

Chapter 50: Face To Face

The *palaver* seemed doomed from the start, as Dorothy predicted. She repeated her judgement, sitting two seats from Lynne in the courtyard filled today with rented plastic chairs. On ordinary days the area doubled as a parking lot. It was appropriate to have the *palabre* outdoors. Besides, it was the only place in the city large enough for the meeting, not counting the soccer stadium, of course. The builders of the court yard had preserved a tree in the center which had grown to enormous size and gave shade over a large area. Mariani had set the stage with a row of big chairs on the outdoor platform facing the crowd. Opposite those officials in the big platform chairs, about Lynne and about fifty other y people sat in chairs placed in rows under the tree and the awnings rigged up to protect the rest of the audience from the fierce sun.

She noticed some foreign dignitaries, including the Chinese Ambassador sitting toward the back. There were at least twenty extra curious people standing and about ten employees of the Cultural Center walking around looking official and confused at the same time. At the very back, behind the chairs, the lovely garden nook with flowering bushes and the 60-foot coconut tree

Dorothy pointed out that it was not only basically a foolish idea, but there was a bad omen. Early that morning out of the regular season, a surprising, severe harmattan storm hazed over the town. One time in Dapaong when a similar strange dust storm occurred, an old neighbor woman went down the street muttering, "*C'est le fin du monde*, it is the end of the world." It looked a bit like that.

Today, the air looked foggy with the dust particles in the air. When Doug Truman stood before them, they saw him through a veil of dust and as the time went by, his mouse brown hair became reddish. He started by introducing the American Ambassador. She was a stately gracious woman with the *cafe au lait* complexion that, oddly enough, in America is considered black. She wore a beige African *boubou*. Which was starting to show darker streaks because of the dust. She acknowledged the introduction, but instead of a speech only said, "Welcome everyone. I wish you all good success in your work today." And she sat down. Doug briefly introduced Mariani and then turned the meeting over to him. His first words were, "It is too early for harmattan, and yet the harmattan is severe today. And here in the south, the harmattan is not supposed to be strong." He spoke as if protesting, bewildered. As if the authorities had made a mistake.

Lynne was sitting in the front row. Sylvia sat next to her. By turning around she could see the others. Peering through the gloom, the dust that looked like fog, she made out all the people she had been thinking about.

The fastidious Togolese, dressed in their best clothes were soon covered with red dust. The dust coating on everyone added to the strangeness. Unbelievably, Bruce was smoking here, even though it was absolutely forbidden. Beautiful Zelda looked even more petulant than usual under a layer of red dust. Ekou looked ravaged, ten years older than he had the last time she saw him. Gumpa, behind his big glasses, looked inscrutable. Lita, with him, was defiantly and possessively clutching his arm, something

not done in public according to Togolese manners, not even by a wife. And another lady filled that role in Gumpa's life. Gregory was businesslike, on duty, going back and forward directing people to their chairs, instructing center personnel.

It was Mariani's time to take over. Standing at the microphone, he looked like a deer caught in the headlights of an unexpected car. He had never conducted a murder investigation before. And certainly he had never conducted a palaver before. It was as if he suddenly wondered what he had gotten into. He started a rambling talk about Adriana's death. "We can't reenact the tragic picnic. We don't have a pool here. And this crime was done in private." He pointed to a large chart on an easel. "This shows the layout of the recreation center and pool. The audience tried to see through the haze to where he indicated with his big pointer.

He said he had a time schedule. He talked about the many interviews he had conducted. He was just warming up when there was a loud and clamorous uproar from the streets, at the other side of the courtyard wall.

Michel, the Cultural Center receptionist, rushed up in great agitation and spoke to friends in the chairs nearest the door something in Mina that caused a startle reaction. Lynne observed panic circled the room, as those he told, each told more, who told others, all expressed in the five African tongues, three European, and two Asian languages spoken by those attending. An embassy guard rushed in, walked up on the stage, and moving close to her ear, said something to the Ambassador. The Ambassador left the platform, hurrying after the guard. Soon after, Douglas Truman, as director of the center, murmured

"Excuse me. I must . . ." and left. The uproar outside continued. Then Mariani, said, "I must go. I have to find out . . . it is my responsibility." He looked for someone to take over. Seeing the Peace Corps Director was leaving too, he picked Fiona, the Peace Corps Nurse. "You keep the meeting going. We have enough people getting in the way. Go on with it."

Fiona said, "But . . . ?" and then shrugged and walked up to the microphone.

Most of the Togolese had already left their seats, rushing to the big wall with its masonry peepholes near the street and to the corridor that led to the stairway and the cultural center offices and entrance. Dorothy rushed off when she saw her boss, Doug, leave. The audience was greatly diminished. The harmattan haze was very severe.

A few Togolese, a handful of Americans, non official ones, three Brits and some officials of other governments remained.

Fiona said, "Does anyone know what is going on?" Charley Kelly, a Peace Corps volunteer that knew many languages, including Mina and Ewe said, "my Togolese friend just told me what people are saying. They are all talking about bodies."

"Whose? Why?"

