

Copper Bullets

Based on a True Story

by

Shupiwe Suffolk

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FADE IN:

1 INT. AIRFORCE PLANE, AIRPORT. LIBREVILLE, GABON. NIGHT. 1993 1

SUPERIMPOSE: Libreville, Gabon. Tuesday, 27th April 1993.

A STEWARD walks from the back of a De Havilland Canada DHC-5D Buffalo plane toward the cockpit door. He wears a smart, impeccable Zambian Army corporal uniform.

He passes twenty-five lively, talkative passengers, all part of the Football Association of Zambia, and many empty seats.

The passengers include the young players DAVID CHABALA and KELVIN MUTALE (both early twenties), the journalist JOSEPH SALIM, coaches, assistants, and civil servants.

Some sleep, some talk, some read.

The steward passes two passengers in the front two seats: GODFREY CHITALU (coach, mid sixties) in the window and ALEX CHOLA (assistant coach, late fifties) in the aisle.

The steward reaches for the cabin PA, which he uses to make an announcement.

STEWARD

(on PA to passengers)

I wanted to update you all on our short delay. We're still waiting to get clearance. I'll serve more refreshments in the meantime. Thank you.

The steward puts the interphone back and starts to walk to the back of the plane. A wave of irritation moves through the cabin - hands up, heads shaking.

Godfrey shakes his head and looks out the window.

2 EXT. TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

2

The Buffalo plane sits under harsh floodlights - squat, old, sweating in the humid night.

Beneath the belly: FOUR MECHANICS in greasy overalls. Hands working fast, practiced but not relaxed.

A PANEL is open. Wires. A dark cavity.

Up above, in the front row window, GODFREY CHITALU's face is a pale shape watching them.

One mechanic holds Godfrey's stare, for too long. Then back to work.

3 INT. AIRFORCE PLANE - CONTINUOUS

3

The cabin steward passes out drinks to Godfrey and Alex in the first row.

GODFREY
(To the steward)
Thank you.

Godfrey turns to speak to Alex.

GODFREY CONT'D
Lusaka. Kinshasa. Libreville. We're
touring airports.

ALEX
We'll get there.

GODFREY
Are you sure about that?

Godfrey looks out the window and sees the mechanics again.

GODFREY CONT'D
Ten hours we'll never get back.

At the back of the plane the steward continues to hand out drinks. The players are impatient.

The steward offers David a drink and he takes one.

The steward finishes serving drinks and goes to the back of the plane.

One of the passengers, JOSEPH SALIM (journalist, wearing reporter's jacket, late thirties), has been quietly observing, taking notes on a small notepad.

He spots an empty seat next to David Chabala. He gets up and walks toward the seat.

JOSEPH
David. Got time for some questions?

DAVID
Sure.

Joseph sits down next to David.

Kelvin, a few rows ahead, overhears this and makes his way over to join their discussion.

He sits on an arm rest nearby, casually playing with a football.

JOSEPH
Big game. You look calm.

DAVID
I always look calm.

JOSEPH
And are you?

David glances toward the window. The mechanics. Then back.

DAVID

My wife says goalkeepers don't get
to be nervous.

(beat)

Too many people depend on us.

Joseph studies him. That lands.

KELVIN

(cutting in)

Ask Klinsman. He scored three times
against David in Seoul!

JOSEPH

What do you tell the kids who want
to be you one day?

DAVID

Kuiposafye.

KELVIN

THROW YOURSELF!

They all laugh at this.

As he says this, there is an audible ping from the front of
the plane and a light goes on.

The steward picks up the cabin PA at the back of the plane
and has a brief inaudible conversation.

Joseph looks toward the front of the plane and then returns
to the conversation.

KELVIN CONT'D

Joseph. Do you want to know David's
real trick?

JOSEPH

Sure.

KELVIN

Witchcraft!

DAVID

(giggling)

My juju!

They all laugh in response. They are interrupted by the
pilot and the SOUNDS of the engines.

PILOT

This is the captain. We've got
clearance. Take your seats and
fasten your seat belts. We'll be
moving soon.

The players cheer and clap loudly.

Kelvin returns to his seat, tossing the football into an empty seat.

The steward passes through the cabin doing one final check.

The players get ready for take off, Joseph returns to his seat. They fasten their seat belts.

A vibration.

For too long.

David glances at Kelvin.

DAVID
You feel that?

David looks toward the cockpit. Then back at Kelvin.

KELVIN
Yeah.
(beat)
It's fine.

The steward takes his seat at the front of the plane near the door and puts on his seatbelt.

A YOUNG PLAYER stares out of the window.

His reflection in the glass.

4 EXT. DUSTY PRACTICE FIELD. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

4

A ragged patch of grass. Faded goals.

A GROUP OF BOYS - aged twelve to sixteen - chase an old football across the dirt with the type of fury that only boys who have something to prove can muster.

Shirts vs skins. Bare feet. Dust rising with every touch.

The ball breaks loose down the right flank.

One player chases it. Faster than the rest.

Sharper. Low center of gravity.

Moving like the ball belongs to them and the others just haven't accepted it yet.

They dummy past the first defender. Clean. Then the second. Cleaner.

The player doesn't hesitate. Shoots. It curls. Upper corner. In.

The teammates erupt. From the edge of the pitch, one voice cuts through all the others.

SAMSON
(grinning)
That's my sister.

The player turns. This is NELLIE, fifteen. Catching her breath, sweat on her face, dust on her knees - and completely unsurprised by the goal she just scored.

SAMSON, nineteen, Nellie's brother, stocky and easy with his joy, is already jogging toward her. The boys around him make space - they always do for him.

NELLIE
(catching her breath)
You're late.

SAMSON
Not too late to see your curl. Ku chalo.

NELLIE
Ku chalo.

Nellie and Samson fist bump hard - the way they always have. They briefly hug. The kind of hug that has a whole childhood in it.

SAMSON
Mum's been cooking all day.

NELLIE
She always does. Especially before a big game. Tiyeni.

Nellie fist bumps the other players as she turns to leave with her brother.

SAMSON
They're already on their way.

NELLIE
Already?

SAMSON
Charles Junior saw them take off at the airport.

NELLIE
Come on. She'll be tired.

Nellie and Samson walk off the pitch together. He puts his arm around her neck, showing love without thinking.

5 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 5

A small house holding more than it was built for. Furniture that was once new and elegant. A television in the corner, loud and flickering.

CHARLES JR, seventeen, is cross-legged on the floor six inches from the screen, close enough that the light from it moves across his face. He hasn't blinked in two minutes.

Nellie and Samson enter. Nellie still in her football clothes, dusty at the knees. She drops her ball by the door - exactly where she always drops it - and looks at the screen.

Charles Jr does not turn from the TV.

CHARLES JR
I saw them from airport road.

Nobody answers. He doesn't need them to.

On screen: news footage of the Chipolopolo squad boarding the buffalo plane at Lusaka International Airport. Supporters waving flags. Players grinning at cameras. Kelvin playing with a football in his hands. A reporter, DENNIS LIWEWE, late fifties, speaks over the noise.

DENNIS (ON TV)
And there they go. Our Chipolopolo. Our Copper Bullets. Who left earlier today, on their way to Senegal, and, God willing, on their way to the World Cup.

CHARLES JR
That's Kelvin. That's him right there.

Nellie and Samson slouch onto the sofas.

CHARLES JR
Kelvin waved.
(beat)
Like he saw us.

Dennis is now talking about the qualifier. Senegal. What would it mean. The whole nation holding its breath.

6 EXT. LIBREVILLE RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS 6

The Buffalo's PROPELLERS cough into motion - then CATCH - becoming a blur that chews the air.

The ground crew move with practiced efficiency. One kneels, checks a wheel. Another tugs a cable, gives a nod.

Then, they peel away from the aircraft, efficient, quick.

A MARSHALL raises glowing batons, guiding the plane.

The plane begins to move toward the runway and gain speed.

The mechanics watch it go. Quiet. Fixed.

The plane's lights flash in streaks as the aircraft gains momentum.

The runway lights stretch ahead like beads on a wire. Ocean beyond: pure black.

7 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

7

From the kitchen, the sound of pots. Rhythmic, vigorous. The kind of cooking that is also something else.

Nellie gets up and leaves the room.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)

Supper's ready!

Samson and Charles Jr don't move. Nellie returns with plates and glasses.

CHARLES JR

(to Nellie)

Will they win?

Nellie places the plates and glasses on the table.

NELLIE

Yes.

CHARLES JR

You always say that.

NELLIE

Then don't ask.

SAMSON

Ask me. Future captain of Zambia.

Nellie and Charles Jr ignore this. They turn toward the door, toward the SOUND of a car engine.

CHARLES JR

Dad's home.

ELIZABETH (forties, tired, gray) enters carrying a pot of nshima. She moves carefully and slowly. She places the food on the table. Her left hand leans on the table longer than it needs to.

Nellie notices. She doesn't say anything.

CHARLES (forties, gray) enters through the front door. His suit was once sharp, once new, his briefcase also fading with age. Charles loosens his tie and makes his way to his

favorite chair.

The family greets him almost in unison.

Elizabeth looks at him with impatience.

DENNIS (ON TV)
And we wish them God's speed.
Zambia is on their way.

8 EXT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

8

Inside the cockpit - the PILOTS glow green from the instrument light. Calm hands. A checklist page is torn away and clipped.

ATC (V.O.)
(Crackling over the
radio)
Libreville Tower, you're cleared
for takeoff.

PILOT
Loud and clear. Good for takeoff.

The throttles push forward. The engines BITE.

9 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

9

CHARLES
There they go.

NELLIE
They'll be back soon.

ELIZABETH
Let's pray they win.

Elizabeth and Nellie leave the room.

CHARLES
Samson. Take your feet off the
coffee table. Bring me a beer.

Samson does as he's told. Nellie and Elizabeth return with food and water for washing hands and drinking. Samson returns with the beer.

Elizabeth starts serving the food, helped by Nellie.

ELIZABETH
(to Nellie)
How did you play today?

CHARLES
She always plays well.

The family eat in the particular silence of people who love each other and are also, in ways none of them have words for

yet, already losing each other.

On the television, the reporter wraps up the coverage. The camera follows the plane as it taxis toward the runway. It becomes smaller. Then smaller still.

CHARLES JR
(Under his breath)
Zambia ku chalo.

Nobody else looks up from their food.

10 EXT. RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS 10

The BUFFALO surges. The runway lights smear into streaks.

Fifty knots. Ninety.

The wheels leave the ground.

And the aircraft climbs into the ink-black sky over the coast.

Then -

A tiny, ugly stutter in the aircraft's rhythm.

Not loud. Worse - subtle.

11 EXT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS 11

A NEEDLE twitches. A light FLUTTERS.

The nose dips slightly. Then more.

12 INT. AIRFORCE PLANE - CONTINUOUS 12

The passengers glance at each other. They feel the plane lurch down. They notice vibrations.

Some clutch onto the seats in front of them.

13 EXT. NIGHT SKY - CONTINUOUS 13

The aircraft banks sharply.

The right engine stops.

Then the left one.

Lights carve across cloud.

14 EXT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS 14

Alarms begin to SHRIEK from within.

The plane drops lower.

A WARNING ALARM SCREAMS.

- 15 EXT. NIGHT SKY - CONTINUOUS 15
- Blinking lights reflect on the black water of the Atlantic.
The wing CLIPS the water.
- WHITE.
- SMASH CUT TO:
- 16 INT. TV STUDIO. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 16
- Silence.
- DENNIS LIWEWE, balding, mid-fifties, sits frozen at the desk.
- A sign on the desk reads: "Dennis Liwewe. Sports Desk. Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation."
- He opens his mouth.
- Nothing.
- Looks down.
- Blinks.
- TITLES
- 17 EXT. STREET. MUFULIRA, THE COPPERBELT, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1978 17
- SUPERIMPOSE: Mufulira, Zambia. 1978.
- A young BUSKER strums the opening chords of "Tiyende Pamodzi" on a battered guitar. He sits on an overturned beer crate, his back against the wall of a clothes shop.
- His flip flops dusty, trousers rolled at the ankles, a worn old white singlet tucked in. An old hat shades his eyes.
- As the melody takes shape, the world around him slowly unfolds: A bustling small-town street.
- One-story stores - a butcher, a tailor, a bookstore - line the dusty road.
- Smartly dressed shoppers exit with shopping bags in hand.
- He starts singing.
- BUSKER (O.S.)
(Singing)
Tiyende Pamodzi ndim'tima umo,
Tiyende Pamodzi ndim'tima umo...
(Let's go together, with our team)
- Across the street, parked cars bake in the sun.

A man reads a newspaper from the driver's seat, legs hanging casually out of the door; women in bright chitenges sit on the ground, selling tomatoes, spinach, green mangoes, onions, dried fish, and maize meal.

In the distance, two long perpendicular walls frame a football pitch - the sounds of a match echo faintly across the town.

18 EXT. DUSTY FIELD. MUFULIRA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1978

18

The busker's song continues OFFSCREEN - faint, hopeful.

Around twenty boys, aged fourteen to eighteen, play with total abandon, Barefoot. Dust rising with every step. Shirts vs. Skins.

The music fades.

The SOUNDS of the match take over; shouts, laughter, the THUD of the ball, the rhythm of bare feet on the dry ground.

Among them KALUSHA BWALYA (fifteen), stands out - lean, and focused. Shirtless, in newish shorts, eyes fixed on the ball.

Kalusha dribbles with power and precision, gliding toward the goal. A DEFENDER lunges in - Kalusha shifts the ball from right foot to left, then back again. A burst of speed. The defender stumbles as he is outmaneuvered.

The football pitch stretches alongside weathered walls painted with faded adverts.

Fresh posters of KENNETH KAUNDA are plastered over the walls.

Another wall bears the rough outline of a goalpost drawn in charcoal. Opposite it, a second "goal" is marked by a row of discarded clothes.

Two small boys in torn school uniforms sit on top of the wall, cheering wildly.

Another defender charges Kalusha, who grins as he threads it through the defender's legs.

The grin drives him toward the charcoal goal.

BOY ON WALL 1

Kalusha! Tiye!

Kalusha reaches the charcoal goalpost on the wall. David, the goalkeeper and now eighteen, stands between him and the goal.

He swings his right leg and strikes the ball with precision.

David dives the wrong way.

The ball hits the wall. It's in.

BOY ON WALL 1+BOY ON WALL 2
Gooooooooooooooooaaaaaaaal!

Kalusha's teammates rush him, lifting him in celebration, laughter and cheers echoing across the dusty field.

19 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1978 19

A dapper man rushes down the corridor.

This is CHARLES (early thirties), receding hairline, impeccably dressed - smart suit, handkerchief in the pocket, glasses perched perfectly, radiating confidence.

He clutches a bunch of flowers in one hand and a football in the other.

He has been here before - he knows where to go.

20 EXT. DUSTY FIELD - CONTINUOUS 20

David is downhearted. The ball bounces off the wall after Kalusha's goal and rolls toward him.

David retrieves the ball, and jogs back toward the group.

DERBY MAKINKA is among them, fourteen, the youngest of the boys, but tall, strong, and already commanding presence.

DERBY
Chabala, you saving one today?

KALUSHA
Give him a break Derby.

From the edge of the group, HARRISON CHONGO, fifteen, has been watching Kalusha's goal not with admiration but with assessment. The way a player watches tape.

HARRISON
(to no one in particular)
He got lucky. The defender slipped.

KALUSHA
(not looking at him)
The ball still went in.

HARRISON
Going in isn't the same as being good.

Kalusha looks at him now. A long beat. Then Kalusha picks up the ball and passes it to Kelvin, who plays with it nonchalantly.

KALUSHA
Let's go again. Kelvin start it.

DAVID

If you all played properly, I'd
have nothing to save.

BENJAMIN BWALYA JR (seventeen), Kalusha's older brother,
joins in, playfully shoving David. Kalusha turns to walk
off.

The boys follow Kalusha and return to the set.

Kelvin holds onto the ball, a small smile tugging at his
lips. He tosses it to Harrison.

Harrison places the ball down carefully. He rests his foot
on it. He waits for them to take their places. He is ready
to restart the game.

21 INT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

21

Charles bursts into the room.

Four beds fill the space. In one, ELIZABETH (also in her
thirties), his wife, cradles a newborn in her arms.

Joy and relief fill the room as Charles takes in the sight
of his wife and child.

CHARLES

Liz! Sorry I'm late.

Charles stops when he sees the baby.

ELIZABETH

Not what you were expecting?

Charles smiles and it is completely genuine.

They share a quick kiss. Charles puts down the flowers, but
holds on to the football.

CHARLES

A girl. A beautiful baby girl.

ELIZABETH

And what are you going to do with
that football?

He gently places the football beside his wife and daughter.

CHARLES

It's hers. Look at her.

Elizabeth passes her daughter to Charles.

ELIZABETH

Nellie. Let's call her Nellie.

CHARLES

Perfect. Nellie my center forward.

Elizabeth shakes her head, laughing softly.

22 EXT. BUS STATION. MUFULIRA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1978

22

Kalusha, his brother Benjamin Jr, his brother JOEL BWALYA (six), and their mother ELIDAH BWALYA (around forty) wait at bus station. Sounds of birds, afternoon heat, and silence.

The boys wear suits - proud, a little too formal for the heat - kicking a small football back and forth.

Elidah, elegant in her outfit and poise, sits on a bench beneath a large Jacaranda tree. Purple blossoms scatter across the dusty ground like confetti.

A bus stop manager at the ticket window, half-hidden behind a newspaper. Commuters mill about; a few wait patiently in the shade.

Far down the road, a bus appears in the distance, a shimmer of heat dancing around as it approaches.

ELIDAH

Boys. The bus is coming.

The bus stop manager lowers his newspaper, squinting toward the approaching bus.

BUS STOP MANAGER

(Shouting)

LUSAKA BUS ARRIVING!

ELIDAH

(To the boys)

Your father will be tired.

The bus rumbles closer, dust swirling around its tires as it slows to turn into the station.

People gather near the lane, shading their eyes from the sun.

Kalusha and Benjamin Jr move forward, excitement on their faces. A few steps behind, Elidah stands with Joel, holding his hand as they watch.

The bus comes to a stop. The door swings open.

Kalusha and Benjamin Jr dart toward the steps, craning their necks to look inside - searching for their father.

Behind the wheel, the bus driver glances into the rear-view mirror, watching passengers disembark.

He spots the two boys by the door.

The driver turns, frowning - a flash of irritation crossing his face.

BUS DRIVER 1

(To the boys)

Move out the way! Let the people
out!

The two boys step back from the doorway, making room as passengers begin to file out.

A mix of faces - young and old, rich and poor - descend the steps, weary from travel, grateful for shade.

After about twenty people have passed, a final figure appears at the door.

BENJAMIN BWALYA (late thirties), dignified in a sharp suit, steps down carefully, a small suitcase in each hand.

KALUSHA AND BENJAMIN JR

DAD!

BENJAMIN

Benji! Kalu!

Benjamin has barely touched the ground when Kalusha and Benjamin Jr rush toward him, throwing their arms around his waist.

He laughs, steadying himself under their embrace - then looks up.

Across the station, Elidah stands with Joel, watching.

Joel breaks free from his mother's hand and sprints toward his father.

