

WHEN SWALLOWS CRY

**A play
by
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Synopsis

This work comprises three playlets, each with three completely different characters in different situations. All the characters in the three playlets are played by the same three actors: two black, one white, all male (in their mid-thirties to early-forties).

The playlets are interspersed with each other, all of them commenting on the theme of migration in different ways, from different perspectives.

Ideally, the white actor plays the roles of Charles Stevenson, Official One (Michael Roberts) and Clark in the different playlets.

One black actor plays the roles of Commandant, Amiir and Raison respectively. One black actor plays the roles of Soldier, Official Two (John Pwono) and Josh respectively.

Playlet One

Charles Stevenson, a Canadian, travels to an African country “to make a difference” as a teacher.

The country is a failed state, with high unemployment, great inequality between a politically-connected elite and the poor masses, with guns being the chief means by which those in power, maintain their grip on power. It is also a context which gives rise to roving bandits, where groups of armed men live by preying particularly on foreigners in the country, kidnapping them, and holding them to ransom.

Charles is kidnapped by one such group that seeks to sell him to a bigger player that in turn will use him for propaganda purposes, or to gain more money and arms in exchange for Charles’ life.

The three characters are Charles Stevenson, Commandant, the leader of the bandit gang and Soldier, a member of the gang.

Setting

The play takes place in a remote setting, a few hours away from the capital city, in a run-down building in a forest.

Characters

Commandant

A physically strong, politically savvy character, who is the leader of the “gang”. In his forties.

Charles Stevenson

Late twenties, early thirties, well-travelled with a generous, optimistic outlook.

Soldier

A similar age to Charles; like Commandant, schooled in life but with some formal education (more than Commandant).

Playlet Two

A Somalian man, fleeing the violence of his own country, and the poverty and difficulties on his continent, arrives at an airport in the USA. His surname appears on Homeland Security's computers as an "undesirable". He is thoroughly – and humiliatingly - interrogated by the security officials.

Official 1, Michael Roberts

White homeland security officer

Official 2, John Pwono

Black homeland security officer

Amiir Sharmarke

Somalian immigrant.

Playlet Three

Two Zimbabweans – both former teachers - are held in a detention centre in Australia, having arrived there illegally on a boat transporting Africans to Vanuatu. They overpower the white officer in the detention centre, and debate plans to escape in order to make new lives for themselves in Australia.

Clark

Detention Officer

Riaison

Zimbabwean refugee

Josh

Zimbabwean refugee

Scene 1

Dilapidated building in an African forest.

Lights come up to give the impression of early evening, but in a place darkened by dense trees. It is inside a rundown building.

Charles is kneeling, his hands tied with a rope behind his back. His head is covered with a hood. Soldier stands about two metres away, brandishing a rifle, generally pointing it in the direction of Charles.

Commandant is talking on a satellite phone.

When Commandant speaks on the phone or to Soldier, he does so in an indigenous African language, with the translation projected onto a screen. (The language is made up of words of different languages and names of languages not peculiar to any country, but could be somewhere on the border between Cameroon and Nigeria). Note: The lines for Commandant are written as below only for the ease of written translation. The sentences should be spoken as naturally as the Actor's English.

Commandant: Bafuti wam, bata gaduwa kotoko kenyang.
(*My brother, we have another one for you*)
Mambali yamassi wuti. One million. (*Beat, snorts*)
(*Same price as last time. One million.*)
Bafuti wam, tikar medumba. Hau five hundred. One million!
(*My brother, you are not listening. Not five hundred. One million!*)
Amerikano. Yamma massa medumba.
(*He's American. So you'll get a good price.*)
Debong duli messa umfazi Franko?
(*What did you get for the French woman?*)
Bakweri! Okay...balundu-dima dollars.
(*You lie! Okay, seven-hundred-and-fifty-thousand dollars*)
Bo, bo, bo...bangwa efik. Hau dzodinka.
(*Yes, yes, yes, he's in good health. No injuries.*)
Mobo. Doyayo evand fungom.
(*Good. Then, same procedure as always.*)
Yamba ghomalo fulfulde. Ewondo fang.
(*You drop off the money. They confirm.*)
Aghem bambalang.
(*We deliver the goods.*)
Allahu Akbar.
(*ends call*)

Commandant takes out a cigarette pack, takes a cigarette and lights up with a lighter. He pulls the hood off Charles' head. Charles has a gag over his mouth.

Commandant: (to Charles) You smoke?

Charles looks anxious. Shakes his head.

Commandant: Good! (shows Charles the pack, reads) "Smoking kills".

Commandant and Soldier laugh.

Commandant lifts up his shirt. Engages with Charles, points to scar on his abdomen.

Commandant: Look....knife. (points to his right shoulder blade) Bullet. (pointing to his left temple) Brick! Many want kill Commandant. Yesterday, Commandant live. Tomorrow, he die. So today...Commandant smoke. (Beat) You? You don't die. Not today. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe next week. Maybe forty years.

Commandant rips off Charles' gag.

Commandant: Your family...they rich?

Charles does not answer; he looks down.

Commandant: All Americans...rich. They pay for you....you live happily ever after.

Commandant takes up a position near Soldier. Then, he moves towards Charles, using him to illustrate his point. He talks to Soldier, but it is really for Charles' benefit.

Commandant: Soldaat, I teach you inflation. Once upon a time...(pointing to Charles), they make us history. They come to Africa. (grabs Charles around the neck and pulls him to his feet) Kidnap you uncles. Commandant's aunties. Tie them with chains. (with hand around Charles' neck) Take them on boats...to Europe. To America. Against them will. And they sell them. One dollar for you sister. Two dollars for Commandant's brother. Fifty cents for you boy cousin. Now they come back...for us gold. Us trees. Us oil. But now...we make them history. We kidnap them. And we sell them. One million dollars...to Boko Haram. Five hundred thousand...Lord's Army. Seven fifty...Al Shabaab. (Beat) One dollar for you African sister three hundred years ago. One million dollars for American today. That, Soldaat...(wry smile) is inflation.

Charles: (softly) Sir...I'm Canadian.

Commandant takes a long drag on his cigarette. Throws it to the ground. Makes a show of stamping it dead.

Commandant: What you say?

Charles: (*softly, nervously*) I'm not...American.

Soldier: If he's not American, Brother Farouk won't pay big....

Commandant turns angrily on Soldier, his face close to Soldier's.

Commandant: (*shouts*) Hau idoma, Soldaat! Hau idoma!
(*No names, Soldier! No names!*)

(Beat, Commandant walks up to Soldier stretches out his hand)

Commandant: Fulani!
(*Rifle!*)

(Soldier hands his rifle to Commandant, gets down to do pushups, knowing that this is Commandant's form of disciplining).

Commandant: (*counting*) Elwa! Hejo! Osa!....
(*Ten! Nine! Eight...*)

Commandant counts as he picks up a ruck sack that belongs to Charles. There does not have to be a correlation between the actual number of push-ups and Commandant's counting. Soldier does push-ups until Commandant counts down from "three". He rummages through the ruck sack as he counts.

Commandant: Tedi! Essa! Jowa!
(*Three! Two! One!*)

On the count of "one", Soldier stands up. Commandant gives back the rifle to Soldier.

Commandant: Mchanga, Soldaat! Mchanga!
(*Discipline, Soldier! Discipline!*)

Soldier: Bo, Commandant.
(*Yes, Commandant.*)

Commandant: (*turns to Charles*) You passport. Not in you bag.

Charles: It's in my safety belt...

Commandant approaches him, cautiously.

Charles: Around my waist.

Soldier assumes a position on his one knee, and points his rifle at Charles as Commandant searches Charles.

Commandant: You have cellphone?

Soldier: I broke and buried it. Like Commandant told me to do.

Commandant opens Charles' shirt, finds his safety belt.

Commandant: *(to Charles)* No second phone in safety belt, so army trace you?

Commandant takes the safety belt, opens it and finds Charles' passport.

Charles: *(quietly)* No.

Commandant: *(pages through Charles' passport)* Where is visa?

Charles: *(nervously)* Visa?

Commandant: To come our country!

Charles: I...I don't need a visa...!

Commandant: You come here...for free. Then you take what is us.

Charles: No...

Commandant: When you take enough *(spits)*?

Charles does not answer. Looks down.

Commandant: Can I go you country?

Charles does not answer.

Commandant: Soldaat, he no understand my English. Speak him.

Soldier: Commandant wants to know...can we go to Canada?

Charles: *(unsure, quietly)* Yes...

Commandant: *(angrily)* Not with no visa! *(hits Charles over the head with his hand)* Not with no money! We need invitation! But you...you just come.

Charles: *(looking down)* I came here to help...

Commandant: Help? (*snorts*) Help yourself...? (*to Soldier*) Soldaat...they no take slaves no more to work them farms. Because now (*ironically*) they “civilized”. They bring them factories here. They pay government, and government pay army to keep us slaves here. Them country stays white. Them happy. Everyone happy. (*turns on Charles*) Only not us slaves!

Charles: Sir...I understand your anger...I came to help free your people from poverty.

Beat as Commandant looks quizzically at Charles.

Commandant: (*bursts out laughing, then, to Solider*) Some white men make us poverty. Other white men come save us from poverty. (*laughs, shakes his head*).

Charles: I’m sorry...that came out wrong.

Commandant: (*firmly, to Charles*) We no need you help! We save us!

Charles: Yes. I only want to help.

Beat.

Commandant: You bring guns?

Charles does not respond. He’s taken aback by the question.

Commandant: (*sighs heavily for effect*) Soldaat...translate....

Before Solider can speak, Charles responds.

Charles: I’m a teacher.

Commandant: If you want free us from poverty, you bring guns.

