

A JOURNAL OF
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
AFFAIRS, IDEAS
AND THE ARTS

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THE BRIDEPRISE OF THE HURA
Mark Auhova
IMAGES

Photographs by Stuart Campbell
REVIEWS by Gary Stonehouse and Andrew Strathern
GOVERNMENT EXTENSION SERVICES & SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE

Maev O' Collins
HIDDEN NAMES
Andrew Strathern

TWO KINA BUSH
Rex Okona

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A JOURNAL OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA
AFFAIRS, IDEAS AND THE ARTS.

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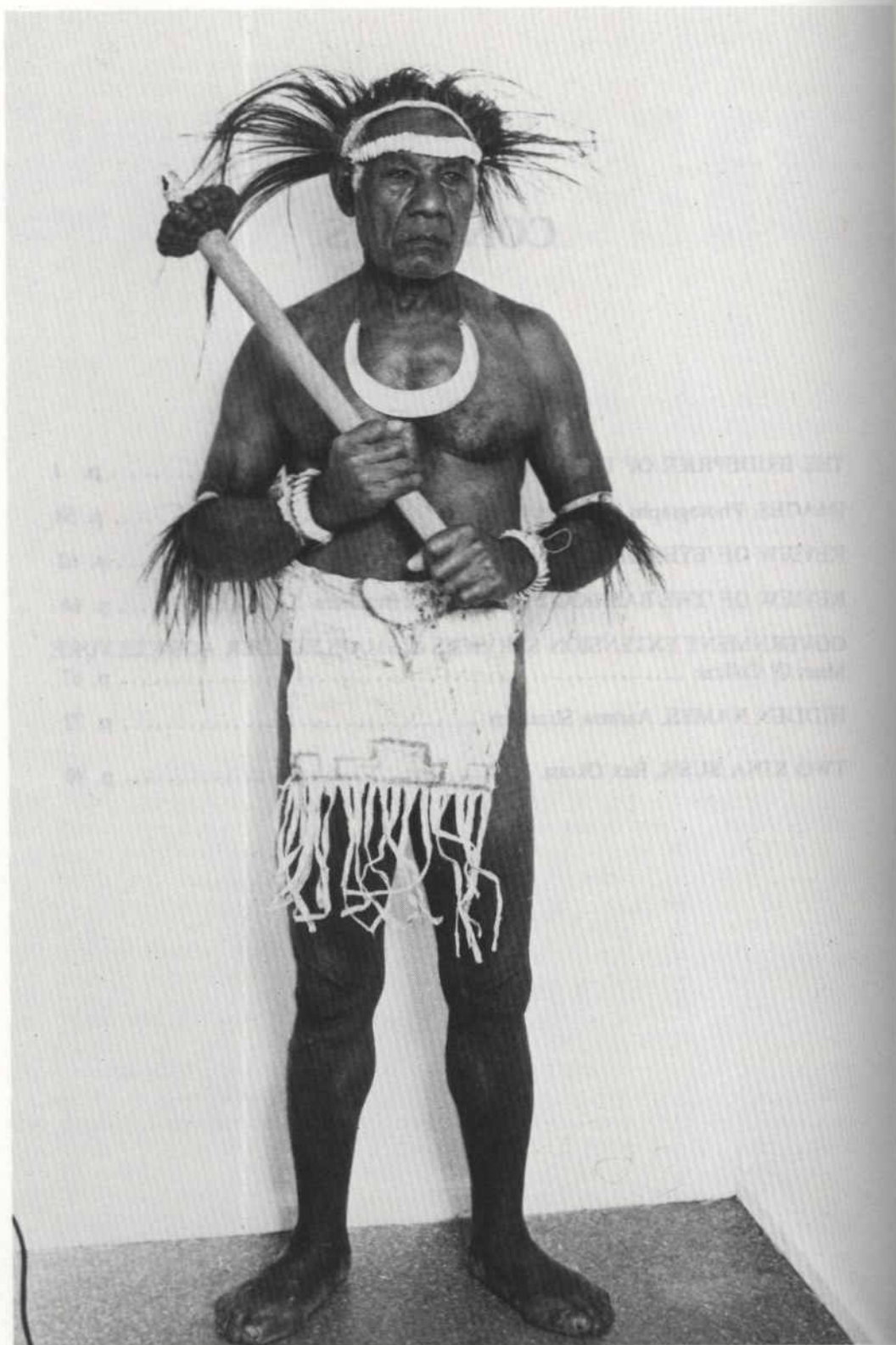
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*Moho Posa of Kairi descent group of Iokea Village holding Hura.
He is its traditional eighth generation guardian.*

THE BRID OF THE

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emerged a soft whisper of a
the dreampath of a sleepin
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description was also seen.
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answered. In a whisper s
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Marepua was uneasy. Wa
seen the ghost? All she co
Maisa in retrospect was
hair was all grey with sur
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She had not objected to
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her mother-in-law. There
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younger one having join
marriage. Instead, there

THE BRIDEPRICE OF THE HURA

Mark Auhova

Out of the domain of death and immortality, emerged a soft whisper of a voice that cut across the dreampath of a sleeping, pregnant woman. The voice was not only heard but a form beyond description was also seen. The ghost had one message to impart. "There will be born a great woman whose skills in warfare will not be surpassed by any in the tribe. She will be the bravest and most courageous of women. Her strength will equal that of men and will lead warriors into battle. She will win many battles but will eventually die by her own hand in a skirmish involving the entire tribe". The ghostly form disappeared as suddenly as it had appeared. The pregnant woman stirred in sleep and woke up with a start. Between the haze of a dream world and the physical realities of the environment surrounding her, she retrieved her own soul, and began nudging her husband to tell him the dream. "What is it?" her husband queried.

"Grandmother Maisea has appeared", she answered. In a whisper she told the message, adding that she was pregnant. But the husband not being given to things supernatural and superstitious, or for that matter ghostly appearances, calmly told her to go back to sleep. Marepua was uneasy. Was it a dream or had she seen the ghost? All she could recall of the living Maisea in retrospect was a huge woman whose hair was all grey with surprisingly few wrinkles on her face, a woman who displayed great wisdom and understanding of the life of her time. She had not objected to her son marrying a woman from Toaripi. Marepua recalled how she obediently listened and fulfilled the biddings of her mother-in-law. There were hardly any signs of resentment as was normally the practice between a mother-in-law and another, the younger one having joined the family through marriage. Instead, there was love and affection

which developed between the two women even at the very start of their newly-acquired relationship. Maisea had exuded this love and affection by tutoring to the younger one the traditional ways, and indeed to the clan at large. For example, Marepua had to learn to respect all people; her allegiance and obedience to her husband was foremost.

Arguing with her husband in the presence of other people and children was an unforgivable sin because it characterised stupidity and immaturity, and above all, it reflected an unprincipled family whose very reputation would be questioned closely at her every utterance and attitude. The long-term, damaging result would be that no uncompromising young man would venture into the family enclosure intently seeking a bride, unless he himself was a fool or shared the similar character traits to the young woman in that family. Girls whose parents were argumentative over issues of little significance and whose mothers enjoyed accusing and abusing their husbands in public suffered most.

"Beauty did not make the whole person because it had many skins", Maisea would say. It was never a qualifying factor in a traditional marriage. Marepua lacked such advice and close tutorials because her own mother had died when she was only a young girl. She had been brought up the hard way and had learnt so much by being patient and resilient. She was glad her mother-in-law was only confirming those experiences. What had become an integral part of Marepua's growth to the craft of motherhood were the skills she had gained from Maisea in sago-making and gardening. Maisea would take her to the garden and patiently and skillfully demonstrate the art of planting root-crops, taros, yams, tapioca and bananas. The secret was, Maisea would say, how deep you dug the soil for suckers and how the roots ought to be planted so that, at harvest time, they would produce the longest tubers and largest bunches. Marepua knew she had gained a great deal from the grey-haired woman. It had been long ago that she had learnt the lesson. Maisea had not been alive to see her first grandson born. There were now three of them, two boys who had joined the village defence force and the third child still growing in the womb. But why did the old woman appear this night, and what did the message mean? Those questions were beyond Marepua's understanding and powers of interpretation while sleep gradually crept over her tortured mind and in the end over-powered her; but the message had taken root and had been locked carefully

in her subconscious.

When Marepua felt she would be in labour soon, she resolved to have the baby delivered at her own village, away from the tenseness that surrounded the atmosphere at Karama. The situation was such that anything could happen at any time whether it was day or night. The Kukukuku had struck again only three days ago.

A pay-back party was already at the headwaters of the river. Oaharo and several other warriors had remained behind to provide reinforcements later when required and also to defend the village in the event of an attack by a straying enemy party. Oaharo, however, had another reason to stay back; his wife might deliver soon. While Oaharo was putting the finishing touches to his bow, Marepua approached him.

"I feel it's best the baby should be born at Toaripi and not Karama. It would be risky here because of the uncertainty over further Kukukuku raids", she said. Oaharo listened sympathetically but he was alarmed at the fear in his wife's voice. It was not a question of whether she would be better protected at Toaripi than at Karama. She would be mentally and emotionally free to deliver at Toaripi. But there was another problem because of the status of her husband. Oaharo was the commander of the Karama defence forces.

He turned to his wife. "You say it is not safe at Karama! You don't see there is even a greater risk getting there!"

"The journey would not be a risk if we have a party to accompany us," a Marepua corrected.

"Very well", Oaharo sighed. "I will have to put the case to the Council of Elders." After the consultations, it was the consensus of the chiefs that there would be company for them. Under the cover of night, a party of warriors and the couple stole out of the village and headed east. All in all, the troops numbered two men's fingers and toes. Every precaution had to be taken against ambush even at that time of the night. The troops split themselves into three smaller groups. The smallest party went with the couple taking the foreshore where the tide had receded and lay steady. They were set up as bait to lure any of the enemy hiding in the darkness further up the beach. Another group travelled by themselves just below the sand cliffs high enough to conceal them. All they could see of the couple were two moving shadows silhouetted against the silvery vastness of the sea. A third party took to the doubtful shadows of the palms and miscellaneous clusters of beach-woods further inland from the sand cliffs. A signal would be

given in the event of an unexpected rendezvous with the enemy; a sudden muffled thump of a dried nipa palm nut on the sand in front of any warrior's feet would be the warning signal.

It meant instant cover for the couple on the dampened sand and reinforcement to the party inland. Their order was to shoot and spear any moving or still objects, whether these be partially exposed or half-buried driftwoods, coconut and tree stumps, and wood piles. Anything made conspicuous by the star light was suspect. To have this executed thoroughly, each warrior in either group took turns as soon as the other resumed position. The contingent was among the best from the village defence-force, mostly teenagers who had successfully undergone manly tests and initiation, and had been prepared as front-line men to lead platoons and battalions into war. As such, none was exhausted as they continued the exercise along the long stretch between Karama and Toaripi.

While along the foreshores, Oaharo with an arm around his shaking wife's waist, in a manner to support and encourage her, walked on. A number of streams poised hurdles but with the prolonged low tide, they crossed easily. At the first light of dawn, they reached the great village. Outside the entrance, the warriors formed one unit and returned to Karama along an inland route to comb the bush and flush out any enemy who might be in hiding. Last night's exercise and today's combing of the bushes were fruitless, but the young warriors were satisfied that they had delivered their charge safely. The exercise had provided them with a deep and inner urge to kill without mercy and compromise. Back at Karama, they waited patiently for the opportunity when the enemy's blood must flow on their soil to save their land.

The Toaripi were the ancient friends of the Karama. They had been so since their ancestors started founding settlements on rich silt-deposit plains on either side of fresh-water river banks. It was not known which was settled first. The two villages consisted of people of predominantly the same language grouping. Either side would boast about the setting of the village, how food was plentiful, how its descendants were the greatest warriors of their time. The Karama had had their time of greatness and pride when they accused the Toaripi of creating newer settlements to the east and in so doing resulted in people migrating to newer homes, even from Karama. The Toaripi in turn spoke of their own heroism, how it was their natural aspiration and ambition to explore and conquer, if possible, the inhabitants of those mountains, hills and valleys and build villages,

even bigger villages on the peaks clad in cumulus cloud.

There was never an open there bloodshed because it tribal jealousy.

Despite this, the two mobilising troops and led conflict on one another's borders. Toaripi had been sending challenges to Karama to put do challenges; but now, the Toar help, if required, when t emergencies, because they threatened. It looked as if thi Their traditional enemy in t once again disputing owner fishing grounds on their co blood had been shed yet.

It was because of this that l had to accompany Marepua : Toaripi; otherwise the To undertaken the task gladly b sister going to their village. entrance to the Toaripi gate, group of women, most of Marepua and called to an walking out of the gate. l brother's wife, Peto, who bade and the other women had con foreshore to fetch fresh, crisp only by the night dew, to excreta, not from adults, but

The sand would also be house to bury the dust but ge immediate surroundings of t tidy and presentable to the vil large. The other reason for the sand around the houses was borers which in their camou would drag and steer themse along well-swept areas leav behind. Daily, they would si little cone-shaped traps and a the contrary, women who we these minor but important rol of unfriendly and critical women's gossip. Sometimes, t back and necessary embarrass qualify as a candidate for wi would have to perform her bes small chores such as waking mornings and bringing load af the cleanliness of the dome apart from mastering the diff tasks of gardening, sago-ma Even after marriage, this gene life and hard work had to co

even bigger villages on the foothills of those peaks clad in cumulus clouds.

There was never an open challenge nor was there bloodshed because it was due merely to tribal jealousy.

Despite this, the two co-operated in mobilising troops and led them to areas of conflict on one another's borders. In the past, the Toaripi had been sending constant reinforcements to Karama to put down the Kukukuku challenges; but now, the Toaripi could only spare help, if required, when there were major emergencies, because they themselves were threatened. It looked as if this might be serious. Their traditional enemy in the hinterland were once again disputing ownership of sago and fishing grounds on their common border. No blood had been shed yet.

It was because of this that Karama troops had had to accompany Marepua and her husband to Toaripi; otherwise the Toaripi would have undertaken the task gladly because it was their sister going to their village. Approaching the entrance to the Toaripi gate, the couple met a group of women, most of whom recognised Marepua and called to another woman still walking out of the gate. It was Marepua's brother's wife, Peto, who bade them for her. Peto and the other women had come out to the village foreshore to fetch fresh, crisp sand, dampened only by the night dew, to cover the night's excreta, not from adults, but that of children.

The sand would also be spread under the house to bury the dust but generally to make the immediate surroundings of the house neat and tidy and presentable to the village community at large. The other reason for the daily mounding of sand around the houses was to keep away sand borers which in their camouflaged, tiny bodies would drag and steer themselves by their rears along well-swept areas leaving minute trails behind. Daily, they would sink themselves into little cone-shaped traps and await their prey. On the contrary, women who were unable to fulfill these minor but important roles became subjects of unfriendly and critical remarks at any women's gossip. Sometimes, there would be feedback and necessary embarrassment ensued. To qualify as a candidate for wifehood, a woman would have to perform her best, whether at big or small chores such as waking up early in the mornings and bringing load after load of sand for the cleanliness of the domestic surroundings, apart from mastering the difficult and energetic tasks of gardening, sago-making and fishing. Even after marriage, this general care for family life and hard work had to continue. As part of

this inherent duty, Peto had gone to the beach early and had met up with Marepua and Oaharo. With the heavy load on her back, she took them through the gate and towards her house. Her husband Ori, an early riser himself, was sitting near a fire, chewing. He had taken some rest after being up the river. Ori was surprised to see his sister and husband arriving at Toaripi so early. Oaharo explained why they had come and how they had arrived safely. He told Ori that he would be walking back and forth until the baby was born. Soon Oaharo was retracing the steps of the troops to Karama.

Exhausted from the long walk, the pregnant woman fell into a deep sleep. When she awoke, it was mid-afternoon. She decided to go for a stroll along the beach she had walked along before. Childhood memories returned. There was no fear then because there were no wars. She tried to recall her many friends who had married elsewhere. When they were little girls, they would play on this beach and try to imagine the kinds of people and animals inhabiting those-distant lands; whether there were bad spirits and ugly animals like the killer-crocodiles which infested their river. Occasionally, they would see thin smoke spiralling through the clear air to join the clouds resting on the blue mountain-tops. But there was no smoke now as Marepua stood on a promontory, still looking eastward. She had heard rumours recently that the mountain people were fighting the Miaru, a newer group of settlers migrating from the ancient Toaripi clan to Uritai. The fighting, it was alleged, was over the new group's settling there on land belonging to the mountain tribes, Oiapu and Tati. The Moripi were still pushing.

"Wars, more wars over land," she thought. As soon as she had painted mentally, a picture of war and suffering, a sudden movement in her womb reminded her of her condition. Marepua was surprised. Whatever it was inside either loved or hated war. This was the first time she had felt the movement. The signal made her reflect on the ghostly dream.

She pondered, "The spirit did not specify where the woman would come from nor whether the mother would be a stranger or from within the tribe at Karama." She continued pondering. Would it be born of a mother at Toaripi or would it be an offspring of a future generation of a village along the coast? To her, these were serious questions which required an

answer somehow but to Oaharo who would not subscribe to such an earthly mentality and traditional sentiments, these were merely an impossible dream resulting from the imagination originating from her head and brought to a real-life situation by her thoughts and attitude.

Oaharo was a strange man, existing in a community whose very unity and strength lay in an all-embracing common belief in the supernatural; in objects that moved and could be seen but could not be spoken to, like the sun, the moon and the stars; in animals of the sea and land, birds, fish, trees and mountains. He often tried to convince himself that there was in fact a village far west where normal daily lives continued; that the dead returned as ghosts. To him, these were stories told by people who merely reflected on the features of a dead person; the shrunken and caved-in jaws, the eyes and the mouth that remained open and were closed by force. Gods, sorcery and magic were created by people who sought reputation and fame by forcing people to fear them. To Oaharo, these things did not exist. His mother, Maisea, disliked him for this because she had tried all manner of persuasion to make him accept these superstitions as part of the daily life of the tribe but Oaharo would have none of them as long as he lived. All he knew was that the end for him was death. No magic or sorcery would harm him before this.

The most-dreaded sorcerers and magicians were made aware of this mainly through his father who had been taught and practised occasionally. They had repeatedly tried to kill him by sorcery and magic but to no avail. One day, to his surprise, a leading sorcerer approached him and spoke to him about how he had been trying to kill him and yet the supposed victim remained normal and healthy all the time. The sorcerer was a brave man because he knew that Oaharo was no other than the commander to the tribal troops. This was also why his two sons were in the army while still in their teens. The sorcerer was still standing, dwarfed by Oaharo's huge size and build and he was told, "You have wasted your time and effort. Go home and look after your children with the zest and patience you used to kill me."

The sorcerer expected to be killed on the spot by the commander but it was not to be the case. He hurried home, pledging not to carry on the

trade.

Parents who had earmarked their daughters for marriage to Oaharo at some future time, had been disappointed because he had rejected them, and there were several. He would never marry, he said, because he had no intention to do so. However, he had then accompanied his parents to a feast and singing at Toaripi and after spending several nights there, his intention not to marry had ended. It was love at first sight between Oaharo and Marepua. Although without a mother, the young woman had a reputation of her own for being well-mannered, completing every task even down to the smallest detail and successfully, without complaint, and without showing exhaustion. Although, not pretty in terms of looks, she had the qualifications of a good mother in the traditional sense. She too, had rejected several offers from potential young husbands. She had already been approached by the parents of one such young man. But her relatives had not yet given any indication. However, the relatives of the young girl had now been made aware of the momentary affair between the two young people. They took the initiative and called a conference between themselves and Oaharo's parents. Marepua's father agreed that the marriage should be arranged and that a ceremony would take place at Karama in a short time. That had happened a long time ago. Marepua had returned to her village again but not the second time with their child. Now, she considered herself lucky; traditional contraceptives had worked well. The two boys were bigger and this on took a long time to conceive.

"Who was it? If it was a girl, she would naturally assist me", Marepua thought and smiled faintly at the last thought. At Karama and Toripi, daughters meant wealth and reputation. Marepua's daughter would be someone she would confide in. The household chores would be divided into halves and she would be proud to teach her the duties and responsibilities of a woman, gardening, fishing, sago-making cooking and other roles that women were expected to fulfil in their life span. Suddenly, Marepua shuddered at the thought that this might never be because of the vision of the dream. She repeated parts of the message of herself, "Will be born a great woman whose skills in warfare... would lead warriors on battle."

"That is practically impossible", she spoke to

herself, because no woman before. She was abruptly thought as Peto called her from Karama, the preparations for intensified. There had been the enemy some distance up. Oaharo arrived from Toaripi preparation. His two teenage warriors busy making as n could. At about the time, M confused about the sex of the of war canoes were already h reported sighting, flanked on river bank by a fool patrol. western bank stopped, and same side pulled up. Ever appeared to be a freshly burnt still retaining heat. At an orde leader, the patrol troops scatte through the bushes levelling th Others rushed back to their ca at great speed further up the ri was passed quickly to the flee They too put their paddles to

On they sped, burnt with r instinct to kill to keep their lan of the river had been followed tree, large or small, had bee swamp whether hostile or fi waded. At last, the patrol lead on the west bank and announ prints or tracks. The troops w to the headwaters of the river. search was made but again n habitation could be seen. The c given. Assured that the enemy some hidden no-man's valley hurriedly building make-shi Karama, exhausted from the the swift-flowing current to p downwards to the village. Th number of young men who ha only taught the art of weapon- only been shown the types of p bows were made. It was also t only the dried reeds into which fixed, and wood for the spee Oaharo consulted the others an put the youths to a test. There v light. In any case, if they had to had to find these weaponry to was taken. On the east bank, the

herself, because no woman had ever done this before. She was abruptly cut off from her thought as Peto called her from behind. Back at Karama, the preparations for a major offensive intensified. There had been reported sightings of the enemy some distance up the Karama River. Oaharo arrived from Toaripi in the midst of the preparation. His two teenage boys were among the warriors busy making as many arrows as they could. At about the time, Marepua had been confused about the sex of the baby, a large fleet of war canoes were already heading towards the reported sighting, flanked on either side of the river bank by a fool patrol. The patrol on the western bank stopped, and the canoes on the same side pulled up. Every eye saw what appeared to be a freshly burnt-out fire with ashes still retaining heat. At an order from the platoon leader, the patrol troops scattered and scrambled through the bushes levelling them to the ground. Others rushed back to their canoes and paddled at great speed further up the river. The discovery was passed quickly to the fleet on the other side. They too put their paddles to water.

On they sped, burnt with revenge and animal instinct to kill to keep their land. Every tributary of the river had been followed. Every suspecting tree, large or small, had been covered. Every swamp whether hostile or friendly had been waded. At last, the patrol leader appeared again on the west bank and announced there were no prints or tracks. The troops were now very close to the headwaters of the river. A final, thorough search was made but again no signs of human habitation could be seen. The order to return was given. Assured that the enemy had retreated to some hidden no-man's valley and were again hurriedly building make-shift hamlets, the Karama, exhausted from the exercise, allowed the swift-flowing current to power the canoes downwards to the village. There was a large number of young men who had until now, been only taught the art of weapon-making. They had only been shown the types of palms from which bows were made. It was also true they had seen only the dried reeds into which arrow heads were fixed, and wood for the spears. Commander Oaharo consulted the others and it was agreed to put the youths to a test. There was adequate sunlight. In any case, if they had to be the best, they had to find these weaponry tools. A consensus was taken. On the east bank, the young men were

landed, and after the labour was completed, the youths ran into the jungle armed with stone-hackers, bone-knives and cutting tools.

Their instructions were to find and hack a particular species of young hard trees with less branches, a palm species that was black when peeled, and reeds. These had to be straight so that when prepared and used there would be less hindrance but dead on target. The theory was not to miss or the missiles would return to base to inflict fatal wounds. Oaharos' two sons joined the youth-groups which were assigned to cut the reeds. The boys were elated because it was their first time to be actually in the jungle, to be made to feel like growing up in the knowledge and skills of the Karama custom and culture. They had found a place where the reeds had been abundant. They slashed and hacked at the virgin forest unaware of a slimy, slithering coil which uncoiled and slid down from a nearby tree-branch, corrected its instinctive sense and headed in the direction of the two boys. It landed in the upper bushes with such a crash that the noise put the young men on the alert. They sensed danger. Until now, the older brother had been cutting the reeds, while the younger was stripping the outer covering and putting them into two bundles. At the crashing sound, the younger brother picked an arrow from his quiver and fitted it into his bow and stood ready. His brother had stopped cutting.

At that moment the younger brother's arrow flew and hit the snake right in between the eyes. While the snake reeled, hissed and staggered in an attempt to dislodge the missile the older brother set to work crushing its head with his axe. After the younger brother had targeted several arrows, he uttered the war cry. The huge snake fell onto the two bundles of arrow reeds, dead. The young and old warriors fast, but cautiously, surged onto the scene of the cry from all directions. The two boys stood dazed by the size of the snake. Their father arrived on the scene first, and shouted the war cry again but louder. Suddenly, the warriors surrounded the threesome, and what praises they did bestow on the two boys! The two boys, however, were dazed not because they had conquered another dreaded enemy but instead they each believed they had killed a bad spirit of the jungle. Several of the warriors shared their feelings but Oaharo pointed out emphatically, "This is a snake; the

type that swallows animals and human beings. It had been fishing. You'll soon see". It was the truth. Many black fish, those found on inland lakes, were inside the stomach when it was sliced. Only then did his sons forget they had killed a god. The collection of the weapon material had been a success. There were more than enough materials to make new weapons for all the warriors at Karama. That night, older men who had a taste for snake meat, feasted on it. The snake's skin was salted, dried and used to decorate the bows, arrows and spears of the two boys. They were very proud.

"You were talking to yourself, I heard you", Peto told her sister-in-law. "I was thinking about the baby; whether it is a boy or a girl. I want a girl. I want a girl. Look at our two boys now. Even at their age, they are warriors already. If it is a girl, she would... but... but... but...; Marepua hesitated and Peto asked no more questions. The news of the two boys' ordeal and their manly killing of the snake had been brought to Toaripi by some people visiting from Karama. At dinner, Ori told his sister about the courage of his two nephews, and Marepua cried with happiness. She knew they were their father's sons.

"I'm so glad, they are alive, and I know they will be like their father with that skill to hit their targets whether it be the enemy or fish or animal." Marepua praised her children.

"A child drowned in a small tributary near the canoe berth and a young girl was taken by crocodile," said Ori, going over the events of the day. Peto cut in sharply, "Those witch-magicians from the west killed those children. I'm sure of that because it is once again their time to travel down this coast looking for young girls and pretty women." It was a strong Toaripi and Karama belief that drownings or killings by crocodiles were not accidental nor did they result from the natural, physical weaknesses of the victims concerned. A crocodile being an amphibious creature could not complain about food shortage and take a human life because all its food requirements were abundant both in the rivers and on land. On land, it could taste meat by preying on birds and animals and in the rivers, fish. A crocodile could not be angry with people because they were afraid of it. Why should it catch and eat a pretty girl? The Toaripi and the Karama were river-people and knew exactly the

movement of a crocodile. Drowning, they knew, was not due to the carelessness of parents unless they did it deliberately. In the opinions of all, from the elderly to the child only learning to speak, the answer lay in black-magic being practised by the Uriri people who inhabited a river settlement behind the mountains further west, beyond Karama. They were complete strangers to the Karama and Toaripi.

"They are the killers," Peto continued but Ori signalled to her to keep quiet and not talk so loud. The Uriri black magicians, whose cruel deeds were passed in stories down from generation to generation, had the power to be invisible and could transform themselves into killer creatures like the crocodile. The coastal people feared the power and strength of the crocodile more than they did that of sharks and snakes. Ori had stopped his wife lest their conversation was overheard. To the Toaripi and the Karama, the Uriri crocodiles had an insatiable appetite for young girls who would be returned to normal life at Uriri and brought up as future brides for chiefs and younger men. These were beliefs hardly understood and acceptable to warrior chiefs like Oaharo, but they survived nonetheless through the constant incidents of catches some of whom were the most beautiful young women in the villages. While Ori's household stopped discussing the disappearances, a party of the toughest warriors put to the river in their canoes and mounted a search for the missing girls. After three nights and three days, no remains had been found. Indeed, it was the common belief that if the drownings and catching were controlled by local socerers, they would have been at least a sign for retaliatory action later. If it was the making of the villager socerer, the crocodile would have been influenced by the dead to have appeared, clasping the body of one of the girls in its foreclaws and displaying it for the search party to see.

As it was, the Toaripi concluded, once again, that the dreaded Uriri black magicians had struck, and a general warning was sounded for women and children not to wander too far and alone. From then on, everynight at every house, noxious bark was chewed and spat out to ward off the invisible murderers. The relatives continued to mourn their dead. On the night of the killings, Marepua became uneasy again. She could not sleep but when she did, the apparition

appeared and the ghost repeated the message, word for word. She

"Marepua," Peko called

"Aha, I just had a dream

"What was it?"

"Oh, just a dream, I think in these circumstances. I don't know

"The little one should be eating and better sleep and rest," I thought sister-in-law and assumed because she, being married and the upbringing of Marepua more but a certain degree of on in her conscience.

The next morning, suffering due to sleeplessness, Marepua went more to her husband who had been at Karama. "It's bad your dream, your condition, the worst man not getting the rest and sleep," Oaharo expressed his frustration who has not yet understood his nature.

Marepua was about to do something somehow swallowed it and attempted. She realized they could not over the dream. He was the boss. Ori asked his brother about the situation at Karama, and was the last few days had been in

"The enemy must have returned to land. Women have resumed preparations are continuing."

"What about these two boys? Have they been doing any more good? I'm proud to hear of their conquests. It is true that any offspring's blood can be extremely courageous, but understanding of any person" his two nephews, "but who are they?"

"They are being fed all right every day while hardening their bows, arrows and spear heads, cooking for themselves. They are pointing to two huge bunches of bananas he had just brought. It was the custom both at Toaripi and Karama that mothers who had been delivering these types of bananas cooked served steaming hot.

This diet served a three-fold purpose: the mother produce more milk

appeared and the ghost repeated its unearthly message, word for word. She awoke with a sign.

"Marepua," Peko called softly.

"Aha, I just had a dream," she replied.

"What was it?"

"Oh, just a dream, I think, because of the circumstances. I don't know," Marepua lied.

"The little one should be emerging soon so you had better sleep and rest," Peto comforted her sister-in-law and assumed a motherly role because she, being married earlier, had helped in the upbringing of Marepua. Marepua said no more but a certain degree of restlessness lingered on in her conscience.

The next morning, suffering bloodshot eyes due to sleeplessness, Marepua explained once more to her husband who had just arrived from Karama. "It's bad your dreaming like this. In your condition, the worst may happen if you are not getting the rest and sleep you need badly." Oaharo expressed his frustration to a woman who has not yet understood his character, and his nature.

Marepua was about to say something but somehow swallowed it and made no further attempts. She realized they could not argue again over the dream. He was the husband, the father and the boss. Ori asked his brother-in-law about situation at Karama, and was given the reply that the last few days had been incident-free.

"The enemy must have retreated further inland. Women have resumed their routines but preparations are continuing."

"What about these two young warriors? Have they been doing any more great deeds? I was very proud to hear of their conquest of the huge snake. It is true that any offspring of strong mixed-blood can be extremely courageous beyond the understanding of any person", Ori boasted about his two nephews, "but who has been feeding them?"

"They are being fed all right," Oaharo replied, "everyday while hardening and straightening bows, arrows and spear heads; they are also cooking for themselves. They have a lot of that," pointing to two huge bunches of cooking bananas he had just brought from Karama. It was the custom both at Toaripi and Karama that mothers who had been delivered had to be fed on these types of bananas cooked in water and served steaming hot.

This diet served a three-fold purpose; to help the mother produce more milk, to speed up the

healing of the wounds, and to ensure that no unfriendly spirit dwelt in the mother's body causing the infant to cry ceaselessly. This diet continued for sometime until the mother was able to exercise her body, firstly going fishing. In the interim, she would not be expected to undertake any heavy duty like sago making and gardening. The same applied to pregnant women shortly before they were delivered.

"I would say you are early with the bananas," Ori joked. Indeed, a cultural understanding among the men of Karama and Toaripi allowed for freer exchanges of flattering jokes between brothers-in-law than they're would be among other relatives and relations. In the two villages, in-laws had greater access to the secrets and properties of their parents-in-law than their own progeny. As a result, the wife's brothers would be somehow jealous of that relationship and would be prepared to joke about a certain matter to conceal their true nature. There were, however, exceptions where a more reserved brother-in-law would not even consider jokes as worthwhile ingredients in a normal conversation. The friendliness despite envy could never lead to enmity. Although Ori's remarks were factual, at the same time it was meant to be a joke.

"Oh, there's no need to worry. I tell you, you just wait and see. You never know when it might see the world. To prove what I say, I'll stop here tonight, just in case," Oaharo answered his brother-in-law good-naturedly, and he was right. That night, about the time that was generally believed and accepted when graves would open and allow their bony, ugly inhabitants to rise and wander into the night, Marepua felt the twitching of labour pains. There was still silence in the unlit house, and a ghostly atmosphere hung in the room. Only Marepua felt the presence of an unknown presence in the room. she tried to snatch sleep here and there but the pains intensified. There was no doubt the baby was coming. She felt comforted and courageous somehow unlike her condition earlier when intense fear had shaken her.

"Peto, Peto, I think the baby is coming now, she called softly to her sister-in-law. Both Oaharo and Ori had heard the call too. Peto lit the fire in the house while the two vacated the room. Outside they made another fire and waited expectantly. Men at Karama and Toaripi were not allowed in a room where a woman was in

labour. Men could not be expected to be part of the scene because they suffered a guilty conscience from considering themselves the prime causes of the suffering, the groans, and moans of the labouring women.

At times, they were sad and embarrassed. Sometimes, the husbands were concerned over whether the birth would be normal or complicated. If there were any complications the husband or his-in-laws must try and seek out the sorcerer and find out why there were complications in the delivery. And if there were any truth that sorcery was causing the delay in the delivery then some payment had to be made to save lives or life. Sometimes, the sorcerer would lie and say that he was responsible and would not accept any payment, in which case the mother would die or child would be still born or die after birth. This would culminate in a pay-back killing at a later date when the memory of the dead was forgotten. The belief was that complications due to sorcery resulted, when soon after conception or during pregnancy, a sorcerer would be hired by someone who had grudges against the family of the pregnant woman to carry out his trade either to kill or punish the pregnant woman. The sorcerer practised his trade in extreme secrecy and concealment. He must not be seen nor heard when appealing to spirits to make his sorcery effective. He had to consult the powers of evil for assistance to procure pieces of personal belongings of the people he wanted to kill. These included wastes like excreta, urine, chewed betelnut and skins, parts of grass-skirts, spit, remains of blood, and many other wastes of human beings. Even the foot-prints on the sand or mud could be the cause of death. Death immediately or prolonged pain or illness was caused by remote control.

A sorcerer would never tell anyone how he killed people. However, knowledgeable people accidentally came upon the sorcerer's product and deliberately removed it. These people would not live long once the sorcerer found out about it. By and large, most people who had close contact with the practitioners refused to practise because of the fatal repercussions. So the sorcerers were left on their own to keep their trade as a monopoly. The sorcerer's death-recipe consisted of a great miscellany of plants and animal parts and other ingredients. There were additives of different kinds of ash and lime; leaves and roots;

tree-bark; snake-fangs; crocodile-claws and teeth; pig-tusks, and human remains whenever required. All emanated an equal amount of power and energy in sustaining pain and contributing equally to the destruction and severance of internal organs. All ingredients were compacted into a decent-sized bamboo which was cut in such a way that one end was naturally closed. After the other end had been sealed off, it would be placed in a shallow hole over which a fire was built. The amount of fire burnt, determined the severity of human pain. The fire would have to be kept burning day and night. When there was a little fire the pain subsided. After a while, the sorcerer would dig out the bamboo and examine it closely and carefully.

If only one worm was found alive in the bamboo, then he had created an impersonal representative of the person he must kill. From then on the victim became very sick and his fate now depended on the mercy of the sorcerer. The adding of fuel to the fire over the bamboo would now be done with a great fervour and the amount of wood put in was influenced by the mood and the emotions of the sorcerer. A bigger fire meant unbearable pains and a lighter fire caused less. In the meantime, slime created by the extraction of moisture from the ingredients in the bamboo as a result of heating, provided the liquid environment in which the worm floated. If it died, the victim also died. On some occasions, the relatives of the sick would negotiate through formalised representatives for pardon and mercy. If the negotiations, were successful, the relatives would make huge compensatory payments in land, food and traditional wealth. With this background of elements of complications at birth, the two men sat around the fire and chewed. One, more prone to the beliefs and their efforts while the other, calmer and composed expected a minimum of pain and speedier delivery.

Inside the house, a large clay pot sizzled as it boiled while around the labouring women sat Peto and a number of mid-wives summoned to the room by the sounds they were familiar with. Marepua groaned and moaned in pain, each of mid-wives taking turns to apply their skills to the relevant parts of the body.

After a while, one of the elderly midwives inquired, "How many other children has she got and what are they?"

Peto replied, "Two boys."

"It must be another boy. Till time to deliver, the cheeky woman concluded speculatively."

This was the experience of women sitting around the fire. They all agreed it was true because they all had sons. But outside, Marepua suffered mental turbulence. Since he had tried to recall in the past between his parents, those of his sister which might help him find an appropriate sorcerer and ask for a found and answer; perhaps whom she had refused to be responsible for the delay in delivery. He posed the question hesitantly to his in-law. "There seem some complications in delivery. I'd better go and talk to the man that she refused to name out whether they know any way to prolong delivery."

"What will you gain by going to trouble? For a start, you do not know those people-have anything against you. It is no use unless you are sure of your own do, the chances are so remote that only waste your time. Why bother about it because that was a bad idea. Oahara replied in controlled anger to his in-law very well; how he would be by any belief whatsoever."

"If you want to, you can go to the doctor. I say I'm part of this life-saving business. I virtually left the decision to him. Ori got up slowly and disappeared. Some distance from his house, he lit a fire with a flickering flame burning. It had never been there before. It appeared the low-built shelter had been there and had been transplanted from elsewhere. At that moment, he was near the hut as he entered inside including the leading side of the house and the young man he had come to see. Ori got closer and as soon as their conversation became audible, he crouched down at the edge of the sand on all fours. After that, he comfortably buried himself under the sand and ears.

Ori realized why the hut had been there in the vicinity of the village. He was afraid of the invisible Uriri men and their plot and lay it to their own

"It must be another boy. They take a longer time to deliver, the cheeky ones," the other woman concluded speculatively.

This was the experience of many of the women sitting around the moaning woman. They all agreed it was true because most of them had had sons. But outside, Marepua's brother suffered mental turbulence. Since the start of the crisis, he had tried to recall in his mind disputes between his parents, those of himself or those of his sister which might help him seek out the appropriate sorcerer and ask for mercy. He had found and answer; perhaps the Toaripi boy whom she had refused to marry might be responsible for the delay in delivery of the baby. He posed the question hesitantly to his brother-in-law. "There seem some complications in the delivery. I'd better go and talk to the relatives of the man that she refused to marry and just find out whether they know anything about the prolonged delivery."

"What will you gain by going to all that trouble? For a start, you do not know whether those people have anything against your family. It is no use unless you are sure of yourself. Even if you do, the chances are so remote that you will only waste your time. Why don't you forget about it because that was a long time ago?" Oahara replied in controlled anger. Ori knew his in-law very well; how he would not be persuaded by any belief whatsoever.

