

NON-SELLING AS IN FREE EBOOK

Chandler and Frasier Go To War



The ACF Series. Vol 1.

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As a parent one of your duties is to encourage your little angels to grow up to be the best that they possibly can. You should tell them whatever it takes to encourage them to aspire to what society calls great things, meaning things with money. You should, for example, never tell your kids that a well-cleaned toilet is a greater thing than a million-unit-selling rap song about sexual positions with “bitches” and that your office janitor is in many ways the superior human being when compared to Lil Derp, Yung Ti\$\$ue and Rick Ross. Not if you want them to aspire to money. They can hire great men to clean the toilets of the mansion they will build for their father, the man who encouraged them, without whom, according to their speeches at universities which give them honorary doctorates, none of this would have been possible.

And this is why on the Saturday morning when taata wa’boys entered the sitting room to see his two sons, Chandler on the left end of the table, Frasier on the right, hunched over, chins on fists, brows folded and furrowed, mouths actually believe it or not, silent, and, of all things a chessboard occupying the space between them, he did not put forth the question that follows:

“Chess is historically a game played by intelligent people, highly intelligent people. Some of whom are geniuses, in fact. It involves keen concentration, strategic thinking, forward planning, calculation and counter-calculation, the plotting of complex maneuvers... It is the sort of game only people with great brains excel at. Now, being accustomed to the report cards your school sends me, which routinely suggest certain very non-genius things about you two, why are you not playing with mud instead?”

No. A good parent who loves his sons may think that. But he must not say it.

So Taata just whistled and strode past, deciding that the best thing to do was pretend he had seen nothing.

But he could not help overhear the two boys when they finally broke their silence.

“This sucks,” said either one. Their father could not tell which it was because they were a shiftless pair of mischief makers who conspire to confuse him. One started breaking his voice immediately after the other finally finished and so neither one sounded the way he did last holiday.

But whichever one had said it, that was moot. For the other promptly grunted that they were in agreement.

“Let’s ask Dad,” said one. It was Chandler. If it was Frasier, he would have said something like “Dadman” or “Poppadawg” or “Zande” because Frasier didn’t like the word “dad”.

“Dad, this game is billed as a war game, right?”

“That is what they call it on Wikipedia,” dad replied.

“It’s missing the war bit,” Chandler said. His fist stayed on his chin.

“Then why are you playing it?” the old man finally got a chance to ask the question that had been burning in his head since he walked in.

“We were advised that if we mastered the art of chess we will be invincible in war,” explained Frasier. “However, now we have reason to doubt the expertise of this person who advised us. He called it a war game and ... puh leese. Look at this thing!” Frasier waved his hands at the board, to indicate the lack of whatever it was he had been expecting of a war game.

“At least Call Of Duty or PUBG,” said Chandler offering his brother a high five which was enthusiastically received.

“What is Call of Duty or pabjie?” the elder asked, now intrigued.

“It’s a game like this so-called ‘chess,’ but less primitive,” explained Chandler, spitting the word ‘chess’ out as if it was a piece of maggot.

“In Call of Duty you get to have a gun that shoots people. Sometimes their heads explode. Boom, right off their bodies. You get? To win you shoot a head off a body. It’s not like this ...eugh... chess crap where to win you just remember that the horsey bit moves two steps then goes sideways. Why can’t the horse do something useful? Can’t it at least shoot something? I think the horse should shoot flames from its eyes.”

Frasier’s looked up when he heard his brother say this.

“That sort of thing would be expected of a disembodied horse head,” he said. “Okay. Flames from the eyes it is. And the bishop should be able to call lightning from heaven cos, well, he’s God’s man.”

Chandler agreed wholeheartedly.

“This castle one, I think maybe it should be invincible unless you attack it from behind,” he suggested. “That’s how castles were, I think. I saw it in Lord of The Rings or one of the many movies that look like it. I don’t remember which one. I always fall asleep”

Frasier nodded. “Yeah. And the queen should be able to seduce the king by taking off her top and showing them her boobies. I remember that is how Queen Cleopatra defeated King Julius Caesar. Either in History or in Literature. One of those.”

Due to an egregious miscarriage of justice, fathers do not have school holidays. And neither did this one. He had to leave for his office and was already late. He left the boys in the room playing at playing chess.

When he returned that evening he found that they had made a true war game out of it. The living room was smouldering as a battlefield after a great war. Furniture had been moved, cutlery was scattered around the carpet, there were traces of flour on the boys’ faces and the smell of burning plastic filled the room.

“Daddycool, welcome back. Hope you had a great time breadwinning today,” greeted Frasier as if there was nothing at all amiss, nothing about the disorder they had wrought in the man’s house that would maybe require an explanation if not an apology.

“Dad, your DSTV only gets local channels,” said Chandler, who took his cues from his elder brother.

The old man decided to field the easier problem first. “You only get local channels because I don’t have DSTV,” he said, then, after waiting for Chandler’s look of shock to subside and for him to finally come to grips with the fact that people actually lived like this in the twenty first century, he turned to the next pressing item on the agenda. He waved his arm at everything and posed the question: “So? All this? Uh huh?”

“Oh, that. We were just playing chess. Don’t worry, we will tidy up everything,” Frasier said.

“You will, obviously, or they will never find your bodies, but right now I am more interested in understanding: How did chess become this?”

“Chandler’s Knights brought in mercenaries from another chessboard, and things escalated. Soon we had a Balkan conflict going on with several interests drawn in,” Frasier began to explain. He even had his hands in that gesture Obama used to use when he was talking about his own wars.

