

Gukundana

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GUKUNDANA

by

LINDSAY VAN STONE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

Twenty years after the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, Violet Walters makes her way to the tiny village of Murumba to fulfill her dream of becoming a philanthropist. In addition to the shock of a new culture, Violet must now contend with Bret Calloway, a hardened philanthropist whose ten years at Murumba have made him less than happy about the arrival of Violet and her optimistic new perspective. Amid the mounting tension of their relationship, war looms in the background. What ensues is a testament to the transformational nature of a culture and its people.

Gukundana seeks to illuminate injustices related to civil strife and genocide from an outsider's perspective. The character of Violet acts as a stable lens from which western viewers can engage with cultural hardships very different from their own. Within this, the connection between the warring ideologies of Bret and Violet against the background of the mounting violence around them serves as another window into greater emotional engagement with themes of violence and war. Ultimately, this screenplay's mission is to bridge cultural barriers in order to endear viewers to the unity, resiliency, and power of the Rwandan people, thus sparking change within a viewing audience's surrounding community.

DEDICATION

To the people of Rwanda.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to extend hearty thanks to Pat Rushin, Peter Telep, Laurie Uttich, and Pete Ives, all of whom were absolutely crucial to the success of this screenplay. To Pat Rushin, whose patience, kindness, and guidance fortified me as writer and editor. To Peter Telep, who nurtured this screenplay at its beginning stages. To Laurie Uttich, whose heartfelt and honest approach to writing made me a more vulnerable writer. And to Pete Ives, who taught me to see a story in everything.

FADE IN:

INT. TRAIN - DAY

VIOLET WALTERS, a starry-eyed woman in her 20s, looks pensively out the window of a train.

Although the landscape beyond the window is indiscernible, her face tells us that it's like nothing she's ever seen.

She seems to be searching for something through the glass, and as the TRAIN ATTENDANT comes over to her, she is startled at his presence.

TRAIN ATTENDANT

I'm sorry to disturb you. We are having a slight delay, but will still be arriving in approximately one hour.

VIOLET

Oh, thank you.

TRAIN ATTENDANT

It's mesmerizing, isn't it? I've seen this landscape since I was a child, but it never loses its charm to me. Not even now...

VIOLET

Has it gotten worse? I was under the impression that things were dying down.

TRAIN ATTENDANT

I've heard the forces are growing more and more violent each and every day. I can only hope it doesn't mar the beauty before us any more than it already has.

VIOLET

To be honest, I'm really not as familiar with what's going on as I should be. I've either been on foot or on a train the past two weeks.

TRAIN ATTENDANT

You should have thought of that before coming here, child. Things have escalated. All you have to look at is what's in front of you to see the pain of our country before your very eyes.

She returns to looking out the window, and this time the landscape before her becomes visible. It is a vast highland with earth a startling shade of crimson.

The sun is brilliant against the horizon, a collection of oranges and rusts against patches of shrubs and brush.

As she peers closer, various points of smoke appear in the distance, rising darkly in the sky. Even closer, it becomes obvious that the areas of sparseness spotting the landscape are from fire.

Violet puts on her sunglasses and continues peering out the window. After some moments, the train jostles, and she drops them.

After a brief search, she gives up and squints outside the window, unable to see.

EXT. DESOLATE TRAIN DEPOT - DAY

Violet exits the train, inquisitively looking around as she picks up her bags and walks over to a dusty desk.

STATION MASTER, a middle-aged man prematurely wrinkled and gray, greets her with evident, almost insincere joy. He speaks English with the stilted tone of a travel guide, and it's evident the proceeding speech is well-practiced.

STATION MASTER

Why, hello, madam! It is my grand pleasure to welcome you to our slice of Africa. It is true that we do not encounter many travelers at this humble depot, so I cannot tell you how pleased I am to see you. It is always a pleasure to introduce new travelers to our lush and beautiful land, as you are a lush and beautiful woman yourself.

He produces a big, hearty laugh that has a twinge of pain in it.

Violet pauses uncomfortably and shuffles her bag to her other hand.

VIOLET

(nervous chuckle)
Uh, I'm an American working with--

STATION MASTER

American?

A beat. He is evidently taken aback by this.

STATION MASTER (CONT'D)

How long it has been since I have seen one of you! My grandfather, twenty years ago, met an American farmer trying to see if the composition of our soil was right for growing all sorts of American vegetables, although my grandfather later told me the more likely story was that the man was studying the composition of our women instead!

VIOLET

(uncomfortably)
Do you know where Murumba is?

STATION MASTER

Sorry?

VIOLET

Murumba.

STATION MASTER

I am so sorry. I do not know what you are talking about.

In a huff, she unzips her bag, letting a tightly woven mass of clothes, maps, and travel guides pop out.

STATION MASTER

You seem quite prepared!

She rummages through her bag without success.

VIOLET

Shit. Gosh, I'm sorry.

As she continues to search, looking periodically from her bags to the man, she mutters to herself.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

This is why we learn how to
pronounce the language, Violet.

As she looks toward her bag, the man's face falls. It is apparent that something is not right, and that his friendliness is a feigned mask.

Violet looks back up and squarely into the Station Master's face with a frazzled smile.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

We'll try this one more time.

(in various tones)
Um, Murumba? Murumba. Maramba. Mu-
ram-ba.

She gesticulates in various directions with a quizzical air. Station Master follows her movements with intent eyes.

VIOLET

It's somewhere in the...west?

STATION MASTER

Oh, I see!

(with a distinct accent)
Muramba. Beautiful village.

He points in the direction of an oppressively tangled mess of jungle.

STATION MASTER (CONT'D)

Three miles straight toward the sunset. Not too far, eh? My cousin lived there before he was taken by the war. Truly a beautiful village. You'll be safe there, too. Beautiful village.

Following his pointed finger with her eyes, she gives his hand a shake and picks up her bags. Heading off in the direction of the expanse, she turns her head back toward him as she yells.

VIOLET

Wonderful! Thanks for your help. I'll have worked on that pronunciation by the time I next see you!

She walks a few more steps and stops, turning around. She thinks for a moment and smiles.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Goodbye!

STATION MASTER

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Wonderful job, my young friend! It will be an honor for the village to have you. I will be praying my blessing over you and the greatest safety. Goodbye!

VIOLET

Uh, sure!

As Violet treks out toward the great expanse behind him, the station master stands taut and ready for the next train.

After she is out of viewing distance, his whole countenance falls. We see lines of tiredness on his face we only had glimpses of before.

STATION MASTER

(whispering)

I hardly know anymore, who lives
and who dies. God help her. God
help us all.

The station remains quiet and strikingly empty, save the rhythmic chanting of his prayers in Kinyarwanda.

STATION MASTER (CONT'D)

(subtitled in Kinyarwanda)

Our father, who art in heaven,
hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom
come, thy will be done...

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Violet has finished her journey and made it to the village. As she drops heavy duffel bags beside her, it stands out before her like some humble gem, a microcosm of everyday life.

The huts stand small, scattered, and numerous against the brilliant sun, and a bustle of people work, play, and scurry around in the background.

Breathing deeply, she heaves her bags back up again and moves forward.

AT THE CENTER OF THE VILLAGE

GAHIJI, a strong, wiry man of sixty or so years with the determination and energy of someone half his age, hammers away at a piece of wood. A group of women giggle around him.

Looking in her direction, he spots Violet in the distance.

He dusts off his hands on his already dusty pants and hurries along to meet her halfway.

ON THE OUTSKIRTS

Violet, seeing him, drops her bags, spent.

As he approaches, Gahiji's bouncy steps ease the nerves apparent on Violet's face. He's harmless.

GAHIJI

(extending his hand)

It is an absolute pleasure to meet you. I apologize--

He looks meekly at his dusty attire and shakes at it.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

--as it is evident that I was not expecting you today.

He laughs with great mirth, and Violet smiles widely.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

Now, let's see...

His air immediately changes to one of business. Instead of coming off as cold, the change is slightly comical, as though it's so opposite to his personality that it's impossible to take this air seriously.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

I will be acting as your guide for
the remainder of the day.

They walk back to the village together, she still
carrying her bags. He seems so intent on other things
that he doesn't notice.

VIOLET

It's so beautiful.

GAHIJI

(laughing)

You have not been around much, have
you?

VIOLET

I suppose I'm just so excited to
finally be here, you know? I've
been wanting to do humanitarian
work for ages.

GAHIJI

Humanitarian work, eh?

VIOLET

Well, yeah. I just graduated from
college and knew this was my next
step. I want to help people.

GAHIJI

When, in reality, they end up
helping you!

He chuckles, turns to her, and sees that she is still
carrying her luggage.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

Oh, you should have told me.

He clucks his tongue and heaves the bag on his shoulder with unexpected ease.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

Just the ramblings of an old fool.
Well, I can guarantee you we will
put you to good use. You will be so
busy that the very word "Muramba"
will make you tired. It does me.

He chuckles and continues on, humming a song with his eyes half-closed.

As they enter the village, a crowd of people swarm them. He rattles off something in Kinyarwanda, and they dissipate slowly, save a man and woman.

ESPÉRANCE, a sage-like woman in her mid-thirties, has all the characteristics of a mother.

OSCAR, standing quietly beside her, is a distracted young man of few words.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

I have appointed these two as the
ones who will give you greater
background on how we live. An old
man can only give you so much.
These limbs aren't as limber as
they used to be.

ESPÉRANCE

Oh please, Gaji. You're more limber
than the rest of us. Don't be
foolish.

GAHIJI

(bashful)

Ahem...yes, as I stated, Oscar will give you a tour of the village and teach you how to not fear what I'm sure is a terrain you are very unused to.

Oscar looks around him, not paying much attention.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

Do not mind if Oscar doesn't talk so much. He has his mind on greater things.

OSCAR

(still looking away)

My mind, old man, is focused on the fact that your grandson is playing near the fire.

Gahiji looks over, throws panicked hands in the air, and scoots after him, cooing and yelling frantically for the child to come toward him.

He catches up to the boy and grabs him, playfully spanking the toddler's butt and producing words of correction lovingly as he throws him in the air.

ESPÉRANCE

(to Violet)

I am very glad to meet you. I'm Espérance. We shall be friends, I think.

INT. VIOLET'S TENT - LATER

Violet drags her two heavy bags into a sparsely and haphazardly constructed canvas tent.

She seems confused and overwhelmed by the chaotic newness around her, and stands helplessly as villager after villager shuffles in and out of the tent with ration boxes.

Gahiji gives orders to the troupe in Kinyarwanda to get everything settled and situated. He ushers everyone out and stands satisfied next to Violet, looking at the finished product.

Sensing how overwhelmed she is, he nudges her with his shoulder.

GAHIJI

Well, that is that, eh? I will allow you to get settled now. I would be honored to assist you in any way I can.

VIOLET

Thank you.

Gahiji stops on his way out, looking outside the tent.

GAHIJI

Regardless of what anyone says, it is good that you are here. Your eyes have something in them that I now only see in our village's children. Do not forget this. Recognize that you are young, but do not burden your heart for it.

Gahiji exits, the back of his pants shaking powdery dust behind him.

