



THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY

A FILM BY PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW

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THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY

A FILM BY PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW

CREDITS

DIRECTOR: PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW
SCREENPLAY: PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW
PRODUCERS: PATRICK QUINET and TOUSSAINT TIENDREBEOGO
CO-PRODUCERS: TOMAS LEYERS and ARLETTE ZYLBERBERG
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: MARC KONINCKX A.F.C.
PRODUCTION DESIGN: KATHY LEBRUN
COSTUME DESIGN: LAURENCE MARECHAL
SOUND: PAUL HEYMANS
EDITOR: ANDREE DAVANTURE
SOUND EDITOR: PAUL HEYMANS

SOUND MIX: ALEK GOOSSE
CASTING DIRECTOR: HOPE AZEDA
MUSIC: ANNONCIATA KALAMIZA

END CREDIT SONG
"MBABARE NIRENDE" BY ANNONCIATA KALAMIZA,
PERFORMED BY SHANEL

SUPPORTED BY LA FONDATION GROUPAMA GAN POUR LE
CINÉMA, MEDIA PROGRAMME, TAX SHELTER ING INVEST AND
TAXSHELTER BE

CAST

JACQUELINE: RUTH NIRERE (A K A SHANEL)
INJURED MAN: AFAZALI DEWAELE

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

ORIGINAL TITLE: LE JOUR OU DIEU EST PARTI EN VOYAGE
PRODUCTION COUNTRY: FRANCE/BELGIUM
PRODUCTION YEAR: 2008
RUNNING TIME: 94 MINUTES
RATIO: 2:35 CINEMASCOPE
SOUND: DOLBY DIGITAL



SYNOPSIS

Rwanda April 1994. During the first days of the genocide, westerners escape the country. Before being evacuated, a Belgian family finds a hiding place for Jacqueline, their young nanny, in the attic. Despite the horror taking place outside, Jacqueline leaves her hideout to find her way back to her village and her children, only to find their lifeless bodies among the dead. Cast out from her home and the village, hunted like an animal, she seeks refuge in the forest.

THE QUESTION OF GENOCIDE

My film project was born from the wish to guard and to transmit the memory of the genocide.

Ever since my first confrontation with images of the Nazi concentration camps, I've wanted to understand how the victim can succumb to the annihilation of their survival instinct. How the executioner can manage to turn a blind eye to the obstacles of a society's morals. How a whole population can find itself an accomplice to such an atrocity.

The Rwandese tragedy gave me an answer to the third question, the question of the passive witness. In 1994 I came to experience what I could never understand: how the people who lived through the Holocaust could say that they simply did not know what was going on and that therefore they were unable to help Europe's Jews.

I witnessed the massacre, along with the entire mankind, taking place over a period of almost three months. And as most of us, I found myself powerless and incapable of acting. I finally understood

that you can know, and even see, and still let it happen. Afterwards, I tried to find ways of expressing my solidarity and my compassion for the victims and the survivors.

This film project was born from the wish to guard and transmit the liveliness of that memory. I wanted the film to be completely dedicated to the survivors. To take an interest in the killers, to seek to know how these men were capable of falling for the temptation of genocide, never mind if it was the execution of an inhuman, rational plan or the act of collective madness, would demand an attempt to introduce them to a human world. It would need to be an act of wisdom, but it would also reduce the importance of the victims. And it is their memory that is crucial to me. I needed to express the confusion I felt faced with their pain. That finally pushed me to make this film.

"This world is uninhabitable, which is why we have to escape to the other. But the door is locked."
Simone Weil, "Cahiers"



THE QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

This film is not an attempt at reconstructing the genocide. **It is inspired by a true story.** In April 1994, some friends of mine returned from Rwanda following the emergency evacuation, as did all foreigners in Rwanda. Before they left, **they hid Jacqueline, their children's Rwandese nanny, in the attic of their house in Kigali, hoping that she would escape the massacre.** They never knew what became of her.

I am haunted by their story and by the fact that no one knows if Jacqueline ever did survive. I've chosen to tell her personal story through the tragedy of the Rwandese genocide, because it allows me to believe that she's alive.

THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY instantly takes us to the core of the massacres, as they were experienced by the local population. No background, no foreword. We know nothing about Jacqueline, the young Tutsi nanny hidden in the ceiling. She overcomes her fear by hoping to save her children, which releases the survival instinct within her. The story told in the film follows the events that she endures. This film doesn't need to know more than her comprehension of the situation she finds herself in.

The way the genocide seems to distance itself little by little, is not reality, it is Jacqueline's heightened threshold of tolerance faced with what surrounds her. This reveals how she gradually adapts to the situation. She, however, has stopped living. She turns her suicide attempt against the only human being at hand, with the hope of returning to life. Jacqueline's attempted murder, although impulsive, is the act of vengeance against her imprisonment, her captivity, her alienation and the fact that she is alive despite it all. It is the ultimate expression of a strength that exists within us, which can only be expressed when all sense of humanity has vanished.

Each human being carries a mortal power. Civilisation supplies us with a protection against this kind of humiliation. The removal of civilisation leaves the field clear for monstrosity. History's genocides have all taken place during wartime. Only when the moral reflexes and the contours of civilisation fade that man allows himself to murder innocent people. It takes wartime chaos for the feeling of impunity to reach its highest level. This is when these massacres take place.

It's the same for Jacqueline. In the forest, far from everything and everyone, she is lawless and without a frame of reference. Even though her conscience and her faith take over and keep her from dying, she fades away, little by little, with the blindness of her despair.