“The pawns were falling like flies, especially after Frasier’s bishops decided to ordain the King as pope, and giving him super-lightning powers. I tell you, dad. It wasn’t looking good. But the Chandler Freedom Alliance had a plan...” Chandler’s eyes glinted. You always think of glinting eyes as a metaphorical thing but something actually flashed there, reminding their father that he had whiskey waiting. He needed one to handle this.

“I admit it was a very cunning plan, Father; I am not a sore loser so I give credit where it is due,” Frasier said. “His queen Cleopatra sent my pope a booty call and while they were getting busy, his bishops snuck into the castle and connived with my knights to stage a coup and take over power.”

“This is all very intriguing,” their father said, meaning that he was not intrigued any more and now that the whiskey was finally in the glass and ready for drinking, he could move to the crux of the matter: “but it doesn’t explain why the room is such a mess.”

“Chess got boring,” Chandler said. “So we were looking for the remote.”

Frasier shook his head heavily. “And after all the trouble we go through to find it, still no Comedy Central.”

What happened was that Chandler and Frasier’s parents had split custody. During school holidays they stayed with whichever parent, Baz or Solome, lost the coin toss. The kids liked each home equally. For example, there was the matter of the

Playstation. There was one at their mother's house, which was also fitted with DSTV. However, though her home was equipped with these creature comforts, she was a harsh and clever parent and was actually more cunning than the two of them; they both knew that they could get away with way more mischief at their father's house. He ranted and raved a lot, but he was a pushover.

This holiday they were at their Dad's place in Kireka, not their mum's in Muyenga and this holiday it was a season of war.

But wait.

Something is weird about the youth of today. Well, something has been weird about the youth of every day since Cain and Abel to be frank, but we want to focus this story on Chandler and Frasier so let us talk about their generation. These kids, especially in neighbourhoods like this one in Kireka, they don't know their neighbours.

When we were younger we all knew each other. We would go outside and hang out, forming nasty little male friendships, huddling in corners to gossip and make plots on whichever teenage girl in the neighbourhood was unfortunate enough to be attractive. It must have been hell for a pretty girl in those days. Every single pimply, gangly, croaking teen boy in the radius who scraped a razor over an imaginary beard each morning made you his chief target. And we all watched Fresh Prince of Bel Air (If you are below 22, I will give you a moment to reach for your phone and look him up on Wikipedia. Got it? Now let us proceed) so we were all using the same corny, outrageous, lame pick-up lines on the poor girl.

This probably explains why so often you find the phenomenon of the late bloomer— a girl who was plain in her teens, then when you meet her in her twenties she is ravishing. That was a clever girl. She hid it from you in her teens because she didn't want you bothering her. But now that you are grown up and probably have a job and better lines than Fresh Prince's, you may now approach the throne and make a move.

Anyway, when we were younger, all the local teens knew each other. In fact, sometimes they knew each other too much. That is, in fact, how Chandler and Frasier came about in the first place. Their parents were once in love with each other. Now they are older and wiser.

But nowadays it is quite common to go through a neighbourhood without seeing a single pack of young wolf pups idling at a corner. These days teens meet at malls, not in the hood. They don't make friends with the other teens in the area.

What happened with Chandler and Frasier, though, is that they made enemies.

The previous holiday they were in Kireka, their father's house, Chez Papa, because they had been banished from Muyenga, their mother's house, Le Mans de la Mama, after their attempt to follow a recipe they found on the internet making for Zulu war paint using eggs and wood ash yielded more catastrophe than their mother was willing to take. Chandler tried to protest that he didn't know you weren't supposed to put eggs in a blender with the shells still on them, but she wasn't ready to listen. She threw them out and they had no place to go but their dad's home.

Now they were looking for more eggs, having learned their lesson, and were determined to use only the egg whites. They were not deterred by the fact that their dad didn't have a blender (He barely had a kitchen. There was just a room with a sink where the containers of take-away and dinner deliveries accumulated until the maid came round on Saturday, snorted, and did her best) but they were sure that something could be improvised with an empty biscuit tin and a plastic fork.

Chandler and Frasier were walking to the row of shops that was nearest to their father's home. Once again, the decline in our society's morals must be complained about. They did not see a single other teenager all the way. All they found was a toddler, around four years old, lacking trousers and therefore easily identified as a male one, that was standing by a roadside puddle bawling at nobody.

"What's he crying about?" asked Frasier.

"Who knows. I don't understand kids of these days," Chandler replied.

Then they reached the shop.

For those of you who live in the normal parts of the city, you know how these shops work. The rest of you will be surprised to find that this is nothing at all like Uchumi, Nakumatt, Tesco, Walmart or whatever supermarket chain serves your neighbourhood. Here, instead of waltzing nicely down aisles picking whatever you want from the shelves and popping it into a silently and sleekly rolling trolley, here you stand beside a barricade and look inside, which is where the merchandise is stored. There are sacks of things you will never recognize because you are a spoilt, pampered rich kid, but I can tell you that they are flour, bushera, maize, beans, groundnuts, rice and sugar. Then there is a fridge, brightly and enthusiastically emblazoned with the logo of a soda company. There is also probably a television-- 12 inches (or less if such a thing is possible). It will be tuned in to Bukedde TV. Around the rest of the shop will be shelves which shall be laden with every single thing in the commercial universe's cheap version. Biscuits, milk, babies nappies, juice concentrate...
And eggs.

It took a while but finally the boys' eyes settled on their prize. But just before Frasier could begin to say, "Good morning, good man. The rains have been kind this season. I hope you are keeping well. You and the rest of the family. Now, would you be so kind as to sell us a few of those splendid-looking eggs you have there on your shelf?" which in Luganda is "Gyebale ssebo. Twagala magyi."

Just before Chandler could remove his hand from his pocket, where it had been gathering notes with which to pay for the eggs, a hand shot between their two faces. A dark, wiry, sinewy hand with four scars around the elbow and a fist clamped around two thousand shillings. A voice followed the hand, piercing the space between the two boys.

