

Visit Tyndale's exciting Web site at www.tyndale.com
Check out the latest about HeartQuest Books at www.heartquest.com

Copyright © 2003 by Catherine Palmer. All rights reserved.
Cover illustration copyright © 2002 by Jacqueline L. Noe. All rights reserved.

HeartQuest is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Edited by Kathryn S. Olson
Designed by Dean H. Renninger

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons living or dead is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of either the author or publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Palmer, Catherine, date.

Sunrise song / Catherine Palmer.

p. cm. — (HeartQuest)

ISBN 0-8423-7230-X (sc)

1. Americans—Kenya—Fiction. 2. Women zoologists—Fiction. 3. Wildlife refuges—Fiction. 4. African elephant—Fiction. 5. Businessmen—Fiction. 6. Kenya—Fiction. I. Title. II. Series.

PS3566.A495S86 2003

813'.54—dc21

2002013791

Printed in the United States of America

09 08 07 06 05 04 03

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*When elephants fight,
it is the grass that weeps.*

SWAHILI PROVERB



One

“SHE’S CHILLIER than the ice on Kilimanjaro,” Clive Willetts snorted. The lanky British pilot banked the small aircraft and glanced at his boss, the new owner of the flying safari company. “Not to say I don’t like Dr. Thornton, sir. It’s just that she can be touchy at times. She doesn’t like people intruding.”

“And I suppose she’d classify my little visit as an intrusion?”

“More than likely.”

Rogan McCullough slid back his starched white cuff and studied his watch. Three separate dials indicated time zones around the world. Here in Kenya, it was ten o’clock in the morning.

His flight from London had been delayed twice, putting him four hours late into Nairobi. After sending his suitcases ahead to his hotel with the limousine, he had boarded one of the two sleek and well-equipped Catalina PBY 5As owned by Air-Tours Safaris. During this short

flight over central Kenya in clear weather, Rogan wondered at his chances of selling a cranky, eccentric scientist on his newest brainstorm.

He gave the watch an absentminded tap as he stared out the side window. Far beneath the plane rolled verdant hills covered in a tangle of vines, eucalyptus, and Nandi flame trees. Small villages occupied clearings, their thatched huts dark against the bright red-orange soil. Then, as though a confectioner had neatly sliced away the middle of a green-iced sheet cake, the fertile highlands stopped. The land fell sharply, and a great barren yellow plain stretched far in the distance until it reached the rise of the distant escarpment.

“The Great Rift Valley,” Clive explained, as if sensing his boss’s interest in the abrupt change. “It runs from the Mediterranean Sea most of the way along the east coast of Africa. Strangest thing you’ll ever see. It’s a fault—as though the continent tried to split in two a few million years back. The whole Rift Valley is full of unusual land formations.”

Rogan nodded, well aware of the unusual configuration. Despite his preoccupation with business, he had always had a keen interest in natural sciences. As a small boy, he had collected rocks and fallen birds’ nests. At his boarding school, his room had been littered with pieces of driftwood, feathers, and pressed leaves. Even as an adult, he’d chosen to include climbing and caving among his pastimes. He kept a record of the mountains he wanted to scale. Through the years, he had checked them off one by one.

Now, seeing this land he'd always dreamed about, Rogan felt something uncomfortable stir inside his chest. He recognized it immediately, though he had never put a name to it. Nature, the magnificence of the earth's wonders, always brought up this prickling curl of awareness. It was a touch, a voice, a sense of something . . . someone . . . higher and greater and more intelligent than himself.

God, he thought, and just as quickly he pushed away the certainty of a creator. He didn't doubt the existence of a higher power, but he felt sure that such a being could not be interested in the minutia of human existence. Rogan's own life was abundant proof of that.

Unwilling to continue in this train of thought, he shifted his attention to the British pilot, whose skimpy blond mustache wandered across his upper lip like an uncertain centipede. "You mentioned formations," he said. "Volcanoes?"

"Quite right," the pilot confirmed. "Some of them are still active. And there are lakes full of pink flamingos. Caves lined with thousands of bats. Craggy black lava flows. Soda-rimmed marshes. Snowcapped mountains. And escarpments."

He let the plane drop and glide along the sheer edge of the valley.

"Can anything live down there?" Rogan asked as his gaze traced the razor-sharp cliffs and the wide plain between.