In Rwanda, men, women and children have been beaten down, they have suffered horribly. They have been hunted down everywhere; in homes, in basements, in churches, in forests, in marshes. The fear of dying beneath the blade of a machete and the will to die by any other means inhabited everyone. But how does one react to this fear? How does one survive that fear?





DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Restoring the importance of man and making something other than an action film. Bringing back and picking up what remains of their souls even though only physical reflexes are expected.

Showing with power and clarity, without the use of effects. Using a subtle camera, undemonstratively, with simple framings, often with a fixed camera, shouldered cameras for the running shots, without mannerisms or dogmas.

Choosing local actors. Taking inspiration from the surroundings and the materials I found around me. Evoking the issues without having to tell. Giving a sense to the massacres, the terror and the ever present danger without corrupting the idea and without adding a voyeuristic perspective to the violence. **Maintaining a respectful and dignified approach to the suffering of the victims and the survivors.** Avoiding explicit violence as it is never completely credible in reproductions of real life events - it doesn't withstand the comparison to real life, and the representation ends up trivial. When it does, it translates into a work of bravery. It was of great importance that the emotions brought on by violence would not be reduced by the film. By placing the violence out of picture, I wanted the terror constantly to remain present, clearly felt throughout the film.

It was important that this suffering be felt in an authentic manner by Jacqueline. She had to be capable of finding the expression of this terror inside of herself, in her own experiences. She had to be a survivor of the genocide who had never lived outside of Rwanda. I wanted her wounds and her culture to guide her, to be her points of reference along with mine. Her point of view alone had to be executed and each frame had to follow her footsteps.

The terror had to remain impersonal. It would not be incarnated, the attackers would remain omnipresent but fleeting silhouettes. I did not want the victims and the murderers to be treated on equal terms. **This film belongs to the victim and her survival. Nothing else.**

The directing had to be sobre, barely discernable. You might say that it is a classic directing, I'd rather qualify it as discrete.

The focus of attention had to be entirely devoted to Jacqueline, the locations had to be linked directly to her. Strictly functional while revealing a vibrant nature. A nature completely indifferent to the tragedy taking place. Realism and naturalism would co-exist through the cinematography, and a sound that captures the surroundings' rich and light qualities. A lingering counterpoint to Jacqueline's morbid state.

I found an excellent support to my approach in Jean Hatzfeld's work on the Rwandese genocide. He had also refused to treat the victims and the murderers in the same context. The survivors were given the first word, and the killers had to follow. He respected their words by being himself very discrete while exploring the wounds and consequences of the genocide among his protagonists without inquiring into its causes.

PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW - WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Born in Brussels, Philippe Van Leeuw studied at INSAS before moving to Los Angeles, where he spent his time studying at the American Film Institute. Among his teachers were the legendary cinematographers Sven Nykvist and Conrad Hall.

Upon his return to Europe, he took on the role as director of photography for feature documentaries, institutional films as well as in advertising. It was during these collaborations that he came to meet director Bruno Dumont, who would direct "La vie de Jésus", Philippe Van Leeuw's feature film debut as cinematographer. From here on he dedicates his career to fiction, lensing several films, television features and short films.

Meanwhile, Van Leeuw also finds time for his interest in writing and photography. His dedication to social and poetic films has lead him to his directorial debut, THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY.

FILMOGRAPHY

2009 THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY (director)
OFFICIAL SELECTION TORONTO, SAN SEBASTIAN, NAMUR AND CALCUTTA

2007 GOD'S OFFICES
(original title: « Les bureaux de dieu », cinematographer)
Directed by Claire Simon

2005 DEMENTED
(original title: « Le Dernier des fous », cinematographer)
Directed by Laurent Achard

1998 FRANCK SPADONE (cinematographer)
Directed by Richard Bean

1997 MORE THAN YESTERDAY
(original title: « Plus qu'hier, moins que demain » cinematographer)
Directed by Laurent Achard

1996 THE LIFE OF JESUS
(original title: « La Vie de Jesus », cinematographer)
Directed by Bruno Dumont

RUTH NIRERE

JACQUELINE

Born on Octobre 1985, Ruth Nirere aka Shanel is a recording artist from Rwanda.

Also known as the singer Shanel, she recorded her first a capella album, "Ntituzabibagirwa" ("We'll Never Forget You") in 1999. The song was written in memory of the victims of the 1994 genocide and to this day, it is broadcast once a year on national television during the remembrance period.

Nirere was recently nominated for a Salax Award as best female artist.

THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY is Ruth Nirere's debut performance on screen.

AFAZALI DEWAELE

INJURED MAN

Born in 1978 in Kigali, Afazali Dewaele now lives in Belgium where he got his acting training at Académie Grétry in Liège. In 2002 he received the "Art dramatique du Conservatoire de Bruxelles Award".

Since then he has starred in several plays in Belgium and in Africa, such as Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", "The Taming of the Shrew" and John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men". He has also made appearances on television in Belgium.

His feature film roles include THE DAY GOD WALKED AWAY by Philippe Van Leeuw and "Cryogenies" by Mathieu Mortelmans.



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produced by TOUSSAINT TIENDREBEOGO and PATRICK QUINET in coproduction with MINDS MEET, RTBF (Télévision belge), in collaboration with CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE, CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ FRANÇAISE DE BELGIQUE ET DES TÉLÉDISTRIBUTEURS
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