

**Murder in the Peace Corps**  
**A Lynne Lewis West Africa Mystery**

*by*

Rosemary Yaco



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

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

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

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

About the Author:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"*Bonjour, Madame. Ca va.*" Lynne used the same multipurpose phrase. Except that her words were not a question, but an answer, Things are going okay<sup>1</sup>. Not really true, but polite. Lynne had spent hours, days, and weeks, supposedly learning French in her three-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Meeting?"

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

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

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

"Dead. How did she die?"

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

## **Chapter Two: EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Why?"

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

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

"Not tactful or culturally sensitive."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Cool, Dudley."

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

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

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

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

### Chapter Three: Road Thoughts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Chapter Four: THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Chapter Five: PREDICTIONS AND PROPHECIES

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

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

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

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

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

Several other volunteers joined in the conversation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You are? Why?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Chapter Six: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

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

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

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

"Irene, what are you doing here?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What did you do?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Aren't you going to the group session?"

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

"You look thoughtful, Lynne!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes Luke, a date."

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

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

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

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

## Chapter Seven: STATE DEPARTMENT POLICY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Chapter Eight: BURN, BABY, BURN**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Chapter Nine: AN END AND A BEGINNING**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But why don't you believe it?"

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

## 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 fetisher 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!

## Chapter Twenty: An Unhealthy Situation

"Ron, look at this!"

Lynne showed him the newspaper.

"Well, that minister's a Mina, one of the few in the president's cabinet. Maybe the president is using this as a way to get rid of him. Or, maybe he didn't give the others their cut of the bribe money."

"Ron, you're so cynical. But Richie. He has such a fine reputation in the American community. Do you think he's a crook?"

"Come on Lynne, don't be so naive. Calling someone a crook is just a matter of definition. Did you think he ran that whole cash checking thing as a charity? You know he was playing big time in the money market. And with all the corruption and restrictive laws, there is no way to do all that legally."

"Ron, do you think Richie had something to do with killing the Ambassador?" And she told him her often repeated story about the strange occurrence in Richie's office with the man who had been the boubou clad waiter in Kara. "Do you think he had the Ambassador killed to keep some of his shady secrets?"

"No, I doubt it. He and the Ambassador were buddies. He often went to Embassy parties. My guess is that now that the Ambassador is gone, Everett, Mr. Acting Ambassador, is doing exactly what the Ambassador would be. He is probably talking to the Togolese Ministry of Justice right now, trying to get Richie out of jail. Richie's an important part of the American community."

"And the boubou man with the pussycat scars?"

Ron laughed. "What a description. I can't figure out what that scene was all about. But, probably he was one of the people Richie dealt with in his business. People are always fighting over pay and money."

"Well, what was he doing working as a waiter in Kara?"

"Lynne, I can't know everything. I can't even guess everything. When the police find him, they'll beat it out of him. Then we'll know."

"You're right. I'm asking you to be my seer. Thanks for your insights. You're always good at knowing what's in the grapevine." Then suddenly, on impulse she said. "It seems like everyone in power is tainted. The only leader we have that I trust is Luke."

"Luke?" Ron's wicked joy was evident. "Luke is pretty good at his job. But, he's not exactly a plaster saint. Sometime I'll tell you what I know about him."

"Oh, I know he has two wives. But that's accepted here."

Ron laughed gleefully. "No. It's not that. You'll be surprised. I did some really fancy snooping to find this out. But I'm trying to decide who to tell and when to reveal it." His beautiful eyes glowed with malicious pleasure.

"I can't believe it's anything bad. But, keep your secret if you want to. It's good to see you perking up a bit. You seemed so down, this whole trip."

"Yes, this is a bummer. I can scarcely bear it. This whole thing's making me sick. I think I'm getting an ulcer from worry about what Dudley will do. Sometimes I feel like going to Everett and telling him the whole thing about Dudley. Maybe I'd be better off out of the Peace Corps and in San Francisco again. I know too many secrets. I've gone from having little enemies to big ones. I know so much about them, I'm a threat. If I'm dangerous to them, maybe they're dangerous to me."

Suddenly a shadow appeared in front of them. Someone was standing over them.

"Dudley, you startled me." Lynne wondered how long he'd been near and what he had heard.

"I want to talk to you two about our plans. We've changed our minds, Ron, about your role in these Self Help inspections. We don't need so many people evaluating Michael's library. We are going to drop you off in Sotoubua. Cindy is doing a project with honey production. Visit her and see what she is doing. We'll pick you up on our way down tomorrow."

Ron looked astonished. He protested feebly.

"Dudley, you know I'm working in education."

"Just give us your impressions, that's all we want."

Ron didn't protest any more. Lynne knew that he'd be glad to get away from Dudley for a day.

"Okay, you're the boss."

Dudley smiled. "Yes, that's right. I am the boss. And Lynne, you and I and Luke are going to see Michael's project. I didn't really brief you before. He is supposed to have built a library with Self Help funds given him last year. But the reports I hear say he never did it. Now, you are a friend of his..."

"Sort of a friend."

"Well he thinks of you as a friend. At least you aren't his enemy. People will trust what you say about it. We will write a report about it together."

"Dudley, I'll look at it with you. And I'll help write a report showing what we see." She chose her words carefully. She didn't want to defy him unnecessarily, but she wanted it clear that she was not a hired gun for him.

"Of course. I only want your honest, unbiased judgment." That relieved her a little, but she remembered Dudley's words during the notorious row in Kara, "I am in charge here. I will exercise my power."

## Chapter Twenty One: Book Lovers

After lunch they resumed their journey. Now that they were in the north country, Lynne saw again the compounds of round mud houses that were so familiar to her from Dapaong. And she began to see pintades, African guinea hens. Their feathers had an attractive small polka dot pattern and they made a sound like oink, oink, oink, that would always mean northland to her.

They dropped Ron off at Sotoubua. Later, Lynne wished she had made a bigger thing of the goodbye, kissed him as she usually did. But the situation was strained and Ron was eager to get away before the others changed their minds again. He asked to be dropped off at the center of town, saying he would find out where Cindy lived and walk there. In her last glimpse of him he was moving with his graceful, buoyant walk, his red shirt contrasting with the drab landscape, his great pleasure at his release making him almost glow. Despite her earlier disapproval of him she found herself thinking fondly that he was a really a gorgeous young man. She didn't realize that would be the last time she would ever see him.

They drove two more hours and arrived in Bassar, one of the four biggest towns in Togo. That meant only that there were a few sand block buildings, a few government offices, one store with a refrigerator, and countless shanties and shacks for people to live in or for small businesses.

Dudley turned to Luke and said earnestly, almost threateningly, "Luke, I expect you to back me up here. I know you tend to take the side of your teacher volunteers. But, taking the Ambassador's fund money and for almost two years stalling and giving excuses instead of performance is a serious thing."

Luke sounded weary, depressed. "I'll do my duty, Dudley. Don't worry about that."

They pulled up in front of Michael's residence. He lived in a compound made up of five houses and several outbuildings, owned by the family of a school teacher. There were three round mud houses with grass roofs and two more modern ones built of the sun dried brick, square, with glass in the windows and tin roofs.

As their paying guest, Michael had the newest, most modern house. It was a dull grey, since the family funds had not stretched to painting it yet. In the center of the compound there was the usual well, but also, Lynne noticed a modern luxury, a water faucet. In front of the house a woman squatted near a fire, occasionally stirring a big pot of sauce. She wiped her hands on the pagne around her waist and shook hands with Lynne. She directed the tiny girl of about three who stood at her knee also to shake hands. Then, she proudly encouraged her tiny child to show off her verbal skills in French. The little girl, with angelic solemnity recited the familiar chant:

*Yovo yovo  
Bon soir  
Ca va bien?*

*Mer ci*

Lynne reminded herself that some people said yovo meant foreigner as well as white person. Luke had told her of traveling in the isolated villages with black American government officials, dressed in American business suits and looking prosperous. He said the children sang the yovo song to them too. Lynne thanked them and shook hands with both of them. The Africans in French speaking countries followed the French custom of constant handshakes. She had been carefully taught to shake hands with everyone when she met them and then again when she said goodbye, even if the encounter only lasted five minutes.

Dudley and Luke wasted no time on these niceties with the woman today, but pushed ahead. Michael was at the door of his house, his scruffy dark beard grown out a little, dressed in a fairly neat shirt and pair of chinos, wearing good leather sandals, acceptable dress for a teacher. He started out with a cold, sullen look on his face but soon was trying to be pleasant.

"Hello Dudley, hello Luke." And then with more warmth, "Hello, Lynne. Come on in."

Michael's house reflected his disorganized life style. Almost every chair or surface was piled with something, wadded up clothes, either clean or dirty, dirty dishes, scraps of paper, beer and wine bottles. There was a big stack of much dog-eared Playboy magazines and several large piles of books. Curious, Lynne looked closer. Most of them were the worn, torn, ragged and partly coverless paperbacks that were donated to the Peace Corps library and were available for long term loan to volunteers. Many were escape fiction-- adventure, mystery, science fiction, and westerns but some were on criminology and sociology, literature, and philosophy. There was even a worn copy of Shakespeare's complete plays and a coverless copy of the dialogues of Plato. So Michael really did like books!

"Sorry for the mess. I've been busy. I haven't seen you since the big blowout in Kara, Dudley. You were busy when I tried to visit you in Lome. I hope there aren't any hard feelings about that little disagreement. You know, I'd been partying and as they say, it was the booze talking."

"Michael, we'll talk about that another time. Now, we want to hear about your project." Dudley, who managed to keep himself and his things neat and clean despite the difficulties of African living, looked around the room with disgust. Even at that moment, after the long dusty journey, he looked crisp and fresh.

"Yes. You ready to go see it now? You know, they gave me just enough money to build the room itself. I still have to figure out how to get some shelves. And I've been collecting books all over. I got some from the Ranfurly Library service in London. I'm making progress, but it's still all just potential as far as using it is concerned."

Dudley listened to this without comment, nodding occasionally, as if humoring a madman. Lynne knew he had no doubt that the inspection would reveal that the construction was not finished, probably, not started. He seemed to be trying to hide his

enjoyment of the situation. He hurried to the car, eager for the confrontation and also probably in a hurry to escape the squalor of Michael's home.

Lynne followed him more slowly. She didn't want to be alone with Dudley in the car and have to hear another lecture about how he expected her to be a team player. Luke and Michael were deep in a private conversation. Luke seemed angry and upset and Michael worried but determined about something. "They'll want to see the books," Michael said. "That's for sure. And when they do, there's nothing I can do."

Luke's voice was at a low volume. Lynne could only a tone of disagreement. More books. What was Michael up to? Luke wasn't going to be able to save him.

Kwami honked the horn, at Dudley's command, and the two quickly caught up to Lynne and hurried to the car. Michael gave Dudley directions to the school. It was only about a half mile down the road.

Lynne saw a typical sand block school, with holes for windows to let in the cooling breeze. A large flock of pintades wandered around the school yard making their distinctive discordant honking sound. The classrooms were in a U shape around a dirt courtyard. She also saw one of the short haired scrawny African sheep looking for a bit of grass near the school rooms. She thought of the old nursery rhyme, Mary had a little lamb.

The suspense was building up. Lynne had to hand it to Michael. He was calm and seemed confident. She wondered what complicated excuses and what rationalization he would spell out to try to cover the fact of the non existence of his building and to bring about their understanding and forgiveness. Michael introduced them to the headmaster, a beaming man in a faded *functionaire* suit. a mao style jacket worn without a shirt, and matching pants and they all exchanged greetings and shook hands. They followed where Michael led. They walked the length of the classroom building.

And there, attached to the school, was an additional room. They entered. It was about 10 by 20 feet long. There was a mud floor. It was built of blocks like the rest of the building. Since there was no electricity, it was hard to examine it carefully.

"Lynne, ask Kwami for a flashlight." Luke said.

Once they got the flashlight, Dudley flashed it on the walls. It was obvious that the room had been build recently. The cement was still not quite dry. But the room was built. It was obviously well constructed. A fine, big room, by local standards. On the floor were about twenty big boxes of books.

The headmaster tried out his small store of English. "It is good. Michael is good. Books is, are good."

He started another round of handshaking, to express his delight.

Michael said, "It's a good start. I'm applying for money for lumber to build the shelves. When I get that, we can get these books out so the teachers and students can use them."

Dudley was almost speechless. He started several sentences, but only produced some sputters.

Lynne had to struggle to keep from laughing. Dudley was so disappointed to see that Michael had somehow pulled it off. She could imagine the agonies of sudden hard work Michael had performed when he learned that Dudley was actually coming up on an inspection trip.

She knew how the volunteers stuck together. Probably all those stationed within twenty miles had worked night and day to help him make the complex arrangements to find and transport the carpenter and the mason and his assistants and also the forms and the cement, to make the blocks, and get the thing constructed in just a week.

"I've really hit my stride, Dudley," Michael said enthusiastically. "You can see that. With a third year I can get another grant for more shelving and more books. We can start a book club and really do something valuable educationally here. We're going to name this library, Dieu Merci, thank God. It took a lot cooperation to build it."

Dudley was still beyond speech. Luke was silent, perhaps out of loyalty to Dudley.

Lynne tried to keep her voice serious and neutral. "You might say that it was almost a miracle."

"Yes," Michael agreed, grinning at Lynne, "A miracle. With a little help from my friends."

## Chapter Twenty Two: A Midnight Visitor

They left Michael at the school, gloating over his achievement, talking to the happy headmaster, who was sure that this visit by the Peace Corps Director would lead to more good things for his school.

Crushed after learning of Michael's disappointing success, Dudley was once more plunged into gloom. Kwami took them all to Affairs Sociales in Bassar, where they registered for rooms for the night. Since Dudley and Luke were important people and the car had diplomatic plates, registration only took a half hour. While they waited, Dudley tried to call Lome. "I tried at Atakpamay and the lines were down. I hope I can get through. There are several important matters..." Eventually he gave up trying. He grumbled, "That's the trouble with travel in the north. You might as well go to the moon, as far as communication with Lome and Washington is concerned. I'll try again tomorrow."

The building was like the one in Kara. Here today long lines of women with babies on their backs waited in line patiently to get the sack of protein supplement infant food provided by Cathwel with the requirement that they weigh their babies and submit to a bit of advise if the babies were not gaining.

