

W H E N P R E Y S L E E P S

written by

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TITLE CARD:

**Since 2006, more than 520 attacks on people with albinism in 28 countries have been recorded. At more than 170 incidents, Tanzania has the largest recorded number of attacks.**

**EXT. MOZA'S PROPERTY - RURAL TANZANIA - NIGHT**

Midnight in Tanzania. A billion stars emblazon the sky. The nocturnal creatures relentlessly CHATTER in the besieging nearby forest. In a wooden birdcage on a chair, a WHITE-BREASTED PIED CROW flutters.

**A WOMAN SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER** where...

**INT. MOZA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

... A fluorescent lantern BUZZES in a bare, poverty-stricken room. No discernible artefacts. Labour is being induced on a homemade wooden bed.

The **MIDWIFE** (40s) speaks in SWAHILI. She encourages the Mother -- Tears stream -- Teeth grit -- Muscles tense.

Finally, a **BABY** is born. But there is silence in the room. The Maria she shakes her head gravely and shows the Mother...

The Mother looks at the baby. It is alive and well... just the wrong colour -- Beneath the blood and fluids, this child is a ghostly white. **Albinism**.

The Mother is devastated.

MIDWIFE  
(whispers)  
Zeru zeru. [Ghost]

The Mother reaches out and touches the child -- one last time.

She shuts her eyes, releasing tears, and solemnly nods to the midwife.

The Midwife presses her hand over the infant's face. Holds tightly. Suffocates... It's for the best.

The Mother turns away and silently weeps. This is **MOZA** (28). Strong behind tears, stronger behind beliefs. A shaved head with feminine features. When she opens her eyes, she watches a **WOLF SPIDER** crawl in the corner of the room. 100s of **BABIES SWARMING ON HER BACK**.

**EXT. MOZA'S PROPERTY - NIGHT**

The Midwife steps out, clearly disturbed. She clasps a shoulder bag tightly and hurries away.

The three family members waiting outside spot her as she tries to flee.

One of the men rushes over and pulls her aside. This is **YAHYA** (35). Small build but robust, wild hair and beard frames nervous, worried eyes. Bare-chested, he wears an understated gold necklace.

The other two are too far away to hear but watch on. The Midwife shakes her head, explaining something. She points to her palm, then her face and shakes her head – *indicating the baby was pale like her palm.*

Yahya throws his arms up, berates the Midwife. She **SHOUTS** back at him.

Yahya advances to attack her, but is suddenly restrained by the other two **ABASI** (40) and **KINYEMI** (19). He tries to grab for her, catches her bag strap. The Midwife snaps away with it.

An onslaught of **SWAHILI ABUSE** whips back and forth.

The Midwife exits quickly -- dashes into the forest.

Yahya finally breaks free and hurries into the house.

**INT. MOZA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Yahya bursts in. Moza is half conscious surrounded by blood-soaked sheets. He can't fully wake her. His eyes wet like fish bowls.

Abasi and Kinyemi stand in the doorway, morose. Kinyemi has the innocence of a child in an adult's body. Abasi is stoic like a statue.

Yahya wipes his tears and barges past Abasi and Kinyemi out of the room.

KINYEMI  
(to Abasi)  
... Where's the baby?

**EXT. FOREST - NIGHT**

Yahya sprints through the deep black forest, chasing a ghost. He can hardly see his hands before his face.

**SCREAMS** for the Midwife!

YAHYA  
WHERE ARE YOU!? SHOW YOURSELF!

Disoriented in the darkness. All is lost. He WAILS against a tree – Raw uncut agony – before continuing his blind search...

The Midwife hides behind a nearby tree... Holding her breath... clutching her bag in clamped fists.

**EXT. MWAMBA'S HUT - NIGHT**

The Midwife emerges from the bush. She approaches a makeshift hut camouflaged in a small forest clearing. At the 'door' she quietly HISSES. It opens to darkness...

Maria opens her bag to show the dead baby.

Access granted. She enters.

**EXT. RIVER - NIGHT**

Yahya approaches the nearby river. He collapses to his knees.

Bathed in bright moonlight, he MUMBLES a prayer and fondles his necklace.

He quietens down.

Then... The LOW GROWL of a crocodile approaches from behind. The heavy tail THUMPS on the clay.

**EXT. GRASSY PLANE - DAY**

A cacophony of insects CHIRRUPING exacerbates the stifling of thick sub-Saharan humidity. The sun bakes every surface.

Blood drips onto scorched grass and dehydrated soil as Yahya is carried by a small group of PEOPLE. His leg: ripped off to the pelvis. His vacant eyes stare up at the sky but see nothing. His necklace shimmers.

