

Acts of Faith by Philip Caputo

Cast of Characters – Major characters

Douglas Braithwaite

American aviator in his early thirties, formerly a UN pilot, now managing director of Knight Air Services, an independent airline flying aid into Sudan.

Wesley Dare

Texas-born mercenary and bush pilot, Douglas's partner in Knight Air.

Quinette Hardin

Mid-twenties evangelical Christian from Iowa, employed by the WorldWide Christian Union, a human rights group that redeems black slaves captured by Arab raiders in Sudan.

Ibrahim Idris

Omda (chief) of the Salamat, a semi-nomadic Arab tribe; also a warlord commanding a detachment of *murahaleen*, irregular Arab cavalry used as raiders by the Khartoum government.

Fitzhugh Martin

Mixed-race Kenyan, a former UN relief worker.

Minor characters

John Barrett – defrocked Catholic priest, field coordinator for International People's Aid, a privately funded Canadian relief organisation.

Lady Diana Briggs – wealthy middle-aged Anglo-Kenyan philanthropist and human rights advocate; one of IPA's principal donors.

Father Malachy Delaney – Irish missionary priest, Barrett's old seminary classmate.

Ken Eismont – American human rights activist, executive director of the WorldWide Christian Union, Quinette Hardin's boss.

Mary English – young Canadian aviator, Wes Dare's copilot in Knight Air

Michael Archangelo Goraende – Lieutenant colonel in the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), commander of rebel forces in Sudan's Nuba mountains.

Hassan Adid – multi-millionaire Kenyan businessman of Somali extraction, an investor in Knight Air.

Dr Gerhard Manfred – German physician who operates a hospital in the Nuba mountains for German Emergency Doctors, a non-governmental organisation.

Phyllis Rappaport – American TV correspondent, chief of CNN's Nairobi bureau.

Tara Whitcomb – Anglo-Kenyan bush pilot in the mould of Beryl Markham; managing director of Pathways Ltd., an independent relief airline and Knight Air's chief competitor.

Ulrika, a nurse; Bashir, an Arab slave-trader; Nimrod, Dare's Kenyan loadmaster; Suleiman, a Nuban guerrilla; Tim Fancher and Rob Handy, American missionaries; Pearl Goraende; Colonel Goraende's daughter; Tony Bollichek, an Australian bush pilot; and others.

Introductory Rites

Lokichokio is a small squalid town in western Kenya, famous only because it lies 30 miles from southern Sudan and is the air base for small freight airlines delivering relief into the war zones of southern Sudan. The Islamic fundamentalists who rule the north have imposed an aid blockade on the south controlled by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. UN planes are prohibited from flying, but other aid agencies break the rules and help the south from starvation.

An unnamed young journalist is interviewing Fitzhugh Martin, managing director of one such freight airline to discover why he and others fly the supplies. Not to get rich he assures the journalist. But because there is a vacuum of mercy in southern Sudan and we help to fill it. He mentions he was one of the founders of the first airline to fly in – Knight Air Services, but is now managing director of SkyTrain Relief Services. Martin drinks beer, smokes cigarettes and offers wisdom to the journalist about religion. There is no difference between God and the Devil in Africa, he explains. One must submit but not surrender to good and evil here. Aware her interest is flagging, he tries to explain by way of example; that of his American missionary friend Father Jim Rigney.

The priest was a political missionary who did good work in Kenya and fought for the rights of the African people. His devoted congregation loved him. But he went too far. He discovered some of his young parishioners had been raped by a powerful Member of Parliament and organised their legal claims against him. Threatened and bullied, Father Jim refused to bargain with the MP to drop the charges and would not even countenance a deal whereby everyone would benefit: education for the girls in exchange for no trial. He could have submitted to this evil deal without surrendering to it all. But instead he refused to back down. And a few months later was found shot dead.

His next story is of a couple of Americans he knew six, seven years ago. Douglas and Quinette who also did not understand. Africa isn't kind to people with good intentions. They took a few people down with them. Reluctant to elaborate on the story the journalist finally leaves and Fitzhugh surrenders to his memories.

Book One

Outlaws and Missionaries

Part One

Man of All Races

Fitzhugh's early twenties, as he told people, were characterised by his modest celebrity as a good Kenyan soccer player. He travelled with his club in Africa, Europe and once to the United States. He realised the gulf between his continent and the West and realised he must do something more – so he quit soccer and became a UN relief worker, first in Somalia and then in Sudan.

But a serious knee injury really was the catalyst for change. He was born in the Seychelles, eldest of three children to a French, Irish and Indian father, and a mother who was black, Arab and Chinese. His family weren't poor but he came to identify with the marginalised as he grew up on the margins of Kenyan's strict tribal and racial society. His UN work was distinguished – particularly in the Sudan where the tribes trusted him as a tribeless man who had no ethnic axe to grind.

He grew to hate the other UN staff – to his mind ambitious bureaucrats and risk lovers seeking adventure who were the new colonials in a long line of old-time imperialists. He chose to live in a mud-walled hut on the edge of the compound at Lokichokio, comforted by electricity, posters of Bob Marley, Malcolm X and Mandela. His recreations were beer and enjoying the pleasures of the foreign women on the base. Every now and then he felt guilty about indulging himself and would go on a binge of monkish abstinence.

He was fired from the UN for helping his friend the priest Malachy Delaney uncovering and publicising a food scandal. The UN secretly burned surplus or out-of-date food near the Loki base. Delaney was a missionary priest who lived with the Turkana tribe in Kenya. They saw the aid going to neighbouring Sudan, but none to them. The priest wanted proof the secret burns took place and Fitzhugh happily supplied them. The scandal was met with wide publicity and eventually Fitzhugh confessed to his role in the affair. He was told that not everyone could be a saint; nor was relief work a religion.

Fitzhugh was thirty three, out of work and living back at his parents in Mombassa on the Kenyan coast. He drank, took drugs and slept with European women. His parents despaired of him and threatened to make him work as a doorman in their hotel. Two months and eighteen days later the disgraced UN official was saved. He calls it the day he met Douglas Braithwaite and fulfilled his destiny; the story involves a fortuitous job offer.

It came from Father Malachy who called from Nairobi. He had met an old seminary classmate John Barrett who was looking for someone with field experience to work for an NGO back in Sudan. Barrett was hired to direct relief operations but needed help. The organisation - International People's Aid – funded by people in Canada and keen to get on the scene. Fitzhugh flew out the next day.

Malachy explained the driving force behind the NGO was Lady Diana Briggs, a Kenyan citizen with British ancestors whose brave deeds had for years endeared her to the cause. He tried hard to convince Fitzhugh that this woman was different from the normal upper-class do-gooders as she was practical and hard-headed and as African as any Kikuyu around. They met at her sprawling mansion in the capital with her other guests – John Barrett and Douglas Braithwaite.

Fitzhugh was immediately captivated by Braithwaite's handsome charm and the fact they were both on the UN's shit list. Doug, Diana explained, used to fly for the UN out of Loki until he broke all the rules. Barrett and Briggs conducted a long job interview with Fitz, cut short when Braithwaite announced that Fitz would be perfect for the job and didn't need the religious and political interrogation.

Before offering him a job, Barrett and Briggs asked him if he knew about the situation in the Nuba mountains in the south west of the country. An isolated area of Sudan that suffered from government bombings and also from the fact they possessed oil. The Khartoum government had been trying to clear people out of this mountain region (Bahr el Ghazal) and build a pipeline to Port Sudan. The international oil consortium was called Amulet Energy and in league with the government was working to move against the Nuba tribe. The Nubans sought assistance from the UN but so far none had come.

Barrett's wish was that this new NGO would supply first relief aid then development aid, and rebuild the St Andrew's mission, a once thriving community in New Tourom that had been devastated by Arab raids. They needed someone to go and assess the needs of the Nuban people. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army had opened up a Nuban front to try and fight the government-backed raids; and its commander was Lieutenant Colonel Goraende who would be provide Fitz and Doug with protection when they flew in.

Appalled at the audacity of entering a blockaded zone, Fitz is at first reluctant to even countenance such a daring mission. Assuaged by Briggs, and assured that they had Tara Whitcomb (a daring pilot) to fly them in and get them out two weeks later, he finally agrees. And feels that he was compelled to do so because Douglas Braithwaite urged him on.

Mustang

Wesley Dare, fifty-three year old bush pilot, watches his careful and efficient Australian first officer Tony Bollichek inspect the old Gulfstream jet, while his other trusted staff member Nimrod handles the cargo and fills in the manifest. A man who understands that zealotry and fanaticism rule most wars, he found it useful and prudent to trust his fellow man to do the right thing only when the wrong thing failed to present itself. As a consequence he was considered a jovial cynic and also a great pilot. They are loading mirra (khat) to fly into Somalia and will take Bollichek's girlfriend Mary along. She is hoping for a job. Wes knows he cannot afford any more staff; but she is intriguing. The khat and fuel are bankrolled by Hassan Adid, a Kenyan businessman. They take off from Nairobi and headed towards Mogadishu hoping to avoid flying into the wrong fiefdom. Wes entertains them during the flight by telling war stories.

They land into a tense atmosphere of violence and instability. They unload their khat and start to take on a few fare-paying customers for the return journey. Tony and Mary go off to explore, when Wes suddenly spots jeeps with mounted machine guns racing towards them. In a dramatic flurry they race back to the plane and just take off before they are completely sprayed with bullets and killed.

Wes admires Mary for admitting she wants to fly in Africa not for the thrill but more for the money. That's a whole lot better, he exclaims; I trust folks who do things for the money.

Wes's plane has just signed a lucrative six-month contract to fly Laurent Kabila and his people in the Congo. Wes is starting to consider taking Mary on to help with the load – if he could overlook his superstitions about women pilots, and his growing attraction.

They lunch together at the famous Aero Club, Wes and Tony entertaining Mary with war stories, before Nimrod ends Wes's bonhomie by announcing a visit from the DCA – Department of Civil Aviation. Wes receives the officer in his shabby, tiny office. The subject is the non-existence of an Air Operating Certificate. Bribery it seems will never end in Kenya. Wes explains that he 'leases' the certificate of a Kenyan businessman Joseph Nakima and pays a percentage for the deal. He manages to bully the officer out the door but feels the battle isn't won. He feels sorry for Nimrod who tries to fix all the bribes in their path, but realises that his weakness is an inability to see all the treacherous moves on the board, and cannot defend against them. Wes believes the officer was actually sent by Joseph Nakima. And that Nakima has sold the plane from under them. Their only chance is to take him to court – even though he will have bribed the judge – and slow things while they think out a solution.

Man of All Races

Fitz and Douglas stay at Tara Whitcomb's compound and discuss the plans for flying into the forbidden Nuba zone. With such clear weather Tara is worried they will be spotted landing on the only landing strip in Nuba – Zulu One – and won't be able to get Fitz and Douglas back out. They have to agree to a secret plan to get into the area under cover of dropping aid at a nearby German hospital.

They discover that Doug is a bit of a birder, his mother an obsessive bird watcher, and he flatters Tara by telling stories about her heroic antics. She replies by hinting that she learned of the so-called hijacking that threw Doug out of the UN. So finally Fitz learns more about this thirty-one year old former US Air Force pilot from Tucson Arizona.

It was to be a routine air drop of maize near Ayod and Doug was the co-pilot, but the Filipino pilot, Estrada, became sick and he took over the controls. Concerned that he was inexperienced to be flying solo, he was further distracted by a call from Ajiep, two hundred miles to the west. The supervisor of the UN compound there called for an evacuation for himself and his 50 staff as they were under attack from *murahaleen*, holy warriors. Doug informed the ill pilot who bravely came back into the cockpit and offered to help. They knew that if the *murahaleen* hit the town, none of the locals would be safe.

They landed, took on the UN workers, but then Doug saw the people standing, resigned, by the runway. One of the Sudanese requested a talk with the captain. Estrada instructed Doug to meet with him. The Sudanese calmly requested his people be evacuated as shells were landing close to the runway. Doug averred, knowing the regulations, and Estrada did not give permission. But Doug relented and let the people board as Estrada was for kicking the people off onto the runway.

Fitz found dazzled by with a fellow man who lets his conscience triumph over self interest. Tara rebuked him for recklessness and reminded him that immigration sent them back home once they landed, not sparing them from their fate but merely postponing it. And Doug lost his job.

They spend time lecturing each other about who is right and wrong in Sudan, Tara reminding Doug archly that she was born in Sudan and was part of the Colonial power that left the Africans to it. Fitz then joins in, and Tara admits that she is impressed by their youthful passion for a cause. But warns them that Sudan is a vast place, its distance is inspiring, but you get a nasty setback. For every emotion, there is an equal and opposite emotion. She leaves and Doug ponders if she is actually on their side of the war. Fitz replies by asking, of all sides in this war, which one do you think *is* ours?

Fitz drives to Loki's airport with Tara's driver and Doug, feeling like a twig in a current. He has been cursing Doug for making them late with his fussing over clothes and languid breakfast habits. They arrive at the airfield and see Tara's aviation set-up of fourteen planes and twenty pilots and everything in immaculate order. Fitz is relieved. Doug is impressed but goads Tara a little by wondering what she would do if the war in Sudan ever ended.

They take off and head to Kakuma, just fifteen minutes flying time. Their decoy destination. They land, load up on medical supplies without switching off the engine. They are met by Lady Diana Briggs and John Barrett who wanted to wish them good luck and send their regards to Gerhard – the German doctor for whom the medicines are destined. They take off, over the Lolikipi plain the cross the northern tip of the Magillas. Once in Sudanese airspace they observe radio silence.

They pass over the uplands of Eastern Equatoria. Over lunch Tara reminisces about the bygone Africa and says they all she does now is fly on the light side for the UN and on the dark side for renegade food agencies. Sometimes evacuating rebel casualties, but never running guns for the SPLA, despite being asked. Doug explains why he flies in Sudan – after leaving the airforce he wanted to go commercial; ended up in Alaska delivering to isolated settlements. It was something to see the look on the teachers' faces, the kids' faces when I brought them the first computers in. Like I was Santa Claus or an angel. He explains no further – being one of those people who dislike revealing their innermost self.

Tara asks Doug to take the controls and as they pass near the Nile she looks at her maps and plots the course. They need to cut the river midway between Kodok and Malakal. Tara takes back the controls, drops down and points to the Nuba mountains in the distance. They keep a lookout for Antonov patrols. Tara swoops down to her so-called runway Zulu One. She drops into a dive, corkscrewing the plane in such a way that Fitz thinks they are crashing. He vomits just as she manages a very dodgy land on a riverbed. Its her evasive way of landing she explains.

A procession of very tall, powerfully built men approach the plane. They shake hands and help to unload. Both men are amazed at how incredible they look. Suleiman turns up. Huge and imposing, he greets Tara warmly and is introduced to Fitz and Doug. He will be helping Doug to find another landing strip. He leads the way and they say their farewells to Tara who fuels up and flies off.

Maroor

They walk for hours over a rough track under a blazing sun in company of Michael Goraende, Suleiman, the porters and an escort of twenty men. The drone of an enemy Antonov overhead forces them to hide until dark. They move on, camp at midnight and resume their march at 4am. Later they arrive at the hospital, and come to meet the German doctor Gerhard Manfred. He is treating people for fever, goitre, snakebite and broken bones. Sterilizing his equipment over a campfire and cynically describing how war in Sudan is a condition of life. He treats the new white arrivals with disdain and instructs Goraende to remove his soldiers from the hospital. Unarmed men were permitted to remain, but the hospital was neutral territory. Although tall and imposing, Goraende defers to the German's wishes meekly and leaves.

Fitz decides that the doctor was suffering from a condition called *bushed*. He has seen it in many aid workers isolated too long; exhausted as even a few hours rest seem an unjustifiable indulgence in the face of colossal suffering. They go to the doctor's neat house behind the hospital where he shows them shrapnel from a Russian cluster bomb, one of four, that fell on the mission six months before. Twenty seven killed, thirty one injured. He shows them a new x-ray machine. Delivered a year earlier – but he has never had any film. If I suspect something I cut them open and have a look. Exploratory surgery, performed with instruments sterilized over an open fire. I return to practice medicine as it was practiced a hundred and fifty years ago. He angrily warns that their mission is also doomed. Aid will never reach the people who need it.

His kindness however is reserved for his patients. He is vaccinating children against disease. And explains to the women that these two men brought the healing spirit with them from the sky. Gerhard claims it will make the Nubans feel favourably towards Doug and Fitz. Douglas thinks the idea is condescending and is made angry by this German doctor's manner. But he is mollified and they agree to a truce. Doug announces they will look for a new landing strip and the doctor warns that it must not be too near to the hospital for fear of bombings.

Fitz tours the bleak hospital with Gerhard to discuss the need for supplies. There is also a German nurse called Ulrika and an Italian logician called Franco. All three are a bit mad. Water and salt are the first priorities and Franco supplies the rest of the exhaustive list. At five they all meet up for the ritual drink and then dine. Michael Goraende is invited as well. They eat and Fitz observes Michael is an essentially peaceful man who has become a warrior. Presently they see a party returning from the desert – Doug's party. But all is not well. They are carrying a dying old man whom they found in a

riverbed. Doug badgered the porters into bringing him back. Gerhard coolly remarks it would have been better to leave him. The old man was merely performing the Nuban practice of choosing to crawl away to die when he had outlived his life. His people in the village will worry that he has disappeared.

