



Eagle Eyes

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Michael S. Lewis

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Eleven-year-old Kofi was in trouble. Again. Although he loved his parents “like crazy,” they were way too crazy about school. Didn’t they realize that Kofi was an up-and-coming football (soccer) champion, and that after he finished school—in just five years—he’d go professional? “Why did they insist that he learn poetry and history? These things didn’t count to a sports star!” But forgotten backpacks are nothing: Kofi knows that he’s really in trouble when his father slides a failed math exam under his door, along with a letter, not signed “Dad,” but Albert Johnston Addo.

To teach a lesson in responsibility (and the good effects of liberal education) Kofi goes with his mother, who is a nurse, to Kofi’s grandfather’s village, where his uncle Charles, who is an ophthalmologist, will be testing peoples’ eyes. When Kofi complains that he wouldn’t be able to work on his math at the village because he can’t see well in kerosene light, his mother snaps back, “Then we shall test your eyes also.”

Even for a native Ghanaian, the differences between city and country life are startling. “Finally, they pulled into the square and dozens of children came running from the huts. Flies were everywhere, even in the eyes of the dogs. Kofi felt sorry for the dogs and used his handkerchief to brush some of the flies away, but they came right back.” Uncle Charles meets them at the bus, wearing his white coat and carrying a football. Kofi adores his uncle because he was a striker on the U-17 team that won the FIFA World Championship in 1991.

Kofi also adores his grandfather, but is glad that his grandfather can’t see him blush when he jokes about Kofi’s math scores. Kofi’s grandfather has cataracts and has been blind since before Kofi was born. But the following week, Grandfather is going on a bus to a hospital with electricity, where Uncle Charles will operate on him and others.

Eagle Eyes is a rich and fascinating book about all sorts of things, like growing up, goals, organization, fear, respect, and teamwork. It’s also a book about people from the same family who both do and don’t live very differently from the average North American. Simple black and white line drawings illustrate some events, plus there’s the real-life photography of Dr. Michael Lewis, who traveled to Ghana with a group in 2007 where they screened 6,000 people and performed cataract surgery on 157 of them. Author Mitchard’s novel, *Deep End of the Ocean*, was Oprah Winfrey’s first Book Club pick. In this book, middle graders will enjoy reading about universal problems in an exotic setting. A portion of the profits from the sale of each book will be donated to the Himalayan Cataract Project. (November / December 2009)

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