

VIBONZO PRESENTS

# ROVIE

- ROVIK -



salim busuru . yvonne wanyoike . kendi mberia

WWW . AVANDU . CO . KE





# VIBONZO

- COMICS -

   VIBONZO



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**AVANDU**

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TALES FROM THE FIRE-PLACE

AVANDU 2018

*This work is dedicated to  
Hawkins 'Hawk' Busuru and Frederick 'Dofre' Mwaluda.*

*...I wish, I wish, I wish.*

*As I grow older and continue living this life. The more I  
wish you were here.*

*- Salim 'Salo' Busuru -*

# **DISCLAIMER:**

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# ROOTS

“I HAVE NO ANSWERS FOR THESE CHILDREN. NO REASONABLE OR CONVINCING EXPLANATION FOR WHY WE HAVE COLLECTIVELY FAILED TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE ATROCITIES OF WAR, NO JUSTIFICATION FOR GENERATIONS OF BROKEN PROMISES. SUCH QUESTIONS SHOW THAT PROGRESS MADE THUS FAR IS TOO LITTLE AND TOO SLOW”

GRACA MACHEL  
CHILD SOLDIERS

[WWW.AVANDU.CO.KE](http://WWW.AVANDU.CO.KE)

salim busuru . yvonne wanyoike . kendi mberia

...WHAT?

WHY IS IT  
SO DARK?

AARGH!!  
MY RIBS

THEY FEEL  
CRACKED



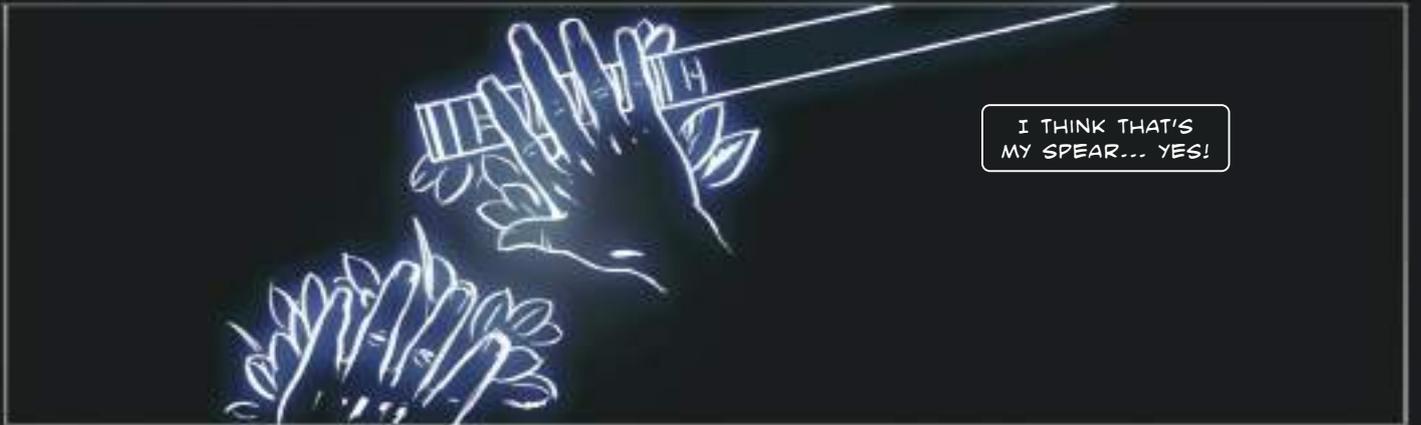
..WHERE  
AM I?



..LEAVES AND  
DIRT. I MUST BE  
ON THE FOREST  
FLOOR



THE FOREST FLOOR!  
I NEED TO GET ONTO  
A TREE FAST.



I THINK THAT'S MY SPEAR... YES!



GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

WHO'S THAT?!!

WHO'S THERE?!!

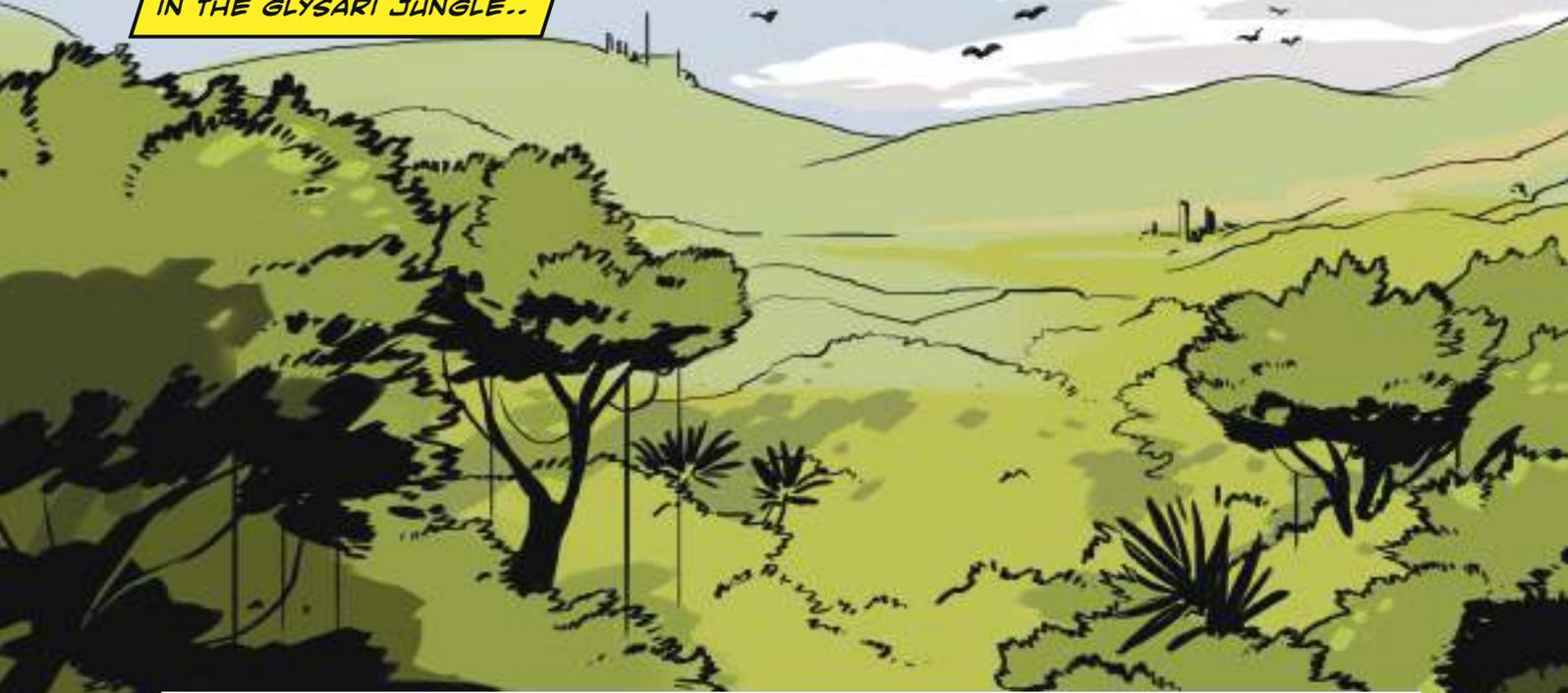
IDENTIFY YOURSELF!!



