**The Good Father
by Dave Carley**
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**Synopsis:**

A Catholic priest has been attacked on the steps of his church by a group of drunks. Albert, a young man from his parish visits Father Francis and helps bathe his wounds.

Albert is a church-sponsored refugee from Uganda. He was forced to flee the homophobic violence there that had been unleashed by anti-Gay legislation. Francis is planning a demonstration against the right-wing American evangelists who influenced passage of the Ugandan laws. He now must do it with a bruised face, and he hopes to have Albert at his side.

**Cast:**

Francis – A Catholic Priest, 30s-50s. Dressed in civvies.
Albert – A young man from Uganda. Dressed for dancing.

**Location:**

The church rectory.

**A Note on Accents:**

I have written standard speech for Albert. If there is an actor available who can do the role with an appropriate accent, wonderful.

**Background note:**

Previously known as the“Kill the Gays Bill”,the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act was signed into law on February 24, 2014, by Uganda’s president, Yoweri Museveni. Clauses prescribing the death penalty in certain instances were dropped from the bill but the Act still broadly criminalized same-sex acts. Conviction for homosexual acts could result in a life sentence. It also made it a crime not to report gay people.

It is widely believed that the private member’s bill that led to the Act was incited by the involvement of the American evangelical Christians. After the Act’s passage, homophobic incidents in Uganda rose dramatically.

Since then, the situation has worsened. The Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 has superseded the 2014 legislation and prescribes the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality”. It also outlaws “promotion of homosexuality” a vaguely defined crime that would presumably include this play.

**Update – April 2024 – From the Globe and Mail**

A panel of five Constitutional Court Judges of Uganda led by the Deputy Chief Justice of Uganda Richard Buteera read their joint judgement at the Constitutional Court, where the Court upheld the anti-LGBTQ Law in Kampala, Uganda April 3, 2024.

Uganda’s constitutional court has upheld most provisions of one of the world’s harshest anti-gay laws, including its death penalty clause, citing a U.S. Supreme Court ruling as support for its decision.

The law, which authorizes the death penalty for the vaguely defined act of “aggravated homosexuality,” including same-sex acts by “serial offenders,” was largely upheld in the Ugandan court ruling in a 203-page judgement on Wednesday.

The court struck down four of the law’s provisions, including criminal penalties for those who lease premises to a gay person or fail to report suspicions of same-sex relationships, but left the rest of the law intact.

Critics have said that the U.S. Christian evangelical movement has had a major influence on the Ugandan politicians who passed the anti-gay law. A number of U.S. Christian leaders have organized conferences in Uganda and lobbied the country’s politicians.

The Ugandan judgement cited the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the Dobbs case in 2022, which allowed anti-abortion laws by states, as support for the argument that a country’s traditions can outweigh an individual’s right to autonomy.

**The Good Father**

*As lights come up, FRANCIS is looking in the mirror, trying to clean a face abrasion. The side of his face is bruised. There’s a knock on his door. He checks the keyhole and opens the door.*

**ALBERT:**

*(Entering.)* I saw your light on and thought I’d say hi - what happened!?

**FRANCIS:**

It’s just a scrape.

**ALBERT:**

More than that!

**FRANCIS:**

It looks worse than it is.

**ALBERT:**

How’d you get it!?

**FRANCIS:**

The gravel by the church steps.

**ALBERT:**

You fell?

**FRANCIS:**

I wish. *(Goes back to cleaning his wound.)* I heard a noise and went outside to look; a guy was taking a leak on the steps.

**ALBERT:**

The church steps!?

**FRANCIS:**

It’s not the first time. They come out of that sports bar on the corner/

**ALBERT:**

That is so disrespectful! *(Takes cloth from FRANCIS.)* Let me.

**FRANCIS:**

I told him to stop, he swore at me, the next thing I knew I was on the ground.

**ALBERT:**

He hit you!?

**FRANCIS:**

I think one of his buddies decked me from behind.

**ALBERT:**

Were you knocked out?

**FRANCIS:**

For a moment. By the time I’d stood up they were swaggering off.

**ALBERT:**

Maybe they didn’t know you were a priest.

**FRANCIS:**

They knew.

**ALBERT:**

You need to disinfect this with more than water/

**FRANCIS:**

It’s just gravel/

**ALBERT:**

You’re going to set tongues wagging at mass. “Was Father Francis in a fight?”

 *(ALBERT works on him a bit. Tenderly.)*

**FRANCIS:**

You’re heading downtown?

**ALBERT:**

I’m meeting some friends.

**FRANCIS:**

Yes, you’ve got that look.

**ALBERT:**

I’m sure I don’t know what you mean, Father.

