So Great a Cloud of Witnesses

A Novel of the Rwanda Genocide

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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 Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath. 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: The Extermination

These are the basic facts: 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. Ninety percent of the people identify as Christian–both Roman Catholic and Protestant. 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. They viewed the minority Tutsis as closer in kind to Europeans and elevated them to positions of power over the majority Hutu. 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 reversed. Once disenfranchised Hutu 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 borders and Hutu militias retaliated by killing Tutsi civilians.

In 1990, a rebel group called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), invaded 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.

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 distinctive 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 a 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.

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 in 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 this book was written.

Chapter 1
Evil Unloosed
April 6 to 9, 1994, in Southern Uganda

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 Tutsi people and extremist Hutu could ever be possible. Still, he hoped for peace in Rwanda.

Victor folded the community newspaper upon his knees and grew introspective. Did he regret his recent decision to join the military wing of the Rwanda Patriotic Front, an army calling itself *Inkotanyi*? After quelling doubts, he gazed into the shadows.

A dozen fellow recruits lingered 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 such questions. Sano's eyes fixed upon a tattered French Bible.

Victor then turned his head to observe young Tomani who danced with a transistor radio pushed to his ear. The high-spirited boy-soldier was constantly swaying to the catchy tunes of Kigali station RTLM–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 like: "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 tribal brother."

> *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 am Hutu, but I do not hate my own people. You see. I am first Rwandan by birth, then second Hutu by custom.” Pointing to all who surrounded him, “You are my people. You are my family. All men who love liberty are my brothers.”

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 die? Because they spoke out against militia atrocities. His parents were protecting people of our tribe. He is on our side, not with the enemy.”

Sano responded, “Thank you for those words but I can defend myself.” Then, turning to Tomani, “Can you point out one disloyal action I have taken against our cause? Yes, I am Hutu, but I am 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-wet 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 creaky doors provided access. Raw timber held aloft a corrugated iron-sheet roof.

Each apprentice soldier 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. Some stashed a flask of *urwagwa* – banana beer; others hid a wad of Rwandan francs.

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.

About nine o'clock he 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, 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 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 faction 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.”

Concerns seemed to cluster into three sets of opposites.

“Will I be killed or will I survive?”

“Will I run away or will I show courage?”

“How about my family in Rwanda? Are they safe or are they suffering?”

After just one week in this training Battalion, all knew the answer to one question. “No, not one of us is prepared for battle.”

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 peace when his ears discovered the comforting monotones of Sano’s sacred supplications.

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 two degrees 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 from the tall grass. A protective perimeter now encircled the compound.

Victor stood in ankle-deep mud surrounded by sixty men rigid at attention. Two dozen barefoot boys had swollen their ranks. Tomani whispered, “Where did these raggedy no-goods come from?”

Sergeant Mwiza overheard the comment, “Private, did anyone give you permission to talk? Drop down and do pushups until I tell you to stop.”

Victor did his best not to break a smile as Tomani plunged his face into the gooey red mud.

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 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 our prime minister and the Belgian peacekeepers. 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–Inkotani ‘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 duty 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 hint of malaria, a compact head projecting an intelligent face. “They tell me you were born in this 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.”

“So, I take it you’re familiar with the land and people in Isingiro District?”

“Yes, sir. Since childhood I’ve run down these roads and across these hills, as far north as Mbarara and south across the frontier into the deep forest.”

“They also say you have a gift for mobilizing, that you are responsible for half the troops in this unit.”

With a chuckle he replied, “Not half, sir, but a greater number than my fingers and toes.”

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, yes, I understand. We Banyarwanda are strangers in a strange land.” With a hardened demeanor, the captain interrogated further. “Is it true you have been actively smuggling weapons across the river into Tanzania? Do you know that’s a violation of the Peace Accords?”

Victor was silent.

“Well, speak up, man.”

Victor clenched his teeth, finally whispering, “I cannot say. Sir, I am under obligation not to share that information.”

The captain demanded, “I order you to tell me.”

Victor looked straight ahead trembling.

Finally, the captain rose to his feet and barked an order. “Sergeant Mwiza, come in here and bring your weapon.”

The burly soldier pushed open the door.

The captain's face softened to a smile. "Sargent Mwiza, meet my special assistant for local intelligence, a man who can hold his tongue. You two will be working together."

Victor's initial assignment was to visit the sprawling Nakivale Refugee Camp, a short distance along the road to Mbarara. This immense settlement was the largest in Uganda hosting upward of 200,000 Rwandan refugees. It was from this settlement Victor had carried out most of his mobilizing. With the onset of active war, recruitment proved easy. After just two days' effort, he marched three-hundred fit young men to Captain Bidogo. The entire battalion was astonished at the number and quality of the green recruits. Victor told his friend Sano, "And I turned away as many as I recruited."

Victor's second task was to scout the Tanzanian side of the Kagera River and report his findings to Battalion headquarters. Sargent Mwiza with his Kalashnikov rifle would accompany him. Sano joined the group as one who was fluent in French, English, and Swahili.