"The place is a regular Garden of Eden, sir. Zebra. Gazelle. Antelope. Cheetah. Elephant."

“People?”

“Unsociable sorts. The Maasai have the run of the place. They’re a fierce, primitive lot who still carry spears and don’t think too highly of modern civilization. And, of course, there’s Dr. Fiona Thornton.”

“Ah, yes,” Rogan said. “Dr. Thornton.” He conjured up the image he’d formed of the woman who ran the Rift Valley Elephant Project. He pictured her as a mixture of his high school English teacher and his great-aunt Rose.

In the weeks spent planning his trip, he’d come to imagine Dr. Thornton as a short, buxom woman with steel gray hair and a thunderous voice. She would wear a khaki dress left over from some World War II women’s corps, thick support stockings in a pale shade that skin had never considered turning, and heavy black lace-up boots. Her stern face would wither him from the shade of a pith helmet as her pinched lips formed the answer she would snap at his request. *Absolutely not.*

Unable to suppress a grin, he shook his head. *Sorry, Dr. Thornton,* he thought, *but I’m afraid you’ve met your match.*

Rogan leaned against the headrest and closed his eyes. As a matter of fact, he was looking forward to the challenge of outwitting the old battle-ax with as much anticipation as he felt for a boardroom confrontation at McCullough Enterprises. His persuasive style and bull-headed stubbornness had built the company into a billion-dollar operation, after all. And he intended to reverse the sagging revenues of Air-Tours by applying the same determination.

“If you’ll excuse my frankness, sir,” Clive spoke up, “you look bushed. Jet lag will catch up with a man, no matter how strong he is. I’d suggest you get a little rest. When your father owned Air-Tours, he used to stretch out in the lounge back there and take a nap. We’ve got a well-stocked bar, a library of old maps and books, and a clean rest room. Your father always said the rumble of the engines did him more good than a hundred-dollar massage.”

“I’m fine. Really.”

The pilot smiled, showing a set of uneven teeth beneath the wispy mustache. “Your father learned the hard way too. But after he’d been coming to Kenya for a few years, he once told me that Africa was the only place where he could really rest. Africa was where he could let go. He said it was the only place he knew of where he was really himself—”

“If you don’t mind,” Rogan interrupted, “I’d rather not talk right now, Clive. I need to review some figures.”

“Yes, sir.” The pilot gave him a sideways glance and clamped his mouth shut.

Rogan flipped the gold clasps on his leather briefcase and extracted a file. Air-Tours. The company had shown a steep decline in the past five years. He intended to rectify that. In many ways, resolving financial difficulties was his specialty. Oh, he enjoyed the media operations of McCullough Enterprises, and he liked working with the journalists and ad men he employed. Their bright-eyed enthusiasm kept him pushing for innovation long after his own fiscal goals had been met.

But Rogan truly excelled in the revival of companies

on the brink of financial extinction. This was how he'd gotten his start. And the prospect of bringing some of his father's smaller businesses back to life helped ease the sting of the pitiful legacy he'd inherited. Rogan was well aware that the collection of flagging industries and the small lump sum—a tiny percentage of John McCullough's vast estate—were little more than conscience money. They were his father's way of acknowledging to the world that once, among all his other accomplishments, he'd produced a son.

After the senior McCullough's recent death, the rest of the estate had been parceled out among ex-wives, educational institutions, and charities bearing his name. Rogan didn't really care that he'd been left the financially weak companies, he told himself. He looked on them as a challenge. Something to keep him going.

From his office in New York, he had examined the books and records of Air-Tours and the other companies. He had made calls. Set up contacts. Investigated and instigated programs. In just three months, the pizza chain was showing a spark of life, and the hotels were preparing for face-lifts. Now he had his sights set on the tiny flying safari company.

Rows of numbers swam before his eyes as Rogan stared at his father's signature scrawled across a balance sheet. *John McCullough*. The ink flourishes personified the man. They suggested extravagance. Wealth. Show. Pomp. Scandal. Clive Willetts's recounting of talks with the tycoon didn't fit the picture his son held of him. Rogan rubbed a finger across his temple.

