

Chapter 40: Menace At Mango

Gregory was quiet a few moments. Then he continued. "But, the reason I want to talk to you. You had been asking me if I knew anything more about the past of Adriana. I did some more asking around and learned that someone she knew at Michigan State lives near here, a volunteer. We will stop in and say hello, just saying it is a gesture from the Cultural Center. I even got the Peace Corps to give us his mail to deliver. Maybe you can get some information and ideas about Adriana from him."

"Do you mean guy that Everett told me about, someone that knew her well? He said his name is Desmond?"

"I didn't know he told you. But that is his name. Adriana came storming into our office one day, demanding to see him. When we told her he lived many hours' drive away, she acted like it was our plot against her."

The drove a few miles more. The terrain was barren and sandy now, with some large rocks, and leafless, twisted trees. Once in the distance she saw the antelopes that the Togolese called *biche*. She wondered how they could find enough to eat to keep alive up here.

They stopped at a round mud block hut with a conical straw roof. "The volunteer chose to live like the local villagers. We could have found him a nice tin roofed house with running water."

"Oh, but it's beautiful!" It was small, the whole house about the size an ordinary American bedroom. All around it the sand was swept clean. There were several tall frangipani trees with fragrant, three colored blossoms and a banyan tree. In this dry savanna season there wasn't a blade of grass or even a weed. But there was a picturesque beauty, with the huge red mud water jars, and in the far distance hills.

Instead of knocking at the flimsy door, Gregory clapped his hands, African villager style. There was no answer from within. He pushed open the door. The only light in the room came from an unscreened, glassless opening used as a window.

What was going on? More blood? A young American, with skin the color of golden oak, wearing an African vest and cut off khakis lay on the floor. A dirty, bloody bandage was wound around his head. He had Rastafari curls reaching to his shoulders.

He stirred slightly.

"My god! It's Kata. Kata!" Lynne said.

"Yes, he calls himself Kata. You know him?"

"Yes. I used to see him at buvettes with fellow volunteers. I didn't know his real name. I talked with him at the Columbus Day picnic."

Gregory went close to the wounded man. "Are you Kata?"

"Yes. I was Desmond. But I am Kata. I'm okay. I just need some rest."

"We're from the Cultural Center. What happened?"

Kata's eyes focused a little better. "Someone walked into my hut and hit me with a *coupe coupe*."

"You need help. We'll take you to the hospital."

"No, I'm all right. I just need to sleep. Lynne, let me sleep." He closed his eyes again.

"Kata, who hit you. Who was it?"

"At the bar, this guy. He followed me. He wore a T shirt. Good old Trojans."

"Trojan?" Gregory puzzled. "I studied about the Greeks in school. He really is delirious"

Lynne, knowing Michigan, explained. "Trojans, oh, yes. I know what that means. That's Michigan State."

Chapter 41: A Togolese Custom

Kwami and Gregory carried Kata into the car and laid him in the second seat of the van, where he immediately went to sleep. Lynne sat in the third seat. She didn't know him well, but had vaguely liked him. He looked dangerously weak. She wondered if she should wake him up. She had heard that if you sleep with a head wound you might die. Or was that if you were frozen? She decided not to meddle.

It was only ten miles from Mango to Dapaong. But it took a half hour on the rutted, dusty roads, crowded with people carrying goods on their heads for the market. They took him to the big rundown one story hospital. Lynne had never been in it. The Peace Corps medical officer had told them never to set foot in it. If they got sick they should hire a bush taxi and go down to Lome even though it might take 12 hours to the Peace Corps Medical Office.

Now she knew why. The mud block building was grubby and stained. It looked like it had never been repainted and was seldom cleaned. It had a few window panes of glass, but most were broken. That was lucky, because there was no air conditioning and it was extremely hot. At least a little breeze got through.

A crowd of Togolese were waiting to be treated. Most of them seemed really ill, probably having acute malaria attacks. But since she had white skin and the driver wore the insignia of the US embassy, the nurse took their party immediately. She unwrapped the dirty bandage on Kata's head and started to clean the deep head wound with an unwrapped ball of absorbent cotton that she took from an uncovered basket on the desk. She dipped the cotton into a pan of water and started wiping.

Lynne felt she was in a bad dream. The Peace Corps nurse had said if you must go to this hospital, bring your own sterile bandages and plastic syringes. She didn't want to offend the nurse, but she was afraid for Kata's life.

She said urgently, Gregory, "Things aren't sterile here. What can we do? It's a deep head wound, near the brain. Infection might kill him."

Gregory spoke intensely in Mina, which luckily was the language of the nurse even though they were in Moba. She says if we don't like her treatment, we are welcome to take him there."

"Oh, thank God. Let's go." For once, Lynne ignored the careful good manners she had been taught to use with the Togolese.

With angry, jerky movements, the nurse quickly rewound the filthy bandage and sent them on their way.