In the night Fitz is taken ill with stomach cramps and meets Ulrika at the latrines. She finds him some medicine, he admires her physical attributes (a feature of Fitz's personality – he seems to find most of the women in the story attractive) and in no time he is back at her hut and they have hurried sex. She pushes him out – and Fitz suspects the Italian the cause.

The next day the old man is found dead; and the German arranges for the only vehicle to take him back to his village.

For the next twelve days they go on a big Maroor – a trek in Sudanese Arabic. But it feels more like a circuitous wandering according to Fitz. Michael Goraende leads them. At one stage they go to the St Andrew's mission. The place where John Barrett wants to rebuild the bombed mission. Along the way Douglas and Suleiman survey for landing strips and Fitz interviews shopkeepers in villages, workers, mothers. He weighs the children and concludes they need everything. They travel mostly at night to avoid the heat and the patrols. On the thirteenth night they march fast through villages and Fitz's knee injury flares up but they still cover thirty miles in twelve hours.

Along the way they learn more of Suleiman, a Muslim and former government employee who escapes being conscripted to fight in the south; he makes his way back to the sanctuary of his native mountains. They wonder if it is hard being a Muslim and fighting other Muslims. He replies he isn't a fighter and besides as a Nuban first then a Sufi Muslim who does not believe in violence in matters of religion.

They have just two more days to travel – and head to Kologi. Doug and Suleiman survey land, Fitz interviews the farmers; until at one moment everyone freezes, and Michael pulls Fitz down. A bombing raid. They lie frozen to the ground, listening for the circling plane. It leaves and relieved, Fitz returns to his work. They go to Suleiman's house, meet his three wives, then discuss their results. That night they are invited as guests to an evening of celebrations in their honour. They observe and then take part in a spectacular Nuban dance ceremony that lasts until almost dawn.

Douglas

Douglas reminisces about being fifteen again, in Tucson Arizona. And gains a promise from his father that if he fulfils all the family wishes he will be allowed, by age sixteen, to learn to fly.

Redeemer

Quinette's story: She sits on a river on the Nile and thinks back to when she was small and imagined the Nile to be huge and awesome, not this disappointing sight in front of her. Disappointing just like her conversion as a born again Christian when she was 24. She was working in retail in Cedar Falls, Illinois, recently divorced and sharing house with her elder sister. Her only thoughts were on hoping to meet someone tall enough to date (she was six foot one) and wonder why if she was saved, it didn't feel more thrilling than grasping how to do square roots in freshman algebra.

They are here near Lokichokio in the Sudan with her boss, Ken Eismont, being filmed by Phyllis Rappaport from CNN about their charity's latest mission. The WorldWide Christian Union's task was to buy slaves and set them free and Quinette is amazed how her life had suddenly become part of it. Phyllis turns the camera on her, pushing her to admit that the plan to save 209 black people from captivity was her idea. But she demurs, she only helps out with the logistics and explained how it began. Children from her Sunday school class heard about Ken's charity and raised money to help.

Phyllis has a way of goading Quinette, making her look gawky and ill-informed about the Sudan, and she is saved from losing her temper by the intervention of Ken. Slavery had been abolished seventy years ago in Sudan, but the new Islamist government has revived it for political reasons. The boats arrive, they pray together and then leave on their journey to buy back the slaves. Quinette suddenly feels a gush of joy at being in Sudan, and dreads the return to normal life in Iowa.

They land on the other side of the river, hike into the bush with a large bodyguard of Dinka tribesmen, Phyllis and her film crew following. At midday they stop to rest. Back on the trail again, Quinette is kindly offered a ride on a villager's bicycle. Ken permits her to ride ahead and she enters the town.

Here she learns of the Arab traders (one called Bashir) who sell and buy slaves and her new friend Matthew Deng explains he hopes his sister is one of the slaves the charity will buy back. She was taken two years ago. The rest of the group arrive and they head towards a compound to rest the night.

First the currency exchange must take place between Ken, the local Sudanese charity and the retrievers – men who buy the slaves back from their owners. Phyllis challenges Ken; these men are skimming profits over the exchange rate to the tune of about \$100. And more people profit back in Nairobi for the local charity. Tension is high but Phyllis admonishes Ken as she is only doing her job.

Phyllis and Quinette share a tent and Phyllis continues her lecture on how she is paid to take the gloss off what seems like the truth. The next day they meet the slaves who were huddled under a huge tree. They count them, Quinette notices they have all been branded on their faces as slaves. Another spat between Phyllis and Ken and the transaction is complete. Ken makes a stirring speech to the mute, exhausted slaves. Quinette feels cheated – where was the elation she expected? Jim follows with a bible story. Quinette was told to speak next and she did. Movingly, with passion and felt powerful and in command. When she finished the Dinka clicked many tongues in approval at her moving words and then started to sing. She was stunned at her ability to bring them some measure of joy.

Ken collects their stories for the report to the WorldWide Christian Union, Quinette types, while Manute translates. The Canadians on the trip feed and check their health. Phyllis films. As Quinette hears the stories an egg of rage at their torture starts to form and grow. Rape, female circumcision, mutilation, beatings. She needs time to compose herself and consider her sins of rage. Meanwhile Ken finishes his work, comes over to her and offers her a job. The Loki representative of his charity, doing similar work as she has done today.

The Partnership

Fitzhugh's report is finished and John Barrett pays him handsomely. He spends most of it very quickly and dreams of seeing Diana Briggs again. But he knows his crush is hopeless; sixteen years older and what rich white Kenyan woman would want to have anything to do with an unemployed brown-skinned man? He flounders at his parents' house, wondering what to do with his life.

He is saved by Douglas who tracks him down in Nairobi to announce Knight Air Services will soon be in business. He has a plane, an out-of-work pilot named Tony Bollichek and John Barrett has contracted Douglas to be the exclusive carrier for aid into the Nuba mountains. Douglas offers him the job of operations manager. Two weeks later they move to Lokichokio and set up.

Their new home is another bungalow on a five acre dusty compound filled already with aid agencies who operate independently of the UN. Tara generously helps Fitz to understand flight operations, and two weeks later their first International People's Aid (IPA) shipment arrives. The Gulfstream jet can only carry four tons, so the ten ton shipment for the German doctor will take three journeys at eight thousand dollars per flight. Douglas is pleased seeing dollar signs before his eyes and invites Fitz on the inaugural flight. They land at Zulu Two, twenty kilometres from the hospital; one of the new runways scouted earlier. They quickly unload the supplies to the waiting porters and soldiers.

Inspired, Fitz tries to convince other independent agencies in the effort of supplying the Nuba. All turn him down except the Friends of the Frontline – a band of evangelical American military veterans whose specialty is ministering to beleaguered Christians in war zones. Their fervour unnerves Fitz. The two local representatives in Loki are Tim Fancher and Rob Handy. But their money speaks and Douglas is delighted they have come on board. He rewards Fitz with a share in Knight Air. Their business doubles and they fly five to six missions a week. Tony and Douglas however are exhausted and declare they need another airplane and a crew to fly it.

Meanwhile Wesley Dare's campaign to stop Joe Nakima from seizing his old Gulfstream One has succeeded, except the plane has been stuck in legal limbo. He needs to find another plane fast to make sure he can fulfil his contract with Laurent Kabila. He contacts an old friend Keith Cheswick who offers a deal. He will lease him an old Hawker-Siddeley 748 for a dollar month, but the real cost will be assigning the Kabila contract over to his group Blackbridge Services. Dare is aware this is a very poor deal. But hasn't much choice. He also has to be demoted to first officer with Cheswick as the pilot. Or as he puts it – guarding the plane in case Dare wants to take the plane and run.

Three months later Dare is back in Nairobi, full of experience from ferrying Kabila around the Congo, but no richer. And his original plane is still impounded due to the lawsuits. He realises he has to hire out his services to make some money. And hears about an organisation called International People's Aid. He goes for an interview with John Barrett, and offers them his plane for services anywhere in the Sudan. They talk and discuss what Knight Air already offers to IPA. Dare argues that his plane can carry 30 percent more cargo than a Gulfstream plane and Barrett sounds interested.

A few days later Douglas calls him up and suggests they meet. Doug offers Dare a deal. Fly with us, join our team. He has already hired Tony Bollichek and Mary and they convinced Doug to ask. Dare blusters and they talk about partnerships, splitting the profits down the middle. The decision is to be made the next day.

Dare knows there is something off about Doug. You gotta watch out for guys who put creases into their blue jeans. Men just oozing sanctimonious sincerity, one eye on the Bible and the other on the bottom line and twenty-twenty vision in both. But he knows it the best deal he is going to find, and his debts are huge. The next day he calls to confirm. And demands that his loader Nimrod comes too. All too soon he finds himself in Loki, working for Knight Air with the delectable Mary as his first officer. He knows he is in for trouble.

Douglas

A piece of Douglas's memory. He is seventeen, and he is driving his mother to an Indian reservation to deliver donated supplies. One of her many charities. She is captivating and entrancing and angry at Doug's father. The night before they had their first ever fight. And the subject will change Doug's life forever. His father has been accused of criminal fraud for cheating a woman out of land and building a huge property development. His father is revered in Iowa and his family from the East are successful business and cultural entrepreneurs. But Doug's mother curse this small streak of self-destruction she sees in them all. And is furious that Doug's father has chosen to make a similar mistake. He has chosen to try and prove that he is not like the rest of his huge family back east. And got it wrong.

Part Two

Warlord

Colonel Ahmar orders Ibrahim Idris to lead a raid into the Nuba hills where the infidel's forces were becoming a nuisance and foreign airplanes were bringing in contraband, in defiance of the government's decrees. Idris assembles his troops and they ride for three days to Kadugli garrison to wait for a militia to join them. They rest and Iris notice how tired his body is. He is getting old. Forty-seven perhaps. Idris and his nephew rest and speak of their quest and Iris is careful to watch his words; the National Islamic Front is so firmly in power and he – a distinguished government official - must be careful to make a convincing show of faith. His nephew is fervent and keen to fight and perhaps be a martyr and Idris must remember that his sister has begged him to keep Abbas out of the fighting.

Idris just wishes he would yearn for cattle and herds and be like any normal man from his Salamat clan. Cattle bring pleasure in life - women, prestige and power. And Idris has all that. But the coup and the National Islamic Front has changed life. Although far from Khartoum, this time the Humr and the other Bagarra tribes were brought into contact with change. Ordinarily the nomads were left alone, to move their stock south to graze, then return north to grow millet. The nomads must join the holy cause to fight so the south would be claimed for Islam.

This is hard for Idris as he knows many Dinka have close agreements with the Humr to allow their cattle to graze on their land. But the government believes the land should be cleared of Dinka so the cattle could graze without paying ever again. All it needed were men from the tribes to fight. And given a promise that those killed would be declared martyrs, and people captured as slaves could be brought back to tend the cattle in the north.

So for five years they have fought; but Idris is tired and mourns for his favourite son Ganis, killed in battle. In defiance of the government he has even made separate truces with Dinka commanders to allow grazing of cattle on their land in exchange for peace. But he tires of the violence and the rape which his men cannot resist in spite of the Koran's edicts. A jinn is loose in the land making men crazy. And he has fallen in love with Miriam, a Dinka woman he has captured as a slave. She has

borne him a son, but run away, back to her tribe and he yearns to find her and their son again. Her Dinka name is Yamila and their boy is called Abdullah.

He holds a meeting with the Kadugli garrison and a Messiriya trader called Bashir [seen earlier in the slave exchange] with whom he has an uneasy alliance. Idris relies on Bashir for goods to fund his men for fighting, but also Bashir buys his slaves whom Idris has captured in battle. The exchange only takes place once Bashir has bought a few at a time, rounded up a group and sold them to the white men. He then brings the money back and pays Idris. It is a complicated deal. And Idris can denounce or shoot him at any time. But Idris wants Bashir to find his slave Miriam, and will pay him handsomely for the information. They barter and settle on an outrageously inflated sum.

Redeemer

Quinette is back in Loki working as the field representative for the WorldWide Christian Union. She waited two months for the news from Ken and by then was desperate to leave her suffocating family and way of life. She is buoyed up with enthusiasm for her righteous work and even puts up with the privations which Loki provides in abundance.

It is a Sunday morning and she is going to meet Father Malachy Delaney at the Red Cross Hospital and tour some Turkana villages. First she walks to the compound's mess tent; and interrupts the only other guests at that hour – Fitz, Wes, Mary and two others whom Quinette does not recognise. The Knight Air people keep to themselves, so Quinette is not concerned they stop speaking when she walks in. But eventually Wes cannot help but admire her outfit (White Dinka Woman she is affectionately called) of bright colours and necklaces and invites her to join them in breakfast.

She is introduced to John Barrett who explains that he and Malachy go back a long way, and Diana Briggs. Quinette's explanation of why she is up so early is not met by an answer to her inquiry. Dare tells the usual lie of flying to Chukudum to pick up medical supplies. And Quinette knows it's a lie – everyone mentions Knight Air's secret missions to the Nuba mountains. Wes gets to work on Quinette and as she says to him: you like to jerk people's chains to see which way they jump. Your technique needs work. Everyone is amused by her sharp wit.

Diana and John offer her a lift in their car to meet Malachy, and Quinette asks what IPA's connection is with Wes and Fitz. John explains he is field coordinator for the Sudan operation at IPA and Diana its benefactor. But somehow Diana manages to warn Quinette not to ask too carefully about Knight Air and IPA's connection. They drop her off at the hospital. And she eventually finds the priest in an orthopaedic workshop that fits limbs on injured Sudanese and Turkana men and boys.

The limbs are supplied free to Sudanese but the Turkana have to pay and the priest is haggling for one of his parishioners. Quinette leaves and runs into Matthew Deng who had given her a ride on his bike back when she was freeing the slaves. He has lost a leg to a landmine, but is cheerful and reminds her of the brave words she spoke to his sister Amin Madit and the others.

Malachy takes her in his jeep to visit the villages. It is her first journey outside the compound. She gets into conversation about the secrets Knight Air and IPA are keeping, admonishing them for their CIA-type behaviour. After all, her organisation also goes into no-fly zones and they tell everyone about it. Secretly it irks her that they are a tight clique on the compound that excludes her and the others. Malachy tries to explain that the Nubans are as black as the Dinka, but their mountains belong to northern Sudan. In the south one can get away with more because it is in the public eye. But the Nubans could be wiped out; planes blown from the sky, and the world wouldn't know or possibly care.

They arrive at a settlement and Malachy calls the people to prayer. He warns Quinette that this is a hard place with hard people, but he hopes the message of Christianity, plus the digging of wells, medicine and the feeding in times of drought will soften them. The service is in Turkana, beautiful, bewitching and it brings tears to Quinette's eyes. A strong whiff of paganism perhaps, but she is proud of coming among Christian people with just a priest, among people who had been held responsible for killing four aid workers just a few days before. She worries that they seem to worship the priest more than God. At the end Malachy laughs and agrees with her, saying the Vatican also shares her concerns. Quinette takes photos of the ceremony, secretly thrilled at how shocked her family will feel back home.

A Clash of Cultures

Mary and Wes go through their flight procedure and agree that Quinette is smarter than she looks. They take off and head towards Nuba.

Ibrahim Idris ponders on the nature of desire. What causes a man rich in cattle, honoured in war, blessed with sons, endowed with wives, and granted fame to awaken each morning with his thoughts possessed by an infidel girl, Miriam?

He is riding with his five hundred men towards the landing field and Nuban village used by the foreign contrabanders. They sing to relieve the monotony and stir their fighting spirits. Once he reached the plateau he was going to divide his force; half to assault the airfield, the while the other half would swoop down on the village. He would then regroup and head to Kadugli to sell the slaves and cattle they captured. It is a simple plan but Ibrahim is a good soldier and likes to keep things simple.

Wes and Mary have reached the point where they need to descend. Wes muses on how Mary hasn't noticed his ridiculous crush, merely thinking of him as a mentor and helping her with her ambitions to become like Tara Whitcomb and prove herself a good pilot. They come into land – Wes noticing something on the horizon which disturbs him – but has no time to inspect or think as Mary gets the plane safely onto the ground.

Idris from the distance of the plateau has heard the plane and realises it has landed. God is presenting him with an opportunity: he tells his team that they will now attack the airfield as one.

On the ground the German doctor is pawing frantically through the contents of the plane looking for the x-ray film, needling Dare and making their relations even worse than normal. Mary is relentlessly recording the trip – filming Suleiman as he loads the Red Cross jeep with medical supplies. They finish and Suleiman and the doctor head off, the women porters have a half day's walk ahead and need fifteen more minutes to finish unloading the plane. Dare tells Mary to go through the flight check while he helps to offload; he wants them off the ground fast. She asks why and he can't explain the presentiment of danger that lives inside him. He has seen a dust cloud in the distance and it sets off a warning bell. Dare tries to warn the Nubans of the danger but cannot make himself understood.

Ibrahim sets up the mortars on the hill, looking at the plane three kilometres away to the north. He has struck one of the Nuban guides with his Kalashnikov as they had led them astray at the last moment away from the airfield. But they realise this is a good viewpoint for their attack and forget their anger. The men are to attack in two long lines and then charge at full gallop when the airfield is in sight. They are hidden in the trees and Ibrahim is anxious to get started before the plane gets away.

Dare sees the blossom of smoke and they all hear the hard, flat crunching explosion. It is all the translation he needs. The shell bursts towards the end of the runway, but out of range. SPLA soldiers and the women scatter in panic. Dare can do nothing for them as he sprints for the plane. Mary starts up the engines to his relief as another shell lands near the runway. They head off, meeting the shrapnel of another mortar like the crackle of hail on a tin roof. They take off, two mortars exploding not far in front of her and fifty feet below. The plane buckles but they skim the trees at the end of the runway and rise. Below them they see the cavalry charge and know the people don't have a chance.