Charles: With due respect, Sir, the young people need education.

Commandant: They need new government. To get new government, we need guns.

Slight beat. Charles is deferential. He does not want to come across argumentatively.

Charles: A new government will need educated people.

Commandant: (*points to Soldier*) Soldaat have education! Soldaat no have job! Have no future! (*firmly, pointing his finger in Charles' face*) We need new government! Not what you or World Bank say we need!

There is silence for a few moments. Commandant pages through Charles' passport.

Commandant: (*paging through Charles' passport*) You travel many countries. Morocco. Jamaica. Israel. Japan. Chile. You teach all?

Charles: No...

Commandant: You CIA? (*laughs*)

Charles: I...those are mostly holidays.

Commandant: (*shakes his head, to Soldier*) He travel the world. For fun. He rich, Soldaat. He get good price.

Charles: Please, sir, you can see that I'm not American. I'm of no value to you.

Commandant: (*snorts*) You white! You have name. You *have* value. Soldaat and me? We no value. The world no know us. (*draws his revolver, points it at Soldier*) I shoot him (*pulls trigger, purposely misses Soldier, but gun shot goes off, Soldier reacts, but then laughs*), no one cries. I shoot you (*points gun at Charles who cowers*), I start a war.

Beat. Silence. Commandant picks up Charles' rucksack again. He takes out a book; it's the play, Hamlet.

Commandant: (*Holding up the play*) What is this?

Charles: It's a play...Hamlet.

Commandant: What is "Hamlet"?

Charles: It's the name of the prince...in the story.

Commandant: What story?

Charles: The book tells the story about a prince. His uncle kills his father, the king. And marries his mother. His uncle becomes king.

Commandant: Where this happen?

Charles: In Denmark.

Commandant: Europe...

Charles: It's a well-known story. By a very famous writer.

Commandant: Equiano wrote this?

Charles: Equiano?

Commandant: You no know Olaudah Equiano? Very famous writer....

Charles: *Hamlet*...was written by William Shakespeare.

Commandant: He Danish?

Charles: English.

Commandant: You teach this book to us children?

Charles: *(uncertainly)* Yes.

Commandant: *(to Soldier, holding up the book)* Soldaat...you see they teach? Kill brother. Marry sister. Become king. Then when we do like they teach, they say we barbarians. *(Beat)* Why you Canadian...and teach book from England?

Charles: The play has universal truths.

Commandant: *(to Soldier)* What is "universal truths"?

Soldier: It means we can all learn what is right and wrong from the book.

Commandant: *(snorts)* They teach us children about brother who kills king to become king. Then they say...*(with irony)* "no kill government...do democracy". *(Shakes his head. To Charles)* Only way for change king here...is kill him. *(tosses book towards Charles)* They send you?

Charles: Excuse me...?

Commandant: The British! The old slave-masters. They send you here?

Charles: No.

Commandant: *(firmly, accusingly)* They send you...!

Charles: No...

Commandant: Before, they take us bodies. Now they send you...to kidnap us children's minds.

Charles: I came on my own.

Commandant: New slavery...free body, colonised mind.

Charles: There's an international education agency....

Commandant: Learn *you* language.

Charles: I applied to them.

Commandant: Know *you* stories!

Charles: They gave me options in Asia or Africa.

Commandant: Worship *you* god.

Charles: I chose Africa.

Beat.

Commandant: You *chose* Africa.

Charles: (*quietly*) Yes.

Commandant: (*bursts out laughing, shakes his head*) Soldaat, he *chose* Africa! Which you choose, Soldaat? Europe? Or America? Australia or Canada? Which you choose?

Soldier shrugs his shoulders.

Commandant: That's right, Soldaat. You...me...no have choice! But he...(mockingly) *chose* Africa. (*Spits, then to Soldier*) Chain, Soldaat.

Soldier exits. Commandant takes out his smartphone, points it at Charles.

Commandant: Look at phone.

(Charles looks at Commandant who takes a photo).

Soldier enters with a heavy metal chain.

Commandant: (to Soldier) Nukila tumbo.
(Secure goods).

Soldier ties one end of the chain around Charles' left leg, and the other around a stake or pole. There is a locking facility with a key. Commandant puts the hood back over Charles' head. Soldier hands the key to Commandant.

While Soldier does this, Commandant looks at Charles' picture on his phone.

Commandant: (to Soldier) Jiwe baridi mbali.
(Do not talk to him.)
Ekundu moshi.
(I'm going to town.)
Wingu adodo kuri.
(I'll bring some food).

Lights fade. Musical interlude.

Transition to Scene 2: For consideration - Slides are projected, with images of an African map. Somalia highlighted. Then Kenya. Followed by Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and finally South Africa. Each country has animated footsteps in it, heading from Somalia to South Africa.

Scene 2

Homeland Security Office, American airport.

The actors who played Charles and Soldier in the previous scene, now play Official 1 (Michael Roberts) and Official 2 (John Pwono) respectively. "Commandant" now plays the role of Amair.

It is an entry port to the USA. Official 1 is white, Official 2 is black. Official 1 and Official 2 – both in their early forties - are putting the final touches to their uniforms; they have changed out of their civilian clothes into black trousers, with white long-sleeved shirts. Name tags are attached to their shirts. Official 2 has a revolver in a holster attached to a belt around his waist. As they tie their shirts, and their belts, they engage in conversation.

Official 2: Are you serious?

Official 1: You'd want your kids to go to school in safety too, right?

Official 2: Everyone would!

Official 1: Exactly!

Official 2: But how do you choose a school that won't be subject to gun violence?

Official 1: If I knew that...

Official 2: Come on, Charles. There are thousands of schools in the country you can choose from.

Official 1: And last year alone, there were shootings at more than sixty of them! Kids, teenagers... killed by some random psycho!

Official 2: By your logic, we wouldn't go to the mall, or restaurants, or even to work...sixty school shootings, but three-hundred-and-sixty mass shootings elsewhere. And that was just last year!

Beat.

Official 1: Bizarre isn't it? We're at the coalface of keeping our country safe from external threats...and we can't guarantee the safety of our kids when they go to school.

Beat

Official 2: (*wry smile*) Maybe we need to lower the minimum age, so schoolkids can carry guns to protect themselves.

Official 1: Be serious John!

Official 2: It works for us in the real world. The more firepower we have, the more of a deterrent we have against being attacked.

Official 1: And when they come at us with passenger planes, trucks, suicide bombers...what use is our firepower then?

Official 2: We do what we always do!

Official 1: And what's that?

Official 2: Find where they come from and bomb them at source!

Official 1 snorts and shakes his head.

Official 2: What?

Official 1: Nothing.

Official 2: Why the snort?

Official 1: *(sigh)* I wish I lived in a gun-free zone!

Official 2: *(his turn to snort)* Then you wouldn't be working here.

Official 1: We don't need guns to do our job.

The phone rings. Official 2 answers.

Official 2: Pwono...Yes, sure. How do you spell that?

He motions to Official 1 who goes to the computer and types as Official 2 spells the name.

Official 2: Surname: S-h-a-r-m-a-r-k-e. First name A-m-i-i-r. *(Beat)* Sure, send him in.

Official 1: Sharmarke...Somalian.

Official 2: Apparently, yes.

Official 1: There are three Sharmarke's on the system, but no Amiir.

Official 2: That's why they're sending him to us.

Official 1: Do they suspect anything?

Official 2: His visa looks authentic, but he got it in South Africa. They just said we should check him out.

Amiir enters pulling a suitcase on wheels behind him. He has a small bag slung over his shoulder and in his hand, is his passport. He tries to establish a relationship with Official 2 assuming racial sympathy. The attitudes of Officials 1 and 2 change dramatically to professional, distant, firm.

Amiir: They sent me to this office...

Official 1: Mr Shamarke?

Amiir: Yes.

Official 1: Your passport please.

Official 1 takes his passport, studies it in silence. Official 2 stares at Amiir, as he puts on latex gloves. Amiir is clearly uneasy.

Amiir: I have a visa...page 13.

Official 2 approaches Amiir to search his suitcase.

Amiir: What's the problem, brother?

Official 2: This your bag?

Amiir: Yes.

Official 2: You pack it yourself?

Amiir: Yes.

Official 2: So you're aware of everything in it.

Amiir: Of course, brother.

Official 2: Please place it on the table and open it.

Amiir unlocks the case and Official 2 begins to search through it.

Official 1: *(holding Amiir's passport open)* Mr Sharmarke...I need to ask you a few questions.

Amiir: They already asked many questions at Passport Control.

Official 1: I may need to ask some of them again.

Amiir: Is there a problem?

Beat. The tension is palpable as they look at each other.

Official 1: Have you ever been a member of a terrorist organization?

Amiir: What?

Official 2: *(holding up a Quran)* He has a Quran!

Amiir: Is that illegal?

Official 1: I'm going to ask you again....

Amiir: No!

Official 2 pages through the Quran, to see if there's anything hidden in it.

Amiir: (to *Official 2*) Please, brother, that is a holy book...

Official 1: (*cutting in*) So you've never been a member of a terrorist organization?

Amiir: Never! I already answered that when I applied for the visa.

Official 1: Do you know anyone who's a member of a terrorist organization?

Amiir: Why do you ask....?

Official 2: (*ignoring his plea, firmly, slowly*) Do you know anyone who's a member of a terrorist organization?

Amiir: Brother...what is the problem?

Official 2: (*coldly*) I am *not* your brother.

Amiir: I'm sorry...I

Official 2: This is America. *You* are from Africa....

Amiir: I thought you...

Official 1: (*cutting in, getting back to the core business*) Mr Shamarke, it would be easier for all of us – especially you - if you simply answered our questions.

