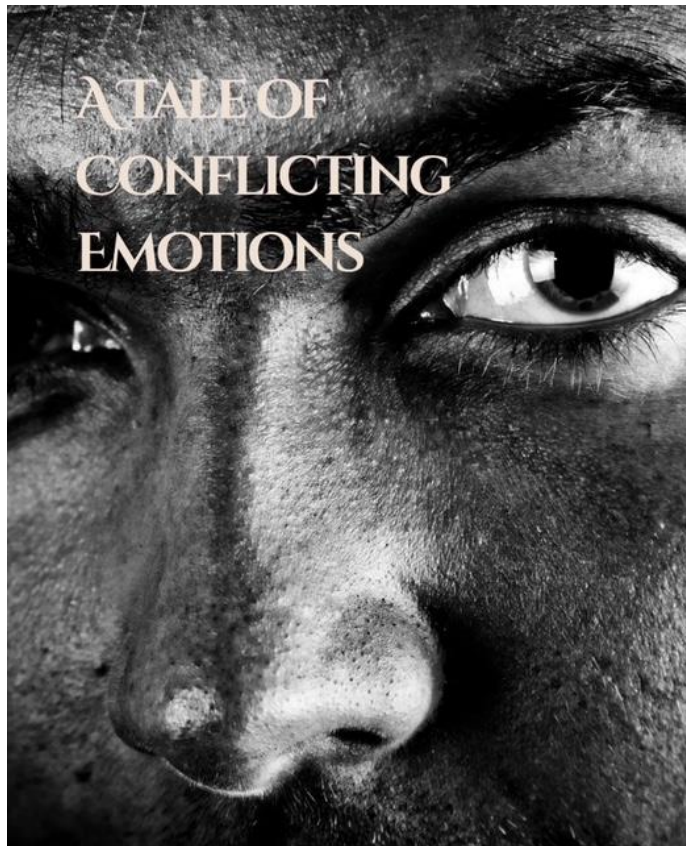


The Road To Redemption



JOHN ROLLINS couldn't believe what he was hearing. What was the United States military asking him to do? Colonel Anderson was waiting for his response, but he didn't have one to give.

"I know you had a problem with us going into Grenada," Colonel Anderson said.

"The United Nations condemned it as a flagrant violation of international law," John responded, finding his voice.

"The Governor-General invited us," the Colonel retorted.

"We invaded on October 25th, the Governor-General signed the invitation letter on October 26th. I know because my team and I were standing in front of him with our guns drawn when he signed it," John responded.

"The United States government cannot have another communist dictator in our backyard," the Colonel replied. "Surely, you, of all people, should understand that. Look at what we did to help Jamaica."

"Jamaica?" John asked incredulously. "That was two cats toying with the same mouse. Then they left the mouse to survive the wounds both cats inflicted."

"We're helping the Jamaican economy to recover, John," the Colonel said pointedly. "You are helping."

"So, you think that gives you the right to ask me, my team, to go into a sovereign nation and assassinate their leader?" John asked, raising his voice.

"Manuel Noriega is a drug trafficker and a threat to the United States because of the poison he sends to kill our children," Colonel Anderson matched John's tone. "He threatens our way of life."

"That's the justification you're using?" John asked, his eyes not leaving the Colonel's face. "He's a clear and present danger, so let's send a special ops team in to kill him? Inject him with a stroke-inducing coagulant and plunge Panama into the same chaos we did in Grenada? In Jamaica?"

"Those are your orders, yes," Colonel Anderson responded.

"I see," John replied, and he did see very clearly. "Orders are orders."

"In the United States military, yes. Orders are never questioned," Colonel Anderson said. "I shouldn't have to tell you that. And I shouldn't have to remind you of the consequences if you refuse."

"So, I have a choice?" John asked sarcastically.

The Colonel had had enough. "John, the military has trained you to be the best at what you do. No one can take that away from you, but if you decline this assignment, I'll assign it to another team, and your career in the United States military will be over."

"I've been a dedicated and faithful soldier for ten years, Colonel Anderson," John said, his anger barely controlled. "I've done whatever Uncle Sam asked of me, even when it went against everything I believed was right. But we cannot keep our boots on the necks of countries who don't think like we do and expect there will be no consequences."

"We police the world. That's what we do," the Colonel said. "Would you prefer the Russians to have the job?"

"Swap black dawg for monkey," John muttered under his breath.

"What?" Colonel Anderson asked.

"It's a Jamaican saying that means surrendering one bad position for another," John explained.

