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SERWA AKOTO'S
Diary

Asabea Ashun

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SERWA AKOTO'S

Diary

Asabea Ashun

FOR REVIEW ONLY

AUGUST

August 15

Dear Diary,

It's so good to be back home in Toronto after a long week in Ghana. I know it was just a week, but heck, it flew by so fast what with all the visiting of relatives and such. I ended up coming back with both suitcases empty 'cos I basically gave everything away to relatives who were not really my relatives. Everyone wanted stuff and I can't blame them because my stuff is fine. I'm so glad Mama didn't press me in her "these children are going to kill me" voice to:

"Take some yams and kenkey and dried fish. They will give you free bowels and improve your complexion you know?"

Sometimes, I think she forgets that you can live in Toronto, with 20 degree Celsius weather and still eat Ghanaian food made with ingredients from the Sankofa grocery store at the intersection of Jane and Finch Roads! No wonder all

the Ghanaians I meet say they're packing up and going to Ghana and never actually live up to that promise because there's hardly a point in leaving when you can still eat fufu in winter! I didn't take my diary with me because Mama is so nosy and she'll find out a whole lot she has no business knowing. So now I'm back and the first thing I'm telling myself, just so I know it's true is: Dear Diary, I am a changed woman. Yah, I know I've said it before but it's true. I am no longer going to have a hair weave that costs \$1000 when that could send a child to school in some developing country for five years! I will also start shopping at for no-name brands (ewwww!) instead of the classy boutiques in downtown Oakville and Toronto. What else? Mmmhhhh, I shall devote one day a month for good deeds and on such days, I will wear only my no-name clothes and sneakers, no make up and eat only inexpensive shawarma which I hope will be made of real meat. Lastly, I have got to start dating black men. So help me God!

August 16

Woke up this morning to a blinding headache and took a while shifting my \$15 gel eye soothers over my forehead. It is Sunday and if this was Ghana, I'd be going to church but since this is apathetic Canada and well; no one really bothers!!! When I checked the time and found out it was

6

already eleven in the morning, I freaked because there wouldn't be enough time to do all the good deeds on my list. As I recall, the priority was to start dating a black man but where do you find these creatures? Most of my friends are white since I went to Queen's University, duh! I'm the only black teacher in my school, and whenever I go to a church with too many black people, I feel weird; like I'm not black enough or something. Usually on Sunday morning, I see white people jogging by the road, riding their bikes, having a coffee in Timmy's and where are the black people? It's just hit me that they're probably in church! But I couldn't be bothered to get out of bed so I just stayed put, turned on the TV and watched this hot black preacher from a Don Mills Church. They asked people to call in with prayer requests so I did. The lady at the other end wasn't nice at all though and said very rudely:

"God is interested in serious requests, not frivolous ones!"

Excuse me! Since when was asking God for a man who can finance my hair weaves, take me on holiday every year, cook for himself and me too, clean up after himself, know what I'm thinking before I've thought it and will never look at another woman, a frivolous request? I bet she has no man, that's it. She's just jealous because I'm hot.

I finally dragged myself out of bed and checked my messages.

Twenty-five of them and only two were not from Kris. Ugh! I had to go jogging to clear my head so I put on my lululemon sweats, strapped a Titleist headband on to stop the sweat from destroying my well maintained hair roots and proceeded to get Kris out of my system.

Of course it didn't happen and by evening, I was cuddling up to him and telling him all these lies. I hope he never finds this diary otherwise he will come to my workplace and shoot everyone including himself!

August 18th

Kris is so sweet! He called today and asked what I was doing. Of course I was writing lesson plans and preparing handouts and all those "fun things" teachers do before school starts! He said he was taking me out to lunch downtown since he'd just found this restaurant he knew I'd love. I didn't feel like cooking; like I've ever! I pretended I didn't want him spending money on me. Every time I do this he ends up buying me a gift, hahahahah. So I took the GO train downtown to Toronto, because I don't drive in that crazy place if I can help it, and walked from Union station to Bay and then walked up north towards Wellington. Tucked into a little alcove, right on Bay was the restaurant. FOUR, I had no

idea why they called it that and was it noisy! Everyone on Bay was probably eating there. He met me at the entrance, gave me a smoldering "I want you like never before why do you do this to me kind of look." Oh, I just love doing that to him! He placed a possessive arm around my 15 inch waist, ok, more like 20 inches, and we walked in looking like we'd just finished a photo shoot. I was in my 6 inch Blahnick boots with the sexy cut at the back, knee high, just beneath a short pencil skirt in stunning mauve. He looked like a hotter David Beckham; much hotter! So we were seated and the waiter came over with the menus and first thing out of his mouth was "Every meal here is not more than 650 calories." Finally, my kind of restaurant! I know they dreamed that up just for me, I mean looking at my body, there's no way I could contain 651 calories and still look this tantalizing. Ba-am! So I had a Couscous cold salad with cucumber and tomato with feta cheese and the softest lamb pieces this side of New Zealand and Chris had a salmon something or other with some creamy thing running over it; could that really be less than 650 calories? Chris stared at me the whole time and I pretended not to see him while munching delicately on my low calorie lunch. I totally loved it. He asked how my prep was going and that unleashed me; do not ever ask a teacher about lesson preparation or curriculum! And I'm not even a teacher yet but I can barely wait for this coming year to end so I can get my certification and start to teach which