Amiir: But I don't understand. I already answered many questions at Immigration. I went for a long interview and have a visa given by the American Embassy. What is the problem?

Official 1: Our job is to check if there is a problem.

Official 2: Or if you could be a problem in future.

Amiir: What kind of problem?

Official 2: We get to ask the questions here!

Beat, tense brief silence.

Official 1: So, you have never been a member of a terrorist organisation and you don't know anyone who is a member of a terrorist organisation?

Amiir: You think I'm a terrorist?

Official 2: (*raising his voice*) Answer the question!

Amiir: (*getting more agitated*) Because I'm from Somalia?

Official 2: (*to Official 1*) He's being evasive.

Amiir: Because I have a Quran?

Official 2: Why are you being evasive?

Amiir: What's evasive?

Official 2: Avoiding the question.

Amiir: (*sighs*) No, I am NOT a member of a terrorist organisation. No, I do NOT know anyone who IS a member of a terrorist organisation! And no, I am not planning to BECOME a terrorist!

Official 1: There are hundreds...maybe thousands of warlords in Somalia...all with their own band of followers.

Amiir: I don't know them.

Official 1: Everyone shooting at everyone else.

Amiir: That's why I come here.

Official 2: To shoot at people here?

Amiir: No! To get away from the killings...

Official 1: Why here?

Amiir: Why America?

Official 2: Why not Kenya? Uganda?

Amiir: I want the American dream. To be free, to live in peace, without guns everywhere.

Beat.

Official 1: South Africa's much closer...you lived there.

Amiir: (*angrily*) They kill Somalis there! They shot my uncle. They killed my cousin.

Official 1: Why?

Amiir: Because they are Somalian.

Official 2: (*snorts*) What...they see Somalis on the street, and they just shoot them?

Amiir: They shoot us in our shops.

Official 1: Why?

Amiir: They say we steal their customers with our low prices. But they don't like to work. They want government handouts. We work hard.

Official 1: (*looking at the passport*) Amiir Sharmarke...your name comes up red on our computers. Why?

Amiir: What does it mean? To come up red?

Official 1: It means...we have a potential problem!

Amiir: What kind of problem?

Official 1: We let you in today, and tomorrow, six months, ten years down the line, we wake up to you strapped in a suicide vest!

Amiir: (*angrily*) That is *not* me!

Official 1: That is what we need to check, Mr Sharmarke. That's our job.

Amiir: I want the freedom and peace that America can give me, but I will give something back!

Official 1: Like what?

Amiir: I have made money in Somalia and South Africa...difficult places. I can contribute to the economy...employ people.

Official 1: We need that.

Amiir: I will help to keep America great.

Official 1 and Official 2 look at each other and smile.

Amiir: My sons will fight to defend America.

Official 1: You have a family?

Amiir: Not yet. But when I do....

Official 1: Do you have military training?

Amiir: No.

Official 1: Have you ever owned a gun?

Amiir: Never!

Official 1: Not even in South Africa...to defend yourself?

Amiir: I've seen what guns do....

Official 2 has been listening all along. He now intervenes.

Official 2: You have a good story, Mr Sharmarke.

Amiir: Thank you.

Official 2: But we need you to strip...

Amiir becomes increasingly agitated during this sequence.

Amiir: Strip?

Official 2: Take off your clothes.

Amiir: What have I done?

Official 1: We need to complete our search.

Amiir: This is *not* good!

Official 1: Mr Shamarke....

Amiir: Why are you treating me like a criminal?

Official 1: This is a standard procedure.

Official 2: Are you hiding something?

Amiir: I've been open and honest....

Official 2: Then take off your clothes...

Amiir: In my culture....

Official 2: Fuck your culture.

Amiir: Why do you swear at me?

Official 2: You're in America now!

Amiir: (*angrily*) I'm a human being!

Official 1 tries to calm things down.

Official 1: Mr Sharmarke...when you go through a metal detector, you have to take off your jacket, your belt, your shoes...

Amiir: Everyone has to do that...

Official 1: Yes.

Amiir: And the detectors have never gone off when I pass through.

Official 1: Then you have nothing to worry about.

Amiir takes off his jacket, his belt and his shoes during the next sequence.

Amiir: But you're treating me like I've done something wrong.

Official 1: Our job is to check that you haven't done something wrong.

Amiir stands with his hands stretched out as required when being searched after passing through a metal detector.

Amiir: Search me.

Official 1: We have to check your body for tattoos. Sometimes they tell us stories...

Amiir lowers his arms, shakes his head.

Official 2 crosses to the computer and reads from it. He questions Amiir who stays standing with his hands outstretched.

Official 2: Somalians take their names from their fathers...is that right?

Amiir: Yes. So?

Official 2: So if "Sharmarke" comes up as a problem on our screens...it is possible that you know a Sharmarke who's a problem.

Amiir: There are lots of Sharmarke's in Somalia.

Official 2: *(looks at the computer)* Fouad Sharmarke...led an attack on a Mogadishu hotel. Two American AID workers were amongst those killed.

Amiir: That's why I left Somalia...too much death!

Official 1: Are you related to Fouad Sharmarke?

Amiir: *(frustrated)* I am not related to Fouad Sharmarke. I don't know Fouad Sharmarke. And I wish he were dead. Are you happy now?

Scene 3

Australian Detention Centre.

This story takes place in a detention centre for illegal migrants and refugees in Australia. A white official, Clark, has a flip board and a side revolver. The two refugees, Riaison and Josh are sitting cross-legged on the floor. Clark is aggressive, rude, abusive. Clark's Australian accent belies traces of southern Africa.

Clark: *(to Josh)* One-four-seven-nine-seven.... Say it!

Josh: One-four-seven....

Clark: *(rolling his eyes)* Jeez! Nine-seven.

Josh: Nine-seven.

Clark: The whole thing...say it.

Josh: One-four-seven-nine...*(plays Clark)* seven.

Clark: *(to Riaison)* You...One-four-seven-nine-eight.

Riaison: One-four-seven-nine-eight.

Clark: At least we have one clever monkey....From now on, that's who you are! You are your number! You will be fed, you will sleep, you will take a shit as that number. You understand?

(Beat. Riason and Josh stare at Clark blankly.)

Clark: *(snorts)* So you monkeys thought you could just arrive, without papers...no passports, no visas, no work permits...and we would just open our arms to welcome you? What tree do you live in? *(lifts his left arm, scratches underneath and makes baboon sounds, shakes his head)*. I'll give you this...we don't get many illegals from Africa. That's quite a trip. Fifteen...twenty days in a leaky boat...full of the stinking, great unwashed. But don't worry...it will only take a day to get you monkeys back to the jungle! You ever been on a plane?

They do not respond.

Clark: You monkeys lost your voice?

He looks at his flipboard.

Clark: It says here you're from Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe doesn't even have a port! So how does it work? You hitch a ride to Mozambique? Catch a bus? And then...stow away on the first boat to Australia?

Riason: We walked.

Clark: *(snorts)* Yeah, right! Two Jesus monkeys walking on water....

Riason: We walked to the port.

Clark: You're fucking kidding me. You walked to Mozambique?

Josh: To Kenya.

Clark is taken aback initially.

Clark: You monkeys are full of shit...who walks from Zimbabwe to Kenya?

Josh: We told your colleagues...the traders have our passports.

Clark: Traders?

Josh: The people who run the boat. Who brought us here.

Riason: Please, sir, we'd like to stay here.

Clark: *(laughs)* That's not going to happen. That's not how we do things in the civilised world.

Riaison: We'd be happy to stay...even in this prison for a while.

Clark: This is a detention centre for illegals, not a prison.

Riaison: It's better than Zimbabwe.

Clark: And whose fault is that? You "liberated" yourselves from white people, and what did you get? And now you're all running or sailing to countries ruled by whites. Well, sorry, we don't fucking want you! But our taxpayers are generous...you'll each be getting a one-way ticket back to your liberated jungle!

Clark turns his back on Riaison and Josh to put his file on a table. Before Riaison can stop him, Josh flings himself at Clark, bringing him down. Josh puts his knee on Clarke's throat, so that he can't scream, and takes the revolver from Clark's holster. He points the gun in Clark's face; Clark tries to be calm, but expresses fear. Riaison gets up, very concerned by what Josh has done.

Riaison: Josh, what are you doing?

Clark: You motherfucker....

Josh puts his hand over Clark's mouth to prevent him from speaking or shouting.

Josh: Find something to tie him with.

Riaison: You're getting us into more trouble.

Clark bites Josh's hand; Josh lets out a little scream of pain. He pistol whips Clark across the temple. Clark lies silent for a bit.

Josh: I'm not going back to Zimbabwe, Riaison! Give me your belt!

Josh rolls Clark onto his back, puts his hands behind his back and ties them with Riaison's belt.

Riaison: I didn't sign up for this, Josh!

Josh: Riaison...you heard him. We're on the next plane back to Zimbabwe! This is our only chance!

Riaison: How? We can't just walk out of here...with all these fences and guards and stuff!

Josh: We'll think of something...but we first need to secure him.

Josh finds a rag or tears the sleeve off his shirt, and ties it around Clark's mouth. Clark has come to, out of a temporary daze.

Josh: Get something to tie his feet.

Clark tries to resist, but Josh points the gun at him, threateningly.

Josh: Riaison...don't just stand there!

Riaison: I didn't sign up for this, Josh.

Josh takes off his belt, and gives it to Riaison.

Josh: It's going to be okay, Riaison. Just tie him up for goodness' sake!

Clark tries to talk through the gag. He makes muffled noises. Riaison reluctantly ties Clark's feet.

Riaison: (to Clark) Sorry....

Josh: Why are you apologizing to this racist?

