

Robert Thomas Atwood

Prof. Kim Ponders, Thesis Director

Dr. Gretchen Legler, Second Reader

Master of Fine Arts-Fiction

Graduate Thesis/Land of a Thousand Hills

01 June 2010

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."~Ephesians 6:1-3.

~Wanda~

When I was young, a giant bird of fire fell from the sky like an exploding star from some far off distant land. I ran as fast as my bare feet could carry me, but somehow my eyes stayed fixed to the ball of fire. It was a strange looking bird to start with, not an earthly bird by any stretch of the imagination. A large, featherless bird with a skeleton that

appeared to be made of metal, of course this was nonsense. It had to be. Who ever heard of a metal bird? A metal bird would be strange enough, then it just burst into flame and I was running.

How did this poor bird catch on fire, I wondered?

The bird finally vanished over the tall mountain trees to the east. The kind of trees Papa Jo says brought white skins to our home many years ago, some kind of rubber tree.

I had on my favorite exploring outfit, a pair of tattered jeans and a red tank top. It was one of two outfits I had. The other was a dress I only wore to special occasions and church. I loved Tanta Jesus and loved church but my dress was too girly. My outfit made me look like a vagabond, my shirt hung low and tattered, faded from the hot sun. It was still red, but after years of wear the color was no longer as bright. My pants were cut in several places both above and below the knees. My flip-flops were three sizes too small and I carried them in my free hand, for I loved to walk bare-foot.

I explored past the edge of the village and the sun cast his bright smile on my face. Beads dripped from my brow and watered all of God's plants. I exited the clearing, leaving behind the trimmed verdure, hard-pan clay, and the rough thicket, climbed over some boulders, and made my way into the densely thick jungle.

I glanced out from around a tree to get a better look, staying semi-hidden. I tip-toed a couple of steps forward, slid behind another tree but heard a twig snap and quickly retreated to the safety of my previous position. I wanted so desperately to save the bird and learn its secrets. I could taste it, but something about the sound of the air just was not right.

I was a curious child and so I did my best to follow the bird, partly because I wanted to see how beautiful it was up close and partly because I wanted to make sure it wasn't hurt.

Mama Rhodesia and Papa Jo were both at the parish and I did not want to miss the opportunity of seeing

this gift from God. I had no time to ask for permission and so I just followed, positive that they would understand. I knew the mountains that the wonderful bird vanished over were not very far away and I could see smoke rising over the horizon.

I was sure that the bird wanted some company and must be tired after his long trip to Earth and so I picked some flowers for her to eat. I wasn't sure exactly where she had landed, but my hopes were on the meadow, because it was the softest place in the entire forest.

I made my way through the short thicket of woods and glanced out to get a better look staying semi-hidden in case the bird was dangerous. I took only a couple of steps forward but quickly retreated to the safety of the trees.

There were men surrounding the bird attempting to put out all of its magical flame and I could hear the bird cry out in loud moans of misery. What were these men doing to this poor bird and why were they setting up large wooden blocks in the road?

The men looked mean, determined to find out the bird's secrets, setting up blocks so the bird couldn't escape. I felt sorry for the poor thing but I didn't dare approach her with those mean men around.

I looked at the leader of the men; at least he looked like the leader because he was the biggest and the meanest of all the men. He had a large bump in his breast pocket and I thought it was neat because songs and words came out of it. Papa Jo had something like that once, but I spilled juice on it, and it never worked again. He forgave me. He always forgave me. I listened closely to the bump in his pocket:

"This is Interhamawe Patriotic Radio.

President Habyarimana plane was shot down in cold blood by Tutsi scum on its way back from a peace conference in Burundi. Long has these cockroaches fought to keep our proud Hutu families down. They have denied us fair wages, have starved our children, and raped our women. Now is the time my Hutu brothers to rid our beautiful country of these

terrible pests. Grab your weapons and don't stop killing those cockroaches until we have won our country back."

I didn't know what that message meant. It said something about Hutus and Tutsis and the President's plane being shot down. The President helped baptize me in my parent's parish, so I knew he was a hero to Papa Jo and Mama Rhodesia. The rest of the message didn't make sense. It seemed to be talking about killing cockroaches and that seemed ok.

I listened carefully. "God Damn Tutsi cockroaches kill one Hutu you better kill them all." Large wooden barriers approximately three feet high by four feet long were lining all the roads coming in and out of the clearing, preventing anyone from coming or going without proper identification.

These men wanted to hurt people. I did not know how I knew this, I just knew I had to get back to Papa Jo and tell him what I saw.

I continued to overhear men working in the road up ahead and tiptoed away from the crash site. My mind

was filled with horror as my heart raced. My tip-toed turned to a gallop and the gallop faded into a sprint. I was not seen and in no immediate danger that I could see but I moved with an immediate sense of purpose. I had to get back to Papa Jo. I had to tell him about the president's plane.

My heart raced in anticipation of being seen, but the bad men never saw or looked in my direction. I did not know what to expect.

My pace quickened as thoughts of what Papa Jo would say when I told him about the bird filled my head. He was a wildly ambitious man and had a habit of running off on great adventures himself for no reason. Once he had claimed to have found the lost city of Mogooboo, a large mythical city filled with gold and other treasures. When I asked him where all the money was he just laughed and said he fed it to his pet crocodile. I always got such a laugh from his wild stories and could not wait to tell him about the bird. We would probably pack up all of our maps and go looking for it together. "Somewhere out there in the

land of a thousand hills lays our fortune," was something I imagined him saying. Would we leave for the bird right away or would we wait until morning?

My excitement carried me past a neighbor's house. The smell of burning sweet grass filled my nose with rich aromas. I loved sweet grass, and could count on this neighbor to be constantly burning some in memory of her four dead children she lost to mosquito sickness.

I missed playing Quoin with her children. I was not the best hurler and I very rarely got the bright red Quoin ring around the pole which would earn me two points, one point if it hit the pole but failed to go around it, but I always had fun playing, especially with her youngest daughter. She was my best friend and the most skilled hurler I had ever seen. When she passed away from mosquito sickness, I vowed never to play Quoin ever again. Passing by my neighbors house is particularly painful as all the sweet grass makes her hallucinate, envisioning me as her own daughter. It is not easy being called the name of my deceased

friend every time I passed by. I hated her calling me the name of her daughter, I was not as pretty as her daughter was and not as smart or as good at quoin. I felt it dishonored her when her own mother called a lesser child by her daughter's name. She had not been to church in some time and her skin started to smell funny. She had fresh open sores on her face. I thought she had the mosquito sickness herself. So I kept a good distance.

I arrived at my church to discover my Mom working over a large pot of porridge. It was a large two-room building made of thatch and packed mud, tightly formed into compact bricks that were fashioned together with the clay from the earth. Straw from the thicket was hand selected, piece-by-piece and fashioned together with homemade rope made from the bark of the black palm tree. It had taken my Dad and a handful of villagers three weeks to shape and mold the mud and clay so it was suitable for praying conditions, and able to withstand the rain season. It had no proper door separating living quarters from the open parish,

but it kept my family warm and dry. Occasionally a snake, skunk, fox or some other critter wandered into our church and raided my Mom's pantry, eating all of our food. These invasions caused the stomach demons to visit much more frequently, but having a door to the open world served my adventuresome style. The two rooms were divided up into a dining room/kitchen and the room I shared with my parents. There was no privy in our house, so we walked one-hundred feet into the woods and dug a hole.

"Where is Dad? I have great news for him."

"You know him; he is probably out flipping over a rock in search of his fortune. Tanta Jesus knows there are better things to do around here than look for buried treasure."

"What is more important than treasure Mom? I have to find Dad and tell him about the bird I just saw. A bird like this must know where the city of Mogooboo really is. I have to find him so we can go looking for it together."

"You're a silly a girl putting your hope in treasure, just like your father. I tell you it won't get you anything except an empty stomach and a battle with the hunger demons."

I cried to my unsympathetic Mom about the unknown benefits of treasure while she tossed me an apron and uttered under breath. Life for your crop, there will be water if God wills it. Hard work keeps the hunger demons away."

Mom was always right about days when no water was willed and no crops were sewn are the days when the hunger demons come to haunt my dreams. Today, despite my story about this legendary bird that burst into flame, and my quest for long-forgotten treasure, food was plenty and hard work was not necessary.

Papa Jo was sitting at his desk writing out his evening sermon like he always did.

"Papa, I just saw a wonderful bird explode into flame just a few minutes ago. I went to go see if it was ok but there were these bad men making the poor thing cry by putting out its magical flame."

"Wanda you know there is no such thing as a bird that can burst into fire."

"I'm telling you the truth. One of the man's pockets had a bump in it and it said something about killing cockroaches and the president's plane getting shot. The bed men started to set up large wooden blocks so the bird couldn't escape."

"The President's plane has been shot down!!! Why didn't you say that? Wanda that bird you saw must have been the President's plane. Tell me did you see anything hit the plane before it turned to flame?"

"This is important Wanda, you must remember,"
Mama Rhodesia said.

"I think there was a small black thing that hit the side of it just before it caught on fire, but I thought that was part of the bird's beak. Are you going to help me rescue it?"

"Jo that must be the sign the Interhamawe was talking about. What do you want to do?"

"We follow through with God's plan."

They both got up off their seats and ran outside to see the smoke that I had told them about.

"We have to begin making plans for the mass exodus to the parish," said Papa Jo. "People are going to need a place to sleep."

I remember my parents moving the parish pews out of the sanctuary to make room for what they thought would be refugees wanting to stay there. Over the next ten days people came to the parish by the thousands.

They carried lawn chairs and luggage, hats and steel-toed boots, dogs and other household pets, a disheveled group of people on the run and away from their homes. We welcomed them in and turned none away. The overall atmosphere of the parish was crowded and it began to take on an odor for we did not have the resources to accommodate everyone's ability to shower.

I was glad to have children there my age, and we ran around the parish, circling the sleeping bags playing tag and come find me. It was a fun time as I played with my new friends from morning until night.

Papa Jo was preaching on the pulpit about the prodigal son and forgiveness and Mama Rhodesia was feeding the masses from the center of the parish, with her specialty, chicken soup.

The over-sized crowd only magnified the praise to God when we sang our songs. I remember singing in rounds with part of the congregation singing one verse and the rest of the congregation starting after them. We sang: "Love, love, love, love, Christians this is your calling. Love your neighbor as yourself for God loves all." I sang the four loves and then when I came to Christians, the rest of the congregation began to sing the four loves and we sang in tandem for multiple rounds, and the angelic sound pleased God and he smiled down on this makeshift camp.

Mama Rhodesia kept asking me if I was alright. She kept telling me, "Wanda you are part of God's chosen people. Soon we will have a mighty sacrifice to offer up to Jehovah. He will look down upon this sacrifice and he will bless us for our actions." She always seemed to glance around the room, keeping track

of my location at all times. I saw her whispering to Papa Jo on a regular basis and even heard her say, "Jo this is God's plan. We don't have a choice." I think the catering to all those people was having a physical and emotional toll on her and she was starting to wear thin.

Papa Jo kept glancing out the window as though he were always anticipating more brand new arrivals. He was constantly aware of the dwindling room available and he seemed too loath sleeping amongst our guests. In the beginning he segregated himself along with my mother upon the stage, but as the parish began to fill, he surrendered more and more space, until he was forced to share a sleeping bag with her. He was unable to perform his duties as principal and had to suspend all school functions until the crisis was over, all of our nuns and teachers staying behind to assist with the aid of the crowd.

I continued to play with my friends and the congregation continued to sing and the mood was jubilant. I ran into Papa Jo's office to see if my

friend had hid in there and the office furniture was missing. In its place there were several boxes of what looked like his gardening equipment stacked three boxes high. I thought that he certainly had a lot of sharp blades in those boxes and I wondered both how he had gotten so many and why were they inside? "Why is your gardening stuff in your office Papa," I asked him? "Well it has been raining outside young one and I didn't want any of my equipment to rust. Do me a favor will you, don't tell anyone what you have seen in that room. I wouldn't want anyone to get hurt," he said. "Ok Papa," I said, and ran off to find my friend.

I look back now in retrospect and wonder exactly what was in those boxes and how he had managed to stockpile so many blades into the parish under the noses of the would be victims. How did nobody see him? Why was I the only one who entered his office? Why did these people so trust this parish as a source of strength?

I remember seeing dim balls of fire glowing in the distance from the parish window and I thought that

it was more friends coming to join us, running away from whatever it was that they were running away from. I admired the beauty of the flame and wondered if it was a part of the wonderful fire bird I had seen. Papa said it was a plane and not a bird but I didn't really want to believe him. I thought these nice people had rescued the bird from the bad men and were bringing the magical flame to visit me. Somehow they knew I longed in my heart to meet that bird and God was answering all of my prayers by delivering the bird to me.

"Papa the magical bird is coming. Come see."

Mama Rhodesia and Papa Jo walked to the window and we glanced out as a family. I looked at their eyes light up as they realized that I was telling them the truth. "You were right Wanda," said Mama Rhodesia.

"Let's go outside and see it up close."

"It's as I've always dreamed of. I hope the bad men didn't hurt it."

I remember the creek of the door and how it needed to be oiled. It made my skin shiver every time

I heard the noise. I opened the door and I went outside and was met by Mama Rhodesia, Papa Jo and a friend who ran outside to see what the bright lights were all about.

"Isn't she beautiful," I asked my friend.

"Come on young one your parents must be looking for you," Papa Jo said, as he grabbed my friend's arm and led her back inside before rejoining us.

The fire was upon us being carried by one hundred men upon sticks and I longed to touch it to be united with my first alien encounter. I wondered if these smaller balls of flame were the bird's magical babies.

"You have done well Umfundsisi," said one of the carriers of light. "How many are there would you say?"

"Oh mighty Gabriel you are even more angelic in person than your descriptions in the good book. My wife and I gathered as many souls as we could in anticipation of your arrival," said Papa Jo.

"Then we must move quickly Father to carry out Jehovah God's work. Do you have a safe place for your

little one? She has Jehovah's eyes," replied the carrier of light.

"I will mark her head with my own blood so that the angel of death shall Passover her as in the times of old. Can she stay outside with one of your angels for protection?"

"That would be pleasing to God."

"Then let me bind her protection with my blood and we can conduct God's business." Papa Jo lightly cut his upper arm so that it spewed out a small trickle of blood. He dipped his finger in it and drew a straight line across my head. He repeated the same process for my mother and then again for himself. "You are to remain outside with the angels Wanda. Is that clear?"

I shook my head yes.

"We are ready Gabriel. So it is written, so let it be done."

Papa Jo opened the door with one last annoying creak and he filed into the parish along with Mama Rhodesia and all the angels. When the last vessel of

God had entered the parish I heard a loud thud as the door slammed shut.

I did as I was told and remained outside with one of the angels.

"My name is Michael," he said. Would you like to hold the light of Jehovah?

"The light of Jehovah, I thought this came from a magical fire bird," I replied."

"Innocent is the mind of a child. Do you not remember the story of Moses and the burning bush? How the burning bush was consumed with fire but not a blaze? Do you not remember how the bush spoke to Moses telling him to return to pharaoh and free his people? The Hutus are those people and this flame is from that bush," Michael said.

"I can hold the light of Jehovah?"

"As long as you hold it high and don't drop it."

"What are Papa Jo and the angels doing in there? Can I go inside and show him the light?"

"You have the heart of a cheerful giver young one and truly Jehovah will bless you. But for the moment,

why don't you wait outside as your father bid. I would hate for you to disappoint him."

"But Jehovah commands us to share his light with all who would see it."

"Your father was right you are a powerful beacon of Christ. Do not worry about sharing the truth Wanda, this light will be shared with all who are currently inside and it is your father who will share it with them. For now we must have patience for all these things will only happen in God's time."

He handed me the mighty light of Jehovah and my entire existence seemed to be that much brighter. I saw with a sense of clarity that I had never experienced. I could smell the asters surrounding the church. I could taste the sweet dew on the air. The nectar filled pollen was suspended in the air as though Jehovah had stopped time itself if only to allow me to marvel at this perfect moment. The light captivated as Michael guided me down the path, away from the church, and toward a wonderful night filled with many dreams.

I could fly. I was flying high in the bright blue sky with the firebird and swarms of butterflies, whispering the secrets of Mogooboo into my ears. They were soaring through the clouds and through the trees. We flew through my village over the clearing and saw Mom and Papa Jo. I shouted for them to join me, and Papa cast down his branches and flew to the sky, Mama Rhodesia spat at the ground and used the moisture to irrigate the plants, "no work will be done flying through the air, get back down here and get your work done." We ignored her and left my unsympathetic Mama behind. Mama Rhodesia shouted at the top of her lungs that foolishness and treasure hunting only brought on the hunger demons. The bird, Dad, the butterflies and I just laughed at her and flew loop the loops around her head.

Tanta Jesus, His angels, and the twelve disciples from Mogooboo joined us in the bright blue sky and flew together just over the mountain trees. We waved to all the rubber workers that king Leopold enslaved, and I flew very low and set them all free so that they

too may join our adventure. It started to rain wooden nickels, only ones that I had not yet collected for my collection, I held open my arms catching as many as I could. Papa Jo, Tanta Jesus all of his angels, the Mogooboo disciples, the butterflies and the rubber workers all held open their arms and collected wooden nickels and presented them to me once they were safely on the ground. Tanta Jesus waved his hand and the wooden nickels were magically transported back to my house.

The Kigali River was always so dirty and never a good idea to swim in because of all the nasty creatures, Tanta Jesus waved his hand again and the Kigali water turned to the sweetest gumdrops in the land of a thousand hills.

The fish, turtles, crocs and all the normally nasty river creatures were swimming in the gumdrops and all of a sudden did not seem so nasty. I decided it was time for a swim and jumped off the bank, did a triple summersault back-flip and landed gently into the gumdrops.

Papa Jo and the bird and all our other companions raced up and down the river fast as can be and I judged who won. I shoved gumdrops by the handful into my mouth and pockets, Papa Jo shoved them underneath his shirt. "Gumdrops to keep the stomach demons away," Tanta Jesus said, and all the rubber workers and disciples rejoiced.

Two crocs swimming side by side swam close to me. A throne of intricate design sat steadily on their backs. It had lions carved from gold on its side and bright red felt lined the seat and backing. "A throne meant for a queen my lady," one of the crocs said. I sat on my throne and was Queen, ruler of the Kigali. Tanta Jesus, His angels, the bird, Papa Jo, the butterflies, rubber workers, disciples and the other river creatures all smiled and clapped. The crocs along with the firebird guided me down the Kigali River into an unknown part of the world. The trees had golden leaves. The grass shone in the sun light. The mountains of gold rose into the horizon further than even Tanta Jesus' eyes could see. The firebird

screeched and the precession followed, leading to a cliff with a giant door made of solid gold.

The door was etched in intricate detail in a language I did not understand. The firebird screeched and the butterflies flew up ahead and whispered their secrets to the door. The butterflies motioned for the rest of the party to move forward. As they approached, the entrance to the city of Mogooboo swung inward revealing wonders and a multitude that could not be explained by Papa Jo's stories or by the book of folk tales. My neighbor and her four children were reunited, there was no more mosquito sickness, and all the hunger demons were gone. Tanta Jesus revealed himself as the golden king of kings and the disciples fell at his feet. I saw the husband and wife transform them into the tree of life. The rubber worker encountered the ghost of King Leopold; they all embraced in their forgiveness. The river creatures multiplied exponentially and joined the rest of the animals by a great wooden ark. The firebird revealed himself as the Holy Ghost and sacred messenger of God.

All of Tanta Jesus' children were full from the wonderful gumdrops and everyone was happy. "Mogoo boo," I whispered. "Moses called it paradise, Adam called it Eden, some call it heaven, but you may call it Mogoo boo if you wish," said Tanta Jesus.

I did not hear the screams. I did not see the blood, but the killings had only just begun.