"Yes, bodies from the lagoon. The pro democracy movement fished them out and piled them into a wagon. They took them first to the French Embassy, then to ours. To show what the dictator is doing.

Twenty bodies were found in the lagoon right there near the center of town. People say it was the dictator's brother who killed them. They say about half of them were students. One was a young woman with a baby on her back.”

So, the next stage of the dark lagoon drama was unfolding. Her students had known about this weeks ago. Not wanting to add to the confusion on the street and in the office, Lynne remained in her seat.

Fiona said, “Mariani told me to go on. But he didn't give me any agenda or instructions. Give me a few minutes to think of a plan.”

The audience immediately took up their discussions to anyone that would listen, releasing their painful tension by something like communication. But many of their remarks were incoherent and partial.

Lynne listened. She was dismayed that this traumatic event was interrupting what might have proved a help in solving the murderous mysteries in the American community.

Just then, a young Togolese man entered the room and made his way toward her. Even though he was a student in her big second year English class, he spoke to her in French. “Madame Professor, now everyone will know about the horrors of this government. But I came for something else. You are here to learn who killed Madame Adriana. My cousin Tom said I must tell someone at the meeting. I would rather tell you and have you help me.”

“Your name is Popo, isn't it? Okay. Fine. Here, sit next to me. What do you know?”

“Oh, I will be punished, I can't tell. I don't know what to do.” He put his head in his hands, as if to blot out a fearful sight.

Lynne didn't know whether to just wait or to try to reassure him. But, what was he talking about? What could she say?

She said in a low voice, “If you know something, it is important to tell them.”

“Wait Madame. Let us listen first.”

Then Fiona came back to the microphone and in a firm voice took over the meeting. “I have been told to go ahead with this. Does anyone know how a palaver works?”

Jacob was still there. Glad to demonstrate the skills he had learned when he got his Master's degree in Britain, he said, “Well, really, it is a little like an English court trial. There are opposing sides. Everyone tells their stories. Witnesses appear. Wise people discuss it, then the judge, the oldest and wisest person makes a decision. A palaver is usually between two parties. Here it is between all of us that are innocent and the person that committed the murder.”

Fiona said, “I don't know what Mariani had in mind. But here we are. Our problem is to find out who killed Adriana. Any ideas?”

Desire Adorno, who had just returned from a quick look out of the holes in the wall returned. As an experienced teacher he had a suggestion. “Can we make our own chart, with notes on it?”

Dorothy had returned, heard this, dashed off to the inside of the building, and came out quickly with a big easel sized pad of paper and a fistful of markers.

Fiona said, "Let's think of what happened just before Martin called for help and I rushed to the pool and started trying to revive Adriana. Think where you were. I'll start with myself. I was at the pie judging contest, then at the baseball game. Then I heard a guard calling for me. I ran to the pool and found Martin in a bathing suit, standing there shouting, "Help her, help her. By then there were about twenty people standing around. Some of you were there. Who knows something about who was near Adriana earlier. One of you must."

They looked from person to person. Lynne looked at Tom, but he was looking at her. Popo was silent.

She looked at the others, Bruce and Zelda, Ned and Margaret, Lynne, and Sylvia all peered through the gloom at each other.

Ned Emerald protested, "It doesn't make sense to go on with this meeting with Mariani out and also so many of the Togolese. They might know something and several of them hated Adriana and had good reason to have her dead."

But by now, almost all of the English teachers were back. Desire Adolpho had good handwriting and volunteered to write on the chart.

Fiona said, "Call out where you were when you heard the news and the half hour just before that. "Gradually, more and more people had been filtering back to the meeting. Once again the room was filled with eighty plus. Lita came back and took a seat next to Lynne. She was the first to call out, and said she was at the baseball game for an hour before Adriana was discovered. Perhaps in order to establish excuses, or perhaps just to pass the time, people shouted out their names and where they were. Most of them said they were at the far end of the area, near the baseball field or at the marines house, or at the picnic tables. No one spoke up to say they were near the pool or the front gate. Despite Desire's neat writing, the sheet soon turned into an illegible tangle of names, arrows, x's and lines.

"Tell them what you know! Lynne said urgently to Popo.

Alarmed, he said, "Oh, I can't!"

"Were you invited to the picnic? I didn't see you there."

He was silent, but squirmed with an agony of fear, embarrassment, or some other emotion. The harmattan had lifted somewhat and Lynne could see better now. She was anxious about still another thing. In the corner of the courtyard the garden of tropical vegetation was still dramatic, though covered with red dust. In the center of it, the exceedingly tall coconut palm loomed over them all. She looked at it uneasily. It was swaying in the strong wind. The coconuts looked big and, as far as she could tell, ripe.

With all the excitement, people were milling around, sitting in unaccustomed seats. When the Chinese ambassador came back from his attempt to see what was going on, someone was in his seat. He and his two assistants took some free standing chairs and made a little place for themselves in the garden area.

Dorothy turned around to talk to Lynne. "This meeting is a muddle. No help at all. As I said, earlier . . ."

