

## Chapter Ten: Self Help

As she continued her work in the Self Help office, she learned that Sally was right -- it was a good place to pick up all the latest in news, information, rumors, speculation, and gossip. It was hard to tell what bit of talk fit into which category. Many volunteers came to see her, saying they had come to learn about getting funding for their projects. But some had been too frightened over the recent deaths and violence to remain in their isolated posts and used this excuse to be where they could see and talk with the other volunteers. And, they wanted to see what Lynne knew and pass on the latest about what others were saying about the horrifying events of the last few weeks. Lynne suspected some of them came just to enjoy a brief respite from the sweltering heat outside.

Michael came to talk about getting additional funding for his proposed library in Sotoubua and also to ask her again to intercede with Dudley to get him his third year. He had nerve, to even dream of getting it after his drunken threats toward Dudley and then his rude, accusing questions at the meeting. But Michael had a kind of protective arrogance. And, Lynne thought, he, also had courage to even want to serve a third year in a place as full of danger as this.

"Please help me, Lynne. Talk to him." Then, half joking, he continued. "But, you'd better be careful about being alone with him. He may be dangerous. He never did tell us what the real situation was with Carrie's death. There are some secrets in his personal life. Maybe the Ambassador finally found them out and was going to sack them. Maybe Dudley killed the Ambassador."

Irene came asking for money from the Ambassador's fund to buy an automobile for her. "If I get funding from the Embassy, Dudley won't dare to refuse me permission to drive it."

Lynne didn't even try to tell her what a ridiculous idea the whole scheme was. She gritted her teeth and tried to stem the rambling flood of talk that always poured out of Elaine's brightly painted mouth. Lynne felt affronted that a woman like her would be in the Peace Corps and have the same job she had tried so hard to do. She knew that Irene was almost sixty years old. Lynne hoped her assessment of her wasn't too much affected by age prejudice. Irene claimed to have a doctorate from some obscure college in the West. Lynne was annoyed by that claim, especially since she noticed that Irene consistently performed at a level below the other volunteers, in every demonstration and exercise they did. And many of the other volunteers were only about twenty three and just had bachelor's degrees. Lynne had taken the trouble to do a little investigating. She got Linda, the volunteer support person at Peace Corps to let her see Irene's records. She found out that she was right. There was no doctorate. Irene wrote a dissertation but it had never been accepted. She did learn that her story of being the widow of an officer in the army was true. Lynne gave Irene forms and managed to keep her quiet long enough so that she could explain how to fill them out to make the proposal.

Somehow she got her out the door, still talking. Irene's parting remark was, "I'm surprised that it was the Ambassador that was killed. Maybe someone was trying to kill Dudley. Enough people hated him. What a pity it happened to the wrong person."

Her next visitor was Dulcie, another one of the Educational advisors for English teaching. Dulcie was tall and extremely thin as some of the volunteers were after too many bouts of the local gastrointestinal problems. She had been a schoolteacher in Illinois until her divorce. Lynne had heard that she had a young son somewhere. She was self confident and effective at her job, and luckily had a cooperative Togolese inspector to work with. With his help, she had given five seminars already this year and ten the year before in Atakpamay. She was trying through the Self Help office to get a scholarship for one of her students.

This morning she started out all business, but soon began to talk to Lynne about the distressing things that were on their minds. They had always been on friendly terms. Dulcie agreed that someone had murdered the Ambassador.

"But why?" Lynne said. "I thought he was a fairly decent guy. Why would someone want to murder him?"

"I know he didn't chase women. He was really committed to his wife, even though she has health problems and has been in the U.S. this year. He was loyal to her. But, aside from that, he was pretty much of a fake. He seemed all charm and smoothness, and pleasant reasonableness. But let me tell you what he did to me. He was insecure and had a terrible temper."

"Now I'm curious."

"It really was the most humiliating event in my entire life. The Ambassador had always been chummy with me, in a half fatherly, half flirtatious way. He told me to call him Corley, that he was really just one of the team, and wanted my ideas on education since I've been a volunteer here two years and knew a lot about the country. He seemed so nice, I thought he meant it. Well, he invited me to a dinner party to meet some big educator visiting from America. There were about thirty people there, from different agencies and educational organizations including some Togolese from the university and the public school system. We were chatting at dinner at a table of about twelve people. The Ambassador laughingly said that he had heard that the prisoners at the jail had revolted over bad conditions, saying that it was a violation of their civil rights, just after the American Cultural Center, to the vast disapproval of the Togolese government, had held a conference on the Rights of Man. I foolishly said I hoped the it wasn't true because it might start a wave of repression. And then, I suddenly realized that my colleague from the superintendent of schools office was sitting at the table. You know how the dictator hates dissent. I said, 'Oh, I forgot. Maybe we shouldn't be talking like this.'

The Ambassador got red in the face. He looked like he was about to explode. A few minutes later he announced that it was time to go to the living room for coffee. Everyone stood up and still chatting, drifted toward the archway that led to the living room. I felt uneasy and went over to the Ambassador to try to smooth things over because he was obviously displeased. When I tried to explain what I'd meant he said, 'No one tells me what to say in my own home. I am not politically naive. Stay away from me. I will not be treated like this.'"

"Wow. So much for his call me Corley business. He really flipped. What did the others think of it?"

"Everyone tried to pretend that nothing had happened, but as I was leaving the room a few of them told me not to feel bad. They had seen him explode before. John Peters from UNICEF said he had better learn to control himself better or he'd get in trouble in this country."

"But, what happened after that? Did he cause trouble for you?"

"Not as far as I know. Whatever, it was embarrassing. Everyone in the room heard him tell me to get out of his sight."

"I bet you were furious with him."

"Yes, I could've killed him."

"You'd better not say that to anyone else, Dulcie. It's convenient for you to have him gone. You told me you've applied for that fine job with USAID after you finish in Peace Corps in a few months. Just one word from him could of killed the whole thing. That puts you in a bad position. You were at that luncheon when he died. In fact, you were supervising the meal. It's literally true--you could have killed him."

## Chapter Eleven: Bunk Mates

When that disturbing day at the office finally ended Lynne made her way through the teeming streets, with thousands of civil servants and office workers looking for taxis to take them home. The end of the day crush added to the normal daily crowds in this country where unemployment was at least 60 per cent and people generally spent their time outdoors in this equatorial climate. Seeing the taxis, some filled beyond the legal five passengers, still being hailed by determined people, she decided it was simpler to walk.

She was still staying at the Peace Corps dormitory, waiting for the office to make final arrangements for the apartment they were planning to assign to her. The half hour walk through the big market area to the Peace Corps office would be a good change from the pressure and confinement of the Self Help Office.

She thought of Dulcie's pained, strained face. Dulcie was a volunteer that Lynne identified with far more than the others. She too had been dumped by her husband. Lynne admired her because she seemed self directed and had made a good life for herself here. She hoped no one seriously would suspect her. If the Ambassador was really murdered, perhaps they were all suspects. But how could it have been done?

Soon she arrived at the Peace Corps office which was a two-story building on a side street about ten blocks from the big market area and about twelve blocks from the Embassy.

