

ACT I: DANSE MACABRE

[01] KAMENGEN 01

Tse Bii'Ndzisgaii

Dinétah (Navajo Nation), North America

19 July 2042 C.E.

If you think the problem is bad now, just wait until we've solved it.

The Navajo girl in pigtails, no more than six years old, crashes into Damien and leaves great patches of her skin behind. Even through his protective suit, he feels the heat from her body like bread fresh out of the oven. She quivers, gasps, and then convulses, coughing. Tattered ribbons of skin hang from her arms, torso, face. Pustules and scars cover her from head to toe. In a moment, the convulsions stop, and she...melts in his arms, slipping to the dusty ground. Where his hands touched her, she peels like an overripe banana.

His head swims, and Damien forces himself to look away. Don't pass out. Don't pass out.

Hands on his shoulders. "Hey, Nexus, you okay?"

Through clenched teeth, Damien replies, "Fine." To prove it, he turns his face toward the voice and wrests his lips into a smile. "Just fine."

The other, a slender Amerind with chestnut eyes and wide lips visible through transparent polymer faceplate, pats Damien's shoulder before releasing him. "No disgrace, Nexus, if you can't handle it." The slightest hint of a French accent sounds more than a little accusative. "It's rough the first time you see something like this. Look away, and if you feel yourself going, leave. Just do not take your helmet off. Faint if you must. The evac team will pick you up."

A shot of stubborn annoyance clears Damien's head. "Thanks for the advice, *Doc*. Is that from experience?" As soon as he says it, Damien is sorry he did.

The other man nods, conceding the point, and holds out his hand. "No reason to turn this into a hydeing contest between the Nexus and *Medecins sans Frontieres*."

Damien grasps his hand. "I'm twenty-five, you're...what, thirty?"

"Thirty-one."

"Helms! My grandmother says that early-adult human males shouldn't

be allowed out without keepers. I guess she's right." He squeezes the man's hand, then releases it. "Damien Nshogoza."

"Jamiar Heavitree. Good to meet you. And, yes, I was speaking from experience. Leave if you feel the need, but keep that helmet locked. A breath of air is not worth contracting Dekoa virus." Heavitree sighs. "All right, we have an epidemic to take care of."

Quickly but methodically, Heavitree and his three companions— all wearing the red and white insignia of MsF— move through the small Navajo encampment, and Damien does his best to keep up and be useful.

It is simple work, as long as he doesn't think too hard about the implications. Each Navajo he meets fell into one of three categories: the dead, those sick with Dekoa, and those who still have a chance. It is easy to tell: those with blistered, peeling skin, thrashing in agony, are sick; everyone else is either dead or healthy. There are too many dead, far too few healthy.

For the healthy, Damien reaches into the satchel on his left and slaps a tracer patch on the patient. A later wave of medevac agents will find and rescue them.

For the sick, there is a syringe from the satchel on his right. Jab, squeeze, and release. Sometimes, when he pulls the syringe back, skin peels away from rich, red flesh. After ten doses, he discards the syringe. Damien doesn't ask what is in the syringes; he only knows that it brings quick peace to the sufferers.

He bears no third satchel; for the dead, there is...nothing.

"That's it for this camp," Heavitree says.

Damien nods and glances at the display glowing on the sleeve of his suit. Thumbing the input, he reports, "Team Alpha, Target Six-Three is secured. Request transport to Target Seven-Niner."

No sooner has the computer confirmed his message, then he hears an approaching copter from the south. The doctors— looking more like astronauts than medical relief workers— gather around.

"Nunn, it's hot," one of them says.

"Thirty-five in the shade," Damien says. "And there ain't no shade."

"But at least," Heavitree says with his unwavering smile, "it's a *dry* heat."

"Speak for yourself," another doctor, a woman, says. "I'm sweating like a pig. They've got to get air conditioning in these suits."

"Anglos can't take heat," Heavitree says, "Never knew one that could." His tone is friendly enough, and the other doctor doesn't seem to mind, but

the comment makes Damien uncomfortable. All the more so when Heavitree continues, "Isn't that right, Nexus?"

Damien is spared the necessity of a response by the helicopter's arrival. The five of them scramble aboard and they are instantly airborne, just as quickly setting down again. This time the target is a small settlement of perhaps three dozen eight-sided log houses with earthen roofs. A few lonely sheep wander, just meters away; otherwise, the settlement is deserted. As they jump out and the copter lifts off, no response comes from any of the buildings.

