





# MACHETE SEASON

**THE KILLERS IN RWANDA SPEAK**

A REPORT BY

**JEAN HATZFELD**

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

**LINDA COVERDALE**

PREFACE BY

**SUSAN SONTAG**

**FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX / NEW YORK**

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX  
19 Union Square West, New York 10003

Copyright © 2003 by Éditions du Seuil  
Translation copyright © 2005 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC  
Preface copyright © 2005 by Susan Sontag  
All rights reserved

Distributed in Canada by Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.  
Printed in the United States of America  
Originally published in 2003 by Éditions du Seuil, France,  
as *Une saison de machettes*  
Published in the United States by Farrar, Straus and Giroux  
First American edition, 2005

This book is published with the assistance of the French Ministry  
of Culture—National Book Center.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Hatzfeld, Jean.

[*Saison de machettes*. English]

*Machete season : the killers in Rwanda speak : a report* / by Jean  
Hatzfeld ; preface by Susan Sontag ; translated from the French by  
Linda Coverdale.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-0-374-28082-6

ISBN-10: 0-374-28082-7 (alk. paper)

1. Rwanda—History—Civil War, 1994—Atrocities.
2. Rwanda—History—Civil War, 1994—Personal narratives.
3. Tutsi (African people)—Crimes against—Rwanda—History—  
20th century. 4. Hutu (African people)—Rwanda. 5. Genocide—  
Rwanda—History—20th century. 6. Rwanda—Ethnic relations—  
History—20th century. I. Title.

DT450.435.H3914 2005

967.57104'31—dc22

2004061600

Designed by Gretchen Achilles

[www.fsgbooks.com](http://www.fsgbooks.com)

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

## CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Maps</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Chronology of Events in Rwanda and Especially in Nyamata</i>	<i>xi</i>
<b>EARLY MORNING</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HOW IT WAS ORGANIZED</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>THE THREE HILLS</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>THE FIRST TIME</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>A GANG</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>APPRENTICESHIP</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>GROUP SPIRIT</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>TASTE AND DISTASTE</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>GOING INTO ACTION</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>FIELD WORK</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>A NEIGHBORHOOD GENOCIDE</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>PUNISHMENT</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>SOME THOUGHTS ON CORRUGATED METAL</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>LOOTING</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>A SEALED CHAMBER</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>REJOICING IN THE VILLAGE</b>	<b>93</b>

<b>THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ESCAPE NETWORKS</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>IN SEARCH OF THE JUST</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>ACQUAINTANCES</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>PENITENTIARY WALLS</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>SUFFERING</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>GUYS IN GOOD SHAPE</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>AND GOD IN ALL THIS?</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>IN THE SHADE OF AN ACACIA</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>REMORSE AND REGRETS</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>JOSEPH-DÉSIRÉ BITERO</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>THE ORGANIZERS</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>BEHIND THE <i>MUDUGUDUS</i></b>	<b>183</b>
<b>LIFE GOES ON</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>BARGAINING FOR FORGIVENESS</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>PARDONS</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>A NOBLE BEARING</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>HATRED OF THE TUTSIS</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>AN UNNATURAL SLAUGHTER</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>WORDS TO AVOID SAYING IT</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>DEATH IN THE EYE OF A KILLER</b>	<b>235</b>
 <i>The Killers</i>	 <b>245</b>

## PREFACE

Our is, appallingly, an age of genocide, but even so, what happened in Rwanda in the spring of 1994 stands out in several ways. In a tiny, landlocked African country smaller than the state of Maryland, some 800,000 people were hacked to death, one by one, by their neighbors. The women, men, and children who were slaughtered were of the same race and shared the same language, customs, and confession (Roman Catholic) as those who eagerly slaughtered them.

"It's too difficult to judge us," says one of the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide who agreed to describe to Jean Hatzfeld what he had done. Why? "Because what we did goes beyond human imagination." But that is just the point. Yes, what was done in Rwanda goes beyond human imagination, and yes, human beings, hundreds of thousands of otherwise normal people, not professional killers, did it. Against the constant backdrop of reflection about the Shoah and other modern genocides, Hatzfeld has harvested a unique set of avowals that forces us to confront the unthinkable, the unimaginable. This is not courtroom testimony but a series of remarkably varied reflections by articulate people who do, in large measure, understand what they have done and still hope to be forgiven and to get on with their lives.