Josh makes as if to hit Clark who raises his arm to shield himself. Riaison puts his hand on Josh's shoulder.

Riaison: Josh...don't.

Josh: (to Clark, pointing to Riaison) Riaison Moyo...say it.

Clark is still gagged. Looks quizzically at Josh.

Josh: (firmly) Say it!

Clark: (muffled) Moyo....

Josh: Riaison Moyo!

Clark: (muffled) Riaison Moyo.

Josh: (pointing to himself) Josh Chikungera. Say it!

Clark: Josh...Chick..

Josh: Chikungera.

Clark: Chik-oon-gera.

Josh: Josh Chikungera...*(waits for Clark to say the whole thing)*

Clark: *(still muffled)* Josh Chikungera.

Josh: That's my name. Remember it, you piece of trash!

Riaison: You've made your point, Josh. Let him go.

Josh: And then?

Riaison: What are we going to do?

Josh: What do *you* think we should do?

Clark makes muffled – not very loud - shout for help.

Clark: Help!

Josh points the revolver at him.

Josh: You make another sound....

Riaison pulls Josh away gently. They argue under their breath, so that Clark can't hear. Josh, though arguing with Riaison, keeps an eye on Clark.

Riaison: I hope you have a plan, Josh!

Josh: We're in this together, Riaison.

Riaison: The way I see it, we don't have many options.

Josh: Do you want to go back to Zimbabwe?

Riaison: Of course not!

Josh: You heard the man. They're putting us on the next plane back!

Riaison: I just don't want us to get into more trouble...to get a criminal record.

Josh: They already see us as criminals...

Riaison: Until you attacked him, we were only illegal immigrants.

Josh: Before that, we were black. For them, that makes us criminals by definition.

Riaison: I don't want to argue with you, Josh. What are we going to do?

Josh: Don't just make this my problem.

Riaison: I'm not the one who played Rambo!

Josh: What do *you* think we should do?

Riaison: We're not just going to walk out of here...this place is built to keep us in!

Josh: I'm trying to give us some options here!

Riaison: By assaulting an officer?

Josh: I am *not* going back to Zimbabwe, Riaison!

Riaison: Maybe we can talk to him...

Josh: (*dismissively*) Him? He's a racist at the bottom of the food chain. He has no power.

Riaison: I meant...we can ask him about our options. Maybe we can apply for political asylum or something.

They look at each other; Josh shakes his head. Josh takes a step back, invites Riaison to speak to Clark.

Josh: You'll be wasting your breath...

Riaison sits on the floor next to Clark.

Riaison: Sir...I'm really sorry about what you've just experienced. But you have to understand, we wouldn't be doing this...we wouldn't have gone through what we have for the last 33 days unless we were really desperate. (*Beat*) There were four of us when we started this journey. One contracted malaria on our way to Kenya...

Josh: (*angrily*) He wasn't just a number! He was my cousin! He's dead!

Riaison: *(trying to soothe Josh)* Josh...okay...Sir, we're both university graduates. But there's no work for us back in Zimbabwe.

Josh: Tell him about Farai...

Riaison: What I mean is, there is work...we were teachers...but there wouldn't be money to pay us...for months!

Josh: Farai was also a teacher. He died on the boat coming over here.

Riaison: We can make contribution to your society. All we're asking...is for a chance. No handouts.

Josh: No funeral. Nothing. They just dumped his body into the sea.

Riaison: We won't be a burden to the state...we just want a chance at a normal life. *(Beat)* Again, I'm really sorry about what you've experienced...we accept that there will need to be consequences. But...as human beings to another human being...you must understand how traumatic this has been for us. *(Beat)* I'm going to take off your gag now. Please...please just tell us what options we have. Okay?

Clark looks at Riaison and then nods reluctantly. Riaison takes off the gag. Clark looks at them both, then screams...

Clark: Help!

Riaison jumps on Clark, and covers Clark's mouth with his hand. Clark bites Riaison's finger (causing Riaison to pull away), and Josh pistol whips Clark. Josh ties the gag around Clark's mouth again, as tight as he can.

Riaison places pressure on his finger.

Riaison: *(angrily)* He bit me! *(makes as if he's about to hit Clark)*

Josh: Did he draw blood?

Riaison: He did! The bastard!

Josh: Good. So he's helped himself to your AIDS.

Clark looks at them in shock. He tries to spit through the gag.

Josh and Riaison burst into derisive laughter.

Josh: I think I'll donate my Ebola to him too....

Josh walks to Clark...

Riaison: Josh...leave him!

Josh spits in Clark's face.

Riaison: (*angrily*) Why did you do that?

Josh: (*to Clark who's trying to rub off the spit*) That's what monkeys do, isn't it? You can take us out of the jungle...(*making baboon-like actions, scratching under his arm like Clark did*), but you can't take the jungle out of us.

Riaison: You're making this more difficult for us, Josh.

Josh: You think?

Riaison: He could be our ally....

Josh: You believe that...even after he's bitten you? And he's the civilized one...

Riaison: I don't have to remind you...we have *no* power here.

Josh: This racist has already reminded me...that this is how the world works. They don't even regard us as human, Riaison.

Riaison: We have to be better than them!

Josh: They treat us like shit, and we just keep turning the other cheek?

Riaison: No...we assert our humanity by being human, not by stooping to their levels of violence and abuse.

Josh: You're so naïve, Riaison...

Riaison: Maybe...

Josh: But then...Mandela has always been your hero. That's why white people...and the West loved him so much.

Riaison: What's the alternative, Josh? ISIS?

Josh goes up to Clark...

Josh: It wouldn't win the war on terror against black people...but the world would be a better place (*pointing the gun at Clark's head*) with one less racist.
(*Beat*) Wouldn't it?

Lights fade. Transition to Scene 4.

Scene 4

Dilapidated building, African forest.

Soldier and Charles. Charles is seated on the floor, the hood is not on his head. His hands are still tied behind his back. Soldier is standing next to him, holding a military bottle to Charles mouth, so that he drinks water from it. Soldier does not speak. He is looking at the cover of Hamlet which he has in his other hand. At a certain point, he stops feeding Charles, and screws the lid back onto the bottle.

Charles: Thank you.

Soldier stands to one side casually where he can see Charles, and he reads Hamlet. Charles tries to make conversation with him.

Charles: Did you learn about Shakespeare at school?

Soldier does not answer. He simply continues reading. Beat, silence.

Charles: Is it true what Commandant said? About Boko Haram?

Soldier continues to feign disinterest, reads.

Charles: What happens now....?

Soldier walks towards Charles, picks up the hood and makes as if to put it on Charles in order to stop him from talking.

Charles: Please...it's difficult to breathe with that...I won't talk.

Soldier moves slowly from Charles, drops the hood. He stands aside, looks at Charles who looks away. There is silence for a while.

Soldier: What did Hamlet do?

Charles perks up, but does not want to alienate Soldier by asking the wrong questions.

Charles: You mean...

Soldier: His uncle killed his father. Then married his mother....

Charles: Hamlet wasn't happy....

Soldier: (*impatiently*) So what did he do?

Charles: (*cutting to the chase*) He killed his uncle.

Beat. Silence.

Soldier: What would you have done? If you were Hamlet?

Charles is taken aback by the question.

Charles: We live in different moral universes now...

Soldier: But you talk of "universal truths".

Charles: What I meant....(*beat*)...I...

Soldier: (*cutting in*) What would you have done?

Charles: I...I'm not sure

Soldier: (*persisting*) Your uncle kills your father...he marries your mother. And they live in your house. Would you be happy?

Charles: No....

Soldier: What would you do?

Charles: I'd report them to the police.

Soldier: You'd want revenge?

Charles: I'd want...justice. I'd want what is right.

Soldier: That's all we want. Justice. What is right. You want to help?

Charles: (*animated*) Yes!

Soldier: (*pointing to Charles*) This is how you help....

Charles: (*deflated*) I don't understand.

Soldier: How long have you been in our country?

Charles: Nearly seven months.

Soldier: You like it?

Charles: It's not Canada...

Soldier: Fifty three. That's the average life expectancy for men in our country

Beat.

Charles: It's 80 in Canada. *(Beat)* You can come to Canada...

Soldier looks at Charles with ambivalence.

Charles: I can arrange it.

Soldier suddenly raises his rifle, points it threateningly at Charles. He circles Charles all the time pointing his rifle at him as they engage each other in the following sequence. Charles cowers when Soldier comes up close to him.

Soldier: I see what you're doing!

Charles: I was only....

Soldier: You're trying to divide us!

Charles: I was not...

Soldier: This is why Commandant says you mustn't talk!

Charles: Please....

There's a bit of a tense stand-off, with Charles cowering and Soldier towering over him.

Charles: Please...I'm talking to you because...you're a good man.

Soldier: Commandant is a good man too.

Charles: Commandant is a hard man.

Soldier: *(smiles)* If not for Commandant....

Soldier stops speaking, wondering if he should continue...After more walking around, and some beats as Soldier thinks, he speaks.

Soldier: Let me tell you something that you won't read in our history books or tourism brochures. Some years ago, many men from our village worked on an iron mine up north. The only jobs here are in the mines. Or farms. Or the army. Maybe in the public sector if you're a member of the ruling tribe. Which we're not. The miners went on strike. For a long time. The mine owners were foreign. Some ruling party leaders were on their board. So government sent in the army to break the strike. Twenty-two miners were shot dead. Commandant was in the army at the time. He refused to shoot...he knew many of the miners, including his cousin. They jailed him for five years. When he was released, he came back to our village. He saw the poverty. Men from our village, from our tribe no longer get work on the mines. Or in the army. Government ignores our region. So Commandant and some others have taken charge. We work the land. We now have our own food. Our own schools. We build our own houses. But we need medicines. Generators. Petrol. For this, we need money. *This* is how *you* help us. Nothing personal. It's just the way our economy works here.

