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**Hostel of Doom:
Adventures of a First Year Graduate Student**

I had been to Africa twice before: in 1984 to Malabo, the island capital of Equatorial Guinea, as a UCLA sophomore majoring in economics, and again in 1992 to Mabuto, the seaside capital of Mozambique, as a struggling Hollywood screenwriter. On both occasions I was a guest of my father, who worked with the United Nations Development Program. Like most college educated, media-socialized Americans, I was casually familiar with the Dark Continent. I had seen the films, read an undergrad's quota of books, heard the depressing news. I was vaguely familiar with the colonial past and becoming familiar with its post-colonial present. Once in Africa, the popular notions of mass famine, military juntas, and apartheid that dominated much of the US press on Africa during the 80's, were augmented by new concepts such as the AIDS pandemic, child soldiers, global dependency, and ethnic cleansing.

As a guest of my father—himself a guest for development--my time in these wondrous locales was occupied reading his books, touring the lush countryside, and wandering the sultry coast. I got lost in the cities—their bustling, aromatic central markets, tourist shops, discos, and cafes. I socialized with a cast of Iberian ex-pats, development diplomats, and locals, from friendly to cynical to devious. I reveled in the earthy tastes and smells, the colorful wardrobes, the mosaic sounds of languages and music, the wide-eyed street children experiencing yet another strange visitor, the crumbling colonial infrastructures giving way to ubiquitous nature—and the occasional reminders of home on store front ads for Marlboro and Coke, a tattered Bulls 23 T-shirt on the lanky body of a day laborer. I came away with a sense that this seemingly unique world, so far from the west Los Angeles I knew...was not so different after all. And that was the beginning of sociology.

It was only a sense, mind you. When I arrived home in Los Angeles after that second visit, I had had my fill of Africa and had no intention of returning. My father's work with the UNDP eventually took him to Central America and Southeast Asia. So like any self-respecting Hollywood writer, I wrote an action-adventure-romance script based on my experiences in Africa, a story of foreign aid, illegal arms sales, and corporate-financed third world insurrections. I saw Andy Garcia in the title role. Truth be told, I never sold that script. Not even close.

Fast-forward ten years to the first summer after September 11th. I am landing aboard a KLM jumbo at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Kenya, near Nairobi, late evening. I've just survived my first year of graduate school in the sociology at Louisiana State University, and spent the early part of the summer attending an Internet workshop on both U.S. coasts. Also, I have just finished my first fieldwork experience—interviews with Internet café users in the Netherlands and Belgium. How a California beach boy, fifteen years post college, found himself back in the Halls of Academe—in the bayou of all places—has everything to do with this third trip to Africa. An Internet romance brought me to Louisiana. My interest in global society and how the Internet might shape its future brought me back to school, although I swore once I would never return. Now here I am a graduate assistant involved in a sociological study of developing world science The Professor had begun ten years prior. And as fate would have it, our study focuses on the local and global impacts of the Internet (and other digital information and communication innovations) on science and technology in Kenya, Ghana, and India. A rather fortuitous chain of events—or is it a stretch for the audience?

But our real agenda, simmering quietly and watched with great care on the back research burner, is understanding the institutions of development—'reagency' as The Professor calls it. How do 'guests for science'—like The Professor, me, and Marcus Ynalvez, our Filipino colleague—confront the challenges and opportunities of developing world research in the digital age? Are these cross-national collaborative efforts still subject to the same kind of social processes as those of the pre-digital past or can we change them? In plain English, doing research, building infrastructure, organizing participative initiatives, executing projects in the Third World is not like doing it in the First. Reagency, in diplomatic

English, involves the redirection of resources to fit local needs—put not so diplomatically, some might call it stealing. But more on that later.

The Professor—tall, angular and athletic—waits for me at baggage claim in a baseball cap, dusty cargoes, and three day old beard, a 21st century Indiana Jones. With him is our Kenyan compatriot Paul Mbatia, Indiana University alum. Paul is a compact, handsome, and alert Kikuyu who is now a sociology professor at the University of Nairobi. I am told that the Kenyan elections are near, and Mbatia has already begun politicking in his home village for the eventual winner, Kibaki. In his rickety Toyota hatchback, Mbatia drives us through the cool Kenyan night along the legendary Mombassa highway to our digs, the Nairobi YMCA. The “Y” is tucked away between the university of Nairobi residence halls on one side and the main campus of the University, adjacent to downtown Nairobi. Through the semi-guarded outer gate, and the rough-edged, brown brick, three story lodge is our efficient project base, with a warm and helpful staff, and a weathered interior courtyard terrace overlooking a beautiful, rustic landscaped lawn with sub-tropical foliage. The focus, within the grounds, is a sparkling and mightily-used swimming pool. The dilapidated tennis courts are eyed daily by The Professor. Tempted as he is, he prefers to travel on crowded, earthy matatu minibuses for higher quality courts several kilometers away. With him this game is an addiction.