He didn't want to think about his father. When the memories intruded, he felt six years old again. Six years old and hiding behind the stair rail watching his parents hurl accusations and Ming Dynasty vases at each other. Six years old and trembling as his mother screeched and wept and hung on to his father's coattails. Six years old and frozen inside as he stood at the iron gate of an ivy-covered boarding school and stared at the settling puff of dust from his father's Mercedes as it roared off.

Rogan slammed down the briefcase lid. Clive lifted one eyebrow.

"About Dr. Thornton," Rogan said irritably. "What's she most likely to respond to? Money? Publicity?"

Clive sniffed. "Well, Dr. Thornton isn't your average sort of person, if you know what I mean. She's more than a little eccentric. Not the kind of woman who'll give you the time of day . . . unless you're an elephant."

"Surely she's in need of funding or new supplies. I've heard these research projects are always in the hole."

"Could be. I wouldn't doubt it."

"You told me she gives you tips on where the elephants are so you can fly tourists over them. You must know something about her. How does she operate? What drives her?"

"She's never said a word to me about herself, mind you. Just talks about elephants. She grew up in Kenya as I did. But we didn't know each other in those days. My father farmed near the coast, and we stayed fairly isolated. She was born in Nairobi to an American father and an English mother. There were four children in all—three girls

and a boy. I've met them, of course, but they're all living in different places now. Tillie's an agroforester in Mali. Jessica owns an old house on Zanzibar Island. Grant is an anthropologist. He lives here in Kenya, but he stays out in the bush most of the time. Their father is a professor at the University of Nairobi—still teaching, I think. The mother was a painter, but she died a long time ago.”

“How?”

Clive shrugged. “No idea. Anyway, after university, Fiona Thornton came back to Kenya and met a woman studying lions in the Amboseli Game Park. Dr. Howard sponsored her, saw that she got her doctorate, and helped her get research grants. Since then, Dr. Thornton has studied elephants. Elephants are her passion. It's like I've tried to tell you, sir; she doesn't have much interest in humans. When she does actually decide to say something, it might be only two or three words . . . if you're lucky. Odd thing about Dr. Thornton, though. The Africans who work with her call her Matalai Shamsi. It means Princess Sunrise.”

Rogan shook his head, declining to respond as the plane banked steeply and began its descent into the Great Rift Valley.



Fiona Thornton stared at the neat column of figures for a full minute. She lifted her head. “Three calves this month,” she said.

Sentero eyed her, his face impassive.

She tapped her pen on the metal folding table. “I

want to find the M family this afternoon. Moira was in estrus in—” she scanned the papers in her hand—“in April. During the long rains, I saw her in consort with the old bull James. At the time, he was definitely in musth. Moira’s had the full twenty-two-month gestation, and I’ve noticed other signs of impending delivery.”

“Yesterday she was restless.” Sentero’s voice was deep, his English enunciation clear.

“She seemed out of sync with the others, don’t you think?”

The African nodded, then stiffened and lifted his focus, as if he could see through the tent’s olive canvas roof.

“What is it?” Fiona had come to rely on her Maasai assistant’s keen senses. He often heard and saw things much sooner than she did.

“Airplane.”

“It won’t land here. It’s probably going to one of the Mara lodges.”

Sentero shrugged. “It will come here.”

At that moment Fiona heard the distinct rumble of the plane’s engines. She chewed the inside of her lip for a moment, then brushed a hand across her forehead. Talking to a visitor . . . a stranger . . . was the last thing she wanted to do. Standing, she replaced her records in a metal file box and locked it.

“I didn’t order any supplies from Nairobi. Did you?” she asked.

Sentero shook his head. Framed in the opening of the tent flap, his tall, sinewy body stood dark against the

brilliant African sunshine. He was a sinister-looking man with a face chiseled by time into sharp angles and harsh planes. His eyes, small and almost black, glittered with a canny sparkle.

Sentero always wore traditional Maasai garb—draped layers of bloodred cloths, some plaid, some checked, all smelling of woodsmoke. Three bead necklaces circled his throat, one a choker with a central button of mother-of-pearl, the other two dangling down his bare chest. His ears, each lobe pierced and stretched to form a two-inch hole, sported beaded bands of red, yellow, white, and blue. Occasionally Sentero plugged the hole of one ear-lobe with an old black plastic film canister filled with tobacco. Chewing tobacco was his only vice.