At midnight, the reconnaissance team crossed the swollen river. Their orders were to follow the waterway upstream until they linked with their battalion at the Rwanda border town of Kagitumbo. The three were to gather intelligence along the route. Victor knew the land well. He had often tramped the river course during his days as an arms smuggler. As he stepped into the watercraft, he felt every bit the soldier of fortune.

Chapter 2
The Un-welcoming Committee
April 9 to 11, 1994, in Northern Tanzania

Once on shore in Tanzania, Victor moved silently in the darkness. A peekaboo moon provided occasional illumination. The infiltration team encountered no one for five hours, hearing only an occasional watercraft, dog bark, or cock crow. 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 first 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 rain. Rubber shoes protected their feet while wide-brimmed hats deflected raindrops away from eyes. However, from neck to knee, the team was continually soaked.

Around noon Victor stumbled across an off-road shelter constructed of bamboo poles, wicker rope, and thatch. “For cows, I think.” Sniffing the walls, the former cattleman confirmed “Yep, cows.”

Sano offered, “This time you two eat and rest. I’ll stand watch.”

Victor and Mwiza double-folded the tarp into a cushion then sat in a corner of the cow pen. Each pulled from his knapsack a plastic container of beans. Victor began to spoon the morsels into his mouth.

Mwiza nudged him with an elbow. “Try some of this. I picked it along the path; do you know wild spinach?”

Victor looked at the vegetation. “You picked dodo?”

“That’s right. Just mix it with the beans. It stretches them into a healthy meal.”

Victor pinched a leaf of the green stuff then flicked it to the ground in disgust. “I don’t eat dodo. Can’t stand the stuff. Do you want to know why?”

Mwiza nodded in amusement.

Victor cleared his throat, then began to orate one of his well-worn stories. A twinkle sparked in his eyes. “You know I was raised in the Oruchinga Refugee Camp, right? The place was always overrun with us Banyarwanda. My shanty could never produce enough food and we all depended on UN aid for rice and beans. One day the deliveries stopped. It was a dry season and we became desperate. The only food mama could scrounge for me was dodo. Day after day, all I ate was that awful weed. But then a miracle happened.”

Mwiza urged the story teller to continue. Sano inched closer, beginning to follow the narrative.

“I grew to love these.” Victor held up a single bean and studied it between his thumb and forefinger. “My mama taught me an important lesson during that dry season. Unbeknownst to me, she had hidden a bag of uncooked beans under her sleeping mat. When I saw her walk out the door with this bag, I grew so excited. *Now I could eat!* But no, mama walked right past me to the furrowed earth, picked up a hoe, and filled her own mouth with the beans”.

Sano interrupted, “What? Did she swallow them herself?”

“No, no. But that’s what I thought at the time and so I began to cry. You have to understand. I was so hungry. But mama struck a hole in the ground and spit one bean into the center of it. She dug another hole, spit another bean, and so on–until the bag was empty. Then she told me and sis to walk down to the creek, fill a jerry can, and pour a cup of water into each hole. That took us all day.

“I finally understood what she was doing. *Invest in today so you can harvest for tomorrow*. And my family did survive. The rains returned in a few weeks; the district provided meager bananas; and in a few months, my family picked a crop of beans. So now you know why I love beans but hate dodo.”

“Good story.” Sano laughed, “Let’s call it *Spitting Beans*.” Then pulling three tiny bananas from his rucksack, “How about something sweet before continuing our journey.”

Mwiza joked, “Yes, it’s time to give the cows back their home.”

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 soldier advised. "It will be slower, but safer." Keeping the river over their right shoulders, the recon team struggled 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, feeling our way along the riverbank. We should see house lights on the far shore when we arrive opposite Kagitumbo."

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 Sano counting beads. Victor switched off his light, then spoke in a barely audible voice, "Sorry to interrupt you. I'm curious. Can you explain to me what that necklace is about?"

"It's called a *rosary*. It helps me to pray, to stay close to God. Each bead I count is a separate prayer. First, I locate the crucifix with my fingertips and recite a prayer, then for each bead I touch I recite another prayer. By the time I complete the circle, I have spoken five decades or fifty prayers. Some of them are short like the *Hail Mary* and others are long like the *Apostle's Creed*. Some of the prayers change with the days of the week. My prayers center on the life of Christ and on the Virgin Mary whose focus was her son.

"When I began this daily practice two years ago, I found it difficult to remember words and to recite for thirty minutes straight. Now it's a joy and a high point of my day. And really, once you get the hang of it, it's not that difficult. Like most accomplishments, it just takes discipline and practice." The speaker lapsed into meditation.

"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 have 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*. I believe that *Hutu Power* is an evil teaching, a doctrine of demons. I am 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 sin 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 am able from the edge of the machete.”

The air grew still as the men eased into sleep.

At the hour when the Southern Cross peaks above the horizon, a volley of distant gunshots echoed down the valley. The men sprang up. “One o’clock,” whispered Mwiza looking up from his illuminated watch dial. “Somebody’s having a party and we need to join it.”

