

THE SNOWS OF KENYA

One Hour Pilot

By

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TEASER

EXT. GREAT RIFT VALLEY (KENYA) - DAWN

As a full moon sets over the Loita Hills in the West, rosy dawn breaks through clouds in the East...

The magical half-light blankets a high plain that stretches to the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro, snow-capped, sacred.

Looking out at this, silhouetted against a ROCK OUTCROPPING, a MAN in a feather headdress sits on a ledge chanting. The Shaman/Healer CONTINUES HIS CHANT to the Ancestor Spirits with mounting passion over...

- An ELEPHANT HERD on the move kicks up a red dust cloud...

- A LEOPARD effortlessly leaps up a baobab tree with a gazelle dangling from its jaws...

- A family of BUSH BABIES make their last wailing calls before settling into a borrow...

- A pair of AFRICAN WILD DOGS play chase along a river bank...until a HIPPO surfaces startling them.

And everywhere, the wild sounds of night give way to choruses of morning birds...

CLOSE ON - MEDICINE BAG - a pouch of dried animal skin, matted with dirt and bits of dried blood.

The chanting Shaman/Healer pours the contents of his bag into a circle that's been etched and re-etched on a rock for thousands of years...

CLOSE ON THE CONTENTS - Two finger-size bones, several smaller knuckles, a pair of nuts, some red stones, and golden stones that spill into the circle.

The Shaman reads the signs like it's the morning news and we see his face for the first time - primal and mysterious with blood-red eyes and white-painted skin with red dots. The Shaman accepts the fate he sees for his tribe...and looks to the sky...

The sound of a JET comes up...and a Kenya Airways 747 flies directly overhead...

The Shaman squints into the sun as the giant silver bird flies east, toward Nairobi.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Most of the passengers are asleep with the shades drawn. Ding! The British Pilot makes the announcement "...will be starting our approach to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport..." The passengers stir to life.

LUKE SNOW, smallish, inquisitive 15 year old, lifts the shade and peeks out as the pilot continues "...clear skies and 82 degrees in downtown Nairobi...scattered rain showers..."

Luke takes his first look at Africa - sees Mt. Kilimanjaro poking through the clouds.

LUKE
(awed)
Kilimanjaro.

GINA (O.S.)
I'm going to kill-amanjaro you.

Luke turns to his twin sister, GINA, over-achiever, popular, blonde, pretty much everything that Luke's not. The sun hits her flawless face disturbing her rest.

LUKE
We're landing anyway.

Gina sits up, groggy, grumpy.

GINA
How can we be landing when I just got to sleep?

LUKE
(mock British)
Shall I inform the pilot that your Highness can't possibly have her beauty rest disturbed?

GINA
(mock regal)
If you wouldn't mind?

Though these fraternal twins have grown apart, they share a special rapport.

DAVID
You guys see Kilimanjaro?

(CONTINUED)

DAVID SNOW, compassionate father with a deadpan humor, looks over from the seat in front of them. Gina frowns, looks away, clearly not happy with dad.

LUKE

Yes. Awesome. So when's our first safari?

DAVID

I'm thinking we squeeze a short one in before you guys start school next week. What do you say, Gina?

GINA

Maybe you can force me to come here, and leave behind my dog, my friends, and my school - but you can't make me to hike around the desert like some kind of prisoner.

DAVID

It's up to you, sweetie. But we're here for six months, so you might as well --

GINA

Whatever. Mom, are you awake?

LAURA

No.

LAURA SNOW, smart and driven with her work as a plastic surgeon, is still trying to sleep in the seat next to David.

GINA

You'd better be because apparently we're in bloody Africa!

Laura sits up, pulls her sleep mask off. Takes in the new reality.

LAURA

Do they have Starbucks in Nairobi?

CUT TO:

INT. JOMO KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Customs line. The Snows finally reach the bored AGENT (40s) and David hands him their passports.

(CONTINUED)

AGENT

Jambo.

DAVID

Jambo, Bwana.

AGENT

You speak Swahili?

DAVID

Used to. I lived here for two years, twenty-five years ago.

The Agent gives David a look.

AGENT

CIA?

David can't help a brief smile.

DAVID

I'm a psychologist but I volunteer back home building houses...

(explaining)

Habitat for Humanity.