Benjamin drops his suitcases and scoops Joel up, lifting him high with a joyful laugh.

The family drifts away from the bus together, the dust settling around them.

Benjamin meets Elidah's gaze - a long, familiar smile passing between them.

He sets Joel down, steps forward, and embraces her.

BENJAMIN

(Hugging Elidah)

I'm glad to be back.

(To the boys).

Kalu, Benji. Grab my suitcases.

Kalusha and Benji do as they're told with smiles, each grabbing one of their father's suitcases.

Benjamin slips an arm around Elidah and lifts Joel into his other arm.

Together, they turn and walk away from the bus - a picture of family, framed by dust, sunlight, and the hum of the small town.

BENJAMIN JR

What did you bring us dad?

BENJAMIN

You're only this happy because I brought gifts from Madagascar?

Benjamin Jr grins mischievously - the football still at his feet.

He gives it a cheeky kick toward his father.

Benjamin, still carrying Joel and with an arm around Elidah, traps the ball smoothly, dribbles a few steps, and passes it to Kalusha.

Kalusha flicks it back effortlessly to Benjamin Jr, the exchange seamless - a quiet, joyful rhythm between father and sons.

Benjamin gestures toward a bench. The boys set the suitcases down.

BENJAMIN CONT'D

Right. Let's see what we have.

He releases Elidah and opens the cases slowly, deliberately.

Inside, three Adidas bags. He hands one to each boy.

Inside each bag, a shoebox.

They lift the lids - and reveal Adidas football shoes, pristine and gleaming.

A hush of awe, then wide smiles.

BENJAMIN

Made in Germany.

The boys settle on the ground, tugging on their socks and sliding their feet into the shiny new shoes, eyes bright with excitement.

Benjamin watches his three sons lacing their boots in the dust. He looks at Elidah. She looks back at him, smiling.

23 INT. BEDROOM. BWALYA HOME. MUFULIRA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1978 23

Kalusha crashes onto his single bed, staring up at the ceiling. Two small night tables separate three small beds.

His brothers join him, flopping onto their own beds.

Kalusha carefully sets his new boots at the edge of his bed, almost reverently.

JOEL

We're going to be champions of the world!

BENJAMIN JR

(Laughing)

Chill out Joel.

Kalusha lies still, eyes closed. Silent.

Kalusha's eyes snap open. He breathes calmly, a small smile forming.

KALUSHA

Goodnight Joel. Goodnight Benji.

JOEL AND BENJI

Goodnight Kalu.

Kalusha turns off the light. His new boots gleaming faintly at the edge of his bed.

24 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM STANDS. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1988

24

Charles (now in his late forties) holds Nellie's (now ten) hand as they hurry through the bustling stadium. Behind them, Samson (fourteen) and Charles Jr (twelve) follow closely.

SUPERIMPOSE: Lusaka, Zambia. 1988.

CHARLES

We'll find a good spot for sure.

They turn into a staircase - an entrance to the stands.

Charles scoops up Nellie and bounds up two stairs at a time. The boys struggle behind him, laughing.

They emerge into the thick of it.

The ROAR of the crowd crashes around them, echoing off the stands. Nellie is mesmerised.

The stadium is packed, a sea of people waving Zambian flags, with the occasional Malawian flag spotted among them.

CHARLES

Bingo.

Charles spots a row of empty seats and walks toward them.

CHARLES

Look at this boys. These are perfect seats.

They're lucky to find seats with such a good view.

The boys grin, excited, while Nellie perches on the edge of her seat, wide-eyed.

On the pitch below, the teams warm up, passing and shooting.

Kalusha and Derby are now ten years older; their bodies moving effortlessly as they practice.

CHARLES

Right. Here we go. Any predictions?

CHARLES JR

We'll win this. Easy.

The teams on the pitch wind up and head toward the locker rooms.

CHARLES

Nellie?

NELLIE

We'll win. Their defense is weak.

Charles smiles proudly.

CHARLES

Bingo. That's my girl. Kuviyala wanna nichiweme.

NELLIE

Wene wene anakazi.

Charles Jr rolls his eyes and turns back to the pitch. Nellie notices but does not respond.

CHARLES

Derby will have a good game.

CHARLES JR

And Kelvin.

The teams start to emerge from the tunnel, returning onto the pitch.

CHARLES

Right. Let's see what happens. COME ON CHIPOLOPOLO!

The Zambian team leads the way, Kalusha at the front, followed closely by Derby.

25 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM PITCH - CONTINUOUS

25

The teams line up on the pitch.

The Zambian national anthem plays.

Kalusha and his teammates sing loudly, pride and focus etched on their faces.

The whistle blows. The Zambian team moves quickly and with precision, dominating the game.

They surge ahead - three goals to one.

From the defense, Derby receives the ball, eyes scanning for the next play.

Derby spots Kalusha breaking forward.

Derby delivers a perfect cross.

Kalusha flicks past a defender with ease, outpacing him. Another defender approaches - he taps the ball through his legs.

Kalusha sprints past the last defender and faces the goalkeeper. He taps the ball to the right - straight into the goal. The stadium erupts.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
GOOOOaaaaaaaal! In the dying
minutes! That makes it four one to
Zambia!

Kalusha races to the corner. Derby follows, sprinting to meet him.

The team joins in - a coordinated celebration.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
Let's hope they can play this well
at the Seoul Olympics next month!

Derby and Kalusha embrace, joy written across their faces as the stadium roars around them.

26 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM STANDS - CONTINUOUS 26

Charles lifts Nellie into his arms as the family joins the stadium celebrations. The whole family jumps up and down, swept up in the euphoria of the win.

27 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1988 27

Nellie and her two brothers watch the match replays on TV.

A phone rings. Elizabeth emerges from the kitchen, carrying plates and glasses. She places them on the table and answers the phone.

ELIZABETH
(on the phone)
Hello?

CHARLES
 (on the phone)
 Liz. I have to work late again.

ELIZABETH
 (on the phone)
 This late? It's past 7.

Nellie looks up at her mum.

CHARLES
 (on the phone)
 Nothing I can do. You know my boss.

ELIZABETH
 (on the phone)
 Three nights in a row?

CHARLES
 (on the phone)
 I'll try to be back soon.

Elizabeth puts the phone down. Nellie watches as her sullen mum returns to the kitchen.

Nellie stands up and sets the table.

28 EXT. AIRPORT. SEOUL, KOREA. NIGHT. 1988

28

The Zambian team empty out of the modern, large airport. They lug oversized sports bags. Eyes wide, they take in the chaos - neon signs in Hangul, the hum of taxis, the chatter of strangers.

For a moment, they stand there - strangers in a new world.

Kalusha grins widely; Derby approaches him from behind and puts an arm around his shoulder.

DERBY
 This isn't Lusaka is it?

KALUSHA
 (laughs)
 No it isn't.

DERBY
 We made it.

KALUSHA
 Yes, we have.

They laugh and walk toward their team bus, emblazoned with a large Zambian flag.

29 INT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1988

29

The Lusaka airport terminal is quieter than Seoul. Ceiling fans. Fluorescent light.

Elizabeth, in a Zambian Airways uniform, walks efficiently through the airport, clicking heels, greeting staff by name. She is immaculate; but looks tired.

She is an efficient walker, avoiding other people, her Zambian Airways suitcase gliding behind her. She exits and sees Charles, Samson, Charles Jr, and Nellie waiting.

She beams, hugs the kids - barely glancing at Charles.

30 INT. ZAMBIAN CHANGING ROOM. SEOUL, KOREA. DAY. 1988 30

Noise. Movement. Shirts. Boots.

David sits apart, carefully taping his ankle.

Too carefully. Layer after layer.

Kelvin watches him.

KELVIN

You planning to play or become a mummy?

The other players laugh.

David doesn't respond. He keeps taping

Kalusha clocks it - just a glance.

31 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD. SEOUL, KOREA. DAY. 1988 31

The Zambian and Italian teams march onto the pitch, the air is wild with thunderous applause. More Italian flags than Zambian fill the stadium.

Among them, Kalusha and Derby slow their pace.

They both crouch, pinch a handful of grass and rub it between their fingers - a quiet moment between the two amidst the chaos.

32 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. EVENING. 1988 32

The whole family are crammed into the living room. They are joined by other relatives and friends; every spot taken, all eyes glued on the small TV in the corner.

Elizabeth keeps busy collecting empty beer bottles, clearing plates, greeting people. Nellie steps in to help her.

CHARLES

(drunk, shouting from his chair)

Come on Zambia!

Nellie focuses on the TV while she helps her mum and the game starts.

33 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

33

Kalusha, black armband on his sleeve indicating his captaincy, strikes with his left foot and scores his first goal. Zambia 1, Italy nil.

Kalusha shoots a direct free kick. Zambia 2, Italy 0.

David saves a goal attempt.

Charly Musonda passes to Johnson Bwalya, who strikes with his right foot. Zambia 3, Italy 0.

Kalusha shoots again with his left foot and scores his hat-trick. Zambia 4, Italy 0.

The whistle blows.

Kalusha leads the team on a lap of honor, draped in a Zambian flag.

Derby catches up with Kalusha, draping an arm over his shoulder. David (also ten years older) joins them.

DERBY

(To David)

Now you've saved goals in Mufulira
AND SEOUL!

The others jump on David and celebrate with him.

KALUSHA

Can you imagine everyone at home
watching this?

DAVID

In Mufulira?

They fall silent, eyes on the cheering crowds.

One of the other players starts chanting.

KELVIN

Tiye Chipolopolo Tiye!

The chant spreads - teammates, then the crowd.

Derby finds Kalusha through the crowd of players.

DERBY

We don't stop here.

Beat.

KALUSHA

(smiling, breathless)

World Cup.

DERBY
 (beat, grinning)
 Final.

They turn and join their teammates.

34 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. EVENING. 1988 34

The guests are now celebrating the win; the room is filled with drunk chaos. Elizabeth and Nellie have withdrawn into the kitchen. People fall into furniture, drinks spill, voices overlap, bodies sway; a song erupts, the same from the earlier street scene.

GUESTS
 Tiyende Pamodzi ndim'tima umo,
 Tiyende Pamodzi ndim'tima umo...

GUEST 5
 (in Nyanja)
 Ahhhhhh! Derby beat them twice!
 (Derby anawamenya kwabiri!)

GUEST 6
 (in Nyanja)
 How can we lose with Kalusha
 (Tingatayitse bwanji ndi Kalusha?)

CHARLES
 Where's Nellie? We need analysis!
 NELLIE!

Charles staggers up to his feet and heads toward the door.

GUEST 5
 Ah let's go.

CHARLES
 (in the direction of the
 kitchen)
 NELLIE!

Elizabeth enters the room.

ELIZABETH
 Charles. Please.

Charles turns away from Elizabeth.

CHARLES
 Bring her. We need our expert.

ELIZABETH
 Charles.

Charles gesticulates with irritation.

CHARLES
 Leave it. We're leaving.

ELIZABETH

At this hour? Where are you going?

CHARLES

It's early. I'll be back. Tiye ni!

Elizabeth does not respond. She starts to clean up the room.

GUESTS

Tiye Chipolopolo Tiye! Tiye
Chipolopolo Tiye!

The guests all leave the room taking their chaos with them. Nellie emerges from the kitchen and starts to help her mother. Neither of them says anything as they clean up together, a ritual well practiced.

35 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. MORNING. 1988 35

Elizabeth, now in casual clothing, cooks NSHIMA porridge for breakfast in the kitchen; she cooks vigorously.

Months have passed and she has lost a lot of weight.

Charles Jr and Samson rush out, carelessly bumping into her.

ELIZABETH

BOYS!

Outside, Nellie plays keepie-uppie with a football, catching the ball with her neck and foot.

Elizabeth watches her daughter from the kitchen.

Nellie walks inside with the football.

ELIZABETH

So, how did Manchester United do
while I was gone?

Nellie puts the ball down and helps her mum.

NELLIE

A draw. Fifth in a row.

ELIZABETH

They'll win the next one for sure.
And your brothers? Did they behave?

NELLIE

I guess so. They were hardly here.
Neither was dad.

Elizabeth hides her disappointment. She passes the bowls of porridge to Nellie. Nellie notices and gently touches a bruise on her mum's arm. Elizabeth pulls away.

ELIZABETH

Help me take these into the living
room.

Nellie does not argue. She takes the bowls and leaves.

ELIZABETH CONT'D

(calling out)

Boys! Breakfast!

Elizabeth leans on the kitchen counter, catching her breath.

Her breathing quickens. Her eyes roll back.

She collapses to the floor.

A beat.

Nellie returns with empty hands - stops.

Her mum lies on the floor, unconscious, beside Nellie's
football.

NELLIE

(panicked)

AMAMA!

She rushes to her, shaking her gently.

NELLIE CONT'D

Amama! Wake up!

No response.

NELLIE CONT'D

(shouting)

DAD!

Charles rushes in, kneels beside her, and desperately tries
to wake her up. He has also lost a lot of weight.

CHARLES

ELIZABETH! Wake up. Wake up!

Elizabeth slowly opens her eyes.

Disorientated, she scans the room.

She sits up.

NELLIE

Mum!

ELIZABETH

What...?

CHARLES

Are you OK?

ELIZABETH

I'm just tired.

CHARLES

Nellie. Get her some water.

Nellie rushes to the sink, pours a glass, brings it back.

Charles supports Elizabeth, helping her drink.

Elizabeth steadies herself, rising slowly with Charles' help.

Nellie watches her - unsettled.

36 EXT. ROAD TO LUSAKA AIRPORT. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1988

36

Crowds line both sides of the road, waving Zambian flags, singing, and dancing. Police try to keep the crowd off the street.

A large truck covered in Zambian flags approaches, players on top cheering.

REPORTER

(talking loudly over the noise)

The whole city seems to be here to celebrate Chipolopolo - home from Seoul.

Nellie and her family are at the front of the road and are pushed back and forth by the moving crowds.

Nellie clings to her mum's hand, nervous but excited.

The truck nears. Kalusha, Derby, and David are at the front of the bus, waving to the crowd with the other players.

Nellie leans forwards to get a view of the approaching truck. Charles Jr is behind Nellie, protecting her by holding onto her shoulders.

They stand their ground.

CHARLES JR

Here they come - look watch!
There's Kalusha Bwalya!

Nellie smiles and starts waving at the truck.

NELLIE

There's Kelvin Mutale!

Also on the bus are all the other players including ESTON MULENGA, WISDOM CHANSA, WHITESON CHANGWE, JOHN SOKO, and JOHNSON BWALYA, all in their early twenties.

CHARLES JR
It's Kelvin!

NELLIE
(Shouting at the bus)
Kelvin!

Kelvin waves back. Nellie beams.

Elizabeth smiles, then coughs.

Charles looks at her with concern.

CHARLES
OK. Time to go home. Tiyeni.

The children reluctantly follow, taking one last look at the players.

Charles helps Elizabeth by guiding her away from the main road and into the crowd.

37 INT. HOSPITAL. PATIENT'S ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1988 37

Nellie sits next to Elizabeth, who lies weakly on a hospital bed in a long, noisy corridor; her eyes are closed. She has lost more weight.

Nellie holds her mother's hand. Nellie's brothers stand around the bed.

Other patients lie on beds near them.

Charles emerges from around the corner and walks toward his family. He has also lost more weight. He puts his hand on Elizabeth's shoulder.

CHARLES
They said they can get you a room soon. I'm going to call the family for help.

ELIZABETH
Call my sister. She has a contact in the Ministry of Health.

CHARLES
OK.
(To Nellie).
Nellie, look after mum. I'm coming.

Nellie nods silently. Charles leaves again and goes back down the corridor.

ELIZABETH
Why are you looking so sad? Did Manchester United lose?

Nellie leans in and holds her mum's hand.

NELLIE

We won again.

ELIZABETH

Great. Tell me about the game.

NELLIE

A slow start. Davenport scored,
Leighton saved some. Hughes also
scored.

As Nellie talks, the scale of the number of people waiting
in the full corridor is revealed.

Patients cram into the narrow space. Thin, bruised, coughing
and murmuring. Visitors linger, pacing anxiously.

Elizabeth holds out her hand; Nellie accepts it.

Nurses and doctors rush past, calling out names, carrying
carts, pushing trolleys, the cacophony of the hospital
machines, footsteps, and murmurs filling the air.

The scale of the crowd and chaos overwhelms the frame,
emphasizing the strain on both staff and patients.

38 INT. DERBY'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1988

38

Derby sits on the edge of the sofa, head in his hands,
anxious. A soft KNOCK at the door breaks the silence.

He stands slowly and opens the door.

Kalusha steps in, and without a word, hugs Derby tightly.

Derby leans into the hug, relief and emotion washing over
him.

KALUSHA

How is your mum?

DERBY

Not good.

KALUSHA

She's at the hospital?

DERBY

Yeah. The private one. We're
heading back later.

KALUSHA

I'll come with you.

DERBY

We just thought she was tired. Just
the flu.

(MORE)

DERBY (cont'd)

(beat)

She still made breakfast.

(beat)

Burned the porridge.

He laughs. Then it breaks. He can't put the rest into words.

DERBY CONT'D

They're dying in New York. Kalu. In
New York.

Derby begins to sob heavily, his shoulders shaking.

Kalusha hugs him tightly, holding him close. His own eyes
betray his anxiety, unmasked despite his composed exterior.

The room is silent except for Derby's quiet sobs, the weight
of the moment heavy between them.

39 INT. BWALYA HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1988

39

Kalusha enters the house.

KALUSHA

Awdi?

There is a muffled sound from inside the house.

Kalusha enters the house into the living room. As he does,
his father enters.

BENJAMIN

Kalu.

They embrace warmly. Elidah enters.

ELIDAH

Kalu! How was the flight?

Kalusha hugs his mum.

KALUSHA

It was good. No problems.

Elidah leaves them to it.

BENJAMIN

So, how long will you stay?

KALUSHA

Not long. I fly back to Europe in a
few days.

BENJAMIN

(looking at him)

You look tired.

KALUSHA

I'm fine. Derby's mum is in the private hospital.

BENJAMIN

We heard. We will pray for her. Your uncle... And your cousin, Agnes. And Kande.

Kalusha nods. He knows.

BENJAMIN CONT'D

We'll pray for them all.

Elidah returns with a tray of tea and sandwiches. They move to the sofa. Elidah serves them both a cup of tea and a plate of sandwiches.

They sip tea in quiet reflection. The names of the dead hang in the air.

ELIDAH

Please tell Derby's mother we're praying for her.

KALUSHA

I will.

ELIDAH

Kalu. I need a favor.

KALUSHA

Anything.

ELIDAH

Can you look out for Benji? I know he's your older brother, but he has less experience.

KALUSHA

He'll be fine.

They share a brief, understanding smile.

BENJAMIN

Good. Now. Tell us about your plans for the team.

Kalusha smiles.

KALUSHA

I plan to win.

Benjamin studies him for a moment.

Then, he smiles, and pats him on the back.

40 BEGIN. MONTAGE. VARIOUS.

40

Southern African 80's pop plays (e.g., Thank you Mr. DJ).

-- Blantyre, Malawi. Stadium changing room.

SUPERIMPOSE: November 13th 1988. CECAFA CUP. Zambia 3 -
Uganda 0

Kalusha scores with a fierce strike to wrap up the game.