Once they got their keys, they each went to their separate rooms to drop off their bags and wash off some of the red dust that had collected on their hair, skin and clothes. Soon it was 6:30 and dark. The place was almost deserted now. There were three or four men at the bar drinking Togolese beer.

Lynne and her two bosses sat on the veranda. Despite the shabbiness of the building, night brought a kind of glamour, with palm trees and tropical bushes waving and rustling in the breeze. The table was lighted by candles, stuck in old wine bottles. Lynne noticed again that Dudley and Luke were stiff with each other and did little talking. Luke occasionally made a little conversation with Lynne about their mutual acquaintances, the English teachers and the Inspectors. Inspector Oujano in Dapaong had been born in Bassar. Luke told her that he would be transferred to Kara where the head inspector could keep an eye on him. Lynne's complaints and those of the English teachers which she had passed on had something to do with it.

"He's an intelligent man. He studied in Paris and must be bored in Dapaong. I hope I haven't ruined his life," Lynne said.

"No, I think it will be good for him. He will be forced to control his drinking. And, he may even end by getting a promotion. He has a talent for making political speeches and Kara is the political capitol of the country. The change may be the making of him. And his transfer will make Inspector Lanagro happy. He hopes they will make him Head Inspector in Dapaong."

Dudley, in his turn, broke the next long silence by telling her more about the history of the plan for the library in Bassar. A previous volunteer had gotten some reference books for the school, but the headmaster had taken them home to adorn his

living room. He couldn't even read them, since they were in English which was not his subject.

When that headmaster was transferred, Michael was encouraged to apply for funds to build a library. The new headmaster promised to keep the books where all the teachers and students could use them. That was all almost two years ago. Dudley sighed. "So you see why I felt we should inspect it. But---"

Lynne listened carefully, trying to decide if he was the good leader she had always thought him or if he was petty and despicable, even dangerous.

At last, their dinner came. Dudley seemed glad to be interrupted. They ate the food on the menu that day, millet mush with peppery tomato- fish sauce. As soon as they finished eating, they parted immediately, agreeing to meet for breakfast at seven AM and start the trip back.

Lynne was happy to get go to her own room, even though it was tiny , almost like a monk's cell, with space in it for a bed and a chair and little besides. The room was lighted by a single 40 watt bulb suspended on a frayed looking wire from the ceiling. There were no screens in the window and she got bit by one of the whineless mosquitoes as soon as she entered . She hurried to get into the old shirt she used as a night gown and climbed into her bed, securely tying the mosquito net.

Lynne wrote in her notebook diary about her day, stressing the newspaper story and Michael's triumph. Once she turned out the light, she went to sleep almost as soon as her head hit the hard little local kapok stuffed pillow.

She was wakened by a sound of pebbles thrown at the window.

Logy, she looked at the window. The room was pitch dark and the night was moonless. She walked hesitantly to the window and pulled back the thin flowered curtain to look out. "Luke", she gasped.

"Quiet", he whispered. " Don't wake Dudley. Will you let me in?"

"Of course. Come to the door." When she opened the door for him, she was struck once more by how good looking he was. The most beautiful human being I have ever seen, she thought. And he cares for me!

"Oh Luke, I didn't dare hope that you would come. It's so hard to see you all day, but to have to act cool and businesslike."

"And it is the same for me. If we speak quietly, I think no one will know. I listened at Dudley's window and he is snoring, like some well fed animal."

"Luke, I get the feeling that you and Dudley are not getting along these days."

"It is true. We are not. He is a man with no flexibility, no compassion. I do not like working with him."

"This whole trip is unpleasant."

"My sweetheart, let us make one small part of it beautiful.

Let me lie on the bed with you and hold you. We will talk of our deepest feelings. Nobody understands me like you do, Lynne. We come from different ends of the earth, but we have so much in common."

Knowing that she might be ruining things by asking him, Lynne still felt impelled to say, " Luke, please tell me about your marriage. I find it difficult to be involved with a married man."

"Oh, my dear. My marriage is not important. My family arranged the marriage when I was only twenty. I never loved her, but felt I had to please my family. She was five years older, an elementary teacher. But she soon gave her teaching up to do petty commerce. She had a squad of women who sold tomato paste on street corners. She was good at it and enjoyed it. She always cared more about money than about ideas, or ideals. Now she manages the little hotel we own. I do not love her. I cannot talk to her. We spend very little time together. In the early days, our three children were born, but we have had almost no sexual relations for years." He looked at her with emotion, "Without love and understanding, sex does not interest me. I have been lonely." He added another word and said, slowly and with emphasis, " Very lonely."

"Oh, Luke!"

"I care a lot about my children and visit them when I can, to inspire them to work hard in school and to have good morals. I have many sides. Honor matters to me. I love Americans. I love their ideas of freedom and democracy and am amazed that they leave their comfortable lives in America to help the Togolese in their poor villages." His eyes glowed with admiration as he looked at Lynne. "You are a good example. Even when your house was burned, you still want to help."

"I had always wanted to do something like the Peace Corps. When my marriage ended, it gave me a chance to really do it."

"How could a man have a jewel like you and leave her? If you were mine, I would cherish you forever."

They heard a loud sound from the room next door. "Oh, it sounds like Dudley is awake and dropped something. Do you think he heard us?"

" No, we have not made much noise. And I will leave quietly." He kissed her sweetly and solemnly on the lips. "Goodnight my love. And Lynne, will you always remember this beautiful time together? Remember how we love each other? No matter what happens, will you remember? No matter what?"

"Oh Luke, I do love you. I will never forget this. A love like ours is a gift of the gods. I'll never forget it." When he left, she felt once more the joy of true, mutual adoration. How lucky she was to have and share this feeling.

She slept, but woke suddenly, feeling she had a bad dream she could not remember. Somehow, words echoed in her mind, "I wear a mask." That was a line from a poem. There were many masks in Africa. But why dream about them?

### **Chapter Twenty Three: Beware The Killer Bees**

The next morning, they had a quick breakfast of bread and butter and instant coffee made with hot water that had been put in big thermos jugs the night before by the kitchen staff since the cooking fires were not lit until later. Since their mission was over, Kwami turned the car toward the branch of the main road which connected with the north/south road at Kara. From Kara the road went south, straight down and eventually reached Lome.

The plan was to stop at Cindy's house in Sotoubua and pick up Ron there and then continue south, stopping to eat a late lunch at Atakpamay. Lynne mused once more at the collection of unlikely friends or near friends she had in the Peace Corps. Fat, blonde, disheveled Cindy was nearly psychotic when she drank, which was often, at night after her work was done. There was a small scandal when she knocked a Togolese man down with her motorcycle, after an evening of celebrating at a local buvette. And Lynne remembered a frightening night when Cindy stayed at Lynne's house, had too much to drink at a local bar and was thrown out of it. It took hours to get her to settle down and go to sleep. She spent part of the time ranting and shouting at people she seemed to feel were in the room. She had many paranoid stories about people who had done her wrong, starting with her family and her father's will, going on to her college advisors and supervisors and crowned by a real hatred of both Dudley and Luke. That night she had seemed to be directing some of her drunken tirades at those Peace Corps administrators.

Lynne thought about the odd couples that Peace Corps brought about. She wondered how Ron and Cindy's day and night together had gone. Cindy came from a conservative family with a fundamentalist religion. She scorned and disliked Ron, and he, a lover of beauty, if not kindness, had a way of saying that she was unstylish, giving the word a special twist.

It was almost ten when they reached the rural road that led to Cindy's house near Sotoubua. They saw a crowd of people, mostly Togolese, but including a few volunteers and Europeans.

When they saw the Peace Corps car, the whole group started shouting urgently, in English, French, Cotokoli, and German. "Thank God you have come. Quick, get him to a hospital. He's just barely breathing."

Trying to make some sense of the urgent competing voices, Dudley and Luke got out of the car and followed where the crowd led.

"You stay in the car Lynne. There are already too many people milling around."

Lynne hated to be left out and tried to peer past the crowd to see what was going on. But soon, Luke returned to get a first aid kit from the car. "Yes, it is better that you stay out of the way. It is terrible. Ron is lying on a blanket at the side of the road. It looks like he is dead. His face is swollen and red, covered with some sort of ... . We will do what we can to save him."

Lynne couldn't bear to stay in the car. She joined the crowd, making a great effort not to get in the way of Dudley and Luke. Dudley found Cindy in the crowd and addressed her directly. "Cindy tell me, what happened? What's the matter with him?"

"The people tell me he was attacked by a huge swarm of bees. They saw him running, completely covered from head to toe by buzzing, angry bees. The more he ran, the more they followed. He was screaming with pain and crying for help. They threw a blanket around him. Finally they got a smoky fire started and drove the bees away. But, by then, he was almost dead. They called the local nurse," Cindy gestured to a Togolese woman in a white uniform." She tried to do something, but it didn't help."

"When did this happen?"

"I wasn't here. They sent to get me at my house. They say it was all about forty five minutes ago."

"Kwami, get someone to help you carry Ron to the car. We've got to get him to a hospital. There's no use taking him to the one in Kara. They won't have any serum or supplies there. We'll take him to the Baptist hospital in Kpalime," Dudley said. "Cindy, how did this happen. Why was he alone?"

"You know Ron, he can't get along with anyone. He walked out after breakfast. Probably like a little kid, he was poking at the bee hive. He should have known that you have to be careful of the new strain of killer bees."

"But didn't you tell him that when you showed him your project yesterday?"

"We got in a fight as soon as he got here and he never went to see the project with me." She looked toward Ron with disgust.

"I'm sorry he got hurt, but it's his own fault. He always thinks he knows everything."

Dudley listened, but didn't take the time to respond.

"Lynne, I'll leave you here. Take a bush taxi home. Kwami will bring you your bag and a package for Irene. Take the taxi to Tablibo and go to Irene's house and give it to her. No matter what we've gone through up here, we'll never hear the end of it if we don't get her the mail and that package I promised her. Spend the night with her. You can get a taxi there to take you home the next morning."

He went to get instructions to Kwami who had succeeded in placing the inert blanket wrapped figure of Ron into the back of the Peace Corps van. A few minutes later, Kwami came with her bag and the things for Irene.

Kwami's kindly face was full of distress.

When the car with Dudley and Luke was gone, Cindy continued her explanation to Lynne.

"They didn't know how to get the bees off of him. They said it was awful. They were all over him, fuzzy and squirming. They were afraid to touch him because they thought the bees might turn on them. But, when I came we started the fire. We'd been trained in what to do if the bees got angry. This is the first time any one has ever been badly hurt by the bees. All the agronomy volunteers were warned carefully and told

not to approach them without a mask and gloves. And the locals knew enough to respect bees. They were always careful. And besides they have their own magic methods. But Ron, probably just blustered up to get a look."

" But why didn't you warn him, tell him."

" You know no one can tell Ron anything. What was he doing here anyway? He's not an agronomy volunteer." "Dudley sent him."

"Yes, Dudley sent him. What a strange thing to do. Maybe he was hoping this would happen. Ron was a pain in the neck since the day we set foot in the country."

The horror of hearing of Ron's encounter with the bees filled her. She knew his life was in real danger. There was no point in taking him to the nearest hospital. The volunteers had been told never to go there. The nurse, Fiona, had told them she saw them cleaning a deep head wound with a wad of absorbent cotton and their methods of sanitation were like the Civil War era in the States. She told them, if they went to any up country local hospital to be sure to take their own bandages and hypodermic needles. And they wouldn't have the right serum to counteract that massive dose of killer bee venom.

Killer bees. For years, it had been sort of a joke with her friends in America, the small articles from time to time in the newspapers about the killer bee menace that was slowly making its way from South America to the US. She hadn't known that some of the African honey bees sometimes went crazy and were life threatening.

Lynne felt sick, filled with pain over what happened. Peace Corps relationships had their own special quality. At home, she would never have met a man like Ron, and certainly would not choose him for a friend. But, after all they had shared in training, and in their meetings since, she felt he was a comrade or an ally. Was there any hope that he would live? The Baptist missionaries in Kpalime had a good hospital. But the trip there would take about four hours. By the time he got there he would be critically weak. And then if the Director of the hospital was in Germany on vacation or their supply of medications that they imported from Europe was depleted, he might not get really good care even there.

Ron had told her this was a cursed group. Maybe Ron would not survive. Then, he would never tell all those secrets he kept hinting at. She thought again of Cindy's question." Why did Dudley send him there? "

Why did Dudley leave him to stay with Cindy? He must have known that Cindy and Ron never did get along. Obviously they could only stand each other for a short time. Did he think or hope something like this would happen?

Maybe Ron's wild story about Dudley was true and Dudley felt it was necessary to silence him. Lynne shivered. Once again, she was left filled with strong suspicion of the Peace Corps Director. The recruiting posters had not prepared her for this.

## Chapter Twenty Four: Good Night, Irene

Cindy walked with Lynne to the taxi station in Sotoubua which was just a muddy, littered large open area surrounded by shacks and stalls that sold everything from food to auto parts. After a two hour wait, the pickup truck that was the taxi going to Tablibo was filled with the 25 people that would fit into it. Then three huge bags of grain were jammed in near their feet and three chickens with their feet tied together. There was a slogan on the bumper that translated to "Who knows his destiny?" It was not reassuring. The truck looked like it could not make the journey without breaking down.

When they reached Atakpamay, four people got out and took the bags of grain with them. Lynne was pleased to be able to stretch out her feet again. But, after a half hour delay, five new people got in to fill up the space. At least the chickens had stopped struggling and seemed to be asleep.

After five hours of uncomfortable travel, Lynne reached the taxi station in Tablibo. As she usually did when visiting volunteers in small towns, she picked a fairly well dressed, alert looking boy and asked him, in French, "Do you know where an American lady lives, a Peace Corps volunteer?"

The boy's face lighted up with pleasure. " Oh, yes. Mama Peace Corps. I will take you there." And off they went at a fast pace through the dark, rutty, uneven, littered streets, turning into smaller, darker, more uneven paths. She saw at some of the houses they passed piles of stones, bowls, and shells stacked and put together to look vaguely like an eerie human. Lynne noticed these often in the rural parts of the country near Vogan, Tablibo, and Aneho. It was bad manners to comment on them to her African friends, but one of her Togolese French teachers had said they were household fetish gods, part of the voodoo religion which was centered in Benin, the neighboring country and had spread over much of Africa and also to Haiti and the New World.