Silence as Charles takes this in for a few beats.

Charles: Was he...Commandant...was he serious about Boko Haram?

Soldier: About selling you?

Charles: I know about the kidnappings...and the ransoms. But I never heard about the on-selling.

Soldier: We're a small group. We don't have their infrastructure. And our leaders don't want to attract attention to our region. So we just supply. If Boko Haram has you and puts you up for ransom, the army is diverted. And America won't send their drones.

Charles: Sooner or later, they'll make the link between you and Boko Haram, and your village *will* be bombed!

Beat.

Soldier: (*shrugs*) Maybe...

Charles: It doesn't have to be that way.

Soldier: What choice do we have?

Charles: You can have a whole new life in Canada.

Soldier: Me?

Charles is unsure about what he's about to say, but he does so anyway.

Charles: If you help to get me out of here, I will make sure you get to Canada.

Soldier: (*angrily*) You want me to commit treason?

Charles: I will pay you more than what Boko Haram will pay for me.

Soldier: With your teacher salary? (*laughs*)

Charles: You're a good man, Soldier. Save yourself...

Soldier: (*snorts*) That's how you Westerners think...save yourself! You only think about yourself!

Charles: If you come to Canada, you can help your family...and maybe your village.

Soldier: Our village needs money. We sell you, we get money. We don't sell you now, Boko Haram won't buy in the future.

Charles: (*tries to play on Soldier's humanity*) You know what Boko Haram could do to me...

Soldier: If your family or company pays the ransom, Boko Haram will let you go. It's not personal, Mr Charles. Just economic.

Silence

Charles: If you help to get me out of here, I promise to help your village.

Soldier: (*angrily*) Don't say that!

Charles: You say you need resources. I can help...

Soldier: (*snorts*) You? What can one man do?

Silence.

Charles: (*quietly*) The iron mine you talked about...Makudari...my family has shares in it.

Soldier comes closer...

Charles: My father was a director of the company that owns the majority share.

Soldier: (*angrily*) So you're *not* a teacher!

Charles: I am! I am in your country as a teacher...

Soldier: You help to keep the ruling tribe in power through that mine...and now you teach us...what?

Charles: What you say...is true. I'm not really a teacher, but I came here to teach because I want to give something back.

Soldier: After you've taken everything...

Charles: Giving money would have been easy. I wanted to give more...of myself...because of how I benefited from other people's misery. Your people. I know that sounds trite...but I don't know how else to say it.

Beat.

Soldier: Like Commandant said...one man – your father - creates poverty, and now another man...another rich man...wants to save us from poverty. But only on terms that he understands.

Charles: My father and I...we disagree...we no longer talk to each other.

Soldier: You still have a father! My father was killed at Makudari.

Charles: In the shootings?

Soldier: In a mining accident. Two years before the shootings.

Charles: I'm really sorry.

Beat.

Soldier: You're sorry. And the world goes on. One miner dead. Who cares? There are hundreds more.

Sound of truck arriving. Soldier makes as if he's looking out through the window.

Soldier: Commandant is coming. Don't tell him what you've told me. For your own good.

Soldier picks up the hood and goes over to Charles.

Charles: *(quickly)* Soldaat...my family has power and influence. The army will come. It's not what I want, but that's how it is. Your village, you, the Commandant are all in danger. Let me go...for your own sakes! And I promise, within three months, I will have mobilized great resources to help your village. Please...

Soldier puts hood over Charles' head. Commandant is on the phone; the audience hears him before he enters. He is in an upbeat mood.

Commandant: Dogo, bafuti wam, samaki hau fimbo.
(Sorry, my brother, we're not selling him)
Sana wapi mzizi.
(Something's come up)

Commandant enters. He has a shopping bag with food in one hand and a rucksack with equipment on his back.

Commandant: Gamba ndege baadhi.
(He's no good for your purpose).
Jani zito tunda. Mtoto vipi nani.
(We'll find others. And let you have them)
Allahu akbar. *(ends call)*
(with a big smile, he takes the hood off Charles) How is Charles Stevenson from Vancouver? *(gives shopping bag to Soldier)*
Soldier, give good friend some food.

Soldier takes out a loaf of bread and a litre of Coke from the shopping bag. Commandant begins to set up the video camera equipment.

Commandant: We treat you well, Mr Stevenson? Now we show world you alive. You safe. You happy. And you want go home.

Charles' hands are still tied behind his back. Soldier feeds him the bread, which he eats voraciously. He drinks from the Coke bottle Soldier holds to his mouth so that the liquid runs down the side of his mouth.

Commandant: You want go home, Mr Stevenson?

Charles does not engage. He keeps chewing and drinking. Commandant is ready to film at this time.

Commandant: Your sisters want know how is Charles. Elizabeth and Diana. You royal family of Canada? Elizabeth, Charles, Diana...*(laughs)*

For the first time, Charles expresses interest. He does not know how Commandant knows his sisters' names.

Commandant: *(firmer)* Did Soldier harm you?

Charles: *(quietly)* No.

Commandant: So we good, Charles! You sisters all on Facebook. Say "Please don't harm our Charles". *(Beat)* Yes, we get Facebook in village, Charles Stevenson. Best music: Coldplay. Best movies: The Godfather, Titanic. Favourite team: Vancouver Canucks. What team that? Football?

Charles: Hockey.

Commandant: Hockey?

Charles: Ice-hockey....

Commandant: *(not getting it)* Never mind. You have much friends, Mr Stevenson! Two-thousand, eight-hundred-and-fifty-one. More than Soldaat's village! Tell friends, tell sisters, tell parents...you okay.

Commandant takes up position behind camera.

Charles: *(quietly)* I'm not okay.

Commandant: You say we no harm you.

Charles: Tomorrow you will sell me to Boko Haram.

Commandant: *(laughs)* No, no, no...we no sell.

Charles lights up. Soldier is interested too.

Charles: You're not?

Commandant: No.

Charles is ambivalent, happy that he's not being sold on to Boko Haram, but unsure about what Commandant plans to do with him.

Charles: What happens now?

Commandant: We make movie. Show family you no harm.

Charles: And then?

Commandant: And then...family give us money, and you go back family. So...look in camera and tell family you okay. Say full name. Say you safe. Say you not harmed.

Charles is hesitant.

Commandant: (*firmly*) You want go home, Charles?

Charles: Yes.

Commandant: Then talk!

Charles: (*kneeling with his hands behind his back, quietly, sadly*) My name...is Charles Stevenson.

Commandant: Too sad. Say again.

Charles: (*breathes in deeply, tries again, but not much better*) My name is Charles...Stevenson. I have been kidnapped but I...

Commandant: No! No talk of kidnap!

Charles: You said....

Commandant: I said...say you safe. Say you no harm. When I say you talk of kidnap?

Charles: Sorry...

Commandant: My name is Charles Stevenson....

Charles: My name is Charles Stevenson. I am safe. I have not been harmed.

Commandant: Good! Not difficult, see? Now do again. More happy. I want believe you.

Soldier: Commandant...

Commandant: Soldaat?

Soldier: If you want to show that he is not harmed, why don't we untie his hands, and let him stand?

Commandant ponders this. Goes up to Charles and helps him up roughly.

Commandant: Untie him hands, Soldaat.

Soldier unties Charles' hands. Commandant stands with his hand on his holstered revolver. There is an uneasy silence. Then, Charles breaks it.

Charles: Sir...may I make my own statement?

Commandant: No! We only need you say you alive and unharmed.

Beat. Then Soldier intervenes.

Soldier: Commandant, let's hear what he has to say. If you don't like it, you can wipe it off....

Commandant: You speak to him while I was away, Soldier?

Soldier: *(quietly)* Yes, Commandant.

Commandant: *(angrily, right in Soldier's face)* I tell you no speak him!

Soldier takes a step back, drops to the floor, ready to do push ups.

Commandant: Get up!

Soldier gets up.

Commandant: Why I tell you no speak him, Soldier?

Soldier: So he does not get into my head. Or my heart.

Commandant: Exactly! First you speak him, then you like him, then you no want trade him. He is goods to trade for money. That is all.

Soldier: Yes, Commandant.

Commandant turns to Charles, and heads to the camera

Commandant: *(to Charles)* Make statement. I no like, you do again.

Charles: I can make my own statement?

Commandant: No talk of kidnap!

Charles realizes that this is the one chance he has both to make an impression on his captors and to speak to the world. His delivery is influenced by his circumstances which, as far as possible, he tries to overcome. He speaks calmly, deliberately.

Charles: *(talking into the camera)* My name is Charles Stevenson. I am a citizen of Canada. When we travel, we mark ourselves with the Maple Leaf to distinguish us from our American cousins who are not very popular in some parts of the world. But in my travels, I have come to see that we differ little from our neighbours in terms of privilege, privilege that comes at a cost. Not so much to my fellow Canadian citizens, but to people whose names we do not know. I am a beneficiary of companies in which these faceless people work, desperate to improve their lives. I came to teach in Africa, hoping – naively perhaps - to make a difference. Now some are seeking to trade my life to improve the lives of many locals. In our world, the life of one Canadian is worth more than the lives of hundreds, even thousands of Africans. This cannot be right. I make this statement of my own accord. If my life means anything to those who love me, then I pray that you would be moved to act with courage and with urgency in making ours a more just, a more humane world. Whatever you do to secure my safety, I implore you not to commit violence. We have done more than enough violence to the bodies and humanity of many others, to support and defend our privileged lives. No more. Not in my name.

Commandant claps.

Commandant: Good, Charles. Very good. You'll be home with family....soon.