"If you want to, you can go to them but do not say I'm part of this life-saving hunt." Oahara virtually left the decision to his brother-in-law. Ori got up slowly and disappeared into the night. Some distance from his house, he saw a dimly-lit fire with a flickering flame burning. The hut had never been there before. It appeared to him that the low-built shelter had been set up hurriedly and had been transplanted from somewhere. In a moment, he was near the hut and saw three men inside including the leading sorcerer, a stranger and the young man he had come to find. He drew closer and as soon as their conversation became audible, he crouched down and started digging the sand on all fours. After the strenuous effort, he comfortably buried himself except his head and ears.

Ori realized why the hut had been relocated in the vicinity of the village. The three men were afraid of the invisible Uriri men who might hear their plot and lay it to their own credit instead of

the sorcerers.

Ori could not follow the conversation because the stranger was talking in pictorial or trade-language known only and used by the sorcerers themselves. "The female pig is so strong, unusually strong, despite the numerous spears that have landed on it. It is completely fenced and there would be no escape. However, I have come to collect more fence posts in case it breaks out from the present enclosure."

Ori had positioned himself in such a way that he was able to see the three men through a peep hole.

Soon, the Toaripi sorcerer beckoned the younger man and whispered to him. He was emptying the contents from a large string bag hanging at his side. Armlets, necklaces, precious shells — all the traditional wealth clattered out. The stranger collected and bagged them.

Immediately, Ori understood what the stranger had been saying. He had come not to collect new fence posts but further payment for his efforts, and that the victim of his efforts was a female pig. Suddenly, he understood that the fate of the woman, his sister, hung on his breaking up the group. He was convinced it was his sister now suffering at his own house. He had to do something now. He was about to rush in but he knew too well that would lead to chaos.

Ori had to decide whether to kill them and cause the gradual elimination of himself, his wife, children and relatives in subsequent payback killings or save them. He decided not to kill. He just had to scare them and see how they reacted. Still in his sandy hole, Ori began uttering strange words and tones. In a sudden burst of the flame in the hut, he saw they were already on the alert, eyeing each other.

As if in one voice, they said, "It's all around us."

Instantly, they scrambled out of the hut at as much speed as each of them could muster for himself in the direction of his voice.

Ori rose from his concealment and broke into the hut. He knew something must be in the sand under the fire. He dug desperately. Shortly, he found two short bamboo pieces which were warm and not too hot. He knew too that the reference to the spears thrown at the female pig signified the amount of fire built over the pipes. He ran to the shore and slowly unwrapped the

bamboo pieces and poured their contents into the wide sea. He walked through the rising tide and made his way to his house. Unknown to him, the spirit of Maisea of Karama had helped make his strange utterings echo eerily around the hut so he succeeded in his rescue operation. It was the belief of the Karama and Toaripi that sorcerers compared their own power and skill to see whose victim would die first. Ori had chanced upon such a competition and had not only saved his sister but someone else at another village. The relatives of that other person would never know except that a relative had been very sick but had now recovered.

Resuming his place near the fire, beside his brother-in-law, Ori found sudden relief and peace of mind. Inside the house, there was no more moaning except of physical, natural labour pains. Oaharo did not ask Ori where he had gone nor would the other tell of his strange and extraordinary ordeal. Ori knew whatever he said would not be accepted nor would it be given a hearing. One thought occupied his mind; his sister would give normal birth. On the other hand, Oaharo waited anxiously and patiently. If the worst had occurred, it was only natural that death had come to his wife. Life and its problems must live on. Between the lull of a dawn nearing, and the willy-wagtail's heralding of it, the silence was shattered by the hungry cry of a new born baby soon after its emergence into the world. The rendezvous with the sorcerers still fresh in his mind, Ori rushed inside, although forbidden to do so, at this time.

He knelt beside his sister. "Are you all right?" he asked.

"Yes, I feel good; I felt a lot of pain earlier", Marepua replied to her brother weakly.

In the meantime, as fast as she could, Peto filled the steam boiling water with the bananas that Oaharo had brought from Karama. In a short time, Marepua sat up and was eating the bananas hungrily and drinking the hot liquid in shellfuls. A plaited tapacloth had been tied around her waist to stop excess bleeding.

The midwives held a quick discussion to decide who should bury the after-birth. The elderly woman asked Peto who had buried it for Marepua's two sons. "Oh, she delivered the two

at Karama. It might have been one of Oaharo's sisters or cousins," Peto explained. Then she asked the older woman to bury it. The other midwives agreed because they knew that the same old woman was a well-known undertaker of placenta at Toaripi. There was a certain trust and respect in the Toaripi and Karama villages, among women, for one of their number who could bury the placenta successfully. The belief was that a woman who was assigned this job must carry it out with great care and concern for the mother and for the safe future of the child. She must bury it without being seen, particularly by sorcerers, or their representatives. If the woman did a bad job, the child would be sickly when it grew up. If she buried it carelessly and it was later dug up by dogs or pigs and eaten, the mother would suffer undue pain during the period of breastfeeding. The afterbirth falling into the hands of the sorcerer would be fatal, not only for one mother but for a lot of other mothers, because he could cut it up and add the ingredients from the women and kill them at childbirth. Many men at Karama and Toaripi shared this belief with the womenfolk. The elderly woman in Ori's house knew exactly what to do. She did not subscribe to another belief that under the ladder of the house would be the most suitable burial ground for the placenta. Her assistants were talking about it. She waved them to stop. The other women watched as she darted out through the door carrying a basket of neatly and closely plaited fronds in which the new born child's natural beddings were carefully wrapped in a tapa bundle to stop the blood dripping. Cautiously, looking back and taking side-glances to check she was not followed, the old woman walked deep into the sea, and sung a praise that only the sea and herself understood; "Oh, mighty sea,

Your surging laugh is fishermen's fear;
Your rippling song his pride;
Your anger is his destruction;
He is weak to challenge,
Your secrets he cannot find;
Keep this and be pleased."

With that she opened the basket, unwrapped

the bundle, and lay the afterbirth gently on the sea bed. She had swum out some distance before depositing it. Slowly, she swam back to the shore,

again checking that no one of the old woman's family were there. She held the secret of the sea. Up the sea would rise and sweep they intended it to destroy, swept away, and a new set of new site. The old woman walked to her house. Dawn started breaking, and once more the women resumed their routine roles. No sinister had occurred in the before.

Oaharo and Ori had taken care after the child had been born. The already dispersed. As the sun rose, four children clambered down the ladder, and found their parents. The dying fire a little distance. The older child put more words. The younger children were looking at a newly-built room. The fourth child being a little taller than others, ventured toward the ladder, pushed aside the loosely-plaited tapa, suddenly was not pleased at the sight. "Don't come inside. Stay out."

Mother Peto peeped out from behind the door. She further explained "Marepua was born last night. Do not make noise. She is sleeping and might wake up. Hey, hey, hey." Peto warned her little one again. The children did not reflect the mother's intention. The children at a distance nor to disturb the heavy slumber. The child revealed a closely observed tradition maintained and strengthened by the child and its parents. A mother explained the beginning of a child's life from and how it had been created. The answer given to any inquisitive child. The baby was always made by a mother. The questions always required a mother. An imaginative tale that confused the child, possibly, and naturally he would not understand other things. In time, it would be for herself, sometimes through the facts of life, and in time passed from one generation to another. In human society, when a child reached a certain stage of development, the child understood the implications of the situation is often dangerous.

Oaharo's family were the only people who held the secret of the sea. Upon their command, the sea would rise and sweep over villages and, if they intended it to destroy, houses would be swept away, and a new settlement started at a new site. The old woman walked straight back to her house. Dawn started breaking in the eastern skies, and once more the Toaripi awoke to resume their routine roles of life as if nothing sinister had occurred in their midst the night before.

Oaharo and Ori had taken some sleep soon after the child had been born. The midwives had already dispersed. As the sun rose higher, Ori's four children clambered down the string strung ladder, and found their parent curved cosily near the dying fire a little distance from their uncle. The older child put more wood on the fire while the younger children were casting suspicious looks at a newly-built room under their house. The fourth child being a little more adventurous than others, ventured towards the doorway and pushed aside the loosely-placed biri-door and suddenly was not pleased at all, when he heard: "Don't come inside. Stay out. I'll be out."

Mother Peto peeped out of the entrance and further explained "Marepua made a little girl last night. Do not make noise, the baby is asleep and might wake up. Hey, hey, don't come inside," Peto warned her little one again. The warning did not reflect the mother's intention to keep her children at a distance nor to stop the children disturbing the heavy slumber of the child, but revealed a closely observed traditional taboo that maintained and strengthened the bond between a child and its parents. A mother would not explain the beginning of a child, where it comes from and how it had been created. The common answer given to any inquisitive child was that a baby was always made by a woman. Further questions always required a long, elaborate and imaginative tale that confused the child purposely, and naturally he would turn to thinking of other things. In time, it would learn for himself or herself, sometimes through hard experience about the facts of life, and in turn the tale told was passed from one generation to another. In any human society, when a child has reached a certain stage of development when it is able to understand the implications in his language, the situation is often dangerous and embarrassing.

There was no other way, in this society, to familiarise them with the language than at a gathering of adults. At such gatherings, even when there was no true purpose for it, conversation was often dominated by frank and open discussions on sexual acts, behaviour, attitudes, intricacies, their limitations, the physical, mental and sensual pleasures based on individual or other people's practical experiences. These were coupled with betelnut intoxication, for consumption of it was executed at uncontrollable speed and laughter would be beyond control.

To some children, the stories they heard at such gatherings were merely jokes. Others would consider otherwise. From such conversations about close relationships and intimacies between men and women, a child would easily pick up a few clues. In the Karama and Toaripi communities, another taboo closely observed was to discourage children not old enough, from handling new-born babies or coming anywhere near a new born baby. It was believed a baby still with the umbilical chord attached caused certain kinds of skin diseases. These took the forms of boils which developed one at a time around the stomach or on the bum. Another belief was that the scent of the mother's bleeding caused the boils. These boils were treated early in the mornings by spitting on them before anything had been eaten. The treatment would be ineffective if the adult had already eaten or drunk liquids. It was only after the umbilical cord had been detached would younger children, even other infants be brought near to the room of the new born baby. Peto's stern warning to her children had awakened the two men who were already talking to the children. The two older ones asked about the name of the baby girl to which Oaharo answered, "You know the names of my two boys."

"Yes, the first one is Oaharo," one of the children interrupted, and the other one is Ori, our father."

"You must be a very good boy," Oaharo confirmed. "Oaharo is named after my father, and the other is named after your father."

"Our father said, your son Ori, has a big area of sago palms not far from here, and many coconut trees over there." The child pointed to a stand of coconuts to the east of the village. The boy had forgotten that young Ori himself had planted those palms long ago after he had been

shown the land by his namesake.

Oaharo had name in the Ori family too. In fact, he was only obliged to name a son after his in-law who had earlier named him. "Where's Oaharo?" Oaharo asked of his namesake. The boy pointed to the beach.

"You tell him, he has plenty of land at Karama. I have planted coconuts and sago but when he grows up, he can grow a lot more," Oaharo replied in turn. The boy ran to the beach with the good news for his brother. One of the children was keen to know the name of the baby girl.

"Uncle Oaharo, what name will you give to your baby daughter?"

"I don't know. I have not yet decided what name I should give her. I'll just tell Marepua that the little girl's name will be Maisea after my mother".

At the mention of the name, a sharp, shrill cry burst from the baby as if it had been disturbed by being called or made hungry as it was spoken, or that it had heard.

"The child must have heard you, Uncle Oaharo, because she is crying now," the nephew suggested.

"She cannot hear, she is only a baby," Oaharo corrected and made his way to the entrance of the room and peeped in.

Taboos were for other men, not for him, the leading warrior of his tribe.

As far as he was concerned, he broke no rules; it was his child, furthermore, it was a girl who would fetch a huge price for the family. It was his first daughter whom he must see before he returned to Karama and told the boys about it. Marepua was sitting, feeding her.

"She is a big girl" Oaharo amused himself at the first glimpse of his only daughter.

"Tut, tut, tut, she looks like an overgrown pumpkin," he whispered, and offered a passing smile. Marepua replied with a slight smile suppressing a mixture of joy and fear.

She would go over the dream again with him, and was determined that their daughter should be named Maisea because of the dream and the vision. Little did she know that Oaharo had also indicated approval earlier. Oaharo left for Karama soon after eating some of the bananas Peto had cooked and served. He would be going to and fro for sometime yet, bringing more bananas until Marepua and the baby were strong

enough to walk the stretch again. That evening, Marepua's cousins, half-brothers and sisters gathered at Ori's house to see the baby and mother. They were surprised, as Ori explained, that there had been complications in the delivery, and that it was Ori who had courageously saved his sister and her baby from the spell of the sorcerer's hold on their lives.

Each of the relatives was urged to take every precaution because if the truth were discovered, the end of the family at Toaripi would be sooner. Ori had explained that it was jealousy that had created this new traditional enmity between their tribe and the other. They must never speak about it to anyone who might give them away.

After Ori had spoken about how Oaharo would not believe in any superstition, the relatives felt they would have to oblige Ori's leadership because of his courage in the extended family. It was a consensus. From now on they just had to give Ori the recognition he should have deserved long ago. They were prepared now to share what they may have in abundance; sago, fish and meat. Ori, however, had built up a certain reputation at Toaripi where his credibility had been high and if the cousins were to adopt traditional sharing, this would be at stake and the worst could happen.

"I am pleased that all of you have agreed with what I have done to save my sister and her child. However, I must warn you that if you are to give me anything at all, do it discreetly otherwise the sorcerer and his friends would hunt me and my family," Ori corrected their decision "I am still a young man and I could make enough to maintain my family. From now on I want all of you to live together as blood brothers and sisters not as individuals as you have been this far," Ori concluded his short but convincing speech. The relatives then entered the room one by one and expressed words of sympathy, comforts and encouragement to the woman who might have been the subject of their tears and weeping this day. The family reunion had been well-timed because many days later, many of the cousins were killed in a bloody confrontation between the Toaripi and their inland neighbours who were as ferocious as the Kukukukus were to the Karama.

Ori's cousins were the victims of retaliatory actions mounted against the Toaripi over the killing of nearly the entire family of the Heavala.

The Toaripi accused the Karama of wrong claims to a sago area in their village and their village. Their accusations of sago-stealing. Their accusations until an equal number claimed, the Toaripi pledged back at Karama just on time summoned. A selected group had been despatched to force him from Karama. They had hardly begun to gate when they saw him walking towards the village. Oaharo rushed before the council of elders there was trouble because from the heard men, women, children and shouting revenge they gave him details of the murder. Kora and Sivio had gone for coconuts. Kora had already given them was sending nuts down while Sivio was in a clearing. Sivio had a very strong scent and shouted the scent but at once, Kora saw him near the coconut tree. Kora was mentally devising a way of taking his friend who had fallen. Unfortunately weapons were also down to improvise on what he had up. Positioning himself carefully a number of arrows flying upwards tore off some of the young coconuts throwing them downwards. It had been able to inflict stunning damage on the enemy. But the number of arrows he could not be stopped.

They rained on him with arrows. The enemy had decided to cut down Kora. Kora had been sitting in a clearing. Kora yelled loud shout before the palm tree hit the ground. It had been heard by a patrol near the beach. He had sensed the arrival of the enemy dispersed even before the palm tree fell ground with a great thump. The fall had shocked the young boys. Only to the misery of arrows or he died, Kora forced out some of the bark bags full of salt water. The report was concluded.

The Toaripi accused the Heavala of pegging wrong claims to a sago area half way between the village and their village. There were also accusations of sago-stealing. There would be negotiations until an equal number of lives had been claimed, the Toaripi pledged. Oaharo arrived back at Karama just on time, as he was being summoned. A selected group of warriors had been despatched to force him to make haste to Karama. They had hardly left the high-walled gate when they saw him walking in long strides towards the village. Oaharo was immediately rushed before the council of elders but he knew there was trouble because from houses nearby he heard men, women, children and relatives weeping and shouting revenge throughout. The elders gave him details of the murders that morning. Kora and Sivio had gone to collect young coconuts. Kora had already gone up the tree and was sending nuts down while Sivio was husking them in a clearing. Sivio suddenly picked up a very strong scent and shouted up to Kora about the scent but at once, Kora saw Sivio fall in blood near the coconut tree. Kora stayed in the tree, mentally devising a way of taking revenge for his friend who had fallen. Unfortunately, all his weapons were also down there. He had to improvise on what he had up there in the tree. Positioning himself carefully away from the large numbers of arrows flying upwards to him, Kora, tore off some of the young coconuts and started throwing them downwards. In doing so, he had been able to inflict stunning wounds on the enemy. But the number of arrows that flew at him could not be stopped.

They rained on him without mercy. The enemy had decided to cut down that very tree. Kora had been sitting in avoiding the flying arrows. Kora yelled loud shouts of fear, and before the palm tree hit the ground, that shout had been heard by a patrol nearby. The enemy had sensed the arrival of the Karama, and had dispersed even before the palm tree hit the ground with a great thump. The impact of the fall had shocked the young boy badly adding only to the misery of arrows on his body. Before he died, Kora forced out some information that there was a big group with many carrying large bark bags full of salt water. The patrol confirmed this by investigating the immediate areas. They had been able to find Sivio's body but not the head. The report was concluded. The patrolmen's

report read out to the meeting had been continuously interrupted by the shouts of vengeance from the mourners.

Oaharo realizing the full impact of the situation sounded out the vengeful command; "Sound out the conch-shell! What are you waiting for?" The conch-shell men ran in every direction inside the village enclosure declaring war and vengeance on the Kukukuku. From each house, warriors emerged fully-armed with spears, bows and arrows, shields, stone and bone knives and axes. Tall men, short and young men, old men, heroes and cowards, the weak and strong converged on to the village centre.

The clatter and rustling of their weaponry struck fear in the hearts of women and children who watched from behind closed doors and peep-holes. All the able-bodied men were now at the village, among them, the old and experienced in warfare; the young who had been taught warfare but had not yet tested it, and those who had been declared men recently through initiations in high expectations; all assembled before the supreme ruling group, the Council of Elders or Pakari and the military commanders the warrior chiefs or Semese.

The council of elders comprised older men who upheld traditional laws of the tribe. They were men of understanding and meekness. The Pukari were literally, the rich men in the villages. A Pukari inherited this status from his father, brother, uncle or even grandfather or father-in-law. The Pukari were the legislature, the government and the judiciary. To qualify for such a post as well as inheriting it, a Pukari had to know every rule and loophole and how to bridge them; own a large measure of land, sago and coconut palms, large gardens of yams, taros and other root-corps, and a large farm of pigs. He had to demonstrate to the village community his wealth and his capability by throwing a huge feast to be shared by the community at large. Every Pukari had to do this because it was embodied in the rules. Those rules were widely-accepted. Although, the Pukari were the elite in the community, they could not live apart from the ordinary members of the tribe. They were just part and parcel of the total community.

However, where they lived apart there were many feasts. No one had the right to sit with them to share the food except by invitation. Occasionally, a number of warrior chiefs took

part because they had been invited. The Pukari were merciless to their own colleagues who breached any rules of the community. This was regarded as abuse of power and privilege and resulted in instant withdrawal of membership only to be restored to former status by a feast larger in volume. If this was not undertaken, any affiliation with that Pukari was banned forever. Some Pukari at Karama and Toaripi despised such obligations because feasts meant total sacrifice for status symbols and forced those who could not afford to be servants of such ungainly beliefs. The supporters of these views did not feel that the Pukari should receive the best of everything at a feast. They did not subscribe to such outlandish, anti-traditional views because they were rebellious in nature. The rules, however strong they could be, just could not be broken. No Pukari would break the protocol and take portions to his family.

The council of elders must eat it all. On the other hand, the Pukari were men of unblemished record; men who knew the demarcation lines between every family and tribal property. It was this unique knowledge that won them praise and respect from the common person. The Pukari were the negotiators and peacemakers but they were not warriors and did not go to wars. Wars and fighting were the unwritten duties of men like Oaharo and other Warrior Chiefs, known as Semese. They were men of temperament, quick to reach their arms particularly when with complete strangers.

They were men who were recognised for their unfettered courage who would prove their worth by challenging warrior chiefs in open combat. No arms would be allowed. It was the mere application of the fittest to survive in terms of strength and resourcefulness. The Semese were men of intelligence and incredible strength and could lead warriors into battle and return again alive. Often they would be seen pulling out arrows and spears from their own bodies at battlefields.

The Semese would work out their battle strategies to the last detail, and always ensured that not many fellow-warriors fell. The Semese would not lift a hand against a Pukari. It was a taboo.

In the presence of the assembly, warrior chief Oaharo convened a hasty meeting of commanders at which the main fronts were discussed

as well as the number of warriors for each company, although it was common knowledge among the warriors to which company he belonged. At times, company commanders might have to be changed. There were no changes now. The commanders agreed to the battle plans. The enemy was to be approached from three main fronts, west, centre and east. The centre would be the fleet which would also reinforce the troops on either side. The fleet would leave Karama after a considerable time had lapsed.

Every warrior had to walk through the swamps and jungles at two arms length. No food was to be carried; every warrior had to find it on his own in the jungle. The Pukari were still on their Posa; the large assembly platform especially built for them. Semese Oaharo approached them with some reverence and presented the plan for their approval and blessing. None of the Pukari spoke, indicating the vote of acceptance had been unanimous. Furthermore it was an acceptance indicative of the council's unspoken resolution that it was a war and not just pay-back killing for the two youths. Normally, the council would not allow wanton killing in a pay-back but war meant the wiping out of tribes, the fittest and the strongest surviving.

An elderly Pukari stood up and explained the decision; "Warriors of Karama, you will go inland today. You will make war on the Kukukuku and it must be war, not a pay-back trip. This means you do not have to kill just two people but if you can the entire tribe."

There was a loud clattering of spears, bows and arrows as they were raised in agreement with excited shouts of "Kill! Murder! Kill them all!" After silence had been restored, the old man concluded, "The men, women and even children must be killed too."

Before the battle rose again, Semese Oaharo issued the orders. Calling each tribe by name, he divided the army according to the three fronts and the names of their leaders. The conch-shells were sounded once more and the great mass moved out of the northern gate fast, leaving dense dust to settle on their houses to which some of them would never return.

The village of Karama was located on a sandy peninsula created by the mercy of a receding seatide over a long period of time, on the eastern front of the river which bore its name. Its shores of black, sandy beaches extended as far as the eye

could see, disappearing towards T

To reach the western shores, Karama had to proceed along the eastern inland, to where crossing would be difficult as it was not too wide to paddle. The shoreline ran further west and ended at huge rocky boulders carved out by the sea and held in precarious positions by foundations. Beyond them further west the land had disappeared; instead, sheer cliffs stood at the sea in a vengeful mood. Above the cliffs, the dreaded Urii magicians guarded the western boundary. Another river on the coast drew the natural boundaries between Karama and Toripi. Somewhere near the two rivers the warriors would start their "hunt" of the eastern front, were given the signal and soon had left the village. Each warrior was positioned at a distance of the arm's length, numbering the fingers on one hand.

The younger warriors took their positions on the river bank, followed by those considered not so strong. Next to them were the strong warriors who could become the backbone of strong attacks. At the two extremes were the extraordinary courage and skills warriors. In between the distances of more than an arm's length, fingers on five hands would be placed to mark the chief. The old and experienced warriors were in charge of the younger and other troops. A formation was adopted from the traditional net called in Karama "teve" and in Toripi "teve". This was a net fastened to a forked post at one open end. When the net was submerged, it formed a slight curve with the net-bellows as the preserve for the trapped fish. The net represented the war fleet while the warriors denoted the infantry. The long hafts signified troop reinforcements. The warriors called for the land-troops to leave behind the fleet. It was also designed for the transportation of Karama dead and wounded to the village. The warriors on the eastern bank already gone around into the jungles and swamps but at a slower speed as the fleet were still crossing the river.

On the western bank, his warriors took positions with his two sons near the river bank. As each warrior measured out the distances Oaharo walked on further into the morning's killings. Soon he stopped, bent down, picked up a

could see, disappearing towards Toaripi.

To reach the western shores, Karama villagers had to proceed along the eastern bank, a little inland, to where crossing would be easier because it was not too wide to paddle. The same black sandy shore ran further west and ended at the start of huge rocky boulders carved out by the battling sea and held in precarious positions by their buried foundations. Beyond them further west, the sand had disappeared; instead, sheer cliff drops snarled at the sea in a vengeful mood. Above was the country of the dreaded Uiri magicians. This was the western boundary. Another river on the eastern coast drew the natural boundaries between Karama and Toripi. Somewhere near the two boundaries, the warriors would start their "hunt". Those covering the eastern front, were given their position first and soon had left the village. Each warrior was positioned at a distance of the armlengths of men numbering the fingers on one hand.

The younger warriors took their position near the river bank, followed by those who were considered not so strong. Next to this group were strong warriors who could become cowards in the face of strong attacks. At the two extremes, men of extraordinary courage and skills were positioned. In between the distances of men numbering fingers on five hands would be placed a warrior chief. The old and experienced would be put in charge of the younger and other troops. The battle formation was adopted from the traditional fishing net called in Karama "teve" and in Toaripi "kako". This was a net fastened to a forked branch with an open end. When the net was submerged, it would form a slight curve with the net-belly which served as the preserve for the trapped fish. This belly represented the war fleet while the opening denoted the infantry. The long handle of the net signified troop reinforcements. This formation called for the land-troops to leave before the canoe fleet. It was also designed for speedier transportation of Karama dead and wounded back to the village. The warriors on the eastern front had already gone around into the jungles and the swamps but at a slower speed as Oaharo's troops were still crossing the river.

On the western bank, his warriors took their positions with his two sons nearest to the river bank. As each warrior measured out their required distances Oaharo walked on further west. At the site of the morning's killings, Semese Oaharo stopped, bent down, picked up a handful of the

bloody sand and sprayed the nearby bushes with it and simultaneously uttered from the depth of his heart, "My blood; young innocent blood; shed without reason; spilled without purpose; I shall kill!" Then he avowed to kill more than their deaths. He walked on.

The troops had seen what he had done and heard what he had said. A warrior next to the chief called out at once, "Their blood must be avenged. Death to the pigs and monsters." Each warrior fired his own version down the rank and file adding more abuses on the Kukukuku. On arriving at the western boundary, Semese Oaharo pushed into the underbush of the coconut tree. The rank and file on the right followed suit. His two sons were the last to disappear into the bushes. Their pace became faster but cautious as they advanced through dried stream-beds which criss-crossed the land-area on the western front.

The streams were once mighty tributaries but were emptied when the sea had receded long, long time ago, resulting in a larger peninsula on which the village now stood. On the stream-beds, had sprung unaccountable shoots of a mangrove species which could give a man's soles painful pricks. So far there were no signs of the enemy but a message had been despatched to the front commander that a small fire-place had been located by the middle-rank warriors, who were almost walking in a straight line, side-by-side from the site of the killings on the beach. The message said that the fire had been lit not many days ago, and it must have been those men who had stopped there for the night before making the kill.

Experts were summoned to the scene to check the age of the ashes. The two men scooped hand-fuls of the ashes, smelled and sniffed into the air. Instinctively, one of the sniffers, nosed right near the ground and picked up a scent. This led to a dense river bush where some of the trees had been trodden down, wide enough to conceal a large raft. The Kukukuku had not yet learnt the art of canoe making. The raft was the slowest craft in terms of negotiating down-stream currents. A little further up north where mud and slosh conquered dry land, evidence lay wide open; two semi-parallel tracks fell into the stream. The Karama warrior knew the stream well. It was long and winding and was the farthest tributary, of the Karama river to the west. Its source was near the headwaters of the Miai river but emptied

itself into a large swamp which nurtured the Karama staple, sago.

After a short discussion with the middle rank commander, Oaharo ordered that his ranks divide so that one group of warriors crossed the stream, while the main party followed the stream. There was tremendous excitement as warriors ran along both sides of the stream, rushing to cover much of the swamps before sun-down. Darkness enveloped the warriors shortly afterwards and the hunt had to be postponed till dawn. They returned to their various groupings.

Ahead, the object of the intensive search, the raft, had reached the main river and sailed on. The jungleman used long poles to steer his raft. Not far back, and on the same bank of the river, a small fire had been lit but was carefully smothered from detection. Tree branches had been cut and stood close together upside-down to provide an extra-effective screen.

Huddled around the fire were Oaharo's two sons and other younger warriors. They too had received the message about the tracks in the mud. Across the river on the eastern bank, and beyond, the news of the discovery had not got there as the means with which to relay it had not arrived. The fleet was still pushing up from the village. The day's march for the warriors on the two fronts had been difficult and indeed of much discomfort because not only did the swamp stretch far and wide, they were infested with the country's irritable, blood-sucking crawling and flying insects; leeches, mosquitoes, large sand-flies, and a horde of nature's weapons against man's invasion of its virginity.

Littered and scattered among the swamps were lonely spots called Tera. These were higher grounds upon which would be found odd stands of coconuts, fruit trees either planted there by natural processes or as extensions of a Pukari's wealth. A Tera was often visited by the owner or by game and ghost hunters. Tonight's camps were made on a number of Tera and around flickering flames at each Tera, warriors busied themselves with antidotes for their irritable itches. The medicinemen applied their trade to ensure that tomorrow's march would not be hindered in any way by the blood-suckers. At the same time, the night's meals were being cooked; lizards, snakes, rats, bandicoots, birds and an assortment of wild animals, and a residue of sago meal. Roots, berries and wild nuts completed the night's repast.

The more senior and more experienced of the warriors sat late into the night, discussing the advance into the enemy territory and at the same time building up their avengeful appetite for the kill. They knew the Tera was the threshold to enemy country and beyond this death hung like the rain cloud on the tree tops ready to drizzle down on them in the form of streaking arrows. The Kukukuku had pushed out of the landlocked area in search of a new world; a new site to resettle and breed his own kind. He was merciless and cruel; his very nature created by an overcrowded environment, changed to one of yearning for better sources of food and entertainment. One particular kind of food and one particular entertainment, the fulfilment of his body's desire. His heart longed for certain delicacies palatable only to his ever-perpetual hunger fired by his natural craving and insatiable thirst for blood; human blood; flesh; human flesh; salty flesh!

His curiosity and the unwavering spirit to conquer urged him on to behold a vast rippling mass stretching as far as the eye could see, from billows converged on the shore, pounding it and disintegrating into foam-like washed-out tiny, river-pebbles. The Kukukuku had at long, long last come to the wide, wide sea. He smelt it, bent down closer and licked it. He dipped his cupped palms into it and drank it before it would escape in minute drops. Ah! a perfect ingredient to the jungle recipe of human flesh cooking. Now, he would come to this place regularly to return with a dripping sack, hoping that some would be saved for further introduction to the rest of his own kind dwelling in makeshift huts, beyond the headwaters of the river.

In his determination to make his tribesmen aware of this new-found, precious substance, he had forgotten he had trespassed into someone else's territory. The Kukukuku was squatting on the land of the Karama. His advance that far had not been the result of an inbred component of his birth right heritage, but one he had recently acquired through his inability to expand on his existing land due to no fault of his coupled with a new spirit of adventure. He was a man of great timidity but moulded into a ruthless and merciless character by his own kind and its environment. He only assumed extraordinary courage and extreme bravery when he was a member of a gang. Alone, he had no natural

instinct to resist because all transformed into personified men the numerous gods and spirits spoken about since he began making tongue. But now, an unusual phenomenon descended upon the Kukukuku slopes directly below the village steadily, cracked and denuded in masses of earth and boulders. This phenomenon, the chief convening a meeting of all men, one night, consultations and advice.

"I fear for the future of our village and our children and our wives. Our ancestors feared for their safety, and this hostile land, which has been here ever since. However, the land is a sign that it no longer desires us."

Hardly had the chief ended his speech the village sorcerer who commanded all, who was also the central figure and ancestral spirits, jumped to promptly delivered a diatribe; "Our forefathers who travelled with the site, are no longer serving us. So have been filled with greed and disrespected been inconsiderately cutting down what we hold sacred. These were the long way from the misty north treated with great care and love by us. Today, where the trees had been, are no more. These were homes and not forest. Now, our beloved ancestors are here. In their places instead are warring gods from the mountains. The owners of this peak have been are denuding the slopes in their their enemies at bay." He paused in reaction, but hearing none he called a friendly god from this peak appeared night in my dream-wandering. He said; Your people are fools, heartless respect for us who have been the forefathers in the time past. You are ungrateful like the ravenous mourner the coastal-crocodile. Do not leave bones. We want blood and flesh. This is the command; unless all are prepared and located at all sites where have fallen, all your young warriors. Remember this, we demand female males."

instinct to resist because all that he heard, transformed into personified mental illusions of the numerous gods and spirits he had heard spoken about since he began mastering his own tongue. But now, an unusual fearlessness had descended upon the Kukukuku tribe as the slopes directly below the village, gradually but steadily, cracked and denuded into ever-rolling masses of earth and boulders. Concerned at the phenomenon, the chief convened a general meeting of all men, one night, seeking explanations and advice.

"I fear for the future of our village, our lives, our children and our wives. Long, long ago, our ancestors feared for their safety, and journeyed to this hostile land, which has been our heritage ever since. However, the land is showing every sign that it no longer desires us"

Hardly had the chief ended his speech, when the village sorcerer who commanded the respect of all, who was also the central contact for gods and ancestral spirits, jumped to his feet, and promptly delivered a diatribe; "The gods of our forefathers who travelled with them to found this site, are no longer serving us. Some of you have been filled with greed and disrespect and have been inconsiderately cutting down the trees that we hold sacred. These were the trees brought a long way from the misty north and had been treated with great care and love by our ancestors. Today, where the trees had been, there is nakedness. These were homes and not just trees in a forest. Now, our beloved ancestors are no longer here. In their places instead are two groups of warring gods from the mountains and the rivers. The owners of this peak have been weakened and are denuding the slopes in their efforts to hold their enemies at bay." He paused to gauge the reaction, but hearing none he continued. "A friendly god from this peak appeared to me last night in my dream-wandering. He scolded and said; Your people are fools, heartless and with no respect for us who have been the friends of your forefathers in the time past. You are greedy and ungrateful like the ravenous mountain-eagle and the coastal-crocodile. Do not leave us only the bones. We want blood and flesh. Before I finish, this is the command; unless all dead females are prepared and located at all sites where the trees have fallen, all your young warriors will die. Remember this, we demand female bodies not males."

The interruption by the medium and his subsequent explanation created an expected impact. An unearthly silence ensued. No one including the chief, spoke for fear that a deadly spell might be cast on him and his generations. The meeting ended abruptly and the men left the hut by stealth and each in his own mind prepared to take the warning beyond the hut and determined to ensure that all members of his family obeyed and understood the situation. Only two men were left sitting on the opposite side of the fire; the chief and the sorcerer each of whom pursued his own thoughts. Shortly, the two men were looking across at each other's face and as their custom had it, embraced each other in agreement for an ambitious mission. They could not speak to each other lest the spirits heard their plans and thwarted them. The agreement was for them to meet again the next day.

In the morning, the two men had a long session alone and shortly afterwards, the chief sent for the strongest young men who were about to be initiated into manhood. The young warriors numbered the fingers on two hands. The chief explained the purpose of the meeting; "In a very short time you all will become men. To help you prior to attaining this I am sending you on a very difficult mission so that you can prove your worth and at the same time, you will have a place of honour among our people. You will recall that our ancestors made the same journey and founded this village. You will follow this stream below to the end the report back in this many days." He held up his left hand with parted fingers. The chief continued, "You will also follow the sun. Observe carefully all you see. Take particular note of all the rivers, mountains, valleys and flat lands. Above all be extremely careful that no one sees you. Kill if you are seen but do not kill anyone if you are not seen."

The assembly burst into a muffled laughter of great excitement and overwhelmed happiness. On occasions like this, provisions were not required and they must live off the land. But every man must be armed to his physical capacity and ability. The group dispersed and were later seen disappearing down the valley each with big loads of weaponry strung down their backs and sides. The female population on the village atop somehow realized the signific-

ance of the journey and wept their loudest behind the bamboo strip fence.

The Kukukuku were born, bred and shaped by their natural environment. Dwarfed in size and timid, they were gifted with tough, muscular, strong arms and legs. The women were of the same build. Both possessed webbed feet to negotiate lichen and moss country. The men, however, were endowed with extraordinary stamina and could walk long distances without tiring or showing fatigue. The young warriors knew that to follow the stream would be an exhaustive test and experience had taught them to always seek shorter access, and it was only natural to climb mountains. At the end of the first day, they were on a peak which numbered the fingers on one hand away from their own mountaintop. They had walked virgin forests, grass and land so far uninhabited. The farther they walked the more they became excited and felt more adventurous. They chewed into their raw pig and bird-meat.

As usual, large chunks of meat were heaped around a revered tree for the gods and spirits and also as an expression of their gratitude for the incident-free journey so far. They were paid in kind and in homage for the guidance they had so far received. They sang songs of praise and gratitude and were lulled into sleep. There were more heights to climb the next day and the day after. The stream still flowed onwards. Each night the ritual of the offerings had to be repeated. At one stage all they had killed for food that day was piled up on a platform of branches and twigs and left there for the pleasure and enjoyment of the guiding spirits. One afternoon as they hacked and trudged their way to the top of the highest peak so far, they were astonished to see lying before them greyish half-round objects, which to them seemed to be halves of large fruit already eaten and the shells scattered. But they knew these were not fruit left-overs. The young warriors withdrew in fear. Hiding behind huge trees they waited patiently to see any movement. These objects lay directly beneath a closely-knit stand of kapok trees whose resemblance was unknown to them in their own area. The trees had already shed their leaves and their white bark and branch formations were strange to them.

The warriors still stood their ground ever

alert for any slight stirring. Upon a signal from the leader, all fitted an arrow each to their bows and stood ready to twang them. In a voice, unknown in these parts, the leader piped a long, fierce war-cry. Above, birds twittered and took flight. There was no response. Again the song was sung longer than before. Again not a sound, not even the shuffling of leaves was heard.

But just before he could issue the last challenge the enormous head of a reptile well known to them popped out of a hollow on the other side of the tree. Its flickering tongue answered the call to war. It was the largest snake they had ever seen. Its slimy body gradually uncoiled and as soon as it reached what was believed to be half its length, the leader signalled to fire. By any standard the Kukukuku was always a good shot. All the arrows were aimed at the eyes and the head. The snake hissed like a mountain water-fall dropping into a pool far below. It writhed and kicked like a wild boar in extreme pain and agony. In its blind efforts to dislodge the objects of sting and pain, it had swept up foliage and uprooted medium sized trees, causing large boulders to be dislodged from their ancient moorings and boomed further down the mountain-side.

Unknown to the Kukukuku the boulders were pushed down a precipice that ended in a hollow far down below. The head of the snake lay still but its tail took up the struggle and turned and coiled hopelessly. It throbbed its last energy and lay like a log. To the Kukukuku a snake was not like any other animal or bird which were treated with love and reverence. It had no relationship with man because it always killed. Despite its ability to kill people without warning and to poison, its meat was like that of fish which were rare in the mountains. The snake-meat was the most delicious meal. The young warriors who had earlier retreated to a safe distance and were suffering pangs of hunger already, now descended on the snake like a herd of hungry wild pigs uprooting gardens. They hacked at the snake with their stone tools and slashed and sliced the still wriggling body into equal portions. They sat back relaxed and chewed with all their might.

