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# INTERNATIONAL D.O.V.E. ASSOCIATION Inc

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# ATTACK!

**January 2006**

*'Here I am, ready to give up my life for The One,  
Here I am, ready to pour out my heart for The Son,  
Here I Am, Here I Am, Here I Am... For the Son'*

Michael W. Smith

Our two inside dogs lay sleeping fitfully by the bed, frequent, low growls coming from their throats. I tossed and turned and mumbled at them to be quiet and go to sleep. It was the middle of the night; the air was still and quiet other than the screech of crickets outside my window. The dogs continued their growls and grumbling so I turned over, pulling my pillow over my head.

I fell back asleep only to be awakened a short time later by more persistent growling. Both dogs were now prowling restlessly around the house. The chickens roosting in a pen outside the house had joined in the fuss, squawking and clucking. Fearing a night visit by common predators, bush cats or snakes looking for eggs, I groggily pulled myself out of bed. Judy and the twins were traveling back from Canada and I didn't want to meet her with news of her pet chickens being slaughtered in the night. I shushed Odie and Anna, our inside dogs and dragged myself across the bedroom and out to the front door. I turned the lock, the click sounding loud in the night air. I pushed the door open.

As I took a step outside the butt of a hand gun came smashing down on the side of my head. Hands wrenched the door open and I was forced back inside with a machete in my face. Men poured into the house yelling at me to give up my weapon. They forced me up against the dining room table and three times they yelled at me to give up my weapon. In shock I stammered that I didn't have one. "We know you are lying!" they yelled at me and jammed their weapons in my face, pinning me in place. They had seen military jackets in both our vehicles, a protection Judy and I both wear when going to town so we aren't harassed by bribe-seeking police. They presumed that we were military so of course we had weapons as well.

They started yelling at me to tell them where the safe was. Stunned, my body shaking violently and head pounding, I couldn't answer. Both dogs were ferociously barking and snarling, keeping the men confined to the dining room and office area. One of them turned and saw a square form in the dark, on the floor near the dining room table. "There it is, there it is" he yelled above the din of the dogs barking. They forgot about me momentarily and grabbed the safe, piling my laptop on top of it as two of them struggled to carry it out the door. Along with it went our printer, other office equipment and supplies, anything they could

grab as they ran. As soon as they stepped out the door I stumbled to it and locked it so they couldn't come back inside. The house was pitch dark as we don't run our generator at night. Both dogs were going crazy and my heart was beating like it would come right out of my chest. I could barely comprehend what had just happened and would have thought it all a bad dream except for the throbbing on the side of my head where they had beaten me. I tried to still the dogs that refused to settle down. I collapsed on a dining room chair, belatedly gripping a baseball bat in one hand and a cattle prod in the other, both weapons we keep near the door in case of intruders. I sat there shaking for two hours, completely in shock.



Once the sky began to lighten I forced myself to search for my mobile phone and called down to the Children's Home at the other end of our 10 acre compound, to let them know what had happened. Once I confirmed that the thieves were gone, and it was safe for them to come out, the house parents came up to see me. We went outside together and discovered that the group of thieves had begun their destruction before they had reached our front door. The door of my Land Rover was hanging open, the interior a mess of broken plastic and wires where they had wrenched the dash apart and tried to hotwire it. Bolts lay scattered in the driveway from the driveshaft of Judy's Land Cruiser. They had spent considerable time trying to remove it. Papers and our office supplies lay strewn across the ground, leading up to our 10 foot cement compound wall. In the opposite direction were more drag marks and chips off the top of the wall where the men had somehow lifted the safe over. A few hundred feet away, down our hilly driveway lay my motorbike where they had abandoned it- being far too heavy for them to push, the locked compound gate preventing them from taking it away. Over the wall, in the bush, we found many discarded items. I picked up my computer bag and my heart sank as I discovered it was empty. Farther over in the bush I discovered my laptop laying face down and covered with dirt and leaves. We also found the printer and other things, dirty and trampled on.

We gathered everything up and carried it back to the house. We sat together in stunned silence. Fighting back nausea and fear, I recounted what I could remember of the attack. As I talked with the house parents a few things became clear to us.



The first, most obvious was the fact that I was alive. Armed robberies by rebel soldiers wandering back from Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire are becoming frequent and almost common place inside Freetown and in almost every instance they shoot and kill the homeowners.

The second fact was that the men had been outside our home for sometime – trying to steal the vehicles and/or parts off them which are quite valuable around Freetown.

Another thing was that this attack was well planned as we found our two outside dogs totally incapacitated by drugs. The robbers were in a tremendous hurry to get out of the house and off the property. Because we are out in the middle of nowhere, there would be no reason for them to hurry so they had to be aware that the British military have taken care of us in the past and could be at our compound in 5 minutes. They had probably spent time watching our compound.

All our animals had been restless and fussy since early evening. The attack happened just before 4am. Were the men waiting outside all night or did the animals just sense that something was going wrong?

These men came specifically looking for the safe. I had purchased it that very day downtown Freetown. It appears that this was set up – the company sells the safes and then sends men back after it, hopefully filled up with people's valuables. All the years that we have lived in Sierra Leone, we have lived without a safe. We had another system that worked quite well however an episode with some of our Dove kids the month before had convinced us that we would be more responsible if the money was harder to get at. Banks are not safe to use so funds need to be kept at the house. The kids had gotten a copy of our house key and had stolen many dollars worth of medicines, our personal belongings and cash.

I was suddenly sick to my stomach with the realization that inside the safe was almost \$20,000 US dollars worth of operating funds for the orphanage, building funds for our school and guest house, cash from the sale of our big utility truck, Christmas money for the Dove kids and personal support. It was all gone with the safe.

Along with the horrors of the armed robbery was the realization of many blessings – I was traumatized but alive. The things that these men do to women are too horrid to mention but at the time of the robbery Judy

and the twins were being held up in London by a failed airplane engine. I hadn't yet had time to install the safe anywhere in the house, so it was sitting in the dining room, in full view so the men were easily satisfied and were out of the house quickly. Because of lack of power and with a full moon just passed, the house was very dark, keeping the men from seeing other items that would have caused them to ransack the entire house. Our two inside dogs kept outside the reach of the men's weapons but put up a big enough fuss with snarling and trying to bite that the men were also discouraged from going further in to the house.

We have to ask why this had to happen, especially after I was robbed in my vehicle earlier in the year as well. I don't think for a minute that God minds us asking. At the same time we have to focus on the blessings and the obvious fact that He kept His hand on me the entire time as well. I feel like I have failed, losing so much money that was intended for the work of Dove even though reason tells me that there was nothing I could have done to prevent the robbery. It was well planned and executed. Sierra Leone is rated as one of the worst countries in the world to live in. Judy and I certainly know from personal experience that it is one of the toughest to live and work in. But in all this we can tell you that God called us here for a reason. The children of Sierra Leone have no voice if we are not their voice. We do not know how we will manage with the loss of money being so huge but we do know that we will stay. It is extremely difficult but with God's help we will persevere. Jesus gave His life for us. It is the least we can do for Him. If you get a chance, listen to "Here I Am." It is on Michael W. Smith's album 'Healing Rain.' If you can commit to praying regularly for us please send us your email address and we will add you to our list. It is our policy to not ask for financial help but if you feel able to help us with replacing any part of the money, there is an envelope included or you may donate through our website.

By Phil Nelson



Nelson's House at Dove's Village of Hope for Children