YOU CAN'T SEE AND I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU

LET ME TAKE YOU TO YOUR ANIMAL...

A FEW HOURS BEFORE  
IN THE GLYSARI JUNGLE..



**HACK!!  
HACK!!**

**WHACK!!**



**HACK!!**





SMELLS LIKE  
ITS GOING TO  
RAIN.



THIS ISN'T A  
BAD PLACE TO  
SET UP.





EY! GREETINGS MAN!



...



...I THINK YOU SHOULD SHOW YOURSELVES



OH, SORRY ABOUT THAT, I THINK YOU CAN SEE US NOW..



MY NAME IS OKOCHER AND THESE ARE MY FRIENDS YEKINI.. AND OBAFEMI..



AND YOU ARE...



...



??



WE ASK IF WE MAY SHARE YOUR TENT? OF COURSE WE DO NOT EXPECT YOU TO SHELTER US FOR FREE..

WE HAVE FOOD AND SEVERAL MEDICATION SALVES.. IF YOU REQUIRE THEM.



WHOO!!  
WHOO!!



KRAK!!



..YOU ARE WELCOME TO  
SHARE MY TENT, ALTHOUGH  
IT WOULD BE CRAMPED  
CONSIDERING MY LEMARI

YOU BEST TURN OFF  
THAT LAMP BEFORE THE  
HYENAS FIND US



NO PROBLEM MY  
FRIEND, YOU HAVE  
OUR GRATITUDE

LET US MAKE OUR WAY  
UP AND ASSIST YOU IN  
MAKING THE SHELTER



TO BE  
CONTINUED...

## 01. THE LAST DAY AT KINSHAZA

The spear raced through the air at terrible speed, everyone in the hunting party felt that this was it. The power and the malice in the thrust, the way the saber spear glinted proudly in the sun as it split the air towards its target. Obusuman had let out a loud roar as he thrust the spear. Everyone watched. "This is definitely it" thought Rovik as he watched the saber spear fly.

The Rhino, a 1 tonne beast already at great speed, was trying its best to get away but no... the spear was here and death was waiting with open arms. The spear plunged deep into its side causing the beast to crash forward in a large heap into the grasslands. There were no dying gasps nor twitching muscles, only dust and fresh death.

The horns were big and beautiful, Obusuman lifted them into the air after they had been cut off the rhinos face by his subordinate using a panga and a chainsaw. They would fetch a very good price now that it has become a very rare commodity. Rovik stared at the gutted skull of the beast, an ugly sight, but a normal sight for him. He felt nothing for the animal. He had seen too much.

Rovik took his share, His job was done, The bitmoney transfer to his smart-comm was quick.

Obusuman asked him if he would like to join them in the sale of the horns to the client, some extra muscle is always welcome and they would compensate him for it. No, He did not want to spend any more time with these poachers than he had to. The bitmoney he had was enough and he now had some meat for the journey, He finally had all that he needed to make the journey to Brazzaville. Rovik took one last look at the faceless rhino. A faceless rhino, a faceless human, it all feels the same when there is no connection.

Rovik decided to take the longer more scenic route to his flat, He went through the mostly empty streets of Kinshaza, remembering how just a few weeks ago they were filled with hawkers, miners and soldiers. His heart sank when he got to the corner where his favourite chapati vendor used to be, A good chapati guy is hard to find.

He had been in this mining town for about year now, He knew it was just a matter of time before the mine shut down but he did not think it would be this soon. His commitment to the paramilitary group was finally over, it was not easy leaving, but he left, he felt he had to. Now he does not know what awaits him in Brazzaville but he definitely knows there is nothing here in Kinshaza for him, a youth like him ...especially like him, and that also makes the uncertainty of Brazzaville even more scary. The flats where his place was were mostly empty, he walked by them as he headed to his room, there was no music, no laughter, no arguments from the neighbours... just silence. Rovik continued up the stairs to his room, unlocked it but went up to the rooftop instead of going in. Pazuzu, his Lemari walked slowly from out of the unlocked apartment and followed Rovik.

The rooftop was one floor above his place. He liked the view from here, he could see the factory in the distance towering above the city below, all powerful. It spoon-fed the city, its' child, but now it was done.

"The empire takes everything..." Said a familiar voice. Rovik turned and looked at his landlady, an old woman whose wrinkles were like an old tree. She was slowly walking towards him.

"...ally or enemy, it will take everything. No light can shine in that darkness" she continued as she stopped right in front of him and looked directly into his eyes. She didn't care anymore.

"That is why you have always confused me Rovik, you reek of blood but not death. I have been around many who are of the darkside, their evil was obvious, it turned your blood cold, but you... I guess that makes you even more dangerous..." She stared at him for a moment longer and then went back to her reed chair and gazed out into the distance.

That was the first and last 'conversation' he ever had with her. Rovik went back to his room with the Lemari, His bags were packed and ready... and with one last look he closed the door and walked down the stairs onto the dirt road towards the forest, Pazuzu in tow.



## 02. OF THE PLANET DUKONGO

The Republic of the Dukongo Formely known as the United Efferitonn, is a Planet located in the outer rim of the Galactic south in the Thakwaa star system

The planet was dominated by Effie speaking tribes, who built trade links outwards to the edges of space, trading in Agrocite. The political stability and development of Agrocite production mines made the Republic of the Dukongo the fourth largest agrocite producer in its solar system providing the planet with relative prosperity despite instability in some areas and unequal distribution of Agrocite revenue planet wide.

### **History:**

Effie speaking people who founded tribes during the Abanatu solar expansion migrations largely displaced and absorbed the earliest inhabitants of the planet, the Yoweri people, through centuries of intermarriage they were absorbed into the Effie people.

### **Government and politics:**

The Dukongo has had a scattered Chieftaincy system since the early inhabitants, although the system is now heavily dominated by supreme chief Sassouman; he has lacked serious competition in the Chieftaincy selections held under his rule. Sassouman is backed by his own Efagikuluo tribe as well as a range of smaller tribes of the Republic of the Dukongo. Sassoumans' regime has been hit by corruption revelations despite attempts to censor them. One independent investigation found over dozens of lavish properties in the neighbouring planets of the Thakwaa solar system; Sassouman denounced embezzlement investigations as tribal based propaganda by the opposition.

Recently, Supreme Chief Sassouman announced that his government would hold a referendum on changing the country's constitution to allow him to run for a third consecutive term as Supreme Chief. The government then held a referendum to allow Supreme Chief Sassouman to run in the next election. The Primary Council of Elders (PCE) claimed that the proposal was approved by 92% of voters with 72% of eligible voters participating. The opposition, who boycotted the referendum, said that the Primary Council of Elders' (PCE) statistics were false and the vote was a sham.

The election raised questions and was accompanied by civil unrest and security personnel shootings of protesters; at least 18 people were killed by security forces during opposition rallies leading up to the referendum held in October.