Yao, the guard, greeted her at the Peace Corps gate cheerfully and warmly. After a quick shower in the communal bathroom, left dirty by the last volunteer, she sat on her bunk, trying to collect her thoughts, plan her life, reconcile herself to the new situation. She did some brooding on her money problems. The red tape of Peace Corps, The Togolese banking system and whatever else was snarled. When she first was posted to Dapaong the Peace Corp office had gone through complicated procedures to have her monthly Peace Corps stipend sent directly to the Togolese government bank in Dapaong every month. Every month in Dapaong Lynne had gone to the huge elaborate marble, almost empty building built with United Nations funds and waited the hour or so it somehow always took for the teller, with motions as slow as an automaton that needed rewinding to check all his records, write all his new notations, and, finally give her the 60,000 CFA which she would live on for the next month. Tomorrow was pay day for Lynne and she greatly needed the money. The \$120 of her pay, barely stretched for her expenses of each month. It made her ashamed when she thought about the fact that her Togolese colleagues somehow managed to raise large families on that amount. But even so, now, having lost everything, she especially needed money to buy some household necessities. Peace Corps had come up with some emergency funds for underwear and toothpaste and other needed things. But she had spent most of that for food these last days in Lome. She had talked about this problem at length at the Peace Corps office and learned only that they would try to retrieve her check from the bank. Knowing how long things took here, she was gloomy about prospects. Even if she got into her apartment, she would still need some cash for food. Her warm relationship with Luke didn't help at all. At the office, he was so afraid of being caught at having a personal relationship with a volunteer that he followed the regulations

with especial severity, even though he sometimes gave her hand a quick squeeze when he felt they were alone for a moment or two.

She could tell by the belongings scattered around that every one of the twelve beds in the room were taken by volunteers in town with some reason or excuse or other. It was lucky she had reserved hers by covering it with the few possessions she had left. Probably the others had decided to go out for the evening and try to take their minds off the recent events. Some no doubt went to drink and listen to music at Cafe des Artes, an open air bar run by a Ghanaian man who was especially friendly to the Peace Corps.

She still had a few small bills left and she began to get hungry. She went out to the street and bought a half of a chicken from the Chicken Lady who for twenty years had operated a stand with a few picnic tables on the sidewalk about two blocks from the Peace Corps office. The chicken was good and cheap although somewhat tough and chewy, and with a loaf of the delicious French bread the Togolese bakers made so well in their clay ovens, it was satisfying. She took it back with her and after eating it, she lay in her bunk, first recording the events of the day in her notebook. She reading a few pages of a dog-eared romance novel she found on the table, hoping to clear her mind of fearsome thoughts. Soon she slipped off to sleep. Her dreams were filled with flames and angry faces.

She had only slept for about two hours when she felt herself being shaken. First, she was terrified. Was the violence continuing? But then she saw it was Ron. "What're you doing? You scared the life out of me. Why aren't you out with the others?"

"I need you. Wake up." Ron was wild eyed.

Still half in her dreams, she stumbled to the bathroom and splashed some water on her face. "What time is it?"

"It's just past eleven. Why does that matter?"

"But why are you waking me? What do you want?"

"I can't stand it. I have to talk to you about all this stuff that's going on. You're the only one I can talk to. I'm not at all satisfied with their story about Carrie's murder. And even though they won't admit it, we all know the Ambassador was poisoned. Let's try to figure out who could have done it. How'd the Ambassador get that poison? They say it worked instantly. He ate the same dinner we did and was perfectly fine until he stood up. Then, he started to cough and asked for something to drink. "

"Wait a minute, Ron. Who says it was instantaneous?"

"Jacobou, the lab technician did. It said so on his report."

"But the report hasn't been released."

"Yes, but I have ways of learning things. Trust me, that's what it says. Now let's brainstorm. How could he get the poison?"

"I don't know. Did someone give him some kind of pill or inject the poison, or..."

"He just drank that bottle of soda and collapsed."

"Okay, Ron, who was near at that time?"

"Dudley and the nurse, Fiona, and Luke were right next to him and we were sitting at the next table, Michael, Sally, Cindy, yes, all of them, besides you and me. And Dulcie was wandering around somewhere, supervising the staff because she was doing logistics for the meeting."

"You were really watching carefully, Ron. It was all so fast I didn't notice exactly what happened."

"Well, I was watching like an eagle. I was listening carefully to see if I could learn anything new about Carrie's death and then when the Ambassador hinted at a some new scandal, I really paid attention. Now think about this, Lynne. This is important. Did you notice that it was a new bottle, a capped bottle? The waiter opened it at the table in front of all of us."

"Yes, I remember that. Maybe something was in his glass?"

"He didn't use a glass. He refused a glass and just grabbed it and took a big swig. It wasn't what you would expect from an Ambassador, but I guess he was really choking."

"Ron, we aren't getting anywhere."

"Lynne, just think about it. His death doesn't make sense. How could someone have given him that poison? And why did the Ambassador die, anyway? Why didn't Dudley die? It would've saved a lot of people a lot of trouble. That guy. What a leader! And now this new thing everyone's talking about!"

"You are always coming up with new rumors. But who knows what's true?"

"Well, I believe this one. The latest is that everyone says that Fiona, the nurse, is pregnant with Dudley's child. That guy is multidimensional sexual. If his wife finds that out, she might leave him. And Dudley wouldn't like that. Maybe the Ambassador was going to fire Dudley over that. Maybe Dudley killed him to keep some of his secrets in the closet, to prevent that announcement the Ambassador was about to make. And you notice how quick Fiona and he were to say it was a heart attack."

"Oh Ron, this's all impossible. I can't take any more. Take your rumors somewhere else."

"Okay, I'll go now. But we've gotta talk again. You're the only one that really understands me. We've got to think about all this. We've got to figure it out. There is at least one murderer wandering around our lives. Maybe he'll decide we know too much. We were there, you know."

"Go, Ron. This isn't doing any good. Let's talk another time." She led him to the door, trying to get rid of him, but continued talking. "Why would he kill someone over that? Even if it is true, it's not so surprising. That kind of sex scandal is so common these days."

"But I haven't told you Dudley's secret that really was worth killing for. If the Ambassador knew that, he probably was going to fire him and make sure he never got another government job." And with that he was gone.

## Chapter Twelve: Moneychangers

When she woke up in the bunk at the Peace Corps dormitory on Saturday morning, Lynne suddenly had an idea on what to do about her money problem. She must do something soon since she was down to her last 3000 francs. She realized that she had a little money in her bank account, back in Michigan. She would go to the office of the money changer, Richie, and have him cash a check written on that bank.

Richie was one of those strange institutions that made life possible in this alien country. There was something a little shady about him and his activities, but Lynne had encountered him at Peace Corps parties and the homes of American diplomats. He had a bland, innocent, Midwestern American face, looking like a school teacher or a scout master. He always said he had confidence in Americans. He was always willing to cash the special checks American parents sent volunteers for birthdays and holidays. He would accept checks from any bank, money orders, any type of financial transfer method. It was odd and wonderful in a country where an American check was greeted with suspicion at any store or bank and if it was accepted for deposit in an account, the money would only be made available in six weeks.

Lynne got a taxi in front of the Peace Corps office almost immediately. She told the driver she wanted to go to the big market and was dropped off a few minutes later on a street lined with market stalls in front of what looked like either a bombed out older building or a never completed new building. She went past the women selling cloth at the entrance and made her way through the big partially open downstairs area, almost filled with construction materials and trash. The building was uncompleted with the second story outside rooms built first. Sweat started pouring down her face as she left the part near the entrance where there was a good breeze and picked her way up the littered stairway, occasionally meeting raggedly dressed Africans, looking like casual loungers. At the top landing she paused, trying to remember which was Richie's door. She passed a set of beautiful elaborately carved wooden double doors, looking like the figures on a Benin bronze, and other doors that were dirty and splintered, with paint peeling. On the fourth door to the left she saw scrawled in uneven black paint Richard Enterprises. She knocked lightly, then entered. As always, when she entered Richie's office she was struck by the stunning contrast. Downstairs the scene had been almost medieval. Here she saw a complex of computers, a ticker systems with world exchange rates posted, fax machines whining, and well-dressed Africans efficiently dealing with stacks of paper work.

