
The Power Of Influence a Long Way Gone Novel

The Soldiers at Yele were ingenious with how they enticed the young boys. They didn't simply captivate them and force them to do what they wanted. They used well thought out techniques to gain power over the boys. They drew them in, made them feel safe, and then turned them against the rebels breathing fury into their minds then sending them out to do the ghastly killing and raiding

They enticed them into their little camp, making it seem like there was no choice, or rather convincing them there was no better option, as if this was the haven they had been searching for. When they first arrived at Yele it felt as if they were coming home, the atmosphere was home-like and deceptively secure. "The village was always full of lively chattering and laughter (pg 101)." Naturally they were drawn to this joyful atmosphere, who wouldn't be? After all they had been through already, they jumped at the chance of a peaceful place.

The soldiers used the power of trickery to make the boys trust them. On page 104 the Lieutenant makes him feel safe and connects with him by talking about Julius Caesar. This small bond he made with Ishmael just fortified the feeling of safety that was already in his mind. He seemed to have a sort of father figure, making this place seem so much better to him in his mind.

So the power of the security in this village called Yele was enough at first to justify the odd things about it. The orphaned children, the dead bodies in the river. Ishmael loved to work, so he busied his time with work, to get his mind off the thoughts that otherwise so easily consumed his mind. I think this theme runs throughout the entire book, the higher power using security as a form of power.

The people at Yele did it from the start. Making the boys feel welcome and secure, giving them clothes, food, and work to do. The people and the laughter provided the illusion of a sanctuary full of good people. "Gradually the smiles on people's faces assured us that there was nothing to worry about anymore, all that darkened the mood of the village was the sight of orphaned children... Apart from this, there were no indications that our childhood was threatened, much less that we would be robbed of it. " The poor boys are so disillusioned by the deception of safety at Yele. They had no foreshadowing in their minds that shortly, everything would be taken from them.

So with this sense of safety established, the Soldiers at Yele were able to do basically anything now and still are trusted by the boys. The first wave of their power was imposed through a false sense of security. So now that they had the boys' attention and trust, they moved along to the next stage. Fear.

However they didn't resort to making themselves feared, they resorted to making the rebels feared. The horror that he was feeling was a result of the Lieutenants talking about the rebel. On page 116 the Lieutenant states that, "the rebels will kill anyone from this village because they will consider us their enemy, spies, or that we have sided with the other side of the war." His fear of the unknown had overcome his thoughts this particular morning. "I tried to eat my

breakfast, but fear had taken away my appetite (pg 107).”

“I got a black a Reebok Pump and was happier about my new crapes than anything else that was going on. I took of my old pants, which contained the rap cassettes. As I was putting on my new shorts, a soldier took my old pants and threw them into a blazing fire that had been set to burn our old belongings. I ran toward the fire but the cassettes had already started to melt. Tears formed in my eyes, and my lips shook as I turned away.” (A Long Way Gone, Pg 110)

This moment is so significant to the story line because in just those few fleeting seconds, his past was melted into the burning flames. Those cassettes had saved him countless times and now they were gone, vanished in to the atmosphere. There would be no more saving from this moment on, only luck. The fear that he felt must have been surreal, the tears in his eyes proved how terribly sad and scared he was about this. Yet this fear came with that resounding feeling of security.

Although his past just got thrown into flames, he still had somewhere to turn to. While the people at Yele had just destroyed his belongings, they otherwise seemed well intentioned enough to be trusted. So he kept on obeying them. Because when you make someone feel truly safe, then you do something bad to that person, they sort of justify it. It’s similar to domestic violence in that the power of the illusion of love justifies the violence and harm in the mind of the victim. So the victim continues to goes back.

The Corporal often inflicted fear on the boys as his form of power. It was his way of saying that they must do what he says or else use your imagination to fill in the blank. They could only imagine what sort of terrible thing might happen if they were to rebel. He would often tell them this one phrase so as to establish the thought in their minds. “Visualize the enemy, the rebels who killed your parents, your family, and those who are responsible for everything that has happened to you.” By making them fear all else, the rebels and the unknown. He made it to appear like there is no better option.

The boys were told, “the rebels are responsible for everything that has happened to you. (Pg 113)” being told this so frequently they were made to believe this. It drove them to loathe the rebels with everything in them. Daydreaming about killing the rebels had become pleasurable. The joy in their life was thinking about killing the people who had ruthlessly taken their families.

Using the trust already gained from the boys, the soldiers were able to convince them that anything was good for them. “The corporal said that it will boost your energy,” says the soldier on page 116, to make the boys take the drugs. Later on the same page, Ishmael “had never been so afraid to go anywhere in his entire life” so he “gripped his gun for comfort.” His mind had already been so influenced by Yele that he was already looking to the gun for comfort. The gun had power, the power of death, and he was already learning to use it.

The power of influence is so resoundingly loud in the book. On page 121 Ishmael talks about all the war movies they would watch in their free time. Then he says, “We all wanted to be like Rambo; we couldn’t wait to implement his techniques.” But the reason they watched those movies is because the soldiers provided them to be the best option, therefore the thing they would seemingly choose to do. So while they were busy obsessing over Rambo and how they admired him and wanted to be like him, they were really just a part of a plan. Ultimately they were being trained to be used as weapons of mass destruction.

Pg 126 "My squad was my family, my gun was my provider, and protector, and my rule was to kill or be killed. The extent of my thoughts didn't go much beyond that. We had been fighting for over two years, and killing had become a daily activity. I felt no pity for anyone. My childhood had gone by without my knowing, and it seemed as if my heart had frozen. I knew that day and night came and went because of the presence of the moon and the sun, but I had no idea whether it was a Sunday or Friday."

This on simple paragraph encapsulates the reality of the empowering influence he is under, and the drastic change that it has made in his life. He is a different person. The power of this war has made his mind go from that of a sweet 12-yearold boy to a heartless a killing machine. The power over him has hanged him in every way shape and form. It has infiltrated his very being. His thoughts, actions and desire are so completely influenced by the soldiers above him. His mind is so infected that he doesn't seem to realize it. His desires including all of killing and drugs. It had become like a game to him, Killing is fun and rewarding to his mind.

It was like mind control. The way Yele used their methods to recruit these child soldiers. They began by proposing a safe haven to them, one that they could confide in and feel vulnerable. Then they talked to them about the horribleness of the rebels. They influentially forced them to hate the rebels too, therefore making themselves look like the good ones fighting for the right cause. Now that they had their perfectly tailored little child soldiers, they could do anything with them. They pumped them full of drugs and sent them out to do the dirty work, with the ever-present threat of something terrible if they so dared to disobey an order. So this was their ingenious plan to use manipulation and fear to hold their power over people.