

Hungry

by

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A STRANGE SCRATCHING SOUND...

FADE IN:

INT. BOY'S DORMITORY - THE ORPHANAGE - DAWN

Dawn light shimmers through the cracks on wooden windows.

On a stained mattress--on the dirt floor--WILLIAM AKI (15) snaps awake to a strange scratching sound.

He scans the dark, messy, cell-like room.

His eyes zoom in on the bottom of his mattress.

Something is moving.

The whole shirt is moving.

He slowly pulls his covers back, sits up.

A huge RAT drags his shirt in its mouth. It scurries at the base of the wall. Passing TWENTY other boys, aged between five and sixteen, sleeping on mats.

William slowly gets up - He only wears badly creased khaki shorts.

The rat drops the shirt. Disappears in a small hole.

William picks the shirt. Shakes the dirt off. Puts it on - The shirt has holes in it, two buttons are missing.

William bends, grabs his worn-out businessman shoes, tiptoes to the wooden door.

Pause.

He peeks through the gap between the door and the frame.

WILLIAM
(under his breath)
Aghhhhh!

He sees a heavy-set woman in her late 50's, strolling down the compound. She wears a colorful, floral *kitenge* (African long dress).

This is AUNTIE PEACE (mostly, Auntie P.) She's the founder of THE ORPHANAGE.

William waits.

Auntie P. passes out of sight.

William quietly opens the door and steps out, unnoticed.

EXT. COMPOUND - THE ORPHANAGE - CONTINUOUS

William closes the door behind him. Pauses. Looks to his left - No sign of Auntie P.

Looks to his right - Nothing.

Birds SING. A rooster CROWS. A butterfly FLOATS past...

He bends, puts his businessman shoes on - The gaps at the front of the shoes show his two big toes.

Sighing, he straightens up and hurries across to a metal security gate. Quietly, he pulls it open. Descends the short set of concrete steps.

INT. KITCHEN - THE ORPHANAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Large sacks and boxes of donated goods stacked high.

On the floor, a stack of dirty dishes left to rot.

In a corner, a large pot of boiling water sits atop a red-hot charcoal stove.

Auntie P. opens a cabinet. Pulls out a bucket of maize flour. Takes the lid off. Empties it into the pot.

As she begins to stir the porridge, using a wooden spoon, hand moving in smooth motions--

The kitchen door CREAKS open.

A boy (JAMES TWAHA, 13) enters. He's dressed in tatters.

AUNTIE P.
James, did you find William?

James shakes his head, looks down.

Auntie P. grits her teeth.

AUNTIE P. (cont'd)
Stupid William! Where did he go?

James lets out a YAWN. Looks down.

Auntie P. eyes the stack of dirty dishes.

AUNTIE P. (cont'd)
Okay. Do William's work. Fill two large pots with water. And wash the dishes. Dry them as well.

James nods. Does as he's told.

Auntie P. goes back to stirring the porridge.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CITY STREET - LATER

A glorious, sunny day.

William wanders down a concrete sidewalk, passing one shop to another.

He looks everywhere, eyes transfixed.

On every turn, he reads 'NO VACANCY' signs posted on shop windows and doors.

He continues to walk. No particular destination.

EXT. MARKET - CONTINUOUS

William enters a cluttered market, walks past stalls and hundreds of people - selling, buying, haggling.

He comes out a side exit and spots an athletic-built man (SIMON BYA, 30s) welding a metal bed outside his WORKSHOP.

A collection of finished beds are on display nearby - for customers to buy.

William sees two women approaching the workshop. The women stare at the beds and walk off without saying anything.

A man also stops by. Looks at the beds. Turns back around.

Another man stops by. Looks. Walks away.

William keeps observing the infrequent comings and goings at Simon's workshop.

He slowly heads over. Stares at the beds. Notices that they are very dirty.

He walks over to Simon.

WILLIAM
Good morning, sir.

Simon doesn't look up from welding.

SIMON
Ya. Good morning.

William runs his finger along a bed, shows it to him.

WILLIAM
Sir, the way these beds look now, no one is going to buy them.

Simon--a bit caught off guard--notices the dirt.

WILLIAM (cont'd)
Sir, I can clean them...if you hire me.