They were unaware that this very place was most sacred to the coastal people. The grounds they had trampled and now sat on was the habitat and home of the coastal hunter

god. No coastal man dared ground. Even looking at the distance had adverse after-effects came barren if they did, but his children would be born. stories told about the evil mountain. The Kukukuku at had completely forgotten the scattered about them. These w from selfish collected from river of the mountain. The Kukukuku people were not aware that collected them for meals. booming echo of the boulder hollow, blew fear and hopelessness of coastal gardeners some distance, the peak seemed bl enveloped in white cloud. On the village, the gardeners spread th they had heard. The news of at the mountain spread like th river. A general warning wa everyone was ordered to sta echo was interpreted as the b hunting season of the gods a must interfere with the god's act at the top, the Kukukuku wa pleted their meal. In the area wh had fallen the foliage was still m so that they could not see what lay of the afternoon sun. One became more curious than oth onto a nearby tree to take a lo shocked and unnerved him fro He hung like a flying-fox, ope after speaking a few words, th weight fell across the cliff fa down.

His friends jumped to the were too late. Before he had m ill-fated warrior had told his frie coast..... I can see the coast. Ou end. But what is that rippling under the sun. OH..oh..oooo." echoed fearsomely down the pre abruptly when a crushing pou breath. There was stillness bro thudding of smaller rocks loo handings by the mighty di boulders, and making short below. The warriors sto

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ged. No coastal man dared set foot on this ground. Even looking at the peak from some distance had adverse after-effects. Women became barren if they did, but if a man did then his children would be born. There were many stories told about the evil caused by this mountain. The Kukukuku at this hearty meal had completely forgotten the white objects scattered about them. These were empty shells from selfish collected from rivers further south of the mountain. The Kukukuku and the coastal people were not aware that the snake had collected them for meals. Meanwhile, the booming echo of the boulders landing in the hollow, blew fear and hopelessness into a number of coastal gardeners some distance away in a valley adjacent to the mountain. From that distance, the peak seemed bluish, misty and enveloped in white cloud. On their return to the village, the gardeners spread the news of what they had heard. The news of the happenings at the mountain spread like the flooding of a river. A general warning was sounded and everyone was ordered to stay indoors. The echo was interpreted as the beginning of the hunting season of the gods and that no one must interfere with the god's activity. While back at the top, the Kukukuku warriors had completed their meal. In the area where the boulders had fallen the foliage was still massive and intact, so that they could not see what lay beneath the path of the afternoon sun. One of the warriors became more curious than others and he leapt onto a nearby tree to take a look. What he saw shocked and unnerved him from head to foot. He hung like a flying-fox, open mouthed, and after speaking a few words, the tree under his weight fell across the cliff face carrying him down.

His friends jumped to the rescue but they were too late. Before he had met his death, the ill-fated warrior had told his friends, "There is the coast..... I can see the coast. Our journey is at an end. But what is that rippling sparkling mass under the sun. OH..oh..oooo." His exclamation echoed fearsomely down the precipice and ended abruptly when a crushing pound took his last breath. There was stillness broken only by the thudding of smaller rocks loosened from their handings by the mighty dislodging of the boulders, and making short hasty downturns below. The warriors stood motionless;

instinctively they were drawn towards their leader and stood with drooped heads. On their faces were the human expressions of deepest sympathy and pity over an irreplaceable loss.

They knew that death among themselves was sacredness itself. But to any other, even by their own hands, it was mocked as if it were a garden weed. The leader surveyed the death-path. The mouth of the cave was strewn with boulders of all sizes and weights, and positioned haphazardly against the narrow opening. On either side, merging from the mouth, two rocky bamboo-sharp, carved-out slopes ran in straight lines to join the precipice atop. In between, a curve, eroded into the shape of a new moon, ascended anticipantly towards the cliff face. The death-path was inaccessible. Their friend therefore could not be given an honoured last rite as prescribed for a person of his status and rank. He had been number two in command of the mission. Back home, his body would have been wrapped in sweet-smelling leaves and hoisted on two poles, and later buried in human stomachs. Only an ordinary soldier would have been dumped in the common grave. Back home too, only women were buried in decent graves because of their heavier responsibilities and because of the number of working tools they had accumulated in their working lives. The remains of this warrior could not even be collected for feeding on the return journey. The commander lifted his head, looked scornfully at the mouth of the cave, and bellowed at the top of his voice abuses at the ground that took their friend. In a frenzied ceremonial madness, he commanded his friends to fit an arrow each to their bows.

When they were ready, he issued the order to shoot at anything whether it be rock, tree or bush on the cliff face where they stood. After this, they all joined in abusing and accusing the earth on which their friend fell, showing their deep desire for revenge as if what they were shooting at were the very enemy itself. Only one arrow each was fired; symbolising the status of their friend. It he was married and had children, the arrows would have been numbered accordingly. Patrol leaders, commanders and warrior chiefs were secretly taught this special aspect of honouring and paying tribute to outstanding warriors who met their deaths in this way. For the rest of the party, it was their first experience and they were uncertain what to do. Respect for their dead still

prevailed. Although they all had seen what he proclaimed, they had to remain quiet until they had proceeded to a safe distance to check the discovery.

Due to the hostile reception on that side of the mountain, it was agreed that they should backtrack as far back as possible to the lower foothills where the river was sighted before the climb. The shadows of the falling night crept slowly upon them. They were determined not to sleep where their friend had fallen because the spirits of violent and unusual deaths were more revealing and courageously bent on revenge whether it be on friend or foe. The descent was made towards the eastern slope which sunk to the river. They had to escape from this accursed mountain as fast as they could. The Kukukuku had a practical fear of the ghost of a ranked warrior, and even though the descent was easy, they reached the lowest spur in double time and with closed ranks. It was safer to trip, stumble and roll as a group than to walk in strange forest virtually alone and risk one's ambition and aspiration. This was part of their practical training in jungle warfare. Shortly the warriors stood hand in hand and counting heads on the bank of the river. No scratches; some bruises but everyone was there; the number of fingers on one hand and one missing of the other hand.

Still vined together the young warriors continued the trot along the bank with occasional side-glances and back-looks to ensure no unearthly being was trailing them.

It was dark as the blackness at the end of a cave whose mouth had been sealed. The dense jungle foliage added much to this condition of the night. The men pushed wearily on and at long last discerned a clearing immediately before them. Their eyes accustomed to the darkness beheld the stars which seemed to them to overshine.

Conscious of the psychological and physical strains imposed, the commander courageously broke away from the rest of the gang; cast his eyes with strained efforts towards the direction they had come. His eyes fixed steadily on a vague shadow towering the sky in the distant star-lit darkness.

A momentous whine from him, signalled to the warriors that the snake mountain was far, far away, and that the danger had ended. It was time to celebrate their discovery of yesterday and forget the tragic death's revenge.

The rest of the party who were either lying or squatting in exhaustion on the dew-laden grass, suddenly recovered their energies and hopped and jumped with excitement and revelry.

Following the lead of the commander they sang:

"Fear is far away;
Our warrior friend
Be our friend,
Be our guide,
To the coast we go,
Be our friend,
Be our guide,
To the coast we all go."

The dancing was most bizarre; so strenuous in their physical exhaustion but they performed it to the best they knew how. It was the dance of passion; of pack rape of a voluptuous woman and how they would force themselves on her with such strength and power that the salt was sucked out of her blood. The dancing continued until dawn twilighted against the morning star. The leader bid them stop. There were yet a number of small hills to be crossed and the commander outlined the strategy for the day. "We are now in a strange land. The gardens of the coastal people are not far away. We cannot risk all being killed. I want you to walk in twos. I will lead alone. The first two will follow as soon as they see me hidden in the distance. The next two will do the same and so on. If you see an arrow stuck fast on the lowest rung of a tree, don't move further. Stay where you are. Make a thorough inspection and advance cautiously. The arrow sign means that the enemy is walking to their gardens. If you see the arrow in the middle stem of a tree, the enemy has finished gardening and is heading to the village. Finally, if the arrow is on the upper stem of a tree or a branch there is no danger."

After explaining these security measures, the leader departed. The twilight hatched into patched rays streaming across mountain tops and silent valleys, pointing to their final destination; salt. The formation took shape and the Kukukuku warriors advanced on land that extended from the snake-mountain region towards east and west and beyond which belonged to another tribe who were nowhere related either by feature or language. The slow cautious march took them past the hills they saw that morning. The steam still flowed past those hills but after these it opened into an ever-widening river. On either side, thick jungles of sago palms dropped

their thorny fronds into the brown water. The leader found but carefully hidden, awaited the rest of the party. When the last arrived, he emerged from his hiding to rest. The sun was high and had seen no gardens or human habitation. To them, the land had been created. The commander was a able person as his number told of further investigation. The two continued by land and not by sea.

They took the direction of their amazement patches of hills only trees and grass grew, and the shrub land pushed through various points. Their hands were at squashing, squirting and squashing crawling swamp pests which were droplets of mud which had dried. The commander of the Kukukuku his deputy reached the edge of the land and ahead of them in the distance, pounding, booming and sizzling struck fear into their bone-rattled and withdrew a little. The commander beckoned his assistant but cautious run to the sound. A long time elapsed through an opening in the forest overawed at the large expense spreading as far as the eye could see speechless; lost in a mental attack the smell they had yearned for; taste; the salt! The sea! They wanted to make the bold stride; symptom of generations of their people misty mountains to the fertile women who laboured on it.

One cool afternoon, a young man jumping over the village fence neared its journey on the horizon forbidden land on which she found the security of the fence. Every form, human or animal was in because any moving form could attack from dwellers from the forest. There had been a lot of blood prompted the elders and with issue a strong warning to enter moved within the walls and men were excepted so they

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their thorny fronds into the muddy, murky, brown water. The leader found a vantage point but carefully hidden, awaited the arrival of the rest of the party. When the last two warriors had arrived, he emerged from hiding and ordered them to rest. The sun was high in the sky. They had seen no gardens or human tracks; no human habitation. To them, the land existed as it had been created. The commander chose the most able person as his number two to undertake further investigation. The two men chose to continue by land and not by river.

They took the direction east and found to their amazement patches of high grounds where only trees and grass grew, and stretches of grass and shrub land pushed through the swamps at various points. Their hands were busily engaged at squashing, squirting and squeezing, swarming crawling swamp pests which they thought were droplets of mud which had dried up on their skin. The commander of the Kukukuku mission and his deputy reached the edge of the swamplands and ahead of them in the distance, they heard pounding, booming and sizzling sound which struck fear into their bone-narrow. They hesitated and withdrew a little. Shortly the commander beckoned his assistant to make a daring but cautious run to the source of the strange sound. A long time elapsed before they peeped through an opening in the bushes and were overawed at the large expanse of foaming mass spreading as far as the eye could see. They stood speechless; lost in a mental aberration caused by the smell they had yearned since childhood to taste; the salt! The sea! They waited until nightfall to make the bold stride; symbolising the migration of generations of their people from the cold, misty mountains to the fertile lands; fertile as the women who laboured on it; and to salt.

One cool afternoon, a young girl was seen jumping over the village fence just as the sun neared its journey on the horizons far west. It was forbidden land on which she walked after leaving the security of the fence. Every movement in any form, human or animal was prohibited after dark because any moving form could provoke an attack from dwellers from "beyond the back." There had been a lot of bloodshed and this had prompted the elders and warriors in council to issue a strong warning to ensure that everything moved within the walls and not without. The men were excepted so they would sneak out and

maintain constant watch. All women and children, however, were to stay indoors at all times. There was no punishment for anyone who disobeyed for on many occasions in the past no one returned to face it. Many a time fathers and husbands would be heard shouting reminders to their children and wives that certain death prevailed outside the walls after sunset. Under these circumstances Oaea raised herself from the jump, hesitated, and walked down the dark sandy beach; that beach which had allowed its sand to swallow much blood; human blood over many, many days and moons from time immemorial.

She walked casually towards the east, her mind visually preoccupied with a problem. For the time being, it would just be playful thinking on her part, she thought. The afternoon breeze played merrily on her grass-skirt. The tide was ebbing. Oaea waded into the water knee high. There were no waves. She sighed in relief and looked beyond the sea to scrutinize the graceful movements of the grey sea birds. The rays of the sun sparkled on the ripples under which a school of tiny, seasonal fish raced before three huge sharks. Above, the sea gulls hovered and dived, and rose with their selections in their beaks. She was fascinated.

The sun went down, and darkness moved in swiftly as if a fire burning in a house had been washed out deliberately. For a long time, Oaea stood observing the gulls which fed on feed that the spirits of the great sea had provided for them. She began conjuring up thoughts which meant something to her alone; the gulls dug no land planted no yam or taro; yet they would move on to the next marrow. However, her imagination dimmed in the same manner as the gulls awakened as it from a deep sleep. She retreated from the water and at the same time realised that she was alone on the forbidden land and at the forbidden time. In the dusk, she slowly made her way to the opening under the tall fence. She turned left and right and, again, studying the coastline on either side. To the west, the silhouettes of tilted palms, their roots obviously subjected to the eroding efforts of the sea, revived in her imagination the scenes of horror, of killing and death. In the same direction, weathered tall fence posts white like skeletons, reminded her of once a mighty village, now deserted. It was the remains of the old Karama village once sur-

rounded by a large cluster of coconut palms. There, according to stories she had heard from the older people, many a brave warrior bled to death from spear wounds as big as man's hands. Many others were burnt to death during a sudden raid. In her now reflective mind, scene after scene of death, torture, and horror were displayed. Overcome by the imagined reality of it she became cold, and shivered as fear struck her like the chilly feelers of death itself. She lumbered towards the fence blindly like lightning, and tripped on a drift-log partly buried in the sand. There she collected herself and attempted to climb the tall fence but failed at the first attempt. The opening by which she had hoped to get inside, had been closed deliberately. She knew it was the custom to do so. She was late, very late. She sobbed then cried out not loudly for fear she might be heard by an unwary sentry or by the enemy. "Oaea! Oaea! Oaea!" someone was calling from inside the walls. It was her sister Maisea. Oaea gathered courage. Until now, her cries had been muffled by the continuous pounding of the waves as they spilled heavily on the beach and the ensuing drone. At one instance when the drone subsided she got closer to the walls, and heard the voice faintly, but the breaking of the monotony frightened her even more.

"Oaea! Oaea!" called Maisea again.

"I'm here," Oaea cried.

Maisea, the elder and the more experienced in the way of life of the day, had been told of her sister's disappearance late in the afternoon. Maisea's immediate task now was to rescue her sister from inside the fence. There was no other way out of it except to find two posts with a space wide enough to allow a hole to be dug. On reaching the post, Maisea whispered to Oaea to begin digging from outside while she did from inside. All had to be done in silence lest the army suspect. The consequences both of them knew were harsh and brutal. Both worked fast, and in a short time a hole big enough to let Oaea through was dug. Oaea's position outside the fence was rather a hair-raising one due to its openness. She had to make sure no strange axe or spear unexpectedly came down on her neck.

"Lie flat on your chest with your head first", Maisea suggested, "and crawl and push on all fours."

Maisea held tight her sister's shoulders and began pulling her through. Once inside, Oaea

though covered all over by sand, embraced her sister as if she had been saved from a terrible death.

"You knew too well you were risking your own life wandering aimlessly outside," Maisea began the scolding. "How ignorant are you knowing that all the wars always start at this end? You know too, there are only three of us; you mother and I. How sad it would have been if we had lost you. Don't you ever dare do this again. Do you understand? I hope you do." Tears started streaming from Oaea's eyes, and at the end of every sentence she nodded in agreement. In a situation like this, it was the responsibility of the father to discipline a naughty child. But they had no father, and mother could not do it. Maisea was not the kind of parent to have boiled with temper with some mischievous child like Oaea who was unmindful of the customs and concerns of the day. Maisea responded to every situation coolly because she believed that when death struck, it never apologised for being too early or too late. Death to her was a common denominator; life was meant to be peaceful and harmonious. If death had caught up with Oaea when she had been outside, it would not have made any difference because she, Maisea would have gone the same direction and perhaps moments later. It was this simple philosophy of hers that enabled Maisea not to arm herself with a stick or a broom to discipline the disobedient. What she said to Oaea was merely voicing her concern over the thought that the second last hope of the family surviving could so easily become a prey to the enemy unwittingly. The two sisters walked home, the older leading the younger, and avoiding being identified by passers-by.

The custom of the Karama people required an adult member of a family to see to the needs of his immediate blood-relatives, namely the parents, aunts and uncles. This relationship was obligatory between the parent and the first male offspring. It was also true for the first female child but only temporary until she married. A son's responsibility and obligations diverted slightly when he found a wife. On the other hand, daughters were brought up with a view to be sold later to another family to breed its future generations. Despite the separation there was no real limit on how much they could provide for the parents in terms of care and food. The two girls,

particularly Maisea, was fully aware that she was solely responsible for the welfare of Oaea and their mother Marepua. She had to fulfil this obligation while she lived. Marepua had faced so much sorrow and pain. She was on the threshold of life and death. She could not eat, she did not care. She only wanted to see her husband and her four sons well. She had longed for the restoration of her strength so she could continue to perform her duties as a mother ought to do. She had wished to avenge the murder of her husband. This was one group of thoughts that occupied her mind. She yearned for peace and to be able to live again free from the blood surrounding her. She had to protect her daughters for trying to risk their lives longer. She never uttered a word about how she felt about them and their efforts. Ira fought this battle. Maisea and Oaea were all that remained. She accepted that they were part of her life and bone. Maisea had been doing this for the three of them. For Oaea to be well for her lately. She was a leading mother. She had felt that about other things. She wanted to let them be out like the other girls of her age. She was becoming concerned over her own acquired profession of archery and his knowledge how to fight.

Maisea had been made a leader of the soldiers. The war-like and pugilistic men had nearly depopulated the island. The training the women underwent was intensive one. It was continuous from dawn to sun-down. The parents of the women complained little for surprisingly the women in terms of home supplies. Oaea, however, suffered a great deal. Maisea was almost indulgent towards her new role as a warrior. The girls in the platoon were part of the tradition which women in the past had participated in. The aspect of the tradition which was restricted to men. The elders had a traditional dividing line which was not to be crossed when the danger was over. Maisea was beginning to collapse under the strain of hunger. Other families experienced the same. Most of the families had already died of fish and coconuts. The co-

particularly Maisea, was fully aware of this; she was solely responsible for the upkeep of both Oaea and their mother Marepua. She strove to fulfil this obligation while she had yet the time. Marepua had faced so much in life that she was on the threshold of life and death. If she did not eat, she did not care. She only wished that her husband and her four sons were alive again, and longed for the restoration of her sight and strength so she could continue her motherly duties as a mother ought to do. Marepua further wished to avenge the murderers of her beloveds. This was one group of thoughts she harboured in her mind. She yearned for peace and freedom and to be able to live again free from the smell of blood surrounding her. She sympathised with her daughters for trying to make the span of her life longer. She never uttered a word about how she felt about them and never commented on their efforts. Ira fought this inner battle alone. Maisea and Oaea were all their mother owned, she accepted that they were part of her own blood and bone. Maisea had been doing all she could for the three of them. For Oaea, things had not been well for her lately. She was growing tired of leading mother. She had felt the urge for doing other things. She wanted to leave the village and be out like the other girls of her age. Oaea was becoming concerned over Maisea's newly acquired profession of archery, spearsmanship and his knowledge how to fight with clubs.

Maisea had been made a leader of the female soldiers. The war-like and pugnacious little hill-men had nearly depopulated the village of men. The training the women underwent was a very intensive one. It was continued from sun-up to sun-down. The parents of the girls had complained little for surprisingly they did not suffer in terms of home supplies. Oaea and her mother however, suffered a great deal. Meanwhile, Maisea was almost indulgent in her enjoyment of her new role as a warrior. She and the other girls in the platoon were proud because no women in the past had participated in this one aspect of the tradition which has for long been restricted to men. The elders had advised that the traditional dividing line would be drawn again when the danger was over. Maisea's house was beginning to collapse under the weight of increasing hunger. Other families experienced the same. Most of the families had already turned to a diet of fish and coconuts. The coastline was always

abundant in shoals of seasonal fish.

The Kukukuku was a clever warrior. He would destroy food gardens and burn the much depended-upon-sago palms before waging a war on the coastal people, thus reducing his enemy's livelihood to the fish from the sea. The nearby yam and tapioca gardens had been exhausted, and the only supply of sago forthcoming was from relatives who married at Toaripi. Until the time Maisea had joined the village women's army, her household had been supported by uncle Ori at Toaripi. Oaea was a young body who possessed an old heart. She never saw her father and brothers and therefore had vague ideas about them, but she learnt to live through the difficulties that followed. Although she lived to guide mother now, she desired to do more than just that. She wanted to be able to show the other girls in the village that she too could do what they had done; like catching fish and prawns or carrying her small string bag of food and roots from the gardens to the village. Her peers at the village always boasted of their accomplishments; accompanying their mothers to the gardens or going fishing. Each of them often told stories about how she caught a big fish or that a big prawn jumped from their mothers' nets to theirs. Their fathers, they said, praised them while eating their daughters' first big catches. Others girls jeered at Oaea, and called her names.

They would say, "You are old like your mother. You would not leave your house to join us in games." Occasionally, Oaea would go looking for them but at their meeting, she would turn and hurry home. She was never very happy and was always embarrassed. Oaea would cover her face with her hands and cry, and on returning to the house, neither tell Maisea nor mother. The parents were not aware of this. It was just fun in words that the girls conceived themselves. Oaea would not stand this sort of thing any longer. She meant to put an end to this teasing. It was these comments and jokes of her contemporaries that aroused in her the feeling of inadequacy. That was why she had left the village for the beach, without telling her mother and Maisea. The thought of finding food not because she must, but for the joy of it, had prompted her to seek solace and possible solutions to the varied problems in her mind. Maisea must be told of this; she wanted to go with her to do anything

and leave mother alone, she thought. Oaea kept quiet until she and Maisea entered the house. She almost burst open with what had begun to accumulate in her mind. Was Maisea also concerned about finding food for the three of them? Would mother object if she asked to accompany Maisea? Had Maisea any plans now? She stirred these questions silently.

"I'll still go if my sister refuses me this time," she chorused her own thought, Maisea already was setting the food down the meal consisted of three roasted sticks of sago, and three roasted wrappings of prawns which a kindly neighbour had given that afternoon. She had prepared the meal before the search for Oaea. The three sticks of sago represented the last supply they had in way of food in the house.

"I suppose you went to the beach because you had a problem," Maisea whispered to Oaea as if she had heard the latter's thoughts. "Did you go out to rid yourself of the problem, or perhaps make up your mind whether to follow me?" "I ... yes, I have nothing to say except that I" Oaea hesitated. "Go on," suggested Maisea.

"I really want to go with you if you are thinking of finding food for us. I must go with you. Don't say I'm staying home again," Oaea insisted and broke down weeping.

Ira was becoming weak and was given to sleeping heavily in the early hours of the evening. She had been fast asleep when the two girls arrived home earlier. Although her daughters were only whispering, it was to her like two people arguing. Their sounds were so loud that she woke up. Until now she had been sensitive to any slightest noise and would ask who it was. But now she had to ask, "What's the trouble?"

"Oh, I said something which Oaea is not happy about and is crying," Maisea replied.

Ira did not pursue the question further. Maisea really had no time to either discourage or encourage her sister because mother had woken up. She felt it would be better for her to tell Oaea when they went to bed. She would suggest that they go up the river together without telling mother. Maisea gave mother her share of the sticks of sago and prawn wrapping. The three ate the meal in silence, and prepared for the night's rest.

Hardly had the two sisters and their ailing mother pulled their mat coverings over them

when the traditional harbinger, the conch shell, was given a long and monotonous note once, twice and again. Its undulating blur caused by the time taken for breath, echoed into the night. If blown during the day, it denoted a certain important ceremony. More often, the blasts. The day-time blowing also signified the welcoming or the swearing-in of a new Semese or a new member being introduced to the elite Pukari group. At night, however, the winding of the conch-shell signified either peace or war. Had the blasts been hasty and repeated momentarily it would appeal for mobilisation for war. Under those circumstances, women and children would be rushed indoors and secured while all the able-bodied male population would be heard; reaching for their fighting-weapons or wrestling with them and heading for the assembly area. Tonight the sound carried certain ambiguities. The village was still at war with the Kukukuku. It still was not clear whether the men were being called to war. After a short time-lapse, the blowing became long drawn, and stopped. This was followed immediately by a loud, clear, calm voice.

"People of Karama resume your gardening and sago making now. For a long time, we have fought the Kukukuku who have tried to grab our land. For a long time, our young men have been killed, and our women have been abducted and killed. Stop weeping. Forget the past. Let us start a new life now. Men of Karama, you must consider and concern yourselves with filling the stomachs of your children. Our children have been hungry for so long. We must now find food or grow it to feed ourselves and our children. The enemy will no longer fight us. People of Karama, our enemy has retreated. Our warriors have followed the Kukukuku to their village in the mountains and have seen with their own eyes why the movement has been made. Their chief who loved war is dead." A sigh could be felt and heard in every house that received the last message. "Rejoice and be happy now for we can move to our land inland and start life all over again. For the women and children, ensure that wherever you go, whatever you do, suspect any noise you hear. It may be that of the enemy. Any sightings you make, report them immediately to the elders. I repeat, any person you see and if you are sure he is not a coastal, then make for home straight away. Married women must move about

with their husbands. For the sure you are part of a large continued to the other end faded, Oaea prodded her sis

"Did you hear that? The Kukukuku have returned to their death of their leader. That help now to get food for our

Maisea was silent for a moment she examined her sister.

"Did you hear the man tell Was he killed or did he die

"No," Oaea replied in a "But I think if he was killed by then I fear the war will never end our life time," Oaea suggested heart. Maisea paused only advised her, "Which is what therefore means you stay home

At Oaea's loud protests, who had heard part of the daughters.

"My daughters, it is the first that the Kukukuku have stopped not give in easily as I know. This regardless of whether they are Mark the words of the man. Men to find food do not go along," "I do not believe a word of said," Ira confirmed Oaea's certain men in this village who about their own personal well they are prepared to betray them I say the man is a coward."

"But mother," Oaea soiled "How could we prove that it comes from a coward?"

"The Kukukuku has the does not spare his enemy," M.

"When I was a young woman your father, a young man par came running into the village had been shot at by a cassowary said, missed him and landed afternoon, many warriors who the time, hurried to the site shooting. They scoured the arrow-shooting cassowary. It started returning home, out of the trees like rain-drop bushes nearby, more arrows at them like sand grains before a

with their husbands. For the single girl, make sure you are part of a large group." The voice continued to the other end of the village. As it faded, Oaea prodded her sister anxiously.

"Did you hear that? The man said the Kukukuku have returned to their own land to mourn the death of their leader. That means at least I can help now to get food for ourselves and mother."

Maisea was silent for a moment then calmly examined her sister.

"Did you hear the man tell how the chief died? Was he killed or did he die a natural death?"

"No," Oaea replied in a confused manner.

"But I think if he was killed by our own warriors then I fear the war will never end. Certainly not in our life time," Oaea suggested with uncertainty of heart. Maisea paused only a little while and advised her, "Which is what could well be. It therefore means you stay home and I go alone."

At Oaea's loud protests, mother Marepua who had heard part of the message, joined her daughters.

"My daughters, it is the first time I have heard that the Kukukuku have stopped fighting. They do not give in easily as I know. They always fought on regardless of whether they are winning or losing. Mark the words of the man. Maisea, if you have to find food do not go alone," Mother continued. "I do not believe a word of what the man has said." Ira confirmed Oaea's fears, "There are certain men in this village who are so concerned about their own personal welfare and lives that they are prepared to betray their own people. I say the man is a coward."

"But mother," Oaea sought an explanation. "How could we prove that what the man said comes from a coward?"

"The Kukukuku has the heart of a pig. He does not spare his enemy," Marepua responded.

"When I was a young woman just married to your father, a young man panting out of breath came running into the village, proclaiming he had been shot at by a cassowary. The arrow, he said, missed him and landed in the river. That afternoon, many warriors who were at home at the time, hurried to the site of the reported shooting. They scoured the area but found no arrow-shooting cassowary. Instead when they started returning home, arrows poured out of the trees like rain-drops. While from the bushes nearby, more arrows and spears flew at them like sand grains before a storm, and swept

them away like floodwaters. Our men stood their ground but were out-numbered. They were brave indeed. It was the greatest massacre of all time. Only a few who had managed to flee, escaped. They arrived home, demoralized, frustrated and exceedingly angry. You see my daughters, this man who had caused the death of so many at the one time, had been sent home as a warning. The truth was that he had made a deal with the Kukukuku; they would spare him and the immediate members of his family being killed. This meant any member of his family could wander inland as far as they could, hunting and gardening and use his name as part of the deal. Anyone else would disappear until such time as the number of people they wanted killed were killed. So he had made up the lie about the cassowary to secure his own livelihood and land. But he lived a short life and the rest of the his family were wiped out mysteriously. I suspect a similar story had been told this evening but in an entirely different way."

Marepua stopped, knowing that somehow she had given her daughters her interpretation of the message. Soon after she had ended her yarn, the three could hear an argument between their kindly neighbour and his wife. The husband had apparently been annoyed by his wife's interpretation of the same message. The man was so angry that he began beating up his wife. The woman's cry and the proceeding argument had been heard by many. Indeed there was already a crowd milling around the house. Maisea and Oaea were there too. The man explained that his wife had accused him of telling that lie to the warrior leaders who decided to inform the whole village. Hence the conch shell blowing. Some men among the group of onlookers became curious too, and asked whether there was any truth in the wife's accusations. He did not say. However, he produced a single leaf of an edible plant common around a Kukukuku home. This particular plant grew in high altitudes and one had to pass by or cross the Kukukuku country to obtain them. Some of the men saw and believed. Others walked back to their houses with some reservations. Maisea and Oaea also saw the leaf in the light of the coconut leaf torches the curious crowds had brought with them.

Oaea whispered into her sister's ear and said, "He is a good man, isn't he? He is always kind to us, and is one of the best warriors in the village.."

"Perhaps he is. We have not yet seen him in action. His story could be true," Maisea replied

trying to correct her sister.

"What do you think of mother speaking about the man who lied?" the younger sister asked.

"I don't know," the older sister replied but added hesitantly. "You had better stay, I'll go to the garden alone."

"No, I am going." Oaea retorted angrily. The two sisters who had become inseparable in answer to a crisis, now walked as inseparable individuals; one apparently hurt by the other.

The dodgy, witless willy wagtail cackled its merry song of dawn, heralding a new day; a day yet with its memories dear and bitter to be held by those surviving and by those generations yet unborn; because it would be the day of blood and death, of victory and sacrifice. The Karama was no stranger to the sound of this bird. Often back home, the willy wagtail sang false alarms particularly for the fishermen who would want to go out at night but instead of low-tide he would find high-tide or vice versa.

With this understanding of the so-called dawn-bird, warrior-leaders at each Tera could be heard discouraging their men from cutting their sleep short.

"Back to sleep. Just a short while until the wild fowl shrieks its hesitant song," they whispered instructions. Perhaps it was anxiety to face the unknown way to a near-dawn fever-of-fear that crept slowly but surely, worsened only by the chill from the morning dew that soaked their sides away from the fires. The leaders had maintained an all night vigilance and the dew would evaporate as the killer of darkness and fear appeared higher and ever higher. There was a hush all over the camps at the Tera as the warriors awaited the faithful and reliable wild fowl, many of which had been disturbed from their nests and scattered among the Tera by the invading forces, the evening before. The hush transpired into an awful feeling of hopelessness and doom as one and all awaited the arrival of the fleet.

Then, the youths on either side of the banks heard the muffled swish of the paddles through water, and upon a cautious investigation, beheld the fleet spreading across the width of the river like drift-wood blocking the mouth of the river. The fleet commanders received further instructions and after brief consultations were told to push on. During the stop, the discovery of the raft tracks yesterday were passed by word of

mouth to the troops on the eastern bank.

In the meantime, the wildfare, most trusted of all winged and beaked creatures, blurted out its message, and the march formulated yesterday took shape once again. Every precaution had to be taken to ensure there was no ambush, and several warriors from the middle ranks of the western front were ordered to make haste along the bank with the specific orders to kill those on the raft ahead.

This group after being named disappeared into the hostile swamp and shrublands. A light early morning mist lay thick, like a huge web on their untrodden paths. Each in his own mind was devising and calculating attack tactics which he would employ upon meeting the rafted enemy; each armed to the full for close and distant combat. Cautiously and silently each pair of eyes swept through the overhanging branches down to the darkest and smallest cluster of jungle shrub; no sign as yet. While back at the Tera the order to advance had been issued and the longest-ever line of Karama troops marched at the pace of a fast-flowing current towards the virgin land and forest; towards a tribe of strangers who appeared to be the owners of the land from the coast to this far. The Kuku-kuku too had sought rest for the night. Their raft was tied and well-hidden at the opening of a smaller tributary far to the north of the Tera. Each of the patrolman had taken turns to keep watch during the night. In their archery training, they had been taught how to respond to dangerous situations such as at this time. They learned too that murderous activities against people called for a close scrutiny of human movements because any subsequent action was equal to the weight and number killed earlier. Their simple philosophy was that what is taken or lost by force must inevitably be paid for in the same way whether it be life or thing.

In their orientations to the skill of acquiring archery, the elders instilled in the minds of the young their first principle of tribal warfare:

"A bird cannot strike back;

A larger bird may;

A wounded animal

Is more dangerous than

The anger of a woman

But the anger of the human enemy

Is death and sorrow;

You must therefore shoot to kill

And not to injure."

The rest of the patrol had been told it would be sometime before the boys who had been killed would be returned. The leader argued, however, that if they were discovered there was a possibility that Karama would be on their track within a day. His conscience was distributed by the weight of guilt; there was no justification for there was no fight. It was a sheer necessity for its own sake.

This was why he had decided to leave the guards last night. When morning came his attitude had changed. They were to be home as soon as possible to get home and to a successful raid.

However, the patrol leader was not so decisive and became conscious of the danger of doom but was uncertain. He bled and vacillated. At first he hesitated to immediate embarkation on the river. The astute leader with additional concern for the survival of the tribe, issued another lot of instructions. These were his convictions that his tribe must not suffer because of inadequate preparation and readiness.

He barked out orders to two warriors to go down-stream to the mouth of the raft was not being followed. Their journey would start when they returned. The men surreptitiously crept down the river, pausing at vantage points, peering through openings in the thick riverbank and undergrowth.

Their instinct drove them from the point from where the river was a straight line to its mouth and stretched down the river. They could see. The two men too strained their eyes as far and as wide as they could. There was nothing; nothing to report. The leader and disprove his pessimism. One thought dominated their feelings. The rest on the raft; they were better, they were the members of the Karama warriors returning from a successful raid. In this happy mood, one of the warriors decided to return to base and the leader.

As soon as their heads were turned, they were struck like the sting of a scorpion. One severed the neck and the other the mouth of another to nape. A

And not to injure."

The rest of the patrol had been convinced that it would be sometime before the bodies of the two boys who had been killed would be discovered. The leader argued, however, that if indeed they were discovered there was a possibility that the Karama would be on their track without hesitation. His conscience was distributed by an inner feeling of guilt; there was no justification in the killings; there was no fight. It was a sheer brutal killing for its own sake.

This was why he had decided to post the guards last night. When morning came their attitude had changed. They wanted to leave as soon as possible to get home and celebrate their successful raid.

However, the patrol leader was still apprehensive and became conscious of an approaching doom but was uncertain. He became confused and vacillated. At first he had ordered an immediate embarkation on the raft but as an astute leader with additional qualities and concern for the survival of the tribe, had issued another lot of instructions. These were based on his convictions that his tribe must not be allowed to suffer because of inadequate preparation and readiness.

He barked out orders to two of the strongest warriors to go down-stream to ensure that the raft was not being followed. The home-bound journey would start when they returned. The two men surreptitiously crept down the western bank, pausing at vantage points, peeling their eyes through openings in the thick river bank shrubs and undergrowth.

Their instinct drove them further down to a point from where the river was almost as wide as its mouth and stretched down as far as the eye could see. The two men took a long pause, strained their eyes as far and wide as possible. There was nothing; nothing to report back to the leader and disprove his pessimistic imaginings. One thought dominated their feelings and those of the rest on the raft; they were now men and better, they were the members of the first successful warriors returning from a successful raid. In this happy mood, one of them beckoned the other to return to base and the raft.

As soon as their heads were turned, two lances struck them like the sting of a bee; one half-severed the neck and the other spear pierced the mouth of another to nape. At the same time

arrows deposited themselves at vital parts. The two warriors fell soundless, sprawling on the newly-beaten tracks.

The Karama patrol had scored in their first revenge attack. They had spotted the tapa cloth hoods of the Kukukuku warriors while crossing the head of the streamlet a short distance back. Careful not to disturb and alert their prey, the coastal warriors crept within throwing distance of the enemy. There was no victory cry lest it be heard up north. The heads of the two fallen were severed and hung by vines on the lowest branch touching water. The troops on both water and land would not miss them.

The members of the patrol gathered speed after realizing they were now very close to the rest of the enemy. When a coastal is full of rage for revenge, as they say 'the effect of dead blood', he was an animal and nothing could stop him.

Carefully and cautiously, they raced through the virgin undergrowth like a hungry lizard after its prey. Shortly, the leader ahead tapped an arrow on his bow making a click which was repeated down to the last man. The raft was seen, and they were to surround the enemy. First, they had to cross the large stream at the mouth of which the raft was anchored.

Each waded deep and virtually swam the rest, and climbed the other side of the bank dripping. They were near but not close enough. In a short time the distance between the main bank and that of the stream was closed in. The party though thoroughly dampened, advanced on the enemy whose eyes were concentrated in the general direction of where their two friends had gone. Eagerly awaiting the two men, many of them were unarmed. Their leader alone was armed with two lances. His keen sense told him there might be trouble. He looked up and down the stream, behaving in a way as if he had heard and smelt a human presence other than of those with him. Then when he spoke sternly drawing the attention of his charges a spear struck him in the mid ribs. Just before he reeled on impact, he managed to let go one of his spears which landed on the left shoulder of a Karama. The Kukukuku leader slumped where he had stood in a bloody heap.

The Karama swarmed onto the raft like bees hacking, slashing, gouging, severing head, limbs and ears. It was a mournful and piteous sight. The cries of human anguish and fear; human appeals

for mercy; the gnashing of teeth; the tearing pain; bones forcedly broken; the splitting of skulls.

Then there was an unearthly silence. The Kukukuku blood flowed, discolouring the muddy, murky water, turning it into brownish-red like the solution in the palm-container before the sago is collected.

The Karama was now afraid. Drenched in fear of the unknown; the strange hostile environment; the conviction of each man that there would be a clash between the living and the dead was too real to be shirked. This fear sank deep in their bone marrow and each shivered. The Karama retreated along the bloody bank, each summoning persuasive and imaginative powers to force a return home by all troops. The basis of the fear was they had all been the bad omen: the Kukukuku leader's eyes turned all white when the last of his warriors has been slain.

