

"One Child Born"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. RWANDAN HOUSE - DAY

LAURENT, 35, a Rwandan Tutsi farmer, rocks in a chair on the porch of his modest home and smokes a pipe.

In the distance, he hears a voice.

MICHEL (O.S.)

Papa!

Laurent gets up and peers up the road.

From around a bend, a boy of 14, MICHEL, comes running toward the house.

MICHEL

Papa! Papa!

Laurent jumps off the porch to meet his son. He catches the nearly-exhausted boy in his arms.

LAURENT

What is it, son?

MICHEL

Papa -- they're coming.

Laurent recoils in fear, but only for a moment.

LAURENT

That's absurd. Why would they come here?

MICHEL

They've already been to most of the farms in the province. I was on my way home from the village when I saw the smoke at Monsieur Nkunda's farm. I went to see...

Michel breaks down in tears.

LAURENT

We have to prepare.

MICHEL

We have to run!

LAURENT

We can't.

MICHEL
 You don't understand, Papa! There
 are dozens, maybe hundreds of
 them coming, right now! We have
 to run!

LAURENT
 The baby is coming.

The words stun Michel.

MICHEL
 We can't fight them, Papa.

LAURENT
 I know. Come help Mama.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Laurent and Michel enter the bedroom where SYLVIE, 34, lies
 on the bed in early labor. An old midwife, MADAME KAGAME,
 mops Sylvie's brow.

MICHEL
 Mama --

LAURENT
 Michel! Let me.

Michel bows his head.

LAURENT
 Sylvie, are you bearing up?

SYLVIE
 A silly question. It's just
 another baby. I'm good at it by
 now.

LAURENT
 Something -- there's something
 happening.

SYLVIE
 What?

LAURENT
 They're coming here. Michel saw
 them at Nkunda's farm. Scores of
 them.

Sylvie sits up in the bed.

SYLVIE

Then we must go.

MADAME KAGAME

You can't travel in this state.
You wouldn't get five kilometers
before the baby came.

SYLVIE

I am not so delicate as you think.

She tries to get up, but a contraction doubles her over.

SYLVIE

Ahhhhh! All right. Laurent,
take Michel and Charlotte and go.
I will catch up to you after the
baby comes.

LAURENT

They won't spare you. Not you,
not the baby, not Madame.

MADAME KAGAME

Then what do you suggest, Monsieur?

LAURENT

Under the bed.

MADAME KAGAME

We hide under the bed?

SYLVIE

Under the bed is the door to a
storage space. A crawlspace under
the house. We can hide there.

LAURENT

Madame, help my wife off the bed.
Michel, Charlotte is in her room.
Go get her.

Michel runs out. Madame Kagame helps Sylvie into a chair.

Laurent pushes the bed aside to reveal a trap door in the
floor.

He opens the trap door.

LAURENT

Not much room, I'm afraid, but
you will be all right.

SYLVIE
"You"? You mean, "we"?

Laurent lifts his wife from the chair.

LAURENT
Sylvie, my love, there's no point
in hiding if the door to our
hiding place is in plain sight.
I have to stay up here to move
the bed back.

SYLVIE
No! I won't --

Michel bursts in.

MICHEL
Charlotte isn't in the house!

SYLVIE
Oh, God!

LAURENT
Calm yourself, my love. It will
be all right.

He turns to Michel.

LAURENT
Help me get your mother into the
crawlspace.

Michel climbs down into the dark hole.

LAURENT
Take her feet.

He lowers Sylvie into the hiding place.

MICHEL
I have her.

LAURENT
Is there a place for her to lie
down?

MICHEL
I think so. Is there light?

LAURENT
No. No light, no lamps, nothing
that could draw their attention.

Laurent grabs the bedspread from the foot of the bed.

LAURENT

Here. Make a place for your Mama.

He hands down the bedspread.

LAURENT

Madame. You next.

MADAME KAGAME

Why don't you let me stay up here?
Go down with your family.

LAURENT

Several good reasons, Madame.
First, my wife and the baby need
you. Second, you can't move this
heavy bed by yourself. Third, if
they find a midwife in my house
instead of me, they will know my
wife and children are nearby, and
they will hunt us down.

MADAME KAGAME

God save you, Monsieur.

Madame Kagame climbs into the hiding place.

SYLVIE (O.S.)

My God, Laurent, what of Charlotte?

LAURENT

Don't worry, she will be fine. I
will send Michel after her. Son?

Michel climbs up out of the hole.

LAURENT

Find your sister. She must be
playing outside.

MICHEL

I'll bring --

LAURENT

You'll take her to the deepest
part of the forest. You'll cover
yourselves with dirt and leaves
and you'll wait a night and a day
before you see if it's safe to
come back for Mama.

MICHEL

Yes, Papa.

LAURENT

And you won't make a sound, either of you, the entire time. You understand?

MICHEL

Yes, Papa.

Laurent hugs his son.

LAURENT

Go.

Michel dashes off.

Laurent goes to the trapdoor.

LAURENT

Sylvie, my love. Michel will take Charlotte to hide in the forest. Madame Kagame will keep you and the baby safe.

SYLVIE

Laurent, no! Please --

Laurent lets the trapdoor fall shut.

He pushes the bed back into place and straightens out the rug and the sheets.

INT. CRAWLSPACE - DAY

Only tiny rays of light fall through chinks in the floor that is the crawlspace's ceiling.

MADAME KAGAME

Madame, you must be strong and you must listen to me. Do you understand?

SYLVIE

Yes.

MADAME KAGAME

The darkness is not a problem. I can do this by feel. But you must keep completely silent, do you understand?

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