

Out of Africa

Screenplay

by

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Adapted from:

Out of Africa and Shadows on the Grass,
by Isak Dinesen

Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller,
by Judith Thurman

Silence Will Speak,
by Errol Trzebinski

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EXT/THE AFRICAN PLAIN-DAY-CLOSE ON A RIVERINE THICKET

NO MUSIC. The thicket is sundappled and still, too green for Africa. The SIBILANCE of the AIR, of RUNNING WATER, unseen. CHITTERINGS and STIRRINGS. Suddenly, the FLURRY of a chase: a SHARP SCREAM, small, cut short. A HUSH.

And now, the VOICE of an OLD WOMAN . . dry . . precise.

HER VOICE

I had a farm in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong hills.

Slowly, SHOT WIDENS. BEGIN MAIN TITLES.

HER VOICE (cont'd)

The equator runs across these highlands, a hundred miles to the north, and the farm lay at an altitude of over six thousand feet. In the daytime, you felt that you had got high up, near to the sun, but the early mornings and evenings were limpid and restful, and the nights were cold.

The thicket is merely an outpost of bush and tree, clinging at the river's edge, besieged by a broad, grassy plain. INTO VIEW: a lioness, muzzle dark with blood, and now, her black-maned mate. They stare INTO CAMERA . . dominate it . . RECEDE as SHOT WIDENS.

HER VOICE (cont'd)

The geographical position and the height of the land combined to create a landscape that had not its like in all the world. There was no fat on it, and no luxuriance anywhere; it was Africa distilled up through six thousand feet, like the strong and refined essence of a continent.

INTO VIEW: Cape buffalo, hostile . . curious giraffe, stock-still . . Thomson's and Grant's gazelles, taut as springs: all are fixed on THE CAMERA, the lions now lost to sight. SHOT (BALLOON-MOUNTED) BECOMES AERIAL, CONTINUES TO WIDEN. TITLES CONTINUE.

HER VOICE (cont'd)

The colors were dry and burnt, like the colors in pottery. Upon the grass of the great plains the crooked bare old thorn-trees were scattered, and the grass was spiced like thyme and bog-myrtle; in some places the scent was so strong that it smarted in the nostrils.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The plain is a great yellow-green lawn, cropped close by a thousand grazing animals. There are zebra, impala, topi, wildebeest. INTO FRAME at great distance: an open safari car, its noise unheard, ruffling the game in its path. Indistinct, the figures of two men, and with them, a woman.

HER VOICE (cont'd)

The views were immensely wide. Everything that you saw made for greatness and freedom and unequalled nobility.

The SHOT is vast and still IT WIDENS.

HER VOICE (cont'd)

In the middle of the day, the air was alive over the land like a flame burning; it scintillated, waved and shone like running water, mirrored and doubled all objects, and created great Fata Morgana.

The CAR, diminished, LEAVES THE SHOT. Again the plain is tranquil, man's passing an irrelevance. The SHOT is now a panorama, all the world contained by the horizon. Above, towering up, cumulonimbus advance. END TITLES.

HER VOICE (cont'd)

Up in this high air, you breathed easily, drawing in a vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the highlands, you woke up in the morning and thought:

Here I am, where I ought to be.

SHOT HOLDS: a scene from prehistory, God's mind before the thought of Adam.

INT/EXT/A BALCONIED BEDROOM AT MOMBASA CLUB-DAY

CLOSE ON KAREN DINESEN in profile, glistening, slick with sweat. She drinks champagne, languidly strokes her face and neck, tastes her salt. Idle:

KAREN

When is it they marry us?

She is 28, aristocratic, rebellious, sardonic: a romantic protecting her heart by acting the realist. Her intellect is substantial, of little value to a woman of her time, her emotions those of a gifted child, unloved. Her masks fail to hide her vulnerability: about her always, a sense of yearning that is both appetite and hunger.

HER POV--FROM THE BALCONY

To establish Mombasa: a ribbon of surf, Fort Jesus looming over the dhows in the harbor.

BROR (O.S.)

Tomorrow morning. Before the train.
Do you plan to be there?

ANOTHER ANGLE

Her damp kimono gapes and clings. In a chair beside her, cheerfully naked, BROR BLIXEN, 26, typically at ease, her deerhound at his feet. Born to the Swedish purple, he is without guile or guilt, an innocent hedonist unburdened by complexities: there will always be something to ride after.

Their manner is peculiar: fond, familiar, yet detached.

KAREN

It's that or home to mother: I'll be there. Unless you find me . . . dull.

BROR

In bed? Hardly. We surely frightened the dog. I've been wanting to do that with you for quite some time.

KAREN

Truly?

BROR

Since I was ten, as I remember. You were my Older Woman. By the time I knew how all the parts worked, you'd taken up with Hans.

KAREN

I don't believe I know him.

BROR

He did care about you, Tanne.

KAREN

Never.

BROR

You were trying to own him. None of us wants that.

KAREN

Can't we send to the wharf to see about my crates? That's all my crystal. All my Limoges.

(CONTINUED)

BROR

It's broken or it's not.

(beat)

- Is it strange, having been with twins?

KAREN

(cool)

It lacks variety, yes.

She steps into the room, looks for a cigarette. Above the rumbled bed, mosquito netting tied in a ball. Bror and the dog follow. He'll pour wine, sit on a stool.

BROR

(a grin)

Sorry.

KAREN

Tell me about the farm.

BROR

You must wait: it's a surprise.

KAREN

Tell me something, then. What are the women like? And don't say you don't know.

BROR

Just women. Less stuffy than at home. They shoot well, some of them.

KAREN

Better than I do?

BROR

Not birds. It will take a bit for you to learn the game.

KAREN

I won't nag, but I don't want you involved in anything serious.

BROR

You're the one that's prone to that.

KAREN

No more. If I fall in love with anyone, I'll want it to be you.

(beat)

I've talked you into this, haven't I?

BROR

You did say I'd be a fool to say no. Or was it idiot?

CONTINUED:

KAREN

There are other women with money.

BROR

None I like as well.

He takes a sponge from a bowl on the bureau, wets his head. Then, casual:

BROR (cont'd)

Hans says you want my title.

Her laughter, rich with candor, then, serious: .

KAREN

You've never judged me, have you?

BROR

Often. You want much more than anyone can have--you may pay for that. But I like you for it. There's no point in living small.

KAREN

No.

He slips her gown to her waist, sponges her neck and shoulders. She shudders at the water's trickle. And with pleasure.

KAREN (cont'd)

I feel like an otter. Slippery.

BROR

(a grin)

And behave like one.

He begins to sponge her breast. Her eyes close: she guides his hand.

EXT/DENSE GREEN FOREST-DAY

Dawn, a light mist rising. From a stand of bamboo, the HEAVY PROGRESS and BELLY RUMBLINGS of a great animal moving slowly, feeding. A swatch of gray hide, a flash of ivory.

DENYS FINCH-HATTON

In bush shorts with suspenders, an old dress shirt without a collar, a felt terai. He is intent, not concerned, all possibilities agreed to.

He is Eton and Oxford, the son of an earl, his family's motto Je Respondray (I will answer); about him, a detached delight, a reserve, amused, which holds him at a distance: he accepts all things as they are, is pleased by the absurd, but he fears an obligation (a limit to his freedom) the way some men fear a snake.

His rifle is a Rigby double, unadorned. In the webbing of the small fingers of his left hand, two cartridges: he may fire twice, reload, shoot twice more--in eight seconds. He finds it fair that one day, eight seconds may not be enough.

FIND KANUTHIA off his right shoulder, small and wild, perpetually silent, without questions because the idea of alternatives does not occur. Perhaps he is a primitive: his father died not knowing that iron had become steel, that there were oceans, and white men who believed the land could be possessed.

There is a clarity to their relationship: In the face of a charge, Denys will shoot until the animal is down or they are overrun; if Denys leaps aside, or if Kanuthia has fled when he turns for his second rifle, the man who ran may live. They are not friends: only honor is involved. They have stood together many times.

DENYS'S POV

Twenty yards to the left, WASILI, an old tracker; wiry, with a staff, looks to Denys, shakes a pouch: a fine dust drifts on the wind--away from the elephant.

WIDER

Denys is very close to the tusker, closer than we knew, but the animal is in heavy cover, moving away, and he must have a head shot. Denys makes a SOUND, a low THURUM in his throat. The elephant stops still. A SILENCE.

Their movements careful, Denys and Kanuthia circle left. Suddenly, with a GREAT SQUEAL, the elephant CRASHES AWAY through the forest, no shot available.

They convene, the natives looking to Denys for judgment. He gives his rifle to Kanuthia, THURUMMS, self-deriding. Wasili HOOTS; Kanuthia permits a small smile; Denys shrugs. They move off after the elephant.

INT/AN OFFICE-DAY

High-ceilinged, spartan, adobe. Karen in traveling clothes, Bror in a white suit, stand before an OFFICER in khaki who has help with the names from a small sheet of paper.

OFFICER

On the authority of His Majesty's government residing in me, I do declare that Karen Christentze Dinesen, a female subject of the kingdom of Denmark, and the honorable Bror von Blixen-Finecke, baron to the king of Sweden, are today and henceforth united as man and wife. God save this company. God save the King.

We'll have your papers straightaway.

He leaves the room. As Bror turns away, Karen takes his sleeve, eyes full.

KAREN

Thank you for this.

BROR

Baroness Blixen.

EXT/THE OPEN PLAIN-DAY-VERY WIDE

The drylands, shimmering in the heat, barely relieved by whistling thorn, wait-a-bit. In the middleground, rhino, and small on the horizon, a moving train: two freight cars, two flat cars, three coaches. Looming beyond: Kilimanjaro.

ON A FLAT CAR

Half-loaded with crates of all sizes. Three men and a BOY, 18, Americans, bang away at the game, AD LIB gibes and curses; they'll shoot at anything, at any distance.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leaning on a crate, sipping warm beer, judgmental, BERKELEY (Barclay) COLE, 26, in appearance a boy, small and fair, nearly delicate, his gaze a man's. A WHOOP: zebra near the track. A fusillade.

ONE ZEBRA

A fountain of blood spurts, two red blotches spread along its rib cage. Five steps and it falters to its knees, RECEDES as the train moves on, left as carrion.

THE FLAT CAR

The boy turns away, pleased, offers his rifle.

THE BOY

Would you like to have a try?

BERKELEY

Thank you, no.

THE BOY

Your first time to Africa?

BERKELEY

Live here, actually.

THE BOY

You do. Really.

(no response)

Much trouble with the nigras?

BERKELEY

(beat)

No.

THE BOY

We're going for one of everything, but it's lions we want the most.

BERKELEY

They feel much the same about you.

HENRY

Have you ever shot a lion?

BERKELEY

Yes.

THE BOY

What sort of heart have they got? How many shots to put them down?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERKELEY

It's just the one, usually. They're quite quick when they come and at the second shot . . . usually they've got there by then, they're on you, I mean and then . . . well of course then they've won, haven't they?

HOLD on Berkeley, calm, the boy, not.

EXT/THE PLAIN-DAY

Denys and Wasili on their haunches, intent, grinning at their game of small stones, ANGLE ADJUSTING TO REVEAL their meager equipment, the elephant's bloody-stumped tusks, Kanuthia, staring down the train track.

INT/FIRST CLASS COACH-DAY

Facing wooden benches the length of the car. Bror, THREE OTHER MEN sit, stand, drink from flasks, tin cups, pass among them Karen's wedding gift: a bolt-action rifle, beautifully machined, stock inlaid.

Brass-bound gun case open on her lap, Karen sits opposite LORD DELAMERE, 43, a stocky Churchill, imperious, hair curling to the shoulder, in each hand a cartridge, one a massive .600 solid-nose, the other a sleek .375 magnum.

DELAMERE

There's a bloody big beast just there! He thinks: shall I mash her?! He comes! Pick your gun!

KAREN

The velocity of the magnum--

DELAMERE

Bless me, she's read a book!

KAREN

I'll be quicker with the lighter gun.

FIRST MAN

Brave girl! Shoot for the eye!

DELAMERE

(derisive)

Shoot for the eye.

BROR

Lord Delamere believes in knocking things down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELAMERE

(opening his shirt)

Things that want to mash you.

SECOND MAN

Bell shot a thousand elephant with a two-fifty-six.

DELAMERE

Course he's dead now.

(to her)

Here's what happens when you don't knock them down.

(his chest is scarred)

KAREN

What did that?

DELAMERE

Rhino, damn her.

THIRD MAN

Rather old rhino, really: I'd've done her with a brick.

WITH BROR/TWO-SHOT

FIRST MAN

Don't know it's wise to give them guns--hard to say just how they'll use them.

(laughter: a male alliance)

WIDER

The train slows, IRON SHRIEKING. They're thrown about, lunge for the windows to see.

FIRST MAN

Look here, it's Finch-Hatton!

THEIR POV: DENYS AND HIS NATIVES

THIRD MAN (O.S.)

What d'you think for the tusks--ten stone?

DELAMERE (O.S.)

Twelve, I'd say.

As the train pulls opposite Denys, shudders to a stop:

DENYS

Is this the train for Edinburgh?

EXT/THE TRAIN

The whites pile out, the blacks in the last two cars craning to see. Denys and the Europeans AD LIB greetings, gather at the ivory. In the b.g., Berkeley strolls from the flat car, the Americans following. Karen's dog dashes about.

INT/THE COACH

KAREN

Is he lost?

BROR

Finch-Hatton? Hardly.

And leaves her to see him, Karen finally following.

EXT/THE TRAIN-DENYS AND BERKELEY

To one side, private, fond of each other.

DENYS

We're onto a herd half a day there.
Some nice old bulls.

BERKELEY

Not up to it, eh?

DENYS

Thought you'd want the practice.
You'd have the benefit of my
experience.

BERKELEY

No, I really musn't.

DENYS

Can you take these (the tusks) along
for me, then? Bilea can fetch them
from the station.

Berkeley nods, sees to it as Bror comes up, Karen trailing.

BROR

Good shooting, Denys?

DENYS

Hello, Blix. Fair enough.

BROR

Here, Karen: another man for you. May
I present Denys Finch-Hatton.

(to him)

New wife. Bought her in Mombasa.

DENYS

(hat off, grinning)
Were you expensive, madam?

KAREN

I hope to be. And a bargain.

DENYS

Well said.

BROR

She thought you were lost.
(irritating her)

DENYS

(for her)
Well, that's all relative, isn't it?
So perhaps I was.

DELAMERE

See here Denys: We're having a party
at your house--can you come?

DENYS

Sorry, no: time I paid the grocer.
There's a new claret somewhere: Bilea
will find it for you.

The train TOOTS; all move to board; Denys walks with Karen.

KAREN

You just give them your house?!

DENYS

Oh, they give it back, usually.

He's undoing his bracelet, strands of silver wire.

KAREN

Your hunting is a business then.

DENYS

(curious, mild)
You'd rather kill for sport?

KAREN

I don't believe I said that.

DENYS

I'm not sure they care why we shoot
them; perhaps they do. I shall miss
your party: you must take your
present now.

(and gives it to her)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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KAREN

Is it silver?

DENYS

Ethiopian. It may give you a memory when you've gone home and left us.

KAREN

I won't be going home.

DENYS

You've been unhappy there?

KAREN

You presume, Finch-Hatton.

(returns the bracelet)

And your present's much too dear.

DENYS

Ah. You want things of no value. Take my hat then. Or my prospects.

She has to laugh. The others, aboard, SHOUT for her.

DENYS (cont'd)

It's just a bracelet, Baroness. It's not as though it were . . . a book.

Her glance, shrewd. At the train, he helps her board.

KAREN

May I have it please?

He hands it up to her; calm, she puts it on.

DENYS

May I know why?

KAREN

So we'll know I'm not afraid of you.

He laughs, delighted. The train begins to move.

HER POV

Denys, RECEDING, still smiling, doesn't wave.

INT/THE COACH-NIGHT

The men in varying postures of sleep. Travel-worn, Karen tries to doze, irritated by the boy who stares at her body. Coldly, she stares back, begins to unbutton her damp dress; undone, the boy feigns sleep.

Moonlit. Carrying pajamas, she makes her way among the crates to find Berkeley on a keg, smoking a pipe.

KAREN

Mister Cole?

BERKELEY

It's Barclay, please.

KAREN

I must get out of these clothes. May I change out here?

BERKELEY

Surely.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Shielded by the crates, just head and shoulders showing, she steps from her clothes and for a moment, stretches to let the air flow over her body, through her hair.

WITH BERKELEY-MOMENTS LATER

As she returns in silk pajamas.

KAREN

May I sit with you?

BERKELEY

Of course.

He feels no need to speak. In time:

KAREN

What brought you here?

BERKELEY

(a long beat)

I s'pose it's Twiga I love best. Giraffe? They're quite awkward, really, but they're such ladies you never think to look at their feet so when they move, it's as though they aren't connected to anything a'tall. Like great huge flowers floating on the grass.

(a grin)

Sorry.

Because she's captivated. In silence, they watch the darkness pass by.

Kikuyu in European castoffs hold horses, mind carriages. A Model T chugs up, the natives wary as the plunging horses. A HUGE MAN extricates himself, moves ponderously to the lawn party.

ON THE LAWN-MOVING

Buffet tables, punch bowls, pink gins on silver trays, silent servants. Children run, two boys fight hard, ignored. A variety of dress: khaki, kilts, caftans, summer dresses, every sort of hat and helmet on both sexes. Fly whisks on some wrists, women with revolvers on their hips, a drink in every hand.

About the settlers throughout, in costume and setting, always the coincidence of luxury and deprivation: battered boots beneath a Paris gown, fine wine in a tin cup, elegance at odds with some shabby detail.

TWO-SHOT/BROR AND KAREN

She's in a fresh dress; he hasn't changed.

KAREN

What do these people do?

BROR

Do as they like, pretty much: they'll be our friends, if we have any. Settlers, most of them. Black sheep like us.

KAREN

Can't we go on to the farm?

BROR

This is for you, Tanne: there are people travelled half a day to come.

KAREN

What about my things?

BROR

Farah's at the station now.

(moving away)

You ought to have a hat.

KAREN

(to his back)

I don't look well in hats.

SHOT: LONG ON A MAN

Back turned discreetly, he urinates in the flowerbeds.

SHOT: THREE WOMEN

FIRST WOMAN

His twin brother threw her over so she's gone and married Bror. She's got money, poor thing. He's run through all of his.

SECOND WOMAN

He's such fun: what a shame if she coops him up.

SHOT: A MIXED GROUP

A man drops ice in a woman's bodice; another reaches after it. She laughs, doesn't oppose him.

SHOT: DELAMERE AND KAREN

DELAMERE

Brings up the color in a man, but it's a hard posting here for the ladies. Always go home for the rains: keep you sane.

SHOT: BROR AND TWO MEN

FIRST MAN

You'll be staying home now, Blix?

SECOND MAN

There's that American girl you haven't got to--the one with the teeth?

FIRST MAN

(to the second)

And then your wife, a'course.
(laughter)

SHOT: KAREN AND A DOWAGER

KAREN

I feel I've got so much to do: settling the house . . . and Bror's never been good with the servants.

DOWAGER

Your man Parah's a bit cheeky for my taste.

KAREN

I haven't seen him yet. What does one do about discipline?

DOWAGER

We're not supposed to strike them; the D.C. gets all upset. I clout them anyway, just as I would my child.