After about twenty minutes of proceeding through the maze of paths, they arrived at a two story building with the lights on.

"Mama lives there," the boy said proudly.

"Thank you so much," she said. "Wait, let me give you something."

" It is not necessary. I am a friend of Americans. Will you take me to America with you? I will work hard."

She had an answer ready because she had been asked this by many others. "I'm sorry. I can't. In American I will not have anyone working for me." Despite his refusal of money, she gave him a 100 franc coin. He smiled even more broadly and left.

Looking up at the building Irene lived in, Lynne saw that as usual, Irene with her combination of pleading, demanding, scheming, and intimidation had gotten a better house than most volunteers. "Top of the line", Ron had wryly described it. And here she was, required to be a guest of her least favorite person. She expected Irene to be reluctant to put her up. On the contrary, Irene was delighted to see her. Lynne had often thought that Irene would rather be with the devil himself than be alone.

Irene was a good hostess and despite the problems of volunteer housekeeping, soon had a good cup of coffee and a plate of cheese and bread and a bowl of fruit before her. Lynne ate it. She was hungry. And besides, it would be rude to refuse. Lynne told Irene briefly why she was there-- the change of plans because of the ghastly bee attack on Ron. Irene was horrified at the latest threat to their lives that had surfaced here, but was unsympathetic about Ron's pain.

Irene had never liked Ron. In fact, she had often complained about him to the volunteers and also to Dudley and Luke. She said, perhaps echoing Dudley, that he was not a good representative of America. Somehow, this time, she managed not to express her dislike, but merely said, "Too bad." Then continued, "Ron as usual was probably doing something he wasn't supposed to do. You know he's a strange person. He just isn't the volunteer type."

Lynne didn't bother to try to defend him. For one thing, there was some truth in it. Lynne had often been repelled by him. Sometimes he was just too spiteful. And his latest revelation of blackmail was distasteful to her.

Even so, she did protest, "Now, Irene, please don't say things like that. Ron is my friend." And she didn't try to argue with her. Irene was so unreasonable and illogical that an argument with her was always frustrating and she knew that she never won.

She wanted to change the subject. Irene wanted to know all the latest news. But Lynne hated to get involved in a complicated discussion with her. She tried to steer the conversation to Irene and what she had been doing. Irene was soon telling her the latest in her mysterious romance with the person she called "an unknown Togolese official." After hearing these hints for many months, Lynne and the others were sure she was hinting at a romance with William Foli, the director of their training camp. He was a fine man and a good leader and Lynne felt he should have more sense and better taste than to get involved with Irene. But she had a way of hinting at secret assets in the United States and her desire to help Togolese get scholarships for higher education. Perhaps hope for the future had swayed him into accepting some sort of relationship. And once more, Lynne heard her excited hints and self congratulatory revelations, scarcely listening.

Just once, a spot of perversity made her make a comment.

"But Irene, he's probably married."

"Oh of course he is. They all are. But that doesn't cramp their style. You know the Togolese, the sexiest, most macho men on the globe. Just look at Luke."

"Luke?"

"Yes, Luke. He sometimes brings his wife to Peace Corps parties. She brings cookies that she's made, the same kind she makes to sell at the market. And there's wife number two. Actually, he never legally married her, but had a child with her when he was in college. She lives in a village not far from here. He visits the child on his birthday, and takes him some books. Those two women don't stop his romances with volunteers."

Lynne felt herself blushing. Did Irene know about their love affair? Somehow, despite their great efforts at secrecy everyone seemed to know.

But Irene went on. " Yes, volunteers. There was that Veronica who used to go with Michael. She went home early because of some secret problem, probably to have, my guess, an abortion. But whether it was Michael's or Luke's child we'll never know. And then, of course, there's Dulcie."

"Oh Irene, where do you get all this from?" She looked at her almost pleading. "You're joking, aren't you?"

"No, of course I'm not. Luke is the biggest tomcat in the country."

Lynne couldn't find words. She ended by lamely saying, "I'm awfully tired Irene. Could I go to sleep now? I'll be happy to sleep on your couch."

Irene was disappointed and hated to lose the opportunity to have someone to talk to. Lynne gave Irene her letters and the package that Dudley had been so conscientious about delivering. Irene opened them with delight, all the time commenting and chatting about who wrote each one, why it was sent, the usual torrent of Irene talk. All the time Lynne was rummaging in her backpack and laying out her pagnie and brushing her teeth, Irene continued with the non stop flow.

"Did Michael actually get that library started? I know for a fact that there wasn't a block built when he went to Kara three weeks ago. He's really shameful. Last time he stayed here on his way to Lome, he tried to get into my bedroom. I found it flattering, to tell the truth, but I didn't think it was a good idea. He was so drunk and is so crazy who knows what he would have done to me."

Intrigued by this strange story into commenting and risking encouragement of the conversation, Lynne said, "Michael tried to get into your bed?" Irene must be at least 60 years old.

"Yes, you notice the odd way this apartment is made. There's a screen door separating the living room from my bedroom. I usually leave the real door open and close that screen door. When I went to bed that night that Michael was here I was careful to hook the screen even though he had passed out on the couch and I thought that was the end of him until morning. But, about 2 o'clock I was wakened. I saw him, by the light of the moon, pushing and hitting the screen and cursing, but then he started begging. 'Irene, let me in, Irene, I'm lonesome ,please, it's so lonely here in this country, we can comfort each other!'

"I told him to go away and go back to his couch. Then he started cursing really violently and I really thought he would break the door. Finally I said, "Michael, I have a knife. If you come in here, I will slit your throat." Irene laughed with malicious glee.

"Did that do it?"

"He left right away. In fact, he grabbed his things and left the house and never came back. He's a maniac."

Lynne managed to convince Irene to let her take a shower in privacy. When she returned to the living room, Irene was waiting, expectantly, ready to continue with her endless tales, probably mostly untrue.

After the long day full of horrors and this unpleasant visit with Irene, Lynne was exhausted, both physically and mentally. Finally, really fed up with the incessant torrent of words coming from Irene's smeary painted mouth, Lynne started talking, halfway musing, to herself. "I'll be glad to get back to Lome. And I know one thing. I'm getting tired of this conspiracy of silence about the Ambassador's death. I've been writing in my notebook every night. I have pages of notes, and all the time I've been trying to sort things out. It's all beginning to fit in place. When I get to Lome, I'm going to type them all up on my computer and take them to the authorities."

"Do you think you know who killed the Ambassador?"

"Yes, I think I know. It's all tied to secrets and scandals. I want to be fair so I won't say anything yet, but when I get it all sorted out and ready I'll take it to someone who can do something about them."

Irene was silent for a moment. Then she said quietly, "You have good judgment, Lynne, and you're not a vindictive person. I don't think you will cause trouble for anyone unnecessarily."

Surprised at this praise, Lynne answered thoughtfully, "I do try to be fair and kind. And in this case I'll continue to try. But, no matter how sympathetic I might be or how compelling the reasons behind the action, I don't think a person should be allowed to get away with murder."

Really completely worn out she said, "I'm going to sleep now Irene. Thank you for your hospitality." She curled up on the couch, squeezed her eyes shut and covered her head with her pagne. "Good night Irene." And when her gregarious hostess tried to continue the conversation, she said, firmly, "Irene, good night!"

## Chapter Twenty Five: Sunny Gets Blue

The next morning, Irene insisted on walking with Lynne to the taxi station and stayed with her until she was actually in a taxi. She kept up an unending flow of talk, but Lynne managed to successfully tune it out. At last she could say, " Good bye Irene. Thank you for your hospitality" and start off. After yesterday's terrible happenings capped off by the unpleasant visit with Irene she yearned for the comfort of a friend. Instead of taking a taxi directly to Lome she had decided to visit Sally at her post in Vogan. She had to talk to someone sensible and decent and try to sort out what was happening.

Down here in the south, bush taxis were cars and station wagons rather than pickup trucks and were a little more comfortable than the northern vehicles. At least there were not so many chickens and goats crammed in. And waits for taxis were shorter. She got in a beat up eight person taxi. The sign near the license plate said, in French, "Only god knows." Halfway to the next village, the taxi stopped at a crossroad and the engine died completely. All the passengers jumped out and positioned themselves on the back and sides to push. After a few minutes of this, the engine caught and they all struggled to get into it again without stopping and killing the motor. After that, the driver stopped for nothing-- goats, chickens and bicycles were greeted with a loud honking of the horn as the car slowed down a bit and whatever was in front of it scurried out of the way.

It was ten o'clock when she reached the taxi station in Vogan, a bare, muddy, vacant lot near the market. When Lynne asked a group where the volunteer lived, a little boy in a ragged pair of shorts with a sweet smile offered to take her there. He took her on a winding path around half finished buildings, past tin roofed huts, through a vacant lot where pigs and sheep were rooting out every scrap of nourishment left on a trash heap. He took her to Sally's house, a typical Peace Corps residence, a fine place by local standards, but rundown, with paint peeling off, unscreened windows, an old tin roof repaired with flattened pieces of cooking oil tins. She gave the little boy 100 francs and he thanked her fervently and left, an even sweeter smile on his face.

When she tapped lightly on the door, Sally opened it immediately. "Lynne, I'm glad to see you. I can really use some friendly company." Sally's usually clean, bouncy blond hair was dingy and bedraggled. She looked pale and strained. Lynne was surprised to see her looking so dispirited. She had often thought in the past that Sally would fit in well in a painting of a sunny day at a mid west farm house.

"You've never visited me before. You don't have to work in the office today?"

"Oh Sally, I've been on tourney with Luke and Dudley and Ron and it is all so hideous."

"I don't have a meeting until three, so come sit down and tell me all about it."

She told Sally about Ron's terrible encounter with the killer bees. She, too had been a little friendly with Ron.

Sally said she felt bad about him being dead or dying. "Imagine, Dudley and Luke had to make that grim journey home with what was left of poor Ron in the car."

"Ron told me that he knows a damaging secret about Dudley and Dudley knows that he knows it. Now this happens to Ron."

"I can't help wondering why Ron was sent to visit Cindy and her project of raising bees. Ron doesn't know anything about honey or bees, he's a city boy, through and through. He wouldn't have any idea that they were so dangerous."

"Yes, and Cindy explained to me that the agronomy volunteers were trained extensively to avoid problems with the bees who can be deadly. Do you think Dudley, knowing that Ron was impetuous and curious, sent him there hoping the killer bees would get him out of the way for him?"

Sally looked skeptical. "That sounds unlikely."

"Is there any official news about the Ambassador's death? We couldn't even get through on the telephone. Dudley tried from Bassar."

"No, no official news, at all."

"Oh Sally, so many terrible things keep happening. And I keep wondering if it's all tied to the Ambassador's death. Ron told me he thought this group of Peace Corps volunteers is cursed. Sometimes I think he's right."

"Cursed, or messed up. It's sure hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys."

In a lighter vein, Lynne told her about the outcome of the inspection of Michael's project.

Sally said, "I really get a kick out of that. I know Michael is a flake, but somehow, I hate to see him in more trouble than he usually is. I think we all know we spend too much time sitting under a tree in the shade instead of fighting in the hot tropical sun to achieve, achieve, achieve, and feel protective of volunteers who can't get their act together. Michael's not a nice person. He's done some bad things. But he's a fairly good teacher when he does his work. Unfortunately, he fell in love at the beginning of his training here with Veronica, you know, the one who lived in your apartment before you. Then instead of sticking to his job way up north in Bassar, he was always on the road visiting her in Lome. But she's gone now. She was sent home early instead of finishing her service. Somehow, Luke let her go two months early. The other volunteers in her group complained like mad. Even so, I can understand how the others banded together to help him build that library fast."

"Yes, it's funny how we feel a loyalty to the other volunteers, no matter what they do. Did you ever hear about the worst volunteer that ever served in Togo? They said his specialty was partying it up until late and spending the night in a ditch when he collapsed there finally. Sometimes a kind local person would bring a pagné and cover him up. Besides that, they said, he sponged off the Togolese totally; you know how hospitable they are. They'll share what ever they have on their table, even if it means short rations for the family. He ate every meal with them, didn't even get himself a stove to cook on, and when he returned to America he had almost his entire salary

saved. And yet, once when the director tried to get after him, a group of volunteers went to plead with him to let him stay."

"It's odd. In the Peace Corps you find yourself sticking up for people you wouldn't speak to at home." Sally said.

"Yes," Lynne agreed. "Peace Corps makes strange bed fellows." Then, she started to giggle, thinking of Irene's wild story about Michael's frustrated love.

When she told Sally the story, she listened seriously and did not laugh. "Lynne, I think Michael is a dangerous man. I saw some records once that showed he had violent episodes in his past. You saw how crazy he was in Kara. That is one volunteer I wouldn't like to be alone with."

"Irene also said---- she was full of so many stories, I can't believe them all. But she said... did you every hear about Luke having affairs with volunteers?"

Sally gave Lynne a penetrating look. "You mean present company excepted?"

"Yes, present company excepted."

"Lynne, you must know, or maybe you don't know, but everyone else knows, Luke is a tom cat."

"Oh. Irene used the same words."

"I don't know who said it first. But it's true. He's a nice tomcat, at least I've always thought so, but he's a tomcat. By the way, did you notice anything strange about Luke and Dudley on the trip? "

"Why?"

"It's still a secret. When I went to the Lome to get some news about my project yesterday, Linda, the volunteer support person, do you know her, she's a doll, a black American married to a Togolese man? She always does what she can to help us fight our way through the red tape. She told me that Luke is in some kind of trouble. She was mysterious about it and wouldn't tell me more."

"Do you think the trouble could have something to do with romancing volunteers?"

"It's possible. But, don't look so upset. You aren't in trouble. Linda told me that not only the Peace Corps administrators, but also Everett Knowlton have been singing your praises."

"That's good. Sally, did you hear Dulcie's story about the Ambassador?"

"No."

Lynne told her about Dulcie's humiliation at the dinner party.

Sally listened intently. "Lynne, we keep wondering who would want to kill the Ambassador. According to your story, Dulcie is one of the few people who had a grudge against the Ambassador, and a reason to want to kill him. You know she's waiting for a decision on a wonderful job she applied for. She wouldn't get it if the Ambassador gave a bad report on her. And she was right there at that lunch table, supervising the waiters."

"How could you even dream of suspecting Dulcie? The person that killed the Ambassador has to be much more sinister and diseased."

