

Chapter Forty: The Past Is Prologue

Lynne was about to leave for lunch when the operator told her she had a call from America.

"Lynne," The rich disc jockey type voice was firm and admonitory. It was Brad. "Do you know what time it is? It is 6:30 AM here in Michigan." He acted like it was somehow her fault. "I tried to call you yesterday during my noon hour, but you were gone."

"Yes, there is a six hour time difference. Probably I was back at my apartment by then. What's the matter, Brad? Is there a problem? Is your family all right? Your mother, is she sick?"

"No, they're fine. I just want to talk to you. I miss you."

Lynne didn't know what to say, so said nothing.

"Lynne, did you hear me?"

"Yes Brad, I heard you. But I'm surprised."

Once again, there was an accusing note in his voice. "You shouldn't be. After all, you were the central person in my life for seven years. It's only natural that I need to keep in touch with you."

"Brad, what do you want from me?"

"I just want to talk to you. You will always be my first wife. Our marriage will remain one of the formative experiences of my life."

"Yes Brad, of course. But, I'm working now. I'm not supposed to have personal calls here."

"I just wanted to hear your voice. Did I tell you I was made a partner of the firm? It was a wonderful ceremony and they gave me a party at the Moveable Feast in Ann Arbor. You would have been proud of me. I know you always were interested in my career."

Would it be rude to shatter his faith in her continuing goodwill and interest in him?

"Brad, I have to hang up. A business call is expected to come in on this line."

"Oh, I understand. You have no authority there. You have a humble job. But, I value you. That will never change. First wives are very important."

Lynne hung up, furious with Brad. Next time she would just tell him to leave her alone and that she didn't want to hear about his life.

But what he said echoed in her mind. "First wives are very important."

Then she thought of Solomon's message, "Look in the past." Was the secret to the Ambassador's death there? Did Brad's axiom apply? Had Corley Harrison been married before? Was there a first wife somewhere? Had anyone really investigated the past of the Ambassador? In the detective stories she read, it was important to learn as much as possible about the victim and his past. Did the motive for the murder lie there? The newspaper mentioned his present wife, but did mention about a previous marriage. She had read that the French police department had a slogan for solving all mysteries, *Cherchez la femme*, look for the woman. And Solomon had advised the same thing.

Was there a way Lynne could search the past and find a deranged woman who long ago had hated the Corley Harrison?

Chapter Forty One: Look For The Woman

Lynne vowed to find out about the Ambassador's past. One way would be to talk to Claudia. As a devoted secretary, she had handled both his business and personal appointments and correspondence. She had known the Ambassador better than anyone.

It was now 12:30. She ate at the Embassy lunch room where Americans and Embassy employees could get simple American food for a low price. She bought a grilled cheese sandwich made with Velveta cheese imported from America on something that was a lot like Wonder bread. It was funny how she missed the non nutritious processed foods she had scorned in America now that she they were so hard to get.

As soon as she returned to her desk she made a call to Claudia. She expected arrogance and hostility from that daunting woman. She said, trying to sound confident and matter of fact, "Claudia, I'd like to talk to you about something that's rather private. Could we go out to lunch sometime soon?"

"Lynne, I have lunch dates every day this week." Then she surprised Lynne. "The Acting Ambassador is out of town this afternoon and I have some free time. Why don't you come in and talk to me right now."

Lynne thought back and realized that Claudia had been acting a little more friendly lately, probably because she had typed Everett's notes to her. Claudia worshiped people in power. Now that she knew that Everett was interested in Lynne, maybe she felt she was worth knowing.

Claudia looked stunning as usual, dressed in a Lord and Taylor outfit that had rust tones to match her orange hair and a beautiful designer silk scarf artfully knotted around her neck. She had obviously had her hair done at the Sarakawa Hotel where there was a very good and very expensive French hairdresser.

She looked disdainful when she saw Lynne, in her local print dress and sandals, her face shiny from her walk in the heat but managed a chilly smile.

"Yes, Lynne. What is your problem?"

"Claudia, I was distressed by the Ambassador's death and dissatisfied by the lack of interest of the authorities in finding out the killer. You were important to the Ambassador."

"Yes I was. He counted on me for everything. He was a wonderful man."

"It must be terrible for you, to have the Ambassador murdered."

"Yes. I really loved him, like a father and a great leader. He was rewarding to work for. And now, who knows what job I'll have next? Maybe the new Ambassador will bring his own secretary with him."

"He was really the center of your life."

"Yes, he was. My work is important to me. But there's also my boy friend, Rachid. He's rich and he treats me like a queen. He wants me to marry him. Maybe this will help me to decide."

For the first time thinking of her as a person and not just a well dressed administrative manikin Lynne said, "I didn't know things were so serious between you. Do you think you'd enjoy just being his wife and not working?"

“No. I wouldn't. I'm used to being near the center of power in a country. I'd miss that terribly.” Then her voice became more friendly than Lynne had ever heard it and almost pleading. “Lynne, will you talk to Everett and ask him if he will suggest to the new ambassador that he choose me to be his a secretary?”

“Oh, Claudia, I'm a Volunteer. I have no status.”

“Don't try to fool me, Lynne. I know you have personal influence with Everett. Use it for me.”

Why did everyone think that she could intercede for them with people in authority? She hated asking anyone for favors. But, since she really wanted Claudia's cooperation she agreed to talk to Everett about her.

“Now Lynne, what can I do for you?”

“Can you tell me more about the Ambassador? Maybe if I knew more I could figure out who would kill him.”

“Not likely, Lynne. Who do you think you are, some sort of secret agent?” But, after mocking her, she began to talk.

In Togo no one seemed to know much about the Ambassador before he came to Africa. But she knew he had been a political appointee and he had told her that he was a friend of the President of the United States and had worked on his campaign. The official biography said that he had been a lawyer in the Eastern U.S., then had gone to Texas and been in the cattle business.

The Ambassador had told her that his life began when he married Virginia Swift. The money from her family helped him to fund his business and led to his great wealth and success. But more than that, it was a love match from the start. The Ambassador and his wife had been important to each other. When she got sick and had to go to America for an operation he was devastated but felt he had to do his duty and continue at his post. He was a fine man with no enemies, no shady past.

“Had he been married before? I've been told that first wives are important.”

Yes, he had told Claudia that he had been married before, to a woman named Myrtle Anderson. Claudia remembered clearly when he had told her about Myrtle. They were working late and his wife was ill. Claudia knew that she was the only one he dared tell some things to. He knew that she was always discreet.

He said this Myrtle was beautiful when he married her. But he soon learned she was a terrible person, mentally ill, and vindictive. He had to divorce her because she would damage his career. Even then he had planned some day to be an ambassador. First he had to make a success in business. When he left her there was a scandal, but finally it died down. She moved to another city and out of his life. He was so emotional as he told it; he looked like he would cry, but instead, he started coughing. He sometimes did that when he was really upset about something. She had gotten him some water and he finally stopped. But he told her that even the thought of his first wife made him wretchedly unhappy.

“What happened to this Myrtle?”

“I really don't know.”

“How can I find out? Do you have a file or anything with information about his life?”

“You know any files I have would be confidential. But, I'll tell you this, there is nothing in them about this Myrtle. And, as far as I know, she is the only person I have ever heard of who didn't love and admire the Ambassador.”

Obviously Claudia had an idealized view of the Ambassador and had not talked to Dulcie.

“Well, somebody didn't like him. Someone killed him.”

Perfect, lacquered Claudia looked at her sadly. “Yes, Lynne. Someone killed him. I hope you help them find out who.”

Suddenly, on an impulse, Lynne asked Claudia, “ Do you know Richie, the money dealer?”

“Well of course. Extremely well. He's Rachid's father.”

Lynne just repeated the last words stupidly. “Rachid's father.”

“Yes. Didn't you know Richie was married to a Lebanese woman?”

“No. I think there are many things about Richie that I don't know.”