**FRANCIS:**

In the three months since you’ve been here, I’ve learned to recognize your work clothes, your mass clothes, and your paint-the-town-pink clothes. And after the bar?

**ALBERT:**

How could anyone hit a priest?

**FRANCIS:**

Don’t change the subject.

**ALBERT:**

But it’s crazy/

**FRANCIS:**

Is it really so incomprehensible?

**ALBERT:**

Yes!

**FRANCIS:**

This isn’t a society where respect is automatic anymore. *Dis*respect is. You sure you want to live here?

**ALBERT:**

We didn’t call this disrespect. There were other words. And in Kampala those guys wouldn’t have run off until they’d finished the job. I will stay here with you.

**FRANCIS:**

I’m fine.

**ALBERT:**

You had a concussion!

**FRANCIS:**

Albert, I’m fine. *(Pause.)* You can tell me if you’re going to the bathhouse. Don’t hide things from me. But you have to be careful. This may not be Kampala, but those guys, if they came across you and not me – I worry you think this is some kind of paradise and nothing bad happens here you can’t be walking home wearing that. It’s kind of lively.

**ALBERT:**

Lively?

**FRANCIS:**

That’s called a ‘euphemism’. It’s uh bit bright. Even by your – lively – standards. Keep your guard up.

**ALBERT:**

Yes Father.

**FRANCIS:**

Don’t you ‘Yes Father’ me.

**ALBERT:**

Yes Father.

**FRANCIS:**

And about tomorrow –

**ALBERT:**

I haven’t decided.

**FRANCIS:**

I get that you’re not comfortable demonstrating/

**ALBERT:**

I don’t want to let you down but/

**FRANCIS:**

If you want to add your voice, then come. A few words from you, from someone who actually suffered from the crap they’ve been pushing/

**ALBERT:**

I know.

**FRANCIS:**

I’m being unfair. It’s a lot to ask. You had North Americans screwing you over in Uganda, we sponsor you to come here, and now I’m asking you to wade into the middle of us fighting among ourselves. But it kills me that the hatred that sent you packing from Uganda started over here, in this city, down the street. And in the name of God.

**ALBERT:**

But it’s funny, too, isn’t it. The way I am living here – right under their noses - is exactly the way they didn’t want me living – there.

**FRANCIS:**

They’ve lost the culture wars, so now they’re exporting it overseas. But what was hate here, is hate there. Except that you ended up with a ‘Kill the Gays’ law. That’s why we have to witness against them. Tomorrow, before *their* service. On the steps of *their* church. We’re going to pee on *their* steps.

**ALBERT:**

Father!

**FRANCIS:**

Metaphorically.

**ALBERT:**

I will consider attending.

**FRANCIS:**

You’ll ponder this while you’re at the tubs?

**ALBERT:**

I do my best thinking there.

**FRANCIS:**

Speaking of which.

 *(FRANCIS goes and gets condoms.)*

**ALBERT:**

You have condoms!

**FRANCIS:**

Not for me! People come to me for counselling –

**ALBERT:**

I’m not using priest condoms! Talk about killing the mood! ‘Excuse me while I slip on my priest’s rubber’.

**FRANCIS:**

*(Handing him some lube.)* And lubricant.

**ALBERT:**

I’m reporting you to the Bishop! When I see him at the tubs tonight.

*(They laugh, though FRANCIS is not entirely sure ALBERT is joking.)*

Will you understand if I don’t go to the demonstration?

**FRANCIS:**

Of course.

**ALBERT:**

Father Francis.

**FRANCIS:**

When you say ‘Father Francis’ I know it’s serious.

**ALBERT:**

You only hand these out? You don’t ever – you know -

**FRANCIS:**

I’ve told you. I’m not gay.

**ALBERT:**

Not even on Saturday nights?

**FRANCIS:**

And I don’t want women either.

**ALBERT:**

Do you know what they call you at church?

**FRANCIS:**

I know you’re about to tell me.

**ALBERT:**

Father Waddawaste.

**FRANCIS:**

And what do you call me?

**ALBERT:**

I call you ‘father’, Father. I’m checking in on you later.

**FRANCIS:**

Sure. If the light’s on - You can help me paint signs for tomorrow. *(Hands over money.)* Take a taxi home.

**ALBERT:**

It’s only eight blocks! *(Begins to leave)*

**FRANCIS:**

I don’t care. Albert. You were joking about the Bishop, right.

**ALBERT:**

I didn’t know who he was at the time.

**FRANCIS:**

Bishop Martin was really at the baths!?

**ALBERT:**

My lips are sealed. But Father – does it matter? We’re all the same in a towel.

**FRANCIS:**

Yes, Albert. We are. Now go, and for the love of God, be safe.

**The End.**