

"RED SCORPION"

Screenplay by

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Registered WGAw

FOURTH DRAFT

Producers: Gary Foster
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FADE IN:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

A small group of Russian peasants are huddled around an open grave. It is fall and the people are bound up in tattered coats to ward off the chilling air. A flurry of dead leaves brush by their worn shoes as they watch a casket being lowered into the ground. The gravestone reads JOSEPH RACHENKO 1934-1971.

A bearded FATHER reads from the Bible.

FATHER

Now unto him that is able to keep
you from falling, and to present you
faultless before the presence of His
glory with exceeding joy.

A young blue-eyed, blond-haired boy watches the casket with a look of fear and bewilderment. Beside him is a stoic-looking Sergeant, dressed in Soviet military uniform.

A WOMAN wearing all black approaches the boy and discreetly hands him a silver ring. The boy looks closely at the ring then clasps it tightly in his hand.

FATHER

(continuing)

To the only wise God our Savior, be
glory and majesty, dominion and
power, both now and ever -- A-men.

The father closes his Bible and the gathering slowly disperses. Some of them offer their condolences to the boy and he nods to them silently.

After a time the Sergeant takes the boy and leads him toward a military jeep. The woman cries out:

WOMAN

... Nikolai!

The Boy looks back with frightened eyes. The Sergeant gives him a nudge and he turns toward the jeep.

Several people hold the woman back as she continues to cry out:

WOMAN

(continuing)

... Nikolai!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Sergeant and the boy climb into the jeep. NIKOLAI RACHENKO stares at the woman as the jeep starts up and moves off into the gray winter day.

EXT. SPETSNAZ TRAINING CENTER - UKRAINE FOREST - DAY

Light flakes of snow float down, settling on an expensive futuristic-looking building. Towering cedar and fir trees rise up in the b.g. like monumental white pillars. There is a stillness in the air, a sense of desolation.

INT. HALLWAY #1

An electronic door slides upward, and silhouetted against a blinding light is an enormous black figure. He is shrouded by a thin veil of red smoke. He looks like some kind of unholy terror -- an ultimate killing machine.

As he steps into the hallway we see that he is wearing a black helmet and high-tech fiberglass armor. He is armed with an assortment of weapons including a semi-automatic machine gun, hand grenades, a commando knife and a shotgun.

CLOSEUP - A HAND

grips the machine gun tightly. On one of the fingers is the silver ring.

BACK TO SCENE

The door slides shut, and Nikolai takes his first few steps. He stops abruptly and scans the area in front of him. After a beat, he extracts a tube from his leg guard and blows into it. A cloud of white dust shoots out, and as it settles, a criss-cross of electronic beams appear directly in front of him. There is a three-foot opening between two of the beams, and he pulls out a dart gun that has a wire coil attached. He aims and fires through the middle of the opening, and the dart sticks into the far wall. He then takes the other end of the coil and fastens it to one of the poles that line the room. He shimmies across the wire, barely squeezing through the opening.

INT. HALLWAY #2

Nikolai crawls out of a small tunnel, and as he stands, there is a LOUD SCREECHING SOUND as three fluorescent cardboard soldiers slide along tracks heading straight for him. He opens fire with his machine gun, and in a matter of seconds all three of them are ripped to pieces.

NIKOLAI'S POV - THROUGH INFRARED GOGGLES

as he approaches a door. There is an air vent directly above the door which opens suddenly, and a hydraulic arm shoots out firing jagged disks at him.

BACK TO SCENE - NIKOLAI

knocks away one after another of these disks with his machine gun. Finally, he rolls onto the ground, picks up one of the disks and hurls it toward the cables suspending the hydraulic arm. The cables snap, and Nikolai clears as the hydraulic arm crashes to the floor.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

The ultra-modern room is filled with high-tech equipment, digital readouts, computer screens and more buttons and dials than the cockpit of the millinium falcon. A technician watches a panel of twenty separate television monitors, pressing several buttons as Nikolai comes INTO VIEW.

INT. LOUNGE AREA

GENERAL ISAAK LUNS, an imposing, barrel-chested man with hard lines marking his face, is sitting in front of a large screen watching the soldier in action. Numerous other high-ranking Soviet officials are gathered around him. All eyes are glued to the screen.

INT. HALLWAY #3

Nikolai kicks down a door and steps into the next hallway. Almost immediately a soldier drops down from some rafters. Nikolai just steps aside as the soldier crashes to the floor. The man scrambles to his feet, and Nikolai smashes an elbow into his face, cracking his helmet.

Suddenly, a hook attached to a wire shoots down from the rafters, wrapping around his weapon. The gun is pulled away, and two more of the hooks shoot out, wrapping around each of his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The soldiers then drop from the ceiling, holding the wires. As they come down their combined weight pulls Nikolai up so that he is suspended in the air.

The soldier with the cracked helmet gets to his feet and rips off his headpiece. There is murder in his eyes. He pulls out a club and takes a swing at Nikolai. The giant Russian twists his body, avoiding the blow, then he wraps his legs around the guy's neck, choking him. The two soldiers holding the cables pull out stun guns; however, in an incredible surge of strength, Nikolai pulls on the wires and both men shoot straight into the air. Their helmets are pulverized against the beams, and Nikolai frees himself from the coils. The two men drop to the floor in a heap.

A fourth soldier emerges from the darkness charging Nikolai. In an amazing maneuver Nikolai cracks the guy's head back with his foot, retrieves the gun, then uses the guy as a battering ram to open the next door.

INT. HALLWAY #4

Nikolai keeps moving forward like a cyborg programmed for kill. The floor beneath him suddenly shoots up, and he dives forward as it slams into the roof. He barely has time to get to his feet when the walls close in and he does several fast rolls as the walls slam shut behind him.

About fifteen yards ahead is the spinning fan with the razor-sharp blades. As he moves toward it, a pipe drops from the ceiling. There is the thundering SOUND of RUSHING WATER, and Nikolai charges toward the fan as water gushes out of the pipe and storms down the hall behind him.

Just as the water reaches him, he dives through the spinning blades and a door slides shut behind him.

A steel pole shoots down from the roof, and Nikolai rolls sideways, easily avoiding it. Machine-gun bullets start spraying over his head, and without missing a beat, he crawls forward and rolls down a decline. At the end of the roll he lands on his feet, then walks toward an open door.

Nikolai is a few feet from the door when a steel clamp traps his foot. The ceiling panel opens, and clamoring, spinning wheels lower. Nikolai looks over as three other wheels of death roll out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The door starts to close, and Nikolai casually pulls out his commando knife, slashes a strap on his boot, then hurls the knife against the door frame. The door is jammed by the knife. Nikolai extracts his foot from the boot, and as the raging wheels close in on him he pulls the door open, retrieves his knife and steps into hallway #5.

INT. LOUNGE

Luns sits back in his seat, a glimmer of satisfaction in his eyes.

INT. HALLWAY #5

Nikolai takes a few steps, then looks down. The entire floor is covered in gasoline. A grenade rolls out of a nearby tube, and Nikolai bolts, taking great strides down the long hallway.

The grenade bursts, and a ball of raging fire quickly closes in on him. Ahead there is a wide black pit, and Nikolai has no choice but to dive into it. He appears to be consumed by the swirl of fire; however, he leaps through the air before it can consume him. As he falls, spikes burst out of the walls and he is nearly decapitated by one. He hits several others, and they slow his fall. Finally, he grabs onto one of them and flips himself around, landing gracefully on a platform that leads out of the pit. The wall in front of him slides open, and Nikolai finds himself at the end of the gauntlet.

INT. GENERAL'S OFFICE

Nikolai is inside a large, very chic office. At the far end, sitting at a chrome desk, is a very lifelike wax general. Nikolai whips the shotgun off of his back and stalks toward his target. Soldiers come at him from all directions, and he easily dispenses with them. An overleg throw here, a head twist there, a cross hook take down here, and pretty soon all of them are out cold.

Nikolai stands in front of the general's desk and casually surveys the room.

Nikolai
Nice office.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He cocks the shotgun, and without wasting time, blasts the target to smithereens. The general's head explodes, his arms are torn apart, his chest is blown out and his desk shatters. Nikolai is not just killing this guy, he's obliterating him. Finally, after about ten blasts, the noise ceases and the smoke clears. Nikolai slips off his helmet, and for the first time we see his face. He is very striking, very Nordic-looking with sharp features, brilliant blue eyes and short-cropped hair.

NIKOLAI

(continuing)

Lousy security.

INT. LOUNGE

There is a flurry of excitement in the room. Luns stands, turns to a Sergeant and nods. The Sergeant nods back and heads for the door.

INT. SPETSNAZ BRIEFING ROOM - CLOSEUP - DAY

A map of an African country is projected on a screen. There are black stripes covering more than a third of the map.

LUNS (O.S.)

In nineteen seventy eight the Soviet Army came to the aid of the Marxist faction known as the Kampala. In the ensuing years we have assisted the insurgent Cuban and Czechoslovakian forces in overtaking nearly two thirds of the country.

CAMERA PULLS BACK revealing an office that is pitch black, save for the light coming from the projector. Nikolai is clearly illuminated, whereas Luns is half-concealed in the shadows. The Spetsnaz soldier takes off his black chest plate, revealing an enormous torso. He appears indifferent to what Luns is saying.

LUNS

(continuing)

All that prevents us from a full out overthrow is a group of rebel guerrillas known as the Tshani. The impetus behind the rebellion -- is this man...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Luns presses a button on the projector, and the slide changes to a photograph of Sundiata. He is a heavysset very powerful-looking man dressed in unassuming attire.

LUNS

(continuing)

... President Augusto Sundiata -- He is your targeted objective.

For the first time Nikolai's interest is piqued. He slips off black gloves as he moves to the screen.

LUNS

(continuing)

He is a very powerful, very dangerous fanatic. A ruthless butcher of men, women and children -- He must be stopped.

NIKOLAI

Access?

As Luns goes on, Nikolai unstraps one of his leg shields, revealing an immense thigh.

LUNS

Lieutenant Armando Kintash, one of Sundiata's top advisors, is currently being detained in Cuamo, which is Kampala's operations center. -- You have been assigned there as a technical advisor. You must align yourself to this man and he will become your entree to the President.

Nikolai eyes the slide as he unstraps the second leg shield. Luns stands and pulls on his overcoat.

LUNS

(continuing)

It is crucial that we remain a covert operation. Once inside you will be entirely on your own.

By this time Nikolai has discarded most of his armor. He picks up a towel and wipes the sweat from his enormous, perfectly-sculpted body. Luns takes one last look at this giant.

LUNS

(continuing)

There will be no turning back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nikolai watches Luns exit, then slowly crosses the room, standing right up against the image of this guerrilla leader. For a long moment he stares into Sundiata's eyes, studying them.

EXT. HELICOPTER IN FLIGHT - DAY

An Allhouette, its rotors shimmering in the hot sun, soars over the vast African landscape.

INT. HELICOPTER

Nikolai, dressed in the crisp uniform of a Soviet officer, watches the passing savanna. Despite the drabness of his attire, he manages to look strikingly handsome.

NIKOLAI'S POV - A HERD OF ZEBRA

scatter through a field of elephant grass, frightened by this mechanical intruder. Altering patterns of bush and scrub pass beneath them with an occasional stream weaving through. A flock of secretary birds pass directly beneath them, their brilliant colors providing a beautiful contrast to the dry savanna.

NIKOLAI

watches without expression.

EXT. CUAMO BASE - DAY

The massive compound is surrounded by barbed wire fences and mountains of sandbags. There are at least twenty buildings including hangars, barracks and a complex of offices. On the horizon the Allhouette can be seen rapidly approaching.

EXT. CUAMO HELIPAD - DAY

The chopper kicks up a storm of dry dust as it touches down inside the compound. Nikolai jumps out carrying a rucksack. He is met by a seventeen-year-old Cuban sergeant, RAUL MENDEZ.

MENDEZ

Lieutenant Rachenko. I am Sergeant Mendez. Welcome to Cuamo.

The men shake hands, and Mendez takes Nikolai's bag as they move away from the thundering machine.

INT. COLONEL ZAYAS' OFFICE - DAY

Nikolai is standing at attention in front of a desk where Colonel Enrico Zayas is glancing over his dossier. Zayas is a tall, heavy-set Cuban with dark piercing eyes.

ZAYAS

(heavy accent)

Forgive me, Comrade, but I am having difficulty in understanding why you have been sent here. You are a technical advisor, and yet in the area of combat it appears you never went beyond basic training -- Somehow I find that difficult to believe.

There is a long silence as Zayas approaches Nikolai, scrutinizing him very carefully.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

In any case, I must tell you that here in Cuamo, I am fully in command.

Zayas moves around the Russian.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

You will find the country conspicuously lacking in modern amenities. The natives, as you will quickly discover, seem adverse to Twentieth Century conventions. In fact, I should say that the vast majority of them are really little more than savages -- Nonetheless, I am certain you will adapt.

He stops directly in front of Nikolai and looks him straight in the eye.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

If, however, you should take a single step out of line, I will see to it personally that full punitive measures are exercised -- Is that clear, Lieutenant?

NIKOLAI

Sir!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZAYAS
(calling outside)
Sergeant Mendez.

Mendez steps into the room.

MELENDEZ
Colonel Zayas, sir!

ZAYAS
Please give the Lieutenant a tour
of his new home.

MELENDEZ
Yes, sir!

Zayas takes a final wary look at Nikolai as the two men
exit.

EXT. TOP OF CUAMO HILL - SUNSET

Mendez indicates to various buildings as he and Nikolai
move along the hill.

MELENDEZ
... officers quarters, mess hall.
Over there is the orderly room, in
back of that, the stockade.

Nikolai's eyes go to the stockade as Mendez continues.

MELENDEZ
(continuing)
That building houses arms and
munitions. Over a third of our
Soviet arsenal is stored there.

Nikolai looks at the building then turns and looks out
beyond the base.

NIKOLAI
... Over there?

NIKOLAI'S POV

Standing beneath a far-off tree, silhouetted by the sun,
is a smallish lean man carrying a spear.

MELENDEZ (O.S.)
(surprised)
... Kung bushman!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK TO SCENE

Nikolai turns to Mendez.

MENDEZ

It is very rare they are seen -- They say it is an omen of good fortune.

Mendez moves off, continuing with the tour. Nikolai turns back to the blazing sun.

NIKOLAI'S POV

The bushman has disappeared.

INT. NIKOLAI'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The room is nondescript; a metal frame bed, a dresser and a chair are the only furnishings.

Nikolai is sitting in the chair, expertly sharpening a thin, uniquely-shaped knife. After a time, he raises the knife to eye level and inspects the razor-sharp edge.

Satisfied, he takes a combat boot from the floor and slides the shoe mold off, revealing a shallow cavity. He fits the knife inside the hollow, then slides the base back into position. He then pulls the boot on and laces it up.

He stands, crosses to the dresser and takes a half-empty bottle of vodka from his duffle bag. He unscrews the cap, pours some into his hand and rubs it onto his face and chest. He takes a large mouthful, swirls it around, then spits it into a nearby sink. He then heads out the door, bottle in hand.

INT. CUAMO BAR - NIGHT

The dark, smoke-filled room is crowded with loud and sweaty Cuban, Czech and Soviet soldiers. The bar is clearly segregated, with Cubans in the back and Czechs and Russians sitting in separate areas near the front. Some of the men are playing cards; others are boasting loudly about war exploits. Most, however, are there just to get drunk and for a moment forget about the hot, filthy war they are fighting.

The door bursts open, and Nikolai staggers in, taking a swig from a bottle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The noise level subsides as the veterans eye the gigantic, inebriated newcomer.

Nikolai lets out a loud belch and staggers awkwardly toward the bar, shoving aside anyone in his way. Tension builds as a few of these men give him unsavory looks; however, it appears that nobody is going to challenge this titan.

