

S SHAD UL SHAD WS II

SOULSHADOWS II:
TANIS

By
Robert Newcomer

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FADE IN:

A DISTANT LIGHT

It shimmers as a lonely star in a sea of darkness.

We approach.

CLOSER

The speck of light grows -- faint images form within.

TANIS (V.O.)

One more soul to lay bare...

CLOSER STILL

TANIS sits, confined in this small halo of light, her head lowered as if deep in meditation.

She shares the space with a flickering oil lamp and a large, black book.

The book is both long and wide, the size of an atlas, at least a thousand pages thick.

The lamp struggles to stay alight -- the oil that feeds it nearly gone.

WITHIN THE HALO OF LIGHT

Having finally reached Tanis, she now raises her eyes to meet ours. She has no smiles for us tonight.

TANIS

...one more shadow to share.

This could be the alcove. This could be anywhere.

It doesn't really matter.

Tanis looks down to the ponderous, ancient tome before her.

She runs her hand across the cover -- her expression a mixture of remorse and resignation to things that even Tanis cannot change.

TANIS

And this tale...well, this tale
ain't got a name...but if it did,
wouldn't be no name but..."Tanis."

Tanis glances to the lamp, unconcerned as it finally sputters to its death.

And there is only black.

And the SCREAMS begin.

SUPER: **TANIS**

OVER BLACK

SCREAMS. Horrible screams. The stuff of nightmares.

And they continue as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A HUT - DAY

The sweaty bodies of NATIVES stuff the small interior of this hut nearly to bursting.

The stifling heat made worse by swarms of BUZZING FLIES.

And those god-awful SCREAMS.

The cramped natives encircle a lone man, BATU, who writhes on a filthy mat. He is the source of the screams.

Batu is emaciated -- nude -- he spasms in agony.

And you wonder if he will ever stop screami...

SABRA (O.S.)

SILENCE!

SABRA, an old woman draped in ceremonial feathers and beads, taps the blunt tip of a long, ornate staff onto the center of Batu's forehead.

And Batu quiets -- but he is not entirely still, and continues to struggle, as if bound by invisible chains.

Satisfied with this, Sabra raises her staff -- then pounds it on the ground -- and secret, hidden mechanisms within the staff HUMMM to life --

-- as a long blade of polished bone slowly emerges from the opposite end of the staff.

SABRA

Your time here is short now,
demon.

She whirls the staff about, and with the dagger-end, she carves a jagged swath across Batu's forehead.

She cuts deep -- deep enough to expose his skull as the skin puckers and separates.

SABRA

You are revealed, foul one!
Show yourself to me!

Sabra steps back as something monstrous begins to squeeze itself through the fresh, ragged scar on Batu's forehead.

Like a tentacle at first -- but it grows -- and as it grows it slowly transforms --

-- until Sabra is faced with the swaying form of an enormous HOODED COBRA rising from Batu's skull!

It HISSSES menacingly at Sabra -- but with a dexterity that would seem impossible for one so aged -- Sabra grips the cobra by its neck.

The beast struggles, but Sabra's hold is strong.

Then, with her bone dagger, Sabra attacks -- carving at its neck with crude fury.

She intends to decapitate the beast!

The cobra-thing HOWLS in rage!

With its neck half-split, the snake bares its fangs -- then spits twin streams of venom into Sabra's face.

Sabra clutches her face and SHRIEKS as her skin begins to blister and steam.

She collapses to the ground and claws at the acid-venom dissolving her cheeks.

ON BATU

The injured demon retreats -- slipping back into Batu's skull -- and it has nearly made its escape --

-- but now a new hand grasps the beast and holds it firm.

WIDER

TANIS (15) grips the snake. The Tanis we know. The same dark frown. The same attitude.

TANIS

Hey, ugly...we ain't done.

Tanis stands -- pulls the snake up with her -- and wrenches the twitching beast completely free from within Batu.

Exposed now, the beast turns its lolling, half-decapitated head to Tanis. It bears its poison fangs once more.

TANIS

Tanis got somethin' for you.

She slams a clay cooking pot over its head -- and the snake begins to flail.

