

So Great a Cloud of Witnesses

A Novel of the Rwandan Genocide



Dr. Chris Alan Foreman

Dedication

One thousand hills.
One hundred days.
One million graves.

This book is dedicated to the cloud of witnesses who survived
an unspeakable horror with an unquenchable spirit.



Author's Note

So Great a Cloud of Witnesses is a work of historical fiction set in the context of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the two decades that followed. While most characters are fictional, several are historical and anchor the narrative into its time and place. I wish to thank all those in Rwanda and in America who allowed me to weave threads of their lives into the fabric of this novel.

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Part One: Witness to the Extermination

~ Land of 1000 Hills ~

The Republic of Rwanda is a small land-locked nation situated in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa—along the Great Rift Valley. As a temperate tropical highland, the soil is fertile and the landscape lush. With rugged mountains, terraced slopes, and snowy volcanic peaks, Rwanda is known as the *Land of 1000 Hills*.



Today, thirteen million people inhabit Rwanda, making it the most densely populated country on the continent. Traditionally there have been three tribes in Rwanda: Hutu composing about 85%, Tutsi about 14%, and Batwa (pigmy) 1%. Official languages are Kinyarwanda, French, English, and Swahili. Eighty-five percent of the people identify as Christian—both Roman Catholic and Protestant. Ten percent follow Islam and some still practice traditional animism. Poverty is widespread with an average wage of three dollars per day.

Isolated from the Western world, Rwanda was the last parcel in Africa to fall into European hands. Germans first arrived in 1892, then Belgians took over in 1916. Both colonizers promoted racial division. Darwinian anthropologists measured skull size with calipers while fanciful historians traced lines of descent from Biblical characters. These pseudo-scientists concluded that the minority Tutsis were closer in kind to Europeans and elevated them to positions of power over the majority Hutus. This exacerbated the feudal status of peasant Hutus and royal Tutsis. In the 1930s, Belgian overlords introduced ethnic identity cards, enshrining tribal differences.

With the coming of democracy and majority rule, racial roles capsized overnight. Once disenfranchised Hutus now lorded over Tutsis. In 1959, Hutu extremists forced a hundred thousand Tutsis to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Following independence in 1962, cycles of violence recurred in which newly-exiled Tutsis attacked government forces along the frontiers and Hutu militias retaliated by killing Tutsis within the nation.

In 1990, an ex-patriot army called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), crossed into Rwanda from its base in Uganda, initiating the Rwandan Civil War. The RPF gained a foothold along the northern frontier, but could not win a decisive victory. The Hutu president of Rwanda half-heartedly negotiated for peace in Arusha, Tanzania. In April of 1994, his jet was shot down over the capital city of Kigali, sparking the mass killing of Tutsis.

~ An African Holocaust ~

It is at this point in the story of Rwanda, the events of this novel begin to unfold.

The Rwandan genocide which followed the president's death was distinct in several ways. First, it was rapid. Like accelerant tossed onto long-smoldering embers, the entire nation burst into sudden flame. For one hundred days of extermination, the death toll averaged a staggering 10,000 souls per day.

Second, it was well-planned. Organizers used census data, employment records, and church rolls to target every Tutsi in the country. Attacks were not spontaneous, but orchestrated from the highest echelons of government. Many massacres were coordinated via national radio.

Third, it was intimate. For generations, the two tribes had freely intermingled, intermarried, and interacted on a first-name basis. When the slaughter began, neighbor pounced upon neighbor. People who sat side-by-side in church on Sunday might kill a fellow parishioner on Monday. Friendship did not protect the doomed.

Fourth, the genocide was low-tech. Throughout the countryside, machetes and clubs were the weapons of choice. Perpetrators often returned home after a day's *work* sodden with blood. Even when guns were used, killers typically executed at arm's length.

Fifth, the killing was effective. In many regions of Rwanda, the slaughter stopped only because the killers ran out of available Tutsi victims.

Yet within this African holocaust, there were miracles of survival. For the thousands who endured, God provided strength and restoration. It is on behalf of these surviving witnesses; I have written this book.

Story One

Four Lieutenants

April 6 to 20, 1994

~ *Strangers in a Strange Land* ~

Victor Kwizera rubbed his blood-flecked eyes, straining to read the smudged newsprint. This scholar-turned-soldier sat on a wobbly stool beneath a dim lamppost—the only available illumination in this isolated military compound. Victor pronounced out-loud the English words: “President Habyarimana of Rwanda meets with African leaders to discuss regional peace.” The headline from the *Kampala Monitor* was nearly a week old.

Victor gleaned Habyarimana had been meeting in Dar es Salem with the leaders of Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi in order to patch together the broken Arusha Peace Accords. Victor had never set foot in his home country, yet he doubted power-sharing between his own Tutsi people and extremist Hutu could ever be possible. Still, he hoped for peace in Rwanda.

He folded the community newspaper upon his knees catching view of a dozen fellow recruits who were lingering under his lamppost. Victor noted a new acquaintance named Sano Ruhinda. By appearance, he looked about thirty, short and muscular. By camp rumor he was Hutu, but it was not appropriate to delve into tribal identity. Sano’s lips moved as he recited words from his French Bible.

Victor then turned his head to observe young Alphonse Tomani who danced with a transistor radio pushed to his ear. The high-spirited boy-soldier was continually swaying to the catchy tunes of Kigali station RTL—Thousand Hills Radio.

Victor studied Tomani’s body language. He figured a rocking head and shuffling feet indicated a popular song. A clicking tongue and clinched fist meant an anti-Tutsi invective, something along the lines of: “The Rwanda Patriotic Force is a brood of cockroaches and we will kill you all.” But what odd combination was this? Shuffling feet and clicking tongue?

Tomani ambled near Sano and cranked up the volume. “Listen to these words of Simon Bikindi. He’s singing to you as a fellow cat-face.”

Hmmm...Ngire? Mbwirabumva. I speak to those who understand.

*I had a revelation from God, I am reviving the old heroes back to life.
Me, I hate those Hutu who are ashamed of their identity.
I despise Hutu who don't remember the slogan that was said
over there in Butare: "Starting at one side, kill everyone."
I hate those Hutu with fat bellies, who feed only themselves,
and who enjoy gaining favor through flattery and begging.
Fortunately for us, there are few of those traitors,
I speak to those who understand. Come listen.*

Sano jumped to his feet, grabbed the radio, and flung it into the mud. "Yes, I'm Hutu, but I don't hate my own people. You see. I'm first Rwandan by birth, then second Hutu by custom."

Victor stepped between the two recruits, extending his lanky frame to its full height of two meters. He growled, "Tomani, step back."

He then shouted with sweeping gestures. "Did you know Sano is like many of us? I heard both his dad and mum were killed by para-military gangs. Why did they sacrifice themselves? Because they spoke out against militia atrocities. His parents were protecting people of our Tutsi tribe. He is on our side, not with the killers."

Sano responded, "Thank you for those words but I can defend myself." Then, turning to Tomani, "Can you point out one disloyal action I've taken against our cause? Yes, I'm Hutu, but I'm Christian foremost." He held high his book. "Every day I strive to follow these words of Jesus. I vow to protect the innocent and punish the guilty."

The recruits nodded their approval while Tomani retrieved his radio and muttered beneath his breath, "We need more vicious brutes and fewer pious saints."

A sudden cloudburst doused the fiery tempers. The lamp blinked off and the billets soon filled with thirty-two dripping bodies. The platoon squeezed together on their plastic-tarped floor.

The four walls of their dormitory were constructed of sunbaked cinderblock. Red adobe smeared with white plaster covered its exterior surface. Bamboo rods supplemented the inside wall. Four rough-hewn windows furnished daylight and two primitive doors provided access. Raw timber held aloft a corrugated iron-sheet roof.

Each would-be fighter was assigned a wicker sleeping mat, a thin sleeping sheet, and a cloth duffle bag to stow eating utensils, hygiene items, and personal objects. Most young men hid a few possessions under their mats or in a wicker basket.

A critical feature of construction was the drainage ditch which encircled the barracks. Because of the April deluge, this canal was constantly monitored and dredged. A few meager planks provided a short walkway over the ditch. Then emerged the vast sea of mud.

In total darkness raindrops pelted the metal roof which reverberated like Burundian drums. Victor fell asleep to the percussive concert.

~ Evil Unloosed ~

About nine o'clock Victor was roused from slumber by exuberant shouts: "What? No! I can't believe it. Yes!"

In breathless excitement, Tomani gasped aloud, "Listen up. Listen up," The men bolted upright on their mats. "I just heard this on RTLM. They report a jet plane has crashed in Kigali. And get this: Habyarimana was on board. They are saying the president was killed, but they haven't yet found a body."

A few men cheered. "Hooray! The great devil is dead."

Sano raised a voice of caution. "No, no. The great devil may be dead, but his legion of demons is about to be unleashed. Don't you see? We must alert the officers."

Victor slipped on his damp clothes and stepped into the downpour. He groped his way to the officer's hut and pounded on the door. He heard rustling, then the door creak open.

"This better be important," Captain Bidogo intoned.

Victor reported in whispers. "We think Juvenal Habyarimana is dead. Private Tomani heard this on his radio."

"What?" Wheeling about he shouted, "You, Mwiza, turn on that radio. Ngabo, gas up the motorbike. Stand by to race your boda-boda to Headquarters Camp for orders."

The startling news was confirmed. Both the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi had been shot from the sky with a surface-to-air missile. In the Kinyarwanda language, rabid voices now crackled over airwaves. "The Tutsis did this. Someone must make them disappear for good, wipe them from human memory, exterminate these vermin from the face of the earth. Let's do the work now."

And the devil's work commenced that very night. In Kigali, a *crisis committee* of Hutu Power was formed. Colonel Theoneste Bagosora seized the reins of government

and sent out his Presidential Guard to round up and murder respected judges, journalists, labor leaders, and cabinet ministers. Hutu militias immediately set up street barricades to identify and kill any person with a Tutsi ID card as well as any Hutu who dared stand in the path of their slaughter. Within twenty-four hours, all opposition figures were either dead or in hiding. A coup d'état had taken place and the peace-seeking body within Rwanda had been decapitated.

From the starting gun, the fanatical goal—the genocidal dream—was to radically re-construct Rwanda as a Hutu-only nation. In an African echo of Nazi Germany, the killing campaign became known as the *final solution* to the Tutsi problem.

The billet of men endured an hour of uncertainty, then Sergeant Mwiza opened the door to read a brief military directive: “Settle down for the night; get your affairs in order; tomorrow we begin the liberation of our homeland.”

Some closed their eyes resting as best they could. Others chattered away their tension. Many monitored radio RTLM.

At age twenty-five, Victor proved to be a natural leader. He paced the tarpaulin, cracking jokes and calming nerves. He seemed to have a Rwandan proverb for every occasion. On this portentous night he favored, “You can outdistance that which is running after you, but not what is running inside you.”

As the billet quieted, Victor lay awake in a vortex of thought. He prayed to *Imana*—the God of his Christian upbringing, but his petitions seemed to bounce off the iron-sheet roof. His mind finally found solace when his ears discovered the comforting monotones of Sano’s sacred supplications.

~ Day One of One Hundred ~

All too soon, Sergeant Mwiza flung open the door. “Out of bed, you forest baboons. Your nation needs you. You have five minutes to stow your gear and align to the left of the flagpole.”

“Yes, sir, sergeant,” boomed the lusty voices.

At one degree south of the equator, the African sun rose without hesitation. With a measure of mercy, it also rose on this Tuesday morning without rainfall. The camp had altered complexion during the night. Four troop carriers had arrived and formed a neat row. Uniformed figures appeared like phantoms emerging from the tall grass. A protective perimeter now encircled the compound.

Victor stood in ankle-deep mud surrounded by sixty men rigid at attention. Finally, Captain Bidogo mounted a wooden platform. “Men of the Rwanda Patriotic Force-Inkotanyi, stand at parade rest and open your ears. The moment we have dreaded—the moment we have longed for and the moment for which we have been preparing—has arrived. That liar and scoundrel called Juvenal Habyarimana was killed last night. Good riddance. We don’t know for sure who shot him from the sky, but we suspect it was a snake from his own brood of vipers.

“That single death is sparking a blaze across our homeland. Reports tell us the cowards have murdered several Belgian peacekeepers and our prime minister, Madam Agathe Uwilingiyimana. If the enemy is so bold as to commit these crimes, they will not hesitate to slaughter every Tutsi—man, woman, child—until our nation is choked with blood from one end to the other. But we will stop them!”

“We will stop them!” returned the roar.

“We will save our people!” shouted the captain above the din. “Don’t forget the meaning behind our name—*Inkotanyi* ‘We will fight without delay, never give up.’ Yes, we’ll return Rwanda to peace. We’ll let nothing stand in our way. This is our sacred duty and we vow this to our God, our nation, our family, and our friends. Swear it. Swear it.”

As the fervor quieted into resolve, the company dispersed. Captain Bidogo called Victor aside. “Meet me in my hut in one hour. I have a special assignment for you.”

Victor had no clue as to his fate. Had he done something wrong? Why had he been singled out? After reporting to his captain, Victor was told to stand at ease.

Captain Bidogo eyed him from across a table. “Private Kwizera, I have heard good things about you. My sergeants tell me you have potential as an officer. They say you were an organizer in the Rwandan Alliance for National Unity. Your country needs competent men in this moment of crisis.”

He examined Victor from head to toe: thin but rugged body, large red-streaked eyes—a sign of malaria, a compact head projecting an intelligent face. “They tell me you were born in the nearby camp.”

“Almost sir. My mom says she gave birth to me just across the border in Tanzania. I don’t remember. But all I have ever known is Camp Oruchinga. I know this area like the back of my hand as well as the mountains across the river in Tanzania.”

The captain continued, “I hear you’re also familiar with the Nakivale UN Camp, just up the road to Mbarara. Is that right?”

“Of course,” he replied. “It’s been like a second home to me. It’s the largest population of us Banyarwanda outside of our nation. I’ve been told the place houses 200,000 refugees, all itching to return to their homeland.” He added, “You know it’s from Nakivale I’ve done most of my mobilizing.”

“Yes,” he responded. “And I’ve heard you’ve been very successful.” Then, looking at his notes, the captain continued his interview, “And did you attend Makelele University in Kampala?”

“Yes, sir, for two years. But I ran out of money. Ugandans make it tough for non-citizens to stay enrolled. As a refugee I had no status.”

“Yes, I understand. We Banyarwanda are strangers in a strange land.”

The captain called in Mwiza. “Sergeant, meet your assistant. He’s called Kwizera. He’ll act as your guide in the Ibanda Forest. Fill him in on the mission. Also, I’ve assigned Sano Ruhinda as a third man. He’s fluent in French, English, and Swahili. You might find him useful.”

Victor soon learned this team of three would scout the Tanzanian side of the Kagera River and report their findings to Battalion headquarters. Sergeant Mwiza with his Kalashnikov rifle would take charge.

~ Tiptoe through Tanzania ~

At midnight, the reconnaissance team were paddled across the swollen river in a rubber boat. Their orders were to follow the waterway upstream until they linked with their battalion at the Rwanda border town of Kagitumba. The three were to gather intelligence along the route. Victor knew the land well, having once tramped the river course during his days as an arms smuggler.

Once on shore in Tanzania, the infiltration team moved silently through the darkness. A peekaboo moon provided occasional illumination. At first light Sano located a small hollow in a thicket of hedge-thorns. “Perfect,” Mwiza told Victor. “This narrow path is the only access in for an attacker.”

“Yes,” rejoined Victor, “but the same path is also the only way for us to escape such an attack.”

“Don’t worry.” The sergeant tapped his rifle butt. “I’ve dropped many an enemy with this weapon. You two get some rest. I’ll keep watch.”

Lying shoulder to shoulder under a common tarp, Victor and Sano did manage to evade the drizzle and catch a little sleep.

With the obscure sun well above the horizon, the three resumed their slog through a steady downpour. Rubber shoes protected their feet while wide-brimmed hats deflected raindrops away from eyes. However, from neck to knee, the team was continually rain-soaked.

Victor walked in the lead, followed by Mwiza at a dozen steps, then Sano. If Victor spotted someone walking toward him, he would stop and begin to sing. Mwiza and his rifle would fade into the shrubs. Sano would do the same if a stranger approached from the rear.

In this manner, Victor passed two boys and a goat. Then four men strolled up from behind. Sano greeted them with a folksong. Victor heard the ruckus and ran to the rear. The men were threatening Sano with *pangas*—long butcher knives. The bandits turn tail and ran when they saw the muzzle of Mwiza’s Kalashnikov.

Let’s walk to the side of the road,” the sergeant advised. “It will be slower, but safer.” Keeping the river over their right shoulders, the recon team sloshed forward.

Victor instinctively hit the ground when he heard clattering metal and shouting voices. “I tell you they were around here somewhere. I think they were Rwandan spies.”

After twenty minutes of silence, the three edged forward. By the time they had found a suitable hiding spot, the rain had stopped; the forest had darkened; and the gibbous moon had risen. Victor pulled out his map and pointed, “I think we’re almost to the bend in the Kagera River. From that point we cross into Rwanda. Let’s wait here until midnight. We’ll then move on tiptoe, feeling our way along the riverbank. We should see house lights on the far shore when we arrive opposite Kagitumba.”

The trio rested on the tarp, tucked between fallen timbers. Mwiza closed his tired eyes, rifle clutched to his side. Victor pulled out a tiny flashlight to further examine his map. He glanced up to notice his friend still awake and counting prayers on his rosary.

“Sano, are you willing to share your story with me? I’ve heard the gossip from the others; something about you being a Catholic priest, studying in France, and your parents getting killed because they supported the Arusha Peace Plan. Did you really find your way to Nakivale Refugee Camp to join us freedom fighters? Can a priest carry a rifle and kill?”

“What you say is close to the truth. I’m not yet a priest. I’ve taken my final vows, but have yet to be ordained. I’m studying at the Catholic University in Belgium not in

France. My rector permitted a one-year absence to sort things out in Rwanda; and yes, my father was killed last Christmas day. He was murdered while walking out of church. My dad was the mayor of Gabiro. I've been without a mother for many years."

Victor pondered his words. "So, do you count yourself as a soldier—a freedom fighter?"

"That's difficult to answer. I doubt you know much about the founder of my holy order, Saint Dominic. He was not a soldier per se, but a preacher of the Gospel. Yet, he did combat heresy. He fought a spiritual and intellectual battle against an evil teaching called *Albigensian*.

"He believed like Saint Paul 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'

"I believe that Hutu Power is an evil teaching, a doctrine of demons. I'm returning to my homeland as a soldier of the cross to vanquish a blasphemy in which my own tribe seeks to annihilate yours. Can there be a greater apostasy than genocide? A greater heresy than preaching human extinction? I also wish to return to my home church of Saint Sebastian in Gabiro. I'm compelled to visit my mentor and priest, Father Silas; seek out my surviving family; and save whomever I can from the edge of the machete."

The air grew still as the men eased into slumber.

~ An Un-welcoming Committee ~

After a few hours, Mwiza roused the two sleepers and served each a few bites of banana. They walked the final kilometers, ducking into the bush whenever noise was heard. At last, Victor heard the splashing of the Kagera River. Creeping on all fours, he spotted raging fires on the far shore, reddening the dark sky.

Mwiza appeared puzzled at the sight but finally concluded, "I guess our RPF are already fighting in the town. I can hear the sounds of rifles, mortars, and grenades." He suggested they hide in the papyrus reeds until daylight. "I think it's less likely we'll get ambushed in the sunshine." Victor and Sano gladly deferred to his judgment.

As the horizon brightened to their backs, Mwiza spotted four figures on the water moving toward them in a small craft. They appeared to be wearing the new uniforms of

the Inkotanyi. Once the soldiers set foot on the shoreline, Mwiza shouted in Kinyarwanda, “Long live the Rwanda Patriotic Front.”

The squad looked toward the papyrus reeds, rifles at the ready. One shouted in his native tongue, “Step forward with your hands raised.”

Mwiza, Sano, and Victor stepped into the twilight mist. One of the four recognized Mwiza and grasped him by the shoulders. “It’s good to see you, comrade. You’re the reason we paddled over here.”

The three clambered into the boat. “We’ll have to hurry back to Kagitumba,” one said. “The Tanzanians don’t appreciate us being on their side of the river.”

Once they arrived at mid-current, the two oarsmen broke into smiles, “Look. We’re now halfway across the Kagera River. Now we can tell you officially, ‘Welcome to Rwanda!’”

The comrades locked arms and in unison belted out, “*Rwanda ni nziza*”—which translates as, *Rwanda is Beautiful*.”

Sano rejoiced the loudest, “Not only is this my home country, but also my home province of Byumba.

Victor then glanced upriver. “Hey, oarsman, pay attention to your navigation. I’ve never seen so many logs floating downstream.”

The boatmen’s merriment melted into melancholy. The one steering the craft replied, “And you pay attention to these logs as they drift by.”

As Victor peered into the brightening gloom, the *log* changed aspect.

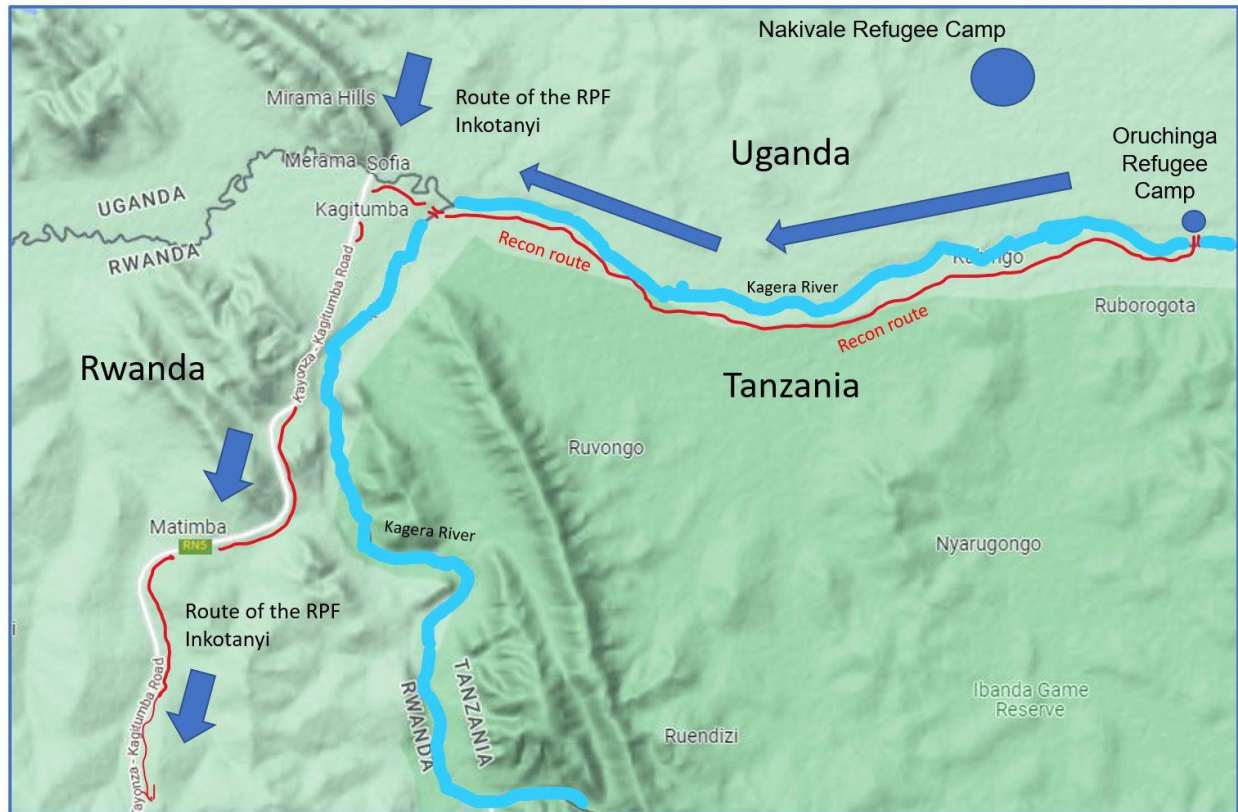
First a colorful patch of cloth swirled into view. Then a naked arm flopped in the current. Both allured and repulsed, the onboard witnesses shook with emotion. At last, they recognized the object as a female corpse bobbing in the torrent. Another *log* appeared, then another, then a baby *log*.

The oarsmen increased their pace.

Sano bowed his head making the sign of the cross.

Victor choked out a few lines of the anthem, *Rwanda ni nziza*, then with sadness repeated the greeting, “Welcome to Rwanda.”

Sergeant Mwiza swept his hand across the waters in a sardonic gesture, “Yes, and may I introduce you to the members of our welcoming committee.”



~ The Inkotanyi Army ~

After navigating a flotilla of human flotsam, the boatmen touched ground in Rwanda. A captain with the RPF ushered the recon team aside for an interrogation. When he had verified their identity, the officer gave badges to Victor, Sano, and Mwiza. Within an hour the three were escorted to a door marked with the name *Major Bidogo*. After salutes, Sergeant Mwiza spoke up, “Sir, I see congratulations are in order. Your promotion is well deserved.”

“And congratulations to you as well, *Lieutenant* Mwiza. And to you, *Lieutenants* Kwizera and Ruhinda.”

The three sputtered in disbelief.

“Men, these are not ordinary times and we must take extraordinary measures. Our army is doubling in size. Our officer ranks require educated soldiers. I have

reviewed a hundred records and you three have risen to the top. Tomorrow, a dignitary will arrive in camp and he will make the promotions official. Now, enough about that. Let's hear your recon report."

The three men recounted details of their two-day trek through Tanzania, but since the northeast corner of Rwanda now lay in RPF hands, their observations were of little value.

Victor spent the remainder of the day walking through Kagitumba, happy to make footprints in his home soil. He spent the hours conversing with a dozen men he had once mobilized from Nakivale.

At night under a make-shift canopy, images of floating corpses bobbed in his dreams.

The morning brought relief through a hardy breakfast. The cook encouraged him to eat as much beef as he could, quipping, "This big-horned steer who bravely sacrificed himself in battle yesterday will not have died in vain."

Victor began to notice an abundance of vehicles and smartly-dressed military police. He figured the dignitary was on his way. Victor also noted hundreds of RPF troops uniformed in identical green short-sleeve shirts with matching short pants. He spotted a supply officer issuing the gear and asked him about the clothing.

"These are from the old East Germany—their summer uniforms. Do you know much about history? When that communist country collapsed, the new government was stuck with a warehouse of obsolete uniforms and equipment. We Rwandese are clever and for just a few thousand American dollars bargained for all this." He gestured proudly over the soccer field. "What do you think? Looks good, right?"

It took all morning for the two thousand soldiers to configure themselves in proper military order. Victor stood in a new uniform next to Major Bidogo and in a unit designated as "Reserve force—Personnel section."

In snatches of conversation, Lieutenant Kwizera discerned his assignment. Victor would remain to the rear of advancing troops to oversee *Personnel Processing Station Three*. The principal function of his unit was to maintain army personnel records and interview civilians and enemy combatants sent to him from the battleline.

Major Bidogo emphasized the importance of his assignment. "Not as the point of the spear," he said, "but as the shank which enables the spear to pierce into the enemy's heart."

Victor connected with Sano and Mwiza while practice-marching about the soccer field. They too were assigned to Station Three. Victor voiced disappointment at not gaining an infantry position saying, “All I ever wanted is to be an Inkotanyi fighter.”

Mwiza responded, “Killing people with bullets is not as glorious as it’s made out to be.” He told Victor his own task would be to interrogate prisoners of war, adding, “That’s alright with me. I’ve survived four years of combat and don’t want to press my luck.”

Sano told the others he was commissioned as a chaplain. “I want you to know I will be a soldier of Rwanda on the outside, but a soldier of God on the inside.” He retrieved a scapular tucked inside his shirt. “This string around my neck is a reminder that I must remain faithful to my calling in the Dominican order. See the medallion of the Blessed Virgin at my throat. It is the only military decoration I need”. He kissed the object and returned it to its hidden place.

He continued, “You know my hometown is in this Eastern Byumba Province. I know the people and customs of this area. My chaplain’s duty will be to address the spiritual needs of the soldiers and displaced civilians. I think God has directed my feet to this place and time.”

A female lieutenant introduced herself to the men. Until recently Bernice Mukamanda had been a school principal in Kampala. Now she wore the green uniform and shoulder tabs of an army officer. Her task at Station Three was to turn out ID cards and act as an advocate for women’s issues. As the hour of noon approached, a dozen enlisted soldiers filled out the ranks of Personnel Processing Station Three.

As the lieutenants continued to discuss their military duties, a hush came over the parade field, followed by the amplified command of *Attention*. Mwiza glanced at his watch: precisely twelve noon.

~ An Unlikely General ~

A dozen dignitaries were seated on a distant platform with flags of the RPF draped as a background. After a command to parade rest, the two-thousand-man contingent watched as a tall, reed-thin, spectacled man approached the microphone. At thirty-seven years of age, Paul Kagame was an unlikely general. He appeared too quiet, too intellectual, too unpretentious, and too young to lead an insurgent movement of fifty-thousand freedom fighters. Yet, he had exuded competence whenever he entered a room and now he inspired confidence as he spoke before this assembled multitude.

“My fellow countrymen of this great nation of Rwanda; my devoted soldiers in this grand crusade of good against evil; my partner patriots of all tribes, ages, sexes, and backgrounds; we are standing on the sacred soil of Rwanda!”

An officer to the side of the general flung his arms in the air provoking the entire mass of soldiery to burst into cheer.

The general continued, “We will never retreat, never step backward. We will only advance. We will fight those who with impunity murder our people. We will fight for the right of all Banyarwanda to return home from exile. We demand only to live in peace and security within the boundaries of our own land; Nothing more we ask; nothing less we’ll accept.”

After three more cycles of speech and applause, General Kagame concluded by shouting out “We will fight without delay, never give up.”

An aide stepped to the microphone. “We are about to take an oath of allegiance to the RPF-Inkotanyi. Stand at attention. Raise your right hand. State your name in full, then repeat after me.”

“I do solemnly swear before these members of the RPF, acknowledging that I clearly understand the RPF principles and goals set forth to promote the dignity for every Rwandan living inside Rwanda or abroad, being young or old, even future generations that are not yet born.

“I swear and promise that I must team up with every RPF member, currently and in the future.

“I acknowledge that every member must protect and be protected, advise and be advised in order to prevent the tragedy that has devastated our country and all of its people.

“I also accept to fight against enemies of Rwanda wherever they may be.

“I also swear before these members that I will strictly follow all current and future rules set forth by the RPF.

“I will avoid making mistakes, being unfaithful, procrastination, and other errors that led our country into the abyss.

“Fellow members gathered here, if I behave in an unworthy manner or do things that are contrary to our principles, goals and rules, I will have betrayed every Rwandan and I must therefore be punished like any criminal.”

After every soldier in attendance recited the pledge, a loud speaker blasted a military march. The aid spoke again. “We will now make the following promotions.” Over the next thirty minutes, 138 names were read out loud, among whom were Major Bidogo and Lieutenants Kwizera, Mwiza, Ruhinda, and Mukamanda.

As the multitude cleared the parade ground, the major collected his staff together. He shook the hand of each officer, then announced to all, “Our first meeting will commence in two hours. Report to the supply officer to pick up a pen and a notebook.”

At the appointed time, Victor assembled under an acacia tree with the cadre of his battalion. As Personnel Officer, Victor’s duty was to maintain the records of the four hundred men and officers of his battalion. There was no need to keep finance records, since military volunteers did not receive a wage.

In addition to managing its own troops, Victor’s unit would conduct interviews with local civilians and prisoners to determine their disposition. All would be issued fresh identification cards. The tripart designation—Hutu, Tutsi or Twa—was purposely omitted. After sixty years of tribal division the *ubwoko*—Rwandan ID card—did not include a tribe identifier.

Victor’s unit would also carry out graves registration for those soldiers killed in action. An older man joined the cadre under the tree. Mzee Pierre Gahutu was a professional photographer. He volunteered his services to process ID photos.

As he closed out the meeting, the major encouraged his staff, “We must learn to share the challenges that come our way. That way our problems will be cut in half.”

Always instant with a proverb, Victor added the Rwandan version of those words, “Yes, a stone that is visible cannot destroy a hoe.”

When Victor finally returned to his unit, Mwiza was busy supervising the construction of their shelter, Bernice was organizing boxes of paper records, and Sano already had his hands full instructing local village leaders. All this was being accomplished well after dark in the beam of requisitioned vehicle headlights. In the spirit of their RPF pledge, every soldier was busy helping the other; building, carrying, or record-keeping. No soldier was idle.

The RPF rulebook was strict indeed. There would be no laziness, drunkenness, bribery, or carousing with women. Uniforms and bearing were always to be sharp and interaction with civilians must be polite. A group of political officers—commissars—mingled with the troops to encourage, educate, and enforce this high standard of discipline.

~ *Interahamwe Atrocity* ~

On the first day of operation, eight hundred Rwandese passed through Station Three. Most were villagers whom soldiers forcibly relocated into Uganda north of the Muvumba river. A dozen young men volunteered as recruits and another dozen accepted professional positions. Criminals were a challenge to deal with. Victor pondered, “How do we separate victims from perpetrators? No Rwandan mama would ever hand over her husband or son no matter how guilty he was as a killer.”

Through trial and error, he discovered the easiest method was to interview victims of obvious violence, those few who were attacked but survived. These witnesses could identify leaders of Hutu Power and those who did their bloody bidding.

Every few days Station Three would pull up stakes and move south along the Kayonza-Kagitumba highway, always a few kilometers behind the battle line. Near an intersection not far from the town of Nyagarare, Victor spotted a bus which was being escorted by two UN vehicles. The caravan paused at his post to resupply with water.

Sano spoke to the French soldiers in blue UN helmets. He learned the unit was part of *Amaryllis*, a military operation designed to evacuate expatriates from Rwanda. The convoy was travelling throughout Byumba collecting all *buzungu*—white people—in order to concentrate them at the Kigali airport then escort them out of the country.

One distraught Swedish nurse approached Sano. She burst into tears as she explained how her best friend, *a very competent Rwandan aide*, was refused entry into the bus. “The Frenchmen struck her with the butt of a rifle,” she sobbed. “My friend wailed, ‘Kill me now with a bullet. Please, I beg you. That’s better than to be raped and hacked by the gangsters that are waiting just outside these walls.’”

Victor reported these words to Major Bidogo who authorized a platoon of twenty reserve soldiers to race down the road to the rural hospital. Mwiza accompanied this contingent. In the afternoon, the platoon returned with eight bedraggled prisoners at rifle point. Victor noted all were blood-stained and wearing baggy print shirts of bright colors. One wore a blue wig. Victor surmised they were *Interahamwe*, a word which meant “those who attack together.” He knew this paramilitary gang of young street thugs had been trained by Hutu Power solely to hunt down and murder Tutsis.

Just before dark Mwiza returned to Station Three. Victor asked, “So what did you find?”

With a troubled face, Mwiza began. “The hospital was not too far down the road, but we were too late. We found fifty or sixty fresh corpses—still warm. Most lay inside

the hospital walls, hacked by machetes or clubbed by the *masu*—the one with nails. We saw some blown apart by grenades and some run through with spears; men, women, children, some in medical bandages. We saw hands and legs severed, brains smashed with hammers, private parts sliced off, and women stripped naked violated with beer bottles. We might have killed a dozen of the attackers as they ran into the bush. Only one of us was wounded, thank God. We managed to rescue three survivors who will testify against these devils.” He paused, then continued, “Now I know why I’m fighting—to stop this hell on earth.”

After an hour, Victor heard distant rifle fire. Mwiza counted the rounds. “Yes, eight shots for eight murderers. Justice can be swift when guilt is certain.”

The hour grew late, but Victor could not sleep. He switched on his transistor radio. BBC World Service was filled with reports from Rwanda. In just five days, forty thousand people in Kigali had perished. Many other familiar cities were named with corresponding death counts. The BBC described his RPF-Inkotanyi as *Ugandan*, *outsider*, and *invader*. The RPF was vilified for refusing a French offer to cease fire.

“How could we pause our fighting?” he muttered to himself. “Can you have a cease fire without a corresponding *cease murder*? Doesn’t that give Hutu Power more license to slaughter Tutsi innocents? I guess they don’t know the words of our pledge ‘Without delay. Always advance.’”

Victor yielded to temptation and turned the dial to RTLM radio. For a while he grooved to the African rock music. He strained to understand the fast-paced words of Simon Bikindi as he described Tutsis as: *umuzimu utera aturutse ishyanga*, a spirit that attacks from a foreign place.”

Then the racist hype broke in—pure hate propaganda. Victor was aghast. He heard the word *Umuganda* which translates as *communal work*, something which villagers had performed for generations. As the commentators joked through their skits, he understood *clearing bush* now meant “killing men” and *pulling up the roots of the bad weeds* meant “killing women and children”. These were the euphemisms emanating from RTLM radio. In short “All you Hutu, Do your work—*Umuganda*.”

For the first time, Victor fully grasped—down to his bones—the unmitigated evil of his exterminating adversary.

~ Inhabiting the Horror ~

The Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) continued their retrograde movement in the face of the relentless onslaught of the Inkotanyi. Victor heard many say the Hutu-Power

government was so preoccupied with killing Tutsi civilians behind their lines, they neglected to engage the Tutsi army to their front. Perhaps it was so.

During their southward march, Victor and his comrades stumbled through the smoldering ruins of a small village just abandoned by FAR soldiers. Mutilated bodies filled the ditches, recent kills on top, putrefying flesh on the bottom. In gastric distress Victor located the shattered shell of an outside toilet. Looking down into the fetid pit, he saw the remnant of a human face, open-eyed staring up at him. He staggered, slumped against a tree, and vomited up his breakfast.

Strewn corpses littered the main street. They appeared frozen in their final screams of agony. Females of all ages told a visual tale of rape and mutilation. Bernice choked back tears as she covered the exposed bodies of violated women. “How can these brutes claim to be human?”

Mwiza comforted the distraught Bernice, seating her on a bench. He then entered abandoned huts to flush out any remaining enemy. In the dark corners, rats and dogs feasted on human flesh. Mwiza shot and killed one particularly vicious canine, then raced toward the fleeing enemy, rifle in hand, hoping to overtake at least one perpetrator of this outrage.

Sano seemed to exist in a world of his own. With pen in hand, he calmly counted bodies, sketched figures, and scribbled notes.

He will give this testimony in court someday. Victor mused. *He will be among the witnesses.*

As Victor’s unit continued to advance south, their workload seemed to decrease. Many villagers were now escaping into the great Kagera jungle; others who were complicit in mass killings—already anticipating defeat—were fleeing into Tanzania.

~ Evil Articulated ~

After an evening meal and a few hours of catch-up work, Victor, Sano, Mwiza, and Bernice began to verbally process the day’s horror. Under a dim battery-powered lamp, Bernice spoke up first. “Please help me. I can’t hold it inside. I need to talk to some ears about what my eyes saw today.”

Sano responded, “Yes, let’s help our sister; let’s help each other. If we are human at all, each of us is hurting inside.”

Mwiza spoke softly to Bernice, “I have seen much evil in my service as a soldier, but nothing compares to what I saw yesterday and especially today.”

Victor stammered, “The remnant face that caught me by surprise is burned into my mind. The vision will never leave me. I pray to God it might, but doubt it ever will. How can I ever look down a toilet again?” After a moment to recover his voice, he enquired, “Sano, you’re a man of God. If Imana exists at all, how do you explain this evil thing that surrounds us?”

“How can I explain to you the mystery of evil, when I don’t comprehend it myself? I was taught at seminary evil is not a *thing* at all, but the absence of a thing, the privation of the good. Maybe so. But like each of you, I cannot fathom how so many of my countrymen—most of them professing Christians—could transform themselves into such a pack of devils. I do understand this one thing. At the heart of our religion exists a savior, a God in human flesh, who suffered like the innocent dead we have witnessed today.”

Sano retrieved the rosary from his pocket and displayed the crucifix. “I worship this Christ-on-a-cross who experienced firsthand the consequence of evil. Our Jesus Christ dripped real blood, as red as we saw today. His flesh was scourged by wicked men and thrust through with a sharpened spear. He was displayed before a jeering crowd then died in agony—naked, humiliated, violated, friendless, drenched in his own blood; all this under the authority of a cruel government. Does this story sound familiar? From the day that Cain killed Abel unto today, the world has been filled with continuous evil. The divine response to human wickedness has never been to send a divine explanation, but to send a divine person.

“But we are too close in time to think clearly about this human catastrophe. We still inhabit the horror. Please, my friends, give me space to meditate and pray. Maybe then God will grant me sufficient grace to talk with you about the evil that envelopes us.”

Bernice wept. “I will pray and meditate too. May God grant each of us strength to deal with the emotional trauma we’ve suffered today and may He give this Inkotanyi the wisdom and ability needed to end this terrible *genocide*.”

As each retreated into his private world, Victor repeated the final word spoken by Bernice in the French language: *génocide*. “Yes, that’s exactly what it is. And the organizers behind this crime are *génociders*.”

The next day, while marching past more devastation, the four lieutenants conducted further conversation. Mwiza opened this round of discussion. “I used to go to church, say my prayers, but now how can I believe? Look around you. How could a loving God allow such suffering?”

Sano took a deep breath and began his apologia. “Forgive me ahead of time for my inadequate words. I searched for answers all night long. As a first step, I must tell you I am a sinner. I have done wicked things that shame me—cursing, stealing, fighting, abusing, cheating, and lying—things that God deplores, things that deserve His wrath. Yes, Sano Ruhinda is a great sinner. Now, I ask each of you to search deep inside your own soul. Have you discovered a sinful person inside of you?” Sano paused, as each acknowledged their sinfulness before God.

“This may shock you. I am no less guilty of sin than those eight prisoners who were executed a few days back. Yes, yes. The outworking of their sin—murder and rape—was clearly more criminal than anything I have ever done. Yet my heart on occasion has been just as black as theirs. At times my anger has been as murder; my lust as rape and my covetousness as looting. My soul held the evil desire, but my body did not carry the thought into action.” He paused. “If you claim you have not sinned in this way then speak up now.” The three remained silent.

“So, you ask, ‘Why did God create a world with evil in it?’

I might answer, ‘Because God chose to create a world with *you* in it?’

You may contend, ‘I think God could have created a world absent of suffering.’

I might respond, ‘Yes, God could have done such a thing, but then He would have created a world without you, in fact, void of all human beings, because we each choose to sin. Let’s be honest. A world free of evil could not contain you or me.’

“And look around at this very moment while we are marching down the Kayonza-Kagitumba highway. Turn your head to the right at the smoldering ruins; now to your left. What crimes lie moldering under that blue tarp? Don’t you recognize human sin as a greatest source of human misery?”

Bernice responded, “Okay Sano, I see your point. Still, I could not have done what these Interahamwe devils have done. Impossible.”

Sano agreed. “The Bernice who is talking with me now; The Bernice who was recently a school principal in Kampala; this Bernice could not be a génocidaire. But what if Bernice Mukamanda had been raised in an isolated Hutu village, illiterate, obedient to her tribal leader, poisoned with racist propaganda. Could that Bernice have been an accomplice to murder? Do you think your own soul is so incorruptible?”

After a moment of reflection, he added, “As a Hutu, I am grateful I was out of the country when my father was murdered. Either I would have died defending him, or lived in shame compelled to be a silent accomplice of Hutu Power.”

Bernice and Mwiza spoke many words in whispered conversation. Friendship had blossomed into affection. As Bernice gazed at the lush countryside, she was reminded of a beautiful woman, now pock-marked by obscene sores. She confided this observation to Mwiza then added, “I have lived a sheltered life and have never seen death so close up. Tell me friend, have you seen this horror before?”

“Yes, my first time was in Gisenyi. I had just completed my second year at the National University and was home to visit my parents. Just as darkness fell, we heard shouts in the street then gunfire. My dad locked our doors and turned out the lights. That first night we were spared violence.

“The next morning a kind Hutu neighbor dropped by our house to warn us. We were on the Tutsi death list. My father and mother told me to escape into the bush, then return to university. My folks determined to stay behind, insisting they had enough money to bribe the local leaders.”

His lip trembled. “Of course, they were among the three hundred murdered that night. I don’t think this first slaughter was planned, but it did go unpunished. That’s all the incentive the blood-thirsty killers needed. I knew my life was in jeopardy, so I decided to leave my homeland. I made it out of Gisenyi, but instead of returning to school, I walked west into Zaire. Along the route to the border post, I saw destruction like this—burned out huts and human bodies left like trash along the roadside. I wanted to avenge the murder of my parents and to end the madness in Rwanda so I infiltrated north to join the RPF.”

After several more steps, Bernice posed a more personal question to Mwiza. “Is there anything you’re afraid of if we confront enemy troops?”

“I’m not afraid to kill nor am I afraid to die. But maybe this: I’m not sure how I would stand up under torture. Will I be brave? Will I be a coward and beg? I pray that I could take death like a man and not lose courage.” After a few breaths, he returned the question. “How about you, Bernice? What’s your greatest fear?”

“I think I’m like any woman in any war zone at any time in history. It’s something you males don’t face. I fear being raped, ravished, violated by multiple men. Death is to be preferred I think.” Her voice trailed into a quiver.

Overhearing the talk, Victor joined in, “As long as we’re sharing our fears, my greatest is pure physical pain. How would I respond to taunts and jabs? How would I bear up under real torture; deliberate cuts, burns, blows, not designed to kill, just to inflict agony; not for minutes, but maybe for days? God help me.”

Sano spoke up, “Yes, it takes physical courage to run into battle and moral courage not to run in retreat. May God grant us courage if we ever fall into the hands of the enemy.” He collected his thoughts. “I know you’re wondering what my greatest fear may be. Like each of you it’s how will I bear up under ridicule and torture. It’s hard for me to put my thoughts into words. Perhaps my greatest fear is this: that I lose my Christian compassion for my enemies and thus betray my Lord.”

The drizzle turned into a deluge, stifling further talk. In defiance of the downpour, the marching soldiers broke into song. “Nothing will delay the Inkotanyi. Nothing will stop our forward march.”

~ *Red Handed* ~

The next morning while Victor was emersed in paperwork, Mwiza led in three captives at rifle point. Their wrists were bound with rope and their hands stained with blood. They reeked of banana beer. “We caught these killers red-handed. Look at their fingers. This young one seems talkative. Do you want to interrogate him?”

Mwiza forced the three to squat under a tree, then spoke to Victor in hushed tones about the circumstance of their capture.

Victor shook his head in disbelief. He then addressed the youth. “If you talk to me, I may be able to spare your life. What can I call you?”

“My name’s on the ID in your pocket. I am Prosper Mukiza.”

The elder of the three, who seemed to be their leader, screamed at him. “Don’t speak another word to this *inyenzi*–cockroach!”

Mwiza struck him in the face with his rifle butt. “If you interrupt again, your worthless body will rot under this tree.”

Victor addressed Prosper. “The lieutenant here says he caught you and your friends while you were hacking a family with machetes. He says you were having some kind of contest. Maybe you were seeing who could chop off a living body part with just one swing. Is that right?”

Prosper fell silent, finally responding, “The decision to kill was not my idea. It came from the organizers. They gave me orders. I refused to join the butchery at first, but it was easier to swing the machete than to be stabbed by ridicule and contempt. That’s the truth.”

Victor asked, “How long has this killing been going on?”

“On the morning after Habyarimana died, the young men in my village gathered on the soccer field. Our mayor told us the Tutsi were responsible for the president’s death and all Tutsi were our mortal enemy. It was ‘kill them or they will kill us.’ He said it was our work—*Umuganda*—as Hutu patriots to cleanse the earth of its cockroach infestation. So, many of my friends went out hunting as if it were a sport. They no longer saw our neighbors as human beings but as vermin to be exterminated.

“Because I showed reluctance, the mayor required me to demonstrate loyalty by participating in a ritual murder. I was given a panga—long knife—and commanded to stab a pregnant mama in the belly. It was difficult, but the crowd egged me on. That was my first murder—rather, a double murder. I couldn’t believe what I had done.