The tile terrace and sloping lawn of the Y attract many businessmen, students, Christian groups, and one particularly cute and rambunctious, ash gray kitten — the local wild life --- during lunchtime, while the patina-colored pool attracts local sun worshipers and aquatic enthusiasts. From the main building down the garden walkway to our residence wing, you pass a rough grass clearing, featuring a drooping volleyball net, and a small, freestanding chapel from colonial days. We would have occasion within the next 24 hours to become intimately familiar with possible hideouts on the grounds, including racquetball courts and an abandoned hair salon surrounded intermediately by jagged brick walls and thick fencing with barbwire crests. Past the sleepy security check and a thick iron plated door is a stairway leading up to our rooms. There are twin beds with woolen bedding (we are on the equator, a chilly mile above sea level) and mosquito nets (optional, according to The Professor, for the annual malaria epidemic

was in the West). There are wooden desks, a closet with keyhole but no key to be found anywhere, hot water twice a day, electricity for our constantly used laptops, and a narrow balcony facing the near Nairobi skyline. If this all seems rather secure, it is not by mistake. We are informed very frankly that the Y has been robbed at gun multiple times over the last five years.

The room at the YMCA included breakfast on the weathered terrace cafe, where we met two old ex-pats, in residence for over 20 years. They did not sit together. They did not eat together. Birds of the same feather who did not flock...? First Tom from New Hampshire: Tom was a Graham Greene Quiet American type, straight out of central casting, or at least that's what the Kenyans thought. For the past 20 years, since Mbatia, our local collaborator was at university, they had been familiar with "the American" at the Y, and knew exactly who he was. Seventy plus years, Tom still jogged three miles several times a week after uncountable laps in that pool. His strange and brusque eating habits (2 bowls of porridge, 10 toasts, 5 eggs and a large vitamin powder drink for breakfast), his ability to live like a Kenyan—which means, without much money and no visible job—and his choice to live so close to the university, raised more than one local eyebrow. All very peculiar, was it not? Not unfriendly, but distant...he spoke perfect Swahili—and why did he never go home to America? It did nothing but solidify his reputation as a CIA operative, "our man in Kenya." Perhaps he was even helping to keep Moi in power for the past quarter century.

Then there was the English actor who had been living in Kenya since 1957. Kenneth Mason was 85 years old and still kicking, shingles notwithstanding. Sir Kenneth, as we called him, comments on our descriptions of contemporary American life in a characteristic and dramatic British drawl, the same way he responds to the nagging daily occurrences of Kenyan life, a life he had willingly chosen for just short of a half century, by singing, "DREADFUL.... ABSOLUTELY, DREADFUL!" He liked nothing better than to retire with a stout in the evening and entertain guests for science, for development, for tourism—any type of guests for any reason in the single room just next to us. His simple room, though, was "converted"—into an imperial salon, awash in books on theater and world history, and a series of colorful, Oxford College's coats of arms he had painted himself. With an offer of a gin and tonic on the

rocks or a brandy in a warm snifter, Kenneth would unfold amazing stories of the Royal Air Force in the second World War, discourse on his post-war, Greek Island adventures with just a knapsack in tote, or reveal how he came to Nairobi to help build a theatre for the performing arts. And so he stayed, year after year, taking his annual vacation to Mombasa, and still operating, directing and acting. When Out of Africa was filmed on location here in the 1980s, Kenneth was cast as the banker who rejects Meryl Streep's loan request. Often, when not giving us his bountiful list of film credits, Sir Kenneth spun tales about his Kenyan adventures that sounded wild, like the British safari character from Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoons: "How well I remembereh the time we wah in Nairobbeh." Kenneth was voluble—New Hampshire Tom's opposite, yet they were admittedly the best of friends, only Kenneth refused to "dine" within eyesight of Tom's diet and table manners.