Just a few minutes later, they found Fiona, the Peace Corps nurse in her room.

Chapter 42: Of Night And A Journey

Even though it was dangerous to travel the roads of Togo after dark, the embassy van set out, going as fast as possible on the narrow, uneven, broken highway with Kwami driving, and the unconscious Kata in back, with a vigilant Fiona, ready to help if needed. Gregory drove Fiona's smaller van with Lynne as passenger. After six hours they reached Atakpamay. Since they had not had any dinner they bought some French bread, some of the ubiquitous *vache qui ris* packaged cheese from a little store, some bananas, and warm Lion Killer lemon soda and continued on the journey.

"How many meals like that have I had in my three and one half years in Togo?" Lynne wondered, and was surprised that she could care about such things now. She and Gregory exchanged only a word or two.

As they neared Lome, Lynne broke the silence.

"Do you think he will die? Is he dead right now?"

"Yes. I think he's dead. Fiona is a good nurse, but no miracle worker. The wound looked really bad, really deep."

"That would make it another murder. Oh, who do you think did it?"

"Kata's talk was mixed up. He said the English teacher he was talking to was angry. That is a possibility. I don't know. Maybe Kata was another American that knew something that made him an endangered species. He mentioned someone else that followed him. Togolese are traditionally mild and law abiding. *Doux*, sweet, they call them. Togolese say all of the murderers and prostitutes are from my country, Ghana. I don't know about that. But times are hard in Togo now. Maybe someone with a grudge against him found a desperate man willing to do this violent act for money."

Lynne took advantage of his openness. "When I asked you what you really knew about Adriana, I felt you were holding something back. Please tell me now."

"Only that she was rude, unreasonable and demanding every time she came to my office." Gregory's eyes flashed. "She insulted me unforgivably. In the old days, a man would not accept that kind of insult. My grandfather would have had her killed."

"Really!"

"Yes. He would have gone to the fetisher."

Lynne was impressed with this glimpse of the proud Ashanti warrior.

"And she treated others like that?"

"Not the Ambassador or people with a lot of power. But, just ask Gumpa and Bruce how she acted toward them."

"Yes, I got a glimpse of their strong feelings. But tell me more about how you feel about her."

"The local people have a goddess for small pox. Maybe she was a manifestation. And someone found a cure!"

Chapter 43: The Clay Feet Of The Cat Eaters

The next day, back at the university, she went to check her mail at her box in the Humanities Building. There was a letter with the official Cultural Center return address. Probably just some kind of notice. She tucked it into her purse.

She saw the bright red hair of Sylvia. The mysterious Sylvia was in a friendly mood today.

"You're Lynne, aren't you. We never got a chance to finish our conversation."

"Yes, Sylvia, how nice to see you. I forgot what we were talking about, but, is it true you are writing a book about Togo?"

"Yes. You know, a male volunteer wrote a book that was critical of the regime. But his was a literary type of thing. Mine will be more factual and direct. I'm going to expose some of these scams the Togolese play on each other and on the developmental organizations. How did you know about my book? That was one of the things I was doing in Paris. There at least I had a computer, a reliable post office, and reference books."

"I'd like to hear more about it. And also, I wonder, when you worked this summer, did you have any contact with Adriana?"

"Yes I did. The bitch. She was impossible. When she insulted me, I refused to work with her. Whoever killed her did a favor to us all."

"Oh, Sylvia. Please tell me . . ."

"Sorry, I'm in a rush again. It's nice talking to you. But, I've got a date and gotta run" and she was off down the corridor.

In each conversation she learned a little more about what was going on. Americans back home would never believe the information vacuum she lived in. Strange, violent things happened here and there was no official, public source of information. Certainly nothing reliable about them appeared in the newspaper which only came out every two weeks. She had picked the current issue from a roadside seller on her way to the university. Only eight pages and tabloid sized, it was mainly about the activities of the dictator, first in French, then in Kabye, and then in Mina.

And nothing about these local violent incidents involving Americans was on BBC or Voice of America which she listened to when she could find it on her short wave radio. The best news source was Radio France, but was frustrating to her since she only understood some of the words delivered by the rapid fire commentator in Parisian accented French.

After her class, one of Lynne's best students, Samma asked if he could talk to her. She was glad to. When teaching in America, counseling students was part of her work. But there was no provision for any place to talk, no office, no nook or cranny. The English office, which gave her gooseflesh because of the disappearing body, was out. And if she went there they probably would find about six people besides the books jammed into the tiny space.

"Please, don't tell anyone I told you this. Mr. Gumpa is a nice man but . . . Is there a registration fee for applying in the camp counselor program?"

"No. That much I know."

“Well, he has been charging one.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. A large one. He charges a fee for everyone that applies and a larger fee for those that are selected. I know, because I had to pay it and so did my cousin and brothers. When I told Madame Adriana she said she would complain about it at a faculty meeting. She cared for her students and tried to help us.”

