

**THE CORSAIR JOURNALS**  
**An original screenplay**  
**by**  
**David Swinfen**

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16 Haseley Close  
Leamington Spa  
Warwickshire  
England  
CV31 2PD  
+044 (0)7513 004973  
start@catalina.me.uk

EXT - CROYDON AIRFIELD, ENGLAND - NIGHT

It is raining heavily on this dark evening in late winter. The sky is saturated and offers fleeting glimpses to a lightning storm above.

Nearby, the outer perimeter of an airfield is marked by a wire-link fence, and a striped windsock is being consistently battered by an unyielding crosswind.

The dainty frame of a De Havilland airliner sways on its gentle approach to Croydon's lone runway. The heavy rains can be heard impacting its wooden carcass with a percussive thudding as it makes determined headway through the storm. Six-cylinder engines sing their howling retort in the face of a steadfast and arrogant hail. She touches down with a pop and a brief screech of tired rubber, before easing a mechanical sigh.

We turn slightly around to the right where a small building with a tin roof adjoins the much larger North Hangar. One of the windows along the side wall is broken, and the building itself is in a ramshackle state of repair. A vague orange light glows past the black door frame, giving the only clue that people are still inside.

A crude sign hangs from the facing wall which states optimistically in black letters, 'Imperial Airways Head Office'.

We pace towards the building slowly and are greeted with a narrow passageway consisting of flimsy plaster walls. The light bulbs above are bare 40-watt lamps with no shades, and the windows and carpets are dusty and old. At the far end of the corridor, a door closes with a definite slam, perhaps caught by the evening's bluster.

Turning into a small side office, we notice a forlorn poster depicting an archaic and feeble Handley-Page aircraft. The office glows to the reach of a green Gauzy lamp, and a wooden desk calendar is obscured by an assortment of newspapers, so we are not able to see the date. Atop is a bold Arrears Notice, which has been cast aside with little regard for its blood-red lettering.

Voices of middle-aged men are heard in the office.

We twirl right as a grey moth enters the room just as we

do. Its antennae are pronounced and long, as if outstretched so that it may hear the conversation going about below. The cold gust down the corridor gives lift to its progress as it dances a ghostly descent towards the lamp.

The room feels cold, as if the copper radiator pipes audibly swell and crackle to the patina of disuse.

The voices continue to be heard.

SIR ERIC GEDDES is a well-built gentleman in his early fifties. His square jaw and chiselled features belie his age, and he has the air of an adventurer. His trousers have broad, striped detail and his white shirt a formal, floral pattern. This man has an extrovert taste, yet carries this unusual garb to a satisfactory conclusion.

The other man is GEORGE WOODS HUMPHREY. He is less lavishly attired, except for a moustache which extends beyond the margin of contemporary necessity. He is younger than Geddes, and his voice is higher in pitch and more quintessentially plucky. He slouches from chair to desk, whereas the other sits bolt upright.

As we greet them face-on, the voices clarify into trailing rhetoric.

GEDDES

To call it a competitor is to do them an ill service. A European route was always going to be easier. What of Heston?

HUMPHREY

Larger by the day. Nearly three thousand feet across now. By this time next year, we may find Croydon to be merely supplementary.

GEDDES

This time next year and we may find that there are more pressing concerns. So typical of Chamberlain to make bold claims without a full understanding.

(cont.)

GEDDES (cont.)

Italy is nothing but a nation of sanctimonious farmers.

Geddes turns to tug a top corner of one of the newspapers into view. The headline is 'Commons United in Defence'.

The date is obscured but it is sometime in March. The year reads '1939'.

HUMPHREY

Sudetenland has implication for Africa. It is doubtful now that anything can be agreed. It will make for a longer trip.

GEDDES

Despite his failings, Alcock would appear to be the exception that proved the rule.

HUMPHREY

He would have got there much quicker. He had storms in Rhodesia, stuck again at Tabora, and hit sandstorms all the way to Sudan. At least the Royal Mail have agreed to pay in full, despite their reservations.

Geddes taps his index finger on the front of the newspapers.

GEDDES

Chamberlain would not have done so if anyone could have predicted how far this would go.

Eric Geddes looks concerned, but the younger man's eyes are alive with optimism.

HUMPHREY

It doesn't matter, Eric!

His long moustache curls in unison with a complacent smile.

HUMPHREY (cont.)

It's too late now . . .

Humphrey exhibits a caddish enthusiasm. He leans forward on his chair and holds both of his hands out to clasp at Geddes' forearms. His tone is excitable.

HUMPHREY (cont.)

We have what we asked for!

Geddes is more reserved. He does not allow himself to be carried away like the younger man.

GEDDES

Cunard can keep Europe . . .

He places a handful of paperwork on the desk in front of us. It's not clear what they are, but the letterhead reads, 'Shorts of Sunderland'.

GEDDES (cont.)

We have Africa.

A soft wind blows across the office and kisses the topmost sheets from the pile. They are rendered astray so we are able to see a small amount of detail.

They appear to be purchase orders, with a large printed stamp across them which reads, 'Approved'.

At the top left is a small silhouette of some sort of aircraft, and banal text at the bottom reads, '£1.75 million in parts of 28'.

EXT - SOUTHAMPTON DOCKS - MORNING

It is a calm morning along the frontages. It is brisk but the early sun permeates what little cloud there is above us.

The docks are busy with people. Workers and passengers spill to and from the road opposite, and across to the pier front and its adjoining mooring.

A black Chevrolet van drifts into the goods yard just off dockside. It rattles to a stop and wobbles visibly with the prompt halt.

The DRIVER jumps out and dashes around to the rear of the vehicle, followed by his beloved dog, a Labrador cross. He enthusiastically calls to his dog and motions for him

to follow.

DRIVER

Come on boy! Hep....!

The dog jogs happily behind. The driver hastens to the rear of the Chevy and swings the doors open. Inside are various packing crates full of fruit and vegetables.

The driver grabs the foremost crate and manoeuvres it onto his stronger arm. He heaves the box upwards and grips it firmly. The Labrador jumps up to his waist to explore whatever foodstuff the crate may contain. The driver shifts his gait to avoid the jumping animal and begins the short walk to the dock front.

All around, people are exuberant and smiling.

The van driver positions the crate in a line with other items which are arranged to be packed for sea transport along the front.

The driver looks up at the sun, which now beats down with considerable strength, and places a hand across his eyebrows to shield against the light.

Our gaze drifts to the ship directly in front. It is the RMS Queen Elizabeth, a frightfully large ocean liner, which sits in the General Berth area near the pier with the quiet dignity of an elephant. All around, workers busy themselves with the task of wilfully handling her lading.

A young lady of some 24 years walks past one of the loading planks. She is VERONICA BERRY, a pretty girl with short, black hair, who appears more unique in that she is one of few lone travellers.

She wears a pink cardigan over a blue dress, and carries a mixed expression of hesitancy and awe. She has a small case under her right arm and a shoulder bag on her left. She glances with admiration at the ocean liner before continuing her walk down the dock.

Continuing from Berth 21 to 22, we see a small naval frigate swaying to the wind's morning rhythm. Its gun emplacements and radar give it a spiky presence, a really hard and difficult silhouette. It is a typical military olive.

As Ms. Berry walks past the berth and onto the next, we are aware of a foreground sign which simply states a series of destinations.

It reads, 'Naivasha - Mombasa - Kisumu - Port Bell - Juba'.

The young lady shifts her leather bag on her tired shoulder.

Glittering morning sea spans the gap between the berths, until we come to 'Berth 25'.

Moored here is a different kind of boat.

It is a flying boat.

An apparition of intense, ghostly silver and powerful, refracted sunlight. The Shorts aircraft bobs gently in the current, its upturned nose which forms both bow and nose seems to thumb a sign of disregard to the mere land by which it is graced. It seems happy on the water, yet would be happier still to receive release from its dockside residence, so that it may escape its cool embrace and make skywards. It is an impossibly pretty shape, one where form meets necessity, but culminates in a strange and inescapable beauty.

Her nose bears a simple 'Imperial Airways London' legend, and the name 'Corsair'.

Gulls are heard chattering above. A soft wind pulls strands of Ms. Berry's hair partially across her face. She moves it back into place with a gloved hand, before continuing her walk towards Corsair.

INT - GENERAL STORE BY DOCKS - MORNING

West's Stores is a small outfit just across the road from the pier front.

A brass bell above the front door clatters with the entrance of MERVYN DUKES.

He is a handsome man in his early thirties, whose proper deportment projects an aura of subtle calm. The gentleman is well attired and carries a small, brown-leather diary, and one small satchel.

He makes his way into the shop but stops by the middle racking which contains a typical assortment of tinned goods and postcards. A particular card has caught his eye. He removes it from the rack and thumbs it thoughtfully. The image depicts the flying boat moored just across the way.

Underneath the colourful illustration, the subtext reads, 'He left a Corsair's name to other times.'

He takes the card to the counter where the SHOPKEEPER is attending to the stocking of spirit bottles behind the desk. He turns to face the man.

SHOPKEEPER

Good day to you. Lovely morning, isn't it?

Dukes smiles politely and places the single postcard on the desk.

SHOPKEEPER (cont.)

Will there be anything else?

Mr. Dukes is well spoken and slow to respond.

DUKES

A smallest bottle of Elgin, if you will.

SHOPKEEPER

Are you flying this morning?

DUKES

Yes.

The shop-keeper looks at the postcard.

SHOPKEEPER

Sir may be fit to realise, but the flight to wherever it may land is never a short one. You could consider something that befits the passenger of an Empire Boat!

Dukes is caught off guard by the supposition.

DUKES

Very well. I shall take the  
Macallan.

The store owner removes an ornate-looking whisky bottle  
from the shelf behind.

SHOPKEEPER

This is a good choice. The  
journey is always part of a  
reason to venture, do you not  
think? Land-plane whisky will  
not do!

He looks up and smiles at Mr. Dukes, who places the money  
on the counter.

SHOPKEEPER (cont.)

I trust that you will have a  
good flight.

DUKES

I shall.

SHOPKEER

Corsair leaves from Berth 25.  
Just follow the signs.

DUKES

Thank you.

The man takes the bottle and checks to make sure he has  
both satchel and diary.

Dukes exits the shop and proceeds across the road, semi-  
mindful of passing delivery vehicles which busy past the  
dock.

He strides over the road towards Berth 25. Across from  
us, we see that there are now more dock workers  
surrounding the flying boat. Corsair's departure is  
imminent.

He hands a boarding card to the Dock Master waiting by  
the mooring and proceeds across the gang plank onto the  
flying boat.

The dock hand signals the pilot of the plane to indicate  
that checks are complete.

INT - CORSAIR - MORNING

The inside of the flying boat is more luxury liner than aircraft. Burr walnut adorns the underside of cabin windows on this lower deck, with polished grab-rails, and all around are comfortable seating arranged in two rows, resplendent in a good quality green cloth more synonymous of a West-end theatre than an airliner.

Mr. Dukes turns to assess the other passengers. The cabin is lightly peopled and reserves a fair number of free seats. Directly to the right, a slightly nervous girl with a pink cardigan over a blue dress sits with both hands in her lap. It is the girl seen previously.

Dukes turns around to view the dock front, which is now bobbing softly away from our vantage.

The morning calm is shattered by a fierce induction crackle, first to our right and then shortly after to our left. It is the sound of carburettor melding air to fuel, and exhausting its first thirsty intake and discharging it at pace to a cool Southampton breeze. The sound intensifies as engines either side of the primes are lit up. The hull below rocks gently to the sensation of torque overcoming inertia.

Mr. Dukes muses the sound and the ensuing motion of the hull. The high pitch whine gives way to a deeper and more mellow howl as the propellers gain pace and cut the air with a progressive ease.

The boat is turning.

Ms. Berry shifts uncomfortably in her seat and looks out of the starboard window across the bay. Soft waves are fortifying the sensation of lateral drift and the boat still moves in a circle to the right.

The Boat Master and pilot, JOHN ALCOCK, enters the compartment from the cockpit. He is perhaps fifty, and has white hair and a boyish charm. He moves into the cabin, taking the time to nod to some passengers in the front-most seats of the vessel.

Alcock speaks with a rural Yorkshire accent.

ALCOCK

Ladies and gents, how do we do? We are good to make go, so if you could be ready.

There is a nervous excitement throughout the cabin.

ALCOCK (cont.)

Could I please ask you Sir, and you Sir . . .

The pilot gestures to Dukes and the man in front of him.

ALCOCK (cont.)

To move to the right hand side of the boat, as balance is essential until we are to speed.

Mr. Dukes and the other passenger lift themselves and reposition to the adjacent row. Dukes has taken the seat next to Ms. Berry. He smiles at the young lady, who reciprocates. Both shuffle with the uncomfortable ease that one experiences when meeting a new travel partner.

ALCOCK (cont.)

For I think we shall be away.

The Northern accent does not quite marry to the impeccable presentation of the Boat Master uniform.

Alcock moves back down the gangway between the seat rows. We see passengers have fastened their lap belts.

Dukes turns to look at Ms. Berry, but his view falls beyond and over, as he looks out to sea. The light reflecting off the water makes it difficult to achieve perspective.

The engines escalate in volume and the fuselage below groans as it contains the thrust. We are moving once more.

A gull resting on the ocean top offers some means of judging acceleration, as it moves slowly into view and quickly out. Corsair is gathering pace as if being pulled by some invisible rubber band attached to the distance. Broken wash has by now been made inaudible by the engine cry, and the speed is becoming dizzying.

Spray thrashes against both rows of view-ports, and passengers settle to their chairs in anticipation of impending lift.

We are away.

The craft lurches and rises like an overweight swan, one moment as if scrabbling for purchase on the continually shifting makeshift runway, the next, a bid for freedom as the engine torque overcomes mass.

Corsair is flying.

EXT - SUDAN DESERT - DAY

The baking backwash of a hundred-and-something-degrees heat reflects back from the pale sands of the North Sudan desert and bakes our eyeballs. The landscape is largely flat, save for the odd rise of dune, and a distant rock formation which seems to stretch towards the sun with outstretched arms, as if crying for merciful release.

God it's hot.

We turn to see a low-lying rural area, with a large monument at its centre. This is the town of Juba. It is a dusty outcrop of simple proportions, and seems composed of but two elemental colours; white for the buildings, and an Azure blue sky.

At the South entrance to the town is a military checkpoint. A Tiger Moth aircraft parked next to the checkpoint signals that this is a British Army site.

A large transport vehicle lumbers up to the checkpoint and stops to an accompanying plume of dust.

Away from the checkpoint, a man paces toward us with a rifle. He is WILLIAM BERRY. A dark-haired man in his thirties, he is modestly handsome with a dark moustache. He walks past and towards a square building to one side of the courtyard.

It is a simple structure, and outside a small banner reads, 'Colonial Medical Services.' There is a large Red Cross symbol on the opposite side.

