

Murder in the Peace Corps
A Lynne Lewis West Africa Mystery

by

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Published by
Anlex Computer Consulting LLC
<http://www.anlex.com>

Author of:
Appointment in Togo: Murder in the Fulbright Program

Dedicated to the heroes and villains who made my thirteen years in West Africa fascinating and the Togolese and Beninese people who with patience and grace endure the presence in their country of Americans sent by their government.

THE STORY IS FICTITIOUS. THE EVENTS DID NOT HAPPEN, THE PEOPLE DID NOT EXIST. BUT THE AMBIENCE, THE ATMOSPHERE, THE DETAILS OF AFRICAN LIFE AS THEY STRIKE THE AMERICAN INTERLOPER ARE BASED ON THE AUTHOR'S THIRTEEN YEARS IN TOGO AND BENIN FROM 1983-1996

About the Author:

Rosemary Yaco spent her early years in Michigan and earned a Ph. D. in American Culture and won a Hopwood award for poetry at the University of Michigan. In 1983 she joined the Peace Corps and served as educational advisor for English teaching in French speaking Togo, West Africa. She stayed in West Africa for a total of 13 years with three years as a Fulbright Professor at the University of Benin in Togo, then as Director of the English Language Program for the United States Information Agency in Benin for seven years. She now lives in St. Petersburg, Florida and is working on the third book of the Lynne Lewis West Africa Murder Mystery Series, Cotonou Means Death: Murder in the American Cultural Center.

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Chapter One: The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love?

On her thirtieth birthday, Lynne Lewis stood under the strange twisted banyan tree in Togo waiting for the English Inspector. For the second time this week she had been left waiting under this tree which only partly shaded her from the fierce equatorial sun. Inspector Oujano was a charming tall man, but he was usually drunk and often forgot his appointments with her. The other Middle School English Inspector, Mr. Lanago, was a grim little man. When he failed to pick her up it was to show his contempt for the Peace Corps. Probably he especially hated being asked to work with a woman, one who was three inches taller than he was.

It was eight o'clock but was already at least 95 degrees. She was standing in what might be called the suburbs of Dapaong. But Dapaong itself seemed to an American only a sort of shanty town with markets and shops in lean-tos with grass or tin roofs. It was in the very north of Togo, only a few miles from Burkina Faso. The scene in front of her was barren and desolate. The red, sandy road stretched both ways, dividing plots of dusty red fields. In some, millet had been planted, and dry, yellowish green shoots pushed their way up in wavering rows. Occasionally there was a stunted, gnarled, tropical tree. Two pigs, thinner than junk yard dogs, rooted disconsolately in the soil searching for an overlooked scrap of weeds.

Lynne had used some of the four precious gallons of water she was able to beg from a nearby hotel daily to take a sponge bath this morning, but already she felt both moist and gritty and knew her brown hair was reddish from the dust.

"This scene looks like something out of prehistory. A new millennium has started. What am I doing here?"

One year ago she had been the wife of Brad, a rising young lawyer, and teaching at University of Michigan, Dearborn. The future had looked good, if a bit ordinary. Then suddenly, she had to get away. The Peace Corps was searching for college professors willing to serve in French speaking West Africa. Six months later, seared by the sun, she thought about her life. She had expected in the Peace Corps she would be overwhelmed with work. She thought of the recruiting slogan, the toughest job you'll ever love. The toughest problem was coping with the grindingly difficult living conditions. She cooked on a small kerosene burner when she could find the fuel. Her screenless house without a dependable water supply was filled with mosquitoes at dusk and three kinds of ants made their nests in her cracked and broken floor. She was always uncomfortable. The other hard part about her life in Africa was the constant waiting and the patience Peace Corps required of her. She learned to fill long days with nothing to do and only one tattered book, *War and Peace*, in French, to read.

A neighbor woman approached from a nearby path, a big basin of water balanced on her head, a small baby strapped on her back just above the waist by a *pagne*, a length of brightly printed cloth. She smiled and said cheerfully, "*Bonjour madame. Ca va?*"

"*Bonjour, Madame. Ca va.*" Lynne used the same multipurpose phrase. Except that her words were not a question, but an answer, Things are going okay¹. Not really true, but polite. Lynne had spent hours, days, and weeks, supposedly learning French in her three-

month training period. But she found even this small exchange in French with her neighbor difficult. What if the woman went on to ask questions that took a real vocabulary to answer? However, she had learned that probably those words would almost use up this kind woman's French vocabulary. She spoke Moba and only knew a little French to use with Africans who spoke other languages and for *yovos*, which is what the Togolese called foreigners, especially white ones.

As the woman, despite her heavy load, gracefully continued her way down the path in the brush, Lynne watched her, filled as always with admiration for the patience and dignity of the Africans, bravely and uncomplainingly living in the unyielding environment. The woman probably had another half mile to carry the water before she could reach her home and start preparing the noon meal. Then she would have to go out again to search for sticks to use as fuel. And yet, Lynne knew if she had asked her how things were going, she would have said cheerfully, "a va", things are okay. And she would have put enthusiasm into her reply.

Lynne thought, "Maybe I'll learn what's really important in life here, living so close to the bone. Maybe I'll gain some wisdom from this experience."

She looked yearningly toward the north. She saw near the horizon a typical compound for these parts, several round mud brick houses with straw roofs, each crowned at the peak by an overturned red clay pot. About five of these were clustered together and connected by a half-fallen down fence made of bamboo matting. There was one of those picturesque granaries that Lynne thought of as elephant bottoms, with four bulging thigh and legs like things, all topped with a straw conical roof.

She peered intently again at the dusty road. Near her, she saw two scrawny chickens having a lively fight over a bit of gravel that looked something like a morsel of grain. Although this road was the only route to and from the capitol, Lome, in the south, to the Dapaong in the north and beyond that, Burkina Faso, there was little traffic.

A few motorcycles whipped by, the brightly printed robes of the drivers and the passengers clutching them ballooning in the breeze as they zipped by. Because of the dictator's strict law, most of them had helmets of some sort. One looked like a World War One soldier's gear.

At last a car appeared, but from the other way, the south, going toward Dapaong.

It was a bush taxi, a covered pickup truck, with its roof piled high with baskets of produce, suitcases, housewares, and an unwilling goat, all stacked as high as the taxi itself. The back had twenty-five people jammed in together, with several bundles of chickens twitching on the floor, restrained by cords around their feet. A printed slogan in French near the license plate gave the message, "Beware, judgement is at hand."

The taxi stopped and out jumped Ronnie, a thin young man, almost too good looking, with a swaying carriage, a little like a ballet dancer. "Lynne," he exclaimed. "Darling." He threw his arms around her and kissed her exuberantly on the cheek.

"Ronnie, how good to see you!" One good thing about Peace Corps was the instant family you acquired. After the forced total contact in the three month initial training, mutual suffering and fear of the outside welded them into a unit. "Here I am, left waiting again! I've only worked one day this week."

"Yeah, that's the way it goes. If you aren't waiting for the Togolese you're waiting for Peace Corps. When I think of the ball I could be having right now with my friends in San Francisco!"

"What are you doing here, Ronnie? Did you come all the way from Aneho just to visit me?"

"No, it was a command performance, the general meeting in Kara. But when you didn't arrive last night I thought I'd come up and see what's up, see if you'd been told about the meeting."

"Meeting?"

"They decided to have everyone come up for the tri-monthly shots instead of trekking down to Lome. And they also want to give us the official line on Carrie's death."