will be utter bliss. As I blabbed on and on, he just smiled at me. He loves cooing my name, Serwa. Especially after I told him that Serwa Akoto was a legendary Goddess of Fine in Ghana in the good old days of the 1950's and 1960's. The name always conjures up images of extreme beauty, the kind that mere mortals can only dream of and I get to live. I do think he's hopelessly in love with me. What will I do when I'm no longer in love with him? Which will be in about three weeks?

August 19th

I've become apathetic again and it has been three whole days and not writing in my diary. I blame Kris. He makes me do all these crazy white boy things that are so nerve wracking and time consuming. Like swimming. I've tried to tell him I can't afford to get my hair wet but he's like "you're so cute" and I want to say "Shut up and listen to me! I cannot get my hair wet!" and he's like "Why?" and I want to slap him because it's such a silly question when you look at that long silky hair weave sitting on my head, straight from an Indian temple; via Los Angeles apparently. If it gets wet, I explained to my brainless boyfriend, I would have to go back to the hairdresser and have it redone. To which he says "So?" When I stopped to think, which is often painful when I'm around Kris, I realized he was right. So what? After all,

he's been paying for all my weaves, massages, facials you name it; it's on Kris' MasterCard so why's my black self getting all stressed out?

August 20th

I'm sort of dreading going back to Teacher's College although it will be my second year doing this. The first year was horrendous and I cried almost every night. I thought I was doing everything right such as the lesson plans, the creativity, the time spent with students we went out to supervise as part of the program but none of it was working. All I seemed to be getting was email after email about this complaint and that complaint. Teaching in a private school can be a major pain in the butt but I do like the freedom I get to experiment with various teaching strategies and the way our program works. I am in this one school for a whole semester so I get to build relationships with the students; it also stops boredom from creeping in because I have to do this for two whole years! The other teachers are usually okay though, and many go out of their way to make me feel welcome. I remember being at this one school in Erin and I tell you, the entire semester I had to teach there, I did not see one black person there! I survived though since everyone seemed nice and I really felt welcomed when I showed up with Kris to our Christmas luncheon. Was it because he was white? We did

look good I must admit and I still felt like I was in love with him. We'd just met and I'd started playing hard to get so yah, it did feel fresh. Kris is fun actually. Nothing is too serious for him and I guess as a photographer, he loves looking at me since he can't stop reminding me of how I remind him of a goddess. I hope not a Greek one 'cos those heifers are not in my league! Even though I'm tall for a girl; last time I measured, I was 5 ft, 10 inches. Kris is a head taller than me and with that floppy hair that tickles his eyelashes...mmhh. When we enter a room, we do make an adorable couple. I'm still the same weight I was when I turned sixteen, an amazing 125 lbs without an ounce of excess flesh anywhere. Every piece of me has a reason for living. My best friend Janelle is 250 lbs and I love her to bits but maybe it's because she's 'well fed'. Ok, enough about me. Oh, I just remembered. I saw something that looked like a stretch mark on my arm and how is that humanly possible on this body?

August 28th

I think I shall have to marry Kris. But he's not black so what does that do for my mid-year priority list? Oh WTF! He has just surprised me with a very early birthday present. My birthday is in six months and we are going to Cuba and returning on Labour Day so I can be all ready for school the following day. I'm going to have to tell him I love him. I called Janelle up and told her everything hoping she'd be

12

jealous but she is so annoying. She is not jealous and she is actually happy for me. She says her boyfriend Tunde might be popping the question soon. I say I'm happy for her but I'm really jealous of her; why hasn't anyone asked me to marry him?

FOR REVIEW ONLY

SEPTEMBER

September 6th

Kris was a douche bag the entire trip. He brought his guitar and played these rock tunes all evening on the beach. Then he found some rocker types and they went off to some shaman-like person on the resort and he brought back some weed and offered me some.

"I don't do weed," I said.

"Why?" he asked shocked. Does he think all black people do weed or what?

"Why should I? I have no need to transcend this awesome body. What's your excuse?" I asked since his body was not too bad. If it were, yours truly wouldn't be with him. He took one long drag of the grass and blew a ring intentionally in my face.

