

Last Day au Village by Wendy Lee (RPCV Cameroon 2008-2010)

I woke up after a restful sleep around 8am, without an alarm, of course, and put on my running shoes for one last jog down my favorite path. The crisp air made for a comfortable jog. I took notice of each house that I ran by and took in each rolling hill that I passed. I will unlikely to have a regular running path this beautiful for years to come. I waved at villagers along the way that I often see; likely the last time I would see those faces again.

Returned home and heated water in the small marmite for one final bucket bath in my latrine. I remember my very first bucket bath - in the same latrine, during site visit two years ago. Back then, I found it to be a treat but slightly awkward. But now, I am so at ease with this process; it had become a basic routine.

Billy, my neighbor boy, came by the house and hung out with me like he always does. But there was a hint of sadness. He helped me wash floors for the last time and counted the money he had earned and saved in his jar. "if it wasn't for you, this money would've been long gone," he said. He had learned the value of saving; that was my small contribution to his life.

I took down the mosquito net and pictures on the wall in my bedroom. Still felt like any other day, but today is the last day.

Headed into town to drop off some things my friend had bought from me, then stopped by the omelet shack for a sandwich. One littler girl was going on about the different patois that she speaks because her parents are from two different towns. She spoke in an adult manner and it made us laugh. I stopped by the phone credit lady to get some MTN credit for my phone before hopping on a moto to come home.

Billy came by again soon after I got home and we hung out more. He kept asking me what I was doing with different things that I am leaving behind, and I got slightly annoyed. He's still a kid after all. I gave him some cookies and he was happy. Liz came by in the afternoon to pick up my fridge with Emmanuel, my moto guy. We chatted. Eman tied the fridge on the back of his moto the way he used to tie my gas bottle. I told Eman to come back and pick me up after dropping Liz off in Baham.

Around 5pm, we went into town. I waved at kids at the water pump as I do every time I go by. I visited all the usual boutiques that I always visit, but this time, it was to say goodbye. An incredibly strange feeling. People you see everyday, and suddenly, I won't see them for a long long time, or ever. The goodbyes were strange, but weren't particularly sad, until I got to my bar with mama Chantal and my friends were there for one final drink.

I ordered one last poisson braisée with baton de manioc and drank a coke - a typical dinner that I've had numerous times. This was the last. My friends gathered and said great things about me and hope for wonderful things for my future. We made sure to

exchange contact information one last time. As people started to leave, I could no longer pull myself together and was a teary mess. Mama Chantal put her arm around me and said to not cry, it's just parting, no one died. But to me, it feels that a part of me is being cut off. Everyone comforted me and said that I go back to school, and in the future, I'll come back. Of course I think that as well, but we all know that life isn't always that straight forward. Despite all my good intention to return, there is no guarantee.

Tomorrow, I will make the trip to Bafoussam as I've done many many times. Except this time, it's for good. Batié has become my home. Each time that I travel, I am comforted to know that this is the place I can come home to. After each trip, despite of the length of the journey, I am always relieved to be on that moto ride from the carrefour to my house. But tomorrow, this home base will be there no more, and my life as a globetrotter continues.