

Zaire74 (Hurry up. Approach cautiously)

Radio-Drama by Patrick Findeis

-57 minute short-cut-version -

Dramatis personae:

Harry Reschke (45)

Ingrid Reschke (43)

Bill Cardoso (55)

Hans Buchhold (58)

Bula Mandungu (38)

Customs officer

Hotel clerk

Barkeep

(Sound of telephone ringing- answering-machine answers, vintage model – we find ourselves at the answering end of the call.)

RESCHKE

(Recorded message, which he has spoken on the answering machine.)

Here is the connection of Harry Reschke and family. Please leave your name, number, and your message. We will return your call.

(Beeping sound)

MANDUNGU

Mrs. Reschke, you don't know me, Mandungu is my name, Bula Mandungu ... I am in official position here in Zaire and have got to know your husband. I would like to say that we have, in this short time become friends, really, perhaps he mentioned me to you? I know you are in contact with one another ... I am worried about Harry.... He is in bad company here, not everyone is interested in the beauty of the sport, the greatness and perfection of the sportsmen. Some subjects use the generosity of our president to present this boxing fight as an excuse, to act out their character weaknesses ... I believe ...

I am sure your husband is being influenced by these subjects.

In both our interests, in case you or your son has any idea where he is or how he can be reached, let me know as soon as possible, please. I am speaking to you as a friend.

(Beep – End of tape)

TITLE

ZAIRE 74 (Hurry up. Approach cautiously.)

Radio-Drama by Patrick Findeis

(Airport)

RESCHKE

Approaching Ndjil airport. The country flat and ochre coloured.

I'm watching out for the Congo, for steamships, chugging down the river, overloaded with ivory and slaves, with copper and rubber, a world which I know from books. But we are now in the year 1974. For ten years the Congo is independent, for five years it has been called Zaire, because President Mobutu Sesse Seko finds the name more authentic. A new, thought up, a dreamed-up country. The dark hearts have been chased away.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Les Zairois sont fiers maintenant

RESCHKE

The Zaire people are proud now.

The customs official tells me, as she rummages in my bag.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Un pays, un avenir solide, un dirigeant fort est notre president Mobutu.

RESCHKE

A strong country, a strong future, a strong leader - our President Mobutu.

RESCHKE

Et le septieme homme le plus riche.

RESCHKE

And the seventh richest man in the world. The customs official closes my suitcase, looks at me for a long time and finally smiles.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Jaloux?

RESCHKE

Envious?

She asks and pushes my suitcase over the table.

Of someone like Lumumba who Mobutu got killed by the Americans would I be envious, I answer.

RESCHKE

Un combattant pour le peuple du Congo, pas pour son portemonnaie.

(Pause)

RESCHKE

The customs official glares at a man in uniform who is standing about twenty metres distant from the exit of the airport. Too far away to have been able to hear us.

His silver revolver shines in the light that's shining through the window. The customs official shakes her head like a teacher whose pupils used a swear word.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Vous ne devriez pas dire quelque chose comme ça.

RESCHKE

Don't say that ...

I lift my suitcase from the table without another word.

(Fade to hotel-room, sounds of type-writer.)

RESCHKE

Cloudy sky, slate grey. Kinshasa is only savanna, no green, no jungle-book, the sun is milky. The jungle begins somewhere upstream of the Congo, of the Zaire as it is now called. Everything in the new Congo is renamed Zaire, the river: Zaire; the country: Zaire; the currency: Zaires; the cigarettes: Fumez-Zaire.

Later I will discover the inscription „Sanicongo” on the toilet bowls - very small and on the side -, and ask myself, what will I ask myself? Are they not consistent enough, or too stupid, or too lazy, to also rename their toilet bowl factory from Sanicongo to Sanizaire? Will I ask myself that? Whether they find the effort excessive to replace

the toilet bowls in the whole country? Because here they don't think dictatorship and suppression and blood and thunder out like we Germans did.