SHOT: TWO MEN ON HORSEBACK

Drifting through the party, playing croquet with polo mallets. One horse bumps a woman: she gives it a stiff elbow, chats on.

SHOT: A VIVACIOUS WOMAN

With an eye patch, her face scarred by claws.

SHOT: KAREN AND BROR IN A MIXED GROUP

KAREN

And he just leaves you the house?

A WOMAN

He's awfully decent, Denys, but we do abuse him. It will be better now we've got a club.

KAREN

(to Bror)

You didn't say there was a club.

BROR

New last month. We don't allow the government types: they've got a club of their own.

KAREN

How strange there'd be clubs out here.

A MAN

Sun never sets on the British club. Two Englishmen and a bottle and there you are: backbone of the Empire.

ANOTHER MAN

Is there something we can call you that gets us round this "Baroness"?

KAREN

(cool)

I'm sure there must be.

SHOT: A YOUNG WOMAN

With a man twice her age, talking covertly, assignation in the air.

SHOT: ON KAREN

Dripping in the sun, feeling the heat.

SHOT: BROR AND KAREN PRIVATELY-LATER

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BROR

It won't pay, being grand here,
Tanne.

KAREN

I want to see my house.

BROR

When Farah comes. Unless you don't
care about your crates anymore.

SHOT: KAREN AT THE PUNCH BOWL-LATER

Late afternoon. She's wan, exhausted, momentarily alone. A
girl, 14, FELICITY, blond, with the promise of being a
stunner, a revolver on her hip, picks over the hors
d'oeuvres, dips herself champagne.

FELICITY

You ought to have a hat.

KAREN

You don't have one.

FELICITY

Used to it, I guess. I'm Felicity.
D'you want me to call you baroness?

KAREN

What do you call Lord Delamere?

FELICITY

D. That's what everybody calls him.

KAREN

Are you allowed champagne, Felicity?

FELICITY

Don't much care for gin.

KAREN

You're not too young?

FELICITY

Not for whisky. I'm going to marry
Denys but I have to be eighteen for
that. What a bore. D'you know Idina?

KAREN

Who is Idina?

FELICITY

Lady Sackville. The woman with Bror.

KAREN'S POV

Across the lawn, Bror and a laughing, full-bodied woman, IDINA, their manner familiar:

BROR AND IDINA-MOMENTS LATER

BROR

So they're both of them naked and not
a shrub in sight--

A MAN

Come give us a hand, will you Blix?
Just sun, I think, but your wife's
gone faint..

INT/DENYS'S STUDY-DAY-CLOSE ON FARAH

Turbaned, stiff on a camel saddle stool, inscrutable,
waiting. He is Somali, that race Hamitic: Pharaoh's son in
blackface. O.S., the MUTED NOISE of the PARTY. He stands.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Because Karen, lying on a couch, a cool cloth on her
forehead, is stirring, sits up, slow to wake.

FARAH

Msabu. I am Farah Aden. We can go
now.

And abruptly departs. Karen looks about.

A great number of books, native art, a huge elephant tusk,
a half dozen hats, memorabilia of public school days, a
littered desk, some sheet music, a dehydrated orange, a gun
cabinet with a dozen rifles and shotguns. As she moves to
the door, she pauses a moment to look at photographs of two
women, leaves the room.

EXT/APPROACHING THE FARM-NIGHT

Two ox-wagons loaded with her baggage move ponderously in
the night, native drivers silent, Farah on one wagon box,
Karen dozing on the other, Bror on horseback.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As they turn up the drive to the house, a substantial stone
bungalow, the grounds wild about it. From bomas off-screen,
the Kikuyu begin to gather, the children running, laughing,
falling silent when they're near.

BROR

Hello the house!

And Karen wakes.

AT THE HOUSE

A few lanterns and a white man, BELKNAP, pushing through the crowd. As he helps her down, Bror SPEAKS sharply in Swahili: from the throng, a ragged "JAMBO, MEMSAAB."

BROR

This is Belknap, Karen: he runs the farm, Farah the house.

BELKNAP

Good evening, ma'am.

KAREN

You're American, then.

BELKNAP

Yes, ma'am.

KAREN

You've got experience with a dairy, Mister Belknap?

BELKNAP

(puzzled, a look to Bror)
No, ma'am.

BROR

And this is Esa: not a bad cook as they go out here.

Old and grizzled, Esa bows; Karen SAYS just: "Esa."

BROR

And this one's Juma. Houseboy, but he'll do whatever.

Juma, young and anxious, in a fez, manages a gentle "JAMBO, MEMSAAB"; her "HELLO, JUMA" is warm.

BROR

And here's your house.

HOLD ON KAREN, looking not at the house but gravely into the faces of the Kikuyu around her, some of them children.

INT/THE LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Two kerosene lamps, and two more held by Bror and Farah, the shadows strong, but there is a fireplace, and the sense that it is clean and solid, but nearly empty, furnished just with Bror's necessities. An antipathy between Farah and the dog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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BROR

The dining room there, and the bedrooms to the rear. And there's a fine verandah off the drawing room.

KAREN

The kitchen?

BROR

Outside. To cool the house.

(beat)

It's quite nice, Tanne. For Africa.

KAREN

(firmly)

I like it very much. I'm going to be happy here.

BROR

(gently)

I do hope so . . . And I've saved you one surprise.

INT/THE BATHROOM-NIGHT

Kerosene-lit. Giddy with wine, Karen luxuriates in her bath --which is not afroth with bubbles. On a camp stool, Bror drinks with her.

BROR

You'd best watch your dog with Farah.

KAREN

Do they eat them?!

BROR

Not Farah: he's Muslim. They won't even touch a dog . . . Did you like your party?

KAREN

They don't care much for women here.

BROR

That's far from true.

KAREN

As people, I mean. I suppose we aren't very useful here, really . . . If you leave me, I'm going to marry Barclay Cole.

BROR

Yes . . . Delamere?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

23/

KAREN

If you liked Napoleon. . Lord Delamere's a century off.

BROR

Finch-Hatton?

KAREN

He hunts for his money, but he gave me a silver bracelet as if it were twine.

BROR

No. His father's an earl. Earl of Winchelsea.

KAREN

He said-no, he didn't . . . You haven't asked what I think of Idina.

BROR

No.

(and smiles)

INT/DINING ROOM-LATER

Thick candles on a bare table. She's clean, without makeup, in shorts, a man's shirt. They eat, Juma fixed at the wall.

KAREN

You have faith in Belknap?

BROR

He's sound enough.

KAREN

I'm not sure it was wise, taking on someone who doesn't know cattle.

BROR

I didn't buy cattle. We're going to grow coffee instead.

Moment. Stunned, she waits, then, cool:

KAREN

That's not what we planned.

BROR

You were in Denmark. I had to decide.

KAREN

We'd made a decision.

(no response)

We don't know anything about coffee.

(CONTINUED)

BROR

You plant it, it grows.

KAREN

We said we'd do a dairy. My family put their money for a--

BROR

Your family doesn't care whether it's cows or coffee as long as it pays. You've got to be with a herd or things go wrong. I didn't come here to sit with the bloody things.

(shrugs)

Just tell them I changed my mind.

KAREN

The next time you change your mind, do it with your money!

BROR

They bought you a title, baronessa --they didn't buy me.

Moment. Idly, Karen touches the candle flame with her finger, licks it. Then:

KAREN

Juma? Go fetch some wine . .

(he's off)

For my lover's brother.

Bror looks at her, very cold, wipes his mouth.

BROR

I think you're tired, Karen.

He leaves the table, passes by her.

KAREN

Did I tell you Hans came to say goodbye?

He grabs her hair close to her head, yanks her to her feet.

BROR

(close, in Swedish)

Some day you'll go too far.

He shoves her away, knocking her into the table. She comes at him with the candle, wax dripping. He knocks it away, SWEARING, batting at his pants. A furious look between them, dominance at issue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slow, he comes for her--but she might spring at him! In a flash, he has her, kisses her brutally--and she kisses him back! tries to match his strength: but for her size, she'd force him to the floor.

They break, gleaming with sexual combat, utterly equal. He grabs at the waistband of her shorts; she strikes him in the face with her fist. A moment. They're apart; he might kill her now--and she is not afraid. Contemptuously slow, she takes off her shorts, throws them away.

She pushes past him to the door, pulling off her shirt, Bror following, past Juma, returning with decanted wine. Undismissed, Juma rights her glass, is pouring when, O.S., a dull THUD, a beat, and her small YELP, hurt and passion indistinguishable.

Juma doesn't spill a drop.

EXT/THE HOUSE-DAY

Kikuyu children play, Farah directs the unloading of the wagons. Karen comes onto the terrace, sipping tea. Work stops. Uneasy, Farah comes to her.

KAREN

Where is Baron Blixen?

FARAH

He is gone to hunt, msabu. By Samburu.

KAREN

When will he be back?

FARAH

He says he can come before the rain.

She looks at the clear sky, so Farah does, too.

KAREN

Is it going to rain today?

FARAH

It can be many days before the rain, msabu.

A flicker of fear. She sips her tea.

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY

In the b.g., Kikuyu fell trees, clear forest, their VOICES CARRYING clear. With her horse, Karen walks with Belknap past rows of seedlings, the natives staring as they pass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BELKNAP

--Maybe a hundred ton. Depending.

KAREN

Depending on what?

BELKNAP

Depending on Africa, Miz Blixen.

KAREN

When do we harvest?

BELKNAP

These are seedlings: it's a couple years anyway. What season they'll bear in?

(shrugs)

Nobody's ever planted coffee this high.

KAREN

Just where does the money come from meantime?

BELKNAP

If you ain't got it, be good if you tell me now.

She can't believe what Bror's done. But now she laughs.

KAREN

Do you write to your mother, Mister Belknap?

BELKNAP

No, ma'am.

And watches her, puzzled, as she mounts.

EXT/THE HOUSE-DAY-WIDE

Kikuyu with scythes are levelling the tall grass. Karen's gestures are wide: it's a large lawn that's wanted. Farah is patient.

EXT/A CREEK BED-DAY

There's a narrow stream, but the converging wash is dry. For reasons unfathomable to Farah, Karen wants the main stream dammed to divert the flow up the wash to pond; he knows only that water has always flowed down the wash.

Her deerhound's hostility has given way to curiosity, but Farah is implacable.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Half-furnished. Karen puts books on a shelf; Farah and Juma are in conference at a crate they're unpacking.

FARAH

(holding out a book)

Msabu? What people are these?

A colored plate in a medical book: a schematic drawing of a man--organs, muscles, veins in bright colors.

KAREN

That is how all people are inside.

(taps Juma's chest)

In here.

Grave, Farah and Juma look down at themselves, to her, to each other, fail to believe their innards are yellow, blue and green.

INT/DINING ROOM-DAY

Karen puts white gloves on Juma, buttons them for him. He holds his hands as though his wrists were broken.

EXT/THE HOUSE-DAY-ON FARAH

Watching Karen plant a flower bed in the b.g. He picks up a wildflower lopped off in the scything of the lawn, ponders the ways of his mistress.

INT/DINING ROOM-NIGHT

She's alone with her dinner, reading by a kerosene lamp. As Juma clears, a plate slips from his hands; he looks helplessly at his gloves.

CLOSE-DOZENS OF CARTRIDGE CASES ON THE GROUND

The heap increasing as she FIRES (O.S.). Her small GRUNT (O.S.) each time the rifle batters her shoulder.

INT/HER BEDROOM-NIGHT

In pajama bottoms, putting on the top, wincing, gingerly touching her shoulder, a mass of blue and yellow bruises. She gets into bed to read, pulls Bror's pillow beside her, studies his side of the bed, empty, picks up her book.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Fully furnished now, open to the terrace. A small BOY, very solemn, waits just inside the door, gazes at a cuckoo clock. In time, at the quarter-hour, a CUCKOO. The boy waits, bobs, departs, very grave.

First light, misty and still. Karen rides away from the house.

EXT/THE WILD COUNTRY-A SERIES OF SHOTS

To show the game as she rides, suggesting the Eden which Kenya then was. Today, the abundance is gone but the variety remains: fifteen minutes from the Nairobi airport is a reserve inhabited by lion, cheetah, rhino, elephant, giraffe, eland, waterbuck, hippo, warthog, wildebeest, baboon, kongoni, zebra, impala, bushbuck, crocodile, ostrich, Thomson's and Grant's gazelles.

To be included: the sense of a killing ground--torn earth dark with blood, scattered bone, the remains of a carcass--a feeling of Africa, not Bambi.

And Karen, not communing with nature but tense, alert.

EXT/A HILLSIDE-DAY

Karen sits elbows to knees, scanning the plain below with binoculars. Her horse, ground-tied, browses a distance away, her rifle in its scabbard. The horse WHICKERS; she ignores it.

A lioness thirty yards away, coming through the grass, stealthy.

The horse WHINNIES, bolts a few yards, turns to look.

She looks to the horse, then opposite.

The lioness, closer, stock-still, staring at her.

She's terrified, frozen: any second she will try to run. Now, an absolute order, flat, dead calm:

DENYS (O.S.)

Sit very still, please, I'd rather not shoot her.

He is behind her, rifle casually ready, Kanuthia at hand.

DENYS (cont'd)

You're quite safe: I'll take her if I have to. Concentrate.

The lioness moves toward her, stops. His rifle comes ready.

DENYS (cont'd)

She won't like the smell of you . .
Do you sing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

29/

KAREN

(unsteady)

Not just at the moment.

DENYS

Barclay and I are in need of a soprano.

The lioness turns away, dog-trots into the grass, vanishes.

Trembling, she gets to her feet, fights for composure, nearly succeeds; they'll walk to her horse.

KAREN

Good morning, Finch-Hatton. I'm quite glad to see you.

DENYS

Baroness. That was nicely done.

KAREN

How much closer did you think you'd let her come?

DENYS

A bit. She wanted to see if you'd run: that's how they decide. Much like people that way.

KAREN

If you'd been wrong . .

DENYS

I'd've had to kill her.

KAREN

Suppose you missed.

DENYS

Very embarrassing.

As they walk, he FIRES TWICE.

DENYS (cont'd)

For Barclay. We stopped at your house and then came looking.

O.S., distant, TWO ANSWERING SHOTS.

AT HER HORSE

Denys expertly checks her rifle, sheathes it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENYS

You'll want to keep that handy: your horse is a very bad shot.

He gives her a leg up, taps her boot.

DENYS (cont'd)

They're the devil to walk in if you're thrown.

KAREN

I don't get thrown, Finch-Hatton.

DENYS

Not ever . . . remarkable . . . You wouldn't rather call me Denys?

Moment. She looks down at him, grave.

KAREN

I don't think so.

EXT/THE TERRACE-DAY

The lawn broad about them, flowerbeds beginning to bloom. Denys surveys it; Berkeley and Karen sit; all have tea.

DENYS

A bit like Surrey, isn't it?
(to her, truly curious)
Do you like to change things?

KAREN

For the better, I hope.

DENYS

Perhaps it's just to make your mark. Like the canines leaving scent to show their territory.

KAREN

How lovely, Finch-Hatton.
(to Berkeley)
He's said I'm a puppy, squirting on the shrubs!

BERKELEY

Too long in the bush, I'd say.

DENYS

Have you ever thought about being a woman, Barclay?

BERKELEY

No, Denys. I haven't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENYS

I haven't either.

(they laugh)

Did you know that in all the literature there are no poems celebrating the foot. Lips, hair, eyes, hands, neck, arms, breasts, hips, legs, even knees. Not one verse for the foot. Why do you think that is?

KAREN

Priorities, I suppose. Did you think you'd write one?

DENYS

It walks in beauty, like the night/
Thine alabaster . . . foot.

(they laugh)

The problem is, there's nothing to rhyme it with.

KAREN

Put.

DENYS

Not a noun.

KAREN

Doesn't have to be:

Along he came, and he did put/
Upon my farm, his clumsy foot.

(laughter, then:)

I'm waiting for you to tell Barclay
what a fool I am.

DENYS

(to Berkeley)

She had a lion a bit interested.

(to her)

No, you're entitled to take a chance
as long as you're the only one who'll
pay. Africa's very fair about that.
Wouldn't you say, Barclay?

BERKELEY

Perhaps. It really sounds more like
you.

(laughter)

A lull, a bit awkward. Denys finds an orange in his jacket,
peels it.

KAREN

Where are you going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENYS
(to Berkeley)
Where are we going?

BERKELEY
I believe you said we ought to look
in on Karen.

DENYS
Yes. So we are where we're going.

KAREN
(a beat)
Bror's off hunting.

They know that, and why: the whole colony does.

DENYS
Is he.

A long moment, expectant. In time, dry:

KAREN
Would you like to stay for dinner, by
any chance?

DENYS
Oh, I don't know. She doesn't sing,
Barclay. Can you tell a story?

KAREN
I happen to be very good at stories.

DENYS
I believe that.
(trisects the orange)
I think what we should do is take our
chairs out to this fine lawn . . and
eat some orange
(gives it to them)
and see what happens. Have you got
champagne?

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Under the clear VOICES of Denys and Berkeley, SINGING
Handel.

--WIDE ON THE LAWN, in late afternoon, the three of them in
conversation, Denys pacing. Juma strides from the house
with yet another bottle.

--IN THE COFFEE FIELDS at sunset, the three figures small,
surveying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

33/

--AT DINNER. Karen's in a gown, Denys in a burnoose, Berkeley in shorts and Bror's dinner jacket, too large. The table's elegant, her best things; both Farah and Juma serve while Esa fusses at the door. Denys and Juma joke over Juma's gloves. Karen watches Denys, contemplative.

--BEFORE THE FIRE. Karen's on the floor in pajamas, telling a story, both men intent on her.

--LATER. Floor pillows and brandy. Just ONE VOICE now. Berkeley's eyes are for Karen but hers are for Denys, standing almost formally at the mantel, SINGING.

EXT/THE HOUSE-DAY

Dawn, the sky just pink. Denys and Berkeley in bush clothes, bleary, ready to ride. Berkeley's mounted. To him:

KAREN

I want you to come often.

BERKELEY

I should like that very much.

He leans from the saddle to kiss her hand. She walks Denys to his horse.

DENYS

You'll want to see this country.

KAREN

I'll make Bror take me.

DENYS

(a beat; intimate:)

Will you be all right?

She nods. He might kiss her now, at least her cheek, but:

KAREN

Goodbye, Finch-Hatton.

They ride down the drive, Kanuthia loping alongside, turn to wave.

THEIR POV

Karen, small on the terrace, turns away.

Karen walks briskly with her dog among the bomas, the Kikuyu watching. Coming toward her, a boy of twelve, (KAMANTE), driving goats, hobbling on a crude crutch, ugly sores on his leg. He stares at her as they pass, his gaze adult, unafraid. Spontaneously, she stops to CALL after him: "You there."

His face is angular, like a cat's; he seems both frail, wise as the elders. She kneels to look at his leg, stands.

KAREN

Your leg is very sick.

(no response)

Tomorrow, you must come to the house for medicine.

(no response)

A small crowd gathers around them, deeply interested.

KAREN (cont'd)

If you do not come, the other boys will say you are afraid.

(he could care)

I myself will only think that you are foolish.

(that is another matter)

Tell me your name.

KAMANTE

Kamante.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

34/

KAREN

(to all)

This boy, Kamante must come to the house tomorrow. See to it.

