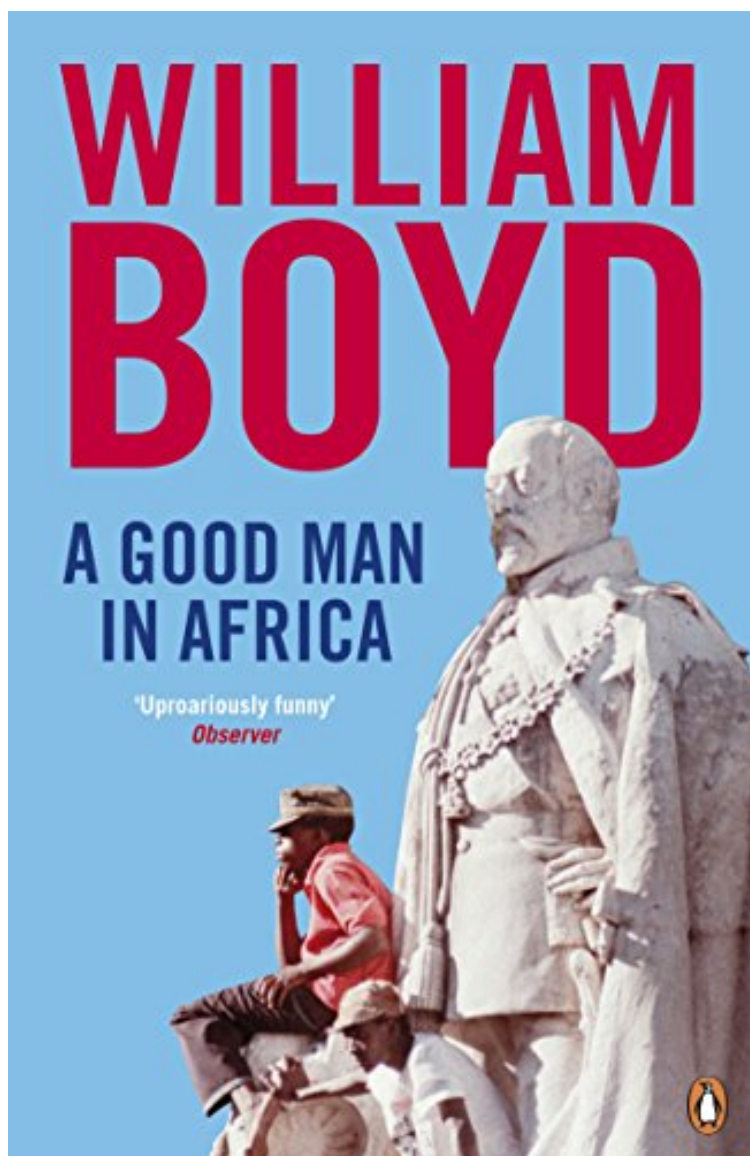


[Download pdf ebook] File size: 79.Mb

A Good Man in Africa



Par William Boyd
*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks |*
Download PDF

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #108681 dans eBooksPubli le: 2013-12-19Sorti le: 2013-12-19Format: Ebook Kindle

[Download pdf ebook] A Good Man in Africa

Par William Boyd : A Good Man in Africa before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Good Man in Africa:

Download

Read Online

Description : Description du produitIn the small African republic of Kinjanja, British diplomat Morgan Leafy bumbles heavily through his job. His love of women, his fondness for drink, and his loathing for the country prove formidable obstacles on his road to any kind of success. But when he becomes an operative in Operation Kingpin and is charged with monitoring the front runner in Kinjanjas national elections, Morgan senses an opportunity to achieve real professional recognition and, more importantly, reassignment.After he finds himself being blackmailed, diagnosed with a venereal disease, attempting bribery, and confounded with a dead body, Morgan realizes that very little is going according to plan.

Prsentation de l'diteurA Good Man in Africa is William Boyd's classic, prize-winning debut novelWinner of the Whitbread Award and the Somerset Maugham PrizeEscapee from suburbia, overweight, oversexed ...

Morgan Leafy isn't overburdened with worldly success. Actually, he is refreshingly free from it. But then, as a representative of Her Britannic Majesty in tropical Kinjanja, it was not very constructive of him to get involved in wholesale bribery. Nor was it exactly oiling his way up the ladder to hunt down the improbably pointed breasts of his boss's daughter when officially banned from horizontal delights by a nasty dose ...