Violet heaves two bags on her bed and considers the words that we're spoken to her.

As she begins unpacking, various villagers continue to filter in and out with the ration boxes, now not paying much attention to her.

BRET CALLOWAY enters, a thirty-something tough guy. He has the hardened, weathered look of someone who has lived among these people for a long time, and flaunts this authority with each and every move he makes.

Bret yells something at a couple villagers in Kinyarwanda as he double-takes Violet. He continues to stare at her coolly as he finishes his dialogue with the villagers. An English-speaking VILLAGER pulls him aside.

VILLAGER

I found out about that thing you were looking into.

BRET

Good. We'll need to set up a time to talk about it.

The villager has almost exited when Bret stops him with a couple of words in Kinyarwanda.

BRET (CONT'D)

I would like to remind you of how important it is that this stays between you and me for now. Ha, we both know you don't need that wife of yours worrying over it!

VILLAGER

(laughing)
God knows! She abuses me enough when she is not with child.

He pats the villager on the back and all save Bret take their leave. Ignoring Violet, he brings a couple of rations in from outside and places them in a heap on the other side of the tent.

Violet, up until now continually looking over to see if he's going to acknowledge her and introduce himself, turns around and faces him.

VIOLET

Hi, I don't believe I've--

BRET

(continuing to work)

Look, let's not start this. I'm Bret, and you're, *unfortunately*, the inexperienced girl who took mommy and daddy's money to lug a shitload of bags to Rwanda and play at being a volunteer.

VIOLET

Excuse me?

BRET

(bowing sarcastically)

Nice to fucking meet you.

He picks up her bags, throws them in a worn leather chest, and heads out of the tent.

BRET

Have a lovely vacation.

Violet sits dumbfounded at the edge of her bed. Looking as though she's going to give him a piece of her mind,

she instead reopens the trunk, takes her bags out, and puts them at the opposite corner of the room.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Violet wanders out of her tent and listens. All is quiet save the rustle of leaves and chirp of crickets.

She notices a large, bent tree a ways off and walks toward it.

She looks up. The moon is full and beautiful, and she continues along looking toward the sky in awe.

At the tree, she quietly rests against its trunk and closes her eyes.

After a moment, a woman's VOICE rings out in the far-off distance.

VOICE

Njye nzahora mpimbaza
uwiteka...Umwami wange, imana
yange...Njye nzahora mpimbaza
uwiteka...Umwami wange, imana
yange.

Violet opens her eyes and searches for the direction of the sound.

VOICE

Mugitondo woou...Karecyane
woou...Nzaririmba
hallelujah...Ndimurugo
woou...Cyangwa ndyamye
woo...Nzaririmba hallelujah.

Very close, a man's voice joins hers. Sitting on a broken log yards away from her, Violet sees Bret.

BRET

(with the voice)
Njye nzahora mpimbaza
uwiteka...Umwami wange, imana
yange...

Violet crunches on a leaf and Bret stops.

BRET

Who is it?

Violet starts, holds her breath.

BRET (CONT'D)

You guys better not be playing a
joke on me again.

Violet watches him as he watches the stars. The voice's
song ends, and they both sit in silence.

He stretches and relaxes back, seemingly convinced he's
alone.

BRET

(beginning again)
Njye nzahora mpimbaza uwiteka...

Violet lingers on him a moment, then quietly gets up and
walks back to her tent.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - DAY

The village is in full morning bustle. Violet stands at
the center of this, and Gahiji greets her with a hearty
pat on the back.

GAHIJI

No time for...how you say, chat-
chat? There is much to do, my
friend.

MONTAGE - VIOLET LEARNS THE ROPES

-- Violet gets a tour of the village from the quiet and disinterested Oscar. Children play, women carry spices and baskets with babies on their sides, and the village itself boasts nature wild and beautiful.

-- Espérance shows Violet women making a traditional meal.

-- Oscar shows Violet various bushes and plants, evidently showing her ones she should steer clear of and ones that are good to eat from.

-- Espérance shows Violet how to teach and care for the many children in the village. In a rustic schoolroom, Espérance writes French and English translations on the chalkboard.

-- Oscar and Violet spot a lion in the distance, him gesturing, pointing, and showing her how to make a fire to keep them away.

-- Violet is chatting with Espérance at her home, her child clinging tightly to her as she sits. Their laughter betrays a blooming kinship.

END MONTAGE.

INT. VIOLET'S TENT - NIGHT

Violet heaves a big sigh as she peels off her dirty clothes. She replaces them with frilly pajamas you wouldn't bring to a Rwandan jungle, putting them on as though she hasn't worn real clothes in years.

She takes some water from a tin basin and washes her face with a cloth, removing caked on dirt and revealing the natural lines of her face.

At the bottom of the basin, her reflection comes into focus. She looks deeply at it.

Rummaging through her large bag, she retrieves a large brush and patiently works through the knotted tangles in her hair.

Espérance peeks inside as though by chance, carrying a small basket at her side.

ESPÉRANCE

(chuckling)

Oh dear, child! You look mighty pretty. What are you all dressed up for?

She places the basket next to Violet and sits beside her.

VIOLET

Bed, Espérance. Just because I'm away from home doesn't mean I can't have my little luxuries, right?

Espérance plays with the frill of Violet's collar.

ESPÉRANCE

Ha, that attitude will change soon enough. You're going to be so tired that you won't even know what to do with yourself, much less the thought of home. For now, this is your home, and this is the way we do things.

Violet shuffles around on her bed uncomfortably.

VIOLET

I don't know why, but tonight I
feel a bit out of my element.

Violet bites her lip and looks at Espérance thoughtfully. She shuffles closer to her at the end of the bed.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Honestly, this seems to be the only
way I can feel as though I'm still
me.

Espérance cups her face in her hands.

ESPÉRANCE

It's just culture shock, my friend.
It will pass. Get some rest.

She begins to leave.

VIOLET

Why are you being so kind to me?
I've hardly known you a week.

ESPÉRANCE

You see, I know what it feels like
to be alone.

With this, Espérance leaves Violet to herself. She ponders the thought for a moment with legs curled up to her chest, and quickly blows out the lamp.

INT. VIOLET'S TENT - DAY

Violet wakes up, peers through her flap, sees the sun way up in the sky, and panics.

VIOLET

Ah!

She throws off her clothes and replaces them with new ones, still hopping into her pants as she exits the tent.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

She regains her composure and walks to the food prep area.

AT THE COUNTER

she receives her breakfast, a thick mush resembling oatmeal, in a tin cup from Oscar.

OSCAR

It is cold, but at least it is something.

She looks to him for any sign of compassion. He stares back, deadpan.

Turning away, she meanders around the village.

As she turns a corner, a boy of approximately two or three stands before her, eyes wide looking up at her.

AIME's protruding belly speaks more than any other part of him. He is malnourished and frail, but his eyes hold a hope and life that's recognizable apart from the evident pain he feels in his tiny body.

VIOLET

(softly)

Hi, there. What's your name? You're
such a cutie.

The little boy babbles thoughtfully in kinyarwanda, his eyes shyly moving from hers to everywhere else. He sways back and forth on his feet as he speaks, a nervous habit.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Wow, that sounds fascinating.

She stares at his belly. This is what she came here for. She looks at her breakfast and back to him again.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I wonder if you've eaten today.
Probably not enough, right?

The little boy continues incoherently in Kinyarwanda, now pointing and explaining something apparently very important to him.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

(playfully)
I wish I knew what you were saying,
but whatever it is, I'm riveted.

She gives the boy her portion and crouches down to meet his eye-level. He eyes the food as though it's gold, looks at her again, and tilts his head in confusion. He's not sure what to do with it.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Yes, it's for you. You can eat it.

She motions her hands as though she's eating soup with a spoon, and when the boy continues to eye it, unsure of what to do, she finally takes a spoonful and feeds him.

Now he needs no more instruction as he downs the food ravenously, taking brief pauses to look at her, soup dripping from his mouth. He continues eating as she speaks.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Wow, I'm glad you're enjoying it. If I had known you could eat this fast, I would have scrounged around for something else! I'm so glad I brought lots of candy. I think it's going to go quickly, especially if you have friends with half your appetite.

The little boy finishes and puts the tin bowl on his head like a hat, tottering around in the dirt. Violet laughs as she watches.

Bret, further away talking to some villagers, spots her playing with the boy. He hadn't noticed her until now.

His face softens for a moment but snaps back into stoic coldness. He then goes on his way, swatting away at flies with a rolled up piece of paper.

Violet takes the bowl-hat off Aime's head. He sees what seems to be his mother, totters over to her, and immediately begins spouting off in Kinyarwanda again, pointing at Violet devotedly.

The woman meets Violet's eyes and nods at her in silent recognition.

Aime makes his way back to Violet and looks up at her with greater devotion.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

You're too much. So, do you have
any more stories for me today?

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - CONTINUOUS

A woman's bright skirt rustles as her bare feet shuffle
against the earth. Beside these feet, a gnarled wooden
cane keeps time with each step.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Violet looks up to find Bret standing before her. Aime
hugs him, and Bret instinctively rubs the boy's head
lovingly.

BRET

You're not here to play around.

She stands.

VIOLET

I wasn't.

BRET

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Aime, go back to your mommy.

The boy hugs Violet's leg and wanders off.

BRET (CONT'D)

I'm just saying you're not off to a
good start.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - CONTINUOUS

The skirted woman is IMANAIRERE, the regal elder of the
village. She is weathered and nearly crippled, but seems
to move quickly everywhere out of sheer stubbornness.

Her breathing labored, she sings between each breath.

IMANIRERE

Njye nzahora mpimbaza
uwiteka...Umwami wange, imana
yange.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - DAY

VIOLET

Why are you being such an...

BRET

What? Asshole? Is that what you
were going for? Ass-hole, that's
how you pronounce it. It's what I
am. It's what your boss is supposed
to be. Have you ever had one?

VIOLET

You're not my boss! We're
colleagues, for God's sake! What is
your problem?

BRET

Besides you?

AT THE VILLAGE ENTRANCE

Imanirere walks through a tangle of children playing.

Gahiji, walking in the opposite direction, looks to her
and nods deeply.

She smiles, winks, and nods back.

GAHIJI

Good luck.

She continues singing and kicks a ball in the direction of one of the children as she passes through them.

PHILLIPE, a boy of seven or eight, along with the other children, cheers.

PHILLIPE

Go, Granny!

Yards away from her, she sees Bret and Violet arguing.

ALONG THE SCHOOLHOUSE WALL

Violet points a finger in Bret's face.

VIOLET

Yes, you're an asshole. I said it.
Does that make you happier? Should
I call you that from now on?

Bret makes to say something but is cut off by the THWAP of a cane against his butt.

IMANIRERE

You know better than to get a lady
angry, Louise.

VIOLET

Louise?

IMANIRERE

Yes, Louise. His hair was so long
when he first got here that he
looked like one of those white
women in the magazines.

She flips her imaginary hair back in disdain and shrugs.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

Hey, it stuck. Now, come. I must
tell you a story.

She grabs Violet's hand and starts off, Bret reluctantly
walking along.

