



Where Bones Dance: An English Girlhood, An African War

Nina Newington

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Where Bones Dance: An English Girlhood, An African War *Nina Newington*

In this stunning debut novel, a child dissects the darkness at the heart of her British diplomatic family. Living in Nigeria on the brink of civil war, Anna—also known as Jake—becomes blood brothers with Dave, the Korean American daughter of a C.I.A. operative. They do push-ups, collect pornography, and plot lives of unmarried freedom while around them a country disintegrates. Luscious, terrifying, and raw, Nigeria itself becomes a lesson in endurance, suffering, love.

Stories are layered upon stories: Anna's grandmother tells stories about life as a white woman on the Gold Coast; the clairvoyant and closeted "Aunt" Elsie gives Anna a story of transformation to hold onto in the coming tumult of adolescence. Yet *Where Bones Dance* also spirals down to the stories that are not told—sexual abuse, the myth of benign colonialism, the chaos of postcolonial Africa. Sensual and fantastical by turns, this moving, funny, immensely readable book delivers an understanding of the interplay of sexuality, gender, race, and war that is sophisticated beyond the years of its intrepid narrator.

Winner, Georges Bugnet Award for Novel, Alberta Literary Awards, Writers Guild of Alberta

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