"I want to see Richie."

"Sure. Go right ahead. Richie is in there." A coffee skinned man in a wildly patterned complet waved a hand at an inner door.

Lynne entered a pleasant large room with windows overlooking the market below. There were several desks, with Richie sitting at one, dressed in a rumpled sport shirt and khakis. His blue eyes beamed through thick, round rimmed glasses.

"Hello there. What can I do for you?"

"Richie, can you cash a check for me?"

"Of course. You're in the Peace Corps, aren't you? Haven't seen you for a long time." His gentle, benevolent face showed concern. "Terrible thing, the Ambassador's death. He was a good man. But, I knew he had enemies. I told him so. He didn't really understand how things are done here. There are people who can arrange for a death secretly, quietly. He wasn't careful enough." He took the check and scarcely glancing at it, quickly pulled a thick wad of Togolese money from a drawer. "The exchange rate today is 400 CFA for a dollar." He counted out the money which was a little over sixty thousand African francs. Just as he was counting out the last few coins she heard loud voices and an angry disturbance outside the door. In burst a tall, thin man in a voluminous, ornately embroidered boubou, accompanied by one of the men who worked in the outer room.

The employee spoke in fast French, "Richie, I'm sorry, I couldn't keep him out. I'll get rid of him now." He took hold of the intruder's arm. And a second man appeared and grabbed his other arm.

The captive shouted in French, "You can't keep me out. I want my money. I did what you asked. Now you must pay me. I insist."

Two more assistants from the other desks joined them, attempting to control the furious man. Richie's blue eyes turned to ice. "Be quiet. Do not speak of these things. We will take care of you later. You shouldn't be here. Get out. Get him out, *now*."

The man struggled and pulled out a knife from under the boubou. But, at last completely outnumbered, he was subdued. The four dragged him away. "Take him out the back way." Richie ordered. They pulled him to a door at the right, behind the desks.

"Forgive this scene. Some people are just impossible to do business with. Richie was all smooth geniality again. "Here's your money."

Lynne snatched the money without counting it and ran out the door. Thank heaven the ranting man with the knife wasn't in sight. She rushed out of the building, doubly fearful, afraid because of the violent scene she had watched and worried that the ragged loiterers might take the money she needed so badly. Or triply fearful. She was afraid of falling on the uneven, broken, cluttered stairway without a railing, lighted only by the daylight from the partially uncompleted roof.

Once out on the crowded market street, she felt better. What was going on? Was Richie some kind of a criminal? That scene was like a gangsters' falling out. The mask of American nice guy had certainly slipped. But something else bothered her. The man in the boubou, the one so dissatisfied, she had seen him before somewhere. Tall, thin, elaborately scarred face. Where? She hadn't ever seen him at Richie's before. She felt profoundly uneasy. Something was wrong, terribly wrong.

And then she remembered. She gasped with shock at the revelation. He was the hardworking waiter at the table in Kara.

What had he been doing there? Did Richie have something to do with the Ambassador's death?

### Chapter Thirteen: There's No Place Like A Home

That evening Lynne moved into the apartment the Peace Corps had provided for her. She was given directions to it by the Peace Corps office and had no trouble directing the taxi driver to it. Most streets didn't have names and houses didn't have numbers, so finding new places was usually a challenge. But today they easily found the building on the university campus. She somehow got all her suitcases and bundles in her arms and approached the building. She knew her apartment was the first one on the second floor. An old man wearing a cast off ski cap sat on a broken chair near the front door eating a piece of bread.

"*Bon soir, Gardien,*" she said, assuming that he was the watchman /janitor for the building. He returned her greeting and continued to eat. She walked past a pile of garbage and puddles of dirty water to the stairs. Little children in scraps of clothing were playing on the landing. When they saw her, they started chanting the *yovo* song that the Togolese seemed to teach their children as their first nursery rhyme.

*Yovo, yovo*

*Bon soir*

*Ca va bien?*

*Mer ci.*

This translated as:

Whitey, whitey

Good evening

Are things going okay?

Thank you.

The chanters always expected pleased appreciation of this greeting verse for white foreigners. Sometimes Lynne managed to seem grateful, or at least gracious. But it annoyed her to be greeted as whitey, even though she knew the whole thing was meant as a compliment.

Lynne mumbled *bon soir* to the group, fumbled with the old skeleton key, and finally got the door open. Once inside, she was relieved to find that the apartment was pleasant. It was furnished with an assortment of used furniture-- tables and chairs, even a book shelf, and had an upholstered couch and easy chair without holes covered in a slightly soiled faded African designed fabric. The apartment had a fine big balcony which gave it a welcome breeze but no mosquito netting, so the first thing Lynne did was cover herself with mosquito repellent. The Peace Corps doctor told volunteers that malaria is a dangerous illness and the way to prevent it is not to get bit by the mosquitoes that came out every night at dusk. Checking it out, she found that this apartment had running water. One flaw was that somehow the toilet had to be flushed by a bucket of water. Even so, Lynne was pleased to find running water and was cheered to see a two-burner bottle gas stove and a sink and a battered, but working refrigerator in the kitchen.

She remembered a rambling friend of hers from college days who used to say, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place." She had been feeling homeless like that since the house in Dapaong was burned. It was good to have her own place to live in again.

Unpacking the supplies she had brought along, she quickly made herself a simple meal of french bread, canned sardines, bottled water and a banana and took it to the balcony to eat. She had a view of the campus in the distance and the near neighborhood where a few goats and chickens nibbled on whatever weeds they could find. A hard-working woman was preparing the evening meal. She was dressed in the typical Togolese costume of a print ruffled blouse with a length of cloth wrapped around her waist for a skirt and another big piece of cloth wrapped to make a big turban. She had a second piece of cloth, shorter than the other around her waist which held a baby on her back. She was vigorously stirring something in a big pot of food over a wood fire on the ground. Her active motions had no effect on the baby who remained motionless.

Togolese children were so well behaved! Sometimes you wanted to poke them and say, "Act up, stick up for your rights, run around and be wild." But this passivity when around adults certainly made it easier to control them in the classroom.

Despite her duties and the burden on her back, the woman seemed serene and energetically graceful. Lynne wondered if Luke's wife was making dinner now. Since she ran a business, perhaps she had a poor relative who lived with them and did the cooking. Volunteers said Luke had a second wife. Maybe she looked just like this right now. She tried to push thoughts of them from her mind. Really, they couldn't both be expecting Luke home for dinner.

Did she dare hope that Luke would come to visit her tonight? So far, they had not been able to keep that date they had talked about in Kara. While she was staying at the Peace Corps office, they only spent a few snatched moments alone either at the Embassy or at Luke's office before someone came in. Even so, she felt a glow of happiness at the thought of him. Whenever she saw him, he made her feel loved and cherished. As she was thinking, there was a knock on the door. She ran to open it.

"Luke, welcome!"

"Ah, good evening, my little American flower." His dazzling smile and his beautiful warm eyes filled her with joy. "How do you like your apartment?"

"Oh, it's fine. It reminds me of a university apartment at home."

"I thought you would like it. Veronica, who taught at the University had it, and was content here but she had to go home."

