

CAROL

Oh, waiter. Could I please get a cup of coffee? Sugar, no cream.

CHARLES

You got it.

(CHARLES BALDWIN is a middle-aged African-American. He walks offstage and returns with two cups of coffee. He hands one to Carol and sits down next to her, sipping the other cup.)

CHARLES

Got enough sugar?

CAROL

It's fine. (there is a pause) You're not a waiter, are you?

CHARLES

Nope.

CAROL

Well, that was pretty stupid of me, wasn't it?

CHARLES

Yup.

CAROL

You're not even Rwandan, are you?

CHARLES

Nope.

CAROL

American?

CHARLES

Sometimes.

CAROL

Aide worker?

CHARLES

Used to be.

CAROL

What do I owe you for the coffee?

CHARLES

No charge. The hotel always gives me free meals when I drop by.

CAROL

Who are you?

CHARLES

Charles Baldwin. You?

CAROL

Carol Thornton.

CHARLES

Let me guess. Your husband is a financier with a project.

CAROL

Nope.

CHARLES

You came to see the gorillas.

CAROL

Sort of. G-u-e-r, not g-o-r.

CHARLES

God, another journalist.

CAROL

So what if I am?

CHARLES

Nothing. Nothing. Just next to the AHA's (ah-hah's), journalists are the world's greatest scourge.

CAROL

Why do you say that? And what's an AHA?

CHARLES

Journalists show up for a week, get their memorable quote or unforgettable picture of a lifetime, and zip off to Nairobi without ever even figuring out which side did the killings. Then it's off to the next set of memorable quotes and pictures and poor old Rwanda fades into the collective oblivion. Except for the folks left behind IN Rwanda.

CAROL

That's cynical.

CHARLES
Okay. Who did it?

CAROL
Who did what?

CHARLES
Which side were the interahamwe?

CAROL
Hutu. I mean, Tutsi. I mean Hutu. Yes. Hutu.

CHARLES
You're sure.

CAROL
Yes.

CHARLES
Good. Score one for the genocide tourist. But how do you tell the Hutus from the Tutsi's?

CAROL
Well. The Tutsi's are tall, with thinner noses –

CHARLES
Wrong.

CAROL
No, I'm right. And the Hutu are the farmers, the shorter ones with flatter noses.

CHARLES
Half wrong. Ready for Rwanda 101?

CAROL
Look, I gotta go –

CHARLES
At some point in history, there might have been a physical distinction. But generations of intermarriage blurred the lines. Until the Belgians got things organized. And handed out identity cards branded "Hutu" or "Tutsi." Now, why the Belgians, you ask?

CAROL
Didn't ask.

CHARLES

Don't know either, do you?

CAROL

Don't really care.

CHARLES

Sure you do. World war one. Rwanda was a German colony. Germany lost the war. The League of Nations ceded the country to Belgium. The bastards.

CAROL

Who were the bastards? The Germans?

CHARLES

The Belgians.

CAROL

The Belgians. Whatever. Look, my coffee's getting cold –

CHARLES

Best way to hold onto colonial power? Play one side against the other. Designate one side the upper class and give them all the privileges. Then when they get too huffy, switch sides. Only problem is when things get a little out of hand. Like they did in 1959. And 1960. And 1961. And 1963.

CAROL

How out of hand?

CHARLES

Call them mini-genocides. You're a journalist. You should be writing this down.

CAROL

Right. (but she isn't writing) What's an AHA.

CHARLES

American Humanitarian Asshole.

CAROL

In other words, what you are.

CHARLES

Ex-AHA. There's a difference.

CAROL

What exactly did you do?

CHARLES

Transport food to famine areas. Bargain for medical supplies. Your basic twenty-one years with various aide organizations. Now, retired fish farmer.

CAROL

Fish farmer! What the heck are you doing in Rwanda?

CHARLES

Married a Rwandan woman, mother of my lovely 16 year old daughter. Starting a small business on the Burundi border.

CAROL

No!

CHARLES

Yes! It's absolutely gorgeous – surrounded by mountains, water running through the property, even a little swinging bridge that'll take folks to my restaurant.

CAROL

Restaurant!

CHARLES

Barbequed fish. Sit out there under the thatched veranda and listen to the kingfishers stealing my crop.

CAROL

Sounds gorgeous. I'd love to see that. I'd love to see anything that's not the Milles Collines.

CHARLES

What are you doing today?

CAROL

Today?

CHARLES

I've got to make a run out to the property. Wanna eat some fish?

CAROL

Is it safe?

CHARLES

Freshest fish in Rwanda.

CAROL

I mean, every time I've gone anywhere around here it's been with three U.N. vehicles in tow.

CHARLES

Sorry, no escort this time. Just me and my Land Rover. Which is leaving in about three minutes. Make up your mind.

CAROL

I don't think so.

