I'm
about to send you.

INT. ASTRA HOTEL (HALLWAY) -- LATER

Cheryl carries Scott through the hallway. He is numb, she's not much better.

SCOTT

A fucking yank carrying a scot back to his room. You've made history love. This is a fucking monumental moment. Don't let go...

They enter his room.

INT. ASTRA HOTEL (SCOTT'S ROOM) -- NIGHT

Cheryl drops Scott onto the bed.

CHERYL

You need water.

SCOTT

God not that...You can't make me.

She steps into the bathroom, turns on a light, and immediately spots a hanging shirt covered in blood.

CHERYL

Oh my God... What happened?

She steps out and looks to him.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Is that your blood?

Scott's alcohol level can no longer conceal his emotions.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

A wall of flame takes the shape of a plywood hut. QUIET conversation is heard.

SCOTT (O.S.)

Still too hot. Split the difference.

The distorted silhouette of a SOLDIER walks towards us.

GAVRIE

I don't think it's the light.

The soldier's face is revealed. It's BOMANI (13) his youthful face unsettling by his complete lack of innocence.

INT. CHIEF OLENGA'S OFFICE (AFRICA) -- DAY

A small light descends behind the head of CHIEF JEAN-PIERRE OLENGA, 40's, an African man in the role of noble leader.

Scott Simms and GAVRIE RUSH, 30's, a cocky American videographer adjust lights.

Jean-Pierre, Bomani, and a handful of SOLDIERS watch with suspicion. Among them is LUMUMBA(19), a loyal thug to Olenka.

GAVRIE

It's sunlight bouncing off the desk.

Bomani gazes into the light reflecting off the desktop.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

AMANI (10) is crying. SOUND remains from Olenka's office. He stands in line with other terrified YOUNG BOYS.

SCOTT (O.S.)

These photos are your family Chief Olenka.

One of them is in a numb state of shock. This is POI (10). Black smoke billows in the background. Jean-Pierre's ENGLISH carries a heavy accent, part French and part Kikongo.

JEAN-PIERRE (O.S.)

Please, call me Jean-Pierre. Yes, they are my immediate family. But, in my country family has a slightly different meaning.

Lumumba barks orders then smacks Amani. Poi gazes forward without a flinch. A rope is tossed onto the ground.

INT. CHIEF OLENGA'S OFFICE (AFRICA) -- DAY

Bomani watches as Scott scrutinizes a portable monitor. In it Jean-Pierre sits before the green, yellow and red of the DRK flag. A 'hot spot' is still visible.

SCOTT

Gav, just flag off the lower half of that window and we're good to go.

Gavrie SNAPS open his knife to cut some cardboard. A rifle is suddenly shoved in his face. Gavrie's hands go up.

GAVRIE

Hey, sorry man. No cardboard.

Scott looks to Jean-Pierre for support.

JEAN-PIERRE

You are needing what, Mr. Simms?

SCOTT

Just need to cover the window a bit.

Jean-Pierre speaks in Kikongo as if telling a joke. His smile is charming. The soldiers LAUGH. He motions to Bomani.

JEAN-PIERRE
Bomani. Help our guests.

Bomani is confused.

JEAN-PIERRE (CONT'D)
Now!

Bomani runs immediately rushes to Gavrie.

GAVRIE
It's ok, I'll just use some tape...

JEAN-PIERRE
I insist. Bomani is an eager one.

Gavrie hands him the cardboard.

GAVRIE
Grab that there. Stand by window and hold like this. Understand?

Bomani comprehends the task but not the purpose. He holds it and stands facing Jean-Pierre. Gavrie adjusts him.

GAVRIE (CONT'D)
Good, now turn so you're umm, well, parallel to the window. Ok. Now lower, lower, good. Now don't move.

Bomani lowers the board slightly. Gavrie gently corrects.

GAVRIE (CONT'D)
Oops. Up a bit.

Jean-Pierre SNAPS in Kikongo. Bomani straightens up. Scott winks to Bomani whose eyes peek above the cardboard.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

The hand of an ADULT SOLDIER pulls at a rope that is tied around the waist of each Boy. SOUND is from Olenka's office.

JEAN-PIERRE
You're making me look good?

Bomani walks behind the line with his assault rifle. Concerned, he watches Poi who walks in a state of shock.

INT. CHIEF OLENGA'S OFFICE (AFRICA) -- DAY

Scott smiles at him.

SCOTT
Like a president. I promise.

JEAN-PIERRE

President Olenga? That's good. Or maybe a Prime Minister, 'eh? Prime Minister. It just sounds better than President, don't you think Mr. Simms? Like Prime-Rib-steak!

SCOTT

I suppose it does.

JEAN-PIERRE

This is why I chose to learn English in England. American English is only good for movies. What do you say?

SCOTT

I say you're bloody right. That's why I do all the talking and Gav here just runs the camera.

Gavrie peers into the viewfinder.

GAVRIE

Anytime Mr. Hitchcock.

SCOTT

Are you ready Chief Olenga?

Jean-Pierre straightens and nods to the camera.

JEAN-PIERRE

Go ahead. Make my day.

Jean-Pierre LAUGHS at his own joke.

SCOTT

State your name please.

JEAN-PIERRE

Chief Jean-Pierre Olenga. Commander of the people's militia of Porte des Cieux.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

SOLDIERS order the Boys onto a flatbed truck. Bomani assists.

SCOTT (O.S.)

You have been in your position now for ten years. Conflict in the region is growing, yet you seem to have a strong following. Why do the people support you?

Lumumba strikes a Boy. Bomani averts his eyes.

INT. CHIEF OLENGA'S OFFICE (AFRICA) -- DAY

Bomani watches nervously over the cardboard.

JEAN-PIERRE

Leadership is earned by giving the people someone to follow. Time does not change things, leadership changes things. I provide for them in a way that the world has not. To them I am a father.

Bomani eyes glance to Jean-Pierre, then to Scott.

EXT. BACK OF A FLAT BED TRUCK (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

A flatbed truck BOUNCES down a jungle road. The Boys ride with a thousand-yard-stare. Amani is the only one CRYING.

JEAN-PIERRE (O.S.)

And they respect me like this. Many call me their Pa-pa. This is why I'm their leader. It is said, the price of greatness is responsibility.

SCOTT

Ahhh. Winston Churchill. Very good.

JEAN-PIERRE (O.S.)

And Spider-Man, don't forget.

SCOTT (O.S.)

Spider-Man, of course. How could I forget.

Bomani spots Lumumba gazing at Amani and understands. A look from Lumumba to Bomani reinforces his feeling. Bomani turns away to look the forest. His expression becomes distant.

INT. CHIEF OLENGA'S OFFICE (AFRICA) -- DAY

Jean-Pierre sits with confidence.

SCOTT (O.S.)

Part of the recent UN treaty calls for the formation of a united military. Is it true that the government is planning to absorb your militia into it's military, appointing you as a General?

JEAN-PIERRE

There are talks of this, yes. But this has nothing to do with the United Nations. My country has been raped by Europe and the west for generations.

(MORE)

JEAN-PIERRE (CONT'D)

We are choosing to unite not because of a mandate imposed by you - but by the will of our people. Our desire to no longer be a cornucopia for the west to exploit at will.

SCOTT

I see. And as part of the government army, will you maintain your current recruitment practices?

JEAN-PIERRE

Can you clarify please?

SCOTT

Will you still use children as soldiers for your army?

JEAN-PIERRE

This has never been a policy. The young that you see among us have nowhere else to go. Families killed in war - we offer them a home.

SCOTT

But is that reality Chief Olenga?

Jean-Pierre CHUCKLES and shakes his head.

JEAN-PIERRE

Some of the children have chosen to join the military when they have nowhere else to go. You see...the real issue is about money to feed our regular soldiers.

EXT. BARRACKS (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

The truck STOPS in front of ramshackle huts. Bomani the Soldiers JUMP off the back. Lumumba shouts in Kikongo.

LUMUMBA

All of you, get up!

The recruits stumble off as the soldiers pull the rope tied to their waists. Amani, the last one off, is still crying.

JEAN-PIERRE (V.O.)

You see, some generals in the government's army are recruiting children. But not as fighters. The government gives money to their militias according to the number of enlisted men.

Lumumba cuts Amani free and walks him to the center of the circle of recruits. He rests his hands on Amani's shoulders.

Bomani watches from a slight distance away.

He grabs a handful of Amani's hair.

LUMUMBA

This one cries because he is missing his home. Anyone crying will die. This is your home now!

Amani continues to cry.

LUMUMBA (CONT'D)

Anyone who does not help stomp out this crybaby will not join us. It is up to you.

Poi and the others hesitate. Blank stares from boys faces.

JEAN-PIERRE (V.O.)

Children pad the list for allocation. This actually helps to feed the children. You see, this issue has been over simplified by the media. It is not a problem in the way that you are inquiring.

Suddenly a BOY rushes in and STRIKES Amani with a stick. Amani drops to the ground. He strikes Amani over and over. Poi and others move forward and begin KICKING and STOMPING.

INT. CHIEF OLENGA'S OFFICE (AFRICA) -- DAY

Bomani watches in disbelief, not realizing he is gradually lowering the cardboard.