Chapter Forty Two: Heavy Hangs The Head

All that night Lynne had dreams about twisted possibilities for solving the murder. And, mixed in with them were images of Brad lecturing her and her and Everett propositioning her. She woke early the next morning and as she made coffee, she thought, "What is up with Everett? At Robinson's beach, he acted interested in me. I haven't seen or heard from him directly since."

As she was involved in trying to plan an effective action for the day that led toward an unraveling of the ball of puzzles involved in the Ambassador's life and death, there was a knock at her door. "Who is it?" she asked. She would not let any stranger into her apartment. And no dangerous acquaintance either.

"Guardien," the old man said. "Ici une envelope." And with that, an envelope was pushed under the ill fitting door. It was on official Embassy stationery. She tore it open. This letter was in Everett's handwriting.

Dear Lynne:

You must be wondering why I didn't follow up on our wonderful evening at Robinson beach. This job is terrible and I don't see why any woman would put up with the way I have to behave. But, please try. Once again, a torrent of events. Some developments on the murderer, but also much unrest in the country. Please have patience. Just as soon as possible, if you are willing, we'll get together. Hotel du Lac at Lac Togo is beautiful. We could take their romantic pirogue ride across to Togoville, far from all this. If you'll bear with me, I promise I will make it up to you some day. The new Ambassador will be here in a few weeks and my life will become simpler. Once again I won't be in the office today for important national and international reasons.

*Love,
Everett*

When she got to work, Lynne learned more about those reasons. All work had stopped and people were clustered in groups, looking intense and listening to radios.

Lynne knew the political background. The Togolese people had recently started to actively work toward the democracy the dictator had given lip service to for so long. A general campaign for what had been promised to be a free presidential election was just beginning. Everyone knew that in an earlier era, Olympia, the last freely elected president, had been killed by the dictator's men. The date of that assassination was officially celebrated as the country's independence day. Olympia's relatives and friends had never forgotten that stained beginning of the present regime.

Two days ago, assured of his safety, Olympia's son had journeyed up country to make some campaign speeches. As his party went around a bend on a narrow road near a cliff, a waiting car showered his car with bullets. He was hurt badly, his driver was killed, and a third passenger who was not hurt, quickly took the wheel and sped through the night. Miraculously they escaped the country, reaching the airport in neighboring Benin where the statesman was flown to Paris for treatment, as was the case whenever

well off Togolese or Europeans had a serious medical problem. They knew the local hospitals had a medieval style of sanitation and equipment.

Witnesses said the car that attacked them contained a member of the dictator's family.

Hearing this, the embassy employees predicted a round of instability and violence. Soon, they went back to their regular duties. Political catastrophes happened too frequently to disrupt their routine duties very long.

Everett would be occupied with high level meetings, protesting the death, trying to encourage democracy, and trying to safeguard Americans and volunteers.

In the middle of the afternoon Lynne got a message from William Foli, the new Assistant Director for Education at the Peace Corps, asking her if she could come to see him. She said she would be right over.

She enjoyed getting out of the office for once and was eager to visit the homey shabby Peace Corps office. When she left the Embassy, an oven like blast of air hit her. Even so, she was tired of the artificial atmosphere she spent her daytime hours in and decided to walk. The Embassy was only two blocks from the big market and one block from the ocean. She could smell the sea, human wastes, rotten vegetables and fish, but also, some perfume from tropical flowers, all superheated.

Someday she would feel nostalgia for this compote of odors. But twenty minutes later, dripping with perspiration, she had enough. She would be glad to get in an air-conditioned room again.

Yao greeted her at the Peace Corps gate with his friendly smile and "Bon arrivee, Lynne."

On her way to her talk with William, she saw Dudley's door open and poked her head in. It was a medium sized room, It was a modest office for the director of an agency, but Peace Corps consciously tried to avoid the expensive grandeur of embassies and large international development agencies.

"Hello Dudley. I have some documents for you to look over. Since I'm here to see William I thought I'd bring them along. When you've decided whether to approve these applications, please send them back me."

"Oh, Lynne. I haven't seen you in a long time. How are things at the Embassy? "

"Pretty good, but that new violence in the Togolese government has everyone speculating and trying to figure out how to handle it."

"Yes, that all is worrisome and it probably means the end of the democracy movement for the time being. And there may be continuing incidents and protests. We've sent out additional warnings to volunteers telling them to make a plan for all of them within a city or an area to decide on a gathering place for them all to go to if a violent disruption starts."

"Yes, that's a good idea if there is warning. I got five minutes of warning."

"Ah, yes. It's probably just as well that you are settled down here. Dapaong has been calm lately. But we still don't know if there will be some action to get revenge for what happened to your house."

"Yes. It's good to be down here when there's unrest in the country."

"Thanks for giving Barbara advice about my party. Things went well. Some important officials came and were impressed. I've hopes for a fine appointment after my

tour here. I didn't need any volunteers at the party to worry about. Some of them are barbarians. They aren't all like you."

Lynne was uncomfortable with this backhanded kind of praise. She remembered when she used to bask in his approval when he deigned to offer it. But now, she felt a surge of loyalty for the other volunteers who were mostly young and were assaulted by culture shock and danger. And, despite everything, they continued to try to help the Togolese in unstable conditions.

He continued. "I'll be glad to get out of this job. The instability of the country just adds to the constant headaches. And this year's been terrible. I won't feel at all secure until they find out who killed the Ambassador. I wish that man Mc Duff would speed up his investigation"

"You feel personally in danger?"

"Yes. It's possible that someone was trying to kill me. I was right at that table."

"Who do you think it was?"

"I don't know. If I did, I could guard myself."

"Who would want to kill you? Most people think you are a good director and are helping the Togolese."

"Lynne, there's a lot of idealistic talk about peace in the Peace Corps. But you and I both know I have a lot of enemies."

Lynne wondered what he knew and who he was thinking of. It must really hurt to know so many people disliked you. "Oh, that must be hard to bear!"

But, to her surprise, he puffed up proudly as if she had given him a great compliment.

"I accept that burden. It is the price of power."

Chapter Forty Three: Voodoo Power?

Preoccupied with Dudley's statement, Lynne went down the hall for her meeting with William. When she entered his tiny office, piled high with folders and records, for a moment the ghost of Luke was there. She had visited him there so often. But William's warm, enthusiastic presence soon dispelled the specter.

She had heard Irene's hints and lovesick ravings and knew that Irene thought William was good looking, but to her he looked somehow misshapen and had a huge constant smile like a happy crocodile. Aside from that, he was attractive, and looked especially good today. He was wearing instead of the official functionaire suit, an African complet, made of the best quality of African cloth, Hollandaise, with a print that combined three shades of large pink flowers on a bright green background. This was topped off with elaborate gold embroidery. It all contrasted well with his smooth, milk chocolate brown skin. He was a fine, warm, kind man, capable and considerate.

How could such a man be involved with Irene? Ron had seen the two of them leaving one of the dingy hotels that catered to volunteers at six in the morning, holding hands.

"Ah, Lynne, thank you for coming."

William told Lynne that he was planning a Women in Development conference at Ferme Bretanea soon. All the female volunteers would be invited and also Togolese women involved in development projects.

"It is a fine place for a conference. Do you know it? It is owned and managed by a double minister, a Christian minister who became a minister of the government. It has a model garden that raises vegetables. It serves them in its restaurant as well as their own ice cream. There is also a swimming pool. We often use the Ferme for Close of Service conferences. You know, at them, we ask volunteers to talk over their time in the Peace Corps and to assess the program and the administration. When we do it in that setting which is comfortable, even luxurious, they usually give good evaluations." His joyful crocodile smile was wider than ever.

"Yes I've heard about it. I've envied those who got to go to a seminar there."

"Now you'll have an opportunity. We need you to attend not only as a volunteer but as a representative of the Self Help office since most of the volunteer projects are funded through that office."

