

ONDORONDO

A Papua New Guinea literary magazine

No. 7.

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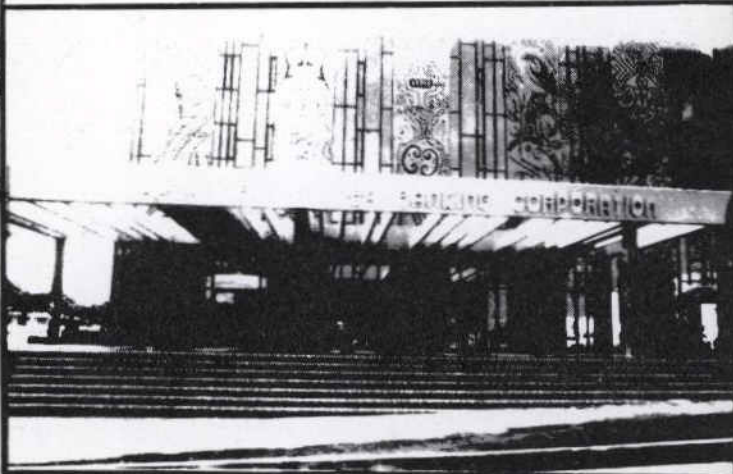
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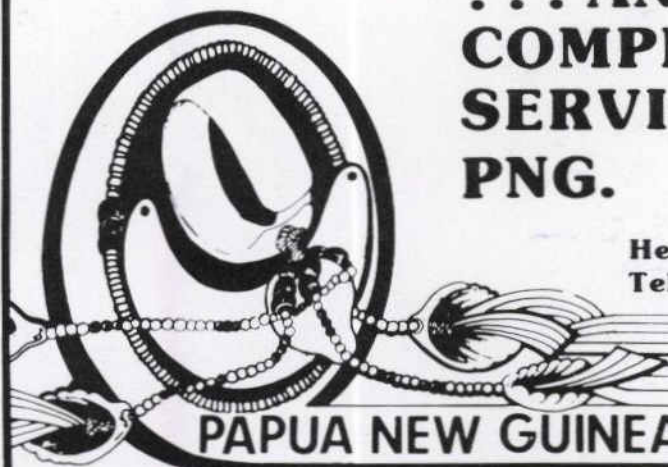
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PAPUA NEW GUINEA BANKING CORPORATION

ONDOBONDO

No. 7

A magazine of new writing from Papua New Guinea Lahara

1985-86

Editorial: A new section of Novel Excerpts has been added to this issue of **Ondobondo**. Three Writers have given parts of longer works of fiction to wet our appetite for more to come. Jack Lahui has sketched an episode involving two lads on a "lark". Daniel Kumbon has introduced a legendary Engan character and Timil Lyakin has started us on a journey to find the strange man who was the father of the "lost one". As well as these novel excerpts, three short stories explore themes of death and desolation in three different tones. One is humorous, one forboding and one sympathetic. The poems by Sorariba and Soaba as well as the play by Nora V. Brash again reflect the enormous talent of these three writers. We hope you enjoy this issue of **Ondobondo**.



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Ondobondo is a Binadere word meaning festival or sing sing.

Contributions and books for review should be sent to Ondobondo, Language and Literature Department, Box 320, University PO, NCD, Papua New Guinea. Manuscripts will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope (or international reply coupons), but no responsibility will be accepted for them.

Advertisements should be sent to the same address. Rates are available from the Chairman, Editorial Board, Ondobondo.

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A GOOD MAN'S DEATH

by Steven Edmund Winduo

The night was cold, chilly and frigid. Hostile mosquitoes feasted and competed on the blood and flesh of the tired sleepers.

Everywhere in the darkness of the house the air was heated by the buzzing and humming sound of hostile mosquitoes. Outside, in the darkness, an owl hooted a long and endless stream of cries.

Nalanduo could not sleep. Peace was not to be found. War and torture stormed the world and reigned over it. Nalanduo found himself fighting an undefeatable and unending battle. The merciless, blood thirsty and boneless creatures pierced, tore, and ripped his innocent skin to pieces. He had become a victim of merciless torture. Rest was not to be found amid the miserable and executing mosquitoes of the night.

Nalanduo looked towards where his father, Rambayawa, was resting. Within the reach of his eyes he saw his father also fighting an unceasing war. Nalanduo and Rambayawa were not alone. Hawina, Nalanduo's mother, was also fighting. She was waving and waving in the darkness as if calling someone to come and rescue her from the great flood of merciless and reckless mosquitoes. How could he help his parents when he was in the same boat as they, he thought to himself. Nalanduo could not break free from the bond of the hostile beings.

Nalanduo could not close his tired eyes. He kept awake feeling his poor eyelids pricked and pulled apart. He forced himself to sleep several times but never succeeded. He sat awake all night thinking to himself. Would the next day arrive to a dew of peace? Nalanduo had a feeling that the worse was yet to come.

The morning continued the cruciating night. It was an unusual

and very strange day. The world was death. Coldness and fridity ruled the world. The morning refused to accept nature's creations. It retreated into the world of the dead.

Nalanduo observed the morning anger with frustration. Why did the morning not accept him as usual, or cheer him up after the torture in the night. The morning birds that cheer and welcome the sun, the crows that cackle in the morning were nowhere to be seen or heard. The swaying trees and palms stood like dying trees in the fields. The morning breeze had also refused to blow as usual.

Like Nalanduo, Rambayawa was also up from sleep very early. Rambayawa had a very ludicrous and strange dream in the midst of the few hours of sleep that he had had. The dream was frightening and fearful. Rambayawa dreamed that as he was hunting in Yawinanku, just on the other side of the Yalim River, something very strange and unexpected happened to him. A wild boar with tusks on either side of its black snout rushed out from its hiding place in the nearby bamboo growth, and attacked Rambayawa. The boar tore and ripped open his body; leaving only a hollowed skeleton. The contents of Rambayawa's body were emptied and lay scattered all over the earth. The blood coloured the green undergrowth red. The boar returned with Rambayawa's heart into the bamboo growth. The canopy looked down on to the dead body and laughed in disbelief at the empty body lying in the pool of blood.

As Nalanduo's father was ending his dream, Suwalika, a cousin entered the village. He had a bushknife in his right hand and an unwashed towel around his adolescent waist. Suwalika lived at Buknholi with Waluwli his father. Waluwli was Nalanduo's father's big brother.

Rambayawa welcomed Suwalika and gave him a seat to sit on. Then Hawina, Nalanduo's mother, gave him some banana to eat. His early

visit caused some confusion amongst the trio. Not once in Suwalika's life had he ever visited them so early. Their anxiety did not last long.

Suddenly, without a word, Suwalika broke into tears. His red eyes were full of endless tears. The sorrow in his cousin's heart struck Nalanduo. Not once in his life had he seen Suwalika cry — not even when a close relative died. He was known as 'mlinku kakhu', the tearless one. Carelessly and uncontrollably, tears drizzled down his eyes. In the midst of his weeping, Suwalika spilled out the news. Waluwli had died in the night, after suffering from a strong cough for a week.

Before long, Nalanduo was also in tears. He could not accept the news. More than what was said, he understood. A poisonous spear had done its duty. The sudden death of his uncle was the work of a secret, poisonous spear. No ordinary death would have made the night so miserable and the dream so plain and horrific.

Waluwli was a good man known far and wide; from Porombe to Haniak and from Wiyomunku to Rofuyawa. His hospitality and kindness was praised by all who encountered him.

How could one who loves and cares for people — friends and enemies alike — just die like that? How could death be so cruel to take his uncle's life so suddenly and unexpectedly? Death had done a nasty job with a secret poisonous spear. But death should not have ripped and opened his uncle's body. Death should not have emptied the contents of Waluwli's body. Nalanduo and his parents got ready and left quickly for Buknholi. They followed the same road that Suwalika had taken.

In his confused and sorrowful mind, Nalanduo clearly recalled his father's dream. The poisonous spear had done its job. It had run away with his uncle's spirit, leaving only the empty body. The contents of the body emptied over the earth. He

could see the undergrowth on the sides of the foot path turning from green to red. The canopy trees looked down at him and laughed as if never to stop. All the way to Buknholi, Nalanduo talked and listened to himself. Thousands of questions about his uncle's death invaded his mind like the buzzing cries of the merciless torture of the hostile beasts in the night. ☹

The Cremation of Tigerman

by Franz Mokno.

Sometime in May 1983, word reached me in Goroka that a prominent member of the dog community back at college had suddenly departed this world. That shook me up some, as the dog had been so vigorous and healthy.

But after the initial surprise had worn off, I reasoned that death comes to every dog eventually, that it was better to die suddenly young, than to slowly and painfully waste one's life away old. So I was not prepared for the final shock that rocked me to a cell when I went back to Diwai and learnt of how he had died.

And having learnt of that death, a death that bestaggered the human population and stopped this side short of bringing a collapse in the organized dog community on campus, I decided to record it for posterity.

I knew this dog only as Tigerman.

I knew little of his private life and less still of his origins. All I knew was that he was a great friend of a friend of mine — John Makali. I do not know how they became friends or what they did after they became friends. Classroom rumour had it that they became quite close because John was seeing the daughter of Tigerman's owner. Tigerman was the girl's private bodyguard. I have a scar on my left calf muscle that testifies to that!

Anyway, about his death, I like to imagine him on that fine but tragic afternoon to have known death was coming. He may have been in pain, I do not know. But that afternoon Tigerman endeavoured to travel outside his sphere of influence, of which there was only one: the boy's dormitories.

They say he trailed blood all the way from his owner's house, refusing help at every corner with a vicious snarl. His crazed mind could think of none but John, that ever so kind boy who fed him biscuits until they 'came out of his ears'. Only in John's watchful eyes would he give his final rasping breath.

However, just as he reached the last row of classrooms, the ones nearest to the boys' dormitories, he collapsed. Tigerman then knew death was not far away, so he made for the only other place where he knew John would find him — his classroom.

He crept slowly, his body fluids pouring from every window of his inner self and so travelled not only the fluids, but it seemed also, the flies too.

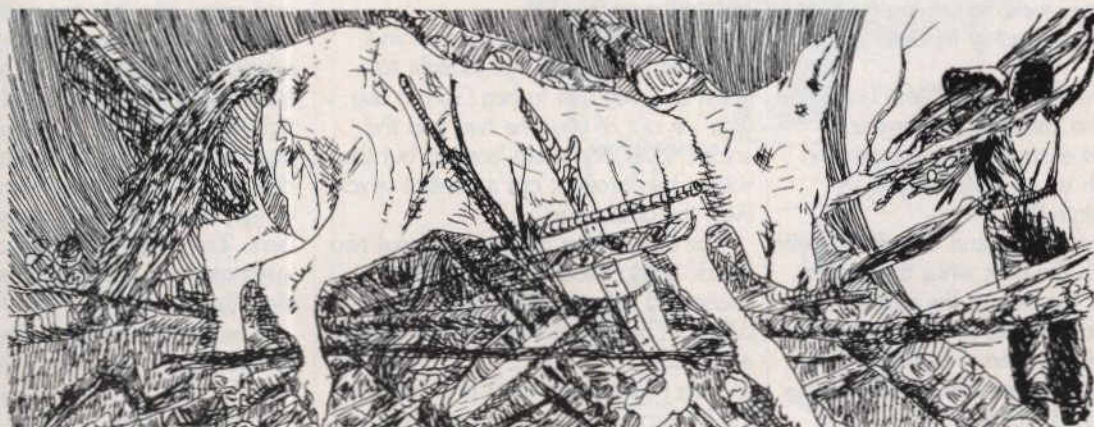
His brave heart finally gave as he stood at the door of John's classroom. Maybe it was the relief of having reached his objective, or maybe he was upset to see John was not there to receive him, but after a few more belaboured steps he drew his last as his great lungs gave up the unequal struggle and Tigerman drowned in his own blood.

Nobody passed that way for a week. Even the sisters of the Holy Spirit, seasoned by a life's experience with sick and dying people, steered clear of that classroom. But John did. He and silent Matt. They wrapped Tigerman in a blanket — one that John had salvaged from a rubbish drum — and brought him to the fireplace where boys cooked bananas. There they cremated the decaying remains of the great dog.

His death is still a mystery and many theories have been developed to explain his sudden departure from the world, but John Makali's seems the only plausible one: distemper, that dreaded disease every dog would rather die than contract.

Nowadays, he has become a kind of a dog legend. Stories are told not of Tigerman's exploits but of his cremation and how his greatest friend John spat quite deliberately into his sightless eye before flames engulfed him.

You see, after Tigerman died, the daughter of Tigerman's owner refused to see John. ☹



Illustrated by L.P. Wamiri

THE SOLDIERS' ADVENTURE

by Niligur Peniel

The sky was as blue as the sea but directly in front of the plane, thick black clouds hovered in the sky, black like the mountains that were rapidly disappearing below. With some shaking, the plane roared through the clouds like a ship through waves. The pilot seemed relaxed but what actually was going on in his mind? Perhaps it was a question also going through the minds of the thirty-four soldiers who sat in two rows. Why are soldiers here? Everybody looked out the window as the plane passed through a small break in the clouds. Way down below lay the great Papua New Guinea snake.

"Fly River at last," murmured the officer in charge of the troops as the meandering river disappeared from sight.

"Sergeant," the officer called to his second-in-command who was sitting at the back.

"Yes Sir," said the sergeant and he walked towards the officer.

"If I ever catch you sleeping again, you'll return to the barracks with seven days extra duty," the officer whispered to the sergeant's ears so that the others would not hear. The sergeant went back to his seat but a few soldiers who had seen him sleeping had anticipated what the officer would say, so they smiled but could not laugh, fearing what he might do to them.

Each soldier sat with two grenades hanging from the front of his webbing with an automatic self-loading rifle on his lap. They were all relying on the pilot to fly them safely to their destination.

It was the officer again who broke the silence as he called to the sergeant. "Check and ensure that every weapon safety-catch is on 'safe' before we leave the aircraft."

The plane landed and the officer went to chat with the pilot while the soldiers gathered at the side of the airport. Five vehicles were parked on the roadside and the soldiers started boarding them. As far as the officer was concerned, everything had happened as planned.

He boarded the first truck and looked at the driver.

"Ningerum," he told the driver. The driver nodded and the convoy started along the Kiunga-Tabubil highway.

The officer was very quiet as they drove along the highway and the driver, who was of stocky built with flat feet, did not even bother to break the silence. He seemed to understand why the man sitting next to him was so quiet. The officer indeed had a lot to think about. He recalled the preparatory stage of the operation back at the barracks.

Two weeks earlier, the operations officer had called him to his office and had briefed him. They had gone over the map of the border in detail. The operations officer had briefed him on what he could expect during the operation. They had put him on a Nomad aircraft for a reconnaissance flight over the border after the briefing. After the reconnaissance flight, he had started training his platoon in preparation for the operation, making sure that every individual soldier was physically fit. He had issued his orders to his troops and a lot of questions had been asked. He had managed to answer a few. One soldier had asked, "Sir, I am from the Western Province and I do not want to engage in any shooting with the rebels."

"I understand your point but we have a duty to do whether we like it or not," he had answered. Another soldier had asked.

"Sir, I am a Christian and killing is a sin, I do not want to kill but I have to kill to defend myself, what must I do?"

"What denomination do you belong to?" he had asked the soldier. "Catholic," replied the soldier.

"Well, my advice is to kill first and when we come back, go straight to a priest and beg him to beg God to beg your sin out of you," he had told the soldier. Everybody had laughed but the soldier had brought out a conflict which even the officer had.

The driver, after driving for about two hours, finally decided to break the silence by offering betelnut to the officer. The officer only looked at him and said,

"You Highlanders don't grow buai in the highlands, but yet you are great

chewers." The driver looked at him and asked jokingly, happy that he had finally achieved a conversation with this quiet man,

"How did you know that I am from the Highlands? The local people here think that I am from inland Madang."

"Your foot gave your identity away," replied the officer pointing at the driver's left foot.

"My foot?" asked the driver curiously.

"Yes, your foot and as a matter of fact, the Defence Force has just overcome its problem by ordering bigger boots with flat noses especially to accommodate your wantok's toes when they wear them. You know that the Highlands people have big legs compared to the Coastal people." The driver smiled and drove on, he could not think of another topic to discuss after he was cut short in his first attempt.

The truck ride was over. Now only God knew what was ahead. The soldiers advanced through the thick jungle, leap-frogging over each obstacle as they moved on. Each soldier moved cautiously with his weapon following every direction that his eyes went, as if it too were a part of his head.

