



Forced Encounter

Kongo in the rear mirror

**A freeform scenario by
Per Wetterstrand**

This scenario portrays the war in Kongo 1961 and the consequences it had for four Swedish soldiers that were part of it.

Introduction

The four Swedish soldiers are (1961): Bo “Bulan” Larson, 21, Ragnar “Pyret” Uggla, 20, Nils “Rally” Henriksson, 23, and Rune “Chefen” Nordström, 24. All the characters come from places around Göteborg (Gothenburg), a city of approximately 300,000 inhabitants on the east coast of Sweden. All characters are fictive yet the majority of the other material is drawn from historical records.

The background and connections are rather extensive but it is not meant that all of this should be explicit. I have been inspired by Joseph Conrads *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Jonas Waerns *Katanga* (1980), Claes Löfgrens *Fredsknektarna* (Squires of Peace) (1990) and numerous from newspaper archives and my own experiences of the downside of life.

Kongo became independent 1960 together with several other African states. However, the liberation from the former colonial power Belgium was disrupted by the secessionist ambitions of the rich Katanga province in the Southeast. Belgium heartily supported this endeavour.

The United Nations decided to send peace keeping forces in order to prevent a mounting civil war . The Secretary General at the time was the Swedish national Dag Hammarskjöld. The conflict, which rapidly took an international turn came to be called the *Kongo crisis* (Kongokrisen). Both superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, wished for a part in the conflict which increased the motivation of the UN to act.

In choosing peace-keeping forces, the UN primarily chose soldiers from other African states for example Nigeria but also neutral European states, Sweden, Ireland and India in Asia. There were Swedish troops in the Congo between 22nd of July 1960 and 20th of May 1964. In total there were a little over 4700 soldiers and 1500 additional personnel. Soldiers from the Swedish air force made a decisive contribution in 1961, eliminating the Katanganese air force with their *flying barrels* (flygande tunnor) (SAAB J:29).

The scenario is about Christmas Eve 1961 shortly after intense fire fights in Elisabethville in Congo (the so called December War). The scenes will take place on Christmas Eves—in different families and in different years.

Scene List

Scene 1; Battalion XIV in the Congo on Christmas Eve 1961

The introductory scene is the most exciting and exotic of the six scenes in the game. This scene serves as a foundation for the rest of the game. The characters handed to the players only have nicknames so that the connection to the next scene with the sons will be less obvious.

It is the events of Christmas Eve 1961 which makes the four Swedish UN soldiers meet Christmas upon Christmas.

Scene 2; Forced encounter

We will meet the sons of the four Swedish UN soldiers on Christmas Eve 2000. They have all been called to attend an important meeting. The location of the meeting is awkward. They are to meet at the customer toilet at Åhléns department store in Göteborg.

The location has been chosen by the now 60 year old Congo veterans in order to force their sons to confront each other and later their fathers. They have chosen the place because:

- i) They know one of the security guards at the department store, Sune, who was also in the Congo. Sune locks the door to the toilet once everyone has arrived.
- ii) A transformer station is located next door to the toilet and this prevents all mobile phones from operating by blocking the signal.

Scene 3; “Teenage Christmas” at the Nordström family 1979

Ulf Nordström is the focal point of this scene. The scene partly explains the start of Ulf’s addiction to narcotics.

Scene 4: Christmas of 1974, the Henrikson family.

A powerful scene portraying a classic Swedish Christmas where tragic memories surface. Little Lars gets a J 29 airplane toy, same model that were used by the Swedish air force in the Congo.

Scene 5: Christmas of 1978, the Larsson family.

The scene intends to show how Robert, as Bo before him, is pressured into behaving like “a man”.

Scene 6: The Swedish UN veterans prepare to face their sons

Epilogue

This scene describes the Christmas of 2001. What kind of game master to decide, but it should follow logically what has happened previously in the scenario and preferable entail a happy ending.

Scene 1; Battalion XIV in the Congo on Christmas Eve 1961

Player characters: Bo "Bulan" Larsson, 21; Nils "Rally" Henriksson, 23; Ragnar "Pyret" Uggla, 20; Rune "Chefen" Nordström, 24. Non-player characters include Swedish officers and soldiers, gendarms and mercenaries.

Introduction

The characters in scene one have only nicknames so that the players will not immediately understand that it is the fathers of the young men played in the next scene.

Whatever happens, the character s will survive.

The scene should be exciting and scary without wallowing in gory details (use common sense). The Congo was not Vietnam. The UN was positioned to create peace and not to shoot communists to pieces. It befalls the game master to respect that this can be real history. The scene is divided into the following parts;

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|----------|--|
| Scene 1a | The characters receives their mission by the officer in the Swedish UN camp. |
| Scene 1b | The characters travel along a rough road eastwards and have to talk their way passed a smaller road block. After much toil they find the mercenary camp in the jungle. |
| Scene 1c | The liberation of the two imprisoned Swedish UN soldiers and potentially four native warriors. |

Scene 1a; Receiving the mission

On the evening of the 23rd of December the call goes out for a minor recon mission that will take place on the following morning. The four newly found friends volunteer without really considering the potential consequences. They are to report to the headquarter (see map) at 05.00hrs where they will be briefed about the assignment.

It is the brigade commander, Jonas Waern together with their company commander, Fredrik Lennartsson (fictive name) that will give the briefing.

Jonas Waern is a tall, fair-haired man around 35. He gives a mildly authoritarian impression. He is very popular. In contrast, Lennartsson, a short, somewhat stocky man in his 30s, is less well liked due to his harsh manner. He is however respected by most people.

There have been reports of imprisoned Swedish soldiers

in a small mercenary camp some kilometers east. The mission assigned to the four characters is to find the camp and investigate whether these reports are true. They will conduct the mission in civilian clothes with "Chefen" (the Boss) as head of the team. (Chefen speaks fluent French and can pose as a Belgian). They are instructed to be very careful because "we do not want any more Swedish soldiers to be captured", as Waern put it.

According to the report there should be a badly hidden car wreck about 15 to 20 kilometers east of the Swedish encampment. From the car wreck there is a small path which leads to a permanent looking encampment.

Jonas Waern exits and leaves Lennartsson in charge. Lennartsson informs the characters that it would be darn good if they were able to liberate any captured Swedes. He is not very familiar with the details of the mission.