"And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many."~Joshua 11:4

~Susan~

I'd like to forgive them, but I can't. I look down at this rotten piece of meat that used to be my hand and know I will never forget.

"Long sleeves or short," the Umfundsisi asked me, before his blade came crashing down upon the alter, separating bone from flesh.

Some things just can't be forgiven.

They killed my parents and I am expected to forget. I see their faces in my dreams, horrified and disfigured. I try to save them but my arm has been taken away and I am forced to choose between them. I hear their screams as I am forced to drop them both to their deaths.

It's the smells that I remember, the pulled flesh, separated from bone, rotten and baked in the hot Rwandan sun. I hear loud thunderous crashes of

explosions in my dreams and I have trouble sleeping at night.

I try to forgive, but I can't. I'd like to forget, but I can't.

We knew there was trouble in Kigali. We heard it on the radio. The president's plane had been shot down and it triggered some kind of country-wide killing spree with Hutus killing Tutsis.

A craze set in and Tutsis started to panic and flee. Hutus set up road blocks and cut off food supplies to major Tutsi villages and it added to the hysterics. Neighboring countries closed their borders to the refugees and it seemed like the Tutsis were trapped with no place to go.

Our village, on the banks of Lake Akagera was relatively isolated within the mountains, safe from attack. The Umfundsi and his wife visited our village often, bringing food and other rations, encouraging us to leave behind all of our Earthly possessions and seek refuge at the Nyarubuye Parish.

"We would be safe there," the Umfundsisi insisted.
"The power of God will protect you," he said.

I didn't want to go. I wanted to stay at our home and play with my friends but my father was a very religious man and he made up his mind for his family, to take advantage of the Umfundsisi's invitation to stay at the parish.

Most of our village agreed with my father. They packed up small night bags with a few changes of clothes and left their homes behind. There was a mass exodus of people who made the four kilometer journey down the heavily traveled, earth-packed trail, to the parish.

Some of our neighbors were stubborn and refused to leave their homes. "I was born in this house. I will die in this house," was a common response. Those who stayed behind were the lucky ones. They were overlooked by the organized death squads of the Interhamawe Army, who planned for the Tutsis to be in a central location.

The deception of a safer place under God's protection lured us in and we were unknowingly rounded up and slaughtered as cattle.

Their combined armies, armed with a vast array of weapons ranging from stones to makeshift swords, sharpened at the point, covered the landscape like sand on the seashore.

They established their camp around the waters of Lake Akagera along a small, shaded inlet, known by local fisherman to yield the largest fish for market. Here, four kilometers from the peaceful, Nyarubuye Catholic Parish, down a heavily traveled, earth-packed road, they took control of the entire land.

Their territory extended throughout the Kibungo Province, from Gikungo to Nyarubuye assuring the only safe passage was across the vast lake into Burundi. The killings by this point had grown increasingly systematic, only nine days old and their campaign had already claimed so many.

Their plans, perhaps weeks old, had been meticulously thought out by militia leadership. The

Umfundsi had given the militia the designated signal that he had been successful in his mission, to lead Tutsi refugees to the safe haven of Nyarubuye Catholic Parish, like lambs to the slaughter.

It was a good plan, and I imagine the men laughing and joking around the campfire, how all Tutsis must be foolish to trust in the power of God to protect them. Our extermination was inevitable for the Land of a Thousand Hills had been promised to the Hutus.

The smells of grilled gorilla steaks and roasted potatoes reached the parish. This was the customary meal before the army was to go on the march supposedly doing God's work. The Interhamawe felt it was cruel for their soldiers to kill on an empty stomach. The gorilla steaks were tenderized using the smoked wood from an apple tree, infusing a special woodland taste into the meat. A ceremonial salt, rendered from the rock face nearby cliff, was rubbed into the meat in order to bring the soldiers good luck. The meat was placed on sharpened skewers and wrapped in banana

leaves to lock in the rich aroma and the moisture the seasonings would produce. The wild potatoes were wrapped in banana leaves, buried under the top level of ash, and roasted over the fire. The hot embers cooked the potatoes but did not scorch their fruit. The meat was succulent, and the Interhamawe felt that eating the meat of a gorilla gave them special powers of invincibility. When they had a stomach full of gorilla meat, their souls would truly be prepared for battle. It is after their meal that they began their attack.

The protection of the parish brought a false sense of security and a fifty-year Jubilee like celebration in which all crimes and debts were forgiven. The multitude of people from all around the Kibungo Province danced around the pews, and sang songs, to a God, that refused to hear their voices.

We saw the Interhamawe Army approaching the parish throughout the night. They carried torches that created a fiery wave throughout the forest.

Still we sang and danced and fed upon the delectable treats prepared. My parents danced shoulder to shoulder with the Umfundsi and his wife and I sang songs, "Jehovah I adore thee, whose son gave his life for me."

An invisible aura surrounded the congregation and we didn't care that our doom was quickly approaching. We trusted fully upon God's protection to save us. I realize now that I was swept up in the excitement of the praise. The dancing over took me. I was unable to control my urge to sing. I lifted my voice as high as I could. I too believed and hoped that God would hear my songs and jump in and put a stop to things before they started to happen. He didn't step in and my faith has been seriously shaken.

The lights grew closer and the singing grew louder. I saw the Umfundsi and his wife go outside to tell the Interhamawe that there were no Tutsis in the parish, to turn around and search elsewhere. When they came back inside, wielding weapons and the orgy of killing ensued, I knew we had been betrayed.

The songs turned to screams and the dancing was transformed into a panicked frenzy. Children were separated from their parents in the confusion. Husbands accidentally trampled their wives, crushing them in the crowd. Blood flew, bodies collapsed and the bones splintered.

The Umfundsisi grabbed me by the arm and was yelling, "If your arm is infected you must cut it off. If your eye has a splinter, you must pluck it out." He had a worn, blood-stained machete in his hand and a blood-lust on his face. A combination of mud and blood formed a type of war paint that was spread across his brow. "The angel of death has come and I shall be spared," he said. "Long sleeves or short?" He brought his cleaver down hard on my arm cutting it at the elbow and I exploded into pain. I felt my life-force slowly leave my body. Drip, drip, drip. The pain brought me back from what seemed to be an out of body vacation where I was able to look down on the massacre as a whole. The loss of blood dulled my senses and dizziness overcame me and I fell to the Earth, being

spared from witnessing the remaining brutality of the killing that happened over the next couple of hours.

I lay among the multitude of rotting, decaying corpses, a cesspool of filth with excrement, feces, blood and urine.

God had long ago abandoned this holy place leaving only his messengers the maggots behind to devour the evidence of the atrocities he had allowed to take place.

God is not a loving, caring God, if he was he would have allowed one of two things to happen; allow me to commit suicide or allow the killers' blades to kill me. Instead I passed out and so the monsters only thought I was dead.

I remember the sound of buzzing flies filling the air, as they flew from around the country, flocking to enjoy the new harvest. I swatted endlessly at the tiny devils' invasion as they were a river, relentless against my defenses, flying through my flailing arm to the fresh meal so unwillingly provided.

I opened my eyes and witnessed the brutality of hell on Earth. I'm not sure how long I slept amongst the dead, longer than a few days, shorter than a week. The hot, rainy climate of the long, wet season hung on the air along with the vast numbers, assisted in preparing the unholy feast for the maggots, splitting and spitting entrails, covering the ground.

I closed my eyes, shielding myself from the horror, but could not escape the smells of decaying flesh, stripped away from bone, prematurely. I opened my eyes again, trying slowly, to digest the massacre in its entirety.

To my left I saw five-thousand dead, mutilated bodies, some in pieces, torn like paper dolls. To my right I saw bits and pieces of the once beautiful human form.

I tried to push myself up. The weight of bodies on top of me weighed very heavy. I wriggled back and forth, leaning at first on one side then rolling, making my way to the other. I saw arms amputated, cut at the elbow and the wide-open eyes of the decapitated

victims, all this while the dead slept. I tried to scream, but my body shook uncontrollably.

My head turned and I saw my dear father laying ten feet from me bent in prayer and humble supplication. I knew he was gone, delivered from witnessing the horrors of the aftermath. I saw no evidence that he had been maimed or hurt. Most of the bodies lay in an imperfect state, but not my father. His skin stretched, enhancing his muscular form. His calloused hands from a lifetime of plowing the field were clenched together, his two pointer fingers elevated together focusing God's energy into his own body. Despite the multitude of unwelcome dinner guests, my father lay almost as he had a protective shield around him, a sacred seal that warded off all of Satan's creatures.

The sight of him gave me strength and I was able to push my way up to my knees and escape from my temporary prison. I crawled making my way over to him and embraced my father throwing my arms around him as though holding him as tight as I could would allow

half of my own life-force to pass into his body so that we could be united once more. He was long dead, but my aching body in my grief needed his warmth and though I knew his heart no longer beat, I could feel his heart beating against my breast.

I kissed his lips and both of his closed eyes. I unclasped his hands and placed them on his stomach. I looked around the area and surveyed the destruction. I had found my dear father, but I did not know if my mother had escaped or if she had suffered the same fate as so many others.

I wondered how such a thing could happen to so many people in such a holy place as the Nyarubuye parish. I wondered why the Umfundsi had betrayed us to our death. Why had he made a contract with the devil? Why had he traded our lives to gain favor with his God? All of these things ran through my mind as I scoured through the wastelands looking for my mother.

I had trouble distinguishing one person from another as the effects of the massacre were long lasting and many of the victims now lay only in bone

form. It seemed as though every morsel had been disposed of while I slept.

I could feel where my arm used to be throb as though the piece of meat were still attached, haunting me as a ghost. I thought to myself that he didn't even have the decencies to cut off my non-throwing hand.

I remember how tired my arm had become as I threw rocks at wild mongrel-dogs. They came sniffing around looking to steal a free meal left by the transgressions of man. The thought of the victims including my father and my mother being devoured by dogs chilled me to my very bones. I was determined to keep them away. They traveled in packs and had a ravenous hue on their faces. Their eyes were empty and shallow as their salivation bordered on cruelty. These dogs were starving and the famine showed in their structure. Under any other circumstances I would have befriended them, taking them in as my own throwing them spare scraps from our dinner table. I needed to deny them this meal. I did not have much strength for I had not eaten in several days, but I threw each

stone with all of my might, each stone thrown with the intent to end the dogs' cruelty. I felt great frustration as each stone fell short of my desired target. When the last few rocks hit several of the lead dogs, they ran from the site of the massacre with loud yelps that reminded me of my youngest brother. There was no doubt in my mind that hunger would eventually overcome them and they would surely be back.

I feared for my life. I felt the Interhamawe would return to finish the job that they had started. I wanted to die, but there were already so many dead as a result of the massacre.

Those same messengers that erased the terrible acts God allowed to happen, mocked my pain as they sealed my wounds and kept me alive. My suffering had only just begun.

The whole thing seemed too well planned for us to really have a fighting chance. The Tutsis fate had been sealed long before the presidents plane had been shot down. It seemed too meticulous to be natural.

The Umfundsisi only played on all of our fears. He took advantage of our everlasting faith and devotion to God.

We were told we would be safe from all harm if we just went to the parish. We were told no one could hurt us or would attempt to hurt us so long as we stay in the holy sanctuary that God built. It was all folly. We were all taken in and duped by the one who was supposed to save us.

Betrayal is a wicked thing. It ruins. It destroys. It burns all that are involved. He betrayed the trust of twenty-thousand innocent people who looked to him as a flock looks to their Sheppard. He killed my parents and I will never forget. I try to forgive, but I can't. I just can't.

There were maybe twenty-thousand people who called the parish sanctuary home for those two days of the massacre, but I could only count forty-two survivors that arose from the destruction.

Some of the survivors were missing limbs others were bleeding from minor cuts. Most of the survivors were orphaned children just looking for their parents.

I remember a blond haired green eyed girl named Morgan. She was the first yellow-haired girl I had ever seen and she reminded me of an angel. She was nine and she had a dirty face and a pale shyness. It took her nearly two weeks to talk to me. When she did finally open up and talk, I discovered she was the only child of Belgian missionaries who had been placed at the church in Nyarubuye to help alleviate tensions between Hutus and Tutsis. She could not find her parents and was frightened that they may have become martyrs for Christ.

There was a small congregation of survivors meeting in the center of the church to decide the best way to escape the country alive. We had heard about a refugee camp just twenty kilometers east of the Tanzanian border prior to deciding to stay at the church. Now that the primary sanctuary had failed, we decided to fall back on the secondary hiding spot. It

was decided that it was best to move in seven waves of six, so we could be spread out and do our best to avoid being captured.

Some of us wanted to stay together and felt there was a greater safety in larger numbers, but it was decided that diversity and spreading out would give us the better chance of reaching our destination.

I was to be in the third wave of seven along with Morgan, an old, elderly couple who had trouble walking under the best of circumstances, a tall man with a fondness for football and a teenage boy. It was believed that if we should run into any trouble that the tall man and the teenage boy would be able to protect the rest of us. I was skeptical, but determined to make sure Ajani was born and Morgan was delivered to safety. It was my hope that her parents were still alive and I held out the slightest hope that my own children were somehow with them.

We traveled by night and hid in the jungle out of sight by day. This made things quite difficult as it is nearly impossible to move at night without being

seen and while avoiding the major roads. Our night vision quickly adapted, but still there were nights where we remained stationary out of fear of being seen.

The long rainy season can be quite chilly at night as the dampness of the air soaks into your clothes and chills. It is not a dangerous cold, where prolonged exposure can kill as you thrust forth into the elements, but it is a cold that bites at your very soul. It is a cold that allows you to get just warm enough so that you think you can go on only for it to remind you of its miserable teeth. To feel as I am freezing slowly and methodically from the inside out and with no fire to break the nature of the beast. A fire seen in the wilderness would be as a beacon to our location and so the cold prevailed.

Morgan and I were both shivering constantly and I tried to lend her my warmth, what little warmth I had and she latched on ravenously. We traveled and I told her stories that I thought would cheer her up. We both

thought the rain would never stop and so I told her the story of an African flood myth. I said to her:

"In the beginning of all things Gumbo the wise and powerful God of the sky and creator of the heavens and the Earth became lonely and so he pushed from the sky two well-formed clouds toward the Earth putting all of his love and energy into them. When the clouds touched the ground, they transformed into the first man and first woman.

Now Gumbo's best friend Old Swiftly the river god, creator of all creatures in the sea became jealous of Gumbo's new friends because he was spending all of his time with them and Swiftly felt forgotten.

Each day Swiftly asked Gumbo if he wanted to create things together for he knew when the two old friends created things together the world would truly be harmonious. But Gumbo had spent so long with Swiftly and knew what to expect and he had

such wonderful adventures with his new friends that he avoided Swiftly at all costs as to avoid boredom.

This made Swiftly sad and each night he cried himself to sleep and his tears covered the earth by night and the water receded by day. And in his terrible sadness he accidentally destroyed the man and woman's home so that each morning they would need to rebuild.

Gumbo became angry at Swiftly for all the horrible damage his tears had caused and so Gumbo broke all bonds of friendship with Swiftly and banned him from ever touching land again.

Swiftly fell back into the sea clutching at his chest and thought surely he must die of a broken heart. Tears fell from his face for four-thousand years and covered all the lands and creatures that Gumbo had created, and the man and woman that had

become Gumbo's new friends had died of starvation and once again Gumbo was lonely.

Gumbo discovered he not only missed his new friends but also missed his best friend Old Swiftly. He missed creating things together. He missed Swiftly's sense of humor and tenderness but he had banished him from all the land and had not seen him in over four-thousand years. Gumbo wanted to see his old friend again and apologize for everything he had done.

And so Gumbo came down from the sky and waded into the water. He walked in every direction covering every corner of the Earth. Swiftly's tears hitting Gumbo's face.

"Swiftly I don't know where you are or where you have been all of these years my old friend but I miss you. I have been a fool for putting new friendships before our everlasting one. Please forgive me for everything I have done."

And Swiftly hearing his old friend's apology came up from underneath the water and embraced Gumbo as he never had before.

And from that day on, Gumbo and Old Swiftly were the best of friends and everything they created together was indeed harmonious.

Gumbo re-created man and woman with the help of Old Swiftly and this time remained friends."

I thought the story fitting considering all of the rain and it seemed to bring a smile to her face and helped lighted the mood. After a month of delays and only walking at night, we finally breached the borders Tanzania. Rwanda you know is sometimes called the land of a thousand hills, but the serious elevation of our long pilgrimage did not begin until we crossed over the border.

It seemed the logical place to have a refugee camp. Protected not only by the vast elevation in all directions for the refuge was deep in the bowl of a

valley surrounded by mountains on all sides, but the majestic quality of the shrubbery seemed to give all that made it to this safe place felt empowered.

The United Nations and what I fancied the rest of the world felt the refugee camp to be a sufficient effort to calm the ruthless killings taking place. If would be victims could just escape and evade the Interhamawe army and somehow get across the border, the world could protect them.

Life in the refugee camp was a return to the most basic of human conditions. It simply was not equipped to handle the amount of people who frequented its borders. There was not enough water and not enough food and it seemed as though the flies that had hovered around Nyarubuye had followed us there. This was a great calamity as flies gained access to a lot of the grain supply and it became ruined and unusable.

It was supposed to be partitioned off, segregating the men from the women to help prevent rape and pregnancy. It was the goal of the United Nations to keep the population of the camp down to a

manageable level. Don't ask me exactly what that is because I could not tell you. It seemed as though they let in any and all who wanted to stay there.

There were rows after row of shelter halved tents. In theory each person was to carry half a shelter with them at all times and they were to find a friend or a partner and link the two shelter halves together to form a tent considered to be suitable living conditions. But the shelter halves were never take apart and so row upon row of tents stood erect as far as I could see. And the rows were perfectly parallel with each tent aligned with the next one in an exact line, dress right dress fashion. It did not create the wholesome feeling of community and it did not feel as though it had the love of human hands. I could feel the military precision behind every single tent. I recognize the proficiency, but I would have done it differently.

I remember hanging clothes on a line that was used to align the tents and washing my clothes in the

nearby reek with a limestone paste that was surprisingly effective at removing all stains.

There were three community tents set up toward the center of the camp. These were used for food distribution and our daily rations. Because the grain and wheat situation was a fiasco, Military MRE's were passed out once per day. These were meals ready to eat and they contained six thousand calories. Their intended purpose was to feed two people for one day, but each person was given one and only one per day. We had to stand in line and our names were checked off a list as we picked up our daily rations.

My favorite was chili-macaroni. I could use water from the reek to pour into the heating packet and the water combined with the powder to form a steam and if I slid my meal into the packet, in less than two minutes I would have a hot meal. But some meals such as tuna casserole with crushed peas were simply not worth the trouble of heating them up. The heat did not make them taste better. The heat did not remove the foulness of preserved tuna that had been dehydrated

perhaps years earlier. I swallowed the tuna without tasting it. I inhaled the nourishment as though if I had stopped to take the time to taste, the taste alone would consume me from within.

The young girl Morgan's hopes and prayers it turned out were answered. Both of her parents had gotten word that an attack had been planned on the Nyarubuye Church and they managed to get to the camp avoiding the church at all costs. They resisted the desire to get to the church to rescue their daughter and they held out hope that their daughter would survive and somehow make it to the camp. They embraced as Morgan was a newborn babe holding her, checking every inch of her for cuts and bruises, and for the first time in a long time I cried. I was happy at their reunion. My face was red and swollen and I couldn't conceal my own grief or emotion. I missed my own family and seeing the reunion only made me miss them more.

The population of the camp grew to critical levels as perpetrators of the crimes tried to escape

from prosecution. They fled across the borders and hid out in the camps blending in as survivors, and for months most of them lived undiscovered.