Kenneth and Tom are permanent expatriates, but not strangers to their own lands—the Internet, of course was the reason. Globalization is not just an economic phenomenon—it is also a matter of connectedness, to people and information. Kenneth is an avid e-mailer, communicating with his old friends and colleagues in the England on a weekly basis. New Hampshire Tom checks the ESPN website religiously to follow football and other American sports—he was eager to discuss our recent LSU football stars, Rohan and Reed, and knew more about their draft status than we did. ("So, if you're really an American, who played shortstop for the Yankees last year?"). Now that I think about it, it is not so strange these ex-pats are so connected. Nairobi has more Internet Cafés per square mile than anywhere I have experienced in Europe, Amsterdam included. They are cheap for us, but not so cheap for Kenyans. Still, they are often full, with their slow bandwidth, helpful staffs and eager patrons, often University of Nairobi students, with a scattering of ex-pats and Guests for Development like us. What is frustrating for The Professor, and amusing to me given the proliferation of digital communication we encounter all around us (mobile phones are everywhere), is that our local collaborators and the institutes we hope to network are not global enough. It is a fight to get them to answer their email on a regular basis—all except Mbatia, with his awesome work ethic and scholarly single-mindedness...give him the Internet, and he will be everywhere.

Now, there can be no more exploring my new surroundings. I must prepare for a new phase of our research and also return to the airport early the next morning to collect a friend, who is arriving from Los Angeles. Elizabeth, a striking green-eyed blond, is a recent Pepperdine MBA. She is treating herself to a world travel marathon after spending the last two years working and studying full time. She learned of our research in Kenya and detoured to help, after trekking through India and Nepal the month before. This would be her very first visit to Africa. Born in Poland, she became a teenage refugee during the Solidarity strike and was eventually placed by the UN in Alexandria, Louisiana, before majoring in architectural design at LSU --- Coincidental perhaps? I originally met Elizabeth over the Internet while I was still in Los Angeles.

On her first day in Nairobi, though, Elizabeth chooses to sleep off her jet lag while The Professor and I venture out into the city to begin our work. Around mid-day, we meet Paul Mbatia and a collection of individuals from the National Drylands Farming Research Centre and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. Our mission for the coming week is to find best prices and purchase digital networking materials to build Local Area Networks (LANs) with the Internet at both institutes. Our project—is it really sociology?—includes the provision of infrastructure. We want to know whether and how the Internet is globalizing science (worldsci.net). Unless we connect these places, we will not have much to study by the time the project is over. But then—synchronized perfectly with some cosmic adventure script's Act One plot twist—all plans are put on indefinite suspension the day of our first shopping expedition. More immediate concerns—for life and limb—become central. What actually unfolds over the next three days is best described in an email The Professor is able to send to our colleagues in the US the next week:

It was Thursday, when we were out buying our networking gear. The Police shot a student on campus near the University dormitories (about 200 Yards away). The YMCA where we stayed is in the middle of them and all hell broke loose. Don't know why--heard the guy was smoking marijuana but that doesn't really sound like the true story--not even in Kenya do you get shot for that. The police say he pulled a knife. The students and the people here at the Y say that he didn't have one, that the police always say that, and even if he did, why do you have to kill him? Which is a good question. We went on to the Green Café where I often do email and tried to take a taxi back. The driver didn't want

to come down the State House Road, from where the President lives to the university, because he'd heard about this on the TV--you see, our YMCA is right in the middle of all these dorms. Sure enough, it was about 10:30pm. As we drove slowly down the hill, some students waved us back, and the driver put it in reverse & backed up the hill at a rapid rate.

I didn't know what to do--so called a friend on the mobile & he advised to wait it out. We went to a place [a bar in Westlands, an upscale part of Nairobi] and waited about an hour outside, then tried again. When we drove down to the city and to the campus where the dorms are, there were rocks (big ones) everywhere on the road. The students had rioted & thrown rocks at cars (which is typical here), and burned one car. But by this time everything had died down & we could get in the YMCA, which is gated.

Friday morning we woke up, heard the students outside on the road, whistling and marching toward the roundabout that leads to the center of Nairobi. That's where the police set up the barriers so the students can't get to the city center. They then spent the whole day rampaging. We considered going out but when the tear gas started coming in the windows we decided against it. There were shots and tear gas the whole day from about 9 in the morning until about 7 at night. The folks here at the Y just said, "be calm, they never come in, they only want to get a policeman."