In silence stirred only by the departing copter's blades, they split up, each taking a different building. Damien pushes open the first door he comes to and cautiously pokes his head in. The dim interior is a marked contrast to bright sunlight outside, and it takes his eyes a few moments to adjust.

The spacious room is impeccably tidy, folded blankets stacked carefully, the hearth spotless. A single terminal, at least two decades old, sits dark and quiet in one corner; a hand-loom occupies another. In the center, on a rough rug of earthtone Navajo designs, four bodies are arranged in a row and covered with blankets. One is a woman about Damien's age, three are children. Flies and rot have only begun to make a mockery of the care with which they'd been arranged.

Pushing aside hanging curtains, Damien examines other rooms. Toilet, what seems to be a tool closet, sleeping rooms with straw mats and hand-woven blankets. In the second of these, Damien finds the architect of all the respectful order: a small, elderly Anglo woman, her gaunt, proud face furrowed with the wrinkles of many lifetimes. Wrapped in a blanket and decked with silver necklaces, she sits on a straw pallet with her back to the wall, head down and eyes closed. Damien is on the point of leaving, when the woman raises her head. Her deep blue eyes, solemn and sad, are endless as the skies of desert night.

Barely a whisper, she croaks, "Are you real, or a spirit?"

"Real." He can't imagine what to say.

The woman nods. "I knew...that if I waited...someone would come." Her eyes move, for the barest instant, in the direction of the main room. "I tried to...make them...comfortable. My daughter...and grandchildren. I don't know their ways, but...I tried my best."

Damien has to look away.

"What should I do?" The woman's voice, stronger but still barely audible, is preternaturally calm. "Have you come to take me?"

"A-Are you...sick?"

She shakes her head, almost sadly. "No." As if confessing a dreadful sin. "Watched them all come down with it. Everyone. I never...got...sick." She looks up at Damien and asks, with calm curiosity that is far, far worse than impassioned appeal, "Why didn't I get sick? Why me? Why not...?" She trails off, then asks again, "What should I do?"

Damien takes out a tracer patch and touches it to the woman's neck. She makes no move to resist; he can't tell if she even notices. "Someone will be here for you in a little while. They'll take you s-somewhere else. Where you'll be safe." Lame, but all the comfort he has to offer.

"I'll wait. Thank you."

Damien backs to the doorway, fumbles with the curtain. "I-I have to go. I have other houses to check." And will each hold a nightmare like this one?

"You've been very kind. I'll be perfectly fine."

He leaves in a hurry.

When he first read of Dekoa's 78% infection rate and 90% mortality, Damien never expected to see it so powerfully demonstrated. He remembers thinking, four in five, without bothering to picture what the statistic really meant in bodies, lives, souls.

Outside, in the sun and the heat, he breathes deeply— even though it is bottled air, no more or less fresh than he's been breathing all along. To the north and east, fields and scrub fade into desert, dominated by soaring mesas in brilliant colors. Between here and the horizon, there is no movement, no sound. The stillness of the tiny village, the remoteness of the unearthly landscape, makes Damien wonder for a moment if he *isn't* spirit instead of flesh, insubstantial visitor to a ghostly world.

He is shocked from his reverie by the approach of two team members, Heavitree and the woman whose name he does not know.

"You know," the woman muses, "this would go quicker if we had entertainment. Or at least some music."

"How about it, friend?" Heavitree asks. "I am sure the other teams would appreciate it as well."

"I'll have to—" Damien stops. He was on the verge of saying he would have to ask the ranking Nexus operative...then he remembered that he *is* the ranking Nexus operative. The decision is all his. And it is one he should have made at the beginning of the operation. "I'll have to see," he finishes.

Nominally, Monument Valley— indeed, the whole Navajo Nation— is under Nexus interdict...and will be, until Navajo raiding parties stop

killing their Hopi neighbors. The terms of interdict, in theory, are unyielding: the offending nation can have no commerce or contact with the world community until they were ready to rejoin it. No trade, no tourists, no Net connections in or out. Only refugees are allowed to leave.

For three weeks the interdict has held, Nexus volunteers working alongside U.N. peacekeepers and Mexamerican troops. Then the first cases of Dekoa flu showed up among the refugees, and MsF arrived with a U.N. mandate to open the interdict.