SCOTT

Is the list that you submit to the government padded with children?

Jean-Pierre grins and shakes his head.

JEAN-PIERRE

I do what I must do to keep the youngest among us fed and educated. Call it...clerical manipulation for proper education.

Chief Olenka LAUGHS as his cute rhyme. Scott obliges.

SCOTT

Very well. Then what do you say about stories of abduction?

JEAN-PIERRE

Over exaggerations. Many, many of the children you see in this camp were handed over by the parents.

SCOTT

Handed over?

Scott glances at Bomani. Jean-Pierre notices. Bomani adjusts.

JEAN-PIERRE

Of course. We are not a rich country like yours. When parents can afford them, the children go back to their family.

SCOTT

Isn't what you are describing called slavery?

JEAN-PIERRE

Survival. This is what we call survival. Employment. You would have them starve and die on the streets?

SCOTT

Of course not, but there are reports of human rights violations.

JEAN-PIERRE

Those are shameful accusations. Understand this - The government would never accept a gang of rebels. The United Nations would not accept us as a member delegation. So you see, that they accept me proves that I am innocent of these horrible charges.

SCOTT

I see. But you don't deny that there are children - young children - training at your camp and fighting in regional conflict.

JEAN-PIERRE

Mr. Simms, this entire continent has been decimated by AIDS. Of course the military is made up of younger men - all of the adults are either sick or dying from an epidemic.

SCOTT

Does that then justify the use of children in warfare?

JEAN-PIERRE

How many British children go to a military academy and train? You see, what I am doing is no different.
(MORE)

JEAN-PIERRE (CONT'D)

I am giving children the benefits of life in the military just like your government does. A structure and discipline so that they may become productive members of society. What I want for my country is no different than what you want for yours. The west sends billions of dollars to Africa. I want none of it. Keep your money. Keep your judgments.

Scott searches for his next question.

SCOTT

Let me go back to something you stated earlier. You mentioned that you provide protection. From whom?

Jean-Pierre looks sternly across the desk, refusing to answer.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Clearly you have an army. Who do they fight?

JEAN-PIERRE

Obviously anyone who threatens our territory.

SCOTT

And what do they want? Why are they threatening you?

Jean-Pierre shakes his head, holding back.

JEAN-PIERRE

Power. They want power.

SCOTT

Over what? The coltan mines?

Bomani drifts. His cardboard slowly lowers. The glare on the desk begins to return.

JEAN-PIERRE

You don't know what you are talking about.

SCOTT

Coltan is used in every computer chip, in every cell phone. The market value is enormous. I have been told that this is a major source of conflict in this....

JEAN-PIERRE

Maybe you have forgotten where you are Mr. Simms.

On the monitor the camera zooms in for a close up. Jean-Pierre's eyes spew anger. Lumumba clutches his assault rifle.

SCOTT

Isn't it true that your forces have taken control of the local gold mines and are now fighting over the coltan in the region?

JEAN-PIERRE

Isn't it true that your country invades oil rich nations? Isn't it true that you invade them before they can cause harm to you? Isn't it true that you torture your prisoners?

SCOTT

We're talking about you.

JEAN-PIERRE

And I'm talking about you. I invited you here because of your honesty. Now you come to me with question about rumors that you hear on the street? What kind of journalist are you?

Lumumba is visibly angered.

SCOTT

OK, then let's talk about how your militia is financed.

Scott holds his ground, waiting patiently. Tense SILENCE.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

How is your militia financed?

Lumumba spots that Bomani has lowered the cardboard. He LUNGES and STRIKES him. All hell breaks loose.

LUMUMBA

(dialect)

Pay attention!

Lumumba GRABS Bomani and DRAGS HIM out of the room.

GAVRIE

Christ.

SCOTT

He's fine. Leave him. It's fine!

Lumumba pulls Bomani like a rag doll. Scott gives chase.

EXT. CHIEF OLENGA'S HEADQUARTERS (AFRICA) -- SAME

Scott BUSTS out the door after Lumumba and Bomani.

SCOTT

Hold on. That's not necessary!

Bomani offers no resistance as Lumumba berates him in Kikongo.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Take it easy.

Scott intervenes. Lumumba's rage shifts to him. He raises his rifle and SHOUTS in Kikongo. Scott's hands go up.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Whoa! It's okay, man. Just leave the kid out of it.

Bomani watches in submission. Lumumba continues to YELL.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Whatever you say man. It's just an interview. It's all good. Put the gun down.

GAVRIE

Christ...Scott. Let him do what he wants.

SCOTT

He wants to bloody shoot me - that's what he wants Gav. Fuck me...

Lumumba YELLS. Scott backs. Lumumba follows, gun raised.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Mate, I'm not sure what you're saying.

Jean-Pierre emerges from the building and casually approaches.

JEAN-PIERRE

He's telling you that the interview is over.

SCOTT

Yeah. Got that part.

JEAN-PIERRE

And he's wondering if you're going to join us in watching our National football team defeat Angola. I have satellite television.

SCOTT

Not much of a fan, actually.

A nod from Jean-Pierre and Lumumba lowers his gun.

JEAN-PIERRE
 Football is more important than
 politics. More important than your
 magazine. Join us.

Jean-Pierre turns and walks away.

SCOTT
 But I only got half an interview.

JEAN-PIERRE
 Maybe tomorrow.

SCOTT
 I hope you're not changing your mind,
 Chief Olenga.

Jean-Pierre turns around and approaches.

GAVRIE
 Ahh, Christ Scott.

JEAN-PIERRE
 I am a man of my word.

SCOTT
 It's a tough interview. I know that.
 But people need to hear me ask
 difficult questions. No one will be
 impressed if you win an easy argument.
 You want people to be impressed,
 don't you?

Jean-Pierre smirks.

JEAN-PIERRE
 Please limit your filming to the
 camp. We will continue later.

He BARKS an order to Lumumba and Bomani in dialect.

JEAN-PIERRE (CONT'D)
 They will be your escorts and can
 help you with anything you need.

He climbs into a vehicle. Scott sends Gavrie a cocky smile.

SCOTT
 That went well.

Gavrie shakes his head and SIGHS in relief.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ABANDONED SCHOOL BUILDING (THE BALKAN) -- DAY

Daylight reflects off concrete providing enough light for
 Cheryl to find her way through piles of debris.

INT. ABANDONED SCHOOL CLASSROOM (THE BALKAN) -- DAY

This room is in shambles. Cheryl instinctively UPRIGHTS an overturned desk. Her eyes scan to discern what happened inside walls that cling to remnants of scholastic decorations.

The SOUND of PLAYING CHILDREN seeps into the scene.

She spots a gruesome spattering of dried blood on the wall.

The only thing still in tact in this room - a CHESS set. She approaches it with curiosity. Two pawns are missing from the set. ONE BLACK - ONE WHITE.

Nearby RUSTLING. She freezes. She is SLAMMED against the wall as a FIGURE races past her. Cheryl gives chase.

EXT. ABANDONED SCHOOL BUILDING (THE BALKAN) -- DAY

Cheryl EMERGES in pursuit.

TEDIC

Wait!

He grabs her as she rushes by.

TEDIC (CONT'D)

It's not her.

CHERYL

Maybe he knows her...

She breaks free, but the boy is gone. She catches a glimpse of him running, then turns back to find Tedic untangling himself from toilet paper.

TEDIC

(rolling the paper)

A precious commodity. I haven't seen any in months.

She tries to contain a smile.

TEDIC (CONT'D)

You think this is funny?

CHERYL

Of course not.

Cheryl pulls a piece of toilet paper off his back and hands it to him. He begrudgingly takes it.

TEDIC

I will bring you back to your hotel.

CHERYL

No. We're getting close.

TEDIC
Close to what? Getting killed?

CHERYL
Relax. He had toilet paper.

TEDIC
In this neighborhood a boy carrying toilet paper is less common than a boy carrying a hand grenade.

CHERYL
That's why I can't leave her here.

TEDIC
You are both arrogant and stupid. I will not risk my life to find a girl who is probably already dead.

She gazes at the disheveled building and surroundings

CHERYL
Yes you will.

TEDIC
Why?

CHERYL
Because I'm paying you.

TEDIC
To drive - not get killed! I will leave without you if you....

CHERYL
Shhhhhh.

Cheryl closes her eyes to think. The distant SOCCER MATCH reverberates through the streets.

TEDIC
Ms. Bradford...

CHERYL
I know where she went. I remember from her letters.

Cheryl UNFOLDS her map and searches past the areas that have been circled earlier...Her finger drifts, and then finds it.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
It was her favorite place. This is where she went.

EXT. CITY STREETS (THE BALKAN) -- DAY

Images pass by. Piles of debris. Military vehicles. A wandering kid. An advertisement in pristine condition.

INT. SUBURBAN TRUCK LIMOUSINE -- DAY

Amelia Daines watches the world pass through a window. She snaps a photo. She looks to the seat next to her and snaps another. Truman Armstrong raises his eyes from a smart phone.

TRUMAN

And what was that for?

AMELIA

A rare photo of a telecom tycoon
unable to find a signal.

He pockets the phone and smirks. Their intimacy is palpable.

TRUMAN

Why did you bring me here again?