So that was it! He collected fees for himself. She was getting close to real proof against Gumpa. Probably he killed Adriana to keep his secret. But he must know it would come out sooner or later. A lot of people knew about it. And he can't kill them all. But now that she knew it, was she in danger too?

“Have you reported this to the authorities?”

“Yes, Madame. You. That is what I am doing right now.”

Startled, she decided she would accept the mission. She would tell someone really in authority so firmly they would have no doubt Gumpa was corrupt and that trying to keep his guilty secrets gave him a strong motive for the murder of Adriana.

Chapter 44: Not Purely Academic

On her way home after the dramatic meeting with

Samma, she was thinking about who to give this new evidence to. She heard a car horn beeping madly. A white Renault pulled to the side of the road.

"Lynne, fellow academic, would you like a ride?"

"Bruce! I'm almost home, But yes. I haven't had a chance to talk to you in a long time."

"Yes, not since that strange seminar up north." As usual, Bruce was smoking. The car was full of fumes. "I told you I would show you my library. Do you want to come and see it now?"

"Sure." She was curious about this wild man. He drove jerkily, cursing pedestrians, shouting at other drivers. Somehow, the car reached a street at the far end of the caisse complex and stopped in front of his house, which could pass for a twin of hers.

Despite his aggressive driving style, he was in a joyous mood. He explained, "Zelda and I are getting ready for a visit from her two sons. We have a whole schedule of genuine African events and ceremonies to take them to." When he was manic, he seemed to have a light around him.

Once inside, Bruce shouted hello to Zelda, who was in the front bedroom, and took Lynne into the large living room. She saw a fine collection of African masks, statues, and batik cloth hangings. There were also several of the formal photographs that westernized Africans have taken on important occasions as gifts for choice friends and family. From across the room, she couldn't tell if she recognized any of them.

There was also a bookcase loaded with books, all obviously from the U.S.

"How did you ever get permission to get all these over here? Did USIA really ship them for you?"

"Yes. The desk officer is so angry, she says she'll be sure I never get another appointment. When she said no, I just went over her head, wrote a letter to the Secretary of State."

Lynne looked at him, wondering. What an eccentric, interesting man! She had gotten over her original dislike. She kept her hand in motion, waving away the tobacco smoke that emanated from him in a cloud.

Images popped into her mind of the other young man, eccentric too, in another way, that looked so much like him.

She interrupted Bruce's flow of witty, gossipy literary talk. "Excuse me, Bruce, did you hear that Martin is missing? They fear the worst. I think you met him?"

"Sure, I knew him. And everyone is talking about him. I've heard the pathetic story so many times I can recite it by memory. He insisted on swimming in a wild sea." He puffed on his cigarettes, and waved his arms.

"Despite his missionary type philosophy, Martin had a strong will, and sense of adventure. He also some kind of dumb faith that god was protecting him. We see how wrong he was."

"That is so sad! So meaningless."

Bruce said coolly, "Freud said that character is destiny. His fate no doubt followed from his life."

Lynne just looked at him, scruffy, eccentric, and alive. "I don't like that. That's not enough!"

Bruce abruptly changed the subject. "Maybe you haven't gotten your mail. But, a bunch of us are going to an African eating house and bar tonight. Oddly, the US government is paying for it. The Fulbright commission gave me a grant to increase cooperation among colleagues at the university. I'm drinking it up. They pay, we chat, we eat and we drink all we want. Come and help us. The Cultural Center crowd is invited too. And there will be a presence from Peace Corps. We'll talk a little about academic things, but also catch up on all the news and gossip, do some--what those some organization types call networking."

"Okay. A good idea. We could stand some togetherness." She was pleased to have an opportunity to learn more about people who were somehow involved in the many puzzles. And she would find a private moment to tell Douglas Truman about Gumpa's guilt.

"I'll take you home now. And then meet us at seven at L'Arbre Banyan."

"Where is that?"

"That's in Forever."

Just then there was a knock on the door. She heard Zelda come out of her room and answer the door. She said happily, "Jean, how delightful to see you. Bruce, look, Jean Tossou is here!" Lynne saw a graceful man with a light brown complexion, dressed in American pants and an African shirt.

Bruce kissed him on each cheek, French style. "Jean Toussou! What is the Togolese mayor of East Lansing Michigan doing here at Bruce's house?" Lynne wondered.

Jean bowed politely at Lynne, then said in fluent, English, with just a touch of a charming French accent, that he was here with his son making arrangements so the young man could represent Togo on the Olympic team.

Bruce and Zelda eagerly plied him with questions, offered him a drink, swarmed around him. They acted as if Lynne was not there, or was an awkward piece of furniture.