The Zambian team dances in unison on the pitch celebrating
their win.

Kelvin lifts Kalusha off the ground. Kalusha is laughing.

-- Lusaka, Zambia. Stadium.

SUPERIMPOSE: January 22nd 1989. World Cup Qualifier. Zambia
4 - Congo DR 2

The Zambian team score four fantastic goals.

The Zambian team dance alongside the pitch. They celebrate
with the fans in the stadium.

DENNIS (V.O.)

They've done it! Chipolopolo have
done it. We're one step closer to
the World Cup!

Derby and Kalusha embrace on the pitch. Neither of them lets
go immediately.

-- Rabat, Morocco. Stadium

SUPERIMPOSE: June 25th 1989. World Cup Qualifier. Zambia 1 -
Morocco 2

The Zambian team have lost. Some players sit on the pitch
with their heads in their hands, some squat looking sad,
others walk straight toward the changing rooms.

Kalusha stands alone at the center circle. Everyone else has
moved.

He is the last one on the pitch.

He doesn't move for a long time.

-- Dakar, Senegal. Stadium

SUPERIMPOSE: January 20th 1992, Africa Cup of Nations
Quarter Final. Zambia 0 - Ivory Coast 1

The Zambian team are all disappointed. Some players cry on
the sidelines. Some lie face down on the pitch in shock.
Kalusha walks straight off the pitch to the changing room.

He does not look back.

-- Antananarivo, Madagascar. Zambia vs Madagascar.

SUPERIMPOSE: 20th December 1992. 1994 World Cup Qualifier.
Zambia 0 - Madagascar 2

It's the final five minutes of play. The Zambian team is losing again. The Zambian team are tired, they're down 2 - nil.

Kelvin sits on the bench. He is not watching the match. He is watching Kalusha.

Kalusha is still playing. Still trying. His face unreadable.

-- Zambian team changing room. Silence. A cramped room. No music. No crowd. Just disappointment.

The players sit without speaking.

Kalusha stares at the floor.

Derby stares at Kalusha.

END OF MONTAGE

41 INT. SMALL OFFICE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1992

41

These are the same men. A few months older. Carrying the same silence from that changing room.

SAMUEL NDHLOVU, wearing a jacket labeled "COACH," sits at his desk. Godfrey stands, jacket labeled "ASSISTANT COACH." Kalusha, Derby, Kelvin, David, Wisdom, Eston, Johnson, and Richard sit around listening.

The room is tight. Airless.

No one is relaxed anymore.

SAMUEL
(To the players)
Three months.

Godfrey and Samuel exchange a look. Samuel stands up.

SAMUEL CONT'D
That's all we've got.

GODFREY
And right now, we're not ready.

Silence.

DERBY
(leaning forward)
We just came off a run of good matches.

SAMUEL
We came off losses.

DERBY
Not all of them.

GODFREY
The ones that matter.

KALUSHA
Madagascar beat us.

A small ripple. Tension.

KELVIN
So what are you saying?

SAMUEL
If we continue like this, we don't
go.

That lands. A small ripple of sighs.

Godfrey wanders over to the window.

DERBY
We're not underdogs anymore.

SAMUEL
No.
(beat)
That's exactly the problem.

KALUSHA
Can we fix this?

Godfrey turns from the window.

GODFREY
We start with discipline.
(looking at the players)
Shape. Fitness. No passengers.

He lets the words hang.

GODFREY CONT'D
Some of you are coasting on talent.

DERBY
That's unfair.

GODFREY
It's accurate.

A long silence now. He softens - just slightly.

GODFREY CONT'D
This is not about talent.
(MORE)

GODFREY CONT'D (cont'd)
 (looking around again)
 This is about whether you can
 suffer.

SAMUEL
 Senegal will make you suffer.
 Nigeria and Cameroon will make you
 suffer. And you can bet every Ngwee
 in your bank accounts that Morocco
 and Ivory Coast will make you
 suffer.

GODFREY
 You go one nil down, do you think
 they'll let you back in?

SAMUEL
 No.

A chair creaks as someone shifts.

GODFREY
 So we decide now. Are we going to
 play? Or are we going to win?

A long pause.

Then:

KALUSHA
 We win.

Simple. Certain.

Samuel studies him.

The team watches Kalusha.

Nobody else speaks. The silence goes on slightly too long.

Then, one by one, the others nod. But Kalusha has already
 looked away. He is staring at the floor.

42 INT. NIGHTCLUB. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1992

42

The Zambian team drown their sorrows in a loud nightclub.

Kalusha and Derby sit apart from the others. Bottles between
 them. The music is too much.

A long silence.

DERBY
 You're starting to wonder if we're
 good enough.

Kalusha doesn't respond.

DERBY CONT'D

That's what I thought.

Kalusha picks up his bottle. Drinks. Says nothing.

Derby watches him.

Finally, he looks away. He picks up his own bottle.

They drink. Neither of them speaks again.

43 INT. SMALL OFFICE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

43

SUPERIMPOSE: Lusaka, Zambia. 1993.

Two FAZ OFFICIALS sit among stacks of papers and scattered football equipment. Posters of the Zambian national team cover the walls. There's a knock at the door.

Samuel enters, holding a newspaper. His face is tense. He shakes hands with both men.

SAMUEL

Morning.

FAZ OFFICIAL 1

Please, sit Samuel.

Samuel doesn't sit. He holds up the newspaper: "Best team in Africa to lose their coach."

SAMUEL

I read this in the paper.

FAZ OFFICIAL 1

Samuel. We...

SAMUEL

Letting me find out from a newspaper. Godfrey will take over?

FAZ OFFICIAL 1

(interrupting)

We don't know how this got to the reporters before we could speak to you.

FAZ OFFICIAL 2

You've done a very good job.

FAZ OFFICIAL 1

We're changing direction.

Samuel starts to leave.

FAZ OFFICIAL 2

Godfrey takes over today.

SAMUEL

Today. Right.

Samuel, disappointed, shakes their hands, and leaves.

44 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

44

Godfrey commands a training session. His jacket now reads "COACH." ALEX CHOLA (forties) assists, his jacket reads: "ASSISTANT COACH." Kalusha, Eston, Wisdom, Derby, Kelvin, and David and the full team attend.

Players wear mismatched kits.

They run football drills on one half of the field.

Kalusha arrives last, laces up his boots, and jogs to the far end. He wears new kit in Zambian colors.

GODFREY

Line up.

The players move but not fast enough.

GODFREY CONT'D

(to Kalusha)

Captain.

KALUSHA

We just arrived.

GODFREY

Then catch up.

Kalusha joins the other players as they line up to do sprints.

Derby approaches Kalusha. They hug briefly.

KALUSHA

Isn't it early to be back?

Derby looks at him. He doesn't pretend not to understand. A beat.

DERBY

I'm fine.

KALUSHA

It's only been a few weeks.

DERBY

Kalusha. I'm fine. How's Maureen?

GODFREY

(overhears the banter, to
the whole team but
directed at Kalusha)

Less talking, more sprinting!

The other players laugh.

Kalusha and Derby lower their voices.

KALUSHA

She's good.

DERBY

Nice kit.

KALUSHA

I got one for everyone.

DERBY

Imagine David Platt buying
England's kit.

KALUSHA

Or Italy asking Baresi.

DERBY

And look at this stadium. Look at
the pitch.

GODFREY

(to Derby)

Let's go!

Derby looks around at the stadium, dead grass, broken seats.

They inch closer to the start of the line.

DERBY

I've played here all my life.
Scored in these nets more times
than I can count.

KALUSHA

More than me?

DERBY

But not on dead grass. Broken
seats. Cold showers.

It's Derby's turn.

KALUSHA

Things will change, Derby.

DERBY

I hope so.

GODFREY

(To Derby)

Sprint!

Derby sprints off, leaving Kalusha, next in line, looking
around at the ruined stadium: Broken benches, a muddy field,
dried grass, peeling paint, and rubbish around the pitch.

45 EXT. ROAD. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

45

Nellie and her brothers sit in a funeral car.

They are dressed in black. The same clothes they wore to their mother's funeral.

Nellie looks down at her hands. She wears the white gloves from the service. She starts to pull one off.

Stops.

Pulls it back on.

She does this three or four times without knowing she's doing it.

Outside, the road is ordinary. People walking. A vendor. A child on a bicycle.

Charles Jr reaches over and puts his hand over hers. Stills them.

She lets him.

They follow the main funeral car that carries their father's coffin.

46 EXT. CEMETERY. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

46

Nellie and her brothers stand in black, faces streaked with tears. WALLS fill the air.

Nellie's face doesn't move. She can't blink.

They are at the front of a crowded graveside service.

A coffin is lowered.

The priest begins to speak. The crowd becomes silent.

PRIEST

In the name of the father, and of the son, and the holy spirit. Brother Charles is brought to his rest in the peace of Christ, in heaven as he joins his dear wife, Elizabeth, already in heaven. With faith and hope in eternal life, let us pray for his orphaned children.

In the distance, other funerals take place - all are attended by young children.

Nellie and her brothers are led away. Nellie resists. She collapses near the grave, falling to the ground, body shaking.

NELLIE
 (crying)
 What will become of us?

Her brothers watch, frozen, trapped in trauma.

Slowly, Samson walks over, helps her up; they turn and walk away with Charles Jr.

47 EXT. BACK OF NELLIE'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1993 47

Two or three days after the funeral. The back yard. Small and functional. A washing line. A mango tree. A garden that was once tended.

Nellie sits on the back step, still in funeral clothes, barefoot. Samson comes out of the house with two cups of tea. He sits beside her.

Neither speaks for a while.

SAMSON
 Junior burnt the nshima.

NELLIE
 I know. I could smell it.

A pause.

SAMSON
 Mum would've gone mad.

Nellie almost smiles. Then doesn't.

NELLIE
 She'd have made him eat it anyway.

A longer silence. The sounds of the street - normal sounds. Music from somewhere. It feels wrong.

SAMSON
 What do we do now?

NELLIE
 What do you mean?

SAMSON
 I mean - what do we do. Monday.
 Tuesday. What happens.

NELLIE
 School. I think.

SAMSON
 (beat)
 Yeah.

He doesn't sound convinced. She notices.

NELLIE

Samson.

SAMSON

I'm fine.

NELLIE

You don't have to be.

SAMSON

(quietly)

I know.

He reaches over, puts his arm around her neck. The same gesture as earlier - but different now. Heavier. Like he's holding on.

SAMSON

Ku chalo.

Nellie doesn't respond immediately. Then, quietly:

NELLIE

Ku chalo.

The music from the street gets briefly louder. Samson's hand drops. He stares at the yard.

SAMSON

I might not go back to school.

Nellie turns to look at him.

NELLIE

What?

SAMSON

I don't know. I can't think about it yet.

NELLIE

You can't just-

(a pause)

You have to go back.

SAMSON

(not arguing, just tired)

I said I don't know.

Nellie looks at him. She wants to push. She doesn't. Not tonight.

They sit in the gathering dark. Tea cooling in their hands.

48 INT. SMALL CAR. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

48

Kelvin, Eston, Wisdom, John, and Whiteson are crammed in a small car.

They are returning from training.

Laughter. Music. Bodies pressed together.

The back seat jostles.

JOHN
 (to the other two in the
 back)
 Move, man. You're crushing me.

Eston, sitting in the back, leans toward the front seats.

ESTON
 I'm telling you - Belgium first.
 Then England.

Wisdom, in the passenger seat, shoves him.

WISDOM
 Big money!

ESTON
 Yup.

Whiteson, casually looks up from his driving.

WHITESON
 Nah. Netherlands. Like Kalu. Then
 England.

JOHN
 Man U! That's who I'll play for!

They all laugh at this.

KELVIN
 And you played so badly this
 season!

JOHN
 That's why Man U will want me!

Laughter fills the car again.

Bodies pressed together. Too much energy for the space.

49 INT. WHITESON'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1993

49

Whiteson and his family sit at a large table.

The table is covered in food.

Music. Chatter. Laughing. Joy. They are relaxed.

Whiteson pretends to steal food from his daughter's plate.

She slaps his hand away.

He laughs - exaggerated, theatrical.

50 INT. KELVIN'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1993

50

Kelvin sits with his young SON.

He helps his son lace up his shoes.

The boy struggles.

Kelvin gently takes over - ties them tight.

KELVIN

There you go.

KELVIN'S SON

Will you score for me?

KELVIN

(smiling)

Always.

(beat)

You just have to cheer loud enough.

He lifts his son and spins him. His son mimics a goal celebration, throwing his arms up like he has scored in a packed stadium.

51 INT. DAVID'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

51

David is in his room packing.

He folds a shirt.

Unfolds it. Folds it again - tighter.

His wife, WINNIE, leans into the room.

WINNIE

You coming to eat?

DAVID

(doesn't look up)

Nearly.

Winnie watches him.

Then crosses to him.

She hugs him from behind. He exhales, holds onto her arms.

DAVID

What if I let them down?

WINNIE

You won't.

DAVID

That also scares me.

Winnie holds him. He doesn't relax and moves to continue packing.

52 INT. ESTON MULENGA'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1993 52

Low light. Quiet. Crickets outside.

Eston walks in. Tired. Weary.

His wife, FELISTUS, sits at the table, surrounded by bills.

She looks up as he enters. She is relieved.

She gets up and walks over.

Their hug is warm and long.

She doesn't let go.

FELISTUS

It never adds up.

(beat)

School fees. Uniforms. This house.

Eston looks past her -

The table. The bills.

He gently pulls away.

Moves to the table.

Picks one up.

ESTON

The next game.

(beat)

There'll be scouts.

Felistus watches him. Not convinced.

FELISTUS

You said that the last time.

Eston sets the bill down.

He gathers the bills.

Stacks them. Too neatly.

Firmer now.

ESTON

This one's different.

(beat)

It has to be.

Silence.

She studies him - wanting to believe it.

FELISTUS

You can't keep betting everything
on one game.

(beat)

We're not the only ones depending
on you.

Eston meets her eyes.

A flicker of doubt-

Then gone.

ESTON

I'm not.

(beat)

I just know this game will be
different.

He moves toward Felistus again, grabs her, hugs her again.

53 EXT. GODFREY'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1993

53

SUPERIMPOSE: Lusaka, Zambia. Tuesday, 27th April 1993.

Godfrey emerges from his front door. A battered car pulls
up.

Alex leans across, opens the passenger door.

Godfrey jogs over with his bag, throws it in, gets in.

A beat as Alex pulls away.

ALEX

You've got the line up?

GODFREY

Yeah.

(beat)

Still not sure about midfield.

ALEX

You never are.

Godfrey half-smiles.

GODFREY

We need to be tighter.

ALEX

We will be.

Silence.

The road stretches ahead.

GODFREY
You spoke to the boys?

ALEX
Some.
(beat)
They're all ready.

Godfrey nods, looks out the window.

ALEX CONT'D
We'll get a result.

Godfrey doesn't respond.

The car drives on.

54 INT. KELVIN'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 54

Kelvin gets ready to leave.

He hugs his wife.

KELVIN
I'll call when we land.

55 INT. DAVID'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 55

David moves toward the door with his bags. He turns to face Winnie.

DAVID
(to Winnie)
I'll be back soon.

56 INT. ESTON MULENGA'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1993 56

Eston washes his face in the bathroom. He looks up at the small cracked mirror. He stares at himself.

ESTON
After this, Belgium.

57 EXT. LUSAKA AIRPORT. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 57

Players arrive - they emerge from various cars, with family, with friends, with kit bags. The ordinary business of departure.

They slowly gather together outside the airport.

58 EXT. AIRPORT OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS 58

The observation deck is packed, all watching the players board the old plane.

A child waves wildly from the observation deck.

Kelvin spots him - waves back.

59 EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

59

The same Buffalo sits on the runway, propellers idle. In the daylight, it looks different.

The players walk toward it.

Kelvin tosses a football casually in the air - he catches it.

For a moment, he holds it.

He stares at the plane.

He hangs back for a moment.

Others move ahead.

DAVID
Kelvin, you coming?

Kelvin looks at David and then back at the plane again.

Then, he tosses the ball to David, who holds it a beat too long and then tosses it back.

David and Kelvin turn - wave at the crowd on the observation deck. David cups his hand to his ear - someone is shouting something from up there.

He can't hear it.

A small smile. A wave.

They turn and walk toward the plane.

They reach the steps of the plane.

A brief pause - no one speaks.

The noise from the observation deck fades.

They board.

60 INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

60

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN runs into the airport. Chaos. Too many bags, clothes in disarray.

He looks around. He spots someone at a check in desk.

He sprints towards it.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Excuse me. I'm late. I'm supposed
to be on the FAZ plane.

ZAMBIA AIRWAYS STAFF
I'm sorry but-

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
(interrupting)
I can run. Which way?

ZAMBIA AIRWAYS STAFF
No. I'm sorry but-

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
(interrupting again)
Which way? Just tell me.

ZAMBIA AIRWAYS STAFF
No. Listen. It's-

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
(interrupting again)
Just tell me!

ZAMBIA AIRWAYS STAFF
I'm telling you - It took off
already.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
What? No! Wait. I'm not that late.

He runs off aimlessly. He spots another Zambia Airways staff member and approaches them.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN CONT'D
Excuse me! Has the FAZ plane
departed?

ZAMBIA AIRWAYS STAFF 2
What? The footballers?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Yes! FAZ!

ZAMBIA AIRWAYS STAFF 2
Oh yeah. They left about thirty
minutes ago.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Shit. I was supposed to be on the
plane!

The staff member walks off.

The middle-aged man stands in the middle of the airport. He drops his bags on the floor in frustration.

People bustle by, unaware of his predicament.

61 INT. AIRFORCE PLANE. NIGHT. 1993

61

The plane cruises through the dark sky.

Calm. Slicing through the clouds.

The passengers are calm, settled.

Unaware.

62 INT. TV STUDIO. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 1993

62

Dennis sits at the sports desk, facing the camera. His manner is bright, proud, completely unaware of what has already happened.

DENNIS

And next - Senegal. Two games away from the World Cup. I'm told the boys are on their way as I speak. Good luck boys and God bless!

63 INT. KALUSHA'S HOUSE. EINDHOVEN, NETHERLANDS. DAY. 1993

63

Kalusha clips on a Walkman to his tracksuit. He is in a large bedroom getting ready for a run.

SUPERIMPOSE: Eindhoven, The Netherlands. Wednesday, 28th April 1993.

As he puts on the headphones the phone rings.

Kalusha takes off his earphones and answers the phone.

KALUSHA

Kalusha Bwalya?

SAM PHIRI (ON THE PHONE)

Hello, Kalusha. It's Sam Phiri.

KALUSHA

Sam Phiri?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)

I'm the accountant. From the Football Association of Zambia.

KALUSHA

The accountant?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)

Yes.

KALUSHA

Are you calling about my trip tomorrow?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)

Yes. And no. Ah. You see. Your trip to Dakar has changed.

KALUSHA

(Annoyed)

Is it money problems again?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
No. It's the boys. They didn't
arrive in the Ivory Coast last
night.

KALUSHA
What? Another delay? Are they still
in Gabon?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
No. They didn't arrive.

KALUSHA
Yes, you said that. Where are they?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
Kalusha. I'm so sorry.

KALUSHA
About what?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
It's confirmed.