Our obligation, and it is an obligation, is to take in what human beings are capable of doing to one another, not spontaneously (crimes of this order are never spontaneous) but when mobilized to think of other human beings—people who were

## FIELD WORK

**ALPHONSE:** For someone plodding up the slope of old age, that killing period was more backbreaking than stoop labor. Because we had to climb the hills and chase through the slime after the runaways. The legs especially took a beating.

At first the activity was less repetitive than sowing; it cheered us up, so to speak. Afterward it became the same every day. More than anything, we missed going home to eat at noon. At noon we often found ourselves deep in the marshes; that is why the midday meal and our usual afternoon naps were forbidden us by the authorities.

**JEAN-BAPTISTE:** No one was going to their fields anymore. Why dig in the dirt when we were harvesting without working, eating our fill without growing a thing? The only chore was to bury bananas in pits, out in abandoned banana groves, to allow the next batch of *urwagwa* to ferment. We became lazy. We did not bury the bodies—it was wasted effort—except, of course, if by bad luck a Tutsi was killed in his own field, which would bring a stench, dogs, and voracious animals.

**ADALBERT:** We roasted thick meat in the morning, and we roasted more meat in the evening. Anybody who once had eaten meat only at weddings, he found himself stuffed with it day after day.

Before, when we came home from the fields, we'd find almost nothing in the cooking pot, only our usual beans or sometimes

even just cassava gruel. When we got back from the marshes, in the *cabarets* of Kibungo we snapped up roast chickens, haunches of cow, and drinks to remedy our fatigue. We found women or children everywhere offering them to us for reasonable prices. And brochettes of goat meat, and cigarettes for those who wanted to try them.

We overflowed with life for this new job. We were not afraid of wearing ourselves out running around in the swamps. And if we turned lucky at work, we became happy. We abandoned the crops, the hoes, and the like. We talked no more among ourselves about farming. Worries let go of us.

**PANCRACE:** Cutting corn or bananas, it's a smooth job, because ears of corn and hands of bananas are all the same—nothing troublesome there. Cutting in the marshes, that was more and more tiring, you know why. It was a similar motion but not a similar situation, it was more hazardous. A hectic job.

In the beginning the Tutsis were many and frightened and not very active—that made our work easier. When we could not catch the most agile of them, we fell back on the puny ones. But at the end only the strong and sly ones were left, and it got too hard. They gathered in little groups, very well hidden. They were picking up all the tricks of the marsh game creatures. When we arrived, too often we would get all mired up for nothing. Even the hunters grew discouraged. Plus, the marshes were rotting with bodies softening in the slime. These were piling up, stinking more and more, and we had to take care not to step in them.

That's why our colleagues grew lazy. They turned their steps in another direction and waited for the signal to go home. They muttered about missing farm work, but they were a small number. Besides, not one of them put in a little hour clearing brush out in the front of his field. Those colleagues were grumbling just



because they were impatient to pop a Primus. They were thirsty for more than work. They were getting fed up with the marshes because they felt well off. It wasn't longing for their hoes that made them bellyache, but laziness.

**LÉOPORD:** Killing was less wearisome than farming. In the marshes, we could lag around for hours looking for someone to slaughter without getting penalized. We could shelter from the sun and chat without feeling idle. The workday didn't last as long as in the fields. We returned at three o'clock to have time for pillaging. We fell asleep every evening safe from care, no longer worried about drought. We forgot our torments as farmers. We gorged on vitamin-rich foods.

Some among us tasted pastries and sweets like candies for the first time in our lives. We got our supplies without paying, in the center of Nyamata, in shops where farmers had never gone before.

**FULGENCE:** Hunting in the swamps was more unpleasant than digging in the fields. On account of the commotion in the morning, the agitation of the intimidators, and the severity of the *intera-hamwe*. The changes in habits most of all. Agriculture is our real profession, not killing. On our plots of land, time and the weather know how to organize us with the seasons and sowing; each person cultivates at will what the field will give.

In the marshes, we felt bumped around, we found ourselves too crowded, too carefully penned in. The hubbub in other sectors sometimes bothered us. When the *intera-hamwe* noticed idlers, that could be serious. They would shout, "We came a long way to give you a hand, and you're slopping around behind the papyrus!" They might yell insults and threats at us in their anger.

We felt far from home. We weren't used to working at the call of a whistle, for going out and back.