“Start the Land Rover,” Fiona said as the plane’s engines roared over her camp. The tent trembled. Vervet monkeys shrieked in the acacia trees overhead. Her cat leapt down from his perch on the wardrobe and darted under the bed. She grabbed her jacket and camera. “I’ll tell Mama Hannah to ward them off, whoever they are.”

Sentero flashed his only smile of the morning, snatched his iron-tipped spear from beside the tent pole, and strode out. Fiona knelt at the foot of the small camp cot. Flicking on her flashlight, she swept its beam through the dust until she caught the cat’s green eyes.

“Sukari, are you afraid?” With small kissing noises, she gently patted the tent’s canvas floor. She snapped off the light. “Come on, sweet one. That was just an old airplane. I won’t let it hurt you.”

Sukari crept forward until he butted Fiona's cheek. She stroked beneath his chin, smiling at the deep, satisfied purr. The spotless white cat was nearly blind, the casualty of a close encounter with a spitting cobra. Fiona stroked between his ears and nestled her nose against his furry neck.

"Now, be a good boy," she whispered. "Sentero and I are going to see if Moira's had her calf. I'll zip you into the tent, so mind your manners and don't chew on my philodendron."



The airplane slipped over the tops of yellow-trunked acacia trees. Like great green umbrellas, their canopies provided a measure of shade in the otherwise scorching heat. Rogan took in the pitiful little camp scattered at the edge of a nearly dry streambed. Several scraggly, patched, and faded tents, olive in color and nearly camouflaged, rested in the shadows like bedraggled bag ladies. A thatch-roofed shed of some sort emitted a thin wisp of blue smoke. Like an aging, rusty King Pelinor, a Land Rover with a dented fender guarded the camp's entrance.

He made mental notes about the needed upgrade. New tents, of course. At least ten of them—the deluxe model, with room for two beds and a table. An expanded campfire area. A dining room with a connecting kitchen. Bath and shower rooms.

The plane descended toward a humped dark mountain shaped like an elephant's sloping back. Then it

swung around, touched down, and taxied across a stretch of uneven ground.

“I know you’re a pilot yourself, sir,” Clive commented. “In Africa you’ll want to watch out for antbear holes when you’re landing. Those things can ruin the landing gear. Your wheel goes in and *boom*, that’s it.”

“What’s going on there?” Rogan grabbed the chrome door handle before the plane had come to a stop. Just across the riverbed a tall figure strode across the clearing. “Who is that?”

“It’s Dr. Thornton, sir. And it looks like she’s making for her car. She’s leaving.”

“Not if I can help it.” Rogan flung open the door and swung down from the plane. Loosening his tie, he set off through thigh-high golden grass. Behind him the plane’s propellers wound down with a deep, air-cutting *thunk-thunk*. A rich smell of heat and soil and fragrant grasses hung thick in the air. It clung to him as he walked, filtered through his hair and onto his skin as if alive and seeking.

Rogan scrambled down the stream bank and splashed through the broad trickle of water, a damp sediment seeping into his shoes. He hurried on, irritation making inroads into his careful composure. The woman ignored him and marched toward the Land Rover as if she’d never even heard the plane come in.

“Dr. Thornton,” he barked.

She stopped. For a moment she seemed to disappear, her body camouflaged among the slender acacia trunks. Her clothing, a pale green shirt and tan slacks, melted

into the surroundings. She made no sound. And then she turned her head.

Rogan's first realization was that Dr. Fiona Thornton was no battle-ax. Great-aunt Rose and his high school English teacher vanished into thin air.

This woman had hair the color of a flaming sunset. Red-gold. Rippling over her shoulders in a tangled swath. A pair of hazel eyes, thick lashed and as wary as those of a lioness, scrutinized him. Accustomed to painted lips and powdered cheeks, he was startled to realize that her face was bare. Yet color infused it with life—cheeks and nose blushed by the sun, faint freckles beneath a ruddy tan and lips almost too full.

He cleared his throat. With one hand extended, he walked toward her. "Dr. Thornton, I presume?" He smiled, hoping to melt her a little.

"Yes." She spoke only the single word, but her voice had a husky quality that resonated in the marrow of his bones. She made no move to grasp his hand. Coolly she assessed him. With an unpainted fingernail, she tapped the camera that dangled against one curved hip.