"Soda Coca Cola!" It said.

Now, the thing with these boys is that, like their father, they instinctively go to sarcasm even when they have not yet understood what is going on. So Frasier blinked and turned to face the guy behind him.

"Hi. Would you by any chance like to buy a coca cola soda? I was just wondering."

The fellow behind them was taller, older. Probably eighteen. He wore a weatherbeaten LA Clippers jersey and beanie over a shock of raggedy hair. He

looked at Frasier as if only just noticing that there was an item there and that it had just spoken. But this was only for a second because the thought, if you could call the feral impulse that snapped in the dark jungle of his mind a thought, the thought that followed concluded that Frasier was not a soda coca cola and therefore was unimportant. The fellow jutted his arm out further into the shop and repeated, “Soda Coca Cola!”

“Dude!” Chandler spat, realizing that this was actually happening. “We were here first. Go! Away! And wait there!”

“Maybe they run a first idiot first served policy in Kireka shops,” snapped Frasier.

And then Chandler pushed the arm out of the way. With the back of his hand he just swatted it out of the way and turned to face the shopkeeper who, through all this, was watching the whole thing with a bemused look on his face. He was probably not accustomed to people objecting to queue jumpers. He was probably not accustomed to queues. But this was promising to be more interesting than the Bebe Cool video that was flashing on the TV screen behind him so he kept his interest on it.

This was when the fellow behind the boys got mad, taking offense to the fact that these people would not let him jump their queue in peace, and he expressed his fury with two words. One of these words is very commonly used when people want to insult somebody but don’t have the time or energy to concoct an insult. It’s like shorthand for “I hereby insult you”. It begins with K and I shall not repeat it here.

The other word is closely related to this one and some people use it to add emphasis to the first, to show that their fury was not as mild as the first utterance would have suggested. It begins with M and means buttocks.

The boys could not help themselves. It is instinct. And genes. Their parents are both that sort of person. You don’t say Kumanyoko matako to them and expect not to get three hundred words in response.

I urge you strongly not to read the following part. In fact I am going to put a few spaces here so you know which part not to read and when to continue.

.....

.....

Seriously. Don't read this.

....

....

I am warning you.

....

....

Chandler began, "Matako? Me? You polyp. You pulsating black polyp, throbbing on a rectum, bursting with pus and blood, about to break and leak and flood your trousers with streams of red, brown and yellow from the pus."

"You disease of the entire bowel that culminates in the throbbing boils my brother mentioned that clog up the one end and make it impossible to disgorge all the fecal waste that way, making it necessary for some of it to go back out the other way," added Fraiser,

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You can start reading again now.

....

“Which is the reason you talk shit,” concluded Chandler.

Now, these stories are written in English and I tend to be slightly off the central axis when I write them. Either I’m on the side of too much coffee or on the side of quite a bit of Guinness so I forget to point out certain things, like the fact that the boys, during this whole exchange at the shop, were speaking Luganda. That part you didn’t read (I hope you didn’t read it. I warned you not to) sounds twelve times more disgusting in Luganda. Luganda is a language of versatile and profound depth. It is capable of immense, staggeringly immense beauty. But, like every good language, it is also capable of massive filth.

The fellow at the shop, having had his ears flooded with the deluge the boys unleashed in response to his little raindrop of abuse, quickly turned red-eyed and hefty-breathed with fury. He heaved and bulged his eyes. And heaved again. And bulged again. It was evident that he was searching his brain for something to say in response, but really, what was there? It was empty. There was nothing he could say. So he did the only thing he could. He punched.

Luka Mulo is one of the more interesting features of this Kireka neighbourhood for a number of reasons, each of which culminate, ultimately, into one reason.

His complexion is in equal parts dark brown and ashy, much like the bark of an old tree. His body and limbs are taut and sinewy, much like the branches of a tree. And his hairstyle is jagged and chaotic, like the leaves of a tree. On top of this, he carries around this blank expression on his face a lot of the time as if he is not actually in there, as if he is elsewhere, he carries the countenance a tree would have if a tree had a face.

Luka Mulo punched Chandler Bazanye and then slapped Frasier Bazanye and then bought his soda and walked off thinking that was the end of it, his face blank of remorse. It should have been filled with regret. No, not just regret. Fear. Because, if trees could think and process knowledge, then Luka Mulo would know that by messing with the Sons of Solome, he had just opened a big fat clay pot writhing with blood-red worms.

The following is a transcript of a cellular phone call between one Solome and her estranged baby daddy.

- Hi, Solome.
- Hi, Baz.
- How are you these days?
- I am the same way I have been for all the days you have known me, Baz. I have been smart enough to know that you don't ask me how I am unless you want something from me. In fact you don't call me unless you want something from me. In fact you don't even care who let alone how I am unless you want something from me. What do you want from me, Baz?
- Solome, it's the boys.
- It usually is.
- They are scaring me, Solome.
- Come on, Baz, it is your turn to be scared of them for the holiday. You lost the coin toss fair and square. The fish is the head of the 200 shilling coin. It's your fault for not remembering that.
- This is different. I have heard them plotting. They are speaking about a war.
- A war?
- Yes a war.
- Are you sure this is not one of their slang terms? They are teenagers. They say things are "lit" and "dope" instead of speaking properly and saying they are "cool" and "kawa" like mature humans.
- Solome, these boys are planning to attack and destroy someone and I am very worried. They are even armed. I looked in my arsenal and I can't find Dark Wrath and Raw Vengeance.
- Who are those?
- Two of my most devastating weapons. I keep them hidden in a secure location.
- Under your bed?