"Veronica, isn't that the woman who used to go with Michael?"

"Now, don't try to get me involved in your volunteer gossip, Lynne."

"Okay. Whatever. It's a nice apartment, convenient and roomy. And after conditions in Dapaong, I'm really enjoying the running water, and the stove. Thanks for helping me get it."

"And how was your work at the Embassy today?"

"Oh, it was fine. I'm catching on to the paperwork. And the Embassy is calming down, getting used to doing without the Ambassador. But Luke, volunteers keep coming in and talking to me and everyone agrees that the Ambassador was murdered. And there have been so many rumors. What announcement was the Ambassador going to make? What did they find out about the cause of death? "

All the playful, loving light went out of Luke's face. "The Peace Corps is infected with gossip. Medical results are supposed to be confidential."

"Yes I know. But, Luke. It's hard not knowing. What were the results of the lab technician's analysis?"

"We're going to release them tomorrow. So I can tell you now, since it bothers you so. They found residues of tuitui, the poison the northern tribes put on their arrows to kill game."

"They found it in his body? "

"Yes."

"But, how did the Ambassador get it ? Could it have been a mistake?"

"It seems unlikely. There is no way that it could accidentally get into his body. The lab technician, Jacobou did several tests; he found traces in that bottle of soda the Ambassador drank just before he collapsed."

"Then someone saved the bottle? Does that mean someone suspected murder right after it happened?"

"No one else did, but, the psychologist, Dr. Putnam, just coming from America, had an idea of what the American procedure is for a sudden death. He saved the bottle and also the bottle caps, the bottle opener and whatever else he could find."

"What else did they learn from them?"

"Jacobou did a rough analysis, but he sent everything to Washington to be gone over with some more complicated tests. They'll check fingerprints too. We won't know about their findings for a long time. You know how long it takes to get anything out of Washington."

"How could it happen? We were all there. And why is also a problem. People liked the Ambassador. And yet, someone killed him right in front of all of us."

"Dudley has many people who are angry with him."

"Yes that's true, Luke. If it were Dudley killed, many of us would know why."

"So maybe the poison was intended for Dudley."

"Yes. Maybe."

"But there are some people who did not like the Ambassador." Luke's brown eyes looked stormy and fierce. "He could be a hard and vengeful man sometimes."

"Do you mean that tantrum Dulcie told me about? Was he going to block her job application?"

"Enough of this dreadful talk. Let us talk about each other, about how we feel." His voice became soft and tender. He looked at her with warmth and admiration. "You are so fresh and beautiful. I have been dreaming of the day we two could be alone together. We never had that date. You are special to me. Let us enjoy having a special friend in all this trouble."

"Yes Luke, I was disappointed too that all this kept us from spending some time alone. We had to be so discreet in public."

"Yes. It is important to be discreet. It is not allowed for us to have warm feelings for each other. But now that you have your own home, I can visit you from time to time. And

that will give me great happiness." His eyes glowed. "Let us talk to each other from the heart."

And they talked for over an hour, words rushing out, of their pain at being separated just when life was so difficult and they needed each other so much. They talked about their childhood dreams and their hopes.

"My dear, after we have had more time to get to know each other well, I will ask to express my feelings with my whole being. But for now, let me just hold you for a while."

Too soon for her, Luke told her he must go. At the door he kissed her in the courteous French way, first on one cheek, then on the other, and then the first again. "Until next time."

"Yes Luke, until next time."

The glow and aura of his splendor lasted her the rest of the evening and she thought, "I had hoped a great adventure was waiting for me in Africa. Perhaps this is it." She hadn't thought of Brad for days. But, part of her mind jeered, "No? You just did."

That night her notebook was full of adjectives of beauty, happiness, excitement. Then her nightmares of previous nights were replaced by dreams of a glossy black panther at a water hole, waiting for her to come to fill her jar. She felt both joy and apprehension, and perhaps a little guilt.

## **Chapter Fourteen: Follow The Leader**

Lynne was making headway with most of her problems. She had a job, a home, and a new romantic interest. But she was haunted by the possibility that Dudley's evasiveness hid the fact that he had something to do with Carrie's death.

And the Ambassador's death bothered her even more. Was someone she knew a murderer?

The Ambassador's body was flown to the U.S. where there would be a complete autopsy and then a state funeral in Washington. His invalid wife was prostrate with grief, but planned on attending the ceremony.

The Economic Officer took over the routine work of the Embassy and something like normality returned. The U.S. Embassy and the Togolese government cooperated to find out what had happened to Carrie. They found the fingerprints of Pierre, Ama's boy friend, on the bloody Red Cross knife that was found in a waste basket in the compound. Pierre confessed to the murder. He admitted that he did it to get revenge for Ama's punishment by the police. A local wise man Koudolo, the oldest and most respected member of the extended family in whose compound Carrie lived, had long talks with all Carrie's neighbors.

He learned that they had all been upset and worried because they knew that Pierre was dangerous and angry. When Pierre visited Carrie one night and then Carrie did not come out of the house at all the next day, they were worried about what might have happened. They did not tell the authorities because they were afraid that they would be blamed.

Pierre was spared from execution by urgent humanitarian pleas from Carrie's family. They said, "Carrie would not want another life lost to avenge her death. She had only love for the Togolese people."

The Acting Ambassador, Everett Knowlton, released all his information in a clear fashion to the Togolese government and for once the repressive Togolese government reported the facts in detail. Dudley flew to America to take Carrie's few belongings and her ashes to her sorrowful family and to attend her memorial service there.

And, at last, the Peace Corps officials sent a personal letter to each volunteer, explaining all of this. It included answers to most of the questions on Michel's list.

All this information stilled some of Lynne's doubts. But she still wondered about some questions Michael had asked him. How did the door get locked after Carrie was killed? Why was the nurse there? What had Dudley been doing at Carrie's house three days earlier? Why all the secrecy?

When Dudley came back from America on his way to a meeting at the Embassy, he stopped into the Self Help office to see how Lynne was doing. "I'm okay, Dudley. I like my apartment and the work and feel safe here in Lome. But you look terrible."

"It's not surprising. That was one of the hardest things I've had to do. These young people are entrusted in my care. To have to go to the family and talk about the death of Carrie-- it was so sad, so painful."

Lynne had sympathy for him, but still uneasy.

"Dudley, on the way to Kara, do you remember you told me you warned Carrie and that she had to die?"

"Yes, I was distraught. That was a rash thing to say. But, I had been worried about her. You've heard the saying, character is destiny? Her fervent idealism sometimes took her into danger, beyond the bounds of common sense. I was feeling guilty that day, because knowing her personality, I had not somehow watched over her more carefully. I had been worrying about her especially that week. That's why I asked Nurse Fiona to make a special health inspection. When I had gone up there three days before, there was a lot of tension in the air. Carrie didn't confide in me but I heard from the other volunteers that she was having trouble with Ama. Carrie insisted that she could take care of things and made it clear that she felt I was intruding. If only Fiona had visited her a day or two earlier. I know she and Carrie got along well together. Perhaps she could have done something."

His explanation made sense. Lynne was glad to have Dudley back as her trusted father figure and leader. She had hated being suspicious and unsure about him.

"Thanks for telling me all this, Dudley. It makes me feel so much better. Another thing. What was that announcement that the Ambassador was going to make just before he died? People are making the wildest speculations."

Dudley once again became the cold formal Peace Corps Director. "Lynne, will you ever learn? When there is an official announcement, you will receive it. Until then, stop prying."

