

MACHINE GUN PREACHER

screenplay

by

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based on the life of Sam Childers

FINAL SHOOTING DRAFT

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This is true...

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - (2003)

The night is stillborn.

Without sound or movement and nothing is in definition. All we see are degrees of blackness in this unlit world. The vague impressions of an African village in the void... a ragged line of *tukuls* (straw huts)... a bicycle propped against a mud wall... a soccer ball in the dirt...

INT. TUKUL - NIGHT

And we find a Sudanese family asleep on reed mats. A mother, father and their two boys. The younger boy we'll come to know as "WILLIAM" (9). His older brother "CHRISTOPHER" (12) curled next to him.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

And slowly the blackness begins to shift... an otherworldly light seeping in from someplace far off... shadows contorting in a ghostly orange flicker... images emerging... the silhouettes of men coming into this village carrying flaming torches.

INT. TUKUL - NIGHT

The family still sound asleep, oblivious to the torch glow coming from outside, and suddenly --

SCREAMING! -- GUNSHOTS!

The family bolts awake, moving to their feet as the door to their *tukul* SLAMS open -- THREE soldiers from the *Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)* coming in carrying AK47's -- shouting in Arabic -- "*Get up! Get up!*" -- the FATHER stepping forward -- holding up his hands -- "*Don't shoot!*" --

KAK! KAK! KAK!

And he's gunned down in cold blood. The soldiers grab the mother and boys and begin to drag them out of the *tukul* -- but WILLIAM breaks free -- scrambles deeper into the room --

THE SOLDIER going after him -- WILLIAM darting behind a stack of storage boxes knocking them to the ground -- frantically burrowing into the corner -- trying to get away but it's useless -- THE SOLDIER grabs his feet and begins to pull him out -- WILLIAM KICKING WILDLY -- digging his nails into the dirt -- and as he's dragged out of the corner he reaches out... inadvertently grabs a FADED PHOTOGRAPH which has fallen on the ground...

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

CHAOS! -- PANDEMONIUM! -- the black sky ablaze in apocalyptic fire --

families yanked out of their burning *tukuls* by LRA rebels -- the adult males of this village shot dead or bludgeoned to death -- the women and children forced into the center of the village -- huddled together and weeping --

-- and now we see WILLIAM hauled out -- his captor shouting to another soldier -- pointing to WILLIAM'S mother and she's pulled from the group and forced onto her knees...

... and WILLIAM is brought in front of her -- his captor saying something in Arabic as he hands him a club -- "*Kill her!*" -- WILLIAM shaking his head 'no' -- tossing the club in the dirt and --

CRACKKK! -- WILLIAM is hit with the butt of a rifle -- goes down -- blood streaming down his face as he's pulled back up to his feet -- crying -- shaking with fear...

... and then he sees his mother staring up at him... and despite the hell unfolding around them we see a moment here between mother and son... something calm and reassuring in the way she's looking at him now... her eyes full of love... and pity... for her child in this terrible moment... and before we see how this ends we --

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS

FOR A LONG BEAT -- AND THEN WE BLEED UP WHITE LETTERS ON THE BLACK SCREEN THAT READ --

MACHINEGUN PREACHER

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

INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - RURAL PENNSYLVANIA - DAY - (AUGUST/1998)

And we see SAM CHILDERS coming down a corridor toward us, dressed in jailhouse orange and flanked by a guard. He's stocky, 32 years old, with a biker's handlebar moustache. On the surface he appears good-looking... even handsome if the light is right... but his face is tricky... always changing... behind the quick smile, around his dark eyes, in the taut muscles of his neck we see *violence*.

INT. PRISON RECEIVING AND RELEASING - DAY

We see a CLERK handing Sam a prison issue tub full of his personal affects. He takes out his clothes, digs out a leather wallet, a watch, some silver rings and a lighter.

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

SAM

Ya'll go fuck yourself now, k?

EXT. PRISON - DAY

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

Sam (dressed in civilian clothes now) pushes out a door and she sees him, straightens her hair, an uneasy smile.

LYNN

Hey baby.

EXT SIDE OF ROAD/INT. LYNN'S CAR - DAY

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

SAM

Gimme a smoke.

LYNN

Don't got any.

SAM

What, you quit?

(Lynn nods)

Shit, that ain't gonna last.

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - DAY

The Vega pulls up to a beat-to-shit single-wide and Sam and Lynn get out. We see a homemade sign hanging outside the trailer that reads, "*Welcome Home Daddy!*"

And now Sam's daughter PAIGE (6) bursts out of the trailer and down the steps... Followed by Sam's mother, DAISY, mid 60's, comes out of the trailer.

PAIGE

DADDY!

And she jumps into his arms.

SAM

Hey *bug*...

PAIGE

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

SAM

Yep, real nice.

Lynn enters the trailer, Paige follows.

SAM (CONT'D)
How'ya doin, Mom?

DAISY
Welcome home, Sam.

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

LYNN
(to Paige)
You excited, get some juice, help me set
the table.

Sam and Daisy enter.

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

LYNN (CONT'D)
Hope you're staying for supper.

DAISY
Well, I didn't know if...

SAM
(to Lynn)
What time you gotta work?

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

LYNN
I ain't on tonight.

SAM
What?

DAISY
(changing the subject)
You know we could boil up that corn we
got in there...

SAM
Friday night you ain't on? Hell is that?

He walks toward the fridge.

LYNN
Paige, get that chair.

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

LYNN
I ain't dancin no more, Sam.

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

LYNN (CONT'D)
Quit a couple weeks ago. Got a job over
at Freemont.

SAM
You tellin me the truth or is this a
joke?

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

SAM
Good money? You stupid, woman? You quit
strippin to pack fucking mushrooms at
Freemont?

DAISY
Sam...

SAM
Mom, keep yer mouth shut.

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

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

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

DAISY
(to Paige)
You ok? Let's ride our bikes outside.

LYNN
No, Sam...

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

LYNN
It ain't right.

SAM

Fuck you talkin about?

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

LYNN

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

SAM

(laughing)

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

LYNN

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

SAM

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

LYNN

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

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

SAM

Gitcha hands off me!

Sam exits.

LYNN

(to herself)

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

EXT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

Sam straddles the bike and kicks it to life. He PEELS OUT, kicking up gravel as he blasts past Paige and Daisy.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam riding down the road.

INT. CROSSROADS BAR - NIGHT

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

DONNIE
Crazyhorse! There he is...

They embrace, old friends.

DONNIE (CONT'D)
 Figured you'd be rollin out round now.
 How you doin, buddy?

SAM
 I'm doin.

DONNIE
 (to one of the girls)
 Get us a coupla shots and buds.
 (Sam sits)
 Don't look too worse for the wear.

SAM
 I'm alright.

DONNIE
 Heard yer old lady ain't at the Bunny Hop
 no more.

SAM
 Bitch found Jesus.

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

SAM
 Ain't so sure bout that.

Donnie laughs, slaps him on the shoulder...

DONNIE
 You wanna taste?

Sam smiles that wicked smile and we go --

INT. BACK HALLWAY - THE CROSSROADS BAR - NIGHT

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

INT. BATHROOM - THE CROSSROADS BAR - NIGHT

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

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - MORNING - WEEKS LATER - (DECEMBER/1998)

Snow piled up on the windowsills and it's cold as shit outside. Sam passed out on the couch and this guy looks like hell.

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

INT. BATHROOM - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - MORNING

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

INT. CHURCH - JOHNSTOWN, PA. - DAY

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

EXT. DOPE HOUSE STREET/INT. DONNIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Sam and Donnie in this car, parked in front of broken down clapboard houses. Donnie pointing through the windshield...

DONNIE

Right there. With the green light.

EXT. PORCH - DOPE HOUSE - NIGHT

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

DONNIE

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

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

SHAVED HEAD

Fuck are you?

DONNIE

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

SHAVED HEAD

I don't know you.

DONNIE

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

SHAVED HEAD

Who the fuck is Bobby?

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

BOOOM!

INT. DOPE HOUSE - SAME

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

DONNIE

Don't fuckin move!

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

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

INT. STAIRWAY- DOPE HOUSE - SAME

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

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DOPE HOUSE - SAME

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

BOOOM! -- *BOOOM!*

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

INT. BEDROOM - DOPE HOUSE - SAME

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

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

SHAVED HEAD

PLEASE, MAN -- DON'T --

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

SHAVED HEAD (CONT'D)

-- PLEASE! --

DONNIE (O.S.)

SAM!

Donnie coming into the room --

SHAVED HEAD

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

SAM

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

SHAVED HEAD

(indicating a closet)

In there...

Sam KICKS him toward the closet --

SAME

Hurry the fuck up.

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

SAM

Cash!

SHAVED HEAD grabs a stack of hundreds, hands it to Sam and --
CRACKKK! -- he SLAMS the butt of the Mossberg into SHAVED HEAD'S
face and he hits the ground on his back -- Sam standing over him --
shoves the barrel of the shotgun into his mouth --

DONNIE

C'mon, let's go!

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

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Fuck are you doin?!

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

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Sam...

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

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Sam!

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

DONNIE (CONT'D)

We need to get the fuck outta here!

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/INT. DONNIE'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

MUSIC LOUD AS IT GOES! -- SCREAMING! -- Sam and Donnie pumped and celebrating after the robbery. Sam in the passenger seat, already cooking coke in a bent spoon...

SAM

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

DONNIE

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

Sam juices a needle and spikes Donnie's arm. Donnie feeling the rush... pressing on the gas and *howling* like a wild man... both of them wired out of their heads... **BLASTING** down this dark, country road... and then they see...

A HITCHHIKER

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

SAM

Look at this sorry fucker...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

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

INT. DONNIE'S CAR - NIGHT

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

SAM

Cold enough for ya out there, boy?

DRIFTER

Yeah.

DONNIE

Where you goin, man?

DRIFTER

Dunshore.

SAM

That's up there past Muncy, right?

DRIFTER

Yeah.

DONNIE
We can take you far as McClure.

DRIFTER
Take me to Dunshore.

Sam looking back --

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

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

DONNIE
What the fuck?!

DRIFTER
Keep drivin! Dunshore or I'll cut his
fuckin throat.

SAM
Get that fuckin blade off him...

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

DONNIE
Sam!

DRIFTER
SLOW THE FUCK DOWN!

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

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

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

He stabs him six times in the gut. The drifter HOWLING in pain.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

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

INT. BEDROOM - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

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

INT. HALLWAY AND BATHROOM - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

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

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

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

SAM

Help me.

EXT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

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

PAIGE

He comin or ain't he?

LYNN

I don't know.

INT. BEDROOM - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - DAY

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

Lynn steps into the doorway...

VOICE (O.S.)

Honey? You ready?

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

SAM

I don't got no good shoes, Lynn.

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

LYNN

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

INT. BAPTISM CHURCH - JOHNSTOWN, PA. - DAY

Packed with Sunday families listening to Pastor Krause at the pulpit. Behind him we see a BAPTISMAL TANK filled with water. And now we see Sam, Lynn, Paige, and Daisy sitting near the back. Sam looks uncomfortable, on edge.

PASTOR KRAUSE

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

CONGREGATION

Praise be to God!

PASTOR KRAUSE

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

CONGREGATION

Amen!

PASTOR KRAUSE

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

A few hands shoot up --

PASTOR KRAUSE (CONT'D)

Stand up! Receive Jesus Christ as your light and saviour...

Three or four people moving to their feet, making their way up to the altar. Lynn turns to Sam, their eyes meet. He looks hesitant, unsure. She gives him a reserved little smile, nods her head slightly as if saying *"you can do this"...*

And in her look he finds strength, gets up, slowly makes his way to...

FRONT ALTAR

And now we see Sam on his knees in the baptismal tank. The water almost up to his waist. Pastor Krause kneeling behind him.

PASTOR KRAUSE (CONT'D)

Receive Jesus as your Lord and Saviour...
in the name of the father and of the son
and of the Holy Ghost...

... and he leans Sam back, cradling his head as he submerges him in the water completely... and when Sam comes back up the church breaks into ROWDY HALLELUJAHS!... and we see Lynn... tears in her eyes...

clapping in the back row... and an organist and singer begin to sing "Amazing Grace" taking us to...

OMITTED

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY - (JUNE/1999)

Months later and the snow has thawed... it's summer... and we see Sam with other CONSTRUCTION WORKERS finishing their day, packing up their tools, cleaning up. We notice that his gaunt cheeks have filled out and he looks healthier.

And now a CONTRACTOR comes up to Sam, hands him a check.

CONTRACTOR
Thanks for your help, Sam.

SAM
You need me to stay on, I can.

CONTRACTOR
We're movin inside next week.

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

CONTRACTOR
Sorry, Sam, I gotta cut the crew. Just
ain't enough work.

EXT. STEPS - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

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

SAM
She asleep?

LYNN
Think so, in our bed... she's funny.

BEAT.

SAM
Job's done.

LYNN
I thought that was goin through August?

Sam shakes his head, and they're quiet... both of them sitting here on these steps... the burden of this life catching up to them in this moment.

INT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY

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

WOMAN

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

SAM

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

WOMAN

But you got no education, Mr. Childers.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY

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

MECHANIC

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

SAM

I gotta sell it today.

MECHANIC

Give you four hundred for it.

SAM

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

MECHANIC

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

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

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

SAM

(reading)

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

PAIGE

What's uttered?

SAM

Like spoke up, made a sound.

PAIGE
Okay, keep goin.

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

PAIGE
They got rid all them rats?

SAM
Yep.

PAIGE
How come you sold yer Harley?

SAM
Cause it's what I had to do.

Off her look...

SAM (CONT'D)
We're gonna be ok, bug, don't you worry.

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

EXT. THE CROSSROADS BAR PARKING LOT/INT. LYNN'S CAR - DAY

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

INT. THE CROSSROADS BAR - DAY

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

DONNIE
Well, well, well, wondered when I was gonna see you again, ole buddy. How you doin?

Sam sits.

SAM
I'm doin.

