

## Acts of Faith by Philip Caputo

### Introductory Rites

Lokichokio is a small town in western Kenya, 30 miles from southern Sudan, the air base for small freight airlines delivering relief into the war zone. The Islamic fundamentalists in 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 do and help the south from starvation.

A young journalist is interviewing Fitzhugh Martin, managing director of one such airline. We work here because there is a vacuum of mercy in southern Sudan and we help to fill it. Martin drinks beer, smokes and offers wisdom 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. He hints darkly about the story of two Americans Douglas and Quinette who also did not understand. Africa isn't kind to people with good intentions.

### Book One

#### Outlaws and Missionaries

##### Part One

#### Man of All Races

Fitzhugh Martin's story: a once well-known Kenyan soccer star, he sees the gulf between his continent and the West and realises he must do something – he becomes a UN relief worker, first in Somalia and then Sudan. He was born in the Seychelles, grew up in Mombasa and is of mixed race. He grows to hate the UN – the new colonials in a long line of old-time imperialists. He gets fired for helping Father Malachy Delaney uncover a food scandal. Drifting, he gets offered a job in Loki to direct relief operations for a Canadian aid agency run by John Barrett (a friend of Malachy's) and funded by Lady Diana Briggs. Also hired is a charismatic American named Douglas Braithwaite, a pilot who was also fired from the UN. Doug and Fitz's first task is to sneak into the isolated and no-fly zone of the Nuban mountain region (flown in by ace pilot Tara Whitcomb) and assess the rebels' needs. The aid agency wants to send relief, and then rebuild the church at New Tourom. The rebel leader is a Lieutenant Colonel Goraende who would be provide Fitz and Doug with protection

#### Mustang

Wesley Dare's story: fifty-three year old jovial cynic and experienced bush pilot. He and his co-pilot Tony Bollichek are flying from Kenya to Somalia with a suspect load of cargo. It is bankrolled by Hassan Adid, a Kenyan businessman. On board is Tony's girlfriend Mary, another pilot, looking for work. Wes is attracted to her. They run into trouble, Wes bravely saves them. He wins a big contract to fly Kabila and the Congolese rebels around, but loses his plane in a dodgy deal involving Kenyan businessmen, bribes to judges and counter-bribes he cannot fulfil. He is out of work and needs a plane to keep the contract.

#### Man of All Races

Fitz learns more of Douglas (an ex-US fighter pilot in Gulf War) and Tara as they plot flying secretly into the Nuba. They fly to pick up medical supplies and then finally reach their destination. They are met by tall powerful tribesmen, led by Suleiman. He will help Doug scout for better landing strips. Tara will pick them up in two weeks.

#### Maroor

On their Maroor (trek) they are led by Goraende, essentially a peaceful man who has become a warrior. They stay at the hospital run by the eccentric Dr Gerhard Manfred. Also here are Ulrika, a German nurse, and Franco, an Italian logistician. All three are a bit mad. They visit Suleiman's house (another rebel leader, but a Muslim) and experience a moving Nuban dance ceremony. Suleiman and Doug have scouted three possible landing sites. They survive a bombing raid, and Fitz finds out the specific needs of the people.

#### 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. The born-again Christian has raised money back in Iowa to help free slaves and has been invited to take part in the ceremony near Loki. She is with her boss, Ken Eismont, being filmed by Phyllis Rappaport from CNN about their charity's latest mission. She meets a Dinka boy Matthew Deng who takes her to the village where the ceremony takes place. Quinette is moved to talk to the freed slaves and she wins their approval. Ken is impressed and offers her a job in Loki to help out. She is delighted - knowing she doesn't have to go back to dull Iowa.

### The Partnership

Fitzhugh's report on Nuba is finished; he has a crush on Diana Briggs. He is hired by Douglas to work at the new Knight Air Services. They have a contract to carry aid to Nuba and the German doctor. Tony Bollichek is taken on as the other pilot. Business is good; Fitz brings in another agency - Friends of the Frontline - evangelical American military veterans represented by Tim Fancher and Rob Handy to also send aid. They need another pilot and eventually Wesley Dare comes on board as a partner. He mistrusts Doug, but needs the money. Mary is to be his co-pilot. He knows he is in for trouble.

### Douglas

A piece of Douglas's memory. He is seventeen, driving his mother to an Indian reservation to deliver donated supplies. His father has been accused of criminal fraud for cheating a woman out of land and building a huge property development. His father's family are all successful entrepreneurs. But Doug's mother curses the small streak of self-destruction she sees in them all.