But as to fatigue and bounty, it was better. During the growing season, if malaria fevers pin you to your bed, well, your wife or your children go to the fields for food and come home worn out. Or else your empty belly chases away your sleep.

During the killings, passing neighbors dropped off more food than you could fit in your pot—it overflowed at no cost to you. Meat became as common as cassava. Hutus had always felt cheated of cattle because they didn't know how to raise them. They said cows didn't taste good, but it was from scarcity. So, during the massacres they ate beef morning and evening, to their heart's content.

**IGNACE:** One evening at the rough beginning, we came back late. We had spent the day running after the fugitives. We were tired.

But on the way back, we discovered another group of girls and boys. We pushed them along as prisoners to the judge's house. He ordered that they be sliced up on the spot, in the dark. No one grumbled despite our weariness from an exhausting day. But afterward he assigned us ordinary schedules such as we were used to. That relieved us.

**PIO:** Farming is simpler, because it is our lifelong occupation. The hunts were more unpredictable. It was even more tiring on days of large-scale operations, patrolling so many kilometers behind the *interahamwe*, through the papyrus and mosquitoes.

But we can't say we missed the fields. We were more at ease in this hunting work, because we had only to bend down to harvest food, sheet metal, and loot. Killing was a demanding but more gratifying activity. The proof: no one ever asked permission to go clear brush on his field, not even for a half-day.

**ÉLIE:** It was punishment to rummage through the papyrus all day long without coming back to eat at noon. The belly could gripe, and the calves, too, since they were soaking in mud. Still, we ate abundant meat each morning, we drank deep in the evening. That balanced things properly. The looting reinvigorated us more than any harvest could, and we stopped earlier in the day. This schedule in the marshes was more suitable, for the young and especially the old.

**IGNACE:** Killing could certainly be thirsty work, draining and often disgusting. Still, it was more productive than raising crops, especially for someone with a meager plot of land or barren soil. During the killings anyone with strong arms brought home as much as a merchant of quality. We could no longer count the panels of sheet metal we were piling up. The taxmen ignored us. The women were satisfied with everything we brought in. They stopped complaining.

For the simplest farmers, it was refreshing to leave the hoe in the yard. We got up rich, we went to bed with full bellies, we lived a life of plenty. Pillaging is more worthwhile than harvesting, because it profits everyone equally.

Clémentine: "The men left without knowing what their day's weariness would be. But in any case they knew what they would collect along the way. They returned with tired but laughing faces, tossing out jokes to one another, as in seasons of bumper harvests. It was clear from their manner that they were leading an exciting life.

"For the women, life was restful above all. They abandoned the fields and marketplaces. There was no more need to plant, to shell beans, to walk to market. Simply seeking brought finding. When our columns of Hutu fugitives set out for Congo, they left

behind neglected fields where the brush had already eaten up several seasons of farm work.”

**ALPHONSE:** It was a grubby job but a job without worries about drought or spoiled crops, we can certainly say that. On his plot the farmer is never sure what the harvest will bring. One season he'll see his sacks swollen, so his wife can carry them to market, and another season he'll see them flapping thin. He'll think about slinking away from the eyes of the taxmen. He'll show an anxious and sometimes miserable face.

But in the Tutsis' abandoned houses, we knew we'd find quantities of new goods. We started with the sheet metal, and the rest followed.

That time greatly improved our lives since we profited from everything we'd never had before. The daily Primus,\* the cow meat, the bikes, the radios, the sheet metal, the windows, everything. People said it was a lucky season, and that there would not be another.

*\*This Belgian brand is the most popular beer in Rwanda. Brewed in Gisenyi, a city on the western border, across from Goma in Congo, it is sold only in one-liter bottles. Inexpensive, slightly bitter, with a normal alcoholic content, it is drunk lukewarm and straight from the bottle, nursed along in endless tiny sips. Mutzig (brewed in Burundi) and Amstel are two drab rivals of this champion brew.*

freedom to complete the task. So we thought, Good, it's true, the blue helmets did nothing at Nyamata except an about-face to leave us alone. Why would they come back before it's all over? At the signal, off we went.

We were certain of killing everyone without drawing evil looks. Without getting a scolding from a white or a priest. We joked about it instead of pressing our advantage. We felt too at ease with an unfamiliar job that had gotten off to a good start. But time and laziness played an ugly trick on us. Basically, we became too sure of ourselves, and we slowed down. That overconfidence is what did us in.