AMELIA

Oh, come on. You need to see this
for yourself. Simply writing a check
isn't enough, Truman.

TRUMAN

Don't kid yourself. It's exactly
enough. More checks and less
accountability is what they want.

AMELIA

Could you at least have an open mind?

TRUMAN

Amelia the crusader. I love that you
think you can change all this.

AMELIA

I hate that you think you haven't
changed it already.

TRUMAN

Have I?

She gazes at him. A sense of fascination.

EXT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (ENTRANCE) -- DAY

The Janitor wedges in plywood to replace the glass that Rafi
kicked out. In a reflection a SUBURBAN limousine arrives.

Lena and Serge EMERGE through the door.

LENA

(Croat)

That's enough. Go.

The Janitor shrugs. Lena continues to the truck.

LENA (CONT'D)
Hello Love. How are you?

AMELIA
Hello gorgeous.

LENA
Any problems?

AMELIA
Everything was wonderful.

Truman Armstrong emerges from the van behind Amelia.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
I'd like you to meet my husband,
Truman. This is Lena Faden my dear
friend who failed to attend our
wedding.

LENA
I'm so sorry Leah. Bit of a twenty-
four-seven operation here I'm afraid.
It's a pleasure to meet you Truman.

TRUMAN
I've heard a lot about you.

LENA
I promise. No tequila for her on
this trip.

AMELIA
Don't believe it.

Truman's demeanor is guarded.

LENA
I'd like you both to meet Serge
Sankara.

SERGE
Nice to meet you sir, welcome. Ma'am.

Hand shakes all around as they move to the building.

AMELIA
Cote-d'Ivoire?

SERGE
Very close! Togo. But my mother is
from Abidjan.

LENA
Amelia has been a long time supporter
of our efforts. Since our inception
I think?

AMELIA

That's right.

SERGE

It's an honor.

AMELIA

You've done wonders since my last visit. I love the flags.

Truman looks around. The polished veneer is thin.

LENA

It's been going very well considering the conditions. How much do you know about what we do here Mr. Armstrong?

TRUMAN

Assume nothing. Educate me.

Lena can't seem to break the ice. She opens the door, allowing them to enter. A nervous glance to Serge.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (ENTRANCE) -- CONTINUOUS

The area has been decorated with WELCOME signs in various languages. A large map has pins indicating areas where the children are from. Lena follows Truman and Amelia inside.

LENA

We are a multinational camp for children affected by violence. We're a prototype for the vision of our founders to show these children the common link that they share with others children around the world.

TRUMAN

A reintegration camp. The United Nations already does that.

LENA

Not quite. Many of these kids are beyond the basic demobilization and reintegration phase. Immediate recovery work is left to the programs and adults already in their respective communities. This program attempts to go beyond those initial efforts.

TRUMAN

Are you qualified to do that?

The piece of plywood FALLS out of the window.

LENA
 Absolutely. Let me introduce you to
 some of our staff...

She ushers him along, avoiding an embarrassment.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (ART ROOM) -- DAY

Mira sits at an easel directly next to the door of the BUSTLING art room. She peers around the easel to find Rafi drawing at a table across the room. He is not happy.

Rafi sticks her tongue out at Mira. Mira keeps a frozen stare, then shakes her head in disgust.

Rafi seems disinterested as he draws with colored pencils.

KATRINA
 (Croat)
 Very good. Is this you?

Katrina looks to his drawing. Rafi looks up with contempt. She realizes that her opinion is unwanted.

KATRINA (CONT'D)
 (Croat)
 Very well.

Rafi slumps into his palm and draws.

Mira paints with retentive precision. She checks the clock and compares it to the drawing on her wrist. The gold key dangles from her hand. It's 2:37.

She turns and is stopped by a horrendous site. A MESSY GIRL walks, dripping paint onto the floor.

Rafi watches as Mira snatches a mop and wipes the floor clean. She swipes under the messy girl's easel, sending a look of disdain to her.

Rafi watches as she puts the mop away and returns to painting. He grasps a piece of paper and CRUMBLES it up.

Mira is painting when a ball of paper drops onto the floor. She looks to the paper, then peers around the easel. She cannot tell where it came from.

Rafi keeps his face in his drawing as Mira stands and places the paper into a garbage can.

Rafi looks to see the coast is clear. His focus stops as he spots a glass jar of paint next to him. A smirk.

MOMENTS LATER - A jar of BLUE paint tumbles through the air.

SMASH! The jar strikes the floor spreading paint everywhere at the feet of the unsuspecting Messy Girl.

Mira gazes at the shell shocked girl.

MESSY GIRL

(Dialect)

It wasn't me!!

Mira sets her brush down in disgust. She grabs a hand broom and dust pan, then moves to clean it up. Something seems odd. The spill is directional...

She spins to Rafi. He's gone. She scans the area but cannot find him, then rushes to the door.

EXT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (CENTRAL CORRIDOR) -- CONTINUOUS

Mira looks both ways. In one direction is Lena, Serge, Truman, and Amelia. He went the other way! She quickly dashes down the hall in pursuit.

Through the door we spot Rafi emerging from a hiding spot under a bean bag chair. He rushes to the door, spots Lena and company, then runs off in the same direction as Mira.

INT. ASTRA HOTEL (SCOTT'S ROOM) -- DAY

A blood stained camcorder sits on the dresser. Reflected in the mirror we see Scott organizing a large camera bag.

EXT. TRAINING CAMP GROUNDS (AFRICA) (FLASHBACK) -- DAY

Scott pans around the camp with the small camcorder. Gavrie lugs video gear, led by Lumumba. Behind with AK-47 is Bomani.

Vérité images. CHILDREN huddle in the shade - weapons at their side. Glazed eyes. Squalid conditions. A PREGNANT GIRL smiles as she crosses.

An ARTIST paints an enormous portrait of Jean-Pierre. Bomani lingers at the portrait, dwarfed by the massive figure.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

A video edit interface plays a news interview of Jean-Pierre.

JEAN-PIERRE

When a bomb explodes in London, Madrid, Israel, the media goes crazy. Five people dead. Ten? Three thousand in New York. Compare this to millions dying from war in Sudan, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda. Where is the outrage then? The people who accuse me of atrocities are simply looking for a better story than the truth of the west's denial of our human rights.

Scott sits at a table in what looks like a slum hotel room. He STOPS the video. His eyes burn a hole in the screen.

Lumumba and Bomani sit on a porch outside the open door. They listen to a SOCCER MATCH on a small transistor radio. Gavrie SPEAKS from the rusty iron bed behind him.

GAVRIE

What's up boss?

Scott looks to Bomani leaning in the open doorway with a bruised and swollen face.

SCOTT

Think he understands us?

GAVRIE

Him? Not a word.

Satisfied, Scott turns to Gavrie.

SCOTT

He was so fucking blunt. So cavalier about everything.

GAVRIE

Captain loony? Yeah, the biggest assholes are usually the most charming. Hitler. Stalin. Jagger.

Scott CHUCKLES as he drinks from a flask.

SCOTT

I hate that he's right. The world ignores it. He actually believes he's part of the solution. How long you been coming to Africa to shoot?

GAVRIE

Africa? Six years.

SCOTT

I've been covering it for twelve. Bombs on a London subway sell magazines. Nobody listens to this.

GAVRIE

It just takes time.

SCOTT

Naive American optimism. Kids shooting guns in a training camp doesn't inspire moral outrage. This story's going nowhere.

GAVRIE

Well, as a naive American, I know plenty about inspiring moral outrage. We just need to dig deeper. Rapes, murders and military attacks by ten year-olds has gotta get noticed.

SCOTT

And how are we gonna get that with
our friendly and well-armed escorts?

Scott indicates towards Lumumba and Bomani.

GAVRIE

Not a clue boss. But that's the job
isn't it? Get past the facade. Tell
the story they're trying to hide.

Scott ponders his choices as he gazes at Bomani.

EXT. FIRING RANGE (AFRICA) -- DAY

A video image: SHOTS erupt in short bursts as Poi struggles
with an AK-47. The recoil knocks him off balance.

An adult reaches in and steadies him. The camera adjusts,
revealing Lumumba. He grabs Pio's legs and adjusts his stance.

LUMUMBA

(Dialect)

There. Now lean into it.

Poi FIRES again. This time he absorbs the VIOLENT recoil.
Lumumba sends an angry look to Scott.

Scott lowers the camcorder and looks around for his next
subject. Various images of YOUNG BOYS cleaning guns.

Nearby, Gavrie sets a camera for an interview. He pulls
equipment from a white jeep.

Scott sets the camcorder on a small tripod and finds a new
subject. A video image of a BOY loading a magazine with
bullets. Suddenly the image is blocked by something.

Scott looks up to find Bomani standing with an AK-47.

SCOTT

Hey.

Scott tries to look past the gun and start a rapport.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Chief Olenga - he is coming? You
know - Papa?

Bomani simply stares at him. Suddenly he points his rifle
at Scott who visibly flinches.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Shit.

Bomani LAUGHS. Scott slowly relaxes and reaches to point the
barrel away from himself.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 Good one. Very funny. You're a
 funny kid.