“The next morning, I was ordered to hunt Tutsi with the others. I had my panga to slice. Others had machetes to hack. Even excited boys ran alongside us with sticks. If we encountered stout resistance, the local police would join us with guns and grenades. The first hunt was tough for me, but then it became easier. We began the day by killing; we ended it by looting. I learned if I killed a Tutsi, I had first claim on his property. I collected three radios, two bicycles, and this set of new clothes you see on my body. I am ashamed to be wearing it.”

The second youth spoke up, “Did you know that two Sundays ago was Easter? I sang in the choir that morning. Two Tutsi friends sang in the celebration next to me. They were schoolmates. The next day was Monday and the president’s jet fell from the sky. On Tuesday we learned this news and on Wednesday, this old man sitting next to me hacked my schoolmates to death.”

The accused shouted, “That’s a lie. I was helping to protect the Tutsis.”

Mwiza lifted his rifle and the protester closed his bleeding mouth.

The second youth continued. “I confess. I did what I did. I had lived with Tutsi friends for years without noticing it. Then I became contaminated with racial hatred without noticing it. But what’s my defense? My priest, the man who baptized me as a baby, he condoned the killing. He said it was God’s will. Tell me. How could I resist God?”

Victor had heard enough. The three remained tied to the tree until dark when Mwiza informed Victor, “It’s time I escort these prisoners into their new home”. With the assistance of a few enlisted soldiers, the killers were led away.

After several minutes, Victor heard a single rifle shot. “One out of three.” He remembered Mwiza’s words: “Justice can be swift when guilt is certain.”

~ *Wheeling West* ~

On April 19th, the entire army changed course toward Kigali. Word filtered through the camp that the RPF strategy was now to move with force upon the capital city. After only one week of existence, his unit was reorganizing. Victor wanted to preserve the moment for posterity so he asked Mzee Pierre Gahutu to take a photo of the four lieutenants. Victor, Sano, Mwiza, and Bernice posed by their shelter with an RPF flag as background. Pierre snapped the picture and gave a copy to each officer. Mwiza and Bernice appeared side by side, a shy smile upon each face.

One day before new orders were to be cut for Third Battalion, the FAR staged a fierce counter attack against the Inkotanyi. Enemy artillery exploded behind the lines. A dozen soldiers perished in the withering fire. Victor’s unit had one last function to perform before reorganization: graves registration. The duty fell upon Bernice to visit the mobile hospital to identify the dead and dying. The school-teacher-turned-army-officer burst into tears when she drew back a shroud and saw the tattered remains of her dear friend, Lieutenant Gilbert Mwiza.

The three lieutenants gathered at the side of their fallen comrade. The grim mask of death, hitherto familiar but impersonal, now settled upon the face of their friend. Each grieved the loss in their own way. Victor brooded; Sano prayed; Bernice wept. Major Bidogo permitted the body to be interred in a local church yard, well-marked for possible re-burial. Bernice carried out her duty as registrar of graves. Tucked inside her friend’s shirt, she discovered the recent photo displaying Mwiza and herself standing side by side. She pressed the picture to her lips before she re-tucked it and sealed it inside his body bag.

Story 2

Kagera Forest

April 21 to 30, 1994

As the military action shifted west toward Kigali, Victor and Bernice moved on with the Inkotanyi army. The Rwanda Patriotic Front de-commissioned Lieutenant Sano Ruhinda as a chaplain and appointed him temporary magistrate of the now-liberated town of Gabiro. He would assume the chair of his martyred father. The priest-in-training dispatched a letter to the Catholic University of Belgium asking his superior for a dispensation to fill this position until legal authority could be restored in Byumba Province.

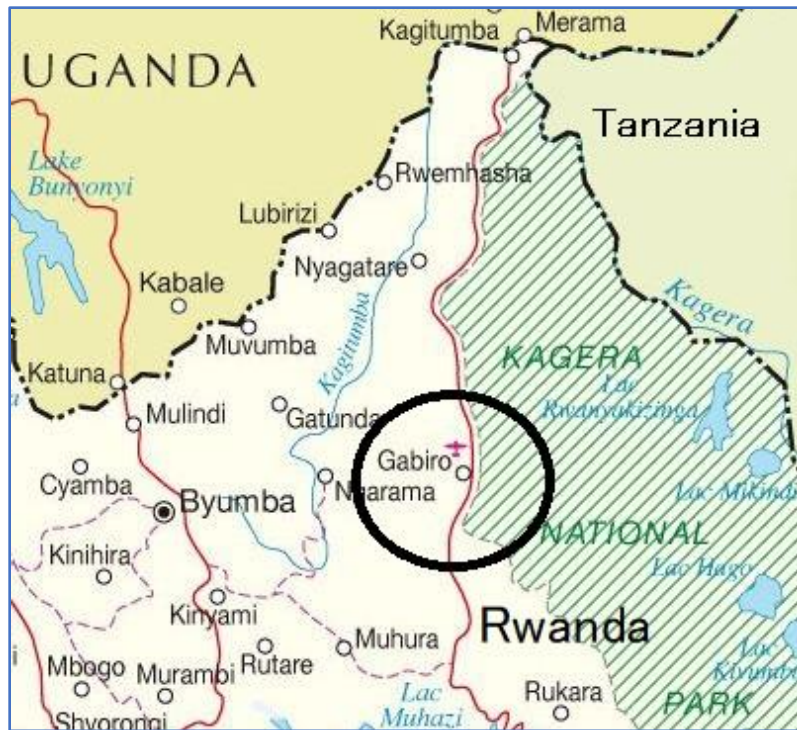
Sano was assigned a body guard of twenty armed troops who claimed as home the northeast corner of Rwanda. These soldiers would serve as a constabulary police force. The next morning, the new magistrate headed north in a convoy along the Eastern Highway. For although Hutu Power had been crushed in the eastern provinces, it had not yet been eradicated. Gangs of thugs still roamed the countryside, especially in the vast jungle of Kagera.

The daylong journey to Gabiro proved uneventful. The troops dismantled a few makeshift roadblocks and fired a few rounds at fleeing marauders. A contingent of Inkotanyi soldiers greeted the convoy outside of town and escorted Sano to the city hall of Gabiro. Battle smoke had lifted, but widespread destruction and the stench of death still clung to a town in ruin. The new mayor's first act was to incarcerate about a dozen of the most notorious génociders, securing them in a local school house.

The population was in flux. As surviving victims straggled into their looted homes, authors of the bloodlust crept into the bush. Chief among the alleged perpetrators was a parish priest by the name of Father Silas Zagabe.

Acting-mayor Ruhinda gathered together the town leaders to dictate occupation rules. Any citizen carrying a firearm would be arrested. Anyone resisting arrest would be shot. Racist talk and behavior would not be tolerated. A curfew would remain in place from dusk to dawn. No one was to depart town limits without an official pass.

Sano located a trusted schoolmate named Dennis and a friend of his father named François. He spoke with these two in private and pieced together the degeneration of his mentor Father Silas.



~ *Spiritual Wickedness* ~

Sano learned that just after he himself had left for Belgium in 1991, the gentle priest began a descent into the abyss. Whether coopted or coerced, he came to embrace the ideology of Hutu Power. His allegiance was no longer to his God and church, but had shifted to his rulers and tribe. Any Hutu who opposed Hutu Power was included under the rubric of *ibytso*—that is “an accomplice”.

Father Silas joined the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (ruling MRND Party), then compiled a list of Tutsi parishioners and tracked their movements. He stood by as an outspoken deacon was attacked and murdered. The man was very tall. His assailants chopped his legs off below the knee and bragged how they *had cut the Tutsi man down to size*.

A grieving mother reported to François how Silas had violated his confessional. She told how her son confided his plan to cross the Ugandan frontier. The youth was found chopped to pieces the next morning.

Dennis related to Sano how his father had died on Christmas Day. “We all urged him to flee into the forest, but he replied, ‘How can I do that? I’m mayor of this city and the last voice of reason among our leaders.’ The odd thing was how these purveyors of

death projected their own evil deeds upon the heads of their opponents. It was like a mirror.

“Father Silas actually accused your father of spreading tribal hatred and supporting militia killers. I overheard this supposed man-of-God say to him at one of the rallies, ‘As a Hutu yourself, you are a traitor to your tribe. It’s not my fault if civil defense youth rise up against you. They despise you and I cannot control their actions.’

“As your father departed morning mass on Christmas Day, he was accosted by a dozen youth near your home. Upon orders from the priest, his body was not mutilated and he was granted burial in the church cemetery. With the moderating voice of your father gone, the situation in Gabiro deteriorated. A Tutsi corpse was found in the street nearly every morning.

“On Easter Sunday, I joined the celebration of Christ’s resurrection. I partook of the eucharist with a few of the remaining Tutsis. The next day, when Habyarimana died, Satan took command in Gabiro and Father Silas stepped forward to become a champion of his demonic hoards.

“Madness gripped the entire Hutu population. Young men hunted their neighbors as jackals hunt rabbits. With the connivance of the priest, hundreds of terrified Tutsis sought refuge within the walls of Saint Sabastian. When the building was packed to bursting, the priest himself unlocked the doors and directed the *work* of Interahamwe gangsters. Men, women, and children were butchered inside the church and on parish grounds. You know about one-quarter of Gabiro was Tutsi. They are all gone—one-hundred percent. Many fled to the jungle, but most are in graves or in rotting piles beyond the toilets.”

As this sad story drew to a close, Sano asked, “Does anyone know the whereabouts of Father Silas?”

François answered, “We think he is hiding near his mother’s home in the jungle, biding his time, hoping for an opportunity to return to his post.”

With tear-stained face, Sano then requested, “Please take me to my father’s grave.”

In somber procession, he followed his friends to a corner of the Saint Sabastian cemetery. Encompassed by stones, the small plot presented an inscription carved upon a wooden plank: “Damascene Habimana 1940-1993”

Sano knelt and recited a prayer for the dead. “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.”

After several minutes of silence, Dennis broke in. “I’m glad your father was buried here and not left to the dogs. I am also grateful his body was not desecrated like so many others. Father Silas boasted about his intervention as if it were an act of virtue. Tell me. Does that single act of decency exonerate the guilt of his crimes?”

Rain began to gush from the sky and the men sought shelter under the roof of the church. François quietly spoke. “Forgive us. We’ve had no opportunity to clean this place since the slaughter.”

As Sano glanced about the sacred space—so integral to his up-bringing—he wept at the desecration. Blood still encrusted pews and spattered walls. Even the Blessed Virgin on her high perch was flecked with blood. Gouges from knives and holes from bullets violated the altar. All items of value had been ripped away as booty. Sano asked about the headless statues.

“Yes,” said Dennis, “The drunken hoodlums practiced their technique on the saints. They tell me Father Silas hid the head of Saint Sabastian, but I don’t know where it is.”

Sano studied the disfigured image. “That could have been me, if I had remained in Gibaro. You may not know this, but my religious name is *Sabastian*.

“Tomorrow is Sunday. I’m not a priest so I can’t celebrate mass, but I’d like to give a homily, not as Mayor Sano but as Brother Sabastian. Please get the word out to the parish. I’ll be here at ten.”

~ *Brother Sebastian* ~

After a night of rain, the morning broke bright and clear. As Brother Sabastian walked through the doors of Saint Sabastian, he displayed a white vestment salvaged from the church closet as well as his own scapular now visible on the outside of his shirt.

He marveled at the interior transformation. Debris was gone; the floor was swept; and much of the blood had been scrubbed away.

Old François explained, “We gathered together as many as we could. They brought their brooms, buckets, and rags. I’m astonished at what ten people working for ten hours can accomplish. A few of your soldiers were a great help.”

Brother Sabastian glanced at the torso of Saint Sabastian.

Dennis smiled, “That was my son’s idea. Your namesake has a head again, even if it’s a whitewashed soccer ball.”

By ten o’clock, thirty townsfolk had gathered in the church. Brother Sabastian recognized most of the faces and knew them to be Hutu. He saw only three Tutsi parishioners shuffling near a side exit. He beckoned them forward saying, “Our Father in heaven recognizes only one race of people; that is the human race without distinction and without preference. We must learn again to sit together in harmony.”

His brief homily concerned the three cardinal virtues: faith, love, and hope. He urged his hurting flock to remain faithful to God in spite of their suffering, to keep Christ upon the throne of their hearts, and not to reject the Church because certain priests proved to be unworthy of their calling.

He then encouraged his listeners to love every neighbor in spite of past prejudices and recent wrongs. He added, “But remember, Christian love does not preclude justice. Our loving God is also a just God. As a nation, the challenge ahead is to balance love and justice into something called *reconciliation*. This road before us will take more courage and forgiveness than I can imagine. Still, we must look ahead of us and not behind.

As his homily drew to a close, Brother Sabastian emphasized hope as the most critical virtue for the current situation. “Remain hopeful that your life will improve, that time will turn your wounds into scars. During these impossible times, cling to the hope that the depth of evil has been plumbed and the only direction is upward toward heaven. As the Psalmist says “Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”

As the group began to rise, Brother Sabastian dismounted the platform. “Please neighbors, remain seated,” he spoke in a firm voice. “I now want to address you as the mayor of Gabiro and not as Brother Sabastian.” He removed his vestment and placed his scapular under his shirt.

As the parishioners re-settled in their places, he spoke on. “I am sad to say that some of you sitting before me are criminals. You know this fact and so does God, even if I am ignorant of the details. Your Christian duty is to confess your sins and pay society for your crimes. In the days and years to come you will be held accountable for your deeds.

“Some of you are innocent victims. I’m so sorry for your losses and suffering. Your duty is not to seek revenge but to seek solace in God. I promise I will do all I can to work for justice within the limits of law.

“Some of you stood by and did nothing when your neighbors were butchered. You did not speak up and you will have to live with that guilt.

“You have all survived a refiner’s fire. May your souls emerge as purified gold not as spoiled dross and may you walk out of Saint Sebastian resolved to do the right thing.”

The people were subdued as they exited the church. Some wondered if the fire ahead might refine the soul as much as the fire behind had scorched it.

The next day, Sano announced to the new city council. “I want to meet with Father Silas as a peacemaker. I think it’s important.” Sano asked François to locate the run-away priest and the old man returned the same day with news that his mentor would welcome a parley of reconciliation. Silas pledged no harm would come to his one-time protégée.

Sano left the next morning, taking along Dennis and François as witnesses. Four soldiers accompanied them to a crossroad not far from Silas’ boyhood home. The escort would remain in place until the peace party returned.

Sano then proceeded on foot up a hillside path, now cascading with rain water. The three peacemakers felt the gaze of spying eyes as they trudged through dense foliage. Suddenly, four whooping warriors rushed to confront them. As the gang menaced and swung machetes, a man shouted from behind, “These are my friends. Show some respect.” Sano recognized the resonant voice as that of Father Silas.

~ *Renegade Priest* ~

As their eyes locked, Sano observed a short, rotund, jovial man, more weathered than he had remembered, but still recognizable as the priest of his youth. The four ruffians melted into the forest while Silas led his guests through the bush.

“François! Dennis! I’m so glad to see you’ve survived this war. I’ve been praying for your safety every day. And little Sano—or should I say *Sabastian*—I am so glad we can meet and clear up our misunderstandings. I’m ready to get back to work, you know.”

The chirpy words and jaunty demeanor seemed wildly inappropriate. Silas jabbered on about the *good old days before the Ugandan enemy invaded our homeland*. Sano, Dennis, and François held their tongues. They noted the ominous reappearance of the body guard, as they entered the home of Silas.

“You remember my mama, right?” A toothless old lady grinned at the visitors. Silas continued, “Please sit around my humble table and enjoy a glass of local Beer.” The

old lady filled four tumblers. “Now, tell me. How can I help you bring peace to Gibaro? You know I have some influence in town.”

Sano finally spoke, “Yes, I know you are a man of great influence. My question to you is this: ‘Up to now, how have you been using your influence? Has it been to promote the gospel of Christ and the welfare of His entire flock?’”

Silas assumed an insulted posture. “I have kept my solemn vows if that’s what you mean. I have never disobeyed Bishop Misago and have never broken a law of the Rwandan Republic. My conscience is entirely clear on these matters.”

Sano replied, “I’m happy to hear that. You’re the person who inspired me to the priesthood. Since the days I served as altar boy, you’ve served as an example of what a priest should be.”

A wide smile broke on Silas’ face.

Sano continued, “Since you are certain of your loyalty to the church and your innocence before Rwandan law, I expect you’re prepared to travel with me back to Gibaro.”

The smile vanished. “It’s not that simple. I have many false accusers, just like Our Lord had them. If I return with you, my enemies may try to crucify me for crimes I never committed, especially those *cockro-*” He swallowed that last word. “I mean *our Tutsi brothers*.”

François entered the conversation. “Old friend, it may be true that you followed the lead of your bishop in Kigali and upheld the rule of your Hutu masters, but your religion was corrupt and your politics evil to the core. I myself repent for being a coward in the face of so great an evil, but I know exactly what my eyes saw and what my ears heard.”

Silas burst in, “All rumors and lies. You must understand that our country is at war. Many Tutsi neighbors are *ibityso*, domestic accomplices to an invading army. Believe me. I stood up for every innocent Tutsi in my parish and tried my best to protect them from the killers.”

Dennis could not hold back his indignation. “You are in one-hundred percent denial. I heard your speeches at the rallies! I watched you as you unlocked the big doors to the church! How can you say you’re not complicit in the crimes that followed? Can you give me the name of a single innocent Tutsi you protected from death?”

Silas shifted ground. “They forced me to do those things. I was under threat of death myself. How could I resist?”

“Sano, listen to me. I did not want your father dead. I did my best to protect him. When I learned he was killed, I rescued his body intact and gave him a Christian burial. Did they tell you that?”

Sano answered, “Yes, François and Dennis have told me many things about your conduct over the last few years. I didn’t believe the stories at first, but I heard the same words from the mouths of a dozen witnesses. I know what’s happened in my beloved country and my heart is broken. No one can deceive me.”

For thirty minutes Sano then recounted his two-week experience in Rwanda to include the floating bodies that welcomed him, the hospital grounds ravaged by Interahamwe, and especially the massacre of villagers at the crossroad. “I witnessed this carnage first hand. I took notes. I counted ninety-eight bodies—women and children all chopped with machetes.

“Silas, the Rwanda Patriotic Army only carries rifles, never machetes. I am certain one-hundred percent that the cutting I witnessed was not the result of a war between two armies, but a genocide perpetrated by one tribe upon another. That is an undeniable fact.”

“No. It was war,” Silas insisted in agitation. “I did what I could to survive it. I’m not ashamed.”

Sano stood to his feet. “It’s getting dark. We need to return to the highway. Father Silas, please come back with us. I promise you will get a fair trial and justice will be done. I’ll stand at your side if you wish.”

The pastoral demeanor of Silas returned. “My son, I need time to think this over. I promise to give you my answer in a few days. Until then, I will be praying for the situation. Say, Sano, are you still reciting the rosary? If so, then please include a prayer for me.”

With that, the three peacemakers exited the home shaking their heads. Once out the door, Dennis muttered, “What did we just witness? Fantasy? Delusion?”

Sano grumbled, “I wanted to give that deceiver an opportunity to confess his sins—to unburden his soul, but how could I do that when he is in complete denial?”

François provided a different interpretation. “I think it was all *ikinamuco*—theater. Father Silas is deliberately scheming. He was practicing his defense for the day when he must defend the indefensible in a court of law.”

The three began their return walk, down the footpath to the down-slope trail now gurgling with water.

When Sano, François, and Dennis arrived at the forest trail, Sano glanced back to see Silas gesturing to his body guards. “I don’t trust that man. Dennis, you’re a strong runner. Sprint as fast as you can back to the soldiers and tell them what’s happened. François is old and I’m no good at running. We’ll head deeper into the jungle. Go now!”

As Dennis sprinted rightward toward the road, Sano and François pivoted left into the darkening jungle. After twenty quick paces, they crept behind a tall tree and remained still. The two heard the splashing footfalls of the four killers as they raced away from them. Then they continued down the winding road until dimness halted further movement.

François collected a few large branches and leaned them against a tree. In this miserable shelter, the two huddled together to brave a rainy night. They saw—or imagined they saw—a dim light pass their hidden position.

~ A Witch in the Woods ~

After nine hours of profound darkness and heavenly petitions, the two prey stumbled back onto the muddy trail heading east, deeper into the Kagera Jungle. Relentless rain bogged their feet, limited their vision, and played tricks with their ears.

Sano quired François, “Should we go on or try to sneak back? What do you think?”

“We must go on. I’ve been down this dark path once or twice. Did you notice the sign of the snake, those wavy lines carved into tree trunks? They say this land is haunted. A sorceress is reputed to live nearby with power to heal, cast spells, and foretell the future.”

Sano let loose an involuntary laugh. “And you believe that?”

François saw no humor in the statement. “This is what people tell me. A traditional healer named Zura Mukamanda inhabits these woods. My mother spoke of this Pigmy woman even when I was a boy—and that’s fifty years ago. Some villagers still seek out this ancient woman for potions and advice.”

Sano rejoined, "Believe me, I'm more afraid of the killers behind us than the sorcery ahead. Yes, let's keep moving."

Soon a bright sun filtered through the canopy. A teenager peddled past them on an unsteady bicycle. The boy paused to gaze backward, then continued at double speed down the path.

"I don't like the looks of this," said Sano. "Let's hurry to see if we can find refuge somewhere."

"I like this situation even less than you," responded François. "Did you see the ghosts?"

Sano shot him a sideways glance, "Ghosts?"

"Yep, just up ahead, to the sides of the hilltop."

When they attained the crest, the pair peered back down the path to see distant killers jogging with machetes in hand.

Suddenly two *ghosts* darted from the woods, covered from head to toe in some kind of white powder. "Please, come with us. We'll take you to Mama Zura." A third ghost sprinted toward the killers screaming and dancing. A fourth ghost blew on a cow's horn. At once, the air was filled with beating drums and terrible shrieks. Sano and François clung to the ghosts as they glided through dense underbrush.

One of the ghosts whispered to Sano, "They're frightened away for now. Don't worry."

Soon the group approached a clearing. On the far side Sano spotted a sturdy stone structure. Robed in crimson and festooned with bangles, a squat woman of ancient visage stood outside the doorway. Zura grabbed each by the arms saying, "Welcome Sano. Welcome François."

Sano whirled in a complete circle, taking in the shaman symbols of skull, snake, and lightning bolt. One of the ghosts began mopping his face, removing a dusting of cassava flour. "Do you recognize me now?"

Sano stared in bewilderment. A spark of recognition emerged from his tongue. "You're—You're little Willy."

The lanky man grinned, "That's me, but no longer so little."

François looked into the man's face. "We thought you were dead."

“Almost,” Willy said. “Zura here rescued me. Not just me, but all those you see around you. She’s a remarkable lady.”

Still confused, Sano retorted, “What? How?”

“You are not the first to run down this muddy path. Since the death of Habyarimana three weeks ago, hundreds of Tutsis have fled into this jungle. Most were caught and killed—many by the same group that chased you. After I reached this house, you won’t believe what happened next.

“I was trembling like a little girl, but Zura confronted the Interahamwe who were rushing after me. She shook her bracelets at them and shouted, ‘You all know that I’m a witch doctor. I’ll send my ghosts after you if you enter my house. You’ll be digging your own graves.’”

Willy continued, “Are you aware that Zura knows all the medicines in this forest? She discovered a special powder that makes men itch. It irritates their skin.” Willy the ghost began laughing. “Zura put this powder on the sleeves of her robes, then flapped her arms as the killers entered her house. The intruders began to scratch their skin as Zura shrieked out, ‘I’m putting a curse on you right now.’ The militiamen ran from the property in horror, asking the witch doctor to show mercy.”

Zura chimed in, “I also called down the thunder of Nyabingi onto their heads. She’s the goddess witch of my childhood. They scampered out the door in terror and have not returned.” She hesitated, “But maybe they’ll come back tomorrow.”

“Sano,” she looked into his face. “You’re a high-value target and the killers are thirsty for your blood.”

The group re-gathered in the parlor. Sano found a pen in his pocket and scribbled a note. Handing it to Willy, he instructed. “Hurry into town. Give this note to the police chief. I hope he can send my soldiers here tomorrow.”

Zura assigned a Pigmy boy to accompany him. “Take Pierre with you. He can navigate these woods in the dark.” With family pride she added, “He inherited this gift from his great-great grandma.”

After the two departed, Sano quizzed his hostess about her unlikely calling as a rescuer of Tutsis.

“Yes, I never intended to shelter such a crowd, but what could I do when they came pouring through my door? I couldn’t turn them away.” Pointing to a corner blanket, her eyes welled with compassion. “See those two tiny babies over there. They

come from different mothers who were murdered with these infants still clutched in their arms. Could I abandon these little ones? And that girl-child. She looks after them. Her mother was murdered too.”

François followed the dialogue in the quietness of profound thought. Finally, he spoke in a low voice. “Brother Sabastian, I have a spiritual question to ask you and I hope you will not be offended.”

“Speak on.”

“You know both Father Silas and now you know Mama Zura. Right? The father is an ordained Roman Catholic priest while this mama is a witch of the woods. Tell me then, why is it that Silas is a wicked man and Zura is a righteous woman? I don’t understand.”

“That’s an excellent question, my friend. I have no answer, but I have similar questions. Why did Simon Peter deny his Savior and Judas Iscariot betray his Lord? Why did a thief on the cross respond to Christ with respect and a persecutor from Tarsus spread His Gospel throughout the world? I don’t pretend to know. I can tell you this. Father Silas Zagabe is a wicked priest. He should be expelled from his church and imprisoned by his country. Mama Zura is a saintly witch. I don’t understand it, but from where I stand right now, she deserves heaven and he has earned a place in hell. But I’m not God and the verdict is not mine.”

François summarized the discussion, “So, it must be true: *By their fruits you will know them.*”

After dark, one of the boys kept watch outside with a whistle in his hand. A quiet tweet meant silence and a sharp trill meant run through the back door. The conversation inside continued until two candles had burned themselves into puddles.

~ Circle of Knives ~

The night was rainy and whistle-less. Sleepers avoided the spots where water dripped to the wooden floor. Sano could not sleep. He sensed the night was his Gethsemane. He prayed that the cup of suffering would pass from him but he expected it would not.

A whistle tooted just after daylight. House dwellers quickly donned their bits of clothing. The smallest refugees hid under floorboards and in cabinets. Through a morning mist, Sano viewed a dozen men walking toward the front door. A man garbed in vestments positioned himself in the rear.

A few rocks then pelted the windows. “Listen up!” a rough voice shouted out. “We know Sano Ruhinda is in there with you. We want to talk with him. We won’t harm the rest of you if you send him out.” As if to make the point emphatic, a burst of automatic rifle fire shot through the door. “Yes, we have guns this time and if Sano doesn’t come out in one minute, we promise to kill everyone inside.”

François spoke to Sano, “You know they will kill us all anyway. They can’t leave any witness to your murder.”

“I believe your right,” said Sano. “Still, I have no choice. I must put my trust in God.”

Zura rushed out the front door. She shook her fist and rattled bracelets. “I put the curse of Nyabingi on your heads.”

A few in the crowd trembled and staggered backward. Then a priestly voice spoke out. “That old lady is full of baboon dung. I speak from authority. There is no witch in this forest just as there is no God in heaven. Only the strong survive and we embody Hutu strength!”

Another burst of gunfire ricocheted off the stones. “Come out now, Sano. Your time is up. The graves are only half full.”

The door flung open and Brother Sabastian paced into the open yard. Zura staggered backward bracing against the wall.

One voice shouted, “Let’s slice him to pieces now.”

Another said, “No, let’s play with him first. I want to see if a witch or a god will come to his rescue.”

A third shouted, “Let me slice his ankles. I want to make him crawl like the insect he is.”

Inside a circle of taunts, the gang beat Sano with clubs. They turned him upon his belly with one attacker forcing a foot into the small of his back.

“Watch this,” bellowed a big man. “This is the right way to do the job.” He then surgically sliced the Achilles tendon above each heel. “Now pick him up under his arms and set him on his feet. You’ll get a kick out of this.”

Once upright, Sano teetered forward upon his face, the soles of his feet still planted on the ground. The crowd roared and jeered as Sano writhed in pain.

A forceful voice from the rear shouted, “It’s time for this Hutu traitor to die. All of you, each one, must take a hack with a machete. I am watching and if you don’t chop, you yourself will be chopped.”

With Sano now flung to his back, the big man swung a machete at his throat. Blood spurted in all directions. “Hurrah!” the killing circle shouted. A second man raised a long knife above his head.

A rifle shot rang from a distance and the long knife dropped to the ground. Another shot felled a second killer, then a third. The Inkotanyi in full force was racing toward the killing squad, but Sano was too far gone to notice their arrival.

Story Three

Terror in Butare

April 6 to 23, 1994

When Belgian colonizers first acquired the East African territory of Ruanda-Urundi in 1920, they established a new capital naming the city *Astrida* in honor of Queen Astrid of Belgium. This was to be their new Jerusalem—a city on a hill.

Upon independence in 1962, the Rwandan government renamed the town *Butare* and re-formulated its well-constructed secondary school as the National University of Rwanda.

By 1994, Butare had become the intellectual hub of all Rwanda, a watering hole for both democratic liberals and Hutu hardliners. Along with the national university, Butare boasted a large seminary, a scientific research center, and an arboretum. The National Museum of Rwanda lay just south of the city. At the time, the leader of the Butare province was Jean-Baptiste Habyalimana, the sole Tutsi among ten regional governors.

As a perceived refuge for terrorized Tutsis, thousands flocked to Butare to escape ethnic violence elsewhere. For several days in April 1994, it appeared Butare might sidestep the holocaust that had engulfed the rest of Rwanda.



~ The City on a Hill ~

Francis Mutabaruka was a renowned professor at the National University and an eminent scholar of Rwanda's pre-colonial past. Doctor Mutabaruka's passion was to discover, catalog, and publish documents concerning his nation's royal history. The professor conducted the bulk of his research in nearby Nyanza, the kingly capital of old Rwanda. He counted among his friends Rosalie Gicanda, surviving widow of Mutara III, the country's last mwami (king). Francis Mutabaruka was an ethnic Hutu, but eschewed politics, proclaiming a love for all things and all people Rwandan.

Pascazia Kubwimana was Francis's former student and present wife. As a scholar in her own right, Pascazia managed acquisitions at the newly-built ethnographic museum. Francis and Pascazia were a well-respected couple within the Butare academic community, conservators of a celebrated past and advocates of a peaceful future.

As the nation devolved into ethnic chaos, Francis and Pascazia walked a tightrope between compliance to authority and resistance to injustice. On the evening of April 6, the fraying rope began to unravel.

The couple had just turned off the house lights when a knock sounded at the front door. Daniel Mugisha, vicar of the Anglican Church, greeted them with concern etched on his face. "Have you been listening to the radio?"

"No," Francis answered.

"Please, sit down and turn it on. It appears President Habyarimana has been killed."

Pascazia gasped, "Oh, my God! What now?"

Francis turned up the broadcast loud enough for all three to soak in the startling words: breathless updates of a deadly jet crash punctuated by hate-filled vituperation against Tutsis.

Awakened by angry voices, little Beatrice wandered into the parlor dressed in her nightclothes. "Mommy, is there anything wrong?"

Pascazia scooped up her four-year-old and carried her back to her bedroom. The two men were left alone to talk.

"What do you think?" Daniel asked. "You're an expert on all things Rwandan."

"That's true," Francis replied. "I know about the past, but I avoid current politics. I keep my mouth shut and my head down. I make it a point not to attend rallies. I don't want to make enemies among the politicians. You know I have to be extra careful since Pascazia is Tutsi."

"I fear the worst," the vicar lamented. "Can you hear the screams for revenge coming through the radio? Those boys are serious. The president's death may provide the spark that will explode this nation."

"No, I think we will be okay here in Butare. Our university community is solid and our citizens reasonable. Plus, Habyalimana is a strong governor and a good man. He would not allow what's been happening in Gisengi to occur here in Butare."

The vicar looked in the direction of the child's bedroom. "You may be right, my friend, but it would be wise to plan as if you were wrong. We are close to the frontier of Burundi. Your wife has family there, right? Maybe tomorrow is a good day for Beatrice to visit her grandmama in Bujumbura."

As he rose from his chair to alert others in his parish, he added, "I thank you so much for your participation last Sunday. What a family! You recited the words of the Easter story, Pascazia sang the songs, and I noticed Bea dropping coins into the offering box." He studied the professor's anxious face, "I want to see you again. You and your family are in my prayers."

After the door closed and Bea had returned to dreamland, Francis and Pascazia continued to monitor events. The newscaster from Thousand Hills radio droned continually, "Stay at home. Make no movement. We are setting up roadblocks and checking ID cards."

Francis attempted to telephone friends, but after thirty minutes of frustration, the couple settled into conversation. "I have a bad feeling about this," Pascazia began.

Determined to maintain a positive outlook, Francis rejoined, "I think we can survive even this if we all stick together."

With pleading gestures, Pascazia replied, "Darling, not this time. I've never heard government rhetoric so fierce and Pastor Daniel so agitated. Please, let's send our little Bea to my mom. Our baby is our future and I could deal with the present, if I knew she were safe."

After a pause, Francis responded. "The radio reports Cyprien Ntaryamira also died in the plane crash. Do you think Burundi will be a safer place with their own president murdered?"

"A little safer, yes. It's true the people of Burundi harbor the same tribal hatreds as we in Rwanda, but their government is not so proficient as a killing machine. Plus, the propaganda Burundian Hutus hear over their own airwaves is not as virulent. I do believe it will be easier to hide and to lay low."

"Then our daughter must cross the frontier into Burundi. I'll make the arrangements." Looking into her moistened eyes, he continued. "And I think you must go with her and live with your mother for a while."

"No", she protested. "My place is with my husband. I promised 'til death do us part' and I will keep that vow."

A minute passed before Francis spoke up again. “I have another concern maybe you can help me with. I’ve noticed Interahamwe militia hanging around the residence of the queen dowager. Rosalie Gicanda might be in immediate danger. She wouldn’t agree to flee to Burundi, but perhaps she can find refuge on the museum grounds.”

“Let me talk with some friends. Maybe the old lady could be our guest for a season. She might find comfort among our other old relics.”

The hour was late when the exhausted couple fell asleep in each other’s arms.

~ Flight Across a Frontier ~

The next day did not bring violence to Butare but increased tension. In this traditional society, everyone knew everyone else’s business: their work place, their social status, and especially their ethnic identity. As Pascazia walked onto the museum grounds, she observed a hand-written notice obscuring the welcome sign: “Stay home. Closed until further notice.” Unlocking the door, she noted Hutu employees huddled in tight knots, not quite threatening, but surely scowling at their Tutsi co-workers.

She spoke privately with the museum director—a Tutsi man—and received permission to smuggle Rosalie into a museum vault. “After all, she is indeed a national treasure,” was his matter-of-fact response.

Pascazia got word to Francis and soon the queen dowager reclined on a royal sofa in a cluttered storage basement. Five elderly attendants looked after her personal needs. With this regal relic now secured and with her own workplace shuttered, Pascazia returned home to prepare her daughter for a cross-border escape.

After a lifetime in Butare, Francis held deep connections within the local power structure. He prevailed upon a former student—now police captain—to risk his badge in an attempt to escort refugees into Burundi. The captain explained how the province was in turmoil; how the Kigali Crisis Committee was issuing one set of orders, while the governor in Butare was busy countermanding them. Army troops and local police were at odds, striving for supremacy.

Francis managed to hire a taxi driver to carry five prominent refugees south to the border checkpoint along the Kanyaru River. To pass through a gauntlet of Rwandan soldiers, escapees would require documents, advocates, bribes, and especially luck.

After a full day of planning, two policemen accompanied Francis as he headed twenty kilometers south along National Highway One. The little girl on his lap asked, “Where are we going, daddy?”

“To your grandmother’s house,” came the reply. “Don’t you want to visit with her and your aunts?”

“Are you and mommy going with me?”

“No, you’ll have to be a big girl. Your mom and I have work to do at home.”

After a pause for thought, Bea asked, “Daddy, am I Hutu or Tutsi? All the kids in nursery school are asking me that.”

“You are Rwandan, my child, a daughter of Imana. Always remember your true identity. Always be proud of who you are.” Francis intuited he may be speaking his last words to his daughter.

The professor then turned his eyes to the window, stifling tears. He shuddered as he saw a flood of rural countrymen trudging southward, most laden with heavy packs or pushing carts. Overloaded bicycles competed for road space. Cows and goats hustled along an adjoining footpath. Traffic slowed then stopped.

Taxi passengers maintained a somber silence, as horns honked, goats bleated, babies wailed, and an occasional gunshot echoed in the distance. Among the throng, Francis observed a scattering of FAR soldiers dressed in khaki interacting with local police in blue. Each group seemed to be shouting contrary orders. Bedecked in the national tricolor of red, yellow, and green, Interahamwe militia danced and flashed their machetes.

A few hundred meters short of the frontier, the eight-passenger vehicle began to rock from side to side. Was the crowd trying to flip it over? The door flung open and an army officer stepped inside. The Butare police officials spoke calmly with the soldier and soon all passengers emptied the bus undisturbed. They huddled at the roadside while contending authorities bargained for their safe passage. Finally, the group of eight began marching toward the bridge. “We are going to negotiate with the chief captain of the border guard,” explained the police captain.

The document check turned into an all-day affair as hundreds idled in a pouring rain. Policemen held onto their sidearms, while soldiers grasped rifles. All documents were checked then double-checked. Those with Tutsi IDs paid double for their exit stamp.

Francis noted hundreds of dislocated Rwandese milling about in disorganized clusters. Suddenly automatic fire broke out and the massive assemblage began a spontaneous stampede toward the checkpoint; men pushing, children flailing, and women screaming. There was more gun fire, this time leveled at the crowds. But it

proved impossible to halt this crush of desperate humanity. The undermanned checkpoint was soon overrun. Francis stuffed his pockets with documents, then clutched Beatrice, pushing his jacket over her head. “Close your eyes, my little Bea, and be brave”. Soon he was swallowed up in a human tidal wave.

As the masses funneled toward the two-lane bridge the human crush became a nightmare of compression. Several bodies lay on the ground trampled or shot. Impotent barricades were shoved aside and military vehicles overturned. Several refugees carried weapons and overwhelmed the Burundian guards. The multitude began flooding into the border town of Cyendajuru.

Francis overheard one machete-wielding militiaman remark to his comrade, “Too bad these *inyenzi* have escaped into Burundi. We should have killed them all, but at least our homeland is free from these Tutsi vermin.”

The situation remained chaotic as some groups dashed for the woods, some continued down the pike, while others set up camp in open fields. As planned, Francis hooked up with his brother-in-law at a furniture store on the far side of town. He handed over Beatrice to her two aunts along with jewelry, cash, and a note from Pascazia.

He spoke to his daughter, “I know you are so good at make-believe. For a little while you must pretend that Aunt Tutti is your mama. Okay? Daddy will come to get you as soon as he is able.” The compliant child buried her face into Aunt Tutti’s bosom.

After parting words and an embrace with each of his in-laws, Francis assessed the situation. He figured an abrupt departure would be less traumatic than a prolonged farewell. “It’s better I return home now. This rainfall and chaos are an advantage for me. I don’t think I’ll be stopped once I’m on Rwandan soil. In any case, I have my Hutu ID, faculty papers, and a little cash to grease the way. Good-bye, my friends. I hope to see you all again soon.”

He was correct in his assessment. By chance he ran across his police captain near the Rwandan checkpoint, one of the few people walking north rather than south. A few more stragglers joined his march. He eventually hopped in the back of a police truck and just after midnight Francis arrived back home.

Pascazia sat in the darkened parlor, unable to sleep. The two talked a while. Relief brightened her eyes as she learned Bea was safe in the arms of Aunt Tutti. The news was less bright for those remaining in town. Kigali authorities had learned of the frontier chaos and were planning to dispatch an army battalion to pacify the defiant southern province.

Pascazia sighed, “Let’s get some sleep. Daniel will be speaking at church tomorrow and we need to hear what he has to say. I also want to talk with my women’s group.” Under her breath she added, “I may not be seeing them again.”

Her final words elicited a groan of resignation from her bone-tired husband.

~ A Fearful Flock ~

Just one Sunday after Easter, their familiar universe had grown strange. As Francis and Pascazia walked onto church grounds, they glanced at scowling officials scribbling on notepads. Francis whispered, “We shouldn’t be here. The radio said we should stay at home.”

His wife responded, “But look, the police are permitting it—at least for now.”

The cavernous church space was only one-quarter filled. Handshakes with Hutu friends seemed cold, while with Tutsi intimates, the grasps lingered warm and long. Their previous week’s greeting of “Christ has risen” had been replaced with “Christ, what shall we do now?”

Pastor Daniel presented two short messages. The first sought to address the pervasive atmosphere of dread among his Tutsi parishioners. He read the comforting words of Isaiah 43:

“Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by my name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the LORD your God.”

After minimal elaboration, he then read verses written by the beloved disciple as found in First John 4. These words he aimed at his Hutu brothers and sisters.

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

As a group of women regaled the church with a song of Imana’s love, the vicar locked eyes with Manasseh, the vice-mayor and boss of Hutu Power. Daniel studied his stern face as he inscribed notes and counted attendees. He spoke to himself, “Do these words of Scripture have any impact at all upon my one-time friend?”

He then looked upon his anxious flock, so bright and colorful in outside apparel but so anguished in inner spirit. He considered the line he was treading; at once proud of his people's courage yet fearful for their safety. He dare not stir up unnecessary trouble for his *bene data*, children of the father.

Daniel had considered calling a parish-wide meeting to discuss the deteriorating situation, but decided against it. He knew his flock was peppered with government informants and so reckoned covert action would be his best course. As members dispersed, he embraced a few men and discretely invited each to his house for a luncheon.

On the walk home, all Pascazia could say was, "My friends are so frightened. What are we going to do now?"

All Francis could reply was, "We'll have to remain brave, take one day at a time, and trust God for wisdom."

~ Eye of Darkness ~

The drenching rain at four o'clock in the afternoon kept the roadways clear of most pedestrians. As Francis avoided puddles on the muddy road, he was approached by two soldiers. The well-known professor was compelled to produce his ID card. He explained to the armed men he was on route to the university to prepare lessons. With an air of suspicion, they allowed him to proceed.

Near the Anglican Church, he was stopped once again, this time by Interahamwe militia. One of the youths, recognizing his former professor, smiled at him with indulgence, "It looks like you're a few hours early. Go right ahead." Francis didn't know what to make of these unexpected words.

After setting aside his umbrella and drying himself with a towel, Francis entered the parsonage of Pastor Daniel. As he looked around the dim room, he recognized six of his long-time friends—four men and two women. The group sipped tea and spoke casually of family and work, steering clear of politics. As five o'clock approached, two more men joined the luncheon. The storm outside raged; the iron-sheet roof percussing like kettle drums.

Finally, the vicar spoke up, "This is good weather for us to meet. We can shutter the windows and this racket will hide our voices. My brothers and sisters in Christ, I ask each of you to make a solemn vow to me, to each other seated here, and to God in heaven. You must promise not to share with any soul the conversation that will now take place. If you cannot guarantee this, please leave this room now."

Not one person rose from their chair. The nine Hutu participants held hands and prayed. Each promised before God to stay faithful unto death.

Daniel continued, “Christ compels me to love all my flock—both Hutu and Tutsi sheep. I know you have been following events over the radio. Our country of Rwanda has gone mad. The devil has taken charge. Believe me. The hills are awash with blood. It’s an absolute fact that thousands of Tutsis are being rounded up every day and killed. On the part of our leaders, those numbers are not a regretful admission but a prideful boast. Hutu Power spares no one—man, woman, child. And even if you are a Hutu who shelters a Tutsi, you too may be killed. And it seems UN peacekeepers can do nothing. All French and Belgian troops have fled our country. We are at the mercy of godless killers. I’m informing you of this perilous time, because I’m asking you to participate in actions that may lead to your death as well as the death of your family. You must know the risks before you can freely volunteer your service.”

Daniel paused. “Please my friends, I need your help to rescue as many of God’s children as we can. We will do this in secret, with shrewdness, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. Will you help me?”

The group was in tears as Daniel concluded his plea.

Rosa—the humble wife of a brick maker—responded with Scripture, “‘He who seeks to save his life shall lose it and whoever shall lose his life for the sake of the gospel shall save it.’ Pastor Daniel, what can we do?”

He spoke in a low voice. “We will not meet again as a group. It’s too dangerous. Remember the faces here as people you can trust, but don’t seek out each other’s company. I suspect each of you will be followed. I will call upon you as needed and please come to me if you think we can save members of our flock.”

With bubbling emotion Francis then asked a question tugging at his heart, “Pastor Daniel, I’ve been a resident of Butare my entire life and a professor for the last twenty years. How can this be happening? Our beautiful city hosts the National University. Our Biblical motto is ‘Let there be light.’ Butare is the center of enlightenment for all Rwanda, its intellectual capital. I just don’t understand how this evil can permeate a city like ours. Can you explain it?”

After a thoughtful moment, Daniel replied. “Yes. Butare is indeed the center of learning. For thirty years the light has been shining in our proud city. But now the light is growing dim. Soon the whole nation will be plunged into darkness.”

Having said this, his face sparked with recollection of a Bible verse. He opened his thumb-worn volume and read from Matthew, chapter 6:

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

He added, “If Butare is turning black, the darkness in Rwanda will be double black.” The vicar then solemnly closed his Bible, clapped his hands, and proclaimed, “It’s now time to eat, my friends. I just got word that our guest of honor has arrived. You all know vice-mayor Manasseh?”

Their eyes popped large at the mention of a local leader of Hutu Power.

“He’s here with some friends to explain to us Hutus how we must behave in these times of trouble. Didn’t you know that was the purpose of our meeting?” he said with a wink. “Please give him your courteous attention.”

The group rose as the vice-mayor joined their company. They feigned interest in his racist conversation, then settled down to an excellent meal of tilapia fish, rice, beans, spinach, and fruit.

After the meal, the vice-mayor stood to deliver his invective against the Tutsi tribe. He passed out copies of the *Hutu Ten Commandments* and read through each of them, emphasizing commandment number eight: “Hutus must cease having any pity for the Tutsi.”

He expounded, “I know you have all been raised Christians and believe that every man is your brother. I am not speaking against that morality. What I am telling you is this: the Tutsi is not your brother. He is not even human. He is an insect. Listen to your government; listen to your leaders; listen to your Hutu hearts.”

When he concluded his long-winded remarks, he asked the group to take a Hutu Power pledge. Pastor Daniel interrupted, “Brother Manasseh, we took a pledge just before you arrived. We also commit to be faithful to each of the Ten Commandments.”

The vice-mayor flattered himself at his effectiveness. “Thank you, vicar. My job here is complete. I have a long evening ahead of me at army headquarters. I’m glad I can count on each of you to be a loyal Hutu.”

When the doors were locked, the vicar smiled slyly. “We shall be faithful to the pledges we made earlier and will honor the Ten Commandments of Moses.” He added, “Before you go, fold that paper of the Ten Commandments and insert it next to your ID card.” The good vicar sent them on their way with a reading from Matthew 10, “Behold,

I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

Professor Mutabaruka walked home without incident, not noticing he was being tailed by a young man arrayed in cartoon colors.

~ Roadblock Talkdown ~

The week crept by slowly. Most news was dark, but Pascazia did get word that Beatrice had arrived safely in Bujumbura. She focused on that single bright spot. The university and museum had both closed and the once-crowded streets appeared void of cars, bicycles, and casual pedestrians. Pascazia perceived the balance of authority was shifting away from local police and toward FAR soldiers.

With doors locked, lights out, and noise subdued, the couple spent most hours of the week at home. Francis did walk to the market on Wednesday where he encountered vice-mayor Manasseh at a roadblock.