INT - COLONIAL MEDICAL BUILDING - DAY

Mr. Berry enters the room, and the switch to such intense internal dark makes it tricky for us to make out details in the room.

The soldier places his rifle in one corner and busies himself at a desk with some paperwork.

A tapping noise is heard. Another SOLDIER MEDIC has knocked on the inside wall to alert William's attention.

SOLDIER MEDIC (off)

William!

He turns to see who is calling.

The other soldier half-enters the doorway.

SOLDIER MEDIC (cont.)

William, you have a mail!

Mr. Berry greets the soldier and takes the envelope from him. His voice is solemn and pragmatic.

MR. BERRY

Thank you.

He takes the envelope and returns to the desk. As he removes the parchment-coloured letter within, we hear the voice of Ms. Berry.

Her voice is soft and full of care.

MS. BERRY (v.o.)

To my dear William, thank you so much for sending me the money to make a deposit on the flight. There was no way I could have afforded to do so myself. Father was right. It was definitely worth the small sum extra to not have to go by surface boat.

William continues to read whilst pouring himself a glass of water at the desk.

MS. BERRY (v.o.)

I am so excited, for all I can think about is to see you again. It seems such a long time since the summer, and it is harder still for me to believe that you have been in Sudan for three years. I am glad to know that you have avoided the troubles so far, and I listen to the wireless every day for new stories on the terrible White Flag League. There is news of Italy also, and I am so terribly worried that the fighting will spill yet further, until it eventually covers the whole world.

William sips from the water.

MS. BERRY (v.o.)

If there should be a world war, I do not know what I should do. I miss you so often that it has become commonplace for me. My only respite comes from the gentle touches of excitement that flash through me from time to time.

Ms. Berry's voice switches from a dignified tone to one of intense pride.

MS. BERRY (v.o.)

I shall be a passenger on an Empire Boat!

William allows himself a half-smile, and moves away from our view.

EXT - CORSAIR - DAY

We are at 15,000 feet, and from here it is possible to understand what a ludicrous proposition the flying boat makes to the air. The underbelly clearly resembles the hull of a ship, and the height of its flanks suggest that its arc skywards should be nothing except mere fiction. Her broad wings hold on to thermal remnants, yet it hangs in the air with impossible grace, as if telling a gentle lie to the winds.

Below, Mediterranean sea meets land. We are somewhere over the South of France.

INT - CORSAIR - DAY

Inside the flying boat, Dukes and Ms. Berry are conversing. As they do so, he makes regular notes in his small journal. They appear quite comfortable with the company of each other.

MS. BERRY

What is the most wonderful place you have ever been?

Dukes eases in his seat before answering.

DUKES

Venice. The canals of Venice are a sight. Have you been?

The young girl shakes her head and listens on.

DUKES (cont.)

The entire city is built on water, and is supported by wooden stanchions.

MS. BERRY

And wood does not rot at sea?

DUKES

It gathers minerals from the passing water and becomes hard as stone.

MS. BERRY

It sounds like a fascinating place.

DUKES

It is a fascinating place to read. Napoleon referred to Saint Mark's Square as the Drawing Room of Europe.

MS. BERRY

Would you not find that you  
(cont.)

MS. BERRY (cont.)  
should be stepping over visitors  
and artists who have travelled,  
like yourself, to sit in the  
Drawing Room?

DUKES  
Yes. And it is why I am  
predisposed to love Africa.  
Very little by way of  
interruption, notwithstanding  
cannibals and peacocks!

He pauses to scrawl further thoughts into his book.

DUKES (cont.)  
You seem very young to be  
travelling on your own-

MS. BERRY  
How old, do you think?

DUKES  
I am leaning towards making no  
attempt, but if pressured, I  
should say twenty one, maybe  
twenty two?

She smiles inscrutably.

DUKES (cont.)  
Twenty-five?

The girl laughs playfully. Veronica looks down at her  
lap for a moment before returning her gaze to him.

MS. BERRY  
My husband is posted in the  
Sudan.

DUKES  
Then he will be delighted to see  
you.

Mr. Dukes' expression is one of soft severity.

DUKES (cont.)  
Meanwhile, should you be cool, you  
(cont.)

DUKES (cont.)  
may have my jacket.

An embarrassed smile.

MS. BERRY  
Mr. Dukes, you are not part of  
the cabin crew!

He retracts the smile. Perhaps that was too much?

DUKES  
Indeed, though concern remains as  
to whether these journeys shall  
still be offered in five years time.  
We shall be at war soon, and who  
then shall buy the bush-meat and  
tribal treasure that is necessary  
for these prehistorics to develop?  
How then shall they abandon herding  
and hoarding for the pursuit of  
increasing boundaries and extent  
of one's territory, the design of  
weapons, and of war with one's  
neighbour? It is only the  
confused who mourn the passing  
of time, and elders beset with  
these potions and tonics of reds  
and blues, for whom progression has  
no sense.

He pauses to glance from the view-port.

DUKES (cont.)  
We are over Marseilles.

The girl listens on in momentary silence, and then  
replies with excited laughter.

MS. BERRY  
A word-smith! Then what is your  
will?

DUKES  
That we should land again before  
Tunisia.

She smiles quizzically. He elaborates . . .

DUKES (cont.)

My legs are aching, and I could  
do with a walk!

She laughs and bites the nail of her index finger, and  
looks out of the window.

EXT - CORSAIR - DAY

Corsair banks vividly right and begins the descent to the  
town below. Up here, above the protective, partial  
patchwork of soft Mediterranean cloud, the sun beats hard  
upon the flying boat's vast wings, and she lurches gently  
deeper for cooler air.

EXT - JUBA MARKET, SUDAN - DAY

A few rag-tag stands and stalls mark either end of the  
trading area, set into the town courtyard below a simple  
stone monument. A cattle herder manoeuvres his  
collection of slender buck stock, elegant beast that look  
like bulls but are pure white and have very sharp horns.  
They are shackled, and are hustled into the town square  
two-abreast.

A man watches. He is ABASI ADOFO, a young man of Arabic  
descent. He enters the marketplace, taking care to avoid  
the train of cattle. He is wrapped tightly to guard  
against flying dust.

He turns to either side to avoid passing traders and  
customers, a mixture of coal-dark Sudanese, Egyptians and  
a few British soldiers.

He notices a stall selling fruit, and makes his way to it  
from the near side.

Pausing, he removes a small photograph from beneath his  
Kashmiri-like shawl. It is a picture of his wife, who  
holds a small child decked in warm woollen blankets. Her  
expression is an odd half smile, one of determination and  
struggle. Adofu thumbs the image gently, and places it  
back beneath his dress.

He makes his way to the side of the stall and perches on  
its outset.

The trader is preoccupied with attending to customers on the far side. He has not noticed our friend loitering. Seeing his chance, Adofo lurches for the nearest table and grabs a handful of datepalm and a small bunch of bananas.

The STALL OWNER notices his flurry and calls at the top of his voice.

STALL OWNER  
Hassas! Thief! Hassasheen!

Adofo makes the most of his limited margin and breaks into accelerative sprint, struggling to keep his footing whilst he turns. The owner is calling behind him as he races with vigour away from the marketplace.

He rounds a corner plot and heads down the adjacent alley.

A dead end! The man pauses for momentary thought. He is panting vividly with panic.

Several voices are calling after him, and they are getting nearer. Still clinging desperately to his fruit, he looks up, frantically searching for a means of escape from the alleyway. The buildings on either side are too tall to climb. He rabbits, but is frozen with the cold shock of serotonin.

Trapped. No way out.

The stall owner rounds the corner into view. He is accompanied by two British soldiers and several of onlookers.

STALL OWNER  
Shena Hassas!

The two soldiers march forward with purpose. One is William Berry.

ADOFO  
La! Azhab, please!!

Both soldiers ignore his plea and continue forward. The young man is trapped, and his wilting cry tells the British that he knows it too.

The soldier with Mr. Berry is DARIUS DAKARAI. He is a dark Egyptian, wearing the Standard British uniform.

DAKARAI  
Stop!

The thief's protest has escalated almost to tears, but his breathing has calmed slightly. He knows it is too late for any escape..

William eyes him up and down, a look of scorn across his visage. He frowns, before gesturing to the other soldier to back off.

Dakari backs up a couple of feet as instructed

Adofo's eyes are alive with fear. The sun above is offering no support, and its rays batter his consciousness and feed his fear.

William moves forward.

Without warning, he raises his right elbow and turns sharply, striking the Sudani with the hard butt of his Enfield rifle. The blow glances his temple, and knocks him down with a dull strike.

He falls into a crumpled heap, and the fruit he was holding spills onto the dirty floor.

Berry leans over him, finally offering him some accidental shade from the harsh sun, but he is not moving.

INT - CORSAIR - DAY

Inside the flying boat, we are on the second level, which is an observation deck. The lavish furnishings continue to this upper deck.

Ms. Berry and Mervyn Dukes ponder the distance to the clouds below from the port-side window.

MS. BERRY  
What do you know of the British  
operation in Sudan?

DUKES

Merely that we were reluctant to give Cairo back to the Egyptians, and we are unhappy to bequeath Juba in the same manner.

Veronica seems insistent to know more.

MS. BERRY

Does the territory offer enough in return for us to justify our continued presence upon it?

DUKES

I know only what I have read, and that its fruit bears a sweeter taste to politicians than it could offer in any true nutrition. I believe that it does not.

The young girl seems perplexed. As she looks out of the port window, her answer is distant.

MS. BERRY

Yet we continue to fight.

Mervyn stares at her as she looks out the window and on to the cloud formation beyond.

DUKES

Your husband is a soldier?

MS. BERRY

He is a medic.

She shifts her purse and straightens her frame.

MS. BERRY (cont.)

With the Colonial Medical Services.

He senses her unease.

DUKES

And he is still expected to fight.

It is not a question. Her response is quick and firm.

MS. BERRY

It is a peace-keeping mission.

Dukes muses, and turns to a new blank page in his journal.

DUKES

I am fascinated to understand how we may invade a foreign country and profess then to keep it safe from invasion.

MS. BERRY

We keep it safe from civil unrest.

DUKES

Then he is a policeman?

She turns to look at him.

MS. BERRY

Of a fashion. There is unrest throughout the Empire, Mr. Dukes.

DUKES

There is unrest beyond the Empire. I think that soon we shall be at war, and struggle to economise to contain these peasants and cattle-drivers, who seek merely to regain their dust-ridden towns.

MS. BERRY

You disapprove of our grasp on our Empire?

DUKES

I disapprove of our commitment to slowly let it fall from our grasp, if there should be a purpose to keeping it. I think that in another half a century, we may be flying our soldiers halfway around the world to protect worthless isles from worthless countries, who serve pointlessly to expand their own borders.

He pauses to scribble a further note in the journal.

DUKES (cont.)

If the decision should fall to me, I should say that our enemies may have these colonies, if they are of no consequence. Allow them to have back their scarred patches, only to foster dirt and room to graze their elephants and hens.

MS. BERRY

Is Sudan of no consequence?

DUKES

It is of consequence to me. It forms part of a route which allows me to get to Uganda.

Her reply is playful.

MS. BERRY

To see elephants? And their great plains?

He smiles.

DUKES

To see what lies beyond these great elephants. I can only reach them by planes!

She smiles at the pun and returns her gaze to the window.

DUKES (cont.)

Soon we shall land at Alexandria. I have been there before.

MS. BERRY

Then you may show me where to graze!

INT - BRITISH BASE IN SUDAN, DETENTION AREA - DAY

Adofo comes to slowly.

He is lying on a simple stone bench in a holding area. Rudimentary cell bars block any exit, and the room is

dark.

Abasi slowly rises from the bench and carries himself delicately to the cell door. He grabs the metal rails with both hands and uses it to support his weight as he looks out at the other cells. His actions are heavy and painful.

He tests the strength of the bars gently and sits back down.

The building door opens. William Berry enters.

He walks in slowly, his expression difficult to read in the low light. He paces towards the lone occupied cell and waits for the captive to rise once more from the bench.

Adofo gets to his feet again. His head is low, like some mischievous dog awaiting a punishment for a wrong.

William takes his time before speaking to him

MR. BERRY

Will that it were, to look upon  
the eyes of my enemy, and see but  
a ghost of fight.

The captive releases a painful breath before answering.

ADOFO

I am not a soldier, Sir.

MR. BERRY

But you are a thief, and know of  
those that are.

ADOFO

I am not White Flag.

MR. BERRY

But you know of Mukantagara?

Adofo looks at the ground, then nods reluctantly.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

You know of where he is?

Adofo shakes his head. No.

William grabs him violently and pulls him by the scruff of the neck to the cell bars. Adofo's head is jammed tightly between two of the rails, and he is struggling for breath.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

I do not care of who you are!  
I care not for stolen datepalm  
and I do not wish to keep you  
here long.

The young Sudani breathes quickly and cannot move. His eyes are wide and fearful.

ADOFO

Please . . . !

William tightens his grip on the other's neck. He yowls at the contortion.

MR. BERRY

You, good Sir, shall tell me!

ADOFO

Good Sir, I know not!

William yanks him hard forward and pulls his head at the bars. Adofo falls to the floor as his head hits the cell bar with venomous force.

He slumps in a heap on the floor. Looking closely, we see a tear form in his eye, as his bunch of bananas lands heavily into his ribcage, and rests sharply with a thud.

EXT - ALEXANDRIA - DAY

An epic skyline of bridges and citadels, this Egyptian city spans from the nearby mosque to distant houses, cast as orange shadows to the desert fold.

Below our vantage is a paved street which runs past shops and street stalls from one end, and on to a beautiful temple of Al-Nasir at the far.

Mr. Dukes and Ms. Berry are walking along this street towards our vision. She has several bags of groceries.

DUKES

Do you require help with your bags?

MS. BERRY

No, though I have enough yellow cake rice to make it difficult for our bird to fly! I like it here.

Dukes smiles.

DUKES

I have been here several times before. I enjoy Egypt, but not as much as Persia. Very good lamb!

She laughs.

MS. BERRY

I suppose we should make some haste for the hotel.

DUKES

Yes, we should get back to the harbour. The hotel is not far from where we landed.

MS. BERRY

Shall you be writing in your journal this evening?

She gestures to the brown leather book by his side.

DUKES

Yes. I never allow this very far from me. I use it to document my every step.

MS. BERRY

Are you a writer?

DUKES

No.

She has obviously been waiting some time for him to explain what he does.

DUKES (cont.)

I work for an airline. They operate from the Eastern seaboard of America, and they wish to know if an African route would be worthwhile.

She listens carefully.

MS. BERRY

Do you think it worthwhile?

DUKES

I do not know. The decision will be made by accountants and men whose souls are constituted largely by double-digits and level-headed conservatism. My opinion is one of subjectivity, for I love Africa.

MS. BERRY

Well Mr. Dukes, we should get your journal to its hotel suite.

They turn and leave along the main street.