INT/DINING ROOM-NIGHT

Alone, bored with her book, drinking wine, picking at her food, Juma at the wall. In time:

KAREN

Farah!

(when he appears)

We will go to town tomorrow.

FARAH

Yes, msabu.

(then)

Msabu? Can you go again where there are lions?

KAREN

Yes.

His sigh heavy with disapproval.

EXT/THE TERRACE-DAY

Dawn, still gray, and Kamante, stork-legged, too early, alone.

INT/HER BEDROOM-DAY

At her dressing table, trying her shirt with and without a scarf.

EXT/THE TERRACE--LATER

Farah waits with a mule wagon. She's forgotten Kamante, who waits with a clutch of those who've come to see.

KAREN

I have to go to town today. You must come back tomorrow.

As she moves to the wagon, Kamante darkens.

KAMANTE

Mamsaab.

(on her turn)

You say I am foolish not to come. So I have come.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

35/

A bold speech: the others are grave. She studies him.

KAREN

You're impertinent. But you have a point. Parah?

MINUTES LATER

She has cotton, alcohol, bandages. The leg is ugly. .

KAREN

This will hurt.

Once, his eyes flicker, nothing more. She notices.

INT/MUTHAIGA CLUB LOBBY-DAY

She looks around for someone who might answer a question but there's no one. Hesitant, she steps through the marked doorway to the men's bar.

INT/MEN'S BAR

Shabby. Military plaques, artillery shells, trophy heads. A number of men at the bar and some sitting, including the Huge Man, in what is obviously his chair, reading a paper. Several stare, fall silent as she enters.

KAREN

Excuse me? Could someone tell me where I get my mail?

HUGE MAN

Joseph!

A black major-domo comes from the end of the bar, SAYS Mensaab, doesn't touch her but indicates the door, firmly accompanies her out. No one's said a word to her. The men shake their heads, resume.

INT/LADIES LOUNGE-LATER

Women, a few men, in two's and three's; waiters bring tea, drinks. Only Karen sits alone; she has a stack of mail but would rather someone spoke to her. From the men's bar, CONVIVIAL NOISE (O.S.)

Idina, two women look her way as they leave, murmur. Idina comes to stand over her.

IDINA

You're Baroness Blixen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: .

35A/

KAREN
Yes?

IDINA
Do tell Bror we miss him in town.

KAREN
He's been hunting.

IDINA
So I'm told. Do tell him, will you?

KAREN
And you're Idina.

IDINA
Or Lady Sackville. If you're fond of
titles. Good day.

She returns to her titillated friends. HOLD ON KAREN,
humiliated.

EXT/MOVING WITH THE WAGON-DAY

Sundown. Karen and Farah on the wagon box. She's bleak.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

36/

FARAH

The rain comes soon, msabu.

She studies him, thinking: my only friend is black, a servant. And I don't know him. The SOUND OF RAIN (V.O.).

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Karen writes a letter, the RAIN heavy on the roof (O.S.) and now a BANGING (O.S.) at the front door. She goes.

Farah's opened the door to a half-naked Kikuyu, drenched.

KIKUYU

Bwana Blixen comes. In the forest.

Farah looks to Karen, apprehensive.

INT/LIVING ROOM-LATER

She's in boots, a poncho, taking her rifle from the gun cabinet, cartridges from a drawer below.

FARAH

Msabu--

She brushes past him.

EXT/THE FOREST-DAY

Karen trudges in the rain, rifle slung muzzle-down.

EXT/A TWO-TRACK IN THE FOREST-DAY

Dark, very wet. Bror, mounted, tired, trailed by a mule wagon, scattered bearers, a sorry bunch.

BROR'S POV

Well ahead, standing across the two-track, framed by dense wet forest, Karen, soaked, rifle at her waist.

NEW ANGLE

As he reaches her. She stares up, wipes her face.

BROR

Hello, Tanne.

KAREN

I want you to come home.

He dismounts, takes her gun, leads his horse, his arm around her shoulders.

The SOUND of RAIN (O.S.). CLOSE on her body in horizontal profile, damp, mottled by light and shadow from a low kerosene lamp, TRACKING calf, thigh, hip and waist to HOLD ON her breast, straining upward. INTO FRAME: Bror's head moving to her breast, her hand urgent in his hair.

INT/DINING ROOM-DAY

After breakfast. O.S., a SWAHILI BABBLE.

KAREN

Mother says she'll make us a loan until we've got a crop.

BROR

I must write to thank her. Are you making friends?

KAREN

The farm's a struggle, you know: every time I turn my back, it wants to go wild again.

BROR

Why did you dam the brook?

KAREN

So we'd have a pond. You could be a help.

(to Farah, entering)

What's all that racket?

FARAH

(shakes his head)

Kikuyu. They want to be sick now.

EXT/THE TERRACE-DAY

Inspired by Kamante, a dozen natives wait to present their aches and pains. A woman with a baby, its eyes swollen and crusted, second in line.

BROR

Don't start up with this, Karen: once they've got hold of you, they don't let go.

But already, ignoring the first man, she is examining the baby.

KAREN

Farah?

He looks to Bror, who shrugs. A sigh, then Farah's YES, MSABU as he turns into the house for her medicines.

CONTINUED:

38/

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY

With Belknap, inspecting the seedlings. Karen's curious, questioning; Bror's bored.

EXT/A MARSH-DAY-WIDE

Sundown. It's pastoral, standing water ringed by hummocks, beautiful in the dying light, no life visible but the ducks returning home, CALLING. Suddenly, Bror and Karen stand into sight, shooting right and left: ducks plummet into the water. A native boy plunges in to fetch them.

INT/MUTHAIGA CLUB DINING ROOM-NIGHT

Karen eats with Lord Delamere and his WIFE. Bror returns to the table; she smiles at him, touches his wrist as the conversation continues.

EXT/RIVER RAVINE-DAY

Above a chute of water, a lioness watches two cubs experiment with the river. PAN DOWN the chute to FIND clothes, a picnic on a rock, Bror's rifle, finally Bror and Karen, lazing in the pool below the fall.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-NIGHT

Karen works over the farm's books at her desk. A fond smile for Bror as he brings her a brandy, returns to his reading.

EXT/THE TERRACE-DAY

Medical hour. She unwraps Kamante's bandages to find the leg is worse, ulcerated and ugly. She sighs, defeated.

KAREN

I have failed you. This leg is very sick. It should go to the hospital.

KAMANTE

This leg may be foolish. It may think not to go to the hospital.

KAREN

This leg will do as it pleases. If it wants to be eaten up by worms, that is not for me to say. But if you will take this leg to the hospital, and keep it there until it is strong, I will think that you are wise and have done a good thing. Such a wise man as that I would want to work in my house, for wages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

39/

KAMANTE

How much wages would come to such a wise man as that?

KAREN

More wages than come of tending goats.

KAMANTE

(considers this)

I will speak to this leg.

EXT/MUTHAIGA CLUB-DAY-WIDE

A great commotion: men arriving on horseback, riding hard, some in old uniforms, all heavily armed; one rider has a pennant on a lance. Many horses, wagons, a few motorcars, already there. An exchange between two riders:

FIRST RIDER

What the devil's going on?

SECOND RIDER

It's war, by God!

INT/MEN'S BAR-DAY

The men silent, drinks in hand, listening to Delamere standing on a bench.

DELAMERE

There's a German regiment in Dar, word of another in Zanzibar. We expect they'll move north at once, before our troops can reach us. My plan's this: take as many as want to come and recce along the border. Send word back by runner as they move: when the regular army's got here, we'll attach to them as intelligence. We know the bush, they don't: and with luck, we'll take them to the Hun.

A MAN

Do you plan to engage them, D?

DELAMERE

We haven't strength enough for that.

(a grin)

But we might find a way to irritate them a bit.

(laughter, bold cries)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

40/

ANOTHER MAN

How long is this? I've got crops coming in.

DELAMERE

We're all that way. We're not enlisting: the farms come first. We'll each have to stay and go as we must.

ANOTHER MAN

We could arm the Masai. Point 'em south..

DELAMERE

And pray they'll confine themselves to Germans? I don't think so. We're all white to them. When this war's done, I don't want the job collecting Masai rifles.

About which there is much agreement.

INT/DINING ROOM-NIGHT

Bror and Karen in the midst of gear, including much ammunition, which they're packing in safari boxes. Farah comes and goes with more.

KAREN

You don't have to go--you want to.

BROR

We've an obligation, don't we?

KAREN

I'm not so fond of the Empire I'd have you shot for it.

BROR

We're gathering intelligence for the army, that's all.

KAREN

Delamere will fight first chance.

BROR

I'll tell him you said not to.

(then)

The farm will take care of itself--you've got Belknap.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

The farm does not take care of itself--I take care of it. And that's not the point. I didn't expect to like you so much.

BROR

(a grin)

You're not going to go falling in love?

KAREN

Not with someone who's always leaving.

EXT/OUTSIDE THE HOUSE-DAY

Dawn. Delamere, other white men, mounted, with pack mules, a few natives. Bror sheathes his rifle.

DELAMERE

You'll tend the home fires, Karen?

KAREN

I haven't decided yet.

Delamere laughs. Bror goes to her.

BROR

I'll try not to be long.

(she kisses his cheek)

That's a fine kiss goodbye.

KAREN

I'm better at hello.

He laughs, mounts; they move off. She watches them go, again alone.

EXT/THE HOSPITAL-DAY

The rough gardens of a low white-washed building. Karen is turning Kamante over to a nun, whose costume he studies. Karen touches him as she leaves; he hobbles away with the nun, turns to stare after her.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Karen's at her desk, working on her accounts. At the terrace doors, the cuckoo clock Boy with another his age and a YOUNGER CHILD. They edge into the room; she notices, lets them come. Farah enters with a strong-eyed youth (ISMAIL), beautiful and brave.

(CONTINUED)

FARAH

Msabu. This Somali is called Ismail. When you go into the forest, he can bring your rifles.

KAREN

I don't need him to bring my rifles.

FARAH

It may be so, msabu. But he can bring your rifles.

The three children wait beneath the clock.

KAREN

How much are we paying for this service which I do not need?

FARAH

Five rupees, msabu.

KAREN

That's too much.

FARAH

It may be so, msabu.

(beat)

If sometime you are torn in pieces and this Somali is not dead also, he must always be gone from this place for the fear that I can kill him. So I think it is not too much.

KAREN

Perhaps not. Very well, Ismail.

The clock CUCKOOES; the children stare. As they leave, the first Boy bows gravely, SAYS "Asante, memsaab" and the youngest child, dragged by the hand, turns back to PIPE: "Asante, memsaab."

EXT/THE HOUSE-DAY

Riding up, Felicity, a gutted gazelle across her pommel. The coltish assurance of a year ago has given way to a fragile bravado betrayed by awkwardness: she is both child and young woman, transitional. She SHOUTS "Hello the house," dismounts, wrestles the carcass from her saddle. Juma comes, Karen following. Felicity gives him a TERSE SWAHILI ORDER: he'll take the gazelle around back.

KAREN

Hello, Felicity.

FELICITY

Thought you might want some meat.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN
That's kind of you.

FELICITY
(shrugs)
Shot it on your land.
(beat)
I've got time for a drink, I guess.

EXT/THE TERRACE-LATER

FELICITY
--I tracked them to Magadi: we had a
splendid row. Their logic's not worth
beans.

KAREN
You are a bit young for war.

FELICITY
They took the boys: they're proud of
them. I knew they'd send me back: I
just did it to watch the fuss.

KAREN
Do you still plan to marry
Finch-Hatton?

FELICITY
Don't know he'd have me, do I? The
thing about Denys is . . . I think he'd
let me be. I'd like to run my own
show. The way you do.

KAREN
Is that what I do?

FELICITY
You don't seem to need us much. And
all this is yours, isn't it? I
thought Bror just--Baron Blixen,
sorry--I thought he was always
hunting.

KAREN
For something or other.

FELICITY
(an awkward pause)
Can I ask you something?

KAREN
Try and we'll see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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FELICITY

This intercourse business--is it
awful?

KAREN

No. You may find you enjoy it. But
that's not yet.

(CONTINUED)

FELICITY

I don't think my mother does.

KAREN

Mine didn't, either.

FELICITY

But you do?

KAREN

(has to laugh)

Yes, I rather do.

FELICITY

Perhaps it'll be all right then.

(beat)

They want to send me home to school next year: Mother says I'm growing up wild. What do you think?

KAREN

It's worth doing. The world is larger than Africa: you ought to see it. But you'll want to come back, I think.

FELICITY

Don't know I'd fit in there. It sounds quite fancy.

KAREN

Try to learn something useful: they wouldn't do that for me. Then you can stand alone. If you care to.

FELICITY

D'you like being alone?

KAREN

(a long beat, then, direct:)

No.

And stands to end it, walks her to her horse. Felicity infers the reprimand. At her horse:

FELICITY

Baroness? I didn't mean to pry. I've got nobody who'll be direct with me.

KAREN

(awkward herself)

Then you'd best call me Karen.

A moment. Felicity starts to mount, turns back to Karen, lip trembling, eyes full.

(CONTINUED)

FELICITY

I don't know what they want!

Moment. Remembering another girl, she touches Felicity's temple, then with a finger sketches her eyebrows, nose and lips, tilts up her chin. With deep feeling:

KAREN

Then to hell with them all.

A moment, and they laugh.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Karen confronts a YOUNG OFFICER, his hat in hand.

KAREN

It's internment, that's what it is!

OFFICER

You'll be safe in town; we can't protect you here.

KAREN

Do you think the Germans want to grow coffee?!

OFFICER

With our men gone, it's the native element concerns us.

KAREN

Ah. They don't love us after all!

OFFICER

I'm ordered to move women and their children off the farms.

KAREN

I'm a Danish subject, Lieutenant.

OFFICER

Women and children, baroness.

KAREN

Is that one category, or two?

OFFICER

I've also got a message from your husband. He wants you to send someone reliable with a wagon; they need paraffin and tinned food.

KAREN

Where would my husband like this wagon sent?

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER

They're on the border. North of Lake Natron.

(beat)

We'll come for you in two days then.

(a grin)

And I'm a captain, madam.

A smart salute and he's gone. Karen seethes, then:

KAREN .

Farah Aden!!

EXT/THE OPEN PLAIN-DAY

A freight wagon pulled by four spans of oxen. Farah, Juma, Ismail and three Kikuyu walk, ride on the wagon, drive two spare oxen.

PAN AHEAD TO FIND KAREN, mounted, leading this sojourn herself. She's sweating, swiping at the flies.

EXT/A DRY STREAM BED-DAY

Eyes rolling, flanks heaving, the great oxen lunge, stumble in the spans, struggle for purchase to haul the wagon up the crumbling bank; around them, the natives SHOUT, use their whips.

Karen watches, her heart with the oxen.

EXT/CAMP-DAY

Sundown. Karen sits in a camp chair, exhausted; Farah brings her food. In the b.g., her small tent.

INT/THE TENT-LATER

She ties the door flap, dubious of the protection it offers, puts her rifle by her cot, starts to undress, doesn't, flops down.

EXT/THE OPEN PLAIN-DAY-WIDE

The ox train against the afternoon sun. PAN TO FIND Ismail and Juma, and Karen, sitting, elbows braced on knees to steady her rifle. A herd of Thomson's gazelle browse at distance. Ismail's optimistic: his knife is drawn; Juma is doubtful. ZOOM IN on a Tommy. The CRACK (O.S.) of her rifle; the Tommy bounds, drops dead.

Ismail WHOOPS OFF to the gazelle. Karen jacks the case from her rifle, hands the gun to Juma.

TILT DOWN TO FIND Karen lying on her back, drinking tea.
O.S., two Kikuyu CROON to calm the oxen.

KAREN

You never eat meat that hasn't been
bled?

FARAH

The book of Allah forbids it.

KAREN

It is also forbidden for men to wear
silk, but I have seen you do it.

FARAH

(considers this)

Well, msabu--it is only a book.

She grins.

FARAH (cont'd)

A foolish Kikuyu has told me this: in
white countries, a man does not pay
to take a wife.

KAREN

This Kikuyu knows more than you.

FARAH

This Kikuyu has even said that a
father can pay rupees to a man who
takes his daughter.

KAREN

What's wrong with that?

FARAH

Msabu: these are very ugly daughters
if a father can pay to be rid of
them.

The logic plain, the point close to home. Juma SPEAKS to
Farah in Swahili; Farah agrees.

KAREN

What are you saying?

FARAH

Juma says this sky at this place is
like the bottom of the sea.

KAREN

What does Juma know about the bottom
of the sea?

(CONTINUED)

FARAH

It is a common thing, msabu, to sleep at night and think about the sea. British do not do this?

KAREN

Even British. It's called dreaming.

FARAH

We do this also.

The COUGH of a lion, O.S., near. She sits bolt upright.

FARAH (cont'd)

Simba.

EXT/THE OPEN PLAIN-DAY

Noon camp. Karen's under a makeshift shelter, eating lunch. Farah stares at the horizon.

Far off, an intermittent glint of sun on metal.

LATER

Dismantling the shelter, Farah looks again at the horizon, SPEAKS sharply to Ismail, who goes to the wagon for Karen's rifle. Karen shades her eyes to look.

KAREN

What is it?

(no response)

LATER

Very quiet. All watch the horizon. One Kikuyu leans on the back of an ox. Karen's standing on the wagon box to see, looks down at Farah. He's bleak.

FARAH

Masai.

TELEPHOTO

Pulled together by the long lens, appearing to run on water, a half dozen Masai, young warriors, loping easily along, naked, slim spears shining in the sun.

NOON CAMP-QUICK CUTS

--Karen, fingering her rifle, Ismail with her shotgun.

--A Kikuyu, nostrils flared, scenting the wind.

--Juma, in the shade of the wagon with a panga (machete).

--A Kikuyu, wiping the oxen's muzzles with water, staring.

THE MASAI

Wildest of the wild, carrying huge shields like feathers, penises tied to thighs with thongs. Some of the warriors bleed lightly from thorn scratches.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The camp in the f.g. The Masai cross no more than fifty yards ahead, hewing to their crow-flies line of march.

KAREN'S POV

The Masai look at the camp as they pass, their manner bold, indifferent. One YIPS a wild sound.

THE CAMP

Relaxes. Karen watches the Masai go, curious.

EXT/CAMP-NIGHT

MOVING around the fire: one by one, the six blacks, eating, joking in Swahili. And the Baroness von Blixen, face greasy with the meat, squatting like a native on her heels.

LATER

All but the nightwatch asleep around the fire, including Karen, her tent forgotten. The lions ROAR (O.S.). Karen MUTTERS "Bloody hell," rolls over. ANGLE ADJUSTS TO FIND FARAH, vigilant, watching over her.

EXT/THE OPEN PLAIN-DAY

The wagon, moving again. ANGLE ADJUSTS TO FIND LIONS at a slow trot paralleling the wagons. Are they following?

EXT/CAMP-NIGHT-WIDE

A low corral of thorn bushes contains the restless oxen. To one side, a low fire, sleeping forms. A Kikuyu moves round the corral with a lantern. In a flash, a lion moves THROUGH FOREGROUND, then it's still.

AT THE FIRE

Karen, others, asleep. Now, O.S., the horrible BAWL of an injured ox. An explosion of action as all run for the wagon and corral, Karen SHOUTING for Ismail, CURSING.