EXT. SACRED TREE - DAY

Imanirere hikes up her skirt and lowers herself, bit by
bit, to a large rock. Bret and Violet take her lead,
sitting on the ground before her.

A tree towers above them, taller than anything else
around it.

IMANIRERE

There is a legend surrounding this
tree.

Bret raises an eyebrow.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

Yes, I never told you. An old woman
is allowed to have her secrets too.

Violet looks above her. Light flickers through the
leaves and creates shadows across her face.

IMANIRERE

Oh, I don't believe I've introduced
myself.

She throws an assortment of nuts before her.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

A welcome gift. I'm Imanirere, the
village elder, or, more simply put,

the old lady who has been here the longest.

She cackles and bangs her cane against the ground to accentuate the joke.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

Now, I want you to close your eyes.

Violet looks confused, but complies.

Imanirere scowls at Bret.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

You too, silly boy. Just because you can grow more hairs from your face does not mean you are any less a boy than when I first met you.

Bret sighs and closes his eyes.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

Now...

IMANIRERE'S VISION - THE LEGEND OF THE TREE

A barren patch of plain boasts a tiny sproutling barely visible.

IMANIRERE (V.O.)

This particular kind of tree is hallowed in our village. There are many things here in opposition to its growing.

Over nights and days of rain and famine, the sproutling begins to grow.

IMANIRERE (V.O.)

But it grows despite itself, its
circumstances.

By now, the tree has become formidable, and stops
growing.

IMANIRERE (V.O.)

Famine and disaster cannot conquer
it.

Periods of rain, wind, and drought pass over the land
surrounding the tree, and it bends and sways with it.

IMANIRERE (V.O.)

And man cannot destroy it, its
trunk so thick with stories.

The scene cycles through men that sleep, take shelter,
and eat from its fruit. All at once, the cycle stops.

IMANIRERE (V.O.)

And every once in a while, it is
said that a very special kind of
flower grows at its base.

Nothing changes except the time-lapse of a flower
growing before the tree.

IMANIRERE (V.O.)

Man and woman, like Adam and Eve,
meet here, and something happens.

The time-lapse rewinds, and a man and woman meet at the
base of the tree. They kiss, and the flowers intertwine
again, time-lapsing before them.

IMANIRERE (V.O.)

The flower is not one, but two. As the two buds embrace one another, it is a sign that the two people who met there will be a part of the other forever.

The couple fades away, but through rain, drought, night and day, the flowers remain together.

BACK TO SCENE

Imanirere takes Bret and Violet's hands and place them on top of one another.

IMANIRERE

You must see the beauty of what it means to be part of another's story.

Violet, eyes still closed, motions her face toward Imanirere.

VIOLET

But what if they leave?

IMANIRERE

Who worries if they leave? The flowers stay, they stay. It's a reflection of the heart, you see?

BRET

I think you're a crazy old woman.

He opens his eyes and retracts his hand.

Imanirere smirks and chases after him with her cane.

IMANIRERE

You men never learn, do you? Always boys till something changes you. Do not wait for calamity to strike before you realize where your heart lies!

BRET

So you can have little white grandchildren before you die? I don't think so, Granny. This may be the first white woman here, but your matchmaking days are over.

Violet reddens. Imanirere purses her lips and expels an exasperated sigh.

IMANIRERE

Look what you do with your jokes!
Making the poor girl turn all red.

She throws her hands up and turns away.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

Ah, poo. Look what it gets you to be an old woman today. No respect, no respect.

Bret, laughing, bounds over to help her through a mass of pebbles. She shoos him away.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

No, no. If you will not take a woman's wisdom, she will not take your strength.

(to Violet)

Pretty girl! I live with my
grandson way outside the village
over there.

(pointing to a secluded stretch
of plain)
You need me to talk some sense into
this boy, you now know where to
find me.

She saunters off, leaving Bret and Violet alone.

Violet looks at him as though seeing him for the first
time.

VIOLET

You're just a big softie.

He kicks a nut at her and begins making his way back to
the village.

BRET

We should get back to work.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Bret paces back and forth in front of Gahiji, who leans
against a tree. Way off in the distance, a large light
flickers.

BRET

I can't believe this. I earnestly
can't believe this.

Lingering on this image, a village takes form, smoke
billowing into the sky and moving in a large cloud in
the direction of the two men.

Gahiji looks over at him with pity.

GAHIJI

Are you really surprised by this?

BRET

I'm surprised that it's come to this, yes. Has anyone come yet?

GAHIJI

A young woman. She says she isn't sure how many others escaped.

BRET

Okay, I want you to compile evidence of this. Kigali must have some interest in this, at least. They can't ignore this type of violence.

GAHIJI

I would not assume that political leaders will see this as a problem that concerns them.

BRET

I'll make it one.

Bret stops pacing and looks Gahiji straight in the eyes.

GAHIJI

I know.

They stand before each other in mutual knowing, tension insurmountable. Gahiji breaks the silence with a heavy sigh.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

Well, I will make the arrangements.
I can send a letter with Violet
when she goes to the agency for her
assignment detail tomorrow.

BRET

Why the hell does she have to go?
She deserves a little reality
check.

GAHIJI

Being in Kigali, I am sure she
shall receive one.

Gahiji turns to leave.

BRET

Wait.

Gahiji remains with his back turned, but stops.

BRET (CONT'D)

Is this like it was twenty years
ago?

GAHIJI

No, not at all. Not at all.

They both know he's lying. With that, Gahiji walks away,
looking toward the night sky.

Bret sits back against the tree and rests a hand over
his eyes.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Victims of the rebel attack wander the village. They all
seem worn and displaced.

Little children stand next to people who don't seem to be their parents, and many men and women look as though they've been through every possible horror one can experience.

Gahiji has all of them convene together.

Espérance leads a group of women carrying baskets of food. She begins handing it out to the crowd.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
I know how it feels to lose your home. I think all of us of the older generation know. This being said, the loss of a home does not mean this loss is permanent. You, being our neighbors, are family.

Espérance comes to a child. She caresses her face as it takes a piece of bread.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
We will take good care of you, don't worry. Espérance--

Espérance moves gracefully to Gahiji's side.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
-- this lovely woman will be here to allocate your sleeping quarters for the night. Also, if you have need of any medical assistance, please go to her before you come to me.

Espérance quickly moves back into the crowd, disappearing among the multitude of people.

Gahiji clears his throat, folding his arms.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Now, I want a statement from all of you so we can better assess your situation and how we can help you. If you would line up here--

He points to a desk that has been brought outside for this specific purpose.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
--that would be wonderful. I would be more than happy to answer any of your questions as well.

Victims create a long line from the desk. Gahiji sits at it, puts on bifocals, and picks up a pen and paper.

A man is the first to speak with him. Gahiji poises his pen in the air.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Now, what do you remember?

MONTAGE - THE VICTIMS' FLASHBACKS

--A villager runs away from his village, left panting against a tree after he's out of danger. He watches as his village lights up under gunfire and Molotov cocktails.

--A woman's hands can be seen as they grasp the legs of a child as it is taken away from her. After the child is out of reach, the arms remain taut and outstretched.

--An old man looks into his wife's eyes as she dies.

--A pregnant woman stands alone, staring off into the night with a hopeless look about her.

--A house is left a disheveled mess of what it once was, little trinkets abandoned in half-broken heaps on the ground.

--A child sits playing in charred rubble, his hands black with the soot of war.

--Fire consumes a tree in an inferno of twisting flame.

--A body lies in disarray against the red earth, flies buzzing around it. Grass grows beneath the toes.

BACK TO THE VILLAGE

A woman stands before Gahiji holding a child. She is the last. Gahiji's papers are full of long, sprawling French cursive.

Gahiji's looks as though he's been hit by a ton of bricks. Recovering from all the information he's just received, he quietly places his pen on the table and looks up at the woman. He attempts a smile.

GAHIJI

Well then, that's that.

The child at the woman's side begins to cry.

EXT. KIGALI - DAY

It is a city of colorful dichotomies: tall skyscrapers, seemingly from a time of better financial stability, tower above shacks in various stages of decay.

Old cars expelling smoke litter the landscape, and people squeeze by each other through a maze of alleyways and shops.

Trash litters the ground. In contrast, trees bearing beautiful bright flowers peek out in unexpected places.

Violet makes her way through this overwhelming city, the sound of a foreign language jumbling from each and every direction.

On either side of her, men and women shove hats, jewelry, and other useless objects at her, urging her in supplicating tones to buy.

At the further end of the alleyway, a man and woman argue with each other. The woman jostles a child against her hip to stop it from crying. It doesn't.

One last turn down an alleyway, and Violet stands before a tidy office building. A shabby-looking man reclining a few feet from the door puffs on a cigarette.

INT. UBUMWE OFFICE - DAY

Violet enters. A large white man at a desk, LEON, looks up.

LEON

(disinterestedly)

Hello.

He then nods towards a door to the right and goes back to paperwork.

Violet takes this hint and quietly opens up to a room absolutely brimming with every possible disorganization known to man.

There are papers scattered everywhere, bulletin boards bearing incomprehensible scribbling erased and written over again; the place is an absolute mess.

A Rwandan in his late fifties, PIERRE, is sitting at the center of this madness.

He seems as though he was distinguished at some point in time, but it's evident that some emotional weight has pulled him down. His eyes are red, and his clothing haphazardly pressed.

He looks up, startled, and back down again, letting his bifocals rest at the tip of his nose.

PIERRE

(tersely)

Who are you and why are you here? I have a lot to deal with right now.

Violet squeezes through the door and comes closer to his desk, Pierre greatly disappointed by this.

VIOLET

I was told to come here a week or two after I was stationed. I'm the new relief from Muramba.

He looks up from under his bifocals, eyeing her.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I need my assignment?

PIERRE

Well then, sit down.

She settles cautiously into her seat. Pierre watches her as she does this, and it becomes more evident that something is very, very wrong about this man. A beat.

PIERRE

You have no idea what's going on here, do you?

Violet stares at him, unsure of what to say but opening her mouth as though it's on the tip of her tongue.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Why do we always find out the worst when we're at our best? I've worked here for twenty-five years, made a respectable career for myself, my wife. A person knows so little when they're happy.

He taps his fingers against his half-full glass. It's full of something strong, and Violet notices a decanter of what looks like brandy on the shelf. It's been tapped into quite a few times.

VIOLET

I'm sure you've--

PIERRE

I'm sure you've what? I'm sure you've told your wife how little these organizations seem to help anymore? I'm sure you've told your children that even Papa cannot stop them from coming for you. I'm sure you've told your neighbors that

everything is going to be alright
when it most certainly is not!

It's only now that she truly realizes how drunk he is.
The swollen eyes and disheveled shirt speak their true
meaning.

The papers scattered around the room are not the result
of unorganized hands, but furious ones. Many of the
papers are crumpled up, and many more are half-burned.

Violet places her hand on the desk, eyes piercing.

VIOLET

Sir, I should go.

PIERRE

No, you should not. You should sit
here and understand what it is that
this organization has gotten you
into.