DONNIE
Heard you was followin the Lord now.

SAM

Lil' bit.

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

DONNIE

Jackie, gimme a mash and bud...

(to Sam)

You want somethin?

Sam shakes his head.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

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

SAM

God was lookin out for us both, I suppose.

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

DONNIE

Well then, here's to him.

(drinks)

Didn't hear you pull up.

SAM

Got Lynn's car.

DONNIE

She broke down on ya?

SAM

Sold her.

DONNIE

Ahhh, shit, man. Shoulda come to yer ole buddy first.

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

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

It's late and we see Lynn sitting at the kitchen table alone. Sam has not come home and she is clearly worried. And then we hear a car pulling up outside, door opening and closing, and Sam coming into the trailer.

SAM

Sorry I'm late.

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

And she moves to him without saying a word... lifts up his arm and unbuttons the cuff of his shirt... slowly pushing up his shirtsleeve to discover a NEEDLE PRICK in his arm...

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

SAM (CONT'D)
Gave blood over in Pitt.

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

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

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

LYNN
Somethin will come through. I promise.

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

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - NIGHT

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

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

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

LYNN
Two touched down near Harrisberg.

EXT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

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

INT. CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Sam coming back into the trailer fast --

SAM
Come on! Let's go...

Lynn following him --

INT. HALLWAY - CHILDERS MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

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

SAM

Get Paige, grab a blanket.

-- Lynn darting into a bedroom, scooping Paige out of her bed.

INT. BACK BEDROOM - MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Sam coming in, moving to a metal gun locker in the corner of the room, pulling out a SHOTGUN.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

THE WIND -- SLAMMING the trailer now -- Lynn and Paige -- terrified -- watching as Sam moves to the center of the room, points the barrel of the shotgun toward the floor and --

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Blows four gaping holes in the floorboards, then starts to kick through the wood with his boot --

LYNN

(yelling, over the wind)

What are you doing?!

He kicks a hole in the planks, turns to Lynn and Paige --

SAM

GET IN!

Paige crawling through the opening... into a shallow trench underneath the trailer... Lynn squeezing in behind her... Sam staying outside... no room for him... the trailer starting to buck VIOLENTLY in the tempest... thin walls contorting around him...

... and Paige starts to cry -- terrified -- Sam laying down on the floor next to the opening, close enough so she can hear his voice...

SAM (CONT'D)

Bug, you hear me?! -- Bug?!

PAIGE

Yeah.

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

SAM

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

And we hear her tiny little voice say...

PAIGE

Whale.

SAM

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

PAIGE

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

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

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - DAY

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

CONTRACTOR

Sam.

SAM

Billy.

CONTRACTOR

Tried to ring ya but your phones down.

SAM

Yep.

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

CONTRACTOR

Looks like ya made it through pretty good.

SAM

We're alright.

CONTRACTOR

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

(beat)

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

SAM

I'm interested...

Sam, seizing an opportunity here.

SAM (CONT'D)

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

CONTRACTOR

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

SAM

You got a deal.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - DAY

A SHOT of Lynn carefully applying a vinyl application on the side of a new (but used) truck that reads, "*Childers Construction Company*"

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDER'S HOUSE - DAY - (JULY/2000)

C.U. ON Lynn's closed eyes -- smiling --

LYNN

What are you doin, Sam Childers?

Months later and we're with Lynn and Paige, their eyes shut, as Sam leads them both by the hand...

PAIGE

I wanna peek.

SAM

Keep em closed.

Sam finally stops them.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ok. Open em up.

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

PAIGE

Where are we?

SAM

We're home, little girl.

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

PAIGE

That's ours?

SAM
Sure is. Go check it out.

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

LYNN
It's beautiful.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

The first night in their new home and we see a few unpacked moving boxes here.

INT. PAIGE'S ROOM - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Paige sound asleep on a small bed upstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - CHILDERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Lynn in the kitchen organizing the cabinets. And Sam enters carrying a box, sets it on the counter.

SAM
That's everything.

LYNN
You get what's in the trunk?

SAM
Yep.

Lynn looking up, seeing how dirty Sam is from the move...

LYNN
Lord, you're filthy, Sam Childers.

Lynn tossing him a kitchen towel. Sam, smiling mischievously...

SAM
Who you callin filthy, woman?

LYNN
You.

SAM
You dirtier than I am.

LYNN
No I ain't.

SAM
Yes you are. I seen it. C'mon, girl, gimme a little shake...

Sam winking at her and playfully *snapping* a kitchen towel at her butt... Lynn giggling and scooting away...

LYNN
I ain't doin that no more.

SAM
... just a little somethin for yer old man, c'mon...

And he snaps her butt again but she grabs the towel and snaps him back...

SAM (CONT'D)
Owww!

LYNN
You gimme a little shake...

She *snaps* him again and he feels the sting...

SAM
C'mon, Lynn...

She *snaps* him again but he grabs her and they fall into each other against the counter... laughing... and he kisses her... playful at first and then it becomes more passionate... and just as it starts to lead somewhere we go...

INT. CHURCH - DAY - (AUGUST/2002)

Two years later and we're watching a congregation finish a Sunday hymn. Sam, Lynn, Daisy, and Paige (10) in the crowd listening to Pastor Krause.

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

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

RELLING
Thank you Pastor Krause, and thank you brothers and sisters for inviting me into this house of the Lord.
(beat)
I'm here today to talk to you about your Christian brothers and sisters, families just like yours, a half a world away that desperately need your help...

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

INT. FOYER - CHURCH - DAY

Parishioners slowly filing out of the church after service. Lynn, Paige, and a few other women chatting by the entrance.

And now Lynn looks over her shoulder and sees Sam talking with Paul Relling off to the side, just the two of them in a corner, deep in discussion.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

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

LYNN

Paige, go get some more beans.

Paige heads to the kitchen.

LYNN (CONT'D)

What are you thinking?

SAM

Thinking about Africa.

Paige comes back in carrying the beans.

PAIGE

They have tigers over there?

SAM

(jokingly)

They eat people!

LYNN

What about Africa?

SAM

Just thinkin bout that fella today.

PAIGE

He talked funny.

LYNN

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

SAM

Was thinkin maybe I'd go over there. Help em out fer a few weeks.

DAISY

Africa?

PAIGE

To see the tigers.

SAM

He was talkin about puttin box beam roofs on school houses over there.

LYNN

What about finishing that job in Boswell?

SAM

I'll only be gone a few weeks. Be back before you know it.

EXT. MISSION CONSTRUCTION SITE - OUTSIDE KAMPALA - DAY

Two weeks later and we're in the rural countryside outside Kampala, Uganda. Sam on the roof of a bombed out school building with other white VOLUNTEERS, working.

Sam looks below to see a dozen black men dressed in the ragged fatigues of the *Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA)*. Each is carrying an AK 47 and standing guard at various points around this compound. The lead soldier is a man named DENG. ANGLE three others we'll come to know as "NINETEEN", "MARCO" and "A.J."

EXT. MISSION CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

It's later and we see Deng sitting underneath an awning by himself, working on his machine gun. Sam approaches...

SAM

You Ugandan Army or what?

DENG

SPLA.

SAM

What's that?

DENG

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

SAM

Name's Sam Childers.

DENG

I am Deng.

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

SAM
 (re: Deng's weapon)
 Givin ya problems?

DENG
 Yes. A bit.

SAM
 Double-feed?

DENG
 Sometimes.

SAM
 Lemme have a look...

Deng hesitates, then hands his AK over to Sam who pops the mag out and studies it...

SAM (CONT'D)
 Yer mag is tight. See here...
 (indicating)
 The loads are feedin right to the barrel
 face. That's yer problem...

Sam pulls out a knife and begins to work on the base plate of the mag as he explains...

SAM (CONT'D)
 ... you need this plate to ramp into the
 chamber... that way yer brass won't get
 stuck...
 (finishing)
 ... there ya go, should be better...

And Sam hands the weapon back.

DENG
 Thank you.

SAM
 No problem.

DENG
 Are you military?

SAM
 No, not me. I ain't the military type.
 Ain't so good with bein told what to do.

DENG
 When did you learn about weapons?

Sam considers the question for a moment... then simply says...

SAM
Long time ago. Different life.

INT. DORM - MISSION - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

SAM
I was thinkin bout goin up north.

DAN
You crazy? There's a civil war going on up there.

SAM
I know.

EXT. MISSION CONSTRUCTION SITE - OUTSIDE KAMPALA - DAY

It's mid-day, blazing hot, and we see Sam approaching Deng.

SAM
Hey, Deng, you wanna Coke?

Sam offers him a can and he takes it.

DENG
Thank you.

SAM
Got a question for ya.

DENG
Yes?

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

DENG
The others are going into Kampala.

SAM

That ain't my speed no more. I wanna see some country.

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

DENG

You want to see?

EXT. DIRT ROAD - RURAL UGANDA - DAY

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

INT. BUS - DRIVING - RURAL UGANDA - SAME

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

SAM

They always drive this fast?

DENG

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

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

SAM

You got kids, Deng?

DENG

No. I have no children.

SAM

Where you from?

DENG

A little village called *Aweil*. Many hours from here.

SAM

That's where your family is?

And Deng simply says...

DENG

My family was killed by LRA.

(beat)

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

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

EXT. UNYAMA REFUGEE CAMP, UGANDA - DAY

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

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

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

DENG

The Muslim North has tried to kill the Christian South for 30 years. Two million have lost their lives...

Deng sweeping his hand, indicating the mass of refugees.

DENG (CONT'D)

... these people have been driven from their villages, however these camps are not much better...

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

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

DENG

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

And another SPLA soldier comes up to Deng --

SPLA SOLDIER 1

(Arabic)

Are you from Kitgum?

DENG

(Arabic)

Yes.

SPLA SOLDIER 1

(Arabic)

Someone wants to speak with you.

Deng turns to Sam...

DENG

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

SAM

Course, do what you gotta do.

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

AGNETE

Excuse me. You. Can you help please?

Sam moving to her --

AGNETE (CONT'D)

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

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

AGNETE (CONT'D)

One, two, three...

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

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

SAM

What happened to her face?

AGNETE

The rebels cut off her lips because she argued. These are Kony's orders.

SAM

Who's Kony?

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

AGNETE

Who are you with?

SAM

I'm with Deng over there.

AGNETE

What organization are you with?

SAM

Working with a Christian group down South. Just up here takin a look around, seein a bit of the country.

AGNETE

This isn't a tourist destination, this is a war zone. You stay in this area, you'll be killed.

(beat)

Thank you for your help.

And she walks off.

EXT. NIMULE, SUDAN - DUSK

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

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

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

DENG

Some say Joseph Kony is a wizard. A shapeshifter. He calls himself a Christian...

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

DENG (CONT'D)

... but I say he is Satan, who devours his own people.

SAM

Kony is the leader of the LRA?

DENG

He is the one we have been fighting for years. But there is very little we can do. Our weapons are old, and our boots are full of holes. We have been forgotten by the rest of the world.

And now Deng turns to Sam...

DENG (CONT'D)

Why are you here?

SAM

S'cuse me?

DENG

What are you looking for in this place?

SAM

Ain't lookin for nuthin.

Deng staring at him, skeptical...

DENG

And then you will get your picture and go back to your life and all this will just be a story you tell your friends.

INT/EXT. HOTEL - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

Sam has no response... and Deng lights his cigarette... and suddenly we hear voices... through the open window... children's voices... Sam peering into the darkness but seeing nothing... only empty streets... and then one-by-one... out of the darkness like apparitions... we see children coming up the street carrying bedrolls... some of them singing spiritual hymns as they walk... laughing as children do... at first just a dozen or so... and then more... fifty... a hundred...

EXT. HOTEL ROOM BALCONY - NUMILE, SUDAN - NIGHT

Deng steps onto the balcony next to Sam.

DENG

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

SAM

Why?

DENG

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

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

DENG (CONT'D)

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

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

DENG (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

INT. STAIRWAY - HOTEL - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

Sam coming down these steps. Deng following.

DENG
(calling after)
Sam...

EXT. HOTEL - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

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

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

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

SAM (CONT'D)
Come on...

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

DENG
What are you doing?

SAM
They ain't sleepin out here. Tell em
they're comin inside.
(to children on the ground)
Ya'll get up... let's go...

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

DENG
Sam, there are too many...

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

DENG (CONT'D)
... you can't help them all.

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

SAM
I can help these here.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIMULE, SUDAN - NIGHT

-- and a DOZEN CHILDREN are ushered into this small room. Sam pushing their cots against a wall so there's more space. Deng speaking to the children --

DENG

(Arabic)

Settle down... it's alright... you can sleep here till morning...

-- and they begin to settle onto the floor... and now we notice a particular BOY in this group... maybe 8 years old... wearing bright GREEN SHORTS... and we watch as he and his SISTER move to a corner of the room and unroll their mats...

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

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NUMILE, SUDAN - DAY

Sam's closed eyes... sound asleep...

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

DENG

The LRA attacked a village last night.

Sam looking up to him...

DENG (CONT'D)

You said you wanted to see.

Sam sits up, looks around the hotel room and we see that it's empty... the children vanished... only a small, handmade toy on the ground which has been left behind.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DRIVING - RURAL SUDAN - DAY

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

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

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

EXT. VILLAGE - YEI, SUDAN - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

... for a moment...

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

BOOOOM!

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

EXT. DIRT ROAD - YEI, SUDAN - DAY

... Sam, Deng, and the others arriving at the source of the explosion. And we see GREEN SHORTS laying on the side of the road... cut in half by a land mine... his dead eyes wide open with surprise...

... and Sam drops to his knees... lifting what's left of the boy into his arms and rocking him back and forth... and we watch as a terrible sadness overtakes him... something happening here... a fierce and overwhelming burden dropping into this man as he holds this dead boy... in the dirt... in the middle of this savage world...

... and as Sam puts it, his "*life changed forever*" in this moment... and we see him looking up to the heavens...

tears streaming down his face... saying something we can't hear, but it's a promise... to God...

To save the children of Sudan.