KALUSHA
What is?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
The plane, the Chipolopolo plane...
it crashed. Minutes after take off
from Libreville. The reports say
that everyone on board has
perished.

Kalusha freezes. He lowers the phone.

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
Hello? Kalusha? Hello?

Kalusha brings up the phone again to his ear.

KALUSHA
Wait. No. This can't be true. Check
again.

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
Kalusha. I'm sure of this. We
checked and checked again. A team
will leave later today to assess
and begin the process of...

Kalusha lowers the phone again and holds the phone against
his chest. A tear starts to fall from his eye.

SAM (ON THE PHONE)
Kalusha? Kalusha?

Kalusha wipes his eye and brings up the phone handle to his
ear again.

KALUSHA

Yes?

SAM (ON THE PHONE)

Have you turned on your TV today?

KALUSHA

No. Wait a minute.

Kalusha steps toward a small TV in the corner of the room while still holding the phone.

He picks up a remote and uses it to turn on his TV. He changes the channel until there is a news show.

ON TV MONITOR

A shaken local man stands on a beach in Gabon, speaking into a reporter's microphone. Curious onlookers stand in silence, waves breaking softly behind them.

MAN BEING INTERVIEWED

(in French)

It was dark... so at first we just saw a big light in the distance. Then there was a loud bang.

(He gestures to the ocean)

We ran down here and saw the light out there, in the water. We knew something terrible had happened

REPORTER

(in French)

And you went out on boats?

MAN BEING INTERVIEWED

(in French)

Yes. We decided to take our boats to see. And that is when we found the parts... floating everywhere.

END OF TV MONITOR

Kalusha lifts the phone up to his ear again and he mutes the TV.

KALUSHA

This can't be happening. Who was on the plane? Was-

Kalusha stops speaking. He pauses.

SAM (ON THE PHONE)

Most were on the plane. I'm so sorry Kalusha.

Kalusha sits down on the bed.

Tears run down his face.

Kalusha blinks and stares out of his window, not focused on what Sam is saying.

SAM (ON THE PHONE CONT'D)

We'll be making plans for
everything shortly. We'll need you
back here in Lusaka, Zambia.

Kalusha stares into space as tears roll down his face. The muted TV still reports on the crash.

64 INT. TV STUDIO. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

64

Dennis Liwewe sits at a news desk, with his sign. His eyes are red. He grips a stack of papers, struggling to speak.

DENNIS

We must interrupt this broadcast.
We have lost our team. Nearly our
entire football team, the
Chipolopolo, have been involved in
a tragic plane crash in Libreville,
Gabon just minutes after takeoff.

He takes a shaky breath.

DENNIS CONT'D

We now know a few players were not
on the plane. The rest... did not
survive.

He stops and wipes his eyes.

He lowers his gaze, then gathers himself.

DENNIS CONT'D

Forgive me...

He pauses, breathing deeply, then looks back at the camera.

He wipes his eyes again. He sternly looks directly into the camera.

DENNIS

We've lost our Chipolopolo, our
mighty copper bullets. May God help
the children left without their
fathers. The young women left
without their husbands. The parents
who have lost their sons. May God
help Zambia.

65 EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE KALUSHA BWALYA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

65

A car pulls into the driveway of a large suburban house.

The driver, ERWIN KOEMAN (early thirties, Dutch), steps out. He is Kalusha's teammate at PSV Eindhoven.

Kalusha emerges from the house carrying a suitcase. It's spring; the trees are becoming green again.

ERWIN

Here, let me take that.

Erwin takes the suitcase and puts it in the trunk.

KALUSHA

Thanks Erwin.

Erwin and Kalusha get in the car and leave.

66 INT. CAR - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

66

Erwin drives along the highway toward Amsterdam airport.

ERWIN

How long will you be gone for?

KALUSHA

They don't know yet.

ERWIN

Kalu, if there is anything I can do for you, you just let me know.

KALUSHA

Thank you.

ERWIN

The boys wanted you to know that PSV is with you.

KALUSHA

Thank you. That means a lot to me.

Kalusha stares out the window. Flat Dutch landscape blurs past. Erwin drives. Neither of them says anything for a long time.

67 EXT. AIRPORT, AMSTERDAM. NIGHT. 1993

67

The car pulls up. Kalusha and Erwin get out. Erwin gets Kalusha's bags out of the trunk. He passes them to Kalusha.

ERWIN

Kalu. We were thinking of taking up a small collection. For the wives and children.

KALUSHA

It's a nice idea.

Kalusha wipes tears from his eyes.

KALUSHA CONT'D

Sorry.

ERWIN

No need to say sorry Kalu.

KALUSHA

It's just... It could've been me on that plane. It could've been my children. Maureen...

ERWIN

Kalusha...

KALUSHA

I've gotta go. I'll see you soon.

The men hug. Kalusha walks off before his emotions get the better of him.

Kalusha walks through the glass doors without looking back. Inside, through the glass, Erwin watches him go. He stands there for a moment, hands in his pockets, watching the doors close.

68 EXT. ROAD TO LUSAKA AIRPORT. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

68

Nellie and Charles Jr walk slowly along the crowded road to the airport. They're dressed in black - the same clothes they wore to their dad's funeral. Nellie's face is streaked with tears.

The sound of WAILING and CRYING fills the air. Hundreds of mourners line the street, wrapped in black or in chitenges patterned with the Zambian flag.

CHARLES JR

Where is he, Nellie?

Charles JR doesn't answer.

He stares down the road.

From the distance, a motorcade of army trucks approaches - each one draped with the Zambian flag.

Thirty coffins.

As the trucks roll past, women break from the crowd, throwing themselves across the trucks, screaming the names of their sons, husbands, brothers.

CHARLES JR CONT'D

There he is.

The truck with Kelvin Mutale passes. Nellie gasps, her eyes locked on it.

A child pushes through the crowd.

Too small. Oversized Zambia shirt. He just stands there.

Nellie watches him.

She looks at Kelvin's coffin.

Back to the child.

Back to the coffin.

She follows the coffin as it passes her until it disappears down the road. The crowd fades around her - just the sound of her own breath and the distant crying. She is frozen in grief.

69 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 69

Samson and Nellie watch Dennis Liwewe's report on their TV. Nellie chews on her finger nails, eyes wet. Nellie is dressed in sports clothes.

Neither speaks.

She looks back at Samson. He has not moved. His tea from the previous night is on the table, cold and untouched. He is watching the TV but not seeing it.

Nellie gets up and grabs a football and a training bag and leaves the house without saying a word.

70 INT. DAVID'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 70

Winnie sits alone in her living room.

She holds David's jersey.

She looks at it.

WINNIE
(quietly, to herself)
You didn't.

She starts to cry.

WINNIE
(louder)
You didn't.

She hugs the shirt tightly and starts to rock back and forth.

71 INT. KALUSHA'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 71

A memorial gathering fills Kalusha's home. Around a hundred guests - friends, family, teammates - move quietly through the rooms.

Conversations are hushed. Grief hangs heavy.

In the open-plan living room, older relatives sit on ornate sofas. The dining table beyond is covered with dishes.

Along the walls, people sit shoulder to shoulder on chairs, murmuring.

From the kitchen, the clatter of pots and low voices of women preparing food.

Kalusha and Derby stand together near the window, each with a cup and saucer in hand. Kalusha stirs his tea without purpose, watching his daughters and other children playing in the garden.

Outside, beneath a large black tent, men unfold tables and chairs.

Every so often, someone arrives. They enter with a sudden, piercing loud WAIL that cuts through the silence. Others join in.

The silence resumes when they have let out their grief.

Among the arrivals is Kalusha's brother Benjamin Jr. He walks directly toward Kalusha; they embrace lightly, Kalusha does not avert his gaze.

BENJAMIN JR

How are you Kalusha?

Kalusha watches the children outside.

Running. Playing.

KALUSHA

The World Cup.

Neither man replies immediately.

KALUSHA CONT'D

We were going.

Kalusha looks down at his tea. He places the cup on a nearby table.

He turns to walk away.

BENJAMIN JR

Kalusha.

Benjamin Jr puts his hand on his shoulder.

As he does this, Harrison (now twenty-four) arrives.

Both brothers watch him.

Harrison is composed where others are devastated - not cold, but already somewhere else in his thinking.

He greets people efficiently.

BENJAMIN JR CONT'D
Kalusha. The team needs to talk.
Sooner rather than later.

Kalusha does not respond.

BENJAMIN JR CONT'D
We need to decide. Soon.

KALUSHA
I know.

Harrison reaches Benjamin Jr, Kalusha, and Derby. He shakes Kalusha's hand and holds it a fraction longer than necessary.

HARRISON
How are you holding up?

KALUSHA
I'm here.

Harrison holds his gaze a beat too long. Again, Kalusha does not respond.

A large group of FAZ officials arrive.

Kalusha winces.

Harrison notices the reaction.

Harrison walks away confidently to greet the officials. Benjamin Jr follows. Kalusha watches them go.

DERBY
He's counting.

Kalusha doesn't respond. He turns back to the window, to his children.

72 INT. KALUSHA'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

72

Elidah (now in her fifties, in a smart black dress and matching chitenge, gray hair) stands at the kitchen counter surrounded by dishes filled with food ready to be served.

Her hands move automatically - arranging, filling, covering - but her eyes are far away.

Through the open doorway, she sees Kalusha still at the window, staring out into the garden.

Picking up some of the food, she moves toward him.

73 INT. KALUSHA'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

73

Hands full, Elidah emerges from the kitchen, scanning the crowded rooms. She spots her husband chatting politely with guests.

She places the food on the main table, and heads toward Benjamin.

Benjamin (also now older and graying), holds an empty dirty plate with plastic cutlery and a napkin on it.

Elidah approaches, leans in close.

ELIDAH

Sorry to interrupt. Excuse me.

(Whispering to her
husband)

It might be a good idea to go speak
to Kalu.

She gestures toward Kalusha. Benjamin nods and excuses himself from his conversation with the guest.

BENJAMIN

Excuse me.

Elidah takes her husband's empty plate, and returns to the kitchen.

Benjamin walks toward his son.

As he reaches him, a man at the far end of the room suddenly SLAMS his cup onto the table.

MAN

(loudly)

Why that plane?

Silence.

Another voice:

OLDER WOMAN

Lower your voice. Please.

MAN

No. No, I won't.

He stands up and points at Kalusha.

MAN

(to Kalusha)

You knew. You all knew that plane-

He stops. Too far.

His hands cover his face.

Kalusha does not look at him.

The room fractures. Murmurs. Eyes shift.

The room is interrupted. Outside, loud wailing erupts again.

A new group enters the room - some sobbing uncontrollably.

Among them is Samuel, his face solemn.

Kalusha turns towards Samuel, his eyes distant. Benjamin puts his hand on his sons shoulder.

BENJAMIN

Kalu. We should go and greet them.

Kalusha starts to walk out of the room away from the guests.

Benjamin sighs and heads towards the new guests.

Just as Kalusha reaches the doorway, Harrison catches up with him again.

HARRISON

Kalusha. I spoke to FAZ.

KALUSHA

And?

HARRISON

They want to move quickly.

He holds Kalusha's gaze.

HARRISON CONT'D

So do I.

Kalusha does not reply. Harrison turns and walks away.

DERBY

I was wrong. He wasn't counting.
He's already counted.

Kalusha storms out of the living room. Derby follows.

74 INT. KALUSHA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

74

Kalusha enters, loosening his tie, removing his jacket. He tosses it onto the bed and sits heavily on the edge of the bed.

The sounds of crying drift in from outside. He lowers his head.

A long silence.

Derby is already in the room. He stands near the window.

Kalusha wipes his eyes.

KALUSHA

Derby. I don't know how to do this.

He doesn't look up.

Kalusha finally breaks down, crying openly. Derby walks over. Sits. Puts his arm around his shoulders.

He waits, holding Kalusha's grief.

Kalusha stops crying.

DERBY

It was good to have the memorial here. The boys would have loved this.

Kalusha wipes tears from his eyes.

DERBY CONT'D

And you're holding up.

KALUSHA

I'm hiding in here.

DERBY

Like a school boy.

Derby playfully punches Kalusha. Kalusha laughs weakly.

KALUSHA

Why aren't you crying?

Kalusha sobs and wipes more tears from his eyes. Derby rises, grabs some tissues and hands them to Kalusha.

Kalusha takes one, wipes his face.

KALUSHA CONT'D

I could've been on that plane.

DERBY

But you weren't. And now you're here.

KALUSHA

But why did God save me?

DERBY

I don't know.

KALUSHA

I shouldn't be here

(beat)

I got out. They didn't.

DERBY

Kalusha.

A knock interrupts.

KALUSHA
(To someone outside)

Yes?

A person opens the door slightly, leaning in to speak.

PERSON AT THE DOOR
Sorry to disturb you, but His
Excellency, the President is here.

KALUSHA
OK. Tell them we're coming.

The person closes the door, leaving it slightly ajar.

DERBY
Chiluba is here.

KALUSHA
That fucking corrupt thief caused
all of this.

DERBY
We can hate him later. Let's go.
You need to show your face. Today
is for our brothers.

KALUSHA
OK.

Kalusha sighs and wipes his eyes a few times to calm himself
down.

A long silence.

KALUSHA CONT'D
And if Harrison is captain?

DERBY
(interrupting)
We don't need to talk about that
today.

Kalusha nods.

75 INT. KALUSHA'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

75

In the hallway, Elidah has come to the door. The door is
ajar. She peers inside.

Through the gap: Kalusha on the bed. Talking. Derby is
beside him, but Elidah can't see Derby. To her, the room
holds only her son, alone, speaking to no one.

She doesn't move. She listens. She scans.

Her face doesn't show shock. It shows something older than shock - a mother recognizing a grief she cannot name and cannot take away.

She waits. She gives him time.

She closes her eyes. Opens them.

KALUSHA O.S.

Derby, I don't know if I can do this.

Elidah hesitates.

76 INT. KALUSHA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

76

Kalusha is oblivious to his mother outside the room.

Derby is still in the room. Elidah does not see him. She never will.

DERBY

Only you can make that decision. But you don't have to decide that today. Today is for mourning. We can deal with the rest later.

KALUSHA

Thanks Derby.

DERBY

Come. Let's go greet Samuel and the President and all of them. Show them we're still here.

They rise to leave the room. As they do, there is a knock on the door. Elidah enters and walks over to Kalusha.

ELIDAH

There you are Kalu. You need to eat.

KALUSHA

I'm not hungry, mum.

ELIDAH

The President is here.

KALUSHA

I know.

ELIDAH

(beat)

You were talking to yourself in here.

Kalusha looks at her. A long beat.

ELIDAH CONT'D

(quietly)

Good. You keep talking to him.

She reaches for his hands. She holds them like only a mother can, like how she held them when he was five, and ten, and twenty.

Kalusha looks at her.

ELIDAH

Come.

Kalusha follows Elidah out the room. Derby joins them.

They pass framed photographs lining the wall - snapshots of Kalusha and his wife, Maureen Nkandu, their children, their home, moments of joy frozen in time.

Among them is a large color photograph of the Zambian national team - the full squad and coaching staff, smiling proudly.

Slowly, the color begins to fade from the picture.

One by one, the players' faces turn black and white - fading into memory.

All except Derby, Harrison, Charly, Johnson, and Kalusha.

77 EXT. TRAINING GROUND. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

77

The team prepare for a training session.

FREDDIE MWILA, the new coach - in his fifties - begins the session.

Kalusha is absent. Harrison is present.

Freddie looks at his watch.

He looks at the gate.

The players look toward Freddie.

Harrison moves toward Freddie.

HARRISON

He said he'd be here.

FREDDIE

We don't wait.

(beat)

We start.

He blows his whistle. Training begins.

A pass goes loose.

A step late.

Another.

Freddie watches.

He doesn't stop it.

Derby watches the empty space where Kalusha should be.

He doesn't join in.

The whistle blows again.

78 INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM. FAZ HEADQUARTERS. LUSAKA,
ZAMBIA. 1993

78

A small room packed too tightly. Microphones on the table. Fluorescent lights. Freddie sits beside Kalusha. A middle-aged FAZ OFFICIAL is in the back row.

REPORTERS fill the room - mainly local press. One older international BBC JOURNALIST is also present.

REPORTER 1

Kalusha. Is the team ready?
Practically speaking you don't have
a squad.

KALUSHA

We have new players. Young but
good.

REPORTER 1

Young and inexperienced. Can they
take on Morocco?

KALUSHA

Everyone starts somewhere.

REPORTER 2

(pressing)

Do you actually believe Zambia can
still qualify for the World Cup?
After everything?

Harrison enters and heads toward the FAZ official at the back. They shake hands, an unspoken easiness bonds them.

Kalusha's attention is directed toward the disturbance.

KALUSHA

(beat, the wrong length)

We'll compete.

REPORTER 2

That's not what I asked. I asked if
you believe it.

Silence. Kalusha looks at the table. Then the reporter. He opens his mouth.

Nothing comes.

He looks down at his hands. Freddie shifts beside him, about to fill the silence.

KALUSHA

(quietly)

I believe in the players. What they're capable of.

REPORTER 3

Some are saying the FAZ acted too quickly. That you're not ready for this.

Kalusha looks up. At the back of the room, Harrison's gaze is level, unreadable.

KALUSHA

(controlled, but barely)

We're - The players are ready.

BBC REPORTER

And the captaincy? Are you ready? Wouldn't it be better to bring in someone fresh?

The room turns to the reporter asking the question they all wanted to ask.

Kalusha doesn't look at Harrison. He doesn't need to.

He opens his mouth. Then, very quietly, almost to himself:

KALUSHA

I don't-

He stops. He looks at his hands. He looks at Harrison.

KALUSHA CONT'D

That's a decision for the Football Association.

BBC REPORTER

Is that your answer?

A long pause. Kalusha is flustered. An empathetic silence fills the room.

FREDDIE

(intervening)

Next question.

The reporters continue. Kalusha's hands are flat on the table. He is very still.

At the back of the room, Harrison watches him - and then quietly leaves.

79 INT. FAZ OFFICE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

79

A modest office. The FAZ official - suits, paperwork, the particular efficiency of men who administer other people's ambitions - from the previous scene sits across from Harrison. Kalusha is absent.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

The association's position is that we need to move quickly. The world is watching.

HARRISON

I understand.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

Kalusha is still the best player. That's not the question.

HARRISON

Then what is?

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

The question is whether he can carry this. Whether he can be the face of this.

HARRISON

He's barely left the house. You saw the press conference.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

And we need someone who is present.

HARRISON

I'm present.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

Yes. You are.

Harrison nods. He doesn't smile. He knows the difference between being given something and earning it.

HARRISON

And Kalusha?

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

He'll understand.

HARRISON

(after a pause)

I'll tell him myself.

The FAZ official looks at him - surprised, but not displeased.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

OK.

Harrison stands. He straightens his jacket. He pauses at the door.

HARRISON

It's the right decision.

He leaves. The FAZ official watches him go - not entirely certain.

80 EXT. TRAINING GROUND CAR PARK. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 80

Kalusha sits in his car outside the training ground. He has been sitting there a while, sports bag on the passenger seat.

Other cars arrive. Players emerge. They make their way into the training ground, oblivious to Kalusha's presence.

Harrison's car pulls up. He gets out. Walks over to Kalusha. He stops at the driver's window. He taps the window.