He moves some papers around into a sloppy stack, seeming
to finally realize how messy they are. He then relaxes
into his chair, massaging his temples before looking out
the window to speak.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

In 1994, I, along with many others,
were witness to the mass murder of
an estimated 800,000 people. After
the assassination of Habyarimana,
everything changed. Competition and
tensions between the Tutsi, who I'm
sure you know have had power for
centuries, collapsed under the
weight of the Hutu. I don't need to
tell you that it was then when all
hell was set free.

VIOLET

Yes, I did a bit of research before I left.

PIERRE

But did you do enough? It was in 1990 that the RPF invaded northern Rwanda in an attempt to defeat the Hutu, as I'm sure you're well-educated head knows. And thus began this illustrious war, as my Hutu neighbors called it. What you don't know is how it feels to see people slaughtered before your very eyes.

He takes off his glasses and wipes them off with a handkerchief from his pocket, unknowingly letting it fall to the ground as he attempts to put it back in his pocket.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

I was a pro-peace Hutu, a "traitor", "collaborationist", and my wife, "the Tutsi-whore". They came after me, my family. This genocide had been planned by top-level government officials, but it wasn't the military that startled me at my door. Alongside the military and Hutu militias, primary responsibility for the killing of my wife and children rested with my neighbors, my brothers, my friends. The very people I depended on raped and killed my wife!

He takes the fingers he was tapping his glass with, clenches them into a fist, and slams it on the table.

Violet, thus far completely consumed by his story,
jumps.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

And now it's back again.

He takes a vicious swig from his glass and pours himself
another.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

You seem young. You don't know what
it's like to start over again. I
have a new wife, more children. I
tried my best to forget the past,
and now it's here clawing at my
doorstep again. A new neighborhood
cannot stop hate when it follows
you like a hungry dog. And we let
it! I should have gotten out of
this god-forsaken place when I
could. I thought I could help my
people, but shadows lurk behind
every bureaucratic desk. I'm afraid
I've done more harm than good.

Violet can't peel her eyes away from him. She watches as
he gets up from his chair and moves to the window, his
back facing hers.

VIOLET

Mr--

PIERRE

Augustin.

VIOLET

Yes, Mr. Augustin. Perhaps I'm misunderstanding the situation, but what exactly is happening here?

He looks over at her pitifully, as though at a lost child.

PIERRE

You, my dear, are in a very dangerous situation.

VIOLET

I was under the impression that--

PIERRE

You were under the impression that you were going to make a difference, right? That the Ubumwe Philanthropic Organization of Kigali sought for the betterment of the Rwandan people with the help of ambassadors from around the world all coming together to seek the unity that can only come from peace. That may be what is in our pamphlets, but it is not the reality.

VIOLET

Then what is?

PIERRE

I now know I'm a puppet. I've been taken advantage of. My organization founded in the name of my late wife is now the unintentional pitfall

for the very people I was seeking
to save.

Violet looks down at her hands. They're shaking.

VIOLET

I don't understand.

PIERRE

Now, most people don't believe
everything they hear from good-
intentioned people, but you can't
help being foolish sometimes, now
can you? Even people you think are
friends have agendas.

He picks up the fallen handkerchief from the floor,
shakes it out, and places it back in his pocket again.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Well then, that is all. I'm not
sorry we lured you here, but I am
sorry that you're now in more
danger than I myself even thought
possible. My selfishness for my
people may become the death of
them--and you.

VIOLET

What am I supposed to do now?

PIERRE

My officials know everything about
your village save the number of
hairs on your head. Your village is
one of the only ones that has
sought neutrality since the early

years of the war, but times are changing. The rebels aren't for neutrality anymore. I wouldn't be surprised if they gave you a visit soon. I'm sending a more qualified relief to replace you as soon as possible. For now, make sure no one follows you back. For later tonight, push everything I've told you out of your mind. My advice to you would be to pretend nothing has happened.

He picks up a newspaper, walks to the door, and opens it for her. After Violet walks through it, she turns to shake his hand and say her last words only to find the door slammed in her face.

She lingers there momentarily, the large man at the front desk looking at her out of the corner of his eye as he chews on a danish.

INT. EN ROUTE TO VILLAGE - NIGHT

The night is incredibly dark save the jolting brights of the jeep Violet and DRIVER are riding in.

Both seem uneasy, the driver especially. He keeps drumming his fingers on the steering wheel and shakily humming to an upbeat song on the radio, filling in for the places of static.

VIOLET

(concerned)

Did we leave too late?

Nothing. After a few moments, she gasps.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

What's that?

She points in the direction of a bright flashing red light not too far in the distance ahead of them. Driver follows her finger and immediately curses under his breath, pressing the gas pedal to the floor.

DRIVER

(yelling)

Yes, we left far too late!

EXT. DISTANT VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Various explosions and gunfire as a REBEL chases after a YOUNG BOY. The boy follows other villagers as they run out into a field toward the dirt road Violet and Driver are approaching some miles off.

The boy keeps tripping over roots and branches. He looks behind him; the rebel has lost ground.

The rebel leaps and bounds over brambles and roots with militaristic precision.

EXT. IN THE DISTANCE ON THE ROAD

Violet sees sparks of light flanking each side of the road in front of them: gunfire.

EXT. BY THE ROAD

The boy rushes by other villagers as some are picked off by rebels seeming to pop up everywhere.

EXT. MILES BEHIND

A rebel truck approaches and speeds by Violet and Driver, giving her a brief glimpse of armed soldiers sitting with their legs dangling over the edge.

EXT. BY THE ROAD

The truck, speeding much faster than Violet's, swerves off the road and lets its load of soldiers off and into the fray.

The boy, seeing them, turns around and runs in the opposite direction. Everyone but children are falling in heaps around him.

EXT. IN THE BRUSH

The young boy and a collection of other children run back into the brush.

Rebels approach and tackle many of the children to the ground. The young boy still evades them and pumps his legs even harder.

EXT. BY THE ROAD

The driver pushes Violet's head under the dash as they enter the heart of the skirmish.

EXT. IN THE BRUSH

The young boy looks behind him and is hit with the butt of a gun.

He is then dragged in the dirt toward the side of the road, leaving a long trail of trodden brush where he's been.

EXT. BY THE ROAD

Violet looks up at the clipped sound of collective crying. She watches in horror as they speed by a line of children in chains. These are child soldiers.

Violet and Driver, now out of immediate danger, sit in silence, both their gazes distant and numb. The radio continues to crackle on and off.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Violet walks as though she's being followed by a colony of wolves, looking all around behind her as tears and little whimpers escape her. Her face is obscured in the darkness, but her eyes betray a fear almost primal.

Bret notices her in the distance. He senses a disturbance in her usual demeanor, and can't help but stop the handiwork he was busy on to look more closely at her. He wipes his hands off on his pants with concern.

As she comes even closer, he hesitates from brushing off his hands. Something is wrong. He walks toward her with purpose, quickening his pace as he becomes more aware that she's in shock.

BRET

Violet?

She turns toward him like a scared bird, jumping at the sound of his voice. He slowly walks closer to her.

BRET

Violet, it's okay.

She begins to walk more briskly toward her tent.

BRET (CONT'D)

Dammit, Violet!

He blocks her way. She frowns at him.

BRET (CONT'D)

What happened?

She says nothing, attempting to get past him.

BRET (CONT'D)

Violet, I need to know what happened.

VIOLET

I need sleep. I need to go to sleep.

BRET

(concernedly)
Violet, please.

Violet turns away from him.

Momentarily, Bret's arms outstretch toward her. He catches himself and pulls them back.

BRET (CONT'D)

This conversation isn't over.

VIOLET

You're an asshole.

Violet enters her tent and shuts the flap in his face. The sound of her sobbing can be heard perfectly through the thin canvas.

Bret staggers back a little, turns around, and walks back to his work bench. He begins hitting a nail into the shaky framework of the work station. He becomes more and more forceful with each blow, flinching his distraught face with each impact.

EXT. VIOLET'S TENT - DAY

Violet wakes up. It looks as though she hasn't slept.

She rises and gets dressed with intentional calm. As she buttons her shirt, her hands shake.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

She exits her tent and immediately gets to work, playing with the children and dispersing rations with her characteristic cheerfulness.

Bret focuses on speaking with a group of men building a hut, but keeps an eye on Violet. As he directs orders, he becomes more and more distracted and frustrated, and as Gahiji comes up to him, he's not even paying attention.

GAHIJI

If I didn't know you so well, I'd say Violet has captured your attentions. Should I get out the wedding wine?

Bret continues looking at her.

BRET

Shut up, Gahiji. Something's wrong with her, and I'm damn well going to get it out of her.

Gahiji smiles to himself.

GAHIJI

Ah, well, that is nice. I am sure that's an attitude she would appreciate. So, could you pay attention to me for a few moments before you stare her to death?

Bret glares at him. Gahiji chuckles.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

As amusing as your face is, and as much as I would like to make it a more distinct one, I have a bit more than trivialities to talk with you about.

Bret seems more focused than before.

BRET

Is it regarding the letter I sent?

They walk toward the outskirts of the village. A group of children laugh and take turns jumping around in the village's makeshift shower.

GAHIJI

Yes. Here you are.

He produces a letter from his pocket and hands it to him. Bret rips open the envelope and stares eagerly at the page.

INSERT - THE LETTER, which reads:

"To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great displeasure I heard that your state of affairs is quite grave. Even in the most dire of circumstances, we are confident that--"

BACK IN THE VILLAGE

Bret crumples the paper in his hand.

BRET

Bureaucratic bullshit.

GAHIJI

I'm assuming there is nothing the government is going to do to protect us, then.

BRET

No. The rebels can walk right up to us with an army and there's nothing we can do about it.

GAHIJI

Well, all we can do is strive toward the best.

BRET

How is that supposed to help anything? Pretending as though everything is perfectly fine? I can't accept that. I'm going to do something else. There has to be something else.

Gahiji sighs and smirks again.

GAHIJI

Don't displace your emotions on me. You are preaching to the man who has worked with that temper for ten years. I want to do something just as much as you. If you have stronger issues, go to the people associated with them.

Gahiji looks over at Violet, who's laughing with a group of women. Bret, realizing that he's talking about Violet, looks away.

GAHIJI

Sometimes I wonder if you've
changed at all in these ten years.

Gahiji pats him on the back and walks away, leaving Bret
to brood.

Impulsively, Bret walks over to Violet, who has gathered
a bunch of children around her.

Aime, standing next to her, is eating her lunch.

As she laughs with the women around her, she hands out
candy to the rest of the children from a large zip-
lock bag.

Before Violet can acknowledge him, Bret whisks her away.

VIOLET

What are you doing?

He pulls her into a small hut.

INT. HUT - CONTINUOUS

The hut is dark and intimate save little slivers of sun
peeking through the leafy blinds. Faint sounds of
children laughing and playing can be heard outside.

With movement, the rusty sand of the floor is kicked
into the air and around the room, playing off the light.

Violet and Bret enter the hut, both equally standoffish.
They take their places at opposite sides of the room.
Bret slams a handful of the sweets hard toward the
ground.