EXT - PICCADILLY, LONDON - MORNING

Central London is awash with its usual commotion, as city dwellers and visitors race to wherever they may be going. Buses do battle with horse-drawn carriages for road space. The weather is dry but clouds loom large.

We follow a Jaguar 3.5-litre saloon in a regal silver. It pulls up outside an imposing hotel called The Bolton. A hotel doorman greets the car.

Two men get out of the back. They are Eric Geddes and George Woods Humphrey. They hurry up the steps to the hotel as the Jaguar departs.

INT - THE BOLTON HOTEL - MORNING

Inside the hotel and just off the entrance foyer is an enclave to one side. It features a U-shaped red leather seat, and is arranged in a large booth to form a

conference area away from the main foyer.

Sitting on the bench is JOHN RUPERT, a 44-year-old man with a round, red face and round belly, upon which he rocks back and forward as he speaks.

The other man is MIKAEL LARSSON, who is of similar age but much taller. He is Scandinavian and has blonde hair, which is quickly diminishing with age.

LARSSON

I'm just telling you, John, that  
this cannot carry on-

Rupert is loud.

RUPERT

I know. Look, I'm dealing with it-

LARSSON

Our investors will not continue  
to keep backing the airline. Not  
when they see it as throwing money  
into a bottomless wishing well.

RUPERT

Let me talk to them.

Larsson eases slightly, though he is clearly incensed.

RUPERT (cont.)

Just . . . , let me talk to them.  
It's fine, honestly. Ah, here  
they are.

They both turn to see Geddes and Humphrey arrive.

RUPERT

Gentlemen.

Geddes has an arrogant swagger, Humphrey a more nervous animation.

GEDDES

Mikael, hello.

HUMPHREY

John.

They take a seat at the booth.

A pale-skinned WAITER approaches the table.

HUMPHREY

We're not ready yet-

He goes to turn.

GEDDES

Brandy.

Eric's interruption prevents him from leaving.

WAITER

Very good, Sir.

The waiter exits.

RUPERT

Now, Eric, we have just been discussing the situation which would appear to keep crawling back upon our doorstep.

Geddes sips his drink and does not look at the man addressing him.

GEDDES

It is of little concern.

RUPERT

For God sake man, our pilots are on strike!

Humphrey notices Eric's apathy and interrupts.

HUMPHREY

With due respect, 'twill be resolved by next weekend, and we have not lost the flights as we had feared-

GEDDES

As some of us had feared, George. The Masters are incredibly well paid. They should just get on with things!

LARSSON

You cannot go on simply plaining wood from the veneer of cost. You invariably find that very soon there is no material left to cut.

HUMPHREY

But we are making money, are we not?

RUPERT

Well I may as well say what we are all thinking.

All sit back.

RUPERT (cont.)

In six months we will be at war, and this will put paid to our most simple and profitable routes. Europe is there for the taking, yet we are being forced to spend a week skirting around the damn place.

Geddes takes another slug of Corvoisseur.

GEDDES

We have Africa.

LARSSON

It is not paying enough-

GEDDES

Then we charge more for the mail-

LARSSON

Which will terminate our subsidy.

Geddes leans back and breathes a heavy sigh. Why will these idiots have no faith in him?

Rupert approaches the next point with some caution.

RUPERT

Of course, the other issue is lost aircraft. I don't much care for losing planes, but two flying boats has been difficult for the board to stomach.

GEDDES

We have lost no aircraft, John.

LARSSON

We have lost two, to lakes in Kenya!

GEDDES

But the boats we recovered-

RUPERT

And this all costs money.

Humphrey moves forward in an attempt to diffuse the stand-off.

HUMPHREY

We can assure both you gentlemen that there will be no further part to play by way of accidental loss.

RUPERT

Our insurers are becoming tough to appease. I should say that if another Empire Boat is befallen upon tragedy, then it shall remain where it is fell.

HUMPHREY

Sir, I can tell you that we are constant in our attention to overcome these missions and trials.

LARSSON

Good. Because the next one may change your future, and my favour.

EXT - SUDAN MOUNTAINS - EVENING

Across the baked dirt and odd tundra lies two small mountains. The nearest is flat on top, and a smoke trail emanates from the far side, indicating that it is inhabited.

Below our vantage point, a British Army Jeep bearing the Red Cross symbol races through the vast expanse. It is followed closely by a second identical vehicle.

They are heading for the mountains.

The lead Jeep enters the range and turns left to follow a twisting path up the larger mountain. Both cars pound up the slope and round a corner to enter a small village at the summit.

One house is forged from the remnants of a cave, while three other simple stone structures complete the settlement.

The Jeeps pull up. In the lead car are William Berry and Darius Dakarai. They disembark, as do two more British soldiers in the car behind.

The villagers peer out nervously from doorways as the soldiers survey the scene. All are armed.

William stands in the centre of the settlement and casts his voice to address all.

MR. BERRY

We offer you security and food!  
We offer you fuel and water! Yet  
you give us nothing in return.

All around look terrified. Berry's voice is frightening.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

You have been asked for the  
location of the militant  
Mukantagara.

No one speaks.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

Merely five towns spread over a  
thousand square miles, yet no  
one sees him or knows of him?

He paces around the houses as their occupants peer out fearfully.

He addresses one woman in particular.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

A ghost? An apparition!

He moves on to the next.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

A Merak? Merely a desert wind!

The villagers cling to young children and wives grip husbands in tightly-coiled fear.

He turns to Dakarai, and lowers his voice.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

Behold, they land like greenfly,  
and are crushed against our skin.

A small boy shouts in Arabic and runs at William in attack.

Calmly, Berry grabs the boy by an arm as he runs, and holds him aloft. He screams and kicks.

The boy's father wants to protest, but has to restrain himself as rifles are pointed at him.

William pulls the boy's sandals from his feet with his free hand and dangles him above the hood of the Jeep. It takes the child just a second to realise how searing hot the metal has become from the sun's onslaught.

He screams and cries, and dances a sickening dance, trying desperately not to place bare toes onto the scalding-hot sheet metal.

William adjusts his grasp so he is lower now, and the boy can't help but snag delicate toes on the baking car hood.

His father can take no more. He dashes from the stone house to reclaim his little boy. As he does so, William throws the Sudani child at his father by his arm, almost wrenching it from the socket.

He clatters into his parent like a rag doll, taking them both to the ground.

We are left with them both holding each other. The embrace seems to take an age. They cling on desperately as the departure of the British Red Cross vehicles raises a dust storm around the settlement.

The British are gone. The small boy still clings on to his father.

INT - ALEXANDRIA, HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Unreal blue morning light blows through slats in the blind. Dukes is asleep. His watch is on the bedside table. It reads half-past five.

He stirs and wakes.

Mervyn rolls onto his back and takes a deep breath. His skin already looks darker after an afternoon under Egypt's heavy sun.

He feels for his journal at the bedside. Spotting it, he takes up his pen and begins to write in the half-light.

DUKES (v.o.)

How strange it is to be averted  
from one's purpose, and how simple  
a deflection is required to  
pervert the course of key reason.  
I am not yet in Deep Africa.

He adjusts his eyesight in the poor light.

DUKES (v.o.)

I am not yet even thinking about  
it. How sudden the transparency  
of one's reason wanders thus, and  
how simply a simple creature can  
take an unknown turn.

He places the pen to one side and turns over on his side.

Lying next to him is Veronica Berry.

He watches her as her eyelids glitter with soft and slight sleep. He rests his arm over her exposed shoulder and places his head next to hers, and kisses her forehead.

She stirs, but does not wake.

EXT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK, BELGIAN CONGO - DAY

Congo is a wild and untamed frontier. It is a land of swamps, and mud, and trees and stone. Scenery looms large, and the lack of any conveniences to mankind makes for a foreboding, green and angry place.

Through the dense bush, a narrow column has been cleared to form a rudimentary path into the forest. The trees have literally been smashed down and removed, leaving barely an eight-foot-wide column. It stops here and becomes a dead end.

The sun beats down hard and only penetrates the clearing, making for a spectacular, focused pot of golden light.

It is broken momentarily.

We turn right to see a nine-foot-high frame bearing down upon us. It is an African elephant, barely a juvenile, but huge in stature. Its ears increase the sensation of vastness, and they fan forwards and back to keep the animal cool as it walks.

Its shadow blocks our sight for a moment as it passes.

As it does so, it is clear that the animal is being ridden.

Atop the beast, a young boy sits a great distance from the floor. He is only 13 years old, and wears simple shorts and a shirt. He is HENRY STAM.

There are no reins, tack or decoration on the elephant. It moves quietly through the undergrowth. Grass is trampled beneath them as they approach the end of the makeshift road.

Suddenly the animal rears onto its hind and raises its front legs into the tree canopy. The young boy leans forward to maintain his balance, and grips hard with his ankles and knees. It paws comically at a nearby tree, eventually gaining purchase on the tough mangrove bark. Pushing forward, it heaves at the fauna and finally succeeds in toppling it, to the accompanying sound of splintering wood.

The ancient tree falls with a delicate swing, and nearby branches cushion its fall to the soft forest floor. It is a slow image, and one of calm.

Henry pats the elephant to indicate encouragement.

The quiet drops away to the noise of a rattly engine approaching behind us. We turn to see a black Volvo truck in honest condition making its way up the path.

It belches black smoke, and down both sides are painted short passages from the Bible.

One reads, `Matthew 7:7-9,11 And to him who knocks, the door will be opened.'

The engine keeps running as the driver emerges. He is HARRY STAM, the father of the boy. He calls to his son who has not turned to look at the vehicle.

MR. STAM

Henry! Henry . . .!

The boy turns.

HENRY

Father!

He spins round and dismounts the animal in one sweep, spanning the gap to the forest floor without flinching.

He runs up to his elder.

HENRY (cont.)

Father, I have only just begun!

MR. STAM

Ha! That is fine Henry. Your Mother wishes for your ear.

He turns to look at the elephant

HENRY

But, Father! Jafaar!

MR. STAM

He will be fine within the confines of the reserve. Come!

The boy jogs behind his father to the truck. Both enter. There are no safety belts, and they move off immediately.

Harry turns the truck around with the merest of clearance to the trees either side, and they progress back down the path.

The vehicle travels along the trail. Inside, both are quiet for a spell, as the engine clatter makes conversation difficult.

The boy looks out and over a valley. Its sides fall away quickly, and densely packed mangrove form a shaky cover down to a steep ravine at the base. It is a lavish, emerald blanket spanning beyond the reach of our sight.

MR. STAM

How are your studies coming along, Henry?

HENRY

Good, father. For sure they are better than Howard's!

He playfully strokes his son's head.

MR. STAM

I sometimes worry about his motivation.

His father has to shout above camshafts clashing.

HENRY

We will be okay. I will still read.

MR. STAM

I know you love to be outside. You are like your mother in that respect. She has always much preferred stirring pools with straw stalks than soups with spoons!

Henry smiles.

HENRY

Do you think there will be any visitors this month?

MR. STAM

I should say not. It has been difficult because of the rains.

The youngster looks disappointed.

MR. STAM (cont.)

But you cannot forecast what errant whimsy can be blown about the lakes when the tides are up.

INT - ALEXANDRIA, HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Veronica stares from the window at the port opposite. She balances her head on both hands, and her visage is one of solemnity and dismay. Time stands still. It is cold out.

How could this have happened?

People pass the window, but she looks through them and beyond.

A hand on her shoulder. She takes Mervyn's hand and strokes it, but does not look at him.

DUKES (off)

Did you enjoy the dinner last evening?

She does not answer. She stares out of the window and doesn't move.

DUKES (cont.)

I liked the butter chicken.

Still she does not answer.

DUKES (cont.)

I thought the salad was on its death-bed, though.

Her reply is distant.

MS. BERRY

Poor William . . .

DUKES

He shall never have to know of this.

MS. BERRY

I will know. I shall know of it.

DUKES

Ghosts are quick to pass. Especially in the desert.

Again she does not speak.

DUKES (cont.)

I am sorry, Veronica.

MS. BERRY

By your part. The blame is my own.

DUKES

Perhaps we should busy ourselves with leaving. It is nearly eight.

Finally she looks at him. He squeezes onto the seat beside her and hugs her. She half-smiles as she looks at him. There is a subtle, sad connection, possibly a bond which goes some way beyond this brief liaison.

MS. BERRY

Yes. We should go.

EXT - ALEXANDRIA - MORNING

Corsair sings where Nile water meets sandstone dock. Tethered to a pillar in the harbour, it makes for a pleasant sight in the morning sun. It's warmer now, and the flying boat is ready to leave.

Dukes and Ms. Berry make their way to the gang plank.

DUKES

Do you need some help?

MS. BERRY

No I am fine.

She stumbles clumsily along the plank. He goes to catch her hand, but she moves it away.

Both enter the flying boat.

Traders busy along the dock side to other stalls, and passing beast can be seen around the dock. Corsair is already pointed to the arrow-straight river and on to the mouth at the far.

Her engines crescendo to increasing choke and throttle, and soon she shall be gone.

Corsair gains pace away from the harbour, and by the time estuary meets river, she is at take-off speed. The nose gradually rises and the waters eventually relinquish her company to the sky.

Soon the city is merely a bright, perfectly formed child's marble below us.

INT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK, BELGIAN MISSION - DAY

Harry Stam writes by daylight.

The mission house where they live is a strange building. It is part clay hut, part metal shack, and even in part a chapel.

Inside is a random collection of differing clutter. An acoustic guitar rests against one wall, and opposite is a desk with a glass top, in which are preserved a collection of embalmed mosquito and hornet bodies. All around is Catholic symbolism.

Stam's writings are interrupted by the sound of his other son, HOWARD STAM, entering the house.

His shouts are distressed.

HOWARD  
Father! Help, father!

We turn to see the 16-year-old stagger into the room. He is half-carrying a black African man who cannot move under his own power. He is EZE BAH, a local. His left leg appears to have been ruptured and he is losing quite a lot of blood. The man stays quiet and does not scream, but he is finding it difficult to breath.

Harry immediately vacates his chair and helps his son move the man to his seat. He winces with the pain.

His wife, HELEN STAM, enters from the kitchen.

MRS. STAM  
Oh My!

She drops a towel and hurries over. Mr. Stam has already removed part of the man's trouser leg with some scissors.

MR. STAM

Howard! I need iodine and gauze.

HOWARD

Yes father.

The wild-haired boy dashes into the kitchen.

MRS. STAM

What has happened to him?

Mr. Stam is holding the man's outstretched hand with his, by way of comfort.

The man is visibly shaking.

MR. STAM

He has very nearly become full prey.

EZE

Pardus! Pardus! Ha! Pardus?

MRS. STAM

A leopard?

MR. STAM

I think so . . .

Howard enters.

HOWARD

Father! Here!

He hands Harry the items he asked for. The African moans as he applies the gauze. Eze grabs violently at the tablecloth next to him and rips it from the tabletop.