"What are you talking about? Carrie is twenty-two years old. She can't be dead. What happened? When?"

"Three days ago when Fiona, the Peace Corps nurse, went to see Carrie for a medical inspection she found Carrie's house all locked up and silent with Carrie's motorcycle in front of it. She asked the neighbors where Carrie was and they looked sort of shifty eyed and said she went to market. She asked why she hadn't taken her motorcycle? They just looked at the ground. Fiona got her driver to break into the house. I guess it was pretty ghastly. There was Carrie, dead, with dried blood all over her."

"Dead. How did she die?"

"Her throat was cut with one of those big Red Cross knives."

Chapter Two: EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY

Lynne felt sick. How could such a thing happen? Just five months ago Carrie was one of the volunteers that Luke Menatevi, the Peace Corps Assistant Director for Education, had delivered to their posts, along with Lynne.

Carrie was a Joan of Arc type, intense, planning to change and improve the lives of the northern Togolese women with her project for stoves that would be more efficient and require less fuel which would help save what is left of the Savanna rain forests. When they had first met, Lynne had once offered her some left over polyester yarn, knowing that she was interested in handiwork. Carrie had shuddered as if she had offered a snake. "But, that's synthetic!"

Lynne had wondered how such an idealist would survive the life here which she had already noticed was filled with inconsistencies, stop gaps, and synthetics. Why, one of the few successful industries in Togo was a plastics plant. She remembered her own indignation when walking on a crowded road after a day of training in Atakpamey, she was almost run down by a huge semi truck filled with plastic dishes and pans. She had thought, "I was prepared to risk getting mauled by lions in Africa, but I never dreamed of being mistreated by plastic."

Poor Carrie. She would never know how the African adventure would turn out. For her, it was already ended. She remembered that when Carrie's supplies were unloaded, somehow, her sack of popcorn was left on the truck and ended up in Dapaong with Lynne. Now she could never return it. "

She was doing what she wanted, living her life her own way. Who knows when it will be our turn?"

"Yes, that's true. But who killed her and why?"

"There are lots of rumors. But so far no real answers."

"Maybe there's someone out there planning to get Peace Corps volunteers? Maybe we're all in danger."

"Face it, Lynne. There's a lot of danger here, for everyone. Anyway, Peace Corps is going to deal with her death with a bunch of touchy feely stuff. They've imported a psychologist from Washington, someone from the Embassy will give a speech, and they're going to have a big blast, with lots of food and drink and dancing."

Now Lynne felt like laughing, feeling a little hysterical. The life she was leading now was unbelievable. The "show must go on ethic" had been followed from the beginning. Volunteers shaking with malaria were wakened from naps to make presentations in their technical training courses. When a poisonous snake bit Elizabeth she was whipped into a car, and medivaced to a Washington hospital by plane. The rest of the group didn't miss a class.

"Okay, Ronnie, like the old joke says, what else is new?"

"Well, since you ask, I'll tell you. I hate that SOB of a director. One of these days I'm going to kill him. I won't be able to hold myself back."

"What's Dudley done now? I remember when he bawled you out for dancing to your Walkman." Lynne could see Ronnie in her mind's eye at their training camp. After a mind

numbing day of French lessons and technical instruction, with everything regimented and all conversations required to be in French which most of the volunteers couldn't really speak, Ronnie would go out on a barren strip of land behind the dining room, and dance to the music that only he could hear through his earphones. The beautiful, graceful young man, swaying and turning to unheard music looked like a wood sprite, or an actor in an avant-garde ballet.

Lynne had admired him for finding a way to escape temporarily and enter a world of personal delight. But, one day, the director had called him in and said that this must stop. He must project an image of dignity to the Togolese. After all he was a teacher. Ronnie had considered quitting and going home, early terminating, right then. But, Eting, giving up, cutting and running, was despised by the volunteers.

"What now? He came to visit me on post and was snooping around my school and headmaster, asking how I was doing. Everyone agreed that my teaching's good. My French is better than most volunteer's and I really know my science. But, he still had to get on my case."

"Why?"

"Well, I got annoyed at my students who kept interrupting me in class to ask me if I have a sister or a cousin who wants to marry them. Finally, I got fed up with it and I said, 'Why should my sister marry you? What do you have to offer her?'"

Ron was a free spirit all right. And also, she had noticed in the past that he had a cruel streak.

"Not tactful or culturally sensitive."

"So what? I got a right to free speech. It's a free country, isn't it?"

"Actually you know it isn't. Togo's a dictatorship and we have orders to follow local rules and customs."

"That's only part of it. There's something fishy about Dudley, really sinister. He puts on a good act as a noble leader, loving husband and father, but you should know what I know about him. Sometimes when he doesn't know you're watching, the mask slips. You'd be surprised. He's really weird."

"You're letting the voodoo of Africa get to you."

"Look. Just before Carrie was murdered, Dudley visited her. They say he warned her about something and they had a big, loud argument. If nothing else, the guy is bad luck. When he visits, watch out for trouble. I'm beginning to think there's a curse on our group of volunteers. Dudley's part of the curse."

Lynne shivered. She almost believed there was a curse. A death and a serious medical emergency added to the many motorcycle accidents, all happening to the members of their small training group in the eight months since they had arrived were too much. And death in the Peace Corps was rare.

But Ronnie was letting his hurt feelings distort things. Dudley was a strong, caring man who kept things going after disasters and tragedies. In this strange country, in this life that seemed as different from that in the States as a visit to the moon, he was the leader, the strong father, even though he was only a few years older than some volunteers.

Obviously Ronnie didn't like fathers. He said he had run away from his own for a short time when he was fifteen, hoping to become a model and a dancer.

"Speak of evil spirits. There he is now. Why isn't he in Kara, at the meeting?" Ronnie exclaimed.

A big four wheel drive station wagon with a Peace Corps logo came in view, speeding in a cloud of dust from the direction Ron had come from. Dudley alighted. He was a slim, good looking man, dressed in the functionaire suit that was the required dress of officials. Some people called it the Mao suit, a light weight suiting jacket and matching pants, worn without a shirt. He looked neat and his clothes were holding their press, despite the oppressive heat. He had a brisk, masterful air that comforted Lynne as much as it annoyed Ron.

"What are you two doing here? Why aren't you at the meeting in Kara?"

"Dudley, we never get the news in Dapaong. I haven't had any mail for two weeks."

"I have to see some officials in Dapaong. While I'm there, I'll stop at the Togolese Education Inspection Office and tell them you'll be gone for about three days. You go to your house and pack your bag. I'll pick you up there. Ron, I'll take you along, too."

"Cool, Dudley."

Lynne was grateful not to have to go to the meeting in a bush taxi. Sometimes the wait at the station took four hours. The battered truck or station wagon never left until it was filled to over capacity. Then, greedy for more fares, the driver picked up additional people on the road until some were standing on the tailgate, holding on with one hand, or halfway out the window. The other passengers agreed with this policy, compassionate for the wayfarer on isolated, desolate strips of road who need to get somewhere.

In another cloud of dust, the big car was gone, Kwami, the driver liberally applying the horn at some startled goats, nibbling at leafless weeds in the road.

