

THE MACHINEGUN PREACHER

screenplay

by

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based on the life of Sam Childers

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BEGIN CREDITS as we hear the plaintive wail of an Acholi WAR SONG...
at first a lone voice in the blackness... haunting... ethereal...
and then a chorus of voices rising up... and the sound of beating
drums...

... and we see we're in a beat-to-shit SUV bombing down this rutted,
red dirt road... the engine at full tilt... slamming over
potholes... bone jarring... but all we hear is the song...

... and now we see five men crammed into this truck riding in dead
silence... AK47's bouncing between their knees... the driver is a
Dinka soldier dressed in the ragged fatigues of the *Sudanese*
People's Liberation Army (SPLA)... we'll come to know him as DENG...
the three SPLA soldiers in the back are "BEN", "NINETEEN", and
"MARCO"... the fifth is a white man... sitting in the passenger
seat... an American... stocky, mid 40's, with a biker's handlebar
moustache, and a Harley Davidson t-shirt cut off at the shoulders
revealing faded prison tats...

His name is SAM CHILDERS.

And we watch these men... a grave stillness on their faces...
thinking of what men do just before their own death... of god and
family... of women... of opportunities lost and the promise of
salvation...

... but Sam's look is different... hard and inscrutable... a man at
war with himself... and we see he has a box of .308 shells in his
lap and he's polishing them one-by-one with a rag, then snapping
them into a gun magazine.

CUT TO:

Quiet. The sound of flies buzzing in the searing heat. And we see a
herd of zebu cattle grazing on dry scrub. Maybe 30 or 40 beasts in
the middle of the road... and then two VEHICLES approaching in the
distance... a lead JEEP with a TRANSPORT TRUCK behind it...

INT. LRA JEEP - DRIVING - DAY

Two ADULT LRA REBELS (mid 30's) in this lead Jeep, AK's resting
between them, smoking and chattering in Arabic... and as they come
around a bend they see the cattle up ahead, blocking their way...
the driver sticking his hand out the window, waving to the transport
truck behind him to stop...

... and the convoy grinds to a halt... the driver HONKING the horn
but the cattle don't move... finally barking something in Arabic to
the passenger who gets out...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

... and moves closer to the herd, waving his hands, whistling,
trying to spook the animals but they don't budge... and finally he
points his AK into the air and squeezes the trigger -- KAKAKAKAK! --
and slowly the cattle begin to lumber off...

Separating in different directions...

Slowly clearing the road...

THE REBEL squinting into the distance... sees something behind the cattle, but it's hard to tell what it is from the dust and heat shimmer... and finally the figure of a man comes into focus and we see...

MARCO -- standing in the middle of the road shouldering a GRENADE LAUNCHER -- THE REBEL suddenly realizes what he's looking at as --

WHOOOOSH! -- an RPG streaks right past him and hits the Jeep -- DETONATES -- KABOOOOM! -- and the Jeep flips onto it's side.

THE TRANSPORT TRUCK jammed into REVERSE -- accelerating back up the road -- trying to get the fuck out of there as --

BBRAAAAAAPPP! -- heavy caliber machinegun fire coming from offscreen -- hitting the hood of the truck and shredding the tires --

EXT. SUV - SAME

-- and we see Ben standing behind a .50 caliber machinegun mounted on the roof of the SUV -- BBRAAAAAAPPP! -- BBRAAAAAAPPP! -- blasting the truck until the engine BURSTS into flames --

EXT. BUSH - SAME

-- Sam sprawled in the dirt -- from his vantage point he sees rebels bailing out of the cab and flatbed -- scrambling behind the disabled truck for cover -- shooting back -- massive machinegun fire from every direction -- a withering firefight -- the big .50 cal ROARING offscreen but the truck is protecting the rebels -- no clear shot --

-- and we see MARCO running through the bush toward Sam. He hits the ground and starts to screw another RPG into his launcher... but Sam shakes his head, waves him off...

SAM
(yelling in Arabic)
Awladi!

Marco hears this, ditches the RPG and picks up his AK.

SAM (CONT'D)
Cover me!

Marco laying down suppression fire as Sam sprints across the road -- advancing on the transport truck -- firing his AK from the hip -- bullets *zinging* past him -- he dives behind the overturned Jeep and finds himself next to Deng. Neither man says a word as they jam fresh mags into their AK's, gunfire erupting all around them. Sam peers around the side of the Jeep to see --

MUZZLE FLASHES coming from behind the transport truck 50 yards away -
 - still no clear shot -- GUNFIRE RAKING across the Jeep, missing Sam
 by inches, and he drops back.

DENG
 (yelling over the gunfire)
 Why don't you just go home?

SAM
 What?

DENG
 This is not your war.

SAM
 You leavin'?

Deng shakes his head --

SAM (CONT'D)
 Well then, I ain't leavin' neither...

Sam lifts his AK, chambers a round, takes a deep breath -- pivots
 around the side of the Jeep -- and --

WHOOOOSH!

AN RPG MISSILE streaking directly at him -- he dives -- impact!

BA-WHOOOM!

AND OUR VISION EXPLODES TO WHITE

For a long beat... only silence... and then slowly the white begins
 to fade... and we see Sam flat on his back... eyes blinking open...
 shell-shocked... staring up at blue sky... and then a shadow coming
 over him... someone stepping into his POV... it's a 10 year old
 SUDANESE BOY holding a smoking machinegun... staring curiously at
 this strange white man laying in the dirt... and we stay on this
 CHILD SOLDIER for a long beat... a boy we'll come to know as
 FRANCIS... looking down at Sam...

... AND THEN WE HEAR THE ECHOED VOICES OF MEN YELLING TO ONE
 ANOTHER... BOOMING MUSIC... TAUNTS... WHISTLES... AN ANNOUNCEMENT,
 INAUDIBLE, OVER A LOUDSPEAKER... TAKING US TO...

INT. PRISON - RURAL PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

And we see Sam coming down a CORRIDOR toward us, dressed in
 jailhouse orange and flanked by two prison guards. He's 9 years
 younger here but still has the same biker's moustache.

INT. PRISON RECEIVING AND RELEASING - DAY

Sam dressed in civilian clothes now as a CLERK sets a small
 cardboard box of his personal affects on the counter. He digs out a
 leather wallet, a watch, some silver rings and a lighter.

He looks up to the Clerk and flashes a malicious smile --

SAM

Ya'll go fuck yourself now, k?

EXT. JAIL - RELEASING - DAY

A beat-up CHEVY VEGA parked at the curb. Sam's wife, LYNN, 30's, in a thrift store dress, leaning against the car, waiting.

Sam pushes out a door and she sees him, straightens her hair, an uneasy smile.

LYNN

Hey baby.

INT. CAR - DAY

The Vega pulled off the side of the road and Sam fucking Lynn in the back. There's nothing tender about what we're watching here. Sam finishes and Lynn slumps into the seat, pulls down her dress.

SAM

Gimme a smoke.

LYNN

Don't got any.

SAM

What, you quit?

(Lynn nods)

Shit, that ain't gonna last.

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - DAY

The Vega pulls up to a beat-to-shit single-wide.

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

Matted shag and a faded sofa kicked in at the knees. We see a 1978 panhead Harley parked in the corner of the livingroom, the kind of TV you gotta slap to get a picture, and a homemade sign in the kitchen that reads, "Welcome Home Daddy!"

Sam enters followed by Lynn.

VOICE (O.S.)

DADDY!

Sam's daughter PAIGE (5) runs around a corner and jumps into his arms.

SAM

Hey bug...

PAIGE

You see yer sign? Grandma and me made it this mornin.

SAM

Yep, real nice.

Sam's mother, DAISY, mid 60's, comes into the room.

SAM (CONT'D)

How'ya doin, Ma?

DAISY

Welcome home, Sammy.

There's a quiet anxiety to this homecoming. Everybody on edge, careful.

DAISY (CONT'D)

I cooked some loaf for ya'll. It's in the oven there if yer hungry.

LYNN

I hope you're stayin for supper.

DAISY

Well, I didn't know if...

SAM

(to Lynn)

What time you gotta work?

Lynn hesitating, not sure how to answer... not sure what's going to happen when she does... finally...

LYNN

I ain't on tonight.

SAM

What?

DAISY

(changing the subject)

You know we could boil up that corn we got in there...

SAM

Friday night you ain't on? Fuck is that?

He sets Paige down, begins to rummage through the fridge for a beer.

SAM (CONT'D)

That cocksucker Mark better be givin you yer time or I'm gonna go over there and bust his fuckin teeth. Why ain't there no beer?

LYNN

I ain't dancin no more, Sam.

He turns to her, studying her with cold eyes...

LYNN (CONT'D)

Quit a couple weeks ago. Got a job over at Freemont.

SAM

You tellin me the truth or is this a joke?

LYNN

Pick up a second shift now and then. Weekends if I want em. It's good money.

SAM

Good money? You fuckin stupid, woman? You quit stripin to pack fucking mushrooms at Freemont?

DAISY

Sam...

SAM

Ma, keep yer mouth shut.

Sam's face changing, starting to turn bad. A look we'll come to know.

LYNN

They're good to me over there, Sam. They got daycare for Paige and I can get medical at the end of the year.

SAM

Tell you what you're gonna do, you're goin back to The Cat Tail and askin that cocksucker for yer old slot back...

LYNN

No, Sam...

SAM

Fuck you ain't. You gonna get that ass back up there and make yer tips.

LYNN

It ain't right.

SAM

Fuck you talkin about?

DAISY

Come on, Paige, let's go outside fer a bit...

Daisy scooping up Paige and exiting, screen door slamming behind them and now Sam and Lynn are all alone.

LYNN

I ain't dancin cause it ain't right in
God's eyes. He don't want me doin that no
more.

SAM

(laughing)

You found fuckin god now, huh? That what
this is?

LYNN

He found me, and he's there for you too,
baby.

SAM

Don't gimme that bullshit. You a fuckin
junkie stripper...

LYNN

Not no more. God helped me change while
you was away.

Lynn reaches for him but he shoves her back violently...

SAM

Gitcha hands off me!

LYNN

You can't keep goin the way you goin,
baby...

He pushes the Harley out the front door...

LYNN (CONT'D)

Sam...

EXT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

Sam straddles the bike and kicks it to life. Lynn stepping into the
doorway in the b.g. --

LYNN

Wait...

SAM

Fuck god. He ain't never done nuthin for
me.

And he PEELS OUT, kicking up gravel as he blasts past Paige and
Daisy.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam riding down the road.

INT. THE BUCK EYE - NIGHT

A tough biker bar in Johnstown, PA. A jukebox in the corner playing *Lynard Skynard*. Sam coming through the door, AD-LIBBED greetings from some of the other bikers here. He makes his way to a back table where a hulking biker in a leather vest named DELANE is sitting with two girls. Delane looks up, sees Sam...

DELANE

Crazyhorse! There he is...

They embrace, old friends.

DELANE (CONT'D)

Figured you'd be rollin out round now.
How you doin, buddy?

SAM

I'm doin.

DELANE

(to one of the girls)

Get us a coupla shots and buds.

(Sam sits)

Don't look too worse for the wear.

SAM

I'm alright.

DELANE

Heard yer old lady ain't at the Cat Tail
no more.

SAM

Bitch found Jesus.

DELANE

Goddamn! That bearded fucker slipped her
the high holy dick while you was in the
can, huh? Better him than the milk man, I
guess.

SAM

I ain't so sure bout that.

Delane laughs, slaps him on the shoulder...

DELANE

You wanna taste?

Sam smiles that wicked smile and we go --

INT. BACK HALLWAY - THE BUCK EYE - NIGHT

-- as a biker chick leads Sam down this hallway into --

INT. BATHROOM - THE BUCK EYE - NIGHT

Sam and the biker chick crammed into this dirty stall, Skynard pounding through the walls. He rolls up his shirt sleeve as she cooks a spoon of methamphetamine... juices a hypodermic... he finds a vein and she spikes his arm... presses the plunger and his head rolls back on his shoulders... speed slamming into his bloodstream as we RAMP UP THE MUSIC.

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - MORNING

Sam passed out on the couch and this guy looks like hell. Thinner than the last time we saw him, skin sallow and drawn tight over his face. And he stirs awake, sees Paige playing by herself on the floor next to him. She sees that he's awake, picks up her doll, and quietly goes outside without saying a word.

INT. BATHROOM - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - MORNING

Sam coming in, taking a piss, staring at himself in the mirror and we see a junkie map of track marks running up and down his arms. And then WE HEAR a communion hymn, "Soldiers of Christ, Arise", coming through... taking us to...

INT. CHURCH - JOHNSTOWN, PA. - DAY

Maybe 200 people packed into this church for Sunday service. We see Lynn and Paige in the crowd, singing along with the congregation.

EXT. CHURCH - JOHNSTOWN, PA. - DAY

Parishioners exiting after mass, greeted by PASTOR KRAUSE who is standing by the door. Lynn and Paige coming out, shaking his hand.

LYNN

Thank you.

PASTOR

Will I be seeing your husband in here one of these Sundays, Mrs. Childers?

Heartbreak flashing across her eyes...

LYNN

I don't think so, Pastor.

INT. DELANE'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Snow on the ground tell us it's Winter now. And we see Sam and Delane in this car, creeping down this shithole street past broken down clapboard houses. Delane pointing through the windshield...

DELANE

Right there. With the green light.

EXT. PORCH - DOPE HOUSE - NIGHT

Bone chill cold. Sam and Delane on this porch, scarves pulled around their necks, hands shoved into their jackets trying to stay warm. Delane KNOCKING at the door...

DELANE

Hey, man, you there?! Open up...

Delane KNOCKING again and the door cracks an inch... and we see a black man with a SHAVED HEAD on the other side looking out...

SHAVED HEAD

Fuck are you?

DELANE

It's me, man, c'mon. Fuckin cold out here.

SHAVED HEAD

I don't know you.

DELANE

Yeah you do, man. I saw you the other day. I'm Bobby's friend.

SHAVED HEAD

Who the fuck is Bobby?

Suddenly Sam pulls a short barrel shotgun from his jacket -- MOSSBERG 10 GAGE -- presses it to the door and --

BOOOM!

INT. DOPE HOUSE - SAME

DOOR SPLINTERING OPEN -- concussion like a fucking pipe bomb -- wood splintering through the room like shrapnel -- Sam and Delane STORMING IN...

DELANE

Don't fuckin move!

INSTANT PANDEMONIUM! -- JUNKIES hopping off the couch, scattering like rats deeper into the house -- SHAVED HEAD darting out of the room -- Sam leveling the MOSSBERG in his direction --

BOOOM! -- the room flashing like a fucking supernova.

INT. STAIRWAY- DOPE HOUSE - SAME

SHAVED HEAD scrambling up these stairs -- Sam coming up after him -- hunting him -- MOSSBERG BLASTING in his direction -- BOOOM! --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DOPE HOUSE - SAME

SHAVED HEAD sprinting down this hallway -- Sam tracking him in the b.g. -- bloodlust in his eyes -- leveling the MOSSBERG and --

BOOOM! -- BOOOM!

Shotgun slugs ripping through the house like cannon shot -- SHAVED HEAD bolting through the smoke -- crashing through a door into --

INT. BEDROOM - DOPE HOUSE - SAME

-- SHAVED HEAD bombing in -- hitting the ground -- trying to get to his feet but it's too late because --

-- SAM kicks open the door behind him -- SHAVED HEAD going onto his back, trying to crab crawl away from him but there's nowhere to go -- Sam moving closer --

SHAVED HEAD
PLEASE, MAN -- DON'T --

-- SHAVED HEAD working his way into a corner -- holding his hands in front of his face -- terrified, shaking --

SHAVED HEAD (CONT'D)
-- PLEASE! --

DELANE (O.S.)
SAM!

Delane coming into the room --

SHAVED HEAD
I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT, MAN! --
PLEASE! --

SAM
Tell me where the shit is or I'll blow
your nigger brains all over this floor.

SHAVED HEAD
(indicating a closet)
In there...

Sam KICKS him toward the closet --

SAME
Hurry the fuck up.

SHAVED HEAD crawling to a small safe in a closet, spins the combo, opens it and pulls out six ounces of uncut cocaine.

SAM
Gimme the cash.

SHAVED HEAD grabs a stack of hundreds, hands it to Sam and --
CRACKKK!

-- he SLAMS the butt of the Mossberg into SHAVED HEAD'S face and he hits the ground on his back -- Sam standing over him -- shoves the barrel of the shotgun into his mouth --

DELANE

C'mon, let's go!

But Sam's not moving... just staring down at SHAVED HEAD... and we're watching something here... a terrible intelligence taking over... something bloodless and unhuman coming over Sam in this moment... and he chambers a slug into the shotgun...

DELANE (CONT'D)

Fuck are you doin?!

And this is it. He's going to blow this guys brains all over the floor...

DELANE (CONT'D)

Sam...

His finger curls around the trigger, eyes becoming lethal...

DELANE (CONT'D)

Sam!

And he snaps back, looks around, sees Delane standing there...

DELANE (CONT'D)

We need to get the fuck outta here!

INT. DELANE'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

MUSIC LOUD AS IT GOES! -- SCREAMING! -- Sam and Delane pumped and celebrating after the robbery.

SAM

See that nigger's face when I put that barrel in his mouth?!

DELANE

Cook that shit up, man! I wanna hit when I'm going a hundred miles an hour in this fucker.

Sam pulls out the coke, cooks a hit in a bent spoon, juices a needle and spikes Delane's arm. Delane feeling the rush... pressing on the gas and howling like a wild man. Sam cooking a hit for himself, spiking his own arm... both of them wired out of their heads... BLASTING down this dark, country road... and then they see...

A HITCHHIKER

Up the road, standing in this bitter cold with his thumb out.

SAM

Look at this sorry fucker...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Delane's car pulls off the road and the Hitchhiker hustles up to it.

INT. DELANE'S CAR - NIGHT

The Hitchhiker climbing into the backseat. He's late 40's, a drifter, probably American Indian. Delane starts driving.

SAM

Cold enough for ya out there, boy?

DRIFTER

Yeah.

DELANE

Where you goin, man?

DRIFTER

Dunshore.

SAM

That's up there past Muncy, right?

DRIFTER

Yeah.

DELANE

We can take you far as McClure.

DRIFTER

Take me to Dunshore.

Sam looking back --

SAM

We ain't goin to Dunshore, boy. Said we can drop you at McClure.

Suddenly -- silver flashing -- A BLADE -- out of nowhere -- pressed into Sam's neck from the backseat -- the Drifter pulling him tight against the seat rest, pressing it into his throat --

DELANE

What the fuck?!

DRIFTER

Take me to Dunshore!

SAM

Get that fuckin blade off me...

DRIFTER

Dunshore or I'll cut yer fuckin throat.

Sam reaches his leg over and STOMPS ON THE GAS PEDDLE -- the car LURCHES forward -- accelerating --

DRIFTER (CONT'D)
SLOW THE FUCK DOWN!

But Sam's not letting up... pressing down on the peddle hard...
90... 100... 110 mph -- DELANE YELLING -- trying to keep the car on
the road -- MUSIC BLARING -- like some wild ride to hell and then --

SAM SUDDENLY JUMPS IN THE BACKSEAT -- wrestling with the drifter --
fighting wild -- elbowing him in the face and somehow the blade is
in his hand now -- and --

Stick, stick, stick, stick, stick, stick!

He stabs him six times in the gut -- the drifter HOWLING in pain --
as we go --

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Delane's car skidding off the shoulder of the road, back door
popping open and the Drifter's body dumped into the dirt. The car
PEELS OUT, accelerates, tail lights disappearing into the dark.

INT. BEDROOM - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Lynn sound asleep in bed. And she slowly stirs awake, hears water
running from somewhere in the trailer.

INT. HALLWAY - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Lynn moving down the hall... toward a sliver of light coming from
under the closed bathroom door... gently pushing it open to see --

Sam standing at the sink... ~~covered in blood~~... frantically trying
to clean himself up... trying to wash the sin from his skin and
clothes but it's useless... and the sense we get is that we're
staring at a man at the edge of an abyss... set to swallow him
whole... terrified... shaking...

... and now he realizes Lynn is here and he turns to her... holding
up his stained hands... a terrible fear in his eyes when he says...

SAM

Help me.

EXT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

Days later and we see Lynn and Paige, dressed up, sitting in the
idling car, waiting.

PAIGE

He comin or ain't he?

LYNN

I don't know.

*
*
*
*
*
*

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

And we find Sam in this bedroom all alone, wearing a thrift store sportcoat, sitting on the edge of the bed. Frozen. Staring at his stocking feet and three or four pairs of workboots scattered on the floor.

Lynn step into the doorway...

VOICE (O.S.)

Honey? You ready?

Sam turns to her, and he looks lost here. Like a little boy.

SAM

I don't got no good shoes, Lynn.

And she comes into the room, sits on the bed next to him, puts an arm around his shoulder.

LYNN

He don't care what kinda shoes you wearin, baby.

INT. CHURCH - JOHNSTOWN, PA. - DAY

Packed with Sunday families listening to Pastor Krause at the lectern. And we see Sam, Lynn, Paige, and Daisy sitting near the back. Sam looks uncomfortable, nervous, on edge.

PASTOR KRAUSE

The point of ~~receiving~~ God's word is life. Life upon life. And to accept the blood of Jesus is life upon life upon life...

CONGREGATION

Praise be to God!

PASTOR KRAUSE

He breathes his spirit into darkness and makes something good. He sees our shadow and says, 'let there be light!'

CONGREGATION

Amen!

PASTOR KRAUSE

... now proclaim his saving grace! If there are sinners here looking for God raise your hands!

A few hands shoot up --

PASTOR KRAUSE (CONT'D)

Stand up! Receive the blood of Jesus Christ your saviour...

Three or four members moving to their feet, making their way to the center aisle and up to the altar. Lynn looking to Sam who is hesitant... unsure... and finally he finds the strength and gets up, slowly makes his way to --

FRONT ALTER

-- Sam and the other members kneeling... and Pastor Krause takes a bowl of holy water and gently tilts each person's head back -- "Do you accept Jesus Christ as your saviour?" -- and lets the water pour over their forehead -- one by one -- until he comes to Sam --

PASTOR KRAUSE (CONT'D)

Do you accept Jesus Christ as your saviour?

SAM

Yes I do.