Equipment

The four characters each have a sub-machine gun and a "jungle knife". They are also given twelve hand grenades that they are free to divide amongst themselves and a communications radio which "Bulan" (the Bump) gets to operate. They also receive four flashlights. They are wearing civilian clothes: tough, sand-coloured, cotton trousers, simple shirts, short jackets and military boots. They are driving a small model, white Peugeot with Belgian license plates.

Scene 1b; The road to the mercenary encampment

The time is already 06.00 when the characters are in the car and slowly drive towards the gate, which leads to the only road east. They will pass the refugee camp that basks the light from a waxing moon and some scattered fires. There are over 20 000 refugees accommodated in the camp. At the other end of the refugee camp are a dussin young Baluba warriors, which should be sleeping in the camp. Some of them have machetes and behave in a hostile manner. If the characters only continue driving they will move without incident yet if the characters hesitate there will be trouble.

The road is full of holes and in a generally bad shape, which makes impossible to drive with any significant speed. For the first kilometer there is no forest, The people in the refugee camp must have used it all for fire wood. Yet further along the jungle becomes dense and within a couple of more kilometers the road is blocked by three large tree trunks. Two gendarmers with rifles are sitting and sleeping nearby. Here it is assumed that the characters will talk their way through...Make the situation feel a bit hostile.

After a while one of the characters spot something by the roadside which turns out to be a car wreck. With the aid of the flashlights it is possible to find a path that

leads straight into the forest. Across the path is a metal wire, which is connected to a small explosive. Let the characters discover the metal wire right before it is too late if they choose to walk on the path.

It takes at least an hour to reach the mercenary camp in the forest.

The perfect opening music score is the first track of *Apocalypse Now: The End* with the Doors.

Scene 1c; The liberation of Swedish UN soldiers

I have chosen not to attach a sketch or map depicting the mercenary camp. It is better if each game master is allowed to create her/his own camp. The following details are however essential and should be included in any description:

- A well constructed hut, which is situated one meter above ground on long poles. Around the hut are sharpened wooden spears with human skulls attached. There is a mercenary by the name of Charles Masy who had as his hobby to collect the skulls of people he had shot (Löfgren, 1990). Note the connection to Joseph Conrads *Heart of Darkness* in which one of the main characters discovered a house which flower beds were outlined with human skulls.
- There are two Swedish UN soldiers, They are both tied up and severely injured from torture. I imagine that they are tied to some kind of wooden structure in a standing position.
- Two Africans, also they tied up. One is dead yet the other one appears to be alive.
- One or several tents with sleeping mercenaries.

The characters are supposed to liberate the Swedish prisoners and be forced to kill several mercenaries in the process. The characters will survive, but can be seriously wounded. (If someone suffers a serious or permanent damage which will affect them throughout their life, then this should be added to the character in the year 2000).

Scene 2; Forced encounter at Åhléns' toilet

Characters: Robert Larsson – liquor store clerk (government monopoly); Hugo Henriksson – car sales man; Rickard Ugglå – doctor of medicine, divorcee; Jan Nordström – narcotics addict; and Sune – security guard (non-player character).

The introduction to the scene (important)

Rickard Ugglå gets a call on his cell when he drops the kids off. The reception is bad but it is someone that wants to meet him at the customers' toilet at Åhléns at five to five. It seemed very urgent. Perhaps it is one of his old patients that needs help... Anyways, he has time to go

over there to see what it is about.

The Toilet

You reach the second floor of Åhléns by escalator. The second floor sports household items, one restaurant and a customers restroom. In order to reach the toilet one has to walk along a corridor for five-six meters. The rectangular toilet carries toilet booths one side and a row of sinks along the other. Access to the three coin toilets costs 5 kronor. All of the toilets are free. The door leading out from the restroom is fairly sturdy and equipped with a remotely controlled magnetic lock (read: there is no way of getting out). There is a transformer station next door and it blocks all mobile phone calls (read: there is no way of contacting anyone outside the restroom). It is possible to activate the fire alarm by smoking vigorously. There very loud alarm will go off in the restroom but can be reset by pressing a button. Sune can also shut it off from the outside (read: no one will come to "rescue" them).

The toilet is equipped with speakers from which Christmas carols are sounding. Later on the music will change. One can for example play the same music as in scene one.

The characters arrive

The characters arrive at approximately the same time. Let the players describe their own characters. When all are present, the security guard Sune will lock the door but without the characters noticing. The speakers informs all customers that it is time to leave for the exits as the department store will close for the Christmas holidays. The game can begin. From this point scenes 3-5 will depart one at the time. In between each departure scene the game will return to the scene in the restroom at Åhléns department store.

Scene 3; "Teenage Christmas" at the Nordström family 1979

Characters: Ulf, 15; Fredde, 15; Lolla 14; Pari 16; and Lena, 15 (NPC).

Envisioned scenario:

Ulf does not want to celebrate Christmas with his parents, so he has invited some of his friends to the summer cottage. Ulf and Fredde has got there on their tweaked mopeds and with Lolla as a passenger. Pari and Lena has used Pari's truck moped.

Suggested music: Ebba grön or time typical hard rock.

Ulf Nordström, 15

Pari has brought two liter moonshine and a substantial amount of hasch. Ulf is in love with Lena but she seems to be together with Pari. Ulf and Lolla are a couple, but

Ulf plans to break up with her today. Anyway, it seems to be quite a messy Christmas Eve. Fredde is an okey friend although he is a little whimpy. Ulf's parents have promised not to come and check up on them.

Fredde, 15 (played by the person who played Robert Larsson)

Your mum and dad have forbidden you to be with Ulf and Pari. He has to return the moped in order for his parents not to be worried. You are afraid of Pari.

Lolla, 14 (played by the person who played Hugo Henriksson)

You are together with Ulf. It will be exciting to celebrate Christmas without any parents. You have brought some left-overs from the Christmas smörgåsbord to share with your friends.

Pari, 16 (played by the person who played Rickard Uggla)

It is cool of Uffe to arrange a small Christmas party. You have nicked two litres of moonshine from your father and have managed to buy a gram of hasch. Damn what party you will have! Lena is your girl, she is OK...Fredde, Uffe's friend is somewhat of a wuss. He can use some booze to relax. Lolla, Fredde's girl is also OK.

Scene 4; Christmas of 1974, the Henrikson family.

