

Present day. A bit north of LONDON, ENGLAND. A rented Mercedes transports the CALDWELL family of Kansas City, along the E-13.

Inside, TRENT drives. SARAH, preps her boys, KYLE, 12, and CAMERON, 15, for thier first visit with their eccentric grandfather, OWEN McBRAGG. Owen was estranged from Sarah's mother decades ago after a short romance during his visit to the states, but has remained in touch by mail and telephone. Cameron has Kyle believing the old man is insane and the house is haunted. Sarah defends her father as a very sweet, quirky soul and tells the boys to be kind while they are there for the night (Sarah and Trent are staying at a local inn to get away from the kids).

The Caldwells arrive at a 400-year-old stone manor-house, and are welcomed by Owen, and his marble-faced butler, GLADSTONE. The mansion contains artifacts from every continent. Game animals and stately potraits line the walls. Rooms are lit by vast fireplaces guarded by suits of armor. The family is awed.

Before Sarah and Trent leave for the night they instruct Owen to, "plug the boys into the tube, and they'll be fine."

That evening, around a forty-foot oak table, Cameron and Kyle dine apprehensively with Owen.

"What kind of cable you got around here?" says Cameron.

"Cable?" Owen says, perking up, "are you planning a heist? Lower yourself into a museum ... diamonds? No. You plan to swing across a river in a death-defying stunt? Or rappel from a skyscraper -- "

"No," Kyle giggles, "he means cable T.V."

They're stunned to learn he doesn't own a T.V.

After dinner, in a library boasting ten-thousand books, Kyle and Cameron are unfortunately immersed in their Game-Boys.

In the kitchen, Owen and Gladstone discuss how to get through to the boys.

Owen enters the library excitedly with a chess board in hand. No volunteers. A moment later he pops in wearing fencing regalia.

"Mom says knives and swords are dangerous," sighs Kyle. Owen returns in boxing gloves.

"Dad said no fighting," mumbles Cameron. Defeated, Owen leaves.

Moments later, Kyle wanders into the hall, stopping below a portrait of an English commander set against a foreign landscape. Below the painting, a small gold bar and a railroad spike rests in a glass case. Cameron joins Kyle, and proclaims the gold is fake. Suddenly, a voice.

"That gold is real," says Owen, suddenly appearing, "and the story behind it would raise the hair on your neck ... " The boys are entranced by Owens stare.

"But," Owen scowls, "such a boring tale could never compete with Nin-ten-do." He retires to his study shutting the door behind him. Gladstone spooks the boys from behind. Hot chocolate. Bedtime.

After brushing, Kyle slips down the hall, knocks on the study door and enters. Owen, whose chair faces the fire, quickly pretends to be reading about chemical analysis. "Is it really real?" asks Kyle. Cameron has followed but watches from the door as Owen begins the story of their great-great grandfather: COMMANDER MONTAGUE MAXIMILIAN McBRAGG.

"Sixty years ago," Owen says to Kyle, "I was a lad much like you ..."

1930's England.

Owen, now 12, springs from the very same spot and disappears through a secret passage behind a false bookcase. It leads to the ballroom where Commander McBragg is hosting a splendid dinner party for friends, academia and members of the press. The guests enjoy cocktails in the main ballroom. Owen mischievously sneaks about the room, as the Commander bellows through two fantastic, and highly embellished episodes of past adventures: Ski-jumping from Tibet to the Swiss Alps, and swimming under the north pole. Meanwhile, the butler, STERLING, discovers Owen and locks him in his bedroom.

The guests assemble in the splendid dining hall. Meanwhile, Owen, takes another secret passage, this time leading to a floor panel under the dining table. He is surrounded by legs.

As they dine, McBragg recounts a ridiculously exaggerated tale of his duty as a young man in colonial Africa. He rivets the guests, recalling his, now famous, daring rescue of 'the lost train of gold'. This is his bread and butter story, launching his military and writing career. It describes a daring rescue of a runaway train that, according to his books, had several cars loaded with freshly mined gold. The commander, then merely a conscript assigned to protect rail travelers, tells how he was on the train when it was attacked by ferocious natives.

"Although there were forty of England's finest on that fateful day," McBragg wails, "only I was left defending the

gold." McBragg then describes how he discovered a young woman and a badly injured man hiding in the locomotive. Fearing he would be attacked again he claims to have cut loose the carriages containing the gold in favor of saving the lives of the young lass and poor fellow. When the three rolled into Nairobi, although the gold was never found, McBragg was given hero status, and the rest is well ... history.