### Part Two

#### Warlord

Ibrahim Idris is to lead his men on a raid into the Nuba hills. He is ambitious, but tired after five years of fighting for the Muslim leaders in Khartoum. With him is his no-good nephew Abbas. He meets up with Bashir, the slave trader, and pays him to search for his escaped favourite slave, a Nuban woman called Miriam (Yamila).

### Redeemer

Quinette is happily working in Loki and is introduced to the secretive Knight Air people, plus John Barrett and Diana Briggs. Their exploits in the no-fly zone of Nuba are renowned. She goes to meet Father Malachy Delaney and visits Turkana towns. She also meets up with Matthew Deng, the Dinka boy who has had an artificial leg fitted, to replace the one lost in a landmine.

### A Clash of Cultures

Mary and Wes land at Nuba on a routine aid run. They unload with the help of the women porters. Ibrahim Idris and his men attack the airfield. Wes gets the plane up just in time but it is damaged. They make an emergency landing at a safe nearby town. Mary and Wes become lovers, and decide to keep it secret.

Idris has had a successful raid with many captured slaves. On the return journey he discovers his men raping the slaves. One is his nephew. Angrily he beats him and the nephew fights back, and dies.

### Man of All Races

Famine comes to Sudan. Knight Air makes a fortune ferrying in relief aid to the Nubans. Fitz negotiates kickbacks with other agencies to get their business and is disgusted with himself. Doug becomes a hardened businessman, and Tare Whitcomb starts to lose her once powerful stranglehold.

They need more planes to cope with demands. Wes suggests they bring in the businessman Hassan Adid and they all go to Nairobi to get his financial aid. Adid agrees to invest. While there, Fitz goes on a secret date with Lady Diana. They become lovers.

### Douglas

Doug is remembering Iraq. He is just a crew sergeant with the Arizona Air National Guard tanker plane; refuelling F-15 fighters in mid-air. He is already at flight school back home. Meanwhile he watches from the lumbering plane as the fighters engage in enemy fire. He wishes he were with them.

## Book Two

**Flights to the Dark Side**

## Part One

**Nuba Day!**

Adid gets Dare's plane out of legal limbo and the company expands to five planes and seventeen staff. Fitz visits Diana in Nairobi as often as he can, Tony finds out about Wes and Mary's affair and gets transferred on the Somali run to avoid conflict. The drought breaks so business slows and Doug comes up with a plan to get more business for the Nuba run from the NGOs. He takes a party of them, with journalists, on a tour of the Nuba region, to show what they need. Quinette helps organise the trip and Goraende's troops guard them. They trek to New Tourom and the day's festivities take place, dances, speeches, wrestling, eyewitness accounts of their suffering – Yamila tells her tale of slavery. Quinette is captivated by the leader Goraende who convinces her that the charities must help them with aid.

**Balm in Gilead**

The next day they are set for take-off but come under attack. Many are killed but the aid workers and press survive. Quinette and her friend Lily stay behind after the rest are evacuated. They are needed at the hospital. They nurse Goraende's close friend Bala, but he dies. Doug and Fitz also stay. Quinette and Goraende become close and exchange life stories.

Another bombing raid scores a direct hit on the hospital. Franco and Lily are killed, Manfred goes mad and Quinette's life is saved by Goraende. She vows she will return to Nuba. Doug and Fitz are appalled at the attack. Goraende explains they need guns not aid; and Doug and Fitz cross over to the dark side. They agree to run guns; anything for the cause.

**Mustang**

They sell the idea to Wes Dare because of the profits. He wants them to stay safe so suggests he and Mary run the show, with an old gun-running mate, Cheswick. He guarantees an exit for them in six months with profits all round. Dare warns against telling Adid and lectures them about flying on the dark side. They set up the company and are ready to run the guns from SPLA airfields on the Sudanese side of the Ugandan border.

**Redeemer**

Quinette's charity is accused of exaggerating the numbers on its slave exchange and she finds proof her boss is happy to be duped as he loves his crusading and publicity. They perform a Dinka slave exchange with many reporters present; and there is evidence the slaves are dissimulating. The middlemen are making money for making things up.

She receives an official letter from her beloved Goraende requesting her to visit New Tourom to establish a similar slave exchange programme. Hinting she knows his perfidy, she gets her boss to agree to send her to Nuba for research.

**Brothers and Sisters in Arms**

Wes and Mary's gun running goes smoothly. One trip Doug takes over from Mary and brings Quinette on board letting her in on their secret. Their guns are hijacked by another SPLA officer who wants them for himself. Quinette saves the day with a devious scheme. In Nuba, there is to be an offensive against government troops and the missionary Rob Handy is to film it for fundraising.

Quinette is seduced by village life, does her slave interviews with Bashir the slave trader and watches an initiation ceremony. Michael confesses he loves her. Later, after the battle, they become lovers.