"I'm not riding with that petty dictator. I'll try to hitch a ride into town and catch a bush taxi." But just then, a decrepit pickup truck loaded down with huge sacks of grain appeared from the north. On the grain sacks there were six young men perched precariously. Defying risk, Ron stood in the road, making wild gestures with his hand. "*Au secours, urgence, aidez moi, si vous plait,*" a torrent of French lies poured from his mouth. "You must stop. It's an emergency, someone is dying, I must get to Kara."

The driver stopped, and shook his head, no, but then accepted a little money and Ron ended balanced on the highest sack, an elfin grin on his beautifully chiseled face. "See you in Kara."

Chapter Three: Road Thoughts

An hour later, Lynne was packed and waiting when Dudley returned. Dudley's brisk cheer was gone. He seemed tense and worried and deep in thought. Lynne passed the time by looking out the window at the familiar landscape. She had already made this trip five times. She watched a man walk by pushing a huge cart the size of a pickup truck loaded with Lionkiller lemon soda and Togobiere, both made in a spotless factory the Germans had set up for Togo in Lome. He had walked from the nearest town and was delivering supplies to the little bars, called *buvettes*, that dotted the landscape. There were few places for community and recreation in this spartan countryside. Lynne once had speculated that all that was really required for a buvette was the rare luxury, a refrigerator, and a shack with a veranda and a few tables and a battery radio playing African dance music loudly. But she later learned that far from the center of town or in the rural areas, patrons did without the refrigerator, drinking soft drinks and beer warm.

Dudley remained solemn and preoccupied during the long ride. Was he thinking about Carrie? Did he have a terrible secret too horrifying to talk about?

Some birthday. Maybe there would be an ambush and an attack. The horrendous fantasy perked her up. She had always wanted to go to Africa and here she was. It certainly was exotic enough. It was bizarre, unsanitary, surprising and often preposterous. But until Carrie's death it had not been violent.

Even during the long stretch through the game park where the speed of fifteen miles per hour was almost intolerable, Dudley didn't say anything. Lynne stared at the scenery, hoping to see some game. There were many antelope, called *biche*, and some low slung scurrying creatures that might have been wart hogs. The local people sometimes complained about the game park when they were with people they were sure were not police spies, telling about the forced evacuation of many of the traditional inhabitants by the government in the hope of attracting tourists to Togo and enhancing its international reputation and tourist industry. Wasted effort. Most people in the US didn't even know where Togo was. Even the post office was sometimes confused. One volunteer got a letter a year late. It had been sent to Tonga, in the South Seas.

She finally decide break the silence, whether her companion liked it or not. "Dudley, was this meeting called to talk about Carrie's death? How did she die?"

Dudley started, as if wakened from a deep sleep. "You'll learn all we can tell you at the meeting."

Lynne pressed on, "What a tragedy. How could a thing like that happen?"

Dudley spoke passionately, his voice loud and emotional. "She was completely obstinate." His handsome masculine face, usually so composed, was distorted by emotion. "I warned her, but she wouldn't listen. It had to happen."

Chapter Four: THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER

After the long, strained ride with the glum, taciturn director, Lynne was grateful when the car finally pulled up to *Affaires Sociales*, the social services center, in Kara.

Like most buildings in Togo, *Affaires Sociales* was constructed of the locally made sand blocks, covered with a thin layer of cement and painted in pastel colors. The front section was painted a sandy brown yellow which had faded and streaked. It was a government-owned facility that acted as a meeting place for educational and health programs. And there were simple rooms like monks' cells in old movies which were rented out by the night or used to house participants at conferences. The one story building had an entrance room with a reception desk where they presented themselves. Dudley had no problem. The clerk recognized him immediately and gave him his key. Probably because she was with him, Lynne got her key immediately, too. Dudley told Lynne to hurry and not to be late at the meeting which would start soon.

Lynne joined the group gathered in the big shabby room used for general meetings which was partially cooled by two ancient noisy fans. The volunteers were dressed in casual clothes, many in jeans, cutoffs, tee shirts, many in faded, wrinkled shirts, wearing sandals. A few of the girls had attractive sundresses or pedal pushers, made from the bright African cloth. In contrast, the ten Togolese French teachers were all spotlessly dressed in beautifully ironed costumes. Abdoulaye wore a flowing *boubou*, a traditional robe. Mensah wore a magnificently embroidered African complet, which looked a little like a dressy pajama suit. Jacob wore neat pants with the flared hand woven shirt and voluminous pants, traditional to the Cotocolis of the north. The rest were dressed in short sleeved dress shirts and well tailored, pleated pants made of dress suit material. They all wore their hair in the neat, attractive Togolese style, a short afro, carefully styled and cut to be about two inches higher than the head.

The meeting turned out to be a pedestrian session about rules, regulations, and job assignments, all delivered in a maddeningly slow fashion, with many disagreements and digressions. Every time a volunteer would interrupt and say, "Tell us about Carrie," those in charge answered, "Tomorrow."

Finally, at the end of the long session, Dudley made an official announcement. "Tomorrow we will discuss the unfortunate death of Carrie. We are still gathering facts and getting information. And at lunchtime tomorrow there will be a special guest who will have something important to talk about."

The general grumbling at this further evasion did no good. They all moved out to the section of the courtyard covered by a large grass-thatched roof which was used as a dining room. They were given free access to the soft drink bar and enjoyed the sweet cold drinks, so welcome in the tropical heat that lingered despite the fact that it was within an hour of sundown. Those willing to pay with their own money could also get the huge cold bottles of Togolese beer. The waiters paid careful attention to traditional procedure for serving drinks. They placed bottles in front of the buyers and opened them right there, poured then into glasses and handed it to them. This practice was more than a matter of etiquette. There was a strong taboo against opening a bottle outside of the presence of the drinker. It

was a taboo rigidly enforced because of fears of sorcery and poison. The volunteers were so used to it and so accustomed to their Togolese friends' insistence on it that they too would refuse a drink if they had not seen it opened. Volunteers started chatting in small groups exchanging bits of information about their perplexing problems and occasionally reporting successes or triumphs. There was a babble of cheerful sound. Some of the volunteers were stationed across the country from their best friends. This was a chance to indulge in the joys of communication in English with someone whose life problems were similar.

"Did you find someone to repair your moto? Did you get over the amoebas, did you find someone to sell you eggs, what do you do about lizards in your house, did your headmaster accept your exam questions, did your friend visit you, shall we have a big bash during spring vacation, how much does your tailor charge, did you get funding for your project?" Questions and answers flew about.

Suddenly a strange figure pushed his way past the tables and jumped up on the raised platform of the courtyard that had been set up with a lectern, and a microphone. He was an imposing sight, tall, well over six feet amidst the Togolese French teachers who were about five seven, with his hair, shocking among the short bushy cuts of most of the Togolese, worn in shoulder length Rastafari curls. His clothes were tattered and large tears and slits revealed his muscular body which was so black it was almost blue.

"It's just a *fou*," several voices called out. Volunteers said, half jokingly that every little bar or *buvette* had its own *fou* or wandering madman. Michael, a tall scruffy volunteer with a half-grown beard who taught English in the north corrected them. "It's Solomon. Sometimes what he says makes a lot of sense. He went to the University in Ghana."

Solomon's eyes rolled and the whites contrasted dramatically with his dark skin in the gathering dusk. "Peacemakers, you have come for a big palaver. Big men are here, big men with strong magic. Some say that only Mawi has power, but he gives his power to those strong enough to take it. There is a chief here. He smiles and smiles but is a villain. Watch out. You are cursed. Death is watching. Death will have a harvest. Soon one who is tall will fall down."