(Pause)

In the arrivals-hall George Foreman walks past me, a German shepherd dog on the leash, his procession of trainers, manager and supervisors one step behind him. I never saw a man like this, he radiates calm, as if he were going to sleep, his eyes almost closed like slits, but he perceives everything ... A hackneyed idiom I know, but this man is like a predator who sleeps in the shadow of a tree. And in seconds rips his victim. In the arrival hall at the airport Ndjil, Kinshasa, Zaire, I begin to seriously worry about Muhammad Ali. George Foreman is so big, so strong, his upper arms are the size of an ordinary man's thighs. I fear for the life of Muhammad Ali...

(Pause)

I can't discover the course of the river from the freeway to Kinshasa City. But I can smell the river in the air, that is surging through the open window of the rental car: heavy and sweet and rotten. Hyacinth float clumpwise rotting down the river, clogging the wide waters that flow brown and brackish and sluggishly to the sea, passing the white villas extending the shore of the Nsele a few miles short of Kinshasa.

The Congress Hall protrudes from its centre, chalk white and powerful, converted to the training-centre for the two most dangerous men of our time, - and here, where normally talks are held on the greatness of the nation, now the clap of boxing gloves can be heard, the heavy breathing of boxers sparring and a loud „Goddam shit” from George Foreman, as blood spatters the canvas of the ring floor, that drips from his eyebrow into which his sparring partner accidentally rammed his elbow -, and opened the connective tissue to the bone.

(Silence in the big hall until someone runs out of the building laughing.)

Less than 5 minutes and the news has spread to all of Kinshasa – to the bar of the Hotel Intercontinental with the orange-brown carpet, the dark rattan armchairs, where journalists and writers and promoters, profiteers, intelligence officers stand and sit

with drinks in their hands, Americans, French, English, South Africans, one Belgian has dared to come here ... and nobody can believe it, and someone says what nobody wants to hear.

CARDOSO

How can anyone defend his title with such a cut over the eyebrow?

RESCHKE

Bill Cardoso says and claps my shoulder and orders a triple bourbon.

At the same time Mobutu's paratroopers are lining up at the departure gates where the machines sluggishly lift off the runway and climb into the slate grey sky.

CARDOSO

They are taking care that no Muhammad Ali, no George Foreman leaves the country, that they stay here until they have boxed for the crown of the heavyweight division.

RESCHKE

In the following days they leave all others go, the journalists, the photographers: they are disappearing back to New York, Paris, London or Johannesburg ... they will be back again ... Everyone who can afford to come back, they go ...

(In the lobby of the Hotel Intercontinental. A lot going on in the background. Coins fall into a telephone, the dial rattles, international code, area code, free line signal - it is picked up.)

INGRID

Yes?

RESCHKE

Harry here, is Stefan home from school yet?

INGRID *(Upset)*

I got no money from the bank yesterday. There is no money left in our account.

RESCHKE

I just wanted to tell you that I have to stay here, the fight has been postponed for 5 weeks, I won't make it to Stefan's birthday.

INGRID

Harry, the money, why did you withdraw everything? How will I pay for the groceries?

RESCHKE

Stefan has the gold coins in his show case. I have spoken to him about it. Bring them to the pawnshop. I'll release them when I come back.

INGRID

But that's all he has left from my father.

RESCHKE

I have discussed all this with him.

INGRID

You can't take all our money and not tell me.

RESCHKE

The flight to here alone costs 5 thousand. I have nothing left. I've invested everything in my book ... that is my ... our last chance ... now the postponed fight ... I save three thousand marks if I stay here and wait for the fight, until then you will have to muddle through, you will manage. Remember, because of you I couldn't re-mortgage the house.

INGRID

I was always on your side.

RESCHKE

It will go off like a bomb, the book ... readings, talk shows, television ... Ingrid ... and the Literarische Quartet. At the top of the Spiegel-Bestseller-List for weeks.

INGRID

You should have told me about the account ... the way the clerk looked at me in the bank!

RESCHKE

I've no more credit. I will get in touch again soon.

INGRID

Yesterday someone knocked on the door, he said his name was Siepmanns, a journalist.

RESCHKE

Newspaper or radio?

INGRID

I didn't ask

RESCHKE

Did he want to know what I'm working on?

INGRID

He wanted to know in which hotel you were staying in Kinshasa that's all ... he was in a hurry, he had to go to the airport.