Commandant puts his arm around Soldier and walks with him out of listening range of Charles.

Commandant: Ukucha nyasi mkona gotilala.
(I see why you thought he should make a statement).

Commandant: Him from rich family. Them say on Facebook...return Charles unharmed...we pay good money. No questions. *(excited)* Boko Haram only pay seven-fifty. Maybe they pay a million. Maybe two million. That good for village!

Soldier is concerned but cannot show it too clearly.

Soldier: *(feigns excitement)* That's good, Commandant.

Commandant: You did good job, capturing him Soldaat! You get good pay!

Soldier: Commandant...?

Commandant: Soldaat?

Soldier: Kichwa sikio?
(*May I speak with you...?*)

They walk upstage, away from Charles.

Soldier: Shingo pumua fahamu?
(*How will they pay?*)

Commandant: Jino mkia?
(*His family?*)

Soldier: Nyasi kamba ukucha Boko Haram. Jino mkia cheka tema.
(*Boko Haram pays cash to our men. His family can't do that.*)

Commandant: Moyo paliza jua. Ogopa, lalishi jino mkia bawa okay.
(*I'm still planning the details. First, we let his family know that he's okay.*)

Soldier: (*shaking his head*) Moyo yai moro.
(*I don't like it*)

Commandant: (*taking offence*) Soldaat mweziguta Commandant?
(*Soldier is questioning Commandant?*)

Soldier: Soldaat tiri rika ganda tupa. Sugua minya pindua...
(*Soldier is worried about the army coming. About the military task force*)

Commandant: (*dismissively*) Hamba tiri rika Soldaat.
(*Don't worry, Soldier*)

Soldier: Maji ziwa bahari, jiwe vumbi ardhi.
(*The longer he's with us, the more time they have to find us*)

Commandant: Hesabu shona. Eleganda par one...two million. Hamba tiri rika sema, Soldaat.
(*Two days are all we need for one or two million dollars. Don't worry so much Soldier*)

Beat, as Commandant turns to go back to Charles.

Soldier: Commandant wingu ukungu?

(Does Commandant know who he is?)

Commandant: Barafu moshi Soldaat? Facebook usiku chafu bova.
(What kind of question is that Soldier? Facebook tells us all we need to know).

Soldier: Facebook usika butu mlima?
(Did Facebook tell you who his father is?)

Commandant: Nene ziyama, kulia butu duara!
(Who his father is doesn't matter, as long as he's rich)

Soldier: Butu duara...sahihi ororo Makudari.
(His father is rich, because he owns the Makudari mine)

Beat, as Commandant looks at Soldier and then at Charles incredulously.

Soldier: Butu nipon okuku ororo Makudari.
(His father was a director in the company that owns the mine).

Commandant's demeanour changes completely.

Commandant: Tirin Soldaat alat?
(How does Soldier know?)

Soldier: Adun idoti.
(He told me).

Commandant goes to Charles, lifts him up to his feet by pulling on the clothes on his chest.

Commandant: *(gritting his teeth)* Soldaat ibaja rafiki?
(Is Soldier telling the truth?)

Charles is confused, not having heard the conversation and not understanding Commandant's language (Commandant is so angry he's not aware that he's not speaking English at first)

Commandant: Your father...him own Makudari mine?

Charles: *(quietly...anxious)* Not by himself...

Commandant throws Charles to the ground forcefully, draws his revolver and points it at Charles.

Commandant: Why you here? You say you come teach, but you come as son of mineowner...son of man who massacre us people...son of man who keep bad men in government...son of bitch! (*kicks Charles*) You speak nice words. But what you come to take this time?

Lights fade, musical interlude.

Transition to Scene 5.

Scene 5

Australian Detention Centre. Charles is still tied up and gagged. Riason and Josh are discussing their options.

Riason: Australia has always been critical of Mugabe. They'll be sympathetic to our asylum application.

Josh: What if they're not?

Riason: That was the chance we were always going to have to take...wherever we landed.

Josh: We thought we were going to Vanuatu or Fiji...we could enter those without visas.

Riason: We would still have needed to apply for work permits....

Josh: (*irritated*) Yes, I know! But we would have had a month...three months in Fiji to sort that out.

Beat.

Riason: You're going to hate what I'm going to say now....

Josh: What? Give him back his gun so he can shoot us?

Riason: Whatever you think of them, Josh, this isn't Zimbabwe. They have rules, protocols...they don't just shoot people.

Josh: Blacks aren't people...

Riason: (*pointing at Clark*) He might not, but the rules and regulations that govern him recognize black people as people!

Josh: Right! Like in America...where the "civilized" world has to be reminded that black lives matter!

Riaison: Okay, Josh, you win. But that's not what I was going to say.

Josh: So just say it already!

Riaison: Pray with me.

Josh turns away in disgust.

Josh: (*angrily*) For fuck's sake, Riaison!

Riaison: (*firmly*) No need to swear, Josh!

Josh: Aaron gets malaria, you pray for him, and he dies! Farai gets ill, you implore God to save him, and he dies! Now you want to pray for us to be saved from (*pointing to Clark*) the likes of him, and he's praying to be saved from us. Who do you think the white man's god is going to listen to?

Riaison: God brought the two of us safely to these shores. We're here for a reason!

Josh: Yes, we are...because we got picked up by the Australian navy for venturing into their waters...!

Riaison: We are in God's hands.

Josh: You really believe that?

Riaison: I don't understand why Aaron and Farai had to die, but I believe it's God's will that we are here.

Josh: Why? Because he wants us to fly economy class back to Zimbabwe...?

Riaison: Fine, Josh. I'll pray by myself.

Josh: Pray for yourself...don't pray for me...I don't want to join Aaron and Farai just yet.

Riaison drops to his knees, raises his hands in prayer while Josh shakes his head and paces up and down.

Riaison: Dear Lord, thank you for bringing us to Australia safely. We do not know why we are here, or what you have planned for us. Your ways are not our ways. I give myself over to you for your guidance and to do with me as you will. Bless Mr Clark...open his eyes so that he may see us as your

children, even as he is your creation. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen.

Josh: Amen. And now what happens? We wait for the Lord to send an angel to free us?

Clark's two-way radio comes to life.

Radio: Control to Centre 47...come in 47.

Josh and Raison look at each other, each not sure if this is the divine intervention that Raison prayed for. Then there are practical considerations...

Josh: He has to answer it.

Raison: Let him answer.

Clark listens to their dialogue.

Josh: And say what?

Raison: That there's been a little situation, but things are under control.

Josh: And if they ask what situation?

Radio: Control to Centre 47...

Josh and Raison's anxiety increases.

Raison: Whatever happens, happens.

Josh: No ways...

Raison: We're in God's hands.

Josh: I'm not putting myself in (*points to Clark*) his hands.

Radio: Come in 47...

Josh puts the radio to Clark's mouth and points the gun at his temple.

Josh: You will report that everything's good...or whatever you say will be the last thing you say. Take off the gag, Raison.

Raison removes the gag. Clark is ambivalent, resentful and fearful.

Josh: Clear your throat. Say your name.

Clark clears his throat.

Clark: *(high register)* Clark Evans.

Josh: Again, with less anxiety.

Clark: *(more normally)* Clark Evans.

Josh nods, holds the radio button down for him to speak.

Clark: 47 to Control...over.

Radio: Are you sleeping 47, over?

Clark: Doing final checks, Control, over.

Radio: We need your paperwork 47, over.

Clark: I'll be there in 5 minutes...or you can send someone to get it, over.

Josh is angered; presses gun against Clark's temple.

Radio: Lazy fuck! See you here in five minutes...out.

Josh: You think you're clever...?

Riaison pulls Josh away from Clark.

Riaison: You would have done the same, Josh. *(to Clark)* Thank you, Mr Evans, I appreciate your situation, I hope you appreciate ours.

Josh: That was your answer to prayer? "Control to 47..."

Riaison: Maybe, yes.

Josh: *(snorts)* How?

Riaison: I don't know yet...

Josh: I'm in my own hands.

Riaison: What are you going to do?

Clark: He's just going to walk out of here...

Josh: I'm thinking...if we kill him...we get to stay here for life!

Riaison: Be serious, Josh!

Josh: I'm *being* serious...

Riaison: You've got five minutes before I walk out that door and give myself up.

Josh: That's my plan.

Riaison: (*excited, lighter*) We walk out together and apply for asylum?

Josh: No, you run out. Raise the alarm. Say I'm holding this...this piece of shit, hostage.

Riaison: (*claps sarcastically*) Great plan, Josh.

Josh: Then I shoot him.

Riaison: Sounds better and better!

Josh: If I kill him, I'll get life imprisonment, and stay inside for twenty years. When I get out, I'll be in my fifties...higher than life expectancy for Zimbabwean males today. I'll have one or two doctorates by then...

Riaison: And me?

Josh: You'll be free! If you stay with me and I shoot him, you're an accomplice. If you run out and raise the alarm before I shoot him, you'll be the state's key witness.

Riaison: We're in this together!

Josh: We don't both have to go to jail, Riaison. I'll do this for you! See this as God answering your prayers!

Beat. Riaison paces up and down, thinking.

Riaison: You don't have to kill him. Shoot him in the leg...that will be a much lesser sentence.

Josh: He'll be a witness against you...he'll testify that we planned this together.

Riaison: Dammit!

Josh: *(ironically)* No need to swear, Raison.

Lights fade, musical interlude.

Transition to Scene 6

Scene 6

African forest, dilapidated building.

Charles is kneeling, a gag in his mouth, his hands behind his back. There is a tyre around Charles' neck.

Commandant circles Charles as he indicts him, spewing his anger at Charles.