Solomon started to cry, "I don't like it, but it is coming. Evil must meet evil. The furies are here in this place."

Chapter Five: PREDICTIONS AND PROPHECIES

"A prophecy of doom! Oh, this is too much. Things are just too bizarre here," Lynne thought.

Michael said, "He's going too far." He put his arm around his friend. "Solomon, come have a beer with me. It's not good for people to know the future."

Solomon changed abruptly and flashed a dazzling smile. "Michael, my friend, let us drink and talk about Shakespeare. Do you like Shakespeare?" The two pushed up to the bar and were soon downing the huge bottles of Togobiere.

"He's repulsive. I'm afraid. He's weird and horrible." Irene, a volunteer in her fifties, shrieked, her voice rising to the nearly hysterical tone she used in every crisis, from car breakdowns and lost purses, to elephants suddenly appearing on the road. "Who do you think is doomed?"

Ron fervently replied, "If there's any justice, it's Dudley."

Several other volunteers joined in the conversation.

"Did he give you the shaft too?" Cindy Monroe rolled her beautiful brown eyes. She had a certain rubenesque beauty but even among the casually dressed volunteers she always somehow was the sloppiest, with wisps of dirty, blondish hair escaping from a lopsided knot. "I'd like to kill him. I got an offer for a wonderful job with UNICEF in Cameroon. You know my fiancée is there. I've only got six more months of my Peace Corps stint and wanted to leave a little early to take the job. He found some stupid regulation saying agencies can't recruit volunteers. Once he objected, they gave the job to someone else. Dudley is jealous and power hungry."

Sally Johanson, five feet tall, with bouncy gold hair, was a staunch feminist, always alert to any hint of sexual harassment. "Do you think he's getting even because you wouldn't dance with him at the Halloween party?"

"Maybe. He's really a menace when he goes on tour without his wife. And if his wife went with him, she would be a menace to everyone, with that nonstop good mommy talk," Cindy quipped. Cindy's remarks always had an undertone of venom. Despite that, her intelligence and energy resulted in her being given a national award by the Togolese.

Pete, a gentle giant of a math teacher broke in, "The Halloween party was the one where someone came as a giant amoeba in honor of the parasites among us."

"Yes, that was some party. Remember Veronica. Those snake skins she called her costume didn't completely cover the crucial parts of her body even at the start. And by midnight, she was definitely X rated," Ron added.

They were cheered by the gossip and the memories of that strange wild party shared as a part of the Peace Corps life, a world away from the American suburbs most of them had come from. Death seemed far from them as they enjoyed being together, sharing this African adventure.

Solomon had left, but Michael continued his spectacular consumption of Togolese beer. He came over to stand next to Lynne. She decided that he was good looking in a street corner hoodlum kind of way. He was tall and had tousled and not very clean glossy black hair. He wore tight jeans with a knife in a belt loop. Lynne asked him if he had much

trouble with the local intestinal ailments since he bought most of his food from the women who made vast pots of stew and served it all day in the blazing sun.

"Oh, I don't worry about all that. I've found a kind of kaopectate with codeine in it. A slug of that and who cares about amoebas!" Suddenly he grew serious, "Lynne, I'm planning on doing a third year here. Did you know that?"

"You are? Why?"

"Why not? I was a prison guard before I joined the Peace Corps, and this is more mellow. And teaching's not so bad. Oh, there's Dudley. I gotta talk to him about it, get his permission."

One hundred volunteers and twenty Togolese trainers, drivers, and French teachers saw the scene unfold, Michael and Dudley on the platform together as the darkness came, like a shadow puppet show in mime. They could hear nothing but could see against the platform lights, first a discussion, then a disagreement, then angry argumentation. Then, they started shouting and the angry words could be heard above the buzz of talk.

"No. No. No. You give the Peace Corps a bad name. You've missed ten classes this year already."

"You're a pompous dictator. Creeps like you don't deserve to live." With that, Michael began to hit Dudley. Probably Dudley hadn't had a physical fight in twenty years. All he could do was try to protect himself, back away and dodge. Michael staggered. He was really drunk, but still powerful and dangerous. He got ready for a violent lunge but was stopped and held back by four strong volunteers. A group of female volunteers led away the humiliated director.

Still defiant, Michael said, "I'll get you."

But, gathering what dignity he could, Dudley replied in a steady, ominous voice. "Don't forget that I'm in charge here. The Peace Corps in Togo is my responsibility and I intend to exercise the powers given me. Washington will hear about your behavior."

"Don't be too sure about your power, Mr. Director. I have ways of getting even with you. I know African ways to settle things."

Chapter Six: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

When Lynne woke the next morning, her first thought was, "Thank God yesterday is over." The news about Carrie had stunned her and the evasiveness of Dudley and the others made the situation worse. Just when she had started recovering from the pain of learning about Carrie, there had been that ominous prophecy of death, and then that fight between Michael and Dudley. After that, dinner had been served almost immediately. She had eaten, the food tasting like straw because she was so upset. She had gone to her room as soon as possible, gotten ready for bed and, wearing the old t shirt she slept in, as was her regular routine, had written in her notebook the main events of the day. Then she turned out the light and mercifully had slept well, despite the continuing blasting equatorial heat.

With the resilience she usually had, she started out the new day buoyantly. Surely today would be better. It was good to be here, with people to talk to in her own language, other volunteers who would understand if she complained, was cynical or admitted she didn't know what she was doing. And this bed, with this simple foam mattress was certainly better than the kapok filled horror set on broken slats that was somehow what she was stuck with in her own house. She yawned, luxuriously. The day would be hot, as usual, but she could feel a breeze through the open window.

Her happy thoughts were interrupted by a voice that sounded like chalk screeching on a blackboard. "Lynne, I'm so glad you're awake. I need to talk to you. You've got to help me. Dudley is so stubborn, he just doesn't..."

"Irene, what are you doing here?"

"You went to bed so early. Did you think you'd have a room all to yourself?"

"No, of course I shouldn't have expected it."

Irene's dyed blonde hair was sticking out like a fright wig and last night's makeup and mascara were smeared, a natural result of the hot humid climate. Only Irene and a few other image conscious volunteers even tried to use makeup. After her morning shower, if the water was running today, and careful repainting, Irene would look once more like a suburban member of a bridge club. Right now her face looked blurry, out of focus.

Lynne swung into action, dressing, putting away her few possessions, trying hurriedly to get out of the room. "It must be time for breakfast. I'm hungry."

"Oh, they probably don't even have the fire started. Wait, I have to tell you about. . . ." And she started a torrent of petulant free association and rambling complaint.

Lynne tried not to listen. It only annoyed her to hear what she said. How a person with Irene's values ever got into the Peace Corps she could never understand. Irene had told her the first time they met that she wanted to establish an international salon in Togo, with sophisticated French and Germans meeting for gourmet food and witty talk. Then she learned that she would be stationed in a small city in the north whose main claim to volunteer fame was that they used to have ice cream there back in the days when electricity was on 24 hours a day rather than just twelve. Irene had spent many hours protesting her placement to everyone who would listen to her.

"And will you believe it, he won't give me permission to own a car here. Now how does he think I can visit the schools? Last week the Inspector was supposed to pick me up for a seminar. He was two hours late. We'd been planning it for three months."

"What did you do?"

"I just took a bush taxi to Lome and complained to Dudley. And I told him I need a car."

"But if there are taxis on your post why didn't you take one to the seminar instead of going to Lome? The teachers must've been disappointed."

