

## The Interpreter (2005)

Silvia Broome (Nicole Kidman) is an interpreter working at the United Nations in New York City. She was raised in the Republic of Matobo, a fictional African country, but has dual citizenship. The U.N. is considering indicting Edmond Zuwanie (Earl Cameron), Matobo's president, to stand trial in the International Criminal Court. Initially a liberator, over the past 20 years he has become as corrupt and tyrannical as the government he overthrew, and is now responsible for ethnic cleansing and other atrocities within Matobo. Zuwanie is soon to visit the U.N. and put forward his own case to the General Assembly, in an attempt to avoid the indictment.

A security scare forces the evacuation of the U.N. building, and Silvia returns at night to reclaim some personal belongings. At that time, she overhears discussion of an assassination plot, and runs scared from the building when those discussing the plot become aware of her presence. The next day, Silvia recognizes words in a meeting where she is interpreting from phrases she overheard the night before, and reports the incident to U.N. security; the plot's target appears to be Zuwanie himself. They, in turn, call in the U.S. Secret Service, who assign Tobin Keller (Sean Penn) and Dot Woods (Catherine Keener) to investigate, as well as protect Zuwanie when he arrives. Keller learns that Silvia has, in the past, been involved in a Matoban guerrilla group, that her parents and sister were killed by land mines laid by Zuwanie's men, and that she has dated one of Zuwanie's political opponents. Although Keller is suspicious of Silvia's story, the two grow close and Keller ends up protecting her from attacks on her person. Silvia later finds that her brother Simon and her lover Xola were killed (as shown in the opening scene).

The purported assassin is discovered while Zuwanie is in the middle of his address to the General Assembly, and security personnel rush Zuwanie to a safe room for his protection. Silvia, anticipating this, has been hiding in the safe room, and confronts Zuwanie and intends to kill him herself. Keller determines that the assassination plot is a false flag operation created by Zuwanie to gain credibility that his rivals are terrorists and to deter potential supporters of his removal. Keller rushes to the safe room and arrives just in time to prevent Silvia from murdering Zuwanie. Zuwanie is indicted, and Silvia is expelled from the U.S., returning home to Matobo soon afterwards.

### Cast

Nicole Kidman as Silvia Broome  
Sean Penn as Tobin Keller  
Catherine Keener as Dot Woods  
Jesper Christensen as Nils Lud  
Yvan Attal as Philippe  
Earl Cameron as Zuwanie  
George Harris as Kuman-Kuman  
Michael Wright as Marcus  
Clyde Kusatsu as Police Chief Lee Wu  
Eric Keenleyside as Rory Robb  
Hugo Speer as Simon Broome  
Maz Jobrani as Mo  
Yusuf Gatewood as Doug  
Curtiss Cook as Ajene Xola (as Curtiss I'Cook)  
Byron Atley as Jean Gamba

### Memorable quotes (with notes on difficult vocabulary)

Silvia Broome: Vengeance is a lazy form of grief.  
**Lazy** = pigro; **grief** = dolore

Silvia Broome: Any **leads**?

Tobin Keller: Maybe one. Come on down to Mexico.

[hands her a picture of a **rally**, her face can be seen among the crowd]

Tobin Keller: Is that you? Can you tell me what somebody like you, who uses the word "diplomacy", like she's **chastising** me, is doing at a rebel rally?

Silvia Broome: A peace rally.

Tobin Keller: I don't want to do this again!

Silvia Broome: That's exactly what it is. What I am doing is listening.

Tobin Keller: After that, after you listen.

Silvia Broome: You're asking the wrong question.

Tobin Keller: I'm asking you the question you don't want to answer.

Silvia Broome: Why would somebody take a picture and type the names of everyone in it on the back. This is a death list. The question you should be asking is "who gave me this?" and "why?"

**lead** = (qui) pista da seguire (nelle indagini); **rally** = comizio; **to chastise** = strigliare, sgridare.

Silvia Broome: Listen, I'm scared, and my protector is some one who doesn't believe me.

Tobin Keller: You don't look scared...