- Yes. And now they are missing.
- Wait. I thought your most devastating weapon was The Baseball bat of Swift Retribution.
- That one is still in the very secret place where I keep it. None but I can wield the BSR. Dark Wrath and Raw Vengeance joined the armory more recently.
- Cricket bats? Tennis rackets?
- Water guns.
- Water guns?
- The watchman got a new radio a short while ago. It is either faulty or cheap or faulty because it is cheap, or cheap because it is faulty, or it only tunes into a station that plays hisses, crackles and sizzling versions of popular hits. I asked him to turn it off and he would not listen, so I bought Dark Wrath, a water gun, to shoot him with every time he switches it on while I am trying to sleep.
- That sort of proactive thinking is what we need in Uganda, Baz. Development depends on people like you who see a problem and do not hesitate to do what it takes to fix it. But now, that explains Dark Wrath. What about Raw Vengeance?
- Well, Dark Wrath was powerful and accurate but mostly at a relatively close range. I could get him from my window. But sometimes he would go and hide behind a car or something, so I had to bring in Raw Vengeance, whose chief strength is that it emits a powerful blast over a larger distance.
- Aaah. Okay. I'm up to speed. And now your weapons are missing...
- And are probably in the hands of mine enemies.
- Hah hah! Baz, be serious. They are not your enemies. They are your sons!
- People can be both.
- You think they are going to attack you with water guns?
- I would not be worried if I merely thought they were going to attack me with water guns. I may not be as rich as you Muyenga people, Solome, but at my job they don't pay me in feathers. I earn enough money to buy an umbrella. I am worried because they are plotting. Plotting, Solome. Chandler and Frasier are PLOTTING!"
- So what do you want me to do, besides be so glad I chose the fish?
- When a person plots and you don't know what their plan is, and you want to defeat it, the best thing to do is affect the part of the plan you *do* know about. Now, I don't know what they plan to do to wage this war against me, but I do know that it involves water guns and a target: me. So...
- So?

- So I need to come and crash at your place. That way we remove the target from the plot, foiling it immediately. You see? I think I read that in the Art of War by Sun Tzu. Or I heard it in a 50 Cent song.
- Baz, just because we had two kids together doesn't mean you can come and live with me. We are estranged. If you look that up in the dictionary you will find that it means, 'not wanting to live with a named party'.
- I don't mean we have to live together. One of us has to stay with the kids.
- What are you talking about? Are you suggesting...
- We exchange houses. Just for a couple of weeks until they realize that their war is not going to work.
-
- Hello? Hello? Hello?

The cornered rat and the single father often find themselves in similar situations; the realization hits both, occasionally, that they cannot run and hide any more and that they now have to take up arms and fight.

Unfortunately for the rat, this realization does little to change its fate. It is still going to be crushed by a swift broom, but the single father, after his estranged baby mama hangs up on him, still has the option of gearing up for battle.

So the old man, when the boys were not looking, sneaked out of the house and into his car and drove off to a nearby mall complex.

Later that evening Chandler and Frasier sat silent in front of the TV. It flashed dull grey and green and blue light at them. There was a wafting of violins and a lot of American sighing coming from the speakers. Evidently a drama at a tense moment in the third act.

"Look. Are you gonna tell me who dirrit?" said one character, with a mustache and a low-brimmed hat.

There was a hiss. It could be interpreted as the sound of waves hitting a wharf. Or the sound of wind rushing through a narrow alley. It was just the sound of tension.

"I knoo yooda figured iddout by now," said the sallow-faced dark-haired woman who stood adjacent to the detective, her hands on the rail of the bridge, staring broodily out at the sea.

Whoosh. Hiss. The detective took the cigarette out of his mouth and dropped it to the ground. He looked up at the camera to show how intense his face was.

“I was tryna give ya a second chyanse ta do the right thin,” he said.

The wind blew the dark hair away from the woman’s face. She winced and turned to face the detective. “I ain’t too good with second chyances, Brock,” she said. “I just ain’t never been no good,”

“We can do this together, Chelsea, you gatta believe me!” the detective impored.

Chelsea melted in his arms, weeping into his black coat collars. “Ah... ah downo whatta say...” she blubbered through trembling lips.

The detective held her firmly, strongly, with what we know from TV as masculine reassurance and, every word rasping with grit and gravel intoned, “Say... jussay...”

“TREMBLE! FEAR! PANIC! FLEE! FOR ALL THE ASS IS GOING TO GET KICKED! BEHOLD THE WEAPON TO END ALL WEAPONS! BEHOLD, THE FINAL DEVASTATOR!! MUAHAHAHAHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH!!!!”

The two boys gasped, their attention jerked suddenly away from the TV screen and to the doorway behind them from where this sudden outburst had come. There stood their father laughing maniacally, one arm raised in a fist, the other one holding the largest water gun either one of them had ever seen on display in the mall.

“What’s that?” asked Chandler. The direct approach is usually Chandler’s first choice.

“It’s a mad father,” said Frasier, almost under his breath, staring up at the apparition.

“What is it holding?” Chandler asked.

“Exactly what we need,” Fraiser said.

“You thought you would challenge me? You thought you would rise up against me? The Father, The Original Baz? The Cause of Effect? Well you thought wrong. For I shall tear you down,” roared the maniac. “Muahahahahahaahah!”

“Dad, what are you talking about?” Chandler’s questions were staying within a close theme.

“You stole my guns to attack me with them, eh? Well, try and attack me now, with those puny pistols. I dare you. Look at this behemoth in my hands, this is the Final Devastator. This will teach you that water guns don’t kill people, but they do drench them!”

Frasier and Chandler leapt up in shock when they saw their father raise the water gun to his chest and draw the pump.