Jean said to Bruce in French, "I want to thank you for the kindness you've shown to my cousin, Placide. I know the English he learned when he lived in Ghana is helpful to you...He is not

Chapter 45: An Evening In Forever

The American Cultural Center van drove up. Out popped Lita, Sylvia, Gregory, and Tom. Probably an invitation for Lynne asking her to go to with them was in her box at the Cultural Center. There was a flurry of cordial greetings. Tom asked a waiter to put three tables together and they sat chatting until a taxi drew up with Desire Adolpho, Blaise Begemey, and Mr. Ekou in it. A flurry of greetings and handshakes. Lynne watched the interactions between the actors in the drama she was living. At first there was neutral small talk, Sylvia asking the usual question, why was the quarter called Forever. It was an odd name in itself, but more strange since it was English in a French speaking country. Blaise explained, managing by his gestures and facial expressions to make it a bit of seductive banter aimed at flaming Sylvia.

"It is named after a bar run by Ghanaians that was once there. It was called Forever Weekend. The idea was that time spent in the bar was always a pleasure, a holiday, forever weekend. Often it was shortened to Forever. For many years Forever has been the official name of the quarter."

Tom seemed to accept Lynne as a member of the USIA team these days. He chatted with her. "You have my cousin as a guard. I know he is doing a good job. I have another cousin, Popo, that is your student in English at the University."

"Oh, I know him. But it's a huge class. So I don't know him well."

At this point, Bruce and Zelda arrived. Bruce was back in his sociable phase and kissed Lynne on both cheeks. After the handshakes and greetings all around, they all presented their plates to the scarf headed matrons dishing out the food of their choice from the huge cauldrons. Lynne tried a little of many things, corn, cassava, and yam mush, and different sauces with small amounts of chicken, fish, goat, and beef in them. They ate and continued chatting with high spirits and friendly laughter. Blaise was gallant and flirtatious toward Lynne and every other woman. Greg worked hard at treating Lynne in a formal and distant manner.

When their first hunger was assuaged, they continued eating with less dedication. Every now and then someone would leave the table to get seconds or to try something new.

Gregory stood up, to get everyone's attention.

"I am glad so many of you could come. The director of the Cultural Center had an engagement with the Ambassador and sent me in his place. We hope to have a series of informal get togethers, as you Americans call them, with the center, the university, Fulbright grantees, and other American agencies like the Peace Corps that work on projects together. He seemed to be carefully avoiding looking at Lita.

"Many of you have been asking about the latest information about someone who should be here tonight, Martin Appleby."

Lynne had been expecting the public confirmation of his sad fate. She watched the faces of her colleagues to learn their reactions.

“When he didn’t show up to do his lecture at the American school, we knew his disappearance was serious. Then two days later Lynne felt a stab of sorrow. She had really cared for the off beat gentle man.

The reaction of the group seemed muted. With so many deaths, maybe they were getting used to accepting them. “We just got the results of an autopsy. He had bruise marks on his head and neck.”

“What do you mean? What caused the bruises?” Lynne asked.

“The authorities are still investigating.”

It is likely that there was foul play.”

“Murder?” Sylvia asked. “Who would hurt a nice man like that?”

“They are investigating.” Gregory repeated.

“And another thing...”

“Not another murder?” Blaise asked, fearfully?

“No, not of a body. But perhaps of a soul or a reputation. You heard Adriana's accusation about corruption at the faculty meeting?”

Lynne spoke now. “Yes. And Madame de Souza implied something about it too.”

“The shameful truth is out. Gumpa has been cheating both the applicants and the US government. He asked each for a sizable fee and pocketed it. He also diverted U.S. funds intended for advertising and mailings. He has been thrown off the program and we will ask the university to fire him as well.”

There was a buzz of dismayed responses, in English, French, and Mina.

And then, acme of embarrassing moments, Lynne saw a newcomer entered the room. It was Mr. Gumpa.

By now, he was, in her mind, besides a tricker of his own people and an embezzler, also a vicious serial killer, engineer of two serious attacks on her, and probably one on Kata. Even when she had that mind set, he looked harmless, his narrow shoulders bent, his once glistening black skin, a chalky grey, his eyes more bewildered than ever behind the Woody Allen glasses.

“Hello everyone...” He seemed to be searching for something else to say.”

Gregory, despite all still the good host, said, “Hello, Mr. Gumpa. Get some of this delicious food from the ladies out in front. We are all ahead of you.”

“No, I ate at home. But I’ll sit with you.”

For a moment, there was strained silence. Then Lynne asked, “Mr. Gumpa, have you been traveling?”

“Yes I had family business in the North.”

Gregory showed his acknowledgment of the significance of this admission. “I just came back too. Did you know an American Volunteer was hideously attacked in Mango?”

Bruce said, in a half joking way, “Yes Gumpa. Did you take a along with you?”

At that moment, Lita stood up and pushed her way over to Gumpa’s side. “Luther, let’s leave this hostile group. This is as bad as Adriana harassing you at the picnic over your counselor selections. This is a nest of rumor and false accusations.”