And he pours the water over Sam's head... and the church breaks into ROWDY HALLELUJAHS!... and we see Lynn... tears in her eyes... clapping in the back row.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Months later and the snow has thawed... springtime... and we see Sam with other CONSTRUCTION WORKERS on the roof of a house which is under construction. His gaunt cheeks have filled out and he looks healthier. In the distance we hear a LOUD RUMBLE and Sam looks up as a pack of BIKERS ride past. Ghosts of another life. Sam watching as they disappear up the road.

INT. FOREMAN'S SHED - CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

A CONTRACTOR here handing Sam a check.

CONTRACTOR

Thanks for your help, Sam.

SAM

You need me to stay on, I can.

CONTRACTOR

We're movin inside next week.

SAM

I can drywall, tile, whatever you got. Know my way round some electrical too.

CONTRACTOR

Sorry, Sam, I gotta cut the crew. Just ain't enough work around these days.

EXT. STEPS - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Sam alone on these steps, lost in thought. Screen door opens and Lynn comes out, sits next to him.

SAM
She asleep?

LYNN
Think so.

BEAT.

SAM
Got cut today.

LYNN
I thought that was goin through August?

SAM
Them condos aren't goin up now. I called Jack Fitch, he don't got nuthin comin up neither.

LYNN
We owe twelve-hundred this month to the office.

SAM
I know.

And they're quiet... both of them sitting here on these steps... the burden of this life catching up to them in this moment...

LYNN
I'll see if I can pick up a double next week.

And she puts her arm around him, holding him tight.

LYNN (CONT'D)
What's important is us, baby. This right here.

And what she means is him home -- and sober -- part of the family again.

INT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY

A WOMAN stares down at her desk with a frown, shaking her head. Sam sitting in a small chair in front of her.

WOMAN
I got somethin in Pitt, but you gotta have some college for that.

SAM
I'm a hard worker and I learn real fast.

WOMAN

But you got no education, Mr. Childers.
I'm sorry, I got nuthin for you right
now.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

And we see Sam talking to the SITE MANAGER, looking for work, and
the Site manager shaking his head 'no.'

INT. SHIPPING CENTER - DAY

A warehouse filled with shipping containers... and we find Sam
talking with a SHIFT FOREMAN who's shaking his head.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY

And we see Sam standing next to his Harley, talking to a CAR DEALER.

CAR DEALER

... don't deal bikes. Probably have a
better shot if you take it over to Pitt.
Or maybe down to Philly.

SAM

I gotta sell it today.

CAR DEALER

Give you four hundred for it.

SAM

There's almost two grand on this bike.
Them pipes right there is custom. You
wont see pipes like that on anything
round here

CAR DEALER

Like I said, don't deal bikes. I'll give
you four-twenty. Cash. Best I can do.

INT. PAIGE'S ROOM - CHILDER'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Sam on the edge of Paige's bed reading her a CHILDREN'S BOOK.

SAM

(reading)

*"Into the street the Piper stept, smiling
first a little smile, then three shrill
notes the pipe uttered like a great and
mighty army muttered..."*

PAIGE

What's uttered?

SAM

Like spoke up, made a sound.

PAIGE

Okay, keep goin.

SAM

(turns the page)

And out of the houses the rats came
tumblin, black rats, brown rats, brother
rats, sister rats, and husband rats
followed their little rat wives... Til
they came to the ragin water where they
drowned and lost their lives."

PAIGE

They got rid all them rats?

SAM

Yep.

PAIGE

How come you sold yer Harley?

SAM

Cause it's what I had to do.

PAIGE

We need money, huh?

SAM

We're gonna be OK, bug, don't you worry.

And Paige curls into him closer... and we're watching him here... in
this moment... holding his daughter... not so sure they're gonna be
ok.

EXT. CANNING PLANT - MORNING

Pissing rain as the morning shift files into this processing plant.
And we see Sam dropping Lynn and Paige off in front. Paige rushing
off to a DAYCARE WORKER waiting by an open door. Lynn leaning back
in the car...

LYNN

See you at four?

Sam nods as we go...

INT. CHEVY VEGA - DAY

CLOSE ON Sam, behind the wheel of the car, parked, staring out the
front windshield. REVERSE to see he's in the parking lot of The Buck
Eye Bar, just watching the entrance.

INT. BUCK EYE BAR - DAY

Empty except for a handful of regulars. Sam coming through the door, taking in the place, the fucking grime and despair. Moving to Delane who is sitting in his same spot...

DELANE

Well, well, well, wondered when I was gonna see you again, ole buddy.

(Sam sits)

How you doin'?

SAM

I'm doin'.

DELANE

Heard you was followin the Lord now.

SAM

Lil' bit.

Delane sizes him up, "how much is a little bit?", turns to the BARTENDER...

DELANE

Jackie, gimme a mash and bud.

(to Sam)

You want somethin'?

Sam shakes his head.

DELANE (CONT'D)

You know that old Indian didn't die out there that night. Story in the Lehigh Valley News bout it. Somebody picked that poor bastard up after us, took him to the emergency room, you believe that shit? Don't know which one of you was luckier.

SAM

God was lookin out for us both, I suppose.

WAITRESS slides a shot and beer in front of Delane...

DELANE

Well then, here's to him.

(drinks)

Didn't hear you pull up.

SAM

Got Lynn's car.

DELANE

She broke down on ya?

SAM

Sold her.

DELANE

Ahhh, shit, man. Shoulda come to yer ole buddy first. I can put some money in your pocket if that's what you need.

Delane smiling, inviting him back into this world. And we're watching Sam, threshold moment here, considering.

EXT. CANNING PLANT - DAY

The end of the day and we see Lynn and Paige waiting outside the plant. Sam's very late. A CO-WORKER pulls up to the curb.

CO-WORKER

Sure you don't want me to drop ya off?

Lynn looks up the street but there's no sign of Sam... so she nods, opens the door and they get in.

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Lynn and Paige finishing dinner at the kitchen table. It's obvious Sam still hasn't come home and Lynn is trying to hide her worry.

And then we hear a car pulling up outside, door opening and closing, and Sam coming into the trailer. Paige scoots off her chair and hugs him.

PAIGE

Hey daddy.

SAM

Bug.

PAIGE

We waited for ya, but Mrs. Shields gave us a ride home.

SAM

That's good.

Lynn staring at him, trying to read this man's face but he's not looking at her. Avoiding her gaze. *Did he use? Is he high?* And then she sees a PINPRICK OF DRIED BLOOD on his shirtsleeve. Her face contorting almost imperceptibly. Her worst fear realized. Relapse.

LYNN

Paige, why don't you go get ready for bed.

Paige disappears into her room and Lynn moves to Sam without saying a word... and she lifts up his arm and unbuttons the cuff of his shirt... slowly pushing up his shirtsleeve to discover a NEEDLE PRICK in his arm...

... and then he pulls out a \$20 bill and hands it to her.

SAM
Gave blood over in Pitt.

Lynn searching his eyes and she knows he's telling the truth.

SAM (CONT'D)
That's all there is. That's all I got.

And she pulls him close, hugging him tight, grateful.

LYNN
Somethin will come through. I promise.

And we hold on Sam, his troubled eyes. Completely out of options.
And we see that for this man the inability to provide for his family
is crushing.

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - NIGHT

HEAVY WINDS! -- FLASHES OF LIGHTENING! -- a storm starting to batter
the trailer park.

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Lynn and Paige huddled in front of the TV, scared, watching an
EMERGENCY WEATHER WARNING... winds buffeting the trailer... Sam
coming into the room from the back.

LYNN
Two touched down near Harrisberg.

EXT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Sam opening the door, coming down the steps, looking up to the sky
and it is fucking black, swirling, ominous.

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Sam coming back into the trailer fast, scooping up Paige.

SAM
Come on! Let's go...

Lynn following Sam --

INT. HALLWAY - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

-- down the hallway -- WIND PICKING UP -- starting to rock the
trailer back and forth.

LYNN
Why don't we get in the car?!

SAM
Cause we might drive right into it!

INT. BACK BEDROOM - MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Sam coming in, setting Paige down, moving to a METAL GUN LOCKER in the corner of the room, pulling out two or three shotguns and tossing them on the bed --

THE WIND -- SLAMMING the trailer now -- Lynn and Paige in the doorway -- terrified -- watching as Sam pushes the heavy locker onto it's side -- grabs one of the shotguns, jams shells into the breech.

LYNN
(yelling, over the wind)
What are you doing?!

He aims the shotgun at the locker and pulls he trigger -- BOOM!
BOOM! BOOM! -- blows three gaping holes in the metal -- air holes -- turns to Lynn and Paige --

SAM
GET IN!

Paige crawling into the impromptu bunker. Lynn squeezing in behind her... Sam staying outside... no room for him... the trailer starting to buck VIOLENTLY in the tempest... thin walls contorting...

... and Paige starting to cry -- terrified -- Sam leaning close to one of the air holes so she can hear his voice...

SAM (CONT'D)
Bug, you hear me?! -- Bug?!

PAIGE
Yeah.

And he starts to play a child's word association game with her... something she knows... something they've played before...

SAM
I'm thinkin of a snail... you hear me,
Bug?! Snail.

And we hear her tiny little voice say...

PAIGE
Whale.

SAM
Good job, Bug, good job! You said whale,
I'm thinkin of a pail!

PAIGE
You said pail, I'm thinkin of a tail.

And so this little game goes between father and daughter... Paige listening to his voice... in the midst of this terrible storm... somehow becoming less terrified.

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - DAY

A brilliantly clear day and we see neighbors picking up after the storm. Sam on the roof of their trailer, nailing down a strip of bent aluminum as a pickup truck pulls up. Window rolls down and we see it's the CONTRACTOR from before.

CONTRACTOR

Sam.

SAM

Billy.

CONTRACTOR

Tried to ring ya but your phones down.

SAM

Yep.

Sam climbs down, moves to the truck, shakes his hand.

CONTRACTOR

Looks like ya made it through pretty good.

SAM

We're alright.

CONTRACTOR

Damn twister touched down eight places between here and Noblesville. Chewed up six hundred homes in Fulton County alone.

(best)
Got all the work you can handle if you're interested.

SAM

I'm interested...

Sam, seizing an opportunity here.

SAM (CONT'D)

But I'm puttin my own crew together. We go 50/50 on the jobs. You cover any heavy machines I need.

CONTRACTOR

60/40 til you pay me back on the tools. Then we'll go half.

SAM

You got a deal.

CUT TO:

A QUICK SEQUENCE OF SHOTS - Sam and a crew busting their asses at various construction sites throughout Southeast Pennsylvania... a sense that many months are passing... and then a SHOT of Lynn carefully stenciling letters on the side of a new (but used) truck that reads, "Childers Roofing and Painting"

CUT TO:

C.U. ON LYNN'S CLOSED EYES -- SMILING --

LYNN

What are you doin, Sam Childers?

We are --

EXT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - DAY

Lynn and Paige with their eyes shut. Sam leading them by the hand --

PAIGE

I wanna peek.

SAM

Keep em closed.

Sam finally stops them.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ok. Open em up.

They do and both of their eyes go wide with surprise.

PAIGE

Where are we?

SAM

We're home, little girl.

REVERSE to see a modest two bedroom house at the end of this driveway. Their new home.

PAIGE

That's ours?

SAM

Sure is. Go check it out.

Paige sprints for the house as Lynn hugs Sam, softly starts to cry into his shoulder.

LYNN

It's beautiful.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

The first night in their new home. A few unpacked moving boxes here. Paige sound asleep on a small bed upstairs. Sam and Lynn downstairs in the master bedroom.

LYNN

I'm so proud of you.

SAM

God made this possible.

LYNN

I know he did. But you let him into your heart. I'm proud of that.

She kisses him and they start to make love, and what we're struck by is how tender and loving this is. A thousand miles away from the last time we saw them together like this. Gently she pushes him back and they lay on the bed... just the two of them... in this small house... wrapped in each others arms... and we hear the sound of singing... coming through... taking us to...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Two years later and we're watching a congregation finish a Sunday hymn. Sam, Lynn, Daisy, and Paige (7) in the crowd listening to Pastor Krause.

PASTOR KRAUSE

Praise be to God.

CONGREGATION

MAY THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

PASTOR KRAUSE

Today we are blessed with a special guest. It's my pleasure to welcome Pastor Relling from the Kilangire Christian Ministry in Uganda, Africa. Pastor...

Polite applause as a tall, white South African man named PAUL RELING steps up to the lectern, and in a deep Afrikaner accent he begins --

RELLING

Thank you Pastor Krause, and thank you ladies and gentlemen for inviting me into this house of the Lord.

(beat)

I'm here today to talk to you about your Christian brothers and sisters, families just like yours, a half a world away that desperately need your help...

And we see Sam in this sea of faces, listening.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

The first thing we notice is the relative "opulence" of this place... deep shag, new color TV, matching sectional sofa... the rural idea of making it. Sam, Lynn, Daisy, and Paige at the dinner table eating. Sam in his own world, oblivious to the MINOR CONVERSATION until --

PAIGE (O.S.)

Dad, what do you think?

He looks up... everybody staring at him.

SAM

Bout what?

LYNN

You alright?

SAM

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Just thinkin' bout that fella today.

PAIGE

He talked funny.

LYNN

Just from a different place than us, baby, that's all.

SAM

Thought maybe I'd go over there.

DAISY

Where?

SAM

Africa. Said they needed people to help fix up school buildings. Figure I'd lend em a hand, pound some nails for a few weeks. Do some good fer somebody.

EXT. MISSION CONSTRUCTION SITE - OUTSIDE KAMPALA - DAY

Two weeks later and we're in the rural countryside outside Kampala, Uganda. Sam on the roof of a bombed out school building with other white VOLUNTEERS, patching BULLET HOLES with plaster. The remnants of war.

Sam looks below him to see a dozen black men in uniform (SPLA soldiers) carrying AK 47's and standing guard at various points around this compound -- ANGLE one of these guards to see it's DENG, the 6'5" soldier from the opening scene.

INT. VAN - DRIVING - DAY

Volunteers jammed into this van. AD-LIBBED CHATTER here. And we see Sam sitting near the front, next to Deng who is driving.

SAM
You Ugandan Army or what?

DENG
Sudanese People's Liberation Army. SPLA.
We are freedom fighters.

There is a certain reserved nobility in this man, in the way he carries himself and speaks. An unwavering strength and self-reliance born from a lifetime of war and struggle.

SAM
Well, I'll tell you what. You are one tall drink-a-water, Deng. You ever get over to the US, boy like you could make a pretty penny in the NBA.

DENG
NBA is army?

SAM
No. Basketball. Michael Jordan, ya know? You ever seen basketball?

DENG
We only play football here. American soccer. This is what we like.

INT. DORM - CATHOLIC MISSION - NIGHT

Fifteen or twenty volunteers lounging on cots in this dorm, playing cards, talking, smoking. And we find Sam off from the group, on his bunk, reading The Bible...

... and then we hear a faint EXPLOSION in the distance... and almost imperceptibly the GROUND TREMBLES. Sam clocking it.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey Childers...

Sam turns to find a British man in his late 20's named DAN standing next to him, thick Cockney accent, smoking a cigarette.

DAN
Some of us are going into Kampala tomorrow night. Find ourselves a little fun this weekend. You in?

-- and then another faint EXPLOSION in the distance --

SAM
What is that?

DAN
Fighting up north.

SAM
Who's fightin?

DAN
Shit, rebels, man. Whole place is in the
middle of a bloody civil war.

And as if to punctuate what he said, we feel another BLAST shake the
floor, taking us to...

EXT. MISSION CONSTRUCTION SITE - OUTSIDE KAMPALA - DAY

It's mid-day, blazing hot, and we see Sam approaching Deng who is
standing guard under a tin awning.

SAM
Hey, Deng, you wanna Coke?

Sam offers him a can and he takes it.

DENG
Thank you.

SAM
Got a question for ya.

DENG
Yes?

SAM
I wanna go up north this weekend. Need
someone to show me around. You
interested?

DENG
The others are going into Kampala.

SAM
That ain't my speed no more. I wanna go
into Sudan. See some of the country.

Deng looks at him, surprised by the request...

DENG
You want to see?

EXT. DIRT ROAD - RURAL UGANDA - DAY

A dirt road cutting through grassy plain stretching in every
direction... and we see a BRIGHT YELLOW BUS speeding toward us in
the distance, kicking a rooster tail of dust high into the air...
and as it gets closer we see 15 or 20 men piled onto the roof,
hanging on for dear life as this bus bounces over the road...

INT. BUS - DRIVING - RURAL UGANDA - SAME

... Sam and Deng crammed into this crowded bus...

SAM

They always drive this fast?

DENG

Traveling is the most dangerous time in Sudan. If the rebels find you on the open road it would be very bad.

An awkward silence as Deng stares out the window. Sam wanting to connect here, but Deng is reticent.

SAM

You got kids, Deng?

DENG

No. I have no children.

SAM

Where you from?

DENG

A little village called Kiteng. Many hours from here.

SAM

That's where your family is?

And Deng simply says...

DENG

My family were all killed by LRA. I am the only one left.

(beat)

Unyama is about two hours from here. We will stop there for lunch.

Deng turns and looks out the window again, silent, quietly watching the land blur past. And Sam says nothing more, intuitively feeling this man's need to be alone in the moment. A great, lost giant.

EXT. UNYAMA REFUGEE CAMP, UGANDA - DAY

A dense sea of people. 20,000 displaced refugees living on top of each other.

Life is lived out in the open here... women bent over brightly colored washtubs sloshing clothes in soapy water... smoke from giant cooking pots drifting into the air... semi-clothed children, some with even younger children on their hips, running everywhere. The poverty and hopelessness is overwhelming.

And we see Sam and Deng walking through the camp...

DENG

The Muslim North has tried to kill the
Christian South for more than 30 years.
Two million people have lost their lives
in this struggle.

Deng sweeping his hand, indicating the mass of refugees.

DENG (CONT'D)

These people have been driven from their
villages because of the killing, forced
to stay in camps like this. However it is
not much better here...

EXT. MEDICAL AREA - UNYAMA REFUGEE CAMP, UGANDA - DAY

A row of wood sheds and worn nylon tents marks the hospital area.
Each enclosure jammed with the desperately sick. Battle-weary AID
WORKERS move among them, doing what they can, caring for the ones
who are most desperately ill.

DENG

Cholera and Malaria are everywhere, there
is little food, and there are not enough
UN soldiers to protect everyone. Even
here they worry that the IRA will attack
at night.

And another SPLA soldier comes up to Deng, words exchanged, he turns
to Sam...

DENG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Sam... I'll be five minutes.

SAM

Course, do what you gotta do.

Deng leaves and now Sam is completely alone, taking in this mire of
humanity all around him. And suddenly there's *COMMOTION!* -- two aid
workers coming into this tent carrying a WOMAN on a stretcher. One
of the aid workers looking around -- a white woman -- mid 30's --
her name is AGNETE CLOSSON, Regional Director of Doctors Without
Borders. She sees Sam across the tent.

AGNETE

(Dutch accent)

Excuse me. You. Can you help please?

Sam moving to her --

AGNETE (CONT'D)

We need to transfer her to the bed. Get
her shoulders...

Sam grabbing the woman underneath the shoulders as another aid
worker gets her feet...

AGNETE (CONT'D)

One, two, three...

And they swing the woman over to a cot... but as they do the sheer piece of blood-stained muslin that was covering her face falls away... and we see that she has been mutilated... her lips cut off of her face...

... and now a DOCTOR sweeps into the tent and begins to work on her. Sam and Agnete pushed back, away from the action. Sam still shocked by what he's seen.

AGNETE (CONT'D)

(extending her hand)

Agnete Closson.

SAM

Sam Childers.

They shake.

SAM (CONT'D)

What happened to her face?

AGNETE

The LRA did that. Villagers who dare to take up arms against the rebels lose their hands, anyone who fails to listen to their commands lose their ears. That woman argued with a rebel, so she got her lips hacked off. These are Kony's orders.

SAM

Who's Kony?

Agnete, suddenly suspicious, takes an appraising look of Sam.

AGNETE

Who are you with?

SAM

I'm with Deng, that skyscraper over there.

AGNETE

What organization are you with?

SAM

I ain't with any group. I'm just takin a look around, seein a bit of the country.

AGNETE

This isn't a tourist destination, Mr. Childers. This is a war zone. If you want to sightsee, I suggest you fly someplace south. You stay in this area, you'll be killed.

(beat)

Thank you for your help.

And she walks off.

EXT. NIMULE, SUDAN - DUSK

Establishing a bustling trading center on the border of Uganda and Sudan. Noisy and overpopulated, a maze of concrete and tin buildings, hundreds of people on the streets, riding bicycles, finishing their business before nightfall.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

A stale room with two cots, bare, institutional. Deng on the edge of his cot, pulling off his boots, taking off his jacket, getting comfortable. And we see Sam sitting on a small balcony overlooking the empty street below.

DENG

Some say Joseph Kony is a wizard. A shapeshifter...

He pulls a baggy of tobacco from his pocket and begins to roll a cigarette...

DENG (CONT'D)

I say he is Satan himself, who devours his own people to quench his thirst for power.

SAM

Kony is the leader of the LRA?

DENG

That is right. He is the one we have been fighting for years. But there is very little we can do. We have nothing. Our weapons are old, and our boots are full of holes. Our pain has been forgotten by the rest of the world.

(beat)

Do you want a cigarette, Sam?

SAM

No thank you.

DENG

You do not smoke because you are Christian?

SAM

Gave my life to Jesus Christ four years ago. Been walkin with the Lord ever since.

DENG

And before?

A moment here, Sam lost in a fleeting memory. And then...

SAM

Before that I wasn't very good.

Deng lights his cigarette, inhales the pungent smoke... and now we hear voices... through the open window... children's voices... Sam peering into the darkness but seeing nothing... only empty streets... and then one-by-one... out of the darkness like apparitions... we see children coming up the street... carrying bedrolls... some of them singing spiritual hymns as they walk... laughing as children do... at first just a dozen or so... and then more... fifty... a hundred...

Deng steps onto the balcony next to Sam.

DENG

They are *night commuters*. They come from deep in the bush. Their parents send them out because it is safer to sleep here than in their own homes.

SAM

Why?

DENG

Because death comes at night in the villages and refugee camps.

And we continue to watch this great migration of children... now streaming into this town... a few of them finding a dark corner just below us... unrolling their reed mats... huddling up against each other for the long night...