The officer in particular was the busiest of all. His mind worked like a computer. What will he do if the enemy fires on his men? How many would die? The big people in Moresby have sent us to check the influx of refugees but they probably have never given a second thought to the risks involved. Perhaps that is what a soldier is for; somebody that the leaders can push around into dangerous locations while they sit back and enjoy life. It is the politicians who start conflicts and when fighting breaks out, politicians sit back in their Parliament while soldiers do the fighting. But when defeat is unavoidable, politicians are the first to flee to freedom. It has happened in other countries and it could happen here. The officer's thoughts were interrupted as the leading soldier signalled for him to come forward.

"The refugee camp is about a quarter of a mile ahead," the soldier said.

"Call everybody together. I will give

my orders in two minutes time," the officer said as he moved to the side of the track to check his map. After everybody had gathered, he pointed to a model of the refugee camp which had been constructed, and issued his orders.

"Sergeant, you get one section and occupy this high ground overlooking the camp," he said as his pointer pointed at the model. "Corporal, you get your section and move one hundred metres to the Western end of the camp and set up an ambush there. Try and apprehend those that may try to escape." The corporal nodded as he surveyed the model like everybody else. The platoon commander continued.

"I will enter the camp from the East with the other section, five minutes after your sections have established their positions." He looked around at the faces of his subordinates, trying to detect any doubt in them before he finally asked;

"Any questions?"

Everybody had understood the task given to him and the soldiers moved off into their respective little groups.

The refugee camp was situated at the foot of a small knoll. There was a possibility that armed members of the O.P.M. were in the camp and could cause trouble, so the soldiers had to enter the camp tactically.

When the soldiers were spotted a sudden roar of shouting followed as the refugees started running for cover. A few of the men in the camp ran away but had run straight into the ambush and were brought back into the camp by the ambushing soldiers. Those who had not tried to escape sat trembling in their huts and witnessed the soldiers aggressively running from cover to cover into the camp. The refugees slowly came out of their huts only after they were reassured over and over again that the soldiers were Papua New Guineans and not from the other side. The leader of the camp had a long discussion with the officer while the medical orderly moved around the camp treating the sick refugees.

The sun was about to kiss Mt. Fabulon on the head when the soldiers completed what they were

sent to do. The refugees had not created any problems as yet for the soldiers, but they certainly had for the country. But that was not the concern of the platoon. Their job was complete and the soldiers back tracked their route to Kiunga.

"Poor people," the officer thought to himself. "Why can't they be given independence? They are the victims of human error and greed," he concluded in his mind as he reached the top of the hill where the leading section had rested.

The officer sat quietly a few metres away from his troops as they rested, refusing to comment on the conversation that was recurring in his ears. His mind was not with him, for it was replaying his conversation with the camp leader who had told him about the terrible experiences of the refugees. Many of them had lost their families and other had been imprisoned or tortured. A couple of weeks earlier the people of the camps had had an armed clash with soldiers and this had caused them to flee for their safety.

It was breakfast time but the officer's stomach did not complain about its bankruptcy of food, for deep

within him he was full of sorrow and sympathy for the people he had just visited. As he replayed the faces of the refugees in his mind, he could see hope and desperation in their eyes. It had started to rain but what poured down his cheeks had a temperature different from that of the rain.

"Well," the officer murmured to himself, "I wish I could do something to help you but I can't."

The aircraft was waiting when they arrived at Kiunga airport. The pilot threw the day's newspaper to the officer as they flew over the great Papua New Guinea snake again. The headline on the front page was; "ANOTHER INFLUX OF REFUGEES AT OUR SOUTHERN BORDER." The Foreign Affairs Minister's news release was that the government was negotiating to repatriate the refugees back to their own country.

"Well mister Minister, I hope you are doing the right thing," the officer murmured to himself as he continued reading.

The plane was now fifteen miles from Jackson's airport and had dropped altitude. With a sigh, the officer looked out the window and said, "Moresby, here I come". ☘



Illustrated by Sibona Buna

NOVEL EXCERPTS

Ambarep Taiakali

by Daniel Kumbon

Prologue

My father came in one evening with a worried look on his face. He seemed not to devour his kaukau properly and was munching one bite of his food for a long time before swallowing. He was pondering something. My mother sat opposite him on the woman's side of the main living room. My young baby brother at her bosom. My sister sat beside her unconcerned.

Darkness was fast setting over the village. The house became dark inside, only the embers of the glowing fire indicated there were people inside, and my father munched on his kaukau.

After what seemed a long time, my father blurted out. "We have been instructed by the kiap to send all boys and girls of Ipan's age to a place called school. A man called a teacher will be coming to teach them new things. If we intentionally hold back any boys and girls who should be in school, the parents will go to jail. Ipan will have to go to school."

"Aha... aa.a who? You go and ask your sister to go to that school. I am definitely not going," I shouted back at my father confused.

"This is for your own good, for one day you will be a doctor boy, a policeman, or a kiap yourself," he said wisely and continued: "If you don't go to school now, you will be a manki masta for somebody else and carry their shoes like they do for the kiap. Do you want to do that?" he challenged me. "If you refuse you won't stay in my home," he concluded firmly.

I knew my father to be a serious man. He never talked long but applied physical punishment suddenly. My mother nodded in agreement to what he said. She usually helped me when my father tried to beat me, but this time she felt that what father had said was important. Besides, she probably did not want her man to go to jail,

for jail, or haus kalabus as it was commonly called, was feared by most men. Policemen there acted as if they were blood brothers to the kiap. They beat people ruthlessly for simple causes like laughing when the kiap was talking. And each beating was always accompanied by that infamous insult, "you bloody bush kanaka, nogat het."

My father won. I went to school. On the one hand I had to prevent my poor father from bearing the consequence, but on the other hand I had very mixed feelings about what I would do or learn at this place called school.

Chapter One

It was one of those mornings I hated so much. Warmth left me in one big shiver. Chilling mountain air bit deep into my diety skin, causing a thousand goose pimples. Atmospheric mist blanketed the valley. Everywhere I heard the drip-drip of heavy dew-drops falling onto the dry leaves below. On this bitter cold morning I was going to look after the family pigs in the bush.

"Look after them well, my son," father had told me as he prepared a burning bundle of dried bark for me to take into the bush. He explained "A man is no man unless he has pigs in his house. You will find pigs to be the basis of your life." My ears were listening but I went about preparing the things I would need in the bush that morning. I strung my bow and arrows. In the meantime my mother untied the pigs from the pig pens.

"Aha...aw...ooo, Aha...a aw...oo. Korkrrr... aeini aeini aeini." Mother's clear voice rang out amidst the early morning bird calls. She repeated this verse over and over as she helped me take the pigs to the Kimbalam Marshlands. To this verse, our pigs grunted stupidly and followed closely at her heels.

With a bundle of burning bark in one hand, the bow and arrows in the other and a small stringbag with two pieces of kaukau hanging

across my back, I took up the rear. Occasionally I gave a passionate kick to urge along any pig that strayed from the procession to nibble at a young tender shoot.

I made no attempt to wipe away the watery mucus that flowed down my nose. Children were all like that in the village.

As we marched in file and to take my mind off the cold my thoughts started to wander. I recalled that one of my parents had helped me take the pigs out every morning. Never before had my mind registered what the words meant that my mother used to take the pigs to the Kimbalam Marshlands. Certainly words had magical powers if a stubborn pig did follow a person. When I wanted to take a pig somewhere, I had to hold onto a rope tied to the foreleg and urge it along. The words were not in my known language. "I must ask my mother." I said to myself.

"Mum" I said blowing puffs of steam into the fog.

I saw her turn her head in my direction with an uncertain glance.

"Anything wrong back there?"

"No mum but what does that strange 'talk' you are making mean?"

"Anything wrong with it?" my mother retorted.

"No! but what does the language you are using to call the pigs mean? Is it in the Mendi language?"

"Silly boy. Can you not see that I am calling the pigs and that is what it means. Now stop that nonsense and make sure the pigs do not go astray."

Obviously mother was cold and she did not want to waste time dealing with childish queries. She turned her head away from me and continued to lead the pigs signalling with the strange language:

"Ahao...aw...oooAha...aw...oooo Korkrrr...aeini aeini aeinii." The pigs gave a responsive grunt and followed mother down the path.

My question remained unanswered as we arrived at the Kimbalam Marsh lands. Presently the pigs trotted off into the bush

NOVEL EXCERPTS

where they would feed on worms, snails, lizards and grass. That's all they would get until the evening when my mother fed the pigs one kilogram of kaukau. How terrible the noise the pigs made when it was feeding time. Mum always placed the bag of kaukau in the middle of the pig pen. No babies were allowed near the pens. These prized animals just might mistake a human hand for a piece of kaukau.

My mother turned to me after settling the pigs and said, "I will come and fetch you and the pigs in the afternoon. Make sure to check on every pig in the bush regularly. They might wander off into Pao territory. These Pao people are thieves." Then she left to go back to

this," he had said. We must demand compensation now. I mean now!" And he rattled his bows and arrows.

"Yes" some men shouted in chorus. "If we do not do anything now those Paos will look down on us. We must act now!"

Everybody contributed hot talk like that. Surely something was bound to happen but the opposite happened.

Amben spoke: "Gentlemen, I am sure my pig was killed by a Pao clansman. It could have been eaten if it was a small pig. I am equally as angry as you are. But I do not want us to do anything further than go into the Pao territory and bring back my pig to eat."

were there. Luckily the pig had been found early enough so it had not decomposed.

I shivered off the possibility of Amben's ill-luck and said resolutely, "Nobody will steal my pigs. I will shoot any person who comes to steal my pigs." I felt my hands tighten on my small bow and arrows. Suddenly I realised I was alone and cold.

I stood my bow and arrows against a dead tree stump and laid the bag with kaukau beside it. I collected a big heap of dried twigs and leaves and made a fire. The fire did not catch up at first but as the smoke dried the leaves, the fire



Illustrated by L.P. Wamiri

our own warm house.

"I will mother," I said and proceeded to make a fire thinking how a few weeks ago Amben's pig had been found dead near a Pao man's garden. Two arrow wounds had been discovered in the chest. A huge pool of sticky blood was found in the belly. I remembered how Komaip, a huge man with a big nose and a fast talker had nearly manipulated Amberep clansmen into fighting.

"Those little Pao devil's sons cannot violate our property like

"Is that all you have to say, Amben? What crap. Vengeance must be sought for vengeance. We must demand compensation from the Paos," shouted the venerable old Komaip.

These days when people cast their eyes on anyone's property, that is a reason to fight. I don't want that!" exclaimed Amben.

The Ambarep clansmen dispersed. Some went to bring back the carcass to Kondo where the pig was butchered and the pork distributed among the men that

caught up quickly. I warmed myself, gazing at the grey smoke rising up a short distance to mingle with the mist.

In the distance I heard my mother's familiar verse again coming closer and closer. "Aha..aw...ooooo Aha..aw...oooo Korkrrr aeiniiii aeinii" I judged from the voice that it was Kapit's mother bringing her pigs to the Kimbalan Marshlands. I knew Kapit was coming and the two of us would spend the day together.

My question still lingered in the air as I listened for Kapit to arrive. Why

NOVEL EXCERPTS

did every woman know the verse to get the pigs to follow her? What do the words mean? Where did the words come from? Certainly the words were not in our tokples. "I will ask my father. He knows a lot of things. These stubborn women know nothing." I said to myself.

Kapit and I had great fun in the Marshlands once the sun warmed the day. We didn't loose one pig despite our games which let the pigs roam freely.

"The words in the verse have no real meaning. It is only a 'made up' means of communicating with the pigs." That evening my father finally answered my question about the women's chant. He said, "Son you too will learn these words in time." But that was not enough of an explanation for me.

"But father who started it?" I asked.

My father lit his thick short roll of bruse and sucked a few mouthfuls of the rich bitter smoke and exhaled. He let a few seconds pass and then said, "Don't let your mind be troubled. In time you will learn the words and many more things. Son, at this time, concentrate only on tending the pigs, collecting firewood and hunting birds. Perhaps I will tell you a story now to ease your mind."

"Yes father! Yes!" I said gleefully and ran across to his side of the hut and hugged him around the neck. There was nothing I enjoyed more, than listening to stories. We children used to lie on the dirt floor like heaps of kaukau while the elders spoke.

Because I had been so curious

about the song of the pigs and the history of this verse, my father carefully chose a story to begin my education on my own history.

"This story is a sacred myth," he began. "It is the story of how the Ambarep Tribe came into existence."

"In all this universe there was one superior being whose name was NIKE (sun). He created everything. But he created the flying fox last and admired the jaws so much that he said: 'I will create one more being like that of the flying fox. And so, 'man' was created and placed at a place called 'ENJA KAM'. Man, in his bid to populate the earth, gave birth to MANDI and KANDEPE."

"Man could control everything in the earth except water. To help man control water, NIKE placed two angelic beings named ELEAPE and KELEAPE at the point where all the rivers of the world met. They were instructed by NIKE to make a huge log fire. The intensive heat given off by that fire controlled the waters. They continued to flow but were contained in the land. The clouds in the sky became the smoke from this fire."

"The descendants of KANDEPE are the six major tribes in the Mariant Basin. KANDEPE migrated to our valley and two of his off-spring were KORETEP and AMBAREP. These two brothers settled in the KAUPU area and cultivated taro. They were taro eaters."

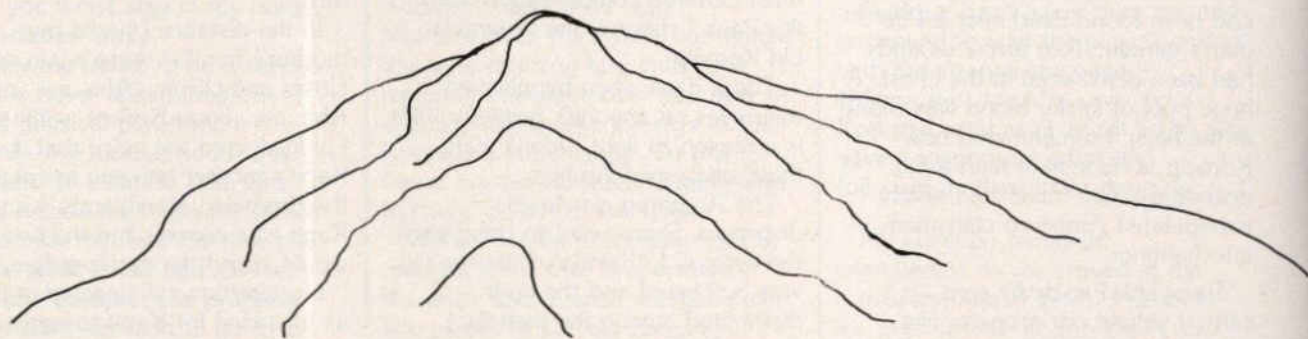
I thought of Kapit's mother who is from KAUPU. When they came to KONDO they always brought some taro to distribute to us. In fact KAUPU is still the place where taro is cultivated to a large extent.

My father continued the story: "Soon the two brothers multiplied in large numbers. They needed more land. So one day they set out further to the northwest and began to climb APAUKU MANDAKA. From the pinnacle of one of the ridges they claimed the virgin land that they beheld with their eyes for themselves. The land stretched north to the base of LUNGU KANA, south to MT. ANDOM and north-west to YURIPAKA. Their off-spring began to populate this valley. And here we are now." My father concluded the story and got up to go to the 'houseman'.

It was now late into the night, and I was too tired to follow him so I lay in a corner of the main living room. While there my mind moved to the top of APAUKU MANADAK. I had climbed it recently with Kapit, Paki, Bali and other friends. We had sung a song like this one about KONDO boys growing up and girls coming to our house:

Laip taip tualao enala pao o
kaliama
Wanaku yakane kambale mandiu
andaka ipa.

I lay thinking into the night. Did my ancestors also sing on that mountain? Was it they who had started the verse to communicate with pigs? In the far off distance I could hear the huge Lai River crashing against boulders as it made its way to the place where all the rivers go. I yawned once, then twice. Quite soon I was snoring where I lay. ☹



NOVEL EXCERPTS

WE ARE TUKES by Jack Lahui

It was not very often that the Tukes drank beer. Karoho and Kokoro had little money to spare. Since the formation of the band two years ago, they had had only two opportunities for drinks.