The local official pulled Francis aside. “Professor, you claim to be a loyal Hutu, right? The hour has come when you must fully support your tribe. Your wife is Tutsi, am I correct? Understand this. Make no mistake. If there is a knock at your door, you must hand over Pascazia. It’s the law. I warn you now. If you hide your wife or run away with her, you will be considered an *ibytso*—accomplice—and meet her same fate. That will be your choice. I’m your friend. That’s why I’m telling you this.”

Dumbfounded, Francis stared at his old church friend. Unable to articulate a response, he cast his eyes to the ground, shook his head, and walked away in silence. Two local thugs who manned the barricade overheard the conversation. With menace, they scraped their machete blades against the pavement then drew their index fingers across their throats. Professor Mutabaruka muttered to himself, “I will never betray my wife.”

~ Song on Her Radio ~

As Francis opened the door of his home, he resolved to be upbeat and not discuss the roadblock encounter with his wife. He discovered Pascazia with her ear to the radio, tapping her foot.

She rose to greet her husband with a smile and then shook her head. “That music of Simon Bikindi is so beguiling, almost right but certainly wrong. I can’t quite put my finger on it. At one moment he’s calling for free elections and insisting that all Rwandans honor the results. Amen to that. Later on, he conjures up images of the

father of farmers. This figure will ‘adorn his drums with the castrated genitals of fallen enemies’. Yes, that’s what the Tutsi kings once did to intimidate Hutus, but now the roles are reversing. I know which tribe fashions itself as farmers and I know which tribe constitutes his enemy. I also know the whereabouts of those bloody trophies. The museum keeps the decorated drums out of sight in our storage room.”

Francis replied, “Ah, yes. Our Rwandan history is bloody indeed and that long song is mostly accurate. It’s called *Intabaza* (the Alert). Here’s the puzzle in it. You know the United Nations is crazy about democracy. Right? And so, as our continent of Africa de-colonized, the UN insisted on majority rule. This world organization will not allow admittance into its company until a fair election is held. That’s as it should be. Correct? We both agree every nation should rule itself.

“However, here’s the rub. What about the human rights of the minority populations? The UN seems to care only about the fact that a fifty-one-percent majority establish its rule. It washes its hands about *how* it should then govern its own people. That’s the contradiction, the dissonance in the song. You sensed it in your spirit.”

He went on, “You know, Simon Bikindi was once a star student of mine—a brilliant man—probably the most innovative talent this country has ever produced. I’ve followed his career of song, dance and performance over eight years. His Irindiro ballet is certainly the best in Rwanda—maybe in all Africa. You know his troupe has performed for Queen Rosalie Gicanda in Nyanza and for Pope John Paul in Kigali.”

Pascazia sat down to respond, “Yes, I know. Some claim he is ‘Rwanda’s Michael Jackson’. But how did he become such an instrument of Hutu Power? Why does RTL Radio constantly promote his songs?”

Francis speculated, “His lyrics are clever and his rhythms are spell binding. His historical accounts are mostly correct. Bikindi knows how to manipulate his audience toward murder without actually mentioning the word ‘kill.’ But enough about my former student. What else did the radio tell you?”

Pascazia hesitated then spoke. “Have you heard about your old companion and one-time faculty member?”

Francis appeared puzzled.

She clicked her tongue. “You know, Theodore Sindikubwabo.”

“Oh, him. What’s our professor of pediatrics doing these days?”

“He’s now the president of the Republic of Rwanda! Can you believe that?”

Francis was shocked. “How is that possible? I thought he was just the secretary of health.”

“Apparently Colonel Bagosora and the rest of his clique figured he’d make a good figurehead, a puppet they could control. But that’s not all the story. This morning I heard that he is coming back to his home town—here in Butare—to install a compliant governor.”

“When will that happen?”

“The radio didn’t say, but it will be soon, and he’s bringing busloads of special forces with him.”

Francis responded. “I know that man. What an opportunist, always grasping for more. His big house sits on that hillside, near the back gate of the university. I was his guest a few times back in the early eighties. I know this about him too—so odd, so perverse. My mother grew up in the same Shyanda village where he was born. She told me once, years ago, that both his parents were Tutsi. My mom said Sindikubwabo bought his Hutu credentials just after independence. Can you believe that?”

Pascazia was astounded. “He himself was born a Tutsi and now he insists there is an indelible ethnic divide between Tutsi and Hutu. What a hypocrite.”

“Oh yes, purchasing your tribal identity was quite common back in those days. It tightened up in later years. Common Rwandese like me and you could not possibly know the true ethnic identity of our great-grandparents. In any case, I believe that any person whose roots spring from the soil of this country is my countryman.”

Francis mused for moment, then spoke with linguistic irony. “You know that name he has—*Theodore*? It means *gift from God*. If his Tutsi mother were alive today, how disappointed she would be in her gift from God!”

~ *The Evil of Manasseh* ~

Soon it was Sunday again. Out of concern for her safety, Francis asked Pascazia to stay in the house. Under cloudy skies, Francis walked the few blocks to the Anglican Church. He approached a newly-established roadblock and anxiously stood in line. He thought to himself, *I’m sure glad Pascazia is not with me*. He noted certain people passing through the barricades while others were herded into an idling truck. Francis produced his Hutu ID card cradled in the Ten Commandments. The militiaman grinned and let him pass.

Only a few dozen men occupied the church pews—no women or children. They sat in an eerie stillness until Pastor Daniel entered through his office door. He was accompanied by Manasseh and a few other local leaders.

The vice-mayor took the pulpit. “Excuse me for speaking first, but I have an important announcement to make. The honorable president of the Republic of Rwanda, our own Theodore Sindikubwabo, has just decreed that all governmental laws will be enforced throughout our towns and villages, especially as they pertain to our enemies—the Tutsis. There will be no exceptions. He has also contacted me personally to announce that tomorrow he will arrive in Butare. The president is bringing military reinforcements to insure all the laws of Rwanda are being obeyed in all parts of our homeland. He will insist that all us Hutu do the work.”

He looked up from his notes. “I’ve received word that some *inyenzi* plan to enter this church building as a kind of asylum. That will not happen on my watch. Right after this service, I will bolt all doors onto the church grounds and post guards to prevent entry.” He gestured toward several Interahamwe militiamen lounging near the back walls.

“I have permitted the vicar to speak a few words before these doors are locked. But don’t worry. When peace is restored to Butare, the doors will be opened again.”

Under the stern gaze of Hutu Power, Pastor Daniel stood erect behind his pulpit and began to speak. “Thank you, Mister Vice-Mayor. Today I have a special message that will honor you because it’s about a certain king of Judea named *Manasseh*, just like you.” He nodded toward the public official who beamed with satisfaction.

“An important lesson that Christians learn from reading about the kings of Judea and Israel is this: ‘When an evil king rules in the land, the nation suffers; when a good king rules, the nation prospers.’ I don’t want to be divisive or get into politics so I will only read the scripture without commentary. You can draw your own conclusions.”

The vice-mayor smiled indulgently.

Pastor Daniel inhaled a deep breath and opened his Bible to Second Kings, chapter 21.

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

Manasseh led his people astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites. Therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.'

In fact, Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end."

Pastor Daniel closed his Bible saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches." He glanced at Manasseh whose face was now hot with rage.

The vice-mayor jumped to his feet and shouted. "This church service is over. Everyone, get out now. Pastor Daniel, come with me. I want to talk with you."

Francis exited the church not looking left or right. The professor could not help but admire the courage of his pastor. His heart swelled with admiration. "If only I could be such a man," he whispered to himself.

As Francis rushed home in a rainstorm, intoxicated militiaman waved him through the roadblock. He noted with distress the Tutsi detainees and the utility truck had vanished into the eye of darkness.

That night, Pascazia bolted upright in bed to ask Francis, "What was that sound? thunder or gunshot?"

"I didn't hear a thing," he mumbled. "Maybe it was a gunshot, maybe thunder, maybe a premonition of things to come."

~ Interim President ~

Theodore Sindikubwabo was a slight man of sixty-five years. A childhood injury had scarred his face producing a perpetual crooked smile—one that mirrored his crooked soul. Before his unexpected ascendancy to head of state, he was leader of the Rwandan legislature. Doctor Sindikubwabo was educated as a physician at the National University and still practiced pediatrics in Kigali Central Hospital.

On Monday morning, April 18, the Crisis Committee of military officers directed him to his hometown of Butare to enforce the final solution to the Tutsi problem. His fleet included six busloads of commandos, a convoy of Interahamwe militia, several

pickup trucks fitted with loud speakers, and three limousines packed with VIPs. These political elites would replace existing leaders in the un-cooperative southern province.

After traveling eighty kilometers, his first stop was in Gikongoro to parley with Monseigneur Misago. This provincial bishop—sold out to Hutu Power—encouraged the killing of Tutsis and helped the interim president plan the provincial genocide. Bishop Misago would one day be imprisoned, released on appeal from the pope, and returned to his post in Gikongoro. His consequent death by heart attack was counted as justice by many in his parish.

Sindikubwabo's second stop brought him to the Simbi Sector near Butare where it was reported Hutus were lax in doing the *work*. In a rallying speech, he called the local Hutus *ntibindeba*, a term which means "those without concern." He emphasized that Hutu *ntibindeba* who do not kill with vigor would be killed themselves.

Upon entering the city, the interim president confronted governor Jean-Baptiste Habyalimana, placing him under arrest. A new mayor and police chief took command and immediately re-enforced roadblocks throughout the city. Monday night was punctuated with screams of terror and bursts of gunfire.

On April 19, the interim president held a ceremony at the university auditorium. His incendiary rhetoric was broadcast over national radio. "These Tutsi are out to kill us. They want to take over our government and persecute you. Don't trust them. We Hutus must act first. Every loyal Hutu must join together to rid Rwanda of these vermin. If you Hutu in Butare don't want to soil your hands, then step aside and let your brothers from Kigali do the *work*." With these words, the Butare extermination campaign was launched in earnest.

Immediately Hutu-Power informants led parties of militia into the homes of prominent Tutsi families. Then inswept the murderous whirlwind. The mass slaughter was typically carried out by young men wielding machetes and long knives. Soldiers with automatic rifles backed the killers, both to incite the blood-letting and to fire upon fleeing targets.

The authors of genocide encouraged wavering neighbors to loot the premises. They figured by making everyone in general complicit in their crimes, no one in particular could be held accountable. Soldiers and militia raged through the streets having license to pounce upon anyone who even looked Tutsi. Throughout the province, fresh corpses clogged the byways.

The ex-governor, his wife, and two daughters were being held in a small prison. The females were subjected to continuous rape by dozens of militiamen. Having sex with such important women as belonged to the Governor of Butare was something these

predators could brag about to their fellows. Eventually, the four were butchered and dumped into an unknown grave.

Next on the kill-list was the “queen cockroach” Rosalie Gicanda. This frail, devoutly Catholic, woman was betrayed by museum workers. The chief military authority personally led a squad of Presidential Guard into her hiding place, seized her and six handmaids, dragged them to the rear of the museum and shot them all dead. This spontaneous dumping ground soon grew into a collection point for a thousand corpses, most trucked in from neighboring sectors.

On April 20, a pacification rally was held at the stadium. The interim president introduced the new governor and set goals for Butare’s extermination campaign. “We will meet our quota,” roared the new governor who then organized and sent out teams of killers into every town sector and rural village.

Soldiers and police sped out in their distinctive uniforms while Interahamwe militia marched in their gaudy colors. Common farmers who joined in the killing frenzy draped banana leaves over their shoulders. This impromptu costume showed these *workers* to be “children of the soil” and not despised Tutsi herdsmen. Many participants wore pins of President Habyarimana and chanted the songs of Simon Bikindi.

Theodore Sindikubwabo delivered a speech in his home district. He was upset that many of the Hutu men still sheltered Tutsi women using them as wives or sex slaves. In figurative language he shouted, “After cleaning the house, one should clean up the kitchen, taking the remaining ashes to the field.” He meant they should slaughter the surviving girls and women whom they had transformed into sex partners. “Bury the remains in the fields,” he ordered.

The killers moved on to the campus of the National University where a Hutu-Power Youth Club had segregated Tutsi students. Hundreds fled to the neighboring arboretum. For many young scholars this soil of exotic trees became their final resting place. In a latter tally of victims, six-hundred university students lay buried in a single mass grave.

~ Narrow Escape ~

When Francis heard large stones crash through his parlor window, he grabbed Pascazia’s hand and rushed out their back gate. The front door burst open and a dozen looters proceeded to pillage their rooms. Fortunately for them, the invaders focused upon booty and not upon blood.

As the couple stared down from a nearby hilltop, they watched as clothing, dinnerware, furniture, baskets, and books marched from the house—all upon the backs of people they once considered neighbors. When they saw uniforms appear a minute later, they ran down the far side of the hill.

Pursuers gave chase.

A childhood friend of Francis agreed to hustle the couple under a plastic tarp. Once the tumult had rushed by, the frightened neighbor informed Francis, “You can only remain until dark. This gang will kill me if they catch me hiding a Tutsi woman.”

As Pascazia and Francis huddled until darkness, they talked of their love. In hushed tones Francis poured forth his never-expressed gratitude. “Thank you for taking in this old man and giving him such a beautiful daughter. Thank you for ten years of devotion. Thank you for putting up with my old-fashioned ways.” He broke into tears.

Pascazia squeezed his hand. “Why did you wait until now to tell me these things? Francis, I love you more than words can express. You’ve always been a good and generous man.

“Look. The gangs are after me, not after you. Please, you must go to your university office. You have the proper ID card and will be safe there. My church friend, Rosa, lives a kilometer down the road. I’ll seek shelter with her. I know she will help me.”

“Yes,” he said, “Rosa’s a godly woman, but what about her husband, Roscoe? He’s a violent man.”

“I can’t stay here,” she interjected. “I dare not go with you onto the campus. If we’re captured together, we’d be in greater danger than if we struggle alone. We must trust God that we’ll both survive. We must do this for the sake of Beatrice.”

After long consideration, he replied. “Yes, I can see the sense in that. I’ll accompany you to the house and we’ll hide together by the privy until you see Rosa appear alone. After you talk with her, I’ll go to my office.”

About seven o’clock, the frightened neighbor pulled open the tarp. “Here, take these sweet potatoes. Please, you must go now. I don’t want to leave my wife a widow.”

They thanked the man for his kindness in hiding them, then Pascazia carefully led Francis through darkened banana groves until they reached the backside of Rosa’s rustic home. In a pelting rain, they crouched in a stand of sorghum.

First, they noted Roscoe dash out then into the house. Two teenage sons followed in succession. When Pascazia saw Rosa emerge, she kissed her husband on his forehead. “Francis, I will see you again soon. May God stay by your side.” She then dashed under the meager cover that sheltered the pathway between the outhouse and backdoor. Pascazia awaited her uncertain fate.

~ *University Hospital* ~

Francis stayed hidden long enough to see Rosa exit the outhouse, take a startled step backward upon sight of Pascazia, then embrace her desperate friend.

The professor whispered a prayer of thanks, then began a half-hour trudge to the campus gate. While stepping through ankle-deep water, he rehearsed the words he would report to the world. “Pascazia and I were sitting at home when a mob broke through the front door. Naturally, I feared for my life and ran. Someone grabbed my wife. I don’t know who it was. I have no idea where she is now. I’m so ashamed I left her behind. Can you help me find her?” That was his cover story and he repeated it until it slipped from his tongue.

Francis viewed the national university from a trench across the street. He paused to hear the amplified tunes of Simon Bikindi echoing in his ears. His eyes saw the chaotic mob dancing beneath the entrance banner upon which was printed the biblical motto, *Fiat Lux*. As Francis emerged into the bright lights, two militiamen seized him by the arms and began barking. “Who are you? What are you doing here? You’re sneaking around after dark so you must be up to mischief.”

“I’m Hutu. I’m a professor. Let me show you my papers.”

He felt the thump of a wooden rod across his back. He stumbled to the mud and received another blow to the side of his head. He spit out a mouthful of blood.

“Get up and come with me,” an angry voice shouted.

They dragged Francis toward an interrogation shelter. He saw uniformed officials kicking a prostrate woman. Francis recognized the victim as an instructor in the math department and knew her to be Tutsi. He averted his eyes as the woman was beaten, stripped of clothing, and passed to a frenzied crowd of local farmers. He did his best to shut out her screams.

A police captain recognized Francis and summoned him to the front of the line. “Francis Mutabaruka, what are you doing here among this rabble? You know all the offices are closed.”

The professor recited his cover story, explaining he had nowhere else to go since his home was in ruins. “Can I just stay in my faculty office?” he whimpered.

“No. That’s impossible. Those offices are occupied by soldiers. But look. You’re bleeding and can barely stand on your feet. I’ll write you a pass to the teaching hospital, okay?”

From the bed of a speedy pickup truck, Francis viewed a reign of terror: fires in trash cans, figures darting in the darkness, shouts of chase, whoops of capture, and, of course, a carpet of lifeless bodies. A fellow traveler whispered to him, “See. The dead are treated like garbage. They execute them near the roadside to facilitate removal.”

Professor Francis was accorded a measure of respect. A doctor who recognized his patient washed his wounds, wrapped his head in bandages, and handed him a crutch. There were no beds available so Francis settled on a blanket in a hallway.

After an hour of extreme discomfort, he looked down the hospital corridor to see a phalanx of soldiers escorting a short man garbed in a checkered suit. He recognized the crooked smile of Theodore Sindikubwabo.

As the entourage entered a classroom, he noticed the chairs were filled with hospital staff. With the door open, Francis heard the pediatrician speak to an audience of Hutu doctors.

“As fellow medical professionals, you know which part of the body to cut and a person cannot recover from the injury no matter how much effort can be deployed. Use and give to the citizens that tip so that when they take hold of an enemy Tutsi, he has no chance to escape them. Use your medical knowledge to promote the work.”

The president-doctor then indicated the jugular vein in his own neck. “Look, if you cut this part, the victim has no chance to recover. I have called you together to go out into the bush and teach this formula throughout the province”. He asked Doctor Gatera—an orthopedic surgeon—to stand as an example of a professional who was practicing this method of murder.

The audience responded with applause.

He continued his lecture. “In short, I want everyone who enters this hospital too be ready to kill. This goes for patients, aides, doctors and nurses.” The interim president went on. “I’ve ordered this hospital to dedicate a section to government soldiers who are injured in battle. Do your best to treat them and return them to the work. I’ve also ordered a separate hall for Tutsis and Hutu traitors who can be dispatched with medical precision. You know what you must do!”

Theodore Sindikubwabo glanced sideways through the hallway door to see the man with a bandaged head. Pointing, he commanded, “Bring that man in here.”

Two body guards escorted Francis in front of the classroom as a visual aid.

The pediatrician-turned-president now spoke to a dozen soldiers lining the walls. “See this man? If you have crutches like him and a Tutsi doctor comes into treat you, just endure the pain. Then hit him with your crutches before shooting him.” He pantomimed the actions of hitting and shooting.

As the classroom sniggered, the president recognized the bandaged head and whispered in jest. “Doctor Mutabaruka, has some Tutsi criminal assaulted you?”

Francis nodded balefully and limped back to his nook in the hallway.

Another pair of eyes noticed the professor of Rwandan history. Vice-mayor Manasseh lingered behind after the room had emptied of its VIP. He strolled to Francis flanked by two militiamen. “Tell me why you are here.”

Francis recounted his rehearsed capture story.

Manasseh sneered, “That’s a lie and you know it. You see I was personally at your property this afternoon. I looked on from the shadows as your greedy neighbors entered your house and ruined my plan to snatch Pascazia. I saw you both at the top of the hill. I was hoping to make you squirm when you had to choose between your own miserable life or hers. I’m still wondering, ‘Professor, which life would you have chosen—your own or your wife’s?’”

The mild-mannered academician lost restraint at this Sophie’s choice and lunged at Manasseh. “You are the devil incarnate.” The militiaman smacked him with a baton.

Manasseh straightened his crumpled shirt. “I declare you to be a traitor to your tribe. As you heard, our president has set up a special ward for people like you. I hope you enjoy your short stay.” He was then dragged away.

After hours of insult and abuse, Francis and two other faculty members were led from the Tutsi ward and prodded to the roadside. Three pistol shots broke the quiet of sunrise and three bodies dropped to the ground. A group of hovering Interahamwe hacked at the corpses for bloody trophies.

~ Boastful Voices ~

At sunrise Pascazia bolted upright in her banana-leaf bed. “What was that sound? thunder or gunshot? Or maybe it was just a dream.”

Rosa soon appeared in the thatched cooking room and noticed Pascazia’s apprehension. “Don’t worry. The men never come in here. Woman’s work, you know.” She sought to bring cheer into a difficult situation. “I must make breakfast for my husband and two sons before they head into town. All three have volunteered to lay aside their brick-making in order to man a roadblock near the Ibis Hotel. This is a crazy time. Nowadays no laborer is working the land or harvesting a crop. They’re too busy *working* their neighbors and harvesting their goods.”

Rosa sighed and handed her weary friend a ripe passion fruit. “Still, while you’re in this room, you better be careful, stay quiet, and cover yourself with banana leaves.”

Pascazia hid in the kitchen for three full days. Sometimes Rosa kept her company. Sometimes a busybody neighbor would poke her head into the shed. One time a young girl began to search the place. The fugitive panicked, but fortunately, the intruder scurried away after filling a bag with stolen charcoal.

Pascazia perked up her ears whenever she overheard male voices outside the door. She couldn’t fathom the cavalier conversations spoken between Roscoe and his sons. They bragged about the number of Tutsis they had killed and about how many ID cards they had turned over to the police captain. They seemed to relish in the misery of others.

Roscoe could not hold back his amusement as he told this story. “You should have seen Mister Nkezabera beg for his life. The boys were about to put their knives to work when Shalom our leader offered this Tutsi a deal. ‘If you pay cash for my bullet’, he said, ‘I promise to shoot you in the head—dispatch you quickly. Today this bullet costs one thousand francs.’ The rich banker ripped a golden cross off his neck and handed it to Shalom. ‘Here,’ the Tutsi man said, ‘It’s worth twice that much.’ With that, Shalom shot him twice in the head.”

The trio convulsed in laughter

Knowing Pascazia could follow the conversation, Rosa asked innocently, “Have you heard anything about our neighbors? You know I was friends with some of those killed.”

One son responded with rage, “How could anyone be friends with a cockroach?”

Rosa gently reminded her son, “You used to be good friends with Faustin and Jean. Remember? You played football with them. They once ate in this house. You didn’t call them *inyenzi* back then.”

Wanting to change the uncomfortable subject, Roscoe responded to her original question. After naming a few slaughtered neighbors, he added, “I spoke with Manasseh a few days ago. The vice-mayor is really good at his work. You know Pascazia and Francis who lived in the big house by the road? She is either dead or on the run somewhere. Manasseh doesn’t know. But Francis, yes Francis Mutabaruka, actually showed up at the university. Manasseh confronted our Hutu brother and found him guilty of being a race traitor. Of course, he was executed. It was in the morning a few days ago, I think. Like our Holy Bible says in the Ten Commandments: ‘Show no mercy to those who betray your people.’”

Rosa stifled her emotions, nodding her head. She heard a rustling yelp in the cooking shed and rushed in. She re-joined the men saying, “It looks like those rodents are after our leftovers again.”

~ Stumble in the Dark ~

The next morning, Pascazia informed Rosa it was time for her to go. “I hear there’s an army of resistance gathering at the Catholic Church in Karama, maybe ten thousand people. It’s not too far. I know I can find the way after dark. Francis is gone from this world. I know it. I think I heard the early-morning gunshots. I must go to Burundi to be with my baby. Keep me in your prayers.”

The drenching rains favored her nighttime travel. She tripped once in the darkness and suffered a gash to her wrist. Still, she struggled forward. She figured, “Even the Tutsi-chasers don’t like to work in such abominable weather. Maybe I’ll make it all the way to Karama.”

However, as she approached the Anglican Church, it appeared her luck had run out. A dark figure stepped out into her path from behind a tree. She trembled. The phantom shouted her name in a familiar voice, “Pascazia Kubwimana, don’t be afraid. It’s me, Daniel Mugisha. Your friend Rosa told me you might be passing by this way. I’m here to save you.”

Two large men joined the vicar as he stepped onto the pavement. They were festooned in national colors and carried machetes. “Don’t worry, Pascazia. My friends will escort you to a safe house. I’ll join you there in a few hours. Put on this red hat with

the imprint of Habyarimana. Hold still and let this guy pour a beer over your hair. Joke and flirt if you encounter militia and let the men do the talking.”

Pascazia did as she was told, walking nonchalantly through two checkpoints, feigning intoxication. “You should be an actor,” chuckled one of the men. “You make a good Interahamwe.”

Far off the road, in a private room lit by three candles, Pascazia sprawled on a floor mat. The rain had lessened to a patter against the iron-sheet roof. She could hear men talking in an outer room. Pascazia responded to a gentle knock and opened the door to the Pastor’s wife, Esperance. One of the men also entered the room carrying a basin of warm water. The other man carried in an armful of clothing then closed the door behind him. In the quiet of evening, the two women sat alone knee-to-knee.

Esperance leaned forward. “I’m so sorry to hear about your husband. Rosa told me all about it. Francis was a very good man. I so wish he could have survived this madness.”

Pascazia wept rather than spoke; tears being the best language.

“Daniel and I have developed a plan to help get you to Bujumbura. Just listen for now. Use this soap, water, and towel to clean yourself for the journey. Dear, here are some underthings and pajamas that I think will fit you. I also think this newly laundered uniform is the perfect disguise for you. This is what you’ll be wearing in the morning. One of the guys mentioned you’re a great actress. You’ll need that skill tomorrow. For now, get some sleep. Daniel will talk with you over morning tea.”



~ *Bus Ride to Burundi* ~

Pascazia awoke on Sunday, April 24, to find Daniel and Esperance conversing over African chai. She was reluctant to leave her room. Finally, she stepped into the parlor, sashaying her body. “What do you think?”, she asked as she modeled the FAR uniform.

Daniel marveled. “Wow! You look just like a female fighter in the Rwanda Forces Army for sure.”

Esperance was less sure. “We’ll have to lengthen the sleeves a bit and I’m sorry to say you’ll need to shorten your hair to military regulation.”

While Esperance was clipping and sewing, Daniel spoke. “I’m glad I caught you before you made it to the Karama Church. Informants tell me thousands of Tutsis are being killed there, even today.” He shook his head. “You know at first it was government policy to lock the doors of churches, forbidding entry. Now local officials demand they be filled with the displaced. Why do you think they’re urging Tutsis to seek refuge on church property? Is this because Hutu Power has had a change of heart?”

He answered his own question. “Of course not! It’s just easier to slaughter people in a confined area, so they make promises of sanctuary until the place is overflowing, then they move in to kill; throw hand grenades, fire machine guns. It’s like a slaughtering pen for animals. It’s the same for medical clinics and school yards. They say you can find safety in numbers but in Rwanda you find nothing but death.”

Daniel continued, “One of the ladies in the church donated that uniform to the cause. She worked at a laundry until her shop was burned down. She managed to save that bundle. So many lives have been destroyed by soldiers wearing that uniform. I hope this emblem of death can save your life.”

Pascazia practiced her military salute and bearing. She repeated her temporary name “Corporal Jane Nyinawumuntu”. Daniel presented her with a handful of Rwandan francs as well as two American twenty-dollar bills.

At noon the two Interahamwe imposters escorted *Corporal Nyinawumuntu* to a military bus. She postured as a last-minute replacement for a sick comrade. Her uniform and smile proved sufficient to gain entry onto the transport. Her papers weren’t checked because the driver seemed distracted by a crowd of refugees who attempted to storm their way on board. A burst of gunfire killed a few and chased away the rest. The foot traffic appeared injured to another bleeding body. So many of their countrymen already lay along the curbs in uncollected heaps.

A man who introduced himself as Sergeant Kambanda sat next to her. He appeared suspicious of his seat-mate, staring at her face. “Haven’t I seen you before?”

“I don’t think so. I just arrived from Kigali a few days ago.”

He looked her all over, struggling to place her identity. “Aren’t you a little old to be a corporal in the army?”

“I only joined last year. I taught school but felt it my duty to fight against the Inkotanyi.” She turned her head to look out the window, signaling she was not interested in further small talk.

She despaired at roadside houses in ruin and so instead focused on the verdant mountains. Every few kilometers the bus stopped at a checkpoint. At these crossroads, a militiaman walked down the aisle, tallied the uniforms, compared them to his roster, and walked out again.

Not far from the frontier a FAR major stepped on board. He explained that those present had been selected for a special mission in Burundi. Their job would be to repatriate detainees back into their home country for summary judgment—that is execution. He expanded to say the Burundian government didn’t want to shelter these important cockroaches, but neither did they want to dispose of them.

The major began a careful stroll up the aisle to check ID badges of those on board. Sergeant Kambanda pulled out his badge and held it on his lap. The corporal lapsed into a full panic, gasping for breath. The sergeant observed the woman’s frenzy, looked to the ceiling, then whispered to the corporal, “Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it.”

When the major reached the rear of the bus, he recognized Sergeant Kambanda. The FAR soldier stood erect to speak with him. “Sir, this woman is Corporal Nyinawumuntu, a friend of mine. She was attacked by a terrorist last night who stole her badge. I can vouch for her, sir. She will stay with me and I promise she’ll get new documents when we return to Butare.”

The major looked her in the face and asked, “Is that true?”

“Almost, sir. Except there were two cockroaches. The little one is dead, but I am ashamed to say the big one ripped the badge from my hand.” She showed him the wound on her wrist.

“If the sergeant vouches for you, that will do for today. But tomorrow be sure to get a new badge.” He then returned to the front of the bus.

The military vehicle crossed unmolested into Burundi where FAR soldiers formed up and began to interrogate the detainees of interest. Armed Burundian troops looked on from the sidelines, rifles at the ready. After a few minutes, Sergeant Kambanda spoke to the major, “I’d like permission to escort the corporal to the privy over there. This place is not safe for a woman, even one in uniform.”

The major nodded his consent and the two headed out the gate. But rather than turn right to the toilet, the sergeant bumped the corporal to the left. “That’s the road south to Bujumbura. Go now. Go fast.”

Pascazia stared at him in amazement. “Why are you doing this?”

“Last year, when I visited the national museum, you favored me by allowing me to tap *Kalinga*—the royal sacred drum of King Mutara. You did not have to do that. Mrs. Kubwimana, you were so kind to me. I am only returning your kindness. Go now in peace.”

Story Four

Song Master Simon

June 6 to 14, 1994

At thirty-nine years old, a barrel-chested multi-talented musician known as Simon Bikindi stood at the pinnacle of popularity. Over the previous decade his intricate rhythms and catchy lyrics had captivated the common people of Rwanda. His particular interpretation of history promoted solidarity among Hutus and resentment toward Tutsis. The singer-songwriter was apolitical by bent, but during this period of ethnic upheaval, he was obliged to walk down one side of the road or the other. There was no middle ground to straddle. Bikindi chose the safer path of Hutu Power.

Bikindi's most-celebrated composition was called *Twazazareye*, a song which translates as "We said good bye to the feudal regime." During the one-hundred days of genocide, *Twazazareye* was repeatedly broadcast over radio, becoming an anthem at Hutu rallies and a soundtrack to massacres. As an artist of celebrity and renown, Simon Bikindi walked among the highest echelons of the MRND government.

On June 6, the popular singer consulted with Charles Nzabonimana, Chief Minister of Youth and Sports. Simon Bikindi had composed a new song and presented the master cassette to his boss. After previewing the recording, the minister informed the artist that Colonel Bagasora himself—head of the Crisis Committee—would have to approve the composition before permitting it to be broadcast over Thousand Hills Radio.

With business concluded, Simon asked with unease, "What do you think? How is the war going for us?"

Charles answered with caution, "Officially or unofficially?" He then drew his chair closer to Simon. "You know it's been exactly two months since the president's plane went down. Some things are proceeding to plan. For example, thousands of Tutsi vermin are in the grave. That's a positive, right? But I'm worried. Our Rwandan forces don't seem able to hold back the tide of Inkotanyi. I see panic in the eyes of the committee. I hear their whispers. But we shouldn't lose heart. We're hoping the French are about to intervene on our behalf."

"Have you made plans?" Simon interjected. "I mean where will you go if the enemy storms into Kigali?"

“It’s a delicate balance. If I make public my intention to exit Rwanda, I’ll be seen as a traitor. Yet if I stay, I’ll become prisoner to the snakes. The best strategy is to keep an eye on the big shots. For sure Bagasora doesn’t want to fall into the hands of Paul Kagame. On the day he scrambles to the airport, that’s the day I make my escape too.”

Simon pondered then asked, “What do you think about my situation? Am I in any danger? Should I leave?”

Charles scoffed at his naivety. “And what do you think?”

Simon burst forth in embarrassed defense, “Look. I’m an artist! I’ve been performing in France for the past three months. I wasn’t even in Kigali when Habyarimana died. My songs are patriotic, yes, that’s true, but they’re historically accurate. I’ve never advocated the killing of any human being. You know that as well as anyone. How can I be held accountable if the enemy misconstrue my songs?”

The minister shrugged a response, “It’s up to you if you leave or stay. If the Inkotanyi enter Kigali it’s *every man for himself*.” Then he stood up. “One more thing, my friend. The committee wants you to go on a road tour to encourage our cause. I’ve requisitioned three pick-up trucks with sound system. You are directed to take your performance group along with a few dozen Interahamwe and convoy west to Gisenyi province. It looks like Gitarama will fall soon and the leadership is moving to our stronghold in the west.”

“When do I go?”

“Three days.”

Simon protested, “How can I do that? I have obligations here in Kigali—to my wife, kids, and to my performers.”

Charles responded, “You may have your obligations, but I have my orders. You must go on Thursday with your troupe and Interahamwe support. The *Akazu* is expecting you in one week and the Little House doesn’t like to be kept waiting.” With a wink he added, “And if anything bad happens here in Kigali, you’ll be just that much closer to the Zaire frontier.”

That evening, Simon broke the news to his wife, Angeline Mukabanana. “I have just three days to pack up and leave to Gisenyi. I don’t want to do this, but ...”

She interrupted, “Are you coming back to Kigali?”

“That’s my plan, but I don’t know for sure. The government’s already moved out of town to Gitarama and I suspect Kigali will be overrun soon. Should I come back if the

capital is in the hands of the RPF? You know some miscreants have called me a criminal for just writing music. They say my lyrics incite murder. Can you believe that?"

With passion he ranted, "I have nothing personal against the Tutsi people. Angeline, you yourself are Tutsi! Your son who lives with us is Tutsi, as is his father. Three in my ballet are Tutsi and two are Batwa. I agree my profile in the party is high, but truly, I'm only a humble singer of traditional songs. Yes, I admit I've been ambitious, but I've never advocated genocide. That's the God-honest truth!"

She comforted him, "You are a good and fair man, Simon. I've never seen hatred in your eyes, only compassion. I know for a fact you only seek talent in the Irindiro Ballet. You look for quality, regardless of caste. If a man or woman can sing or dance, you welcome them with open arms. Yet, having said this, you're a prominent member of the MRND team and if this team loses the game, you'll be punished along with the rest."

"It's not fair, but I think you're right," he grumbled. "The RPF doesn't understand my music. I'm a working man. The Hutu government has paid generously to perform songs that praise their tribe. I have to make a living you know."

Again interrupting, she asked, "And what if the Tutsis come to power in Rwanda?"

"Of course, I would write my songs for them." He smiled and paused. "That's what I do. I perform traditional *ikinimba* music and dance. Hutu or Tutsi, it doesn't matter to me. Music's in my heart, not hatred toward a particular tribe."

Angeline continued, "You say you will be performing at a rally for the Akazu? Now there's a clan with true tribal hatred in their heart. The president's wife—Madame Agathe—may have run away to France, but her family still spews tribal poison in Gisenyi. You know Agathe was the mastermind behind *Zero Network*, that is "zero Tutsis in Rwanda". And that zero includes me and my son.

"She's the one who hypnotized President Habyarimana with occult evil. Those in the Akazu always opposed his peace initiative in Arusha. There're even rumors she was behind her husband's death, because he supported accommodation with the Tutsi RPF."

Simon grew alarmed, "Don't say that out loud. I've heard that too, but spies are everywhere and a word against Madame Agathe is like digging your own grave. But, thanks for reminding me about the zero tolerance of the Akazu. I'll only take my Hutu musicians on this road trip. I love all my performers, but Emanuel and Josef are Batwa and Promise and Maria are Tutsi. I don't want them harmed. They'll remain behind here in Kigali. Who knows? Maybe they will even welcome the RPF's arrival."

~ Road to Perdition ~

Over the next few days, Simon recruited four Hutus as stand-ins for his Tutsi and Batwa stay-behinds. He also coordinated with the Minister of Youth for vehicles and Interahamwe militia. Bikindi's caravan of eight transports and thirty personnel left the capital city at noon on Friday, June 10.

As his convoy snaked out of town, Simon pondered his excursion to the west. He felt a rush of pride. The artist considered himself a super-patriot, a true son of the father of farmers, a man of the people doing his righteous duty. Indeed, he loved Rwanda, singing about bad old times and pleading for better days to come. He truly wanted justice for all. Of course, he opposed the foreign invaders flooding in from Uganda. How could a patriot do otherwise?

His face darkened. "But I cannot condone the cold-blooded murder of civilians, especially women and children. But what can I do as one man against so many?"

Simon dreaded powerful extremists like those on the crisis committee and in the Akazu, those with hatred in their hearts, machetes in their hands, and the power to declare him an *ibytso*—accomplice. "I don't want to get on the wrong side of such violent people."

He set his jaw. "I'll do the minimum necessary to keep myself safe, to survive this tribal war. But I will never take a weapon in my hand or speak the word *kill* into a microphone." The raging sea of his inner turmoil—after much mental gymnastics—had landed him upon this island of compromise.

At the first roadblock exiting Kigali-Ville, he directed the vehicles to circle in a large dirt lot. With the nation's preeminent singer in their midst, the high-spirited youth demanded he lead them in songs they had only heard on the radio.

The sound systems echoed throughout the suburban shantytown as Simon Bikindi let rip the anthem, *Twasazareye*. Colorful dancers shook and shimmied to the opening beats. Then, like a church choir of animation and syncopation all the voices erupted: *Terera amaso inyuma Munyarwanda, yeee...!*

*Turn your eyes back, you Rwandan!
Remember the whip, remember the harsh labor
Remember the days you spent working for the chief without any compensation!
So then, let's rejoice for Independence!*

*Remember how long and hard you had to walk,
The many nights you spent outdoors!
Bearing things to the residences of the Tutsi chiefs,*

*Giving up things that your family needed,
And upon arriving there, so worn down, the receivers were not even thankful!
So then, come, let's rejoice for Independence!*

*I am the one who admires the wise, praised for his selfless dedication.
I am a boy who protects the army during the days of troubles
I am the one who brings out the arrows stopping injustice.
I announce myself ready for war, moaning like the lowliest Hutu.
We cheer for you, pride of the youth. Continue to valiantly lead the army!*

After an hour of raucous celebration, the commander of the barricade took the microphone. The tumult had attracted about a thousand local residents. The FAR captain beamed at the crowd then at the singer, "Mister Bikindi, thank you for this unannounced rally. We of Butamwa sector appreciate it so much. We want you to know that just today we have captured and killed nine of the enemy. And this is getting harder to do because so few cockroaches remain hidden under their rocks."

The listeners cheered with approval.

An exuberant Simon took the mike, couching his words in coded speech. "Thank you, captain. But I want to tell you, the work is not complete. All of you hearing my voice, we must seek out all the enemy and complete the work."

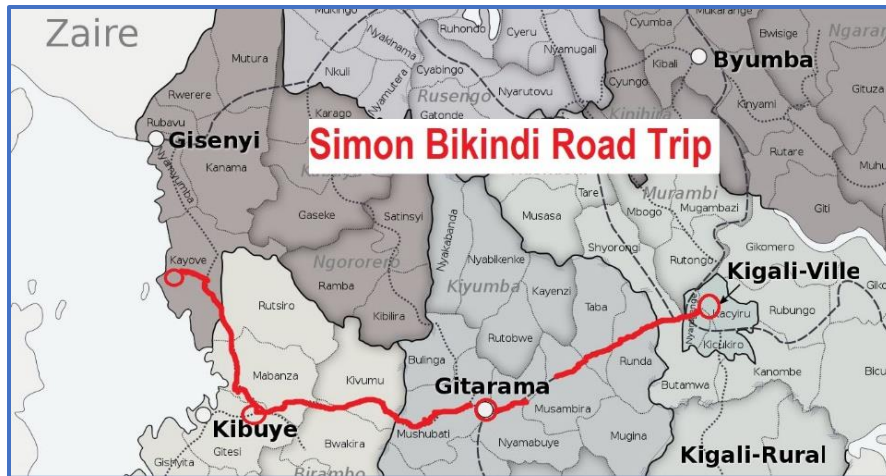
Again, the crowds roared, and Simon basked in the adulation. Near the truck bed where Simon was standing, three farmers—obviously drunken—stepped forward. One shouted at the entertainer, "Look. We brought this enemy especially for you."

Two more farmers decked in banana leaves emerged from the crowd dragging a battered, sobbing, young woman. "We just caught this *inyenzi* hiding in the fields," said one with slurred speech. "Let me show you how well we farmers from Butamwe can carry out the good work you are asking us to do."

Each farmer then took a hack at the victim. Her breasts were cut off; her belly cut open; and her entrails wrapped around her quivering body.

A sickened Simon Bikindi could not stand the sight of such butchery and turned aside his head. A few local boys dipped their fingers in her blood to paint their faces. Simon was appalled. The two juveniles then dragged her body to a ditch flinging the mangled corpse upon a pile of nine, making this girl the tenth victim for June tenth.

At that moment the sky burst with open-spigot rain. The crowd vanished and the convoy team huddled for the night in a large vacant house, a property once owned by a prominent Tutsi businessman, but now vacant for sixty days.



On the next morning, the convoy continued southwest toward Gitarama. It's true the main north-south artery may have proven quicker, but the Inkotanyi had severed that route and were closing in on the re-located seat of government.

Progress was slow along unpaved roads. Hundreds of refugees now clogged the throughfare, some with arms, heads, and backs fully laden with meager possessions; others pushing carts or overloaded bicycles. Small boys pulled the leads of goats and cows. At every roadblock, the convoy would pause and Simon would sing along to a recording from his well-known repertoire. Enthusiasm waned as concern began to settle in. Still, some along the road would stop to listen, others would even cheer, but most of the displaced trudged onward eyes downcast.

Simon Bikindi received word in Gitarama, that the Little House was no longer holding rallies. Thus, his ballet troupe was not needed. However, he was informed there was an opportunity in Kayove, a town along Lake Kivu. The local mayor could use his help in flushing out a few hard-to-find enemy. This was not a directive from the committee, but an invitation. The convoy could return to Kigali, if they so wished.

Simon gathered his troupe together. "So, what do you want to do? Return to Kigali or go on to Lake Kivu?"

The lead dancer spoke up. "I talked to my husband before leaving. He's not expecting me to return. Did you see all the people walking along the road? They were coming up from behind us. They were voting with their feet. All of them were heading west; not one toward Kigali. There's wisdom in that."

A drummer added. "There is nothing in Kigali for a Hutu like me. Soon it will be a Tutsi-run capital and reprisals will begin. I think my family is already headed in this direction. Maybe we passed them. I don't know. This road west—this road into Zaire—is a

road to hell. It's a road to perdition. Yet we must take it and trust God for the outcome because it's the only road open to us."

The decision was unanimous. They all agreed to demonstrate their loyalty by helping the cause in Kayove. Then they would wait to see if Kigali fell into the hands of rebels. If that were to happen, the patriotic action would be to join a Hutu government in exile within Zaire. Who could have predicted such a catastrophe could ever be possible?

After loitering a few nights in Gitarama, the convoy continued west. This was fortunate for Simon because the Inkotanyi army captured the city on the next day, June 13. The Irindiro Ballet had danced one step ahead of his enemy.

As the summer solstice approached, sunshine replaced rainfall. A film of red dust soon choked the jammed roadway. The weary travelers grew thirsty, especially the restless contingent of Interahamwe. Their chief joy was in killing Tutsi, yet in passing through Kibuye Province all such victims were either dead or fled.

Simon directed the caravan to stop at a roadside cabaret for liquid refreshment—something to wash the dust away. This traditional Rwandan cabaret was a combination of social club, bar, and general store. Inside the thatched-roof hut with beaten floor stood cases of Primus beer and soft drinks stacked against a side wall. Containers of banana and sorghum beer lined the back counter. Simon bellowed out, "One hour. That's all. Then we have to move on to Kayove before dark."

The proprietor was astonished at the sudden appearance of thirty thirsty travelers. A few barflies rushed left and right outside the door to summon additional vendors for such a large number of guests. The single hour extended into two as rowdy youth downed drink after drink of intoxicating beverage. Skewers of goatmeat appeared with bags of peanuts and bowls of fruit. Of course, the famed Irindiro Ballet could not refuse to perform.

When farmers returned from the fields, a party atmosphere ensued. His drunken Interahamwe escort proved impossible to control. Finally, Simon directed one semi-sober driver ahead to Kayove to inform the mayor, with apologies, the ballet could not arrive until the next morning.

A local magistrate showed up at the cabaret to talk with Simon Bikindi. He quizzed the singer about his plans and about the progress of the war.

"It doesn't look good for us," was all Simon would say. He did apologize for the conduct of his Interahamwe escort: drunken fights, gunshots into the air, breaking glass, and screams of women.

The Hutu magistrate commiserated. “It’s okay. These boys are just letting off steam. They’re more perceptive than you may think. It’s like they’re slowly emerging from a bad dream, but not yet waking up. They sense their life of unrestrained murder, loot, and lust is coming to an end. In the back of their minds, there’s a dawning awareness that someone-someplace-sometime a reckoning awaits them. Their dream is turning into a nightmare. Their heaven will soon be hell.”

After a long pause, he added, “I think that goes for myself—and maybe you too, Mister Bikindi.”

Story Five

Family of Four

April 7 to July 24, 1994

With a grand estate on the banks of Lake Kivu, the prosperous Tutsi family had been a pillar of the Kayove establishment. The father, André Muhoza, served as headmaster at the College of Saint Mary. Over the previous few months, he had viewed with consternation the disintegration of his academic community. Long-time Hutu friends had begun to shun him; some disrespecting him with tribal epithets. The seminary priest spoke out against such racial hatred, but his voice was muzzled when the local bishop assigned a junior priest to deliver party-line homilies.

~ Offscouring of the Earth ~

André's wife, Adeline, was the first to hear the ominous news on the morning of April 7. It was true she had heard gunfire during the night, but recently such ruckus had become commonplace. With the first hints of daylight, she stepped out her front door to see a neighbor dashing by, then another, then three school boys waving Rwandan flags. Adeline spoke through the iron bars at the front gate, "What's all the excitement, guys?"

"Haven't you heard?" shouted the youngest with wild eyes. "The Tutsi cockroaches have killed our beloved president!"

A taller one added, "Yeah. They shot down his airplane, but don't worry. My dad said we'll be getting our revenge soon."

The third one studied Adeline's face, finally saying, "Aren't you Clementine's mom? That means you're not one of us Hutu, but an accomplice."

All three boys then joined in jeers, "*inyenzi*, traitor." They banged their flagsticks against the bars then scampered further down the street.

Adeline rushed into the parlor. She turned on the family radio and summoned her husband and two children to listen up. Through screeds of anti-Tutsi vitriol, they understood President Habyarimana's jet plane had crashed the previous evening. A crisis committee had formed in Kigali which asked all citizens to remain in their homes.

André did his best to reassure his wife, daughter, and son. "We'll be okay. Things like this have happened before. Both my mom and dad survived 1959—you know that—

and those days were worse than what we see now. I have connections with the local council and if that doesn't work out, Idjwi Island in Zaire is just across the lake. We can paddle there in our boat, if we have to."

The two children looked to their mother. Trying to stay calm, Adeline said to them, "You two won't be going to school today. You heard the radio direct us to stay home and you'll be safer here with me anyway." She cut fruit and warmed porridge for breakfast, but Clementine and Jean-Luc were too anxious to eat.