Bomani approaches the camcorder. He looks at it with wonder. Scott studies Bomani's face before sliding in next to him.

Carefully, he positions Bomani behind the tripod and gives a simple lesson. Eerily similar to Lumumba coaching Poi on the firing range.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 That red button records. Press it
 once and you're taping anything that
 you see in this window.
 (taps lcd display)
 Press it again and it stops.

Bomani takes interest. He tries to operate, but his gun gets in the way. Bomani absentmindedly leans it against the tripod. Scott grabs Bomani's hand and puts it on the tripod handle.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 You can pan and tilt with this.
 See? Pan and tilt.

Bomani smiles for the first time as he begins filming the long line of BOYS on the firing range.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 Not that...Here, film me.

Scott steps in front of the camera and dances around to give him something to film. His silliness forms a connection. Bomani LAUGHS at Scott's antics as he bobs and weaves. Bomani responds trying to keep him in frame.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 Gotta be quick if you wanna be a
 camera man.

Scott moves to the camera and operates the zoom button.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 Here - look. Zoom.

Bomani SHRIEKS with delight as he plays with the zoom button. Scott continues to play for him by performing a dance.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 (pointing)
 Here - get my feet.

Bomani responds by tilting down to film his feet. A quick pan jolts the tripod. The gun begins to fall over. Scott leaps to catch it. He smiles and stands up with it.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Whoa..Close call. Here ya go.

Bomani flinches. Scott turns to see the butt of a rifle just as it SMASHES into him. He HITS the ground.

Blurred visions of Lumumba towering above him.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS (AFRICA) -- LATER

Scott's facial wound now matches the one at the airport. Jean-Pierre stands over as a SOLDIER pulls a syringe from Scott's arm. Lumumba waits near the door.

SCOTT
What was that?

The soldier walks away with a small plastic bag. Scott tries to move is too dizzy.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Is he a doctor? At least tell me the needle was clean.

JEAN-PIERRE
I'm sorry about this Mr. Simms. What were you doing with a gun?

Scott gently touches his head.

SCOTT
...Dancing,...I think. My mistake.

Jean-Pierre LAUGHS deep and loud.

JEAN-PIERRE
Not a good idea, was it?

SCOTT
Sorry.

JEAN-PIERRE
My men get a little protective.

Scott looks to Lumumba.

SCOTT
I'm sure he feels awful about the whole thing.

Jean-Pierre smiles in agreement.

JEAN-PIERRE
Feel better. I never got to finish my interview.

Scott attempts a smile. The image BLURS.

EXT. BUSH ROAD (AFRICA) -- MAGIC HOUR

The image finds focus on a group of fifty BOYS walking with blankets or sleeping mats. In front is a boy, NAJJA (14). He wears what is obviously a shirt from a donation center: BILLY'S GRAND CAFE, ST. PAUL, MN.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUSH (AFRICA) -- AFTERNOON

Blurred VIDEO images form a distorted dream. Rusty pliers clamp down around the sides of a bullet. It twists slightly and pulls the lead from the shell casing.

The gun powder from the shell pours into a metal bowl and mixes with a small amount of white powder. Water is poured in and the mixture becomes a dirty sludge.

Dark skin coated with sweat twitches and shakes. Poi's visible eye is wide with terror. A knife cuts. A small WHIMPER escapes as blood trickles down his face.

A hand is forcing Poi's head down on a table. Another hand rubs the gunpowder mixture into the bleeding wound.

The hand leaves and returns with fingers covered in wet plaster. Quickly it's spread over the wound, a stark white patch with thin lines of blood.

Pio's eyes glaze over with a thousand yard stare.

Various images of boys pulling their clothes off. They dip their hands into Shea oil and rub it onto their skin. Some of them rub in the sign of a cross.

Images of children in prayer. A sadistic blessing ritual is performed by an OLDER SOLDIER, seemingly anointing them.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS (AFRICA) -- MORNING

A blur solidifies into Gavrie on the edge of the bed.

GAVRIE

Like always, you're making friends.

SCOTT

Scottish charm.

GAVRIE

Is that what it is? In the States we call it being a fuck-brain. Slight nuance in translation I guess.

SCOTT

I guess.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(Beat)

Did you happen to grab my camera?

GAVRIE

Sorry. It was gone when I went to get it. Tripod and all.

SCOTT

(moaning)

Shit. Probably been sold three or four times over by now.

GAVRIE

I did find coffee.

He hands Scott a cup of liquid.

GAVRIE (CONT'D)

...I think.

SCOTT

We have to get that interview. I want you to go to Olenga and set up a time.

GAVRIE

You up for it?

SCOTT

We still don't have anything on this bastard.

Gavrie winks and exits. Scott closes his eyes.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

Scott's eyes snap open to a moonlit room. He sits up, testing his equilibrium. On his lap is the missing camcorder.

With a sense of confusion, he examines it. He pulls on a shirt and rises. *(This is the same bloody shirt that he pulled from his bag earlier - minus the blood)*

He presses PLAY and LCD comes to life, illuminating his face. His eyes widen. VIDEO IMAGES of the bizarre ritual we just saw. He looks around the room with paranoid anxiety.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS (AFRICA) -- MOMENTS LATER

A finger presses a button on the camera to stop playing. Gavrie looks to Scott in amazement.

GAVRIE

Where the hell did this come from?

SCOTT

It was sitting in my lap when I woke up.

GAVRIE

This is a major fucking problem.

SCOTT

No kidding.

GAVRIE

I mean - Santa Claus didn't bring your camera back.

SCOTT

Nobody has this. People haven't seen this.

GAVRIE

It's gotta be a trap. Your new friend. Captain Looney. We're never getting out of here with that. They're just lookin' for a reason.

Scott PLAYS the tape again. Both of them stare in horror.

SCOTT

Look at them. They're fearless.

GAVRIE

They don't know what death is. What are they rubbing on their skin?

Suddenly a VOICE from behind them.

BOMANI

Shea oil.

Scott and Gavrie JUMP in fright.

GAVRIE

Ahhh-Christ!

Bomani emerges from darkness. Scott and Gavrie are unsure of the next move. Bomani speaks in awkward but clear English.

BOMANI

It is blessed by God so that bullets cannot penetrate.

GAVRIE

Oh my God...

SCOTT

You speak English.

BOMANI

My father taught me English.

SCOTT
You did this?

BOMANI
You teached me to be camera man.

Gavrie tilts his head back in disbelief.

GAVRIE
Ahhh, Christ, Scott.

SCOTT
Gav, shut it.

BOMANI
I give you what you want - on the
tape.

SCOTT
(Unclear)
What we want?

BOMANI
Moral outrage. I give you moral
outrage. Now you help me. I want to
leave here.

Scott is completely dumbfounded.

BOMANI (CONT'D)
So we leave now that I made for you
this tape. Papa will shoot us if
he sees this tape.

SCOTT
Yes. Yes I believe that he will.

Scott and Gavrie catch each other's eyes in a state of fear.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Just the cameras. Leave everything
else.

Gavrie nods in terrified agreement.

EXT. TRAINING CAMP GROUNDS (AFRICA) -- LATER

A SOLDIER passes. Bomani leads Scott and Gavrie through the
dark shadows of the camp. They reach cover and spot their
WHITE jeep.

SCOTT
White. Why in fuck did we get a white
truck? We'll never get out of here
in that.

GAVRIE

Are you serious? You wanna walk out of here?

SCOTT

You drive the big caucasian target. I'm walking.

GAVRIE

Christ.

BOMANI

I know a way to the city.

GAVRIE

Great. How do we get past them?

A group of SOLDIERS congregate in front of a small television where a SOCCER MATCH plays.

SCOTT

We bloody hope that Angola has a really shitty team this year.

Bomani leads them silently behind the group of soldiers who stay focused on the game. A GOAL is scored. They CHEER!

Guns are FIRED into the air, giving the diversion needed. Bomani leads them into darkness.

EXT. BUSH (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

Just outside the camp the group converges.

BOMANI

Come. I will show you something before we go.

Bomani dashes off.

GAVRIE

Damn it...Where's he going?

Scott nods and gives chase.

EXT. GUEST QUARTERS (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

Lumumba enters the empty guest quarters. Something's wrong!

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

VIDEO IMAGES find the skeleton of a hut. This is the village from the opening scene of this story.

Holding the camcorder Scott reels in horror. His BREATH is deafening. Bodies decomposing in the moonlight. Seen through Gavrie's camera, Scott VOMITS. Bomani speaks to the camera.

BOMANI

We are told to never return to a place we have been. I want for you to see for video.

SCOTT

How did this happen? Who killed these people?

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

Smoke swirls as a FAMILY is forced out a hut by Lumumba. CHILDREN run for their lives.

BOMANI (O.S.)

We kill them. The women we rape and kill, people who run we kill. This is what we are told to do - this is what we must do.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

The video camera finds Bomani's face. His expression remains even and detached.

SCOTT

Why were they killed?

BOMANI

I don't know. I shoot this woman in the head.

Scott and Gavrie are shocked by this open confession. The camera holds on Bomani's unaffected face.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

A MOTHER'S face is stretched back in grief and terror. She begs incomprehensibly to someone above her.

BOMANI (O.S.)

