

## PREFACE

“Look out.”

Sergeant Fabrice Ntaganzwa heard James’s warning just before he felt the warm fluid spray against the back of his neck. He reached behind and touched his uniform. His hand returned, smeared red with blood.

Fabrice had just been entering Sophie when her son, suddenly breaking free from his guards, grabbed the sergeant’s shoulder. However, before the boy could pull Fabrice off his mother, James, moving instinctively, struck him with a machete. The spurting blood from the boy’s wound made a red dotted line up along Fabrice’s back and across Sophie’s face. She screamed.

Fabrice was furious. The back of his jacket was soaked with blood; his beautiful uniform was ruined. Angrily, he slapped Sophie again and again.

Fabrice Ntaganzwa, like his father and his father before him, was a carpenter. He worked long hours to support his family, and had had neither time nor interest in politics. This began to change, however, during the last year when the radio newscasts began describing the atrocities of the Tutsis invaders from Burundi. According to the reports, entire Hutu villages were burned to the ground while the women were raped and, along with the children, killed. The broadcasts usually ended with a call for all patriotic Hutus to join together in ridding the motherland of the cursed Tutsis.

Fabrice soon became a follower of President Habyarimana’s party, attending protest rallies and, later, joining the newly formed militia called the Interahamwe.

The Interahamwe was a group of mostly young, loyal Hutus, trained by the military as a backup for the army. The Rwandan army had reached a stalemate in the fight with the Burundi Tutsis and the President, unhappy with his army's inability to defeat the invaders, decided to mobilize civilian Hutus into a personal defense force. As Fabrice was to learn later, a second reason for the Interahamwe was the President's lack of trust in his own officers, many of who were Tutsis.

Fabrice had never attended school and the militia lectures opened up a whole new world, which he eagerly embraced. He was astounded to learn of the many Tutsi invasions into Rwanda and the treachery of the Europeans when, during the Berlin Conference of 1885, the white men had divided up all of Africa. The stories of the betrayal of his people by both the Belgians and the Tutsis appealed to his natural paranoia. He soon became aware that his boss, a Tutsi, was getting rich from the sweat and hard work of Hutus like himself.

In addition to the classroom instruction, there was also the physical training of the militia. Fabrice was taught the best use of a gun and explosives. Here, he was in his element. His muscles, strong from working with the hammer and chisel, made the effort of disabling and killing with a machete easy. Imagining the practice dummy to be his hated neighbor, he hacked and chopped it into fragments.

The training was arduous but, with his powerful body and quick mind, Fabrice stood out. He soon caught the eye of the Commander, Major Mathieu Zieba. As more and more volunteers joined the movement, Fabrice Ntaganzwa was promoted to sergeant and given his own squad to train.

The camaraderie of the Interahamwe was enjoyable for Fabrice. For the first time in his life, he was part of a group -- an important group. The militia was protecting their families and the country from the tyranny of foreigners, both white and black.

Fabrice soon heard Major Zieba and the other officers railing against the negotiations between the Government and the Tutsis invaders from Burundi. Their resentment intensified when it was announced one morning that a peace conference between President Habyarimana and other heads of state would take place in Dar es Salaam. The meeting had been arranged by the United Nations for the purpose of negotiating a peace plan between the two warring tribes.

When the news of an agreement was announced, the officers vented their anger. Their feelings were best summed up by one of the lieutenants. "There is no place for negotiations with the Tutsis. We should kill them all."

Major Zieba cautioned patience. "There are all kinds of agreements. Let's wait until the president returns to see what he intends to do."

On the morning of President Habyarimana's return, the Interahamwe had gotten up early to form an honor guard for his arrival. As they waited, Fabrice heard the sound of an airplane and, looking up into the sky, saw a small speck, gradually growing in size.

There was excitement in the air and the people were laughing and talking loudly. The women, dressed in their best colorful garb, contrasted with brown formation of militia standing at attention. Major Zieba walked back and forth, inspecting the troops. Fabrice, in his new uniform, stood proudly in front of his men.

The plane was almost overhead. The crowd of spectators, being held back by the police, began to cheer.

“Attention. All eyes forward.” The troops snapped to attention at the major’s order.

Fabrice was excited at the prospect of President Habyarimana’s arrival. He would soon have the honor of seeing the man he both served and admired. The sound of the engines became louder as the plane took a triumphant pass over the field, before turning in preparation for landing. The aircraft was so low that smiling faces could be seen in the windows of the plane. The crowd became louder as the airplane started its downward approach.