They bank and turn and Dare sees some of the horsemen trying to fire at the plane. Thinking they will miss Dare continues with the commands for flaps and gear. Mary's response is to swear, the landing gear stays resolutely down. Shrapnel must have severed a hydraulic hose. They could be leaking oil as well. Mary tries again and fails to get the landing gear up, knowing that they cannot maintain a high airspeed without ripping the gear off the plane. Knowing they won't make it back to Loki they decide to try for the UN airfield at Malakal, one hundred and forty miles away and hope they can repair the plane. First they have to navigate a huge dust storm up ahead.

Ibrahim Idris wakes from a bad dream. It is night and it is the noise of the women captives who pervade his dreams. He goes to stop the men from raping them, thinking over the day. They had lost only two men and five horses while slaying more than twenty Nubans. And they had destroyed the airfield and taken one hundred and fifty captives. Plus countless numbers of supplies. He spies some men raping a young girl and is angry at their disobedience. Not only does the Koran forbid rape, but the young girls are more valuable as virgins when traded. He strikes out at the first one with his whip,

beating and attacking and only stops when he realises with a shock that it is his nephew. Enraged and not knowing what he does he starts to whip the Nuban girl too. And then throws his nephew back onto her demanding he practice with his whore if that is what he wants. All the time insulting him that his own dead son Ganis would not have disgraced the family in this way.

Suddenly two people pull Idris away and demand what he is doing. Abbas the nephew reaches for his small dagger and slashes at Iris – catching him on the chest. Abbas lurches forward, trips over the prone woman, his momentum cannot stop him and he falls onto the ground. When he attempts to stand his own dagger is protruding from his ribs, just below his heart.

It is the second day in Malakal, where Wes and Mary have stopped to repair the plane. She knocks at his door and begins to tell him how brave he was during the fighting and the storms, but instead just leans in and gives Wes the most thrilling kiss of his life.

They make love and an hour later discuss the mistake they are making – betraying Tony, sleeping with the boss, and wanting to do it all again. They do. When Mary asks Wes how they are going to handle this, he suggests that neither go on bended knee, confess and then beg Tony's forgiveness.

As he dresses Wes is appalled at his flabby middle-aged self and hopes Mary doesn't ask what on earth she just did. He insists they must put this behind them and blame it on the eroticism of danger and get on as if nothing happened. She does not agree, angrily turning on him and demanding that he see how she feels about him. They kiss again, but all the while Wes is thinking that she would not stay with him. Not if his powers start to fail as she isn't the sort of woman who would be with a man who is weaker than herself.

Man of All Races

Drought and then famine come to Sudan. The people of Bahr el Ghazal are starving. They pray to their own gods, then the missions and finally beg the white men to send their planes to feed them. But they do not know the government in Khartoum has taken the drought as a sign the infidels must all die, and forbid the UN from flying. And Fitzhugh Martin realises that the calamity in the Sudan is the best thing that has happened to Knight Air and thus to him.

The UN leave the relief work to the independent agencies. Tara Whitcomb's airline cannot handle the volume of business, so pass work onto Knight Air. They fly two planes out a day. And Fitz is appalled to think that his profits are coming at the expense of the starving victims but the thought of profits bring him secret joy. In six weeks they gross almost half a million dollars. And they present a cheque to the South African from whom the Gulfstream jet is leased and own the plane free and clear.

But two months on the Khartoum government relents and lets the UN begin to fly relief missions; and Knight Air's business drops. Douglas pleads with Fitz to try and drum up more business.

Fitz notices that this is the new Doug now. Harder and all his passion seems to have become manifested in a quest to surpass Tara Whitcomb. He seems to have become an aid entrepreneur, talking about lease fees, per kilo rates and commissions, kickbacks. Fitz looks at him and asks – is this what we are all about, is this what we came here to do? Doug turns on his charm and convinces him it isn't true. But Fitz is resentful. And goes around all the NGOs trying to drum up business for Knight Air. He doesn't want to offer kickbacks to get the business, but finally does with a Belgian who hints at how it is done. And he gets business from four NGOs in the same manner. They get kickbacks for taking on Knight Air but all the while Fitz is disgusted with himself. But later that night at dinner Doug praises him highly for doing the work and Fitz realises that he needs the approbation.

Three days later Doug leases a huge Antonov-32. Business improves even more when one of Tara's best pilots is murdered over a dispute when he sees SPLA guerrillas taking the food aid that is meant for the starving villagers. Tara suspends all her flights in the area until her pilot's murderers are captured. And Knight Air can barely keep up the volume.

In all of this the old Douglas returns and says he wants Tara to reconsider the suspension of her planes. A quarter of a million people are starving out there, we cannot do it all. She must reconsider. But she refuses, saying that to see her own close friend and fellow pilot murdered is a brutal thing, and sends Doug away. That night Doug turns on the charm to his own flight crews and put the same spiel – the

risk of life is great. But with so many thousands starving, the crews must decide if its worth the risk. They all do of course, in an emotional meeting and Fitz gets the feeling that in the end they are not doing it for the people, but for the approval of Douglas Braithwaite, no one wants to let him down.

They fly daily for twenty-two days straight. Each flight is an act of faith, in Providence, in luck, the rightness of the mission and the exhausted crews began to look upon themselves as embodiments of the company's logo; airborne knights, rescuing the peasants from the twin dragons of starvation and war.

To assuage his guilt over the ten percent kickbacks he gives, Fitz takes to joining the pilots on the runs, helping them offload and seeing the good the aid is doing. His own small guilt is a worthless currency in the face of so much misery.

Meanwhile Tara is given what she asked – the SPLA show her documents recording the court martial and execution of her pilot's murder. She returns to Loki shaken but satisfied they have agreed to her demands. She can fly again. But the NGOs are happy with Knight Air (and the kickbacks) and her business is slow to pickup. Knight Air feels the need to expand.

Dare thinks he has a solution. He has a wealthy friend Hassan Adid who might want to invest capital in Knight Air. (He was doing the mirra runs for Hassan back in Somalia.) He cannot help Dare with his own plane and the lawsuit, but is interested in the Loki business. And Dare thinks that the good business they bring in might just get Adid to help get his plane back eventually.

Hassan is a wealthy Somali who grew up in an entrepreneurial family – making their fortune from mirra, mining, construction and cattle. They also did a very lucrative line in the illegal ivory trade before it was banned. They meet him in his offices in Nairobi – Dare, Fitz and Doug.

Hassan spends time praising Fitz for his days as a soccer star which makes him squirm, then they get down to business. It is a strange meeting. Doug reveals more than he should about the disgust he felt as a US airforce pilot shooting up the enemy, and Dare tries to cover the embarrassment by being more racist than normal. Doug tells them he flew A-tens – ground attack planes and that they shot up retreating Iraqis on the last day of the Gulf war. Hassan demands all the technical questions about the company's finances, its business plan, and future. And then suggests they all meet for dinner.

Asked his opinion, Fitz thinks the man is trouble: a *wabenzi*. A fat-cat profiteer who drives a Mercedes-Benz, and turns down the invitation to dinner. He secretly decides he wants to meet up with Lady Diana Briggs instead. They speak on the phone. She has been meaning to get in touch. John Barrett has a load of supplies just waiting to go to Nuba, but Knight Air planes never seem to have time she admonishes. He gets the courage to ask her to dinner – alone. And she agrees.

At the restaurant he is dumbstruck by the sight of her again, and uncomfortable about being a coloured man in such glamorous surroundings. She puts him at ease however and he fills her in on Knight Air's plans and on Adid's interest. He declares his confusion, claiming that all he wanted to do was make a difference, not make money and that all the talk of expansion and business plans disgust him. They move on to talk of what she has been doing; and she makes a long speech about how Africa must never be neglected and how she tries to do all she can to help. She speaks passionately and sincerely and Fitz realises she has captivated him entirely. Will he summon to courage to do anything about it?

He tries; and she gently interrupts. She is fifty-one, he is thirty five. She mentions that had her daughter lived she would be almost the same age. Fitz is stunned into silence by this revelation she had a daughter who died. She forbids discussion of her husband by pouncing on the restaurant bill and offering to drive him back to town.

Outside the restaurant Fitz is confused. Diana announces her daughter was born before she married and that her husband lives in the UK and they have been separated for ten years. In a bit of torrid car tussling they kiss awkwardly, confess they are both attracted to each other and agree she must go back to his hotel for the night.

Douglas

Doug is remembering Iraq. He is a crew sergeant with the Arizona Air National Guard tanker plane; refuelling F-15 fighters in mid-air over Kurdistan. And wishing he were with them. He is already at

flight school back home and will soon have his multi-engine rating. Meanwhile he watches from the lumbering plane as the fighters engage in enemy fire.

Book Two

Flights to the Dark Side

Part One

Nuba Day!

The next morning at breakfast Fitz declines to comment on his date but Doug is too excited to care. Hassan Adid will invest. First to get Dare's plane out of legal limbo; then five hundred thousand initially, followed by five hundred thousand more if the profits keep rising. Dare's plane however will have to be sold to Knight Air, with the profits being taken in the form of company stock equal to its market value. Dare isn't happy with the arrangement, but can't refuse.

Adid's magic works. Dare's old Gulfstream is out and painted in the company colours, two more pilots hired, another two to fly aid workers to and from their assignments in the Sudan. The company now has five aircraft and seventeen on the payroll. But the rains have come, the drought conditions in Bahr el Ghazal have lifted and invoices sharply decline. Doug hustles contracts to deliver aid to Somalia; two planes go back to flying aid into the Nuba mountains. Doug wants Fitz to help hustle more business but his mind seems elsewhere. Fitz must fly to Nairobi once a month to deposit Knight Air's receipts, and he always manages to contrive visits to the capital more often. She puts him up in the guest house and creeps in late at night when the servants have gone to bed. Neither likes the arrangement but can do nothing about it.

Love seems to cause trouble elsewhere when Tony announces that Wes and Mary (the whore and that fat wanker) have to go. Doug replies he can't sack his partner, and all looks lost until they transfer Tony to the Nairobi office to skipper the Gulfstream on the Somali runs, everything will work out. The captain of that run is brought to Loki to replace Tony as co-pilot with Doug.

The problems with employee relations and the financial stress make Doug irritable and short-tempered. He has to get more business for the Nuba run. If he can enlist those agencies in his crusade, he can reconcile the halves of his divided self and serve God and Mammon at the same time. Doug comes up with a mad idea. Let's stage Nuba Day! Just like the old Governor's Day in British ruled Sudan. The idea would be to fly representatives of all the NGOs up to the Nuba mountains, have them stay the night at St Michael's mission, give them the news on the Nubans, hold dances, get the German doctor to explain his work and his needs, and get that woman Quinette involved as she is good with media. Fitz is told to get on with organising it, and Doug is fired up by this cool idea.

Quinette and other NGOs are on board the plane heading to Nuba. Her usual bickerings with the CNN bureau chief Phyllis Rappaport continue as they bounce over the turbulent plain in a thunderstorm. Phyllis thought this was to be an exclusive on an unknown region of the war, and is incensed that AP and the *New York Times* have come along. But Quinette is so proud that the Knight Air clique has admitted her to their circle and unveiled their secret operations in the Nuba that she ignores the worst of Phyllis's diatribe.

Dare and Mary banter in the cockpit, and Dare thinks over how their relationship is going. He's not going to risk a fifth marriage, and for a while Mary chose to sleep with both Tony and him. For months until Mary decided to break it off with Tony as gently as she could. It didn't work that well, and Mary started feeling that it was all Dare's fault that her life became so complicated.

They are heading to Zulu Three landing field near the town of New Tourom and speak with Doug on the ground about runway conditions and the lookouts against enemy patrols. Michael Goraende has his troops on all the hills keeping a lookout. Doug and Fitz have been in Nuba three days, organising the dignitaries and setting up the stage and sound equipment like a couple of rock promoters. Dare's thoughts jump between his future with Mary, his cynicism about aid workers and his plans on giving his passengers a barf bag of a landing by coming down in a twisting spin.

On the ground they are greeted by the usual teenage rebels, women porters and SPLA fighters as they unload the supplies. The fighters are actually Michael Goraende's crack bodyguards, but today they are guarding the precious cargo of aid workers on their two hour hike to the village. Dare watches

them unload, camouflages the plane and then speaks to Mary as she relentlessly records the porters and camels and aid workers making their way up the track. We fly cargo that doesn't officially exist on flights that don't officially exist to places that don't officially exist on anybody's map. If you and me got killed, nobody would know we were dead because we don't officially exist either.

Quinette looks down the track where she has left the plane and feels the Nuban landscape is more pleasing to the eye and tougher on the body than she had thought. Though weakened by her first bout of dysentery, her regimen of hiking and cycling every day in Loki and trekking with Ken has paid off. She is in much better shape than her companions. They walk into the once prosperous New Tourom, past the largest church Quinette has so far seen in Sudan, its windows blown out, roof partly collapsed and full of holes.

The stage managed show begins. Nuban warriors dance around the guests and then Colonel Michael Goraende introduces himself and his adjutant Major Kasli and the huge men shake hands with all the guests. Quinette notices that Diana Briggs and John Barrett are also up on the stage. For the next two sweltering hours the delegation listen to speeches; from Barrett about International Peoples Aid, Gerhard Manfred tells of his work in the hospital, local Nubans get their tales of woe translated into English. Lastly Michael Goraende introduces a tall dramatic young woman looking like a panther. Her name is Yamila and she haltingly tells her tale of her kidnap and slavery. Quinette records her story and realises that hers is different from the thousands of others because she managed to escape her Arab captor. Her journey took days as she made her way to the other refugees at New Tourom, her son dying on the way and being buried in the mission cemetery. She tells them her captor was Idris.

Over lunch Quinette watches the group. She is not sure about the organiser Douglas. He seems like a cocksure frat boy from back home, but when he turns on the charm you feel the most important person in the world. After lunch they are treated to the traditional Nuban wrestling matches – a frenzy of wild and breathtaking noise and spectacle. In an unscheduled match, the victor challenges the strapping Michael Goraende to a fight and Quinette watches on as the huge man strips down and prepares himself for the fight. Michael wins. And then she gets up the courage to go and speak to him. They discuss pleasantries and then get onto the issue of slaves. Michael suggests he show Quinette the mission. In the dusk they walk through the village with Michael commenting as he goes about how he wants to build the village into a new land of immigrants like America was once before. His passionate speech ends in the church and Quinette understands he wants to convince her and then the others of his mission. He has to leave, so asks Quinette to spread his message for him. Which she does.

Balm in Gilead

The next day they inspect the wet runway and Doug asks John Barrett if he thinks the event is a success. Yes is his reply. Diana looks at the tick bites on her arms after four days in the bush. And Fitz remembers removing them the night before in her tent. John quietly confronts Fitz over the illicit affair and warns her not to hurt Diana's feelings. Fitz promises him he won't and gently ribs John over his own odd relationship with a tall young Nuban woman.

Three hours later the aid workers, soldiers, and Nubans arrive at the runway to leave. Doug straps in, Fitz beside him pretending to be first officer (his co-pilot drunkenly broke his leg the week before). Suddenly a fountain of gray-black smoke shoots up in the air at the end of the runway; they are under attack. Three Nubans are killed in front of them, everyone scatters. Fitz suddenly thinks that Diana is out there somewhere, but Doug has the plane moving before he can release his seat belt. Doug takes off, telling Fitz he will circle, keep the plane safe, land and then get everybody away. He contacts Michael to give the news where the bombing is coming from. They fly closer to the enemy to get the bearings. Fitz is alarmed and asks Doug what is happening. We're in it my man, that's what. We are in the goddamned war!

Doug helps Michael on the ground to get the range of their shots against the enemy. After three goes he gets the range right. Fitz feels like hero in a war film. They see the shots hit the enemy and whoop for joy and land the plane.

Fitz sprints between the bodies to find Diana blood-soaked, but unhurt. Gerhard is racing around helping the injured, making Quinette and other aid workers bind the bandages. Barrett is saying prayers to dying soldiers and Phyllis is filming the scene to one side. She's got her story now.

People behave calmly, bringing the wounded to be treated. Fitz goes to collect his passengers and finds none of them badly wounded. He has them ready to board but there is a change of plans. Manfred needs to evacuate the wounded to the hospital, Tara Whitcomb is to come and pick up the aid workers and journalists. She is in nearby Malakal. But her plane can only take fourteen. Two people are going to need to stay behind.

Fifteen casualties and seventeen dead lay in the shade of the palms. Michael Goraende helps with Quinette and her friend Lily, the Irish aid worker who worked as a paramedic in Belfast before coming to Sudan. Quinette realises that she understands her father better having seen all the death around her. He had been undone by Vietnam and returned home an unbeliever. Such things sowed doubt in the ordered garden of her belief.

She and Goraende help to nurse the wounded captain as they wait for the plane to take the second lot of casualties to hospital. Quinette feels her faith is being tested. They get the wounded onto the plane and Quinette is touched to see Goraende holding the wounded captain's hand as they take off. Goraende explains that he was in the Sudanese army with Bala, the wounded captain. They deserted together, joined the SPLA and have fought side by side from that day to this. Bala suffers, and Quinette finds herself singing him a hymn *There is a balm in Gilead* to make the wounded whole to him.

