

# “The Igneous Rocks of Tameapa”

(an exploration adventure story by Michele Murray)

## *Part VII: Ancient Taboos*

Rene was half way out of town hiking with diligence up the nearly dry arroyo stepping on stones to cross where water filled wide places in slimy, green pools. She learned in Peru, in the vicinity of Yaori, that standing water is not just a smelly nuisance, but can also be an incubator for such formidable germs as yellow fever, typhus, cholera, TB, dengue fever, etc. She doubted if this region in Sinaloa hosted such serious disease, but she knew better than to make assumptions the stagnant water was sanitary enough to walk in. At the least, this seasonal river provided a main conduit for raw sewage, as did most of the world’s drainage systems where humans reside – sewage and garbage disposal.

It always amazes field geologists working in remote regions to recognize the vicinity of a human establishment by the ring of trash around the perimeter. Even in the United States, plastic shopping bags wave from barbed wire fences like the state flag when approaching the outskirts of rural towns and plastic “applicators” and cap-rings for milk cartons and other jugs line high-tide on beaches just outside of major sea ports all over the world. Rene had always been fascinated by the deposits of plastic debris along the margins and ramps of major intersections, like sand dunes piled against specific corners of an open plain. Fact: human trash is a modern depositional unit in the stratigraphic column of the Holocene, today.

The morning sun was growing in strength on the horizon but the wind was blowing a terrible chill – very unwelcome conditions to this Mexican town. People were staying in their beds and standing around their adobe stoves in their kitchens rather than commencing their normal daily routines outdoors. No women were sweeping. No children were playing. No muchachos were headed for the “cash-crop” in the hills. People were feeling frozen to the bone by the previous

night's chilling rain and the "hitched" power-line was dead (a clip on local power line, by which local villages tap into the electrical resource illegally). Only the River Chickens of Tameapa seemed to survive the cold unhampered.

The River Chickens of Tameapa were a constant presence along the river.

By 10 a.m., Rene had climbed to the end of town. The houses grew smaller and the facilities more rudimentary. No power up here. No cobblestone street, no flower gardens, no fat mule or outdoor motors. No trucks no motos no curtains even, in the dank-looking clay houses clinging to the steepening sides of the upper cañon. Rene was beginning to see people stirring in their yards. She noticed these people were not the typical Sinaloa-looking variety of short, thin, pale Tameapans with small heads she had come to know as the local variety of people. These were a different type of people.

Tameapans are a country folk. A typical muchacho will be wearing blue jeans, a western style shirt with snap-buttons halfway unbuttoned down his chest to show himself off – white straw cowboy hat, huge belt buckle, gold chain, gold rings, all round clean-cut cowboy-looking guy. The women are dressed up. Totally decked out. Young women wear the tightest little hip-hugging jeans with precious little shoes and their hair pulled back into confining barrettes with gel to make their bangs stick out, full-make up with black eye-liner and lots of jewelry. The older women wear nice dresses and have perms in their dyed hair, stylish eyeglasses, panty-hose and lipstick with rouge. Tameapans dress to be attractive in their idea of what is vogue for the times, though seemingly out of place in a region that used a river for raw sewage and let pigs roam between houses.

The people Rene was starting to see at the margins of town were dark, muscular people with larger heads, handsome faces and intense eyes. Their clothes were shabby, definitely of the pre-owned type of who-cares-what-I-look-like variety that Rene guessed might be the only clothes they owned. The most obvious feature Rene noticed right away was that these women were not wearing the modern tight jeans and pretty little shoes, nor did they wear make-up. Their features were starkly beautiful and even noble-looking in their natural state. These people were the Indios

of Tameapa – a distinct racial bias and social strata existed in the region. She remembered now, a warning from Adolfo not to venture too far from the compound because of what he called “*Bruhas*” – witches. Rene knew from past friendships that the local Tameapans were nervous about the primitive practices still in use by the indigenous “Indios.” Rural Mexicans, (as with most “country folk” in the world), tend to be superstitious and the mystical rituals practiced by the Ancient Ones scared them, (though in contrast the presence of crucifixes and abundant icons of Virgen de Guadalupe and other Christian artifacts such as Saints seemed just as mystical to Rene as waving dried chicken toes in the air.) The “Indian” women disappeared behind obstacles in their yards to hide from Rene but she could sense they were still watching her, probably with apprehension about this white American she-devil.