But for the true victims it became a life full of uncertainties. Most were recognized by the people who saw their faces as they escaped the horrors of original attacks. But this new population created more than a sense of fear. Rumors grew of a minister of death riding a chariot of fire had made his way to the camps. I had seen such a man riding the very bicycle that I had ridden to the doctor's office the week before the massacre and I knew it to be mine. I had left my bicycle on the outside of the church as my family and I waited on the inside. This had been the first time I had seen my beloved bicycle since before the attacks and I knew this chariot of fire must be referring to my own bike. That is how I associate the term Minister of Death to mean the very Umfundsí that had betray all of those people to their deaths.

I notified the camp officials of whom I thought the man to be and they were slow to act. I was

terrified of the Umfundsisi and the terror he could invoke. That is when my decision to return home to Nyarubuye became final. I later heard that he had indeed been captured by Belgian official and was sent to Brussels to face the war crime tribunals. I felt much safer knowing he could no longer hurt me.

The return home was much easier than I ever expected, of course I have still not stepped foot into the church where it all happened and I expect I never will.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."~Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

~Wanda~

My hardship started with the loss of my parents.

Academic study and the way the world has responded, has told me the authorities may have been right to take them.

Kids at school talk behind my back, "Wanda, Wanda, parents killed Rwanda," they say, and it makes me cry. "Children of killers are like killers themselves," they say, and it makes me sad. I just wish the kids would stop picking on me, or worse, running away at the sight of me. I don't have horns or an infectious disease; their responses are normal to the daughter of two mass murderers, I guess.

Mr. Mugabe, my history teacher, and resident assistant at the Joan Saleweyo home for war orphans,

often lectures on the history of Rwanda from his textbook: The History of the Land of a Thousand Hills. His research took him five years to complete. He is a short and simple man with well-groomed facial features and an olive complexion. My heart races every time he speaks, and my body melts becoming fixated upon his melodious tones. His delicate muscles flex as he points his ruler at various points in the timeline. I fall into a rhythm of his sweet words and daydream of a time when the caress of his hands, the hands that have not been tainted by the stains of man or nature, hands that are smooth and unclouded, could trace my every curve, with sensual explorations. I wait a time when he makes me his African queen, and proclaims me Queen Wanda ruler over all the Land of a Thousand Hills. His lessons teach that my parents, Rhodesia and Jovenal Fischer, orchestrated the Nyarubuye Catholic Parish Massacre on April 15, 1994, organizing the murders of twenty-thousand people. The world has judged my parents guilty of war crimes and has placed them in Gikungo, a prison for genocidaires.

Ten years have passed since the Liberation Front arrested my parents. I was a five-year-old girl, ripped from my mother's arms.

Letters written by genocide orphans to my parents, call them both "monsters." Can't they see that I also lost those I love?

I have nightmares of Susan Kyran, a resident here, pointing at me with her stump. Her sleeves are rolled all the way up to her shoulders; she ignores me with her good arm and casts her stump in my direction shouting, "Long sleeves or short, that's what your father said to me." She forces me to shake her stump, as though we were shaking hands in a congratulatory manner. Just as I pull away, I wake up and my hand smells of rotten flesh.

I punched Robert Okampa in the nose for placing a dead animal in my bed. I was the one that got in trouble, while he was treated to lemon-ice and pampered by Joan Saleweyo, the owner of the home for genocide orphans.

This kind of behavior seems to be encouraged; for certain Ms. Saleweyo shares the views of the residents, making me an outcast. At the very best, she looks the other way and allows these things to happen.

I find myself wishing that I too was a victim of the attacks that day. I may have suffered the effects of a hard hit to the head, or even the loss of a limb, but then I would fit in, and the children, orphaned by the genocide, would be my friends. How nice would it be to be able to point my finger, calling others names, gaining strength from their tears? I could run away from the fallen, or hide dead animals under their beds, all the while having the love and support of Ms. Saleweyo.

Still I miss my parents and wonder if perhaps Mr. Mugabe is wrong. Maybe the history of Rwanda has judged them unfairly. Perhaps they are just victims of their situation and circumstances.

Mama Rhodesia was an amateur seamstress and a housewife. She did not charge for her mending services but welcomed neighbors into our home with promises of

fixed garments, gossip, and authentic Bible tales. She had a gift for adopting local mythology and events into the doctrine of the Catholic Parish, and used her needle and thread to win souls for Jesus. With each stitch she drew people closer to the word, as they became captivated by the compassion knitted within each story. She was a lovely Christian woman, kind but firm, wise but humble, headstrong yet submissive. I think that's why my father loved her.

Papa Jo was the Umfundsi at the Nyarubuye Parish. He tended gardens, cultivated low-hanging fruit, and encouraged onlookers to view God's splendor. He was a shepherd to his parish. He held mass five days per week, and held men's prayer group twice per week. He was the principal of the Nyarubuye Catholic Academy and taught several classes on divinity. He visited villages along with my mother and passed out food and other rations to those hungry for more than just the word.

My parents have been in prison for a very long time and will remain so until they die or can be proven innocent.

The stories they have told me, I think they will go a long way to vindicating them and bringing them back to society.

Knowing what I know about my parents and listening to what Mr. Mugabe says I am torn between two worlds, not knowing whom to believe.

I want to believe they are innocent because I don't believe that two gentle people can commit such acts. I want to believe they are innocent so they can be free from the bars that currently make up their world. I want to believe they are innocent so they can get me out of here and we can be a family again.

I want to believe they are guilty because I know in my heart those people did not kill themselves. I want to believe they are guilty because that would justify the way I have been treated. I want to believe they are guilty because Susan's arm is not going to grow back.

I want to believe, but must lament, I remain
undecided.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asked received; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."~Matthew 7:7-8

~Letter from Wanda Fischer to Rhodesia and Jovenal

Fischer~

Mama Rhodesia and Papa Jo,

These last few years living without you has been nothing less than agonizing. When they came and took you away from me my heart cried. I do not understand what they are all saying about you or how it can be true.

My parents are not monsters I tell them. They loved me and they loved Jehovah. They welcomed in the Tutsis to protect them not to slaughter them. But still the kids at my orphanage all make fun of me and moreover they blame me for the deaths of their loved ones. I tried to explain to them that I too have lost my mother and father, then they all just start calling

you the Butchers of Kigali and Angels of Destruction and I can't help but cry.

The orphanage hasn't really been a home for me and I miss you dearly. I miss lying in the grass with Papa Jo looking up at the sky and forming biblical figures in the clouds. I miss knitting with Mama Rhodesia and seeing the looks on people faces as we present them with the finished product. In short I miss being a family and I wish we were reunited once again.

As bad as the orphanage has been, I have finally made a friend. Her name is Susan and we sometimes lay awake at night talking to each other about our families and what we plan to do once we are old enough to leave the orphanage. She tells me that she will go onto to college to be a grammar school teacher. She loves folktales and is always retelling them to me so I think she will be a great teacher. I tell her that I don't care what I do after I get out of this place so long as I am reunited with my parents.

She tells me stories saying that you killed her family and even chopped off her arm. Her stories are so detailed and graphic that I have terrible nightmares of what she says happened. But how can what I know about you being kind, loving and honest parents are true at the same time as her own story be true. The duality of my two truths is polarizing and it is ripping my heart in two. She tells me her story and I see her amputated arm and it makes me cry. Then I remember how much fun our short time together was and that too makes me cry.

Please Mama Rhodesia and Papa Jo say we will be reunited once again. That one day you will be cleared of all charges against you and we will be a family again. Please tell me that my friend Susan is mistaken. Tell me that you tried to protect her and some random mistake must have happened. Please just tell me the truth. I love you always and forever.

Wanda

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."~John 5: 28-29.

~Wanda and Susan~

"What do you think happens to us after we die," Susan asked?

"I was taught that we are resurrected to the promise of an eternal life in Heaven with Jesus and his angels if we are good, and we are damned for all eternity in hell with Satan if we are bad. Why what do you think happens?"

"When my parents were alive they used to tell me that we had a choice whether we wanted to come back or not. If the pain of this past life was too much, we could choose to remain in an eternal slumber where the pain will be no more. But if we chose to come back, we don't always get the choice of what form we come back

as. One may be a human in one existence and a gypsy moth in the next," Susan said.

"I think I like that better than what I was taught. I miss my parents, but hate imagining them slowly burning for all eternity, being tortured for their sins. I like the idea that they will be able to choose if they want to come back or not."

"If you could choose what form to come back as what would you choose," asked Susan?

"I have always loved grey-back gorillas. But with my luck I would come back as one of those beautiful creatures and then I would die at the hands of poachers. But I guess that isn't all the different from the way the people in the church died. What would you come back as?

"I guess I would come back as a pomegranate tree," said Susan.

"That's a weird thing to back as. What possible use could a pomegranate tree be other than its delicious fruit?"

"When I was young, my mother told me a tale about African mortality, I would have to tell it to you for you to understand," said Susan.

"A pomegranate tree? This is going to be interesting."

It was a time when man was created and grew nearly as powerful as all the Gods. And all the Gods grew jealous of man and thought surely he must die. But one God had befriended man and explained to him that he must surely die for if he was allowed to live forever, he would gain the knowledge of the Gods. Man was told that he may choose the manner in which he could die, and the friendly God asked if they would rather die as the moon or die as a pomegranate tree. And the man asked how the moon died and how the pomegranate died and the friendly God explained."

"The moon dies at the end of every month but slowly over time is allowed to

come back to life, but must surely die again as part of a never ending cycle. So in that way the moon lives forever. The pomegranate tree is allowed to bear delicious fruit that takes on the characteristics of its parents and so when the tree itself dies its offspring carries on its legacy and thus the Pomegranate tree is allowed to live forever through the fruit that it produces. And so the man decided that he would like to die as the pomegranate tree. And so he lay with his wife and produced fruit that was similar in nature to them, and they raised their children the way they would have them and had great times together. The time came for man to die and he did not die begrudgingly for he knew that his legacy would live on through his children," Susan finished.

"In this story, they got to choose which way they would die not which way they would come back."

"Yes, but don't you see, if I came back as a pomegranate tree, according to this story I would live forever through my children and loved ones. I think that is how I would like to be remembered," Susan said.

"But what if your parents are monsters or what if the fruit is rotten? Won't all that bad seed be passed down to the offspring? Won't the children also carry out in the parents footsteps?"

"Look what your parents did. Do you want to kill me? Hate is a choice and even though sometimes we are products of our environment, we always have the ability to learn and grow outside of what we have been taught. Look how much you have grown since you have learned the truth," Susan said.

"I have two truths and both are equally real to me, and it is tearing my heart into pieces. Mama Rhodesia's letter came in the mail earlier today and her explanations make me think she really is a monster, but the person who wrote this letter is not the same person I remember."

"The truth has a way of changing the hearts of man. Do you still have the letter? I would love to hear what she has to say," Susan said.

"its right here, but you're not going to like her explanation."

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."~Genesis 4:8.

~Letter from Rhodesia Fischer to Wanda Fischer~

My Dearest Wanda,

I was a child when my grandmother taught me to knit.

She had the bad cancer in her left breast and her side was immobile and chewed up.

She wore her arm up in a sling, using it only to stabilize herself, as she held her left knitting needle tucked underneath her armpit, her right arm carrying the stitch all the way across her chest to her left.

I loved my grandmother and thought nothing of this disability, for there was ever a time in my young life that I did not see her this way. I envisioned the sling as part of her body, the intricate temple that Jehovah God built. I did not hug her lightly with ease, nor did I look at her with pity, but treated her as I treated everyone else.

It came by great surprise when I discovered that she in fact taught me how to knit backwards.

"Loop, swoop, and pull, Rhodesia," she would say to me.

Her ailment caused her to abandon the accepted practices of knitting and to adopt a new, innovative way to carry out her favorite pastime. In that way she was a pioneer and a survivor.

With each "loop, swoop, and pull," she brought me into her adopted way of thinking and it became my norm. So much so, that today I cannot knit the correct way no matter how I try.

She kept her needles close to her heart and throughout all these years, I still imitate her lessons.

I have adapted her teachings into a style of my own, one that favors speed and creativity, but I still hold the needles close to my breast and knit with my heart.

I was nineteen when my family moved to the Kibungo Province from Kigali in the summer of 1989.

My father retired from his work as a barrel maker where he made his living in a small shop in the middle of downtown. His fingers were mashed and heavily calloused from thirty years of meeting monthly quotas. His arms were riddled with arthritis and it pained him to bend them even just a little bit. His back was hunched because of all the heavy lifting and he longed to be away from big city life. He fancied himself a fisherman and he wanted to spend his remaining days on the banks of Lake Akagera, and so we left the city behind in favor of a rural retirement in the mountains of Kibungo.

My first look of the Nyarubuye Parish came while preparing a place to sit for my father. He did not even unpack before he was out of the house and down by the lake. I went with him to take in the scenery. Along the banks of the lake were thick layers of asters, roses, marigolds, banana groves, apples orchards, cocoa beans, and coffee, allowing a vast array of colors - red, blue, purple, orange, yellow and green - to flood the valleys that the lake flowed

through. The mountains were home to fish, birds, livestock, wild animals, small animals, seed bearing fruits, green grasses and plants, exotic healing barks and delicious blue berries.

The parish was created from the clay of the ground. A 120,000 square foot slab was cleared out, completely voiding it of all trees and other plant life. Oxen are truly amazing creatures, and can pull up to four times their own weight. With the use of several oxen, ploughs, lumber jack volunteers, and the resources of the community, what was once densely thick jungle, was turned into hard-panned, sun-baked clay, ready for God's precious touch. The foundation of the parish was laid in the stripped clearing, brick by brick, and each brick was two inches thick by four inches wide by six inches long, all perfectly placed interlocking like a jigsaw puzzle. Four brick platforms, each one built upon the next, perfectly centered within each other, in a ziggurat pyramid formation, formed the appearance of steps leading to the house of God. From the fourth and highest platform

arose the temple, and a mighty temple it was. The parish formed the appearance of a medieval castle, complete with four spires made from brick, connected to the body of the parish, one at each corner, and wonderfully vast arch-shaped windows without the glass, beautifully molded doorways, and a hand-carved angel, made from solid ivory by the artisans of the Vatican, centered on the front exterior wall of the parish, and flown high as a beacon of hope for everyone in the Land of a Thousand Hills. She became the focal point of my eye every time I went down to the lake. The parish was visible two kilometers from our side of the lake, and was elevated on a hill, for all to see.

My first impressions of the parish were to wonder why it was so big. Surely they never manage to fill the thing. My impressions were only half correct. When I first into the parish. My voice echoed across the high ceilings and I was not alone I was joined five thousand people.

It was a strange kind of irony for me. We had left the big city behind in favor of seclusion and peace, stepping into the parish, was the most people I had ever seen in one building in my life.

It was loud, but a different kind of noise that the crowd made. It was a wonderful sound as their songs were magnified by the acoustics of the building. It was a rejoicing, a celebration of life, and God's love filled the room. I felt swaddled in God's love. Within these walls, I felt secure. I felt at home.

I spent much of my waking hours at the parish, walking around the grounds, admiring the architecture and praising the architect. I enjoyed eating the exotic fruits picked directly from the tree and my father whose free time was spent fishing in the lake did not seem to notice my absence.

I still maintained my daughterly duties and helped my mother with preparing the meals and with tidying up the house. I even knitted my father arm warmers for those extra cold fishing days during the long rainy seasons, and he wore them. His demands on

me were light and almost non-existent. He only asked that I bring him the weekly program from the parish that I so loved. Sometimes he asked to relive the events of the parish and I was always happy to meet these requests.

My mother strived to keep me busy and away from the parish. She was not a follower of Christ and clung to the Bantu religions of old. She told me often that my time was best served away from the parish in search of a good husband so her and my father could be rid of me as a burden. "One less mouth to feed," she always told me, and I often cried to myself and to Jesus as I sought solace in the only home I felt I truly had left.

I took up the task of sewing new burgundy seat cushions for the benches and stuffed them with the weeds of the wisteria plant which offered up a pleasing aroma. I stitched together matching padding for the knees to worship upon and I mended each of the table cloths that the body of Christ was offered upon.

Many of the wives took notice of all of my cheerful service and I became the unofficial seamstress of the parish. I attended and sewed for the Nyarubuye Parish faithfully over the next couple of months. When the Christmas season of 1989 was upon us, rumors grew among our congregation that President Habyarimana would be attending our Christmas service celebrations. He had been president for over twenty years and never had he attended our parish. A panic-filled excitement spread across the parish, as many in the congregation likened President Habyarimana to the second coming of Jesus Christ, never had such an honored man graced the halls of our parish.

The drapes were dusty, the tapestries were tattered and I was very excited about meeting a hero of mine. The parish was good enough for our humble purposes, but not good enough for a man of distinction.

An open calling was made to the congregation for all those with sewing skills to volunteer their services and I thought what better way to serve God

and utilize the skills my grandmother taught me. Others in the parish looked to me to fulfill this obligation and I was happy to do so being the unofficial seamstress.

All of the materials that I needed were provided and I stitched each stitch with love and devotion. My hand-woven patterns shown through as I varied the density of my stitching with my overlapping bands. I chose a bright shade of maroon to reflect the spilling of Christ's blood as a sacrifice. The maroon favored the natural Earth tones of the parish over a traditional red. A golden circle into the center of the tapestry surrounded maroon lettering YHWH Each tapestry took three days to complete and it gave me a new respect for all the work Jehovah God had finished in only six days

I folded the twelve tapestries I had finished and placed them within a canvas mail bag and brought them to the parish for presentation. I was apprehensive because the congregation had to vote for my tapestries to be hung up and I was nervous that they may not be

good enough for such an important occasion. With such a large congregation, I feared that there would be a multitude of opinions and by the time came from the President to come, we would still be deliberating.

I unfolded one of the tapestries and held it outstretched so the Umfundsisi could admire it. The congregation was so large that up until that point I had not met the Umfundsisi in person and my hands shook with a mild anticipation of our hands meeting at the corners as he took my labor of love from me. My heart began to race as I saw him up close for the first time.

He had a thickness to him, a hardness that suggested he could not be broken. He was dark and tall with his hair as wool with tight curls. He had fiery eyes and spoke with a gentle softness.

"These are as beautiful as their creator," were the first words he said to me. He draped the tapestry over the pew and took my hands in his. "Please. I must know your name," he said.

"Rhodesia," I replied.

"Jovenal, but please call me Jo."

He held up my tapestry for all to see and said, "Truly her hand was guided by God. All in favor say I." The congregation all said I in unison.

We were smitten at first sight and our chond ship lasted only four months. He wrote me love notes and sent me flowers. We studied the Bible together and he even taught my father how to tie a new fishing knot. "We must be fishers of man," Jo said to my father when he asked for my hand in marriage. My father was overjoyed that the Umfundsisi of the parish was also a fisherman. It was under the stipulation that he return to fish with my father as often as possible, only then could he be allowed to marry me.

Mother too was overjoyed that I had found the man I wanted to marry. She let go of her concerns that he was a practicing Christian and was happy that she could finally be alone with her own husband, though his interests had shifted from her to the fishing hole. Perhaps she wasn't using the right bait. It wasn't too long before we were married and it was my

grandmother's needlework lessons that brought us together.

The wife of an Umfundsisi is not without responsibilities.

I watered the parish plants and prepared all the meals for his studies. I entertained the wives of the men during men's prayer group I washed and ironed his robes and set out his Bible notes every morning before mass. I left my parents and I clung to my spouse and we became one flesh. We returned to fish with my father as often as we could and he was happy in his retirement while my mother was as bitter as ever.

Some say virginity only means something if you lose it. I was apprehensive at first but found living in marital bliss a wonderful gift from God. Singles in the parish would say marriage is an institution created for those who could not abstain. I think there is a special bonding that happens when both men and women fill their cups with the same substance. Both husband and wife pour out their own materials and fill their cups with the love of God. This band cannot

easily be broken, the same cohesive bond help hold the parish together and is something a single person could not understand.