Even then the drinks were provided by friends. The first was during an end-of-the-season village league social and the second was during the birthday party for a girl who claimed to have turned twenty-one. For reasons unknown to Kokoro, she was a girl Karoho fancied from a distance. So the drinking was an excuse for Karoho to get within talking distance. But nothing resulted from that initiative.

Karoho, sitting on his bed in the dark of his bedroom, thought and thought. The problem was getting the carton of beer through the living room without raising Baru's suspicions. He realised the great odds with so many relatives seated in the outer room, in particular brother Pune and uncle Vagi. Their immediate view was none other than the entrance to his own room. And there was the more risky problem of the ever pressing, milling relatives inside, outside and down on the landing. One way was to wait until the crowd had eased a bit, but then that might mean keeping in his room until it was too late. Karoho gradually grew tired of sitting and letting time pass, so he rose and opened the door. He had to talk to Kokoro and tell him of a plan.

The layout of the Baru residence was such that Karoho's room formed one wing but with no windows facing the main verandah. The only windows in Karoho's room were on the eastern side ends. They were the push-out type with no meshing. There was an immediate drop from the lower window frame of about seven feet to the sand below with no baulkway of scaffolding.

Karoho found Kokoro and gave his instructions. "I will return to my

room while you loiter and bide time hereabouts near the landing. I will find an old rice bag, place the carton in it, tie it to a rope, and lower the bag down to you. You know what I mean?" Karoho tried out a low drawn whistle to use as the signal and when Kokoro had no more questions, he assumed 'all systems go'.

After finding a rice bag, Karoho entered his room and set to work, silently pushing the carton in to fit evenly. That complete, he pierced the two top ends and inserted a rolled end of his bed sheet and then bent out the window to study the movement of the crowds below. All seemed well so he sounded the low drawn whistle. Moments after, Kokoro silently materialised out of the dark and stood directly below the window, straining his eyes upward as Karoho spoke "Ready Tukes?"

"Yes, I'm ready. You?"

"Here it comes and nurse it good," said Karoho.

Kokoro received the carton and quickly undid the end of the sheet and then made for the darker area away from the glare of Coleman lamps. Moments later he became one and the same with the street crowd.

Karoho found Kokoro in the open street some twenty minutes later and the two left in the direction of the unfenced school beach front, some hundred metres short of the boundary to the old village cemetery. Both were in a good mood for talking. They passed through the village Primary School yard in silence "You didn't think we'd make it, did you?" asked Karoho to break the silence.

"We could've done this hours ago," said Kokoro.

But? You were the hardest person to find this afternoon and why did you have to fight?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Tukes," Karoho laughed. "I needed a good exercise." "Say, what was that fight over?"

"I don't know exactly. All I know is that Merbo's sister, Kaia, was trying to humbug with our nakimi

Morea but Lucy found her out."

"My word that's not right Tukes. Morea is now married to our sister Lucy. What does Kaia want anyway?"

"Yes, shame on her. What do they all want? My main reason was to give Merabo a good knockout," Karoho said bitterly and he demonstrated with a balled right fist and melodious laugh.

From accounts of the fight, Karoho had not gotten a chance to even touch Merabo, although his vicious heckling was of such intensity, it would have tired any man of average build. It was unfortunate for Karoho that the intervening man was none other than the solidly built, eighteen stone, Kohu Gaudi of Gunina clan. Karoho was dwarfed by the goliath Kohu. Kohu felt the need for peace so held Karoho in an armlock until the worst of the struggling was over, and then led him home.

Karoho and Kokoro reached the beachfront and found a grassy spot beside a beached canoe. Kokoro unfurled the top of the carton, revealing a neat row of bottles. He reached for one and tried to open it with his teeth. He had it open with little effort and passed it to Karoho, while he collected another for himself. Moments later he held his own towards Karoho in the manner of a good toast. "Very good cheers to you my Tukes bro," cracked the enlivened Kokoro.

"Cheers to you Tuke. Good luck to you my bro forever," toasted Karoho in return.

"Merry Christmas to you which is one month away," replied Kokoro. They started to drink noisily and voraciously. Their day long thirsts made it easy for them to go through their first bottle. They then had their second. After drinking two bottles each, the earlier quiet of their settling in now took a turn for noise. Already Kokoro was narrowing in on the subject of genealogies and family ties. Now it was Karoho's turn.

"You see Tukes, my father is

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Baru Mataio. You know he's deacon, very important. He's one of the powers in the village. He's also one of the family heads in our Botai number one clan of Porebada. My grandfather was known as Mataio Vaburi and my great grandfather was also called Baru but this other name was Karoho, my name sake. He was Baru the terrible, and for that they gave him the name Karoho. My great aunt was Kone Baru who, my mother told me, married your great grandfather Kauna Gau or somebody by that name, and he begat your grandfather who in turn begat your mother Manoka."

"Very clever my bro," Kokoro said surprised.

"Yes Tuke. So what I mean is that you are really my brother properly."

"Momokani Tuke! You are sure that is the way we were born?"

"Honest,"

"But I did not know."

"Didn't you ask your mother or father?"

"Put it here my brother. We are brothers."

They shook hands.

"No wonder my father came to your house once for the dava kara hebouna many months ago. I do remember that Tuke. But today they just paid the Bride Price eh? Tuke, you are very lucky and rich."

"You think so? But no. No. I think you are wrong. I think my father Baru is wrong in calling many relatives and friends. I know tomorrow they will come and collect everything, the toeas and moni. I fear I may not get the bus I marked," said Karoho sadly.

The mention of a bus sounded most interesting to Kokoro. "A bus hey? Like the one we climbed into some moons ago. That was a long long time ago. Somebody has probably bought it finish."

"Then I will get another. If father does not get it, I'm going to get it some way. You know that."

"No Tukes. It's alright for small cars but buses, no they are like houses. You cannot easily hide

them in bushes. By the way, you ought to be thinking of finding a partner rather than a bus."

"A partner? Definitely not. I'm still a boy. I've still got many years to go. I'm only twenty now. I know one thing though. When you marry, you become a slave to woman. I've seen it. I'm not joking."

"But Tuke, what I'm saying is that you will eventually get married. You must get ready while you have some money. And of course when you are ready, tell me so that we can make a muramura to hook her very quickly," said Kokoro, boastfully.

"Ah ha, I don't think I'll need any help in that. I've got a plan. As soon as I'm ready, I will tell bubu Virobo to let me try the most powerful muramura she has! With that Karoho reached for his third bottle and passed one over to Kokoro.

"This is a very beautiful night for animase, honestly. Very quiet and not a sound coming this way. But keep your voice down. This is a school yard. We should have brought the other carton too."

"Shutup. Leave it for tomorrow, Tukes," Kororo said as he reached for a fourth beer. He was trying to get his note for the start of a song. Kokoro started singing the song the two had composed for the Band, "Tukes of Porebada."

Ihareha ogogami. Emai ore a binai. Mai hemaraimi ida anemu, a lolo isimu Tukes."

The song ran into a second stanza with a slight variation which went

"Tukes of Pore, lalo namo, hetura dainai, Emai ore a binai mai mainomai ida anemu, a lolo isimu Tukes.

The last stanza was an extended version of the second stanza, worded as follows:

"Tukes memero of Porebada, ihareha, ogogami, Emai ore a binai, mai lalo namo ida a anemu, a lolo isimu tuke. A lolo isumu hosana!

Mr. Taravatu Bodibo, the deputy headmaster of Porebada Primary School heard singing from his study

in his staff residence while finishing off Monday's lessons. Mr. Bodibo had just completed the write up and was preparing to retire for the night. He usually remained in the school over weekends. It was his fashion to ensure that no strangers were on the school grounds. The Headmaster often entrusted this to him whenever he himself went away. The singing sounded too close to neglect. Mr. Bodibo put out the Coleman and lit the storm lamp. He took it into the bedroom where his family, his wife and two children, lay fast asleep.

Outside the duo were repeating the last stanza. Bodibo, who had taught two years in Porebada, knew the song well but could not identify the singers. It was a very popular song, one that the village youths had on their lips everywhere they went. Mr. Bodibo stood on his verandah to accustom his eyes to the sudden darkness he had created for himself, and for sometime tried to figure out who owned the voices. When Karoho and Kokoro reached the finale, Mr. Bodibo ascertained the direction and the distance of the singers. Bodibo felt duty bound to make the celebrants establish their business.

He set off in the direction of the singing. The school area was cast in the pre-moonrise darkness. The heavens were star-cast and lit the way ahead. After some twenty metres, Mr. Bodibo noticed the flicker of a naked flame as a match was struck and held ready before a face. The glowing embers of a lit cigarette appeared as the flame went out.

A voice shattered the silence with a shout of 'Smahal' Mr. Bodibo was now five metres away and an audience for the dark forms ahead. There was an exchange by the Tukes followed by a clash of bottles. Mr. Bodibo spoke: "Hey, Dahaka-----"

Karoho dropped the newly lit cigarette, turned, and shot up as he saw the dark wide figure approaching. He made a hasty grab at the carton but snatched only two bottles while Kokoro shot up with a

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drink in his hand, and went off, already in full flight.

"What do you villagers think you are doing here disturbing the peace!" shouted Bodibo behind the disappearing forms.

"Hey you! You! You!" Bodibo made as if in hot pursuit of the scurrying shadows, but then felt his leg. He stopped and looked at the spot where the two had sat. There was the displaced carton! He bent low and looked inside. He saw the glowing yellowish tops and the intactness of at least ten bottles of beer! As many as ten empty bottles were strewn about carelessly. He collected the empties and tried to fill the carton but found it four short. Bodibo carried the carton toward the main assembly ground. He could see from the village the distant glare of as many as five pressure lamps. He felt a little frightened, even though he had his earlier daring. He turned and carried the carton to his residence.

Karoho and Kokoro ran into the street at full speed, heavily panting from the strenuous sprint effort. Once within the outer curvature of the oval street, they settled down to recover but could not talk.

Karoho finally spoke. "Tukes can you guess who that was?"

"I dunno, could've been a vada tauna or an evil spirit. Remember the school is not far from the old cemetery. Or it could've been the Headmaster. Who knows? If he was the Headmaster, he would've carried a torch or something. I'm sure he was not an ordinary person. You know, perhaps we were sitting above some old grave. The end of the school was once a cemetery!"

"But the beer. Shall we return and collect it?"

"I'm afraid Tukes! I still feel my legs shivering. I don't dare!"

"We should have been more daring, like the way Homoka and Tara acted to Councillor Nohokau. The old councillor was returning from his garden at Taurama and saw Homoka in a coconut tree. It was a very hot day and the old man fancied a drink. The only chance he

thought possible was to chase the youngsters away and then help himself to what they gathered. Homoka, who was up in the tree, saw the intention of the old man. By then he was near and was in a rage. Homoka climbed down quickly to tell Tara of his observations. The whole thing did not happen the way the old man expected. Homoka and Tara stayed put and drank as if the old man did not exist. Councillor Nohokau pelted the two with all the merciless Motuan curses he could think of, calling them thieves, crooks, trash, and dogs. He emptied his mind and left, warning them of the consequences of their stubbornness in later years.

"This is not funny. Whoever that was, a spirit, a vada tauna, or the headmaster, is going to have a good night with those ten beers."

"Forget it Tukes. We mustn't think too much about it. I have the last beer still in my room. We must select a better place next time."

"Oh well," said Kokoro. "I managed to collect two bottles in our hasty retreat."

The wide sandy windswept street of Porebada is one which experiences a peak traffic hour between seven p.m. and midnight. At weekends the traffic goes on into the late hours, especially when the moon is full. It is then that the young people start to roam, sing, and walk the full length of the oval shaped street. By midnight a few daring youths remain to keep the vigil. After midnight the street is left to the ghosts and the dogs to patrol until the next sunrise.

For this Saturday night, the normal pattern had been broken. There was some traffic of late night socialising from aivara makers in different parts of the village. With the shift of the Lahara into a Mirigini from the Kokoro mountains, there were families taking full advantage of the cool inland breeze. Karoho and Kokoro had finished their beer and found themselves in the quiet mood of the village. They too rose and made for their separate houses. It was well past midnight. The smell of Sunday was already in the late night air. ☁



Illustrated by L.P. Warrin

NOVEL EXCERPTS

NEPATAE

by Timil Lyakin

At last the time had come! The moon was full and had reached the peak of its life. In about five days its power over the earth would gradually decline until it would completely vanish. Possums caught at this time of the harvesting moon were fat and full of meat. To build up the meat and fat, these animals had to feed on the young pandanus nuts which were far greater in value than the possums themselves.

Utterly lonely and nigh heartbroken, Nepatae set off to the forest alone. Many of the village boys and men had already gone to the forest. Some had gone hunting, others to clear away the undergrowth from the foot of the pandanus trees. This was done to keep away the possums. Some of Nepatae's playmates had urged him to accompany them but he had refused, saying he had a head-ache. His all time favourite, Pilyo, had repeatedly begged him to accompany him but he had also refused him. Seeing that his begging and pleading were of no use, Pilyo had left for the forest just at the break of dawn. All the days while the others were going in pairs or in groups of three or more, Pilyo had been waiting for his friend, hoping with all his heart that Nepatae would be free from his make-believe sickness.

"All right," Pilyo had said while leaving. "I shall not forget you if I find anything in the forest. And also, I shall do my utmost to clear the undergrowth from your pandanus trees."

"Thank you, Kaimi," Nepatae had replied. "But don't waste too much of your time over mine."

"Do not talk rubbish!" the other had blurted. "You know very well that we are inseparable brothers..."

"Why? Of course!"

"That means anything you own is mine and vice versa, anything I own is yours..."

"So?" Nepatae had said, quite absent-mindedly.

"So why do you say that I should not waste too much time over your pandanus trees?"

"Well, I guess you are right," Nepatae had said in response but his inseparable friend had already left.

Nepatae walked out of the man-house and down the path to his father's family house. As he had expected, timbers were flung across the door. He battled over whether he should go in or not. No! He had better not, he decided at last. It seemed he was a stranger to the house. The strange feeling crept in again. This feeling — that he was a stranger in his own house — had crept into his inner-most being several harvesting moons ago when his father had divided his land and other properties among his brothers, his own two brothers and the other three brothers by his father's first wife. He had been given the least productive garden lands and the very old, half-drying pandanus trees. It was unusual, he had thought, for his father to give him the least attention, particularly when he was the first born of his mother who was his second wife. Surprisingly, his father had never shown any indication of favour for his younger brothers, Nepatae's own two brothers by his own mother. As for his other three brothers by his father's first wife, Nepatae felt he was a stranger to them.

When his father had treated him thus — paying him very little or no attention at all — he had lacked the courage to complain. He had a natural right to complain but instinct had warned him against this. He had an inner feeling that he was unwanted in his father's household.

Nepatae's father was one of the few recognized and influential Tee agents of his tribe. But unlike other boys of his tribe, Nepatae had never tried to take advantage of his father. During Tee Ceremonies when his father's pigs were tethered to long rows of stakes, his brothers had the task of counting them and giving them out to the recipients.

Despite his father's negligence,

Nepatae was already travelling the path of fame and fortune. He never needed his father's help. Unlike the village young men in his peer group, Nepatae had already taken part in burial feasts and pig killings. He had killed a fat pig whose white fat, when cooked and severed, reflected the sun's rays and attracted the eyes of all the on-lookers who had taken part in the bride wealth payment. He had taken part in compensatory payments and in all other tribal activities. He was on the threshold of being an important Tee agent, a position which was very rare, a position won through perspiration, blisters and hard work. When the "Down Valley" Tee occurred, some of his pigs were eligible to be given a significant name in conjunction with higher level Tee cycles which had gone to the "Kopona" people in the Far East. His pig had gone through a chain of recognized Tee agents. Although he had never seen these Tee agents, he had gathered information from friends about who actually was responsible for which pig. He had heard from friends that most of his pigs were accumulated by the great Samboek Kiningi, and from his hands, the pigs had gone down to the Far East through important Tee agents.

All these achievements were due to Nepatae's beloved mother's perspiration and energy. In contrast to his father, his mother paid all her attention to Nepatae and to him only. She made sure that Nepatae's pigs were well fed and well looked after. It was of course, her obligatory duty to look after her young son's pigs and other properties, which she did, but the treatment she gave to Nepatae and his pigs as well as any other properties was unique. If she had thrown five handfuls of tubers to her younger sons' pig stalls, then she would throw ten handfuls to Nepatae's pig stalls. When Nepatae was out hunting and if the family ate pork or any other food stuff of significant value, then she would put her whole share on top of Nepatae's and she alone would keep it. In the

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morning when he returned, she would give the food and Nepatae would guess what had happened. He would eat only a bit and throw the rest to his mother saying,

"Woman! I am not your baby any more. If I am out when the family eats such food, you must always eat my share."