"Dr. Thornton, my name is Rogan McCullough. I'm sure you've heard of McCullough Enterprises, New York." When she didn't respond, he leaned toward her and coaxed her fingers from the camera strap. He expected a cold-fish handshake. He was wrong.

Their hands clasped as if they had silently agreed to engage in a duel of elemental arm wrestling. He stared into her eyes. Camouflage eyes, green and brown, mottled with bits of gray and yellow. He sensed

that she hid inside them, revealing as little as possible of herself.

“I have a proposal for you, Dr. Thornton,” Rogan continued. “It’s one I think you’ll like very much. May we talk?”

“Sentero,” she snapped suddenly, jerking away her gaze—and her hand. She spoke in Swahili. “*Ngoja kidogo, tafadhali.*”

The African cut the Land Rover’s engine and emerged from the vehicle. He moved leopardlike across the clearing, his spear held against one bare brown thigh and pointing at the intruder.

Rogan swung around and assessed the Maasai. His heart began to race as he realized that this was no New York boardroom. This was Africa. This was an eccentric woman and her savage guard. A man with dangling earlobes and snakelike black eyes was advancing on him, weapon menacing. Here the rules were different.

“Excuse me, but what does he have in mind with that spear?” Rogan asked.

Dr. Thornton’s lips twitched, and her mouth formed a wry smile. “Don’t worry,” she said as the African’s path took him safely to one side. “I’ve told Sentero to wait until we’re finished.”

“Does he really need the spear? Wouldn’t a gun be more efficient?”

She glanced at Sentero, then stepped back and ran her eyes down her visitor. “You, on the other hand, are perfectly equipped for the African bush,” she said. “A gray business suit? A navy tie? Please.”

“My flight into Nairobi was late. I didn’t have time to change.”

“Wool?”

“It’s February. Winter in New York.” Retaking the offensive, he gestured toward a pair of faded canvas camp chairs beside the fire ring. “Could we sit down, Dr. Thornton? I’d really like to—”

“What is it you want, Mr. McCullough? I’m very busy today.” Aware he had disturbed her, interrupted her routine, Rogan made up his mind to be as civil as possible.

“May we?” He held out a hand to indicate the chairs as he gently cupped her elbow. The touch—the warmth of her sun-heated skin against his palm—sent an unexpected current up his arm. With effort, he dismissed it. This was business, after all.

As if in an effort to escape him, the woman pulled away and took a chair.

“Now, Dr. Thornton,” he began, seating himself across from her. He leaned forward, focusing on her face as he spoke. “As the new owner of Air-Tours Safaris, I’ve been studying ways to make my company viable. When I was in New York—”

“Tea, *toto*?” A small African woman spoke as she emerged from the shadows of a nearby tent. “And perhaps some chocolate biscuits for your guest?”

“No thank you, Mama Hannah,” Dr. Thornton said. “Mr. McCullough won’t be staying long.”

The elderly lady nodded, her head swathed in a brightly colored scarf and her small dark feet clad in

a pair of neon yellow flip-flops. "I could cook some rice pudding. Or a sausage."

At this, the scientist's face broke into a warm smile. She reached out and took Mama Hannah's hand. "I'd love a sausage for dinner. But Sentero and I are going out in a moment to check on the M family. We won't be back until sunset."

"I will cook a sausage for you at sunset." She glanced at Rogan. Dark, birdlike eyes scanned him up and down. "You are hot. Your feet are wet. You have no peace. 'Change your ways. . . . Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.'"

With this final word, she turned and headed back into the tent. Rogan gaped after her, aware that he was sweating inside his wool suit, and his feet were damp from sloshing through the stream. And as for peace . . .

"As I was saying," he began again, cutting off his own thoughts. "When I was in New York inspecting the Air-Tours records, I spoke with Clive Willetts by telephone. He mentioned that you had been a big help to him. He told me about your camp and your elephant research projects. And that was when I began to see a future for this place."

"I have no trouble seeing the future, Mr. McCullough. I've worked with the Rift Valley elephants for more than ten years, and I intend to continue working with them for the rest of my life. I have only one goal, and that's to ensure the survival of the African elephant in the wild."

"Exactly my point. And that's where Air-Tours comes in. I have the resources to help you accomplish your goal."

“What resources are those?”