And pulling the abashed Mr. Gumpa behind her, she stalked out of the room.

Chapter 46: Politics And Love

Late that evening, she was surprised when her guard knocked on her door and told her a professor wanted to speak to her. She looked past Koffi to the dark figure at the gate on the street. He moved into a streak of light coming from her window. He looked too tall to be Gumpa. Since she learned

that foul play had not caused the body in the English office, he was the only professor she was suspicious of.

"You can ask him to come in." She held the door open for her visitor. "Blaise. What can I do for you? I invited everyone to drop in sometime to consult my books. But I just saw you at dinner." Blaise was still dressed in the Parisian business suit that he had worn to the dinner and smelled of hyacinth cologne. But, but did not use his usual gallant manner.

"Yes, true. Lynne, unfortunately, I have a distressing reason to be here."

"Well, come in and sit down. Bad news feels better, sitting down. Not another death!"

"This corruption scandal. You must do something. Or I and the whole English department could be put in jail or worse. You are an American-- I am asking you to intercede for us with the director of the American Cultural Center. The sooner you officially declare yourself as interceding for Gumpa, the better off you will be."

"Oh, that sounds like a threat!"

"Not from me."

Blaise Begemey continued seriously, "Gumpa, like everyone else in Africa has many friends, relatives, brothers. He also has close connections with high government officials."

Lynne looked deeply into his eyes, but his face was inscrutable.

"It is hard for us. Americans do not understand the political situation here. They do not consider the remnants of tribalism, the meaning of power."

It came over her in a flash. Gumpa is Kabye, one of the Togolese president's ethnic group, Blaise and most of the others were Minas, members of the ethnic group of the previous, slain president.

"I cannot say this officially, but..." Here he stopped, walked over to the window and looked out carefully on all sides. "Yes. We are alone." But he lowered his voice. Gumpa cannot be fired from his university position. He has friends and relatives in high places. Please somehow, let the American Ambassador know that. Here, it is a serious thing to fire a person. There are no other jobs. Please, talk to Mr. Truman and explain."

"But, his guilt in the Camp Counselor thing makes him a likely suspect for the murder of Adriana. She accused him in a public meeting! And maybe he killed Martin, and he probably attacked Kata, that volunteer up north. Kata said he had been drinking with an English teacher that sounds like Gumpa just before someone followed him and almost killed him."

"Oh, Madame Lynne. I have known Gumpa all my life. He is a cousin of my wife, my northern wife. I think you saw her with me in the restaurant in Atakpamay. He used

his position to get a little money, yes, anyone would do it if he could. But he is a timid man. Imagine Gumpa attacking anyone! Even if he had a reason to, look at him. He doesn't have the strength."

"You can't always tell."

"Before you get too excited about his guilt in the murder of Madame Adriana, listen to me. Gumpa could not have done it."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because, I was talking to him for a good part of the hour before the body was discovered. Many people saw us. We were at the back of the land, behind the baseball field, under a shade bush. I was talking to him about ..."

"About what?"

He looked sheepish. "You do not understand our society. We have an obligation to help the family. I have a nephew who is an orphan and is especially poor. He is a good student and wants to go to America as a camp counselor. My nephew talked to me at the conference at Atakpamay. I was thinking of asking you to intercede too. I was asking Gumpa to find a way to send my nephew to America as a camp counselor."

"And you are sure it was exactly that time?"

"Completely sure. As for this recent thing.

Where was the American volunteer attacked?"

"Mango."

"Gumpa's family, his mother and brothers, live in Sokode. He only took off one day to visit them. He came to see me back in Lome that evening. He could not have gotten to Mango and back in that time. Now, will you deliver my message to the Cultural Center?"

"I'll go the first thing in the morning and see what I can do."

She tossed and turned all night, trying to decide what to say. Now it seemed ridiculous to have ever suspected mild mannered Gumpa as the murderer of Adriana, and Martin. She decided to deliver Blaise's message. Doug and Washington could decide how to deal with the political situation that firing Gumpa would cause. But, if Gumpa was not the murderer, that left Lynne without a chief suspect. Maybe she could convince Doug to try something that would be new in this investigation, but was old.

She awoke at dawn and went to the road to look for a taxi at 7:30. She reached the Cultural Center before it was officially open. The guard let her in. Since she had a few minutes to wait and the day was unexpectedly mild, she went out to the inner courtyard to wait. Coming from around the corner, she heard loud voices, a man and a woman, talking in a loud voice. The language was English!

Her first feeling was concern. It sounded like they were in the tiny garden corner of the courtyard that was so attractive with its tropical plant display of palms, hibiscus and bougainvillea. In the center was a huge coconut palm, about 30 feet tall. She was always concerned about those trees. Coconuts were heavy and clusters of them grew together. Lately she had noticed that the extremely tall coconut tree had a cluster of almost ripe huge, heavy coconuts. She hoped no one fell on them.

