

Ruined

Salima: stupid man. Why did he have to come? He called me a filthy dog and said I tempted them. Why else would it happen? Five months in the bush, passed between the soldiers like a wash rag. Used. I was made poisoned by their fingers, that is what he said. He had no choice but to turn away from me, because I dishonored him.

do you know what I was doing on that morning? I was working in our garden picking the last of the sweet tomatoes. I put Beatrice down in the shade of a tree because my back was giving me some trouble. Then this splendid bird, a peacock, had come into the garden to toned me, and was showing off its feathers. I stoop down and called to the bird. Then I felt a shadow cut across my back, and when I stood four men were there over me, smiling, wicked schoolboy smiles. "Yes?" I said. And the tall soldier slammed the butt of his gun into my cheek. Just like that. It was so quick, I didn't even know I'd fallen to the ground. Where did they come from? How could I not have heard them? One of the soldiers held me down with his foot. He was so heavy, thick like an ox and his boot was cracked and weathered like it had been left out in the rain for weeks. His foot was so heavy and it was all I could see, as the others "took" me. My baby was crying. She was a good baby. Beatrice never cried, but she was crying, screaming. "Shhh," I said. "Shhh." And right then A soldier stomped on her head with his boot. And she was quiet. Where was everybody? WHERE WAS EVERYBODY?