Its struggle is epic. It ROARS! It wraps its tail around Tanis' neck and pulls it tight. Acid venom drips from inside the pot onto Tanis' hand and sears her flesh.

But Tanis holds tight -- determined to finish what Sabra started.

TANIS

Back to your pit, dark fool!

Tanis grips the snake by its slit neck -- and with an angry ROAR of her own --

-- she rips the head from the snake with her bare hands!

The clay pot falls to the floor.

The head of the snake rolls out -- defiantly gnashing its fangs even now -- until its eyes glaze over forever.

The hut falls silent. Batu is finally calm.

Even the flies are stilled.

Every eye in the hut is on Tanis.

She lets the limp, headless carcass of the snake slip from her fingers to the dusty floor with a heavy THUMP.

INSIDE A BOWL

Someone is mashing herbs into a thick, green paste with a wooden spoon.

INT. SABRA'S HUT - DAY

Tanis crushes the herbs. She sits beside Sabra, who lies on a cot -- one side of her face concealed by a cloth.

Tanis holds the bowl to Sabra's nose.

TANIS

Enough?

Sabra sniffs, then nods that it is.

Tanis lifts the cloth from Sabra's face -- and even Tanis winces at the sight.

The extent of the damage is frightening. Sabra's teeth are visible through the flesh of her cheek.

Tanis applies thick gobs of the crushed herbs to Sabra's face with her own damaged hands.

Sabra sighs with relief.

SABRA

You take foolish risks,
child.

TANIS

It be done.

Sabra rolls a stern eye towards Tanis.

SABRA

You think there is nothing
beyond you...that will be
the end of you someday.

Tanis applies more salve. Sabra relaxes.

SABRA

I did not see Juma at the
ceremony.

Tanis frowns. She had noticed this, too.

TANIS

He...he be on the hunt today.
(smiles)
But the bones say Juma and
Tanis be havin' 10 babies.

Sabra laughs -- it hurts, but she laughs just the same.

SABRA

You can't trust a bone reading,
girl...those spirits only play
with you!

TANIS

Believe what you want...Tanis
believe what she want.

Tanis moves in with more salve, but Sabra waves it off.

SABRA

Leave me be now. Tend to
your own wounds.

Sabra lays back on her cot and closes her eyes.

INT. SABRA'S HUT - ANOTHER ROOM

Tanis carries the bowl to a table -- rags, clay pots, and a large tub of water fill the space.

Tanis clears some of the debris, but pauses as she notices something -- half-buried under the rags -- the corner of a large black book.

She turns back to the door. She is alone.

Tanis rips away the rags to reveal an aged tome, sealed with a thick, leather strap.

She places her hands upon its gnarled cover, as if she might soak up the secrets contained within --

-- only to be met with spiders -- an army of spiders that sprout from the book and leap onto her arms!

She SCREAMS as they burrow into her flesh!

SABRA (O.S.)

Tanis!

Tanis whirls to meet Sabra's cold, iron glare.

TANIS

Sabra...help Tanis!

Sabra does not move. Tanis extends her spider-filled arms toward Sabra -- only to discover that the spiders are gone.

Tanis looks to the book -- to her arms -- and then back to Sabra. She slumps, knowing that she has been tricked.

Tanis scowls like a petulant child, caught with her hand in the cookie jar.

TANIS

That be a cruel trick.

SABRA

A girl who cannot be trusted
deserves nothing less.

Sabra covers the book once more, protecting it beneath its shroud of rags.

TANIS

Why you be keepin' secrets
from Tanis?

SABRA

Those aren't my secrets,
foolish girl!

Tanis will not be dissuaded.

TANIS

Tanis wants to be knowin' just
the same.

SABRA

What lies between those covers
leads only to madness...that,
or something far worse.

Tanis eyes Sabra with suspicion.

TANIS

Then how you even be knowin'
such things?

Sabra sighs -- it is a tale she is loathe to tell.

SABRA

I was witness to its birth...

INT. CAVE - DAY (LONG AGO)

YOUNG SABRA (12) enters the darkened cave to find a nude woman, BIMKUBWA (50), who jibbers and drools as she sits in a puddle of her own blood and filth.