Dreams were an integral part of the life of Karama. To him a dream was the direction to a pitfall in life; a shadow of happiness or sadness for the present or for the future. Often some dreams were confirmed in physical activities as foretold. But many others drifted away from the conscience like the drift-log in a strong current. The Karama believed that dreams were visions sent by powers beyond himself and that these powers fought constantly to control his thoughts, habits, behaviour and actions. He believed dreams were communications between the dead and living or among the living and therefore one of these powers was none other than his own spirit. Those communications between himself and the dead, a relative, were extremely serious matters and therefore required serious considerations and indeed interpretations. Any element of doubt or where ambiguities prevailed, meant the cancellation of daily routine plans for gardening, fishing or hunting. Often the personality and character as foretold in dreams never materialised, let alone their physical existence for any length of time.

However, the dream and vision about the birth of Maissea had become practical reality in ways other than that which referred to her as 'leading warriors into battle.' The rest were no longer tell-tales of a dream.

In reaching adulthood, Maissea was one of the tallest women of the village. She had a round pretty face that never stopped smiling. Her physique was not representative of the contem-

poraries of her age. Indeed, her outer physical features very much resembled those of the men. These resemblances were the issues of entertainment and joviality among gossiping women in an amicable manner. To some, she was strangely beautiful but to others she was a man in female skin. The men, however felt the women were undeniably jealous but laced their criticisms in an unobtrusive and less-admiring manner.

For Maissea had long arms wearing thin tight flesh under which veins stood out like newly attracted parasitic leeches sucking the blood.

Along her calves and on the feet more muscles were clearly visible. She was slim in the waist which supported an extraordinarily huge pair of breasts. As such she was also the sexiest-looking woman at Karama. But no man dared flattery nor teasing, nor approaching her with the obvious question.

Despite those characteristics, Maissea was known throughout for her calmness, mobility, resourceful perseverance, patience and, of course, great physical strength. She excuded these attributes and qualities wherever she went. The people of Karama, particularly the women, suffered an inner feeling of fear and because of this many of them held her name in high esteem and even some had revered it. The major cause of this was the occasion when Maissea killed the animal, the most dreaded by the coastal and river people of the river creatures; the crocodile. Women and men alike would never rest their lips from telling.

The village was situated on the east bank of the Karama river along a peninsula jutting out to the sea. The mouth of the river extended westward. When the tide ebbed, many inlets were formed and because this region was near the fresh and salt water boundary, plankton was abundant and therefore it was an ideal fishing spot. The main river flowed nearby. One afternoon Maissea was fishing alone from a canoe and not far away in another canoe were three other women fishing on her left.

Suddenly from nowhere a huge crocodile emerged and began attacking the canoe belonging to the three women. The canoe capsized and the terrified, helpless women were thrown off balance, and in the ensuing confusion swum in any direction. The fearsome-looking, man-eating creature was as cunning and clever in its wild instinct as its size was big. It began smashing up

the craft probably to ensure the escape. Its lance-sharp claws and biters set to work and in a short time the carefully hewn out log was split. Maissea sat fishing with her back to the log and did not see what had really happened.

On hearing the sounds of the cries of the fear-struck women, Maissea came to the rescue.

As it happened, the tide was running earlier, before the attack had begun. The fast current helped them to reach the sandbar that had been formed and stood there shaking with fear.

Maissea decided to intercept the crocodile. It seemed to her to be intent on catching her even on the sandbar. She paddled with might and shortly was now facing the crocodile's head.

The crocodile hit the canoe with its tail. At that moment a wooden paddle flew from its eyes. The man-eater was startled at the moment and then on recovering its senses, it was furious then ever. Again it dashed forward whose occupant was already in the water.

The first impact of the thrust of the dugout canoe sinking. Maissea tried to retrieve the paddle. The blow had cut across the eye of the crocodile. The moment did not seem to recover. Maissea threw a leaf-plaited hand-ball and a guttural cry shocked the onlookers. The crocodile somersaulted and rolled over times as if to dislodge the oar.

While turning and heaving, the crocodile was nearby. It surfaced and charged. Maissea's form but missed as it had only one oar. The long tail accidentally brushed her. The tip so maneuvered, emerged around the waist and she was pulled up in the air. She splashed just a few feet away from the great, gaping mouth of the scaly killer.

Instantly, Maissea, still holding the paddle, gathered all her strength, leapt out of the water, and as the beast speared her, she drove the paddle into its eye. So, the crocodile bit off three fingers from her hand. The paddle lodged itself in the crocodile's mouth. The killer struggled, when it surfaced in an attempt to dislodge the inedible matter which stuck fast.

the craft probably to ensure that none of its prey escaped. Its lance-sharp claws and equally-sharp teeth set to work and in a short space of time the carefully hewn out log was in smithereens. Maisea sat fishing with her back to the women and did not see what had really happened.

On hearing the sounds of the smashing and cries of the fear-struck women, she rushed to the rescue.

As it happened, the tide which started ebbing earlier, before the attack had isolated them and the fast current helped them to swim towards a sandbar that had been formed. They reached it and stood there shaking with fear.

Maisea decided to intercept the beast which seemed to her to be intent on chasing the women even on the sandbar. She paddled with all her might and shortly was now facing the killer from her canoe.

The crocodile hit the canoe with its nose. At that moment a wooden paddle struck on one of its eyes. The man-eater was stunned for a moment and then on recovering became more furious than ever. Again it dashed at the canoe whose occupant was already in the water.

The first impact of the thrust had the single dugout canoe sinking. Maisea had managed to retrieve the paddle. The blow had gouged a deep cut across the eye of the beast which for a moment did not seem to recover fully. It spun like a leaf-plaited hand-ball and reeled. Its heavy guttural cry shocked the onlookers. In great pain, the crocodile somersaulted and heaved many times as if to dislodge the object in its eye.

While turning and heaving, it sensed a being nearby. It surfaced and charged at the floating form but missed as it had only one eye to use. Its long tail accidentally brushed against Maisea. The tip so maneuvered, embraced Maisea around the waist and she was pulled and shot up in the air. She splashed just a small distance away from the great, gaping, sharp-toothed mouth of the scaly killer.

Instantly, Maisea, still holding the paddle, gathered all her strength, leapt waist high out of the water, and as the beast speedily closed in on her, she drove the paddle into its mouth. In doing so, the crocodile bit off three fingers on her right hand. The paddle lodged itself firmly in the mouth. The killer struggled, wheeled, dived and surfaced in an attempt to dislodge the foreign indigestible matter which stuck fast right down its

throat, its claws groping aimlessly.

This was a member of the most dreaded, feared and hated of all creatures in the water. A child or a grown-up in its claws never knew pity. "The crocodile must die," Maisea thought to herself.

Before long she was diving and dodging its claws and tail, hoping to kill it somehow although she had no weapons. She conceived an idea.

The crocodile did not become weak. It still shook itself, dived and surfaced, whined and reeled.

Maisea dived right under it. With her remaining two fingers on the right hand she paused them with a great force into the anus of the beast, and withdrew them holding parts of the intestines. The crocodile spun around, turned up side down and floated lifelessly towards the deep blue sea.

So ended the battle between a woman and a beast. The victim-to-be became victorious. But the merciless son-of-nature became a source of feeding for numerous fish and prawns.

The three women who had been watching the spectacle with awe swam towards her and helped her swim to the sandbank which had become the farthest extremity of the peninsula at low tide. One of the women had apparently sought help from the people. Shortly before the fight had ended, the beach had become alive with people. For some reasons unknown, the men who were there did not attempt to help her. The people wondered whether the woman was dead. She was lying face downward bleeding badly from the finger wounds.

Was the killing of the killer a feat performed by some extraordinary beings who had powers and strength beyond human understanding?

In the Karama community performers of miracles were hardly praised but a criminal act was much discussed and talked about. Thus, while Maisea built around her a number of hero worshippers she had at the same time, the same number of enemies who were mostly men.

However, among the men themselves, those who had responded to the distress signal could not explain and refrain from talking about why they could not do a thing to help at the time although they were armed ready to step in and kill the crocodile themselves. These men told their story in awe and reverence. But to the others

she was just "lucky". To them "the friendly mermaids" in great numbers helped the women in her fight. Yet others said that the spirits of other women killed by crocodiles had killed the crocodile. The story of her victory was told in three different versions.

Indeed Maisea herself had no knowledge of the woman in the dream, for she had never been told why she was named Maisea and not any other name.

The story was told by her body. In time the wounds became scars and the missing fingers confirmed the courage of woman who had conquered a painful death. Her courage became a legend along the Karama coast.

The Karama depended on the moon to forecast the weather. According to this widely-accepted belief, the newly-risen moon in its natural inclinations indicated which of the two main seasons were approaching. In its resemblance to a bow with a slightly-loosened string, the new moon inclining in a westward direction signified the coming of the west wind, and its accompanying rains and thunder-storms. Similarly, if one end of the bow was raised higher than the other and pointed in an easterly direction, the time for the cold, dry east wind was near. The Karama knew from long experience and knowledge that the changes would be effective for either seasons respectively within two or three new moon-rises. These seasonal changes dictated the kind of life, mood and attitude of the Karama before and during the respective periods. The people of Karama both hated and loved the west wind for it brought inconveniences as well as numerous advantages in terms of their survival and livelihood. It was called Avora.

The Avora with its natural potential to destroy and to kill acted as the checking system for all constructions.

The people therefore must engage vigorously in counter-offensive measures; new strong storm-resistant houses had to be built; roofs mended or replaced; posts and thatching were reinforced, and supports provided to walls and fences. The second group of activities which demanded energy and physical strength was the most important of all; the making of new and larger food gardens. These were entered into with energy and commitment as if there was a competition to find the biggest garden.

There was indeed an understanding among

the Pukari for such a contest, for they owned more than the ordinary village person. It was they who would be competing indirectly, come time for harvest, by making ceremonial Pukari feasts. Those who had nothing to do or had little land to till, were often employed. They would harvest a substantial share if they needed food. Garden-making was a particularly labourious and strenuous physical task as appropriate tools for felling large trees, for example, were scarce and those that were available were unreliable.

The Karama, however, applied ingenious, long-standing practices for cutting down trees.

The larger trees were debarked at the bottom of most trunks and this was followed by tediously digging deep enough to expose parts of the surface roots. An inferno built over the exposure was sure to kill the tree. Smaller trees were uprooted. This was no problem as the making of larger gardens was a community effort.

The Karama possessed a number of tools nevertheless. By way of heavy-duty garden tools, the Karama had discovered over time immemorial the use of a certain type of stone as tools. At one stage these stones were abundant and were bedded at the headwaters of a mountain stream some distance west. The stones flaked off a hard rock wall that overshadowed the stream.

The stone in varying sizes and shapes were heated over several days in an effort to test their strength and hardness. The selected stones were then chipped and ground against each other into the required shapes and sizes. This process was followed by dipping the tools into a tub of refined solution of coconut and herb oil. The oil reinforced and element of the tool and gave it a gloosy surface. These were then placed above the fire-place to continue the process of hardening before use.

Axes, adzes, knives and other household tools were made in this way. The tools were employed appropriately in their respective tasks before the onset of the wet and then again at harvest time.

The people of Karama received the east wind in a mood entirely different to that of the west wind. Their spirit would rise because they knew harvest-time was near. There would be food everywhere for everyone. Due to the abundance, there would be feasting, singing and dancing; bride price payments; and time for other important traditional ceremonies. This was the time when the Karama would look beyond his

own environment. His attitude became more sentimental at the time when the great sea ceased its anger and ferocity and ordered only miniat hullaby to lap the watery shore and hesitant as if to reflect people ashore. The beaches wards from the tide marks e sea-shells of assortment and their cowardly tongues in sea life. Most ended up lifeless fires; while above, the sky lay which the sun showed its re by shooting down fiery arrows on all living things. This increased the visibility of the extremely jealous of the Sep the rolling hill lands to the time, perpetual smoke scivities below. The Karama f and selecting cool palm screen spiral into the bl evenings they knew that hor bandicoots, and cassowari the day were being feasted felt that the land of the Sep as this had been cut into n and islands where thorny hostile, inaccessible swamp

Under this rather conf mood, the Karama wa numerous songs of ima hardships of the past and p Mauta; a time of full storm time which promoted adv

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Maisea arrived at Toa incarnated, dead relative Toaripi were the most su had a deep-rooted belie physically of people whom

own environment. His attitude and mood would become more sentimental and mature. This was the time when the great seething, surfing sea, ceased its anger and ferocity; it lay still and calm and ordered only miniature waves to sing a lullaby to lap the watery shore. The sea was lazy and hesitant as if to reflect the mood of the people ashore. The beaches had stretched outwards from the tide marks exposing in their wake shells of assortment and life which spat out their cowardly tongues in search of the breath of life. Most ended up lifeless in cooking pots and fires; while above, the sky lay wide-open through which the sun showed its real temper and power by shooting down fiery arrows of scorching heat on all living things. This cloudless condition increased the visibility of the Karama. For he was extremely jealous of the Sepoe; the inhabitants of the rolling hill lands to the east where, at this time, perpetual smoke screened hunting-activities below. The Karama flocked to the beaches and selecting cool palm shades watched the screen spiral into the blue oblivion. In the evenings they knew that hordes of pigs, wallabies, bandicoots, and cassowaries slaughtered during the day were being feasted upon. The Karama felt that the land of the Sepoe was the dreamland as this had been cut into numerous little streams and islands where thorny sago-palms sprung in hostile, inaccessible swamps.

Under this rather confused but sentimental mood, the Karama was able to compose numerous songs of imagined abundance; of hardships of the past and personalities. This was Mauta; a time of full stomach; of laziness, and a time which promoted adventure.

Mauta was also the time of extreme caution and care in avoiding injuries as it was the ideal time for ulcers and weeping sores. Toaripi was closer to the wallaby country than it was from Karama. Some Karama had to carry sago to Toaripi to barter for bananas and other crops that had reportedly come from the east; their dreamland. Those who had friends and relatives in Toaripi often spent their Mauta time there. It was during one Mauta that Maisea spent some time with her uncle Ori at Toaripi.

Maisea arrived at Toaripi a celebrity; as the incarnated, dead relative of long ago. For the Toaripi were the most superstitious people who had a deep-rooted belief in the return to life physically of people whom death claimed wrong-

fully or immediately. Indeed people whose pigment of skin was entirely different to that of the Toaripi and were complete strangers were often indentified as relatives who had returned from the dead. But within the Toaripi community anyone who performed mighty feats and actions which could not easily be explained, were none other than those who had returned from Evei; the land of the living dead.

To the Toaripi, the killing of the most dreaded creature was beyond their capacity to understand, thereby stimulating hero-worship. In this case it was a woman.

They had no doubt, however, that the young woman from Karama was a living spirit. For many days, people swamped the Ori house; milled around it from sunrise to sunset, observing the scars; offering sympathy and praise, and vying for vantage points just to catch a glimpse of this extraordinary woman of extraordinary courage and strength. Besides exhibiting these human attributes, the Toaripi, particularly the women, were afraid; afraid of hurting her feelings and ego.

Ori decided after being told by many people of the stories spread about his niece to address them and correct their impressions. "My friends, my relatives, people of Toaripi, I have been told many stories about my niece, Maisea. She is not what many of you believe her to be. She is the daughter of my sister Marepua. My niece was born here but has lived at her father's village at Karama where she has grown up to be a woman. This is her you see now." Ori concluded his brief address.

Despite the explanation many, particularly children and older people, continued to idolize her virtually confirming that general impression in the following incident. In the Toaripi hinterland, a number of fresh water lakes were formed as a result of changing river courses and directions. Many of these dropped their water levels during the dry and heat of Mauta. They were abundant in fish and bird life. One day it was decided that one of those lakes must be swept with nets. The lake was connected to a nearby waterway. Maisea accompanied Peto and together with other women left the village very early in the morning.

The stream wound around a sago swamp, and to reach it, the women had to walk through a

thick jungle. About half way towards the stream, some women began asking about the proper direction, as what was presented before them was a knee-deep foliage with vines and undergrowth criss-crossing and webbing the entire length of the track.

The elderly women were sure they were following the right route as taller trees seen last Mauta were still there. They were able to persuade the others to follow. Every step each of them took gave them that sinking feeling and some of them withdrew in shock and fear. Each, however was determined to get there for very personal reasons; a good catch meant endless praise from husbands. The more superstitious women were wary of the condition of the route. They felt in their bone-marrow that something dreadful would happen. Indeed all Toaripi believed that such natural conditions signalled that some great misfortune would befall them before or after a successful hunt.

The women walked closer to the stream. While above the sounds of the crackle of trodden leaves, there were even louder clicks and clacks coming from the direction of the waterway. These were sounds made by the little white prawns as they jumped and skipped in their over-crowded environment. The stream as well as the lake were sizzling with life. In place of the fear that had struck them just a little before, there was excitement and joy on the face of each woman. The elderly women suggested that instead of approaching the mass of luck directly, they should spilt into two groups; one group to come down-stream and the other up-stream. When the two groups met, what a haul of prawns everywhere! Swamped onto the banks, the prawns like sandgrains crawled like lame ants. The women caught what they could and bagged them.

During the height of activity there was a general mood of intense happiness and joviality. Indeed among the women were those who had been newly-married and who had been aroused to a greater degree than the older women. They laughed, giggled and joked about how the little creatures scratched and pricked their vital parts and breasts and how they were stimulated for action. They openly said they would confide this to their husbands after a delicious and delightful meal. It was decided to fish the lake another day as it was getting late. Each carried a coconut-

sackful and each planning in her own mind how the prawns would be cooked that evening. Singing merrily and telling each other stories, they placed their bags on their backs and started the return home. However, the bank-up of leaves was not so thick near the streams but it thickened and deepened as they walked further into the jungle. Someone asked if they were going out of their way again, but another said it was the same route they had taken in the morning. Maisa walked second last in the long line of women. The vision was clear. The women could clearly see where they walked. The only noise that drowned their conversation and singing was the crackle of the dry leaves under their feet. Suddenly, the first, second and the third women at the front were dragged under as if they had fallen into a deep pit, concealed by age-old, jungle droppage. Simultaneously, two huge tails the size of young palm trunks, rose from beneath, and in their wake scattered a dust of leaves, and gripped the three desperate women like a hunting net. The fear-struck, panic-sweating women literally flew and dived in every direction, shouting, crying and helpless. From the rear, however, the famed woman of Karama called out to them to stay together. The tails were of two monstrously sized pythons both of considerable length which had been positioned in the path by inexplicable forces. The blame for the moment was on the Uriru men of the west. The pythons began to pull their victims while coiling at the same time. Their grip was so tight the women gave up in exhaustion and despair. The jungle was alive with their cries for help and-for loved ones at home. Along the dishevelled, leafy path, terrified women stood silently watching in panic as the full effect of the magic dampened their senses from their toes to the roots of their hair. No one moved. No one spoke. The tails had been so arranged that they overlapped but formed a circle in which the women had fallen earlier. The distance between the first and the third women fitted perfectly into the diameter already made by the snake tails. The heads of the two snakes were hidden on the opposite sides of the track, so that when the tails gripped the women and contracted it was obvious there was a tug of war between the two most dreaded creatures on the land. Maisa too was under the influence but she was the first to break the spell. When this occurred she jumped into the rescue like lightning. She started

pulling the women by their arms swaying palms in a guest of welcome however, caused more discomfort. The "legendary" women retreated had just come and pulled a young enough to serve her purpose. It too had been lifted from the rest who stood now motionless placing their trust and hope in a woman to save their friends. A branch-forks she had pulled searched out the head of the snake with all her might pinioned it to the body. She forced down two more forks. The impact on this was immediate loosened its grip on the women who uncoiled its tail from them. Maisa back to the first one again and reserve energy so that this snake lay with such effect that the women headlong in the direction of the shocked state of mind, the release them to faint and they were seen another. The other women sped to their friends, and together with Maisa friends out of the danger area. In a number of younger women hurried to the village to bring help. The three were carried home where all night the traditional hot water treatment out evil spirits, and relieve pain. They suffered only bruised legs and ankles sprained knees.

Death to a widowed Karama was an immense emotional and a blow. The sorrow and sadness of an individual was more than just told confused emotions and feelings. The painful effect on the mentality and behaviour of the living because of the physical, moving, living life had been physical world no longer existed thought kindled and rekindled in a grave. Life was no longer tolerable partner for the remaining space emotional imbalance forced many to contemplate suicide as the easiest. Indeed, a few did precisely that. The situation was more extreme. Since her husband Oaharo and four sons and She could have decided to meet

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pulling the women by their arms which hung like
weeping palms in a gust of wind. Her action,
however, caused more discomfort to her friends.
The "legendary" women retreated to where they
had just come and pulled a young plant strong
enough to serve her purpose. It seemed the spell
had been lifted from the rest of the women
who stood now motionless but consciously
placing their trust and hope in the Karama
woman to save their friends. Armed with the
tranch-forks she had pulled out, Maisea
marched out the head of the snake on the left and
with all her might pinioned it to the nearest tree.
She forced down two more forks on the rest of
the body. Then she turned to the one on the right.
The impact on this was immediate as the snake
loosened its grip on the women and slowly
coiled its tail from them. Maisea then leapt
back to the first one again and utilized all her
reserve energy so that this snake loosened its hold
with such effect that the women were thrown
headlong in the direction of home. In their
shocked state of mind, the release had caused
them to faint and they were seen lumped on one
another. The other women sped to their swooned
friends, and together with Maisea carried their
friends out of the danger area. In the meantime, a
number of younger women hastened to the
village to bring help. The three women were later
carried home where all night they were given the
traditional hot water treatment meant to force
out evil spirits, and relieve pain. The three women
suffered only bruised legs and ankles and two had
strained knees.

Death to a widowed Karama male or female
was an immense emotional and psychological
blow. The sorrow and sadness of the respective
individual was more than just tolerating intensely
confused emotions and feelings. It had a prickly
destructive effect on the mentality, attitude and
behaviour of the living because to them the
physical, moving, living life had ceased; the
physical world no longer existed. Only one
thought kindled and rekindled in the hearts; the
grave. Life was no longer tolerable with out a
partner for the remaining span of life. This
emotional imbalance forced many widows to
contemplate suicide as the easiest way out of life.
Indeed, a few did precisely that. But Marepua's
situation was more extreme. She had lost her
husband Oaharo and four sons at the same time.
She could have decided to meet the same fate as

those before her but she concerned herself with
the future of her two daughters. She considered
remarriage but would the man have the same
character, love and qualities of Oaharo? No! She
must struggle and she knew how to respond to
this struggle. It was her maternal job and res-
ponsibility to ensure her two daughters reached
womanhood before she prepared for her
departure from the world. It seemed that the time
had arrived and she was now more than ready to
part with the full truth of the tragedy that had
haunted her for a long time.

When the two young women returned from
their quarrelling at a neighbour's house, they
found their mother awake and sitting up. She too
had heard the message and had been busily
engaged mentally in pruning facts from fiction
from the message that had been delivered earlier
in the evening. She based her assessment on an
experience of long ago. She was now determined
to import that experience so that her two
daughters could compare and draw their own
conclusions as to the truth or fallacy of the story.
This was the sad, sad story of how her husband
and four sons were murdered. She had preserved
it all this time in her heart. For Maisea and Oaea,
it would be the first time they would hear about
the tragedy, although they had heard from close
friends rather vague details of the terrible slay-
ings.

When the two girls prepared to sleep they
heard mother say, "I have always wanted to tell
you," she paused. "How your father and brother
were killed. The time has now come for me to tell
you all." She was one of a number of eye witnesses
to the burning and torturing of many men,
women and children at the old Karama village.
Maisea and Oaea knew that what they were
about to hear would not be repeated. The older
sister added some wood to the ebbing fire. There
was tenseness in the air. Although the introduc-
tion had been made, and the rest was yet to be
told. Oaea however, was beginning to feel some-
thing foreign climbing and creeping towards her
shoulder, and throughout the narrative, Oaea
suffered currents of coldness flickering up her
spine. Marepua moved closer to the fire. In be-
tween a cry of intense sorrow and the strong will
to leash a deadly weight, she hesitantly began the
story; "Father and I had gone gardening that day.
On our return at sunset, we saw from the distance
thick, white, smoke-like clouds spiralling
through the air. As we got a little closer, we saw

that the whole village was burning, and to make matters worse we could easily see that one of the houses was ours. Your brothers; two of them were there, to defend the village. Neither was married."

"Marepua" he said, "quickly climb that mango tree and wait for me. Camouflage yourself and don't make any movement; don't cough or break any branch. Be very careful." He walked a little distance towards the village but returned, saying, 'I can see that the village has been surrounded. You stay where you are. Be careful. I will go further to check for the boys'."

"Unfortunately, I had forgotten in my hurry, to hide the string bag of food which I left sitting in the main track. Darkness was beginning to spread and the moon was low. As I sat comfortably in the fork of a branch, I heard murmurings below me. I was tempted to call, 'Father!' thinking it was he, but I didn't under those circumstances. I could see from where I sat, in the dim twilight, that the village was still burning. Below, it became obvious to me that a group of people was there. There was the swish of an arrow, and I knew that they had accidentally stepped on the string bag of food and had realized that there may be a woman hiding in the tree. A second arrow grazed my forefinger. I knew that they had seen me somehow and were aiming the arrows at me. I had no alternative but to climb down. As soon as I neared the ground, my grass skirt was torn off me. I grappled with the two men. My breasts and chest were bruised. One of them tried to throw me down and have sexual intercourse with me. I struggled but all in vain as one of them had tied my two hands behind me. Suddenly I heard the voices of many people approaching. I knew no more. When I woke up I saw there were many men. The two men who had assaulted me were also there. It was a terrible feeling to be a woman alone among the enemy. I made every sign I could think of to them to kill me. But no one moved. I broke down crying aloud. When I opened my eyes your father was standing before me. 'Oh, my husband!' I cried 'Father! What is happening to us? Why, why? They've raped me. What have they done to you? I cried ever so hard and fell heavily on his chest. My hands were still tied.'"

"Your father could not hold me because his hands were also tied around him. He told me not to cry. He told me things might be all right if I

kept quite. I believed in what he said and remained quiet.

"Then he told me what had happened to him. 'I was shot in the arm and managed to pull out the arrow. When I was about to swing the axe at the one who shot me, I was attacked like a wild pig and thrown to the ground. They blind-folded me. I heard you cry so I knew. We were led to a grove of palms; our own palms near the main garden route. It was near that creek where our people now anchor their canoes, where they now take them away paddling up the river.' The moon had long gone but the sky was clear and the stars were bright that night. I can see him, even now. His waist was bound to a palm; that one which bears red coconuts now and is growing old. The beasts were not worried about me. They brought a youth who did not resemble any of the hillmen. He translated the questions."

" 'Is this woman, your wife? Were there any other women with you? Do you intend keeping that woman as your wife?' Father was a very brave man. He did not answer any of the questions for which he was slapped each time after each question. But he kept calm. Through the interpreter Father asked that I be set free. They slapped him once, twice, and many times more with a knotted end of a rope. He was bleeding. I wept bitterly and continuously."

Oaea whose chest was dampened with tears, interrupted, "Mother, do not tell us any more. You are frightening me."

"My daughters, I feel that my hour is drawing close, and therefore I must tell you the full story so you can tell it to your children and they too can tell it to their children."

"Where was I?" Maisea asked calmly without showing any signs of breaking down. "You were a little older, and father had taken you to Uncle Ori's village. Not many days later this story happened. And my daughter Oaea, you were only forming in my stomach. And now I must tell the rest of the story. I was free and felt I should pull father away from the animals. Unfortunately four men were posted around father and they were all armed with pointed arrows. The rest of the men sat around us. Although my face was swollen out of all proportion, I still could see that they were poking father's sides with the pointed lances. He said to me to make an escape if possible and leave him there. I could not even think of escaping. The men were still sitting there

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Marepua moved a
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and apparently waiting a rendezvous with the rest of the party. I cried louder, louder still. In between my tears, I could see they were binding father with more rope. I swore at them ceaselessly; human-eaters, dogs, pigs, sex maniacs,..." At that instant someone came up behind me and sprinkled some dust like lime on my face. I fell backwards where I had been sitting with unbearable pains. I wept louder. Another landed a hard hit on my face. I was prepared to die then I thought, and got up and started kicking the four men sitting near father. At that moment, I heard a faint war cry. It became clearer as it got closer to where we were. I forced my eyes under great strain to see your father. But when I did he was no longer there. The enemy tried to drag me away too but they did not succeed. I forced open my eyes once more and found I was alone. Fearing that the worst was to happen yet, I crawled under a heap of coconut leaves nearby, and waited to hear and identify the war cry. In the meantime, I could hear faintly the cracking of the bamboo supports of the village fence as the fire continued to burn into the night. The war cry had stopped. My whole body was aching. I was afraid when I heard the low but curious sounds of men coming towards me. I lay still. Then someone spoke softly to another in the language I knew well. 'A heap of coconut leaves. Let's clear it.' Instantly, I shouted with the little energy I had left in the language for help. Although it was not loud enough, the men had already surrounded me. It was uncle Ori who had spoken softly to another. When he realized it was me he sat me up against his knees and asked me about your father. I told him in tearful tones what happened. The others made a stretcher from some wood they had found and carried me to Touripi.

Ori had explained to his sister how they had come to be there. 'We had been informed that a large Kukukuku party was heading towards Karama, and that another party was heading for Touripi. We found this group and there was a pitched battle. However, some escaped and were heading towards this direction'. The rest of Ori's party together with the Karama who had survived the raid, searched the back region of the village until dawn.

Marepua moved a little closer to the fire-place. The night had grown cold with the land breeze blowing down the river.

"What happened to father?" Oaea asked between sobbing and crying.

"The last I saw of your dear father was that he was being bound in ropes. Anything could have happened to him. He could have been buried alive, as the Kukukuku know nothing about life, or just killed and thrown in the river. The human eaters are cruel. No male prisoner ever returned home." The fate of the four young men was later established when a search party inspected the burnt-out village in the morning. They were either killed or thrown into the fire or were burnt to death while trying to escape. All that remained of the village was the bloody sand on which the houses stood, and the scorched bodies of those who had once been alive. Towards the end of the story, Oaea began crying loudly, and her mother joined in the doleful tune. The woman of the dream, however, sat still but showed some sympathy for mother. She felt that people who cried over deaths, farewelled themselves. Death to her was a common denominator. The mother and her two daughters found peacefulness in sleep but the night crickets and centipedes took up the sad, sad story in their incessantly monotonous choruses into the night.

The house in which they lived was built on the sand. It had been put up recently because of the ailing mother. It was designed in such a way as to keep out supernatural forces and a host of evil influences. But more importantly it identified the state and condition of the residents so that human closeness and sympathy could be attracted easily to the plight of the three people. In the Karama society, no one was allowed to starve to death as everyone else, either a close relative or a distant one, made it his or her responsibility to ensure that the welfare of the poorer and the suffering, was maintained and cared for. Even in times of disasters like wars and storm-damage, the entire village rallied to the support of those who had lost property and relatives. No one was seen to be abandoned or rejected. A house-building like this one was a most tedious task. The work required first a framework of mangrove timber for roofing. In between the mangrove frame, bamboo strips or strips from a species of hard palm were laid closely and tightened by means of intricate string work. Nipa palm leaves or biri were pushed singly into the strips and curved around about the middle. Once these were placed in the desired

position, the ends of that leaf with the stronger part lying under, were tucked carefully on top of the strip that had been filled. At completion, long coconut fronds were laid against the thatches as weights. The house had only one opening, the entrance. Inside, a fire-place was built in the centre of the room.

Family houses were often much bigger with two or even three rooms depending on the age and number of children. Elderly women headed these households. At puberty, young men were taken away from such homes and housed in the Elvao, the long house for men only. This was a long awesome building built in the same way but off the ground. It had timber and palm-strip-beds built one on top of the other. The topmost was occupied by the youngest and the lowest belonged to the oldest. In this way, any absenteeism meant severe discipline particularly for those occupying the beds above. A married man was allowed to visit his family only when his youngest child spoke fluently to him and its mother. Even then it was forbidden for him to stay away at night. On either end of the Elavo there were two entrances so that when there was an invasion the men could rush out quickly. At both entrances, verandahs were built, from where long ropes were hung so that each wife or child delivering food could tie on the food which was then pulled up and given to the appropriate person.

In the Elavo, young men were hidden from the world, and were fed like pigs for slaughter. Each clan had its own Elavo for its youths. At an appointed time, these young men were released for sometime to roam the village on "courting trips" during which all the families who had sons undergoing this preparation, slaughtered numerous pigs for the entire village to consume. In this way, the young men became adults and therefore were ready to marry. However, after their, 'presentation' they adjourned to the Elavo again for some considerable time before they were allowed to marry. This adjournment period was used by the older men to teach them how to treat wives, how to behave and how to do everything that a man can do.

No young man, however, had approached the house on the sand for they feared the strength of the older sister. So, again tonight, Marepua and her two daughters slept in their usual places. Marepua on one side, the younger one in the centre and the other sister on the other side. The

fire-place just near their heads had burnt out its last wood. The cool night breeze from the land began blowing, and the only noises now were those of the loose-ends of the roof which rattled and hissed in the breeze. Oaea turned over to one side brushing against the other sister deep in sleep. She began sobbing and talking and stirring restlessly. The sobbing became a loud cry and she moved violently as if she had been attacked or she was running away from some danger that was real to her. Marepua was sitting upright, listening without a word and thinking. She tried to assess the movements of her sleeping daughter for a possible interpretation. But the dreamer now lay silent in heavy slumber. Marepua fell back again to bed hoping that the last of her labour would not disturb her conscience once more. Oaea was a medium, a characteristic that was unusual to the immediate members of her family. However, Oaea's great great-grand father on her father's side was also one. Her Uncle Ori communicated with ghosts occasionally but not as regularly as the niece. Oaea saw ghosts either in dreams or met them physically and spoke to them as if talking to a living person. She was afraid of the consequences of being named an informer. In the Karama society, the medium helped save many lives from deaths caused by sorcery, puripuri, black-magic, and even of those who were possessed by evil spirits or those who had sustained injuries in accidents and were dying or dead. Any death had a cause or a reason for it. These causes and reasons were found either in people or spirits.

There were two kinds of ghosts which communicated; one was the soul of a person who was very sick, the other was of the person who had already died. Oaea's speciality was in these two kinds. On many occasions the souls and ghosts of many people had communicated with her regarding people who had been responsible for their deaths. But her mother advised her not to tell anyone. Often this silence meant fatal results because the sorcerers would be told who else had received the same message before. But the sorcerers were inclined to leave the harmless family unmolested. If, however, Oaea had imparted the messages which had saved lives then she too would no longer be alive. Many times she was approached and the question put to her but she denied them. The enquirers walked away convinced that a person of her age would not

know how to communicate conversation with a ghost. ghostly communication certain their knowledge of who were village. In many instances, m wealthy and made lasting they had given away the me the lives of the people of cl their own.

The ghosts appeared to C forms. Most appeared to her skeletons. Others only showed just their heads. Often she showed her voice when the apparition had intestines and organs which by inexplicable means and ways about going to a certain place active in their trade.

Tonight, there were no bitter dream; one that became which she had been taken maternal grasp and love to a ventured before. This was the time Oaea and four other girls paddling up the river, and turned of the river, the vessel was pulled. This particular section of the favourite place for women were shellfish. The tide was going out food was abundant, Oaea was stream filling up a coconut basket. The others called out made her way back to the p were heavy and because she had muddy slippery cliff surface to left the basket a little distance had gone back and brought it about to slide down she heard She woke up with a scream and loud shout. In the dream she cliff surface still carrying the fish.

In a moment she was sick between her mother and Ma had been awakened by the she briefly what the dream had been comforting words from Mot again went to sleep. Despite Marepua was still worried a considered and conjured up tations. She wanted to wake and ask why this dream had

know how to communicate or understand any conversation with a ghost. The informers of ghostly communication certainly died because of their knowledge of who were killing people in the village. In many instances, many people became wealthy and made lasting friendships because they had given away the messages which saved the lives of the people of clans which were not their own.

The ghosts appeared to Oaea in a variety of forms. Most appeared to her as walking-talking skeletons. Others only showed bottom limbs or just their heads. Often she shouted at the top of her voice when the apparition before her only had intestines and organs which were illuminated by inexplicable means and were speaking to her about going to a certain place to find sorcerers active in their trade.

Tonight, there were no appearances but a bitter dream; one that became a nightmare in which she had been taken away from the maternal grasp and love to a place she had not ventured before. This was the dream. For the first time Oaea and four other girls were on one canoe paddling up the river, and turning into a tributary of the river, the vessel was pulled up the bank. This particular section of the stream was the favourite place for women who went collecting shellfish. The tide was going out and because the food was abundant, Oaea made her way upstream filling up a coconut fibre bag and a basket. The others called out for her and she made her way back to the party. But the shells were heavy and because she had to slide down the muddy slippery cliff surface to the canoe, she had left the basket a little distance from the bank. She had gone back and brought it but when she was about to slide down she heard a shout "Look out!" She woke up with a scream and followed it with a loud shout. In the dream she had fallen down the cliff surface still carrying the basketful of shellfish.

In a moment she was silent and was sitting between her mother and Maisea both of whom had been awakened by the shout. Oaea explained briefly what the dream had been about and after comforting words from Mother, the two sisters again went to sleep. Despite the explanation Maisea was still worried and concerned. She considered and conjured up different interpretations. She wanted to wake the two daughters and ask why this dream had come to Oaea.

From her experience, she had learnt that dreams like this one came to people because they had ideas and plans, and many times, dream were just twisted versions of arrangements and plans. She could not find any answer so she decided to ask them in the morning. Oaea did not dream any more but the hours left for them to rush out from the house by stealth were drawing nearer. But for the time being, a great silence befell the house and once again the crawling singing insects took up the dream; interpreting it in their own natural way; either weeping or farewelling the vacillating and dreaming sisters.

After being aroused by Oaea's shout, Maisea had gone back to sleep without pulling the matting over her body to prevent the chilly, dawn air. She now felt cold and tried to reach the covering with her foot. In doing so, she heard the friendly willy wagtail sing its joyous, dawn melody. The hour had at last arrived. Maisea grasped her sister's right arm to which the latter responded in a muffled shout. The two lay back again to prevent any suspicion by mother. After sometime had lapsed, Oaea and Maisea cautiously walked out of the house and rushed towards the landing. On the way they passed a number of early risers who were at least suspicious about their intentions. The two sisters, experienced a strange feeling; the feeling of remorse caused by desertion. Oaea spoke first, "Perhaps, she had been awake too long after my dream, and is fast asleep."

"You could be right," Maisea agreed.

"Or that she thought we were going to the beach, my accompanying you."

"Should we go back and check?" Oaea asked of sister in a plea.

"What do you mean?" Maisea asked, confused by her younger sister's change in attitude. "Do you really want to come with me? I know she is our mother. I am not forcing you to accompany me."

"Will we be back here before sundown?" Oaea asked, changing the subject slightly.

"We'll return even before sundown," the older sister reassured her sister.

"Very well, let's go," said Oaea accepting the prospects of an early return. The two sisters had prepared the garden tools and bags the evening before. These were ready in the canoe before the two sisters arrived. The bright, misty rays surged down on the village as the two sisters pulled the

craft down to the river. Maisea skippered the vessel. They paddled for a long time against the outgoing current. There was hardly any conversation between them. They paddled for hours on end, always keeping close to the banks. Maisea knew from her position in the rear that her sister was making her first trip by canoe. It had been evident for sometime now. When Oaea paddled she did it with such a force and acceleration that the canoe seemed to refuse the direction from the stern. With her stronger muscles and paddling in large spans forcing loads of water backwards, Maisea was able to keep the canoe on course.