Victor quizzed him, “Where did those shots come from? How far away?”

“From the west, maybe Kagitumbo. I just heard rifles, not artillery. I can’t guess how many.” Then after a pause, “But listen, there’s more, now the thud of hand grenades. It can’t be much farther to the battle.”

The three strode parallel to the shoreline, about five paces off the roadway. In the dim starlight Victor began to see shacks and piers dot the waterfront. He heard more distant battle noise and now near-by vehicles sputtering down the road.

Sano spoke up, “I want to duck down within earshot of the road and listen for voices.”

Just as Victor reached the road ditch, a dozen men rushed by. “Angalia,” one shouted.

Sano whispered to the others, “That’s Swahili for *watch out*. By the chatter, I think they’re Tanzanian military.”

Victor and Mwiza nodded in agreement. The staccato of automatic weapon fire filled the air. The three dove for cover when bullets whizzed overhead.

Further down the road, confused voices shouted out, "*Forces rwandaises de defense. Ne tirez pas*–Rwanda Defense Forces. Don't shoot."

"That's the *Forces Armed Rwanda* for sure," Sano narrated. Then in bafflement, "But what is the FAR doing on this side of the river?"

"Just one thing I can figure," Mwiza mused. "Our boys chased them here."

As the three eavesdropped on further conversation, several FAR soldiers surrendered their weapons to the Tanzanians. Sano strained to catch the interaction. "It's as we thought. Kagitumbo is now liberated." The men clasped hands in jubilation.

But then another round of shooting echoed from the west. This time accompanied by the boom of cannon. Sano hung his head in disappointment. "It sounds like the fighting continues."

The sergeant cocked his practiced ears to the west. "No, I've heard that sound before. Those are not the booms of battle but the thunder of *hurrah*, letting the world know that our Inkotanyi has won a victory."

With stealth, the team passed the final kilometer, ducking into the bush whenever shadows approached. 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 suggested they hide in the papyrus reeds until dawn. "I think it's less likely we'll get shot in daylight." Victor and Sano gladly deferred to his judgment.

As the horizon brightened to their backs, Mwiza spotted three figures on the water moving toward them in a small craft. One swayed upright displaying a Tanzanian flag. When the boat struck shore, Victor was stunned. Not ten meters to their left, a dozen armed men burst from the swaddling reeds and rushed to the boat. The group huddled near the water and began to converse in Swahili.

Mwiza dropped his rifle then whispered. "Trust me and do what I do." Invisible within the thicket of reeds, he first shouted in English, "Long live the Rwanda Patriotic Front." He repeated the words even louder in Kinyarwanda.

Five riflemen turned abruptly and leveled their weapons toward the papyrus. They called out in Swahili, “Come forward slowly. Raise your hands.” The three-man team reached to the sky and shuffled to the shoreline.

The official who held the flag looked each man over. Then he queried Mwiza, “Who are you? Where did you come from?”

He sang out in his native tongue, “Sergeant Gilbert Mwiza of Third Battalion, Rwanda Patriotic Army.”

One of the Rwandan boatmen stepped forward to look the man in his face. “Yes, I know this soldier. He’s one of us.”

The Tanzanian official continued his interrogation. “And how did you come to end up on this side of the river?”

Sargent Mwiza shrugged out the words, “We just got lost. That’s all.”

The officer scoffed, pondered a moment, then told his Rwandan counterpart, “If you claim this man, you can return with him to the other side of the river. We don’t want trouble.”

The sergeant then blurted out, “And these two are recruits to the RPF. They got lost with me.”

The response was sharp. “Damn you all. All of you go back to Rwanda. We don’t want your kind on this side of the river.”

The three clambered into the boat while the Tanzanian cohort retreated into the forest.

Once they arrived at mid-current, the two oarsmen broke into smiles, “Lost indeed. How did your reconnaissance go?” Laughter reigned among the five men.

Release followed mirth. “Look. We’re now halfway across the Kagera River. Now I can tell you officially, ‘Welcome to Rwanda!’”

The comrades locked arms in relief and in unison belted out, “Rwanda Ninzia”– 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.