## REJOICING IN THE VILLAGE

**ALPHONSE:** The first evening, coming home from the massacre in the church, our welcome was very well put together by the organizers. We all met up again back on the soccer field. Guns were shooting into the air, whistles and suchlike musical instruments were sounding.

The children pushed into the center all the cows rounded up during the day. Burgomaster Bernard offered the forty fattest ones to the *interahamwe*, to thank them, and the other cows to the people, to encourage them. We spent the evening slaughtering the cattle, singing, and chatting about the new days on the way. It was the most terrific celebration.

**JEAN-BAPTISTE:** Evenings the gang would get together in a *cabaret*, in Nyarunazi or Kibungo, it depended. We might also go from one to the other. We ordered cases of Primus, we drank, and we fooled around to rest up from our day.

Some spent sleepless nights emptying bottles and became even wilder. Others went on home to rest after having an ordinary relaxing evening. Rowdies kept on slaughtering cows after the killings because they couldn't put down their machetes. So it wasn't possible to herd the cows for the future, and they had to be eaten on the spot.

Me, I went through those festivities with a pretend smile and a worried ear. I had posted a young watcher to make rounds

about my house, but I stayed on the alert. The safety of my Tutsi wife tormented me, especially during the drinking sessions.

**FULGENCE:** In the *cabaret*, we made comparisons and had contests. Many upped their numbers to increase their shares. Others lowered their numbers because it bothered them to recount the blood spilled and to boast about it. People cheated both ways and made fun of those who exaggerated too obviously. There is one, however, well known today in prison, who bragged of more than thirty victims in one big day, without anyone accusing him of lying.

**PANCRACE:** The evening atmosphere was festive, but some came spoiling for a fight, their fists clenched or machetes still dirty in their hands, because of badly distributed land. For fields, negotiations got very serious. Since many drank Primus without counting, it could get chancy.

At night the bosses were gone and their authority with them; conditions in town were no longer controlled, as they were in the marshes during the day. It was heated and disreputable. So the women would come looking for their husbands and take them home if they heard they were in bad company.

**ADALBERT:** Vagabond children, children from the streets of Nyamata, more or less abandoned by misfortune, took part in the marshes. Little good-for-nothings, so to speak. But the educated children of the farmers—they could not go. They contented themselves with the looting activities and the merrymaking on the hills.

**ALPHONSE:** During the killings, we had not one wedding, not one baptism, not one soccer match, not one religious service like

Easter. We did not find that kind of celebration interesting anymore. We did not care spit for that Sunday silliness. We were dead tired from work, we were getting greedy, we celebrated whenever we felt like it, we drank as much as we wanted. Some turned into drunks.

Anyone who felt sad about someone he had killed really had to hide his words and his regrets, for fear of being seen as an accomplice and being treated roughly. Sometimes drinkers went mean when they had found no one to kill that day; others went mean because they had killed too much. You had to show them a smiling face, or watch out.

Clémentine: "In the evening, families listened to music, folk dances, Rwandan or Burundian music. Thanks to the many stolen audiocassettes, families in every house could enjoy music. They all felt equally richer, without jealousy or backbiting, and they congratulated themselves. The men sang, everyone drank, the women changed dresses three times in an evening. It was noisier than weddings, it was drunken reveling every day."

ÉLIE: We no longer worried about wasting batteries, we turned on all the radios at once. The blast of music never stopped. We listened to dance music and traditional Rwandan songs, we listened to soap operas. We did not listen to the speeches and news anymore.

Basically, we didn't give a hoot what they were scheming up in Kigali. We paid no more attention to events in the country, as long as we knew the killing was continuing everywhere without a snag. Poor people seemed at ease, the rich seemed cheerful, the future promised us good times. We were satisfied with our private celebrations, with eating well, drinking well, and having lots of fun.



Besides, a youth could hide a girl he had brought back from the marshes, to have her behind a pen or a clump of bushes. But when he had had enough or when tongues started wagging, he had to kill her, to avoid a serious penalty.

Clémentine: "I knew the gang well. Those boys were known in Kibungo for bad behavior when they had had a lot to drink. Before the killings, they used to harass Tutsis. They would lay ambushes to throw taunts and punches at them. Some in the gang spoke extreme words against the Tutsis, calling them cockroaches and threatening them with an evil end. The older ones especially did that, and it made the young ones laugh.