Characters: Nils, father; Rosmarie, mother; Maria, big sister, 10; Hugo, 8; and Santa Claus played by Janne the neighbour (non-playing character).

Envisioned scenario:

Santa Claus arrives with two mysterious Christmas presents. A assembly model of the J 29 "flying barrel" which was used in the Congo in 1961 and was handed to Hugo with "wishes from Santa". Santa Claus also has a gift to the dead daughter Johanna: a diary with pressed flowers from "dad". Maria gets her beloved barbie doll from "mum and dad". What happens next is decided by the course of the scene.

Nils Henriksson, 36 (played by the person playing Ulf Nordström)

Owens a car firm; Wife: Rosemarie, 33; children Maria 10, Hugo, 8, and Johanna who would have turned 13 this year.

Johanna disappeared and was found in lake Mjörn five years ago. Since then Nils has bought a gift every Christmas and placed in the attic. This year he purchased a diary with pressed flowers on the covers. For Hugo he got a assembly model of a Spitfire, a plane commonly used in the Second World War.

Rosemarie Henriksson, 33 (played by the person who played Rickard Uggla)

Housewife; husband Nils, 36; children Maria 10, Hugo, 8 and also Johanna who would have turned 13 this year. She drowned five years ago.

Rosemarie is slightly unstable today. She has worked very hard with the Christmas food for two whole days and cleaned and polished the entire house. She wants this to become a nice Christmas Eve.

Maria Henriksson, 10 (played by the person who played Robert Larsson)

Maria has wished for a barbie doll from Santa.

Hugo Henriksson, 8

Hugo has wished for a assembly model of a Spitfire for Christmas. He feels like playing with his big sister.

Scene 5; Christmas of 1978, the Larsson family.

Characters: Bo, father; Ritva, mother; Jarl, grandfather (non-player character, much needed input from GM); Inga, grandmother; and Robert, 7.

Envisioned scenario:

It is Christmas Eve dinner. The table is filled with delicious courses and Bo and Jarl have had a few schnapps. Grandpa Jarl dominates and tells little Robert what it is to be a real man!

Bo Larsson, 38 (played by the person who played Ulf Nordström)

Bo's wife, Ritva, has been very ill lately. It is something affecting her joints. She is in pain and often experiences feelings of anxiety. They have not had sex for two years. They even sleep in separate bedrooms.

Ritva Larsson, 36 (played by the person who played Hugo Henriksson)

Social worker.

Ritva has been very bad lately. She has pains in her joints and she has been having anxiety attacks. Bo and Ritva have not had sex in two years' time. They even sleep in separate bedrooms.

Inga Larsson, 58, Bo's mother (played by the person who played Rickard Uggla)

Inga has a small yarn store in Stenugnsund, The store is a place of calm when it becomes too much at home. Her husband Jarl can become very violent when he is in a bad mood. She has thought about leaving him on several occasions but she can. She still loves him, despite everything.

Robert Larsson, 7

Robert is sitting and wondering of what's underneath all that wrapping. He wants a pair of soccer shoes and a real football. Robert is well behaved and can sometimes seem like a bit of a besserwisser.

Scene 6; The Swedish UN veterans prepare to face their sons

Characters: Bo Larsson, well driller; Nils Henriksson, restaurant owner; Ragnar Uggla, truck driver; Rune Nordström, early retired; Sune-security guard and UN veteran (non-player character).

Envisioned scenario:

The sit in the worn down Restaurant Murveln that is located almost opposite Åhléns. The scene is thought to be the last one but it is possible to introduce it earlier and then jump back to the toilet scene. It is perfectly alright to move back and forth between Murveln and the toilet scene if one wishes.

From time to time, Sune the security guard will enter the restaurant and report on the situation.

There is not much to add to this scene. Possibly some old war wound from scene 1.

Epilogue

I want a happy ending. From what has happened in the scenario, the game master describes the Christmas Eve of 2001. I have some suggestions:

- Christmas at Rickard Uggla in his spacious house in Örgrytevilla. Robert Larsson is there and so is Ulf Nordström and Hugo Henriksson with family. Rickard's both sons are also there and they all have a nice children friendly Christmas with lots of gifts and delicious Christmas food.
- Robert Larsson has invited Ulf Nordström for a quiet Christmas celebration with pre cooked dinner and TV. The other characters phone and wish them a very merry Christmas.

Bulan (the Bump) 1961, 21

UN soldier in battalion XIV 15/12 (1961)-1/5 1962

There was a dance by the beach. Everybody was there. The bottles of booze were gulped down behind the girls' changing room. He had his sights on a little blond-haired girl named Sofia. She was not old, maybe seventeen, but she was stunningly beautiful, not to mention her breasts! He walked towards the dance floor and looked around, yes there she was with three of her friends. He rolled up the sleeves of his newly ironed linnen shirt, unbuttoned the collar button and marched over. When he was almost there Charles appears and asks Sofia if he can have this dance. Something snapped. He spins Charles around and says: wrong girl and clocks Charles for queen and country. His fist burned and he rubbed his hand as he saw Charles fall to the ground.

Now, you come with me, he said to Sofia, and that was that. Nobody saw how insecure and nervous he really was and that was good.

On the day following the arrival to Congo, on the 16th of December there was a large scale attack against gendarm fortification Camp Massart in Elisabethville. The actions was well-planned by the Battalion Chief Jonas Waern. All four: Bulan, Rally, Pyret and Chefen were part of the battle. Sharing the terror and excitement in the trenches around Camp Massart was where they got to know each other. It was these four that volunteered when Jonas Waern himself asked for people for a very special mission on Christmas Eve.

The 24th of December 1961

The four friends are to report at 05.00 at headquarters in the Swedish encampment in Elisabethville.

Rally

He is a groovy guy, but a bit mental with a death wish. He is one heck of a driver.

Pyret (Wee one)

He looks very young. People usually guess he is seventeen or eighteen. The week in Elisabethville have left his mark.

Chefen (the Boss)

He is cool and experienced. It feels as if you are going to be okay if you stay close to the Boss. He has already survived five months in the Congo. He was part of the intensive September battle when the UN took several strategic Elisabethvill. Unfortunately, the UN has been forced to retreat from its position not to appear too provocative.

Status

The Bump is very eager about the mission of Christmas Eve. What if they are caught and captured. But the worst case scenario would be to be attacked by drugged up wild negroes with great big machetes. He had seen what the Baluba warriors in the refugee camps were capable of. It feels comforting to have the Boss in command. He seems so calm and experienced.