Kalusha looks up, sees him, and slowly winds down his window.

HARRISON

I wanted to tell you myself. Before we go in.

Kalusha waits.

HARRISON CONT'D

I've spoken to FAZ. I'm going to take over. While you-

KALUSHA

While I what?

HARRISON

While you find your way back.

A beat.

HARRISON CONT'D

We need structure.

(softer)

Until you're ready.

KALUSHA

We need time. We're not ready.

HARRISON

We don't have time.

KALUSHA

They just died.

HARRISON
And the country didn't.

Silence.

In the background the training commences.

KALUSHA
Let's go in captain. We shouldn't
be late.

Kalusha grabs his bag and opens his door. Kalusha walks off
toward the training ground.

Harrison pauses. He hangs back. He waits.

Then, follows.

81 INT. FAZ OFFICE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

81

Kalusha enters the FAZ office. The same FAZ official is
seated. He already knows what they have to say.

He sits down confidently.

KALUSHA
I spoke to Harrison.

The two officials look at each other nervously.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3
We can't afford failure here.

KALUSHA
No one can.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3
No. You don't understand.
(beat)
If this team collapses, it reflects
on all of us. On the government. On
the country.

A beat.

FAZ OFFICIAL 3 CONT'D
We need stability. Not emotion.

Kalusha absorbs this.

KALUSHA
You think this is emotion?

FAZ OFFICIAL 3
I think, we think that-

KALUSHA
That I'm not ready? Then why did
you pick me?

FAZ OFFICIAL 3

We thought you were ready.

(beat)

But you're not.

Kalusha stands.

For a moment, it genuinely feels like he might walk away from the team entirely.

He doesn't speak.

He leaves.

82 EXT. LUSAKA STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

82

Nellie (flip-flops, jeans, oversized t-shirt) walks along a dusty road near the stadium. She carries several plastic bags, green vegetables poking out.

She pauses when she sees a sign: "Independence Stadium, Lusaka, Zambia."

Across the road, a bus stop. In the other direction, the stadium looms. She turns and walks toward it.

She slips through a half-open metal gate. Inside, another sign reads: "Lusaka Stadium. Chipolopolo Memorial Site. 1993."

Mounds of soil, about a meter high, line the space like graves.

Each mound is covered with flowers and wreaths. A wooden frame holds a black-and-white photo of a player.

Beneath each, a carved plaque with a name and birth date. The date of death on every single one: 27th April 1993.

Visitors walk quietly among the graves.

Nellie passes a few: Godfrey "Ucar" Chitalu... David Efford Chabala. She stops at one. Kelvin "Malaza" Mutale.

A barefoot security guard approaches. His uniform hangs loose, the truncheon on his belt almost slipping. Nellie wipes her tears before he arrives.

SECURITY GUARD

You're looking at Kelvin. Many people like that one. Player of the Year in 1990... grave in 1993. So fast.

NELLIE

(Reading softly)

"Dad, You have left us alone. What are we to do now?"

SECURITY GUARD

What?

NELLIE

It's written here. On his photo.

He follows her gaze, nodding slowly.

SECURITY GUARD

Ah yes. The families...
unimaginable.

(beat)

He was very good, that one.

NELLIE

He was the best. I saw him once.
Five years ago. When they came back
from the Olympics. I saw him on the
road from the airport. With my mum
and dad.

SECURITY GUARD

I missed that parade.

NELLIE

They've passed too.

SECURITY GUARD

Who?

NELLIE

My mum and dad.

SECURITY GUARD

My condolences.

NELLIE

Thank you.

SECURITY GUARD

Come back in the rainy season.
They'll build a real memorial. Real
graves.

He gestures toward plastic-covered mounds.

SECURITY GUARD

And I'll get a real uniform. To
protect our heroes.

Nellie turns to leave. She shifts the weight of her plastic
bags. The guard walks off in another direction.

She pauses near the gate for one last glance. A name catches
her eye:

"Patrick "Bomber" Banda - 28th July 1974 - 27th April 1993."

Below it, a handwritten note on scrap paper reads:

"Taken too soon at 18 years. Gone is our father, our husband, our brother and our son."

A gust of wind lifts the paper. It flutters loose, held only by small rocks. It starts to blow away - until Nellie catches it with her foot.

She kneels, sets her shopping down, and carefully tucks the note back under the stones.

She picks up her bags, steps through the gate, and quietly closes it behind her.

83 EXT. AIRPORT, AMSTERDAM. NIGHT. 1993

83

Kalusha emerges from the airport.

He is dressed for the cold and grey.

A professional suit. Sombre. Purposive.

He walks straight into a waiting car.

84 INT. KALUSHA'S HOUSE. EINDHOVEN, NETHERLANDS. EVENING. 1993 84

The house is quiet. Kalusha enters, still in his suit from his flight home from Zambia.

Maureen is elsewhere in the house. The children are asleep.

Kalusha dumps his suitcase casually on the kitchen floor. He takes off his watch and a Chipolopolo bracelet and casually throws them onto the table. Jacket comes off, tie loosened.

He reaches for the fridge and finds a cold beer.

He opens it and drinks it like water.

A knock. Erwin lets himself in.

The men hug.

ERWIN

When did you get back?

KALUSHA

Literally an hour ago.

Erwin looks at him.

ERWIN

How are you?

KALUSHA

Exhausted.

ERWIN

I bet.

Kalusha collapses onto a kitchen chair. Erwin grabs a beer from the fridge for himself.

ERWIN CONT'D

You haven't called.

KALUSHA

I know.

ERWIN

The boys have been asking about you.

A silence.

ERWIN CONT'D

About the way forward for Zambia.

KALUSHA

I'm not captain anymore. But they want me to go back. For the qualifiers. Denmark training. Then Morocco. All of it.

ERWIN

Who made the decision?

KALUSHA

FAZ.

ERWIN

Shit call.

KALUSHA

It was right.

ERWIN

What do you want to do?

Kalusha doesn't answer immediately.

KALUSHA

Stay here. I don't know if I can walk out there again. In that shirt. In front of everyone.

ERWIN

Then don't.

KALUSHA

We lost thirty brothers, Erwin. Thirty people on one plane.

ERWIN

I know.

KALUSHA

And I was here. Getting ready for a run. A bloody run.

He stops.

KALUSHA CONT'D

One thought goes over and over and over in my head. Why me? Why am I still here?

Erwin is quiet. He knows there is no answer to that.

ERWIN

So stay. Stay here. No one would blame you.

Kalusha is quiet for a moment. He looks at the bracelet on the table.

He reaches for the Chipolopolo bracelet and plays with it in his hand.

KALUSHA

When we were fifteen, all of us used to play on a dirt pitch. We made goal posts out of whatever we could find. Bare feet. A ball made of plastic bags.

A beat.

KALUSHA CONT'D

We always said we'd do something with it. Make it mean something.

Erwin looks at him. He does not push.

KALUSHA CONT'D

They can't finish it now. And I don't know if I can.

From another room - Maureen.

ERWIN

I should get back. Listen. No matter what you decide, you know where I am.

KALUSHA

I know.

Erwin finishes his beer. He places the empty beer in the sink.

Kalusha stands to say goodbye. The men hug.

Erwin leaves and Kalusha returns to his seat, his beer, and to playing with the Chipolopolo bracelet.

85 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

85

Nellie returns home, sets down her groceries. Loud music blares from the living room.

She moves quietly, unpacking her vegetables - not much food, but she works methodically, on auto-pilot.

She chops onions. Stirs a pot of Nshima. Steam rises.

SAMSON (O.S.)

Nellie. My sista Nellie.

Her older brother Samson staggers into the kitchen - drunk, eyes red, reeking of beer.

He staggers toward her. She ignores him and continues cooking.

SAMSON

You're cooking. Good.

He sways, catches himself against the cupboard.

SAMSON CONT'D

We're going to the tavern to watch the game.

NELLIE

(quietly, still cooking)

The food will be cold.

He opens the fridge - empty except for six large beers. He grabs three beers.

SAMSON

Who made you my mother?

NELLIE

She did. When she died.

Samson stops. Nearly drops the beers.

NELLIE

I'm going to Zambia Airways to ask for a job.

SAMSON

Little miss perfect. And school?

Nellie stops chopping; the knife pauses.

NELLIE

I'll drop out.

SAMSON

Whatever. I'm leaving.

He stumbles out.

SAMSON (O.S.)

Tiyeni!

Moments later: laughter, clinking bottles, the sound of the door slamming. Then - silence. Just the bubble of the nshima, Nellie chopping.

86 INT. KALUSHA'S HOUSE. EINDHOVEN, NETHERLANDS. DAY. 1993 86

Kalusha alone.

Silence.

A phone on the table.

He picks it up.

Starts to dial-

Stops.

He doesn't know who to call.

He tries to speak-

Nothing comes.

He laughs.

Just once.

It dies immediately.

87 EXT. NELLIE'S BACK YARD. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 87

Nellie steps outside with two plates and bowls - nshima and vegetables - setting them on a straw mat. There is not much; but it's enough.

Her younger brother Charles Jr follows carrying a water jug and bowl.

They sit cross-legged. Wash their hands. Eat quietly.

CHARLES JR

You don't have to drop out.

NELLIE

I have to find a job.

Charles Jr keeps eating. He doesn't look at Nellie.

CHARLES JR

I already did.

NELLIE

What do you mean?

CHARLES JR
I dropped out. Got a job.

NELLIE
Charles! Why?

CHARLES JR
It's done. You stay in school.
Kande Junior got me a job at that
car place.

NELLIE
Why didn't you discuss this with
me? You have to go back to school.
You don't owe me your life.

CHARLES JR
And you don't owe me yours.

Nellie looks around. The empty, bare room. The small amounts
of food. Her schoolbooks on the table.

She nods.

A beat.

NELLIE
One year. Then you go back to
school.

Nellie gets up and quietly places her schoolbooks into a bag
and slides them under the table.

CHARLES JR
Deal.

They both know this is a lie.

NELLIE
Does Samson know?

CHARLES JR
He doesn't.

NELLIE
It should be him going to work.

CHARLES JR
Yeah.

Beat.

CHARLES JR CONT'D
More importantly, where are we
going to watch the game?

NELLIE
Not at the tavern.

CHARLES JR
Never. That's where dad used to go.

NELLIE
The tuck shop, then?

CHARLES JR
I'll check if they're showing it.

They eat in silence - comforted just by being together. In the distance, people talk, laugh, sing.

88 EXT. CAR - MOVING. EINDHOVEN, NETHERLANDS. DAY. 1993 88

Kalusha drives along a quiet country road. He is dressed to run.

He signals. Turns off into a forest.

He parks and gets out.

All around him - tall trees, stillness, running paths.

He locks the car, pockets the keys. He exhales, then starts to jog.

His pace quickens. His jaw tightens.

The jog turns into a sprint. As fast as he can.

Sweat runs into his eyes. He ignores this.

He suddenly stops, doubled over. Gasping.

He straightens, looks up at the sky-

Tries to scream-

Nothing comes.

Just air. A broken sound. He stops trying.

Silence.

His breathing - loud, uneven.

Too loud.

He looks around-

Nothing responds.

Just stillness.

He looks toward the car-

Too far. He doesn't move.

He starts walking.

Slow.

Unsteady.

89 EXT. TRAINING GROUND. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

89

A heavy metal door opens onto an empty, sun-bleached training field.

Twenty or so Zambian football players and FAZ staff, casually dressed, stroll out, chatting quietly.

Harrison leads the team; he has settled in his new role after a month or so.

Kalusha emerges last and takes his place among the group.

Kalusha and Harrison are joined by GIBBY MBASELA (twenty-one), MORDON MALITOLI (twenty), KENNETH MALITOLI (twenty-one), JAMES PHIRI (seventeen), and HAPPY SICHIKOLO (seventeen).

They are young, noticeably.

Freddie stands at the front as the new coach - tracksuit, whistle, calm authority.

The stadium beyond is still run down - peeling paint, rust, damp stains, litter scattered among the stands.

Freddie steps forwards as the last of the players take a seat.

FREDDIE

Gentlemen. Four games away from the 1994 World Cup. Four games that will define our lives.

(he starts passing out papers)

We've accepted an offer from Denmark who will host us for a month's training camp. Then Ian Porterfield will take over as coach.

A ripple of excited chatter spreads through the players.

JAMES

EICHO!

DERBY

A Scottish coach!

FREDDIE

We leave as soon as possible. Maybe next week. Need to sort out a few passports.

JAMES
Coach, will there be separate
training for us goalkeepers?

FREDDIE
Yes, I'm sure.

HAPPY
We'll all need special training.

KENNETH
Coach. We're not them.

Kalusha looks at Harrison.

Harrison looks straight at the young player.

HARRISON
Then don't try to be.

The players are attentive.

FREDDIE
Remember one thing. Grief doesn't
win matches.
(beat)
Discipline does.

Kalusha looks away.

GIBBY
(hesitant)
What plane will we fly with?

The chatter dies down. Freddie shifts, eyes flicking to
Kalusha, to Harrison, then back to Gibby.

Everyone looks at the coach. There's a pause before he
answers.

He shifts on his feet. He looks at the floor. He looks at
Kalusha and then at Gibby.

FREDDIE
With British Airways. The Danish
are covering everything.

Relief. A few nods.

MORDON
And after Denmark?

FREDDIE
We'll open our campaign here in
Lusaka - against Morocco.

HAPPY
 (grinning)
 Ah... coach. For such a long
 time... Can we bring our
 girlfriends?

The players burst out laughing.

MORDON
 Or our wives!

JAMES
 Or for some of us, both!

More laughter. Freddie chuckles too.

Harrison interjects.

HARRISON
 We minimize distractions.
 Girlfriends and wives stay home.

The laughter lingers.

FREDDIE
 Alright. Let's go.

Freddie starts to pace as the team line up to start the drills.

90 EXT. TRAINING GROUND - CONTINUOUS

90

Two lines. Sharp passes, movement, finish.

Harrison wears the captain's armband. The players respond to him - they try, they work. But there is a flatness. The drill is correct. Something is missing.

Kalusha joins the back of the line.

The drill reaches Harrison. He plays it forward. The move breaks down. Mordon misses his run. Freddie blows his whistle.

FREDDIE
 Again.

The drill resets. The time Kalusha is at the front.

He receives the ball. One touch.

He does not look - he already knows where everyone is.

He plays it. The move flows. Mordon hits his run perfectly. Goal.

The players react differently. Not celebration but recognition. Something clicked.

From the sideline, Harrison watches.

He watches Kalusha jog back to the line. Kalusha does not look at Harrison.

He watches the younger players orient toward him without thinking. He watches Freddie thinking the same thing.

Harrison crosses his arms. His hand rests on the captaincy armband.

He looks down and around. He is not ready to do it here. Not yet.

A beat.

He knows exactly what this means.

91 EXT. TRAINING GROUND - CONTINUOUS

91

The training winds up, laughter trailing off as the team leave the field. Kalusha lingers, approaches Freddie.

KALUSHA

Coach.

FREDDIE

Yes, Kalu?

KALUSHA

Before we leave, we should go to the memorial site. As a team.

FREDDIE

That's a good idea. It'll remind us why we're here.

They shake hands. There is a pause. Kalusha walks off first.

FREDDIE CONT'D

Kalusha.

KALUSHA

Yes.

FREDDIE

(beat)

Nothing. See you tomorrow.

Freddie turns away toward the other coaches. Kalusha hesitates, then follows his team mates out of the training ground.

92 EXT. LUSAKA STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

92

Two old buses rumble up to the stadium gates - freshly painted with the Zambian flag and the word Chipolopolo.

As they park, Nellie walks in the distance - shopping bags in hand, back turned to the arriving buses. She disappears down the road.

The barefoot security guard rushes to open the gates, salutes sharply as the bus rolls in.

The players step out - silent, respectful. Freddie and Kalusha lead the way toward the rows of graves.

No words. Just the sound of wind and footsteps.

93 INT. SMALL BAR. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

93

A small, dim bar. The barkeeper moves quietly in the background.

Joel, Happy, Gibby, Mordon, and Kenneth sit around a table scattered with empty Mosi bottles. A TV in the corner has silenced them.

TV MONITOR:

DENNIS (ON TV)

Their next game is undecided but would likely be a friendly here in Lusaka.

Harrison enters and heads toward his teammates. He takes a seat casually.

JOEL

Is Kalusha joining us?

HARRISON

He's on his way.

MORDON

What did you want to talk to us about?

Harrison grabs a full beer from the table and drinks more than the moment calls for.

HARRISON

When Kalusha arrives, I'm going to give it back.

JOEL

What do you mean?

HARRISON

He's ready.

GIBBY

Does FAZ know?

HARRISON

I requested it.

KENNETH

You've held us Harrison.

JOEL

Yeah, we appreciate it.

Harrison leans back on his chair.

HARRISON

The boys play for him. That's the truth of it.

They all fall silent.

HARRISON CONT'D

This was my decision. If he thinks it was FAZ, he won't take it. You all know that.

GIBBY

And what if he won't take it?

KENNETH

Then, we've got bigger problems.

The door opens. Derby enters first. Then Kalusha. He reads the room immediately - all of them, together, Harrison in the center.

He looks at Harrison.

HARRISON CONT'D

(to Kalusha, flat, no ceremony)

Sit down, Kalu.

A beat.

HARRISON CONT'D

We need a captain. Stop wasting time.

The other players look at Kalusha. Harrison looks at the table.

A long silence.

Kalusha looks around the room. At Joel. At Gibby, At Mordon and Kenneth. At Derby.

Then, slowly, Kalusha sits.

94 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993

94

The stadium heaves with life - a sea of flags, whistles, and dust. Supporters cram every inch, roaring.

Players emerge from the tunnel, warming up under the blazing sun.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Ten minutes to kick-off. The first international game for the new Chipolopolo. With Kalusha back as captain.

On the sidelines of the Zambian benches, Freddie Mwila stands beside IAN PORTERFIELD, late forties, Scottish, tracksuit tucked in, calm focus. They exchange nods as the anthems begin.

95 EXT. STREET. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 95

Nellie and Charles Jr walk along a busy road. They're purposive.

The streets are alive with anticipation. People walk around in all directions, as purposive as the siblings.

96 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1993 96

Dennis Liwewe commentates offscreen, parallel to the game preparations on the pitch.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Back in Lusaka. Back on the pitch. Whatever happens today - they showed up.

97 EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS 97

Nellie and Charles Jr weave through the busy street, scanning for a TV.

They pass a full bar.

CHARLES JR

(to the people in the bar)

Has it started?

BAR PERSON

Not yet. Ten minutes.

NELLIE

(to Charles)

Charles! We can still make it.

CHARLES JR

(to Nellie)

Come on Nellie!

They run toward the distant sound of drums and cheers - the stadium.

98 EXT. OUTSIDE THE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 98

The national anthem echoes inside. Nellie and Charles Jr reach the closed gates.

CHARLES JR

Follow me.

He leads her toward a crowd slipping through a hole in the fence.

CHARLES JR CONT'D

Here, Nellie!

They squeeze into the crowd - jostled, nervous, exhilarated. Charles Jr never lets go of her hand.

They duck through the fence, breathless - then break into a run, finding space near the far end of the pitch.

NELLIE

We made it!

CHARLES JR

Told you. Better than the tuck shop!