RESCHKE

Siepmanns? I don't know anyone of that name. Don't mention to him or anyone where I am and what I'm working on, otherwise I'll never get rid of them.

INGRID

I don't know anything ... I don't want to know anything either. I have to get money from somewhere.

RESCHKE

Tell the boy I will ring, I have no more coins.

(The handset is hung up. Unused coins drop into the returnable flap. Reschke picks them up, lights a cigarette.)

RESCHKE

While Foreman's eyebrow heals, lightning is flashing up river over the jungle, thunder still a distant growling, the monsoon is coming nearer every day. The stadium for the fight has no roof, there is only a tarp above the ring. And although not even the madness of their dictator can guarantee the fight, the people of Zaire have bet all their possessions on Ali, received betting slips with which they can wipe their behinds if the rains start before the newly scheduled fight date. Ali bom aye, they shout: Ali kill him, and are so sure that the fight cannot have any other outcome than a victory for Ali.

(Fade – night outside, town Kainshasa, cars voices, French music, life)

RESCHKE

At six o'clock PM it is suddenly night. The kerosene-lamps along the boulevard light up, the rest of the town disappears in the African night, and Kinshasa lost the bit of colour it shows throughout the day. The earth is black, the sparse grass yellow, and all buildings are grey, if one of them had ever been painted brightly, the colour has faded and peeled off, and the grey underneath eats them like a rash.

The plumage of the great egrets rummaging through the garbage is dirty and dull and Cardoso shoos off a swarm of them, they scatter in the night sky like a handful of carelessly thrown pebbles. He wants to show me a six-meter-long python in a sewer, who is digesting a german sheperd dog, but he can't find the place again. We are almost run over by a car that emerges from nowhere without a headlight...

CARDOSO *(whispers)*

If you hit someone with your car, be it during the day or night, if you should run over someone, something, a person, a child, a goat, keep driving as fast as you can, don't stop! The people here don't wait for the police, they immediately tear the driver and the car into pieces.

RESCHKE

A single gust of wind blows out the long row of campfires. The night watchmen who sleep on bast mats in front of the stores in the Galeries présidentielles have lit them after dark. And with the next gust of wind the fires light up again one after the other.

(Cardoso laughs. Fade. Music)

The water condenses on the black painted walls of the Club de Paris, drips from the ceiling, while a fat man sings with his band on the stage about a free Zaire. We are the only white people in the room. I look around. The women are beautiful and slim and some are so petite that you don't need the strobe light that burns the thick make-up off their face for fractions of a second to recognize that they are not women, but girls.

The men look at us. Every now and then the handle of a pistol flashes out from under the jacket, which is pushed into the waistband; they have thick bundles of dollar bills in their pockets, from which they pay for the drinks at the bar.

CARDOSO *(shouts against the music)*

Mobutu had a thousand gangsters captured by his paratroopers here in Gombe, in Lingwala, all over Kinshasa and brought them to the catacombs in the stadium, the same Stadium where the fight will take place, and a hundred of them were chosen, quite randomly, burglars, contract killers, gang bosses, pimps, pickpockets, all of them, who were then shot in front of the rest nine hundred.

And they understood the message and carried it out into the rest of the city, that it can get to any of them if they don't all keep their fingers still, as long as the people from the television, the radio and the newspapers are here for the fight. That you better don't burn your fingers on people from Europe and the USA ... so that they can write and talk in front of a camera about a city where nothing bad happens.

RESCHKE

I bet a thousand dollars on Muhammed Ali this afternoon ... On a knockout, by him.

CARDOSO

I don't believe you ...

RESCHKE

Eighth round...

CARDOSO

A thousand dollars?

RESCHKE

The last of my money ...

CARDOSO

One thousand dollars!!!

RESCHKE

I didn't give it much thought.

(Ring of telephone. Answering machine switches on, like above.)

RESCHKE *(Recorded message, which he has spoken on the answering machine.)*

Here is the connection of Harry Reschke and family. Please leave your name, number, and your message. We will return your call.

