

S A M A R I T A N

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SKY - EARLY MORNING

The deepest, bluest sky.

A WHITE-OUT

of sun climbs above the horizon.

A CARPET OF EMERALD GREEN

as its surface shivers and ripples.

No, not carpet, but -

EXT. TROPICAL FOREST - EARLY MORNING

Coconut fronds stretch over white sand towards the ocean.

Fruit trees - mango, banana, breadfruit - bloom upward in a slow-motion race to the sun.

ALLOTMENTS

crammed with broad taro leaves nodding their collected dew away.

Unseen cicadas make a WALL OF SOUND, one last hurrah before their siesta.

EXT. ROAD - EARLY MORNING

More of a wide, dirt and gravel path that stretches in a kinked and dusty line toward the mountain, MAUGA SILISILI, a dead volcano long overgrown with jungle.

AFA (O.O.S.)

Guys.

THREE YOUNG MEN

walk the path. They're all bare-chested, wearing only LAVALAVA.

AFA

leads the way. At fifteen, he's the youngest - and the scrawniest. He slows their progress by continually turning towards -

APELU AND SIU

walk several feet behind. Seventeen and eighteen, respectively, they each carry a MACHETE and a small FLAX BASKET.

They're two opposites who've been thrown together by authority. Apelu - tall, good looking, loud, and eager about their work. And Siu - short, average looking, quiet, and conscientious.

APELU

Move it.

AFA

Guys.

He stops, forcing the other two to pull up short.

AFA (CONT'D)

Wait. Just wait - (A MINUTE)

Apelu bares his eyeballs and half-raises his machete:

APELU

'Ei, puti'o¹ - I said move it!

Afa drops to his knees and pleads directly to Siu:

AFA

Please. I beg you.

Siu stares down at their charge for a long beat. He extends his hand toward him:

SIU

(gentle)

C'mon, Afa. Let's go.

Afa pulls himself up - a sob escapes his throat - and resumes walking.

Apelu nods his approval.

CUT TO:

¹ Literally, "Hey, arsehole". More towards its use and intent of twenty- to thirty-years ago, rather than current usage.

EXT. CLEARING - MORNING

APELU (O.O.S.)
 - so I said to her, "E, suga² -
 if it's too hard, just close
 your eyes!"

We hear Apelu's rambunctious laughter as -

AFA

stares up at the sky, his head resting on the dusty ground. A pathetic hum rises from his compressed lips as he tries to rein in his crying, but it's occasionally punctuated by an explosive sob.

APELU AND SIU

finish tying their respective knots: an ANKLE or WRIST tied to a STAKE in the ground. Apelu chortles to himself at his tale.

They straighten and survey their handiwork: Afa lies naked and spreadeagled on the ground. An offering to the sun.

Afa takes a deep ragged breath.

APELU
 Well. Here we are.

SIU
 Afa.

Afa stares up into the blue.

SIU (CONT'D)
 Be a man and take it.

Apelu nods:

APELU
 Yeah.

Siu looks at his colleague. He goes to a massive, gnarled MANGO TREE at the edge of the clearing. They've emptied their flax bags amongst the roots: food, water, playing cards and books.

Apelu looks up at the cloudless sky.

² Equivalent of "Hey, girl".

APELU (CONT'D)
 (to Siu)
 It's going to be a hot one.

Siu picks out a spot where he can stretch out.
 Apelu joins him in the shade.

APELU (CONT'D)
 Just as well we drew this one,
 a? Long, hot day like today -
 we could've been out there
 working.

Siu gets comfortable and glances at Apelu: a long
 day, indeed.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING - MID-MORNING

Just beyond the entrance to the clearing, we can see
 the dirt road the three boys came by.

Various people pass by: villagers en route to their
 allotments who don't notice Afa; young children in
 school uniforms who stop and stare.

AFA

tries to swallow. He manages a sequence of rough
 clicks. He breathes carefully, trying to conserve
 his energy. His eyes roll towards his captors.

A SMALL BANANA

is carefully jammed into Apelu's mouth. He grunts
 in appreciation as he masticates openly, his cheeks
 bulging. A fresh banana peel joins a small mound of
 peels browning in the sun.

