***A Long Way Gone* – Chapter Notes**

Chapter 1 (p.5-17)

- Rambo, Rapper’s Delight, Eric B & Rakim

- SLPP, APC

- Veranda scene with Heavy D music

Chapter 2 (p.18-20)

- Flashforward to boy soldier - visceral street scene

- “I live in three worlds: my dreams, and the experiences of my new life, which trigger memories from the past.” (p.20)

Chapter 3 (p.21-25)

- “One Love” explained

- Into the bush! (RUF, RPG, AK-47, G3)

Chapter 4 (p.26-29)

- scavenging in the bush

Chapter 5 (p.30-36)

- “scared like a soaked monkey” (p.31)

- desperate---steal corn from boy; parents give more corn

- recruited then attacked!

Chapter 6 (p.37-43)

- Kamator village: OPP saves the day

- “It was the last time I saw Junior, my older brother.” (p.43)

Chapter 7 (p.44-48)

- attacked, running, living in fear; “head toward the ocean”

Chapter 8 (p.49-57)

- forest: chased by wild pigs

- people fear the “seven boys”

- Difficult being in the forest—loneliness 🡪 READ: “Alone” poem (Poe) (p. 52)

Chapter 9 (p.58-68)

- Arrive at the beach; Atlantic Ocean sounds like metal drums on a tar road

- Captured and interrogated by fishermen- take their shoes

- Walk under the skin on feet is burned off- bloody and covered in sand

- Nameless fisherman helps them- grass steam heals feet/salt water- makes good food

- Ishmael is very quiet among the group of boys- descriptions

- Their host is young- getting married soon

- Stayed there two months- his mother comes and warns them the village is coming after them- gives them dried fish and water to take

- They get captured and placed in front of the chief- no one there recognizes them

- BOOK TITLE: “This time we were a long way from Mattru Jong.A long way gone.” (p.65)

- Call them “little devils”; again saved by rap music (p.66)

Chapter 10 (p.69-88)

- “My journey… when will it end?”

- Saidu: “how many more times do we have to come to terms with death before we find safety?” I feel like each time I accept death, part of me dies.

- Ishmael’s birth story (p.75-77) - Remembers his family- the gentle hands of grandmother; mother’s protecting embrace; father’s laughter; brother’s arms; little brother as mirror of him

- Musa tells a story about Bra Spider- why they are thin at the waist

- Descriptive passage- celebration- women do tricks with pestles

- Wake up and dog has eaten their food - Musa tells a story about his dad eating dogs

- Now Ishmael understands why he is so quiet all the time

- Crow falls out of the sky and they eat it

- Saidu dies (p. 84-88)

Chapter 11 (p. 89-99)

- Run into Gasemu- older bachelor from their town; banana farmer

- Gasemu notes that Ishmael’s head doesn’t shine anymore

- His family is alive!! Been looking for him; they are in the next village with Gasemu

- They march, but stop and rest---Ishmael anxious!!!

- Village attacked--- burning people; streams of blood

- The house of his family has been burned ; punches the walls

- Lashes out against Gasemu ---his fault

- rebels appear carrying someone’s head; laughing; playing cards

- Gasemu has been shot and dies (p.94-99)

Chapter 12 (p.100-113) --- *THE HALFWAY POINT!!!*

- Yele military base (30 boys): soccer, Musa’s stories, nightmares/migraines, Shakespeare (p.104)

- war is near; call to arms; training (p.108)

Chapter 13 (p.114-120)

- First fight (p.117); first kill; Musa is dead

Chapter 14 (p.121-125)

- Brown Brown; war movies (Rambo, Commando); The Killing Contest; Lansana’s humming

Chapter 15 (p.126-137) *--- TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED!!!*

- “In my head my life was normal. But everything began to change in the last weeks of Jan. ’96. I was fifteen.”

- Captured villages and turned into bases---- No pity, no childhood, frozen heart

- Wants to talk to lieutenant about Shakespeare- Macbeth shall never vanquished be…

- UNICEF shows up and “rescues them”; picks 15 of them--- confused/angry/betrayed by army

- Disarmed!?!? (p.129)

- Restless on truck---- The rescuers are all smiling- infuriating

- They arrive in Freetown: the compound (p.131)--- City Soldiers with clean guns and uniforms

- They are given new and clean clothes- beds to sleep in

- At dinner, Ishmael is hiding a grenade--- The man from the kitchen is terrified

- New friend- Mambu

- The RUF boys are there too- huge fight (p.134):six people were killed; two on their side and four rebels; several wounded, including the men that brought them; Mambu blinds a kid