BRET

You think you can give a child a
sandwich each day and you'll solve
world hunger. Of all the things you

could have brought for these kids,
candy? Get a life, Violet.

VIOLET

I've been fed well my whole life.
What I do with my share of food is
my own business. Even if you don't
realize that simple things--

BRET

--make a difference? Yeah, you and
your grassroots philanthropy,
right? Bullshit.

VIOLET

Well, at least I don't distribute
rations like a death sentence and
write these ridiculous little
business letters all tucked away
from everything. Don't you see it?
There's so much life here.

They both turn toward a small noise outside. It is
ignored.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I don't care what happens to me.

Exasperated, Bret paces around the room.

BRET

You're an idiot, Violet! Impossibly
young, impossibly naive,
impossibly...

Bret stops short as a wave of emotion flashes across his
face.

BRET

You don't understand what's
happening here, Violet.

VIOLET

The hell I don't. I understand you
were expecting someone as hard-
assed and uptight as you, but fate
didn't grant you that. Sometimes
you can't control the situation in
front of you, even if you want to.

BRET

I want you out of here.

Violet, full of confidence, walks toward Bret.

VIOLET

(ominously)

What, so you can sit around
wallowing in your own misused view
of the world until something
happens?

Violet squares herself before him, rigid with anger.

Bret grasps her arms tightly.

BRET

I told you, you're in over your
fucking head. You have no idea
what's going on here.

Bret loosens his grip and, by degrees, both their eyes
soften. The mood becomes romantic.

Abruptly, Aime walks in, the reality of his protruding belly breaking Bret and Violet's moment. All seem ashamed.

Bret looks painfully back at Violet and abruptly leaves the room.

Violet, completely taken aback, backs into one of the corners of the room and sits. She and Aime stare at each other.

VIOLET

I don't even know your language.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Bret storms out of the hut with much of the village stopping to watch.

His typically chilly exterior is surging with emotional distress, and although he attempts to conceal this in his face, his agitated gait and pace makes it impossible to ignore.

He collects himself and makes a beeline toward his tent, staring straight toward his goal and ignoring everyone else.

Gahiji, who sits lazily chewing on sugar cane as his grandson plays, has been passively eyeing Bret's approach.

Bret pauses his impassioned walk beside him, still looking forward.

Gahiji pauses his chewing.

BRET

(coolly)
I'm going to Kigali.

With this, Bret surges forward, noiselessly opens the flap of his tent, and lets it snap shut behind him.

Gahiji smiles, shakes his head, looks thoughtfully at his grandchild looking thoughtfully at him, and resumes chewing his sugar cane.

EXT. VIOLET'S TENT - DAY

Violet is awoken at what seems to be the crack of dawn by Espérance's giggles.

VIOLET

(groggily)
What is it?

Espérance moves closer to her, as if about to tell a secret.

ESPÉRANCE

(whispering)
You should have seen what happened this morning! The whole village is crying with laughter over it!

Violet looks confused. She swings her legs over the bed as Espérance sneaks a peek through the tent flap, still whispering.

ESPÉRANCE (CONT'D)

There is a reason I love my husband's grandfather so much. Gaji came to me early this morning --

She scurries over to Violet and grabs her hand, pulling her toward the tent flap.

ESPÉRANCE (CONT'D)

-- and told me to tell any man
coming to pick Mr. Bret up to leave
with as much quickness as possible.
I knew not to question an old man
why, --

She opens the flap for Violet and pushes her to look
out. The village pulses with its usual morning bustle.

ESPÉRANCE (CONT'D)

-- but he read it on my face anyway
and told me that Mr. Bret was going
to finally be taught a lesson.

Violet looks back at her perplexed.

VIOLET

Whatever does that mean?

ESPÉRANCE

I do not know! Is that not
exciting? Mr. Bret is hardly ever
questioned here, and Gaji treats
him so much like a son that I could
not believe what I was hearing.

Violet recoils at the sight of Bret through the flap.

ESPÉRANCE (CONT'D)

Look! And now Mr. Bret does
everything as though nothing has
happened!

A playful glimmer hits Espérance's eye.

ESPÉRANCE (CONT'D)

Apparently, everyone saw Gaji talking with Bret in loud voices outside the camp, and the whole village watched as Mr. Bret came back with his tail between his legs.

Espérance nudges up next to Violet by the flap, chuckling to herself.

Thinking of their confrontation, Violet reddens and turns to brush her hair.

Looking at Violet, a change occurs in Espérance's countenance. Things start clicking into place.

She places both hands on Violet's shoulders and peers at her through the small mirror on the back of the brush that Violet now holds toward her face.

ESPÉRANCE

You should take your time getting ready, my dear friend. I have a feeling today is going to be full of surprises.

Violet looks back at her imploringly without realizing it.

VIOLET

I don't get it. Why would Gahiji care if he leaves?

Espérance squeezes Violet's shoulders consolingly.

ESPÉRANCE

Maybe there is something here he wants him to see.

Espérance, with the grace of a queen, turns and exits the tent.

ESPÉRANCE (CONT'D)

(under her breath)
Good work, Gaji.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

The village rejoices as the sound of helicopter's propellers evidences that a fresh supply of water and food is being flown in.

EXT. FROM THE AIR

The sound of a helicopter drowns out all sound. All the village's children gather toward the village center, dancing, jumping and pointing toward the source of the sound.

A tether holding supplies and a relief worker emerge and descend toward the group. The children become more animated and point with greater enthusiasm. Adults walk toward the group from all sides.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER

The children look up toward a helicopter lowering supplies. As the package comes closer, everyone makes a large circle around it, allowing space for it to drop.

The man standing on the package motions toward the pilot to lower it down and makes a sharp gesture when it hits the ground. He unlatches the tether from the box, salutes the children, and signals the copter to pull him back up.

As the copter flies away, the village, as though they've done this a million times before, begins allocating the packages like a well-oiled machine.

EXT. FROM THE AIR

The group of villager's disperse from their main hub to huts with packages. The result looks much like a spider web.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The afternoon sun brings Violet to wipe beads of sweat off her face as she lugs a heavy canister of water toward a makeshift shower.

The area gives the appearance of quiet, because although the shower is nothing but a pipe attached to a bucket, the location is secluded.

The precipice of a jungle flanks her one side, and the other displays the backs of huts, quiet and unoccupied due to the day's chores.

Violet, clearly excited, peels off her dirty clothes with relish until she reaches the one-piece bathing suit she wears underneath.

With joyful effort, she heaves the canister of water above her into the shower head. Smiling up at it, she pulls the tether and watches as cool water shoots forth from it.

She then takes a chunk of amber soap and begins washing her hair and face, letting the suds drip off her into the mud.

Passing behind the huts, Bret comes into view as he walks toward another part of the village. Upon seeing Violet, he stops.

He seems entranced. It's not so much the way she looks but the way she acts that seems to stop him in his tracks.

Abruptly, the water stops. Bret jumps back, regaining his composure. He looks at her a second longer and pulls himself away, rushing out of view.

Violet, head tilted up toward the water as if it's still running, slowly opens her eyes and sighs.

As she looks toward the back of the village, everything is as she left it. The sounds of the jungle mixed in with that of the village emanate around her.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

The last remnants of the afternoon hang across the village as its inhabitants prepare for rest. The sun descends rusted orange against the horizon, and a violet glow hangs upon the scene.

CHILDREN

at their mother's hips rub their eyes as men put away their work and strip their shirts for sleep.

VIOLET

carries a jug of water toward an open air hut.

BRET

leisurely walks to his hut on the other end of the village, his deep breaths taking in the night air.

Both meet in the middle. Unsure and startled at finally running into each other, they avoid eye contact. Violet quickly places the water jug on the table beside a vase filled with flowers.

They awkwardly dance around each other, chuckling, and both hurry in opposite directions, him to his tent, her to hers.

INT. BRET'S TENT - NIGHT

Bret puts an arm under his bed and pulls out a journal. Throwing it on his bed, he searches for a pen.

Finding one, he grabs his journal, two pictures falling on the bed. One is of him with what appears to be friends and family, the other him and a woman. He stares at them for a moment before shoving them back in the journal.

BRET

Yeah, no writing tonight.

He shoves the journal back under the bed. He then throws off his shirt, splashes water on his face from a basin next to the bed, and blows out the lamp.

INT. BRET'S TENT - LATER

Bret wakes up in a panic and turns his head to the sharp creak of pans that line the opposite end of his tent. They clang softly against the give and take of the canvas, and Bret stares at them, wide-eyed and terrified.

He jumps out of bed, knocking over a leather bound stack of papers. He ignores them, picks up something indiscernible, and bursts out of the tent in a passion.

The hurried sound of his feet against the gravel slowly fades.

The papers, under a strong gust of wind, are sent in various directions, some covered in gritty red dust. Through them, we see the harsh outline of an old typewriter's lettering and official seals.

One of these letters flutters closer to the tent's flap, which filters short bursts of moonlight against the page.

INSERT - GOVERNMENT LETTER, which reads:

Unfortunately, the Rwandan government is no longer able to assist you. Please consult with your--"

BACK IN BRET'S TENT

The rest of the words are almost all obscured by rusty dust. It looks like blood on the page.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

The chirps and scratches of insects fill the night. A large grasshopper scurries along. Bret's foot hits the dirt after it.

EXT. ABOVE THE VILLAGE

A multitude of thatched roofs lie visible among the patches of shadow they cast. All is dormant.

A light flickers to life near the left end of the village and moves. Bret has lit a candle.

He crosses from one end of the village expanse to the other, weaving quickly in between huts and tents, the candle's light casting strange shadows around him.

EXT. AT VIOLET'S TENT FLAP

He continues his consistent stride and pulls up the flap without consideration. His form enters into darkness and the canvas flap falls shut behind him.

INT. VIOLET'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Bret enters, moves toward Violet's bed, and stands silent for a beat.

VIOLET

is sleeping soundly. The candlelight plays about her face.

Juggling the candle from one hand to another, Bret feels foolish now. He looks intensely at her for a moment, then lets out a tight sigh and blows out the candle.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Children are kicking a ball around a gnarled tree.

GAHIJI (O.S.)

I do not know what to do.

Gahiji is crouched over in a mangled lawn chair watching the children play a ways off. His face, which belies great and heavy concern, is obscured at the mouth as he rubs his stubble. His eyes squint further as he speaks.

Bret stands next to him, also staring off in the direction of the children.

GAHIJI

Neutrality is meaningless.

Gahiji runs his hand across his whole face now, attempting to rub the fatigue out of it. He reclines and looks up at Bret.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

All I know is that we have to come up with something new quickly. From the look of all this, it seems as though we will be getting trouble soon.

Bret scoffs.

BRET

They wouldn't dare attack us. We've been neutral since the first conflict.

GAHIJI

This is not the first conflict. With each new generation of war, new rules are established. What was once a gain becomes a loss, and what was once a life becomes...less than one.

BRET

Gaji, tell me honestly. Is this the same as before?

Gahiji diverts his gaze back to the children, almost beyond them.

GAHIJI

(hesitating)

No.

BRET

What should I do if it becomes the same?

Gahiji's eyes strain at the creases, lingering on a thought.