They reach the hospital. Ulrika chooses which of the wounded are to be treated first – Bala is one of the lucky ones. And Doug declares that he cannot return to Loki that night, and Quinette and Lily can sleep inside the plane. Doug and Fitz can bag out under the wing.

Ulrika bustles up and demands Lily's help at the hospital. Lily is reluctant but Quinette suggests they go together. (She has spotted Michael standing on the running board of the jeep looking back toward them.) They buck and ride on the roof of the jeep feeling part of a great adventure.

Lily is gowned up and sent into the makeshift surgery while Quinette helps preparing the wounded for their operations. Bala is to go in next. They carry him in and Quinette watches the proceedings from the back until Gerhard spots her and sends her scurrying back out. She waits and then the team come out and announce they could nothing for Bala, he is dead.

Quinette is sent to Ulrika's house to rest and treat her dysentery. She goes to the hut, washes as best she can and ponders the death of captain Bala. She feels some sort of inner collapse. Everything she and Lily have done for the man were for nothing. She sleeps just fifteen minutes and is woken by a knock on the door. It is Goraende. She offers her sympathy and Goraende asks her to distract him from the war – tell me about Iowa. He quizzes her on why she has come to Africa, and to avoid the truth that it was more interesting than being at home, she adjusts the answer to include the fact that she has been called here by God. Michael talks of the war, the fact that he fights because he hates it. Quinette is confused. I fight in the hopes that if I fight hard enough, long enough, and with enough intelligence, I can make an end to fighting.

Michael tells her of his wife and three children: his wife and two children killed during the bombing on the St Andrews school where his wife worked as a teacher. His one child, a girl, survived. Quinette feels a rush of guilty pleasure that he has no wife. More talk about how she must help the Nubans and then the inevitable happens, he gets up to leave and Quinette throws herself at him. They kiss until they are interrupted by an orderly. He leaves, she resists the impulse to run after him and gets into her sleeping bag, scheming how she can get back to Nuba again.

Fitz wakes under the wing of the plane and ponders his future with Diana. He realises that he really loves her, but suddenly he also understands that his desire to have children will be an impediment to their future. Doug's chirpiness annoys him but he holds his temper as Doug spins the idea that the bombing raid can be turned to their advantage in convincing the NGOs to send aid. It's another subject altogether that Fitz is thinking about and he tells Doug that he is in love with Diana. Incredulous and astonished Doug wonders if he isn't running an airline but more an odd-couple dating service. First Wes and Mary and now Fitz and Diana.

Their conversation is cut short by the low drone of a high-flying Antonov. It heads towards the hospital and Doug gets Fitz to radio the hospital and request Michael and the aid workers to come back to the plane. The bomb doors of the Antonov open and the muffled rumble of a bomb cuts Doug off.

Half a dozen bombs fall and the men on the airfield run for cover. How on earth can people bomb a hospital Fitz asks, as he hides from the blasts.

Lying between two boulders Quinette is covered by Michael's body pressing down on her. It is finished, he announces but she can barely hear him through the ringing in her ears. She is safe, shocked but understands the soldier in Michael wants to know if she is injured physically, and she replies no.

They had all been having breakfast in the lemon grove behind Manfred's house. They saw the Antonov overhead but the doctor told them not to worry, they pass over from time to time. She remembers the Italian, Franco, telling them to go to the airstrip: Lily goes to get her rucksack. Michael, Quinette and the radio operator go towards the jeep. The bombs started falling across the narrow valley which gives them time to run for the rocks and hide.

They walk up to the hospital to see what they can do. They are confronted by a scene of horror. All that remains are a mangled mess with people on all fours staggering through the smoke. They find Ulrika on her knees, tearing at the wreckage bare-handed. She is seeking Franco, but Michael makes her understand no-one can be left alive. Manfred is alive, in the paediatrics ward, attending to a woman and child with bleeding ears. He is injured himself, but needs to get on with helping Lily. Manfred goes to the corner of the building and picks up two legs, white and ragged and takes them to Lily's truncated corpse. Appalled Quinette and Michael follow. She kneels, brushes her palm over the still, startled eyes and closes them. In a trance Manfred puts the legs back onto the corpse and asks for sutures to attach the legs again. Everyone watches in shock as the obviously mad doctor keeps going. Ulrika tries to pull him away but Quinette stills her. She pretends to help the doctor as, with imaginary needle and thread, he sews the legs back on. Quinette sings the spiritual 'Balm in Gilead' and gently and calmly coaxes the deranged doctor away.

Half an hour since the air strike and Fitz and Doug are trying to raise the hospital or Michael on the radio. Doug decides they need to fly over and take a look. Flying low, they both curse and only on the third pass do they see Michael waving at them. He contacts them on the radio and updates them on the wounded and dead. Those who can walk will try and get to the airfield. They arrive around noon. Michael with Ulrika and Manfred, Quinette following with the radio operator and two orderlies. They carry Lily's body to the plane. Quinette drains Fitz's water bottle then, looking taut and drawn, lies down and falls asleep.

Michael tells the story of the bombing, and how Ulrika was forced to sedate the doctor who wouldn't leave the hospital so he could come along. And that the remarkable Quinette (Fitz and Doug exchange looks as Michael strokes her head) refused to leave Lily's body behind and helped carry the body for the entire ten kilometres trek. More survivors start to arrive at the airfield. Those Doug will fly to New Tourom. The rest of the wounded would be cared for by the other Knight Air plane which was being flown from Loki by the Russian crew. They would take them to the Norwegian People's Aid hospital in Chukudum. Michael's soldiers will stay to guard the airfield and assist in the evacuation.

The German doctor needs to get to Nairobi and they start to move. But Michael needs first to tell them that there is no point in the aid and the air drops and the hospital if the enemy can come so easily and blow the things apart. What they really need are shoulder-fired missiles to bring the planes down. Doug realises that this is something Michael has been thinking for a long time. The Nuba are a sideshow; the weapons never arrive. Would Doug help them with what they really need?

Michael, Fitz and Doug take a walk down the airstrip to talk. The weapons are at the SPLA depots away in Uganda. Doug has to ask if they can be paid for the 'delivery charges' and Michael assures them the SPLA can easily pay. Both Fitz and Doug have crossed a boundary. After the past few days they understand they would probably do it for free. Doug explains he would have to discuss it with his business partners first, but the deed is done. They walk back to the plane where Michael looks at Quinette, and nods.

Mustang

Back in Loki, Dare is told of all the adventures and the issue of Michael Goraende's request comes up. Doug's impassioned speech includes the belief that running guns into the Nuba is a sacred duty. Humanitarian aid is no longer the solution to humanitarian problems. As he soars into the rhetorical ionosphere, Dare is surprised that Fitz is just as keen. He tries to change the mood by asking who pays

them and by how much. The SPLA will pay them eighteen thousand per flight and the hardware is smuggled over to the airstrips on the Sudanese side of the Ugandan border. Dare mentions he has a friend he flew with in Blackbridge Services who could help. But before that he is compelled to give the young men a lecture. Flying humanitarian aid into Sudan's no-go zones isn't really flying on the dark side, but kind of the grey side. But smuggling weapons is another matter and if the UN find about it, Knight Air would be banned from Loki in a heartbeat. The Kenyans would probably want to make an example of them, they would lose their licenses, their planes, and land in prison.

Doug wants to know if they should tell their business partner Adid about it. Dare naturally tells them that he wouldn't object for moral reasons, as he has none, but rather he would agree it would be too much of a risk. Instead Dare has a suggestion. The idea of gun running still appeals to him, but more than that he thinks he has a way of making enough money to leave Africa altogether.

We form a shell company, incorporate it in Uganda, use my name and my plane and if anything goes wrong, I take the fall. Dare warms to his plan and explains they leave with a half load from Loki, fly to Uganda to pick up the guns and head to Nuba. He and Mary will fly the plane and bank the money in Kampala. Only five people are to know – the three in the room plus Mary and Nimrod. Dare wants to do it for only a set period and then sell up. He leaves the company with either half a million in cash or his Gulfstream plane. Two days later Doug and Dare agree.

Dare and Mary start their first journey to Uganda to get the paperwork in order. He is buoyed up by thoughts of their future together. Away from Africa, affording a corporate jet and going back to flying musicians around on US tours. Having children (her idea) opening a flight school perhaps.

They spend a week in Entebbe getting the Yellowbird Air Services off the ground. It makes Dare nervous that things are going so smoothly. On their last night Mary wants to go out dancing but Dare feels too old to haul his bones to nightclubs. She goes anyway and half an hour later Dare realises he has to go and find her. She is dancing with a young man and he finds himself in the undignified position of almost starting a bar fight over a girl. Mary is delighted he has arrived, but the visit ends in a huge fight as Dare makes her go home. They make up eventually, but Dare realises there are many drawbacks to love with a much younger woman.

They need to see his old Blackbridge associate Keith Cheswick and agree to meeting up in Murchison as it is close to the border with Congo, where the man has business. They meet on a launch on the river and discuss business. Dare and Cheswick discuss the prices of SAMs, Stingers and triple-As, Mary photographs wildlife, and the guide helpfully points out an elephant on the bank. No problem with supply, the Israelis are always happy to make life difficult for the Muslim brethren in Khartoum. Business is concluded.

Redeemer

Quinette has become a minor celebrity back in Loki, everyone wants to hear her story first-hand. She wishes she could take more part in what has now become a personal war – she wants to be like Doug and Fitz and fly planes of rifles and rockets for Michael Goraende's army. She writes Michael a letter, but tears it up before she gets to the Knight Air offices. Instead she goes to her austere office in the compound and gets to work for her next slave exchange. This next one is to have a huge group of reporters. Ken has suffered a setback when UNICEF criticised the charity for exaggerating the slave conditions in the Sudan and hinting that it was a mere fundraising gimmick. She does her administrative work and then gets on with the database called the Record of a Crime Against Humanity. So far the charity has free more than eleven thousand people. She adds twenty more narratives to the database and then works on her last task – cross-checking the names of those freed with the ones on the southern Sudanese list. Oddly, of the 160 captives liberated on the last mission, more than thirty have never been reported as captured. She is interrupted in her baffling discovery by the arrival of a letter from Michael Goraende, sent by one of the Russian pilots of Knight Air.

It is an official letter from him requesting her to visit Nuba again to help with establishing a similar slave exchange programme in the Nuban zone. She is thrilled he has done as she asked.

Quinette and Ken's party fly over to the Dinka to do a slave exchange. Things do not go according to plan. Ken has promised the journalists the freeing of more than four hundred slaves. Instead the local men admit they only have forty-eight captives to redeem. The redemptions have become a routine and

Quinette delivers her now usual set speech, but for once she doesn't gain any approbation from the slaves who have been set free.

The interviews must be done, and Ken chooses ten at random and they begin. The press circle around, listening to the tales of torture. One French cameraman wants to film the woman who has described the whip scars on her back from the beatings. Frightened she refuses, and Ken feels she must do it to salvage some of the situation. Quinette is appalled that he has turned this into a freak show. Later in the medical exam Quinette realises that the woman has been lying – there are no scars on her back. The French cameraman brings it to her attention. She tells Ken she needs to have a serious talk when they get back to Loki. She needs to show him the charity is being taken advantage of.

She shows Ken the discrepancies in the records, how the people today and those of the last redemption have never been recorded as captured as slaves. They speculate that Manute, the middleman may be rounding people up and getting them to act as slaves. But Ken warns her not to play Nancy Drew and tells her she is not paid to be some kind of auditor or private eye.

He warns her that the press, especially someone like Phyllis, could blow this out of proportion and the charity would be damaged beyond repair. She is filled with contempt for the man in front of her, but realises she needs him if she is to get back to the Nuba mountains again. She hands him Michael's letter, he prevaricates, but finally agrees to let her go and investigate.

Brothers and Sisters in Arms

Wes and Mary make three gun runs in the first week, departing Loki at dawn with light loads of innocuous cargo, landing at an SPLA airstrip on the border, taking on the arms and flying to the Nuba mountains. They return from each trip in time for lunch.

The next week is the same, but this time Wes suggests Mary stops her incessant filming and hides the videos she has already taken. Gun running is routine anyway, Mary concedes. Their luck with routine doesn't hold out and the next mission the runway near Nimule on the border is washed out after a deluge and they are stuck for two days. The bush around the runway is littered with unburied corpses from a local battle. Wes is stung by a scorpion on the second day when inspecting the airstrip. Despite all her attentions, the leg swells up to the thigh and he is unable to operate the rudder pedals. He needs a doctor. She unloads the weapons and races back to Loki where he is treated by the Red Cross.

As he recovers Mary has to go to Canada to visit her dying father. On the next gun-run, Doug has to fly as co-pilot. Just before departure Wes is appalled that Doug announces they are to have a passenger on board their secret mission – Quinette. She needs a lift to Zulu Three. And Doug reassures Wes that Quinette has known about the missions for as long as he has, so there's no secret to tell.

They land at an airstrip near New Cush and Dare senses a problem. Soldiers surround an officer and approach the plane. Barefoot civilians bring out the crates and containers and head toward the plane. The officer announces the flight has changed. The cargo is more needed in Yei than in the Nuba and he and the soldiers would accompany them to make sure they reach their destination. Doug blusters saying they will be overloaded and Wes tries to understand why an army would hijack weapons from people fighting on the same side.

Wes tries the idea of a bribe and secretly offers the officer money. He hesitates as he is under orders. Dare suggests he take half the weapons, deliver his supply to Lei then return for the other half and go to Nuba. It's an impasse, until Quinette pipes up with an idea – why not take the medical supplies intended for Ulrika as well and claim that was all that was on the plane. They do this. And Quinette suggests they tell Ulrika that the supplies were confiscated by SPLA troops in Lei. Doug approves. Wes isn't sure these two do-gooders haven't gone entirely bad, but Quinette refuses to feel guilty.

They land. Find there is not enough fuel (secretly siphoned off by villagers and topped up with muddy water). They contact Fitz in Loki and explain the situation. The solution was to wait three days until Alexei could bring the fuel in the Antonov.

Quinette and Michael meet again. Everyone treks away from the plane up the path near New Tourom but in a hidden valley where Michael's military base is set up. It's more village than base, but the weapons and radio antenna tell another story. Doug confirms with Fitz that they cannot return for five

days and Quinette is pleased. Michael informs her of the meeting she will hold to learn more about the slaves, plus he has arranged for her to meet the trader Bashir at New Tourom the next day. She is disappointed to learn that Michael will be leaving the next day for a secret military option.

Michael takes her to his home where she will stay. His daughter Pearl and two cousins will look after her. The women pass the afternoon braiding Quinette's hair. Meanwhile Doug, Nimrod and Wes have to contend with ticks in their bedding and mushy food. The Nuba girl serving them notices the scratching and sorts out their bedding with a stick and boiling water. Suddenly they are assailed by a young American named Rob Handy, one of the Friends of the Frontline who had come on the first press trip. He has been in Nuba two weeks making a fundraising film for the school they are to build. Lord spare me from another loony Christian, thinks Dare, as Rob announces he is also to film the operation Michael is about to launch. Most of the Friends of the Frontline are war veterans and will lap this sort of footage up. Rob says he was a Gulf War vet too, like Doug and quizzes him on his squadron. Doug evades the answer by asking if he is to bunk in the crowded hut with them. Rob replies he prefers to sleep outside.

Michael and Major Kasli pay an official visit. They request semtex in the next load as they intend to blow up an enemy oil pipeline one hundred kilometres away. Michael then spells out his battle plan. To carry the heavy mortars to blow up the pipeline they need trucks. So the next day they are going to seize three of them from a road junction near Kologi.

Quinette finds domestic life with Michael and the family compelling. Michael asks her to talk about her field missions and they plan what could take place in the Nuba, his voice and his ideas create a magnetism for her. They are close to their passion of before. He sings for her with a small handmade harp, they kiss but hold back.

The next day Quinette treks to New Tourom to meet the schoolteacher who will be her translator for the slaves. They set up in the half-repaired St Andrews church. Bashir looks uncomfortable. She sits down and takes down notes about the number of slaves and the dates. It is exceedingly tedious work. By midday she has interviewed just two of the eight slave redeemers. And hasn't spoken yet to Bashir.

They break for lunch and Quinette finds herself eating with the teacher, his wife and Ulrika. Ulrika questions Quinette closely about the missing medicine and Quinette prays God will forgive her half lies. Ulrika has a small makeshift clinic in New Tourom and the supplies are very low. Quinette inquires after Dr Manfred. He is back in Germany and may not be coming back for a long time. He suffers from too much of Africa.

After lunch Quinette confers with Bashir. He will be able to act as middlemen in the Nuba, just as in Dinkaland. But travel here is more difficult and dangerous and the charge will have to be higher – seventy-five dollars a head. They bargain a bit and Bashir hurriedly agrees to sixty. Moses is relieved that he is not called upon to translate what she really thinks of this Rolex-wearing slave-dealing man.

Rob Handy films a training exercise, he is ill with a fever and diarrhoea, but takes plenty of drugs to alleviate the symptoms. The soldiers are a motley lot; some in uniform, most not. But Dare must concede Michael has trained them well.

Quinette has spoken to all the traders but two. Both she and Moses are exhausted. But he asks her to help with his English class and she agrees. It is held outdoors and of the ten students, one of them is the escaped slave Yamila, who is still fierce and uncompromising, even when Quinette takes special care to try and teach the alphabet.

