

White Devils



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Chapter
Nicholas Hyde is working late and alone when Tremaine Thompson comes up the hill to ask his question. The setting sun throws Tremaine's shadow ahead of him as he climbs through strip fields on the slope above the shallow tributary of the Congo River and the ruins of the village. The day's stored heat beats up from the red African dirt. Dry stubble crackles under his boots. In the gallery forest at the edge of the fields the mobs of butterflies their wings printed with the blue red and white logo of a famous soft drink are love-bombing flowering vines as indifferent to what happened here as to what has been done to their genes. Fourteen months ago a ragged gang of armed men burst out of the forest and seized control of the village. They were soldiers loyal to Sergeant Samuel Nyibizo's military dictatorship in headlong retreat from the victorious forces of a democratic coalition supported by Obligate the biggest and brashest of the new wave of environmentally conscious transnationals. The soldiers shot two men who tried to resist and rounded up the rest of the villagers and forced them to undress. They killed the village's pigs and chickens set fire to the huts and the little tin-roofed schoolhouse smashed the solar-powered water pump and the satellite dish. Then they marched the naked men women and children up into the

fields.
 A young woman who had been collecting wild ginger in the forest saw
something of what the soldiers did before she lost her nerve and ran away. She
said that they killed the women first¼ because they had been makin~ the most

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