She was crying for her child.

It's Poi, trembling with a gun in his hands. Lumuba holds a machete and screams at him. Pio's trembling hands won't hold the gun in place. Lumumba raises his machete.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

Bomani crouches down next to the body. His face is blank. Scott is unsure of how to react. He crouches next to Bomani.

BOMANI

I shoot her so they will not rape her. So they will not kill him.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

Bomani raises his gun and FIRES, killing Poi's mother.

Poi is in shock. Lumumba drags him over to a group of boys where we find Amani, crying. A group of GIRLS behind them.

EXT. RURAL VILLAGE (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

In night vision Bomani looks small and vulnerable. His expression is disengaged and unplugged.

BOMANI

First you must kill with your hands.
If not then they are cut off. We
are told to kill our mothers and
fathers. If you cry they will kill
you. We never cry. We never cry.
You are thinking of home if you cry.
But they don't know what is in my
heart if I don't cry. If I go home
they will now kill me. If I stay
here they will kill me.

Bomani has a quiet moment.

BOMANI (CONT'D)

I wish for now that you would kill
me. I will be better if you kill me
and I can see my family again. You
have now the video for moral outrage.

Scott is stunned.

SCOTT

Ye..Yes. We do.

Bomani rises to his feet, gives a final look to the dead woman, then looks right into camera.

BOMANI

They will soon coming for us. I will
lead us to the away.

The camera is shut OFF.

EXT. BUSH ROAD (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

Lumumba rides on the back of a vehicle loaded with SOLDIERS. They scan the roadside ditches with weapons ready.

EXT. BUSH (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

ADULT and CHILD SOLDIERS race through the bush.

EXT. BUSH (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

Bomani rushes through the underbrush. Scott and Gavrie do their best to keep up with him.

They all pause to catch their breath. Behind them, SHOUTING. They CONTINUE TO RUN.

EXT. BUSH ROAD (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

A truck PASSES on the nearby road. Bomani cowers in the underbrush. His eyes scan the immense jungle. NOISES hint of soldiers in the distance. He motions to Scott and Gavrie.

EXT. BUSH (AFRICA) -- NIGHT

Bomani, Scott and Gavrie reach the edge of a clearing and slow their pace slightly. They stay low in the tall grass.

BOMANI

We will going to the river and cross there.

GAVRIE

How far?

BOMANI

Not far. The city is...

GUNFIRE erupts in front of them. Gavrie is hit. Scott and Bomani hit the ground.

SCOTT

Gav!

The shots ERUPT from Poi's gun. He fires crazily without an ability to aim. On his temple is a wad of white and his eyes are glazed and crazy. Scott crawls to Gavrie.

Bomani rises to his feet and charges. He runs directly at Poi as the gun FIRES at random. Bomani DIVES at the boy.

A STRUGGLE in tall grass.

Scott watches as Bomani rises to his feet with Poi's weapon. In a reflexive action he raises the rifle above his head and SMASHES it down. Then AGAIN. AGAIN. Bomani DROPS the gun.

Scott watches as he begins to CRY.

JEAN-PIERRE (V.O.)

I can tell you that what some are doing, others are not. But it is no surprise to me that children are used to fight.

Bomani reels in agony.

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING (AFRICA) -- MORNING

The sun peeks above the horizon just on the edge of a town. Bomani leads as Scott helps Gavrie. All are in state of complete exhaustion. Scott's shirt is covered in blood.

JEAN-PIERRE (V.O.)

For you and me it's life and death
but for them it's like a game. They
fear nothing. And when it's over
they are proud and celebrate victory
with no talk for the ones who died.

They approach what appears to be a lifeless building.

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING (AFRICA) -- CONTINUOUS

Bomani pushes a door OPEN. Before them is a vast room filled to the brim with CHILDREN. Most are still asleep, laying side-by-side with no room to move.

Najja, the boy in the familiar tee shirt, rises to his feet. He and Bomani help Gavrie inside. With bloody shirt, Scott observes the young boys in amazement. Heaving in exhaustion.

INT. CHIEF OLENGA'S OFFICE (AFRICA) -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

The image pixilates and the audio STUTTERS as it jumps through time. Jean-Pierre freezes for a moment in front of the DRK flag before playing back at normal speed.

JEAN-PIERRE

And when it's over they are proud
and celebrate victory with no talk
for the ones who died. They are
perfect soldiers.

The images freezes. Then blackness.

EXT./INT. TEDIC'S CAR (THE BALKAN) -- DAY

Tedic's taxi approaches a large structure. It STOPS at a stone-arch that reflects in Cheryl's window.

TEDIC (O.S.)

We don't have much time. It is very
dangerous to be in the city at night.

They EMERGE from the car.

TEDIC (CONT'D)

How can you be sure she came here?

CHERYL

It was her favorite place.

They are at the entrance to a large football stadium.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM (THE BALKAN) -- CONTINUOUS

Cheryl and Tedic walk through a tunnel towards the field. They emerge into the open space of the arena and are greeted with a disturbing image.

A field filled with grave markers. Hundreds of them. A lone GRAVEDIGGER (60) digs another.

Cheryl and Tedic turn to see a herding MASS OF CHILDREN running through the tunnel towards them.

Cheryl greedily scans faces, trying to find Ana. The children let out pent up energy, RUNNING, climbing, and skipping.

Like a shepherd following her flock is ALEKSANDARA (58). A dominant presence with graying hair and hardened demeanor.

TEDIC

(Dialect)

We're looking for a child.

Aleksandara continues past.

ALEKSANDARA

I haven't seen one in months.

She takes a seat overlooking the field.

CHERYL

What did she say? Can she help us?

TEDIC

I'm not sure she can.

Cheryl gives Aleksandara a photo of Ana.

CHERYL

This girl. Have you seen this girl?

Aleksandara takes the photo without much regard.

ALEKSANDARA

The children have not eaten today.

Tedic nods and addresses Cheryl.

TEDIC

She has no food for the children today.

Cheryl looks into Aleksandara's eyes. There is a connection. She pulls money from her pocket and hands it to Aleksandara.

CHERYL

This is everything. Tell her that I can help more. I must find Ana.

Aleksandara gladly takes the money, looks longingly at Ana's photograph, then a glance to Tedic.

ALEKSANDARA

Ana spoke of an American friend.
Mrs. Bradford.

Cheryl's heart leaps.

CHERYL

Oh God. Yes. I'm Cheryl, Cheryl
Bradford. Where? Where is she?

TEDIC

Where is Ana? Can you tell us where
to find her?

A discouraging look from Aleksandara.

EXT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (FOOTBALL FIELD) -- DAY

Kids play soccer. Feet dribbling. Smiling faces. Moments of camaraderie. Walking at the edge of the field we find Truman, Lena, Amelia, and Serge.

LENA

Most of the children are here for a
total of 3 months. Some are from
refugee camps, some served in combat
or worked as slaves for the army.

A CLASH of feet on the field. Serge focus' on the play.

SERGE

(French)
Man on! Man on! Pass back!

A quick tackle and the ball is free. Faces full of life.

SERGE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I am their coach.

LENA

With football we put them into a new
kind of army. It helps them work
through aggression in a positive
setting and reconnects them to
childhood. We teach them how to
organize games like this.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (PRINTING SHOP) -- CONTINUOUS

The group passes through a shop where CHILDREN are learning how to screen print on shirts.

LENA

Each of these kids were specifically selected to attend our program by counselors and teachers from their native country.

Truman seems unaffected by anything that he hears or sees.

AMELIA

Explain to Truman how they are selected.

LENA

Right, well...It's based upon criteria set up by our steering committee. Of course we're looking for children that are stable and have some comprehension ability. Each child undergoes a full screening process before being selected.

Truman never sets eyes on Lena which makes her quite uneasy.

LENA (CONT'D)

We're basically looking for leaders that can return to their communities with a new set of tools to reach other children.

Serge can see that Lena is struggling.

SERGE

Children need other children to hear and understand them.

LENA

Exactly.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (GALLERY ROOM) -- CONTINUOUS

Truman enters and examines the various paintings and drawings.

LENA

Art therapy is a big part of our program as well. The more these kids can work through their experiences, the more they realize that they're not alone.

SERGE

They have a unique perspective on war. They know that pain and hatred are universal. We teach them that love and compassion are also universal. This is why we are here.

Truman seems to thrive off of other peoples nerves. He looks Lena directly in the eyes for the first time.

TRUMAN

What is your success rate?

LENA

Success rate.

TRUMAN

I presume that you have some barometer to determine efficacy.

LENA

Of course.

Lena SHUFFLES though papers that she has been carrying.

SERGE

Quantifying the mental health of a child is not an exact...

Lena eagerly produces a piece of paper and cuts Serge off.

LENA

Our graduates are routinely tracked and evaluated by our in-country representatives.

Lena gets an approving glance from Amelia.

LENA (CONT'D)

You can see that they are each given a grade in several different categories.

As Truman examines the paper we see that the edge of his hand is covered in white paint.

SERGE

We consider the child's involvement in the lives of other affected children to be the most important factor.

Truman looks to Serge, then back down to the paper.

TRUMAN

I'm solicited by thousands of organizations that attempt to convince me that their cause is more important than the next.