Now a single strand of data fiber, temporarily strung across the border at Gray Mountain, carries all the traffic for the relief operation. And Damien is the one who decides what that fiber transmits.

He flips open the keypad on his wrist and punches in a code, instituting a link to the Nexus command post. "Skippy?"

"*Habari gani*, boss. How goes it?" His assistant is, somehow, always cheerful; Damien suspects drugs.

"Don't ask. Can you pull the unit codes for all our people in Dinétah? Not just Nexus, but everybody?"

"Sure."

"I want to give them each standard access to MusicWeb, audio-only, voice-command protocol. But I don't want any unauthorized packets piggybacking on the bandwidth. Can you set that up?"

"Sure. We're passing telemetry and voice now; that fiber has plenty of room left. I can set up a realtime monitor-and-compare loop on the system here and have it kick out any spurious packets. That should keep the traffic clean."

"Good. Do it, please, and then announce to all team members. Thanks."

Damien links back into the common channel, and says to Heavtree, "It'll take just a few seconds. Thanks, I should have thought of that earlier."

"I think you have had other things on your mind, my friend." Heavtree knows, Damien realizes, that something in the last house spooked him. "This is difficult work that we do, and you do not have our training. If you would like, we can work as partners for a little while."

Damien considers taking the offer as an insult, then decides not to. "If you don't mind. I'm a little more shaky than I thought I would be."

As they move through the rest of the houses, Damien finds himself impressed by Heavtree's sensitivity. To the dying as well as the survivors, he is compassionate and understanding. With his soft voice and his easy, supportive touch, Heavtree calms the frantic and brings the face of

humanity into this nightmare.

Damien can see why MsF chose him to head the relief operation.

House after house, target after target, hour after hour they work like avenging angels, choosers of the dead. Finally, Damien reports the latest target secured, and the computer spits out an unbelievable reply: "All targets secured. Return to base."

He follows the others aboard the copter, stomach empty and bladder full, and slumps on the deck next to Heavtree. "We've done it," Damien says. "Medevac units are over half done their job, too. By nightfall the whole area will be ready for sterilization."

Heavtree sighs. "I've been on more than a dozen of these missions. It never gets any easier."

The fire hall in Gray Mountain has been turned into decontam, headquarters, and mess hall for the operation. Damien, along with the others, allows the decontam crew to spray the outside of his suit with bleach, then struggles out of it and hits the lavatories. Then, smell of bleach and sweat clinging to him, he makes a beeline for the food.

Smiling, fat-bottomed Anglo women serve wilted mexam casseroles from surgical-looking steam trays. As Damien nears the end of the line, one of them (the name tag on her heaving bosom reads "Marge") brandishes her slotted spoon and bellows, "Ah sure can't thank you enough for comin' out here to take care of everything. Not just that plague, neither, but the whole Navajo thing. People in these parts were getting tired of all the fightin' and killin', if you know what I mean." She guffaws, showing a full set of perfect teeth. "You Nexus folks, you're okay with us. Here, have another helping of cherry cobbler. You deserve it."

"I thank you," Damien answers softly, with the hint of a bow. He has lived in North America since he was eight, but he's never managed to get into the habit of blaring the way Anglos do. "Everyone here has been exceptionally kind to us, and the Nexus certainly appreciates all your support." Especially, he thinks, since your own government can't be bothered to keep order on its own boundaries.

He excuses himself and stops to search for an empty seat. Doctor Heavtree, already established at one of the long metal picnic tables, waves him over.

"Sit down, my friend."

Damien slides in next to Heavtree. The others at the table are MsF agents whom Damien at once tags as Heavtree's entourage. They are all within a

few years of his own age, and all of them— like Damien and Heavittree themselves— look like the walking dead. They acknowledge him with nods and eyes quickly lifted from their plates, without interrupting the business of eating.

Damien can't blame them, and immediately starts shoveling the mess on his plate into his mouth. The dishes aren't anything he recognizes, except of course for Marge's cherry cobbler; he identifies beans and rice, cheese and ground meat, shredded greens and maize, strips of chicken. Here the spark of red peppers, there a wilted tortilla fragment, there a few incongruous olives...but in general the ingredients have, in that undeniable American way, been together long enough to work out a mutual understanding that teeters on the rim of "bland."

Still, it is food, and right now Damien is ready to admit that it is the finest meal he's ever eaten.