INT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - DAY

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

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

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

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

Paige brushing her teeth at the sink. Sam watching her from the doorway...

PAIGE

You see any tigers over there?

SAM

Naw, didn't see no tigers.

PAIGE

But they do have them over in Africa.

SAM

So I hear, but not where I was.

PAIGE

Sure am glad you're home.

SAM

Me too, *bug*.

PAIGE

I'm thinkin of a *plane*...

SAM

It's late, you better get to bed...

And he grabs her and carries her into the bedroom, plops her onto the bed...

PAIGE

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

Sam giving in, playing their little game as she gets under the covers...

SAM

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

PAIGE

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

SAM

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

PAIGE

Gotcha!

SAM

Ok, you got me.

PAIGE

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

Sam bending over, kissing her forehead...

SAM

Sweet dreams, bug.

INT. HALLWAY - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

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

LYNN

You comin to bed?

SAM

In a bit

LYNN

You ok?

SAM

Just a long flight.

She senses more but knows this man well enough not to push... and so she simply turns away.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Quiet. Just Sam on this porch all alone, been here for some time, eyes far off, images in his mind he can't seem to shake.

And he steps into the yard... walking along the side of the house... just moving... trying to shed this feeling like snakeskin...

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

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

INT. BEDROOM - CHILDERS HOUSE - MORNING

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

EXT. CHILDERS HOUSE - MORNING

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

INT. UTILITY SHED - MORNING

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

LYNN

Baby, whatcha doin'?

He looks up...

SAM

Makin plans.

LYNN

You been to bed yet?

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

SAM

I had a vision last night, Lynn. Crazy as it sounds, God spoke to me...

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

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna build a church.

LYNN

A church?

SAM

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

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

LYNN

How we gonna pay for a church, Sam?

SAM

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

(smiling)

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

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

LYNN

Yer crazy.

SAM

'Lil bit.

LYNN

What's that?

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

SAM

That's the orphanage I wanna build. In Sudan.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY - (MAY/2003)

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

EXT. PLAYGROUND - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

Children at play, laughing, screaming, swinging on swing sets and digging in a sand pit. And we see Sam off to the side, leaning against a (new) black Harley, watching Paige playing in the group.

VOICE (O.S.)

Sam Childers...

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

SAM

That's me.

The Biker extends his hand, they shake.

BIKER

Hey bro, Ben Hobbes, knew each other long time ago.

SAM

Yeah, Ben, how you doin'?

DAUGHTER

Daddy, I'm gonna go.

BIKER

OK, sweetie...

She runs off.

BIKER (CONT'D)

Goddamn, they grow up quick, don't they?

SAM

Sure do.

BIKER

Hey, nuthin fer nuthin, Sam, but rumor has it you was puttin up a chapel over there in Central City.

SAM

That's right. Gonna minister to anybody who's lookin for The Lord.

BIKER

That's good, man. Maybe you can do somethin bout your old friend, Donnie.

SAM

What about em?

BIKER

He ain't doin so good, bro. But hey, good seein ya' man.

EXT. CRACK HOUSE - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

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

INT. CRACK HOUSE - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

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

THE FRONT DOOR CAVES IN!

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

INT. CRACK HOUSE - BACK ROOM - DAY

Sam comes around the corner and finds himself face-to-face with a CRACKHEAD pointing a .357 MAGNUM -- eyes amped up and wild -- shaking -- a stand-off -- and Sam sees a body on a bare mattress in the b.g. -- bone thin and pale -- spent hypodermic hanging out of his arm --

It's Donnie.

SAM

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

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

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

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

DONNIE

I can't do this.

SAM

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

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

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY - (AUGUST/2003)

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

INT. ENTRY HALL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

And we see Donnie, dressed in his biker jacket and a buttondown shirt, sober for the moment, greeting people as they come through the front door. Standing next to him is Daisy handing out programs.

DONNIE

Welcome to Shekinah Fellowship Church.

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

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

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

And now we see Lynn and Paige (11) standing near the back. Lynn nervous, checking her watch.

INT. FOYER - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

Sam on his knees, sleeves rolled up to his elbows, wrenching a leaking pipe. Lynn and Daisy walk in...

LYNN

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

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

SAM

You call him?

(Lynn nods)

Try him again.

Lynn exits and Daisy steps forward, shuts the door behind her. Just she and Sam here alone now.

DAISY

You like this dress, Sam?

SAM

What, mom?

DAISY

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

SAM

It's nice.

DAISY

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

(smiling at the thought)

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

SAM

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

DAISY

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

INT. CHAPEL - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

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

SAM

(to the band)

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

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

SAM (CONT'D)

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

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

SAM (CONT'D)

The guest preacher we had booked today ain't shown up... so I thought I'd say a word or two.

An awkward beat...

SAM (CONT'D)

Lotta yous been wonderin what made me wanna build this here church. Seein as I ain't the best seed in the bunch I can understand that.

A beat, considering what to say... and he begins...

SAM (CONT'D)

Buncha years ago I was runnin from some bad fellas in the woods over there by Cleary. Those old boys was comin after me hard and I reached in my bag lookin for my old shotgun but it was gone. My momma had took it out when I wasn't lookin and put this bible in there instead...

Sam holding up a worn bible, and we start to notice something here... a transformation happening in this man as he speaks to these people. His nervousness falling away and a natural charisma taking over...

SAM (CONT'D)

Well I figured I was done for, so I sat down under an old tree with this useless book and I waited...

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

SAM (CONT'D)

... and then the strangest thing happened. Them boys ran right on past me. Didn't even see me sittin there. Now the way I figure it, things would have turned out pretty different if I had pulled out that shotgun instead of this here Bible. And that's probably the first time I can remember God savin my butt.

(beat)

God... and my momma.

Some laughter and applause...

SAM (CONT'D)

Figure least I could do was build em both this church.

And the congregation responds with a *Hallelujah!*

INT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - DAY

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

SAM
Be back soon as I can.

PAIGE
You're gonna miss my play.

SAM
Have momma videotape it for me, k? Now I gotta git.

Lynn pulling Paige off, kissing Sam on the lips.

LYNN
Call us when you can.

SAM
I will.

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

SAM (CONT'D)
You watch out for em while I'm gone, ya hear?

DONNIE
That's done, buddy.

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

CUT TO:

EXT. SPLA CAMP - KITGUM, UGANDA - DAYFULL SCREEN - SEVEN LARGE SHIPPING BOXES RIPPED OPEN

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

Sam and Deng watching the soldiers.

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

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

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

SAM
Right here, stop the truck!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAY

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

DENG
Sam, wait...

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

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

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

SAM
This is it...

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

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

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - NIMULE, SUDAN - DAY

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

ADMINISTRATOR
This is not a good idea.

SAM
I think it's a heckuva good idea.

ADMINISTRATOR
It would be better further south. Closer to Kampala.

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

Sam pointing to the map. The Administrator turning to Deng --

ADMINISTRATOR

(Arabic)

He should not be this far north.

SAM

What are you sayin?

ADMINISTRATOR

The villages in this area are very remote, Mr. Childers. There is nothing there.

SAM

Then it seems to me them people need help the most.

ADMINISTRATOR

(to Deng, Arabic)

He will be killed.

SAM

Talk to me.

The Administrator turning to him, laying it out simply --

ADMINISTRATOR

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

SAM

I don't think you understand me, so lemme make it real clear to ya. I didn't pick this land -- God did.

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

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

And we see life already finding it's place within these bamboo walls. Acholi WORKERS laying brick on what will eventually become a schoolhouse and chapel.

And we find Sam with two or three small CHILDREN who are crying for no apparent reason. He's on his knees, trying his best to soothe them but he is way out of his depth here.

And now we see Deng in the b.g. approaching with a powerfully built Ugandan woman in her late 40's.

DENG

(introducing)

Sam... this is Betty. She is from the village of *Kotido*. A few miles from here.

SAM
Good to meet you Betty.

Betty, no reaction. Just the incessant crying of the children in the b.g.

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

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

DENG
She can do this.

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

Betty hears this, turns to the crying children and softly says --

BETTY
(Arabic)
Quiet now.

-- and instantly their crying stops.

SAM
Tell her she's hired.

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANGE - NIGHT

We see Betty and another Camp Woman (ROSE) moving through this room carrying lanterns, helping the children get ready for sleep --

BETTY
(Arabic)
You two share a blanket and tomorrow we will find another.

ROSE
(Arabic)
Shhhh, it's time to shut your eyes...

And we see Sam here too, doing what he can, tucking in a few of the kids, starting to make a connection with these children.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

SAM

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

DENG

What is this '*darn it?*'

SAM

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

DENG

(dead serious)

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

(becoming heated)

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

Sam feeling terrible, realizes he's offended him.

SAM

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

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

SAM (CONT'D)

What does Sam mean in Arabic?

DENG

Small penis.

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

SAM

Can I ask you a question?

DENG

Of course.

SAM

You believe in God?

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

DENG

I was raised to believe there was a God in heaven.

(MORE)

DENG (CONT'D)

But it is impossible to live here, to see what I have seen, and not turn your back on him.

BEAT.

SAM

Maybe you'll invite him in again one day.

DENG

I don't think so.

CUT TO:

EXT. AFRICA NIGHT - PITCH BLACK

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

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

The children sprawled on their mats sound asleep.

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

Deng and a few other soldiers sleeping on bedrolls.

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

Sam sitting on his cot. He rips open an airmail package and pulls out a small VIDEOCASSETTE, slides it in a VIDEOCAMERA, hits play --

ON THE SMALL VIDEO SCREEN we see Paige, dressed in a pilgrim costume, performing in a Thanksgiving Day play. Her voice coming through the tiny speakers as she recites her lines. Sam smiling at what he's watching.

EXT. FRONT GATE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

SOLDIER #2

(Arabic)

That was a mistake...

SOLDIER #3

(Arabic)

Where?

SOLDIER #2

(Arabic)

Right here... your third "house" is open...

Soldier #3 reacting to his mistake as --

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

The SPLA soldiers oblivious to the advance.

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

Sam watching Paige's play -- when suddenly --

AN EXPLOSION! -- machinegun fire popping o.s. -- Sam hitting the ground, scrambling for cover --

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

NEW ANGLE

-- Sam hustling across the compound -- joining Deng and another soldier behind a makeshift shed --

SAM
How many are there?

DENG
Two squads...
(indicating)
There -- and there.

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

SAM
Where are your men?

DENG
I don't know.

Sam looking around, realizing the rest of the SPLA soldiers are scattered throughout the compound firing randomly into the dark.

SAM
They're gonna pick us off like this!

Sam, split-second decision here -- and he starts to sprint across the compound to --

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

TERRIFIED SCREAMING! -- the children cowering in the corners --
Betty and Rose here trying to calm them down --

BETTY

(Arabic)

Stay down! -- stay down! --

ROSE

We are protected! --

Sam bursting through the door --

SAM

-- Betty! Get em to the church right now!

(Arabic)

Quickly.

(English)

Understand?! --

Betty nodding as Sam rushes out --

INT. STOREROOM - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

-- Sam bombing into this shed -- quickly opening a metal chest and pulling out an AK47 and mags of ammo --

EXT. FRONT GATE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

-- Sam scrambling across the compound with the AK -- moves next to Deng and pops a mag into the machinegun --

SAM

Get yer men back to the church! That's
our best shot! I'll cover you...

And Sam starts to open up the AK -- laying down a curtain of suppression fire as Deng shouts to his men --

DENG

(Arabic)

To the church! --

-- and they start to fall back to the center of the orphanage --

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Betty and the other Camp woman herding the terrified children into this building -- the only brick structure on the compound -- and then Deng, Marco, A.J. and the other SPLA soldiers coming in -- moving to the window holes and returning fire --

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

Sam sweeping the AK back and forth, trying to hold off the rebels as long as he can -- and then --

KABOOOM!!

More of the fence eviscerated by a grenade blast.

REBELS ADVANCING ON THE ORPHANAGE -- BREACHING THE PERIMETER --

Sam becoming overwhelmed in the fight -- firing as he retreats back into the compound --

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

-- Sam storming into the chapel -- turning to Betty --

SAM
(meaning the children)
Put em in the middle!

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

BETTY
(Arabic)
Down here! -- in the center! -- all of you! -- stay down!

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Sam, Deng and the other soldiers returning fire --

DENG
(Arabic)
Four on the right!

NINETEEN
(Arabic)
There are too many!

SAM
Just keep firin!

Sam starting to open up with his AK -- *Krakakakakakak!* -- spent shells showering down around the children huddled in the middle of the room.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

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

Krakakakakak!

He's cut down before he's able to fire --

INT. CHAPEL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - MORNING

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

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

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

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

LYNN

Hello?

EXT. STREET CAFE - NIMULE, SUDAN - SAME (DAY)

And we find Sam sitting at a table along this dusty, crowded street. His duffelbag on the ground next to him.

SAM

(into phone)

It's me.

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

Lynn immediately senses something wrong.

LYNN

You ok?

EXT. STREET CAFE - NIMULE, SUDAN - SAME (DAY)

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

SAM

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

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

She hears the anguish in his voice.

LYNN

Where are you?

EXT. STREET CAFE - NIMULE, SUDAN - DAY

SAM

Nimule...

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

SAM'S VOICE (O.S.)

... I'm comin home.

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

EXT. STREET CAFE - NIMULE, CAFE - DAY

LYNN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Sam?

SAM

Yeah.

LYNN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Can you hear me?

SAM

I can hear you.

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

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

LYNN

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

EXT. STREET CAFE - NIMULE, SUDAN - DAY

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

LYNN'S VOICE (O.S.)

God gave you purpose, Sam Childers. Now stop yer cryin, get off yer butt and build it again.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

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

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

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

-- Nineteen, Marco, A.J. and a few other SPLA soldiers cutting the bush away from the edge of the compound with *machetes*.

SAM

Cut it all down... so they got nowhere to hide...

-- Sam, Deng and the crew of village men digging post holes around the perimeter of the orphanage...