"That's the Inspector's fault, not mine. Besides, you-know-who's in Lome, and I'm so lonesome for him." She put on a vivacious expression that might have been attractive in an unstreaked face. Irene was always hinting at a secret forbidden romance with one of the Togolese Peace Corps officials. "So Lynne, you must talk to Dudley and tell him you agree that he should let me have a car."

"Please Irene, you know we can't have cars. We're supposed to live like the Togolese we work with."

"If you won't help me I have a way to convince him. A man who acts like he does should be careful. I have connections with important Embassy people."

"Irene, I'll see you in the dining room." Lynne made her escape. She didn't want to reveal how repugnant Irene was to her. She knew that in Peace Corps it wasn't good to make enemies. They were a small group and they needed each other. You never knew when you would be assigned to work with the very person you could scarcely bear to talk to.

After breakfast, Lynne joined the others in the general meeting room. She waved at serious, dark haired Lita who served in Dapaong with her. Obviously she had gotten notice of the meeting, somehow, perhaps through the chain of volunteers she worked with in high schools. She noticed Michael making his way around the room, talking to small clusters of volunteers, then writing on a sheet of paper. The Peace Corps officials seemed to be waiting for something before starting the meeting.

About 9:30 Lynne heard a car drive up and saw a driver rush in and hand a big envelope to Dudley who took it, tore it open and hurriedly read it. Then he called the group to attention. He looked sad and sober and very official. First he talked about the sorrow he and others felt about Carrie's death and what a great loss it was to have her die at such a young age. "We have finished our preliminary investigations into Carrie's death and have received a report from the police. It is a terrible story but you should know the truth and stop the flood of rumors and false accounts."

Dudley solemnly recited the story of how Carrie's body had been found by Fiona, the Peace Corps nurse. She had come for a routine medical inspection. The door was locked and no one answered when she pounded on the door. She asked some neighbors, people living in the compound where Carrie was. They said she had gone to the market. But she was uneasy because she saw Carrie's moto was there and the market was a long distance away. Fiona insisted that the Peace Corps driver break open the door. When she did, she saw Carrie was dead.

Then he told what was known or suspected so far. A week earlier Carrie had found out that Ama, the young woman who worked for her in her house, someone she had helped

and befriended, had stolen some of Carrie's clothes. She had actually seen Ama at the market wearing them. Carrie had told the girl's father about it. Oddly enough, the father had told the police, and the police had hauled the unfortunate girl into the jail and beat her savagely. Of course Carrie was horrified. She had certainly never intended or expected that kind of treatment of the young, misguided girl. A young man was under suspicion for the murder. He had lived in Paris and learned lawless Western ways. He was Ama's boy friend and had been at Carrie's house often. Carrie no doubt would have opened the door for him, considering him a friend. The police were interrogating him at that very moment. Dudley would keep everyone informed about his trial and punishment.

Dudley's manner changed. He seemed to relax for the first time this morning. His tone was that of a loving father, a caring leader.

"This is the first time anything like this has ever happened to a volunteer in Togo. As you know, the people here are usually gentle, peaceful, and law abiding. I realize there had been more violence and disorder recently with the new democracy movement, but, despite that, our volunteers have had not had aggression directed against them. But, because of this incident, we are going to advise volunteers to be more careful. In the future, we will not put any volunteer in an isolated house, but will make placements in a compound with other people."

"Not logical," Lynne thought. Carrie had lived in a compound with other people. It had been people she knew who were suspected of killing her, and the neighbors had lied about where she was.

But Dudley continued in his warm, kind, confident voice, "This is disturbing, but, let me say that you should not worry too much about your personal safety. I am sure this was an isolated instance. If you use common sense, and a little alertness you can continue to do your jobs here effectively and safely. That is all I want to say about this tragic incident now. I am going to turn the meeting over to Dr. Richard Putnam, who flew in from Washington to help you through this difficult time."

A pleasant older man in a rumpled business suit started to make his way to the front of the area. But there was an uproar of protests and questions from the group.

Michael stood on a step so he could be seen by everyone. He had a sheet of paper in his hand. He had written out the rumors and questions he had collected from the group. He made himself heard over the tumult. "Now Dudley, we need more information. How was she killed? What evidence do you have against Ama's boy friend? What was the murder weapon? When was Carrie killed? Why did the neighbors lie? How did the door get locked after she was killed? Why was the nurse there? She wasn't scheduled to travel for two weeks. And what were you doing at Carrie's house three days earlier? Why all the secrecy? Why weren't we told earlier what was going on?"

Dudley once again put on his forbidding official manner. "I've told you what you need to know. I can't tell you more now because the matter is still under investigation and the authorities have to act."

Ron said, "Come on Dudley, you must know more than that."

"That is all I will say for the present. Dr. Putnam will talk to you now."

Placed in this embarrassing situation, Dr. Putnam started to talk, somewhat hesitantly at first. He seemed a kind man, sympathetic and low keyed. He told them his sorrow about Carrie's death. He announced two big group meetings volunteers could attend to talk over their feelings about what happened to Carrie. He ended by saying, "I'll also allot some time to allow you to make an appointment for a short, private talk with me about anything that is bothering you. I can see one or two of you before lunch and then some others late this afternoon after the second general session.

Lynne did not feel like expressing her feelings in a group. She was at least five years older than most of the volunteers and in some ways felt separate and different. The rest all stayed for the general meeting with the psychologist.

She sat at a small table not far from the rest, shaded by a conical leaf roof. She could hear occasional sounds of clapping, muffled assent, and even some laughter. The touchy-feely expert must be good at his work.

"Aren't you going to the group session"

She jumped, startled, and then saw to her delight that it was Luke, the Assistant Director for Education. Luke was a splendid looking man, tall with a strong proud carriage, with skin the color of bittersweet chocolate. He had flashing eyes and beautiful white teeth. His hair was worn in the neat and attractive Togolese short afro style. "Oh Luke, I'm glad to see you."

"You look thoughtful, Lynne!"

"They say they're going to tighten security by having people live in compounds. But, Carrie lived in a compound. It was a friend that killed her. I hate to think about it. We are each all alone in this strange country where we can't understand what people are saying most of the time. And now this."

"Lynne, I've always noticed that you have a great amount of leadership ability and courage. You came to this country to start a new life. You have dealt with things well so far. With your strength and good sense, you can help the others."

His obvious affection and respect for her made her suddenly feel her usual cheerful self, despite the unsettling revelations of the day. "Oh Luke, I always love to talk to you."

"And I love to talk to you." He clasped her hand and looked fervently into her eyes. There was more in his expression than the reassurance of a leader to a member of the group in his care. "You must have noticed that I have always liked and admired you, Lynne. And, I think you have warm feelings for me. After these meetings are over in Kara, can I come up to Dapaong to visit you? I would like to get to know you better somewhere and sometime when there aren't other volunteers around."

"Oh, Luke, I'd like that very much."

"Now, I've got to go and see how the meeting is coming along. But let's consider that we have, what do you Americans call it? A date?"

"Yes Luke, a date."

Perhaps a little warning bell should sound in her mind, Lynne thought. She knew that Togolese men could have four wives and were not expected even to be faithful to the four. She had heard that Luke had two. This eased her conscience somewhat. To start a romance with a man with one wife would put her in the class with Allison, the despised.