Fiona seemed to realize the same thing. Looking at the scrawled sheet, she said. "Thank you everyone. I will give the chart to the security officer when he returns. But right now, I want to introduce a guest. He was scheduled to come earlier, but was detained. An honored guest. Monsignor da Silva, the head of the Catholic church in Togo. A dignified man in a black priestly robe with a red cardinal's cap, he gave a passionate prayer in French. About seeking and finding, about guilt and repentance. He called on the guilty person to come forward. "*Le Bon Dieu regarde tous!* God is watching! God sees everything."

Fiona didn't understand much French, but Gregory, standing nearby murmured in her ear. His words seemed to motivate her. "The monsignor is right. Let's try something else. Someone must have seen something that is really helpful. Please, tell us. What do you know? ? Who killed Adriana? Who was near the pool and could have killed her?"

The big courtyard was painfully quiet. There was a great tension. Lynne had the feeling that people really believed something important was going to happen, and they were waiting for the revelatory testimony.

A quick gust of sand filled air swept through the court yard.

Then she heard a series of thumps, and then screams that didn't sound American.

She turned around to the source of the noise.

The Chinese ambassador was shouting something, and holding his head. A trickle of blood was running down to his beautiful dust- streaked white tropical suit. On the ground were four newly fallen coconuts.

Dorothy looked disgusted. "Doomed!"

Chapter 51: Seeing Everything Twice

Once again, Fiona, the Peace Corps Nurse was pressed into emergency service. As usual, the Peace Corps doctor was out of town. His territory included all of Togo and Ghana, too. She rushed from to platform and examined the Chinese Ambassador, had him do a few simple things to assess his neural health, looked carefully at his eyes. Four strong young men carried him in a chair into the Cultural center offices. As they passed Lynne, Fiona said, "Lynne, tell them I think he needs a stitch or two, but there is no concussion. We were lucky."

"Okay. Yes, I'll tell them." Lynne replied. "And, if you need a translator, a Peace Corps Volunteer, Charley Kelly speaks Chinese. I remember he talked to the Ambassador for a long time at the Columbus Day picnic."

"I guess the third World War won't start today. Lynne said to Sylvia in a low voice. "And, the coconut wasn't a magic indicator."

"I wish something would reveal the truth. I hate this thing with everyone being under suspicion." I wasn't even there." Sylvia replied.

At this point, Mariani returned. Lynne quickly passed on Fiona's message.

Now Doug Truman was back. He and Mariani had a confidential conversation. Lynne guessed they were deciding how to end this meeting without too much humiliation.

Mariani went to the microphone, and spoke. "What a day! We regret the injury to the Chinese Ambassador. The nurse tells us she feels he needs a little first aid, but is not seriously injured. The ambassador cannot return now. She accepted the petition from the demonstrators and is considering it in consultation with Washington by cable. She said we should continue. This matter of Ms. Gallant's murder is important too." He took over the meeting again. It seemed as if the traumatic events had given him self confidence. He spoke forcefully.

He looked at the chart. "What's this?"

Desire explained to him in a low voice what they had been doing.

Mariani looked at the scribbles as if he could understand them. "A good start. But the problem is, that according to this, none of you were near the place where the murder actually occurred just before it happened. Now this can't be true. Think again. Someone must have seen people going back to the pool area. Someone saw the murderer walk back there to do the foul deed. And someone saw the murderer leave the pool before the alarm was spread."

His words were melodramatic. But so was the situation he described. "And, someone that is here, did the murder. Adriana Gallant was a woman with strong ideas of right and wrong. She believed in exposing people's flaws. Someone quoted her as saying, "*Tell the truth and shame the devil.*" Probably that habit is what killed her. We examined her past and the past of some people that were known to run afoul of her. This is what I see. There is not one crime, but a series, all an effort to hide a guilty past. A person here knew her in America. She knew the person's past, and rashly threatened to expose it. The person killed her. But, not satisfied, the person tried twice to make sure that if

our Fulbright professor, Lynne Lewis knew the secret she would not tell it. That is why she was attacked at her house and in Atakpamay.

Adriana's friend Kata also knew her and the secret in America. He was attacked, and seemed to be near death. And the unfortunate Martin Appleby either stumbled or remembered something that indicated Adriana's murderer. This person is dangerous, reacting not with just one explosive moment of passion, but a period of violence over a period of weeks, most of it premeditated.

"Did you see anything or anyone surprising, out of order, unexpected at that picnic? Each one, ask yourself. Everyone of you search your memory."

Lynne looked around for signs of guilt and nervousness. She couldn't tell much. A sorry crew, smudged with red harmattan dust, distressed by the wagon load of bodies, how would a guilty nervous person stand out? They all looked exhausted and tormented. Ekou, Gumpa, Begemey, Adolpho, the Emeralds, Bruce, Jacobou, Lita, they all looked intense, eyes glued on the speaker. They all looked nervous, possibly guilty. Gumpa stood up. Some people buzzed "I knew it. He did it. It's all part of that counselor scandal." Gumpa replied passionately. "I want to declare my innocence." He talked about ethnic prejudice, said the Cultural Center favored southern groups, then made the crucial point, that he was with Blaise Begemey behind the baseball field talking most of the hour before the body was discovered.