"But someone we know well must be more sinister and diseased than we think. There were only a few of us near the Ambassador when he died. Maybe Dulcie was deeply disturbed. Some people can put on a good front, and seem upbeat, cheerful, rational, but underneath there's another side, almost another personality that can do terrible things. Maybe she spent her adolescent years in a mental institution. How would we know?"

"How could she get into the Peace Corps?"

"You know that the main thing you have to do is get four people to write recommendations for you. Aside from that, little information is required."

"Oh, everything seems so messy and horrible. I'm discouraged. And you seem down today, too."

"Yes," Sally said, "Hearing about Ron really depresses me. But I was already discouraged today. You know my job in Peace Corps is working with women's cooperatives. I've spent probably 100 hours talking to everyone, making plans, getting agreement, looking for materials for a weaving project for them and now I find I have to go to the meeting and tell the women that there's no money. We can't start. It will probably make the group fall apart."

"Sometimes I just get sick and tired of always being hot and sweaty, always being uncomfortable. But, I'll let you go, now. You can find your way back to the taxi station, can't you? I've got to take a shower. And soon I'll go to the meeting with the bad news. I just hate that. I knew that the Ambassador was thinking of refusing the project, but I thought with his death I would have another chance at getting the funding. I just learned yesterday that the Ambassador trashed my project, definitively. He ruined my life."

"I wanted to prove myself before I settle down to being Mrs. Nice Doctor's Wife. Thanks to that bastard, the Ambassador, I'll probably never accomplish anything in my life except raising a couple of children. Yes, the message from Sunny Sally is that bastard should have died a little sooner. He won after all!"

## Chapter Twenty Six: Pen In Hand

Lynne returned by bush taxi from Vogan at three o'clock on Thursday after visiting Sally. That trip only took two hours, a pleasant drive. Part of the way the road was near the sea so occasionally she got glimpses of a tropical scene with waves and also the stately coconut palm trees that were part of the agriculture established by the Germans to help find a source of income to replace the slave trade in the eighteenth hundreds. Since her apartment was on the main road going to the city, she was dropped off just in front of the university and only had about two blocks to walk before she was back to the building that held her apartment. She greeted the sleepy guard and the ever present ever lively group of children who this time said, "Bon arrivee" many times, singly and in chorus. This welcome made her feel good. She was no longer a stranger.

She was relieved to see that her apartment basically was in good order. There was a covering of dust, and some new ants, and a slightly rotten smell because of the spoiling of the bananas she had left on top of the refrigerator. She decided that she would not even attempt to contact the office or Peace Corps until morning. Without phones in most houses and with poor postal service, the easiest way to contact anyone was to go where they were. She would go back to work tomorrow.

She decided to unpack, do a little washing, take a shower, and remove some of the dust from her furniture. In the early evening she walked to the African version of a mom and pop store nearby. In Togo these were usually owned by Lebanese or Indians and partly staffed by families. There was no refrigerator, but she was able to find enough food to keep her for a few days, instant coffee, powdered milk, cookies, some Vache Qui Rit cheese. On the side of the street nearby, a woman with a baby playing around her knees was selling fruit. She bought oranges, a pineapple, and some bananas. Just past her another woman was selling loaves of the delicious fresh brown crusted french bread.

After supper she sat at the shaky table she used for a desk, writing in her notebook, trying to summarize her impressions of the mysterious events that had occurred since she had gone to Kara on her birthday. Maybe if she brought it up to date and organized her daily notes she would get some clear idea of what was going on.

The trip up north had been like a visit to another world, so different from life as she had always known it that it seemed like a fantasy realm. But now that she was back near to sources of authority and in contact with the States, she hoped things would become clearer. Her idea of who she suspected of the murder had been crystallizing for the last two days. But there were so many possibilities. She read over all her notebook entries since the trip to Kara, and started a clean page. She would organize her notes and try to make them make sense.

Just before she went to bed she reached the end of the ten pages of notes she had written. To summarize, she started a fresh page and made a chart. She printed neatly.

THE MURDER OF THE AMBASSADOR

Method	How given?	When?	Source
Poison, tuitui	In drink	At lunch	?

Then she started a chart of suspects. She printed in big letters a title:

**WHO KILLED THE AMBASSADOR?**

She listed four names as possible murderers.

She thought again and for fairness sake, added a name. Luke. She got this far and then thought, "This is a sexist list." She should be an equal opportunity suspecter. She added four names. She admitted to herself that she just had this full list to try to be orderly and logical. She felt she should include everyone at the head table at that fatal lunch and also those at the next table, which was close. And also, she had to include the boubou man and Dulcie who had been hovering nearby.

Her suspicions were really much narrower. But she filled out the chart as completely as she could. She had one column for possible motives. Someone had suggested that maybe the Ambassador was killed by mistake. Maybe Dudley was the intended victim.

So she included all those with a motive against Dudley.

She titled one column, How Likely. She put a star in that column for those that conceivably had a motive and ok for those that had none. She looked critically at the finished chart.

Possible suspect	Motive	How likely
Ron	meant to kill Dudley.	*
Michael	meant to kill Dudley	*
Dudley	to hide secret wrongdoing	*
Boubou man [for Richie]	to hide criminal activity	*
Luke	no motive	ok
Dulcie	to prevent bad reference	0
Sally	he refused project money	*
Fiona	no motive	ok
Cindy	meant to kill Dudley	*

She put a second star after the boubou man's name. Then she thought deeply. The bee attack on Ron seemed significant.

She went to the kitchen to get a drink and to the bathroom to wipe her face with water. She returned to her desk, read her list again and then put a second star next to a name. Dudley.

She really must talk to someone about all this.

Show her notes to someone official. It seemed like no one was doing anything. She was one person who had been involved from the first, nearby when the Ambassador died, and also close to the situation when Ron was attacked by the bees. If no one did anything, who knew who else would get hurt or killed?

Should break the promise of secrecy she made to Ron and tell someone the sordid story about his blackmailing Dudley. Ron could be in terrible danger.

And was Michael in danger? He had antagonized many people, including Dudley. If the motivation of the murders and attacks was to keep secrets from coming out, what secrets did Michael know? Or almost as dangerous, what secrets did he pretend to know and threaten to reveal?

And she, herself. Was she in danger? She had seen that strange fight with the boubou man. And so many people had talked to her and hinted scandalous things. Did others, especially Dudley, know that she knew these things? Or suspect? She vowed to

think of someone in authority that she could talk to tomorrow. She must act and get someone with authority and resources to act.

## Chapter Twenty Seven: What Did The Butler Do?

Lynne had just arrived at her office at eight o'clock the next morning when the interoffice phone rang. She heard the haughty voice of Claudia Belmont. Lynne thought of a term for her. A power snob. She treated Lynne and the other volunteers as if they did not exist, looking through them if required in any way to have contact with them.

She spoke in her usual cold authoritative voice, "The Acting Ambassador wants to see you immediately."

Despite the command for instant action, Lynne took a few minutes to collect her thoughts. She could scarcely remember what she had been working on Monday before she left. She gathered together her folder of the outstanding proposals, a pad of paper and a pen. She also got from the files the folders for Michael's and Cindy's projects.

Everett Knowlton greeted her warmly. "I'm glad you're back, Lynne."

"I'm glad to be back." Once again, she had the problem of what to call him, so concentrated on not calling him anything. "It seems like horrible things happen when I'm up north, lately."

"Yes, that volunteer and the bees, a terrible thing."

Lynne took a deep breath, expecting to hear confirmation of Ron's death. "And Ron? How is he?"

"The Peace Corps Director managed to get a telephone line that was working and called us from Sokode. We were able to get an emergency helicopter to meet them in Kpalime after the Baptist hospital gave him some transfusions and serum. The helicopter flew him to Lome. Fortunately, the Air Afrique Flight left at 6 that night so they could send him to Abidjan almost immediately. And, after some treatment there, they will medivac him to the US for more treatment."

"He's alive!"

"Yes. He was critical at first, but he'll make it."

Lynne was relieved. She had been so sure he was dead. Maybe everything would turn out all right for all of them. "That's wonderful."

Everett Knowlton took in her relief. "You volunteers care a lot for each other, don't you?"

"Yes, we do. For better or worse, we're a family. Not always congenial or well matched, but still a family."

"And, I hear your little inspection tour showed the volunteer, Michael, had used the funds properly."

Lynne felt like laughing again when she thought of Michael's surprising accomplishment. But she said in a businesslike way, "Yes, the Ambassador's funds were well used."

"Good."

The Acting Ambassador seemed so casual and relaxed, Lynne wondered why he had called her in. Was he really devoting his valuable time to chat with her?

"Since you were out of town, you missed some of the happenings in the American community. You know Richie, the money changer."

"Oh yes, remember I told you I cashed a check there last week. And a strange thing happened, that man who waited on the table in Kara was in there and threatened him with a knife, some fight over some money he said Richie owed him."

Everett sighed. "Ah, yes. Richie's work takes him down some shady lanes. He was arrested at the airport because of a transaction with a Togolese cabinet minister. I spent two days seeing every official from the police on up in order to get him out. Did you read in the paper about Richie being in jail?"

"Yes, I did."

The Togolese government used the incident to get rid of a minister that was suspected of being loyal to the Olympio faction and the democracy movement. From what I can figure out, it seems that their transaction was a secret but accepted procedure, and it was a matter of politics to suddenly arrest him. It was one way to get a possible candidate out of the running."

"And, what will happen to Richie?"

"I think he may eventually pay a small fine. But, he's back in business, today."

"And Richie isn't really a criminal?"

Now Everett Knowlton smiled. "That is a semantic question. Criminal can mean someone who disobeys the laws. But sometimes the laws are made so they will be disobeyed and the government officials can get *cadeaux*, bribes for ignoring them. Richie assured the Ambassador that his operation was basically clean. He is honest in his own way, and is helpful to Americans. So, let's leave the label to philosophers."

He was saying the same thing Ron had predicted. "And did the Ambassador know all this? "

"Of course the arrest happened after the Ambassador's death. But he certainly knew the background information. He was the one who briefed me."

He paused, and once more Lynne was surprised at being able to take up his time and ask some of the things that she had been wondering about. "I know you have been concerned because we haven't made any announcements about the Ambassador's death. At last, we have the replacement for the American security officer that retired. Don McDuff has come to town and from now on can take over the whole security function. He will be in charge of coordinating the Togolese and American effort to investigate the death. We have all decided, with the approval of Washington, temporarily, to leave the cause of death officially as a heart attack and just make one announcement when we have finally found the murderer."

"But who do you suspect?"

"Oh, I'm not in the detective business. I'll not worry about suspecting anyone until the investigators tell me what they know."

"But have they found the waiter that was there when the Ambassador died?"

"They finally found him and questioned him carefully. He says that he makes a living working temporarily here and there. He used to hang around Richie's, in order to occasionally do errands for him. Richie was a money lender, besides being a money changer. I think that your boubou man may have had the job from time to time of impressing it upon people that they must pay their debts, sometimes rather forcefully. I hope they didn't do too much of that sort of thing. "

Lynne laughed weakly. "So that's what the butler did when he wasn't pouring drinks for the Ambassador. Doesn't anyone check the records of people they hire for Peace Corps functions?"

"Come on Lynne, this is Africa. We have no control over things like that. Most businesses here don't even have written records. And do remember that the Ambassador's visit was somewhat of a surprise. Originally they had planned to send me there.

"They found out a lot from the man. His name is Komi Bedeba. He said that last month he went up north where he has several wives and families. He works as a waiter from time and was happy to get the job as extra help at the Peace Corps meeting. That's why he was working at Affaires Sociales that day in Kara. He says he was frightened when the Ambassador died and was afraid that he would be blamed. You know people here are terribly afraid of witchcraft and of people putting potions and poisons in food and drinks. But, as far as anyone can tell, he had no motive to hurt the Ambassador. The police beat him thoroughly before they told us that they found him. That's all they got out of him. That, and the fact that he had tried to convince Richie to pay him a second time for a service he performed, telling Richie that someone had robbed him of the money. When Richie didn't fall for the story, he tried to force the issue."

Everett looked at her searchingly.

She was struck by what a nice looking man he was. There was nothing dramatic or flashy about his appearance, he just looked pleasant and inspired trust.

"You were with Luke and Dudley in the car all day, from morning to night. How did they get along together?" he asked.

"They seemed cold and formal. I couldn't make out what was going on."

Everett looked sad. "You'll learn soon. I've put it off because it is unpleasant, but I must make an announcement soon. You call the Peace Corps a family. There's a big problem in your family."

Which of her suspicions would be confirmed?

"So you can't tell me now?"

"No." There was a long pause. Everett remained silent.

Lynne wondered again why he had called her in. What was the real purpose of this meeting? It was pleasant to talk with him even about these unpleasant things. But was he leading up to something? Had she done something wrong?

Abruptly, Everett said, "Lynne, in this job I have so little free time, and no private life. But, I think I can polish off the most pressing things if I work late Friday night. Would you, will you go out to dinner with me Saturday? We could drive out to Robinson Beach, watch the waves a while, eat on the veranda overlooking the water. It's lovely there, simple and peaceful, with a nice cool breeze. Even though the restaurant is only a large veranda with a few cooking shacks and a refrigerator, they say that they have excellent chocolate mousse for dessert."

A torrent of mixed feelings surged through Lynne. She was pleased that such a nice, important man wanted to take her out on a real date. Of course he didn't know about her relationship with Luke and she couldn't tell him about it. But then she thought, why should she feel any loyalty to Luke? He had a wife or two, besides those worrisome possibilities hinted at by Irene and Sally. So, with only a barely perceptible pause, she said, "I'd love to. It sounds wonderful." And then she deliberately decided to

call him something. You had to call someone you are dating by a name. "Yes, I'll be glad to, Everett."

## Chapter Twenty Eight: In The Dark

Everett's telephone rang. "Yes, Claudia, I'll get right on it," he said in a placating voice. After he hung up he said, "She's a little hard to take sometimes, but I'm lucky to have her. She's the one who knows what the Ambassador or an Acting Ambassador is supposed to do. I'd better get back to work. As usual, most of these things are urgent."

Lynne went back to her office in a happy mood. Everett had not given her any new instructions for work, so she busied herself processing the pile of applications she had started before her trip up north.

Without a tap or knock, the door burst open. She should have guessed. It was Irene. She beamed with expectation of an especially warm welcome, now that she had offered hospitality to Lynne. "I've got my application ready for my grant for a car. You have to get this to the Acting Ambassador today. We've got to get this all cleared up. I need transportation."