"I can't handle this abstinence thing you've put on our relationship. I see a goddess and cannot worship. I see smoothness I cannot melt into. I see taut muscles in legs that I want to contort, but I can't. So I smoke weed."

What a stupid reason. But I do like that description of what I do to him. How can I make him feel this way and not give in to him? I was beginning to melt at this point but he made the awful mistake of taking a long drag that started choking him. He began to look pathetic and I realized I couldn't give my awesome body to this man. So I have to leave him. But how? I don't want him shooting my students and me out of anger and shame. I will seek professional help.

September 7th

First day of school and there's so much to write about. I've been assigned for my penultimate practicum, a public school in Mississauga. Yippee! It is close to home so I can sleep in a bit. There are two new teachers in the science department so I am going to be released from teaching grade 9 and 10 science. I will now focus on senior biology and chemistry, which I totally love. One of my grade eleven classes is surprisingly small, just about twelve students, so it shouldn't be too hard memorizing names. I really don't have a good memory except when it has to do with hair weaves: Auntie Lizzy, Makeba, Aztec, Hindustan, and Rapper's Delight. When it comes

to people's names, I find it hard. I remember a kid in the last school named Mike Brummers, poor child. He had a crush on me in grade 4 and I had to send him away from the classroom several times at lunchtime when he'd come in on the pretext of looking for his beyblade but all he wanted to do was stare at me! When I tell Janelle these things, all she says is:

"Ei be careful ohhhhh, these kids can go and gossip about you," in her Ghanaian accent.

She only speaks like this when we're together. Actually, I do too. It's so much more comfortable.

"Of course I'll be careful. Janelle, why do these white boys like me kraa?" I asked my free therapist.

"Have you looked at yourself lately? You're as thin as a stick with no bottom, you have a long thin face, your nose is not broad or flat and you almost look like a boy, a bit like those models you see on TV with starved looking faces, you'd think they'd been forced to be in a famine. Add to that you have long, black, straight hair and you look good, girl; you look good for a white boy.

I love Janelle and her straight talk. I did check myself in the Staff Room washroom though, and I am thin. I wonder if I'm too thin for an African... not a "starving because I'm in a war torn zone" kinda thin? It made me remember visiting Mama's older sister at Korle-Bu Hospital in Ghana and getting lost in one of the hallways. Someone dressed like an orderly stopped to give me directions, never asking me where

I was supposed to be going and instead assuming he knew where I had to go:

"Dis way for de AIDS clinic, my sister. Sorry ohhhhh!"

Anyway, I do not have AIDS and I can't help it if I look great; make that stupendously gorgeous. This brings me to a student in my class who is quite gorgeous. Her name is Mary and she has large doe like eyes and thick luxurious black hair. I think it's all hers. She has just transferred from another school so Principal Jacobs has stressed that I take special care of her. It's only the first day but I saw him about five times today and each time, he acted like he'd not mentioned anything to me about Mary. I think he's probably on antidepressants or something.

So today was not a bad start to the school year. My students seem willing to learn and I'm starved of teaching, with summer break and all, enough to want to jump into it with all my clothes on! Which reminds me, Kris called to ask if he could come over.

I said, "Buddy, I've started work and you've got to do without your Goddess Athena for a while." Gotta get my groove on otherwise those rich brats I teach will chew me alive. He tempted me by saying he would cook something Greek. I want to eat something cooked in my house and not some take out and Greek food is fine. But then Kris would have to come here and I'm still trying to figure out how to

dump him. I firmly said no, another time when it's not so crazy busy. Kris was not happy. I feel bad that I don't care so I flipped open my Mac, logged onto Blue Mountain and sent him a lovey-dovey note. He likes that kinda stuff. I don't, so he better not send me one back!

September 8th

He did! I woke up to check my email and there it was in my gmail inbox: You have received a card from Blue Mountain. Ugh! I had to write this before going to work. Kris is stalking me and I'm afraid to take a shower in case he goes all psycho on me.

Mama and Dad called this evening saying they want to stay longer in Ghana. They feel bad they've left me all alone in Toronto and it's getting cold. I made my voice sound like I was sad too.

"Don't forget to get your thermals ohhh," Mama reminds me for the umpteenth time knowing full well I do not wear thermals.

"Yes Mama," I said dutifully, just to shut her up.

It didn't work.

"Of course if you had a man, a proper man, you wouldn't need thermals to warm you up."

And then I hear chuckling in the background. Or was it just

my imagination? I'm going to bed, got lots to think about like why did students ask me to play Gloria Gaynor in an upcoming musical—Is it because I'm black?