Mariani said, "Yes, that has been confirmed by Begemey and others. You are not under suspicion." When no one else spoke up, Mariani looked disappointed. He seemed baffled.

Lynne hoped Tom would speak up, but he didn't say anything.

She knew she must do something to get Popo's information from him. She stood up and, in a ringing voice said, "Wait. This is important. My student has something to tell you."

Popo gave darting looks around, as if trying to find a way to escape. But Tom, said loudly and firmly, "Yes, my cousin has something vital to tell you."

"Come up here and talk to us, young man," said Mariani. He looked relieved. Had a miracle occurred and was this meeting going to be successful after all?

Popo was tall and good looking with red brown skin, redder now with harmattan dust, his hair in the typical two inch Afro. He spoke hesitantly. "I speak the English small small."

"Don't worry about that. But speak louder. Just tell us the best you can. Use French if you want to."

With relief, and in excellent, fluent French, he began his story. "I was visiting my friend, one of the guards. I knew I wasn't supposed to be there. I wanted to see what the party looked like. I looked all over the grounds, the playing fields, the house, then, before returning to the guard hut, I was curious about what was behind the hedge. I saw Madame Adriana in the water, swimming, slowly, and someone talking angrily to her."

"What time was this?" Mariani spoke surprisingly correct French although with a heavy American accent.

"About a half hour before the big fuss when someone saw she was dead." I was embarrassed, and quickly returned to my friend, the guard. The other guard, Jacobou was on

break just then. My friend was just checking in the Belgian ambassador. He can tell you the exact time.”

“Did you see anything else?”

“I stayed with my friend, but a little closer to the pool. There are bushes so you cannot see the pool, but you can see when people leave it. I was watching, curious. I saw the person leave, clothes splashed and wet!”

Mariani said “Was it a man or woman”

“A man.”

“Did you know the man?”

“Yes I knew him. He is a teacher.”

“Tell us. Who did you see?”

The student said, “I do not like to say this. He is a good professor; he helped the students.”

Lynne looked at the group still in the courtyard.

In French the word that he used, *professeur*, could mean either high school teacher or college professor. There were quite a few of both here today. Some were Togolese, some American, some British, some French.

Could one of them be . . .? The hush was so intense it was as if the group had suspended breathing. Who was it? People looked through the audience.

“What did he look like? This man that was with Madame Adriana just before she died.”

Lynne waited, almost breathless. Many of the professors were her friends.

Popo was gaining confidence now. “He was white. An English professor. At the University. I do not know his name. But I know him.”

There were only two white male professors at the university English department. Ned Emerald spoke up. He said, in a clear loud voice, “So it was Bruce! I knew the drinking and drugs would ruin him sooner or later.”

Someone near Lynne murmured, “A transparent effort to direct the guilt to someone else.”

She remembered the story Ned’s wife told her about her husband’s brutality to her and his fear of losing his job if it became known. Adriana seemed to know everyone’s secrets. Did she know that one and threaten to tell the authorities?

Inspector Mariani ignored him and concentrated on Popo. He was almost stuttering in his eagerness. “Tell. You know . . . Who . . . Tell me . . . What . . . Who was it? Is he here? Show us.”

Popo pointed. Despite the haze and gloom, many of those present could see him pointing to the professor that sat almost in the middle of the courtyard, next to his beautiful wife.

The Inspector wanted to be sure. “Who are you pointing at?”

“The American professor that always smokes.”

There was group shock.

“When I heard that Madame was dying or dead, I ran quickly out the front gate. I didn’t want to get into trouble or get my cousin fired.”

All eyes were on Bruce, who somehow, as usual was smoking. He stood up. He seemed to be searching for words. But he went on, smoking. Silently.

And just then there was a loud noise and sounds of arguing from the entrance. A ragged man burst in and made his way to the platform. In a kind of English dialect he shouted "Martin long time my friend."

And Lynne recognized him. It was Martin's roommate, and friend, Ollie, the one that had talked to her.

His intonation was Ghanaian. "Day on beach I see Martin. I see nodder Martin. He bad man. He dere. He murder man. . . Murder man." He pointed dramatically at Bruce.

Ned Emerald, as Acting Consul for the British government was used to many varieties of Ghanaian speech. He hurried to the front of the room, then, emotional and shaken said, "You saw that man on the beach the day Martin drowned?"

"Yes. I see two Martin. They like brothers. But now I see this brother kill Martin."

Zelda, screamed, "Oh, Bruce are you a murderer?"

The ragged man continued pointing and addressed Bruce. "Mr. Sir, you push Martin in water. Gods get you!" Bruce dropped his cigarette and bolted, roughly pushing Ekou who sat next to him, with surprising strength for such a sickly looking man. He ran fast, too, but, in the crowded room, couldn't get far. Three cultural center guards blocked his way. Everett stepped forward and gave an authoritative signal, and surprisingly, six marines appeared from the entry, six small bits of officialdom that had been across the street during the earlier disorder. They surrounded Bruce and grabbing his thin arms, marched him toward the door leading into the Center's offices, followed immediately by Everett and Mariani.