But they also stone a lot of cars & extort money from drivers, so the rampaging can become thievery very fast. We stayed in the compound of the YMCA the whole day; occasionally we talked on the mobile phone to Paul Mbatia (my collaborator, the Univ. of Nairobi sociologist, who was only about 500 yards away at the Sociology department--but it might as well have been 100 miles). We tried to assess the situation and whether we should try to make an escape.

You could move all around the city, but just not where we were, in the middle of it [the riot}. And you're just too visible, being white. I actually felt pretty tense for the first few hours, kind of a "Blackhawk Down" syndrome or something--wondering what they might do to Americans if they came into the place. I've just never heard that much shooting before. And I don't think anyone (else) was killed--actually I don't know. The staff here keep reassuring us that the students are not interested in us, and only want to kill one policeman, then it would be over (later we heard, 'no, two [policemen].'). It would be good if the YMCA had Internet.

The pattern is this: the police drive the students back, then the Students go beyond the university gates & taunt the police to come in, then the police retreat & the students advance--and back and forth it goes the entire day. At one point we heard the Vice Chancellor came out to calm them down but then they went at it again.

I did venture out of the back gate once to have a look when the Students had advanced far enough that they didn't look like coming back immediately, and I was in a group of Kenyans from the Y, all of whom are extremely nice. Then the students ran back and started yelling at us to pick up a stone to throw, and we better not be watching for fun because this is very serious. I thought it took them a **very** long time

to lock the gate? One of the women kept saying to the guards, 'Look, this is not a movie.'

I realized a couple of guys were working on the roof of our building so we went up and you could see a lot of the action from the rooftop (3 story building). These workers did not even look at the students once, but were very interested in us--one mostly in whether we felt the students were justified, and the other mostly in witnessing to me about an American biblical prophet that I should well know about but didn't. We stayed -up there for at least two hours and had an excellent view. [we could see] lots of storks and hawks and odd birds. We're pretty sure they were using rubber bullets--most of the time. The Kenyans keep saying 'rubber bullets.' Rick Duque, my doctoral student, said: I know rubber bullets (from his Hollywood career) and these aren't. But mostly I think they fire tear gas.

The next day [Saturday] we went out early, before the students and walked in the opposite direction from the conflict. Two scientists and the computer guy from Katumani were driving in from some distance outside Nairobi, so they wanted to take back their equipment. The plan was for them to navigate around the trouble so we could go buy the stuff and then go somewhere until it settles down. But the police arrested the offending officer so the students called it off. (Bets were that they would keep him in jail for his safety, since the newspaper published his picture on the front page.)

Kenyans asked so many times 'so, this kind of thing doesn't happen in your university?' And I say, 'no, I can't say I've seen something like this.' Or 'well, it used to happen back in the 1960s but not anymore.'

Their next question is 'so, if they don't do this, how do the students express their grievances?' And now I'm just casting about for an answer, 'Well, they don't have too many grievances at the moment.' Or 'they are not too organized.' Or 'they don't worry too much about politics.'

Finally the Kenyans ask 'so when they do complain, how do the Authorities react?'

This one, I have no problem: 'they fire the coach and hire a new one.'...

And that is just what the Kenyans would like to do.

But this sly reference to Kenyan politics comes later. This is only the second day of the riot and it seems to be escalating. The Professor and I scan the grounds and the racquetball courts just don't cut it as a hiding place. At least on the rooftop, you can always pull up the ladder behind you. Accompanied by Elizabeth, our ascent to the rooftop is tricky. The door to the roof is inconspicuous: a dark, cluttered stairwell leads to a perilous wooden ladder. On the roof, the workers coach us to step gingerly along the solid bolted spines that hold the fragile aluminum in place. Was it the Last Crusade?

No Nazis or cave snakes, but I do have a Professor and a Beautiful Blond. Then we spy New Hampshire Tom down below. Tom speaks for a moment with a concerned guard at the building entrance. He looks right and left, and then makes a decision. Here, where we are, is a place where the non-Africans, and even some of the more cautious locals, are seeking safety, the Christian grounds of the Y. Yet like a tall, lilywhite ghost, Tom walks purposefully to the gate, opens it, and strides fearlessly into the center of the mêlée. Where?! “You see,” says Mbatia over the mobile, “definitely CIA.”