VILLAGE MAN 1

(*Arabic*)

How far?

DENG

(*Arabic*)

All the way around...

-- The men sinking metal beams into the holes with cement, then surrounding the compound with heavy gage CHAINLINK FENCE.

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

INT. OFFICE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

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

SAM

Come on in...

The door opens and we see Deng.

DENG

Preacher, you need to come see this.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

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

SAM

What's goin on?

DENG

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

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

DENG (CONT'D)

(translating)

They are saying that fire brings strength and ashes abundance...

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

DENG (CONT'D)

(translating)

... when the land burns, the next year the soil produces more...

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

BETTY

(Arabic)

The children are your fields...

DENG

(translating)

... she says you are a farmer and these children are your crops...

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

BETTY

(Arabic)

... and this ground will grow them tall.

DENG

... and this ground is richer now and they will grow stronger because of it.

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

INT. MESS HALL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Days later and we see Sam here with Nineteen and a few other SPLA soldiers, eating lunch, trying to learn their language. And it's humorous to these guys as Sam tries to pronounce some words in Arabic...

And suddenly we hear *YELLING* coming from outside.

EXT. MESS HALL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

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

Sam rushing over as soldiers help two YOUNG BOYS out of one of the trucks. Both are around 5 years old, injured and crying. And then a third child is lifted out in a makeshift stretcher -- this is ALICE - - 10 years old -- her broken body limp and bleeding profusely -- mumbling something to herself in Arabic over-and-over again --

INT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

-- *DOORS BANGING OPEN!* -- *CONTROLLED CHAOS* as the children are hauled into this clinic -- Betty taking care of Alice -- the worst off -- hooking her up to an IV as Sam moves to her bedside -- the little girl still mumbling quietly --

SAM

What is she saying?

BETTY

She is asking what she did wrong?

Sam taking Alice's hand in his... very slowly her beautiful eyes open and she sees him... and says something in Arabic...

BETTY (CONT'D)

(translating)

She is asking if you are 'The Preacher.'

SAM
 (nodding)
 Tell her she's gonna be ok.

Betty translates and Alice smiles faintly... and now one of the other camp women comes over and Sam steps back so they can work...

EXT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DUSK

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

SAM
 Where did they find em?

DENG
 Their village was hit out *Adjumani*.

Off Sam, hearing this, we...

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAWN

And we see Sam and Deng sitting outside the infirmary, exhausted, been here all night waiting. And now the door opens and Betty comes out. She looks down at them and simply shakes her head...

And we know Alice is dead.

And it looks like a grenade has gone off inside Sam. And suddenly he grabs an AK and gets up, seething, walks off...

DENG
 Sam...

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

... Sam walking fast through the compound... Deng following...

DENG
 Where are you going?

SAM
Adjumani.

DENG
 Sam, please wait...

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

Sam reaching the SUV and starting to gear up...

FADE UP the plaintive wail of an Acholi WAR SONG... haunting... ethereal... and then a chorus of voices rising up... taking us to...

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

Bombing down this rutted, red dirt road. The engine at full tilt. Sam, Deng, Nineteen, Marco, and A.J. jammed into this truck riding in dead silence... AK47's bouncing between their knees... only the sound of the WAR SONG playing as we watch these men... a grave stillness on their faces... thinking of what men do just before their own death.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAY

We see two LRA VEHICLES approaching in the distance... a LEAD JEEP and a PICKUP TRUCK behind it...

INT. LRA PICKUP TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

Four CHILD SOLDIERS squatting in the flatbed of this truck carrying AK47's. We recognize one of the boys as the younger brother from the opening scene -- WILLIAM.

INT. LRA JEEP - DRIVING - DAY

With two ADULT REBELS in this Jeep as they drive down this road past bombed-out vehicles... and in the distance we see the smoldering wreckage of a transport truck on the side of the road... the thick smoke hanging over the road like a black curtain... blocking out vision of the road ahead...

... and the Jeep punches into the black smoke followed by the pickup truck... and we're lost in the swirling haze for a moment before coming out the other side... and this is what we see --

SAM -- standing in the middle of the road ahead of us shouldering a RPG -- the ADULT REBELS see him just as --

WHOOOOSH! -- an RPG streaks right at us and DETONATES -- *KABOOOOM!* -- and the Jeep flips onto it's side --

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

THE PICKUP GRINDS TO A STOP! -- the driver slamming it into REVERSE -- accelerating back into the curtain of smoke -- trying to get the fuck out of there when --

BBrrraaaapp!

.30 CALIBER MACHINEGUN STRAFE across the front hood --

EXT. SUV - SAME

-- and we see A.J. behind the .30 cal -- opening it up -- *BBRAAAAAPP!* -- *BBRAAAAAPP!* -- blasting the engine compartment of the truck, trying to disable it --

EXT. LRA PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

-- the pickup truck reversing out of the black smoke -- OUT OF CONTROL -- going off the road into a ditch -- WILLIAM and the other boys bailing out of the flatbed -- TWO ADULT REBELS piling out of the cab -- scrambling for cover behind the truck.

EXT. BUSH - DAY

Sam, Deng, A.J. and the others hustling through the smoke and finding cover. From Sam's vantage point he sees rebels hiding behind the disabled truck for cover -- shooting back -- a withering firefight -- the big .30 cal ROARING offscreen but the truck is protecting the rebels -- no clear shot --

EXT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - DAY

William and the other child soldiers here with two ADULT REBELS -- crouched behind the truck for cover -- the ADULT REBELS returning fire, but the children aren't moving, scared shitless.

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

WILLIAM

(Arabic)

It's the white preacher!

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

ADULT REBEL

STAND UP AND FIGHT!!!

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

EXT. BUSH - DAY

MARCO running through the smoke toward Sam. He hits the ground and starts to screw an RPG into his launcher... he wants to hit the transport truck, but Sam shakes his head, waves him off...

SAM

No shot! There are children behind the truck!

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

SAM (CONT'D)

Cover me!

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

EXT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - DAY

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

ADULT REBEL

Fight you cowards!!!

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

EXT. BERM - DAY

Sam and Deng behind the berm. Sam peers over just as GUNFIRE misses him by inches. He drops back.

DENG

Why don't you just go home?

SAM

What?

DENG

This is not your war.

SAM

You leavin'?

Deng shakes his head --

SAM (CONT'D)

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

Sam chambers a round, pivots around the berm as --

EXT. LRA TRANSPORT TRUCK - SAME

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

SAM COMES OUT FROM BEHIND THE BERM

RPG streaking directly at him -- hitting the ground short --

BA-WHOOOM! --

AND OUR VISION EXPLODES TO WHITE

For a long beat... only silence... and then slowly the white begins to fade... and we see Sam flat on his back... eyes blinking open... shell-shocked... staring up at blue sky... and then a shadow coming over him... someone stepping into his POV...

it's William, hands held open in surrender, staring curiously at this strange white man laying in the dirt... and now Deng and Marco appear next to Sam and help him to his feet.

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

... William reaches into his pocket and...

... Deng and Marco REACT -- lifting their AK's -- "*Don't move! Don't move!*" -- but the boy only pulls out a FADED PHOTOGRAPH... the one he grabbed just before his capture... a picture of him and his older brother... standing next to each other smiling.

WILLIAM

(Arabic)

Have you seen my brother?

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

WILLIAM

... Where are you from?

ANTHONY

Jabal.

WILLIAM

Were you with the rebels?

Anthony nods. William pulls out his photograph.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Did you know my brother? He was called Christopher.

Anthony studying the photograph...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

He has a funny left eye. It looks the other way sometimes. Do you remember him?

ANTHONY

No.

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

WILLIAM

I am William. Were you with the rebels?

EXT. GENERATOR HUT - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

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

INT. TUKUL - NIGHT

And we see Sam on his cot when the light goes out. He leans over and torches a small Kerosene lamp next to him.

INT. DORM - NIGHT

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

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

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

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - EARLY MORNING

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

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

SAM

Mornin, buddy.

William, no response. Just staring up at him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ain't you gonna say nuthin?

William, nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ok then.

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

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

SAM
 Guess I do.

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

SAM (CONT'D)
 Take care of things while I'm gone, ok?

DENG
 I will, Preacher.

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

SAM
 You can't come with me, buddy.

DENG
 (to William, Arabic)
 Get out of there.

But William isn't moving...

DENG (CONT'D)
 (Arabic)
 Come on! -- out! --

... and finally Deng reaches in and grabs him... tries to pull him
 out but he fights back... yelling as Deng drags him out of the
 truck...

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

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

CUT TO:

INT. SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH/KITCHEN - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

And we see two teens moving toward the sound of a crowd coming from
 inside the church, responsive, "Hallelujah!"... and then Sam's voice
 over it all...

SAM (O.S.)
 In your actions you give service to the
 Lord...

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

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

SAM

... he's not interested in your good *thoughts*... your good *intentions*... he wants your hands... your backs... your sweat... your blood to pour into the foundation that will build up his kingdom!

Ad-libbed SHOUTS and PRAISE... and now we see Lynn, Daisy, Donnie and Paige in the congregation listening... as we go --

INT. HALLWAY/FOYER - SHEKINAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY

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

LYNN

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

VOLUNTEER

Good. Hey Pastor.

SAM

Sue.

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

SAM (CONT'D)

Been thinkin we need to put up a playground. Swings. Some things the kids can climb on.

LYNN

We can't build anymore. Not for awhile.

SAM

You said Sundays has been full.

LYNN

Turn outs been good, but that don't mean people is givin money.

(MORE)

LYNN (CONT'D)
Economy is in trouble, construction
business is slow. Times is tight.

SAM
Be good for them kids, Lynn.

LYNN
They got the playground over in
Cairnbrook. And they can play at the
school on weekends if they want

Sam turning to her --

SAM
Not talking bout here. Talkin about the
orphange.

Lynn catching up to him now, realizing his head is still back in
Africa.

INT. SHED - CHILDERS HOUSE - DAY

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

DONNIE
What'cha workin on, buddy?

SAM
Trouble with the push rods I think. She's
runnin kinda rough.

DONNIE
Shoulda kept that mild in there 'stead a
buildin up a hot rod. Let's see whatcha
got here...

Donnie moving next to him, working on the bike...

DONNIE (CONT'D)
... never had these problems when we was
runnin solid lifters, huh?

SAM
Used to fix them old shovelheads on the
side of the road with a buckknife and a
wire hanger.

DONNIE
Remember that year we went to the
Freakers Ball?

Sam smiling...

SAM
I think that old '78 broke down five
times on that trip.

DONNIE
 Sounds about right. Shoot, we had more fun tryin to get there than when we finally did.

Sam and Donnie share a laugh.

DONNIE (CONT'D)
 Can I talk to you about somethin'?

SAM
 Yep.

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

SAM
 The Lord don't ask for nuthin you can't deliver, buddy. And yer one tough ole boy.

DONNIE
 Sometimes I ain't so sure how tough I am.

And we see in Donnie's eyes just how troubled he is.

SAM
 Why don't we pray together then...

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

SAM (CONT'D)
 Our gracious Heavenly Father, bless us with the strength to carry on in your name. And grant us, in our darkest hours, the understandin that you are always by our side.

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

INT. SHOWROOM - CAR DEALERSHIP - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY (JULY/2004)

Four or five gleaming sedans on this showroom floor. And we see Sam sitting across from BILL WALLACE, late 40's, gold Rolex.

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

SAM

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

BILL

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

Sam, getting down to business...

SAM

Reverand Carlton gives a mean sermon, puts me to shame. Anyway Bill, I'm here cause I wanna talk to you about what we're doin over there in Africa.

BILL

Course I know about what you're doin. Helluva thing helpin out those kids, Sam.

SAM

Thank you, but I'm gonna be straight with ya. We're hurtin for money... If we had a little bit more support from people like yourself sure would help things run a lot smoother over there.

Bill feeling the rub, shaking his head...

BILL

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

SAM

I hear that, but you gotta understand that them kids over there got nuthin. I mean nuthin, Bill, and I'm not asking for much.

BILL

How much you lookin for?

SAM

Five thousand dollars.

BILL

Jesus Christ, Sam! Five thousand dollars?

SAM

That keeps them doors open for another six months.

BILL

People are losin their jobs left and right round here. Tough to be askin for five thousand dollars for a buncha African children half-way around the world.

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

SAM

You're right. We got problems right here. But with that kinda money we could feed them kids, house them kids.

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

BILL

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

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

SAM

Ok.

BILL

Why don't you and the family come over to the house next Sunday. We're havin a little barbeque, ok?

SAM

Sounds good.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Upscale French provincial in suburban Johnstown. A "barbeque" is underway. 15 couples here with their kids and a handful of waiters in white-tie offering champagne and *hors d'oeuvres* to the guests.

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

SHANNON

Well, come on in...

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

SHANNON (CONT'D)

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

Smiling, a joke she loves...

LYNN

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

SHANNON

Good to meet you.

VOICE (O.S.)

There he is!

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

BILL

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

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

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

BILL (CONT'D)

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

SAM

Thank you, Bill.

BILL

Forget it. Now c'mon, can I get ya a
mojito or somethin?

INT. BATHROOM - SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

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

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

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

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

LYNN

Sam...

PAIGE
Why we leavin so soon?

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

SHANNON
Everything alright?...

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

SAM
Get in the car.

LYNN
What's wrong?

As they load into the truck...

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

LYNN
Sam...

SAM
I asked him for five-thousand dollars to feed a buncha motherless babies and you know what he gave me?
(taking out the check,
wadding it up)
Hundred and fifty bucks. That's it.
Handed it to me like it was gold bouillon! Sonuvabitch spent more than that on salsa for his party.

INT. CHILDERS HOUSE - DAY

-- Sam coming into the house, enraged, followed by Lynn. He moves to his gun cabinet, grabs a hidden key, unlocks it...

LYNN
What are you doin?

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

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

LYNN
Sam Childers...

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

SAM
Stay outta my way.

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

EXT. PAWN SHOP - JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Sam coming out followed by the Shop Owner...

