

Yamussa

Written by

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EXT. AFRICAN SAVANNA WOODLAND I - DAY

The sun is setting in the sky above a dry savanna-woodland. The cool night is slowly being replaced by the hot and dusty morning.

A breeze shakes the yellow grass of the savanna and gently moves green-leaf trees of the thick woodland nearby.

AFRICAN PARADISE FLYCATCHERS,

BEE-EATERS,

and OTHER COLORFUL BIRDS are SINGING in CHORUS.

A SHRILL TRUMPET scares the birds away.

A MASSIVE FEMALE AFRICAN SAVANNA ELEPHANT effortlessly walks from the woodland to the grassland.

Following her, A DOZEN ELEPHANTS make their way between the trees.

The young ones follow the adults in a playful mood.

The entire group of elephants is now in the open, moving through the grassland at a slow pace.

The scene is peaceful.

SUDDENLY, the massive female elephant stops and softly trumpets. She raises her trunk, smelling the air.

We now see the elephants are being observed by SEVEN TURBANED GUNMEN (20-45, light-skin African men), wearing plain desert clothes and carrying AKM assault rifles. The gunmen are hiding in the tall grass.

All the elephants stop walking.

The elephants nervously GRUNT.

KHALID, the most imposing gunman, suddenly stands up, immediately followed by the six other gunmen. They all FIRE at the elephants!

Two elephants immediately collapse. The rest of the group runs back towards the woodland, CRYING LOUDLY!

Another three elephants are shot and fall down.

Three gunmen follow the dispersing elephants until the entrance of the woodland. They keep on spraying their bullets through the woods.

Gun shots stop.

Elephants' CRIES are heard fading off as the surviving elephants run deeper into the woodland.

The three gunmen enter the woodland.

Five dying adult elephants are lying in the grassland.

Their CRIES are muffled by the blood coming out of their mouths and trunks.

The remaining four gunmen in the grassland congratulate each other. Khalid is still carrying his rifle but two other gunmen are now bare-chested carrying axes. Another bare-chested gunman has a chainsaw. They look at the dying giants.

Khalid approaches a baby elephant crying near an adult lying on all fours. The adult elephant is crippled by opened wounds on the flanks and limbs.

As Khalid gets closer, the baby elephant cries louder. Khalid aims at the baby and kills it. The crippled adult TRUMPETS LOUDLY!

The gunmen with axes start cutting the skulls of the adult elephants, trying to reach for the base of the ivory tusks. The dying giants are still breathing when BLOOD starts pouring.

The three gunmen come back from the woodland. They speak Arabic.

ONE OF THE THREE GUNMEN

They fled. But their tracks are visible.

KHALID

Let's finish with these ones first.

The gunman with the chainsaw switches it on and starts opening the skull of a dying elephant.

The elephants' cries are covered by the loud chainsaw.

BLOOD flows onto the cracked dry soil.

Elephants' cries are fading away.

TITLE

All dialogues in italics are in French

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ASSOCIATION HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The sun is high in the sky of a city of northern Cameroon. The soil is yellow but the scarce vegetation is green. The streets are mostly used by motorbikes, there are very few cars.

A TOYOTA RAV4 enters in the front yard of a two-story building. On the walls of the building, a mural represents A TREE, GIRAFFES, ELEPHANTS, A LIONESS WITH A CUB, AN ECOGUARD AND SMILING VILLAGERS. The mural is nice, but needs to be refurbished.

The car parks near a DUSTY TIRE-LESS 4X4. VICKY (22, blue-eyed blonde-dyed Caucasian woman) and ROGER (45, African man) get out of the car from the passenger sits. Vicky is beautiful, she has classy touristic clothes and sunglasses. Roger is wearing a cheap suit but looks very sharp.

ROGER
(heavy French
Cameroonian accent)
Welcome to our association's
headquarters, Miss Anderson.

VICKY
(American accent)
Thank you.

ROGER
The whole design was your mother's
idea.

VICKY
I'm pretty sure the mural was
supposed to be refurbished by now.

ROGER
Yes, but remember it was when the
park's headquarters needed more funds
to be finished. So we agreed to use
the money for the mural to dig the
well out there.

VICKY
I must have forgotten.

ROGER
The Regional Delegate should be here
in any minute. Would you want to see
your mum's resting place while we
wait?