(Beeping sound)

MANDUNGU

Mrs. Reschke, Bula Mandungu here... you haven't heard from Harry yet? I spent any time I had searching the city for him. Mrs. Reschke trust me please ... I knew about your husband's problems long before I met him ... I know everything about the people who came to the fight. That is part of my duty here in Zaire... may I describe to you the first meeting with your husband ... in front of a nightclub of the lower category ... red light milieu, you would call it ... together with Cardoso, an American, a dubious subject... I introduced myself to your husband, we started to chat.

(Cut to street in front of the Club de Paris, music in the background can still be heard)

MANDUNGU

I am always happy when someone from the home of Beethoven, Schopenhauer and Bach is interested in the culture and amusements of my country. I was lucky enough to study in your brother country in Leipzig and East Berlin: Kurt Masur with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, on the Schiffbauerdamm Weigel as Mother. I am still very happy today when I think back on it.

(Pause)

How impolite of me. I did not introduce myself to you, I am Bula Mandungu, me and Mr. Cardoso are already acquainted. President Mobutu has entrusted me with the honourable task of taking care of the safety and well-being of all professionals involved in the fight.

CARDOSO

Mr. Reschke and I feel very safe here, thank you Mr. Mandungu.

RESCHKE

Yes, yes completely.

MANDUNGU

You know, Mr. Reschke, the name Patrice Lumumba is one of the names that are no longer popular in our beautiful country ... because they remind us of a time when a lot was at stake for our people, and now everyone is very happy that these times are over, that there is stability, progress, future ... that we don't have to listen to a big brother in Moscow ... See, this beautiful sports event, why we and all of you gather, would not take place if Lumumba could have implemented his plans for our country. Would it have been appropriate for me, Mr. Reschke, at the time to inform an official citizen on duty when I arrived in Schönefeld that I would prefer a Mr. Adenauer to a Mr. Ulbricht in his capacity as leader of the country that welcomed me?

(Pause)

During my time in your beautiful brother country, which is so inspired by beauty, despite the big, big differences, I never forget why I was there. Nobody had to remind me. I was commissioned to learn how a state is organized and how it ensures its security. And I learned that well, believe me. And I learned to see everything and to

hear everything. And if I listen and look closely, I think I can see that you are not here to write about a fight, but to spread propaganda about our country that does not reflect the current situation in the slightest. I can only advise you to let this be.

(Cut to Reschke's answering machine. Pause.)

We liked each other immediately ... at that time I did not yet know what troubles this Cardoso had brought upon him, Cardoso was not in this bar for enjoyment, but to find more drugs for his western customers. Mrs. Reschke, I greeted him from Mr. Siepmanns who is also acquainted with you, so I am informed... I reproach myself for not having looked after your husband better at the time ... forgive me ...

(Beep. Cut to hotel room ... sounds of typewriter typing.)

RESCHKE

It is raining lightly, a spray almost. We have a view of the black starless sky. A gust of wind and the rain ends. Cardoso shakes his head. Mandungu smiles. The red light of the lettering above the door of the Club de Paris shines on the silver revolver on his belt. He doesn't say goodbye. He gets into his Mercedes and drives away. It smells of everything for which there are no words. I look up at the sky again. Nothing is moving. Of no fucking use all this, I think.

(Cut for short-cut-version. In the missing scenes Reschke attempts in vain to interview Muhammad Ali. Instead he meets a die-hard-nazi who executes missile tests in the Kongo with Mobutus permission.)

(Typewriter hotel-room)

RESCHKE

Muhammed Ali's living room is a huge nightmare, as big as a gym. Miles-long sofas covered with green velvet, orange cushions on them, the armchairs as well, a dark brown coffee table divides the room. A TV-Set turned on in the corner. I sit between Angelo Dundee, the trainer, and Bundini Brown, Ali's assistant. Bundini slaps me on the back, pours tea for me, as the door opens and Ali enters. He shines, he glows. I

feel like a child in his presence. This must be the most beautiful man that ever walked the earth, a God who in 3 weeks will be led to the slaughter. The fear in the eyes of his coaches and counsellors that George Foreman will kill Ali in the ring, incites him to continual joking and rhyming, to make fun of his opponent. It has become exhausting for Ali to train: the strength, the endurance no longer come automatically after the years he was forced to inaction ...