SHOP OWNER
... I'm sorry, twenty-five hundred is the best I can do for them gun.

REVERSE to see Lynn's car parked at the curb, Sam pointing to it...

SAM
Throw in the car for five.

The Shop Owner considering, as we go...

EXT. ROAD - PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

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

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

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

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

EXT. MAIN GATE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Seven or eight heavily armed vehicles coming through the gate. Maybe 20 or 30 SPLA soldiers guarding a black SUBURBAN in the middle of this motorcade. Nineteen waving his hand, yelling as the cars pass --

NINETEEN
(Arabic)
It's Garang! -- It's Garang! --

Palpable excitement ripples through the compound... Sam's soldiers grabbing their weapons and forming a ragged line near the Suburban as it stops...

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

Sam turns to Deng --

SAM
Who's this guy?

DENG
That's our leader.

SAM
John Garang?

Deng nods as we go...

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANGE - DAY

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

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

SAM
Sam is fine.

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

SAM
We can thank God for his blessings.

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

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

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

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

SAM

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

GARANG

You are stubborn, aren't you?

SAM

As a mule.

Garang smiling, an instant affinity for this man.

GARANG

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

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

GARANG (CONT'D)

I founded the SPLA in order to fight for the future of Sudan because nobody else would. We fight for freedom from the government in Khartoum, for the right to vote, and for the right to worship any god one may choose.

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

GARANG (CONT'D)

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

(beat)

There are Peace Talks scheduled for the end of August in *Naivashu*. I'd like you to come as my guest.

SAM

Talkin bout peace in a room somewhere is a waste of time. You gotta go out and make it.

GARANG

You are correct, but we must fight them at every level. Part of my battle is waged in those rooms. We must talk of peace, but keep our rifles ready for war.

Sam turning to him, coming to an understanding here. Realizing that both of them are warriors in the same fight.

GARANG (CONT'D)

Maybe together you and I can make Sudan free once again.

And now we see they have arrived at the brick chapel in the middle of the compound. Garang turning to him, eyes suddenly becoming dark...

GARANG (CONT'D)

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

(beat)

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

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

INT. PAIGE'S ROOM - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

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

DONNIE

You say prayers or somethin'?

PAIGE

Already did.

DONNIE

Ok then, sweet dreams.

PAIGE

Ain't you gonna read me a book?

DONNIE

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

PAIGE

Then let's play a game.

DONNIE

Ok.

PAIGE

I'm thinkin of a *dog*.

DONNIE

What about it?

PAIGE

Never mind, Donnie.

DONNIE

Ok.

PAIGE

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

DONNIE

Sure I can.

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

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Sweet dreams.

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

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

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

SAM

Keep em closed! A little bit more!

BETTY

(Arabic)

Keep your eyes closed.

ROSE

(stern, Arabic)

Michael! Cover your eyes! No peeking!

SAM

... keep comin'...

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

SAM (CONT'D)

Ok, stop! Open your eyes!

BETTY

(Arabic)

Open your eyes!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hours later and we see Sam pushing a couple of the smaller children on the swingset. Deng approaches...

DENG

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

Sam, no reaction, just keeps swinging the children...

DENG (CONT'D)

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

SAM

He ain't the first old-boy who wanted to see my head hanging on his wall. Keep yer soldiers where they're needed. I can take care of myself.

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

SAM (CONT'D)

He said anything yet?

DENG

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

SAM

Where's the brother?

DENG

Nobody knows.

NEW ANGLE

Sam approaching William, kneeling down next to him.

SAM

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

William, no response.

SAM (CONT'D)

You know sometimes it helps to tell somebody what you got locked up inside, know what I mean?

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

SAM (CONT'D)

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

William just stares back at him and Sam realizes he doesn't speak English. And they both just sit here for a moment, silent, staring at the children playing on the playground. And then Sam, feeling the need to unburden himself, begins to talk...

SAM (CONT'D)

I done a lotta things I ain't proud of. Hurt a lotta people. Truth is, helpin you kids is about the only good thing I ever done in this life.

William watching him quietly.

SAM (CONT'D)

But I'm scared. Scared one day I'll close my eyes to all this and make it somebody else's problem.

(beat)

Just like everybody else in this world.

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

INT. SUV - DRIVING - DAY

Sam behind the wheel, driving alone the edge of a dry ravine. Deng is in the passenger seat and we see Nineteen, Marco and A.J. crammed into the back.

SAM

I don't see nuthin.

Deng checking a handheld GPS unit --

DENG

This is it.

Sam looking out the window, sees movement at the bottom of the ravine.

SAM

Hold on...

... and we see what he sees -- CHILDREN hiding behind a bush.

SAM (CONT'D)

I got em.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

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

EXT. SUV - DAY

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

SAM

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

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

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

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

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

A.J.

(Arabic)

Don't be scared.

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

-- A SHOT RINGS OUT!

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

Nineteen dives behind a boulder for cover.

EXT. SUV - DAY

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

SAM
What's he sayin?

DENG
A.J. is dead.

SAM
Shit.
(beat)
Tell him to stay where he is. Don't move.

DENG
(yelling to Nineteen, Arabic)
Don't move!

SAM
Ask him if he saw the shooter.

DENG
(yelling to Nineteen, Arabic)
Did you see him?!

Nineteen responds.

DENG (CONT'D)
He did not see.

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

EXT. SUV - DAY

Sam looking through binocs as --

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

SAM
You got 'em?

DENG
Yes. He's on the ridge... just below that outcropping.

SAM
Can you reach the Browning?

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

-- A SHOT RINGS OUT!

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

SAM (CONT'D)

Need you boys to cover me on three,
alright? Put everything you got into that
rock up there.

SNIPER POV -- locked on the SUV when suddenly -- Deng and Marco
pivot around the truck and start firing -- bullets popping all
around and the sniper drops for cover as --

EXT. SUV - DAY

-- Sam SPRINTS over the rocks and dives into a shallow ditch out of
sight. Deng and Marco stop firing and drop back behind the SUV.

SNIPER POV -- slowly pops up from behind the rocks after the
shooting stops. And we realize he didn't see Sam change positions.

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Sam rolling onto his stomach and slowly sliding the barrel of the
rifle between two rocks... then seeing a sliver of the SNIPER hidden
on the ridge.

SNIPER POV -- still locked on the SUV, waiting for a clear shot.

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Sam putting a bead on the Sniper, but at this range the shot is
going to take instinct. Sam turns his head away from the rifle and
exhales -- controls his breathing -- as we go --

SNIPER POV -- trained on the SUV... and then we see a *FLASH* from the
right side of the screen... and a delayed *POP!*...

CRACKKK! -- THE SNIPER DROPS

Killed instantly.

EXT. SUV - DAY

Deng looking through binocs at the ridge --

DENG

(calling out to Sam)

I think you got him!

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Sam, Deng, and Marco moving toward the children, weapons drawn,
scanning the area in all directions. Deng is the first one to reach
the boys who are huddled on the ground, shaking from fear...

DENG

(Arabic)

It is ok. You can get up now.

But the boys don't move... and Deng reaches down, pulls them to their feet and we see that their ankles are chained to a post which has been buried in the ground.

DENG (CONT'D)

Sam.

Sam joins Deng, sees the chains.

DENG (CONT'D)

LRA wanted us here.

Sam realizing that these children were used as bait -- for him.

EXT. RAVINE RIDGE - DAY

We're at the top of the ravine now and we see Sam and the others moving toward the location of the SNIPER...

... and Sam is the first to reach the body... laying on the ground face down... a pool of blood soaking the dirt underneath... and he rolls the body onto it's back and we see it's just a kid -- no older than 15 years old.

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

It's late at night and we see Sam on his cot, sitting here in the dark. And we hear the sound of his satellite phone *vibrating* on the table next to him. He picks it up, sees DONNIE'S name on the screen...

SAM

(into phone)

Hello?

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

And we see Donnie on a couch by himself in this shitty little room.

DONNIE

Sam, it's me.

INTERCUT THE CONVERSATION:

SAM

Everybody ok?

DONNIE

Oh yeah, everybody's just fine. I was just callin to say 'hey' is all.

SAM

How're the girls?

DONNIE

They're good. Paige cooked us all dinner the other night. Chocolate-chip pancakes.

SAM

By herself, huh?

DONNIE

Yep. I helped her with the stove is all. She did everything else. Pretty good too.

And now we see Donnie's DOPE WORKS sitting on the table in front of him. He's using again.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

How's it goin over there?

SAM

Goin fine.

DONNIE

Hey, maybe I'll come with you one of these trips. I'd like to get outta here for a spell. See what it's like.

SAM

Sounds good.

And it's silent between them... both of these men lost in their own worries for a moment... and then...

DONNIE

Ask you a question?

SAM'S VOICE

Yeah.

DONNIE'S VOICE

You think God will forgive us for the things we've done?

And we're watching Sam, this question hitting him like a freight train. Unable to answer.

EXT. NIMULE - SUDAN, AFRICA - DAY - DAYS LATER

We're hit by a crush of people, a thousand black faces moving past us and all the noise and confusion of this busy border town. And we find Sam, Deng, and Nineteen here loading supplies into the back of the SUV.

VOICE (O.S.)

They talk about you...

Sam turning to find Agnete, the aid worker, approaching him.

AGNETE

In the camps. The children. They say there is a white preacher who hunts the LRA. This place does not need more killing, Mr. Childers.

SAM

I'm just tryin to help these people. Same as you.

AGNETE

War upon war does not fix what is broken here. The history of this country is filled with *righteous killers*. That is how it always begins, with men thinking they are killing for the *right reasons*.

SAM

I got a 200 kids who are gonna sleep safe tonight and wake up tomorrow mornin to a bowl of hot food. Right or not, that's all the reason I need.

AGNETE

And what about the rumors I have heard about you supplying weapons to the SPLA?

Sam turning to her, face-to-face, starting to get pissed...

SAM

You fight the evil in this place your way, I'll fight it mine.

AGNETE

Do not delude yourself, Mr. Childers. You're a mercenary, not a humanitarian.

Sam, finished with this conversation, slams the lift-gate closed on the truck and starts to climb in...

AGNETE (CONT'D)

They say you are doing good. That you have special powers. That you are protected by angels and cannot be killed by bullets.

Sam looking at her and there's a warning in what she says next... about violence corrupting men... consuming them...

AGNETE (CONT'D)

They said the same thing about Kony in the beginning.

EXT. SAM'S TUKUL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DUSK

Sam sitting outside his tukul alone, tearing open an airmail package and pulling out another VIDEOCASSETTE, slides it into his videocamera, hits play --

ON THE SMALL SCREEN we see a school production... children dressed in costumes shuffling across the stage... lines being spoken by rote...and then the awkward entrance of Paige speaking her lines... but instead of finding joy in this sweet moment he finds heartache... the distance from his family... from their innocence... simply too great to bear in this moment...

... and then he hears *giggling*... and he realizes two young orphan BOYS have snuck up behind him and are looking at the screen over his shoulder... and Sam holds it up so they can see better and now more children gather around -- maybe 10 or 15 kids -- pointing at the small screen... giggling and chatting in Arabic...

ORPHAN #1
(Arabic)
Look at their shoes...

ORPHAN #2
(Arabic)
They look silly...

ORPHAN #1
(Arabic)
This is how Americans dance?

ORPHAN #2
(Arabic)
Their dancing is terrible!

The children laughing hysterically... and for an instant Sam is swept out of his melancholy by their sweet enjoyment...

... and then Sam sees Deng and Nineteen approaching quickly...

SAM
What's goin on?

DENG
An LRA convoy has moved north over the border. They're heading for *Ed Duim*.

SAM
That's where they sell em on the black market, ain't it?

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DEEP IN SUDAN - NIGHT

A moonless night... and we see headlights piercing this blackness... bouncing down a singletrack road... we are...

INT. SAM'S TRUCK - DRIVING - NIGHT

Deng behind the wheel driving -- Sam in the passenger seat -- Marco, Nineteen, and a third SPLA SOLDIER jammed in the back --

DENG

Look...

Far ahead we see three sets of HEADLIGHTS coming towards us on the road -- just bouncing white dots on the horizon -- and silently they begin to check their mags and weapons -- preparing for battle --

-- and the headlights get closer -- Deng not slowing down -- and we realize we are on a collision course with this convoy -- and finally we see MUZZLE FLASHES in the distance -- and --

THUNK!, THUNK!, THUNK!

Machine gun strafe hitting the front and side of the truck --

SAM

Let's go!

Sam and Nineteen leaning through the open windows as Deng drives -- leveling their AK's and firing --

KRAKAKAKAKAK! KRAKAKAKAKAK!

And now the approaching convoy LIGHTS UP with RETURN FIRE! -- Sam and Nineteen hanging out the windows blasting back -- Deng stepping on the gas, accelerating toward the convoy like some hellish game of "chicken" (*reminiscent of Sam and Donnie's wild ride with the Drifter in scene #29*) --

-- and we watch as the headlights barrel towards us at full bore -- BULLETS POPPING across the windshield of the truck -- SAM AND NINETEEN IN CONSTANT FIRE MODE -- THE SOUND DEAFENING -- headlights blown out on both trucks and now we're plunged into total blackness -- only the wild-strobe of machine gun fire lighting up the night as these trucks slam towards each other -- and finally --

THE LRA CONVOY CAREENS OFF THE ROAD AND BOTTOMS OUT IN A DITCH

Deng skidding to a stop as Sam, Nineteen, and the third SPLA SOLDIER pile out of the truck -- firing and advancing on the caravan by foot.

EXT. DITCH - SIDE OF DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Rebels jumping out of their disabled trucks -- Sam and his men flanking them -- blasting one of the trucks until the engine bursts into flames -- cutting down the rebels before they even knew what hit them. And then there's a great stillness. The quiet of death...

... Sam coming out of the blackness with his AK leveled... moving toward the flaming wreckage of the caravan... Deng, Nineteen, and Marco moving to each rebel body... making sure they're dead.

NINETEEN

Clear!