Then she forgot the coconuts, as the voices continued. They were arguing. Loudly, bitterly.

“You, big man you, you made me great. Now give me money. Doctors want money and I am sick. And my clothes are too small now. I can’t work like this. I lost my job. You gotta take me for your wife.”

“Come, you know I have a wife in Ghana from my own tribe, and next week we will have naming ceremonies for our new son . . .

Chapter 47: Palaver

She wasn't even sure of the actual situation. She didn't know if she wanted to tell the director what she overheard yet. She needed some time to think.

"Yes. That matches with what I've just learned from another source. Then that leaves me without a suspect. Do you know who they are considering?"

"No, but Mariani says he had a strong suspicion. He has interviewed two hundred people and has a good idea of their movements at the picnic on Columbus Day...."

Just then Gregory entered with a pile of papers.

She felt a stab of pain, knowing she could no longer consider this beautiful man as a lover. And how

could he keep that regular, professional self-assured bearing after the scene he had just participated in? "

"Yes, " Gregory chimed in. "It is traditionally led by the oldest and wisest person in the village. Everyone presents their ideas and then that old person gives a wise solution for the problem. Too bad we can't have a palaver under a big old banyan tree."

"I think this might be a good idea. Maybe we should we use some old African wisdom here," Doug said, meditatively.

Lynne was getting enthusiastic. It was African, and yet. . . When she read murder mysteries and they used that corny old Agatha Christie device which was similar, she had felt it was hokey. But she remembered in the Peace Corps deaths in Togo two years ago, the security officer McDuff had a big general meeting and solved the mystery. It was worth trying. At the least it might stir up some activity. "I'm glad you will consider it. But, will Mariani accept it?"

"Mariani and I have been quite friendly. He is lonely here with his wife in the states waiting for the birth of their baby. Just a minute, I'll see if he thinks the idea has any merit." He reached for the telephone and dialed a number. "Tony, Doug here. We have our young amateur detective, Lynne, in here and Gregory too. Okay, I'll tell her. Lynne, he says he has been waiting for a report from you. He wants you to come and see him soon."

"Oh, I'll be glad to!"

Doug continued his phone conversation, "They think it would be valuable to have what the Africans call a palaver. Get all the possible suspects and witnesses together and have them talk it out and see if some wise old man could come up with a solution."

He paused, and listened. Then said. "Yes, it's worth trying. Maybe you had better be the wise old man?"

He listened again. " Well then, How about the ambassador? She's not a wise old man, but everyone respects her. Right now, the weather is quite mild. Even so, it is almost ninety in the afternoons and the sun is hot. But we could have it outside in our courtyard in the morning when it is a little cooler. We have one big tree to give some shade. And we can get some big awnings." He listened a while. Then, "You agree then?" Then he listened to what was a long reply. "Okay. Let's set it up."

He hung up and talked to Lynne and Gregory. “He wants to invite a number of suspects and also a lot of witnesses. All together, about 80 people. I’ll talk to the ambassador about it this morning.”

Gregory was all efficiency. “Just give me a date. I’ll get the lists from Mariani and inform everyone.”

Lynne watched him. Wondering. Gregory was an impressive man. So good looking and good at his job. But, another case of a cat eater with clay feet. Could he put on a show like this if he himself was the murderer?

Chapter 48: Explosive Encounter

Lynne heard fireworks in the night. She had noticed that her next door neighbors, people from the German Embassy, were having a party. As she lay sleepily in bed, she considered going to her back veranda and watching them. It would be a treat to see something unusual. But, laziness prevailed and she turned over and went to sleep.

It happened that she left her front gate just as the German neighbor was leaving hers. She was surprised to see the woman come to her and start speaking. She had noticed that most Germans here spoke English well. But in the past, friendly nods at a distance had been their practice.

“Madame. Are you all right? That was a terrible night.”

“What do you mean?”

“Terrorists came over the border from Ghana. They went through down town, shooting, attacking the police and demanding cars from people passing by.”

“You mean you didn’t set off fireworks at your party? Those were real explosives somewhere?”

“No fireworks. We had a birthday party, with much music, laughing, and talk. Afterwards, one of our guests went into the center of town to get some pizza. He had been sent here to start a zoo for the president of Togo. Some terrorists asked for his car. When he refused, they killed him. It is horrible, horrible! We heard many gun shots.”

Lynne murmured some sympathetic words, trying to comfort the distraught woman.

“I’m on my way to the university. Do you think it is safe to go?”

“The radio says everything is fine now. That they caught seven terrorists and the incident is over.”

“Then, excuse me, but I must go. I will be home later in the afternoon. If there is anything I can do, just ask me.”

She went to give the exam. At the Humanities building, she saw the students, milling around, talking, afraid to miss the exam, but nervous and afraid to be away from their homes. She saw Ned Emerald, usually so suave. He was flustered. “Where is Bruce? His class is here and they’re just walking around, getting in everyone’s way.”