Our bond grew stronger and one year after our wedding we welcomed you, into our lives. I lay in bed and knitted your first hat and booties and you were a chunky baby just like your father. He held you tight in his arms and I remember him saying that you were as beautiful as an angel. You were our special miracle and we promised the day of your birth to raise you the best we could.

President Habyarimana made coming to our parish during the Christmas season his new yearly tradition, so your first visit to the parish there was a huge celebration. We held a baptism ceremony where the president insisted on holding you while you were sprinkled with water.

"A mighty Hutu you will become," he said as your father finished baptizing you.

We started to teach you the truth from infancy and you accepted the Bible teachings faster than we

ever expected. You grew like a weed Wanda; sucking up all the knowledge we passed on.

You were a curious soul and got into everything there was to get into around the parish. We found you pouring over old books and talking to strangers about Jesus. You always made us proud from an early age.

A time came when a great threat filled our land. Winds of terror were sweeping through the country and many villages were no longer safe. People could not stay in their homes for fear of being separated from their families or murdered in the middle of the night.

Jo and I visited villages on a mission of compassion bringing food and other provisions to help counteract some roadblocks that had been set up to prevent food from getting to the villagers. We tried to lift their spirits with the good news of everlasting life, but most of the villagers were worried about this life, not the next.

We anticipated a great worry and wanted to help prevent a panic from arising. Without great effort we removed many of the pews from the parish and converted

the sanctuary into a shelter. We dismantled the pulpit in favor of creating more room for the mass exodus.

Our visits now extended to inviting villagers to leave their homes behind in favor of the holy sanctuary and god's protection. Many thousands accepted this invitation graciously and left everything behind. I remember crying as my mother and father refused to leave their homes. Mother would go nowhere near a Christian parish and father could not be persuaded to put down his fishing pole. Wanda had grown attached to her grandparents who spoiled her with sugar-candy and soda. She screamed for days when they wouldn't come to the parish.

I heard rumors that mass killings were happening in Kigali and my heart wept when President Habyarimana plane was shot down. I mourned my fallen hero and listened to ever speech he ever gave over Rwandan public radio. He was instrumental in the change in Rwanda. He favored equality between Tutsis and Hutus even if others did not.

I never understood why members of his own party killed in his name.

The parish had reached near capacity and was the home of over twenty-thousand people. We had trouble finding places for all of them to sleep and feeding them was not easy.

Some volunteers offered to do all of the cooking, but in preparing meals for the masses, the stores in the parish pantry were drained after only three days. Hygiene went out the window and living conditions deteriorated quickly. I asked God for a miracle, for him to help us save these people and he appeared to me in a dream in the form of my fallen hero President Habyarimana.

"Jehovah, what must we do to save these people," I said.

"The Hutus offering of vegetables and agricultural goods throughout time has not been acceptable to me. Look at your Tutsi brothers who have offered me their first born calves and the fattest of the herds. Truly they have sacrificed part of their

livelihood as an offering to me and I have found it very pleasing."

"What must we do in order to make our offering pleasing to you? We try to serve you and I am sorry that I have fallen short of your expectations."

"You must look at your Tutsi brother's example and follow it giving me an even greater offering, one so great that it will surely please me for all time. Your Pygmy brother the Batwas have come under my favor. I would have Rwanda restored to them for they are my chosen people. It is from their divine line that my son shall return."

"Thank you Lord for letting us worships you. We shall render you an offering so great all of your creations will remember it for all time."

I awoke to a cold sweat and tears had run down my face. I had seen God's face and he spoke to me telling me his purposes and asking for an offering.

I was honored and excited to do God's work. How long had our offering been unacceptable in the eyes of God?

People have called Jo and I the butchers of Kibungo because we confessed to contacting the Interhamawe Army and letting them know of our location. I have been called a weaver of death sowing the seeds of destruction. How can the world call me guilty when I was only doing God's will?

They call us the butchers of Kibungo because we offered the Tutsis up as our offering and God saw that it was acceptable.

My grandmother taught me to knit backwards. She inculcated me into her teachings and my actions have been pleasing to God. I am sorry dear Wanda if any of my actions have caused you or any of your new friend's pain. All things must bow down to the will of Jehovah.
Always You're Loving Mother,
Mama Rhodesia

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."~Mark 12:29-31.

~Wanda and Susan~

Summers turned to winters and winters back to summers again or so it seemed as I eagerly awaited Papa Jo's response to my letter. I was afraid he might not even respond. Was I too direct or to the point? Did I ask the right questions? The past couple of weeks had been filled with anticipation and regrets at not including certain passages in my letter and through talking to Susan Kyran, I have heard all sorts of interesting things about Papa Jo and is curious if any of them are true. I play on the banks of the Akagera often and try to get my mind of the damned anticipation but nothing seems to help.

My time here hasn't exactly been a picnic. They pick on me and call me names. Susan has finally come around and has stopped pointing her rotten piece of meat at me every chance she gets. She is the only girl here my age and I have begun to look forward to her company as strange as that may sound.

Sometimes we swing from the branches and run around in circles circumnavigating our old hollow chestnut that we found in an abandoned part of the forest. We go there a lot to be alone and to share our stories and other girl things.

In another life she could have been my very best friend. She could have come over my house for a slumber party, and I could do her makeup and Mama Rhodesia could serve us porridge and we could stay up all night telling stories, this is not another life, our relationship has suffered the loss of both of our parents and Susan has even given up an arm. The fact that we even get along despite my parents genocidal nature is a miracle.

We both know we are not related and that the world perhaps does not want us to be together and that she is supposed to be my mortal enemy and one day seek revenge for the death of her parents, but over the past few years she has become my sister and I hers, and my love for her has grown in ways that I never thought possible. Rather than acting like sisters we have become best friends, nearly inseparable even in the worst of times.

Susan tells stories of folk lore and of past times and I like to listen to those stories as we always work together to decipher any hidden messages or secrets within those stories. Susan and I have a very special place built along the banks of the Akagera River. We hollowed out a once well-established cave made of earth and shale and here we run and discuss the stories of our lives.

Waiting for Papa Jo's response had been agonizing at best, especially after the no less than horrifying explanations she had received from Mama Rhodesia. She had her doubts, but clung to her last ounce of hope

that Papa Jo's story may somehow redeem her faith in her parents. The time had been filled with campfires that we had built to help warm the cave as we braved the short rainy season Rwanda had to offer. Every day we ventured down to the cave and every night we walked home happy and filled with stories and fellowship.

"Maybe your father called on the power of God to stop the killings and the power of God was so powerful that everyone in the chapel was killed," Susan expressed her opinion.

"Well I still think it was a combination of mosquito sickness and demonic spirits which frightened the masses to death. Why hasn't Papa Jo's letter come already?"

"I was listening to Tanta Mambo yesterday as he was trying to sell me wine evoking that Christ once made water into wine and to honor Christ I must drink from the wine which he created. I told him that yes Christ indeed said to drink the wine and that it was his blood and we should do this in remembrance of him, but Tanta Mambo's wine was not made by Christ and if

it was, it should be freely given to all who wish to receive it. With that argument, he agreed with me and gave me a gallon of wine. He also told me a story I think you might find interesting. Would you like me to tell you?" Susan asked.

I pulled the sleeves of my grey cotton sweater down, threw a bundle of sticks onto the fire stoking it to my desired height and took a sip of wine. "Well we don't have that damn letter to talk about and I am tired of speculating on what Papa Jo's involvement in this story is, so yes tell me Tanta Mambo the old drunk's story and let it be a good one," I said.

Susan copied me, pulling the sleeves down on her sweater and buckled down on her side her head propped up on her hand. "I will try to tell the story exactly as he did so we can try and figure out what it means. Are you ready?"

"There was a boy who lived in a village on the outskirts of the jungle. It was a jungle not at all unlike the one we are in today. And that boy lived with his mother

and his father and with his uncle and his two sons.

"The boy was always obedient to his elders for he was brought up to respect the ones that have come before him for they are wise. He always did what he was told and no matter what the situation, he never told lies.

"The boy's uncle was a mean spirited man and his two sons were lazy and did not like to perform chores. They enjoyed lying in the sun as the boy worked hard collecting the fruit from banana trees. And the mean spirited uncle did not think his own children should have to work and so he yelled and screamed and pinned all of his sons' work onto his nephew. He yelled in the morning for the boy to fetch him breakfast, he yelled to the boy when he was thirsty throughout the day. And it seemed as though he were born to yell. And throughout all of

this the boy never complained and always did what he was told.

“One day the mean spirited uncle wanted to play a joke on the boy and so he told him that he longed for the taste of the forbidden fruit that only grew in one place in the jungle and this place was heavily protected by a wild creature that had the horns of rhino, the fangs of a wolf, and the eyes of a snake. And he told the boy that if he should be eaten by this wild creature the fluids in the creature’s stomach would devour him for a thousand years. This scared the boy greatly, and he was petrified of going to this guarded place to fetch his uncle the forbidden fruit.

“The boy was a lover of music, and everywhere he went, he brought with him a very special set of drums his parents had given him for being so obedient. And so he brought his set of drums with him as he set

out into the jungle to find the forbidden fruit.

"He walked for what seemed to be an endless amount of time, over hills and through ravines. He even waded through a river or two until he finally came to the place that had matched his uncle's description. And to his surprise he discovered the forbidden tree and the forbidden fruit in the exact location his uncle said it would be. It pleased the boy that he would be able to make his uncle happy and he could not wait till he got home and presented him with the fruit.

"But before he could begin collecting the fruit, he heard a loud roar and wondered where it had come from. He looked to his left and to his right and saw nothing. Roar!!! He heard the sound again. This time when he looked around he saw the wild creature. It had horns like a rhino and

fangs like a wolf and the eyes of a snake and the boy could hear the fluids in the creature's stomach rumbling.

"And the creature saw that the boy was picking the forbidden fruit and chased after him. The boy was fast, but the wild creature was faster and the chase lasted for a long time. And with his last breath and burst of energy, the boy found the tallest tree in the jungle and began to climb. But the wild creature was persistent and remained at the bottom of the tree for the boy surely would grow hungry and eventually come down.

"He grew nervous and did not know what to do, and so he did what he always did when he grew nervous and needed to think, he played his drums. And the beat of the drum filled the air and traveled to the waiting creature down below. And the creature liked the beat of the drum and began to dance. When the boy stopped, the creature resumed

his attempts to get up the tree. And so the boy played all day until the sun went down and the creature grew tired and went away to his cave. And the boy climbed down and ran all the way home, back over hills and through ravines and wading through a river or two.

"He was so frightened about the creature and so disappointed that he could not fulfill his uncle's request that he ran to his father to tell him what had happened and to beg for punishment. His uncle and father were talking with one another when the boy explained his story. Upon hearing the story, the uncle laughed and struck the boy for lying. "I made that story up to scare you," the uncle said. "And yet you return to me without the forbidden fruit that I asked for, truly you are the laziest boy I know." And the boy cried and begged for forgiveness.

"The father spoke in a quiet voice, "my boy has always been obedient and he has never lied to anyone, why should we not believe him? Tomorrow we shall all go out and see about this wild creature and this forbidden fruit."

"And so his mother and his father, his uncle and his two boys all left their village and went into the jungle to find the forbidden fruit and to see if there was indeed a wild creature that the boy spoke of. And they walked over hills and through ravines and waded through a river or two until they arrived at the spot that the boy had described. And they began to pack the forbidden fruit into the bags that they had brought. But the mean spirited uncle and his two lazy boys only lay in the sun and greedily ate the fruit.

"Roar!!! They heard a loud noise. They looked around but saw nothing. Roar!!! A

thunderous crash came down upon them as they saw the wild creature. And he had horns like a rhino and fangs like a wolf and the eyes of a snake, and everyone could hear the rumbling that his stomach made. And they began to run, but the creature was fast and soon he caught up to the father and devoured him, he caught up to the mother and devoured her, he ran and ran and ran and caught up to the uncle and his two boys and devoured them all. But the boy was able to find that same tree he had climbed before and he made it to the top before the creature could capture him.

"The boy was deeply saddened for he had just lost his entire family to the wild creature. And in his loss he cried and as he cried he beat his drum. And the music from the drum filled the air and traveled to the creature's ears. And as before the creature began to dance. He moved his body from side

to side, and he moved up and down and soon the wild creature held his stomach in pain.

"This gave the boy an idea, he played his drum even faster and the wild creature danced to the beat, moving side to side and up and down and he did as any wild creature would do when he has eaten too much and whose stomach is upset, he threw up the boy's father who had not yet been digested. He banged on his drum faster yet and the creature spit up his mother who clung to her husband in fear. Despite the constant yelling and the cruel jokes the uncle always played on the boy and despite his lazy sons never working, the boy longed for them back too. So he beat his drum, but nothing happened. He pounded, but still nothing. He tried one last rhythm, but the creature only let out a loud burp. The creature had digested the mean spirited uncle and his two

lazy sons, and fell over and died because of the foulness of the taste.

“And so the boy climbed down the tree once more and was reunited with his mother and father. They ate of the forbidden fruit generously and journey home with as much fruit as they could carry.”

Susan cleared her throat and took a sip of wine as she finished retelling Tanta Mambo's drunken story.

“Well there it is,” said Susan. “What do you think?”

“I wondered how the boy was able to climb the tree while holding a drum at the same time,” I said. “But I think that the uncle was awful to the boy and took advantage of his kind nature, and his two sons were lazy and did not deserve to eat any of the fruit that the boy picked. If anything I think they had it coming to them.”

“But does anyone deserve die, regardless of how awful they are? My family has died and your mother has

died, did they deserve what they had coming to them," asked Susan?

"When you say it like that, you make me sound like a monster. I'm not saying that the people who died in the church had it coming or anything like that, but that uncle and his sons were really awful, and he tried his best to bring them back. It just says, listen to and respect your parents, work hard and always tell the truth and no harm will ever come to you. Harm did come to him. He loved his uncle and his cousins despite their cruel nature. So what does the story really mean," I asked?

"He did lose someone very special to him, but he was given his parents back whom he loved very much, and it showed that if you are obedient, you are rewarded, he was given the drum for listening so well, and he was able to use that reward to save his parents lives," Susan said.

"So it says if we obey our parents we can bring back the dead?"

"Don't be stupid. It does mean that at all. It means that God helps those who honor their mother and father." Only God knew the true power of the drum when it was in the boy's hands. God gave the boy the talent for music, and instead of burying his head in the sand and accepting his fate to be eaten by the wild creature, he took his talent that God gave him and used to save his life and the life of his parents," Susan said.

"As always Susan you tell a good story and make really good points. I didn't think of it that way," I said.

"It is meant to open the way that we think."

"It is still early and I want to get back to the house to see if Papa Jo's letter has arrived and I am starving. I don't want the wild creature to get me after all," I chuckled.

Susan and I extinguished the flame and pulled some thick brush over the entrance to our hideout to protect it from any wild visitors and made our way home arriving before lunchtime. Susan went to

the table to fix herself a sandwich; I went to my room to catch my breath before following Susan in making myself something to eat.

I arrived in my room, changed my damp clothes and hopped on my bed resting my head on my pillow. As my head hit the pillow, I heard a loud crinkle noise emanating from underneath my head. I lifted my head with curious wonder and found a letter addressed to me lying on my pillow. I tore it open with a furious anticipation having waited over two weeks for Papa Jo's response. I thought about first calling Susan so that we may read it together, but decided to storm through the letter first by myself, as I could not fight off her curiosity for even another moment. I rested my head back down on my pillow and perused the letter.

"I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey."~Exodus 3:17.

~Letter from Papa Jovenal Fischer to Wanda Fischer~

My Dearest Wanda,

Thank you for your letter, which was so eloquently written. You have a God given gift for words. I would encourage you to allow this gift to flourish and grow, so that you may edify your readers and bring glory to God, which can be our only purpose on this Earth. I fear, far too many of our brothers and sisters bury their heads in the sand when it comes to using their talents for God.

I'd like to start this letter, by saying that much of what your friend Susan says is true. Indeed I did take part in the killing of not only her family but so many others. One could stop reading at this revelation and live a perfectly good life knowing that a true monster has been sent to jail for terrible

things, but I hope that I can persuade you to read my entire letter to see the reasoning behind my actions. If I can persuade even part of you that not all of this is my fault, then perhaps the truth of the horrible massacre can finally be known. I have much to say and tell, and I would tell the entire story without gaps or holes, and in its entirety, with a prayer to our Almighty Father and our Savior Jesus Christ, who took the weight of the world on his back as He lie on the cross and died for the sins of man.

Oh Heavenly Father, I come to you today humbled and in need of your tender guidance and love. Please guide my hand and strengthen my heart as I retell the period of my life when I was a son of Adam taken over by Lucifer, rather than a child of God. Please come into my body, refresh my spirit and mind, so that I may honor dear Wanda's requests. Please allow the story of my deeds to flow flawlessly from my pen and into Wanda's mind and heart, and allow her to receive it without casting judgments, for if she judges, she shall be judged in the same light. I ask that you come

into her heart and strengthen her, so that she may resist this temptation. Please watch over our leaders and allow them to be beacons of light leading to you Lord. Take this light, and use it to grow the paradise you have promised to grow. Watch us and keep us, sending the Great Comforter to protect us, until our Savior and Redeemer returns. I ask all of this in your Son's precious name. Amen.

I know that this may seem like little more than a history lesson for you, Wanda, and I do not mean to sound boring. I am sure you are quite anxious for me to get to the nexus of my story, but all of these points are crucial for your understanding of the entire events. The buildup of hostilities between the Hutus and Tutsis is paramount to this story and plays a key role in why I did what I did which I promise I shall get to soon.

Wanda, in the beginning God planted a garden in Eden, in the east and here He created man, and all sorts of beautiful trees from which grew exotic fruits. A river flowed from the land of Eden and

watered the garden, allowing it to grow. It thrived until the man, which God put there, ate from the forbidden fruit, and was cast out of this paradise. So too, Wanda, did the original indigenous peoples of Rwanda, and mainly Kibungo, build their lives on the banks of the mighty Akagera River from which all Kinya-rwanda civilization springs. Pygmies hunters, or as some may call the TWAS, fished and tracked game along this river as early as the fiftieth century. They lived in conjunction with nature. Their relationship was symbiotic; unlike the relationship man has today, which is clearly parasitic. Living as hunter-gatherers, the TWAS did not have much of a need for a warrior society. There were some opposing tribes from surrounding areas, such as Burundi and Tanzania, who threatened to take over the TWAS' hunting territory, but the Pygmy people were protected by the mighty Akagera River and by their elevated territory, for the foundations of the Kibungo province are built on mountainous terrains.

Along the banks of the river were thick layers of asters, roses, marigolds, banana groves, apples orchards, cocoa beans, and coffee, allowing a vast array of colors - red, blue, purple, orange, yellow and green - to flood the valleys that the river flowed through. The mountains were home to fish, birds, livestock, wild animals, small animals, seed bearing fruits, green grasses and plants, exotic healing barks, and the Pygmies, being the first people in this paradise, were given the charge of naming all the plants and animals.

The first people in Kibungo were blessed by this mighty river and wonderful garden that God made for them. Though the river in the Bible splits into four branches, and those branches are called the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates, it also says that an angel has been placed at the entrance of the garden to prevent man from reentering after the fall. I, however, have a slightly different interpretation. God was careful to list the exact location, such that if one should follow one of these four river branches

back to its source, they would find this forbidden paradise, Eden. Perhaps God did this to keep man from finding the true location of Eden. In His divine glory, He knew the hearts of man would always long to return to the origin of creation, and so God gave man a treasure map of sorts, with the directions in the Bible. Man would always follow these directions and, therefore, never discover the true Eden.

I submit to you Wanda, that Kibungo, despite the number of tragedies, which I will talk about later, is the Eden that is spoken of in the book of Genesis. African folk lore also refers to this place as Mogooboo, the mythical city of gold and the origin of all life. Mogooboo, Kibungo, the Akagera river valley, or Eden, Adam and his wife Eve were cast out from this paradise. I would also ask you to take this into your heart, and seek God for the true answers to the questions man has asked since his exile.