Commandant: I could shoot back of you head. But that too quick. I could shoot many bullets in you body. That still not enough for miners massacred by you father. Maybe I beat you and beat you and beat you...till you bleed to death. I want world...watch you die...slowly...in pain. Like miners. Like country. Your father...he no pull trigger, but he call army. Army come...they shoot...they kill many good men from village. Your father no here no more...but he sent his son...to die for the sins of him father. And for the sins of all like him father.

Commandant picks up the can of petrol and begins to pour it on the tyre and on Charles. Solider, standing still till now, begins to pace up and down, concerned by what is happening. Commandant and Soldier speak English in this sequence.

Commandant: *(as he pours the petrol)* This we learn from South African brothers. I know...you...your world say...barbarians! How can kill someone like that? How can watch someone burn? Civilised world, Soldaat...they drop bombs. They drone death. They nuclear cities. Kill tens. Hundreds. But we...we barbarians. *(Spits)*

Commandant turns to Soldier.

Commandant: Soldaat...record. I make statement.

Soldier slowly makes his way to the camera. He catches Charles eyes. He stands at camera, points it at Charles and Commandant. Commandant wraps scarf over much of his face, so that only his eyes show. Commandant takes out a lighter and tests it.

Charles makes muffled noises, trying to say something through his gag.

Commandant: Soldaat ready?

Soldier: He wants to talk.

Commandant: Me done talking. Me act.

Soldier: Commandant...are you sure you want to do this?

Commandant: This, Soldaat, this for Foday Danso, Wandu Mandinka, Abdou Kambi, Isaka Bajo, Basiiru Ogunsola, Jomba Uster...and all miners die in massacre...in accident mines...like you father. Names (*pointing to Charles*) his world no know.

Soldier: This won't bring them back...

Commandant: This way...world get know their names. This be our memorial to them. Men who migrate from village, leave families, dig iron eleven months and return to village...in a box...full of lead.

Soldier: We won't get one million dollars for this.

Commandant: There be more do-gooders come here, Soldaat. This way...we inspire oppressed people to do something!

Soldier: We kill him...and our village will suffer. We won't get money *and* the army will come.

Commandant: Good! Then we fight!

Soldier: They have warplanes, tanks...we will all die.

Commandant: You afraid Soldaat?

Soldier: Soldaat is not afraid...Soldaat wants to know why? Soldaat is doing this to help our village...how does killing him help our village?

Commandant steps away from Charles, comes closer to Soldier to engage with him.

Commandant: Soldaat question Commandant?

Soldier: Soldaat knows that Commandant is still angry about the massacre. Soldaat is also angry. Commandant wants revenge. Soldaat wants revenge. Soldaat also wants what's best for the village, for his family. Commandant wants best for village. Soldaat wants to know Commandant's mind.

Beat. Commandant breaks into indigenous language.

Commandant: Yobaru fengwe mambila?
(*What did you talk about when I was away?*)

Soldier: Commandant kotesa maa?
(*What does Commandant mean?*)

Commandant: Eli duwa bata bokyi wassosi. Ke lubia eli bat?
(*He told you his father owned the mine. What else did he say?*)

Soldier: Eli batanga Kanada.
(*He said I should go to Canada*)

Beat as Commandant takes this in. Back into English.

Commandant: (*laughs*) He say you go Canada with him?

Commandant draws his revolver and aims it at Charles.

Commandant: You try bribe Soldier?

Soldier intervenes.

Soldier: I said no...I want to stay to help our village.

Commandant: You no listen him! They no want you and me! They want Africa's doctors. Nurses. Footballers. You...me...we never get visa. Even we get visa...we arrive...they send we back! They only want you...me...work *their* mines, *their* factories...*here* in our country...they don't want *us*!

Soldier: Yes...Commandant.

Commandant re-holsters his revolver. Repositions himself next to Charles, wraps scarf around his mouth so that he is not recognizable on camera.

Commandant: Let's do this, Soldaat.

Beat. Soldier does not move.

Commandant: Do we have problem, Soldaat?

Soldier: I don't want to do this. I don't want to kill him.

Commandant: Discipline, Soldaat, discipline! You take orders.

Soldier : What if orders harm our village?

Commandant: (*firmly*) Give rifle!

Soldier steps back, holds rifle more firmly, but without pointing it at Commandant.

Soldier: Commandant hasn't said how this will help our village.

Commandant: (*barking*) Ten press-ups, Soldier!

Soldier: Soldier loves Commandant...but Soldier cannot do this.

Commandant looks at Soldier. Then walks abruptly towards the camera.

Commandant: Commandant do this himself.

Commandant walks towards the camera. When he turns around, Soldier is pointing his rifle at Commandant. Commandant stops in his tracks. Initially shaken, he assumes his commanding self.

Commandant: Stand down, Soldaat!

Soldier: We are not going to kill him.

Commandant: I say...stand down!

Commandant reaches for his revolver.

Soldier: I do not want to shoot Commandant.

Commandant: What you do, Soldier?

Soldier: Put up your hands Commandant.

Commandant: You are soldier...

Soldier: (*firmly*) Lift up your hands!

Commandant: (*angrily*) I am Commandant!

Soldier points his rifle slightly away from Commandant and shoots, misses Commandant who reacts with shock.

Soldier: (*shouting*) Now!

Commandant slowly raises his hands.

Commandant: What do you think happen after this?

Soldier: Turn around.

Commandant slowly turns around.

Commandant: After all I do for you...for you family.

Soldier: I'm doing this for my family.

Commandant: Commandant see. You take money from Charles for you and you family.

Soldier: I'm doing this to save our village. I'm doing this for you, Commandant!

Commandant: Commandant no need you...(spits)

Soldier moves towards Commandant, removes his revolver from its holster.

Soldier: Kneel, Commandant....

Commandant: You bring shame to your family.

Soldier: (again, loudly, shoving his rifle in Commandant's back) Kneel!

Commandant slowly gets to his knees.

Soldier: Keep your arms up!

As Soldier goes about the next actions, Commandant speaks to him, with his back to Charles and Soldier, his hands in the air.

Soldier puts the rifle to one side, far from the reach of Commandant. He puts the revolver in his belt. He goes to Charles, lifts the tyre and rolls it away. He takes the gag from Charles mouth and unties his hands. He helps Charles to stand on his feet.

Commandant: You think your mother be proud? What village do to you and you family when I tell them what you do? You better go Canada...with family....I not believe you betray us, Soldaat. You my man...I train you...I want you be next leader. You disappoint...big disappoint.

Soldier: (to Charles, once he was on his feet) You okay?

Charles: Thank you.

Soldier: Come...we need to move quickly. First, we tie him.

Commandant: You no tie me!

Soldier trains the revolver on Commandant and orders Charles, who acts reluctantly, still scarred emotionally and physically.

Soldier: His feet! (*Charles uses the rope he was tied with*). Keep your arms up!

Commandant: (*spits at Soldier*) Fuck you, Soldaat, fuck you!

Soldier: Now his arms...behind his back.

Commandant struggles a bit, but with Soldier and Charles, he eventually is overpowered, and his arms are tied behind his back.

Charles gets his gag, and uses it to gag Commandant, who again tries to resist. Once he is incapacitated, Soldier reaches into his Commandant's pocket and takes out the vehicle's keys.

Soldier takes the rifle, and just before he and Charles exit, he speaks to Commandant.

Soldier: I'm taking Mr Stevenson to the city. Then I'll come back for you.

Commandant tries to talk through the gag. Clearly, he is angry and is swearing at Soldier.

Soldier and Charles exit. The sound of a vehicle starting and pulling away. Lights fade.

Transition to Scene 7.

Scene 7

American airport Homeland Security office.

Amiir is sitting in at the table. Official 1 and Official 2 are downstage right, speaking to each other.

Official 1: What do you think?

Official 2: I think we should squeeze him more.

Official 1: My gut tells me he's harmless.

Official 2: The tighter we squeeze, the more likely something will come out.

Official 1: What have we got? He's from Somalia. He has a Quran. And he shares a surname with a warlord.

Official 2: Three strikes! We've turned people back for much less.

Official 1: That's not enough.

Official 2: Our job is to assess the risk. I think we'd be less at risk if he were back in Somalia.

Official 1: You heard what he said. There's nothing for him in Somalia.

Official 2: That's not our problem. (*meaning America*)

Official 1: If we refuse him entry, he could turn to hating us. Then he could join the warlords and do damage to us abroad.

Official 2: That still won't be *our* problem...(*meaning Official 1 and 2*). Then it's up to the marines. And the drones.

Beat. Official 1 shakes his head.

Official 1: I hate playing God.

Official 2: That's our job.

Official 1: I love my job...I hate playing God.

Official 2: Sandy Ayala.
Peter Paul Appollo.
Evan Barron.

Official 1: Yes, yes, okay...

Official 2: Everytime I begin to doubt what I do, I recite these names...
Arline Babakitis
Kermit Charles Anderson
Joseph Angeline Junior...
We owe it to them not to have another 9/11.

Beat, silence for a while. Official 1 turns around to face Amiir, as does Official 2. As Official 1 speaks, Amiir remains impassive.

Official 1: Mr Sharmarke, for reasons of national security, we are unable to recommend your entry into the United States of America. You will be placed on the next aircraft that has available space to return you either to Johannesburg, your place of departure, or to Mogadishu. We will need to make the necessary arrangements with immediate effect, so require you to make a decision about your preferred point of return.

Beat. Silence. Amiir stares ahead, without looking at either Official 1 or Official 2.

Official 1: Mr Sharmarke....

Amiir: (*quietly, still sitting*) If you were in my position, would you go back?

Official 2: If we were in your position, we'd have no choice but to go back.

Amiir: You're sending me back to my death.

Official 1: Mr Sharmarke, we're returning you to where you came from.