Falling back on his deep-laid reserves of misanthropy and guile, Morgan has to fight off the sea of humiliation, betrayal and ju-ju that threatens to wash over him. A Good Man in Africa is one of the greatest comic novels of recent times and will be loved by fans of Any Human Heart, as well as readers of Ben Macintyre, Sebastian Faulks, Nick Hornby and Hilary Mantel. 'Wickedly funny' The Times. 'If a widening grim is the test of a novel's entertainment value in retrospect, A Good Man in Africa romps home' Guardian.com Morgan Leafy had high hopes when he first headed out to the small African nation of Kinjanja to serve as Her British Majesty's representative. But once there, Leafy's dreams of professional advancement and personal happiness soon fade: this son of an airport catering manager finds himself overtaken on the career ladder by other, newer recruits to the diplomatic corps who come from the right family and attended the right schools. What's worse, the girl of his dreams has just become engaged to someone younger, thinner, and better connected. And if all this weren't enough to make a career civil servant miserable, Leafy is also being blackmailed by a representative of one of Kinjanja's many political parties who has presented him with a puzzling task: get to know the Scottish medical doctor at a local university. Author William Boyd has written about Africa before, most notably in his bestselling novel Brazzaville Beach. In A Good Man in Africa, Boyd spins a darkly comic tale of political corruption, revolution, sexual misadventure, blackmail, and death. By novel's end, Leafy may not have become a better man--or even a much wiser one--but he has acquired a kind of dignity and gritty courage for which he is well suited.

Chapter 1 "Good man," said Dalmire, gratefully accepting the gin Morgan Leafy offered him, "Oh, good man." He presents his eager male friendship like a gift, thought Morgan; he's like a dog who wants me to throw a stick for him to chase. If he had a tail he'd be wagging it. Morgan smiled and raised his own glass. I hate you, you smug bastard! he screamed inwardly. You shit, you little turd, you've ruined my life! But all he said was, "Congratulations. She's a fabulous girl. Lovely. Lucky chap." Dalmire rose to his feet and went to the window that looked over the Deputy High Commission's front drive. Heat vibrated up from the parked cars, and a dusty even light lay over the view. It was late afternoon, the temperature was in the low nineties, Christmas was less than a week away. Morgan watched in disgust as Dalmire tugged and eased his sweaty trouser seat. Oh Priscilla, Priscilla, he asked himself, why him? Why Dalmire? Why not me? "When's the great day then?" he asked, his face all polite curiosity. "Not for a while," Dalmire replied. "Old Ma Fanshawe seems set on a spring wedding. So's Pris. But I'm easy." He gestured at the sombre bank of clouds which loomed over the rusty sprawling mass that was the town of Nkongsamba, state capital of the Mid-Western region, Kinjanja, West Africa. "Looks like we're in for a shower." Morgan thought about replacing the gin in his filing cabinet, decided against it and poured himself another stiff three-fingers. He waved the green bottle at Dalmire who threw up his hands in mock horror. "Lord no, Morgan, couldn't take another. Better let the sun hit the yard-arm." Morgan shouted for Kojo, his secretary. The man promptly emerged from the outer office. He was small, neat and dapper with a starched white shirt, tie, blue flannels and black shoes loose on his feet. Every time he was in Kojo's presence Morgan felt like a slob. "Ah, Kojo. Tonic, tonic. More tonic," he said, trying to keep himself in check. "Comin', sah." Kojo turned to go. "Hold on. What's that you've got?" Kojo held several looping strands of paper-chain. "Christmas decorations, sah. For your office. I thought maybe this year. . . ." Morgan rolled his eyes heavenwards. "No," he shouted. "Never, none of it in here." A merry bloody Christmas I'm having, he thought bitterly. Then, aware of the startled look on Dalmire's face, he said more reasonably, "Nevah bring 'im for here--you sabi dis ting. I nevah like 'im for dis place." Kojo smiled, ignoring the pidgin English. Morgan scrutinised the little man's features for signs of resentment or contempt but found no trace. He felt ashamed of his boorishness; it wasn't Kojo's fault that Dalmire and Priscilla were engaged. "Of course not, sah," Kojo said politely. "It will be as usual. Tonic comin' up." He left. "Good man?" Dalmire asked, eyebrows raised. "Yes, he is actually," Morgan said, as though surprised by the thought. "You know: bloody efficient." He wished Dalmire would go. The news was too depressing for him to maintain his conviviality for much longer. He cursed himself futilely for not paying more attention to Priscilla these last weeks, but they had been impossible, amongst the worst he had ever experienced in his generally fraught existence in this stinking hot frustrating shit-hole of a country. Don't think about it, he told himself, it'll only seem worse. Think about Hazel instead--the new flat. Go to the barbecue at the club tonight. Do anything other than dwell on golden opportunities missed. He looked at Dalmire, his subordinate, Second Secretary. He thought

