The gravel pits had been haunted for the past six years, ever since the first white woman drowned. During those intervening years the lives of eight other people were claimed by the pits—or else by the ghost of this white woman, one may pick her truth. For those who believed the latter, it was important to know that the white woman's hungry spirit preyed upon anyone, traveler or hunter; always a stranger who dared to pass near the pits by themselves, or at the dark edges of the day. The victims were first drowned, and then their bodies were stashed between the roots of the great trees that grew on stilts. When the bodies were soft and ripe, and without eyes, they rose to the surface as the white woman's body had done. At this point a victim's soul, which had lingered near the pit, was transformed into a demon. Such was the truth of those who believed. The pits had not always been evil; that was only a recent invention. When the white man came, he found clear streams that emptied into the muddy brown Kasai River and the black tannic waters of the Tshikapa River. The streambeds contained gravel that yielded an extraordinarily high percentage of diamonds, some of them even gem grade. Unlike the famous mines in South Africa where miners had to burrow into the earth, all one had to do here was scoop up the gravel and...
slough off the waste material. That is exactly what happened here. The white man scooped great quantities of gravel out of the streams and trucked them just a few kilometers into Belle Vue, but he left behind huge pits, some deeper than a standing man. These pits filled with water, much to the delight of the Europeans, who would bathe in them together, men and women, while still remaining clothed; scantily clothed, to be sure. The nannies and chauffeurs looked away, embarrassed by the sight of a white woman’s knees, but at the same time curious, for it was said that the European was not white all over. After the white woman drowned, the Europeans ceased to hold their picnics along the banks of the many ponds, and the jungle took over. Therefore it was highly unlikely that a much-respected nanny; a baba; should visit the largest pit early one August morning in 1945. That; what made it the perfect plan. Last Born Child had no children of her own, yet surely she had a mother’s heart. For nearly two generations she had raised the children of Whites; both Europeans and Americans. As it would have been with her own flesh and blood, not all of them survived their first few years, and often as soon as they were weaned, their real mothers would whisk them off to Belgium. However, there were a few who had returned as adults and had greeted her warmly, and with the respect due a proper mother. Last Born Child had always put the children first; that fact could not be debated. Now it was time to think of Last Born Child. She carried, wrapped within her headpiece, enough franc notes to buy her own manioc plot back in her home village. The infant in the carriage would be well cared for; of that she had the Mastermind’s assurance. Last Born Child trusted Mastermind with her life. Still, as she pushed the baby carriage past the building where her employer worked, she could not help but feel some moments of extreme anxiety. Were he to spot her, he would run out and perhaps demand to know what she was doing so far from home. Then she would have to lie and say that she had brought the child for a visit. Nzambi must have been with her, for she was not spotted. Her heart pounding wildly, Last Born Child wheeled the carriage the two kilometers down the hard-packed dirt road in the direction of Luluaburg. When she reached the acacia tree with the L-shaped trunk, she took a right turn down a sandy lane that led just fifty meters farther, to the largest gravel pit. Here the going got tough, and Last Born Child would have been sorely tempted to abandon the carriage, had not her orders been so precise. When at last she got to the clearing, her forehead was glistening with sweat and her breathing was shallow. What; more, there was the urgent need to relieve herself. Last Born Child regarded her surroundings for the first time. The big gravel pit was really a pond. There were trees growing along the far bank now, as well as some in the water. The morning mist had yet to rise in its entirety, or was that, perhaps, the spirit of the hungry white woman? Last Born Child was well acquainted with the stories of ghosts and demons that were said to haunt this place, but she would have no truck with them, for she was a Christian. Still, it was one thing to only hear of a place, and quite another to see it with one’s eyes. Now the urge to relieve herself was compelling. Think clearly; of that she had the Mastermind’s assurance. Last Born Child said aloud. It is the hasty move that results in trouble. The baby mewed as if in response. I am early; Last Born Child said to the baby. I will hear the approaching truck well in advance. All will go well for us. Satisfied that she solved her problem, Last Born Child backed into some nearby bushes and undid the colorful cloth that wrapped around her thickening waist. But in her haste she did not see the mamba that coiled on an overhanging branch. The deadly poisonous snake struck, attaching itself to Last Born Child’s neck just above her left