His mother had always said, "Yes my son." But in fact she had not, on a single occasion, eaten her son's share which was always given to her to keep. All she had done was to put her whole share on top of Nepatae's.

Had it not been for Nepatae's sister, Yombonwan, the third born, his mother would long ago have suffered to death looking after her son's pigs and her own.

Yombonwan had indeed been a blessing to her. When she grew up she had taken half of her mother's responsibilities. As she was the sole female sibling by Nepatae's mother, she was given everybody's attention. Nepatae's father's first wife had a daughter too, as young as Yombonwan. All six brothers did everything within their capacity to comfort their sisters regardless of which mother had borne them. There were rivalries between the brothers themselves but every brother was equally fond of the two sisters by different mothers.

The two sisters-by different mothers, however, loved Nepatae more than they loved their other brothers. Nepatae made sure that both girls were equally made happy. When he was severing pork or possum meat, he would hold the two biggest pieces in either hand and would call the girls' names. The girls would reach for Nepatae's outstretched hands and get their shares.

The other brothers would sometimes shout at the sisters, particularly when it was their turn to sever pork or possum meat, or other food like pandanus nuts. When the sisters excitedly claimed a bone or another preliminary part loved by children and girls, the brothers would shout at them to shut up and calm down.

But Nepatae's father had never said anything openly against him in spite of his queer actions towards him. In his life time Nepatae had never discussed family affairs and problems with his father. They were more like strangers to each other than like father and son. It was also unusual that for example his father would habitually call him "Hey boy" or "You there" while calling the other boys by their names.

Since a small boy, Nepatae had felt a queerness evolving between him and his family; he had experienced a feeling that he was unwanted. He had, however, complained not even a single once about the queerness. Instinct, or something more than instinct, kept telling him that he had no right to complain against this queerness. He had moulded himself into what he was with his own two feet. Despite his father's negligence, he had shown the community that he was one of the few who had the strength, potential and capability to succeed the prominent and influential leaders of the tribe.

Nepatae had two qualities which impressed his tribe more than the pigs he owned and slaughtered, or any other community activities he took part in. Firstly, he never showed indications of self-assertion or self-importance in all his deeds. He was always willing to accept advice from his elders. When people asked him for help, say, in gardening or any other activities, he always found it extremely hard to be negative. He particularly loved the old people of his tribe. One elder, a man whose status was almost equivalent to that of Samboek Kiningi, described him at a tribal gathering thus: "Nepatae certainly proves to be a man whose soul might be turned wrong side outwards without discovering a blemish." But Nepatae took no advantage of this remark which was quite unusual to be made about a boy his age.

His second quality which won him fame and respect was his enormous

physical strength and war mentality. His fighting skill and spirit in battles were unusual for a young man of his age, and for the son of a man such as his father. He was a young man who had a complete monopoly on fighting mentality and physical talents for fighting. During battles he planned counter-attacks, secret pathways, how to manoeuvre the enemy onto his lands, where to build his fortress, and all other plannings. Despite his age, his tribesmen had learnt to obey him and his orders. Most of his plans never failed. Many young warriors struggled to fight first by his side, because if they did, the fear of death and spear wounds would vanish in mid air. Some young warriors with evil hearts, including one or two of his brothers, were filled with envy but they had no choice. They had to obey him because the bulk of the tribesmen and warriors was always at his command.

Nepatae was a first class shot with spears as well as with a bow and arrows. In battles he hated missing his targets. When he pulled the bow string or raised his spear, you'd be sure to see an enemy fall, either dead or fatally wounded.

Unlike any other warriors of Nepatae's calibre, he fought differently. In most battles when he fought with fury, he never showed the slightest hint of the fury burning him. He would pass his orders and plans to his warriors through a selected group of elders and he would remain calm. He would let the other young and old warriors fight. He would just stand behind like a coward, resting his spears on his shoulders and sliding his bow and arrows across his back. He would seem to enjoy the battle scene like a coward would. The warriors of the allied tribes and spectators would, quite naturally, mistake him for a coward, ready to give somebody a spear when demanded. Only a few trusted friends would perhaps guess what was going on in his mind. Nepatae would watch the progress of the

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battle with deep interest with his sharp-witted eyes and mind. When he was acting thus, only a few of his intimate friends would know that he was actually watching his enemy's movements, particularly to catch a glimpse of a particular person he wanted dead. He would watch this particular target like an eagle would watch a rat. When his particular target came into full view, he would, in a long stride, run towards the enemy, heedless of the arrows whizzing past him, avoiding death by split-seconds. By the time he sped back, his target had fallen dead because he had fired his arrow with deadly accuracy, and more importantly, with uncontrollable fury.

The enemy would be thunder-struck at who actually had driven the arrow or spear home, and that was exactly what Nepatae wanted. In contrast to other warriors of his age, Nepatae made it clear that he deserved no praises nor respect for his war mentality. He seriously told his elders and warriors that it was his, and everybody else's, obligatory duty to protect the women and children of his tribe and to avenge the death of any of his tribesmen. When he said this, his tribesmen paid him more respect and even began to take him as a leader. He was a war hero. Had it not been for his strict set of principles which kept him from being exposed to the world and confined knowledge of him only to his own tribe, his name would long have been common-knowledge at family fire places, man-house fire places, or tribal gatherings. The neighbouring hostile enemy tribes knew that an incomparable first-class shot existed in the Yaupa tribe but who it was, they had no idea. Some warriors suspected Nepatae but many said that Nepatae, the son of Nambuli, was an easy-going weakling and a coward. Some described him as a useless wreck and a spear carrier for the actual warriors of the Yaupu tribe.

In his own tribe Nepatae was known as an easy-going baby-like

man — but at battles, when overcome with fury, he set his enormous strength loose and would be like a heated young wild bamboo about to explode, producing nerve-shattering thunder.

Despite the love, admiration and respect shown by his tribesmen, Nepatae had a growing fear that he was a stranger to the tribe. He felt he was neglected by his father and brothers. His brothers' negligence, he thought, could be justifiable — young people are young and competitive. He could describe this as mere jealousy, which is quite a common thing in many families.

What he got from his father, he felt, was not to his heart's content. He had battled against mental disturbances and had tried to remain normal like any other tribesman but something from deep within his heart had warned him that the worst was yet to come. The fear that the worst was yet to come, had been a preoccupation since his father divided his land and property several harvesting moons ago. Nepatae was surprised with what his father had given him, yet he hadn't shown the slightest indication of anger. Neither had he the course to complain. However, from then on, an utter loneliness had settled on him.

Pilyo, Nepatae's inseparable brother, belonged to another patrilineal clan. He realized Nepatae's loneliness and mental disturbance and had repeatedly asked what was wrong. Some of Nepatae's close friends and elders had noted his growing loneliness and repeatedly asked after his health. In response, all he had to say was, "I am all right". Some of the elders, particularly the oldest men and women of the tribe, might perhaps have known what was wrong with him.

But Nepatae's beloved mother knew everything. She knew exactly what her son was lacking but she did not want to show any womanly feelings that would embarrass her son. She always remained calm and normal in front of her son. However, at times, when she could

not control her emotional upset, she would weep. She was deeply concerned with what fate had destined for her son's future. Her son's future looked gloomy at times. More over, it seemed there was no way out. Her only means of hope and comfort was what THE MAN had said. THE MAN had said that HIS HEART WOULD YEARN FOR HIM. But would everything turn out positive? What if....? What if....? She was repeatedly caught in the middle of nowhere. Day and night her poor mind was caught in all kinds of entanglements in connection with her son. She distinctly knew that her son was mentally disturbed and emotionally upset. Her son, in turn, never knew that her suffering was double what he was suffering.

Yes he was a stranger, Nepatae thought, as he turned right and walked down the path leading to the huge family garden. The sun was high over his head. The sky was a beautiful clear blue. It was completely free of any white or grey speck. What was beyond the blue sky, he thought. This was a fantasy question he repeatedly asked during his childhood but which kept creeping into his mind. He hurried down the pathway in the midst of the savannah grassland until at last he reached the little bridge over the big ditch fortifying the entire garden from pigs. He crossed the bridge in two strides and as he was about to jump over the little embankment, he heard. Alas, the worst he had been waiting for, had at last come. He could not believe his ears. Surely what he heard and saw in the garden was not real?

A quarrel was going on. Nepatae dashed to a nearby bush and hid himself. He strained his ears to listen to his two mothers quarreling. There were a good number of spectators, particularly women and girls, including Nepatae's two sisters who apparently remained neutral. Some had come to help Nepatae's sister and mother in the garden. Others had come from the nearby

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gardens, merely to watch the fighting women. Many of the spectators had tried to stop the two women, but seeing that they had already come to the point of no return, they gave up.

"All right my sister," Nepatae's mother was saying. "We shall settle this before the man (her husband) and the elders, who are here to witness the garden-land disruption. What is the use of us fighting?"

"Shut up!" Nepatae's father's first wife shouted. "This row of mounds is on my side of the border."

"It is a naked lie, woman. It was only during the last harvesting moon that I made this row of mounds. How can you say..."

"Shut up! You are only my waist downwards." Nepatae's father's first wife put more emphasis on the words "waist downwards". Then she added. "If you think you have made this row of mounds, then you must have made it for me because you are my servant. I am the first wife..."

"Did you say I am your servant?"

"Of course, you are my servant, are you not?"

"In what circumstances, pigs or gardens?"

"You may indeed have the fattest pigs or the most productive gardens but still I consider you as my servant."

"Just because you happen to be the first wife?"

"And also because you have no place in the family."

"You may be right when you say you are the first wife but you do not act like what you claim to be. The pigs you rear are always full of worms and the kaukau you grow is not worthy for pigs to eat, let alone human beings. When your performance is thus, are you not ashamed to say you are the first wife?"

"All I know is that you are my servant and my heart therefore is content."

"Woman", a male spectator asked Nepatae's father's first wife, "does it mean the gardens and the litter of piglets she owns, or looks after,

rather, (meaning all the big pigs belonging to Nepatae and his brothers as well as his mother) are yours? I mean, when you say that she is your servant because you are the first wife, all things she looks after are yours... Eeh?"

"Shut up! Just shut up and keep out of this," she blurted in response.

"If I were you," said Nepatae's mother, "I would be ashamed of this kind of behaviour. You are the first wife, all right, but all you came with and all you possess now is your big inside, so shut up. You are not worthy to quarrel with me...nor to call me your servant. Under no circumstances have I ever been at your command and never shall I be."

"Well, as I have said you are only m..."

"Hey! You two stupid women!" interrupting his first wife, Nepatae's father came by another pathway, opposite where he was hiding. "Shut up, you foolish women!"

"This wife of yours here," Nepatae's mother said pleadingly, "is acting as if she is the boss around here."

"Just what are you fighting for?" the husband demanded.

"This woman of yours," said his first wife, "is trying to claim this whole garden."

"You two stupid women are just trying to cause trouble," the husband said in anger.

"Here, we are fighting over this row of mounds," Nepatae's mother said, jumping onto one of the mounds. "Who's row is this?"

The husband looked to the right, then to the left, counting every row of mounds. Then he said, quite absent-mindedly: "Why, this row is yours."

No sooner had he spoken than his first wife started shouting at the top of her voice to the whole world. "All Yaupu men and women! Come and see this man and woman chopping my neck off!"

Her wailing was the kind that would attract warriors. It was the sing-song kind of women's wailing that would attract even the busiest man busy at work. Her sing-song wailing continued: "Why do my Yaupa men and women forsake

me? A...man ... and ... a woman ... are ... chopping my ... neck off... Please come and see!"

"Take it easy, woman," the husband said almost pleadingly.

"Eeh? What are you saying?" the wailing woman shouted. Then, all of a sudden, the wailing woman jumped on top of the mound on which Nepatae's mother was standing. Her jump was so sudden and unexpected that Nepatae's mother and all the spectators were taken aback. With out-stretched arms the wailing woman violently moved herself forward. Nepatae's mother was a split-second lucky. She pushed herself side-ways and down went the wailing woman. She fell head-long and heavily collapsed to the periphery of the mound. She lay sprawled in an awkward manner which compelled the male on-lookers to look away. By that time Nepatae's mother had sought protection and was hiding at the back of some of the male on-lookers.

The wailing woman rose to her feet and quickly ran towards the nearest row of stakes fortifying the huge family garden. She pulled a strong, heavy stake and holding it over her head with both hands, she ran back. She halted in front of the crowd and looked this way and that, trying to find the would-be victim.

"You are seeking trouble," the on-lookers shouted.

Heedless of what the onlookers were saying, she sped towards the crowd, still wailing. Her husband tried to block her way but she raised the heavy stake. The husband ducked, bending his body, thus, making way for the loose bar. His wife dashed towards the crowd, raising the stake. The crowd dispersed partially, just with looking at the way the stake was held. The wailing woman caught a glimpse of her foe and dashed towards her. But her foe, who was on the defensive, was ready. She pelted the charging and wailing woman with a stone. The charging woman gave a sharp cry, dropped the stake, and vigorously waved her hands. She had been a split-second lucky that the heavy stone had landed not on

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her face, as intended, but only on the outside of her left palm.

By that time most of the villagers had arrived. Some began asking questions excitedly.

"Woman", the husband said, "this is the reward for your stupidity. You have been wrong. What I have allocated to you and your sons is far beyond reasonable satisfaction."

The worst moment that Nepatae had feared arrived. Irritated by her husband and burning with pain and anger, the wailing woman shouted:

"Eeh? What do I hear? You will give this entire garden to this dog of a woman so that her bastard son can stay on one leg, will you? Eeh?"

Dead silence and bewilderment fell among the crowd. People started whispering to each other's ears. Some of the older men advised the husband to stop his spiteful wife. But what the husband said made the crowd even more surprised. "Woman," he said, "I am a man and what I have given you and your sons should be beyond your satisfaction and manageability. Besides woman, remember that I have other sons."

"No!" bellowed the wailing woman. "You will give this whole garden to this dog of a woman so that her BASTARD son will stand on one leg."

"Please," Nepatae's mother said crying. She had already come to the point of no return. "Leave my son out of this. Why do you have to call my son all sorts of names...? He has done you no evil. He has done good to both of us. Eeh?"

"What has happened to my mother," somebody shouted with a panting voice, running to the crowd, followed by two others. The wailing woman's sons surrounded their mother.

"Look at my hands," the woman said, now crying harder than before. "See what that dog of a woman has done to my hands."

"Come on!" shouted one of the brothers. "Go and do the same thing to her. Quick!"

"If you touch this woman, you will also touch us," the onlookers warned.

"You are our sons," said Nepatae's mother, crying. "You should stay out of this and remain neutral."

"Oh!" wailed the other woman. "See what has happened to my hands. See what that bastard's mother has done!"

"Shut up! Stop lying, you spiteful woman!" the two sisters blurted almost at the same time. "It was you who started it! Besides, we all know that this row of mounds is not yours!"

"Shut up!" the wailing woman hit back. "You two girls think you are smart, eeh? You think you will become decent wives, eeh? No! You will be like the Kepa possum jumping from tree to tree."

"Don't be spiteful to the girls, you toad!" blurted some of the young boys in anger.

"Oh! See my hands," the wailing woman continued.

"You just go and do the same to the same part of her body," her youngest son said. "And be quick! What are you scared of?"

"I can't use my hands," the wailing woman cried.

No sooner had she said this when one of her sons sped towards Nepatae's mother. Nepatae's mother immediately sought protection behind some of the village young boys who comforted her, telling her not to worry.

"Mame!Mame!" shouted an authoritative voice beaming a war mentality. To the young warriors present it was a familiar commanding voice. "Mame! Run Here... this way, to me!"

Everybody stood rooted to the ground. Nepatae's mother ran towards the voice. Nepatae ran down to meet his mother, his arms outstretched. In a split-second his mother was in his arms, sobbing.

"Go ahead, my brothers," Nepatae said, facing his brothers. "I am ready."

Nobody moved. The three

brothers stood in a group, revealing shame and cowardice. They were soon joined by their father. They stood facing the mother and son.

"So," Nepatae said with an air of uncertainty. "The time has come I suppose?" If he had chosen to, he would have handled the three brothers single handed but he had decided otherwise. Now that the truth had been revealed, his growing fear had been confirmed. He now felt he was no longer a Yanpu. The worst he had been expecting had happened. Moreover, because his father joined the three brothers, he felt out of place.