“As you may know, Air-Tours caters to wealthy individuals. We work with highly influential people. People who make a difference in their world. I’m proposing to bring them here, Dr. Thornton. To the Rift Valley. You can show them what you’re doing. Show them the life of the African elephant and why that life deserves preservation. You’re a brilliant woman. You have a lot of creative energy. People will flock to learn from you. Think about it. You could hold seminars. You could touch people with the stories of your elephants.”

“What on *earth* are you talking about?”

Bemused, Rogan studied her. This woman showed none of the enthusiasm he’d seen in other potential clients, who usually swallowed his speeches as though they were strawberry ice cream. In fact, she looked as if she’d just eaten a dill pickle.

“I’m suggesting,” he said, “that I can introduce you to the kinds of wealthy, influential people who are always looking for charitable foundations to support. With the cooperation of Air-Tours Safaris, you could have a major impact on wildlife awareness.”

“Mr. McCullough, I appreciate your interest in the elephants, but we really have nothing to discuss.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m not interested in your plan, Mr. McCullough. Air-Tours is failing, so you want to lure rich tourists with promises of ‘getting close to the animals.’ You want to bring planeloads of loud, trash-littering, gum-chewing people here to complain about the poor roads and the

lack of hot water and electricity. They'll squeal over the lions and scream at the sight of a snake. They'll try to pet the vervet monkeys and feed bananas to my elephants."

"Your elephants?"

"My elephants. And if you think I intend to allow—"

"Dr. Thornton, please." He struggled to keep from revealing his annoyance at her unreasonable reticence.

"I'm genuinely puzzled by your lack of understanding here. These are the people who can support your project. These are the people who have the money to make the difference between a healthy budget and a skimpy one. They matter to your elephants. I have a vision here, Dr. Thornton."

"I have a vision here too."

"Don't you see what I'm offering you? I propose to provide you with new, comfortable tents. I'll expand the camp area, clear some of those trees—"

"My acacias?" Her voice shook. "You'll do nothing of the sort."

"I'll build you a brand-new water pump," he continued. "Don't you understand? I'll bring in generators. You'll be able to see at night. You'll be able to work and study as late as you want."

"I don't want generators. They smell. They belch diesel smoke."

"New Land Rovers, Dr. Thornton. Think about that. I'll buy you three or four of them if you want. And how about a water hole? I could build a big concrete water hole for you. The elephants would be able to come right up to the camp and drink."

"And what's going to keep them from walking in here,

knocking your tents flat, and smashing your generators? Elephants have no interest in human boundaries, Mr. McCullough.”

“I’ll hire guards. This could be a completely self-contained enterprise. I’ll put in a kitchen for staff and visitors, and I’ll bring in a professional chef.”

“All that, and a big trash pile for the elephants to forage through, no doubt. Look, Mr. McCullough, I’ve found plastic bags, gloves, medicine bottles, pieces of metal, and all sorts of wrappings and containers in elephant droppings. And it’s due solely to the rubbish the tourists leave behind.”

“I’d build a fence.”

“Nothing can keep elephants away but an electric fence. They walk right through iron and wood and even concrete without the slightest hesitation. My elephants have died after eating shards of broken glass from human garbage pits. *Died.*”

Her face went soft all of a sudden. The chilly veil over her eyes lifted, and Rogan saw in them a deep, unbearable pain. Dr. Thornton lowered her head and sagged in the chair. He stared at the top of her head, at the wild red-gold tumble that even at a distance smelled of rainwater and fresh air. She was breathing deeply, and with each breath came the slightest shudder.

“I’m sorry,” he said. “About your elephants. About . . . about the glass.”

For a long time she didn’t look at him.

“I didn’t know elephants would eat trash,” he tried again. “I wasn’t aware of that.”

“We’ve had a drought,” she whispered. “The December rains failed. The grass is almost all dead or eaten away. But even in the rainy season, elephants raid the lodge garbage pits. Once they acquire a taste for bananas, mangoes, pineapples—”

“Forbidden fruit.”

She lifted her head. “Elephants don’t know what’s good for them and what isn’t. They’re not like humans.”

“Not all humans know what’s good for them either.”

“I know what’s good for *me*, Mr. McCullough. The Rift Valley Elephant Project is my life. I don’t want changes. I won’t allow anything different, anything disturbing.”