Clementine Nezerwa was a schoolgirl of sixteen. Still growing into her classic Tutsi frame, she was tall and slender, with big eyes and bright teeth. She was her father's princess; studious, focused, and compliant. Clementine shined in the classroom, spoke elegant French, and was painfully shy, shielding her mouth when speaking in public. Clementine would be happy to remain home for a day just to read her books.

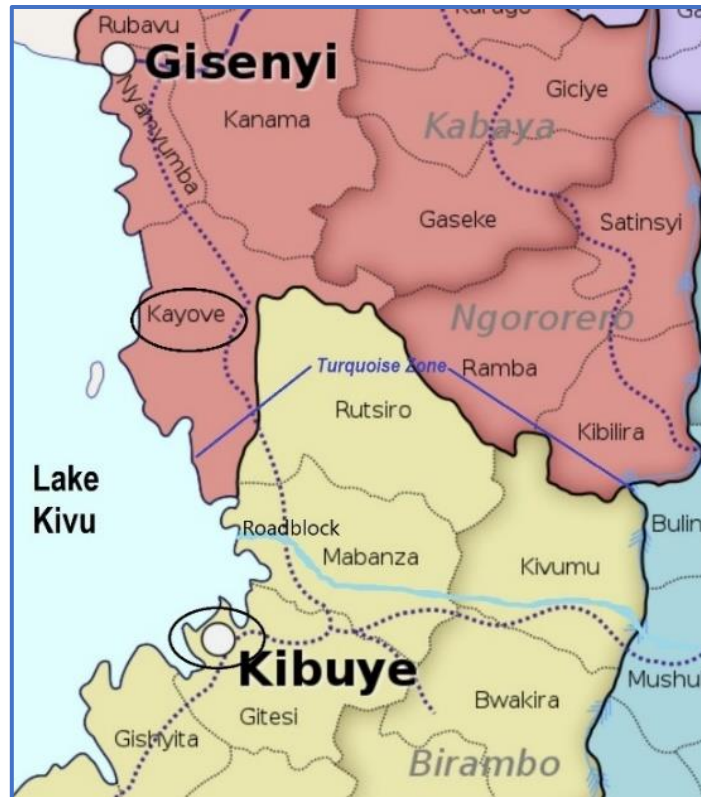
Jean-Luc was twelve years old—all boy. A gifted soccer player, he never walked anywhere, always hustled. While sitting next to his mother in church, the boy would bounce and squirm. By all measures, Jean-Luc was a *handful*. Yet, he brought such joy to the family, always amusing, always playful. "He'll grow out of this phase," his mother would assure André. Their son was disappointed he had to remain home, not because he enjoyed schoolwork, but rather, he loved to hang out with his buddies.

André informed his wife with reluctance, "I have responsibilities. I have to go to seminary today. People are depending on me. I owe it to them."

"And how much more do you owe to me and your children? Your students can get along without you. Your family cannot." A tear squeezed from her eye. Both André and Adeline regretted the harsh language that ensued on that Tuesday morning.

As the headmaster strode out the front door, he whispered an apology to his wife. "I'm sorry, sugar. Duty calls me and I must be faithful." He murmured to himself, "And I must be kind. I never know when I might speak my last words to this beautiful woman."

Once he reached the front gate, he turned about to see Adeline, Clementine, and Jean-Luc standing outside the door. André shouted. "I'll see you again this evening. Don't worry," After another step he spun around. "And you better make sure you lock this iron gate."



The remainder of April 7 passed in relative peace, but Adeline had a premonition of evil things to come. Anticipating her home might become the target of jealous Hutu neighbors, she packed a suitcase for herself and each child, then walked with her son to the shoreline to bury a satchel of valuables. As she flung sand into a pile, Jean-Luc looked at the waters of Lake Kivu. He tugged at his mom’s dress. “Isn’t that our boat out there?”

Adeline looked up, shocked to see Tutsi neighbors paddling their small craft. She ran into the shallows and shouted. The neighbor-turned-thief waved his hand, showed his back, then continued his escape to the far shore. There was nothing she could do.

Adeline sent Jean-Luc home then rushed up the road to the dwelling of a woman she knew from church. Her Hutu friend answered a knock at the back door and ushered her into the garden behind a wall.

Adeline began, “Paula, I see by your face you know the gravity of the situation.” Averting her eyes in deference, she continued. “We’ve known each other since our catechism days. Can you show kindness to a fellow parishioner? Can I make a bargain with you?”

With passion the suppliant delivered her plea, “If my family must suddenly vacate our house, can I trust you to look after our possessions? I will put all we own into

your hands for safe keeping. If we never return, our property will become yours, even the car. I'll put that in writing, if you like. I only ask one thing, Paula. Please show mercy and hide me and my two kids for one week until I can arrange to flee into Zaire."

Paula responded, "You know even hiding you for one week could be dangerous." She mused for a moment. "But for you I'll do my best. You're my friend and I'd never take advantage of you. I promise to look after your things."

Adeline handed over her house keys and car key as a token of her sincerity.

When she returned home, she found a note pinned to her front gate. It was from André: "I'm so sorry. I can't make it home this evening. The streets are too dangerous and I'm looking after terrified students locked inside a classroom. Please pray for us."

Adeline wondered if she would ever see her husband again.

~ Refuge in a Crypt ~

On the morning of April 8, as André was placing phone calls from his office, a frightened student burst through the door. "Principal Muhoza, you must leave now. A gang of Interahamwe is headed this way. I've seen several of our Tutsi teachers killed. They're coming for you."

André rushed toward the church building just out the back door, but seeing the gaudy garments of paramilitary assassins near the entrance, he raced to the rear where Father Clement was waving him inside. Gesturing to a closet, the priest said, "Hide in here, André."

The campus descended into bloody chaos. For one night, then two, then three, the priestly closet served as a cluttered sanctuary. On the fourth night, Father Clement informed his friend, "The police will conduct a thorough sweep of this place tomorrow. Mayor Rubangura is desperate to catch you. I've prepared a room that will be difficult for him to find."

In the dead of night, the two lowered themselves via a ladder into a dank cellar beneath the altar. A dim devotional candle lighted the way. The priest whispered, "Not many people know of the concrete crypts down here. I think there is just enough space, daylight, and fresh air for you to survive—at least for a while. I relocated the bodies of my predecessors. I don't think they'll mind. You can see the two saints stacked in the corner."

André spoke at last. “Thank you, father. I don’t mind the company. You know, I’ve sat in this church for years and have never known about this hiding place.” His face contorted into grief, “Please get word to me about my darling Adeline. I must know if my wife is safe; and about Clementine and Jean-Luc too. And let Adeline know that I’m alive.”

“I’ll do what I can, my friend. When I get to the top of the latter, pull it down with you. I’ll drop food, water, and news into this cellar when it’s safe. Whenever you hear footsteps from above, be as quiet as you can.” The two embraced, recited prayers, then the priest left André to his thoughts.

During that first night of confinement, the fugitive prayed until daylight, mostly for his family, but also for his seminary, his neighbors, and his nation of Rwanda. He thanked God that his first son, Oliver, was out of harm’s way studying at the Catholic University in Kinshasa. “I’m sure he’s on his knees right now praying for his family in Kayove,” André brightened at the thought of his first son.

He was unsure concerning the whereabouts of his number-two son. Joseph was supposed to be studying at McGill University in Montreal. However, he heard rumors that his patriotic son had secretly returned to Uganda to fight as part of the Inkotanyi army. Could that be true? Father Clement had advised him to only speak of Joseph as if he still resided in Canada, quipping, “That would not demonstrate the vice of deceit but the virtue of prudence.”

As André pondered alone in the darkness, he adapted as best he could to his damp quarters. About dawn, he noted a slight glow at ground level. He gave thanks: “I am blessed by this tiny gap between the church foundation and this cellar. Maybe I can really survive this ordeal.”

For weeks André kept to his secret vigil in the crypt beneath the floorboards. He often heard screams, gunfire, and heavy footfalls on the planks above his head. Every few days a parcel of food, water, or newsprint fell through the small opening. In one note, Father Clement let André know that Adeline, Clementine, and Jean-Luc had disappeared. They were not listed among the dead and Paula—a neighbor—reported the three had attempted the journey to Zaire.

The professor was a practical man, determined to use his days of confinement as a learning opportunity. He possessed a large French Jerusalem Bible and a small Gideon New Testament. “I will learn to read English,” he resolved to himself.

From First Corinthians four, he ran across the French words, “Nous sommes devenus comme l’ordure du monde, jusqu’à présent l’universel rebut.”

Finding them particularly appropriate, he memorized the words of Saint Paul in his King James Bible:

Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, are naked, are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat. We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

André continued to read every scrap of print dropped to him, joined silently in church masses conducted above his head, and tried to keep his flagging spirit afloat through continual communion with God and the saints. The days passed in ceaseless procession. When the rain stopped, reports of possible liberation reached his ears.

~ Refuge in a Goat Pen ~

At the same hour on April 8 as André first fled from his school office, Adeline and her children rushed outdoors to seek refuge in their neighbor's garden. Their hiding place turned out to be a tarp-covered goat pen. The ground stunk with manure. Yet its very awfulness provided a measure of security. No human being would willingly poke his nose into that stench!

While the family huddled in the rear goat pen, Paula busied herself at the streetside pasting pictures of President Habyarimana to the windshield of her newly-acquired car. She figured it might provide protection from looters.

A rag-tag mob of farmers and youth marched down the street on that Wednesday afternoon. As leader of Kayove Youth Ministry, her husband, Freddie, marched at the head of the procession.

Freddie stopped for a moment to congratulate his wife for poaching the car so quickly, then added, "But have you seen the owners, André and Adeline? Those cockroaches are next on our hit list."

"Yes, I just saw them running toward the water to their boat." At that word, a dozen youth cut toward Lake Kivu. Because her husband was a Hutu party official, Paula figured no one would suspect she was sheltering the objects of their pursuit.

Days passed. The three fugitives shared their hovel with five goats only during night-time hours. As the sun rose each morning, a local street urchin would arrive, rope the goats, and walk them through open spaces to graze on grass and fallen banana leaves. The boy would return before sunset and be rewarded with an evening meal. Felix was the same age as Jean-Luc, but had to drop out of school when his mother died of

AIDS. When his father abandoned him, good-hearted Paula provided Felix with enough sustenance to survive orphanhood.

On the fifth day of hiding, Felix spotted Clementine peeking from behind a fence. “What are you doing here?” he demanded. The girl glared at him speechless. Then Jean-Luc jumped into view, arresting his attention.

Finally, Adeline spoke up, “Your name is Felix Ndizeye, right? I remember you once attended school with my son. We are going to need your help.” She spoke to Jean-Luc with nonchalance, “Get my purse, will you?”

Adeline took from her wallet a thousand-franc banknote and handed it to Felix. “Can you buy for us a large bag of peanuts, say for five-hundred franks. You can keep the remainder if you can keep the secret that we are here. I have more money to give you later.”

Felix responded with a distinct stutter, “I c-c-can do that. S-s-see you soon.” The boy dashed through the back gate without his goats and returned an hour later. He handed over a bag of nuts, wearing a new store-bought t-shirt. He roped the goats together and headed out the gate. “We c-c-can talk some more when I c-come back this evening.”

When Paula appeared in the garden, Adeline told her about the incident. The protector clicked her teeth, “It was only a matter of time. The boy is pliable. I don’t think he can hold his tongue for long. I’m sorry, but it’s time for you three to move on.”

Adeline sighed. “You’re right. Jean-Luc tells me that Felix spends his time with a gang of lost boys. I’m sure many of them are combing the area right now looking for run-away Tutsis. She collected her thoughts. “Maybe you can do this. Hide us in the house for just this evening. When Felix returns, he’ll see we’re gone. We promise to leave after midnight and trust God will lead us safely to Zaire.”

After hiding the three in her kitchen, Paula re-constructed the goat pen to the other side of the garden. Sure enough. When Felix returned that evening, he was accompanied by two older boys. “Where are they?” asked the startled boy.

“What are you talking about?” Paula retorted.

“You know. Jean-Luc, C-c-clementine, and her mom.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she scolded. “And I won’t be needing your services anymore with the goats. You’re crazy!”

The older boys laughed as Felix slunk away.

That night, after Freddie fell asleep, Paula filled two bags with sweets and handed them to the children. She gave Adeline an envelope with cash, saying, “I sold your car. I hope you don’t mind. Here’s the money.”

With tears, the two women embraced. Then the three outcasts strode into the darkness. A north wind howled as rain pelted their cheeks. With Adeline in the middle pulling one child on either side, they made their way to the stand of trees near the shore line. There they huddled under a large avocado tree. Jean-Luc whined, “What a nasty night! How can we possibly find our way.”

His mom spoke firmly, “Your childhood days are over. Starting right now you must act like a man. Do you understand we are counted as Tutsis and many of our neighbors are out to kill us? That is real. You must not complain, and always listen and obey what I tell you.”

Jean-Luc bit his lip. “I understand, Mama”.

“Look around you. This weather is perfect for our escape. God planned it this way. Those Tutsi-catchers won’t search in the woods during this midnight tempest. She paused, then wrapped an arm around each child. She then explained, “We are not going to Idjwi Island, but to my sister’s house.”

Clementine interrupted, “I thought my Aunt Louise lived over in Kivu with her husband and kids.”

“She did until a few years ago. Her husband—your uncle—was killed in a guerrilla attack. Her sons were kidnapped, forced to enlist as under-age soldiers. They did wicked things to Louise. I never told you, because it was all too sad. My sister was so broken. She retreated to our old family property, but lives as a recluse. She hates all people and refuses to see even me.”

The mother softened her tone to explain this difficult family matter. “You may not know this but your Aunt Louise is Hutu. We are actually half-sisters. Our father was Hutu and Louise’s mother was also Hutu. My mother—who I never met—was Tutsi. I told you once she died giving birth to me.” Adeline held back her tears. “It’s complicated. I’ve not seen my half-sister in ten years. I don’t know what to expect when we present ourselves to her. But she’s our best hope to survive—our only hope.”

Adeline rose to her feet. “Clemi, Jean-Luc, I think I can find my way to the old family farm. It’s only a few kilometers from here, across Serpent Creek, and up a steep ridge. I pray we can make it that far and I pray Louise still lives on that run-down piece of dirt.”

Mercifully, the rain clouds parted and a crescent moon provided minimal light. Adeline led the children up the shoreline for an hour. In total silence, they steadily picked their way through sloshy fields, moving parallel to a road way. As they approached the bridge spanning the creek, Adeline heard a tinkle of music and froze. She strained to catch the faint radio beat of a popular Simon Bikindi song. “Thank God for that man’s voice,” she whispered out loud.

The outcasts thrashed downstream a short way then struggled to cross the fast-flowing creek. Clementine gave thanks to God because her papa had taught them the skill of swimming.

Shivering on the far shore, Adeline informed her children. “This is far enough for one day. Let’s squeeze together for warmth.”

She wanted to draw her family closer still. “You know children, I was thankful for that radio sound that alerted us to a barricade.”

Speaking to her daughter, she added, “And you, Clementine, you told me you were thankful your papa taught you how to swim, right?”

She spoke to her son. “How about you, Jean-Luc? Are you thankful for anything?”

The boy sniffed the air. “Yeah. I thank God the stream washed us clean and we don’t smell like goat poop anymore.”

~ *The Umuswahili* ~

The three outcasts slept soundly through a morning drizzle. In a hazy dawn light, Adeline awoke to the clang of morning cookware. She heard a female voice and a male response. Did the man bid her a *goodbye*?

Half in dream and half awake, Adeline’s brain had been concocting a survival plan. She spoke it softly to her children, “There’s a woman nearby. I must contact her to find out if Louise still lives around here. Listen carefully, children. As a disguise I’ll pretend to be crazy—out of my wits. This is an act, but you must pretend it’s real. Do you understand?

“Yes, mama,” they said in unison.

“You must be clever, play along with me. Remember, we’re not telling lies. That’s a bad thing. We’re just pretending, like actors on TV. Do you understand?

“Yes,” they nodded.

“And stay hidden right here until I come back for you. It may be a few minutes or maybe hours.”

Clementine groaned within herself, “And what if it’s *never*?”

After commending each child to the care of the Almighty, Adeline put on her makeshift disguise. She mussed her hair, rubbed dirt into her face, and put a small stone inside each cheek. She purposely exposed one breast.

Jean-Luc turned his head away from his mother’s demented appearance.

Adeline stood and walked resolutely in the direction of the woman’s voice. The stranger came into focus—a woman with a headscarf. Was she a Swedish Pentecostal? No. By her flowing dress, she was Muslim, an *Umuswahili*.

“What! Who are you?” the startled woman gasped. “Why are you on my property? Are you alone? You’re not one of those runaway Tutsis, are you?”

In a garbled voice came the response, “Can you help me? No, I’m a Hutu widow running from the Inkotanyi army. I’m searching for my big sister, Louise Mukakuabuga. We used to live here together. Do you know her?” The crazy eyes darted side-to-side as drool dribbled down her chin.

“Cover yourself up,” the Muslim commanded. Then she stepped behind the crazed woman, peering into the sorghum fields. “I guess you’re alone.”

She spoke on, feeling safer, “Look here. I know of Louise. She lives on the other side of the cornfields, but she never wants visitors.”

The umuswahili bent forward looking the disheveled outcast square in the face. “Yep, you look Hutu well enough and I might add a little bit like Louise.” She chortled to herself, “and you look just as crazy as Louise, poor woman.”

After a circling inspection of the unexpected guest, the umuswahili said, “Okay, I’ll take you to Louise’s shack. It’s not much to look at. I’ll let her decide if she wants to keep you. What did you say your name was?”

“It’s Deli”, she responded, using a childhood name once spoken by Louise.

“Okay, Deli. I’m called Fatima. Let’s walk over there. I’m curious about how one crazy woman will react to another.”

As the two strode through fields of maize, Deli chattered to herself, not in tongues of dementia but in recitation of fervent prayer. She looked to her right, and noticed a

concrete structure painted a lime green. “That’s a pagan mosque, for sure”, she thought, and she prayed even more zealously to her Christian God.

~ *Demented Duo* ~

Deli spied a dilapidated mud hut, a squat cube of sunbaked adobe. She barely recognized it as her old homestead. It appeared the edifice was melting into the rust-colored ground from whence it came. Only splotches of white plaster stuck to the exterior walls. Window outlets were boarded shut. A black tarpaulin flapped in the breeze, no longer adequate to cover a yawning gap in the rusting roof.

Fatima shouted from the rickety gate, “Louise–Louise Mukakuabuga!” There was no response. They circled the house together. “Louise, your sister is here to see you.” Still no response. Then they stood for a few minutes near the front door.

Just as they turned to walk away, a frightened voice sounded from the shadows. “My sister you say? Who? What sister?”

“She calls herself Deli,” shouted Fatima.

The door creaked open. “Adeline, is that you?”

“Yes, Louise. It’s me, but you called me ‘Deli’. Remember?”

Fatima stepped back and the sisters stood face to face. “Deli, yes. You were daddy’s favorite. Aren’t you married? I seem to remember children.”

Deli responded, “Can we go inside your house so we can talk more?” She turned to Fatima, “Thank you, for your kindness. I need to talk with my sister alone.”

The umuswahili ambled down the footpath muttering “*Umugore ufite ubumuga bwo mu mutwe*—the woman has a sickness in the head.”

After entering the ramshackle hut, Deli continued her demented act, drooling and rolling her eyes.

Louise responded, “Is there something a matter with you?”

“Yes,” came the reply. “My husband and sons are killed. I have no place to go. This was our daddy’s farm a long time ago. Please, let me stay here with you. I think I can get better.”

Louise stared at the apparition for a long time. “Yes, I recognize your voice and your face. You are indeed my little sister. I remember when you were born and how sad papa was when your mother died. People here call me *umusazikazi*—crazy woman—but I’m not really. I’m just a widow alone in the world, bereft of husband and children. We’re alike in that way.”

After a pause Louise added, “Maybe we two widows can help each other on this farm. Our country is filling with blood. I don’t understand it. I never had a problem with Tutsis, but the mayor tells me I must hate them. Sister, maybe we can survive this madness by being crazy together.”

After considerable thought, Deli grinned. “Yes, let’s survive this madness by being crazy ourselves, the demented duo.”

At that point the door flung open. Fatima appeared with her husband. The man wore the kufi cap and abaya robe of Islam. He looked at Adeline in anger then pushed two children in her direction. “Are these yours?”

Clementine and Jean-Luc cowered in the midst.

“I caught them stealing bananas from my garden.”

Fatima spoke harshly to Adeline. “I don’t appreciate being lied to. That is not the way of our Prophet. This girl told me who you really are and why you came to this hilltop. Yes, Louise is your sister, but you’re Tutsi and the police are searching for you.”

Adeline looked into Fatima’s eyes and with humility replied. “Yes, what you say is true. I’m sorry for lying to you. That’s not my character. I only did it to save the lives of these two precious children.”

The couple turned to each other. “We understand,” the man said. “I would do the same to protect my own daughters.”

A tear trickled down Fatima’s cheek. “My husband and I have agreed to help you. It is our righteous duty, but there are many young hoodlums combing this neighborhood looking for runaway Tutsis just like you. We must have a plan if you are to survive.”

Adeline embraced her two kids. She abandoned her crazy act, expressing gratitude to the couple, “Thank you for your mercy. I know you are putting your own lives in jeopardy. You know; beside in the market place, this is the first time I’ve spoken with Muslim people.”

Fatima responded, “Yes, our community is small, but we are a tight knit group. We look after each other and our Prophet tells us to show compassion on the oppressed. That means you and your children.”

The husband added, “Our ubwoko show us to be Hutu, but we are Muslim first.”

Louise joined the conversation. “Adeline, since you’re my sister, these two must be my niece and nephew.” She choked with emotion. “Come here children. Let your Aunt Louise give you a hug. I haven’t seen family in such a long time.”

Tears filled the room. The man led the strategy session, pointing first to Adeline. “We will call you ‘Deli’. Your name ‘Adeline’ is known to many people. My guess is that you are not an idiot at all, but are using madness to mask your identity. I think you should continue to do that. If police or thugs appear at the door, act demented. My wife tells me you’re good at that. What do you think?”

She clung to her children. “I can do that, but what about these two little ones?”

Fatima spoke up, “They look too-much Tutsi and they are too honest to fool interrogators. They couldn’t even fool old Akbar here.”

Her husband laughed at that reference. “Yes,” he said. “We’ll have to hide them and they’ll have to be quiet. The four of us will look after the children until this nightmare has passed.”

Adeline spoke, “What do you think, sister.”

“I’m scared. These boys in pajamas I’ve seen running around are ruthless killers. I’ve stepped around the bodies they’ve butchered. I know what happened to my man and my kids in Kivu. And now it’s ten times worse here in Rwanda. But, Adeline—I mean Deli, you are my sister and you are seeking my protection. I cannot turn you away. I’ll help out with this plan. Just tell me what to do.”

Akbar continued, “We are already hiding two Muslim Tutsis under the floor of our mosque. There’s no possibility there, but we do have a ceiling space above our kitchen. I think that’s the best place to hide your son. As for your daughter, we can hide her in the sorghum field. I’ll dig a pit, put an iron sheet over it, then cover it with soil and brush. We can get them food and water, but they’ll have to stay quiet, especially if they hear voices. These Tutsi-catchers are always boisterous when they’re on the prowl. This is the best plan; I think.”

~ Hiding Places ~

And thus, it came to pass. The two sisters hung out in the shack; dirty, disheveled, and deviously demented. When they felt securely alone, the two would often talk of old times—happier times of youth. Their staged insanity and deliberate uncleanliness acted as armor when militiamen entered the space and looked into corners.

Deli considered everyone a potential spy. She would visit the sites of her children every day, stand at a distance, and talk to herself within range of their hearing. She didn't see their faces for ten weeks, knowing that direct contact could reveal their presence.

At first, it appeared Jean-Luc had the easier time. His above-ground enclosure was mostly dry; he slept and crouched on a cardboard mat; and he was well fed from the kitchen. But Jean-Luc was a squirmer and Akbar constantly scolded him for making the boards squeak too much. The twelve-year-old had to learn stillness, especially when voices sounded from below. He also battled with kitchen smoke, heat, and stinging insects. Each day of solitude passed as torture for this hyperactive boy. He did emerge a few times in the dead of night, to wash, stretch, and gobble food, but that was never safe.

Clementine survived in a wet foxhole dug into a slight rise in the sorghum field. Her enclosure was about one meter deep, one meter wide, and two meters long. A sandy entrance was just wide enough to squeeze her slender body into the pit. This refuge was ably covered by one long panel of iron sheet roofing.

This metal became abundant after looters stole it from abandoned Tutsi homes. The galvanized steel sheets were coveted as the one construction material not native to the African forest. Akbar had bartered three stalks of bananas for the single iron sheet.

Clementine vowed to make at least one modest improvement to her shelter every day. She placed plastic and bamboo on the bottom of her nest and sticks along the side to hold back the wet mud. Her mom assisted in the survival effort by creating a garbage heap on top of the shelter. Adeline would throw food waste and paper trash over the top mound. Sometimes she would burn the garbage to obscure her treasure hidden below.

Clementine would scour the heap at night to recover bits of food and notes of comfort. After dark in the rain, the young girl could sit just outside the entrance, alert like a sparrow, never more than a body-length from her nest. As the days passed, rain became less frequent.

~ Predator and Performer ~

The mayor of Kayove was named Alexis Rubangura. He held a pathological hatred of all things Tutsi and being more zealous than his peers, he continued to hunt for his enemy week after week, well into the month of June. The predator was merciless, ordering the extermination of women, children and babies. He often quoted his favorite saying: “*Iyo inzoka yizingiye ku gisabo ugomba kikiyena ukabona uko uyica*—In killing a snake curled around a gourd, you break the gourd if you must kill him.” In his capacity as chief magistrate of Kayove, Alexis had smashed a thousand innocent gourds.

The mayor met with local Interahamwe every Monday, held rallies with homegrown Hutu farmers and thugs every Sunday, and personally lead police on home invasions at the slightest rumor of a runaway. In some of the Tutsi-abandoned homes, he housed FAR conscripted troops. He paid these soldiers two beers per day for their services with a ten-beer bonus for capturing an enemy—man, woman, or child.

On three occasions, the mayor entered and searched Saint Mary Church. André had heard his footfalls, and listened to him shout insults at parishioners. Mayor Rubangura had walked into the home of Akbar and Fatima just one time for a talk. Jean-Luc held his breath as a team of boys searched in all the corners. Even the crazy sisters received a visit from the obsessive mayor. He examined the stinky women, perceived them as idiots, and never returned. Adeline cackled with amusement when the oblivious mayor slammed shut the front gate.

At a meeting of Hutu Power leaders in the provincial capital of Gisenyi, the mayor got word that the planned visit of Simon Bikindi had been cancelled. Since his Irindiro Ballet was already in route, west of Gitarama, Mayor Rubanbura appealed for a visit to Kayove in order to motivate local youth and farmers. He voiced certainty that many snakes were still hiding in the bush. The mayor boasted to his bosses, “I can provide accommodations for Bikindi near the banks of beautiful Lake Kivu. I own a marvelous residence once occupied by a seminary dean.”

Mayor Alexis Rubangura waited anxiously in his office for the arrival of Simon Bikindi’s convoy. As was his habit, he kept one ear tuned to radio station RFI (France International Afrique). The news was not good. Kigali was being besieged by the Inkotanyi army and the capital could fall any day. In addition, thousands of displaced Hutus were now flooding toward the Zairian frontier. He could look out his office window and see the feet in motion. His dream of Hutu Power seemed dashed.

Then he heard a special bulletin. His ears perked up. The French government had just announced a plan to organize “Opération Turquoise” in the south-west corner of Rwanda. This safe humanitarian area would comprise one-fifth of the nation’s landmass forming a rough triangle between the cities of Cyangugu to Kibuye to Gikongoro. The stated aim was to secure this expanse in order to protect displaced persons and threatened civilians.

The mayor was elated. He intuited Zone Turquoise could provide a safe haven for dispirited militiamen and uprooted génocidaires. Alexis flipped the radio to Thousand Hills. The announcement was confirmed. He heard the celebration in his own language. At the brink of defeat, France was intervening on his country's behalf. An exuberant broadcaster boasted. "We are not yet conquered. Our friends the French will support us and we will prevail. In the meantime, remember the graves are only half full. Continue your patriotic work."

The broadcaster then joked, "You Hutu girls go wash yourselves and put on a good dress to welcome our French allies. The Tutsi girls are all dead, so now you will have your chance."

Just then, Alexis heard a song of Bikindi amplified through the atmosphere. In a moment the man himself appeared in the room accompanied by an entourage of performers.

"Welcome, Welcome," exclaimed the joyous mayor.

The performer looked at him askance as if something were amiss. "Why are you so happy?"

"Haven't you heard? Our allies, the French, are coming to assist us. We can still turn this war around. And the new French zone begins only a dozen kilometers south of here in Kibuye!"

Simon listened carefully as the mayor explained the latest news, then responded. "I've just left Kigali and Gitarama. I've seen a wasteland, people running away and soldiers in full retreat. A few thousand French gendarmes can't turn that mess around."

"We will see, Mister Bikindi, but please stay positive for the sake of the majority population." Changing the subject, he asked, "Where would you like to go first? To the barricade or to your guesthouse?"

"We are all so tired. Let me and my troupe rest a bit, then we'll be ready to help with your propaganda."

Over the next two nights, twelve performers of the Indiro Ballet lounged in Andre's comfortable mansion by the sea. By chance Simon discovered a photograph tucked in the top of his closet. He remarked to a dancer, "What a good-looking family; a father and mother, three boys and a girl. I wonder where they are now."

On the day of the summer solstice, André heard a blast of amplified music. He perceived the clatter of shuffling feet on the boards above his head. Some entertainer was making use of the sacred space as a practice hall for popular music. He was aghast at the sacrilege.

André overheard the heated argument between Mayor Rubangura and Father Clement. A gunshot fired through the floorboard settled the dispute. After passing through the carpeted wood, the errant bullet whizzed past André's ear. Could the mayor have ever guessed how close he had come to dispatching his arch fugitive?

André then heard complaints about the RPF reclaiming his nation. It might be just a matter of weeks before he could climb out of his crypt and breathe the fresh air above. He couldn't help but wonder, "But what will I find on the outside?"

A few hours after their entrance, the troupe exited the church. Two pick-up trucks equipped with oversized speakers reverberated through the neighborhoods. "Attention! Attention! The world-famous entertainer, Simon Bikindi, will be performing at the soccer stadium at six o'clock this evening. You are all invited to listen to his patriotic music and message."

From their farm shack, Adeline and Louise heard the Bikindi echo. From his hiding place nestled above a ceiling, Jean-Luc heard the words; as did Clementine from her underground burrow. They also heard a chilling proclamation spoken by the artist himself: "To the majority populations, it's you I'm talking to. You know the minority population is Tutsi. Exterminate quickly the remaining ones."

Serpent Creek served as a perfect barrier to catch runaway Tutsis. The waterway twisted through the countryside like a winding snake, hence its name. Militiamen and volunteer boys guarded about three kilometers of the creek, from the steep hillside waterfall, to its outlet into the lake. Many unsuspecting Tutsis had been snared in this net. The bridge itself was the heart of the barricade, encompassed by a boarding house, cabaret, and lesser establishments.

The mayor greeted the entertainer upon his arrival. As they sat together drinking a Primus Beer, the mayor pontificated his philosophy. "Hatred and Power!" he thundered. "Leading these common people is like leading a goat. Hatred is the stick. You hit the goat from behind to motivate it into action. The people surrender to this hatred. Power is the banana skin given from the front to entice the goat forward. The common people aspire to power."

He added, "I've trained my townsfolk to hate the Tutsi vermin and once in their grasp to demonstrate Hutu power by killing them without mercy." Liquor had loosened his lips and he philosophized further, "You've got to understand. Deliberate homicide is an unnatural act. We humans are trained from birth to abhor it. So, to accomplish mass bloodshed we must de-humanize. First, we reduce the victims to the status of animals—vermin like insects and snakes. We can do this through propaganda. That makes the enemy easier to kill. Next, we de-humanize the killers. I accomplish this through alcohol and drugs. Once their inhibitions vanish killing becomes a sport." He paused, "And the young girls, ou lala, they are especially useful to me. Sometimes I pay the soldiers with a girl—an *umusanzu*—a contribution to the army."

Simon Bikindi squirmed, uncomfortable with this line of conversation.

After the glasses emptied, three men of his Indiro troupe approached their leader. “Boss, look what we found.” An adolescent girl stood before them, battered and bloodied with a rope around her neck.

Umusanzu—Bikindi figured.

A young boy lurking behind the Indiro men spoke out, “Hey, don’t I get some of the c-c-credit? I’m the one who blew the whistle when I saw this girl c-cockroach swimming the c-creek.”

The mayor kept his ear tuned to radio station RFI. He learned Kigali had fallen to the RPF on July 4 and the bulk of the Inkotani army was now turning west—heading straight toward him. After two more weeks of futile Bikindi propaganda, confused troop movement, and sporadic gunfire, the end seemed near.

Word reached the mayor that the RPF had liberated the Hutu stronghold of Gisenyi on July 17. A column of bedraggled military men shuffled south over the Snake Creek Bridge. Hordes of terrified refugees followed in their wake: young women hoisting babies, old men pushing carts, goats, chickens, bicycles; all in a jumbled procession of panic.

In spite of the growing chaos, this local boss of Hutu Power remained resolute. “Even if I die in the process, I’ll take along as many of these cockroaches as I can.” He ordered his police to stay on the lookout for Tutsis and offered a bounty for each so-called *head of cabbage* brought to him.

~ Barricade at Serpent Creek ~

André heard explosions and shouts above his own head. The RPF was on its way. He could not contain his joy but had to climb out of his tomb. From the top step of his ladder, he could see the shattered church interior, a shadow of its former brightness. He spotted ever-faithful Father Clement on his knees near the bullet-ridden altar. The priest advised his friend to wait—just a few days—but the headmaster was determined. The good father provided him with a ball cap as he stepped into the sunlight.

Invigorated from the brisk air and vivid greenery, he skipped through campus. Knots of people huddled in corners, all shuffling in a general southward direction. The disorganized swarm seemed lost in their own world. No one appeared to be on the lookout for runaway Tutsis.

André worked his way through the throng, creeping down familiar streets, until he arrived near his own house. From a distance he observed a convoy of vehicles packing

up drums and musical equipment. A barrel-chested man was urging the group to expedite their exit. André lay low until the Bikindi party had cleared the street corner, then he cautiously pushed open the front door. He shouted the names of *Adeline*, *Clementine*, and *Jean-Luc*, but only a few blank faces stared back at him.

Pulling down the bill of his cap to hide his face, he walked north to the rear of the lakeside mansions. He spotted a woman sitting on a low wall, head in hands. “Paula,” he whispered, “is that you?”

She looked up, stared in shock, then gasped, “André, are you alive?”

With a smile, he responded, “Yes, I have survived.”

She took to her feet, still gazing. “I wouldn’t have believed it except I saw you with my own eyes.”

“Paula,” he said with a stammer, “Do you know anything about Adeline and my kids?”

Now it was Paula’s turn to smile. “Most people think they’re gone to Zaire, but I know otherwise.” She glanced over her shoulder. “André, I got word that your wife is hiding out with a sister on her old property. Do you have any idea where that is?”

“I think I can find it,” came the prompt reply.

Just then a male voice shouted from inside the house, “Woman, who are you talking to?”

Paula whispered to the fugitive, “That’s Freddie. You better run like a gazelle.”

Although the street was overrun with panicked people, most were trudging south toward Kibuye. Only André was walking upstream through this human current. His counter-movement caught unwanted attention. A young man in bright colors shouted at him, “You, yes you, where do you think you’re going?”

André ignored the shout and darted through a hole in the crowd. He jumped the roadside ditch and began to walk along the same side path which his wife had navigated a few months earlier. Chaos increased as he approached the Snake Creek Barricade.

He noticed two militiamen jump the ditch and clamber to the path. A whistle sounded then a voice squealed, “C-come here. I think I c-caught me a c-cockroach.”

The young boy pursued. André’s old legs could not carry him far. The wheezing runner was corralled at the base of a large eucalyptus tree. Machetes appeared. A drunken man in uniform snarled, “Show me your papers.”

A younger man yanked off the fugitive's cap. "I know this guy. The mayor will be so pleased. This insect here is headmaster André Muhoza."

A loud blast echoed just a hundred meters down the highway. The whistle-boy turned to see crouching soldiers in uniform. He was stunned. Their garb was not brown and shabby, but green, neat, and short-legged.

The drunken man screamed, "Let's get this done with. I'm not going to fight against the Inkotanyi."

Each man swung at the helpless victim. His head was hacked loose from his body.

"The mayor might give me cash for this cabbage, but I'm not going down that road."

"C-can I have a swing?" stuttered the whistle-boy.

"Make it fast," came the reply.

The boy sliced off the prize parts and pitched them into the ditch. All three scampered into the bush, leaving a mangled corpse by the road and blood on their hands.

~ Discovery at Serpent Creek ~

As this murder was taking place, Victor Kwizera sat in the lobby of the Serpent Creek Guesthouse. He was gathering intelligence as the Inkotanyi Army advanced. By day eighty-eight of the one-hundred-day genocide, the lieutenant was proficient at his duty.

In the afternoon, a blood-soaked Sunday Missal appeared on his cluttered table. He recognized the name scribbled upon the front leaf, *André Muhoza*, and conferred with his notebook. Then he summoned his assistant, Corporal Joseph Mugemana.

"You've talked about your family in Kayove. Do you recognize this book?"

Joseph studied the pocket prayer book and trembled. "Yes, that belongs to my father. Where did you find it?"

"I'm sorry to tell you this. A fighter removed it from a corpse just up the highway."

Joseph shuddered in grief. "Please, I must go to him immediately."

"I'll go with you," Victor insisted.

A blanket already covered the remains as tearful residents looked on.

“Let me look first,” said Victor. The severed head was placed above the neck, but the sight was still ghastly. To Joseph he spoke, “I know you must see and verify for yourself, but prepare your heart.”

After a brief observation, the corporal knelt at the side of his father and wailed. Finally, a bystander took him by the arm. “You are Joseph Mugemana, aren’t you? I loved your father. He was such a kind man. I may have some good news for you. I’ve heard rumors that your mother is still alive.”

Joseph was shocked out of his grief. “What? Where?”

“She’s hiding next to a mosque not far from here. Talk to someone named Akbar.”

At the exact moment Victor and Joseph looked upon the corpse of André, his three killers arrived at the cook stove of Fatima. They were demanding food and valuables before a retreat to Kibuye.

Brandishing his knife, the uniformed leader shouted, “Hurry, hurry, fill this bag.”

The whistle-boy boasted to the third assailant, “You know that man Muhoza we just kill k-killed? I remember him. That c-cockroach was the father of my rich s-schoolmate.”

Ears hidden in the ceiling above the cook stove listened and remembered these stuttered words.

With a bag full of booty, the trio of killers high-tailed south.

~ Rescue at Serpent Creek ~

Accompanied by a squad of fighters, Victor and Joseph raced down the path toward the mosque. Unbeknownst, they passed within ten meters of the three retreating killers.

Joseph shouted to a veiled woman outside the mosque, “Is there someone here named Akbar?”

The woman pointed to the house next door. “There’s his wife. Talk to her.”

Fatima recognized the uniforms of the Inkotanyi and said, “You got here too late.”

Joseph looked at her in alarm. “Too late?” he muttered. “What do you mean ‘too late’?”

She continued, “I mean you’re late. Those thieves were already here and stole all the valuables I had.”

“But what about my mother, Adeline? Someone told me she was around here.”

“What? She’s your mom?” then talking at Akbar, “Go fetch the crazy sisters and bring them here.”

Again, turning to the young soldier, “Well, if that woman is your mother, then your brother must be just above your head.”

Joseph looked up puzzled.

“Go ahead and call for him.” A tear fell from her eye.

“Jean-Luc! Jean-Luc are you here someplace? This is your brother, Joseph.”

After a pause, a knock sounded from the kitchen ceiling, followed by a feeble voice. “Joseph, is that really you? Am I dead or dreaming? Are you really coming for me?”

The big brother could not contain his joy. He pushed aside a ceiling board and two bare feet appeared in a small opening.

“I need help getting down,” the voice continued.

Victor and two soldiers helped the boy to the floor. Jean-Luc wobbled and looked a mess. He stunk of urine and feces. His blood-red eyes were wide open, yet he could not see his brother. “I tried to stay good. I had to keep quiet,” he mumbled. “I think the bugs ate out my eyeballs.”

Just then two women rushed toward the soldiers nearly as stinky and disheveled as Jean-Luc. Adeline screamed. “Where is he? Where’s my son!”

Joseph squinted sideways at the demented appearance of the woman. Then a spark of recognition lit a fire of emotion. Like his Biblical namesake (the son of Jacob, the governor of Egypt) the army corporal revealed himself. He removed his headgear, wiped the camouflage from his face and shouted, “It’s me, Joseph. I am your son.” All those who witnessed the reunion would remember the moment forever.

Adeline embraced Jean-Luc with concern. The boy was weeping, “Mama, I can’t see. I can’t see.”

She wiped his face and eyes with a wet towel, “Oh, Joseph, what can we do for this boy?” Then she remembered. “Joseph, let’s go together to get your sister.”

The little group pushed their way through a sorghum field, coming to a mound of smoldering garbage. Joseph was leading his blind brother by the hand.

Adeline shouted out, “Clementine, you come out now. Someone special wants to greet you.”

Victor heard a high-pitched squeal. Where was it coming from? Even the army intelligence officer had no clue. Then he saw a pile of refuse shift sideways and a delicate hand appear.

“Here, let me help you,” Victor grasped one hand, then two, then gently lifted the teen-age girl from her hiding place. She stumbled on the soft earth and fell into his arms, chest to chest. Embarrassed, Victor set her on her feet again. Clementine smiled as she gazed into the face of her champion warrior.

The family of four joined arms. “We made it,” declared Adeline, but Clementine whispered loud enough for all to hear, “But what about papa?”

Joseph glanced at Victor, then Victor noticed Joseph’s tightening jaw. After a moment of hesitation, Victor spoke up in a military manner, “I’m sorry to tell you this, mam. We have received an official report that André Muhoza has been killed in the genocide. I will let you know more when I can.”

As the family continued to celebrate their own survival, they also grieved the one who did not survive. Adeline would look at her children with joy, then raise her eyes to heaven with tears streaming down her cheeks.

After an hour of washing and eating, Joseph proposed to his mother. “Let me take you, Clemi, and Jean-Luc back home.”

Victor added, “I can get you a car to take you into town.”

Adeline looked at her sister. “Louise is coming with us. She’s part of my family now.”

A convoy of three RPF vehicles headed into town. The area was mostly clear of Hutu Power, but automatic weapons still rattled along certain side streets. Joseph pointed out his house. A dozen Inkotanyi soldiers crouched around the iron gates.

One reported to Victor, “Sir, we have a situation here. A few men are holed up in this house. We think one might be Mayor Rubangura.”

The lieutenant responded, "I'd like to take that man alive. He's on my list as a noted war criminal."

Adeline spoke up, "He was the lead killer in Kayove. Everyone knows that."

Jean-Luc added with confused speech, "He's the one who killed papa. I heard that when I was hiding."

Just before sunset, three soldiers rushed through the back door. One threw a hand grenade; another tossed a tear-gas canister. Three men in white shirts fled through the front door, choking and brandishing pistols. A burst of automatic fire struck the lead man, dropping him to the ground.

Victor turned to see Joseph handing a rifle back to a startled private. "You didn't have to kill him, corporal."

"Oh yes I did," came the solemn reply.

Lieutenant Kwizera never pursued the matter. He remembered the words of his friend Mwiza: "Justice can be swift when guilt is certain."

~ A Final Rescue ~

On July 19, 1994, the Rwanda Patriotic Front installed a government of national unity in Kigali. This marked an official end to the 100 days of genocide. Within the UN-mandated Turquoise Zone, French troops were maintaining a measure of peace in larger cities, but killing continued in the hill country.

Inside the lakeside manor, Aunt Louise, Adeline and three children were trying to put their lives together. To the back of the property, the remains of the headmaster had been interred in a makeshift gravesite. A proper headstone would have to wait. To the front of the house, they gazed upon thousands of Hutu refugees streaming south toward the Zairean border city of Bukavu.

In mid-July, Father Clement appeared at the door. At his side stood a young mother nursing an infant girl. The priest spoke to the entire family. He told them about André hiding out in the crypt, how he had urged him to remain longer, but how passionate he was about reuniting with his family. Then he introduced the young mother. He switched to the French language which the woman could not comprehend.

"This lady is called Victoria. You see her breastfeeding this newborn, but the baby is not her own. A few weeks ago, hoodlums broke into her mud house. They killed her husband, abused and raped her, then stabbed her own little baby. Because she has abundant milk, she has agreed to suckle this orphan.

This baby you see has no name. An Inkotanyi fighter found her held fast in the arms of her mother. The victims were stacked upon a pile of corpses. The poor woman was slashed across the throat. The fighter heard a feeble cry, treated the baby's vicious cuts, and brought her to Saint Mary's. She was barely alive, but now—thanks to God and a caring doctor—she seems to be recovering. That's their story.

I am here today to ask your care for these survivors. The woman wants to return to her parents after the baby is weaned, but this baby girl requires a permanent home. Adeline, can you find it in your heart to adopt this child?"

She replied, "You know my André departed from this world three weeks ago. That appears to be the same timeframe when this infant entered into the world. You say this child has not received a name. At church next Sunday I'll christen this girl—my new daughter—*Andrea*."

Story Six

Resistance in Bisesero

July 25 to August 30, 1994,

Major Bidogo was maneuvering his battalion southward along Route 7 from Kayove toward Kibuye. All Rwandan territory to the north had been liberated by Rwandan Patriotic Forces and the genocidal killing had wound down. However, when his Inkotanyi fighters reached the Nyabahango Bridge, the major ran into an obstacle. Three French armored personnel carriers blocked his river crossing.

A dozen French troopers in UN helmets inspected vehicles and checked documents. Military police permitted only civilian refugees into their Turquoise Zone. A French officer explained to him, “This has been designated as a safe region. No weapons are permitted beyond this point.”

Major Bidogo contacted his higher headquarters for instructions and was ordered to stand down and camp north of the river to await developments.

Victor Kwizera looked through his binoculars at the south side of the span. He could see clusters of Interahamwe waving machetes. Some were draped in the tri-colors of France; others waved banners of the Rwandan regime; all jeered at the impotent Inkotanyi.

Officials of the tottering regime had been anticipating this confrontation for several days—this hour when RPF vehicles would be stalemated at the threshold of the Turquoise Zone.

Among the satisfied onlookers stood Bosco Kayishema, governor of Kibuye province. This true-believer in Hutu Power had already supervised the slaughter of 40,000 Tutsis and was hoping to complete the *gukora*—the work. Once he was assured his enemy would not cross the bridge, he and his cronies returned to Kibuye, courtesy of a French quatre-quatre (4x4 all-terrain vehicle).

Next to the governor sat the French commander in Kibuye, Captain Marin Gillier. He took the attitude that Kayishema was the legal authority throughout the province and hence, warranted his full military support. According to the captain’s worldview, Anglophone Africans like the Ugandan-based RPF posed an existential threat to Francophones like Hutu-Power Rwandans. It was of secondary importance who was being killed and who was doing the killing.

That evening the governor led a rally at the stadium flanked by Rwandan and French flags. He bowed to Captain Gillier remarking in the colonial language, “Thank

you so much for saving our nation. Your people have always been friends of us Rwandese.”

The governor switched to his native tongue, knowing the captain could not understand his oration, “Majority population, here me out. Our brothers—these *French Hutus*—insist they will leave our country in just one month. Therefore, we must quickly do two things. First, we must strive to make our province Tutsi-free. Cleanse it from all cockroaches. Don’t worry. I’ve been assured that Captain Gillier has no mandate to identify criminals or arrest militia fighters.” With a wink he added, “And we are so many and they are so few. They can’t possibly look on every hilltop at once.”