Amiir: I came from places where people like me are killed. Everyday.

During the next speech, Official 2 moves closer to Amiir.

Official 2: (*ignoring Amiir's speech*) I will escort you to a waiting room while my colleague organizes....

Before Official 2 reaches him, Amiir stands up quickly, pointing a revolver at Official 2.

Official 2: What the fuck!

Official 2 goes for his gun, but stops when Amiir points the revolver at his chest.

Official 1: That's my service pistol...

Official 2: You fucking left it in the desk drawer?

Amiir: I am *not* going back....

Official 2: What do you think is going to happen here? That you'll just walk out of here...?

Amiir: (*calmly holding the gun, but his voice quivering with emotion*) I have seen too much death.

Official 1: Mr Sharmarke, you're only making this harder for yourself.

Amiir: I have buried too many people I love.

Official 1: Please just put the gun down. And let's talk.

Amiir: You have made it clear you do not want me here.

Official 1: We are just doing our job.

Amiir: I am not going back....!

There is a tense stand-off in silence. Amiir trains his gun on Official 2.

Official 1: (*stretching out his hand*) Give me the gun....

Amiir steps back away from Official 1. He points the gun at Official 1 who stops walking towards him and then at Official 2, then at Official 1 again, then at Official 2. Finally, he stops, puts the gun barrel inside his mouth.

Fast blackout as a shot rings out.

Transition to Scene 8. Allow for at least a 45-60 second musical interlude between the end of the last scene and the beginning of the next.

Scene 8

Australian detention centre.

Riaison: Give me the gun.

Josh: Why?

Riaison: Just give me the bloody gun!

Josh reluctantly hands the gun to Riaison.

Josh: What are you going to do?

Riaison: I'm going to restore the order...

Josh: Riaison, no!

Riaison goes to Clark and unfastens his hands, so that Clark then unties his feet.

Riaison: You had no right to place me in danger by taking his gun...without asking me.

Josh: You would have said no!

Riaison: Exactly! And now...we're going back to how it was.

Josh: Now we're both in shit!

Riaison helps Clark to stand up.

Riaison: Mr Evans, I apologise for your ordeal, and for whatever trauma you might have experienced. No human being should have to experience that. We're ready...I'm ready to face the consequences, and go through the proper procedures. To apply for political asylum. You've seen how desperate we are...

Riaison hands the gun to Clark, who is taken aback. He does not holster the gun.

Clark: Number?

Riaison: Sorry?

Josh: One-four-seven-nine-seven.

Clark: *(points the gun at Josh)* Sit the fuck down, seven-nine-seven.

Josh sits down slowly. There's a tense silence. Riaison breaks it, stepping back to join Josh.

Riaison: One-four-seven-nine-eight...sitting down.

Clark: My colleagues thought it would be funny for me process you two. Ozzie humour. You see, my family had a farm in the bread basket of Southern Africa... Rhodesia...before you munts turned it into the basket case of...*(exaggerated African accent)* Zimbabwe.

Josh: I don't think I want to listen to this.

Clark: *(angrily)* You shut the fuck up, munt! *(pushing the gun in Josh's face)* You will listen to whatever the fuck I have to say!

Riaison gently grabs Clark by the leg.

Riaison: Mr Evans, please...he means no harm.

Clark: *(turning on Riaison)* Get your fucking hands off me! Don't you ever touch me again....*(getting angrier and angrier)*. *(Still to Riaison)* You think you're some clever monkey...trying to win my heart so I'll play nice with

you! I lost an uncle in the Rhodesian bush war...trying to keep you barbarians at bay. From fucking up the country that we built. We tried to civilize you. Christianise you. Teach you our values. But we lost the war. We didn't win your voodoo hearts or your jungle minds. So we lost our farms. But we're here now...in paradise. And I'll be damned if we let in the barbarians this time! No murderous towelheads! No greasy boat people! And definitely no disease-bearing African monkeys! This is the front line! Here and no further!

Clark makes as if he's hyperventilating, talks into the Radio.

Clark: Control, Control...come in...help! It's 47...47 here! I'm being attacked!

Clark, as he speaks, goes towards Josh, pointing his gun at him. Raison realizes what is happening. He gets up and stands in front of Josh who is moving away from Clark.

Clark: Oh shit! Help...Control...help! (*puts the radio on the ground*)

Clark shoots Raison in the chest; he falls to the ground.

Clark: (*to Raison*) You shouldn't have got in the way...I was only going to shoot you in the leg...(he shoots Raison again) (*to Josh who has tried to run away, but then stands up, with his arms outstretched as if being crucified*) As for you, motherfucker munt...say hello to Idi Amin in hell.

Clark shoots Josh in the head. Josh falls to the ground. Music. Clark walks around surveying what he's done.

Beat.

Radio: 47 this is Control...47...we heard shots.

Clark: (*picks up radio*) This is Clark Evans. The situation is under control...over.

Lights fade, transition to next scene.

Scene 9

African forest, dilapidated building.

Commandant sitting up, his hands still tied behind his back, with his feet untied but still with his gag on. Soldier is sitting cross-legged opposite him.

Soldier: Stevenson bangwa ghomala. Ambele Kanada befang.
(*Stevenson phoned from the capital. He leaves tonight for Canada*)
Bhambili guziga dollars fe fulde. Tunda tano dollars gavar.

(He promised two million dollars within three months. And a million every year after that).

Bishuo mudani samaki chawa. Mna kekere bebil ewonda.

(If he does, it will be great for our village. I don't know if he will or not).

Mna dibong Commandant korofo.

(I know Commandant is angry).

Commandant baleni kreda Commandant Baleni.

(Commandant must do what Commandant must do).

Soldier takes off Commandant's gag. He unties Commandant's hands.

He then kneels in front of Commandant and offers Commandant his revolver, the handle facing Commandant.

Commandant spits. He roughly grabs the revolver from Soldier and immediately points it at Soldier's forehead. Commandant is full of suppressed anger.

Commandant: Stevenson samaki nda la-phone. Agora ibaji kidogo.
(Stevenson called you on your phone. Now the army will track us here!)

Soldier: Hayi. Tunda samaki, mna zitogo la-phone. Jani Commandant gamba mna.
(No. After he called, I threw away the phone. Like Commandant taught me).

Commandant: *(pressing gun to Soldier's forehead)* Nda mojali Commandant!
(You betrayed Commandant).

Soldier: Mna kubiwe refu pana. Jani Commandant gamba mna.
(I was loyal to the village. Like Commandant taught me).

Commandant circles Soldier, points gun at his forehead all the time. Soldier turns on his knees to face Commandant all the time, never turning his back on Commandant.

Commandant: Nda vagana Kanada. Busami nda ngo bu?
(You should have gone to Canada. Why didn't you go?)

Soldier: Commandant sisa mandisi malut.
(Commandant said they will turn us back).

Commandant: *(snorts)* Sisa nao mandisi nda malut! Nda la beti! Nda duma la povo!
(They won't turn you back. (mockingly) You're a hero! You reject your own people!)

You save rich white Canadian!

Soldier: Mna povo bitari ake. Nda vao Kanada, Stevenson baya kot medumba!
(My people are here. If Soldier went to Canada, maybe Stevenson won't send money).

Commandant: Nda elip kudwa! Stevenson kot medumba!
(You are so naive! Stevenson won't send money!)

Soldier: Commandant diza la bassosi sopanz medumba bulu zipa. Ele zipa.
(Commandant said his family will pay good money to free him. He's free).

Commandant has no answer, so he shifts the goalposts.

Commandant: *(angrily)* Siseko samukele hashe! Siseko samukele zimasa! Baleni makala titu malga belunda!
(That won't change the government! That won't change exploitation! That just keeps the black man dependent!)

Beat.

Soldier: *(quietly)* Soldaat bansop fikile.
(Then Soldier has made a mistake).

Commandant: Soldaat bansop bekwel fikile!
(Soldier has made a big mistake!)

Soldier: Soldaat masibulele.
(Soldier must pay).

Commandant, angry, wide-eyed, breathing heavily.

Commandant: Beti wamra!
(Turn around!)

Soldier: Tikar yabassi et mume et malina...Soldaat tanoslet.
(Tell my sisters and my mother and my brothers that I love them).

Commandant: *(louder)* Beti wamra!
(Turn around!)

Soldier: Stevenson tikar baya medumba Soldaat giva.
(Stevenson said he'll only send money if Soldaat is alive).

Commandant: (angrily) Stevenson baya kot medumba! Timar Soldaat!
(Stevenson won't send money! Stupid Soldier!)
Beti wamra nda lebele bimfo cha!
(Turn around so I can finish this!)

Soldier: Soldaat vanga Commandant jama leke Soldaat maya.
(Soldier wants to look Commandant in the eye as Soldaat dies).
Soldaat tanos Commandant.
(Soldier loves Commandant)

Commandant is still pointing gun at Soldier's head. There is a tense silence for a few beats.

Commandant lowers his revolver.

Commandant: Fe fulde, Soldaat! Fe fulde.
(Three months, Soldier, three months).
Nati yisa egana ne fe fulde, nda et la mulema wenu bokyi.
(If there's no money and no change in three months, you and your family must leave the village).

Commandant switches to English.

Commandant: And if money come...if...they no tell us how to use it, okay? If we want buy generators, we buy. If we want buy guns, we buy. Okay Soldaat?

Soldier has a wry smile.

Soldier: Okay...Commandant.

Lights fade as Commandant holsters his gun. Extends his hand to pull Soldier to his feet.

Commandant: Nda pulina mal, Soldaat. Sondo soldier, hut pulina mal!
(You're a good man, Soldier. A bad soldier, but a good man.)

Music, fade to black.