He sits opposite me, and challenges me with his lively eyes to begin the interview.

RESCHKE

To be black and conscious in America is to be in a constant state of rage...If I may quote the American writer, James Baldwin... Mister Ali, Muhammad, the amount of anger you must have felt in your life, can you describe it?

RESCHKE

Ali looks at me, a smile that he tries to hide. He asks me where my dictating machine is and I answer that I have forgotten it and hold up my note book and pencil. He doesn't speak. He is impressed with my question. I can see that he's searching for words. In a helpless gesture he spreads his arms, stretches, and shakes his head. He cant tell me how much anger he felt in his life, as a little boy, as man, as world boxing champion.

(A knock on Reschke's door, typing ends.)

RESCHKE

Yes?

CARDOSO *(from behind the door)*

It's me. Get ready. I'll be waiting for you in the lobby-come on.

(Fade to: river, town in background)

RESCHKE

The iron statue of Henry Morton Stanley lies on the shore of the Zaire. It must have been six or seven meters high when it was erect. The feet and part of the thighs are

missing. It's lying with its face in the mud. The thankless Congolese have thrown the man here who civilized them, who stole their freedom on behalf of the Belgian King, but have never forgotten him; they call him Bula Matari, the stonebreaker, Cardoso is sitting on the head of the statue. He rolls a joint and lights it.

CARDOSO

Willie Pep, do you know him, the featherweight, he said once: first your legs go, then you lose your reflexes, then your friends.

I don't believe that Ali has the legs or the head to dance the whole night. Foreman will kill him ... we'll have to do something about your thousand dollars, and I know what!

RESCHKE

I drive, next to me the old black man, the Feticheur, the spiritual healer whom Cardoso coaxed with a bundle of dollars out of his one-story house without electricity and canalization. Cardoso is sitting in the back with a bottle of bourbon. We leave the dark streets of Kinshasa behind us and drive in the deep black night through the plain of the Congo basin. The bottle goes from Cardoso to the old man, to me, to Cardoso. The faith healer shakes his head and repeats: Êtes vous sûre? Are you sure? Are you sure? He tells me to turn right onto a dirt track. He tells us that we're driving to the grave of Kuka Pemba, that it's a magical place, a dangerous place, that we must do what he says, that we must be very careful. Also that the curse that we want to put on George Foreman has the best chance of success if spoken here. Kuku Pemba is a mighty forefather, he was the first to catch sight of the demon Stanley himself. Kuku Pemba and Bula Matari. Both are imprisoned forever in the world and eternity where they hear everything, but can't see anything, where they are longing for the joys of life: a cold beer, a hot woman, a piece of bloody meat; but they don't possess lips to drink the beer, no arms to hold the woman, nor teeth to chew the meat. Cardoso laughs in the backseat and lights one of his Congo torches, as the old man directs me to drive to the right and stop. It is quiet as we get out of the car. No sound from the animals, from the night birds, from the hyenas. We stop in front of a marble-framed square that is strewn with sand. No tombstone, no name, no decorations. Kuku Pemba, says the old man. Cardoso looks disappointedly at me. He expected voodoo, sacrifices, skulls, bottles of rum and glasses, cigars, dolls with needles bored

into them. That's why he's here, that's why he paid for all of this. But the grave of Kuku Pemba looks like a sandbox in a Bauhaus settlement. Cardoso gives the note to the healer where we have written down that Foreman's punches will have no effect on Ali, that his blows go wild, that he can't breathe from exhaustion, that Ali doesn't knock him out until the eighth round, so that we have something from the struggle or match and yet not have to suffer with him for too long. The healer digs a hole in the ground with a wooden spoon, in which he places our note.

(Mantras in the background)

He lights a match and burns the note. As the flames flare up I think I see a shadow moving towards us. It is quiet ... Nobody speaks ... Not even the wind rustles in the tree at the entrance to the cemetery.

(Pause)

On the way back to Kinshasa the healer wants to sit in the backseat with Cardoso. As we see the first lights of the city he asks if we have seen the shadow at the grave. He followed us, a ghost, the Ndoke is sitting on the passenger seat. The Feticheur says the Ndoke must like me, he thinks, that he likes my teeth.