"Irene, you should realize this really isn't in the guidelines for the Ambassador's Self Help Fund, to get a car for your personal use. Are you sure you want to press this?"

"Of course. Here. I made it out just like you told me to."

Lynne never got over being surprised and repelled by the selfishness and gall of Irene. "You know, the money is to help the Togolese."

"What could help the Togolese more than to have me available to travel at any time? I'm here to help them. If you won't send it through I'll talk to the Acting Ambassador myself."

Wanting to spare Everett from an unpleasant scene and a great waste of his time, she hurriedly agreed. "I'll look it over and send it right through today. Call me in about a week and I'll tell you what's happening with it."

"A week. That's not fast enough. I'll be back in town Monday. I want an answer then."

Irene took Lynne's silence for agreement. Bubbling with enthusiasm, she started one of her stream of consciousness monologues about her plans for shopping, eating, and visiting while she was in Lome.

Lynne was deeply grateful when her telephone rang and the guard at the gate told her that a volunteer wanted to see her. "Sorry, Irene, I've got an appointment now. See you later."

When Irene left, still talking, she asked the guard who was there. It was Michael. She told him to send him up.

Michael came in looking pleased with himself.

"Lynne, I want to make an application for those funds to get the shelving for the library. And, did you talk to Dudley about my third year? I don't think he can refuse me now."

"You heard what happened to Ron, didn't you? We found him not many hours after we left you."

"Yes," Michael said, somberly. "It sounds like it's lights out for Ron. You never know what will happen. That's why I live every day for itself. Maybe it will be my last one."

Lynne knew that Michael did live like that. But she hadn't thought he would express it. She couldn't resist picking a small hole in his philosophy. "If you believe

that, maybe I don't need to bother to give you the application for the grant, or try to help you get your third year."

Michael laughed. "Well, that's just in case I do make it until then."

"Things aren't as bad as we all thought. I just learned that Ron isn't going to die. He is in Abidjan right now and doing well."

"Oh, that's good news. But, I'm sure he'll never be back here. He caused too much trouble for the administration. Ron never really fit in here. And Dudley doesn't like anyone that isn't a little tin soldier like he is. Or at least pretends to be. Dudley will use this as an excuse to keep him from coming back. Or maybe Ron will choose it. But, mark my words, we've seen the back of him."

"Maybe so."

"But anyway, back to Dudley. I'm going to talk to him again about the third year. He'd better give it to me. He really is a bad guy. He'd better watch out. He was lucky in Kara. But the next time he won't be so lucky."

"What do you mean about Kara?"

"Oh, you don't believe that Ambassador was the target of that death. That was a mistake. Nobody wanted to hurt the Ambassador. But Dudley, that's a different story."

"Yes, that's possible. Michael, at that meeting you asked a lot of questions that the volunteers had brought up about Carrie's death. Are you still suspicious about that?"

"No, I'm pretty satisfied with the news story and letter. All my Togolese friends are sure it was Pierre who killed Carrie and that Peace Corps officials had nothing to do with it. There was something strange about a locked door. It turned out that old Koudolo, the elder of the compound, had a key. He locked it to be sure no one got in and stole anything."

"I'm glad that's cleared up. It's good to have one death explained and one less thing to wonder about. But about Dudley, Michael, what kind of a person would kill another human being over any of the petty things people are complaining about. Could you kill someone?"

Michael thought a minute. "Yes, I could. Sometimes I get mad or drunk or just don't give a damn. But, I'd never use poison. I'd knock him down and kick him or stick a knife in him."

"Michael do you mean it?"

"Yes. It's not pretty but it's true. Some of the things I had to do as a prison guard, I came close to offing those animals." Lynne felt herself instinctively pulling away from Michael. And this was a man that most people, including Michael, considered to be her friend.

"Okay. But honestly, you didn't kill the Ambassador, or know who did?"

"No I didn't and don't, Lynne. Killing like that's not my style."

"Michael, you're a friend of Solomon. What did he mean when he made that prophesy? Did he somehow know that a murder was planned? Do you think he helped get the poison?"

"Lynne, I know you're interested in all of this. I'll tell you what I'll do. Solomon makes a sort of circuit, traveling the country, going from relative to relative, friend to friend, getting a some food and a little money from each one. Chances are he'll turn up in Bassar soon. I'll talk to him, try to find out why he said that about a curse on us."

"Will you really do that?"

"Yes I will. And, will you really talk to Dudley about me?"

"Oh Michael, why do you want to stay? You have missed so many classes this year your students probably won't pass their examinations."

"Lynne, I'm turning over a new leaf. Honestly. If I get the third year I'll stick to my job, teach the students and really develop the library."

"Okay, it's a deal." She gave Michael some tips on how to make his application effective and gave him a form.

That evening Lynne made her way home by taxi. She stopped at the SGGG store to buy some good groceries. The SGGG was almost like an American supermarket. It seemed like an amazing place to Lynne after her time in Dapaong, where the best store had only a tiny refrigerator and the electricity was off twelve hours a day. She feasted her eyes on its large selection of foods, carefully deciding which of the bounteous display of groceries she could afford. Afterwards she took a shared taxi with three assorted Togolese. They eyed her with a friendly curiosity as was the custom.

She in turn, smiled faintly and looked them over. She never got over her enjoyment of the wonderful Togolese clothes. There were at least a thousand different African prints worn currently. One of the men in the taxi wore a pink embroidered *complet*. It contrasted beautifully with his bittersweet chocolate skin. Shocking pink. She wished men in American would dress like that. But then she almost giggled as she thought of self important Brad in such a suit. With his pale skin he would look washed out in it, almost sickly. Darn. She had thought of him again!

She was home before dark came at 6:30.

She made another of her simple suppers. It was a treat to be able to prepare her own meal with fresh supplies. She even had bought some hamburger, something only sold at the SGGG and the two other yovo stores in town.

Because of all of the things she had heard about Luke lately, for once she hoped he wouldn't visit her this evening. She couldn't decide how to treat him, ignore the rumors or to ask him about them. And she felt a little guilty about her date with Everett. She would rather see how it turned out before she told Luke about it, if she did tell him.

By the time she had eaten and washed her dishes it was dark outside. She was tired after her first day back after her long journey. Even so, she took some time writing in her notebook and reread her speculations about the murder. It was a relief that this Mr. McDuff was going to really investigate it. She got ready for bed early.

Lynne was happy to be back in Lome, in her own apartment and her own bed. She felt safe and at home here. The fine breeze coming from the balcony made her comfortable and at least for the time, cool. She got into a clean old tee shirt for a night gown. As usual, she left one night light burning in the entryway near the door. It was weak but cast a dull glow over that area of the apartment.

As usual, she fell asleep almost as soon as her head hit the pillow. But, as often happened, she woke later. Drowsily she wondered why she had wakened. Was there a noise? Suddenly she jerked awake. The apartment was completely dark. The light near the door was out. Feeling uneasy, she thought it must have burned out. She turned the switch to turn on the reading lamp near her bed. It still was dark. She glanced out the window and saw the neighbors' lights were still burning. It wasn't a general failure. She started to feel worried. Then, she heard a sound at the door. Someone was trying to get in. Someone had turned off her lights at the fuse box and was trying to enter her

apartment in the darkness. She heard a scratching at the door and then a loud thud. In the unlighted darkness at the entrance, she could somehow see a darker area, the shape of a figure slowly coming in. Lynne was terrified. Was it the boubou man? Did she see a flashing gleam of a knife in his hand? Was he going to kill her, or... Probably at the back of her mind since she had arrived in this strange country she always had the fear that some night a strange man would enter her bedroom and molest her. Laura who had served in Burkina Faso told her that one night there she had wakened to find a strange man standing over her.

Lynne had never been a screamer, but she tried to scream now. No sound came out. Then she tried again. All she could produce was a loud, one note, piercing, wordless shriek. She deliberately repeated it one, two, three, four, five, six, seven times. The figure left the doorway, slammed the door and she could hear hurried steps on the stairs. She continued her piercing, one note shriek. After what seemed an eternity, she heard people on the stairs. She heard her neighbors' voices, speaking in French and Mina. "What is the matter. Are you all right?"

"Entrez." she said. "Come in." They asked her to turn on the light and tell them what was the matter. She explained that someone had turned the electricity off and had entered her room. Her kind neighbor, Komi, an English professor at the university got a flashlight from his apartment. He shined it on her to be sure she was all right. Then he went to the fuse box downstairs and threw the switch.

Immediately, Lynne's entrance light and the reading light went on. She quickly snatched up a length of cloth from a chair and wrapped it around her like skirt. Her room was full of neighbors, men, women, and children, talking curiously and sympathetically to her in French and Mina.

"Komi, how did he get in? The door was locked."

"Ah, Lynne, the locks are old and weak. Almost any skeleton key and a good push will open our doors. You had better pay a locksmith to come here tomorrow and put a good double lock on. Someone really thought about how to get in. And it was your apartment they wanted to enter. They figured out which fuse to turn off and they walked up the stairs to the second floor."

"Who do you think it was?"

"There are a lot of thieves around here, but I think this was an American." He showed her a scrap of paper that he had found near the fuse box. It was torn from note paper. "Look. See what it says at the top-- Peace Corps Office."

## Chapter Twenty Nine: The Fetish Market

Lynne woke early the next morning after fitful sleep and nightmarish dreams. She had barricaded the door with chairs and a table and felt no one could get in now without so much noise she would have plenty of warning. But she wasn't at ease, knowing that her lock was almost useless. Her kind neighbor had promised to send Mensah, a cousin of his who was a locksmith the first thing in the morning to help her make her home secure. She didn't want another episode like that again. She shuddered, just remembering it.

Soon, the locksmith came, one of the few fat Togolese men she had ever met. He carried a supply of locks, old and new, in an old flour sack. After a short consultation he started work, putting on a modern double lock and also a chain. It would cost 10,000 CFA, about 20 dollars. That took a large chunk out of her monthly stipend. But perhaps she could talk to Mr. Da Silva, the cross Assistant Peace Corps Director for Finances and see if this was a reimbursable expense. While he worked, Lynne busied herself with house work.

She made sure that her purse was hidden in the next room. It wasn't so much that she specifically distrusted Mensah, the locksmith, but she had remembered the words of the Peace Corp Assistant Director giving them orientation the first night in the country, "Don't buy anything valuable. If you brought expensive things here, think of your stay here as a gradual transfer of your goods from you into the hands of the Togolese." After losing her expense money several times she learned to always keep her money guarded carefully. But then in the fire in Dapaong everything had been destroyed except for what she could get together and carry out in those five minutes. What a pity that was. She wished now she had given her radio, her calculator, and her cassette player to the wistful Togolese children who had looked at them enviously.

She had tried to guard against thieves. But last night's incident gave her a new kind of pain. Someone from Peace Corps had been there last night. Who? One of the Togolese employees, hoping to find some money or valuables? Or was it tied to the Ambassador's death? A chill went down her back. She wouldn't feel safe until that murderer was revealed.

When Mensah finished his work, she tested the lock and door carefully. It was fine. She paid him and thanked him profusely for his quick, good work. She felt good. Her home was secure again. No one would get in again, as long as she was sure to lock her door.

Just as she was thinking this, she heard a strong knock on her door. After last night, her first reaction was apprehension. She called out in as stern and threatening a voice as she could, "Who is it?"

A woman's voice called back. "It's Dulcie. Am I bothering you?"

"Dulcie. How good to see you! Come in." The two women hugged and exchanged kisses on the cheek, just one. The three kisses that were the French custom always seemed silly to Lynne.

"I haven't seen you in a long time. I came yesterday to get some shots at the Health Office and spend the weekend."

"Dulcie, what're your plans for the day? I have an idea and I'd like some company."

"What do you want to do?"

"I've never gone to the fetish market and I want to go today."

"Oh, I've seen it. Maybe it's not a good idea. People here believe you can go there and buy a charm and put a curse on someone with it."

"Well, that's all nonsense, isn't it?"

"The way an old Africa hand explained it to me is this. Whatever you think about it, voodoo and magic spells work. They can make people sick, even kill them. Probably voodoo works by psychological suggestion."

"If you don't believe in it, then it can't hurt you."

"Lynne, by going there, and buying a charm, you are buying into that whole mind set. On some level you do believe it. That then makes you vulnerable to bad magic done against you."

"Yes that could be true. So, I'll guard against believing. I certainly won't buy any charms. There's one bit of research I want to do. I've heard that sometimes, if the curses and charms don't work to get revenge, you can buy poison."

"Lynne, are you playing detective?"

"No one else seems to be. I want to know just how hard it is to buy tuitui, the hunting poison that killed the Ambassador."

"Okay. I'm game. But, if you touch anything, be sure to wash your hands."

So they went to the fetish market which was in downtown Lome. It was as big a large square city block and full of stalls with rows of ghastly objects, skulls of small animals, lizards, snakes, bits of dried animal fur and snake skin, various unidentifiable repulsive remnants of some living thing. Lynne thought of the witches in Macbeth, eye of newt, toe of frog. The stench of the fetish objects in the heat was disgusting.

The market was crowded with people buying charms to use either for good luck or to hurt their enemies. At one stall, piles of bones, dried lizards, shells and live chameleons were all sold along with incantations, magic formulas, and instructions for making them effective.

Lynne found a stand that sold hunting supplies. She bargained with a man with many decorative scars on his face wearing the northern style striped, flared, handwoven shirt to buy a bow, arrows and a small bag of tuitui leaves for 4,000 CFA. At the last minute, she became uncomfortable about the whole thing and lost interest in having physical evidence of her information. She didn't want to have a deadly poison in her possession. She also realized that after paying for the lock, she was almost out of money. She thought of these things after the deal was all made, and then she did an unforgivable thing. She said she didn't want it after all.

The seller started shouting at her.

She and Dulcie ran away from his stand, rushing, dodging around stalls, looking for an exit, but where ever they ran, the news of their terrible breach of business honor followed them and people yelled, cursed, and complained in many languages. Running as fast as they could they finally came to the front entrance. Just about to leave, Lynne stepped into a puddle of thick mud and skidded. She fell into a counter covered with skulls of snakes of different sizes.

Somehow regaining her balance, she ran out the door, out to the street where traffic was proceeding in its normal, congested, but peaceful way. Dulcie wasn't far behind her.