Back on the roof, the workers are busy hand-insulating water pipes running to a hot water heater in the center. From her seat along the sturdy roof edge, Elizabeth resigns herself with a pensive pucker of her lips. This is her reality, in the mist of a potentially explosive riot, tear gas slowly sailing toward her from the street below. Not exactly what one hopes for on their first full day in Africa. Worlds away from an MBA program in Malibu and the fancy boutiques lining Rodeo drive near where she lives. The hotel wing is separated from the street below by gated grounds on all sides—there is even a private club beneath us, not far from where students and police play the deadly but controlled cat and ever taunting mouse. In the empty lot immediately below, birds gather for their midday meal of assorted litter and carrion, if birds they are. More like large gray dragons with wingspans of six to eight feet, descending past us, cutting the crisp, cool blue Nairobi afternoon, pre-historic monsters oblivious to the human drama unfolding below. It is lunchtime for them.

While the riot raged below, I powered on my digital recorder—somehow it helped to think of this as research, a kind of intentionality attributed to a completely unintentional situation. When we later assessed our experience on that rooftop over a glass of contraband red wine (it was the YMCA, after all), we replayed the audio. Halfway through the recording it gets very quiet. Then there is a horrible sound and a gasp, where our rooftop chorus holds its combined breath. Relaxed now in our room, we try to remember what had actually occurred at that moment of surprise during the riot—a tank rolling over a student, or a platoon of police sharpshooters mowing down a fleeing mob? Then it hits us. During a lull in the riot, one of those pre-historic creatures glides past us at arms length, monstrous and magnificent:

“Who dares encroach here?” It is the pattern of the day: humanity explodes; nature goes about its business.

As I mentioned earlier, after my last visit to Africa in 1992, I was left with the sense that it was not much different from the world I had come from. And up there on that rooftop, when those pipe workers asked if ‘this’ had ever happened in our country, I didn’t have to think twice in answering. Under similar circumstances, in the spring just before the summer of my last visit to the “Dark Continent,” the Rodney King riots exploded my home town of Los Angeles into an emotional and physical inferno, paralyzing Tinsel Town for about two weeks, forcing the National Guard into the city, and inspiring a visit by the senior President Bush. Less than a year and half before, I had been living and working in Korean Town, one of the local epicenters of the disturbance. Of course, ever the screenwriter, I wrote a romantic-drama based on those happenings. That one didn’t sell either. Unlike the Nairobi riot, the L.A. riots saw not only great loss of property, but also lost lives and lost trust, with wounds still healing ten years later. They talk about tribalism in Africa as an impediment to development. Just witness the tribal lines in my hometown, dividing our city along elevated freeway arteries, palm-lined boulevards, concrete rivers, and those barriers still kept in place by suffocating traffic and phantom riots. On this third visit, the “Dark Continent” is illuminating quite nicely, a mirror of places I have known very well. In fair contrast, the Nairobi riots—after the initial, brutal killing—involved no deaths and minimal harm to life, more like the choreographed warfare of horticultural societies. There was, in the end, little violence, and almost no bloodshed—though the technologies for producing bloodshed were present and available.

And so I am left with this: Isn’t the essence of sociology—more than any theory or methodology—the burning desire to understand something, some social phenomenon? I am only a year or so into my studies—but what a worthwhile struggle it will be towards that understanding. Here in Africa we must understand the ways the Internet is implicated in the process of globalization: Will new information and communications technologies lead to the ever-increasing internationalization of social relationships? It is not an easy question. In Nairobi there are universities, collaborators, professional

scientists, Internet infrastructure, Olympic-sized pools, tennis courts, and mobile phones—as well as grinding poverty, rampant HIV-AIDS, and the corruption born of a permanent political party and a dictator seemingly without conscience. There is a strange difference you can't quite put your finger on, but it is now my job, like others in this field, to place that finger. There are riots; but those occur back home as well, contrary to The Professor's off-the-cuff email remark. There are unscrupulous collaborators, even in our own project, and the resulting interaction of interests is an aspect of reagency. This is not just the pursuit of knowledge—it is also about survival and livelihoods. I have no reason to believe the pursuit of knowledge is any more or less fundamental to research in the developed world. That is one of the tenets of sociology and STS that science is a social process, embedded in social structures, rather than an impersonal, objective enterprise driven by lofty ideals.