He gave her a packet of information and told her to prepare a short speech on the Self Help program and be ready to answer questions about it.

"And, you had better be up to date on the status of the applications for funding of projects concerning women. A lot of the volunteers have applied for your funds-- Sally, Cindy. Irene will probably ask about hers, even though it is not strictly for Women in Development."

For once he wasn't smiling, but was holding his face in a completely noncommittal expression.

"Okay William, I'll read all this and prepare for the conference. I'll enjoy it. I'm getting tired of staying in my office. But I just talked to Dudley. He's worried about instability in the country, especially after what happened the other day up north."

“Yes, we all are. But, you know the policy is to carry on whenever we can, no matter what particular disturbing incidents occur. If we start canceling things, we will soon find that we can't function at all.”

The cheerful toothy smile was back in place.

Lynne always felt much at ease with William. She had told him when she was in training, that he was a wonderful father to them all. Actually, he was only about forty and was still hoping to be sent to the United States to complete his doctorate.

She felt that she could talk to him about what was bothering her. She asked him if he had any ideas about the Ambassador's death.

This capable, efficient administrator surprised her by his response. “Lynne, Africa is different from the rest of the world. Sometimes things happen for reasons Americans can't understand.”

Lynne's French teacher had told her the same thing. He swore that he went to a Kabye ceremony and saw a man cut a huge slit in his chest and take his heart out, look at it and put it back in.

William went on to explain that sorcery was a real fact, a common occurrence in Africa. He knew a student, cursed by another, who just wasted away. Doctors could not diagnose the ailment. Lynne remembered the story of a student who said that the way to pass examinations was to have his father in the north county go to an isolated hut for three days with nothing to eat and just do voodoo chants and ceremonies.

“Any of us could tell you of many cases we know personally when there is no scientific explanation for what happened. If a person goes to a really powerful fetisher he can get a charm that will kill anyone. And the murderer can be miles away from the death. Or they can turn into an animal or a bird and get their revenge that way.”

“Do you really believe things like that can happen, William?”

“Yes I do. I know they happen all the time. And Lynne, did you notice that a bird was flying around in that lunch room veranda that day the Ambassador died?”

Chapter Forty Four: A Reasonable Person

After what Dudley and William had told her, Lynne felt she really should talk to Mc Duff again. She had a few new facts and some new vague suspicions and possibilities. And she wanted to get him thinking about the Ambassador's past and see if he had any way to do a more thorough search to find out about his first wife, the mysterious and malignant Myrtle.

As she was leaving, she noticed the door to the office Mc Duff was using was closed and there was a big sign on it. "DO NOT DISTURB. DO NOT ENTER WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT"

The next day she called Linda at Peace Corps and, as she had done several weeks before, asked for an appointment, with the security officer. Contacts with him weren't pleasant, but she felt she had to persist. He seemed to be the only person really trying to figure out what had happened that day in Kara.

To her surprise, Linda said, "Mr. Mc Duff can see you in a half hour."

Amazed, but pleased, she locked up her office, found a taxi outside the Embassy and was soon knocking on the door of the makeshift office.

"Good morning, young lady." Was that a faint smile on his face?

"I'm pleased that you can see me so soon. I want to talk to you again about the Ambassador's murder."

"I gave orders to the secretary to be sure I see you as soon as possible whenever you call me."

This was different. Earlier he had treated her like a nosey pest.

He continued, "I've talked to a few people about you and you have a good reputation. I'm glad you keep on thinking about this. You have a combination of advantages no one else has. You know the people well, you were on the scene, you're an intelligent, reasonable person. The bits of information you can give me might be helpful."

"Well, the main thing is, have you thought about investigating the Ambassador's past? Maybe there was something or someone from an earlier period that would show some light on the murder. I have learned that he had a first wife named Myrtle who caused him a lot of trouble and who hated him. She was a vindictive person. Maybe you can find out what happened to her and if there are ties between her and anyone here. What is she doing now?"

Despite his earlier words of admiration for her thinking ability, he rejected her ideas flatly. Of course they had investigated the background. An Ambassador could not have any old secrets. And of course he knew all about Myrtle. He had copies of the official statements the Ambassador had filed with the State Department for his application for the post and his confirmation by the Senate. He had even seen legal documents restraining her from contacting him. She died twenty years ago.

"Oh," said Lynne, disappointed. "Was there anything else in his past that might provide some sort of motive?"

"No. Aside from that, he had a highly successful but uninteresting past. He'd been a respected business man and politician, even had friendly ties to the President of the United

States before his election. And he had no connection with anyone now in Togo except for those people he met since he came and almost all of them were in the course of his duty.

“And here in Togo, he was a faithful husband, loyal to his wife. When she was in Africa he spent as much time with her as his official duties allowed. When she was sent to America for medical care, he kept in touch daily by telephone and increased his official duties and entertaining to fill his empty hours. You won't find any scandals in his past or in his conduct here in Togo.”

“Okay. Scratch that idea.”

“Is that all you have to contribute?”

“You called me reasonable. But, this may sound unreasonable. My African friends tell me that there are powers in Africa that are different. Every week in the newspaper there are serious stories of sorcery, of women transforming themselves into owls to get revenge on unfaithful lovers. And at the university, there was a seminar just this year on how to frame the official law of the country for treatment of crimes like murder when a person changed himself into an animal, like a leopard, and killed someone in that form. The village courts take things like that into account when sentencing a person in a trial. Maybe we should consider the possibility of some sort of magic.”

“You didn't give me the impression of being a superstitious person.”

“I never was. But, when there's no other explanation, maybe the most rational solution is to accept sorcery.”

“Why do you think there is no rational solution to our mystery?”

“Oh, Mr. Mc Duff. I was there. I have gone over it in my mind many times and talked to some other volunteers about it. That bottle of soda water the Ambassador drank from was a fresh one with the cap in place. The waiter opened it with a bottle opener. It was firmly closed, not just lying on the top. He used force to get it open. We all saw it. How could the tuitui get into it? If there was tuitui at the bottling company, people all over Togo would be dying, not to mention the whole group of us who drank soda from that same case. There is just no logical way poison could have gotten into the Ambassador's drink. That is what makes me think we should consider of voodoo and sorcery.”

“If that's your sticking point, we have a solution to that problem, purely physical ordinary causes. We finally got the results of the analysis of the objects taken from the murder scene. They found that the cap of the soda bottle had a hole in it, as if made by a nail pounded in using a hard object like a hammer or rock. The tuitui had doubtless been inserted in the fatal bottle through that hole.”

“It's lucky Dr. Putnam was calm and orderly enough to save the evidence. Otherwise we might never have known.”

“Yes, it's good that one person had some idea of proper procedure. The rest were all too hysterical or too concerned with State Department Policy. Anyway, let's forget witchcraft. Washington tells us though, that the bottle and cap had no identifiable fingerprints. There were only messy, blurred smudges. That's a pity. So now we are working on the big questions: who had access to those bottles, and how could the murderer be sure that the Ambassador would get the poisoned one? Only one bottle cap had a hole and only one bottle showed residues of tuitui.

“I have interviewed all of the people who were in that room that day, made diagrams of the seating and the access to the Ambassador's drink. I've scheduled a general meeting of all the Peace Corps people and the Togolese French teachers who were at that luncheon to meet in a week. Then I can complete the diagram and ask the group as a whole to reconstruct what happened that day. It's still true, what I told you earlier, Lynne. You saw what happened. If you just could remember it and think of it in the right way it would be apparent to you.

“We're thinking seriously of the waiter in the boubou again. He handed the bottle to the Ambassador. Why did he choose that bottle? Had he known the Ambassador would drink from that bottle? We know he had some sort of a relationship with Richie who did business with the Ambassador. Did he have ties to any other people who might conceivably have a motive? He should be investigated thoroughly. Unfortunately, at the moment, we can't find him.

