

Savage Land - Pilot

by

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**INT. - BASEMENT/NOSSA SENHORA DE NAZARÉ SLAVE SHIP - DAY**

The constant sound of waves crashing against the ship is punctuated by the intermittent murmurs and hushed cries that echo around dark, muggy corners.

We see dirty feet, bruised hands, eyes wide with fear or closed tightly in hopes of finding sleep, which doesn't come easy.

Dozens and dozens of enslaved men and women are huddled together in rows that crisscross the entire length of the wet and gloomy basement of the Nossa Senhora de Nazaré slave ship.

Chained sided by side, propped against the dirty hull or simply plopped down on the floor, they seem lifeless.

Suddenly... A STRONG, PIERCING SCREAM!

A woman sitting on the left side of the basement howls with pain.

She is CATARINA, eighteen years old. Her shaky hands squeeze an enormously pregnant belly.

CATARINA  
(in kicongo)  
No! Not here!

Next to her is SIMÃO, a seventeen year old boy with distressed, fearful eyes and a voice that trembles with anguish.

SIMÃO  
(also in kicongo)  
Kimbu, that's not for us to decide.

Catarina screams with pain and almost faints.

An older woman, chained to Catarina, turns around and says something in a language Simão can't understand.

She motions for him to hold Catarina's head up, and Simão tries to follow her instructions.

The woman then lifts Catarina's legs, in obvious preparation for childbirth.

Catarina protests and tries to fight it.

CATARINA  
She is not coming now! Not here!

(CONTINUED)

Catarina howls in pain, and the woman jumps forward, covering her mouth.

She is clearly frightened, and says something as she points to the deck overhead.

Simão immediately understands the danger they're in, and tries to calm Catarina down.

A younger woman moves in and talks with the older one in their language.

They speak in hushed, anxious tones, and grab a few pieces of cloth, which they lay under Catarina's legs and hip.

Catarina cries desperately, but Simão wraps her face around his strong hands.

SIMÃO

Kimbu, trust me. I won't let  
anything bad happen to you.

Catarina calms down a little and turns her attention to the older woman, who speaks constantly.

Realizing her words are not being understood, the woman starts breathing deeply and rhythmically.

Catarina begins to mimic her and soon, feeling sharp waves of pain, screams once again.

SIMÃO (CONT'D)

Kimbu, no, please, or they'll hear  
you.

Catarina looks up, scared. She grinds her teeth and continues to breathe rhythmically.

The pain is too strong and, after a few seconds, she faints again.

Simão tries to wake her up, shaking her torso and face, but she is too weak.

He hears a soft and low cry, and only then does he realize that the baby has been born.

The old woman talks with the young one, and the two wipe the child clean using the rags they had collected earlier.

Simão moves closer and sees...

...his daughter.

(CONTINUED)

A beautiful girl that stops whining as soon as her wide eyes meet her dad's.

The woman wraps the baby in rags and hands it to Catarina, who has reawakened.

Feeble and shaky, she needs Simão's help to support the weight of the newborn child.

Catarina smiles and looks up to Simão.

CATARINA  
Our Lubutuku.

SIMÃO  
Our Lubutuku.

Simão's eyes remain apprehensive, confused, scared.

He caresses Catarina's face, and she smiles weakly at him and passes out once more.

Simão grabs the baby and then notices the two women talking anxiously.

There is a lot of blood in between Catarina's legs and in the floor all around her, and the women point to it worryingly.

Simão holds Lubutuku with one hand and with the other he shakes Catarina, who remains unresponsive.

He leans closer, tries to wake her.

SIMÃO (CONT'D)  
No, Kimbu. Please, don't! Please, I  
need you, Kimbu!

Catarina doesn't react, her limbs fallen, her open eyes lifeless.

The two women stare at Catarina with reverent silence.

A few other slaves stand up and watch the scene.

Most of them, though, are too weak and remain lying, indifferent to the tragedy taking place in the suffocating and dark basement.

Simão holds Catarina with one arm and Lubutuku with the other.

He cradles both of them carefully, his soft wailing resonating all over the basement.

(CONTINUED)

**EXT. - SANTA EFIGÊNIA PLANTATION - DAY**

The sun bears down against the green ocean of the Santa Efigênia sugar cane plantation, deep inside the Rio de Janeiro and São Vicente Captaincy.

It's almost noon, and even the insects are prostrated in silence.

The only sounds come from the machetes zapping back and forth and from the worn out yet powerful voices of a dozen slaves.