DENG (CONT'D)

These are the lucky one so far. The ones the rebels have not found. The *invisible children*.

Sam watching them for another beat then suddenly turning, moving back into the room.

DENG (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

INT. STAIRWAY - HOTEL - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

Sam coming down these steps. Deng following.

DENG

(calling after)

Sam...

EXT. HOTEL - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

Sam exiting the hotel, moving to a group of 5 children huddled on the sidewalk...

SAM

Get up... let's go...

The children looking up, surprised to see a white man here...

SAM (CONT'D)

Come on...

The children getting to their feet... and Sam moves to another cluster of children up the block as Deng catches up to him...

DENG

What are you doing?

SAM

They ain't sleepin out here. Tell em they're comin inside.

(to children on the ground)

Ya'll get up... let's go...

And Sam starts to move up the block further, wanting to gather up more children, but Deng stops him...

DENG

Sam, there are too many...

And he looks up the street and we see more children here than we thought... hundreds of young kids huddled on the streets...

DENG (CONT'D)

... you can't help them all.

Sam knows he's right. A moment later as he looks to the children he's gathered, staring up at him...

SAM

I can help them.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

-- and a DOZEN CHILDREN are ushered into this small room. Sam pushing their cots against a wall so there's more space. Deng talking to them in Kiswahili as these children begin to settle onto the floor... and now we notice a particular BOY in this group... maybe 8 years old... wearing bright GREEN SHORTS... and we watch as he and his SISTER move to a corner of the room and unroll their mats...

... and eventually Sam turns off the lamp and we stay here in the dark... Sam on his cot, listening to these 12 little children breathing... their shifting bodies on the floor trying to get comfortable... and then...

CUT TO:

SAM'S CLOSED EYES... SOUND ASLEEP...

Just before dawn. Deng standing over him, shaking him awake...

DENG

The LRA attacked a village last night.

Sam sits up, looks around the hotel room and we see that it's empty... the children vanished... as if it were all a dream.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DRIVING - RURAL SUDAN - DAY

Sam, Deng, and a few other SPLA SOLDIERS jammed into the flatbed of this truck, carrying heavy weapons, bouncing fast over this open dirt road... featureless savanna FADING into sporadic mud huts... the outskirts of a VILLAGE in the distance... and thin columns of black smoke twisting into the air...

... and as the truck gets closer to the village we begin to pass CHILDREN walking along the side of the road... ~~night commuters~~ returning to their village... some of them huddled together, weeping...

... and we notice -- Sam notices -- the little boy in the GREEN SHORTS, walking hand-in-hand with his sister, their faces quiet masks of fear as they move closer to their home.

EXT. VILLAGE - YEI, SUDAN - DAY

The pickup arrives and Sam, Deng, and the other soldiers hop out... and this is what they see:

Complete devastation. 30 or 40 bodies mutilated and stacked outside smoking mud huts -- tukuls. ~~Some children already here, on their knees, weeping next to the corpses of their parents. If you could smell the air it would smell of burnt flesh and death.~~

Sam silent, aghast, just staring at the horror all around him...

DENG

You said you wanted to see.

... and now we see GREEN SHORTS and his sister arriving at the village... moving to their family's tukul and discovering their mother and father piled outside. Naked and burned alive. And the sister falls onto her mother's corpse and begins to wail as GREEN SHORTS stands there -- frozen -- staring down at his dead parents -- and suddenly --

MOVEMENT! -- from inside the tukul... a small dog... a family pet... darting into the open... running across the dirt... GREEN SHORTS going after it, yelling his name...

Sam watching the boy chasing after his dog, rounding a corner out of sight...

... for a moment...

... just the boy's voice calling after his dog... and then...

BOOOOM!

A muffled burst -- in the distance -- Sam, Deng, and the other soldiers already in motion -- running out of the village toward the explosion...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - YEI, SUDAN - DAY

... Sam is the first to arrive at the source of the explosion... and he sees GREEN SHORTS laying on the side of the road... cut in half by a land mine... his dead eyes wide open with surprise.

And Sam drops to his knees... lifting what's left of the boy into his arms and rocking him back and forth...

... and we watch as a terrible sadness overtakes him... something happening here... a fierce and overwhelming burden dropping into this man as he holds this dead boy... in the dirt... in the middle of this savage world...

... and as Sam puts it, his "life changed forever" in this moment... and we see him looking up to the heavens... tears streaming down his face... saying something we can't hear, but it's a promise... to God...

To save the children of Sudan.

INT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - DAY

A bright, fluorescent corridor filled with garish advertising and harried travelers rushing to make planes... and we find Sam coming down this concourse, carrying his duffle bag, his face expressionless. He reaches a revolving door but stops... doesn't pass through... sees Lynn, Paige, and his mother waiting for him on the other side... their happy, expectant faces...

But they don't see him yet... and he just stays here... hidden... watching them through the glass... and as Sam puts it, at this moment he realized he would never look at his own family the same way again... in some way lost to them forever after what he saw on the side of road in Yei...

... and finally he forces a smile, pushes through the revolving door and we watch, from this side of the glass, as Paige leaps into his arms... Lynn and Daisy moving to him too, embracing him, welcoming him home.

INT. PAIGE'S ROOM - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Sam on the edge of Paige's bed, tucking her in.

PAIGE

You see any tigers over there?

SAM

Naw, didn't see no tigers.

PAIGE

They got em over in Africa. We read about it in class.

SAM

Not where I was.

PAIGE

Sure am glad you're home.

SAM

Me too, bug. I'll see you in the mornin.

PAIGE

I'm thinkin of a plane...

SAM

It's late, better get to bed.

PAIGE

C'mon, plane... I'm thinkin of a plane...

Sam giving in, playing their little game.

SAM

You said plane, I'm thinkin of a train...

PAIGE

You said train, I'm thinkin of a brain.

SAM

You said brain, I'm thinkin of a...
(hesitating)

PAIGE

Gotcha!

SAM

Ok, you got me.

PAIGE

You coulda said drain, or mane... like horse's hair.

Sam bending over, kissing her forehead...

SAM

Sweet dreams, baby.

INT. HALLWAY - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Sam coming out of Paige's bedroom, pulling the door closed, finding Lynn waiting here for him.

LYNN
You comin to bed?

SAM
In a bit

LYNN
You ok?

SAM
Just a long flight.

She senses more but knows this man well enough not to push... and so she simply kisses him and moves down the hall.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Quiet. Just Sam on this porch all alone, been here for some time, eyes far off, images in his mind he can't seem to shake. And he steps into the yard... walking along the side of the house... just moving... trying to shed this feeling like snakeskin...

... and he comes to something on the ground which stops him dead in his tracks... something we don't see yet... and slowly he reaches down and picks up...

A LITTLE DOLL. One of Paige's toys. Soiled and faded and left in the dirt. And we watch him holding this forgotten doll... and what we see on his face ain't pretty... his world collapsing out from under him... trying to keep rein on his emotions... a battle he's losing.

INT. BEDROOM - CHILDERS HOUSE - MORNING

Lynn stirs awake, looks next to her and realizes Sam never made it to bed the night before.

EXT. CHILDERS HOUSE - MORNING

Lynn coming out the front door in her nightgown, seeing a light on in a utility shed in the back...

INT. UTILITY SHED - MORNING

... Lynn slowly pushing open the door to find Sam on the floor, hunched over a pad of Paige's art paper... drawing... paper wads strewn all around him... been here all night...

LYNN
Baby, whatcha doin?

He looks up...

SAM
Makin plans.

LYNN

You been to bed yet?

He gathers up a couple of the papers, moves to her.

SAM

I had a vision last night, Lynn. Crazy as it sounds, God spoke to me. Felt him come right into me and tell me I needed to spread his word...

He hands her a sheet of paper -- CU to see it's a crude drawing of building.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna build a church.

LYNN

A church?

SAM

Right across the street. Not like Faith United or Calvary Fellowship. Place that ain't gonna turn you away if you a drug addict or a prostitute or whatever. Place for sinners, just like me, who wanna hear the word of God.

Lynn studying him, trying to judge how serious he is here. And Sam looking back at her, his eyes like we haven't seen them before. Sparkling.

LYNN

How we gonna pay for a church, Sam?

SAM

We got money in the bank. Business is good. Besides, I own a construction company...

(smiling)
I'm gonna give us one heck of a good deal on the build.

She smiles, shaking her head, catching his enthusiasm...

LYNN

What's that?

He hands her the other paper -- CU to see it's a another drawing.

SAM

That's the orphanage.

LYNN

You wanna build an orphanage?

SAM

In Sudan.

Lynn's smile fading, all of this suddenly becoming too much...

LYNN

Sam.

SAM

They got nobody, Lynn. Babies walkin
around in the bush with nowhere to go...

And now she realizes this has been what's haunted him since his
return... and like a man telling a ghost story he begins...

SAM (CONT'D)

Rebels go into these villages at night
and they butcher entire families. And the
children, the ones that survive, the ones
that make it out... some of them no older
than Paige... they got nuthin. I saw em
with my own eyes, Lynn... right down
there in the dirt, sittin next to their
dead mothers, cryin out to nobody.

Lynn, quiet, sensing his anguish.

LYNN

How we gonna do all this?

SAM

I don't know. But I promised God I'd do
whatever I had to in order to save those
kids. And that's what I'm gonna do.

BEAT.

LYNN

Ok.

And she pulls him closer, holding him tightly, as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY - SIX MONTHS LATER

We're looking at a simple, cinder block church which is under
construction. A scattering of pickup trucks parked at the site and a
flurry of activity. WORKMEN pouring cement, laying sheetrock, etc.
And Sam in the middle of this crew, putting the finishing touches on
a timber frame which is about to be raised.

INT. SAM'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam at a table in this simple kitchen, eating a plate of eggs. His
mother pouring a cup of coffee in the b.g.

DAISY

Saw Louise McNamara at Jolly's the other day. Said her daughter is havin another baby.

SAM

How many is that for them now?

DAISY

That's six at least. Lord, can't imagine. God gives you what you can handle, s'pose.

She joins him at the table and suddenly Sam stops eating... quiet... just staring down at his eggs...

DAISY (CONT'D)

You alright, Sammy?

SAM

No I ain't.

DAISY

What's wrong?

He looks up to her...

SAM

I think I left a piece of me back there in Africa.

Daisy reaches out, holds his hand in hers, and they just sit here for a long beat.

DAISY

You know when yer sister died it felt like she'd been snatched right out of my arms in the middle of the night. Still felt her for months after she was gone, tuggin at my dress like she would. Never really lost that feelin.

Daisy disappears in a memory for an instant, then looks up to Sam...

DAISY (CONT'D)

If you can save even one of them babies over there, then maybe there's a momma that won't feel what I've felt all these years.

(beat)

That's somethin real good, Sam.

She squeezes his hand, smiles to her son.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

Children at play, laughing, screaming, swinging on swing sets and digging in a sand pit.

And we see Sam off to the side, leaning against a (new) black Harley, watching Paige playing in the group... and then something catches his eye...

It's an eight year old boy on the playground... in bright green shorts... climbing up a jungle-gym... and we're watching Sam here... watching this boy... his eyes dark...

VOICE (O.S.)

Sam Childers...

Sam turns to see a BIKER, late 40's, leather vest, standing with his 12 year old DAUGHTER.

SAM

That's me.

The Biker extends his hand, they shake.

BIKER

Ben Hobbes, met a long time ago.

SAM

Yeah, Ben, how you doin?

DAUGHTER

Daddy, I'm gonna go.

BIKER

OK, honey...

She runs off.

BIKER (CONT'D)

(re: Kids)

Grow up quick, don't they?

SAM

Sure do.

BIKER

You used to ride an old panhead, didn't ya? Red one.

SAM

Yep, that was mine.

BIKER

I remember that bike. What ever happened to it?

SAM

Sold her lotta years ago.

BIKER

(re: Sam's bike)

Well, looks like you got yerself a good one now.

SAM

She rides ok. Little quiet for me, but my daughter don't like them loud pipes.

Biker chuckles, nods his head, something he can understand.

BIKER

Heard you was puttin up a chapel over there in Central City.

SAM

That's right. Buildin a house for God. Gonna minister to anybody who's lookin for The Lord.

BIKER

Maybe you can do somethin bout your old friend, Delane.

SAM

What about em?

BIKER

He ain't doin so hot.

EXT. CHILDERS HOUSE - DAY

Sam pulling up to the house on his bike, Paige sitting behind Sam, arms wrapped around his waist.

SAM

Go on now.

PAIGE

Ain't you comin?

SAM

Somethin I gotta take care of first.

Paige climbs off the bike and Sam THUNDERS OFF...

EXT. CRACK HOUSE - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

A torn up house in a shitty part of town, windows spray painted black. Sam pulls up to the curb and gets off, opens one of the bike's hard cases and pulls out the same SAWED OFF 10 gage we've seen before... chambers a slug as he moves toward the house...

INT. CRACK HOUSE - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

Dark, junkie squalor. Two or three people slumped on a ratty couch, strung-out, watching a flickering TV -- and then --

BOOOM! -- THE FRONT DOOR EXPLODES!

Sam coming into the house -- sawed-off leveled -- junkies scrambling for cover -- YELLING! -- CHAOS! -- Sam moving into --

BACK HALLWAY

Sam moving down the corridor -- KICKING IN A DOOR! -- empty -- another door opening -- somebody coming out fast -- Sam swinging the sawed-off -- a JUNKIE freezes and his hands go up --

SAM

Where's Delane!

The Junkie points to a back door...

INT. BACKROOM - CRACK HOUSE - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

DOOR CAVING IN! -- Sam coming through with the shotgun -- finds himself face-to-face with a CRACKHEAD pointing a .357 MAGNUM -- eyes amped up and wild -- shaking -- a stand-off.

Sam sees a body on a bare mattress in the b.g. -- bone thin and pale -- barely human -- spent hypodermic hanging out of his arm --

It's DELANE.

SAM

I'm here for that boy right there. You gonna get in the way a that?

A TENSE BEAT -- not sure how this is gonna go -- and then the CRACKHEAD shakes his head "no"

EXT. CRACK HOUSE - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

Sam coming out the front door carrying Delane on his shoulders.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

Delane in a bed, covers pulled up to his neck and he's shaking bad, retching in a bucket, deep in the throes of a detox. Sam and Lynn here doing what they can, toweling off his forehead, trying to keep him warm.

Paige steps into the doorway in the b.g., looks worried.

PAIGE

Mom...

LYNN

Why don't you go next door, baby. Leave your dad and I here for a spell, k?

Paige turns, disappears. Delane pulling the sheets tighter, gritting his teeth, shaking his head.

DELANE
I can't do this.

SAM
Look at me. God don't make trash, boy.
Now he ain't givin up on you, so don't
give up on him, you hear me?

And somehow Delane finds strength in his words, and in Sam's hand touching his head, and he nods.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

A bright Sunday morning and we're staring at the cinder block church which is almost completely finished... the sound of a garage band coming from inside, playing an unlikely rendition of a spiritual hymn... and a handful of people, dressed for service, moving up the cement stairs into...

INT. ENTRY HALL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

And we see Delane dressed in an ill-fitting brown suit, clean and sober, greeting people as they come through the front door. Standing next to him is Daisy, wearing her 'Sunday Hat', handing out programs.

DELANE
Welcome to Shekinah Fellowship Church.

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - DAY

Still under construction. Exposed beams and bare insulation on the walls. There's a small riser at the front of the hall with an altar, organ, and the GARAGE BAND playing the rocked-out hymn.

A handful of people here, sitting in pews. FARMERS in clean overalls, FACTORY WORKERS, BIKERS still dressed in their riding leathers, listening to the garage band and chatting.

And now we see Lynn and Paige (8) standing near the back. Lynn nervous, checking her watch.

*
*

INT. ENTRY HALL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

*

Lynn coming up to Delane and Daisy.

*

LYNN
Ya'll seen em yet?

*
*

DELANE
Nope.

*
*

INT. BASEMENT - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

Sam on his knees, sleeves rolled up to his elbows, wrenching a leaking pipe. Door opens and we see Lynn and Daisy standing in the hallway outside...

LYNN

Sam.

SAM

Yeah.

LYNN

It's five-til and he still ain't here.

Sam hearing this, moving to his feet, toweling off his hands.

SAM

You call him?

LYNN

He don't answer.

Sam worried, a moment of indecision here. Daisy steps forward, puts a hand on Lynn's shoulder...

DAISY

Honey, you mind leavin Sam and I alone for a moment?

Lynn surprised by the request...

LYNN

Sure.

DAISY

Thank you, sweetie.

Daisy shuts the door. Just she and Sam here alone now.

DAISY (CONT'D)

You like my hat, Sammy?

SAM

What, momma?

DAISY

You ain't never seen this one. I bought it a long time ago. Been keepin it for a special occasion.

SAM

It's nice.

DAISY

I never told you this but when I was pregnant with you, now this was way back, probably 1960, when yer daddy and I was still in Grand Rapids, a Pastor prophesied over me. Pulled me right up on stage and laid his hands on my belly and told me I was gonna have a Preacher for a son.

(smiling at the thought)

Yer daddy and I were so proud. I remember we went home and neither of us could sleep all night. Just laid there and talked bout you, bout what was comin.

SAM

I just built a church, momma. I ain't no preacher.

DAISY

Yes you are. You were born to it. Just took you a little ways to get here.

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

Sam entering at the back of the chapel, taking a moment to appreciate what he's looking at: 20 or 30 people here in the church that he built. A dream realized. And he walks down the center aisle, shaking hands with a few people, climbing steps to the altar and switching on the microphone...

SAM

(to the band)

Thank you, Tommy. You boys is soundin pretty good up here.

Sam turning to the crowd, clearing his throat, clearly nervous.

SAM (CONT'D)

I wanna thank ya'll for comin out for the first day of worship here at Shekinah Fellowship Church.

Some applause. Lynn and Paige sitting with Daisy who is beaming.

SAM (CONT'D)

I never been too keen talkin in front of people, but the guest preacher we had booked today ain't shown up yet so I thought I'd come up here and say a few words. Then maybe Maggie could come up here and read from the bible a bit seein as she's gonna be our Sunday school teacher...

(finding a woman in the crowd)

... you ok with that Maggie?

(woman nods)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Good, ok, well a lotta yous out there knows me pretty good. Knows I wasn't the best seed in the bunch for a lotta years. And I guess that's what made me wanna build this church. Cause God don't call people who think they're righteous, he calls people who know they're sinners, and I was about as bad as they come...

And we start to notice something here... a transformation happening in this man as he speaks to these people. His nervousness falling away and a natural charisma taking over...

SAM (CONT'D)

Buncha years ago I was up to no good and was runnin from some bad fellas in the woods over there by Cleary. These old boys was comin after me pretty fast and I reached in my bag lookin for my old shotgun I used to keep in there but it was gone. My momma had taken it out when I wasn't lookin and put a bible in that bag instead. This one right here matter-a-fact...

Sam holds up a worn Bible...

SAM (CONT'D)

Well, I pulled out this bible and cursed my momma pretty good. And I heard them boys stompin through them woods towards me and figured my time was up. So I just sat down under an old tree stump with this useless book and waited...

And we see the congregation hanging on his every word, identifying with this man standing before them. One of their own.

SAM (CONT'D)

... and then the strangest thing happened. Them boys ran right on past me. Didn't even see me sittin there under that tree. Now the way I figure it, if I would have reached in that bag and pulled out my old shotgun things would have turned out pretty different that night. But I didn't. I pulled out this Bible. And that's probably the first time I can remember God savin my butt.

(beat)

God and my momma.

The congregation laughing... and Sam opens up his Bible...

SAM (CONT'D)

Romans 11:29 says "The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." That means when he got an idea for you he ain't ever gonna take that away.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm proof of that. And that goes for every one of yous out there in the audience. God's got his eye on you and he ain't ever takin it off... so you might as well just give him a wink and welcome him on in...

And the congregation responds with a Hallelujah! And we see Daisy in the crowd, tears in her eyes as she watches her son -- The Preacher -- standing before her.

EXT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - DAY

Sam holding Paige, her face buried in his shoulder, crying.

SAM

Be back soon as I can.

PAIGE

I'm gonna miss you.

SAM

Gonna miss you too, bug, but I gotta get.

Lynn pulling Paige off, kissing Sam on the lips.

LYNN

Call us when you can, ok?

SAM

I will.

Sam turning to Delane, and we see he's back to the hulking man he once was.

SAM (CONT'D)

You watch out for em while I'm gone, ya hear?

DELANE

That's done, buddy.

Sam winks, slaps Delane on the shoulder, as we --

CUT TO:

FULL SCREEN - SEVEN LARGE SHIPPING BOXES RIPPED OPEN

★

And we see a line of SPLA soldiers (including NINETEEN, MARCO, and BEN) sitting in the dirt, pulling on NEW BOOTS, smiling, spit-polishing them to a high shine. We are...

★

★

★

EXT. SPLA CAMP - KITGUM, UGANDA - DAY

★

Sam and Deng watching the soldiers.

★

DENG
You came all this way to bring us new
boots?

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

Deng driving fast down this bumpy road. Sam in the passenger seat. Nineteen, Marco, and Ben in the flatbed of this truck, ever watchful.

SAM
Right here, stop the truck!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAY

Sam already out of the truck, moving into the bush. Deng following...

DENG
Sam, wait...

But he's not listening, moving through the scrub to a small clearing... walking around...

DENG (CONT'D)
It is not safe here.

Sam kneeling down, picking up a handful of red dirt, letting it trickle through his fingers...

DENG (CONT'D)
This is it.

EXT. NIMULE - ON THE BORDER OF SUDAN AND UGANDA - DAY

Establishing a busy trading town on the border of Sudan and Uganda. And we see a small crowd of villagers standing underneath a tarp, watching a small color TV (the only TV for miles) -- on the screen we see a black man in a military uniform giving a fiery speech -- this is JOHN GARANG -- one of the good guys -- the founder of the SPLA.

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - NIMULE, SUDAN - DAY

A tight, cramped office filled with villagers. Two or three men here at desks handling the administration of life in the bush: renewing travel papers, registering newborn children, hearing complaints from local farmers, etc. And we see Sam and Deng at one of these desks, a topographical map splayed out in front of them.

ADMINISTRATOR
This is not a good idea.

SAM
I think it's a heck of a good idea.

ADMINISTRATOR

This is in a very bad area. It would be much better further south. Someplace closer to Kampala.