His stomach placated, he takes a deep breath and forces himself to stand. With a wan smile, he excuses himself from the table. "Time to make my rounds, cheer up the troops." Nearly a hundred Nexus personnel are involved in this operation, from the handful who live on-site and maintain the interdict, to the dozens of volunteers who came in specifically for the relief effort. Damien, as head of that effort, feels it his duty to at least greet and thank each one of them.

Nexus operatives are easy to spot. Most conspicuous are those who need to remain incognito; their faces are distorted or disguised by cold light holograms. Some hide their identities behind fantastic, stylized masks drawn from one culture or another; others opt for simple scrambling. One woman, who goes by the codename Lady Mondegreen, wears the androgynous, vaguely-oriental "average" face of humanity; her expressions are so flawlessly animated that Damien almost believes he is looking at a real face.

Many operatives, though— especially the younger ones— make no effort to hide their features. In recent years, the Nexus has gained widespread support among the world's people and in the United Nations; secrecy that had been necessary in the early years is increasingly irrelevant to the organization's second generation. The older trappings of codenames and secret handshakes which Damien grew up with, have become a game, part of the Nexus mystique.

Nowadays, to find the Nexus operatives in any crowd, one looks less for holomasks and more for the uneven starburst symbol: fourteen radiating

lines accompanied by binary digits, representing the sun's distance from fourteen specific pulsars. Drake's Starburst, which had flown into interstellar space on numerous probes, stands for the Nexus commitment to the human community as a whole, no matter whether East or West, North or South, on Earth, the Moon, or Mars.

All Nexus operatives wear Drake's Starburst: on clothing, on jewelry, tattooed or painted on the skin, even in cold light perched on the shoulder like a pirate's parrot. Damien has the design tattooed in fluorescent yellow on his left bicep, and in addition wears it today as arm- and breast-patch on his black tee shirt. He spots it on pendants, hairclips, earrings, and in rainbow face paint; on badges and brassards, buckles and beads, printed and woven and embroidered on blouses, trousers, robes, caps. He introduces himself to each wearer, takes their codename in return, thanks them for their efforts. Some he knows from long association, either in person or on the nets; some he recognizes by their aliases; some he meets today for the first time. It doesn't matter...in all the important ways, the Nexus is like an enormous family. When he meets someone wearing the Starburst, he knows that there are bonds between them.

Of course, as in any family, there are some he can't stand—and others who are more...congenial. Damien's eyes light on a brown, somewhat zaftig woman, about his own age, with long dark hair and faintly Anglo-Asian features. She wears a loose dress of bright kinte cloth and earth-colored sandals that lace halfway up her bare calves. Drake's Starburst flashes from a gold pendant that sits atop her shapely bodice.

"Habari gani," he greets her. *"I'm Damien Nshogoza, task leader."*
She meets his eyes. *"I've seen your name on the nets. I'm Penylle."*

He vaguely recalls seeing her name on the nets as well, and wishes he could log on to check. *"I want to thank you for coming out here today."*

"It was no trouble."

He chuckles. *"I wouldn't say that. Do I detect a hint of Mother Africa in your accent? Maybe the West?"* Her voice is mostly standard American, but Damien thinks he hears more than a trace of home.

She dimples. *"Born in Baltimore, raised in the States, but now I live in Kampala."*

"Parents came over in the Recall, I imagine?" It is definitely not polite to ask if either or both had been transportees.

"Not really. I...found my way there myself, in my teens. How about

yourself?"

"The opposite, actually. Born in Dar es Salaam, moved to Washington when I was eight. Dad went to Africa in the early 2010s, met mother through the Nexus, and she followed him there. I was born the year before the Recall was issued." No sense in giving any more details of his convoluted family life.

She pretends to be impressed. "Ooo, second generation Umoja. I don't often meet them outside of Africa."

"Outside of school, you mean." He shrugs. "So I'm an old man."

She smiles. "I didn't say that."

"Did you come all the way from Kampala, or were you in the States?"

"I'm still not in the States." She waves her hand; it passes right through Damien's without a trace of sensation. Cold light hologram. "Physically, I'm at home."

Surprised, he looks closely at her body. Now that he knows what to look for, he can see it: the outline of her body and limbs is a bit too sharp, the details of her skin a trifle blurred. Still, it is the best cold light projection he's ever seen. "Rats," he says with a grin.

"What?"

"Now I'll never know what you *really* look like."

"For your information, this *is* what I really look like."