### **Human rights:**

Many of the Efkonfane tribe belong from birth to Efagikuluo tribe in a relationship many refer to as slavery. The Jedi Council Human Rights Observatory says that the Efkonfane are treated as property the same way "pets" are. In recent years the Chiefs assembly adopted a law for the promotion and protection of the rights Efkonfane peoples. This law is the first of its kind in Dukongo, and its adoption is a historic development for indigenous peoples on the planet.[33]

### **Economy:**

The economy is mainly Agrocite mining with a mixture of agriculture and handicrafts. Agrocite mining has supplanted food production as the mainstay of the economy. In recent decades, the mining sector accounted for 75% of the GDP, 90% of government revenue, and 92% of exports

Rapidly rising mining revenues enabled the government to finance large-scale development projects with GDP growth averaging 5% each cycle, one of the highest rates in its solar system. The government has mortgaged a substantial portion of its petroleum earnings, contributing to a shortage of revenues. In recent years devaluation of zonal currencies by 50% resulted in inflation of 46% in the past 5 cycles. but inflation has subsided since.

Economic reform efforts continued with the support of Galactic organizations, notably the Galactic Bank and the Monetary Council. The reform program came to a halt when civil war erupted. When Sassouman returned to power at the end of the war, he publicly expressed interest in moving forward on economic reforms and privatization and in renewing cooperation with galactic financial institutions. However, economic progress was badly hurt by slumping Agrocite prices and the resumption of armed conflict a few years later, which worsened the planet's budget deficit.

The current administration presides over an uneasy internal peace and faces difficult economic problems of stimulating recovery and reducing poverty, despite record-high Agrocite prices since the construction of the Death star began. Natural gems and precious metals are also recent major Dukongo exports.

### **Health:**

Public expenditure health was at 8.9% of the GDP in the last ten cycles, whereas private expenditure was at 1.3%. A small proportion of the population is undernourished, with malnutrition being a problem in the Kante region. There were 200 physicians per 100,000 persons in the last five cycles

As of the count last cycle the rate was 5 deaths/100,000 live births, and the infant mortality rate was 5.94 deaths/1,000 live births. Invasive Female Maturity Rituals (IFMR) is rare on the Planet, being confined to limited geographic areas of the planet

### **Culture:**

The Dukongo culture has been influenced by a wide variety of natural landscapes, stretching from the savannah plains in the North Niraria flooded forests, to the great Dukongo River, to rugged mountains and the largest known tropical forest of Munambe, The presence of numerous tribal groups and various political structures once (Kangao Empire, Kingdom of mulongo, kingdom Teke, Northern chiefdoms) provided an enormous amount of diversity in the traditional cultures as well as in many ancient artistic expressions. Vili Nail fetishes, Bembe statuettes which are very expressive despite their small size, the strange masks of the Punu and Kwele, reliquaries Kinabalu, Teke fetishes, curious cemeteries, with their monumental tombs, the Lari country.







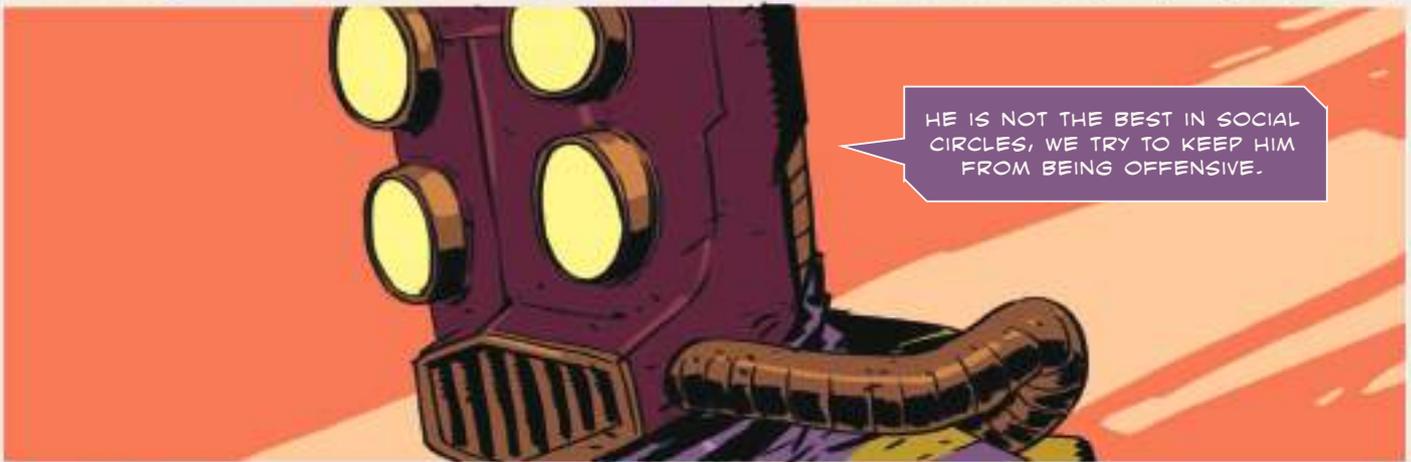






SORRY ABOUT THAT..  
OUR CYBORG FRIEND  
HERE IS A BIT CLASSLES

EISH!



HE IS NOT THE BEST IN SOCIAL  
CIRCLES, WE TRY TO KEEP HIM  
FROM BEING OFFENSIVE.



HM! HE SAID  
MORE THAN  
ONE WORD



WELL THATS A RARE  
TREAT, I GUESS HE  
FEELS WELCOME HERE..



..AND THANKS AGAIN  
FOR SHELTERING US..



I HAVE SOMETHING THAT SHOULD LIVEN US UP A BIT.



NNNNG!  
ITS ALSO GOOD MEDICINE FOR THE STOMACH..



..HERE YOU GO. IT WILL HELP IN DIGESTION, AMONG OTHER THINGS..



\*SNIFF!



\*PFF!



HEHEHE, THATS HOW YOU KNOW ITS WORKING

'BURP!'\* BY THE WAY, WE STILL DON'T KNOW YOUR NAME.. YOU KNOW OURS, IF YOU DON'T MIND SHARING..





I'M CALLED..KOF!  
ROVIK..



\*BEEP  
\*BEEP



ITS LUCKY THAT WE MET,  
THAT CHEMICAL RAIN  
WOULD HAVE MESSED OUR  
LUNGS FOR DAYS, STALLING  
OUR JOURNEY.. MAY I ASK  
WHERE YOU ARE GOING?



..BRAZZAVILLE.

HA! ALSO US. I GUESS  
EVERYBODY IS HEADED THERE.



SO WHAT DO  
YOU HOPE TO  
DO THERE?



..MY BUSINESS  
IS MY OWN.

I SUGGEST YOU  
RELAX WITH THAT 21  
QUESTIONS VIBE..



MY BAD, MY BAD.. I DON'T MEAN TO OFFEND, WAS JUS TRYING TO PASS TIME BY TALKING TO SOMEONE OTHER THAN THESE TWO CLOWNS



MY SCANNER SHOWS THE STORM IS STILL HEAVY, THIS ONE WILL TAKE A WHILE BEFORE IT BREAKS

\*WHRRRR  
\*BEEP.  
\*BEEP.

WE SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE OURSELVES COMFORTABLE.. WE MIGHT BE HERE TILL DAWN..