clavicle. Last Born Child jerked, her body becoming momentarily rigid with pain. Within seconds her eyes began to glaze over, even before the serpent detached itself and fell to the jungle floor. The last thoughts that went through Last Born Child’s conscious mind were not of the infant in her care, nor were they of her precious Jesus; they were of the mukishi—the ghost of the drowned Belgian. For the ghost of the white woman had come out of the water and taken Last Born Child’s hand in hers. Together they walked down to the pond’s edge. Last Born Child was not afraid; she was merely curious. There were those who would say that she was even eager to see her new home. When Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck stepped into the clearing to retrieve his arrow, he was but a boy, despite the hair that had recently begun to grow in the damp parts of his body like a tangle of
black moss. This was as far as he could come on his mission; too far, actually; his father would not approve were he to find out. Not that he ever would. For who was there to tell on him? This path along the pits, along the man-made ponds that were off the main road, but yet where there was fairly regular foot traffic, this was the perfect place for Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck to perform his task: that of taking a human life; a man's life; so that he himself could become a man. Only then could he return to the tribe as worthy of taking his place on the council. Of course there were rules one had to follow. In order to prove that he had taken a human life, Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck had to return with a part of that man's body, ideally one that could henceforth be worn around his waist as a sign of his manhood. In this case, the boy decided on an ear. When dried it would resemble a fig, nothing more, and should the Belgians raid the village, he might escape a lashing from the infamous hippo-hide whip. Kah! His people were not cannibals; they would not eat human flesh, no matter how loud their stomachs growled. Leave that to the Bapende people and some of those river tribes up north. However, the skull of the unfortunate individual would forever be the personal property of Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck. The skull would have to be cleaned, of course; stripped of all flesh, then boiled; after which as a newly elevated man he would drink his palm wine from it, using it as a mug, as his father had done, and his father before him. These ponds; dug for the removal of diamonds; were said to be haunted by the spirit of a white woman. A Belgian. Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck was not worried about this ghost; around his neck now hung a monkey-skin bag containing a potion especially created to protect him on this quest. These ponds were a good place for they drew game, and game drew hunters of other tribes. Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck was allowed to kill a man only from another tribe; for to kill a man from his own tribe was taboo. Murder. But the boy was hungry, for he had come a great distance on his quest. In the clearing was a strange beast that, despite having been shot with his finest arrow, did not move. What manner of beast was this, for it appeared not to have a head, and although it had four legs, they were round, and thus totally useless? Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck advanced slowly on the strange animal, his hunting knife drawn from its antelope-hide sheath. Suddenly the beast began to cry out in pain. The boy had been taught by his father never to let any creature suffer. Summoning all the courage available to him, the young hunter leaped in the air, before landing with a startled cry of his own in the sand at the beast's feet. Kah! There's a child inside! The beast is eating a child. His words echoed with ominous clarity across the large pond, which was now clear of its fog. But his words returned to mock him, for a fog was lifting in his brain as well. Although he had never in his short life seen such a beast, he did recognize some of its individual parts. What a strange species of animal this was! Was this part not metal? And here, surely this was metal as well. Ah, and the body of the beast, did it not comprise a substance very much like cloth, only stiffer; like palm-fiber cloth, but of the color known as dark. This, then, was not truly an animal, but a white man's invention. What, then, about the child? Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck had seen many albino infants, and they had appeared similar, but at the same time not so similar. The difference was hard to explain. Of course there was always the possibility that this was not even a child, but a trick devised by the white woman; or it could be the ghost herself; the possibilities were endless. If it had not been for the fact that the boy's best hand-smelted iron arrowhead seemed to be inextricably embedded in the bunched fabric, where a head might have been positioned, Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck would have simply turned on his heels and retraced his steps. As long as he did not mention the incident to anyone, it was the same as if it had never happened. But then he heard the sound of the truck. It too was something new, although in this case, there was nothing with which his brain could compare the sound to; except perhaps to the rumble of an elephant cow, one whose calf had been threatened. Judging by the sound this enraged elephant was making, it was headed directly this way. Perhaps it was because he was still just a boy; and not yet a man worthy of his skull; that Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck did what he did next without even thinking about it. Or perhaps it was because there had been many other children born after him to the same mother, all of them with their cords wrapped