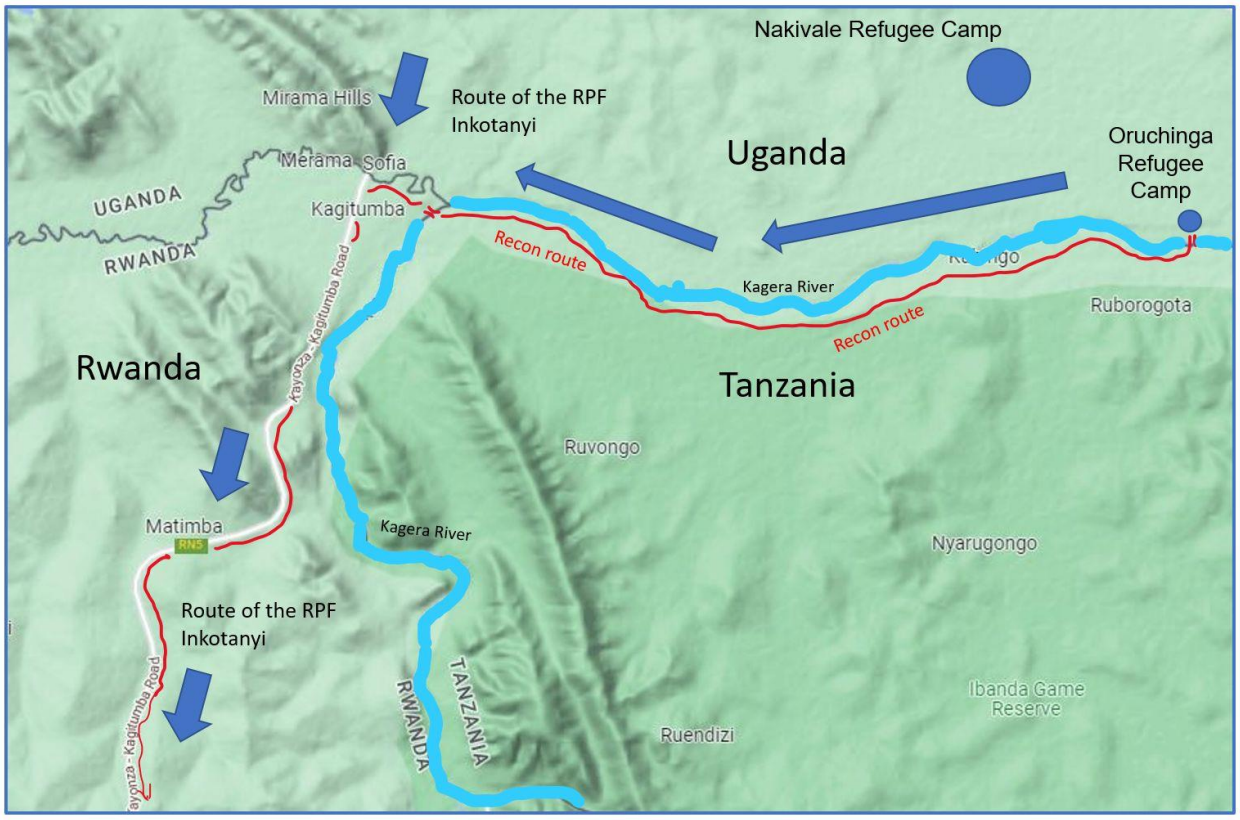
First a colorful patch of cloth swirled into view. Then a naked arm flopped in the current. Both allured and repulsed, the onboard witnesses shook with emotion. At last, they recognized the object as a female corpse bobbing in the torrent. Another *log* appeared, then another, then a baby *log*.

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 Ninziza*, 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 our welcome committee."



Chapter 3

The Inkotanyi Army

April 12 to 16, 1994, Entering Rwanda

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 was sure of 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 need quality 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 Kagitumbo, happy to make footprints in his home soil. He spent the hours conversing with a dozen men he had mobilized for the patriotic army.

At night under a make-shift canopy, images of floating corpses haunted 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 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 body."

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 secret place.

He continued, "You know my hometown is this Eastern Byumba Province. I know the people and customs of this area. My main task 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 Kabanda 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.

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 Bidago and Lieutenants Kwizera, Mwiza, Ruhinda, and Kabanda.

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 task 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 racial division the *Ubokwo*–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. His main duty would be in processing 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.

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 were recruits and another dozen were professional volunteers. 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-Kagitumbo 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 they were travelling throughout eastern Rwanda removing all *buzungu*–white people–in order to concentrate them at the Kigali airport then fly 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. "They 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 attach together." He knew this paramilitary gang of young street thugs had been trained by Hutu Power to kill 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 do that?" he muttered to himself. "Can you have a cease fire without a corresponding *cease murder*? Doesn't that just give Hutu Power more days to slaughter more 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 *Umuganga* 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 orders emanating from RTLM radio. In short "All you Hutu, Do your work–*Umuganga*."

For the first time, Victor fully grasped–down to his bones–the absolute evil of his exterminating enemy.

Chapter 4
Inhabiting the Horror
April 11 to 20, 1994, Down the Eastern Highway

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 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 remains. 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.

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 distorted face that caught me by surprise is burned into my mind. It 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 being.

“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 suffered today and may He give this Inkotanyi the wisdom and ability needed to end this *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 had 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 apologetic. “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 I 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 that, but then He would have created a world void of human beings, because we all choose to sin.’

“And look around at this very moment while we are marching down the Kayonza-Kagitumbo 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 genocider. But what if Bernice Kabanda 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 preferred I think.” Her voice trailed into a shudder.

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 grace if we ever do battle with 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."

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."

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. Now you can see where that term comes from–*red-handed*." He cracked a grim grin. "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 life will end 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–*Umuganga*–as Hutu patriots to cleanse the earth of its cockroach neighbors. 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 could not 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 on Tuesday the president's jet fell from the sky. 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 is 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."

On April 19th, the entire army wheeled west 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 blanket and saw the tattered remains of her dear friend, Lieutenant Gilbert Mwiza.