"So during the killings, that gang muscled up to the front line in the marshes. They went off together with great strides, they helped one another during the day, they came back staggering beneath loads of spoils. Evenings they spun out all their boasting to demoralize those who hadn't had as good a hunt. They never tired of killing, mocking, drinking, laughing, celebrating. They displayed constant merriment."

**LÉOPORD:** In the evening, we told about Tutsis who had been obstinate, those who had gotten themselves caught, those who had gotten away. Some of us had contests. Others made predictions or bets to win an extra Primus. The bragging amused us—even if you lost, you put on a smile.

We had sessions with girls who were raped in the bush. Nobody dared protest that. Even those who were edgy about it, because they had received blessings in church for example, told themselves it would change nothing since the girl was marked for death anyway.

Me, I had no taste for such messing around; I didn't like the drink so much, either. I would take a little for solidarity, then go

home to bed early, around eight o'clock, to be in shape the next day. Since I was a cell leader, I had to feel always ready.

**ADALBERT:** There were two kinds of rapists. Some took the girls and used them as wives until the end, even on the flight to Congo; they took advantage of the situation to sleep with prettified Tutsis and in exchange showed them a little bit of consideration. Others caught them just to fool around with, for having sex and drinking; they raped for a little while and then handed them over to be killed right afterward. There were no orders from the authorities. The two kinds were free to do as they pleased.

Of course a great number didn't do that, had no taste for it or respect for such misbehaving. Most said it was not proper, to mix together fooling around and killing.

**FULGENCE:** In the evening, the atmosphere was very lively. But at night it turned different as soon as I got home. My wife appeared fearful with me. She no longer felt safe, she simply didn't want to do it anymore. She turned away from me. Waking and sleeping separated us—we no longer hoped in the same way. A number of colleagues went looking for sex in the woods just because of a change of climate in their beds.

**ÉLIE:** We went home full, we had drunk well. That time offered us carefree evenings of enjoyment. It mixed up Good and Evil for us. It showed us a welcoming smile. With my wife, things went normally. She knew that after such a day I could not do without it.

## W O M E N

**PANCRACE:** I think that women are guided by their husbands. When a husband goes out in the morning to kill and comes home in the evening with food, if the wife lights the fire under the cooking pot, then it is because she supports him in the traditional way. My wife did not lecture me, she did not turn away from me in bed. She reproached me only on those days when I overdid it.

**FULGENCE:** The women showered us sometimes with advice, sometimes with reproaches. Some women showed pity for their Tutsi neighbors and tried to hide them for a few days. But if they were caught, the women did not risk anything except getting their husbands in trouble. My wife scolded me several times—she warned me I might well lose my head in the marshes. I told her that these killings could no longer be stopped. She asked me above all to keep my mouth shut.

**P10:** In the Rwandan family, the man is the first one responsible for right and wrong actions, in the eyes of the authorities and neighbors. If a woman wanted to hide Tutsi acquaintances, she had to get permission from her husband, because if she was found out, of course he was the one condemned by his neighbors to cut those acquaintances with his own hand, in public, right in front of his house. It was a punishment of some importance. It was a

big thing to cut a person with whom you had shared years both good and bad.

The women were less deciding, they were less punishable, they were less active. They were in the second rank in that activity of genocide.

But really, in the Tutsi camp it was quite the opposite. The killings were more serious for the wives than for the husbands, if in addition they were raped at the end and saw their little ones get cut before their eyes.

**JEAN-BAPTISTE:** It is a country custom that women do not concern themselves with any bothersome task of cutting. The machete is for a man's work. This was as true for the farming as for the killing.

So during the killings, the women continued to prepare the meals in the morning, and during the rest of the day they went looting. They were storing up goods instead of crops, so they were not unhappy. They didn't complain because they knew that in any case the operation was intended to succeed completely. They dared not show any sign of disagreement with the men's brutality, not even the simple gesture of a mama's kindness.

In Ntarama I do not know of a single Hutu woman who hid away a little Tutsi child to save it from the massacre of its family. Not even a toddler wrapped in a cloth or a nursling unrecognizable to her neighbors because of its tender age. Not one woman on the whole hill cheated in the way of a rescue, not even for a short moment of trying.