GAHIJI

You should live.

Gahiji adjusts himself forward and picks up a stalk to chew on. He sticks it in the corner of his mouth. It wobbles as he continues to speak.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

You should find something to love.

Bret seems confused and stumbles around something to say, satisfying himself with a soft kick at the dirt.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

Maybe you will understand it
someday.

Gahiji rises, throws on his characteristic smile at the sight of a group of women waving after him, and walks in their direction.

Bret stands rigid against the background of villagers walking, working, and talking in the background. He's not a part of this.

EXT. EN ROUTE TO VILLAGE - DAY

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA, a young man wearing a military uniform and western sunglasses, rides passenger side in a military truck. His hand dangles out the window of the vehicle.

In the back of the truck, a slew of rebel forces sit huddled around its perimeter. Their guns and uniforms are imposing, but seem more a show than anything else.

Nshirmirimana reclines back further and languidly tilts his chin down to look over his sunglasses. The village is in sight. He looks over to the driver apathetically.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

(in French; subtitled)
Got it.

Nshirmirimana folds his arms as if to sleep as the driver accelerates.

INT. RWANDAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A withered hand slams against a stack of papers haloed by the dark wood of a table.

PIERRE

(in French; subtitled)

This is an outrage!

Pierre slams his fist against the table with each syllable he speaks. The sound is hollow and reverberates with his voice, which carries in the austere-looking room.

The meeting room is oppressive, consumed by high-backed chairs, cigarette smoke, and emotionless eyes.

Some men tap their pens against pristine agenda books, others play with their cuff links or adjust their ties. None are paying attention.

BENGALI, a hulking middle-aged man, wears his military uniform with spectacular attention to detail, looking like a king among the men in suits surrounding him. He is a massive man and knows it.

More apathetic in countenance than the rest, Bengali spins a bright gold wedding band around his finger. The contrast is startling against his skin.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Bret exits his tent and squints his eyes at a dust cloud in the distance. Confusion clouds his features. A beat. Now unease.

BRET

You have got to be kidding me.

AT THE WELL

Bret stops next to Violet, who is crouched around a bowl mashing plantains. She looks up at him puzzled.

He crouches down to her level.

BRET

I need you to quietly gather as many children as you can and--

He rises to discern how far away the forces are.

BRET

--and find Espérance and the women.

Bret walks off in a daze.

Violet rises, brushes herself off, and looks after him.

AT THE STOREHOUSE

Bret meets Gahiji's gaze and immediately knows that he is just as aware of the situation. A group of men surround him.

BRET

What the hell is this?

GAHIJI

I do not know. Everyone has been informed already.

BRET

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Alright, let's get things ready in case we need to defend ourselves.

The men nod and scatter.

Bret and Gahiji periodically look back and forth between the other's face and the car approaching a couple miles off.

GAHIJI

I want you to stand next to me.
Speak for me if I cannot. Never
stoop below them. I've retained my
dignity for far too long to lose it
today.

Bret looks at him to attempt to understand the meaning of this statement but doesn't have time; the rebel truck approaches quickly and Gahiji begins making his way to the center of the village.

INT. RWANDAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

PIERRE

(in French; subtitled)
I want an answer! I want to know
what it is you think you're getting
away with!

Bengali smirks and relaxes back into his chair.

AIMON, a small man in a fresh suit and glasses, rises to speak and points an accusatory finger at Pierre.

AIMON

(in French; subtitled)
How dare you accuse the ministry of
something of which you know nothing
about!

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER

Bret and Gahiji watch as the truck pulls up to the village and Lt. Nshimirimana walks over with his men.

The village is scattered with men doing various snatches of handiwork, carrying baskets concealing primitive weapons and tools.

Lt. Nshirmirimana extends a calloused hand to Gahiji and pulls off his sunglasses with the other. His tone is condescending and heavy with sarcasm.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

(in French; subtitled)

You must be the great Gahiji of
Muramba.

He looks over at Bret.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

(in French; subtitled)

And you must be his little bitch.
Parliament has received so many
letters from you!

Gahiji seems a little taken aback at the lack of respect. He's unused to this. Regardless, he attempts to set a tone of friendliness.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)

May I ask why you come today? I
must admit we haven't had visitors
of your variety in a while.

Gahiji's attempt at a chuckle almost succeeds, but it is cut short by the sound of one of Nshirmirima's men cocking his gun.

EXT. SAFEHOUSE HUT

Violet's face can be seen peeking out through a tent flap.

Espérance, running around a group of women and children huddled at the back of the hut, waves frantically at her.

ESPÉRANCE

(whispering)
Violet!

Violet turns around briefly and puts a finger to her mouth.

VIOLET

Shh! I'm fine.

Violet resumes looking outside the flap.

INT. RWANDAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE

CLEMENT, seated next to Aimon, gently tugs him back to a seated position as he rises himself. His voice is kinder, but laden with disappointment.

CLEMENT

(in French; subtitled)
Pierre, I know how you've suffered,
and we know it must look as though
our...retraction of your
organization and position as
secretary in Parliament must seem
suspicious from your previous
experiences, but do you really
trust us so little?

Clement sits as Aimon nods vigorously beside him. The rest of the men nod less enthusiastically and now stare at Pierre.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

(in French; subtitled)
Maybe you've been away from
civilization for so long that you
don't understand my tongue. We've
come to assess the situation under
the new regime, and your
cooperation is necessary.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Haven't we always cooperated?

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

(in French; subtitled)
I can't speak on Parliament's
assessment of your village in the
past. Have your American send
another letter. I'm here now to
tell you that cooperation is
necessary.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Come now, can we not even speak as
fellow Rwandans anymore?

Gahiji is obstinate. Although his attitude is one of complete geniality, the authority from which he speaks Kinyarwanda is nothing short of a slap in the face to Lt. Nshimirimana.

Lt. Nshirmirimana looks to his men with disdain, puts on his sunglasses, and saunters up to Gahiji.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

(in French; subtitled)

You are of an archaic time, my friend. We are a new generation of soldiers for a new generation of prosperity under the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda.

Lt. Nshirmirimana steps back and enunciates the name of the rebel group, letting it ring out over the village.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

(in French; subtitled)

That is for all the rats hiding in their huts. Do you hear me?!

EXT. SAFEHOUSE HUT

Violet looks out. She tries focusing on the foreign languages being spewed back and forth, but centers in on the faces instead.

The tight line of Gahiji's jaw and the agitated tone of the man in the uniform makes her eyes widen.

She looks back at Espérance, who is pouring a brownish substance into a bowl. Violet notices her hands shaking.

INT. RWANDAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE

Pierre looks defeated, and his face softens for a moment. This is a moment of decision. It is obvious from the climate of the room that if he continues, he will have spoken himself into danger he can't get out of.

Looking down the line of the faces staring at him in varying degrees of disgust, he stops at Bengali's uniform.

Pierre pauses briefly. In a swift moment, he makes the decision to keep going and loses any semblance of calm

or restraint he had before. He points at Bengali accusingly.

PIERRE

(in French; subtitled)

You! I've been suspicious of the military's involvement since after the first conflict. I'm beginning to understand what's going on here, and I will continue to strive after truth till the day you pry me away from it! I have people of my own. I should never have given parliament my allegiance for the sake of the greater good. The means is the end, and this is what we've come to!

Bengali rises.

BENGALI

(in French; subtitled)

That is enough.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER

Gahiji stares at him as though waiting for him to stop. Proudly and eloquently, he speaks in the same cadence as he had before.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)

Well, if the new "FDLR" is so keen on making childish scenes and empty threats, perhaps the old days were better.

Lt. Nshirmirimana smiles for the first time. It stretches wide across his face.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

(in French; subtitled)

After twenty years, I believe
you've made your first blunder.

INT. RWANDAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE

Bengali brushes off his uniform and strides the length of the table over to Pierre, pulling him close. His steps resonate authoritatively throughout the room.

BENGALI

(whispering in Kinyarwanda;
subtitled)

You have a new Tutsi-whore now,
don't you? See, I have my people
too.

Pierre's eyes widen and dilate.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER

Lt. Nshirmirimana knees Gahiji in the chest, knocking the wind out of him and pushing him onto his side.

Bret starts to reach out after Gahiji, but the old man's hand pushes him away. Bret remembers Gahiji's words and straightens up against Lt. Nshirmirimana.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

(in French; subtitled)

If you would like a word of advice
from me, keep a knife at your
bedside. White men are easy to pick
out in the dark.

BRET

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
Leave. Now. Parliament will be
hearing about this.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

(in French; subtitled)
Ha! We are Parliament. You are the
rebels now.

Lt. Nshirmirimana and his men turn and leave with little fanfare. The soldiers' vacant stares are slowly obscured by dust as they drive away.

As Bret finally crouches down to tend to Gahiji, he notices a tear run down his face.

GAHIJI

(in Kinyarwanda; subtitled)
God help you.

INT. RWANDAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE

Bengali beams at the horrified Pierre, showing stark white teeth.

Pierre makes to say something, but all he can muster is a wide-eyed, open-mouthed gasp.

Under the table, Pierre's feet shuffle and clatter nervously against the marble. The shoes look new and uncomfortable.

The shoes, under some commotion, are dragged away.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Bret, Violet, Gahiji, and Espérance guide everyone back to their huts.

AT THE VILLAGE CENTER

They reconvene and look to Gahiji.

GAHIJI

And here we are.

ESPÉRANCE

Do you want me to stay up, Gaji?

GAHIJI

Gosh, no, my dear. There is simply
no need.

ESPÉRANCE

But...

GAHIJI

Go to bed. Kiss your husband. Hug
my grandson for me.

She kisses Gahiji on the forehead, then turns to Bret.

ESPÉRANCE

You take good care of this woman
tonight, you hear?

(turning to Violet)

I love you, my beautiful friend. I
feel as though I saw your heart
today, and it matches mine so well.

Espérance and Violet embrace.

VIOLET

You know I feel the same way. Get
some rest.

Espérance puts a heavy jar to her side and walks toward
her hut.

Gahiji stretches and yawns.

GAHIJI

Now, I am an old man, and I must
get my rest too. Are you two
lovebirds going to be alright for
the rest of the night?

Violet and Bret look at each other and laugh.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

Ah, yes, young love is something to
behold. I shall see you all in the
morning, my friends.

In a swift change of tone, he grabs Bret's shirt.

GAHIJI (CONT'D)

You do as Espérance says, you hear?

BRET

(laughing)
Of course!

GAHIJI

(grasping him tighter)
Do you hear me?

Bret takes Gahiji's hand from his shirt and peers at
him.

BRET

Yes, I hear you.

Gahiji smiles, pats him on the back, and walks off.

GAHIJI

I'm proud of you both! Now, get
good rest! There is always much to
do in the morning!

Violet looks up at the sky.

VIOLET

What are we supposed to do?

Without thinking, Bret takes her hand.

BRET

I don't know.

He squeezes her hand and lets go. She grabs it again and
squeezes back.

VIOLET

How long have you been here?

BRET

Ten years.

The two stare at the stars.

BRET (CONT'D)

(nostalgically)
Ten years. Isn't that crazy?