"But what of the survivors?" asks a guest.

"I offered to marry the lady of course, and bring her back to civilized society, but," McBragg harumphs, "she declined, saying she preferred life in Africa. A reliable source told me she was later cooked and eaten by savages. The jungle is no place for a woman."

"And the man?" asks a stern-looking lady.

"I'm glad you asked. Sterling, fetch my grandson, I have an announcement."

Owen barely makes it back to his room in time to appear to be studying, before Sterling arrives.

Now joined by his grandson, McBragg announces, "having recently finished my latest book, I will embark on a return tour of Kenya, with my grandson, Owen, at the invitation of the very man who's life I saved on that train, LORD MARSHALL KINGSLY, the legendary colonialist and great admirer of mine." Owen is thrilled.

McBragg also announces they will be escorted by Lord Kingly's two expert guides, in attendance at dinner. They are HUNT HAGGENS, 40, and his son TREVOR, 20, nicknamed TRACKER. A life of toil and travel have hardened their faces. Hunt, barely able to smile, toasts to Kenya.

Their journey is delineated by the classic line-on-the-globe, intercut with aerial footage: England, Paris, Tunisia, Addis Ababa, Nairobi.

Now on the Ugandan railroad. Vast plains. Spectacular wild sights. Forest. British colonial territory.

Dusty trucks complete the final leg of the journey, arriving at the expansive and majestic ranch-estate of Lord Kingsly. They are welcomed by a military band and a celebration.

The legendary Kingsly, a giant of a man, greets them warmly and presents them with native gifts and a rousing but rambling speech on the superiority of British ideals. Later, after settling in, Kingsly invites McBragg on a day-trip to hunt big game.

The two Englishmen ride horses through a semi-arid jungle, native trackers assisting on foot. McBragg recounts some of

his book. Kingsly, in friendly competition, boasts about his (real) hunting exploits and his killer instinct. Shockingly, a leopard attacks from a high branch.

In an instant, Kingsly shoots and kills the big cat, but not before McBragg's horse is injured badly. Kingsly orders McBragg to end its misery. McBragg stalls, so Kingsly coldly shoots the animal, ordering both animals to be returned to his estate for slaughter. McBragg asks why.

Dinner. Native servants attend to Kingsly, McBragg, Owen, Hunt, and Tracker.

"Try the fried leopard, it's delicious," says Kingsly. Hunt and Tracker dive in, but McBragg opts for the potatoes and bread. Owen tastes the cat out of curiosity.

Kingsly toasts, "to eating them, before they eat you! Eh, McBragg?" The main course: Roast horse ribs.

Night. Owen is in bed, but awake. Kingsly, McBragg, and the Haggens' are in the study enjoying a fine cognac. To McBragg's surprise, Kingsly believes his yarn of lost gold. In fact, it's been his obsession for many years, and he thinks he has learned new information that could lead to the discovery of the treasure. He suggests a partnership in a venture to find the gold. McBragg, although he has boasted of knowing the whereabouts of the gold doesn't really know where the location is, so he stalls.

Meanwhile, Owen has slipped from his room and is eavesdropping on the men from an open window.

Impatient and frustrated with McBragg's reluctance, Kingsly reveals his plan to harm Owen if the Commander doesn't reveal the secret location of the gold. McBragg tells the truth that he made up the gold part of the story, but Kingsly, Hunt and Tracker think he's joking and burst into laughter. Owen also thinks he's jesting, but knows he and the Commander are in danger.

The next day. Hunt pilots a pontoon plane while Kingsly, McBragg, and Tracker, survey the area. Owen, having overheard Kingsly's plan has stowed aboard with a stolen gun. During a hijack attempt Owen accidentally shoots Hunt through the shoulder. Hunt takes the plane low over a river. In the confusion, Owen, McBragg and a parachute fall through the door and plummet into the river. Once surfaced, they cling to the unopened parachute. Hunt manages to land upstream but McBragg and Owen plunge over a towering waterfall. Holding McBragg other tightly, Owen, has the presence of mind to pull the ripcord. Embracing each other, they float down to the jungle canopy. After a high-wire descent from the trees they decide to camp along the river.