“Muzeeyi ,wait wait!”

“Begging for mercy? Already?” the man guffawed.

“No no, you don’t understand. We were not going to attack you when we borrowed your guns...”

“You mean when you stole my guns!” but the growl was dropping slowly in decibels and menace and confidence.

Frasier, continued. “Fatheroo, let us assess the facts: you are in your forties. They are toy water guns. You have children in the house. Do you think any court in the land will interpret that as us stealing your property?”

“Us we found toys. We are kids. We took them,” Chandler delivered the summation. “Well within our rights.”

For the next five minutes, the old man stood there, a very expensive toy water gun in one hand. It was fully loaded, and very large, meaning it was also very heavy.

“Are you coming for me?” he asked, eyes narrowing suspiciously.

“That would be disrespectful, and UnAfrican of us, to attack our own father with water guns! Unthinkable!” Frasier gasped.

“Especially when we already know all your allergies,” added Chandler.

“And how soundly you sleep.”

“And the passwords of your email and phone and facebook.”

“And your exes...”

Their dad looked at the water gun in his hand. An idea struck him. He wondered what whiskey would taste like coming out of a giant water gun and with that, dismissed himself.

On the next morning, the sky was blue, the sun was bright and the birds were singing, although there was a new timbre to their song which only the more astute bird linguists would interpret as a question mark.

They were singing thus: “Guys, is that Chandler down there squatting behind those bushes on the side of the road?”

“I think it is. And look. On this side, is that Frasier?”

“What are they doing awake at seven in the morning on a school holiday? Is it already Armageddon?”

But birds can never be expected to understand the ways of man, because we are too sophisticated. And so they would not know what would make man break the norm this morning.

Chandler, as the little blue bird had observed, was squatting on one side of the road, his face smeared in black and green streaks of flour and food dye. And Frasier, as the bird with the red and green feathers had noted, was on the other side, similarly smeared.

One held Dark Wrath in his arm. The other was poised with Raw Vengeance on the other side of the road.

They waited.

After five minutes, Frasier heard a small beep in his pocket. He pulled out his cellphone.

“Dude, the guy isn’t showing up,” said the message.

With one hand Frasier typed back a response. “Thanks for the update, Honourable Minister of Obvious Affairs.”

Another five minutes passed, then another beep came.

“Seriously. Where the hell is he?”

Beep. “Seriously, if I knew I would not be here waiting to trap him. I would be there pumping water into his face.”

Beep. “You sound irritated.”

Beep. “It is seven in the morning. Of course I am irritated.”

Beep: “Maybe we should adjourn. We are not built for this.”

Beep: “I am not letting him get away with this just because you want to go back to sleep, man. No way.”

Beep: “I am just saying, we can come back later. I am sure we can trap him later in the day.”

Back at the house, the old man was wandering through the rooms as he did every morning, mumbling incoherently to the walls, to the carpet, to the shadows and to himself, bumping into things and stumbling in circles through various rooms. He was not a morning person. He was barely a person in the morning. He was more like a random jumble of blurred impulses colliding in confusion within a central nervous system that was befuddled and lost and quite resentful over having been assaulted by that alarm clock.

Usually it took an hour and the meticulous observation of certain rituals -- the brushing of teeth, the cold shower, the brushing of teeth again having forgotten that they had already been brushed, the coffee, the loud music from either NWA or Lynrd Skynrd (he was probably their last surviving Ugandan fan) – to rouse him to a state of at least some wakefulness.

But this morning the sight he saw shot him from zero to sixty in an instant.

“Who allowed you to go to discos, you deviants! That is not a question! I swear if either one of you has made someone pregnant and or picked up a drug habit I will not be an understanding parent. I will do things that will enable you to

provide the basis of PhD theses for psychotherapists in the future!" he yelled at the two boys who walked in through the front door at seven thirty that morning.

"Muzadde, what are you talking about? We are not from any disco," said Frasier, putting his gun down. Chandler walked in after him and placed his gun next to his brother's. Then he picked it up again, squirted a shot into his own face and began to wash the paint off.

"You are just spreading it around. Go to the bathroom," said Frasier.

"If you are not returning from a disco, then what other possible reason is there for you to be walking in at seven thirty? Nothing else is even remotely plausible," said their dad.

"But dad, you were there when we told you of our mission," Chandler said, squinting through a face that was now entirely grey. "We have been outside waiting to ambush our enemy." He held up the water gun as evidence.

It began to dawn on their father. The previous night, as he ignored them and focused instead on trying to aim accurately into the glass from the Final Devastator at record length of five feet, his new game, they had said something about laying an ambush to get Mulo. He had not figured that it would happen in the morning. It takes a lot of concentration to shoot whiskey into glasses at a distance.

"So, did you get him?" he asked the boys.

Frasier shook his head sadly. "Nah. We waited but there was no sign of him. I guess he was still in his own bed sleeping. We wasted our time squatting in those bushes."

"I think my bush was some animal's toilet," Chandler said morosely.

"Wait," their dad sat down. "You went out to stage an ambush for someone and you did not even know whether he would be awake to fall into it? You people, haven't you ever heard of strategy? You didn't have intelligence?"

Frasier was offended. "We have intelligence. We have lots of intelligence!"

"No," the old man said. "You have craftiness and cunning. If you had intelligence you would not have been crouching in bushes early in the morning while your target is asleep and while the smell of animal piss insinuates itself into your clothes. Chandler, you are going to bathe off that stench, but not in my

bathroom. Carry a basin to the garage or something. Intelligence, particularly military intelligence, is the first step to a successful campaign. You need to find ways of gathering information about your enemy before you launch your strategy against him. I advise you to recruit a spy.”