Chapter 5

Spiritual Wickedness in High Places

April 21 to 25, 1994, in Gabiro, Rwanda

The three lieutenants gathered at the side of their fallen comrade, Gilbert Mwiza. 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.

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 order 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, locking 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 dawn to dusk. 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.

Sano learned that just after he had left for Belgium in 1991, the gentle priest began a descent into spiritual wickedness. 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 *ibyitso* – that is "an accomplice".

Father Silas joined the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (ruling MRND Party) and compiled a list of Tutsi parishioners and tracked their movements. He stood by as an outspoken deacon was attacked and murdered. He reported the intent of four young choir members who confessed their plan to cross the Ugandan frontier. The youths were found chopped to pieces the next morning.

Dennis related to Sano how his father had died on Christmas Day. "We all urged him to go 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 racial 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. Two days later 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 connivence 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 will be here at ten.”

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. “Hope is the anchor of the soul. 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 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 they 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 it. 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 am 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 killed. 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.

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. 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.

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 Primus 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 flock?’”

Silas assumed and 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 crystal clear on these matters.”

Sano replied, “I am happy to hear that. You are the person who inspired me to the priesthood. Since the days I served as altar boy, you have 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 God, 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 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 everyone in my parish and tried my best to protect the innocent 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?”

Silas protested, “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 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 has happened in my 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 roadside. “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 that the cutting I witnessed was not the result of a war between two armies, but a genocide perpetrated by one tribe upon another.”

“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 crossroads. 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 pray 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 that deceiver an opportunity to confess–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 *ikinamucho* - theater. Father Silas is 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.

Chapter 6

A Witch in the Woods

April 28 to 30, 1994, in the Kagera Jungle

When they 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 good runner. Sprint as fast as you can back to the soldiers and tell them what happened. François is old and I’m no good at running. We’ll head deeper into the jungle. Go now!”

As Dennis ran 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.

After nine hours of profound darkness and whispered heavenly petitions, the two stumbled back onto the muddy trail heading east, deeper into the Kagere 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 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 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 are 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 cultic 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 am a witch doctor. I will send my ghosts after you if you enter my house. You will 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 Nayabingi onto their heads. She is 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 eyes. "You are 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 Oscar 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 them? And that little girl. 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.”

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.

The night was rainy and whistle-less. Sleepers avoided the spots where water dripped to the wooden floor. Sano could not sleep, instead reciting his rosery. He sensed something big would be happening the next day and prayed for courage to face it.

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 does not 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 Nayabingi 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 Power!”

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 him 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 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.

Chapter 7

City on a Hill

April 6 to 9, 1994, in Butare, Rwanda

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 gathering place 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.

Francis Tabaruka was a renowned professor at the National University and an eminent scholar of Rwanda's pre-colonial past. Doctor Tabaruka'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 Tabaruka 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 Wansula, 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 meetings. 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. 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. She’s 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 racial hatreds as we in Rwanda, but their government is not so proficient as a killing machine. Plus, the propaganda the 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 border 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. You know I have been working from Nyanza. 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.

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 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 lieutenant–to risk his badge in an attempt to escort refugees into Burundi. The lieutenant 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 a 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 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 aunties?"

"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 softly 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 lieutenant.

The document check turned into an all-day affair as hundreds shuffled in circles 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 Cendajuru.

Francis overheard one machete-wielding militiaman remark to his comrade, “Too bad these cockroaches 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 Tuti is your mama. Okay? Daddy will come to get you as soon as he is able.” The compliant child buried her face into Aunt Tuti’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 stressful than a prolonged farewell. “It’s better I return home now. This rainfall and chaos is 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 luck he ran across his police lieutenant 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 Tuti. 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 nod of sorrowful resignation.

Chapter 8

Eye of Darkness

April 10 to 18, 1994, in Butare, Rwanda

On April 10, just one Sunday after Easter, the familiar *Land of One Thousand Hills* had shifted on its axis. 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 your 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 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 the people he loved.

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.”

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 the comment, “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 wiping 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, 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 true that thousands

of Tutsis are being rounded up every day and killed. Those numbers are not a regretful admission on the part of our leaders. They are 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 am 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 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 be taking place in a city like this. 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 final guest 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 explained, "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 a cockroach. 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 spoke up, "Brother Manasseh, we took that pledge just before you arrived. We also commit to be faithful to each of the Ten Commandments."

The vice-mayor was amazed 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 you to be loyal Hutus."

When the doors were locked, the vicar smiled slyly. "We shall be faithful to our pledges 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 Tabaruka walked home without incident, not noticing he was being tailed by a young man arrayed in cartoon colors.

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

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 is the law. I warn you now. If you hide your wife or run away with her, you will be considered an *ibyitso*–accomplice–and meet her same fate. That will be your choice. I am your friend. That’s why I am 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. They scraped their machete blades against the pavement then drew their index fingers across their throats. Professor Tabaruka muttered to himself, “I will never betray my wife.”