“This African thing, the power of the family is getting in the way. He has, like many Africans, about 50 cousins that he thinks of as brothers. Then add to that the fact that he has five wives, all with many cousins. He always has someone to hide him or lie for him when we want to get a hold of him. And, he seems to help himself to their names and work records. That's how he gets so many jobs in this jobless country. But, we will find him. And when we do, this time he won't be free until we learn why he picked that particular bottle to give to the Ambassador.”

Chapter Forty Five: Women In Development

Two days later Lynne felt in a holiday mood when she got into a seat in the rear of the minibus Peace Corps had provided for woman volunteers in Lome and nearby posts for the trip to the Women in Development Conference. She was pleased to see that Irene was seated far from her, in the front. Now she could enjoy the company of some volunteers she seldom saw.

Next to her was Joycelyn who had been her room mate, actually bed mate, the first night in the country. They had shared a lumpy double bed in the hotel the Peace Corps had provided to give them a little rest before they journeyed up to Atakpame for their three months of training. She would never forget seeing in her open suitcase the carefully color matched wardrobe Joycelyn had brought with her for her two years in an African village. She had new, fine quality tee shirts in about ten pastel shades, each with a matching skirt and also pair of shorts. Every individual item was neatly folded and was in a plastic protective bag.

Joycelyn was pretty and wore carefully applied make up that enhanced her looks. She had been a little down that night and tried to cheer herself up by sorting the huge collection of cassette tapes she had brought. At Lynne's urging, she abandoned that task when a friend tapped at the door and invited her to go out with a group of the others and see the town. Lynne was glad for the privacy, carefully placed herself in the part of the bed that had no cassettes on it and went to sleep. But, before she slept, she had spent a few minutes wondering how this fastidious young woman from a prosperous home would fare in what she could already see was a desperately poor, dirty, uncomfortable country.

Chatting with Joycelyn now, it was good to see that she, like most of the American volunteers, hadn't been spoiled by her previous life of luxury. She was enjoying her service, doing well with her teaching, and was also starting a secondary project to help village women make money selling their handicrafts.

As they neared Ferme Bertanea, the scenery was delightful. Everything looked peaceful. The Kpalime region was the most scenic in the country. It was something like her dreams of verdant jungles that she had had before she came. Everything was lush and green and they wound around a road that was on a big hill, considered a mountain here. They saw the usual graceful, patient women balancing large loads of goods for the local market. One of the loads was a huge red enameled pan, loaded with white chickens with bright red combs.

Joycelyn and the volunteers sitting near her started a lively debate about a book that had just come out that was written by a volunteer in Togo who had Early Terminated last year after a Christmas vacation in Paris. Most of those who had read it were awed by what a fine writer she was. They were impressed by how well she had picked up the most telling details that made the African scene so unique.

Then Joycelyn said, "But I worry about the Togolese people she worked with. Her characters are too true to life and too easily identifiable. In this dictatorship, some of the Togolese could lose their jobs and freedom, if not their lives because of what she said."

Lynne agreed, but tried to make a case for an artist's right to self expression and to portray the events in her life.

The bus jolted to a sudden screeching halt as a goat ran into the road directly in front of them. Joycelyn said, "We all learned in grade school why a chicken crosses the road, but I still wonder, why does a goat cross the road? It looks the same on both sides to me."

Joycelyn suggested for old times sake that she and Lynne share a room. Lynne was pleased. She would be glad to spend more time with someone not involved in the mystery that had been plaguing her for so many weeks. Right now her three closest Peace Corps friends were high on her list of suspects.

Ferme Bretanea was a lot like a pleasant small American motel. After they got settled into their rooms and ate a sandwich lunch, they went to the large veranda that was used as a meeting hall. William was the only man there except for the Ferme Bretanea staff. He went about his new duties as Assistant Director of Peace Corps and organizer of the seminar confidently, his teeth flashing and his cheerful laugh booming. Irene was dressed carefully and stylishly with all her makeup in place and with costume jewelry complementing her outfit. In the general discussion she was at her most loquacious and when she responded to William's questions to the group, her most flirtatious. He seemed to find her captivating.

Madame Adjovi, the director of the women's division of Affaires Sociales went to the front of the room to give an address. She had her hair done in the elaborate medusa like way with about fifty spikes of hair jutting out from her scalp. She was an imposing woman and the hairstyle was becoming to her. She wore an elaborately tucked, shirred, and pleated three piece Togolese dress with huge fancy leg of mutton sleeves. An extra length of cloth was wrapped around her waist to make a second layer that was something like the gay nineties bustle. It was Irene who had told Lynne that probably the Togolese women's costume came from an adaptation of the 1890's style of the wives of Europeans who colonized West Africa around the turn of the century.

Madame Adjovi gave a spirited speech, saying that women needed power. Women's power was necessary for the development of the people. She wanted the help of the volunteers to show Togolese women how to do economic projects which would give them power. She said that there was a slogan in the US, never estimate the power of a woman. No one should. "There is much potential power in the women of Togo. All of you development professionals must help the Togolese women to unleash it."

The official meeting broke up early and there was time for informal chatting. Lynne noticed Fiona was present, pregnant, carrying herself proudly. By now, the one time secret of the paternity of the baby had made its way through the volunteer information system and the consensus was that Fiona was a woman who knew what she wanted and would make it work out fine.

Irene found Lynne and started pressing Lynne, asking her to tell what she had done to convince Everett to give her the grant to get her a car. Lynne had done nothing about it. Even if she had not thought it was a terrible idea, she had scarcely seen Everett lately. She told her only the second reason, stressing the disorders in the country that had kept Everett

out of the office. Opening her mouth for another blast of attempted persuasion, Irene saw William enter the room and left Lynne abruptly. Lynne could see her talking away, fluttering her eyelids as she looked up at him, with his happy grin flashing as he responded.

She was glad to see Lita again, the first time after their dealing with the situation of the burning of Lynne's house. As always, she was struck by Lita's startling beauty, and the fact that she seemed completely unaware of the effect she had on people. Lita said that Dapaong was peaceful now. The general had taken his entire huge family down to Lome to live with the other four wives there. Sometimes Lita's students or teachers asked her when Lynne was coming back.

"I've heard that Inspector Lanago is coming down to see you. They really want you back."

"That man. Why does he want me? He always tried to find some way to keep me from doing my work when I was there. Anyway, Dudley thinks I should stay here for now. I like it here. My job is fine."

"Yes I bet. Things are sweet and easy in Lome. It's almost like living in the United States." Lita's voice had a little edge to it. Maybe being at this comfortable seminar center reminded her of everything she was doing without in her post in Dapaong. Lynne noticed that her long black hair was dulled by the Harmattan dust from her journey.

Lynne greeted and chatted briefly with several Togolese women that she knew. She felt relaxed expressing herself in French, supplemented with many handshakes and smiles.

As often happened because of the attraction of friendship, Lynne was soon in a little group that contained herself, Cindy, Sally, and Dulcie. Lynne was able to give Sally the good news that Everett had reconsidered her proposal and would give her money for her project. Sally was radiant. Now she would be able to accomplish something and show herself and her fiancé that she could be effective on her own. Dulcie had her own good news. She had heard from her application for the terrific, high paying, responsible position with USAID and she had got the job. Everett had gone ahead and given her an excellent recommendation, even though he didn't know her well personally. It had helped when her Togolese colleagues praised her work. The job would start as soon as she finished her tour of duty in the Peace Corps in July.

"Oh, congratulations, Dulcie. How wonderful!"

"Yes it is." Then, she surprised Lynne by talking about a subject they had never discussed before. "With a good job like that, maybe I can get custody of my son. USAID pays for excellent schools for dependents."

Cindy looked angry and jealous. Lynne found Cindy good company when she wasn't drinking or following one of her persecution ideas. But she was noted for helping herself to anything a volunteer had in the cupboard when she started drinking. Lynne remembered how indignant Dulcie was when Cindy drank the fine bottle of wine that she had been saving for some possible special romantic occasion in the future. And sometimes she was spiteful. Now she said, "It seems the Ambassador's death worked out fine for you two. But I'm still stuck without a job for next year because of Dudley. Too bad he wasn't killed, and six months earlier."