Every inch of Bimkubwa's exposed flesh is covered in deep puncture wounds -- many scabbed, but some fresh.

She scribbles with furious intensity into a dark book she holds in her lap -- she writes with a pointed, snapped-off stalactite, the size of an icicle, clutched in her fist.

Bimkubwa pauses -- then jabs the stalactite deep into her thigh -- and with a fresh supply of blood, she resumes her feverish scrawling.

SABRA (V.O.)

She had written in her own
blood...the most powerful and
wise of all the Shaman women...
but the dark arts had consumed
her...

Sensing her presence now, Bimkubwa turns to young Sabra and smiles -- exposing only bloody holes -- as all of her teeth have been ripped from their roots.

YOUNG SABRA

Bimkubwa...?

BIMKUBWA

The secrets of life and death!
I have written them all! Such
secrets!

Bimkubwa begins to LAUGH HYSTERICALLY.

SABRA (V.O.)

...and the darkness had swallowed
her mind.

EXT. CAVE - DAY (LONG AGO)

Bimkubwa's LAUGHS echo from inside the cave as STRONG MEN roll a huge boulder in front of the cave opening.

SABRA (V.O.)

She was lost to us...but how
she laughed. She never ate.
She never slept. She only
laughed. It was two cycles
of the moon before her breath
finally left her...before she
was silent at last.

Young Sabra stands off to the side, clutching the book that she can barely lift.

SABRA (V.O.)

And so it fell to me...a book
written in league with the very
demons themselves...every word
ripped from their hissing tongues.

The boulder thumps into place -- but Bimkubwa's frantic
laughter can still be heard from within.

TANIS (V.O.)

Why even be keepin' such a thing?

EXT. YOUNG SABRA BESIDE A FIRE - NIGHT (LONG AGO)

Young Sabra tosses the book into the flames.

SABRA (V.O.)

I sought to destroy the wretched
thing, but found it could not be
burned...

The book rests on the coals unscathed.

EXT. YOUNG SABRA ON A HIGH CLIFF - DAY (LONG AGO)

With all her strength, she heaves the book into the
crashing waves far below.

SABRA (V.O.)

I would toss it from the highest
cliff...

INT. YOUNG SABRA IN BED - MORNING (LONG AGO)

Young Sabra awakens, wipes the sleep from her eyes.

SABRA (V.O.)

...but it would only find its
way back to me.

Her eyes widen as she spies the dark book resting at the
foot of her bed.

INT. SABRA'S HUT - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

Tanis glances once more to the innocuous pile of rags where the dark book is hidden.

SABRA

Such a monstrosity can only be kept...and kept from harm's way.

TANIS

The secrets of life and death... that be soundin' to Tanis like a blessing.

SABRA

It is the worst curse imaginable. Perhaps the day will come when the book is your burden to keep...but be warned, Tanis...it is not a book for mortal eyes.

Sabra lifts the herb bowl and mixing spoon from the table as she steps to the tub of water.

She shoos Tanis towards the door.

SABRA

Now go find your Juma...that is the only magic you should be working on this day.

Sabra drops the utensils into the tub of water.

IN THE TUB

The surface of the water ripples as they sink, and slowly, the water becomes...

EXT. RIVER - DAY

JUMA (18) bursts from the icy, blue water to the surface.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Juma steps nude onto the shore.

His dark skin beads with water and ripples with the toned muscle beneath -- hunter that he is.

He stoops to lift a loincloth from the ground.

TANIS (O.S.)
Batu be freed of his demon
today.

WIDER

Tanis is there. Juma stands before her unashamed.

She offers him a cloth. He accepts it and begins to scrub himself dry.

JUMA
I heard.

TANIS
It be Tanis freein' Batu!

Juma slips into his loincloth.

JUMA
I heard that, too.

Juma takes Tanis' hands and examines her scars.

JUMA
You are disfigured.

TANIS
They will be healin.'

He drops her hands.

JUMA
They are frightful.

Branches rustle off to their left as AFYA (16) emerges from the trees and makes her way to the shore.