AT THE WAGON

Karen tears into it, looking for her rifle. The oxen make a TERRIBLE NOISE (O.S.) as she snatches a stock whip, runs for the corral.

Tearing at the thorn bushes to get into the corral. Thorns rip at her clothes, arms, face. The SNARL of the lions (O.S.)

IN THE CORRAL

A lion flees, jumping the corral; another's battling an ox. Ismail's behind Karen now, trying to give her the rifle, but too late: Karen's at the lion with the whip. It whirls, may come for her, but she's attacking: CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! And Ismail, beside himself, runs at the lion, swinging the rifle like a club. The lion swipes at him, leaps gracefully out of the corral.

Karen's dazed, wipes her face, licks the blood on her hand. Others are quieting the oxen. Farah gives Ismail a fierce stare. The others are shaken.

WITH THE OX

Bleeding, fatally mauled. She ASKS for Juma's knife, strokes the ox's head, takes its ear. Her hand moves BELOW FRAME, jerks: the ox BAWLS; there's a fine spray of blood in the air as it slumps from view.

She leaves the corral, a mess, bleeding, her pants covered with the ox's gore. Alone, she'd vomit now, doesn't.

AT THE FIRE-LATER

Farah treats the deep thorn scratches on her naked back. The ghost of a smile:

FARAH

This simba always eats this ox. But msabu speaks to this simba: do not eat this ox or I can whip you with my little whip.

(Karen starts to laugh)

This simba thinks: this memsaab is not right: it can be she is a witch. I can eat this ox another time. But msabu kills this ox with Juma's knife.

(Farah's grinning)

Msabu is bleeding: she does not have this ox. This simba is hungry: he does not have this ox. This ox is no good to anyone!

(very funny; in time:)

God is happy, msabu. He plays with us.

Past several tents. White men ride in, depart. Natives at chores, some female. NOTICE a beautiful girl, Somali or Galla, strolling, without a task. HOLD ON DELAMERE at a map-littered campaign desk. A man on horseback points. Delamere takes binoculars, goes to look.

DELAMERE'S POV

But not through binoculars. The ox wagon approaching at distance.

ON DELAMERE

DELAMERE

(dry)

We'd best tell Blix his wife's arrived.

LATER

A dozen white men, a few natives, watch the wagon come in, silent.

Karen looks horrible: sunburned, nose peeling, lips cracked, clothes torn, hair matted, scabs on her face, arms, legs. But she feels fine, doesn't understand why they're staring. And they are. They're a tough bunch, don't say much, just a word among themselves, but they're impressed. At the end of their ragged line, Bror and Delamere.

DELAMERE

(quiet)

Hello, Karen.

There are flies on her face, no longer a bother.

KAREN

Hello, D. Hello, Bror.

BROR

You've changed your hair.

She laughs. They don't. She's lucky to be alive.

INT/BROR'S TENT-NIGHT

A tent, gear-strewn, but an old carpet, large rough pillows, make it feel a bit Arabic. Karen's clean, in his shirt, silk panties (like dance pants, then). And she is changed. They drink from tin cups; there's a lot of moving around on the pillows.

(CONTINUED)

BROR

Women do not go wandering around the bush!

KAREN

Why not?

BROR

Things can happen!

KAREN

Well now there's a reason to live. I'll bet God thought of that.

(grins)

I've just had a go at a lion with a whip: you may not scare me much.

BROR

That was quite the stupidest thing you'll ever do. Unless it's being gay about it now.

KAREN

(beat)

I know. I do know. I didn't plan it. I didn't even think.

(a silence, then:)

You won't run from anything--you never have. But there had to be a first time. Before you knew if you'd be brave.

BROR

(beat, then a chuckle)

Edgar Sundstrom. We fought one day, on the ice. I believe he won.

KAREN

Don't you see? There's something . . . permanent there. But women don't fight on the ice, we get no chance to be cowards. So we never know. God. We're such twits.

BROR

There's childbirth. Grief. Dissent. They all take courage.

KAREN

Those things don't have claws. I could have lived all my life and never once been really at risk. Now I think I may not run, just for fear of being hurt. How's that, for information?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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KAREN (cont'd)

(shakes her head)

It's not right, the way we're kept safe.

(then)

When are you coming home?

BROR

Not just yet.

KAREN

(beat)

You're not going to help with the farm at all, are you?

Grave, he shakes his head.

KAREN (cont'd)

I could force you--cut you off.

BROR

I'd just hunt professionally. I may do that anyway.

Moment. She's not angry.

KAREN

Well . . . I'll do it myself then.

(beat)

You understand you musn't tell me what to do. Any more.

He can accept that, but not acknowledge it.

BROR

You've just missed your good friend Barclay. He went off with Denys yesterday: they were bored, I think.

He's lying on some pillows; she straddles his waist.

KAREN

I like it that you're honest with me.

BROR

I like you, too. Very much.

She bends to kiss him; his hands go under her shirt. We're sure they'll make love.

EXT/THE ABERDARES-DAY

Forest, not jungle, dense, with intermittent clearings. Just a glimpse of an elephant moving slowly, feeding.

(CONTINUED)

Denys, stalking, Kanuthia near. He looks left, motions.

Berkeley and Wasili watch Denys, move on his signal.

The elephant, feeding, his tusks very fine.

Berkeley moves forward, freezes.

A huge shiny patch of black hide in a glade.

Berkeley signals Denys: Stop!

He does, can't see what Berkeley sees, is puzzled.

Berkeley puts his rifle to his forehead, imitating huge horns: Cape buffalo.

Denys searches the forest.

A patch of hide, there! The glimpse of a heavy boss, there! A whole animal, browsing into a glade, there! They've stumbled into a herd of feeding buffalo!

The elephant keeps moving.

Denys and Berkeley look to each other: grin. Carefully, so the shells don't clink, each man maneuvers extra cartridges into his off hand.

Intent on the elephant, Berkeley moves past a buffalo he knows is there. Without warning on his right quarter, a huge bull EXPLODES from a thicket, charges down on him. He FIRES! AGAIN!

The bull drops but the whole area is a sea of frantic buffalo, a ton apiece, CRASHING BLINDLY through the forest.

Denys SHOOTS left at a cow coming for him, SHOOTS right at a young bull, snaps the breech open, the cases ejecting, the shells in his fingers slide home.

The cow has veered; the bull is down.

Berkeley's running, switching rifles with Wasili as he goes, jumps up on the carcass of the first bull he dropped: he's still after the elephant.

It's moving fast, away.

Berkeley SHOOTS, slips, CURSING, falls off the dead bull.

Another bull comes straight for him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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Berkeley struggles to free his rifle.

Denys SHOOTs! AGAIN! Riveted on Berkeley, he doesn't even turn as he takes his second gun from Kanuthia.

It quiets down. The FADING NOISE of the buffalo running off. Four dead buffalo visible. No sign of Berkeley.

Quick and careful, Denys and Kanuthia move toward Berkeley's area. Here's his first bull and we can HEAR Berkeley giving orders in Swahili.

DENYS

Barclay?

BERKELEY (O.S.)

Lend a hand here, will you?

More ORDERS in Swahili. Denys goes around the first bull. Berkeley's struggling, pinned waist-down between the first bull and the one Denys shot: it fell dead nearly in his lap. Berkeley and Wasili are pulling and shoving.

DENYS

I think you've one too many there, Barclay.

BERKELEY

(mild)

You might have done him a bit sooner.

They laugh.

EXT/FOREST CAMP-NIGHT

Kanuthia cleans the rifles. On camp stools, Denys and Berkeley drink whisky, watch the fire. Denys peels an orange. In time:

BERKELEY

It was good to be with you today, Denys.

DENYS

A good day all round.

A bond here, among men who hunt together, that no hearth--and no woman--will defeat.

EXT/AT THE FARM-DAY

Karen finishes work on the piping of the elevated cistern behind the house, climbs down the ladder, steps to the ground: her leg buckles. Puzzled, she takes a step, collapses like a doll, sitting. She's baffled: her legs aren't working.

Kerosene light. She's in bed, wet with fever. Farah's on a bedside stool, trying to keep her clean. She retches. He wipes her mouth. Her hand, clumsy, tries to push his away but as she touches his cool skin, it seems to help. Farah hesitates, touches her forehead, knobby black fingers stroking her brow at the hairline. She sighs, drifts away.

INT/DOCTOR'S OFFICE-DAY

Primitive equipment. The DOCTOR is 40-50, a hulk of a man, Irish. She'll get into her clothes as he gets a bottle, glasses, pours them a drink, sits, holds his glass to the light.

DOCTOR

You've got syphilis.

A long moment, then she continues dressing.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Bror?

KAREN

There's no other.

(stops again)

What does one do about that?

DOCTOR

Your pride? That's hardly your first concern: your life's in danger. But the cure's fine punishment: he'll hope to die. He's not ill at all?

KAREN

Not the last I saw him, but that's three months--he's on the border with Delamere.

DOCTOR

(shrugs)

People are different: he may have just a dose. You've got a case like a trooper's.

KAREN

(sips her drink)

It's not what I thought would happen to me now.

DOCTOR

You'd best go home to deal with it. They've got a thing called Salvarsan.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Arsenic.

(knocks back her drink)

No sex until a cure's established. No children. Assuming I live. Anything else?

DOCTOR

I'll have to see Bror.

KAREN

I'll send for him. May I assume this won't be conversation at the club?

DOCTOR

Of course. You've had this before?

KAREN

No. My father got it with the Indians in North America.

(gathers her things)

When it seemed he'd go mad, he killed himself. I didn't know it was an act of courage: I thought he musn't love me.

(at the door)

What are my odds?

DOCTOR

About even, I'm afraid.

She nods to herself. A grim smile for him.

EXT/HOSPITAL GARDEN-DAY

She walks with Kamante, who limps on his bandaged leg. All of his speeches, always, begin with a grave pause.

KAREN

I am sick now, like your leg. But I must go to a different hospital, in my own country.

KAMANTE

In how many days are you not sick like this leg?

KAREN

I don't know. But you will be well soon and then you must go to the farm and find Farah, who will give you work.

(CONTINUED)

KAMANTE

I am Christian now, like you: the mother of God says prayers for me.

She glances at the hospital, irritated.

KAREN

You should make up your own mind about that.

KAMANTE

Farah prays to Allah. He does not pay wages to Christians.

KAREN

He will do as I say, and so will you.

KAMANTE

Now I am a Christian, I think you can give me a rupee.

KAREN

Why should I pay you to be like me?

KAMANTE

If I pray to Allah, I think Farah can give me a goat.

INT/LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

She's bundled up, drinks brandy, sometimes seems to want to retch. And less angry than she might be: Bror's in anguish.

KAREN

You've got no symptoms.

(he shakes his head)

Well, you've got a touch, anyway: you'll have to be seen.

(beat)

The others, too.

(stricken, he nods)

I hope they've got it.

BROR

You musn't feel that way.

KAREN

Don't moralize with me, my friend.

BROR

I only meant it's my fault, no one else.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

God. You think so little of us we're not even accessories.

(then)

I expect you to keep me out of whatever you tell your ladies. I'm going to lie at home, say I've got something tropical. I don't want Mother upset.

BROR

I'd like to go with you.

KAREN

I want you to stay here, keep an eye on things--can you do that?

BROR

It's little enough.

(then)

How long should it be?

She may die; they both know it.

KAREN

A year . . perhaps.

BROR

What will happen with us now?

KAREN

It's either shoot you or let it be: time may improve your chances.

(more serious)

I don't know. We'll have to wait for that.

(then)

You might have a crop before I'm back.

BROR

I'm terribly sorry, Tanne.

Her smile is strange: fond but preoccupied.

KAREN

My turn's come round, hasn't it? For fighting on the ice.

His eyes fill, his face works, he has to leave the room. Her look after him is detached. She stokes the fire.

Her steamer trunk and luggage being loaded onto the mule wagon. More than the usual number of Kikuyu, including the cuckoo children, silent.

BROR

Where is the memsaab?

FARAH

She is riding now.

BROR

(to no one)

Bloody hell--she'll miss the train.

FARAH

(unsolicited)

She can come soon enough.

Bror stares hard at Farah, whose gaze is cold, unafraid. Bror goes into the house.

EXT/THE PLAIN-DAY-WIDE

She rides slowly, the game drifting away as she passes.

CLOSE ON KAREN

Chin up, tears coursing her cheeks.

AERIAL

PULL AWAY AND AWAY until she's a small figure, alone on the plain.

INT/EUROPEAN HOSPITAL WARD-NIGHT

Like an old sanatorium. The STIRRINGS and SMALL NOISES of sick people at night. A nurse through the ward toward the hallway which backlights her, HEELS BRISK on the marble floor. FIND KAREN in fitful sleep, drooling. Her wrists are tied with gauze to the bed frame; one hand grips a stanchion, tightens . . . relaxes.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Bror struggles with the farm's books, looks outside to activity on the lawn, finally gets up to lean in the doorway, watching.

INT/EUROPEAN HOSPITAL DAY ROOM-DAY

Karen, terribly gaunt, sits in a wheelchair, writing a letter. She retches, wipes her mouth, continues.

EXT/THE TERRACE-DAY

Bror, two other men we've seen before, with three women, one of them Idina, another a pert blonde. They're drinking, shooting skeet, using dinner plates as clay pigeons. Bror AD LIBS stay ahead-swing through instructions to the blonde.

INT/KAREN'S BEDROOM-DAY

Farah carefully dusts around the things on Karen's vanity, arranges her combs and brushes. O.S., the SHOTGUNS.

EXT/STONY BEACH-DAY

A gray, flinty day. Karen's in a bulky sweater and heavy pants, pale, drawn, her eyes dark-circled. She has aged, become more beautiful: pain has brought her dignity.

She walks with her MOTHER, a somber women all in black, stolid, not elegant.

KAREN

Bror says my cook has died. Esa. One of his wives gave him poison.

MOTHER

Why did she do that?

KAREN

I don't know.

MOTHER

(some yards later)

Some people aren't meant to be married.

Karen has to laugh at that leap between cultures.

MOTHER (cont'd)

Are you happy with Bror?

KAREN

I like him very much.

MOTHER

I think you ought to come home now.

KAREN

He wouldn't leave Africa now.

MOTHER

No. They just don't give a damn, as long as it's strange and wild. Even if they kill you.

How much does she know? Karen skips stones.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN
I wouldn't either.

MOTHER
There's a limit to what we can put
into this coffee of yours.

KAREN
We'll get a crop soon. If you can
wait a bit longer.

MOTHER
Elle plans to marry.

KAREN
Who is he?!

MOTHER
She hasn't told me yet.
(beat)
He's a solicitor. Ambitious, they
say. He wears jewelry. At least
they'll stay at home.
(beat)
Don't get sick again.

KAREN
All right.

MOTHER
And if you do, don't lie about it.

Her mother is formidable: Karen has always sought the love
she withholds. No more.

KAREN
I'll lie when I choose, mother. In
this case, I did it to spare you.

MOTHER
(in time)
You seem to be growing up.

EXT/THE FARM-DAY-KAREN'S POV

MOVING up the drive. A hundred Kikuyu fixed on the CAMERA,
moving to it, excited and happy, Juma among them. Left
behind at the house, Kamante, and apart from him, Farah.

OTHER ANGLES

She's in a motorcar, Bror driving, descends into a clutch
of Kikuyu quickly exploded by the frantic arrival of her
deerhound: paws on her chest, he slathers her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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She moves to the house, has sweets for the children, notices the cuckoo clock child, older now, hands cupping a baby owl. He thrusts it to her: she takes it, strokes it, then, affording him much dignity, SAYS a formal "Asante." He is so excited that he must run away.

Kamante has thought long and hard about this moment of drama, has put on old bandages; now, with great affect, he slowly unwraps them to reveal his leg, scarred but well. Karen is appropriately grave but her eyes are merry.

KAREN

You are well enough to work then.

KAMANTE

I am cooking now for Esa. He is not bap-ti-sed so now he is dead.

KAREN

Are you paid wages for this cooking?

KAMANTE

Not so much as Esa.

At last she comes to Farah, looks long, up at him, looks down at the owl, strokes it, looks up again.

KAREN

Are you well, Farah Aden?

FARAH

I am well enough, msabu.

KAREN

Then I am well enough also.

She enters the house, Farah following, and is home.

INT/LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Bror in his chair, Karen curled on the couch, drinking brandy, savoring her return, as always, comfortable with him.

KAREN

And Kamante's cooking?!

BROR

Quite well, really. Seems to have a knack for it. I've had a time with Farah: I think we ought to sack him.

KAREN

Lucky for him it's not "we." How is Barclay?

(CONTINUED)

BROR

He was ill, but I think he's up again. Denys is in Egypt: the army's teaching him to fly aeroplanes.

(beat)

Did you miss me at all?

KAREN

Yes, I rather did. Not that I was used to your company.

(beat)

You're no friend to my money: I've looked at the books.

BROR

Already?

KAREN

We didn't need a motorcar. What we need is a crop.

(beat)

You never really got sick, did you?

BROR

A bit of fever. Nothing, really.

(a grin)

Are you all well, Tanne?

KAREN

Physically I'm cured. But I don't know about us yet. Is that all right?

BROR

Of course.

He goes to her, kisses her lightly, then, somber:

BROR (cont'd)

I miss you that way.

(at the door)

Now that you're back . . . I've been thinking about safari work. Eric and I want to look at the Mara, scout some campsites. Would you mind?

KAREN

(a smile)

When are you going?

BROR

(a grin)

He'd like to go tomorrow. If that's all right.

She nods. Alone, she looks at her house, toys with the dog, at peace.

INT/DINING ROOM-DAY

At the table in her dressing gown, she feeds the baby owl the remains of her breakfast; the dog is very interested.

FARAH

Msabu. Sick people have come.

KAREN

Good Lord. Already?

EXT/THE TERRACE-DAY

Before her as she steps on to the terrace, silent, in jagged single file, half a thousand Kikuyu, every age and shape. She's stunned, stares open-mouthed.

The Kikuyu can restrain themselves no longer: their LAUGHTER explodes. They leap, bend double, some fall on the ground: Oh, did you see the memsaab--we have fooled her completely. This is certainly the finest joke ever.

RAIN-A SERIES OF SHOTS

--First drops, on the still surface of the cistern water.
 --Drenched chickens among the manyattas, and Kamante, catching one.
 --Karen and Belknap in a roofed open shed which shelters coffee sorting equipment, inspecting it.
 --A coffee tree in bloom, dripping wet.
 --WIDE on the coffee fields, a rolling sea of white on green, rich with promise.

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY

Karen with Belknap, inspecting the ripening berries.

KAREN

How much longer.

BELKNAP

Until we pick? Eight weeks, maybe nine.

Even that's not soon enough: grim, she looks at the berries, willing them to ripen.

INT/THE KITCHEN-DAY

Farah and Juma in laughing SWAHILI CONVERSATION as Karen arranges flowers in a vase. When Kamante begins to beat egg whites with a rusty fork, she gives him the egg-beater; he inspects it closely, puts it aside, resumes. To Farah, idly:

KAREN

What are you saying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FARAH

(grinning all the while)

The uncle of Juma has found a bee tree in the forest. He does not speak of it so he can steal this honey for himself. He goes alone and makes smoke from this pipe.

(imitates puffing)

These bees do not care about this smoke: they bite him all over. He falls down from this tree and lies all day until a leopard comes.