**SLAVES**

(singing)

quebranta o sol, ai ô, vou  
quebrantar, auê, a, quebranta o  
sol, ai ô, vou quebrantar, ê, nas  
ondas do mar

A surly, middle-aged overseer, GREGÓRIO, observes everything atop a beautiful black horse.

The sound of the singing and of the machetes intersect, the rhythm of the old song guiding the movement of the tired hands.

ZILÁ, a beautiful sixteen years old enslaved girl, raises her machete and sends it skillfully towards the base of a sugarcane.

Next to her, two equally young enslaved men work without the same expertise.

FERNÃO, eighteen, skinny and always smiling, and JOSÉ, seventeen, strong and handsome, try hopelessly to mimic Zilá's technique.

They follow the singing only rhythmically, not knowing the lyrics.

**SLAVES (CONT'D)**

(singing)

vou quebrantar, lá me vou eu só vou  
quebrantar, lá me vou eu só

Gregório dismounts and walks slowly towards José.

The other slaves notice it and tense up, but José and Fernão continue to work unaware of the agitation.

**SLAVES (CONT'D)**

(singing)

quebranto só, ê, o ouro do mar  
quebranto só, ê, o ouro do mar

(CONTINUED)

José raises his machete for one more blow when Gregório, in a swift and precise movement, holds him back.

Everyone stops singing and working immediately.

Fernão turns around, but all other slaves keep their eyes to the ground.

Gregório wrings José's arms skillfully, forcing him to let go of his machete.

He pulls José forward and hurls him next to a line of harvested sugar canes.

GREGÓRIO  
Look at that, boy.

Gregório points to the roots of the canes José had just reaped.

GREGÓRIO (CONT'D)  
Look at the stalks you left there.

Gregório kneels down, pulls out a remaining piece of sugarcane from the ground and shoves it inside José's mouth.

GREGÓRIO (CONT'D)  
Eat it, boy! Chew!

José fights back and tries to move away, but Gregório pulls him close violently and stuffs the dirty stem into his mouth.

GREGÓRIO (CONT'D)  
Swallow it!

José gives in and chews on the dirty cane, unable to swallow the muddy paste that forms in his mouth.

Gregório pulls his head closer.

GREGÓRIO (CONT'D)  
Swallow it, boy!

José struggles but eventually manages to eat the chewed cane.

GREGÓRIO (CONT'D)  
What did it taste like?

JOSÉ  
Cane.

GREGÓRIO  
Cane?

(CONTINUED)

JOSÉ  
Sugarcane, massa.

GREGÓRIO  
So you're not doing it right. Look  
at that!

Gregório turns José's face to the row of sugar canes he had just harvested.

The overseer drops José, grabs his machete, and moves closer the a bush still not reaped.

GREGÓRIO (CONT'D)  
When you do it, you have to rip it  
at the base. Hear it?

He zaps the machete down and hits the cane's roots, almost at the ground.

José nods and Gregório throws the machete back at him

GREGÓRIO (CONT'D)  
So back to work, boy, get up!

He turns around and all other slaves go back to work right away.

Zilá watches from the corner of her eyes as José gets up, spits the remaining dirt and cane from his mouth, and walks to the next row of canes.

The enslaved men and women resume the rhythmic movement of harvesting, but they do it silently now, with no song to guide their tired hands.

#### **EXT. - COURTYARD NEXT TO THE SHACKS \ PLANTATION - NIGHT**

A group of about twenty slaves is gathered at the courtyard near the shacks where they live at the Santa Efigênia Plantation.

The simple wooden houses have bare openings instead of proper windows, long curtains in lieu of doors.

The slaves sing cheerfully, accompanied by the rhythmic beat coming from a few improvised instruments.

SLAVES  
(singing)  
Muriquinho piquinino, muriquinho  
piquinino, Parente de quiçamba na  
cacunda.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

## SLAVES (CONT'D)

Purugunta aonde vai, purunta onde  
vai, Ô parente, pro quilombo do  
dumbá.

Zilá, seating next to José and Fernão, laughs as the two  
young men struggle to keep up with the singing.

## SLAVES (CONT'D)

(singing)

Ê, chora, chora gongo, ê dévera,  
chora gongo chora, Ê, chora, chora  
gongo, ê cambada, chora gongo  
chora.

When the song ends, everyone laughs and cheers.

A strong, middle-aged enslaved man, ORIEL, points to José and  
Fernão, laughing.

## ORIEL

Not a song you're used to singing,  
I see?