Doug Truman asked him as he was leaving, "Bruce, I must ask, did you kill Adriana?"

Bruce barked his cynical laugh. "Are you crazy? That's insulting. Do you think I would answer a question like that?"

"Then how about this one. Bruce, did you want Adriana dead?"

"Oh, course, She was nothing but trouble attached to a mouth!"

His words hung in the air like a banner. There was silence throughout the room.

The guards led Bruce through the door into the Cultural Center offices.

Of the official group, only Douglas Truman was left. He addressed the audience, "Ladies and gentlemen, We have all had enough of this dramatic morning. The *palaver* is over."

Chapter 52: Reasons Of The Heart

Lynne wanted to get out of this nightmarish atmosphere. She pressed her way through the crowd and walked a block hurriedly until she saw a taxi. She was soon home.

Trying to reorient herself, she noticed it was two o'clock. Four hours since she had first sat in that front row seat to participate in the *palabre*.

She grabbed herself some cooled tea and made a sandwich of French bread and canned corned beef. She choked it down, scarcely tasting it. Propping herself up with pillows in her bed, she decided to write in her journal and see if that would help her sort things out. But images whirled, a wagon load of bodies, a falling coconut, confessions and revelations, all covered with red dust in the gauzy air. She drifted off to an uneasy sleep.

And then she heard the bell on the gate outside ring. Since it was still day, Koffi her guard, wasn't there. Maybe it was just a peddler. She tried to ignore it. But it rang again and again, stridently. She opened her house door a crack. She heard a lilting African voice say in English, "Madame Lynne, I know you are there, please come talk to me."

She peered through the haze. Her sight was partly impeded by vines, flowers, and the slotted iron gate. But she saw a graceful tall figure in a boubou, somewhat familiar.

"Who is it?" she called.

"Jean Tossou, from East Lansing, Michigan."

Absurd. But probably true.

She was curious. She had wanted to talk to him. And she liked him when she met him those few minutes at Bruce's. But still she hesitated.

In some romance mystery books she had read the gullible heroine goes into an attic with the ax murderer. She didn't want to be like that. Yet she felt impelled to see him.

"Come in. The gate isn't locked."

She decided to stay with him on the veranda. If he threatened her, she could cry for help and a neighbor could hear her.

Jean laughed. "Ok. Here I come. One Michigander visiting another."

He was smiling, yet his face had signs of strain, and the red dust ruined what was basically a magnificent white *complet* suit covered by a *boubou*, all embroidered in gold.

"Mr. Tossou, please sit down and tell me what's on your mind."

His English was accented, but correct, slangy and relaxed, the way it is spoken in East Lansing, Michigan.

"Lynne, the American Embassy has arrested my nephew, Placide. You met him at Bruce's house."

"I guess so."

"It's terrible. Terrible. It turns out that Bruce has been killing people. I was afraid the drink and the drugs were hurting his mind."

"Has he admitted it then?"

"That is what they told me. When they wouldn't let him smoke or take a drink or one of his magic pills, he crumbled and told everything. I think he may regret it later. I like Bruce, but have been expecting something bad to happen to him. He had lost control of his life."

"And yet you encouraged your nephew to work for him."

“Yes, my nephew and other relatives. I see that was wrong. But you know Togo. There’s no work here. People stand around all day or walk the streets, looking for something to do. And Placide is not playing with a full deck. He isn’t as we say it in French, *normal*.”

“Still . . . ”

“ But I didn’t know that Bruce was paying him to beat people up. He said he was just doing odd jobs for him. Like leaving a voodoo threat at Adriana’s house to try to get her to go back to America, and calling you to get you to stop interfering.”

“What is it the Embassy says he did?”

“They say Bruce sent him up north to follow the volunteer Kata and hurt him so badly he couldn’t talk. Please help me. Placide did wrong, but he needs mercy. The Togolese police will beat him to death.”

Lynne wished this was fiction instead of real life. She knew the police did beat people savagely.” So Bruce was behind the threats. I started out thinking of him as an evil twin, but talked myself out of it. But *why* did he ask Placide to do it? What did he have against Kata? And against me in Atakpamay?”

“Placide didn’t hurt you. Someone else did that. But about Kata, Bruce’s mind has gotten scrambled with the pills and the drink. He worried too much, distrusted everyone, exaggerated everything. You have to ask the Americans for the whole story. I just learned this a few minutes ago. It seems Bruce got into some trouble in America and his university chairman warned him that if he got into any more scrapes, he would lose his university post. Then, the court wouldn’t let his wife have custody of her sons. They were supposed to come here to live in a few days. He killed Adriana because she said she would tell everyone about the old scandal.”

“But Kata?”

“He knew Kata was a friend of Adriana’s in East Lansing. He was afraid that she had talked to him about the East Lansing scandals. Saw them talking together at the Columbus Day picnic.”

So the attack had nothing to do with the English teacher Kata was talking to?”