- Taken to Benin Home- head hurts; withdrawal from drugs begins

Chapter 16 (p.138-151)

- Angry: Act like animals/ beat up the cook; Fight for hours; Take mattresses outside

- Alhaji punches wall till bone shows; Ishmael punches glass- gets all in hand---ends up in hospital

- Goes through withdrawal= passing out

- Recalls a time when he single-handedly conquered a village- killing all in it ---Nickname “Little Rambo”

- Back at Benin: Sees blood in faucet ; Kids reenact raids; Burn school supplies

- Go to freetown, then sell them; Scam bus driver

- War memory- Rotting Toes; hard to capture village- rebels wouldn’t give up; forced them to dig their own graves; stabbed and tortured and buried them alive

- Bruises all over arms from stray bullets- so close to death

Chapter 17 (p.152-166)

- His nurse (Esther) is pretty; she gives him gifts: Coca-Cola, Walkman & rap music, notebook/pen

- Difficult to trust anyone at this point in his life- friendship has been an exploitation

- Tells him he has a great smile--“we should be friends”

- Tells the story of being ambushed and shot in foot while staking out village (p.155)

- In extreme pain, overhears lieutenant tell doctor to make sure he gets out alive= he is valued member of army

- carried back to village for medicine 3 miles away (p.157)

- Horrible description of removing the bullet --- First thing he asked for was his weapon- spent time cleaning it

- Sergeant doctor told him he was lucky- didn’t think he was lucky, thought he was brave- says: “Little did I know that surviving the war that I was in, or any kind of war, was not a matter of feeling trained or brave. These were just things that made me feel I was immune to death.”

- Hates it when people tell him it’s not his fault

- Goes to Freetown with Esther and Leslie --- Resists Esther’s affection

- BAD DREAM & BREAKTHROUGH---he begins to open up to Esther (p.164-165)

- Has a nightmare- room covered in blood and death; goes into a room where his family is- they act like they can’t see the blood; goes outside to clean of the blood; comes back inside and it isn’t there anymore

- Starts to trust Esther and it doesn’t bother him as much when she says it’s not his fault

- Looks at the moon- sees the same ones he saw as a child --- Grandmother says, “the sky speaks to us.” (p.166)

Chapter 18 (p. 167-178)

- He has no family left- nothing to live for --- Esther: consider me family; his sister

- Esther reminds him of Abigail, a friend from home

- Performs monologue from *Julius Caesar* and hip-hop play for Mr. Kamara and visitors

- “Beginning of my seventh month at the rehabilitation center…”

- Asked to be the spokesperson for the center

- Speaks about resilience of children

- Mohamed- childhood friend- shows up- reminder of his childhood

- After 7 months, Leslie tells him he’s going to find him a foster family

- Repatriated

- He has an uncle named Tommy who lives in Freetown- carpenter

- He meets his uncle- taller and lighter skinned than his dad

- Calls him son

- Difficult to believe in happiness

- They sing Three Little Birds together

- Story about his father and uncle and a bees nest

- Given a chance to talk about his childhood

- Regrets not growing up with his mother and little brother

- Cousins aren’t told about the war

- Meets his cousin Animata- they soon become good friends

- Family is always happy but he finds it difficult to smile/laugh

Chapter 19 (p. 179-192)

- Worried about joining a family

- Wonders why; often gets lost in his own head

- Tells his friends goodbye

- Never sees Mambu or Alhaji again

- Mambu ends up getting sent back to the front lines since his family refused to take him in

- Alhaji gets passed around foster families

- Esther- “I loved her but never told her.”

- The first night they make chicken for him- special occasion

- Misses Benin Home

- Family sits around listening to cassettes of story-telling

- Goes out dancing with Allie

- Remembers being truly happy when going out dancing with friends

- Theres a black light

- Disturbed because remembers attacking a secondary school during a dance

- Dances with a girl named Zainab- dates girls but never tells them his story

- Leslie shows up and tells him he has an interview to be sent to the UN in New York and talk about child soldiers

- Least dressed up of all the boys

- Doesn’t know what an elevator is

- Says he should be picked because he’s actually experienced the war

- It makes him angry that the interviewer smiles

- Genuinely laughs

- His uncle doesn’t believe that he’s going

- Gets a visa- American embassy- white lady behind the counter doesn’t understand- asks if he has a bank account or seomthing to make him return to Freetown

- Dr. Tamba is taking him to the airport

Chapter 20 (p.193-200)

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Chapter 21 (p.201-218)

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\*CHRONOLOGY [p.219-226]