## JOSÉ

Where we're from they're all  
brutes. What they sang we couldn't  
understand.

## ORIEL

And you were brought here together,  
the two of you?

## JOSÉ

Me and Fernão, raised there since  
we were about born.

An enslaved woman in her early forties, MARIA, holds a  
toddler in her lap and speaks towards José.

## MARIA

Raised together? Born there?

José, clearly the more articulate one, answers while Fernão  
just observes and smiles.

## JOSÉ

I was, yes. Not him.

## ZILÁ

And how's it, where you're from?

Fernão stops smiling and lowers his head. José looks at his  
friend and then to Zilá.

(CONTINUED)



JOSÉ

Our massa... he's a bad man. Didn't like folks much. Black folks then, that he hated.

MARIA

But bad like, whipping kind of bad?

José stares at his friend, his expression serious yet filled with kindness. He nods and Fernão stands up.

He walks to the center of the courtyard and raises his shirt.

His back is completely covered in scars, clearly the result of a severe flogging.

The group becomes suddenly silent, serious, sad. Fernão returns to José's side and sits down.

JOSÉ

Massa was very rich. He had the plantation plus some other six. That and all the gold he got from the Sarabuçu.

A much older man, BINA, speaks from across the fire pit.

BINA

Is said that gold sprouts from the ground there...

JOSÉ

Sure it does... massa had so much gold. So to him it didn't matter much, if a slave died, he'd go and get another.

Zilá looks to Fernão, who is crestfallen, yet serene.

JOSÉ (CONT'D)

He liked to throw these big parties, gather some friends from the mines and then he'd collect some girl slaves from the shacks to...

José look at the children present and measures his next words.

JOSÉ (CONT'D)

...entertain the guests. Fernão was having a thing with one of the girls when they came for her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOSÉ (CONT'D)

He about lost it. He set upon them  
like an animal...

José stares at his friend and then to the faces that watch  
him attentively under the moonlight.

JOSÉ (CONT'D)

They couldn't keep count of the  
whippings. Massa himself did the  
punishing... and he kept on going,  
even after Fernão here was flat on  
the ground, near dead.

Everyone stares at Fernão and José with sadness, but with the  
jaded eyes of those who've heard this story before.

JOSÉ (CONT'D)

But over here is much more... you  
know... peaceful.

ORIEL

Massa Alberto is a good master. But  
he's white, and the blood runs  
sometimes. But he looks out for us.  
The overseer, now he's a mean  
spirit. You're good to stay away  
from that man.

ZILÁ

And when you near him you've got to  
keep an eye out for what you're  
doing.

JOSÉ

I should say so. Never eaten so  
much dirt before in my life.

Everyone is serious but as soon as José starts laughing, the  
whole group joins in.

Biná plays a note on the charamela, the percussion returns,  
and after a few seconds, the voices start to echo a new song.

As the fire dies out, the slaves of the Santa Efigênia  
Plantation welcome the night with a song.

# **EXT. - JUNGLE \ ATLANTIC FOREST - DAY**

The dense forest blocks the sun, which reaches the leafy  
ground in sparse rays.

Camouflaged between the vegetation, MATADI, a black man in  
his early forties, stares ahead.

(CONTINUED)

Next to him is APIÚNA, a native boy with dark skin, about twelve years old.

His eyes trace the same line as Matadi, reaching a lofty palm tree.

Another native with equally dark skin, around eighteen years old, stands left of Apiúna.

His name is RAONI. He watches the scene attentively, and then waves for Apiúna to lift his bow.

The boy wields the weapon and positions a long arrow between his fingers and the string.

Matadi turns to Apiúna and instructs him to take a few deep breaths.

Apiúna obeys. He takes in a large amount of air, holds it, and...

A NOISE. Twigs and dry leaves breaking. And then...

A TAPIR appears in the narrow meadow.

The small animal is focused on the tiny brown fruit that are scattered all around the palm tree.

Matadi looks at it and then at Apiúna. He smiles, nodding.

The boy takes another deep breath, fixes his eyes on the tapir, arches his back, pulls the arrow and shoots.

The animal bolts, scared, and the arrow pierces a branch a few inches over its head.

APIÚNA  
(in macro-jê)  
No!

Raoni starts to laugh as he walks over to Matadi and the boy.

RAONI  
(also in macro-jê)  
What happened, Api?

The boy, visibly ashamed, turns to Raoni and then to Matadi.

MATADI  
(also in macro-jê)  
I know what happened.

APIÚNA  
I have good aim. I do!

(CONTINUED)