Lynne looked at her three Peace Corps friends. She still didn't think their concerns would have resulted in a strong enough motive for any of the three to have killed the Ambassador intentionally or while trying to kill Dudley. But then she thought of a possibility. They were all about the same age, between twenty-five and thirty. They were just about the age that a child of the mysterious Myrtle could be now. Could it be possible that one of them was her child and had gotten revenge for Myrtle's sad problems? She looked at the three. Even that wasn't a good enough reason to kill a man. But, if one of them was a psychopathic personality? As she looked at them, it was as if a shadow went over them.

Was Mc Duff investigating their past? Was one of them the dispenser of the fatal tuitui?

At that point, a servant hit a gong. William announced proudly that a special buffet had been set up in the other room to honor all of them. They went to the flower decorated room and saw a sumptuous buffet, loaded with appetizing dishes--crudities, cut up salad vegetables, fruit cut in chunks, slices of tomatoes and avocado, bowls of cooked carrots and green beans, magnificent platters of fresh rolls and then three huge platters of the special main dish.

Lynne gasped. The other Americans were making similar sounds of surprise. Lynne looked at it carefully. What was it? Surrounded by bits of parsley and roses made of radishes, artfully arranged, there were neat rows of little quail, cooked with their heads on, each lined up symmetrically with eyes closed and the heads hanging on the left, like bashful school boys.

William said with pride, "They have prepared the specialty of the house just to honor us."

"Ugh," Cindy said. "They needn't have bothered."

Lynne had just regained her composure and decided to eat only fruits and vegetables when she had a second shock. There was another source of astonishment. She looked at the man bringing in a huge bowl of rice.

The waiter, dressed in a neat Ferme Bretanea uniform of khaki with yellow and green trim, was tall, thin, and had an elaborately scarred face. It was the boubou man!

"Monsieur, monsieur, I must talk to you," she said in French. Probably her urgency and the intent look on her face frightened him. He put the bowl down on the table quickly and scurried back to the kitchen. Lynne followed him as soon as she could, but had to make her way past a mass of hungry people trying to reach the buffet table.

When she arrived at the crowded kitchen, she saw many pots and pans and some cooks and a waitress, but no waiter. Where was he? She tried to make herself understood in French. The whole group had a noisy discussion or argument in Ewe. Finally, the head cook came to her and said firmly, "He has left. He is sick. You must go."

At breakfast the next morning there was a new waiter.

Chapter Forty Six: Almost There

Immediately after breakfast, they returned to Lome. After she glanced at her mail at the Peace Corps office, even though the formidable sign was still on Mc Duff's door, Lynne chanced knocking on it.

Mc Duff's voice was angry "Who is it?". Obviously no one else just knocked on his door.

"It's Lynne. I think I should tell you some things."

"Come in." His table was piled with documents. "Madame detective, do you have more clues for me?" he said sarcastically.

"I just wanted to tell you that I talked to the volunteers at the Women in Development conference at Ferme Bertanea in Kpalime and I'm thinking the three female volunteers at that fatal luncheon that were where they had most access to the Ambassador's drink are all about the right age. Any of them could be Myrtle's daughter, seeking revenge. Can you look into their backgrounds more? Especially, can you find out if any of them had emotional problems? I don't think there was any motive that a normal person would murder over. I've heard rumors or noticed some symptoms in all three of them. But I'm not a psychologist."

"No? Just a detective?" Mc Duff joked. "But, your thinking is good, even though it is delayed. Washington is investigating just those possibilities. Is that all you have to tell me?"

"But I haven't told you the most urgent thing. That man who was the waiter in Kara, he's like the Cheshire cat. He appears and disappears. It's ridiculous, but I saw him again. He was working as a waiter at the conference. I tried to talk to him, but that scared him and he disappeared. They had to get another waiter to serve breakfast the next day."

"So you saw your mysterious boubou man again. It's surprising that he continues to take jobs with Peace Corps since he knows we are looking for him. But, in a country with few jobs, people do what they can. Peace Corps should have notified us. But maybe he used the name and papers of one of those countless cousins. We'll get on it immediately. Your information is helpful. I'll find out through William here at Peace Corps who hired that waiter and track him down. My list of questions grows. This time when we find him we won't let him go until we learn who put that tui tui in the soda water bottle."

"Oh I do hope you can clear things up soon."

"Yes. Washington is pressuring us to get it all settled. With the new unrest and their problems of policy they want to know for sure whether any Togolese citizens were involved in the murder. Right now, the investigation is progressing well. We are almost there."

"I got a notice in my box saying there will be an all volunteer meeting with you in Kara in three days."

"Yes. By then, I'll have valuable information and a strategy that will reveal who killed Mr. Corley Harrison."

Chapter Forty Seven: A Visit From The Inspector

Just after lunch the next day, the guard at the office called to tell Lynne that a Togolese official was on his way up to see her. A few minutes later she heard a light knock, and then Inspector Lanago came in. "Inspector," she cried.

He was a tiny man, about five four, but even so, he looked kingly. His dark skin contrasted attractively with the magnificent all white outfit, a white lace *complet*, topped with a white boubou embellished with ornate white embroidery. He was fine featured and carried himself erectly. He wore white leather shoes that were pointed and looked like something out of Arabian nights.

"Ah, Miss Lynne, you lack me in Dapaong. It is good to see you, sir." She was touched that he was making an effort to speak English with her. Even though he was the English Inspector, he ordinarily spoke French with her, even in the English classroom, and with the teachers.

And she was even more surprised that she was feeling affection for him. Inspector Lanago was a kabye, the same ethnic group as the dictator, and obviously had no sympathy for the democracy movement. He had always stonewalled against her activities, trying in every way he could to keep her from functioning as an expert in English. Even so, she was glad to see him. She jumped up and shook his hand enthusiastically. "Yes, I missed you too."

"You left us."

"Yes Inspector. Someone burned my house down."

He slipped back into French, so that he could speak with ease about the painful subject. "Ah, those protesters. They will not do it again."

To her pleasure, Lynne's French flowed freely and fluently. She told him that she was in favor of democracy but had been appalled when she was left homeless. She said that she was glad that the children of the General were all right.

Inspector Lanago told her the new Head Inspector in Dapaong, Mr. Mono, had send him to talk to Lynne. He told her that the teachers needed her. The country was in turmoil and she could help by helping teachers. Lynne knew the new inspector. She had met him at an all country meeting before he was transferred and been impressed by him. Mr. Lanago brought messages from teachers she had worked with. He seemed sweet and sincere. Maybe now, with so many changes he really would like to give her a chance.

"Please come back. I will be sure you will be safe. Inspector Mono says he has an apartment for you in his compound. He is liked by everyone, trusted by the government even though his family came from the south."

"Oh, Inspector, I am sorry but I have a good job here."

"You volunteers came to help, not to just have a good job. No one else can work with the teachers of the North. We need you to plan a seminar. We will provide transportation." Then he added what was perhaps his real reason for his determination to change her mind.

"The President himself ordered us to do everything necessary to keep Peace Corps volunteers working at their posts."

"This is sudden. I'll think about it."

"Good. Now I am going to do something for you."

Lynne was intrigued. What would he say next?

"I hear you are looking for the worthless husband of one of my nieces. He might know something about your ambassador's death. My government too is eager to clear the matter up. I will tell your authorities where to find him."

"Oh, you can do that?"

"Yes, I can. In return, I want you to do something. Miss Lynne, I want you to promise to think seriously about returning to Dapaong."

"All right. I'll promise to think it over carefully."

"Now, I will go directly to the office of that man Mc Duff who gave me his card when they were investigating up north. I will tell him how to find the waiter today."