Lena and Serge are on pins and needles.

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

Some of them are more important than the next.

LENA

Of course.

TRUMAN

Although the world doesn't believe
it, even my resources are limited.

Truman hands the paper back to Lena.

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

My lovely wife has told me all about
your efforts, and it is because of
her that I am here in person...

Suddenly he notices the white paint on the edge of his hand.

LENA

Oh my God. Here....let me get you a
napkin.

Truman accepts the napkin.

AMELIA

Oh, it's on your sleeve honey. What
did you get into?

He discovers a few patches of paint on his jacket sleeve.

TRUMAN

It's paint I think...

LENA

Serge, get some water for Mr.
Armstrong....

TRUMAN

Is there a restroom that I may use?

Serge ushers him to the door.

SERGE

Absolutely. Just over here.

He leads him into the corridor while Lena sinks in
frustration.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (STAIRWELL) -- DAY

Mira enters a split stair. A locked exit and dark steps that
lead to the basement. Her light shines down the stairs. An
unlatched door! She rushes to it.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (BASEMENT) -- DAY

Mira enters a dark room filled with storage boxes, broken
furniture, water heaters, plumbing, and various items. At
the far end are three doors leading into adjoining rooms.

She pulls a desk in front of the door to block any attempt
at an escape route. She searches and finds a small pipe.

ADJOINING STORAGE ROOM - SAME

Rafi stands atop a pile of boxes working on an old basement window that has been painted over. The small bars over it are making her task difficult. Suddenly he hears a NOISE.

Movement of a flashlight approaching as...

MAIN BASEMENT ROOM - SAME

Mira searches nooks and crannies, moving closer to the doorway that separates them. She approaches the doorway and...

ADJOINING STORAGE ROOM - SAME

She enters and spots what Rafi has been up to. Her eye-line follows a stack of boxes that lead to a small window high on the far wall. She begins to carefully search and...

CLANGING from out in the main room...The pipe! She runs!

MAIN BASEMENT ROOM - SAME

The metal pipe rolls along the floor away from the desk that Rafi has attempted to move. Mira scans one direction as...

Rafi runs the opposite direction. Mira pans the light as spots him entering a far room.

They dodge in-and-out of rooms until Mira stops. She spots an old portrait painting among the junk pile. She smirks.

Mira turns off her light. Moments pass.

Rafi emerges from a back room. Mira steps out and faces him. He runs into the dark and Mira CHASES.

He rounds and suddenly SCREAMS as he comes face-to-face with the haunting eyes of the old portrait which Mira has set up in the middle of the corridor, lit with her flashlight.

He turns and runs into the arms of Mira, grasping onto her, hiding his face in terror. Mira smirks at her victory.

EXT. WAR-TORN CITY STREET (THE BALKAN) -- EVENING

The dirty headlights of Tedic's taxi maneuver past us as early evening descends onto this war zone.

INT. TEDIC'S TAXI (THE BALKAN) -- EVENING

Tedic is nervous and unsure.

TEDIC

This area changes sides from day to day. Snipers everywhere. Brought in from different countries so they don't recognize any of their targets.

Cheryl examines a city map.

CHERYL

Are you sure this is right? Do you think she would have crossed the river?

TEDIC

This is what the crazy woman said. If you ask me this is insanity.

CHERYL

Somebody looked out for you when you were a kid, right?

Cheryl keeps her focus on the map.

TEDIC

If you asked my Mother, she would say yes. I would differ with her. But, Mrs. Bradford, if this girl is even alive...

Suddenly they LUNGE forward as Tedic SLAMS the breaks.

EXT. RIVER BRIDGE (THE BALKAN) -- EVENING

Headlights illuminate three heavily armed, YOUNG MILITIA. A scorched car provides cover for their position. Raised assault rifles and spotlights paralyze Tedic and Cheryl.

MILITIA MAN #1 (18), steps to Tedic with his gun leveled near his face. Tedic offers identification papers.

TEDIC

(Dialect)

Just trying to get to the airport.

The others surround and peer inside while he inspects Tedic's papers. Particular attention is paid to Cheryl.

MILITIA MAN 1

Sasha!

SASHA (O.S.)

Yes!

A fourth FIGURE approaches. It's Sasha, Ana's friend.

MILITIA MAN 1

(Dialect)

Check the trunk.

Tedic carefully hands him the keys.

FROM A SNIPER POV of the Taxi. They are isolated and alone.

MILITIA MAN 1 (CONT'D)
Get out of the car. Both of you.

Tedic obeys.

TEDIC
They want us to get out.

Cheryl rises to her feet with her small backpack clenched. It is RIPPED from her hands and passed over the car to Sasha. He DUMPS the contents out.

MILITIA MAN 1
Where is her luggage?

Tedic is caught in a lie.

TEDIC
At the airport already.

He knows that Tedic is fabricating. A nod to the rear door.

MILITIA MAN 1
Open it.
(off his pause)
Open it!

Tedic quickly OPENS the rear passenger door. The Man looks to Cheryl.

MILITIA MAN 1 (CONT'D)
(Dialect)
Get in.

She refuses. The Man smiles and firmly grabs her breast. Cheryl resists.

TEDIC
Stop!

Tedic moves in, but is immediately PULLED away. Cheryl resists. The violence escalates. Cheryl is powerless as he pushes her into the back seat.

Cheryl tries to crawl through to the other side, but is met by the barrel of a gun at the other side. The Man gets inside and PULLS her towards him.

Tedic resists and POW! He's knocked to the ground.

Cheryl begins to CRY, but then falls silent in submission.

Sasha is joined by another SOLDIER in looking for loot. Then, Sasha spots something in the pile.

The weight of the Man dominates Cheryl. She begins to disconnect from her body. Then, POUNDING on the window above her. The Man ignores it. More POUNDING.

MILITIA MAN 1

What!?

The Man looks up to see the photo of Ana pressed against the window. He recognizes the girl, then looks down to Cheryl.

MILITIA MAN 1 (CONT'D)

Where did you get this? How do you know Ana? Where is she?!

He climbs off of her.

MILITIA MAN 1 (CONT'D)

Where is she!

Cheryl SOBS. He manhandles Tedic.

MILITIA MAN 1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Where is Ana?! Tell me!! Where is she????!!

Tedic gazes back in shock. Cheryl huddles in the back seat.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (CENTRAL CORRIDOR) -- EVENING

Truman and Amelia walk hand-in-hand towards the main entrance. Lena and Serge lead.

LENA

I've put together an information packet to provide you our mission statement, goals, financials, as well as some child profiles.

Lena offers a small binder of papers.

TRUMAN

Thank you. I'll look it over.

LENA

Thank you, Mr. Armstrong. Obviously we can only exist and grow by donations and sponsorships, so your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Amelia gives a reassuring look to Lena.

AMELIA

I'll make sure he does.

Serge quietly addresses Lena.

SERGE

One of the students wanted to....

Lena remembers.

LENA

Oh gosh. Would you mind a photo-op?
This boy has been bugging me for
weeks about it.

Amelia looks to Truman with a conciliatory smile.

AMELIA

Of course.

LENA

Are you sure? I wouldn't ask if I
hadn't made a promise.

A nod from Amelia. Serge dashes off down the hall. Amelia's
eye-line shifts to...Scott Simms standing in the doorway.
Lena impulsively rushes to embrace him.

LENA (CONT'D)

Oh my God! When did you get here?

SCOTT

Yesterday.

Lena pulls him towards Truman and Amelia.

LENA

Why didn't you come sooner?

Scott isn't prepared to answer. Lena senses this.

LENA (CONT'D)

Let me introduce you. Scott Simms,
Truman Armstrong and Amelia Daines.

SCOTT

I've been looking forward to meeting
both of you.

AMELIA

It's nice to meet you as well. This
is the journalist boyfriend I presume?

LENA

This is him.

SCOTT

Actually I've been just outside since
about 2 o'clock.

LENA

Really? Why didn't you come in?

SCOTT

Ohh, I didn't want to disturb you
all in the middle of it.

(To Truman)

You gave her a check didn't you?

An uncomfortable CHUCKLE from Lena.

LENA

Scott...

TRUMAN

(Cordially)

I've been given the complete tour and am considering it.

SCOTT

Oh, well I'm glad to hear that. I just finished a complete tour as well. The Congo. Ever been there?

TRUMAN

I haven't, actually.

SCOTT

It's great. Lots of death and suffering. Ripe for a guy in my line of work.

SILENCE.

LENA

Are you okay?

SCOTT

Should I wait outside?

LENA

No of course not.

SCOTT

I'm sorry. A close friend of mine was nearly killed while I was there...

AMELIA

That's horrible. Another journalist?

SCOTT

Yeah. Just doing a freelance gig about the mining industry. I've got some amazing video - would you like to see it?

AMELIA

Ahh - I think we're just gonna get back to the hotel. I'd love to see it some other time though.

SCOTT

No problem. I'll just wait in your office.

He offers a small kiss, moves as if leaving, then turns back.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 ...Actually. Do you have a cell phone?

TRUMAN
 Me? Of course.

An unsure and uncomfortable air to the moment.

SCOTT
 Can I see it?

TRUMAN
 My phone?