As Chandler’s shoulders fell and he began to slouch towards the back where the basins were kept, Frasier’s face folded into a frown. “A spy, yes. Someone to tell us what his habits are, where he goes and at what time. That way we will be able to set a trap that will crush him! Muahahahaha!”

“You’re welcome,” said his father.

“Muahahahaha!” was all Frasier replied.

The day stretched on. The sun crossed the sky. Fate progressed. The planet spun. The narrator filled in the paragraph with non-informative sentence fragments. And then it was evening and the male portions of the family were reunited when the father returned to his house.

At the sound of the door shutting behind him, Frasier rose to his feet and shouted, “Tennnn HUT!”

Chandler snapped to his feet and clapped his arms straight down his sides.

Their father understood what was going on immediately, because the fruit had not fallen far from the tree in this, as in most cases, and so he just put his bag down and said, “At ease soldiers.”

He joined the two boys at the dining table, over which a large sheet of paper was spread, crisscrossed in pencil with marks and lines.

“Apprise me of the situation, lieutenant,” he said, taking the empty seat at the top of the table. “What is the latest intel on operation Flood of Justice?”

“Yes sir,” said Frasier. “Our agent in the field, who shall be referred to as Double-O Kay Will havetodo, filed a report at Oh twelve thirty hundred hours PM,” Fraiser reported.

The agent, also known as Alleni, the six-year-old daughter of the housegirl from the people next door (which meant that she was a kid who hung around the neighbourhood and had a lot of time on her hands) had been conscripted for the fee of a few biscuits. In between munches she had revealed that Mulo was not difficult to find.

“Mulo? Tall, dark skinned, raggedy guy? You know him?” Frasier had asked. Then seeing the look on Alleni’s face, backtracked. Everyone was tall to her. “Dark skinned, raggedy guy?”

Alleni blinked like a six-year-old who doesn’t understand questions and hazarded, “Chandler.”

Chandler bristled. “I’m not raggedy. I am fly. These clothes are from malls even, not from markets. Recognize game and be a hater later,” he admonished the child.

Frasier understood that the agent needed more details. “He is darker than Chandler. Hair like an old broom. He likes wearing a t-shirt with a photo of a monkey that is sticking a finger up its nostril.”

Alleni looked up at Frasier. There was more blinking. Then she slowly asked. “A shirt that when there is a monkey there?”

“That is correct. A shirt with that characteristic. The monkey is picking its nose,” Frasier repeated.

“The monkey she is doing like dis?” and Alleni dug her (yes, Alleni was a girl. In Uganda girls can be called Allen) little stub of a forefinger up her minute nostril. She managed to find and extract more goo than you would presume could fit in there.

“Exactly!” said Chandler, offering her a handkerchief. Alleni looked at it and blinked again. She did not know what handkerchiefs were for, being a self-sufficient child who was more used to taking care of her boogers the old fashioned way. It was disgusting.

Chandler put his finger on his temple and made a whirring sound. “Erasing memory. Erasing. Whrrrrrrrr! Click!”

Alleni just blinked on. She said, “Dat boy she is called Mulo. She like smoking.”

“Really? A delinquent?” said Chandler, re-engaging in the conversation.

“Every day she go to da bushes dere and with da friends she go and dey be smoking,” said Alleni.

“This is valuable. Do you, by any lucky chance, know how to tell us what time he goes to these bushes to smoke? I know it’s a stretch but you are on a snitching roll here and it makes me think that I should not underestimate your capacity.”

Alleni indeed had more to offer. A precise time. “Dey go for smoking when tis time for sleeping time after eating time for lunch time. When am in da room going to sleep me I see dem when dey are going for smoking.”

Frasier extended an open palm to Chandler, who met it with the high five that the moment had inspired. They knew that Alleni’s afternoon nap was at three, because every day at that time she would start wailing and cursing and screaming as if she thought that just once, just this once, her mother would let her stay out and play instead of shutting her into the bedroom, as if she thought that once, just once, it would lead to freedom and not to a heavy spanking.

Back at the dinner table-turned-Situation Room, Chandler pointed at a spot on the map. “The target frequents these coordinates on a regular basis every afternoon at Oh three hundred hours PM.”

“He goes there to join others and smoke without the knowledge of his parents. This behaviour is deplorable. One must never do things without the knowledge of one's parents. This is one of the reasons why we must destroy him,” Frasier said. Then he paused to cough.

“Let’s focus, Lieutenant,” said the Commander (the person who sits at the head of the table is the commander, apparently. These rules are made up arbitrarily)

“How come I am a lieutenant and he is a lieutenant?” Chandler asked.

“It’s the same thing,” Commander replied.

“It’s not pronounced the same. Left and Lyoo are different words,” Lieutenant Chandler objected.

“Oh, one is British and one is American. I am not sure which is which, so I don’t know which is correct. I use a different one each time so I can be correct at least half the time. A better bet than risking being wrong all the time. You see?”

“What is the difference between American and British Lieutenants?” asked Frasier, being drawn in.

“It’s like the difference between James Bond and Jack Bauer,” Commander explained.

“Who are those?” Chandler asked, and their father, realising how old he was, adjourned the meeting to get his whiskey. Was Jack Bauer really that long ago?

At two forty five, or what Lieutenant Frasier would prefer to call Oh two forty five hundred hours PM, the Storm Force Strike squad took their positions. Frasier had the high ground of the perimeter, which was inside the abandoned and crumbling wooden shack that Blown, a neighbourhood shopkeeper, used to store his produce in before he found that rats were using it for the same purpose. The rats felt that the food in it was theirs, that is to say. Frasier was ducked inside with a bucket of water, full to the brim. This was his ammunition. He also had a pile of buveera, or polythene bags, filled with water. These were grenades.