Maybe Bruce had more sense than the rest of them. Home would be a good place to be right now. She could hear guns shooting all around. But she went to her assigned room and distributed the exam papers. At one point, she went out to the area near the office to see if there was any new information. A woman rode up on a motorcycle, her blowing robes billowing, then at rest. She was literally shaking like a leaf, like an aspen in a storm. She started talking in an African language.

“What is she saying?” Lynne asked.

“She says there are bodies, bodies all over the streets in downtown Lome,” Desire Adolpho said.

Since no one could leave, she felt it was best if her students stay in the examination room and continue working. Other professors were allowing their students to wander around outdoors, infecting each other with their terror. Then all of a sudden

a policeman drove up on his motorcycle and gave the order. They must evacuate. Cars would be available to take professors home. The students were on their own.

Ned Emerald said to her, "You've got to go. My home is closer. Please come go there. Margaret will appreciate the company."

"You want me to do that?"

"Yes, I beg, order, insist, command." The shadow of a smile crossed his face. "Just do it." Ned was needed in town. He jumped on the back of the policeman's motorcycle and zoomed off.

At the door of the house, when Lynne explained to Margaret what was happening, she calmly welcomed her. "Ned, no doubt had to help British and Commonwealth citizens. Since there is no British Embassy here, Ned serves as British consul.

"He is a good man. He takes no end of trouble to help any fellow Brit here that is in trouble. We've been in Africa 12 years. There isn't much we haven't experienced. This will all blow over too. Can I get you a nice cup of tea?"

Lynne found this all comforting. She searched Margaret's peaceful, welcoming face. She didn't have heavy makeup this morning.

"It's good to hear a woman that admires her husband."

"Yes, my husband is a fine man. But he used to have a violent temper. He used to beat me. That is why we were here and not in Britain. There was a big scandal and he lost his job. But, he got counseling and is fine now."

"Margaret, forgive me, but, I saw you recently, covering up bruises with makeup.."

"Yes," she said shamefacedly. "Once in a while. But only when he gets really worried about something. These murders have shaken him. But don't tell anyone. We will lose our position again. I know you won't tell. You're a kind person. But that Adriana, she was going to talk to the American Ambassador and even tell someone in London."

Lynne heard more explosive sounds outside. This time she knew they weren't fireworks.

Margaret and Lynne moved away from the windows. They were each being quietly brave to help the other deal with this. But they didn't try any more conversation until the gunshots stopped.

After about an hour, it was quiet outside. Soon after, a car drove up.

It was Ned. "I solved the Brits' problem. Wish I could do the same for the Togolese. Bad show in the center of town. But I think the attackers, terrorists, they call them, are in custody. Lynne, thanks for staying with Margaret. The car will take you home."

"I was glad to have her company too."

beater to woman murderer? But the motive? He loved Africa and wanted a permanent position with the British Council here. Maybe Adriana had told him she would block it.

But how about the other incidents? How could he be responsible for them? The men that broke into her apartment wouldn't tell who had asked them to do it. And what documents could he be interested in? She knew he had been in Atakpamay when she was mugged. But there were no reports of another white man around when Kata was hurt. And what could he have against Martin? And where was Ned on the holiday when Martin was killed?

If he had some hidden motive, it was possible that one of the many loyal African friends that he had helped over the years, driven by the hard times would do those violent acts for money.

Or were those attacks completely separate from the death of Adriana?

Chapter 49: Rumors And Reasoning

Everett phoned her soon after she returned from the Emeralds' house, checking to see if she was all right. But he couldn't give her any more information.

It was good to hear his voice. And good to know he was still thinking of her. If the city really became chaotically violent, he probably would be sure that she got evacuated, even though she wasn't an official state department officer, and not entitled to first consideration.

Three days later, the city really was calm and the University held peaceful examinations. Lynne had a sense of satisfaction when she gave the exam that had been delayed by the violence.

The television news showed seven more captives confessing to planning the attacks, speaking like robots from a prepared script. It gave a probably false account of the situation and called the men terrorists. They gave no hint that it might have been an aborted coup attempt. The city settled into a tense, precarious calm.

With all this going on, she hadn't been able to have the promised second talk with the security officer. When she tried to make an appointment with Mariani, the embassy secretary told her she would be hearing from him. Soon after, she got a hand-delivered message by embassy mail.

She wanted to probe her brain once more, in preparation for the palaver. With Gumpa having a fool And many of them had a real grudge against her. . But who hated her enough to kill her?

She let her imagination roam freely. She would start with Gregory. The conversation she overheard that he had with Hope indicated that he had a violent streak. She had seen him look fierce and furious when he told of the rudeness of Adriana. And maybe she knew about the pregnant woman somehow and was about to inform someone, perhaps the Embassy.