Handy becomes ill and asks Doug to go and film the battle instead. Dare goes along to try and exercise constraint. The battle is successful but they are attacked by a helicopter gunship on the way back. Doug shoots it down and he and Dare are proclaimed brothers and heroes.

**Douglas**

Douglas has saved all the newspaper cuttings about his father's fall from grace: the lawsuits for fraud, money laundering, the federal probe, the bankruptcy, the trial, and finally the announcement of the car bombing before he is due to testify against a Mexican drug ring. He is murdered.

## Part Two

### Warlord

Ibrahim's clan is divided over the death of the nephew and the demands for blood money by his mother. Things degenerate almost to civil war but eventually all is settled to Ibrahim's advantage. He has lost political power, and suffers the ghost of his nephew, but is buoyed by news Bashir has found the location of his beloved Yamila. Bashir can get her, but it will cost him.

### Redeemer

Quinette and Ken arrange a redemption mission in the Nuba. It goes well, with one hundred slaves set free. Quinette sneaks around to see Goraende who explains his second officer Kasli is against their liaison. She has doubts too. But he proposes, and after a long consultation with Father Malachy Delaney, she agrees to swap her life and become a Nuban wife.

### Love in Wartime

Diana confesses her love to Fitz, but says he is too young, so she needs to set him free. Fitz loses himself in work – a new deal by Adid to bring in more business with marketing deals, buy more planes and edge out Tara.

Quinette announces her engagement to Goraende and is ostracised by her family and friends in Loki. She moves to Nuba and settles into her life. She teaches English, helps the missionaries (zealously trying to convert the Muslims), undergoes the initiation rites to womanhood and gets married.

Wes proposes to Mary and she, to his surprise, agrees. They meet a Tucson pilot who disabuses them of the story that Douglas was a fighter pilot in the Gulf War.

### Star at the River's End

Quinette and Michael's honeymoon on a walking tour of the Nuba with bodyguards, missionaries and porters. They visit towns, survive a bombing raid, and Quinette tries her hand at preaching to the women. The SPLA, under Goraende plan a big offensive against the oil fields in the north, and he sends Quinette to Loki to order more guns secretly from Doug.

### Man of All Races

Fitz proposes to Diana after a brush with death at a safari park (Doug's fault). She agrees, but they keep it secret. Doug's small lies are being revealed, and Fitz refuses to spy on his behalf. The war with Tara escalates. She gets Doug's planes briefly grounded for unworthiness, he organises (through Hassan) to get her UN license revoked. One month later she is made bankrupt and keeps just one plane. Meanwhile, the SPLA are behind in gun payments, Wes strikes, John Barrett's aid charity steps in and pays the missing funds. The guns continue to get through – the big offensive can go ahead.

Diana, angry at Knight Air's dirty business dealings against Tara and Fitz's supposed connivance, breaks off the engagement. Fitz goes on a bender until her reads of the successful rebel raid (but with foreign oil casualties) on the oilfield and decides to return to Loki and get to work.

### The Baker's Daughter

Quinette lives like the Nubans and is happy. She helps the war effort and waits for the offensive. The German doctor Gerhard returns to rebuild the hospital. Ulrika explains Yamila's behaviour to Quinette as jealousy. Quinette becomes jealous in her turn; Nuban men take many wives.

A Muslim delegation led by Suleiman call on the missionaries to cease converting Muslims. They leave unhappy with the faint promises from Handy and Fancher. They hear news of the battle and eventually the soldiers return. Goraende secretly confesses to Quinette he shot down a foreign oil plane as it might convince the oil contractors to pull out and publicise their war. Kasli stirs up the Muslim dissent, the government begins its reprisal bombings, the rains fail and drought comes. Quinette, at first shunned for bringing bad fortune, saves the region by an heroic act of getting NGOs to send in aid.

She flies to Loki to request more guns, but Wes has parted company with Doug. Quinette thinks up a scam and Wes and Mary agree to one last flight. She will hold a fake slave exchange in Nuba and gets her old charity to pay for the slaves' release. It works, the guns come through.

Later the government accurately bombs the airstrips and Goraende realises they have been betrayed by Suleiman and other Nuban Muslims. It is revenge for the conversion of the Muslims. Kasli stages an uprising and escapes. Suleiman and his co-conspirators are executed.

### **Douglas**

Douglas and his mother move to a small house in town after his father's scandalous downfall. Douglas curses him, not for being a crook, but for being a fool. His mother has a nervous breakdown; he promises her he will make up for what his father has done.

### **Webs**

Hassan and Doug connive to trick the other investors out of the company. Wes tells Fitz he saw it coming but doesn't realise before it's too late that Doug and his old enemy Tony Bollichek cheat him out of his own Gulfstream plane. Tony now takes over the gun-running.