VIOLET

That's a really long time, is what it is. You're old.

BRET

I like experienced better.

Violet chuckles and nudges him with her shoulder.

BRET (CONT'D)

Ya know what it was? One morning I woke up and felt something. I had drank and fucked and played all sorts of foolish games with my life, and one day I just woke up. Not the kind of waking up that involves finding that the sun has had a head start on you, but the kind that shakes you awake. The woman next to me wasn't my wife. I was hung over, but somehow knew that didn't suit me anymore. And so I just woke up, in this sort of existentialistic panic, from my bed. As though the weight of the world had shifted. I just kept thinking "this is not my life. This is not my life. I'm not me." I threw on pants that didn't seem mine anymore and couldn't even bring myself to touch the woman next to me. I didn't know who she was.

He looks deeply at his worn hands, rubbing his palms over well-established calluses.

BRET (CONT'D)

God, that was ten years ago. *Ten*. I got my plane ticket to this god-forsaken place because I didn't know what else I was. I felt this inextricable pull toward something bigger than me. I did it in blind faith. I did it because I was the living dead. I did it because I knew I deserved to be punished.

VIOLET

But look at all you've done.

BRET

I've learned their language, their faces. I've fallen deep into this culture that still seems so much larger than I am, but that isn't enough, is it?

VIOLET

What do you mean?

BRET

I'm afraid.

Bret hangs his head. Violet stares at him.

BRET (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I'll fail them. I've failed so many people.

Violet lingers on him a moment longer, then looks back up at the sky.

VIOLET

You really are such an asshole,
Bret.

Shocked, he studies her face. Understanding her, he
relaxes and looks up too.

BRET

(laughing)
Yeah, I know.

INT. BRET'S TENT - NIGHT

Bret, sitting on his bed, takes out the two photographs
from his journal. Picking up one, he runs his thumb
along the woman's face.

INSERT - POLAROID OF BRET'S WIFE

It is a Polaroid of Bret and a young brunette. His smile
is wide, genuine. He looks young and happy.

BACK TO BRET'S TENT

He picks up the other Polaroid.

INSERT - BRET'S FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH

The scene depicts his birthday with friends and family.
"Bret's 16th Birthday, 1995" is written in the upper
corner. There is also text at the bottom of
the Polaroid, which reads:

"October 24, 2005

I figured I'd try to send this to
you. We all miss you very much.
Don't be a stranger, Bret. The past
is the past, and I'm proud of you.

Love, Dad"

BACK TO BRET'S TENT

Bret smiles a little and sighs. He starts to put the pictures back in his journal, stops. Instead, he puts them on the box next to his bed and blows out his lamp.

INT. BRET'S TENT - NIGHT

Bret wakes up in his cot to the sound of gunshots and screams.

As he exits his tent, a rebel drags a woman by her hair, the woman gasping and gargling as blood trails darkly in a line behind her.

A Molotov cocktail smashes against a hut, illuminating the scene momentarily in a fiery blaze. The scene is a horrific display of violence and bloodshed, cutting people and scenery into halves of shadow and blaze.

Espérance appears in the light, bloodied and wide-eyed.

BRET

Espérance!

She merely looks in horror at him. Bret steps closer.

BRET (CONT'D)

Espérance, tell me where everyone is. We need to find everyone.

She holds a bloodied bundle against her chest. Upon closer inspection, he sees that it is her baby.

BRET (CONT'D)

Oh, God.

She looks down at it, and in one swift movement, turns and walks leisurely in the other direction. Among the sounds of violence, you can hear her singing.

Bret runs into the chaos, bumping into frantic villagers and tripping over bodies as bullets fly by him.

Machine gun fire overpowers every other sound, and rebels scatter the expanse performing every imaginable act of violence on men, women, and children.

Bret becomes more frantic and screams out Violet's name into the night. We can't hear what he's saying over the noise.

He comes face to face with a rebel. They stare at each other intently. He spits on him and runs off.

Strangely, every rebel seems to pay little to no attention to him, either pursuing other conquests or calmly walking past him.

Bret continues to push past the chaos and finally makes his way to the fire pit. Gahiji is dead.

Bret collapses to the ground in anguish and looks over at Violet's tent. It seems untouched.

BRET

(barely audible)

Violet!? Violet, are you there?

Violet?!

He scurries up and rushes toward the tent, hesitating at the flap. All background sounds die down and become muffled. He seems hesitant to find out what's inside. He takes a couple shaky, shallow breaths and continues.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

The room is quiet save a kerosene lamp sputtering on the ground.

Bret runs over to her cot and fumbles in the dark, finally finding matches on top of her makeshift

nightstand. Fumbling in the darkness, he finds the lamp and strikes the match.

It is Nshirmirimana reclining with his machine gun against the back of Violet's head.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

You are stupid, white man.

He cackles and blows out the match. Gunshots scatter holes across the tent.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

The old man asked about you. I told him you were dead. You should have seen his face!

Bret's breath catches.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

Don't worry! I haven't killed her yet! I want her to see you dead first.

Another volley of gunshots litter the tent.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

You see, the white girl and I had quite the heart to heart...heart to heart? Is that how you say it? I spent some time in America, but your idioms never seemed to stick.

Violet cries out in pain.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

See? She speaks! Pain seems to
speak the most, doesn't it? Imagine
what will happen when I shoot you!

Violets screams and sounds of a struggle ensue.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA (CONT'D)

White bitch!

They crash against the tent, it's foundations breaking
and falling over.

EXT. VIOLET'S TENT - NIGHT

Another molotov cocktail bursts against the tent next to
Violet's. This one takes to the flame, creating a small
fire near the surrounding area.

Under the canvas of the fallen tent, a mound of figures
contort and struggle.

INT. VIOLET'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

The light of the fire flickers through the holes,
illuminating Bret and Violet fighting back against
Nshirmirimana on the ground.

Nshirmirimana sees his gun behind him and leans back to
grab it. Violet jumps on him and arrests his hands.

Bret scurries for the gun. Nshirmirimana throws Violet
off and attacks him.

LT. NSHIRMIRIMANA

Merde!

OUTSIDE

The tent continues to show the three struggling. With
one last burst of GUNFIRE, all noises and movement stop.

After a few moments, breathing can be heard. Bret, then Violet, crawl out from under the tent.

What is before them is total destruction. Bodies of villagers scatter the entrances of huts, and embers continue to burn where huts once lay.

In the distance, the military vehicles screech out of sight.

At the fire pit, flies pass by Gahiji's face, settling on his charred lips.

In a small crevasse beside a hut, a woman huddles with her child, quietly whimpering in the night.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Gahiji's body has been placed in a shallow grave. A shovelful of dirt hits his face. A few more hit him at a practiced pace.

It is Oscar, who takes another shovelful and throws it in.

Beyond him, a long line of graves, each with its own shoveler, stretch all the way down to an even longer line of bodies waiting to be buried.

Surrounding all this, mourners encircle the scene. Violet looks vacantly at the faces of those who have died.

EXT. COMMUNAL FIRE PIT - NIGHT

It is a quiet night, save the silent crackle of the fire and wildlife surrounding the village. A group of villagers are sitting around the fire in somber reflection.

Bret and Violet sit at opposite ends of the fire. As Bret speaks, the fire dances before his eyes and profile, detailing small twists and turns of emotion.

Espérance cries out loudly into the night, rocking back and forth where her child should be. Violet, at a loss, attempts to console her.

BRET

(subtitled in Kinyarwanda)
Until we meet again,
may God hold you in the hollow of
his hand!

Bret takes a stick and shoves it into the fire, letting agitated sparks scatter into the air.

BRET (CONT'D)

What have I done?

(hands falling to his sides)
Where is my heart? Is it hidden
under the eucalyptus? Did I bury it
in the dirt? Or did I sacrifice it
to the fire?

At this, the group lets out loud cries into the night.

LATER

Bret stills sits at the fire. Violet sits across from him. The two seem entranced, he by the fire, she by him.

VIOLET

Bret.

Bret doesn't look up.

VIOLET

Bret.

He continues staring at the fire.

BRET

Yes?

VIOLET

It's not your fault.

BRET

Yes, it is.

VIOLET

We've done nothing but try to help.

BRET

Yes, try.

He stirs up the embers with a stick.

BRET (CONT'D)

It all makes sense now.

VIOLET

What?

BRET

Everything Gahiji said.

A bird rests on a tree and coos softly.

BRET

He was grooming me to take over the village when he died. All this time.

VIOLET

He couldn't have known.

BRET

All this damn time, and I didn't see it.

VIOLET

You couldn't have known.

BRET

Yeah, no one could have known, but he did. He knew, and he's been hoping for me to see something I wasn't getting for ten years.

VIOLET

Gahiji is...was proud of you.

BRET

I'm not ready yet.

VIOLET

You have to be.

Bret gets up and runs fingers through his hair.

BRET

I need to think. Good night.

Violet starts after him and stops.

VIOLET

Wait.

Bret turns to her.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Could you just stay a while?

Bret nods and sits back down. Violet follows. The two continue staring at the fire.

EXT. COMMUNAL FIRE PIT - DAY

Violet wakes up in front of the fire, a blanket draped over her.

EXT. HUT

In the distance, Bret helps a group of the survivors rebuilding a hut. Further still in the distance, a long line of people carry hut-building materials toward the village.

BRET

Alright, guys, we're making good work of this!

Bret looks in Violet's direction. Once he notices Violet is awake, he cracks a small smile.

BRET

(yelling)

Get over here! We have a lot to do!

EXT. GAHIJI'S WORK AREA- NIGHT

Violet watches Bret hammer a new piece of wood to the charred remains of Gahiji's work area.

VIOLET

I can't believe they've already
built so much back.

BRET

You've been a part of that.

VIOLET

And it makes me feel alive. It
makes me feel like we're helping
them bring new life into the world.

BRET

That's what they teach. They're a
resilient people.

VIOLET

You're one of them.

He stops hammering and sits next to her.

BRET (CONT'D)

Violet, you know you have to go to
Kigali.

VIOLET

No.

BRET

You need to go.

VIOLET

I want to stay here and help.

BRET

You need to do this, if not for yourself, then for me. They're going to want to put you someplace safer.

VIOLET

What, like home?

BRET

No, like somewhere where you feed kids your lunch every day.

She smacks him playfully.

BRET (CONT'D)

Besides, we need you to find out why this happened.

VIOLET

Yes.

Violet takes a handful of dirt and sifts it through her fingers.

VIOLET

I don't want them to call me away from here. I want to stay.

BRET

I want that too.

He stands up and begins hammering again.

BRET (CONT'D)

But that's for them to decide, not me or you.

He pauses.

BRET (CONT'D)

Heck, maybe it's not even for them to decide. Maybe life decides for us.

He continues his work, Violet watching him.

EXT. EN ROUTE TO KIGALI - DAY

Violet watches the landscape pass by. The YOUNG DRIVER, a man of about 20, eyes her.

YOUNG DRIVER

Um, you never told me where you're going.

VIOLET

Kigali.

YOUNG DRIVER

Yeah, but where?

He refocuses his eyes on the road and turns on the radio. Violet snaps into focus.