"Then I'm very pleased. Perhaps we could—"

"Perhaps we could get to know one another better, first." She dimples. "Tell me more about yourself. What made you leave Umoja?"

Damien is often asked this question, usually with the unspoken implication that he is some sort of traitor to Mother Africa, for living on another continent. "I didn't, really. I have dual citizenship. And it wasn't my choice."

"Oh?"

"When I was a boy, my father was a victim of identity theft. The wyden murdered Father, took over his identity, and had Mother killed."

Penylle's face melts into sympathy. "I'm so sorry. He was caught and punished, I assume?"

"No." The familiar smoldering rage rises in Damien, tasting of old bile. "He covered his traces skillfully. I was the only living witness— and the authorities weren't about to take the word of an eight-year-old." He shrugs. "After a while, I got sick of going to psychologists, so I ran away and came to live with relatives in the States."

"And the man who stole your father's identity, is still out there?"

"Yes. He's—"

Damien's watchphone beeps, and from it Heavitree's voice emerges: "Damien, I think that you should meet me at the front of the hall— at once."

Both Damien and Penylle look in the direction of the entrance. Half a dozen burly Amerind men, accompanied by a dozen reporters, push their way past the bewildered pair of blue helmets ostensibly guarding the door. Damien walks quickly toward them, followed by Penylle; Heavitree closes from the other side and they meet two meters from the Amerinds.

The leader's ebony hair falls in a single braid down his back, but his temples are greying and his face is already furrowed with wrinkles; Damien guesses that the man is in his late fifties. His deep voice holds a slight twang but otherwise is straight Standard American. "Who's in charge here?"

Damien steps forward. "That would be me, I suppose. Damien Nshogoza. And you are...?"

"Wakiza Il'izilani, Chief of Dinétah. I was given to understand that your leader went by the name H. Orlamus."

"Hammy's in the hospital, recovering from injuries he received from a Navajo raiding party last week. I'm surprised you didn't know that." Damien straightens his shoulders and tries to pump some bravery into his voice. "I speak for the Nexus here."

"Then when are you going to lift your interdict and leave my people alone?"

Damien, mouth suddenly dry, takes a deep breath. It doesn't help. "As soon as you agree to comply with U.N. Resolution 6502 and stop raiding the Hopi. If you want, I can get the Secretary-General online and you can do the agreement right now."

"I am not going to debate politics with you, not while my people are dying."

Calm. "The interdict has been suspended to allow medical relief teams to deal with the plague emergency."

"Which was probably caused by more white trickery."

Damien holds up his right hand, showing off chocolate-brown skin. "Chief Il'izilani, perhaps you could more productively direct those comments to someone who's actually white."

The Chief bulldozes on, "This is the only the latest in a long, long history

of attacks and betrayals which my people have suffered at the hands of the Anglo and his lackeys. I demand that— ”

Jamiar Heavitree steps forward, standing nearly a head taller than the Navajo. “I’ve had enough of that, Tl’izilani. I am Dr. Jamiar Heavitree, in charge of this medical operation. I am also full-blooded Cherokee— and believe me, we *know* from suffering at Anglo hands. More than the Navajo ever will. Don’t give me speeches about Anglo trickery and betrayal. This is nothing political and nothing racial...it is a *disease*, for gods’ sakes. People are dying...red, white, brown, black. Unless we stop the spread, many more will die. So we’re doing what we know we must, to stop it. If you stand in our way, for whatever reason, you will have more blood on your hands than you already do. Period, end of report.”

“Ever since the Anglos and Latinos came to this land, they’ve been trying to exterminate our people. And yet you believe that this disease is not political?” Tl’izilani shakes his head. “You are naïve, Doctor.”

“There are more people alive and well in your single tribe today, than there were in all the tribes of all the peoples in 1492.”

“They killed nine in ten of us.”

“No, *they* didn’t. Do you know what *did* kill nine in ten of us? Disease. Smallpox. Measles, mumps, typhoid, influenza, diphtheria, scarlet fever. If the Anglos and Latinos had been the most enlightened and peaceful visitors on the planet, the end result would have been exactly the same.” He holds the Chief’s eye for a long moment, then says softly, “Dekoa kills eight in ten. Would you have us stand by and allow this tragedy once again?”

“I...”

“Let me tell you *why* our people died, Chief. Because for ten thousand years, we’d had no contact with the rest of the world. We had never been exposed to diseases that Eurasians took for granted. We had no defenses. All we needed was one sick man, five, ten sick men to bring the microbes across the ocean. The microbes did the rest.”