By evening, Nepatae, his two sisters and his mother were alone in the garden. Nepatae could not believe all that he had heard although the events confirmed his fear - the everyday pre-occupation he had had. What he had heard with his naked ear was enough - was enough and no more.

"Mame!" he said, trying to control his feelings. "I can not bear it any longer. What is the meaning of all this?"

"Of what?" His mother replied, trying to be as calm as always.

"Do not try to fool me. You know what I am talking about."

Nepatae, my son," his mother said, sobbing. "If I tell you, you'd be embarrassed. Besides you would not believe it."

"Forget about the embarrassment. As for not believing you, do you mean I would not believe what I have heard in the quarrel with your sister?"

"What do you mean? How long have you been here?"

"Ever since the quarrel began."

The woman cried harder.

"Crying will get you nowhere. Save your tears for your husband's funeral. If fate had determined that I should be a sakae vine cut in the middle, then I can always complain to fate. There is always a way out. I shall be a striver until I tie the middle part of the sakae vine with the stalk. Now, instead of wasting time crying, tell me. And be quick."

"Well, my son," said the sobbing

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mother. "Can you guess who gave you the name Nepatae?"

The two sisters pulled themselves together and moved closer to the mother and son. They strained their ears with awe. They had already started crying. This was a moment they would never forget even when they had their own grand-children.

"Yes, you are right," the mother said. "Can you guess why I gave you the name?"

"Because I was the lost one, I guess?"

"Yes, my son," she said, crying harder. "I called you Nepatae, meaning 'the lost one'."

"Who was it that lost me?"

"Well, you are a man. You will find this out yourself. When you find out who it was that lost you, you might probably find that you were not actually lost. These were his final words, 'MY HEART WOULD YEARN FOR HIM. I SHALL ALWAYS KNOW THAT I WILL DIE CONTENT IN HIS ARMS.'"

"What do you mean by all this! What do you mean - what are you getting at?"

"You will hear the full story from him. If I told you now, I would faint..."

"Can you not give me some hints at least?"

"Well, firstly, he is not hard to find. Secondly, you shall find him somewhere in the north. Thirdly, and most importantly, show him this and see what his reaction is." Thus saying, she pulled out a parcel the size of a young boy's string-bag. "I have stolen this from him and have kept it as a token ever since you came out into the world. I don't think you will undergo any big problems..."

"I hope not," Nepatae said, drowning his words as a dying man would, wondering what the path to the spirit world held in store for him. "And mame, don't worry. I shall not forget you, nor my sisters here. And of course, I shall not forget my mother with whom you quarrelled. Neither shall I forget every other member of the

family...."

"Please, Nepatae!" the girls shouted, crying terribly. "Don't leave us! Please don't leave us. We shall..."

"No, shut up, you girls! I am not dead yet!"

"But you are going away," the girls cried harder.

"What's wrong with you girls. I am just going away for a pig distribution. I will come back."

"No! No!" the girls cried harder as if in a funeral.

"You girls are big enough!" their mother put in. "Don't cry as if he is already dead."

The girls immediately lowered their sobbing voices. They were overcome with embarrassment.

"My son, one last thing," said the mother. "Aren't you marrying?"

"Not until I have striven to excel. I mean not until I have tied the middle part of the sakae vine with the growing stalk..."

"And your pigs?"

"Are you and these two girls here also going away?"

"Well spoken! One last question, mam..."

"Wait, one more thing," Nepatae interrupted his mother. "When the pandanus nut is up in the tree, it always looks easy to get. If, by any chance, I don't show up when it is time for either or both of these girls to go away, then do not hesitate. All my pigs are theirs."

"I know they shall wait for you," his mother responded. "And I also know that everything shall be all right."

"What was it that you were trying to ask, mame?"

"Oh, yes! What was it? Yes! Yes!..."

Be quick. You are always dragging your words."

"Well, I am always fed up with all your fiancées coming to me. Now tell me, who actually do you have in your mind?"

"If you should know, well... it is the Kiliapa girl."

"You mean the girl whose sister...what's her sister's name? I mean the the girl who left her Saane

husband several moons ago?"

"You mean Liapwan, don't you?" put in one of the sisters.

"Oh, yes!" the mother said excitedly. "Do you mean Liapwan's sister?"

"How many Kiliap fiancées do I have?" Nepatae answered back, rather crossly.

"I was just trying to confirm it, you know. We old people are old and practical you know?"

"Okay, mame, the sun is going home. And I warn you, do not think too much of me, okay?"

"How can you expect a poor soul to lose her heart and stay as if nothing has happened."

"But don't come to the point of no return lest you would never see me again, okay?"

"A heartless mother is al..." It was a pity that her beloved son was by then climbing the hill on the other side of the creek. She wept bitterly and her daughters joined her, but they knew that their weeping would not bring him back. Neither would their weeping do any good. They watched till he vanished into the thick, shadowy forest. ☹



Illustrated by L.P. Wamiri

HE WILL MISS

— by Sorariba N. Gegera

*Dedicated to the late Doctor GABRIEL GRIS
who passed away on March 14, 1982.*

We heard it —
Loud and clear,
Dead!

He was a man —
Our Doctor,
Father of our University;
A figure of dignity —
In our nation —
And people,
His people.

Spent four decades —
Among us,
Growing in mind and body;
Without reservations —
He took and gave,
Then he fell,
In a foreign soil.

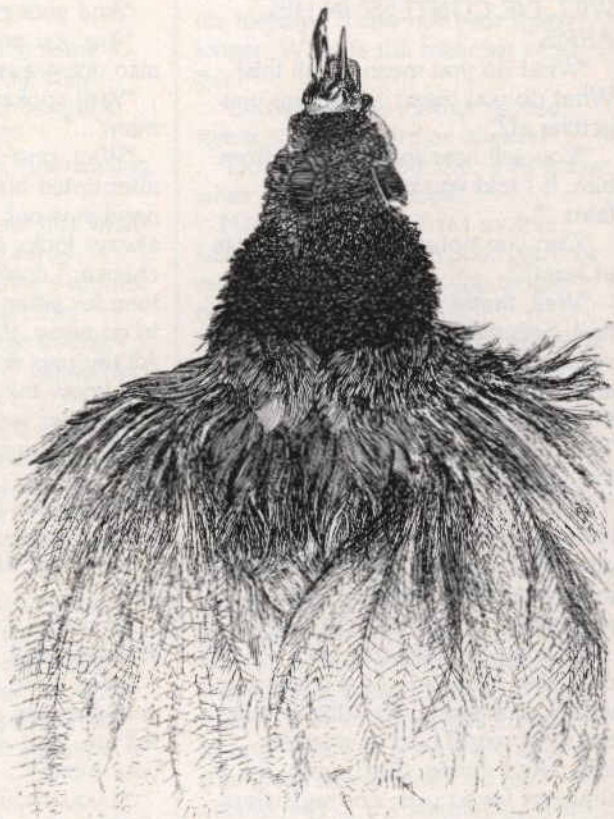
National tune played —
After mid-day,
Last prayers said —
Tears,
And silence —
For his name,
To live —
In our memorise.

There he lay —
Far away —
From his garamut sounds,
Of Manus —
The sounds of the winds,
The smell of rotting sea-weed,
Music of the crashing waves,
He will miss.

His mother's people —
His father's people —
Warm sunshine of the islands,
Caressing stings from the rains,
Loving breeze from the Oceans;
And from the mountains —
He will miss.

Songs of late fishermen,
Mother's chant of praises,
Fathers secret message,
His woman's voice,
Children's voice;
Smell of home —
He will miss.

To you —
Our son —
Our father —
Our brother —
Our thanks are here,
Belated;
For your service —
To our nation,
In our minds —
Shall you live —
Forever.



Illustrated by L.P. Wamiri

LAGOON DIALOGUE

— by Russell Soaba

In the sweep of a lowtide morning
silhouettes of steel build piers
across Gona Lagoon. The tourist
and the villager watch the sun
over the wreck and the sea.

"Not our war," says the villager
suddenly conscious of his own remark.
"Being born in it makes us live
its rust, and mystery. We leave
the beach to children, and grow
old in what remains of it."

The tourist ponders
and leaves after seventeen
syllables, unheard.

PORT MORESBY IN HIGH SAVANNAH

— by Russell Soaba

Sun on light mist, the yellow
hills. Smoke, mucous sky.
An early riser casts
a glance at the sleeping sea
and yawns.

The day is a tired old earth
panting 80 degrees fahrenheit.
The afternoon brings in dusty wiry
hair, and stomachs that are empty.
Then dusk;
burnt sienna clouds, sky:
a solitary mud lake.

We could love this city,
a fluorescent lagoon
of suburban tropicalities;
areca drug days
bahasa sunsets
and no betel nuts
for the gods.

The fall of evening blinks out
silhouetted signs:
itambu
nogat wok.

KUBURABASU

— by Russell Soaba

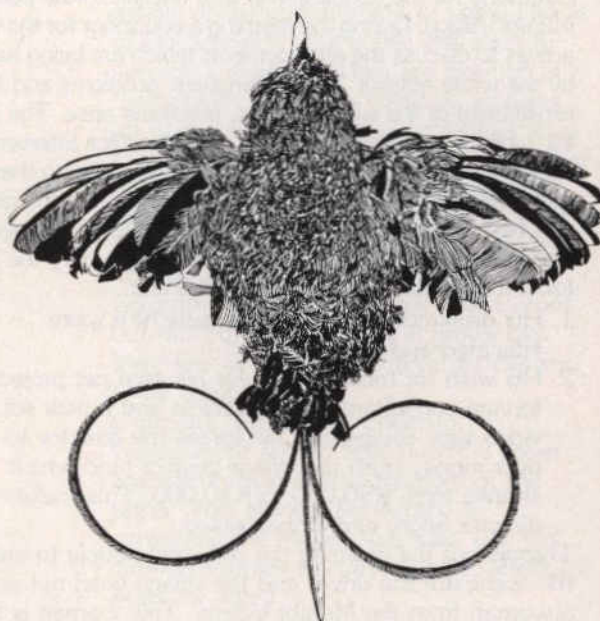
Da kuburabasu green
Over the years of your poets' dreams
You patched up each fragment of green
From the broken kwamra that everywhere
Held to keep the country green.

Then it was time to cultivate the savannah,
To speak of green things in mystic chambers,
Of voices holding out in the low savannah
And of kindling found among dying ambers
For the baking of clay in the high savannah.

The hiri would come with its winds
And you would be troubled by its echoings
Of voices not of the laurabada winds,
Wondering if it too in such undertakings
Would build towers out of trade winds.

The sand will see its first morning
Of thatched castles, aribourne as islands
Along cliff-faces this morning
And the city will be stone with multiple hands,
Juggling severed roofs on a skyless morning.

So you leave us, kuburabasu green,
Tropical ruins across this savannah,
Hamlets blown ablaze by the winds,
And for the morning
OndoBondo on the green.



Illustrated by L.P. Wamiri

PICK THE BONE DRY

by Nora Vagi Brash

CHARACTERS:

WAITAD:	A White Adviser
SEKETERE:	Young and vivacious
MINISTA:	Government Minister
DAREKTA:	A Public Servant
DRAIVA:	Middle Age
KANSOL:	Mid 50's balding
RADIKOL:	Young and fiery
EXECUTIVE OFFICER	
REPOTA:	Too confident
VENDA:	Old down to earth
MAN 1	
MAN 2	
WIFE	
MESSENGER	
DIKON	
2 CHILDREN	

PLOT

Director of government department arrives at work for a normal day and his hassled by white advisor and threatened by his Minister. The main issue of the day is the planning of the ceremony for the handing over of a cheque to the people of Munibi Village. During the morning a councillor for the village arrives to discuss the arrangements which are being handled by the white advisor. Due to language problems and the insensitivity of the white advisor, problems arise. The Director who is sympathetic to the old councillor intervenes to cool the situation down. Also, during the morning there is a visit from the Minister who browbeats him and the director tells him that he, the Minister alone, will make the speech at the village even though the project is designed by the Director. Other factors in the Minister's visit are:

1. His dislike of the Director because he is more educated and younger.
2. His wish for more money for his own pet projects: a foreign consultant, a new vehicle and a new set of video tape equipment. He forces the director to hand over money from the village project fund which shrinks from K50,000 to K10,000. This makes the director angry and embarrassed.

Throughout the morning the only real people to enter the scene are the driver and the village betel nut seller, a woman from the Munibi Village. This woman is the key to the play. She links the office to the village. She observes the behaviour of all parties, and comments

perceptively and humourously on them. Contrasted with the village lady is the secretary who is young and vain, sexually and socially ambitious.

The final complication of the morning is the appearance of a young student who claims to be the voice of the people, and protests against the project as organised by the Director. He tries to claim money to start a project which is closer to the people ... the grass roots. Other things that happen are petty arguments between the secretary, white advisor and a newspaper reporter. The final scene takes place in the village with a celebration that erupts into an ugly incident causing the Minister to take the money back ... thus leaving the village with nothing.

ACT 1: GOVERNMENT OFFICE WAIGANI

Office space: A secretary's desk. 3 telephones, 1 typewriter, 1 desk calendar. Behind the desk are two filing cabinets. On left is the Director's desk, a sign saying 'Director In'. An empty coffee cup and two "In" and "Out" wire trays. An ash tray with cigarette butts. In the corner, a small fridge and an electric coffee percolator. Down stage a shelf for various pot plants. Clock on the wall showing five past eight. An air conditioning unit. Toilet door down stage on the right.

SCENE 1: The Secretary is sitting at her desk peering into a small mirror applying her make-up. Enter the white adviser with a new pot plant, a briefcase and a manila folder which he hands over to secretary.

WAITAD: Good morning. *(Pause.)* I have a lot of work for you this morning.

SEKETERE: Monday. Too much work, already.

WAITAD: Don't be like that. I know it's Monday morning, but we should look busy all the same. *(Looking at his watch and the clock)* Hey! that clock is slow. It's half past eight. *(Goes over to adjust it.)*

SEKETERE: So what! the Director's not here yet.

WAITAD: We don't want to give the wrong impression now. How about those reports I gave you on Friday? Hope you've done a bit of work. He told me to check them out.

SEKETERE: *(Puts her mirror away.)* Correction! You told him to tell you to check me out.

WAITAD: *(Ignoring the remark.)* The Minister will be needing them quickly. This is an efficient office.

SEKETERE: Parliament doesn't sit till next month, anyway.

WAITAD: *(Impatiently.)* You know what he's like. We have to keep abreast, otherwise we will all get branded - I mean I will get a

PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY

bad reputation and my contract will be cancelled.

SEKETERE: That's your problem. I don't need a lecture from the white advisor, thank you. We're an Independent Country now, so leave us to make our own mistakes. Just keep your nose out of our affairs.

WAITAD: Don't kid yourself, you're still relying on Australian aid. *(Changes tone.)* I didn't mean to offend you.

SEKETERE: *(More defiant.)* I get my directions from the Director. You are paid fantastic wages to look after him, not me. With regard to your files, I shall do them when the Director sighs and signs them OK?

WAITAD: Alright! Alright! I get the message loud and clear.

SEKETERE: *(Gets up and moves towards toilet.)* Don't forget to water the Master's garden, dust the table and fetch his papers and empty his ash tray and wipe his bum for him. *(She disappears into the toilet.)*

WAITAD: Stupid bitch. *(Clasps his hands as if to pray.)* Oh! My God! *(He starts to clean up.)*

DAREKTA: *(Entering quietly.)* You're early.

WAITAD: Early! It's a quarter to nine.

DAREKTA: The bloody driver was running late this morning and of course there was a traffic jam. You know the usual.

WAITAD: Can't be helped, I suppose.

DAREKTA: *(Observing the plant.)* Where did you get that from?

WAITAD: I bought it from an old woman outside the office. I thought it might look nice on your table. It would take away some of that paperish look about the office. *(He fusses around the desk.)*

DAREKTA: OK! OK! whatever you think. *(He looks towards the audience and rolls his eyes up.)*

WAITAD: *(Picking up folder.)* I er ... finished the report and put in new recommendations and proposals for you to see. I think they're valid, as far as the last tour to Hong Kong's concerned. I think that we should not rely on what we saw there. A second tour to Japan would be appropriate to revalue production methods.

DAREKTA: Yes, well, just leave it there and I'll get to it in due course.

WAITAD: Well, the PM is expecting the report, so could you give it your immediate attention please?

DAREKTA: *(Impatiently.)* Look, why don't you leave it there and check up from the migration office about this crowd who are coming

over to negotiate this project at Munibi Youth Centre? I believe they are due next week sometime.