MR. STAM

The wound is not very deep. His biggest wrong shall be from disease.

Howard looks on, ready to react the moment his father should ask for something further.

MR. STAM (cont.)

There is not much we can do here.  
Help me, Howard!

His son manoeuvres Eze into a more upright position.

MR. STAM (cont.)

We must take him to Faradje.

MRS. STAM

Yes, they can take better care of  
him there. Howard, help your  
Father.

They carefully lift him to his good leg and precariously make their way back out of the door. Mr. Stam supports the man by the entrance as Howard runs on and starts the truck. It rumbles into life with a reluctant shiver.

Harry has to manhandle the African to get him into the vehicle. At last they are in.

The youngster drives off whilst his father supports the man in his seat.

As the truck leaves, we see on the back a colourful image of a leopard's head depicted in bright paints, and text around it advertises, 'Garamba National Park est. 1927'.

INT - CORSAIR - DAY

Dukes stands with his back to us at the smoking deck, looking out. He has a lit cigarette but is paying it no mind.

To his left, the Boat Master, John Alcock, approaches him. Dukes only turns to address him when he realises who it is.

ALCOCK

A good day, Sir.

Mr. Dukes is clearly preoccupied.

DUKES

It is a good day to take flight,  
Sir.

Corsair's Master senses the other's unease.

ALCOCK

Are you suffering discomfort  
from flying for so long?

DUKES

I suffer disillusion.

ALCOCK

From our flight?

DUKES

From our travels.

Alcock smiles. From below, he produces a bottle of South African whisky. Dukes even smiles too.

DUKES (cont.)

Ah!

The pilot removes two glasses from a small rack next to the smoking deck door. He adds the liqueur to both glasses and offers one to Dukes

ALCOCK

Adieu!

DUKES

To disillusion!

Both raise their glasses.

ALCOCK

Your lady friend will not join  
you at the deck?

DUKES

A friend, she remains in her  
seat.

ALCOCK

Flying opens the doors to so  
many destinations.

DUKES

These majestic fields are soon  
departed, and their paths are  
scattered to fierce winds.

ALCOCK

This is true.

He drinks.

ALCOCK (cont.)

This is very true. We shall soon be in Uganda.

DUKES

It is wild, that place.

The pilot drains his glass and pats Mervyn on the shoulder. He returns to the cockpit.

EXT - ABOVE SUDAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

A dainty Fairey Swordfish plane hangs gently in the soft gusts above the Jabal Ledo mountains. The British aircraft clings to the air, before banking quickly to the right.

Its pilot has spotted something.

The engine soars in pitch as the bi-plane dives. The mountains below us now spin like a dizzying logic puzzle.

The plane is low, and at this altitude, a small number of domed structures can be seen around the base of a small foothill. It looks like a settlement, nestled cleverly amongst natural camouflage.

The Swordfish pilot eases throttle and levels out, before making an easy circle around the hills. The co-pilot in the rear stares below through binoculars. After a closer inspection, he gestures wildly and becomes very animated.

He frantically waves to the pilot, who puts the aircraft into a sharp fade right. They continue to turn as they climb for higher cloud.

INT - BRITISH BASE IN SUDAN, COMMAND - DAY

William Berry enters his commanding officer's main office. His expression is serious and his pace quick.

MR. BERRY

Sir!

His COMMANDING OFFICER is calm, and politely acknowledges him enter.

COMMANDING OFFICER

Yes, William.

He is a portly gentleman in his fifties. His voice is warm.

COMMANDING OFFICER (cont.)

I trust all is well.

William ignores his decent mood.

MR. BERRY

Sir, we have had word from a scout. He reports that we have spotted a new settlement, over towards Jabal Ledo to the North, and it is likely to be a rebel position.

The officer barely takes his concentration from off of his paperwork.

COMMANDING OFFICER

This is good news indeed. I shall signal Cairo and ask Tank Command to properly survey it.

MR. BERRY

Sir, time is of the essence! It is a safe bet that the aircraft was spotted.

COMMANDING OFFICER

It is beyond our remit to attack a stronghold, however small.

Berry looks disappointed. A look of intensity washes over him.

MR. BERRY

It is out duty to investigate-

COMMANDING OFFICER

We have fulfilled our duty. Our purpose in Sudan is one of peace-keeping and reconnaissance.

MR. BERRY

But we can attack it from the air-

COMMANDING OFFICER

I will not risk the sacrifice of the meagre fleet we have. I have but two planes left, and they are torpedo aircraft. Tell me, what good are torpedoes in the desert? Besides which our men are concentrated in Juba, and it is critical our good work is not undone on a whim.

Berry is becoming increasingly angry.

MR. BERRY

With respect, Sir, Juba can take care of itself-

COMMANDING OFFICER

I will not be drawn into several days of operation in the North. Our goal is to protect the town.

Berry is vicious.

MR. BERRY

These devils steal our riches and transform our currency into weapons to use against us! Our teas and trophies are becoming cannons of flak, and our new world skies are filling with their discharge.

William finds he has slammed both arms down on his superior's desk.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

I beseech you not to sit idly by whilst our Empire falls to procrastinators and pirates!

## COMMANDING OFFICER

That is enough, Mr. Berry.

His voice is firm. The others' eyes are alive with venom, his reply reluctant . . .

## MR. BERRY

I shall follow my orders . . .

He goes to leave but turns back round.

## MR. BERRY (cont.)

But I deplore your reason to place the jackal in a stranglehold and not to sever its throat. Your good grace shall be our ill turn!

Berry exits.

The officer marks a location on the large map in front of him and turns to the Morse code machine.

## EXT - PORT BELL, UGANDA - DAY

From the great salt lake of Victoria, the waters glitter with magical refraction, and Corsair nestles elegantly above the soft waves. She seems grateful of this moments rest. Behind our flying boat is another Shorts aircraft. It is identical to Corsair and rests in the harbour also. The sight of these two leviathans together makes for a spirited vision.

Where the waters edge meets land, simple wooden planks form a basic mooring. The rest of the site is unpaved, with a grassy expanse adorned only with a small hotel made of wood, and several straw-roofed buildings which form a basic terminal.

A rough airstrip is marked on the grass, and the way a light aircraft lumbers into view and bounces with hard ricochet off the unkempt surface, landing here is something of a misery.

Farmers manoeuvre cattle towards boats moored on the wet dock. It is quite a chaotic scene, and no one seems to be in absolute control.

The flying boats sit calmly, like obedient sheepdog.

To the back of the airfield, the terrain becomes very hilly. From our viewpoint up here, Ms. Berry and Mervyn Dukes survey the busy scene of the docks below.

An African fellow struggles with a trailer of hay, as it tumbles from its precarious position and lays about his feet. He shouts at the driver, but his words are rendered indistinct by distance.

MS. BERRY

D'you know I have only met with  
him three times.

She considers her own statement as she looks out upon Lake Victoria.

DUKES

That is not much time.

MS. BERRY

I sometimes get the feeling that  
he does not want me to come here.

DUKES

Oh?

MS. BERRY

William . . .

She readjusts her focus on the blinding lake.

MS. BERRY (cont.)

He was always so preoccupied  
with duty.

His response is careful.

DUKES

To neglect one's duty is to pay  
a penalty upon oneself.

MS. BERRY

And what is it to neglect one's  
wife?

He looks at her.

DUKES

Your husband will be pleased to see you, Ms. Berry.

She smiles at the formality.

MS. BERRY

Walk with me.

Both get to their feet. Mervyn fumbles for a cigarette. He lights it and offers the pack to her. She shakes her head.

We follow as they walk. She holds onto his arm.

DUKES

I am interested to know what extraordinary feat your husband was able to achieve, in order to convince you to marry a person you may never see.

She smiles again.

MS. BERRY

I sometimes wonder that myself. Perhaps it was my Brother who was most able to present a valid proposal.

DUKES

Really?-

MS. BERRY

Hmm. He told me that no girl should be without a man to marry.

Dukes stares at her.

DUKES

And what of love?

MS. BERRY

A facet of fiction, bereft of significance, except in fairy stories and advertisements.

DUKES

And so what of romantic love?

MS. BERRY

Between a man and his woman?-

DUKES

Yes.

MS. BERRY

I believe that it is fickle,  
and would not last beyond the  
summertime. Best then to think  
more long term. Summers do not  
last forever.

He looks at the ground and has no immediate response.

DUKES

It is hot today . . .

She stares back as he looks up.

DUKES (cont.)

Here it is hot.

She does not reply. An indeterminate wild animal call is heard some distance off.

INT - EQUIPMENT STORE, SUDAN BASE - DAY

Dakarai uses a small torch to peer into the firing mechanism of a jammed Enfield rifle. The scope has been removed and the tension spring and two screws lie on the table in front on him. The room is dark.

William Berry enters. His anger has subsided and given way to softer melancholy. As he enters the room, Darius sees him but does not stop working.

MR. BERRY

My friend.

The other remains quiet. Berry takes a seat next to the table.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

Do you require any help?

The Egyptian does not take his eyes off the mechanism as he works it with a screwdriver.

DAKARAI

The trigger has seized again.  
Ahh . . . !

He fumbles as William reaches over for the weapon.

MR. BERRY

Here . . .

The British man takes the rifle and forces the handle end of the screwdriver hard against the firing pin. It snaps with a loud click.

Darius looks annoyed that he was not able to fix the Enfield himself, as Berry holds it up to the small sliver of daylight.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

With this stock and scope we  
create a resounding peace. A  
short, sharp crack of the air is  
a small price to pay for  
everlasting quiet.

DAKARAI

May I help you in return,  
Mr. Berry?

William continues to stare at the weapon.

MR. BERRY

Yes. You may.

He places it once more on the table.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

Our ever-thoughtful senior has  
decided that empathy should  
overcome belligerence.

DAKARAI

We are not to attack the  
stronghold?

MR. BERRY

We shall. It has just required some wider thinking. The Commander does not wish to place our aircraft at risk, so we shall charter our own plane in Juba.

The Egyptian man pauses before replying. He appears concerned, and slowly strokes his beard.

DAKARAI

There is much risk.

MR. BERRY

A necessary risk. It is a necessary endeavour.

Another pause. A thoughtful answer . . .

DAKARAI

Do you not wish to see your wife again?

Berry intensifies.

MR. BERRY

It should not be the end of my world if I should not. I shall continue to court my duty.

The other man eyes him carefully.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

And besides, what good is a mere, courteous and giving maid from this many thousands of miles?

Dakarai has no answer.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

I shall claim my prize when I am satisfied that my work here is finished.

EXT - UGANDA WATERFALL - DAY

A thirty-foot waterfall cascades down into a pool which collects at its base. Orange cloud above breaks the

afternoon sun, and rocks around the pool appear purple, as if in a surrealist watercolour painting.

The loud call of wild apes are heard in the distance, and are just audible over the falling column of clear water. It tumbles slowly like maple syrup and breaks with a gentle crash on the smooth rocks beneath its feet.

Dukes cradles his companion as one may hold a delicate child, and they both stand below the falling water. It is a long embrace and kiss. Neither are clothed. His journal lies at the water's edge.

DUKES (v.o.)

Such simple missions have before  
become derailed by simple  
perversion. I am in Uganda.

The water weighs heavy on both their shoulders, as if preventing either of them from escaping its torrent.

Neither wish to.

DUKES (v.o.)

The expectation upon me is to tell  
of wild apes and hot evenings. Of  
flat pieces of earth where men  
should build hotels and entice  
further visitors. My paymasters  
wish to hear of good reason, why  
pioneers should push boundaries and  
forge paths to unknown destinations.

The water is cold, and it batters their naked skin as they kiss.

DUKES (v.o.)

But unknown destinations conceal  
charms and pitfalls in equal  
measure. Summers do not last  
forever, but summer moments  
shall.

Grasses to either side are awash with cricket calls, and distant hills roll to the almost inaudible thunder of moving wild beast.

DUKES (v.o.)

I am in Uganda. And it is hot,  
here.

We fall away from view as the scorching sun relinquishes its gaze to lower clouds. On the near shore of the rock pool, a small frog sits still. Its black and bright yellow skin signify to us that it is highly poisonous.

EXT - JUBA MARKETPLACE - NIGHT

The town centre rocks to loud frivolity. It is evening, and many British soldiers head into Juba to experience it's raucous but ramshackle bars. Some soldiers stagger, and are already drunk.

INT - JUBA MARKETPLACE, BAR - NIGHT

William Berry, Darius Dakarai and three other soldiers sit to one side of a drinking hole. It is basic but lively. They play cards, and surround the contested pot of Sudanese nickels.

All talk loudly over crackling English popular music.

We focus on Darius, who considers his hand for an age. A SCOTTISH SOLDIER hurries him.

SCOTTISH SOLDIER

Come on Dakarai, by the time you  
have decided on a course, I shall  
be grossly intoxicated!

The other BRITISH MEDIC joins in.

BRITISH MEDIC

For God's sake, man. Just turn  
them over!

Berry remains quiet.

DAKARAI

I shall pick a time to unleash  
my fury.

The severity in his voice is a source of amusement to the younger soldiers.

BRITISH MEDIC

Yeah, well I shall pick this time  
to return to the bar! Where is the  
boy who looks like the rat?

He searches the bar for a table waiter. Darius stares at  
the cards.

BRITISH MEDIC (cont.)

Here!

The soldier shouts at a passing youngster holding a tray.  
The boy collects two empty glasses without a word, and  
goes to return to the bar.

DAKARAI

Yes . . .

He slowly places the hand down. It is a Full House.

SCOTTISH SOLDIER

For Christ sake . . . !

Darius smiles and collects the small pile of coins.

SCOTTISH SOLDIER (cont.)

Argh!

DAKARAI

There is much to gain from biding  
one's time.

BRITISH MEDIC

Then when are we to move?

BERRY

On Ledo?

BRITISH MEDIC

Yeah.

BERRY

Darius has found our man. We  
now have the aircraft.

All continue to drink.

SCOTTISH SOLDIER

Then it is almost time for it  
to rain?

BERRY

Yes.

He pauses as the serving boy returns with several drinks.  
Berry looks to one side as the youngster shuffles  
uncomfortably off.

BERRY (cont.)

Desert rains are long overdue.

The Egyptian is unsure.

DAKARAI

When do you plan on leaving?

BERRY

Two days. Two days at this  
time.

BRITISH MEDIC

You are sure this is the right  
thing to do?

BERRY

We are here to do a job. And it  
shall be more than good nature  
towards these thieves and witches  
that prevents this goal.

The serving boy has overheard the last part, and moves  
away as he catches William's cold stare.

BERRY (cont.)

Soon they shall find that stone  
houses shall not prevent flames  
from finding their jackal.

The music stops. The bar is still noisy.

BERRY (cont.)

It is time to light that fire.

INT - CORSAIR COCKPIT - MORNING

The flying boat helm is workmanlike and simple. Bare metal is finished in dark jade paint, and dials are arranged in a linear fashion. Big handles for throttle and choke jut from the centre console, and secondary engine primes lean down from above. A huge compass sits to one side, which is flat and resembles a sundial.