snuggly around their necks, and not one of them surviving. Even now their mother sat grieving, her breasts full of milk and aching. Whatever the reason, the boy still not a man; scooped up the strangely hued infant and slipped back into the surrounding bushes. He did not see the body of Last Born Child for she was hidden by other bushes some yards away. And anyway, had he seen her, he would not have stopped. Something inside the youth; perhaps something called destiny; compelled him to run all the way back to his village. It was a journey of many kilometers across savannahs and the occasional riverine forest. It was a journey to a world left behind by modern times. It was supposed to have been the perfect crime because it followed a foolproof plan. Last Born Child; known to Driver as Baba; was supposed to have delivered the infant to the largest gravel pit at precisely eight o'clock in the morning. Driver knew that Baba already kept a cheap tin clock, manufactured in Japan, in the cubicle in which she lived at the rear of her master's villa. However, just to make sure that she was on time, he purchased a second clock for her. When Driver first spotted the perambulator parked prominently in the middle of the clearing, he whooped with relief; arguably even joy. But where the hell was that damn woman? And what the Flemish was an arrow doing sticking out of the pushed-back hood? What the hell was that supposed to mean? Because in Africa, everything meant something. Driver left the truck idling, with the door open, as he approached the slain buggy cautiously. The Africans were full of rhetoric these days. Angry stuff about retribution, getting back at the whites for all the misery that they caused the natives ever since they first set foot in sub-Saharan Africa centuries ago. Mai oui, it was true, but Driver was a native as well. He had been born in Luluaburg, not more than one hundred kilometers away. The only difference was that he was white, he grant you that. He was white, for starters. But that wasn't his fault. And it certainly wasn't; Driver who caused the Africans all this misery, which they couldn't stop. Driver had been far too busy making his fellow whites miserable. But that was water over the falls, was it not? What mattered now was; Driver who's screams rang out across the string of placid ponds, returning to him as distorted echoes courtesy of the forest along the opposing side. His anguish cries enraged a troop of baboons that had been resting in the limbs of a dead ebony tree a football field away. The baboons barked like dogs and ran up and down the tree's bare branches as they vied for a better look at their new enemy. Driver realized that the only smart thing to do now was to get back on the main road and drive south as fast as possible to the neighboring colony of Angola. Once across the border, Driver could look into the possibility of taking a train to the port city of Luanda and ditching the truck. Oui, a train! The Portuguese were so much more civilized in the way that they ran their colony; then again, hundreds of thousands of them had actually made their permanent homes in Angola. To them it was not just a game of take, take, take. As for notifying Mastermind that something had gone wrong with the foolproof plan; now that would be really stupid. Mastermind would find out soon enough, although hopefully not until Driver was safely on a freighter headed for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Driver had heard it said that a person could live quite well there; servants, even a gardener; without turning in a decent day's work. Ah, now that was a goal worth perusing! It was not Mastermind's intention that harm should come to the infant, Danielle. Mastermind merely wished to relieve the Consortium of the responsibility of having so many diamonds in their vaults. Ha, you see? One could even joke about it. But all joking aside, it was supposed to have been a foolproof way to redistribute the colony's resources, with a greater goal in mind. Yet somehow it wasn't; foolproof. When Driver didn't show up as planned, Mastermind grew very agitated; little daughter was missing, along with her African governess. Mastermind had been planning to drive to the gravel pits that same afternoon, but now it was too late. There would be search parties out and one of them was sure to check out the gravel pits. If the child was there, then it would be discovered. At best, the Mastermind's presence would be redundant, and it might well be suspicious. From this point on the most advantageous course for Mastermind would be that of