WAITAD: I had a phone call yesterday saying that they are here. I'll pop over there and make some arrangements. See you soon.

DAREKTA: *(To audience.)* Not too soon I hope. Bloody fussy old mama. *(He looks through the report quickly, chucks it aside, and picks up the newspaper and starts reading.)*

SEKETERE: *(Entering.)* Good morning sir. Any good news?

DAREKTA: Oh! hello Seke! No, nothing much, just the usual stuff. Proposal for a new leadership code, enquiry into students' unrest. A parliamentarian on a drunk charge. Another foreign consultant to review policy. Ah! you'll like this one. It's a letter to the Editor.

Dear Mr. Editor, I would like to make my view to the public on this matter of girls wearing jeans and shaving their eyes. Girls should not wear jeans because they look like mountains and valleys, and I do not like it. Our ancestors never shaved their hair off their eyes so our girls should not copy white women. They look like K2, anytime girls. Thank you, yours Badu Kava.

SEKETERE: *(Very annoyed.)* Who cares! Obviously written by an uncivilised school drop out. The English isn't even very good.

DAREKTA: *(Turns another page.)* Bloody hell, just listen to this: Editorial: As it is time for a review of the appointment of some Heads of Departments, the public will want to see some changes. They are alarmed at the amount of money spent on vehicles, on new palatial offices, on overseas tours. *(To the audience.)* Yet another better fleet of Toyotas and Mercedes have arrived. *(Back to his paper.)* Not only that; there is evidence of favouritism and wantokism. We are at the brink of corruption. The Government must act firmly now to root out this corruption before it grows big. Very few of the present directors deserve to be reappointed.

Criticism, nothing but criticism. Government should take over the paper and slam down on the freedom of the press. This bloody democracy is corrupting the Melanesian way. *(An old woman shuffles in carrying pots, shells, fruits for sale.)*

DAREKTA: *(Without looking up.)* Christ, who is that? It's too early for visitors.

PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY

VENDA: *(Entering.)* I selem banana, popo, buai.
(Shows a pot.) Dis here plaua pot. *(Points to the seketere's desk.)* It look good dere, right?

DAREKTA: This is not a market place. I've already got a pot. Anyway, have you got a license to trade with natives?

VENDA: What yu tink! I get aisen yu netiv! *(She peels a banana and hands it to the Darekta.)* Dis swit mo! Yu laik it?

DAREKTA: No! I just had breakfast.

VENDA: *(Hands a pot to Darekta.)* Dis gud wan. Putim plaua insaid ah!

DAREKTA: You better go away. We have a lot of work to do here.

VENDA: Wok? Dat no wok. Yu look see pepa. Yu tink wok! ha! ha! ha!

SEKETERE: *(Picking up the phone.)* If you don't shift your arse, I'll call the police.

VENDA: *(Hurriedly puts her things away.)* No get pulus, mi wokabout OK!

WAITAD: *(Enters carrying two boxes.)* Well, here we are.

DAREKTA: Ah good. Do me a favour and scare the old thing away. *(to the old woman.)* Taubada ia mai inai. *(The old woman hurriedly picks up her things and moves out, forgetting her clay pot.)*

WAITAD: She's left her clay pot. It would look nice on the filing cabinet. I better go and give her some money for it. *(He goes out.)*

SEKETERE: *(Laughing.)* Did you see the way she left when she saw the taubada? Fancy barging in here like that as if you were going to buy the whole lot. I must order a much bigger 'Itambu' sign.

DAREKTA: Yes, and get one of those big black hands on the sign too. What was I saying before?

SEKETERE: You were reading the Editorial.

DAREKTA: I nearly forgot. Is it today we're expecting the party with the Munibi Project?

SEKETERE: I'll just check the diary. *(She opens her diary.)* Yes, you have got a meeting at 11 o'clock, with the old councillor.

DAREKTA: This report is alright, nothing to amend, just a few spelling errors. Type it out and give it to the white mama when he comes around. I'll be back shortly. Call the driver.

SEKETERE: *(Going over to the back exit and calls out.)* Draiva! Draiva! Come hurry up.

DRAIVA: *(Runs in dressed in rascally type clothes.)* Yes sah Misus, Masta.

DAREKTA: Just what are you doing in those rags? Where's your uniform? This is not a holiday camp.

DRAIVA: No sah. *(To the audience)* Man a ting dispela peles i olsem wanpela bik pela

peles malolo. *(To Darekta.)* Sori sah! Uniform bagarap pinis.

[No sir, Man I thought this was the holiday camp. Sorry sir my uniform's had it.]

DAREKTA: Alright! *(Opens the box.)* I've just the thing for you. *(He hands him a gaudy coloured shirt with a Bird of Paradise motif on it and a matching laplap.)* Hurry up about it. We got work to do man!

DRAIVA: Yes sah masta. *(To the audience.)* Man bai mi putim bilas na ol lain meri bai sigirap. *(He takes his old shirt off, unbuttons his trousers and throws them to the audience.)*

[Yes sir Master, Man, when I put my new garb on, all the women are going to get frisky.]

DAREKTA: Not in here. You'll spoil my sight.

SEKETERE: Yes, like good one.

DRAIVA: Na yu ting wanem. Em samting bilong gavman. Sapos yu lukim leva bilong yu bai kalap. Draiva Feiva!

[Yeah what do you think? This thing belongs to the government. When you see it your heart will tremble. Draiva anytime!]

DAREKTA: That's quite enough. We haven't got all day. *(Driver ducks into toilet, and comes out buttoning his shirt and stands in front of seketere who is not at all impressed, and salutes.)*

DRAIVA: Hey Meri, yu ting wanem nau. Inap bai mi baim yu long K5? No I ting yu mas baim mi long K10, long wanem bilas bilong mi nara kain yet a!

[Hey you woman, Can I buy you for K5? No I think you must buy me for K10 because I've got my new gear on, and looking a bit of alright ah!]

SEKETERE: *(Offensive.)* You? I wouldn't dream about it. Just one look at you, I want to fall asleep.

DAREKTA: *(Impatiently.)* Enough you two, come on let's go before we get carried away. *(The Draiva and the Darekta walk out one door while Waitad enters from the other end.)*

WAITAD: So you're alone? Where's the chief?

SEKETERE: Gone out. Why? *(The phone rings.)*

SEKETERE: Darekta's office Can I help you? I beg your pardon?

.... just a minute, I'll put you through. *(She puts her hand over the mouth piece.)* Here ... It's for you from the Minister's office.

WAITAD: Hello yes ... good thank you. *(He puts the receiver down.)* Well, we better make the place look nice. The Minister's coming over. *(Waitad fusses around and cleans up, emptying ash trays. He picks up the pot plant.)* I just better put some water on this. It's already drooping. Yuck!

PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY

SEKETERE: a snail Oh
 WAITAD: What's the matter?
 WAITAD: Uh, here in this pot plant. You better call the Director of the National Botanic Gardens to have a look at this.
 SEKETERE: Is that all! I thought you said snake. Here give it to me, I'll throw it in the toilet. There's no windows in this building.
 WAITAD: Oh, no. Don't. It might crawl up the pipe to the Primer Minister's toilet.
 SEKETERE: (She picks up the snail. Puts newspaper down and squashes the snail.) Something nothing.
 WAITAD: (Holding his stomach.) Yuck! I can't stand slimy things.
 SEKETERE: Yes, and I can't stand weak men. (Enters Kansol. Shuffles into the office.)
 KANSOL: (Clears throat.) ... m. mi, kam painim masta Darekta. You masta Derekta?
 WAITAD: (I'm looking for Mr. Darekta. Are you Mr. Darekta?) No.
 KANSOL: Masta Kiap o?
 WAITAD: (Mr Patrol Officer?) Why do you want Masta Directa?
 KANSOL: Mi kansol bilong Munibi!
 WAITAD: (I am the councillor from Munibi.) Munibi! Then what the hell are you doing here. Shouldn't you be back in the village making preparation for the ceremony?
 KANSOL: Mi wokim pinis.
 WAITAD: (I have done what is required already.) Right. You tell your people we want a real traditional 'do'. No trade store decorations! Understand?
 KANSOL: Wanem masta Kiap?
 WAITAD: (What's that Mr. Patrol Officer?) You tok him man and meri, no bras. (He imitates with his hands.) No clothes. Just bare arse. You hearim me tok. You kirapim bilas belong tubuna alright!
 KANSOL: Orait masta Kiap.
 WAITAD: (Alright Mr. Patrol Officer.) You better make sure the show goes well, and no tribal fights or we'll have the riot squad out.
 KANSOL: Ye sah masta kiap. Na Masta Darekta, wanem taim bai em i kamap?
 WAITAD: (Yes sir Mr. Kiap, What time will Mr. Darekta be back?) You don't need to see Masta Darekta. I'm organizing the show. Just you go back and tell your people to put on a good show.
 KANSOL: Tasol, mi laik tok save long masta Darekta.
 DAREKTA: (I just want to let him know.) (Entering) Ah! bik man. You're here.

KANSOL: Mi kam stap tasol.
 DAREKTA: (I'm just waiting.) So your show is all ready to go?
 KANSOL: Yes, mipela bai wokim mumu. Man ol lain baim sip sip, kakaruk, magani pis, na buluma kau pinis.
 WAITAD: (Yes, we're preparing a "mumu" (traditional pit cooking). We have bought lots of mutton, chicken, wallaby, fish and beef. We're ready to roll.) You better put on a decent show. Lots of VIP's are coming. None of your long drawn-out dances understand?
 KANSOL: Wanem sah?
 WAITAD: (What sir?) Yu tellem kanakas no dance long long time. Quick! Quick dances you listen me? Finish hurry up 10 mins. tasol.
 DAREKTA: Look, leave him alone. You'll get yourself confused. Village people know best what to do.
 WAITAD: Well sir, things have got to move smoothly at the ceremony.
 DAREKTA: Sure, but don't forget, it's their show!
 KANSOL: Masta Darekta, mipela wokim olgeta samting pinis, tasol mi gat wan pela askim! Inap bai yu kisim polis ban ikam pilai long peles.
 DAREKTA: (Mr. Darekta, we have made the preparations but I have a question. Will you be able to bring the Police Band?) No, I don't think you can worry about police band. You guys can do a better job. Yu pela yet mas danis na sing sing laga!
 RADIKOL: (Radikolo enters without knocking, dressed in old jeans and a "T" shirt with "Let the ruling class tremble" written on it.) So you're planning to hand over some money to the village eh! Just to build a community hall! Well, I'll tell you. I have been working at the grass-roots level and I know where this money should be spent. Not on a useless community hall. Are you trying to organise the villages from here?
 DAREKTA: The money has already been budgeted and allocated for this project and that's that.
 RADIKOL: On no! I have news for you, Mr. Darekta. We have formed a graduate society in the village and our aim is to prevent multi-national co-operations from taking over the rural areas. I think this is a valid argument and I think it's right that this fund should be transferred to this project. My people are behind me.
 KANSOL: (Holding on to Radikol's shoulder.) Nau pikinini yu no ken koros long dispela ting

PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY

ting bilong gavaman. Ol i bai halivim mipela long peles.

[Now my son, don't get all heated up about this. The government is only thinking about us. They are ready to back us up.]

RADIKOL: Father, you have been saying Yes, Yes, Yes, to the government for the last 20 years. Now it's about time you sat down and let us run the village. It's our generation.

KANSOL: Mi papa bilong yu mi kela pinis long wok bilong gavaman na mi isi isi tasol wok olsem na wok i go het. Taim yu pela yangpela kamap, yu ting yu ken bosim mipela, no nap, mi stap yet. Mipela ino olsem yu pela long pait nabaut na wokim "strike" long gavaman na bik et olgeta.

[I have lost every hair on my entire head working for the government, and now you young ones want to take over and run it. Don't forget, we're still around. We're not like you immature kids going on strike when we feel like it.]

RADIKOL: Don't blow your rock for nothing. If we don't go on strike you village people will be taken for a ride by your own kind.

DAREKTA: And if you don't remove yourself, you'll be dealt with severely.

RADIKOL: You try me! We have solidarity. You'll see. I'll get legal aid from the University.

DAREKTA: Seketere! Will you call the security! *(Seketere goes out and comes again followed by a small man dressed in gaudy security clothes, carrying a softball bat. He does his security drills, then menacingly chases Radikol out.)*

SEKETERE: He's here!

RADIKOL: You haven't seen the last of me yet! We'll sabotage the ceremony!
You wait and see!
(The Radikol is escorted out by the small security officer.)

SEKETERE: Well now! That took care of him. I hope it's the last we see of him. Ha! ha! ha!

DAREKTA: I'm afraid that's not correct. He'll be there sabotaging the ceremony all right. These kids never give up until they get what they want.

WAITAD: Ah, but we have a contingency plan! Any move and we'll have them high and dry!

DAREKTA: You better alert the riot squad.

WAITAD: That's taken care of sir.
(Enter Minister's secretary to announce his arrival.)

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to introduce the Minister for Grass Roots level and the Melanesian Way. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Kusai Spakman.
(Enter Minister, Pot-bellied, wearing a lap lap and a jacket and a tie, followed by his

advisors. Darekta comes forward to welcome the Minister.)

DAREKTA: Good morning sir! Welcome to my little kingdom. We are deeply honored by your visit, sir.

WAITAD: Sir, would you like to sit down here.
(Shows him to an armchair.)

DAREKTA: How about a drink for Mr. Minister, Seketere.

SEKETERE: Excuse me sir would you like a cup of tea, or coffee? They are both products of Papua New Guinea. Or would you prefer beer or spirits?

MINISTER: It's a bit hot for tea or coffee. Too early for spirits. Now let me see, yes, I'll have a beer thanks, miss. What's your name? Sanswan if you've got any.

SEKETERE: Seketere, sir! Seke for short. *(She goes over to the cabinet and brings out a beer.)*

MINISTER: Hm, that's a saucy looking chicken you have there, Darekta! How would you like to swap her. I could do with a sex bomb around the office.

DAREKTA: She's quite efficient sir, but you know how it is these days. These girls are hard to come by. We'd have to start all over again teaching someone the routine here. I tell you what! You can take her after the departmental heads' reshuffle next month. I have a feeling I won't be here any longer.

MINISTER: That's an idea. If a new person comes here, he can have a new whole staff. I don't think you can worry about that now. The PM thinks you're OK. *(Seketere comes over with a glass of frothy beer accompanied with a bottle. She places it on the table in front of the Minister. Minister playfully slaps her on the backside.)* Hey! how about working for me as my personal secretary, eh? *(Licks his lips.)*

Think about it, I travel a lot overseas. You could be a great help to me.

SEKETERE: Wow! Travelling sir? That's been one of my greatest ambitions, to travel.

MINISTER: I'm off to New York in two months' time.

SEKETERE: New York! Great! It's only a name and pictures from fashion magazines to me now. To think I could actually be there. Wow!

MINISTER: Well, why don't you think about it girl. I'm serious you know. *(Turns to audience.)* Oloman em feiva stret.

DAREKTA: *(Clears his throat.)* Well sir, could we get started on the business. I'm afraid we have not much time. Tomorrow is the big day at Munibi Village.