Silvia Broome: People handle fear in different ways, Mr. Keller. It turns some people into **stand up comedians**. You don't know me at all. Maybe I should talk to someone else about assigning someone to look after me who's better suited to the job.

Tobin Keller: My job is not to look after you, it's to look after the man who's been threatened, if there was a threat. My job, as it concerns you, is to investigate you.

Silvia Broome: So you're not here to offer me any protection whatsoever?

Tobin Keller: No, Ma'am.

Silvia Broome: [handing him back his card] And we were getting along so well.

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Silvia Broome: Do you think I'm **making it up**? Why would I report a threat I didn't hear?

Tobin Keller: People do.

Silvia Broome: I don't.

Tobin Keller: Some people like attention.

Silvia Broome: I don't!

Tobin Keller: Maybe you don't want Zuwanie at the U.N.

Silvia Broome: I didn't make it up.

Tobin Keller: How do you feel about him?

Silvia Broome: I don't care for him.

Tobin Keller: Wouldn't mind if he were dead?

Silvia Broome: I wouldn't mind if he were gone.

Tobin Keller: Same thing.

Silvia Broome: No, it isn't. If I interpreted gone as dead I'd be out of a job, if dead and gone were the same thing there'd be no UN.

Tobin Keller: Your profession is playing with words Ms. Broome.

Silvia Broome: I don't play with words.

Tobin Keller: You're doing it right now.

Silvia Broome: No, you are. If I wanted him dead, I wouldn't have reported it. I would sit back and let it happen. That's not what I want, that's not why I'm here.

**stand up comedian** = cabarettista; **to make sth up** = inventare (di sana pianta); **If I interpreted gone as dead I'd be out of a job** = se interpretassi 'andato' con 'morto', perderei il lavoro.

Tobin Keller: You think that **not getting caught in a lie** is the same thing as telling the truth.

**to get caught in a lie** = essere scoperti quando si dice una bugia

Tobin Keller: You lose somebody, you lose somebody. I don't wanna lose two somebodies.

**I don't wanna (= want to) lose two somebodies** = non voglio perdere due persone che sono qualcuno.

Silvia Broome: Everyone who loses somebody wants revenge on someone, on God if they can't find anyone else. But in Africa, in Matobo, the Ku believe that the only way to end grief is to save a life. If someone is murdered, a year of **mourning** ends with a ritual that we call the Drowning Man Trial. There's an all-night party beside a river. At dawn, the killer is put in a boat. He's taken out on the water and he's dropped. He's bound so that he can't swim. The family of the dead then has to make a choice. They can let him drown or they can swim out and save him. The Ku believe that if the family lets the killer drown, they'll have justice but spend the rest of their lives in mourning. But if they save him, if they admit that life isn't always just... that very act can take away their **sorrow**.

**mourning** = lutto; **to drown** = affogare; **sorrow** = dolore

[last lines]

Silvia Broome: What was her name?

Tobin Keller: Laurie. Keller. Killed in an auto accident in Santa Fe. Twenty-three days ago.

[Sylvia says something in Ku]

Tobin Keller: Rest in peace?

Silvia Broome: Close enough.

**Rest in peace?** = Che riposi in pace?; **Close enough** = (ci si avvicina abbastanza) più o meno

Silvia Broome: Do you know that the leading cause of death for **beavers** is falling trees?

beaver = castor

Tobin Keller: But not just dead. Dead in front of the delegates of a hundred and ninety one countries, and every news service with a camera. Dead in front of the world.

Jonathan Williams: Nobody needs **to be that dead**.

**to be that dead** = morto fino a quell punto

Silvia Broome: We don't name the dead.

Silvia Broome: Peace, security and freedom are not finite commodities like land, oil or gold, which one state can acquire at another's expense.

**commodities** = beni

Roland: What is that?

Silvia Broome: Come on, Roland, it's my **flutes** and stuff. I have a lesson tonight. Don't make me **drag** it down just to drag it back up.

Roland: I let you do this, I'm gonna get coats and hats and yogi mats...

