THE WILL I WILL NOT WRITE

red mushanana

COCKROACH!

Chicken ‘n Chips

Gacaca

***red mushanana***

The blushing roses in my bouquet match my red mushanana, the one I waited my whole life to buy. For Him.

The tender petals fall gently, like the shy tears sneaking out my eyes. I can feel him waiting. I can feel the kiss of silence stealing the voices of our family, of our friends. I can feel the soft strings of the lute, the harp, wrapping warmth around my wintery body. One song vanishes to be replaced by the tunes of another. For Me.

The moths in my stomach fly me away, taking me back to the first time he held my hand, the first time we danced, when we carved our names into the trunk of a tree – *Antoine + Pacifique*. I remember planning our wedding, our honeymoon too—it would be special, private, and true. For Us.

I knew everything else would end, but we were eternal. This lit a light in my life –

*if the full moon loves you, why worry about the stars?*

He would always still my heart, but still, my heart would beat for him. Forever.

Today, I wish it would beat just a bit better. And in my mushanana, stained so perfectly red, in a shade so specific to me, I cannot take a single step forward. My naked finger is now heavier than my eyes. My eyes, which could see one-hundred guests sitting, staring patiently. My eyes, which could see him smiling at the altar, the same smirk he’d always save for me. My tears decided they were no longer shy; they rushed down my face, neck, and red mushanana. For Him.

For Me.

For Us.

forever.

You see, I never wanted a red mushanana, I wanted powder blue; delicate and light. But here I stand, bleeding and helpless on

the *happiest* day of my life.

***COCKROACH!***

The Tutsis were pests,

Vermin to exterminate.

Years of the minority monarchy…

no more.

HUTU POWER.

They stood like tall trees,

“Long legs!”

“Small nose!”

“Light skin!”

The best in the eyes of Belgians.

But this is Rwanda.

Time to cut

the tall trees.

Every day, we slashed, chopped,

slaughtered.

But their stench still plagued our towns.

So, we slashed again, chopped again,

slaughtered.

They thought they could outlive an apocalypse,

scurrying around in hundreds of

plague-ridden gangs. Purging our purity.

We knew

They stole our money, our women, our rights.

They were a disease to destroy.

I knew

She was different though;

The Tutsi who should’ve been Hutu.

She was unlike the others, my wife.

Albertine.

Kind, generous, loving.

Family.

I knew; *we* didn’t.

I couldn’t fight Hutu victory,

So, we drowned her pleas.

My mates gave me a machete

And they started to speak –

*Her or me.*

Slash, chop, slaughter.

I’m forced to do what’s right. I’m sorry,

Albertine.

***Chicken ‘n Chips***

She makes dinner with the TV turned on. 100g chicken, 100g chips. Chilli, cayenne, paprika. The spices stain her hands red.

ew.

She washes it off. Clean. She stares at the oven as she listens to the evening news. She hears about a genocide in Africa – Uganda or Rwanda…or something like that. Rick Ardon from the news reports this genocide,

“***THOUSANDS OF TUTSIS DEAD!”***

*He has such a dreamy face*, she thinks…*what’s a Tutsi?*

The oven is hot, but... *Ugh!* The chicken is raw—there’s still a little bit of blood.

gross.

She yawns, *this is taking way too long*. But it’s okay, she can look at Rick Ardon’s dreamy face.

***“THE HUTUS HAVE MASSACRED TEN BELGIAN SOLDIERS!”***

*Oh, my goodness! …What’s a Hutu? …Why are they so mean?*

***“ALL WESTERN TROOPS WILL BE EVACUATED; WE CANNOT STOP THIS CIVIL WAR.”***

*Yikes*, she thinks, *I don’t like war…it’s scary*. She feels a little flat because conflict upsets her, but she cheers up when she notices that her chicken is developing a warm, golden-brown colour. *Yummy!*

She realises that thirty minutes have almost passed, meaning it’s her last chance to see Rick Ardon’s dreamy face…well, at least for today—after the program, she’ll have to wait a whole day before she can see him again! She’s disappointed when she sees busses filled with men on the screen. These men aren’t dreamy Rick Ardon—they look a little flat, and they wear blue helmets that are marked with letters ‘U’ and ‘N’.

Faint screams can be heard in the background, but she doesn’t notice because someone comes to the camera and speaks. She thinks he’s African.

***“please! stay!”***

She pauses…*why does he want them to stay? Can’t he see that the blue-hatted men are hurt? Ten Belgians were killed!*

The evening news is now over, and she turns off the TV. Her dinner is ready…

YAY!

She stabs her fork into a pile of chips. It slides in and punctures the potato with ease, like a machete sliding into the stomach of an unarmed child.

***Gacaca:***

Blood shed on the grass,

And I remember

I was forced to stay silent when there was

No hope for *my kind*.

Sentenced by some sort of prejudice and bias,

We were imprisoned;

Disease, disaster, death.

I remember what it was back then;

The stains left from the past.

We wished to erase

Our times of emptiness, anger, embarrassment.

But then, it came—2002,

There was hope.

We were assisted by the West

When

The blood that was shed was a different shade of red… still blood though…

But whatever, it’s just

Neighbour against Neighbour.

~

Neighbour against Neighbour,

But whatever; it’s just! —

The blood that was shed was a different shade of red…still blood though.

When

We were assisted by the West,

There was hope.

But then it came…2002;

Our times of emptiness, anger, embarrassment.

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