“Second, we must cross the frontier into Zaire. Our esteemed leaders are waiting for us. They’re already preparing camps near Bukavu. Once we’re established in strength, our revived army will return to Rwandan soil and then it will be Paul Kagame’s turn to run away. I also heard this: Once we have a toe-hold on foreign soil, the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) will recognize our international status. Then, even the American government will provide us with aid.”

The frenzied crowd of one thousand cheered. “Yes governor, let’s get to work.”

Back at the RPF encampment, Major Bidogo voiced his frustration. “If I could shoot just one Frenchmen, these UN interlopers would soon pull out of Rwanda and slink back into Zaire.” The major understood the hiatus in fighting was a diplomatic decision and not one based on military necessity.

~ Into the Turquoise Zone ~

While politicians debated and diplomats dithered, ethnic cleansing continued throughout this back pocket of Rwanda. With the connivance of *French Hutus*, Thousand Hills Radio was re-located from Kigali to Kibuye. The governor used the power of broadcasting to specify the locations of renegade Tutsis and to direct paramilitary forces against them.

Finally, after three weeks of idleness, Victor looked through his binoculars and noticed the UN-helmeted troops had vanished. With orders from the new unity government, Major Bidogo led his convoy across the deserted bridge.

By this late date in August, over one-half million Hutu refugees—many complicit in crimes of genocide—had already escaped through the Turquoise Zone and crossed the international bridge from Rwanda into Zaire. By September, two million desperate souls overflowed makeshift refugee camps near the frontier cities of Goma and Bukavu. All who fled into Kivu Province were now outside the reach of Rwandan justice.

After the liberation of Kibuye, Major Bidogo learned that Bosco Kayishema had flown the coop into Zaire taking along most of his ring leaders. Reports of reprisal killings by armed Tutsis and undisciplined Inkotanyi came to the ears of the new governor. He asked the army to keep half its force in the city as constabulary police. “I have no love for the génocidaire,” said the Unity governor. “But I’ll keep these evil men in custody until justice finds them.”

The battalion convoy struggled down Highway 11 toward Changugu, crawling up one hill then down another; negotiating hairpin turns and hugging the deep inlets of Lake Kivu. After a torturous twenty kilometers, the two-hundred fatigued soldiers stopped for the night at Bisesero Secondary School. The buildings were shattered and looted, but the classrooms served as adequate billeting.

At first light, Lieutenant Victor Kwizera reported to the major. “Sir, I’ve received reports that a remnant of the Interahamwe militia is still roaming the hills just east of here. They tell me a dozen killers are five kilometers up the road near an Adventist Church. They’re still hunting down Tutsis.”



A moment later three tactical 4x4s were churning the dust, heading into the sunrise. Along the route, fighters recruited a church elder to guide them. Soon a flash of color and a stray gunshot alerted them to danger ahead. The troops dismounted and cautiously walked up the road. In the distance they saw the backsides of the scampering enemy. At the same moment, they heard the shriek of a child. Two riflemen leapt over a stone wall to confront a militiaman beating a crumpled woman with a *masu*—the nail-studded club. At the sight of intruders, the outlaw drew his pistol and fired. His bullet missed its mark. The rifle response did not.

The fighters attempted to calm the screaming toddler. From the shadows of a back room a short man crept forward with a newborn in his arms. He studied the

uniforms of the intruders and burst into sobs. “Thank God. Thank God,” he cried out. Then seeing the disfigured form of his wife, he looked to heaven and wailed, “My sweetness is dead. Why did it have to happen like this?”

The fighters escorted the grieving man to the roadside, each carrying a small survivor of the genocide. As two of the 4x4s raced to catch the fleeing enemy, the third vehicle carried three witnesses back to Bisesero Secondary School.

The next day, after the short man was fed and cleaned, he sat with Victor for an interview. The Adventist elder and his wife looked after his two children. The newborn was not doing well. Her head was bruised when the bandit dropped her to the ground. The witness spoke into a tape recorder with sorrow and purpose. He wanted his testimony to be complete.

~ Anchor of the Soul ~

“My name is Eric Nshimiyimana. I was once on faculty at this school, teaching French and English. It seems like a very long time ago.” Eric spread his papers on the tabletop.

“As you can see, my *ubwoko* declares me to be a Batwa. That’s not quite true. My father was an indigenous dancer at the court of the last Mwami. He sang about the *inyambo*—sacred cow. My mother was Hutu, a singer of traditional ballads. As the second of nine children, I took my father’s tribal identity.

“I grew up with privilege, but when King Mutera was poisoned to death, my parents re-settled in my father’s ancestral home near the Nyungwe Forest. We lived so deep in the trees of the Rift Valley; we figured politics would not touch us. But trouble came to our door. When my father spoke out against the murder of his Tutsi friends, he was killed in reprisal. The local police did nothing. I was only twelve years old.”

Eric paused and brightened his mood. “I don’t want to make my story so sad. There was plenty of joy also as I was growing up. I remember this old song my dad taught me before he passed away. Let me sing it for you. It’s called *Ntawundi mwana nkibyara ndakuze*— “He’s so old he can no longer procreate.”

The listeners in the room could not contain their laughter as Eric sang through five verses of this folksong. He made faces, pantomimed, and shook his body until tears rolled down the cheeks of Victor.

After catching his breath, Eric resumed his tragic story. “When my father died, my mom took us kids to Gisenyi and joined a performance troupe, again singing these kinds of traditional songs, often for private parties. We struggled; we begged; my mom did what she had to do to feed us all. At that time, I attended a day school set up by

Belgian missionaries. When I turned eighteen, I was able to use my French skills to support my family. My mother died of AIDS when I turned thirty—so did one sister.

“This was a desperate time for me. I began to attend a Protestant church, one of the Pentecostal type. My angry heart changed. I began to study the Bible in a serious way and became a youth leader.

“That’s how I met Rachel in 1990. She was twenty years younger than me and she was Tutsi. My friends warned me that such a match was not wise. Afterall, we lived in Gisenyi, the stronghold of Madame Agathe Habyarimana’s *Akazu*. The next year I married her anyway and soon my first son came along; that’s Marco. Because my wife came from the wrong tribe, I lost my government job in Gisenyi. We should have walked across the frontier into Goma as refugees, but I love my country and instead, we moved to a place not far from here; the house where you found me.

“This past year, around Christmastime, I learned that Rachel was pregnant again. I should have been happy, but instead I was fearful. I was now teaching school right here; as a matter of fact, just two classrooms away.” Eric stopped abruptly and walked to a window. He pointed to a small building across the courtyard.

“I kept up to date in regard to political events by listening to France International Afrique. I was hoping the Arusha Peace Accords would bear fruit and Rwanda would heal. However, when I bicycled into school on April 7, I learned about the tragic death of our president.

“My *ubwoko* showed me to be Batwa, but that was not the same as being Hutu. I was not the enemy, but neither was I a friend. We Batwa were somewhere in the middle. The thing that tilted the scales against me was Rachel. I did not advertise my Tutsi wife, but I think the school principal reported her to the sector leader.

“After a few uncertain days, the school closed and the massacres began. My humble house was far from the highway and we managed to survive there. On a few occasions, Interahamwe came to the door and I showed them my papers. Rachel and Marco had already moved deeper into the interior. She had church friends there and I provided her with some money. I learned later Rachel had given birth to our daughter. She named my second-born *Hope*.

“The situation worsened during the month of May. Residents from neighboring sectors came to take refuge in Bisesero. As mass killings by the militia increased, people trekked from miles to take refuge in these hills. By now there were ten thousand Tutsis banding together. Even though I’m Twa, I joined this resistance on behalf of my wife. We resolved to fight unto death rather than succumb to the Interahamwe.

“One of the village elders named Aminadabu Birara took command of the situation. We prepared to fight anyone who came to attack our villages. Our leader

instructed all Tutsi resisters to take strategic cover on top of the hill called Muyira. Here we could spot our enemy from a high vantage point. Only men and boys who were strong enough to resist joined the fighting. Children and women took cover behind the hill. At that moment our weapons of resistance were stones and a few spears. Yet, we proved able to kill a few of our attackers.

“When Governor Kayishema learned that Bisesero residents were fighting back, he directed units from the regular army to crush the resistance. Artillery and mortars were called in from all corners of Rwanda.

“On May 13, over four thousand residents gathered on top of Muyira Hill. I stood among them. Big bullets from mortars and cannons rained down on our heads. They even dispatched a helicopter overhead to spy out our positions and direct attacks. Our stones and spears were no match for such an onslaught. Although many died, a few of us did survive and continued to resist.

“After a full month of running and hiding, our hopes soared. I heard on a small radio the French army had arrived. Their mandate was to protect us civilians—non-combatants. We would be rescued!

“Only later did I learn the cunning of the governor. He convinced the French captain—a man named Marin Gillier—that the resisters at Bisesero were in fact armed rebels; this was absurd. In fact, the front line of the RPF was some fifty kilometers away.

“Our so-called French protectors arrived in Bisesero on June 27, intending to stop the genocide. Governor Kayishema accompanied them. Captain Gillier asked to parlay with a French speaker, so I volunteered to meet him at this school. I explained the best I could that we were not rebel fighters. We possessed no weapons but were merely defending our lives with spears and rocks. Many of us who were well-hidden came out to seek the protection of the French army. Our secret places were spied out by the militia. After discussing matters with the governor, Captain Gillier told me he could do nothing on that afternoon but promised his troops would return in three days for our rescue.

“I saw the face of the governor brighten up. I knew we were in for trouble. So many people trusted the French and so many people died as a result. I ran to get my wife and kids and without further word, we escaped deeper into the forest.

“Not long after the French army’s departure, the Interahamwe came back to finish what they had started. They attacked day and night to kill each and every survivor. On the night of June 30, the French came back to find a hundred corpses. Only a handful remained alive to tell our story of resistance.”

Eric paused and Victor probed, “How did you come to live in that house?”

“Oh, that?” Eric continued his story. “With one three-year old and one newborn, my wife could not stay in the forest forever. She said to me one day, ‘I’ve been praying a lot lately, asking God about hope. A church friend directed me to a book in the Bible called *Hebrews*. She read to me, ‘We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.’

“My dear husband, we must cling to this hope in order to survive. Hope in God anchors our being. You and I must have this anchor for the soul. That’s why I named our daughter *Hope*. Don’t you see?

“I said to her. ‘Sweetness, every time I look upon my daughter’s face I will think about this moment of hope.’ I then suggested our best chance for survival would not be in the forest, nor on Muyira Hill, but back in our own house. We still had food hidden in the area and our walls were sturdy. Plus, if we had to die, I’d rather it happen in our own home.

“That was two months ago. Everything seemed to be going better. The French left for Zaire and the wicked governor followed. The killing seemed to stop and guns ceased to fire at night. I even spoke to some of my neighbors and we bartered for food items.

Eric’s tone changed, “Lieutenant Kwizera, do you believe in demons? I saw them. With my physical eyes or spiritual eyes, I don’t know. First, I heard the demonic laugh, then I turned to see this red-colored beast fall down from a tree, like a spider on its string. I saw several more grinning down at me, pointing at me and making obscene gestures to my wife. Then, they faded away with a lingering odor of fire. That’s how I knew. The evil presence of Interahamwe was still around.

“Then two days ago, a gang of straggling gangsters re-appeared. We hid behind our house in the tall grass. But yesterday morning Marco heard a gunshot nearby and let out a scream. A single evil-eyed man uncovered us. He hit me with a club, then grabbed Rachel. He ripped Hope from her mama’s breast and flung the baby to the ground. Then he dragged my wife into the house to abuse her for his pleasure.

“I heard her cries fade into sobs, then into silence. My three-year-old wandered toward the house to see what had happened to his mama. I was too much of a coward to even stop him. My son shrieked louder than I had ever heard before. A moment later I heard one gun shot, then two in reply. Again, there was silence. That’s when I collected the courage to walk through my back door. I found two Inkotanyi soldiers, one holding Marco in his arms.”

Eric broke off his interview and burst into tears. “Rachel is still in that house; still exposed to the world. Please help me get back to her. I must give my wife a decent burial; for her sake, for my sake, for Marco, and for Hope.”

Story Seven

Massacre at Kibeho

April 17 to 27, 1995

A full year after the onslaught of genocide, the unity governor of Butare Province called a meeting of his top civilian and military advisors. Waving a paper in his hand, he exclaimed, “I have a direct order here from the minister of defense—Paul Kagame. He is crystal clear. The refugee camp at Kibeho must be emptied immediately; forcibly if necessary. He says it’s a threat to our national security. Our aim, as always, is to send known génocidaires to prison for adjudication and the remainder back to their hometowns to carry on with their lives. To assist the displaced civilians, I’ve been directed to establish smaller staging areas around the province. We will gather transport and send them all home”

The governor then asked the local commander of the Rwanda Patriotic Army to brief the group about Kibeho.

Colonel Muneza stood to speak. “As you know, the Kibeho camp is operated by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). It’s grown to become the largest camp in our nation, containing more than 80,000 displaced Rwandese. The camp is located on a plateau of about nine square kilometers near the Kibeho Catholic Cathedral. Most of you know that place to be a center for devotees who believe in the apparitions of Mother Mary. I understand many fearful Hutus have congregated there to seek the protection of the Blessed Virgin. This camp is policed by a company of Zambian infantry assigned by the UN, but they are too few and do little but wave batons. There are limited medical services provided by Médecins Sans Frontières and other volunteers under the auspice of the UN.

“At the present time my army is maintaining a tight cordon around the camp. Any refugee wishing to exit has to pass through our checkpoints. At these gates we have local genocide survivors who will point out criminals. You realize that with such large numbers the process has been slow. But because of the crisis, we are speeding things up.

“Also, we believe strongly that Kibeho doubles as an active insurgent camp. We have concrete evidence that inside its perimeter the Interahamwe are terrorizing residents and using them as human shields as they attempt to escape. These former militiamen chase them and crash them against the wire. I can also tell you this: Many Hutu extremists inside the camp are spreading disinformation. They tell the lie that whoever leaves the camp will be killed. This delusional thinking makes it nearly impossible for us to get these fearful people out of the camp and integrated back into

society. General Kagame has concluded the camp must shut down before the displaced people will leave; by force if needed; with violence if resisted.”

The governor closed the meeting. “When we clear this camp, I expect many will die. The United Nations will not like it, but this can’t be helped. We are damned if we do and damned if we don’t.

“I am no friend of the UN. Where were they when Tutsis were being slaughtered? Where were they when my own brother and sister were killed here in Butare? But now that one million innocent dead are rotting in the grave, the UN pampers their killers and their accomplices, insisting each génocidaire is entitled to Western-standard human rights.”

“Those white Europeans treat us black Africans with contempt—like we’re ignorant children. If it were left to the UN do-gooders, that miserable camp would remain open forever, a hotbed of resistance, a resort for criminals, outside of our jurisdiction. That’s not acceptable. Why don’t they let us deal with our own problems in our own way?

He took a deep breath and moderated his language. “Yet we are part of the world community and we Rwandese will need the help of foreigners to get back on our feet. We must resist their nonsense yet cooperate as best we can to gain their financial assistance. May God help us.”

~ Man in a Yellow Coat ~

Thirty kilometers to the southwest—in the center of Kibeho Refugee Camp, Mathilda Umuraza was voicing the same prayer: “May God help us.” Looking upon the concentrated mass of humanity, her heart groaned with compassion. At twenty years old, Mathilda was a budding scholar, a warrior for justice, and proud of her Hutu heritage.

She had been praying since the day her family fled from the Rwanda Patriotic Forces. That had been twelve months earlier during the previous April rain. Her refugee journey took her from Kigali to Gisenyi, then into the Turquoise Zone. Although not subscribing to the extremes of Hutu Power, Mathilda counted the Inkotanyi fighters as foreign invaders.

Like most in her caste, she equated all Tutsi people (inyenzi) with accomplice (icyitso) and accomplice with enemy (umwanzi). And in this time of pitched war, she agreed the enemy had to be neutralized. Hutu ideology may have lodged in her head, but

in her heart and through her actions she treated all human beings with kindness. These virtues of charity and justice she had inherited from her father.

Preacher Elisha—as her dad was called—was a man of deep faith. His wife had died in a stampede when shots were fired in the Turquoise Zone. His younger daughter had succumbed to severe diarrhea a week later. Elisha and Mathilda were now on their own, two flecks of debris bobbing in a torrent of turmoil.

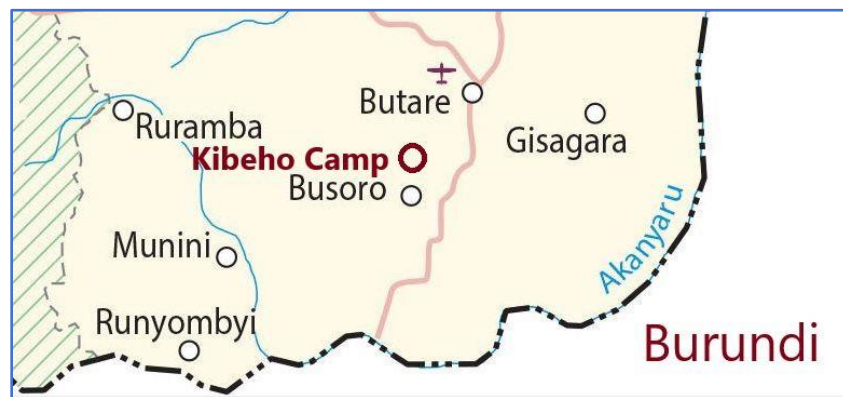
The devoted daughter gazed at her upright father in amazement as he quoted the Biblical figure of Job in regard to his losses: “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

“Where did my father find such peace?” she marveled. “He is either a fool or a saint. Maybe they are one and the same.”

Preacher Elisha was dirt poor. He possessed no food or money. He did wear a bright yellow raincoat once handed to him by a UN worker. He also maintained a French New Testament which he protected from the elements by shielding it under his waterproof jacket.

The preacher projected an aura of calm in the midst of chaos as he sat on a wooden box and read words from the Sermon on the Mount: “Heureux les affligés, car ils seront consolés. . .”

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. . .
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”



On April 18, two battalions of RPF soldiers surrounded Kibeho camp. Their orders were to clear the area using any force necessary. To accomplish this end, the

military had barricaded the two roads winding into Kibeho. They stopped all food and water distribution from aid organizations and forbade any further UN involvement. Medical personnel were permitted to treat patients only outside the barbed-wire perimeter.

The soldiers used the expedient of firing shots in the air to move the residents along. During this process of concentration several children were trampled to death. The troops also torched many of the huts so residents would not return outside. One group of refugees broke away and started to run into the valley. Rwandan troops fired and several runaways fell dead. The army command resolved to let no man—especially any potential génocidaire—escape past the cordon.

As the process continued, the refugees concentrated into an increasingly tighter area. At this point about 100,000 refugees stood shoulder to shoulder on a mountain plateau about the size of three football fields. Kibeho Concentration Camp took on the character of a dying star. Compressed by its own gravity, it grew denser and darker. No light could escape from this black hole.

On April 22, what has been termed “The Massacre at Kibeho Camp” took place within this confined area. Just after 10:00 am, in heavy rain, army forces began firing into the air near the hospital compound. Fearing a riot, some troops began to shoot directly into the crowd and soon most riflemen joined in, firing indiscriminately. Many Western onlookers claimed their motive became more about revenge against Hutus and less about crowd control.

This shooting caused a stampede of human livestock that broke through the razor wire and barricades. Army forces continued to discharge their weapons at fleeing refugees for the next two hours. While initially firing into the massed crowd with rifles, the army later began using heavy machine guns and mortars. Escapees were run down and killed on the spot. Nevertheless, hundreds of internees did escape into the countryside.

As conditions in the camp became desperate, terrified herds of people rushed first in one direction then another. Shifts in the pattern of slaughter caused bodies to be crushed, rolled in human filth, and torn by razor wire. Panicked women and children strove to evade machete-wielding Hutus on the one hand and to escape the bullets of Tutsi soldiers on the other. To avoid injury, some frantic souls leapt into latrine pits, wallowing in neck-deep human waste.

Oblivious to the tumult swirling around him, a solitary preacher stood on a wooden box. A dozen down-trodden refugees encompassed him, clasping hands or

hugging children. Mathilda did her best to sing a rendition of “Amazing Grace”, but her voice faltered.

The man in the yellow coat continued his reading from the Sermon on the Mount—that pinnacle of ethical teaching that has set Jesus above any mystic or guru who has ever preached: “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you or persecute you.”

As her father encouraged his listeners and restored to them a sense of dignity, Mathilda spotted a *muzungu* (white man), a visitor she knew to be from the Australian peacekeeping forces. George Gittoes wore a blue UN helmet, held a sketch book in one hand, and appeared to be taking notes. Then, snapping his book closed, Mister Gittoes took two small boys by the hand and led them toward the front gate.

A respite of relative quiet burst into a maelstrom. Explosions rocked the earth and Mathilda’s father vanished into a jumbled hillock of splinters, clothing, and body parts.

Mathilda was knocked to the ground. Then, rising to her knees, she limbered her body. Was it an “amazing grace” that she was spared serious injury, or would it have been a greater mercy of God to bestow death at the elbow of her beloved father?

A woman with a bandaged head handed a Bible to her. “Maybe you should hang on to this. This book is a survivor too.”

For several hours, the young woman hugged her knees rocking gently. She sang hymns to herself before falling into a fitful sleep. The muddy Bible served as her pillow.

In the morning, a measure of calm was restored and she picked her way unmolested to the front gate. A female guard leafed through her tattered Bible and searched her body. Mathilda signed her name in a big book, recorded her hometown, and checked the mark stating she did not take part in genocide atrocities. She then joined an endless procession of bedraggled men, women, and children as they plodded toward the relocation camp near Butare.

~ A Displaced Person ~

Once again Victor Kwizera teamed up with his comrade, Bernice Mukamanda. The two lieutenants worked side by side at the relocation camp near Butare. Their focus was to re-issue ID cards to the tide of incoming Hutus who no longer needed the word

“Hutu” imprinted on their *ubwoko*. Both were counting down the days when they could finally shed their army uniforms and resume their pre-war lives.

Victor noted the large photograph on his friend’s desk: four lieutenants standing side to side near the eastern frontier. He spoke quietly to her, “This war is so cruel. Mwiza was a true friend; and do you know whatever happened to Sano?”

She responded, “Yes, Mwiza... Will I ever find a special friend like him again? And that earnest face of Sano staring into the camera. He had such a bright future ahead of him. We cannot be sure. We have his journal as a witness which suggests he was killed at the house of his mentor priest. The cleric turned out to be a lead génocidaire.” She shuddered, “I’m glad those murderers have been weeded out of this bunch. It makes our job easier.”

Bernice wiped a tear and asked him about his experience in Kigali.

Victor held a pencil between his fingers. “When I entered the capital on the heels of the Inkotanyi army, I could not even find a single pencil like this one here. Every item of value had been carted off or destroyed. The only objects in abundance were human corpses. I helped supervise the interment of thousands in such places as Gisozi and at Kicukiro.”

He then smiled in wry amusement. “I did learn a new English word while reading the American newspaper. ‘Kigali,’ it reported ‘was a necropolis.’ Yes indeed, it was.”

After an exhausting day of work, a sergeant spoke to Victor in private, “Sir, there’s a woman here who demands to see the officer in charge. She has a complaint to lodge against the army and appears very determined.”

“Show her in,” responded the weary lieutenant.

A young woman strode up to Victor’s desk. Bernice glanced sideways at the developing situation.

“Are you in charge?” the woman demanded.

Victor looked her up and down. Like most others fleeing Kibeho, her clothes were filthy and ragged, her hair matted with clods of dirt. A bruise marred her frowning face and she carried what appeared to be a Bible. After these observations, Victor answered, “Yes, I’m in charge at the moment. How can I help you?”

Mathilda raised her voice in anger, “Where can I get the proper forms to report acts of genocide?”

“Oh,” said Victor. “You’ve been a witness to the murder of Tutsis? We have forms right here.”

“No, you dunderhead. I want to report RPF soldiers who purposely killed innocent Hutus at Camp Kibeho.”

Victor was taken aback. He was about to curse the woman, but gulped his words.

Lieutenant Mukamanda came to his rescue, “Miss, you can’t use those words in here. If you won’t speak with respect, you’ll have to leave.”

“Respect!” she shouted. “Respect? Just a few days ago I witnessed my own father blown to bits by an RPF mortar. Your underlings wouldn’t let me report this atrocity. They said there are no forms for such things. Are you telling me that murdering a Tutsi is a crime, but murdering a Hutu is not? What kind of country is this?”

With a measure of sympathy, Bernice handed her a blank sheet of paper. “Here, write down your story—names, times, places—I promise to pass it up my chain of command.”

“I don’t want your promise.” she raged. “I want justice for my father. I want his killers held accountable. He was such a good man.”

Victor and Bernice consulted in whispers as Matilda filled two pages with handwritten scrawl. After several minutes she presented the paper to Victor.

Victor read the words and clicked his tongue. “This will never do. These are serious accusations against loyal soldiers of the RPF. I see you have no corroborating witnesses and no direct evidence of how your father died. These allegations are also dangerous for you personally.”

He then told Matilda a Rwandan proverb, “If your mouth turns into a knife, it will cut off your lips.”

Matilda pondered his words a bit, then responded. “When I was in grade school, I learned proverbs too. I’ll recite this one for you. ‘In a court of fowls, the cockroach never wins his case.’ And now I see clearly you two are the fowls and I am the cockroach. Such irony! Me in the role of *inyenzi*!” She laughed to herself.

Bernice demonstrated patience with the troubled woman. “I do promise to pass on your letter if you insist, but while you’re here, let’s get you a new ID card.”

Mathilda was directed to a basin of water where she could clean her face and tame her hair. She looked at her reflection in the mirror, studying her bruise for the first time. “I guess that’s the best I can look.”

When she was handed the completed *ubwoko*, she studied it with a look of puzzlement. “I see my proper name, my hometown, my birthdate, but where is my tribe? Where’s the word *Hutu*? Are you trying to erase a whole population? Isn’t that a kind of genocide?”

Bernice was astonished. “Didn’t you know the Government of National Unity has forbidden you to speak those tribal names? Don’t you recognize racial distinctions are what caused the genocide in the first place?”

“Excuse me,” she shot back. “Hatred is what caused the killing, not tribal affiliation. I was born a Hutu and I will die a Hutu. Isn’t it denying reality to say no tribes exist in Rwanda? Isn’t it re-writing history books?”

She held up her father’s Bible. “Look here. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says we are to love people who are different than us. He taught that Israelites should love Samaritans and vice versa. He never taught His followers to erase racial distinctions, but to embrace them! and still to love. Why can’t you be a Tutsi and I remain a Hutu and we still respect each other as neighbors, allowing no special treatment for either tribe? That’s the world I want to live in.”

As she tucked her card into her Bible, Victor warned her one more time, “Don’t let your mouth cut off your lips.”

Matilda slammed the door behind her and stormed to a relocation bus, filled with fellow refugees returning to Kigali.

Story Eight

Land on the Mend

1994 to 1998

The nation of Rwanda was left *decimated* in a literal sense of that word. One in ten citizens had been exterminated. In addition, two in ten had fled into neighboring countries mainly into refugee centers along the Zairian frontier. On top of this, another million Rwandese were categorized as “internally displaced persons”, wanderers without a place to call home.

In an ironic twist of numbers, an influx of one million diaspora Tutsis filled the void left by one million annihilated countrymen. It was as if an avenging angel had stuck his mixing fork into a paint bucket, scrambled the human contents, poured out a portion, and added outside ingredients.

In the Land of One Thousand Hills not a single soul was left untouched by the tragedy. From Mount Bisoke near Kigali, to Huye by Butare, to the great mountains of the East Africa rift, to the volcanic peaks of the mountain gorillas, there was desolation on every hill.

Would border wars continue into the indefinite future? Would cycles of murder and revenge never cease? Or, could reconciliation replace retaliation? Could this textbook example of dysfunctional Africa actually transform itself into a prosperous, unified, democratic, and peaceful republic? Hope and despair wrestled in an uncertain atmosphere.

With such widespread desolation, many rootless survivors surveyed the breadth of their troubled nation, seeking a peaceful place to settle. This was especially the case for the Tutsi diaspora who had never claimed a home in their own homeland. Many of these new citizens wended their way into the university town called Butare.

~ A Lieutenant Returns ~

Ugandan-born Victor had mustered out of the military near the town and figured he'd seek his fortune in this intellectual hub of the country. He had heard the National University would re-open soon and he desired to complete the education he had abandoned in Kampala.

He soon found a job as an English interpreter for a non-profit organization. *Compassion International*, headquartered in the United States, paid him a meager salary and provided him with room and board. Among his roommates were Fred and Emmy. These two evangelists would keep him awake at night with their hymn singing and would pester him with gospel appeals. Fred handed him an English-language booklet called “The Four Spiritual Laws”. Victor studied the words, both to polish his English and to consider its message.

1. God loves you and created you to know Him personally.
2. Man is sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him.
3. Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for man’s sin.
4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Emmy continually invited Victor to his Pentecostal church. Finally, on a September Sunday, the apprehensive soldier-scholar accompanied his two companions to a lot on the outskirts of Butare. Victor noted the parcel of land was in the process of being cleared. A herd of munching goats assisted in that endeavor.

At the lot’s center stood a half-complete rectangular structure. A dozen sturdy timbers held up an iron sheet roof while lesser saplings formed a two-meter-high external wall. On this Sunday morning, light burst in from all directions. Although the grounds appeared freshly swept, a powdering of red dust settled on every surface. Two cars were parked near a rear door and a young man struggled to start a gas generator.

As Victor strolled toward a welcoming line, he glanced in the direction of the pastor. Yes, it was him! It was Eric Nshimiyimana, the man he had once interviewed in Bisesero. Emmy introduced Victor to the pastor.

“Yes, yes, I think I know this man,” Eric spoke to himself. “But you were in uniform two years ago.” He probed his memory looking up and to the left. “Kwizera, right?”

“That’s correct. It was such a difficult time back in Kibuye. And how are your two kids?”

An eye-twinkle preceded a positive response. “Marco is well and we never lost Hope. But you’ll see for yourself. They’re inside with my sister.”

As the three friends entered the church, Victor looked around at the space. Crude wooden benches were filled with about one-hundred worshippers and a dozen folding chairs surrounded a raised pulpit. Several carpets and wall hangings added a dash of color to the drab interior. As he stepped in, an electric guitar crackled to life and the young man thump-tested a microphone.

When the singing, dancing, and preaching had concluded, Pastor Eric asked if anyone needed prayer. Victor stepped forward. A dozen hands stretched in his direction as he confessed his faith in Jesus and put his trust in the Lord. Shouts, whoops, and spontaneous cheer reverberated through the space.

Victor soon became a regular attender and a volunteer greeter. A few months after his conversion, he recognized a familiar face entering the church. He grasped the hand of his old comrade, Joseph Mugemana from Kayove. Next to him stood a tall young lady he hardly recognized. Could that attractive creature actually be Clementine? His eyes widened.

Joseph followed Victor's gaze. "Yes, that's my little sister. She's really blossomed into a beauty, huh? Oh, and that's Jean-Luc holding on to her hand. My poor brother. We've taken him to doctors, but he remains blind." He lowered his voice. "Most of it is physical, but after two months hiding in an attic, he also suffers some kind of post-traumatic stress disorder."

As Victor and Joseph engaged in conversation, the shy Clementine looked on from the side line. How could she forget that brave soldier who had rescued her from the pit of gloom and briefly held her in his arms?

~ A Professor Returns ~

A few weeks after the RPF had liberated Butare, Pascazia Kubwimana returned to her university town. Her property was trampled and her house plundered but the structures were mostly intact. She discovered a dozen refugees squatting in various corners and permitted one mama with three babies to remain while finding shelter for the others. Because Pascazia knew how difficult it would be to mend her shattered world, she decided to leave Beatrice with her aunts in Bujumbura; at least for the time being.

Every morning, she was reminded of Francis and every evening she wept herself to sleep. After a soul-strengthening visit from Pastor Daniel, she determined to redeem her time by keeping her life busy. First, she relaunched her effort to earn a law degree, reading legal books in the evening and completing courses by correspondence.

Next, the new unity government appointed her administrator of a museum committee. With the aid of a Belgian non-profit, she initiated the reopening of the Ethnographic Museum. This monumental task of restoration and inventory was the kind of detail work that kept her mind engaged; day-by-day putting distance between her bloodstained past and her post-genocide world. Yet Pascazia realized she could never return to a time she called *before*.

Beatrice returned to her mother in 1997, not alone but with her Aunt Tutti and a few cousins. The situation in Burundi had deteriorated and Butare now seemed more stable than Bujumbura.

In mid-1997, Pascazia met with the new president of the National University. She shared with him her vision of a permanent memorial dedicated to all students, staff, and faculty who perished during the one-hundred days.

By year's end, a stone enclosure set astride the north-south highway. Facing the roadway, visible to all vehicle and foot traffic, a purple banner exclaimed, "*Twamaganye afafobya. Itsembabwoko n'abarihakana*. No! to the revisionists. No! to the deniers."

Wooden display cabinets spanned the interior walls of this structure with photographs pinned behind plexiglass. Of 565 known victims, about three hundred were exhibited through name and photo. The black and white likeness of Francis Mutabaruka appeared in a corner of the martyred faculty.

For the next few years, Pascazia stopped by this touchstone on every passing. She would sometimes put flowers in a vase and say to herself, "Yes, these are the martyrs. These are voiceless witnesses." This was the best a sorrowing widow could manage since there was no gravesite for her beloved husband.

~ A Major Returns ~

In early 1997, during a walk through the local market, Victor Kwizera spotted a uniformed officer examining potatoes. He studied the man's face, circled to his back, and joked from behind. "Major Bidogo, what are you doing in my city?"

The officer responded without turning about, "Your city, Lieutenant Kwizera? It's my city too."

Victor reacted with surprise, "How did you know it was me without even turning around?"

The major laughed. "I've been here in Butare for a full month and it's my job to know the name and status of every resident. Also, I observed you examining the men's cologne. As a matter of fact, I was about to contact you."

"You were?"

"Yes, my military section has need of reserve soldiers; not full time you understand, but once a month and when called upon for extra duty. I suppose you're in need of more pocket change."

Victor smiled his response.

The major continued, “I know your ability. I saw you in action. You’re a soldier of intelligence and discretion. That’s what I need right now. Why don’t you drop by my headquarters this evening to talk; say about seven?”

Victor took the card handed him as Major Bidogo walked to the cashier to pay for his purchase.

That evening Victor showed his entry pass to a guard and was escorted to a spartan office. “Not much here,” quipped the major. “We’re still gathering our supplies. That’s one of the things you may be doing if you accept a position.”

An easy conversation ensued. Victor filled in a few details of his life since they had parted ways in 1994. He mentioned his Christian walk, but the major showed little interest. Victor then asked, “I read the newspapers every day, but what’s going on now? Are we really at war with Zaire?”

“It’s called the Democratic Republic of Congo now. Its President is Laurent Kabila. He was our friend last year but this year he’s our enemy. I’m a soldier and not a politician, so I try not to dig deep, just follow orders.”

“So, then you were in Kivu, fighting?” asked Victor. “How was that? What can you tell me?”

“I can’t tell you much about what I did personally, but I can inform you about the situation in general. We estimate that two million Rwandan Hutus fled into the border camps just inside Congo. Do you think these masses of refugees are avoiding revenge? Or are they escaping the justice which is due them?”

Victor responded, “I guess it depends on whom you ask.”

“Still the diplomat I see.” The major then continued, “The ex-FAR military began to set up replicas of their Hutu power state. Our enemy was massing fighters just a few kilometers from our border. We had to act. We had no choice. Then what began as a border problem expanded into a regional problem. A political crisis exploded into a humanitarian crisis. Thousands of people died by disease in these festering hellholes. I felt especially sorry for the suffering women and children. Then the Nyiragongo volcano erupted and killed thousands more. Some people—perhaps you’re among them—called all this *divine retribution* in response to their murderous deeds within our country.”

“And what about the authors of the genocide?” asked Victor. “What happened to them?”

“We know where they are and we’ll bring to justice as many as we can, but it’s a challenge for a small country like Rwanda. Colonel Bagosora plots his revenge from Cameroon; Bizimungu fights rebels in Angola; and Bikindi now sings *Twasazareye* in Holland. Madam Agatha fled to France and is gathering a kind of Akazu around herself. Interim President Sindikubwabo hides out in Congo. In revenge of a sort, my troops

destroyed Sindikubawabo's big house south of campus. Not one stone is upon another. Have you seen the ruins?

"Kwizera, maybe you don't know this: The UN has set up a court in Arusha, Tanzania, calling it the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). I suspect most of these big shots will end up there, in the dock before foreign judges. That angers me. These crimes were perpetrated by Rwandans upon Rwandans within the boundary of Rwanda. It's not an international affair at all. I'm told the powers at the UN don't trust our government to provide justice for our own people."

Major Bidogo changed the subject abruptly. "By the way, do you know a certain woman named Mathilda Umuraza? She was in my office a few days ago. Her attitude appeared most negative. She was asking me how to file charges against Inkotanyi soldiers who she claims killed her father. She said you interviewed her once."

"Yes, I remember the woman. She was asking me those same questions a few years ago and I warned her about being so vocal. So, she's in Butare now?"

"Yes, she says she's enrolling at the university. Umuraza seems to be a religious person. She was carrying a Bible. Maybe you could talk with her. I'd hate to detain her, but if she breaks the law, I have no choice. You know tribalism, revisionism, and trivialization of genocide are now considered criminal offences.

A Troublemaker Returns

As the new year of 1998 began, classes resumed at the National University. Returning students could simply re-enroll, but new students needed to undergo an evaluation of documents and submit to interviews in both English and French. As he walked toward the exit, Victor felt dejected. Yes, he was admitted, but only provisionally. He'd have to take one full year of remedial French and pass a language aptitude test in 1999.

By chance, he spotted Clementine, looking equally dejected. He nervously approached her, "What's wrong?" he blurted out with embarrassment.

Clementine was shocked. Although the two had been exchanging glances in church for a full year, he had not yet spoken to her. Her heart fluttered as she responded. "I'm sad because I can't take regular classes yet. I'm fluent in French, but my English is very bad. I have to study English for a year."

Victor couldn't bear to look into her eyes, so spoke to her feet. "It's very strange. I'm good at English, but up in Uganda I never learned French." He took a deep breath to muster his courage before adding, "You know, maybe I could tutor you in English and you could help me with French."

There, he had said it, and now looked into her eyes. She turned her head and spoke to the air, “I will have to ask Joseph about that, but I think it will be okay. Of course, we’ll have to be very discrete.”

“Yes,” Victor glowed all over. “*Akabanga?* A secret? I’ll talk with your brother in private, if that’s okay with you.”

Just after she had spoken her “yes”, an angry woman rushed past the couple. Clementine stepped aside to give her space. She cast a flirtatious smile toward Victor, then strode away in wonderment.

The woman was now shouting at an older man, a professor. “What do you mean, I’m not found suitable for the university?”

Victor recognized the suppliant as Mathilda. He heard the professor say, “You’ll never attend this university if I have anything to say about it.” He then turned his back and stomped away in a huff.

Calling out her name, Victor caught the attention of Mathilda. He spoke to her, “Is there anything I can do to help you?”

She looked at him head to toe. “I remember you. You once helped me fill out a complaint form. That didn’t help at all, but got me into big trouble.”

“Yes,” Victor responded. “And if I remember correctly, I told you not to let your lips cut your neck. Is that what you were doing just now with this vice rector?”

“You don’t understand. None of you Tutsis understand. I can speak French and English better than this so-called professor who just rejected me. I scored the highest on every math test they offered me. Yet this man had the gall to say there was no space for me at the NUR. He said only 120 new students would be admitted for this semester, but twenty slots were reserved for diaspora soldiers—that means Tutsis—and fifty for orphans of the genocide—that translates as more Tutsis. What chance do I have?”

Her face contorted into tears, “Look, my mother died in the Turquoise Zone and my father died in the massacre at Kibeho Camp. I explained that to this professor and do you know how he answered? He said ‘That doesn’t count. Only if your parents died at the hands of the génocidaires would that count.’ Of course, my dad was killed by a Tutsi explosion.”

Before running off, she shouted over her shoulder, “I know who you are. You’re a friend of that Major Bidogo. You can tell him I’m leaving this rotten country. I have no future here. I’ve made some important friends in France you know.” And with that, she was off.

~ A President Arrives ~

On March 25, 1998, the President of the United States—Bill Clinton—paid a visit to Rwanda, limiting his stay to a few hours at the Kigali Airport. He was hosted by the president of Rwanda, Pasteur Bizimungu. In so many words, Clinton offered an apology on behalf of the world for failing to intervene during the Rwanda genocide.

“I have come today to pay respects of my nation to all who suffered and all who perished in the Rwandan genocide. It is my hope through this trip, in every corner of the world today and tomorrow, their story will be told; that four years ago in this beautiful, green, lovely land, a clear and conscious decision was made by those then in power that the peoples of this country would not live side by side in peace.

“It may seem strange to you here, especially the many of you who lost members of your family, but all over the world there were people like me sitting in an office, day after day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror.”

Clinton went on to suggest if the U.S. had intervened in Rwanda following the start of the genocide at least a third or roughly 300,000 lives could have been saved. He remarked it could have been an easy task to put radio station RTLM out of action with just a few missile strikes.

Pastor Eric was viewing this event on his television with Deacon Victor at his elbow. “Yes,” Eric said. “Clinton’s words are cheap. Why didn’t he take action four years ago?”

While not disagreeing, Victor remarked, “You know he’s the first world leader who is even attempting an apology, as feeble as it may be.”

~ A Missionary Arrives ~

After three months of secret French-language remediation, Victor received a visit from Pastor Eric. “Hey, Brother Victor. I’ve got some good news. I may need your interpretation skills. There’s this guy coming from America, but he’s Korean and speaks Korean with some English. Anyway, he’s an evangelist and wants to hold Christian rallies all over Rwanda. Can you stay after church next Sunday? He wants to meet with local pastors and interpreters. It may mean some money in your pocket. I’m expecting about a dozen local clergy.”

On the following Sunday morning Victor greeted Missionary Park and a few other Korean-Americans at the Pentecostal church. When the service ended, local pastors began to arrive. Daniel was there from the Anglican Church, Pastor Zebulon from the Nazarenes, Monte from Transformation church, Willie from the Baptist Church, and

even Dante from the Swedish Pentecostals. Victor recognized Oscar the police captain and Pascazia representing the mayor's office. He also greeted Emmy who planned to serve as a fellow interpreter. Along with this crowd there were campus leaders from a multitude of university groups.

After a few hymns, Missionary Park rose to speak. Eric did the interpretation from English into Kinyarwanda. "Thank you for inviting me to your wonderful town and beautiful country. *Imana ni nziza* – God is Good!" The audience appreciated his effort at speaking their language.

Missionary Park continued, "You may not know this, but next to America and England, the little nation of South Korea sends out the most missionaries in all the world. And many faithful Koreans have immigrated to the USA, especially to my state of California. As a matter of fact, I've personally visited over sixty churches filled with Korean-speaking Christians.

"I first came to your country in 1994, just a few months after the war ended. I didn't arrive as a missionary, but as a reporter for the Korean Times Newspaper based in Los Angeles. My heart was broken by what I saw four years ago and my faith was re-kindled. I continue to see your suffering and your desperate circumstance, but also, I see your rebuilding, your effort at reconciliation, your forgiveness, but especially your need for Jesus Christ."

The group of pastors broke out into applause and to amens at these words.

Missionary Park went on, "I want to bring about forty Korean-Americans to your country, three or four to Butare. Can you help me? We want to speak and teach in your churches and hold a crusade at your football field. We want to turn the hearts of all Rwandans to Jesus."

Everyone in the pews agreed to participate in the upcoming event scheduled for July. Eric was elected as representative to Missionary Park's organization which was called *Christian Life Frontiers*. He spent the day coordinating with Jonas, a Rwandan and Park's right-hand man. A budget for Butare was agreed upon at four-thousand U.S. dollars. They would now have to wait until July to see what would happen.

As the months progressed, Victor held a clandestine date with Clementine every week. The supposed objective was language learning but this object proved secondary. Victor also accepted the offer of Major Bidogo and began to collect military intelligence in the environs of Butare.

Pascazia passed her bar exam and began to dabble in Rwanda law; Pastor Daniel was demoted from his position as Anglican church vicar; Pastor Eric became affiliated with the Assembly of God denomination and began construction of a permanent church building made of brick and mortar; and Mathilda purchased a one-way ticket to France.


The April monsoons came and passed—reminding this nation of the devastation that had occurred just four years earlier, a time when one-hundred days of genocide descended upon this land of one-thousand hills and left one-million of its people in the grave.

So Great a Cloud of Witnesses

A Novel of the Rwandan Genocide



Part Two: Witness to the Reconciliation 1998 to 2014



~ Up from the Ashes ~

“Miraculous” is the word most commonly spoken to describe the transformation that took place in Rwanda in the two decades following the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis. This astonishing turn of events occurred throughout Rwanda; in its society, polity, economy, and in the very fiber of its people. How did it become possible for ten million traumatized citizens not only to function as neighbors but also to flourish as a nation?

The path to wholeness and prosperity was neither smooth nor easy. Hatred and resentment ran deep. Credit belongs to all citizens across the board: to Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa; to Christian and Muslim; to rich and poor; to the perpetrator, enabler, bystander, victim, and rescuer alike. The mass of society had to buy in to the framework of reconciliation and warring tribes had to set aside their differences. The multitude had to seek out this higher good.

However, one man stands out as indispensable to Rwanda’s national success. That person is Paul Kagame, first as general of the RPF, then as president of the republic. Without his guiding hand, it’s difficult to imagine how Rwanda could have ever transformed from basket-case to case-study.

Like the first American president, Kagame has been hailed as “first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen.” He maintains such a sterling reputation that African despots in surrounding countries have taken to calling him “Saint Paul.”

Of course, Paul Kagame does have his detractors, especially among those in the exile community where he is viewed as dictatorial and anti-human-rights. The president of Rwanda does indeed strictly enforce laws against tribalism, revisionism, and trivialization of genocide. Some opponents would add to that litany “criticism of his policies, his governance, and especially his person.” Nevertheless, even his fiercest critics point with pride to the stability and prosperity so obvious in Rwanda today.

As a tribute to this nation and its president, many notable Americans have trekked eastward to pay homage to the revived Rwanda. During a short span of four months in 2006, three wise men bearing gifts arrived in Kigali. First to come was Bill Gates offering prosperity through healthcare and his charitable foundation. A few

months later Bill Clinton appeared, once again contrite for his non-intervention, and providing international visibility to an obscure nation. Within a short time, Rick Warren paid a call on President Kagame. He offered evangelical support along with 10,000 copies of his *Purpose-Driven Life*.

The three American magi underscored the three-fold mend that was taking place in Rwanda: economic, political, and spiritual.

In formulating his national policy of reconciliation, Paul Kagame favored the proverb: “Truth passes through fire but it does not burn.” He believed the road to recovery must begin with indestructible *truth*. Every Rwandan person had to admit to the truth of the genocide and account for their involvement in it. He insisted no progress could be made without such transparency.


Only upon a foundation of truth could *justice* stand firm. Yet, Western-style justice proved elusive in a place where one million citizens were potentially complicit in the destruction of another million. There simply were not enough judges, juries, and court space to accommodate the decimation. At a rapid pace of one hundred legal verdicts per day, it would still have taken three decades to adjudicate one million criminal cases. Rwandans would have to create their own home-grown method to administer justice on such a massive scale.

Only after truth and justice have taken root could a process of reconciliation bear fruit. At a minimum, a genuine reconciliation would entail a willingness to forego personal revenge and an agreement to live side by side in harmony. Such reconciliation would require both super-human strength and supernatural grace. Yet, miraculously both seemed to happen.