It was appalling to realize that she just a few days ago she was in a love relationship with a man that could possibly be a murderer. Now that she glimpsed a new side of his personality, she tried to remember his activities at the picnic. But she really hadn't been paying attention except for the enjoyable sparring, hinting at future love interludes. Could he really have been that charming and likeable right after he had murdered another woman?

" And too, maybe Adriana with her tendency to blow whistles was going to prevent Sylvia from publishing her book that exposed many unfavorable things about Togo. Sylvia wasn't at the picnic. She was with a French lover in Paris. Probably Jacobou didn't know that. Would Jacobou kill for her? Who knows?

Gumpa was no longer on Lynne's list. He had a big motive, but also a big alibi. How about Bruce? He was furious because of Adriana's rudeness. Ned Emerald had said he had a real drug and alcohol problem. He might be right, but probably he only had a selfish crazy problem. Could he have pushed Adrianna down into the pool in a fit of substance craziness? But she remembered what a good time he had been having at the

picnic, entertaining everyone. He seemed sober, and in his madly eccentric way, sane. But who else?

How about Ekou? Lita had told her not to trust him. Then Everett had told her why, that he was cheating in the international Exchange Program he administered. Could Adriana have threatened to complain about that to the authorities in the U.S.? That was a real possibility. She tried to remember his activities at crucial points. He had been at Atakpamay when she was attacked. Had he been in Mango when Kata was almost killed? Was he the English teacher Kata had talked to in the bar?

She tried to recall and visualize that Columbus Day. People came and went, in and out of her range of vision. As far as she remembered no one looked particularly wet, but many looked damp and sweaty. .

Murder is such an irrational activity. It is hard to think of any ordinary person doing it.

Again she made a careful list in her journal. It had five names on it. Then she added a sixth item, to stand for people like Blaise and Desire that Adriana knew and had offended or perhaps rejected. She thought some more and added a seventh. Maybe it was someone Lynne had never met or heard about who had been at the picnic and hated the golden haired professor. She added as number Eleven, *Unknown*.

Now she was prepared for the palaver on Wednesday.

Tired of the isolation of thinking of this all alone, after class that day, she took a taxi to the American Cultural center. She wanted to see if there was anything she could do to help with the palaver. The director was at the ambassador's office. She didn't want to see Gregory, but he dashed out of his office to welcome her. "Lynne. How good to see you! I've been too busy. Sorry I have not called you or" he lowered his voice. "Visited you."

He didn't seem to notice that her reply was cold and that she had been distant lately. Probably he was preoccupied with his troubles with his village sweetie. Obviously he had no idea that she had overheard his conversation with his pregnant girl friend.

Tom, resplendent in an outfit that looked like it came out of Esquire magazine asked her if he could help and took her into his private office.

"Thanks you for seeing me, Tom. I want to know if I can help in any way to make the palaver work out."

Tom acted as if he had gained a lot of respect for her since that first day when she told him about the blood at the English office.

"We are all left out. Once Doug gave him the idea, Mariani took it over and wants to make it his show. He is being secretive about the agenda The Ambassador has graciously agreed to attend and do the summing up. They have made it clear that all those invited must come. The letter telling them so came from the ambassador herself. You will see yours in your mail box. Peace Corps will provide transportation for volunteers on posts who are on the list to come down for it. The palaver is scheduled for Wednesday morning at 10 o'clock in the courtyard here."

Tom commented, "She's from the Bahamas but is married to a petty Togolese official. She thinks she's more Togolese than the Togolese. She thinks she knows everything about what's going on."

Lynne went on, "But what is Mariani going to do? He certainly doesn't know the details of how an African palaver is supposed to work."

Tom laughed. "Of course not. Some of us offered to help him, but he wants to do it himself."

"I was one of those that suggested the idea. But unless it is done right, it won't go any good at all."

But Tom was oddly confident. "Not true. My father was a notorious polygamist. He had ten wives and I have 50 brothers and sisters. I learned a lot about people, just surviving that crew. And I've seen a lot of . They are often unorganized and chaotic, but they bring out secrets, forgotten things, hidden things. Something will come out of it. There were many people at that damned picnic. Someone saw something important. This will trigger some memories. It will also trigger some signs of guilt, some admission of guilt."

"What did you think of Adriana?"

"Now don't make a suspect out of me, Madame detective. I was busy with the director all that day. I didn't have time to push anyone under the water. But she was a difficult woman. That whole thing about housing wasted my time for days. And in the end she was still discontented, accusing me of taking bribes to give the apartment at the Caisse to you. An infuriating woman. But, if I had killed her, I wouldn't do it that way."

This interested and amused Lynne. Probably a lot of people had hostile fantasies that included a method of murder. "No? What way would you choose?"

"We have African ways. Go to a good fetisher and your problem is over."

"So you are not the murderer, but you have a feeling we will learn something important at the palaver?"

Tom laughed. "I have been toying with you. I know for sure that something crucially important will come out of the *palaver*. When you leave it, you will know who the murderer is."