But, if he already had two wives, surely she wouldn't be hurting anyone by gaining a little warmth in this strange lonely country. But a bit of common sense provided a rebuttal to this internal dialogue. "Yes, but you might hurt yourself hurt Lynne." Despite that, Lynne felt suddenly ebullient. He really was the best looking man she had ever met in her life. And he had chosen her! Well, why not? She knew that her quiet good looks impressed men. And probably it was true that she had more character than the others. When he left Lynne did some class preparation while waiting for their meeting to end. Suddenly there was enthusiastic clapping and volunteers burst out of all the entry ways. Then she was surprised to see this Dr. Putnam standing next to her, looking down at her, his kind face warm and welcoming. "And you, my dear, are you all right?"

"Thank you for your concern. Yes, I'm all right. But I'm so sorry about Carrie's death. And I wonder if it's the start of some general reign of terror against Americans. And it bothers me to know that I didn't really appreciate Carrie. And now she's gone."

"Yes. You and all the volunteers will all have to deal with your grief. But the healing cannot really begin until you have the facts about her death. Right now there are too many questions." His old, wrinkled face took on an intense expression. "Too many mysteries."

Chapter Seven: STATE DEPARTMENT POLICY

So Dr. Putnam wasn't satisfied with Dudley's explanation. She wanted to ask him which of Michael's questions seemed most important. And perhaps she should tell him about Dudley's enigmatic reaction to her questions. What would he make of the director's strange, ominous words, "I warned her!"

But, suddenly they could hear the strange strident *wong wong wong* of the African dinner bell, struck enthusiastically by big Pete who was always restless with too much sitting still and talk, glad for even the physical activity of striking the gong.

They joined the group which seemed once again to be waiting for a messenger, a visitor, or a momentous event. A huge black limousine, flying two small American flags pulled up to a usually unused loading zone. Lynne knew now who the important visiting official was that people had been hinting would come to talk to them. Maybe now they would learn the real facts about Carrie's death. Out walked Corley Harrison, the American Ambassador. Everyone stood and clapped.

Dudley led him to the dining area on the veranda and showed him to the place of honor at in the center of the head table. The Peace Corps officials and the Ambassador sat on one side of a small table, facing the rest. The area was filled with tables for six. Lynne sat at the first table in front of them with Ron, Michael, Cindy, and Sally. Soon they were eating the pounded yam called fufu and sauce made of tomatoes and stewed chicken that had been placed on the tables. Lynne ate with a fork, admiring the volunteers who had learned the African way of eating it, grabbing with thumb and forefinger a big glob of the fufu which was something like thick wallpaper paste and dipping it into the sauce. She noticed that the Ambassador and the others at the head table ate American style. An extra plate of chicken was placed in front of the Ambassador.

Everyone ate quickly and the tables were cleared. There was suspense in the air and hope. Maybe there would be some clarification now. Dudley rose and introduced the Ambassador.

The Ambassador was sixtyish and dignified, about six feet tall, dressed in an expensive beautifully tailored tropical weight dress suit. Everything was well coordinated, from his black wingtip shoes to his dark gray suit and his dress shirt with a tiny gray strip and even in all this heat, a gray and maroon tie that perfectly complemented the outfit. His hair was slightly gray, with the blow dry look of a TV anchorman. All this set him off as a kind of royalty or even divinity among the volunteers in their crumpled clothes and sandals.

His face radiated the charisma that had made him one of the best fundraisers for the American president's party and had gotten him a reputation for being an excellent host which had led to his appointment as ambassador. Looking at him made Lynne especially conscious of her face, moist and shiny from the heat, and the dust on her sandaled feet.

Everyone quieted down. The volunteer tried not to show it, but they were awed.

In his rich resonant voice, the Ambassador began to speak. "Volunteers, I want to give you my condolences for the death of Carrie. She was a fine person; it is a great loss to all of us. Your director has told you the information we have about that unfortunate

tragedy. He will keep you posted as more details come to light. It is not my place to say more at this time."

There was a low, disappointed groan from the volunteers. But, cowed by the great man, no one spoke. The Ambassador continued.

"The director has no doubt explained the steps we will take to ensure your safety. You are important to American foreign policy here and also to the Togolese people. We expect you to continue doing your work at your posts." He beamed at them with the charming smile that had won the hearts and contributions of moderately conservative Americans.

The assembled group was silent. No one felt up to confronting this confident man.

"Now, unfortunately I need to talk to you about something else that is extremely unpleasant. I hate to have to do this now when we are all so pained and saddened by Carrie's death."

There was a murmur of surprise among the audience. What did he mean? What else was going wrong? What new trouble was there? Did someone else die?

Suddenly the screeching voice of Irene could be heard above everyone else's muted speculations. "You've taken them. I know you have. They were right here when you cleared the table. You took them. Where are they? Maybe you think your mother could use them. Get them for me immediately. You people here are all thieves. And I need them right now. When I can't see properly it makes me nervous." She was speaking English to the bewildered waiter who spoke only French. Others tried to intercede, to translate, to calm Irene down, to shush her. But, Irene flounced out of her chair and pushed her way up to the front of the room to a table behind the head table where drinks and serving utensils were kept. "You see," she said triumphantly, "There they are."

Lynne watched this exhibition. Scarcely a day went by that Irene did not cause some sort of scene. Someone had stolen her medicine or her papers or her scarf that she had jokingly told them they could have. And now she was making this fuss, right in front of the Ambassador. Lynne shuddered. Oh, how she hated that woman. And somehow, once more she was her roommate. She noticed Dudley was upset by this scene. And he should be. It was partly his fault. He had always catered to Irene, perhaps because she was the oldest volunteer and let her do things the others could not do and given her special privileges. When a journalist came to Togo to do a story on volunteers, he had suggested to her that he interview Irene because she was remarkable. It was good that Dudley had refused her permission to drive a car. But, he probably would give in to her, in the end. Irene always won.

The Ambassador seemed distraught. Watching this ridiculous scene he opened his mouth as if to say something, but closed it and continued staring at this woman who did not know how to act in front of an important person like him. He glared at the Peace Corps Director who should be controlling his people.

When she had returned to her seat, he tried to compose himself. He continued. "As I said, I must tell you something unpleasant. But it is necessary. It has come to my attention that.... I have some serious things to tell you. Because of them some changes must be made in staffing and..." He stopped to clear his throat. He started to cough. He tried

again to speak, obviously in distress, got out the words, "A drink. Soda water Soda." He gasped and continued to cough. A waiter appeared quickly. He was tall and thin and wore an elaborately embroidered boubou. His face was marked with what Lynne thought of as pussy cat scars, four slanted scars on each side of the face looking something like a cat's whiskers, a pattern often seen among northern people. Swiftly he took a bottle of soda water from the serving table and flipped the cap off. Gratefully, without waiting for a glass, the ambassador grasped the bottle and took a large gulp. Then he continued, "I must..." but his words ended in a cry of pain. He clutched his chest and suddenly fell over.

"Quick, nurse," voices called out. Nurse Fiona rushed up and started to administer CPR. She worked on him for ten long minutes, trying to revive a spark of breath and life. But, the Ambassador's face was turning blue. "I told him he should get more rest," the nurse wailed.

Volunteers milled around, trying to see and hear what was happening. The Peace Corps officials had a huddled conference. Four of the Togolese waiters came forward, and two taking an arm, two taking a leg, they carried the now inert body to the big black diplomatic limousine that the Ambassador had made such a magnificent entrance in less than an hour before. Nurse Fiona and the Peace Corps Director continued their low voiced consultation.