Only yards away, she pretends not to notice them.

She steps to the waters edge and lithely slips out of her kaftan -- a vision -- revealing the dark caramel skin and smooth curves of a Nubian goddess in full bloom.

Juma's eyes are locked on Afya.

Tanis' eyes are locked on Juma.

TANIS

Juma!

Afya turns at the sound of Tanis' voice --

AFYA

Oh!

-- and with a show of modesty -- false modesty -- Afya dives into the water.

She surfaces moments later, treading water.

AFYA

Hello, Juma...

(sniffs)

...and Tanis. I didn't even see you there.

TANIS

It be a shame we wasn't hungry tigers, then.

Afya laughs. It sounds like music.

AFYA

Oh, Tanis...the tongue on her, Juma! Does she ever turn it on you?

Both girls now look to Juma.

And Juma the hunter -- his finely honed instincts warn him of danger -- trapped between these two jungle cats.

JUMA

I must go. There are fresh kills to clean.

He hands the cloth to Tanis.

JUMA

Thank you.

And he exits between the trees.

AFYA

Didn't even say goodbye...

Tanis turns on Afya with a furious scowl.

TANIS

Tanis know what you be doin'.

AFYA

What do you mean?

TANIS

Why you be comin' here now?
And be showin' yourself like
the devil's toy?

AFYA

I go where I please. What
should you care?

TANIS

Juma belong to Tanis...Juma
be promised!

AFYA

Then you shouldn't care. Or
do you doubt that promise?

TANIS

Juma love Tanis! Just as Tanis
be lovin' Juma!

AFYA

(mocking)

Tanis be lovin' Juma.

(laughs)

Always talking like you aren't
even there. You're a fool, Tanis,
thinking a man like Juma could
ever be happy with some witch.

Tanis darkens -- her voice soft, but thick with menace.

TANIS

Afya...you should be choosin'
your words more careful when
talkin' to Tanis.

AFYA

Why? Are you going to hex me?
Witch? Just like old Sabra,
that's what you are...and that
is what you'll be...old...all
scary-looking...and all alone.

Afya laughs and dives back into the water -- she splashes
Tanis as she kicks away.

Tanis seethes as water drips from her nose.

A GOSHAWK - DAY

It rests on a rock, sharp beak and ferocious talons.

SABRA (O.S.)

See through his eyes, Tanis.
Feel his fury in your heart...

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Sabra -- her face scarred, but healing well -- sits on a
log beside Tanis.

She whispers into Tanis' ear.

SABRA

...his strength in your arms.

Tanis concentrates on the bird. She furrows her brow,
fully focused.

SABRA

Look hard, Tanis...as hard
as you are able.

Tanis' eyes slowly glaze over white. Sabra smiles.

SABRA

Yes...you see! But you
have seen nothing yet.

Sabra leaps from the log, rushing at the bird and waving
her arms.

SABRA

Away, hawk...to the skies
with you!

THE GOSHAWK

The startled bird takes flight...

TANIS

...gasps...

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

...and suddenly we soar!

The ground falls away -- across the lush fields with
dizzying speed -- darting and tilting between the trees.

Tanis laughs, but it is heard only as an echo, from
someplace far away.

She has become one with the goshawk.

IN THE FIELD

Sabra watches the bird, now a speck on the sky.

She leans down, whispers again into Tanis' ear.

SABRA

Good...good. Now turn him round,
bring him home. Show him you're
the master.

As Sabra watches, the bird begins a long, lazy arc.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

The horizon tilts as we bank.

But what is this? In the distance -- two figures beneath the shade of a starfruit tree.

Drawing near, these figures become familiar.

BENEATH THE TREE

Juma sits with Afya. They sit close -- they talk and smile and laugh MOS.

Juma holds a fallen starfruit. He carves off a slice of the fruit and offers it to Afya.

She takes it with a smile -- places the fruit between her lips -- and moves toward Juma, offering him the other half.

IN THE FIELD

Sabra is confused as the bird alters its course -- it swoops low and out of sight, behind the trees.

SABRA

Tanis?

TANIS

(trance-like)

...no...