(Cut. Knocking on the door, Reschke opens.)

HOTEL EMPLOYEE

A message for you, sir.

(Reschke searches for a dollar.)

Thank you, sir.

(opens an envelope, unfolds the paper and reads out)

RESCHKE

... I would be pleased if you would join me for a drink in the bar at 7 o'clock. I would be very interested to hear how you are progressing with your work ... Yours, Andreas Siepmanns

(Cut, hotel lobby, coins, dialling, dial tone)

INGRID

Yes?

RESCHKE

I could get no connection to you, what's wrong?

INGRID

I got six hundred marks for Stefan's gold coin. I am running from one supermarket to the other looking for bargains.

RESCHKE

Everything will be fine when the book is published. I have interviewed Ali... he said nobody had ever spoken to him like me... he called me the Champ of journalists ... with that alone I'll go down in history.

INGRID

We tried to reach you. At the reception, they claimed they didn't know a Harry Reschke. They said the only German there is called Siepmanns. Stefan was very nervous on his birthday. Always near the telephone, he couldn't have much fun with his friends. He was waiting constantly for your call.

RESCHKE

Is he there now?

INGRID

Football practice, as usual, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

RESCHKE *(whispering)*

Did you tell Siepmanns what happened between Stefan and me? We had agreed that nobody would hear when I went into therapy.

INGRID

Why aren't you in the hotel anymore, Harry?

RESCHKE

They are planning something, Siepmanns is everywhere, like a spider who has spun his web around me ... are you in this with him?

INGRID

Don't start that again.

RESCHKE

He must somehow have discovered how big this is, what I am working on...

INGRID

For the boy's sake, pull yourself together please...

RESCHKE

They won't let up.

(Handset is hung up. Coins fall into the flap. Cigarette is lit. Cut to Muhammad Ali coming out of the ring after sparring – boasting, sounds of boxing gloves hitting the bag. Konga drums in the background)

CARDOSO

One of the Englishmen who arrived here yesterday asked Big Black, the drummer who Ali invited here from Los Angeles, what his drums were called. Big Black said: Konga drums. The Englishman thought he said Kongo drums. Then he sent his article to London by telegraph, in which he mentioned Big Black's "Kongo drums". But what version arrived in England, what happened on the way to London? Big Black's "Kongo drums" became "Zaire drums"

(Laughs)

No one can fart without our friend Mandungu listening in.

RESCHKE

A man crosses the hall, squeezes through the crowd of journalists who observe Ali's sparring. He has long hair, wears the same leather jacket that I used to have. A briefcase is jammed under his arm, it looks like the one in which I kept my manuscripts and which I put under my bed in my hotel room before I drove here to Nsele. The long-haired-guy stands next to Angelo Dundee at the ringside, flips up the cover of the briefcase, pulls out a few sheets of paper and, grinning, reads from them quietly.

(In the role of Siepmanns, Reschke makes fun of the writing, maybe the voice sounds as if we heard it from the other end of the large hall.)

In the evening light Muhammed Ali lifts a child, who stretches wide his arms and legs as though totally happy. Behind them a speedboat races up the Zaire, the sound of it's engine like the humming of a fly carried over by the wind, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker. Ali bom aye, Ali bom aye! Ali kill him! The children, the women, the men are shouting. It is the evening before the fight. In this light Ali looks like a natural part of the world, something that is simply there, there is no doubt about it, someone who will never leave this world, has never entered it... Ali raises his hand in greeting, after he put the child down and discovers me. I greet him in return by raising my left arm with clenched fist. Ali laughs, you are the best, Harry, you are the best.

(Reschke, as before)

He glances at the paper and looks at me. He lifts his thumb. Dundee laughs and shakes his head. Some of the colleagues look openly at me, some furtively. Siepmanns I think, what game are you playing with me? Wearing my clothes and aping my hairstyle? Ingrid can't have given you my leather jacket, she would never do that surely?

(Cut to telephone ringing- answering-machine answers, vintage model – we find ourselves at the answering end of the call.)