(a rich chuckle)

KAREN

And he lived?!

FARAH

(puzzled)

No, msabu. He is dead.

KAREN

Why is that funny?

Farah cannot comprehend the question. In time, he shrugs.

FARAH

God is great, msabu.

She looks at him, continues with the flowers, thoughtful, trying to grasp the African mind.

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY-WIDE

The Kikuyu, scattered through the fields, picking.

EXT/THE COFFEE SHED-DAY

A line of pickers bringing their baskets of red berries, dumping them, adding to a huge pile. As they pass, a black foreman drops a coin into their empty baskets.

EXT/THE DRYING TABLES-DAY

The husked beans spread on long tables in the sun to dry. Kikuyu smooth them, bring the bottom beans to the top; its fluid, satisfying work, hot. Karen works with them: they are much taken with that.

EXT/AT THE SHED-DAY

A last wagon, loaded with huge burlap sacks, prepares to go, drivers making ready.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Karen's with Belknap; he has a grimy ledger under his arm.

KAREN

We've got peace--where's the prosperity?! Why should prices fall now?! Just because we're not killing anyone?!

BELKNAP

Tea's down just as bad.

(beat)

We could fertilize next year.

The wagon moves out, the drivers' whips CRACKING.

KAREN

We ought to get a profit growing eighty tons of anything!

(beat)

Our debt's too high.

(irritated)

Do they always have to whip them so?!

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY-A SERIES OF SHOTS

Of a roadster moving at speed along the two-track which rises and falls in the fields, Denys at the wheel, Felicity beside him, both laughing at their recklessness.

EXT/THE COFFEE SHED-DAY

As they arrive, jump out, SHOUT for Karen. He's in cavalry boots and military uniform; she is 17, nearly a woman. Karen comes from the shed, grimy: Felicity runs to kiss her; Karen tries not to dirty her blouse.

KAREN

Why are you home?! You're supposed to be in school.

FELICITY

They've tossed me out! Celia and I went swimming with some boys: Eathorne girls don't do that. Isn't it marvelous?

KAREN

Hello, Finch-Hatton. Where are the medals?

DENYS

For my courage in the pub?

KAREN

Have you learned to fly?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENYS

There's some doubt about that.

FELICITY

We've come to take you for a picnic.

KAREN

(sighs)

I've too much work.

DENYS

And only you can do it.

KAREN

You've just got room for two.

FELICITY

No, we'll squeeze. Come on.

She looks to Denys; he nods. Reluctant, out of place, she climbs into the car, sits stiffly on the boot behind them.

EXT/AT THE RIVER POOL-DAY

After a picnic on the grassy bank. Felicity sprawls, unaware of her body; Denys is in shirtsleeves; Karen's feeling old and drab.

DENYS

Was it good fun, being home?

KAREN

No.

DENYS

Why did you stay so long?

KAREN

Circumstances.

FELICITY

I don't understand how anyone can live there: all those little streets. Pasty people.

(a grin for Karen)

To hell with them all, I say.

DENYS

You're a rude, uncultured child.

FELICITY

Yup. I'm going in the water: want to come?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENYS

I'll spy on you.

FELICITY

Then you'll have to marry me.

(to her)

Now he says we have to wait until I'm
twenty-four. Would you believe it?

She goes off into the bushes.

KAREN

You could do worse.

DENYS

But could she?

(beat)

They say Bror's hired out his gun:
does he like it?

KAREN

I gather. He's booked straight
through, except the rains. I hardly
see him.

DENYS

What's he think of the clients?

KAREN

Rich Americans. With daughters and
young wives. I hope no one shoots
him.Felicity, naked, dashes for the water, takes a racing dive
into the pool, swims, CALLS: Help! There's crocs in here!
And splashes frantically.

DENYS

It's going to be a good business,
safaris. May do it myself.

KAREN

I thought you'd be an earl.

DENYS

I've an older brother, thank heaven.

KAREN

You don't want to inherit?

DENYS

What a boring life that would be.

KAREN

God forbid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An edge to that: he looks at her. Felicity swims to the fall.

DENYS

You seem a bit down.

KAREN

(shrugs)

The farm's got hold of me again. Our crop wasn't much.

DENYS

I doubt that it's your fault.

KAREN

I didn't say it was.

DENYS

I thought you felt responsible for everything. Felicity! Come out of there!

She swims toward them, starts to walk out of the water, mischievous, the water level dropping on her body.

DENYS

(dry)

Put on your clothes first?

She turns, dives: a flash of nakedness.

KAREN

(sarcastic)

It must be such a burden. Chivalry.

DENYS

(cool)

Not really.

ON KAREN, knowing she's been small.

EXT/MUTHAIGA CLUB-NIGHT-WIDE

The lights and distant DIN of a party. Outside the club, a pyramid of cordwood, perhaps 20 feet high. Natives in kanzus slosh paraffin around its base.

INT/MUTHAIGA CLUB-NIGHT

Decorated for New Year's Eve, jammed with drinking settlers in evening clothes; some dance to gramophone records. A bar, overrun, but a number carry their own bottles. Everyone's there.

MOVING

Amidst the general party:

--Denys is dancing with an older woman.

--Karen, talking with Berkeley, is jostled by dancers.

--Bror, laughing with the pert blonde and others, spills champagne on her bosom: she doesn't much mind.

ON THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK

Elaborate, festooned with paper, empty glasses. Now it TOLLS midnight, ignored. Eventually, it's noticed: O.S., CRIES of Happy New Year, the thin beginnings of Auld Lang Syne.

WIDER/FAVOR KAREN

Most people kissing. Felicity's kissing Denys for all she's worth. A woman has thrown herself at Barclay. Without a partner, Karen looks for Bror: he's nowhere to be seen. Her eyes meet Denys's. He speaks to Felicity, kisses her on the forehead, moves toward Karen. She sees him, turns away.

WITH HER

Her escape route blocked by revelers, their backs to her. Turning, she bumps smack into Denys, spills her glass. A moment between them: we can feel her fright. He's gentle, serious:

DENYS

Once a year's all right, I think.

And kisses her. She's stiff, doesn't respond at all.

The other kissing's over so the group around them notices, AD LIBS jeers, jibes at Denys. She's bleak.

DENYS (cont'd)

I've embarrassed you. I'm sorry.

So she kisses him, a magnificent kiss, her body bold. She means only to defy their audience--small CHEERS, some women watch shrewdly--but when they break, both are somber. She wants to be defiant, walks away defeated.

ON THE TERRACE MOMENTS LATER

He comes up behind her.

KAREN

Why.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENYS

You're a lovely woman. You've got a splendid mouth.

KAREN

(low, blazing)

You've a nice mouth, too, shall we go to bed now?!

(turns away)

All of you . . . no thought . . . just appetite . . .

(turns back)

I'm not interested.

DENYS

No.

(beat)

I wouldn't be either--in just that.

She stares at him, walks off.

EXT/THE BONFIRE

The members gathered round the woodpile as Delamere lights it. It catches quickly, flames tower up.

A dowager, stiff with pearls and presence, the sort who might rule India, fumbles in her purse for her revolver, FIRES TWICE in the air. A HUSH. Over the CRACKLING FIRE, her QUAVERING VOICE: God Save the King. One by one, ALL JOIN IN. PAN THE SETTLERS in the glow: they are flawed, idiosyncratic, some are dissolute. But they love their country and are far from home.

INT/LADIES ROOM

Karen, smoking, shaken.

EXT/THE TERRACE

Denys, alone, contemplative. O.S., the ANTHEM.

EXT/THE BONFIRE

Bror and the blonde MOVE THROUGH SHOT, going off.

AT THE BLIXENS' CAR

Secluded. Bror gets into the rear seat, seems to open his trousers, shielded by her: she's stopped to fumble beneath her long dress: we think she's removed her panties.

She sits astride him, drops her straps, cups a breast, puts it to his mouth.

INT/THE MOVING CAR-NIGHT

Karen's driving. INTERCUT for the animals appearing in the headlights. In time:

KAREN

Someone's left her underthings in back.

((no argument; she sighs))

I'd like you to take a place in town. You'll have to do it yourself--the farm's got all my money.

BROR

(beat)

Are you quite sure, Tanne?

KAREN

I can't deal with this anymore. I'd rather people think we've separated.

BROR

(beat)

Do you want a divorce?

KAREN

No. Do you?

BROR

No reason: there's no one else I care about.

KAREN

Then why are they so important?!

They ride in silence. In time, Karen paws fiercely at her eyes.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Crossing, Karen stops short.

HER POV

Through the open French doors onto the terrace. Farah sits on a bench, her deerhound fixed before him. He does not touch the dog, but he is, at great length, explaining.

INT/LADY MACMILLAN'S DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Karen, LADY MACMILLAN, distinguished and shrewd, two other women play mah-jong. Karen's bored. One WOMAN gushes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN

He's always been a doubter, Doctor Detweiler. Agnostic at least, worse I think: a man of science and all? Well. We took him up Mount Kenya. Spectacular day. The weather kept changing, rain and then snow and then the sun shone and the animals were all about. And when we came down, Doctor Detweiler said--it was hard for him, I think--he said there on Mount Kenya, he found it possible to believe in the existence of God.

Triumphant, she seeks reaction.

KAREN

I wonder--on Mount Kenya--if God finds it possible to believe in the existence of Doctor Detweiler.

LADY MACMILLAN

More lemon, Karen? Or do you have enough?

INT/HER BEDROOM-DAY

She's at her dressing table, idly brushing her hair, ignoring the owl, grown now, which walks among her things, challenges its reflection in the mirror. She studies her image, scientific, makes no judgment.

She looks long, unblinking, at the unblinking owl, taps its beak.

KAREN

Is that a prince in there?

She kisses the owl's beak. It remains an owl. She's not surprised.

EXT/IN THE FOREST-DAY

She's riding home, Ismail walking beside her with her rifle. Now, faint, the SOUND of a Mozart symphony (O.S.). Puzzled, she strains to hear, puts her horse to a trot, leaving Ismail behind.

EXT/THE TERRACE-DAY

Denys's safari truck, with Kanuthia and Wasili. He's on the terrace with champagne, gramophone blaring.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENYS

(reduces the volume)

I thought you'd like some music. I
got another for myself.

KAREN

(from horseback, cool)

May I pay you for it?

DENYS

If you must. It's intended as a gift.

KAREN

Because Bror's moved to town?

DENYS

That's a private matter, I imagine.
I'm going down along the Tana. I'd
like you to come.

KAREN

I believe I'd rather pay in pounds.

DENYS

Come down from there.

(she doesn't move)

Now.

A long moment. She gets down, crosses her arms, waits.

DENYS (cont'd)

You haven't the slightest idea what
I'd want from you. Have you.

(no response)

Have you.

KAREN

No.

DENYS

Then don't pretend you do. You're
just chock-full of payments and
prices and who owes who. You think if
you possess things, it means you'll
never lose them. When will it dawn,
Karen? There's nothing to own worth
having. This land's not yours: you've
borrowed it from Africa. You can't
barter for someone to love you.

I'm not a farm for you to hold to,
but I'm none of the people who've
hurt you, either. So why don't you
just jump the fence and wait to see
what happens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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KAREN

And then?

DENYS

Haven't the slightest.

KAREN

And never mind the cost.

DENYS

Is that the trouble? You might skin your knee?

KAREN

Or worse. I can't afford much, right now.

DENYS

(more gently)

I know. But your life's not years, Karen: it's just a day here and a minute there--a few fine moments. You've got to go collect them.

She goes to him, takes his glass, drinks, decides.

KAREN

I won't sleep with you.

DENYS

You'll do as you wish.

Moment. She nods, half to herself.

KAREN

When did you want to go?

DENYS

Now's all right.

KAREN

I'll get some things.

She goes off. Denys takes the needle from the record. No victory here, for either of them. Almost a sadness.

EXT/ON THE PLAIN-DAY-WIDE

The safari truck, jouncing along a two-track.

INT/THE TRUCK

Denys is calm. Karen is stiff, pinched, certain now she shouldn't have come.

EXT/FIRST CAMP-NIGHT

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In camp chairs at the fire. In the b.g., two small tents, each dim-lit by its own lantern. Denys has an orange; she smokes, drawn up, protective.

DENYS

--Ndrobo are fine in the bush, the best with elephant. Turkana are horribly fierce. But Masai? Nothing like them anywhere.. If Rome had come this far? Now there'd have been a battle. The magistrates don't know what to do them them--they die in prison.

(beat)

You've seen them, you said.

KAREN

Yes.

DENYS

(beat)

We've got an early day: why don't you pack it in?

She drops her cigarette in the fire, goes straight to her tent. Denys fishes in his bush jacket for a book, reads, eats his orange. The NIGHT SOUNDS of Africa. Her movements cast shadows on the tent wall. Engrossed, he ignores both sounds and shadows.

EXT/ON THE PLAIN-DAY-WIDE

The safari truck, moving at dawn, over open country, the two-track left behind.

INT/THE TRUCK-LATER

She's more interested in the world around her, grins, points:

Warthogs, trotting single file, brisk burghers on business.

EXT/THE TRUCK-LATER

Broken down, bonnet open. Denys, clean as a surgeon, makes fine adjustments to the engine with a screwdriver. While the natives squat, not involved, Karen, sweat-soaked and greasy, is in charge of the crank.

He SAYS Again. She cranks. He adjusts. AGAIN. She cranks. He adjusts. AGAIN. She cranks. The ENGINE COMES ALIVE. He closes the bonnet, pleased, oblivious to her, dirty, dripping, out of breath. But not unhappy: no concessions are being made for her gender.

Sundown. Wasili brings wood to the fire; Kanuthia stores gear on the truck. At a camp table, Denys cleans a rifle while Karen fusses with a balky lantern. In time:

KAREN

I've heard what you think's wrong with me: what is it that you like?

DENYS

Your mind's attractive . . . when it's not adding and subtracting . . . there's a sensuality about you that's very compelling . . . And you stand up to things, I like that.

Finished with the rifle, he stands, yawns.

DENYS (cont'd)

I need a pillow--bloody lorry wore me out. Good night, Karen.

KAREN

Good night, Finch-Hatton.

He goes to his tent. She's thoughtful.

EXT/THE PLAIN-DAY-CLOSE ON FINCH-HATTON

At the wheel, watching, smiling.

HIS POV-WIDE

Karen, small on the plain, amidst a half-dozen giraffe, delighted as a child at the zoo.

EXT/RIVER CAMP-WIDE

Along the Tana, green, idyllic.

ANOTHER ANGLE

A white cloth on the camp table where they've finished lunch, wine in a tin bucket, no ice. A lazy day. Denys reads. She's trying to desnag her hair, wincing, MUTTERING.

DENYS

I can fix that, I think.

CLOSER TO THE RIVER-LATER

She's on a stool in shorts and camisole, a towel round her shoulders, hair thick with soap. Denys, in shorts, no shirt, stands in front of her, suds to the elbows, having a fine time, reciting all the while.

(CONTINUED)

DENYS

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship/
The boat spun round and round.
And all was still, save that the hill/
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips, the Pilot shrieked/
And fell down in a fit.
The holy Hermit raised his eyes/
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars; the Pilot's boy/
Who now doth crazy go/
Laughed loud and long, and all the while/
His eyes went to and fro.
Ha, ha, quoth he, full plain I see/
The Devil knows how to row.

Farewell, farewell--

KAREN

You're skipping verses.

DENYS

I leave out the dull parts.

Farewell, farewell, but this I tell/
To thee, thou Wedding Guest:
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

Pouring slowly, he rinses her hair with a bucket of water.
Her shoulders, camisole, his shorts, get wet. When she
opens her eyes, he's looking at her. A moment.

LATER

She reclines in a camp chair, eyes closed, face tilted to
the sun; he sits behind her, combing her hair. She's
drifting, feeling languid, then, casual:

DENYS

Do you want a lion?

KAREN

(eyes wide; a long beat)

Yes.

DENYS

We'll go early, try to find one on a
kill.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Dawn. Karen checks a heavy rifle yet again, somber.

(CONTINUED)

DENYS (V.O.)

You want a heart shot, if you can, just inside the shoulder. I've got a four-fifty you can use. Don't worry about the recoil: you won't feel a thing, till later.

Karen, Denys, the natives, walking in thigh-high grass.

DENYS (V.O.)

They're quick. Very, very quick. I'll be just behind you. If there's a charge, drop flat--right now--and let me have him.

All four, hunkered down, staring, fixed on the same spot.

DENYS (V.O.)

They'll twitch a bit, just before they come.

Several lions, including a big male, feeding on a zebra.

DENYS (V.O.)

Then a snarl. Ugly sound. That's to freeze you, just for a second. With most of what they're after, that's all they need.

They move slowly toward the lions, about sixty yards away.

The lions keep feeding.

Denys whispers instructions, points, sends her ahead. He's behind on her right, Kanuthia on his right, Wasili staying put.

Karen's intent, checks her safety again and again. Like the prospect of being hanged, lions concentrate the mind.

The big male sees them, stops feeding.

She looks back to Denys. He nods. It's about forty yards. She's raising her rifle when, O.S., a SNARL, a very ugly sound.

FLASH CUT

Karen, quizzical, half-turning to Denys. FREEZE IT.

SLOW MOTION

On her left, a huge male explodes from the grass, charges home. We SEE two bounds.

SLOW MOTION

Denys turns, brings up his rifle: Karen's squarely in his line of fire.

VERY SLOW MOTION

Karen turns, smooth, the rifle easing into her shoulder: we SEE it kick once, then again. And only now, HEAR the CRACK of her rifle. And AGAIN.

SLOW MOTION

The lion stumbles, tumbles down in the grass.

SLOW MOTION

The big male on the zebra charges: great leaps.

SLOW MOTION

Denys pivots, FIRES once, the SOUND delayed.

SLOW MOTION

The lion whirls, snaps at his flank, flops down.

SLOW MOTION

Cordite smoke hangs in the air. Karen turns to Denys, terror on her face. He's intent.

SUDDENLY, REAL TIME

DENYS

Load! Now!

She fumbles with her rifle, reloads. Denys watches both lions, back and forth. The other lions withdraw.

Kanuthia moves forward, throwing stones at Karen's lion. In time, he stands near it. It's dead.

Denys walks carefully to his lion, dead, too.

Rifle at her waist, she hasn't moved. Denys goes to her. She is standing tall, refusing to collapse; her lip trembles; she bites it to keep from crying.

DENYS

(slow, calm, very firm)

When we are hunting, it's essential that you do exactly as I say. I must know what you'll do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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Her shoulders shake, tears course her cheeks, her lip is bloody, but she won't give in. She makes no sound, nods.

DENYS (cont'd)

Go to your lion now.

A MOMENT LATER

She walks around her lion, brushes at her tears. Kanuthia takes her rifle, clicks the safety on.

LATER

She sits cross-legged, studies the lion's massive head, touches an eyetooth, feels the point. She examines a forepaw--she needs both hands for this--feels the claws, the dewclaw, puts the paw to her face, rubs her cheek against it, bleeds from a single long scratch.

Denys and Kanuthia come, bloody from skinning the other lion.

DENYS

We'll take his hide now.

KAREN

(standing)

I want to do it.

(he hands her the knife)

You'll have to tell me how.

DENYS

Start along his hind leg.

She goes to the lion, starts to cut.

DENYS (cont'd) (O.S.)

I'm sorry for the time I didn't know
you: life's made you very fine.