SAM

If I wanted to be closer to Kampala...
I'd be closer to Kampala. I wanna be right here...

Pointing to the map, and now the second Administrator steps forward, laying it out...

ADMINISTRATOR #2

This area is deep in the war zone, Mr. Childers. The LRA will kill you here.

SAM

I don't think you boys understand me, so lemme make it real clear to ya.
(leans in close)
I didn't pick that land -- God did

*
*
*
*
*
*

INT. SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

We're in the basement of the church and we see children dressed in homemade costumes... pilgrims and Indians... rehearsing for an upcoming play.

INT. OFFICE - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - NIGHT

We see Lynn in this office going through a ledger, balancing the books. She gets up, moves to a file cabinet, pulls the drawer and...

~~Doubles over in excruciating pain... falling into the metal cabinet... holding her stomach with both hands... the weight of her body held up by the cabinet alone... and now the phone on her desk starts ringing... and ringing... and ringing... but she can't move to pick it up... and finally...~~

A quick knock at the door and a woman sticks her head in --

VOLUNTEER

Lynn, you ok?

Lynn standing up straight, hiding the pain, smiling.

LYNN

Yeah, fine, just my back.

VOLUNTEER

Sam's on the phone.

EXT. STREET - NIMULE, SUDAN - SAME

Sam at an outdoor call center.

LYNN'S VOICE

Hello?

SAM

I got it. Forty-two acres. Bought and paid for. Just signed the papers right now.

LYNN'S VOICE

Congratulations.

SAM

Me and Deng is gonna start clearin it soon as we can. Figure it'll take us six or seven weeks to get a fence up then we're in business. Everything ok back there?

INT. OFFICE - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL - SAME

Lynn at her desk on the phone. INTERCUT CONVERSATION.

LYNN

Everything's just fine.

And now we hear feet running up stairs... the door flinging open as Paige bursts in...

PAIGE

That dad?!

LYNN

Paige just come through the door...

PAIGE

Lemme talk to him!

Paige excited, taking the phone...

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Dad!

SAM

Hey bug.

PAIGE

You still in Africa?

SAM

Yeah, honey, I'm in Sudan. Whatcha doin?

PAIGE

Rehearsin for the Thanksgivin play. I'm a squaw. You seen any tigers yet?

SAM

Not yet.

PAIGE

Think you gonna make it back for the play?

SAM

Don't think so, baby. Gonna have to have mom videotape it for me so I can see ya.

Watching Lynn here as Paige continues her conversation... something flashing in her eyes... uncertainty of some kind... a profound sense of foreboding she can't seem to shake.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANGE - SUDAN - DAY - THREE MONTHS LATER

What we're looking at is the modest beginning of *The Angels of East Africa Children's Orphanage*. A cluster of tukuls and 2 or 3 rudimentary wood buildings built on the dirt Sam first let trickle between his fingers.

And we see life already finding it's place within these bamboo walls. Acholi WORKERS laying brick on what will eventually become a schoolhouse and chapel. DINKA WOMEN preparing food and tending to the 15 ORPEANS here who already call this place home.

And we find Sam and Deng standing with a powerfully built Ugandan woman in her late 40's, arms crossed. In the b.g. we hear two small children BAWLING LOUDLY...

DENG

(introducing)

Sam, this is Betty. She is from the village of Kodo. A few miles from here.

SAM

Good to meet you Betty.

Betty, no reaction. Just the incessant BAWLING of the children.

DENG

She is knowing that you need someone to run the orphanage.

SAM

I'm lookin for somebody who can keep the place in order. Make sure things is taken care of when I'm away.

Deng translates and Betty simply nods her head.

DENG

She can do this.

SAM

She's gonna have to take care of the children too, make sure they're fed, fix em when they're sick. Can she do that?

Deng translates and Betty turns to the crying children and says one word in Kiswahili... and instantly the crying stops. Sam and Deng share a look, impressed.

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell her she's hired.

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANGE - NIGHT

Betty and another Dinka woman moving through this room carrying lanterns, helping the children get ready for sleep... rolling out reed mats, untying shoes, comforting some of the younger ones who are crying.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

And we see a handful of SPLA soldiers stationed around the perimeter of the compound, standing guard. Sam and Deng sitting next to a lantern by the front gate.

SAM

You know what's funny? In English your name means "darn it."

DENG

What is this 'darn it?'

SAM

Deng. It means 'shucks.' You know, like you stub your toe and you go "ahhhhh, deng!" Get it?

DENG

(dead serious)

This is not funny. In my language, in Kiswahili, names are very important. They tell you everything about a man.

(becoming heated)

Your name proceeds you wherever you go. You are Sam. This is how you are known. In my language this means something.

Sam feeling terrible, realizes he's offended him.

SAM

I'm sorry, buddy. It was just a joke.

Quiet, awkward, just the two of them sitting here quietly for a long beat. Finally...

SAM (CONT'D)

What does Sam mean in Kiswahili?

DENG

Small penis.

And Deng smiles brightly. Sam realizing he's been played.

SAM
Yer kiddin me.

And Deng starts to LAUGH. A deep, guttural, infectious laugh. Sam joining him, and we sense that at this moment these two have become friends. And gradually their laughter subsides, and it's quiet again.

SAM (CONT'D)
Can I ask you a question?

DENG
Of course.

SAM
You believe in God?

Deng considering this for a beat, and then...

DENG
My mother and father were Christian just like you. I was raised to believe in Jesus and The Bible. Taught there was a God in heaven looking down on all of us.
(beat)
But it is impossible to live here, to see what I have seen, and not turn your back on him.

BEAT.

SAM
Maybe you'll invite him in again one day.

DENG
I don't think so. I would need to see some proof that he was real, and in this place... that is unlikely.

CUT TO:

PITCH BLACK

The heavy stillness of an African summer night. Only the sound of Kestrel hawks screeching far off in the distance, hunting prey... and the drone of African Cicadas buzzing all around us.

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

The children sprawled on their mats sound asleep.

INT. SOLDIER'S BARRACKS - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Deng and a few other soldiers sleeping on bedrolls.

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT *

Sam asleep on his cot. *

EXT. FRONT GATE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT *

A few of the SPLA soldiers sitting next to their weapons in the dark, smoking, tossing beads into a carved wooden trough, playing the ancient game of Mancala. *

AND NOW WE SEE SHADOWS IN THE DARKNESS... MAYBE 10 OR 12 FIGURES MOVING SLOWLY THROUGH THE UNDERBRUSH... LRA REBELS... APPROACHING THE PERIMETER OF THE ORPHANAGE. *

The SPLA soldiers oblivious to the advance. *

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT *

Sam sleeping soundly when suddenly he's awoken by an EXPLOSION! -- machinegun fire popping o.s. -- Sam hitting the ground, grabbing an AK47 resting by his bed -- *

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT *

-- Sam rushing out of his tukul -- sees the front gate OBLITERATED from the blast -- bamboo fence burning -- the death song of AK47's howling in the darkness -- *

-- Betty coming out of her tukul and Sam grabs her -- *

SAM
Get the children! Bring em to the church! *

Sam points toward the unfinished chapel in the center of the compound and Betty nods her understanding, rushes off. *

NEW ANGLE *

Sam hustling across the compound to the front gate -- joining Deng and a few other soldiers behind a makeshift shed -- firing into the darkness at the LRA rebels in the bush -- *

SAM (CONT'D) *

How many? *

DENG *

Two squads... *

(indicating) *

There -- and there. *

Sam peering around the corner -- sees MUZZLE FLASHES in the blackness -- maybe 15 or 20 rebels moving through the bush like specters -- firing at the compound -- *

Sam turns to Ben -- *

SAM
Get the .50 cal and drop back to the
church!

Ben nods and takes off -- Sam, Deng, and the others laying down
covering fire as he disappears back into the compound.

SAM (CONT'D)
We gotta keep em outside this fence!

Deng and the others fanning out, returning fire.

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

The children cowering in the corners -- TERRIFIED -- SCREAMING! --
Betty and another Dinka woman rushing into the room -- gathering up
the smaller children in their arms and leading the rest out the
door.

INT. STOREROOM - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Ben coming into this shed, opening a metal case and pulling out the
.50 cal machinegun and boxes of ammo.

EXT. FRONT GATE - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam, Deng and the others trying to hold off the rebels -- and then
we see a FLASH in the blackness -- and then another --

TWO RPG'S STREAKING TOWARD THE COMPOUND AND --

KABOOOM!!

More of the fence eviscerated in the blasts!

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Betty and the other Dinka woman herding the children into this
building -- the only brick structure on the compound -- forcing them
into the corners -- onto the floor -- the younger children weeping
uncontrollably --

And then the door BANGING OPEN! -- Ben coming in with the big .50
cal on his shoulder -- moving to one of the window holes and setting
up the gun -- threading ammo through the breach as --

EXT. FRONT GATE - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

REBELS ADVANCING ON THE ORPHANAGE!

Sam and the others becoming overwhelmed in the fight -- firing as
they retreat back into the compound -- and we see REBELS moving
through the bombed out fence -- breaching the perimeter now --

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam, Deng, Nineteen, Marco and the other SPLA soldiers coming into the chapel --

SAM
(to Betty, meaning the children)
Put em in the middle!

Betty and the other woman do exactly that -- they move the children into a tight circle in the center of the room.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Rebels moving through the compound, firing into tukuls and setting everything on fire.

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam, Deng and the other soldiers moving to every available window and returning fire -- Ben starting to open up with the .50 cal --

BBrraaaaapppp! -- BBrraaaaappp!

Spent shells showering down around the children huddled in the middle of the room.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Rebels swarming around the chapel, but reaching a point where they can't advance any further --

-- and we see a rebel squat behind a shed and screw an RPG into a launcher -- he pops up -- levels the launcher at the chapel and --

BBrraaaaapppp!

He's cut down by the .50 cal --

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

-- Ben sweeping the big gun across the compound -- Sam and the others burning through magazines and reloading -- rebels firing back -- Betty and the children crowded on the floor in the middle of this STORM OF GUNFIRE -- and we stay in this little chapel -- watching this last stand -- until we --

CUT TO:

MORNING

And we see the entire orphanage has been razed to the ground. Betty and a few of the children picking through the burned out buildings and torched tukuls, looking for anything salvageable. Deng, Nineteen, and some of the SPLA soldiers loading the corpses of rebels into the back of the truck...

... and now we find Sam staring at the brick chapel in the middle of the compound. The only structure that remains. Everything else -- his entire dream -- in ashes.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

And we see Lynn and Paige pushing a shopping cart down the aisle, past shelves loaded with packaged produce. And we hear BUZZING. Lynn digging the cell phone out of her purse --

LYNN

Hello?

INT. MOTEL - KAMPALA, UGANDA - SAME (DAY)

And we find Sam on the phone in this shitty hotel room, sitting on the edge of the bed. His duffelbag in the corner.

SAM

It's me.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

Lynn immediately senses something wrong.

LYNN

You ok?

INT. MOTEL - KAMPALA, UGANDA - SAME (DAY)

And we see that he's not. This man is empty, alone, defeated.

SAM

They burned it to the ground. All of it.
Ain't nuthin left.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

She hears the anguish in his voice, turns to Paige.

LYNN

Honey, why don't you go get us some
English muffins, k?

Paige runs off and Lynn returns to the phone.

LYNN (CONT'D)
Where are you?

INT. MOTEL - KAMPALA, UGANDA - SAME

SAM
Kampala...

INT. GROCERY STORE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

SAM'S VOICE (O.S.)
... I'm catchin a plane in the mornin.

And we're watching her here, clocking the resignation in his voice. A moment of quiet for both of them. Lynn's eyes welling up, tears falling down her cheeks, sensing the dimensions of his heartache. All she wants to do is bring him home, hold him close, ease his pain... but she knows that's not what he needs... not this man...

INT. MOTEL - KAMPALA, UGANDA - NIGHT

LYNN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Sam?

SAM
Yeah.

LYNN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Can you hear me?

SAM
I can hear you.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

And we see her move around a corner into an empty aisle, away from the other shoppers. And she says...

LYNN
Then quit feelin sorry for yerself. Them children have had their whole lives burned to the ground and worse. How many of them you see givin up?

INT. MOTEL - KAMPALA, UGANDA - SAME

And we watch Sam listening, finding strength in what this woman says next...

LYNN'S VOICE (O.S.)
God gave you purpose, Sam Childers. Now stop yer cryin, get off yer butt and build it again.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

BEGIN SEQUENCE. Giving us a sense that many months are passing.

-- Sam and a crew of DINKA MEN hauling the charred remnants of tukuls and burned building out of the compound on their backs.

-- The remainder of the bamboo fence that once surrounded the orphanage being torn down.

-- Nineteen, Ben, Marco and a few other SPLA soldiers cutting the bush away from the edge of the compound with machetes, clearing the land so the rebels have nowhere to hide.

-- Sam, Deng and the crew of Dinka men digging post holes around the perimeter of the orphanage... sinking metal beams into the holes with cement... then surrounding the compound with heavy gage CHAINLINK FENCE.

-- New DORMS being built from brick. An INFIRMARY. A MESS HALL. SOLDIER'S BARRACKS. And finally, Sam laying the last brick on the chapel in the center of the compound. Completing it.

INT. OFFICE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

A simple administrative office with a short-wave radio and sat phone. Sam here, sitting at a desk when we hear a knock at the door.

SAM

Come on in...

The door opens and we see Deng.

DENG

Preacher, you need to come see this.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Sam following Deng to the center of the compound where we see 5 or 6 Dinka women (including Betty) dressed in colorful robes and headdresses. Maybe 80 children here, quietly sitting in the dirt, watching the women. Nineteen, Ben, Marco and the rest of the SPLA soldiers here too, watching from the side.

SAM

What's goin on?

DENG

The Acholi people were farmers before they were driven from their ancestral homeland. Each year they blessed the soil before a planting.

And now the women begin to move in unison... singing an ancient Acholi song as one of the older orphan boys beats a small drum in accompaniment...

DENG (CONT'D)
 (translating)
 They are saying that fire brings strength
 and ashes abundance...

The women continuing their dance... moving in a tight circle and stomping their feet as they sing...

DENG (CONT'D)
 (translating)
 ... when the land burns, the next year
 the soil produces more...

And now Betty peels away from the group and approaches Sam, talking to him directly in Kiswahili...

DENG (CONT'D)
 (translating)
 ... she says you are a farmer and these
 children are your crops...

Sam looking to the 80 little orphans watching this from the side... and now Betty bends down and scoops up a bit of ashen earth and runs her finger across his forehead, blessing him...

DENG (CONT'D)
 ... and this ground is richer now and
 they will grow stronger because of it.

OFF SAM standing here with his ashen face, staring at these people in front of him -- his African family.

INT. MESS HALL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Days later and we see Sam here with a few SPLA soldiers eating lunch... trying to communicate with them... learning their language... and it's humorous to these guys as Sam tries to pronounce some words in Kiswahili...

And suddenly we hear YELLING coming from outside.

EXT. MESS HALL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Sam coming out fast, sees soldiers pulling open the front gate as THREE pickup trucks speed into the compound -- SPLA military trucks - skidding to a stop.

Sam rushing over as soldiers help two YOUNG BOYS out of one of the trucks... DOMINICK and WALTER... both around 5 years old... completely naked... rail thin... and then a third child is lifted out in a makeshift stretcher -- this is ANGELA -- 10 years old -- cracked black skin stretched over bone. A living skeleton.

INT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

DOORS BANGING OPEN! -- the children hauled into this clinic -- Betty barking orders to the soldiers in Kiswahili -- CONTROLLED CHAOS -- Sam and Deng taking care of Angela -- the worst off -- hooking her up to an IV drip --

-- and Sam at her bedside, holding this little girl's hand, and very slowly her beautiful eyes open and she sees him... and says something in Arabic...

SAM
What is she saying?

DENG
(translating)
She is asking if you are 'The Preacher.'

SAM
(nodding)
Tell her yes.

Angela's skeleton face smiling, struggling to say something else...

DENG
She says she has heard of you, but didn't think you were real.

SAM
Tell her I'm real. Tell her she's safe now.

The little girl hearing this and nodding.

EXT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DUSK

Sam coming out of the infirmary and finding Deng here with a few of the SPLA soldiers who brought the children.

SAM
Where did they find em?

DENG
Outside Adjumani. The LRA is very active in that area.

SAM
What happened?

DENG
Their village was attacked. Everyone was killed except for the girl and her two brothers.

(beat)
They've been in the bush for six weeks. Too terrified to move.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

DAWN

And we see Sam sitting outside the infirmary, exhausted, been here all night waiting. And then the door opens and Betty waves him inside.

INT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAWN

Sam coming up to Angela's bedside, sitting next to her, holding her frail hand and slowly she opens her eyes -- but the sparkle we saw hours earlier has faded. This little girl is dying. And she whispers something to him...

SAM

Tell me what she said.

BETTY

(translating)

She says she and her brothers sang a song while they were hiding.

And softly, with a quavering little voice, Angela begins to sing... and Betty translates as she does...

BETTY (CONT'D)

(translating)

Never stand away from God, never stand away - Hallelujah - 'The Preacher' will protect us one day - Hallelujah, Hallelujah...

And with that Angela's spirit leaves her tiny little body and she dies. Sam frozen at her bedside, unmoving... her bony hand still in his... and we're watching him here... breaking on the inside...

INT. STORAGE ROOM - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

SAM BARGING INTO THIS ROOM! -- a seething fury building in this man as he unlocks a metal cabinet and pulls out an AK 47, clips of ammo, and then the big 50 cal machinegun.

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

Sam walking through the middle of the compound with the heavy weapons. A few of the SPLA soldiers watching him quietly. They know this look. This is a man out for blood. And now we see Deng coming out of a tukul in the b.g., catching up to him...

DENG

Where are you going?

SAM

Adjumani.

DENG

Sam, wait...

SAM

I ain't waitin. You wanna see what waitin gets ya? Take a look in that buildin over there...

Sam reaching the SUV, loading the .50 cal into the back...

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna go get me some souls. One way or the other.

INT. SUV - DRIVING - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAY

*

A CONTINUATION OF SCENE (1)

*

Sam, Deng, Nineteen, Marco, and Ben jammed into the SUV... bombing down this rutted, red dirt road... riding in silence... the plaintive cry of the Acholi WAR SONG playing over.

*

*

*

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAY

And we see the LRA convoy coming up the road. A lead JEEP and a TRANSPORT TRUCK behind it.

INT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

Four CHILD SOLDIERS squatting in the flatbed of this truck carrying AK47's. We recognize one of the boys from the opening scene, the boy who stood over Sam in the dirt. His name is FRANCIS (10 years old).

INT. LRA JEEP - DRIVING - DAY

The two ADULT REBELS smoking and chatting in Arabic as they come around a bend and see the cattle blocking their way. The driver sticking his hand out the window, waving to the transport truck behind him...

INT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - DAY

... and the convoy grinds to a halt. Francis and the other boys looking up the road as the rebel gets out of the Jeep and moves toward the herd, waving his hands, whistling... finally firing his AK into the air and the cattle begin to move...

Slowly revealing...

MARCO in the middle of the road with the RPG -- and --

WHOOOSH! -- the RPG hits the Jeep and it flips over in the EXPLOSION -- THE TRANSPORT TRUCK grinding into REVERSE -- accelerating back up the road --

BBrrraaaappp!

.50 CALIBER MACHINEGUN STRAFE across the front hood -- Francis and the other boys bailing out of the back of the truck -- ADULT REBELS piling out of the cab -- scrambling for cover behind the truck.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAY

Ben firing the .50 CAL -- hitting the transport truck until the engine bursts into flames -- shredding the tires --

EXT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - DAY

Francis and the other child soldiers here with three ADULT REBELS -- crouched behind the truck for cover -- .50 Cal bullets exploding all around them -- the ADULT REBELS returning fire, but the children aren't moving, scared shitless.

Francis peers around the truck and sees Sam fifty yards away, turns to the boys next to him...

FRANCIS
(Arabic)
It's the white preacher!

The other boys reacting, this means something to them. And now one of the ADULT REBEL turns to the children...

ADULT REBEL
STAND UP AND FIGHT!

And he pops up and returns fire, but the boys don't move.

EXT. BUSH - DAY

Sam sprawled in the dirt -- and we see MARCO running up and hitting the ground next to him -- screwing another RPG into his launcher, but Sam waves him off...

SAM
(yelling in Arabic)
Awladi! (children)

Marco hears this, ditches the RPG and picks up his AK.

SAM (CONT'D)
Cover me!

Marco lays down suppression fire as Sam sprints across the road -- gunfire snapping past his head as he runs -- DIVING behind the overturned Jeep and finding himself next to Deng -- neither man acknowledging the other -- silent -- slapping fresh mags into their weapons as --

EXT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - DAY

The adult rebels continue fighting -- alternately popping up from behind the truck and returning fire. The ADULT REBEL realizing that Francis and the other boys still aren't fighting --

ADULT REBEL

Fight you cowards!!!

But Francis and the other boys don't move, and the Adult Rebel keeps shooting until his mag *clicks* empty. He looks around and sees an RPG LAUNCHER on the ground, picks it up, arms it --

EXT. OVERTURNED JEEP - DAY

Sam and Deng behind the Jeep.

DENG

Why don't you just go home?

SAM

What?

DENG

This is not your war.

SAM

You leavin'?

Deng shakes his head --

SAM (CONT'D)

Well then, I ain't leavin' neither...

Sam chambers a round as --

EXT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - SAME

-- the Adult Rebel stands up with the RPG -- *fires!* -- at the same instant Francis shoots him in the head -- he jerks -- *WOOOOOSH!* -- the missile launching at a bad angle as --

-- SAM COMES OUT FROM BEHIND THE JEEP

-- RPG streaking directly at him -- hitting the ground short -- *BA-WHOOM!* -- and he's lifted into the air like a ragdoll -- flipped onto his back in the EXPLOSION and then --

Complete silence. Sam on his back in the dirt. Eyes blinking open. Shell-shocked. Staring up at blue sky as Francis steps into his view holding the smoking machinegun. And now Deng appears next to Sam and helps him to his feet.

And we see the battle is over. The remaining child soldiers slowly emerging from behind the LRA truck... laying down their weapons and walking toward Sam... joining Francis... staring at this white man in front of them...

... and Francis reaches into his pocket and pulls out a FADED PHOTOGRAPH. A picture of him and another boy. His older brother. Standing next to each other smiling.