WOULD YOU BE OK WITH THAT?



..ITS FINE. WE MIGHT AS WELL REST THE JOURNEY THROUGH THIS FOREST IS NOT EASY..





A FEW HOURS LATER...

..GET UP.

I SAID  
GET UP!

..EISH MAN! I THOUGHT  
WE AGREED O..

..AAH!!?!

ZZZSHH!!

NKT! NOW WHAT  
IS THIS??

TO BE  
CONTINUED..

### 03. THE INVASION\_part 01

They ran through the plantations at full speed, ducking and dodging the mature cassava plants like pros. Voke was 'it' and was chasing Rovik this time. Always faster than Rovik even though he was 'rounder' in size, Voke as per usual, had given Rovik a head start.

Rovik ran, Already in overdrive, huffing and puffing, sweat dripped down his face, he could feel the wind rush past him. The sharp turns he made almost had him falling onto the cassava plants. As he pushed on Rovik glanced back to see where Voke was only to see him right at his heels, his heart sank, but the moment he saw what was on his face he stopped immediately and started shouting at Voke.

"Aaaargh! ...huff...You ...huff,huff...suck! .....Why do you...huff ... always do that!" shouted Rovik, or at least he tried to in-between breaths of air. Voke had been smiling during the chase. He would always get close enough to Rovik and not tag him to see how long he would last at full sprint.

"haha! Relax, It's training man. How will we become jedi if you can't run!" said Voke with the smile still on his face

"You know Jedi don't come from the Effe people, idiot, or even our planet, we are farmers and miners" said Rovik ".and you know we are almost considered pygmies, plus some of us are more ..full-bodied hehe, a.k.a. 'biggie' Voke"

"Don't call me that!!" said Voke fiercely, changing his expression in an instant.

"What did you say? ...biggie" Rovik responded.

Voke pounced on Rovik. Rovik started flailing at him with his fists. But Voke was faster, larger and much stronger than him and thus threw Rovik to the ground and sat on him.

"You know I always win" said Voke, smug.

They were of the same age set, which means they were born within three cycles of each other. Their age set was named 'of the red sky' so called because of the Agrocite mine explosion not too far off that turned the night sky red for a week the year they were born. I guess they were between 9 and 11 years old at that time.

.....

It was evening, there was no communal laughter and conversation that usually happened under the mugumo tree after work. There was only the lame dog and silence. The battleship had been in the sky for over a week now, it was a bit confusing to look at because it was so imposing yet it looked like it was so high in the sky. Rovik and Voke felt the tension in the village and it scared them. The adults snapped at them over small things and so they decided to keep to themselves.

Rovik and Voke would hang out in Vokes' room every day sometimes playing ajua, they were not very good at it and they found it boring, but they could not go outside. They could only see the outside through the large windows. Directly In the middle of the village was the chiefs' home, That was the only place that had constant activity. Rovik and Voke would just sit and stare at the people walking in and out of the Chiefs' house, women carrying food or empty platters, local elders, elders from the neighbouring villages... one day, they saw tall people dressed differently carrying weapons walk into the Chiefs house, that meeting was a long one and no one walked in or out of there for hours. When they finally did the Chief looked like he had aged a few years in those few hours. The Chief shook hands with the tall one dressed in all black, then the tall people went their way.

A few days later just before the sun came up there was a crash and a loud scream. Rovik and Voke shot up in the bed they were sleeping on. The screams came from everywhere now, they looked at each other shaking,

"le.. lets.. go see through the window" said Voke, his voice shaking with fear. As they mustered the courage to stand up and head to the window, the door to their room was kicked in violently and standing there at the door were three mean looking men, but they were like Effe people, The children were saved.

"What is going on?... Help us!" cried Voke as he stood up and looked through the window. The one at the front kicked Voke in the stomach sending him crashing against the wall

"What are you doing! Leave him alone?!" cried Rovik as he lunged at the man, the man pulled his hand back as he gave Rovik a yellow stained smile. That was the last thing Rovik saw before everything went black .



#### 04. RUMOURS OF DEATH

Rovik didn't have to turn to notice the old miner to the right of him. The old man devoured the order of 'special mix' a mash up of all the choice foods the food kiosk had to offer that day. The old man was no threat.

"Young man of the red sky," the miner said suddenly. Rovik didn't turn but the old man knew he had his attention. The old miner had a medium frame. Old age visibly creeping into what must have been a once stronger, more vibrant man. "Your markings betray you... I remember that day well; when the sky turned to blood. The owls were hooting for daaaays. Hmph! I tell you Death was in the air. I heard the loud explosion as I was on my way home to my wife and children. The sky turned black and red. It was as if the ancestors were warning us of the evil that was to visit this planet a few years later.

"HEYA WE! HEYA WE! HEYA WE!" boomed the old man

"This was the song of the mines that kept our pick axes in rhythm, Whenever there was a challenge, we always have a song, a dance, a chant... but no chant could make what we were to face any easier. The invasion was bad, but the mining... that was death. Always toiling, never tiring. We went from grazing our beautiful cattle on the hills to levelling our ancestors' mountains. From planting cassava in the fields to planting explosive sticks on our fathers graves, Oooh we were cursed now!"

Rovik shifted uncomfortably in his seat. The old miner raised his plate to his mouth and took a huge swig of his soup and using the back of his hand wiped his mouth capturing the little drops trying to escape.

"There was never a better time for Dukongo. Our land was green, the air was fresh. We were our own people. Not concerned with the helter-skelter of the outside worlds, you could take your time here. But like the devil himself who is always on the prowl, the flying ship appeared in the sky. That Agrocite has been a CURSE! to this planet, A CURSE! To the children of Dukongo. To the mothers who toil in the contaminated fields, the fathers who died in the crowded mines to the young ones who died in the service of the enem..."

"Careful olderman.." Rovik interrupted, "The mines may be closing down but the Empire is still the Empire "

The miner's eyes scanned the other patrons then settled back on the young man.

"I hear there is a weapon," Rovik responded.

"It is no ordinary weapon - nothing like those laser assegais you possess. It is to be the most powerful ever created. One instruction, one single blast and planets will be destroyed. With every spade that penetrates the mine, we are digging our own graves and those of countless others. With a weapon like this, the Empire will be indestructible. With a weapon like this..." he shuddered. "There is only one mine left here on Dukongo, it is too crowded now. My children managed to leave the planet, may our ancestors protect them. Soon the resources will be long gone. What was once a land that exuded life and longevity will be left cold with nothing but scars of greatness it once held."

Rovik's meal remained half eaten - and now cold.