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 is 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* who ‘adorns his drums with the castrated genitals of fallen enemies’. 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. Right? We both agree every nation should rule itself.

“However, what about the human rights of the minority? 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 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 RTLM Radio constantly promote his songs?"

"His lyrics are clever and his rhythms are spell binding. His history is 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 is our professor of pediatrics doing these days?"

"He is 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 new 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 he 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!"

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 assistance 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 have received word that some Tutsi cockroaches 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. He 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, dancing 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; thunder or gunshot?”

“I didn’t hear anything,” he mumbled. “Maybe it was a gunshot, maybe thunder, maybe a premonition of things to come.”

Chapter 9
Interim President
April 18 to 21, 1994, in Butare, Rwanda

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 traveled the eighty kilometers in eight hours, making rally stops in Gitarama and Nyanza. His entourage included six busloads of army troops, 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.

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 established armed 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 extermination campaign was officially inaugurated.

Immediately Hutu-Power informants led parties of militia into the homes of prominent Tutsi families. Then swept 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 as though they had license to pounce upon anyone who even looked Tutsi. Throughout the province, corpses piled up, including that of the ex-governor and his family.

At the top of 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 putrefying heap of a thousand corpses.

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.

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.

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 property 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 this Tutsi woman.”

As Pascazia and Francis huddled until darkness, they talked of their love. In hushed breaths 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 have 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, “She’s a godly woman, but what about her husband, Roscoe? He’s a violent man.”

“I can’t stay here. 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 can do this for the sake of Beatrice.”

After a long pause, 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 man pulled open the tarp. “Here, take these bottles of water and sweet potatoes. Please, you must go now. I don’t want to leave my wife a widow.”

They thanked the neighbor 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. She awaited her uncertain fate.

Francis stayed hidden long enough to see Rosa exit the outhouse, take a 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?”

“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 all decked in banana leaves. He did his best to shut out her screams.

A police captain recognized Francis and summoned him to the front of the line. “Francis Tabaruka, 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 have 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 have also ordered a separate hall for Tutsis and Hutu traitors who can be dispatched with medical expertise. 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 Tabaruka, 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. You see I was personally at your property this afternoon. I watched 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 see you squirm when you had to

choose between your own life or hers. I'm still wondering, professor, which life would you have chosen?"

The mild-mannered academician lost restraint 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.

Chapter 10
Bus Ride into Burundi
April 21 to 24, 1994, in Butare, Rwanda

At sunrise Pascazia bolted upright in her makeshift 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 killing their neighbors and harvesting their goods.”

Rosa sighed and handed her weary friend a ripe avocado. “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 held 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 *cockroaches* 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 Tabaruka, 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, 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.”

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 gunshots. I must go to Burundi to be with my baby. Keep me in your prayers.”

The drenching rains favored her 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 Wansula. 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 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."

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 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.” 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 there is safety in numbers but in Rwanda there is 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. I hope this emblem of death can save your life.”

Pascazia practiced her military salute and bearing. She repeated her temporary name “Corporal Jane Karenzi”. 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 Karenzi* 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 automatic fire killed a few and chased away the rest. The foot traffic appeared inured to the bleeding bodies.

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 up and down, 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 face 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 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. Corporal Karenzi 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 Karenzi, 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 will 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 RAF 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, Sargent 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 into his face in amazement. “Why are you doing this?”

“Last year, when I visited the national museum, you favored me by allowing me to beat *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.”

Chapter 11
Road to Perdition
June 6 to 14, 1994, in Kigali and Westward

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. Bikindi's most-celebrated composition was called *Twasezereyea*, a song which translates as "We said good bye to the feudal regime."

During the one-hundred days of genocide, *Twasezereyea* was repeatedly broadcast over radio, becoming an anthem at Hutu rallies and a soundtrack to massacres. As an artist of celebrity and influence, 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 chuckled 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 person. 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 tribe. 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, you’ll be punished along with the rest.”

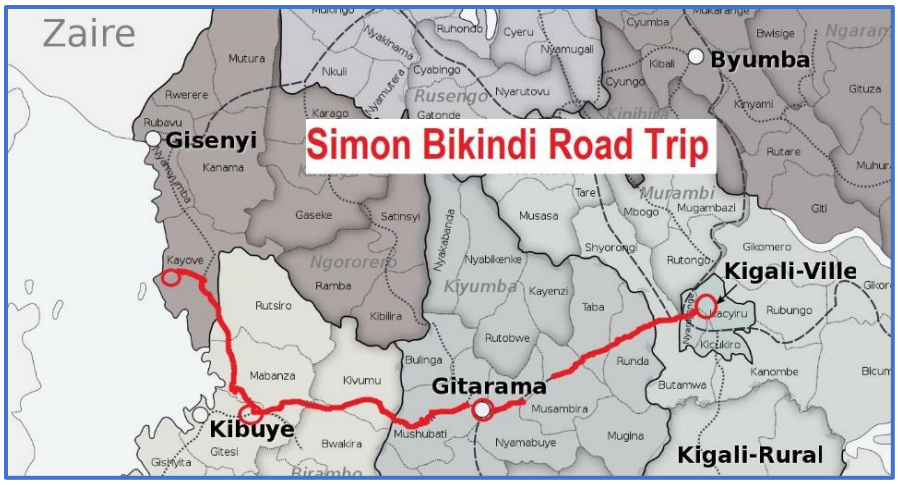
“It’s not fair, but I think you’re right,” he grumbled. “The RPF doesn’t understand my music. I’m a working man. The Hutu government paid generously me to perform songs that praise their tribe. I have to make a living you know.”