Simon switches off his welding machine. Eyes William with suspicion.

SIMON
Aren't you supposed to be in school?

WILLIAM
I have no money. For school fees.

Simon watches him with a look of pity.

SIMON
Sorry. I can't afford to hire you.

William goes down on his knees.

WILLIAM
Please, help me. I want to work. Save up money. Go back to school.

Simon lowers his head. Thinks. Gives in to the moment.

He disappears into his workshop for a sec. Reappears with a piece of cloth. Throws it at William.

SIMON
Ya. Okay. Let's see how it goes.

William--anxious--grabs the cloth. Gets up from his knees. Hurries to clean.

Just as he turns his attention to the beds--

A MAN in his 40's approaches. He glumly looks at the dust on the beds.

William gives him a half-smile through his stained teeth.

WILLIAM
Mister! You want a bed?

MAN
Yes, but your beds are so dirty.

William smiles broadly, bends, starts cleaning.

WILLIAM
That's exactly why I am here. Soon, the dirt will go. And all you'll see are spotless, new beds.

The Man walks off. William grabs his arm, stops him.

MAN
It's okay. I'll come back when the beds are clean.

WILLIAM
Wait! Can I ask you a stupid question?

The Man gives William a quizzical look.

WILLIAM (cont'd)
Why do you want a bed?

The Man looks at him like it's the stupidest question he ever heard.

MAN
Of course, to sleep on it.

WILLIAM
Well, the beds here do more than that...they change lives.

MAN
Change what?

WILLIAM (cont'd)
You see, when you buy a bed here, my boss will make money. And he will afford to pay me. And I will save up that money for school. And our lives will change.

The Man blankly stares, unsure what to say.

WILLIAM (cont'd)
So, I suggest you buy a bed here. Try it out. If you're not happy with it, I will personally come to your home to pick it. And my boss will refund your money.

MAN
Where's your boss?

William motions for Simon to come over.

Simon joins in, helps the Man choose a bed.

William cleans it, spotless.

The Man pays cash, departs with the bed.

Simon--smiling--counts the money. Gives some to William.

SIMON
Commission. For you.

William's jaw drops as he takes the money.

WILLIAM
Is this mine?

SIMON
Ya. I think you have good luck.

William shakes his head.

WILLIAM
It's not about luck, it's about wanting something so, so bad.

SIMON

Whether you believe in luck or not, I
want to work with you.

William puts the money in his shirt's breast pocket and
extends his hand to shake with Simon.

WILLIAM

By the way, I am William.

Hands shake.

SIMON

I am Simon.

William goes back to cleaning the beds.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GATE - THE ORPHANAGE - LATER

Darkness settles in as William pushes open the orphanage
security gate.

He's about to walk through when--

AUNTIE P. (O.S)

William! Is that you?

William stops abruptly as if he has bumped into an
invisible wall. He pokes his head, sees--

A very pissed-off Auntie P., sitting on a bench.

William takes a step backwards, ducks out of view.

AUNTIE P. (O.S)

William. I saw you. Come over.

EXT. COMPOUND - THE ORPHANAGE - CONTINUOUS

William lets himself quietly into the compound. Stands a
few feet away from Auntie P.

AUNTIE P.

How many times should I tell you that
I need to know where you are at all
times?

WILLIAM

I want to go back to school. My
education must continue.

AUNTIE P.

Soooooo? I am aware of that.

WILLIAM

I am just saying.

AUNTIE P.
You are not just saying. You are just
stupid.

William leans on the wall, folds his arms.

WILLIAM
Auntie P. You keep promising that
you'll help me get back to school.
But nothing happens.

Auntie P. rolls her eyes.

AUNTIE P.
Understand this. One: I have no money.
Two: You're a little nobody. You have
nothing...No father...No mother...No
family...No connections...No job...

WILLIAM
...I got a job today.

Auntie P. gets up, leans in.

AUNTIE P.
Really? What job?

WILLIAM
Cleaning beds. At metal workshop.
With a good commission.

Auntie P. laughs long and hard at that.

AUNTIE P.
Even if you clean 100 beds every day
and earn a good commission selling
every piece, you'll still have to
borrow money to complete school.

William looks down, closes his eyes - it hurts.