SABRA

Concentrate, girl!

BENEATH THE TREE

Juma's face is close to Afya's -- he parts his lips to accept the fruit.

And with a SCREECH, the goshawk attacks!

Afya SHRIEKS as the bird rakes her face with its claws.

Juma swats at the bird.

The goshawk grabs Afya's hair in its talons -- and rips free a large clump of hair as it flies away.

JUMA

It is a demon!

Juma grabs a stone from the ground and leaps to his feet.

He pulls a sling from his waist, places the stone, and whips the sling about his head.

He tracks the bird with practiced ease, then lets the stone missile fly.

His aim is true.

THE GOSHAWK

The stricken bird lets out a pained SCREECH as the stone rips into its side.

TANIS

She also CRIES OUT in pain, jolted from her trance.

THE GOSHAWK

Tumbles from the sky to the hard ground.

TANIS

Tumbles from the log to the ground.

WIDER

Sabra stands over Tanis and frowns.

SABRA

You need to focus if you ever
hope to become like me!

Tanis rubs her arm, where an angry welt rises.

She glares at Sabra and leaps to her feet.

TANIS

Maybe Tanis don't want to
be like you!

Tanis races from the glade -- fighting back tears that Sabra cannot understand.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Women wash clothes, pounding and scrubbing with rocks.

Afya is amongst them. Her face bears the scars from the earlier attack.

BY A TREE

Afya hums as she hangs a multicolored blanket to dry from the branch of a large tree.

She grabs another small bundle of clothing from the base of the tree and heads back to the river.

Once Afya is gone, Tanis steps from behind the tree.

She has a knife, and she cuts a scrap of fabric from one corner of the blanket.

Then she darts away just as silently as she arrived.

THE GOSHAWK - DAY

The goshawk flops on the dusty ground, mortally wounded.

An unforgiving afternoon sun blazes overhead, baking the life from the bird.

A pair of sandals shuffle to a stop beside the animal.

WIDER

It is Tanis. She stoops beside the bird.

Tanis unwinds the long, black strands of Afya's hair still looped in the bird's talons. Pockets them.

Then she turns to lift something we cannot see.

THE GOSHAWK'S P.O.V.

Tanis looms above us, but dark, silhouetted by the sun.

TANIS

You be helpin' Tanis, bird...

She raises a large stone above her head --

TANIS
...now Tanis be helpin' you.

-- and she slams it down.

SCRUNCH! Black.

INT. AFYA'S HUT - NIGHT

Afya spreads the colorful blanket over her cot.

She notices the cut corner. She frowns, but shrugs it off and smooths the edges of the blanket.

EXT. AFYA'S HUT - NIGHT

Afya steps into view through her lit window -- but seen from a distance, as if someone were spying on her unawares.

Which we are.

Afya yawns -- stretches -- then lowers her kaftan from her shoulders before letting it slip carelessly to the floor.

She moves naked to the lamp.

And her window goes dark as the light is extinguished.

IN THE WOODS

Tanis has been watching. Waiting.

A low rumble of distant THUNDER as Tanis turns and strides deeper into the trees.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A small fire crackles and pops.

More growling THUNDER warns of an approaching storm.

WIDER

Tanis on her knees, bows to the fire -- her face to the ground and arms splayed toward the flames.

She chants rhythmically -- soft but earnest words in some long-forgotten tongue.

Then she rises and pulls something from her kaftan.

Afya's hair.

Tanis clenches the hair in her fist -- raises her fist to the sky -- and shouts to the moon.

TANIS

The body of the wicked!

LIGHTNING...and THUNDER...separated by mere moments.

Tanis now raises her other fist, in which she clenches the scrap of bedsheet.

TANIS

And where she lay tonight!

LIGHTNING...and THUNDER...closer together.

Tanis feverishly wraps the hair in the scrap of blanket.

Then Tanis lowers her kaftan from her left shoulder.

And she raises her blade.

Her voice now a whisper.

TANIS

And the blood from Tanis heart.

LIGHTNING AND THUNDER BOOM AS ONE -- as Tanis carves a deep, jagged X over her heart.