On their way back to the camp they see women dancing on a ledge in the distance. Quinette is curious and wants to investigate. It is only for women her translator replies, but she insists on sneaking up for a look. Three dancing are Pearl and her cousins. In a circle surrounded by older women they are systematically whipping each others backs until the blood flows. They do not cry out but suffer tremendous pain. The dance is over and the older women sooth the wounds and console them. Quinette creeps away, and in the evening Michael explains it is an initiation and purification ceremony. The women must be prepared for the pain of their adult lives and need to show they possess the bravery to endure. Quinette confesses that she envies their pain and the way they go beyond it. Michael

assures her he has already seen her courage and then tells her he loves her. She is struck dumb. And can only wish him a safe battle the next day.

On the morning of the battle, Rob is appalled to find his illness has returned, but Doug assures him it isn't amoebic dysentery so he has a chance of joining the attack. Dare is writing a love letter to Mary, Doug is studying his bird book, Nimrod is poking at the remnants of his dinner and Rob is praying loudly for his illness to pass. Instead he is sick again and asks Doug if he will take his place.

Dare glances at his partner and is not surprised to see the look of zest on his face. He takes him aside after his camera lesson and asks what the fuck he thinks he is doing. Doug, always a one with a logical explanation for every illogical thing he does, explains that he is doing a favour for one of their clients. And besides, it will bring more business to Knight Air if the fundraising film is successful. They argue, but Wes realises it's time to quit – some kinds of ignorance about danger were flat-out invincible.

And the next morning, utterly exhausted and sore, Wes is trying to work out why he has agreed to go along too. The forced march is hell, and the water has run out and he can see that they are only halfway. Wes, Doug, Suleiman and Michael are on the hilltop with the mortar crews. They watch the troops pick their way down the hillside and head towards the guarded trucks. The attack begins; first the bullets and mortars fire wide, but the next rounds are closer. Michael looks like the director of a war movie, and Doug the cinematographer – he is in hog heaven. All goes well until the advancing troops, led by Kasli, radio to explain they have run into minefields. The garrison start to fight back with mortars of their own, the shots heading up the hill. One of the machine gunners at the end of the line is hit. Doug lives out some sort of combat fantasy by dropping the camera and sprinting over to try and take his place. Wes stops him by tackling him from behind. Michael calls a cease-fire as his ground troops get through the minefield and start up with automatic weapons. They allow some of the enemy to escape, who do so in one of the trucks. Not remembering that they are supposed to be capturing the trucks, Kasli's men open fire and blow up the vehicle. After a few minutes there is silence, and Michael tersely suggests they go and see what they have got.

Inside the garrison every sight and smell reminds Wes of other wars. He sarcastically reminds Doug to get good close-ups of the carnage for the propaganda war effort.

Quinette cannot concentrate on her abducted persons work as all she can think of is Michael. Distractedly she goes to Ulrika to get an infected tick bite seen to. Ulrika does so, and then informs Quinette that the baby with diarrhoea has died. Promising to help with more supplies propitiates her conscience. And then she confesses to Ulrika about Michael and Ulrika offers her some sage advice.

Dare and Doug are in one of the trucks driving back over dry riverbeds. In the planning of the attack, Michael has forgotten to ask which of his soldiers can drive. Only Suleiman, Major Kasli and Michael can, so Doug and Dare are obliged to drive. Doug is buoyed up from the experience, Dare warns him the adventure may not be over yet.

Suleiman's Land Rover leaves the hiding place of the riverbed to try and find another path. Suddenly he yells, helicopter, and they all dive for cover. Doug aims his camera in the sky looking for the gunship, while Dare throws a hat over it warning it will flash like a mirror. Suddenly the gunship is upon them. The Land Rover is in the open, five hundred feet up. Michael warns them to hold their fire, but one man cannot resist and opens up. Their bullets are ineffectual, but it alerts the gunship to the attack. It does, blows up the Land Rover, takes a hit itself, then flies out of range. Two of the soldiers (spear carriers a few months ago) creep out with their SAM rockets and get ready to fire. The gunship comes in for another pass. The soldier doesn't fire. Dare yells at him to shoot, but realises the complex double action of the weapon has him confused. Everyone yells to shoot – and then Doug leaps up, grabs the weapon and fires it himself. The helicopter crashes in a spectacular hail of explosions. Whooping for joy and hailing Douglas a hero, Michael gives him the title of *Negarra*, a brother, and Doug claims Wes should be too, after all, he was the one who told him how the SAM ought to be fired. So both are hailed as heroes and the dance for joy continues.

Back at the camp Quinette is concerned Michael hasn't returned but is reassured all will be fine.

Michael and the troops decide to halt a few miles from the airfield. Continuing is too dangerous in the dark so they rest. The next morning they reach the airfield – the limit of the vehicles range and unload the nine corpses and the wounded. Runners are sent to announce the victory and carry the wounded to the clinic. Dare announces he can't haul his sorry ass any further and will wait by the airfield. Doug can go up to the camp to collect Handy for all he cares.

Quinette takes to helping the girls with their endless chores. It is hot work and she strips down to her underpants, like the others and works away at grinding the beans into paste. Covered in sweat and aching from exertion, Michael finds her in her semi-naked state and quietly and sternly asks why a guest is doing such menial work. Embarrassed, she dresses and then joins him in a meal.

Eventually he tells Quinette that the operation went well with the loss of few men, and that Douglas shot down a helicopter. Everyone sleeps. Later Michael announces there will be a victory dance and he presents Quinette with a beautiful cotton dress and asks that she wears it for the feast that night.

The evening's dances are like a Mardi Gras, but one called the Nyertun, is a mating ritual with the girls doing the choosing. Douglas is put in the men's row which causes great mirth, and a Nuban woman dances with him. Pearl asks Quinette if she too wants to take part. At first she is terrified, but the drink and the drums take over and she dances over to Michael and he joins in. Later he takes her to his tent and they make love.

Douglas

Douglas has clipped and saved all the newspaper cuttings from the scandal of his father's fall from grace: the lawsuits for fraud and then money laundering, the federal probe, the bankruptcy, the trial, and finally the announcement of the car bombing of Doug's father on the second day he is due to testify against a Mexican drug ring.

Part Two

Warlord

Ibrahim is continually visited by the jinn in the form of his dead nephew Abbas. Ibrahim has taken to talking openly to him. Today is the day he will make peace with his sister in law's lineage and he hopes it will make the jinn disappear. Elders of the tribe cannot remember a day when the Salamat clans have been so divided. His sister-in-law has demanded blood money for the murder to the tune of sixty cattle, but Idris says the actions weren't murder. The boy fell on his own dagger while trying to attack him. They leave it to the elders to decide and Ibrahim is worried other clansmen will use this opportunity to create his political ruin.

He suffers the indignity of a trial but is found not guilty. But his generous offer of 30 cattle to his sister-in-law fails to assuage her. All feels she has summoned Abbas's jinn to punish him. Pay her what she wants and the jinn will go away, they say. Ibrahim refuses – it would be a sign of his guilt.

She starts other mischiefs – such as claiming that Ibrahim and a certain Messiriya trader have an illegal business arrangement to buy back captives from their masters then sell them on to infidel foreigners for several times their worth and split the profits. It is only a rumour, but enough to stop him becoming the tribal chief when the old man dies a few months later.

Following other incidents, including seven revenge killings, Ibrahim is threatened with the stripping of all his powers and things almost escalate into a tribal civil war. Finally things come to this day when Ibrahim must attend a peace conference. It starts with the settlement of blood money for the dead men which takes all morning and is full of angry shouting and confusion. In the afternoon the real acrimony begins, but by sunset Ibrahim heaves a sigh of relief. It has been resolved peacefully. He had lost nothing but thirty cows and can hope the jinn never plague him again.

Later he reports to the nazir that the tribes are at peace. Bashir turns up and tells Ibrahim that he has found out where Miriam is – living in the eastern Nuba, in New Tourom. But the village is too close to an enemy camp, retrieving her will be difficult. Ibrahim agrees a high price and leaves dreaming that Miriam will be his again.

Redeemer

Quinette is worried that her affair with Michael is going to get out. While sexual liaisons are common in Loki, an affair with an SPLA commander is definitely forbidden. She could lose her job as well as her reputation. She writes a letter to Michael and waits agonies before the next Knight Air flight returns with a reply. He wants to see her and begs her to contrive a way to visit.

By good fortune Ken agrees to arrange a redemption mission in the Nuba. Bashir has contacted Michael to inform him that more than one hundred captives will arrive in New Tourom within a week. The team fly out and Quinette finds it is worse to be close to Michael without being able to see him. On the second night she takes a risk and creeps out to his compound (avoiding bodyguards and the risk of leopards along the way). They make love then discuss the difficulties. Major Kasli is against their liaison because he thinks all white people coming to the Nuba are CIA spies. The next day she slips away again at Michael's request and he takes her to the special cave where she spied the rites of the women. He lifts her up to show her the artwork his ancestors have painted there. He tells her the story of his tribe and then warns her he is going on another mission. But before he leaves he solemnly suggests that in order for her to be part of their history they ought to be married. She is too dumbfounded to reply.

Back in Loki she tries to imagine her life as the wife of a Nuban commander, learning the language, teaching English, trying to build a New Sudan. And then suffers the flip side of doubts about the homesickness, the privations, the fear of air raids. Her Midwestern caution is holding her back. Desperate to confide her dilemma she finally cycles over to Father Malachy Delaney's church to speak.

She asks him what it is like to give up all his past life to commit to Africa and then tells about Michael Goraende. Hearing the consequences of her actions phrased so starkly by him renews her misgivings. He presses her on whether she is marrying the man or the cause. Irritated by his questions, but thoughtful, she returns and realises that thinking through the negatives of the life she might commit to helps her appreciate the positive ones too. God is sending her a message she decides. And writes to Michael with the answer of yes.

Love in Wartime

Diana and Fitzhugh are visiting Malachy's beloved Turkana land to assess the effects of the latest drought. Malachy warns people through the bush telegraph that these are special people who are to be treated with respect. Diana's latest fundraising campaign is to raise money to dig bore holes and provide people of north-western Kenya with more reliable water. Fitz tags along so he can be with her. Their affair is no secret and the gossip mongers of both Fitz's and her own circle are having a field day. Fitz is happy when he is with her, miserable when not and tries not to think beyond that. At the end of a busy day touring the region, Diana is pensive. She orders the vehicle to stop and announces she needs to walk with Fitz alone. He follows her to a desolate broken place beside a dried up river bank. And says this was where her baby was conceived. She relates the tale of how she was just eighteen and had developed a passion for an Irish boy, raised in Kenya, who was working for his father. They had difficulty meeting up, but one day managed a picnic by the river where they were sitting. The rain fell, the river was impassable and they had to wait for it to subside before they could get back. Suddenly they are disturbed by the magnificent sight of a Turkana war party jogging past – men in nothing but loin cloths and two spears. The procession took twenty minutes for them to pass. This made her reckless and she seduced the young Irishman.

Later back at university in Britain she discovered she was pregnant. Brian offered to marry her, but she didn't write back. And now she confesses to Fitz that the baby wasn't born dead. It wasn't born at all. Fitz doesn't condemn her for being so young and having an abortion, but she goes on to say the operation ruined her chances of ever having another. She married seven years later and after five years of no luck, her husband David found the truth. Two years later they divorced. Fitz is learning a few of the lies Diana told back when they first met. She then confesses that she loves him. And because of this love she wants only the best for him. He must know that she can never have children and is too old. And thinks that it may be best to end it now as she knows in a few years time he will turn away from her. And that pain would be greater than losing him now.

Her rejection makes him angry. They drive back to Tara Whitcomb's where Diana is staying and hiss at each other in the dark. They agree that Fitz must decide if he can sacrifice everything for her and that he cannot see her until he decides.

Fitz gets on with his work, seemingly his usual cheery self. He organises Rob Handy and Tim Fancher's flights, the two missionaries who are going to set up ministries in the Nuba mountains. He delivers his hateful ten percent 'commissions' to the aid agency logisticians, and prepares a report on the finances for their sugar daddy Hassan Adid. Business is booming but ten percent of it comes from gun-running – a fact which Fitz must hide from Adid with some creative accounting. But he always feels guilty about the conspiracy. Half the company are flying on the dark side and committing fraud. Still the business meeting is a welcome distraction from his inner turmoil

At dinner that night (in the shabby Hotel California mess) Adid proposes that in order to increase profits they need to hire a marketing manager – and he has just the man. Timmerman from the UN. The man who accused Douglas of being a hijacker. But Adid insists that the animosity is in the past. Besides they need someone to get to the UN's contracts with the cargo airlines. At present Tara's organisation has more than 30 of the UN affiliated contracts, Timmerman could lure them away. This personal reference is something that Adid knows will work. It is Douglas's weak spot. And he then mentions he can put up the capital for three more planes which they will need if they win the contracts. Douglas is seduced. Fitz not so sure, and believes that Adid is planning on taking them over.

Quinette decides to announce her decision to marry Michael. She writes to Ken with her resignation and reason, writes a rambling letter to her mother and sisters, tries to get Father Malachy to marry them, but he refuses as a Catholic and suggests John Barrett instead. She asks her roommate Anne Derby to be maid of honour, but she refuses the request. She thinks she is throwing her life away but wishes her well.

She hitches a ride into Nuba with the two Friends of the Frontline missionaries who plan on staying out there four months. They will base themselves in New Tourom but fan out into the countryside converting and training civilian pastors. She decides to tell them the reason for her visit; and although they are surprised, they give her their blessing.

When she lands, she is warmly greeted by Pearl, the cousins and many villagers. An outcast in Loki, she is warmly received here. She gets to the camp to learn that Michael won't be back for three days. She has a spat with Major Kasli who is in charge in Michael's absence and then settles down to her life in the compound.

The next day she joins Moses and the English lessons at the New Tourom school, teaches to the small children in the morning, has her usual lunch with Ulrika, the teacher and his wife, and then tries to teach the adults English in the afternoon. Yamila is her usual headstrong self, but Quinette senses she is not unintelligent, just very stubborn, and takes out her anger on Quinette. Bemused at the woman's raw hostility she is preoccupied as to why. She visits the missionaries who are rebuilding the church, but they don't cheer her up. Their zeal in trying to convert the Muslims is unsettling too.

Realising that she must be like Father Malachy and his Turkana and meet the people halfway, she summons Pearl to the sacred cavern and tells her she wants to take part in the Nuban woman's rites. Pearl returns with two women who agree. One of the women teaches Quinette the steps of the dance and she becomes more supple and confident as the late afternoon wears on. She feels the sting of the whip on her back and wills herself not to cry. The dance continues, and in an ecstasy of pain and pleasure, Quinette passes the initiation. She is one with the Nuban women.

Michael returns and they have a joyous homecoming, she proudly shows her lacerations, and they choose the day. John Barrett and his tall Nuban wife come for the ceremony and they go through the wedding ritual. Ulrika is to be Quinette's maid of honour, and Major Kasli is forced to be the best man. He looks like he is going to an execution.

She prepares well for the day of her wedding, helped by her Nuban women friends. Ulrika and Pearl escort her to the crowded St Andrew's church. A thrill bolts through Quinette when she sees Michael and his bodyguards of honour. Barrett marries them in a solemn but happy ceremony in Nuban and English. As they walk out a large snake crosses their path and people fall on it to kill it and remove it. Major Kasli shoots them a meaningful look as if it's a bad omen. But Michael merely explains that puff adders enter the buildings all the time. Whoever gives out omens wouldn't be so obvious.

They begin their married life.

Mary returns to Nairobi and her bleak grief acts as a brake on Dare's happiness at her return. They go to an hotel and Mary falls quickly asleep. Wes knows that now is the time to act. He leaves her sleeping, goes to a jewellers and buys a ring. He rehearses what he is going to say, dreading the possibility she will turn him down. He is greeted by the sight of the old Mary, saucy and lithe and he forgets to propose. He tries again at lunch and manages to produce the ring. He tries his spiel about selling up, moving to Texas, flying planes and Mary doesn't say no, but doesn't see the unpredictability in the life he proposes. There is a long, long pause, a bit of pleading on Wes's part and finally Mary says that she loves taking chances and this is the biggest one yet. Wes, for once, is speechless.

The crowd of Americans at the next table break into applause. And Wes buys them drinks. Just soft drinks says the man next to them. We're pilots and have a flight this afternoon. They introduce themselves. One is a man called Bob Mendoza and from Tucson Arizona. They swap stories and Bob proudly tells them that Doug Braithwaite was their refuelling officer in the Air National Guard.

Instead of canoodling about being engaged, Mary and Wes spend the entire flight back to Loki pondering why Doug would want to invent his past.

Star at the River's End

Quinette and Michael's honeymoon begins with a walking tour of the Nuba; accompanied by full bodyguard, the two missionaries and twenty porters. They trek at night to avoid the enemy and the heat. Each village would be the same; the women would gawk at Quinette, Michael would meet the SPLA officers and the missionaries would evangelize with fervour and efficiency. On the sixth day Handy and Fancher ask Quinette if she would bring God's message to the women as they can't be seen listening just to male ministers. She dithers. They travel to the lands of the Maskarin tribe, use minesweepers to clear the way, and are on the lookout for enemy ambushes. The locals have been forced into the hills away from their crops and are in a dreadful state. The Maskarin suffer from being along the main supply route between the two government-held towns of Talodi and Kadugli. The oilfields are near Kadugli. Michael outlines his plans to Quinette for the attack on the oilfield. They stay with a local SPLA battalion commander who will help with their attack. Quinette stays with his three wives in their courtyard.