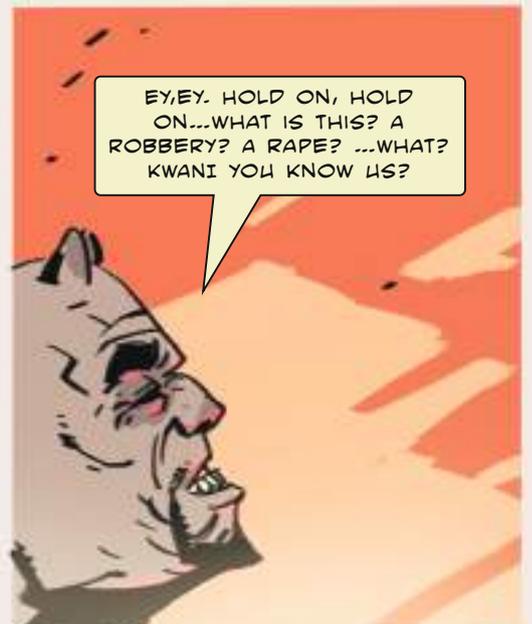
"There's nothing more for me here and soon here there will be nothing at all," he spoke more to himself now than to Rovik. "I'd rather make my way to Khoma or Brazaville... no, no that's not far enough. Perhaps I shall follow my children to the planet of Lukanda. The Tydirium mines there seem promising for what's left of these old bones. Yes, Lukanda is where my next journey lies," he was standing up now leaving his seat. It was time to head back to the mines. Lunch break was over. "Can you feel the suffocating air around us, the sense of defeat. No, we were defeated the moment the tall men set foot on this soil. Their feet cursed everything good in the land. Our hopes turned to dust. You may continue to guard these mines with your life young man of the red sky, assuming there is a life to come worth guarding. There's nothing for me here. It's only a matter of time before the mines are closed completely. The ancestors turn in their graves. They are angered, maybe more saddened than angry ....or both, I don't know. But I know this is not the future they enjoy for us."

Rovik watched the miner exit. His words raising no sentiment at all. "...maybe I'm already dead" He thought. A different way of life that he would never enjoy. This was life now. If you survive, you survive and if not - hopefully the ancestors he talks about have a place for him.

In what Dukongo had come to be, death was ironically the main component of the air they breathed in order to live.









LET US FIRST GET YOUR M-CREDITS.



DONE.



\*RRRRR



OK, THE ROBBERY IS DONE, WE WILL SKIP YOUR FANTASY AND MOVE ON TO THE 'DO YOU KNOW US' PART





YES I DO KNOW YOU,  
THE QUESTION IS, WHY  
DO I ...KNOW YOU?



...



..LOOK, NO DISRESPECT  
BUT WHY DON'T YOU  
JUST TELL US AND MOVE  
THIS STORY ALONG..



I AM THE  
ONE YOU...



WHOOO!!



**KRRRRRR!!**



**AAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGH!!**



**AAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGH!!**

**OOFF!**

**AISH!**

**WHOO!  
WHOO!**

**AAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGH!!**



**AAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGH!!**



**AAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGH!!**



TO BE  
CONTINUED..

## 05. THE INVASION\_part 02

"We have been tasked to acquire more recruits," Okocher addresses Obafemi. "We will divide the men into groups and have them raid the villages in the North East. We need to increase our numbers and begin to train them soon."

Their ranks in Elder-Chief Konys' army are growing quickly. By day, they attack, by night, they enjoy. This is what they are being paid to do and they enjoy every moment. They are living every mercenary's dream their m-credits increasing with every raid. The more the captives the greater the power.

"I got word that the villagers in the East have been sharpening their spears and knives in anticipation of an attack. We must tell our men not to cross through there. My scanner shows weather will be favorable for the next two moons. Ample time to complete the mission further North," Obafemi says as he takes a quick scan of the camp. "I see Yekini approaching." Okocher squints his eyes attempting to get a better look at what Yekini seems to be dragging in a sack towards them. The load is shifting and making little sounds of protests as it is deposited it before them.

"I got her from the new batch of kids, hehe, this is fresh from the farm."

Rovik and Voke sit tied up under the tree, bound together with the other youngsters. The stench of urine and feaces from their brothers was now familiar. Fear had escaped Rovik days before. What had started out as fear had long turned to an uncomfortable, impatient wait. Why were they here? Would they ever be freed? Only the gods of their ancestors could tell. The gods were silent. Only in Voke's presence did he find a sort of a silent comfort.

Obafemi and Okocher open up the sack to reveal a young girl, barely of age. Age is no factor here..

"There are girls this time, eh, Voke," Rovik observes and lets out a gasp. "Isn't that Nerea?"

"Yes it is..."

"Nerea!... NE..." Called Rovik

"Shut up!" Voke hissed as he gave Rovik a deadly look

"-but where are they taking her?..." Rovik asked.

They watch as Okocher and Obafemi take her to nearby hut, after a few moments screams and cries of terror fill the camp, then silence.

They watch as the two mercenaries dragged her out of the tent. Her dera is stained with blood, her hair in disarray. She cries for her mother. "This camp is your mother," Obafemi mocked. The others break into laughter. "Who wants a go at it! It's a good one aisee!" Okocher tears open what's left of her dera. The other men cheer as they whistle and catcall her.

"I can trade you! Gimme yours I give mine!" a man shouts.

"That would be a waste! You wouldn't know what to do with a dime like that! Let me have her!" another one retorts.

Nerea looks around, her eyes wide begging for someone to save her, but those who have mercy cannot help, and those who can help have no mercy. She sinks her teeth into Obafemi's hand biting down as hard as she possible can. The militant lets out a loud roar in anguish and strikes her with his other hand. She falls to the ground, out cold. Ptui! He spits on her.

"Clean this filth up!" he barks at no one in particular as he walks away.

Tears flow freely down Rovik's eyes. "What did they do to her? Why is there blood on her clothes? What are they doing to the girls here?"

Voke looks at his lifelong friend, "You always care Rovik... that's what makes you a good friend... but you should feel bad for yourself, coz even though Nerea is no longer a girl, she is still pretty. That means she has a better chance of surviving this than we do."

Rovik studies his surrounding sudden realization dawning on him. He looks around at the group of girls that have just been brought into the camp. He sees it clearly now in their disheveled looks and in their limps. Their eyes are distant, defocused. He has witnessed the chaos of the other days, but this, this is new. He can see the senseless looks of enjoyment and satisfaction on the faces of their abductors. "Cannibals devouring their own." Bile rises in his throat as rage threatens to consume him; but what good is rage when one is tied up and helpless?



## 06. A BLOSSOM IN THE DARKNESS

“Lead punch!”

“Again!”

“Again!”

“Right Jab!” “Left jab!” “Left jab! Right cross! Left Uppercut! Cross! Pivot using the ball of your foot! Your body is a gate! Again!..... Again!”

Rovik’s body hurt all over. Training was always so intense. Too intense. He looked over to Voke who seemed extremely fluid with the technique. It seemed it came naturally to the big fellow. “Biggie! Weh Biggie!” he called out to his friend in attempt to distract him a little bit.

“Young boy! Is there something you’d like to share?” The trainer threw a sharp look at Rovik, his eyes were cold and yet seared deep into Rovik’s soul. The effect was chilling. “Step to the front!” he commanded, before the boy had a chance to respond. “Boxing stance! Feet in position!” he barked. Rovik hesitated for a millisecond and felt the sharpness of the trainer’s staff as it came in contact with the calf of his leg. “Boxing stance!...Jab! Cross! Low left body hook! Left hoo- that’s your right hand boy!” Wack! The stick hit his right shoulder! “Put the weight in your front leg!” Wack! Another strike to his calf! “Jab high! Sink low-cross! Check your shoulders!” Wack! Wack! His shoulders this time. Rovik paused to rest, his hands on his knees for support. “Who told you to stop?! Ebu Get back to your position and let me catch you opening that mouth again!... Right block! Two-point defense....”