In the midst of paradise on Earth, the TWAS built up their civilization along the banks of the river, and lived there undisturbed for nearly a century,

until they were supplanted by the forbearers of the agriculturist ethnic group known as the Hutus, and a third party made primarily and predominantly of pastoralists, known as the Tutsis.

The Hutus and Tutsis began to clear forests for their permanent settlements. The Hutus were concerned with the growing of plants and gardening, while the Tutsis were concerned with livestock and animal husbandry. The Hutus and Tutsis had their differences, as all cultures have had since the whole world spoke one language, and were united under the one goal of building a tower tall enough to reach Heaven. God said, if they could do this at the beginning of their unity, what they would be able to do later on. He scattered the people throughout the Earth and gave them all different languages, so that neighbors could not understand each other, and man could never again be united under the banner of one goal, and the tower was called Babel, because the languages were confusing as a baby's speech.

Despite these differences, the lines between Hutus and Tutsis were often skewed, because of intermarrying and allowing members of the opposite tribe to become honorary members of their tribe based on courageous acts. King Rwabugiri, a Tutsi, set up a Tutsi aristocracy, with the Tutsis as the upper class herdsman, and the Hutus the lower class farmers. It was not uncommon, though, due to these blurred lines, for a lower class Hutu to take minor power ; therefore, the Hutus and Tutsis lived together as neighbors, until the Europeans reached Rwanda, the last part of Africa to be colonized, in 1894.

King Rwabugiri died the first year of this European expansion, and there was a great conflict between Hutus and Tutsis as to who would be his successor. Count von Gotzen of Germany claimed Rwanda for his Kaiser. He also claimed Burundi, and the area was treated as one large colony called Ruanda-Urundi.

Having raised more cattle and livestock, the Tutsis had access to more milk than the Hutus, were better nourished, and perceived as healthier. Their

possession of livestock also gave them the appearance of being the wealthier of the two ethnic groups. The Germans thought the Tutsis had a European Hermetic appearance, with a taller stature and eloquent personalities, and so the Germans romanticized Tutsi origins. Because of this, under German colonialism, Tutsis were elevated above Hutus and allowed to vote and own land, and were often placed in charge of Hutus.

Germans placed agents in the courts of local rulers to make sure Ruanda-Urundi policy reflected German interest. Despite this, the German influence was not overwhelming, because this colony was taken from the Germans with the outbreak of war.

You see Wanda, the Belgians were better warriors than the Germans, and possessed smarter tactics. When Germany invaded Belgium, the Belgians retaliated in a much smaller way in Central Africa, mainly Ruanda-Urundi, by moving troops from Congo, already a Belgian colony. They occupied the large colony in 1916, but it wasn't officially awarded to them until 1924.

Belgium runs both Congo and Ruanda-Urundi; however, Congo is run from Brussels exclusively, and Ruanda-Urundi is allowed to run itself through the Tutsi aristocracy.

This transition only solidified the racial divide, as the Belgians became obsessed with the differences between the two races. Belgian scientists measured the differences in the skulls of Hutus and Tutsis, and determined that Tutsis' brain sizes were larger. They were deemed superior, and better suited to lead. Hutus were subject to forced labor with Tutsis as their overseers. Due to all of the scientific racial testing, and the Belgian obsession with racial differences, in 1933, racial identification cards are issued to every citizen, along with a general head-tax.

Jesus once said, on the issue of taxes, "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's," but the issue of taxes created a lot of disagreement between the two groups. Belgium instituted a head-tax on all Rwandans, which stated that all Rwandans, regardless of ethnic origin,

had to pay a tax to Belgium, its mother state. This allowed Hutus to follow a European leader, rather than a Tutsi leader, and this young Wanda is where the first break down of racial numbers were discovered - 85% Hutu, 14% Tutsi and 1% Pygmy TWAS. This set in stone the distinction between the two races, and the Belgians favored one of them, the Tutsis.

The first wave of violence, of Hutus against Tutsis, came after a group of Tutsis beat up a member of the Hutu party, and Rwandan radio spread false rumors that he had been killed in that attack, rumors that continued even up to the events of the church, in 1994. The outbreak of violence was engineered by one of the writers of the Hutu Manifesto, Gregorian Kayibonda, and was called the wind of destruction.

This wind of destruction leads to a mass Tutsi exodus and the Hutu Emancipation Party coining the phrase "cockroaches", referring to Tutsis, and this becomes a part of everyday life. Indeed, Wanda, I can remember when I was young, hearing these terms on the radio. Tutsis left, becoming exiles in other

countries. They made several attempts to get back into the country, but failed.

In 1963, after a year of independence, several Tutsis tried to get back into the country. They got within twelve miles of the capital city of Kigali, before being captured and executed. This prompted the Rwanda Government to adopt a new policy of "cleaning up the bush." Within days of this Tutsi invasion, 14,000 Tutsis were slaughtered in one of the most horrible acts of violence since World War II. This was nothing compared to the Hutus' power in the 1990's.

There was a huge massacre that killed over 14,000 Tutsis in 1963, but, as radical as this was, it was not radical enough for some Rwandans, who held a coup in 1973, when the government was replaced by a military dictator Major General Habyarimana. He was in power for 21 years until his death. However, his regime was a self-serving military dictatorship, and he had the backing of several powerful countries, such as France and England.

Tutsi refugees constantly flooded the borders of Rwanda, and neighboring states were always encouraging Tutsis to return to their home state. With the sudden refugee status, many countries could not handle the overwhelming increase to the population, as this new group often sucked the resources dry. They could not return to Rwanda either, for the overwhelming population loathed the Tutsis. The story is heading in a very dangerous direction as, in 1986; President Habyarimana rejects all refugees trying to return into Rwanda.

A group of refugees, mostly made up of Tutsis, formed a group that is to be later known as the RPF, or the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which was committed to ending the reign of the president. So determined in fact, that members of the Ugandan army deserted their posts, with all of their military equipment, on October 1, 1990, and moved south into Rwanda, capturing Kigali, and putting an end to the president's regime. It was not that simple as Habyarimana asked his friends from the west to

intervene, and France sent brigades of paratroopers to help restore the peace and drive the Tutsis back out of the country. This served as the number one catalyst, for it provoked Hutus to commit one of the century's most appalling acts of genocide.

Racially motivated newspapers began to publish the "HUTU TEN COMMANDMENTS," which justified the hatred of Tutsis. You must understand that a great movement was overtaking the country, and the Hutu Ten Commandments led to the phrase "Hutu Power." I am fairly certain that all copies of this propaganda have been destroyed by now, so I will list the ten commandments, just so you may see what the public was subjected to by the print media.

1. Every Hutu must know that the Tutsi woman, wherever she may be, is working for the Tutsi ethnic cause. In consequence, any Hutu is a traitor who acquires a Tutsi wife, acquires a Tutsi concubine, or acquires a Tutsi secretary or protégée.

2. Every Hutu must know that our Hutu daughters are more worthy and more conscientious, as women, as

wives, and as mothers. Are not they lovely, excellent secretaries, and most honest?

3. Hutu women must be vigilant, and make sure that your husbands, brothers, and sons see reason.

4. All Hutus must know that all Tutsis are dishonest in business. Their only goal is ethnic superiority. We have learned this by experience, from experience. In consequence, any Hutu is a traitor who forms business alliances with a Tutsi, invests his own funds or public funds in a Tutsi enterprise, borrows money from or loans money to a Tutsi, grants favors to Tutsis (impart licenses, bank loans, land for construction, public markets, etc).

5. Strategic positions, such as political, administration, economic, the military, and security, must be restricted to the Hutu.

6. A Hutu majority must prevail throughout the educational system (pupils, scholars, and teachers).

7. The Rwandan army must be exclusively Hutu. The war of October 1990 has taught us that. No soldier may marry a Tutsi woman.

8. Hutu must stop taking pity on the Tutsi.

9. Hutu, wherever they may be, must stand united in solidarity, concerned with the fate of their Hutu brothers. Hutu, within and without Rwanda, must constantly search for friends and allies to the Hutu cause, beginning with their Bantu brothers. Hutus must constantly counter Tutsi propaganda. Hutu must stand firm and vigilant against their common enemy: the Tutsi.

10. The social revolution of 1959, the reformation of 1961, and Hutu ideology must be taught to Hutus of every age. Every Hutu must spread the word, wherever he goes. Any Hutu who prosecutes his brother Hutu for spreading and teaching this ideology is a traitor.

President Habyarimana was all too happy to do anything and everything he could to uphold these Hutu Ten Commandments and to ensure Hutu Power, so in 1991 he recruited a Hutu youth militia, which became the Interhamawe army, meaning those who attack together. In public, the Interhamawe held rallies under the

president's picture. In private, they practiced wielding machetes, and drew up lists of Tutsi and Hutu sympathizers. Radio Rwanda deliberately spread a false rumor that the Tutsis planned to manufacture a massacre against the Hutu. This caused a whole new wave of attacks.

Despite all of these things, extreme Hutus disagreed with the president's failed attempts to supplant the Tutsi guerillas. Instead, the president, in an act of kindness, and what would be known as the crowning moment in his 21-year reign, negotiated a cease-fire. Peace talks alienated the Hutus who were at the meetings. In 1993, Habyarimana signed a peace treaty allowing refugees to come back into Rwanda, as well as the Hutus to share power with the Tutsis, and the Rwandan Army and Patriotic Front to join forces as one. The RPF would also be represented in the new provisional government, and then the President invited the United Nations to come to Rwanda to witness the process.

These concessions seem outrageous to the Interhamawe Army, and on April 6, 1994, rockets are fired, assassinating Habyarimana and the president of Burundi on their way to a peace conference. Radio broadcasts sent out the message, urging people to do their duty, to seek out Tutsi and Tutsi sympathizers living among them in the streets. The message is received loud and clear, "Eliminate the cockroaches." Extremists are whipped up by the orgy, or Hutu propaganda, and this, Wanda, is where the true massacres begin.

I feel as though I should continue to tell you about the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Rwanda, about how the church in Nyarubuye was built, about my time at seminary, and becoming the pastor of the church. I must also tell you about my trial and the war crime tribunal. All of this, I must do before I tell you about my involvement in the massacre at the church. I shall start with the inception of the Roman Catholic Church in Rwanda. Please forgive me if my history is overlapping, for I would tell you the

history of the church, both separately and concurrent with the history of hostilities, for it is vital to my story.

Ruanda-Urundi adopted the Roman Catholic nature of its mother state, Belgium. Catholicism swept through Ruanda-Urundi and particularly Kibungo the place of our story, like wild fire. Catholicism became as a drug for the Hutu people, and it replaced most of the Bantu religions that, up until that time, were prominent in Ruanda-Urundi. For it is in 1952, that King Matura Rudahigwa changed his name to Charles, and became the first Rwandan leader to be baptized in the Catholic Church. King Charles, a Tutsi, ordered the building of several churches across the country, from Lake Kivu to Kigali, and the church that occupies this letter, the Nyarubuye Catholic church.

People came in droves, from all over the Kibungo, province to build the church at Nyarubuye. King Charles publicly condemned the Tutsi mistreatment of the Hutus, encouraged by political change in Belgium, and by his own democratic vision. Charles seized all

land in Rwanda, and redistributed it amongst both Hutus and Tutsis. This carried great popularity with the Hutus who felt liberated from Tutsi rule. The Hutu people were motivated to write the Hutu manifesto, saying that all differences, political, financial, or ethnic, will be solved along the racial divide.

The church was created, just as man was created, from the clay of the ground. A 120,000 square foot slab was cleared out, completely voiding it of all trees and other plant life. Oxen are truly amazing creatures, and can pull up to four times their own weight. With the use of several oxen, ploughs, lumber jack volunteers, and the resources of the community, what was once densely thick jungle, was turned into hard-panned, sun-baked clay, ready for God's precious touch. They built with the same precision and care that King David and his people took in building the mighty temple in Jerusalem, according to the Book of Kings. Though the temple was destroyed, split in two and built again, by various invaders such as the Babylonians, after Christ destroyed the temple, brick

by brick, in the Book of Luke, the temple, although promised in the end days, is not yet rebuilt. A temple of God that the people of the Kibungo province built as a home for the Living God was built with extra special care.

They lay a clay mortar brick foundation with the attention and detail of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, who worked every day in a Soviet gulag to stay warm, for the integrity of a hard day's work and for the hope that there will always be a tomorrow. Shukhov is somewhat of a hero in Gikungo prison, and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, as well as Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, is the most popular novels amongst the prisoners. Unlike Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the writer of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, I am not wrongfully imprisoned. I am guilty, and I belong here, but we shall get to that later.

Meanwhile, the foundation of the church was laid in the newly stripped clearing, brick by brick, and each brick was two inches thick by four inches wide by six inches long, all perfectly placed interlocking

like a jigsaw puzzle. You see, my friend, the power of God's wonderful touch, and this was only the foundation. Everything He touches, Wanda, is divine. Four brick platforms, each one built upon the next, perfectly centered within each other, in a ziggurat pyramid formation, formed the appearance of steps leading to the house of God. From the fourth and highest platform arose the temple, and a mighty temple it was. Forty feet high by four-hundred feet long by fifty feet wide, the church formed the appearance of a medieval castle, complete with four spires, one at each corner, and wonderfully vast arch-shaped windows without the glass, beautifully molded doorways, and an eight square foot hand-carved angel, made from solid ivory by the artisans of the Vatican itself, centered on the front exterior wall of the church, and flown high as a beacon of hope for everyone in the Land of a Thousand Hills. I too, Wanda, was greatly inspired by this wonderful creation, so much in fact that when I was a young boy of fourteen, in 1962, when the church was finally completed after eight long years of

building, I decided that it was my dream to become a priest, a servant of God, sworn to lead lost sheep to their Sheppard.

This was a time of great joy in my life. I left my mother and sister behind in Kibungo, and made a long pilgrimage to Saint Peters' Basilica in the Vatican, where I was determined to receive my religious training, so that I could one day return to Rwanda and serve. The journey was a long one, one I can equate with the mandatory pilgrimage of every Muslim to Mecca and Medina. I had access to the finest transportation money could buy, because my father was a cooper, my mother a seamstress, my family was well off and they offered to put me on a plane to the Vatican on a direct flight. Instead, I walked from Kibungo, north across Africa, hitched up with a caravan, and crossed the dessert just as Jesus did. I made my way through Sub-Saharan Africa past the pyramids dedicated to heathen Egyptian Gods, built on the backs of Hebrew slaves. I helped bring in the harvest of a local farmer in exchange for fair on a

charter boat to take me across the Suez Canal, and I made my way into Europe, over mountains, through snow storms, through forests, and over highways, and finally into the Vatican, where at first I was turned away to test my patience and willingness to serve God. I would tell you more of this terrific, humbling journey, perhaps in another letter, if you long to hear the tale, and I assure you it is a fantastic one, as I compare myself to Jonas and the great traveler, Marco Polo.

The Vatican strengthened my conviction greatly, as I learned the Bible stories and tenants of the Catholic faith in a formal classroom education. While I was gone, Rwandan Hutus decided to take control of the country, and end years of what they perceived to be Tutsi oppression. They collectively agreed to have no master, so they pushed all Europeans out of the country, and declared themselves independent, in 1962. A correlation was drawn, they equated the old history as colonialism and Tutsi, and they rejected it,

adopting a new Hutu Catholic history, making a complete break from the past.

This change led to killings and a large exodus by the Tutsi population to the Eastern most part of the country. So, you can imagine this separation only added to the turmoil that was to come much later, as these new Tutsi inhabitants occupied much of the Kibungo Province and were the majority of the worshipers at the newly established church.

Tutsis became the scapegoat for everything that went wrong in the country, in a drastic shift of power and role reversal.

Meanwhile, my Catholic training was going splendidly. I was living a life of simplicity and supplication. I awoke at 4 a.m. every day, and did nothing but pray for two hours. Morning mass was always at 6 a.m., and usually lasted until 8 a.m. A breakfast of kasha, oatmeal, was served from 8 a.m. until 9 a.m., hard work and chores lasted from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Chores usually consisted of gardening or painting, always-backbreaking work in an attempt to be

closer to God through copying his pain and suffering. Every brother's dream was to reach a level of ecstasy brought on by stigmata. I never personally experienced any stigmata, and the Catholic Church does not officially recognize stigmata as a God inspired miracle, but rather as an unexplained, naturally-occurring phenomenon. Father Bergeron, a close friend from the Vatican, once had the bloody indentations on his forehead of a crown of thorns, and it was the topic of discussions for many meals. Class always began at 1 p.m. and ran until 5 p.m., where I learned bible theory, about prophets and their messages, the gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John, of the end times, and the new kingdom to be established with the return of our Savior. Dinner was much like breakfast, a bowl of kasha; only dinner was served with a roll of sweet bread, which I always looked forward to. The kasha was bland at best, and I crumbled my bread into the kasha, which gave it a sweet nectar flavor, for the bread was always soft and scrumptious, one of life's simple pleasures. Evening mass ran from 6 p.m.

to 8 p.m., during which we made our daily confessions and prayed our good Catholic tenants. After 8 p.m., was a period of silence and self-reflection, in which we were to meditate on the pains and sufferings of Jesus Christ? We were not allowed to talk again until our afternoon chores began. I usually prayed from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., in my small, private room, not at all unlike the cell I am currently in before giving myself over to God for the night, and falling into slumber, to wake up and start the process all over again. For six long wonderful years, I did this, Wanda, as I was awarded the cloth I so long desired, the collar that I still wear around my neck.

Despite this wonderful time in my life, I longed to serve God in a place of need. I requested that I be sent back home, to Rwanda, to be placed in one of the many churches, so that I may minister, and be of good service. My eagerness to serve far outweighed my longing to make, yet another, mind-purifying journey, so I willingly accepted charter upon a bus, which took nearly three weeks to get me to Kigali, a far shorter

trip than the two-year journey I had undergone to get there.

Never, in my wildest dreams, did I ever imagine that I would become an associate pastor at the very church I longed for since I first witnessed its construction, the Nyarubuye Catholic Church, where I was to be the back-up pastor for Father Mogabawe, who was ailing and in his upper fifties. I was given the charge to aid the father in whatever he should need, to lead the church, and raise them up in the ways of the Roman Catholic faith, when I was needed. I was jubilant to say the least. I was twenty-two years old, but with the benefits of a classical Roman Catholic education, and those six years at seminary went far in aiding my maturity.

Father Mogabawe did everything he could to assist me in making this very important transition, in 1970. He let me preach two sermons per week, and allowed me to watch over several Bible studies. Among the community, it was no secret that Father Mogabawe had contracted yellow fever, or what I like to call

mosquito sickness, which plagued Kibungo for the better part of two years in the late 1960's and early 1970's, when several thousand people died before local swamps were treated and the mosquito population was significantly lessened.

I settled into these duties that Father Mogabawe charged me with, and did them happily for seven years, until yellow fever finally overcame my predecessor, and he passed on to his true home with God the Father.

In 1977, his funeral was the first service I officiated as the pastor of the church, and it was not mournful, but a period of celebration for the father's empty shell and his soul's ascension to heaven. It was the first of many happy events that took place under my twenty-year reign as priest of the church.

I oversaw 100,000 baptisms and 10,000 weddings, many funerals and some dedications. I pastured over some major politicians' weddings, and even witnessed their children's first communions and confirmations. I was blessed with these periods of celebration. I ask God to forgive me of this sinful pride, for I am proud

that I was able to serve Him, but my feelings should not be in these accomplishments, but only with Him.