He beams, scanning the field.

CHARLES JR CONT'D

(excited, pointing)

There's Kalu!

99 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

99

The crowd roars as the whistle blows.

DENNIS (V.O.)

And we are underway here in Lusaka! Zambia in green, facing Morocco. And Kalusha's first game as the captain.

The players move with precision and hunger - Kalusha commanding the midfield.

Just before the tenth minute, Johnson Bwalya strikes but hits the post.

After fifteen minutes, Morocco score.

The crowds in the stadium are silent as the Moroccan players run to the corner to celebrate.

Kalusha does not react. He stares at the pitch. Still.

An hour of play goes by. The Moroccans defend well.

Zambia is awarded a free kick.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

And here we have a chance to equalize with sixty minutes played. Kalusha will step up to take it.

Kalusha steps up to take the penalty. The crowd is quiet.

Kalusha kicks the ball straight over the defenders and scores.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
Gooooooooaaaaal! KALUSHAAAAA
BWALYAAAAA has equalized for
Zambia!

The Zambian team rush to the fans; they are swarmed on the sidelines.

Kalusha stands apart. Again, still. He does not react and stares at the action.

He seems oblivious to the cheering around him.

Harrison approaches him; they fist bump, bringing Kalusha back to the game.

The whistle blows and the Moroccan team kick off again.

Johnson Bwalya is just outside the box, he passes to Kalusha Bwalya, but he's intercepted.

The Moroccan player who intercepted the ball tries to pass it to his teammate.

Johnson Bwalya quickly strikes the ball perfectly into the right lower corner of the net.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
Johnson strikes. He scores!!!
GOOOOOOaaaaaaaal! Johnson Bwalya
has scored! He has scored!

The Zambian team rush toward Johnson.

The crowd loses control and invade the pitch.

In the last minute, the referee looks at his watch, and blows his whistle.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
And that's it! CHIPOLOPOLO have
done it! We've WON!

Some of the Zambian team fall to their knees. The Moroccan team walk off the pitch.

The pitch is invaded a second time.

Nellie is frozen, staring at the pitch. Charles shakes her out of her freeze.

Kalusha, on the pitch, emulates Nellie. He is frozen. Once again, Harrison approaches him. They hug.

The crowds soon reach them both and hoist them both onto their shoulders.

The stadium starts chanting again:

WHOLE STADIUM
CHIPOLOPOLO! ZAMBIA KU CHALO!

Nellie remains silent, trapped in awe.

100 EXT. AIRPORT. CASABLANCA, MOROCCO. DAY. 1993

100

A large bus unceremoniously pulls up to the airport. A small Zambian flag on the door.

The Chipolopolo players file off the bus, subdued, heads low. They pull their bags from the luggage hold.

Ian Porterfield steps off, grabs a kit bag.

IAN
Come on lads. Let's get our bags
and get home.

A reporter approaches with a notepad.

BBC REPORTER
Ian Porterfield? BBC. Tried to
reach you last night.

IAN
Go on.

BBC REPORTER
That loss ends Zambia's World Cup
hopes. Was the new Chipolopolo team
really ready for international
football?

The players glance over, avoiding eye contact, but annoyed.

IAN
Damn right we were. Everyone wanted
a miracle. Didn't happen. But this-
(gestures to his players)
-this is only the beginning.

BBC REPORTER
How's the team feeling?

IAN
Gutted. But we've got Tunisia next
year. That's our focus now.

BBC REPORTER
You think Zambia can still win the
Africa Cup of Nations?

IAN

Aye, I do.

The reporter, nods leaves. Freddie approaches Ian.

FREDDIE

What do you think the world thinks
of us, Ian?

IAN

They think we don't stand a chance.
Stuff them.

Ian pats Freddie on the back, they both grab their bags, and
walk off.

101 EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAWN. 1993

101

Empty. The same kind of pitch Kalusha grew up on. He is
alone, in training clothes, a ball at his feet.

He doesn't run drills. He just passes the BALL against a
wall.

One foot. Then the other. The way he would have done at
fifteen.

The ball is the only sound.

After a long time, Derby arrives. He sits on the wall and
watches. He doesn't ask Kalusha why he is here at dawn. He
already knows.

DERBY

We go to AFCON next year.

Kalusha passes the ball against the wall.

DERBY CONT'D

Six months ago, we didn't have a
team.

KALUSHA

I know.

DERBY

So what are you doing out here?

KALUSHA

I don't know what we're playing for
anymore. We were supposed to get to
the world cup. For them. We didn't.

The ball comes back off the wall. Kalusha stops it under his
foot.

KALUSHA CONT'D

What do we tell them now?

Derby doesn't answer immediately. He looks at the pitch. At the wall. At the charcoal lines someone has drawn for goalposts - still there, still the same.

DERBY

We tell them we're still here.

KALUSHA

That's not enough.

DERBY

It's what we got.

Kalusha looks at the charcoal goalposts. He picks up the ball.

He walks back to his mark.

He shoots. It hits the wall inside the lines.

He picks up the ball again. And starts again.

102 EXT. KALUSHA BWALYA'S HOUSE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1994 102
SUPERIMPOSE: Lusaka, Zambia. 1994.

A sleek van pulls up to a metal gate. A GUARD opens it. The van drives up a gravel driveway.

Joel and Benjamin Jr step out, followed by the DRIVER. They approach the front door; Joel knocks.

Kalusha opens it, greeting his brothers warmly. Derby stands behind him.

BENJAMIN JR

Ready?

KALUSHA

Gimme a minute.

Kalusha disappears down the hall.

The driver gathers the luggage, loads the van. Kalusha returns carrying his daughter TAMELA BWALYA (7).

JOEL

Tamela!

Tamela smiles shyly. Elidah and Benjamin join them outside.

ELIDAH

You'll be late.

BENJAMIN JR

Ma, I've been trying to tell him.

Kalusha hands Tamela to his mother. He pats his pockets.

KALUSHA

My wallet!

He jogs back inside.

BENJAMIN

He's been quiet.

BENJAMIN JR

We'll talk to him.

ELIDAH

He has too much on his shoulders.
This Cup of Nations.

JOEL

Don't worry, Ma.

ELIDAH

That's impossible. I can't stop
worrying about all of my sons.

Kalusha returns, waving his wallet. He hugs his mum,
lingering to address her concerns.

KALUSHA

OK, let's go.

Kalusha kisses Tamela and his mother, shakes his father's
hand. Derby and his brothers follow him to the van. As they
drive out, Elidah holds Tamela close.

ELIDAH

Please God. Keep them safe.

BENJAMIN

He will.

Benjamin wraps his arms around his wife and granddaughter,
watching his sons leave.

103 EXT. AIRPORT CARPARK. TUNIS, TUNISIA. NIGHT. 1994

103

The Zambian team exits the terminal, heading toward their
bus. Two teen boys spot Kalusha and rush over.

YOUNG BOY 1

Excuse me, Mr. Kalusha Bwalya?

KALUSHA

Yes?

YOUNG BOY 1

Can you sign something for me?

He hands over a school book. The other boy joins.

YOUNG BOY 2

Me too, please!

Kalusha signs both books, smiling.

YOUNG BOY 1
Thank you, Kalusha.

YOUNG BOY 2
Good luck Mr. Bwalya! We'll be
watching!

YOUNG BOY 1
Good luck Mr. Bwalya!

The boys run off, grinning. Derby comes up behind Kalusha, teasing.

DERBY
(Joking)
Good luck Mr. Bwalya! Can you sign
this Mr. Bwalya!

Kalusha laughs.

DERBY
They just met a future African
champion!

Ian Porterfield leans out from the bus door.

IAN
Kalusha. If you've finished
frolicking with your fans, would
you mind getting on board? We've
got some training to do!

KALUSHA
Sorry. Yes, coach.

Kalusha smiles. They climb aboard. The bus drives off.

104 INT. STADIUM ENTRANCE - TUNIS, TUNISIA. NIGHT. 1994 104

The ZAMBIAN and NIGERIAN teams line up in the tunnel.

SUPERIMPOSE: April 10th, 1994.

The roars of the crowd echo through the tunnel.

The players chat nervously, bounce on their feet, stretch
their arms.

STEPHEN KESHI, the Nigerian captain, extends a hand to
Kalusha who shakes it.

STEPHEN
Hey Kalu. No matter what happens,
everyone in Africa is proud of all
of you.

KALUSHA

Thank you.

They lead their teams out. The roar of the crowd swells.

The tunnel empties into silence.

105 EXT. TUCKSHOP. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1994

105

A crowd gathers around a TV outside a small store, watching the final.

Nellie and Charles Jr squeeze in, eyes glued to the screen.

DENNIS (V.O.)

And we're about to kick off. It's the super eagles against Chipolopolo. This time last year we didn't have a team, and now we're in the 1994 African Cup of Nations final.

106 INT. CHIPOLOPOLO CHANGING ROOM. TUNIS, TUNISIA. DAY. 1994

106

The players drift in slowly. Their boots echo on concrete. Silver medals hang from bowed necks.

Some take off their shirts.

They're dejected and head straight to the benches and sit down.

Kalusha enters, followed by Derby, the last of the players.

The two coaches are the last to enter.

Freddie sits by the door.

Ian Porterfield stands center, hands on hips.

He looks at the ground.

Mordon sits opposite the coach and breaks the silence.

HAPPY

Miracle Team.

IAN

Lads.

HAPPY

What a joke.

IAN

Lads. The super eagles are champions. But so are you.

The players are unmoved.

Some shift nervously in their seats.

MORDON
Coach, we just lost.

Ian looks around the room.

IAN
Listen. In twenty-five days we'll all be in Lusaka for the one year anniversary of the accident. It's been less than a year. And here we are.

He gesticulates wildly.

IAN CONT'D
At the bloody African Cup of Nations finals.

He scans the room.

IAN CONT'D
What you did for your brothers is fucking brilliant.

The players still look despondent.

IAN CONT'D
I don't know about you all, but I'm in need of a change of clothes, a steak supper, and a few beers. Who wants to join me?

Silence. Then -

KALUSHA
I'll join you, coach.

Others echo him, one by one.

IAN
Great. First round's on me.

Ian exits with Freddie. For a moment, nothing.

Then - slowly - the room begins to breathe again. Someone laughs. Someone else. It spreads.

They start to get changed. Kalusha stays seated, quiet. Derby puts his hand on Kalusha's shoulder and sighs.

107 EXT. STREET. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1994

107

Nellie and Charles Jr leave a small shop where they have watched the game.

They are joined by other fans all leaving the shop. They're all dejected.

The sounds of the game on the TV trail them as they leave.

CHARLES JR

(He sucks his teeth)

I really thought we were going to win.

NELLIE

Same. I really thought we would score first.

He puts his arm around his little sister as they walk on.

The afternoon light fades, but there is enough to see the remnants of the supporters. Discarded flags. Empty bottles. Food wrappers.

A group of BOYS a little older than Nellie kick a ball nearby. Hard. Angry. The ball flies wide, clatters against a wall.

One boy swears. Another storms off.

Nellie watches.

Charles Jr Keeps walking.

After a few steps, Nellie slows.

She looks back at the boys. At the ball, resting awkwardly in the dust.

She hesitates. Then breaks from her brother and jogs off.

CHARLES JR

Nellie!

She doesn't answer.

She picks up the ball with her foot. One touch. Then another. Controlled. Calm.

The boys watch her, surprised.

Nellie looks up at them, still controlling the ball.

Nellie holds the ball under one foot. Then plays it cleanly into motion.

The game resumes. Nellie takes charge.

Charles Jr watches from a distance.

Nellie plays. Not celebrating. Not proving anything. Just playing.

108 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 1994 108

The TV is broadcasting the post-match coverage: players, trophies, the Nigerians celebrating. Samson is slumped in a chair, empty bottles and chaos on the floor beside him. He is not asleep. Just still.

Nellie comes in. She sees him. She doesn't say anything. She moves to turn off the TV.

SAMSON

Leave it.

She leaves it. She sits.

A long silence. On the TV: The Nigerians lifting the trophy.

SAMSON

We should've won.

NELLIE

I know.

SAMSON

We had it right there.

He gestures at the TV. His hand is unsteady.

SAMSON CONT'D

Where's Junior?

NELLIE

At work.

SAMSON

Good boy.

He almost smiles.

NELLIE

Samson. You need to get a job.

The almost smile turns into a frown.

SAMSON

Don't.

NELLIE

I'm not asking. Junior dropped out.

SAMSON

I said don't.

NELLIE

Someone has to-

SAMSON

(sharp)

I know, Nellie. I know.

He stands. Steadies himself against the chair.

SAMSON CONT'D

Don't tell me what I already know.

He walks out the room. He slams the door behind him.

Nellie sits in front of the TV. The Nigerians are still celebrating. She watches it for a moment.

Then she turns it off and starts to clean up the mess Samson left behind.

109 INT. CHIPOLOPOLO CHANGING ROOM TUNIS - CONTINUOUS

109

The room has emptied. Boots and kit on the floor. The sound of distant music - the Nigerians celebrating.

Kalusha sits alone, shirt in his hands, staring at the crest.

Derby has also stayed. He finishes packing up his kit and walks over to Kalusha.

Derby sits. He doesn't say anything.

He picks his own shirt from out his bag and holds it in the same way - both of them, silent, staring at the same crest.

A long moment.

KALUSHA

I keep thinking they're watching.

DERBY

(quietly)

They are.

KALUSHA

Then we let them down.

Derby doesn't answer immediately.

DERBY

We got here. Less than a year after

-

KALUSHA

(cutting him off)

We got here and lost.

A beat.

KALUSHA CONT'D

David would've saved that penalty.
Kelvin would've scored.

The music from outside gets louder. And then fades.

KALUSHA CONT'D

I don't know how to do this without them.

DERBY

Then take them with you.

KALUSHA

And if it's never enough?

Derby doesn't have an answer. He puts his arm around Kalusha's shoulders.

They sit in the silence of a changing room that smells like sweat and defeat.

Outside faintly: Tiyende Pamodzi.

Someone is singing it. A Zambian supporter, somewhere in the stadium, refusing to go home.

Kalusha hears it. He holds very still.

He folds the shirt. Places it carefully on the bench.

He stands.

For a moment he stays exactly where he is.

He walks toward the door. Stops his hand on the frame.

Outside, the singing continues.

He listens. He turns to Derby.

KALUSHA

You coming Derby?

Kalusha walks out.

Derby stands up and follows him out the room.

The door closes leaving an empty room, strewn with the remnants of a football game.

110 EXT. STADE DE L'AMITIE. LIBREVILLE, GABON. DAY. 2012

110

SUPERIMPOSE: Stade De L'Amitie. Libreville, Gabon. Sunday, 12th February 2012.

A gray metal door OPENS.

The sound echoes.

Kalusha strides through. Grey-haired, but still fit nineteen years later. Dressed sharply.

Behind him, Derby (also mid-fifties) follows, equally fit and equally sharp in his dark suit.

The ECHO of their polished shoes ricochet through the tunnel
- the only sound in the silence.

Kalusha wears a lanyard: KALUSHA BWALYA. PRESIDENT, FOOTBALL
ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA. AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS 2012.

Orange "CHIPOLOPOLO" rubber bracelets circle their wrists, a
quiet symbol of unity and pride.

They reach the end of the tunnel and climb the stairs,
emerging onto a vast football pitch - a modern stadium
rising around them.

Hands in their pockets, they walk to the edge of the grass.

They stop at the white line, taking it all in.

The ROAR of a full stadium: vuvuzelas, drums, whistles, a
sea of Zambian and Ivorian flags waving in rhythm.

The SOUNDS of the match to come.

They crouch. Pinch a tuft of grass.

Kalusha rubs the blades of grass between his fingers, lost
in thought. Then quietly slips them into his pocket.

Derby tosses his handful into the air, letting the breeze
take it.

DERBY

We made it.

A beat.

KALUSHA

Yes, we have.

They bump fists. They stand in silence.

Derby turns and starts back toward the tunnel. Kalusha
lingers, taking one last look around.

Overhead, a plane cuts across the blue sky, its engines
ROARING.

Kalusha looks up, follows its flight for a moment - he
stiffens. A flicker of pain crosses his face.

The distant sound of a guitar begins. A single chord. Then
another. A song from a long time ago.

A song that remains current. The song he listened to as he
ran earlier: Tiyende Pamodzi.

Kalusha turns and walks toward the tunnel, disappearing into
its shadow, followed by the song.

111 INT. KALUSHA'S BEDROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012

111

A spacious modern room. Photos line the walls: the Zambia 1988 Olympic team in Seoul, Kalusha with President Kaunda, and the 1994 AFCON final.

And in the center, one large photo of the team in 1993.

SUPERIMPOSE: Lusaka, Zambia. Wednesday, 15th January 2012.

On the bedside table, there are pictures of Kalusha and his family, including Tamela, grown up and a picture of an older Kalusha with his wife EMMY CASALETTI (Italian, in her forties, elegant and warm).

Kalusha adjusts his tie in the mirror.

He picks up a small badge of the Zambian flag and adds it to his suit lapel. He adds his lanyard, the same one from earlier.

Emmy enters the room and walks toward him.

EMMY

Ready? The car's on its way.

KALUSHA

Almost.

They share a smile in the mirror.

Emmy comes to stand behind him. From behind him, she straightens his collar - a gesture so practiced it has become invisible to both of them.

She hugs him from behind. He holds her back, keeping the smile in the mirror.

EMMY

You've been awake since four.

KALUSHA

I know.

EMMY

Thinking about them?

KALUSHA

Always.

She holds his gaze in the mirror.

EMMY

They'd be proud of you. Whatever happens over the next month.

KALUSHA

(quietly)

I'm not doing it for pride.

EMMY

I know.

She lets go and faces him. She kisses him. He holds her hand against his chest.

EMMY CONT'D

Come on. Don't be late for your own tournament.

They turn and walk out hand in hand.

112 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 112

Nellie stands at the kitchen counter. She is now thirty-four. She is already dressed for work - smart, composed.

On the table: empty bottles that Nellie has collected from somewhere else in the house.

Nellie starts to place the bottles in a plastic bag. She ties it up.

Charles Jr appears in the doorway, car keys in hand. He is also older - now thirty-six.

CHARLES JR

He's not here.

NELLIE

I know.

CHARLES JR

How many times this month?

NELLIE

Who knows.

She hands Charles Jr the bag.

CHARLES JR

You can't keep cleaning up after him.

NELLIE

(sternly)

I am just trying to manage all of this.

She looks at him. He looks back.

NELLIE CONT'D

I'll talk to him.

CHARLES JR

It never works. Does it?

NELLIE

I'll talk to him.

Charles Jr leaves. Nellie stands in the quiet kitchen for a moment.

Then she opens the fridge. She pulls out a plate of food.

She writes something on a piece of paper and places it on top of the plate. The note reads: SAMSON.

She picks up her work bag and leaves.

113 INT. CAR - MOVING. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 113

Kalusha and Emmy sit in the back of an expensive moving car, on their way to a TV studio.

Kalusha's hand rests on the seat between them. Emmy gently places hers over it.

He glances down, then at her, and smiles. He laces his fingers through hers, turning back to the window - watching Lusaka roll by in the sun.

114 EXT. AIRPORT CAR PARK. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 114

An old car pulls through a security barrier. The DRIVER taps a card. The gate lifts, and Nellie drives through the gate.

