

THE SHORT END OF THE STICK

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Mikki Russ

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Characters:

Joy: American 20s to 40s

Aminata: Senegalese 50-60s

Man: Any age any ethnicity.

Monkey: Primate

Police Officer: Any age. Preferably male.

Man: Black Male. Any age.

Lieutenant: 20-30 Any gender, any ethnicity

Commander: Older than Lieutenant, any gender, any ethnicity

Synopsis:

When two women discuss village life in Senegal, they ruminate on more than they bargained for.

Two female actors are center stage in chairs facing one another. One is a white woman aged 40, the other is a black African woman aged 60. They are seated at Wild Iris Coffee Shop in Prescott, AZ.

JOY:

Was it a guy you had ever seen before on Whiskey Row?

AMINATA:

Not that I really remember.

JOY:

Ok, so go on, what happened?

AMINATA:

Well, Gina and I were sitting and talking. She just started a job at Yavapai Regional Medical Center in the x-ray department. She was telling me about working there when one of the Good Ol' Boys a few people down yells at me, "Hey!" I look up from my drink and acknowledge him. "Yes?" I say. "Where ya from?" He yells loudly over Gina's head.

JOY:

Do you think he meant where in Africa are you from?

AMINATA:

I have no idea. I told him "Cottonwood."

Joy laughs at that

What? That's true. I live in Cottonwood. I was having a drink in Prescott. It's not that mysterious. I go back to talking to Gina. The Good Ol' Boy is not deterred. "Where'd you grow up?" He thunders. I tell him Senegal, but I am trying to finish talking to Gina and it's irritating that he isn't just letting us girls visit. He asks my name, which is another interruption, by the way. I tell him "Aminata." I'm definitely polite still. Then a minute later he yells, "Where do you work?" I just look up at him confused. "Why would I tell you where I work?" That somehow sets him off and he screams "FUCK YOU."

JOY:

Was there a bouncer there or anything?

AMINATA:

Nope. And the bartender is standing right there drying a glass. Silent. Sees it all happen, says nothing. The guy wanted me to know I wasn't welcome. I decided to finish my beer. Gina wanted to go. Maybe we should have. But I had been watching this cowboy down the way inch a little closer all along. He was staring daggers into that man. On my way out the door he tipped his hat and said "Ma'am." So that was nice.

JOY:

Kinda different than your neck of the woods in Senegal, eh?

AMINATA:

There's a lot to like here. That was one jerk. I haven't had to run from a monkey in ages, so that's nice too.

JOY:

Sorry?

AMINATA:

In my village, there are monkeys. They can be kind of a nuisance. They stalk people in the tall grass and bushes. They will jump out at you looking for a fight. Now these are not small monkeys, these are enormous monkeys. If they engage you, they are dangerous.

JOY:

Are they fast? I mean, can someone outrun them?

AMINATA:

They are very fast. It is not always wise to run.

JOY:

So, what do they want? Food or something?

AMINATA:

Maybe. Who knows what they want, but they are ready to fight.

Lights up on one actor who strolls across the stage as a monkey stalks him. Let their interaction happen for a few lines as the women talk. Then blackout on the monkey and man.

JOY:

Like a fist fight?

AMINATA:

Pretty much. They are very strong. The thing is, the monkey has a process. He will step out of the bush and try to antagonize his targeted person to fight, but first, the monkey looks the person over quite carefully. Seeing that the person does not have a weapon, the monkey will get a stick to offer the human being. The monkey does not want to have an unfair advantage in the fight.

JOY:

What do you mean the monkey doesn't want to have an unfair advantage? It's a monkey! How would a monkey have any concept of that?

AMINATA:

They just do. Justice is apparently very important to the monkey.

JOY:

Mind blown. What happens when they offer you the stick?

AMINATA:

DO NOT TAKE THE STICK!

JOY:

You just refuse the stick?

AMINATA:

DO NOT TAKE THE STICK!

JOY:

Ok! I don't take the stick!

AMINATA:

And maybe you run!

JOY:

Damn right I run! Does the monkey lose interest?

AMINATA:

Well you did refuse your weapon, but he also knows that he gave you a chance to arm yourself. Sometimes they leave you alone because you didn't gather the stick. Other times...

JOY:

Other times?

AMINATA:

They just kick your ass.

*Lights up on the actor being offered the stick by the monkey.
Man refuses, turns and runs, pursued by the monkey.*

JOY:

Really?

AMINATA:

And like I said, they are very strong. It's a common problem.

JOY:

You have monkeys stalking you in the bushes with sticks? That's the neighborhood plight?

Aminata nods as the man and primate take their chase off stage.

JOY:

The stick thing. It's astounding. Like, how does a monkey-who I suspect spends it's time picking nits out of fur, throwing poop and swinging in trees- have more common decency than most of us?

Immediately a black man runs from where the monkey just exited pursued by a cop. The cop shoots the man in the back as he falls dead in front of the women who do not notice or react.

AMINATA:

Good question.

Lights down on the women, cop and dead man. Lights up on two soldiers stage right. One is seated with a headpiece and microphone on, holding a joystick. The Commander is behind him directing his actions.

LIEUTENANT:

I am trying to get a fix on the target, sir, but there appears to be an unusual number of bystanders in proximity.

COMMANDER:

Collateral damage. Deploy your drone Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT:

If we just wait a few minutes, sir, I think the target will clear the area and...

COMMANDER:

I don't know how you can surmise the target's next move 1600 miles away looking at your computer screen Lieutenant. Now strike.

LIEUENANT:

Sir, yes sir.

Lights down on soldiers. Lights up on women. The cop and dead man have exited in the blackout.

JOY:

If we evolved from our primate cousins, do you think our tactics have actually devolved since then?

AMINATA:

Yeah, I'd say so. There isn't such a thing as a fair fight anymore is there?

Joy reaches in her purse and pulls out a pack of Twizzler sticks, tears one off and offers it to Aminata.

JOY:

This is a good stick offering.

Aminata takes it. Lights down.

THE END