

Rwanda Suite: Ape Woman

by Steven Gowin

I'll shoot him now. Stupid bastard, white, but all the same. Where's that carbine?

Do I remember this one though? Is he that kid? From that day on the Goma frontier? When we'd wrapped Baby Boy in plastic and hauled him down in back of the combi? Sure, that's it.

Poaching fuckers butchered my little one and left the body to rot on the Virunga side headless and handless. We hauled him down the Rwandan side but had to take him to Goma for examination. Should have buried him on the saddleback. I'll murder the bastard who did it.

CP time. I'd waited and waited. Most of that Johnny fifth and a pack and a half of Luckies already gone and only 2 PM. Virunga Wildlife wasn't showing, and the Zairois wouldn't let me cross, and I didn't want to hand him to the damned kaffirs anyway.

Then he and that little blonde come past. A chance meeting? No. They are nosy. Australians, I'm thinking. Turns out they're Peace Corps with Zairian visas. She's got that cute girly French accent, perky little bitch.

The Zairois will pay attention though. To her theyll pay attention. These kids don't recognize me so I introduce myself and tell the dumb ass kid, I say, take her and go by the Bureau du Parc, and for Christ's sake make them send someone. That was what? six months ago?

No blonde with him this time, but it's the same kid all right. He's back. Probably friends with those worthless research assistants, that Will and Mimi. Bet they've promised to show him a big one they're tracking, a big male. Research, hell, I'm the only here who's ever done anything real up here.

She's not so bad. But he. The husband, Will. All bullshit. Thinks he'll educate these blackamoors on what they've got. What they're throwing away. Schoolchildren programs on the collective treasure, Parcs Nationaux. Forest elephants, giant apes. Wildlife tourism. Jesus fuck.

The cretins climb way the hell up here and shoot the "natural resource" to chop off a hand or a head for a trophy room in Ghent. God damned savages. Barely an ape left and the forest all hacked out for charcoal and bananas for their beer. Fucker Leopold had it knocked. His people handled the savage.

What had those two told me, those researchers? Something about somebody at Christmas. It's this kid. By God, that's it. And Christmas; deck the halls. I'll drink to that. But the season means they'll be coming up from the embassy again. "Come in for the holidays. Get some sleep. Dry air in your lungs. Doc McLean will have a look."

My ass. McLean wants me back on the blue pills, shipped to California to dry out. They'll be ticking the Johnny bottle while I'm "invited." And they'll want the earnest talk again about "diminishing returns up there" and "doing more harm than good."

So I won't be heading to Kigali. Besides who'd fend off the poachers? Not these sorry ass rangers, that's sure. Buy them off for a litre of urwagwa. Where were they when the wogs took Baby Boy's hands? They're all in it together, all against me, that's where.

And as for that lanky son of a bitch, he's no permit, I'll bet. So I can take action. There he is now, standing on the saddle not twenty yards away staring off at Volcan Mikeno, off at Witch Mountain.

Oh, he's civilized enough. He doesn't want a baby hand for an ash tray. He just wants a big silverback to charge up and scare him shitless. Just like the rest. But he's no business up here, none of them have a business up here.

I could show him the witch. Have him in for a drink. Then he'd have something special, a story. I'd make it a fucking ghost story too. He can't see me, but I see him right now, right down the barrel, right in the bead. I'll squeeze a ball into his brain pan.

I'll have a drink first though, and a smoke. But hell, now he's gone. Next time, next time I shoot. Shoot to kill. God damn it, nothing better. I'm a dead aim, believe me.

But I bury the poaching bastards proper, yes, Christian style. Not a one left rotting or mutilated. Never. Not a one. Not yet.