Sam and Deng moving to the back of the Transport Truck...

SAM

Bring me a flashlight.

Marco hustling up with a spotlight -- Sam switching it on as Deng rips the canvas back and we see --

TWENTY THREE CHILDREN IN THE BACK OF THIS TRANSPORT TRUCK

Boys and girls... none of them older than twelve... tied together with rope... emaciated... terrified... in very bad shape.

MARCO

(Arabic)

The front axle is broken... this truck won't drive.

SAM

What'd he say?

DENG

The truck is too damaged to move.
(meaning the children)
 We don't have room for them all,
 Preacher.

The implication of this hitting Sam, his mind reeling, turning to Nineteen...

SAM

Bring our truck up here and shine them lights on us.
(to Deng)
 Pull everyone of them kids outta there.

DENG

(to soldiers, Arabic)

Bring the children out...

Deng and Marco helping the children out... one-by-one... untying them...

SAM

Put em right here... real easy...

DENG

(Arabic)

Put them together here... gently...

And now Nineteen pulls up in the SUV, lighting up the children.

DENG (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

SAM

We're takin the ones that ain't gonna make it through the night. Come back for the others later.

And Sam moves to the first child in the group -- a little girl -- reaching out to her but she pulls back.

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell her I'm not gonna hurt her.

DENG

(Arabic)

It's ok... he will not hurt you...

And slowly the little girl steps forward... and Sam gently unbuttons her shirt and begins to examine her little body... turning her around in the harsh light of the SUV's headlamps... and he finds five infected gashes on her back... whip wounds... already turning gangrene... and he gently pushes her toward Deng...

SAM

Put her in the truck.

And Sam continues with the group... assessing each child's health... tenderly running his hands over their broken, starved bodies... somehow calculating which ones are worse off and pulling them out of line...

... and he reaches the last child and we see that the SUV is now PACKED with children... huddled into every available corner... 10 children in total. There's no more room.

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell em we're comin back.

Deng hesitating, knows the reaction he's going to get...

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell em!

DENG

(Arabic)

We will be back for you!

The children become hysterical, crying, running at Sam and grabbing for him, begging to be taken.

SAM

Let's go!

(to the children, holding up
two fingers)

Two hours... I'll be back in two hours...

Sam, Deng, and the others loading into the SUV... some of them climbing onto the roof... the only available space... the remaining children clamoring around the truck as it begins to pull away...

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell em to hide. Don't come out til they see my face...

Deng yelling this to the children as they drive off...

DENG

(*Arabic*)

Hide until we return!

... the faint cries of the children slowly fading as they speed into the darkness.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAWN

A red sun breaking the horizon. It's ONE HOUR LATER and we see the SUV blasting through the front gate of the compound and skidding to a stop -- DOORS POPPING OPEN -- SOLDIERS JUMPING OFF THE ROOF -- Betty and the other camp women already pulling the children out of the truck... ushering them into the infirmary...

Sam yelling at another soldier as he walks across the courtyard --

SAM

Gas it up! We're leavin here in five!

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - MORNING

Two hours into this return trip and it's silent in this cab. Deng checking a handheld GPS, clocking their position, and then they see it -- through the windshield -- in the distance --

SMOKE

Rising in a thin column a half-mile away.

EXT. ROAD - DEEP IN SUDAN - DAY

The scene of the ambush the night before. Burned out pickup trucks and dead LRA rebels strewn in the dirt. Sam's SUV arriving and he's the first one out... *whistling* for the children but they're nowhere to be seen.

And now we realize that the column of smoke isn't coming from the bombed-out LRA trucks -- it's coming from behind them. Sam moving around the back of the TRANSPORT TRUCK to see --

THIRTEEN LITTLE BODIES STACKED ON TOP OF EACH OTHER

The children Sam left behind.

Burned alive by the LRA an hour earlier.

Sam just standing here, staring at this smoldering pile of children. Starting to go someplace very dark. And as he puts it, most of him died in the bush this morning too.

CUT TO:

INT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - NIGHT - (JUNE/2005)

And we see a line of American TRAVELERS waiting to be checked through customs... BUSINESS MEN in their rumpled suits carrying briefcases, PARENTS with their tired children returning from vacation... and Sam standing in this line with his duffel bag, somehow cut-off from the life all around him. And the CUSTOMS OFFICER waves him forward... Sam handing him his passport...

CUSTOMS OFFICER

Sudan?

And he looks up, studies Sam --

CUSTOMS OFFICER (CONT'D)

What are you doing over there?

And we see Sam has no answer for him. This question beginning to plague him like a festering sore.

EXT. PASSENGER PICK-UP - PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - NIGHT

It's raining and we see Sam sitting on a bench waiting, staring o.s. at a SKYCAB TROLLEY. Two men working through a pile of BLACK GOLF BAGS, heaped on top of each other like bodies, tossing them one-by-one into the back of the trolley...

VOICE (O.S.)

Sam!

He looking up as Donnie gets out of his car, smiling.

DONNIE

Sorry I'm late. Sixteen was all jammed up...

Donnie is strung out, but Sam is too deep in his own shit to see it.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Welcome home, buddy.

INT. OFFICE - BANK - JOHNSTOWN, PENN. - DAY

A BANK MANAGER at a desk, in a gray suit, shaking his head.

BANK MANAGER

I understand what you're saying, but there's just not a lot we can do, until we pay down some of what you owe my hands are tied.

REVERSE to see Sam sitting in a chair across from him, a manila folder filled with his business papers sitting on his lap.

SAM

It's just an application for a short term loan.

BANK MANAGER

Sam, we already took out a second on your home.

SAM

It's only 90 days.

BANK MANAGER

You're completely leveraged.

SAM

I only got one truck over there, John. I need the money to buy a second vehicle.

Sam opens a manilla folder and pulls out a photo of a truck for sale.

SAM

It's important. Now, there's one in Kampala I can probably get for twenty-one...

BANK MANAGER

(cutting him off)

Sam, we know what you're doing over there in Africa and we support it but ...

Sam leans over the desk and sets another photograph down in front of him -- and we see it's a gruesome photograph of a mutilated boy...

SAM

I want you to look at this. See that? Twelve year old boy had both his arms cut off by LRA...

An employee approaches the bank manager with something to sign, looks down at the photos. The Bank Manager becoming uncomfortable.

BANK MANAGER

Sam... It's not necessary.

Sam pulls out another photograph and sets it in front of the Bank Manager -- this one even more gruesome...

SAM

Look at this John, when we found this little girl her breasts had been hacked off...

Bank Manager not looking at the photograph...

BANK MANAGER

Sam, this isn't necessary...

SAM

Look at her. Look at this girl.

Bank Manager glancing at the photograph then looking away...

SAM (CONT'D)

Now I ain't in here askin fer money fer a hot tub or vacation or somethin like that. I'm askin for an extra vehicle so I can save some children. You understand that?

BANK MANAGER

I do, but...

SAM

But nuthin. I need you to open yer little book there and do whatever you need to do to get me that loan...

BANK MANAGER

Sam, You need to calm down...

SAM

Don't tell me to calm down! Look at those pictures! -- Look at em, John --

And he slams the desk with his open hand, taking us to...

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

A/C on the fritz and it's blistering hot in here. 150 parishioners in pews waving themselves with hand fans trying to stay cool. And we see Sam at the pulpit in mid-sermon, shirt pitted and rolled up to his elbows. The rage in this man is palpable.

SAM

... *Open yer eyes!... Wake up!...*

(beat)

You call yerselves children of God, but you ain't. Ya'll just sheep followin him deaf, dumb, and blind...

(amped-up)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

But God don't want sheep. He wants wolves to fight his fight. Men and women with teeth to tear at the evil that's out there...

The congregation whipped into a frenzy. A few of them jumping to their feet, shouting praise...

SAM (CONT'D)

THE LORD'S PROPHETS AIN'T MEEK MEN. THEY AIN'T MEN IN FANCY CLOTHES, THEY'RE WARRIOR PROPHETS...

INT. CAR - DRIVING - KAMPALA, UGANDA - DAY

And we see John Garang in the back of this car as it drives through downtown Kampala.

SAM (V.O.)

... MEN OF CONVICTION!...

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

Sam becoming more possessed...

SAM

... WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STICK AND A SWORD AND AIN'T AFRAID TO PICK UP EITHER IF THEY NEED TO!...

The congregation responding, "Amen!"

EXT. TARMAC - KAMPALA AIRPORT - DAY

The motorcade pulling to a stop. Garang and other GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS getting out and making their way to a waiting HELICOPTER.

SAM (V.O.)

... SOLDIERS WILLING TO GO FORTH AND SHOUT HIS NAME LIKE MEN OF WAR!...

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

Sam, a building fury...

SAM

... DRAWING UP BATTLE LINES AGAINST HIS ENEMY WHEREVER THEY MAY BE...

EXT. TARMAC - KAMPALA AIRPORT - DAY

Garang and the others loading into the helicopter, locking doors. Propellers starting to rotate.

SAM (V.O.)
*... WILLING TO FIGHT TO THEIR LAST
 BREATH...*

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

SAM
*... UNTIL THE LEGIONS AGAINST THEM FALL
 AND ONCE AGAIN THERE IS ONLY HIS LIGHT...*

EXT. TARMAC - KAMPALA AIRPORT - DAY

The helicopter lifting off the ground, ascending into the cloudless sky until it's just a speck in the limitless blue...

SAM (V.O.)
 And only then will their hearts beat no more... and they will be turned to dust.

INT. CHILDERS' HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY - (JULY/2005)

Paige and her girlfriend from her 7th grade class sit on the landing. Donnie flips through a magazine, Lynn puts away laundry. Chatter here about an upcoming formal...

PAIGE
 Mary Strauss and them is havin dinner at The Chimney.

LYNN
 Who's her date?

PAIGE'S FRIEND
 Tony Wilks.

LYNN
 I thought Tony Wilkes was goin with Patty Hobbes' daughter.

PAIGE
 They broke up last month.

And now we see Sam off from the group, absently watching the TV in an adjoining room... and a NEWS REPORT begins... a PICTURE OF JOHN GARANG flashing on the screen... Sam moving closer to the set so he can hear --

TV NEWSCASTER
... Sudanese opposition leader John Garang has been killed in a helicopter crash according to a statement released by the Sudanese Government in Khartoum today.

Sam going completely still...

TV NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
Garang was hailed as a peacemaker in Sudan and was instrumental in ending the 21-year civil war that has ravaged that country.

ARCHIVAL SHOTS OF GARANG.

TV NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
Six of Garang's associates and seven others also died in the crash which is being blamed on bad weather.

Sam frozen, shocked... just staring at the TV as the newscast switches to another story...

PAIGE (O.S.)
 Dad? -- Dad?

Sam looking up to find everybody staring at him.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
 What do you think about us gettin a limo for next weekend? Wouldn't be too expensive since there'd be six of us.

Sam lost here for a moment...

PAIGE (CONT'D)
 Hel-lo? Earth to Dad? What do you think?

LYNN
 Honey, you ok?

DONNIE
 Heck, why don't I just drive ya'll?

PAIGE
 We ain't crammin in the back of your Caprice.

DONNIE
 Ya'll could fit in there easy.

PAIGE
 We got dresses, Donnie! We'll get all wrinkled! Plus it smells in there.

DONNIE
 I can get some freshener, Paige, that ain't no problem.

PAIGE
 Dad, what you think? Can we get a limo?

SAM

No.

PAIGE

Dad. Please. Patty and them is gettin one.

SAM

You ain't rentin no limo to Pittsburgh.

LYNN

We could probably get us a deal through one of Tom Hickey's boys. Between the six of them it wouldn't cost too much.

SAM

Nobody's spendin money on no friggin limousine.

PAIGE

But dad...

Sam snapping, FLASHING WITH RAGE --

SAM

WHAT THE HELL DID I JUST SAY?!

Quiet. Nobody moving. Completely still. And then...

LYNN

We're just talkin bout it, honey...

SAM

Too much talk in this house. I got mouths to feed and you're talkin bout pissing money away on a limo.

PAIGE

It's my formal, dad.

SAM

I don't give a shit what it is! You ain't gettin no limo, end of story.

Tears welling up in Paige's eyes, anger, hurt, wanting to lash out at him somehow. And what she says next she's felt her whole life...

PAIGE

You love them black babies more than you love me.

SAM

WATCH YER MOUTH LITTLE GIRL, BEFORE I SLAP IT!

LYNN

Sam...

Donnie instinctively grabbing his arm, protective...

DONNIE

Hey...

And Sam spins -- gets in his face -- eyes dark and threatening --

SAM

What the hell you think you're doin, boy?

LYNN

Honey...

SAM

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

DONNIE

Take it easy, buddy.

SAM

Don't tell me to take it easy in my own fuckin house...

Sam and Donnie toe-to-toe and the threat of serious violence here. Tension like a hair trigger.

SAM (CONT'D)

That ain't your wife and this ain't your family. You nuthin but a stray fuckin dog round here, boy.

DONNIE

You don't mean that...

SAM

Hell I don't. Now you get the fuck outta here fore I put yer head through that wall.

Donnie standing here, hurt... looking to Lynn to make sure she's alright and she nods for him to go... and he turns and walks out. Paige bursting into tears and running out of the room.

INT. BAR - DAY

A crowded, noisy outlaw bar in Johnstown. We see Sam sitting at the bar all alone, a shot of whisky and a bottle of beer in front of him. Staring into a void.

VOICE (O.S.)

You that Preacher, ain't ya?

Sam turns to find a burly looking BIKER standing next to him smiling.

BIKER
 Yep, you him. I seen your face in the papers few years ago. Call you the *Machinegun Preacher*, right?

Sam nods.

BIKER (CONT'D)
 (to his buddies)
 Told you this is the guy.
 (to Sam)
 Hot damn, I knew it! Papers was talkin bout how you was like some kinda African Rambo or somethin, right?

SAM
 You don't mind, I'd like to just sit here right now.

BIKER
 You still helpin them niggers over there?