Oaea's padding at the front was also causing one side of the canoe to be filled with water. As a result, this side of the vessel was gradually submerging. "Check your side, Oaea," Maisea demanded but in an encouraging manner.

"Hey, there's a lot of water on this side," Oaea consciously observed.

"Let's put it there and I'll bail it out."

The water in the river itself had begun to rise on to the banks, slowly but surely as the tide came in. In the mid-stream the current was also easing. Maisea steered the canoe into an opening along the bank. Oaea in turn put her own words in action. Soon she was back in her paddling position.

"Just paddle carefully this time. The garden is around two bends from here," Maisea advised. They paddled past the last bend. Along the way, Oaea had stopped paddling and was catching jumping prawns in her palms as the canoe disturbed the feeding pools of the prawns. She was filled with a pride which Maisea showed Oaea was anxious to see how a big bush-garden looked. She was familiar with yam and tapioca gardens that dotted the Karama coastline but not a large taro or pumpkin garden where other crops were also planted. There was hardly any clearing. The giant ever-greens dominated the site as they made the landing through a small offshoot of the main river.

"Where's the garden?" Oaea asked out of curiosity.

"You'll see when we ascend the embankment" Maisea gave assurance. The two sisters anchored the canoe by beaching it on one side and drilling two poles into the mud at both ends to fasten the vessel. They climbed the high bank cautiously, and on reaching it, discovered to their surprise

and amazement freshly burnt out ends of wood where a fire had burning.

"Hey, someone made a fire here," Oaea said although suffering an internal fear over the likelihood of an attack. Maisea did not immediately respond to her sister's remark but knew that if she were to say anything now it would frighten Oaea more. She too was extremely suspicious of this unusual presence on their garden land. She made a careful study of the nearby shrubs and bushes for any evidence of human trails and tracks. But there no signs. There were no footprints on the ground leading to the garden. She examined closely the muddy embankment but found no signs of vessels berthing or being dragged into water.

"Some hunters may have gone up the river this morning. They must have been here earlier," Maisea answered her sister, doubting very much the truth of that answer. But Oaea, still shaking with fear, decided to accept the advice despite an uncertain conviction in her mind that there might be trouble. The fact that other human beings had been there and that there were no further clues to confirm her sister's theory, exacerbated her fragile mentality and she swallowed hard with her willingness to be there. Soon, however, her soul returned to the purpose of the expedition. Simultaneously, their two minds set to work. Maisea started digging the taro garden, and Oaea obsessed with the thought of achieving something in the presence of her older sister, reflected on their conversation before.

"Didn't you suggest you dig up some roots while I try to catch some prawns up that stream?"

"Yes. But it might be safer and easier for you to dig while I catch the prawns."

The younger sister saw merits in the arrangement and took over the digging. Maisea had decided to change the original plan so she could check alone for any other signs of human presence and also to ensure that when it was Oaea's turn it would be safe. Up towards the end of the small stream, prawns and little black freshwater fish abounded. Maisea caught as many as she could while looking around for hidden canoes and footprints. In the meantime, Oaea had the fire going in a short time. The fire had been kept burning on the wood they had lit when they started the journey. By the time Maisea had completed netting fish, Oaea had roasted several taros after which she followed the tracks of her

sister to collect the fish that Maisea had caught in shallow holes along the stream. After the meal, the earlier part of the day, the two sisters then returned to the garden where they cooked fish and ate. After the meal, the earlier part of the day, Maisea would weed the garden and take home. For first time, Maisea accepted rather gladly.

Maisea had a warning thought. Just stay where I was."

No sooner had the tide receding. Upstream, Oaea could hear the splash as they chased and poked, clicking, clacking prawns in countless numbers, as nature's system. From where she stood, she looked over the stream and saw it branching off it. Cautiously she stepped into the mud to the stream. To her surprise, she was caught in a streamlet close to the bank as a result of the receding tide. She pushed and jumped against the natural pool, crowding against the mud, pushing and jumping were countless as sand grains. Oaea was amidst of them. Using her arm, she frantically threw them on to the ground. In a moment, she was busy digging for the fish for collection. In her pride, she had forgotten the warning and the sight of her older sister. Quick she began filling up the holes.

Nearby, carefully camouflaged by the jungle stem surrounded by thick foliage, they had watched this coastal girl with nothing in their eyes. They stared and waited. She was lost in this, her job ended and started catching the fish from the holes and putting them in the net. After emptying the last hole, she turned to carry it like a stripling, so, she was now facing the water. She remained concealed. There was a lance pierced her heart. She fell into one of the holes she had dug. She heard a muffled cry which Maisea could not hear. The blood of the innocent flowed down through small passages along

sister to collect the fish that Maisa had placed in shallow holes along the stream. They had no time to get a proper container to put the fish in. The two sisters then returned to the site of the fire where they cooked fish and ate their days' meal. After the meal, the earlier plan was adopted. Maisa would weed the garden and collect more food to take home. For first hand experience in collecting fish Oaea accepted the assignment rather gladly.

Maisa had a warning though, "Don't go too far. Just stay where I was."

No sooner had the tide risen than it began receding. Upstream, Oaea could hear bigger fish splashing as they chased and preyed on the fleeing, clicking, clacking prawns in their swarms of countless numbers, as nature sped up its drainage system. From where she stood, Oaea carefully looked over the stream and spotted a smaller one branching off it. Cautiously she waded into the mud to the stream. To her surprise, the prawns were caught in a streamlet closed off by a mud bank as a result of the receding water. In that natural pool, crowding against the bank, pressing, pushing and jumping were fish and prawns countless as sand grains. Oaea dived into the midst of them. Using her arms and legs, she frantically threw them on to the wet, sticky murk. In a moment, she was busy digging holes to keep the fish for collection. In her pre-occupation she had forgotten the warning and was actually out of sight of her older sister. Quickly but carefully, she began filling up the holes.

Nearby, carefully camouflaged in a dead jungle stem surrounded by thick undergrowth were Kukukuku warriors numbering the fingers on one hand. Peeking and peeping through the thick foliage, they had watched the movements of this coastal girl with nothing more than murder in their eyes. They stared and waited. Oaea, however, was lost in this, her job experience. She sat down and started catching the fish and prawns from the holes and putting them into her small net. After emptying the last hole, she lifted the net and turned to carry it like a string bag. In doing so, she was now facing the warriors who still remained concealed. There was a swish and a lance pierced her heart. She fell backwards into one of the holes she had dug. She yelled only a muffled cry which Maisa could not hear at that distance. The blood of the innocent girl trickled down through small passages along the bank of

the muddy streamlet. The bloody water followed the natural course, passing just near the location of the garden. The bloody current flowed out into oblivion.

Maisa had been bending down too long, weeding. She straightened up and suddenly realized Oaea had not been communicating and had been away for too long. She looked up at the stream unaware that the very stream pouring into the river, carried her blood; her mother's blood; that blood which gave her life also.

Deep in her consciousness, Maisa knew there was trouble. She began calling, "Oaea, Oaea, Oaea!" There was no answer. She called again and again as she sped through the muddy slime dotted with prickled bushes and broken off tree stumps, Maisa visualized the holes from some distance and in a moment was on the site. Fury boiled in her bone and skin when she saw her sister's lifeless bleeding head drooping over a hole alive with fish. Maisa turned the head over and seeing that face broke her heart. In an extreme rage she scooped up the broken off piece of the spear and issued a challenge to the still concealed warriors.

"You eaters of rotten pig-meat; sexual maniacs! thieves! dogs! stinking human eaters! Why? Why? Why? There'll be war. There'll be revenge. Oh, my sister. My sister. Where is why.....?"

For the first time in her life Maisa cried, and at the same time waving the lance-piece over her dead sister in a mad frenzy for revenge. While in the bush from where the lance had come, inquisitive eyes through small openings stared at the bodies of the living and the dead before making their next move. The reigning Kukukuku chief Tati had sent men out on patrols regularly in order to boost morale and maintain discipline as a result of long intervals of peace. Tati was the most cunning of all the chiefs. He knew how to provoke and put down the crisis. He was also the strongest and cleverest. His spears and arrows were his words. He was a man of action. Tati had become restless and had decided it was time to investigate thoroughly the latest manoeuvres and movements of the coastal people. He had sent out a large party of warriors with the specific instructions to record new village sites or those being built, and to mark out strategic points along the river and also near the sites and older villages. The men had set out the night before,

fully-armed. Most of them were experienced in this kind of intelligence work. At least a number of them through previous missions had heard of a coastal woman named Maisea. How they obtained this information remained a mystery. They knew about her but not her face. It was this woman who stood before the small group which had murdered Oaea.

Maisea repeated her challenge and accusations emphasising that she would not leave until compensation in kind was made. There was still no movement from where the lance had been thrown. Maisea herself could not see them. The men were frightened of the woman. As they looked at her their warlike and manly instincts melted away. They felt as if they were facing a party of warriors who had outnumbered them. It was late afternoon, and as Maisea could not see them, she lifted the body and began carrying it towards the canoe. Maisea, soaked in mud and blood, slugged through and swam the stream, and upon reaching the garden, lay the body carefully down.

No sooner had she done this than an arrow landed between the body and herself she turned in fury and dashed to the embankment where the canoe had been berthed, suspecting that the arrow may have been shot from there. Indeed it was. For beside her canoe two other vessels had anchored, and she easily perceived them to belong to the Kukukuku as they were hewn-out logs rafted together by means of intricately-stringed planks of jungle timber. The primitive craftsmanship carried onboard entire trees and bushes to resemble floating dead trees and driftwood which invariably dotted parts of the river where the currents had become weak. The trees were fastened to the wooden frame in such a way that when they wilted, the skeleton-wood could be mistaken for a promontory along river banks. Grass was actually growing on the vessel. The Kukukuku rafts were thus natural camouflages to an unsuspecting hunter or gardener. In her training as a warrior, Maisea had learnt these Kukukuku tricks and ingenuity. Maisea was not surprised when from the bushes behind the garden, warriors descended on her in twos. She stood her position ready to strike with the broken piece of spear she still carried. Shortly, there was a shout from the direction of the vessels. More men converged on her. Their order was not to shoot but to take her alive. It was Tati's order

and he was there among them.

Maisea struck like a wounded boar with the strength and courage she had reserved for this time. She jumped at them with arms and legs. She mauled them with their own spear-end. Several of the warriors were sent reeling near the body of her sister, unable to rise and attack again. Another group of men lay moaning like women on top of the string-bags containing taro and other vegetables and suffering broken jaws, split lips, broken arms and wrists. Maisea still retained her position and ground. Another group ascended the bank from the rafts. They were dragging a net. This was Tati's party, well-trained and the best of the warriors whom he had handpicked. They numbered the fingers on one hand and had drawn their net as if to trap a wild, dangerous boar.

Their victim, however, knew these tricks and tactics. Maisea stood poised ready to pounce at the nearest warrior. When the opportunity availed she dodged the net and struck the warrior on her right with the end of the spear, severing his right ear. The man was momentarily stunned and on recovery snatched his spear and was about to take his revenge on the woman when a warning arrow scratched him on the wrist and he withdrew in disgust. The arrow came from Tati's bow. Ceaselessly swinging her war-torn palm spear-end left and right, Maisea was able to avoid the net but at the same time distorting the frontal features of the men. These men, however, did not fall nor did they waver in their determination to bring the woman under control. Eventually, the only weapon she had broke once more when she had struck so hard on the head of one of the warriors. This blow had little effect. The warrior managed to catch Maisea by an arm and accidentally grasp the other. Although helpless she began to use her feet, kicking and pushing with the warrior holding her two hands at the back. Bruised and disappointed, the warriors who had retired in exhaustion seemed to have a new lease in life and instantly they braced the legs with the net and several strong hands completed the task of wrapping the strongest women they had ever fought. But Maisea could not be a prisoner in a net like a wild pig. She tore the net with her hands. By this time Tati was losing his patience, and approaching from behind he gave a near fatal blow and the dream woman of Karama swooned into unconscious-

ness.

There was a sigh from warriors. Never had they ex- this with a woman before. the bundled-up woman on head of which sat Chief T warriors which had murder from a mission down the concerned and had organis including his best warriors. they had sighted the first r distance up from Maisea's i it cautiously, they had Extremely worried. Tati wa men to proceed when th breathless. They reported th how they suspected the othe the mighty woman of Karar two groups hastened to anchored their canoe. Short returned carrying the bodi aftermath of the struggle h two warriors who had take of extreme embarrassment woman. She had caused r warriors as well. When she h to smile over these with in cause of one death she wa death of two. Maisea was lai raft. At the stern sat those injured. Deep down in the the woman who had don silently bit their tongues in a for Tati's intervention Mais butchered.

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Back at the garden, Oaea blood exposed to the destruct The coastal people including their dead, unlike their enem great respect and reverence

There was a sigh from everyone of the warriors. Never had they experienced a fight like this with a woman before. Strong arms carried the bundled-up woman onto a waiting raft at the head of which sat Chief Tati. The first group of warriors which had murdered Oaea was overdue from a mission down the coast. Tati had been concerned and had organised a second mission including his best warriors. On their way down, they had sighted the first raft anchored a short distance up from Maisea's garden. Approaching it cautiously, they had found it deserted. Extremely worried, Tati was about to order his men to proceed when the warriors returned breathless. They reported the murder to Tati and how they suspected the other to be no other than the mighty woman of Karama at her garden. The two groups hastened to where the girls had anchored their canoe. Shortly afterwards Maisea returned carrying the body of her sister. The aftermath of the struggle had been the death of two warriors who had taken their own lives out of extreme embarrassment of being beaten by a woman. She had caused much shame to other warriors as well. When she had recovered she was to smile over these with inner satisfaction; because of one death she was responsible for the death of two. Maisea was laid in the centre of the raft. At the stern sat those men who had been injured. Deep down in their hearts lay hate for the woman who had done the injuries. They silently bit their tongues in anger. Had it not been for Tati's intervention Maisea would have been butchered.

Then one of the paddlers up at the front cleared the suspicion as he repeated the stories the mission had heard about a woman named Maisea who had slain a crocodile and two snakes single-handed. The listeners, including the injured, received the news with fear and awe. They now knew that their opponent, a woman, was a god. Chief Tati after hearing the stories walked to Maisea and felt for her heart beat. She was still alive. Tati stayed beside her and continuously checked the beat until they reached the village. The sun had long gone.

Back at the garden, Oaea lay alone in a sea of blood exposed to the destructive forces of nature. The coastal people including the Karama buried their dead, unlike their enemies. They showed a great respect and reverence for the dead. They

were convinced of an after-life at Evei. They did all they could to equip the dead with utensils, weapons, and food for the long journey and to enable the dead live a new life at Evei located to the west of Lavau. Articles for pleasure, weapons of war, gardening-tools and fishing-gear, bedding, and clothing were buried with the dead. All things that a man required were buried with him. The same applied to a woman at burial. Often love and the marital relationship between a husband and his wife were so strong that if the husband had died, the wife was also buried several days later, so that they were able continue their love as they did in physical life at Evei. A properly conducted burial and strict compliance to the rules of observing deaths meant that the ghosts would be friendly and would be only too willing to inform relatives of the causes of their deaths.

Any death had a uniting effect on the entire community. For several days, there would virtually be no activities at the village; no beating of drums, no singing, no dancing, no gardening or fishing until a feast had been made. Permission had to be sought and granted before anyone could do anything. Without this, one would be scorned and ridiculed which could be the cause of his or her death. It was therefore unusual and distasteful to the tradition that the body of a girl whose tribe knew how to please even the dead, now lay alone, cold, far from home and love. Back at the village, the door to her house had been closed for nearly four days. The kindly neighbour had not checked the house thinking that the family had gone to visit their uncle at Toaripi as they often did. It was the afternoon of the fourth day that serious discussions took place regarding the absence of Maisea. A group of women were returning from an extremely successful fishing venture, and a very close friend of Maisea asked the other women about her absence as they often went fishing together. One of the elderly woman who had seen the two sisters that morning answered the query without hesitation.

"I saw them walking towards the canoe-landing place. They looked to me to be in a rush but were not carrying anything, like gardening tools, string bags or fishing nets".

"I think they were trying to go and visit their uncle at Toaripi," said the kindly neighbour's wife joining in.

"I am confused. You two are suggesting that they went by canoe to Toaripi. That is an impossible task," a third woman tried to make corrections.

"No, it would be quite possible with the sea unusually calm these days," the elderly woman put in assuredly. The argument ended abruptly when a heavy thump on the ground caused by a falling coconut frond, alarmed and scattered the women. That night people in nearby houses including the kindly neighbour and his wife could not sleep because of a disturbing noise coming from the empty house. The noise was a continuous buzz and drone like that made by a swarm of carpenter-bees boring soft rafter-wood. As if by arrangement three men found themselves listening intently to establish what the noise was. When they had met, one of them who had been extremely jealous of Maisea broke the silence.

"This house stinks. There is a strong stinking filtering out of the house. There must be a body inside." The other two including the kindly neighbour did not think of the prospect of handling a decaying body at this time of the night and suffering the consequences. They walked rather fast back to their houses. It was the common belief that a body reacted quite openly, to its hate or love for someone by being tight and heavy or loose and light in terms of preparing it for burial. The men could not have possibly done that as they were no relations of the body. At the same time as the three men were returning to their houses, Ori had been in severe pain at Toaripi. Earlier in the evening he had been at his garden collecting soem mustard for chewing when he had lost control and fell to the ground. He had been picking the fruit while standing on a ladder, when Oaea's ghost appeared to him. The effect of the meeting caused him to be unconscious momentarily.

"Uncle, mother died this afternoon. Her body is still at the house. I was killed by Kukukuku and I'm lying at our taro garden, the farthest garden up the river. Maisea has been taken by the Kukukuku and is now at their village. Please, help me and mummy. Please ... please ah iiiii..!"

Ori awoke as if from a deep sleep with the message as clear as the water of a mountain stream. He wept loudly for his sister and his niece. The fall had bruised his back, buttocks and shoulders but no bones were broken. With a

heavy heart he walked home. Between sobs he explained the message briefly to his wife Peto who broke into tears. By some miracle, Ori was now feeling better than earlier. Indeed, it was the common belief that a friendly ghost would not cause severe injuries only to allow a message to penetrate at a time and in a state and condition as it was. A message was sent to his brother-in-law Haviri to accompany him to Karama. The two men were soon walking and groping their way through the darkness towards Karama. They arrived at the village just as the morning star, Oa Malara, appeared over the mountain horizon far east.

In the first house they passed, although in the early hours of the morning, someone was complaining loudly about a nasty smell. The morning breeze, however, was carrying much of the stench out to the sea. Ori opened the door which had stood slightly ajar. As his eyes adjusted themselves to the pitched darkness within, he was struck by a most bizarre spectacle; sliding, crawling, and flickering on the body was a moving mass aglow like a mound of charcoal ash on a bright afternoon that spread from the toes to the roots of the hair. Ori withdrew in a great fear but advanced courageously when he realized it was his own blood that lay rotting before his feet. The glowing stopped. He cried in a loud, deep male voice stricken with grief. In a short time, a crowd of older people had gathered and soon the tribal dirge was sung enticing many more people to weep and mourn. Several fires were lit around the house against the morning chill. Ori walked outside and in a shaky voice audible only to the gathering, he informed the villagers of the fate of the two sisters. In a more manly voice, he spoke his intention.

"My sister... and ... my mother will be buried at the same time. I would like therefore some assistance to bring the body of my niece down here for burial."

"A short time later a party of well-armed troops accompanied the bereaved man to the garden. The men arrived at the garden as soon as was practicable. Ori led the warriors up the steep bank and towards the garden. Lying near the string bag of food was the body of the girl. A pungent smell swept into the noses of the warriors and some of them withdrew. As Ori approached, blue flies, countless like sandgrains blown before a whirlwind, scattered and their

drone and buzz resembled a thunder. Ori knelt before the body and appealed to her soul to assist in the burial. "My niece, I am uncle. I have come a long way to this garden which I want to take you back home to. Sing and cry for you. I am no stranger, uncle Ori."

Miraculously, the pigment of the body changed from one of deadly pale to a brownish tinge. The body, however, was in a late stage of decomposition; the stomach, the lips, the nose and the limbs. This change in appearance encouraged Ori to signal some assistance in lifting the body into the canoe that had been prepared and waiting at the village. As it was his own, Ori lifted the head and the shoulders. The legs and the body were gently lifted one of the legs broke off at the knee. The men stayed away. It was later learnt that the man who was about the same age as Ori had been constantly abused the dead girl as an old woman. After the canoe was closed and secured it was placed in the river. By appealing to the soul of the dead girl, the other men were able to lift the body and place it in the coffin. Ori would have disintegrated and extremely difficult to pack in that case, the body would have been left in the garden. That night the Kara and hatred for Kukukuku mother and daughter took their bodies were given a full traditional burial as both had been Semese by virtue of Makeu warrior ranks. Many months later, Ori returned to Karama and together with the women made a very large feast. It was divided into three portions: one for the women in memory of their lost leader, one distributed among the Pukari and the third portion went to all the men who helped. Ori believed that by this way, he would encourage the women to avenge the deaths of his sister and to rally their support to the men while eating their share.

drone and buzz resembled that of a distant thunder. Ori knelt before the corpse of his niece and appealed to her soul to assist him for proper burial. "My niece, I am uncle Ori. I have come a long way to this garden which is not your home. I want to take you back home to Karama so I can sing and cry for you. I am no stranger. I am your uncle Ori."

Miraculously, the pigment of the skin changed from one of deadly pale to that of a near-fresh brownish tinge. The body, however, was in the late stage of decomposition particularly around the stomach, the lips, the nose and in the joints of the limbs. This change in the skin-colour encouraged Ori to signal some of the warriors to assist in lifting the body into a container palm that had been prepared and brought from the village. As it was his own, Ori decided to look after the head and the shoulders while the others lifted the legs and the body. One of the men gently lifted one of the legs but before long it broke off at the knee. The man was ordered to stay away. It was later learnt that man's daughter who was about the same age as Oaea, had constantly abused the dead girl and described her as an old woman. After the container had been closed and secured it was placed in the middle of the canoe and the men paddled back to Karama. By appealing to the soul of the dead, Ori and the other men were able to lift the body in one piece and place it in the coffin. Otherwise the body would have disintegrated and it would have been extremely difficult to pack it into the coffin. In that case, the body would have been buried in the garden. That night the Karama were alarmed and hatred for Kukukuku mixed with grief for mother and daughter took deeper root. The two bodies were given a full traditional and ceremonial burial as both had been members of the Semese by virtue of Makeu's position in the warrior ranks. Many months later, Ori returned to Karama and together with Makeu's relatives made a very large feast. It was divided into three portions: one for the women of Karama to eat in memory of their lost leader, Maisea; another was distributed among the Pukari and Semese and a third portion went to all the people who had helped. Ori believed that by sharing the feast in this way, he would encourage the Karama to avenge the deaths of his sister and her daughter, and to rally their support to find Maisea. The women while eating their share of the food talked

much about Maisea, and the news of her disappearance and the death of her sister was blown by the wind and spread like floodwaters along the coast.

Chief Tati's party arrived long after sunset. The warriors were ordered to carry Maisea in a platform to the village. Although she had gained consciousness she did not try to be bitter with her captors. The hard and tough Maisea was now among her tribe's most hated enemy. She wept intermittently not because she feared being among the enemy but out of the deepest sorrow for her dead sister. In spite of this, she felt she could not prolong the mourning and a new hope suddenly dawned on her that she was there on a mission. Two ideas based on humbleness and humility took shape in her mind and she whispered them to herself.

"I will be most faithful to this Kukukuku Chief. But at the same time I must remain loyal to my own tribe. Which means I will do as much as I can to know about these human-eaters. Then I will make an escape, perhaps soon." With this inner joy she shook the platform and the warriors thought she was trying to attack again. But this was followed by a small giggle and a shy smile which no one noticed. Under the dying light of the first bow of the moon, Maisea, still stationary on the platform, surveyed her new home. She was being carried to a house which stood separated from the rest of the village. The carriers had stopped and the long coastal woman was carefully lifted out and set down just in front of the doorway of the lonely hut. Chief Tati entered the hut and after examining it under the light of a burning fire, went outside and summoned an older woman. This woman led Maisea into the hut and made the fire bigger.

She placed a clay pot over the fire and started filling it with an assortment of leaves. At the same time she placed some taro on the fire around the pot. Her charge watched eagerly and hungrily. Sometime later, the pot was taken off and its contents emptied into a basket. Then she poured some oil into the pot and added a completely new set of leaves. After the first lot of leaves had cooled off she took these out and had them wrapped around Maisea's head. This gave soothing effects to her sores caused by Tati's blow. In the meantime, the woman cleaned the roasted taro and gave them to Maisea. Then she

poured out the liquid from the pot into a fruit-skin bowl together with some of the leaves. After Maisea had finished the meal, the woman made Maisea lie down and with the remaining liquid and leaves from the pot, she rubbed down the coastal woman. The treatment was warm but gave a comfortable feeling. Soon Maisea was fast asleep.

The effects of the herbal bath and treatment proved to be overwhelming on the physical and spiritual characteristics and concepts of the lone coastal woman. Where she had not been able to cross paths in dreams to visualize the supernatural or make contact and communicate in these things, Maisea from this night onward would have the world of her own private-self shattered and tampered with, depending entirely on her capacity to interpret the visions in real life situations. In short the bath and leafy consumption initiated her into the environment; the life style, the beliefs and into the very core of the Kukukuku existence. Tonight, she slept as a stranger among equally strange beings and environment. But tomorrow at the first glimmer of dawn, she would possess a split personality; one half to suffer a dimmed conscience reflecting on the beauty of the coast; the tranquility and peacefulness washed ashore by the wide, monstrous and beautiful sea, the shade and sway of the great refreshing and nourishing palms that stood the length and breadth of the shores like an eternal wall to slash and test the strength and ferocity of the wind, would be just like a virginal past. While her other half would be caved in, restricted, forbidden, dejected; committed though in default to the unwilling participation in all that was Kukukuku; their rush, warring, dancing and killing-life. This was the ritual of "taking the new", of forced love and forced marriage. The entire process was aimed at diminishing the memory and it would be completed after sunshine numbering the fingers and toes of one person. Late in the night, two women clasping the ends of a long narrow tapa bark in the middle of which was a noose, entered the lonely hut. Each positioned herself on either side of the sleeping woman and searched out the most ticklish parts of women. Each manipulated her fingers in such a way as to arouse her but Maisea was dead as a rock. Satisfied that the potion had penetrated the sleeping woman, the magical experts carefully slipped the noose around the

head and tightened the strands they held to stumps already there. The resultant effect was that Maisea's head jolted. It looked as if she was fast asleep on her elbows. Then they stood up and balanced themselves on the belt, further thrusting the head upwards giving the impression that the body was being stretched to observe a passing crisis behind a high wall. The two women danced on the belt and somersaulted, still maintaining their balance and steadiness. When they had become exhausted, they unwrapped the noose and placed the head back into position. They left the hut as stealthily as they had entered it. Despite the deadly influence of the potion, normal functions of the body were not impeded. For the first time Maisea was dreaming. Apparitions and strange visions appeared to her without stop since the time she had fallen asleep following the meal.

The first vision she had seen was that of two women standing after signalling to her to follow them. After a while, realizing she would not move to them, the women made their way towards her. They were a younger girl and an older woman. As they walked closer she was able to identify them to be Oaea and mother Marepua, the former dripping blood from her nose and eyes and the latter appearing almost as a skeleton. For a time they stood thus before her then disappeared. Neither of them had spoken a word. In the second dream, she saw herself standing on the alert ready to strike a wild boar which had dug the soil with its hindlegs in order to reinforce a lunge at its assailant. The boar took the leap but Maisea dodged the gleaming tusks, and in doing so caught her neck in twisted jungle vines. She was able, however, to release herself. For the rest of the time of her sleep in Kukukuku land, she was seeing some of the most gruesome and terrifying beings imagined. Maisea awoke shortly after the two athletic women departed from her prison. Her commonsense, however, took the best of her and she refrained from the first natural reaction. She pondered over the dreams and the visions. At first, she decided that her mother had died. She considered carefully and thoughtfully the second vision when numbness began to grow around her nape and spread to the rest of the neck and shoulders.

Before she had the time to think about this phenomenon, the door of the dark hut opened and the woman who had cooked for her and

massaged her last evening, morning light invaded the room breaking. Maisea saw her first her tribe's ancient enemy. burning wood with which she word, she reached out her Maisea's forehead and around she had laid the hand for

Maisea gave a small cry of pain her instantly and hurried out later, she returned carrying a looking fruits as big as fists, and shoots. After removing the outer fruits, she punched holes in them aside. Next, she stripped the core and put these together in a small clay pot. When the heated she poured some vinegar. Shortly after the pot had been poured the mixture into an liquid into smaller bowls. She and handed the other to Maisea was left standing. After the little, she selected three and application to the neck and they had eaten and drunk, Maisea lie down on her chest and the mesh evenly on the neck began squeezing it into the skin she dipped her fingers into the remaining bowl and applied Maisea was thus kept in appointed time for her public day and each night the same beating and feeding continued to perform their woman hers. Each morning a slightly sprained neck which as the days progressed. The healing working miracles. As the dawn on Maisea was being drawn to surprised to find that she was her desire was to be part of her next of kin of the coast, sandy beaches were slipping. From the second night on myriad of scenes, without Oaea and Marepua, the woman kept a constant reminder

"This is not your home."

Your people are awaiting; are mourning for you;

to massaged her last evening, entered. The early morning light invaded the room like a huge surf breaking. Maisea saw her first day in the land of her tribe's ancient enemy. The woman brought burning wood with which she lit a fire. Without a word, she reached out her right hand to feel Maisea's forehead and around the neck. When she had laid the hand forcefully on the neck Maisea gave a small cry of pain. The women left her instantly and hurried outside. A short time later, she returned carrying a number of spongy-looking fruits as big as fists, and several bamboo shoots. After removing the outer-covering of the fruits, she punched holes in them and placed them aside. Next, she stripped the shoots to the core and put these together with the seeds into a small clay pot. When the contents had been heated she poured some water into the pot. Shortly after the pot had boiled, the woman poured the mixture into an open bowl and the liquid into smaller bowls. She sipped from one and handed the other to Maisea. A third bowl was left standing. After the shoots had cooled a little, she selected three and mashed them for application to the neck and the shoulders. After they had eaten and drunk, Maisea was made to lie down on her chest and the woman spread the mesh evenly on the neck and shoulders and began squeezing it into the skin. At the same time she dipped her fingers into the liquid in the remaining bowl and applied this with the mesh. Maisea was thus kept in isolation until the appointed time for her public appearance. Each day and each night the same massaging and heating and feeding continued. The two women continued to perform their task and the older woman hers. Each morning Maisea awoke with a slightly sprained neck which seemed to improve as the days progressed. The bamboo shoots were working miracles. As the days and nights drew on Maisea was being drawn to the place. She was surprised to find that she was liking the place and her desire was to be part of it. The memories of her next of kin of the coast, the waves and black sandy beaches were slipping down and down. From the second night onward, among the myriad of scenes, without the apparitions of Oua and Marepua, the voice of an old, old woman kept a constant reminder:

"This is not your home.

Your people are awaiting you where the waves are mourning for you;

Don't forget Karama! Karama! Karama!
 The coast, the sea, the palms, the beaches;
 Your home, think of your home!
 Remember you will return;
 Don't lose hope;
 Your people are waiting for you,
 I am Maisea.
 I am Maisea your beloved.....
 Your"

In the ensuing days, the message had no practical and emotional impact on the receiver. It floated by like myriad of things. Her mind and conscience had been infiltrated and swamped with all things Kukukuku. The "breaking of the new" had taken a deeper root and had begun to influence her attitudes and manners. She behaved the way she was taught; she imitated their language and was beginning to respond positively to simple communications. She felt her neck was stronger than it had ever been. Indeed, the nightly exercises had been aimed at achieving this objective. Tomorrow would be the big day for the coastal woman. It would be her wedding day. She would marry Tati.

Chief Tati already had wives numbering fingers on four hands and Maisea would be the latest addition to this number. About half the number of the wives were girls who were too young but were the basic assets in the status symbol of the Kukukuku leader. It was the custom that if a leader was able to provide for the needs of all his in-laws with regard to physical basic necessities, provided he was the strongest of all, he had unlimited freedom in selecting whom-ever he wished to marry; even if the girls were still young. The majority of his wives were therefore just girls whom he had to maintain until they reached womanhood. In this respect, Tati was always surrounded by young girls who could be mistaken for his daughters. He had at least two daughters of his own. At the time Maisea had arrived, three wives had each older children. Two others also had children but younger than the first three. One had an infant while another was pregnant. Four others were waiting their turn to join the reproductive process. One girl was reaching her puberty. The rest were not yet mature. Maisea was well past puberty but was still a virgin. The woman who had spent so much time with Maisea was the first of the wives who had been neglected by Tati according to traditional law. She had the oldest child, a boy. Her

name was Pua. Although Tati had not slept with her for a long time, Pua still loved her husband to the extent that she had enticed him unsuccessfully several times because she was emotionally and deeply frustrated. But she was able to draw mental satisfaction from her experiences. If however, on the spur of a moment when the heat was high, and she had sought satisfaction for her desire outside the marital taboo, the result would be instant death once she had been found out.

Her relationship with her husband deteriorated further when she heard village gossip that Chief Tati had boasted about how he "enjoyed breaking the virginal floods" of his young wives. Pua heard these with complete distaste and considered it an insult to her colleagues, specifically those who were still innocent of the sexual experience. She had a mind of her own which was far from being the obedient, lacking complaint, subservient servant her community had demanded of her. She registered disapproval at the first opportunity, in private though, of her husband's unbecoming manners and attitudes as the Chief. To Tati these were part of the normal relationship between them. But she could never scold him for his boasting because Tati would immediately realize it was jealousy and therefore was subject to desertion and loss of status and privileges.

Pua knew Tati had an insatiable capacity for sex. She had experienced this at the time of the "breaking of the virginal floods" of her own. She had undertaken the first night thinking this was how men and women did it. But in subsequent conversation with other women she had learnt that men preferred to have sexual intercourse in a proper manner and atmosphere, and they showed great respect for the feelings of their wives. But Tati was a different kind of being, almost superhuman in his efforts; to live with it, and to eat it, so to speak. In particular, Pua recalled and she tried strenuously to explain it to Maisea through signs and appropriate actions, her first sexual experience with the Kukukuku chief. She enacted one incident in which Tati entered her animal fashion, and she moaned while crouching on her hands, facing the dirt like a wounded pig. Maisea understood the overt actions but could not feel it emotionally as she herself was still a virgin. That this unusual affection was shown by a stranger to another stranger reflected Pua's conspiratorial nature to avenge

her husband for frustrating and disappointing her in their relationship.

Pua was not as old as Marepua. This was evidenced particularly in her retention of youthful features on her face and limbs. She was conscious of these features and was always overcome with pride and jealousy when she observed herself at the clear stream water where she always fetched water. She had imagined making Tati suffer for promoting her state of affairs. Then, when Maisea appeared on the scene she knew this was what she had been waiting for, for a long time. She wondered whether the other would subscribe willingly to the ignoble scheme she would present to her. She knew deep down in her consciousness that the scheme would succeed. This was why she had adopted the maternal approach; show sympathy; love and affection, and moreover, win unreserved friendship and the trust of her young coastal friend first.

This was why she had overdosed Maisea so that there would be little pain to bear. This was why she had to massage Maisea when under normal circumstances this was forbidden, and upon being caught, the masseur would pay an embarrassing penalty. Pua had observed that her sexually-demonstrative antics had been acceptable and she was now more than determined to impart and apply all her ancestors' secrets, associated with restrictions of birth and those that restrained men from desiring sex during physical contact. Pua could not persuade herself that this beautiful man-like coastal woman should inconvenience herself with a pregnancy from Tati. Above all, it was her deep, unconditional conviction that his coastal woman must one day return to her own village and to her own people. While Maisea sat pondering the meaning of the demonstration, Pua offered the last of the kinds of meals she had been cooking and sat back to enjoy her portion.

While the meal was in progress, Pua emptied from a small string hanging down from her left armpit, a bundle of creepers she had collected during the day. The creepers and small tiny leaves were growing along the soft stalks at random. She took a handful and began chewing them, likewise encouraging the other young woman to do so. Maisea pulled a smaller bundle towards herself and after tasting just a little, gulped them. Her partner acknowledged this courage with a little acclamation. Pua explained by means of

imitating a voice culmination other's belly indicating how a formed. The plant, Maisea cause sterility. Next, Pua pul small dried gourd which s droplets of lime. Shaking it, t lay on her back with her legs a handful of the particles, she s allowed the lime to fall along vagina. Her only spectator however, comforted her friend and in bodily action, imitate swing into action, and adding to apply the lime. She repeated until the pupil nodded. Then Pua broke the news. F appropriate signals and signs she expected would be a bride and Tati v groom. That would be tomo

Pua left the hut and a short with a large string bag bursti The bamboo flame that had ashes. The wild and beautiful the mountains, heralded a n shrill songs of dawn, at whose would either withdraw in em dark deeds like the night or ris glory. Associated with it w union between two equal strange in their respective trad ment. The winged singing he lonely hut, seemed to disap made mockery of the forth But at the same time, the rhytl which the tunes were cackled tony, depicted an irony in the pleasures. For in the very hut flapped and sung, a woma irresistible excitement and p on her legs and nape; shaking down; her organ as wide as There was a pause, almost an then, she shot it out from the and fell in a thump exhaust dry. It was like a spout of a d husked coconut punched only that she felt she had made which had shuddered her fro toes to the roots of her hair. I orgasm she had ever experie demonstrations of yesterday h Quickly, Pua felt for wetness

imitating a voice culmination with a touch on the other's belly indicating how a baby would not be formed. The plant, Maisea interpreted would cause sterility. Next, Pua pulled from her bag a small dried gourd which she had filled with droplets of lime. Shaking it, the droplets fell. Pua lay on her back with her legs wide open. Taking a handful of the particles, she squeezed them, and allowed the lime to fall along the mouth of her vagina. Her only spectator was shocked. Pua, however, comforted her friend by standing up, and in bodily action, imitated a man about to swing into action, and adding hand signals when to apply the lime. She repeated the demonstration until the pupil nodded in understanding. Then Pua broke the news. By means of appropriate signals and signs she explained that Maisea would be a bride and Tati would be the bridegroom. That would be tomorrow.

Pua left the hut and a short time later returned with a large string bag bursting out of its limits. The bamboo flame that had been lit, burnt into ashes. The wild and beautifully plumed birds of the mountains, heralded a new day, with their shrill songs of dawn, at whose maturity the world would either withdraw in embarrassment for its dark deeds like the night or rise in adoration of its glory. Associated with it would be a strange union between two equally strange people; strange in their respective traditions and environment. The winged singing heard so close to the lonely hut, seemed to disapprove greatly and made mockery of the forthcoming ceremony. But at the same time, the rhythm and the speed at which the tunes were cackled in natural monophony, depicted an irony in the highest of human pleasures. For in the very hut around which they flapped and sung, a woman heaved with an irresistible excitement and pleasure. She stood on her legs and nape; shaking violently up and down; her organ as wide as she could open it. There was a pause, almost an eternal pause, and then, she shot it out from the depths of her own, and fell in a thump exhausted, breathless and dry. It was like a spout of a drink from a young husked coconut punched only in one eye. Except that she felt she had made a painless delivery which had shuddered her from the nails of her toes to the roots of her hair. Pua had the biggest orgasm she had ever experienced. Her obscene demonstrations of yesterday had taken their toll. Quickly, Pua felt for wetness on her body and

skin, and with a handful of dirt she covered up the embarrassing evidence. Soon Pua had a warm fire burning. On releasing the entrance handle, she realized that dawn had broken. She was no longer a frustrated woman as she had been. She smiled in relief and agreed that the day should take its normal course and whatever happened in this hut tonight would not concern her in the least. Pua looked over where Maisea was sleeping and saw a slight movement.