Meanwhile, Hunt tends to his wound, while Kingsly orders Tracker to make camp.

Once in a real adventure, McBragg's lack of actual experience slowly exposes him as a fraud in front of Owen; his biggest fan. His slapstick attempts at finding food and shelter are an exercise in futility. All the while he acts as if he's in control. Owen's respect for his Grandfather borders on worship, so he initially gives McBragg the benefit of the doubt but in fact, if not for Owen's Royal-Scout training all would be lost.

After a long scary night, the campfire smolders and a bleary-eyed McBragg leaves Owen to sleep a bit more. He wanders a few yards down to the river and sits on a rock in the morning sun.

From the top of the falls, Tracker, using a rifle sight, has seen the smoke and has brought his father and Kingsly to see for themselves.

"He's alive," says Tracker in disbelief, "the man is supernatural, he's probably laughing at us right now."

On the rock below, McBragg sobs.

"What will I do? The boy and I are doomed." McBragg notices Owen suddenly approaching.

"Ah, nothing like a splash of cool water," McBragg says, quickly splashing water on his face to hide his tears, "to wake one's senses, you know. Well, we'd better get marching. I'm sure there will be a village nearby." The two set off into the forest.

From above, the men see the boy. Tracker offers to pick them off. Kingsly derides Tracker for such a stupid comment, pointing out that McBragg may still lead them to the gold. Tracker sneers.

"Do what your generous employer says," his father barks. Kingsly smiles at Hunt's 'wisdom', then orders Tracker to follow them and report back to the estate with details.

Later. McBragg and Owen are captured by a local tribe. One of the natives, KIPJA, speaks broken English and tells them they are to be cooked and eaten. McBragg demands to be set free by order of the king.

Strung from a log about to be lowered over a blazing fire and believing the end is near, the Commander cries out, confessing to Owen that he's a fake. Kipja translates and the tribe begins to laugh. McBragg and Owen have been the victim of a practical joke used on many gold-diggers. The laughing is spoiled by the sudden appearance of CAROLYN LORD, 47, an Englishwoman nicknamed MAJU by the locals.

She scolds Kipja in his native tongue. The tribe laughs even harder. McBragg and Owen are dumbfounded as the natives free them. Maju introduces herself and assures them the natives are harmless. McBragg introduces himself. She slaps

him. Hard. Without revealing details, she grudgingly offers let them stay at her sparse home nearby and take them to Nairobi in the morning.

"Clean them up," she tells Kipja, and stomps away. Tired, stunned and deflated, McBragg attempts a pathetic last ditch effort to convince Owen that he was really unafraid, but the boy's confidence has been shattered and a new lie hurts even more.

Kipja takes McBragg and Owen to a fabulous swimming pool below a small waterfall. Kipja strips and dives in. He invites them in.

"When in Rome," says McBragg as he strips and dives in. Within seconds, Kipja and McBragg are splashing and frolicking under the waterfall. Owen bashfully strips. Now buck-naked he prepares to leap when he hears giggling. Owen A beautiful girl is watching from a tree. Owen overreacts and slips off the rock into the pool.

"Who are you?" Owen says as he resurfaces, "I mean I don't know your language and all but -- "

"Pasha," she says laughing, "my name is Pasha." She speaks English. From her leafy cover she swings out across the pond, hopping onto a branch and nimbly scaling the length of the bough. She swan dives into the water. Owen couldn't feel more vulnerable; Where is she? Where is she? He dives for her. Nothing. Then he looks up. It's Pasha, on top of the rocks surrounding the pool. She rings out her braids, grabs their clothes and disappears into the forest.

In the village, Kipja accompanies Owen and the commander who now wear the most gaudy of authentic tribal wear. They receive strange looks.

"Celebration!" yells Kipja, "what else can one do in the forest at night?"

During the celebration McBragg begs an explanation from Maju. As Owen and Pasha dance Maju reveals that she is the young girl McBragg supposedly saved on the train three decades earlier. McBragg has nowhere to hide. Maju knows the true story: Her father, a railroad engineer, plotted to steal the gold to settle a debt owed to him by the crown for services unpaid.