A few men step back as Nikolai approaches a barstool. This particular barstool is occupied by a very stocky, badly-scarred Czech. His name is GUNNER, and he must weigh close to 300 pounds. Nikolai stands behind the Czech and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

NIKOLAI

... Move.

After a beat, Gunner turns and looks at Nikolai without expression. Slowly, he faces back to the bar.

NIKOLAI

(continuing)

Move, you Czech bastard.

A moment passes, then very abruptly Gunner spins around and pummels Nikolai in the gut. It's a devastating blow, yet Nikolai doesn't flinch. Instead, he just stares at the Czech with a drunken grin. Infuriated, Gunner lunges at Nikolai. With one quick move, Nikolai smashes his wrist across Gunner's neck and as the Czech doubles over, he hammers a fist into his back, rendering the enormous man unconscious.

By this time the bar has fallen dead silent. Nikolai takes another gulp of vodka as he staggers into the middle of the room.

NIKOLAI

(singing)

Sing to the motherland,
Home of the free,
Bulwark of peoples in brotherhood
strong!

Soldiers start backing out of the way as Nikolai kicks over one of the tables, sending glasses crashing to the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NIKOLAI

(continuing; in Russian)

The party of Lenin,
The strength of our peoples.
To Communism's triumph, lead us on!

He kicks over another table, this time sending one of the Cubans sprawling back in his chair.

NIKOLAI

(continuing; in Russian)

The tempests the sunrays of
freedom have cheered us.
Along the new path where great
Lenin did lead.

Suddenly, two armed MP's rush into the room, rapidly taking up positions. Nikolai ignores them as he goes on with his rampage.

NIKOLAI

(continuing; in Russian)

Thy might was created by will of
our peoples.
Now flourish in unity, great Soviet
land.

The guards surround Nikolai and move in to apprehend him. Abruptly, he whips around, smashing one of them in the face, sending him sprawling backward.

Before the second one has a chance to react, Nikolai executes a spinning heel kick, caving in his chest. The soldier drops in a heap.

Nikolai snatches up one of the MP's machine guns, and soldiers scramble in all directions as he opens fire. He shoots at the bar, and bottles and glasses shatter apart.

He fires on the windows, and one after the other they explode outward. He annihilates tables and chairs, blows huge chunks out of the walls, then rips apart the ceiling. He even manages to perforate a water main, and water sprays everywhere.

Just as the clip empties, a slew of soldiers pours into the room, one after the other dropping to their knees and raising their weapons. Nikolai just stands there, staring vacantly, his gun dangling at his side. He remains passive as several soldiers advance. One of them kicks the gun from his hand and knocks away the bottle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Three others move in and fiercely handcuff him.

Colonel Zayas marches in and surveys the pandemonium. He spots the bottle of vodka and picks it up. He inspects it briefly, then stands directly in front of Nikolai. There is a pause as the two men face each other off.

ZAYAS

(barely containing his
rage)

This is despicable!

NIKOLAI

(deadpan)

Go fuck yourself.

The Colonel strikes Nikolai viciously across the face. For a very brief moment a pure, almost masochistic evil reveals itself. He quickly composes himself, however, straightening his jacket as he does so. He signals the soldiers with the flick of his head, and they roughly lead Nikolai toward the door.

INT. STOCKADE CELL - NIGHT

The door clanks open, and Nikolai is shoved to the floor of the cell. He gradually props himself up, resting his back against the wall.

He looks around the dark, squalid room; the walls are dripping with green scum, and the floor is covered with dirt and human feces.

A figuré stirs in the corner. As he sits up his face is illuminated by a light bulb dangling from the aluminum roof. It is the badly-beaten ARMANDO KINTASH. The men stare at each other, neither one saying a word. In time, Armando turns over, disappearing in the shadows.

Nikolai rests his head against the wall. A very subtle smile appears on his face.

INT. CELL - MORNING

A thin beam of dusty sunlight streams through the narrow window. Nikolai stirs and sits up. Across from him Armando is on his knees in a prayer position. There is a large gash down the side of his face, and his body is covered in bruises.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMANDO

(barely audible)

I will go to the altar of God, even unto God my exceeding joy. Our hope is in the name of the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost -- Amen.

Armando crosses himself and opens his eyes. He moves back to the corner, resting against the wall.

Nikolai lifts his pant leg, revealing a whiskey flask that is strapped to his ankle. He unfastens it, takes the top off and has a long drink. He looks over at Armando as he replaces the cap. After a beat he throws him the flask. The huge black catches it, never taking his eyes from Nikolai. He unfastens the top and takes a swig. He releases a deep sigh as the soothing liquid flows through his veins.

ARMANDO

(continuing)

... What is your name?

NIKOLAI

Nikolai.

ARMANDO

... Armando.

Nikolai gestures to Armando's wounds.

NIKOLAI

What did they do to you?

ARMANDO

... Cuban hospitality.

Eventually, he replaces the cap and tosses the flask back.

ARMANDO

(continuing)

Thank you.

Nikolai nods then takes another swig.

INT. BARRACKS CORRIDOR - DAY

FOOTSTEPS ECHO in the darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY (O.S.)
 Lighten up, asshole. Yer breakin'
 my fuckin' arm!

DEWEY FERGUSON, a thirty-year-old American with hair tied back in a bandanna, rounds the corner. He's escorted by two MP's. The undersized, foul-mouthed mercenary appears to have stepped right out of the Sixties.

DEWEY
 (continuing)
 Boys, remember the face. It'll be
 the last thing yer all gonna see
 before yer collective asses are blown
 to kingdom-fuckin'-come!

The MP's heave him into the cell, slamming the door behind him. Dewey screams down the corridor after them.

DEWEY
 (continuing)
 I'll rip yer fuckin heads off and
 stick 'em on poles for maggots to
 chew on, you shithead sons of
 bitches!

He viciously kicks the steel doors. After a beat he turns and looks over at Armando. His expression changes drastically.

Dewey throws his arms around the big Colonel.

DEWEY
 (continuing)
 Armando. 'The hell're you doin' in
 this piss-hole?

ARMANDO
 Dewey Ferguson.

He steps back and takes a good look at his friend.

DEWEY
Goddamn, you look like shit! I've
 seen --

He stops short when he notices Nikolai.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

(continuing; flaring
up)

What the hell is that?

(crossing to Nikolai)

Jesus, man, what the hell's he doin'
in here? I don't believe this! I'm
sharin' a cell with a fuckin' Soviet
cutthroat!

Dewey stands over Nikolai. The Russian slowly rises,
dwarfing the American. Dewey holds his ground.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Just stay on yer side of the cage,
man -- Yer fuckin' side of the cage!

He turns back to Armando.

DEWEY

(continuing; mouthing
the words)

King-fuckin'-Kong.

Nikolai slowly sits, watching the two men as they continue
with their salutations.

EXT. STOCKADE - DAY

A transport truck pulls up, and SERGEANT KRASNOV, a
full-bellied Russian, climbs out. Six Cuban MP's jump
out the back.

INT. CELL

Dewey and Armando are sitting opposite from Nikolai.
Dewey is talking to Armando in hushed tones.

DEWEY

... bridge went up like the fuckin'
fourth of July -- It was beautiful,
man. Fuckin' beautiful.

(pause)

We were comin' back. They ambushed
us just outside of Asabe. I nipped
four of 'em before some fucker
smashed me from behind -- They killed
Abias and Manuel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dewey shakes away the memories, and his attention turns to Nikolai.

DEWEY

(continuing)

So what about him? 'The fuck is he doin' in here?

ARMANDO

... Disorderly conduct.

DEWEY

(blowing up)

Disorderly conduct?! Aw, shit, are you fuckin' kiddin' me? So whaddya do, cuss out the Motherland? Fuckin' disorderly conduct! You wanna see disorderly conduct take a look at what you fuckers are doin' to this country.

There is the SOUND of a DOOR OPENING and FOOTSTEPS. A moment later Krasnov appears along with six MP's. One of them opens the cell door.

KRASNOV

You are being transported to Sandoa.

The prisoners rise, and the MP's shove them against the wall, roughly handcuffing them. One of the MP's twists Dewey's arm back.

DEWEY

(wincing)

Easy there, poncho.

The three captives are herded toward the door.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A transport truck moves through a mountain valley.

EXT. TRUCK BED

Two long benches flank the walls. The prisoners sit interspaced between the MP's. Krasnov eyes the three of them while drawing from a thick cigar. Nikolai is gazing out on the mountains, and Armando is sitting back with his eyes closed. Dewey quietly hums to himself. Eventually, he breaks into song.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

(singing)

And they were singin',
Bye bye, Miss American pie.
Drove my Chevy to the levy but
the levy was dry.
And good 'ol boys were drinkin'
whiskey and rye,
Singin' --

KRASNOV

Enough!

DEWEY

Fuck you.

Krasnov stands abruptly and thrusts the butt of his gun into Dewey's gut. The American doubles over, gasping for air. Krasnov motions to one of the MP's, and he snaps Dewey backward, using his rifle to pin the American's head to the wall.

Armando makes a move, and a pistol is shoved into his side. Nikolai remains motionless.

KRASNOV

A very tough little man.

Krasnov takes the cigar from his mouth and extends the burning end toward Dewey's chest. Dewey struggles to break free. When the cigar is about a half inch from his chest, Krasnov stops. He looks the American straight in the eye.

KRASNOV

(continuing)

Fuck you too, hey.

There is a sickening NOISE as the cigar burns into Dewey's skin. His body convulses, and his eyes squeeze tight. Armando watches helplessly, an intense rage in his eyes. Nikolai shows no expression.

KRASNOV

(continuing)

You would like more, perhaps? -- Very good.

Again, Krasnov singes Dewey's skin. Armando looks over at Krasnov, and something snaps inside of him. He drives his elbow into the MP with the pistol and a shot goes off, killing the MP sitting across from them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He then thrusts his foot up, crushing the jaw of a third MP. Before Krasnov can figure out what's happening, Armando locks his legs around the Sergeant's neck, squeezing the life from him. The third MP turns his rifle on Armando and as he thrusts the bayonet toward him, Armando swings Krasnov around. The blade sinks into Krasnov's shoulder, and he drops to the floor.

Dewey is on his knees, gasping for air. He sees one of the soldiers pull a knife and he springs up, screaming like a ferocious animal.

DEWEY

Ahhhhh!

He body-checks the MP, bashing him against the wall. His arms are constrained by the handcuffs so he executes a head-butt, rendering the man unconscious.

Armando heaves his bulk against another one of the MP's, pitching him sideways right out of the truck. He dodges as another MP thrusts his bayonet at him. The wall splinters beside his head. He quickly releases a pivot kick, smashing the man's throat.

Dewey faces off the last of the MP's, daggers shooting from his eyes.

DEWEY

(continuing)

The road, amigo.

After a beat the MP jumps out, tumbling down a steep embankment.

Dewey is about to reach for a weapon when he hears the CLICK of a shotgun being cocked. Both he and Armando freeze. Krasnov gets to his feet, the gun trained on both of them. He smiles at his captive enemies, paying no attention to the blood seeping from his wound.

KRASNOV

... Now, you will die.

He raises the gun, and just as he's about to blow the men away Nikolai springs to life, kicking the weapon from Krasnov's hand. He jumps up and wraps his handcuffs around Krasnov's neck.

KRASNOV

(continuing; screaming)

What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dewey quickly snatches up a rifle, turning it on the Sergeant.

KRASNOV

(continuing; Russian)

Are you insane? These people will kill you!

There is a tense moment as Dewey waits for Nikolai to make his move. From the look in his eyes it's quite clear that he'd be more than happy to waste both Russians.

KRASNOV

(continuing; Russian)

If you do not help me, you are a dead man.

Nikolai waits a beat longer, then strangles the life out of Krasnov. The Sergeant's eyes roll back, and his face turns a putrid red. Eventually, Nikolai releases him, and the Sergeant drops dead. Dewey continues holding the rifle on Nikolai, burning into his eyes. Armando steps forward, pushing the gun down.

ARMANDO

The keys.

Dewey reaches down and takes the keys from Krasnov's dead body. While he's at it he takes the Sergeant's remaining cigars and stuffs them in his shirt pocket.

EXT. TRUCK CABIN

Nikolai climbs over the roof, maneuvering himself onto the cabin. The two soldiers inside look up, bewildered.

INT. TRUCK CAB

A hand shoots through the window, grabs the passenger by the scruff and cracks his head against the windshield. The driver watches, horrified, as his partner is hoisted out the window and tossed to the side of the road.

He gropes for his pistol as the door opens, and Nikolai drops into the passenger seat. Just as the pistol comes free, Nikolai slams the driver's wrist back, snatching the gun away from him. Nikolai raises the gun to the man's temple.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NIKOLAI

The road, amigo.

The driver hesitates briefly, then opens the door and is gone. Nikolai slides over and takes the wheel.

Dewey climbs through the passenger door bearing a G-3 assault rifle. He flashes Nikolai an icy look, clearly establishing that they are still enemies.

EXT. KAMPALA ROAD CHECK

A gray brick building stands off to the side of the highway. Numerous military vehicles are parked around it. As the transport approaches, TWO SOLDIERS move to the center of the road. It's quickly apparent that the truck is not going to stop.

SOLDIER #1

What is he doing?

Both soldiers raise their weapons. The transport continues barreling down on them. They open fire in the last minute, only getting off a few rounds before they're forced to dive for cover.

As the truck blasts by, a group of soldiers rush out of the building. Soldier #1 scrambles to his feet, retrieving the gun.

SOLDIER #1

(continuing)

Contact Colonel Zayas. Move!

One soldier returns to the building, and the others dash toward the various vehicles. Two of them climb on souped-up motorcycles with machine guns mounted on the front.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Dewey checks the chamber of his G-3 then pulls the slide back. Nikolai's eyes flick to the rear view mirror. Several jeeps are fast approaching.

EXT. TRUCK BED

Armando has an AK-47 trained on one of the jeeps. He's waiting for the vehicle to come within a good range.

INT. TRUCK BED

Dewey looks back at the jeeps, sticking the rifle out the window.

DEWEY

All right, scum-fucks. Come 'n' get it.

The chase is on!

EXT. TRUCK BED

Armando waits another beat, then fires, blasting the driver in the forehead. The jeep veers off the road, smashes into a boulder and tosses through the air like a crushed beer can.

EXT. TRUCK BED

Two jeeps flank either side of the truck. Dewey knocks off a few shots, but he's forced to take cover when the cabin is showered with bullets.

EXT. TRUCK BED

Armando looks back as two Ural trucks speed toward them. He chambers another round, takes aim and fires. The driver swerves at the last second, and the bullet hits the seat, inches from his head.

INT. TRUCK CAB

As the two jeeps pull out in front of the transport, Nikolai sideswipes one of them, almost sending it off the road. The gunner in the second jeep unleashes a stream of bullets, and again Nikolai and Dewey throw their heads down. The windshield blows out, and glass sprinkles everywhere.

DEWEY

Enough of this shit.

He springs up and repeatedly blasts the jeep, all the time screaming at the top of his lungs.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Ahhhhh!

EXT. HIGHWAY

Bullets ricochet all over the jeep, and one of them finds its target in the driver's neck. The jeep slows suddenly, and the transport rams into it, instantly transforming it into a mass of twisted steel and mangled bodies.

INT. TRUCK BED

Armando watches as two jet-black motorcycles screech around the corner, quickly closing in on the truck. One of them pulls ahead of the other, and suddenly a spew of bullets shoot out from the mounted machine gun. Armando returns fire, but the driver expertly evades the shot. The second bike pulls up alongside the first and now both of them open fire, forcing Armando back down.

INT. TRUCK BED

The remaining jeep opens fire on them once more, and a bullet blasts into the seat directly between them. Both men are slightly intimidated by this close call.

NIKOLAI

... The gas tank is behind the left front tire.