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 are rumors she was even 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 will 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.”



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 *ibyitso* –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 had landed him upon this island of mental 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, *Twasezereyea*. Colorful dancers shook and shimmied to the opening beats. Then, like a church choir of animation and syncopation all the voices rang out: *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 RGF captain beamed at the crowd then at the singer, "Mister Bikindi, thank you for this unannounced rally. We of Butamwe 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. "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, "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 cockroach 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 two months.

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 is 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 is 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 is a road to perdition. Yet we must take it and trust God for the outcome."

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 were 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 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 two semi-sober drivers 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 arising from a 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.”

Chapter 12

The Four Outcasts

April 7 to 15, 1994, in Kayove, Rwanda

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.

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 a traitor."

All three boys then joined in jeers, "Cockroach, 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, 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 will 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 Wednesday 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 thought to himself, “And 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 will see you again this evening. Don’t worry,” After another step he spun around. “And you better make sure you lock this front 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 classes. Can you show kindness to a fellow parishioner? Can I make a bargain with you?”

With passion the supplicant 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, sugar. 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.

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 Rubangula 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 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 place 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 commanded 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.

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 protection. 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 mob.

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 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 a seat at the dinner table. 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 asked. 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 change 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. Please pray for us."

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 handed each child a fallen avocado. “Here, munch on this while I tell you my plan.” She wrapped an arm around each child. “We are not going to Zaire, 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 changed 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 will happen when we present ourselves to her. But she is our best hope to survive–our only hope.”

After casting away a rock-hard avocado, she 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 hill. 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 taught them the skill of swimming while they boated on Lake Kivu.

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 and we don’t smell like goat poop anymore.”

Chapter 13
Crazy Sisters
April 16 to June 16, 1994, in Kayove, Rwanda

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 grandmother dressed in traditional clothes.

"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 Kabuga. 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, woman,” the grandma commanded. Then she stepped behind the crazy woman, peering into the sorghum fields. “I guess you’re alone.”

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

The old lady 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 Louise is just as crazy as you, poor woman.”

After a circling inspection of the unexpected guest, the grandma 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 Grandma Ruth. Let’s walk over there. I’m curious about how she’ll react.”

As the two walked through fields of maize, Deli chattered to herself, not in tongues of dementia but in recitation of fervent prayer.

Deli spied a dilapidated structure, 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 iron-sheet roof.

Grandma Ruth shouted from the rickety gate, “Louise–Louise Kabuga!” 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 the grandma.

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

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

Ruth 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 the grandma, “Thank you, for your kindness. I need to talk with my sister alone.”

The old woman ambled down the footpath muttering “*Umugore ufite umbumuga dwo mumutwe*–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 think I’m *umusazikazi*–crazy woman–but I’m not really. I’m just a widow alone in the world, bereft of husband and children. We are alike in that way.”

After a pause Louise added, “Maybe we 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.”

At that point the door flung open. Grandma Ruth appeared with her aged husband. The man 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.”

Grandma Ruth spoke harshly to Adeline. “I don’t appreciate being lied to. This girl told me who you really are and why you came to this hilltop. Yes, Louise is your sister, but you are Tutsi and the police are searching for you.”

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

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

A tear trickled down the grandma’s face. “My husband and I have agreed to help you. It is our Christian 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.”

Louise joined the conversation. “Adeline, I know you are Tutsi, but you are my sister first. And these two must be my niece and nephew.” She choked with emotion. “Come here children. Let your Aunt Louise give you a hug. You are my family.”

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

Ruth spoke up, “They look Tutsi and they are too honest to fool interrogators. They couldn’t even fool old Laurance 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.”

Laurance continued, “We 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.”

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 did not 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-Luk was a squirmer and the old man 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. The old man had bartered one case of sorghum beer 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.

The mayor of Kayove was named Alexis Rubangula. 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 mayor was merciless, ordering the extermination of women, children and babies. He often quoted his favorite saying: "*Iyo inzoka yizlitse ku gisabo ugomba kikimena 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 local 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 RGF 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 at parishioners. Mayor Rubangula had walked into the home of Grandma Ruth 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 old women, perceived them as idiots, and never returned. Adeline shrieked with amusement when the oblivious mayor slammed shut the front gate.

At a meeting of Hutu Power leaders in the provincial capital of Kibuyi, 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 Rubanbula 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."