**flute** = flauto; **drag** = trascinare

Asian Interpreter: Ladies and gentlemen, the situation in Matobo has now become critical. With Ajene Xola in hiding and Kuman-Kuman in exile, Edmond Zuwanie has few domestic obstacles to his policy of **ethnic cleansing**. The Security Council must therefore **press for** his immediate referral to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

**ethnic cleansing** = pulizia etnica; **to press for his immediate referral to the International Criminal Court in The Hague** = esercitare pressioni perché sia immediatamente deferito alla Corte Penale Internazionale dell'Aia

American Ambassador Davis: Let's be clear, Mr. Ambassador. The United States may not recognize the I.C.C. as a legitimate court, but we certainly do not **condone** the methods President Zuwanie uses against his own people.

Silvia Broome: [translating from Ku] Dr. Zuwanie is an educator. He is... our teacher. But his opponents engage in evermore ferocious acts. The partisans of both Kuman-Kuman and Ajene Xola have become... terrorists.

American Ambassador Davis: The French proposal is a **diplomatic headache** for both of us.

**to condone** = giustificare, legittimare; **diplomatic headache** = rompicapo diplomatico

Tobin Keller: Do you think you can identify the voice you heard if you heard it again?

Silvia Broome: Well, I'd say yes, if it were... It was almost a **whisper**. Whispers **disguise** the quality of a voice. You, I imagine, study faces. You know, I'm not really a dignitary.

Tobin Keller: I know. How'd you happen to be up there after hours?

Silvia Broome: We had an evacuation. I'd left some things in the sound booth. I had to go back for them.

Tobin Keller: And at that moment, there happened to be a couple fellas talking about an assassination in a language that you and maybe eight other people understand, in a room full of microphones.

**whisper** = sussurro, bisbiglio; **to disguise** = nascondere, falsare; **fellas** = (informale per fellows) ragazzi

Jay Pettigrew: Are you sure you're ready to come back?

Tobin Keller: I'm better working.

Jay Pettigrew: We got a credible threat?

Tobin Keller: We should assume so.

Jay Pettigrew: As popular as we are in the rest of the world these days, the last thing we can afford is to have some foreign leader **get popped** on our soil, particularly a guy like this that we don't like. So state wants you to know, N.S.A., C.I.A., F.B.I., whatever you need to keep this maniac's heart beating till he makes his speech and gets the hell out, it's yours.

**to get popped** = (slang) farsi ammazzare

Dot Woods: [to Tobin about Sylvia] Are we using her as **bait**?

**bait** = esca

Tobin Keller: [on the phone] Guys, get with me here. **We got a situation.**

**We got a situation** = abbiamo un problema

News Reporter: I'm standing here on Nostrand Avenue in Crown Heights, where the scene behind me can only be described as unconscionable carnage...

**unconscionable** = incalcolabile, inimmaginabile; **carnage** = carneficina

Jonathan Williams: My opinion, it's a con.

**My opinion, it's a con** = se vuoi la mia opinione, è tutta una messinscena/truffa

Tobin Keller: [to Sylvia] You can't do that. You cannot do that. How the hell am I supposed to protect you if I don't know where you are?

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Silvia Broome: Hove Vambi... killed by **land-mines**. Alexander Mungoshi... Charles Kufomo... Ruth Kufomo... shot to death defending their home. Robert Chenjari... Benita Matkudzi... burned to death during a protest rally. Edgar Sakuro... Masumi Bamcha... John Enkumo... Yvon Enkumo...

G.A. President: Let the record show...

Silvia Broome: Steven Gawanda...

G.A. President: ...that the Security Council...

Silvia Broome: Solo Gawanda...

G.A. President: ...has unanimously commanded...

Silvia Broome: Steven Shamere...

G.A. President: ...that President Zuwanie of Matobo...

Silvia Broome: Stambuli Watiku... Esther Tikembu...

G.A. President: ...**be tried** at the International Criminal Court in The Hague... for crimes against humanity.

Silvia Broome: Simon Broome... shot to death in a soccer stadium.  
**land-mines** = mine antiuomo; **to be tried** = essere processato

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