Rally (1961), 23

UN soldier in battalion XIV 15/12 (1961)-1/5 (1962)

Girlfriend: Siv Malmgren, 20.

His hear was racing and he could feel the excitement rushing through his body. The Saab was back on all four wheels again after the fierce roll. It was just like Karlsson on the Roof, he thought. Karrlsson, the Swedish rally driver was his big idol. "Rally" had enforced the roof with welded iron pipes. It worked perfectly. When he came back from Africa he would look for sponsors and aim for a proper rally career.

Fortune was smiling upon Rally. He had a girlfriend (Siv) who looked like a photo model. Himself, he looked like a movie star, with a leather jacket and a sparkling smile. Rally did his military service as a tank driver in Skövde two years ago.

"We had read about the battles in Swedish newspapers during the training in Stängnäs and seven people quit. When we landed in Leo (Leopoldville in Western Congo) no one knew what was happening in Elisabethville (Easter Congo, Katanga province). Communications were down and there on the platfore stood Frölander, a guy from Visby that I had been with in the tenth. He was sorting people who came from Elisabethville—there were dead, badly wounded and scrapes and cuts. Those who came down there for the first time surely were in for a bit of a chock.

We were order to dress in full combat gear. No one knew what was happening so of course there were some butterflies whizzing around. We closed in on the town towards the afternoon and could even see it from afar. Black pillars of smoke were rising towards the sky. The pilot found out over the radio that the gendarmers were in an outer circle around the airport and were firing the planes with anti aircraft fire, but the UN were in control of the airport in an inner circle.

I do no know if we were hit, we heard noise but the landing was fine and the pilot commanded us to exit the craft as soon as possible, They did not wish to stay any longer than necessary. The sun was shining and it was very hot. They first people we med were Swedish UN soldiers covered in mud. They were dug in, ready to fire and we were order to take cover positions until it became dark."

Roland Isaksson, Sergeant (from Fredsknektarna (Squires of Peace))

On the day following the arrival to Congo , on the 16th of December there was a large scale attack against gendarm fortification Camp Massart in Elisabethville. The actions was well-planned by the Battalion Chief Jonas Waern. All four: Bulan, Rally, Pyret and Chafen were part of the battle. Sharing the terror and excitement in the trenches around Camp Massart was where they got to know each other. It was these four that volunteered when Jonas Waern himself asked for people for a very special mission on Christmas Eve.

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He is cool and experienced. It feels as if you are going to be okay if you stay close to the Boss. He has already survived five months in the Congo. He was part of the intensive September battle when the UN took several strategic Elisabethville. Unfortunately, the UN has been forced to retreat from its position not to appear too provocative.

Status

It is going to be so exciting to go out into the jungle on a mission. Maybe he will get the opportunity to shoot one or two savages, or maybe that would be stupid. They are supposed to avoid battle. He is carrying a worn picture of his girlfriend Siv in his pocket.

The Boss (1961), 24

UN soldier in XII battalion in the Congo 7/6 1961-2/11 1961 and 15/12 1961-1/5 1962

Girlfriend: Britt-Marie

It almost got really bad in the summer of 1960. He had begun to drink heavily. He was living in a bachelor pad with pantry in the Old town in Gohenburg and was working as a day worker down at the docks. Yet he broke free of the bottle when he met Britt-Marie who was from Växjö. The late summer of 1960 was one long romance. They were travelling around the Gothenburg archipelago, camping and swimming. "The Boss" had never been happier in his entire life. That his relationship with Britt-Marie might come to an end once he returned from Congo did not even cross his mind.

The boss was a bit of an adventurer. This made him join the navy at the mere age of sixteen. He became a full-time sailor and sailed all over the world with different ships for three years. It was during this time that he learnt French. He had a knack for languages and even native French speakers would ask from what part of Canada he was from.

The Boss had chosen the hardest training in the military service. parachute trooper at Karlsborg. The training almost broke him. But he pushed through and became a good soldier.

He received the rank of sergeant in the Congo and he became the natural leader among the four newly found friends. He had already been down there for five months, so he was something of a veteran. Granted, it was nice to be home on leave in November. Yet it had not been long until he was climbing the walls back home in Sweden and he made sure that he went back to the Congo with the XIV battalion.

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Status

The boss is proud to lead the mission. He is aware of the risks. They can be attacked, tortured, caught or killed. Everything is up to him. He must act cool and with confidence. The Bump and Wee One seem very nervous. Hope they make it. He hopes he makes it.

Bo "The Bump" Larsson, 60

Self-employed "Larsson's Well Drilling". Lives in a detached house in the outskirts of Stenungsund.

Wife: Ritva Larsson, 58, part-time employed as a secretary at the social insurance.

Children: Robert Larsson, 29

Mosquitoes, mosquitoes, mosquitoes. The vacation in the summer cottage had been pure hell. There wasn't usually any problem with mosquitoes but it is sure to be the stupid sanitation unit that the neighbours have built that acting as the prime environment for hatching mosquitoes. The Friggwall's, what a name! They one of those grass eating, environmental loonies that Bo hates. Right, one should not pollute the environment but to pollute the air with mosquitoes should be forbidden. He invited the Friggwall's over for meat casserole. Big success. They sat there, squirming on their chairs, stuttering about how they did not eat meat. Then Bo had answered that it apparently was in order to divert the piss to a pond that generated more mosquitoes than the inner countries of Norrland, but that there was something wrong with his meat casserole. Damn that scolding felt good. It almost saved the summer.

Bo Larsson is a stubborn man. He knows that he will get passed every obstacle. Every obstacle! Although he has had a hard life. His far was a wife beater and an alcoholic. Damn, how he loved his father. Bo had forgiven him many times for what he had done. Now he is dead since 15 years. Mum is still alive. She lives in a old peoples home in Stenungsund. She has become like a child now, poor mother.

Bo's wife Ritva has been very ill. She has arthritis and often goes for treatments. Her medications takes up a frightening big part of the medicine cabinet. Bo takes Losec for his stomach and painkillers for his back. Bo and Ritva sleep in separate bedrooms since years back. Yet the marriage has improved in recent years. Bo has become more patient and Ritva no longer suffers as much anxiety from her illness anymore.