Chapter 14
Barricade at Serpent Creek
June 17 to July 17, 1994, in Kayove, Rwanda

Mayor Alexis Rubangula 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 that. 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 a "safe zone" in the south-west corner of Rwanda. To be called "Zone Turquoise", the area would comprise one-fifth of the nation forming a rough triangle between the cities of Changugu to Kibuye to Gikongoro. The stated aim was to secure this area and 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 genocidaires. Alexis flipped the radio to Thousand Hills. It was true. He heard it 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 bodyguards.

"Welcome, Welcome," exclaimed the joyous mayor.

Simon looked him up and down 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 Kibuyi!"

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 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 few days, 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 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 Rubangula 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 came to dispatching his arch fugitive?

André also received word the RPF was reclaiming his nation. It might be just a matter of days 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 refuge. 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. “Leading these common people is like leading a goat. Hatred is the stick. You hit the goad 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.” He laughed, “And the young girls are especially useful to me. Sometimes I pay the soldiers with a girl–an *umusanzu*–a contribution to the army.”

Simon Bikindi appeared uncomfortable with this line of conversation.

After the glasses emptied, three men of his Indiro troupe approached their leader. “Boss, look what we found.” A tall thin man of about fifty years stood before them, battered and bloodied with a rope around his neck.

A young boy lurking behind the 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 c-cockroach swimming the c-creek.”

After a week of Bikindi propaganda, confused troop movement, and sporadic gunfire, a column of bedraggled military vehicles shuffled south over the Snake Creek Bridge. Hordes of terrified refugees followed in their wake: young women hoisting babies, old men pushing carts, goats, bicycles; all in a jumbled procession of panic.

Word reached the mayor that the Inkotani army was advancing down the highway. In spite of the growing chaos, this local head 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 cabbage (head) brought to him.

André heard explosions and shouts above his head. The RPF was on its way. He could not contain himself 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 alter. The priest advised his friend to wait–just a few days–but the headmaster was determined. The good father provided him with a vestment and hat as he stepped into the sunlight.

Invigorated from the brisk air and vivid greenery, he strode through campus. Knots of people huddled in corners, all shuffling in a general southward direction. The disorganized mob 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 at 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 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 his hat to cover 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, could it be you?"

With a smile, he responded, "Yes, it is."

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 looked around her, "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 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 moving south toward Kibuyi. Only André was walking contrary to this human current. His movement caught some unwanted attention. A young man in bright colors shouted at him, "You, yes you, where are you 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 hat. "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 raggedy, 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 will give me cash for this cabbage, but I'm not going in that direction."

"C-can I have a swing?" stuttered the whistle-boy.

"Make is 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 corpse by the road and blood on their hands.

Victor Kwizera sat in the lobby of the Serpent Creek Hotel. He was gathering intelligence as the Inkotani Army advanced. By day eighty-eight of the one-hundred-day genocide, the lieutenant was proficient at his duty.

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 gruesome. 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, right? 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 has a sister not far from here. It’s by the home of Grandmother Ruth. Just ask her.”

At the same moment Victor and Joseph looked upon the corpse of André, his three killers appeared at the cook stove of Ruth. They were demanding food and valuables before a retreat to Kibuyi.

Brandishing his knife, the uniformed leader shouted, “Hurry, hurry, fill this bag.”

The whistle-boy spoke casually to the third assailant, “You know that man 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 full bag of booty, the trio of killers high-tailed south.

Accompanied by a squad of fighters, Victor and Joseph raced down the path to the home of the old couple. Joseph shouted, “Is there someone here named Grandma Ruth?”

The old lady recognized the uniforms of the Inkotanyi and said, “You got here too late.”

Joseph looked at her in sorrow and alarm. “Too late?” he muttered.

She continued, “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 Laurance, “Go fetch the 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 stay quiet," he mumbled. "I think the bugs ate out my eyeballs."

Just then two women rushed toward the soldiers nearly as stinky and disheveled at 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. I'm here to rescue you." 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, Jean-Luc, 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.

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 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. Embarrassed, Victor set her on her feet again. Clementine smiled as she gazed into the face of her champion.

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 tight lips. After a moment of hesitation, Victor spoke up in a military manner, “I’m sorry to tell you this. 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 the sky 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 is Mayor Rubangula.”

The lieutenant responded, “I’d like to take that man alive. He is 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.”

After an hour-long standoff, 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.

On July 4, 1994, Kigali fell to the RPF. A day of celebration ensued. Within a week the Inkotani army was facing down French troops just outside of Kibuyi. Hutu refugees continued to stream south into the Turquoise Zone. The situation stood at a temporary stalemate.

Inside the lakeside mansion, Adeline and three children were trying to put their lives together. The remains of the headmaster had been interred in a gravesite near the home, but a proper headstone would be a long time in coming.

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 baby, 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 Inkotani fighter found her next to her dead mother. The victims were stacked up in the midst of corpses. The poor woman was slashed across the throat and this infant was tied to her back. The fighter heard a feeble cry, treated the baby's cuts, and brought her to Saint Mary's. She was barely alive, but now–thank God–she seems to be thriving. That's their story."

I am here today to ask your Christian 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's about the same time this infant entered into the world. You say this child has not received a name. We will call her *Andrea*."