She is thrust into the role of missionary on the tenth day. One hundred women have assembled under a tree near the church where the men are preaching. Her first bible reading is interrupted by the arrival of helicopter gunships. They run for the shelters which are full, and survive two attacks. Before they have time to come for a third strafing run, Michael sets up the troops and shows them how to fight back with rifles and anti-aircraft machine guns. Quinette proudly watches as the men bring down one of the gunships. The missionaries try to stop the villagers from tearing the one surviving helicopter crew to pieces, but Quinette replies she cannot stop them. She observes the bundles of bodies on the ground where just minutes ago she was preaching.

They leave that night after burying eight dead and reach the village of Tira. Here Quinette preaches her second lesson. They move on again and are just a few days march from New Tourom. Michael and Quinette find some privacy by the river. They are startled by a herd of ostrich and hide behind an outcrop just in time.

Back in New Tourom, Quinette has to get used to the life of an officer's wife and Michael's absences. The attack on the oilfield is to be larger than previously planned, with the Dinka helping to attack from the south while the Nubans come from the north. Michael's second in command, Kasli, is against such a big offensive, worrying that the reprisals against the people will be too great.

One day Michael finds a practical job for Quinette to do with the war effort. The radio is no longer safe for Michael to send his requests for guns. Other SPLA officers try to hijack Wesley's shipments. So they agree on a private code between Douglas, Wesley and Michael. But he wants Quinette to personally fly back to Loki to hand deliver the handbook of codes.

Back in Loki she is held up at customs where her bags are searched and she is interrogated. At the moment when she fears they will inspect the handbook, Mary English suddenly appears with a discreet bribe and saves the day. She explains that Quinette is now persona non grata in Loki and they were expecting trouble. Also that she is barred from flying any UN planes or their affiliates.

Mary takes Quinette to the offices where they meet Fitz who opens the safe and brings out the codebook. Mary and Fitz set to work on the decoding. The words please do not forget the handbook translate into send priority shipment of two hundred assault rifles, five tons of ammunition, two dozen grenade launchers and grenades.

Quinette secretly revels in the luxuries of a hot shower, soft beds and good food. She decides to flaunt her notoriety by wearing her black and gold dress. She and Mary go for drinks – Quinette enjoying the ease of speaking English instead of struggling with the local language Moro back in New Tourom.

She has an embarrassing and unpleasant encounter with Ken and the rest of the WorldWide Christian Union crew, then returns to the sanctuary of a table with Mary and Fitz. Later she reads a vitriolic letter from one of her sisters, so her ostracism is complete. But she clings on to the conviction that God sent her to Michael and the Nuba for a purpose and it keeps her safe.

The day after her return to Nuba, Quinette undergoes one of the initiation ceremonies for Nuban women. With Pearl beside her, she has her stomach tattooed with an intricate Nuban design.

Man of All Races

Fitz is woken by the sound of a lion in the night. He also sees the safari camp's mascot, the elephant, nearby. Diana comes out to ask what woke him; it is four in the morning. They are staying out in the Tsavo in Kenya, at a safari camp, a place that Diana knew as a child. A week earlier Diana sent him a letter asking for an end to their 'intermission' and he answered immediately that he felt the same about her – the separation was unbearable. Douglas has organised a long weekend holiday bird watching in Tsavo for himself, and invites Fitz and Diana along.

They make love quietly on the veranda and then discuss their future. Fitz suggest they could adopt children, and then there is the issue of her wealth. They have no definite answers. After breakfast they join Doug with a guide and two rangers on his search for a carmine bee-eater, one to add to his life-list of birds observed in their natural habitat.

Fitz is confused. Wasn't that the bird that he and his mother had photographed in the Tsavo long ago? Must be mistaken Doug replies, I've never been to the Tsavo before. Fitz starts to make an issue of it, but Diana restrains him. They travel on, Doug single-minded in his pursuit of the bird.

He spots two, dashes out of the safety of the truck with the rest of the group cautiously following. Suddenly they are startled by a cow elephant and her calf. The ranger hisses at Doug to retreat slowly, but he wants to photograph the angry beast first. She charges. Doug runs – straight at Diana and Fitz who leap into a saltbush to hide. Fitz wants to protect her from the tusks. They hear three rifle shots and elephants trotting away, scared off by the noise. Diana thanks Fitz for trying to protect her, but reminds him that elephants squash their victims to death instead. But she says she loves him all the more for trying to protect her. Doug retrieves his camera unaware of the close call and even forgets to thank the Turkana rangers for saving his life. There is something missing in him, Fitz decides. He doesn't even realise he put us all in danger.

Back at the camp he and Fitz have a business meeting. His reservations about Timmerman the marketing manager were unfounded; the man has wooed a lot of business away from Tara to them. But Tara is angry and is threatening reprisals for what she sees as unfair practice. Doug is unconcerned as usual, but Fitz pays attention. Doug then pressures Fitz to see if he would ask Diana to find out what her friend Tara is up to. Fitz surprises both of them by declaring he wouldn't ask the woman he loves to become a corporate spy.

Fitz tries to think what Tara would do against them. There is the issue of the gun-running, but also half the Knight Air crew do not have proper documentation. They have been expanding too quickly to keep up. Also some of the planes have expired certificates of airworthiness. He makes a mental note to settle some of these issues as soon as he gets back to work.

He goes back to the hut where he and Diana are staying, and proposes to her. She says yes. Back in Loki everyone remarks on his demeanour, but he keeps it a secret as Diana asks. Instead he works on the planes certificates and the correct bribes to the right authorities. Nimrod proves invaluable to him.

Fitz and Nimrod fly to Nairobi to meet the powerful Director. But their timing is just out. She has sent two officials just that morning to Loki to ground the planes. She is certain the planes will be grounded for a month. Nimrod then produces a box containing her favourite peanut butter cookies and she agrees that the paperwork may be cleared up earlier, perhaps in a week. Back in Loki, Doug is concerned, worried that Tara may out bribe the Director with 'cookies' of her own. But Fitz doesn't think she operates that way.

Doug wants a war with Tara but Fitz restrains him. Six days later the planes are given a clean bill of health, and the pilots' documents are issued. Meanwhile Douglas flies to Nairobi for a meeting with Hassan Adid, but tells no-one the purpose of his visit.

A few days later Tara storms into Fitz's office. She produces the daily schedule of UN-authorized flights and spits out that there is corruption; she has been notified that as of yesterday her UN call sign has been revoked. She cannot fly for the UN. Fitz assures her that it is the first he has heard of it. Tara shouts that she will be bankrupt within a month, threatens retribution and leaves.

Fitz guesses that Douglas and Hassan Adid have done this. And starts to wonder why he has invested three years of his life in Douglas Braithwaite and Knight Air, especially if he has to accept that the American is unworthy of his loyalty. He thinks perhaps Adid may have manipulated Doug to do this deed, and what Doug needs is Fitz's countervailing influence to bring him round to the better side of his nature. Besides, Tara may bring unforeseen and unpleasant consequences.

When Doug returns, he denies all knowledge and thinks Tara is just jumping to conclusions. Fitz says he has a hard time believing in the co-incidence. Doug manages to screw the argument around and actually hint that he might have to let Fitz go if he doesn't trust him. Doug finally agrees to try to get things sorted with Tara's call sign, just for the sake of the happy wedding that Fitz has just revealed.

Thirty-four days later Tara's company goes bankrupt. She is forced to sell her planes, but refuses to sell any to Douglas, even at twice their market value. Everyone in Loki assumes she is the victim of a dirty trick. After a decade of hard work and risk, she has been thrown back to where she began, one woman and one small airplane. At the age of fifty-eight she vowed to start over.

Another matter looms. The SPLA have failed to pay Yellowbird for two arms deliveries to the Nuba mountains. Wes announces he and Mary are going to strike. Doug demands they keep flying for the sake of Michael Goraende's offensive. Their argument escalates almost into a fistfight with Fitz trying to referee. Doug calls Wes a coward for being too scared to fly; Wes retorts that seeing that he knows all about Doug's famous Gulf War record from the chance encounter with Mendoza, the accusation is a bit rich. Doug blanches and refuses to answer Fitz's questions once Wes has flounced out.

Barrett is enlisted to try and convince the SPLA to pay. He only gets promises, so instead he agrees to pay the owed money out of his own pocket. Thirty-six thousand dollars is transferred from International People's Aid to Knight Air's account, Wes withdraws his half, and takes off on the next mission. Barrett then must balance his books, which he does so with Fitz's aid. They invent humanitarian aid flights together to cover the expense. Fitz is uneasy that he is getting himself deeper and deeper into the deception, but Barrett assures him that one can rationalise it with the big picture of saving Sudan. Barrett then suggests he fly to Diana and explain what he knows about Tara's situation.

He does, and his reception is cool. Diana is angry about Tara's treatment and at least feels that Fitz did nothing to stop it. She is surprised that Fitz hasn't quit already, as everyone has misjudged Douglas. But Fitz remarks that most people think him a fortune hunter already without him being out of work. Their conversation escalates into an argument about privilege and wealth and the fact that Diana could be considered a parasite. Calmly she replies that his opinion makes things easier for her and she announces they can no longer marry. Shocked and stunned, Fitz leaves.

Fitz goes back to central Nairobi and goes on a drinking and sexual binge that lasts for a few days. Then calls the office to announce he is taking two weeks off and flies home to his parents in Mombasa. After two weeks he feels he has convalesced. He reads one day in the paper that a plane belonging to Amulet Energy has been shot down by a missile during an SPLA assault on an oil facility near the Nuba mountains. So Michael's campaign has been a triumph, but at the cost of lives. Fitz realises

there are going to be questions about how the weapons reached the rebels in the Nuba and suddenly feels a desire to be back in Loki to forget Diana and weather the storm.

The Baker's Daughter

Quinette lives like the Nubans. Its privations are considerable, but she has never been happier. In the mornings she helps Moses teach English, in the afternoon she takes missionary instruction from Fancher and Handy. She preaches to the women in New Tourom, and occasionally joins the missionaries in neighbouring towns. Their aim is to restore St Andrews church, support the Nuba Christian congregations, but also to proselytize, and do it with fervour. But converting Muslims is never going to be an easy task. She also helps her husband to counter the negative effects of Major Kasli. She orders laptops and solar generators from Knight Air and teaches the clerks how to use the machines. She drafts press releases about the Nubans' plight and manages to interest a Reuters correspondent to visit. One month later medicine arrives as aid, and even more surprisingly a restored Gerhard Manfred. He has an emotional reunion with Ulrika, Quinette and Michael. It was Gerhard who convinced a charity to send him back to New Tourom with the facilities to build a new hospital.

The major offensive is about to begin and is expected to last a month. A tense expectancy charges the headquarters. While Michael is away, Quinette distracts herself by starting a vegetable garden. The village harvests its doura grain and stores the excess in silos. Manfred's new hospital gets off the ground with the help of the entire village. And even the roof of the church gets built. Old-fashioned sewing machines arrive for the soon to be built tailoring shop. It is an initiative from Friends of the Frontline. Quinette feels they can make Nuban dresses and sell them in Kenya via the return flights of Knight Air.

Quinette finally understands Yamila's hostility. Ulrika bluntly explains to her that she is jealous of her marriage to Michael. Finally it all makes sense; but gradually Quinette starts to become jealous of Yamila in her turn. She fears Michael might take her as a second wife.

One day in the village a delegation of Muslims arrive, led by the grave Suleiman. They call on the missionaries and Quinette and request that they stop preaching their Christianity to the Muslims. Their people are being turned by the television and the music and the promise the missionaries offer. And worse of all, in doing so, they are insulting Islam. Suleiman has special concern for Quinette as she is the husband of a commander and must promote harmony, not division.

Fancher placates the delegation by assuring them they will hold their meetings in private from now on, so that Muslims will not be offended. But the delegation are not satisfied.

There is no news of the offensive until Quinette hears a report on Ulrika's short wave radio – twenty four days after their departure. That day the soldiers return. The village surges to greet them. Michael is in front of the procession, and a great party ensues. Michael however is subdued – he has given permission for his men to open fire and bring down the oil company plane because he knew it would cause them to pull out and leave. It is a terrible confession to make and he wishes to make her understand he has never knowingly taken an innocent life before. He asks for her forgiveness and she gives it to him.

One week later and they hold a more formal celebration for their victory. She prepares well for the Nyertun (the girls' love dance where the women choose the men) and is only surprised when her rival Yamila also chooses Michael during the moonlit dance. As is the custom, the man must choose. He chooses Quinette and Yamila runs off, mortified and angry.

Later they discuss what it will be like in the new Sudan, and what it will be like with children (it is Quinette's fervent wish to get pregnant.) Her jealousy does not abate however, and the regular arrival of her periods drive her to despair.

The rains come, but soon fail. There is fear of another drought. Quinette finds herself being quietly shunned by some of the village women and she starts to understand why. Their ancestors are offended that a pale-skinned stranger has married the commander and not brought forth any child. She conducts discreet inquiries and feels it is perhaps the village rainmaker who can blame her for his failure to bring the rain, or Yamila. Or Kasli. One day she confronts Yamila with other women at the town well and speaks her mind (knowing that Yamila doesn't understand the words, but does the

intentions) and then sees Kasli, accusing him of putting the not so bright Yamila up to it. She threatens Kasli too. And is finally reprimanded by Michael for stepping out of line.

Kasli's next step is to involve the Muslim elders again, this time demanding Michael should decide their grievance. Michael is reluctant to get involved in religious affairs, but knows the SPLA cannot afford to lose the support of the Nuban Muslims.

The meetings takes place in the courtyard and Michael hears both sides. Kasli stirs things up, demanding the confiscation of the missionaries videos and recordings, and the matter is unresolved. Quinette passionately defends the rights of Handy and Fancher, and herself, declaring that Sudan will change when the war ends, and religious intolerance will have to go. She pleads that he do nothing.

The drought means Khartoum can take it revenge on the Nubans as the roads are still passable. Four weeks after the drought begins the bombing starts. After three days of bombing the results are known; seventeen towns have been levelled and thirty-six thousand people have been killed, displaced or taken into captivity. New Tourom escapes the onslaught because of Michael's anti-aircraft guns. Eventually the refugees arrive and swell the size by three thousand. Everyone stops to help the injured. Dysentery sweeps through the camp, and Manfred and Ulrika are overwhelmed. Michael and the military fail to quell fights that break out over food; hunger and disease bring the town to the brink of chaos.

Kasli naturally chooses this time to remind Michael he predicted disaster after the campaign. But Michael holds his tongue – he needs Muslims on his side, and sends Kasli scouting for new recruits.

Quinette organises a one-woman relief campaign. First she convinces Fancher and Handy to request food aid from their field office in Loki. She then broadcasts appeals for help from the independent aid agencies on the garrison radio. She contacts Doug and begs an emergency delivery. And the next day treks to the airfield to meet his plane. She gives him press-releases to send to Nairobi and the press agencies and is relieved to know that in such an emergency she can rely on Doug.

Within a week the aid fights to the Nuba double. Film crews arrive, including Phyllis Davenport. She makes Nuba the focus of world attention. A southern Sudanese doctor and nurses arrive to help. But still the refugees trickle in and still it isn't enough. Quinette pleads with the UN to lift the Khartoum-imposed blockade of the mountain towns, but they refuse. She goes to Knight Air, her favourite blockade runners and gets Doug to drop aid in many of areas blighted by the bombing.

After the food distribution, the town carry Quinette aloft and offer her a special blessing. She is the kujur now, the rainmaker who makes food fall from the sky.

The crisis eases; but Quinette is told that she is under threat of assassination, and must have a bodyguard of five around her at all times. Worried, Michael even tells her she must go away for a while. She is to go to Loki, with her one bodyguard, Negev. But also she is to take a request (in the form of another password) for more guns and ammunition to Doug and Wes Dare. The password is Baker's Daughter.

With the thrill of sneaking across international borders, bodyguards and the threat of assassins, it is impossible not to feel that she is in a movie, and it blunts the sting of missing Michael and her fear that Yamila will take advantage of her absence.

Doug reads out the order but admits to Quinette that he cannot deliver the goods. He and Wes have come to a parting of the ways. (Perhaps explaining the bandages on his nose). No one else can fly the goods as a Knight Air plane cannot be seen picking up SPLA goods. He is working on a system and understands Quinette's despair. Doug suggests she try the personal approach and goes to find Wes in another aircraft hangar.

Wes and Mary are having their Hawker-Siddeley plane re-painted, and putting it up for sale. She explains her situation, and Wes replies he no longer works for Doug. He hopes she admires the broken nose he gave him. He reminds her that they did the run for just over seven months and the SPLA still owes them for three payments they failed to make. They are out of the business and he sends her away.

Wondering what to do, Tara Whitcomb arrives, driving up to her Cessna. They greet, but Tara has an overnight flight with her old boss Ken Eismont, and suddenly Quinette has a plan. She marches in to Wes and Mary and declares that she can raise the money for another flight. Wes starts to bargain and Mary pulls him aside to hastily confer. They agree they will do it for no less than twenty. But if she can't raise the money before they sell their plane, there is no deal.

The next day she approaches her old boss Ken and spins him a tale. A slave retriever is coming to New Tourom with four hundred Nuban captives. She has been sent to Loki to ask if he will arrange a redemption mission. He asks the details and she says the normal method, except the trader wants the payment in US dollars, not Sudanese. Lying like mad, she then says that the man is a Muslim Nuban, hence the change in currency plans. He pauses and then seems to fall for the plan. It will take a few days to organise the finance and the media, but he thinks it can be done.