Alcock sits on the right. The co-pilot seat is occupied by JAMES WILSON, who is the Second Boat-master. He is much younger than his superior, and his movements across the panels are quick.

Alcock looks confused. He peers through the starboard window, as if looking for a familiar landmark.

Wilson meddles with the trim, and turns to look at the other.

WILSON

Captain, I fear that the Uganda sun has been playing a nasty trick upon my conscious.

Alcock immediately detects the unease in the younger man's voice.

ALCOCK

How so?

WILSON

I was assured that the ground crews had rectified the glitch which was becoming such an annoyance yesterday.

ALCOCK

The navigation?

WILSON.

Yes.

Concern grows. He fumbles for a map, and lays it across the centre console.

WILSON (cont.)

At last call-in, we should be seeing the corner of the Nile . . .

He points to the map.

WILSON (cont.)

Here . . .

ALCOCK

Then we are past the way-point?

WILSON

I don't think so, Captain.

Alcock looks below. The cruising height offers a good view of the ground, but it is a complex patchwork of tributaries and rivers.

ALCOCK

Discerning the Eastern corner is impossible.

WILSON

You see?

John peers out at the horizon.

ALCOCK

Raise them again, let's see if Khartoum can offer us any help-

WILSON

I can't get them.

His reply is one of shock.

ALCOCK

We are too far away?

WILSON

Yes

Panic grips.

The younger man slowly turns to address his Captain.

WILSON (cont. )

John . . .

Alcock stares at him. His eyelids flicker with doubt.

WILSON (cont.)

I do not know where we are.

The Boat-master turns back to assess their heading once more. Nothing to indicate where they might be. Nothing but God-damned rivers.

WILSON (cont.)

Captain?

ALCOCK

Bring her about, port side,  
one hundred degrees.

Wilson notices something below.

WILSON

Sir, is that the Judd?

Alcock stares at the expanse below. An arrow-straight river courses steep banks on both sides.

ALCOCK

I should say it is.

A pause. A horrible moment.

Realisation.

ALCOCK (cont.)

We are miles off course!

They look at each other. How could this have happened?

ALCOCK (cont.)

We don't have enough fuel to  
play guessing games. Cut the  
primes and make her ready.

WILSON

Yes, Captain.

ALCOCK

I fear our golden goose will  
have to settle where it may.

ALCOCK

Yes, Captain.

There is no hesitancy in the young man's voice, only unwavering trust.

EXT - CORSAIR - DAY

As our aircraft turns and slows, a view below shows the extent of the problem. Stretching as far as we can see, a vast blanket of green and brown undulates and spreads into a meaningless nothing. The horizon is flat and featureless, the landscape a dreary and dark expanse of hopeless, ambling void.

EXT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Young Henry Stam crouches next to a small fire. He has discarded his shirt, and has set about making a small cigarette out of bush grasses and chamomile flower.

The boy expertly crafts the smoke and lights it in the fire. He relaxes and draws on the makeshift cigarette.

Jafaar's heavy cry is heard off. The elephant's slightly panicked call draws Henry to his feet. He dashes to the animal which is nestled into bush to his right.

HENRY

Jafaar!

The elephant cries, and looks as if it may rear.

HENRY (cont.)

Hey, boy! Hey!

The youngster places his palm on the animal's flank in an effort to calm him.

HENRY (cont.)

What is it?

The elephant is wild-eyed, and turns this way and that.

Henry places his hand against his eyes to shield from the light. It is misty but still bright.

Jafaar's stressed song is matched to another more soulful cry. It is distant but becoming louder. The sound of the elephant and the other animal echo in chorus.

Finally the elephant becomes quiet.

The other sound solos. The boy realises what it is.

Aircraft engines!

As he turns to follow the sound, a vivid shadow encompasses the clearing, rendering everything in momentary shadow as it passes overhead.

It is our Corsair.

Henry staggers backwards with the incomprehensible image. It is as if an entire city was being suspended above him, seemingly hanging by invisible strings, dancing over his position like an ethereal puppet show.

Corsair passes the clearing. The boy is struggling for breath, desperately trying to process the images being presented to him.

The sound bounces off trees and rocks and surrounds the clearing with its wailing vocal. Leaves shake to the shuddering thump of propeller torque cutting tranquil air.

And then it is gone.

Henry excitedly mounts the elephant using a tree stump, and hastens to make the animal turn. His heart beats like a quickened metronome.

HENRY

Yar! Hey!

The animal eventually moves. The couple proceed up the slope to better advantage.

From up here, the boy looks out across the valley, and gentle plumes signal the line the aircraft has taken, as it flies straight across the plains.

INT - CORSAIR - DAY

A CABIN ASSISTANT, a young girl with curly-blond hair wakes Mr. Dukes from his slumber.

CABIN ASSISTANT

Sir . . .

Dukes stirs.

DUKES

Hmm?

CABIN ASSISTANT

We are to alight.

Mervyn wakes. He acknowledges the girl who moves on to the next row.

He turns to Veronica who is fast asleep. He looks at her. She seems to be smiling. He decides not to wake her. Dukes takes up his journal and writes.

DUKES (v.o.)

Sudan was not a part of my itinerary. If I should be asked upon my return to New York, I shall say that it was within reach, and it would be folly not to have explored each avenue.

He looks at Veronica. She is fast asleep.

DUKES (v.o.)

But I have no business there. I know the destination of Juba, and it is under the control of the British. There is nothing to be gained from visiting there.

He looks at her again.

DUKES (v.o.)

But it was a simple request. Fear of the unknown plays upon many a mind, and the world, even within our own borders, has become a nervous place.

Veronica dreams.

DUKES (v.o.)

I will not be able to stay there.  
(cont.)

DUKES (cont.)

Failing further twists, this road  
is close to an end.

Dukes peers out of the starboard porthole. Ground is fast approaching. He steadies himself and looks around the cabin. All is calm.

Outside, the engines howl under deceleration, and the plane eases before starting its landing run.

Moments later, the graceful splash indicates metal hull has met water, and the cabin thrums with vibration. Water splashes against the window. Dukes considers the moment. He has experienced the sensation several times now, and there is no cause for concern.

He closes his eyes once more.

A sickening, rib-shattering bang.

Veronica is thrown from sleep and falls sideways, where Mervyn catches her with both arms. She does not know what is going on. Mervyn is rigid with shock.

Possessions are falling from storage lockers and the plane is listing vividly to the right. The window next to the couple is filled with opaque spray. Violent bumps impact the hull below, and the fuselage groans to the painful cry of metal being stressed and ruptured.

Another smash. The plane lurches suddenly, its nose now pointing at the sky.

Are we still moving?

Ms. Berry looks up at Dukes with wild fear. Her head is cut and bleeding from the impact. Veronica whimpers and clings on to Mervyn with both hands. Passenger cries go up all around like stricken air-raid sirens. Panic fills the cabin.

Our plane has stopped. Fear is all around.

Dukes looks out of the starboard window, but it offers no view. Dark earth is packed against the glass, as if the plane has descended below the ground and has fallen straight into hell.

The Cabin Assistant has been thrown from her feet, and passengers struggle to reorientate themselves.

What in the hell could have happened?

Mervyn calms his breathing.

Cabin lighting has gone out.

Breathe. . . .

Looking to the left, we see waves splashing against the port windows, which are now partially submerged under dirty river water. Its rolling current playfully laps the left side of the aircraft.

Breathe.

EXT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Young Henry runs for all he is worth. He sprints along the rock edge toward our position and on past. Down at the bottom of the valley next to us, we get a good view of Corsair. She has entered the river straight and true, but just before the aircraft was able to stop, she looks to have impacted a large rock, and has been speared to the underside. Her nose now rests beached on the river bank, and the tail and left wing are partly submerged in the river.

EXT - CORSAIR CRASH SITE - DAY

It is later now, and clouds are lower.

Passengers are leaving the flying boat by a rear exit, which still leaves a trudge through foot-deep, dirty water to the shore. Ladies are assisted by gentlemen passengers, but there is no graceful means across the shallows.

A group of seven passengers have waded out and are stood on the grassy bank. They are joined by Alcock. His other crew members assist in getting the remaining passengers out.

Dukes and Ms. Berry emerge. He holds her hand as she grimaces, before splashing through the murky water. He

watches her step and not his own.

MS. BERRY

Well, Mr. Dukes, it would seem that you will not be without an African tale to imprint upon your diary!

Dukes smiles.

DUKES

It is just the tonic. The flight was at risk of becoming a bore!

She smiles. Both joke, but are clearly relieved.

They climb the steep bank by the shore just as the black Volvo truck belonging to Mr. Stam arrives.

The vehicle horn sounds twice. Some of the passengers applaud.

Mr. Stam and his wife exit the vehicle and immediately pick out the Boat Master.

MR. STAM

Good Lord! This is not something that befalls us every day!

ALCOCK

I should say!

Wilson steps up.

WILSON

A bloody rock! A wretched peril!

MR. STAM

I would say you were very lucky.

He gestures to the opposite bank. The river was just wide enough to accommodate Corsair's wingspan.

ALCOCK

There must be something in the air. We nearly bloody made it.

WILSON

We were lucky to make the shore.

Alcock looks at the poor Empire boat, her nose nestled uncomfortably by the steep incline of the shoreline.

The Cabin Assistant joins the conversation.

CABIN ASSISTANT

Captain, nobody is hurt. Not seriously.

MRS. STAM

We have medical supplies, and we have food and water. No need to panic!

The young crew member breathes a sigh.

CABIN ASSISTANT

Oh, thank you!

Wilson laughs. Terror has given way to the thrilling sensation of survival.

WILSON

Did you hear that, Captain? What better place could you have wished to alight?

Alcock smiles and fumbles for a cigarette.

Dukes and Ms. Berry reach the shore.

DUKES

Well now. Juba looks different to how I remembered it!

All laugh. Harry touches Veronica's shoulder to express his relief. She looks at the ground in merciful thanks.

MS. BERRY

Thank you.

MR. STAM

I am Harry Stam, and this is my dear wife, Helen.

MS. BERRY

I am Miss Berry, and this is Mervyn, my dear journalist.

Her answer is confused, a result of shock.

MR. STAM

We shall get you looked at,  
have no fear!

As Harry Stam tends to Veronica's forehead, Mervyn is distracted. He is reading bible passages from the side of Harry's truck.

MR. STAM (cont.)

Are you okay?

Dukes pats his leather journal against his leg.

DUKES

Yes. I am fine.

Veronica addresses Mervyn as Mr. Stam moves on to other passengers.

MS. BERRY

Do you think an African route  
worthwhile?

He is caught off guard by her wit. She keeps a straight face as she continues . . .

MS. BERRY (cont.)

Do you think these cannibals  
will have tonics?

INT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK, BELGIAN MISSION - DAY

Stam's black Volvo rattles up the leaf-strewn incline to their abode. In front of the mission, the vehicle stops, and Harry and his wife disembark. She proceeds immediately into their house.

Harry hurries to the rear of the truck and swings the heavy doors open. Passengers from the stricken aircraft jump out, one by one. All are shaken, but clearly relieved to have their feet back on solid earth.

MR. STAM

Welcome to my humble home!

A gentleman jumps out, and as he does so, nearly loses

his hat. Stam helps him. The man pats him on the arm to indicate his thanks.

Harry helps a lady exit after him.

MR. STAM (cont.)

You're all probably used to finer comforts and greater space, but you are now in the Belgian Congo!

Another lady takes Harry's hand and climbs out. One by one they exit, like hurricane-ravaged refugees.

The mood is upbeat.

MR. STAM (cont.)

The nearest Hotel is in Aba, which is some fifty miles beyond. And like me . . .

The last passenger exits.

MR. STAM (cont.)

You're probably in need of tea!

The gentleman exits, nods, and smiles gratefully.

Mr. Stam's two boys peer out of the door of the mission. They are excited, and obviously unaccustomed to seeing this number of people.

Mrs. Stam appears in the doorway too, and touches Henry's head.

MRS. STAM

We have drinking water here. And wash-water, if you do not mind waiting!

The passengers enter the home. Harry follows them and looks at his wife as he enters the house. She smiles at him. Her manner is one of patience and of long, mutual respect.

HOWARD

Father, can I go with you to collect the remaining passengers?

MR. STAM

Howard, please help your mother.  
I can manage on my own, and may  
need the further seat.

No argument.

HOWARD

Yes, Father.

Harry looks outside. The sky is darkening, and the cloud  
is becoming low. We may be in for a storm.

He exits the house and returns to the truck.

EXT - CORSAIR CRASH SITE - DAY

Veronica sits on the muddy shore at the lake's reach.  
Her eyes are motionless, and are transfixed on the water  
surface. It is a murky brown, like a Sudanese landslide,  
and the water forms ghostly shapes at the wind's behest.

She does not move.

Mervyn sits a little further down the bank. He leans  
against an awkward boulder, and writes in his diary.  
Pausing, he looks over to the young girl.

DUKES (v.o.)

We are safely out of the boat.  
How fortunate that we should have  
selected this place, this isolated  
white elephant amongst mere and  
hollow fields of blossom to make  
our unscheduled descent.

He pauses.

DUKES (v.o.)

It is a vacant and inhospitable  
place. A sterile and dark  
moonscape, seemingly from another  
world. Fortunate then, that the  
Belgian and his wife were to offer  
their utmost in terms of their  
hospitality, and we shall spend  
the night with them.

It is starting to rain. Dukes looks round and once more

assesses the surrounding wilderness.

DUKES (v.o.)

Why? Why would God choose to have fractured such an otherwise pearlescent and beautiful African marble? This is the deep and dark Congo, and my every instinct is instructing me to go at the first opportunity.

He looks at Ms. Berry, who remains still.

DUKES (v.o.)

But where I go from here is not my call to chance.

Veronica blinks, and gets slowly to her feet. The rain is becoming faster. Mervyn appears behind her, his jacket stretched above his head. He immediately offers the young woman cover, and takes her hand as they turn away from the lake.

There is no shelter, so they make back for the right wing of the aircraft.

The lights of Stam's truck peer through the slushy downpour. The horn sounds, and all the remaining passengers and flight crew jog towards the vehicle.

Harry Stam is already out and around the back of the car, gesturing for the people to enter and escape the storm.

We notice a bible slogan which runs along the front fender, which reads, 'Matthew 7:13-4 For wide is the gate and broad is the road'.

Dukes spots it too as he shields his face from the howling torrent.

DUKES (v.o.)

Enter through the narrow gate.

The handful of passengers in front of him enter the rear of the truck. Dukes follows. The doors are closed behind him.

DUKES (v.o.)

For wide is the gate and broad  
is the road that leads to  
destruction, and many enter  
through it.

The truck departs. Its purchase on the loose soil looks speculative, but it makes a getaway.

The rain is becoming very heavy now.