MINISTER: Carry on Darekta! I'm with you all the

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- way.
- DAREKTA: Old kansol came in this morning to see me about the ceremony tomorrow. Everything will go ahead as planned. They are having a mumu. Mr. Waitad has details on paper.
- WAITAD: Sir, the ceremony will go ahead as planned except for two minor changes. Mr. Darekta will hand over the money to the chief of Munibi Village.
- MINISTER: I'm sorry folks. I am the elected leader. Therefore I see it appropriate that I should hand over the money. I am also the highest ranking officer in the government.
- DAREKTA: I thought I was the one who instigated the whole thing. I mean, the money came from the budget from this office.
- MINISTER: Don't forget it needed my signature to have the project approved.
- DAREKTA: The point is that the allocation was made here from this very office.
- WAITAD: Gentlemen, could we move on to the next point? Time flies, and if we argue, we'll never get over to Munibi Village for the ceremony.
- DAREKTA: Quite so.
- MINISTER: *(Impatiently.)* Well get on with it.
- WAITAD: The money agreed upon was originally 50,000 Kinas. But various projects cropped up and started eating up the money. Now we're left with 20,000 Kina. We have made up a cheque to that amount.
- MINISTER: Hold your horses. I nearly forgot. We have just employed a white woman as an advisor to the Betel Nut Festival. We need about 10,000 Kinas.
- WAITAD: But sir, the cheque has already been made out.
- DAREKTA: But sir, there's not going to be enough money for this project.
- MINISTER: I'm sorry. All my funds have been exhausted. I can't help you. You'll just have to do with what there is.
- DAREKTA: The people are going to get very disappointed with the small amount of money.
- MINISTER: *(Angrily.)* You call 10,000 Kinas small! Man, village people are lucky to be getting such an amount. There are other projects still awaiting approval and others that have been folded up for lack of money.
- DAREKTA: Sir, I don't think it's fair to get money from this allocation to pay for this woman. Why can't we get it out of your discretionary funds.
- MINISTER: I'm reserving my discretion funds for a reception. I don't think it is any of your business to talk about my special fund.
- DAREKTA: Well, I don't think we need another advisor and a white one at that. It's just a waste of money and what's more, surely there's a national who is just as capable of carrying out such duties.
- WAITAD: We are getting off the subject, gentlemen. *(Brings a tray of beer and glasses.)* How about another drink?
- MINISTER: I'm not a bad idea. My throat is too dry from too much mauswara - ha! ha! ha! Yeah! Now what about my speech? Have you prepared it yet?
- WAITAD: Yes sir. It's all ready. The programme has been worked out, all ready to roll.
- DAREKTA: Don't forget the village people will also have their programme as well.
- MINISTER'S SECRET-ARY: *(Gulps his beer down quickly.)* Well kilok mi itok taim bilong painim rot nau.
- DAREKTA: Thanks for the drink. We have a function to attend.
- DAREKTA: Thanks for calling in, Sir, and we will see you tomorrow.
- MINISTER: Don't forget to change the amount of money on the cheque. Now don't you forget the offer girl. Man mi bai lukautim yu gut. *(slaps her playfully as he leaves the Office.)*
- SEKETERE: Goodbye Sir.
- DAREKTA: Ah well, there goes another K10,000 off the project. What a bloody mess. I guess you better write out another cheque. We can't give this cheque with the figures rubbed out or it'll be an embarrassment.
- WAITAD: Rightio! *(Turns to Seketere.)* You better ring the various papers and remind them to send representatives along tomorrow.
- SEKETERE: There's a photographer coming to take pictures of Darekta this morning for tomorrow's paper. *(Enters a Reporter and Cameraman.)* Talk about the devil. Here they are.
- RIPOTA: Good morning, I'm from the National News Paper. I'd like an interview with the Director.
- SEKETERE: *(Forces smile.)* Wait here a while, I'll call you when the Director is ready for you. *(She goes over to the Director.)* Sir, the reporters are here.
- DAREKTA: I'm ready now. *(To audience.)* It's about time we had a national news paper.
- RIPOTA: Sir, I believe you are about to hand over some money to the Munibi Village. Can you tell me what this money is for?
- DAREKTA: Well, the money has been allocated from this office for a community project.
- RIPOTA: Can you tell us how much exactly you are handing over?
- DAREKTA: I can't release any figures as yet.
- RIPOTA: Can you just give us a rough estimate?

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DAREKTA: I'm sorry. It's our policy not to release figures until the cheque is actually in the hands of the recipients.

RIPOTA: I understand that there is another group who is also interested in this particular fund.

DAREKTA: Well yes! There is definitely a group who is concerned.

RIPOTA: Can you confirm this?

DAREKTA: It's not my job to tell you who this other group is. I'm actually not happy about the Minista handing this money over. I have instigated the whole thing and as far as I'm concerned, all the responsibility lies on my shoulders.

RIPOTA: I understand that this allocation has been split into two. And I believe the Minista has employed an expatriate and that the rest of the fund will be used for that purpose. How do you feel about this?

DAREKTA: Naturally I'm disturbed. Especially when this particular budget is tampered with. However, I guess it's his ministerial prerogative. Anyway, I think that's enough. The ceremony is tomorrow at two o'clock and you can get your story on the spot. So you can get more information then.

RIPOTA: Thank you, sir, for your time now. We'll definitely be there to cover you at the village. By the way, we'll take a shot to go with the news. How about a little bit of a pose? (*Darekta sits erect with chin up and a slight smile.*) Thank you, that's beautiful.

Exit Ripota - Enter Vendor and Draiva: They sit on the left side of stage and the Venda puts out her vegetables for sale.

VENDA: I kam banana, betnat, popo, enibod kam bai it.

DRAIVA: Lukaut mama nogut dispela meri seketerere i rausim yu.

[Look out mama, that witch of a secretary is going to get rid of you.]

VENDA: Ai not prait po dis seketerere, him smol gel.

DRAIVA: OK. Mama, yumi sindaun long hia bai mi halivim yu long salim olkain samting bilong yu.

[Ok mama, you just sit yourself here, and I'll give you a hand at selling your ware.]

VENDA: Banana poti toea, betnat tuenti toea, popo pipiti toea.

WOMAN: How much for pawpaw?

VENDA: Pipiti toea. Sanigue!

DRAIVA: Em switpela kaikai tru.

[It's very sweet.]

VENDA: Das gud kaikai.

WOMAN: Thank you, I love pawpaws.

DAREKTA: Draiva ating yu mas kam nau. Yu mi igat planti wuk long tomora.

[Draiva I think you'd better come now. We have plenty to do tomorrow.]

VENDA: Yu gat moni po loliwota?

DAREKTA: No mama, lau moni lasi.

[No, mama I don't have any money.]

SEKETERE: Gees, how many times are we going to tell you to go away?

VENDA: Hey, yu not tok me laik dat. Yu bulari sid.

SEKETERE: Don't you call me bloody shit. Get out of here you dirty old hag.

VENDA: Yu kip kuwait, you not boss dis opes. Dis mai ples an yu istupid.

SEKETERE: You stupid yourself - Get out of here or I'll call the police.

VENDA: Goan yu kol pulus, I not prait on pulus. Hi kam hi marit yu a? I not laik yu marit plandi man. Mi mari wan man, yu get plandi boi tek yu.

SEKETERE: Look, you shove off. We have important issues to work out here. You are disrupting government work. You can be charged for loitering. This is not a smelly market place!

VENDA: Yu tok hisiu ah, dis gavman not give viles people hisiu. Bipo gavman give blankes, tin mit, rais, suga, tobako, masis. Dis yu gavman give hisiu por kondom, pamili planning das not hisiu, that por istupid gels laik yu.

SEKETERE: You get out of here quickly before I get the police. *(She walks over Venda's wares, which insults and infuriates venda. She picks up the rottenest banana and chucks it at Seketerere's face. Seketerere yells.)* Help! *(In comes a security man with his softball bat and clears everyone off stage - lights dim.)*

ACT II

Villagers are wearing gay coloured clothes. Some are arranging the seating for the big-shots, some are clearing the main arena, sweeping etc. Everyone is having a lovely time. Kansol enters with a loud-hailer, puts the hailer to his mouth, and tries to speak but nothing happens.

KANSOL: Orait olgeta, tede em taim bilong hamamas. *(There's no amplification.)*

[All right everyone, today is a happy time.]

MAN 1: E Kansol, yu tok wanem? Mipela ino bin harim tok bilong yu.

[E Kansol, what did you say? We didn't hear anything.]

MAN 2: Ha, yu gat laisen long dispela samting A ting yu Kusai tasol.

[Ha, have you got licence, or are you just fooling around?]

KANSOL: *(Tries again but to no avail ...)* Yu olgeta

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WIFE: *[Hey everyone.]*
E Kava, push the button, ha! ha! ha! How much bags of rice have I wasted on feeding you. You can't even work a simple thing like that.

KANSOL: *[Hey stupid.]*
Pasim maus meri. Em wok bilong man. Yu brumim graun tasol. *(He pushes the buttons and the buzzing gives him a fright, so that he nearly throws the thing on the ground.)*

[Shut your mouth woman. This is man's work. You just sweep the ground.]

WIFE: Ha! ha! ha! Serves you right. See I told you so.

KANSOL: *(Clears his throat through the hailer.)*
Orait, olgeta tede em taim bilong hamamas. Yupela save pinis Klostu bai ol bikman bai i kam no bringim bikipela mani bilong wokim dispela prosek. Mi save gavman bilong yumi i bin wok hat long winim dispela moni bilong prosek.

[All right, everyone, today is a happy day. You all know that in a short time the big man will arrive with the money for this project. I know the government has worked very hard and has won this money to allow us to go ahead with this project.]

KANSOL: Taim bilong tumbuna, ol waitman i kam na lukatim ol na sampela bilong yumi ol i bin kisim igo long peles bilongol. Na ol Siapan na Ostraria i bin pait long hia na Ostraria i bin win na oli lukautim yumi. Taim oli i bin lukautim mipela oli no save givim moni long yumi. Tasol gavman bilong yumi long tete bai givim moni long mipela na yu olgeta mas bilas gut na kam na yumi bung na hamamas olgeta.

[During our forefathers' time, the whitemen came and they took some of our people away to work on plantations on their land.

Then came the Japanese and Australians to fight their wars here. Australians won so they remained here to look after us. When they were here they never gave us any money. Now we have our own government. Today is a big day because it's today that we will receive money. So you all must decorate yourselves and get together and have a happy time.]

MAN 1: Ye, em gutpela samting tasol hamas moni bai gavman givim yumi?

WIFE: I bet they will give us about 5,000 Kina and no more. After all the government spends it all on new cars and trips and anytime girls in Saina eating house.

KANSOL: Yu meri bilong toktok. Hamas taim mi mas tokim yu long dispela kain tok bilong yu. *(To the man.)* Yes poro, gavman i bin

promis long givim 80,000 Kina stret.

[Hey you talk too much. How many times am I going to tell you to mind your tongue Yes friend, the government promised us 80,000 Kina.]

VENDA: *(Rushes in with a string bag of unsold goods almost out of breath.)* I wait long taim. Dat PMB not lipt mi na am not have my waswas - *(She lifts her arms as if to smell her armpit.)* Hoo! Maski. Inai be gau to lasi.

WOMAN: He, Venda. Wea yu bin my dear?

VENDA: Be oi badiba! *(She imitates a white woman.)* I bin to taun to see mu bopren, in da opes, Waigani. He comin very nearly. Why do you want to know?

WOMAN: Here is your bilas. I think you go and have your shower first or your bopren will not want to talk to you after all that rushing around.

VENDA: *(Takes off her clothes, puts on her grass skirt and her decoration.)* Give dat pauda I laik smell gud. *(She smears her body with baby powder.)* Ah! Ai smell laik niu gel in opes.

MAN 1: Wokim gut Venda. Man, yu olsem yanpela meri na bilas gut.

VENDA: You save pinis. Pikinini, dat wan Minista will dai po mi yu see.

MAN: Gutpla na inap bai yu singim wanpela singsing o nogat?

VENDA: Yu ting wat. Venda still live. Yes yu gels dere. Come hia we sing. Dis happy de. *(She starts to sing a prophet song, "Moale Dinana Binai".)*

Moale Dinana binai - he he he he
Moale Dinana binai - he he he he
Moale Dinana binai ie laolao taugu danu.
Natugu danu, heehee he,
Natugu danu lau ida nala *(Everyone joins in the song, and dances and sings.*

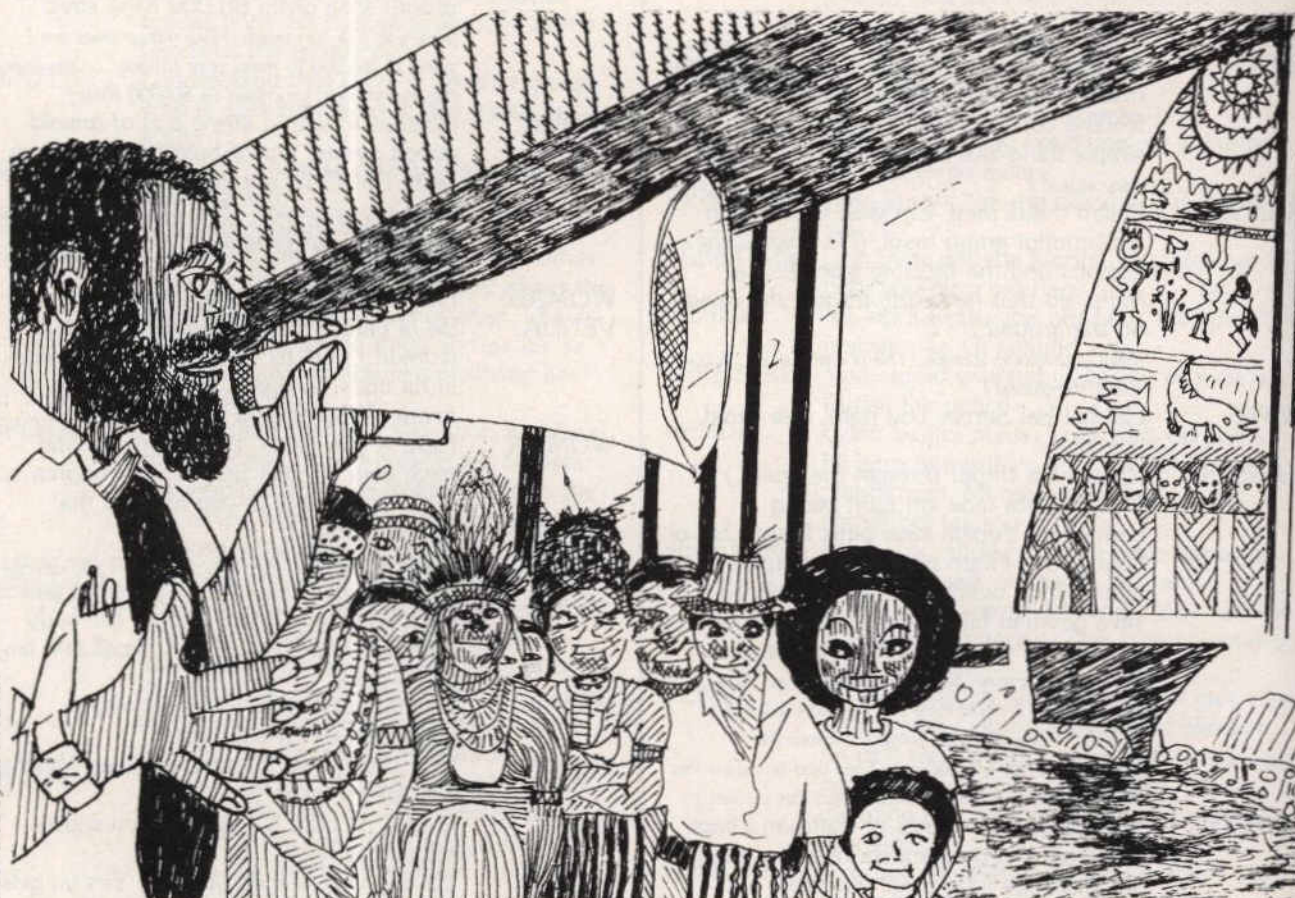
Messenger comes running in gasping.

MESSENGER: *Yells at the top of his voice to be heard.)*
Ladies and Gentlemen. The Minista and his party are just coming into the village. They should be here in this area ..*(He looks at his watch.)* Yes, he will be here in ten minutes.

KANSOL: *(Turns on the hailer and addresses the audience.)*

Yupela olgeta mas sindaun gut. Tede am bikipela de bilong yumi. Mipela ibin wok hat long kirapim dispela prosek na nau em taim bilong hamamas. A ting ol lain sumatin yu mas singsing nau bai mi go mitim ol lain bikman. *(The children sing a song they have learnt from school. "How much is that doggy". While they are singing, the VIP's enter. They all take their place in the chairs. The song ends.*

Illustrated by L.P. Wamiri



The Ripota is busy taking pictures of everyone. Kansol gets up and introduces the Minista.)

(Everyone sit down. Today is a happy day. We have been waiting patiently for this very day. Why don't you children sing one of your school songs?)

KANSOL: *(Clears his throat.)*

Olgeta man na meri na pikinini dispela bikman is em Minista bilong lukautim yumi. Mi no ken toktok planti long wanem mipela laik harem em tok long yumi olgeta.

(Ladies and gentlemen, and children. This here is our Minister. I do not want to make a long speech. It's proper that we hear his talk.)

MINISTER: Thank you, Kansol. Ating mi bai tok Inglis long wanem mi laikim ol yampela mas kisim as bilong toktok bilong me tete, na bihain yu tokim mama papa bi long yupela. You translate the story to your parents later okay?

(Thank you Kansol. I think. I will speak in English because I want the young people to hear what I have to say.)