Once on the safe sidewalk, she drew a long breath and tried to compose herself. She hoped that she hadn't become a believer in voodoo power and according to Dulcie's friend's theory was now vulnerable. She hoped that when she closed her eyes tonight, she wouldn't see that table of voodoo snake skulls.

But, she had learned one thing. Now she knew. There was no problem in buying tuitui. Anyone could buy it for less than 4,000 francs – eight dollars.

## Chapter Thirty: Mysteries

When Dulcie too had made her escape, they looked at each other, messy and muddy, and collapsed into laughter, partly from fear, partly from amusement. Dulcie invited Lynne to go to the chicken lady with her to get some food and have a good long talk. But, Lynne asked to be excused. Her mind was full of anticipation of her date that evening.

When she got back to her apartment, she planned to take a leisurely shower and wash her hair, use some of the precious skin lotion and cologne she had brought from America and take a nap to be fresh and rested for her big evening. But, when she got to apartment and turned the key to open the new lock she saw an envelope had been pushed under the door. It was typed on Embassy stationery and said:

*Lynne,*

*I'm so sorry, but we'll have to put off our dinner date until another time. Something urgent came up and I will be tied up all evening.*

*Best,*

*Everett Knowlton.*

Well, write that one off, she thought. Disappointed, she took a quick shower to remove the dirt of the market, made herself a tasteless sandwich, and did some housework she had been putting off for a long time. She wrote about her tuitui discovery in her notebook and the stark sentence, "Everett Knowlton broke the date."

That night she felt secure with the new lock and chain. She didn't feel she had to worry about anyone getting in. No one entered her apartment and threatened her that night, but she had dreams of angry fetishers chasing her, chanting yovo, yovo, in threatening tones.

Sunday, she decided to spend the day lying on her bed, reading the American murder mysteries that Dulcie had brought her. When she opened the first one, a letter addressed to Lynne dropped out. Probably it had somehow been sent to Dulcie and she had forgotten to give it to her. She looked at the return address. It was from Brad. Ideas leapt into her mind, "He's sorry, he's ashamed, he's going to ask me to forgive him." Then she read it.

Dear Lynne,

*Your mother tells me that you have a responsible administrative job in Africa and are enjoying your life there. Probably this will give you an opportunity to gain new leadership skills. In the long run, you will probably gain from it. This pleases me because I wish only the best for you.*

*In our hurry to divide up our things when you packed up to leave I think you took one of my favorite books, The Education of Henry Adams. Will you send this to me by priority mail as soon as possible? I want to use a quotation from it in my acceptance speech when I am made a partner next month.*

*Allison sends her love. Good luck to you in all your endeavors,*

*Best,*

*Brad*

How could Brad feel so justified, no matter what he did? Why had she let him get away with it so long?

She went to the bookcase and picked up one of the few books she had brought from the United States. She looked at the inscription inside the front cover, written by Brad when thought of himself as her mentor.

*To Lynne. This book always inspired me. When you read it, you will learn some important things about my aspirations.*

*Your Brad.*

Carefully and precisely, she tore out each page and then tore it into four pieces. When she had finished, she put all the pieces in the charcoal stove on the balcony, added the front and back covers, poured kerosene on the pile and lit a match. When it was burning well, she added the letter from Brad to the flame.

She said aloud. "Brad, I'm sick of you and your sanctimonious selfishness. I'm also sick of Africa. It's hot, it's dirty, it's alien, it's dangerous. Even in my own apartment there are strange intruders. I can't bear it here. I wish I could walk this very minute right out of Africa and into one of my books."

She read the first mystery, then, three hours later started the second one and at 11 pm she finished her third mystery. She almost forgot where she was and the things that had distressed her earlier. Unlike the problems of her real life, the puzzles in mystery books always had solutions.

She turned off the light and thought again of Brad. He and Allison would probably have nervous breakdowns if they had to constantly be menaced and, always, as Lynne was now, moist with sweat in the tropical heat. Lynne felt a surge of pride in herself. What was that song, "In the jungle, in the jungle the lion's roaring tonight." She herself was that lion, strong, proud, able to take it. She made a promise to herself. She would be the one to discover the murderer and save all of them from danger.

"Brad, you conceited idiot. You couldn't take this life any better than Allison could. I know something about courage you will never learn."

## **Chapter Thirty One: Roadkill**

Monday morning Lynne was back in the office. She didn't know how to react if she saw Everett. She wasn't sure she believed the cancellation of their date was unavoidable.

She decided just to do her job and let events clarify their relationship. She busied herself with paper work and prepared a stack of forms for Everett's signature.

About ten o'clock, Cindy came to see her. Here at the Embassy where everyone tried to look neat and formal, she especially stood out with her sloppy tee shirt and wrinkled skirt. She asked for a form for a Self Help application. She was clearly both excited and upset. Then she explained why. "Oh, Lynne. Have you heard? Something ghastly happened again."

She had just come from post. She had ridden down in a bush taxi with other volunteers. Everyone was talking about Michael. He had been killed on his motorcycle. Of course he was going fast, like he always did. When the engine all of a sudden gave out, and then the brakes failed, he fell off, hit his head and was gravely wounded. He was wearing his helmet but didn't have the strap buckled. He died before they got him to the doctor.

The talk was that someone had deliberately tampered with his moto. He had just had it repaired at the shop of Pepperoni, as they called him, the young Togolese man who had been set up in business by an education volunteer doing a secondary project. Dudley and Luke had been helpful to him. He had tremendous loyalty to them. Everyone remembered Michael's loud, hostile argument with Dudley at Kara.

Cindy wanted Lynne to leave work and go to Peace Corps to try to get more of the latest information and rumors about Michael's death. But, she explained that she had to work regular hours at this job. They exchanged hugs. "Take care of yourself, Lynne. There aren't so many of us left!"

What a melodramatic statement! But there was some truth in it.

Another violent episode, this time a death.

Lynne felt dreadful. Was there something about being her friend that made people die young? She grieved for Michael. Even though there were a lot of things about him that she did not like, they had been tied together by their common lot. It was tragic for a young man to die before he could ever find himself. She felt bad remembering her revulsion the last time she had seen him alive. She now had no doubt that Ron and also Solomon had been right. This volunteer group was cursed. And she didn't even believe in curses. But maybe it was cursed because there was a remorseless murderer in their midst, masquerading as their wise guide and friend. Was Dudley some kind of homicidal maniac who was determined to kill everyone that threatened him? Maybe the idea was too extreme to take seriously, but it made Lynne shiver. Did he plan to kill everyone who knew the secret that the Ambassador was about to reveal? And, if Ron was right about this secret, was Lynne in danger since she knew it too?

## **Chapter Thirty Two: I Owe A Cock**

This last death was just too much. She must talk to the new security man, Mc Duff, who was supposed to be figuring things out. Someone should be keeping watching Dudley. And she wondered if the authorities had discovered how easy it is to buy tuitui in Lome.

Lynne had promised herself that when she got to work the next morning she would get an appointment with Mc Duff to talk about her strong suspicions.

But, once again, the Embassy and Peace Corps offices were plunged into confusion with another death. Everett was unreachable. Doubtless poor Michael's death was what had made him break the dinner date on Saturday. Everett and Dudley seemed to be in meetings most of the time and when she tried to make an appointment with Mc Duff, she was told that he was meeting with one or the other of them and couldn't talk to her.

The next few days, Lynne dutifully did her work in her office and returned at night to make her simple meal in her apartment. She felt isolated. She couldn't figure out why that intruder had come to room. It added to her general distrust. She was glad that Luke had not visited her lately. She felt ill at ease about him with so many people hinting about his activities and didn't want to face him while she was feeling so suspicious.

At last the authorities completed their formalities and Dudley once more accompanied a body to America by airplane. Once again Dudley had to make a sad announcements to the parents. Wild Michael hadn't had much of a family, a father who was a helpless alcoholic and a rejecting stepmother. According to the grapevine, the father had cried and cursed the Peace Corps. Dudley had accepted it patiently.

It all was ironic, if it was he who had arranged for Michael to be killed. At least Lynne would be safe for a few days while Dudley was in America.

The situation at the Embassy finally calmed down to the point where Lynne could get a hold of the secretary who was handling calls to Mc Duff and could get an appointment for early the next week. Then, Thursday, soon after she arrived for work Lynne was called by Linda for Peace Corps. All volunteers who were in town were asked to come to the Peace Corps office at 9 AM for an emergency meeting. When she said that she was supposed to work, Linda just said, "Don't worry; it's been cleared with Everett. You just come along." She wouldn't give her any idea what the meeting was about. Lynne found a taxi almost immediately in front of the Embassy and took it to the Peace Corps office.

Everyone was jammed into the reception area sitting on folding chairs that had been brought in. She saw about fifty volunteers. As it happened, many of them worked in education and had come from their posts for a training session that had been planned long ago for today. Sally was there, looking bright and cheerful again.

Everett Knowlton, looking attractive and official and accompanied by Dudley who had just returned from America, walked to the front of the room. The noisy chatterers became quiet.

"Good morning everyone. Once again, we are saddened by the death of one of our Peace Corps Volunteers. I join you in grieving for the loss of Michael. And, I have another difficult announcement to make.

About a month ago, the Ambassador started to address you when he was suddenly stricken. He died soon afterwards. At that time, he had been about to tell you some preliminary facts that had come to light that had made it necessary for him to make some staff changes. The changes were not made because of his death and the dislocations that caused. When I took over as Acting Ambassador, I was busy with other problems and also reluctant to do this unpleasant thing that I knew I must do. We continued our investigations and found more, irrefutable evidence. I checked with Washington on policy and it was clear. So, I must announce to you the action that I took yesterday.

"Luke Menatevi has been relieved of his position as Assistant Peace Corps Director, Education.

"It is our principle to demand financial integrity from all employees rather than winking at corruption as the Togolese government does. Information about this matter first came to the Embassy through an informant in the Togolese government. We investigated and consulted with your Peace Corps Director. There is no doubt about it. It is not just one instance, but a pattern over at least the last two years. Luke has been told of the results of the investigation, was asked to clear out his desk and has been told that he will no longer be allowed to enter any Embassy or Peace Corps office or facility."

He said this last sentence with especial official solemnity and let his eyes rove over the assembled volunteers. When his glance rested on Lynne, he gave an almost imperceptible nod of recognition and continued to sweep the group.

"Now, I'll let you talk to your director who has just come back from his sad duty of accompanying Michael's body to the U.S."

Dudley looked miserable. "Volunteers, this is a sad meeting. I just had to tell Michael's parents about his death. We will have a memorial ceremony for him next week.

"And I have to talk to you about this thing with Luke. I think all of you like Luke and benefited from his leadership in our projects. I thought of him as a personal friend. But, I, we, have no choice. Luke has been stealing from the Peace Corps for at least two years. You have heard of the hotel his wife runs for him? You may have even stayed in it. We have learned that he has been regularly using Peace Corps cars to do the shipping for it. Over the years he diverted many shipments of goods bought with Peace Corps Funds for use of volunteers, especially shipments of chickens, for use at his hotel."

Dudley continued. "This is a tragedy. A fine man, brought down by his own bad judgement and his ambition for financial rewards.

"We have made a temporary replacement. William Foli, who has done such a fine job as director of training in many of our training camps, will take over as Acting Assistant Director. We will try to work out a deal with the University to allow him to combine the job with his professorial duties. We will then negotiate to see whether to give him the job permanently." Here, Dudley stopped talking and was handed a sheet of paper by Linda. He and the Acting Ambassador had a hurried huddled discussion.

Lynne remembered something she had read in that book of Plato that had ended up on Michael's floor. Socrates, that honest man, when he knew that death was inevitable said to a friend, "I owe a cock to somebody, be sure the debt is paid." It looked like Luke owed a whole load of cocks to Peace Corps.

Her lover was a thief. Her first reaction was of anger and feelings of betrayal, to think that Luke, a had turned out to be a petty embezzler of Peace Corps goods. But her second wave of feelings involved sorrow and great pity and exasperation. Luke had had it good. He was one of a tiny percentage of Togolese who had a fine job with good pay and medical and retirement benefits. He had prestige not only with the American and expatriate community but among the Togolese. She once went with some education volunteers to his native village with him. He was greeted as a great man, taken immediately to the chief and a big feast was given in his honor.

Now that he was fired for this he would never get another job with Americans or any other government or international agency. And, there were almost no other jobs here.

No matter how they all tried to overcome cultural differences, once again, they were caught in a conflict of standards and expectations. Dipping a little on the side was an expected practice in West African bureaucracies. She had seen the fine big mansion owned by the head of customs. Only a small proportion of taxes due was actually collected; a tip for the tax collector was substituted.

Of course, Luke should know Americans better, and know they take such things seriously.

She turned to Dulcie, looking for someone who might understand her mixed feelings. "Dulcie, you've been a friend of Luke's, haven't you?"

"Yes, indeed. A close friend," she said emphatically.

"Very close?" Lynne found herself asking.

"Yes. I know you have been too. He is a wonderful lover, isn't he?"

"Yes, wonderful." Lynne tried to make her voice casual. But she was dismayed. All the special glory she had felt at being the one chosen for Luke's love fell from her. She was only one of a group who felt he was "a wonderful lover."

"Dulcie, don't you feel terrible? This will ruin his life. How could he risk everything for such small amounts of money?"

"Yes, I do feel bad. The disgrace of being fired will almost kill him. He will be just another jobless man. Without Peace Corps patronage, probably his hotel will fail too. He'll be like thousands of other educated African men, unemployed, somehow making do. But, you know it's almost impossible to get capital to start a business here in any legal way. He dreamed of having a successful hotel that would give him income when he retired and provide work for his sons and nephews. It was no small dream for him. But now, poor, dear, gorgeous, proud man, his dream is dust."

The Acting Ambassador called the group to order again.

"Another matter you are all interested in. Don Mc Duff, the new Security Officer for the American mission is vigorously investigating the death of the Ambassador. He has some recent reports on laboratory findings from America, but I can not announce them at present. This much I can say. As you all suspected, the Ambassador did not die of a heart attack. He was killed by ingestion of tuitui, a local poison used in hunting. If you have any information about how his death came about, please get in touch with Mc Duff. He will want to talk to all of you that sat at the tables near the Ambassador at that fateful luncheon in Kara. Peace Corps is lending him an office to make his work with you more convenient.