Next Quinette begs space for herself and Negev on the next relief flight to New Tourom. She offloads cargo to get home that afternoon. Michael is furious for disobeying his orders and thinks her scheme is outlandish. It takes a while but she wins him round.

Quinette scours the refugee camps for people whom she thinks can act the part, and musters 410. Using interpreters she explains the plan. The delivery of the guns will be their salvation, plus they will receive extra food if they do their job well. It is a novelty and a respite from their monotonous existence. She holds an audition and chooses a dozen men and women who will be able to tell the concocted stories Quinette knows so well. From town she picks a retriever and guarantees him cash if he can act his part as well.

Six days later Ken and the team arrive. She feels sick from fear the hoax will fail, and whispers to Ken that she has chosen some people from the group of listless refugees who will help make him look good. Less than three hours later the Cessna leaves and a grain sacks filled with twenty thousand five hundred dollars is lying at her feet. The whole hoax has gone off almost without a hitch.

Quinette and Negev sneak back to Loki the next day. Wes is amazed at her audacity and allows her to fly with him to the Ugandan pick up and deliver the guns to the waiting Michael at the airfield.

Life resumes its normal pace; teaching, ministering, tending her garden, fighting off Yamila's attempts to lure her man. The church is finished and the nearby school, tailor, carpentry shops and cottages for teachers and visiting clergy glow in the late afternoon. Quinette and Michael gaze at it with hope.

They hold a re-dedication ceremony, Fancher preaching and praying for rain. Not to be outdone, the kujur also holds a ceremony calling on the gods for rain. And later that evening the drought does break, a feat which Quinette puts down to the kujur just as much as the Christian church's prayers. The rain continues in patches and so too the government Antonov bombing raids. Khartoum is targeting the Nuba's airstrips. Three are struck in as many days. Michael realises that they have finally worked out that their weapons have come from outside via the pretence of aid drops. New Tourom's airfield is the fifth they hit. The anti-aircraft rockets can't reach the high-flying planes. The soldiers might as well have thrown spears, and Quinette reflects bitterly on the futility of her efforts. She also reflects on the futility of what Michael has done, downing the oil company plane.

Only sixteen of the women who were portering loads from the airfield survive the bombardment, and everyone helps Manfred and Ulrika attend to their wounds. Quinette relives her rage at Lily's death when she tends the wounds of Pearl's cousin Nolli, who dies later that day.

Michael has watched the raid from the hills above the garrison and he realises that someone on the ground must have been directing the three planes as the accuracy of their bombing couldn't be put down to training. The soldiers search the town brutally for two days. Two men, Muslim Nubans, are discovered with a radio and the enthusiastic soldiers shoot them before they have a chance to be interrogated. The only other radio they find is one hidden in the house belonging to Suleiman.

Later Michael tells Quinette that he should have guessed Suleiman was involved. After all, he was the one who found the airstrips in the first place. Michael thinks he has done it in revenge for New Tourom permitting the presence of the Christian religion, and more so for not acting on the

missionaries in their zealous conversions. As soon as things settle he will have some stern words for Fancher and Handy.

Quinette does not think this is a good moment to tell him she is pregnant. She cannot resist telling her women's Bible study class later that afternoon. They rejoice, but before she can do anything more a platoon of soldiers come running across the mission grounds and surround the church. Her bodyguards seize her and drag her into the church. Handy and Fancher are already inside. Negev tells her there is big trouble and Michael wants her protected. Firing starts and rages around them in the town. Over two hours later the battle ends and Michael enters the church and informs them they are safe; that he has put an end to everything. Kasli has staged an uprising. Many are killed but Kasli has escaped with sixty or more. Before Suleiman could be brought in to confess, Kasli thought it best to stage his attempted coup before the news came out.

Kasli was to be their assassin. He volunteered his services to the government when Michael sent him on the recruitment mission. Only he decided to recruit people for himself. He was to organise the bombing of the airfields, shoot Michael and Quinette, be made the commander and start an uprising of the Nuban Muslims against the SPLA.

Fancher is appalled that Michael tells them he will shoot Suleiman and two of the Muslim elders, but Michael silences him with the news they were planning to murder Handy and himself the next day. The missionaries are so single minded in their beliefs they even ask Michael give them a chance to try and convert the condemned men before their execution. Michael sternly replies that he intends to send them to hell, not save them. The missionaries implore Quinette to ask for a postponement, but she is resolute too. The time has come to see some healthy, holy hate, she too thinks they should die.

Douglas

Douglas and his mother have moved to a small house in town after his father's scandalous downfall. Douglas curses him, not for turning out to have been a crook, but for being a fool. His mother has a nervous breakdown, gives up her beloved bird books and instils in Douglas the conviction that he must never let this failure happen to him. He promises her he will make up for what his father did.

Webs

Since his break-up with Diana, Fitz dedicates all his energies to Knight Air and getting rich. He models himself on Doug and Hassan Adid. Growing the company, as Doug calls it, it distracts Fitz from Diana and his lost happiness. He gets a pay rise, and a greater share in the profits and seeks out new work to build the empire of now twenty planes. They branch out from Sudan and Somalia; going to Congo and Rwanda to negotiate contracts to deliver aid. That was what those hearts of misery and African darkness were to an entrepreneur of humanitarian aid – markets.

They hold a shareholders meeting in Nairobi. The company has grossed eight and a half million dollars in the past year, but higher fuel and operating costs have dented profits. And the Kenyan Government wants thirty-five percent of this profit in income tax. Doug asks each shareholder to contribute sixty thousand dollars to pay the tax bill and operating expenses. All in favour of additional investment? Only Wesley's hand goes up. The rest vote to dissolve Knight Air Services and put it up for sale the next day. It is bought by an unknown company called East African Transportation Ltd who pay the shares value at twenty-five cents on the dollar. Fitz is appalled. He has not only lost out on a fortune, but his job as well.

Wes takes it well. He explains to Fitz that he saw this coming. The East African Transportation company is owned by Hassan Adid. The president of the new company – Knight Relief Services – is Adid, and Dougie boy is still the managing director. Adid gets the airline and at a fire sale price, Doug gets to join an empire that holds political clout in Kenya. They are a hunting pair.

Fitz is offered a job and a role as junior partner – making him part of a multi-million-dollar hustle. Wes explains how he worked out the scam; to scare off the legitimate investors of the company with the spurious tax bill. And he votes for the sixty thousand to show them he is onto them.

When Fitz returns to Loki he notices Tony Bollichek is working as Doug's first officer, and no doing the Somalia runs. He is told that Tony had an accident on a runway there and the plane, the Gulfstream, is a total loss. Later, in the bar Wes joins Fitz, Doug and Tony in a drink. Tony is quizzed

by Wes about the mysterious crash. That plane, after all, is the one Wes intends to take out of the company. He wants Doug to pay half a million dollars into his personal account now, because he doesn't want to wait around for the insurance money. They argue – Adid as president is going to start looking closely at the books. He will be surprised to see half a million needing to be spent on Dare. It is the first time Fitz sees Douglas sweat.

Further revelations come from Wes; he has seen his old Gulfstream plane, the one supposed to have crashed, getting a new paint job and registration out at Wilson airport. It looks like Hassan Adid is in on the plan to trick Wes out of his plane and then his half million dollars. He spells out how he thinks the scam was done, and demands the money turn up in his account first thing the next day. Otherwise he is going to have words with the insurance company.

A bar brawl breaks out. Tony is knocked unconscious, Wes connects with Doug's face, Fitz breaks it up. Fitz questions Doug at the hospital and realises, sadly, that Dare was telling the truth. Doug replies that he understands Fitz is upset and probably wants to leave Doug, a fact Doug can sense. But lack of a job keeps Fitz, as well as a promise that Doug will make it up to him for the deceits and lies.

Fitz realises that the smuggling of arms was Doug's only soft spot in an otherwise ruthless mind. Doug tries to set up a new gun-running scheme out of Uganda, but Fitz declines to get involved. Doug has promised Quinette he won't let the Nuban down. So he sets up a new shell company for his gun running alone. Busy Beaver Airways. And this time it's Tony who gets Dare's old gun running deal.

Fitz steps back from Goraende's codes and guns, leaving it to Doug. He tries to get on with life, including joining the rest of the office in an interview with CNN on Knight Air's 'defying Khartoum's blockade' story. Phyllis is back. She works her way around to the accusation that some aid agencies are running guns to the rebels. Douglas lies beautifully and Fitz has to admire him. But not content with backing off, Douglas steps in it. Would it be wrong the arm the rebels? Not content with her assurance they she would never air insinuations, Douglas has to try to convert her. Later Fitz tells him it was a mistake. They have to stop anyone from the company from giving her a lift to the Nuba, or talking. Wes could be a liability.

Mary is looking forward to leaving Africa, and she and Wes go over the books. They can get out with some money, but not as much as they had hoped. They are dancing in their tent when they hear a sound outside. Tony has been harassing her recently when Wes isn't around. They are on their guard. It's Phyllis from CNN, and she wants to charter Wes's plane for the trip to the Nuba. With six thousand in cash up front, Wes and Mary can't refuse. But if the plane is sold before the flight, Wes suggests Tara Whitcomb. Phyllis then cleverly turns the questioning around and promises everything she asks will be off the record. Wes tussles with his conscience and then sells his soul to the devil. He promises her a story, complete with photos and invoices, but only after he and Mary leave.

Fitz has made a decision. He eats a hearty breakfast, greets Phyllis who is heading back to Nairobi with a large bulky box, and then goes over to Douglas's house. Fitz explains that he went over to Wes's house the night before, but didn't go in. Rather he overhears Wes spilling the beans to Phyllis. And even telling Phyllis that John Barrett of International People's Aid had paid money for the guns. Doug is angry and lashes out, cursing the reporter and Wes for talking. Fitz has never seen him so dishevelled and distracted. He explains to Douglas what he must do. Douglas interrupts and says he can get Hassan's men to break into CNN's offices in Nairobi and steal the files. Fitz steers him back to a more honourable course: stop the gunrunning with Tony, confess everything to Hassan and then they both resign.

Doug marvels at the work Fitz has put in; asks about how it will be to abandon Michael Goraende, but Fitz retorts – I believe that deep down in your white boy's heart you think Goraende is a dumb African nigger who cannot wage this war without you. He is a resourceful man, he will get on.

Whatever Doug decides, if he doesn't go to Hassan, Fitz will resign. Doug assures him he will go to Nairobi and confess. He just doesn't want Fitz with him. And Fitz sees he can't trust him even now.

Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia

Wes sells his plane to a steely Ukrainian for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And declares he won't risk his just sold plane on a trip with Phyllis to the Nuba, she will just have to fly with Tara.

Fitz have been on his own in Loki for five days, running the business and waiting for Doug to call. He does, explains that it was messy, but that Hassan has come up with fresh ideas; there is no need for resignations. He is driving into the main compound for a UN meeting when Tara's assistant, Pamela, forces him off the road. She needs a plane and a crew at once – Tara called in a mayday, her plane has gone down. She reminds Fitz that Knight Airways are responsible for this. She would never have taken a charge at the last minute before.

Dare and Mary suddenly race into Tara's office. The news is all over Loki. He takes her mayday message, her co-ordinates and her flight take-off time and plots her course. It is very near New Tourom. They can't risk radioing Michael Goraende's unit as his radio is monitored by army garrisons nearby, they don't want anyone hostile searching for the downed plane.

Fitz can't believe she has been shot down by an army garrison troops near the airfield. But they can't think of another plausible reason. But Dare thinks it could be possible. He and Mary volunteer to fly and search. Fitz is told he must stay with Pamela and sit by the radio.

They take off and Wes calculates they will have ninety minutes to search before they have to turn back. Just minutes later warnings flights flash on their left engine. It has gone cold. He radios Pamela to tell her he has to abort the search. He then calls the Loki tower to warn of a crash landing. He ponders what has happened to his plane. He has an idea the fuel has been sabotaged and radios Fitz to get him to collect some plastic bottles and bags he saw near the plane earlier. Fitz is confused, but complies.

The second engine starts to conk out and Dare knows they are not going to make it back to Loki. He gets Mary to find the co-ordinates of the old runway called Echo One; they are going to have to put down there. It is abandoned and warns only for emergency use. It is thirty miles away. Mary dumps fuel and Wes calls Loki tower to explain their plan.

The plains and marshes of the Nile tributaries and the Ethiopian border come up. Both engines fail and they start to glide. Wes calls on all his skill to get close to the airfield and try to land. The Hawker swoops down over the trees and hits the high grass at ninety miles an hour. They land, then skid and spin. The Hawker slams broadside into a row of trees and comes to a rest.

When Wes comes to he is covered in blood, his ribs are fractured and he sees Mary's side of the cockpit crushed in. With a rush of adrenaline he pulls her out. She is gravely injured, and Wes cradles her in his arms, begging her not to die. He knows they are only an hour from Loki and a plane will be searching for them soon. He bandages Mary's wounds and gathers wood for a fire to signal the plane. He has to stay awake until dusk, and he talks to Mary incessantly, hoping she will stay alive. All around him is a crushing silence. At dusk he lights the fire for the search plane, and then falls asleep.

He is woken in the dark by strange sounds on the runway. He moves back to Mary's side, gets the fire going again, and gets out his Beretta. He is being stalked by a pack of hyenas. He aims at the leader and fires twice. He kills it and the rest scamper off. But not far – they then race back and tear at the carcass of the fallen dog. He shoots another hyena in a rage, bellowing that Mary is not for them. He goes back to Mary and realises she is dead. He closes her eyes and holds a vigil, staying awake all night to make sure the hyenas don't return.

In the morning he realises there is no plane for him, and he doesn't want one now that Mary is dead. He has to bury her; and labours an hour to dig her grave. Her body is bent with rigor and he can't bury her properly. He knows the hyenas will come back, but he hasn't enough bullets to fend them off.

He raves, then falls asleep, only to be woken by a tug at this boot. Not a hyena, it is the tug of a young man. A young man with one artificial leg and a Kalashnikov over his shoulder. He introduces himself as Matthew Deng, as his barefoot friends crawl all over the plane. He wanted to take Wes's shoes for his friend, and didn't realise he wasn't dead.

With great organisation and restraint, Deng forms his ragged group of boys in line and they share out the food Wes hands over. Deng tells Wes a fantastic tale. He and his companions have been on the march for six months. They came from Bahr el Ghazal, six hundred miles away. The Arab raiders attacked their town, killing everyone they didn't enslave. They returned to find everything gone, and

walked to the next village for help. It too was destroyed. So they walked, and collected other boys until they numbered three hundred, scavenging what they could. They reached an SPLA camp where they trained and planned on staying. Except the white people arrived in a Red Cross plane and accused the SPLA of training boy soldiers. They fussed so much that the boys were expelled from the camp.

Travelling at night to avoid slavers, troops and hostile tribes, their numbers dwindled through death and disease. They are heading for Kenya, to an SPLA camp at Kakuma. Deng asks Wes how far they have to go and he replies about three hundred kilometres. And then Deng announces Wes had best come with them. Wes is amazed at this child's determination, his faith in the future baffles him. He has no future, so he announces he will stay behind to die, but they are welcome to his shoes.

One of the boys has found Mary and is trying to tug the boots off her corpse. Wes is angry and tells them to stay away. He knows he'd rather die fast than slow, so he draws his pistol to fire.

Fitz calls at Tony's hut and they get ready to fly, Tony hastily hiding a filthy pair of coveralls. They take the company's smallest plane. In it are supplies of food, water, a medical kit; and two body bags just in case. Another crew is searching for Tara's downed Cessna.

At first Tony has refused to search, but Fitz had cajoled Doug in Nairobi to order him to go. Fitz has to keep forcing him to fly lower and lower. They skim at eight hundred feet, spot the plane and see a body on the ground. Fitz commands they go into land. On the ground they see Mary's body, and Wes's barefoot form. They haul Mary first onto the plane then turn to Wes. He has three holes in his back. Exit wounds. They load him too, all the while Fitz confused about the strange scene. He tells Tony he is going to call for a UN crash investigation team.

Later Alexei radios from Nuba. He has found the wreck of the Cessna, ten miles short of the runway at Zulu Three. SPLA troops are on their way to search for survivors. The next day he lands in Loki with five more corpses. The wreckage was riddled with bullets, confirming it has been shot out of the sky.

Fields of Destruction

Ibrahim Idris and his thousand troops are heading to battle. A fortnight earlier Bashir the slave-trader appears, telling Ibrahim he has a man who can deliver Miriam to him. The man is Mohammed Kasli. He tells Ibrahim he has deserted the SPLA and wants to change sides. He has knowledge of the rebel defences; information that would crush the rebellion in the Nuba with a single blow.

Kasli is confused with Ibrahim questions him closely about Yamila / Miriam's house in New Tourom (near the church with the words 'god bless this house' above the door) and announces that Kasli is going to deliver the rebels and Yamila to him. Oh yes, and defeat the enemy in the biggest battle of all.

Michael is suffering from great remorse; Quinette trying to console him. How were they to know it was Tara flying the plane? Hadn't they been told that Wes, the betrayer, was bringing in the journalist and film crew to destroy them? Quinette feels it is justified, for the war and besides, Jesus has forgiven her, why not let Jesus forgive him? But Michael retorts that he is not a soldier, just a murderer now and he weeps for Tara and his own soul. She admonishes him and commands that he remain strong.

They go to their secret cavern with a cistern of water in the rocks above the church. Nuban law prohibits sexual intimacy between a husband and his pregnant wife. Michael doesn't believe the taboo, but asks her to move to an empty room in the compound, to keep up appearances. No wonder Nuban men take many wives, thinks Quinette and immediately imagines the other woman.