Lynne was again plunged into confusion and doubt. Why did they keep so many things secret? The administration's evasiveness only increased suspicions and rumors about the Ambassador's death. So far the official news in the Togolese press, the only news they had access to, said that he had died suddenly, but did not tell how. All the Togolese she met believed that he was poisoned and so did all the volunteers. She wouldn't tell Dudley that she had been given secret information by Luke. Now, everyone was saying that Dudley has having an affair with Fiona. She was the one that pronounced the Ambassador dead and was nearest to him when he did die. Once again, horrible ideas about Dudley leapt into consciousness. Maybe they plotted together to kill the Ambassador to keep him from firing them over the romance and the pregnancy. But how would that help?

Probably her distress showed on her face, for Dudley said with firm, businesslike calm, "Now Lynne, please keep your mind on your work. Everett, the economic officer, is trying to keep the functions of the Embassy working without a hitch. He wants me to visit Michael's post to see how his library project is coming along. The money came from the Self Help Fund. I want you to go with me. Okay?"

A chill went down Lynne's back. If Dudley was a murderer, he was the last person she wanted to travel up country with. But she answered, dutifully, "Of course I'll go, if it is my job. But, do you think it's a good idea to travel now? Everyone says the country is in unrest now. Don't forget I'm here because they burned my house down. Is it safe?"

"Lynne, you, we are not in the Peace Corps to always be completely safe. If Washington thought there was any real danger to American citizens in Togo, they would withdraw the Peace Corps. But since they have not done so, we're still here and we'll go on with our work. All my information sources say the north is calm."

He looked at her intently, as if trying to read her soul. "Lynne, you seem hesitant. It is your job. And I need you. Tell me, will you do it? Will you go?" He gave her one of his warm, good leader smiles.

"Yes, Dudley. I'll do my job."

"Good. And just so we can get the best possible reading of the current local situation, Luke will go along with us."

This time there was more enthusiasm and conviction in her answer. "Yes Dudley, I'll go with you."

## Chapter Fifteen: A Many Splendored Thing

Despite lingering doubts about Dudley that persisted after his partial explanations and her suspicion that someone she knew was a murderer, Lynne started feeling much at ease with her new life. Now that she understood what she was doing in her work, she started enjoying herself. She appreciated her new easy life. Instead of the frustration of trying to understand the intentions and motivations of the Togolese Inspectors and spending most of her time waiting for appointments that were never kept, she was able to work hard and at the end of every day could see that she had accomplished something. And she was physically so comfortable. The office in the Embassy remained pleasantly cool even on the hottest days.

And then, after a satisfying day at work, there was the evening to look forward to.

As she hurried home her heart was filled with the beauty and romance of Africans. She noticed the splendid builds on the shirtless workmen, the graceful kinglike walk of some prosperous Moslem businessmen in their flowing robes and embroidered caps. She saw their faces with the glowing black skin and the high cheekbones. From the taxi window she watched the ever present crowds. When she saw among them a couple who dared break the general taboo and were holding hands in public, a song ran through her mind, with the words slightly changed.

"Hello lovers wherever you are. I have a love of my own. I have a love of my own!"

Soon it would be 6:30 and darkness would fall as it did here on the equator at that time every evening. Soon after, she hoped, Luke would come to her.

She had only been in her apartment a few minutes one evening when Luke's familiar knock sounded on her door. They had become more relaxed with each other and more physical each day. Today, Luke said, "Can I have a shower? I'm so hot and tired. Come and talk to me while I get cleaned up."

Luke was even more splendid without clothes than he was in his beautifully pressed and tailored clothes. Like most Togolese men, he had a hairless muscular chest with pectoral muscles that would be envied by many weight lifters, and straight erect carriage. He started lathering himself with the soap, putting a layer of white foam on his satiny dark body. "Oh, Luke, you look like a devil's food cake with whipped cream icing."

Always interested in improving his English, Luke asked what that was. When she explained, he laughed and said, "And what do they call those white American cakes?"

"They are called angel food."

"Then, come, take off your clothes and shower with me. Then we will also have an angel food cake with whipped cream icing." Enjoying the joke, and losing her inhibitions, Lynne shared the tiny shower stall with him. Cold water always felt good in this hot climate. And, to be intimately involved with this beautiful man gave Lynne such a jolt of happiness she was afraid she would burst. After sharing Lynne's one towel to get dry, they each wrapped themselves in lengths of African cloth, Lynne with hers wrapped around her from armpit to knees, Luke with his wrapped around his waist with the end tucked in with a big knot which was the style for men.

Luke looked at her, with eyes shining." You are so beautiful, so sweet, so soft, so perfect. Come with me to your bedroom and I will show you my love for you."

And the shabby bedroom, with the water stained cracks in the plaster, with lizards scurrying overhead, was for a time transformed into paradise. Luke was gentle and adoring. He murmured sweet phrases of praise and love, some in French, some in English. They were in a private land of enchantment. Lynne had never felt such intensity.

Even when Luke told her he must go, the aura of this glowing hour lasted. No matter how this all turned out or what happened in the future, this sublime night could never be taken from her, this glorious, outrageous, romantic love. She tried to describe the magnitude of her happiness and her strong feelings in her notebook. Why did she think in terms of old time popular music. Why couldn't she quote Shakespeare or Keats? But the sweet, sentimental song ran through her mind "Love is a many splendored thing."

## Chapter Sixteen: Between Friends

At the Self Help Office the next day, Lynne tried to keep her mind on her work. She kept being plagued by her suspicions of Dudley. If he had nothing to do with the Ambassador's death, why was he so secretive? And so many people were sure he was the father of Fiona's baby. Would he kill again to keep that a secret? How could she travel up north with him, feeling as she did? She would feel a little safer with Luke there too. It would be nice to be with him, but they would have to guard their behavior every moment. The stress would be terrible.

A light knock on the door was followed by the entrance of Sally. She was wearing a yellow printed African style dress that fit her sunny personality, which always brought an atmosphere of health and cheer with her. Even shocking gossip was only entertainment to her happy nature. "Lynne, you look more at home here now. Do you understand the paper work?"

"Yes, I understand the paperwork, but I don't understand the people."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I now believe what you told me, that the Ambassador was murdered, but, it's been over two weeks now, and there has been no official announcement of it. As usual, they're playing information management games. Some people say Dudley did it to keep the Ambassador from firing him."

"Why would the Ambassador fire Dudley?" Sally was interested.

"I've heard that Fiona is pregnant by him."

Sally laughed. "Boy, are you way off!"

"Really?"

"Yes really. You know, Fiona and I are friends. We do a lot of cryptic crossword puzzles from the London Times together and have gotten into the habit of telling each other our deepest secrets. I tell everyone about myself, but she is more exclusive."

"Do you mean you know something the rest of us don't know?"

"Yes. She told me a long time ago that she wants a baby, desperately. She is almost forty. Since her engagement was broken when she was stationed in the Gambia she has had a hard time finding someone she can really love. She made up her mind to have a baby anyway. She had a dear old friend, a Frenchman that she has dated casually for years. She planned that when he came to see her in February she would convince him to father a child for her. She said he is intelligent and healthy and will provide good genes for her baby. It worked out just as she said. She's going to keep on with her job and raise the baby herself. As for Dudley, don't tell anyone, but she thinks he is a stiff, unbending bore."

"Oh that's wonderful. I do hate to suspect Dudley. Sally, I'll turn the question around that you asked me my first day in the office here. With all your sources of information, who do you think killed the Ambassador?"