The low ground was taken by Lieutenant Chandler who was standing among the brick and grass of an unfinished house that somebody had been building on that plot before he got caught up in an audit, had his embezzlement exposed, and was sent to jail.

The seconds ticked and tocked. Then ticked again. Some of them even tucked. Because the tension was so high.

And finally the mobile phone vibrated in Chandler’s pocket. “The rabbit has left the kitchen. Prepare to strike. Over,” said Frasier in a hoarse and cracked voice, one that could be found in the same general clan as the voice Bruce Willis used in Expendables. At least they knew Bruce Willis, if not Jack Bauer.

“Roger that, copy. In position. Over,” replied Chandler in a voice that could claim to be distantly related by marriage to that of Batman.

Mulo strode up the hill. When an unarmed and undefended victim walks up hills into an ambush, the air about him is usually one of exaggerated confidence.

The peace and calm of his gestures seems to be amplified. In this case Mulo was actually kicking an empty mineral water bottle up the path, hands in his pocket, and he was humming along to whatever song it was that was playing in the imitation Beats By Dre headphones he wore over his scruffy hair. It was difficult to tell what song it actually was because the humming was flat and tuneless and his wooden treelike expression offered no hints. It might have been something from Taylor Swift for all we knew.

The Storm Force Strike Team waited. Mulo strode on. The SFST waited and watched.

Mulo swaggered onwards, kicking his bottle.

He had just removed his hands from his pockets to scratch one of the drier elbows when he suddenly heard a loud shout and found himself under fire.

“Break yourself, fool!” yelled Frasier, leaping out of his hiding place and shooting blast after blast of water at Mulo.

“And I will rain upon thee with furious anger...” Chandler shouted shooting beam after beam at the target.

Such was the power of Dark Wrath that Mulo could not even stop to think of resisting. All he could do was run. And such was the length of Chandler’s speech that by the time he was done, they had pursued Mulo round a bend, up a small rise, and all the way to the nook where the smoking Alleni had told them about had just began.

Mulo burst into the circle gasping. His friends turned round in shock to see him dripping wet and gasping for breath. They were just about to ask what was happening when, into the circle sprang his pursuers.

Flushed, if you will excuse the pun, with the thrill that comes from having your enemy on the run, and sure of victory, the two boys were shooting wildly, burst after burst of water, the jets streaming. They were not even aiming any more. They just shot them in the vague direction they presumed Mulo might be fleeing in at the time.

Which is why once they turned the corner to the smoking section they could not stop the fountain of water that leapt out of their guns and splashed over not just Mulo, but the four other guys who were also standing there.

They were tall, with curt looks on their faces, teeth that looked like they could open beer bottles, eyes that looked like they had seen these kids who had just drenched them and legs that apparently were set to run at the boys, catch them and enable hands, also in play, to exert revenge.

This is why Chandler and Frasier turned and fled.

This is the epilogue part of the story. These things are short because, well, so are life, my attention span and I. At five seven it is not that easy for me to stretch anything out.

So the sun was dipping beneath the roofs of the rich people's houses, the trees were in silhouette, the cars were snaking back home with their lights just coming on if they were responsible drivers. The enyange birds were sailing west across the sky in their arrowhead formation and, like the drivers and the birds, the soldiers of Kireka were heading home.

Chandler and Frasier bore their wounded pride on weary shoulders. Yes, they had scored a victory, technically, in that the mission had been successful. They had left their enemy soaked to the skin. They had achieved that which they set out to do. However, the fact that they did not leave the battle with cocky swaggers, raising their arms triumphant, but rather had run like bushrats from the scene, quite heavily soured that victory and made it seem a bit too much like a defeat. They had spent the rest of the afternoon musing over the bitterness of this reality in the abandoned building that had been Chandler's base (it was both nearer and easier to hide in) and were now returning home. The bitterness of the soul does not preclude hunger. Even bitter souls need dinner.

They dragged their feet up the path to the house.

Nope, they were not saying anything.

They raised their heavy heads to look at the house.

They noticed that the lights were on and that their father's car was parked outside. He was home early. They inwardly considered going in through the back

door if only to avoid the mockery that would inevitably spill from his mouth when he saw them looking so forlorn after their battle.

They inwardly decided that this would be best. They looked at each other and the agreement was sealed. How come they needed mobile phones to act as walkie talkies during the mission and yet they were, as this moment seemed to suggest, telepathically linked all along?

They entered the house through the kitchen door and heard their father's voice guffawing loud. It was a unique guffaw, one that was more pleased with itself than usual. It sounded as if he had company.

He did, and this was confirmed soon after his guffaw when a rumble of polite laughter followed the loud bellow. It was a laugh these boys heard often, being teenagers, even though it was a laugh they never uttered, being these particular teenagers. It was the laugh young people give when an older person has told a joke. Chandler and Frasier never laughed at old peoples jokes just for the sake of it. Life, like their father, their author and them, was too short. Often they just demanded a better one.

But whoever was in the sitting room with their dad was not as brave, or just had better manners and was therefore chuckling dutifully at his stories. Chandler had to see.

Again that telepathy. It can apparently be transcribed. It turns out this is how it went.

Chandler gave Frasier a look that said, "I need to see what is going on."

Frasier replied with a look that said, "This funeral? It's yours. So whatever."

Chandler crept up to the door that lead to the living room and peeped through the keyhole. Then he started back so suddenly that Frasier had to stop in his tracks in the corridor.

Chandler blinked at Frasier. "You need to see this."

Frasier crept up to the door and looked through the keyhole. The sight that met his eye made him start as violently as his brother. He stared back with a look that said, "Shit!"

For in the sitting room, squeezed onto the sofa set, were the four boys they had found in the smoking section. All four of them on the sofa.