RESCHKE

(Recorded message, which he has spoken on the answering machine.)

Here is the connection of Harry Reschke and family. Please leave your name, number, and your message. We will return your call.

(Beeping)

RESCHKE

Once upon a time the jungle burned, the steppe, the country. The flames were strong, driven by the wind. The animals tried to save themselves by diving into the river. But a turtle was so heavy, the holes in the ground too deep for its short legs, the fallen tree trunks too high to enable him to flee from the inferno. Then the hyena overtook him. And the turtle asked him: can you save me? But the hyena just ran on to save itself from the flames. The leopard overtook the turtle and again the turtle asked: can you save me? And the leopard stopped, took the turtle in its mouth, and climbed with it up a high tree, and placed it in the fork of the highest branch and jumped off. The flames came and began to creep up the tree, the turtle's panzer was singed, but it survived. When the fire was out, the leopard came back, climbed up the tree, took the turtle in its mouth and carried it away.

(Beeping sound. Cut to sound of boxing gloves delivering blows. Konga drums in the background. We are again at training with Ali. Mandungu approaches Reschke from behind)

MANDUNGU

Mr. Reschke, you don't look happy. You sleep too little.

RESCHKE

Everything is fine, Mr. Mandungu everything is fine

MANDUNGU

If you need a present for your son, come with me, I know where you will find something special. It won't be easy to build up trust again with him...but the love between father and son is strong...come , come, I'll call my chauffeur...

RESCHKE

Mandungu's Mercedes - Benz is equipped with soft, smooth, brown leather, the windows are tinted. It rolls silently through the colourless streets of Kinshasa, past

the construction sites, the scaffolding, the cranes. In the weeks that I have been here I never saw a worker on any of the scaffolds. In the middle of a large intersection a small edition of the Eifel-Tower. At least a hundred and fifty metres high. The top is missing, a few struts protrude into the sky. I want to ask Mandungu what that's about but he waves me off and shakes his head before I can open my mouth. Women are sitting on the sides of the street, piled in front of them are bags of dazzling white manioc flour.

RESCHKE

Where are we going?

MANDUNGU

We'll soon be there, wait....

RESCHKE

We stop at the edge of a large , empty square which is bordered by a low-rise building at the rear end, which is otherwise surrounded by trees. Mandungu gets out, and I follow him. He takes a deep breath. The sun is reflected in the window front of the low-rise building.

MANDUNGUG

On some days, when I feel a longing, I let myself be driven here, then I get out of the car, lean against the fender and cover my ears as tightly as I can, until I can only hear the sound of my blood, the beating of my heart. then I wait. Sometimes it takes only a few minutes sometimes a quarter of an hour, sometimes half an hour. But there are voices always, rising in me that begin to tell, in the cooing sing-song of the Leipzig accent, of the frozen water in the loo halfway up the stairs in Winter, of the soot on their windows When the wind blows from Meuselwitz, of thinking about Christa T.. then I'm back for the moment in Augustusplatz in Leipzig. Then somewhere the tram screeches down from Roßplatz towards the main station, then I smell the beer in the morning breath of a worker hurrying across the street to the new post office.

RESCHKE

It's a long time since I was in Leipzig...but with a little imagination ...

MANDUNGU

Don't make fun of me. I know that it is absurd to feel here in the centre of the madness of Kinshasa that I am in Augustusplatz in Leipzig... I am a romantic but not a fool.

(Pause)

Right here in the middle of the square, right there in front, eight years ago Evariste Kimba hung, wriggling, on the gallows for twenty minutes, his heels hit the edge of the flap over and over, again and again in his death struggle... for twenty minutes, pock, pock, pock, pock, pock ...

(Pause)

A hundred thousand people watched the execution. A hundred thousand people can no longer forget the sound of his heels. But a hundred thousand people have forgotten the name of Evariste Kimba.

(Pause)

Why did we make such a spectacle of hanging Everiste Kimba?

Why not?

(Pause)

Would we have hanged the so admired Parrice Lumumba with the same amount of spectacle?

Why not?

(Pause)

Don't be a disappointment ... Don't take yourself too seriously Don't try to understand what's going on here...