“I don’t think so. I need your help right now. You must help me. Get them to release Placide.” He leapt up and moved close to her. He was tall and towered over her, still sitting. “Lynne, I insist. It is necessary.” His face looked fierce, threatening.

She stood, to gain something closer to height equality.

“Does this violent streak run in your family?”

He raised his hand as if to strike her.

“Hello, *bon jour*, madame is that you? Are you all right?”

A blessing. It was Koffi.

“Come Koffi, quickly.”

Jean lowered his hand and looked at it, as if in astonishment.

Koffi said something to him in Mina.

Jean answered sadly” Yes, *oui*, okay.”

And he quickly walked down the path and out the gate.

“Koffi, thank heaven you came.”

“I wondered if the dust storm was ruining my flowers.”

“What did you tell him?”

“I told him that you cannot force friendship.”

“You mean?”

“Only a friend can help his nephew. Hitting you will not help.”

That Africa grapevine! Already Koffi and obviously many others knew about the arrest.”

Lynne heard the telephone ringing.

It was Mariani. “Lynne. We’ve got Bruce singing like a canary. He’s practically babbling, telling everything, anything. What do you want to know? I can send a car to pick you up and you can ask him while he’s in this mood.”

“Oh yes, come right away. I’ll be glad to get away from here. I was almost attacked.” And she told him about Jean’s visit.

“Okay. Ill send someone out to look for him and bring him in for a talk. All the more reason you should come down here.”

In ten minutes the van was there, in twenty she slipped quietly into Doug’s big office where Bruce was enthralled a circle of embassy officials. He smoked a cigarette and was taking big gulps from the large glass of wine before him. He was sitting in the strange California Buddha squat that he said was most comfortable for him. The frenetic story teller seemed to enjoy telling his damning stories. “Of course I did it. A public service. I’m not strong and that cow was all muscle. It was hard for me to keep her head down with the pole in the American pool. I had to get really close and got splashed with all her futile struggles. But I had to do it. I need this Fulbright grant. My chairman said, take the Fulbright appointment, get yourself straightened out, then we’ll see about your job and tenure. I knew if I could keep out of obvious public trouble and finish my book I would get the tenure. My book is my landmark study of idealism and activism in American universities in the sixties.

“But that nosey she ogre threatened to tell everyone. She said I am still using.” His eyes glittered as he produced an eerie laugh. “And besides that, she threatened to testify against me and have my wife lose custody of her sons.”

Mariani said, in an encouraging tone, “How about Martin?”

“I’m sorry I had to kill Martin. But I knew that he suspected me of killing Adriana, the snooping witch. I had my sources. Placide had been following him. He was in a *buvette* when Martin said, in a loud voice that he was going to reveal information. I was worried about him, because he was the one to discover Adriana. He probably saw that my clothes were wet. They dried in all that heat in a few minutes, and no one else seemed to notice. When Placide learned from gossiping with his neighbors that Martin planned to go to the beach on Ascension Day, I went there, did some swimming, and then finished off Martin. He was easier than Adriana. He was even skinnier and weaker than I am and he could barely swim. It didn’t take much to push him under a big wave.”

At this point he noticed the newcomer in the circle of listeners. He gave an exuberant welcome. “There’s my naive colleague. What do you want to know, Lynne?”

He seemed to be enjoying his performance. The circle of embassy officials was obviously enthralled.

“Bruce, why did you those men break into my house. What document did you want?”

“I heard Adriana say at the faculty meeting that she was going to give you some secret documents. She wrote out all the dirt she knew or had dreamed up about me and gave it to you, didn't she? But the men that were supposed to get it from your house were bunglers. How did you hide the papers so well? They couldn't find them.”

“Oh, Bruce, there weren't any secret papers. She just gave me some classroom assignments she had used last year. But if I had any, they wouldn't have found them. They couldn't read English.”

This seemed to depress Bruce for a moment. “I wanted to send Placide, he knows some English. But he can't read. He introduced me to some friends that do little jobs for a small fee. But they were useless.”

“But then, that second time, up in Atakpamay. who hit me in the tunnel?”

“I did. It was a pleasure. Another snooping bitch.

I wrote the note so it would look like it was by an illiterate African. You were too nosy. I wanted you to stop. That should have scared you away. But you were too stubborn. I should have stopped you then, permanently. Then Popo wouldn't have squealed on me.”

“And why didn't you kill me?”

.Bruce smiled, a twisted smile.” Actually, I rather like you, Lynne. But anyway, I could hear someone coming, so had to make a quick getaway.”

The brilliant scholar sounded like a twelve year old playing cops and robbers.

Then, with one of those lightning changes of mood he was noted for, he suddenly said. “I'm tired. Why should I indulge your curiosity?” He suddenly seemed exhausted. His skin became deathly pale. The dark circles under his eyes seemed so dark he looked like an albino raccoon.

“I'm so tired of this place.” He looked around him with disgust. “Boring. I can't stand any more of this. I need some rest.” He closed his eyes. Then he turned in the swivel chair and faced the wall.