Rovik hated him. He hated them all. Ever since Elder-Chief Kony had sent word that he needed new soldiers to guard the mines training had been unbearable. The children were let out of their cells before first light and trained for hours on end. The trainers were never satisfied. Taking turns in instructing the child soldiers yet the children themselves only suffered continuous turmoil!

“Pair up!” the instructor was shouting. “You – attack! You- defend! You – attack! You...” He went around the group barking his instructions. “Parry!... Catch!... Bob and weave!... Protect your face!... Keep your jaw down!...” Instructions, instructions, instructions. Rovik was tired. He wanted to retire to the hard floor of his cell. He’d much rather be dead than be here. “Form a circle! You two, centre!” he said addressing Rovik and his partner. “Let’s see if you’ve learnt anything! Fight!”

Rovik wasn’t prepared for the first blow that struck in the jaw. He moved back slightly more prepared for the next attack. Block... Block... Counter... Block... Strike... Strike... “You’re only as good as your weapon!” he heard the instructor shout.

He powered his attack with a high wind block and countered with a hammer arm fist. He could see his opponent now bleeding, heaving. Rovik threw a right cross, his opponent caught his hand and held it tightly in his fist. He threw a left cross, his opponent ducked under his arms and shoved Rovik’s elbow upwards. He closed the gap between them and entered into a throw position. He grabbed Rovik by the groin, he lowered himself a little, lifted Rovik and twisted him as he slammed him into the ground. Rovik let out a loud cry of pain but his opponent was not done yet. He crouched on top of him and just as he was about to administer yet another myriad of blows – “Enough!” the instructor shouted. “Eeh?! How does that feel! Hehe, lets see you talk again. You, you – center!” He instructed the next pair.

.....

“Ssssss Eish. I think he broke my ribs bana,” Rovik was saying to Voke later that evening.

“Take this,” Voke said giving his friend some white powder. “Mmm, What’s this?”

“Ah, Just take it, and prepare yourself for a repetition tomorrow! We have to get stronger, otherwise you stand no chance at seeing the days to come! ...Do you hear me Rovik!”

But Rovik couldn’t hear him, he had long drifted to a place where there was no pain or anguish.







AAAA...NOOOO...



...DAMMIT YEKINI!



WAKE UP!!



\*WRRRR  
\*WRRRR

...THANK  
GOODNESS.





OKOCHER! ARE YOU INJURED, I'M SORRY I DIDN'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY?



UUGH...



I THINK I WILL LIVE. I'M GOOD. HOW IS YEKINI?



YEKINI'S ALIVE, BUT HAS SUSTAINED A BLOW TO THE HEAD. I NEED TO FIND MY BACK-PACK TO HELP HIM



ARGH! WHERE IS IT?!

















...ЦЦЦГН



**КРАК!**



**АААААААА!**



**КРАК!**

**КРАК!**





## 07. FINDING THE LEMARI

The hunting party crept through the forest. Rovik crouched to the ground and measured the size of the paw prints with the palm of his hands. 'Grown lemaris, no more than three metres ahead,' he whispered. "The shamans will pay a lot for these animals man! ...Split into three. We will position ourselves there, there and there. Follow my leading shot," Obusuman guided. The poachers fell into place communicating through hand signals from that point. They did not wish to risk warning the prey of their advancement. Through the bush where he took cover, Rovik could see two great beasts. Obusuman's saber spear cut through the air landing on the side of one the lemaris. It let out a great cry as they took speed trying to make their escape. Two more saber spears were shot out of the direction the animals were headed. They turned, now heading towards the side of Rovik's group. From behind the animals the rest of the hunting party approached using their arrows to push the beats further into their trap. Rovik and his men leaped up, saber spears in hand. He released it landing his shot perfectly in the square of one of the lemari's head. It fell to the ground. The poacher to his left pulled out his gun. Bang! Bang! The second lemari fell to the ground motionless.

"Aaah! A great catch!" Obusuman rejoiced as he sauntered towards the lemaris. "The feast of the mountain spirits is in a few days. This one will make the perfect sacrifice at the shaman ritual of strength and immortality... this other one will go down perfectly with Lituma! Ha! Ha! We can sell the skin for extra. Round them up!"

As the men worked skillfully securing their catch of the day, Rovik heard a small noise come from a bush near them. "Shh!" he hissed at the men.

"What is i-"

"Shhhh!" he hissed again following the direction the sound came from. As he closed the distance between the bush and himself he activated his saber spear and in two quick slashes cleared enough of it to see a young lemari cowering at the foot of the bush. They stared at each other eye to eye for a moment. Rovik was captivated by the fear in the lemari's eyes. It's as if he had seen those eyes before. A spot of dried blood had formed on the left side of the animal. A red stain on the animals soft brilliant white fur. Rovik wondered why he suddenly felt such a crushing sadness? "Its just a baby Lemari," he thought "Its an albino but that shouldn't make me cry"

He was confused until the images of the camp and finally Nerea came to the top of his consciousness, He had pushed those memories so far down he had almost forgotten ...almost.

"Don't be afraid," he said to the animal.

"Eyoo! What is it?!" Obusuman shouted irritably and stormed to where Rovik stood. "Eish, eish I see! Kill it then! You're wasting precious time. A white one will fetch even more with the shaman!"

"No," Rovik responded. "There is no value in a lemari of this age. We will leave it be." Obusuman clicked his tongue. He was losing patience, he had no time to argue with the young guard. He reached for his holster.

"I will forfeit my pay on this contract. Sell it to me then." Rovik stated. Obusuman ignored the young warrior and began to retrieve his gun from the holster. Rovik with one quick movement had his knife to the poacher's neck. The hunters all stood and watched, intrigued by the altercation.

"Eisshh! If you want it so much then it's yours. We already have a lot. It's only a matter of time before someone else tracks it down anyway. Put that knife away and calm down. Ai?" Rovik put away his weapon. Obusuman returned to the other hunters. "What are you staring at! We need to have this transported before dark! Move!"

Rovik crouched down to the level of the lemari. After a pause, he stretched out his hand to the young animal. The lemari stared at his hand quizzically for a moment, then rested his head on Rovik's palm.



## 08. TRUST AND DEATH

They sat side by side at one corner of the camp. They had sat in silence for quite a while now.

“You’re stronger than me Biggie, faster.” For once his friend did not protest when he was called by the nickname he loathed. There was no time for that. This day would be the last for one of them. Fight to the death was the last stage of their recruitment. They had watched many go. The combatants made it clear to the young soldiers – kill or be killed. Two nights ago, Lukoko, one of the younger recruits had snuck to where his designated opponent lay to rest for the night. Their battle had been set for the next day and scrawny Lukoko had stood no chance of winning. In the morning the young boy was found sitting on the floor next to his opponent, a blood stained Bukoko spear beside him. His opponent lay dead, stabbed twelve times. There were no sanctions. The end justified the means.