Sam bristling...

BIKER (CONT'D)
 The way I figure it, the reason you so interested in helpin them porch monkeys is cause you probably throwin it in them nigger bitches, ain't ya?

The Biker smiles a nasty, malicious smile. His buddies moving next to him now... and we see a quiet storm brewing in Sam...

BIKER (CONT'D)
 Am I right? You a nigger fucker, boy?

A moment here --

Sam staring at the Biker with a look we've come to know -- and --

CRACKKKK! -- Sam HEAD-BUTTS the Biker's face and a sudden, violent brawl breaks out -- Bikers swinging cue sticks -- Sam wading into the crew -- swinging wild -- taking the Biker down and stomping on his face -- bloody -- murderous -- and then --

EXT. JAIL - JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Sam released, coming out a door and we see Lynn's car parked in the parking lot, engine idling.

EXT. JAIL - JOHNSTOWN / INT. LYNN'S CAR #2 - DAY

Lynn behind the wheel as Sam comes around the passenger door and gets in. And the two of them just sit here for a long beat, until...

LYNN

You're gonna sit there and you're gonna lemme talk.

BEAT. Sam says nothing.

LYNN (CONT'D)

I've always believed in you. I trusted you, trusted the Lord, and did what I could so you could follow your dream.

(beat)

But I ain't willin to lose you to what you're doin over there. Ain't gonna just stand by and watch you get swallowed up by it.

She looks to him and we see she has tears in her eyes...

LYNN (CONT'D)

I know you're all them kids got, but you're all we got too. Paige needs her father. I need my husband.

INT. SHED - CHILDERS HOUSE - NIGHT - (AUGUST/2005)

Sam sitting in a chair in the dark. And we hear his cell *vibrating* on the desk. He picks it up and sees DONNIE'S name on the screen... a moment here and then he sets the phone back down... doesn't answer it... as we go...

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - SAME

Donnie on a couch and he looks like hell... pale, gaunt face... phone at his ear listening to *RINGING* and *RINGING*... and then the sound of Sam's voice...

RECORDED MESSAGE

This here's Sam. You know what to do.

(BEEEEP)

DONNIE

(quietly)

Hey buddy, it's Donnie. Shoot, I was hopin' you was there...

Donnie hesitating... doesn't hang-up... and we can feel how badly he needs to talk to somebody...

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Other day I was thinkin bout when you and me was kids.

(MORE)

DONNIE (CONT'D)

That summer we'd go down to the quarry over in Montrose, remember that? We hooked up them ropes and spent all day swimmin and jumpin off them walls...

Donnie smiling to himself, a fleeting memory, and then something dark coming over him. And now we see another man here in this shitty dope house, cooking up a spoon of black tar, juicing a needle. Donnie watching him like a hawk...

DONNIE (CONT'D)

I wish you was there to pray with me, buddy.

EXT. WOODS - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAWN

Eastern White Pine wrapped in early morning fog. Hazy. Floating like a dream. And then the sound of WOOD SPLINTERING... and we find Sam alone in this vapor cutting logs with an axe. Sweating despite the chill in the air...

... and then a voice from somewhere far off. Sam stopping, looking into the haze as a figure materializes... coming toward him calling his name... at first it looks like Donnie... but then we see it's Lynn...

And when she reaches him her look tells us something terrible has happened.

CUT TO:

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

DONNIE'S CORPSE lying in a casket...

Packed with mourners. And we hear a CHILDREN'S CHOIR singing a plaintive hymnal... "*My Jesus, I love thee*"... and Donnie's mother in the first pew, dressed in black, surrounded by a few other women offering her comfort.

And now we see Sam moving up the steps to the platform... and the choir softly finishes... and he looks out over the congregation... not saying a word for a long beat... and then...

SAM

Most of you want me to stand up here and make some sense outta this. That's why you come here today. You want me to tell you that God has his plan for all of us, and when he wants to call us back home he's gonna do it.

(beat)

That's what you wanna hear...

(quietly)

That's what you wanna hear...

And Sam stops, unable to continue... just stares out at the congregation... at the expectant faces looking back at him, waiting...

... but he steps away from the lectern, down the steps, and walks up the aisle toward the exit... the congregation staring at him as he passes...

INT. LYNN'S CAR #2/CHILDERS DRIVEWAY - DRIVING - DAY

Hours later. Lynn and Paige still dressed from the funeral, driving up the driveway to their house.

PAIGE
Mom, who are those men?

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD we see a FLATBED TRUCK parked next to the house and 7 or 8 MOVERS pulling heavy machinery out of the barn.

EXT. GARAGE - CHILDERS HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

Lynn getting out of the car, approaching some of the men...

LYNN
S'cuse me, what are you doing?

MOVER
Loadin up...

And she makes her way into...

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

Filled with movers busily hauling equipment out of the garage. Lynn coming in, confused...

LYNN
Hey, s'cuse me...

And now she sees Sam going through a cabinet in the back.

LYNN (CONT'D)
Sam, what's goin on? What are these men doin here?...

Sam slamming the cabinet closed, moving past her without saying a word. Lynn grabbing his arm, stopping him.

LYNN (CONT'D)
Where are they taking our stuff?

SAM
Ain't ours no more. Best go through and make sure they ain't takin nuthin that belongs in the house.

He walks off...

LYNN

Sam...

And she sees two men start to dismantle the "*Childers Construction Company*" sign that she painted herself years ago --

LYNN (CONT'D)

Hey! -- Don't touch that! --

EXT. GARAGE - CHILDERS HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - DAY

Sam moving toward the house. Lynn comes out of the barn after him...

LYNN

(calling after)

Sam!

But he's not stopping. He reaches the house...

INT. CHILDERS' HOUSE - DAY

... Sam coming inside, moving to the kitchen... Lynn following him.

LYNN

Honey, I know you're hurtin. I know you're angry, but we need to talk about this...

SAM

It's all done, so save yer breath... where's the keys to the safe?

Sam grabs papers from the counter and hands them to Lynn. She quickly pages through them, can't believe what she's reading.

LYNN

You sold the business for \$27,000?

SAM

I need a new truck for the orphanage.

LYNN

A new truck? You sold our business for a new truck?

Sam finds the Keys.

LYNN (CONT'D)

That was our future, Sam. Paige's future.

Lynn follows Sam into the office.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Everything we have has gone to those children, Sam. There's a point when there ain't no more to give.

SAM

What's the combination? What's the fucking combination.

LYNN

Paige's birthday.

Sam starts to spin the combination but hesitates...

LYNN (CONT'D)

You don't know it, do you? You don't even remember your own daughter's birthday.

SAM

What are the numbers?

LYNN

You fight for everyone but us.

She moves past him, spinning the combination and cranking open the vault. Sam grabbing a couple stacks of cash.

LYNN (CONT'D)

You take that and we lose the house. The church. All of it.

SAM

You can make it up with the ministry.

LYNN

What ministry?! They see what you've become, Sam. They see how far gone you are. You need to get quiet with The Lord.

And he looks to her...

SAM

Fuck the Lord.

LYNN

Don't say that. Don't turn yer back on him.

SAM

... He turned his back on me! -- on Donnie! -- on every one of them kids over there.

LYNN

The good you're doin is destroyin this family.

SAM

What good have I ever done?

Sam standing here, weighing something in his mind. A choice he must make here... and finally he moves past her...

LYNN

Please don't leave...

But he's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAMPALA AIRPORT - DAY

And we see Sam moving across this crowded tarmac. Disconnected. A bit frightening. And he's greeted by Deng.

DENG

Welcome back.

But Sam says nothing, and Deng sees that his eyes are deserted. Inevitable. And Sam moves past him without saying a word.

INT. MESS HALL - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

30 or 40 adults and children here eating the last meal of the day. And we see Sam in a corner, off from the rest of the group. And maybe it's just the lighting in here, but there's a darkness around him -- literally as if the space surrounding this man is devoid of light.

And we see William working his way through the room... refilling cups with hot tea... his particular job here... and he comes up to Sam and accidentally sloshes some of the tea onto Sam's arm and he *flinches!* -- burned -- "*Damn it!*" -- shoots his arm out and accidentally hits William in the chest -- knocking him backward onto the ground.

The entire room falls silent. Nobody moving.

And Sam gets up and walks out of the room.

INT./EXT. TRUCK/RURAL ROAD - SUDAN - DAY

A convoy of 2 OR 3 AID RELIEF TRUCKS coming down this dirt road. And we see Agnete here with a DRIVER in the first truck as they drive onto a NARROW BRIDGE -- and just before they reach the other side --

A PICKUP TRUCK filled with heavily armed LRA REBELS pulls in front of them, cutting them off.

AGNETE

STOP THE TRUCK! -- STOP!! --

The truck grinding to a halt. The driver becoming terrified, trying to jam the truck into reverse --

AGNETE (CONT'D)

No, no, no! -- don't go back --

DRIVER

WE ARE GOING TO DIE! -- THEY WILL KILL US!

AGNETE

You move and they'll shoot! -- calm down!
-- I will talk to them.

Agnete climbing out of the truck as we go --

EXT. NARROW BRIDGE - SUDAN - DAY

Rebels jumping out of the pickup truck and moving up the bridge as Agnete approaches -- holding up her hands --

AGNETE

It's ok -- we are a relief convoy --

Agnete and the LRA LEADER meet in the middle of the bridge --

AGNETE (CONT'D)

We have only medical supplies -- non-
military --

And suddenly the LRA LEADER slams her in the gut with the butt of his rifle and she collapses. The other Rebels swarm all over the convoy, pulling out AID WORKERS and DRIVERS, forcing them onto their knees in a group.

ADULT REBEL #3

Get on your knees!... Get down!...

DRIVER

PLEASE DON'T KILL US!

ADULT REBEL #4

(Arabic)

On your knees or we will take your legs!

Everyone terrified -- some of them sobbing -- Agnete looking up, trying to talk to the LRA LEADER--

AGNETE

We are only a relief convoy --

LRA LEADER

Shut your mouth!

-- and he SLAMS her in the face with the butt of his rifle and she goes down hard... and he rests the barrel of his rifle on the back of her head... he's going to shoot her -- and --

KAK! KAK! KAK!

His chest EXPLODES! -- three bursts from behind -- the other rebels spinning toward the gunshots as --

KRATAKRATAKRATAKRAK!!!

A firestorm of lead -- Sam, Deng, and the rest of his team coming onto the bridge shooting -- rebels scrambling for cover but it's too late -- dropping as they try and sprint away -- and in an instant it's all over.

Agnete sees Sam, rushes toward him, but when he looks at her she freezes. He is completely unrecognizable to her in this moment -- a killer's thousand-yard stare -- barely human -- more like a machine than a man.

And he moves past her down the bridge, to the LRA LEADER on the ground who is still alive. And he puts the barrel of his rifle against the rebel's head and...

BOOOOM!

He's dead. Just like that. And he continues walking up the bridge. And we see Agnete, Deng and the other soldiers having just witnessed this.

INT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

William coming in quietly, moving next to one of the captured Rebels from the previous scene who is shackled to a bed, injured. Two SPLA soldiers here standing guard.

WILLIAM

(Arabic)

I want to ask you something...

William pulls out the photograph of his brother, holds it up...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

This is my brother. His name is Christopher. He was stolen by the rebels.

(beat)

Do you know if he is alive?

The Rebel looks at the photograph but says nothing, just shakes his head... and he looks off, his thousand yard stare inscrutable...

And William simply folds the photograph back up and slips it into his pocket... but he doesn't leave... he sits here a moment longer... quietly... thinking... and then...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Were you taken when you were young like me?

The Rebel hears this and turns to him... and nods his head...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Do you remember your parents?

And we see something happening in this hardened rebel... his eyes filling with a distant memory... a sadness... and slowly he nods his head again.

And we stay here with these two lost souls sitting next to each other... silent... connected by a shared history and anguish.

EXT. CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY - LATER

Sam sitting alone, lost to the world around him. Deng approaches. Neither one acknowledging the other for a long beat until...

DENG
 Do you hear that, Preacher?

SAM
 What?

DENG
 There is no more laughter. The children do not play here anymore. They are scared once again.
 (beat)
 But now they are scared of you.

Sam, no response.

DENG (CONT'D)
 The men do not trust you any longer to lead them into battle. They say you have a wish to die.
 (beat)
 I am worried about my friend. I want to help him.

SAM
 I don't need your help.

And Sam turns away. After a beat Deng walks off, leaving him alone once again.

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

And we see Sam here in the dark... moonlight filtering in through the thatched roof... like shards of glass cutting through the blackness... and he doesn't look right here... soul worn thin... eyes hollow... starting to go someplace very bad...

... IMAGES FLASHING IN HIS HEAD... babies burned and screaming... Donnie in his coffin... and we realize we're watching something here... his world starting to cave in on him...

... and he drops against his cot... distraught... tears in his eyes and this man is breaking... and suddenly we see a gun in his hand... finger curling around the trigger as he puts it to his head... eyes closing against the world... and...

WE HEAR A KNOCK AT HIS DOOR

Sam frozen... still holding the gun... and slowly the door pushes open and we hear soft footsteps shuffling into this dark room...

... and William steps into the light, sees Sam here on the ground with the gun in his hand... and slowly he moves next to him, sitting on the cot without saying a word... just the two of them here for a moment... and then slowly he begins in perfect English...

WILLIAM

I remember my parents when I sleep. I see them in my dreams sometimes.

Sam looking to William... this small boy sitting above him... telling his story...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

My father was big like you. They shot him. We were so scared. Then the rebels gave me a club and told me if I didn't kill my mother they would shoot my brother and me.

And William pauses in his story... lost in this memory... his face becoming a mask of pain... but no tears... there are no more tears in this young man left to be shed... and so he continues...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I refused, but my mother told me to swing hard... that I must make her proud...

(beat)

And so I did. I made her proud.

And now William looks down at Sam... staring at this man on the ground... and he reaches out and gently touches Sam's head... a moment of tenderness for both of them... an act of love.... these two broken souls finding each another here... and William says...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

If we allow ourselves to become full of hate then they've won. We must not let them take our hearts. This is the most important thing.