Bo was a UN soldier in battalion XIV 15/12 1961-1/5 1962 in the Congo assigned to Elisabethville. In Congo he got to know Nils "Rally" Henriksson, Ragnar "Wee One" Uggla and Rune "the Boss" Nordström from Gothenburg. They became friends for life and have met since then. On Christmas Eve they experienced something very specially that left deep impacts on all of them. They have tried to get together every Christmas since then to honour that memory. For this Christmas they have decided to finally get their sons to meet. He came up with the idea and chose the location. The public toilet at Åhléns right before closing time.

Status

Robert will surely come to the meeting. He has a good kid.

Nils "Rally" Henriksson, 62

Restaurant owner. Lives in Alingsås.

Wife: Rosmarie, 59

Children: Maria 36, Hugo 34 and Henrietta 28.

Rosmarie and Nils had gone on vacation all the way up to Lofoten. It was so deafeningly beautiful that Nils had to wipe one and even two tears from his eyes. He and the wife had dreamt of this trip for several years but somehow it had never happened. When they finally got to Lofoten they had went on whalesafari and seen lots of killer whales, white whales and many other. Life was pretty darn good!

Except for what happened in Congo there is one more memory that never leaves Nils. This was when his daughter Johanna drowned. She disappeared and was fished out of the Mjörn lake 27 years ago. Since then Nils has developed the habit of buying her a Christmas present every year and place it on the attic. It is a ceremony that he values greatly.

Nils is a good family father. He loves his wife and his children. He is happy with the restaurant and has only felt younger and younger in recent years.

Restaurant "Homey" is a pretty small establishment with seating of for 25-30 guests. The wife Rosemarie cooks while Nisse acts as waiter or vice versa. They both have there specialties. Rosemarie bakes bread, desserts and her special fish soup á la Henriksson. Nisse is a master at pasta and meat dishes and a couple of African specialties (Congo casserole and the restaurant most expensive dish: Tanganyika fish, 280SEK). Sometimes the youngest daughter Henrietta assists.

Nils was a UN soldier in battalion XIV 15/12 1961-1/5 1962 in the Congo assigned to Elisabethville. In Congo he got to know Bo "Bulan" Larsson, Ragnar "Wee One" Uggla and Rune "the Boss" Nordström from Gothenburg. They became friends for life and have met since then. On Christmas Eve they experienced something very specially that left deep impacts on all of them. They have tried to get together every Christmas since then to honour that memory. For this Christmas they have decided to finally get their sons to meet. Larsson came up with the idea and chose the location. The public toilet at Åhléns right before closing time.

Status

It was tricky to get Hugo to come to Gothenburg. Nils does not like the idea of forcing their sons together. What good can come of it? They are so different. Although it is kind of fun to trick Hugo that there has been a break-in in his car firm and then get him to come down to Åhléns. Just hope that he does not get too pissed off.

Ragnar "Wee one" Uggla, 59

Truck driver living in Partille outside of Gothenburg.

Ex wife: Katarina, 56. Child: Rickard Uggla, doctor

The engines were roaring. The smell of burnt rubber lay heavy over the stands and soon Ragnar's favourite sport was about to start. Tractor pulling was not a hobby, it is a way of life. He was at Mantorp for the twelfth year in a row and still he could feel the tickle down his spine when the enormous monster vehicles came up to the starting line. This was life!

Ragnar had never gotten over what happened in Congo in 1961. His defence mechanisms had been to suppress and forget so there were not many people who knew that he had been to Congo. His son, Richard for example, knew nothing.

Ragnar's marriage had been rocky for many years so it felt natural that they got a divorce three years ago. She has found a new husband, that she probably met a long time ago. Ragnar is spending some time with a woman from Thailand. She is only 38 years old and married to another truck driver (that Ragnar knows). She is badly treated by her husband and they are trying to figure out what to do so that she can get a divorce.

In addition to watching TV, Ragnar reads a lot of books. He usually gets interested in one subject and then reads everything about it. This October it was bridges when he read all there was to read about the two building teams tasked with constructing the Alvsborgsbron. In November he had a relapse on Guinness Book of Records. He loves to read about really fat, really tall and otherwise abnormal people.

Ragnar was a UN soldier in battalion XIV 15/12 1961-1/5 1962 in the Congo assigned to Elisabethville. In Congo he got to know Bo "Bulan" Larsson, Nils "Rally" Henriksson and Rune "the Boss" Nordström from Gothenburg. They became friends for life and have met since then. On Christmas Eve they experienced something very specially that left deep impacts on all of them. They have tried to get together every Christmas since then to honour that memory. For this Christmas they have decided to finally get their sons to meet. Larsson came up with the idea and chose the location. The public toilet at Åhléns right before closing time.

Status

Ragnar is nervous about how Rickard will react. Will he think that Ragnar is a coward telling him about Congo like this.

Wee one (1961), 20

UN soldier in battalion XIV 15/12 (1961)--1/5 1962. Girlfriend: Katarina, 17.

Dad had taken him home to where he grew up, a farm in Skärsta valley, east of Gränna. They took dad's blue Volvo, the weather was wonderful and dad was in an excellent mood. Here, my son, our family has resided since the early nineteenth century, dad said, and did a swooping gesture indicating the valley.

They were standing on a muddy, dry field with dad's childhood home just beneath it. Come, and I'll show you a treasure, he said. He moved a couple of rocks by the outside lavvy and pulled out an old box made of copper.

Here, the treasure will be buried for all eternity and you will take your son here and he will take his when that time comes, he said with great dignity and put the box back again.

Dad had a brother who had lost it, as they said. Wee one had never seen him, but had been duly warned that that what's happen unless you take heed. It ran in the family, apparently, and was just something you would have to live with: the fear of loosing contact with reality.

Wee one just completed his military service at I 15 in Borås. The infantry.

"During training in Strängnäs, we read about the fights in Swedish news papers and seven of us dropped out. When we landed in Leopoldville, Leo as we call it, no one knew what was happening in Elisabethville. The communications were cut off and on the landing platform I bumped into Frölander, a guy from Visby that I'd met before. He stood there sorting people from Elisabethville--- dead, heavily wounded, lightly wounded. The newbies were probably quite chocked.