September 15th

This always happens to me. The first week back at work always drains me and I can't even write. All my writing juices are taken up with correcting stupid spelling mistakes on student work like "litmos" instead of "litmus" or "petal" instead of 'petal'. Where do these kids learn to read for crying out loud? Who doesn't know that the pretty part of a flower is usually the petal, spelled with one l and not two? Why would you need two l's anyway when the sound has already been made? Ugh!!!! Gosh, sometimes I feel like an English Teacher and not a Science Teacher since I spend too much time correcting spelling. Now if it were for a word like "phenolphthalein" I wouldn't be running to my medicine cabinet to down a bottle of Tums! I've been invited to an outboring this weekend and I have to find something African to wear to this thing. Mama's friend's daughter had a baby six weeks ago. I hate going to these things. Everyone is going to be there and I'm going to feel weird 'cos everyone is thinking I'm not Ghanaian enough. Of course when I tell Janelle, she tells me it's all in my head, underneath the sleek Hindustan weave I got just two weeks ago. Maybe it's in my

head but the important thing is that it is in my head and it won't go away. I know a Ghanaian dressmaker who will sew something that will give me more hips so no one asks me why I'm sick. I know Janelle is going too but that won't help because it's at Ghanaian functions like this that Janelle is clearly hotter than I am. Her hips make the long, traditional skirt—the sleet—look hot and all the men look at her.

I went to the local library today because I couldn't find a book I needed in the school library. I need to approach historical science in a way that is appealing to my hormone riddled teen students and they say it's sooooo boring. So I went to the library and got distracted by all the noise. I guess it's Saturday so that's when all the stressed moms take their brats out for a breather. As I navigated this mess, making sure no one stepped on my Blahnicks, I spied a lovely brown leather armchair beside the fireplace and headed towards it. Barely had I sat down when this black guy came up to me and asked if he could sit on the chair opposite.

"Sure," I said, when what I really wanted to say was 'suit yourself'.

After half an hour or so, he gets up to leave and asks if I can do him a favour. I didn't say anything but nodded slowly. Then he asked for my email address. I looked at this five foot four, two hundred pound, wrong specimen of what black men have to offer and with a smile, I said,

"No."

He looked shocked. And then I was shocked that he was shocked. WTH? Then he just smiled and walked away.

Oh, not before telling me, "My name is George."

Like I care!

The Outbooring

I'm going to make up for not writing in my diary for a couple of days. So diary, I have to explain that the concept of Outbooring is so different from the Christenings I've been to but they are technically the same thing. First off, there weren't as many people at Keira's baby's Christening. Keira is my other best friend, the white one, who I went to high school with. You remember her don't you? She's the one that filled up almost my entire high school diary! Well, she's married and has a baby. Yes, even Keira is married and that is sooooo annoying 'cos she's not that pretty and she knits. Maybe her baby can appreciate that but for crying out loud who else knits apart from octogenarians in a nursing home? But I digress and the point I was trying to make was that at Keira's, there were just five people at the Christening: Keira, her husband Bob, her baby Beulah, me and Father Michael O'Hanlan. At the Ghanaian Outbooring today, I counted one hundred people and then had to stop 'cos suddenly, all the Ghanaians started blending into one another and it seemed everyone had a twin. I must admit my cousin Gyasiwa looked

gorgeous and she's been able to tone down that tummy that nagged her all through high school, or maybe she's wearing a tummy tucker of some sort, or maybe she's had staples put in her stomach? I will make it my mission to find out her secret. I was at her wedding to Prince a year ago and even then, I didn't think she looked like a princess but today, girlfriend had it going on big time. Um, who else was there? Patricia came with a gorgeous black man and my jaw was left hanging when they stepped out of their Mercedes S Class with him opening the door for her. I spied her shoes which were Blahnicks but the 2007 model and was not impressed. Her purse was a Coach knockoff and that fat belt she had on the midriff of her knee low silk dress was a Calvin Klein for sure. And I think it was real. I tried hard not to drool over her date but diary, I was in love. He must have been at least six feet tall, had smooth, blemish-free skin, lovely cut hair—not too much and not too little—he just had the lithe, taut body of a Michael Jordan or something. Papa come to me! I quickly composed myself and continued carrying around that tray of terrible hors d'oeuvres that Auntie Pink, Gyasiwa's mom had made for Mr. & Mrs. Kufwor's baby Christening. Auntie Pink still wears pink by the way and now, my eyes are immune to the outrageously garish colours she assaults everyone with. I guess when you're so cuddly and warm and fun to be around, you can get away with such fashion faux pas but the rest of them mere mortals should just stick to

grey and black.

I didn't mind the hors d'oeuvres 'sweat shop'- like job at all because it got me around the throng and I played a little game of trying to spot knockoffs. You know the most common knockoffs I saw? Louis Vuitton scarves! Ghanaians love scarves and they put them everywhere, on their head, neck, arms, waists, and even purses! I have to find out where to get these knockoffs 'cos knowing this crowd, they couldn't cost more than five bucks and yours truly could certainly do with cheap gifts to give away to unsuspecting victims!