(off Agent's confused look)

I'm here to build a children's ward at the Samburi Rural Hospital. And my wife's a surgeon who's volunteering at the same hospital.

The agent approves of this.

AGENT

Asante sana.

David nods as the agent stamps the Snows' passports.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN NAIROBI - DAY

A minivan/cab loaded with the Snows and their luggage weaves through the crazy traffic. A turbaned Indian CABBIE drives.

INT. MINIVAN CAB - SAME

Laura drinks an African brand coffee and looks out at the streets packed with smartly dressed Africans walking everywhere. Luke shoots pictures with his digital camera

(CONTINUED)

A packed Mutatu (public minibus) cuts them off and the Cabbie curses in Swahili.

LAURA
 Nairobi looks kinda like downtown
 Minneapolis.

DAVID
 It's a major city, what did you
 expect?

LAURA
 "Out of Africa?"

LUKE
 (doing Meryl Streep)
 "I had a fahr-ram in Ah-fri-ca."

Gina's underwhelmed so far.

INT. MINIVAN CAB - KENYA HIGHLANDS - DAY

At this high elevation, everything is lush and green. The Snows look out the windows at the passing sights...

Africans walk everywhere. Young boys herding cattle, mamas carrying babies and balancing huge stacks of firewood on their head, hawkers selling bananas and cheap wares. Most wear secondhand clothes, shirts from the United States that might say "Nike" or "Pep Boys." Gina's interested now.

The minivan suddenly slams to a stop and the Cabbie starts cursing again in Swahili; he angrily honks--

SEVERAL DOZEN ZEBRAS cross the road unconcerned that they're not in a zoo. The Snows are blown away.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SNOWS' HOUSE - DAY

Five acres of lush gardens with one main house and four smaller houses surrounded by jacarandas, bottle brush, Nundi flame, bougainvillea, poinsettia, roses, and avocado trees.

A DOZEN BIBI WOMEN, (flower planters) in traditional dress move through the garden singing an African hymn, (a solo call followed by a chorus answer) as they plant in unison.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES MYOBO, the Snows' cook and head of the staff, watches for the Snows as ASHKU, the head gardener of mysterious Indian/African lineage, yells instructions to the Bibi Women. Charles spots the Snows' minivan pulling through the gate. He excitedly waves them up.

The minivan stops in front of a washed stone house with a shingle roof. Charles greets David with a wide smile.

CHARLES

Habari, Mr. Snow. I'm Charles Myobo.

DAVID

Jambo, Charles. It's so nice to finally meet you in person.

Charles and David shake. Charles is a large but elegant man who speaks decent English with a slight British accent.

Laura, Gina, and Luke look around in awe at the dozens of MONKEYS leaping through the trees and the EXOTIC BIRDS.

DAVID

You guys each get your own little house in back. Go see which one you want.

LUKE

No way!

Gina's starting to get even more interested now. She heads for the back of the house then jumps and screams! It's a HUGE GREEN SNAKE!

GINA

Snake!

She runs and jumps into the arms of her dad.

CHARLES

(calling out)
Ashku! Snake!

Ashku promptly beheads the snake with a swift chop of a machete. Gina burst into tears.

GINA

He killed it! He just killed it!

Charles and Ashku are confused. What are you supposed to do with a snake? Ashku speaks in broken English/Swahili/Indian.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID
 (to Gina)
 It's okay. It's okay.
 (to Charles)
 What did he say?

CHARLES
 This is Ashku, the head gardener.
 He says that it wasn't the
 poisonous kind of Green Snake. It
 only looks like it.

Gina's not much relieved to hear this.

GINA
 Why did you bring me here!? I want
 to go home!

She runs to Laura who hugs her. David and Laura exchange a
 look. Then David looks at Charles, a little embarrassed.

DAVID
 Jet-lag.

Charles nods like he understands. Then admits...

CHARLES
 I've never been on a jet.

Luke examines the headless snake. Impressed.

LUKE
 Ashku, my man! Way to go!

Ashku breaks into a silly grin.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF KENYA (ISK) - DAY

Once the site of a coffee plantation, this private school on
 30 lush acres is run by the American and Canadian Embassies
 and boasts over 40 nationalities represented in its 300 plus
 students. The school buildings are converted farmhouses and
 the football field has a stunning view of the Ngong Hills.