Fabrice would have liked to watch the plane land, but he remained at attention with eyes looking straight ahead, as the Major had ordered. It was only when he heard the loud explosion and felt the heat of the blast that he looked up to see a giant fireball and pieces of the plane falling to earth. Suddenly, what had been an orderly and rehearsed event became pandemonium. Fabrice heard the screams of people as the crowd panicked and ran toward the terminal building to avoid the falling debris.

Fabrice was stunned. What should he do? With others, he started toward the wreckage that was now burning at the end of the runway. He stopped when he heard the major’s command. “Attention! Remain at attention!”

As Zieba spoke, a fire engine came screaming up to the pile of rubble burning furiously in the middle of the runway. “You would only be in the way. Let these firemen do their job. You are soldiers and there is nothing we can do now to help these martyrs.” He paused, his face grim, “Your duty is yet to come. Go home and be with your families. Return for instructions in the morning.”

Still unable to accept what had happened, Fabrice returned to his village. He saw people out in the street talking about the crash. The report of President Habyarimana's death from an explosion had stunned all of Rwanda. Most of the women and some of the men were weeping, and, when his neighbors heard that Fabrice had actually seen it happen, they crowded around asking for details.

Fabrice's mood quickly changed from numbness to delight. This was the first time his neighbors had ever shown him any respect. Basking in this feeling of importance, Fabrice's mien was serious as he shook his head. "We don't know what caused the accident. The plane was coming in for a landing and then just exploded."

A man spoke loudly over the chatter. "The radio said the Tutsis shot down the plane with a missile."

His neighbor, the schoolteacher, replied angrily, "That's a lie. It was an accident."

Fabrice, hiding his great dislike of the man, nodded wisely. "These are all the things we are considering. We are not sure what caused the explosion, but," Fabrice smiled at the schoolteacher, "we are sure the Tutsis were somehow involved. After all, they are the cause of most of the recent troubles." The Hutus nodded their heads in agreement. The Tutsis looked worried as Fabrice spoke and began drifting away toward their houses.

One of the men had a radio and they listened as the music was interrupted for a news bulletin. "The army is in disarray since the Chief of Staff, General Nsabimana, was also aboard the plane. It is expected that a new commander will be appointed within the hour."

The newscast reported that the militia, however, was ready to act. Fabrice nodded in agreement and repeated a statement of one of his Interahamwe lecturers. "Our country is in grave danger from the foreign killers and rapists who would steal our freedoms."

Fabrice went home to change his clothes. He was proud of the splendid figure reflected in the mirror. He had never had a suit before, so he was especially proud of the new brown uniform. The pants were creased and were held up by a shiny black leather belt. Red sergeant's stripes were on both sleeves of the jacket. The hat was soft with a red slash in the front.

Fabrice ate his noon meal and then went out to where the men were assembled in the marketplace. Again, he was the center of attention. As the day's events were discussed, tempers began to flare with one Tutsi angrily stating, "We are not traitors just because we are Tutsis. First, we are Rwandans. When I was in the army, I fought against the invaders from Burundi."

Fabrice remained calm, cautioning one noisy agitator. "The man is right. Wait. We need to let the proper authorities decide what needs to be done." The other men agreed with his wise counsel.

The next morning, Fabrice donned his uniform and reported for duty. There was much talking as he and the other sergeants assembled their squads. The men were restless. One soldier demanded, "What are we going to do? Are the Tutsis going to get away with their murder of our president?"

For once, Major Zieba did not seem to notice any lack of discipline as he addressed the assembled officers and soldiers. Pointing toward one of the complainers, he

said, "This soldier is right. We need to act quickly to preserve the peace and destroy those who would enslave us again."

As the men cheered his remarks, the Major held up a paper, "We have received our orders. The Tutsis are to be driven from the country."

One soldier asked, "The Tutsi army from Burundi or all the Tutsis?"

The major had a wintry smile. "Is there a difference? My orders call for the elimination of all Tutsis from Rwanda."

From the back of the formation came a question. "What if they refuse to go?"

Major Zieba replied impatiently. "We are united and strong. They are cowards who will flee of their own accord." He paused and smiled, "Because you are trained soldiers and will kill anyone who resists."

As the men cheered again, he shouted above the din, "You are to show no mercy."

Some of the men were shocked. Others, like Fabrice, were smiling. This was the opportunity he had long hoped for.

Fabrice came to attention as the Major walked up. "Sir, what are my orders?"

"The same as the others. To find and eliminate all enemies of the Interahamwe. Where do you want to start?"

"I know of a teacher in my village. He is a Hutu but is married to a Tutsi."

"Excellent! Hybrids. These bastard children are the greatest threat of all."

"Sir, what about the police? Or what if the army tries to interfere?"

"Neither will bother you. They have their orders and are confined to their barracks."