now that, in fact, he had really disliked him all along. From the day of his arrival. Something about his unreflecting Oxbridge assuredness; something about the way Fanshawe had instantly taken to him. Fanshawe was the Deputy High Commissioner in Nkongsamba; Priscilla was his daughter. "Glad you had a chance to have a chat with Morgan, Dickie," Fanshawe had said to Dalmire. "Old Nkongsamba hand is Morgan. Been here, oh, getting on for three years now, isn't that right, Morgan? Part of the furniture almost, eh? Ha-ha. Good man though, Dickie. Finger on the pulse. Got great things planned, haven't we, Morgan, eh?" Morgan had smiled broadly throughout the whole harangue, a brief but foul chant of rage running through his brain. He looked at Dalmire now as he stood by the window. He was wearing a white shirt, white shorts, beige knee socks and well-polished, brown brogue shoes. That, Morgan decided, was another thing he despised about him: his affected old-colonial attire. Ghastly wide shorts, billowing Aertex shirts and his college tie, thin and discreetly banded. Morgan himself sported flared, light-coloured flannels, bright shirts and these new wide ties with fist-sized Windsor knots which, so his sister assured him, were the latest fashion back home. But when he met with Fanshawe, Dalmire, and Jones, the Commission's accountant, they made him feel cheap and flashy, like some travelling salesman. Even Jones had taken up shorts since Dalmire's arrival. Morgan detested the sight of his fat little Welsh knees peeking out between the hem of his shorts and the top of his socks like two bald, wrinkled babies' heads. Morgan wearily dragged his attention back to Dalmire who was saying something while still dreamily staring out of the window. ". . . the whole fate thing, gosh. Priscilla was just saying how extraordinary it was that my very first posting should be here." Morgan felt a sudden desire to weep hot tears of frustration. How dare he throw fate in his face? When it could so easily have been him standing there, the new fiance, if Hazel had only kept . . . if Priscilla hadn't . . . if Dalmire had never come . . . if Murray . . . Murray. He stopped the runaway car at the edge of the cliff.

Yes, Murray. Fate had been working overtime. Dalmire was still talking. "Don't you agree, Morgan? Astonishing how these things happen?" "Quite," Morgan said, looking intently at the Annigoni reproduction of Her Majesty on his office wall. "Absolutely. No question." He sighed quietly. He cast a glance at Dalmire who was shaking his head in wonder at the miraculous nature of things. What was so remarkable about Dalmire? he wondered to himself. Mild, reasonably pleasant features, thick brown hair with a straight well-defined parting, slim, fit-looking build. In strong contrast to himself he had reluctantly to admit, but beyond that nothing but unexceptionable blandness. And, in truth, he had to concede also that Dalmire had always been amicable and subservient; there was no evident cause for the poisonous hate he now nurtured in his breast. But he knew he hated Dalmire abstractly, *sub specie aeternitatis*, so to speak. He hated him because his life was so easy and his attitude, far from one of abject and astonished gratefulness that this should be so, seemed rather to indicate that this was as fixed and natural a state of affairs as the planetary orbits going on invisibly above their heads. He wasn't even particularly clever. Checking up his A-level and degree results in his personal file, Morgan had been amazed to discover how much worse Dalmire had done than he. And yet, and yet he had gone to Oxford, while Morgan went to some concrete and plate-glass building site in the Midlands. He already owned a house--in Brighton, legacy of some distant aunt--while Morgan's UK base was his mother's cramped semi-detached. And yet Dalmire had been posted abroad as soon as his training was over, while Morgan had sweated three years in an overheated office off Kingsway. Dalmire's parents lived in Gloucestershire; his father was a Lieutenant Colonel. Morgan's lived in Feltham; his father had been a catering manager at Heathrow. . . . He could go on and on. It just wasn't fair, he moaned to himself, and now he's got Priscilla too. He wanted something harsh, cruel and inexplicable to happen to Dalmire; something shocking and arbitrary, just to put him in touch with real life again. But no, the final insult from a bourgeois, ex-public school God had allowed Priscilla to be swept off her feet within weeks of Dalmire's arrival. His thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door and Denzil Jones, the accountant, poked his head round it. "Excuse me, Morgan. Ah, there you are, Dickie. See you at the club. Five-ish?" "Fine," Dalmire said. "Think you can cope with eighteen holes, Denzil?" Jones laughed. "If you can, boyo, so can I. See you there, OK? Tara, Morgan." Jones left. Morgan reflected that of all the accents he disliked, the Welsh was the most irritating. Except possibly Australian . . . or perhaps Geordie come to that. . . . "Good little golfer is Denzil," Dalmire volunteered amiably. Morgan looked astonished. "Him? Golf? You must be kidding. With a gut like that?" He sucked in his own. "I'm surprised he can see the ball." Dalmire screwed up his face in polite disagreement. "There's more to Denzil than meets the eye. You'd be surprised. Handicap of seven. It's all I can do to beat him." He paused. "Talking of golf I heard you used to play a bit. What about joining us?" "No, thanks," Morgan said. "I've given up golf. It was ruining my mental equilibrium." He suddenly remembered something. "Tell me," he asked, "do you ever see Murray on the course?" "Dr. Murray?" "That's

