

A dose of reality

TWICE NO ONE DIES
A K Jenkins

In the case of Hobart author Kate Jenkins, it must be almost compulsory for art to imitate life.

A teacher who has travelled the world as an educator and curriculum developer her own life holds no shortage of anecdotes and inspiration for her work.

Jenkins has just published her first novel, *Twice No One Dies*, a crime thriller set in the small West African nation of Togo, where the 69-year-old once lived and worked.

Her protagonist is Marius, a former Ghanaian intelligence officer who now lives in the Togolese capital of Lome.

When his friend Louis, a jazz trumpeter, is found hacked to death on a beach in Lome, Marius and his friends are sure there is more to it than the military police claim, so Marius takes the lead in an investigation that must keep off the radar of the military dictatorship's surveillance.

This world of beautiful beaches and heavily armed police is a world Jenkins still remembers vividly, having lived for four years in Ghana and four years in Lome.

"I really wanted to write about this place and share it with people but I hate writing about myself. Even if I try to keep a diary I write it in the third person," she says.

"So this is my way of writing about it but taking myself out of it and fictionalising it. My friends in West Africa will probably recognise aspects of themselves in it."

Jenkins says the only things she has written previously are curriculum books for the International Baccalaureate.

She had wanted to try her hand at fiction for quite some time but says work and life always seemed to take up too much time, so it was only when she entered semi-retirement that she found the time to dedicate to putting words on the page.

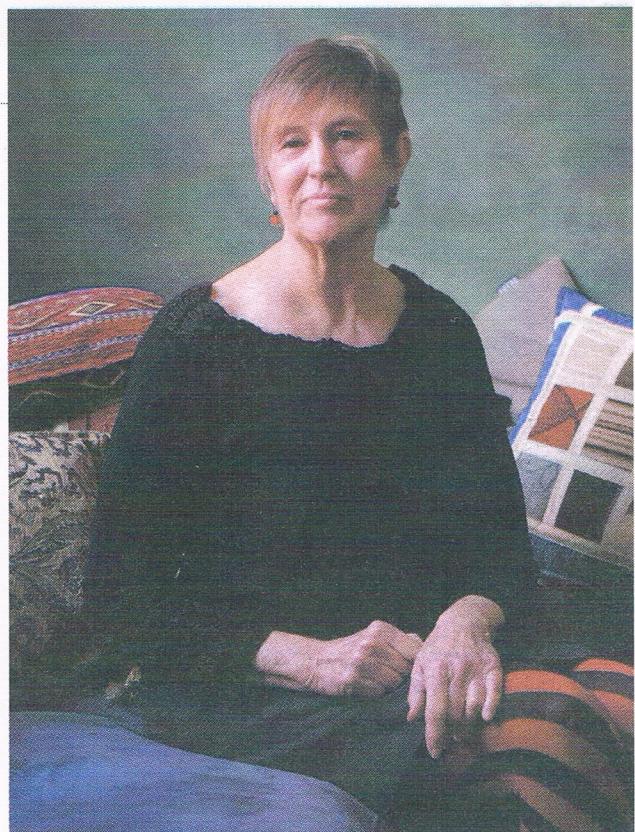
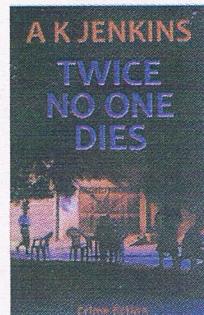
And the authentic sense of place is not the only piece of reality that has crept into Jenkins' work.

While living and working in Lome, she decided she wanted to learn to play jazz flute, a hobby that set her on a path that would eventually result in someone trying to kill her with a venomous black mamba snake hidden in a box - an incident she recreates in her novel.

"In Lome I met a local jazz musician who was teaching me, and through him I met a lot of other musicians, and I ended up producing a CD of their recorded music," she says.

"So I started a jazz bar and ran it for about a year, but then everything went bad.

"The jazz bar in the book ... is the one I wish I had run! The one I did have was fraught with problems right from the start and most of them stemmed from an associate of one of my business partners who wanted to take over the place for himself."



OUT OF AFRICA: Author Kate Jenkins of North Hobart. Picture: NIKKI DAVIS-JONES

"I was getting scammed for ages with the bills, stealing electricity and so on. I noticed the bills getting really expensive and eventually I refused to pay and that's when things got really nasty.

"Eventually a black mamba was put in an empty crate behind the bar. When I decided to close the bar, we took everything out of it, including that crate. I took half of it to my home and my partner took the other half.

"Fortunately for me, he took the one that had the snake in it. He did the right thing and called a snake handler when he discovered it, so he was OK.

"The same thing happens to Marius in my book."

After experiencing the slow process of trying to publish through a major publisher, Jenkins made the decision to self-publish, but says it was not necessarily the easy option.

"It took me nearly three years in total: 18 months of writing before I could even start showing it to people," she says.

"I spent a year showing it to publishers and other people to get their opinions and so on, and after a while a few people started saying I should just self-publish.

"But it's not anywhere near as easy as that.

"In the end I self-published through Lightning Source, who use IngramSpark as their distributor, which is very good news for me because many of the big publishers use IngramSpark anyway.

"Of course it would be great if it had a wider readership but I have other reasons for wanting to get it out there: it's something I've always wanted to do."

Jenkins plans to write a series of crime novels featuring the same protagonist and is already well on the way to finishing the second book.

Twice No One Dies is available at amazon.com, \$16, chapters. indigo.ca/en-ca and barnesandnoble.com, or in e-book format for Kindle. Or visit Kate Jenkins' website at equinepress.wordpress.com