**ADALBERT:** The women led a more ordinary life. They house-cleaned, they tended to the cooking, they looted the surrounding area, they gossiped and haggled in town. There were fierce wives

who wanted to march off on expeditions and help with the killing, but they were prevented by the organizers, who lectured them that a woman's place was not in the marshes. I know one case of a woman who bloodied her hands out there, a too quick-tempered woman who wanted a reputation for herself.

Still, if women happened to come upon some Tutsis hidden in an abandoned house, that was different.

Marie-Chantal: "When my husband came home in the evenings, I knew the disturbing gossip, I knew he was a boss, but I asked him nothing. He left the blades outside. He no longer showed the slightest temper anymore in the house, he spoke of the Good Lord. He was cheerful with the children, he brought back little presents and words of encouragement, and that pleased me.

"I don't know of any wife who whispered against her husband during the massacres. Jealous wives, mocking wives, dangerous wives—even if they did not kill directly, they fanned the burning zeal of their husbands. They weighed the loot, they compared the spoils. Desire fired them up in those circumstances.

"There were also men who proved more charitable toward the Tutsis than their wives, even with their machetes in hand. A person's wickedness depends on the heart, not the sex."

**JEAN-BAPTISTE:** During the killings, much jealousy spilled from the mouths of our women because of the constant talk about the Tutsi women's slender figures, their smooth skin thanks to drinking milk, and so on. When those envious women came upon a Tutsi searching for food in the forest, they called their neighbors to taunt her for crawling around that way all slovenly. Sometimes women shoved a neighbor to the bottom of the hill and threw her bodily into the waters of the Nyabarongo.

**ALPHONSE:** My wife would tell me, "Listen, really, going every day, every day, it's too much. These filthy things should be stopped," and suchlike recommendations I ignored.

One evening she scolded me, "Alphonse, be careful. Everything you are doing will have accursed consequences, because it is not normal and passes all humanity. So much blood provokes a fate beyond our lives. We are going toward damnation." Around the end she refused to share the bed, she slept on the ground, she said, "You are cutting so many, you cannot count them anymore. I am afraid of this foul thing. You are turning into an animal, and I won't sleep with an animal."

**IGNACE:** I did not hear many women protesting against Tutsis being raped. They knew this work of killing fiercely heated up the men in the marshes. They agreed on this, except of course if the men did their dirty sex work near the houses.

Any wife who wished to tag along on the hunting raids got sent back by her husband, who asked her to mind the house and see to the looting.

**ÉLIE:** It was impossible for the women to squabble with their men over those killings and the foolish sex matters. After all, they themselves had to go looting, too, to deal with hunger, since the crops were being neglected. The men, the women—no upset came between them during the killings. The men went out to kill, the women went out to pillage; the women sold, the men drank; it was the same as with farming.

**LÉOPORD:** The women vied with one another in ferocity toward the Tutsi women and children that they might flush out in an abandoned house. But their most remarkable enterprise was fighting over the fabrics and the trousers. After the expeditions

they scavenged and stripped the dead. If a victim was still panting, they dealt a mortal blow with some hand tool or turned their backs and abandoned the dying to their last sighs—as they pleased.

**PANCRAE:** In a war, you kill someone who fights you or promises you harm. In killings of this kind, you kill the Tutsi woman you used to listen to the radio with, or the kind lady who put medicinal plants on your wounds, or your sister who was married to a Tutsi. Or even, for some unlucky devils, your own Tutsi wife and your children, by general demand. You slaughter the woman same as the man. That is the difference, which changes everything.

**FULGENCE:** The Hutu women imprisoned at Rilima are more fragile than the men, because they are never visited and fed by their husbands or their brothers. Many of them were denounced by envious people, to get the possessions of their dead husbands. They know themselves to be rejected by the past and the present. Which is why they are more reluctant to admit their crimes. When they have done what they have done, they keep silent.

Christine: “Today I worry about that, because many Hutu women have soaked their hands in the blood of genocide. Men are more liable to kill and to reconcile than women. Men forget more quickly, they share the killings and the drinks more easily. Women do not yield in the same way, they keep more memories.

“But I also know of good women, Hutus, who do not dare show compassion for fear of being accused in their turn.”

Clémentine: “The men came home from the marshes with savage faces. They behaved brusquely and glowered at the least little household problem. The women viewed their brutality with

fear. A few viewed them with anger and muttered against their bloody deeds, especially those like me who had been married to Tutsis they had killed. But most of them said they were content with everything brought back from the killings—like the sacks of beans, the clothing, the money. They went themselves to collect sheet metal and household utensils overlooked by looting husbands.