DEWEY

Listen, you fuckin' commie. Just do yer goddamn job and I'll do mine, all right!?

EXT. HIGHWAY

One of the Urals pulls up alongside the transport, and the two trucks thrash against each other like rams battling to the death.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Dewey sits up, and he's about to fire at the jeep's driver when he swings the rifle around. He aims behind the left front tire and squeezes the trigger. The jeep bursts into oblivion.

DEWEY

(under his breath)

... Far out.

Nikolai gives Dewey a sidelong glance, then returns his attention to the road.

INT. TRUCK BED

Armando tries to get a shot off; however, a rain of bullets burst over his head, forcing him to take cover. He drops down beside one of the dead MP's, and he spots a grenade attached to the man's waist. He quickly unfastens it and moves away from the body. He waits until there is a lull in the gunfire then pulls the pin, sits up and tosses it directly in front of the motorcycles.

EXT. ROAD

The grenade bursts, and one of the bikes swerves clear. The front wheel of the second bike explodes, causing the machine and the driver to do a midair somersault. When the bike comes down there is a spray of sparks as it is ripped apart. The rider rolls along the road, then plunges over the cliff. His lifeless body drops into the canyon below.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The trucks veer dangerously close to the ledge of the riverbed. The Ural in back speeds up and slams into the transport.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Dewey and Nikolai are thrust forward from the impact.

DEWEY

Sons of bitches!

He sits up and takes careful aim at the Ural in front of them, and just as he pulls the trigger they are rammed again from the back.

His shot goes astray, whizzing past Nikolai's face and fracturing the driver's seat window.

NIKOLAI

... Missed.

DEWEY

Screw this, man. Yer such a damn hot shot, you do the goddamn shootin'!

He throws the G-3 on Nikolai's lap. Just then one of the Urals pulls out in front of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the back a Cuban is kneeling down, lining up the sights of a rocket launcher.

Nikolai flashes Dewey a look, then in one swift motion he picks up the gun and fires through the broken windshield. The bullet hits the rocket launcher, and the back of the Ural erupts.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Nikolai steers the transport clear as the Ural fishtails and flies off the bank. The truck explodes in midair, breaking into a thousand burning fragments.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Dewey looks at Nikolai kind of like Elliot did when he first saw E.T. He slowly turns forward, and his expression changes for the worse.

There is a T-54 tank dead ahead.

DEWEY

Aw, fuck it!

EXT. T-54

The mechanical beast maneuvers onto the highway, its protracted gun turret rotating into position.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Nikolai thinks for a quick moment and suddenly he hits the gas, heading straight for the tank. Dewey looks at him like he's out of his mind.

DEWEY

'The hell're you doin'?!'

Nikolai checks the rear view mirror. The one remaining Ural stays close on their tail. The remaining motorcycle has pulled back, and it is directly behind the Ural.

EXT. T-54 TANK

The gun turret aligns with the truck and locks into position.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Dewey is becoming frantic.

DEWEY

Where you goin', man?!

There is a look of raw determination in Nikolai's eyes. Dewey sinks into his seat.

DEWEY

(continuing; almost in prayer)

Jesus.

NIKOLAI

Hang on.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The tank fires and at the same precise moment the transport careens left, hurdling down the riverbank. The rocket misses the transport and torpedoes into the Ural, blasting it to kingdom come.

The motorcycle rider tries to veer out of the way, but the bike spills, and rider, and all skid right into the inferno.

EXT. RIVERBED

The truck flies down the last part of the slope and crashes into a pile of boulders. There is silence, save for the SOUND of STEAM spewing from the engine. The passenger door falls open, and Dewey rolls out, followed by Nikolai. Dewey's eyes go to the remains of the truck. He can't believe he's actually alive.

DEWEY

Shit! Guy's out of his fuckin' mind!
Goddamn!

They move to the back of the truck.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Jesus, man, if everyone in your country drives like you, it's no fuckin' wonder yer all tryin' to defect!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Armando stumbles out the back of the truck. He looks off toward the eastern hills.

ARMANDO
We must move quickly.

DEWEY
(turning to Nikolai)
So, what about him?

ARMANDO
(to Nikolai)
... If you choose, you may travel with us as far as Saurimo. From there you can cross the Zamibian border and seek political asylum.

NIKOLAI
Very well.

DEWEY
(cutting in)
Are you outta your fuckin' mind?
He's a Russian!

ARMANDO
He is also responsible for our lives.

DEWEY
That doesn't mean shit! What the hell is this, Armando? I mean, he's a fuckin' Communist! Let them hunt him down as a deserter.

ARMANDO
... We will accompany him as far as Saurimo.

DEWEY
(outraged)
Fine, man! Do what you wanna do. Just don't come lookin' to me when you wake up in the night with yer guts spillin' all over the place!

He storms off.

NIKOLAI
-- He is a very angry man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMANDO

(watching Dewey)

... In the Vietnam war he lost two brothers. He has been fighting Communism ever since -- avenging their deaths. He is not so good with public relations, but he is the best demolitions man in the country.

A bullet kicks up the dirt beside Nikolai's feet. The men look up and see two soldiers sliding down the slope, both of them carrying rifles. Two loud SHOTS ECHO in the canyon, and one after the other, the soldiers drop. Nikolai and Armando turn to see Dewey standing on top of a giant boulder. He lowers his rifle.

DEWEY

If you girl scouts are through with the jamboree, maybe we can get the fuck outta here.

ARMANDO

Come.

Armando heads up the riverbed, and Nikolai follows.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

The three soldiers make their way along the sweltering dry riverbed. All of them are perspiring heavily. Dewey and Armando are walking together about twenty yards ahead of Nikolai.

DEWEY

Listen, man, are you serious about this son of a bitch taggin' along? I mean, I say we just grease the fucker right here right now, ya know? One less problem to deal with.

ARMANDO

I gave him my word.

DEWEY

(sarcastic)

Yeah, right. Your word.

He looks back at Nikolai.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

(continuing)

Ask me, the guy's bad news, man --
bad fuckin' news.

ARMANDO

... Have you been to Porto Silva?

DEWEY

Don't think so.

ARMANDO

You would have remembered it. We
shall pass through on our way. I
believe it is the most beautiful
village in our country.

DEWEY

Isn't that where what's her name -- ?

ARMANDO

Noe.

DEWEY

Right, Noe. You still -- you know?

ARMANDO

I have not seen her in many months.

DEWEY

'Give me that crap. I just mention
her name and you look like you've
died and gone to heaven.

ARMANDO

... We shall see.

DEWEY

Yeah, we shall see.

EXT. TOP OF RAVINE - DAY

The men scramble up the last part of a gravel slope. Dewey makes it to the top first, and he stops dead in his tracks. Armando comes up beside him, breathing heavily, and he too just stands there, frozen. Nikolai finally makes it up, and with him we REVEAL what has to be the most spectacular sight in the world. This is Africa in all its majestic splendor. From where the men are standing they can see forever in all directions.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There are rolling mountains, open valleys, winding rivers, lakes, forests -- and it all looks like something straight out of a dream. The three men stand for a long time, captivated.

DEWEY

... It's beautiful, man.

ARMANDO

This is the gift that god has given to my people. We are a part of all this. The rivers, the mountains. It is what our struggle is all about -- For hundreds of years we have had to fight against the forces of colonialism in order to preserve what was god-given -- One day the oppression will end. These mountains, these valleys will be returned to us and we will walk among them as free men -- As a united Africa.

Nikolai studies Armando closely, listening to his words.

INT. COLONEL ZAYAS' OFFICE - DAY

Zayas is sitting at his desk pouring coffee from an ornate pot. The desk is spotless, almost sterile, with everything in its exact place. There is an urgent KNOCK at the door.

ZAYAS

What is it?

MENDEZ (O.S.)

Forgive me, Colonel. We've received --

ZAYAS

Come in, Sergeant.

Mendez steps in. He has a very anxious expression on his face.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

Continue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELENDEZ

We've received an urgent message --
Armando Kintash has escaped along
with the Russian and the American.

Zayas slams his cup down, spilling coffee on his desk.

ZAYAS

I want four hunter teams deployed
immediately. And, Sergeant --
understand me. I don't care what
it takes -- I want those prisoners
recaptured.

MELENDEZ

Sir!

EXT. JURA LAKE - DAY

The soldiers follow the shoreline, their reflections
clearly visible on the glassy surface of the lake.

A flock of marabou stork are wading in the shallows, and
a few of them flutter away as the strangers pass.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

The refugees traverse the top of a steep ridge that
overlooks an open grassland. All of them move swiftly
and lightly. Their pace slows as they look down on the
savanna. Four bronzed aborigines are cutting a diagonal
path through the grass. All of them carry spears and have
bows and quivers slung over their shoulders.

DEWEY

Looks like a hunting party.

ARMANDO

Bushmen.

(to Nikolai)

They are one of the most primitive
peoples on earth... In a single
lifespan they have been asked to
bridge all the great revolutions of
the past ten thousand years.

DEWEY

From the Stone Age, right through
to the goddamn Nuclear Age --
Unbelievable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dewey and Armando continue up the trail. Nikolai lingers a moment longer, intrigued by the hunters.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Nikolai, Armando and Dewey are gathered around a small fire that casts a pale glow on their faces. Armando is cutting meat from a skewer that is placed over the fire.

DEWEY

(sarcastic)

Smells terrific.

ARMANDO

Tomorrow night we will stay at my uncle's village. He shall feed us very well.

DEWEY

Didn't you say somethin' one time about Noe having a younger sister?

He hands Dewey some meat.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Ow, shit! That's hot!

ARMANDO

I can always remember the flowers there. Oceans of flowers that seemed to go on for an eternity.

He hands some meat to Nikolai.

NIKOLAI

Thank you.

Dewey finally gets up enough nerve to take a bite, and his face crunches up in distaste.

DEWEY

Aw, god! Real delicacy, huh? -- Man, what I'd give for a mushroom cheeseburger right now -- or pizza. Wash it down with an ice-cold beer. Fuckin'-A.

ARMANDO

What is pizza?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

Are you kiddin' me? You've never heard of pizza? Man, it's the staple of the American diet. Pizza with pepperoni and anchovies.

ARMANDO

When I was young, on special celebrations we would eat Pamali.

DEWEY

What's in it?

ARMANDO

It is a rice and beef dish. It is very spicy.

DEWEY

Probably beats the hell outta this shit.

ARMANDO

(to Nikolai)

The food in your country. What is it like?

NIKOLAI

... We have something called Borscht. It is a kind of soup with beets and cabbage. It is very good.

DEWEY

Fuckin' diet is about as exciting as yer fuckin' lives.

NIKOLAI

So the Americans all swear so much as you?

DEWEY

(ranting)

As a matter of fact, in America an American can swear whenever, wherever, however much he or she fuckin' well pleases. A little something we call freedom of speech, which I'm sure you're not real familiar with.

NIKOLAI

We are free to swear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

Well, yippidee-fuck! Guess I had you bastards figured out totally wrong after all.

They eat in silence for a moment.

ARMANDO

... What does it mean to you? Freedom.

NIKOLAI

I have not thought so much about it -- In Russia I was given orders -- I obeyed them.

DEWEY

So that's all it is, isn't it? Bunch of fuckin' killin' machines come down here to do yer job. No questions asked.

NIKOLAI

And what about you? What does it mean to you?

DEWEY

It's everything, man. It's what the whole fuckin' thing's about. Freedom to choose what you want from life. Choose how you wanna live. How you wanna die. It's all there is.

(turning to Armando)

'The hell're we goin' on about freedom for, man? This shithead's a Russian. He no comprende what the fuck we're talkin' about.

Dewey puts his meat aside and stands.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Feel like I'm gonna puke -- I'll take first watch.

(eyeing Nikolai)

Sweet dreams, huh.

LONG SHOT

as Dewey takes his rifle and moves away from the fire. Nikolai and Armando continue eating in silence.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The fire has almost completely died out. Armando is fast asleep, whereas, Nikolai is lying with his eyes open, listening to the wild SOUNDS of the night. In the b.g. Dewey is resting against a tree, also fast asleep.

There is the SOUND of a BRANCH CRACKING somewhere in the bush, and Nikolai reaches for his rifle. He quietly sits up, looking off in the direction of the noise.

EXT. BUSH

Nikolai moves cautiously alongside a thicket, his rifle held out in front of him. There is another snap, and he freezes, his gun at the ready. Several feet away from him a branch moves and its leaves flutter.

Nikolai takes several steps forward and reaches out with his left hand, holding the rifle with his right. He carefully pushes the branch aside.

There is a sudden primeval ROAR as Nikolai finds himself face to face with a golden-eyed leopard. Nikolai holds the rifle on the animal, but something keeps him from firing. Man and beast lock eyes, neither one making a move.

Finally, the leopard backs away, disappearing into the darkness. Nikolai is left alone, transfixed by what he has just witnessed.

EXT. QUELA RIVERBED - NIGHT

Zayas is standing near the wrecked transport vehicle. The jeeps are parked to the side, and numerous soldiers are active in the b.g. The Czechoslovakian, Gunner, approaches.

GUNNER

... They have headed east -- into the Cassai.

ZAYAS

Take two of the teams and track them.

GUNNER

Sir, that territory is virtually impossible to cross. Our vehicles --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZAYAS

I don't care if it's the inferno
itself, Sergeant. Convey the order.

GUNNER

Yes, sir.

Zayas moves off quickly.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - SUNRISE

The men ascend a mass of tuberous volcanic rock that looks very much like the surface of the moon. All of them are perspiring, and their faces reflect the orange-red glow of the sun. Dewey is singing "American Pie."

DEWEY

Did you write the book of love,
And do you have faith in God above,
Even if the devil tells you so --

Nikolai hears a WHISTLE, and he looks up as an Okavango darts overhead. He follows the tiny bird as it sails down the mountainside.

DEWEY

(continuing; singing)
Do you believe in rock 'n' roll
And music that can save your mortal
soul...
(to Nikolai)
Don't tell me yer a fuckin' bird
watcher?

Armando, who has reached the peak of the mountain, stops in his tracks.

ARMANDO

Madre de Dios!

Nikolai and Dewey quickly climb to where Armando is standing. Their eyes follow his gaze.

THEIR POV - BLACK SMOKE

rises from a village built into the base of the mountain. The place is ravaged. Almost every building has been razed to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK TO SCENE

Nikolai and Dewey look on apprehensively.

DEWEY

Jesus!

EXT. STREET - PORTO SILVA - TWILIGHT

Nikolai and Dewey follow Armando through the bombed-out village. They pass haggard, dazed survivors. Most of them are too traumatized to even notice the strangers. Some of them assist the injured, others clear away rubble, searching for the buried, and others seem too despondent to do anything other than mourn their loss.

Dewey has a rage in his eyes. Nikolai for the first time appears discomposed. Armando crosses himself, a heavy sadness on his face.

ARMANDO

God have mercy.

A young, very attractive woman approaches. She is NOE KOSSONGO.

ARMANDO

(continuing)

Noe!

NOE

(crying)

Armando.

Noe embraces Armando like she is holding on for dear life.

NOE

(continuing)

They came this morning.

ARMANDO

How many dead?

NOE

Many.

As Noe pulls away from Armando, she notices Nikolai for the first time. In a sudden screaming rage, she attacks the Russian, clawing at his face. Nikolai does nothing to stop her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOE
 (continuing; crying)
 You -- you bastard! Murdering
bastard!

Armando pulls Noe away and she turns to Nikolai, spitting at him.

NOE
 (continuing)
 Murderer!

Armando pulls Noe away, and she falls into his arms, wailing.

NOE
 (continuing; despondent)
 ... Murderer!

Armando slowly walks her toward one of the huts. Dewey shakes his head and moves off in a different direction. Nikolai is left alone amidst the carnage. He seems confused, as though he can't quite believe any of this is real.