Anyway, they ordered us to get into full gear. No one knew what was happening in Elisabethville so naturally, we were all a bit on edge. In the afternoon, we neared the city. We could see it from a distance, black pillars of smoke rising to the sky. Via the radio, the pilot was told the gendarmes were in an outer circle around the airport firing at the aeroplanes with anti-aircraft guns, but that the UN were in control of the inner circle.

I don't know if we got hit. We heard the noise, but the landing was successful and the pilot ordered us to exit the helicopter as fast as our legs could carry us as they were eager to get airborne as soon as possible. The sun was shining and it was hotter than in hell. The first soldiers we met were Swedish UN troops covered in mud and dug in and ready to fire. We were ordered to get into covering position until it was dark."

Roland Isaksson, Sergeant in the conscription army

On the day following the arrival to Congo , on the 16th of December there was a large scale attack against gendarme fortification Camp Massart in Elisabethville. The actions was well-planned by the Battalion Chief Jonas Waern. All four: Bulan, Rally, Pyret and Chafen were part of the battle. Sharing the terror and excitement in the trenches around Camp Massart was where they got to know each other. It was these four that volunteered when Jonas Waern himself asked for people for a very special mission on Christmas Eve.

Status

He has already regretted volunteering, he is so very afraid of dying. Luckily, their commanding officer, and friend, The Boss, is a cool cat with experience to back him up.

Robert Larson, 29

(To the player who played Bulan) Shop-clerk at Systembolaget, Gothenburg

He was in Greece for the third year in a row. His friend Erik had bailed out in the 11th hour leaving him alone on a bed in a hotel on Samos. Two Norwegian girls were living next door. They were having a pre-party. He could hear it on the volume of their voices. It was getting louder. As were the laughs. They had looked at him, then at each other, and then broken into laughter. Did he look silly? No! He had a perfect sun-tan and a flat stomach.

To them, he was a catch and he knew it. They had just laughed because they didn't know how else to handle the situation. That's how it was. Now it was just a matter of coming up with a strategy, placing himself so that they must pass him by when their pre-party was over. He was forcing down a quarter of a bottle of scotch. He didn't like it, but he was a stubborn as it was strong.

Robert had a normal upbringing, without siblings in a residential area in Stenungsund. His mother was plagued by arthritis. In the medicine cupboard, he could count no less than 22 different cups of pills. Admittedly, some of them were dad's, claiming he had trouble with his stomach. He had a feeling mum and dad had one or two skeletons hidden in their closets. They were nice and friendly. He could always borrow money if he had to. He was always welcome home, alone or with friends. Mum and dad had separate bedrooms for many years.

Once when dad was pissed at a crayfish party, he took Robert out into the garage and showed him a box of old photographs. This is your siste, he said and showed Robert a picture of a pretty little girl with black skin.

School was so-so. Okay grades but not good. In upper-secondary school, he got his second choice, 4 year engineering track. That went south pretty soon and he dropped out in the second grade and started working in the storage of the local supermarket. Robert has thought about finishing schooling in the school for adults, but lacks the true motivation. Six years ago, he moved to Gothenburg. He lives in a two-room flat that he likes more and more.

Today, Robert is a pretty lonely young man. A couple of years back, things were different and he was part of a bigger circle of friends. But for some reason, they have started to avoid him. On one occasion because he got smashed and did stupid things. Like peeing from a balcony at someone's home, pulling down the skirt on a girl, making prank calls from someone's phone and yell "cock!" as soon as someone answered. The kind of things people do at parties. Nothing to get all serious about. Fucking asses for friends!

December 24, 2000

Dad was bloody bonkers. Meeting him at the Åhléns (supermarket) toilet. He had received a letter a couple of days back:

Hi Robert!

Long time, no see, eh? How are you nowadays? Have you found a doll to secure me my future grandchildren yet?

I have a little surprise for you on Christmas day. I'm hoping you will understand. I want to meet you at the toilet at Åhléns at 17:00. SHARP! Don't be late.

Daddy-o

Status

You've shopped milk, crisps, bread and smokes on a convenient store just before coming into the 2nd floor toilet. You're dressed in blue jeans, boots, and thick shirt and dark green jacket. The cell is home on the bedside table. You're a bit irritated at you old man for forcing you here at this hour, but more curious than angry. Honestly, there is no time for you to be somewhere. You were planning a christmas in solitude.

Hugo Henriksson, 34

(To the player who played Rally) Self-employed. Living outside of Gothenburg. Wife: Lisa, 29
Kids: Jalle, 5 and Stina, 8

You couldn't trust the stars anymore. A four-star camping is supposed to have everything! The place where the trailer was parked was so badly kept that the right wheel has sunk 10 cm in three days. On the upside was the female receptionist. Probably no older than 18 but it was obvious that she knew what she wanted. You could see it in her eyes. She had become cocky and horny when he started complaining about the sunken wheel. "I expect to be compensated for this", he'd said, and "I think you know how to compensate a man". Sadly, they had left the camping before he had had any chance at any compensation as the kids had their eyes set on some bloody amusement park.

Hugo grew up in an beautiful neighbourhood just outside Gothenburg. Villas all around. Nils, his father, was making a boatload on selling cars and her mother was a housewife. He had three siblings: two older sisters and one younger. The oldest sister drowned when she was eight. Hugo cannot even remember her. The second oldest sister is called Maria and lives in Zaire where she works as a missionary. The younger sister is married to an engineer and live quite close. Henrietta is her name.

Hugo was a trouble maker in school. He was the leader is a miniscule gang of thugs that bullied people and held nightly moped competitions, stole and drunk and beat up schoolmates. When Hugo was 17, he ended up in juvenile correctional facility and at 18 met God. The religious, calm period lasted for two years and during that time, he met Lisa, his current wife. The had a miscarriage, which might well be the final reason for Hugo to leave the church. Lisa left him around that time, but came back to him two years later when Hugo was in the can for assault. When he was released, he promised to behave himself. They married and soon had Stina. Hugo worked in his daddy's car sales business and made a good deal of money. After a while, he bought the firm of his daddy that went into restaurant business and made a second success.

Hugo's family is a real traditional Swedish family. A villa, a Volvo, a dog, and a trailer. Lisa is studying to become a nurse. Stina is doing well in second grade and they youngest son is a trouble maker like his dad. The car business is still good to them, but opening that second shop on the other side of Gothenburg has taken its toll and forced Hugo to work more than he would have liked lately.

December 24, 2000

Tradition dictates christmas to be celebrated twice in the Henriksson family. First a smaller dinner in front of the TV, watching the christmas cartoons, and then a short car drive to the parents' place where they will have a second dinner.

In the middle of the christmas cartoons, the phone rings. Someone is observing a burglary at Hugo's car shop in Gothenburg. He takes his car and drives down there as fast as he can calling the police from the car. When he gets there, the police is already there but cannot find any evidence of a break-in. They leave and Hugo is alone in his shop. The the phone calls again. An unknown voice tells him to meet him at the toilet at Åhléns (a big shopping centre) immediately. There he will be presented with a business proposition that he will find irresistible. Before he can ask for an explanation, the voice hangs up.

Hugo smells a rat, but finally decides to go to Åhléns and check it out. It is so preposterous that it might just be something good.

Status

You've had a hard time finding a parking space and is pretty speeded when he finally reaches Åhléns' toilet. On the way there he gets a third phonecall, from Lisa. Buy more coca-cola. The conversation breaks up when he enters the toilet. No network connection!

Hugo is dressed pretty smart. Long, black overcoat and stiped suit with matching shirt and tie.

Rickard Uggla, 35

(To the player who played Pyret) Physicial. Lives outside Gothenburg in a huge villa. Ex-wife: Britta, 38 (nurse) Kids: Tobias 14, Joakim 12 and Beatrice 7

He was standing on a wet farm field overlooking a valley. A nice soft rain. His white shirt was torn at the arm and there was a red, strong colour of fresh blood seeping through. He was uncertain where he had parked his car.

Below the slope was a familiar farm. He had been here before, a long time ago. Underneath some rocks by the outdoor lavvy, a treasure was buried. He walked and skidded down the muddy slope towards the farm. For some odd reason he started crying, long and hard. When he finished crying he turned around and walked for the car. The treasure could wait.

Rickard grew up in Skövde and the family moved when he was 12. His dad was a truck driver and his mother was a house wife. When dad got a delieverance to some foreign country he could be gone for days. Rickard was bullied in school for his daddy being locked up for six months. Rickard was 8 at the time, and doesn't remember much of it. It was like a one of those blank areas on old maps denoting uncharted territories.

When the moved, things got different. He decided to be someone, not be a nobody as he had been in skövde. He was the kid with a dad that drove huge trucks all over the world. It worked out okay. But he soon grew tired of his new friends. He started dropping out of school and kept to himself. His maths teacher got him to get his act together, and when he left upper-secondary school, he had excellent grades and could apply for medical school. He was accepted and at 25, he could put Dr. as his title in the phone book.

He met Britta during his studies. He was 22 and she 25. They had a stormy romance for a couple of years, had kids and got married. But then things started falling apart. Rickard had a few slipups and was diagnosed as manic depressive. Just like his father. It was tough for Britta, but she eventually left him, pregnant with their third kid. They got shared custody of Tobias and Joakim, but she got sole custody of Beatrice.

December 24, 2000

Rickard is having the kids today, until the christmas cartoons. At 16:00 he is supposed to leave Tobias and Joakim at Britta's and her new husband's (Jörgen) house. At 18:00 Rickard is supposed to be at his dad's house. His parents are recently divorced and his father is not keen on celebrating christmas alone. They will spend christmas together, just the two of them, for the first time. When the game starts, has just dropped of the kids with Britta, slightly delayed.

Status

Rickard is wearing his favourite sweater, from their 1984 honeymoon. The pants are old, they look a bit like army pants only nicer, with big pockets on the sides.

Ulf Nordström, 36

(To the player who played The Boss) Unemployed, ex fish-saleman Unmarried, no known kids
Lives in Gothenburg. Drug addict.

Ulf had been to a bar but after that, everything was blank. He'd woke up in a student dorm room somewhere. It looked nice and tidy, like if a girl was living there. He heard noises from the shower, and not before long, a nice redhead girl came out from the bathroom with a towel wrapped around her body. Hi, I'm Sara, she said and smiled at him. I'm heading out, but I have a spare key so you can stay a couple of extra hours. Ulf realised he was neatly tucked in on a spare mattress with both a t-shirt and underwear. What happened yesterday, he asked, his voice thick and wheezing. Was I any trouble?

You were nice to me, but the cab driver wasn't particularly happy about you, she said with a constrained laughter. By the way, you owe me 60 crowns for the cab fare, if you've got any money. I'm off to a meeting. He had no money.

When she was gone, he searched the dorm room. He found half a bottle of gin and took a couple of sturdy morning grogs. The unknown samaritan had a pretty good stereo and as she started to feel the effects of the alcohol, he started playing her Bowie albums. She seems like a nice girl, he said to himself. I better leave her and make sure our paths cross again. She deserves a better fate, he thought. They never met again.

Ulf wants nothing more than kicking the drugs. His sister Isabell is clean since over a year, and she was far worse off than him now. He has no contact with his mother, Camilla, and very seldom talks to Rune, his dad. His father is an ex drug-addict too. He's even toured the country to talk about his addictions to narcotics.

For many years, Ulf hated his father and blamed him for his own addiction. Today, he has more or less forgiven him. He has had to. But there are still days of abstinence or high when he would like to slit his throat.

His parents got divorced many years ago when Ulf was still in school. During this turmoil, they totally forgot about him. Naturally, he grabbed this opportunity to get into bad company. He started snorting thinner when he was 12 years old and had moved on to smoking hashish at 14. Today, he has no idea where his mother lives. He doesn't really care anyway. She's probably in some psych ward dreaming about death.

Ulf has only tried to commit suicide twice. Many of his drug-addict friends are already dead. Any day now, he'll go to the hospital and ask them to lock him up until he's clean. That much he's decided.

Maybe then, he'll find a woman and have kids. Who knows. A lot of drugs have passed through his body, and he has some ticks. Sometimes, his brain runs a bit slower and the words are coming out of his mouth in the wrong order. He has moodswings. He can be real nervous at times, especially under pressure. He hates cops.

Actually, there was a period of three years when he was doing real good. He was working as a shop clerk in a fish truck. The work was hard and not the kind you'd long to get back to. Today, he is living off social welfare and petty theft. His sister was financing her heroin use by walking the streets. Sometimes she was doing well enough to lend him money. He hated himself, and the money smelled.