Of course the ceremony didn't start on time. With this many black people, oohming and aahhmin and eiiiing all over the place and regaling each other with stories of immigration, which airline gives the most baggage allowance to Ghana, whose funeral is next week and where you can do your taxes so you get a charitable donation of \$5000 when your reported annual income is \$12,000 how could the ceremony possibly start on time? Besides, the pastor didn't arrive till three so people just kept eating and eating and I dodged question after question about my lack of a companion. I could have brought Kris and he would have loved this immersion in African culture but I was not in the mood to follow him around to make sure he didn't eat anything too spicy before he starts breaking out in some sort of an allergic reaction. I finally escaped from the throng and sought refuge in the one washroom at this church basement where the Outdooring

was being held. As I breathed deeply—and this was scary since the small washroom was dingy and smelled like a washroom shouldn't smell. I wondered where the air refreshner was anyway, and why wasn't there any toilet paper? I took a moment to compose myself. And then I heard voices outside.

"But didn't she know he was sleeping with her?"

I know...this was juicy stuff but I couldn't place the voices. Definitely two women but who were they and who were they talking about? I reached for my cell phone and muted it. I didn't want to give away my presence.

"Look, Tunde can be with anyone. Have you seen his body? Why do you think he wants to be with Janelle?"

Nooooooooooooo!!! My Janelle? Tunde the Bastard! I knew he was no good. The convo continued and on and on about Tunde's misdemeanours. Apparently, he is an illegal immigrant and is on the verge of being deported. This is big news since Tunde told Janelle he was born in Kingston, Ontario. I have to tell her. No, I can't. But I must. What if she is so hurt she kills herself? And then it'll all be my fault. But she's my best friend! I cupped my face in my hands. My fingers did look good today since I had them done at my little Korean place just behind Clark Street. I've told no one about that place because I don't want anyone to have nails like mine but every time I go there, I get a discount because Kim-Kim, the girl who does my nails thinks every black person who walks in must have been recommended by me. Apparently, all black

people look the same so almost every four weeks, I get free nails. I have no idea who these black people are who know about Nice Nice Nails on Clark Street but I pretend I do so I can get the discount. I digress once again. I had had enough of the traitorous Tunde so once the voices left my vicinity, I gently flushed and I mean that. The handle looked like if I gave it a normal flush, I would be left holding it in my hand! I straightened my lovely baby blue Vivienne Westwood silk dress, looked down at my six inch Blahnicks with pure pleasure and run my hands through my Rapper's Delight eighteen-inch weave. Satisfied I looked better than everyone I'd seen so far, I stepped out of the toilet only to be seen by Auntie Pink who was holding a roll of toilet paper. She ripped off a few squares and passed it to me and said: "Sorry ohhhhh, we run out, I just remember." I mentally corrected her English.

I murmured thanks and looked at the plywood in my hands. Who uses toilet paper so hard that it feels like it was just sliced off the side of a large oak tree? Has anyone heard of Charmin? What about Baby Soft? For crying out loud, the process of expelling unwanted things from your body is disgusting as it is and you don't have to make it an even more arduous process by using wood to clean up!

I was so tired by evening but I had thoroughly enjoyed myself even at the annoying bits. Ghanaians can be so

loud but maybe it's an African thing. Whenever I have an event like this, it hits me how Africans are really quite full of life. Everything is raucous, worthy of laughter and joy and even church which in a typical Canadian sort of way is quite solemn, can be turned over on its head when there are Africans in it. Sometimes I wonder how Ghanaian I am because I can only handle the "life" so much and then I need some quiet. But I don't like quiet either.

I'm messed.

Goodnight diary.

OCTOBER

October 1st

Dear Diary,

I have the flu so I will not write for a long while. Well, not in my diary anyway but I did have to send my lesson plans to the Vice Principal to be given to the supply teacher since my Associate Teacher is also sick. Poor supply teacher. Good luck to her or him. I just heard a noise outside my door, wait a minute and let me go see what it is.

It was the newspaper boy. I feel so sick I guess I'll just have to read the 'Dakville Beaver'. After flipping through miles and miles of ads from car dealerships, an odd one stood out to me. It said, "Wanted, a surrogate mother for loving couple unable to conceive. Compensation provided." People do that?

Weird!

October 2nd

I still have the flu.

October 3rd

I have to either write or I will kill myself lying in bed. This must be how it feels like when you have nobody, lying in bed all day, and sniffing and sneezing. Kris has called several times and I've seen his missed calls but I don't want to see him. My hair feels matted and my nose feels like I visited a hornet's nest. I haven't even looked at myself in the mirror because if I do, I am sure I will have an aneurysm and I have too much to live for. I will send Kris a text or something otherwise I'm sure this third day running, he will hoist a ladder to my bedroom window with TV camera's outside as he stages a heroic rescue! So much drama! Speaking of drama, staying in bed has made me watch a lot of TV and with all the bad acting I see out there, I'm wondering if I should try my hand at it. I'm fine, I've got a great body and I'm clever. Of course it'll have to be something decent like an 'NYPD'ish kind of show. I don't want to come across like Paris Hilton cos she is so dumb. I know I can knock the pants off Kim Kardashian because I still have one over her in that I haven't done a sex tape with Ray J. I'm tired now. My brain is switching off.