INT. HUT

Armando and Noe step into the remains of a grass hut. Lying in the corner, covered with a blood-drenched blanket, is an old man. This is CHIEF KANDANA, Armando's uncle. Armando gets down on his knees beside the elder. With great effort Kandana reaches out to him, and they hold hands. Kandana is very pleased to see Armando, and a weak smile appears on his worn face.

EXT. VILLAGE

Dewey is bandaging the leg of a small boy, and several other children are gathered around him, pulling at his bandanna and talking excitedly.

DEWEY
 You are a very brave young man.

One of the girls yanks the bandanna from his head, and Dewey turns and gives her a mock snarl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

(continuing; playfully)

Give it to me, or I shall eat you
alive.

The girl squeals gleefully as she throws the bandanna to one of her friends. Suddenly, all of them stop and stand quietly as Armando steps out of the hut. There is a hard, distant look in his eyes. He walks through the rubble, passing Dewey and the children, seemingly oblivious of them.

NIKOLAI

is moving slowly through this holocaust. He stops as Armando moves by him and heads up a small slope just outside the village.

ARMANDO

slows and finally he drops to his knees. He begins to weep and the tears find their way down his dust-covered face.

EXT. SILVA PORTO - NIGHT

There are two fires blazing just outside the village. Armando is seated at the larger fire with a group of elders gathered on either side of him. There is also a young man, SAMUEL, who sits directly to his right. There appears to be some type of tribal ceremony taking place. A woman brings Armando a plate of food, and he nods his appreciation to her. Armando takes some of the food, then hands the plate to Samuel.

Nikolai and Dewey are sitting across from one another at the smaller fire. Nikolai is staring into the flames, and Dewey is watching him with a look of intense resentment. He gradually stops eating as the fury inside of him continues to build. He takes several deep breaths and tries to calm himself. Suddenly, he puts down his plate, pulls a pistol from his belt and heads straight for the Russian. Nikolai is shaken out of his reverie as Dewey grabs him by the collar and shoves the pistol against his temple.

DEWEY

(spitting the words)

Motherfucker!

He cocks the gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY
(continuing)
You, motherfucker!

ARMANDO (O.S.)
Stop!

Dewey looks over as Armando approaches. The Tshani colonel gives Dewey an authoritative look.

ARMANDO
(continuing)
Enough killing.

Dewey hesitates, his face purple with rage. Finally, he shakes Nikolai away and moves off. Nikolai and Armando share a look then Armando turns and addresses the crowd.

ARMANDO
(continuing)
This man, he is a human being -- And human beings should not be judged by what they are, they should be judged by who they are.

Armando looks around him, his eyes going from face to face.

ARMANDO
(continuing)
You must know that before we achieve liberation there will continue to be bloodshed and suffering. -- We must be ready. All the forces that oppose the Russians and Cubans should join hands and refuse to be divided. Let us be filled with hope and re-find what unites us -- we are all children of god.

The people are silent as they let these words sink in. An OLD MAN begins to sing spontaneously.

OLD MAN
Uazima lomtralo ufun a amadoda.

THE VILLAGERS
Unzima lomtralo ufun a amadoda.

CONTINUED:

They reach a clearing where several elephants are feeding. Nikolai watches with fascination as the giant creatures maneuver their trunks to pull the leaves from a tree.

EXT. DESERT

The men are gleaming with sweat as they continue their hard pace. Nikolai comes up beside Armando. It's apparent that he wants to say something but he's having a difficult time finding the words.

NIKOLAI

Last night -- How did your people find the courage to sing -- after such tragedy?

ARMANDO

They sing to mask their fears.

Nikolai gradually falls back, looking disturbed.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - DAY

The men have reached a small muddy watering hole that is shaded by a grove of trees. Dewey is down to his underwear as he dives in off of a small rock.

DEWEY

Yaaaaah!

He makes a big splash, then instantly surfaces.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Whoo weel! Damn that's nice!

Nikolai is off to the side, kneeling down and splashing water on his face. Armando finishes pulling off his shirt and walks to the edge of the pool.

DEWEY

(continuing)

All right, Armando, let's see whatcha got. How 'bout a little swan dive.

Armando sucks in some air, then executes a perfect belly-flop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY
 (continuing; to himself)
 Beautiful.

Armando surfaces and shakes water from his hair.

DEWEY
 (continuing)
 Real nice, Armando. 'Bout as
 graceful as a fuckin' rock.
 (to Nikolai)
 So what's with you? Big brother
 never teach you to swim?

Nikolai ignores Dewey as he drinks several handfuls of water. Armando and Dewey just lie back, enjoying the respite.

ARMANDO
 ... Paradise.

DEWEY
 Fuckin'-A. All's we need now is some
 deck chairs, few bikini-clad
 California girls -- we're there.

Dewey submerges, and Armando gulps down some of the water.

Nikolai watches them in silence. Suddenly, a rifle prods into his back. He hesitates for a half second, then sideswipes his leg, knocking down a Tshani guerrilla. A second guerrilla tries to get a shot off, and Nikolai rolls forward, bowling him over. He delivers a quick blow to the man's face, then snatches up his rifle.

Three more guerrilla emerge from the bushes; however, before any shots are fired, Armando yells out.

ARMANDO
Elano!

The guerrilla standing in the middle recognizes Armando, and he can hardly believe his eyes.

ELANO
 Armando??

Armando climbs out of the pool and comes up beside Nikolai.

ARMANDO
 He is with us. A deserter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

By this time two guerrillas that Nikolai has just dispensed with are slowly getting up.

Armando turns to Nikolai and reaches out for his weapon. Nikolai hesitates.

ARMANDO
(continuing)
You will not be harmed.

Reluctantly, Nikolai hands over the rifle. Elano lowers his gun and embraces Armando. The two other guerrillas keep their weapons trained on the Russian.

ELANO
It is good to see you, my friend --
Sundiata will be very pleased.

ARMANDO
(surprised)
The President? He's with you?

ELANO
Yes.

Nikolai is jarred by this news. The guerrillas motion for him to move and he starts walking.

EXT. TSHANI MOBILE CAMP - LATE AFTERNOON

A group of open tents are set up beneath a cluster of umbrella trees, and surrounding them are a bunch of battered trucks and jeeps. Tshani guerrillas have just returned from battle, and there is a flurry of activity as the wounded are cared for, weapons are cleaned and reloaded and vehicles are repaired. These are not stalwart, heavily-armed guerrillas. They are a group of half-starved men, women and children whose only real strength lies in the sense of brotherhood and hope that seems to permeate the tiny camp.

INT. TENT

A tall, heavyset man holding a cane and wearing a pearl-handled revolver, stands with his back to us. A LIEUTENANT is behind him, reading a report out loud.

LIEUTENANT
(Portuguese)
... Fifteen lives lost, twenty-two casualties... They have forced us back another thirty-four miles.

EXT. CAMP

Armando walks into the camp alongside Elano. Dewey, Nikolai and the others follow. Two of the guerrillas keep their rifles on Nikolai. People stop what they are doing, and one after another they move toward these men. Pretty soon most of the camp comes out to greet them. Men hug him, women kiss him, children jump up and down calling his name.

They also shake Dewey's hand, greeting him warmly. When the children see Dewey they become ecstatic, all of them vying for his attention. Dewey picks one of them up and pats others on the head. These men are heroes here.

Nikolai looks around at this pitiful camp and at these shabby, weary people, and he can't believe what he is seeing. This is the rebel army?

EXT. TENT

The group reaches the tent, and everyone waits at the entrance as Armando steps inside. The Lieutenant stops reading and stares unbelievably at Armando.

Slowly, the figure with the cane turns, and we recognize him as PRESIDENT AUGUSTO SUNDIATA. He is even more imposing in real life. Immediately, Sundiata's eyes light up, and he goes to Armando with open arms.

SUNDIATA

Armando!

The men embrace like father and son. Sundiata breaks the embrace and holds Armando at arm's length.

SUNDIATA

(continuing; Portuguese)

Welcome home.

Sundiata sees Dewey, and he extends his hand.

SUNDIATA

(continuing)

Mr. Dewey.

DEWEY

(shaking his hand)

Mr. President.

Dewey pulls the cigars out of his pocket and hands them to the President.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY
(continuing)
Two of Havana's finest.

Sundiata nods in appreciation.

SUNDIATA
I am afraid I still cannot pay you.

DEWEY
Forget it. Shit, it's great to be
back.

Sundiata now sees Nikolai. There is a silence as the men
look into each other's eyes.

SUNDIATA
... And who is this?

ARMANDO
Nikolai Rachenko. A defector -- He
is responsible for our lives.

SUNDIATA
(appearing pleased)
I am grateful to you. Welcome to
our camp.

Nikolai nods to Sundiata.

SUNDIATA
(continuing; turning)
Armando, there is a great deal we
must discuss -- In the meantime, I
think it best that we keep our
Russian friend confined. It will
be safer for all.

Armando nods to Nikolai as if to say, "Everything will
be all right." He then moves off to a corner of the tent
with Sundiata. Dewey moves away with the children all
following him, and Nikolai is led in the opposite
direction.

EXT. TRUCK CELL

A guard opens the back door of a contained truck that acts
as a kind of mobile cell. The soldiers move away and the
guard takes a seat on the steps leading up to the door.

INT. SUNDIATA'S TENT - NIGHT

Sundiata, Armando and several other OFFICIALS are gathered around a map that is illuminated by a kerosene lamp. The men are in the middle of a heavy discussion, and the tension is very high.

OFFICIAL #1

Kampala forces have gained control of this entire ridge all the way to the Sesheka.

OFFICIAL #2

Our food supply is dwindling. Our medical supplies are almost non-existent. We have spent over two thirds of our ammunition.

OFFICIAL #1

There are no options left. We must retreat.

OFFICIAL #3

We are dying here, Augusto.

SUNDIATA

-- The will of God will guide us.

ARMANDO

(loud)

The will of God! He will guide us where?!

EXT. CAMP CLEARING

Dewey is sitting in a circle with a group of kids teaching them to sing "American Pie". All of them turn toward Sundiata's tent as they hear Armando yell.

INT. TRUCK CELL

Nikolai is peering through the bars, also watching Sundiata's tent. He slowly moves to the back of the cell, a heavy expression on his face. He slides down the wall and rests on the floor, closing his eyes. There are beads of sweat on his forehead.

INT. SUNDIATA'S TENT - NIGHT (LATER)

It is very late and only Armando remains with the President.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDIATA

You must get some rest.

The men stand and embrace warmly.

ARMANDO

I apologize for my temper.

SUNDIATA

There is nothing to apologize for.

Armando starts to move off.

SUNDIATA

(continuing)

... Armando?

(as Armando looks back)

This Russian -- What do you know about him?

ARMANDO

... Very little. It seems -- that he is searching.

SUNDIATA

(apperceptient)

Yes.

(beat)

It is good to have you home.

Armando smiles as he heads out into the darkness.

INT. TRUCK CELL

Armando steps in, and the door closes behind him. Nikolai looks up from the floor as Armando pulls out a bottle of whiskey and passes it to him. Nikolai takes a drink as Armando seats himself. There is an uncomfortable silence between the men. Nikolai takes another drink, then returns the bottle.

NIKOLAI

Thank you.

ARMANDO

... Tomorrow we will be moving on. You must head due east past the Orango valley. On the other side you will find the border. There you can seek political asylum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Armando gets to his feet and turns to the door.

NIKOLAI

Until last night -- death was nothing more than a statistic to me.

Armando stops.

ARMANDO

I wonder -- when will it come to an end.

He opens the door.

NIKOLAI

Armando.

Armando waits.

NIKOLAI

(continuing)

Someday I hope to understand... what it is you fight for.

Armando nods, then heads out. The door is locked behind him.

EXT. TSHANI CAMP - NIGHT

Except for a few guards moving through the darkness, the camp is dead still. Sundiata turns out his lantern.

INT. TRUCK CELL

Nikolai is standing at the bars watching Sundiata's tent. He is sweating heavily now, and his breathing has become erratic. He moves away from the bars and quietly paces.

NIKOLAI

As a member of the Armed Forces of the U.S.S.R., I will manfully, skillfully, with dignity and honor defend it.

(beat)

If I should break this solemn oath...

Nikolai stops pacing and closes his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NIKOLAI

(continuing)

-- If I should break this solemn oath, may I suffer the implacable punishment of Soviet law and the hatred and scorn of all Soviet people.

There is a long pause, then Nikolai's eyes open. They have changed. They are cold and hard. These are the eyes of the Spetsnaz assassin. He drops to the floor, slides the shoe mold off his boot and extracts the knife. He replaces the mold, then stands, never taking his eyes from the glistening blade. He shoves the knife into his belt, then moves toward the door.

EXT. TRUCK CELL

The guard is sitting on the stairs smoking a cigarette. Nikolai appears at the bars and lightly knocks on the door. The guard turns, getting to his feet.

NIKOLAI

... Cigarette.

The guard hesitates a beat, then reaches into his shirt and pulls out a pack of cigarettes. He takes one out, then passes it to Nikolai. The Russian puts the cigarette in his mouth, and the guard strikes a match, reaching inside the bars. Immediately, Nikolai grabs hold of his arm and jerks him forward. The guard's face cracks against the bars, and he is knocked unconscious. Nikolai spits out the cigarette as he reaches down and rips the key from the man's belt.

EXT. TSHANI CAMP

Several guerrillas pass beneath a tree, and when they're out of sight, Nikolai drops from the branches, landing without a sound. He darts across a clearing and rolls underneath a jeep.

EXT. SUNDIATA'S TENT

Nikolai belly-crawls through some tall grass, stopping about twenty feet from the tent. A guard slowly paces back and forth, and Nikolai watches him carefully, timing his moves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A MONKEY SCREAMS somewhere in the bush, and the guard stops for a moment, looking in Nikolai's direction. Nikolai drops down, melting in with the grass. He wipes the sweat from his brow and closes his eyes, trying very hard to concentrate.

The guard continues pacing, and Nikolai waits until the man's back is to him. Very silently he sprints toward the tent. The guard makes his routine turn and finds himself face to face with the giant Russian. Nikolai snaps the guard's head into his iron chest, knocking him out. He quietly lays the guard down in some nearby grass.

INT. SUNDIATA'S TENT

Nikolai rolls out from beneath a table and pulls the knife from his belt. With deathly silence he steps past some radio equipment and approaches a cot. On a table beside the cot is Sundiata's pearl-handled revolver. Nikolai stands beside the bed, casting an ominous shadow over the sleeping figure. By now he is drenched with sweat. He slowly raises the knife and for the first time we see his hand shaking. Time seems to come to a standstill as he holds the knife in midair, ready to strike. He takes several quick, silent breaths, then slowly reaches for the blanket. In a sudden movement, he rips the blanket away. There is nothing in the bed except a pile of clothes.

There is an AMPLIFIED SOUND of a MATCH BEING STRUCK, and Nikolai whips around as Sundiata lights one of his cigars. He then stands and lights a kerosene lamp. An eerie glow flickers across his face.

Nikolai seems immobilized, as though he were in some kind of trance.

SUNDIATA

Killing... it is always easier when you are sure of who your enemy is. Your people, they believe that by assassinating me they can end this revolution. What they fail to understand is that I am not the revolution. The people are the revolution. You must tell your leaders -- as long as there are foreign oppressors in Africa, this struggle will continue. Whether I live or die, it makes no difference -- the struggle will continue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is a YELL in the b.g., and a soldier comes rushing in holding a Kalyshnikov. He is immediately followed by three others. Sundiata raises his hand, and they all stop.

SUNDIATA

We are people, we have a history --
and we want our destiny.

Armando pushes past them, breathing heavily. When he sees Nikolai, his face turns ashen. Dewey shows up with his pants half-undone, and he looks at Nikolai with an all-consuming rage.

DEWEY

You son of a bitch!