Then Dudley stood and quieted the room to make one more announcement. "Everyone, I have to tell you, the Ambassador is dead. It looks like a heart attack." He was calm and in control of himself and the situation. "I will go with his driver to take his body to Lome and notify the officials. All of you stay and get your inoculations. Fiona will be waiting for you in Room Four. Anyone that wants a meeting with the psychologist, go ahead. Now we have a new tragedy to adjust to. After you get your shot you may start home and return to your posts. This is a terribly sad thing. I'll get in touch with Washington and we will make an announcement about his death on the radio. Please, in the meantime, refrain from gossiping about it. It is important that the Togolese hear this officially with a statement that it will not affect American State Department policy toward Togo."

Chapter Eight: BURN, BABY, BURN

Despite the Peace Corps Director's effort to turn this into a manageable event, Lynne was in shock. Just as Solomon had predicted, a man in high places was dead. So many deaths, so much trouble. She began to shiver despite the intense heat. She went to room Four, hoping to get her shot so that she could start the long, uncomfortable trip home. But at least fifty of the others were in line ahead of her. No one seemed to want to talk about the death they had just witnessed. Instead, they were all complaining about Irene. After that stupid scene, they were fed up with her. In the past, they had often forgiven her because she was lively and amusing and there were few sources of entertainment here. But she had embarrassed them all. Lynne learned that Irene had been the first to get a shot and with her usual ability to wangle special privileges, had gotten the driver to let her ride to her post in the official Peace Corps car in Dudley's place now that Dudley was riding in the Ambassador's limousine.

Lynne wanted to talk to Luke and be comforted by his loving strength. But she saw him involved in official duties. And Irene would ride in the car with him. At least that meant Lynne didn't have to see her for a while.

And now, Lynne was back to her usual Peace Corps occupation, waiting. Finally at 3 o'clock she was inoculated and given a month's supply of malaria preventative and was free to pack up her bag and go to the taxi park. There was barely enough time to reach home before nightfall. The narrow, unmarked roads were dangerous after dark, with surprising holes, ruts, ditches, and unexpected construction besides occasional stray animals. An added hazard was the uncertain state of repair of the old wrecks used for bush taxis. Sometimes if they slowed down for an intersection, they wouldn't start again and the passengers had to get out and push.

Mercifully there was only a short wait for the bush taxi to fill and soon she was packed firmly in the back of a pickup truck wedged in between a fat market seller and a gentleman in a soiled boubou. Even though they were all crowded, the vehicle had good ventilation once they were on the road, since it had no sides except for being covered by canvas which was only loosely tied down. Lynne was glad to put up with the cloud of dust in exchange for the strong breeze that made the hot evening endurable. She went into the half-conscious state she had learned to attain just as the Africans did, of patient waiting, acceptance, passivity. There had been a time in America when she felt she could not wait in a doctor's office or for an airplane without something to read. But here, she just sat. Even though she couldn't see out the window, the decrepit truck was slowly making its way to Dapaong. In this equatorial zone, darkness always fell at 6:30. Not long after the truck became completely dark, Lynne found a hole in the canvas covering and looked out. She saw she was on the outskirts of Dapaong. She managed to get the attention of the driver and convince him to let her off on the main road outside the city near the large sign which proclaimed their arrival in Dapaong. It displayed a picture of the swimming pool at the government hotel which had never been filled with water.

This crossroads was near the General's compound where she lived. She walked the 300 feet from the large road almost feeling her way in the darkness, avoiding rocks, holes, and a ditch that looked like a shadow.

She was glad this day was almost over. She banged on the tall metal gate. The General's mother, a toothless, bare-breasted woman with a big printed head dress and length of cloth around her waist opened it muttering something in a language Lynne didn't understand. "*Bon soir. Merci.*" she said, but the woman only continued saying strange words that somehow sounded ominous to Lynne.

"I'm so tired and have had so many things happen I'm starting to imagine trouble and bad omens," Lynne thought. She tried to pull herself out of her mood. She was home. Thank god. And the electricity would still be on for several hours. It usually went off for the night at ten o'clock. She could make a snack, then get ready for bed, write in her notebook and read a little. By the time the lights went off, she should be happily asleep.

She had just taken a shower and was toweling herself dry when she heard a banging at her door. She wrapped herself in a *pagne* and opened the door a cautious crack. There was a group of at least twenty Togolese, some of whom she had seen before at school or in town. One of them, a student, spoke French to her carefully and slowly, to be sure she understood. "Am I having a nightmare?" she thought. For his message was, they were going to burn down her house, in the name of democracy. They were going to show her landlord, the evil general what they thought of him. Since they liked Lynne and respected what she was doing for the schools, they were doing a special favor for her. They would give her five minutes to pack up the things most valuable to her and get out. Then, they would burn the house.

Frantically, Lynne threw on some clothes, grabbed her notebook, and the envelope she kept her passport and official papers in, got her purse and a change of underwear. What else should she take?

"*Vite, vite.*" Hurry, hurry, they called from outside the house. Scarcely knowing why, she snatched two books, a box of photos and a few old letters, one *pagne* and a bottle of water and ran out of the house. She could smell kerosene everywhere.

She heard the pounding of a drum and loud chanting. A tall man in a *fonctionnaire suit* came out of the group and stood near the gate. She recognized him as Dossa, a math teacher at the high school who had circulated a petition for the democracy movement. In his hand he had a piece of wood with straw tied to it. He lit it and with great force threw it in an arc, high in the air onto the roof of Lynne's house. There was a whooshing sound and suddenly the night was bright with light. The house was a huge torch. Her home where she had lived for five months was destroyed.

Then Lynne noticed that the other five houses in the compound, homes of the general's wives and children were only piles of smoldering rubble. Where was the grandmother, the general's mother? She was suddenly alarmed. Had her neighbors, who had been kind and welcoming to her, been burned with their houses? She examined the crowd and to her relief realized that the general's large family was standing outside to the entrance gate looking stunned and subdued. There were looks of horror and disbelief on many faces and some were wailing and sobbing. They were all empty handed. They had

obviously not gotten the five-minute warning, but at least they were alive. She remembered a line from an old movie. "In times of war, many sparrows fall." And lose their nests.

Chapter Nine: AN END AND A BEGINNING

It all seemed unreal to Lynne as she saw the bright orange flames shoot up in the sky and light up the tall palm trees, throwing grotesque shadows on the menacing crowd. She watched the only home she had burn down with all her possessions. Even more discouraging, it was torched by neighbors and people she knew, people she considered friends. She felt disheartened and too dazed to think of what she could or should do now.

Then she noticed in the crowd, Zorab, one of the teachers she worked with. He was a refugee from Ghana. His face looked like a patchwork quilt with the most elaborate and extensive system of scarification she had seen. When she had first met him, his face had startled her, but, once she got used to him, his pleasant personality, good bone structure and manly carriage made her think of him as an attractive man. She remembered that when he had first met her he had urgently and sincerely asked her to tell the CIA they should lead a coup to restore his party to power in Ghana. His older brother had been a cabinet minister and was now a refugee under the UN Program. Lynne had convinced him that she had no connections in the CIA. They had become good friends and neighbors. Now, she was glad to see him, knowing that he was neutral concerning Togolese politics, in that mob of excited and violent people.

"Dear Lynne," he said, "You know they are protesting against the dictatorship, not you. They like you and appreciate what you are doing for the schools. They burned the house to punish its owner, the General, who is a bad man."