"Why that's obvious."

"Obvious. How so? And who?"

"It's just that the most logical person is the one that handed him that final drink, that tall, thin waiter in the boubou."

"Oh come on. That's like the old joke. The butler did it. Does anyone else think he did it?"

"I know they're looking for him, but they can't find him. He wasn't a regular employee of Affaires Sociales. They just hired him for the seminar."

"Did Dulcie hire him?"

"No, it was the management that hired him. The police went to look for him in Bassar where he had said he lived, but no one could find him."

"Sally, I know where he is, or where he was last Saturday."

"You do?"

"Yes. I saw him at the office of Richie, you know the man who cashes the checks. And let me tell you, something weird happened when I was there."

And Lynne told her all about the strange outburst of the man and the disturbing reaction of Richie and his employees.

"Maybe you ought to report that to someone. It might be important."

"Yes, I keep thinking I should. But I'm not going through all the hassle of trying to explain it to the Togolese police in French when I can't figure out myself what it meant. And Dudley is always telling me to mind my own business when I try to talk to him."

"Maybe you ought to talk to Luke about it." Sally had a laughing, sly look. "I hear you two are pretty chummy these days."

## **Chapter Seventeen: Call Me Al**

Lynne had still never met Everett Knowlton, the Acting Ambassador, her boss. Everyone agreed that he was a nice bright young man, an excellent Economic Officer who had been given several promotions in the State Department hierarchy already. But they also knew that he was too far down the ladder to be considered for a permanent ambassadorial post for quite a few years. So far, things were going without too many hitches. Lynne worked directly for him. But, contact occurred indirectly. Lynne passed on reports and messages to him through the mail room or through Claudia Belmont, his formidable secretary, a stylishly dressed woman with bright orange-copper hair. In time, she heard from Claudia or got the document back from the mail room with penciled comments.

Once she felt she had a grasp of what she was doing, she decided it was time to ask Claudia for an appointment and meet her boss face to face. There were several questions she wanted to ask about her work.

Claudia was very much career State Department. She had been the fiercely loyal, extremely capable secretary of Ambassador Harrison. She was awesome, attractive like someone in a fifties movie. She was the only woman in Togo who wore hose in the tropical heat. You couldn't even buy stockings here. The American community said that she had a regular boyfriend, a wealthy Lebanese diamond merchant who traveled among three or four African countries

She was top notch at her work and had been valuable to three different ambassadors in small African countries.

She had almost worshipped the Ambassador and rained glaciers of indignation on any one who did not follow his orders, through her, fast enough. She had always been at hand at official functions in Lome tactfully near the Ambassador, ready to produce glasses, cold water, notes, anything he wished, instantly.

She continued with her majestic habits even though right now she was only acting as Everett Knowlton's secretary. Claudia gave her a tentative appointment and said she would call her later to let her know if the Acting Ambassador would really be available.

Soon after her talk with Sally, Claudia called to tell her that the Acting Ambassador was in and could see her. She must come immediately. She felt nervous as she made her way down three hallways and ten desks to his office. Perhaps just to remind himself and everyone else that his job as Acting Ambassador was temporary, he had retained his own modest office. Lynne was glad because she knew that the Ambassador's office was huge and impressive and it was hard not to be filled with awe and too much deference there.

Everett Knowlton was about thirty-five, Lynne's age. He was good looking and tall, with gray eyes and brown hair. He looked the part of a young man in control of things, on his way up, fast.

But, he smiled pleasantly and asked her to sit down. "You're Lynne, my Self Help helper, aren't you? I'm sorry I've been too busy to initiate this meeting. I'm glad to see you. What can I do for you?"

Lynne had organized her papers and her questions carefully. She wanted to show that she was capable and businesslike. Her supervisor gave her a quick, helpful and intelligent answer to each question. All the time they worked together she could tell by the way he looked at her that he was interested in her, that he thought she was an attractive woman. Lynne looked around the desk, searching for the tell-tale pictures of a loving wife and little children.

She saw none.

"Now is that all? It looks like you are right on top of things. Don't hesitate to call on me if you need help with the Self Help," he said playfully.

"Thank you. That's good to hear, Mr. Knowlton."

"Oh, please call me Everett. Actually, my best friends call me Al. Right now I'm pretending to be a great man, an ambassador, but soon I'll be back to just being another officer at the Embassy."

"Al? Why Al?"

"My middle name is Alfred. My family always called me Al." He looked at her searchingly. "If you will forgive me for being personal, can I assume that you are single, Lynne?"

"Yes. As you know, we just about have to be to be in the Peace Corps."

"True, although Dudley tells me there will be one couple next year."

Made bold by his informality and her curiosity, Lynne said, "But it is the opposite in the State Department. Having a wife is an asset."

"I suppose it depends upon the wife. But whatever, I don't have one. In some ways it's better, but it sometimes is lonely."

"Yes, I think loneliness should be put in the job description of both Peace Corps and State Department jobs."

"How true, Lynne." He looked at her intently, admiration still obvious.

Encouraged by his friendliness, she decided to try to get some information about the mysteries that were bothering her. And if that worked, she might even try to tell him about the alarming scene at Richie's. "Please, you'll probably say this is none of my business. But there has been no official information released about the Ambassador's death. Everyone in Peace Corps knows that it wasn't a natural death, but there is nothing in the paper, no official information. Can't you let me, us, know what is going on?" She said this all fast, in one breath, expecting him to stop her and reprimand her as Dudley had.

But he continued to look at her with an interested, friendly expression. "I know it's difficult. But, we are in a tricky diplomatic situation here. We gave the Togolese government our preliminary laboratory analysis which showed poison in the Ambassador's system. Now, we are waiting for the results of a more thorough analysis from experts in Washington. The Togolese police are investigating the death. They don't want to release any details until they can announce an arrest. They're looking for the waiter that served the last drink to the Ambassador."

"Have they found him?"

"No, it's like he has disappeared in thin air. We know he was in Lome about a week after the Ambassador's death, but he's not at any of the many addresses we have for him. It seems he has about five wives and five homes, but he can't be found in any of them."

"I saw him at Richie's money changing office about a week ago. He was angry and threatening. They threw him out."

"Really. Well, the Togolese police are investigating everything about him."

"Yes, he, I mean I--" Lynne stopped, trying to frame a statement that made sense about what she saw and her confusion over the meaning of it.

But Everett Knowlton suddenly changed the subject. "Lynne, I want to ask you something."

He glanced down at some papers on his desk and looked back at her seriously now. "What do you think of Luke?"

Her thoughts were wild. "Oh no. Does he know? How could he?" She forced herself to answer calmly, "What do you mean?"

"You were a teacher trainer, weren't you? He was your supervisor, Assistant Peace Corps Director for Education?"

Lynne gave her answer slowly and carefully, making a great effort to sound impersonal. "Yes, of course. He has been in charge of our program from the first. He tries hard to help us. When the Inspector didn't cooperate, he tried to find a solution. And the same thing for Ron's problem with his headmaster. But there is a limit to what he can do. I think everyone feels he is doing a good job."

"And they like and respect him?"

"Yes, they like and respect him."

Still worried that he had some suspicion of her personal relationship with Luke and that she would somehow betray that he was her lover, she was glad to be rescued by the telephone's ring.