The Colonel looked at John. His face showed his displeasure at John's insolence. "Well?"

John continued to stare at Colonel Anderson for a long time before answering. "No, sir. I cannot take this assignment in good conscience."

"Then I will accept your resignation effective immediately. Thank you for your service," Colonel Anderson said coldly. "You can see yourself out."

John was dismissed.

"John, just come home," his sister Julie begged. "Jamaica needs strong men like you to help rebuild."

"The last thing Jamaica needs is another soldier, Julie," John countered.

"You're not a soldier in Jamaica. You have a family that loves and needs you," Julie said softly. "Daddy really misses you."

"The businesses barely make enough to care for our three brothers and their families. I would be another mouth to feed," John replied.

"That's not true," Julie replied angrily. "The contracts you secured to rebuild the U.S. Embassy have been a huge help."

"But not enough," John said. "And now I have blown any chance of securing more contracts like that."

"You don't know that. We're doing a good job for them, and they are reviewing the contract to build the housing units for the embassy. That's an even bigger payday," Julie said.

"Julie, I can't be another employee in one of Dad's companies," John said gently.

"That's not fair, and you know it," Julie responded, annoyed. "Daddy would be happy to give you

one of the businesses, just like he did for Jack, Frank, and Henry. You are entitled to anything they are."

"And what's making money in Jamaica after our brush with socialism, Julie?" John asked. "The island has no foreign exchange reserves left, no infrastructure for agriculture, manufacturing, and no import or export industry left."

"It's coming back," Julie implored. "It's true; it will take time to repair the damage done. I mean, you're right. The only thing earning any hard currency is the drug trade."

"The drug trade?" John asked. "You mean ganja?"

"How do you think all those politicians were able to buy guns and arm their people?" Julie asked.

"Guns for drugs?" John asked.

"Yes," Julie answered.

"How do you know this, Julie?" John asked, fearing the answer.

"Well, Henry may have rented out some of our storage space at the docks," Julie responded softly.

"Hell, Julie!" John exclaimed. "Does Daddy or Jack know about this?"

"Jack does. Now, and he was livid," Julie explained. "But Jack said we weren't to tell Daddy."

"Is this still going on, Julie?" John's voice was stern.

Julie hesitated before answering. "Maybe."

"I'll be on the first flight to Jamaica tomorrow," John said. "Pick me up at the airport."

"Jesus Christ, Julie! The brake is the pedal on the left!" John yelled, slamming on the non-existent brake under his foot as he sat nervously in the passenger seat.

"Now, you complain about my driving?" Julie asked sarcastically. "You taught me to drive!"

"I was twelve, Julie. All I did was show you the basics," John responded, terrified at how his sister weaved in and out of the traffic.

"No one else was willing to teach me," Julie replied peevishly.

"Now I remember why," John ducked as they nearly hit a motorcycle man. "Damn it, Julie, you nearly hit that poor man clean off his motorcycle!"

"No!" Julie said, clearly offended. "That motorcycle nearly hit me. I swerved to avoid it, just in time, I might add."

"Where are we going anyway?" John asked, noticing that Julie was headed out of Kingston.

“I thought it best you met with Jack and Daddy first,” Julie said quietly.

“So, why are we taking the South Coast Road?” John asked.

“Jack wanted to meet at the beach house,” Julie answered. “The three of us will talk first. Then Benji will bring Daddy down.”

“Why the secrecy, Julie?” John asked suspiciously.

“It’s not secrecy, John,” Julie replied irritably. I thought it best you spoke with Jack to better understand what the family is facing and what Jamaica is facing.

“Why?” John asked.

“Well, I may have shielded you from some more unpleasant developments,” Julie responded, her voice just above a whisper.

Jamaican Rum Coffee

Ingredients:

1-ounce dark Jamaican rum

1 1-ounce coffee cream liqueur

6 ounces hot coffee,

whipped cream

ground allspice

Steps

Pour rum and cream liqueur into a coffee mug.

Top with hot coffee.

Place a dollop of whipped cream on top and sprinkle with ground allspice.

Lynda R. Edwards

What Readers are saying about Redemption Songs.

Beautiful and inspiring

Redemption Songs is a fascinating mix of family drama and social commentary. I really enjoyed the emphasis on strong women characters. The way the author beautifully described Jamaica made me feel as if I was there!

With its plot twists this book will keep you guessing as to its ultimate outcome.

Great read.

The End

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Lynda R Edwards-Author

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