She finds a space to park and steps out. She's much older and wears a smart suit. She walks toward the terminal.

She carries a work bag and a large sports bag.

115 INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS 115

Nellie walks through the busy terminal. Announcements echo over the PA. Like her mum years before, she weaves through the crowd. She greets other people around her who greet her in return.

She passes a sign: EMPLOYEES ONLY, and enters.

116 INT. AIRPORT. NELLIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 116

Nellie walks down a corridor, greeted by colleagues. She enters an office she shares with many others - modest but warm; she settles in.

On the wall next to her desk: a poster of the 1988 Zambian Olympic football team, bright and proud.

She places the sports bag down, alongside other football equipment that is cluttering up her office.

117 EXT. ZAMBIAN NATIONAL BROADCASTING CORPORATION - CONTINUOUS 117

A car pulls up to the entrance.

Emmy and Kalusha step out and head into the modern studio building.

118 INT. TV STUDIO - CONTINUOUS 118

In a bright, modern studio, Kalusha Bwalya and HERVE RENARD, a charismatic Frenchman in his forties with shoulder-length hair, sit side-by-side on a stage sofa.

Herve leans toward Kalusha and whispers a joke. Kalusha chuckles; Herve grins.

Behind them:

ZAMBIAN NATIONAL BROADCASTING CORPORATION Africa Cup of Nations Final. 2012. Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

Off-camera, a PRODUCER stands behind Emmy, who watches, arms folded. Derby, also now in his fifties, stands behind her and nods at Kalusha, who nods back.

PRODUCER

OK - and we're live in 3, 2, 1...

The red light on the camera blinks on.

119 INT. NELLIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 119

MARY, in her thirties, one of Nellie's colleagues walks up to Nellie's desk.

MARY

(excited)

Someone has a TV.

NELLIE

Oh my god. Thanks Mary. Has the interview started?

MARY

Yup. Let's go!

Nellie gets up and follows Mary out the door, giggling, excited.

120 INT. TV STUDIO - CONTINUOUS 120

TV PRESENTER

We're one week away from the start of the Africa Cup of Nations - jointly hosted by Gabon and Equatorial Guinea - and we're joined by the president of the Football Association of Zambia, Mr. Kalusha Bwalya, and the coach of the Zambian national team, Mr. Herve Renard. Gentlemen, welcome.

Behind him, the studio screen shows archival images - the 1993 team, then the 2012 squad training.

121 INT. AIRPORT. OFFICE BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS 121

Nellie stands at the back of a crowded room, watching the broadcast with co-workers. Her eyes glisten.

122 INT. TV STUDIO - CONTINUOUS 122

The presenter turns to Kalusha.

TV PRESENTER

Kalusha, as you know, the final will be in Libreville. If you make it-

HERVE

(interrupting)

When we make it!

Kalusha smiles. He rubs his thumb along his wedding ring anxiously.

KALUSHA

Same place.

A beat.

KALUSHA CONT'D

Different ending.

Kalusha's eyes flick past the camera, toward Derby.

123 EXT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. BACK YARD. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 123

Nellie parks her small old car outside her house. Samson, beer in hand, sits on the steps.

Nellie exhales slowly, grabs her sports bag, her work bag, and steps out of her car.

SAMSON

Well, well, well.

NELLIE

Stop, Samson. Not this month.

SAMSON

Ah yes. Your precious Chipolopolo are playing soon.

She keeps walking, then turns.

NELLIE

Not my Chipolopolo. Look around Samson. Everyone is getting ready to support them.

SAMSON

They paying our bills now?

Samson gets up, anger flaring. Nellie bites her tongue.

SAMSON CONT'D

(drunk and angry)

I can't be like you and Junior! It was all too much.

Samson turns to leave. Nellie turns away, hesitates, turns around.

NELLIE

You know what. I'm tired Samson. You left it all to Junior and I. You're the oldest.

SAMSON

(stopping)

I'm not him.

Samson stops. He wants to say something else. He stops himself.

He walks out through the gate, taking his beer with him. Nellie looks on, disappointed.

NELLIE

(softly, to herself)

Shit.

Nellie stands for a moment. She turns. Enters the house. She has things to do.

124 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012

124

The ZAMBIAN TEAM train in a new stadium - sprint drills, short passes, laughter mixed with nerves. They wear new, smart kits, with new expensive boots.

In the stands: billboards for softdrinks and telecoms.

Herve paces the sideline.

Kalusha and Derby emerge from the tunnel, joining him.

KALUSHA

Well?

HERVE

They're starting to believe it.

Kalusha and Herve shake hands - Derby stands aside. They watch the session.

KALUSHA

And how are they feeling?

HERVE
 (laughing)
 They're petrified!

KALUSHA
 Once we get there, they'll settle.

HERVE
 Once we start playing.

KALUSHA
 And they look fit.

HERVE
 Thank God Nigeria didn't qualify.

KALUSHA
 We've been lucky.

HERVE
 To be honest with you, this whole
 tournament feels written in the
 sky.

Kalusha looks at the players. At the pitch. At the sky.

125 EXT. STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 125

Nellie is coordinating a training session of young girls.
 They look to her with respect.

She stands with two or three other coaches, watching the
 game take place.

She is concentrated.

She is the coach.

126 EXT. STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 126

The stadium is empty.

Nellie sits alone on a bench her father once brought them.
 Her sports bag sits beside her.

Charles Jr appears from the stairs. Spots her. Comes down.

CHARLES JR
 Hey Nellie.

Nellie doesn't respond.

NELLIE
 Do you remember sitting here? When
 we were kids.

Charles Jr sits beside her.

CHARLES JR
Yeah. So many times.

A beat.

NELLIE
I used to think coming here would
give us good luck.

CHARLES JR
(smiles)
It still does.

Nellie considers that.

NELLIE
Maybe. Not in the way I thought.

They sit in the quiet.

NELLIE CONT'D
Why does he drink so much?

CHARLES JR
Because he's angry. He is sad. I
don't know.

NELLIE
I think he's trying to stay
standing. Keep upright.

CHARLES JR
He doesn't do a very good job of
standing upright!

Nellie smiles at this.

NELLIE
You OK?

CHARLES JR
Yeah. He got a job you know.

NELLIE
What?

CHARLES JR
Yeah. At my car place.

NELLIE
How long will that last?

CHARLES JR
He seems serious this time.

NELLIE
I wish I'd been the one.

Charles Jr looks at her.

NELLIE CONT'D

To drop out. Not you.

He doesn't answer immediately. He looks at the empty pitch.

CHARLES JR

You know what I remember most?

She waits.

CHARLES JR CONT'D

You scoring. Right there.

He nods toward the near end of the pitch.

NELLIE

What's the point?

CHARLES JR

In football? There isn't one.

(beat)

But it's... everything.

NELLIE

I scored a lot of goals down there.

CHARLES JR

Dad was proud!

NELLIE

(quietly)

He was.

A beat.

CHARLES JR

You should've kept playing.

NELLIE

You too.

CHARLES JR

(after a long pause)

I'm glad you found coaching.

NELLIE

I tell my players they all get to dream. All of them.

Nellie pauses.

NELLIE CONT'D

Come on. Let's go home.

They start up the stairs together.

Halfway up, Nellie pauses. Looks back at the empty seats.

Not sad. Not longing.

Grounded.

Then, her phone buzzes. She glances at it.

A text: FAZ. Can we talk? Before the final? We have a proposition for you.

She reads it. Doesn't reply. Puts the phone away.

She turns. Follows her brother out the stadium.

127 EXT. STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

127

The goalkeeper, KENNEDY MWEENE, tall with cornrows, late twenties jogs over to Herve and Kalusha holding an orange bib.

KENNEDY

(to Kalusha)

Sorry to interrupt. We're about to start a practice game. And we wanted to ask...

He holds out the bib to Kalusha.

The squad cheers.

KALUSHA

(Laughing)

So you want me to show you a thing or two? OK. Tiyeni.

Kalusha pulls the bib on. Derby steps back. Kennedy hands a bib to Herve.

DERBY

(to Kalusha)

I'll sit this one out!

KENNEDY

Herve you're with my team!

HERVE

Tiyeni!

KALUSHA

Get ready for a thrashing Herve!

The players howl with laughter as the mock match kicks off, with Derby taking photos on his phone as they play.

128 INT. CAR - MOVING. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012

128

Nellie drives through crowded streets. The city is awash with Zambian flags, football merch, and vuvuzelas.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Well, I don't think anyone in Lusaka is doing anything else tonight. Most Zambians will be glued to their television sets.

Traffic crawls. Vendors weave between the cars.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The last time Zambia were in a semi-final of the Africa Cup of Nations was in 1994 less than a year after we had to rebuild our team from scratch after the terrible accident.

Nellie approaches a red traffic light and stops.

RADIO ANNOUNCER TWO (V.O.)

That was nineteen years ago when the team was captained by Kalusha Bwalya, and now the Football Association of Zambia is run by Kalusha Bwalya.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We'll be following the game tonight. Zambia vs Ghana, the semi-final game for a place in the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations Final. And now over to a new love show where listeners send in their questions...

Nellie turns the radio off, dials her phone.

Phone screen: CHARLES JR.

NELLIE

Hey, I'm on my way. Football practice ran late. Save me a seat please! OK. OK. Bye.

She hangs up. A STREET SELLER approaches, stacked with twenty Zambian flag hats piled on top of each other on his head, ten scarves around his neck, and holds up two football shirts.

STREET SELLER

Ah madam! No flag? No scarf?

NELLIE

How much for the shirt?

He holds up one of the shirts.

STREET SELLER

This shirt here? Only 10 pin!

NELLIE

How much for two scarves?

STREET SELLER

For you Ma, as you have nothing so far, you can have them both for just 3 pin. Imagine?

Nellie hands over some cash.

He grins, passes her the two scarves

NELLIE

Better make it three.

Nellie hands over more money and he hands her one more scarf.

STREET SELLER

Zikomo! Tiye Chipolopolo! Toye!

Before Nellie can say anything, he darts to the next car as traffic moves. She puts the scarves on the seat next to her, and drives on, the city alive around her.

129 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM. BATA, EQUATORIAL GUINEA. NIGHT. 2012 129

A packed stadium. Flags everywhere - Zambia and Ghana in full color.

Herve Renard, in his trademark formal white shirt, stands on the sidelines.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And we're about to kickoff the semi final of the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations. Zambia vs Ghana.

TV COMMENTATOR TWO (V.O.)

And there is the Zambian coach ready to start.

Herve begins to pace along the field, occasionally talking to someone.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

He has said he has to wear a white shirt for his team to win. Do you think it will work today?

TV COMMENTATOR TWO (V.O.)

Zambia has a lot of work to do. Ghana are one of the best teams in Africa right now.

On the bench, Kalusha sits with arms folded, tense. Derby sits next to him, more relaxed.

TV COMMENTATOR TWO (V.O.)

And there's Kalusha Bwalya. He'll
be one happy man if Zambia win
today.

The referee's whistle cuts through the roar.

130 INT. FAZ OFFICE. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012

130

Nellie strides down the hallway of the modern FAZ office building. The modernity compared to 1993 is noticeable.

She approaches a door and knocks. A muffle from inside.

She enters. An official sits behind a busy, modern desk.

FAZ OFFICIAL 4

Nellie. Come in. Please sit. Thank
you for seeing me on such a big
day. Not ideal timing!

Nellie sits opposite the official.

NELLIE

No problem. How can I help you?

FAZ OFFICIAL 4

I'll be quick. The association
wants to establish a national
women's coaching program. Formally.
Starting this year. We'd like you
to head it.

Nellie is very still.

FAZ OFFICIAL 4 CONT'D

Full contract. Staff. Budget. The
resources you've been doing
without.

NELLIE

And my girls?

FAZ OFFICIAL 4

You'd transition. Someone would
take over the club program.

She looks at him.

NELLIE

Someone.

FAZ OFFICIAL 4

It's a national role, Nellie. This
is what you've been working toward.

A pause. Nellie stands up.

NELLIE

Can I think about it?

FAZ OFFICIAL 4

The board meets next week. After
the final.

Nellie walks toward the door. She spots a picture of the
1988 Olympic team on the wall. She pauses before the door.

NELLIE

I'll let you know.

She leaves. She does not look back.

131 INT. BAR. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. NIGHT. 2012

131

Nellie pushes through a packed bar, scarves in hand. TVs
glow above the crowd, people talk loudly and relentlessly.

She spots Charles in the corner.

CHARLES JR

Nellie! Over here!

She fights through the crowd to reach him.

CHARLES JR

It's about to start.

She hands him a scarf.

NELLIE

Got you a scarf.

CHARLES JR

Ah! Zikomo!

They both wrap them around their necks.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And we have kick off!

The bar erupts.

ON TV MONITOR

The players kick off the game.

After six minutes, a Ghana player, ASAMOAH GYAN, is fouled.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And here is a gift wrapped
opportunity for Ghana. David Nkausu
fouls Gyan and rightly so the
referee has given Ghana a penalty.

TV COMMENTATOR TWO (V.O.)
 It was a soft one, but the defender
 took him down. And here he steps up
 to take the penalty.

The kick - SAVED by Mweene.

END OF TV MONITOR

The crowds in the bar go wild. Nellie cheers, waving her
 scarf.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Kennedy Mweene! has been crucial to
 this Zambian team. What a save!

ON TV MONITOR

The referee blows his whistle for half time.

TV COMMENTATOR TWO (V.O.)
 Nil-nil at the break. Mweene's been
 the difference so far.

On the field, Kalusha and Derby head down the tunnel with
 the team.

132 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 132

The game resumes. Zambia press forward.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Here's an opportunity for Zambia.
 We've had 77 minutes of play.

133 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 133

The crowd leans in. Nellie holds her breath.

ON TV MONITOR

EMMANUEL MAYUKA turns, shoots - GOAL.

END OF TV MONITOR

The bar erupts again.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 He's done it. He's broken the
 deadlock! His third goal of the
 tournament. What a goal! It may be
 the goal that gets Zambia through
 to their third AFCON final.

Nellie is stunned. She laughs, tears in her eyes. Charles
 hugs her.

134 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

134

The Zambian team celebrate on the pitch. On the touchline, Herve and Kalusha celebrate with the other FAZ staff.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And the Zambian players are celebrating! They have every right to be happy! Emmanuel Mayuka the twenty-one-year-old from Kabwe, scores for Zambia in the 78th minute of this African Cup of Nations semi-final.

The teams jog back to their positions.

TV COMMENTATOR TWO (V.O.)

That was a fantastic goal. We'll be live later on as well for the second semi-final. Where Mali take on the giants of the Ivory Coast. So by the end of the night, we'll know the two teams meeting in the final.

Derby moves to stand next to Kalusha, who turns toward him anxiously.

135 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

135

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And we're in the dying minutes.

The bar is tense and quiet, eyes fixed on the TV.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

It's still Zambia one, Ghana nil. Will the ref call it? He's looking at his watch. And he's blown the whistle. Zambia have won!!

The bar ERUPTS with celebrations.

People leap onto the tables.

Nellie covers her mouth, then pumps a fist at Charles, grinning. He jumps and hollers with the crowd.

Nellie stands in the center - stunned, joyful.

136 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

136

The Zambian players are ecstatic. Some kneel to pray.

Others sprint to Mayuka and hoist him up, carrying him toward Herve.

TV COMMENTATOR 1 (V.O.)
 Remarkable. Ghana are out of the Africa Cup of Nations. And Zambia are on their way to their third final at the Africa Cup of Nations. They face either Mali or Ivory Coast but no matter what, that will be a historic game.

TV COMMENTATOR 2 (V.O.)
 That's right. The final taking place in Libreville, Gabon not far from the Zambian 1993 plane crash site. It'll be an emotional return for the Zambian team.

Herve and his staff all hug each other.

TV COMMENTATOR 1 (V.O.)
 Zambia will surely play with the memories of their teammates who died in Gabon on their mind.

TV COMMENTATOR 2 (V.O.)
 And that is one happy Kalusha Bwalya down there on the pitch.

Kalusha, calmer, shakes hands with everyone around him.

TV COMMENTATOR 1 (V.O.)
 It'll be an emotional return for Kalusha Bwalya - I cannot imagine what he's thinking right now.

Kalusha pauses, taking in the stadium, the players, the moment. Derby walks up behind him and puts an arm around his neck.

KALUSHA
 Next stop the final.

DERBY
 How does it feel Kalu?

KALUSHA
 Like coming home.

They turn and smile at each other, taking in the achievement.

137 INT. HOTEL ROOM. LIBREVILLE, GABON. DAY. 2012

137

Kalusha slips on a suit jacket, ties his shoes. His phone rings: "Dad."

He answers.

BENJAMIN (ON THE PHONE)
 Kalu? How are you?

KALUSHA

Good dad. How are you?

BENJAMIN (ON THE PHONE)

Good. Your mother is here as well.

ELIDAH (ON THE PHONE)

I'm so proud of you. You got them to the final.

KALUSHA

No, they did it themselves.

ELIDAH (ON THE PHONE)

You led them Kalu.

BENJAMIN (ON THE PHONE)

We're all set. We'll see you in a few days.

ELIDAH (ON THE PHONE)

See you soon my son. And pass on our greetings to Emmy.

KALUSHA

I will. See you soon.

He hangs up.

Emmy walks into the hotel room.

EMMY

You ready?

Kalusha looks up at her.

KALUSHA

I don't know.

She hugs him tightly. They turn, head out.

138 INT. CAR - MOVING. LIBREVILLE, GABON. DAY. 2012

138

Emmy and Kalusha sit in the back. Derby sits in the front seat. The car stops. Outside: a crowd.

Kalusha looks to Emmy - he is anxious and sad.

EMMY

Let's go pay our respects.

He nods. They step out, greeted immediately by players, FAZ staff, photographers, and media.

Derby gets out but remains by the car. He does not follow them.

139 EXT. BEACH. LIBREVILLE, GABON. DAY. 2012

139

A solemn procession along the shoreline. Some carry candles, others flowers. Waves hush the sand.

Among them: The Zambian team, coaches, FAZ staff, former presidents RUPIAH BANDA and KENNETH KAUNDA, and president MICHAEL SATA.

A hymn begins, low and steady. The crowd joins.

They reach a wreath laid on the sand. One by one, they place flowers.

Kalusha Bwalya steps forward, unfolds a paper. Cameras tighten in.

KALUSHA

In 1993, the Chipolopolo came here to fulfill a promise; a promise to bring glory to Zambia. They did not succeed but instead they gave up their lives for our country. We have returned here to pay our respects for those who lost their lives nineteen years ago. But we've also returned here to take on the baton. May they rest in peace.

He folds the piece of paper, pockets it. Another hymn swells. Kalusha wipes his eyes.

He looks at Derby.

Memorising him.

He looks for Emmy. She finds him, walks over. Holds his hand. He holds it back tightly.

Players lift the flowers and wreath, carry them to the water, set them afloat. The waves bear them seaward.

The dignitaries and team turn back along the beach.

Kalusha and Emmy remain.

KALUSHA

I still miss them.

EMMY

I know, Kalu.

Emmy puts her arms around Kalusha as he begins to cry.

140 INT. NELLIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 140

Nellie watches the beach memorial on TV, alone, a scarf around her neck. The third scarf lies on the table in front of her.