“Neighbor women asked me how I could have let myself be impregnated by a cockroach. They’d warn me not to hope for anything for my husband, since their men were firmly resolved to kill everyone. They advised me to teach my son that he hadn’t had a Tutsi father, that he was a full-blooded Hutu, because if he ever let his tongue slip later on, it would be deadly for him.

“In Nyamata the midwives returned to their jobs at the maternity hospital after the slaughter as though they had not seen any bloody marks upon the walls. They even snagged their last pay before leaving for Congo.

“On the hill of Kibungo not a single woman took in the child of a Tutsi neighbor who had gone to his death. Not one woman mixed a nursling in with her own brood. Not even for money. Not even in a forest hideout. Because the women did not want to be scolded by their husbands, if the men came home punished by a fine for that misdeed.”



## IN SEARCH OF THE JUST

It was close to noon on April 11, the first day of the Tutsi hunt on the hill of Ntarama. Isidore Mahandago was sitting on a chair in front of his *terres-tôle* house, resting after a morning of weeding. He was a Hutu farmer, sixty-five years old, who had arrived twenty years before in Rugunga, on the Ntarama hill.

Some strapping fellows armed with machetes came singing up the path that ran near his house. Isidore called to them in his deep old voice and lectured them in public, in front of the neighbors: "You, young men, are evildoers. Turn on your heels and go. Your blades point the way toward a dreadful misfortune for us all. Do not stir up disputes too dangerous for us farmers. Stop tormenting our neighbors and go back to your fields." Two killers approached him, laughing, and without a word cut him down with their machetes. Among the band was Isidore's son, who according to witnesses neither protested nor stopped to bend over the body. The young men went on their way singing.

→ Isidore Mahandago is the Just Man of Ntarama.

The next day, three kilometers away in the bush of Kibungo, Marcel Sengali was watching a herd of brindle Ankole with their lyre-shaped horns. The Sengali family lived in Kingabo, an area inhabited by Tutsis and by three Hutu families, including the Sengalis, who over time had learned from their neighbors how to raise cattle. Because of their mutual trust and friendship, the residents had combined their animals in a single herd.

Coming up the path, Hutu toughs armed with machetes spotted Marcel Sengali on the slope below among the cows, in the shade of a huge *umunzenze* tree. They sprang to the attack and, without even questioning him, hacked him to death. Searching the dead man's jacket, they discovered the word *Hutu* on his identity card and their bloody mistake.

Two days later Marcel's widow, Martienne Niyiragashoki, decided to follow her Tutsi neighbors, her lifelong friends, into the marshes where they were trying to escape the hordes of killers. Her son, Gahutu, was one of them. Learning of his mother's flight into the papyrus swamps, he went down to the edge of the bog several times to order her to come out, screaming promises of his protection. She refused each time, unlike other Hutus who, having first sought refuge in the marshes, usually in the company of a spouse, eventually abandoned their relatives and the swamp to save their own lives. Martienne's body was found much later, cut to pieces.

Marcel Sengali and Martienne Niyiragashoki are the Just of Kibungo.

François Kalinganiré was an influential civil servant in Kanzenze. He had even been burgomaster of Nyamata in the 1980s but was deposed in 1991 because he joined a moderate political organization when Rwanda's multiparty system was created. His tenure as director of the youth vocational center in Mayange had been without incident, although his adversaries still held a grudge against him.

On April 12, the second day of the slaughter, some of them appeared at his home, accompanied by *interahamwe*. Knowing he was married to a Tutsi, they ordered him to kill her to show support for the genocide. He refused stoically and forbade them to enter his house. Terrified by the confrontation, his neighbors

urged him to obey by sacrificing his wife. Instead, he tried to get rid of his visitors. He was murdered in his courtyard and buried on his property.

He is the Just Man of Kanzenze.

Joining these people, born in the region and known to us by name, are the anonymous Just. In the forest of Kayumba, looming above Nyamata, around five thousand souls struggled to escape the bloodbath, among them Innocent, Benoît the cattle breeder in his felt hat, Théoneste the ladies' tailor, and other friends who were wary of the churches and the marshes. Unlike those who remained motionless in the slime beneath the papyrus fronds, the fugitives of Kayumba sprinted and slalomed all day long among the eucalyptus, to evade the hunters hot on their heels and survive until nightfall.