Rovik knew it was no coincidence that he had been paired with his best friend. The combatants were not stupid, they knew how to mould a killer. “We can try to run away,” Rovik suggested. But Voke shook his head. “No, brother, that will do us no good. They’ll just hunt us down and kill us. It would all be for nothing. No, I think one of us must live. when the blood of our ancestors call, who will answer?. Remember the words of the ancient Dukongo warriors, ‘Our ancestors will choose who is to be with them at that time and who will stay for their purpose.’Let’s swear to each other, by our ancestors who guide us through our path, there will be no holding back. We must be fearless.”

“But you’re stro - ”

“Don’t say it,” Voke interrupted. “There is no time for that now. We should only remember the blood of our fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters ...Swear you will be ready to answer when they call out for vengeance” He turned to look at his friend. “Swear it Rovik. Let us embrace the strength of the red sky, “I swear.” Rovik said..

They continued to sit in silence.

.....

Rovik and Voke were in the pit. The surrounding crowd made bets at the expense of their lives. This was the norm before every match. Rovik could hear their names in whispers, the stakes somehow seemed higher; the crowd seemed more excited than usual.

The rules of the match were clear. There were no weapons. Not at first. A gun sat caged on a table at one end of the pit. The cage would be unlocked during the fight, if neither of the opponents had succumbed to his blows yet they would race for the gun and – But for now, it was only fists and feet. Rovik glanced at his friend as they awaited the starting command. Voke returned his look but there was no warmth in it. Their pact was clear. No love, no friendship, Only purpose. Nothing else mattered. Elder-Chief Kony gave the command. They merged into a fury of kicks and blows. They had both become much stronger.

Rovik is on the ground. The crowd cheers. Voke is advancing fast. Rovik jumps to his feet. The crowd is now wild with excitement. Rovik controls the movement of his punches. Voke redirects and attacks. Rovik evades and dominates over Voke, he now has him in an arm lock. Voke bangs his foot down onto Rovik’s. They withdraw from each other. Panting. Sweating. Bleeding. Rovik attacks. The fight goes on. Blood spatters everywhere. The closer the crowd is to the blood, the more charged they get.

“GUN!” someone in the crowd shouts. They hear the word at the same time and turn towards the table. The cage is off and the gun lies there. Rovik and Voke exchange a quick look and run. They were in the plantation once again, running, but this time for their lives. Voke was ahead. A thought crossed Rovik’s mind - he didn’t want to die. He pushed himself harder, willing his legs to move faster. The gun was inches away. He moved with all his valor, with all his might. They were now neck and neck. Rovik jolted himself forward at the final stretch his hands firmly securing the loaded gun. He twisted to face his best friend and as he pulled the trigger he saw the look in his Biggie’s eyes. The smile in his eye. He dropped the gun, his hands trembling and dropped down to the ground where his friend lay. He held his best friend in a tight embrace. “Why Biggie? You liar, cheat!” He cried silently to the ancestors. He tightened the embrace and sobbed. Looking up he saw the three highest ranked guards smile as they collected their winnings. Rovik was consumed by this new feeling he felt. So strong. So visceral. Elder Chief Kony looked on at the seeds that were planted and watered in the child Rovik. Seeds of hate.

“Welcome to the dark side” Elder Chief Kony thought, as he got up and left.



PRESENT TIME.

...GIVE ME  
YOUR HAND.

YEKINI!? IS  
THAT YOU?

YEA, IT'S ME. STOP IT MAN!  
EVERYONE ELSE IS DEAD,  
YOUR ANIMAL IS HURT BAD  
AND FROM THE LOOKS OF  
IT YOU CAN'T SEE...

..YOU NEED ME RIGHT  
NOW... AND I NEED YOU IF  
WE ARE GOING TO MAKE IT  
OUT OF THIS JUNGLE



SIGH.. HEBU CHILL... LETS GO LOOK AT YOUR BEAST.



HE IS QUITE A STRONG BEAST, WE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT WITHOUT HIM.



WHERE IS HE?



ABOUT TWO METERS STRAIGHT ON...





HIS NAME IS PAZUZU



**GRRRR!**  
**GRRRR!**

COME ON, DONT BE LIKE THAT... HE'S ON OUR SIDE FOR NOW...



**GRRRR!**



ITS OK BRO. ITS ANOTHER DAY...



...WE ARE STILL HERE

**THE END**

# EPILOGUE

## YEKINI

The journey through the forest had been a quiet one, their symbiotic relationship being the only thing that stopped them from killing each other.

Brazaville. Finally they had made it.

"I can see a pygmy settlement ahead. Perhaps they may be kind enough to allow us use of their facilities." Rovik says. They walk through the temporary camp noticing the stares directed towards the large beast that walks beside them. It was extremely rare to see albino lemaris, the pygmies have witnessed them being hunted in the forest for decades.

"I remember you," Yekini spoke. "I've seen your fighting technique before. Your tribal markings made me suspect where you are from. Look at you, still alive, still surviving."

"Don't talk to me about survival," Rovik retorted trying to get a grip on his anger. Every word that left his temporary ally's mouth felt like slime on his skin. His hand rested subconsciously on the sheath secured by his belt.

"Eh bro! don't catch feelings. We've both done what we had to and lived the only way we knew how." Pazuzu let out a low growl. He could feel the irritation of his master. Rovik petted his neck, "There, there bro. I know you understand." His stomach rumbled. Unlike Pazuzu, the wild fruits of the forest were not very nourishing for the two other travelers. They walked towards the biggest hut as the chief stepped out to meet them.

"Lay your weapons on the ground and bow your head," Yekini instructed. "High respect to the ancestors of the Mabi and all their progeny. We pass through in peace seeking one meal and use of your facilities. We shall provide compensation for your resources."

"With the kindness of the god Komba I grant your request. Pick up your weaponry, my men shall provision you." He nodded towards his men and returned to his hut.

One of the men leads them towards a hut. Rovik trails behind, walking slowly. His mind has long drifted back to his childhood. To the evil he saw, to the pain he experienced, the struggle he went through and the hate he carried. He had become a shell of a man. This is what Dukongo had made him. This is the destiny he was born to fulfill.

Would there be retribution in taking another life? To whom did he owe honor. Certainly not to this mercenary. Not to the combatants. When the blood of our ancestors call, who will answer? His long lost friend's words echoed in his ear... When the blood of our ancestors call, who will answer? Again. When the blood of our ancestors call, who will answer? And again. This was his retribution. He was going to finish this battle. Vokes' blood cried out to him every night. He was going to finish what he had started.

He watched as Yekini walked into the hut. He gripped his saber spear tightly in his right hand and settled Pazuzu outside. The mercenary would be busy settling down the luggage and making unnecessary demands. The attack would be unexpected. A life for a life, blood for blood. His allegiance sworn to the red sky.

With catlike movements, Rovik swept into the hut and activated his saber spear. On the other side of the room, there stood Yekini, unmasked.





# ROVIE

“THE HORRORS LIVED BY CHILD SOLDIERS ARE OVERWHELMING: ABDUCTED, SUBJECTED TO SEXUAL SLAVERY, BEATEN, DEPRIVED, FORCED TO KILL AND OFTEN MURDERED. WE HAVE KNOWN THIS FOR MANY YEARS. WE HAVE IT IN OUR GRASP TO STOP THIS NIGHTMARE - SO WHY HAVE WE NOT MADE THIS HAPPEN? THE PROBLEM IS NOT THAT WE LACK THE POWER TO DO THIS - THE PROBLEM IS OUR FAILURE TO USE THAT POWER EFFECTIVELY, CONSISTENTLY AND URGENTLY.”