Mariani said, “The man is sick. Get the nurse.”

And we should leave him alone for a while. I'll get a marine to guard the door.”

Gregory came to her. “I haven't seen you alone for a while. I would like to take you home. But I think they need me here.”

He obviously hadn't noticed that she was angry with him. Gregory's tangled sexual life seemed far from them after this bizarre day. But, she couldn't forget it. The scene she had overheard on the stairway in this building last week was too meaningful. What a revelation about the character of this gorgeous man!

“ Gregory, our special relationship is over. I know about Hope.”

He looked startled, but said nothing. His eyes implored her.

How full of poetic irony it all was! When she first met Gregory, she had too much faith. And now she knew that Gregory had too much love for Hope!

Chapter 53: Usually Reliable Sources

She had nothing more to say to Gregory. And there was no point in hanging around after Bruce's strange fit. He had stopped talking. He obviously needed medical care.

She found a taxi immediately and was home in minutes. She locked her door carefully, hoping Mariani had sent someone to control Jean Tossou.

Several hours later, Everett came to see her. He told her what had happened before she arrived at the office and after she left. When Bruce was first brought in, they immediately confiscated his cigarettes. He was bereft, agitated, and insecure.

"I must smoke. I can't talk unless I smoke."

His usual line didn't work this time. They held fast.

He no longer had the manic air of control and arrogant playfulness that was often his public stance. They questioned him persistently, each of them, Mariani, Doug, and Everett, taking turns. He was distraught. Almost hysterical.

Mariani then said, in a fatherly voice, "Bruce, if you tell us why you killed Adriana, we'll give you the cigarettes and a bottle of wine too."

That did it. He immediately started ranting about his hatred of Adriana. After he got his cigarettes and a couple big glasses of wine, almost immediately, he became the wild, talkative, dynamic Bruce, the playful raconteur they knew.

Lynne said she hoped they had read him his rights.

Everett responded, "Oh, this isn't a cop show. This is just a little in-house investigation. Some explanations among friends."

"Why did he kill her?"

"She knew him at Michigan State. She hated him because he had won out in a dispute over teaching assignments. She had heard of his drug using and also a serious, hostile sexual harassment case that was squelched by behind-the-scene negotiations at the college. Being the vengeful person she was, she planned on exposing him in a way that would cause him a lot of trouble. At that point of the story, you came in."

"Okay. But afterwards, what happened after I left?"

"Someone hurried to get Fiona, the Peace Corps nurse. You know, she is the nearest thing to an American trained doctor we have. She said he was suffering from withdrawal of one of his arsenal of drugs. She said, 'The doctor will be back in town tomorrow. I hope he knows more about drug problems than I do.' "She gave him some sort of soothing shot and he was immediately asleep.

Lynne was silent for a moment. Then said, "So Bruce did it. I knew he was eccentric, but it's still hard to believe. What will happen to him?"

"That, I don't know. When he gets over this crisis, he probably will take back his confession. It's hard to predict what will happen after the diplomats think it through. They probably want to avoid a public scandal in the Fulbright Program. They will probably can get him into detox, then find out what's under that personality with chemicals removed."

"So, it turns out that the palaver worked after all."

Yes, but Mariani had known what to look for before the palaver. He had done background checks. He wasn't as inept as he seemed. He had learned of the problems Bruce

had in Michigan and had strong suspicions of him. He had traced his activities, and knew that he was on the beach that day that Martin died.

They also traced his friendship with the Togolese Mayor of East Lansing. Marianni knew Tossou has a pack of penniless relatives and friends, some of them desperate and unscrupulous who would do anything for a little money or some help in escaping the country. He could get them to do anything by promising to help them get visas to go to America.

“We’ve informed the Fulbright commission by cable last week and that Mr. Bradford cannot do his duties because of illness. We’ll talk privately to the bursar of the University of Togo.

“Something else you were interested in. Ekou visited us early this morning. He was afraid that he would be accused of attacking Kata just because he talked to him in the bar. We told him that Bruce had admitted that Placide did it. Poor dumb guy, he even wore a t shirt with Michigan State on it, which helped us pin the story down. That relieved Ekou, but then we told Ekou that we have strong evidence that he has been administering the International Student Exchange Scholarship fund unfairly. We warned him that we are going to ask for his resignation or dismissal. He was really shaken.”

“Everett, I appreciate you telling me these things.”

He looked at her intently, as if trying to decide what to say. Then he just said quietly, “I’m glad to do it. You’ve helped a lot in this whole investigation. You should be informed of what is going on—you’ve gone through a lot. You didn’t expect that your Fulbright appointment in Togo would be an appointment with death and danger.”

Chapter 54: The Dance Goes On

One morning the following June, Lynne wiped her moist face before she entered the even hotter than outdoors amphitheatre at the university of Togo. It was the last day of classes.

“Surprise!” Almost two hundred students cried, pronouncing the *i* in the French way, *sur preeze*.

Kossiwa, stylishly dressed, hair tressed in an elaborate do a little like Medusa’s, walked up to the platform and handed her a gaily wrapped present. Minou, the senior class captain had been invited to speak. His English had improved. “You have come here, an American pioneer to bring us to the frontier of knowledge. We are at home in the language of Shakespeare because of you.”