Vicky nods.

ROGER (cont'd)
Comes this way.

Roger walks to the backyard, followed by Vicky.

EXT. BACKYARD OF THE ASSOCIATION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

In a backyard with beautifully arranged exterior plants, a NAMELESS CONCRETE TOMB is standing, with GRAVESIDE ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS, in the shade of a tall palm tree.

Vicky and Roger approach the tomb and stand in front of it.

VICKY
This is it?

ROGER
Yes, this is where lies Mrs Anderson,
the Fearless Lioness.

VICKY
It's a beautiful garden. Why is it a
concrete tomb?

ROGER
This is how we burry big people. To
prevent ill-intentioned rituals.

Vicky does not seem to get it.

ROGER (cont'd)
Witch-craft. With body parts.

VICKY
Oh, God!

Silence.

A warm wind blows the leaves of the shrubs and the trees.

VICKY (cont'd)
Okay, thank you.

ROGER
Won't you say a few words?

VICKY
No, I'm alright.

ROGER
It is the tradition. You need to talk
to your mother.

VICKY

Do I?

ROGER

The spirits of our parents are here to guide us. Your mother needs to know you are here to visit her and she will guide you.

VICKY

She is not here anymore. I don't know how I feel about talking to a block of concrete.

Roger looks uncomfortable.

VICKY (cont'd)

But it is nice, thank you for doing this in your tradition. I'm sure she'd appreciate it.

We can hear the sound of a car parking in the front yard.

ROGER

That must be the Regional Delegate.

INT. ASSOCIATION'S OFFICE - DAY

Around a long wooden table in a light blue office, Vicky is sitting with Roger, DOBA (35, dark-skinned African man), ISSIAKOU (35, light-skinned African man), MARCEL (30, African man), NEBA (30, African man), JACKSON (50, dark-skinned African man), MENDOMO (45, African woman). Mendo is on her phone.

Mendo is short but strong looking, with a military sand-colored uniform with medals. Behind her are sitting TWO YOUNG MEN (20-25, African) with slightly oversized cheap suits. Doba, Issiakou and Neba are wearing the green uniform of park ecoguards, while Jackson has humble clothes. Issiakou has a scar on the forehead.

Mendo takes her eyes off her phone.

MENDOMO

(heavy French
Cameroonian accent)

Thank you for this introduction. As Roger said, my name is Mendo Gislene Ernestine, I am the Regional Delegate of the Ministry of Environment and Parks.

(MORE)

MENDOMO (cont'd)

I am very pleased to finally meet you, Miss Anderson, because your mother was a great treasure to all of us. She dedicated her life to our park and we all keep her deeply in our heart. We know from Roger that you have been generously supporting this park, to continue your mother's work and for that we are forever grateful. As you are here, however, I also want to take this opportunity to tell you that the park needs more help. The Government cannot allocate enough funds for effective patrols, which is the base of conservation work. I think the ecoguards present here can add to that. Neba?

Mendomo goes back to her phone.

NEBA

(with an English
Cameroonian accent)

Thank you, Madame the Delegate...

MENDOMO

(taking her eyes of
her phone)

I forgot to mention. Neba is the assistant to the Conservator of the park. The Conservator is not here because I sent him and the rest of the ecoguards to take an oath.

VICKY

What does it mean?

MENDOMO

Ecoguards need to swear in to be qualified to arrest people in the park. These three already swore last time. We needed the rest of the staff to take an oath as well.

VICKY

I see. Well that's good.

MENDOMO

That's good, but expensive.

Mendomo makes a sign to Neba for him to resume talking and goes back to her phone.

NEBA

Thank you, Madame the Delegate. As Madame the Delegate just said, I am the Coordinator of the park. I assist the Conservator to manage the teams over the protected area, to make sure we use our human resources as efficiently as possible. We are working in close collaboration with Mister Roger, through the association. In this sense, we want to thank you for your support.

VICKY

My pleasure.

NEBA

I am with Mister Issiakou, and Mister Doba, both ecoguards of the protected area.

VICKY

Nice meeting you.

Issiakou and Doba greet Vicky.

NEBA

(pointing at Jackson)

And this is Jackson. He doesn't speak English. He is the local guide we take on our inventories in the park.