Those of us foreigners who ministered post-genocide in the *Land of One Thousand Hills* became first-hand witnesses to a miracle of reconciliation. We count ourselves among the great cloud of witnesses. Perhaps it came to pass as written by Saint Paul—the apostle not the president: “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. (Romans 5:20)”

Mission 1998

Answering the Call



~ A Seed is Planted ~

Joy Lee Taylor spread her Korea Times on the kitchen table. Munching pear slices with one hand, she flipped through newsprint with the other. It was her hour to unwind the day. She read with interest news of a conflict along the DMZ in Korea as well as a double-homicide in Los Angeles-Koreatown. A special report told of pregnant women flying from Seoul to L.A. to give birth in California hospitals. It appeared this was a novel form of tourism designed to provide American citizenship to newborn Koreans.

Almost complete, Joy turned the newspaper upon its face, displaying its back cover. There she noted a full-page ad from a missionary named Fred Park. His organization, called *Christian Life Frontiers*, was recruiting volunteers to accompany him on a short-term mission to the troubled nation of Rwanda. The deadline for payment was only five days away. She sighed, folded the paper in two, and tucked it into the waste bin.

After removing makeup, brushing, and flossing, she plopped into the king-size bed, unable to fall asleep. First, she fussed about the raucous day just past at Sonoma State University. She was a tenured professor after all. Why should she take flak from that subordinate lecturer? How dare he tell her how to teach! Should she speak with the department chair about the unhappy situation?

She placed her hand on the pajama waistband of her snoring husband. Yes, they were still in love; still devoted to each other; still active in the Baptist church; but where was the sense of adventure? Ken said he didn't mind that she earned more money than he did. That was probably true, but deep down, did she herself care? Maybe she did. Maybe she resented her carefree American husband who always stopped to smell the roses.

She smiled as she thought about her son, Jefferson. Three years at Princeton was a financial challenge, but he was fulfilling his dream—perhaps more properly her own. She was proud of her first-born. Unlike most Ivy-Leaguers, Jeff held firm to his Christian principles.

Madison? Well, Madison was struggling with both her faith and her direction in life. She was certainly smart enough for U.C. Santa Cruz, but there were so many

distractions. It was such a liberal place; no structure, lots of parties, lots of discovering yourself, lots for a mother to worry about. But the two of them would be chatting about such things the next day.

Her mind shifted to the newspaper and the full-page ad. The picture of gaunt children with big eyes haunted her imagination. It caused her to think of her own upbringing in South Korea just after a bloody civil war in which a million of her countrymen had perished. Her own family was dirt-poor in Gyeongnam Province. Yet there always seemed to be enough fruit to eat in her grandpa's orchard.

Joy turned and tossed. She later claimed it was a prompting by the Holy Spirit that kept her awake. Finally, she retrieved the newspaper from the bin, smoothed it out, and placed it next to a stack of student homework she planned to grade in the morning.

Ken called to Joy just before eight, "Time to get up, *Yobo*"—his Korean term of endearment. "The coffee's waiting for you."

She groaned and flopped over.

He stepped into their bedroom. "Maddy's coming back from Santa Cruz today, remember? Her old room is ready, but you said you wanted to do some shopping when she comes, 'to jazz it up' you said."

Those promptings roused her from bed. "Give me a few minutes. I'll sit with you at the breakfast table. Uh, there's something important I want to talk about."

Ken felt uneasy. *Wanting to talk about something important* often meant trouble. "What's this about?" his brow furrowed.

After thirty minutes of time-biding, Joy appeared at breakfast. Ken slapped down his *San Francisco Chronicle*, mixed his wife a cup of coffee, then sat with arms crossed. "Well?"

"Well, what? ... Okay." She gathered her thoughts, trying to figure her opening gambit. "What do you know about the country of Rwanda?"

He approached her question academically. "It's in east Africa; capital is Kigali; there are mountain gorillas; and a few years ago, the whole country was embroiled in a terrible genocide; there was fighting between two ethnic tribes; I think they were called *Tutu* and *Hootsi*."

"No, silly, they were *Tutsi* and *Hutu*. The killing is over, but there's still a lot of suffering going on in Rwanda."

“Okay, that’s good to know,” Ken responded matter-of-factly and reached for his newspaper. Then it struck his slow wits; this was more than a geography quiz. “So, what makes you interested in Rwanda?”

She smiled coyly. “Oh, I don’t know. I was just wondering if maybe you’d like to go there with me on a missionary trip. That’s all.”

Ken was speechless.

Joy placed the full-page spread on the table top. “I know your Korean isn’t proficient enough to read all this, but you get the idea. This church group is going to Rwanda on July 6 and my heart is touched by their mission of mercy. You know I’ve been wanting to go on an overseas mission for a long time and just yesterday this appeal appeared in my newspaper. Plus, it’s a bonus for me. The group is Korean, so I can fit right in.”

Ken responded, “Well, yobo, I’ve learned once you sink your teeth into something you don’t let it go. But isn’t mid-July the time we planned to go to England to see Jeff on tour with his *a cappella* singers?”

“Yes, I thought about that. I almost bought those London tickets for us. Maybe God held back my hand because He knew this mission trip was around the corner.”

Ken mused in silence. *Now she’s invoking God to plead her case. How can I possibly oppose both my wife and my God.* Then he spoke softly, “If this is really important to you, I’ll support it. We both have the summer off from teaching, our passports are up to date, and we set some money aside for Europe. Let me know how I can help.” Adding with growing interest, “And it might be fun for me to go too.”

She stood from her chair, stepped behind his back, and placed her cheek to the top of his head. A tear moistened his hair. “Thank you. I know I married the right man.”

After a few phone calls, she announced to Ken, “That was easy. Christian Life Frontiers is meeting with new volunteers next Sunday afternoon. The time is short. We’ll have to bring a check if we really want to take the plunge.”

Ken wondered what his wife had cajoled him into.

Joy talked with Madison while at Macys. The college freshman was happy to hear of her parent’s adventure and promised to look after the house while they were away. Joy concluded the talk, “And I’ll speak with the Thompsons next door. They’ll let me know if any parties are going on.”

Madison pretended that such a thought had never crossed her mind.

Ken spoke to Jeff by phone. His son was disappointed his folks weren't traveling to England. Jeff also mentioned his intense preparation for the Foreign Service Exam. "Dad, pray for me," he said. "I've been aiming for the diplomatic corps since middle school. Some friends and I will be going to New York in a few weeks to take the test."

~ *A Team Is Assembled* ~

After their own Sunday morning service in Mill Valley, the Taylors drove to a large Korean church in Santa Clara. It was already two o'clock and the second service was letting out. The pungent odor of kimchi wafted out an open door. "The right place," she said. "Just follow your nose."

Joy reveled in speaking her native tongue. English took an effort, but Korean flowed with ease. Missionary Park and his wife introduced themselves to the Taylors. Ken looked around to discover—as often happened—he was the only non-Korean in the room. He pulled his wife aside, "You enjoy yourself. Talk all you want and learn as much as possible."

After a potluck of rice, noodles, and kimchi, twenty-five people lingered around three folding tables. Fred Park outlined the mission in halting English. "We will gather in London. I think we'll bring about twenty people from the Bay Area. Several are also coming from L.A. and my brother from Denver will take along six from his church. There are twelve provinces in Rwanda and we'll strive to have a three-man team in each provincial capital. We'll talk more about the team structure later."

"Oh, and today is the last day to sign up for the mission. We have to buy tickets next week. If you haven't paid yet, my wife will take your check when we end. First let's make sure we answer all your questions."

The discourse bounced between English and Korean, landing sometimes in the middle realm of *Konglish*. Ken felt he was slowing the process by his presence. The Korean-Americans wanted to be polite and include him in their discussion, but that might double the length of the meeting. Ken caught the attention of Missionary Park. "Please my friends, just speak in Korean. My wife will fill me in later."

To make the point emphatic, he scooted his chair outside the circle of tables. The discussion sped up and became more animated. Soon, one of the men tapped Ken on his shoulder and asked to sit outside with him. Once out the door, a conversation ensued.

“I’m Bryon Baek,” said the man. “I hope you’ll join us next month. There’re too many women. We need a few of us guys to balance things out.”

Bryon spoke about his church, his wife, and his three kids. He said he worked at Apple Computer in Cupertino and was looking forward to a mission trip in Rwanda. Bryon mentioned how Apple gave him free vacation time if he went overseas with a non-profit organization.

Ken spoke about himself, about being drafted into the army, sidestepping the war in Viet Nam, but instead doing a two-year stint at Yongsan Army Base in Seoul. “I met Joy just as I was about to return to Oregon. It was love at first sight. I wanted to marry that young woman on the spot, but she refused. ‘Go back to America,’ she insisted. ‘Get out of the army and come back here as a civilian. If you do that for me, I’ll know you’re serious. I promise to wait for you. Then we’ll talk about marriage.’ That’s exactly what she told me and that’s exactly how events unfolded.

“We lived as a couple in Seoul for almost two years. I was making decent money as an ESL instructor while at the same time honing my Korean language skills. However, my bride was miserable. Being married to an ex-GI, she was insulted on the street with all kinds of profanity. So, we came to California in 1975.”

“And what do you do for work these days?” asked Bryon.

“I have a checkered career,” he laughed. “My undergraduate degree was in history. Then, I was drafted and when I came back to the States, I couldn’t find a job teaching in high school. I loved technology and soon began teaching program languages at a community college, then more practical stuff like how to operate a PC. I worked with a stock broker for a while, but now I’m teaching American history. My specialty is in the era of the founding fathers.”

Bryon inquired further, “I understand you have two children?”

“That’s right. Jefferson was born in 1977 and Madison in ‘79. You see, I was a historian by trade and named my children after the third and fourth presidents.”

“That’s funny,” said Bryon. “I’m a Korean patriot and named my first son after the highest mountain in Korea called *Baek Dusan*.”

“And is your son a volcano like the mountain?”

“You may find out. My twelve-year-old is coming to Africa with me.”

With the fellowship hall nearly empty, Joy continued to converse with Sara, the wife of the missionary. When Joy was finally talked out, she conferred with Ken, then

the two of them held hands to pray. At last, Joy found her inner peace. She wrote out two checks for \$1725 each; \$1225 for round-trip tickets to Entebbe Airport and \$500 as a mission fee. It was a done deal. Now it was time to prepare for an adventure.

Joy met with her new Korean friends on the following Sunday. She later informed her husband, “We’ll be co-leaders of a team in a town called *Butare*. Fred made that decision because we’re both in academia and that place is home to the National University. Maybe I can even speak on campus. That would look good in my *brag book*. There’s a woman named Lilli on our team and a guy named Johnathan. He’s kind of a weirdo, but I think you can handle him. Fred wants you to come next Sunday to talk in person about it.”

At the top of their to-do list was immunization. Joy and Ken traveled to the Kaiser Permanente in San Rafael to receive vaccines against yellow fever, hepatitis, typhus, and tetanus. They were also prescribed once-a-week tablets against malaria.

During this preparation time, Ken made great use of his favorite search engine, *Hotbot*, to discover new things about Rwanda. He wanted to learn especially why the U.S. didn’t do more to halt the genocide. What was the history behind that? He discovered that President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeline Albright had been spooked into their position of non-intervention.

He read that in late 1992, then-President George Bush interjected American forces into the failed state of Somalia at the behest of the United Nations. *Operation Restore Hope* was intended to save innocent Somali lives.

On October 3, 1992, eighteen American soldiers were killed while trying to arrest a tribal leader. News outlets later broadcast gruesome images of jubilant African mobs dragging American corpses through the streets of Mogadishu. Some news analysts suggested the video might have contributed to Bush’s loss in the November election.

Newly elected president, Bill Clinton, determined not to involve his administration in African politics. Non-intervention became a cornerstone of his foreign policy toward the continent. Just after his inauguration, Clinton halted *Operation Restore Hope* and ordered all American forces home by a deadline of March 31, 1994.

Just six days after troops exited Somalia, President Habyarimana crashed to his death in Kigali. From this historical perspective, Ken could understand why Bill Clinton might be hesitant to intervene in another so-called African civil war. American leaders shuddered at the thought of American corpses on parade in Kigali.

Fred Park was happy to have Ken along on the mission. When they talked the next Sunday, he asked, “Can you help me with communication and preparation of English documents?” He then handed a mission guidebook to Ken which contained: lists of items to pack, tasks to accomplish before departure, a proposed itinerary, Rwandan songs to sing, dos and don’ts in Africa, as well as passages of Scripture. After reading through the thirty-odd pages, Ken understood why Fred had asked for his editorial assistance.

Joy delegated two tasks to Ken. He was to procure two tropical sleeping bags and buy four over-sized suitcases. He purchased the bags from REI and wheeled home the luggage from Goodwill.

On July 4, Ken phoned his brother Roger who was a professor at Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, Oregon. He explained his itinerary: to London and Entebbe by air, then to Kigali by bus. He told of the purpose: “Joy and I will be Bible teaching and maybe some evening preaching. I’ve prepared five lessons based on the parables of Jesus. I think we’ll be going on some side trips to places like a genocide memorial, an orphanage, and a refugee camp. Some of that depends on what we find when we actually hit the ground. Missionary Park tells us things are always in flux and we need to remain flexible.”

“I’m glad you’re going,” Roger told Ken. “Such a trip can be life-transforming. I know you and Joy have been on a few missions to that orphanage in Mexico but this sounds like it will really stretch your faith. Be sure to take lots of pictures and fill me in when you get back. Who knows? Rwanda sounds like a fascinating place. I may want to accompany you some day.”

Roger continued, “While you’re in Africa, I’ll be at a conference in Germany. A theologian by the name of Wolfhart Pannenberg will be leading a seminar on the historical resurrection of Jesus. Have you heard of this theologian?”

“No,” admitted Ken.

“Look him up online. He has quite the reputation. Also, I plan to visit some Nazi internment camps while in Europe. I’m still looking for a specialty beyond New Testament studies. Maybe I’ll find it in Buchenwald. The existence of evil in God’s good creation has always been a problem that intrigues me. I want to resolve this puzzle, at least to my own satisfaction.”

Ken responded, “I’ll be looking at some evil stuff in Rwanda too. You know the Jewish holocaust and the Rwandan genocide have a lot in common.” Ken concluded, “You’ll be in my prayers, brother.”

Roger reciprocated, “You’ll be in mine as well.”

~ *Final Preparation* ~

The Bay Area mission team of twenty-one people gathered on Sunday, July 5, at the Korean church fellowship hall. After travelers showed their passport and immunization record, each received an airline ticket. Next, Sara taught the group some children’s games like duck-duck-goose. Then the group sang three Rwanda songs shown from an overhead projector.

Every participant brought along one empty suitcase to be filled with material for *Christian Life Frontiers*. The twenty-two CLF bags would be trucked to the airport the next day. Once there, each passenger would reclaim their own luggage for check-in.

Ken and Joy helped to fill the containers with books, bedding, donated clothing, and photocopied handouts. The most critical cargo turned out to be Korean food. Ken noted that each piece of luggage contained five pounds of rice, gochujang (hot pepper sauce), dried squid, and packaged noodles. In addition, jars of kimchi were double-bagged for extra safety. When they found an empty space, they crammed it with rolls of toilet paper.

Ken pondered, “How could Koreans survive without their comfort food?” Each piece of group luggage was carefully weighed to be under fifty pounds. Finally, Missionary Park closed the evening in prayer.

Madison, who had agreed to serve as house-sitter and chauffeur, arrived late Sunday night to occupy her newly-furnished bedroom.

Most of Monday morning Ken and Joy packed, unpacked, and re-packed. At mid-day they departed, picking up Lili in Sausalito, then heading to the San Francisco Airport. With four adults in car seats and three fifty-pound bags in the trunk, Joy’s red Pontiac was packed to the gills.

After Maddy waved good-bye from the curb at the international terminal, the missionaries were on their way. They met up with Fred and the others two hours before take-off. Ken pushed their heavy bags to the British Airlines window and watched as one ton of Rwandan supplies passed along the conveyer belt.

Just after taking his aisle seat in economy class, Ken’s mind percolated: “I’ve not even set foot in Rwanda, yet I can’t shake this intuition that I’ll be returning to this corner of the world again and again, and again and again.”

~ First Steps in Africa ~

After nine hours of talking, movie-watching, and napping, Ken and Joy landed at London Heathrow. The Taylors then boarded Kenya Airlines for a seven-hour flight to Entebbe. With travel fatigue and sleep deprivation, the couple was beyond tired. Yet, their bodies perked up when their eyes beheld the Ugandan multi-colored wardrobe and their noses inhaled the moist equatorial air. Yes, they had arrived in Africa!

The Taylors passed through customs and boarded an eight-passenger bus. With faces pressed to windows, they bumped down a dusty road to a rural compound where a cavernous church interior would serve as their shelter for a few nights. Fred Park supplied cardboard flooring and foam mattresses as travelers wrapped themselves in their tropical bags.

The rough-hewn structure was constructed of raw timber packed with mud. Wasps abounded, having made nests in the earthy mortar. Some sleepers lit coils of repellent to keep the mud-daubers away. This action proved to be a study in the law of unintended consequences. Noxious fumes collecting in the tall rafters eventually caused a hailstorm of intoxicated insects. The midnight bombardment produced multiple shrieks but no bodily injury.

Ugandan mamas prepared communal meals for the multitude. The local fare of rice and skewered goatmeat was augmented by kimchi and gochujang. Joy looked around at the African and Asian faces and spoke to Lili, “I’m happy my husband came along with me. It’s Ken’s face that completes the rainbow.”

After a few days of acclimating to the foreign time and place, the mission convoy proceeded south, pausing one night at a Mbarara guesthouse. A “Welcome to Rwanda” sign greeted the three busses at the frontier. The sojourners walked through a Ugandan checkpoint struggling to pull luggage. They paid a Rwanda visa fee then boarded a thirty-passenger bus, this time keeping to the right side of the roadway. It was all so novel and exciting. The gawkers couldn’t keep their eyes off the verdant hills and exotic villagers.

The thirty-two short-term missionaries booked rooms at the Isano Hotel in Kigali. From the capital they would move on to their provincial sites. After a breakfast of fruit and porridge, the arrivals assembled in the hotel wedding hall. Missionary Park summoned his Rwandan hosts one-by-one to identify their city and to meet with their guests. Eric Nshimiyimana and Victor Kwizera walked to the platform, announced their hometown as Butare, and called out the names of Kenneth, Joy Lee, Jonathan Kim, and

Lili Cheon. The newly-formed team of six moved to a corner to confer and plan. Ken had already formed an opinion, whispering to Joy. “I bet the tall skinny guy with the small head is Tutsi while the squat grinning one is Hutu.”

She scolded him, “Shush. We don’t speak of such things in this country. Here we’re all God’s children.”

Ken responded with a measure of hurt, “That’s true in polite company, but to a historian like myself, the past cannot be rightly interpreted without recognizing tribal distinctions.” He then quoted Santayana, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Joy rolled her eyes at Ken’s scholastic affectation.

Eric provided his own car as transport for Ken and Joy while Victor hired a mini-bus to haul Jonathan, Lili, and twelve pieces of luggage. After a sixty-mile journey they arrived at their destination.

Butare was located three degrees south of the equator, providing the town with plenty of warm sunshine. Yet, at six thousand feet above sea level, the temperature and humidity proved moderate. Fog often crept over the forest floor while breezes cooled the hilltops. Ken said the climate reminded him of San Francisco, but without a nearby ocean.

The group checked into a local-style hotel called *Eden Garden*. The compound consisted of twenty small rooms constructed of cinder block and facing a large inner courtyard. The simple accommodations contained a firm-but-comfortable bed, a desk with chair, and a wooden wardrobe. On the streetside of Eden Garden was a welcome desk and restaurant. Behind a second set of doors lay the guest accommodations consisting of large tables, potted plants, and toilets. Three shower stalls, constructed of wooden planks, stood side-by-side.

After checking into their rooms, Victor gathered the four by the wash facilities, “Would you like to get cleaned up?” He then explained bathing procedures to his uninitiated visitors. “Here’s how we do it in my country. A housekeeper will give you a plastic tub in which to stand along with one jerry can of warm water. Please be mindful. Hot water is a precious commodity because it’s heated over charcoal. Use half to wash and half to rinse.”

Victor then pantomimed the process stepping into a tub. “Use this hand bowl to gather your water. Start by pouring it over your head. We usually wash from the head to the middle, then from the toes upward. The water collects in the tub to soak your feet.

Be sure to pick up a towel before entering. I think you all brought your own soap, but the hotel mama has some if you need it.”

~ Such Delightful People ~

After the guests had freshened up, local clergy filtered in for a meet-and-greet. These arrivals included six pastors, their wives, and one single woman—Pascazia Kubwimana. Through interpreters, Ken and Joy introduced themselves to the couples. Only Pastor Daniel and Professor Pascazia spoke understandable English. Therefore, it was to these two, the couple was drawn. Joy especially enjoyed chatting with her fellow female academician, conversing for an hour after the others had departed.

Joy wanted to experience Rwanda at ground level and coaxed Ken into a casual walk around the college town. She passed on information about Pascazia and the tragic death of her husband, Francis. In response, Ken shared about Daniel and Esperance and their amazing survival story. “Such resilient people,” he marveled.

As they strolled down dusty streets, children clustered, whispering to each other “Muzungu-muzungu” (foreigner-foreigner). Joy knelt to a knee so the kids could see her at eye level. She then purchased a bag of hard candy from a street vendor and began to distribute the sweets into the swarm of out-reached hands. After only a minute, she shook the bag upside-down pantomiming to the street urchins her supply had come to an end.

Continuing their walk, Joy observed Rwandan mothers cuddling their babies, college students strolling hand-in-hand, and old people laughing in animated conversation. She remarked to her husband, “Are these the same human beings I’ve been reading about? Where are the heartless killers and terrified refugees? I thought I’d see devil horns on some of these Rwandans. And yet they appear to be such a delightful people.”

In contrast, Jonathan Kim proved to be decidedly un-delightful, insisting on two containers of hot water, whining about inadequate food, and sulking in his room when not getting his way. Joy told Ken, “I can see why Missionary Park assigned this troublemaker to our team. I think you’re the only man on this mission who could handle his childish behavior.”

Ken smiled, “Well, I’ve had practice. I raised your son and daughter, didn’t I?”

Joy and Lili led an assembly of children at the Anglican church. They disgorged the contents of their giant overseas bags: Bible-based coloring books, crayons, scissors,

scotch tape, paste, string, and balloons. Pascazia served as interpreter while local mothers shared in the management and excitement.

Joy sprained her ankle teaching a circle of children how a duck might escape a chasing goose. As the event concluded, Joy said to Lili, "We bring bags of stuff to them and they send us home with bags of love. I think we get the better of the deal."

July was typically a dry season in Rwanda, but in 1998 there were unusual rain storms. In their daily prayer sessions, the missionaries and pastors prayed that the rain would stop so that people could attend outdoor rallies. Ken talked about this rain problem with Pastor Eric who replied, "You know, local farmers are praying in opposition to you. Summer rain grows fresh grass for cows."

After discussing this theological dilemma, the pastors agreed rain could fall at night, but in the evening the weather should remain clear. Later in the week, it became their testimony that on three consecutive nights rain fell but during evening hours the sun shined.

A series of outdoor crusades was held for three afternoons on a grassy hillside behind the Pentecostal church. On the first day Ken preached the Parable of the Prodigal Son and on the second the Parable of the Good Samaritan. He was encouraged by the response. Ken had always considered himself an accomplished *teacher*, but a *preacher*, no way. Yet, many people raised their hands to accept Christ. Should he and Joy return to Rwanda? Ken was unsure. "Lord," he prayed. "Give me a sign. Do You want us to return to Africa?"

On the final evening Ken was preparing to preach from Matthew, chapter 25, the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. He noticed an ill-clad boy in the distance walking a herd of goats up a nearby hillside. He joked to Eric sitting next to him, "If only some sheep would magically appear. That would be amazing."

Eric examined the distant animals. "You know there are sheep mixed with those goats. They aren't white European sheep, but spotted African ones."

The shepherd boy then steered his flock behind a copse of trees.

Just as Ken walked onto the rickety platform, the boy re-appeared on an even closer hill. When Ken began his message, he spoke into the microphone, "I'm about to preach about sheep and goats and can you believe it? I can see over there by the trees, a collection of sheep and goats!" He gestured toward his grazing visual aids. "I could never do that in America." He pondered during a musical interlude, "Could this be the confirmation, the sign I'm looking for?"

The boy soon disappeared behind the trees, not to be seen again.

After Ken took his seat between Joy and Eric, he said to his wife, “Yobo, I feel the tug of God in this place. I sense his providence everywhere. Do you think we can come to Butare again next year?”

She snuggled to his side, “I’ve been waiting for you to ask me that question.”

~ *Nyamata Genocide Memorial* ~

After seven days of independent activity, the dispersed teams were re-united in Kigali. Fred Park told his group, “We can’t minister to this people unless we understand the extent of their suffering. We’re going to visit a village named Nyamata. There, on the grounds of a Catholic church, thousands of innocent people were massacred.”

Along with the rest of the missionaries, Joy and Ken made the pilgrimage to this genocide memorial. They followed a guide whose face and head bore slash-scars of a machete attack. Through the interpretation of Eric, Leon Muberuka told the story of Nyamata.

“This is one of six official Genocide Sites in Rwanda. The ground you’re walking on was originally owned by the Nyamata Parish, but was desacralized by the Roman Catholic Church two years ago. Mass graves are situated behind the church, which now contain the remains of forty-thousand genocide victims. This number includes those who were killed inside the church, as well as others who were exhumed from surrounding areas.”

Leon went on to explain how he was one of hundreds who sought sanctuary within the walls. He showed the group the exact spot where he was slashed by militia blades inside the sacred space and left for dead. Leon credited desperate prayers to the Blessed Virgin for his miraculous survival.

Joy and Ken then joined the great cloud of witnesses; those who would bear testimony to an undisputable genocide of unmitigated evil. They walked into a stain-glass sanctuary, now stained with effusions of human blood. Dark splotches on floors and walls, spatters on ceiling and statuary gave evidence of a human slaughterhouse.

They stepped into a warehouse mausoleum; an extended charnel house packed with the human remains of the thousands who sought a futile refuge in this *house of God*. Displayed in room after room; sorted on table after table; placed in stack after stack; were laid out shattered skulls and broken femurs. Some skulls were arranged in pyramids like cannon balls.

Skeletal remains enclosed in a parchment of skin, powdery white with lime, showed patches of hair clinging to tops of heads. Most of these corpses were recovered from latrine pits which had often served as hasty burial pits. In a touch of the macabre, a Catholic rosary dangled from one skeletal hand. A large room contained an assortment of infant-sized corpses; another a collection of killing implements such as machetes, clubs, hammers, and spikes. What struck Ken most was the pervasive odor—musty with corruption, chemical with preservation, and made doubly obscene with manifest wickedness.

Stepping into the fresh air, Ken stomped his feet to remove any trace of the odorous lime. He noted the banners announcing in French, English, and Kinyarwanda, “No! to the Deniers. No! to the Revisionists.”

Ken added more *no*’s to the guest book. After signing his name, he scribbled, “Know Jesus, Know peace. No Jesus, No peace.” He muttered to himself, *Trite but true*. Then he spoke to Eric, “My friend, I needed to come to this awful place. I needed to see for myself this depth of human depravity. I feel I’m now fully committed to do whatever I can to bring reconciliation to the people of Rwanda. Joy and I will return next summer. We know only the gospel can heal this shattered nation.”

~ *Gihembe Refugee Camp* ~

Christian Life Frontiers made one final stop before departing Rwanda. This was at the Gihembe Refugee Camp located near the border city of Byumba. The bus parked outside this barbed-wire enclosure and about a dozen hardy visitors shuffled toward the entrance.

Eric explained the identity of the inhabitants this way: “The Banyamulenge are a kind of Tutsi people that migrated into Kivu Province a hundred years ago. They consider themselves Congolese, although they speak a dialect of our Kinyarwanda language. I have no trouble understanding their speech. In 1994 when the ex-FAR crossed into Bukavu and Goma, Hutu fighters began to hunt down the Banyamulenge. I guess once the killers got the taste of Tutsi blood in their mouths, they continued to be thirsty. A few thousand of these peaceful people were slaughtered across the frontier in Kivu. The only way to protect them was to get them out of Congo into Rwanda. My government offered this slice of land as sanctuary and the U.N.H.C.R. opened this camp just last year. Our hope is that the refugees will return to Congo when it’s safe.”

As Ken and Joy listened to these words, they peered through a maze of cyclone fencing. Their own eyes were met by smaller eyes peering back at them. To the camp’s throng of children, the appearance of *buzugu*—white-faced foreigners—was an occasion

of great amusement. The missionaries passed through a checkpoint on the way inside this UN encampment and were greeted by a delegation of escorts and interpreters.

Gihembe Camp turned out to be a makeshift village of ten-thousand displaced persons; a dense warren of plastic tarp and timber shelters; some serving as dormitories; some dining facilities; others clinics or schools. Green tarp seemed to serve as walls while blue tarp provided roofing. All tarps, jerry cans, and fabric sacks were stenciled with a bold “UNHCR”. Ken paused at a barren area of red soil. His eyes followed the action of barefoot boys kicking a homemade soccer ball constructed of plastic bags and twine.

As Ken scoped the grounds, he discovered Joy and Lilli handing out hygiene bags of soap, shampoo, and toothpaste. Ken snapped long-range photos of his wife’s beaming smile, veiled behind a vast sea of ebony faces. These memorable pictures became the centerpiece of his “Where’s Waldo?” slide presentation.

The visitors consumed their lunch in the camp restaurant. To get to this place they passed through a gauntlet of grabby kids then tip-toed over a wooden plank which bridged a sewerage trench. The canteen turned out to be a cluster of small rooms surrounded by barbed wire. The walls were built of sticks and mud. A single small window provided just enough light to see across the wooden table. The dozen missionaries drank warm soft drinks and ate the mushy beans and rice provided by the camp cooks.

As they griped about the food, a missionary lady opened her small backpack and pulled out a tube of something. Ken thought she was going to brush her teeth. But this was not toothpaste, but a tube of gochujang. Eleven Koreans clapped in delight as she passed around this important condiment of Korean cuisine. Ken whispered to Joy, “I’m experiencing a kind of double culture shock, with one wave crashing from Africa and another from Asia.”

After the meal, Ken stood in the center of a plaza where tufts of grass struggled to sprout from trampled soil. He taught from John chapter nine—the story of the woman taken in adultery. Ken recruited a female bystander as his visual aid. His experience seemed Biblical. At the appropriate verse, Ken mimicked Jesus by bending over and with his finger writing on the dust of the earth. A few minutes later he picked up a fist-sized stone shouting, “He who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” When he had concluded his gospel message, he spoke to Joy, “These people may be unfamiliar with the Bible. Yet, they inhabit Biblical times.”

The camp was overflowing with children in search of diversion and the foreigners appeared as a circus arriving in town. To maintain order, one of the camp elders wielded

a long stick in his right hand. His job was to keep the little ones at bay. He didn't hesitate to smack a few unruly kids who encroached upon the space of the speaker.

As Ken later joked to Fred, "Now I can relate to Jesus even more. He moved off-shore in a little boat just to put some distance between himself and the throng. I had to do something like that. I can also understand why his disciples chased away little children. I'm guessing maybe Pastor Simon Peter even carried a stick like the stern-faced disciplinarian."

After two days of joyful exhaustion, it was time to leave Gihembe Camp and catch the return flights to San Francisco. To Ken it seemed he was at the bottom of the deepest ocean and was about to ascend to the far-above surface.

~Comparing Notes ~

The twenty-two-member mission team spent one final night at the cavernous church in Uganda. Jonathan availed this opportunity to pepper Missionary Park with complaints, many in regard to Ken's disregard of his dignity. Dusan erupted in anger when he learned he would not be able to carry an enormous drum back to America. Bryan left the cow-hide monstrosity with a church caretaker.

The exhausted team straggled into Entebbe Airport a few hours before their midnight departure. There were open seats on the large airliner, so Joy rested her head on Ken's lap during the nighttime flight to London.

After a five-hour layover at Heathrow, they continued their homeward journey. For this leg of the flight, Ken sat next to Bryon Baek. The volcano known as Dusan was absorbed in his own universe, headphones in place, eyes closed, oblivious to the outside swirl.

Bryon asked his aisle mate what he thought about the Rwandan churches.

"Different, joyful, amazing, so exuberant!" Ken gushed. "I think about the passage in John where Jesus tells the Samaritan woman, 'True worshipers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth'. These are like the two wings of a bird. Proper worship requires both wings to soar in the heavens. It seems to me as a longtime Baptist living in America, I have a grasp of Biblical truth, but—sorry to say—not much of a fervent spirit. On the other hand, my African brethren seem to have an abundance of bubbling spirit, but a poverty of gospel truth.

"But think about it. Consider the blessings of my bookshelf; full of commentaries, devotionals, writings of C.S. Lewis; all in my native language. Now compare this to a

rural Rwandan. The Bible itself may be available in his native tongue—if he can read at all—but not much more than that. That’s why I think this kind of international Christian intermixing is inspirational to us, educational to them, and beneficial to both. Together we can soar like eagles with two functional wings.”

Bryon then told Ken his favorite church story. “My team of four went way out into the bush, beyond the grid of pavement and electricity. We walked a mud trail for ten minutes following a city pastor who was expanding his outreach into the countryside. The primitive building was of pole and mud construction fitted out with an iron roof, woven mats over a dirt floor, rough-hewn benches, and colorful fabric walls.

“I caught about half the sermon through my interpreter. I understood it to be about the *Prayer of Jabez* as a means to prosperity. The preacher asked his flock for all the tithe money they could gather. I found it appalling. I asked my interpreter why the preacher needed so much cash. My guide told me, ‘In Africa wealth is a sign of success; more money equals more prestige.’ I recognized this as a kind of heterodoxy, the kind of prosperity gospel that’s so prevalent on Christian TV in California.

“I also asked my interpreter, ‘What’s the biggest financial need for this humble church.’ His answer surprised me: *petrol*. He told me the pastor did not want to perform with traditional drums and plucked strings. He wanted electric guitars, keyboards, and microphones to attract a local crowd. That required electricity and electricity required a generator and a generator required gasoline. Every Sunday about two jerry cans of expensive petrol powered the preaching. The pastor underscored his penchant for modernity by presenting Dusan with a large old-fashioned drum; and yesterday you witnessed the temper tantrum caused by that unsolicited gift.”

Ken and Bryon continued to talk for a few more hours. When Dusan began to drool, his father removed the boy’s headphones. Bryon excused himself and pulled his mask over his tired eyes.

Maybe I should get some sleep too, Ken thought. He lowered his tray-table, positioned his backpack and neck-pillow under his folded arms and soon joined the sleeping chorus.

When the cabin lights flashed on, Ken rose from his aisle seat and fumbled his way to the restroom. He splashed cold water on his face and swirled his nostrils with a cotton swab. He glanced down to notice a rouge smudge. He recognized the red dust of Rwanda and redoubled his pledge to return to *the Land of One Thousand Hills*.

Mission 1999

Celebrating the Gospel

Both Joy and Ken were transformed by their missionary experience. The couple began to advocate for Rwanda at churches and various fund-raisers. They continued to attend their Baptist Church on Sunday morning, but in the afternoon drove into San Francisco to participate in a Korean Presbyterian service. Joy was able to praise God in her native language while Ken led a Bible study for English-speakers. As their faith blossomed, their marriage strengthened. In growing nearer to God, they grew closer to each other.

Once, when Joy went out shopping with Madison, she confided to her daughter, “This doesn’t bring me pleasure like it used to. I think about the poverty in Rwanda—how much this one-hundred dollars can provide for them—and hesitate to indulge myself. It seems indecent.” She termed her ailment *the Macys effect*.

As Ken spoke in front of groups large and small, he shared from his heart the four things he had learned while on mission to Africa:

“First, it’s only when I step aside that God is able to work. I was happily surprised by my ability to preach the Gospel. My decades in church, listening in Sunday school, and memorizing scripture, all paid off as I was able to tell others about Jesus. I truly believe the Holy Spirit was providing my mouth with His words and bringing His Scripture to my remembrance. Before I ever stepped up to a podium, I made it a habit to repeat the words of John the Baptist: ‘He must increase, but I must decrease.’

“Second, be flexible and always be ready to serve. Never say *no* to an opportunity. Redeem the time! I had spent many days preparing material before going to Africa. I used nearly all my words, but not as I had originally intended. Parts of sermons became parts of a seminar and vice versa. I re-purposed little pieces of composition into brief talks of inspiration. God used all I had prepared, but in His own fashion.

“Third, everyone on a mission team has a job because everyone in a mission field needs love. Some people who traveled with us felt they had little to contribute. Some women seemed only to prepare meals, while certain men seemed only to pray. I learned many folks in Rwanda, especially the children, are in desperate

need of affection. Jesus commands us to love the least of these. If all we do is provide hugs to the hurting, then we're doing a missionary's job.

"Fourth, Paul the Apostle describes a ministry that all Christians possess, one-hundred percent of us. That's the *ministry of reconciliation* as described in Second Corinthians, chapter five. Every Christian must be prepared to reconcile people to God as well as people to each other. Please pray that true reconciliation can happen across the breadth of Rwanda."

~ Celebration 99 ~

Throughout the remainder of 1998, Ken and Joy helped Missionary Park in the planning for "Celebration 99," an evangelical effort focused on Uganda, Rwanda, Congo, and Burundi. The couple often addressed large congregations, recruiting short-term missionaries for Christian Life Frontiers.

The two went on the road to speak in Los Angeles and Denver. Ken showed visuals of their mission in Africa; of crusades, of genocide, and of the flocks of children at the refugee camp. He challenged his audience to find the lone ivory face in the sea of ebony smiles. "Where's Waldo?" he would joke. "Maybe you should join her next summer," he would enjoin.

When Joy spoke to her Korean audiences, her final slide was from the Gospel of Luke: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into his harvest field." Indeed, the harvest field in East Africa had become their consuming passion.

When the new year arrived, Jefferson phoned his parents reporting he had been provisionally accepted into the Foreign Service. He would first have to graduate from Princeton in May then serve an internship in September. He anticipated a few empty months in the summer and phoned his parents, asking if it would be okay to accompany them to Africa. "It would be a great practical experience," he added.

Of course, both parents were elated to have their son's company.

Five months later, with graduation behind him and armed with a degree in International Studies, Jeff returned to California. He volunteered as special assistant to Missionary Park. Jeff's Korean language skills served him well as he strove to solve problems for the sixty-five missionaries traveling with Christian Life. In anticipation of his upcoming career, Jeff made arrangements to visit U.S. embassies in Kampala, Kigali,

and Bujumbura. Once in Africa, Jeff would lead seminars in good government—something sorely needed in all corners of the continent.

Because of the large number of travelers, the short-term missionaries departed California in three groups. Fred and Jeff left with the first contingent of twenty; Ken and Joy led a second group of thirty-one; And finally, Bryon led a group of twelve young Korean-Americans who composed the Hallelujah Soccer Team. These young men would compete with local African teams and promote the Christian gospel.

The celebration kicked off on Saturday, June 19, in Kampala. The venue was the new Mandella National Stadium. Fifty fans of Hallelujah Soccer cheered as their visiting team played a local football club. Community pastors brought in several thousand of their congregation to enjoy the sport, then celebrate the gospel.

Ken was pleased to re-acquaint with Victor Kwazera who sat next to him in a stadium seat. For although he enjoyed his activities in Uganda, his heart was fixed on the people of Rwanda. After a night in Kampala, Ken and Joy bussed south with Victor to Butare. For a second year, that university town became their mission base.

Once again Ken was teaching and preaching to pastors while Victor provided the interpretation. Joy led a seminar for women. She also met on campus with professors of technology. Once again, Pascazia proved to be her interpreter, traveling companion, and especially trusted friend.

Jefferson flitted from city to city with Missionary Park, visiting embassies and assisting the Hallelujah soccer team. Ten days into the mission, the team arrived in Butare for a contest with the National University.

~ Like A Different Planet ~

Jeff couldn't stop talking about his recent experience in Congo. "It was surreal, dystopian. The city was in ruin and the infrastructure in shambles." He was about to explain more to his mom and dad, but halted, "Hold on. Let me read you my thoughts." With that, he opened up his journal.

"We Left Kampala on a Tuesday and arrived in Changugu, Rwanda, the next day. On Thursday morning, Fred Park and I—along with the soccer team—marched into Congo. We were escorted across the frontier bridge by government officials and a brass band. Kivu province is in rebellion against the central government in Kinshasa. There is little functioning government and nearly all Westerners have abandoned the city. Armed Congolese troops patrol the streets. Ours was the first sports team to visit Bukavu in several months so the local governor treated us like royalty.

“This part of Africa is a sad place suffering from war in 1994, in 1996, and again in 1998. Remnants of the FAR, former génociders of Hutu-power, continue their work of terror in outlying villages. Money and supplies are scarce, even though there are many beautiful colonial homes and breathtaking views of Lake Kivu.

“July is a dry season and an inch of dust painted everything a rusty red. The wide Congo streets of cobblestone constructed by the Belgians in the 1960s had never been repaired. In some places large stones projected several inches above the road bed while in other places ruts appeared large enough to swallow tires. The roadway appeared as choppy sea waves, petrified in place. Our 14-passenger van drove down one of these streets en route to the soccer match. Our roadway was designed for maybe four lanes of traffic, but this particular concrete strip doubled as a market place.

“Along each side of the road were small ramshackle table stands selling everything imaginable. The roadway was packed with shoppers and pedestrians. There was barely enough room for two vehicles to pass each other. All along the route, our over-packed van would stop and all the locals would gawk at the strange non-African faces. A dilapidated truck just in front of us was overloaded with green bananas. Whenever this truck stopped—which was often—a boy would hop off the back and quickly put a metal tire hub under the truck’s rear tire. This prevented the vehicle from moving backward into our van. We named this busy child *break boy*.

“The mass and press of the human bodies that surrounded us was incredible. The Rwandan driver of our van would just honk the horn and inch forward. Children would leap out of the way. Men sitting along the roadside would simply draw in their long legs. Some bold people would bang on the sides of the van asking for a handout. The ten-minute drive to the soccer game (which took a full hour) was the most incredible ride I had ever taken.

“When the soccer match ended, soldiers escorted us back to the parking area. The escort proved inadequate and soon we were smothered by swarms of Africans. Some were street kids out for a lark. Others were curious, gazing upon white faces for the first time, and some thrust their hands out asking for money.

“It was exhilarating and frightening at the same time. I felt both adulated and intimidated. The curious would pack around our parked van six-people deep. They would only jump away as the van began to move. I felt like I was on a different planet.

“By the way, the Hallelujah team beat the local Congolese two goals to one. But like many experiences in life, the journey to and fro became more memorable than the destination itself.”

Joy stared at her son in admiration. “Make sure you save that story and keep up your journal-writing. I bet that book in your hands is the first of dozens you’ll be filling up.”

~ *Rock, Paper, Scissors* ~

On the following day, the sports venue shifted to the Butare stadium. Ken was having the time of his life; preaching, cheering, even dancing in the aisles. He glanced at his wife to his right and son to his left. “I was born to do this,” he whispered to no one in particular. However, his grateful eyes shone upward, so maybe his utterance was directed to his heavenly Author and Finisher.

Jeff led a government seminar in the university auditorium. As the contingent from Christian Life took their seats, Pascazia pointed out to Joy, “Look over there. That’s the university president. And see, in the front row there’s our governor and mayor. It looks like the whole place is packed with public officials.” She concluded, “They must have made today a holiday. This is a good omen. Our government is serious in making Rwanda a better place.”

As an icebreaker, Jeff called Pascazia onstage to partake in a game called *rock-paper-scissors*. The local officials laughed as she explained the rules in Kinyarwanda. Jeff then formed the audience into two-person competitors. Losers sat down while winners stood for the next round. The final two standing joined Pascazia on stage for a final face-off.

Jeff expounded, “Believe it or not, that was an exercise in nation building. In the United States we have three independent branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. They function as a kind of rock-paper-scissors, so no single person can monopolize power. The president vetoes a law; the congress impeaches a president; the court nullifies an act. This is called *checks and balances* and is one important feature of democratic government.”

The seminar closed with an unabashed Bible teaching. Ken walked to the podium with a white towel in hand. He spoke briefly from the Gospel of John.

“I’m a follower of Christ and in all things, Jesus is my example, even in the realm of public service. On the day He was betrayed, like a walking illustration, the master of all masters took a towel just like this one and washed the dirty feet of his disciples. Think about that humility!

“In a sense, you are the leaders of this re-born Rwandan society. Never forget the towel. Never forget the word ‘servant’ in the term *public servant*.”

As the seminar concluded, Joy noticed her son shuffling toward a young lady. “Ah,” she said to herself. “That’s Fred’s niece from Denver. I wonder if there’s any chemistry going on.” She determined to sit next to the young lady’s mother during the flight home.

~ *Recipe for Genocide* ~

Mission 1999 grew to a close at Entebbe. For the flight leg to London, Joy asked Ken if it would be okay for her to exchange seats and converse with a *new Korean friend*. Ken was puzzled but acquiesced. He and Jeff sat side by side with a Korean man at the window seat who introduced himself as Fred Park’s brother. He didn’t say a word, just looked out the window. Ken surmised Joy was now seated next to this man’s wife. Of course, father and son were oblivious to female machinations.

Jeff had organized some thoughts on paper, perhaps the germ of a master’s thesis. He glanced at his dad then asked, “Can you help me talk this through?” After a nod from Ken, his son cleared his throat and read the provisional title *Recipe for Genocide*.

“I’ve been struggling to wrap my head around what happened in Rwanda in 1994 and I’ve come up with four ingredients for the genocide: human depravity, tribal identity, government complicity, and international apathy. First off, I think the base ingredient for any evil undertaking is *human depravity*. That’s universal. That’s undeniable. That’s even biblical.”

Ken reached for his pocket Bible.

Jeff continued, “I recognize this as a religious concept, so I may have to disguise the language to publish in the secular academic world. Yet, I believe every human is born with this tendency to commit evil, to act out the worst of our nature, to abuse other people whenever given license. Virtue must be taught, but vice arrives without invitation. What do you think?”

Ken agreed. “The original ingredient of all genocide flows from original sin. The people of Rwanda are no different than any people anywhere in the world.” He thumbed to the final plaintive verse in the *Book of Judges*: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

“What can that lamentation mean except that whenever a person does what is *right in his own eyes*, he inevitably does what is evil in the eyes of God? Yes, each of us is full of evil imaginations. We can’t help ourselves. What happens in the big city when the lights go out? Good things or bad things?”

Jeff added, “Plus, our disordered nature can be inflamed by people around us and especially by those in authority over us. We tend to act out our mischief in the company of a violent mob. I think human depravity must take center stage in such mass killing.”

He went on, “The second ingredient of genocide is *tribal identity*. That’s the notion that your tribe, race, or community is superior to others; the doctrine that your identity group enjoys rights and privileges that others do not. It’s the reverse of loving your neighbor as yourself.”

Ken expounded. “Indeed, tribal identity is something we Christians must oppose, whether it shows its ugly head as Tutsi verses Hutu in Rwanda, White verses Black in America, Man verses Woman in Feminism, or Bourgeois verses Proletariat in Communism. Whenever your primary allegiance shifts away from God, or even humankind, to an earth-bound group, you descend into tribalism. Cold-blooded murder can occur by a single depraved person rising up against another, but genocide requires something in addition. Genocide requires one tribe seeking to extinguish another.”

Jeff continued to the next point. “The third ingredient of genocide is *government complicity*. It’s my contention that governments are established to counteract the negative effects of tribal identity and human depravity. So, what results when a national government establishes tribalism as law? Genocide happens! Rwanda happens! When Hutu Power gained control in Rwanda, a clique of leaders became complicit in crimes against humanity, fully embracing tribal hegemony and unleashing a wave of depravity. They forfeited their right to govern.”