MAN 01  
What's his name?

WOMAN 01  
Yahya. Husband to sister Moza.

MAN 02  
Soon to be a father.

MAN 01  
...The poor child.

They continue on.

**EXT. MOZA'S PROPERTY - DAY**

Suffocated bamboo and barbaric bushes besiege a dusty clearing with two rudimentary homes forty metres apart. Simple concrete boxes with weather-beaten paint jobs.

**EXT. PLANT NURSERY, MOZA'S PROPERTY - DAY**

Abasi works on hoeing the soil. His crops are luscious and bountiful.

His once-white vest bears a hundred holes. His muscles show he used to be a work-horse, but age has softened him.

He wipes his wet brow and peers across the dusty plane of the property...

...Yahya's carriers emerge from the edge of the forest and approaches Moza's house. Abasi drops the hoe.

**EXT. MOZA'S HOUSE - DAY**

Outside the entrance the carriers stop and gently place the body on the ground.

MAN 01  
(calling)  
Auntie...?

(Note: 'Auntie' is a general term of respect amongst strangers for elders in Africa.)

The door opens. It's Kinyemi. She staggers immediately.

Abasi arrives, panting.

ABASI  
What happened?

MAN 01  
A crocodile...

ABASI  
(to Kinyemi)  
Is she still sleeping?

Kinyemi musters a weak nod.

ABASI  
Good--

Abasi crouches and checks Yahya's neck with a heavy hand.

ABASI (CONT'D)  
(to carriers)  
Who took it?

Abasi ransacks the carriers' pockets -- finds nothing.

ABASI (CONT'D)  
(to Man 01)  
Where is it?

MAN 01  
I don't know what--

ABASI  
(to Man 02)  
You better tell me which one of  
you took it!

MAN 02  
(nervous)  
I don't have it!

Abasi turns to the woman. She stands stolid.

ABASI  
Did you take it?

The woman shakes her head. Abasi finds it odd.

ABASI (CONT'D)  
Open your mouth.

She doesn't.

He grabs her face and squeezes. The gold chain twinkles  
behind her teeth. It slinks into his palm.

Abasi pockets the chain and then SLAPS the thief.

ABASI (CONT'D)  
You bastards! Get out of here!

Abasi pushes and kicks them away.

Kinyemi desperately holds her tears back.

KINYEMI  
Should I wake her? She must  
know--

ABASI  
Not yet! I will call 'them'. We  
are not the ones to deal with  
this.

KINYEMI  
But--

ABASI  
 (harsh whisper)  
 Keep quiet!

Abasi hurries to the forest edge. He makes a LOUD CALL that sounds like a cross between a CHIMP and a BIRD. It's a unique call that echoes through the trees.

Kinyemi looks at Yahya -- can't for too long -- then looks back at Moza in bed.

**EXT. FOREST EDGE**

A steady, dry RUSTLING in the distance. A group of TRIBAL PEOPLE COVERED BY LEAVES AND FLOWERS emerge from the forest. They are known as '**WATU WA DUNIA**' [Translation: PEOPLE OF EARTH] Abasi meets them. He hurries them.

**EXT. MOZA'S HOUSE**

The W.W.D. gently pick up Yahya. They slowly turn and walk away with him.

Kinyemi seems antsy -- something doesn't feel right...

KINYEMI  
 I must wake her--

Abasi grabs her arm.

ABASI  
 Don't be stupid, woman! She shouldn't see this--

KINYEMI  
 She must say goodbye.

Kinyemi pulls free and heads back inside. Abasi watches the W.W.D.

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

The W.W.D. walk ceremoniously through the thick greenery. The forest is almost SILENT in respect.

Several paces behind, Moza and Kinyemi follow the trail of thick blood droplets. Moza hobbles as Kinyemi holds her up.

**EXT. CAVE - DAY**

They all stop 40ft away from the black hole of a cave entrance. The W.W.D. tilt Yahya, holding him upright like puppeters, his leg dangling.

Moza staggers forward and squeezes him tightly. She rests her head on his chest.

MOZA  
 (whispers)  
 My love... I'm sorry.

The W.W.D. gently parts them. Blood from Yahya's fresh amputation stains her dress between her thighs. They head to the cave. Moza follows. **DAMU** (50s) stops her. Slim and serene. His eyes are deep pools of sadness, hair as thick as the jungle at night.

DAMU  
 You know you're not allowed. Your father taught you better.

Moza watches them enter the cave. They descend into black.