Lynne looked at their bright, young faces. A tear rolled down her cheek. What an honor it was to be working with them! She was making progress in her mission of increasing international understanding.

After class, she walked to the gate to catch a taxi, clutching her precious gift, a beautiful length of the best quality Hollandaise printed cloth. The campus was full of students. Many of them smiled and bowed and said, “Good evening teacha!”

Inexplicably, she heard drums pounding. Then, in a field near the English office she saw why. Three traditional drummers were keeping a lively, strong beat, and hundreds of students were dancing a traditional African dance. Lynne and her friends called it the chicken dance, because everyone bent their elbows and flapped them a lot like chickens. It was wild and wonderful and infectious. A student pulled her into the dance. She twisted her body and kicked her legs joyously to the insistent drums until she was absolutely breathless, then danced to the farther edge and continued her walk on the path toward her home.

“*Bien danse*, good dancing, teacha” they called after her.

As she walked home, sweat pouring down her beaming face she made a mental list of the developments since November.

Mariani and a marine guard took Bruce back to the USA in handcuffs. Fiona went along. After advice by cable from a doctor in Washington, and a federal express shipment of medications, she gave him a treatment that kept him calm, and half asleep.

Bruce was whipped into detox. He spent some fruitful time in a drug rehabilitation clinic. When he got out he withdrew all of his confessions and American prosecutors threw them out because of lack of a Miranda warning. The only real witness against him, Popo, couldn’t be found. People said he had slipped over the border to Ghana to live with relatives there when he learned that he might be asked to testify in a trial. The State Department showed no eagerness to make a public scandal.

In a burst of creative effort, Bruce finished his book called “The Dreaming Generation.” It was snapped up by a fine publishing house. When his chairman read the early reviews, he recommended that the university give him tenure.

According to people that followed his activities in America, he kicked all his addictions except two. He still smoked constantly and still insisted on squatting on tables.

Zelda passed the preliminary exams for her doctoral program at Michigan State in African Studies and wrote friends in Togo that as soon as she wrote her dissertation and got her degree she would apply to come back to Togo as the Fulbright professor, with Bruce acting the role of grantee's spouse.

Placide was sentenced to five years in a prison in Northern Togo for beating Kata. Conditions there were bad. Relatives brought him food every day.

Kata fully recovered. He confirmed and returned to his Peace Corps post. His long epic poem dedicated to Adriana was published in the Peace Corps magazine, *Beating Drums*.

Tony Mariani's wife had a baby boy that they named Victor. She joined him, and now his clothes were more subdued and always matched.

Gregory invited the Cultural Center staff to a naming ceremony for his baby boy. Because his wife had a responsible job in a bank in Ghana, it was decided that Gregory would raise the boy in Lome with the help of a nursemaid named Hope who also had a new baby.

Gumpa was still at the university, but the word was that he would no longer be coordinator of the Camp Program. His wife had a new baby.

Lita suddenly resigned as assistant Peace Corps Director and left for the United States on the next plane. Friends said she planned to go back to graduate school to work in Population Control.

The very non-innocent Innocent Ekou was still in charge of the international student exchange program.

The source of power Ned Emerald had hinted at was the fact that Ekou was the brother-in-law of the head of the opposition party stationed in Ghana which was eager to take over the country if ever the current dictator lost power.

Togo still was in political turmoil. A pro democratic movement kept trying to get fair and free elections, but the President, with the army behind him, remained firmly in power.

Lynne had almost forgotten glorious Gregory with his body like a god. She was tactful when he apologized to her because he didn't have time any more to visit her. She felt she was cured of her desire for such insubstantial lovers.

She no longer was furious with Everett who was a really a nice man, and in some ways helpless. He apologized, sort of. He said, "I told you there were no fires between us. Maybe that is good. With Adriana, there were brilliant sparks and when she rejected me after showing me what I was missing, I really hated her. I don't like myself when I feel that. Lynne, I know its asking a lot, but will you give me another chance?"

"Chance for what?"

"Just to go back as we were, continue to see each other and see how it turns out."

That sounded good to her.

“That means you want me to stay in Africa?”

“Yes, please ask for a second year at the university. Renew your appointment in Togo.”

“I had already decided to stay. My work isn’t finished here.”

She wrote an affirmative report to the Fulbright commission about her work at the University of Togo and got an appointment for a second year.

Lynne remembered the old story called Appointment in Samara. In it, a man tried to escape his doom by fleeing to Samara, only to find that all along he had an appointment with death in Samara.

Adriana had come to Togo to teach the Togolese students. She had met her death here.

Lynne’s appointment in Togo brought her harrowing times and close escapes. Her heart went out to the patient, hopeful students, struggling in this unstable country with classes continually disrupted by violence. Lynne made a vow. She would give them some knowledge, some techniques, some education. She couldn’t change the world. But she could prepare good lessons and be a good educator. She had an appointment with the youth of Togo.

THE END