Dewey snatches a rifle from one of the guerrillas and viciously drives the butt into Nikolai's stomach. The Russian drops to his knees, blood dripping from his mouth.

NIKOLAI'S POV - SUNDIATA

stands, silhouetted against the golden light of the kerosene lamp. As Nikolai begins to lose focus, Sundiata takes on the appearance of a kind of celestial being.

SUNDIATA

This time we have spared your life,
but the next time you will not be
so fortunate.

BACK TO SCENE

Dewey cracks the rifle butt against Nikolai's head, and the Spetsnaz warrior crumbles.

Armando turns to the President, badly shaken.

ARMANDO

Mr. President --

SUNDIATA

(stopping him)

Armando -- I am not so sure that he
is our enemy.

EXT. TSHANI CAMP - DAY

Nikolai is face down on the ground, tied to four wooden stakes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The camp has been deserted; the only signs left are the tire tracks from the jeeps and trucks.

Nikolai stirs and manages to lift his head. His face is dry and dusty, and he has to squint to protect his eyes from the glaring light. In the distance there is a peculiar MECHANICAL SOUND. He spits some dirt from his mouth as he looks off in the horizon.

NIKOLAI'S POV - HEAT WAVES

shimmer across the arid ground. He tries to locate the source of the noise, but there is only the flittering waves. He focuses his eyes, and very slowly specks begin to take shape. The mechanical noise becomes louder as the specks become larger.

Eventually, Nikolai can make out the shape of Army vehicles. He blinks his eyes several times, then lowers his head back into the dirt.

EXT. TSHANI CAMP (LATER)

Nikolai has fallen unconscious again. A boot steps INTO FRAME, and Gunner kneels down beside him, grabbing hold of his hair. He pulls Nikolai's head back and the beaten soldier looks up at Gunner.

GUNNER

So... your guerrilla friends have
deserted you.

Gunner brutally shoves Nikolai's face into the dirt.

GUNNER

(continuing)

We shall deal with them later.

EXT. JAMBA - DAY

A small convoy of rusted, bashed-up trucks and jeeps roll into a crowded Tshani village. Sundiata and Armando are in the lead vehicle and the villagers throng around them, yelling and cheering. This primitive farming village has managed to come through the war unscathed. This is what the entire country once was, resplendent and timeless.

EXT. CUAMO - DAY

Colonel Zayas strides briskly across the compound. A drill practice goes on in the b.g.

INT. CELL

Nikolai is slumped in the corner, staring at the dirt. He looks like a different man. He is pale, covered in filth, and his clothes are little more than rags. The biggest change, however, is in his eyes. They are hollow, despondent. The eyes of a broken man.

He looks up at the barred window and his eyes settle on the empty flask left from when he and Armando were here. Slowly his eyes drift to his hand, to the silver ring on his finger. He studies it for a long moment.

There are FOOTSTEPS in the corridor and a moment later the guard opens the door. Zayas enters. The Colonel looks down at the beaten Russian with a glint of pleasure.

ZAYAS

... Lieutenant Nikolai Rachenko.

Suddenly he takes Nikolai by the collar, pulls him to his feet and thrusts his back against the wall. Nikolai is completely submissive.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

Who are you?!

Nikolai is silent, his expression vacant. This infuriates Zayas even more. He swings Nikolai around and hurtles him against the opposite wall. The Russian hits the stone full force and roughly drops to the floor. Zayas kicks him in the gut and Nikolai instinctively curls up.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

What were you doing with them?

Zayas shoves Nikolai against the wall again, this time squeezing his hands around the Lieutenant's neck. Blood streams down the left side of Nikolai's face, forcing him to shut his eyes.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

... They leave you to die and yet you protect them?... Why?

He releases his hold and slaps Nikolai several times with the back of his hand.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

Why?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

By this time Zayas is practically spitting out his words. In his frustration he pulls out his pistol and shoves it against Nikolai's head.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

Speak, you pathetic bastard, or I swear I will blow your brains all over this fucking wall!!

NIKOLAI

... Kill me.

There is a pause, then Zayas shoves Nikolai away. He stands and roughly holsters his gun.

ZAYAS

I will. Believe me I will.

He turns on his heel and the guard opens the door for him.

Nikolai closes his eyes, wiping some of the blood from his face.

EXT. CUAMO HELIPAD - DAY

A helicopter drops down from an overcast sky, setting on the helipad. The door opens and General Luns steps out, clutching his briefcase. Zayas greets him and leads him down the hill toward the stockade. Gradually their voices become audible.

LUNS

Has the prisoner told you anything?

ZAYAS

He refuses to speak.

As they near the stockade Luns motions for Zayas to stay back.

LUNS

I would like to see him alone.

ZAYAS

Yes, sir.

INT. CELL - DAY

Nikolai looks up wearily as Luns enters. The General is surprised by Nikolai's appearance. The men eye each other for a long moment.

LUNS

Look at you -- the pride of the Soviet Army -- What happened out there, Lieutenant?

NIKOLAI

... I... was defeated.

LUNS

Sundiata is alive?

NIKOLAI

... There were complications.

LUNS

It is your profession to overcome complications.

NIKOLAI

... Tell me, General.

(raising his head)

What kind of war are we fighting here?

LUNS

(furious)

There are vast geo-political and economic factors at stake here. Things you know nothing of for they do not concern you. You are an instrument of war, Lieutenant. It is not your place to question -- anything!

NIKOLAI

... It is too late.

Luns burns into Nikolai with his eyes.

LUNS

... I will tell you this much. Before long this country will fall and with it Sundiata and his people will be slaughtered. Every man, every woman, every child. I will see to it personally that the earth is drenched with their savage blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NIKOLAI

... They are human beings, General,
the same as you and I.

LUNS

You are a great disappointment to
me, Lieutenant.

Luns turns and quickly exits. Nikolai watches him, deeply shaken by what he has just heard. He gradually closes his eyes and rests his head against the wall.

INT. ZAYAS' OFFICE - DAY

Zayas is leaning against his desk, looking somewhat intimidated. Luns is pacing silently.

ZAYAS

-- In the past month the borders have
been pushed back almost sixty miles.
We've wiped out four of their key
villages and we've --

LUNS

(interrupting)
I want him killed.

ZAYAS

Sir?

LUNS

The prisoner. He must be terminated.

Zayas nods and exits the room. Luns moves to the window, lost in deep thought.

EXT. DARK SKY - DAY

A bolt of lightning scintillates through the clouds like electric tentacles. A moment later there is a BOOM of THUNDER.

EXT. CUAMO BASE

Rain pours down in great sheets. The dry earth is instantly transformed to mud. Soldiers scatter in all directions, seeking cover from the downpour.

EXT. STOCKADE

A jeep pulls up and Zayas climbs out dressed in a raincoat.

INT. STOCKADE HALLWAY

The aluminum roof is alive with the SOUND of PELTING RAINDROPS. There is a CRACK of THUNDER outside, and the whole building seems to rumble. The guard sits up abruptly as Zayas steps in.

The Colonel pulls back the hood of his raincoat and reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a gun and opens the cartridge, making certain that it is fully loaded. Zayas nods to the guard, and they move toward the cell.

INT. CELL

Zayas and the guard round the corner and freeze. In front of them are two hanging feet.

ZAYAS

(furious)

Open it! Quickly!

The guard fumbles with the keys and finally gets the door open. Zayas steps past him and looks up at Nikolai's hanging body. The Russian has formed a noose from his belt and hanged himself from the rafters. His body is motionless, and his face is a bluish-purple color. Zayas is infuriated.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

... May you rot in hell.

As Zayas turns, Nikolai's eyes pop open! He takes hold of the rafters, and with all his strength kicks Zayas in the back. The Colonel sprawls forward, cracking his head against the wall.

The guard turns and fires, but the shot goes wild as Nikolai drops down on him, knocking him to the floor. He lifts his foot and drives it into the guard's chest, cracking his ribs. He then picks up the rifle and walks out of the cell.

EXT. CUAMO - DAY

The shack door bursts open, and Nikolai steps out into the rain. He turns to the sky, his eyes closed, and allows the cool liquid to wash over his body.

The soldier in the jeep looks at him wide-eyed. Nikolai raises the gun and climbs in.

NIKOLAI

Drive.

There is a flash of lightning, and Nikolai lights up, looking like some kind of Nordic barbarian. The DRIVER shoves the jeep in gear, and it lurches forward.

Just then a WHISTLE BLOWS and a soldier yells in the b.g. Bullets spray in front of the jeep, spitting up the water.

INT. CELL

Zayas stirs and sits up groggily. There is blood on his forehead, and it drips into his eyes. He wipes it away as he looks over at the dead guard and slowly collects himself. Finally, he gets up and stumbles out the door.

EXT. FRONT GATE

Nikolai doesn't even flinch as bullets whiz past him. His attention is on the gate which is being closed by two guards. There is not enough room for the jeep to pass through, so the driver slows. Nikolai raises the AK-47.

NIKOLAI

Go.

DRIVER

But the --

Nikolai slides the bolt back. The driver slams on the gas, heading directly for the gate. The jeep picks up speed, and the guards turn, leaping out of the way as the vehicle roars between them. The gate is thrashed apart, and the front of the jeep is badly mangled -- but it keeps moving.

EXT. MUD ROAD

Nikolai and the driver are tossed about as the jeep bounces over a decayed muddy road. Both men are soaked through to their skin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRIVER

Where are we going?

Nikolai ignores him. He looks back to see if they're being pursued.

EXT. FRONT GATE

The guards pull aside the broken gate, and three other jeeps speed through. Zayas is in the lead vehicle.

EXT. BRIDGE

The jeep careens around a bend, then heads down a straightaway that leads onto a bridge. The concrete structure spans a wide gorge. It's more than a hundred-foot drop to the foaming river below.

The jeep is about halfway across when a FAPLA truck drives on from the other end, blocking them off.

NIKOLAI

Stop.

The driver comes to a quick stop. Nikolai watches as soldiers pour out of the truck, readying themselves for battle.

NIKOLAI

(continuing)

Turn back.

The driver turns around and as he straightens out, the three other jeeps come down the straightaway.

They are trapped.

ZAYAS

signals for the vehicles to stop. He climbs down and walks out into the open. Six armed soldiers come up beside him.

NIKOLAI

watches, then turns back to the truck. His mind is racing. The driver watches him anxiously.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZAYAS

waits for a moment, his eyes filled with loathing. He turns to a TALL CUBAN SOLDIER who is armed with an RPG rocket launcher.

ZAYAS

Kill them.

TALL SOLDIER

(confused)

Sir?

ZAYAS

I said, kill them!

TALL SOLDIER

(protesting)

Sir, one of our --

ZAYAS

(cutting him short)

Damn you!

He rips the RPG from the soldier's hands, then drops to one knee, lining up the sights.

NIKOLAI

turns back to Zayas. The driver starts to panic.

DRIVER

What is he doing?

NIKOLAI

Run.

Nikolai starts to move, and he yells at the soldier.

NIKOLAI

(continuing)

Run!

Nikolai realizes he only has a few seconds to live. With phenomenal speed he bolts from the jeep and dashes for the rail. He's about four feet away when he dives through the air.

Zayas fires, and the rocket tears into the jeep, transforming it into a fireball. The force of the blast tosses Nikolai head over heels. He drops toward the river, spinning and twirling as he goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZAYAS

approaches the rail just as Nikolai plunges into the turbulent waters. He stands there for a long time. Nikolai never resurfaces.

INT. ZAYAS' OFFICE - DAY

Luns is at the window, contemplating.

LUNS

... Are you certain he is dead?

ZAYAS

If the explosion did not kill him then he could not possibly have survived the fall.

LUNS

(turning)

You do not know what kind of man we are dealing with. If he is alive, you cannot comprehend how dangerous he could be.

ZAYAS

General, I am sure --

LUNS

(cutting him short)

... I want his body recovered.

ZAYAS

... Yes, sir.

Zayas turns and exits.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Nikolai is lying unconscious, his legs are still half submerged. The rain has stopped and rays of sunlight stream down through the broken clouds.

Across the river a crocodile slides over a muddy bank and glides into the water. A MONKEY SCREECHES in the trees and Nikolai slowly opens his eyes. He looks up at the foreign surroundings and painfully reaches for an exposed root. He notices something moving and he turns to see the crocodile heading straight for him. With enormous effort he drags the rest of his body out of the water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He manages to sit up on the bank and he looks back as the crocodile veers off in another direction. A tentative expression crosses his face as he turns, looking up river. Gradually, over the din of rushing water, TRUCKS can be heard.

Nikolai half crawls, half drags his body toward a fallen tree, where he manages to shield himself from view. Just then several trucks appear, crushing the saplings that line the riverbank. Armed soldiers scrutinize the river and a moment later they are gone.

Nikolai leans back against the tree and breathes easy.

EXT. BUSH - DAY

Nikolai limps through a tangle of bone dry prickly bush. He is dressed only in tattered pants, having lost his shirt and shoes back in the river. His enormous upper body is covered in bruises and there are tiny cuts and scratches everywhere.

The bush appears to be getting thicker and he slows to seek an easier passage. He finds himself imprisoned by the shrubbery and there is nothing to do except bulldoze his way through.

EXT. SCRUB - DAY

Nikolai has slowed his pace considerably. FLIES and other INSECTS BUZZ around him, some of them landing on his sweat-covered body. He is too exhausted to bother with them. The floor of this vast wasteland is covered with sharp pebbles, forcing him to move very cautiously. He looks at the sun which is low in the sky and licks his parched lips.

EXT. ACACIA TREE - MORNING

Nikolai is lying in the dirt and a spider scurries past his sunburned face. He stirs and rubs his swollen eyes. His lips are badly cracked and his body is covered with brown dust. He gets to his feet and from the look on his face it is obvious that he is in great pain. He moves off, his limp much more pronounced. In the distance a small pack of hyenas watch him.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Nikolai appears half dead as he moves through this incredibly hostile environment. The stifling heat seems to be burning right through him. A herd of Roan antelope perk their ears up and watch this stranger with slight trepidation. Nikolai pays no attention to them as he stumbles along. He is oblivious to the pack of hyenas who are now trailing him.

EXT. SAND DUNES - DAY

By this time Nikolai is barely able to walk. He is slowly dying out here. He reaches the top of a slope and as he makes his way down he loses his footing. He tumbles all the way to the bottom, bringing a small avalanche of sand with him.

For a long time he just lies there in a heap. He tries to spit out some of the sand, however his mouth is too dry. He looks up and nearby he sees a pool of shimmering water. There is a wild, almost frenzied look in his eyes as he scrambles to his feet and staggers toward it. He moves faster and faster, the sweat dripping from his broken body.

Finally he reaches the pool. As he leaps forward the mirage disappears and he lands inside a crater of sand. He becomes delirious as he claws frantically at the ground. His breathing grows loud and raspy as his digging slows. Gradually he lays his head down, resigning himself.

EXT. SAND CRATER - DAY

A gust of wind kicks up some sand and it settles on Nikolai's half-buried body. Vultures circle high above and the hyenas watch him from the top of the crater. Eventually one of the dogs gathers its nerve and descends into the pit. Several others follow, cautiously closing in on Nikolai. The first hyena moves around to Nikolai's neck, baring his teeth. He's about a half foot away when a spear cuts through the air and impales him. The hyena is killed instantly and the rest of the pack scatters.

A pair of rough, dried-out feet appear at Nikolai's side and a bushman squats down beside him. The aborigine has tufted hair, dark eyes and is dressed in a duiker skin loin flap. His name is GAO.

The tiny man makes a careful inspection of this extraordinary giant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He can't quite believe what he is seeing. He pulls the spear out of the dead hyena and using the butt he cautiously touches Nikolai's rounded chest. He moves down the length of Nikolai's body, shaking his head in wonder. He pokes at Nikolai's thigh, astounded by its size.

Nikolai stirs and Gao leaps back, uttering something in his click tongue. The giant is motionless again and Gao breathes easy.