It occurred to Rene then, that sometimes she doesn’t realize the dire consequences of situation she had got herself into until after she was already in way over her head. That was the situation in Morocco, when Newmont took her on a boondoggle to test run one of the first GPS units on the market. Technically, she had been selected on basis of merit as a summer intern to accompany the managers on a regional reconnaissance of west Morocco. The job was to test run the abilities of their first GPS unit – a 2 pound device as big as a toaster that could provide an accuracy of up to 50 feet. In retrospect some 20 years later, she realized the additional factor of being a young blond co-ed probably contributed to that internship. That’s just the way the world goes around especially in this industry. Her job was to jump out of the tour bus, run up to the top of a ridge, and hold the device overhead until it found a satellite and recorded a bearing. Then, she would run back to the bus and hand the device over to the managers who waited in the air-conditioned chariot. At the end of the trip, Rene opted to spend an additional week touring Morocco solo in a rented Renault Quattro: bad idea.

Rene’s young idealism was a bit like Jane Fonda during her Vietnam War debacle, in that Rene assumed people are the same all over the world “One People” and we just need to accept each other with open trust. For the most part, people (as humans) *are* the same all over the world, but it is the details as to what *KIND* of humans we are that make for different practices. For example, Rene in Morocco was a 22 year old, semi-wealthy, definitely elite class of single-American-Christian-woman who had no social inhibitions and (probably quite obviously) was not “chaste.”

She was running around in a Muslim countryside where Americans don't occur, cars are rare, no one has money, and women wear black cloaks across their faces and stay at home or else --- the "or else" part is an ailment of the human condition, a psychotic reaction to sexual freedom: female mutilation. Rene didn't know about that part of being "One People." She didn't know about Ancient Taboos. It would never occur to her that women are kidnapped in this modern world by their own kin off the streets and severed from their exterior genitals on the basis that women are innately evil and their biological parts are put there by the Devil in order to ensnare men and keep them from their heavenly devotions. That would be a science-fiction horror story to 22-year old Rene up until her personal experience in the outback of a remote Morocco village.

Rene had barely escaped a terrible fate at the hands of some Moroccan ruffians that time, but she did take with her the acquired knowledge that there are dangerous people in the world. They may not be evil in their heart based on the premise of their cultural beliefs, but their actions are evil as humans go. She knew how to watch behind her back now, to look for an alternative exit, and to monitor B.S. when it was being fed to her. The family she met in the Moroccan village doted on her in the day. They invited her into their home, gave her a Koran, touched her blonde hair, and later guided her into an ambush where guys with knives were waiting. She ran. That was the first time (but not the last) she would be running for her life in her career. She ran for her life once in Jakarta. She ran again in Peru. She ran and hid in Ghana and in Cotes D' Ivoire. Now, Rene carried a knife, sometimes mace. She sent an attachment of a copy of her passport to her own email account for emergency access at any time and kept hard cold US dollars taped inside her jacket. She was a world traveler now and she knew how to read the layout. Here in the upper part of Tameapa in the dark part of the cañon, she recognized a change in the ambiance of people.

Rene decided her original mission to seek out the Mad Tuba Player of Tameapa was still a worthy cause, but her timing and impulsive nature might need some refinement. She kept hiking up the cañon but her radar was on Maximum Alert. Eyes Open. Ears Tuned in. Then, she heard a sound. In the distance she heard the first sound of a moto all morning.

*'Muchachos on their way to tend the "cash-crops" in the field'* she thought to herself. They were approaching at a fast rate. She stepped to the side of the sad river and continued upstream

as if to blend in with the River Chickens and cows now browsing along the sticky banks. The motos approached and came abreast of her. There were at least 4 muchachos per machine sitting like bags of grain with their legs sticking out in every direction. Six motos with piles of men were traveling in a caisson together. The first and last loads of men were brandishing AK-47s like fishing poles in the air. They slowed as they came alongside Rene and there was no hiding the situation: Rene was an American gringo hiking in the wee hours of the day to the upper regions above Tameapa.

*What had she been thinking?!*