One night Innocent encountered three strangers leaning against some trees, resting as they awaited the dawn. "They were Hutus who were not from here," remembers Innocent. "From Ruhengeri, I think. We call them *abapagasi*, guys who come to be day laborers on large plantations in exchange for food. We questioned them politely. They had not gone astray; they said that they were Pentecostalists, and Holy Scripture forbade them to kill men whom the Good Lord had created in His image. And since the authorities forbade them to leave the area, they had gone into the forest.

"In the chaos of the running chases, we lost track of them. Afterward I tried to discover their fate, but I never even heard any talk of them. Were they cut down in the melee? Did they manage to escape to their native region? Nobody knows. In any case, we were twenty survivors in the forest at the end, and they were not among us."

Those three agricultural workers are the unknown Just who surely represent other anonymous good souls.

And the Just who are still alive, who and where are they? In truth, after many visits and much searching, I have not yet met any of them on the three hills of Kibungo, Ntarama, and Kanzenze. But I can mention some other worthy people in their stead. Ibrahim Nsengiyumua, a prosperous merchant of Kibungo, paid fine after fine to avoid killing and looting, to the point of ruining himself. He did it "because he had amassed enough wealth in his life not to spoil it with blood," explains Innocent.

Valérie Nyirarudodo brought her little ones to her job at the maternity hospital one morning and left with an extra toddler. A mama, living in a house at the foot of the forest of Kayumba, slapped her children because they denounced Tutsis hidden in the bush. Many people, in the words of the young farmer Christine Nyiransabimana, "were able to pretend, to dawdle behind and return in the evening without dirtying their machetes . . . but had to show they were with the others."

In closing, one should mention the special case of spouses in mixed marriages who saved their wives and a few relatives in spite of the merciless sanctions. Unlike the Nazi administration, which generally classified Jewish spouses in a mixed marriage according to their religious faith and instruction, Jewish or Christian, and decided their fate on that criterion, the Habyarimana regime applied a more simplistic, sexist rule. Tutsi husbands of Hutu wives had to be executed, and they were, without exception. Tutsi wives of Hutu husbands could be spared, and sometimes their children with them—that is, if their husbands accepted conditions that Jean-Baptiste Murangira sums up as follows: "Tutsi wives of poor Hutus had to be killed, but their children could be spared. Tutsi wives of well-off Hutus could be saved if the husbands participated conspicuously in the killing duties."

Thus the census taker Jean-Baptiste Murangira saved his wife

Spéciose Mukandahunga; the judge Jean-Baptiste Ntarwandya saved his wife Drocelle Umupfasoni; the retired chief warrant officer Marc Nsabimana saved his wife Annonciata Mukaligo; the director of the post office and a few other prominent citizens and prosperous farmers protected their wives. Following his spontaneous confessions about "the killing duties," the census taker was sentenced to a prison term. Thanks to testimony in his favor, the judge was released after two years in prison; his case is closed, but he has not been reappointed to the bench. Subpoenaed as a witness in several trials and repeatedly summoned to appear before a tribunal, the retired warrant officer has not been prosecuted to this day. Whether they admit or deny their guilt, all three have little to say about their behavior during the genocide and seek no public recognition for their actions.

## ACQUAINTANCES

**ADALBERT:** It was possible not to kill a neighbor or someone who appealed for pity, gratitude, or recognition, but it was not possible to save that person. You could agree together on a dodge, decide on a trick of that sort. But it was of no use to the dead person. For example, a man finding someone with whom he had popped many a Primus in friendship might turn aside, but someone else would come along behind and take care of it. In any case, in our group, that never happened.

**FULGENCE:** You could spare a person you owed an old favor to, or who had given you a cow, but there was always someone bringing up the rear who was out to kill. Luck did not exempt a single Tutsi in the marshes. What had to be done was done under all circumstances. You knew it, and in the end you did not dare go against that truth.

**PIO:** Advancing as a team, we would run into a scramble of fugitives hiding in the papyrus and the muck, so it was not easy to recognize neighbors. If by misfortune I caught sight of an acquaintance, like a soccer comrade, for example, a pang pinched my heart, and I left him to a nearby colleague. But I had to do this quietly, I could not reveal my good heart.

Anyone who hesitated to kill because of feelings of sadness absolutely had to watch his mouth, to say nothing about the reason for his reticence, for fear of being accused of complicity. In