EXT. BUSHMAN CAMP - NIGHT

Coals are cleared off of the hyena's blackened carcass and a Bushman begins butchering it with absolute precision. The camp is made up of a circle of dome-shaped grass huts. There are wooden tools, weapons, cutting utensils and skin blankets all set up in an organized fashion. The tribe consists of about twenty people, all of them of varying ages and sexes. The women wear colorful beads which are wrapped around their legs, arms and necks. Some of the men wear beaded headbands, others are naked except for their flaps.

A second, larger fire is burning in the center of the camp. Beside it Nikolai is lying unconscious on a skin blanket. A curing ceremony is just beginning and Gao, along with several other healers, dances around the fire. The women and children of the camp slowly gather together, singing and clapping. The men glow with a reddish-orange color as the fire reflects on their sweaty bodies. As the dancing becomes more intense the rhythm picks up and the singing and clapping become louder. The men become more and more concentrated as they fall deeper into their trances. One of them releases a chilling yelp.

Eventually the dancers gather around Nikolai and together they lean over him, fluttering their hands lightly across his body. Nikolai's head twitches and he manages to open his eyes. He looks up, frightened by these incredibly bizarre surroundings. He tries desperately to sit up, however he's too weak. The smoke, the music, the heat, everything swirls around him like a dream. Nikolai starts to lose focus and again he falls unconscious.

As the healers move deeper into the trance state their bodies contort and their hands and feet gesticulate in a kind of frenzy. All four of them touch each other's bodies and they rise up from Nikolai like a human pyramid. Gao has fallen into the deepest trance and his body jerks uncontrollably as he reaches down and touches Nikolai's head.

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CONTINUED:

The singing has become deafening now and all eyes are on Gao as the ceremony reaches its pinnacle. Suddenly Gao reaches up toward the sky, pulling the illness from Nikolai's body. He releases a soul-wrenching SHRIEK that ECHOES through the night.

EXT. HEARTH - EARLY MORNING

An old woman with hundred of lines marking her face, squats over a wooden bowl making an ointment from animal fat and herbs. She adds some tiny leaves and uses a stick to mash them in with the rest of the compound. When she's finished she takes the bowl to Nikolai, who is still lying by the smoldering fire.

The old woman squats down beside Nikolai, scoops some of the ointment onto her fingers and gently spreads it onto one of the Russian's more infected wounds. Nikolai awakens and moves back slightly. The woman nods to him as she reaches for more ointment. Nikolai is apprehensive but he makes no effort to resist as the woman continues applying this primitive medicine.

Nikolai's head is much clearer now and he looks around the village in absolute awe. A second woman approaches carrying an ostrich egg bowl, and she gently puts it to Nikolai's lips. He takes a small sip of the cool water then quickly gulps down the rest. Nikolai nods his appreciation and the woman smiles. She moves away as the older woman continues with her treatment.

INT. LUNS'S OFFICE - CUAMO - DAY

Luns is in his new office seated behind a large desk. Zayas enters and the General looks up from the communique he is reading.

ZAYAS

You wanted to see me?

LUNS

I've just received this communique from Colonel Strehl. It is a confirmation on the Quitapa raid.

(reading aloud)

Our forces suffered over twenty fatalities and nearly double that in casualties. We lost seven T-fifty-four's, five personnel carriers and eleven other vehicles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZAYAS

With all due respect, General, the raid was successful in addition to which --

LUNS

(raising his voice)

Yes, the battle was a success. But at what cost? For every skirmish we fight, Colonel, why is it that such a staggering price must be paid? This was to be a surprise raid, and yet the Tshani Guerrillas were fully prepared for us.

(beat)

Again, Colonel, what it comes down to is that we are being beaten down by a band of rebels.

ZAYAS

I would hardly refer --

LUNS

(cutting him off)

This country has at its disposal tens of thousands of Cuban troops in addition to hundreds of Soviet and eastern bloc advisors. In the past ten years, you have been provided with well over a billion dollars in Soviet arms. The statistics are overwhelming in your favor, and yet the rebellion continues to prosper.

Luns stands and begins pacing. He wipes himself with his handkerchief.

LUNS

(continuing)

I have decided to take full responsibility for Soviet involvement in this country. I tell you now, Colonel, that no matter what the price -- I will succeed in my efforts here.

ZAYAS

What are these efforts exactly?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUNS

I intend to fully accelerate our scorched earth policy. We shall wipe out everything that stands between ourselves and the Tshani. We shall cut off all resources... Armaments, food supply, water, everything. We shall force these savages back into a corner. And then, Colonel, I intend to launch a full-scale assault, using every troop, every weapon, every vehicle at our disposal. This offensive will go on until Sundiata and every one of his guerrillas have been eliminated.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - LUANDA - NIGHT

Hundreds of Tshani men, women and children are crowded onto a field, facing a small, rough-hewn podium. Many of them clap their hands as they sing a traditional tribal song. Flickering torches throw eerie shadows on their faces, making the setting almost dreamlike.

There is a deafening roar as Sundiata steps up on the podium. He stands silent for a moment, deeply moved by his people's overwhelming adoration. Eventually the crowd falls silent.

SUNDIATA

My family -- We have come here to discuss our problems and the future of our country. Also to put once again that the Russians and Cubans have no business here. -- We must continue to fight them. In this we must double our efforts. We must also ask you to double your efforts in cultivating the land to help feed our Army -- our soldiers and nurses who fight so valiantly.

(beat)

Our ultimate aim is to get rid of the Russians, the Cubans, the Czechoslovakians. The aim of independence is to be free to decide our own destiny -- We must not despair for the spirit of god is with us. He shall guide us against the imperialist forces.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDIATA (Cont'd)

He shall free us from our bondage.
 We must join together in body and
 in spirit and fight for our homes
 -- and for our lives. We must
 preserve our traditions, our way of
 life. We must reach out to all our
 villages, to all our people. We must
 protect them and encourage them to
 take up arms -- We must achieve our
 goal of a truly independent Africa.

The crowd cheers ecstatically, many of them begin clapping in rhythm and some of the women and children start to dance, kicking up the dirt with their bare feet.

SUNDIATA

(continuing; shouting)

The struggle shall triumph! United
 we shall win!

The people cheer even louder now as drums are brought out and a group of men begin beating on them with a frantic yet controlled pace. A few people begin to sing an ancient tribal song and before long the whole group joins in. It is a moment of absolute harmony as everybody unites, not only into one another, but into their surroundings. This is the spirit of Africa in its purest, most wondrous form.

EXT. HEARTH - BUSHMAN CAMP - NIGHT

Nikolai and the bushmen are gathered around the communal fire, eating cooked meat with their hands. Everyone is in a festive spirit as they enjoy the hard-earned meal. One of the hunters chews on a bone as he recounts the story of the hunt. He makes broad, humorous gestures which cause everybody to laugh.

Nikolai cleans off the last bit of meat from a leg bone, then drops it into the flames. He notices Gao's spear, which is sitting between the two men. Gao sees this and gestures for Nikolai to pick it up.

Nikolai stands and takes up the long shaft, carefully inspecting the razor-sharp edge. Gao puts his meat down and also stands, taking the spear away from Nikolai. He turns to a tree, takes a step back and expertly tosses the weapon. He hits the tree dead center.

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CONTINUED:

Nikolai is amazed by Gao's accuracy. The bushman retrieves the spear and returns it to Nikolai. Nikolai rolls the shaft around in his hands, getting the feel of it. Eventually, he takes a step back and flings it toward the tree. The spear turns in the air and lands in some bushes.

The bushmen all look at Nikolai with incredible surprise. Suddenly Gao bursts out laughing. This is followed by a cacophony of laughter as the whole group joins in. Nikolai looks down at his delighted friends and for the first time we see him truly smile.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) A LONG SHOT of the desert. Blurred heat floats on the horizon like a shimmering pool of water. Gradually, two figures materialize, their bodies piecing together as they draw nearer. It is Nikolai and Gao.
- B) Gao loads an arrow onto the newly fashioned bow and lets it fly. The arrow sticks into a tree about fifteen yards off. He hands the bow to Nikolai and the Russian follows suit. The shot goes wide, however Gao encourages him, handing him another arrow.
- C) Gao is outstretched on the ground, sucking on a hollow sip stick. He sits up and Nikolai takes his place, sucking up the moisture that is hidden beneath the surface.
- D) Gao is giving Nikolai a lesson in spear throwing. He tosses his own weapon, hitting a nearby tree. Nikolai watches him closely, then repeats Gao's actions. Already he's beginning to improve.
- E) The bushman watches Nikolai as he climbs a monkey orange tree. Nikolai shakes the upper branches violently, and the fruit starts dropping to the ground.
- F) Nikolai is sitting at a fire watching Gao clear away some coals with a stick. He uncovers a bunch of cooked caterpillars and passes some to Nikolai. He then takes a small bundle himself. Nikolai watches in distaste as Gao drops a few of the crisp insects into his mouth. Nikolai inspects one of them and with great reluctance he puts it on his tongue. He chews it a few times then quickly swallows it.

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- G) It is early morning. Nikolai watches Gao as he gently breaks a leaf off of a tree and puts it to his mouth. Very delicately he tilts it upward and a trickle of water drops onto his tongue.
- H) Gao has dug a deep hole in the ground using a sharpened hardwood digging stick. Nikolai helps him scoop out the last bit of dirt, then Gao reaches in and pulls up a plant bulb the size of a coconut.
- I) Gao unearths a cocoon from a hole in the ground and shows it to Nikolai. He uses his razor sharp spearhead to cut the end off exposing a poisonous pupae. He drops the pupae onto a piece of wood and crushes it, mixing the juices with other substances. He then applies the poisonous mixture to the metal shank of an arrow.
- J) Gao stands back and watches Nikolai as he approaches a gathering of warthogs. Nikolai has his bow armed and he's trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. Unfortunately he's so enormous that he has a difficult time keeping out of sight. He steps on a branch and it snaps, alerting the warthogs. He tries to get off a shot however it's too late; the warthogs have already dashed off. Gao can't help himself from laughing.
- K) Gao leads Nikolai along the bottom of a sheer rock face. He stops before several ancient rock paintings depicting scenes from a hunt. Nikolai marvels at these antiquated designs. It is a special moment as Gao has brought Nikolai to a very sacred place.
- L) The mid-day sun glares on Nikolai as he crouches down at a watering hole. Time has past and most of his wounds have healed. He's about to scoop up some water when he notices his reflection on the surface of the pool.

His dirt-caked, muscle-bound chest, his unshaven face, his tangled hair all give him an unruly almost barbaric appearance. He is no longer the dignified, clean-cut soldier of his past.

He scoops up some water, breaking his image apart.

EXT. CUAMO AIRPORT - DAY

An enormous transport plane taxis past several MIG's then pulls to a stop, the WHINE of its ENGINES gradually dissipating. The landing crew swarms in like ants attacking a large prey.

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Mobile stairs are put in position, a fuel truck pulls up and there is a loud WHIR as the tail of the plane slowly lowers to the ground. Several of the ground crew members approach the steel ramp and peer anxiously into the dark belly of the plane.

An engine starts and a moment later an articulated eight-wheel transport vehicle rolls out. Mounted on top of it is one of the most terrifying, most lethal death machines known to man. It is a jet-black Hind helicopter. It has the appearance of a mammoth bug-eyed fly. The ground crew watches in awe as the machine rolls past them.

EXT. JAKA VILLAGE

A reddish-gold mist shrouds this tiny village, consisting of a circle of domed huts. A small cattle fold made from thorny scrub stands in the center of the circle.

A WRINKLED OVIMBUNDU MAN

blows the ashes of the previous night's fire and places a few twigs on the glowing embers. There is a faint CRACKLE as the twigs ignite.

A WOMAN

adorned with multi-colored beads, prepares umcuku by crushing dried mealies on a grindstone and catching it in a grain mat.

A GROUP OF SMALL CHILDREN

laugh exuberantly as they give chase to a flock of SQUAWKING CHICKENS.

A YOUNG WOMAN

gathers beans from a garden, her baby strapped to her back in a soft skin goat wrap. She sits up suddenly, looking off toward the western hills. A curious expression crosses her face.

THE OLD MAN

watches as a flock of yellow wagtails take flight. He slowly stands and turns toward the west.

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CONTINUED:

THE GROUP OF CHILDREN

give up the chase. One by one they too turn toward the hills. A faint RUMBLING SOUND can be heard, and the children exchange inquisitive looks.

THE VILLAGERS

gradually emerge from their huts, all of them migrating toward the western end of the village. The RUMBLING GROWS frighteningly loud, and the smaller children scurry to the safety of their parents. The peasants come to a stop at the edge of the village. A wave of apprehension moves through the small gathering.

A LAND ROVER

appears on a rise, overlooking the village. There are two Army personnel inside, both dressed in leopard spot dungarees. The man in the passenger seat Gunner. He has an AK-47 propped up in front of him.

The land rover pulls to a stop and Gunner rises, looking down at the villagers without expression. He raises the AK-47 in way of a signal, and a moment later a convoy of armored personnel carriers, T-54 tanks, and recon jeeps clamor over the hill. The entourage comes to a halt, and heavily armed Kampala soldiers pour out of the personnel carriers, quickly taking up positions.

THE VILLAGERS

stand there, defenseless and terror-stricken.

GUNNER

surveys the helpless peasants, prolonging the inevitable massacre. He takes a whistle from his jacket and slowly brings it to his mouth. He draws a deep breath and -- CRACK -- A SINGLE SHOT RINGS OUT. Simultaneously, a small clean hole appears in the center of the Sergeant's forehead. He remains standing for a moment, looking almost surprised, then topples backwards.

ELANO

steps out from a thicket. He's armed with a Kalashnikov rifle. As he steps out --

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TEN MORE GUERRILLAS

emerge from the darkness of the huts, all of them armed with outdated rifles and dressed in rag tag clothes.

A FEW MORE GUERRILLAS

drop from the branches of surrounding trees. The situation appears hopeless for the band of rebels, yet they stand there fearless, ready to fight to the death.

ELANO

raises his gun, and the rest of the guerrillas follow suit. For a long moment the world falls silent.

ELANO

(shouting)

Viva la revolution!!

He OPENS FIRE, and this is instantly followed by the THUNDEROUS ROAR of full-scale combat.

A rocket from the T-54 incinerates several buildings. Bullets explode everywhere as the Cubans advance, many of them meeting bloody deaths. Several of the guerrillas are blown to pieces as grenades explode nearby. The village children are herded away by several women, most of them screaming in terror. The rest of the villagers, both men and women, take up arms and join in the battle. These people are expert fighters; however, they are heavily outnumbered and their weapons are totally inferior.

The battle sounds gradually become drowned out by the much louder, much more terrifying CLATTER of a Hind HELICOPTER.

Suddenly, over the ridge the colossal death machine appears, swooping down on the village. There is a cacophony of SCREECHING SOUNDS as it releases a barrage of rockets. The screen is filled with a glaring flash of light as the rockets explode, destroying this ancient settlement.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Nikolai steps quietly, skillfully through a lush green forest. Shafts of light shoot through the high trees turning the early morning mist into a soft orange glow. Nikolai has never looked better in his life.

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His hair is long and golden, his body is a deep bronze and his eyes are clearer, more alert than ever. He has gone through a phenomenal transformation. With the guidance and teachings of Gao he is melding himself into his surroundings. He is becoming a part of Africa.

There is movement ahead and Nikolai masterfully draws an arrow from his quiver and loads his bow. He crouches down very low, taking soft, silent steps. An obese warthog with protruding tusks COMES INTO VIEW and Nikolai seems to stop breathing as he closes in. He expertly draws the string back, waits for the perfect moment then releases the arrow. It slices through the air and the poisoned tip sinks into the warthog's belly.