She looks at him, accepts it, resumes the skinning.

EXT/RIVER CAMP-NIGHT-HIGH ANGLE-WIDE

At distance. The tents, the truck, the fire, the dining table a dab of white in the kerosene light.

AT THE TABLE

Set for dinner. Karen sits, watches the shadows on the wall of his tent: he's changing clothes, SINGING a gay Swahili song. She touches her swollen lip, wants him badly, now gets up to walk slowly toward the tent.

INT/THE TENT

He's in clean shorts when:

KAREN (O.S.)
Finch-Hatton?

DENYS
Coming.

Unbidden, she steps into the tent.

DENYS
Is supper ready?

KAREN
I don't want supper.

He understands, smiles, then:

DENYS
Um. Lions are like that. For me as well.

(reaches for his shirt)
Let's see how we feel tomorrow.

But she reaches for his shirt: they're both holding it.

KAREN
I went home because I'd got syphilis.
I'm all right now.

He drops his end of the shirt, moves in.

DENYS
I never seem to get anything. German measles, once.
(brushes her lip)
Will that hurt?

KAREN
No.

He kisses her. She lets the shirt drop to hold his throat, the gesture masculine. He turns away to turn down the lantern.

KAREN
Leave it up, please.

He does. She unbuttons her cuffs, begins on her shirt buttons.

DENYS
I'd like to do that.
(and begins to)

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Tell me what this means: I have to know how to think about it.

DENYS

It means we've nothing more to read.
(another button)

It means you're lovely, and I want you. And hope you want me, too.

(two buttons more; he stops)

It means we're here. Just that.

He waits for her consent. She nods. He resumes.

MOVING SHOT

To circle the tent, sometimes ON THE TENT WALL and their sharp silhouettes, sometimes THROUGH MOSQUITO NETTING at each end of the tent, their figures visible, gauzy.

He takes off her shirt. She holds her arms over her head; he removes her camisole. He touches her breast, unbuttons her shorts; they slide to her feet. He slips her panties down her legs; she kicks them away.

TWO SHOT-TIGHT

A hungry, urgent kiss. As he moves to her neck and shoulder, her lip is bleeding.

KAREN

(very low)

Jesus . . Jesus . .

INT/THE KITCHEN-DAY

Kamante is dicing vegetables, paying little mind to Karen.

KAREN

Your clear soup. The new lettuce. And chicken, just the breasts. In a sauce.

(no response)

I trust this has your approval?

KAMANTE

(the usual pause)

Who is coming, memsaab?

KAREN

Bwana Cole is coming.

KAMANTE

I will think on Bwana Cole.

She goes off, exasperated. Kamante dices on.

GRAMOPHONE MUSIC, low. They're in evening clothes. He's flushed, perspiring. Juma clears the soup plates.

KAREN

(cheerful)

I'm in the worst sort of trouble now.

BERKELEY

Denys?

(she nods)

Will you divorce?

KAREN

Do you think he'd marry me?

BERKELEY

(uncomfortable)

I would. He might.

KAREN

Ah, the candor of the conditional tense.

(beat)

He won't.

BERKELEY

You'll be alone a good bit in either case.

Juma serves the main course.

KAREN

That's not new. It's not knowing . . . how far to go. Or what's going to happen. I'm not good that way.

(looks at her plate,
then, to Juma:)

Get Kamante.

(to Berkeley)

He's out of hand entirely.

She waits, indignant. When Kamante comes:

KAREN (cont'd)

Does this look like chicken?!

He comes beside her, gravely inspects her plate.

KAMANTE

(patient)

Here is not a chicken, memsaab. Here is a fish.

KAREN

Go away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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He does. Amused but careful, Berkeley takes a bite.

BERKELEY

Quite good, isn't it?
(they have to laugh)

EXT/ON THE TERRACE-LATER

They're dancing to a WALTZ (O.S.).

KAREN

So how do you think I'll take to adultery?

BERKELEY

I'd hardly call it that.

KAREN

Not if you want to come again.

They laugh. She touches his forehead.

KAREN (cont'd)

You're awfully warm, Barclay.

BERKELEY

Malaria, I s'pose. It comes and goes.

KAREN

Wouldn't you like to spend the night?

BERKELEY

No, I'd best get home.

KAREN

Why is my life so rich with men who want to leave me?

BERKELEY

(leans in, sniffs)
It's not your perfume.

They laugh. She puts her head on his shoulder. He's in love with her himself. Against the music, the SOUND (V.O.) of metal rattling on metal.

INT/EXT/DENYS'S TRUCK-DAY

Jouncing along the track to Karen's house. The Kikuyu along the way salute open-palmed; Denys responds automatically. Kanuthia rides with Denys; Wasili sways in back.

DENYS'S POV

As he turns up the drive to the house. Karen's cutting flowers in the garden beyond, looks TO CAMERA.

As Denys parks, Karen strolls across the lawn, flowers bunched in one hand. She walks slowly, as though she wants every detail of the moment. She doesn't pause when she reaches him, goes straight into his arms. They hug, don't kiss, turn to the house.

INT/HER BEDROOM-DAY

He's facedown on her bed, naked, head and arms hanging over the foot. She's cross-legged, scraping at his legs with a knife, digging out ticks and jiggers.

KAREN

How were the clients?

DENYS

German.

KAREN

You ought to look in on Barclay. He doesn't seem that well.

DENYS

He's been cooped up too much.

(beat)

I'm thinking I'll sell the house--no sense keeping it when I'm out all the time. How would it be if I kept some of my things with you?

KAREN

(a long beat)

You mean you'd come and go from here.

DENYS

If that's all right.

KAREN

(reaches for a cigarette)

If you like.

DENYS

I thought it might please you.

KAREN

It does. When the gods want to punish you, they answer your prayers.

She lights her cigarette, holds it to a stubborn tick embedded in his calf.

EXT/THE HOUSE-DAY

Bror, arriving in his lorry, gets out, looks at Denys's truck, goes in.

Denys at the table, in a burnoose, reading his mail. A certain tension, but both are calm.

BROR

(entering)

Hello, Denys.

DENYS

Hello, Blix.

BROR

Can I get anything for you?

DENYS

No. Karen's here, somewhere.

BROR

(beat)

You might have asked, Denys.

DENYS

I did. She said yes.

KAREN

(entering)

Hello, Bror.

BROR

I'm just on my way to town. Do you have a moment?

KAREN

Of course.

They go off to the drawing room.

INT/DRAWING ROOM

KAREN

I'm broke, too, you know!

BROR

Just a few pounds--fifty, if you can. I've a party in the end of the month--I'll pay you then.

She goes to her desk, will write a check.

BROR (cont'd)

I wouldn't ask, but tips were a bit light this time: couldn't find them a leopard.

KAREN

Tips?! You're living on tips?!

(CONTINUED)

BROR

And salary. Tip's a hundred quid if they've shot the whole card--it's not the poor I'm taking round.

(takes the check)

Are you all right?

KAREN

If we get a decent crop.

(He nods; a beat)

Denys will be staying here when he's not hunting. I don't want that known, at home. They've not much faith in me already.

He nods, considers it, then, a boyish grin:

BROR

I've got this horrible urge to kiss you.

She smiles, goes to him, kisses him.

KAREN

Don't be upset. It's what I want right now. It won't last.

BROR

I could shoot him for you.

KAREN

Then I'd have neither one of you.

A moment, fond: they will always be friends.

BROR

Good luck with it, Tanne. He's smarter than I: it may go well.

And leaves her there, going out the terrace doors.

EXT/THE NGONG HILLS ABOVE HER HOUSE-DAY

A grassy slope overlooking the plain, recalling the shot under titles. They've picnicked; he lies dozing, eyes closed throughout. Their horses browse nearby.

KAREN

Finch-Hatton?

DENYS

Um.

KAREN

If I get eaten up sometime, bury me here, will you?

(CONTINUED)

DENYS

All right.

KAREN

There. Where it drops away.

DENYS

What do you want on the stone?

KAREN

(beat)

This be the verse you grave for me/
Here she lies, where she long'd to be.

BOTH, in unison

Home is the sailor, home from the sea/
And the hunter, home from the hill.

DENYS

I always found that trite.

KAREN

I had an aunt of whom they said: Her
days were hard, her nights sweet.

DENYS

Too vulgar.

KAREN

(beat)

She loved but once, then well.

DENYS

Better. We'll work on it.

(beat)

Shall we go to the club tonight?

KAREN

Together?!

Denys laughs as though that's the funniest thing ever,
pulls her on top of him. They begin to make love.

INT/MUTHAIGA CLUB DINING ROOM-NIGHT

At table. She's stiff, defiant of those who watch and
murmur. He notices her silence.

DENYS

Do you remember the feeling, when the
lion came for you, out of the grass?

KAREN

Yes.

DENYS

(truly puzzled)

Then how can you think any of this is
. . relevant?

Moment. She nods. Delamere leaves the men's bar (from which there's NOISE (O.S.)), passes by their table.

DELAMERE

Denys. Hello, Karen.

DENYS

Hello, D.

KAREN

It's very gay in the inner sanctum tonight.

DELAMERE

The Americans are teaching us about poker. Blix is down a few hundred but we're otherwise all right.

(he moves on)

KAREN

(beat)

"Blix" doesn't have a few hundred.

(beat)

Go and get him, will you?

DENYS

No.

KAREN

(low)

He hasn't got it! I haven't got it, either.

DENYS

That's not my affair.

KAREN

He's a friend, isn't he?

DENYS

No. If he were, all the more reason.

KAREN

(beat)

You could do it for me.

DENYS

Yes.

But won't. She looks at him, slaps down her napkin, goes off.

A number of men, and six around a poker table. Bror's back's to the door. Astonishment as she enters.

BROR

(turning)

What is it, Tanne?

KAREN

May I see you, please?

The Huge Man from the wedding reception sits alone, puts down his newspaper. Bror moves away with Karen. Both low:

BROR

You don't belong in here, you know that.

KAREN

Are you winning?

HUGE MAN (O.S.)

Von Blixen! Get that woman out of here!

Firm, Bror propells her toward the door. She resists.

KAREN

(low)

We haven't got the money!

BROR

Your lover's rich, what do you care?

She slaps him hard. He just looks at her.

The whole room's embarrassed; some gape, others look away.

BROR (cont'd)

(quiet)

I'd say we're even now. Don't you think?

She turns on her heel. Bror rejoins the table, SAYS a brisk Sorry. The game, CONVERSATION, resume. The Huge Man returns to his newspaper.

INT/BERKELEY'S HOUSE-DAY

Dark, like adobe, Arabic. Berkeley looks like death, fixes Denys a drink. On a floor pillow with sewing, a lovely Somali (Mariammo) with a dignity all her own.

(CONTINUED)

DENYS

You do look like hell.

BERKELEY

I s'pose I do. How's Karen?

DENYS

Well enough. Still going broke.

BERKELEY

Well, we're all that. How have your clients been?

DENYS

Not awful. The women seem to go a bit mad--born assassins, I think. But the men are decent enough. When do we get you out of here?

BERKELEY

(beat)

I'm afraid my water's gone black.

Denys looks at him steadily, drinks.

DENYS

George Martin had blackwater--when was it? Five years now?

BERKELEY

Um. Strong fellow, George.

DENYS

Is there anything I can do for you while you're down?

BERKELEY

No.

(beat)

You might take along that ten-bore you're so fond of--ask them to look at the bluing?

(Denys nods)

And the Rigby. Trigger seems mushy but perhaps it's just me. Ask Karen to try it. Nice size gun for her.

DENYS

All right . . . Mariammo?

BERKELEY

She'll have some money. She'll want her own people, I think.

(CONTINUED)

DENYS

Shouldn't you go home for a while?

BERKELEY

Oh . . .

(a crooked grin)

I am home, I s'pose.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Now full of Denys's things: his books and records, the elephant tusk, his rifles. O.S., the SOUND of the front door and Karen's entrance.

KAREN (O.S.)

Denys?

DENYS (O.S.)

Out here.

She's in the room now, makes herself a drink.

KAREN

How's Barclay?

DENYS (O.S.)

(beat)

All right.

EXT/THE TERRACE

He sits with his empty glass, looking out on the late afternoon. She joins him, kisses him.

KAREN

We're about ready to pick, I think.
The sorting machine's fixed.

DENYS

He's given you his Rigby.

And so she knows. She sits, stunned, fights for control, looks up at the hills, blinks back tears. In time:

KAREN

There's no hope at all?

DENYS

It's blackwater fever.

KAREN

I'll go to him tomorrow then.

DENYS

No. He looks quite awful: he wouldn't want you there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAREN

(stares, then:)

Balls.

She moves to the drawing room. At the door:

KAREN (cont'd)

What the hell do you think a woman's
for?!

She goes in, returns with whisky, fills their glasses.

DENYS

(quiet)

There's a woman there, Karen. He's
been with her some years now.

(beat)

She's Somali.

(beat)

The comfort you'd bring is less than
his pain if you knew. You musn't go.

KAREN

(beat)

Is he right, to think that of me?
That I care who's at a deathbed?

DENYS

Not that. That he's lived with her,
and kept it from you.The sun slants low across the lawn. The native children
play, gather in the goats.

KAREN

Did he love her?

DENYS

(irritated)

I don't know.

(beat)

I think so.

He is having trouble with his own thoughts. In time:

KAREN

(a grimace)

I'm thinking: I'd've had them to the
house.

(shakes her head)

I'd've got round it somehow, I'd've
made it not matter . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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DENYS

(looks at her)
It did to me.

Moment. She comes to stand behind his chair, comforts him.
In time:

KAREN

They must have been very lonely.

EXT/A SMALL CEMETERY-DAY

Set off by a token iron fence, wild but neat enough. The coffin's in the ground, 30-40 settlers at the grave with an Anglican minister, SAYING a last prayer. Most heads are bowed, not Karen's: she's looking to the fence where a number of Africans watch, among them Mariammo, barefoot in fine Somali clothes, gold jewelry, proud witness to a ceremony at which she is unwelcome.

OUTSIDE THE FENCE-LATER

The Europeans disperse, go to their cars and carriages, MURMURING. As Karen passes Mariammo, she pauses just a moment, inclines her head respectfully. Mariammo, proud with grief, just looks at her.

AT HER CAR

LADY DELAMERE

Where is Denys, Karen?

KAREN

He was gone this morning. I think
he's off with Barclay.

Lady Delamere looks at her shrewdly, may understand.

EXT/THE FOREST-DAY

Kanuthia, alone, squats on his heels with a rifle, watches something, not involved. There will be no killing today.

A heavy-tusked bull elephant, trunk in the wind, ears spread, sways, deciding on a charge.

Denys is thirty yards in front of him, his rifle casual on his shoulder.

The elephant TRUMPETS, ready to come.

Denys brings his rifle in front of him but not to his shoulder, FIRES both barrels in the air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The elephant crashes off into the forest.

Denys watches after it.

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY-A SERIES OF SHOTS

Of Kikuyu children picking coffee. [It might be interesting if they were aware of the camera.]

EXT/THE COFFEE SHED-DAY

The coffee pickers (adults) dump their baskets, are paid. The pile of berries seems impressive but CAMERA FINDS Karen and Belknap at the counting station, bleak.

INT/HER BEDROOM-DAY-CLOSE

On the owl, staring from her vanity.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Karen, in farm clothes, drawn up on the bed, eyes red from crying. Now, O.S. and BUILDING, the SOUND OF AN AIRPLANE. It's quite loud before she notices, gets up.

EXT/ON THE TERRACE-DAY

The plane, a Gypsy Moth, banks to come low again above the house.

She watches, serious.

The plane dives low again, Denys at the controls: he points off--a place for her to meet him.

She breaks into a great grin, dashes into the house.

EXT/A NEARBY MEADOW-MINUTES LATER

Mounted, she races along the edge of the meadow. The plane comes THROUGH SHOT, landing, passing her.

AT THE PLANE

As Denys pivots it around, GUNNING THE ENGINE. Karen flies from her horse, SHOUTS, incredulous:

KAREN

Where did you get it?!

DENYS

Mombasa! Come along! There's elephant on the hill!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

98/

She struggles into the cockpit in front of him. They have to shout.

DENYS

How's your crop?!

That stops her. She shakes her head, then:

KAREN

Let's go!

DENYS

Your horse!

KAREN

To hell with him!

The plane accelerates across the meadow, lifts off.

FLYING

Africa from the air. The possibilities are endless but would include a herd of elephant moving through the high forest, a soda lake ringed by flamingoes, the Suswa volcano, every sort of game on the plain.

As a pilot, Denys is more bold than expert: once, they'll exchange a look, laugh when he cuts it too close.

She's exhilarated, all care put aside. Near the end, she'll grow quiet and, heading home, turn in her seat, hair streaming, to look at Denys, reach back to him but fail to touch. She will live to be seventy-seven years old, and remember these as the finest moments of her life.

EXT/THE MEADOW-DAY-WIDE

Sundown. The plane lands, runs the length of the meadow.

AT THE PLANE

He GUNS it around, KILLS the engine. Both wriggle from the cockpits, Denys first; now he sees that she is streaming tears. She grins, LAUGHS, cries, TRIES TO SPEAK, can't, laughs, TRIES AGAIN, still can't, shakes her fist at the sky, SHOUTS an aargh. He laughs at her, starts to walk. She runs after him, jumps on his back like a schoolgirl.

INT/BANKER'S OFFICE-DAY

A number of polo trophies. The BANKER is 50, has a stump where his left hand should be. He hands her documents.

(CONTINUED)

BANKER

Here, you're giving us a lien against your crop. We'd take it over should you default.

KAREN

I'd default only if the crop failed. In which case . . . there'd be no crop.

BANKER

(unbothered by logic)

Yes. And we'll need Baron Blixen's signature as well.

KAREN

It's my property.

BANKER

Yes. But then, it's our money: we'd like the baron to sign with you.

He's bland, omnipotent. She's disgusted.

EXT/THE STREET IN FRONT OF THE BANK-DAY

Where Farah waits. They walk.

KAREN

We've got a year at least.

FARAH

God is great, msabu.

KAREN

He's charging three per cent.

EXT/ON THE FARM-DAY

Karen, Belknap and Denys follow a broad trail of blood through a field of young coffee, some trees broken.

They come to stand over the bloody carcass of a young bullock. Karen moves upwind.

BELKNAP

Lazy, filthy bastards.

KAREN

(to Denys)

Almost a kilometer, and he's near seventy stone--can they do that?

(he nods)

(CONTINUED)

BELKNAP

Dead for the fun of it: they didn't even eat.

KAREN

(absent)

It's their nature to kill, they don't mean it against us.

BELKNAP

They'll be back. We'll see how they like their dinner with a little strychnine.

KAREN

Nonsense.

BELKNAP

When lions start on cattle, they don't quit. We can't spare another ox.

KAREN

(to Denys)

Is that right?

DENYS

Not always. Mostly.

KAREN

(with regret)

They'll have to be shot then.

BELKNAP

I'm married, Miz Blixen--I'm not paid to hunt. I'll dose 'em good.

KAREN

Denys and I will shoot the lions.

(beat)

That's all, Belknap.

(he shrugs, goes)

Mister Belknap?

(he turns)

If there's strychnine on the farm, remove it. If you speak again of poisoning an animal, I'll have you off the property.

His look is sullen; he stalks off. In a moment, mild:

DENYS

You ought not talk that way to a man, unless you want to lose him.