VICKY

Hi, Jackson.

Jackson smiles at Vicky with a few missing teeth.

VICKY (cont'd)

Speaking of inventories, when was the last one carried out? Last year, right?

NEBA

Yes, we conducted the mammal inventory last year.

VICKY

Did you send me those reports, Roger?

ROGER

Yes, I did.

NEBA

All the reports are here, you can have a look at them.

VICKY

That will be helpful before the field.

MENDOMO

(taking her eyes from her phone)

The field?

ROGER

Miss Anderson wants to visit Yamussa National Park for a couple of days.

MENDOMO

Now?

VICKY

Yes. Well, tomorrow.

MENDOMO

It is not going to be possible.

VICKY

Why is that?

MENDOMO

I just told you, the Conservator is not here.

VICKY

Surely we can go with his Coordinator, can't we?

MENDOMO

The park is not his responsibility. If anything happens, what will he do? No, I am afraid you will have to wait for the Conservator to come back.

VICKY

When will that be?

MENDOMO

The oath will be on Monday. The will be back on Tuesday. Wednesday, you will go to the park.

VICKY

In four days?

MENDOMO

Yes, it is not long.

VICKY

What am I going to do for four days?

ROGER

Even if there was a possibility to go to the park, we couldn't because the Conservator and the ecoguards left with the park's 4x4's.

VICKY

What about this car? It's the car you purchased for the project, right?

ROGER

Yes, indeed.

VICKY

Can't we use it to go to the park?

ROGER

It can, it can, but not during the rainy season. And rain is expected to come at any moment now. We would not want you to be stuck in the middle of the savanna.

VICKY

You bought a car that cannot be used half of the year inside the park?

ROGER

Just for a few months. The rainy season does not last more than a few months, here.

Vicky is boiling inside.

Mendomo puts her phone into her pocket and stands up. The two young men behind Mendomo stand up as well.

MENDOMO

I need to leave for another meeting, now. Neba, you will give Miss Anderson the reports of the activities of the park. And once the Conservator comes back, you will all go to the park together, okay?

NEBA

Yes, Madame.

MENDOMO

Miss Anderson, do not be frustrated.
In four days, you will follow your
mother's tracks in Yamussa.

INT. BAR - EVENING

A large pair of GIANT ELAND'S HORNS is hung on a wall. We can see that the walls of the bar are covered by half a dozen more trophies of antelopes. The ambiance of the bar is warm, the light is weak and the CAMEROONIAN MUSIC played by A DJ (25, African man) is lively. CUSTOMERS (20-55, African and Caucasian men and women) are drinking and dancing to the music.

Vicky, wearing a different outfit, is entering the bar. She goes to the counter and orders a drink.

Vicky sits at the table next to the imposing giant eland's horns. She bitterly looks at them.

The waitress, AZAH (25, African woman), brings Vicky her drink.

VICKY

Thank you.

Vicky is about to pay for the drink.

AZAH

(heavy English
Cameroonian accent)

It's okay, this man over there
already paid.

Azah points at PATRICE (35), a handsome African-Caucasian man, sitting at the bar.

Vicky thanks Patrice in raising her glass.

VICKY

(to herself)

Didn't expect to be recognized here.

AZAH

Oh, I don't think he recognized you.
Patrice likes welcoming newcomers in
town. But, I recognized you, Miss
Vicky.

Vicky is surprised.

AZAH (cont'd)
I hope I am not too straight forward.

VICKY
Not at all. How do you... How do you know me?

Azah looks around and discretely sits at the table.

AZAH
I am a fan of yours.

VICKY
Oh, are you?

AZAH
Yes. I didn't know you were here. You posted a picture from your bedroom this morning.

VICKY
(embarrassed)
Yes, I know, I'm sorry. I didn't want to say I was traveling to Africa. It's more like a personal trip.

AZAH
Of course, I understand. And it's true, your type of content is not well seen, here in Cameroon. But I don't care, I've been one of your fans for a over six months, now.

VICKY
Well, thank you.

AZAH
No, thank you! You've... You've helped us a lot, my husband and I... He doesn't know I follow you, but I have tried to replicate some of the things you do and... Let's just say it's been magical since.

VICKY
I'm very flattered.

AZAH
I can tell you... I'm pregnant!