"Poor girl," Pua sought to herself. "I'll help you escape. Soon. Very soon." The sleeping woman had awoken and sat up. Gua felt terrible as a series of questions arose in her mind as to whether Maisea had in fact seen any of her actions. Was Maisea under the impression that she, Pua, knew a way of satisfying herself without the services of a male? Just what did the coastal woman think of her?

"It was only a dream," Pua responded to her own thoughts. At that instant, the two women heard together the short bursts of the ceremonial bamboo pronouncing the start of the ceremony. The blowing was following intermittently by a hooting voice, calling to prepare the bride and the groom. Both must not eat this day till late in the afternoon. Pua, suddenly conscious of the role entrusted her, swung into action. She had lost both parents, to marry the same man who was the father of her children.

The maternal duty of giving away the daughter would never stop until she died, in which case, the wife next in seniority assumed responsibility or until Tati himself was caught up by senility or died. Along the coast, however, this responsibility was vested in the parents, particularly the father. In the absence of both, uncles were preferred over the bride's other next-of-kin including her older brothers and sisters. In the context of this subtle unfamiliar difference, the preparation of the bride would also be an unprecedented departure from the Kukukuku tradition, whose ancestral creators had orally passed through from generation to generation the ways and means of handling the situation. Pua was already knowledgeable in preparing and designing the forms and the colours required to reflect the bride as a stranger also from the coast. The colours used in the make-up had been selected over its centuries to represent a particular tribe and area. Some aspects, however, would be purely Kukukuku and would depict his views on

women.

Pua emptied the large string bag she had brought into the hut. With hollowed jingles the contents were carefully put in different groups for their respective purposes. There were long and short strings of beads. Dog teeth, pig-tusks, snake-fangs, bird-beaks; paradise bird and cassowary-plumes; hornbill-beaks, and cuscus-skin-bands for the head, neck, arms, and legs. Among them was a prized set of human-teeth beads. These were strung in different lengths and sizes according to the age of the wearers. Inside the larger bag was yet another smaller one. Pua sifted this out and carefully laid the contents aside. These were container gourds which held an assortment of ochre for decorative painting. In sign language, Pua asked Maisea to undress. She then picked up one of the gourds and poured, in drips, pig grease onto the body of the girl. Using her palms the grease was smeared evenly on the skin. This dressing continued until the container was empty. Next, she took another gourd and using a large white parrot feather, began painting with red ochre. A line as wide as Maisea's nose was drawn from the top of the nose right down to the navel from the navel to round the waist. While engaged in this, Pua was re-assuring the girl in her own Kukuku language.

"Don't be afraid. You are going to fight a number of men. It will be a mock fight to test you to match Tati as his wife. If you lose you will live with him in his hut. Your movement will be restricted every morning due to lack of sleep because he likes to play with the losers every night. Should you win, and I have no doubt you will, it will mean you have your own house, and you can go gardening and fishing whenever you like; and then I will help you escape." Each action word, Pua emphasised with appropriate signals. Maisea was able to understand much of it.

Pua was an expert painter. While she had been talking thus to Maisea, she had applied the red ochre above the eye-brows, the cheeks, and other appropriate parts. In addition, she had taken a gourd of liquid-lime and had painted the face with dots, dashes and strokes. She had painted across the centre of the forehead over the red, a shape that of the newly risen moon with the liquid lime. Then with yellow ochre she drew small circles on both cheeks, and on the breasts. Other colours were also used to add brightness

and beauty. A crown of feathers flanked by two large paradise tail plumes, completed the painting task. The next set of chores were dressing with the ornaments. Pua took one half of a large scallop shell which had been painted red, inside and outside, and hung it over the reproductive organ. The covering was almost perfect.

It was tightened around the waist by means of intricate stringwork that had been laced through small holes drilled at the top of the shell. The lower part of the shell had two separately laced strings which were also extended around the thighs. A piece of tapa cloth cut to size halfway between the knees and the groins was hung to enclose the shell and frontal part from view. A large white shell in the shape of a new moon was hung down the chest, almost a burden for the two breasts to carry. Between the neck and the shell, the beads were hung. The human teeth were followed by dog-teeth, pig-tusks, and snake fangs. The hornbillbeak was hung around the breast just below the edge of the shell. The cuscus-skin bands were tied on the upper arms; around the calves and ankles. A long, floppy tapa cloth reaching the ankles was fastened around the neck over the shoulder.

The dressing was completed. The colours used; the dress in general, had their own individual stories but basically told the tale of coastal woman who was a virgin, had deserted her own, and was now in Kukukuku land to live there forever. At least that would be the tale for everyone, but not for Pua. She could have imposed her will and intention in departing from the norm and be caught and killed. Despite this reluctance, she had to fulfil her responsibilities in fulfilling those demands, at least for the duration of the ceremony. The ornaments, and material used were hers and she wore them on her wedding but using a very different pattern. She had acquired them as a result of her status and position as the only daughter of Chief Zombie at whose death he was succeeded by Tati. The succession was unlike those of the Pukari and Semese in the coastal region. In Pua's community, the strongest, most intelligent, the most resourceful warrior, would declare himself Chief and subsequently show it by his actions. If he proved bad, the people had to live with it. No one was killed unnecessarily unless in combat. Pua was forced into marrying Tati but that was the way of her people. So at her father's death, all the

wealth passed on to her and worth by going into battle today. She had proved she chief. In her society too, the chief had the discretion should be in line as far as authority was concerned. on behalf of Tati many the brides were scarcely had been. The entire community anxiously and looked to Each wedding was the same. "No, Pua had not reco the people would say and today, she made her choice coastal woman with her wealth.

The large bamboo flute ing ceremony began. Maisea entrance of the hut with a closely behind. Directly in away, Tati walked, his he Maisea's, his arms and legs beads. His cuscus skin band larger than Maisea's. He some. He was armed w arrows. Beside him walked dressed in a similar manner with long bamboo knives stopped. The two women stopped just a distance from began to gather. When Tati ment the crowds sighed. Tati fully Maisea was dressed, their stares away from her. Tati looked proud and mighty from him, the biggest string was carried to the centre bamboo raft by four men headress of her friend and go forward and carry the advanced, picked up the bamboo effort lifted it up and stood exclaimed and sighted. Pua neck was extremely strong under the weight. The crowd after seeing how she had lived with ease. The Tati signal men approached Maisea. about to strike, an older among the crowds. Tati turned

wealth passed on to her and she had to prove her worth by going into battle like Maissea would today. She had proved she was the daughter of a chief. In her society too, however, the first wife of the chief had the discretion to choose whomever should be in line as far as handing over practical authority was concerned. Gua had undertaken on behalf of Tati many similar ceremonies but the brides were scarcely dressed, the way Maissea had been. The entire community therefore waited anxiously and looked towards the ceremony. Each wedding was the same.

"No, Pua had not recognised anyone as yet," the people would say among themselves. But today, she made her choice and had bestowed the marital woman with honour, authority and wealth.

The large bamboo flute bellowed. The wedding ceremony began. Maissea walked through the entrance of the hut with a clatter. Pua followed closely behind. Directly in front them, a little way away, Tati walked, his headdress twice as tall as Maissea's, his arms and legs heavily weighted with beads. His cuscus skin band around the waist was larger than Maissea's. He looked tall and handsome. He was armed with a large bow and arrows. Beside him walked a band of men also dressed in a similar manner but who were armed with long bamboo knives. The group had stopped. The two women approached them and stopped just a distance from the men. The crowds began to gather. When Tati shouted with excitement the crowds sighed. They saw how beautifully Maissea was dressed. They could not take their stares away from her. The show continued. Tati looked proud and mighty and on a signal from him, the biggest string bag of food ever seen was carried to the centre of the arena on a bamboo raft by four men. Pua removed the headdress of her friend and made signs for her to go forward and carry the string bag. Maissea advanced, picked up the bag, and with very little effort lifted it up and stood carrying it. Everyone exclaimed and sighted. Pua knew her friend's neck was extremely strong and would not snap under the weight. The crowds withdrew with fear after seeing how she had lifted the heavy weight with ease. The Tati signalled the attack. Four men approached Maissea. But when they were about to strike, an older man shouted from among the crowds. Tati turned to him. "Speak!"

he said.

"Tati" he said, "my son still has an injury caused by this woman. Many other warriors were injured by her. This woman is very strong. See how she lifted the string bag? She might kill our men whom we might need in a real war."

"No, let the fight start," one of the warriors interrupted, and darted towards Maissea who still had the load on her head. The young man drew his long bamboo knife. Maissea reached into the string bag and brought out a long taro. The young man swung his knife and Maissea drew her taro. The knife slashed the taro. Again the young warrior charged, and again, cut off another piece of the taro. The taro had been reduced in size and Maissea held the remnant in the cup of her hands. The young man struck again. But before he could pull away his knife, Maissea had already grasped it. She pulled so hard, and at the same time swung her head to release the string bag in the direction of where the warrior would run. The bag landed right in front of him and he fell comfortably on it. There was a general applause. Maissea turned the knife and held it by the handle. The young warrior got up walked ashamed towards Tati and took his position. The other three were reluctant to charge.

Chief Tati turned to the old man and made a reply, "What you have said is true." There'll be no more tests. She is now my wife and we shall celebrate."

Pua replaced the headdress, and before they were ready to join Tati, a huge bamboo raft had been readied behind them. Chief Tati, his first wife and his newest wife were carried to the centre of the village where the feast was being prepared. Maissea had won and took an honoured place among her tribe's most-hated traditional enemy. The feast was the largest ever cooked at the village; most of it in ground stoves. In the centre sat the chief, Maissea, and Pua. On one side was located Tati's polygamous efforts and on the opposite side of the concourse was the rest of the crowd. The food was divided accordingly."

The bridegroom then wore his other cap as the Chief and addressed his subjects thus, "Warriors and friends, you witnessed today a grand union that our ancestors had never dreamt of, and would have never aspired to. You will recall how individuals have mourned their dead, and have pledged vengeance for their relatives and loved ones. You will recall how we have lived with fear

and suspicion because of the counter-vengeance for our deeds and acts. Our ancestors were sent to find a new location closer to the source of sweet, bitter salt. This was the site chosen for that they purpose. This woman, my new wife, has been observed to be possessing the strength of men. She showed it again today. At the garden where we captured her, her extraordinary strength warded off the manly challenges as if my warriors were nothing more than spectres in the air bouncing against a giant eagle. Indeed, had it not been for the stories about her killing a huge crocodile, and later taming two of grant snakes and killing them, I would have ordered her killed. She came to the garden with another, a younger girl, whom the warriors killed because they thought she had seen them and would therefore alert her mighty partner. I had upon hearing about her conquests intended to capture her and make her my wife. Her young friend had to be killed in order that my dream would come true. However, because of the murder this tribe as from today is guilty, and her blood as a result of this marriage smears our hands and is upon our heads." Pua looked at Maisea. Little drops trickled from her eyes. Maisea only smile back in return.

"I have decided therefore," Tati continued, "that a practical means by which we can show her tribe that we must have peace and friendship, should be considered now and be implemented immediately." Tati paused to gauge reaction. There was none.

Tati then put up his proposal. "As from tomorrow, four rafts will be loaded with food of all kinds, and taken down the river. At a spot halfway between here and the coast, the rafts will be abandoned."

"How will we know that the food will be received as a token of goodwill and friendship from this tribe?" an older man said, expressing everyone's doubt regarding the peace gifts.

"We must prepare not for tomorrow but for the tomorrow after tomorrow."

"But Tati, that is impossible. Our languages are completely different. Our ways are completely different from theirs," another older man quizzed the chief.

"You have to live long enough to see for yourself," Tati replied with a sense of humour. Seeing that no one else would speak, Tati called his son by Pua. The youth got up from among

the maternal ranks; walked a little distance picked up a bundle and carried it to his father. Tati unwrapped it and displayed an extraordinary weapon. It was a stone club. An awesome fear invaded the crowd. The crowd seemed to shudder at its sight. A babble broke out as each told his own version as he knew it. The club had a head with an undulating surface which had been carved into spike-like prongs which shaded out into a long, stony handle. The babble vividly concentrated on two tales relating to the origin of the club. One which most people believed was that the club was a gift from the gods of the mountains who had favoured a certain chief. Tati was a direct descendant of that line.

The ancient chief was crossing a mountain stream when he noticed the handle projecting out of the water. It was surrounded by bubbles indicative of steaming, boiling water. His first impulse was to flee this awesome sight but a quiet small voice appealed to him.

"Welcome, brother of the morning star and brother of his companion, we have seen your struggle against the mist which is the breath from our nostrils combating light which blinds our eyes. We hate light and the mist helps us to complete the task we embark on in the darkness. We have found favour in you. You are strong and a good man. Use your strength. It will help you to conquer lands in the regions where the sun sets" "The chief waded into the stream. Despite the steam and heat, he touched it and at once it became cool to his feel. He pulled but it did not loosen. At last with all his might, he wrenched the weapon from its mooring. Suddenly the water in the stream was cold. He turned to see the water being sucked under in a whirlpool.

Another story told about the origin of the club with certain relish, was that another chief ventured into the cave inhabited by a monster which had the body of a boar but had two long crocodile tails. The monster would enter the caves with its tails first. Its pig-body lay on a sheltered stone-platform at the mouth. The monster was sleeping after a successful hunt and gardening. Due to a full stomach it had become tired and lazy. As a result, one of the tails was halfway inside the cave and the other lay half-curved with the tip touching its mouth. It was carefully camouflaged against the soil and rock. The chief thinking there was a pig to be killed,

fired an arrow which hit the monster's face and fell shuffling near the entrance. An earth-shattering grunt was heard as the monster heaved into position. The chief realized the extreme danger. He flung himself headlong into the undergrowth. The monster, with the weapon lying hidden under a rock, stood on the conjunction of the two tails and hurled the club which struck the warrior but struck a stone instead of amputating his left leg. In great fear, the warrior chief stood amazed at the beauty of the weapon. His timidity caught up with him. In great courage, he scooped up the club and rushed, dodging the monster, seemed to snarl down at the warrior through thorns and thistles. He took a breath. As he looked distinctly the monster's face was seen. It was a grunting and snorting. It was the tail that lay haphazardly on the ground, heaving, touched the warrior's foot. The monster coughed. The warrior of the offending tail into the correct entrance. Tati was exhausted. That night he was covered in human hair and Tati gave him a vision.

"I admired your courage. It has not been for my tail, I have seen the flesh," it said. "However, I will use of this weapon. It will do no harm. I do not wish it. Do not use it because it will surely kill you."

"Chief Tati standing on the right hand called on the monster to bless the transfer of a coastal woman he had said to Maisea, "you have the weapon."

Tati cast a loving glance at Maisea. Feasting began. It was the feasting and dancing. People walked home. Tati was uncertain about the monster. Chief in relinquishing the woman who was still in the monster's communities. The monster with the opportunity to be set up. For since

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ed an arrow which bounced against the rock
and fell shuffling near the snout. There was
an earth-shattering grunt, and the loose tail
leaved into position. Only then did the warrior
chief realize the extreme danger he had ventured
into. He flung headlong into the nearest jungle
undergrowth. The monster reached for the
weapon lying hidden under its forelegs. Then,
standing on the conjunction of its long tails, it
turtled the club which missed the head of the
warrior but struck a stump in front and fell short
of amputating his left toes. Though fleeing in
fear, the warrior chief stopped with a great effort,
amazed at the beauty of the weapon. At first
timidity caught up with him but with momentary
courage, he scooped the weapon with hands and
feet and rushed, dodging the large trunks, that
seemed to snarl down at him ferociously. He ran
through thorns and thickets and at last stopped
to take a breath. As he did so, he could hear
distinctly the monster's fearful and protesting
grunts and snorts. It was in excruciating pain as
the tail that lay haphazardly had accidentally, on
heaving, touched the rocky ceiling of the plat-
form. The monster could not manoeuvre the tip
of the offending tail into the cave as it lay beyond
the correct entrance. The warrior arrived home
exhausted. That night during sleep a figure
covered in human hair from head to toe, appeared
to him a vision.

"I admired your courage and speed. If it had
not been for my tail, I would have gashed your
flesh," it said. "However, take extreme care in the
use of this weapon. It will kill anyone even if you
do not wish it. Do not threaten people with it
because it will surely kill them."

"Chief Tati standing with the weapon in his
right hand called on the gods and ancestors to
bless the transfer of authority from him to the
coastal woman he had just married. "Take it," he
said to Maisea, "you are worthy of such a
weapon."

Tati cast a loving look at Maisea and the
feasting began. It was almost three days before
the feasting and dancing stopped. The ordinary
people walked home tired and weary but were
uncertain about the meaning and motives of their
Chief in relinquishing the mystical weapon to a
woman who was still unknown by the mountain
communities. The ceremony presented Maisea
with the opportunity to see how the village had
been set up. For since arrival there, she had been

unable to see the entire village due to her prepara-
tion for marriage. Severe measures restricted
brides to be seen publicly for a given time until
the ceremony. Maisea was hooded the day after
her arrival with a full-sized covering of tapa cloth.
Even her eyes had been sheltered. Her responses
to the call of nature had been made only when
she had a companion to lead her like a blind
woman until she had realized that Pua was more
than a friend and she decided to bury her wastes
where she slept. She had been introduced to the
ceremony semi-blindfolded as a result of the
numerous ornaments with which she was
adorned. Only when she was challenged were the
ornaments removed, and she was able visually to
study the setting of her new home. The marriage
ceremony was held in an open, undulating
country which fell into a ravine below which a
cool clear mountain steam tumbled over rock
faces and crags. This seemed the only flat and in
the region, as high peaks competed to reach the
sky in the east, north and west. Another peak
smaller in size stood oddly in the south as if in
protest against being isolated. On the spurs of the
peaks falling into the plateau could be seen
round, mud-and-grass thatched homes, looking
like large beehives, under the shadows of giant
kapok trees. In the centre upon a huge rise, stood
a neat village almost circling a row of three huts.
Below the mound more houses could be seen.

The huts in a semi-circle belonged to the wives
who had won their wedding fights and an
additional one just built belonged to Maisea. The
three houses which stood directly opposite the
others, were the homes of Tati, those wives who
lost their wedding fights, and the young girls who
were being reared for wifehood. While below,
scattered but spreading out towards the spurs,
were the rest of the community. Closer were the
troops and a little further on were the homes of
the old and aged. The village had been located
strategically so that any invasion could be
counteracted by the warriors first. The
Kukukuku was a pugnaciously hostile tribe. The
spoils of war were almost his life-blood. The
women too were hard-working, ready to sacrifice
to complement the gains of war. It was therefore
essential for the leader to have easy access to
warriors in order to retaliate simultaneously
whenever possible.

Maisea was surprised. It was as big as Toaripi
but slightly smaller than Karama. Maisea was

tired but not exhausted. Pua led her by the arm into the newly-built hut. At one corner used as storage were stacks of food which had been enclosed securely. Digging into the dirt at one corner with its snout was a pig. Piled in the centre were varying sizes of tapa-cloth for her use. These had been made by the best craftsmen. Maisea virtually flopped onto the pile of bark material, and was instantly fast asleep. Pua had returned to her own hut. Sometime had lapsed when the voice that had haunted Maisea since her arrival once more echoed its inspirational message. This time though in tones of crushing the vacuum that had been forcedly created in Maisea's conscience and mentality.

"My grandchild," the voice started at first. "Your relatives were killed by these people. They have also on their hands the bloods of your brothers, and Maisea, my child, have you forgotten the brutal murder of your sister? Remember Oaea? Who was Oaea? Revenge! Kill. Kill. Kill!"

"Ahaaaaaaa!!!" Maisea shouted and sat up thinking. Maisea could hardly recall the message from the voice. It seemed to her that two messages had been imparted simultaneously using the same voice. The same voice in turn assumed guttural tones. What had frightened her was that the guttural tone was personified as a hairy, wild, moving thing grasping the stone club to its hairy chest. Maisea had seen the thing rescue the club from a swelling, twirling, steaming stream. At the words, 'Kill, Kill, Kill!' the handless thing threw the weapon at her. She had woken up frightened. At her shout, two young women rushed to the hut, and seeing Maisea sitting up with a weary, sleepy look on her face, they realized she had had a dream. Agreeing that it was a bad dream, they chewed some bark and spat it out over the entire hut. Then they made the appropriate sign-language telling Maisea to go to sleep. The two women left the hut, giggling and talking as they walked away. Maisea fell back and a heavy sleep.

As a warring tribe, the Kukukuku had devised community laws to regulate morals health, and welfare of the tribe as near perpetual readiness to move or mount a counter-offensive should there be an invasion. The specific tribal law relating to marriage and reproduction had been designed to ensure that no one was inconvenienced and handicapped by a large small family under

uncertain circumstances. The rules which were as old as the existence of the tribe, stipulated the number of children in each family. For the monogamist, a child must first speak and eat on its own, before the parents planned another child. A disobedient family was often abandoned with the old village when a war resulted in migration. For the polygamist, the practical application of the law was more severe than it was for the single family.

Chief, Tati enforced the law even to the minutest detail. He supported the rules with personal examples. He knew that to deviate would mean embarrassment, disrepute and loss of respect. Although he was allowed to marry his wives when they were ready, he was prohibited through careful self-observation, to ensure with highest moral respect that, not all of them became pregnant at the same time, if he had married them at at once. Tati improved the law to suit his purpose, no two wives should deliver babies at the same time or one delivery followed by another too soon, no single wife should have more than one child if there were other wives who had not yet produced. He believed in procreation rather than in pure hedonistic endeavours. His favourite, the 'breaking of the floods', was an absolute exercise in the former.

This strict compliance with and observation of the law by Tati was the very injury that had been inflicted on Pua; not only herself but the other two as well. The period now seemed longer than it had been with the recent addition to the family. She had made sure that Maisea was fully aware of this situation, and both shared each other's feelings with the other, however, determined to assist in an escape attempt.

No wonder, as a newly married woman, she had expected to be visited on her wedding night but there was no visit from Tati and there had never been any since. Only Pua visited the coastal woman and when both met they were heavily engaged in conversations in the language that the younger one was learning so fast. Often they would be seen together working hard in the gardens; digging new plots, planting and harvesting what was ready. At ceremonial feasts, the two would be seen together like mother and daughter or like sisters. Pua taught her charge how to cook pig-meat, a mixed variety of edible leaves and jungle fruit; the Kukukuku recipes for soups of snakes, birds, dogs, lizards, larvae, and even of

delicious soups that were compulsory. Earthen stoves were used for meals for feasts, while earthenware held the bulk of the cooking utensils at home. One afternoon while working in the garden made for Maisea, a young man, holding a large bundle

"Meat," he said while laying it on the ground between the two. Maisea was curious to see what was carefully unwrapped the bundle. It was in it, withdrew in horror. In the middle of the greased leaves was a good sized human thigh, soaked in its own blood, filling up the wrapping in severed ends. Suddenly there was a mental transformation; some of the lost returned in somewhat mangled form; garden; coastline; mountain; Gua; Tati, house; hut; pig; stone club.. Hura!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ai.e.e." was a pleasureable laugh. "The girl from the coast, to see you that had been cast on you had meat held the secrets. Come, eat and eat the meat for only then you will be in your former condition. You are restored in full." The suitor's maternal love that Pua had to Maisea was in fact a disguised conversion formula she had prominent father, Chief Zombi had insisted that his only child have many children as she could do. Thus Pua had become disobedient to her father's wish had not yet been changed that Tati had made a statute relating to the number of children each family. It was this desire and yet without the means to fulfill it that drove her to a state of rebellion occasionally, before Maisea's birth. Then one night disguised as a Zombie's ghost appeared to her in vision, and encouraged her to do you long for men? Use your power.

There was an immediate change then Pua had been able to vent her pent-up frustrations but she had a baby with her fingers. Then she had a potent formula which

delicious soups that were composed of vegetables only. Earthen stoves were used to cook huge meals for feasts, while earthen pots comprized the bulk of the cooking utensils in a Kukukuku home. One afternoon while they were at the garden made for Maissea, a young boy ran up to them, holding a large bundle of taro leaves.

"Meat," he said while laying it down carefully on the ground between the two women. Maissea was curious to see what was in the bundle. She carefully unwrapped the bundle, and seeing what was in it, withdrew in horror. Lying at the bottom of the greased leaves was a good-sized chunk of a human thigh, soaked in its own blood which was filling up the wrapping in drips from newly severed ends. Suddenly there was a confused mental transformation; some of what Maissea had lost returned in somewhat marred visions; beach; garden; coastline; mountains; Oaea; wedding; Gua; Tati, house; hut; pig; human meat; club; club. Hura!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ai.e.e.e," Pua broke out in a pleasureable laugh. "The time has come, my sister from the coast, to see your people. The spell that had been cast on you has been broken. This meat held the secrets. Come, my sister let us cook and eat the meat for only then will you return to your former condition. Your memory will be restored in full." The supposedly deepfelt maternal love that Pua had expressed privately to Maissea was in fact a disguised intention to test a conversion formula she had learnt from her prominent father, Chief Zombie. In life, Zombie had insisted that his only child should produce as many children as she could during her life span. Thus Pua had become disappointed that her father's wish had not yet been realized due to the changes that Tati had made in the community statute relating to the number of dependents in each family. It was this desire to produce more, and yet without the means with which to fulfil the wish that drove her to a state of almost insanity occasionally, before Maissea arrived on the scene. Then one night disguised as an old woman, Zombie's ghost appeared to his daughter in a vision, and encouraged her thus; "My child, why do you long for men? Use your fingers."

There was an immediate compliance and since then Pua had been able to at least relieve her pent-up frustrations but she could not produce a baby with her fingers. Then she realized that she had a potent formula which when applied would

produce differing effects and significance for men and women. As she had not tried it before for fear of being suspected, she had waited until the opportunity presented itself in Maissea through whom it had been proved to possess power. As it had been applied to a stranger, the initial results had been encouraging.

"Yes, Tati was only a man," Pua amused herself with the thought. She sifted out a comprehensive plan of action. After Maissea's departure she would attempt this formula on her husband. She was absolutely convinced of its success and the subsequent pleasure she would obtain by its mere application. Pua's certainty was founded on the obvious fact that the formula had been applied for the first time to a stranger, a woman, and had proved itself according to her expectations. What inhibitions were there to prevent Tati a man, a pure Kukukuku in blood and soul, from yielding to its power, and her wishes? She believed men were prone to being influenced by love potions, and Tati therefore would be an easy target. She swallowed, with yet another important addition to the chain of thoughts in her determined mind. She became vocal, talking to herself, "They must all suffer because I have suffered long enough." Pua envisaged a kind of revolt among the many wives. This she hoped would spread like an epidemic among all the wives who had reached their respective stages of motherhood. She would make Tati love her more than any of the other wives, and at the same time ensure a further amendment in the community statute in her favour. Pua laughed to herself, very much excited by her prospects. Pua knew it would produce the desired effects on a member of her own kind. This was why she had laughed, pleased when seeing Maissea's reactions to the "meat."

She was now determined to tell why Maissea had been under the mental condition she had been. Pua had decided to cook the meat at Maissea's hut. At the garden and from the bushes she collected the essential ingredients and the two women adjourned. Although Maissea had been horrified at the sight of human flesh, the sweet pungent smell of the meat made her mouth water. After the food had cooled, the two women began to eat.

Between bites, Pua told her story. The other listened intently, and after a while, she said, "True" in the Karama language but changed

instantly to say the same in the speaker's dialect. The meal had the intended effect on the coastal woman. Maisea suddenly became consciously aware that she was Maisea Oaharo of Karama. At that moment the two became separate individuals; one from Kukukuku and the other had come from Karama. Maisea examined herself. She had been there a long time. Her breasts had developed; the skin on her legs had toughened a little; she felt small, shallow bumps on her cheeks. She knew she had reached the stage where she was a grown up woman, no longer a young active girl. Karama was a long way away. It would take many days and many nights to get back there. Home-sickness had plunged into her. She was bed ridden for many days.

"I cannot lie here and die." With this thought she walked out of the hut towards the shaggy crevice. The place was inaccessible. She walked eastward past the gardens. Down there were more houses. There was no accessible route. She turned in disappointment and walked back to the hut. To her surprise Pua was sitting there waiting.

"How does the route look?" Pua asked as if it had been discussed with her.

"How do you know I was looking for a route?" Maisea replied, surprised.

"It is clear, isn't it? You are better now so naturally you want to return home." Pua confirmed the other's feelings. "My sister, you must wait. I have promised to see you leave this place," Pua assured her. "We must wait until the first crescent of the moon appears, then we will find your way out".

At the time of the first crescent, the Kukukuku allowed the mating of the cassowaries to take place. This meant that wild ones would be allowed to wander into the village in search of male or female mates. At the same time the tamed ones would be released. There was a domesticated cassowary at nearly every home. In their fear of being attacked, unawares, the Kukukuku like the Karama, posted guards at night. It would be a risky encounter, if someone were to break through the ranks at night without being interrogated. Pua was a genius. She knew exactly what to do. So in Maisea's hut, she began to assemble two frames in the shape of a cassowary, using strips of bamboo. When she had finished, the frames resembled the skeletons of two full grown cassowaries. There was more

than adequate tapa cloth material to cover the skeletons. In the frame that Pua herself had to wear, she had built a larger belly to accommodate a string bag of food for Maisea. At the rear, natural cassowary tail feathers were glued on. The legs did not need covering. Maisea asked Pua to get into one and see how it looked. Maisea was amazed to see how true-to-life it looked. The two women waited.

One night, overcast skies almost delayed their departure. Pua had just left Maisea's hut to go to hers when she looked and saw it, far in the western sky. She rushed back.

"My sister, time to leave." Maisea had been long prepared. The two donned their disguises and walked around behind the houses of the other wives. Fortunately, a number of true cassowaries were seen there earlier. Some children including Pua's son were sitting in groups playing and talking. The two women walked down the gullies, past the houses that Maisea had seen earlier, and up towards a look-out-height and down on the other side.

In the belly of Pua's cassowary was a large string bag of food, the ornaments that Maisea had worn on her wedding day, and the mystical weapon; the Hura. At the entrance to the village on the east were some warriors. An opening big enough to allow free access in and out for the cassowaries had been made. Along the way, the real animals had been avoiding the two strange creatures. Near the opening, the two women struck trouble; Maisea could fit into the exit and out but Pua's was a little too big in size. At that moment, the cassowaries walking in pairs stopped short of the entrance. The female partners became irritated at this delay. Meanwhile, Maisea crawled out into the open and waited in great fear for her friend.

"What shall we do?" Maisea asked in a whisper.

"Wait" Pua replied. "Here you take these things." She had taken off the disguise and had laid it aside. It was empty. The short period of the pause by the cassowaries had drawn the attention of a sharp-eyed guard.

"Hey, look! Two of the birds cannot bear it any longer. They are doing it just there." He directed the others to the shadows near the fence.

"Let them do it," one guard said. Outside, Maisea called on the spirit of her grandmother Maisea to help. In that instant a bright star shot

towards the western skies.

"Look, a shooting star!", one of the guards cried. At that moment, a bamboo pole was tossed over the wall. Maisea caught it. She walked out relieved to find an opportunity. Pua carried the bag and the weapon she had hidden through the hole. Maisea walked on still in the clumsiness of their artificial cassowaries. The path down which they had walked from the fence ended abruptly. They stood on the plateau. Winding down the old walking track. Pua took off the disguise. Maisea to do the same. Then they went down with the stone weapon. They walked down into the opening of the tunnel. Pua and Maisea made their way. Shortly were groping their way through the darkness of the jungle. Pua began to speak.

"Do you know why Tati put the weapon?" she asked Maisea.

"As a wedding gift," Maisea replied.

"No," Pua corrected. "It means to know how long our people have lived. Your people accuse us of being lazy. Our ancestors did not set their own will. The weapon directed them to see the coast is too far. Your people reach this area. So the land did not belong to one and our ancestors took it. I cannot hear what Maisea would say. It is difficult to say anything. She was a serious topic had to be discussed. The jungle track was rough; the descents, high steep, gullies, narrow makeshift bridges, thorns and many countless dangers that prevailed."

"What can I say?" Maisea asked herself. Then she remembered the kindness and generosity; her friend. Maisea did not belong there and the village as soon as practicable. Moreover these deeply and decided anger, she must allow the conversation to continue and she had to be honest.

"Our people hardly speak of it. Why and how do they have this general view they gave was that of our land," Maisea replied to her friend. "I think that because the Karama people they also have the right to

towards the western skies.

"Look, a shooting star!", one guard shouted. At that moment, a bamboo cassowary was tossed over the wall. Maisea caught it and laid it down. Pua walked out relieved with that apportionment. Pua carried the bag and the other things including the weapon she had earlier given to Maisea through the hole. The two women walked on still in the clumsiness and discomfort of their artificial cassowaries. The grass slope down which they had walked from the security fence ended abruptly. They stood at the edge of the plateau. Winding down the side was a walking track. Pua took off the mask and asked Maisea to do the same. Then she dismantled them with the stone weapon and threw the pieces down into the opening of a short natural tunnel. Pua and Maisea made the ascent and shortly were groping their way in the pitched darkness of the jungle. Pua began talking.

"Do you know why Tati presented you with the weapon?" she asked Maisea.

"As a wedding gift," Maisea replied.

"No," Pua corrected. "It means peace. You know how long our people have fought each other? Your people accuse us of stealing your land. Our ancestors did not settle here at their own will. The weapon directed them here. You see the coast is too far. Your people could not reach this area. So the land did not belong to anyone and our ancestors took it." She paused to hear what Maisea would say. Maisea found it difficult to say anything. She was annoyed that a serious topic had to be discussed at the time when the jungle track was rough; there were low descents, high steepes, gullies, numerous creeks, makeshift bridges, thorns and prickles, and the countless dangers that prevailed in a wild jungle.

"What can I say?" Maisea was thinking to herself. Then she remembered the other woman's kindness and generosity; her very belief that Maisea did not belong there and should leave the village as soon as practicable. Maisea pondered over these deeply and decided that despite her anger, she must allow the conversation to continue and she had to be honest.

"Our people hardly speak of this land. Who owns it? Why and how do they own it? But the general view they gave was that your people stole our land," Maisea replied to her friend. "But I think that because the Karama live on the coast, they also have the right to claim the land

immediately inland."

"So it means that when your people kill our people they want the land to which they make general claims and do not provide the specific proofs."

"I think that's right"

"That's exactly the reason why Tati made the gift of the weapon to you, so that if he died, or if you had the chance to escape you could take it with you and present it to your people as evidence of our ownership of this land." Pua felt satisfied with her explanation. Indeed, Maisea had nothing more to add, only to say how pleased she had been with the honour of being the first coastal woman to have brought this evidence to the Karama. During the discussion, the two women had covered much of the distance without any mishaps.

"Just a short distance ahead and I'll leave you," Pua said, assuring Maisea of the proximity of her destination. At last they reached the bank of a river where rafts had been anchored in some order. Pua brought one of the rafts closer to the bank and allowing Maisea to jump onto it. Pua gave directions to her friend.

"Listen very carefully. There are number of large bends and points along the river on your right. They number about this many fingers (she opened and closed her palms three times each). When you count the last, turn your raft and follow it down. That's the main river. Remember what I have taught. You might find some of it useful. Use the weapon if you can but be careful. Farewell, my sister. Farewell, my friend. Fare...wel...l..."

Maisea pushed the vessel out into the open. Before her lay a long, wide stretch of fresh water. This was the Koko river, one of the numerous streamlets that composed the headwaters of the Karama River and others east between Karama and Toaripi. Not many Karama knew about this river. It flowed from the general direction north, towards the east and then dropped into the Karama which ran in a westerly direction. Maisea used a big long pole that had been provided to steer the vessel. The current was strong enough not to warrant an additional effort. So Maisea stood at the rear looking our ahead. The vessel was making a slow but easy progress. The features that Pua had pointed out were not yet appearing. Soon she saw some light breaking in the east. Mountain and river birds

sand their dawn welcome songs, and Maisea remembered to start counting the main features. Slowly but surely the raft was guided past the first of the bends and points. About sun-down almost half the number of them had been passed. She knew that any deviation from the course would be disastrous and she had to force herself to keep awake in order to continue the count. Occasionally, she tugged the vessel along with her pole.

Then she thought she saw a light ahead. The light seemed to be travelling in the same direction. It disappeared around the bends and appeared again and again still burning, still shining. At last it seemed to have become stationary. Maisea placed the weapon under her feet, and pushed the raft a little faster along, with the pole. After a long while, she could clearly see the light. It was burning in a tree on one of the points. As the raft came closer, it disappeared. Just a short distance ahead, Maisea saw the trees silhouetted against a wide clearing. It was on the right. Maisea swung the raft in the direction; down down, faster and faster. Maisea fell asleep after having convinced herself that the spirit of her grandmother, Maisea, had come to the rescue. When she awoke the sun was already high in the sky. But the vessel had crossed the wide river and was floating down the left side of the river. It had, however, entered the river on the right. The downstream current was still fast and strong. Just before the sun had set again, Maisea decided to stop for the night after seeing some familiar landmarks in the distance. Maisea thought it was the longest night she had ever experienced.

In the twilight before dawn, she decided to abandon the raft. She swung the string bag around her back, positioned the weapon firmly in her right hand and started beating through the virgin jungle bush. She walked for a long time but at the same time not losing sight of the river. When the sun's position was directly at her back, she noticed a cluster of bananas in the distance. Arriving at the garden, she found the garden path and knew it would lead to the village. She still carried the Hura in her right hand. Suddenly her hands were grabbed from behind, and were held in locked position. Quickly, the assailant tied her hands together, and threw the string bag full of ornaments to one side. He picked up the weapon that Maisea had dropped and hid it. Then he returned to Maisea and started raping her. It seemed that when Maisea had reached proper

womanhood she had lost her might. The Kukukuku spell could have been the direct cause as Tati and his warriors were aware of it. As soon as the man had attacked her, Maisea seemed to have lost her agility and the strength with which she had single-handedly killed the crocodile and the snakes. She was now powerless. The man, Iaki, had been hunting all night, and had been unsuccessful. He had been hiding in the bushes to try and shoot some of the large morning birds that dominated the area. When he saw Maisea coming, dressed fully in Kukukuku garb he was afraid, and had climbed a tree to see how many warriors were coming. When Maisea walked alone, he waited in the tree a while and then climbed down when he realized the woman was alone. He did himself carefully behind the large tree until Maisea walked past. The man could not control himself. He could not stop. He repeatedly raped the woman until she could not react.