She looks at him, hawks, spits.

Just grass and sky, moonlit. Now, in silhouette, a lion comes over the crest, disappears below it. And another.

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELD-NIGHT

The coffee trees--like bushes--shiny in the moonlight. NIGHT SOUNDS, each small noise distinct: a sense of much activity, unseen. Now, a different sound: the SCUFF of moccasins.

Karen and Denys MOVE THROUGH SHOT, wary. The gleam of his rifle.

The SHOT looks down a row of coffee trees. They come INTO FRAME, kneel down. He points.

Down the corridor, a white shape: the dead ox. Carefully, they sit to wait. SUDDENLY, the crazed CHORTLE of a hyena, near. It startles us, not them.

LATER

Relaxed, waiting. Stiff, Karen shifts. Now, slow, he touches her to hold her still, nods.

Very near, a snake. It slithers along, full of menace.

She's calm, just watches. The snake moves past her boots, disappears. She imitates it, tongue flickering. He grins.

LATER

Waiting. Suddenly, he's intent. The SOUND of something large, moving.

The carcass twitches, jerks: the lions on the ox. The SOUND of them feeding, a SNUFFLING, BONES CRACKING. He snicks his safety off.

THE LIONS' POV

A sudden circle of yellow light and half the outline of a man standing, aiming. [Karen's just behind him to one side with an electric torch.]

REVERSE

Two lions (their eyes, mostly), caught by the light. TWO SHOTS, very fast. The light moves here and there, looking for another lion, steadies, returns to the carcass. A SILENCE, no noise at all. It's over too quickly. A sense of anti-climax, the ease of these deaths.

Moving to the ox. Her light finds two young males, dead where they fell. They stand over them. A sense of their regret.

KAREN

They were good friends, these two.
They got it in their heads to make a
raid, just to see if they could do
it. Then they couldn't let it be.

(a sigh)

Just a story for the ladies. Now
they're dead for that.

MOVING WITH THEM AS THEY GO

KAREN

The wild things always lose.

DENYS

(beat; dry)

Not always.

CLOSE ON A COFFEE DRYING TABLE-A TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE

Empty. Sun-bleached. Now, it passes into shadow. First
drops of rain, building to a deluge.

DENYS (V.O.)

There's something about the rains
that calms you down.

KAREN (V.O.)

They keep you home. I like that.

The rain diminishes, stops. The table dries.

KAREN (V.O.)

My mother wants to visit. She wants
to come for June.

DENYS (V.O.)

I'll be away most of the month. All
of it, if you like.

KAREN (V.O.)

That's best, I think.

From OUT OF FRAME onto the table, a torrent of coffee
beans. A pair of black hands smoothes them. Now more
hands, and more, sifting, culling, spreading. One pair
white.

DENYS (V.O.)

I ought to go home for a while. Won't
you come?

(CONTINUED)

KAREN (V.O.)

There's no one here, with Belknap gone. I just can't. You know I can't.

DENYS (V.O.)

I know. But it would be such fun.

KAREN (V.O.)

(beat)

I'm pleased you'd ask me, Denys.

The number of hands reduces till only hers are left; their motion slows, stops, beans trickle through her hands, which now leave the SHOT. The table tilts, the beans sluice away, OUT OF FRAME.

DENYS (V.O.)

We haven't hunted in a year. Let's go just ourselves. You ought to have a leopard.

KAREN (V.O.)

When we shot the lions? I said I wouldn't hunt anymore, except for meat.

DENYS (V.O.)

Said to who?

KAREN (V.O.)

(vague)

Oh . . . whoever.

The table's bare. A few stray beans remain.

EXT/POLO FIELD-DAY

Hell-for-leather, no uniforms or helmets, settlers versus Government House. Cars, carriages, spectators line the field; two inebriates cross it, oblivious to their peril. Much drinking, SHOUTING.

The action's furious: riders fall, careen through the crowd, the referee FIRES a pistol when the ball goes out of bounds. Bror's a contestant, but the action belongs to Felicity, 20, very much a woman, one of two on the field. She's expert, reckless, striking.

Karen watches, chats with Lady Macmillan. She is older at the eyes, perhaps a bit of gray, but not for the worse: time serves her well.

A melee on the field--horses bumping, riders SWEARING--and out of it, the ball's hit long toward government's goal. Felicity, a male opponent, are after it in a flash.

(CONTINUED)

They're stride for stride for half the field, ponies bumping, elbows flying, till she rides him off the ball and with a great looping backhand, drives it home. The referee FIRES.

Felicity's engulfed by teammates as they trot up the field.

LADY MACMILLAN

Quite something, Felicity.

KAREN

Yes, indeed.

Bror slides off his horse, laughing, gives up his place to a replacement, takes champagne.

WITH KAREN-A MOMENT LATER

Lady Macmillan's turned away as Bror comes to Karen.

BROR

How are you, Tanne?

KAREN

Getting old, I think. Not you. How is the shooting?

BROR

(shrugs, cheerful)

Ah. The good years are behind us. I'll make a living.

(beat)

Finch-Hatton's not here?

KAREN

Uganda. Some maharajah.

BROR

(sips)

It occurred you might be wanting a divorce.

Moment: a glimpse of her old fear. In time:

KAREN

Has she got money?

(he grins)

Of course she's got money.

(beat)

Is this important, Bror?

BROR

(shrugs)

I suppose.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

(a sigh)

I'll have to accuse you of something, you know.

(tart)

Or did you think you'd have it the other way round?

BROR

(grins)

No. Fire away. Whatever, I've surely done it.

(serious)

Thank you, Tanne.

Moment. As always, they're fond. She smooths his hair.

KAREN

I shan't worry you'll be happy. But it will please me.

BROR

You'll let me know what the solicitors need?

She nods. He kisses her lightly. A half-smile.

BROR (cont'd)

I remember that. Quite well.

He grins, offers a small salute, turns away, at once caught up in the conviviality of the crowd.

ON HER

Watching a chapter close. She finds a cigarette.

EXT/ON THE FARM-DAY

Muscles bulging, several Kikuyu strain to hold up a wagon from which one wheel's removed. Karen, filthy, greases the axle.

Farah, fastidious, disapproving, waits; he's brought her tea.

FARAH

These Kikuyu can do this work, msabu.

She nods to the man holding the wheel; he moves to refit it. Her attention's on the work, not Farah.

KAREN

Yes. They're not afraid to get dirty. Like the Somali.

(CONTINUED).

Farah frowns. The Kikuyu think this is very funny, almost drop the wagon. Karen sips her tea.

FARAH

I think Finch-Hatton can come today.

KAREN

(absent, watching)

Finch-Hatton is in the Mara.

FARAH

It may be so, msabu. Unless he comes today.

KAREN

(to the Kikuyu)

Now the other side.

She's back to work, moving among them, smiling with them, their pleasure apparent.

EXT/THE FARM-LATER

Sundown. Tired, Karen walks home alone. Now, faint, O.S., MUSIC. She walks more quickly, breaks into a run.

EXT/THE TERRACE-MINUTES LATER

The light fading. The gramophone outside, the record finished, still revolving, running down.

Denys, dirty, exhausted, fast asleep in the lounge chair, his glass in his lap.

Eager, she enters, slows. Quiet, she'll take the needle from the record, get her straight chair and place it--just so--next to his, take the glass from his lap, sit. And touch his chair.

WIDER-ON THEM

A portrait. The sense of an era ending. And of them. There is something about their postures that reminds of lions: her sense of connection with her sleeping mate . . . calm . . . protective . . . waiting.

INT/THE BATHROOM-NIGHT

Denys lolls in the bathtub, feet up for Karen to paint with a fungicide.

DENYS

It wasn't hunting they wanted. Just killing.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

How could Farah know you'd come today?

DENYS

(shrugs)

Africa. Bloody Africa.

(beat)

What we need . . . is a swim in the ocean.

KAREN

Wouldn't that be lovely?

DENYS

We could go day after Christmas.

KAREN

(stunned: she's forgotten)

Christmas.

EXT/ON THE LAWN-NIGHT

A great bonfire, and Karen, receiving a long line of her natives who greet her first, then move to the table where Farah doles out portions of tobacco, sugar, candy.

STUDY the African faces--planes and angles, fire-lit, and magnificent eyes.

--A man of 50, gnarled, his dignity untarnished.

--A toothless crone, grinning in anticipation.

--A young mother, sleek and shy.

--A boy of 10 who defied his elders to claim a place in line.

--A young man, stiff with pride, who takes the lion's tooth from his neck to make Karen a present, leaves the line, declines her gift, her gaze on him a moment long.

Over this, VOCAL MUSIC, a capella, in Swahili, a lilting language.

EXT/THE COASTLINE-DAY-AERIAL

Rushing low above dazzling beach and rolling surf. ANGLE ADJUSTS to include the shadow of an airplane.

EXT/ON THE BEACH-WIDE

From the sea, so broad breakers fall away to reveal a great expanse of beach, a small adobe house in the b.g. and their figures, very small, running to the ocean, apparently naked.

IN THE SURF

They dive into incoming waves, surface in the foamy trough. Karen stands waist-deep, back to CAMERA, slicks back her hair, watches Denys dive through a wave, ride another back to her.

ON THEM

Sleek. In slight SLOW MOTION, they kiss, and are swept away by another wave breaking around them.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

VERY CLOSE, in the same slight SLOW MOTION.

--Her face in profile against the sand, eyes closed, and now his finger, tracing her lip.

--Her stomach, streaked with salt, and now his head, bending to lick it away.

--His hand, brown on her white hip.

--Her shoulder, and now his fingers on her upper arm, revealing her armpit as he pins her arm above her head.

--Their calves, interlocked, muscles taut, ANGLE ADJUSTING to include their feet, her heel, his toes, bracing against the sand.

--His face, eyes open, smiling, and now her head coming INTO FRAME above him.

--Her hand, open-palmed, falling back, spent, against the sand.

EXT/ON THE BEACH-NIGHT

A small fire. Wine, the remains of shellfish. They're in caftans, his head in her lap.

KAREN

I won't be happier than this.

DENYS

Why go on then?

KAREN

How else remember?

(a long beat)

It's time I settled things with Bror.

DENYS

(points)

Sirius. The dog star.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

You don't mind being with another man's wife?

DENYS

(curious)

You see yourself as a possession then.

KAREN

I've been thinking I'll divorce him.

DENYS

Um. That will solve that problem.

KAREN

(dry)

You're quite good at this, Denys.

DENYS

(beat)

Did you want children?

KAREN

I'm not supposed to do that.

DENYS

How do we gain by marriage then?

KAREN

I might like it.

(no response)

I would like someone to ask sometime. Do that, will you? If I promise to say no?

DENYS

Just trust you, eh?

(kisses her)

I could not love thee, dear, so much/
Loved I not Freedom more.

KAREN

It's Honour, not Freedom.

DENYS

Whatever.

ON HER

Unsettled, unrequited, unresolved.

VERY HIGH AERIAL

Looking down on the biplane, very small, lonely in the dawn sky, itself flying high above a great sweep of Africa.

Decorated for Monte Carlo night. A vertical wheel of chance, tables of baccarat, dice, chemin de fer. MOVE through the usual crowd, playing, chatting, to NOTICE Denys and Felicity talking to one side. She's animated, her gestures broad: it's not a flirtation.

And FIND KAREN in a small group across the room, her gaze on Denys.

WITH HER

HUGE MAN

These new people are another class entirely! They've no heart for a frontier but they want a fortune the week they're off the boat. No sense of what's involved.

DELAMERE

(passing by)

Can I get a lift with you, Karen?
I've broken a wheel.

KAREN

If you're ready now: I'm bushed.

DELAMERE

(he's not)

All right.

KAREN

Find Denys for me, will you--tell him it's time?

HER POV

As Delamere makes his way to Denys, who listens, apologizes to Felicity. And now looks across the room to Karen.

INT/HER BEDROOM-NIGHT

He's in bed, eating an orange. At her vanity, she examines a stain on her robe, then:

KAREN

How would you like to come help me run things?

He's curious: has she gone mad? She sits on the bed; he has to make room for her.

KAREN (cont'd)

You can't hunt forever. It looks to be a good crop this year.

(takes some orange, unoffered)
I'd give you half my interest. We'd go partners.

DENYS

If we voted opposite, who'd prevail?

KAREN

We could toss for it.

She's blithe, but we know she's serious. He returns to his book. She's dripped some juice on his stomach, licks it away: an invitation. He doesn't respond.

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY

Gray and green in drizzling rain, not yet in bloom.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

O.S., the RAIN. Karen is sketching Kamante in charcoal. In time, with his usual pauses:

KAMANTE

When you go up in the sky, can you go where God is?

KAREN

No. We cannot get that high.

KAMANTE

It is high, where God is.

KAREN

Would you like to go up in the aeroplane with Denys?

KAMANTE

No.

KAREN

Why not?

KAMANTE

God is afraid when people come up high.

KAREN

Why would he be afraid?

KAMANTE

God does not like people to look at him.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-NIGHT

He reads, she's in a chair opposite with sewing, finishes with her shorts, takes up his shirt.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Have you got buttons anywhere?

DENYS

What are you doing?

KAREN

Mending your shirt.

DENYS

I have that done in town, Karen.

Moment. She drops the shirt on his chair as she leaves.

HOLD ON HIM

Concerned. He doesn't want to hurt her: why can't she let it be?

INT/DINING ROOM-DAY

Karen, with an earnest YOUNG MAN in corduroy, standing over a map spread out on the table.

YOUNG MAN

We'll come just along here--from west of town to the property just east of you.

KAREN

There's a road there already.

YOUNG MAN

Well, a track, really--this will be a proper road--gravel, a lane each way. If you like, we'll bring it straight on out to you. You'd stand that cost, of course.

KAREN

How much would it be?

YOUNG MAN

(rolling his map)

Say . . two hundred pounds and a bit. Not more than three, surely.

KAREN

Good Lord.

YOUNG MAN

That's just our cost, actually: we thought you might like it.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

That's kind, thank you--I suppose I like the old roads, really. Can I get you tea?

YOUNG MAN

Musn't, thanks: I've got my Kukes working down the way. Leave them alone--you know how they are.

KAREN

(not unkindly)

No . . . I've never really known how they are at all.

ANGLE ADJUSTING to see them to the door, AD LIBBING thanks-so-much and cheery-bye. As she returns:

KAREN

(under her breath)

A proper road!

INT/LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

They're on the floor before the fire, playing dominoes at a low table. Brandy.

KAREN

--A proper road, he called it.

DENYS

Felicity's asked to come on the camera trip I'm taking round Samburu.

KAREN

(a long beat)

If you'd said no, you wouldn't have told me. So you've said yes.

DENYS

No. I don't much care whether she comes or not. I thought I'd speak with you about it.

KAREN

I'm damned if I'll say thank you.

DENYS

Karen . . . there's no reason for her not to come. I've known her since short pants.

KAREN

And she's been mad for you ever since. I presume you've noticed she's grown up.

DENYS

I'll be armed, I'm not defenseless.

KAREN

You want her to go.

DENYS .

I want things that don't matter . . .
not to matter.

KAREN

Then tell her no.

DENYS

(beat, quiet)

And then . . . what else will there be?

(beat)

You know I don't lie to you.

KAREN

It's not your candor that's at issue!

(beat)

I won't allow this, Denys. You're
living in my house.

DENYS

(beat)

You've really no idea the effect that
language has.

(beat)

There's a vine in the Congo that
grows only on one sort of tree.
They're symbiotic, the one can't live
without the other. In time, the vine
strangles the tree: they both die.

KAREN

And I'm the vine, am I?

DENYS

I can't have you starting to manage
me: it would only be a matter of
time. I love you well enough to know
how much you'd find to want.

(beat)

She's not important.

KAREN

You'd lose me over this?

(no response)

Then apparently she is.

(beat)

Why is your freedom more valuable
than my self-respect? Over something
not important?

CONTINUED:

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A hard question. He truly weighs it, then:

DENYS

I'm going to Samburu. She can come or not.

KAREN

Then you'll be living elsewhere.

DENYS

As you wish.

She chuckles, bitter, then:

KAREN

I've learned a thing you haven't: there are things worth paying for. I want to be one of them.

She gets up for a cigarette, then:

KAREN (cont'd)

Perhaps you'll find you miss me.

DENYS

(quiet)

Yes. There's that.

EXT/THE COFFEE FIELDS-DAY-CLOSE ON A TREE

Heavy with clumps of red berries. Black hands come INTO FRAME, nimble and quick, stripping the ripe coffee.

EXT/AT THE SHED-DAY

ON a long wooden trough through which water-borne berries bob and float. Natives beside the trough discard green berries. She works with them. A sense that's she's losing herself in the work, that her people know she's to be left alone.

INT/INSIDE THE SHED-DAY

At the soaking tanks. Taking a break, she drinks tea. She's very tired, returns to work.

ANOTHER ANGLE-LATER

She moves along the tanks where pulpers husk the water-soaked beans, unaware of those who watch her.

INT/DINING ROOM-NIGHT

Alone at dinner, she fights to keep her eyes open.

Karen, natives, spreading the husked coffee for the sun to dry. She's robotic.

INT/THE SHED-NIGHT

Kerosene lamps, clanking machinery: a huge revolving drum, heated by a wood-burning furnace stoked by sweating natives. Karen, withdrawn, watching.

INT/HER BEDROOM-NIGHT

She's deep asleep, exhausted. Now, O.S., a HUBBUB, BUILDING, men SHOUTING, running, and now a FRANTIC BANGING at the door. When she comes awake, it's instantaneous: she's gone in a flash.

EXT/AT THE COFFEE SHED-NIGHT

Hundreds of Kikuyu stand silent, grave, in the glow of the huge fire. Some have buckets.

The entire structure is ablaze, all hope of saving it gone.

Karen watches, detached, a spectator.

A toddler comes to her, hands at the pocket of her robe where there might be candy. When she kneels to the child--strangely--it has her full attention. She smiles, pokes the child, tickling; it wriggles.

KAREN

All gone.

She stands to watch the fire, her hand idle on the child as it tries the other pocket.

EXT/COFFEE SHED-DAY-WIDE

Burned to the ground, still smoldering. Karen and Delamere walk around the ruin. Kikuyu youngsters dash hot-footed among the charred and twisted remains, salvaging this and that. Farah waits.

WITH KAREN-MOVING

About her humor, something insistent, brittle. She's too gay, about to break: Delamere will notice.

DELAMERE

Is there any insurance?

KAREN

That's for pessimists.

(CONTINUED)

DELAMERE

What about your family?

KAREN

They write often. They say I've squandered their money. I've squandered it well, don't you think?

DELAMERE

(beat.)

There's Denys.

KAREN

Not really.

(laughs, too giddy)

He doesn't want me to need him. He'd think I was one of those vines, the kind that strangle their host? He'd give me all I asked. And leave.

I'm broke, D. It's over.

They walk. A new thought, not sensible, occurs.

KAREN (cont'd)

I've got to get some land for my people.

DELAMERE

Even the odd little acre's expensive.

KAREN

No, I need a big chunk. Enough that they can all stay together.

DELAMERE

You've trouble enough--don't worry about that.

They've come to Farah.

FARAH

I can send now to fetch Sa'ab Finch-Hatton.

KAREN

No. He wouldn't like that.

(to Delamere)

We're out of coffee . . but I can give you tea.