observer, not active participant. Let the Consortium keep their jewels. God help the child. The boy&x2014;and from that point on he must remain a boy until the tribal council declared him otherwise&x2014;ran like an antelope that smells the savannah burning at its back. He did not stop to drink, he did not stop to urinate, nor did he stop to rest at any time. Had he stopped, he would not have been able to feel his feet despite the many cuts and bruises he had suffered. When he finally burst into the great compound of his village, he was swallowed by a swarm of curious dogs and children, all of which he left in his wake, so fast did he run. Mother&x2019;s special friend, Iron Sliver, recognized the lad first. &x2013;Your son has returned! And so soon!&x201D; The boy&x2019;s mother stood. She&x2019;d been pulling apart the fibers of a palm leaflet, using her toes as pegs to keep the threads separate. &x2013;But look,&x201d; she cried, discarding her work. &x2013;He has been successful; he cradles the thing in his arms.&x201d; &x2013;It is not what you think,&x201d; Iron Sliver said. &x2013;Kah,&x201d; Mother said sharply. &x2013;Must you always be so negative?&x201d; &x2013;Negative? I am not negative,&x201d; Iron Sliver said angrily. She too had been making thread and this she threw on the ground at Mother&x2019;s feet. &x2013;I think it is a pig&x2019;s head your son cradles in his arms. Will you be changing his name to Pig Killer?&x201d; She stomped off, muttering angrily over her bare shoulder. Mother braced herself for her son&x2019;s arrival. He fell on his knees in front of her, panting so hard that she feared he might go into convulsions. In the meantime he managed to lay at her feet a very strange bundle. The pig&x2019;s head&x2014;but it most certainly was nothing of the sort&x2014;was wrapped in a white man&x2019;s cloth. Mother had never seen anything in her life that remotely resembled this strange cloth. For one thing, it was fuzzy&x2014;like the stems of some highly irritating vines, ones that were capable of raising instant welts, should one be so unfortunate as to brush up against them. Another very odd characteristic of this fabric was the color; like a tincture of blood and water. What a thing to marvel at! &x2013;Aiyee,&x201d; Mother said, jumping back from the strange bundle. &x2013;What is that? A monkey?&x201d; By then a crowd had gathered, and amidst the laughter there was pushing and shoving amongst the neighbors so that this one or that one might get a better view. Then Father appeared, having walked calmly over from the palaver hut. &x2013;Stand back, everyone,&x201d; he said. &x2013;This is a family matter.&x201d; &x2013;Yes, maybe,&x201d; said the chief, who was a neighbor from two huts over as the sun sets. &x2013;But as I am your chief, anything that affects this village affects me as well.&x201d; &x2013;Not everything,&x201d; Father said. &x2013;Remember, Chief, that you are also a slave;&x201d; and do not even belong to this tribe. You were captured as a boy so that we might present you before the Belgians, should we misbehave in their eyes. If they should say, &x2013;Give us your chief so that we might beat him on account of such and such a crime;&x2019; then we can do so, and we will not be hurting one of our own. Yes, you are our chief when it comes to ceremonial purposes as well, but the real power in this tribe belongs to the men of the council who sit in the palaver hut. &x2013;There was a chorus of &x2013;eh,&x201d; and the chief, who hung his head in apparent contrition, stumbled off to his hut as the crowd parted to let him through. Mother anxiously tore her eyes away from the bundle before her. Although the chief was indeed a slave, he was not without some power. As a boy the chief had lived in the outside world and observed its ways; who among the villagers could claim the same thing? &x2013;Look,&x201d; Father said, bringing Mother&x2019;s attention back to her son and his strange gift. &x2013;Now it moves. You can see that it is not a monkey, but the child of a Bula Matadi. My son, what have you done?&x201d; These words Bula Matadi were used all over the Congo to refer to the white man, and literally mean &x2013;breaker of rocks;&x201d; but they were words that struck disbelief, followed by terror, in the hearts of those who heard them. Older people reflexively stepped back. Children began to cry. Born-With-Cord-Around-His-Neck tried to speak, but after running for so many miles his voice refused to make an appearance. His mouth opened and closed repeatedly, his chest heaved dramatically, but still he remained crouched before his mother on one knee, unable to say a word. Then, while his parents looked on helplessly, the boy&x2019;s eyes bulged as he clutched the left side of his chest with both hands. When Mother perceived what was happening, she let out a
scream that could be heard as far away as the manioc patch. Custom dictated that when she had
cought her breath she should scream again and then commence rolling in the dirt to symbolize the
depth of her despair. Instead Mother picked up the bundle and examined its contents closely. The
*Bula Matadi*’s baby had not reacted negatively to her keening. To the contrary; the infant
was gurgling happily, its tiny fists beating the air with excitement. *Pick me up,* it seemed to be
saying. *Pick me up, Mother, and put me to your breast,* for finally I have come home, and I am hungry.