Iaki then picked up everything that Maisea had brought including the string bag and of course, the Hura, and disappeared. Maisea lay hurt and exhausted. The best she could do was to crawl. She was completely naked. Some time later, she was able to walk and found some leaves to cover herself. Outside the village fence she was met by the women who had been their neighbour. The woman on noticing Maisea and her condition, screamed. But Maisea spoke back in language. The woman told Maisea to wait while she went to bring a grass skirt and other necessary coverings. She then walked Maisea to her house. When Maisea had recovered fully she told her story and no one could believe it. The Karama again accused the Kukukuku for the rape but Maisea explained that it was one of their own men. She stayed with her relatives for some time and later visited her uncle Ori at Toaripi. Ori was happy and angry at the same time. Other relatives at Karama heard the story and prepared to take their revenge as soon as the man displayed his stolen goods at a dance and singing. The man had returned to Karama after being absent for sometime. But the relatives felt no attack should be made until he had worn those ornaments and displayed the Hura. The relatives waited a long time. Maisea had married and had children. Then at a big singing ceremony, Iaki was seen dancing beautifully with the ornaments dangling from his sides. He was also dancing with

the Hura. Maisea's attentive man by the woman who had Maisea told all the relatives the ceremony.

Maisea called out Iaki he looked she accused him could not hold their peace.

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the Hura. Maisea's attention was drawn to the man by the woman who had saved her. At once Maisea told all the relatives and they approached the ceremony.

Maisea called out Iaki by name, and when she looked she accused him. Maisea's brothers could not hold their peace. They converged on

the man like a pack of hungry dogs. Iaki was hacked to pieces. His relatives, however, took up the argument and sought revenge. The biggest tribal war ever fought at Karama, took place. It involved the entire tribe.

The Hura was rescued and was carried to Toaripi.

The author wishes to state that this is an imaginative reconstruction of collected or investigation. Possible alternative names for the characters are Marepua (Ira), Oaharo (Makeu), Tati (Zogi) and Pua (Gua or Maripua).

IMAGES

Photographs from Tony Stachurski's
play "Eyes of the Whites," taken
by Stuart Campbell

K2 BUSH

Rex Okona

It was half past six p.m. Friday, the Government fortnight weekend. Yamoka pushed his half-dented aluminium bowl aside and looked up. He had just finished the customary meal of half-cooked sausages and fried brown rice. He picked up his-a-cupfull of not-too-warm black-tea and gulped it down at one drop. The tea was pretty sour. "Eech!", he claimed and spat onto the table. "These bloody lazy good-for-nothing so-and-so cooks," he shouted. "Just wait, just wait, one of the fine glory days I'll knock their rotten betel-nut-stained teeth down their stinking maggot-infested throats. Half of them don't deserve the tax-payers money. They should all be sacked", he complained as he picked up his eating utensils, pushed the table down and the wooden chair backwards and got up.

He stamped his right foot hard on the cement floor two or three times, while at the same time he scattered the remains from his bowl onto the floor and strolled out towards the main door.

The cooks were so taken aback that they did not know what to say. They just stood there staring wide-eyed and with half of them, their lower lips were almost dropping off their locations.

Yamoka got to the self-closing, hard-spring door, kicked it wide open and before stepping out he looked back at the cooks, made some funny faces and shouted, "Stop staring at me you fuckin' baboons." Then he slammed the door hard behind him and walked away still insulting the cooks.

The cooks kept standing, staring at the door, dumbfounded. They did not know whether to cry or rush out and slit open Yamoka's throat with their butcher-knives. One of them was so shaken by the experience he did not realize that he had dropped his long metal soup spoon onto the partly-wet and dirty cement floor. It landed with a loud clang. This noise brought everyone back to their senses. Some started mumbling to themselves while others still stood motionless.

Half the students looked embarrassed while others nodded their heads with approval.

In one corner behind where a group of 'One Way' Christians were sitting, a voice could be heard. "Typical, typical", he gloated. "When are these inconsiderate drunken louts ever going to learn? How on earth could that son of a b... I mean fool, complain about food when people in India are starving to death at this very moment?"

In reply to this unexpected comment, a big, burly, broad-chested guy with a cut-off-sleeves, jungle-green, army-shirt, with hair uncombed and a bushy black beard, who was popularly known as Half-man popped up from his seat like a champagne-cork and shouted, pointing at the 'One Way' guy who made the comment about Yamoka.

"Hey look here mate, you shut up, all right? Look!" and he tapped the table and continue, "This is not your India, ok? We are in PNG. I am also worried about this, you understand!". As he said this he pulled up his shirt and pointed at his big hairy stomach.

Halfman had reputation for getting drunk and picking fights in public with anybody who disagreed with him so the 'One Way' fellow knew well enough not to continue any further. He just said, "Ok Half-man" and kept quiet. Some students started laughing and mocking the 'One Way Guy.

I was also laughing but suddenly realized that it was not so funny. One of the cooks was shouting now in broken English.

"Ai!" he started "you people are like that ah? You people thing you know more ah? You think you got more educate ah?" The mess supervisor tried to calm him down and ordered him to stop his silly outburst and get on with his work but the cook was still very furious. He was pointing at the students as he shouted at the top of his voice.

"I know, I know you people are like that; you no worry for our hard work. You worry for yourself only. No worries. Look out! I see you some days," he shouted as he moved up and down behind the counter. The supervisor pushed him into the kitchen and locked him in. The loud 'bang bang' band on the door from the kitchen meant that the cook was still intending to show the students how he felt. The supervisor threatened to sack him if he continued opening his big mouth. He then came out into the mess hall and apologized to the students but half the students

were not listening as they v out.

I felt sorry for the cooks, it was not their fault that the same food everyday. Who somehow the cooks were money and more dirty insu

I was submerged in my incident and I did not realize student left in the spacious looking into my plate on the it. When I came too slowly z Toma, my wantok, the mes down at me.

"Half a dozen 'sotneks Misinare," said Toma tap head. I pretended not to be

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"Whether you like it or not me tonight."

"Ok, since you'll be doing definitely coming," I said.

"I'm not. Its Mr. Bulengi, way, you know Mr. Bule asked.

"If I know him I don't replied shaking my head.

"Well you see, he is t husband, the newly elected ment from Kewai village i was in the Opposition party this morning to join the gov offered the newly-created M you students I am the only e our electorate he knows in me to see him in the place tonight. He thinks I'll give

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While he was talking I half-cut, empty, forty-four-g bin for food remains and er left from my plate into it. I utensils into the half-fille proceeded to wash them. To

while we not listening as they were already walking

I felt sorry for the cooks, poor pitiful creatures! It was not their fault that they had to feed us the same food everyday. Whoever's fault it was, somehow the cooks were always getting less money and more dirty insults.

I was submerged in my thoughts about his accident and I did not realize that I was the only student left in the spacious mess hall. I had been looking into my plate on the table but not seeing it. When I came too slowly and looked up, it was Toma, my wantok, the mess supervisor looking down at me.

"Half a dozen 'sotneks' for your thought Misinare," said Toma tapping lightly on my head. I pretended not to bear him.

"Sorry, what did you say?" I asked.

"You know what I said," he continued. "Whether you like it or not you are coming with me tonight."

"Ok, since you'll be doing all the shouting I'm definitely coming," I said.

"I'm not. Its Mr. Bulengi," said Toma. "By the way, you know Mr. Bulengi don't you?" he asked.

"If I know him I don't remember now," I replied shaking my head.

"Well you see, he is uncle's sister-in-law's husband, the newly elected member of parliament from Kewai village in our electorate. He was in the Opposition party but suddenly decided this morning to join the government after he was offered the newly-created Ministry. Apart from you students I am the only educated worker from our electorate he knows in this city. He invited me to see him in the place where we are going tonight. He thinks I'll give him some advice."

"But Toma, he didn't invite me," I tried to explain but he cut me short.

"Yeah, I know; its all right, don't you worry; Mr. Bulengi is such a great man, he would be glad to meet you. In fact he asked me to take one or two senior students along with me. You are the first sensible person I've met this afternoon."

While he was talking I walked over to the half-cut, empty, forty-four-gallon drum used as a bin for food remains and emptied whatever was left from my plate into it. I then threw my eating utensils into the half-filled sink nearby and proceeded to wash them. Toma came nearer and

tapped me on my back and continued.

"You see, he is being accompanied by other members of parliament from our province. What's more, they are going to meet in the grooviest joint in the city. Its our lucky night tonight don't you think?" he asked excitedly and started singing "Come on, come on jump in my car."

"But do you think its right to have such an important meeting there?" I asked, not knowing the ways of politicians.

"Who cares?" said Toma "The hell with their politics. The most important thing is they are buying the beers. Come on, let's go." He said all this as he dragged me towards the door. When we got to the main door, "Oh my God!" he exclaimed "Look!" and he pointed to the big wall-clock near the door. It was ten minutes past seven.

"Come on, rush down to the students village and get dressed and wait for me. I'll pick you up in fifteen minutes time," he said as he ran out to his car, opened the door and went in. He slammed the door hard and screeched off towards the staff quarters.

I stood there for sometime wondering whether I was doing the right thing by allowing other people to make up my mind for me. Then I realized that Toma would be out to pick me up in a very short time.

"To hell!" I mumbled to myself. "Who cares? I suppose life is like that. People's minds are made up for them all the time. So what? Besides, it's a weekend." I looked around to make sure nobody heard me talking to myself. I then dashed down to the dormitory and push-kicked the door open to my room. I shoved the cutlery into its usual place in the old brown cardboard box under my bed. Then I pulled down my jeans and and stepped out of them while at the same time reaching out for my half-wet towel from the line in the open locker. All the while Chairman Mao was staring down at me from the wall near the window. He was very lifelike and seemed to disapprove of every bit of my action.

"Oh no, old boy, not now. A man has to get out there into the open world and see for himself what's going on I suppose. Don't you agree?", I heard myself saying as I walked out of my room towards the shower block. When I came back he seemed to have understood what I meant.

Just then there was a loud knock on my door.

"Come on man. We don't have the whole bloody night." It was Toma's voice.

"O.K., O.K.," I said, "I know, I'll be out in a second".

"You'd better be, man. You know these politicians. They are always impatient," he continued, impatient himself.

I quickly put on my best clothes, combed my hair with my wire-comb and sprayed the man's lotion in the right place. I stared at myself once again in the big mirror on the wall which I once smuggled in from the public shower-block.

"You'd better behave yourself old boy", I said, winking at myself.

"Who? Me?" shouted Toma inquiringly from outside.

"No, its my brother," I lied as I walked out, closing the door behind me.

"I didn't know your brother was here," said Toma as we made our way to his car.

"He is always here with me, my friend," I said pointing at myself and laughed mischievously. But he did not seem to understand. Anyway, when we got near the car which was parked beside the road some distance away from the dormitory, I could see the outline of somebody's head in the back seat.

"Hey, we've got company. Who is it?" I asked.

"Your friends of course," he replied quickly.

"My friends? But if it is those two; I didn't really expect to see them here after the incident in the mess," I said sadly.

When I opened the left-hand side-door the light came on automatically and I could clearly see Halfman and Yamoka sitting there at the back like an over-sized boy and his little girl friend.

"Surprised aren't you?" boomed Halfman while Yamoka sat there guiltily like a school girl who has been caught redhanded having a affair in a classroom.

"You can ask that again," I said, annoyed. "You bastards are the cause of all my headaches".

"No, it's the cooks", they laughed mockingly.

"Cooks or no cooks, I mean it. My head is really aching seeing you sons of bitches around," I continued trying to be really angry.

Maybe I should introduce you to these guys before we go on. Well, you see, though we may not sound so friendly to each other, the fact is we are all really good, solid friends. We have a lot of things in common. For example we all work and study at the same campus. We are all members of

our own little club. In fact we have a name for our club. We call it 'Four Piss'.

I am Misinare Kaima of Giligom village near Mount Elimbari in the Central Highlands. I am five feet four inches tall. Sorry I am still trying to learn my height in metric measurement. You know it is pretty hard to understand at this stage. Maybe I am stupid but I hope you will forgive me. My marital status is, that I am still single but sometimes engaged. My occupation? I'm a full-time, professional student in Education trying to major in Manipulative Psychology. Nationality? I'm a native. Extra-curricular activities? Active member of the 'Four Piss' club, co-organizer of Students' Solidarity Party, founder and co-editor of 'The Catalyst' a popular student's monthly magazine. Future? Hopefully graduating at the end of next semester and looking forward to an eventful and explosive future in our country's political area.

Toma is really Tomanem Nulnonga of Nugumoi village about ten kilometres away, up' and-down two hills from my village in the same electorate.

As far as we, the schooled people from the area know, he is a grade nine dropout from one of the high schools in the city. But he always claims he has completed grade twelve 'Down South'. He had been down south for some months but its doubtful whether he was down there doing grade twelve.

Anyway with his down south accent which he quickly learnt, he usually easily convinces other people. But that is beside the point; the main thing is without him we would not have the 'Four Piss' club. He is the lifeblood of our little club. In spite of his failure to complete high school he has done well in this competitive world. He has a good, secure and well-paid job. As you are aware he is our mess supervisor; he has a subsidized and fully-furnished little flat which we call out little King's Cross, a brand new car in which we are sitting right now and money.

Though he is not any taller than me, he usually calls me shorty which is very embarrassing, particularly when there are girls around. Talking of girls, he is a real women's man. You may call him 'PNG Casanova' if you like though he is not as tall. We do not call his flat 'King's Cross' for nothing. He insists that he is experimenting on an idea. He hopes prostitution will be legalized someday so he could get a loan from the

Development Bank and pleasure houses in the ma the country. He reckons opportunity to talk to the has been repeating for th time now that if Mr. Bule he will listen to him; an actually introduce the bill parliament. That is how a pushover guy you know.

Next is Yamoka the inv sitting at the back there wit he may be small but there him. He is the most un ferocious, little creature on is angry he can be angrier when he is happy you wou Smile, the Happiness.' An would think he was wi Sorrow' itself.

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Last but not the least is man'. He prefers to ke anonymous so that we sh Halfman. He is the most- 'Four Piss' club. To everyc is nothing but an unthinki drunken bully who picks u no good reason other than muscles and make a fool hi

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Development Bank and set up a chain of pleasure houses in the major towns throughout the country. He reckons tonight is his golden opportunity to talk to the minister concerned. He has been repeating for the hundredth-and-one time now that if Mr. Bulengi has any sense at all he will listen to him; and not only listen but actually introduce the bill in the next session of parliament. That is how ambitious Toma is; no pushover guy you know.

Next is Yamoka the invincible, our little friend sitting at the back there with Halfman. Physically he may be small but there is nothing small about him. He is the most unpredictable and most ferocious, little creature on the campus. When he is angry he can be angrier than anger itself; and when he is happy you would think he is 'Mr Big Smile, the Happiness.' And when he is sad you would think he was wrinkled 'Old Mother Sorrow' itself.

Whatever he may be, he is still our faithful little friend and we all love him. He promises to die for us fighting anybody who plays around with us. That is how courageous this little man is. He almost got himself killed once fighting alongside Halfman during one of Halfman's drunken brawls with a group of fanatical perpetrators of regionalism on the campus.

Yamoka comes from the North Coast of New Guinea mainland. And he does not hesitate to mention this to anybody who cares to know.

He thinks he is wasting his time on the campus and insists that the quicker he gets out of this place the better it would be for him. He claims that if it was not for us, he would have been out years ago. He is in his third year of his study in criminal law. He believes criminals are the by-products of the kind of society we have now. He intends to look into an make necessary changes to those parts of the constitution which promote injustice, greed and hypocrisy. He wants to fight to the very end and knowing what he is like, I do not doubt that he will.

Last but not the least is our big friend, 'Halfman'. He prefers to keep his real identity anonymous so that we shall only know him as Halfman. He is the most-colourful member of 'Four Piss' club. To everyone on the campus he is nothing but an unthinking, good-for-nothing, drunken bully who picks unnecessary fights for no good reason other than to show off his stiff muscles and make a fool himself. Nobody on the

campus has the guts to admit this to him openly for the fear of being wrung by the neck like a little chicken. He is conscious of what they feel and takes full advantage of it.

When he is drunk he roams around the campus as if he owned the place, knocking down garbage bins, smashing to pieces bottles and glasses and punching anybody who has the misfortune to be in his way. Whenever there is any loud noise on the campus the first word you hear is 'Halfman! Halfman!'; even if it is not him.

If he is sober which is infrequent, he talks about nothing but complaints of the quality and quantity of food in the mess, about the workload he has in his studies, if he ever studies at all, and complains practically about everything on the campus. But there is one thing he is really good at and that is when it comes to describing girls on the campus. He can invent words out of nothing. He can describe in minute detail every part of the female anatomy. He can demonstrate with a pillow on the bed every movement and position as if he was born with it.

You can laugh but that's how he is and he is our friend. You might be wondering how we could still maintain our friendship and solidarity in spite of our differences.

It started some years ago when Margaret Mead was giving one of her famous lectures about how different societies organize and keep themselves alive as a unit. When she talked about P.N.G. she mentioned that it is one of the most diverse societies on earth. That was nothing new; she only reminded us what we already knew but we members of 'Four Piss' Club looked up to her for her mention of the idea of 'Unity in Diversity'. So you see, 'Four Piss' Club is actually unity in diversity in practice.

Apart from Halfman the rest of us know what and where we are heading for but we don't intend to leave Halfman or for that matter any other members of 'Four Piss' Club behind.

"My word, time is leaving us behind", shouted Toma as he got in the back of the wheel. I do not know how Toma drives but when he drives he really drives. We flew along Waigani Drive at breakneck speed.

We turned right at the Islander and headed for Hohola. When we turned the bend we could see formidable Hohola ahead with its piercing, little neon-eyes. Though we were scared we could not turn back. Hohola rushed up and swallowed us.

When we came to, we found ourselves at the tail end of Hohola at the Taurama junction.

A couple of minutes waiting there for the green light seemed like ages to Toma. He blamed everybody in general who happened to be in the vicinity and the cars and trucks in their right of way, in particular, for the delay. You could hear him calling them all sorts of strange names. With his 'Down South' accent he sounded exactly like one of the blokes from down south with whom I once had the misfortune to accept a ride in his car. That unreasonable bugger kept on blaming everybody for his own silly little mistakes.

He kept on saying 'Now, who the hell do you think you are?', everytime one of the locals overtook him. He also kept on swearing all kinds of nasty words. If you had been there you could have smelt his stinking mouth.

I was busy thinking about this and did not realize that Toma was at his dirty tricks again. He released his left foot suddenly from the clutch and stepped hard on the accelerator. The little car gave an agonizing cry and surged forward like a wounded pig.

If it were not for my quick reflexes I could have lost all my teeth and maybe my nose and eyes as well. I felt so angry and upset I did not know whether to cry or tear Toma apart there and then. If murder was allowed, the story could have ended drastically here with Toma bleeding to death like a toad on the road. But luckily it did not happen that way so we continued our journey.

Up on the Three Mile Hill Toma slowed down a bit and I quickly grabbed this opportunity to educate him on the danger of fast and careless driving. My words went through his left ear and flew out of his right ear into the noisy city night. He simply ignored my advice, claiming that he had been up and down this road a million times. After saying that, he drove down the road to Badili like hell. I pleaded with him to let me off here but he pretended not to hear a word I said.

The dumb big bull Halfman made the matter worse by starting to laugh one of his ugly, eardrum-piercing, mocking laughs. He shook me on my right shoulder and said on top of all the speeding noise. "Hey, little man, scared already aren't ya? You aren't getting out of this here pretty little babe," meaning the car and imitating Toma as if he were also one who had been down south.

"If we die you are also dying here with us like a little native wantok. Don't you agree?" and he burst into hoarse laughter again. Yamoka was sitting next to him unsuccessfully trying to hide his fear.

"Get your dirty, clumsy, monstrous claw off my shoulder", I shouted angrily but he was only laughing more and taking me for a spineless little creature.

"I had been busy arguing with Halfman and Toma and I did not notice how fast we had travelled. When I looked out I was surprised to find us in the brick jungle of the main section of the city. The lights in the buildings were dim and the street-lights shone brightly. If it were not for the cars and the strange, moving bodies of the night people you would think you were actually in one of our beautiful but fast-deteriorating forests on a bright moonlight night with fireflies going on and off there.

Without warning Toma started with, "Good evening ladies and gentlemen, Captain Nulonga announcing the safe arrival of Machine 007 at its destination Number One. Hope you enjoyed the trip and wishing you all a happy and successful evening tonight". He finished and winked mischievously at us. I felt like twisting his neck for calling me a lady but being a tolerant and mature person I let the little devil off.

It would normally take a considerate driver twenty minutes at a normal traffic hour to get to the main city from the campus but we arrived ten minutes earlier.

We waited for sometime for the politicians and in the meantime we cracked jokes and watched people moving in and out like flying-foxes in the numerous bars and taverns in the place. Every now and then one or two drunks would stagger out of one of the drinking spots and start a ruckus, waving and shouting at passing vehicles to stop. The motorist would normally ignore them and go on their way.

One or two brave ones would poke their heads out and shout "You loose!" or "you spakman!" as they sped by. Most likely they were also drunk themselves. At this our drunks would be very furious and throw load after load of obscenities at the motorists concerned and later at every moving vehicle in the vicinity. You would think they had gone insane. In fact that is what I thought when I saw a drunk for the first time

some years ago.

The sensible ones wailed from the taverns and cautioned there to go home, that is left; but if the drunks we would probably get into innocent bystander and for 'drunk and disorderly' which are the most common keep the officials busy. While we stood the would happen with Mr. Bulengi and his dressed men walked over skinny and the other sh. "Hey, wantok, dispe yupela a?" the tall one as car.

"Yes tupela wantok ei Toma proudly.

"Orait you save dring again.

"Yes bigman, mi save long hia", replied Toma his hand the various dri where we stood.

"I orait, long yu kei bilong me igo long Si sampela bia na ating bai bilong yu tu". Toma was consider this proposition for him.

"Sori tumas wantok bikpela man bilong ga impela kisim yu igo long gavman man bai kros. Sori, ating yutupela pa askim long igo, iorait a?

The tall one didn't see but the short one said, "Yes wantok em i tok convince the two fellow mumbling swear words.

"Did you guys see w three comrades.

"You always seem to see this time? Maybe y pair of underpants", mo

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The sensible ones walked some distance away from the taverns and caught a 'bus or a cab from there to go home, that is if they had any money left; but if the drunks were abusive and silly they would probably get into a fight with some poor innocent bystander and be whisked off to the cell for 'drunk and disorderly behaviour' the cases of which are the most common in the courts which keep the officials busy earning their money.

While we stood there contemplating what would happen with our meeting with Mr. Bulengi and his colleagues, two ruggedly-dressed men walked over to us, one tall and skinny and the other short and stumpy.

"Hey, wantok, dispela kar hia em bilong mipela a?" the tall one asked, pointing at Toma's car.

"Yes tupela wantok em bilong me ya", replied Toma proudly.

"Orait you save dring bia?" the tall one asked again.

"Yes bigman, mi save dring bia. Tasol ino nau long hia", replied Toma partly indicating with his hand the various drinking joints in the area where we stood.

"I orait, long yu ken kisim mi na wantok bilong me igo long Six Mile? Mi bai baim sampela bia na ating bai mi kisim wanpela meri bilong yu tu". Toma was taking his time trying to consider this proposition but I cut in and decided for him.

"Sori tumas wantok, mipela i wait long bikpela man bilong gavman. Ino inap long mipela kisim yu igo long Six Mile. Nogut bikpela gavman man bai kros nogut tru long mipela. Sori, ating yutupela painim arapela man na askim long igo, iorait a?"

The tall one didn't seem to believe what I said but the short one said, "Iorait".

"Yes wantok em i tok tru", put in Yamoka to convince the two fellows. They left reluctantly, mumbling swear words at us.

"Did you guys see what I saw?" I asked my three comrades.

"You always seem to see things. What did you see this time? Maybe you saw a bloody, pink pair of underpants", mocked Halfman

"You can shove that up yours. If it was not for me your rockhead friend Toma here would be on his way to Hades now. That tall guy wantok fellow of yours had some hard, sharp thing

protuding through his shirt from his back. I saw the sharp end gleaming in the light and assumed it was knife so I cut in and stopped Toma from agreeing to take those two wantok fellows of his to Six Mile. I always tell you not to give lifts to suspicious-looking characters like that. You never know what would happen" I warned.

"All right, all right! But Mr Bulengi or whatever he's called better turn up and buy those beers he promised", complained Halfman. "If it was not for that fat politician of yours, we would be on our way to Six Mile with those two fellows for the beer and the meri they intended to get for us".

"Oh, come off it; you seem to have nothing but beer and meri up in your thick skull," I said looking away from him. "One of these fine days you'll be sorry. I won't be sorry if you lay groaning with blood oozing out of your snout in the wet, muddy drain somewhere and may be your friends' beer and meri will be out there to save your miserable hide".

Yamoka who had been laughing most of the time suddenly asked, "Hey, Halfman, how did you know Mr Bulengi was fat?"

"How did I know? Well isn't he a politician?" he exclaimed and we all started laughing after realizing fully what meant. There is a lot of truth in Halfman's idea of a politician. Some of them were once skinny little people but they quickly become fat once elected.

Just then a big fat while car with M.P. on the number plate came suddenly to a stop beside, "Machine 007". The parking lot was now nearly full. The three passenger-doors opened simultaneously and three immaculately-dressed men, two clean-shaven and one with a thick dark, bushy beard came out and looked about importantly as if they owned the whole place. Their driver came out and closed all the doors that they had left open.

Toma ran forward and gave a really big handshake to the youngest of the three men. Contrary to our belief Mr Bulengi was not as fat as the other two. That meant he was only a newcomer to the political arena.

"Oh boys, this is Mr Bulengi, the man we have been waiting for, and sir these are my most faithful friends and the senior students from the campus," Toma introduced us to each other.

"Sorry boys, if you have been waiting long. You see, it has been a really very busy week for

me everyday. Just before we came here I was held up for a very important meeting," Mr Bulengi apologized but being understandable people we, said, "It's O.K., it's O.K. Sir."

"All right, come on, come on in, my friends. You have to feel free when you are with us. Come on and meet Mr Kasunem and Mr. Tuwit, the two most senior members from our province," he said as he led us towards the other two members who were already on their way towards the entrance of the tall hotel-building.

The bearded of the two looked back and shouted, "Hey Mr Bulengi, who are those bunch there with you? Look! We can't waste any more time. Come on, hurry up."

"But Sirs, these are University students. You see, they are my friends," he tried to explain but the two senior members insisted again, "Oh, all right, tell them to hurry up." They sounded as if we did not matter at all. These two most obviously held some very important positions in the government. Typical of most of them, when they are newly-elected or in the opposition they come around begging for ideas and our support but as soon as they are in power, well, this is exactly how most of them behave. They claim there is no time for people like us. Maybe it is true or maybe they are puppets of some foreign capitalist advisers who tell them that we are nothing but communists and a bunch of good-for-nothing rabble rousers. When we got near the main entrance there was no sign of the two members. They must have disappeared into the maze of corridors that led to the left, the right, the upstairs and one big one straight ahead. There was a well-illuminated inscription on a neatly-framed rectangular marble just ahead of the steps that led to the upstairs lounge. It read. Notice.

Gentlemen are expected to wear nice clean shoes, long sleeved shirts and neckties; if shorts, socks are to be pulled up.

Children not allowed.

Thankyou
The Management

We looked at each other but none of us fully measured up to the management's idea of a gentleman.

Mr. Bulengi, Toma and myself had long-clean trousers and long-sleeved shirts, of which I had mine rolled up close to my shoulders but we missed out on the necktie bit. Yamoka had a

smart, short, tight pair of short with his big clumsy brother almost bulging out between the front of his thighs. He forgot to have his long sleeve shirt and a necktie. He reasoned that he would easily pull up his socks but could not afford the tie and the long-sleeved shirt from his meagre fortnight allowance.

Halfman was nowhere near the hotel management's idea of a gentleman.

He had on a new 'T' shirt, one of those with American sport teams' names. It showed an American flag and a big 'Boston Giants' written across in blue. If it were not for his typical, native facial features you could have mistaken him for an American negro or rather Afro-American. He had on a pair of Amco jeans and a pair of brown leather shoes. With his hair combed, probably for the first time, and beard trimmed short, he looked really something.

We stood there wondering which way to go. We knew we definitely would not go upstairs even if we explained that we would like to see if two members from our province may have gone up that way.

Just then a big, local, security man in khaki uniform came down from the upstairs and roared "Hei yupela inoken pasim rot. Ol masta na misis bai igo ikam antap long dispela rot. Yupela igo hapsait long ples bilong ol kanaka. Kwik igo nao." he said chasing us away like flies.

"Ok, tank yu tru wantok-yes-masta-ti-boi", said Halfman with the 'Yes-masta-ti-boi' a bit fast to avoid his comprehension.

We couldn't help being startled when Halfman started one of his typical out bursts again "Bloody arsehole tropics," he started. "Where the bloody hell do they think this is? A bloody chapel in Alaska? Can't they fuckin' feel hot in this bloody goddamned tropics? If they were bloody gentlemen, they wouldn't be wearing those bloody neckties and long-sleeved shirts in this bloody hot place. They are nothing but a bloody bunch of murderers and thieves. Are they bloody trying to kill us all with those bloody neckties? Shit!" he shouted hitting hard his right clenched fist into his left open palm.

The same security man came back again. "Hei dispela man spak o olsem wanem?" he inquired. "Sapos you spak yu igo slip. Yu inoken krai krai olsem pikinini. Nao igo sidaon isi na dring. Igo nao", he ordered.

We walked towards the left-hand side-bar.

The security man looked at Sapos dispela man i sing polis ikam, yupela save?"

"These bloody, nati don't appreciate what I said Halfman, irritably. "I like me coming around their right they wouldn't be complained.

Before we pushed of ground-floor lounge-bar been thinking about what security man, Halfman. Y ways but one thing is that employ them You know

"Maybe or may well Halfman and pushed the c us held it open while we iridescent night-spot.

One of the barmen ran on us to make sure we w was particularly focusing make sure we had on a d I do not mean nice, clean tropics.

This reminded me of m days when every mornin teachers would inspect ou we did not have any unfortunate enough to be between your legs you'd l all the little boys and girls like a motherless child wh would be laughing and je

I had this horrible exp imagine how a person fe from a public place like t

The music was soft an our ears from somewhe obscene-looking Sepik ma the dark, shiny, mahogan lanky, young man was ear thing with a cute, little fondly staring at the b sleeping, giant penis. I a her habit when ever she

There were quite a lot already. When we came door, looking around to familiar faces, one or two look up and run their eye on us with sleepy, drunk were busy minding the

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The security man looked at us and warned, "Sapos dispela man i singaut ken bai mi kisim isikam, yupela save?" and he walked upstairs.

"These bloody, native, yes-masta-tea-boys don't appreciate what I am doing for them", said Halfman, irritably. "If it was not for people like me coming around here trying to fight for their right they wouldn't be here in the first place," he complained.

Before we pushed open the door to the ground-floor lounge-bar Yamoka said, "I have been thinking about what you said about that security man, Halfman. You were right in many ways but one thing is that you cannot afford to employ them. You know that?"

"Maybe or may well bloody be not," said Halfman and pushed the curtained glass door for us held it open while we entered the dimly lit redolent night-spot.

One of the barmen ran his eyes up and down at us to make sure we were neatly dressed. He was particularly focusing his eyes at our feet to make sure we had on a decent pair of footwear. "Do not mean nice, clean new slippers, fit for the tropics."

This reminded me of my early primary school days when every morning at the assembly, the teachers would inspect our bodies to make sure we did not have any scabies. If you were unfortunate enough to be caught with one such between your legs you'd be exposed in front of all the little boys and girls and sent home weeping like a motherless child while the rest of the school would be laughing and jeering at you.

I had this horrible experience myself and can imagine how a person feels when he is sent off from a public place like this.

The music was soft and sexy. It drifted into our ears from somewhere behind a big and obscene-looking Sepik mask further down beside the dark, shiny, mahogany counter where a tall, lanky, young man was earnestly discussing something with a cute, little counter-girl who was fondly staring at the big, Sepik mask-man's sleeping, giant penis. I assumed she made this her habit when ever she was on duty there.

There were quite a lot of people inside the bar already. When we came in and stood near the door, looking around to see if we could spot any familiar faces, one or two of these people would look up and run their eyes up and down quickly at us with sleepy, drunken, glassy looks. Most were busy minding their business, drinking,

smoking, laughing and talking away.

We looked around to see the two senior M.P.s but they were nowhere among the smoke-filled, noisy crowd.

Mr. Bulengi was a bit impatient and worried, "Would any of you guys have an idea where those two gentlemen may be?" he asked.

"Maybe upstairs with the rest of the gentlemen, I suppose", said Halfman pointing up at the ceiling.

We made our way to the second-last vacant table in the corner on the left-hand side of the door and stood there looking around for some time before pulling a chair along and allowing Mr Bulengi to seat himself in it. He felt uneasy and lonely among us without his senior M.P. colleagues from the same province. Damn them, they sure were mean.

A group sitting next to us quickly gulped down their beers like water and got ready to move out, "Kamon hariap, yu save pasin bilong ol dispela meri. Sapos yumi ino hariap bai ol igo wantaim arapela man," said one of them impatiently as they quickly moved out. In their rush they nearly bumped into a group that was just coming in. So that was it. No wonder they were moving out so early.

We quickly grabbed their chairs and sat ourselves with Mr Bulengi. He looked up and showed a sign of surprise and embarrassment. Obviously he had been having an early dream in a noisy public place. His mind and soul seemed a long, long, way away from his poor body. He could have been thinking of anything, home, us, his two M.P. colleagues, an overseas trip, or of anything.

"Sorry" he said apologetically "Anyway Toma, call that barman here and get him to get us some beer". He pulled out his fat, black wallet and took out a clean K10 note and laid it on the table.

Toma picked up the ten kina note and looked around for the barmen.

We did not thank him verbally because it is not a civilized manner to be heard thanking your servants.

The rest of us picked up our drinks and sipped slowly and talked like civilized people but Halfman was already half-way down with his. We asked him to use a glass but he refused, claiming that after all the contents would be no different in a glass than in a bottle and what was more

they would all end up in the same place. So what was the bother? Besides it was less cumbersome for the poor bartenders removing bottles than glasses.

Some of us were now on our second and third bottles and glasses while Halfman was already up to his fifth. Friends and our new acquaintance piled some more on our table. Mr Bulengi gave me some money to repay our friend with beer. Our table was really full now with beer and bacardi-and-coke.

"Hey, you supposedly civilized people are drinking too much and you shouldn't have so many bottles on the table all at once like us dumb uncivilized savages," mocked Halfman.

"Oh, just drink!" I said, annoyed. He must be silly to bring this idea up now when Mr Bulengi said he had not even started buying beers yet.

Just then a sexy-looking half-drunk girl with a tight micro-skirt and a dark, see-through blouse staggered out of the women's.

She stood there staring drunkenly at everybody with half exposed thick voluptuous breasts and then walked drunkenly towards her friends. All the male eyes were enviously on her vibrating, big arse.

One particularly drunk man on the furthest corner got up and waved longingly and frantically at her and shouted "Heh, you beautiful sexy kekeni, you want some beer? Come here, I give you some".

She stood beside her table and stared at him for sometime and then said, "Eh, look at him like good one" as she sat herself carelessly down among her jealous boy-friends and another half-a-dozen of the same type of woman.

Actually there were two barmen walking in and out around and among the people and tables with their colourful trays like strange sea creatures near a coral reef on a moonlit night.

You do not have to get things over the counter yourself in this place. If you want anything you simply say, "Hey! barboy", and hold up your bill, and no question, he will come. You only go to the counter if you want to use the telephone. The girl will get it for you.

You have to order what you want; you see civilized people do not buy and drink at the counter and when you get your beer you have to use a glass. It is uncivilized people who drink out of bottles. Pour your beer into the glass and sip it slowly. Put it down lightly and smoke and talk before you proceed with your beer in the same manner. Do not gulp your beer like water

as we natives tend to do.

When you sip make sure you put the edge of the glass lightly between your lips and sip. Do not put the glass roughly in your mouth, otherwise you break the glass on your teeth. When you are putting the glass on the table make sure you hold it for a while and talk before you put it lightly on the table. Do not drop the glass like natives do and do not ever pick up the change and put it immediately in your pocket. Leave it on the table; otherwise people might think that is your last money.

Anyway Toma picked up the ten kina bill and looked around at the barman and said like I said, "Hey! barman", and held up the money proudly as if it was his own and held it up long enough to attract the attention of the numerous 'pamuks' that were in the room.

"Oh sorry, what would you like to have sir?" asked Toma looking expectantly like a obedient, little child at Mr Bulengi.

"Bacardi and coke and a packet of Peter Stuveysant please", said Mr. Bulengi looking at the barman who was looking down at us as if he was a duty teacher watching a group of uncompromised students doing their group project at class, night-study time. The rest of us ordered S.P. brownies and greenies.

We looked up thankfully at the barman when he placed the tray of what we ordered and the change on the table.

In one corner sat a group of sexily-dressed young local men. They attracted my attention because most of the men around were staring at them and talked and joked about them. At closer scrutiny I noticed that these young men were behaving and talking in a strangely feminine way. Halfman must have noticed my curiosity so he asked mockingly, "You interested?"

"Who are they?" I asked ignorantly.

"You must be joking", he said. "They are the topic of discussion tonight and every other night like here", he continued.

"They are the new breed, the by-products of this very society here. You see those whitemen over there?" he said pointing at a group of whitemen sitting near the counter drinking and talking and pretending to mind their own business. "Those are their partners", he concluded. I still didn't understand very much but I felt extra-satisfied and glad of myself to be alive and witness all this moving dynamic and lively society.

All the while the music was playing slowly in

the background. It now played favourite numbers from the local band. It really put everybody drunks got up and staggered thinking that they were smart fools of themselves. They looked girls expectantly but none prepared to get up and dance drunken devils. But they were they kept on. One of them did indecent movement at the girls people among the crowd looked disapproval from this bag of old drunken do-as-they-do ones who mischievously and encouragingly.

"This is real life!" shouted one excitement as he moved his chair which would enable him to eye anybody else except the whitemen feminine boys with fancy clothes facing the seven girls who were everything there. Their boyfriend a mixture of pride, embarrassment.

One envious voice was heard above the noise, "You lucky prick going to enjoy yourselves tonight I were you". Some heads turned envious and frustrated voice whistled and whistled.

The clock on the wall showed in fifteen minutes the warning would be on. And in another people other than the owner workers and live-in guests showed inside of the premises.

We downed our beer one after another. Mr Bulengi shouted at the trays as one for-the-road before the ten drinkup sign came on.

"Ok yupela hariap. Klostu one of the those khaki-clad soldiers on the sign light for 'Start-m'.

We raced against time as beer on earth.

"Kamon, kamon, yupela I nao", shouted the security man last person I like to see and man at this particular time complained and grumbled. He held his temper any longer. He shouting, "You shadup! Yu long wonem. Yu ting mipela

background. It now played one of my favourite numbers from the local New Krymus and. It really put everybody on. One or two drinks got up and staggered about proudly thinking that they were smart but in fact making fools of themselves. They looked towards the girls expectantly but none of the girls was prepared to get up and dance with the poor drunken devils. But they were not discouraged; they kept on. One of them did a sexy, thrusting, indecent movement at the girls. The sensible people among the crowd looked away in embarrassment from this bag of obscenities but the drunken do-as-they-do ones shouted and cheered enthusiastically and encouragingly with laughter.