INT/SMALL GOVERNMENT OFFICE-DAY

A sympathetic BUREAUCRAT at his desk, Karen opposite.

(CONTINUED)

BUREAUCRAT

(prepares to write)

How many people would you have to move?

KAREN

About a thousand, I think.

BUREAUCRAT

Good Lord!

COMMISSIONER (V.O.)

That's quite impossible.

INT/LARGER GOVERNMENT OFFICE-DAY

She's in different clothes. The COMMISSIONER'S in uniform, has given her tea.

COMMISSIONER

There's no arable land that size outside the reserves.

KAREN

What are you reserving it for? Golf?

COMMISSIONER

And if there were, we'd not put natives on it.

KAREN

Since it's theirs, that wouldn't be right, would it?

COMMISSIONER

It's not theirs, Baroness. It belongs to the colony, and the colony to the crown. We're already short labor on the established farms--

KAREN

The white farms, you mean.

COMMISSIONER

The scheme you're proposing would have them working for themselves. It's really quite impossible.

KAREN

Yes, it always is. Who must I see next?

COMMISSIONER

You've run through us all, I'm afraid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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She stands, puts on her gloves.

KAREN

We've a new governor, haven't we.

COMMISSIONER

Sir Joseph? He's not arrived yet.

KAREN

But will soon, I'm told. Poor as I
am, you do still ask me to things.
(and smiles)

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

She's packing books in crates. Now, O.S., the NOISE of a
LORRY ARRIVING, brisk STEPS into the house. She knows who
it is.

DENYS

Karen?!

She waits for him to enter; he's driven long and hard.

DENYS (cont'd)

I didn't know till we'd got to the
border. A bearing froze, then we lost
a--

KAREN

(unsteady)

I think you'd better hug me right
away.

A long hug, her body remembering his, then:

KAREN (cont'd)

It seems I'll do most anything to get
your attention.

INT/LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Coffee and brandy after dinner. She's curled up on the
couch; he's on the floor at her feet.

KAREN

--The bank says I can stay however
long, but I think they mean: not too
long. Do you know they plan to cut
this up? Little houses. For all the
little people who work in town.

DENYS

We'll see how they like lions in the
yard.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

My people come round the house every day, just to wait--they think I've got the answer. I've got to get them some land of their own.

DENYS

Your friends won't like that much.

KAREN

The white ones, you mean.

(shrugs)

They'll be rid of me soon enough.

(beat)

I've got to think what I'll do. Sometimes I think I might be able to write. Not well, but to make a living. D'you think?

DENYS

I don't know.

KAREN

My poor family. I've got them near bankrupt--now they'll have to take care of me all over again.

A moment. Will he ask her to stay?

DENYS

(beat)

You'd leave Kenya.

KAREN

(beat)

Yes.

DENYS

(beat)

I've got some money. You could take a house in town.

KAREN

(half to herself)

Like the little people.

(to Denys)

You'd keep me then.

(no response)

And we'd be . . friends?

DENYS

Of course.

She can have Africa. For a price. Her gaze is long, then she shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Are you going on to town?

DENYS

If you like.

(beat)

I'd like to stay, Karen.

Moment.

KAREN

Well . . . I've never stood on principle too long. May I have another brandy?

EXT/THE GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE-DAY-WIDE

An afternoon reception on the lawn to greet the new governor. A large crowd, a long reception line, after which there are tables of food, several bars.

ANOTHER ANGLE

In order, Delamere, Karen, Denys in the line, nearing the governor and his wife. The Commissioner is to his left, performing introductions.

COMMISSIONER

The Right Honorable Hugh Chomondeley,
Lord Delamere.

SIR JOSEPH

Delamere.

KAREN

Commissioner.

DELAMERE

Your servant, sir.

COMMISSIONER

Baroness.

COMMISSIONER

The Baroness von Blixen-Finecke.

SIR JOSEPH

(to her deep curtsy)

I'm sorry to know that Kenya will be losing you.

KAREN

You've heard of my trouble then.

SIR JOSEPH

Yes. I regret it.

KAREN

And of my problem now?

(CONTINUED)

SIR JOSEPH
The land you're after.

KAREN
Will you help me?

COMMISSIONER
Baroness, you really

SIR JOSEPH
That's quite difficult.

Delamere and Denys, unprepared, watch with interest. The line begins to BUZZ. She studies Sir Joseph, kneels before him! takes time to arrange her skirt. A GASP.

SIR JOSEPH (cont'd)
Please get up, Baroness.

KAREN
Kenya is a hard country for women, so there's a chivalry here, of a sort. You're a powerful man. And I've nowhere else to go.

SIR JOSEPH
Please do me the courtesy of letting us discuss this in a proper way.

Delamere and Denys are fighting off grins.

KAREN
You musn't be embarrassed. I've lost everything--it costs me very little, to beg of you.

The Commissioner is motioning for an officious aide. Sir Joseph's wife, LADY BYRNE, regal, watches Karen sharply.

KAREN (cont'd)
The land was theirs, you see: we took it. And now they've nowhere to go.

The aide arrives, would lift her to her feet, but:

DENYS
(pleasant)
I shouldn't do that.

DELAMERE
(more pleasant)
For fear you'd break an arm.

Sir Joseph, no fool, assesses things: the settlers are perfectly capable of slugging it out.

(CONTINUED)

SIR JOSEPH

I'll look into myself. And we will do the very best we can.

KAREN

May I have your word, Sir Joseph?

LADY BYRNE

You have mine, madam.

Karen gets up, brushes her skirt, SAYS thank you to Sir Joseph, pauses before Lady Byrne.

KAREN

I do thank you.

And curtsies low. The movement of the line resumes.

EXT/ON THE LAWN-LATER

Karen, Delamere and Denys, drinking.

DELAMERE

"You're a very powerful man . . ."

Laughter. Now Denys, exaggerating great sad eyes:

DENYS

"You musn't be embarrassed. Just because I've wrecked your party."
(more laughter)

KAREN

They've gone soft, I tell you. Old Belfield would have left me there till midnight.

DELAMERE

You do know what you said: Africa for the Africans? We'll not hear the last of that.

KAREN

That's a justice we'll never see.
(to both)

You're getting old, too: for a moment there, I thought you were going to help me.

INT/LIVING ROOM-DAY

She is moving through the room, writing prices on slips of paper, pinning them to pieces of her furniture. Natives move the larger pieces outside. Farah follows her.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

(as she works)

--You must have them ready to leave before the rains. It is good land, enough for all, and they must not fight about it or be any trouble to the authorities--do you understand? --or they will lose it.

FARAH

Yes, msabu.

KAREN

You must make them understand that I will not be here to speak for them.

FARAH

This land is far?

KAREN

By Dagoretti. Not too far.

FARAH

Msabu? How can it be now, with me and yourself.

KAREN

You will have some money. Enough, I think.

FARAH

(reproachful)

I do not speak of money.

Moment, through which she continues her work.

KAREN

Do you remember how it was on safari? In the afternoons I would send you ahead, to find a place and wait for me?

FARAH

And you can see the fire and come to this place.

KAREN

Yes. Well, it is like that. Only this time I am going first and I will wait for you.

FARAH

(considers it, then)

It is far where you are going?

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Yes.

FARAH

This fire must be very big. So I can find you.

Her back's to him. She gestures at the andirons.

KAREN

Take these on to the lawn.

Because she's crying. Alone, she breaks down.

INT/DINING ROOM-NIGHT

The room is nearly bare, much as it was when she first came. The candlebra is gone: stubby candles light the table. They've dressed for dinner; her gown is long but she wears no jewelry and no makeup. Juma pours coffee, would retire, but:

KAREN

Juma? Take off those silly gloves.

A broad smile. He removes them, leaves them on the table. She smokes, looks around at the room.

KAREN

We should have had it this way all the time.

DENYS

When you're through with this rummage sale of yours, let's do something just ourselves?

KAREN

I want to go flying.

DENYS

Um. I'm going down to Tsavo--there's some land might be right for a tourist place. I'll come get you Friday. We'll go to Rudolph for the weekend: there's a spot I know.

KAREN

I'd like that.

(long beat)

You're really going to let me go.

(beat, calm)

Do you remember how it was with us, along the Tana?

(CONTINUED)

DENYS

Yes.

KAREN

I've got this little thing I've lately learned to do . . .

When it's so hard I think I shan't go on, I try to make it worse. I make myself think about Barclay. Our camp on the river. My first lion. How fine you are.

When I'm certain I can't stand it . . . I go a moment more. And then I know I can bear anything.

She stubs out her cigarette, smiles.

KAREN (cont'd)

Would you like to see?

DENYS

All right.

She stands, holds out her hand to him.

KAREN

Come dance with me then.

EXT/THE TERRACE-NIGHT

Denys brings the gramophone to the old stone mill table. They wind it, start the record: a WALTZ, made for an eighteenth century ballroom. She takes off her shoes.

We're CLOSE ON THEM as they dance. A sense of their pain, their acceptance of it, and of great love. In time, tears on his cheeks. Not hers.

CRANE SHOT-MOVING TO A HIGH ANGLE

As he waltzes her off the terrace and out across the broad lawn till we almost lose them in the dark.

EXT/WIDE ON THE HOUSE AND LAWN-DAY

Furniture, many tables, some makeshift, holding her china and glassware, everything on sale. A number of shoppers, working class people: none of the settlers we've seen before.

WITH KAREN

Strolling among the shoppers, watching them paw over her things, sit in her chair, scoff at her art.

CONTINUED:

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A LITTLE GIRL, six or seven, runs from the house to Karen, clutching a crystal animal, hands her a greasy bank note.

KAREN

That's five rupees. It's marked ten.

LITTLE GIRL

Mummy said you'd bargain with me.

KAREN

Mummy was wrong.

The little girl doesn't know what to do.

KAREN (cont'd)

You musn't bargain on the price of fine things--it's got to be paid or the thing's of no value.

(beat)

My father brought me this from London when I was small. It was very nice to have because my sisters got nothing at all.

(a pause)

Is that all you have?

(the girl nods)

Then we must exchange gifts. What do you have to give me?

The girl thinks on that, digs in the pocket of her smock for an orange. Karen takes it. The girl runs off.

Karen's strolling on when Denys comes out of the house, calls to her.

DENYS

Friday!

They wave, he goes toward his truck. Karen CALLS to him.

Underhand, she throws the orange--a long way, really, but still it bounces, rolls toward him. He retrieves it, waves another goodbye.

But she's already engaged with a shopper.

EXT/OPEN COUNTRY AT TSAVO-NIGHT

Denys and Kanuthia, silent at a small fire, the plane outlined against the night sky behind them. Denys is staring into the fire, absently takes the orange from his pocket, begins to peel it.

EXT/TSAVO-DAY

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Dawn. Denys pitches his kit into the plane. Kanuthia's hanging back.

DENYS

Kwenda sasa.

Kanuthia doesn't move. Denys is thoughtful: he doesn't dismiss the Africans in these things. He walks round the plane, checks rudders and ailerons, guy wires. Nothing.

He gets into the cockpit, motions to Kanuthia to heave on the prop. The ENGINE COMES ALIVE.

Denys looks to Kanuthia, shrugs. Kanuthia hesitates, then, giving another meaning to the gesture, shrugs himself, gets into the forward seat.

WIDE

The plane accelerates across the hardpan, climbs, ENGINE ROARING. The plane's a half-mile away, the NOISE RECEDING, when suddenly: SILENCE. The plane begins to descend. Long silent moments, an EXPLOSION, small with the distance, when it crashes. And now, black smoke.

EXT/THE FARM-DAY

The last of the rummage sale, most items gone. Karen's taking money from a shopper, looks to the terrace.

HER POV

Farah, hands behind his back, staring at the sky. Now he looks to Karen, sees her watching, turns away, guilty.

ON HER

She knows.

INT/DRAWING ROOM-DAY

Sundown. She is sitting stiffly at her desk, hands crossed, waiting. The SOUND OF A CAR (O.S.) and at the front door, A MURMURING, inaudible.

Delamere enters, his face white, stricken.

KAREN

Hello, D. Would you like a drink?

DELAMERE

If you please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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Idly, she makes it, hands it to him, waits. He doesn't drink.

DELAMERE

Denys has been killed. His plane has crashed at Tsavo.

A long moment. Not so much as a nod. Now she goes slowly to the liquor, pours a glass. In time:

KAREN

Was he damaged?

She might as well have struck him.

DELAMERE

(beat)

There was a fire.

(long beat)

I'm sorry . . . that I am unable to say . . . how very sorry I am.

He puts down his drink, hurries away. Her look after him is vague, detached.

EXT/THE TERRACE-NIGHT

Just dusk. Farah stands at the door, washing his hands, over and over, ANGLE ADJUSTING TO FIND KAREN, back to CAMERA, sitting in her last chair, looking out over the lawn.

EXT/THE NGONG HILLS-DAY-VERY WIDE

At the gravesite Karen selected for herself. In the f.g., the three Kikuyu who've dug the grave now stand, move away as far in the b.g. a procession of cars and lorries edges up the hill, stops.

So far away we can't make them out, people debark; men take the coffin from the rear of a truck.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Still QUITE WIDE. Delamere, other men we've seen before, lead the way with the coffin, struggling in the slippery knee-high grass. The minister, perhaps thirty other mourners, Bror and his wife among them.

And Karen, veiled, just behind the coffin. Her stride is steady. She carries a small book.

The coffin in the ground. Karen nearest the grave, the others haphazard, spread out behind her. At distance, a few Africans.

THE MINISTER

--The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.

ALL

(ragged)

Amen.

The minister steps back, looks to Karen. She removes her hat and veil, runs her fingers through her hair. For the first time we see her face: it's gaunt, beautiful. Her voice will be low, steady, clear:

KAREN

The time you won your town the race/
We chaired you through the marketplace/
Man and boy stood cheering by/
And home we brought you, shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come/
Shoulder-high we bring you home/
And set you at your threshold down/
Townsmen . . . of a stiller town.

PAN the mourners. Brave men swallow. Women are crying. Tears flow furiously from Bror's eyes; he will not wipe them. Delamere is trembling.

KAREN (O.S.) (cont'd)

Smart lad, to slip betimes away/
From fields where glory does not stay/
Early though the laurel grows/
It withers quicker than a rose.

Felicity buries her face on her father's shoulder. Lady Macmillan's chin is very high. Lady Byrne turns away to stare up the hill.

And Wasili, alone at distance, watches.

KAREN (O.S.) (cont'd)

Now you will not swell the rout/
Of lads that wore their honors out/
Runners whom renown outran/
And the name died fore the man.

Not a tear. She no longer needs the book.

KAREN

So set, before its echoes fade/
The fleet foot on the sill of shade/
And hold to the low lintel up/
The still-defended challenge cup.

And round that early-laureled head/
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead/
And find unwithered on its curls/
(unsteady)

A garland . . . briefer than a girl's.

Moment. Her voice steadies. She looks up at the hills.

KAREN (cont'd)

Now take back the soul of Denys
George Finch-Hatton, whom you have
shared with us. He brought us joy, we
loved him well. He was not ours.

(beat)

He was not mine.

She bends to take a handful of earth to drop into the grave. Her lips move: we cannot make it out. She may have said: I love you.

But she cannot drop the earth; the gesture is too final. It trickles away through her hand. She turns to the mourners, looks at them all . . . and seems to shrug. She walks away, not toward the cars but down the slope of the hill.

At distance, Farah waits.

She pauses once, to take off her shoes. Far-off, she passes by Farah, who turns to follow her down the hill.

EXT/THE FARM-DAY

She says good-bye to Kamante and Juma at the house, walks with Farah to her car, loaded with not much luggage, the dog following. Spread over the lawn, hundreds of silent Kikuyu.

AT THE CAR

She kneels to the dog, fondles him, stands.

KAREN

He is old now, like you and me. He should die where he lived. Will you keep him for me, until then?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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FARAH

Yes, msabu.

He snaps his fingers. The dog sits beside him. Karen takes Denys's bracelet from her arm, thinks about it, then:

KAREN

This is very dear to me, but it must not be away from Africa. Will you wear it, until I fetch it from you?

FARAH

Yes, msabu.

She would like to touch his face, shakes his hand instead. She gets into the car, drives away, does not look back. As she goes, from the Kikuyu, a ragged KWAHERI, forlorn.

INT/MUTHAIGA CLUB-DAY

She's at the desk, writing out last instructions for the club.

KAREN

--Letters you'll just send on to this address in Denmark. My accounts should go to Hunter and company--and anything else you don't know what to do with.

DESKMAN

Yes, memsaab.

As she turns, the earnest young engineer comes to her.

KAREN

I've been down your road. I still like the old one.

YOUNG MAN

(grins)

Yes, Baroness. I've been sent to ask if we might stand you a drink.

KAREN

And who is we?

YOUNG MAN

Well . . . the members, actually.

She nods, walks to the men's bar, enters without hesitation, the young man following.

Perhaps thirty men, all ages, many that we know, including the Huge Man. A few are standing, most sit at tables. They don't acknowledge her. She pays no attention, goes straight to the bar. It has no mirror.

KAREN

Whisky, please.

The black barman hesitates, looks to the young man.

YOUNG MAN

Two whiskies, please.

Her back's to the room; she looks straight ahead. O.S., the SCRAPING OF CHAIRS. Lifting her glass, she waits for his toast.

YOUNG MAN

The King, I guess.

KAREN

Rose-lipt maidens. Lightfoot lads.

She drinks.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Behind her, all the men are standing. Their conversation continues, only a few look at her, but they are damn well standing. The Huge Man stands, too, his baleful glare ready for anyone not on his feet.

WITH KAREN

She knocks back her drink, SAYS thank you, walks briskly through the door, out of view. HOLD ON THE VACANT DOORWAY, framing empty space.

EXT/THE NGONG HILLS-DAY

At the crest, broad and green, all of that part of Africa below.

THE ACTRESS AS HERSELF, in blue jeans, strolls, talks directly to us.

THE ACTRESS

These are the hills where she lived. Denys is buried down there, and her house was over there.

That's Nairobi. It's a big city now: jet planes land there. But over there . . . that is still Africa.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

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THE ACTRESS (cont'd)
She never came back. She went home--well, not home, really--but to Denmark, and she wrote stories. About Farah. Kamante. The lions. Her life on the farm. About Denys, she wrote very little.

She took the pen name Isak Dinesen. Isak means one who laughs. She didn't marry, didn't fall in love.

She was born in the time of Victoria. On a trip to America, before she died, what she most wanted to do was have lunch with Marilyn Monroe. And she did.

She takes a folded piece of paper from her hip pocket.

THE ACTRESS (cont'd)
Some months after she left Africa, a friend wrote this to her:
(reads)

"The Masai have reported to the district commissioner at Ngong that many times, at sunrise and sunset, they have seen lions on Finch-Hatton's grave. A lion and a lioness have come there, and stood, or lain, on the grave for a long time.

"Some of the Indians who have passed the place in their lorries on the way to Kajado have also seen them. After you went away, the ground round the grave was levelled out, into a sort of terrace. I suppose that the level place makes a good site for the lions. From there they can have a view over the plain, and the cattle and game on it."

(refolds the paper)
I hope that that was true.

She walks on.

WIDE ON THE GRAVESITE

A lion saunters through the grass near the grave, stops to stand looking over the valley. And now a lioness . . . strolling toward him.

PULL AWAY AND AWAY. CREDITS RUN

THE END