FRANCIS
(Kiswahili)
Have you seen my brother?

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

80 children laying on the floor on reed mats, getting ready for sleep. And we find Francis in mid-conversation with a young boy named WILLIAM.

FRANCIS
... Where are you from?

WILLIAM
Patonga.

FRANCIS
Were you with the rebels?

William nods. Francis pulls out his photograph.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
Did you know my brother? He was called Christopher.

William studying the photograph...

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
He has a funny left eye. It looks the other way sometimes. Do you remember him?

WILLIAM
No.

Francis folding up the photograph, getting up, moving to another little boy a few feet away... kneeling next to him... and so he continues...

FRANCIS
I am Francis. Were you with the rebels?

EXT. GENERATOR HUT - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

A soldier cuts off the generator and the compound goes black.

INT. TUKUL - NIGHT

And we see Sam on his cot reading The Bible when the light goes out. He torches a small Kerosene lamp and continues reading.

INT. DORM - NIGHT

The children on their mats in the dark now... quiet... a few of the younger ones whimpering, starting to cry... the darkness becoming too much... reminding them of past horrors... and then we hear a FAINT VOICE in this dark room... singing quietly... an ancient African lullaby... and then other little voices joining in... singing this song they all know... a song their mother's once sang to them...

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

... Sam hearing the soft chorus drift across the compound... somehow finding comfort in it too... blowing out the lamp and laying here in the dark... listening to the children sing.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - EARLY MORNING

A SLOW DISSOLVE... life springing up in the camp... daylight breaking... a routine seen here... Betty and the other camp women arriving at the orphanage... cooking fires being lit... soldiers drinking cups of strong coffee, warming themselves after a long night...

... and Sam coming out of his tukul carrying his duffle bag... discovering FRANCIS curled up next to his door, sleeping on a mat in the dirt... been there all night. Francis stirring awake, seeing Sam above him and scrambling to his feet.

SAM
Mornin, buddy.

Francis, no response. Just staring up at him.

SAM (CONT'D)
Ain't you gonna say nuthin?

Francis, nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)
OK then.

And Sam walks across the compound followed by Francis a few paces behind... and he reaches Deng, Betty, Nineteen, and a few of the other volunteers waiting by the truck...

DENG
(meaning Francis)
Looks like you've got yourself a
bodyguard.

SAM
Guess I do.

Sam tosses his bag into the back, says goodbye to everyone...

SAM (CONT'D)

Take care of things while I'm gone, ok?

DENG

I will, Preacher.

They shake hands and Sam gets into the truck... and we see Francis already here, sitting in the backseat.

SAM

You can't come with me, buddy.

But Francis isn't moving... and finally Deng reaches in and grabs him... tries to pull him out but he fights back... yelling something in Arabic as Deng drags him out of the truck...

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

Sam turning around in his seat as we pull away from the compound... and he sees Francis still struggling in Deng's arms... and finally he breaks free and SPRINTS for the truck as it drives off... fast as he can... chasing Sam until he no longer can.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

A blistering cold, late December Sunday. And we hear a crowd of people coming from inside the church, responsive, "Hallelujah!"... and then Sam's voice over it all...

SAM (O.S.)

In your ~~actions~~ you give service to the Lord...

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - SAME

Sam at the lectern in mid-sermon. There is an air of Fire and Brimstone to what we're watching here... electric... the congregation listening in rapt attention...

SAM

... he's not interested in your good thoughts... he don't care bout your good intentions... Romans chapter 12, verse 1, "I appeal to you brethern, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies in sacrifice, wholly and completely to God, which is your spiritual service."

Ad-libbed SHOUTS and PRAISE... and now we see Lynn, Daisy, Delane and Paige (10) in the congregation listening...

SAM (CONT'D)

He wants action! He wants your hands --
your backs -- your sweat -- YOUR BLOOD TO
POUR INTO THE FOUNDATION THAT WILL BUILD
UP HIS KINGDOM AND SPREAD HIS WORD
THROUGH THE DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD!

The congregation ERUPTS in *Hallelujahs!* as we go --

INT. HALLWAY/BASEMENT - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

Lynn and Sam walking through the facility, and we see this place is alive with activity. More than just a church, this is a community center. Lynn opening a door and we see a Volunteer here with a dozen little children running around this playroom...

LYNN

We started daycare last month. Monday thru Friday from 8 to 2... Sundays after first worship for a few hours if anybody needs it. How you doin, Sue?

VOLUNTEER

Good. Hey Reverend.

SAM

Sue.

Lynn pulling the door closed and they continue... moving down a set of stairs to the basement where we see children and parents... some of them playing ping-pong and air hockey... others in a corner rehearsing for a Christmas play...

LYNN

... Kristy Fiscus is doin an after school program for some of the older kids...

Moving through the room... AD-LIBBED greetings from some of the adults...

LYNN (CONT'D)

... and Thursdays we got an adult bible study that Clare Welage is leadin...

INT. OFFICE - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Lynn and Sam enter, and we see another Volunteer here working.

LYNN

Becca, you mind if we kick you outta here for a minute?

VOLUNTEER

Course not, gotta scoot anyway.

Grabbing her things, moving toward the door, kissing Lynn on the cheek...

LYNN

Thank you, sweetie...

REBECCA

Ya'll have a good day.

And she exits. Sam moving to a window, looking out over the church property.

SAM

Been thinkin we should build a mess of cabins in the woods back there. Could do retreats in Summer. Maybe have Billy Crouch do somethin with music.

LYNN

We can't build anymore. Not for awhile.

SAM

Youth camp would be good for the kids, Lynn.

LYNN

We can't afford it.

SAM

You said Sundays has been full.

LYNN

Turn outs been good, but that don't mean people is givin money. Everybody is hurtin around here, Sam. Economy is in trouble, construction business is slow, Bender layed off 200 employees last week. Times is tight.

SAM

I need money for the orphanage.

LYNN

Sam, we don't have it. Orphanage already cost us twice what we figured. Rest of what we had in savings went into finishing Shekinah Fellowship. I'm barely gonna make the mortgage this month as it is. You're gonna have to wait.

SAM

Ain't about me waitin, Lynn. Them kids need things.

LYNN

Sam, we can't. Not right now. We just don't got the money.

Off Sam, doesn't like being told no.

INT. PAIGE'S ROOM - CHILDERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Sam on the edge of Paige's bed, reading her the CHILDREN'S BOOK we remember.

SAM

(reading)

But the Mayor said no to the money they spoke, and the Piper thought it was no joke. 'If you folks put me in a passion, I'll use my pipe in another fashion.'

PAIGE

You gonna be home for awhile?

SAM

Yep.

PAIGE

(excited)

Really? Promise?

SAM

I promise. Now you want me to keep readin or not?

Paige nods, and Sam continues...

SAM (CONT'D)

(reading)

"And once more he stept into the street and blew three notes which were so sweet...

(page)

And out came the children runnin, all the little boys and girls, with sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls. Tripping and skipping the sons and daughters, following the Piper to the ragin waters.

(page)

And to a place where honey-bees had lost their stings and horses were born with eagle's wings."

PAIGE

He took all them babies away?

Sam nodding.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Come nobody went and got them back?

Sam, no response. Just sitting here lost for a moment. This children's story resonating for him.

INT. CAR DEALERSHIP - JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

We see four or five gleaming sedans on the showroom floor.

INT. OFFICE - CAR DEALERSHIP - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

Sam in a chair in this large office. BILL WALLACE sitting behind a desk, late 40's, gold Rolex, tan even though it's the middle of winter.

BILL

... from what I heard, you built yourself one helluva church over there in Central City.

SAM

Still got a ways to go, but we're gettin there. You and the family should come on by one of these Sundays.

BILL

That's nice of you, but we're at Calvary now. Bit more our speed over there I think.

Sam, getting down to business...

SAM

Bill, I'm here cause I wanna talk to you about what we're doin over there in Africa.

BILL

The kids. The orphanage. Course I know what you're doin for them folks over there and I think it's real nice.

SAM

We done some good so far. Got ourselves about 80 children livin on the compound now...

BILL

That's just terrific...

SAM

... feed another hundred, hundred-fifty from nearby villages every day...

BILL

Fantastic. Should be proud of what you're doin, makin a difference like that.

SAM

Thank you, but I'm gonna be straight with ya. We're hurtin for money...

Bill feeling the rub, shaking his head...

BILL

Sam, look, everybody is feelin the pinch around here.

SAM

I hear that, but you gotta understand that them kids over there got nuthin. I mean nuthin, Bill.

BILL

How much you lookin for?

SAM

Five thousand dollars.

BILL

Jesus Christ, Sam! Five thousand dollars?

SAM

That keeps them doors open for another six months, feeds them kids, buys me a new generator which is sorely needed.

BILL

People are losin their jobs left and right. Tough to be askin for five thousand dollars to buy a generator for a buncha African children half-way around the world when people ain't even sure how they're gonna put dinner on the table.

Sam shifting, not giving up, coming at him another way...

SAM

You're right. We got problems right here. But if you could see these kids, Bill. I'm talkin about little boys and girls bout the age of your kids right now with no shoes on their feet when I get em. Naked. Billies stickin out to here cause they haven't eaten in weeks, their parents killed, villages burned to the ground. And some of them boys, young ones, them child soldiers, forced to do things you and I can't even imagine.

(BEAT)

"Hell" would be too kind a word for this place, Bill. That orphanage is the last hope these kids got at anything worthwhile in this life.

Bill staring at him, saying nothing, on the spot. Sam hoping that somehow he's reached this man. And finally Bill stands up...

BILL

Alright, tell you what, lemme see what I can do.

Sam feeling this victory, flashing a smile, shaking Bill's hand.

SAM

Ok.

BILL

Why don't you and the family come over to the house next Sunday. We're throwin a little Superbowl deal over there, ok?

SAM

Sounds good.

INT. SHED - CHILDERS HOUSE - DAY

Sam working on his Harley. Delane entering in the b.g.

DELANE

What'cha workin on, buddy?

SAM

Intake ain't suckin like it should. She's poppin on me.

Delane moving next to him, helping him fix the bike.

DELANE

That should do it, she'll get plenty of air now.

(beat, something on his mind)

Can I talk to you about somethin?

SAM

Shoot.

DELANE

I'm glad I'm walkin with the Lord and all, but sometimes I ain't sure I'm gonna be able to do what he wants me to do.

SAM

I hear you, buddy. But I can tell you one thing, the Lord don't ask for nuthin you can't deliver.

Delane hearing this and for the moment finding solace in his words.

SAM (CONT'D)

Why don't we pray together.

And they both take a knee, bowing their heads as Sam continues...

SAM (CONT'D)

Heavenly Father, look down on us, your servants, and bless us with the strength to carry on in your name. And grant us, in our darkest hours, the warmth of your loving salvation and the understandin that you are always by our side.

And we leave these two men, their heads bowed in quiet supplication, next to this Harley, praying for strength.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Upscale French provincial in suburban Johnstown. A party is underway. 15 or 20 couples here with their kids, two flatscreens playing Superbowl pre-game, a handful of waiters in white-tie offering champagne and hors d'oeuvres to the guests.

DOOR BELL RINGING -- and we see a perky woman in her late 40's coming through the crowd, blonde hair from a bottle, accessorized to the hilt, holding a glass of white wine. SHANNON WALLACE. She opens the door to find Sam, Lynn, and Paige standing in the doorway.

SHANNON

Well, come on in...

And they enter... Lynn smiling awkwardly, dressed in the same yellow dress we saw her in previously... her only dress... and Sam looking around this enormous room...

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Ya'll must be the Childers. Welcome. I'm Shannon, Bill's ball-n-chain.

Smiling, a joke she loves...

LYNN

I'm Lynn, this here is Sam, our daughter Paige.

SHANNON

Good to meet you.

VOICE (O.S.)

There he is!

Everybody turning to see the car dealer coming through the crowd, smiling, a little drunk. AD-LIBBED introductions and then...

BILL

Glad ya'll could make it. Get on in here and meet some people...

Bill ushering them deeper into the house... quick intros to a few guests as they pass... Sam, Lynn, and Paige taking it all in... starting to sense the dimensions of this massive house... the waiters in their pressed jackets offering them food... the extravagance... like nothing they've ever seen...

... and Bill pulling Sam off from the crowd so it's just the two of them... taking an envelope from his jacket and handing it to him...

BILL (CONT'D)

This is a little somethin for the kids, ok? What we were talking about.

SAM

Thank you, Bill.

BILL

Forget it. Now c'mon, kick-offs in about
20 minutes. You want a mojito or
somethin?

INT. BATHROOM - SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Sam coming into this bathroom and locking the door... taking the
envelope out of his pocket and tearing it open... pulling out a
personal check -- CLOSE UP to see it's in the amount of \$150

HOLD ON Sam face, and it's disgust we see in his eyes.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Front door opening fast and Lynn and Paige coming out, followed by
Sam, pushing them along...

LYNN

Sam...

PAIGE

Why we leavin so soon?

Shannon appearing in the doorway in the b.g., calling after...

SHANNON

Everything alright?...

Lynn turning to respond, but Sam keeps her moving forward, down the
driveway, past the line of parked BMW's and Mercedes to their truck
at the curb...

SAM

Get in the car.

LYNN

What's wrong?

As they load into the truck...

SAM

Sonuvabitch is cryin pour-mouth to me and
he's livin in the damn Taj Mahal...

LYNN

Sam...

SAM

I asked him for \$5000 to feed a buncha
motherless babies and you know what he
gave me?

(taking out the check,
wadding it up)

Hundred and fifty dollars. That's it.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Handed it to me like it was gold
bouillon! Sonuvabitch spent more than
that on salsa for his party.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - DAY

-- Sam still enraged, moving through the house, sees a bookshelf full of collectables, the color TV, the leather sofa, at the "luxurious" life he's built. And his eyes fall on his gun cabinet, his impressive collection of firearms... mind turning... coming to a decision here... reaching up and grabbing a hidden key, unlocking it...

LYNN

What are you doin?

SAM

I've had it with these people and all
their bullshit about wantin to help...

And he starts pulling out weapons... shotguns and assault rifles... stuffing them into an oversize gun bag...

LYNN

Sam Childers...

Lynn reaching for him and he grabs her wrist... tightly... staring at her with dark eyes. A flash of the "old" Sam Childers here when he says...

SAM

Stay outta my way.

And for the first time in years this woman is scared. He lets go of her wrist and continues to fill the bag -- and we go --

INT. LYNN'S CAR - DAY

Sam driving fast. The gun bag resting on the seat next to him.

INT. PAWN SHOP - JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Sam's guns laid out in rows on the glass counter top. Superbowl on a shitty Zenith in the b.g. The SHOP OWNER picking up a few of the rifles and inspecting them...

SHOP OWNER

Ain't gonna be able to give you what
these is worth.

SAM

How much?

SHOP OWNER

Got papers for all of em?

SAM

Sure do.

SHOP OWNER

I can do two thousand for the bunch.

SAM

I need at least five grand.

SHOP OWNER

Twenty-five hundred and that's the best I can do.

EXT. PAWN SHOP - JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Sam coming out followed by the Shop Owner, motioning to Lynn's car parked at the curb.

SAM

Throw in the car for five.

The Shop Owner considering, as we go...

EXT. ROAD - PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Windy, pissing rain. And we see Sam walking up this rural road, hands in his pockets, head down trying to beat this fucking cold... the only human for miles... trudging through this shitstorm completely alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

And we see Sam with a group of men working in the sweltering heat... laying brick... adding another room to the children's dorm...

... and he squints into the distance, sees a cloud of dust on the horizon, cars coming closer.

EXT. MAIN GATE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Seven or eight heavily armed vehicles coming through the gate. Maybe 20 or 30 SPLA soldiers guarding a black SUBURBAN in the middle of this motorcade.

Palpable excitement through the compound... Sam's soldiers suddenly snapping to attention, grabbing their weapons and forming a ragged line near the Suburban... clearly they know who has arrived.

And the back door to the Suburban opens and a black man steps out, maybe 6'3", 280 lbs., dressed in shirtsleeves and slacks. The same man we saw giving the fiery speech on the little outdoor TV in Nimule earlier -- JOHN GARANG.

Sam turns to Deng --

SAM

Who's this guy?

DENG

That is John Garang. He is the founder of the SPLA. Our leader.

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANGE - DAY

Sam and Garang walking through the middle of camp, trailed by a squad of SPLA bodyguards and camp children...

GARANG

They call you Preacher. Is this what I should call you?

SAM

Sam is fine.

GARANG

I hear what you have done for the SPLA and I am grateful.

SAM

We can thank God for his blessings.

GARANG

Yes, we can. How many children do you look after, Sam?

SAM

Couple hundred with us here. Feed another thousand a day from nearby villages. Anyone who shows up hungry gets a meal.

And they continue through the camp. A few of the children running up to Garang, touching the cuff of his shirt, then sprinting away...

GARANG

What you are doing is noble, but too dangerous. I must advise you to stop risking your life in our struggle.

SAM

Until someone starts fightin the fight for these children, I'm the one that's gonna do it.

GARANG

You are stubborn, aren't you?

SAM

As a mule.

Garang smiling, an instant affinity between these two men.

GARANG

You and I come from very different worlds, but we are not so dissimilar.

And another child runs up to Garang, touching him, and then sprints away giggling...

GARANG (CONT'D)

That sound, children laughing, is what they want to destroy.

(beat)

The Muslim north has used Joseph Kony as their hatchet man for decades. His rebels have decimated the Acholi people. Of course the government in Khartoum denies any affiliation with this madman, but it's true. They give him safe haven, provide him with food and even the weapons he uses to destroy the Christian South. It is their hope that Kony will break them, drive them off, kill their spirit by ruining their flesh. But they are wrong. The will of people to be free is unassailable.

More children running up... Garang touching their heads...

GARANG (CONT'D)

I founded the SPLA in order to fight for the future of Sudan because nobody else was doing it. We fight for freedom, for the right to vote, and for the right to worship any god you may choose.

(beat)

But most important to me is our fight for the children. Their laughter. That sound has been lost to this country for far too long.

SAM

It's the sound of God's joy on this earth.

GARANG

This is true.

(beat)

There are Peace Talks scheduled for the end of August in Naivashu. I'd like you to come as my guest. We need more men of conviction like you fighting this fight.

SAM

Thank you.

And now we see that they have arrived back at the motorcade. Garang turning to him, eyes suddenly turning dark...

GARANG

There is a cost for freedom, Sam. A price for the future of these people. Some pay with their lives, others pay in different ways.

(beat)

My only hope is that your cost is not too great.

AND SUDDENLY WE'RE SOMEPLACE FAR AWAY... ANOTHER WORLD... THE SILHOUETTES OF ANIMALS DANCING ON A DARK CEILING... PROJECTED FROM A CHILD'S NIGHTLIGHT... WE ARE...

INT. PAIGE'S ROOM - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Delane tucking Paige into bed, making it up as he goes, clearly out of his depth here but wanting to do it right.

DELANE

You say prayers or somethin?

PAIGE

Already did.

DELANE

Ok then, sweet dreams.

PAIGE

Ain't you gonna read me a book?

DELANE

Ahh, Paige, you know I don't read so good.

PAIGE

Then let's play a game.

DELANE

Ok.

PAIGE

I'm thinkin of a dog.

DELANE

What about it?

PAIGE

Never mind, Delane.

DELANE

Ok.

PAIGE

Dad usually kisses me on the forehead before he leaves. You can do that.

DELANE

Sure I can.

And Delane does just that, bends down and kisses Paige on the head...

DELANE (CONT'D)

Sweet dreams.

And now we see Lynn in the hallway having just witnessed this through the cracked door, keenly feeling Sam's absence in this moment.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

And we see Sam leading a group of children, their hands covering their eyes so they can't see, into a clearing behind one of the dorms.

SAM

Keep em closed! A little bit more!

(Arabic)

Eyes closed!

The children inching forward, following his voice, until...

SAM (CONT'D)

Ok, stop! Open your eyes!

And we see a hundred little eyes popping open, staring at something off screen, confused for a split second at what they're looking at.

REVERSE to see a PLAYGROUND: two or three battered swingsets, a few see-saws, and a jungle gym soldered out of metal pipe.

And the kids SPRINTING for it, climbing all over the jungle gym like ants... hitting the swing-sets... and then we hear it... something we realize we haven't heard in this place before... the sound of laughter... children losing themselves in play. Innocence flooding back.

And now we see Ben, Nineteen, and a few of the other SPLA soldiers standing around a BUNNY BOUNCER... staring at it quizzically... talking in Arabic trying to decide what this thing is... and then Ben, the bravest, slings his AK onto his back and carefully straddles the bouncer... pulling up his long legs and resting his feet on the pegs...

And he begins to bob back and forth... holding onto the bunny's ears with his big hands... the other soldiers starting to laugh as he bobs faster... and then we see Ben's smile... a million watt smile on this guy... the first time he's played like this since he was a boy.

EXT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY - LATER

Hours later. Sam and Deng watching the children still playing.

DENG

Some of the child soldiers say there is a bounty on your life. That Kony is offering money for your nose and ears.

Sam, no reaction.

DENG (CONT'D)

I'd like to assign a few more men to you during the day.

SAM

That sonuvabitch ain't the first one who ever wanted my head hangin on his wall. Keep your men where they're needed. With the children.

Deng clearly worried for his friend, but doesn't press the issue. And now Sam notices Francis off from the group, sitting on the ground by himself, not playing.

SAM (CONT'D)

He said anything yet?

DENG

All we know is that his family was killed and that he and his brother were taken into the LRA.

SAM

Where's the brother?

DENG

Nobody knows.

NEW ANGLE

Sam approaching Francis, kneeling down next to him.

SAM

Hey buddy, you don't wanna play with the other kids?

Francis, no response.

SAM (CONT'D)

You know sometimes it helps to tell somebody what you got locked up inside. That way you ain't alone with the thing all by yourself, know what I mean?

Francis, no reaction whatsoever. Something dawning on Sam in this moment...

SAM (CONT'D)

You have no idea what I'm sayin, do you?

Francis just stares back at him and Sam realizes he doesn't speak English.

And they both just sit here for a moment, silent, staring at the children playing on the playground. And then Sam, feeling the need to unburden himself, begins to talk...

SAM (CONT'D)

I done a lotta things I ain't proud of. Hurt a lotta people. Truth is I haven't been a very good husband and I ain't much of a father to my little girl at home neither. Helpin you kids is about the only good thing I ever done in this life.