MINISTER: I am deeply honoured to be able to come to this gathering. I know you have been anticipating my visit. After all, this is my

first visit to your village and I am privileged to have the opportunity to come along on this important occasion, especially when this meeting has been procrastinated so much. My government has been working very hard since Independence. Papua New Guinea is a very lucky country. You at the grass-roots level have been very good carrying out your self-reliance programmes. It is for this reason that my government has decided to endow you with ample provision for this project. Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not want this gathering to be bored with details of how this money was obtained for this purpose, but I would like you to appreciate that this project is financed from my discretionary fund. Money is very hard to come by these days ladies and gentlemen, I assure you.

RADIKOL: Yes, it's used for building extravagant offices, cars, trips and extra wives for big men. You foolish people!

MINISTER: Ladies and gentlemen, do not be misled by our young men who are also privileged in that all their university education has

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- been paid for by my government. So he should have no cause to complain. We, the government, have been putting our emphasis on the grassroots level. It is our firm belief that development should start here. We at the national level are very keen to see rural development.
- RADIKOL: When are you going to start the actual bloody work. Too much mauswara! We are sick and tired of it!
- MINISTER: Finally, ladies and gentlemen, as your Minista for Rural Development, I would like to take this opportunity to hand you over a cheque of 10,000 Kina. I assure you my government is very happy for you to have this money
- RADIKOL: 10,000 Kina! A miserable amount! I think that my project should have this money. Do you think you can just walk in here and deliver a crappy paper that's not even written by you, and expect popularity here?
- WIFE: Where is the 80,000 Kina we heard about eh? What do you take us for, a pack of dogs?
- RADIKOL: *(Takes over the microphone.)* You see, my people. See what I've been telling you all along. This government and their grass muck-ups! They have been playing political football with you. I shall advise the opposition party to vote a "No Confidence" motion in the next parliament. *(He storms out in a huff.)*
- MAN 1: So this government has been making some funny business, eh? We are not happy about this money. We thought you were going to give it to us on a fifty-fifty basis for each clan. No one is going to get anything out of this useless bit of paper. We thought we were getting real money.
- MAN 2: Yes, many of our young people have been sent to jail for using that kind of money. Give it to me. I want to roll my brus for smoke.
- VENDA: Ai not save, dis gavman. He get Minista. The missionare, he get Minista. Viles assembly, he get Minista. Plandi de, tok moni, moni, oltaim. Ol eri bod not wek in gaden laik viles pipol no trakta. Viles pipol mek gaden with pok, sabol na axi. Ol man in gavman not save wek hot sun na mek gaden. Viles pipol is namba wan tru.
- WIFE: Venda, you are so right. If it weren't for us village people, this country would be nowhere.
- KANSOL: *(Hailer in position)* Hey yu tupela meri natin. Yu go redim kai kai na noken daunim poin long gavman.
[Hey you two silly women. You go and prepare the meal and don't mock the government.]
- VENDA: Yu sad yu maut. Yu is mekin yes yes onli.
- KANSOL: *(Bringing the hailer to her ears.)* Hariap kisim kaikai ikam yu hambak meri, maski toktok.
[Hey, you, bring out the food quickly and cut out the yacking.]
- VENDA: Shiah! yu blari shid. Laik gud wan. *(She scrambles off and helps bring food in singing and dancing, and places, the food in front of the VIP and men folk.)*
- KANSOL: *(Hailer.)* Masta Minista, masta Darekta na ol lain man meri bilong Munibi. Mi laik tok out long yupela long wanem tete em taim bilong hamamas. Tete em wanpela bikpel, a de bilong yumi.
[Mr. Minister, Mr. Darekta and people of Munibi. You all know well the purpose of this get together. Today is a happy day.]
- WAITAD: *(To Seketere.)* I told him not make any long speeches, and where on earth are the traditional dancers?
- SEKETERE: Probably putting their bras on. These bloody village 'do's' go on for hours. I warned you didn't I?
- KANSOL: Masta Minista, mipela i hamamas long wanem gavman I sore long mipela ha salim liklik moni i kam long hia.
[Mr. Minista, we are happy today because the government has pitied us and sent us this little bit of money here.]
- WAITAD: They call 10,000 Kina liklik. Gee, that's a year's wages for someone in Waigani. You can't win, can you?
- SEKETERE: These people don't know anything about money. All they know is how to cry for it.
- DAREKTA: And you don't know what hard work is like. All you can do is push the buttons on the typewriter and paint your silly face.
- KANSOL: *(He shows the cheque.)* Dispela hap pepa bai mi putim long tebol. Husat i laik lukim ken kam na lukluk. Tasol yu noken kam olgeta wantaim, wan wan man or tupela long wanpela taim tasol. Yu noken holim, nogut bai i doti. Em moni hia.
[I place this cheque on this table so that everyone can view it. You must not all rush forward. Come two by two. Do not handle the cheque, it might get all dirty.]
- KANSOL: *(He puts cheque on table.)* Nau yumi mas kaikai. *(He sits down but jumps up again.)* He! He! Asua bilong mi lus tingting long tok tenkyu long bikpela antap. Dikon! inap bai yu subim tok i go antap nogut bai yumi kisim pekpek wara

long wanem yumi no lotu pastaim.
[Its time to eat. My mistake, I forgot to give thanks to the Almighty above. Deacon would you mind saying grace for us, we might get diarrhoea from not praying.]

WAITAD: We'll get bloody diarrhoea from the blue flies settling on our food.

DIKON: *(Clasps his hands in prayer.)*
 Papa God
 Mipela hamas long dispela de
 Na mi askim you long blesim kaikai long mipela. Na mi hamamas tru long dispela liklik hap pepa gavaman i givim mipela. Amen.

*[Father God
 We are happy today
 And we ask you to bless this food
 And this bit of paper that the government has given us today.]*

KANSOL: *(Clears his throat.)* Orait olgeta yumi kaikai.

(Everybody eats while two by two the people come up to admire the cheque.)

MAN 1: So that's what a check look laik. I never see one before. This my first time.

MAN 2: This my first time too. Hey give it here let's see it.
(He pulls it from his friend. They both tug from each end. In come Radikol with a band of youths who join in the fun of the tug of war. They pull the cheque to bits. A group of children standing by call out in unison.)

CHILDREN: Ehe ... Kere - re - ehe Kere - re Ma ... mi na

(All hell breaks loose, the Minista, not knowing what's happened, just moves out. Everyone follows suit except Venda who has walked across to the centre of the stage holding on to Darekta who breaks into fits of laughter. The youth come back and carry out the food triumphantly.)

VENDA: Watpo yu lap saniboi. Dis not lapin mata. An wai yu not stop dat Radikol, hi bad boi brek pepa.

DAREKTA: Mama, I don't know who is right any more. I'm so confused.

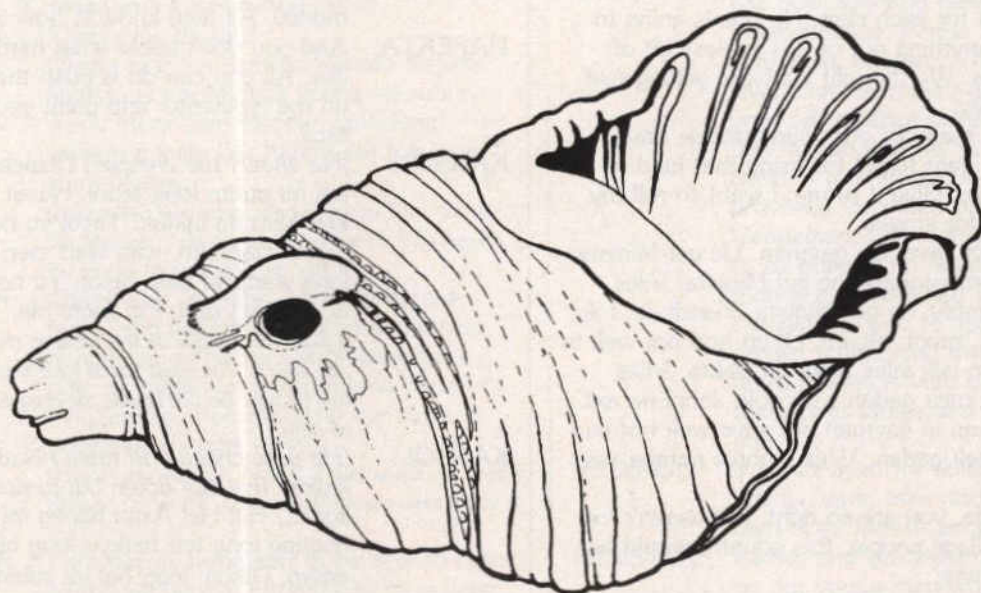
VENDA: A tink viles i gud. No wari baut draiva to Mosbi. Yu bai bensin give plandi moni. Mi hapi. Aigo gaden, ai bai piempi go makedi. Ai kam haus, ai kuk pis samtaim, ai slip aptanun. Viles gud ples. Taun plandi hed pen yu drink bia spak, pait, ka kill pasindia on rod plandi trabol. Viles is gud.

DAREKTA: Yes, village is a relaxing place. I think I'll stay here and help out in rural development.

VENDA: But yu get plandi moni to taun.

DAREKTA: Well I think I'll just take a chance and find my bearings. Hey, you see how the Minista ran, his big fat gut nearly burst. He was really out of breath. *(He remembers the incident and imitates.)*

VENDA: You look dat gel ran. *(She gets up and imitates how Seketere ran. Darekta imitates the Minister's run, and he pinches Venda's bottom and they both run out laughing.)* ☹



Contributors

Brash, Nora Vagi: from Tubusereia. Ms. Brash is known for her satirical wit and uses contemporary subjects in her large number of poems and plays. At present Ms. Brash is residing in Canberra.

Gegera, Sorariba N.: from Northern Province. Mr. Gegera's works include poems and short stories which examine problems and make observations about modern Papua New Guinea.

Kumbon, Daniel: from Enga. Mr. Kumbon is a journalism student who started his interest in Literature in the Media Unit of the Enga Provincial Government. His clear style in recording facts from his background and weaving them into a story make his writings worth watching.

Lahui, Jack: from Central Province. Mr. Lahui is an experienced writer who has edited literary magazines. His characters and incidents landmark certain character types and incidents in Papua New Guinea. At present Mr. Lahui works for Hebamo Press in the Advertising Department.

Lyakin, Timil: "Nepatae" belongs in that body of Literature called Quest Literature. Here there is an emphasis on the quest, action, suspense, and adventure. The continuation of this novel should prove interesting.

Mokno, Franz: from Jimi, Western Highlands. Mr.

Mokno is a journalist by profession. He mixes broad and subtle humour to create a most enjoyable story.

Niligur, Peniel: Mr. Peniel is a member of the Defence Force currently completing a degree through the Extension Studies programme. This story was written during an introduction to Literature course. We hope to see more from this writer in future.

Soaba, Russell: from Milne Bay. Mr. Soaba has written two fine novels, **Wanpis** and **Maiba**. Both have had wide international acclaim. His ability to get into the mind of his characters and thus comment on the changing society in Papua New Guinea make his writings worth study and enjoyment. Mr. Soaba is a Lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Winduo, Steve Edmund: from East Sepik. Interested in the unique "turn of phrase" in Papua New Guinea writing and unique P.N.G. images, Mr. Winduo is becoming a writer to watch. He is currently a student at U.P.N.G. and is secretary of the P.N.G. Writers Union.

Yarupawa, Shem: from Milne Bay. Mr. Yarupawa's cover poem has all the characteristics of narrative poetry: a main character, narrative and dramatic action, atmosphere and setting, and an ironic twist — who is famed? Who is shamed? Shem Yarupawa is a student at U.P.N.G.



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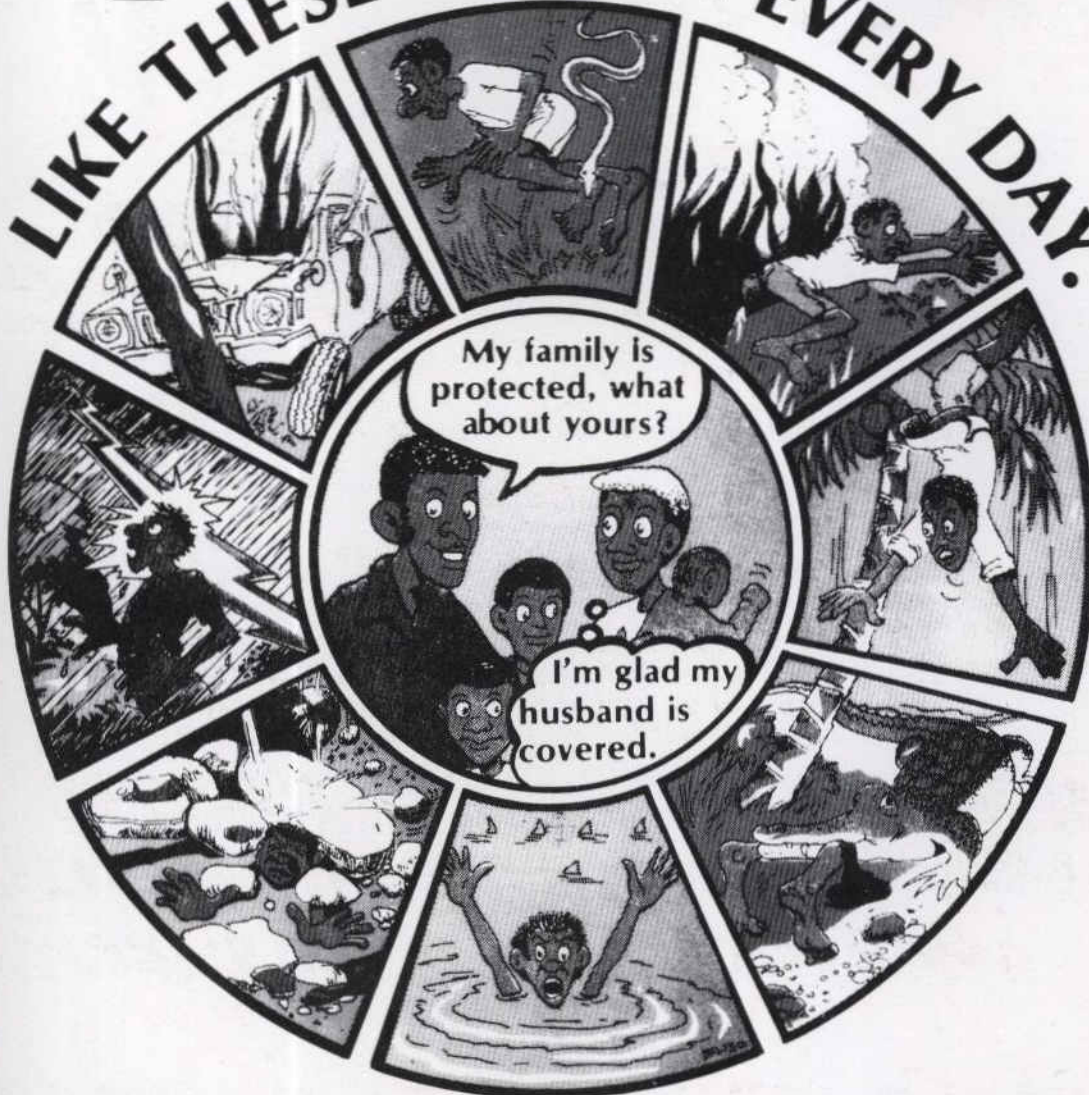
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THE BALLAD OF MANAGI

— Shem Yarupawa

Upon the plains he lies in sleep
A noble sleep he slumbers deep
But up the banks of the narrow creek
Enemies of all ranks creep
Managi is his name
The wild man they are to tame
So they can get the fame
While he the shame

His hands they say are stained with gore
They come to get him for sure
Taro and neiya he has to bite
To have the strength to fight
Managi is his name
The wild man they are to tame
So they can get the fame
While he the shame

Dangerous will be the game
But he has to play it all the same
For they come for him, to apprehend
And the warrior in him, he has to defend
Managi is his name
The wild man they are to tame
So they can get the fame
While he, the shame

In swarms they come, like fleas
So that he has to flee
To roam the jungles wild
'Cause he's the nature's child
Managi is his name
The wild man they are to tame
So they can get the fame
While he, the shame

He leaves the place in which he dwells
His loved ones, they fare him well
And at his feet they openly weep
While his sorrow, he keeps in the deep
Managi is his name
The wild man they are to tame
So they can get the fame
While he, the shame.