(Sound of telephone ringing- answering-machine answers, vintage model – we find ourselves at the answering end of the call.)

RESCHKE

(Recorded message, which he has spoken on the answering machine.)

Here is the connection of Harry Reschke and family. Please leave your name, number, and your message. We will return your call.

(Beeping sound)

RESCHKE

The sweltering night of Kinshasa is filled with the voices of the thousands who pour onto the sidewalks, the unpaved side strips of the stadium. The lightning bolts over the Congo are getting closer - the people count 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 - but the thunder sounds still distant. The rainy season has kept still, so that Ali and Foreman can meet in the open air arena, where hundreds of thousands of people will shout: Ali, bom aye, Ali kill him! Behind the counter of the bar of the Intercontinental hotel, the bartender washes glasses, smiles and shakes his head. Norman Mailer, who gets drunk with a group of American journalists, asks him if he is sad to miss the fight. Their faces are red from alcohol, from the excitement, from the fear about Ali, that the giant Foreman will kill him. The barkeeper shakes his head and laughs.

(Cut to the bar of the Intercontinental-Hotel)

BARKEEPER

No, no, there was a German here yesterday. He had a dice cup and dice in his hand. He was whispering all the time. I think he was talking to himself. He ordered an Old Fashioned. He starts to roll the dice. And in the beginning, it seems to be going well for him. Once he cheers loudly and drums on the table. He rolls exactly twenty-eight rounds. Then he stops. He looks at a piece of paper on which he has made a note after each round.

BARKEPPER

What did you roll for?

RESCHKE

My teeth.

BARKEEPER

He drinks the Old Fashioned in one go. Buys a whole bottle of Bourbon. Suddenly he no longer speaks, just shakes his head every now and then.

BARKEEPER

Didn't your game with the dice end well?

RESCHKE

I lost 10 teeth, including 3 incisors.

BARKEEPER

Your mouth looks quite normal

RESCHKE

I still have to deliver them.

BARKEEPER

To whom?

RESCHKE

To the Ndoke

BARKEEPER

I don't see any Ndoke, they don't even exist.

RESCHKE

Of course, he went ahead, he is waiting in my room with the pliers. I came down with him. He was always here.

(Cut to answering-machine)

RESCHKE

Mailer and the American journalists are finishing their drinks, They are as excited as children. They have already seen many fights, seen champs come and go, but tonight, this morning, at 4 A.M. when Muhammad Ali competes against George Foreman, their hearts will beat like that of a schoolboy who wants to invite the prettiest girl of the town for an ice-cream soda. Norman Mailer pays for the drinks, the others walk to the door. Mailer bends down to tie his shoe. In the fibres of the deep-pile carpet he discovers something white to which dried blood sticks. It takes him a while to understand that this is a human tooth, a molar. He picks it up and looks at it in the indirect light of the bar. The golden inlay on the masticatory surface of the tooth shines. Someone calls his name, the car is ready for the trip to Nsele, where they will meet Muhammad Ali and his team. Together they will drive to the stadium. He throws the molar in the ashtray on the counter and leaves the bar. A good night to sacrifice a victim. A good night to dance.

CREDITS I

(Coins fall into a telephone, the dial rattles, international dialing code, area code, telephone number, dial tone, signal tone, distant sound can be heard It is lifted off the hook.)

Ingrid

Yes?

RESCHKE

... the turtle thanks the leopard and says, hold still, I want to give you a present. And he paints the most beautiful spots on the leopards fur, so that from then on the animals and the people rave about the beauty of the leopard and say: look there, the leopard, how beautiful he is ... and the hyena becomes jealous. And approaches the turtle and asks him to also paint beautiful spots on his fur. The turtle smiles and says, just come here and I'll paint your fur beautifully.

INGRID

Harry, did you speak here on the tape - the story with the teeth – this guy Mandungu

...

RESCHKE

... but instead of the beautiful spots it paints ugly spots on the hyena's fur and since then people say, there is a hyena, look how ugly the pattern on its fur is, that's the hyena, that's the hyena

INGRID

Harry, where are you?

RESCHKE

Thats the hyena....

CREDITS II