"Volunteers, I sympathize with you for serving at a time of so much doubt and fear. But, I have every confidence in your Peace Corps director, Dudley. He is on a daily basis in touch with the Embassy and it is evident that he is solicitous of the needs and rights of volunteers. Please cooperate with him in any measures he takes to safeguard you in a time when we not only have this problem in the American community but threats of disorder and unrest in the country. I have the greatest faith in him."

Trust Dudley? So much for Lynne's theory that Dudley was the bad guy whose terrible secret was prevented from disclosure by the Ambassador's death. Everett was clearly standing behind Dudley, as a pillar of the American presence here.

So the announcement that the Ambassador was about to make was about Luke, not Dudley. Could it have been Luke who killed the Ambassador, trying to keep him from making the announcement? Was her extremely part time lover not only a thief and but a murderer too?

### **Chapter Thirty Three: Private Investigations**

After the meeting at the Peace Corps office, Lynne returned to her office. Shocked at the revelations, she was annoyed at herself for ignoring the many hints about Luke's behavior that had been coming at her from all sides. Now they were confirmed and clarified. How could she have made love with such a man?

Now that it was revealed that the Ambassador did not have an ugly secret about Dudley to reveal, all her suspicions of the Peace Corps Director seemed groundless.

But someone had killed the Ambassador. For once, she had no work waiting to be done in the office, so she took her diary out of her purse and once more looked over the summary of her thinking about the Ambassador's death. Now that she had visited the fetish market, she felt she had something to add. Under Method it said, tuitui poison. Under Source, she wrote fetish market. As she thought more about the situation and the recent revelations made by Everett Knowlton, she felt she should revise her list of suspects. She thought deeply and deleted a star after Dudley's name.

At this point the telephone rang. Oddly enough it was Barbara Dudley's wife. Lynne was surprised to hear from her. She had two little children and was noted for her domesticity. Occasionally, when she did attend a Peace Corps function, she was noted for cornering a luckless volunteer, usually Lynne, and giving an endless account of the latest and most adorable things her children aged five and three had done. As far as anyone knew, she never complained about Dudley's long hours, his many trips up country or any rumors about his enjoyment of Peace Corps parties. If you could get her to stop talking about her children, then the subject was always Dudley, how the Embassy counted on him and how Washington appreciated him.

"Yes, Barbara. How are you? What can I do for you?"

"Lynne, you're a little older than the other volunteers and more responsible. That's why I called you. Dudley's had such a terrible time these last months, with all of the problems in the Peace Corps. I want to give a birthday party for him. I know that you're a lady. Can you give me a list of about five volunteers I can invite that I can count on behaving well? I plan to invite officials from the Embassy and USAID, some people visiting from Washington and a few French people and I don't want any of the rougher element embarrassing me. I'll tell you a little secret. Dudley's being considered for a wonderful job in Washington after he finishes this tour of duty. My little party will help that."

Lynne thought fast. No one would want to attend such a party under such restrictions. "Barbara, I think it would be better not to invite any volunteers right now. Everyone is too upset with all of the deaths and now the problem with Luke. Who knows how they might act."

"Maybe you're right, Lynne. I thought it would be a fine opportunity for some of the better ones to associate with some higher type people. But I'll follow your advice. Dudley is such a fine man and good husband, caring and thoughtful with everyone. I want to do everything I can to show him how much appreciated he is."

Was she talking about the same Dudley that Michael and Ron knew? And she remembered that just a few months ago, she had admired him almost as much as his wife did.

"Yes, Barbara. Goodbye now, and good luck with the party."

She looked at her list again. She knew that Dudley had a hostile, punitive side. But, even if Ron's strange story was true, it didn't sound as if he had ever been in any danger of getting into trouble with the authorities. And no revelation could dent Barbara's blind confidence in her precious husband. She removed the other star after his name and wrote in its place, ok.

Lynne looked at the list of suspects sadly. Two on it, young men who were friends of hers, had met with violence. Ron was still in a hospital in the U.S. Michael was dead. She drew lines across their names. They hadn't killed the Ambassador. Probably they had been attacked because of something they knew. Maybe it had some connection with a big secret that the Ambassador started to talk about.

Now, after the meeting with Everett and Dudley she knew what that painful secret the Ambassador had been about to announce was. There was one obvious prime suspect. She made a star next to Luke's name. She tried to figure out the whole situation with Luke in the role of murderer. It would have been easy for him to buy the tuitui anytime at the fetish market. But how did he administer it to the Ambassador? For that matter, how could any one administer it to the Ambassador? There had been a roomful of people watching just before he died.

And Ron, was Luke responsible for his death? Dudley had said that he and Luke had decided to have Ron look at Cindy's bee project. Was it Luke's preposterous idea that Ron should look at a bee project? Ron had told Lynne he knew a damaging secret about Luke. Had he hinted about it to Luke and threatened to expose him? Ron seemed to know everyone's secrets. Ron was a conniver and black mailer. It was possible.

And poor Michael, she remembered his whispered conversation in the new little library up north with Luke. Probably they had been talking about the accounting books for the training program that his girl friend, Veronica had been logistics manager for. She would have known about the missing chickens. Michael had been there too, a technical trainer. To buy their silence, Luke had let Veronica return home before her release date.

Lynne remembered one strange dinner when they had eaten noodle soup, rice, and the fried yams called colicos, with no meat course. They had all been very new, determined not to complain and to show how willing they were to suffer the necessary privations of Peace Corps. Probably the load of chickens intended for that meal had gone by Peace Corps truck to provide Luke's hotel with a main dish for some banquet they were catering for Togolese officials.

She continued her reconstruction of those past events. Michael had known all of this. And now he was dead. Pepperoni had damaged the motor and brakes of the moto as a favor to Luke who had helped him get the money to start his business. Luke has gone to these cruel lengths to try to keep from being exposed. And all for nothing. Now he was shamed, disgraced, all power stripped from him.

She looked at the chart again. She believed the story she had just told herself. She considered it all again carefully. All her previous loving thoughts about Luke evaporated. Her ex-lover was lover to the multitudes. Now she was sure he was also a cheat, a thief and a murderer.

She put a second star next to his name.

## Chapter Thirty Four: Knock Knock

When Lynne returned to her apartment that night she was tired from the emotional stress of the day. And when darkness fell at 6:30, it seemed natural to start thinking of bed early. After her dinner and clean up she took the time to write a few more notes in her diary, mainly about her feelings. When she lay down, she had trouble relaxing and her mind was like hamsters in a wheel toy, going over and over the revelations of that dreadful meeting and her even more dreadful conclusions about Luke's character.

Then she heard a knocking at her door, first hesitant, then firm, then downright loud. Glad she had the new lock and the chain, she went to the door and called, "Who's there?"

"It's Luke. I have to see you."

Luke! Fear swept over her. What did he want? Had he come to kill her too? She said as confidently as she could, "No Luke. I can't see you. Go away."

"Lynne, you are my friend, my sweetheart. It is all a misunderstanding. Let me explain. Let me talk to you. Let me in."

"No. No."

"Lynne, just days ago you held me to you and promised that you would never forget what we meant to each other, no matter what happened."

"That was when I thought we meant something to each other. I was wrong."

"Lynne, let me in. I will show you that I do love you, madly. Now, let me in." His voice became loud and commanding. "Lynne, I demand that you open this door, immediately. I must see you"

"No, No, No, go away."

And he started pushing, banging and applying pressure against the weak old door. The strong new locks would hold. But maybe the old wood would splinter. What could she do? She had thought that she was used to not having a telephone, but right now she longed for a 911 number. Even if she had a phone, she knew there was no number to call that would get her help. The police didn't have transportation and wouldn't come unless a person paid for a taxi for them. What should she try? She started to move her heavy desk towards the door; maybe that would keep him out.

But, then, mercifully, she heard the pleasant voice of her neighbor, saving her once again. He said politely in French, "Sir, I'm sorry, but it appears the lady does not wish to see you now. You must go." She heard Luke argue in an authoritative voice. But when the English teacher insisted, she heard Luke give up and then she could hear his steps going down the stairs. She waited a few minutes and then opened the door cautiously with the chain still in place.

"Komi, you're an angel. Thank you so much."

"You are welcome. A gentleman does not insist when a lady says no."

She started to explain the situation but it seemed so complicated and also nebulous she just agreed.

"Don't worry. I will tell the gardien not to let him visit you again with out asking your permission first."

"Oh, that will be good. Good night now."

"Good night."

She lay awake for hours, trying to decide what she could do. There was no way to get the local police to help in a situation like this. And if she asked Peace Corps or the Embassy to protect her, it would lead to them asking questions about why he might come to visit her and the story of her love affair with him would come out. Right now, above all, she hoped Everett would not hear about that. It might kill their still fragile new relationship. She distrusted Luke now, but really, he had no reason to hurt her. She should not be emotional. Komi's solution was good. The guard would not let him up again.

And she would be careful until she got a chance to talk to the security officer at her appointment next week about her strong suspicion. By now, he too probably suspected Luke of more than embezzlement.

## Chapter Thirty Five: An Enchanted Evening

Friday morning, Lynne awoke vowing to tackle her problems vigorously once more. As usual, it was a hot and steamy day, but it was also bright and sunny. She forced herself to hum, "Oh, what a beautiful morning," as she dressed.

She had not had a private conversation with Everett for days and wondered again if a personal relationship was possible in the midst of all these catastrophes.

About mid morning she got a note, nicely typed on Embassy stationery.

*Dear Lynne,*

*I meant to talk to you the first thing this morning to make additional apologies for our missed appointment. It really was unavoidable, and all the things explained at the meeting at Peace Corps yesterday made it impossible even to talk to you. Please understand and give me another chance. I hope things have calmed down. Are you willing to try again Saturday to have our dinner at the beach? If it's all right with you, I'll pick you up at 4:00. I'm dictating this at 7:00 AM because I'll be out of the office most of the day. Will you please tell my secretary that everything is okay if you can go with me?*

*Everett*

She called haughty Claudia immediately and in the most businesslike tone she could muster asked her to tell the Acting Director that she could keep the appointment.

Deciding not to count on the date too much and avoid letting herself in for disappointment, she promised herself she wouldn't make big preparations, even in her mind. Rising late Saturday morning, she washed her hair so that it would be fluffy and clean. She dressed for the day, wearing a backless sundress that a local seamstress had made for her of a beautiful blue, green, violet African print. She knew that many Africans thought a bare back was indecent, and had a jacket made which she wore for ordinary occasions. She fell to musing the contradictions of African life. While older country women cheerfully sat on the streets bare breasted, a foreigner in a mini skirt or with a low cut dress was considered to be a prostitute.

She decided to spend the day catching up on her letter writing and record keeping. All day, she expected to hear the gardien knocking at her door saying someone had left her a message. Everett was really too busy and important for a social life with her. She watched for him on the balcony.

At one minute after four she saw him drive up in his personal car. She called down to him, "Everett, I'm coming." She flew down the steps and to the car which was attracting a more than usual crowd of curious children.

Everett leaned over in the driver's seat to open her door. "Forgive me for not getting out. I didn't know if I could get through this gang."

"Yes, it's a good idea to stay with the car. They might want to find some souvenirs."

He wasn't wearing casual clothes, but was dressed in ambassadorial style, wearing not the functionaire suit that Peace Corps officials and lower Togolese officials wore up north, but a beautifully tailored, navy blue dress suit, diplomat quality. She felt a little awed, but he looked at her in her sun dress appreciatively.

"Lynne, you look lovely, just right for our beach side visit. I'm sorry that I'm overdressed, but, it turned out, I had to go to a meeting at the Togolese ministry and came directly here. I'm so glad you will go with me."

They made the long picturesque drive to Robinson Beach in the daylight, took a short walk near the water, watching the white waves land on the sandy shore. They found a flower decorated table on the veranda and placed their order. They could hear the waves crashing and palm trees rustling in the breeze. It was pleasantly warm with the scent of fish, salt water, and flowers.

It was the kind of tropical romantic evening she had fantasized about before when she came to Africa. The dinner didn't come for two hours so they had plenty of time to talk. They explored their common interests and their dreams. Everett told about his desire to remain a career officer with the foreign service and to visit all the exotic places of the earth. He often was lonely. He had never married and had been careful until now not to fall in love. But now if he could find the right woman, one who shared his goals, he might be ready. He looked deeply into her eyes.

Lynne was strongly attracted to Everett. But, she had been attracted to Luke.

She needed some down time. She had a hunch that sometime in the future they would become very important to each other. But she he wanted to control her life alone for a while first. They watched a typical Togolese sundown. At 6:30 the sun was out but, low on the horizon. For a few minutes it was faintly pink. Then pop, it was gone, and it was dark. When the waiter finally reappeared they ate the meal by the light of the large candle on the table.

They started to talk a little about the near future. The new ambassador would come in a few months and Everett would go back to his old job. He had asked for a third year in Togo.

Amid all this warm, affectionate talk, she realized this was an opportunity to find out something that would help her understand who had a motive to kill the Ambassador

She started, "Everett, can you tell me if ..."

But just then, Everett reached across the table and took her hand in his. She lost her chain of thought.

Across the dimly lit table she sensed a sweet potential. She felt this evening was precious.

She started again, "I have something to ask you about the Ambassador's..." Her words were drowned in the noise of a group of local people who appeared on the beach and started pounding drums. Soon the sand was full of local villagers dancing with abandon underneath the sliver of a moon. They watched their graceful motions following the beat of the traditional drums. Some of the people eating at the restaurant joined them and were welcomed warmly.

It was too noisy to talk, but Lynne and Everett continued to look deeply into each other's eyes.

She was nagged by the feeling that she should be finding out some things only an official like Everett would know. But, later, in a brief pause of the drumming, instead, Lynne, asked, "Did your family really call you Al?"

"Yes they did. Someday you will too!"

The dancing ended and they drank coffee and brandy. The waiter started to yawn and asked them three times if they wanted anything else. Reluctantly they made their way off the crowded veranda and through the interior dining room toward the entrance. In the gloom of a dark corner, Lynne saw Richie, the money changer. He was with man that looked ragged, dirty, and disreputable. Their heads were together, and their conversation intense.

## Chapter Thirty Six: When The Lovely Flame Dies

Everett was too busy to meet with her for her Self Help matters on Monday, according to Claudia, so Lynne spent the day preparing documents to present to him when she next saw him. Lynne's desk was crowded with papers when the messenger came in with the mail. There was a letter addressed to her on Embassy stationery.