October 4th

Janelle had to take me to the clinic this afternoon because the feeling of malaise had not left me. All the way to the urgent care clinic, she just would not shut up. It was Tunde this, Tunde that. Well, the latest is that he wants to bring the traditional engagement forward. Surely this must be a sign that his immigration status is a problem? So I told Janelle that that was nice and tried to get a few things out of her too.

"So, where exactly does Tunde work?" I asked. I put my head back on the seat so I wouldn't have to look at her. However, my senses were all alert and I did sense a slight hesitation which was about ten seconds long.

"He lost his job." Ah hah! How convenient I thought.

"That's sad. So how do you finance your weaves girl?"

Janelle is always laughing at my weaves. She just buys the ones from Walmart meant for white people because they're cheap and she clips them on. Yah, you get the picture. Not pretty.

"I don't need Tunde to finance my weaves, I can do it myself. Besides, when we're married, we're going to be saving money towards our future so it's a good thing I'm saving now, it's good practice."

What a load of crap, but of course, I just smiled. This guy did

make her happy and since she'd been without a guy since high school when I paid the lunchroom lady to have her son ask Janelle out on a date, I was willing to ride this Tunde train for a while. We got to the clinic and it was pathetic. It had this large waiting room with every kind of immigrant possible, looking all sick and bedraggled. I almost turned back because I had a horrible feeling that I was going to have an unworthy experience and you know what diary? I was right. I must admit the waiting time was short and for a walk-in clinic, the only one open on a Sunday afternoon within ten kilometers, I was quite impressed! I was ushered into the consulting room and the doctor walked in just after ten minutes which is a record. He must have been about seventy, with poofy white disappearing hair, stooped shoulders and he looked impatiently at me through glasses that no actor on 'Glee' would wear. First thing out of his mouth is, am I pregnant?

"Do I look pregnant?"

He ignored me. I almost ignored him because at that point, I remembered that ad about the poor couple that posted the ad about looking for a surrogate; I wonder— what happened to them?

Anyway, so I told him what was wrong and he kept saying, "There's nothing wrong with you." This happened about three times until I'd had enough. In about a minute, I sized up the situation. He wasn't about to take me seriously; he looked

like he was tired of his job and all that talking was beginning to make me sicker. So, I gave it to him.

"Are you a trained physician?" I asked in my haughtiest British accent. I've been watching BBC America.

He just stared. I got my attitudinal black girl on; like there's another kind!

"Or do you no longer speak English? Listen buddy, maybe you're tired. If so, go home. If you're not tired, get off that bony ass of yours and tell me if there is something possibly wrong with me! I've told you that my symptoms have persisted despite rest, fluids, vitamins and such and I am no ordinary human being ok? Don't be looking at me thinking I'm one of those poor black girls you read about in Sociology class at University of Toronto in 1934. The kind that immigrated from some place sad and depressed and have, by virtue of suppression, no ounce of self esteem and would likely think that because you are white and you are a doctor, that you are allowed to think and they are not. All I want to know is could this be anything more serious than the flu or not? And you know what grandpa? Perhaps ordering some blood work to see if my WBC is high would be a start!"

Dear Diary, if you hear that an old white doctor died in his office shortly after 3pm then you'll know to shut up. Because all I know is I ran out of the office when his mouth fell open and a dampness started appearing in the crotch

area of his khaki's. He probably forgot to put on the Depends diapers that old people wear to catch their urine but he got a lesson in treating people with dignity alright. Whether people are black, white, old, young, educated well, or not, fine (in my case) or not so fine (in the case of many others), you do not treat people like they do not matter. I must admit I felt better just walking out of there and I'm already on the mend. It has got me thinking... I went to one of the lower income neighbourhoods and this is the reaction I got. My regular family doctor and others in his practice have never treated me this way. I wonder if it has to do with poverty—the treatment of people, whether black or white—do they get sub par treatment just because they are poor? That just ain't right. I'm feeling like I must fight this injustice you know? Maybe I will look for a poverty eradication campaign and do something with them.