The political turmoil always seemed to have a big impact on church policy. Gregorian Kayibonda tried to push all the Tutsis out of all state run churches, and Nyarubuye was certainly no exception. But it was my opinion that anyone who was eagerly searching out God, and willing to serve him with their whole being, was most welcome in the church, and I adopted a don't ask policy when it came to church members being Hutu or Tutsi. The law said I was required to check those identification cards, and then refuse service to any Tutsi wishing entrance, as though Heaven and church were some kind of Hutus-only club. I did not buy into that belief, and this may sound terribly hypocritical of me when you hear the tale of my involvement at the church. I always believed that he who asks God to come into his heart, and save him from his sins, would in fact be saved and welcomed into heaven. I felt very much like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, from the Book of Daniel, who were cast into a furnace so hot it

killed all of the guards who watched them. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were all-faithful servants of God, and refused to renounce his name, and so when they were cast into the furnace, Gods love protected them from the excruciatingly hot flames, allowing them to exit unscathed. This was how I felt in allowing Tutsis to stay at the church. I felt that if God was for me, then what Hutu could be against me.

The needs of the community developed over the years, and the church adapted to fit those needs. In 1988, despite the military state that had developed in Rwanda, the church was doing well and prospering, and we had a need to build a first class Catholic school in which youngsters from the community could learn the love of God as well as how to read. We hoped to tackle a serious illiteracy rate, by teaching the youth to read, in the hopes that they would teach their parents and elders. We thought this would lead to a higher level of understanding, and more people would read the Bible, and be converted to Christ. For this educational doctrine to be successful, we also built a

rather large convent to house the nuns and young novices, who would teach the youth in the new school. My unwillingness to turn anyone away, especially Tutsis, cancelled any state funding that I may have received. Therefore, these additions were built entirely by private donation from good God-fearing people. The school and convent went up much in the same way as the rest of the church did. Etched above the entrance to the school was "SANTIFICA en VERITAS;" as it was explained to me, that means "seekers of truth." This could not have fit our doctrine, or the doctrine of the Catholic Church, any better. Seek the truth of God eternal, seek the light of Jesus the redeemer, seek ye salvation, and seek the truth of the world.

Just as I was pastor of the church, I was also principle of the school, and taught classes on divinity. This well-designed addition to the church was pleasing to me, and brought nothing but glory to God.

All students seeking an education were welcomed, and all nuns, regardless of years and faith, were welcomed with open arms. There were not a stringent selection process, and many nuns arrived from around the world, hearing God's call to service. In addition to their teaching duties and mass responsibilities, much in the same way I did at seminary, in the Vatican, the nuns and novices worked hard on chores always meditating on the sufferings of Christ. I was happy that a number of the attending nuns were from Rwanda, knew and loved God and aided the newly arriving nuns, helping get them acclimated to the new climate and atmosphere.

Sister Mary Francoeur and Sister Mary Benedict were both Rwandan angles, who aided me tremendously when the churches and school opened.

They stood as beacons of beauty, both with light brown skin pale, but not ashy, sunken cheeks, elongated forehead, bright brown plant sized eyes, and shoulder-length, jet-black hair. Mary Francoeur was the taller of the two, standing five feet six inches,

and Mary Benedict stood five feet two inches. I lusted over both of them on more than one occasion, and had to seek absolution in confession of my sins. My lust and longing, for one or both of them, did not go any further than that, for I would have been forced by the arch diocese to vacate the cloth, and I loved God far more than I desired these two woman. However, our relationship was not without love and obedience, for I was their pastor, and loved them dearly, and they were humble, supplicate, and obeyed my every request without question. This fact is of some importance in regards to the events you are inquiring about, and I assure you, Wanda, I shall get to the point eventually. It is crucial that you hear the entire story of the church, and the history of hostility between the Hutus and the Tutsis, if you are to gain a full understanding.

It has been fifteen years since the events, that destroyed most of the church in Nyarubuye, and five years that I have been incarcerated in this prison at Gikungo. I must admit that I am very well pleased that

the church has been rebuilt to its once former glory. That it is functioning to serve as the house of the Lord, and as a school, helps the community with literacy, and provides a convent for kind loving nuns. It also pleases me that the entire church, and the aftermath of what happened there, has been turned into a wartime memorial honoring the dead. I hear that the clearing that the mighty foundation is built on is now covered with exotic daisies, roses and begonias, and that the colors of the flowers reached to the sky. I also hear that one hundred dogwood trees have been planted, and that they are growing nicely. I wish this thing did not happen, and that I could turn back time and undue the past, and take part in the planting of the flowers and the dogwoods, because I see the church in my dreams, and my dreams make me happy at how beautiful it has become. I dislike being estranged from the church I grew up loving, and the church I spent twenty years pasturing. I dislike the behavior that lead to the terrible events. I loathe the way I became in the acts I committed, and when I am

released, if I should survive to see that day, I shall return to the restored church to plant a bushel of flowers for every victim of the massacre, and dedicate the rest of my life tending to God's garden. It brings me great joy that after decades of aggression and differences Hutus and Tutsis live in a restored peaceful Rwanda, to be freed from this prison cell to rejoin and be a part of heaven on earth again second to serving God, is my only pleasure, and it is what gives me hope and helps me to keep going.

After the events of the massacre at Nyarubuye, the church that I hold so near and dear, and that I have promised to tell you all about, I fled for the flat lands of Tanzania. I saw a bike lying in the wreckage of the church, grabbed the bike, and rode all the way to Tanzania and freedom.

The bicycle was a 1947 Streamline Aero, blue with white and red trim, left over from Belgium colonialism. The tires were red with white walls, and bright chrome, hand-crafted spokes, covered on top by a half-moon-shaped protector that was blue with a

white diamond at the bottom. The front tire protector had "Facile Planent" written in cursive, meaning "easy glide" in French. The rear tire cover had a snowshoe-shaped basket holder on top, curved around, taking the shape and contours of the tire, with four bars in the middle for added stability, and three rods tapering down to meet at the center of the wheel. A shiny, chrome kickstand matched the L-shaped ape-hanger handlebars that were also held together by a perfectly welded W-shape. At the end of these handle bars were thick rubber padded grips, which were fire red, and fitted to the user's hands. The frame of the bike came together in an obtuse scalene triangle, with the largest of angles being 101 degrees. The body, which was fashioned to this triangle frame, was shaped like a torpedo, fat and round toward the front, slowly working its way toward the middle of the bike finishing with a rounded point. On the front of this missile-shaped body was an eye-shaped headlight reflector, with wiring hooked up to the wheels that generated electricity, and lit the rider's path. This

eye shaped light was complemented by five chrome, decorative bars on each side of the eye, equidistant from the center. A chrome ring, representing an eyelid, surrounded the glass eye. Above and parallel to this eye-shaped light was a round chrome horn with eight slotted holes that, when you peek through them, you see the red inner workings. The button to activate the horn is at the end of the left handle bar. On the sides of the torpedo-shaped body, there was a smaller torpedo-shape, painted white and etched in red. In the center of this white paint was a grey, American B-29 Super Fortress bomber with one red front propeller. Written across the center of the plane, in bright red capital letters, was "STREAMLINE." Below that, in black uppercase lettering was "AERO Cycle." To complete the rare bicycle was a subdued, or blackened, chain and teeth. Jutting out is a chrome pedal holder, at the end of which is a bright orange rubber padded pedal. The teeth of the bike formed a circle made up of six hearts that, when the tips of the bottom conjoined at the center, formed a five-point star.

This bike was a blessing, a gift from God. At the time, I thought God was pleased with my actions and the offerings I left for him, but I could not have been more wrong. I rode this delicate, pristine bike to the freedom of a refugee camp, just forty miles from the site of the massacre. I feared the retribution of the people who would seek out genocidaires and punish them fully under the law. I feared being lined up in front of an execution firing squad and having my empty shell of a body tossed onto the heap of bodies established by the mass graves dug all over the country. I feared God would not remember my face after I had died, when He had so many other victims, some say a million and a half, to remember.

I settled into what would be my new home for the next six years. I witnessed to Tutsi refugees who made it out of the country alive, putting my pastoral services to good use, as people dealt with the harsh reality that many of their friends and relatives would not be joining them. I gave myself back over to God, in an attempt to earn his forgiveness. I later

learned, once I became incarcerated here, that God could not forgive those who cannot forgive themselves. I thought that my sin was, unforgivable so bad that God Himself, in His ultimate glory, could not forgive me. That was an even bigger sin, the sin of pride, saying my sin was bigger than God.

I held hands with survivors. I hid out in the camps, which also harbored my fellow genocidaires and members of the Interhamawe army, who hid out and blended into the population of the camps, fearing retribution from United Nations and Rwandan Patriotic Front for their actions. Planning exactly the right moment, when to return to Rwanda, as to blend themselves with the returning refugees, to avoid justice and being dragged in front of the war crime tribunal, a topic of great concern in the next portion of my letter.

It was this mighty gift of a bicycle, and what I would later call Elijah's Chariot of Fire, that became my undoing. I had liberated this sweet chariot from the piles of the church, back in 1994, and it had

served me incredibly well, as I not only rode it to freedom, but I also used it to serve God, riding from one end of the refugee camp to the next ministering to all who would hear my tale of salvation and the power of God's love. It was late one afternoon in early spring, 2000, when I was striding along on this streamline aero cycle, on my way to a far off corner of the camp that was plagued with malaria. I had the power of God on my side, and had received both malaria and yellow fever vaccines when I was in my schooling at the Vatican, so I had no fear of catching the virus. I drove my bike across the camp, through some of the worst, over-populated conditions one could ever imagine seeing, to the area of the camp that was rumored to be infected with malaria. I wanted to testify to these poor souls, because in Rwanda, as I am sure you know, Malaria had a 50% mortality rate, due to lack of vaccines, improper health care, and living conditions. I was not a doctor, but I had the all-powerful healing hands of God on my side, I was going to touch these people, and ask God to heal them

from the walking dead, just as he had cured the lepers and raised Lazarus from the dead.

There was a great rumor flying around the camp that a minister of death, on a chariot of fire, was riding around the camp as one of them, claiming lost souls for Satan himself. When I arrived at that corner of the camp, the authorities were waiting for me. The young women I was supposed to see had passed on from the sickness, and had left her only child to her best friend, who was also in the camp, and her best friend had recognized that very bike as her own, abandoned in the aftermath of the massacre.

That, Wanda, is where I must leave you for tonight. For it is time for nightly count here, at the prison in Gikungo, and I would get in trouble and not be able to finish this letter for missing it. Now would be the best time for you, too, to get a bite to eat, and get some rest, for the horrific part of my tale is still to come. I know I shall require all of my energy to write it, so I imagine that it will be emotionally draining for you to read it. I ask the

good Lord to bless all of this information into your heart and mind, and make you ready to receive even more information when you wake tomorrow.

With that in mind, I bid you good night, and see you in the morning.

"And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled."~Acts 16:26-27.

**~3rd Person Omniscient/Letter From Papa Jovenal Fischer
to Wanda Fischer Continued~**

Papa Jo sat up in his light, baby blue hospital scrubs, dangled his extraordinary long legs over the side of his bunk, careful not to invade upon his cellmate Tom's space, and put his treaded sock-slippers on his feet one foot at a time. He had done this everyday for nine years at exactly 6:58 a.m. Morning count was always at 7:30 a.m. and his internal clock always allowed him to awaken thirty-two minutes early in order for his daily prayer session.

He hopped down from the bunk which was not a very long distance for him standing six foot two inches

tall, and he had his morning stretch session with his feet a little more than shoulder width apart, reaching his long monkey-like arms to the sky. The sky in this case happened to be an eight-inch thick concrete slab, which represented the ceiling of his cell, so he pressed the open palm of his hand flat against the roof of the room. He let out a gorilla's yawn and lay completely flat, face down on the ground.

There was no rug to cushion him from the extreme coldness of the course, rough, unforgiving cement that he now lay his head upon, and if there had been a rug, he would have rolled it up, placed it in the corner of his cell, and then would have lay down. His Morning Prayer session he lay with his nose buried in the flooring, careful not to glance up at anytime as he whispered words that to most prisoners in Gikungo Prison were empty ones.

It was about the sufferings of Christ on the cross, the reason for his self-induced pain. Closer to the pain, closer to the suffering, closer to the ecstasy and closer to God.

The baby blue hospital scrubs took the place of the old prison uniform, which was grey, heavy, and impossible to keep deloused due to the thickness of the material. The hospital scrubs were lightweight, yet durable and provided the prisoners with ample warmth throughout the year. Unlike any old prison uniform, this uniform did not have identification numbers on the back of it. Instead, prisoners were responsible for knowing their own number. If during count, a prisoner should be missing, all other prisoners have their rights and outdoor privileges revoked for the day until that prisoner is found, or until they rectify the count. There had not been an escape attempt at Gikungo Prison in nearly twenty years, and this was attributed to the next to normal living conditions that the prisoners endure.

He lay face down on the ground, his onetime skintight uniform now hung loosely from his body, nine years of choosing not to eat all the proper food he was given, this he did as penance for his crime. He only ate breakfast and then fasted for the rest of the

day in remembrance of all the victims he had killed. This was not a state ordered punishment, but a self-enforced one in which he never faltered. This would be the day he thought to himself that he would go to the prison commissary and trade in his old uniform for one that fit a bit better. Usually he would equate a new uniform with a much undeserved luxury, but after nine years of wear and tear and the unsightly bagginess of the uniform, he deemed it a necessity. He had gone so long without getting a new uniform in fact that most of the prison had a running wager pool as to who could guess the day Papa Jo would trade in his old robes for new ones.

April 15, 2009 was the guess of Gamma Kigali a fellow genocidaires and member of the Interhamawe Army serving fifteen years for his part in setting up illegal roadblocks leading to the death of no less than fifty women and children. For Gamma Kigali's winning bet, he collected on the mother lode of caches thirteen cartons of cigarettes, light laundry duty for the next three months, a 2006 Hustler Magazine with

adult video starlet of the year, Jenna Haze on the cover, two extra woolen blankets for the cold nights and extra portions at every meal, which he never missed. Aside from this day being the day of Gamma's tremendous victory, it was also the fifteenth anniversary of the massacre at Nyarubuye Catholic Church and Papa Jo's mind was occupied as he turned in his old rags.

Time for morning count had arrived, and Papa Jo rose from his uncomfortable area of prayer stretched again in his eight by ten foot cell and stepped to the front of his bunk along with Tom to await the bars to open. Gikungo Prison adopted the bunk-bed system in 2003 to accommodate the overwhelming increase of prisoners due to convicted prisoners from the war crime tribunal and in April of 2009, one thousand two hundred fifty four prisoners call Gikungo prison home and all lined up in front of the bunks, exactly at 7:30 a.m. Papa Jo had come to like his cellmate Tom over their past three years together. Tom was a stocky plump kid of no more than nineteen years old. He was

the sole provider for his family after his parents died of old age leaving him in charge of his younger sisters five and eleven. Without a job or any other means to afford to feed his family, he went into a general store one fall afternoon and stole twenty-five Rwandan Francs worth of groceries from the store to feed his sisters who had not eaten in nearly a week. He was successful in getting the much-needed groceries to his sisters before being apprehended by the police. Because the general store, which sold not only groceries but also toiletries and other household goods, also acted as the town's local post office, Tom was charged with a federal crime, robbing a post office rather than just petty theft. As a result, he was sentenced to six years to be served in the maximum-security prison in Gikungo. He was a model prisoner and never spoke out of line and respected the guards. This good behavior prompted the guards to help him out in whatever way he needed. His family back home was taken care of and Tom even finished his education in the short time he had been here. However,

like most other prisoners in Gikungo he longed to be back in the real world and reunited with his family. The bars opened and prisoners two to each cell filed out of their holding areas. After one thousand two hundred fifty four numbers were called out, the prisoners formed two parallel lines and walked one pace at a time in unison to the dining facility (DFAC). Papa Jo often envisioned these prisoners being transformed into God's army marching two by two to the battle of Armageddon, their feet shod with the gospel of peace, armed with the sharpness of a double bladed sword, the old and new testaments. He knew this crowd was filled with the most violent sinners Rwanda had ever seen, but was comforted by the thought of Jesus Christ's own genealogy. The genealogy was filled with liars, harlots, thieves, and beggars and from that ragged pack of vagabonds comes God's only begotten son reassuring Papa Jo that God has his own plans and can use anyone for his divine purpose. God had used Rahab a harlot from Jericho, giving her warning to leave the city before he destroyed it brick by brick leaving

Rahab as the only survivor. God had used Moabites whom were believed to be unholy and unclean in the direct line of Christ and this thought brought Papa Jo great joy as he filed out to the dining facility with the other prisoners.

Papa Jo grabbed his tray and it was filled with turkey sausages, powdered eggs, sweet bread and oatmeal. The meal was complimented by a plastic cup filled with Gikungo prison's homemade apple juice. The juice was made with special enzymes that when combined with the ingredients from the rest of the meal was designed to make the prisoners feces whole and regular. Beside the turkey sausage that was served in place of regular sausage because about one fourth of the prison population is Muslim and does not consume pork, Gikungo prison adopted a strict recycling policy to help save on administration costs. This recycling consisted of all paper products, plastics, wasted foods, and old prison uniforms, cottons including blankets, tattered shoelaces, shoe inserts and the soles of the shoes themselves. The ingredients of the

daily meals are designed to take recycling to the next level as their purpose is to make prisoners regular and when they defecate they all do so in specially regulated containers used to collect the feces which is then either used as organic fertilizer for all the prison gardens which grow 100% of the vegetables for not only the prison but also for the city of Gikungo. The specimens are also collected and run through an elaborate methane gas collector, which processes all of the gases out of the feces and runs it through generators and produces fuel, which is used to heat Gikungo prison year round. In this way, prisoners feel as though they are truly giving back to the community as this collection of feces is completely voluntarily and the majority of the prison population partakes in it. The garden grows abundantly, the prison produces ample heat and the turkey sausage, powdered eggs, sweet bread, oatmeal and apple juice is always delicious.

Papa Jo nibbled on his eggs but his focus was not solely on his breakfast, it had been fifteen years

since the events at Nyarubuye Catholic Church and his mind was not only occupied with the events of that day but also with the finishing of the letter he had started writing his youngest girl Wanda. He had promised to tell her everything that had happened and he just did not know the best way in which to do that. He had sat down all day the previous day and written the history of hostilities between the Hutus and Tutsis. He explained the propaganda behind the Hutu Ten Commandments and had even told her the history of his beloved church, but those had all been easy tasks in which to describe and now Papa Jo was getting to the more difficult parts of his story. He still needed to tell Wanda about the War Crime Tribunal of 2000 and about his trial and conviction and he needed to tell her the hardest part of all about his involvement in the massacre at Nyarubuye. He worried about being able to finish these tasks today or if he should write half today and then leave the finale for tomorrow. He worried how Wanda would handle the news of the massacre. He knew it to be graphic and vivid in

nature, his involvement had given himself nightmares, and he did not wish to pass along those nightmares to Wanda. Would he choose to tell her of the events but leave the more graphic parts out? Alternatively, would he throw caution to the wind and tell her the entire story as he had promised her? He finished his eggs as he contemplated these important decisions.

The prison commissary was open to all prisoners who were in need of extra paper for letter writing, pens, pencils, prison uniforms, dental hygiene products and the occasional hard candy. Papa Jo walked into the commissary and spoke with Llewellyn the store attendant. Father spoke softly of his need for both writing paper and a new prison uniform that fit his body. He was aware of the running wager pool on exactly when he would break down and gets a new uniform and he did not want what he viewed as an earthly pleasure to benefit anyone. He did not agree with the gambling that was going on and did not want any part of it. Llewellyn a fellow prisoner however, took a small fee from Gamma Kigali's winning stake for

alerting the masses of the father's decision. Gamma was more than happy to pay this small fee, as he knew Llewellyn had special abilities to have prisoner's commissary rights revoked and therefore he was a well-respected man and a feared man, far from the benefits prison has brought him. Papa Jo accepted the new uniform and made a mental note to pray for a change in Llewellyn's heart.