The preacher in Ken jumped in; his passion piqued. “In Romans, chapter 13, the apostle tells us, ‘Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.’ I believe that’s correct. Human government is God-ordained, but it must be established by majority rule and carried out with respect to minorities. There must be equal justice under law.”

The historian in Ken pontificated, “Our founding fathers framed the purpose of government upon these four pillars: ‘to form a more perfect union, to provide for the common defense, to promote the general welfare, and to secure the blessings of liberty.’ Thomas Jefferson and James Madison said it best. I don’t think I can state it any better than these framers of the constitution.”

Jefferson Taylor—namesake of Thomas—waited for a pause in his father’s political sermon. “The last ingredient of genocide is *international apathy*. I contend this ingredient is a modern innovation. Genocides have occurred throughout the millennia, yet only in the past hundred years has mass murder inside the boundaries of one nation become a moral concern to people inside another.”

He asked rhetorically, “Could the United States or Great Britain have stepped into Rwanda to prevent the genocide against the Tutsi people? Probably, but nations instinctively behave in their own self-interest. It would have taken an act of national courage to rescue people who are not your own citizens. I’m not surprised the international community stood by as a million people were exterminated. It was simply not in their self-interest to risk an intervention.

“And it doesn’t matter if the General Assembly of the United Nations ratified an official convention against genocide. After all, in 1994 Secretary General Butros-Ghali did not command his own UN army. My thesis contends these four ingredients, all occurring simultaneously, combined in a perfect storm to unloose a horrific genocide in Rwanda.”

Ken stretched his arm around his brilliant son. “That was quite an exposition. There’s only one additional ingredient I might suggest: *demonic activity*. But given the secular climate of academia, it’s probably wise to set that component aside.”

Ken sighed, “I wish I had your sense when I was twenty-two. But when I was your age, I was on the prowl for a wife. I’m glad I found your mom when I did. Say, Jeff, is there any news on that front?”

Jeff hesitated then grinned. “Let me tell you about Abigail.”

The man in the window seat smiled in silence as he overheard rhapsodies of his daughter.

Mission 2000

Ministry Launched

Once resettled in California, Ken and Joy resumed the routine of their teaching careers. Yet, distant drums continued to echo in their ears and visions of Africa sparked in their eyes. They both embraced the far-off nation of Rwanda as their long-term commitment.

For a brief season, their empty nest re-filled and the family of four dwelt under one roof. Jeff was awaiting admittance into the foreign service, reclaiming his high-school desk. His obsession was in learning the Swahili language. His distraction was a young lady in Denver named Abigail Park.

Madison was getting her de-railed life back on track. For a time, she too was living at home, now enrolled at Sonoma State University, commuting with her mom up Highway 101. A resurgent love of art consumed her soul, revealing itself in paint and plaster.

With the advent of the new millennium, the nest emptied once again. Jeff left to D.C. for an internship, settling on a Consular career. Madison moved away from the convenience of home to relocate in an “art colony” near Napa.

Like a lunar cycle, the missionary moon waxed toward its fullness. Ken and Joy increasingly spoke in churches, collected donations, and recruited missionaries. Roger had intended to join his brother for the mission, but an unexpected summer class detained him in Portland. In his stead, Roger *volunteered* his first-born son, Caleb.

~ *MissionMates* ~

Fred Park had altered the pattern of previous missions. For the summer of 2000, *Christian Life Frontiers* would confine its outreach to four big cities: Kampala, Kigali, Bujumbura, and Goma. Butare wasn’t even on the radar. The largest mega-church in Korea would take center stage bringing along their own extravagant resources and their own coterie of congregants. Fred’s strategy was to partner with this super-church in order to boost the prestige of his own ministry.

Joy was saddened by this turn of events since Butare had grown close to her heart. For this reason, she made special arrangements to meet up with Pascazia at the

National University. Ken was disheartened telling his wife, “If we ever dig our own well in Africa, let’s choose a single spot and dig it deep.”

Over four weeks in July, Korean evangelical teams held high-profile crusades at stadiums in each of the four big cities. Ken was relegated to the position of a warm-up speaker. The keynote events proved complicated because Korean evangelists spoke only their native tongue, which was then interpreted into English, which was in turn delivered into the local language. With fast-talking preachers and reverberating sound systems, Ken experienced a Tower of Babel.

Caleb hung out with Missionary Park; spending a week in each metropolis; assisting as he was able; making quick friends; exploring city streets. Unfortunately, Caleb spent his Kigali seven days confined to a hotel bed, sick as a dog. He later advised his uncle Ken, “Never eat the salad. I think it was the mayonnaise sauce that did me in.”

Ken and Joy were unhappy with the unfolding of Mission 2000. After conferring on the matter, the two decided to skip the leg to Bujumbura and instead *dig a well* at the National University in Butare. Fred Park was not pleased with this declaration of independence and voiced his displeasure. Ken then told Joy, “Maybe this is a sign we should strike out on our own. I have this idea. What would you think about matching up students from Rwanda with students from the USA?”

With his new digital camera, Ken took fifty portrait-photos of Christian students each accompanied by a brief biography. As he told Joy, “Maybe these Rwandese could correspond with Americans like pen pals. I’m thinking we could raise support and some of our California students could even accompany us here to Butare. Something like this has proven successful with little kids in orphanages. Maybe it can work as well for university students.”

Ken was paying close attention to his interpreter. “Is it possible for me to partner with Victor Kwizera in a Christian ministry?” Ken had heard stories of Rwandan shrewdness toward *buzungu* and asked himself, “Is Victor trustworthy? Does he possess the integrity of a faithful Christian?” He was unsure.

In preparation for a Sunday sermon, Ken discretely studied Victor from across a wooden table. His counterpart appeared engrossed in thought, thrashing through his Kinyarwanda Bible. Ken observed smudged text, underscored verses, notes scribbled in margins, and bookmarks tucked between pages. He concluded, “A well-worn Bible is the sign of a God-fearing man.”

On the long return flights to California, Ken put his thoughts to paper, sketching out a non-profit organization with Victor as the agent in Rwanda. He asked Joy, “What do you think of calling it *Mission Mates*?” And with a nod of her head, it came to pass.

Once back home, Ken went to work with gospel gusto. He registered the name “Mission Mates” with the state of California, creating a charitable non-profit. Madison helped him create a website (www.missionmates.org) along with a flashy logo. He established a board of directors with himself as president, his brother as vice president, Joy as treasurer, and Lili as secretary. The first meeting was held on October first, with Roger phoning in his input from Oregon.

Out of fifty Rwandan applicants, he selected twenty of the most appealing, ten female and ten male. He polished their narratives and set out to elicit financial support for their living expenses. He spoke at his home church, at Korean churches, and at his own College of Marin. His pitch typically ran, “These students are dirt poor! Their meager dollar-a-day stipend barely covers food expense. Most own only two tee shirts; one is on their back while a second dries on a clothesline. These struggling students are the future of Rwanda. As much as foreigners may contribute to national success, these men and women can do so much more. I truly believe if you want to help the needy in Africa, you should invest here. There is no better *bang for your buck*.”

~ Christmas Appeal ~

Ken raised sympathy, but not much money. Only twelve students were *adopted* at twenty dollars per month. Some supporters gave donations of clothing; others a single cash contribution. By December, the amount pledged stood at \$240 per month. At Christmastime, Ken mailed out this fundraising appeal:

“As a missionary to Africa, I sometimes wish I could show you pictures of shoeless orphans with big smiles. That’s an image that tugs at the heart of most Americans. Or maybe I could show pictures of AIDS victims languishing in dark hospitals; or street children dressed in rags. I have these pictures—many of them. The rampant poverty and despair in Africa breaks my heart. I’m so grateful that thousands of caring Americans are doing their utmost to relieve suffering in this part of the world. But I won’t show you such heart-wrenching pictures because addressing these social symptoms is not the primary purpose of MissionMates.

“We believe the core problem throughout Africa is *bad governance*—political leaders, business bosses, and tribal chiefs who covet power as a means of personal gain; who lead corrupt and immoral lives. Billions of dollars in well-intended aid have flowed into such countries as Congo and Somalia, yet the social symptoms of bad governance continue and even worsen. A boatload of money is not the answer to what ails Africa.

“We believe the antidote to *bad governance* is *pure religion*. The Apostle James tells us ‘Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:27)’ We believe that instilling this *pure religion* into the hearts of the next generation of African leaders is the real solution to Africa's underlying problem.

“In the small nation of Rwanda there is only one national university. Nearly all future leaders of Rwanda will pass through the University gates in Butare. Rather than show you a picture of suffering children, here's a picture of the hope of Africa. You see a college student standing and asking a question about the Bible. He's learning to be accountable to God. Young men and women like this are practicing the pure religion of social justice and personal transformation.

“The Spirit of God is blazing like a wildfire across East Africa. MissionMates is fanning the flames at the university. Our hope is that Rwandans will create a home country in which foreign aid is no longer required. Pure religion will someday put an end to bad governance. Only when Rwanda prospers will pictures of happy children replace images of their suffering.

“I realize this singular vision of MissionMates will never possess the mass appeal of a ministry that directly helps suffering women and children. We accept this shortcoming. However, I do appeal to those of you who catch this superlative vision. We are planting seeds in the hearts of college-age people. These seeds are the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our seedlings will not bear fruit tomorrow or even next year. But when the seeds of MissionMates come to fruition, your generous gifts will do more good in the long term than you can ever imagine today.”

The Christmas season brought a flood of good tidings from Jefferson. First, he was sworn into the United States diplomatic service. Abigail sat among the cheering throng at the state department celebration. Jeff said he was the last of the Clinton-era diplomats to take the oath.

Second, Jeff proposed marriage to Abby and she accepted. He sent out a picture from the Capitol steps of himself on one knee extending an engagement ring toward a welcoming hand. The couple announced a wedding date for the following September when the bride-to-be planned to complete her studies as a nurse practitioner.

The engaged couple arrived in California in January. Jeff announced his first assignment would be as a consular officer in Sudan. He would be studying Arabic before shipping out to Khartoum. All the news on this front was positive.

Maddy was also thriving, making the dean's list, discovering herself, and dropping by the house a few times a month. With her children stepping up the ladder of success, Mrs. Taylor embodied the joy in her name.

Mission 2001

Brothers in the Harvest Field

As the months rolled forward, *MissionMates 2001* gained little traction. Only Ken, Roger, Joy, and Lili ended up buying flight tickets to Kigali. Ken took to calling his little non-profit a *mom & pop* enterprise. At a mission get-together in May, Roger and Ken set in motion an international student conference while Joy and Lili prepared to teach lessons from the Joyce Meyer book, *Beauty for Ashes: Receiving Emotional Healing*.

~ The Sunflower Project ~

Roger Taylor held an agenda beyond teaching students. As a Ph.D. aspirant at the University of Oregon, he chose to specialize in Christian ethics, gathering material for a potential dissertation on the problem of evil and moral choice. Over the phone, he asked Ken if he had ever read a book called *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, a philosophical biography written by Holocaust survivor Simon Wiesenthal.

After a negative reply, Roger explained the contents this way:

“The book describes what Simon Wiesenthal experienced in the Nazi system of concentration camps. At one point, Simon is sent to an army hospital as a slave laborer. A nurse summons him to the bedside of a Nazi named Karl, who is near death with war wounds. This soldier tells him he’s seeking *a Jew’s* forgiveness for a crime that has haunted him. The dying soldier confesses to his participation in the destruction of a house full of three-hundred Jews. He states that as the occupants tried to leap out of windows to escape the burning building, he and his comrades gunned them down without mercy.

“After he finishes his confession, Karl asks Simon the Jew to forgive him. Simon then leaves the room without response. The next day, Simon learns that Karl had died during the night. The holocaust survivor ruminates on whether or not he should have forgiven the Nazi killer. He then poses the ethical dilemma of forgiveness to the reader. ‘Given what you know from this story, would you have forgiven Karl?’ In an appendix to the book, there are 53 responses provided by various scholars, mostly religious figures.”

Roger concluded the phone call, “I want to recast this story and ask similar questions of forgiveness but in a Rwandan context. Do you think that will work?”

In mid-June the team of four headed to Africa. Upon their arrival Roger set about to accomplish his *Sunflower* project. He recruited Eric to help devise a scenario along the lines of Wiesenthal’s dilemma. This was the story as transposed from a European holocaust to an African genocide:

“Pastor Flaurien Mugabo was a Tutsi survivor of the 100 days. He witnessed firsthand the slaughter of many in his church congregation. His own sister had been raped and murdered. In the months following the terror, the pastor volunteered to serve at a prison hospital in Kigali. One day, the chief administrator informed him that a well-known genocidaire wanted to meet with him.

“The pastor sat across from Augustin Kabuga, a former militia leader. This author of genocide explained how he had once attended a Catholic seminary and always knew in his heart his actions were evil. The man recognized he was dying—and on behalf of the Tutsi people—he begged Flaurien to forgive him of his wrong doing. Francois explained how he wanted to die in peace.

“Flaurien left the dying man’s bedside, informing him he would return the next day with an answer. The question for you is this: ‘How would you answer Augustin? 1. Yes, I forgive you. 2. No, I do not forgive you, or 3. I am uncertain how I would respond.’”

After Eric pondered the words which he had helped to compose, he spoke to Roger, “I’m not sure how even I would respond to your question, one-two-or three. This situation strikes close to home. You know I witnessed with my own eyes a militiaman kill my wife and brain-damage my little girl.” He mused then added, “Tell me, Roger, if you were in the shoes of Flaurien, how would you respond to this difficult question?”

Roger began slowly. “You know I’ve been thinking about the *Sunflower* question for several months; and now we’ve layered upon it this Rwandan version. On reflection, I’ve concluded a proper response must take into account three things: the precision of words, my understanding of Scripture, and the condition of my heart.

“First, let me clarify some words for you. I would have *compassion* for Augustin no matter what. I would treat his wounds and listen to his confession. As a Christian, I must show compassion toward all who suffer. Compassion is what the Good Samaritan showed toward the bleeding Jew on the road to Jericho. But compassion is not the same as forgiveness.

“Second is the word *absolution*. This is a term used in some religious circles for one who forgives sins when he is not personally offended. To *absolve* means to forgive *en masse*. I don’t think I possess that power, even as a member of the victim tribe. To absolve is God’s prerogative.

“And so, on a technical level, I *would* not forgive Augustin because I *could* not. Before our fictitious encounter, I did not know the man and he didn’t know me. And as I said, I don’t think I have the standing to absolve his sin.

“However,” and here Roger smiled, “That’s not the real question, is it? You really want to know this, ‘If I had the power and standing to forgive him, would I?’ I think my response must be *yes*. I’ve come to see that forgiveness is a reflection of my own soul’s condition. Not to forgive is to hold onto bitterness and resentment. On this ground, and as the Gospel commands me, I must forgive all who ask—and even those who don’t. After all, Jesus forgave his tormentors, even from the cross, and He Himself taught me to pray ‘Forgive us as we forgive others.’

“Now understand me, Eric. My offer of forgiveness does not release Augustin from the consequences of his actions. I could never condone his atrocities. To the state he is accountable for his crimes and to God he is accountable for his sins. Plus, forgiving Augustin does not mean that I like him or trust him. To me forgiveness means I forsake all revenge and free myself from all bitterness. I submit to God to be the judge of his soul. For all these reasons and with these caveats, I will check box number one: Yes, Augustin, I forgive you.”

When Roger tallied the results of his Sunflower Project, he counted 49 *yes* votes, 11 *no*, and 25 *not sure*. That result showed a greater tendency to forgive among Rwandans than those who responded in Wiesenthal’s book.

As Ken reviewed the results, he quired his brother, “How about my own response? If the genocide leader had asked me, ‘Will you forgive me?’ I might say this, ‘No, I can’t do that, because you didn’t harm me, but I can introduce you to the one who can forgive you.’”

Ken pondered, “And what if the genocider said, ‘I’ve already asked God. I haven’t heard back from Him yet. But I really want to know, Ken, do you forgive me?’”

The brother’s theological back-and-forth continued into the night.

~ *Joseph in Africa* ~

While Roger was partnering with Eric, Ken met with Victor, Daniel, and Pascazia. These three Rwandese agreed to form an independent board of directors calling their own non-profit *MissionMates Rwanda*. This local board would oversee donated funds and supervise employees within the country. Eric joined this board at a later date.

Ken sought out another twenty university students to join the African contingent of MissionMates. He took their photos and collected their biographies. He also handed out token gifts on behalf of the twenty American supporters.

During the second week of *MissionMates 2001*, the Taylor brothers conducted the international conference. They marveled as an audience of 200 students filled the NUR auditorium: 100 from Rwanda, 50 from Uganda, 35 from Burundi, 15 from Congo, and a few each from Tanzania and Kenya.

Ken and Roger determined to teach about leadership in a way that might inspire African pride. With this in mind, they presented a curriculum called *Joseph in Africa: How God Builds Character*. Taken from Genesis 37 to 50, each of ten lessons represented a page in the life of Joseph while he sojourned in the land of Egypt.

Lesson 1. Dream big dreams. (Genesis 37:5-7)

Lesson 2. Overcome your past. (Genesis 37:11-36)

Lesson 3. Serve with loyalty and integrity. (Genesis 39:1-6, 21-22)

Lesson 4. Run from sexual temptation. (Genesis 39:7-20)

Lesson 5. Leave your dreams with God. (Genesis chapter 40)

Lesson 6. Give God the credit for your success. (Genesis 41:14-16)

Lesson 7. Plan for the long term. (Genesis 41:28-36)

Lesson 8. Trust God and let Him promote you. (Genesis 41:37-44)

Lesson 9. Test others before trusting them. (Genesis chapters 44 and 45)

Lesson 10. Forgive Freely. (Genesis 50:15-21)

The conference was a smashing success. The Rwandan foreign minister dropped in, took the lectern, and spoke a few words about Joseph. Roger delighted students by donning a golden King Tut headdress. Dozens posed for portraits smiling like a pharaoh. As in most Biblical exposition, Ken as the teacher benefited most from *Joseph in Africa*. He told his brother about the three P's. "I really don't know a subject until I pray, prepare, and present."

~ Season of Weddings ~

While in Rwanda, the missionaries witnessed the wedding of Victor and Clemintine. On a Monday morning, they accompanied the couple to a courthouse where the two registered their marriage, signed papers, and—by holding onto a Rwandan flag—

pledged allegiance to their nation and its principles. As is the custom in much of Africa, the newly-wed wife did not adopt the second name of her new husband, that is *Kwizera*, but kept her birth name of *Clementine Ndazanbaze*.

Ken joked with Victor, “How many cows did you have to pay for this beautiful bride?”

Victor answered in a serious tone, “That’s why it so difficult to marry in my country. It can take an average man five years to gather enough cows to pay a bride’s price; and as you can see my Clemintine is way-way above average. Since the day I met Clemi in church, I’ve been saving, borrowing, and begging.”

Ken then handed Victor a wedding card with five Benjamin-Franklin cows. “Maybe this can help.”

On Saturday morning they joined in a traditional ceremony in Kigali at an outdoor wedding venue. With three hundred guests in attendance, the newlyweds arrayed in Tutsi garb, Victor posing with a spear and shield. To symbolize their union, Victor and Clemintine sipped sorghum beer from a common wooden jar. Finally, there was a church ceremony with tuxedo and wedding gown. Ken met Clementine’s mother, Adeline, and three brothers. He heard the story of Andrea and how she, as a newborn, was rescued from the arms of her deceased mother. The precocious young girl was now seven years old.

Ken took dozens of pictures and later joked with Victor, “I’m going to tell my church people you’ve been married three times!” Then after a pause, “Of course, all three times to the same woman.”

Soon *MissionMates 2001* was complete and the team returned to California.

Immediately a second wedding burst upon the horizon. On September 6, Ken and Joy flew out to Denver to celebrate the nuptial vows of Jefferson Taylor and Abigail Park. They were greeted at the airport by Jerry and Susan, parents of the bride.

Saturday, September 8, was filled with tuxedos, gowns, flowers, photographers, and well-wishers. The bride and groom glowed resplendent in their wedding attire. Jefferson vowed *to love his wife as Christ loved His church* while Abigail promised *to give respect to her husband as unto the Lord*.

Madison sparkled as bridesmaid while Caleb stood tuxedoed as groomsman. Joy and Susan donned traditional Korean hanboks, while other wedding guests wore contemporary attire. It turned out to be a rapturous day all around.

During the reception, Jerry informed Ken he had approved of his new son-in-law the very first time he laid eyes on him. “Do you remember that trans-Atlantic flight in 1999? Your son didn’t even know who I was, yet within my hearing he spoke all those honorable words about my daughter. What’s not to like about such a gentleman?”

After the wedding on September 8, the newlyweds departed to the nation’s capital for a honeymoon. That romantic interlude was intended as a segue to their new life together as a diplomatic family in Khartoum.

On Tuesday morning, Jeff and Abby strolled from their hotel room in Arlington, Virginia. Jeff suggested they take a two-mile walk through the national cemetery. As they ambled toward the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, they paused to note a cluster of policemen in frantic conversation. Next, they observed swirling strobe lights of military vehicles. Then at 9:37 a.m. they heard an ear-thumping explosion. Their heads spun to the southeast to observe a burst of flame and a rising plume of smoke. What could it be?

As they rushed in the opposite direction toward their hotel room, they overheard snatches of conversation. “Terror attacks in New York City! Passenger jets crashing into skyscrapers!” The world seemed to shift on its axis. The Hilton hotel was in panic mode, as the couple ran up four flights of stairs, entered their honeymoon suite, and turned on the television. There they set, glued to the screen, for the rest of September 11, 2001.

Abby managed to phone her mother, report what they had witnessed, and establish they were safe in a hotel room. Jeff called his father, saying he didn’t know what might happen next. However, he figured he would not be traveling to Sudan any time soon.

Jeff got word from the State Department that he should shelter in place until further notice. After two nights, Abby agreed to share their spacious suite with an unhoused diplomatic couple. And so, fourteen days passed in a sumptuous honeymoon suite underwritten by the new Secretary of State, Colin Powell.

Every day they walked down Sheridan Avenue until they reached the barricades. Staring up into a sky void of aircraft, Jeff knew the nation he loved had entered a brave new world. Jeff and Abby became friends with their hasty roommates, Rebecca and Phillip Conway. For Jeff, those details of 9/11 were indelibly imprinted upon his mind. He would retell this world-shattering story for the remainder of his years.

On September 14, the U.S. Congress authorized use of military force against terrorists; On October 7, President George W. Bush began a war in Afghanistan; and on December 7, the city of Kandahar fell to coalition forces. It was two days after that benchmark when Jeff and Abby finally arrived at their consular posting in Sudan.

The year of 2001 ended on notes of resolution, prayer, hope, and wish. Ken resolved to redouble his efforts on behalf of MissionMates, to witness his faith on a campus hostile to God, and to knit his family closer together.

Jeff was in regular communication with his parents via email. He asked everybody in his circle to pray for peace in his Islamic corner of the world. The place was both unsettled and unsettling.

Madison was upbeat about her college work, her art exhibitions, as well as a new relationship now budding with a MissionMates correspondent. “Could this African doctor-in-training be the right man for me?”

Finally, Joy Lee wished 2002 would prove to be better than 2001; that the upcoming year would usher in more happiness and less sorrow than the terror-struck one now passing. But would it prove to be so?

Mission 2002

A Season of Loss and Sorrow

As winter warmed into spring, prayers of the previous year seemed to sprout and take root. The number of *MissionMate* pen pals rose from twelve to twenty-six, bringing monthly pledges up to \$520. With that increase, Ken figured he'd have to sign up even more NUR students during the coming summer.

The world situation settled into a new normal. Jeff reported that with upgraded security, his duty in Khartoum became less insufferable. The exciting news came from Abby who reported a baby on the way. The unborn appeared to be conceived at Christmastide and was thus due around their first anniversary.

Madison proved to be a great help in recruiting Sonoma State students. She herself agreed to participate in Mission 2002 and signed up three friends from her Bible Study. With a Korean couple and a tablemate from Ken's men's group, the number of travelers blossomed into nine.

Of course, Madison entertained a special reason for traveling to Rwanda. The young man's name was William Bazombanza, a Rwandan by parentage, but a Burundian by birth. William was part of the Banyarwanda diaspora, a youth who had returned to a homeland he had never called home. Through email correspondence, William presented himself as a devout Christian, a third-year medical student, and a successful grant writer. Maddy was intrigued but cautious.

Joy celebrated the prospect of her first grandchild. What could be better than that? However, she grew prickly about the title "halmoni"—*grandmother*. She told Ken, "Being a Korean halmoni means an old woman and I'm only fifty."

Joy harbored mixed feelings concerning her daughter's pen pal. Her objections were more visceral than rational. It was never a racial issue. After all, Joy herself had found a husband on a distant continent. The best an anxious mother could do was to wait and to pray.

When the school year ended in May, the mission team gathered at a place called *Prayer Mountain* near Santa Cruz. Overseen by a Korean widow, the hilltop retreat provided a place to lodge, to gather, to stroll, and to plan. Bold Bible verses were placarded to redwood trees and flower gardens sloped up hillsides. Ken said, "This is a sanctuary where scripture intersects nature."

For Mission 2002, Ken and Joy planned to meet with the local board of *MissionMates Rwanda*, rent a large house, and hire full-time staff. Ken understood that of paramount importance would be the employment of trustworthy Rwandans. He further understood that uncovering such people in a cross-cultural context could prove difficult. Might Victor be such a virtuous person?

Madison along with her college mates—Ryan, Kristen, and Terri—planned to spend most of their energy on campus. They would lead Bible studies, recruit pen pals for MissionMates, and soak in the culture. As minimal English speakers, Mr. and Mrs. Choi, journeyed along to observe, take photos, and share their kimchi with Joy. Elder Frank Simmons would hang out with Ken and participate as he was able. He joked with Ken, “Traveling to Africa has always been the final checkmark on my bucket list.”

~ Land of Imana ~

On June 14, the nine missionaries, along with nine-hundred pounds of luggage took flight to Africa. Victor, Eric, and Pascazia met the arrivals at Kigali Airport. Accompanying this trio was a winsome student named William.

The young man politely introduced himself to the whole team. He opened his fine leather briefcase and presented Maddy with a small gorilla woodcarving. “This is just a thank-you for being my pen pal.”

William went on to share how he was considering changing his career path from Medical Doctor to Christian Pastor. “I have a real knack for writing grants and raising funds,” he declared with pride.

Madison didn’t know what to make of that comment while Pascazia probed deeper with a few questions in Kirundi—the national language of Burundi.

As the missionaries traversed the central highway, they gazed at the sights and swayed to the sounds. Elder Frank remarked to the group, “What a beautiful country Rwanda is!”

Victor took this opportunity to voice his favorite proverb, “Yes, that’s true. Imana spends the day looking after the whole world, but every night He returns to Rwanda for rest.”

Ken was familiar with the adage and couldn’t resist teasing his interpreter, “Perhaps so, Victor. But back in 1994, for at least one-hundred days, it appears Imana was resting at night in another part of the world.”

Once in Butare, the caravan of one minibus and two private cars pulled beside a large house on Cyarwa road, just south of campus. Eric announced, “This is the house we rented; \$120 per month. The old man who owns it lives in Kigali. I think he evicted his lazy son so you could move in.”

As they walked through the front door, they were greeted by three new faces. Pascazia introduced Immaculée as the hostess of the house, Jacques as the watchman, and Robina as the housekeeper. Victor would serve as the campus liaison and Bible teacher. These were the first four employees of *MissionMates Rwanda*.

The brick house was a substantial structure with two bedrooms downstairs and two upstairs. The Taylors and Choïs moved into the ground-level rooms, while the three young women and two bachelors occupied rooms up a flight of stairs. They all shared a humble downstairs toilet.

Ken and Joy Taylor met with the Rwandan board to develop a mission statement. A first draft read: “The purpose of MissionMates is to lift up Rwanda’s next generation of Christian leaders that they may usher Africa into a brighter future. The mission house is intended to be a resource and refuge for students at the National University and an outreach to the local community.”

To meet this dual purpose, two groups began to gather on the premises. The first assemblage consisted of university students, organized by Victor with the assistance of Ryan. William played gospel songs on his guitar and continued to voice interest in Christian ministry. Over several evenings, a dozen young people gathered in the super-sized parlor for songs, sermons, and Bible Study. As hostess, Immaculée supplied refreshments. Elder Frank loved to preach to this buoyant group. The students got to calling the old man *Moses* because of his white hair and beard.

Joy dubbed the second group *morning mamas*. This assembly would gather at first light on their way to toil in the local fields. Immaculée and Pastor Daniel recruited these *diggers* as they ambled down Cyarwa Road at the first streaks of dawn. Joy and Robina provided hot tea and sometimes a snack. Jacques the watchman pounded the drum as the women clapped, sang, and gave testimonies.

By 6:30 a.m., the hard-working women stepped out the door with hoe in hand; many with baby on back. Maddy, Kristen, and Terri helped minister to these women and showered them with affection. The college girls became unofficial members of their cooperative.

On the first Sunday morning in Butare, the whole team attended the Anglican church of Pastor Daniel. Each visitor stood to greet the congregation, Moses with many

words and the Chois with just a wave and smile. After the service, the group gathered at the next-door parsonage of Daniel and Esperance.

The pastor voiced sadness because he soon would be stepping down from his position. As he explained, “I am demoted by my bishop for speaking out during the genocide.” He paused, “I am twice rejected; first by my Hutu people in 1994 for protecting Tutsis and now I am rejected by my Anglican church for naming some of the complicit priests.”

For an hour, Daniel and Pascazia regaled their American audience with harrowing tales of survival. Most exciting turned out to be the bus ride of a disguised Pascazia into Burundi. Most heart-wrenching was the pursuit and death of her husband, Francis. Before closing the conversation, Pascazia promised to take the four students to the University Memorial. “I’ll show you his picture in the panel of martyred professors.”

Daniel introduced his grounds-keeper, Gaston. The pastor explained how he had found the youth begging in the streets. “This boy demonstrated a way with animals and now he looks after my cows, goats, and chickens. He tells me he’s from Gisenyi and suffered much during the one-hundred days.”

~ Briefcase Pastor ~

After lunch, Daniel walked the group about a mile down Cyarwa Road where the gravel turned to dust. He and Esperance provided a tour of goat pens, cow enclosures, sorghum fields, and a banana grove. He was especially proud of his experimental crops. “You know I spent a few years in England and still have friends there.”

Maddy interrupted, “So, is that how your English language got so good?”

Daniel responded with a positive nod. He went on to explain the unique nature of each plant in his special corner. “My friends from abroad are sending me different strains of crops. I’m planting them to see what will grow in our unusual climate. Much of my harvest goes to support the AIDS widows who gather at your house in the morning.”

Terri jumped in, “What? Those women have AIDS?”

“Yes, most are destitute Hutu villagers. Many of their husbands died from AIDS, others are now serving time in prison for genocide crimes, while some husbands have run away to Congo. The government has helped these women to form a cooperative and has provided some acreage in the valley to cultivate. I help them to organize, manage meager funds, and speak with local officials on their behalf.”

He hesitated as if unsure to continue. “My government is enlightened, but I have concerns. Tutsi widows and orphans have been provided with scholarships because they are genocide victims, but poor Hutu widows like these receive minimal aid. It’s true that many of their husbands, brothers, and sons were part of the killing machine, but that time is past and we should be treating all people as Imana’s children.”

Ken could see that Pastor Daniel was doing much good work and wanted to encourage him. Joy asked if he had ever applied for support from a non-governmental organization (NGO).

He laughed and told them he had once attempted to receive NGO money. “The only way to get dollars from foreigners is to pay a bribe to local officials who sign off on the grants. I refused to pay such bribes. But with the new unity government in place, maybe I’ll apply for grants again.”

Daniel described one unscrupulous pastor whom he knew and who had paid a bribe to get foreign money. “In truth, my former acquaintance didn’t preach or oversee a congregation at all. Instead, he operated his *church* out of his briefcase. There are many such preachers in Rwanda. We call them *briefcase pastors*. Such scoundrels pay about one-third of their NGO grants in bribes, put another third into their own pocket, and use only the remainder to help needy people.”

Joy jumped in the conversation, “It sounds like he was an opportunist; shmoozing with Americans to bilk them of money. Daniel, you’ll have to help us as we evaluate Rwandans we can trust.”

At this point, Ken was fingering an envelope in his pocket. However, he was reluctant to give Pastor David this designated gift of \$100. He placed the cash inside a new briefcase along with a roll of tape, a stapler, and a box of pens.

Daniel humbly thanked his benefactor as he received this unexpected gift.

Ken asked, “And does this officially turn you into a *briefcase pastor*?”

Meanwhile, Joy was focused upon furnishing the house. She and Pascazia visited the market nearly every day, buying plastic chairs, wicker mats, kitchenware, bedding, and wall hangings—all in an attempt to transform the lazy bachelor house into a multi-use mission center.

On one of these shopping sprees, Pascazia spoke to Joy at an internet café. She began, “My friend, you know my home town is Bujumbura in Burundi.”

“Yes,” said Joy. “Ken and I were there once. We ate the bulombora fish along the shores of beautiful Lake Tanginika.”

Pascazia smiled at the remembrance, then frowned. “You know that William Bazombanza is also from Bujumbura. Right?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“I hope you’re not offended,” she continued, “but I did some research on my own. I recognized that young man, something about his voice and manner. It turns out his mother was a friend of my family in the years before the genocide. My sister Tutti knew his parents much better than I did.

“Now Joy, you are my true friend and I know how much you love your daughter. I’m not a stupid woman. I know there is romance in the air between Maddy and Willie. I sensed something was wrong when I first met him, so I did some investigating of Mister Bazombanza. I’m sorry to report I was right about something being wrong.”

Joy rocked in her chair, “Go on.”

Pascazia reached across the table to grasp her hands. “First, William is not a medical student in Kigali. He goes there sometimes to work at the Hotel des Mille Collines as a busboy. That’s what Tutti told me. Also—and this is harder to say—Tutti reports he keeps a girlfriend there who works at the front desk. Oh, Joy, please forgive me if I am out-of-line in telling you this and I won’t say another word.”

After silence and a tear, Joy responded, “No, Pascazia. You’re everything I could hope for in a friend. You know I’ve been praying every day in regard to Madison’s happiness. Your snooping was an answer to my prayers.”

Joy collected her thoughts, “I want to do the right thing. I don’t want to hurt Maddy or even Willie. So, please do this for me. Talk with William in private to confirm the story. I don’t wish to embarrass him, but if what you say is true, ask Willie to write a goodbye note to Madison which we will deliver to my daughter. We can be with Madison when she opens the envelope. Urge Willie to go back to Kigali and never contact my daughter again. If he does that, we promise to keep his deception private.”

Pascazia smiled, “I think that’s a wise plan and you are a kinder person that I would be if I found myself in that same situation with my daughter, Beatrice.”

Joy answered, “I think I know my child well enough to expect her heart to be crushed for a season, but she’s an overcomer. He is truly a charming guy—might I say a *lady’s man*—and his attention has been flattering, but Madison is old enough to know that character is what really matters in a man.”

A few days later William left town and Madison read the goodbye letter. Her eyes grew misty, but she told her mom she had never given her heart to this African pen pal. "I like him well enough," she said, "But I've always been a tad suspicious of his motives."

When Ken finally got wind of the romance gone awry, he confided to his wife, "William was nice to me and he claimed to be a follower of Christ. All well and good, but I saw the briefcase he was carrying. He proudly pulled out of it an English dictionary, a medical book, and a Bible. When I casually glanced through the Bible, only the name of some French hotel was stamped on the front cover. I couldn't find a single wrinkled page or underlined verse. You know; I can tell a lot about the condition of a person's heart by the condition of their Bible."

~ Ethnographic Museum ~

Pascazia volunteered to lead members of the mission team on a private tour of the ethnographic museum. She opened a few locked cases to pass around artifacts of pre-colonial Rwanda. Maddy tapped on the drums until Victor told her the nature of the round objects which dangled from the cowhide.

As a historian, Ken scrutinized all the documentation available in English. He learned that every Rwandan village had once possessed a community drum. Often, when a conflict arose between two towns, warriors would fight each other with arrows and spears. But rather than kill, their object was to capture their neighbor's big drum. If they succeeded, they won the battle. The brochure said, "The losing side was like a roaring lion but without teeth."

Pascazia then led them down basement stairs into a storage container. She gestured toward a wicker and velvet sofa. "That's where the last queen of Rwanda spent her final moments. For six days Rosalie Gicanda and her old handmaids lay hidden in this locked vault. Finally, she was betrayed by some Hutu staff. The frail woman was over sixty years old, yet soldiers sexually assaulted her and dragged her behind the building."

Then in silent procession, the group walked outside to face east looking over a forest of eucalyptus. "And this is where they killed her and the other helpless women. I saw their lifeless bodies stacked over there. Let's look at the marker."

And there it was: "Rosalie Gicanda: 1928 to 1994. Wife of King Mutara III Rudahigwa 1942 to 1959." Pascazia passed around an enlarged photo of the Queen Rosalie. At that moment, nine missionaries joined the great cloud of witnesses to a genocide which spared no person who was of Tutsi heritage.

At the next student Bible study, Ken spoke of the queen dowager and about the village drums. “I pictured in my mind a battle between Jesus and the devil. After Christ’s victory on the cross, Jesus marched straight into hell and took the enemy’s giant drum. Saten is helpless these days, but still making a lot of noise. He has no power over you. He can roar and scare you, but the lion has no teeth.”

~ Visit to the Batwa ~

Three days before their return flight, the nine missionaries paid a quick visit to a local Batwa compound. Eric and Pascazia led the convoy to this collection of Rwanda’s original inhabitants. As of 2002, most Batwa survived on government reservations in a fashion similar to that of Native Americans.

The outsiders walked the last hundred meters to the settlement because the roadway became undriveable. In a long cinder-block building of eight rooms the group visited eight families of a related clan. After ministering to their spiritual needs with prayer and preaching, the MissionMates team ministered to their physical needs.

Ken brought along a Polaroid camera and took one picture of each family. Some consisted of only three members. Others had as many as ten. Joy gave the instant photo to the oldest person in each family. For many, this was the first time they had seen a likeness of themselves. They danced in delight. The patriarch in one family smiled broadly for his picture showing off his mouthful of decaying teeth. The photos revealed twenty-four little kids as well as six pregnant women. Ken explained to Eric his folksy remark: “That’s two dozen in the barn and half a dozen in the loft.”

Madison provided small toys for the children and Ryan brought a soccer ball as a community gift. The youth then joined the kids in kicking the ball up and down the dusty pathway outside their building. Ryan would punt the ball deep into the banana grove and a dozen boys would chase after it.

Mrs. Choi gave away scissors to several women and asked Pascazia how they would use the implements without paper to cut.

The Rwandan replied “Hair cutting is their first priority.”

Pastor Eric brought six Bibles to hand over to community elders. Of course, all thirty adults held out expectant hands. But Eric was clever. Before he placed one in a Batwa’s hands, he required that person to read out loud the verse printed on the inside cover. One woman stomped away in anger because she wanted a book but was unable to read.

Finally, Ken had one last item to pass out. This gift was a worn pair of sport sneakers that a soccer player had left at the MissionMates house. As Ken gazed over the

sea of faces, he spotted an old man in raggedy clothes. Up until this point, the old man had just looked on as an outsider while others were receiving gifts.

Ken summoned him forward and asked him to put on the shoes. The man was so excited he began to shake. The rest of the Batwa broke out in laughter. Apparently, this person had a reputation as being a little bit crazy. The shoe recipient didn't understand how to unloose the shoestrings, so Ryan helped him get the sneakers on his feet. He jumped in the air. The corners of his mouth met his ears in a grin that would not stop. Eric explained this pair of shoes was the first ever this sixty-year-old man had ever worn on his feet.

The missionary group left this neglected settlement with all the Batwa dancing and waving to the departing vehicles. Joy remarked, "Not only did we give them physical goods, but also hope that better times lie ahead." She pledged to return to the same settlement in 2003. Her final words, as interpreted to exuberant Batwa, were these: "Look at me closely. No doubt you will see this Muzungu face once again."

~ Bicycle Taxi ~

A common mode of transportation in the town of Butare was the bicycle taxi. This sturdy conveyance featured a padded seat above the rear tire and foot pegs welded to the frame. Riders would grasp the pedaler's seat or wrap their arms around his waist. In recent years these cyclists were restricted to off-pavement use. In a collision with a motor vehicle, a cyclist always bore the brunt of injury.

Jacques the nightwatchman augmented his meager wage by earning a few coins pedaling his bike in the daytime. Along with a dozen buddies, he would hang out at the bus stop located at the terminus of Cyawra Road.

On June 28, 2002, Joy, Pascazia, and Madison began a long walk to the downtown market. They planned to return by cab with a final load of house furnishings. However, Maddy wanted to experience a bicycle ride before her return trip to America; and it only cost fifty franks per person! Joy recognized Jacques and straddled his padded rear seat. The other two found pedalers and raced ahead of Joy, bumping down a dirt road parallel to the blacktop.

The three women chatted carefree as the men churned the bikes forward. Maddy was loving it, her long hair swirling in the breeze. About half way to the market, a 4x4 truck barreled through an intersection. The driver swerved to avoid the lead bikes, but struck Jacques' bicycle full force, propelling the pedaler through the air into a vegetable garden. The bike was discovered mangled under the truck's carriage while Joy was found crushed behind a rear tire.

All were in shock. The young driver quickly exited then sat on a stone wall with his face in his hands. Jacques was conscious, but unable to walk and bleeding from the head. Pascazia took command of the situation. She ordered the driver back into his truck and told the two bicyclists to gently place Joy into the truck bed. With assistance, Jacques managed to sit in the passenger seat. Pascazia hopped into the truck bed and cradled Joy's head in her arms.

Madison was hysterical with tears at one moment, the next numb in disbelief, then angry with the driver. Pascazia spoke to her, "I know the way to the trauma ward at the university hospital. I'll go there with your mom right now. Don't worry. Keep the faith. This bicyclist will rush you back to the house. Tell your father what happened and to meet us at the hospital. This guy here will explain the situation in our language." She then spoke a few words to the distraught cyclist.

Before breaking away, Maddy wailed, "Is my mother dead? She looks so bad. Can you tell?"

Pascazia was knowledgeable enough to feel for a pulse with a grasp to the throat. She shouted, "I think she's alive. Her eyes are still fluttering. Hurry. Go to your father now. Pray all the way. Tell him to meet us at the hospital."

Maddy shot down the dirt road on the back of the bicycle taxi.

In fact, Pascazia had felt no pulse at all.

~ Grief beyond Measure ~

Back at the house, Ken and Victor were sitting in the parlor engaged in light conversation. Ryan and Frank were upstairs packing bags. Terri and Kristen were with Immaculée in the side yard passing out final sweets to local children. The Chois were strolling somewhere in the neighborhood taking last-minute pictures.

About 10:00, Ken heard a bicycle clatter to a stop just outside the front door. A young man rushed in babbling something in Kinyarwanda. All the native speakers rushed to his side, eyes wide with disbelief. With tears streaming down her face, Madison ran into the arms of her father. She could hardly choke out the words. "Oh, daddy! There's been a terrible accident. Mom was on the back of a bicycle when a truck hit her and ran her over. She's bleeding and unconscious. Jacques was hit too, but he seems to be okay. Pascazia took mom to the hospital. We have to go now. We have to see if they can keep her alive." After a sob she added, "And it's all my fault. I'm the one who insisted we ride into town on those stupid bicycles."

Victor was hearing the same story in two languages. He sent the bicyclist to fetch a taxi cab, then hugged Ken saying a car would take them to the hospital right away.

Ken responded, “Yes, we’ll do that. But first let’s call all us MissionMates together for a circle of prayer.” Once gathered in the parlor and appraised of the situation, the six Americans and six Rwandans formed a circle. Maddy sobbed as Ryan tried his best to console her. Elder Frank pleaded with God to hold Joy in His arms and keep her alive. Like the good friends they were, Terri and Kristen cried along with Madison.

Two taxis appeared outside the house on Cyarwa Road. Victor, Ken, Madison, and Frank piled into the first, while the second carried Immaculée, Terri, Kristen, and Ryan. Sobs, sighs, and muttered petitions reverberated all the way to the hospital gate.

Victor took charge, talking with sentries and admission nurses. After rushing down a corridor, they spied Pascazia sitting head down outside a closed door. She burst into tears at the sight of Ken and Madison. She looked Ken in the eyes, “I’m so sorry! So Sorry!”

Ken pleaded for a positive response, “How is she? She’s still alive, right? Am I right?”

“I don’t know,” she fudged her response. “It doesn’t look good for her. The doctor is examining her right now. He said he’d be out soon to give a report. We’ll have to wait.”

In fact, the wait was short. Dr. Carlos—a trauma specialist from Cuba—swung open the door into the waiting room. “May I speak to the family alone”. His somber tone and manner let all know that the news was tragic.

Ken and Madison followed the doctor into a private room where he asked them to sit on a worn couch. “I’m sorry to say this, but the lady has died. Her chest was crushed and her ribs pierced her heart and lungs. There was nothing I could do.” He paused. “Given the extent of her injuries, there’s nothing any hospital in the world could have done. It appears she died immediately. I don’t think she suffered. I’ll give you a full written report tomorrow. Again, I’m sorry for your loss.”

When Ken and Madison re-joined the group, Victor introduced his military colleague, Colonel Bidogo, “This man is a good friend of mine. He’ll do anything he can to help us get answers.” Victor also introduced the police chief, Oscar, and interpreted his words to the effect that the driver was being detained at police headquarters and his truck was impounded pending investigation.

With notebook in hand, the police chief then commenced a long conversation with Pascazia.

Only Madison and Ken were permitted to see the deceased Joy Lee Taylor. Her body lay on a gurney, tightly bundled in a white sheet from neck to toe. The top of her head was bandaged, but her face shown undamaged. Her eyes were shut tight as if in a profound sleep. However, when Ken put the back of his hand to her cheek, her flesh was cold to the touch. Ken's face contorted in grief and in a dam burst of emotion, he wailed without restraint, "Oh, my love, my life, how can I possibly live without you? You are everything to me."

The motherless child stepped back in a subdued sob as her father looked upward to heaven, a torrent of tears streaming down his cheeks.

Before returning to the house to navigate the troubled waters that lay ahead, the missionaries all paid a visit on Jacques. He sat upright in bed, awake, stable, a cast on his leg, a drip in his arm, and a wife by his side. When Victor informed him of Joy's death, Jacques convulsed into tears. "It's not my fault," he shouted to Victor. "It happened so fast! I didn't even see the truck coming at me."

When they returned to the house, Pastors Eric Nshimiyimana and Daniel Mugisha were sitting at the dinner table sipping African tea. Various friends, university students, and morning mamas joined them, concern etched on each face. Mr. Choi sat in shock with his wife. He apologized to Ken for not being present at the hospital. Madison retreated to her bedroom to grieve in private.

Ken pulled himself together in order to manage the crisis. He gathered around him Frank, Eric, Daniel, and Victor. Ryan Roberts asked to join the group. They clasped hands to pray, Frank taking the lead. The man they called Moses petitioned God to provide grace, courage, and wisdom on how to proceed in this awful hour.

Victor spoke first. "The death of an American citizen is a big deal in Rwanda. The local police and doctors are on edge. I told the hospital chief that Mr. Taylor planned to ship the body back to America for interment. He told me no one in Butare has the necessary credentials to embalm a body for international shipment. He asked to make immediate arrangements to transport Mrs. Taylor to Kigali. You'll have to sign papers for that."

Ken nodded his consent.

Victor continued, "The administrator will be here in the morning. He will bring Doctor Carlos' report and a stack of papers for your signature. Your wife should be in Kigali by tomorrow night."

Ken descended into grief at the word *wife*.

Eric entered the conversation. “The Assemblies of God has a big church in Kigali. I’ve talked to my friend, Apostle Anselm. He is willing to host a funeral next Wednesday on July 3. Will that be okay? I can make arrangements for you.”

Again, Ken nodded his agreement.