Phyllis Rappaport sniffs out a story. Doug realises she must never get to Nuba to question the origin of their guns and Wes is becoming a liability. Fitz overhears Wes telling everything to Phyllis and handing over Mary's film. She promises them a lot of money to fly her to Nuba in a week's time and they agree. Fitz informs Doug of the dire situation, and gets his promise to confess all to Hassan, and then they can resign. Doug flies to Nairobi to see him, but Fitz doesn't really trust him.

### **Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia**

Wes sells his plane and won't risk a last trip with Phyllis to the Nuba, she flies with Tara. Fitz waits five days for Doug's call. He has a solution; they don't need to resign. Suddenly Tara's assistant contacts Fitz – Tara has called in a mayday, she needs to search for her plane. The news is all over Loki and Wes and Mary come to their aid. They take off in search of Tara, but lose power in both their engines. They crash land at a disused airfield and Mary eventually dies. Before he crash lands, he warns Fitz it may have been sabotage.

Wes digs her grave, fends off the hyenas, but is killed by a group of boys, led by the one legged Matthew Deng who kill him for their shoes. Fitz and Tony find their plane, and bring their bodies home. Fitz calls in a UN crash investigation team. The next day the Antonov lands in Loki with five more corpses. The wreckage of Tara's plain is riddled with bullets; it has been shot out of the sky.

### **Fields of Destruction**

Ibrahim Idris and his thousand troops head to battle. Bashir has a man who can deliver Miriam to him. He is Mohammed Kasli, an SPLA deserter who has knowledge of the rebel defences, and the location of Yamila's house. This will be his last battle, he is a tired man.

Michael suffers remorse – he is the one who shot down the plane, assuming it was Wes the betrayer, not Tara his friend.

The Arabs attack New Tourom in two parts, Idris and Kasli to the town to draw the soldiers, others to then attack the garrison. Kasli kills the missionaries, but the attack fails. Idris doesn't find Yamila and is forced to negotiate a truce with Goraende to escape with his life. They bargain and agree to conclude peace between tribes, let the Arabs return home but swap Kasli in return for Yamila. It is Quinette who tells Michael and Idris where she is hiding.

### **Small True Facts**

A feeding frenzy of media ensues; visits to the crash scene, interviews with Goraende and Quinette telling their plausible tale. Michael gets the guns again now the risk of exposure has gone, Douglas gives a moving eulogy at their memorial service, and Fitz starts to scheme.

He finds more evidence; Adid's nasal spray at the airfield, flight records, manuals in Tony's room and bank accounts with Swiss bank transfers, and starts weighing the facts: two planes down on the same day, the mechanic's theory how the plastic bags of dirty water could bring down the plane, Doug and Hassan's obvious desperation. But he confronts Hassan and realises he has not played a part in the scheme. He has a last talk with Douglas, putting the evidence before him. Doug is silent as he presses on, and eventually just sacks him. A reporter is sniffing around, Fitz isn't ready to reveal all to him.

He goes to see Diana and confesses all he knows. They agree for Tara's sake Fitz must find a way for the truth to come out.

### **God and the Devil**

Fitz tells his tale and convinces Hassan they can set a trap as punishment and stop the men. Fitz acknowledges he is part of the conspiracy and wants to atone for his sins. Dissolve Night Relief Services, create a new company, warn the world they suspect Doug of gun running, warn the Khartoum government on Doug and Tony's next gun run and catch them in the act. This happens; they are sentenced to death in Sudan, get commuted to life instead, but after a few months are freed.

Kenya swoops and arrests them on suspicion of multiple murder. At the trial Tony is set free, Doug confesses but there is no substantiation of his confession and the case is dismissed. Fitz watches Doug at the trial and hopes that in acknowledging his crime and suffering prison time he has had his African punishment.

### **Dismissal**

Fitz manages the aviation business and consoles himself with his marriage to Diana. They adopted two AIDS orphans one year after their wedding. He visits Diana and the children on the weekend in Nairobi, and finds that he is more or less content. He is only plagued now by memories and Quinette.

Quinette's first child, a son, died in infancy. She is ill with malaria and evacuated. In the hospital she confesses her part in the murders to Malachy Delaney and Fitz. 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 less-than happy marriage. She presents Michael with two children, but he takes a young second wife. Then a third. Having a white wife in the new Sudan is a liability.

Michael's status in the region rises but Quinette is left behind. She sneaks into Kenya periodically and only has Fitz to talk to. Homesick for America, she goes with her children and husband for a visit, but it doesn't work out. So back she goes to the country that had once seduced her. But she knows that it has extracted its price.

End