Siu clears his throat, a hint of annoyance as he
 ahems wetly. He slaps at an insect and turns a page
 in his BIBLE.

PAULO (O.O.S.)
 'Ei!

They look up.

PAULO

strides towards them. He's a big man - clean-
 shaven, greying hair kept short, a short-sleeved

shirt tucked into a lavalava held up by a wide leather belt. A successful businessman.

Apelu and Siu get to their feet as -

PAULO (CONT'D)
What's this?

APELU
He was caught stealing taro -

PAULO
Really?

He looks down at Afa.

PAULO (CONT'D)
Stealing taro, a?

Afa sees no sympathy from the businessman.

Paulo steps back - and kicks Afa in the side -

AFA
Aough!

SIU / APELU
Ei!

They surge forward -

- and Paulo backs up, his palms out to them:

PAULO
Easy, boys. Some bastard broke into my shop the other week. Probably this one -

SIU
You don't know that -

PAULO
A thief's a thief. That's all I need to know.
(chuckles)
Anyway, I was just testing to see if he was still alive.

Apelu joins their visitor in laughing.

PAULO (CONT'D)
How long's he out here for?

APELU

All day.

Paulo grunts:

PAULO

It's still morning and it's like
an oven.

APELU

Tell me about it.

A silence descends on them.

PAULO

I can't stay all day and chat,
I've got a business to run. You
boys look after him good, a?

APELU

We will.

Paulo raises a hand in acknowledgement and farewell
as he leaves the clearing.

Apelu returns to the shade, passing Siu crouched
beside Afa.

APELU (CONT'D)

Is it lunchtime yet? I'm
starving.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING - LATE MORNING

AN ANT

walks intricate patterns on Afa's body. His skin is
pinched and dehydrated, and severely sunburnt. His
face has swollen up, his eyes mere slits.

We hear LABOURED BREATHING - but it's not from Afa.
It's approaching.

Afa's head shifts fractionally. A small noise
escapes his throat.

PULETOA

enters the clearing in an angry waddle. He's
generously swathed in white cotton, a straw hat
shading his face. He stops beside Afa:

PULETOA
 (off Afa)
 Auoi 'ka fia ola e³.
 (at Apelu)
 Ei! You! What do you think
 you're doing?

Apelu recognises the minister and jumps to his feet.

PULETOA (CONT'D)
 Release this boy this instant.

APELU
 He, uh, he -

He glances about for Siu - but he's nowhere to be seen.

PULETOA
 Are you deaf? Let this boy go!

APELU
 I -. We -

Puletoa bends forward to untie Afa's bonds but his stomach won't allow it. He straightens. His eyes alight on the machetes in the shade.

PULETOA
 (to Apelu)
 Give me that machete.

Apelu hesitates -

PULETOA (CONT'D)
Give me that machete.

Apelu reaches for his machete -

- when ANOTHER HAND takes it. Siu gives him a look - what're you doing? - before turning to the minister:

SIU
 Good morning to you, sir.

He reties his lavalava - a ROLL OF TOILET PAPER rejoins their gear - and steps out from under the shade.

³ Literally, "Oh, my life". Equivalent of "Oh my god."

SIU (CONT'D)
How can I - (HELP YOU)?

PULETOA
Cut this boy loose.

SIU
(beat)
I can't do that.

Puletoa blinks.

PULETOA
I -, I said -

SIU
With all due respect, sir, I
heard you.

The minister stares at him.

Apelu steps into the breach:

APELU
He's a taro thief. This is what
happens -

PULETOA
I know what happens to taro
thieves! But enough's enough -
look at him!

Apelu looks down at Afa as -

PULETOA (CONT'D)
This is -, this is barbaric! He
could die in this heat! Do you
want that on your conscience?

Apelu glances at Siu.

SIU
(beat)
Toloa gave us our orders. He
stays here until nightfall.

Puletoa notices the machete in Siu's hand.

PULETOA
At least give him some water.

SIU
No water.

Puletoa looks at Siu for a beat, then at Apelu who stands just behind him in support.