DUKES (v.o.)

But small is the gate and  
narrow is the road that leads  
to life.

The truck is gone. It is getting dark.

DUKES (v.o.)

And only a few find it.

INT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK, BELGIAN MISSION - NIGHT

All of Corsair's passengers and crew are crowded into the small sitting room area in the Stam's home. There is not much light, and the rain can be heard hitting the corrugated roof with vigour.

All are relaxed. The gentleman passengers have whisky glasses, which Harry Stam is determined to keep topped.

Veronica is amongst the group, and a lady some forty years her senior has a scarf wrapped across her shoulders. She smiles, and seems happy with the company of the others.

Dukes stands to one corner next to the kitchen, on his own. He watches Ms. Berry as she chats to the other passengers. He is statuesque in the dark enclave, and all the golden light cast from the different lamps is focussed on the table where the others sit.

Dukes also has a glass of whisky, from which he occasionally sips.

He is approached by Mrs. Stam, who enters from the kitchen.

MRS. STAM

Can I get you another drink  
from our limited cabinet?

Dukes smiles.

DUKES

No, it is fine. I have some  
Macallan, if any of your other  
guests wish to help themselves.

She looks at the bottle which stands on the shelf behind  
him.

MRS. STAM

This is a good choice.

Dukes reflects. There is a long pause and she goes to  
leave. He stops her.

DUKES

May I ask . . .

Mrs. Stam waits.

DUKES (cont.)

How long is the drive to Aba?

Harry interrupts.

MR. STAM

It is three hours. Depending on  
the lakes.

DUKES

Thank you.

He looks once more at Veronica as Mrs. Stam returns to  
the kitchen.

Stam watches Mervyn's eyes closely. His comment is  
considered.

MR. STAM

How quickly the sun can enter a  
cold room, and warm each article  
to our touch.

Dukes stares right at him.

DUKES

Do you require a drink?

Stam's smile is inscrutable. He looks into the kitchen at his wife.

MR. STAM

No. I already have one.

Golden light from a paraffin lamp breaches the dark shadows around Dukes' eyes. His expression is difficult to decipher.

His reply is slow.

DUKES

Then all is well.

MR. STAM

Are you a religious man,  
Mr. Dukes?

DUKES

No. Why? Are you going to set upon me with a righteous and persuasive whim, to which I offer no provocation, and to which you offer no reason or justification?

Stam smiles gently.

MR. STAM

No. I offer you something else.

The missionary reaches into his pocket.

MR. STAM (cont.)

You are not religious, but I can tell you have a strong spirit. Does that give you conviction in your beliefs?

DUKES

I believe in many things I do not understand, but I wish to experience each of them in turn.

He removes his hand and presents Mervyn with a tiny,

corked vial. It contains an opulent, royal-red substance.

MR. STAM

Then I would encourage you to think differently, and to find your faith elsewhere. Sometimes it helps to just abandon reason. Just follow the signs.

Dukes eyes the small bottle.

DUKES

What is this? Blood?

MR. STAM

Morelia Sequis.

Dukes holds it up to the light.

DUKES

This is the blood of a python?

Stam is shocked by his knowledge.

MR. STAM

Yes. Ha! The bushmen believe that is has the properties of an elixir.

DUKES

I do not wish to live forever.

MR. STAM

No . . .

Stam turns and looks at Veronica, who sits quietly listening to the man opposite as he describes his version of the crash landing.

MR. STAM (cont.)

But she wishes that today will last forever.

Dukes is rarely speechless. Stam grips his shoulder and shakes him from his temporary daze.

MR. STAM (cont.)

If you do not mind, I shall  
stick to your scotch!

Dukes stirs, as if his ghostly spirit has just re-entered his body. He pockets the vial and raises a glass of whisky.

They toast.

MR. STAM (cont.)

To life!

DUKES

To hospitality.

Both drink.

MR. STAM

I shall stay with all the  
passengers at the guest house  
at Aba.

DUKES

I'm sure there is no need.

MR. STAM

I know there is no need. But  
like yourself, I do not wish to  
do myself the disservice of not  
completing my journey.

Dukes raises his glass again.

EXT - CALSHOTT VILLAGE, ENGLAND - MORNING

It is a mild day across the South coast of England. This tiny village is lightly populated, and has but two remarkable features. One is a small castle ruin, which overlooks the single road leading through the village centre, and the other is the wet dock. It is a small engineering facility nestled at the waterside.

We pace down a short, wooden walkway and into the engineering works. The building is a basic, metal structure which resembles an aircraft hangar.

Inside, a young engineer, PETER NEWNHAM, is working on a

huge piece of sheet metal, carefully working rivets so that they sit flush. He stops for a moment, and pauses to take a sip of tea.

His rest is interrupted by the sound of a motorbike pulling up outside.

He walks to the exit of the building, where another man, GIUSEPPE LACOVITCH, dismounts the black motorcycle. He removes his helmet, and we see her wears a black biker jacket and red neckerchief. He is a dark-skinned, mixed-race Italian with rugged features.

LACOVITCH

Greetings, Peter!

Newnham drops the cloth and walks up to him. He slaps him on the back.

NEWNHAM

Mr. Lacovitch! What brings you to sleepy Calshott?

He hops off of the saddle and shakes his friend's hand.

LACOVITCH

Work has brought me to you!

NEWNHAM

Oh?

He sips the last of his tea.

LACOVITCH

Mr. Geddes was adamant that I see you.

NEWNHAM

If this is about the wing, we are almost on schedule-

LACOVITCH

It is concerning another matter. One of great importance.

NEWNHAM

Eric has sent you?

LACOVITCH

They have all sent me, Peter.

The other looks intrigued.

LACOVITCH (cont.)

We have an assignment together.

NEWNHAM

Of course, but I was told that this repair is to be treated as a priority-

LACOVITCH

This new trial is to supersede all.

NEWNHAM

It's not the bloody Rugby Works again, is it? I'm not driving to Warwickshire again-

LACOVITCH

No, my friend. This one shall require a flight.

NEWNHAM

Where?

The Italian pauses for a moment and breathes in the country air.

LACOVITCH

Africa.

The Englishman looks shocked.

NEWNHAM

Africa?

LACOVITCH

Yes. We have lost another bird. Seemingly to harsh winds.

NEWNHAM

If this is because of the engines I have told Eric-

LACOVITCH

This tribulation is altogether  
more of a human doing.

NEWNHAM

Where is the bird?

LACOVITCH

Belgian Congo.

NEWNHAM

For Christ's sake-

LACOVITCH

It hit a rock on landing.

NEWNHAM

Is it stuck?

LACOVITCH

Yes. And they need us to dig it  
out.

NEWNHAM

This is more than a human  
undertaking. How many crew?

LACOVITCH

Both.

Peter steps forward and blinks.

NEWNHAM

What?

LACOVITCH

We are to head the salvage team.  
There will be a crew, of course.

NEWNHAM

Son of a bitch!

LACOVITCH

We will recruit others when we  
arrive there.

NEWNHAM

They expect us to raise a  
(cont.)

NEWNHAM (cont.)  
mountain from a river using  
nothing but spit, sawdust and  
bushmen?

LACOVITCH  
Your skills will help us,  
Peter.

NEWNHAM  
We may need the luck of the  
voodoos too!

LACOVITCH  
We will have whatever tonics we need.

Newnham muses.

NEWNHAM  
When?

LACOVITCH  
Tomorrow. A plane is already on  
route to collect the passengers.

The Englishman sighs.

NEWNHAM  
So much for my bloody holiday.  
My wife will be livid-

LACOVITCH  
Jean is a patient woman.

NEWNHAM  
I fear my own patience will be  
our tether!

Lacovitch smiles.

LACOVITCH  
The workload will be shared . . .

The Italian looks at him. He knows he is unable to  
refuse.

LACOVITCH (cont.)  
But the credit will be your own.

Peter walks back into the workshop. We enter with him and pivot to the other side of the hangar, which we did not see before. Inside is a complete Empire boat. The metal structure barely contains its mass, and its nose points through the far, open end of the facility.

They both stare at the vast aircraft.

NEWNHAM

Inform Geddes that I will be at  
Croydon for the morning.

He turns to see Giuseppe bang in a rivet on the workbench. Perhaps Newnham's workmanship was not to his standard.

Slowly, he turns and readdresses the other.

LACOVITCH

He knows.

EXT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK - MORNING

Howard Stam sits under the shade of a fallen mangrove. He reads a book and is deep in concentration. As we become closer, we see that it is Mr. Dukes' journal that he is reading. The youngster clasps at its leather binding respectfully as he reads.

His brother Henry interrupts.

HENRY

Howard! Mother said to call  
you.

HOWARD

Quiet, Brother, can you not see  
I am reading?

Henry slides in on his knees and peers over to look at what his elder is so preoccupied with.

HENRY

What is it you read?

HOWARD

Shhh. I have borrowed it from  
one of the passengers.

Henry gulps.

HENRY

Howard! The man will be looking  
for this!

HOWARD

Quiet!

HENRY

What does it say?

Howard finally relaxes and becomes less edgy, as he  
realises his little brother is too intrigued to leave him  
in peace.

HOWARD

Here . . .

He begins to read out loud.

HOWARD (cont.)

It seems like such an age since we  
left the cool waters of Southampton.  
I am fortunate to have been blessed  
with this most interesting of travel  
companions. Ms. Berry too embarks  
on an adventure, and we take flight  
together. I am fascinated by this  
girl, and of how a journey of duty  
can be so borne out of tendency, and  
not want. It is a curious thing,  
but to hold out my arms and lean  
backwards against a stiff wind makes  
me wish to take flight once more-

DUKES (off)

Do you wish to contribute a  
passage?

Both boys turn in surprise. Howard looks most worried.  
He panics slightly, and does not know what to say.

Henry diffuses the situation without realising.

HENRY

Where you a pilot in England?

Dukes smiles.

DUKES

No. Although I have seemingly  
been a navigator at times.

Howard looks terrified as Mervyn moves towards him.

DUKES (cont.)

It is okay. You may read my  
journal.

Howard does not speak, and nervously hands the book back  
to him.

HOWARD

You say that we will be at war in  
a few months. Is that true?

DUKES

It is my personal belief that we  
shall. Others would like to think  
not, but I am a realist.

HOWARD

My Father?

Dukes looks at the concerned boy.

HOWARD (cont.)

Will he have to go to fight?

DUKES

I should say that he will not.  
There is plenty to keep him  
occupied here, and you will be out  
of harms way.

Young Howard kneels at the man's feet.

HOWARD

Sir, I am sorry that I took your  
book.

DUKES

Do not fret.

Howard rises.

DUKES (cont..)

The need to discover is what sets us apart.

EXT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK, BELGIAN MISSION - DAY

Ms. Berry walks with another passenger, an older lady. She is MRS. MILLER, who is an active 60-year-old. Her pink shawl and pink cardigan are a bright intrusion upon the Congo's muted browns and greens.

She holds Veronica's arm as they walk from the mission.

MRS. MILLER

The most unexpected thing I have ever experienced in my life!

MS. BERRY

Yes. It was very frightening. The sound of the hull woke me from my sleep, and then I do not know what happened. I guess we were very lucky.

MRS. MILLER

Yes!

MS. BERRY

Are you travelling alone?

MRS. MILLER

Yes, I am. I am travelling to Juba. My son is an engineer. We will leave there together soon after, and move further East. I am worried about what may happen this year, so best to keep out of harm's way.

MS. BERRY

Yes . . .

MRS. MILLER

The gentleman you are travelling with . . .

She turns to look at the young girl.

MRS. MILLER (cont.)

Is he your husband?

MS. BERRY

No. He is a companion I have met on the plane. My husband is stationed in the Sudan.

MRS. MILLER

Is he a soldier?

MS. BERRY

He is a medic. With the Colonial Medical Services.

MRS. MILLER

Do they also expect him to fight?

She looks at the ground.

MS. BERRY

Yes. We must all fight. William is a duteous man, and a brave fighter.

MRS. MILLER

Is he a duteous husband?

A pause.

MS. BERRY

Things are very difficult at the moment. I do not see him often, and if war does break out, I am not sure what will happen. So difficult to plan any kind of things at the moment.

MRS. MILLER

Then you must be most thrilled to be getting to the Sudan! We are being collected this evening and will spend the night in the town, oh, what is it called?

Veronica smiles at the older lady.

MS. BERRY

Aba. It is not far from here.

MRS. MILLER

Yes, Aba! We have but one more day to wait. Then you shall be on your way to see your darling brave soldier!

EXT - SUDANI SETTLEMENT, JABAL LEDO - NIGHT

It is dark.

Desert falls away below our view, and it looks like a river of oil under the moon's blue illumination. We are atop a mountain.

A collection of simple, stone dwellings nestle into the foothills. This small hamlet is familiar. It is the one seen before from the air.

A young Sudani boy leads a ragged-eared donkey up the trail towards the settlement. The animal is saddled with leather satchels. It plods on, one aching foot after another, until they arrive at the outskirts of the village.

The boy stops. He looks out across the endless expanse of desert.

A high-pitched whine is heard some distance off. As it becomes louder, the pitch lowers, as if it is becoming closer, yet slower.

The boy's father leaves one of the buildings and walks up to him. He helps him remove a satchel from the animal, and strokes the boy's head. He too becomes aware of the noise.

Looking up, they see the simple frame of an aircraft silhouetted against the moon's ghostly glow. It is a bi-plane.

Panic fills the Sudani's manner. He gestures for the boy to hurry into the family home. At the door, his wife peers out. Other villagers are now aware of the din, and look up at the aircraft.

It is close now.

Fear grips. A woman screams.

The aircraft is diving.

The scene transforms from simplistic, daily determination to chaotic terror.

The plane is almost upon them. It glides in at little over stall speed and seems to hover like a bird of prey above the village.

Animals run loose in the panic, and women escort children to the far side of the settlement, where a steep wall of rock seems to offer some cover.

Rain falls from above as the aircraft passes over, as if a sprinkler from the heavens had suddenly been turned on.

The confused villagers shelter from the rainstorm.

The man pauses. He wipes a raindrop from his cheek and licks his finger. It is a moment of sickening revelation.

Aviation fuel . . .

The aircraft sweeps in a long arc and readies for another pass over the village. Screams of terror go up.

As the plane plunges through the blackness, our eyes hurt to a blinding illumination. A Spanish rescue flare is cast from the co-pilot seat, and it falls slowly to the floor, like a firefly caught in autumn winds.

As the spark hits the fuel-soaked dirt, flames take, and they flash across the village.

Screams.

A vast wall of fire erupts all around, and it dances a deadly path from rooftop to rooftop. The far grip of the flames encircles two of the homes. Peering through the yellow hell, we see the shadow of an old woman holding her crying granddaughter. They are trapped.

Above the painful lick of the fire's reach, the underbelly of the British aircraft is kissed gently by this white-hot death. The engine crescendos in pitch and the bi-plane passes harmlessly out of the reach of the flames.