Francis watching him quietly.

SAM (CONT'D)

But I'm scared. Not of all the shootin or the killin, but of givin up. I'm scared one day I'll just make up some excuse as to why I can't keep doin all this and just quit. Close my eyes to all I've seen over here and make it somebody else's problem. Like everybody else in this world.

(beat)

That's what terrifies me the most.

And he stops and it's silent between them again. Francis just sitting there quietly. And Sam looks up to the sky... feeling his life washing over him... his burden... this fear.

EXT. SUV - DAY

And we see the SUV parked on the edge of a dry ravine. Deng, Nineteen, Marco and Ben waiting inside the truck as Sam looks through binoculars, scanning the riverbed below.

SAM

I can't see nuthin.

Deng checking a handheld GPS unit --

DENG

This is it.

SAM'S BINOCULAR POV -- and we see movement at the bottom of the ravine.

SAM

Hold on...

Sam brings the binocs into focus and we see CHILDREN hiding behind a bush.

SAM (CONT'D)

I got em.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

And we see the SUV picking it's way down the rocky slope... reaching the dry riverbed below and moving closer to the children...

EXT. SUV - DAY

... and the terrain becomes inaccessible and the SUV stops. Unable to go any further. Sam and the others getting out of the truck and we see two children hiding behind a bush 50 yards away. Sam WHISTLING to the kids, but they draw back. Too scared to move.

SAM

Deng, tell camp we're comin back with two. Ben, Nineteen -- go get them kids.

Ben and Nineteen move off as Sam pops the rear hatch on the SUV and pulls out a MEDICAL BAG.

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Ben and Nineteen moving over rocks toward the children, calling out to them in Kiswahili -- "Come out, we won't hurt you." -- but they don't move...

... and finally they reach the kids and we see it's two boys (6 years old), kneeling in the dirt, terrified...

BEN

Don't be scared.

He smiles, reaches for one of the boys -- and --

-- A SHOT RINGS OUT!

-- A BULLET hits Ben in the neck, killing him instantly.

Nineteen dives behind a boulder for cover.

EXT. SUV - DAY

Sam, Deng, and Marco scramble behind the SUV. A moment before we hear Nineteen YELLING offscreen.

SAM

What's he sayin?

DENG

Ben is dead.

SAM

Shit.

(beat)

Tell him to stay where he is. Don't move.

Deng yelling to Nineteen in Kiswahili.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ask him if he saw the shooter.

Deng yelling. Nineteen responds.

DENG

He did not see.

SNIPER SCOPE POV -- and we see Ben's lifeless body lying by the children... and the SUV... and then part of Sam's head peering from behind the truck --

EXT. SUV - DAY

Sam looking through binocs as --

-- A SHOT RINGS OUT! -- hitting the windshield right next to his head, and he drops behind the truck.

SAM

You see him?

DENG

Yes.

Sam reaches up and snaps off one of the truck's sideview mirrors. He holds it around the side of the truck and is able to see the reflection of the ravine cliff in the distance.

DENG (CONT'D)

He's on the ridge. Just below that outcropping.

Sam tilting the mirror, adjusting the reflection -- sees the outcropping.

SAM

You think it's too far for an RPG?

DENG

Yes.

SAM

Can you reach the Browning?

Deng opening the rear door and reaching inside the truck... pulling out a long barrel HUNTING RIFLE as...

-- A SHOT RINGS OUT!

The bullet hitting the SUV, narrowly missing Deng. He slides the HUNTING RIFLE to Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

Need you boys to cover me on three, alright? Deliver everything you got into that rock up there.

SNIPER SCOPE POV -- locked on the SUV when suddenly -- Deng and Marco pivot around the truck and start firing -- bullets popping all around and the SCOPE POV drops for cover as --

EXT. SUV - DAY

-- Sam SPRINTS over the rocks and dives into a shallow ditch out of sight. Deng and Marco stop firing and drop back behind the SUV.

SNIPER SCOPE POV -- slowly pops up from behind the rocks after the shooting stops. And we realize he didn't see Sam change positions.

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Sam rolling onto his stomach and slowly sliding the barrel of the rifle between two rocks... peering through the scope to see a sliver of the SNIPER hidden on the ridge.

SNIPER SCOPE POV -- still locked on the SUV, waiting for a clear shot.

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Sam zeroing in on the Sniper, but at this range the image is hazy and the scope dances. This shot is going to take instinct. Sam turns his head away from the rifle and exhales -- controls his breathing -- as we go --

SNIPER SCOPE POV -- trained on the SUV... and then we see a *FLASH* from the right side of the screen... and a delayed *POP!*...

CRACKKK! -- THE SCOPE SPLINTERS INTO PIECES

The Sniper killed.

EXT. SUV - DAY

Deng looking through binocs at the ridge --

DENG
(calling out to Sam)
I think you got him!

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Sam, Deng, and Marco moving toward the children, weapons drawn, scanning the area in all directions. Deng is the first one to reach the boys who are huddled on the ground, shaking from fear...

DENG
(Kiswahili)
It is ok. You can get up now.

But the boys don't move... and Deng reaches down, pulls them to their feet and we see that their ankles are chained to a post which has been buried in the ground.

DENG (CONT'D)

Sam.

Sam joins Deng, sees the chains.

DENG (CONT'D)

LRA wanted us here.

Sam realizing that these children were used as bait -- for him.

EXT. RAVINE RIDGE - DAY

We're at the top of the ravine now and we see the SUV coming closer. Sam and the others popping out of the truck and moving toward the location of the SNIPER...

... and Sam is the first to reach the body... laying on the ground face down... a pool of blood soaking the dirt underneath... and he rolls the body onto it's back and we see it's just a kid -- no older than 13 years old.

ON SAM as he stares down at this young boy, a child he killed. And it looks like a grenade has gone off inside this man.

EXT. NIMULE - SUDAN, AFRICA - DAY

We're hit by a crush of people, a thousand black faces moving past us and all the noise and confusion of this busy border town. And we find Sam, Deng, and Nineteen here loading supplies into the back of the SUV.

VOICE (O.S.)

They talk about you...

Sam turning to find Agnete, the aid worker, approaching him.

AGNETE

In the camps. The children. They say there is a white preacher who hunts the LRA. This place does not need more guns, Mr. Childers. More killing.

SAM

I'm just tryin to help the children. Same as you.

AGNETE

War upon war does not fix what is broken here. The history of Sudan is filled with *righteous killers*. That is how it always begins, with men thinking they are killing for the *right reasons*.

SAM

I got a 200 kids who are gonna sleep safe tonight and wake up tomorrow mornin to a bowl of hot food. Right or not, that's all the reason I need.

AGNETE

Do not delude yourself. You're a mercenary, not a humanitarian. You'll bring more harm to these children by doing what you're doing.

Sam struck by what she has said, wondering if she may be right. Slamming the lift-gate closed on the truck, finished with this conversation.

SAM

You fight the evil in this place your way, I'll fight it mine.

Sam getting in the truck...

AGNETE

They say you are doing good. That you have special powers. That you are protected by angels and cannot be killed by bullets.

Sam looking at her and there's a warning in what she says next... about violence corrupting men... consuming them...

AGNETE (CONT'D)

They said the same thing about Kony in the beginning.

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

It's late at night and we see Sam on his cot, sitting here in the dark. And we hear the sound of his satellite phone vibrating on the table next to him. He picks it up, sees DELANE'S name on the screen...

SAM

(into phone)

Hello?

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - PENNSYLVANIA - SAME

Delane on a couch by himself...

DELANE

Sam, it's me.

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - SAME

SAM
Everybody ok?

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - PENNSYLVANIA - SAME

DELANE
Oh yeah, everybody's just fine. I was
just callin to say 'hey' is all.

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - SAME

Sam quiet.

DELANE'S VOICE
What'cha doin, ole buddy?

SAM
Just sittin here.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - PENNSYLVANIA - SAME

And it's silent between them for a beat. Finally...

DELANE
Ask you a question?

SAM'S VOICE
Yeah.

DELANE
You think God will forgive us for the
things we've done?

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - SAME

And we're watching Sam, this question hitting him like a freight train. Unable to answer. The vision of the young boy he killed -- the sniper -- flashing in his mind.

EXT. NAIVASHA LODGE - LAKE NAIVASHA, KENYA - DAY

A sprawling, upscale retreat on the banks of Lake Naivasha. Lush green landscaping, Mount Longonot rising up through the mist in the b.g... and incongruously, UN PEACEKEEPERS, in their blue-cyan helmets, stationed around this compound.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NAIVASHA LODGE - NAIVASHA, KENYA - DAY

Maybe 50 or 60 well dressed men sitting at tables in this enormous room, representatives from every country on the African continent as well as a few American and European delegates. A sign above a dais reads, "African Peace Summit, 2005"

And we see Sam, the only "non-official" at these talks, sitting at a table in the back, listening to a GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN (GOS) DELEGATE.

GOS DELEGATE

It is our suggestion, pursuant to the Nakuru Document presented to this roundtable in 2003, that revenue for South Sudan be based on a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product as opposed to an outright share of crude oil monies.

And now we see JOHN GARANG at a table with other members of the Southern Sudan delegation... and one of his REPRESENTATIVES responds...

SOUTH SUDAN DELEGATE

Who would not like to control the purse strings? Of course this means the Government of South Sudan must trust what is happening in Khartoum... and this is simply too much for you to ask of us in the South.

GOS DELEGATE

We have already invested in the oil fields and attracted significant foreign investment. Certainly this should be taken into consideration.

SOUTH SUDAN DELEGATE

Invested in oilfields which are rightly Southern -- and which have already, for the last decade, been exploited without our consent.

And now a MODERATOR interrupts, stopping this debate...

MODERATOR

Gentlemen, in an effort to keep these talks on track I must open this topic up to others in the room who may have something to say...

And now we see Sam moving to his feet...

SAM

I'd like to talk.

Heads turning in his direction, staring at this white man in shirtsleeves...

MODERATOR

Yes sir, what delegation are you with?

SAM

I ain't here with no group or delegation. I'm just a small town preacher from Pennsylvania and ya'll don't know me from Adam. But I been in Sudan goin on five years now, and I seen enough to have something to say.

Garang settling into his chair, eager for what's coming.

SAM (CONT'D)

Now I been here since yesterday cause I thought this was gonna be a talk about peace, but so far all I heard is a buncha yappin about oil and money sharin.

MODERATOR

(interrupting)

Sir, these discussions are for...

VOICE

Let him speak!

Everyone turning to see Garang standing across the room...

GARANG

This man has a voice -- just like every other man and woman on this continent -- and it deserves to be heard.

The room quiet, and slowly he sits down and Sam continues...

SAM

The way I see it everybody in this room, Americans too, is so blinded by greed and politics that you ain't seein what's happenin right under your noses.

And he begins to walk through this delegation...

SAM (CONT'D)

When are you gonna start talkin about the killin? That's what I wanna know. I come to this place to hear what we're gonna do -- what y'all is gonna do as leaders -- to save the children who are being slaughtered every day in Sudan and Northern Uganda. But so far you ain't said nuthin worth hearin.

Angle Garang, quietly pleased at Sam's indictment of this room.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sometimes I can forget what I'm doin in this place too.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Even where I am, where there is little girls and boys with no lips or ears. And women who got no breasts cause they been hacked-off in the middle of the night by LRA rebels. Even I can find myself believing that suffering is just part of this world and there ain't a whole lot you can do about it 'cept maybe pray and go about your day... worrying about money... or oil... or politics... or whatever the hell else got you all worked up.

(beat)

That's why I keep this in my pocket...

Sam pulling a piece of paper out of his pocket... unfolding it to see it's a PHOTOGRAPH OF JOSEPH KONY.

SAM (CONT'D)

This here is Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army. Now I keep this picture with me so as I can remind myself that evil has a face. Kony and his army have butchered 400,000 innocent men, women, and children. Stolen over 40,000 babies and forced them to do unspeakable things. Vile things. Boiled their mommies and daddies in cooking pots and made em eat the flesh. Forced little girls no older than five years old to have sex with adult men. This man right here...

Sam holding the picture up so everyone can see --

SAM (CONT'D)

So if you didn't know his face before, now you do. And if you're sittin here listenin to me then you know the evil he's done.

(beat)

Now I'm just an ignorant hillbilly from central City. I don't got no education or money and I don't give a darn about runnin for any kind of office. And maybe cause of all those things I can see what ya'll can't. Cause it's real simple from where I stand...

And we realize he's talking directly to us -- to you -- the reader of this screenplay -- the audience of this movie -- when he says:

SAM (CONT'D)

(to camera)

Every one of you in this room is guilty the next time a baby dies cause this monster is still walkin free. Cause now you know. And if you don't do nuthin about it, then all that blood is on your hands.

Sam letting it sink in... the room dead silent... and then he carefully folds up the photograph and slips it back into his pocket.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ya'll have a nice oil talk.

And he walks out.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM - NAIVASHA, KENYA - DAY

Sam coming down this hallway fast... and we see Garang pushing through a door in the b.g., catching up to him.

GARANG

Preacher! -- Wait! --

Garang reaching him but Sam doesn't stop...

GARANG (CONT'D)

You have made them terribly upset. I knew it was right for you to come.

SAM

That's a waste of time in there. You can't talk about peace, you gotta go out and make it.

GARANG

I don't argue with you there, my friend. We pray for peace, but keep our rifles ready for war.

Sam finally stopping, looking to Garang, seeing the conviction and fire in this man.

GARANG (CONT'D)

We must fight them at every level for our freedom. Part of my war is waged in rooms like that. You keep doing what you're doing and maybe together we can make Sudan free once again.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

Dark. Packed with parents and small children sitting on folding chairs watching a NATIVITY PLAY... small wise-men in their handsewn robes shuffling across the stage... lines being spoken by rote... the awkward entrance of "Joseph" and "Mary"...

And now we see Lynn standing near the back of the hall, videotaping the production... and suddenly she grabs her stomach in pain... one of the parents next to her looking in her direction -- "you ok?" -- Lynn waving it off, forcing a smile -- and then --

SLAM! -- she doubles over -- falling into a chair and hitting the ground *hard* -- audience **REACTING** -- *shock!* -- people urgently moving next to her, "Call 911!"

INT. CLINIC WAITING ROOM - PITTSBURGH, PENN. - DAY

We see Lynn and three or four other women here waiting.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - PITTSBURGH, PENN - DAY

Lynn in the middle of a gynecological exam, laying on a table in a paper gown with her feet in stirrups. A DOCTOR sits between her legs using metal obstetric equipment.

DOCTOR

You're gonna feel some pressure here...

And Lynn winces... tears rolling down her cheeks... suffering the pain and indignity of this examination all alone. And finally the Doctor finishes, snaps off his gloves.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Ok, all done.

LYNN

What's wrong with me?

DOCTOR

I need to do some more test, but it looks like your ovaries are necrotic.

LYNN

What does that mean?

DOCTOR

It means they're diseased, Mrs. Childers. They're gonna have to be removed. Along with part of your uterus.

Lynn hearing this... the weight of it coming down on her in this moment... closing her eyes as we...

MATCH CUT TO:

SAM'S CLOSED EYES -- SOUND ASLEEP --

And suddenly **POUNDING** at the door to his tukul, snapping him awake...

EXT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam coming out, finding Deng and Nineteen here.

SAM

What's goin on?

DENG

An LRA convoy has moved north over the border heading for Ed Duim.

SAM

What's Ed Duim?

Deng and Nineteen share a quick look --

DENG

It's a place in Sudan where children are sold on the black market.

(grim, final)

There is no return from Ed Duim.

EXT. DIRT ROAD -- DEEP IN SUDAN - NIGHT

A moonless night... and we see headlights piercing this blackness... a caravan of three LRA vehicles... two lead PICKUP TRUCKS and a TRANSPORT TRUCK bouncing over this rutted road... and suddenly...

WOOOOOSH! -- WOOOOOSH!

Two PHOSPHOROUS STREAKS cutting the dark -- RPS's -- hitting the lead pickups simultaneously -- KABOOM! -- lifting the PICKUPS into the air end-over-end.

THE TRANSPORT TRUCK

Grinding to a stop. Rebels jumping out of the cab, firing into the black, shooting blind, can't see anything -- but we see --

SILHOUETTES MOVING

Through the darkness -- Sam and his men -- like specters -- flanking the remaining rebels and cutting them down before they even knew what hit them. And then there's a great stillness. The quiet of death...

... and Sam coming out of the blackness with his AK leveled... moving toward the flaming wreckage of the caravan... Deng, Nineteen, Marco and two other SPLA soldiers moving to each rebel body... making sure they're dead.

NINETEEN

Clear!

Sam and Deng moving to the back of the Transport Truck...

SAM

Bring me a flashlight.

Marco hustling up with a spotlight -- Sam switching it on as Deng rips the canvas back and we see --

TWENTY THREE CHILDREN IN THE BACK OF THIS TRANSPORT TRUCK

Boys and girls... none of them older than twelve... tied together with rope... emaciated... terrified... in very bad shape. Marco saying something fast in Arabic --

SAM (CONT'D)

What'd he say?

DENG

He says the truck is too damaged to move.
(meaning the children)
We don't have room for them all,
Preacher.

The implication of this hitting Sam, his mind reeling, turning to Nineteen...

SAM

Bring our truck up here and shine them
lights on us.
(to Deng)
Pull everyone of them kids outta there
and put em in a straight line.

DENG

Sam...

SAM

Do it.

Deng, Marc, and the other soldiers helping the children out... one-by-one... untying them... lining them up shoulder to shoulder...

SAM (CONT'D)

If they got clothes on, pull em off so we
can see em... real gentle...

Deng and Marco doing exactly this... gently pulling some of the children's clothes off... talking to them in Arabic, trying to calm them as best they can. Nineteen pulling up in the SUV, lighting up these children standing in a line... naked... shivering from fear...

DENG

What are you doing?

SAM

We're takin the ones that ain't gonna
make it through the night. Come back for
the others later.

And Sam moves to the first child -- a little girl -- reaching out to her but she pulls back.

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell her I'm not gonna hurt her.

Deng translates and the little girl steps forward... and Sam begins to examine her little body... turning her around in the harsh light of the SUV's headlamps...

and he finds five infected gashes on her back... whip wounds... already turning gangrene... and he gently pushes her toward Deng...

SAM (CONT'D)

Put her in the truck.

And Sam continues down the line... assessing each child's health... tenderly running his hands over their broken, starved bodies... somehow calculating which ones are worse off and pulling them out of line...

... and he reaches the end and we see that the SUV is now PACKED with children... huddled into every available corner... 10 children in total. There's no more room.

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell em we're comin back.

Deng hesitating, knows the reaction he's going to get...

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell em!

Deng translating and the children become hysterical, crying, running at Sam and grabbing for him, begging to be taken.

SAM (CONT'D)

Let's go!

(to the children, holding up two fingers)

Two hours... I'll be back in two hours...

Sam, Deng, and the other soldiers loading into the SUV... some of them climbing onto the roof... the only available space... the remaining children clamoring around the truck as it begins to pull away...

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell em to hide. Don't come out til they see my face...

Deng yelling this to the children as they drive off... their faint cries slowly fading as they speed into the darkness.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAWN

A red sun breaking the horizon. It's TWO HOURS LATER and we see the SUV blasting through the front gate of the compound and skidding to a stop -- DOORS POPPING OPEN -- SOLDIERS JUMPING OFF THE ROOF -- Betty and the other camp women already pulling the children out of the truck... ushering them into the infirmary...

Sam yelling at another soldier as he walks across the courtyard --

SAM

Gas it up! We're leavin here in five!

INT. STOREROOM - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - MORNING

Sam, Deng, and Nineteen grabbing boxes of ammo, RPG's, grenades.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - MORNING

Sam, Deng, Nineteen, Marco and the others loading back into the SUV... front gate pulled open and they speed out of the camp...

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - MORNING

Two hours into this return trip and it's silent in this cab. Deng checking a handheld GPS, clocking their position, and then they see it -- through the windshield -- in the distance --

SMOKE

Rising in a thin column a half-mile away.

EXT. ROAD - DEEP IN SUDAN - DAY

The scene of the ambush the night before. Burned out pickup trucks and dead LRA rebels strewn in the dirt. Sam's SUV arriving and he's the first one out... whistling for the children but they're nowhere to be seen.

And now we realize that the column of smoke isn't coming from the bombed-out LRA trucks -- it's coming from behind them. Sam moving around the back of the TRANSPORT TRUCK to see --

THIRTEEN LITTLE BODIES STACKED ON TOP OF EACH OTHER

The children Sam left behind.

Burned alive by the LRA an hour earlier.

Sam just standing here, staring at this smoldering pile of children. Starting to go someplace very dark. And as he puts it, most of him died in the bush this morning too.

CUT TO:

INT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - NIGHT

And we see a line of American TRAVELERS waiting to be checked through customs... BUSINESS MEN in their rumpled suits carrying briefcases, PARENTS with their tired children returning from vacation... and Sam standing in this line with his duffel bag, somehow cut-off from the life all around him. And the CUSTOMS OFFICER waves him forward... Sam handing him his passport...

CUSTOMS OFFICER

Africa?

And he looks up, studies Sam --

CUSTOMS OFFICER (CONT'D)
What are you doing over there?

And we see Sam has no answer for him. This question beginning to plague him like a festering sore.

EXT. PASSENGER PICK-UP - PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - NIGHT

It's raining and we see Sam sitting on a bench waiting, staring o.s. at a GARBAGE TRUCK parked at the curb. Two men working through a pile of trash... black garbage bags... heaped on top of each other like bodies... tossing them one-by-one into the truck and they're chewed into oblivion...

VOICE (O.S.)

Sam!

He looking up as Delane gets out of his car, moving toward him, smiling.

DELANE

Sorry I'm late. Sixteen was all jammed up...

Delane hugging him and the sense we get here, watching Delane, is that he's using again. Sam, too deep in his own shit to see it.

DELANE (CONT'D)

Welcome home, buddy.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

A girls pee-wee softball game is underway. Paige (12) standing on second base in a batter's helmet. Straight-down-the-middle apple pie is what we're watching here. Bleachers filled with parents cheering on their kids, families on blankets eating fried chicken...

... and Sam off from the crowd, leaning on the third base fence... isolated... staring at the action on the field but somewhere far off. Doesn't take a clairvoyant to know he's seeing those torched children in his mind.

And we see Lynn in the stands, watching her husband.