Moza crumbles to her knees.

KINYEMI  
 Sister, should we go back? You must rest.

Moza's eyes remain on the cave. Kinyemi sits beside her.

MOZA  
 (barely audible)  
 Please... leave me.

Kinyemi looks around. Thinks. She kisses Moza's cheek and hugs her tightly.

Kinyemi gets up, dusts off, and creeps away.

Alone. Finally.

Moza WAILS -- The forest joins her and the natural audible commotion of nature RESUMES.

Several moments of emotional agony later...

A dog's BARK ECHOES.

Moza doesn't hear it at first. Another BARK. Moza looks to the cave, face drenched.

A wretched stray dog (Azawakh breed) stumbles out. A *greyhound looks well-fed in comparison*. His coat is patchy and covered in scars. This stray has lasted well past its expiration date.

It limps over toward Moza.

Moza instinctively shows fear, but it quickly subsides. She... *recognises it... somehow*.

The dog stops and looks at Moza. A moment is shared.

Moza struggles to stand and slowly walks away. She stops just before passing a cluster of bamboo culms and looks back.



MOZA (CONT'D)  
 (to dog)  
 Come, then, my love. Let's go  
 home.

The stray hobbles along.

**EXT. FOREST/MWAMBA'S HUT - DAY**

SUPERIMPOSE: ONE YEAR LATER

Deep in the forest. Losing light.

Two hands rest on a clothed, lightly pregnant stomach. Then a third hand joins. The third hand belongs to Moza.

MOZA  
 It's too soon to kick.

KINYEMI  
 But I can still feel him.

MOZA  
 Him?

KINYEMI  
 It's what Abasi wants.

Moza removes her hand.

MOZA  
 Come, it's getting dark. Mwamba  
 doesn't like late meetings.

Moza and Kinyemi approach a makeshift hut (the same one the Midwife entered a year ago).

MOZA (CONT'D)  
 (gently)  
 Mwamba?

Nothing.

**INT. MWAMBA'S HUT - DAY**

Moza enters cautiously. Kinyemi nervously waits outside.

Animal skins dangle from the walls and ceiling. Home-made clay receptacles are dotted around. A dark powder fills a mortar pot. Small bird bones and sticks are scattered.

A King Baboon Tarantula watches from a glass jar. Moza regards it.

KINYEMI  
 Where is he?

**EXT. FOREST - SAME TIME**

An anonymous chase in the bush.

Leaves SLICE -- branches WHIP -- Pale feet light as a feather scurry across the forest floor -- QUICK PANTING.

Wider strides from a flat-footed pursuer closely follow -- Everything his soles land upon turns to dust.

The sound of RIPPING leaves approach the edge of the forest until an ALBINO CHILD (8) bursts out -- The sunlight burns her pale irises - little red slits tatter her porcelain skin. She powers on. Her name is **FAREEDA**.

**MWAMBA** (50s) rips out after her, but age is not on his side.

Dressed like a beast of the jungle, he wears shreds of animal furs around his forearms, bird feathers around his head, and multifarious, unidentifiable bones around his neck -- His machete leads the way.

He's waning, but still gaining due to his stride.

The gap is closing--

Fareeda doesn't dare to look back--

Mwamba's hand reaches out -- Closer... *CLOSER*...

A **BLACK MAMBA** strikes at Fareeda -- misses.

Mwamba spots it. He skids and hits the ground kicking dust everywhere. He shuffles back as the snake locks its focus on him.

Fareeda continues on, still on the run.

**EXT. FOREST/MOZA'S PROPERTY - DAY**

Fareeda realises she's alone. But she's not safe. She sees a clearing through the trees. Hurries over with what's left of her energy.

Hidden behind a bush at the edge of the forest she stakes out the seemingly empty property.

Leaves SHRED in the distance behind. Mwamba is on the hunt again.

Fareeda bolts out onto the dry plain and rushes toward Moza's house. She passes a 4ft deep hole.

Fareeda runs behind Moza's house -- Hides. PANTING.

A TWIG SNAPS in the bushes before her -- The foliage is too thick to see through -- But we hear more than one traveller.

*Panic!*

She looks up at a large, sun-battered water drum next to her. Begins to climb it. A rusty splintered edge nicks her bare foot. She scrambles up --

**EXT. MOZA'S HOUSE/ROOF - DAY**

-- to the corrugated steel roof. She lays flat on her stomach.

'Safe' at last.

**EXT. FOREST/MOZA'S PROPERTY - DAY**

Mwamba emerges from the forest. Glistening with sweat. Stained with dirt.