The ANIMAL makes a horrendous SQUEALING noise as it charges off, crashing through the brambles. Nikolai pulls the spear off of his back and bounds after it, his body moving in and out of the trees like a snake gliding through grass.

The warthog blindly plows through everything in its path, a fierce rage in its eyes. It is moving at an amazing speed yet Nikolai manages to keep up with it. Nikolai's thick legs seem to flow with the spryness of a gazelle. He ducks beneath a branch, leaps over a fallen tree, weaves through a maze of saplings. He sweats very little and even his breathing is controlled. The world seems to disappear around him as his whole being becomes focused on the prey.

Very abruptly the forest becomes silent. Nikolai freezes, his eyes and ears fully alert. He waits for a tense moment then takes a few cautious steps forward. Again he stands motionless -- listening. Suddenly, from out of the greenery, the warthog barrels down on him, its lethal horns aimed directly at his legs. In the last second Nikolai leaps clear of the enraged beast.

He spins around and prepares for another assault, his spear at the ready. Somewhere in the bushes he can hear the WARTHOG'S harsh BREATHING. There is a loud CRUNCHING of LEAVES as the beast dashes toward him. Nikolai's body tenses, every muscle becoming taut. He raises his weapon and when the warthog is about ten feet away he thrusts it downward.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

The warthog has been butchered and Nikolai and Gao have already finished their evening meal.

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They sit across from one another, a small fire between them. They are in a dark smoky cave and the orange flames sparkle on the crystal-embedded walls. This is a mystical place and both Gao and Nikolai appear to be in an elevated, preternatural state.

Gao is staring deep into Nikolai's eyes, studying him, looking inside of his very being. He extracts a root from a leather pouch and places it before Nikolai. He motions for Nikolai to eat it and the Russian obeys without question. He indicates for Nikolai to stare into the flames and as he does so, Gao picks up a sharp stick and a bowl filled with a purified compound of charred meat and fat. He moves to Nikolai's side.

Nikolai is becoming hypnotized by the fire. Its flames cast an ethereal glow on his face. Suddenly his eyes open wide and...

Nikolai's POV -- running through the African bush. There is an AMPLIFIED SOUND of his HEARTBEAT and BREATHING. Nikolai leaps over some rocks, flies down a slope, thrashes through some bushes and...

He is back in the cave, his eyes still glued to the fire. Gao throws Nikolai's dog tag over his back then takes the sharp stick and makes a shallow incision in his chest. A stream of blood trickles down onto his belly. Nikolai is completely oblivious to all of this. His eyes widen and...

He is running naked through the African night. His legs are moving so fast that he appears to be dancing across the earth. His arms pump back and forth. His biceps bulge and pulsate, his hands are clenched, his fingers...

become claws. Leopard claws. Razor sharp and protruding from thick padded paws. The leopard's hind legs spring back propelling the animal forward with an awesome power. His front legs extend, ripping into the earth and...

Nikolai is back in the cave. Beads of sweat trickle down his forehead and his entire body shivers as he falls deeper into the trance. Gao has punctured a series of holes into his chest and the beginnings of an elaborate design can be made out. His whole body shudders and...

Leopard's POV -- racing over the land. Now Nikolai is the leopard and he is moving at fifty miles an hour, soaring up and down hills, bounding over obstacles. He has become the beast.

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Up ahead a herd of zebra graze beneath the moonlight. The leopard advances toward the herd with lightning speed. It's paws hit the dirt and...

He is back in the cave. His body is drenched with sweat and his eyes are a thousand miles away. Gao has finished with his design and he begins rubbing the purified compound into the incisions. Nikolai jerks his head back and...

He is the leopard. The herd of zebra begin to charge off in every direction as the beast of prey swoops down on them. He has chosen his target and he closes in on it like a magnet. He's about twenty yards away and...

Nikolai is running amidst the scattered herd, a lethal glare in his eyes. He's about ten yards from the zebra and...

He is the leopard. He takes several more giant strides then springs up and...

Nikolai's entire body wrenches as he releases a primeval SCREAM. It ECHOES through the cave. Then suddenly everything is quiet and still, the only sound is that of the crackling fire.

Nikolai blinks his eyes and catches his breath. Gao places down the bowl and stick. He has finished with the tattoo. Nikolai looks at his bloodied chest. He can't quite make out the symbol, however he knows that he now possesses the heart of the hunter.

EXT. WATERFALL

Foaming water cascades down a rock face, whipping up the surface of a crystal-clear pool. The entire area is covered in a dark green moss, and a thin spray floats through the air. There is something sacred about this place.

A ripple appears in the middle of the pool, and Nikolai breaks the surface. He rises slowly, rivulets of water streaming down his huge torso. He looks up reverently, surveying the surroundings. He appears to be in a kind of rapture, as though he has somehow become a part of this majestic place.

He looks down at his chest and now that the blood has washed away he can clearly see the tattoo. It is in the form of a scorpion.

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CONTINUED:

He carefully brushes his hand over it. After a moment he takes hold of his dog tag. He studies it, turning it over and over again in his hand.

Gao is sitting on the edge of the pool, watching Nikolai attentively.

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - SUNSET

Nikolai and Gao follow the edge of a thousand-foot cliff. Beneath them an ocean of lush trees goes on into eternity. The sun has just touched the horizon, like a ball of fire resting on the earth.

Nikolai walks out as far as he can go and looks straight into the glowing orb. His eyes move to the dog tag hanging from his neck and gradually he clenches it. He rips the chain off and holds it in his hand, looking at it for the last time.

He brings his arm back and hurtles his identification into space, watching it fall into oblivion.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - DAY

Nikolai and Gao reach the top of a ridge and directly below them they see the remains of a watering hole. Poison has been sprayed over the entire area leaving an orange colored dust on everything. There are half-rotted carcasses surrounding the pool. Bushbuck, Roan antelope, klingspringers, all of them covered with orange death.

Nikolai and Gao are stunned. They move slowly through this debacle, pained expressions on their faces. Gao squats down at the pool and scoops up some water. It seeps through his hand leaving an oily orange film. He turns to Nikolai, incredible despair in his eyes.

GAO

(click)

The evil gods.

Gao stands and they move on, walking away from this nightmare.

INT. HUT - JAMBA - DAY

Sundiata, Armando and several other officials are gathered around a table.

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The President is speaking with a harshness we have not seen before.

SUNDIATA

This killer, General Luns, he is a fanatic! A mass murderer! He is cutting down innocent people -- children. And the machine, this Hind helicopter, he uses it to poison the animals, the land -- Such consequences Africa may never recover from. -- This is no longer a conventional war, it is genocide.

BOY (O.S.)

They are coming!

EXT. JAMBA - DAY

A young Tshani BOY dressed in shorts and a filthy shirt sprints into the camp. He is so terrified and exhausted that he can barely speak.

BOY

They are coming! -- Kampala. They are coming!

The men step out into the sunlight. Off in the distance they can see an enormous vehicular convoy heading straight for them. A great cloud of black dust rises up behind the foray.

ARMANDO

Hurry!

They join the rush of people who are grabbing weapons, taking up fighting positions and hiding their young.

EXT. OUTSIDE JAMBA

Kampala is out in full force. There are a dozen jeeps, a half-dozen trucks, land rovers, personnel carriers, mounted 82mm mortars, T-55 tanks and 122mm rocket launchers. The vehicles fan out as they approach the camp, creating an impenetrable wall.

INT. AMMUNITIONS HUT

Armando quickly distributes weapons. He holds out a machine gun and Sundiata takes it. There is a moment's hesitation as the two men lock eyes. It's obvious that Armando doesn't want his leader out in the field.

ARMANDO

... May god be with us.

SUNDIATA

Yes.

Armando watches Sundiata as he heads out with the rest of the fighters.

EXT. JAMBA

There is a loud WHINE and a moment later a rocket lands on one of the huts, blowing it to smithereens. The WHUMP of mortars, the RAT-TAT of machine guns, the BLAST of rifles, fills the air.

The Tshani have taken up positions in trees, in camouflage towers, behind sandbags and in trenches. The world is exploding around them yet they fight with an amazing tenacity. Everywhere is the SOUND of their cries mixed with screams of pain.

DEWEY

dives out from behind a bush, rolls down a slope and disappears beneath a tank. A moment later he rolls out the other end and rushes toward one of the trenches. The tank erupts as he dives headlong into the pit.

DEWEY

(yelling)

Shiiit!

KAMPALA TROOPS

drop out of carriers and before they hit the ground many of them are picked off by Tshani sharpshooters.

A LAND ROVER

closes in on the village and the soldier in the passenger seat fires on one of the towers, killing several guerrillas. As the guerrillas fall to their deaths the land rover drives over a mine and bursts into a thousand pieces.

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ARMANDO

leaps over some sandbags and sprays machine gun fire on a jeep, killing its driver. The vehicle rolls into a ditch and erupts into flames. Armando continues running, blasting away at everything in sight.

SUNDIATA

fires on the enemy from one of the trenches. The man beside him is hit in the chest and he grabs him, easing him to the ground.

A Cuban charges the trench and he's about ten feet away when Sundiata spins and releases a volley of bullets. The bloodied Cuban drops.

The SCREAMING of a CHILD can be heard and Sundiata sees a young Tshani girl walking out in the open. The child wails in terror as bullets kick up around her.

Sundiata scrambles out of the trench and makes a suicidal dash for the youngster. Two soldiers rush at him and one of them shoots him in the leg. Sundiata returns fire, killing both men on the spot. As he limps toward the child a mortar bursts behind him, hurtling him through the air. He lands and rolls along the ground, his face covered with blood. With great effort he gets back to his feet, finally reaching the girl. He gently picks her up and turns back to the trench, explosions going off all around. He's about twenty yards away when a bullet rips through his back, propelling him forward.

ARMANDO

sees this happening and he advances on the perpetrator with an uncontrolled vengeance. He riddles him with bullets, firing until his cartridge is completely empty.

SUNDIATA

has managed to protect the child and with every last bit of strength he drags her toward the truck. Armando rushes over and helps the two of them to safety.

A TRUCK

blows up and the two jeeps swerve around it, then turn back, retreating from the village. Numerous guerrillas fire on the jeeps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

sees the jeeps disappearing and he, too, fires on them. They are too far off. He turns back and looks over the smoke-covered battlefield. There are fires raging and the occasional explosion or gunshot goes off, but the war is over. The Tshani have managed to survive, yet at great cost. Half of their camp is destroyed and many of their people are dead or wounded. Dewey lowers his gun, gasping for air as he slowly heads back.

EXT. BURNED OUT FARM - DAY

Nikolai and Gao are wandering through the remains of a scorched farm. The charred skeleton of a farmhouse stands nearby and beyond that black, burned-out fields go on for as far as the eye can see. This is the result of the scorched earth policy.

Gao stubs his spear into the earth and squats down, touching the charred ground.

Nikolai slows and a queer expression registers on his face. Suddenly he drops to the ground, motioning for Gao to do the same.

ENGINES can be heard and a moment later two jeeps speed over a rise. The red star of the Soviet Union is painted on each of them. The men remain motionless as the jeeps race by.

GAO

(click)

The evil gods!

Nikolai stands and looks at the spear then at Gao. He gives Gao a questioning look and the bushman gives him a slight nod.

Nikolai pulls the spear from the earth then runs to where the trucks are. He looks off to where the jeeps disappeared then turns to the east in the direction they came from. The tracks are discernible for about ten feet then they disappear.

Nikolai struggles with a decision. He looks to Gao, turns to the east then back to Gao. He nods to his friend and starts walking, eventually breaking into a run.

Gao is left standing alone. He watches Nikolai for a long time. Gradually a glint of satisfaction shows in his eyes.

INT. MAP ROOM - CUAMO - NIGHT

Luns inspects a map that is spread out on a large table. Zayas comes rushing in, out of breath.

ZAYAS

(excited)

Sir. We have them!

LUNS

Where?

ZAYAS

Our men raided a camp this morning, just beyond the Chivemba hills.

Zayas approaches the map and points to the hills.

ZAYAS

(continuing)

This area here -- one of our soldiers swears that he saw Sundiata. He says that the President was shot.

LUNS

... I want every one of our soldiers prepared to advance. -- Now we shall end this rebellion once and for all.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Nikolai walks through the battlefield, passing the twisted burned-out wreckage of Army vehicles. Bodies, some of them still clasping their weapons, are strewn everywhere. Nikolai is filled with remorse as he heads toward the camp.

EXT. JAMBA

The Tshani survivors are doing their best to recover from the assault. They bury their dead, tend to their wounded and patch up the remains of their huts.

Dewey is underneath a jeep trying to repair it. Only his legs can be seen. A young boy, MIGUEL, is squatting down beside him. There is a loud CLANK and Dewey yells out:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY (O.S.)

Shit! Goddammit, I need tools! How the hell am I supposed to fix these trash cans when there's not even a goddamned crescent wrench around? Son of a bitch!

One by one people in the camp stop what they're doing and look up the road. There is a figure coming toward them and as he draws near they see that it is Nikolai. This is possibly the most extraordinary sight they've ever witnessed. The Russian is dressed only in cut-off's now. He carries only a spear. He is a dark brown color, his body is firm like a rock and his gait is strong and sturdy. He truly looks like some kind of primitive, herculean god. As he approaches the Tshani literally break apart, creating a path for him.

DEWEY (O.S.)

(continuing)

Man, if we were back in North Dakota right now I'd be able to fix this shit box blindfolded with my hands tied behind my back. Miguel? Miguel, you listening to me?

Miguel is watching Nikolai with wide eyes.

DEWEY (O.S.)

(continuing)

Miguel, goddammit!

He rolls out from beneath the jeep and notices everybody standing, frozen.

DEWEY

(continuing)

What the --

He sees Nikolai and his mouth drops. The Russian walks to the center of the camp and stops.

DEWEY

(continuing)

... Un-fuckin'-believable.

Several guerrillas approach Nikolai, their guns leveled on him. One of them takes away his spear. Dewey grabs a rifle and walks toward him with a mixture of rage and disbelief. He goes right up to Nikolai and for a long moment the Russian and the American just stare at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWEY

(continuing)

'The fuck're you doin' here?

NIKOLAI

I have come to help.

DEWEY

Man, either yer the gutsiest goddamn son of a bitch I ever met -- or yer just plain off yer fuckin' rocker -- whatever it is, yer one dead Russian.

INT. SUNDIATA'S HUT - DAY

Sundiata is lying in bed, drenched in sweat. There are bandages over half of his face and he barely has the strength to keep his eyes open. Armando is at his side looking broken and fatigued.

ARMANDO

They will return before long. We must move soon. We must get you away from here.

SUNDIATA

(weak)

... No.

There is a commotion outside and Dewey enters.

DEWEY

Excuse me, Mr. President.

The two soldiers escort Nikolai into the hut, keeping their guns on him. Armando sits up, stupefied. There is an uncomfortable silence that is eventually broken by Sundiata who motions for Armando to hand him his revolver. Armando obeys. Sundiata takes the gun and looks at Nikolai.

SUNDIATA

Come.

Nikolai approaches the bed and Sundiata stares into his eyes. Using every ounce of his strength, Sundiata sits up on one arm. His gaze shifts to Nikolai's chest and he studies the tattoo. All eyes are on the President. He reaches out with a trembling hand and touches the markings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDIATA

... I see you have earned the heart
of the hunter.

NIKOLAI

I have come a long way.

ARMANDO

Why did you return?

NIKOLAI

... Out there, I became separated
from everything I was. I experienced
thoughts and feelings I had never
known... I now understand what it
is you fight for.

DEWEY

(interrupting)

Are you guys outta your minds? How
can you listen to this guy?

(to Sundiata)

Mr. President, he tried to kill you.

SUNDIATA

Mr. Dewey... I believe our friend
can be trusted. -- I believe he has
seen the true enemy.

Sundiata turns to Armando.