The broadcast ends. She doesn't turn off the TV. She sits with it.

The front door opens. Samson enters. He sees her. She doesn't turn.

He slouches down into the chair opposite. He sees the scarf on the table.

A long pause.

NELLIE
(not looking at him)
I got you a scarf.

SAMSON
You didn't have to do that.

NELLIE
I know.

He picks it up. He doesn't put it on. He just holds it.

SAMSON
I've been watching.

She turns now.

NELLIE
Which part?

SAMSON
The beach. All those flowers.

A pause.

SAMSON CONT'D
Mum would've cried.

Nellie looks at him. Something shifts in her face.

NELLIE
And she would've been very loud
about it.

Samson almost smiles.

He looks back at the scarf.

SAMSON
I'm trying, Nellie.

NELLIE
I know.

SAMSON
I just-

NELLIE

You don't have to explain.

She stands. Goes to the kitchen.

Kitchen sounds travel through to the living room.

Nellie returns with two cups of tea.

She sets one in front of Samson. Sits back down.

He looks at the tea. Then at her.

Neither of them says anything. On the TV, the broadcast moves on.

A pause.

NELLIE

The final is on Sunday. We're going to watch it.

Samson looks at her.

NELLIE CONT'D

Junior and I are going to watch it. Together.

A beat.

SAMSON

That's yours and his now.

NELLIE

It doesn't have to be.

SAMSON

Football is in the past for me.

He means it. He is not angry. He is stating a fact for himself.

Nellie looks at him.

NELLIE

(after a moment)

OK.

She does not push. She has learned, over the years, when to push.

Samson gets up.

SAMSON

Thank you for the scarf.

He leaves the house.

Nellie sits. She stares at his tea, left unfinished. The scarf sits next to it.

141 EXT. LIBREVILLE STREETS. DAWN. 2012 141

SUPERIMPOSE: Libreville, Gabon. Sunday, 12th February 2012.

Kalusha runs through the city as it wakes up.

Faint music from Kalusha's earphones: Tiyende Pamodzi.

Vendors setting up. Shutters opening. Distant traffic.

He runs past it all. Doesn't see it. His pace is steady. Controlled. Too controlled.

A corner-

He turns.

Another-

He turns again.

The same street. He slows. Stops.

Hands on hips.

142 INT. LIBREVILLE HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS 142

Quiet.

Kalusha's suit is laid out on the bed. Perfect.

Shoes aligned. Shirt ready. Emmy is in the shower.

Kalusha enters. Post run he is sweaty, but still controlled.

143 INT. LIBREVILLE HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS 143

Kalusha is suited up. He is wearing his lanyard and Chipolopolo wrist band.

He picks up a Zambian flag badge.

He holds it. Doesn't put it on. He turns it. The badge catches the light.

He looks away.

He walks toward the mirror. He lifts up the badge.

Stops.

Then-

He pins it on. He looks at himself. Doesn't move.

A beat.

144 INT. LIBREVILLE HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

144

Kalusha stares out of the window at the ocean. Derby sits in a chair, reading on his phone.

DERBY

We should get going.

KALUSHA

We should.

A KNOCK. Kalusha opens the door. Herve and two FAZ officials enter.

HERVE

Good morning! Today is the day!

KALUSHA

(to Herve)

I'll grab my things. You seem happy.

HERVE

Et pourquoi pas? Today, we win the African Cup!

The FAZ men laugh. Kalusha smiles, shoulders a bag and laptop case. They all head out.

145 INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

145

RAINFORD KALABA and CHRISTOPHER KATONGO, in Zambian tracksuits, approach a door and knock.

RAINFORD

He always sleeps late this one!

CHRISTOPHER

Always! Come on Mweene!

They knock again. The door opens. Kennedy Mweene emerges, corn rows tidy, grinning.

KENNEDY

Morning guys! Have you come for my autograph? Guess who is getting interviewed by the BBC?

They laugh.

RAINFORD

Ah you. We're all getting interviews today.

KENNEDY

Who else do they want?

CHRISTOPHER

Come on Mr. Famous. Do you want to
do push ups for being late?

Kennedy emerges and they walk down the corridor.

146 INT. CHIPOLOPOLO CHANGING ROOM. LIBREVILLE, GABON. NIGHT. 146
2012

The team is focused. Boots laced. Jerseys crisp.

Herve strides in - crisp white shirt - and steps to the
center of the room.

We don't hear his words yet. Just the intensity.

147 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 147

Kalusha's family - his parents, brothers, wife, and children
- take their seats near the Zambian bench. The Zambian
presidents sit nearby.

Benjamin moves along the row greeting them.

148 INT. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. BAR. NIGHT. 2012 148

Nellie and Charles Jr, both draped in their scarves, are in
their favorite bar watching the game with friends, all
decked in Zambian colors.

A giant TV dominates. Nellie checks her phone.

CHARLES JR

Nellie. He won't come. Let's enjoy
the game?

Nellie nods, pockets the phone.

149 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 149

Herve paces the touchline. Kalusha stands behind him,
shadowed by Derby.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Good evening to you all, where ever
you're listening. This is Dennis
Liwewe and we are about to start
the 2012 African Cup of Nations
final. It's Zambia vs Ivory Coast,
live here in Libreville, Gabon. The
Ivory Coast know they're against a
team who are here to bring glory to
Zambia and our fallen brothers who
died perhaps not even 10km from
where this final is taking place.

Kalusha scans the stands - finds his family. They wave.
Kalusha waves back.

On the pitch, DIDIER DROGBA and Christopher Katongo - both wearing black captain armbands - exchange pennants, shake hands.

The referee flips the coin.

Game play starts with the Ivory Coast kicking off.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

And here we go, after twenty-three days of a tournament, we are about to decide who are the champions.

TIME CUT - 70th minute.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

And we are in the second half having played 70 minutes of football. It's still nil all with no team yet to score. Both teams are defending solidly. But wait! Wait! It's a penalty to Ivory Coast!

GERVINHO goes down in the box.

150 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

150

The bar erupts in outrage.

NELLIE

That wasn't a foul!

CHARLES JR

Get up! You're not Italian!

151 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

151

The referee runs toward the Zambian player.

DENNIS (V.O.)

And Muyamba gets a yellow card.

The Zambian players swarm the referee. Herve waves them back, shouting orders.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

Even Mweene is coming off his line. But it's no good.

Drogba places the ball ready to take the penalty.

152 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

152

NELLIE

(quietly)

Come on Mweene!

The bar falls silent.

- 153 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 153
- Mweene readies himself. Drogba focuses. Herve barks. Kalusha folds his arms tight. Derby paces.
- Drogba strikes - it goes OVER!
- DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
Add that to his list of missed penalties!
- Kalusha and Derby leap, arms raised. Herve applauds, pointing at Mweene.
- 154 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 154
- The bar erupts with joy. Nellie throws her hands in the air with joy.
- 155 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 155
- The Zambian supporters in the stadium go wild.
- Mweene rushes up to Drogba, wagging a finger - a playful taunt.
- The players reset.
- TIME CUT - 80th minute.
- At the 80th Minute, Katongo bursts through.
- DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
We have ten minutes to play. And here comes Katongo, he's strong, he passes one defender, he shoots!
- He hits the post.
- A collective groan rolls around the stadium.
- 156 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 156
- The bar erupts with a SIGH as well, stunned that he has missed. Nellie holds her scarf around her head trying to hide her face.
- 157 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 157
- The referee blows his whistle. It's the end of regular play.
- DENNIS (V.O.)
We have had 90 minutes of full time and an extra thirty minutes added on but still no one has scored. It's nil - nil. So we go to penalties.

The players all walk toward their respective benches. Huddles form. Captains confer. The ritual begins.

158 INT. BAR BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 158

The bathroom is alive with chatter. Nellie washes her face. The noise dulls.

She looks at herself in the mirror. She pauses.

Someone shouts out "CHIPOLOPOLO." The sound pulls her back. She joins in, loud and full-hearted. They all spill out singing.

159 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 159

Nellie emerges with the singers - then stops. Samson stands beside Charles Jr. Samson wears a Zambian scarf - the one Nellie bought.

Samson turns and spots Nellie.

Brother and sister lock eyes.

He walks toward her. She to him.

They hold each other. For a moment, just the two of them, in the middle of the noise.

She pulls back. Looks at him. He looks at her.

Charles Jr interrupts them.

CHARLES JR

Come on you two. The penalties are starting!

The three siblings return to watch the game. All wearing matching scarves.

160 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 160

Kalusha and Derby stand with FAZ officials on the sideline, hands in pockets, gaze fixed on the pitch.

Kalusha's family watches him, anxious and proud.

161 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 161

The bar is silent. Nellie stands between her brothers, gripping her scarf.

162 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 162

Mweene walks toward the goal. The Zambian players link arms, shoulder to shoulder.

The first Ivory Coast player walks toward the penalty spot.

Kalusha and Derby watch Mweene, unblinking. Vuvuzelas drone.

163 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 163
The bar holds its breath. A lone voice breaks the silence.

SUPPORTER
COME ON MWEENE!

164 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 164
Christopher strides in, cool as ice. He strikes - GOAL.
The Zambian team erupts with joy.

165 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 165
Chaos. Scarves whirl. Flags fly.
Nellie, Charles, and Samson shout along with everyone else.
A hush descends again.

166 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 166
The Zambians on the halfway line bow their heads in prayer.
Mayuka steps up.
Mayuka shoots carefully - tucks it in - GOAL.
The Ivory Coast player, SOL BAMBA, walks up.
He strikes - Mweene SAVES.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
AND IT'S BEEN SAVED BY MWEENE!!!
MWEEEEEEENNNEEEEEEE!!!!

167 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 167
The place explodes.

168 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 168
But then the referee blows his whistle.

DENNIS (V.O.)
No! There's a flag up!

169 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 169
The supporters scream at the TV screen, now outraged.

SUPPORTER
REF!

NELLIE
Come on ref!

170 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

170

DENNIS (V.O.)

So the assistant referee says
Mweene came off his line. Another
chance for Bamba.

Kennedy is disappointed but returns to his goal. Bamba
shoots again and scores.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

It's 3 - 2. We saw Drogba miss a
penalty at the 70th minute, then
Katongo hits the post, and now a
retaken penalty!

The next Zambian player, ISAAC CHANSA approaches.

Chansa murmurs to himself, then slots coolly - GOAL.

171 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

171

The supporters scream at the TV screen again, this time with
joy.

172 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

172

The Zambian team urge their fans to lift the noise. Herve
barks orders; FAZ officials look anxious. Kalusha, hands in
pockets, is composed. Derby stands by him, equally calm.

The next Ivory Coast player, MAX GRADEL, steps up.

He shoots a powerful goal and scores.

The next Zambian player, FELIX KATONGO, steps up.

DENNIS (V.O.)

And now it's Felix Katongo. His
older brother, the captain, has
already scored a goal. What will
Mrs. Katongo be thinking back in
Mifulira?

He's nervous and hesitates.

He shoots and he scores.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

Mrs. Katongo will be smiling.
Everyone in Mifulira will be
smiling! Great goal! 4 - 4 and it's
still an even game.

The next Ivory Coast player, Drogba, steps up to take his
goal.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
 What a moment for the captain of
 the Ivory Coast. He missed his
 penalty earlier in the game.

He's relaxed and shoots the ball calmly to score.

Herve paces up and down the pitch. Mweene steps up to take a
 penalty.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
 The Zambian goalkeeper has to score
 or Ivory coast have won it. If he
 does score we go to sudden death.

He shoots easily and scores.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
 He scores! It's 5 - 5.

He scores and walks over to the Ivory Coast goalkeeper and
 shakes his hand.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
 What a cool penalty and he goes up
 to shake the hand of the other
 goalkeeper. That was a great moment
 for African football.

The crowd clap as the goalkeepers shake hands.

Herve, Kalusha, and Derby stand next to each other on the
 sideline.

Many of the Zambian team are now on their knees praying.

The Ivory Coast team talk amongst themselves.

They debate who to send up.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
 The Ivory Coast team are now
 running out of players. They're
 taking their time deciding who to
 send up.

The Ivory Coast player, KOLO TOURE, is chosen and he
 nervously walks up to take his penalty.

He shoots but Kennedy dives and saves the ball.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)
 And it's saved!!! Mweene!
 MWEEENEEEE!

Absolute SCENES in the bar. Nellie stands frozen, stunned,
 as pandemonium rages around her.

174 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 174

Kennedy sprints to his teammates; they engulf him.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Mweene has saved the penalty! The flag stays down. And Zambia have the next penalty to win the Africa Cup of Nations.

The Zambian team regroup and then Rainford Kalaba walks calmly toward the penalty spot.

He shoots and misses.

175 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 175

Silence drops like a stone.

176 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 176

Rainford lowers his head, trudges back. Ivory Coast rejoice behind him.

The Ivory Coast team regroup. GERVINHO steps up.

Before he can play, the ground staff run up to clean up the torn up penalty spot.

They take their time.

DENNIS (V.O.)

And here comes Gervinho. He's the 17th player to take a penalty. And they have to clean up the penalty spot. And here he goes, Gervinho. Can Mweene save the day for Zambia?

Gervinho balloons it over.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

He doesn't need to! Gervinho has hit the ball over the post! And Zambia have another chance to win it!

177 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 177

The bar goes WILD again, the whole bar cheers and sings. One SUPPORTER throws up a hand.

SUPPORTER

Everyone! EVERYONE! Quiet!

Slowly the bar becomes quiet.

NELLIE

(under her breath)

One more goal. Just one more.

The room stills. Nellie has her arms around both brothers.

178 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 178

The Zambian team stand arm in arm again.

STOPHIRA SUNZU begins the long walk.

DENNIS (V.O.)

And here comes Sunzu.

He reaches the spot - calm, centered.

Sunzu sets the ball.

Teammates fall silent.

Herve, Kalusha, and Derby stare, unblinking.

He runs up to shoot.

179 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 179

The bar is silent as they watch Sunzu prepare for the shot.

Many supporters cross themselves.

Some can't watch.

The siblings stand together - arms around each other.

NELLIE

(to herself)

Come on. Come on please.

180 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 180

Sunzu pauses - SHOOTS - GOAL.

181 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS 181

The bar LOSES it for one last time.

The whole bar CHEERS.

Samson and Charles lift Nellie up in the air.

She windmills her scarf, laughing and crying.

They crash into a three-way hug.

182 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS 182

Sunzu tears to the corner of the pitch, the entire team chasing. The stadium goes WILD.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Zambia has won the Africa Cup of Nations!

The team smothered Sunzu, lifting him high.

The stadium explodes.

Kalusha doesn't.

He stands still.

Listening.

DENNIS (V.O. CONT'D)

Where ever you are, in Petauke and
Monze and Kalabo and Kitwe and
Ndola and Kasama and in every town
in Zambia, remember this moment!

The Zambian benches are empty.

FAZ officials hug.

Herve and Kalusha hug. They stop and hold the moment.

Derby stands behind them.

Herve is dragged away by a player. Kalusha turns to face
Derby.

DERBY

Did you ever doubt it?

Kalusha smiles but before he can reply, the players hoist
him up onto their shoulders and parade him around.

They carry him away. Derby stands watching, hands in his
pocket.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Nineteen years on, the scene of our
greatest tragedy has now become the
scene of our greatest success.

WHOLE STADIUM

ZAMBIA KU CHALO!

Kalusha's family start to make their way down to the pitch.

The teams line up to approach the podium.

AFCON officials ready the medals. Ivory Coast receive their
silver medals.

Kalusha and Herve smile, clap, and cheer with the FAZ
officials and the coaches.

Herve helps an injured player along.

The team beckons Kalusha. He joins them on the podium.

Derby watches from the sides.

The Zambian players mount the steps of the podium, one by one.

Mweene wears a large Zambian flag.

Other players wear chitenge in national colors wrapped around their waists.

Two players hold up a banner that says "In memory of 1993. Chipolopolo plays on."

Last is Katongo. He steps up. He takes his medal.

And then the trophy.

He moves to the center of the team.

He pauses.

Then lifts the trophy up, a celebration joined by the entire team.

As he lifts the trophy, the FIREWORKS erupt.

The team jump up and down on the stage.

Katongo then hands the cup to Kalusha.

Kalusha kisses the cup. He then holds it up to the crowds. They cheer WILDLY again.

He is beaming.

183 EXT. BEACH. LIBREVILLE, GABON. DAY. 2012

183

Morning after. The beach is empty but for a few fisherpeople.

Kalusha and Derby walk down the beach to where the ceremony was held the previous week. They are alone.

They walk toward the water.

They stop and face the ocean as the waves crash against the shore.

A long silence.

KALUSHA

Thank you for staying.

Derby looks at him.

A beat.

Kalusha nods.

They stand for a moment longer.

Then:

Kalusha turns and walks away.

Derby stays where he is.

184 EXT. ROAD TO LUSAKA AIRPORT. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 184

The Zambian football team, including Kalusha and Herve, are aboard a bus that moves slowly along the airport road.

They have just returned from Gabon. Derby is absent.

The bus is drenched in flags and the streets are so full that the bus travels very slowly down the road.

The scene is drenched with the SOUND of the crowd cheering, singing, and playing vuvuzelas.

In the crowd, Nellie stands with her two brothers.

They wear their Zambian scarves around, waving at the team.

CHARLES JR

Look Nellie! Kalusha waved at us!

The three siblings laugh together in response.

185 EXT. LARGE STADIUM. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012 185

Kalusha drives up to the stadium gate.

It's now modern and well-kept.

Two security guards open the gate and salute as he drives through.

He parks.

Gets out, a small bouquet of flowers in hand.

He walks slowly across the quiet grounds toward the memorial graves.

They too are now tended and immaculate.

He stops at one grave. Kneels.

KALUSHA

(to the gravestone)

We did it Derby.

He gently lays the flowers on the gravestone.

GRAVESTONE: Derby Makinka. 5 September, 1965 - 27 April, 1993.

Kalusha stays for a moment.

He cleans the graveside, moving leaves and debris.

He stands. Looks around at all the other graves.

He pauses for a minute.

He does not move.

KALUSHA

(to the whole site)

We did it.

He has been carrying this for nineteen years.

He will carry it for the rest of his life.

But it is different now. He knows the difference.

Finally, he sighs, hands in pocket, turns and leaves.

186 EXT. SPORTS FIELD. LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. DAY. 2012

186

Nellie arrives at a sports field.

On the pitch, a football practice with a young girls team is underway.

Other coaches wait for Nellie.

She starts to walk toward the pitch.

She is interrupted by an FAZ official.

FAZ OFFICIAL 4

Coach - they're asking for you
inside.

Nellie glances toward the small office.

She looks back to the girls.

They're waiting. Restless. Ready.

NELLIE

They can wait.

Nellie walks toward the other coaches. The FAZ official turns away.

She fist-bumps the other coaches - all women - and then scans the drills.

She spots BARBRA BANDA (12) and Racheal KUNDANANJI (12) who train as a pair.

NELLIE

Barbra! Racheal! Let's restart that
drill.

BARBRA AND RACHEAL

(in unison)

Yes coach!

At the far end of the sports field, a Zambian flag ripples in the breeze.

Nellie folds her arm and watches the two players perfect her instructions.

FADE OUT