SCOTT
 Yeah. Do you mind?

He hands him his phone. Scott examines it. Looks of bafflement all around.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 Amazing. This one of the new ones?

TRUMAN
 A prototype. We'll release it later in the summer. Fastest processor on the market.

SCOTT
 Wow. Still using Tantalite in them?

TRUMAN
 Of course. Everyone does. May I have my phone back please?

AMELIA
 What are you talking about?

SCOTT
 Well, it's actually known as Coltan. It's a raw mineral that makes computers and cell phones work faster.

LENA
 Scott, can you give Truman his phone back.

SCOTT
 All you do is cut down some jungle, dig up the ground and wash all the dirt in the river. When you're done you've got a pile of dead trees, a large hole in the ground, a dirty river and a handful of black metal.

LENA
 Scott, please?

SCOTT
 ...Wait. I'll show you.

Scott SMASHES the phone to the ground.

LENA
 What the hell are you doing?! I'm
 so sorry.

AMELIA
 It's okay. Maybe we should go.

TRUMAN
 This is just a perfect fit to the
 day, isn't it? Better than a pie in
 the face I suppose.

Scott searches through the pieces as Truman heads for the door. Amelia reluctantly follows.

AMELIA
 (To Lena)
 Don't worry love, I'll call you.

Scott finds a chip.

SCOTT
 Wait. Here's a bit of it! This is
 what they're dying for. Your company
 makes them - We buy them. Everybody
 wins. Well, almost...

Truman just shakes his head as he continues towards the door.

LENA
 Scott, don't...

Amelia stops as she absorbs Scott's words.

TRUMAN
 Are you coming?

AMELIA
 Please, wait a minute, hun.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
 What are you talking about? Who's
 dying for it?

TRUMAN
 Christ...I'll see you at the hotel.

Amelia gazes at Scott. She can see he's been through hell.

AMELIA
 Wait!

He turns and faces us.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Show us the video.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. COLTAN MINES (AFRICA) VIDEO IMAGES -- DAY

Rows of child and adult SOLDIERS are crouched in a tree line. Young faces stare out onto a small field.

On the far side is a series of brick buildings with SOLDIERS in unfamiliar military uniforms.

Poi, with eyes that are glazed and crazy, looks straight at us. On his temple is a dried wad of plaster.

Other YOUNG BOYS surround him. Their bodies glisten in shea oil and are unable to hold still. Lumumba approaches the boys and hands one a machete. Through WHISPERS and gesturing he gets them excited.

Across the field two trucks pull out from behind the buildings. Logos of a mining company are revealed as they slowly disappear down a dirt road.

As if caged animals, the young boys CHIRP and JERK. Poi clutches a stick. He is naked and covered in oil. His BREATHING is heavy.

Lumumba holds up a fist and rows of troops shift and ready themselves. The moment lingers, and in an instant, releases.

He ushers the line of children ahead. They rush past him. The first wave of CHILDREN lunge out of cover and into the field. Many are naked and flailing their arms.

SCOTT (V.O.)

They call them shock troops because the adults are afraid to shoot them.

SHOTS suddenly erupt everywhere. Bullets WHIZ by. Parts of the trees EXPLODE. The YOUNGEST CHILDREN race directly towards the enemy. Many are shot and fall to the ground.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

They don't take cover - ever. They never retreat.

A second line of CHILDREN emerge from the trees and immediately some of them fall.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Then a second group.

Earth and leaves fly everywhere. A new row advances to the edge, this time made up of ADULT SOLDIERS.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Then the adults...

Much more cautiously they advance, firing ahead into the battle. An ADULT SOLDIER approaches the cameraman and pulls him into the battle.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (LENA'S OFFICE) -- EVENING

Tears fill Amelia eyes. Truman shifts uncomfortably.

AMELIA
Stop it.

Scott STOPS the tape. SILENCE. He produces a photograph enlargement of a video image. It is a close up of one of the trucks and a small logo on the side.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
What is this?

Scott looks to Truman. A long SILENCE.

TRUMAN
We buy three tons a month.

AMELIA
Oh God.

TRUMAN
I can't know the origin of every raw material. Every gallon of gasoline, every tree, every mineral.

AMELIA
Why not?

TRUMAN
Where were those shoes made Amelia?
Can you tell me? I had no idea this was happening.

SCOTT
You didn't know if the rumors were true. Hell, I didn't know about some of them. The question is, what are you going to do now that you do know?

All eyes turn to Truman.

TRUMAN
I mean, we'll change our suppliers.

Amelia is sickened.

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

It's not that simple. Thousands of jobs around the world. Commerce can't just stop. Without jobs we have slavery. Without profits we have theft. Without trade there is no need for cooperation. I'm not sure what I can do, but I sure as hell am not going to stop my business. It goes on with or without me.

SCOTT

Give me an interview. Right here, right now.

TRUMAN

No way. I'm not getting cornered by you on camera.

SCOTT

The only way I can corner you is with a lie. I'm asking for your truth before I go to broadcast. This is your chance to give me your true reaction before you're handled by a public relations department.

Truman looks to Amelia for his answer.

EXT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (FOOTBALL FIELD) -- EVENING

A FLURRY of young feet dribble a ball down the field. The contest is heated. A KICK sends the ball flying...

To the goaltender, Mira. She swiftly CATCHES the ball and in one motion PUNTS it down field. Behind her we spot Rafi sitting next to the goal post.

He sits defeated. Firmly tied to his wrist is a swath of red yarn - the other end to the goal post. A bell RINGS.

The children RUSH towards Joanne, RINGING a hand bell. Mira cuts the yarn from the goal post. Rafi refuses to stand.

She waits, then gives the yarn a gentle tug, pulling his hand out from under his chin. A frustrated glance.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (CENTRAL CORRIDOR) -- EVENING

Mira walks briskly through the CROWDED hall with Rafi in tow via the red yarn. Mira is on a mission as she zig-zags around the others. A glance up to a clock. It's 4:55!

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (DINING HALL) -- EVENING

Mira ties the yarn around a radiator. Rafi sits alone at a table as Children RUSH to their seats with dinner plates.

Mira exits for a moment, leaving Rafi a chance to tug at his soft restraints. It's no use. She quickly returns with a plate of food and a drink.

Rafi looks to the food, then to her. She compares her wrist to the clock on the wall. A perfect match. She pulls out the gold key, smiles to Rafi, then exits. Rafi sits alone.

Mira reemerges in the doorway. A sense of guilt and responsibility.

A pair of scissors SNIP the red yarn. She gestures him to follow, then exits. Rafi hesitates, then rushes after her.

EXT. WAR TORN STREET (THE BALKAN) -- EVENING

Cheryl stands defeated at the ruins of a building. She holds Ana's photo up. The photo's background matches the ruins. *This is the same doorway that was used as a soccer goal.*

Tedic approaches with a bruised face. A TINKLING noise. They look down to the bullet casings that litter the street.

CHERYL

What am I doing here?

TEDIC

Saving a child.

CHERYL

She saved me. With a damn photo.

TEDIC

We will keep looking.

Cheryl observes the destruction around her.

CHERYL

She's gone.

Tedic hands her a lit cigarette, which she draws from. A VOICE ECHOES from a distant loud speaker.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE

(dialect)

Clear the streets. There is not a secure area!

They spot a UN Peacekeeping vehicle at the far end of the street. A 'Blue Helmet' holds a bull horn.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE (CONT'D)

(dialect)

This area is not safe! Find shelter immediately!

CHERYL

What's he saying?

TEDIC
Just being an asshole.
Come on, I'm hungry.

They get into the cab and DRIVE AWAY.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (GALLERY ROOM) -- EVENING

Scott spins the focus ring as he looks into his viewfinder.
Truman and Amelia take their seats in front of the camera.

Lena enters with a cup of tea and hands it to Amelia.

LENA
Are you sure I can't get you anything
Mr. Armstrong?

Truman nods no and straightens his jacket.

SCOTT
I'm sorry about your phone.

TRUMAN
So how is this going to work Mr.
Simms?

SCOTT
I'll ask questions and hopefully
you'll answer them.

TRUMAN
And will those answers actually make
it into your broadcast, or will you
edit it for your own context? Are
you interested in the truth or blaming
business for the demise of the world?

SCOTT
Every word as you say it.

Serge suddenly emerges at the door.

SERGE
I'm sorry...

LENA
Oh. That's right. Do you mind?

AMELIA
Of course not. I'd love to meet
him.

Lena nods to Serge.

LENA
A good kid. Lives in a refugee camp
on the West Bank. He's been with us
for a few weeks.

Jamal enters with Serge. Lena greets him with the little arabic that she knows. Jamal is quite nervous.

LENA (CONT'D)

Hello Jamal.

Serge gently ushers Jamal towards Amelia. His hands are crammed into his pockets, *much like the terrorist on the bus from earlier.*

SERGE

(Arabic)

Jamal, this is Amelia Daines.

She receives him with warmth.

JAMAL

...Hello.

AMELIA

Hello Jamal. It's nice to meet you.