She moans as she places the scrap of bedsheet to the wound, soaking it in her blood.

She kisses it once -- tasting her own blood -- then tosses the bundle into the fire -- WHOOMF! -- it is devoured by the flames in a single, furious flash.

TANIS

Now let the rains of vengeance
be fallin'.

And it begins to rain.

Not gradually -- but as a torrent -- as if the handle of God's own spigot had been suddenly wrenched.

Tanis raises her face to the downpour and laughs -- not with joy -- but with a hint of the maniacal.

With a hint of Bimkubwa.

The fire is doused by the rain.

Tanis grabs a handful of the wet ashes.

EXT. AFYA'S HUT - NIGHT

Tanis at Afya's window. She looks about, sees no one, then tosses the handful of ashes into Afya's hut.

She drops to her knees and begins her rhythmic chant.

INT. AFYA'S HUT

Afya stirs as Tanis' O.S. CHANTS waft in through her window.

She sits up. Tilts her head. Notices the ashes.

AFYA

Wha...?

But the thought goes unfinished -- as Afya's sheet springs to life and pulls her down -- pinning her to the bed!

It binds her like iron -- and the sheet grows -- it spreads and undulates until it fills the room like a swirling maelstrom.

Tanis' CHANTS grow louder.

AFYA

HELP M...

A coil of sheet leaps into her open mouth!

Then coil after spinning coil of sheet twist themselves down Afya's throat -- her neck swells like a python swallowing a wild boar.

Tanis' CHANTS rise to a fever pitch.

Afya's watering eyes grow wide with terror.

She needs to scream. She needs to *breathe!*

But she can do neither.

The sheet magic is a horrible death -- and Afya finally succumbs -- and stills.

Then the sheet retreats -- and flutters silently back onto the bed -- as if nothing had happened at all.

EXT. AFYA'S HUT

Tanis rises slowly, her chanting ended, and she steps to Afya's window.

She hesitates -- yet knows she must look.

She peers into the window.

A flash of lightning reveals the room -- with Afya dead in her bed -- but she is not alone...

The cold, stark lightning reveals Juma beside her!

A stray coil retreats from his throat as it is drawn back into the sheet. His dead eyes stare back at Tanis.

TANIS

No...NO!

Tanis WAILS at the dispassionate moon, but her anguished cries are only swallowed by THUNDER.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Tanis struggles to make her way through the rain-soaked foliage -- a determined wraith with lunacy in her eyes.

She drags something heavy behind her -- something wrapped in the once-killer blanket.

She looks up. A FLASH OF LIGHTNING reveals Sabra's hut in front of her.

INT. SABRA'S HUT

The door BANGS open. Tanis drags her load inside.

She is suddenly illuminated by the glow of a lamp.

SABRA

She holds the lamp aloft.

SABRA

What devilishness have you
brought to my house?

WIDER

Soaking wet, her eyes ablaze, Tanis looks deranged.

TANIS

Tanis be needin' magic...the
strongest magic!

Sabra gasps as the blanket falls open to reveal the dead face of Juma.

SABRA

By the demons, girl! What
have you done?

TANIS

Tanis be needin' magic...

Sabra kneels beside Juma.

She sets down the lamp, then places her palm to Juma's cold forehead. She glares up at Tanis.

SABRA

This is death! No magic
for that!

Tanis' crazed eyes wander to the table where the dark book
is concealed. Now Sabra knows what Tanis is after.

SABRA

No, Tanis.

But Tanis nods... "yes."

TANIS

The secrets of life and
death...that the magic
Tanis be needin' tonight.

Tanis runs to the book. Sabra leaps from the floor and
grabs Tanis from behind.

Tanis shoves Sabra away.

Sabra staggers backward -- and crashes hard into a wall
covered with her magical paraphernalia.

Sabra's eyes grow wide -- she opens her mouth, but emits
only a low, droning HUMMM -- more mechanical than human.

TANIS

Sabra?

Now Sabra convulses -- thick rivulets of blood flow from
her mouth down her chin -- and slowly --

-- a long dagger of polished bone emerges from her mouth!

TANIS

Sabra!