With a feeling of elation, Fabrice led his squad to his village, to the house of the schoolteacher. For years he had hated the man and his superior attitude. Living next door, the teacher had always been courteous and, when Fabrice's answers were rude and brusque, he had smiled condescendingly, as if his neighbor's behavior was expected but unimportant.

The teacher was the envy of many men in the village, partly because of his education but more so, because of his beautiful wife, Sophie. Tall and willowy with large breasts and the sinuous walk of a mountain cat, she was often the object of male yearning. Fabrice had felt the attraction himself and, when she smiled at him one day, suggested they might meet alone in the woods. Humiliated when she laughed, Fabrice included revenge in his sexual fantasies.

Besides his desire for the man's wife, Fabrice had another reason for seeking revenge. When his wife had enrolled their son James in the school, holding the teacher up as an example of achievement, Fabrice had become infuriated. He beat his wife for not first asking his permission and again later, when she suggested that he was jealous of his neighbor. Fabrice could only read his name and a few words, but that was enough. His son would be a carpenter like him and did not need more education.

The hatred intensified when his wife demeaned him further by accepting the teacher's charity. Because Fabrice earned barely enough to care for his family, the teacher had graciously waived any tuition for his neighbor's son. The humiliation was worse after Fabrice's wife spoke of their good fortune to the neighbors.

Studying together, James had soon become best friends with Elie, the teacher's son. They made a strange pair. James was tall and burley like his father while Elie was a

head shorter, thin, and always smiling. As their friendship grew, James' relationship with his Fabrice became strained.

Looking at his son by his side, Fabrice smiled. The embarrassment of his father's lowly status had disappeared when Fabrice became active in the militia. Initially, the young man resisted the idea of joining but, when his father was picked for leadership, James began to show an interest. Quick to learn, he came to the lectures detailing the treachery and treason of the Tutsis and slowly took on his father's feelings of outrage.

Fabrice looked back at his squad of six men. He shook his head in resignation. They were a mixed crew, without uniforms, just red armbands and machetes. Despite his best efforts, they had never acquired the ability to remain in step. Only he had a gun, a revolver that had been presented upon his promotion to sergeant.

Fabrice raised his hand to stop the noisy chatter of the squad and motioned for James to stand beside him. He was proud of his son who already was a head taller than his father. "Today James, we will see who's the better man. The cockroach will beg me for mercy."

Fabrice banged his fist on the door. "Open up!"

As Sophie opened the door, Fabrice pushed her roughly aside and entered.

"Fabrice!" The teacher had been seated at the table with his son, Gaspard and daughter, Valerie. As the militia crowded their way into the main room, he jumped up from the table, "What do you think you are doing?"

"We have come to revenge our President."

The teacher looked confused. "I had nothing to do with his death."

"The Tutsis are responsible and will have to pay."

“I am a Hutu, the same as you.”

“Your wife is a Tutsi. Your children are bastards.”

“They are Rwandans, like you and me.”

Pointing at Sophie, Fabrice shouted, “A cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly.”

Suddenly the schoolteacher, eyeing the men with their knives held casually by their sides, began to appreciate the seriousness of the situation and backed up to the wall with his wife and children behind him.

Fabrice ordered, “You men, go through their belongings. Look for any weapons or evidence connecting them to the Tutsi traitors.”

The men opened cupboards, pulled out drawers and emptied bookcases, scattering the contents onto the floor.

“Take whatever you want. Then go and leave us alone,” the teacher’s voice was loud and desperate.

Fabrice walked over and slapped his face. “You do not tell us what to do. The true patriots of the Interahamwe are now in charge.”

Watching his men searching through the debris on the floor, Fabrice demanded, “We want money. Where is yours hidden?”

“I only have this,” the teacher reached into his pocket and pulled out a small wad of francs.

Fabrice grinned. Putting the money in his pocket, “This is not enough.”

“It is all I have.” Pointing to the jumble of possessions on the floor, the teacher added, “Take whatever you want and then, please leave us along.”

“I intend to take what I want.” Fabrice pushed the man aside and, grabbing Sophie’s arm, dragged her struggling, into the bedroom. Shaking loose from his grip, she slapped him and, with breasts heaving, stared contemptuously at him. “You are a pig.”

Fabrice was amused by her hostility. He admired her spirit and looked forward to spending many nights with this woman. Her husband would never dare object.

First, however, Fabrice intended to make her appreciative of his attention. Still smiling, he slapped her and then, before she could respond, grabbed the front of her blouse, ripping the cloth apart, exposing her breasts. As she attempted to cover up, he grabbed her arm and twisted it until she was forced to her knees. Then, encouraged by his men who were crowding in the doorway, he proceeded to tear at the rest of her clothes.