"He cleverly arranged a mock attack by friendly natives," she says, "knowing that, due to budget shortages, there would only be one guard, you, not forty like in your book. His plan was to split the gold with Kingsly, my father's partner, if he would back up his story, then take his half and me to

London." She continues: Kingsly shot her father in cold blood during the fake raid, then shot many innocent natives for effect. Her father managed to get off a final shot hitting Kingsly in the gut. Kingsly stumbled to the locomotive, confronted Maju but luckily collapsed before murdering her too. Maju ran to her father but he released the coupler allowing the locomotive to go free.

"I reached for his hand but we were drawn apart. He said he would hide the gold and come for me. That was the last thing he ever said to me. Of the five carriages with gold four were most certainly later recovered by Kingsly, making him very wealthy, but one was missing. With my father. I crawled back to the front and passed out. When I awoke, you were there. To take the glory. Of course, even if I wanted to tell the truth I couldn't, no one would believe a young lady's account. I didn't want the money or the fame. I only wanted to make a life where my father raised me. My life since has been a fight to protect the rights of the natives, and raise my daughter, Pasha."

The next day. Maju prepares for the trip to Nairobi. McBragg asks if he could have a moment. They go for a walk. Oddly, McBragg finds himself drawn toward her. Free from having to showboat he feels strangely liberated. He apologizes and she forgives him. Kingsly, after all, is the real villain. They take a moment to reveal more of their real-life stories, hardships, relationships.

Simultaneously, Owen and Impasha steal away to see the nearby falls. A storm surprises them, so they seek shelter in a cave known only to Impasha.

Later, lost in the labyrinth with only a meager torch, they stumble upon a cavern that, incredibly, contains a full-size railroad box-car sitting upon tracks that appear to lead directly into the rock. Inside the car, they are horrified to find a human skeleton, clothes still on. Things get worse: the kids have been followed by Tracker and he seals them in.

After a night in the dark, the kids lay huddled together. They are jolted awake by an explosion blasting a hole in a far wall. Daylight shines in, then, Kingsly and his men climb through. The kids are apprehended. His men find the bones but not the gold. Kingsly unsheathes his hunting knife and menacingly approaches Impasha and Owen.

At the last moment Kingsly turns the knife toward the carriage and scrapes the paint away on the metal frame, revealing yellow, gleaming gold. He knew this would be the method of hiding the treasure. Kingsly screams out victoriously and orders his men to build tracks and to collect his old adversary's bones for later display in his study. Nearby, the jungle's ears have heard.

In the village, tribal scouts report to McBragg and Maju that Kingsly is digging a train from the mountain and the kids are being held hostage.

Maju, McBragg and the tribe mount an assault on the operation, but in the melee, Kipja is shot, and the train car with the gold, McBragg, Kingsly, Maju and the kids, careens uncontrollably down the mountain. In the final thrilling moments, McBragg finds the power to live up to, and even exceed, his own wildest stories, saving the day and more importantly, Owen's respect. And ... Kipja lives, of course.

Present day.

Kyle is a believer and maybe even Cameron.

The next morning, the boys say farewell and join their parents. As their rental-car rolls away down the long driveway, Owen turns to Gladstone and speaks in a natural American accent.

"Thank you so much, Lord Gladstone, you've no idea how much this means to me. You own a wonderful house." Gladstone smiles.

"Think nothing of Owen old boy, I'm sure they'll be back some day, so anytime you want to use my house, just ring."

Owen smiles as his grandkids fade from view. He retrieves his old bike from behind some bushes. As Owen climbs on, Lord William Gladstone, 'the butler', and true owner of the manner-house calls out.

"That story, McBragg ... was more real than reality itself."

"Quite," says McBragg, and pedals away, up the narrow road to the small cottage where he has lived for decades.

Family Tree

Commander McBragg Ann Smith
 (1880-1961) (1885-1962)

McBragg met her at a port-of-call and sent her money to raise the result.

Caprio Nino Annabeth (Smith)Nino
 (1890-1919) (1901-1920)

He was killed in a dual. She died in childbirth one month after the wedding.

Owen McBragg Lily (Buchanan) McBragg
 (1919-) (1922-1981)

The Commander changed his surname from Nino when he gained custody. She dumped McBragg when she discovered he was broke.

Trent Hall Sarah McBragg-Hall
 (1964-) (1960-)

He sells tractors. She's an exhausted housewife, mother and school volunteer.

Kyle McBragg-Hall Cameron McBragg-Hall
 (1986-) (1983-)

Kyle recently began to notice girls. Cameron won't be seen with parents.

girls.