**Category: Law and Society**

**FROM KAYA TO WAR**

Fort Valour was a small British outpost that was set up a few hundred miles north of the Kilimanjaro. It was home to 1st Company, 3rd Battalion of the King’s African Rifles (KAR). By extension, it was Zahir’s new home. Zahir was a young Mijikenda man with dreams of making a name for himself. The earthen walls and scattered tarpaulin tents of the meager British outpost were a different sight for him. The vast plains of the savannah, a far cry from the forests that grew around his kaya.

As he was being served breakfast that morning after the drills, his mind drifted back to the day he left the kaya. The images of the colonial officers accompanied by the local *askaris* filled his head as he dug his spoon into the soft mash of oats. The formation having entered the village, formed neatly into their ranks under a large tree they used as a forum. The captain of the *askaris* stepped forward, addressing the gathering crowd of villagers saying.

*“As of yesterday, a war was declared upon our British governors. The Germans have failed to bow to our will and they are threatening our land from their colony in Tanganyika,” He proclaimed, “The Governor is looking for men to serve in His Majesty’s Royal Army and to fight against the German dogs that intrude on our sovereignty.”*

He went on a lengthy diatribe about how the Germans mistreated their fellow Africans. He glorified the struggle, painting the future soldiers of the KAR as liberators. He appealed to their warrior spirit and Zahir and his friends loved the idea of joining the KAR. The lure of adventure ticked their youthful energy. The trucks were thereafter full of Kaya men. Mothers cried while fathers threatened their sons with dire consequences were they to leave the kaya to go and fight for the white man. But trucks drove off with a majority of them as the sun set over the small village.

Thus far, the men of the 1st company have not seen combat. They have spent the initial weeks in basic training, aiding the engineers in completing what would later become Fort Valor. They are busy digging trenches and sifting dirt for the wall.

Zahir feels betrayed for he was promised a fight against the Germans. Instead, he is doing menial jobs. The chiming of the bell can be heard across the fort and Zahir rushes speeds for the mess hall. Other soldiers join him and they form ranks on the assembly ground.

Atop of the podium their commanding officer stands and waits for the dust to settle before he speaks. “*The Germans have attacked!”* he shouts, “*Their askaris have crossed the border at the Kilimanjaro.”*