INT. OFFICE - BANK - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

A BANK MANAGER at a desk, in a gray suit, shaking his head.

BANK MANAGER

I understand what you're saying, but there's just not a lot we can do.

REVERSE to see Sam sitting in a chair across from him.

SAM

I got only one truck over there, and the damn thing's held together by chickenwire and cow dung as it is. I need another vehicle.

BANK MANAGER

Sam, we took out a second on your home already. Had to borrow against the church property just to keep the doors open.

SAM

I'm talkin about saving kids here, John. That's what this is about. I need a second truck.

Bank Manager shaking his head --

BANK MANAGER

We love what you're doing over there in Africa, but you're completely leveraged. Until we start to pay down some of what you owe, my hands are tied.

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - DAY

A/C on the fritz and it's blistering hot in here. 150 parishioners in pews waving themselves with hand fans trying to stay cool. And we see Sam at the pulpit in mid-sermon, shirt pitted and rolled up to his elbows. The rage in this man is palpable.

SAM

... hold on... hold up...

(waving them quiet)

You raise your hands to what I say, but you don't have no idea what I'm talkin about. Sittin out there with your bellies full, cars waitin for you outside to take you back to your houses fulla' crap...

Reaction to this, quiet surprise, and he continues...

SAM (CONT'D)

You call yerselves children of God, but you ain't. Ya'll just sheep followin him deaf, dumb, and blind...

(amped-up)

But God don't want sheep. He wants wolves to fight his fight. Men and women with teeth to gnash at the evil that is out there...

The congregation whipped into a frenzy. A few of them jumping to their feet, shouting praise...

SAM (CONT'D)

No! -- quiet! -- keep yer hands down! -- you don't care.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

None a yous in here cares. You sit on your butts and watch your movies, and read your news, and shake your heads in pity at the evil that's outside this door, but you don't do nuthin! Devastation is your entertainment... atrocity is your distraction... you find comfort in the pain and suffering of this world because it ain't your own!

(on fire)

THE LORD'S PROPHETS ARE NOT MEEK MEN,
SOFT MEN IN FANCY CLOTHES, THEY'RE
WARRIOR PROPHETS...

INT. CAR - DRIVING - KAMPALA, UGANDA - DAY

And we see John Garang in the back of this car as it drives through downtown Kampala.

SAM (V.O.)

... SIMPLE MEN WITH CALLOUSES ON THEIR
HANDS AND BURDENS ON THEIR BACKS...

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - SAME

Sam becoming more possessed...

SAM

... BATTLE HARDENED MEN OF CONVICTION!...

The congregation responding, "Amen!"

EXT. TARMAC - KAMPALA AIRPORT - DAY

The motorcade pulling to a stop. Garang getting out and making his way across the tarmac to a waiting HELICOPTER.

SAM (V.O.)

... MEN WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A
STICK AND A SWORD AND AREN'T AFRAID TO
PICK UP EITHER IF THEY NEED TO!

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - SAME

Sam, a building fury...

SAM

... SOLDIERS WILLING TO GO FORTH AND
AROUSE HIS ZEAL LIKE A MEN OF WAR!...

INT. HELICOPTER - FLYING - DAY

A cloudless day 3,000 feet above the African savanna. Garang in the back of this Chinook along with other GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS and SECURITY GUARDS --

SAM (V.O.)
... UTTERING A SHOUT, A WAR CRY. AND
DRAWING UP BATTLE LINES AGAINST HIS
ENEMY...

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - SAME

SAM
... WHEREVER THEY MAY BE!...

INT. HELICOPTER - FLYING - SAME

PILOTS in the cockpit suddenly alarmed -- REACTING to something on the ground --

SAM (V.O.)
... IN WHATEVER FORM THEY SHOW
THEMSELVES...

And we see TWO WHITE STREAKS coming up from the ground -- Surface to Air Missiles --

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
... AND THEY WILL FIGHT UNTIL THEIR LAST
BREATH...

The rockets coming straight at the chopper -- warning BUZZERS SHRIEKING -- panic! -- PILOTS banking hard -- evading -- and --

IMPACT! -- KA-BOOM!

The helicopter EXPLODES into a massive FIREBALL.

Blown out of the sky.

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - SAME

SAM
... UNTIL THE LEGIONS AGAINST HIM FALL
AND ONCE AGAIN THERE IS ONLY HIS LIGHT.
(beat)
And only then will their hearts beat no
more... and they will be turned to dust.

INT. CHILDERS' HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

Paige and two girlfriends from her 7th grade class at a table with Delane in the kitchen. Lynn cooking dinner at the stove. Chatter here about an upcoming school dance...

PAIGE

Mary Strauss and them is havin dinner at
The Chimney.

LYNN

Who's her date?

PAIGE'S FRIEND

Tony Wilks.

LYNN

I thought Tony Wilkes was goin with Patty
Hobbes' daughter.

PAIGE

They broke up last month.

And now we see Sam off from the group, absently watching the TV in
an adjoining room... and a NEWS REPORT begins... a PICTURE OF JOHN
GARANG flashing on the screen... Sam moving closer to the set so he
can hear --

TV NEWSCASTER

... Sudanese opposition leader John
Garang has been killed in a helicopter
crash according to a statement released
by the Sudanese Government in Khartoum
today.

Sam going completely still...

TV NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Garang was hailed as a peacemaker in
Sudan and was instrumental in ending the
21-year civil war that has ravaged that
country.

ARCHIVAL SHOTS OF GARANG.

TV NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Six of Garang's associates and seven
others also died in the crash which is
being blamed on bad weather.

Sam frozen, shocked... just staring at the TV as the newscast
switches to another story...

PAIGE (O.S.)

Dad? -- Dad?

Sam looking up to find everybody staring at him.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

What do you think?

SAM

What?

PAIGE

What do you think about us gettin a limo
for next weekend? Wouldn't be too
expensive since there'd be six of us.

Sam lost here for a moment...

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Hel-lo? Earth to Dad? What do you think?

LYNN

Honey, you ok?

DELANE

Heck, why don't I just drive ya'll?

PAIGE

We ain't crammin in the back of your Le
Sabre.

DELANE

Ya'll could fit in there easy.

PAIGE

We got dresses, Delane! We'll get all
wrinkled! Plus it smells in there.

DELANE

I can get some freshener, Paige, that
ain't no problem.

PAIGE

Dad, what you think? Can we get a limo?

SAM

No.

PAIGE

Dad, please. Patty and them is gettin
one.

SAM

You ain't rentin no limo to Pittsburgh.

LYNN

We could probably get us a deal through
one of Tom Hickey's boys. Between the six
of them it wouldn't cost too much.

SAM

Nobody's spendin money on no friggin
limousine.

PAIGE

But dad...

Sam snapping, FLASHING WITH RAGE --

SAM
WHAT THE HELL DID I JUST SAY?!

Quiet. Nobody moving. Completely still. And then...

LYNN
We're just talkin bout it, honey...

SAM
Too much goddamn talk in this house. I
got mouths to feed and you're talkin bout
pissing money away on a limo.

PAIGE
It's my seventh grade dance, dad.

SAM
I don't give a good goddamn what it is!
You ain't gettin no limo, end of story.

Tears welling up in Paige's eyes, anger, hurt, wanting to lash out
at him somehow. And what she says next she's felt her whole life...

PAIGE
You love them black babies more than you
love me.

SAM
WATCH YER GODDAMN MOUTH LITTLE GIRL,
BEFORE I SLAP IT!

LYNN
Sam...

Lynn steps between them and he pushes her back into the cabinet
hard... Delane instinctively grabbing his arm, protective...

DELANE
Hey...

And Sam spins -- gets in his face -- eyes dark and threatening --

SAM
What the hell you think you're doin, boy?

LYNN
Honey...

SAM
SHUT THE FUCK UP!

DELANE
Take it easy, buddy.

SAM
Don't tell me to take it easy in my own
fuckin house...

Sam and Delane toe-to-toe and the threat of serious violence here. Tension like a hair trigger.

SAM (CONT'D)

That ain't your wife and this ain't your family. You nuthin but a stray fuckin dog round here, boy.

DELANE

You don't mean that...

SAM

Hell I don't. Now you get the fuck outta here fore I put yer head through that wall.

Delane standing here, hurt... looking to Lynn to make sure she's alright and she nods for him to go... and he turns and walks out. Paige bursting into tears and running out of the room.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A crowded, noisy outlaw bar in Johnstown. We see Sam sitting at the bar all alone, a shot of whisky and a bottle of beer in front of him. Staring into a void.

VOICE (O.S.)

You that Preacher, ain't ya?

Sam turns to find a burly looking BIKER standing next to him smiling.

BIKER

Yep, you him. I seen your face in the papers few years ago. Call you the Machinegun Preacher, right?

Sam nods.

BIKER (CONT'D)

(to his buddies)

Told you this is the guy.

(to Sam)

Hot damn, I knew it! Papers was talkin bout how you was like some kinda African Rambo or somethin, right?

SAM

You don't mind, I'd like to just sit here right now.

BIKER

You still helpin them niggers over there?

Sam bristling...

BIKER (CONT'D)

The way I figure it, the reason you so interested in helpin them porch monkeys is cause you probably throwin it in them nigger bitches, ain't ya?

The Biker smiles a nasty, malicious smile. His buddies moving next to him now... and we see a quiet storm brewing in Sam...

BIKER (CONT'D)

Am I right? You a nigger fucker, boy?

A moment here --

Sam staring at the Biker with a look we've come to know -- and --

CRACKKKK! -- Sam SHATTERS his beer bottle across the Biker's face and a sudden, violent brawl breaks out -- Bikers swinging cue sticks -- Sam wading into the crew -- swinging wild -- taking the Biker down and stomping on his face -- bloody -- murderous -- and then --

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Sam sitting on a metal bunk, face bruised and bandaged from the fight... and as we stare at him here... knuckles cut... his shirt torn and stained with blood... it's impossible for us not to get the feeling that we're watching the 'old Sam' coming back. The man we met at the beginning of this movie. The man with a deathwish.

EXT. JAIL - JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - NIGHT

Sam released, coming out a door and we see Lynn's car parked in the parking lot, engine idling.

INT. LYNN'S CAR - NIGHT

Lynn behind the wheel as Sam comes around the passenger door and gets in. And the two of them just sit here for a long beat, until...

LYNN

You're gonna sit there and you're gonna lemme talk. You're gonna do me that courtesy, as your wife and your partner.

BEAT. Sam says nothing.

LYNN (CONT'D)

I've always believed in you. Never once, in all these years, have I stood in the way of what you wanted to do. I trusted you, trusted the Lord, and did what I could so you could follow your dream.

(beat)

But I ain't willin to lose you to what you're doin over there.

(MORE)

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

LYNN (CONT'D)

Ain't gonna just stand by and watch you
get swallowed up by it.

She looks to him and we see she has tears in her eyes...

LYNN (CONT'D)

I know you're all them kids have, but
you're all we got too. Paige needs her
father. I need my husband.

Off Sam sitting here, listening, eyes staring straight ahead.

INT. KITCHEN - CHILDERS' HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

Christian music coming from a small radio on the windowsill and Lynn
at the kitchen table doing paperwork. Paige coming in, moving to the
refrigerator... and then seeing something out the kitchen window...

PAIGE

Mom, who are those men?

Lynn moving to the window, looking out...

EXT. BARN - CHILDERS HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

A storage barn at the back of the property .. and we see a FLATBED
TRUCK parked here and 7 or 8 MOVERS pulling heavy machinery out of
the barn... construction equipment... loading it onto the bed of the
truck and securing it with cables...

Lynn coming out of the house in the b.g...

LYNN

S'cuse me, what are you doing?

Making her way into...

INT. BARN - CHILDERS HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

Filled with movers busily hauling equipment out of the barn. Lynn
coming in, confused...

LYNN

Hey, s'cuse me...

And now she sees Sam going through a cabinet in the back.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Sam, what's goin on? What are these men
doin here?...

Sam slamming the cabinet closed, moving past her without saying a
word. Lynn grabbing his arm, stopping him.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Why are they taking our stuff?

SAM
Ain't our stuff no more.

He walks off... Lynn following...

LYNN
Sam... Sam...
(catching up to him)
What are you talkin about?

SAM
I sold it.

And as if to underscore the point, we see two men start to dismantle the "Childers Roofing and Painting" sign that Lynn painted herself years ago --

LYNN
Hey, don't touch that! -- S'cuse me! --
Lynn pushing the men away --

SAM
Get outta their way, Lynn. It ain't ours no more. Best go through and make sure they ain't takin nuthin that belongs in the house.

LYNN
You sold the construction business?
Sam pulls a stack of folded papers out of his back pocket and Lynn SNAPS them out of his hand... quickly pages through them... can't believe what she's reading.

LYNN (CONT'D)
\$27,000?

SAM
I need a new truck for the orphanage.

LYNN
A new truck? You sold our business for a new truck?! That was our future, Sam. Paige's future. That business was all we had left...

SAM
It's done, Lynn, so save your breath...

Sam walking away from her, out of the barn...

LYNN
(calling after)
Get back here! -- Sam Childers, get back here!

But he's not stopping. He reaches his truck, gets in. Lynn pounding on the closed window...

LYNN (CONT'D)

Open the door, Sam... open the door!...

He starts the engine...

LYNN (CONT'D)

DON'T YOU LEAVE US! -- SAM! -- SAM!

And he drives off leaving her in the middle of this driveway.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

It's mid-day and there's a lot of activity here... Betty and the other Camp Women preparing for a lunch meal... children playing on the playground... a few of the older kids kicking a soccer ball through the compound.

And we see Sam and two other soldiers next to a NEW TRUCK, retrofitting it with bush gear. Francis, as always, sitting nearby, close to Sam. Nineteen hustles up...

NINETEEN

Reverend, there are men here to see you.

SAM

Ok.

(to soldiers)

Pull the rest of them bench seats outta there. I'll be back in a minute.

Sam wiping off his hands, moving off toward the front gate.

NEW ANGLE

Deng coming out of the soldier's barracks, sees Sam walking across the compound trailed by Francis. And then he notices three men -- VILLAGERS -- waiting by the front gate. He turns to a soldier next to him...

DENG

Who are those men?

SOLDIER

They are here for the Preacher.

Deng stiffens at this... something is very wrong here... and he sprints off the porch...

NEW ANGLE

Sam approaching the front gate... and then he hears...

DENG (O.S.)

Sam!

He turns, squinting into the bright sun, sees Deng running toward him urgently waving his hands. Sam sensing something off, turning to the front gate as --

THE VILLAGERS suddenly in motion -- pulling machineguns from their jackets -- KAKAKAKAKAKAK! -- shooting at Sam as he dives to the ground -- dirt and rock exploding all around him.

SPLA soldiers reacting -- shooting back! -- CHILDREN caught in the crossfire -- SCREAMING! -- TOTAL PANDEMONIUM! -- two of the gunmen hit in the chest -- going down -- just one gunman left and his hands shoot into the air -- YELLING SOMETHING IN ARABIC WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND! -- SPLA soldiers surrounding him -- weapons leveled --

And Sam sees what nobody else does -- the gunman has a GRENADE in his hand -- detonator lever depressed -- Sam waving the SPLA soldiers off -- knows if this guy is shot that grenade becomes live!

SAM

DON'T SHOOT! -- DON'T SHOOT!

The Gunman still SCREAMING! -- SPLA soldiers moving closer -- weapons leveled -- Sam yelling not to shoot! -- CONFUSION! -- and --

BOOOOM!

Gunman shot in the shoulder -- goes down --

THE GRENADE

Tumbles out of his hand into the dirt... Sam scrambling to his feet... sprinting to the gunman... shoving SPLA soldiers out of the way... SHOUTING!... frantically scanning the ground for the LIVE GRENADE! -- and he sees it -- GIVES! -- grabs it and depresses the detonator lever -- and --

Nothing.

He turns to see Francis few feet away. Terrified. A half-second away from being blown to pieces.

DENG (O.S.)

Sam...

Sam looks to Deng who is on his knees a few feet away, holding the GRENADE PIN in his fingers. And Sam gently slides it back into the grenade.

INT. INFIRMARY - ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

We see the gunman who was shot, cuffed to a bed, his shoulder bandaged. Two SPLA soldiers standing in the b.g. guarding him.

EXT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

The last gasp of sun. Sam sitting here staring at the grenade which is in his hand, just rolling it back and forth from palm to palm.

VOICE (O.S.)
You must be careful...

Deng standing above him...

DENG
It is a short fuse now. Give it to me and
I will discard it for you.

Sam shaking his head "no"

DENG (CONT'D)
Kony sent them.

Sam, no response. Something he already knew.

DENG (CONT'D)
It would be better for you in Kampala.

SAM
I ain't goin to Kampala.

DENG
He will not stop until you are dead.

And we're watching Sam here. And the sense we get staring at this man, rolling this grenade back and forth in his hands, is that he wants to die.

INT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Francis coming in quietly, moving next to the gunman who is asleep in his bed. And gently he touches his arm, waking him.

FRANCIS
(Kiswahili)
I want to ask you something...

Francis pulls out the photograph of his brother, holds it up so he can see...

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
This is my brother. His name is
Christopher. He was small like me when we
were taken by the rebels, but I am sure
he is big like you now.
(beat)
Do you know if he is alive?

The Rebel shakes his head...

REBEL
I'm sure he is probably dead.

Francis, no response... simply folds the photograph back up and slips it into his pocket... but he doesn't leave... just sits here a moment longer... quietly... thinking... and then...

FRANCIS

Why do the rebels kill our parents and steal us? Why do you do it when you know it is bad?

But the Rebel has no easy answer for him. He just stares off... his hollow eyes unknowable... lost to what this little boy is asking. And finally Francis gets up and slowly walks out of the room.

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam on his cot wide awake. The Bible on the floor under his bed, no longer a source of solace for this man. And now we hear his sat phone vibrating. He picks it up and sees DELANE'S name on the screen... a moment here and then he sets the phone back down... doesn't answer it... as we go...

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - SAME

Delane on a couch and he looks like hell... pale, gaunt face... phone at his ear listening to RINGING and RINGING... and then the sound of Sam's voice...

RECORDED MESSAGE

This here's Sam. You know what to do.
(BEEEEP)

DELANE

(quietly)
Hey buddy, it's Delane. Shoot, I was hopin' you was there...

Delane hesitating... doesn't hang-up... and we can feel how badly he needs to talk to somebody...

DELANE (CONT'D)

Other day I was thinkin bout when you and me was kids. That summer we'd go down to the quarry over in Montrose, remember that? We hooked up them ropes and spent all day swimmin and jumpin off them walls...

Delane smiling to himself, a fleeting memory, and then something dark coming over him.

DELANE (CONT'D)

That was the last time I remember feelin good about anything.

Delane pausing... a heavy silence... and now we PULL BACK to see he's sitting on a couch in a decrepit living room... a crack house... another man here cooking up a spoon of black tar... juicing a needle... Delane watching him like a hawk...

DELANE (CONT'D)

I wish you was there to pray with me,
buddy.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Sam working in the courtyard as Betty comes toward him carrying a
Sat phone...

BETTY

Reverend, there is a call for you.

Betty handing him the phone...

SAM

(into phone)

Yeah?

INT. KITCHEN - CHILDERS HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - SAME

It's raining outside and we see Lynn at the sink on the phone...

LYNN

You better come home.

CUT TO:

DELANE'S CORPSE, dressed in a gray suit, lying in a casket...

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - DAY

Packed with mourners. And we hear a CHILDREN'S CHOIR singing a
plaintive hymnal... "Eternal Father"... and Delane's mother in the
first pew, dressed in black, surrounded by a few other women
offering her comfort.

And now we see Sam moving up the steps to the lectern... and the
choir softly finishes... and he looks out over the congregation...
not saying a word for a long beat... and then...

SAM

Most of yous want me to stand up here and
make some sense outta this. That's why
you come here today. You want me to tell
you that God has his plan for all of us,
and when he wants to call us back home
he's gonna do it.

(beat)

I can do that. It's easy to do that. It's
easy to believe in God when you're under
a roof like this, alive and kickin. Even
if times is tough, money's tight, health
is poor, even if you starin at a somebody
in a box that shouldn't be there, it's
easy.

(beat)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

But you live long enough and you start to see what's out there. Start to see how people treat one another in this world. And once you see that you realize there ain't no God.

The congregation falls dead silent... eyes fixed on Sam...

SAM (CONT'D)

What ya'll tell yourselves before you go to sleep at night ain't true. Them prayers you say ain't heard by nobody but yourselves.

Murmurs rippling through the crowd...

SAM (CONT'D)

God don't live in a place that has what I seen. He don't live in a place that puts good men fulla needle holes. He don't live in a place where little babies are stacked four deep and set on fire for no good reason.

(beat)

I'm tellin you right now, sure as I'm standin here, there ain't no God. And that's a fact.

And Sam steps away from the lectern, down the steps, and walks up the aisle toward the exit... the congregation staring at him as he does... stunned... silent... and Lynn moving to her feet, making her way across the crowded aisle, following him...

EXT. SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

Sam coming out of the church, moving toward his truck. Lynn coming out after him...

LYNN

(calling after)

Sam...

But he doesn't stop, gets in the truck and drives off.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

It's late and we see Lynn on the sofa, sound asleep, been here all night waiting for Sam... and she stirs awake... gets up, turns off the light, and looks out a window to see the church across the street. A LIGHT ON in one of the upstairs offices.

INT. HALLWAY - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - NIGHT

Lynn coming down this hallway, pushing open a door into...

INT. OFFICE - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - CENTRAL CITY - NIGHT

... where Sam is rifling through one of the desks...

LYNN

Sam...

He looks up...

SAM

Where the money?

LYNN

Where have you been?

Sam, no response, gets up and starts going through a supply closet...

LYNN (CONT'D)

I know you're hurtin', baby. I know you're angry...

She reaches out to touch him and he JERKS way, turns to her, threatening...

SAM

Where do you keep the cash, Lynn?

She stares at him for a moment, clocking the depth of his rage... and she points to closet across the office. Sam moves to it, opens the door to find a SAFE against the back wall.

SAM (CONT'D)

What's the combination?

LYNN

Everything we have has gone to those children, Sam.

SAM

What's the combination?

LYNN

There's a point when there ain't no more to give.

SAM

TELL ME.

LYNN

Paige's birthday.

Sam starts to spin the combination but hesitates...