“Fabrice, what are you doing? Stop!” The teacher cried from the main room after his wife screamed. He tried to push forward but was held back by two of the soldiers. He appealed to his son’s best friend, “James, for God’s sake, please stop your father.”

The young man ignored him, watching in fascination at his father pushed Sophie down onto the floor. Sitting astride her body, Fabrice continued slapping her until all resistance stopped. Then, opening his pants, he began to claim his victim. As his father started in on the rape, James cheered with the others until Gaspard broke loose and grabbed Fabrice’s shoulder. Reacting instinctively, James swung his machete cutting into the boy’s neck. He watched in surprised horror at the boy fell and lay in a pool of blood.

Now, Fabrice was finished. Pulling up his pants, he looked down at the dying young man, whose head lie only inches from his mother's face. Sophie was sobbing loudly. He kicked her, "Stop the noise."

He was angry because his uniform was ruined but also because of the boy who lay next to his mother. His plans for the teacher and, especially, Sophie were slipping away. The death of one family member meant all must die. There could be no witnesses.

He motioned toward the sobbing woman as he walked back into the main room. "Anyone who wants can take her now." Motioning toward the dead boy, "Move him into the main room."

"No." The teacher sobbingly fought against his captors.

Fabrice watched the struggle for a moment, then, "Take him in and let him watch."

Looking around, Fabrice suddenly realized that someone was missing. Turning to the teacher who was staring in horror at his wife being molested, "Where is your other son, Elie?"

"What?" The teacher was looking desperately at his moaning wife. Her body was almost completely covered by a soldier who was vigorously moving in and out. Another stood nearby, impatiently waiting his turn.

"Where is your older son, Elie?"

"I don't know."

"You are lying." Striking the man across the face, "Where is he?"

"I don't know."

“You are lying.” With a grim smile, Fabrice added, “It makes no difference. We will find him.”

“If I show you where some money is hidden, will you let my family go?”

Fabrice laughed. “Today all traitors and their families will die. If you give me the money, I will kill you quickly with my pistol. Otherwise, your deaths will be slow. These men,” he indicated the smiling militia soldiers, “need to practice with their machetes.”

The teacher had stopped crying. With a look of determination, “You must let us go before I show you where the money is hidden.”

Fabrice grunted in disgust. “Oh, you will tell me.” Pulling the daughter up from behind a chair, “James, this one is yours.”

His son had just vomited in a corner. He shook his head. “Valerie is only ten years old.”

Fabrice laughed, “She needs to enjoy sex before she dies.”

James looked down at the boy he had killed. Here was a friend who was only two years younger than himself. This was not what he had imagined when he joined the militia. “I can’t. She’s only a child.”

Fabrice was disgusted. James was not yet the man he needed to become. No matter. He would learn soon enough to be a good soldier. Fabrice made a motion for one of the other men to take the girl into another room. The teacher started violently when his daughter began screaming. Seeming to shrink in size, he cried out, “Fabrice, stop. I will give you the money.”

When the men had satisfied their lust with both women, Fabrice ordered, "It's time. We have other duties to perform."

Pocketing the money taken from its hiding place behind a cupboard, Fabrice, using a piece of the daughter's dress, wiped the blood from his machete. He looked back at the three bodies lying in pools of blood. There had been no reason to waste bullets.

"One more to go," he said, holding out his machete, "the woman is mine."

As he stepped into the next room, Fabrice felt a sudden, searing pain in his face. Reaching up to touch his right cheek, he was aghast to find his hand again bright red, this time with his own blood. Turning around quickly, he saw Sophie raising the kitchen knife to slash him a second time. Fabrice jumped aside and, holding onto her knife arm, struck her again and again with his machete.

James handed him a towel as a compress to stop the bleeding. Fabrice removed it long enough to examine his face in a mirror. The knife had missed his eye but there was a ten-centimeter gash from his right ear to the corner of his mouth.

He was enraged. He did not mind having a battle scar but the other men would laugh at him for having been wounded by a woman. Especially a Tutsi woman.

Fabrice needed to get to the hospital but first he had to finish the assignment. Holding the compress against his face, he ordered, "Spread out and look for that boy, Elie. We must find him. James, you know where his favorite places are. Go around to the back of the house and search the woods. And everyone remember what Major Zieba said. 'If one is killed, everyone in the family must be killed. Even the babies. We can't have someone coming back in a few years to avenge their family'."

James entered the woods and saw a thin familiar figure slip standing in a distant clearing. Elie turned and, for a few seconds just before disappearing into the trees, he stared bewildered at his old friend.

As James returned, Fabrice came up. "Did you see any trace of him?"

"No sir." James answered, "He's not here."