"That thing. It's always ringing, and not for the real me, but for my public role, for the Acting Ambassador." Then he spoke into the telephone with a formal clipped accent, "Yes, Everett Knowlton here. He is? He was? They did? That's bad for us. Yes, look into it. Probably we should intercede. I'll cable Washington. Hold on a minute." He covered the speaker and said, "Sorry Lynne. You and I have finished our business, haven't we? I'm once again plunged into one of these mini diplomatic events that could turn into mini diplomatic crisis. I hope I manage not to blow anything big before they get a real ambassador in here."

Lynne quickly grabbed her papers and scurried to the door. "Thank you. And good luck -----." She didn't know what to call him. If she called him Mr. Knowlton again or Mr. Acting Ambassador, he would be offended. And, remembering Dulcie's chilling story about the fickleness of people in power, she certainly wasn't going to call him Everett or Al.

Just as she went through the door she heard him speak on the telephone again. "You were saying? And what does Richie say about all this?"

Richie! Why was the Ambassador's office interested in Richie? And Everett wanted to know what Richie thought about something? Were they friends? Did Richie call him Al?

## Chapter Eighteen: Secret Lifestyles

The chat with Sally had reassured her once again about Dudley but now Lynne was confused about the Acting Ambassador and Richie. Returning to her office, Lynne tried to make headway in dealing with a large stack of applications, reports, procedures, and other assorted red tape that crowded her desk. It seemed to always remain high. As soon as she dealt with one thing and sent it on its way or filed it, the mail came with another stack. She had a fine computer to use for many tasks.

There were great contrasts and contradictions in this country. In the north she had once spent most of a Saturday going to every little shop in Dapaong trying to buy a brown manila envelope to mail something out in. There, if she found a piece of carbon paper, she cherished it for months. Photocopiers were nonexistent. Now, paper flooded her desk. She found herself hoarding scraps of partially used paper, but then throwing them away when the mass of paper surrounding her became too great.

When people wanted to see her here at the Embassy, they were supposed to make appointments with her and had to go through the security guard at the gate. Since the troubles in the country, the Embassy had changed from the kind and sleepy Togolese guards to six young American marines who had been flown in to Togo to protect the Embassy. The volunteers were amused because the marines were not only younger than most of them, but smaller. It was lucky for the Americans that usually the country's disorder and violence were aimed at other Africans rather than them.

Even with the marine guards on duty, usually the volunteers could talk their way into her office without an appointment. So, once again, a tap on the door announced one of her volunteer friends.

"Hey Lynne. it's time to continue that talk. I've got some heavy things on my mind and I can't stand keeping the secret alone any more." Ron looked somehow changed. His usual faunlike, clear cut good looks and dancer's grace were muted. Even his gestures, once so extravagant, were toned down, subdued.

"Sure Ron. I don't have any appointments for a long time. I was half asleep struggling with this paper work. What's up? Last time we talked you hinted at some serious secret in Dudley' life."

"Yes, it's a bad secret and you must be discreet about my part in it, about all of it. Now, you won't tell anyone? I know that you're pretty tight with both Dudley and Luke. This is dynamite I'm going to tell you. It could really get me in trouble if it gets out. Promise?"

"Promise. But what is it?"

"When I saw you up north, I told you that Dudley was always on my case. He's been wanting to get rid of me and send me home from the beginning."

"But why?"

"Because he, they, everyone thinks I'm gay. And you know homosexuality is against the law here in Togo."

"Yes, I know. They told us that in Orientation in Philadelphia."

"Well, Dudley kept looking for other reasons to get rid of me so he could get me out without causing a scandal here and maybe a different kind of a scandal in the U.S. About

two months ago, he thought he really had me. My headmaster complained to him because I refused to give the exam the supervisor sent out."

"You did? Why?"

"Because it was stupid. Asking the Togolese kids to repeat back a complex, outmoded theory in physics. They shouldn't have to know it for one thing, and since we don't have any equipment or lab work, they weren't taught it in any way that made sense to them. So I wrote my own exam, one that fit the important things I had taught them."

Lynne was impressed. So Ron did have a serious side; he had some integrity about education.

"Dudley was all set to send me home. He sent a message for me to come to Lome and discuss it. You know, in this small country, coincidences are always happening. On the way there in the bush taxi I ran into a . . ." He paused as if looking for the right word. He looked at Lynne appealingly, but when she just looked puzzled, continued, "A young, sort of a friend, a young Togolese man I had. . ." Again that pause and search for wording." Had spent some time with. He often visits a cousin in Aneho. His name is Raoul. Raoul was glad to see me. It was embarrassing to sit with him, but luckily there wasn't anyone else in the taxi that knew me. He knows English so we could talk without the others understanding what we said. He asked me if I was going to Lome. When I said yes, he said he knew someone in Lome. He asked me if I knew a type called Dudley.

"So then he settled in to gossip. He said that Dudley sure could swing when he was away from Lome. Stunned, I asked him what he meant. He said that whenever Dudley came up to Sokode, he came to see Raoul. He would send a messenger to Raoul's house saying he wanted to buy some *kente* cloth, you know, that handwoven stuff. When the messenger said that he knew Dudley would visit him that evening. He said Dudley would keep him busy all night. That he liked things pretty bizarre, that Raoul had to wear a dress. But Raoul didn't mind that. At first I didn't believe him. But, as he told me more details, I realized it really had happened. Dudley, the good husband, the charmer of women, likes to spend an occasional night with a gay prostitute."

"But how could he keep it a secret? Everywhere we go the Togolese notice us."

"Dudley always came after dark. He didn't take his car, and he dressed like an Arab with a long white robe and turban. I guess the masquerade was part of the turn on."

"What a story. I don't know if I believe it. But, what does this have to do with your problem?"

"Raoul was just an angel sent to me from heaven that's all. Did you ever hear of blackmail? When I went to talk to Dudley, it was just as I expected. He had the papers all made out to bounce me out of the Peace Corps and send me home on the next Air Afrique flight. I listened quietly, then closed the door carefully to be sure we had some privacy in that rat's nest of a Peace Corps office. Then I told him about Raoul and said if they early terminated me, I would tell the Raoul story to the Togolese, the Embassy, the Peace Corps in Washington and anyone else that would be interested."

"What did he do? Did he deny it?"

"No, of course he couldn't deny it. He sort of puffed up like he was about to explode. Then he asked me if he didn't send me home, would I swear that the story would go no

farther? So I told him sure, I'd swear. Then he had the nerve to pull one of his good father acts. He started all this stuff,' Ron, I'm going to give you another chance to make good as a volunteer. And we'll just forget this conversation ever took place."

"Oh, my. It's hard to believe. If he were caught in that disguise with Raoul it would have practically international repercussions. How could he take such a chance?"

"Our Dudley is a passionate man. In all direction. For example, Fiona."

"Well Ron, you're wrong about the Fiona thing. Sally knows Fiona well and she swears the baby is a Frenchman's."

"Okay, so maybe that one isn't true. But, I'm sure some of the other stories are true. And Raoul's story is."

"Ron, why did you drag me into this? You broke your word to Dudley. Now I know."

"Yes you know. But you swore not to tell. It's like talking to myself. You're my only real friend. See, I feel better already. "

"And I feel worse. This is really going to make that trip up north difficult."

"What trip?"

Dudley, Luke and I have to visit Michael to check out his Self Help project."

"Oh, you're going to be involved in that too? Oddly enough, the reason I'm in town is that Dudley has asked me to go along. I think he wants to involve me in a dirty little plot. He wants me to be a volunteer member of the committee to report on Michael's project. I'm afraid the whole thing is a put up job to get revenge on Michael. You saw that big scene in Kara.