“Change can be a good thing,” he countered. “Look, I have a certain measure of influence to accomplish the things I feel are important, such as wildlife conservation. There’s a sense of satisfaction in that.”

“In other words, power.”

He shrugged. “You could call it that.”

“I don’t need power. I have peace.”

“Peace?”

She spread her long, tanned arms. “I’m out here with God and the animals. What more could I possibly need?”

“You need empowerment, Dr. Thornton. You need financial support. You need people to provide that support.”

“The last things I’ll ever need are power and money. I need people least of all. As I told you, I have the elephants. I have my camp and my research. That’s all I require.”

“You need what I have to offer, Dr. Thornton. And so do your elephants.”

“I’ll be blunt, Mr. McCullough; I don’t need you,” she said, standing. Her eyes flashed with warning. “I don’t need you, and I don’t want you.”

“Just let me outline my proposal, Dr. Thornton,” he tried, in as gentle a voice as he could muster. “On paper. Let me explain in detail what I can do for you. Let me bring in one group of tourists. We’ll show them your work. Just a test run. A trial.”

“Absolutely not,” she snapped.

Before he could respond, she pivoted and motioned to Sentero. The African was on his feet instantly. He loped toward the Land Rover, spear glinting in the noon sun. In moments, they had climbed into the vehicle and were pulling out of camp.

“How did it turn out, Mr. McCullough?” Clive Willetts asked, coming up beside Rogan. “Did you talk her into it?”

Rising, Rogan smiled. “Not exactly.”

“Well, I warned you. She doesn’t like to talk. I’ve never seen anyone who could stand up to Dr. Thornton.”

Rogan loosened his tie and unbuttoned the collar of his shirt as he studied the vanishing Land Rover.

“Let’s start back to Nairobi,” the pilot said. “There’s no shame in losing a match with someone as stubborn as Dr. Thornton.”

“Losing? Hardly, Clive. In fact, I’d say the battle has only just begun.”

Slinging his suit coat over one shoulder, Rogan set out across the grassland toward the airplane.

A Note from the Author

Dear Friend,

I've had so many letters asking, "Are we ever going to get to meet Fiona Thornton?" You'll know about her if you've read the Treasures of the Heart series, which tells the stories of Fiona's siblings: Tillie, Jessica, and Grant. The books in that series are *A Kiss of Adventure*, *A Whisper of Danger*, and *A Touch of Betrayal*.

All four books, including *Sunrise Song*, have led interesting lives. *A Kiss of Adventure* was originally titled *The Treasure of Timbuktu*, and *A Whisper of Danger* was titled *The Treasure of Zanzibar*. Tyndale House chose to repack-age and retitle these books to help them fit better into the HeartQuest line of Christian romances. Caught in the midst of these changes, *A Touch of Betrayal* languished for several years as an unpublished manuscript. When it finally was released in 2000, it came out with a bang, winning the 2001 Christy Award!

So Tillie, Jessica, and Grant finally had their stories in print. But what about poor Fiona? She'd actually had a previous existence too. Long ago, I wrote about her for the general market under a different title. A Tyndale editor read that

Catherine Palmer

old book and wanted to build a whole series around it for the Christian market. We had to wait many years for the book's copyright to become free, but finally I have the great privilege of giving Fiona a fresh breath of life. Her story now reflects my true beliefs about God, love, marriage, and of course, the created world for which we Christians have been given responsibility.

Although the Rift Valley Game Park, the Rift Valley Elephant Project, and the Rift Valley Elephant Preserve are products of my imagination, I would like to thank the many organizations in Kenya and worldwide that are helping to preserve the African elephant, whose very real plight has been detailed in *Sunrise Song*. Among these organizations are the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, whose work with elephant orphans inspired this book; the East African Wild Life Society; the African Wildlife Foundation; the Kenya Wildlife Service; and the World Wildlife Fund. Researchers whose work allowed me to portray elephant behavior with accuracy include Iain Douglas-Hamilton, Cynthia Moss, Joyce Poole, Katharine Payne, and William Langbauer. It is through the support of these people and organizations—and through our determination never to buy ivory—that the African elephant may have hope for survival.

If you enjoyed *Sunrise Song*, be sure to check out the other three books in my Treasures of the Heart series. Thanks to God, every person who is in Christ is a new creation—and if it is His will, even old books can have new lives!

Blessings,
Catherine Palmer