With a new uniform and the fifteen-year anniversary of the Nyarubuye Catholic Church Massacre looming, Papa Jo headed for the prison chapel where he was scheduled to deliver a memorial service and candle light vigil. He had prayed for guidance in what words he would say about the events. He was aware of his audience and knew of many of their guilt, he wanted to pray not only for their forgiveness but also for his own, but the story he would tell them would be greatly different than the story he would tell Wanda, for she was an innocent and needed to know the truth. With his fellow prisoners, he had decided to remind everyone of the horrific day and pray for the victim's souls and

the forgiveness of the perpetrators. Word about Papa Jo's new clothes spread quickly throughout the prison and therefore the prison chapel filled rather quickly. "Father use these earthly pleasures and the perversion of this crowd who have filed into your house with impure intentions for your purpose let them here and be moved by your unlimited love let them hear of your son and his sacrifice on the cross for all men's souls," Papa Jo thought.

The chapel filled and Papa Jo saw Tom in the middle row and smiled a faint smile at him, he also saw Llewellyn and Gamma Kigali sitting together joking about Gamma's winnings. Papa Jo took solace knowing Tom his cellmate did not take part in the lottery. He was extremely taken by the boy and thought that he would develop into a powerful disciple of Christ. This joyful thought filled him, as he stood up from his chair adjacent to the pulpit and stood behind it placing his well-worn King James Bible on the oak stand as he adjusted the singular microphone and addressed the crowd.

"My fellow inmates and brothers in Christ we are gathered here today in Gikungo Prison Chapel to remember a horrible tragedy that happened fifteen years ago today and more importantly we are here today to hear the word of God and to accept his word for us. And so I would like to ask you all to join me in opening today's service with a prayer so that we may first bring glory to God so that he may bless us in everything we do and forgive us the terrible sins we have committed against our countrymen. Oh heavenly father we just come to you today to edify each other and bring glory to you. We strive to please you and do your will and we ask that you come into each one of our hearts and heal us. As your servant Lord, I have made mistakes and have committed terrible acts and I ask that you give me the strength to not only forgive those around me but also the ability to forgive myself. I ask that you give me the strength to deliver the message that you would have us here today and allow that message to resonate with everyone who would listen. Allow your audience to become powerful beacons

for you Lord so that we may win over souls for your army as it goes marching onto war against Satan and his army of darkness. We ask all of this in your son's precious holy name. Amen.

Now fifteen years ago Rwanda was thrown into the grips of genocide when the Hutus massacred over one million Tutsis. These are the facts and whether we took part in the massacres or stood by and allowed them to happen, we are all sinners and all have blood on our hands. The complacency of the rest of the world to stand by and doing nothing while over one million innocent people were slaughtered is irreprehensible and disturbing at best and they too shall have to answer to our Lord almighty for their lack of action. The genocide was wide spread and was carried out by a surprisingly large amount of people. Neighbors killed neighbors, teachers slaughtered students, and yes, priests killed their parishioners in the fastest and most methodical genocide of the twentieth century. A fifty-eight-year-old grandfather of eighteen grandchildren reportedly took part in the killing of

several children in a nursery. You cannot make this stuff up and no one has been able to account for exactly what came over us during those one hundred days of darkness. I have offered the explanation that Satan himself completely took over me on that day fifteen years ago as he drove my actions and manipulated my mind to murder. No explanation can change the past or bring back the victims of these terrible events. Over twenty thousand people are believed to have taken refuge in the church at Nyarubuye and only forty-two that I know of survived the massacre. We must pray for all of those souls who never accepted Christ before they died. The people who were not given the opportunity to make a deathbed confessional for their fate in eternity is far worse and far greater than any tragedy bestowed upon them on this earth. We must also pray for forgiveness from the people who lived and passed on the story of what happened. It is said that the victors write history, but in this case, history is passed on by the vacant expressions of the dead. The dead have spoken and the

world is finally listening. So today in remembrance of all those victims whose voices are now being heard, we will all light a candle and have a moment of silence. I shall light my candle with the eternal burning flame of Christ and pass it along to the first person of the first row I would ask that he pass the flame to the next person and so on and so on until everyone in the room has a well-lit candle. I would also ask that you maintain your silence until after all candles have been lit after which I will say a short prayer in remembrance of all those aforementioned people before I dismiss you for the rest of you day's events. I would also leave the alter open for any who wish to come forward and pray directly to God. I would encourage this for God hears all prayers and we do not want to wait till the last moment to accept Christ into our hearts for he comes like a thief in the night and no man knows when the master of the house cometh."

Papa Jo lifted his candle to the centerpiece positioned on a table next to the oak pulpit on stage. There were three candles representing the trinity and

Papa Jo held his candle to the center flame and whispered in the name of the father the son and the holy ghost and walked down three stairs to the first person in the first row and held his candle to that of the prisoners and said peace be with you.

The light of the candle spread as a wave taking four minutes to encapsulate the entire chapel, it would be as Nineveh caught up in fire and brimstone if Jonah had his way. He did not have his way for the Ninevehites repented of their sins and were saved from what Jonah thought was an assured destruction. Papa Jo was hoping for the same effect as the candle light illuminated the chapel he held the hope that the light would illuminate men's souls. He waited an additional two minutes for the seriousness of the moment to set in, the crackle of the fire burning the wicks of the candles could be heard over the silence.

He glanced down and saw a number of people with their heads buried in their hands and they lay on the ground below the pulpit. Some were whispering, all were crying and Papa Jo later recorded six prisoners

reporting personal salvation. He praised God and lifted his arms to the sky.

“God said let there be light and there was. You see in the book of James the Angels rejoiced in song and that song was so pleasing to the Lord that He got in a creating mood, and that song lasted six days and in those six days God created the heavens and the earth. God was so inspired and so happy at the song that the angels sang for him he created something so wonderful as the heavens and the earth. God created man in his own image and he held man above the angels as his favorite creation. Man was created with the sole purpose of praising God but ever since the original corruption of man in Eden by the mighty serpent, man has held himself above God and has not praised God as he was intended to be praised. If God was so inspired by the angels a lesser creation that he created the heavens and the earth, imagine what he would be inspired to do if his favorite creation were to praise him and sing to him as we were intended. The new kingdom of heaven would be built right here on

earth with our lord and savior Jesus Christ as our divine ruler and king and all of our names would be etched in the golden book of life as we lay jewels by his feet and are presented with crowns of our own for we are all kings. All these things are already promised if we but lift up our heart, voices, and minds and praise him. Our prayers please him and that my friends are what we were created for and must be our only purpose. Heavenly father we ask that you come into our hearts and completely take over our spirits and give us the power to praise you the way that we should praise you. Give us the power to be restored to your bosom lord as you swaddle us and take us under your care. We are sorry we have corrupted your purpose with our own agenda and have poisoned life with death. We have placed ourselves above you God and have played God by ending life before your divine plan. Moreover, some of us have believed our sins too great that they are above your forgiveness. We ask that you forgive us lord and give us the strength to forgive ourselves. We

ask this in your son's holy name. Amen. Thank you my brothers. Have a blessed day and go in peace."

The masses filed out in a less joking manner than when they filed in and Papa Jo stayed behind several minutes to answer all questions about God. He turned away three parishioners with questions about the lottery accusing him of being in on it and taking kickbacks from Gamma Kigali. One prisoner asked if Jesus was really a carpenter and if God took a special liking to men who work with their hands. Another prisoner inquired about the nature and requirements of seminary and becoming an ordained minister for the Catholic Church. Finally, a prisoner inquired as to whether or not Rwanda was the New Babylon spoken of in the book of Revelations. To this question, Papa Jo and his inquirer talked at great length.

With the remnants of the prisoners filing out of the chapel Papa Jo wrapped his King James Bible in its cloth carrying case, extinguished all the candles still lit throughout the room and exited the sanctuary returning to his cell.

He placed his bible down on the edge of the desk that lay flush against the wall and reached up underneath his pillow and grabbed a thrice folded stack of papers all held together by the three folds and a newly purchased black ink pen from his commissary sack. It was lunchtime, all of the prisoners fresh out of chapel were gorging themselves on the prisons largest feast, and Papa Jo took advantage of what promised to be at least an hour of solitude to delve him back into the letter he was writing to Wanda. How he longed to have just the right words to explain his action on that terrible morning in a way that would not be too harsh but also in a way that Wanda would understand. The young were so impressionable and he worried about the state of her mental health if she were to read about the full extent of the killing. In the last part of his letter, he had promised to tell her about his capture and about the war crime tribunal, so he would keep his promise and start there. He sat down at the desk,

pulled his chair in as to have correct posture for his rigorous test and began to write.

My Dearest Wanda,

I trust you waited at least one night to finish the letter as I asked you to do, for the next two parts of the letter are sure to be grueling and emotionally taxing for the both of us. Just as a reminder, in the last part, I told you about the history of the hostilities between the two factions the Hutus and the Tutsis and it has certainly been a very bloody one. I also told you about the propaganda behind the Hutu Ten Commandments and the tremendous popularity behind the genocide of fifteen years ago. I told you of the history of my beloved church in Nyarubuye and of its build up and construction to my being ordained as the minister there. I told you about the appointing of nuns and of the building of the school and convent and I told you how I had escaped the country after the genocide was over and how I lived among the victims in a refugee camp just across the Tanzanian border. I told you how I loved to ride

my chariot of fire my Aerospace Streamline glider and how the residents of the camp recognized me and set up a trap to capture me. I rode into that trap happily, ready to minister and witness for God and how the trap was sprung and the officials apprehended me, and that dear Wanda is where this part of the letter shall pick up. First, much in the same way the first part of the letter started, I would like to open this part with a prayer to our heavenly father and ask that he watch over this letter and allow open communication through his love.

Oh heavenly father we just come to you today to praise your holy name and to worship you as you want us to worship you. We ask that you illuminate all truth through this letter and help block out all the lies with darkness. Change the hearts of man who would willingly deceive others trying to take children away from you dear lord. Open Wanda's heart to your message lord and allow her to have full understanding through this letter. I ask all of this in your son's precious holy name. Amen.

As I said before there was a terrible outbreak of malaria or mosquito sickness as some may call it in the refugee camp and I longed so very badly to be restored in the eyes of my lord and savior by ministering to the sick and helping them. Therefore, I rode my beautiful bike to the corner of the camp, there as I previously stated the Rwandan patriotic front in conjunction with Belgian police arrested me, and charged me with committing war crimes.

The arrest actually came without surprise to me as in my heart of hearts I longed to be apprehended. I wanted to be caught and punished for my crime. I too Wanda thought that my crime was too great for God to forgive and so my heart suffered because God hardened my heart and would not allow me to forgive myself until I learned that nothing is above him. I had to bury my pride and so after nearly six years of living on the run with tremendous guilt I breathed a big gulp of fresh air as I was taken in to custody.

I fully expected the matter to be handled locally in Kigali as it was surely only a Rwandan matter and

at the time, the rest of the world seemed unconcerned about putting an end to the senseless killing. In this, I could not have been more wrong. It seems as though the world indeed did not care about the killings while they were happening, but after nearly one and half million lay slaughtered in the streets the world need to appease their conscience and hold someone accountable.

Full investigations were launched to discover which Hutus had taken part in the massacres and which Hutus just stood innocently by. Discovering one time genocidaires hiding amongst their victims proved particularly difficult as they often fled into other neighboring countries to avoid prosecution or sometimes even sneak back into Rwanda, closer to harm further away from danger was a motto adopted by many. Many fled into war torn Congo and helped to overthrow an already unstable government, some fled into Tanzania and Burundi while others ran to the safe havens of Kenya and Ethiopia. The vast distance these criminals had spread out made it particularly

difficult to capture them, and if you have watched the news recently in the past year or so they finally caught and tried Major Denisso after fourteen years of being on the run, and so you see Wanda, so many people took part in the killings whether willingly or through coercion that the United Nations War Crime Investigation Committee had trouble tracking them all down.

As I mentioned I was relatively easy to capture for many people recognized me from the church and at least one woman was able to describe in detail my actions there. In addition, when I was read my rights I waved them for I no longer had anything to hide and I wanted the entire world to know of my actions. I was taken from the camp in Tanzania back across the Rwandan border, over the mountains and into the heart of Kigali where I was joined by hundreds of other genocidaires where we were to be flown from Kigali, Rwanda to Brussels, Belgium. Several of the genocidaires looked nervous and apprehensive as though their last moments on this Earth were at hand and they

were faced with the task of confessing to a higher power or suffering the ultimate consequences. Despite the apprehension and the overall nature of the flight with all the potential war criminals on board, the flight was not without all of the earthly comforts, flight attendants serving soft drinks and little packets of nuts. They passed out pillows and warm cotton blankets and treated the plane as though it were a normal flight booked with paying customers, and although I was not yet able to forgive myself for what I had done, after being caught and placed on the plane I was able to sleep the best sleep I had in years. My head hit the pillow as I wrapped myself in the cotton blanket and I fell into a deep slumber.

The flight was long and without incident as there were armed guards every ten feet or so and no one dared to try anything. After twelve hours aboard Air Kigali flight 687, we touched down at Brussels International Airport and were swarmed by the international press all holding their microphones suspended at the end of long poles as they shoved them

in our faces eager to get even a word from the suspected killers' mouths. Most genocidaires cried like a baby, some bulked up their shoulders in an attempt to appear macho and some covered their face with their hands as to not be seen by the press. I myself said four words, "His judgment has cometh." The press ate that phrase for breakfast as those four lines were printed in the top headlines for different newspapers in forty-two different metropolitan areas across the world. "Killers brought To Justice" was also written in many papers. It was not a circus in my opinion but all of our wicked deeds finally coming to bare. I had planted a seed of terror back in 1994 and finally in 2000, it had blossomed and the rest of the world was finally devouring the fruit. The fruit albeit was bitter and hard to swallow but they ate it up with a ravenous ability that matched the mob mentality of the Roman Coliseums.

The press pushed and the authorities pushed back until all of the suspects including myself were piled away into transportation vehicles that would carry us

to United Nations headquarters and the home of the war crime tribunal. I expected years of incarceration before the trial would even start, but the world demanded answers and two hundred forty seven genocidaires were brought to trial in the spring of 2000.

I thought the white land rover transportation vehicles were reasonably comfortable with padded bench chairs and plenty of room for twelve. Ten prisoners and two guards poured into each land rover and formed a convoy of vehicles thirty trucks long. The press followed closely behind in their news vans before being left behind the silver chain length fence restricting their access. The photographers jumped out of their vans and shot rolls of film from their high-powered telephonic lens cameras leaving nothing to chance as they snapped their shots and collected their paychecks. The roads in Brussels were smooth and paved completely void of holes unlike the terribly bumpy rock filled dirt roads of Kibungo and it almost felt as though I was floating upon a cloud as we rode the

twenty-seven kilometer journey to the United Nations headquarters and home of the war crime tribunal.

Europe is a great place of culture and the people in Brussels and all over Belgium is terrifically wonderful, polite and hospitable always ready to welcome you into their homes as one of the family, and I highly recommend you visit someday if you should be given the opportunity. I also thought it a bit ironic that the war crime tribunal was to take place in Belgium the one time ruler of Rwanda and if you will remember Wanda, it was Belgium that instituted the mandatory racial identification cards in Rwanda one of the factors leading to racial inequality and eventually the genocide. The judge and jury along with the rest of the world sat in judgment in Belgium, when it was the colonial rule of the Belgians that brought about the whole thing. How dare they hold the war crime tribunal there of all places? Hypocrites is what they are Wanda.

As the transportation vehicles pulled into headquarters and the photographers snapped their

photos, the prisoners were taken off the vehicles two by two and led to central processing and the holding cells where we would all be held for the duration of the trial until we were either released or sentenced and transferred to another prison.

The cells in the Belgian prisons put Gikungo prison's cells to shame. They are hardly cells really but moreover luxurious well furnished dorm room suites with four rooms making up each suite with two prisoners to each room and two rest rooms per suite along with common areas such as a communal living space for a television and the like and a kitchen area for meals to be prepared and each suite had prison bars over the windows preventing escape complete with two guards guarding the entrance to the suite around the clock. Such comforts Wanda especially for a prison are completely uncalled for. Prisoners cannot be expected to learn from their mistakes when surrounded by such earthly comforts. Even here at Gikungo, we have far far too much stuff that we certainly can live without and though I would go as far to say many of

the prisoners at Gikungo have been rehabilitated or have found the lord, many more would see the light of God if stripped of all unnecessary items. You can see this work with the nuns at Nyarubuye Catholic Church as they live lives of simplicity and therefore live a closer life with god through hard work and sacrifice. Simplicity young Wanda is a virtue no longer taught to our youth and therefore not remembered when we are older. The prison in Brussels does not even go through the trouble of delousing the prisoners like Gikungo does, a thick powdery paste is shot out of a hose at you killing all bugs and outside parasites such as crabs and lice, when I was deloused at Gikungo I was warned to keep my eyes firmly shut unless I should want to join Oedipus in blindness. But at this suite, the Hilton of all prisons in Brussels, the delousing process does not even take place so in this way though the rooms are as paradise, the genocidaires brought with them and contaminated the rooms with exotic bugs from Rwanda and all around Africa. Thank God, for

small miracles I did not have this bug problem and was very careful to keep my possessions and body clean.

I was assigned a French public attorney named Gregoire Bonaparte and though he was, short, French, and had a self-proclaimed love for horses, he assured me on several occasions that he was not related to Napoleon Bonaparte the one time ruler of France. Gregoire had recently graduated law school from the University of Lyon and volunteered as a public defender for the war crime tribunal in the interest of enhancing his resume for future employment. He had a pale complexion white and pasty and wore thick bifocals on his nose as he looked always over his glasses as he read his legal documents. I often wondered if he even needed those glasses because it seemed as though he almost never looked through them. He loved to play a card game called bridge and we always played together when he questioned and counseled me in my room and I grew greatly accustomed to his company and much later friendship as today he still visits me in Gikungo regularly. We talked a

great deal about my involvement in the massacre and the exact crimes I was being charged with and the potential sentences I could get if found guilty. He tried to convince me that my actions were not my own based on my testimony of my actions that I told him; he insisted that I could plead not guilty for reason of insanity or mental defect. He kept claiming that I was caught up in the movement and given the choice to kill or die and I did what anyone would do and I killed, regardless of his arguments and countless efforts to persuade me, and despite the possibility of the firing squad in my future, I insisted on pleading guilty. Of course, his claim that I could have gotten off for reasons of temporary insanity unfortunately were true ones. Several genocidaires, prisoners that murdered innocents, and one prisoner known as the Butcher of Kigali plead not guilty for reasons of temporary insanity and were found not guilty by the war crime tribunal jury. The Butcher of Kigali confessed to killing at least sixty-eight men, women and children citing the story of Cain, Able and Seth.

He claimed that God demanded from him a large offering, an offering so great that it would be pleasing to his site and so the Butcher of Kigali a Hutu or Cain as I shall call him saw his brothers the Tutsis or Able for the purposes of my story, had given God a mighty offering of animals and vegetables, always the first and last of their crops and so the Butcher of Kigali grew incredibly jealous of his brother the Tutsi's offering saying what is my offering in the eyes of the lord when compared to the Tutsi's offering and so the Butcher set out to kill the Tutsis his brothers and offering them up to the lord as his own offering believing that this mighty offering would indeed be pleasing to the lord. The Butcher finished his argument by saying he had fulfilled God's purpose. He was Cain and killed his brother Able and so the Tutsis were dead and the Hutus were banished from the world for the crime in this way, the Twas or Seth, God's chosen line and direct ancestry of Christ was restored to power and allowed to return to the old ways of worship. In addition, of

course Wanda you must be familiar with the story of Cain Able and Seth by now. Cain and Able were told by God to go and get an offering that was pleasing to him and so Able offered up his hard work and sacrificed all of his animals and everything he had trusting that the lord would provide everything he needed and Cain seeing Abel's offering grew jealous and set to bring an even better offering to the lord and so Cain sacrificed his own brother in an act of fratricide and offered him up to the lord and God saw the offering as an abomination and banished Cain and all of his offspring to parish. This left Adam and Eve's third son Seth left to carry on the direct line from Adam to Abraham and Abraham to King David and King David to the baby born of a virgin and king of Kings Jesus. You can see Wanda the terrible perversion of scripture the Butcher of Kigali used in order to serve his own purposes and get him acquitted. The jury found him not guilty for reasons of insanity and sentenced him to ninety days in a mental institution under the medical attention of skilled psychiatrists. His sentence could

be extended if the doctors deemed it necessary for his mental well-being, but can you imagine he was not even given one day per victim. He confessed to killing at least sixty-eight people and was sentenced only to ninety days in a mental hospital. What a terrible example of how operates' law is corrupted and flawed. His true judgments awaits and no amount of storytelling will save him from the eternal damnation that awaits him if he has not accepted Jesus and asked for his forgiveness.