Everyone says that Michael just took the money for his project and never built the library. Dudley wants to catch him at it, with all the witnesses possible so he can get rid of him and not be accused of doing it over wounded pride because of the scene in Kara. You know how I hate Dudley and don't like to be near him. But, I don't want to go through a fight about early terminating me all over. I'm still not getting along with my headmaster. So I'm going to go with him."

"What an unholy mess. Why is everyone getting me involved in their messes? Dudley is sounding more and more like a really crummy character. Ron, do you think he would kill the Ambassador to keep him from firing him over that? And if you do believe that, aren't you afraid for yourself? I've heard that blackmailers have a way of dying early."

## Chapter Nineteen: On The Road Again

Three weeks after her birthday, Lynne found herself on the road in front of her apartment waiting again for a ride in order to attend a meeting. In a way, it seemed like years since she had sat under that banyan tree up north, hoping fervently to have the day turn out to be a productive one. That day had turned out to be full of threats and terrible confrontations and the following day had contained death and disaster.

Now, waiting for the tourney, as the Peace Corps called it, she looked forward to being picked up with more apprehension than eagerness. What was that expression that everyone seemed to be using lately?-- It seemed like this might be the tourney from hell. She tried to mentally prepare herself. There were so many possibilities for trouble on this trip, if she thought them out ahead of time, she might avoid some of them.

For one thing, the country was still in a state of unrest. A democracy supporter had been shot in a village near Blitta. And someone had fired shots at a policeman's house one night. There had also been a few demonstrations and some violent retaliations. Despite all this, the Peace Corps had insisted on this tourney. The larger setting was more than worrisome. The smaller world of the Peace Corps minivan was equally nightmarish. Of those who would be in the car, only Kwami, the driver was a kind trustworthy person not involved with problems.

After hearing Ron's story, Lynne was once again in a flip-flop of doubt about Dudley mixed with her old faith in him. And in the past, she had always felt somewhat sympathetic toward Ron, who was so much of an outcast among the volunteers. But his shabby story of blackmail and his willingness to be used to trap Michael, made her feel distaste. She had gotten this far in her inventory of problems when the Peace Corps minivan appeared.

Faithful Kwami got out and greeted Lynne in his usual polite, helpful way. He took her bag from her and put it in the back of the van which was crowded as Peace Corps cars always are with things to be delivered to volunteers at their posts up country. In between boxes of papers, books, and supplies, there were ten pineapples, gifts for fruit starved volunteers up north.

The second two seats in the car held Dudley and Luke. Both of them wore their official functionaire suits, prepared for meetings with local officials.

Lynne went into one of the third seats next to Ron, who wore a red T shirt, khakis, and sandals. He looked subdued.

Everyone said "Good morning."

"*On va?*" was Kwami's question.

"*On va*" Dudley answered. Yes, they were ready to go.

And they were off. After the dictator took over the country, twenty five years ago, one of his main accomplishments was the building of this road which started in Lome and went straight through the center of the country up to Dapaong and then reached the Burkina Faso border. All the commerce of the country was tied to the road. The main cities and larger villages were all on it or were connected to it by similar roads from Bassar and Kara. People who had served in Togo before the road was built said it used to take two or

three days to reach Dapaong then. It was two lane and paved, in good condition by West African standards. The first stop would be Atakpamay. It was only about 100 miles away, but travel on Togolese roads was always slow. Kwami was careful and had won an award for traveling throughout Togo for the Peace Corps for ten years without an accident. Knowing this, Lynne was prepared to be patient on the long slow trip. They probably wouldn't arrive in Atakpamay until about noon.

Distrustful of two of her companions, Lynne felt alienated. She was glad that Luke was strong, trustworthy and wonderful, but here in the car, he was deferential to his boss, Dudley, which bothered her. He was also carefully cool and distant toward her. She knew that it was crucial to both of them to keep their relationship secret, but she would have enjoyed a little warmth and friendly support.

Lynne and Ron scarcely spoke on the long morning journey, each burdened by the secrets they knew. Lynne noticed that there seemed to be strain between Dudley and Luke. In the past, whenever they were together, they had used the time to continue the never ending conferences about Peace Corps discussing problems, planning actions and activities. But today, each silently looked out the window on his own side. Both of their faces worn a similar somber expression.

Lynne was beginning to feel that Dudley was some kind of a manic depressive personality. But she still wasn't sure if she believed Ron's wild story.

Deciding to try to enjoy something about the trip she kept her eyes on the scenery. As they made their careful way up north, she admired the way Kwami dodged children and people on wobbly bicycles as well as chickens, pigs, and goats. She saw villages; some of them had houses made of bamboo or woven palm matting. There were many mud houses. In this southern part of the country they were square, a pretty color like a pink copper with grass roofs. It was market day somewhere near and she saw long files of women dressed in the African prints Lynne loved so much, often barefoot, walking the miles to market with big bundles of things for sale on their heads. They carried big trays with stacks of red clay bowl and pots, huge bundles of woven mats and fencing, vast calabash gourds filled with the local beer, pans of live chickens, and others of the yams that looked like logs with rough tan bark.

Lynne had noticed that she almost never traveled this road far without seeing a volunteer, because the road went through the main market and government office areas of each village. She wasn't surprised when they reached the road that turned off to Kpalime to find Dulcie, bargaining with a market woman for some tomatoes. Kwami stopped the car. Dudley greeted her and gave her a handful of mail. "We're giving out pineapples to the people up north today. But, I guess you don't need one. They both laughed as he gestured to the mountain of pineapples the woman had for sale. Lynne thought of the remark of a professor of art who had visited Togo this year. When she had said that there wasn't much art here, except for the traditional masks, hand batiked cloth, and tourist items, he had said, that was true, but to notice what people do with vegetables and fruits for sale. The way they are displayed and arranged is art. And Lynne admired the beautiful mounds of tomatoes so carefully arranged and the huge one of pineapples. The composition of another woman's tray, with oranges, lemons, avocados, and pineapples was a real life still life.

When they reached Atakpamay, Lynne was glad to be able to stretch her legs. They stopped at L'Ambience, an open air restaurant and bar. She noticed some of the people at a nearby table were eating what the volunteers called green slime, a sauce made of okra, boiled until it had a gelatinous texture. They passed it up and ordered lunches of the tough, stringy local chicken and french fries. Sitting under a tree at a table with Ron on the other side of the room from the uncommunicative pair of administrators, she waited hungrily while their food was prepared. She bought some peanuts from a food seller, being careful to use her right hand to give the woman the coin. Peace Corps had taught the volunteers never to touch anyone with the left hand. She had worked so hard to learn this lesson that she found herself thinking of her left hand as contaminated and useless. One time a fetishist in a trance had offered his left hand to her. She had been horrified and insulted.

She also bought from an insistent little boy, for 100 francs, about twenty cents, a copy of the official Togolese newspaper which had no doubt come on the bush taxi from Lome that had been just behind them on the road. This was Togo's only newspaper and it was short on news and long on praise for the President of Togo, founder of the party, the Assembly of the Togolese People. The paper was in French on the first pages with translations into Ewe and Kabye on the last pages. Her first glance at the front page startled her. She could read the French easily.

It said, "American and Cabinet Minister Caught in Corruption." She read the story which explained that money changer Richie Newell had been arrested for corrupt financial dealings. The Secretary of Finance was involved. He had been caught with the American, at the airport, involved in a transaction concerning 1,000,000 CFA in undeclared money. Both of them were in prison.

Richie was in jail!