And Sabra pitches forward onto the floor -- speared from
behind by her mystical staff -- now erect in her neck.

TANIS

No!

Tanis rushes to Sabra and yanks out the staff, tossing it
aside. She kneels and cradles Sabra in her arms.

She rocks as she hugs Sabra, the tears rolling down her cheeks mixed with moans of despair.

TANIS

No...no...Sabra...Tanis be
so sorry...so very sorry...

The old woman can only mouth a few senseless gurgles before she dies in Tanis' arms.

And once again Tanis' eyes are drawn to the forbidden book.

An idea forms.

TANIS

Tanis bring you back...

Tanis dashes to the table and rips away the rags that conceal the book.

TANIS

...Tanis bring everyone back!

She places her hand on the cover -- tense for a moment, but no spiders this time.

She pulls the book to the floor, next to the lamp --

She pulls her blade from within her kaftan --

She slices the leather strap that binds the book --

She takes a deep breath --

And she opens the book of darkest secrets.

ON TANIS

As Tanis gazes into the book, the pages glow -- bathing Tanis in their light.

She is horrified by what she sees.

TANIS

No...it cannot be...

And the pages continue to glow brighter -- and brighter still -- until they are blinding.

Tanis shields herself, but is engulfed by the light.

EXT. SABRA'S HUT

As if the noontime sun were high overhead, the jungle night is awash with the light that spews from the windows and leaks from every seam of the hut.

Tanis SCREAMS from within.

TANIS (O.S.)

It must not be!

The hut suddenly goes dark. And silent. Night returns.

INT. SABRA'S HUT

Tanis sits before the dark book -- drained, beaten, spent.

Blood seeps from the corners of her eyes.

TANIS

It cannot be true.

SABRA (O.S.)

But it is, Tanis. You desired the secrets...and now they are yours to keep.

WIDER

Tanis turns to find Sabra beside her -- but only a shadowy reflection of her former self.

TANIS

Please...Tanis don't want to be keepin' such things.

Sabra only shakes her head. She cannot help Tanis now.

JUMA (O.S.)

It's too late, Tanis.

Tanis whips her head in the other direction. Now Juma is there as well -- a shadow-Juma.

TANIS

Juma...

JUMA

It's become a part of you
now...as you now become a
part of it.

Arms suddenly spring forth from within the book -- a dozen wizened, white arms, road-mapped with blue veins and ending with hooked, yellow nails.

They claw at Tanis' flesh and clothing and hair -- she struggles -- but it is a losing battle.

Tanis raises her eyes to Juma and Sabra -- only to find that Afya has joined them as well.

But their eyes reveal nothing but pity.

TANIS

Tanis be...so sorry!

And Tanis' final words echo behind her -- as she is dragged into the book!

The ancient volume SLAMS closed.

FADE TO BLACK:

TANIS (OVER BLACK)

So here Tanis be...

THE FLASH OF A MATCH

Suddenly lit, brilliant in the darkness.

TANIS (O.S.)

...with her stories...and all
her "precious" secrets.

ON THE BOOK

Illuminated by the flickering light of the match.

TANIS (O.S.)
 The secrets of life...Ha!
 Ain't no secret but one.

ON THE LAMP

The match relights the lamp -- but again, its flame is only weak and fitful.

TANIS (O.S.)
 The only secret to life is that
 one day...it gonna be over.

WIDER

Tanis shakes out the match. Flicks it away into the darkness.

TANIS
 But the secrets of death...
 well, Tanis don't know when we
 be seein' each other again, but
 Tanis be tellin' you one thing...
 the most important thing...

And now we pull back from Tanis and her small halo of light, receding rapidly -- farther and farther --

TANIS (V.O.)
 ...when your days be over...
 when your soul ain't nothin'
 but the shadow you be leavin'
 behind...

Tanis' lamp is now only a pinprick of light -- nothing more than a lonely star in a sea of darkness --

TANIS (V.O.)
 ...just be sure you ain't
 left behind no secrets...no
 stories...for Tanis.

-- and finally even this faintest of lights winks out, consumed by the utter and unforgiving black.

FADE OUT.