Jamal's hands stay crammed nervously in his pockets.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (STAIRWELL) -- EVENING

Mira and Rafi enter a dark stairwell. She CLICKS on her light as they descend. A remnant of red yarn dangles from Rafi's wrist.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (BASEMENT) -- EVENING

The flashlight leads them through the darkness, and to the mystery door. Eyes are full of wonder as they approach.

She SLIDES the key into the lock, TURNS it, and pushes the door open with a CREAK. They peer inside. Beyond the door the room has a faint blue glow. A RED lounge chair sits in the center.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (GALLERY ROOM) -- EVENING

The red tally light on Scott's camera turns on. Jamal gazes at it, transfixed, then to the supermodel in front of him.

SCOTT (O.S.)

Okay - I think I'm ready on this end. If you just want to state your name and title for a sound level.

Jamal kneels just in-front of Amelia. Nervous. Hands SHUFFLE inside his pockets.

TRUMAN (O.S.)

Truman Armstrong. Founder and CEO of Universal Industries.

SCOTT

Great.

SERGE

(To Scott)

Is he okay there?

Scott looks to Jamal who is transfixed by Amelia.

SCOTT

(Chuckling)

He's fine. Unless he's bothering you?

AMELIA

Not at all.

She gives him a wink and a smile. Jamal gives a slight smile.

SERGE

(Arabic)

You have to be very quiet Jamal.
Shhhhhhh.

Jamal responds with a nod. Scott looks to Lena with a loving glance. She smiles back.

SCOTT

Let's get right to it. You've just seen video of children fighting for a mineral called Coltan. A material used in every cell phone and computer. Your company is a primary user of this material for your products. How do you respond to the notion that your practices are fueling this kind of conflict?

TRUMAN

The idea that children are being killed for Coltan is horrendous...

SCOTT

I'm sorry...It's not an idea. It's a fact.

TRUMAN

May I have the opportunity to answer Mr. Simms?

SCOTT

Of course.

TRUMAN

As the leader of a Fortune Five-hundred company, with thousands of employees in hundreds of locations
(MORE)

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

around the world, I can't possibly be aware of every aspect of our manufacturing process.

SCOTT

But don't you have a basic responsibility to be aware of global conditions regarding environment, labor, and human rights.

TRUMAN

Of course I do.

SCOTT

So this is a failure on your part?

TRUMAN

If admitting failure makes you feel better, then yes, I failed. Maybe by admitting to some insatiable desire for profits and market share, you and your viewers can be let off the hook for any accountability.

SCOTT

The public aren't the ones loading trucks with materials procured via child slavery and military indoctrination.

TRUMAN

The public is in a constant race to the bottom. Corporations like mine meet them there, or die. We live in a buy more, pay less society. It's one of the unpleasant realities of capitalism.

SCOTT

Is that your excuse? That in order to deliver the cheapest product you're forced to look the other way?

TRUMAN

It's a reason the conditions exist. I had no idea this was occurring in our supply chain. We will immediately stop using this supplier, and encourage others to do the same.

Haunting sounds of a CHILD CHORUS seep into our score. Jamal's hand moves inside his pocket.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (MYSTERY ROOM) -- EVENING

Mira and Rafi cautiously enter. Both are illuminated by a glowing source. Their eyes widen and fill with light.

SCOTT (V.O.)

How will that affect your business?

TRUMAN (V.O.)

My prices will go up. To maintain profitability I'll begin to market our product as fair trade and eco friendly, which it now will be. Some people will pay more. Most won't. My competitors will gain market share and be forced to increase production, at which point they will go to my former suppliers. Then you get to go and have this conversation with them.

SCOTT (V.O.)

So there is no hope to stop this sort of activity. Even with you out of the equation.

TRUMAN (V.O.)

It's a question of how you change the consumer mentality. How do you change societies desire for the lowest price? You're talking about the contraindication to supply and demand.

Mira and Rafi move towards the light with wide eyes.
A smile from Rafi. His first.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD (AFRICA) -- EVENING

Dust flies as Bomani and others play soccer. Joyful faces.
Standing vigil are UN PEACEKEEPERS creating a safe play zone.

SCOTT (V.O.)

Ms. Daines, can you offer any insights?

AMELIA (V.O.)

I really had no idea, until coming here, the extent of the situation. How kids in every corner of world are being affect by the violence of adults. I think the first step is eliminating deniability.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP CARPENTRY SHOP (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

Old Man leads two BOYS in prayer in front of the shop.

AMELIA (V.O.)

That's half the problem isn't it?
We want to deny that these things are going on and that we have anything directly to do with it.

EXT. WAR TORN STREET (BALKAN) -- EVENING

Sasha FIRES a shot. A distant pedestrian DROPS dead.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (MYSTERY ROOM) -- EVENING

A silly looking PUFFER FISH stares at us through the glass of a large aquarium. Rafi and Mira delight at the wonder.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (GALLERY ROOM) -- EVENING

We slowly MOVE in closer as our music continues to BUILD.

AMELIA

The only thing worse than seeing the senseless death of a child, is to see a child become a senseless killer.

Jamal makes a decision. He slowly looks up to Amelia.

EXT. BUSH (AFRICA) -- EVENING

Chief Olenga inspects a long line of young girls.

AMELIA (V.O.)

Not just kids on the cusp of adulthood, but young children. Very young. It's something that has to be dealt with. That's why I'm here.

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT -- NIGHT

All around Cheryl passengers sleep. Her eyes are wide open, deep in thought.

EXT. CITY STREET (CHICAGO) -- NIGHT

Young children hang out near drug dealers. American gangs.

INT. RURAL AMERICA -- EVENING

A YOUNG BOY plays a violent video game, attacking a bus.

AMELIA (V.O.)

That's why Truman is here. To make a difference. To bring this to the attention of the world. To support organizations like ChildCorps.

EXT. BUS BOMB SITE (GAZA STRIP) -- EVENING

The blue scarf blows in the wind.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP CARPENTRY SHOP (GAZA STRIP) -- DAY

Kasib father works on a wood chair.

AMELIA (V.O.)
 Changing the purchasing habits of
 people is a step towards creating
 equality.

INT. MIDAMERICA INSURANCE TOWER (CHERYL'S OFFICE) -- DAY

Tina stands at Cheryl's desk, on the phone, consumed by her work. Her back to the world outside. Camera's focus racks to the distant Chicago skyline behind her.

SCOTT (V.O.)
 Isn't that just consumerism disguised
 as philanthropy?

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (GALLERY ROOM) -- EVENING

SCOTT
 Doesn't that simply allow the public
 to continue to ignore reality?

She makes eye contact with Jamal. DOOM BUILDS in our MUSIC.

AMELIA
 The answer is right in front of your
 camera. This is the hope. This is
 our future.

Scott's camera pans down to Jamal. He is shy and nervous, hands still in his pockets. He looks into camera...

Then up to Amelia as he pulls his hand from his pocket.

Amelia looks to his hand with curiosity, then smiles as he reveals a small, carved wooden rose.

INT. CHILD RECOVERY CENTER (MYSTERY ROOM) -- EVENING

Two figures illuminated by the aquarium. Mira reaches high up. PLOP. Her WHITE chess piece settles to the bottom of the tank.

She gently embraces the hand of her new friend, Rafi. Music BUILDS as the chess piece and terrain of the fish tank...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. 5TH FLOOR CITY APARTMENT (CHICAGO) -- DAY

Our opening image. A city skyline. Rain drops on a window refract the shapes of the inner city. An ocean of grey tones.

A KNOCKING at a door. MUFFLED RUSSIAN dialogue. Ana gazes out to the city below her. KNOCKING continues.

She moves across the grungy room and OPENS the door. Two men are waiting. A RUSSIAN PIMP and a AMERICAN JOHN.

Ana lets the John inside and moves to the window. She sets a BLACK chess piece onto the sill, turns, looks directly at us, then pulls off her blouse.

INT. AIRPORT (BAGGAGE AREA) - LATER

Cheryl passes the carousel, towards the exit. She looks up to see a LITTLE BOY running directly towards her. At the last moment she steps aside and he passes into the arms of...

A YOUNG WOMAN in US ARMY fatigues. She looks like a child herself, and can't be older than 18 years. Cheryl watches their loving embrace for a moment.

SOUND of a familiar office phone overlays.

TINA (V.O.)
Risk management, Cheryl Bradford's
office. This is Tina.

INT. MIDAMERICA INSURANCE TOWER (CHERYL'S OFFICE) -- DAY

Tina is at Cheryl's desk, listening to dead air on the phone.

TINA
Hello?

INT. AIRPORT -- DAY

Cheryl hangs up her phone. She looks to an airline kiosk.

CU of a credit card SWIPE. Word on the screen SELECT YOUR DESTINATION. The cursor blinks. Waiting for input. She gazes at the kiosk screen as she ponders.

CUT TO BLACK.

SCREEN TITLE:

The United Nations has outlined the Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict.

1. Killing or maiming children. 2. Recruitment or use of child soldiers. 3. Rape and other forms of sexual violence. 4. Abduction of children. 5. Attacks against schools or hospitals. 6. Denial of humanitarian access to children.

These rules have yet to be fully accepted by the member nations.

CURTAIN CALL OF CHILD CAST.

CURTAIN CALL OF ACTUAL CHILD SOLDIERS AND REFUGEES.

THE END.