AUNTIE P. (cont'd)
Forget all about your education. You
just can't afford it. Okay?

William covers his face with his hands - he looks like
he's been hit in the face by the brick.

AUNTIE P. (cont'd)
Now, go to sleep. And make sure you
wake up early, tomorrow morning. I
don't want James to do your dish
washing job again.

William walks off. Passing Auntie P. who suddenly sniffs
the air and crinkles her nose.

AUNTIE P. (cont'd)
Phew! You stink horrible. When is the
last time you had a bath?

INT. BOYS' DORMITORY - THE NEXT MORNING

Grey morning light streams through the cracks on wooden windows.

William blinks awake. Sits up. Looks desperately around.

Everyone's still asleep.

He gets up. Packs a few of his belongings - they don't fill a sack.

He throws the sack over his shoulder. Grips it tightly. Walks to the wooden door.

He opens it. Steps out.

INT. KITCHEN - THE ORPHANAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Auntie P. stands in a corner, holding a wooden spoon, stirring the simmering porridge in a large pot atop a charcoal stove.

The kitchen door WHINES opens.

William--sack in hand--enters, very determined.

Auntie P. glares at him for a sec, goes back to stirring.

WILLIAM

I am leaving.

AUNTIE P.

Is this the way to leave? After ten years at this place?

WILLIAM

If I don't leave now, I fear I'll never have a chance to complete my education.

Auntie P. rolls her eyes.

AUNTIE P.

William. You are better off here. Where are you going to stay, once you leave? What if you don't get the money? What are you going to eat?

WILLIAM

I don't know. But I have to go away.

AUNTIE P.

Okay. Whatever happens to you, don't ever come back here. I don't want to see you in my face again.

WILLIAM

Thank you for keeping me here. It was very kind of you.

AUNTIE P.

I said. Get off my face. NOW. GO...!

Auntie P. turns around--wooden spoon in hand--and walks towards William.

William hurries out of the door.

SLAM!

Auntie P. shuts the door on him. Turns back to stirring the simmering porridge.

EXT. BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

William--sack in hand--sits on a bench. Waits for the bus.

In front of him, cars, SUVs, trucks, eighteen wheelers and whizz past him at 70 m.p.h.

William looks impatient. He stands, puts a hand in his pocket, pulls out some money. As he counts--

A YOUNG MAN riding a rusty *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxi) approaches.

William gets up, whistles. Young Rider sees William, stops in the bus lane. William adjusts his sack, sits at the back seat.

YOUNG RIDER

You ready?

WILLIAM

Ya. Be faster. I am late.

Off they roll.

EXT. BODA-BODA - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Young Rider weaves in and out of the maddening traffic at a rather high speed.

William--tense--clings on.

YOUNG RIDER

Where to?

WILLIAM

Market. Simon's Workshop.

EXT. BODA-BODA - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

The rusty *boda-boda* rolls down the bumpy road that leads to the market entrance.

WILLIAM
Stop here.

Young Rider STEPS harder on the brake pedal.

The *boda-boda* doesn't stop.

Young Rider tries again - Nothing.

WILLIAM (cont'd)
I said. Stop! STOP, NOW!

YOUNG RIDER
The brakes don't work.

WILLIAM
THE BREAKS DON'T...WHAT?

Panic strikes William's face as the *boda-boda* rolls down past the market entrance.

Young Rider fidgets, glancing nervously at the road ahead.

William clings on - several times he's almost hurled off as Young Rider tries to gain control.

WHAM!

The front tire hits a pothole and rockets up in the air.

WILLIAM (cont'd)
God. Almighty!

EXT. ON THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

William, his sack, Young Rider, his *boda-boda* fall in a confused heap. Roll in different directions like pebbles.

Young Rider quickly gets up, looks at himself - He only suffers a few scratches on his elbows. He looks down at William, a few feet away - His mouth opens in shock.

Just above William's left knee, the thighbone is jutting out through the flesh. It's dead white. Its end is jagged. Blood runs out.

Visibly shaken, Young Rider looks around - No one seems to have noticed. He dashes to his damaged *boda-boda*. Pulls it from the ground. Kick-starts. Jumps on it.

Young Rider speeds off, leaving William curled up in the middle of the road.

FADE OUT: