

F e l o n i o u s M o n k

A Man on a Ledge

A man's toes hang over a ledge, far above a deep river gorge in the middle of the night. The toes are scraped up and filthy. Several appear to be broken. Sweat drips onto them. Then blood. The toes belong to Touré, a man teetering on the edge of a high bridge. The rest of him is filthy and beaten, too. He's about to jump and just be done with it all when a voice speaks to him so close it's startling.

BROTHER HI (O.S.)

It's very nice up here in the wind.

A figure sitting on the edge of the bridge a few feet away, having appeared out of nowhere. Though chubby, he trips along the beams effortlessly demonstrating amazing balance until he's next to Touré, his toes, too, dangling over the void.

TOURE

You should leave.

BROTHER HI

You should, too. So I propose a bet. I will tell you how you came to be where you are. If I'm right, you'll leave this bridge and come with me.

TOURE

And if you're wrong?

BROTHER HI

If I'm wrong, then I will go with you.

Touré, with nothing to lose, nods.

BROTHER HI

You were born innocent, of course, and so you believed what you were told.

Brother Hi will make his case off-screen, laying out a mystical-sounding, if vague, story of how a man ends up on a bridge in the middle of the night. As he does, we will go back to see Toure's story as it actually happened.

An Orphan

A boy hides in the brush, armed with crude weapons of his own making, watching a group of armed men make their way down a jungle path. Fierce and terrified, he attacks. He is easily subdued, being only seven, but the leader of the men is impressed and filled with pity and takes the boy in. The man's adolescent son, BOWIE, clearly dislikes this idea.

The boy's savior is the weirdly charismatic L'OUVERTURE, leader of a small, radical right-wing paramilitary cell called The Citizens. The cell is at war against imperialism. As they see it, incursions into their sovereign country - or any sovereign country for that matter - by powerful business interests who exploit and steal their land, resources and people are acts of war and they are simply retaliating. They consider themselves rebels, which is why they all take the names of rebel leaders throughout history. The boy is called Touré (TOO-RAY), a nod to Samori Touré, the leader of a rebellion against French colonialism in Africa. They are intensely dedicated and reject all outside influences that might corrupt them. News is propaganda. History is lies. Media is poisonous corporate brainwashing. Women are temptresses who use their sex to weaken men's spirits and distract them from a purpose-filled life. Love is a myth and a distraction. There is only duty and honor and service to The Citizens.

As we hear the justification for what they do, we see Touré grow up in the cult, being trained in every way possible to kill. It begins with hand-to-hand combat. He and Bowie fight like MMA fighters. Or pitbulls in a ring.

L'OVERTURE (O.S.)

For thousands of years, starfish
fed peacefully on the oysters at
the bottom of the sea. But then,
fishermen discovered the oysters
and began to take them. Soon, they
became so greedy that they wanted
them all, leaving none for the
starfish.

The boys carefully construct bombs. Bowie nervously, Toure less so. The bombs are live.

L'OVERTURE (O.S.)

Each time a fisherman found a
starfish in the beds, they cut it
in half and threw it back in the
water.

The boys and men are in pairs sitting across from each other, assembling and loading Kalashnikovs as fast as they can. The first to finish puts his barrel on the forehead of the other. Toure's gun barrel snaps onto Bowie's forehead. L'Overture smiles.

L'OVERTURE (O.S.)

What they didn't understand was that each piece of a starfish grows into a new starfish. Soon there were more starfish, so the angry, ignorant fishermen began cutting each starfish they encountered into many pieces.

The cult trains relentlessly, running until they drop, doing hundreds of push-ups, fighting.

L'OVERTURE (O.S.)

This land is ours. We are the starfish. Each of us who is cut down becomes many.

Fully trained, Toure is celebrated for his first kill, smeared with blood like a deer hunter. He is twelve.

Heir Apparent

Touré has now grown into an amazing mix of strength, skill, brains and blind devotion. In him, L'Overture sees the son he wishes he had. Naturally, this does not sit well with Bowie, a genuine psychopath. That, coupled with the abuse he has endured, has made him very unstable, and his jealousy of Toure' is intense.

The final blow to Bowie's fragile ego comes when Toure is given leadership of the cell's boldest mission ever; a bombing raid on a copper mine in Indonesia's Papua province. The mine is owned by GoldCorp - a huge multi-national American company. Imperialists, according to L'Overture, allowed access by a corrupt local government. The offensive has been in planning for months and Toure's role in it fills Bowie with jealousy and shame. He tells his father that promoting Toure was a mistake. For his insolence, he's publicly disciplined, which he accepts, submitting as always to his father's will. But inside, he is seething. And maybe planning - it's Bowie who is assembling the mission's bombs.

Left for Dead

The mission is to destroy the mine completely. Bowie and his team move to the compound gate to cause a distraction, while Touré, on the other side, moves toward the back of the site.

Toure's entrance into the mine shows us why he was chosen for this mission. He deftly kills an employee, takes his clothes and ID, then effortlessly scales a razor wire fence. He renders several guards unconscious with quick blows, disarms security systems, then steps into the mine and blends into the crowd of busy workers.

Toure flashes the stolen badge, identifying him as Louis Coleman, an engineer, and goes deep into the complex. Slipping through an old door, he repels far into an abandoned mine shaft, dangling in the vast darkness from a very thin rope. Explosives planted, he heads back out. But before he reaches the exit, Bowie appears.

BOWIE

We should have killed you when we found you. If you crush the egg, you never have to deal with the serpent.

He closes the door and locks it, trapping Toure'. As Bowie sprints off, BOOM! The explosion goes off. A string of explosions is triggered, leveling buildings, killing people and collapsing mines. And Bowie manages the fantastic coup of stealing a helicopter, a prize for the cell.

Back at camp, Bowie lands the chopper like a returning hero, which is how he expects to be treated. He "solemnly" reports to his father that Touré miscounted his steps and didn't make it out of the mine in time, becoming - as they all will - a martyr. But luckily Bowie was there to complete the mission.

L'Overture is clearly heartbroken, only proving to Bowie how much his father loved Toure' and making him happier that the orphan bastard is dead. But Touré is not dead.

A Much Larger World

The survivors of the blast crowd the little company hospital. "Mr. Coleman" lies in a bed amongst the other wounded; damaged, burned and unconscious. As he slowly comes to and his eyes flutter open, he sees a beautiful kind-faced woman hovering over him, tending to his burns. his is MARTA, the nurse assigned to care for him. She looks like an angel.

But she isn't. She's a bawdy, smart, funny, hot mess, and she exposes Toure' to ordinary things. While recovering in bed, she reads him news and literature, they watch movies on her iPad, and they talk - all while she gives him sponge baths, changes his bandages and makes sure he eats. Toure' has been brainwashed into believing that women are temptresses, that they will weaken him and distract him from his purpose.

And though he remains silent and feigns amnesia, his heart is opened by newfound feelings for Marta. And his mind is opened by the different perspective she gives him.

As she pushes his wheelchair through the mining compound, Toure' sees it in a very different light. People here seem... happy.

MARTA

Yeah, it's super corporate and the pay isn't great because the worst, greediest people always seem to rise to the top.

Toure' can't help but think of L'Overture. And Bowie.

MARTA

But everybody here is cool. And without the mine, there's no money, no school, no hospital. So, when those deranged bastards in the jungle aren't here killing total strangers, I get to do pretty great stuff. I gave a kid a tetanus shot this morning. It seems small, but it saved his life.

At night, he and Marta watch Blazing Saddles over and over and drink her favorite beer, a local brew called Mad Abbot's Bad Habit that has a very high ABV and gets them plenty drunk, which Touré finds amazing. It's a first for him. Over the month it takes for him to recover, Marta teaches him humor, wonder, curiosity, joy, and, ultimately -- love. And, against all rules and sound judgment, lots of intense, joyous, playful, life-changing sex. Another first.

And now that "Mr. Coleman" is well enough to answer a few questions, he is introduced to AGENT ECTON - a CIA official who is all business in sharp heels, a crisp suit and a gang of Blackwater types at her side. Touré plays weak and disoriented, but this kind of scrutiny is very dangerous. And he notices something disturbing in the gaze of one of the local doctors who is trailing the agent. Touré does not like the way this man looks at him. His instincts are right.

In the jungle camp, the men eat dinner. The suspicious doctor arrives. L'Overture's face lights up and Bowie's goes hard with the news he brings - Toure' is alive.

The Past is an Animal

He prepares to leave Marta, his heart breaking. And when she finds him packing, she asks to go with him.

She paints a beautiful picture of their life together, traveling the world and happily growing old. Toure' never considered such a thing. It sounds wonderful. So, with a smile and a nod, he agrees. But as he takes one step toward his love, the window shatters and Bowie, L'Overture, and several other cell members swarm the room. In a fraction of a second, records are deleted, the room is set on fire and Touré is whisked out the window. Suddenly he is face-to-face with Bowie, the brother who tried to kill him and is certainly planning to finish the job. But their face off is interrupted by a scream - a woman's scream.

Instead of escaping, Toure stops and looks back to Marta. And the look between them says it all. L'Overture sees this and instantly knows what's going on. For Toure's own good, he aims at Marta and shoots.

Time goes into slow motion. As he turns, he sees Marta, looking frightened. The bullet sails toward her heart. He dives, unable to stop it. He sees L'Overture, gun smoking. As Marta falls, Toure, screaming in grief and rage, twists mid-air and in one move deftly takes a gun from one of The Citizens and shoots L'Overture. He shoots a few more of his rescuers, then takes off into the jungle, leaving Bowie howling over his fathers body. Even damaged by the explosion, Toure' is a machine, dodging fire from the cell and the guards, stealing a Jeep and making his way down the dark jungle path.

At the camp, he torches everything, then escapes in Bowie's prize; the stolen helicopter. Bowie arrives, completely enraged and fires at the chopper, but Toure' circles it around and strafes his former comrades, taking heavy fire before he turns and vanishes over the trees.

He flies as far as the damaged chopper can go, but finally crash lands the in the nearby village square. Not giving any fucks at all, he looks around at the buildings, the stores, the market stalls -- normal life still baffling to him. Then he sees something he at least recognizes - a sign for Mad Abbots Bad Habit, Marta's favorite beer, on the front of a bar.

Dead Man Walking

Having never been in a bar, he has no idea what to do. He has no money, so he trades his Rolex, pilfered from some victim, for a bar tab. This rouses suspicion, which leads to confrontation, which leads to a fight in which Touré beats the crap out of everyone but the bartender and the monk delivering the keg of Mad Abbot's, who is Brother Hi. As Toure exits, Brother Hi watches. Toure walks through the village.

Touré makes his way to the bridge, scales the structure and hangs his toes over the rail, peering into the waiting chasm below. And then Brother Hi arrives and we're back to where we began.

Toure' looks into the chasm.

BROTHER HI

It is a sad story. And sadly familiar. But the past was already gone, of course, and the future never arrives anyway. There is only the present.

Toure doesn't reply. Brother Hi, shockingly nimble for such a big fellow, traipses down the narrow beam toward Toure.

BROTHER HI

And in the present, there is an abbey full of food and beer and brotherhood.

(nodding into the void)

Or there's that.

He takes Toure's hand.

BROTHER HI

So. Which shall we chose?

Touré considers his options, then steps back from the edge. A smiling Brother Hi follows.

BROTHER HI

Don't worry. If you need it, the bridge is always there.

Afterlife

As the sun rises, Brother Hi's beer truck zooms up to the gate of the monastery, at the end of a narrow road. When the gate swings open, Touré is surprised at what he sees. The grounds are set up like a circus training camp, with a full trapeze, obstacle courses, and a high wire. It's much like the cell - a group of men hidden away from society to dedicate themselves to a philosophy. It's also the exact opposite. Touré stares at a big trampoline where a couple of monks are currently laughing and bouncing. Behind it is the big abbey building. Waiting in the door way is The Abbot. The Abbot welcomes the battered terrorist, telling him not to worry, that everything is just as it should be. This, of course, is a matter of opinion.

TOURE

Why am I here?

THE ABBOT

A wise man does not concern himself with things beyond his reach. But when things are within his reach, he does what he can. You were within our reach.

Back in the jungle, things are not as they should be. With his father gone, Bowie has taken charge of the cell. Touré's betrayal has proved him right, giving him legitimacy with the members and the power makes him all the more insane. He believes his father thought too small and old-fashioned. He is going to introduce modern methods into the cell, starting with something the cell has never seen, a laptop hooked to a phone - the internet.

Three things happen at once. Agent Ecton takes apart the hospital room, reconstructing the crime scene and getting valuable evidence no one has ever had about The Citizens. Medical records, eye-witness accounts, and fingerprints, putting her ever closer to the cell.

Bowie studies the internet, learning about the company he is fighting, learning about bomb making, learning that the mine in the village. It turns out that in addition to copper, they also harvest high grade uranium. Bowie's ambitions are becoming grander and deadlier. The cell trains harder than ever.

At the Abbey, Touré does as he's told, as is his habit. Though he mourns Marta's death, he finds real solace and interest in the life of the monastery. The hours of meditation and the focus required to sit in quiet presence and stillness. The rigor and bubbly magic of brewing beer. The concentration needed to tuck and flip on the trapeze or walk the tight rope high above the lawn. The odd, peaceful beauty of the monk's philosophy. His terrible rage and PTSD begin to subside as he is able to look inward, to control his emotions, even the rate of his heartbeat - and he starts to be able to sleep.

And then, the training in focus reaches a new level and yields an almost mystical result in someone who already has such skill and precision of thought and action. One day he notices that he can hear something, a rhythmic buzzing noise. He can't figure out at first what it is. But he focuses his vision, which is becoming insanely acute, and finally spots the source - a hummingbird far across the grounds, hovering over a flower. By concentrating, he can make it seem to slow down, like he's living in bullet time. Impossibly, he can see each wing rhythmically flapping.

He can hear the bird sipping nectar. He smiles and then looks down to see that he is balanced on a branch no more than three inches wide. His circus style training has given him balance that is staggering and effortless, his footsteps make no sound at all.

There are other subtle surprises, too. He sees a monk having a violent-looking tattoo covered with a big yin/yang symbol. A brother at dinner is clearly repressing some PTSD rage. Toure' finds comfort knowing that perhaps some of the other monks have dark secrets as well. We suspect that guys like Jason Bourne and John Rambo might end up here to try and find a little peace. And it seems to be working.

Toure's pain and guilt over Marta - and all the other victims of the cell - is abating enough to allow him the occasional smile. After a lifetime of fighting the world, he is now just living in it. He will be very content to stay here with his beer-drinking brothers for the rest of his days. And then he gets on a bike and rides down a lane, reveling in the cacophony of birdsong and wind, overwhelmed by the intense beauty he can now experience. It's a moment he could never in his wildest dreams have imagined would be part of his life.

But while Toure' grows more focused, Bowie gets more insane and strong. His newfound information has brought him access to steroids and speed and more fuel for his hatred. His raid to get the uranium is a maniacal bloodbath. Gone is L'Overture's restraint and focus on only hurting the aggressors. Bowie's methodology is to inflict as much horror and pain as possible - on everyone. He sees no distinction between killing colonizers and killing their local enablers. Or between killing adults and killing small children. He just likes killing.

The Other Shoe

In the market in town, Touré approaches the register. A cute cashier is looking up at the television. He is about to speak to her when a name rings out from the TV - Louis Coleman. Toure reflexively turns his head away from the cashier and looks down, peering up at the broadcast.

Agent Ecton is on the news. The Citizens have been on a killing spree and seem to have taken over several other terrorist cells. They are thought now to be led by a man using the pseudonym Louis Coleman. The photo is, of course, of Toure, in a selfie taken in the hospital by Marta. Her smiling eye is visible in a corner of the frame. Agent Ecton continues. The Citizens are believed to be making a dirty bomb with stolen uranium.

They claim to be ready to "strike the heart of the beast." Toure' struggles to keep his cool and places his items on the counter without looking up trying to conceal his suddenly very famous face.

The cute cashier notices his tattoo on his arm which reads "The Bridge is Always There." She likes it. She thinks it's sweet to believe that no matter what, you can always go home. Keeping his eyes down, he says the bridge is in front of him. The one behind him was burned. There is no going home. He completes the transaction and heads for the door. But in the reflection in the glass, the cashier sees his face. Its like spotting Osama bin Laden. She goes ashen and grabs her phone.

The return trip is very different. He pedals hard, but is obviously spotted and photographed. Sirens fire up in the near distance. He'll never make it on a bike. He steals a car and, with his new set of skills, drives like Batman. He evades the local cops and comes dangerously close to running over people, but the experience is kind of amazing for him. To throw them off his trail, he sails the car into the river, diving out mid-air and crawling like a spider over the very bridge he once contemplated jumping from. It looks as tempting as ever, but he has something he has to do.

But when he gets to the edge of the bridge, he finds himself facing the barrel of a gun. It's held by a cop who looks like he may be a teenager, terrified and brave.

TOURE

Please. Something terrible is going to happen.

Other cops arrive on motorcycles and on foot. Many guns are drawn. One cop has a large growling dog.

RANKING COP

So, you a monk?

TOURE

No. I took this robe from a monk I killed. Now, get out of my way. I really don't want to do the same to you.

RANKING COP

But, friend, we are not so easy to kill as a peaceful monk. We are real men. Men with guns.

The ranking cop makes the slightest move towards his gun. Toure' zeroes in on this and his hyper alert senses kick into gear as we go into hyper-slow motion. Toure' can hear the muscles twitch as we zoom macro-close to the trigger finger.

We can hear the blood flowing through the veins, the accelerated heartbeat, the quickened breathing. It's as if Toure' knows what's going to happen *before* it happens.

But before it *does* happen - WHAM! - Toure' kicks the gun away, dodges the fire from the others, handcuffs the dog to its master, disarms them all, steals a motorcycle and speeds off. Even he is stunned as how easy it seemed. And pleased not to have killed a single one of them.

Nowhere to Hide

At the rear of the monastery, Toure' climbs almost impossibly over then wall and slips past the monks who never let anything slip past. He slips into his room, takes the clothes and weapons he has hidden out of their hiding place. Putting his old cloths on is like becoming his old self, flashing him back to the crimes he committed, to L'Overture and to Marta. Dressed and armed, he turns to go. And suddenly he's face to face with the Abbot, who has silently appeared and is actively ignoring the arsenal.

THE ABBOT

All men are alone. But brothers are alone together.

Then he hands Toure a cell phone. Toure' looks at it, confused. The Abbot simply nods as if to say - you'll know what to do.

The Wide, Wide World

Toure's first ever trip out into the world is overwhelming. He dodges surveillance cameras and evades the authorities in spite of a bum leg and severe PTSD, using his terrorist training for strategy and his monk training for awareness and calm. He makes it to the mining company headquarters - the heart of the beast. There's an army of defense contractors in place in response to the threat, all looking for Toure aka Louis Coleman. Toure threads past them like he's invisible and is upside down, moving again like a spider along the top of an access tunnel when he sees something that stops him in his tracks. The ad is just a spec of light peeking through a tiny air hole, the center of a distant billboard that, miraculously, he can read.

The Heart of the Beast

It's a photo of the smiling faces of children. It's for the Family March, a celebration of children from around the world coming together for peace. Sponsored by? GoldCorp. Suddenly Bowie's words come back to Toure. "If you crush the egg, you never have to deal with the serpent."

The other stuff was all a diversion. Bowie's going after the heart of the beast, alright - the kids. Knowing this will lead to his arrest and probable execution, Toure' takes out the Abbot's phone to call Agent Ecton and warn her.

But when he opens the old flip phone, it's one of those kids' phones that will only call pre-programmed numbers. And the only number in it is, of course, the Abbot's.

In a panic, Toure rushes into the street, ignoring the CTC cameras and the guards and asks some guy for his phone. But the guy refuses because he's live-streaming himself. Toure looks around and realizes how many people are staring at their phones. He swipes the guy's phone and begins to climb the building.

As he climbs, he broadcasts his statement. He identifies himself as Louis Coleman, says that the Children's March is the real target. The video feed goes viral as, one by one, we see the parents in the crowd look up from their phones, realizing the feed is coming from their midst. High atop the building, Toure' waits.

Agent Ecton and the authorities mobilize, but there are families everywhere and panic is starting to set in. But in a beat, his real target arrives - Bowie. He knew Bowie couldn't stand to see his thunder stolen, least of all by his adoptive brother.

High on atop the building, the fight commences and it's a monster. Bowie has idiot strength and rage on his side. Toure, now his opposite, has self-sacrifice and a set of senses that are now super-human. But as their strengths cancel out, so do their weaknesses and the fight - still being broadcast - seems like it will last forever. And when the military helicopters arrive, all guns are trained, of course, on Toure' aka Louis Coleman. Bowie appears to be a victim.

With Toure unable to follow, Bowie slips off to complete the mission. Toure escapes by flopping over the parapet wall. He faces the streaming phone and professes his love for Marta and apologizes for everything he's done. He is, he knows, the darkness. He throws the phone over the edge. As he does, a bullet hits his leg, sending him sliding toward his death. Out of instinct, he grabs a window-washing cable and finds himself once again dangling over the abyss. Many children are going to die, Bowie is on the loose, and it's all Toure's fault.

Within Reach

And as the gunships hover lower and the shots get closer, Toure takes out the burner phone the Abbot gave him. He dials the one number.

THE ABBOT

Hello! What an exciting day.
Brother Hi was at the bar and said
he saw you on the television!

TOURE

Yeah. I don't know why I called. I
just wanted to tell you I'm sorry.

THE ABBOT

I know why you called - because I
gave you a phone. And I gave you a
phone to keep you within reach.
Because when something is within
reach, you do what you can.

Toure looks down, just a tiny figure dangling in the air.

THE ABBOT

Is our brother within reach?

The Abbott turns to Brother Hi, who sits in front of a large super-sophisticated surveillance console. A light starts blinking in the middle of the it - he has tracked the call.

BROTHER HI

Yes.

Brother Hi presses a single button.

ALL ACROSS THE WORLD, at monastery after monastery, BELLS TOLL. Monks stop what they're doing and crane their necks.

At the stadium, above the pandemonium and the sirens, the bells can be heard. They are beautiful.

THE ABBOT

I have one more riddle for you.

TOURE

Of course you do...

THE ABBOTT

What do you do when you reach the
end of your rope?

(beat)

You let go.

Toure looks down and sees monks on a balcony, stretching a large cloth below him. All around, monks come out of the bloody woodwork. Toure lets go.

Alone Together

Toure and the other monks evade the feds and defeat the cell with some serious Crouching Tiger stuff mixed with old-fashioned fighting and shooting until Toure finds Bowie, who is seconds from detonating his dirty bombs.

TOURE

Your heart is dark. It's time to
let in a little light.

BLAM! He shoots Bowie in the chest.

TOURE

That ought to do it.

Then, using his super-hearing and focus, he defuses the bombs meant to kill thousands and he and the hundreds of other monks vanish.

In the aftermath, Agent Ecton is on TV taking credit for spoiling a massive terrorist plot and swearing to find global enemy number one, the terrorist known as Louis Coleman.

At the monastery, the monks celebrate their victory with much beer. Toure takes a new name, one taken from he and Marta's favorite movie. He will be Brother Mongo. He and his brothers go back to studying and meditating, practicing their circus skills and drinking beer, waiting until the bells are again rung.

THE END

Notions For Sequels

Chapter 2 - The cell, it turns out, is one of many. In response to the killing of Bowie and the destruction of the Citizens, they rise up as one under the direction of a mysterious, anonymous leader. It takes all the monks in all the monasteries - under Toure's reluctant guidance and a grudging secret alliance with Agent Ecton - to save the world.

Chapter 3 - The anonymous global terrorist leader now turns all attention to wiping out the monks. Smart and informed and clearly privy to high-level information, the leader resists all traces and is terrifyingly powerful. As Toure and Agent Ecton work together more closely to stop the threat, a very ill-advised and intense romance develops. But Agent Ecton is not who she seems.