Chapter Forty Eight: Promises To Keep

The next morning Mc Duff called to thank her for helping get the information about the waiter from Inspector Lanago. It turned out that the man had fled to a wife in Lome. Mc Duff himself had gone to the police and taken them to the house that Lanago pointed out to him. The police took the boubou man to jail immediately and he was being interrogated thoroughly, first by the Togolese, and then Mc Duff would ask him his list of questions.

During the three days before the meeting in Kara, Lynne went to the Self Help office every day working at what now had become routine. She didn't see Everett. She heard that he was called for an emergency meeting in Washington to be briefed on how to handle the latest evidence of the falsity of the democracy promises of the President of Togo.

At night, when she finished with her dinner and dishes, she wrote in her notebook and tried to make sense of her life. The first night she wrote some speculations about the murder. She didn't feel like a master detective. She had many speculations.

She revised her chart again. She got out her bottle of white out and removed the names of Ron and Michael. She also blanked out the names of Luke and Dudley. She hesitated over Fiona, but whited her out too. She was too old to be Myrtle's daughter and she had no motive at all.

She left the double stars after the boubou man and Richie. Richie certainly had a slimy side. She thought of his underworld type companion at the beach restaurant. And the bou bou man certain was the person nearest the ambassador when he was poisoned. Someone could have paid him to do the murder. She added Other Ties and a question mark after it in the boubou man's section. She left stars after her three woman friends' names. She looked critically at the finished chart. She wrote a new person, Myrtle's daughter. And in the Motive column wrote Revenge. She thought some more and put in the How possible column, three stars.

So many people had asked her to intercede for them. She had promised some that she would do so. It was a quirk of hers that she felt she had to keep her promises, even if they were made under duress. She decided to write them down and think about them clearly. She had been delaying too long and should start acting on them.

The first had been her promise to Michael. But he was dead, poor thing. He no longer could participate in the third year he had wanted. Irene had asked her to help her get a car. But, she had not promised and it was also a bad idea, so she wouldn't do it. Ron had made her promise not to tell anyone about his blackmail of Dudley. The way things worked out, it looked like she could continue to keep that seamy secret. Luke had asked her to write a recommendation. She hadn't promised. But, this one she could do. She could word it carefully, telling all his good points and his successes in his job and leaving out the bad things. Tomorrow she would prepare it on the computer and somehow get it to him.

But who else had she really promised something to?

Oh dear. It was Claudia. She had agreed to talk to Everett about his recommending Claudia as secretary to the new Ambassador. Earlier, she was just a volunteer filling in on a low level job. She would have seemed pretty silly giving advice to an important man. But

since she got the wonderful letter, she was feeling that they would be a couple in the future. Well, she would do it. She would find a way to at least casually mention Claudia's hopes.

Now she had made a promise to Inspector Lanago. She had said that she would really consider going back to Dapaong. What Lita had said about her enjoying the good life in Lome bothered her. She did have it pretty easy here. And she realized that a lot of the thrill of living in Lome had gone away. After five weeks, she had gotten used to having water and a good stove and stores nearby so she could buy whatever food she could afford on her salary. She didn't really feel like a volunteer anymore, living like this, in such comfort and ease.

She thought of the promise Inspector Lanago had made to her that she would be safe if she returned to Dapaong. She knew he probably still didn't personally want her there, but orders from above had a lot of influence with him. Obviously the Togolese government felt it would look bad internationally if the Peace Corps pulled out of Togo. Maybe they really would see that to it that she would have security. Mc Duff had promised, or at least said definitely, that he would find out and reveal who killed the Ambassador when they met in Kara this week. As for Everett, she thought of that enchanted evening at Robinson Beach. And now in the letter he promised that if she would be patient a little longer, he would make up for the times duty had kept him from her.

Soon the new Ambassador would come and Everett would be Economic officer again with more time for a private life. Even if she returned to her post in Dapaong, she would have to check in with Lome every few months. And Economic Officers often had to go up country to meet with officials.

Suddenly Lynne felt herself overwhelmed with a surge of happiness. Life did have many promises.

Chapter Forty Nine: Real Power

At last, the day came for the promised meeting in Kara. The Peace Corps bus was crowded with volunteers and the Togolese French teachers who had been at the fatal meeting in Kara. It was six o'clock and the morning was already sticky and warm. They had all been told to take a snack along in order to go straight through to Kara as quickly as possible. They would eat a late lunch up there.

They finally arrived a little after three and went directly to the stuffy meeting room, its heat beyond the cooling power of the floor large fans. At first it was the kind of Peace Corps meeting they had often, with some announcements about their program and some handouts. But, soon Dudley introduced Mc Duff as the man in charge of investigating the Ambassador's death.

Mc Duff said he felt that by the time they left that day, they would know who the murderer was. Everyone should cooperate and contribute what they knew and remembered.

They would soon eat lunch. They would eat in the covered section of the courtyard, just as before and would sit at the same seats they had at the fatal lunch. Any one who had not been there would sit at a special table at the very back of the room. They would eat the same menu. They should be sure to drink the same drinks they had at that early lunch.

At the head table, Everett Knowlton, who had just returned from an important meeting in Washington, would take the place of the Ambassador. He had been briefed by those who had been at the earlier lunch to know just what to say and do. The only other difference was that the original waiter was in jail and could not attend. He had been questioned by the Embassy investigators and also by the police, who used their usual brutal but effective interrogation methods.

"I feel satisfied that we have all the information possible from him. He can't be here. For one thing, he's not feeling well after the police questioning. And also, since he has a way of disappearing, we want him safely in jail until we have the murder solved. He says that after everyone had eaten that day in Kara, there were only three bottles left on the serving table behind the speaker's table. All with their caps on. There was a bottle of coke, a bottle of orange, and a bottle of soda water. When the Ambassador urgently asked for soda water, even though he was speaking in English, the waiter understood since the word, soda, is also French so he quickly got the bottle of soda and took it to the Ambassador with the cap on. He opened it with the bottle opener as he had always been taught to do, right in front of the Ambassador and all the rest of the people. He was surprised to see the Ambassador drink directly from the bottle, but knew that he had been coughing and choking."

There was a murmur of agreement from the group as they remembered that they had seen the bottle opened and the Ambassador drink directly from it.

"We have asked William's nephew who is a waiter by profession to act the part of the elusive boubou man."

He pointed to a good looking, tall man, about thirty years old in a magnificent burgundy colored boubou, embroidered with gold.

They went to their seats on the dining veranda. There was something ghastly about acting out a murder scene, but soon their usual youthful spirits and pleasure at being together asserted themselves and they ate their lunch, fufu with chicken sauce, with good appetite. At her table, Lynne noticed especially the sad gaps where Michael and Ron had sat. Sally and Cindy probably did too, and they made an effort to keep cheerful talk flowing. Dulcie was circulating around the room, mostly near the head table, as she had at the earlier lunch because of her supervisory duties.

Lynne looked at her three friends and tried to keep in mind that one of them was probably the murderer unless Mc Duff had found some one with ties to the boubou man and a motive for the murder.

After they had eaten, Mc Duff went to the front of the room.

"Before we continue with the reenactment of that fatal scene, I want to talk to you. Are you all sure you are sitting at the seat you held that day? As we do this, if you think of anything, anything at all that is different or that might help us, speak up.

"Let me tell you some of the things we have learned that bear on the murder. The Ambassador died when he drank tuitui which was in his bottle of soda water. No other bottle had poison in it. The poison was introduced into the bottle through a hole in the cap which was made by pounding a nail with a rock.

"We have been looking for a motive. We know that some of you had reasons to dislike the Ambassador or to wish that he were not in authority in Togo. And some of you had grievances against Dudley. It is conceivable that someone meant to poison Dudley and not the Ambassador. Whoever was the intended victim, it seems to me that the motives we have found were not strong enough to cause someone to kill unless the perpetrator was mentally ill. We had an investigation done in the US on the background of all the volunteers, but especially on certain suspects."