“You’re trying to change the subject.”

“No, I’m not. I’m talking about *your* nation today, withdrawing behind your boundaries, killing your neighbors to keep those boundaries secure, standing as far apart from the rest of the world as you can possibly manage.”

Tl’izilani frowns. “If what you say is true, what about the Europeans? *They’d* been separated from *us* for ten thousand years. Why didn’t they

catch *our* diseases?"

"They did. Settlers died by thousands. But those who would have carried the diseases back to Europe, died on the way." Heavitree holds out his hand to the Chief. "This is all ancient history. Please let it remain that way. Do not hinder the work that we do here."

Tl'izilani hesitates, then shakes Heavitree's hand. "Agreed, Doctor." He glares at Damien. "We will not interfere with medical relief. But tell your Anglo Nexus that it has not heard the last of the Navajo."

"Listen," Damien answers, "you can talk to me all you want, but you're wasting your breath. The Nexus isn't going to lift that embargo until the U.N. rescinds 6502. Talk to the people in Geneva if you want action."

"We will see." Tl'izilani and his entourage turn to go.

"One more thing," Damien says, and the room is suddenly very silent while tension snaps back like a rubber band. "Between midnight and three, local time, keep all your people out of the red zone. We'll be sterilizing the area, and I can just imagine how upset my superiors would be if you were caught in the beam."

Without a word of reply, Tl'izilani is gone.

Heavitree pats Damien on the shoulder. "I don't know about you, my friend, but I need a drink."

"You were great."

"I am sick and tired of people who use their heritage— of any type— to avoid dealing with the modern world. I apologize: I *do* tend to go on."

"You weren't so bad yourself," Penylle says to Damien.

Damien grins. "Well, *I'm* sick and tired of people beating up on the Nexus." He sighs. "I wish I could ask both of you to share a drink with me, but we all have work to do. I have to start coordinating tonight's beaming."

"And I," Heavitree says, "should start genotyping this virus. We need to know which strain this is, and how it reached this population. Perhaps we can have that drink when the operation is complete?"

"It's a date," Damien answers, then says to Penylle, "You'll come with us?"

"Buzz me. You can find my netcode." With that, she fades out.

Damien, smiling, turns back to work.

DIVERTISSEMENT 01

from *African Armageddon* by Hassan Kerekou (2035)
University of Harare Net,
<stf3.uharare.edu.zw/Kerekou/AA/intro>

Ebola fever. Marburg virus. AIDS. Half a million Africans dead. Then one million, two, five. Rift Valley fever, Sabia virus, dengue. Ten million, twenty, fifty. Millennial flu, Cairo fever, Kabinda virus. A hundred million African corpses, hundred-fifty, two. By the time Dekoa flu came along, a quarter-billion African lives had fallen to disease, and just as many to starvation, exposure, murder, and the various madneses of society unable to hold itself together.

The White West, intent upon its own problems, did little—and the Yellow East even less. Not until Dekoa flu erupted from the Congo, with its 78% infection rate, eight-month incubation period, and 90% mortality, did the rest of the world step in to aid the Black South. And not until Africa was a wasteland, fully half of her billion-plus perished, did the World Health Organization succeed in containing and controlling the plagues.

Simulations agree that Africa's death toll would have been halved—or better—if the West had stepped in a mere decade sooner. Had the UN acted in 1995, 2000, or even as late as 2005, Africa would today be richer by three- or even four-hundred million lives.

What took so long? Quite simply, the West was not threatened. Before Dekoa, Western deaths were limited to the poor, immigrants, Blacks, other undesirables on the fringes of society. A quarter-billion African deaths, a million or so in Western ghettos, mattered little. Only when the crisis struck home—when Dekoa started to claim the wealthy and powerful—when White faces started filling the obitunets—when the Beautiful People began to perish—only *then* was the West threatened, only then did it act. And then only in its own self-interest.

Indeed, it can be argued that without the high-profile death of

the Whitest and most Western man on the planet, England's King Charles, the West might have waited even longer before interceding in Africa. Thus, the greatest irony of the African Holocaust is this: that a prince born into a world of Western Colonial oppression, ruler of the last of the Colonial powers, should be the proximate cause of both Africa's salvation and her eventual rebirth in freedom. In death, Charles served us far better than he ever could have in life.