She knew that he was bad. He used the military to brutally suppress any stirrings of protest against the dictatorship. And he, a rich man, demanded constant gifts from the poor people to avoid problems with him. And even in matters concerning his own family he was a hard man. She had heard that he had his soldiers savagely beat a young man who dared to court his daughter.

But she thought with affection of the parade of his fifteen children, aged from six through twenty who had filed out together past her house every school morning, all wearing the standard khaki uniform to start the long walk to school. Five of his wives lived in the compound and had jobs as civil servants. Rumor had it that he had four more wives down in Lome where he spent most the year with his army. About once a year he came to Dapaong for a visit. A few months later, people noticed that several of the Dapaong wives were pregnant again. The children looked much like any other school children, with the difference, that all of them had uniforms that were not faded or ragged, they wore leather sandals instead of the rubber shower sandals many children wore, and the real status symbol, each one of them, starting with the tiniest, carried a school book bag or brief case. Well, those days were gone. Now, they too, were homeless.

"Jump on the back of my moto, Lynne and I will take you to the house of another volunteer. Lita lives in the house of an old man that everyone respects. He has nothing to do with the government. This crowd won't threaten it. You will be safe for the night and can get some sleep." Zorab acted as her savior.

Lita greeted them warmly, her black curly hair tousled, wrapped in a green patterned *pagne*. As always, she seemed unaware of her exceptional beauty. She was serious, capable

and as always. She too had arrived from the meeting in Kara not long ago and was preparing to go to bed. When she heard what had happened, and Zorab's theory about the safety of her house, she remained calm and showed herself a caring member of the Peace Corps family. She brought out several *pagnes* of African cloth and prepared a place for Lynne to sleep on her couch. They both thanked Zorab profusely for his help.

"I'm glad to do it for you. I know what it is like to be a refugee."

Despite the multiple horrors of the day, and the stifling heat, they somehow dropped into a restless sleep. Early the next morning, Lita lent Lynne some clothes and packed a suitcase for herself. "I'll ask Peace Corps if they think it is safe for me to stay in Dapaong after all that," she said soberly.

After waiting three hours, the two of them caught a bush taxi and made the sixteen-hour journey to Lome. The crowded van, the chickens and yams underfoot, and the bleating goat tied to the roof made little impression on them. They were glad to be on the road, driving away from the violent scene of the night before.

They arrived in Lome after midnight and both spent the night on top bunks in the Peace Corps dormitory, a 20 by 20 room that had six double deck beds, a couch, a TV, two big chairs and a refrigerator and a few shelves of dilapidated donated books that was called the volunteer library. One blessing, it was air conditioned. Another, there was clean, cool water to drink and hot water for showers.

The next morning, Lynne and Lita started a long series of meetings with Peace Corps and Embassy officials trying to figure out what to do with them. Both the Peace Corps and the Embassy were in disorder. Carrie's death, the death of the Ambassador, and now Lynne's house being burned were too many crises to deal with. Ordinarily, it would be the Ambassador who would set policy in their case. Without an ambassador, everything was confused and disordered. When they met with Dudley, he was distracted by many calls on the telephone. Lynne observed him carefully, remembering again his unsatisfactory reaction to Carrie's death. Dudley soon turned them over to Luke who was serious and businesslike, making sure that no hint of their new friendship was apparent in his behavior. After hearing her account of the house burning he told them they would have to talk to the Security officer at the Embassy and afterwards, there would be a meeting to decide what they should do.

It turned out that the Security officer was scheduled to finish his tour of duty this week and was packing to return to the United States. There was another series of broken or decisionless and frustrating appointments with Embassy officials who were trying to cope with their leaderless situation, jockeying for position and shooting off piles of cables to Washington asking for policy.

Everett Knowlton, the young Economic officer, was named Acting Ambassador and inquiries were sent to trusted sources in the Togolese government, trying to understand the situation in the north and also predict what effect the recent American deaths might have on the country's stability.

After assessing the situation of the country as a whole, the American officials decided that the burning was an isolated incident, regrettably part of the general unrest in the country, but not the start of a revolution or general severe wave of violence. They sent

Lita back up to her station. Since her house was owned by a local tribal chief who was much respected in the community and was neither a party official nor a democratic protester, she should be safe. But, they warned her, "Be sure you keep your key in your door so you can open it quickly if necessary and always keep a bag packed in case you have to get out on short notice." It was more of "The show must go on." As long as it was agreed that Peace Corps would stay in Togo, no extraordinary means for assuring the volunteers' safety would be put in place.

But, since Lynne no longer had housing in Dapaong, and also, because she knew too much about who had burned the house, it was agreed to find a job for her in Lome at least temporarily. She would continue to stay at the Peace Corps dormitory until they could arrange for housing in Lome for her.

Two days later, Lynne had a new job. She was the Self Help Coordinator at the Embassy, helping volunteers to prepare their proposals to get funding by the American Ambassador for development programs asked for by the Togolese. It was called Self Help because the Togolese had to request the project and also to agree to contribute a number of work hours to accomplish it.

One of the nice things about Lynne's new job was working in the clean, modern, well-equipped Embassy office with its blessed air conditioning. Dressed in castoffs from other volunteers, and some underwear bought with a special emergency fund given her by Peace Corps, Lynne tried to keep her mind on the jargon filled language describing the procedure for proposal writing.

There was a knock on the door. It was Sally, the blonde volunteer from Aneho who had gossiped so cheerfully with Lynne at the meeting in Kara. Sally had told her that her childhood nickname was Sally Sunshine. Her boyfriend was in medical school in Chicago. He had agreed that since he would be studying night and day so he could make top grades she might as well spend two years in the Peace Corps and get her idealism and hopefully feminism out of her system. They planned to get married as soon as she returned home after completing her service.

It seemed a long time since that first evening in Kara. Terrible things had happened since then.

"Lynne, I'm sorry you got burned out. But, I'm glad you got this job. Before you came, Claudia at the Embassy was trying to do it all by herself on top of her regular work and sometimes it took months to get a decision. Maybe you can speed things up."

Sally wanted to check on her previous proposal, but after a search, Lynne decided the papers must be in the Ambassador's office. Sally agreed to check again in about a week, but she also wanted to submit a proposal for a new project. She had been through the procedure several times before, so she could help Lynne with the paperwork necessary. Sally was a Cooperatives volunteer and wanted funding for a weaving project. After Sally had practically done all the work herself, Lynne tried to put on a show of professionalism. "Okay, I'll finish this up and get it to the Ambassador right away. When I hear something about it I'll let you know."

"Great. But you forgot something. The Ambassador is dead."

"Oh, I misspoke. They said that Everett, the Economic officer will take over the Ambassador's work for the time being. When it's ready, I'll get it to him."

"Well Lynne, you are here right in the center of things. Tell me, who do you think killed the Ambassador?"

"Killed!" Lynne gasped. "Why do you say that? They said he died of a heart attack."

"Oh, that was just some more of that official nonsense, trying to keep us all from panicking and trying to make the Togolese believe everything is perfect with the Americans."

"But why don't you believe it?"

"Oh, everybody knows that's not true. The Ambassador was in fine health. He played tennis several times a week. There's no way he could have died of natural causes. He was murdered. Remember Solomon's prophesy? It came true, but in a surprising way. A lot of people wanted Dudley to die. But it was the Ambassador who was murdered! Right before our eyes."