SUNDIATA

(continuing)

... You have one more war to fight
-- You must destroy this man Luns
who so ruthlessly massacres our
people. You must put an end to all
of this. My ears have heard the
battle drum, summoning me to war,
and my soul has heard the voice of
god, calling on me to die -- I am
prepared, but before my heart is
stilled I ask not that you come back
safe but that victory be ours.

With a last great effort Sundiata lifts his revolver,
extending it to Armando.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNDIATA

(continuing)

Go Armando -- You must conquer this evil. -- There is no weapon in the world capable of silencing the wish of our people.

The young warrior takes hold of the gun and the exchange is made -- the torch is passed.

EXT. SUNDIATA'S HUT

The Tshani have gathered at the hut. Many of them are near tears as they witness this proceeding.

EXT. FUNERAL PYRE - NIGHT

The guerrillas are standing around a raging funeral pyre, most of them weeping. Sparks shoot upward, blending into the stars -- Sundiata's spirit rising into the heavens.

Armando approaches the fire holding the President's cane. He studies it for the last time then drops it into the blaze.

NIKOLAI

looks down as a youngster approaches and holds out his spear. He graciously accepts it.

He quietly comes up beside Armando, staring into the flames.

NIKOLAI

We have one last war to fight.

He holds the spear out and Armando looks him in the eye. After a moment he grasps it tightly.

DEWEY (O.S.)

Fuckin'-A.

Dewey comes up beside them and wraps his hand around the weapon.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Let's kick some ass!

EXT. SWAMP - EARLY MORNING

A gray mist fills the air. Out of it the Tshani guerrillas start to appear like ghosts, all of them armed to the hilt. At first there are twenty, then fifty, then over a hundred of them. Armando leads the way.

Nikolai and Dewey take up the tail end. Nikolai is waist-deep in the sludge but he doesn't seem to notice it. Dewey, on the other hand, is chest-deep, and he's outraged.

DEWEY

It's fuckin' repulsive, man. I hate swamps -- Probably die of some parasitic disease.

NIKOLAI

-- Perhaps if you don't think about it.

DEWEY

How can I not think about it? I'm drownin' in it.

NIKOLAI

Distract your mind.

DEWEY

Whadda ya mean, distract my mind?

NIKOLAI

... Sing.

DEWEY

Sing! Screw you.

They move through the green swill in silence for a while.

NIKOLAI

(singing)

Bye bye, Miss America pie.

DEWEY

American pie.

NIKOLAI

(singing)

Bye bye, Miss American pie. Drove the Chevy --

DEWEY

My Chevy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NIKOLAI

(singing)

Drove my Chevy to the levy --

DEWEY

The levy was dry.

NIKOLAI

(singing)

Drove my Chevy to the levy,
The levy was dry --

DEWEY

(singing)

And good ol' boys were drinkin'
whiskey and rye,
Singin' this'll be the day that I
die,
This'll be the day that I die.

The two of them gradually disappear into the mist. Only their voices are left behind.

NIKOLAI AND DEWEY

(singing)

And good 'ol boys were drinkin'
whiskey and rye,
Singin' this'll be the day that I
die,
This'll be the day that I die.

EXT. CUAMO - NIGHT

The stillness of the African night is shattered as the front gates of the fortress swing open and a deafening convoy of armored vehicles roll out. Kampala is launching it's final attack.

EXT. CUAMO BRIDGE

Dewey quickly and proficiently finishes placing mines along the bridge. The convoy can be heard rapidly advancing. Armando calls to him from the far end of the bridge.

ARMANDO

Dewey! Move!

DEWEY

Yeah, yeah. I'm comin' -- Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The lights of the first truck appear, slicing through the darkness. Dewey makes a mad dash and dives over the rail, landing in some bushes.

The vehicles advance over the bridge. There must be at least thirty of the frightening machines.

Just as the first truck reaches the far end of the bridge the mines start to go off. One by one the vehicles are blown to smithereens. Trucks, tanks, jeeps, all of them go up like the fourth of July.

EXT. ROAD

Armando stands on top of a small rise and raises his machine gun in the air.

ARMANDO
Viva la revolution!

The Tshani emerge from the trees, swooping down on the convoy like flies.

The war has begun!

INT. LUNS' OFFICE - CUAMO

Luns hurries to the window and peers out onto the distant burning bridge. There is a cacophony of NOISE as the BATTLE ensues.

LUNS
(unnerved)
It's him.

EXT. CUAMO

Nikolai dives off of a barbed wire fence, landing on a running soldier. The two enemies roll along the ground and Nikolai finishes him off by thrusting his fist into the man's temple.

Bullets kick up around him and he does a somersault, rolling in between two buildings. Headlights from a jeep fall on him and he throws his back against the wall.

The jeep disappears and Nikolai bolts across the courtyard, suddenly switching direction when he's assaulted by machine gun fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He slams into the door of an orderly room, ripping it off its hinges. He disappears inside, a barrage of bullets trailing after him.

INT. ORDERLY ROOM

Just as Nikolai picks himself up off the ground a door flies open and soldiers pour in. One after another Nikolai blasts them with machine gun fire, at the same time maneuvering himself toward the window.

A second door bursts open and Nikolai swings his gun around trying to hold the men back. Bullets burst all around him, splintering desks, perforating cabinets and sending papers everywhere.

Finally, Nikolai leaps through the paned window.

EXT. LANE

Nikolai soars through the air, covered in glass and somehow he manages to land on his feet. He turns down a lane, charging like a frenzied bull. He's bombarded from all directions as soldiers appear from doorways, windows and rooftops. A bullet catches him in the shoulder but he keeps moving, blood rushing from the wound.

He rounds a corner and a soldier carrying a blowtorch blasts him with a burst of flames. He's about to be incinerated but with awesome speed he spins back around the corner, slamming himself against the wall.

He waits a half beat then dives out into the open. Before the soldier can torch him he lets loose with his machine gun, riddling the guy full of bullets.

He jumps to his feet and seizes up the flame thrower.

EX'. ROAD

The battle is in full throw. Guns are blazing, grenade launchers pound away, rockets detonate. A guerrilla hurls a molotov cocktail into the back of a Ural and the truck disintegrates. A sharpshooter lying on a rock picks off soldier after soldier. Men engage in hand to hand combat, executing shoulder throws, body blocks, hip and leg take-downs. A guerrilla leaps from a tree, lands on the hood of a truck and blasts the driver.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kampala soldiers try to take cover but the Tshani come at them from all directions. This ambush is pure guerrilla warfare and the Tshani clearly have the upper hand.

EXT. CUAMO COURTYARD

Nikolai runs out into the open, torching everything in sight. He flames a supply hut, and it is consumed within seconds. He lets loose on a parked truck, and the engine blows, then the whole thing disintegrates. He scorches a generator, causing sparks to shoot up in the sky like fireworks. He passes a barracks and spews lightning against the wall, setting the building aflame.

A slew of soldiers appear from different trajectories, opening fire on him. He's hit in the thigh and he dives down, taking cover behind a parked jeep. Bullets come at him from all directions. He tries to make a move but he is immediately forced back.

EXT. CUAMO - FRONT GATE

Two jeeps are parked in front of the closed gates, blocking the passageway. Numerous soldiers stand behind them, armed with machine guns. They are suddenly blinded by headlights as Dewey barrels down the road. The jeep is smeared with bullets but it keeps rolling, picking up speed as it goes.

DEWEY

(yelling)

Yaaaaaah!

Dewey smashes through the blockade and his own vehicle hurtles through the air, tears through the gate and lands in the courtyard with a loud crunch.

EXT. COURTYARD

Dewey spins around, smashing into the vehicle that shields Nikolai.

DEWEY

Thought you might need some help.

Bullets kick up everywhere as Nikolai dives into the jeep. Before Nikolai can seat himself Dewey peels off, leaving behind a cloud of dust.

EXT. LANE

Dewey careens around a corner and sideswipes a building, ripping apart some water pipes.

NIKOLAI

Thanks.

He speeds down a straightaway and another jeep pulls up, cutting him off.

DEWEY

Bad idea, dipshit.

Dewey slams into the jeep, flipping it over on its side. Sparks fly as his own vehicle is thrashed but somehow it keeps going.

He rounds a corner and about fifty yards ahead there is a tank bearing down on them.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Aw, shit!

A rocket shoots from the turret and blasts the front of the jeep. The whole vehicle flips over and Nikolai and Dewey are sent sprawling.

Nikolai is hurtled against a wall and he drops to the ground, momentarily stunned. He clears his head then scrambles out to where Dewey is lying. He drags the bloodied American out of sight and leans him up against a wall. Dewey is semi-conscious.

DEWEY

(continuing)

Listen, man -- if there's anything to that hocus pocus tattoo crap, I figure now would be a good time to use it.

NIKOLAI

Will you be alright?

Dewey nods.

DEWEY

... Use it, man.

Nikolai turns and makes a mad dash for the tank. The machine fires a second time and Nikolai hits the dirt as the rocket blows the wall out of a building.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nikolai slips the pin out of a grenade and as the tank advances he tosses it. The grenade explodes beneath the tank and the treads are ripped apart, stopping the beast in its tracks.

The top hatch opens and Zayas climbs out, bloody rage in his eyes. As Nikolai stands the huge Cuban dives off of the tank, sending him flying. Nikolai's spear is knocked away as the men thrash around on the dirt. Zayas is a good match for Nikolai. In fact the Russian is at a disadvantage as he is badly wounded.

Zayas gets him in a chokehold and Nikolai flips him over, following up with a rapid blow to the neck. The Cuban drives his feet into Nikolai's chest, sending him sprawling back, then he gets up and does a flying tackle. Again they roll over. This time Zayas gets on top of Nikolai delivering blow after blow to his face and his wounded chest.

Nikolai gets his hands around his opponent's neck and starts to squeeze but Zayas rolls clear. Both men scramble to their feet and circle one another.

ZAYAS

You bastard traitor!

Zayas makes a flying kick and Nikolai chops his leg with his forearm then spins and drives his elbow into the Cuban's forehead. Zayas's head snaps back and Nikolai continues the assault, pummeling him several times in the gut.

Another tank rounds the corner and bears down on the soldiers. Zayas manages to execute a pivot kick and this sends Nikolai back onto the dirt. Nikolai does a knee lift, catching Zayas in the shin and again both men are down.

As the tank closes in the opponents go at each other's throats. Blood is streaming from Nikolai's mouth as he gasps for air.

Zayas manages to break Nikolai's hold and he straddles him and starts strangling the life out of him.

The tank is only ten feet away now and its treads are directly in line with Nikolai's head. Nikolai sees the crunching, caterpillar-like machine bearing down on him and he tries to clear out of the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The tank is about three feet from his head and in a last incredible surge of strength Nikolai hurtles Zayas backward. The Cuban lands right in front of the opposite tread. Nikolai rolls clear as the tank drives over the Cuban's mid-section, pulverizing him.

ZAYAS
(screaming)

Ahhhh!

Nikolai retrieves his spear and hurries off.

INT. HIND

Luns climbs into the chopper and slides the door closed behind him. As he's doing this he sees a very bloody, very angry-looking Nikolai Rachenko.

LUNS
(to Pilot)
Let's's move!

Luns pulls out his pistol.

INT. COCKPIT

The Pilot flicks some switches and the turbine roars to life.

EXT. HELIPAD

Nikolai walks deliberately up the stairs of the helipad, his spear at his side.

INT. HIND

Luns fires through the window and Nikolai dives clear. A moment later the Hind lifts off.

Luns drops back in his seat, breathing a huge sigh of relief. As the helicopter climbs through the air he looks down at the base.

Suddenly, Nikolai's face appears directly in front of him. He opens his mouth to scream, but no sound comes out.

EXT. ROAD

The battle is gradually subsiding. Armando hears the THUNDERING Hind and turns to the sky in fear. When he see's Nikolai hanging from its side a look of absolute marvel crosses his face.

INT. HIND

Nikolai thrusts his spear into the door of the Hind and starts prying it open. Luns fires at him and Nikolai dodges the shot. Finally he gets the door wrenched open. Luns takes another shot as Nikolai's spear cuts through the air and sinks into his shoulder. This causes the bullet to go straight up into the turbine, showering the cabin with sparks. The helicopter spins wildly out of control.

Nikolai and Luns are thrown against the wall and Luns is knocked unconscious. Nikolai coughs violently as he picks up the general's pistol and steps through to the cockpit.

INT. COCKPIT

The Pilot looks up as Nikolai kicks his door open and shoves the gun against his temple.

NIKOLAI

The road, amigo.

The Pilot isn't about to argue. He leaps out, and Nikolai drops into the seat, taking over the controls. He slams the joystick to the left, and the chopper banks sharply.

EXT. SKY OVER CUAMO

The helicopter swoops down on Cuamo. The red and green lights give it the appearance of a UFO.

INT. COCKPIT

The Hind vibrates violently, and smoke streams in from the cabin. A WARNING SYSTEM goes off, but Nikolai pays no attention to it.

Luns rises from behind Nikolai, holding the shaft of the spear. His shirt is soaked with blood. He lowers the shaft around Nikolai's neck and starts to choke him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nikolai reaches back and with awesome force he thrusts Luns forward, smashing his head into the window. Luns is dazed from the blow and Nikolai quickly shoves him into the co-pilot seat. He reaches over and straps him in, wedging the seat belt between two steel joints.

EXT. CUAMO

The Hind veers down over the ammunitions building and hovers for a moment. Smoke streams out the back as it slowly lands.

INT. COCKPIT

Luns turns to Nikolai, defeated. His wound is bleeding even more now.

LUNS

What are you doing? This is the munitions building!

NIKOLAI

You lied to me, General. You used me.

LUNS

I sent you on a mission. A mission to aid an oppressed people.

NIKOLAI

But the truth, General, the truth -- is that we are the oppressors.

LUNS

If that is what you believe then you are living a lie. You are a part of all this. You are a part of us. A Russian.

Nikolai roughly lands the Hind. He turns to Luns, taking a grenade from his vest.

NIKOLAI

I am no longer one of you.

He pulls the pin and drops the grenade between the General's legs. Luns turns to him in horror.

LUNS

What are you doing?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nikolai retrieves his spear and opens the door.

LUNS
(continuing)

Stop!

Nikolai jumps out and walks away.

LUNS
(continuing; screaming)
Stoop!!!

EXT. CUAMO - FULL SHOT

The Hind EXPLODES and then --

KAAAAAAAAAAAAA - BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!

The munitions building erupts like a volcano. A mountain of fire and black smoke blast into the air.

EXT. ROAD

The guerrillas all look up, stunned.

EXT. CUAMO

Dewey looks up in wonder as Nikolai approaches. He is silhouetted against the raging fire and he looks like death incarnate, walking out of hell.

DEWEY
Son of a bitch, huh! Guess maybe
there's somethin' to that crap after
all.

Nikolai lifts Dewey up, cradling him in his arms.

NIKOLAI
Fuckin'-A.

EXT. ROAD

Armando and his men raise their weapons and rejoice as they see Nikolai and Dewey coming down the road. Plumes of smoke from the destroyed fortress rise up behind them.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Armando, Dewey, Noe and many others gather around Nikolai, saying their goodbyes. Nikolai is dressed only in Army fatigues and the only thing he carries is his spear.

Armando comes up to him and the men look each other in the eyes.

ARMANDO

-- You shall always be welcome here
as a brother.

The men embrace strongly. Eventually Nikolai breaks away and moves to the edge of a slope. Dewey comes up beside him.

DEWEY

So, Nick -- sure you can take care
of yourself?

NIKOLAI

(grinning)
I will manage.

They shake hands.

DEWEY

Take it easy, man.

Nikolai nods to his friend then moves off down the slope.

EXT. BUSHVELD - SUNSET

Nikolai walks across the horizon, his giant graceful body silhouetted by the sun. Alongside him is the much smaller silhouette of Gao.

FADE OUT.

THE END