They had brought the fight to them? Is that how aggressive they were? But what were they doing in the house with the old man? He must have found them lurking in the compound waiting to ambush Chandler and Frasier and got them to come in and listen to his old man stories.

Chandler and Frasier looked around. There it was, leaning on the wall near the shoe rack, their father's doomsday weapon. Final Devastator.

"Should we?" looked Chandler.

"Are we mice or are we men? Of course we should!" Frasier looked back and he reached for the gun.

"Wait..." said Chandler and beckoned his brother back.

Oh, it seemed there was a limit to the telepathy. Now they wanted to use words.

In the recesses of the corridor Chandler whispered, "Okay, we need a plan. We can't just go in blasting. We could hit dad."

"He will dry off. He's our father," Frasier countered.

"He will be mad."

"And since when was that a problem?" Frasier said, and began to creep back towards the gun.

"Wait," Chandler hissed back.

"What?"

"We could hit the TV."

Frasier returned immediately. "We need a plan."

Chandler thought for a few seconds. "Okay. I've got it. I will go in and try to lure them towards the kitchen. I will get them to walk through the door. When they get there, cry havoc and let loose the dogs."

"Good plan," Frasier nodded, back to wordless communication, and off strode Chandler.

This has turned out to be a pretty long epilogue for such a short story.

“When I was your age,” the old man was saying when Chandler burst through the door.

“YOU WANT US COME AND GET US!” He shrieked.

The four boys didn’t move. They just turned to face Chandler and ... and they smiled.

“Ah, here is Chandler, the younger one,” said his father.

Chandler was caught between wondering why his own father would deliver him to his enemies like this and bewilderment at the smiles that were beaming at him. He could just gulp.

“Chandler, these young men have been here waiting for you for almost half an hour. Where have you guys been? Where is Frasier?” He turned to the four squashed up on the sofa. “The other one is never far behind. I am sure he will be here any time now.”

“Good evening, Chandler,” said one of the smiling boys.

“Good evening?” Chandler echoed. They didn’t pick up that he was asking incredulously and assumed he was returning their greeting and continued.

“My names I am called Okecho Martin. This is Kizito Joseph...”

One of them, who we gather was Joseph Kizito but was Ugandan and therefore often was introduced in the Ugandan way, that is, coloniser name after real name, squeezed his narrow bottom off the sofa and appeared to lunge at Chandler.

This is the point where Chandler should have turned and began his flight, for the plan was to run and lure them into the ambush. But in his panic, instead of running, Chandler flicked like a switchblade into a kung fu stance, one arm outstretched, palm open, the other arm bent, also palm open.

Kizito took the outstretched arm and shook it, smiling. Then returned to squash himself back onto the sofa between Okecho and the fellow who Okecho was to introduce as, “This is Okello Duncan.”

Okello also squirmed his bum out of the tight squeeze and shook the still-outstretched palm of the bewildered Chandler.

Okello spoke, "Good evening,"

"And finally, Rogers Atwine," said Okecho because one out of four Ugandans insists on their names being rendered in the English order.

Rogers squished out of the scrum, shook Chandler's hand, and smiled. "Good evening. Rogers."

Chandler was frozen in pose while Okecho and his friends continued to smile. He looked askance at his father, who, as usual, was beaming in avuncular bliss. He didn't often have teenagers treat him like this, with deference and respect, so he was enjoying having these four here acting grovelly and obsequious. Until Chandler interrupted, the old man had been testing the limits of just how far he can go, just how boring a story he can tell them and still get that polite laughter they unfailingly offered as a response to him.

Okecho continued. "We are from the local group called Kireka Youth Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse. We have been working in the local community to sensitize the youth about the dangers of alcohol and drugs."

Rogers beamed directly at Chandler and said, "We sensitize the youth."

Chandler looked at the whiskey in his father's hand. His dad beamed on, oblivious to the irony.

"We have been trying to eliminate the use of marijuana in the community," Okecho continued.

"Marijuana usage," Roger added. "Around here is growing rampant."

"And we have been having a hard time trying to understand how to enforce... If I may use that word, enforce I think is the best term to use, isn't it?" Okecho asked his friends. They nodded and looked at each other and nodded left and right. Roger confirmed it by saying, "Enforce is what we have been trying to do."

Chandler looked at his dad. His dad, catching the look, decided to bring the rambling explanation to a conclusion. "But you gave them a great idea and now they are going to use the arsenal to hose down the teenage smokers!"

Finally Chandler dropped the kung fu stance. "What?"

"Yes Chandala" said Okecho, "We would like your help to help us..."

“Hold on a minute,” Chandler said. He retreated from the sitting room and returned a second later dragging Frasier with him. “Proceed. It’s best he hears this first hand. Otherwise he will keep saying, what, what, what? And I will have to keep repeating it. Go on.”

“We were saying we would like your help,” begun Okecho.

“Your assistance, that is,” echoed Rogers.

“To acquire such devices and to develop skills to utilise them in our enforcement.”

“You want us to get you waterguns and teach you how to drench Mulo?” This time it was Frasier and not Rogers who did the reiterating.

“That is correct. To teach and drench,” because Rogers had to get a word in.

“Bring Raw Vengeance and Dark Wrath. The organisation has agreed to buy them. But not Final Devastator. That one stays with me. Just in case,” their dad was patting his pocket and smiling even more. He had obviously charged them a hefty price.

“So, we are training you guys,” said Frasier.

“We have to learn how to utilize the weapons,” said Roger, getting his in before Okello for once.

Chandler looked at Frasier. Frasier looked at Chandler.

Lieutenant Chandler and Lieutenant Frasier grinned. “Troops, fall in for training at oh noon hundred hours PM tomorrow without fail. Teen hut!”