October 7th

I almost killed a student today which was totally unintentional. As part of the grade eleven chemistry curriculum, all my students have to independently research a topic and present their findings. It's called an STSE and it encourages students to explore a topic in depth such as the chemistry behind it, the technology related to it,

societal implications as well as environmental, and present their findings in the form of a presentation to the entire class. So far, they've gone very well and the topics have ranged from the obvious like Greenhouse Gases, to the less obvious like drag racing. Each student has 40 minutes to present their study and in between, the audience is allowed to ask questions. Amy said she was ready to present today and apart from saying she was nervous around lunchtime, she seemed good to go. She had her laptop, props and a really neat video to show the class. Her topic was hockey. Surprise, surprise! So she starts and she uses the video as the hook. And it's a hook alright since this is Canada after all, so she completely has the students. But then, for a hook it goes on for way too long so about a minute and a half into it, I said:

"Amy, since this is a hook, a sort of intro, it shouldn't be too long."

"Ok Miss, the whole clip is only 2 minutes long," she replied. I thought that was cool; It's about to end then. It did and then she started disintegrating right before our very eyes. She started slurring her words, her eyes glazed over and she paused for a long time in between words. It was scary! Everyone stiffened around me and my mind raced to figure out the best way to stop this sudden "death by presentation."

I calmly spoke to her saying, "Umh..Amy...do you need a

moment? Are you ok?" She stared for a second or so and nodded and then proceeded to the next slide. Her face started puffing up and getting red as her speech continued to slur. She was not making sense. She stared at us like she was waiting for us to say something and her whole body looked weak and helpless. I could take it no longer.

"Amy, I think you should take a break ok?" She didn't argue with that at all. I motioned to two of her friends to take her outside and tried to regain control of the class. Jack was ready with his presentation so I quickly asked him to present to stop the inevitable discussions. He was a good speaker and was doing what I called an overdone topic which was drugs, so of course, the students were all agog and this allowed them to debate the issues. In no time, Amy had been pushed to the back burner and their focus was on something else.

What a weird moment. I have never seen anyone so nervous and afraid that his or her bodily functions seem to stop working. I have been nervous before but never to this point. As I watched Jack present, I was reminded of how different we all are. Some are great at doing things in front of people and for others; it's just not their gift. As a teacher though, how do I evaluate these students when one of the components we're trying to teach is the ability to confidently present a finding? Is it possible to go through life without ever

having to present an idea or concept to a group of people? Is it fair to ask someone to do something that is obviously so traumatic for her? I shall have to book an appointment with my vice principal Mr. Koutsadis to discuss this because I don't want some parent up in my face asking me the basis on which I have built my evaluations.

October 8th

At Assembly today, it was announced that the service trips for next year were to New Zealand and Belize. This is where students get to shed their rich Oakville/Mississauga personas and try to become selfless by helping others less fortunate than themselves. I think it's a great idea but the thought of possibly not having a shower for one entire week and my hair getting matted from carrying mud or bricks for building a house while my shaved, toned legs are encased in mud has never appealed enough to me to make me consider signing up as a teacher supervisor! Besides I'm only here for a semester despite being asked by the VP to come back for another. But, I told myself, if I truly want to make an effort to join the Wal-Mart gang, surely this must be the way to go? And, Janelle told me that hot black guys actually like the selfless type. Well, so does Kris and look where that's gotten me! For the past week since my flu attack, he's been quite cold, not his usual fawning self and I'm wondering why

my hold over him is waning. Or maybe he's just getting back at me for my no sex policy? Who knows? Anyway, I do miss him but I'm not making the mistake of sending him another Blue Mountain card this time. I shall do something else, like cook for him. He will definitely know I care somewhat because that is a real bloody sacrifice; no pun intended. Actually, pun very much intended.

So after all the whining, I ended up signing up but told the service trip coordinator Marie Ketchum that if someone else offered, she shouldn't feel badly about taking my name off. She said sure but I could see she didn't mean it. I'd much prefer New Zealand to Belize. I can go to South America anytime but how often does one get to go very much down under? We will be living on a small island off the coast of the much larger South Island and will apparently be looking after sheep. O dear Lord! What have I gotten myself into? I pray someone else hears the voice of God and decides they need to go and save natives or something. Besides two weeks without my gorgeous tresses being massaged by a trained Capillarologist will likely do me in.

October 9th

Kris is not returning my calls and I am fivid. What could possibly be consuming his time so much that he has no time for me?

October 10th

I don't want to seem cheap by going to look for him at his apartment so I am going to give him one last day to redeem himself.