In Nairobi, it is abundantly clear how embedded we are in these structures, while at the same time we are involved in the social construction of our own research site, assembling a diverse group of bodies with special interests often unrelated to science, technology, or sociology. The Professor purchases networking materials—cash only please—with precious bundles from ATM withdrawals, surrounded by watchers in the mid-day Nairobi sun. I take photos of money changing hands—would that I had a 35mm film camera and a crew.

We check for missing survey pages, decide on a strategy of carrots or sticks for the painfully brief Internet café interviews streaming in daily from another remote site. We look at the first batch of interviews with Ghanaian scientists and wonder if the network questions were asked properly. We negotiate with DHL on shipping the Kenya surveys home for checking. We fire one of the local interviewers who had contracted what Kenyans call 'mazungu disease,' the syndrome inspired by the perception of 'white man with too much money needs to part with it...' We argue for long hours in the bar about the impact of mobile phones on Internet use and globalization (it should be negative, we think). We visit a gorgeous, pristine research site—Katumani—a Santa Fe-like setting just miles outside the chaos that is Nairobi, where we hope one day to gather data on the use of the LAN the project has purchased...if and when they ever get it up and running. As of now, six months later, it is still not in

place. Unsurprisingly, certain required hardware was forgotten the first time around and more project resources are requested to get the system installed. What is it I can't put my finger on? The same, but very different. Different, but just the same. I am going to get it—where the costs are high, there will be high rewards.

While we pondered this conundrum, Elizabeth, who was only there for the “holiday,” turned out to be our best undercover operative, it seems. She decided to solve the puzzle of New Hampshire Tom, which might have been accomplished much earlier had anyone bothered to talk to him. His brave foray into the riot? To meet his handler and pass on information? No. To our dramatic disappointment the Quiet American was no CIA agent. He had a French class to teach, you see, and the children were waiting for him. Even Mbatia's skepticism dissolved. Tom loved Kenya, loved Kenyans, and loved teaching French to local school children—for almost no money. And it was OK with him.

That student interviewer, the one that was ceremoniously fired...? Well, we designed a new study to examine the relationship between mobile telephony and Internet use. She has been miraculously rehired and is arguably the best interviewer on the project.

And Kenneth, the Old School actor...? Hey, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Perhaps when we're doddering in the year 2033 AD, The Professor and I will need a story or two ourselves:

My Deah Professah:

I'm sitting at some newfangled communications café near the new Sunset and Vine hover campus, the one dedicated to the late humanist Sir Rodney King, you remember. I am having a chat with dear Elizabeth—you do recawl our old friend? Now that Mbatia is Guv'nah of the Internet she's engaged in a bit of consulting for us. As you always said, don't ask, don't tell!

We were wondring if you could still get an email at the Nairobi "Y" from time to time? We cahn't seem to ping you, but we suspect you still have your room with the view! You remembah back when we used keyboards? So much more sensible. This silicon neural eye gel with the sinus globecom tracking implants are a complicated, messy business, indeed. Quite! Drives my allegories batty, I tell you. The things we do for progress, right? I continue to feel—as I always did—that humans are inherently digital creachures and digital creachures prefer keyboards. It's a proven fact. Now I've got to learn these new things myself—and without graduate students to help. This new gooey technology, as dear Elizabeth calls it, is dreadful. Simply Dreadful. Don't know why they can't keep these things simple.

For some strange reason we were remembering that time we were together in Nairobi at the turn of the Millennium. Bit of a tight spot, eh? Oh two, if memory serves...during that uprising of the indigeni, before the troops popped in and put it to rest. By gawd those were the days, wot? Just the thought of it set us going! Teah gas streaming threw those windows! Brings it awl back, evry moment, I do say...shots wizzing to and fro, thick as pheasant on the estate, wot? As I recall, we were late for dinner at the Carnivore. Frightful really. The zebra and impala were perfectly cold.

Spot of informashun for you in case your connection is down—LSU has changed coaches again! Now maybe the boys can make a good run for the lotus pedals at the Globecom Beijing Bowl next Chinese New Year. Geaux Tigers and all that!

I meant to ask you about your titanium hip. Has it improved your net game? Simply preposterous how Wimbledon has disallowed their use this year...next they'll be shrinking the court back to 50 meters. You'd think we were in the dark ages.

A bit curious—is that Kibaki fellow still in charge? It must be nearly 30 years he's been in office. Showed so much promise early on, as I remember. As they say nowadays, the infinite consistency of change!

Hope to see you in Nairobi again someday, health permitting. Don't let the vultures get you, ole boy.

Sir Richard Duke
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