It is gone. The village burns.

The boy's donkey yelps as the remains of its stricken carcass ignite, and the flames take its life.

The boy has escaped down the mountainside. His mother and father have not. The man's body lies at the foot of the fires reach, in the doorway to the family home. It is motionless.

We move away from the painful blaze and look back out to the desert. The sick crackle of the ravage is still heard behind us as we look away.

Over the unyielding blackness of night sky, a man's voice is heard.

DUKES (v.o.)

Dark is this night. Of phantoms  
and echoes and cries of lost  
souls, of wilting screams across  
deep domains. Impending troubles  
are told by announcers, and war is  
now no longer probable, but  
inevitable.

The fire can no longer be heard.

DUKES (v.o.)

The world waits with grim  
determination. The fight comes  
quickly. Flames transport fear  
to other destinations, and  
concepts of mere travel for  
travels sake will now facilitate  
death in long-lost fields.

A pause.

DUKES (v.o.)

Dark is this night.

INT - BRITISH BASE IN SUDAN, COMMAND - MORNING

We stare at the Commanding Officer's desk. A Colonial general service medal lands on the veneer. We look up to see the Commander, who stares through us for an eternity. In front of him is William Berry.

BERRY

Sir, I accept your recommendation,  
and I wish to assist the process.

The Officer leans back and ponders. His mood is one of sadness.

COMMANDING OFFICER

William, please sit down.

He does so. His superior breathes a heavy sigh.

COMMANDING OFFICER (cont.)

I am in full support of your efforts to protect our services and our mission, I truly am. You serve with distinction and unwavering effort.

Berry's eyes flicker with intensity.

COMMANDING OFFICER (cont.)

I have to respect the wishes of our High Command. Cairo cannot justify what has happened. I'm to prepare a full report this afternoon, but I am left with no choice.

Berry looks at the floor momentarily.

MR. BERRY

I understand, Sir.

COMMANDING OFFICER

In my eyes, the attack was not justified, and the Sudani governors will see it the same way. I do not believe there will be charges pressed. By way of circumstance, I shall argue that the offensive has increased our capability within the region.

MR. BERRY

Yes, Sir. I believe it has.

An awkward pause.

COMMANDING OFFICER  
But we know now, that the Ledo  
was harbouring no militia.

His mood darkens.

COMMANDING OFFICER (cont.)  
Only God-damn women and goats!

He pushes an arterial route map from the desk, and it  
lands with an uncomfortable flutter.

COMMANDING OFFICER (cont. )  
I have asked that you be  
collected from Faradje.

MR. BERRY  
I am to be reposted?

Silence.

COMMANDING OFFICER  
No. You are to return to England.  
The Command will then take it on.

Berry's lip quakes in sadness, but he has no argument.

He steps back and reluctantly concedes.

MR. BERRY  
Yes, Sir.

He turns and leaves.

The Commander twists in his chair and looks at a letter  
he has pinned to his operations board. We cannot see its  
detail.

He shakes his head. William Berry is gone.

INT - ABA GUEST HOUSE - MORNING

Dukes sleeps alone. The stray sliver of light through  
the blind falls upon his face and he wakes. He looks  
round at the room. Slowly Mervyn gets to his feet and  
paces over to the window.

Outside, there is nothing much, save for this simple,

wooden hotel, a hitching post, and a small river which runs on past.

Outside, the Corsair passengers are assembling in front of the guest house.

Dukes blinks in the harsh light. Gathering his few items, he puts on a shirt and exits the room.

He walks down partly-rotten steps and into the reception area, which contains nothing but a black African behind a basic desk.

He steps outside, where he is immediately greeted by James Wilson, the Second Boat Master.

WILSON

Good morning, Sir. How did you sleep?

DUKES

Alone, and uncomfortably.

Wilson laughs. His good humour is infectious, but it does not pass to Dukes.

WILSON

Where is your lady friend?

DUKES

I do not know. Perhaps she still sleeps.

WILSON

You should wake her. Our paymasters have arranged for a second boat. The Centurion will be here soon.

Mervyn returns to the guest house. Its archaic wooden construction confounds, for the simple fact that it is still standing after ten years.

Mervyn goes back upstairs. Veronica's room is opposite his own. He taps on the door.

DUKES

Veronica . . .

No answer.

DUKES (cont.)

Ms. Berry . . . ?

Still no reply.

Reluctantly, he tries the handle. The door has no lock. He carefully moves inside.

Veronica's room is identical to his own. The girl sleeps. Mervyn carefully stands over her and whispers.

DUKES (cont.)

Veronica, we must be leaving.

She is awake but incomprehensible. She murmurs but does not fully respond.

Dukes is concerned. Eventually she turns over.

On her right temple, a dark clot has formed around the injury she sustained during the crash landing. It is a foreboding and painful sore of a pale purple, which suggests it is infected.

DUKES (cont.)

My God! What has become of this wound?

Her eyes open and she coughs an indistinct vowel.

He attempts to lift her shoulders. It is a difficult operation.

DUKES (cont.)

Veronica, you must wake . . .

She slurs a word and eventually sits upright. She stretches out and feels for his cheek. He stares back compassionately.

Another passenger enters the hotel room. It is Mrs. Miller.

MRS. MILLER

Shouldn't we be going?

Dukes does not reply.

MRS. MILLER (cont.)

Oh, my dear, what is wrong?

He strokes her face.

DUKES

Her injury has become infected.

MRS. MILLER

She does not look well at all.  
I shall find someone.

She exits.

Dukes watches the girl as she rolls uncomfortably in her bed. His insistence is grave.

DUKES

We must get you to Faradje.

MS. BERRY

Far- Faradje. Are we?

She is not fully aware.

Dukes grabs at her forcefully and swings her up in both arms. He carries her out of the room.

EXT - ABA GUEST HOUSE - MORNING

Ms. Berry is lying on a blanket in the back of Harry Stam's truck. Mr. Stam goes to close the doors.

MS. BERRY

No! No! Where?-

Dukes appears.

MS. BERRY (cont.)

Where are you taking me-

DUKES

It is okay, Veronica.

He takes her hand.

MS. BERRY

Your wound has become infected.  
Mr. Stam will take us to Faradje,  
where we can get you some decent  
help.

Stam moves forward.

MR. STAM

Here . . .

He produces what looks like a dark blue piece of soap and  
wipes it on her forehead. She complains at the pain.

Mervyn is not happy at all.

DUKES

What is this?

MR. STAM

This is Osun. It is a  
disinfectant.

Dukes eases.

DUKES

It seems you have tonics for many  
ailments, Mr. Stam.

He half-smiles as he attends to her.

MR. STAM

Out here, Mr. Dukes, you quickly  
find that you have no choice but  
to believe in other remedies.

He looks at Harry earnestly.

DUKES

Thank you.

He means it. Stam closes the van doors. Both hasten to  
the cabin.

MR. STAM

You realise you will not make  
your flight?

He is preoccupied, and his answer is distant.

DUKES

Yes. I know.

The engine catches and they depart.

Mrs. Miller remains with the other passengers, and looks on with huge concern.

INT - HARRY'S TRUCK - DAY

The Volvo bounces along the rough road between Aba and Faradje. The rear compartment is inaccessible from the cabin, so we cannot see Ms. Berry.

DUKES

How long should this take?

MR. STAM

Oh, do not worry, she will be fine.

His comforting manner only serves to infuriate Mervyn somewhat. Stam notices.

MR. STAM (cont. )

It is our nearest town and only option. I say, less than forty miles.

Dukes calms, and finally smiles.

DUKES

Could I ask that you do not spare the whip?

Stam smiles too.

MR. STAM

Do not panic, Mr Dukes, this old girl has not let me down yet!

The truck bounds and ricochets off the terrible road surface. The engine clatter is horrendous.

MR. STAM (cont.)

Your concern goes some way beyond  
(cont.)

MR. STAM (cont.)  
what one may normally lavish upon  
an unknown travel companion.

Dukes suddenly looks uncomfortable.

DUKES  
She is a charge to my care.

MR. STAM  
Then she will be grateful that  
you have gone beyond what would be  
humanly expected.

Mervyn looks down into the foot-well.

DUKES  
She is my responsibility.

MR. STAM  
For sure, until she is returned  
to her husband.

His reply is slow.

DUKES  
Yes. Until then.

EXT - JUBA, SUDAN - DAY

We are on the fringe of the British Army site near to Juba. A man paces toward us. It is William Berry. The image is of a similar moment to when we were first introduced to him, except now he wears a black shirt and shorts instead of a uniform, and he carries no weapon.

He makes his way from the base entrance checkpoint to the town beyond. He carries a small hiker backpack and nothing more.

He enters a Juba street, which runs straight from the town fringe to the centre. It is low-lying, dusty and pathetic.

A short way into the alley, he pauses as he encounters two local men who are arguing.

Both are clearly incensed, and push each other as they

contest in loud Sudanese Arabic. One holds out a small number of coins, and points at it repeatedly as he shouts.

Berry stops and eyes them suspiciously.

A stray dog barks. It is a Labrador cross. It looks identical to the van driver's dog back in Southampton, except that its fur is tattered and patchy, and it has only one good eye. It confronts William and challenges his presence upon the neighbourhood. He looks down at it with contempt, and once more at the two Sudani men.

He shakes his head in disdain, and carries on.

William reaches the town centre and takes a seat at the foot of the central monument. He blinks in the uncomfortable light. He takes a moment to look at his watch, and sighs impatiently when he realises how long he has to wait for collection.

To one side, he sees two British soldiers. They laugh and joke with a local stall owner, and one of the British men playfully rubs the head of the Sudani's son. The boy looks up at the soldier and smiles. The second British man offers his father some of his bread, and he accepts it thankfully.

Berry scowls. He sits under the monument, in dark shadow.

INT - FARADJE MEDICAL PRACTICE - DAY

Veronica Berry lies on a simple bed. She slowly opens one bleary eye. The room details are obscured by incomprehension and half-sleep. Slowly she opens the other. Clarity returns to our vision.

The young girl is in one of only two rooms of a small medical unit in the town of Faradje. The window is half-obscured by a blind, but the sun coming through is somehow comforting.

In our confusion, the angular corners of the window frame mellow into the round port-holes as we have seen in Corsair. We imagine clouds to be passing softly by, and the enduring hum of strong engines cascading through the window frame into the room.

Veronica smiles.

She moves her head slowly and tries to lift herself, but she is prevented from doing so by Dukes, who surprises her and shakes her from the hallucination.

DUKES

Lay still.

Her words are slow and confused.

MS. BERY

Have I been asleep? Are we at fifteen thousand feet?

He pats her pillow and adjusts her posture.

DUKES

You have been further that that.

MS. BERRY

Where did-? Are we in Sudan?

He is slow to answer.

DUKES

No. This is Faradje. We are still in the Congo.

She blinks with confusion and worry.

MS. BERRY

What? What are . . . ?

DUKES

You were taken ill, Veronica. Mr. Stam and I had to bring you to this hospital. Do not panic, the Doctor has helped you, and you should be fit to recover, post-haste.

MS. BERRY

But, William! My husband, is he . . . ?

DUKES

Please, relax.

MS. BERRY

I am duty-bound to visit him.  
I must-

DUKES

You need to recover. Tomorrow,  
Mr. Stam will arrange for you to  
go by car. It will be a very long  
journey by road, but we are not  
sure how long it will take before  
the Airline sends another boat  
here.

She is still dazed.

DUKES (cont.)

Please, relax.

Dukes turns to leave, but her words stop him at the doorway.

MS. BERRY

Do not go!

She is breathless. He blinks.

MS. BERRY (cont.)

Do not leave my side.

Mervyn is lost for words, so simply nods once, before exiting the room.

She stares at the doorway as he goes.

Dukes exits into the corridor, where a Black African man sits in leather wing-back chair. He sits almost horizontal, as his left leg is bandaged and suspended close to waist height on a floral footstool.

He is Eze Bah, the local man seen previously.

He watches Dukes enter the corridor.

EZE BAH

Jamba, boet.

Mervyn looks at him, and looks down at his leg with some unease.

DUKES

Hello, friend. A lion did this to you?

The African shifts his weight in the chair.

EZE BAH

Pardus . . . Pardus.

Dukes does not understand. The black man becomes frustrated.

DUKES

You speak Malawi? I am sorry, friend, I do not understand it.

The African turns away and stares at the wall.

Mervyn pauses, and takes something from his trouser pocket. It is the tiny vial of blood given to him by Harry Stam. He offers it to the injured man.

Eze is surprised, but as Dukes reaches out, he clasps his hands around the Englishman's, and clears his throat.

EZE BAH

No, my friend. You keep this.

His English is broken, but the words can be distinguished.

Dukes is surprised, and slowly withdraws his offering.

EZE BAH (cont.)

You will need this.

Mervyn grips his shoulder in thanks. His words are quiet.

DUKES

Thank you.

Dukes decides to leave him in peace, and exits the front door to the surgery.

Outside, Stam is waiting on the front steps.

MR. STAM

I trust she is okay?

DUKES

The doctor said she should recover very shortly.

MR. STAM

How about you?

He looks at the journal by his side.

DUKES

I am fine. Thank you.

He seems quick to change subjects.

DUKES (cont.)

And what of you? Should you not be getting back to the mission? They said that rains are coming, and they shall be heavy. Will that not make your journey home more dangerous?

Stam smiles.

MR. STAM

Perhaps. But then, I guess nobody wants to live forever!

Dukes does not immediately reply to the joke.

DUKES

Thank you, once more.

MR. STAM

Remember what I told you. There will be a market held two days from now-

DUKES

Yes, by the route to Nagero, by the number twenty-five sign next to the roadside.

MR. STAM

Yes! You've got it! Just follow  
(cont.)

MR. STAM (cont.)

the signs. You will be able to buy  
your road passage to Juba there.  
It will cost you next to nothing.

They shake hands.

DUKES

Thank you, Harry.

MR. STAM

Goodbye now!

Stam waves behind him as he leaves, and heads back to his truck.

We watch Mervyn as we hear the vehicle clatter into life over to our right.

It leaves.

MS. BERRY (off)

Does that give me only two more  
days?

Dukes turns to see Veronica standing at the entrance to the house. Her shirt is half-unbuttoned and her hair is wild.

DUKES

Yes. Except for the journey by  
road, which will take quite some  
time.

MS. BERRY

Then if I am leaving shortly, I  
wish to see everything that is  
around here before I go.

DUKES

Ms. Berry, there is not much  
around here at all.

She steps down the small steps to the little porch and stands at his side.

MS. BERRY

Then we will just have to walk  
(cont.)

MS. BERRY (cont.)  
a little further.

EXT - TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON - EVENING

George Woods Humphrey sits on a bench in a mood of melancholy. He feeds pigeons around his feet with breadcrumbs he has in a tiny bag.

A shadow moves over him. He is unaware of the presence of another. It is his DRIVER.