October 11th

Tunde proposed! I am so shocked I've had to take four painkiller tablets in the last hour and that is very unscientific of me. Janelle has already asked me to be Maid of Honour and I said yes of course but that's because I doubt if the wedding will really come on. They are going out tonight for their first official dinner. I bet Janelle will have to pay since Tunde has spent all his money paying D.J. Simpson's lawyers to keep him in Canada. Why, oh why, is this happening to me? I love Janelle to bits and will miss her when she gets married because she won't have time to listen to me! I need to step up this investigation of Tunde before they have their church wedding. I think its going to be in the summer but guess what? The engagement is on the 30th of this month! Yes, this month! Surely there is a reason for this rush and I know everyone is thinking Janelle is pregnant but I know she isn't. I already thought of that one and made her take a pregnancy test by locking her up in the pharmacy bathroom and slipping the stick to her through the crack in the bottom of the stall. It was one of those industrial

type stalls that have keys on the outside circa 1912! Even though she was mad at me, she secretly looked relieved when the negative sign came up. Of course I cautioned her that if she didn't play a little hard to get, well there'd be no mystery left. She didn't seem convinced and looked at me like she wanted to say "like you would know?" And I know she means I don't technically have a boyfriend but it's because I can't be bothered. Kris is going through some form of male menopause or something and I know just how to get his mind back to me and off whatever it is that is taking him away from me. Ok, back to Janelle. So like I said, the engagement is in less than three weeks and I have to step up the investigation of Tunde. I wonder, should I try to seduce him and have it taped to show her how cheap he is? Or shall I hire a private investigator? Or perhaps pretend I'm calling from Immigration and that he's being deported on the 29th and see if he asks her to move the engagement to an earlier date? Lots to think about but I must rest the brain cells. Just checked my phone messages and Mama and Daddy are coming back to Canada for Christmas. Mercy me! I'm going to have to eat goat for Christmas!

October 15th

Diary—OMG! I've just had the most interesting day in the longest time. I woke up feeling all down which is so

not me so the day was not looking too good. I stayed behind after school to practice with the students for the 1970's extravaganza they were planning. None of these students were born in the seventies; heck neither was I! It was funny seeing how much trouble they were going to just to get the tone right. Reminded me of when Janelle and I used to watch "House of Elliot" on PBS and were so enamored by it that by the third episode or so, we started dressing up like we were in the 1920's or 1930's just to watch the show! We wore wigs smoothed back with hair bands and a feather stuck in the band, long dresses which we picked up at the Salvation Army second hand store, and draped long fake pearls around our necks. The thrift stores are perfect for those things; maybe that's how I should dress for Halloween since the Catwoman thing is not very appropriate for a teacher of hormone riddled high school boys! Well that part was not the funny part. I actually called Immigration!!!! Yes, yours truly started working on her friend's problem and dialed the 1-800 number I saw on Immigration Canada's website and after a long set of instructions: if you'd like to find out the status of your application press 1, if you want to immigrate to Canada press 2, blah blah blah, press 3, sheesh, why wasn't there a "If you want to report an illegal alien press 10?" Anyway, all jokes aside, I ended up pressing the button for speaking to a representative and was on hold for a millennium! Can Immigration Canada not find people

to take calls about illegal aliens or what? I was getting so frustrated and about to hang up when the representative came on. She had a French accent. Why does it seem like all government of Canada jobs are taken by French speaking Canadians? Note to self, I must register at Alliance Francaise and brush up on my French:

"Hello my name is Giselle Belavue, how may I help you?"

"Hi, I'd like to report an illegal alien," I said.

"Thank you Madam. May I remind you that this call will be recorded for quality assurance purposes?"

"Whatever. Listen, he's about to marry my friend to allow him to stay in Canada but he's a fraud."

"Thank you Madam. May I have your name please?"

"Me? Why?"

"We need a reference point as we follow up this lead. You are aware we will begin an investigation right?"

"I don't need an investigation. I just need you to remove him before he makes a fool of my friend."

"Madam, we take calls like this seriously. If you call us, we expect you to be forthcoming with all the necessary information to enable us to proceed with an investigation. We appreciate your concern, for your friend and for your country but we cannot proceed without taking some details down. Can I have your name please?"

Just then, I heard the call waiting beep so I asked my "friend" Giselle if I could put her on hold, after all she put me on hold

before, ... payback. She didn't mind she said, so I switched to the other call and you know who it was? Tunde!!!!!!

"Hi Serwa."

"Tunde? Oh, I was just talking about you," I said tongue in cheek.

"Really? With whom?" I must say he is quite well mannered and educated, he speaks really good English. I wish he wasn't such a douche bag.

"Oh, just a friend. We are discussing the engagement and such."

He laughed. He actually sounded nice and a little twinge of guilt started engulfing me, starting from my lower extremities.

"I need your help," he said.

Oh, oh here goes—he's going to ask me to speed things up for him or something.

"Anything, what is it?" as I prodded for more information. Shoot I thought—the Immigration woman was still on the line. Let her wait. However long this call with Tunde took, it might be just what I need to give back to Grisele at Immigration Canada.

"You know the engagement is at the end of the month right? Well, I was wondering if you could convince Janelle for us to do it earlier?"

I exhaled. I know I'm always right but it does shock me each time it is confirmed. Diary, if this is not proof, what is? He