He stopped. The effect was dramatic. There was no sound. Would he name someone? Who would that murderer be?

"We found psychiatric episodes and problems in the backgrounds of several of our suspects."

Lynne watched her friends at her table.

"One of them lost custody of her child because of emotional problems."

Dulcie started sobbing. "Oh, It wasn't true. I wasn't sick. I didn't hurt the baby. My in-laws had so much money they could buy medical testimony. They took away my little boy."

Mc Duff said nothing, just listened calmly and patiently. Then he continued. "One other volunteer had a problem with a bipolar disorder."

Sally looked upset but said nothing.

Mc Duff continued. "And another volunteer had a tendency toward disorderly and violent behavior after drinking."

Cindy just looked sullen.

"Another volunteer had paranoid tendencies."

The volunteers were eying each other suspiciously. Who was he talking about?

"We think we know who did this murder. That murderer is in this room right now. You know who you are. Do you want to tell us about it right now and save a lot of pain? It would be better for you to tell us now. You know we are all your friends."

Lynne could scarcely believe her ears. That cold fish Mc Duff was sounding like a gospel preacher asking country people to come up and be saved.

He paused for a full sixty seconds. When no one spoke up, he went back to his matter of fact tone. "Then, we will continue our reenactment. If anyone notices anything different or significant speak up. All right. We will start."

Everett stood up. He was dressed in a formal dark grey suit. He even had on a white shirt with a grey strip, but wore his own tie, a grey and blue one. He was in exactly the place the Ambassador had been in. He repeated almost exactly the words of Ambassador on that earlier occasion.

"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 let you know as soon as we know more about it. That is all I can say about it now."

Many in the audience were shocked at this reference to a terrible sorrow that they were trying to bury. But Everett went on with his re-creation of the Ambassador's last speech.

"The director has told you what will be done to ensure your safety. You are important to American foreign policy here and also to the Togolese. We expect you to continue doing your work at your posts. Now, unfortunately I need to talk to you about something else that is unpleasant. I hate to have to do this now when we are all so torn by Carrie's death. But it is necessary. I have learned that. I have some serious things to tell you. Because of them some changes must be made in staffing and..." Everett stopped talking and made some loud, disturbingly realistic, dramatic coughs. "Soda water," he gasped. Suddenly Lynne remembered something and called out, "Mr. Mc Duff, Mr. Mc Duff, something is not right. Something's missing!" Some of the others agreed, consulting each other. "Yes, something was left out. What was it?"

Mc Duff said, "Well, tell us. It could be important."

Lynne said, "I remember now. Irene interrupted at some time. She was accusing the other waiter of taking her glasses."

Suddenly the room was abuzz with others remembering, completing, correcting. John, the huge math teacher stood up. He was sitting at a table near the back of the room. "I remember now. The waiter couldn't understand at first but then he denied taking her glasses. We tried to calm Irene down, but she pushed her way up to the front of the room."

Others now were agreeing. They remembered too.

John continued, seriously, solemnly. "She went to the front of the room, to the table behind the head table. To the serving table. Yes, she went there, and she said she found her glasses there. It all happened just before the Ambassador asked for his drink."

Someone asked Mc Duff, "Did the boubou man say he saw a pair of glasses there?"

"He said there was nothing on the table by that time but the three bottles of soft drink."

From the back of the room, almost as if doing the enactment, they heard Irene's loud angry voice. First in some inaudible words, then in an unearthly shriek and then the screeching voice crying, "Oh, I hated him, he ruined my life when I was just a trusting girl. I've been waiting twenty five years to find a way to kill him. But you never would have known because I'm clever. It's all your fault, Lynne. You did it. You told them. You always hated me from the minute you saw me."

And she rushed forward as if to attack Lynne, but a crowd of volunteers grabbed her and restrained her. She progressed into hysteria, sobbing, shaking and screaming. Fiona, the nurse put her arm around her. "Now dear. Just calm down, you'll be all right, come with me, I have some medication that'll make you feel better. Poor dear, you've really had a hard time."

Mc Duff and Fiona together with two waiters escorted the hysterical woman toward the back of the room.

But at the door she turned to the group and said, "You be my witnesses. I always planned to get him because of the way he treated me when I was a girl. I won. "He was rich, he was an Ambassador, he thought he was way above me, but I had real power. I killed him."

Chapter Fifty: All's Well

Once again, Irene rode down to Lome with officials in a special car. The Acting Ambassador decided to leave immediately and get at least as far as Atakpame by nightfall. There, telephone lines were better, and they could phone Lome to inform Washington they had found the murderer. Fiona had sedated Irene heavily and she was asleep. They carried her out to the second seat in the big Embassy car. Mc Duff would sit next to her. He had brought a pair of handcuffs with him, but did not feel it was necessary to put on the sleeping woman. Fiona would also go along, in case Irene was still hysterical when she woke up. She sat on the other side of Irene. The Ambassador sat in front with his driver. In Atakpame, they would ask the gendarmerie to assign some Togolese soldiers to help them guard Irene and escort their car down to Lome.

The volunteers and Togolese French teachers as well as Dudley would stay at Affaires Sociales until morning, as had been planned. They spent the rest of the afternoon and evening rehashing the dramatic reenactment and their memories of the earlier meeting at Kara. Generally, their spirits were high. At last, the mystery was solved.

Lynne listened to them for a while, but then went to the room she had been assigned to share with several volunteers. She kept rerunning in her mind the accusations of Irene, "You did this, Lynne. You always hated me." And there was truth in that. She had disliked Irene from their first meeting. And it was true that she was the one who had remembered so well and told Mc Duff her movements at that murderous luncheon. She had wanted very much to catch the murderer. And she had done it.

Then she remembered what else Irene had said as they led her out of the room, "Lynne, you and your notes and your diary. You have been spying on me from the first."

So it was Irene who had entered her apartment that frightening night, trying to steal the diary!

They left immediately after breakfast the next morning. They asked Affaires Sociales to pack them a lunch to eat on the bus so that they could drive straight through. It was four o'clock when they reached Lome.

Later, Linda, the Peace Corps assistant, told Lynne and a group of other volunteers what Irene had told Mc Duff when he questioned her. She had said that she had requested service in Togo because she learned that her ex-husband was Ambassador there. She had hated him through the years after their bitter divorce, but had not known where he was until she read a newspaper story about his appointment as ambassador to Togo. As it happened, she had already applied for a Peace Corps appointment, and she requested to be posted in Togo.

When the Ambassador met her at the swearing in ceremony, he had looked at her as if wondering. After all, she had changed in thirty- five years and her hair had been black then. She had seen him a few times afterwards at official affairs and could tell by his careful avoidance of her that he realized who she was. Linda said he must have been nervous about her presence in the country since he had stated on official forms that his first wife was dead.

Irene had bought the tuitui and made a solution of it, carried it in her purse in an eye dropper bottle, hoping someday to get an opportunity to slip it into the food or drink of the

Ambassador. When she had seen him drive up to the meeting in Kara looking so important and prosperous, her fury boiled over.

She would do it that day. She knew his reaction to great stress often was to have a fit of coughing and usually tried to deal with it by drinking something. If he suddenly saw her, he would probably start coughing. He didn't like sweets or beer, so he would probably ask for soda water. She got a cold bottle of it from the kitchen before the meal and pounded a nail into the cap to make a hole. She squirted the poison in and put the whole thing carefully in her big straw bag covered with flowers that she always carried. When the time came, she made the fuss over the glasses and ran to the serving table behind the Ambassador. She exchanged her prepared bottle of soda for one that was there.

Her plan worked beautifully. It gave her great joy to kill him right in front of everyone. No one knew realized how devious, powerful, and in control she was. She had shrieked most of this out, so emotional and malicious she almost foamed at the mouth.