December 24, 2000

He recently met with a great guy who is pushing a good smoke herion for 500 crowns. They've decided to meet at Åhléns' (a supermarket) toilet at five o' clock on Christmas itself. Ulf has the money so when the dealer shows, it will truly be Christmas.

Status

You're wearing a torn jeans jacket, jogging trousers with white stripes, partly discoloured and brand new winter boots. You're unshaved and smell of urin and old fags. In short, you look like the drug addict you are. And the abstinence is starting to take its toll on you.

Rune "The Boss" Nordström, 63

Retired from taxidiving, living in Gothenburg Divorced for 20 years, ex-wife Camilla, 58 Kids:
Ulf Nordström 36, Isabelle 30

He had managed to save 20.000 for his trip to Africa. Despite warnings of instability in Kongo, he go there in March. Since the UN service in 61/62, Kongo had briefly shifted name to Zaire before becoming Kongo again. It was election year, and things were shaky. Minor fights between government troupes and rebels.

Rune wasn't young anymore. It showed. One week into his stay, he got stomach sickness. For three days he did nothing by vomit in the toilet of his Kinshasa hotel. He wanted to go back to Elisabethville, that was nowadays called Lubumbashi. He wanted to see if the bullet holes in the mail house, the gendarme hotell and railway bridge was still here. He wanted to see the place where the four friends spent Christmas 1961. He got to see nothing. The stomach sickness got in the way and as soon as he got better, it was time to go back to Sweden again.

Rune, or "The Boss" as his frients call him, has lived a tough life. No one can dispute that. He has failed with marriage and both kids. His son is an alcoholic and a drug addict and even though his daughter has finally quit her habit, she is nothing but a shadow of her old self. After Konto, Rune tried studing for a while. He did one year, but then things turned south. He was plagued by guilt for the lifes he took and tried any way possible to dampen those feelings. Tablets, opium, alcohol. Today he is almost clean. He allows himself to get drunk once a month, but that is it. His kids getting into the drug business is what hurts him the most.

Three years ago, he was forced to retire from of the effects of a whiplash injury. Ever since, he has been writing on a book about how it is to parent a drug-addict. He's gone on short lecture tours against narcotics and works as a support person for addicts in the Gothenburg area.

Ragnar was a UN soldier in battalion XIV 15/12 1961-1/5 1962 in the Congo assigned to Elisabethville. In Congo he got to know Bo "Bulan" Larsson, Nils "Rally" Henriksson and Ragnar "Wee one" Uggla from Gothenburg. They became friends for life and have met since then. On Christmas Eve they experienced something very specially that left deep impacts on all of them. They have tried to get together every Christmas since then to honour that memory. For this Christmas they have decided to finally get their sons to meet. Larsson came up with the idea and chose the location. The public toilet at Åhléns right before closing time.

Status

Rune knows his son will be a bit different from the rest of the crowd. It feels bad to trick Ulf into meeting them there under the false pretense of buying cheap drugs. Really bad, actually, but it was necessary. Ulf would probably not show otherwise.

Scene 3; "Teenage Christmas" at the Nordström family 1979

Ulf Nordström, 15

Pari has brought two liter moonshine and a substantial amount of hash. Ulf is in love with Lena but she seems to be together with Pari. Ulf and Lolla are a couple, but Ulf plans to break up with her today. Anyway, it seems to be quite a messy Christmas Eve. Fredde is an okay friend although he is a little whimpy. Ulf's parents have promised not to come and check up on them.

Fredde, 15 (played by the person who played Robert Larsson)

Your mum and dad have forbidden you to be with Ulf and Pari. He has to return the moped in order for his parents not to be worried. You are afraid of Pari.

Lolla, 14 (played by the person who played Hugo Henriksson)

You are together with Ulf. It will be exciting to celebrate Christmas without any parents. You have brought some leftovers from the Christmas smörgåsbord to share with your friends.

Pari, 16 (played by the person who played Rickard Ugglå)

It is cool of Uffe to arrange a small Christmas party. You have nicked two litres of moonshine from your father and have managed to buy a gram of hash. Damn what party you will have! Lena is your girl, she is OK...Fredde, Uffe's friend is somewhat of a wuss. He can use some booze to relax. Lolla, Fredde's girl is also OK.

Scene 4; Christmas of 1974, the Henrikson family.

Nils Henriksson, 36 (played by the person playing Ulf Nordström)

Owens a car firm; Wife: Rosemarie, 33; children Maria 10, Hugo, 8, and Johanna who would have turned 13 this year.

Johanna disappeared and was found in lake Mjörn five years ago. Since then Nils has bought a gift every Christmas and placed in the attic. This year he purchased a diary with pressed flowers on the covers. For Hugo he got a assembly model of a Spitfire, a plane commonly used in the Second World War.

Rosemarie Henriksson, 33 (played by the person who played Rickard Ugglå)

Housewife; husband Nils, 36; children Maria 10, Hugo, 8 and also Johanna who would have turned 13 this year. She drowned five years ago.

Rosemarie is slightly unstable today. She has worked very hard with the Christmas food for two whole days and cleaned and polished the entire house. She wants this to become a nice Christmas Eve.

Maria Henriksson, 10 (played by the person who played Robert Larsson)

Maria has wished for a barbie doll from Santa.

Hugo Henriksson, 8

Hugo has wished for a assembly model of a Spitfire for Christmas. He feels like playing with his big sister.

Scene 5; Christmas of 1978, the Larsson family.

Bo Larsson, 38 (played by the person who played Ulf Nordström)

Bo's wife, Ritva, has been very ill lately. It is something affecting her joints. She is in pain and often experiences feelings of anxiety. They have not had sex for two years. They even sleep in separate bedrooms.

Ritva Larsson, 36 (played by the person who played Hugo Henriksson)

Social worker.

Ritva has been very bad lately. She has pains in her joints and she has been having anxiety attacks . Bo and Ritva have not had sex in two years' time. They even sleep in separate bedrooms.

Inga Larsson, 58, Bo's mother (played by the person who played Rickard Uggla)

Inga has a small yarn store in Stenugnsund, The store is a place of calm when it becomes too much at home. Her husband Jarl can become very violent when he is in a bad mood. She has thought about leaving him on several occasions but she can. She still loves him, despite everything.

Robert Larsson, 7

Robert is sitting and wondering of what's underneath all that wrapping. He wants a pair of soccer shoes and a real football. Robert is well behaved and can sometimes seem like a bit of a besserwisser.