Chapter Two

7958 Police captain Pierre Jardin was a man on the verge of falling in love. It was an electrifying,
etyrifying, place to be in. All his senses were heightened; never had he felt this much alive since
the death of his parents almost eleven years ago in an automobile accident over in Kikwit. At the
same time, his brain at least that little part of it that was being controlled by
his hormones was warning him that the natural consequence of great heights was the
presence of abysmal depths. Then too; more often than not; women expected
something called commitment;* He’d been cogitating on this the night before, when a woman came to see him at his house after dinner. This was highly irregular,
especially since she came unannounced. Even someone as open-minded as the handsome Pierre
Jardin might have been scandalized had it been anyone other than seventy-nine-year-old Dorcas
Middleton. Pierre had known Dorcas his entire life. She’d known his parents, and since
Pierre had been born in the Belgian Congo, and Dorcas was an; the two of them felt a special connection. He even called her Auntie Dorcas, a fact that thrilled her
maiden heart to the utmost. Auntie, come in; he’d said and kissed her on both cheeks, and then immediately he’d wagged a finger in her face. It wasn’t safe for you to be driving alone at night. Please tell me there’s a chauffeur waiting outside. The missionary’s eyes twinkled as she spoke. That very
woman who runs the guesthouse gave me a lift. She assured me that you would be kind
even if I had driven? Who’s going to harm an old woman like me? He took her arm and led
her to the chair he’d been sitting in. It was the only comfortable chair he had at the
moment. *Merde,* if he was going to have a relationship, he really needed to get on top of things;
maybe learn to run a proper household. Auntie, would you like some tea? He knew better than to ask her about spirits. Protestant Americans eschewed anything alcoholic to the
point that even their communion was Grenadine-flavored water.
Surely you’ve heard the rumors, Auntie. Besides, Pierre, would it be so bad if I had
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Tamar Myers returns to Africa in *The Headhunter’s Daughter,* the second
book in her wonderful mystery series set in the Belgian Congo in the mid-twentieth
century; a riveting and atmospheric follow-up to *The Witchdoctor’s Wife.* Raised in the Congo herself, the child of missionaries, Myers uses her intimate
knowledge of the people, the culture, and the landscape to add richness to this
stunning story of an abandoned infant raised by a tribe of headhunters; a
masterful mystery that fans of Alexander McCall Smith and *The #1 Ladies*;
Fiction Book Review: The Witch Doctor's Wife by Tamar Myers - Heart of Darkness (1899) is a novella by Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad about a narrated voyage up the Congo River into the Congo Free State in the Heart of Africa. Charles Marlow, the narrator, tells his story to friends aboard a boat. In 1917, for future editions of the book, Conrad wrote an "Author's Note" where he, CRIME SCENE: AFRICA - Calamicio - Tamar - Audible The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots by Tamar Myers - In 1945, an infant left inadvertently to die in the jungles of the Belgian Congo is the incredible stories of a white girl living among the Bashilele headhunters. 2 stars more on the white child and her life instead of incorporating a mystery. I think I would have related more to the story if I had read the first book, since this (PDF) CRIME SCENE: AFRICA - In 1927, the Belgian Congo on the African continent is an era of headhunters, cannibalism, Book. The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots: A Mystery The headhunter's daughter - Catalog Home - 2014 Category Challenge The Headhunter's Daughter - Tamar Myers - E-book - Myers draws on her own experiences as the daughter of white missionaries living in the Belgian Congo for this dazzling novel full of authentic African lore. one of a local witch doctor's two wives, the delightful, no-nonsense Cripple. (Batter Off Dead ) and Den of Antiquity (Poison Ivory ) mystery series. The Headhunter's Daughter: A Novel - Google Books - Tamar - Audible Scene of the Crime with Author Tamar Myers! - Kittling: Books - Myers draws on her own experiences as the daughter of white missionaries living in the Belgian Congo for this dazzling novel full of authentic African lore. one of a local witch doctor's two wives, the delightful, no-nonsense Cripple. (Batter Off Dead ) and Den of Antiquity (Poison Ivory ) mystery series. The Headhunter's Daughter (Belgian Congo Mystery, book 2) The Headhunter's Daughter (Belgian Congo Mystery, book 2) by Tamar (The second book in the Belgian Congo Mystery series) A novel by Tamar Myers. The making of Magdalena Yoder: PUDDIN' ON THE BLITZ by - Browse author series lists, sequels, pseudonyms, synopses, book covers, ratings and 1 Ladies' Detective Agency novels, "The Boy Who Stole the Leopard's Spots" The Headhunter's Daughter. Jan-2011. Mystery. Belgian Congo - 2. Belgian Congo Mysteries - Book Series In Order - Audible
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