

# This Mortal Coil

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CONTACT:

FADE IN:

1 INT. SURGICAL TENT — NIGHT

1

Super: CONGO, 1896

A decrepit military medical tent. Sweaty PATIENTS, members of a Congolese tribe, agonize on makeshift bunks.

DR. FRANCOIS COTARD (33) in a stained white coat leans over a DELIRIOUS MAN with a ravaged infected face.

A frank brow, Cotard wrings a pus-smearred bandage in soiled water, undeterred by the nagging flies.

The stench of the gangrene eating the Man's face makes Cotard heave. He tosses the bandage on the floor.

COTARD

(in French)

Soombu, bring the ether. And some clean bandages. Soombu?

Soombu is nowhere to be found.

Cotard opens a wood cabinet. Nothing remains inside.

COTARD

Damn it!

Wearied, Cotard reaches for his jacket dangling on a nail. Feels inside a pocket. Retrieves only a lighter.

Frantic, he feels the other pockets. Empty as well.

Seething, he snatches a gun from a drawer.

2 EXT. CONGO JUNGLE — NIGHT

2

Cotard rushes into the jungle, gun in hand.

COTARD

Soombu!

He leaps over shrubs, dodges branches.

CAMPFIRE

Through the trees, the glimmer of a bonfire. Shadows of MEN whirl around the fire.

A group of short sculpted TRIBESMEN sniffs the Ether.  
Built like a puma, SOOMBU (28) twirls among them.

Undeterred, Cotard vaults towards the group.

COTARD  
(in French)  
My wallet, Soombu!

Soombu looks up. Only to see Cotard with a gun in hand.

COTARD  
My wallet, Soombu! Now!

Soombu darts off. Cotard tracks him.

CONGO JUNGLE

Branches CRACKS, SNAPS under their feet.

Soombu bolts here and there, quickly distancing Cotard.

But only to fall face to face a LION. It ROARS. No  
time to blink. The Lion pounces on Soombu.

Cotard stops, hearing the grueling HOWLING of a man being  
chewed to death.

COTARD  
Soombu? Soombu!

3 EXT. CONGO JUNGLE — BONFIRE — NIGHT 3

The whirling Tribesmen freeze.

4 EXT. CONGO JUNGLE — NIGHT 4

The Lion flees as Cotard approaches, FIRING.

Mauled to shreds, Soombu draws deep breaths.

The Tribesmen gather in silence.

COTARD  
Someone get me some water.

The ELDEST TRIBESMAN (50) points at a mountain.

ELDEST TRIBESMAN  
(in Congolese)  
We must take him to the mountain.

The Tribesmen pick up Soombu, who resists.

SOOMBU  
 (in French)  
 Not the mountain. Let me die here.

Cotard gestures them to wait.

SOOMBU  
 Dr. Cotard. Here.

He gives Cotard his wallet.

Cotard checks out the photograph of a fresh faced woman.  
 Pretty. Mysterious. He squeezes Soombu's hand, thankful.

SOOMBU  
 She has hair. Like angels.

Soombu squirms, passes out.

ELDEST TRIBESMAN  
 If we don't take him, his spirit  
 will fly away.

SOOMBU  
 (to Cotard)  
 Don't let them take me. The evil  
 spirits will eat me alive.

Shaking with dread, Soombu looks between Cotard and the Tribesmen.

Resigned, Cotard steps aside. The Eldest Tribesman lights a torch, heads towards the mountain.

SOOMBU  
 No. No. Noooo . . .

Cotard watches the Tribesmen disappear into the jungle, carrying away the dying man.

He follows them.

5 EXT. CONGO JUNGLE — MOUNTAIN — NIGHT

5

A grave awaits Soombu when Cotard reaches the Tribesmen. They wrap Soombu in leaves.

Soombu prays to himself as life abandons him.

The Tribesmen drop him still alive into the grave. Soombu fights to escape.

COTARD  
For the love of God.

Too late to intervene, the Tribesmen bury Soombu up to his head.

The Eldest Tribesman blows smoke on Soombu's face. He raises his arms towards the Heavens.

ELDEST TRIBESMAN  
Spirits of the mountain. Receive  
this wounded mortal. Take him to  
your house, give him a good meal,  
and make him an immortal hunter.

Soombu falls unconscious.

Cotard glances at the crackling bonfire, brooding as the Tribesmen pray, chant in trance.

6 EXT. CONGO JUNGLE — MOUNTAIN — DAWN

6

The sun rises over the lush mountains. The Tribesmen's enthusiasm wakes up Cotard.

They gather around Soombu. Very much alive, shaking with fear. Cotard is the only one surprised.

COTARD  
Soombu?

He gazes at the Tribesmen, not understanding. Soombu drinks water, brimming with life.

The Tribesmen dig out the soil. Free his chest.

Instead of shredded flesh, clean scars appear. Shining with an opalescent glow.

Cotard fingers the mystifying healed wounds.

COTARD  
Soombu, this is a miracle.

The Tribesmen pound drums, sing grateful to the Heavens.

But Soombu kneels down, prays, looking terrified.

Ignoring him, Cotard sieves the soil through his fingers.  
Weighs it. Smells it.

Exalted, he rubs himself with it.

Horrible SCREAMS dim his fervor. As he watches the  
Tribesmen club Soombu to death.

Cotard rushes to stop them.

COTARD

Stop! What are you doing!?

Too late. The Tribesmen carve chunks of flesh out of  
Soombu's dead body. And EAT them.

The Eldest Tribesman offers Cotard Soombu's forearm.

ELDEST TRIBESMAN

The good hunter lives forever.  
Now he lives within us.

Cotard stares at the forearm, sickened, while the  
Tribesmen beat the drums.

CUT TO:

7 INT. DIVE BAR – NIGHT (PRESENT)

7

An avalanche of raunchy riffs. A grunge band, The  
JUNKYARD FLOWERS, plays in a dismal venue.

BRIGIT WORTHAM (28), wrapped in a leopard skin, WAILS in  
her mic. Her eyes distant, lost in an alternate universe,  
where she has been stuck ever since losing her mother.

BONZO GONG (32), an octopus covered with tattoos, makes  
love to his drum kit, intensely. He talks a lot about  
strong limbs and appendages.

More anger screams out of LARRY RUIZ's (31) shiny Latino  
eyes than from his guitar's feedback. An air of secrecy  
prevails in the wake of each of his notes.

He gapes at Brigit.

Aware, ADRIAN DROBLYN (33), the bass player, checks out  
the scattered CROWD with distress.

His ambition runs deeper than the roots of a tree. But  
deprived of the soil to his past, he is like a tree  
without roots.