VICKY
Awh...

AZAH
My husband doesn't know yet, but I'm pregnant. And this is thanks to you.

VICKY
Congratulations!

AZAH
Thank you. I'm Azah.

VICKY
Nice to meet you Azah.

AZAH
I should go back to work. It was great meeting you.

VICKY
Good luck.

Azah goes back to the counter. Vicky smiles.

Patrice approaches Vicky's table with a glass in his hand.

PATRICE
May I?

VICKY
I'm sorry, I don't speak French, but thanks for the drink.

PATRICE
(French accent)
Oh, an American!

Patrice sits.

VICKY
For a French-speaking country, there are a lot of English speaking people.

PATRICE
It's actually a bilingual country. This territory was German and after World War I, it was divided between the English and the French. That being said, it turns out that people from French-speaking Cameroon don't speak English and people from English-speaking Cameroon don't really speak French.

VICKY

You seem to know a lot about
Cameroon, are you from here?

PATRICE

I am indeed. My pops was French, my
mum Cameroonian. What about you?
Traveling on your own?

VICKY

Yes, I arrived today.

PATRICE

(raising his glass)
Cheers to that!

Vicky and Patrice cheer and drink.

PATRICE (cont'd)

(looking at the horns)
Magnificent, aren't they? It's the
most prized trophy you can dream of
in Africa. The largest antelope, but
the hardest to get. It's a real
ghost. And I know the best spot where
you can get them.

ADRIAN (50, black-haired Caucasian), a bulky slightly
intoxicated man, interrupts Patrice.

ADRIAN

(American accent)
Don't listen to him! He's a fucking
liar!

PATRICE

(embarrassed)
Adrian, you're still here?

ADRIAN

You owe me a fucking trophy, you
fucking fraud!

PATRICE

I don't owe you anything.
(to Vicky)
Excuse me...

Patrice stands up and tries to calm Adrian down.

Neba enters the bar. He is still wearing his ecoguard
uniform and carries a pile of documents. Vicky sees him. She
tries to wave at him but Neba does not see her and goes
straight to the counter.

Neba kisses Azah. Vicky sees it. She is surprised, she smiles.

All dialogues between Azah and Neba are in Cameroonian English Pidgin.

AZAH

How did it go at work?

NEBA

I'm still not finished, I have a meeting with our donator here.

AZAH

Great, and when are you going to the field?

NEBA

Not until Wednesday. The Delegate refused us to go to the park in the absence of the Conservator.

AZAH

The Conservator is not here?

NEBA

No, he's in Tcholliré.

AZAH

Neba! This is your chance! You are free to tell the donator about all the problems you are facing here!

NEBA

But we were told not to go.

AZAH

You keep on saying we cannot have kids because of your salary and my small earnings. Show the donator how things work here and convince him to do something about it!

NEBA

I will see what I can do. But it's not a he, it's a she.

AZAH

The donator is a woman?

NEBA

Yes, she's actually a young woman. She should be here any minute.

Neba is scanning the room. He sees Vicky.

NEBA (cont'd)
 Wait, she's here already!
 (waiving at Vicky)
 She's Mrs Anderson's daughter.

Azah sees Vicky waving back at Neba. Azah is embarrassed.

NEBA (cont'd)
 I gotta go.

Neba approaches Vicky's table. Patrice and Adrian are still arguing.

Azah looks at Vicky and places her finger on her mouth.
 Vicky smiles at Azah and nods her head.

NEBA (cont'd)
 (to Vicky)
 I am sorry for being late.

VICKY
 It's alright, it's been entertaining.

NEBA
 Mister Adrian, are you still
 complaining about the hunting party?

ADRIAN
 Why shouldn't I? I paid 30,000 euros
 for a trophy and he only presented me
 medium-sized ones!
 (to Patrice)
 What's wrong with you? I'm a fucking
 record breaker!

NEBA
 I know, Mister Adrian, I know.

ADRIAN
 I hunted a 36-inches bongo last year,
 for God's sake! I will make sure
 everybody knows you're a scam, Mister
 Vivien!
 (to Vicky)
 He is a scam! Don't go to his hunting
 zone, keep your money!

Adrian leaves abruptly.

NEBA
 I'm sorry for the disturbance, Miss
 Anderson.