DRIVER (off)  
Sir, I am sorry to hasten you,  
but must we not be leaving?

An age passes. He eventually replies, but does not look up.

HUMPHREY  
Do you know what they shall  
say?

DRIVER (off)  
No, Sir.

HUMPHREY  
They shall drag us in there, and  
we shall limp, like wounded pet  
animals, pending punishment for  
misdeed.

Still we do not see the driver.

HUMPHREY (cont.)  
And then they shall ask, how did  
you come by an aircraft that was  
so unable to cling to the sky?

DRIVER (off)  
Forgive me for speaking my mind,  
Sir, but my Sister has purchased a  
ticket for passage on an Empire  
Boat.

HUMPHREY  
Do not tell me. She is part of  
(cont.)

HUMPHREY (cont.)  
the passenger group who we must  
now return?

DRIVER (off)  
Yes, Sir.

Humphrey breathes a gentle sigh.

HUMPHREY  
Then I imagine you will be  
joining the queue, and shouting  
loudly that Eric and I should step  
down.

Still we do not see him.

DRIVER (off)  
No, Sir. She has been looking  
forward to the journey so much, I  
cannot remember a time when she  
has been happier. This came  
about through your invention.

HUMPHREY  
We have invented nothing but rods  
for our own backs.

DRIVER (off)  
Perhaps, but you have also  
invented a gateway to a domain  
that others, like my sister,  
would never have experienced.

Finally George smiles.

HUMPHREY  
Perhaps.

A moment passes.

DRIVER (off)  
Sir . . . The board are  
waiting.

EXT - MOUNTAINSIDE, FARADJE - NIGHT

Veronica and Mervyn walk. The route they have chosen is

a flint-strewn patch which leads from bushy precipice to stony mountain base.

The night sky is as clear as spring water, and a blanket of stars spatter the vast panorama above. The bushy verges to either side are alive with noise, and crickets chatter as the couple walk amongst them.

At the bottom, a ridge has opened up along the mountain like a seismic chasm. The large cave, seemingly rendered of stalactite and meandering sharp teeth, splits the starlight to their touch and spill it as amethyst fallout upon the cold rocks below our feet.

MS. BERRY

I love this place.

He looks at her.

DUKES

It is not very warm here. Are you sure you wish to stay out this late?

MS. BERRY

I am not cold.

She squeezes his arm. Both stop walking.

MS. BERRY (cont.)

I am tired, though.

He places a gentle finger on the cut on her forehead. It looks much improved.

DUKES

You surprise me that you have been able to walk this long without feeling a need to lie down.

She smiles, then looks him straight in the eye. She places both arms around his neck and cradles him.

MS. BERRY

But I do feel like that . . . !

She holds Mervyn gently at the waist with her left hand, and kisses his cheek.

MS. BERRY (cont.)

Do you still have the key?

Mervyn pulls the hotel key from his pocket. Holding it up to the light, it looks new, and shimmers in the moonlight.

The number reads, '21'.

DUKES

Yes. I have it. Shall we return to the hotel?

MS. BERRY

I do not wish to return to anywhere that I know of.

He pauses to move a few stray hairs from her cheek.

DUKES

What of Sudan?

She stares back with glassy eyes, which seem bigger under starlight than by searing sun.

Her eventual reply is breathless and sincere.

MS. BERRY

I do not wish to leave here. I do not wish to leave you.

He looks back without any real estimate to a response.

DUKES

What of your husband?

She turns away to the side, and paces a few feet away.

MR. BERRY

I do feel terrible. Do not ever think that I do not.

He waits for her to turn back round.

DUKES

I, too, am sorry for my part in distracting you from your course.

Eventually she turns, and addresses him with severity.

MS. BERRY

Do not ever mistake my sorrow for  
regret!

Her eyes seem to grow bigger and pulse.

MS. BERRY

My heart is full of regret . . .  
But I am not sorry . . .

She pauses as the sentiment in her own words reverberates  
around her lasting perception.

Mervyn is lost for a reply. His effort is poor . . .

DUKES

I guess things are to happen as  
they may-

She interrupts, and slaps him hard across the right  
cheek.

MS. BERRY

A knave! A slobbering horse!

He withdraws at the attack, and looks at her deeply.

They both kiss. He holds her for an age before releasing  
her.

She breathes a slow breath and both collect themselves.

MS. BERRY (cont.)

I am warm now.

DUKES

But it will become more cold.

MS. BERRY

Then we shall leave.

DUKES

For the hotel?

MS. BERRY

Yes. For the hotel.

As they depart, we see that the embrace has taken place  
beneath a staggering rock face of cascading emerald

stone. It stretches vertically over thirty feet high into the sky, just as the Uganda waterfall did.

INT - THE VOYAGER HOTEL, FARADJE - MORNING

The following morning sun is bright.

We stare at a bare wooden desk in the entrance foyer of the guest house. On the tabletop, there is a brass bell which sits in the exact centre of the desk, and to the right is a small frog.

Its skin is black, and poisonous yellow, just like the one seen in Uganda.

It leaps off the desk in fright as the shadow of a stranger looms over. A man's hand reaches for the bell and rings it loudly once, and then a second time.

It is William Berry. He waits impatiently for attention.

The African HOTELIER emerges from the side office.

HOTELIER

Yes?

Berry is emotionless.

MR. BERRY

I wish to procure a room. For two nights.

HOTELIER

You are in luck. I have but one room left.

MR. BERRY

Very good. Shall I pay now?

HOTELIER

You may pay when you leave. When you have concluded your business.

He hands him the room key.

The key fob is rusty, and states, '22'.

MR. BERRY

Thank you.

HOTELIER

Can I help with your bag?

MR. BERRY

No. The bag and its contents I shall keep with me.

HOTELIER

Very well, Sir. Can I take a name for my register?

MR. BERRY

Mr. Berry. My name is Berry.

The hotel owner places a notebook onto the desk and flicks to the current page.

Confusion mounts.

HOTELIER

Sir, it seems a room has been registered to your good self.

Berry is stunned.

MR. BERRY

That is impossible, for I have only arrived here this morning.

He scans the columns.

HOTELIER

No, a Miss Berry has already checked in. I did not check them in myself, it was my assistant-

MR. BERRY

Them?

Consternation gives way to blind anger. He tries to compose himself.

MR. BERRY (cont.)

When?

HOTELIER

Just last eve. For three nights.  
You are both to depart on the same  
day. I presume she will be leaving  
with you?

William looks at the guest register. It does indeed  
state her title as 'Miss'.

MR. BERRY

Yes. That is correct. What room  
number does my sister occupy?

HOTELIER

Room 21. Just opposite your own.  
Top of the stairs, just follow the  
signs.

Berry has already started to gravitate towards the  
stairwell. His words are distant, like a heavy  
thunderstorm.

MR. BERRY

Thank you.

He moves towards the stairs and proceeds up.

The staircase up to the landing is dark, and Berry's face  
is clouded in shadow. At the top, an oil lamp burns  
bright. His expression does not change.

Atop the stairs, he stands between his room and  
Veronica's. Pausing, he looks at both doors. He moves  
to room 21 and knocks three times. There is no reply.

INT - ROOM 21, THE VOYAGER HOTEL, FARADJE - MORNING

Three knocks. Mervyn Dukes lies on the bed. Veronica  
lies across him, her arm stretched out around his neck.  
She is asleep. They lie with their heads pressed  
together. He opens an eye. Again the knock is heard.  
Berry sits up and moves her carefully to one side. She  
does not wake.

Slowly, Dukes walks to the door. The tap is heard for a  
third time.

Dukes opens the door. The latch clicks.

Darkness.

Silence.

DUKES (v.o.)

Bright is this morning. Unknown destinations conceal charms and pitfalls in equal measure. Summers do not last forever, but summer moments shall. She sleeps. Perhaps she dreams of new domains. Difficult to know what is hidden in these places. But to neglect one's duty is to pay a penalty upon oneself.

The door swings open.

Berry stands still in the doorway. Dukes looks at him and does not speak.

Veronica sleeps. William sees her lying in the bed. She is partially clothed, and the wind blows gently through the window and kisses strands of her hair across her forehead.

His expression does not change.

He carries a .45 military pistol.

Dukes looks at the weapon. Berry levels it to the other's chest and fires a single shot. The crack of the mechanism fills the silent room. Dukes stumbles with the impact.

Veronica wakes in a sudden move. Gripping the pillow behind her back, she sits rigid and looks upon her husband, who does not move. Smoke trails gently cascade from the pistol breach. Berry's features remain, like a cold statue. Duke's eyes stare deeply into his. A wash falls over them as consciousness departs him.

Slowly he falls.

She shakes and cries.

Berry turns and leaves without a word.

Veronica leaps off of the bed and places both arms around

Mervyn's waist. She falls to the floor with him as he releases a painful last breath.

She looks down. His shirt absorbs the blood from his chest wound in a perfectly circular blotch.

She cries, and holds him tight. She kisses his forehead as he slumps awkwardly in the corner of the room. His hand rests on her knee.

He does not move.

She whimpers and looks round the room as she rocks back and forth with him. Life slowly drains from his face.

She looks up at a ceiling fan which turns under the soft, morning air. It is a ghostly image. Slowly, the fan gathers pace, faster and faster, until it cuts the air with howling force. It continues to quicken, until it spins like the turning blades of our Corsair. It hums with delicate, reassuring persistence, and the voice of the flying boat is heard.

Then it slows. The engine hum fades from the room, as the ceiling fan turns at an increasingly slower pace. Softness returns. Now it barely turns.

Finally the fan stops.

She looks back at him as tears run down her cheeks. She does not let go.

Dukes' head flicks back with muscle spasm, and the top of his head strikes her chin. She starts with surprise.

Stunned, she places one hand over the chest wound and feels the soft dampness of blood.

What is this?

She reels with shock. Carefully she reaches for his breast pocket. Her hands react to the touch of something soft and substantial. She pulls the object from his pocket.

It is Mervyn's journal.

The leather-bound diary is soaked with blood and tiny shards of glass. A perfect hole penetrates its cover and

most of the pages. Contained within is a perfect .45 calibre round.

She pulls back in absolute shock.

Quickly, she rips the top two buttons from his shirt and exposes his skin to the still air. She fumbles down his shirt and around his left chest.

She feels something.

Withdrawing her hand, her fingers grip a small object.

She holds it up to the light. It is a tiny cork.

Dukes' lifeless body coughs a desperate release. She looks on in terror and confusion. The colour has drained from her visage.

Dukes falls from his position in her lap, but she grabs with both arms and steadies him. Her expression is one of echoing stillness.

Mervyn breathes. It is a slight and difficult breath. Her breathing is tight and unreal too.

Slowly, he opens both eyes. She looks on in disbelief.

Dukes reaches painfully down to his chest. His movements are limited and his breathing painful.

He touches his chest. Without taking her eyes off of his, she places the journal to his touch. He feels for it, and clasps his fingers around it. The leather is soft and warm.

Dukes looks up at her and stretches to place a hand on her cheek. She grips him with all her might and coughs a cry of happiness. Dukes is alive.

She kisses his forehead again and again and again as he sighs. Veronica props him up next to her and takes the journal from his hand.

Reaching behind her for the bedside table, she feels for his silver pen. Taking the implement, she turns through the blood-soaked journal and locates the final entry. Pausing, she removes the pistol round from the book and places it on the bedside unit. It is perfectly round,

and has no deformation.

Mervyn gasps, and tries to look at her.

She looks down at him reassuringly, and begins to write on the last bloody page.

Closely we watch her shakily scrawl some letters across the page. His blinking eyes struggle to make out the words. He cannot see properly, but she smiles at him with nervous excitement.

She writes, 'Here it is hot. And now I understand.'

Mervyn fumbles for the pages.

She angles the book down so that he may see. She laughs again, a nervy, disbelieving whimper, and grips him tighter.

Dukes' eyes finally settle on her handwriting. He sees.

He coughs desperately and reaches up, placing both hands around her neck.

She laughs again and grips him firmly.

Slowly, we fall away from the couple, and withdraw out of the window. Silence returns to the room, and the only sound we hear is of distant and indistinct wild animal calls.

It is hot out.

EXT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK - DAY

A snake of articulated, flat-bed vehicles make their way up a steep incline. This scene is familiar, and we remember it from where we first saw young Henry Stam and his elephant.

Now the leaves part to a heavier, mechanical thunder. We count five lorries in total. One carries a complete engine unit for the flying boat, and the others carry vast sheets of folded metal.

A man waves them on from the verge. He is Giuseppe Iacovitch.

As they progress, we see the passenger in the lead truck is Peter Newnham.

This is the salvage team from England. The impression is of a vast and intricate operation.

DUKES (v.o.)

Two weeks have passed since the aircraft has fallen.

The trucks round a corner and continue up the slope. They are lumbering, noisy beast.

DUKES (v.o.)

The salvage team are here now. They have many helpers, but this is a serious undertaking.

We look out now upon the Corsair crash site.

A team of black locals have been conscripted to lift the aircraft, by hand, from the murky river waters. They form a line and pull with a rope. All are skinny and topless, but working as a team, they get individual pieces of the aircraft raised slowly from the lake.

DUKES (v.o.)

Our time must also come. There will soon be a point where we must also be raised from our squalid seat and our noses be pointed skywards once again.

EXT - GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK, BELGIAN MISSION - DAY

Dukes sits out front of the Stam home. Veronica lies across him and he holds her gently. Both have interlocked hands and are smiling.

Dukes writes in his journal. She simply watches him, with a look of contentment..

DUKES (v.o.)

That time is not today. We wait for the rainy season to return to the Congo. But today, here, in this place, it is hot.

She looks up at him and strokes his face.

DUKES (v.o.)

Veronica has her regrets. But I am aware that they become more diminished with each passing day. I myself have only one regret, and it is that I have reached the last page of my journal.

Mervyn readjusts his posture and continues to write.

DUKES (v.o.)

This blood-drenched and tattered compatriot to which I turn upon regardless of where I am, or what current flight it is that I pursue. My time to write in this book is also now limited.

Harry Stam moves up behind them and offers a glass of orange juice to Veronica. Both her and Mervyn smile at the Belgian, who pats Dukes on the shoulder.

He silently mouths the words, 'thank you.'

DUKES (v.o.)

We all travel on borrowed time.

He and Veronica look out with contentment into the lush and bright Congo, and both seem as if they have found their place.

All around is calm serenity.

Animals are once more heard in the distance.

Slowly, he returns to his writing.

We notice he is near the bottom of the last page.

DUKES (v.o.)

So I shall end with this note of thanks to you, my friend. A soliloquy to your protection and your confidence. You reassure me, as this fragile and beautiful world hangs by a sliver, above the jaws of destruction.

She kisses his cheek.

DUKES (v.o.)  
Summers do not last forever.

He holds her as he completes the paragraph.

DUKES (v.o.)  
But summer moments shall.

FADE OUT