As I said I had more than one opportunity to take Gregoire Bonaparte's advice and plead not guilty for reasons of insanity, but I knew of my guilt and I knew of the reasons I partook in the massacre, but I was determined not to blame anyone else besides myself for my own actions. There were other driving forces and powers at work that day fifteen years ago and I promise I shall get to that in due time, but first I must finish telling you of the war crime tribunal and of my trial and sentencing and of my first days and adjustment at Gikungo prison.

Gregoire and I went before the war crime tribunal in July 2000. The weather was particularly cooperative during that time and I truly feel as though God was shining down his light at me and finally allowing me to forgive myself and ask forgiveness for my crimes. Five genocidaires, Hidalgo Gugamma, Robert Juthicara, Cyrille Lombossaire, Xavier Stevenson and I Father Habyarimana Kyran were allotted that weekly time in July to go before the tribunal for our trial. I had gotten to know these four men fairly well as room assignments were allocated in accordance with when each individual trial was to be held. The five of us were allotted the second week in July and thus bunked together in the same suite. The other three members of our suite were scheduled for the week following us and so the war crime tribunal and the trials of better than two hundred genocidaires went smoothly. Hidalgo Gugamma had been an openly boisterous member of the Interhamawe army and gloated to all who would listen about all the dirty Tutsi cockroaches he had killed. He spoke to everyone preaching the upcoming rise of

the mighty Hutus who would regain power and finish the job they had started in 1994. Robert Juthicara also as a member of the Interhamawe army used to capture Tutsis alive only to release them and set them free in known mine fields threatening them under gun fire to move forward into the danger zone, he then would watch in anticipation as his victims stepped on the surprises left for them, Tutsis who made it more than two hundred feet into his mine field fell victim to his gun fire as he took no chances in a Tutsi escaping and allowing it to reproduce because where you can see one Tutsi there are a thousand hiding in trees ready to pounce that you do not see. Cyrille Lombossaire and Xavier Stevenson were two normal teenage boys at the time of the killings and loved to play soccer and run about with their friends. Both were taken from their families and forced to fight in the genocide against the Tutsis as boy soldiers under threat that if they did not participate in the Hutu cause both they and their families would be slaughtered it as if they were Tutsi. Therefore, Cyrille and Xavier were given large

amounts of drugs, which helped them be proficient killers too high to have a conscience. Therefore, the five of us went before the council to present our cases and learn of our fates.

There was a panel of six judges, an American judge with a long jaw and short neck, a Chinese judge with no forehead and a fat face, an English judge with a handlebar mustache and rosy cheeks , a French judge with wide flaring nostrils and a thin mouth, an Israeli judge with an oversized Star of David religious medallion on the outside of his robes and a plain black yam mica, and a Russian judge with craters on his face from a bad case of childhood acne, presided over the court room. The six judges, representing the six countries and permanent members of the United Nations, France, England, Russia, China, Israel and the United States took center stage of what appeared to be an enclosed space surrounded by several circles, each circle raised slightly above the previous one for maximum audio capabilities. On these circles were placed tables at which sat dignitaries

and representatives of one-hundred-eighty-eight countries and visiting members of the United Nations with only the six permanent members allowed to vote. Behind the visiting members of the United Nations were invited guests and members of the world press given special and exclusive access to the court rooms provided they come without any audio or video recording equipment. Behind the invited guests and the world press, raised twenty feet in the air, enclosed in large glass booths are foreign language translators, translating the four official languages of the United Nations, English, French, Chinese and Russian, into hundreds of different languages for the observing audience as each person in the crowd including the six judges wore an ear piece from which they heard deliberations translated into their native tongue. I was greatly inspired by this because the bible speaks of people speaking in tongues and the message being useless unless people are able to understand the message and act upon it, but with this the truth and light is exposed, people are speaking in

one tongue and others are hearing it as though it were spoken in their own language. One of the many miracles God has brought to man.

The English judge with the handlebar mustache and rosy cheeks brought his gavel down on a block of wood three times and the circus as if atmosphere of wild animals on display came to a humbling hush. The American judge with the long jaw and short neck began to speak, "The United Nations War Crime Tribunal of the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 is now in session with Honorable Judges Boyles, Chen, David, Klitchko, Renier, and Smith presiding. You all will be allowed to come forward and make up to a fifteen minute statement defending your actions and if this court should deem it necessary at the end of those fifteen minutes you shall be granted additional time if appropriate. You may also wave your right to a statement and allow an attorney to speak on your behalf if you should wish, or to enter a plea of guilty and choose to omit a statement on your own behalf all together."

I thought this was an obvious thing that every must know, but I guess Wanda they are required to make sure that prisoners know and are aware of their rights. I also did not understand why anyone would not choose to make a statement, but I guess people chose to remain silent when their time came to speak, no one in our group of five remained silent even the ones that plead guilty. You must understand Wanda it has been quite some time since the trial and I have forgotten what was said word for word and by which prisoner, but I shall attempt to recreate the conversations of each case and situation so that you may get a true sense of exactly what the tribunal was like.

Hidalgo Gugamma went first before the judges and proclaimed that God's chosen people the Hutus would come into power once more and would smite down all the blasphemers and man's law would hold no power over them for they would be rewarded for all their efforts before the almighty and God would restore his kingdom upon this earth and establish the Hutus as leaders of

all. He stood up proudly and ripped off his shirt to expose his tattooed body reading HUTU POWER DEATH TO TUTSIS before being restrained by the court bailiffs and muscled so that the audience could no longer hear his words. "Well it is clear Mr. Gugamma that you represent the epitome of what Hutu hatred for Tutsis truly is and if there were a Tutsi present in this court room and you were given the opportunity to inflict bodily harm on him you would stop at nothing to do so, and so it is clear to this court that the best way for your rehabilitation would be to spend time in a prison for your actions and be subjected to therapy at which you can attend and get serious help with some of your more defective and genocidal thoughts so this courts finds you guilty and sentences you to no more than fifteen years and no less than six years to be spent in Gikungo Maximum Security Prison in Gikungo, Rwanda. I have faith Mr. Gugamma that you can change your ways and see the light."

Hidalgo was taken out of the courtroom because despite being restrained he was still a distraction to

the proceedings and so once he was taken away Robert Juthicara turn came and he was civil about how he went about presenting his case. You remember Wanda that it was Juthicara that set free Tutsis about live land mines for his own pleasures and laughed as they expired and would you be surprised that he used the most peculiar of arguments for his defense. He stood up, was very cordial and polite towards the six judges, and presented the case of a reformed and changed man who was deeply sorry for his actions. He said that he had developed a blood lust and desired to see the streets littered with corpses and he did not care who they victims were. Juthicara claimed that both of his parents were killed when he was a young child, he had witnessed their deaths, and it had a terrible effect on him and how he developed as a young man. He claimed that he had went through counseling voluntarily previous to his capture and even provided evidence signed by a clinical physician that he was on his way to recovery and indeed was a changed man. He told the courts that he knows what he did was wrong,

there is no excuse to justify his actions, and he should be placed in prison so that his crimes may deter future assailants. In addition, would you believe Wanda that the judges were so moved by his speech and taking responsibility for his own actions that they stood and applauded his courage and sentenced him to only three years in prison? He seemed jubilant at the verdict and thanked each one of the judges personally for sentencing him and helping in his recovery. I have been told that Juthicara when released joined the Hutu party in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a major and taught young troops the values behind the Hutu commandments as they seized control of the Congolese government using his experience from Rwanda to become a more proficient killer. Justice is not always served. He told the judges exactly what they wanted to hear and so they went easy on him when considering his sentencing, he had feigned remorse and faked sorrow taking genuine steps of recovery to fool everyone as a façade so that

he may continue his killing hateful ways after his release.

Cyrille Lombossaire and Xavier Stevenson you will remember were boys taken from their homes and forced to fight as child soldiers in the genocide against the Tutsis. Not only were they forced to face to horrors of war and killing but also became addicted to opiates after the genocide was over and so the drugs took over their bodies and minds making them shadows of their once former selves. Their drug use was so rampant that they were unable to give a speech for themselves and so a public defender was provider to them at the court's expense to help present their case. The public defender knew and understood the true tragedy behind what happened to the boys. He knew they had been taking from their homes and forced to fight against their will, he knew they had only fought under threat of parental harm and under the influence of drugs and so; he stood up and made his clients' case to the Chinese judge with no forehead and the fat face. He said your honors these were but boys, young and

innocent stripped away from their mothers, fathers, and everything they knew and loved and that made them feel safe. It was not their choice. They did not choose this life for themselves and could not help what they were doing any more than we ourselves can help breathing, for if they did not partake in these terrible acts their parents and everyone they know would have been killed. They could no more kill their parents than any of us could and so your honors it is my hope that this court do the right thing and help these boys become men for God helps those that help themselves and they have tried to free themselves from their terrible addictions but have failed and so I would ask that you sentence them to mandatory rehabilitation and community service so that they may experience sober life and a community that is worth living in. In this case prison would do very little to help this rehabilitation along. They would get nothing from it and the community would gain nothing except two prisoners in a system that after this war crime tribunal will surely be overly crowded.

In addition, the Chinese judge with the short forehead and fat face agreed with the public defender wholeheartedly calling child soldiers one of the biggest tragedies the genocide brings the table, and Cyrille Lombossaire and Xavier Stevenson were sentenced to two thousand hours of community service to be served in conjunction with their successful completion of a rehabilitation program.

So many prisoner were sentenced to fifteen years and some were sentenced to ten or less, some were given community services or released all together, but despite almost a million and a half innocent people being slaughtered no one was sentenced to death. For the leaders of the genocide the world thought it best to sentence the worst genocidaires to twenty-five years and order them to seek restitution with the victims and the victim's families. Killers being forced to confront victims and historians and investigators and even school field trips, speaking on the nature of the genocide and exactly what happened, in other words, these worst of the worst were to be

put on display as museum pieces for all to admire and probe for hidden answers in the human condition. Why did they do it? How could they do? How could the rest of the world do nothing? In addition, this category young Wanda is the category that I fall into. I was one of the worst killers of all. I know what you must be thinking, that it must be terrible of me to even divide killing into different categories with one death being far worse than the next, but my crimes are indeed worse than many others that I have shared with you and because of this I was classified as one of the premier war criminals and despite my speech and my guilty plea I was sentenced to serve twenty-five years with possibility for parole or release after eighteen years.

I was allowed to gather all of my things from the suites and allowed to say goodbye to my three roommates that had not yet gone before the war crime tribunal and I was escorted back to the land rover along with several other convicted genocidaires to be

transported from Brussels back to Rwanda and ultimately Gikungo prison.

I remember the journey to the prison well because finally I felt as though God and I had become reconciled. He had a divine purpose for me and he used my terrible deeds to serve a greater purpose. I am not saying what I did was right or that God caused me to do the things I did, but God has a purpose and uses all of our actions even if they are driven by pure evil for his holy and divine purpose. I was finally on the same page as God and on my long journey to Gikungo Prison God revealed to me his greater plan for my life. He told me that I would be a witness of his love and mercy and I would share that love and mercy with the prison population and I was to share the story of God's love whenever anyone should ask me to recollect the events that happened in April of 1994 and in the back of that land rover and despite having attended seminary and having been an ordained minister for a number of years and dedicating much of my life to the service of God, I finally became born again.

I up until then had gone through the motions of religion and repeating the earthly comforts parishioners needed to hear. I knew of Jesus and I knew about the stories of salvation for those who accepted Christ as their personal savior, but I never asked Jesus to come into my heart personally and save me. I never thanked him for stretching out his arms and dying on the cross for my sins, I never asked him to love me and in the back of that land rover after years of formal bible education and after years of pretending and after being convicted for taking part in the worst genocide in the twentieth century, I accepted Christ as my personal savior and was saved. I also accepted the mission God lay before me, and thus young Wanda you have noticed this letter has been heavily laden with the truth about God's love and not just because I am a pastor, but because I made God a promise to serve him for the rest of my days and so I shall.

The first couple of days at Gikungo were the hardest, as you will hear most of the prisoners say.

The adjustment from normal civilian life able to roam free to the life of a caged prisoner is certainly a hard adjustment to make. Learning the ins and out of prison life took some getting used to and I was determined to take the task that God had just charged me with to the population of Gikungo. I found the crowd to be less than receptive for most of them shunned away from God and swore at the mention of his name, they pointed the finger at God blaming him for their own incarceration. They cursed him and turned their back on him. But for me this was no different than the times of Christ when he rode into town and performed miracles healing the sick and raising the dead, people of the old testament were just as pessimistic as the people of today and the people of the old testament were rabbis and other religious leaders and they just refused to follow him. It actually brought me great solace knowing that some of the more influential leaders were swayed for Jesus in the end such as Nicodemus. I knew there would require

some time and effort but I was not discouraged by this.

Alas young Wanda, I know you do not want to know of the inner workings of Gikungo Prison or how I go about teaching prisoners about the word of God. I know you have written for only one purpose and that is to find out how I was involved in the events at Nyarubuye Catholic Church on April 15, 1994 and from what I have told you about me being sentenced to twenty-five years and being one of the worst genocidaires you must truly be curious about what exactly I did and especially after you have read my long ramblings in this letter you must be real anxious to get to the end of it and believe me I too am anxious to finally tell the tale and be done with it, but I think one more night will be best to let everything set in and settle down, to perfectly set the scene for the events of April 15, 1994. You have trusted me and stuck with me for this long, I beg you to stay with me just one night longer, and you shall know the entire true story. As for now my friend and ever-close companion in Christ, I must

again leave you. Until tomorrow-young Wanda, I must
bid you ado.

Papa

Jo

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."~Luke 15: 3-4.

~Conclusion of Jovenal Fischers Letter/Wanda and Susan

Discuss Both Stories~

Wanda,

You have been most patient with me and for that I thank you. Words cannot begin to describe exactly how much I miss you and your mother. I too long to be a family again, but I fear that may never happen.

I have committed terrible acts, and God has delivered me to where I truly belong, Gikungo Prison. I have spent my time here, trying to repent of my actions and trying to change as many lives as possible through the power of prayer, but I fear I may be beyond God's forgiveness. I realize now that I got caught up in the excitement of the massacre. I got swept away.

How can that happen you ask? Why does a grandfather with eight grandchildren slaughter a child? Why does a man kill his neighbor whom he has known for all his life? These are all questions that may never be sufficiently answered?

Many prisoners here have told me that they were overcome by the devil. That Satan materialized here on Earth and possessed them and caused them to do his work. In part I believe that. It is the only explanation that bears any truth. Some may say that this is a refusal to accept any kind of personal responsibility for their actions or involvement. I can see this side of the argument as well. But Lucifer was once the most beautiful angel before he was cast out of Heaven and he was allowed to hold his wings above God. So you see the truly great power that he possesses. And he is perhaps the most beautiful creature one could ever see. If you think about this, he would have to be beautiful, for if he was a hideous beast who would open their doors and let him in. But

still I have received a great release at accepting personal responsibility.

That is the reason many would give for their actions, but I have another very real explanation for my own involvement which was extensive. So we come to the nexus of my story at last. Please my lovely Wanda, don't think any less of me when you read what I have to say.

I told you about the history of hostilities between Hutus and Tutsis for a reason. If you can remember my comments the Tutsis and the Hutus were both given an inheritance by their European fathers. One son the Hutus worked very hard on his father's field and did all of the right things, and his actions pleased not only his father but also Jehovah. He took great joy in carrying out all the responsibilities that his father asked of him. So when his father died he was left a large inheritance that he worked hard to protect.

His brother the Tutsis, also worked hard on his father land at one point in time, but when the father

past away, this brother took his large inheritance and he spent it away on frivolity and actions that did not benefit the farm. He squandered away all that he had learned from the father.

When the Tutsis inheritance was all but gone, he returned to the farm his father had given him and begged his Hutu brother to support him and to give him part of his well earned inheritance. In this way Wanda, after claiming wealth for many years and after squandering it away, the Tutsis have become the prodigal son returning to claim what he thinks is his. He return to his Hutu brothers and has dragged down the prosperity of the farm or in this case the whole of Rwanda.

The Bible made it very clear that if there is a splinter in your eye you must pluck it out lest ye go blind. If your arm is infected you must cut it off in order for the entire body to grow. The Tutsis, dear Wanda were that splinter and I did what I thought was right at the time to pluck that splinter out as I was commanded.

Now where I did not actual kill anyone, I did get caught up in a knife wielding frenzy where I swung wildly where I must have cut off your friend Susan's arm. I was so intoxicated with bloodlust that I do not know what came over me. Perhaps it was possession by the devil; perhaps it was lapse of judgment. Whatever it was I see now that my way of thinking was wrong.

God gave the Earth to all man to share. I helped organize the church as a sanctuary safe zone with the Interhamawe leaders and so they knew that the multitude of refugees seeking safe haven and the power of God would be at the parish. I knew that their belief in God was a powerful one and I sought to take advantage of that.

Being in here has truly saved me. I would surely have burned in a fiery torment forever if I had never been caught. I never would have repented of my sins. I never would have seen that my entire mindset of hate in blaming the Tutsis for the economic downfall of Rwanda was wrong, and I would never have learned to

call the Tutsis my brothers. Now I can do all those things through the healing power of Christ.

I know this does a poor job of explaining my one time actions and motivations and I realize that saying that I have changed may not be enough to undo all that I have done, but I would ask for your forgiveness and the forgiveness of your friend Susan.

I miss you my dear sweet Wanda. Always remember that I love you and you are in my thoughts.

Papa Jo

Wanda looked up from her letter with tears streaking down her face. She had elected to read the entire letter out loud to Susan as she had done with Mama Rhodesia's letter and she was shivering from the emotional experience. Here she was the daughter of two killers and the best friend of a survivor of the massacre they orchestrated. How had she been so naïve'.

"I'm so sorry Susan for ever doubting your story. My parents were monsters and I can see that now."

"Many people got caught up in the spirit of the movement. Maybe they really were possessed by the devil," Susan said.

"He asks you and I to forgive him. How can I ever do that when his actions have separated us? How can you ever forgive him?"

"These past years have been hard without my parents. Sometimes when I close my eyes I can see their dead faces, but over the past couple of days as you have been reading your parents letters, I have been able to sleep at night and I have been able to dream," Susan said.

"How can your dreams be good when all of this has happened to you?"

"I dream that the Nyarubuye Parish has been rebuilt and it is surrounded by beautiful gardens. The flowers in the garden are people who have chosen to come back into a new existence. The gardens are surrounded by a grove of pomegranate trees and I imagine those trees as my relatives, growing for all eternity as the delicious fruit is shared by all Hutu

and Tutsi alike. Your mother is weaving table clothes for the dinner everyone will share and your father will say a prayer binding us all in unity," Susan said.

"If you who said she will never forgive or forget what happened can forgive my parents for their actions, so to must I."

The hour grew late and the warmth of the fire radiated. Wanda and Susan had shared their last truths with each other, and had grown stronger because of it. All the deadwood had been cast upon the fire where it would continue to burn in their hearts for all time.