GRACA MACHEL  
CHILD SOLDIERS

[WWW.AVANDU.CO.KE](http://WWW.AVANDU.CO.KE)

salim busuru . yvonne wanyoike . kendi mberia

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# A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT ROVIK...

This comic has been a journey for me, a tough one but a necessary one. I wanted to know that I can make a comic. One that I am proud to show off, but ultimately to prove to myself that I am able to do so. The confidence boost after completing this has been immense and I hope that it also encourages other comic creators grinding away at their own titles.

It has been almost four years since I got the story from Yvonne, she wrote the original short story that Rovik is based on, It was about an Arab journeying through the desert, I guess I might send it to you guys once the Rovik comic is out. It has not been easy getting it all done, from the character designs to the storyboarding to the penciling. It has been a journey, one that I am grateful for.

Child soldiers is something that breaks my heart. After watching movies that glorify heroes in battle and the battle itself, I got desensitized to the visuals in the news too. Until I started learning about the wars in Afrika, When you go into the details of war in Afrika and other 'third world' countries, It is much more brutal and heartwrenching. That is the reality of war in Afrika.

I decided to set it in the starwars universe because I felt that for a whole universe there was little that I could identify with as an African. The other reason was that it is a rich universe that can hold any type of story (it is a universe after all)

...it also helped that starwars is massively popular, so yes, I was riding on that too.

Thank you  
Salim Busuru



**ROVIK**



# THE ART OF ROVIK

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salim busuru . yvonne wanyoike . kendi mberia







THE INITIAL CONCEPT ART DESIGN THAT INSPIRED THE IDEA TO HAVE ROVIK BE SET IN THE STARWARS UNIVERSE. IT WAS A CHARACTER DONE FOR THE MONTHLY CHARACTER DESIGN CHALLENGE ON FACEBOOK. ...DIDNT WIN :(

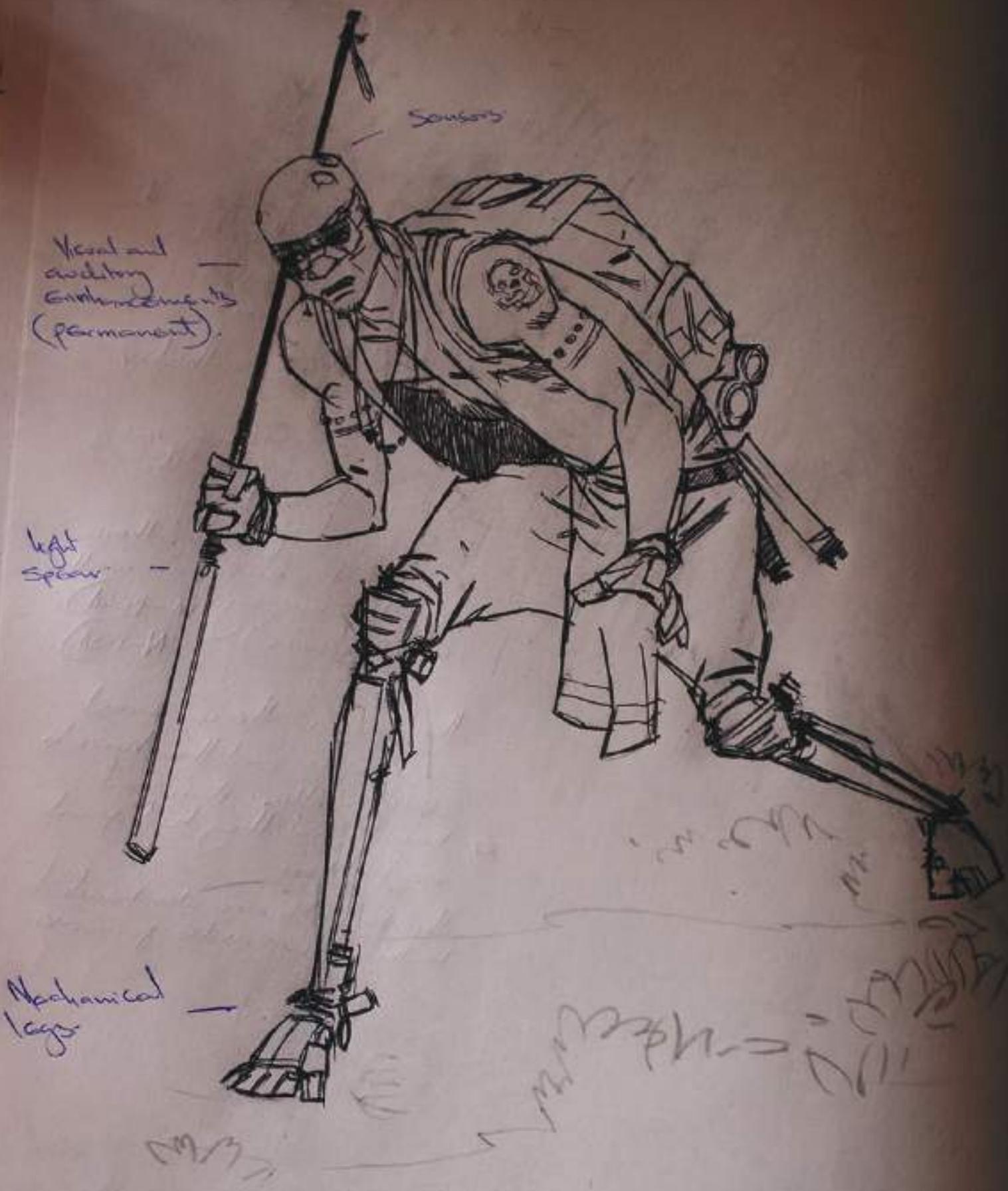
IN THIS YOU CAN CLEARLY SEE THAT HE IS A JEDI, THE STORY DICTATED THAT HE BE OF THE DARKSIDE.



PAZUZU! ROVIKS TRUSTY SIDEKICK. I THOUGHT ABOUT MAKING HIM ABLE TO COMMUNICATE LIKE CHEWIE BUT I DECIDED AGAINST IT COZ AS MUCH AS IT IS A FRIEND, ALMOST A BROTHER TO ROVIK, IT'S STILL AN ANIMAL.

AT FIRST HE WAS A SMALL MANDRIL, BUT AS THE STORY DEVELOPED WE HAD TO MAKE HIM A LARGE ANIMAL AND SO SETTLED ON A GORRILA TYPE ANIMAL.





Sensors

Visual and auditory Enhancements (permanent)

Left Spaw

Mechanical legs





**ELDER CHIEF KONY**





THE FIRST DRAWING OF THE  
AGROCITE MINING COMPLEX. I  
WANTED IT TO BE GRAND AND  
IMPOSING. SO THAT THERE  
IS NO DOUBT THAT IT IS THE  
LIFEBLOOD OF THE CITY.



VIBONZO PUBLISHING

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