Quinette climbs into the cistern, revelling in the cool, deep water and invites him in. He cannot swim, but gets into the water. She takes his head and pushes him under the water, explaining that in asking forgiveness he is washed clean of his sin.

They sit drying, naked in the sun and he explains it is not forgiveness he is looking for but forgetfulness. He cannot get the sight of the dead bodies out of his mind. She finds ways with her body to try and distract him.

Ibrahim's troops are eager for battle, for the chance to capture cattle and women. But Ibrahim vows this will be the last one. He memorises the English words that will lead him to his Miriam, and looks at

the columns and of Kasli's men marching behind the horses. No one expects an attack on the Christian Sabbath from the ground in the rainy season. Kasli warns him that the garrison is well protected. To attack they need to send a decoy group into New Tourom and draw the garrison away from the ridges. The second column would then pour through the breaches, seize the ridge and destroy the garrison.

Kasli demands that the rebel leader and his foreign wife be turned over to him for a special execution. They are close to the town. Ibrahim's clan of mounted warriors line up and are ready to charge the town. Mortar shells go off as the first attack from the troops begin. Ibrahim almost laughs as the villagers, fleeing the shelling, run right into him.

Michael and Quinette are returning from church when they hear the first muffled boom. Their bodyguards swoop around them and all run into the headquarters building. Michael issues commands in the panic and announces that the murahaleen are sacking the town. He tells Negev to take her to safety, if the raiders break through she will be tortured.

The shockwave of human flesh that are the Arab raiders slam into New Tourom. There is a melee of murder and looting. Ibrahim finds the house with the cross above the door and calls for Yamila. The people do not answer, he kills them; and realises the words are written over half the doors in the town. He curses Kasli and fights off a rearguard action. They reach the end of the town and know they must turn back – to go to the garrison single file through the ridge would be suicide.

Suddenly bullets swarm around them. Ibrahim is blown off his horse, he is unhurt, and vaults onto another horse. They head back to the church where Kasli is guarding two hundred captives, and standing over the bodies of two men whose light skin marks them as foreigners.

Kasli declares the dead men as American spies, and points to Ulrika and Manfred, telling Ibrahim he has spared them because they will be useful as a nurse and doctor. The radio operator is nowhere to be seen and Ibrahim does not know what he is to do. He regroups, notes that he has lost more men in this battle than any other, and then realises the rebels have not fallen for the decoy. They are counter-attacking from all sides. The assault on the garrison must have been defeated, now he is trapped, and realises, abandoned. He wheels back to the church and thinks of a plan.

Quinette and Negev run, trying to outpace the mortars, they go up to the rocks where horses cannot follow. They gather a group of women and children as they climb. They reach the cavern and the cistern. Quinette notes that Yamila is one of the group. Negev and Quinette inch their way to the edge to watch the battle unfolding.

Ibrahim and the Arab raiders form a perimeter around the church and its outbuildings. The rebel soldiers cannot shoot them for fear of hitting the captives. Ibrahim orders the captives into the church and commands his men to stop shooting. Calling Kasli to his side, Ibrahim waves a flag and demands a truce. At first the rebels refuse, until Ibrahim announces he will kill the foreigners and all the captives who are locked in the church unless they negotiate with him.

Eventually Ibrahim goes to see the commander alone, having left orders for his men that if he does not return by sundown to set fire to the church and burn all the captives.

The battle has stopped so long that Quinette wants to go and find Michael. Negev thinks they have won, but is worried that Quinette should want to escape the safety of the rocks. She rejoices in seeing Michael alive and even accepts his rebuking.

Michael explains the situation, informing her coldly that Handy and Fancher are dead, killed by Kasli who is the reason for all this confusion. She breaks down in tears, and then is cut short when Michael announces the arrival of the murahaleen commander. He shows no fear and Quinette is amazed at the lack of anxiety he exhibits in such a difficult situation.

Michael and Ibrahim greet each other formally and Ibrahim spells out his terms. Truce for both sides to bury their dead, peace concluded between both groups so that no one will make war with the Nuba from now on. Next that they be allowed to leave with their weapons. And lastly, that Ibrahim be allowed to take his property – a woman named Yamila – with him.

If all the conditions are not met then the hostages will be killed and he and his troops will be prepared for martyrdom. Michael tries to understand why Ibrahim will do all this destruction if a woman is not returned to him, and offers money in her place. But Ibrahim wants her dead or alive. Michael translates for Quinette and she realises she has to decide whether to tell where Yamila is hiding.

She does. She and Michael confer outside and then return to the room. There is more discussion and Michael adds one condition of his own. Hand over Mohammed Kasli to me. It is agreed.

Everyone waits outside for the exchange. Yamila for Kasli and everyone goes free. Kasli arrives bound and bleeding, Yamila comes face to face with her Arab captor and realises it is a trick. She tries to escape and is eventually captured by three men. She goes off kicking and screaming and Quinette tries not to note the irony of a former aid worker sending a woman back into slavery. Michael bends over as if he is sick, but Quinette holds his hand and is certain God will forgive them both.

Small True Facts

The death of the journalist and her crew bring the press in their droves to cover the story. Fitz and Pamela organise a press trip to survey the crash scene when the bombing dies down. Michael Goraende holds forth, claiming the Khartoum government is resorting to terror to stop aid from reaching the mountains. He then flies with them to show the destruction of New Tourom. Quinette's testimony of the Arab raid lends authenticity. Michael hands Fitz a letter to be given to Douglas – with thanks for helping us win this battle. While waiting for the aircraft to refuel Pam spots something lying on the ground, a small bottle that sends a jet of mist into the air. She hands it to Fitz and he understands to whom it belongs. Hassan Adid seems to have been to New Tourom.

Pamela asks Douglas to organise a memorial service for the three aviators. Malachy Delaney and John Barrett preside, with two hundred people in attendance. Douglas gives the eulogy and his sincerity moves everyone. But Fitz knows that he is never more fraudulent than when he is most sincere.

Fitz hands Doug the new coded shopping list – now that the danger of being exposed is eliminated, Doug gets Busy Beaver and Tony up in the air again. Business could do with the cash – many of Knight Air's flight crew have been spooked by the killings, so Doug and Tony find themselves flying as a team. Meanwhile Fitz starts playing detective and lines up his small facts: two planes carrying the people who can do the most harm to Douglas and Adid go down on the same day, the bottle of Adid's brand of nasal spray, Wesley's strange request, and the overalls in Tony's hut. He doesn't come up with enough proof. And the UN crash investigation team tell him he has to wait quite a long time.

Fitz starts doing the investigation himself. He questions the Knight Air mechanic Van Rensberg about the possibility someone has put water in the fuel tanks of Wes's plane. Van Rensberg gives a demonstration how the water would clog up the fuel lines. But he doubts the water would have had that effect as things are done on pre-flight procedure that would pick it up. They both agree Wes was lax about pre-flight checks, but Fitz also ponders the fact Wes told him someone left the jugs of water and plastic bags on the ground near the plane in a hurry.

Next Fitz borrows a spare key and sneaks into Tony's hut. He finds maintenance manuals on the engine of Wes's plane, but it is inconclusive. Van Rensberg then comes back with a plausible theory. Perhaps the dirty water was inside sealed plastic bags that were then pushed into the fuel tanks. They wouldn't show up on pre-flight checks, but would eventually dissolve after the plane has taken off. Such a thing would be impossible to pick up by the investigators as the plastic would dissolve and have the same chemical make-up as the fuel. They would simply conclude Wes did an improper flight procedure. Van Rensberg doesn't believe the crash was an accident, not with two engines failing.

Next Fitz flies to Nairobi for banking business; and finds time to talk to the branch manager and request the last twelve months of Knight Relief Services bank records. They show that money is wired out to a Swiss bank account every time the gun running operation brings in funds. Is Douglas running guns just for the money, he wonders?

He visits the Director at the Department of Civil Aviation, his friend the cookie lady. She gives him the list of all flights out of Nairobi just before the planes crashed. One is flown by Douglas on the sixth, and he makes a copy, realising that Douglas claimed he had stayed in Nairobi that weekend fessing up to Adid.

He requests and receives an appointment with Hassan Adid, they meet up for dinner. Fitz doesn't know where to start so he asks Adid what were the 'fresh ideas' that he and Doug were cooking up when Douglas appeared and explained their problem. Adid claims he suggested they do nothing. There was no threat. Suddenly Fitz feels deflated. He has come to confront a man who organised the murder of five people, and instead he has a banal villain who fakes bankruptcies, schemes to crush competitors and doesn't even seem to be a co-conspirator with Doug. He feels let down.

Adid goes on to say that he investigated Doug's background, and discovers the lies about his military service, his father's dodgy business dealings with the Mexican drug smugglers, the decision to testify and his subsequent murder. And simply says, it disturbs me, his telling stories like that, but I don't care who a man lies to as long as it is not to me. Adid then sneezes and Fitz produces the allergy bottle, explaining where he found it. Adid gave a look of distaste, why would he ever go there?

Back in Loki, Fitz ponders what to do with his so-called evidence. He greets Doug after one of his flights, tells him he gave the secretary Rachel the afternoon off. He then asks Doug why he told him he had a meeting with Adid on the sixth. Quick as a flash Doug says that he chickened out just as Fitz assumed he would do. He simply told Hassan they were going to be smeared on CNN as war profiteers. He reaches out to touch Fitz, but the man shrinks away. He apologises for lying but reminds him it doesn't matter now.

Fitz produces the water jug and asks Doug if he recognises it. Fitz calmly tells him that he is amazed Doug thought it all out himself and only had assistance from Tony, not Hassan Adid. Doug watches him and declares he has cracked. He presses on about how the sabotage was conducted and is about to move on to the issue of Swiss banks and embezzlement when Douglas yells at him to stop. Fitz presses on, only Doug could have told Tony that Wes was going to take Phyllis on the Monday flight. For his final act he shows Doug the false flight plan he photocopied in Nairobi. It doesn't take eight hours to fly from Wilson to Jomo and back. And Doug has just admitted the last time he was in Jomo was five years before.

You flew to Nuba to talk over the problem with Michael Goraende instead, says Fitz calmly. This was the back-up plan if Wes survived the sabotage. You convinced him that under no circumstances must Wes and the journalist be able to land the plane. Shoot it out of the sky and blame the Sudanese army.

Douglas eyes him carefully and calmly states that he is not worried what Fitz will do. He goes to the file cabinet, withdraws a cheque book, and writes out one year's salary for Fitz as severance pay. He gives a pretty speech and says I couldn't have built this company to where it is today without you. And that hits Fitz hard. Resorting to bribery is cheap, but reminding him he is just as involved is partly true.

He replies to Doug that he would rather walk away with nothing, but he will walk away. He tries to ask Doug not why, but how. How could he bring himself to do it? But Doug will not answer. And with his habitual demeanour of bland handsomeness, veiled in innocence, asks Fitz to leave.

He does, and is relieved to know that other NGOs still find him employable. He takes up the post of UN deputy flight co-ordinator, and moves into the UN compound. Fitz still runs into Doug occasionally and both are unfailingly polite. He is haunted by the need to bring the man to justice, to strip away the pretence – and the memory of Tara haunts him most of all. She seems to cry out to him that he is harbouring a fugitive by his silence and inaction.

He even has an auditory hallucination one day in the humdrum of the UN office. Her appeals grow more frequent and strident. But he replies: What do you expect me to do? This is Africa, Tara, where justice is as rare as ice. And he hears her reply: And where God and the Devil are one and the same.

One day a CNN reporter visits Fitz and explains he is Phyllis's replacement, and as a tribute to her they are trying to piece together her last story and will he help explain. They have videos and photographs but not much else to go on. Fitz suggests he try Douglas Braithwaite. The reporter replies that the man had refused to co-operate. Fitz puts him off, he has an idea, but needs to work it through.

He flies to Nairobi and pays a call on Diana. They are uncomfortable at first, but Fitz needs to tell her his beliefs about Tara, the journalist, the two crew members, Wes and Mary being murdered, and that Douglas and Tony Bollichek did the deed. She demands an explanation and he spends a long time

filling her in. He agrees it wouldn't hold up in a criminal investigation, but prefers to find the solution in Hassan Adid. He tells her he is going back out to the Tsavo West safari lodge the next day to meet him. Diana tells him to take her car and driver; on the condition that he take her. For Tara's sake she wants to go too.

God and the Devil

Out at Tsavo, Fitz picks up Hassan and takes him for a drive out to the lava fields. He states that Douglas is embezzling the company, to the tune of almost \$36,000 a week and is leaving an obvious audit trail. Hassan grumbles that he knows, and explains he discovered it before he suggested they hire Timmerman as marketing manager. By that time the little nest egg had grown to one hundred thousand. He confronted Doug with it, and the man was terrified. Eventually Hassan decided to do his bankruptcy charade certain that Douglas would agree.

Fitz realises that Hassan is shameless in his admission that he has blackmailed Douglas, and is certain that the money in the Swiss bank account is now shared two ways. He seems bulletproof and his revelations are the product of his vanity. Fitz decides to push his advantage and tell everything about the gun running, certain it will be a revelation to Hassan. It is, and Fitz does not even have to voice his theory about Douglas murdering the victims, Hassan arrives at that conclusion on his own.

He reminds Fitz that he is a part of the conspiracy, which is true. But Fitz knows he has done the right thing. Hassan promises to sack Douglas the day he gets back to Nairobi. His pride has been hurt that someone has so skilfully lied to him. But Fitz has another suggestion. Surging bravely ahead, he announces that he will go to CNN with the story of the Swiss bank account in Hassan's name, plus a few juicy stories unless he agrees to Fitz's plan. It will involve the government in Khartoum, but as Hassan is so close to them, it won't be very difficult. The one thing Hassan must make sure, Fitz says, is that no blood is shed.

The plot is this: dissolve Knight Relief Services and form a new company called SkyTrain Relief Services. Announce you have discovered your managing director has been engaged in gun running, and he and his co-pilot are discovered in the act. CNN should then move quickly to work out the story. Was Phyllis really murdered? By that time Adid and his company will be in the clear.

A few days later the plan is in place. Fitz finds the flight he is looking for. A Busy Beaver flight plan filed by D. Braithwaite and T Bollichek and knows the real destination is New Tourom. Feeling like a spy, he sends this information on to Khartoum and waits for the results. They are caught. The plane is intercepted by Sudanese MIGs and escorted to an air force base. Two days later the story is sent out about the illegal gun runners and it travels around the world. Fitz watches it on TV, but does not feel the vindication he expects.

Four months later the Sudanese government announces they have tried Douglas and Tony in an Islamic court and sentenced them to death. The US and Australian governments plea for clemency. These are answered. Their death sentences are commuted to ten years' imprisonment and then suspended. Douglas and Tony are set free and expelled.

But CNN does not let up and eventually when they are being thrown out of Sudan, Kenya requests their extradition to Nairobi for questioning about a multiple homicide. They are almost in the clear when Douglas does an amazing thing. He confesses to everything.

At the trial the charges against Tony Bollichek are dismissed for lack of evidence. Despite Douglas's confession, which his lawyer claims was based on the strain of being imprisoned, there is no evidence to support such a confession; and as there is no crime committed in Kenya, but possibly in Sudan, the Kenyan court has no jurisdiction. The case is dismissed. They are both expelled from Kenya, and Fitz hopes the time in prison and the torture Douglas must have suffered will be an African justice for his crimes. He consoles himself with the thought that at least Douglas acknowledged his crimes; and in that there must lie redemption.

Dismissal

Fitz has been the managing director of SkyTrain Relief Services for two years now. And although the journalist's questions have brought back a lot of demons, he consoles himself by looking at the photograph of Diana and their children. They adopted two AIDS orphans one year after their wedding.

He visits Diana and the children on the weekends in Nairobi, and finds that he is more or less content. The only other part of his past is Quinette. She plagues him on her visits to Loki and looks on Fitz as her friend.

It all began when Quinette's first child, a son, died in infancy. Shortly after she became very ill with malaria and Fitz and Michael arranged her evacuation to Nairobi General Hospital. People thought she was dying, so when she asked for Malachy Delaney, her doctor assumed she was Catholic and sent for him to deliver the last rites. Fitz went along. And they found her sitting up, lucid and ready to tell her confession. She has been haunted too by spectres: Suleiman, Tara and Yamila. Father Delaney absolves her of her sins, but Fitz knows she is not forgiven.

Quinette returns to Nuba and her now less-than happy marriage. Michael blamed her for the loss of their son by allowing Quinette to violate the rules that forbade sexual visits during pregnancy. A year later she presents him with another son, and then a year and a half later, with a third. This time they adhere to the rule of sexual abstinence and it has the effect she fears. Michael takes a second wife who is nineteen years old.

His status in the region rises, but having a white wife in the new Nuba is a liability. A new young Nuban wife puts paid to the criticism. He helps negotiate the peace treaty and is often in the capital to discuss making plans for a semi-autonomous province. Quinette is left behind.

He becomes fat and powerful, takes a third wife, and Quinette settles to a life of some unhappiness and routine. She realises that the hardships of the African bush has been endurable only with the excitement of the war. So to escape the drudgery, every few months she sneaks into Kenya to revel in hot showers, good food and company. But Fitz was the only company she finds, the rest think her eccentric, a relic from a bygone era.

She becomes homesick for America and manages to take her brown children and husband home on a trip that doesn't turn out as she hoped. So back she goes to the country that had once seduced her. But she knows that it has extracted its price.

End