And Sam sets the gun down and reaches out to William, pulls him into an embrace... holding him close... and we know that without a doubt this boy has saved this man's life.

INT. CHILDERS' HOUSE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY- CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

Soft Christian music is playing on the radio. Lynn folding clothes in the laundry room when the phone rings. Paige comes into the upstairs hallway and answers it.

PAIGE
(quiet, into phone)
Hello?

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

Sam on his sat phone --

SAM
Bug? You there?

INT. CHILDERS' HOUSE - CENTRAL CITY, PENN. - NIGHT

PAIGE
Dad?

SAM
Yeah, it's me.

PAIGE
You ok?

SAM
I'm ok, Bug.

And there's a long pause... so much to say but no words to say it... each of them holding their phones to their ears and just listening... and finally Sam says...

SAM (CONT'D)
I'm thinkin of a tree...

And we see tears well up in Paige's eyes when she hears this... and now we see Lynn coming around the corner, overhearing them as they begin their little game one more time...

PAIGE
You said tree... I'm thinkin of a knee.

Sam smiling to himself... and we realize this man is coming back to life when he says...

SAM
You said knee, I'm thinkin of bee...
(beat)
I love you, Bug.

PAIGE
I love you too, Daddy.

Lynn hearing this and tears roll down her cheeks as we go...

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - NEXT DAY

And we see the soldiers at their posts... Betty and the other Camp Women cleaning clothes and preparing food... and we see most of the children loitering around a tree in the shade, sullen, not playing on the playground.

And then we see Sam coming into the courtyard kicking a soccer ball... some of the children see him and point... and slowly the entire camp begins to notice Sam kicking the soccer ball awkwardly by himself out in the open... Betty and the other women stopping their chores and watching him, speaking to one another in Arabic...

Deng and the other soldiers staring as Sam pops the ball into the air and bounces it off his head...

... and now a couple of the smaller kids sprint for him and he kicks them the ball... and slowly the rest of the children join in the fun... kicking the ball back and forth... an impromptu soccer game... and then we hear LAUGHTER again... joy flooding back into this place.

Deng watching with a big smile as this white man dances around these little children... a Pied Piper of joy... playing in the dirt.

EXT. FRONT GATE - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY - LATER

And we see William approach a knot of soldiers standing by the front gate smoking cigarettes...

WILLIAM
Excuse me...

SPLA SOLDIER #3
What is it?

WILLIAM
Is it true an LRA commander was captured last night?

Soldiers nodding their heads "yes."

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Where is he being held?

SPLA SOLDIER #3
At the army base in Kisoro.

WILLIAM
Are you going there?

SPLA SOLDIER #3

Yes.

WILLIAM

Can I ride with you?

SPLA SOLDIER #3

Why do you want to go to Kisoro?

WILLIAM

I want to ask the commander something.

SPLA SOLDIER #3

No, you cannot ride with us. Wait till tomorrow and go with the women on the bus.

And the soldiers turn their backs on William and he slinks away.

EXT. RIVERBANK - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

We see a line of women along the riverbank in their colorful dresses... scrubbing pans and washing clothes... singing an ancient African spiritual as they work... the sun dropping pale red on the horizon...

And we see Sam here too... alone with himself... sitting at the river's edge, watching the water rolling gently past... listening to the soft serenade of the women... the beauty of it all...

... and then he gets up and walks into the river... and he kneels down so that water reaches his waist (reminiscent of his first baptism in scene #35)... and now the women on the riverbank stop their work, watching him as he closes his eyes and gently leans back... submitting to the water... and when he comes up again we see in his eyes that his soul has been saved in this simple act.

And the women begin to shout their praise from the riverbank as we go...

INT. DORM - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

And we see William here alone, pulling out a small satchel... filling it with a bottle of water and a blanket...

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANAGE - DAY

William at the edge of the compound... looking over his shoulder to make sure nobody is watching him... and then quickly slipping under the fence and he's gone...

EXT. BUSH - DUSK

William walking through the dry scrub alone... already a couple miles deep in the bush... the sun starting to set... light waning... William starting to get nervous, picking up his pace...

AND THEN THE SOUND OF MEN

A squad of LRA rebels coming through the scrub... William hiding under a bush, terrified... the men coming closer... no idea if they saw him or not... his mind racing... voices getting louder... starting to hyper-ventilate from the fear -- and --

WILLIAM BOLTS

Sprinting through the bush -- running for his life -- rebels see him -- yelling for him to stop -- chasing him down -- shooting their rifles into the air and he hits the ground in the fetal position -- too terrified to continue -- eyes clamped shut as 4 or 5 rebels surround him -- guns pointed at his head -- caught.

INT. INFIRMARY - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DUSK

Sam coming into the building, finding Betty tending to a sick child.

SAM

Have you seen William?

Betty shaking her head "no", and we see the worry on Sam's face... intuitively knows something is wrong.

INT. LRA TRUCK - DRIVING - DUSK

William bound and gagged being dragged through the bush by 5 or 6 rebels... and one of the rebels sees him staring at them and he brings the butt of his Kalishnikov down hard -- striking William on the head as we go --

EXT. OFFICE - CHILDREN'S ORPHANAGE - DUSK

Deng coming up to Sam...

DENG

Some of the soldiers said he was asking about the commander that is being held at *Kismoro*.

Sam closing his eyes, knows instantly what William has done.

SAM

Get em on the phone, see if he's shown up at the base yet.

EXT. LRA CAMP - DEEP IN THE BUSH - NIGHT

William shoved through the bush... moving deeper into this rebel encampment... dark and otherworldly... figures moving around camp fires... laughing... men with little girls... their child wives... with pregnant bellies... and incongruously the sound of American rap music coming from a jambox somewhere.

The overriding sense we get from this place is one of '*insanity*.'

And William is dragged to a clearing next to a grouping of tents and he's kicked to the dirt... two other soldiers pinning him to the ground as a third grabs his feet and pulls off his shoes... William YELLING and now a handful of other LRA soldiers start to gather around... most of them only a few years older than him... watching as his ankles are bound together and placed on a wooden block...

... and now another soldier steps forward with an AXE... and the crowd whips into bloodlust... shouting... cheering...

AND THE SOLDIER LIFTS THE AXE INTO THE AIR --

WILLIAM WRITHING ON THE GROUND BUT CAN'T GET FREE --

AND THE SOLDIER STARTS TO BRING THE BLADE DOWN -- AND --

VOICE (O.S.)

(Arabic)

Stop!

The soldier freezes -- everyone turning as an LRA COMMANDER comes through the crowd -- takes the axe from the soldier --

SOLDIER

He ran from us.

COMMANDER

He is worth nothing with no feet. Put him with the others until tomorrow.

EXT. COMPOUND - CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ORPHANGE - NIGHT

Deng hustling up to Sam... shaking his head...

DENG

They have not see the boy.

SAM

Ok. Get Nineteen and Marco -- we're gonna go look for him.

EXT. LRA CAMP - DEEP IN THE BUSH - NIGHT

And we see William in a bamboo cell in the center of camp... and we see other children here... in various stages of fear and suffering... some of them completely naked... shivering in the cool air... others catatonic, probably doped up or too battered to move.

INT. SUV - DRIVING - NIGHT

Sam, Deng, Nineteen and Marco in this lead truck... been out here for hours... behind them we see the second camp truck following...

And they come to a fork in the road, pulling to a stop.

DENG

It will be light soon. What do you want to do?

Sam looking at a topo map on his lap...

SAM

Let's go through *Maridi*, see if they've seen anything.

EXT. LRA CAMP - DEEP IN THE BUSH - DAWN

Pale yellow sun breaking and we see William and a line of 10 or 12 other children -- shackled in iron -- being loaded into the back of a TRANSPORT TRUCK.

INT. SUV - DAWN

Both SUV's parked off the side of the road now. Sam and Deng here, looking at maps and the GPS tracker. And we hear Deng's radio *squawk*. He digs it out, responds in Arabic, then turns to Sam...

DENG

The village outside of *Akot* says an LRA caravan came through there an hour ago. They were headed for *Ed Duim*.

INT./EXT. - LRA CONVOY/BUSH - DEEP IN SUDAN - DAY

A convoy of 4 or 5 LRA trucks barreling down this dirt track. And we see lots of rebels standing up in the back of these trucks, cradling heavy weapons, alert -- and suddenly we see in the distance --

TWO ROOSTER-TAILS OF DUST COMING AT US

From different angles -- converging on the LRA convoy -- the Rebels see them and point -- they know what's coming and they begin to prepare for war --

THE ROOSTER-TAILS

Getting closer -- and then we see them --

SAM'S TWO TRUCKS

Bouncing over the terrain towards us -- coming fast -- and then --

WOOOOSH!

An RPG streaks toward the lead LRA truck and -- *KABOOOM!* -- the truck is blown off it's axles -- the other LRA trucks pulling off the road -- and suddenly we're in a withering firefight -- the roar of heavy weapons at full-tilt.

SAM AND HIS MEN

Jumping out of their trucks and flanking the LRA convoy -- triangulating fire -- shredding the rebels -- blowing them back off their feet.

NINETEEN

Sprinting through the bush -- edging around the LRA trucks -- finding a position on their weak side and locking an RPG into a launcher -- shouldering it -- aiming -- *WOOOOSH!* -- the missile streaking toward the second LRA jeep and --

KABOOOM!

It's blasted into the air -- onto it's side -- rebels scurrying away from the wreckage -- still firing -- an absolute hail of lead -- AK's barking in every direction --

KRATAKRATAKRATAKRATAKRAKKK!

One of the rebels standing up -- firing an RPG -- *WOOOOOSH!*

MARCO crouched behind the new orphanage truck firing -- sees the white streak coming at him -- dives -- just as --

THE TRUCK IS EVISCERATED IN THE BLAST!

SAM moving closer to the rebels -- shooting -- picking them off one by one -- gunfire raking over his head -- a dozen muzzle flashes coming from everywhere -- Sam yelling over the thunder --

SAM

Go! -- Go! -- Go! -- Go!

And we see Deng coming out of the bush to his right -- and then Nineteen to his left -- and they charge on the remaining rebels -- Sam providing covering fire -- a curtain of lead cutting through the enemy -- and just like that it's over -- Sam waving behind him --

SAM (CONT'D)

Cease fire!!

-- and suddenly there's just a sick silence -- smoke rising from the shot-to-shit LRA trucks -- bodies strewn in the dirt -- the brand new orphanage truck bombed out and smoking on it's side.

And Sam makes his way to the first TRANSPORT TRUCK -- Deng covering him as he rips the canvas back to see --

50 CHILDREN CRAMMED INTO THE BACK OF THIS TRUCK

SAM (CONT'D)

Pull em all out! C'mon, let's go!

DENG

(to Soldiers, Arabic)

Take them out.

Soldiers start to unload the children --

SAM
Cut them loose!

DENG
(to soldier, Arabic)
Cut the ropes!

Sam moves to the second TRANSPORT TRUCK, rips the canvas back to find --

50 MORE CHILDREN SHACKLED IN THE BACK OF THIS TRUCK

Holy fuck indeed.

He's been here before... 100 kids and he only has one good vehicle... and we watch him standing here... staring at these tiny faces looking back at him... a moment... lost in indecision until one of the kids stands up near the back...

IT'S WILLIAM

Sam sees him and suddenly he knows exactly what he needs to do...

SAM
C'MON, LET'S GO!... get em out of there
and line em up! -- C'MON! --

And we've seen this before... Sam going through these children... assessing their health... one by one... separating the worse off from the others... forming two group... turning to Deng and Nineteen and motioning to the smaller group (about 15 children)...

SAM (CONT'D)
Load these here into the truck. Put em
three deep if you have to...

Deng herding the children toward the one good truck...

SAM (CONT'D)
(turning to Marco, Arabic)
Come with me --

NEW ANGLE

Sam and Marco moving from one dead LRA rebel to the other... rolling them onto their backs... going through their belts... pulling out extra ammo clips and grenades...

SAM (CONT'D)
Get them AK's too.
(Arabic)
The machine guns.

Marco swinging four or five machine guns onto his shoulder...

NEW ANGLE

At the SUV, now jammed with children. Sam talking to Nineteen, Marco and the others...

SAM (CONT'D)

I need all you to climb up on that roof and keep yer eyes peeled. That road back might be hot, so be ready.

NINETEEN

What about you, Preacher?

VOICE (O.S.)

We're staying.

Sam turns to see Deng next to him, holding an AK in his hands, a steely resolve in his eyes. Sam nods, emboldened by his support.

SAM

(to the soldiers)

Go on. Get outta here.

The soldiers load onto the SUV and drive off, leaving Sam and Deng standing here in the middle of these 85 children.

Waiting for the war that will surely come.

INT. SUV - DRIVING - DAY

And we stay in this truck as it pulls away... driving for a long time... until Sam, Deng, and the children become only specks on the horizon... and then...

WHITE LETTERS ON A BLACK SCREEN THAT READ --

"To this day, Sam Childers fights for the children of Sudan and Northern Uganda."

THE END

LEGENDS:

Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army continue their reign of terror in Sudan and Northern Uganda.

Amnesty International estimates that Kony and the LRA are responsible for over 400,000 murders and more than 40,000 child abductions. These children are tortured, raped, sold into sex slavery, and forced to take part in ritualized killing by LRA commanders.

The Islamic Government of Sudan continues to provide weapons and safe haven to Kony and the LRA as part of a deal to wage a proxy war against the predominately Christian South.

Without pressure from the United States, this support will continue and more innocent children will be slaughtered.

Now you know.

As of 2011, Sam Childers has rescued over 800 children from the LRA. His 'Angels of East Africa Orphanage' is home to more than 300 orphans, and feeds over 1200 meals a day to neighboring villagers in need.

To get involved go to:

<http://www.angelsfeastafrica.org/>

or visit:

<http://www.machinegunpreacher.org/>

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