VIOLET

Turn it off.

He does, and they sit in silence.

EXT - KIGALI - DAY

Kigali hasn't changed a bit. The same vendors prod her, the same meats sizzle on the spit, and the same vibrantly-dressed women float around her. The city is untouched.

Violet, in the middle of it all, pushes her way through the crowd.

What seems to be a FOREIGNER passes her way. Violet pushes past people to get to her.

VIOLET

Hey! Hey, excuse me!

Violet stops in front of her.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Do you speak English?

FOREIGNER

(in thick accent)

Yes.

VIOLET

Did something happen here?

The woman looks suspicious, moving her purse to the arm opposite Violet.

VIOLET

I mean, have there been any political issues here or...anything?

FOREIGNER

No, nothing's happened here. I don't know what you mean.

VIOLET

Oh, I see. It's just that some of
the local villages...

Violet gives up. In the distance, she sees the Ubumwe
building.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Sorry, have a good day.

Determined, she weaves through the crowd.

The woman, puzzled, checks her bag and walks away.

INT. UBUMWE OFFICE - DAY

Violet walks into the office with authority. The same
receptionist, Leon, sits at his desk pensively chewing a
danish.

VIOLET

Where's Pierre?

Leon looks up sheepishly.

LEON

Uh...

VIOLET

I'm not going to wait for you to
figure out what lie you want to
tell me. Where is Pierre?

LEON

Not here?

VIOLET

(unconvinced)
Really?

LEON

Yes, really.

VIOLET

Where might I find him, then?

LEON

I don't know.

VIOLET

This is bullshit.

LEON

Excuse me, miss?

VIOLET

You heard me. I want some answers,
and you're going to give them to
me. Do you even know what's
happened?

Crumbs fall from his mouth, and he scurries after a
napkin.

LEON

Alright, alright.

He walks over to his desk and retrieves a key.

LEON (CONT'D)

Honest to goodness, I have no idea
what's going on.

He fumbles with the key in the lock.

LEON (CONT'D)

Uh, Pierre had told me to operate
as usual if anything strange
happened...

He finally unlocks the door and opens it. The room is
empty save the skeleton of Pierre's desk.

LEON (CONT'D)

...but I'm not sure what to do
about this.

VIOLET

What?

LEON

Yeah, you should have seen me.

Violet saunters into the room and opens up Pierre's
drawers. Nothing.

VIOLET

Something happened in Muramba.

LEON

Yes, I know.

She stops and stares at him.

LEON

Don't look at me like that. I know
because I received a letter from...

VIOLET

From who?

LEON

...I don't know.

She shoves the drawers shut.

VIOLET

And you did nothing about it!

LEON

Hey, it *supposedly* happened days ago. You need confirmation on these things.

Violet walks past him and back into his office.

VIOLET

Well, now it's confirmed.

Brushing past him, she arrives at his desk, sits down, and rummages through it.

Leon rushes over to her, but does nothing.

LEON

Hey, hey! Whoa!

VIOLET

Do you have any idea what you're doing?

She grabs his lapel.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Did your letter tell you how many people died?

LEON

You act like this is the first time something like this has happened.

VIOLET

You've lost me, and I'm growing impatient with you.

LEON

The reality is that many of our ambassadors of recent days are lying in a mass grave somewhere. To downplay the danger is to keep our people receiving the help they need from people who would not come otherwise.

VIOLET

You sound like a puppet.

LEON

Heck, maybe I am, but people still need help.

VIOLET

Okay, so you and your organization lied to me. I get it. But how am I supposed to trust you guys now?

Leon looks toward an old photograph of Pierre and his family.

LEON

Pierre is one of the greatest men
I've ever known. We're trying our
best here, but some things are
simply out of our control.

VIOLET

Where is Pierre?

LEON

I told you. I don't know.

VIOLET

Where do you think he would be? Who
can I talk to about this?

LEON

Parliament's office?

VIOLET

Good.

She makes her way toward the door.

LEON (CONT'D)

Weren't you that sheepish volunteer
over in Muramba?

VIOLET

Yes.

LEON

What the hell happened to you?

VIOLET

Life.

INT. RWANDAN GOVERNMENT OFFICES - DAY

Violet makes her way to a kiosk at the end of office's main plaza.

At the desk, BEATRIZ, a beautiful Rwandan women, smiles at her.

BEATRIZ

Hi, how may I help you?

VIOLET

Where is Pierre Augustin?

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

I'm not sure I understand.

VIOLET

I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. Where is he?

The woman looks both ways and retrieves a letter from a desk drawer.

BEATRIZ

Tell no one.

Violet smiles broadly.

VIOLET

Thank you so much for the directions. Gosh, I feel like such a tourist!

Beatriz looks to her and winks.

BEATRIZ

The pleasure is all mine.

INT. EN ROUTE FROM KIGALI - DAY

Violet, sitting in the car, takes her bag and retrieves the letter. She opens it and pulls out a typed letter.

The young driver hums as she reads.

PIERRE (V.O.)

If you are reading this, you are one of the noble volunteers who has chosen to work with the Ubumwe organization.

The sun sets against the horizon quickly.

PIERRE (V.O.)

I understand that my method of communication is strange at best, but I felt it necessary that if something should happen to me, I wanted the people I trust, most notably my volunteers, to have understanding of their situation.

Violet looks up from the page and up at the trees passing above them.

PIERRE (V.O.)

Should you receive this letter, know that I have taken every precaution to protect you, and I am sorry if this was not my priority in the past. My people are my life, and I fear that, in making them

first, I inadvertently placed
others in danger.

Violet puts the letter back in her bag.

PIERRE (V.O.)

Before the writing of this letter,
I contacted the American Red Cross,
who, upon understanding the
situation, planned to relieve every
volunteer and replace them with a
highly skilled worker who can
assess what damage has been done
and act accordingly. In accordance
with this, I must regretfully ask
that you leave this place as soon
as possible.

Violet closes her eyes. The car jostles her softly.

PIERRE (V.O.)

Again, thank you for your work. I
pray the best of luck to you and
that your experience with my people
has been even a slice of what it
has been to me. Live life, my dear
friends, and carry the stories of
my people with you!

The young driver makes a beat with his fists on the
steering wheel.

EXT. IMANIRERE'S HUT - NIGHT

Violet approaches a hut seemingly in the middle of
nowhere.

VIOLET

Elder?

She raps on the door quietly. Various noises of movement ensue.

IMANIRERE

Yes, yes. I'm coming.

She opens the door.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

Ah, pretty child. Come in.

INT. IMANIRERE'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

The room is filled with trinkets and rustic linens. Pillows line the floor. Souvenirs left from other volunteers scatter the room.

Imanirere plops herself on a pillow and beckons Violet to do the same.

VIOLET

I'm here because--

IMANIRERE

--you must go. I know.

VIOLET

What? How did you know.

IMANIRERE

Magic.

Violet stares at her in disbelief.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

(laughing)

No, child. I received information from a white friend of mine that all the volunteers were going to be...how do you say it?

VIOLET

I suppose evacuated would be the proper word.

IMANIRERE

Huh. Evacuated. And you, my dear, want answers from a wise old sage.

VIOLET

Well...

IMANIRERE

Ha, I am right again! This old head is good for something!

She grabs her cane and rises, shuffling toward dozens of Polaroid pictures of her with various volunteers.

She grabs a beaded necklace from a shelf and fingers it.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

My dear, what you've come for I can't put cocoa butter on. Your heart is aching.

Tears roll down Violet's face.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

You love.

VIOLET

Yes.

IMANIRERE

We love you too. You have done so much.

VIOLET

I want to do more. I want to help more!

IMANIRERE

Sometimes child, there are things...things in life that are meant to be like the passing of a leaf.

She makes her way over to Violet and drops the necklace in her lap.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

You are young, and there are so many more passing days that will grow you into a stronger, better woman. You have learned what you can here, and now you must move on.

VIOLET

Me learning about myself wasn't the reason I came here. I wanted to--

IMANIRERE

--Child! That is why we have volunteers come here! They think it is all for us, but many times, it is really just as much for them.

VIOLET

I want to stay here and learn more,
Elder. You and your people are so
strong. What happened with the
village...

IMANIRERE

Happened. Your notions of mourning
and long sadness are a very western
thing. Here, we pick up the pieces
and move on, keeping their wishes
with us.

VIOLET

I want to be a part of that.

IMANIRERE

When life is beckoning you away?
Take your chance and make something
new of it. We will stay with you.

VIOLET

I know.

IMANIRERE

He will stay with you too.

She gestures toward the bead necklace.

IMANIRERE (CONT'D)

Bret made that necklace one of the
first days he came here. I've held
onto it since, watching as he grew
into more of a man with each
passing day. You've made that final

change in him, so you can take it now. I no longer need to remember where he's come from.

VIOLET

Thank you.

Imanirere picks up a broom and begins sweeping.

IMANIRERE

Now go, and God's peace be with you! You have much to do and say before you leave. No need to cry the crocodile tears in front of an old woman like me.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Violet, carrying her luggage bag, walks with Bret toward the outskirts of the village. Their steps are hesitant and solemn, but their tones attempt to conceal this.

VIOLET

You won't even carry a lady's bag.

BRET

Hell, you're gonna have to carry it from here to the station anyway, so you better get used to it.

They chuckle.

Standing a few feet apart, they shuffle uncomfortably.

BRET

So this is it.

VIOLET

Yeah, I suppose it is.

BRET

I guess we didn't have those grandkids, huh?

VIOLET

(chuckling)
I guess not.

BRET

Vi, come back someday.

VIOLET

Yes, someday.

He closes the distance and embraces her.

BRET

I...

VIOLET

Yes, yes.

They move away and stare at one another. Violet heaves her bag and starts walking away.

All at once, rain begins to fall. Violet turns around, and the rain intensifies.

Bret begins to laugh, Violet following.

Yards apart, they laugh till they cry, a mixture of joy and sadness.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The day is sunny and thick with moisture from the sudden shower. From it, the station seems to have come alive since the last time Violet visited it.

Bushes and branches shake their thirst-quenched leaves, and even the train has taken on a new shine. The once-deserted stop is bustling with people-- African women and men in an array of bright colors.

Everyone seems to have acquired a second wind from the rain, and they twist and turn between Violet as she makes her way further into the crowd.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Violet boards the train and settles into her seat, throwing her bag beside her.

All at once, a woman starts singing. It's in Kinyarwanda, and her voice belies a million different emotions. The woman, dressed even more brightly than the others, shakes her braids as she sings and raises her hands to the ceiling.

The rest of the crowd seems to know the song, many starting to sing. Some look out the window pensively, others turn toward her.

The woman raises her voice higher, and as her smile widens, she begins to cry, her sobs ringing out between each breath.

EXT. TRAIN STATION

The TRAIN'S GEARS spring to life and churn slowly, building as the song reaches it crescendo.

INT. TRAIN

Violet looks out the window, tears welling up in her eyes. All at once, she smiles broadly and begins singing along with them.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE OUTYLING VILLAGE - DAY

Under the canopy of a tree, two flowers lie intertwined.

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