Ryan spoke up. “Pastor Daniel advised I phone the U.S. embassy. I spoke with a consular officer named Judy Adams. She was sympathetic and said she will personally drive to Butare to speak with the doctors.” Ryan looked at his notes, “She explained it was part of her diplomatic duty to investigate and complete a form called *Report of the Death of an American Citizen Abroad*. She also said she would contact the ambassador in Sudan to support your son for emergency travel to Rwanda.”

Ryan continued, “Sir, I’ve taken the liberty to email Jeff. Madison gave me his address. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Not at all,” Ken replied. “Please continue. It’s difficult for me to type out words right now. I need a right-hand man to do my correspondence. Thank you, Ryan.”

Ken then gathered the other MissionMates around the table. “You’re scheduled to fly home the day after tomorrow. I suggest you stick to that plan. Frank here is making arrangements to hold a funeral for Joy at our church in a few weeks. There’s no big reason for you to attend one funeral in Rwanda, then a second in California. Please, my friends, I encourage you to return home.”

Five of the six agreed, but Ryan spoke up, “Sir, I want to stay. I think I can be of some help and, anyway, Madison needs support.”

After dark, several NUR students lit a fire of logs in the front yard. Eric explained it was a traditional custom of mourning. People sat in quiet remembrance around burning embers until well past midnight.

One of the late-night arrivals was consular Judy. After extending her condolence, she explained protocol to Ken. She had investigated the matter and learned Joy was a fully-vested employee of the California State Retirement System. As a benefit of her employment, her remains could be transported back to the US at no cost. “This is a real value to you,” she remarked.

The twelve hours of darkness seemed never-ending. For Madison and Ken, if sleep came at all, it descended in fits and groans.

~ *A Funeral in Africa* ~

On Saturday morning, eight missionaries gathered for breakfast. Judy dropped by to say she would be accompanying the remains of the ninth to Kigali. A Hospital administrator showed up at the house. Victor helped with the interpretation and pointed out the places where Ken should affix his signature. With financial assistance from Mr. Choi and Frank, Ken paid in cash the full amount of \$1735 for the hospital bill.

Victor and Pascazia accompanied the convoy to the Isano Hotel in Kigali. When Ken entered the lobby, he recognized the familiar form of Jefferson, standing with arms outstretched, eyes swollen in sorrow. Abigail stood at his side; her eyes downcast. With Maddy joining in, the four embraced and wept.

There was so much to discuss, but any talk about Joy led to unquenchable tears. Madison brought sunshine to faces when she mentioned Abby's obvious maternal condition.

Jeff spoke up, "We both plan to attend the California funeral, but I'll be returning to Sudan alone. Obstetrics aren't be best in Khartoum so Abby will be spending the last two months of her pregnancy in Denver."

Abby added, "It's a season of sadness and joy for my parents."

Judy dropped by the hotel in the evening and Jeff talked with her late into the night. The conversation ranged from details about the handling of his mother's death to her fifteen years' experience in the diplomatic service.

On Sunday morning the contingent of Americans, now numbering ten, attended the Assemblies of God church. Ken spoke with Apostle Anselm who was pleased to open his facility for Joy's funeral. Jeff and Madison worked with Victor on a list of speakers. Eric and Daniel arrived Sunday night after fulfilling their own church responsibilities.

About 9:00 p.m., a group of six headed to the airport. Their flight left for London a little after midnight on Monday. Elder Frank prayed once more and vowed to keep Ken informed of funeral arrangements. Ken asked one final favor of his church friend, "Joy and I never made burial plans. Frank, could you do some investigation and locate a suitable cemetery in Marin County?"

"I'd be happy to," Frank said.

On Monday and Tuesday, the Taylor four prepared their hearts and minds for the Wednesday morning funeral. Besides these principles, David, Eric, Victor, and Pascazia would all participate. A representative from the NUR students and the Morning Mamas would also say a few words.

About two-hundred mourners were in attendance on Wednesday morning. Maneuvering on crutches, Jacques fitted himself into a front row seat. The closed casket

of Belgian manufacture was placed to the left of the platform. Pastor Eric held an agenda in his hand and called out the names of speakers.

After songs and testimonials, Madison walked to the podium stifling tears. “Thank you so much for being here to honor my mom in this way. As sad as this is for me, this was God’s time for my mother to go. She was right in the middle of doing what she liked to do best and what she was called to do.”

Jeff spoke with a quiver in his voice. “Imagine that God appeared to my mother two weeks before her death and said to her, ‘My child Joy, I will be taking you home in fourteen days. Because you have led such an exemplary life, I grant you to spend the next two weeks in any way you choose.’ I suspect my mom would have chosen to spend the time exactly as she had lived it, working in Africa, assisting the poor and hugging babies. She had no greater joy. That was my mother. She lived out her name to the fullest.”

Ken held up his Bible for all to see. “Let me read the words embossed on the front cover of this book. They’re from Jeremiah 29:11. ‘For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’ I had my plans and Joy had hers, but God had different plans. We are not the authors of our own biographies. God designed the course of Joy’s life as he has designed my own. And our ways are not His ways.”

Daniel spoke a final prayer and the ceremony ended. As the attendees exited the church, they walked past the casket for a final tribute to Joy Lee Taylor. Ken, Jeff, and Madison placed their hands on the metal box and wept their goodbyes. Judy was in attendance and she accompanied the hearse to the airport for its flight to San Francisco.

During an elaborate meal in Anselm’s house, the family reminisced about Joy. Madison continued to struggle. She could not forgive herself for recommending a bicycle ride and she confessed continued hostility toward the truck driver who barreled through the intersection.

Pascazia then shared her own experience when Francis was murdered. “I hated those killers. I cried out to God for weeks. I wanted them dead. Then Pastor Daniel reminded me that unforgiveness is like a poison you give to others, but it only harms your own soul. I determined in my heart to forgive. Only then did I begin to heal. I believe that’s what’s happening across my country. I think that’s why Rwanda is on the mend. Reconciliation is the sole path to wholeness. It must be that way with you, Madison. It’s so difficult; and talk is so cheap, but you must learn to forgive like a Rwandan.”

As dinner was breaking up, Ken spoke to Eric and Pascazia. “I’m just like you now. My spouse has died in Rwanda.” With a grimace he added, “And that’s one club I never wanted to join.”

The next day was July fourth, a public holiday both in America (Independence Day) and in Rwanda (Kwibohora) the day in 1994 on which Kigali was liberated. Jeff wanted to see the site of the accident so the group made the round-trip car ride to Butare. Pascazia led the four on foot from the bicycle lot to the dusty intersection, a distance of one-hundred meters. Madison sobbed as she described events and pointed out places. The griever joined hands around the spot where six days earlier had lain the broken body of Joy. Curious bystanders looked on as tear-drops mingled with red dust.

Judy caught up to the group at the Kigali airport and delivered to Ken twenty embossed copies of Joy's death certificate. He clutched them to his chest. "It's here in writing; in black and white. It must be true." Ken also surrendered Joy's passport to Judy who punched holes through the booklet and returned it into Ken's possession. "It's like you're punching holes through my own soul," he shuddered.

~ A Funeral in California ~

During the long flight to Paris, Ken gazed upon the dark Mediterranean. Joy's absence appeared as enormous as the sky out his window, spreading from horizon to horizon; his sorrow seemed as deep as the sea below his feet. He located a lament from Job: "Oh, that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea."

Jeff applied his writing talent in composing an obituary. He wanted to post it in the Marin Independent Journal the moment of arrival. "One-week heads-up is not a long time. I think we should run it for three days."

Arriving at the San Francisco airport, Elder Frank Simmons met the party of five. Ryan's father assisted as a second driver.

Once inside the Mill Valley home, Joy's absence loomed as a hovering gloom. Her furniture, her books, and her clothing all lay undisturbed, a mute testimony to the life force that once animated the Taylor house.

Over the following days, friends dropped by to offer solace and practical assistance. Caring congregants dropped off casserole meals day after day. Jeff made a checklist of people to contact and places to go. Madison took charge of her mother's personal effects, hanging on to a few items, donating a closet of clothing, and packing away dozens of cardboard boxes for future determination.

On Thursday, distant family began to drop by for condolences. Roger, Rose, Caleb, and Laura checked into a local hotel. Joy's older sister from Korea and younger brother from Virginia came by the house with their families. Ken's east-coast sister, Ellen, appeared and apologized for her long estrangement. "My life has been so screwed

up that I've been ashamed to share it with my religious brothers. But, Ken, I need to be here for you."

At 10:00 a.m. on July 13, First Baptist Church of Mill Valley was filled to capacity with mourners of every stripe. In the foyer, Madison passed out remembrance cards with a photo of Joy and the following prayer:

We give her back to You, dear Lord, for You gave her to us. Yet as You did not lose Joy in giving her to us, so we have not lost her in her return to You. Not as the world gives, do You give, O Lover of Souls. What You give You do not take away, for what is Yours is ours always if we are Yours.

And life is eternal and love is immortal, and death is only a horizon. And a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up strong Son of God, that we may see further. Cleanse our eyes that we may see more clearly. Draw us closer to You that we may know ourselves nearer to our beloved Joy, who is with You. And while You prepare a place for us, prepare our hearts for that blessed place so that where Joy is and You are, we too may be. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

At fifty years old, Joy had passed away at the peak of her academic career. Dozens of fellow faculty members and tearful students were in attendance to pay their respects. Joy Lee had been fully engaged in her community: hiking clubs, yoga classes, Korean writing, Bible teaching, and lately *Myspace* blogging. A multitude of these acquaintances dropped into the church service.

Roger took on the role of MC, calling person after person to walk forward to celebrate Joy's life. When Ken stood on the platform, he spoke of human existence as a transient moment. "On Joy's gravestone it will read 1952 dash 2002, a birth year and a death year connected by a small horizontal stroke signifying fifty years of life. What are you doing with your dash? What are you doing of eternal significance? Today, as we heard many people pay tribute to Joy, I was amazed at the eternal consequences of her life—of her involvement at her university, of her compassion with her family, and of her evangelism in Rwanda."

"Joy's life was cut short; Yet in the years God gave her, she accomplished much because she loved much. I have no doubt that Joy Lee Taylor will hear those words spoken by her heavenly Father, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

After Ken's tribute, there were benedictions in English and in Korean. Then the family departed, as the congregation sang *Amazing Grace*.

Fernwood Cemetery lay only a mile down the highway, thirty acres of greenery bordering the national forest. With a motorcycle escort, a few dozen vehicles followed the hearse for a brief graveside ceremony. A brother, a son, and four nephews served as pallbearers. After a prayer and a song, the casket was lowered into the ground. Flowers and soil were dropped into the pit. The ritual of parting was complete. The dance of death had taken its final step.

A capstone family gathering assembled at the Taylor home. Ken confessed to his brother that his heart was too broken to preside over the non-profit ministry called *MissionMates*. Roger told him not to worry and he would gladly assume leadership. Overhearing the conversation, Ellen the prodigal sister asked, "What can I do to help you two guys? Your strong faith and loving words have inspired me to give God another chance. It was years since I had set foot in a church. I had forgotten what love could be found there."

The next morning, Madison drove Jeff and Abby to the airport. Her brother was bound for Sudan via D.C. and her sister-in-law to Denver for a baby delivery. As Madison gave Jeff a final hug, she remarked with a tear, "One of the saddest parts of mom's death is that she never lived to see her first grandchild."

Jeff rejoined with a smile, "Granddaughter in fact. And her middle name will be Joy."

~ *Heartbroken* ~

The accumulation of weeks and months acted as a balm of sorts. Time did not remove the psychic wounds, but did harden them into scars. Ken constructed a wall of remembrance by repurposing CD jewel cases, fitting a five-inch square photo of Joy into each frame. The acrylic wall gallery began at forty pictures, then expanded to eighty, then culminated at one hundred.

Ken continued to work at the College of Marin, sometimes for long hours. The workplace held fewer ghosts than the homestead. Madison stayed with her father in the house and commuted to Sonoma State. This was part out of convenience and part mutual comfort. They attended the Baptist church most Sundays although Maddy did worship in Sonoma on occasion sitting with Terri, Kristen, and especially Ryan.

The newly-minted widower found great solace in the Hebrew poetry of Psalms, Job, and Lamentations. The words expressed the gnawing ache in his soul and the dark place enshrouding his spirit. In a counterintuitive fashion, the gloomy words lifted his soul out of gloom.

“How long will you forget me, O Lord? forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God” (from Psalm 13:1-5).

“Have pity upon me for the hand of God has touched me. I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. I cry unto you, and you do not hear me: I stand up, and you do not regard me. You are become cruel to me: with your strong hand you oppose me. O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and set in the rock forever (from Job 18: 20 to 24).

“I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me He is turned; he turns his hand against me all the day. He has set me in dark places” (from Lamentations 3:1 to 6).

Because of the proximity of Fernwood cemetery, Ken often dropped by Joy’s gravesite. In late August, the headstone finally arrived. To maintain the natural setting, Fernwood requested a bolder serve as its marker. Joy’s brass inscription held nineteen words of Scripture: “I have glorified God on the earth. I have finished the work that He has given me to do” (John 17:4). Ken often read the words and sighed *amen* to the affirmation.

The long season of sorrow was interrupted by a single burst of celebration. The way Abby told it she “labored all day on Labor Day Monday, but the newborn didn’t make her appearance until the wee hours of Tuesday.” Emily Joy Taylor came into the world on September 3, 2002, sixty-six days after her grandmother had left it.

Two weeks later Ken and Madison flew to Denver. Jeff had joined his wife and in-laws, looking with awe upon this handiwork of heaven. Ken considered the words of the preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes:

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.”

Ken first became aware of those verses in 1965, when a rock group called the Byrds sang the ancient words as lyrics to the pop song *Turn, Turn, Turn*. “How odd,” he mused that such thoughts should return to mind in this season of birth and death.

As the calendar turned pages, a *new normal* took root. Ken remained undecided if the ebbing of grief was a good sign of his healing or a bad sign of disloyalty toward his wife. At year’s end, he sat at his computer to compose a December letter.

For the past several years Joy and I have mailed end-of-year letters. You may remember getting one. I wondered whether or not I should mail out Christmas letters for 2002. My first inclination was *No*, of course not. You would understand my grief. My second inclination was *Yes*. I won't allow grief to take mastery of me. As my family and friends, you deserve to know how I'm doing.

So, if you're wondering how I'm doing, I'll say this: "I am glad the year 2002 is behind me." It was my worst year ever, my dark night of the soul, my valley of the shadow of death. True, there was a flash of bright lightning when my granddaughter, Emily Joy, was born in September. That lifted my spirits. Yet the darkness soon re-enveloped me.

I will never comprehend why Joy had to die in Rwanda. That is for God to know, and I have fully accepted Him as my Sovereign. My past was filled with grace; my future is filled with hope. It's my present that's bleak, but I expect my present to slowly grind into my future.

Some questions are impossible to answer, like the one hypothetically addressed to President Lincoln's wife: "Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play?" If you redirect that question to me, it becomes, "Other than your wife's death, Mister Taylor, how did you enjoy 2002?"

For me, 2002 will always mark the year that my sweet Joy died. I'm glad the year is behind me. And yet I expect great things for 2003 and beyond. God is not through with me yet. I am surviving my season of sorrow because I continue to have Christ in me, the hope of glory.

Mission 2003

Souls Gone Astray

Ken Taylor took seriously the counsel of his pastor. The widower allowed his heart time to heal. For a full year after Joy's death, he avoided impulsive decisions. He held on to his job, did not sell his house, nor move his residence. Ken sought ways to honor his late wife, yet not idolize her. He desperately missed Joy and wore her wedding band on his little finger. He longed for the feminine touch yet resisted any rebound relationship. His mind had to move Joy from the present tense into the past tense; from "She is my wife" to "She *was* my wife." In addition, he chose not to return to Rwanda; at least for the time being.

Roger Taylor embraced his appointment as president of *MissionMates*. He grasped the baton passed on to him by his brother and began planning a solo trip to Africa. After discussing matters with his doctoral advisors at the University of Oregon, Roger decided to shift the focus of his ethical inquiry. He concluded the problem of evil could be better approached not by polling the victims of genocide but by interviewing its perpetrators.

Roger was able to acquire release time for the entire summer of 2003 and on May 31 he traveled to Rwanda for his second tour. He kept up regular correspondence with Ken and posted his observations on an internet platform called *Blogger*.

~ Two Crises ~

Upon his arrival in Butare, Roger encountered dual emergencies. First, Victor told him *MissionMates Rwanda* would have to find another house. "It's crazy," Victor expounded. "I didn't realize this, but the old man who owns this house; it was his son who drove the vehicle that killed Mama Joy. Pascal—that's the young man's name—demanded to his father he move back into this place. And his father said *yes*. So, we must go. Don't worry. Pastor Eric found a better house just down the road from here."

Eric piggy-backed on his comments, "Please tell your brother Ken about the situation. Pascal was found guilty of vehicular manslaughter. His father, who is a rich man, tried to get him released, but Professor Pascazia Kubwimana was a powerful witness of the crash and Colonel Bruno Bidago sat in the court room to make sure the process was not crooked. Pascal lost his driving privilege for five years. He was put in a local jail for six months and must be on parole for another year. He cannot drive a car; his movement is restricted to Butare; and he must report to the judge once a month.

That's why he wants to move back here: more room for him to lounge. But the house does belong to the old man and we must move out next week as directed." He placed the eviction notice on the table for Roger to peruse.

Victor recruited a dozen students to carry household goods to the new residence. The house was larger than the one vacated, but hid a host of unexpected problems. Once relocated, a second crisis hit concerning Immaculée, the house hostess. Roger blogged about these twin issues in an entry he called *Standards*.

I am in Rwanda now, just moving into a new house. This is a challenge for me. Standards in Rwanda are different than standards in America. It turned out to be an all-day chore just to accomplish simple things that might take only a few minutes back in the States. We especially had problems starting up our electricity, telephone, and plumbing.

In this part of the world, electricity is shut off at mid-day in order to conserve energy. Last week, while the power grid was down, I noticed two people walk through the front gate. A man opened the utility box as an assistant took notes. Since we had just moved into the premises, I assumed the two were writing down the current number on the electrical gauge. However, the power was off all that day, all that night, then the next day. I thought to myself, *this is surely a long time for the city to turn off the power*. Then I spoke with my neighbor—a Canadian. She told me she had no issue with her electricity. Then I realized the visiting workmen had actually switched off the power!

Electricity was off on Monday; I didn't realize it until Tuesday; and on Wednesday the local electric company didn't work because it was a holiday. Fortunately, my Rwandan interpreter knew someone in the mayor's office and power was restored by Wednesday evening. I informed my friend, "We have a higher standard in America."

The telephone was another story. The previous renter didn't pay his bill in full and the phone company wouldn't connect us to the line until the bill of about \$30 was paid. We talked to the owner of the house. He said he would speak with the previous renter. After a few days of non-communication, we decided to pay the back telephone bill and deduct it from a future rent payment. We finally got our landline in working order. Once again, I told my Rwandan friend, "We have a higher standard in America."

Then there's the plumbing. For some reason our water pressure is extremely high. One evening our housekeeper turned on the kitchen faucet and it wouldn't turn off. Water kept gushing out. We tried to twist off the outside connection, but the pipe was rusted and wouldn't budge. The water spouted like a fountain all night long. Finally on the next morning we located the owner, who contacted a

plumber, who replaced the cheap faucet with a high quality one. I told the Rwandan owner, “We have a higher standard in America.”

Last summer we contracted with a young lady to be director of our Christian Fellowship House. Immaculée was single, but had a boyfriend. She had married just one week before my arrival in Rwanda. I was sorry to have missed her special occasion.

After my arrival in Africa, I met her new husband and told him how happy I was with his wife’s work. A few days after that, Immaculée asked to speak alone with me and my interpreter. With tears in her eyes, she confessed that she was four months pregnant. She asked for forgiveness. We prayed together and of course I forgave her.

Immaculée had not yet told her own pastor, but when she did tell him of her motherly condition, she expected some kind of “church discipline” for having sexual relations prior to marriage. Maybe she would have to step down from her position as Sunday School teacher. Immaculée wanted to know what her future was as director of our house.

I discussed the situation with trusted pastors and women leaders. They each said that in the Rwandan Christian community, it would be difficult for her to continue as a religious leader and role model. People would not visit our house if her own church had sanctioned her. After some prayer, I asked her to resign at the end of the month. Immaculée seemed to accept the decision.

I spoke at length with the local board about Immaculée and her situation. I said, “Something like this would not happen in America. Most American churches would overlook her pre-marital sexual activity as part of the modern world, especially since she is now married to the father of the child.”

Then my friend said to me, “Yes, Professor Taylor, but in Rwanda we have a higher standard.”

~ Taking Counsel ~

Before beginning his doctoral research, Roger sought the counsel of local advisors. Daniel recommended Professor Kubwimana. As a lawyer she was most connected with the criminal justice system in Rwanda. He added, “Did you know she’s been appointed an *Inyangamungayo*? In our language that means ‘one who detests dishonesty.’”

Victor suggested Roger include Colonel Bidago among his consultants. “For two years after the genocide, this army officer was in charge of our local prison system. He

knows important people in the capital, including Warden Mkele. He can help you gain access to Gikondo Prison in Kigali.”

Along with the professor and the colonel, Victor became part of this unofficial committee serving as the researcher’s interpreter and prison escort.

As Roger had requested, Pascazia brought facts and statistics to the first meeting. “Here are some things you need to know before you enter our prisons. First, back in 1994, when my country began to deal with perpetrators of the genocide, we had next-to-nothing. Everything was destroyed. Many of our best judges and lawyers were dead. Yes, most of them were Tutsi, but all fair-minded Hutu scholars perished in the holocaust. Plus, many of the courtrooms were wrecked and office supplies ransacked.”

Victor quipped, “I can vouch for that. When I first entered Kigali, I couldn’t even find a pencil to write with. Our government opened shop with nothing, zero.”

Pascazia went on, “After the national catastrophe, Rwanda possessed only six prisons with a listed capacity of 18,000 inmates. What could we do? After just a few months, they were filled with over 100,000 men and women accused of horrible war crimes. Plus, we were processing about one thousand criminals every month. Yes, my government really packed them in, elbow to elbow. The conditions were terrible. But again, what could we do? After a few months and a quick assessment of accusations, our justice minister released about half back into their communities—all low-level offenders. They could be monitored and dealt with at a later time. Many in the villages did not understand this prisoner release. We tried to keep the worst violators incarcerated. Professor Taylor, I am a big supporter of American concepts like *habeas corpus*, due process, and a speedy trial, but with so many potential perpetrators and so few judges, our options were limited.”

She sighed and handed Roger a packet of notes. “You can read through these later, but just look at the first page. I’ve outlined our system for you. It’s complicated, but think of it as having three parts. The first part is our national government. Right now, the Rwanda Correctional Service keeps about 120,000 Rwandan citizens in lockdown. These prisons are grossly overcrowded and filthy. You’ll see that when you go inside. I apologize ahead of time. I can say with all frankness we do not want to retain these people. They’re a drain on our resources. We don’t want to feed and house them. Truly, I assure you, rehabilitation and reintegration is our goal.

“You can see I have listed the second part of the justice system as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). That’s the one that meets in Arusha. Here’s the background on that. Many of the key génociders fled the country as Hutu power began to collapse. They were like rats abandoning a sinking ship. Some

went to Europe, especially Francophone nations like France and Belgium. Others fled to neighboring countries like Congo and Kenya. My government located many of these runaways and asked foreign powers to return them to Rwanda for trial. However, the United Nations stepped in uninvited by us and set up its own tribunal in Arusha. My country objected to this action. What, are we incompetent? After all, these were Rwandan perpetrators who committed crimes on Rwandan soil against Rwandan victims. We did our best, but we are a small country and the UN is worldwide. Therefore, captured génociders were extradited to a prison in Tanzania. International authorities did catch some of the big rats, but many got away or are still hiding.”

Roger spoke up, “How many prisoners are at the UN Tribunal?”

Colonel Bidago answered that question. “According to the latest information, the number is ninety-three. I’ll be going to Arusha in a few weeks as a representative of my government. I’m hoping I can escort some of these suspects back to Rwanda.”

Pascazia continued, “The third part is most intriguing to me. Have you heard the term *Gacaca*? No? It can be translated as “short grass” and refers to a public space where neighborhood elders used to gather to solve local problems. Think of the term as “meadow” or “forest clearing.” Our president, Paul Kagame, has endorsed this traditional system of courts to try low-level genocide suspects.

“I think you know I’ve been elected as *Inyangamungayo* for my sector. Our court is organizing now and soon we will hear the trials of suspects. Local citizens will give perpetrators the opportunity to confess their crimes, show their remorse, ask for forgiveness, and maybe receive mercy—all in front of the same community they once offended. It’s all about reconciliation of our people, Hutu and Tutsi alike. These gacaca are happening in short-grass meadows across Rwanda. I’m proud of my country for coming up with this practical solution.”

Roger quired, “What about those who committed serious crimes? What if you run across someone who is a mass murderer or a planner of genocide?”

Professor Pascazia answered, “Our court can remand those people to the legal system for trial, but we estimate we can resolve nine of ten cases at the local level.”

Finally, Roger asked, “What happened to the worst of the worst? I heard there were some executions at one time. Are they still going on?”

The Colonel answered, “Yes, they happened once, but no more. Back in April of 1998, twenty-two génociders were shot by a firing squad. Notorious figures like Froduald Maramira and Silas Munyagishali were put to death. I myself was a witness. Our government took so much international criticism for that, we soon passed a law

stopping all capital punishment. I think we were the first country in all Africa to do that. We went from damnation to praise all in one week.” He ended the session with a wry smile.

~ Gikondo Prison ~

Roger Taylor resided in Kigali over three weeks in June of 2003. Victor Kwizira functioned as his interpreter, escort, sounding board, and confidant. The colonel accompanied the two men through the front gates of Gikondo Prison where they met Warden Mkele. The two RPF fighters caroused as old friends, clasping hands and shouting. Roger and Victor were then issued badges and granted access to a prison classroom. As Victor winked to Roger, “In my country it’s not so much *what* you know, but *who* you know.”

On the next day, the warden accompanied the three men on a tour of the living quarters. As they walked, the warden told his guests how the Belgians had built the prison in the 1930s and had designed it to house a few thousand law breakers. He reported the population once topped an incredible 50,000 but now was stable at about 20,000. “Yet overcrowded still,” he shrugged.

The grounds were encompassed by a massive concrete wall, but inside, the prison space appeared communal. As Roger glanced around, he noted pink-pajamaed prisoners filling every nook. Their demeanor ran the gamut. Some youngsters stooped in small knots, talking and joking. Several older men seemed lost, crunched in corners, eyes vacant, staring into space. A few of the weakest rested on canvas cots stacked four high, affording just enough room to sandwich skeletal bodies in sideways. The warden mentioned two or three corpses were wheeled out every day.

Victor posted a small paper on a bulletin board soliciting participation in a discussion group. The notice read, “Professor Roger Taylor desires to interview prisoners in regard to their participation in the genocide against the Tutsi. As an incentive, you might be granted an early parole from prison. Talk with a chaplain to sign up for this group.” Dozens of the internees responded.

The first week of interviews did not go well. At first, Roger spoke with inmates in one-on-one sessions, his cassette player recording the words. He figured privacy might lead to frankness. However, single interviewees appeared evasive and tight-lipped; more interested in gaining early release than in detailing criminal motive.

As Victor interpreted the words of a dozen men, the stories melded into one: “I am a good person who did bad things for one-hundred days. It was not my fault. I obeyed those in authority over me. If I am released, I will never do a crime again.”

Roger then changed strategy. He supposed men might loosen their lips amongst a group. Perhaps a dozen might talk where one would not. However, this method did not pan out either. As strangers to each other, make-shift groups proved suspicious. Maybe one of the fellow inmates was really a spy. Maybe the Muzungu would report their words and land them in deeper trouble.

Victor suggested a third strategy. “Remember when we walked through the prison? Did you notice those small cliques—five or six—in a tight circle laughing among themselves? Maybe that will work best. Let’s go back into prison and talk with some of these guys. I don’t think they’ll be suspicious of each other and as we have observed, they are loud-mouthed in their own company.”

Victor identified a clique of seven young men. Their boss was a tough talker name Cyprien whose ID showed him to be twenty-five. His followers were a few years younger. These men met with Roger and Victor for five sessions. At each encounter, the researchers provided the inmates with a small gift: fruit, soap, pencils, vitamins, socks.

The first few sessions followed in the pattern of the others. “We are good people who did bad things and we are sorry. We only followed orders. It was not our fault.”

Cyprien did most of the talking for the group but if another spoke, he would glance at his boss to gain approval. Victor loosened up the seven by telling funny stories about his boyhood—stealing bananas and such. They got to telling stories about themselves and finally crossed the boundary to tell stories that occurred during the one-hundred days.

At the third meeting, Cyprien broke the ice. “Yes, some of us killed Tutsis, but the judge in our town told us ‘From now on, you are to do nothing else.’ Do you understand me? That was our job. The judge wore his fancy robe of authority and spoke from a high table. We talked no more about farming. Worries let go of us. His words were the only truth our universe contained.

“But once it got started and encouraged, the authorities did not have the ability to control our behavior. We were like savages. The massacres soon became extraordinary, cruel, and beyond all reason.” He added, “Mister Kwazera and Taylor, we are trusting you to show favor on us. We have no power. You have it all, so we must trust you to do right by us.”

At the fourth meeting, a tall man with broken teeth looked toward his boss, then spoke with hesitation, "As a group, we had stopped seeing Tutsis as humans or even as creatures of God. We prayed for ourselves, for a better life, but never for our victims."

Another added, "When the whites and priests left our town, we could kill without drawing evil looks. I even killed to get a sheet metal roof. Once you cross that line of murder, I'm sorry to say it becomes easy."

Ken asked about rape.

After a moment of furtive glances, Cyprien spoke up, "That was a part of it. The attitude was like this, 'If you're going to kill this Tutsi girl anyway, why not have some fun with her first? Sexual intercourse is fun, right? It's a God-given urge.'"

Another broke in, "And if you are going to kill them anyway, why not steal everything they own? They won't need it dead underground, will they?"

The tall man with broken teeth picked up the line of his conversation, "I've had time to think about this in prison. I even tried to explain it during my trial. During the one-hundred days there were two kinds of rape. The first was vicious and quick. You ravish her, maybe torture her, then toss her away like a cigarette butt. That's one kind.

"The second is more difficult to explain. Yes, you assault the female and humiliate her, but hesitate to kill her as you should. Maybe you hide her in the bush. Then you feel sorry, or have compassion, or maybe just enjoy her body. This rape victim becomes a kind of slave-wife, even if she is Tutsi. You protect her; she follows you; she cooks for you. She knows what she must do to survive."

Cyprien broke in, "Hah! Sabantu, you're talking about Odette in Gitarama, aren't you? Did you really fall in love with that tall Tutsi girl?"

Sabantu flushed in embarrassment.

Cyprien stopped his teasing and continued in a more sober tone. "Sorry, Sabantu. I too was disappointed when the Interahamwe found her hiding and hacked her with machetes. I know you felt some affection for that girl."

Sabantu put his head in his hands and remained sullen the rest of the afternoon.

To change the subject, Victor asked, "Is there any Hutu who refused to kill?"

One in the back row answered. "Once when we were chasing Tutsis through the forest, we surprised three men in suitcoats. We asked for their ID cards and they were Hutu like us. I said, 'Then prove yourself in a hunt. It will be fun. Maybe you can hunt down a girl for your pleasure.'"

One said, 'We are Pentecostals. We are forbidden by God to kill.' I replied, 'but all those White priests are gone and our own priests say it's permissible.' He replied, 'You did not understand my words. It's not a priest or preacher who forbids killing, but God Himself. We cannot do what you ask.'

Cyprien built on that story. "That's true. I had a big stick and beat them. Still, they wouldn't join us. I thought about slicing them, but then I heard a whoop. We had cornered a Tutsi so we left the Hutu traitors at the crossroads. I don't know what happened to them after that."

Roger asked, "Did you ever complain about having to kill your neighbors?"

A wise-guy slouching in the back responded, "No, we adjusted our lives to that. Here's what we did grumble about. Every few days an Interahamwe leader would visit our neighborhood and demand a *contribution* of money. We resented that tribute. We had stolen that money fair and square, but they had bigger guns than we had."

The other six shook their head *yes* in agreement with this comment.

At the final meeting, Roger probed his audience in regard to torture. "Let's concede you are foot soldiers in service of Hutu power, just doing your duty as you understand it. It was a war you tell me. You explained to me that you followed orders to kill. Okay, I understand that soldiers are supposed to kill during a war. But, did any of your genocide leaders command you to *torture*, to intentionally inflict bodily pain on another?"

There was silence and thought. Finally, Cyprien spoke, "I will be honest with you. My soul is dark on this topic. I admit to killing, raping, and looting. All that is true and to some degree, I can justify these things as acts of war. But I am honest. I also tortured my own neighbors for pleasure. I can no longer understand that part of me. I was not a sadistic person before the one-hundred days of madness.

"Torture was a supplementary activity for us, a kind of recreational break. We worked so hard in the daytime and had to unwind. These raucous village jamborees were quite popular. I hate to say this, but it was mentioned already. Since these Tutsi vermin would be dying anyway, we reasoned we should squeeze out as much juice as we could before we put them in the graves. We raped them, stole their goods, and they entertained us. How? By them begging and screaming in agony. We laughed at their anguish. Our broken souls figured cruelty was hilarious. We competed for ways to illicit screams from our victims." The tough-looking Cyprien hung his head and with this confession, exhaled a deep breath.

Degrís Simbi, short and pockmarked, spoke for the first time, "God allowed Satan to win the match. Therefore, it is God alone who can judge us. Yes, we obeyed our leaders instead of God. We took pleasure in inflicting pain and death.

“I can’t imagine any human forgiveness capable of drying up all this spilled blood. I seek only God to forgive me. That’s why I ask that of Him every day; offering Him all my sincerity, without hiding any of my misdeeds from Him. I don’t know if He says *yes* or *no*, but I do know that I ask Him very personally.”

Roger rose to his feet, thanking the men for their frankness. Victor reassured the seven he would do his best to gain them an early release on the basis of their contrition. As a final gesture of his devotion to God, Victor placed his hands on each man and prayed God’s will be done in each of their lives.

Back in the hotel room Roger shared his feelings with Victor concerning the seven prisoners. “It was a challenge for me to sit in the midst of these confessed murderers. To be honest I began with aversion toward them, then came condescension, next a kind of indulgent complacency. As they talked more and I listened better came perplexity. How can this be? Finally, I found them not more likable, but at least less unpleasant.”

~ *The Milgram Research* ~

The prison recordings were completed by July 10. Roger and Victor returned to Butare and invited Pascazia to listen to five hours of cassette recordings. The professor honed and clarified Victor’s English transcript. As she drank in her Kinyarwanda language, sometimes she laughed; sometimes she wept. At times her face appeared puzzled; at other times red hot. At a few places, Pascazia had to rewind and replay. “Did those bizarre words really come out of this guy’s mouth?” she mused.

Upon completing the final tape, she shared this conclusion with Roger: “At most times these guys sound like sane and likeable fellows; profane for sure. But then they swerve into evil, beginning to laugh so casually about murder and rape. This is odd to me, incongruous. In some moments they accept a little bit of responsibility, but their continuing excuse seems to be they obeyed those in authority over them. How can I make sense of their actions?”

Roger asked Pascazia and Victor, “Have you heard about a psychological study called the *Milgram Research*?”

They shook their heads *no*.

Roger set some illustrations on the table before them and went on to explain. “Here, let me read from my notes: The study was conducted in the early 1960s at Yale University. Stanley Milgram examined people’s willingness to obey an authority figure, even when that obedience caused harm to others.”

Victor quipped, “You mean, like in Rwanda?”

Roger continued, “The study involved three participants: the experimenter, the learner, and the teacher. The experimenter was in charge of the procedure, gave orders, and wore a white lab coat. The learner was an accomplice who worked with the experimenter and pretended to receive electric shocks. The teacher was the uninformed volunteer who thought the pretend shocks were real.

“Together the experimenter and learner worked to deceive the teacher who was the actual subject of the research. The original study involved forty participants who were instructed to deliver electric shocks to victims. These so-called learners pretended to receive the shocks. The fake electricity was delivered via a *shock machine* and ranged in severity from slight shocks to severe shocks.

Victor interjected, “So the three people were like a genocider, a victim, and a perpetrator. Am I tracking you?” He studied the diagram Roger had set before him, noting the three positions.

“That’s right,” Roger went on. “I’ll use your terms. The genocider instructed the perpetrator to administer electric shocks to the victim whenever he gave a wrong answer. The shocks started at a low level and increased in intensity with each wrong answer. The victims were not actually receiving shocks, you understand, but they pretended to be in pain and begged for mercy. Despite this, the genocider instructed the perpetrator to continue shocking the victim.” He paused, “Can you see how this research sheds light on what happened in Rwanda?”

Pascazia held the diagram before her eyes.

Roger continued reading, “The results of the Milgram experiment were shocking.” The reader paused and smiled at the pun. “Despite the learner’s protests, the majority of volunteer participants continued to administer shocks to the maximum level, even when they believed that the shocks were causing serious harm. That is, despite the cries of pain and protest, the majority of participants continued to administer shocks up to the maximum level, demonstrating high rates of obedience to authority figures.

“And you might find this interesting. One important aspect of the research turned out to be the role of the experimenter’s uniform. The lab coat served as a symbol of authority and expertise, creating a sense of credibility and legitimacy for the experimenter. By wearing the lab coat, the authority figure appeared more knowledgeable and trustworthy, which influenced participants to follow their instructions more readily.”

Roger read the concluding remarks. “The Milgram experiment remains a significant and influential study in the field of social psychology, providing valuable

insights into the power of authority and the limits of individual autonomy. It demonstrates that ordinary people are capable of inflicting harm on others when instructed to do so by an authority figure and continues to have an impact on our understanding of obedience, authority, and human behavior.”

Pascazia asked, “Can I make a copy of these few pages? Obedience, authority, and human behavior? This does help me to understand what went on in my country. It also eases my mind somewhat that such things can happen even in America.”

Handing her the papers, Roger replied, “Yes, this kind of evil is not unique to Rwanda. Those of us with a Christian conscience must constantly be on the lookout for wicked experimenters like those in this study. We must re-direct pliable teachers who obey authority figures in opposition to their own moral conscience. Especially we must look into our own hearts. Ultimately, we must all learn to apply the Golden Rule– ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’”

~ Zigzag to the Truth ~

Roger met with his three advisors before his return to America. “I hope to use these prison interviews as a basis for my dissertation. I plan to acknowledge each of you when it’s published and I’ll give you a copy.

“I find a kernel of truth in what the inmates have told me. How can I dismiss their consistent testimony out of hand? These are my three observations. First of all, they state they are *basically good people*. I think that means—according to their own definition—they had never been in trouble with the law. Some of them were even regular church-goers. Until Habyarimana’s plane went down, they had never before murdered, raped, or looted. I think that’s accurate. Do you think that’s true for the most part?

“Second, most inmates in Gikondo Prison do admit to committing horrible crimes during the one-hundred days; even vicious crimes like murder, rape, and torture. It’s an undeniable fact. The thousands of corpses I have seen with my own eyes could not have killed and buried themselves.

“And third, once the inmates in Gikondo Prison are released back into their own communities, I believe they pose little risk of relapsing into their genocidal ways. That’s already been proved true. The recidivism rate is next to nothing. Oh, I can agree there will be law-breaking like public drunkenness, petty theft, or domestic abuse, but crimes against humanity? Not likely; not here in Rwanda anyway. I view my philosophical task as puzzling my way through these three observations.” He put down his notes.

Colonel Bidago responded first. “I think what you say is mostly true and that is the puzzle. The Hutu killers I have spoken with were not bloodthirsty murderers before the genocide. Yet, leading up to the catastrophe, they were being groomed to exterminate Tutsis. They were bombarded with propaganda. The killers harbored hatred and racism in their hearts, but those cannot be counted as crimes.

“I also think the four-year war between my RPF and Hutu-power contributed to what happened in my country. As a soldier myself, I believe genocides usually occur in the context of war. You see, war suspends the rule of law; it normalizes savagery; It fosters fear and delusion; It reawakens old demons and unsettles human values.” He grinned, “You know it’s easier to hide a dead body resulting from a massacre when other bodies from a battlefield are actively being put into graves.”

Victor gave these words his full attention. “Professor Taylor, I agree with all that has been said. These three observations also puzzle me. I hope when you are back in America you will listen closely to this conversation and maybe come up with a solution. Let me say one more thing about the colonel’s comment. I think it’s true that genocide requires a battlefield. I knew twin brothers, both Hutu Interahamwe. They were in prison together and alike in many ways. One is returned here to Butare—Pascazia knows him—and he is a model citizen. One could not guess he was ever a killer. His brother took a different course. He remains a fighter to this day, hiding in the Congo hills and killing people. War and genocide seem to go hand-in-hand.”

Colonel Bidago nodded his agreement.

Victor continued, “The genocide was the result of plans formulated by collective decisions. It’s difficult to place the responsibility upon one person’s shoulders, like an Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. Our genocide was rooted in a history unique to Rwanda.”

Finally, Pascazia joined in, “Yes Victor, our historical reality is particular to our time and place. That’s why is so difficult for foreigners like Roger here to grasp our truth. Our customs, traditions, culture, and language are so different from Western ways.

“And yet... and yet, God created all of us in His image—Black and White—and each of us is responsible to Him for our actions. Our Great Creator put into the hearts of every human being a moral compass. To be human is to be rational is to be moral. Each inmate in Gikondo prison knows in his heart it is wrong, even wicked, to kill, to torture, to abuse another person. They don’t need a lawbook to tell them that. It’s a property of being human.”

Pascazia opened her briefcase and retrieved her English Bible. “Not only am I a student of the law, but also a student of God’s word. Here’s what it says in Romans One:

‘What may be known about God is plain to them, because God Himself has made it plain. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.’

“Roger, you’re a professor at a seminary. What do you think? Do these perpetrators of violence have any excuse before God for their atrocities?”

Professor Roger Taylor was embarrassed. He recognized the academic aspect of his intellect had wandered from its Biblical anchor. After a moment of reflection, he replied, “I think my mind was stuck in my ivory tower. Thanks, Pascazia, for returning me to earth, or rather should I say to heaven.”

She laughed to herself then continued, “That’s okay. Sometimes I get so caught up in my historical research I forget God Himself is the author of history. I get so deep into jurisprudence I forget He is the ultimate law giver. I must remember to turn to God for complete understanding.”

She held up three fingers. “As a woman who has this finger in the history book, this one in the law book, and my thumb in the *good book*, allow me to make a few of my own observations. You can do with them as you will.

“The legal journals which I’ve been reading have made a distinction between these two: retributive justice which is based on punishment and restorative justice aimed at reconciliation. I think this is a proper distinction, especially here in Rwanda. So then, we have two questions before us. First, ‘what is the appropriate punishment for wrongdoers?’ and second ‘how can we rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into their communities?’ I think the second question is more important than the first.”

She asked the others, “What do you three think about the first question? What is the proper punishment for the perpetrators?”

Roger said, “I’ll defer this question to you. This is Rwanda and is for Rwandans to decide.”

Colonel Bidago took this cue, “Our country has devised a three-tiered system for dealing with genocide criminals. Category One is for the authors, mass killers, ring-leaders so to speak. Category Two is for followers who committed serious crimes, even up to murder, but claim they were under duress, obeying their superiors. And Category Three is for property crimes, abuse, intimidation, things like that.”

Victor picked up this thought. “It’s a challenge, but we strive to determine the exact nature of the crime, then apply the punishment without bias. That’s our goal, but sometimes we make mistakes.”

Pascazia reentered the conversation. “A judge like myself must take so many things into account before sentencing. What is his age and mental condition? And especially, how much pressure did a leader apply? But remember, all of these mitigating circumstances do not mean a crime has not been committed, no, but rather the punishment must fit the crime.

“In all these deliberations we must strive for truth. This is what our president tells us too, ‘Truth passes through fire but it does not burn.’ Our road to reconciliation must begin with truth.”

Colonel Bidago snorted, “What is truth?”

Professor Pascazia was startled at his words. With a tease she replied, “Why colonel, I didn’t know you could quote the Bible. Those are the exact words spoken by Pontius Pilate. He asked Jesus that same question, but the Roman governor did not give our Lord a chance to reply. However, in another part of the gospel Jesus says this, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’ So, Bruno, to answer your question, the way of Christ is the way to truth.”

The colonel muttered and shook his head.

Looking at his fellow soldier, Victor addressed Pascazia, “Thank you for your witness to my friend.”

Roger rose from his chair and said, “That’s a good Biblical note on which to close this conversation.”

As they were walking through the door, Victor pulled Roger aside. “You know the colonel’s wife died during the war. He doesn’t talk about it much.” His face changed from dark to light. “And he has been pursuing the professor as a second wife. She’s so witty, well-spoken, and still beautiful, even in her forties. She would be quite a catch to anyone lucky enough to reel her in.”

Victor added, “You know at one time my colonel asked her to be his guest at a military luncheon. Do you know what she said to him? ‘Yes, I will do that if you will be my guest as I put a bouquet at the memorial plaque to my late husband.’ That put a damper on his romance. Yet, they remain friends, even playful friends.”

Within a few days, Roger was heading back to Oregon; a suitcase full of cassette tapes, a head full of conjectures, and a heart full of gratitude.

Back in California, Ken wept his way through the one-year anniversary of his wife’s death. It lay at the back of his mind to do something special for Joy, to make some monument, to establish some lasting legacy. Rwanda might be the

right place but Ken puzzled at how he might accomplish that. He still shouldered expenses, especially a large mortgage. Plus, his position at the community college was untenured, always semester-to-semester.

He did count himself as blessed, however. Joy had worked at Sonoma State from 1982 to 2002, exactly the twenty years needed for vestment. Her retirement check was sufficient to keep his head above water. It appeared she would be blessing him until the end of his days.

As the year passed, Roger plugged away at his dissertation. Ken was recovering his life, putting distance between the advancing calendar and the receding sorrow.

Mission 2004

Justice in the Short Grass

In January of the new year, Joy's sister phoned from Virginia. Pam asked for some of Joy's papers, especially those written in Korean. Ken saw no problem in doing that. After a few minutes of small talk, Pam hinted that her sister was a wealthy woman and asked if she might borrow some money from her estate. It was to help her daughter in college, she said.

This was news to Ken, but he acted with nonchalance. "Okay, let me think about that. First, what do you know about your sister's money?"

Pam was hesitant to share such information. "She used to talk with me; says she invested in Microsoft in the eighties and Apple in the nineties; with Sam Sung too, I think. You know how much she was always into technology. I remember her saying how undervalued Apple stock was. I know for sure she bought nine-thousand dollars' worth in 1990. I thought she was nuts, but I read the newspaper. Do you know how much that's worth today? She wanted it to be a secret, so invested with some Korean bankers. From what I can figure, it must be worth over a million dollars today. I'm just asking for a little bit. It's to help out her niece Nancy."

Ken was shocked at this information. It was a revelation to him. "Tell you what," he said. "I'll give the matter some serious consideration and get back to you. I promise."

After hanging up on Pam, Ken gathered Joy's papers together. He located three envelopes filled with certificates and Korean-language explanations. A year earlier, he had struggled with so much sorrow, he set the papers aside. The next day, he contacted Lili from Sausalito. He knew she worked at Wells Fargo Bank and would help him figure this out.

As she sat in his living room, tears welled her eyes. "The last time I sat here, your wife served me tea. I miss her so much."

Ken offered Lili a tissue, pressing one to his own eyes. He then placed three large manila envelopes on the coffee table as well as six pieces of mail, still unopened. "I've been pestered by these since she died. I opened one and couldn't read it. I figured it was junk mail so put them with the rest of her stuff. I did plan to contact them someday to inform them Mrs. Taylor was deceased, but never got

around to it. You can see the only English word on the front is *Confidential*. She's gone, Lili, so you have my permission to open them up."