the one. The Scottish chap. Doctor for the university." "Yes, I see him down there at some point during the week. He's quite good for an oldish fellow. I think he's teaching his son to play at the moment--he's usually been with a young kid the last week or so. Why?" "Just curious," Morgan said. "I wanted a word with him. Perhaps I'll catch him at the club." He looked thoughtful. "How well do you know Murray, then?" Dalmire asked. "I only know him professionally," Morgan said evasively. "I had to see him for a while about a couple of months ago for . . . I wasn't feeling so good. Just before you arrived in fact." Morgan's face coloured as he remembered the most achingly embarrassing moments of his life, and he said with some venom, "Actually I can't stand the man. Sanctimonious, Calvinistic so-and-so. Totally unsympathetic--can't think why he became a doctor--hectoring, bullying--sort of moral storm-trooper." Dalmire looked surprised. "Funny. I've heard he's very well liked. Bit stern maybe--but then I don't know him at all. They say he holds that university health service together. Been out here for ages, hasn't he?" "I think so." Morgan felt a bit of a fool; he hadn't meant his attack to be quite so vigorous, but Murray had that effect on him. "I suppose we just didn't hit it off," he said. "Personality clash. The nature of the illness and so on." He left it at that. He didn't want to go on about Murray because he regarded the man as a wholly unwelcome and intensely annoying presence in his life. For some reason he seemed to stray across his path repeatedly; no matter what he did he seemed to run into Murray somewhere along the line. In fact, now he thought about it, in a way Murray had cost him Priscilla; indirectly, Murray was responsible for this latest disastrous piece of news that Dalmire had so smilingly brought him. He stiffened involuntarily with anger. Yes, he remembered, if Murray hadn't told him that night. . . . He stopped himself; he saw the if-clauses stretching away to the crack of doom. It was pointless, he told himself in a sudden chill of rationality; Murray--like young Dalmire--was simply a handy scapegoat, a useful objective correlative for his own stupid mistakes, his fervent pursuit of the cock-up, the banal farce he was so industriously trying to turn his life into: Morgan SNAFU Leafy, R.I.P. He looked pointedly at his watch, then interrupted Dalmire's reverie. "Look, Richard,"--he couldn't bring himself to call Dalmire Dickie, not even now--"I've got a hell of a work to do. . . ." Dalmire looked at his feet and pushed both his palms forward, as if to support a toppling bookshelf. "Far be it from me, old man," he said mock-abjectly. "No no. You plug on." He walked to the door swishing an imaginary golf club. "Sure you don't fancy a round this afternoon? Threesome?" Morgan was sorely tried by the way Dalmire persistently accompanied his conversational remarks with visual analogues, as if he were a presenter on a TV show for the under-fives. So in response Morgan exaggeratedly shook his head and histrionically indicated towering reams of bumf in his in-tray. Dalmire flashed him a thumbs-up sign and slipped out of the door. Morgan sat back in pained relief and gazed at the motionless fan set in the ceiling. He sat and listened to the hum of his air-conditioner. How, he asked himself with a smile of sad incredulity on his face, how could a demure, refined . . . sweet girl like Priscilla marry that crass nonentity, that ignorant scion of the English upper middle classes? He pinched the top of his nose in heartrending disbelief. She knew that I loved her, he told himself, why couldn't she have seen. . . . He checked the progress of his thoughts for the third time. He should stop deluding himself this way; he knew why. He stood up and walked round his desk to the window. Dalmire had been right about the storm. There was a fuming cliff-edge of dense purple-grey clouds looming to the west of Nkongsamba. It would probably rain tonight; there invariably were a few thunderstorms at Christmas time. He stared out over the provincial capital. What a dead-end place, he thought, as he always did when he contemplated this view. The only large town in a small state in a not-very-significant West African country: the diplomatic posting of a lifetime! He sneered--you couldn't even call it a backwater. He felt miserable; the irony wasn't working for him today. Sometimes he panicked, imagining that the records of his posting had been lost, deep in some bottomless Whitehall file, and that nobody even remembered he was here. The thought made his scalp crawl.