CHARLES

Come all this way to Rwanda to sit around the Milles Collines?

CAROL

I don't even know you!

CHARLES

And you call yourself a reporter. You want to sit around in this air-conditioned lobby all day with a bunch of arms traders and scamsters or do you want to see the real Rwanda?

CAROL

You mean with an ex-AHA scamster like you.

CHARLES

At least you know the devil you're driving with. Let's go.

CAROL

Okay. Let me leave word at the desk and grab a hat.

CHARLES

I'll finish my coffee.

(He watches her exit with interest. Lights fade to black.)

SCENE 6

(It's much later that same night. The scene begins in darkness. We hear the "top ten" playing on distant taxi radios. In the dark, we smell and see the glow of Marcott's cigar. The lights come up. Marcott is quite drunk. Carol's note is on the table. We hear a voice off-stage right.)

CHARLES

You still smoking that stinky Cuban knock-off?

MARCOTT

Not a knock-off, it's the real thing. Who the hell – ?

(Charles steps into the light. He calmly lights a cigar of his own. Marcott thinks he's seen a ghost.)

MARCOTT

Son of a bitch.

CHARLES

Nice to see you, too, Marcott.

MARCOTT

I can't believe it.

CHARLES

I can hardly believe it myself. But what's the old saying? "Everybody comes to Kigali."

MARCOTT

What the fuck are you doing here?

CHARLES

I was in the neighborhood.

MARCOTT

You always were a smart ass.

CHARLES

Hope you've had time to do some souvenir shopping. Great help to the local economy. May I suggest a machete? Just be sure the one you buy is the genuine article. There's a lot of cheap knock-offs out there.

MARCOTT

I suppose you've got your hand in that, too. What did you do during the war, sell them wholesale?

CHARLES

You can tell the genuine item by the rust marks. No rust, no sale, I say. Fine looking lady you got there, Marcott. Much prettier than the little blonde from KNBC. Remember how she got her journalistic ass in hot water when she found out the stories you were whispering in her ear were all lies.

MARCOTT

You're the fucking fish farmer.

(Marcott crumbles up Carol's note and throws it.)

CHARLES

Such a gift for alliteration! Don't worry. I brought her home safe and sound.

(He sits himself down at the table and puts up his feet.)

MARCOTT

What did you tell her?

CHARLES

You think I want to talk to a pretty reporter about Mike Marcott? Mighty self-centered, don't you think? You've got to watch that, Marcott. Nothing worse than a politician who thinks he's at the center of everybody else's universe.

MARCOTT

Jesus. Every election, I expected you to turn up. Every time I'd hold a press conference, I expected to hear your voice in the back of the hall, asking questions. "What about Western and 96th?"

CHARLES

What about Western and 96th?

MARCOTT

They said you died.

CHARLES

Should have died.

MARCOTT

They said your plane crashed.

CHARLES
They were wrong.

(Marcott crushes his cigar out in his drink. He stands up – shakily – and paces.)

CHARLES
I understand you've had a theft.

MARCOTT
Should have known it was you.

CHARLES
You should know that's not my style.

MARCOTT
Then what do you know?

CHARLES
I hear things. Jungle drums and secret messages and all that.

MARCOTT
Bullshit.

CHARLES
What are the tapes worth to you? Fifty grand? A hundred?

MARCOTT
You're crazy.

CHARLES
Consider it restitution for what went missing in south LA.

MARCOTT
Fuck you.

CHARLES
Careful there, cowboy. I'm the one person you can trust in this country.

MARCOTT
Trust you? I'm not that drunk.

CHARLES
Think about it, Marcott. How much luck have you had so far?

MARCOTT (he considers it)

What do you want?

CHARLES

Look. No promises. I'll see what I can find out.

MARCOTT

How much?

CHARLES

You know, today's your lucky day, Marcott. I'm not fishing for cash.

MARCOTT

Then what?

CHARLES

I want you gone. Out of my little acre of heaven. The sooner you find your camera, the sooner you leave my backyard. You guys are kicking up dust, stirring up trouble. And the one thing I don't need is trouble. I like it here. I'm planning to stay a long, long time. (he gets up to leave) Just remember what I said about those dime a dozen souvenir machetes. Gotta look for the rust. No rust, no sale. Why the rust, you ask? How'd it get there? (he picks up a beer bottle and turns it upside down. A few drops of beer run down his arm) Blood runs down the blade to the wooden handle. Unless you're very careful, it gets in the seam. Turns to rust. Take my advice, Marcott. If you want a genuine genocide souvenir, you've gotta look for the rust.

(He tosses the beer bottle at Marcott, who catches it.)

CHARLES

Good night.

(Charles exits. A few seconds after he's gone, Marcott throws the bottle offstage after him. We hear it smash.)

MARCOTT

Son of a bitch.