PULETOA
I'm going to speak with Toloa.

No response from the boys.

PULETOA (CONT'D)
And once I tell him how, how
disrespectfully you treated me,
you'll wish you'd done as I
said.

They look at him impassively.

Puletoa leaves the clearing with all the dignity he can muster.

AFA

as a NOISE - a whimper? a sob? - escapes his lips.

APELU AND SIU

watch the minister's departure. A long beat, and then -

APELU
Is he really going to tell on
us?

AFA, APELU AND SIU

as Siu heads back for the shade of the mango -

SIU
He knows the law.

CLEARING

as it frames Afa, Apelu leaving him out in the sun -

CLEARING AND DIRT ROAD

to follow Puletoa's progress on the dirt road as it merges into the -

TROPICAL FOREST

where we can discern the allotments amongst the fruit trees and palms -

ISLAND OF SAVAI'I

seeming to float on azure blue, the lone Mauga Silisili pushing up into the sky...

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING - NOON

SILENCE in the blazing heat of the day - as if too hot for both man and beast.

A long, soft RASP OF BREATH. Afa's breathing is painful and slow.

APELU

spills water against his chin as he chugs at his DRINK, his eyes on Afa. He looks at Siu - opens his mouth to say something. Then closes it.

SIU

stares at the Bible that's open in his lap. His eyes are focussed well page before him, all of his senses acutely aware of -

AFA

lies in the centre of the clearing. There's a long silence. Then another tortured breath.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EARLY AFTERNOON

MAO slowly approaches. Over one shoulder a POLE with BASKETS OF TARO at either hand. In the opposite hand hangs a MACHETE.

His slow, measured pace hints at a long day's work. His face is so wrinkled, his sinewy body almost leathery, he could be seventy or a hundred.

As he draws level with the CLEARING ENTRANCE, something catches his eye.

EXT. CLEARING - EARLY AFTERNOON

Mao is framed in the entrance as he looks in and stops.

SIU AND APELU

doze in the shade. A faint BUZZ of a snore from Apelu.

AFA

tries to swallow but it's impossible. He flinches as a pole and baskets are gently placed beside him.

A MACHETE BLADE

arcs downward and SLICES through a ROPE. THUNK.

SIU AND APELU

are startled awake -

APELU

E! What're you - (DOING)?!

Mao cuts another rope. THUNK.

Siu and Apelu scramble toward the old man -

SIU

Ei! Stop!

Mao looks at them and raises his machete high. They stop short.

THUNK.

SIU

Sir, you can't do that.

THUNK. Another rope goes.

SIU (CONT'D)

Sir. Please.

Mao goes to the last rope.

SIU (CONT'D)

(to Apelu)

Get my machete.

Apelu's eyes widen - and he snaps into action, getting both their machetes as -

- Mao stands over the remaining rope.

SIU (CONT'D)

(to Mao)

He was caught stealing taro.

Mao pauses. Looks at Afa.

Apelu hands Siu his machete and nervously hefts his own. He looks between Siu and Mao.

APELU

He has to learn his lesson.

Mao looks at him. He raises his machete.

Siu hefts his machete. Apelu follows suit, eyes on Siu.

Siu stares at the old man:

SIU

Don't.

Mao's machete arcs down.

THUNK as it slices through the rope.

The machete is speared into the dirt.

Mao levers Afa's body over one shoulder.

Siu and Apelu stand rooted where they are, machetes hanging from their hands.

The old man turns to leave with his new burden.

MAO

(over his shoulder)

I'll be back for my taro.

He begins walking, the same slow and measured pace. The distance between him and the young men slowly lengthens.

SIU

stares after Mao's departure, a strange expression on his face.

APELU

Oh man. Oh boy. Are we in shit now. You should've done something, I don't know, something, anything, and we wouldn't be in this shit right now -

SIU

Shut up.

He tosses his machete toward their gear.

In one smooth movement, he lifts the old man's pole and baskets onto a shoulder.

Apelu opens his mouth. Then shuts it.

Siu pulls the machete from the ground.

He heads after the old man.

FADE OUT.

THE END