

# Malaria Dreams

You have just been hired as an intern in the production department of **HBOmax Studios**. It's one of the most successful TV and film production studios in the U.S., but it has a lot catching up to do if it wants to match **Netflix** or **Amazon** (or even **Disney**) on a **GLOBAL scale**. Keep in mind that HBO recently merged with WarnerMedia (owner of Discovery, Food Network, Animal Planet, etc.) Nevertheless, there have been some big shows coming out of HBO during the past year, such as **Mare of Easttown**, as well as some older successes, such as **Game of Thrones**, **The Sopranos**, and **Big Bang Theory** (maybe you've heard of them).

All of these have been **MAJOR ca\$h cows** and allowed HBO to become a possible "contender" for the real global game of thrones currently underway in the TV-world.

MOOOOOOOO!!!!...

Do you get the picture?

**TODAY**, however, may be your lucky day.

Your supervisor has just handed you the first pages of a book entitled **Malaria Dreams**, by Stuart Stevens. She tossed it on your desk and simply said, "**Read this and tell me what you think.**"

The book tells the story Steven's trip across the heart of the African continent. The story is captivating. It's wryly humorous, adventurous, and at times, more than a bit frightening. But it's also non-fiction travel literature—not necessarily the stuff of HBO's recent playbook.

"Read this and tell me what you think..." These are obvious **code words** in streaming television-land. Your supervisor is looking to take a **bold** chance, and she wants to know your opinions on **IF** or **HOW** this piece could (or should!?) be adapted into some sort of a TV production. (!?)

More specifically, what she really wants is your recommendations on the following **conceptual** and **tactical** issues:

**First**, what are the **PRIMARY considerations** that **any** producer would need to take into account **IF** or **WHEN** this story was made into a series? Director? Scripting? Budget? Target Audiences? Casting considerations (specific actors and actresses)? Locations? Filming? Story transformations? Narrative tone or tenor? Film or HiDEF 8K Video? Mini-Series? ?

**Second**, how could this particular section of the book be made cinematic and/or dramatically televisual in keeping with the **HBO brand**? What gets put on film/video? What gets left out? What are the compelling stories here? This specifically includes the kinds of **images/shots**, **audio** (ambient, dialogue, voice-overs, music, etc.) **characters**, **actors/actresses**, **character features**, **plot changes**, etc.

**Ultimately**, your supervisor wants YOU to describe some of the challenges a producer (or director) **might face** in making this scene into a great overall production. \$eriously.

Alas, not only is your supervisor interested in making this into an HBO production, what she is slyly doing is using this as a test case to see if you are "suitable material" for promotion into the higher ranks. This could mean bigger \$\$\$ for you and maybe even the power to produce the shows that you've been dreaming about.

That is, **IF** you get it right.

Time is **short**—as it always is in TV-land. You have 10 minutes to come up with your recommendations.

# Malaria Dreams

By STUART STEWENS

## Preface

I just looking at the books made me feel better. They were piled in the adjacent airline seat, reassuring in their bulk. Each of the titles had an appealing no-nonsense quality. *Africa Overland* and *Sahara Handbook* were the thickest volumes, but my favorite was a skinny pamphlet called *Stay Alive in the Desert*. I liked the author's imperative tone. None of this "how-to" stuff, just a simple command: Stay alive, dammit!

I opened *Africa Overland*. "Nowadays one can read of travellers getting lost," the introduction began, "and into trouble, or even dying in the attempt to cross Africa, but the reasons for these tragedies are simple and there for anyone to see. The first and most important reason is insufficient planning."

This was somewhat unsettling. My planning had mostly consisted of one trip to Hatchard's bookstore to buy the books that evidently were now going to enumerate all the preparations I had not made.

"Such a trip must not be undertaken lightly, and should be planned on an expedition basis with the whole of the planning for the trip spread over a period of at least one year."

This suggested further problems. I had decided to travel across Africa about three weeks ago.

"Prospective travellers should not listen to rumours and hear-say of crime, muggings, abductions and other bad reports of happenings in African countries."

I read on, anxious to find out exactly *why* one shouldn't listen to these reports. Unfortunately, further explanation seemed to

be missing. I skipped ahead to the section headed "Travelling Companions."

"The choice of persons or person to accompany you is of paramount importance and the success or failure of the whole trip can depend upon your choice."

I thought about this for a while, staring out the plane window at the red and orange bands of the sinking sun. We were over the Sahara.

The author elaborated on the proper characteristics of a trans-African companion. Or companions, really, as he made it clear that it was entirely unwise to consider such a journey without a proper "team."

"Physical fitness is an important factor in selecting your travelling companions, as there will be some extremes of temperature to contend with, and times when everybody will be required to push and heave when a vehicle becomes stuck, or to lift when it comes to changing a wheel. . . . Most important, at least one member of your group should be a professional motor mechanic or have sound mechanical knowledge."

I put the book down. Across the aisle my "team" was engrossed in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. She was twenty-three years old, 5'5", 110 pounds, and possibly the only person ever to transfer from Bryn Mawr to the University of Oklahoma. In all likelihood Ann knew more about mechanics than I did, but I doubt I've ever met anyone who didn't. She was nibbling from a can of pheasant pâté. She'd acquired this treat at the airport in Marseilles when I had suggested she buy us some sandwiches while I held our place in the check-in line. She'd returned some time later quite pleased.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Pâté. Pheasant pâté."

"What happened to the sandwiches?"

"They looked yucky. All they had was ham and stuff like that."

"Ham."

As the plane began to descend, I finished the introduction to *Africa Overland*. "It must be emphasized that the trans-African trip will not be a holiday. If you are able to accept this, you will lose completely the worries and inhibitions associated with the dull confines of civilization."