LYNN (CONT'D)

You don't know it, do you? You don't even remember your own daughter's birthday.

SAM

What are the numbers?

LYNN

You fight for everyone but us.

SAM

Open the goddamn safe, Lynn!

She moves past him, spinning the combination and cranking open the vault. Sam grabbing a couple stacks of cash.

LYNN

You take that money and we lose the house. The church. All of it.

SAM

You can make it up with the ministry.

LYNN

What ministry?! There ain't no more ministry, Sam. The church is dead. They see what you've become. You stood up in front of the entire congregation and denied God. Turned your back on him.

SAM

He turned his back on me! -- on Delane! -- on every one of them kids over there that's rottin in a grave.

LYNN

The good you're doin is destroyin us.

SAM

CHILDREN HAVE DIED CAUSE OF ME!

Sam going silent. The cold admission of this hanging in the air. Lynn realizing his burden.

LYNN

What's the price of that, Sam? You have to lose your own family?

Sam, no response. And we see in his eyes that perhaps the price may be more than that. It may cost this man his own life.

LYNN (CONT'D)

It's time to fight for us. For Paige and me. Your family.

Sam standing here, weighing something in his mind. A choice he must make here... and finally he moves past her...

LYNN (CONT'D)

Please don't leave...

But he's gone. And Lynn drops to her knees and begins to weep.

*

CUT TO:

INT. KAMPALA AIRPORT - DAY

A thousand faces crisscrossing camera in this busy airport. And we see Sam moving through this crowd. Disconnected. A bit frightening. And as he moves outside the terminal he's greeted by Deng standing next to the SUV.

DENG

Welcome back.

But Sam says nothing, looks up to him as he passes and Deng sees that his eyes are deserted. Inevitable. And Sam gets into the truck and slams the door.

INT./EXT. TRUCK/RURAL ROAD - SUDAN - DAY

A convoy of 6 or 7 AID RELIEF TRUCKS coming down this dirt road. And we see Agnete here with a DRIVER in this lead truck -- suddenly --

TWO PICKUP TRUCKS filled with heavily armed LRA REBELS pull into the middle of the road cutting them off.

AGNETE

STOP THE TRUCK! -- STOP!!

The truck grinding to a halt. The driver becoming terrified, losing it, chattering wild in Kiswahili. Agnete trying to calm him down.

AGNETE (CONT'D)

It's ok. Calm down. They're not going to do anything.

But through the windshield we see a rebel stand up in one of the trucks -- shoulder an RPG launcher -- firing! -- WOOOOSH! -- the contrails of a rocket coming at us and --

BA-WHOOOM!!!

The world suddenly up-ended... the truck lifted off the ground in the blast... Agnete and the Driver tossed upside down... fragments of glass and metal swirling around... lost in this gray world of dust and smoke where nothing is recognizable.

And then slowly Agnete regains consciousness, eyes fluttering open, a deep gash on her head flowing blood. She turns her head slightly to see the Driver next to her is dead.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - SUDAN - DAY

Agnete's truck is completely upside down and on fire. A squad of ADULT REBELS swarming all over the other trucks, pulling out AID WORKERS and DRIVERS, forcing them onto their knees in a group.

And now we see Agnete dragging herself from the overturned truck, and she's grabbed by the hair and pulled into the group. Everyone terrified -- some of them sobbing -- Agnete trying to say something in Kiswahili to the LEAD REBEL but he SLAMS her in the face with the butt of his rifle and she goes down...

... and he rests the barrel of his rifle on the back of her head... he's going to shoot her -- and --

KAK! KAK! KAK!

His chest EXPLODES! -- three bursts from behind -- the other rebels spinning toward the gunshots as --

KRATAKRATAKRATAKRAK!!!

A firestorm of lead -- Sam, Deng, and the rest of his team in the bush shooting -- rebels scrambling for cover but it's too late -- dropping as they try and flee -- and in an instant it's all over.

Sam coming out of the bush followed by his men. Agnete seeing him...

AGNETE

Sam! Thank God...

But when he looks at her she freezes. He is completely unrecognizable to her in this moment -- a killer's thousand-yard stare -- barely human -- more like a machine than a man.

And he moves past her down the road, to one of the rebels on the ground still alive, twisting in pain in the dirt. And he puts the barrel of his rifle against the rebel's head and...

BOOOOM!

He's dead. Just like that. And he continues walking up the road. And we see Deng and Agnete share a look, having just witnessed this.

INT. MESS HALL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

30 or 40 adults and children here eating the last meal of the day. And we see Sam in a corner, off from the rest of the group. And maybe it's just the lighting in here, but there's a darkness around him -- literally as if the space surrounding this man is devoid of light.

And we see Francis working his way through the room... refilling cups with hot tea... his particular job here... and he comes up to Sam and accidentally sloshes some of the tea onto Sam's arm and he flinches! -- burned -- "Goddamn it!" -- shoots his arm out and hits Francis in the chest -- violently knocking him backward onto the ground.

And the entire room falls silent. Nobody moving.

And Sam gets up and walks out of the room.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY - LATER

An hour later and we see Sam here... and Deng comes up... neither one acknowledging the other for a long beat until...

DENG

Do you hear that, Preacher?

SAM

Hear what?

DENG

There is no more laughter. The children do not play here anymore. They are scared once again.

(beat)

But now they are scared of you.

Sam, no response.

DENG (CONT'D)

The men do not trust you any longer to lead them into battle. They say you have a wish to die.

(beat)

I am worried about my friend. I want to help him.

SAM

I don't need your help.

And Sam turns away... and after a beat, Deng walks off... leaving him alone once again.

The start of a sequence here.

INT. CORRIDOR - PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - PITTSBURGH, PENN. - DAY

Stark, white, sterile walls... harsh flourescents overhead... and we see two nurses rolling Lynn down this hallway on a hospital gurney... Paige walking along beside her... holding her hand... and they reach a "restricted area" and Paige can go no further...

And she lets go of her mother and watches as they push her through double doors... and she's gone...

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

And we see Sam here in the dark... moonlight filtering in through the thatched roof... like shards of glass cutting through the blackness... and he doesn't look right here... soul worn thin... eyes hollow... starting to go someplace very bad...

INT. OPERATING ROOM - PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Lynn on the operating table in this bright room... still awake... staring up at masked nurses moving around her... prepping her for surgery... and she starts to shiver from the cold and fear...

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam moving around this small space... moving through the shards of light... images flashing in his head... babies burned and screaming... Delane in his coffin... and we realize we're watching something here... his world starting to cave in on him...

INT. OPERATING ROOM - PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Lynn unconscious... eyes taped shut and a ventilator tube running out of her mouth... and we see two SURGEONS above her... gloved hands covered in blood and moving urgently... and the sense we get, watching these guys work, is that they're running into complications... and suddenly...

BLOOD -- everywhere -- a great splash of crimson across the surgeons... nurses scrambling... doctors barking commands... monitors BEEPING!... blood pressure dropping fast...

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

... and Sam dropping against his cot... distraught... tears in his eyes and this man is breaking... heartbreak darkening his face... and suddenly we see the short-fuse grenade in his hand... his finger curling around the pin... eyes closing against the world... he pulls the pin... and...

WE HEAR A KNOCK AT HIS DOOR

Sam frozen... still as stone... still holding the grenade in his hand... safety lever depressed... and slowly the door pushes open and we hear soft footsteps shuffling into this dark room...

... and Francis steps into the light... and he sees Sam here on the ground and slowly moves next to him... sitting on the cot without saying a word... just the two of them here for a long beat... and then slowly he begins in perfect English...

FRANCIS

I remember my parents when I sleep. I see them in my dreams sometimes.

Sam looking to Francis... this small boy sitting above him... telling his story...

FRANCIS

The rebels came into my village at night. We were awoken and dragged out of our house. My father was big like you. He tried to fight them but he was shot.

(MORE)

FRANICS (CONT'D)

We were so scared.

(beat)

The rebels made my mother kneel on the ground and they gave me a big club. They told me if I didn't kill her they would shoot my brother and me.

Francis pausing here... lost in this memory... his face becoming a mask of pain... but no tears... there are no more tears in this young man left to be shed... and so he continues...

FRANICS (CONT'D)

I threw the club down and refused, but my mother picked it up and handed it back to me... and she told me to swing hard... that I must make her proud... to save my brother and me.

(beat)

And so I did. I made her proud.

And now Francis looks down at Sam... staring at this man on the ground... and he reaches out and gently touches Sam's head... a moment of tenderness for both of them... an act of love.... these two broken souls finding each another here... and Francis says...

FRANICS

If we allow ourselves to become full of hate - full of rage - then Kony has won. We must not let him take our hearts. This is the most important thing.

And Sam slides the safety pin back into the grenade and reaches out to Francis... and pulls him into an embrace... holding him close... and we know that without a doubt this boy has saved this man's life.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Post-surgery and we see Lynn asleep in a bed... Paige curled up in a chair next to her, eyes closed... and then we hear a cell phone ringing... Paige stirring awake, pulling out her cell and answering it...

PAIGE

(quiet, into phone)

Hello?

INT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam on his sat phone --

SAM

Bug? You there?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM/SAM'S TUKUL - PITTSBURGH/ORPHANAGE - SAME

PAIGE

Dad?

SAM

Yeah, it's me.

PAIGE

You ok?

SAM

I'm ok, Bug.

And there's a long pause... so much to say but no words to say it... each of them holding their phones to their ears and just listening... and finally Sam says...

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm thinkin of a tree...

And we see tears well up in Paige's eyes when she hears this... and quietly they begin their little game one more time...

PAIGE

You said tree... I'm thinkin of a bee.

Sam smiling to himself... and we realize this man is coming back to life when he says...

SAM

I love you, Bug.

PAIGE

I love you too, Daddy.

And now we see Lynn's eyes open slightly having just heard this... seeing Paige here on the phone... talking to her father like a little girl again... and she smiles and drifts back to sleep as we go...

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - NEXT DAY

And we see the soldiers at their posts... Betty and the other Camp Women cleaning clothes and preparing food... most of the children loitering around a tree in the shade, sullen, not playing on the playground.

And then we see Sam coming into the courtyard kicking a soccer ball... attempting to juggle it from foot to foot, but he's not very good... and now some of the children see him and point... and slowly the entire camp begins to notice Sam kicking the soccer ball by himself out in the open... Betty and the other women stopping their chores and watching him... Deng and the other soldiers staring as Sam pops the ball into the air and bounces it off his head...

... and now a couple of the smaller kids sprint for him and he kicks them the ball...

and slowly the rest of the children join in the fun... kicking the ball back and forth... an impromptu soccer game... and then we hear LAUGHTER again... joy flooding back into this place.

Deng watching with a big smile as this white man dances around these little children... a Pied Piper of joy... playing in the dirt.

EXT. FRONT GATE - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY - LATER

And we see Francis approach a knot of soldiers standing by the front gate smoking cigarettes...

FRANCIS

Excuse me...

SOLDIER #1

What is it?

FRANCIS

Is it true an LRA commander was captured last night?

Soldiers nodding their heads "yes."

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Where is he being held?

SOLDIER #1

At the army base in Kisoro.

FRANCIS

Are you going there?

SOLDIER #1

Yes.

FRANCIS

Can I ride with you?

SOLDIER #1

Why do you want to go to Kisoro?

FRANCIS

I want to ask the commander something.

SOLDIER #1

No, you cannot ride with us. Wait till tomorrow and go with the women on the bus.

And the soldiers turn their backs on Francis and he slinks away.

EXT. RIVERBANK - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

We see a line of women along the riverbank in their colorful dresses... scrubbing pans and washing clothes...

singing an ancient African spiritual as they work... the sun dropping pale red on the horizon...

And we see Sam here too... alone with himself... watching the water rolling gently past... listening to the soft serenade of the women... the beauty of it all...

VOICE (O.S.)

I have a favor to ask...

He turns to find Deng standing here.

DENG

I want you to take me home to my father.

Sam staring at him, knows full well that Deng's biological father is long dead, but understands exactly what this man is asking for.

NEW ANGLE

In the middle of the river... as Sam and Deng wade out to their waists... and Sam turns to face Deng and he says something we can't hear... and Deng nods "yes"... and now the women on the riverbank see them and they stop working... and Deng kneels in front of Sam and he gently dunks Deng's head in the cool water...

... and Deng emerges again... baptized... and the women begin to shout their praise from the riverbank... singing their song... and we know that not only Deng has been saved in this simple act... two souls have found their way back to their father.

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

And we see Francis here alone, pulling out a small satchel... filling it with a bottle of water and a blanket... tying it to his back...

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

Francis at the edge of the compound... looking over his shoulder to make sure nobody is watching him... and then quickly slipping under the fence and he's gone...

EXT. BUSH - DUSK

Francis walking through the dry scrub alone... already a couple miles deep in the bush... the sun starting to set... light waning... Francis starting to get nervous, picking up his pace...

AND THEN THE SOUND OF TRUCKS

A squad of LRA rebels coming up the road... Francis darting under a bush... hiding... and the trucks getting closer... the sound of brakes... trucks stopping... men yelling...

FRANCIS

Curled up... frightened... can hear some of the rebels moving through the bush... no idea if they saw him or they've stopped for another reason... his mind racing... voices getting closer... starting to hyper-ventilate from the fear -- and --

FRANCIS BOLTS

Sprinting through the bush -- running for his life -- rebels see him -- yelling for him to stop -- chasing him down -- shooting their rifles into the air and he hits the ground in the fetal position -- too terrified to continue -- eyes clamped shut as 4 or 5 rebels surround him -- guns pointed at his head -- caught.

INT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DUSK

Sam coming into the building, finding Betty who is tending to a sick child.

SAM
Have you seen Francis?

Betty shaking her head "no", and we see the worry on Sam's face... intuitively knows something is wrong.

INT. LRA TRUCK - DRIVING - DUSK

Francis bound and gagged on the floor of this truck... and we hear the sound of shifting, grinding gears... Francis looking up to see 4 or 5 rebels sitting on bench seats around him, smoking cigarettes, fucked up on khat and talking incessantly.

And one of the rebels sees him looking and brings the butt of his Kalishnikov down hard -- striking Francis on the head as we go --

EXT. OFFICE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DUSK

Deng coming up to Sam.

DENG
Some of the soldiers said he was asking about the commander that is being held at Kismoro.

Sam closing his eyes in frustration, knows instantly what Francis has done.

SAM
Get em on the phone, see if he's shown up at the base yet.

EXT. LRA CAMP - DEEP IN THE BUSH - NIGHT

Francis pulled out of the truck and shoved forward... moving deeper into this rebel encampment... dark and otherworldly... figures moving around camp fires... laughing... men with little girls...

their child wives... with pregnant bellies... and incongruously the sound of American rap music coming from a jambox somewhere.

The overriding sense we get from this place is one of 'insanity.'

And Francis is led to a bamboo cell at the center of camp... and he's kicked into the pen... and we see other children here... in various stages of fear and suffering... some of them completely naked... shivering in the cool air... others catatonic, probably doped up or too battered to move...

VOICE (O.S.)
(whispering)
Francis?

Francis turns to find a 15 year old boy standing outside the cell dressed in tattered fatigues and holding a rifle.

This is Francis' brother.

FRANCIS
Christopher!

CHRISTOPHER
Shhhh, you must be quiet.

The brothers touch hands through the bamboo slits.

FRANCIS
I *knew* you were alive. I prayed to mother every night to keep you safe until I found you.

CHRISTOPHER
We are leaving in the morning.
(Beat)
For Ed Duin.

Francis realizing the implications of this. Looking around at the other children in this cell, knowing they will all be sold into slavery.

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANGE - NIGHT

Deng hustling up to Sam... shaking his head...

DENG
They have not see the boy.

SAM
Ok. Get Nineteen and Marco -- we're gonna go look for him.

EXT. LRA CAMP - DEEP IN THE BUSH - NIGHT

We see Francis and Christopher escaping... slipping from shadow to shadow... silently making their way through the camp... finally reaching the periphery and darting into the bush -- when suddenly --

FLOODLIGHTS EXPLODE ON!

Rebel guards in trees -- shining a million candlelights into the bush -- illuminating Francis and Christopher in mid-stride -- other rebels YELLING! -- running after them -- hunting them down like dogs.

INT. SUV - DRIVING - NIGHT

Sam, Deng, Nineteen and Marco in this lead truck... been out here for hours... behind them we see the second camp truck following...

And they come to a fork in the road, pulling to a stop.

DENG

It will be light soon. What do you want to do?

Sam looking at a topo map on his lap...

SAM

Let's go through Maridi, see if they've seen anything.

Deng nodding and they continue.

EXT. LRA CAMP - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAWN

Pale yellow sun breaking and we see Francis, Christopher, and a line of 10 or 12 other children -- shackled in iron -- being loaded into the back of a TRANSPORT TRUCK.

INT. SUV - DRIVING - DAWN

Bouncing down this dirt road, and we hear Deng's radio squawk. He digs it out, responds in Arabic, then turns to Sam...

DENG

The village outside of Akot says an LRA caravan came through there an hour ago. They were headed for Ed Duim.

Off Sam...

INT./EXT. - LRA CONVOY/BUSH - DEEP IN SUDAN - DAY

A convoy of 5 or 6 LRA trucks barreling down this dirt track. And we see lots of rebels standing up in the back of these trucks, cradling heavy weapons, alert -- and suddenly --

KABOOOM!

The lead LRA truck is blown off it's axles -- and suddenly we're in a withering firefight -- the roar of heavy weapons on full-tilt.

SAM AND HIS MEN

Flanking the LRA convoy -- triangulating fire -- shredding the rebels -- blowing them back off their feet.

NINETEEN

Sprinting through the bush -- edging around the LRA trucks -- finding a position on their weak side and locking an RPG in a launcher -- shouldering it -- aiming -- **WOOOOOSH!** -- the missile streaking toward the second LRA jeep and --

KABOOOM!

It's blasted into the air -- onto it's side -- rebels scurrying away from the wreckage -- still firing -- an absolute hail of lead -- AK's barking in every direction --

KRATAKRATAKRATAKRATAKRAKK!

One of the rebels standing up -- firing an RPG -- **WOOOOOSH!**

MARCO crouched behind the new orphanage truck firing -- sees the white streak coming at him -- dives -- just as --

THE TRUCK IS EVISCERATED IN THE BLAST!

SAM moving closer to the rebels -- shooting -- picking them off one by one -- gunfire raking over his head -- a dozen muzzle flashes coming from everywhere -- sam yelling over the thunder --

SAM
Go! -- Go! -- Go! -- Go!

And we see Deng coming out of the bush to his right -- and then Nineteen to his left -- and they charge on the remaining rebels -- Sam providing covering fire -- a curtain of lead cutting through the enemy -- and just like that it's over -- Sam waving behind him --

SAM (CONT'D)

Cease fire!!

-- and suddenly there's just a sick silence -- smoke rising from the shot-to-shit LRA trucks -- bodies strewn in the dirt -- the brand new orphanage truck bombed out and smoking on it's side.

And Sam makes his way to the first TRANSPORT TRUCK -- Deng covering him as he rips the canvas back to see --

50 CHILDREN CRAMMED INTO THE BACK OF THIS TRUCK

SAM (CONT'D)

Pull em all out! C'mon, let's go!

Soldiers start to unload the children --

SAM (CONT'D)
Get em out of them chains!

And Sam moves to the second TRANSPORT TRUCK -- rips the canvas back to find --

50 MORE CHILDREN SHACKLED IN THE BACK OF THIS TRUCK

Holy fuck indeed.

He's been here before... 100 kids and he only has one good vehicle... and we watch him standing here... staring at these tiny faces looking back at him... a moment... lost in indecision until one of the kids stands up near the back...

IT'S FRANCIS

Sam sees him and suddenly he knows exactly what he needs to do...

SAM (CONT'D)
C'MON, LET'S GO!... get em out of there
and line em up! -- C'MON! --

And we've seen this before... Sam going through these children... assessing their health... one by one... separating the worse off from the others... forming two groups... turning to Deng and Nineteen and motioning to the smaller group (about 15 children)...

SAM (CONT'D)
Load these kids into the truck. Put em
three deep if you have to...

Deng herding the children toward the one good truck...

SAM (CONT'D)
(calling after)
Hurry up! We don't got much time!
(turning to Marco)
Come with me --

NEW ANGLE

Sam and Marco moving from one dead LRA rebel to the other... rolling them onto their backs... going through their belts... pulling out extra ammo clips and grenades...

SAM (CONT'D)
Get them AK's too.

Marco swinging four or five machineguns onto his shoulder...

NEW ANGLE

At the SUV, now jammed with children. Sam talking to Nineteen, Marco and the others...

SAM (CONT'D)

I need all you to climb up on that roof
and keep yer eyes peeled. That road back
might be hot, so be ready.

NINETEEN

What about you, Preacher?

VOICE (O.S.)

We're staying.

Sam turns to see Deng next to him, holding an AK in his hands, a
steely resolve in his eyes. Sam nods, emboldened by his friend's
support.

SAM

(to the soldiers)

Go on. Get outta here.

The soldiers load onto the SUV and drive off, leaving Sam and Deng
standing here in the middle of these 85 children.

Waiting for the war that will surely come.

INT. SUV - DRIVING - DAWN

And we stay in this truck as it pulls away... driving for a long
time... until Sam, Deng, and the children become only specks on the
horizon... and then we...

CUT TO:

WHITE LETTERS ON A BLACK SCREEN THAT READ --

*"To this day, Sam Childers fights for the children of Sudan and
Northern Uganda."*

THE END

LEGENDS:

Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army continue their reign of terror in Sudan and Northern Uganda.

Amnesty International estimates that Kony and the LRA are responsible for over 400,000 murders and more than 40,000 child abductions. These children are tortured, raped, sold into sex slavery, and forced to take part in ritualized killing by LRA commanders.

The Islamic Government of Sudan continues to provide weapons and safe haven to Kony and the LRA as part of a deal to wage a proxy war against the predominately Christian South.

Without pressure from the United States, this support will continue and more innocent children will be slaughtered.

Now you know.

Micah Green
Kim Fox

As of 2009, Sam Childers has rescued over 300 children from the LRA. His 'Angels of East Africa Orphanage' is home to more than 700 orphans, and feeds over 1200 meals a day to neighboring villagers in need.

To get involved go to:

<http://www.angelsfeastafrica.org/>

or visit:

<http://www.machinegunpreacher.org/>

Micah Green
Kim Fox