*Dear Lynne,*

*Can you meet me at Mama Wata tonight at 8 o'clock? I must talk to you. It is important.*

*Everett*

Pleased that he had time to see her again so soon, she still wondered why he chose that restaurant. It was picturesque since it was authentically African, named after a voodoo divinity and had real African food, including agouti stew which was made out of the local bush rat. Perhaps it was because it was near the center of the town and there were secluded individual little straw covered verandas, called paillotes. And what did he want to tell her? If it was business, wouldn't he find time to talk during the work day? But, her heart started to pound. Maybe he wanted to tell her something personal. Maybe he wanted their relationship to move forward. She hoped he didn't want it too get too serious too fast. Then she had the terrible thought that maybe he had somehow heard rumors of her relationship to Luke. Oh, she hoped not. She hoped he wouldn't hear about that now. Would that end their new relationship before it started?

She arrived at exactly eight o'clock. The restaurant was eerie. There were about ten tables, each in its own paillotte. Lighting was from large flickering torches set at widely spaced intervals. The walls were decorated with grotesque African masks. The waiter told her to go in and that he would come and take her order when her friend joined her. She sat nervously for at least ten minutes, seemingly the only person in the room. She could hear the sea thudding beyond. She knew that the beaches of Lome were the most dangerous places in town. There were muggers, even murderers lurking there. Mama Wata was the goddess of the sea. Sometimes she was good and gave fish to eat, sometimes she was bad and swallowed boats and fisherman. The hair on the back of Lynne's neck began to rise. Where was Everett? Why did he choose a place like this for them to meet? Why did she come?

If she left now she would have to look for a taxi in the dark outside on the street which had seemed deserted when she entered.

And then, she saw someone entering the dark room. Was it Everett? He was tall and in a business suit. But something was wrong. There was no flash of light skin contrasting with the suit in the darkness. The man continued to come. It certainly wasn't a waiter. He was dressed too well, too formally. And then he was standing over her.

"Lynne. I had to see you"

"Luke, what're you doing here?"

"I couldn't leave things like that. You refused to see me at your house."

"But, how did you know I'd be here?"

"I was the one who wrote the note. My cousin who works at Robinson Beach told me you know Everett well."

She was suddenly terrified. Luke had murdered at least two people and now he had tricked her into meeting him at this isolated spot. She tried to stand up, prepared to run.

"No, Lynne, wait, don't go. You can't go. I won't let you."

She pushed passed him and ran, but she stumbled on the floor which was made of uneven stone blocks. She found herself cornered and he was coming toward her. She tried to find the exit, but the tables and pailotes were set up in a haphazard pattern, almost like a maze. She tried to find an exit on the ocean side, but there was none.

"Lynne, please, I'm getting angry. You must give me a chance. I need your help. You can't get away, I won't let you. I know you love me, and when a woman loves me, she does not turn against me in time of trouble."

He was close now and reached out for her. She tried to scream, but no sound would come. Would he kill her too?

How could she escape? He had her trapped. He was much bigger and stronger than she was. In the darkness, his suit, hair, and skin were scarcely visible. Only his white shirt, the whites of his eyes, and his teeth stood out distinctly. His teeth seemed as if they were in some ferocious snarl. She tried again to scream, but got out only a sort of choking sound.

And suddenly she heard a voice from the darkness near the entrance, speaking French in the Togolese way, slowly, and carefully enunciated. "Did you change your mind? Didn't you like the table I gave you? Are you ready to order now? We have good dorade tonight and freshly made fufu."

The waiter came slowly into the dark room. Lynne took a long shuddering breath. "I realize that I am not feeling well. I can not eat. Will you help me find a taxi?"

"Of course, Madame. And Monsieur?"

But Luke had disappeared.

## Chapter Thirty Seven: Security

Early the next week, the Peace Corps held a simple memorial service for Michael. About half of the volunteers attended. Probably in an attempt to be tactful, since so many volunteers had witnessed that horrendous argument between Dudley and Michael at Kara, William, the new assistant director, rather than Dudley acted as the main official. And of course, Luke had not been allowed to come. The whole service had an atmosphere of being on the surface, with many things left unspoken. The rumors of deliberate sabotage of Michael's moto were strong. Lynne was not the only volunteer who felt frustrated at the authorities' failure to clear up the question of the Ambassador's murder and to investigate the possible connection between it and poor wild Michael's early death.

At last the day arrived when Lynne had an appointment with the security man, Mc Duff. It would be a relief to finally talk to someone in authority who was investigating the murder. She wanted to tell Mc Duff all the bits of evidence she had. She was glad to have a chance to tell him of her strong suspicions of Luke, but she still didn't want to tell him his threatening behavior these last few days. If she did that it would lead immediately to a general knowledge of her affair with Luke. She still hoped that wouldn't come out, at least not right now. Her growing relationship with Everett was precious and precarious at this stage. Soon after she walked into the office at Peace Corp that Mc Duff was using, she began to wonder if she would be able to talk freely about her suspicions.

Mc Duff was a stiff, prissy, cold little man, out of place in the heat and disorder of Africa. Dressed in a brown pin striped suit, he wore an elaborately folded handkerchief in his breast pocket which also held a designer pen. His ginger colored hair was cut short.

He had a supercilious look on his face that changed to something like outright scorn from time to time during the interview.

Somewhat accusingly, he asked her to tell him about the luncheon during which the Ambassador died, where she was sitting and exactly what she saw. She told him to the best of her ability. He had started a diagram, and she showed him where she, Ron, Michael, Sally, and Cindy were sitting. She told him that the Ambassador had started to make an announcement about an unpleasant subject, had begun to cough, and asked for something to drink. Almost immediately after drinking from the bottle of soda water he had collapsed.

He asked her if she knew anything else that might help in the investigation.

She told him about the Michael and Luke's conversation about the books, and also where you can buy tuitui. He listened carefully, taking many notes, but did not comment.

Refusing to be intimidated by his cold manner and determined to learn what was going on, she blurted out, "Mr. Mc Duff, It seems like no one is really investigating the Ambassador's death. It has been so long, and yet there is no official information."

"Where would you expect to receive the information, in the Peace Corps News?", he said scathingly. "We are doing many things and know many things, but we do not make announcements until we are ready to take official action."

Not cowed, she looked him in the eye and pressed on, "What kind of investigations? What are they doing?"

"Washington was given a great deal of physical evidence taken from the scene of the murder. They have analyzed much of it and sent other portions to specialized laboratories. We have some of the results and expect the rest soon." He went on to explain that they were investigating every clue concerning the Ambassador's death, were having official interviews with everyone who had been in the room near the Ambassador when he died and following all leads.

Not impressed by this answer, Lynne explained her theory. "I feel that Luke had a strong motive. He was sitting right next to the Ambassador when he died. He knew that Michael knew about his embezzling. Now Michael is dead."

Mc Duff said they had thought of all this. Concerning Michael's death, they were investigating the rumors about possible sabotage since both the engine and the brakes failed not long after the moto had been allegedly repaired. "Do you have any actual proof, rather than just suspicions and ideas?" he asked coldly.

She thought about many rumors that were too wild and vague to try to express. But, the thing with Ron now. "Ron told me that he knew a terrible secret about Luke. He hinted to me that he was going to reveal it when he thought it would help him. Probably he hinted the same way to Luke. And, the fact that he was sent to Cindy's is suspicious. Why would they send him there? He was a city boy to the core and knew nothing about agronomy or bees."

Mc Duff looked even more scornful. "I'll give you one piece of official information from the records. Ron put on his application for Peace Corps that he had raised bees. At one time they had considered making him an agronomy volunteer since his field was chemistry and not the physics that he would be assigned to teach here."

Astonished, Lynne demanded. "Where did you get that?"

"It's in the files."

"But, Ron always lived in the city, in San Francisco."

"He wrote on his application that he spent summers with his grandmother in the country and belonged to Future Farmers of America."

The thought of Ron in Future Farmers of America made Lynne feel like giggling hysterically. She could imagine his malicious joy in writing such fabrications. He'd probably wanted to make himself sound like an all American boy. But he had many times told her he had never spent a day away from the sounds of the big city before he joined the Peace Corps.

So Ron's prank had almost killed him.

Mac Duff went on. Yes, Luke had been investigated thoroughly and his firing was one of the obvious results of that. He was still being investigated. But, as for a strong motive, that was not obvious. "The Ambassador was Luke's enemy. He had tried hard to find a way to forgive him his embezzlements and was reluctant to fire him. And many people who know Luke best feel that he isn't a violent man."

Then she remembered what she had meant to ask Everett. "Mr. Mc Duff, was the Ambassador the only person who knew about Luke's illegal behavior? Or did Dudley also know? And did Luke know that others knew?"

Mc Duff's continued disdain was majestic, but he answered the question. "Of course many people knew about the problem and the decision to punish him was a group one. It's true that certain information about a banquet the Togolese had that featured chicken that

was packed in Peace Corps cartons and was catered by Luke's hotel was told to the Ambassador, personally. But it only capped an investigation that my predecessor had been making for over six months. He and Dudley both were well aware of the announcement that the Ambassador was about to make and Luke had been warned by Dudley that serious steps would be taken."

Just as he was about to leave, the emotionless, little man leaned toward her and spoke with great intensity." Keep thinking about that luncheon, young lady. On some level you know who did this. You, an eye witness, are important. Try to visualize that room, that table, all the things that happened. It might help if you would write it all out. You were there. I wasn't. You no doubt saw the murderer. It is up to you and the others who were there to remember."

## Chapter Thirty Eight: The Wisdom of Solomon

Lynne got two letters at work the next day. One was from Luke. It was formal and in French. It said that he was disappointed that she didn't even have the kindness to talk to him. He had thought that since they had meant a lot to each other, she would be willing to write a letter of recommendation for him. He wanted to try to get a job with the United Nations. He said he was sorry to say that he never wanted to hear from her again. Then he said, "I did not do such an evil thing. Balance it with the good I did, and you must admit I am a good man. I tried to help all of you Americans. Now you turn against me."

After her talk with Mc Duff, Lynne realized Luke hadn't had any motive to kill the Ambassador. And Luke was right, true, she had not acted like a good friend. She had refused to see him and panicked when he insisted. But still, she had lost her earlier faith in him. She hoped she would never see him again.

The second letter was from Bassar. Tears sprung into her eyes when she saw the handwriting. Michael had written and mailed it ten days ago.

*Dear Lynne,*

*I won't be coming down to Lome again for a while and it's too frustrating to even try telephoning, so I'll scribble you a note. I'm writing this while waiting for my moto to be repaired by Pepperoni. Do you know him? He's a Togolese wild guy, a friend of mine. Luke helped put him in business.*

*By the way, pretty soon everyone will know the trouble Luke is in. I don't know what they'll do about it, but I hope they forgive him. I knew about Luke skimming some cream off the Peace Corps training camps and because of that he was willing to help Veronica and me out when she wanted to leave the country early. She needed an abortion and America's the place to get one. Last week I got a chance to talk to Luke and tell him that the authorities were going to make a big stink about him and that I would do whatever I could to help him. But you know how little influence I have. Now, everyone respects you. Think about it and think of what can be done. Maybe you could get up a petition of respectable volunteers to say how valuable he is.*

*Okay, they are through here. I'll just finish this letter and mail it while I'm near the post office. The moto is a mess. Pepperoni did the best he could with it, but he had to use old parts cannibalized from some old motos. I hope the thing will hold together until we can get some new parts from Lome. I kept my promise to ask Solomon what he meant in that weird prophesy in Kara. He visited me yesterday and I asked him about it. Solomon is half crazy. You can't get him to talk about a subject reasonably and coherently. But he told me some things. He felt that the Ambassador had done some bad things supporting the dictator of Togo and went from there to a prophecy of his death. But, he said he was really surprised when it came true. He had only been talking of his feelings, his premonition, and of course had not had anything to do with the actual death. He wasn't even there the next day*

*when the Ambassador was killed. He said it was a judgement on the Ambassador for sins he had committed. He didn't know what his sins were.*

*Solomon is a gaddo. You know what that is? Twins are supposed to be lucky and magical and the child that comes after the twins is called the gaddo who is especially magic. Solomon has always been a seer and prophesied events. He said "To know who killed the Ambassador, you have to look in the past; the seeds of the murder are old. Something that happened in the Ambassador's life before he came to this country is the reason he was killed."*

*Sometimes, Solomon is wise. His intuition was right in Kara. Maybe his hunch about the cause is wise too. Solomon said we should look for a woman.*

*Buddy love,  
Michael*

## **Chapter Thirty Nine: A Cryptic Puzzle**

Michael had kept his word and given Lynne the information she had asked for. It was almost the last thing he ever did. Oh, how Lynne wished that Michael was alive and Lynne could keep her side of the bargain.

Once again, Lynne's clear idea about the identity of the murderer had turned into many fuzzy, vague, and conflicting ideas. Mc Duff said Luke had no motive to kill the Ambassador. And now the letter from Michael showed he had no motive to kill him, either. And Mc Duff's information revealed that it was perfectly reasonable for Luke and Dudley to send Ron to look at the bee project. And Michael's letter also made it seem likely that the motorcycle death was truly an accident, not a murder. But, even if the injury of Ron and the death of Michael were accidents, someone had killed the Ambassador. And that person was one of those that had been near him at that fatal lunch.

She got out her chart of suspects again. She thought about Richie and the boubou man. They were still a possibility. From all she heard, the Ambassador had been trying to help Richie and his death removed a powerful friend. Of course there was the possibility that the murderer had killed the Ambassador by mistake and had meant to kill Dudley. But why? Did they even know each other?

And she really had never seriously considered suspecting either Sally or Dulcie. But, was it possible that Sally was talking about herself when she mentioned childhood mental illness? Could she have killed the Ambassador in a violent, melancholy mood? Or was she hinting about the childhood of Dulcie, and was it likely that Dulcie was really a secretly dangerous person who had poisoned the Ambassador to keep him from giving her a bad reference and keeping her from the job with USAID?

And Cindy really hated Dudley and got crazy when she was drunk. But she hadn't been drunk that day. And a planned murder by poison didn't seem to fit her personality. Lynne really couldn't believe any of the three could have killed the Ambassador. Their grievances against the Ambassador were too slight to murder a man over. But someone did. Who was it? Who killed Corley Harrison?

## 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 fur 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**