Eventually, she calmed down and as usual, Irene managed to work a special deal for herself. No jail cell and brutal Togolese police for her. She had convinced the authorities that this was not murder, that she was mentally ill. Washington agreed and convinced the Togolese authorities to accept this decision. She was psychovaccinated, flown to Washington, accompanied by Mc Duff and Fiona and put in a psychiatric hospital to be treated and evaluated.

Someone said, "But, the name. Did she change it?"

"Mc Duff asked her that. She said of course she did. Who would keep a name like Myrtle? And a few years later she married her husband, Captain Anderson and naturally took his name."

A few days later, Everett called Lynne on the telephone. This was the first time and he himself had ever spoken to her on the telephone. "Lynne. It's wonderful to hear your voice. Congratulations on your help in solving the murder! Mc Duff is going to tell Washington about it. He asked me to write an official letter thanking you. And, more good news. The new ambassador will be here in a week. Claudia will be his secretary. That will make turning work over to him easy. After that I hope to see a lot of you."

"Yes. That's all good news. I'm so glad the whole thing is over. I'll be happy to see more of you. But, I'm thinking about what I will do now. I will probably decide I want to go back to my job in Dapaong."

"Well, I'm sure you'll make a good decision. Whatever your plans, I hope I'll be included in them."

"Of course, Everett. I'll let you know what I decide. But whatever, I expect we'll have good times together." She realized how these last four months had changed her. What had Brad said in his arrogant letter? "Probably this will give you an opportunity to gain some new leadership skills. In the long run, you will probably gain from it."

Maybe so. Then she realized that was the first time she had thought of Brad in weeks.

She decided that she would convince Dudley to let her return to her post. Now she knew she could make Inspector Lanago allow her to do her work.

Africa had done her good. Now she would do some good for Africa.

Murder in the Peace Corps

Chapter Fifty One: After The End

A year later, Lynne was back in Dapaong, under the banyan tree, waiting again for the Inspector, the new one. She had been waiting for an hour, but felt he would come. Inspector Mono was usually late, but he almost always came and they worked well together. After she had protested strongly several times, Inspector Lanago too sometimes kept his appointments with her. But she had learned to always carry a notebook so that she could pass the time by writing while she waited. Today she entertained herself by writing another list. Maybe someday she would write a novel. She had so many notes now, it wouldn't be hard to write a book about the strange and tragic events that occurred during that four-month period of deaths, murder, and violent injuries last year. In time she had gotten involved in the lives and hopes of many people. She thought about what they were doing now.

After being psychovaccated, Irene spent two weeks at a psychiatric hospital in Washington used by Peace Corps. With her usual ability to persuade authorities to make special exceptions for her, despite her confession before a room full of people of a carefully planned murder, she worked out a bargain pleading guilty only to wrongful death. Then, with the usual solidarity of Peace Corps, a flood of volunteers and ex volunteers who had not known Irene in Togo sent petitions and letters on her behalf to the judge, the newspapers, and congress, saying that her sufferings during arduous labors living as a volunteer in a third world country had driven her to emotional illness. The judge suspended her sentence. When last heard of she was on her way to Mexico where she said she was going to marry a ninety year old man who had long been in love with her.

Somehow, Irene's secret romance with William had not become public and he was officially appointed as Assistant Peace Corps Director for Education with the understanding that he could also keep his post at the University. When Lynne last saw him, his crocodile smile was wider than ever.

The new Ambassador reported for work a week after Irene left the country. As a protest to the Togolese government for the continuing dictatorship, he followed Washington's instructions and ended USAID operations and the ten million dollars of planned funding for Togo. But, in a diplomatic balancing act to keep from completely severing ties between the two countries, they decided to keep Peace Corps there and make a special effort to keep volunteers on their posts. As part of this, when Lynne asked to be returned to Dapaong, Dudley had to agree, even though he was concerned for her safety.

Ten months ago, Peace Corps had found her a new house in Dapaong. It turned out that the one in the Inspector's compound was not really available.

Her new Togolese neighbors were especially kind and helpful to her, as if trying to help her to forget how she had left five months before.

She had gone back to her work as Educational Advisor for English Teaching. She had given two successful regional seminars for teachers. She had visited all of the schools in her region. She loved the schools. They were made of mud blocks, with windows which were just holes for ventilation, without any screens or glass, with no pictures, no teaching aids, few books and no water, but neatly swept and cleaned every morning. The children sat

straight as soldiers at attention, wearing their uniforms of khaki shirts and shorts for boys or khaki jumpers for girls. The teachers and students always met her with bright smiles and welcomed her warmly. The teachers were grateful for the help, advice, and booklets she was able to provide. And she was a break from the routine, an exciting visitor from the outside world. When the sun was bright, and that was almost all daylight hours, the place was well lit even though there was no electricity. For the children who walked up to three miles to attend the classes, the school was a place of shade, of activity in the desolate savanna land, of some hope of getting an education that might enable them to leave the hard life of short handle hoe agriculture. Lynne thought of the phrase, "a clean, well-lighted place."

When Lynne got permission to return to her job in Dapaong, the Self Help job was left vacant. The new Ambassador decided he didn't want a volunteer to fill it. He wanted to hire an American living locally. Since Cindy's period of service was almost finished, she applied and was hired. Lynne enjoyed thinking of the fun that must fly when Claudia and Cindy worked together.

Ron didn't come back to Togo. He got some work as a model, first in San Francisco and then in New York. There, he even got fifteen seconds of fame. A Walkman competitor did a 15 second sequence of him dancing on a skyscraper roof to the music of their apparatus.

Sally returned to Cleveland and married her doctor in a society wedding. Her husband agreed to her working in a free clinic one day a week.

Dulcie now held an important USAID job in Guinea. She had a whirlwind romance with a Canadian UNESCO worker and was now happily married to him. Her young son was with her on post.

Richie paid a small fine and a large bribe because of his money problem at the airport. Despite his semi-legal business and disreputable associates, he remained a member of the Establishment. He was invited to the big Embassy reception introducing the new Ambassador to the community.

Fiona had a fine baby boy, who did indeed look rather Gallic. She combined her work as medical officer and mother well but so far had not made any tours up country.

Dudley finished his period of duty as a Peace Corps Director and got a well-paying job with Microsoft. His wife was pregnant with their third child.

The last time Brad had written her, asking her to share with him and Allison his pride and happiness on the birth of their son, Brad Junior, Lynne had written back to him, "Realize that our friendship ended with our marriage. If you have anything to communicate with me in the future, please send it through my lawyer."

Lynne's relationship with Everett had developed. She had spent a vacation and several long weekends with him in Lome and he had visited Dapaong several times. But both of them were taking it cautiously. Sometimes, when things were going especially well between them, she called him Al.

The volunteers and friends of Carrie founded and funded a scholarship for a young Togolese woman to study stoves and lead the struggle for improved fuel use to help safeguard the remnants of the forests in the country and also save labor for the

hardworking Togolese women. The volunteers who had known Carrie continued to mourn for her. They knew that they themselves let the countless obstacles-- heat, lack of cooperation, a shortage of supplies, and lack of energy, stand in the way of optimum achievement. They knew that they had not really done everything in their power to make their projects work out. But they felt that Carrie, with her burning intensity and high idealistic motivation would somehow have overcome it all and made a real difference to the village people of Togo if she had not been murdered in the Peace Corps.

Togo was limping along. The democracy movement seemed to have aborted, but there were still from time to time feeble attempts to plan for a free election. At some periods, it seemed there was freedom of speech, but often those periods continued to be suddenly capped by treacherous unpunished murders of democracy advocates.

The tourist industry was almost dead, trade at the port was almost nonexistent, and the country had less order and security and also less income than in the past. And yet, the brave Togolese in the countryside continued in their patient, cheerful, way.

As she wrote and waited, she saw, just as she had a year ago, a beautiful stately woman, pregnant, bearing a baby on her back and carrying a huge pan of water on her head, walking past her serenely.

She smiled at Lynne. "Ca va, Madame Peace Corps?"

Lynne smiled back and answered, "Ca va." Everything is okay.

THE END