"This is real life!" shouted Halfman, silly with excitement as he move his chair into a position which would enable him to eye the girls. Everybody else except the whitemen and the local feminine boys with fancy clothes were sitting along the seven girls who were now the centre of everything there. Their boyfriends sat there with a mixture of pride, embarrassment and jealousy.

One envious voice was heard shouting over the noise, "You lucky pricks. You are really going to enjoy yourselves tonight. My, I wish I were you". Some heads turned towards that envious and frustrated voice while others clapped, laughed and whistled.

The clock on the wall showed half-past nine. In fifteen minutes the warning-for-drink-up sign would be on. And in another fifteen minutes people other than the owners of the place, the workers and live-in guests should all clear off the inside of the premises.

We downed our beer one after the other like water. Mr Bulengi shouted another two loads of trays as one for-the-road before the quarter-to-ten drinkup sign came on.

"Ok yupela hariap. Klostu taim nao," shouted one of the those khaki-clad security men. he put on the sign light for 'Start-moving-out'.

We raced against time as if this was our last year on earth.

"Kamon, kamon, yupela hariap. Klostu taim nao," shouted the security man, repeatedly. The last person I like to see and hear is the security man at this particular hour. Others also complained and grumbled. Halfman could not hold his temper any longer. He got up and started shouting, "You shadup! Yu hariapim mipela long wonem. Yu ting mipela pik bilong yu a?".

"Yes, yutasol yu pik. Taim na hariap liklik", said the security man pointing at Halfman, menacingly.

Halfman shot up out off his seat like a piston and aimed his right fist at the security man's nose but could not reach it through the massed, human wall.

"You silly idiot, son of uneducated Nymphomaniac", he shouted while pointing at the security man. "I'll boot the shit out of your stinking, native asshole. You stand right there!" He said this, showing the security man his clenched first and surged forward. "Don't you run away like a scared little bitch with her tail down between her stinking mangy do-legs."

"Calm down mate," I said but to no avail.

"Give him some! Give him some!" shouted somebody from among the crowd, encouragingly.

"Hey yupela laikim mi kisim polis a?" shouted back the security man threateningly.

"You can go get your bloody boyfriend and let him do you in, in there," shouted Halfman pointing at the men's toilet. "You bastards are the cause of all the deaths on the road. You should all be hanged by your balls, you bunch of murderers!"

"Em ol sumatin bilong Yunebesity. Ol ting ol smat na ol save bikhet tumas. Ringim polis na kalabusim ol," said one of the barman. "Peter tokim manesa na em ringim polis," he ordered Peter a little barman. Peter must have got through to the police. In four or so minutes one of the policemen could be seen pushing his way up towards us.

"Em! Em ya. Em tasol. Em bikpela man wantaim bikpela maus grass ya", said the security-man pointing at Halfman.

"The policeman came up near where we sat and pointing at us but later particularly at Halfman he asked," Hei, yu tasol a? Yu spak na mekim nabaut long hia? Yu tasol i bin pait long hia?"

"Nogat polis. Mino bin kirapim pait. Mi toktok tasol long dispela security man. Em wok long hariapim mipela long dring na mi stopim em tasol, em krosim mi nating tasol," Halfman said.

"Orait yupela wait na mi streitim tok," said Mr Bulengi standing up and trying to explain what happened.

The policeman eyed Mr Bulengi up and down

and asked, "Yu husat? Yu kain spakman olsem igat wamen kain gutpela save na yu laik toktok a?" Yu kain spakman olsem inoken mauswara long polisman, yu save?" he said pushing Mr Bulengi back down to his seat. Mr Bulengi missed the seat and stumbled backwards onto the floor, carrying the table and whatever was on it with him. He could be heard under the table screaming obscenities and threats at the police in general and this one in particular.

I removed the table and pulled him up by his hand. He looked very silly and funny. He was dripping wet with beer all over his clothes. The policeman stood there with a big, mocking grin right across his wide face. He seemed pleased with what he had just done. The drunken girls fell into mischievous laughter. This made Mr Bulengi mad with boiling anger.

Mr. Bulengi shook the wet beer and the cigarette-ash dirt off his clothes and looked squarely in the policeman's eyes and shouted, "You know who I am, Mister? You know who you've done this damned thing to ah? You are fired as from now." he exclaimed as he marched straight for the door. He sounded like a police commissioner.

We looked around and then ran straight out after him leaving everybody confused with wild, drunken bewilderment.

When we got out we could see Mr Bulengi heading straight for the M.P. car. We waved and shouted after him frantically to stop but he did not take any heed of our pleading. We rushed after him. When we caught up with him he looked back and said, "Quick get into your car and just follow me and stop wherever my car stops". We did not wait and ask for an explanation. We simply stood there with drunken puzzlement while Toma opened the doors to his car. We all hoped in the Toma started the car. The M.P. car backed out and headed for the main road and we did likewise.

Once on the road, we followed the M.P. car. I was particularly glad now because, otherwise Toma would drive us with our hearts in our mouths like the devil himself. That is what he does when he is drunk and when there is a trouble following him.

We drove on and on for ages up and down and around, in and out until when eventually we did stop and got out, it was in quite a strange part of the city. I could not remember seeing This

part of the city before. Maybe it was only darkness and drunkenness playing tricks with my eyes. No it was not. For sometime I still could not figure out this joint.

"Well, where are we now?" I asked.

"Well, we are where we are", said Halfman. I stood there completely ignorant and lost.

Mr Bulengi opened the door to his car and came out after fumbling around in the car seat for a time. He explained that he was searching for his wallet.

"Don't make any loud noise. Just stand here and wait quietly for me. I'll be back in a few minutes," he said as he disappeared into the tall hibiscus plants.

We waited for a few minutes and then heard a soft 'knock knock' ringing out clearly in the still trafficless night. After some minutes we heard a soft murmur. And then the hibiscus plants parted and a man came out with two cartons of beer. Immediately after him came Mr Bulengi followed by two meri-blouse-and-laplap-clad women. The women did not look anything like those girls we saw in the bar but what did that matter? The important thing was that they were women. Unlike the ones in the hotel who wore mini-skirts and micro-skirts and look-through-dresses, these two looked simple in their laplaps and meri-blouses.

Mr Bulengi opened the door to the back seats of his car and ordered the women to get in and sit quietly. He then opened the boot and put one full carton of beer in it. He tore open the other carton and took out six bottles and took them over to the M.P. car and instructed the women to get on with it and get drunk and get ready for the important action. He grabbed some for himself and gave us the remaining beers, about fifteen bottles, and told us to help ourselves while we followed his car out again.

Our next stop after some more zig-zagging around was also at a strange place but after allowing my eyes to get acquainted with the place I now recognised one of the most conspicuous land marks in the city. It was at Korobosea. Just a stone's throw away was the big concrete man-made hill of the Taurama General Hospital building.

"Orait draiva, kisim dispela ki igo opim dua na karim dispela katen bia igo putim insait long bokisais," ordered Mr Bulengi.

While the driver was carrying out part of his

normal duty, we consumed. Bulengi explained that the house offered to him by the house was given the new portfolio.

When the lights were house by the driver, we car of beers and walked in after two women.

"Put the rest of the to make yourselves at home changed", he said as he was robe. He behaved cheerfully silly as a maggot, in the house. He got dressed and flew living room and pointed at were standing there in the little docile negro slave-w Southern U.S.A.

"Orait yutupela meri Tawel istap long hap", a the towel could be found yutupela wasim gut na ik bia. Plenti istap long boki driver he said, "Na drive nao. Nogut ol meri pikini O.K.?" and tossed K2 to "Dispela money yu kis kaikai long 24 hours long long haus bilong yu, yu

The docile, subservient the money, said "Thank "Tomoro moning long e kisim mi igo long bikpe called after the driver.

"Yes sa, orait sa," could as the driver walked toward Next minute the car was off into the noisy city night.

Soon after the driver the music and we sat and two women were washing. They could be heard showers. Something funny there.

Mr Bulengi suddenly laughter.

We sat there taken what the devil got in pleasure-loving politician

"You know what?" h laughter still hanging in mouth. "I am thinking

Maybe it was only playing tricks with my eyes. Sometime I still could

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noise. Just stand here. I'll be back in a few minutes. He appeared into the tall

minutes and then heard a sound clearly in the still. A few minutes we heard a sound of hibiscus plants parted two cartons of beer.

came Mr Bulengi, a louse-and-laplap-clad man who did not look anything like a soldier but what did that suggest was that they were in the hotel who wore shorts and look-through-implies in their laplaps

door to the back seats. The women got in and sat in the boot and put one foot on the floor. He tore open the other bottles and took them. He instructed the women to get ready for the bed some for himself. He had some beers, about fifteen, and he put them on the floor for ourselves while we

me more zig-zagging. He went to a place but after a while he was faint with the place. He was the most conspicuous as at Korobosea. Just he big concrete mania General Hospital

ela ki igo opim dua na go putim insait long ngi.

rying out part of his

normal duty, we consumed our beers. Mr Bulengi explained that this was the ministerial house offered to him by the government when he was given the new portfolio.

When the lights were put on in the minister's house by the driver, we carried part of our carton of beers and walked in after Mr Bulengi and the two women.

"Put the rest of the beers in the freezer and make yourselves at home while I go and get changed", he said as he walked towards his wardrobe. He behaved cheerfully as if he did not look silly as a maggot, in the hotel earlier in the night. He got dressed and flew cheerfully back to the living room and pointed at the two women who were standing there in the corner shyly like two little docile negro slave-wenchies in the old deep Southern U.S.A.

"Orait yutupela meri igo insait na waswas. Tawel istap long hap", and he indicated where the towel could be found. "Wara i hot olsem na yutupela wasim gut na ikam dring sampela moa ha. Plenti istap long bokisasi," and turning to the driver he said, "Na driva youken kisim kar igo mo. Nogut ol meri pikinini bilong yu bai ol wari, O.K.?" and tossed K2 to him and continued. "Dispela money yu kisim igo baim sampela laikai long 24 hours long Hohola na kisim igo long haus bilong yu, yu save?"

The docile, subservient, little driver accepted the money, said 'Thankyou' and walked out. "Tomoro moning long eit kilok yu mas kam na kisim mi igo long bikpela miting, yu save?" he called after the driver.

"Yes sa, orait sa," could be heard from outside as the driver walked towards the ministerial car. Next minute the car was started and was driven off into the noisy city night.

Soon after the driver left, Mr Bulengi put on the music and we sat and drank to its sound. The two women were washing together in the shower. They could be heard giggling away in the showers. Something funny must be happening in there.

Mr Bulengi suddenly burst into horrendous laughter.

We sat there taken aback with wonderment what the devil got into this mad, fun-and-pleasure-loving politician.

"You know what?" he started with part of his laughter still hanging in the air and his beer-filled mouth. "I am thinking of that incident in the

hotel," he continued. "If it was not for my good act, probably some of you wouldn't be sitting here drinking this nice beer in these nice comfortable chairs and listening to this beautiful music. Probably you could be locked away in some cold, stinking cell right now. I knew at that time that we had to get out quickly somehow before more policemen turned up. So what I did out there was merely an act to create confusion and diversion so that while everybody, including the policeman, were busy wondering what the devil was going on, we could act seriously and march out right in front of their nose, as we did", he concluded with a sigh of relief and satisfaction and more laughter.

If he meant what he said, then I think undoubtedly his natural acting talents are above average. When I saw him in that hotel lying there on the wet floor under the table like a hopeless, little maggot it did not look like mere acting to me. I felt quite sorry for him then. I thought it was very real, which I still believed now, but he insisted it was only an act. Whether it was an act or not, he truly saved Halfman's miserable hide from shivering away in a cold cell somewhere for 'drunk and disorderly behaviour in a public place.'

"And Sir, how about those two?" Yamoka asked, meaning the two women. "Sorry, what I mean is how did you manage to get the beer and those two women in there?" he corrected himself, at the same time pointing towards the shower.

"On, them?" he said waving carelessly at the freezer and the showers. "Those two in there are only simple pamuks. They come from the area where my kidbrother is married to. Every woman there knows me. And what's more, wherever this goes, women just follow like that", he said as he picked up a little, loose, brown two-toea coin from the tea-table and showed us. "But about the beer, don't mention anything about it. Let's just drink and forget about it", he said as he picked his beer up and downed a full drop.

"And what do you think your wife would feel if she learns about your life down here in the city?" asked Yamoka.

"She wouldn't feel anything" he replied "she is only an ignorant village woman. Even if she does feel anything, she wouldn't say a word of it to me for fear of losing me and all my money. She is nothing but an obstacle to my busy personal life", he said and you could see that he regretted marrying in the first place. He mentioned that to

make matters worse he was forced into wedding in Church by some old numbskull elders.

"Talking of women, what the hell are those two holes doing in there for so long?" he said impatiently and went over to the showers to find out.

He knocked on the door and asked "Hei yutupela i mekim wanem insait? Kam aut kwik na dringim sampela bia". While he was away we were looking at his house. It had three bedrooms at the back of the living room past the toilet and the showers. The floors were carpeted and spotless. On the wall to our left was the kitchen with a brand new electric stove and a row of blue, painted lockers above for the cutlery and what-not. The big brand new freezer was also situated in the kitchen and was easily accessible from the common room. We were sitting in the big, comfortable cushion-chairs. We had our beers and cigarettes on two expensive, marble-topped tea-tables. On the wall near the door were two, coloured spot-lights, one blue and other red. These were now focused onto the common room giving an impression of a night club. Further down on the wall was a Morehead deerhead, with sharp horns staring down at us threateningly. Apart from that there was nothing else of great interest in the big, spacious room. The fan was on now, moving lazily above our heads, circulating our own carbon dioxide and the smell of beer and smoke.

Mr Bulengi was back with his two women following behind him. He must have noticed our interest in his residence and so he said, "Ah you know, I just moved into this house this morning. That's why you may not see anything interesting here now. But next time you come you'll see quite a big difference," as if interesting things could easily be picked from trees like leaves; but considering that he was an important government minister we did not doubt him. You know, with those politicians nothing is really impossible.

"Could one of you guys grab some beers for these two ladies?" he said as he motioned the women to sit down in the vacant cushion-seats next to his. Toma offered the women some beers which they took shyly.

"Kamon dring nao yutupela", said Mr Bulengi looking the ladies in their nervous faces. He turned to us and spoke in English which he learnt as a grade 8 learner and later to grade ten through correspondence and a lot of practice.

"These two holes act as if this was their first night out. The last time I took them out they got drunk and crawled all over me as if I was a bloody ant hill, begging me to take them away and do them in. You can never really understand these bloomin' things," he said in an educated manner.

"Talking of holes, sir, have you a telephone somewhere in here?" asked Toma expectantly.

"Yes" replied Mr Bulengi. "All ministers are entitled to a telephone in their houses. Mine's in the third bedroom from here, which I decided to use as a study", he said with an air of importance as if he ever really did all his paperwork.

"Hurray!", shouted Toma as he jumped out of his seat, "Could I use it for a minute please?"

"Go ahead son, just go ahead. Anything that is mine is ours," he said.

Toma literally flew across the common room towards the bedroom where the telephone was. He grabbed it as if his life depended on that telephone at that instant. After some minutes he skipped jubilantly towards us and proclaimed, "O.K. people, see you in a short while", and he lit his cigarette and headed for the door.

"Hey Toma, where the hell do you think you are going?" I said racing after him, but he shut the door 'slam! bang!' in my face as he made for his car.

"Can't you buggers ever understand?" he replied from outside as he drove off.

"Maybe I'll never understand your kind," I thought as I went back to my seat resolutely.

We were drinking away and every now and then someone in our male population would get up and swing to the beat of the music. Mr Bulengi kept on encouraging the docile women to drink up and get out of their seat and dance as we did or with one of us.

After having five beers one of the women started becoming talkative.

"Ai wantok, dispela ol yangepla man em all bilong we?" she asked Mr. Bulengi.

"Em ol save man bilong Yunibesiti. Ol save moa long danis. Traid na hatim skin wantaim ol," Mr Bulengi said, encouraging the ladies.

Halfman got more and more excited when he realized that one of the women was beginning to become talkative.

'This is good', he thought. Mr. Bulengi went over to the kitchen and got some steaks and sausages and started frying. The tasty smell of

fried steak and sausage with the common room made our started swallowing our saliva

Halfman asked the talka dance but she refused sayir grumbled with embarrassmer on the other one. She also same thing. He sat down with got into one of his usual hab obscenities after obscenities general and these two in p English so they couldn't cor was raving about, but they upset by them but they did r

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nd steak and sausage with onions drifted into the common room made our mouths water. We started swallowing our saliva with beer.

Halfman asked the talkative woman for a dance but she refused saying, "Me sem". He fumbled with embarrassment and tried his luck on the other one. She also refused saying the same thing. He sat down with defeated pride and got into one of his usual habits again. He piled obscenities after obscenities on prostitutes in general and these two in particular. He used English so they couldn't comprehend what he was raving about, but they knew that he was upset by them but they did not seem to mind.

"Come on, 'ease down Halfman', you are killing the excitement", I said.

"Yes, killing your bloomin' excitement!" he complained. "These bloody, dirty, primitive, mamuks can't even learn to dance."

Just then a car pulled up outside and Toma rushed in followed by two educated girls, swinging their buttocks proudly and confidently as if they had been there before.

"Gee, it smells nice in here," said one of them without shyness.

"Toma, get me a glass of cold water please. It's bloody warm in this goddamned city," said the other girl. You know some of these girls do not have any brakes. Then without asking, she sat herself carelessly in Mr Bulengi's temporarily vacated seat exposing her tight, blue underpants. Halfman sat there drunk with disbelief. He wiped his eyes to be sure he was not dreaming.

"Oh, by the way gents, that pretty thing over there is Jenny," Toma said indicating the girl with the blue underpants. "And this cutey here is my girlfriend Juliana; that right dear?" he said looking down at her and held her closer under his shoulder and pressed her smooth little hand. She nodded with a wide grin and said "Hi!" and looked around politely at us.

Jenny gulped the glass of cold water and placed the glass on the tea-table and sat back with a big sigh of relief and satisfaction showing her blue underpants once again. This was too much. She pulled out an expensive Dunhill and lit it with an even more expensive gas lighter and puffed out a coil of white smoke and sat back with satisfaction, showing her pants for the third time. This was just too much. We could hardly hold down our brothers, but somehow we managed it for the time being.

Just then Mr Bulengi came away from the kitchen and announced that we could help ourselves to whatever he had prepared.

He stood eyeing the new-comers for a while before he asked, "Hey Toma who are these cute little creatures you've got here?"

"Oh by the way girls, this is Mr Bulengi, the new minister I was talking to you about", said Toma.

"Hi! Sir!" said the girls politely in unison as if they had been rehearsing this all day.

"You boys, have you offered our guests anything to drink?" asked Mr. Bulengi, looking concerned.

"Yes, I just had a glass of cold, refreshing drink," said Jenny.

"Would you care for a beer?" asked Mr. Bulengi.

"Yes, please," replied the girls.

Seeing Halfman intent on the girls' smooth legs, Mr. Bulengi requested him to go to the kitchen and look after the food. Halfman left obligingly and laid his big paw straight on the biggest and the juiciest steak he could find. He came back quickly and started biting at it while his eyes were fixed on Jenny's legs.

I was thinking, here were four women, all with the same commodity and same age-old profession, and yet they were miles apart. There was something very peculiar and yet very real about them. Sitting over there with heads bent, and shy, were two women, one no older than Juliana and Jenny and the other slightly older but not too old to be active and not too ugly and repulsive to be rejected. They were just fine and fair for any average male to be attracted to; who knows, maybe no worse and no better than Juliana and Jenny in bed and yet there was still something very peculiar about these women. After pondering over this question, the answer became evident. With a bit of modern education, courage and a bit of exhibitionism, a woman could do practically anything to any man. Like Juliana and Jenny; they knew how to make use of themselves! With a bit of style, a woman to the eyes of most men, is more of a woman. She could raise even the weakest and sleepest of the man-brothers, as Jenny was doing to us.

Fortunately for ordinary and simple, poor men, not all women are sophisticated man-killers. Otherwise the poor men would suffer the most agonizing of male sicknesses; the illness of

frustration, longing, jealousy and envy and maybe eventual suicide. If it was not for simple women like those sitting over there clad in laplaps and meri-blouses, half the adult male population, and even the married ones like Mr. Bulengi, would be suffering. Not all men can afford the modern ones. I was not thinking that all educated women are exhibitionists like Juliana and Jenny. No, please, do not take me wrong. It is nothing of that idea whatsoever. Dear Sisters, I hope you understand what I mean when you read this. People like Halfman who call uneducated pamuks, "simple primitive nymphos" should be ashamed of themselves. Let us stop pretending and show these so-called simple and primitive women the honour they deserve. It is long overdue. People like Mr. Bulengi and Halfman, who look down on the poor, simple women, are like dogs who eat their own vomit.

The governor-general should consider offering some of these women, some of those Queen's medals for the selfless, active and untiring service they render the community in times of persecution, deprivation, degradation and abuse instead of wasting the taxpayers' money on his useless, unproductive office. It would be a really mean and inconsiderate and unreasonable politician who would vote against this idea. Let us all be human!

"You hear that, Mr. Bulengi, you hear that?" I said unconsciously. Then I realized that everybody was watching me. I must have said my thoughts out loud. I felt guilty and embarrassed when Jenny asked, "Hear what?"

"Oh, nothing; sorry," I said, looking down apologetically.

"Hey, Misinare; stop dreaming and go and get the carton of beer that I left in the boot of my car. I forgot to bring it up," said Toma, throwing a bunch of keys on my lap.

I got the set of keys and tried to move out when Mr. Bulengi said, "Misinare, are you trying to tell me that you are superstitious? Don't tell me you've been seeing strange and invisible creatures and hearing noises in this very real, solid room and among these real people?" To be sure, he touched one of his women sitting beside him.

The woman moved with surprise and irritation and exclaimed, "Ai, yu spak o olsem wanem?"

"Mi no spak; mi holim yu nating tasol ya," answered Mr. Bulengi, embarrassed. The

educated girls laughed.

Mr. Bulengi looked annoyed and, looking away, said, "These bloody uneducated whores don't seem to appreciate what I am doing for them. If it was not for me, these bastards would still be out in the bush somewhere playing around like animals with some dirty, uneducated, primitive pricks." I shook my head with disbelief at this load of hypocrisy and ratshit. I went out, collected the carton of beer from Toma's car and came back. When I came in, some of them were eating sausages and steak. There was a tray of this stuff on the tea-table.

A loud, unmistakeable voice rang out through the noise. "Commander speaking! Commander speaking! Everybody to gun station; everybody to gun station; attention please and follow the instruction carefully," it boomed. "Men to the rear, women to the kill. The commander instructs men to eat steaks and women to eat sausages," and the voice burst into a thunderous, mocking and drunken laughter. Damned, bloody Halfman! He always thinks of some funny things to say about every little thing like eating steak and sausages. He came out of the kitchen and looked around sternly as if he was a real marine commander in an American battleship.

Seeing one of the uneducated women eating a piece of steak, he shouted angrily, pointing in her face. "You miserable bitch! You dare disobey my instruction? Come on. Get off the seat," he ordered. She sat there with a big grin which later, after Halfman's stern and intense look, turned into fear and nervous trembling.

"Oh, come on, leave the poor woman alone," said Juliana with some pity.

"Man ia em tok wanem?" the lady asked with uneasiness.

"Em tok long yupela igo wok sip," answered Mr Bulengi. "Kam on, bihainim em na yu tupela igo insait long rum namba tu nao," ordered Mr Bulengi. The poor woman took it seriously and getting up, stood there for sometime, wondering whether they were serious or just joking. Unsure of what to do, she followed Halfman subserviently into the second bedroom.

After ten minutes or so, I saw Halfman running stealthily across from the second bedroom into the showers. Before he came out, he flushed the septic toilet; then he walked out pulling his jeans up. I saw him walking straight into the kitchen and came out with a tray of half-

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burnt steaks and sausages and acted as if he had never been to room number two. He left the meat on the tea-table and grabbed a beer and sat directly in front of me showing no sign of guilt. Juliana was dancing with Toma, and Jenny with Yamoka. They were busy dancing and had not noticed Halfman's stealthy movements.

"How was it?" I asked, with a grin.

"How was what?" he retorted unsuccessfully.

"Come on, stop pretending and tell me. What was it like?" I wanted to know.

"O.K., you win," he said resignedly. "My, it's something," he added delightedly. "You like to try?" he then asked, as if it was something new.

"I'll ask for it when I want it. I'm not a savage hypocrite," I said, turning my head towards Yamoka and Jenny who stood, hugging passionately near the freezer.

"Are you calling me a hypocrite, eh?" said Halfman with intense agitation. I felt cold fear running down my spine. Oh, my god, why did I say what I had said? It was, in fact, an insult. I regretted it very much. I wished I were in Alaska. I would be safer there in the cold than here right now.

"You calling me a hypocrite?" he said as he lunged at me but luckily, Mr Bulengi flew straight between us and saved me from destruction.

"What the hell do you two think you are doing?" he said, looking into our faces like a stern but fair father.

"This bastard son of a bitch here called me a hypocrite," Halfman shouted, pointing and looking down at me from above Mr Bulengi.

"O.K! O.K! I know he was only joking," said Mr. Bulengi as if I was completely innocent. "Can't you have a heart for a little friend?" he said, patting Halfman's back. It was some minutes before he parted with Halfman and then he stayed close enough to stop another attempt. Halfman stood looking away from me and then sat down slowly. I knew that if I were not his best friend, it would have been a different story. I know him well enough to mention this. He still insists that some guy who had the misfortune to be reported for insulting him, has yet to pay for his 'crime' as he calls it. He eventually looked up shamefacedly and apologized. It was I who should have apologized but I did not want to revive the matter so I simply accepted the apology with a guilty conscience. All these pro-

ceedings took place completely out of the educated girls' notice. That was good. We would not like the girls to learn about the incident and ask awkward questions. I picked up Halfman's own beer and handed it over to him as if I had bought it myself particularly for him.

"Let's drink to our friendship and indestructible solidarity," I said as I lifted mine, showed it to him and put it in my mouth and gulped it down in remembrance of our everlasting oath.

"To death and only at death do we part," he said as I did like wise. I felt like a newborn babe.

"Wow!" I cried with relief and a tear of joy dripped down my cheek as I gave him a really big handshake. He almost tore my arm off its socket. We skipped around the big room hand-in-hand jubilantly like little children on a fine, breezy, moonlit night. I looked around to see Toma and Juliana but they were nowhere to be seen. Just then, as if I controlled their minds, they walked in, hand-in-hand from the outside. I can only guess why they were outside but only the Bigman up above knows how they went about it. When I went back to the common room, the woman who spent her time in the second bedroom with Halfman was back and was going through the burnt sausages and a piece of half-ready steak.

"Meri wantok, yu i orait?" I asked, looking at her between the wall and the freezer.

"Yes, mi i orait," she said. "Na dispela bolsulap man ya i go we?" she asked.

"Husat?" I queried, even though I knew whom she meant.

"Em dispela mausgras pamuk man ya," she answered.

"O, em? Ating em istap long haus kuk," I replied; and right enough, Halfman walked towards us from the kitchen with a sausage in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other. He walked happily towards us but when seeing the woman he had a go with in the second bedroom, he stopped, suddenly transfixing his eyes on the woman like a little mouse after seeing a poised snake.

"Ai yu tasol yu giamanim mi na mi weit long taim insait long rum. Tu kina bilong yu we?" she asked, intent on exposing Halfman to the rest of us. These women may look simple but when it comes to the business of collecting the fee, they do not hesitate to expose you in public if you have cheated them. That is the only guarantee they have of collecting their fee.

"Mi save yu weit. Mi bin tokim yu olsem mi skulman na mi nogat moni," said poor Halfman, trying to explain but he was trembling with guilt and shame. I was very sorry for him. He looked like a little boy.

"Yu skulman, na bilong wanem yu raun long pamuk nabaut?" she said. Poor Halfman, big though he was, he stood there drowned and dripping with shame and embarrassment.

"Sorry Halfman; I should have reminded you," apologized Mr Bulengi. "You can't escape them when it comes to paying the fee." He confirmed my belief and ran over to a drawer nearby and pulled out two kina and gave it to her on Halfman's behalf.

All this time the younger of the two women had been sitting there quietly sipping her beer and eating a piece of steak. Everybody was drunk but we struggled to be sober. Only this girl looked and acted sober though she had consumed quite a number of bottles. I looked intently at her simple innocent face. She looked up and met my gaze and looked down quickly and then slowly looked up again and giggled. I knew what this meant, so I pursued my opportunity.

"Ai, yu i lap long wanem?" I asked, throwing a cigarette butt on her lap.

"A? Yu tok wanem?" she countered as she got off her seat and came to me. Leaning against my shoulder with one of her tender but firm breasts, she asked once again, "A? Yu bin tok wanem? I knew instinctively that she was asking for it. She was pretending to be very serious about my personal business. She pressed her breast against me harder and asked, "Yu bilong we?"

"Mi bilong P.N.G. tasol," I said, looking up at her little, brown face.

"O sori, yu weit na mi go long toilet na bai mi i kam bek," she said as she pressed her breast harder against my shoulder the third time and left poking my back lightly. I knew what she meant but I did not want to show my weakness by getting up and leaving immediately. I was sipping my beer with my empty body. My mind was already away minding my other urgent business. There is truly a lot of truth in the expression, 'Home is where the heart is'. I finally left for home. I guess you know what I mean in this case. Well, when I arrived at home I found her waiting near the toilet door. I looked out to the common room to make sure nobody was watching me. I darted over and opened the door to the second

bedroom. The room was dark. I stood inside and this girl whom I shall now call Maria, darted up and into the room after me, I call her, Maria because she reminded me of someone with the same name I once knew and secondly, because this girl here refused to tell me her name.

Well, we locked ourselves in and spent some time in the second bedroom. I do not want to describe anything here in detail because some of you are only little kids, so all I can say is that it was just fine; no problems, no fees. That is how smart guys handle our business. If you treat your girl well she will treat you well. People like Halfman had miles to go yet.

Our way back to the common room was fine. We behaved as if nothing had happened back there. At this stage, Mr Bulengi and Halfman's ex-girlfriend went missing from the crowd. We agreed that they were big enough to look after themselves so we did not bother about them. We went on drinking and dancing and telling some dirty stories. Mr Bulengi's next-door neighbours must have had some hard feelings but we were not in a position to know so we forgot the whole matter. We left it to Mr Bulengi to sort it out himself later. We were there to enjoy ourselves. To hell with the rest of humanity.

As Toma said, "You don't have parties every night." Men of Mr Bulengi's status should put on a big party and invite other members of parliament and his wantoks and next-door neighbours for the inauguration of his position as a new minister. My word, talking of next-door neighbours, we have our own two neighbours missing now. Oh, by the way, four neighbours in fact, Yamoka and Jenny and Mr Bulengi and his girlfriend, the one Halfman auctioned.

Just then a high, shrill and sensual, feminine voice blew the roof off from the second bedroom. Oh, poor Jenny, we should have reminded her. Of the four members of the 'Four Piss' Club, Yamoka was the most dangerous of all, he was only a little man in build and height but he had the clumsiest and the biggest brother.

"Poor Jennifer, she should have been warned," said Halfman. "We don't call Yamoka, 'The Great' for nothing. We sincerely hope he doesn't demolish Jenny's devil's playground completely. "We waited impatiently before Yamoka and Jenny came out walking cheerfully and hand-in-hand.

"What happened in there?" Juliana asked

awkwardly.

"Oh, nothing really," she said. "Juliana meant what he said. "Juliana she saw a big python up there right, dear?" he asked, tugging her lobes tenderly.

"Yes," said Jenny obediently. "I got away with some little cash but not us, where this business is."

We drank and danced and visited the second bedroom but Mr. Bulengi and his girlfriend turned up. So we formed a small group and eventually found them lying on the floor in the first bedroom to use when his wife and child were in week. He was snoring away behind him on the floor. I was drunk or they were worn out. We did not know what the situation explained that what happened before they left for dreamland. So we went back to the common room. We still had a freezer but since most of us were exhausted from dancing and drinking in the second bedroom, we could not stay 'shut-eye'.

When I woke up it was morning. I was lying in the bed. Maria cuddled up next to me. Jennifer were in a simple cushioned chair directly in front of his girlfriend had driven away.

"What the hell; what was I thinking, as I headed into the kitchen, drunken, weak face. Maybe I was playing tricks on me. When I saw Halfman sitting and sipping his beer, I can drink beer at six a.m.

"He'll be back from Koroia," he said, grinning mischievously.

"The bloody devil," I said in a state of dejection.

"It's all right, he'll be back soon," Halfman reassured me.

"Yes, that is if he is still in Koroia, will she be coming back? It sounded a bit silly anyway."

"Who knows?" replied Halfman, continuing with his beer. The door probably drop her where he

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"Oh, nothing really," said Yamoka as if he meant what he said. "Juliana only imagined that she saw a big python up on the wall. Isn't that right, dear?" he asked, tickling his lover's earlobes tenderly.

"Yes," said Jenny obediently. They can lie and get away with some little community school-kids but not us, where this business is concerned.

We drank and danced and sang songs and visited the second bedroom a number of times but Mr. Bulengi and his girlfriend still did not turn up. So we formed a search party and eventually found them lying naked and exhausted on the floor in the first bedroom, the one he intended to use when his wife and children arrived the next week. He was snoring away while his lover lay behind him on the floor. Either they were dead drunk or they were worn out after the hard work. We did not know what they did but their situation explained that something must have happened before they left for their honeymoon in dreamland. So we went back to our party in the common room. We still had some beers left in the freezer but since most of us were drunk and exhausted from dancing and our activities in the second bedroom, we could not resist a bit of 'shut-eye'.

When I woke up it was six a.m. on Saturday morning. I was lying in the cushion-chair with Maria cuddled up next to me. Yamoka and Jennifer were in a similar position in the cushioned chair directly in front of us. Toma and his girlfriend had driven off to King's Cross.

"What the hell; what a fine new day," I thought, as I headed into the showers to wash my drunken, weak face. Maybe my eyes were playing tricks on me. When I came back, I saw Halfman sitting and sipping beer. Some people can drink beer at six a.m., you know.

"He'll be back from King's Cross to pick us up," he said, grinning mischievously.

"The bloody devil," I commented with some dejection.

"It's all right, he'll be back to pick us up," Halfman reassured me.

"Yes, that is if he is still alive. And how about Juliana, will she be coming back too?" This sounded a bit silly anyway, I realized later.

"Who knows?" replied Halfman and continued with his beer. Then he went on, "He'll probably drop her where he picked them up last

night. "Halfman looked at Yamoka and his girlfriend and said, "Wake those two Sodom and Gomorrahs up. What the hell do they think they are?" He sounded a bit jealous. I looked down and saw Maria just struggling to get up from her deep slumber,

"Ai tulait nao. Yu laik i go long haus bilong yu o laik weitim poroman bilong yu?" I asked, looking down at her face.

"A ting bai mi igo nao," she said, looking away from my stare.

"Orait," I said and pulled out a twenty-toea coin and tossed it onto her lap. "Em bilong kisim bas."

She picked up the twenty toea coin and walked out of the house and headed for the 'bus-stop. The last thing I want is to be seen in public with her kind. That is how mean I am sometimes after making use of them I felt sorry for her. She would live as a 'rabis pamuk nating' for the rest of her life. When she is around carrying out her badly-needed service, people will laugh and despise her for the rest of her life. I imagine how she would be like in old age when her commodity had shrunk and her body no more translucent and vigorous but a sack of old wrinkled mass of stringbag. People would laugh at her and the little children would mock and say, "Ai lapun pamuk, yu i stap?" then jeer and run away.

I imagined myself an old, wrinkled, poor, sick man waiting sadly for my unpleasant and turbulent journey through the land of the ever lasting and horrifying fire and death.

"Oh, God save me," I said as I walked over to the freezer to get some water to quench my drunken thirst. After gulping three refreshing glasses of water, I came back and dropped into the soft, cushion-chair like a tired and exhausted old man. I shut my eyes and cupped my face in the palm of my hands for sometime and sat there like that. Eventually, I looked up and said, "Halfman, you know what? I've been thinking ..."

"Mm," he burbled under his breath with a mouthful of beer.

"I mean, life in general but this kind in particular," I tried to explain but his concern was on beer more than anything else.

"When I think of it, sometimes I just wonder where we'll all eventually end up. Some claim that its immoral. There you are sitting there enjoying your beer. That's immoral; and over here are Yamoka and Jenny cuddled together

enjoying themselves; that's immoral. You listening, Halfman?"

"Mm," he said again. Obviously he was not listening. He was more concerned about beer than anything else. He did not even seem to worry about death from over-consumption. Even if he did wrong, he did not seem to care. He probably could not help it. Whatever it was, he was lying there with the bottle of beer in his mouth dozing like nobody's business.

Immorality, yes, that was it, immorality. "What is immorality?" I asked myself. The preacher in the local church talks about it. My Sunday School teacher talked about it. My religious-instruction teacher talked about it when I was in high school. My father talks about it; seems practically everybody is talking about it. Maybe even the animals and unborn babes talk about it. Why do they talk about immorality, decadency, sin, fire and hell when we enjoy all these things? I guess there must be something in it; otherwise they would not bother.

Just then a car pulled up outside and Toma flew into the room.

"Hey, you bags of drunken, immoral, sleepy heads, get up!" he shouted; and, "It's a new day; happy new day," he sang merrily, then shook me and Halfman and told us to "get off our bums". He winked at Jenny who was just struggling to get up.

"Where is Juliana?" she asked.

"I dropped her at Four Mile. She wants you to meet her at Boroko Pharmacy."

It was a quarter-to-nine when we left Mr Bulengi and his girlfriend undisturbed and left. We drove down to Boroko and stopped near the Post Office.

Jenny got out and said, "Tata!" as she left to look for Juliana or probably some of her numerous boyfriends. Toma went to the bank and Yamoka and Halfman left for the Post Office. I headed for the newsagency.

Toma looked back and said, "See you all at ten in the Calypso", and proceeded to the bank. I went into the newsagency and looked around for something interesting to read. I decided to get myself yesterday's paper. I scanned through the pages and there on the fourth page was an unmistakeable picture of Mr Bulengi, the new Minister. It said something about him taking an overseas trip the next month for three weeks to look into something or other. I bought the paper and walked out wondering how Mr Bulengi was

getting on in bedroom number one.

Just as I was walking out I saw Juliana and a tall young fellow with faded blue jeans and a second-hand army shirt and a little goatee, chatting earnestly in the corner near the artefacts shop. He could be anybody; a cousin-brother or a school-mate maybe. That is how some girls are these days. They have as many boyfriends as there are hairs on your head. Everytime they meet a new boy, they tell him that it is the first time they have seen a boy in their lives. That is what she probably told Toma the previous night. We all know their simple trick. What a bunch of shameless, dirty liars! Soon I had bought a packet of Bex Powder in the chemist on the second floor of Hugo's and walked down the steps out towards the post office where I expected to meet up with Halfman and Yamoka.

"Hey, Misinare, this way!" called Halfman from B.P.'s Supermarket on the other side of the road. I turned left and bumped into a fat woman with a heavy load of stuff in a string bag. She stopped the bag on the cement path and started screaming in public that I had intentionally tried to do something bad to her. I tried to explain that it was only accidental but she would not listen. For some reason, she was determined to get me into trouble. A large crowd was beginning to gather. A man pushed his way through and grabbed me by my collar and growled, "Ai yu mekim wanem long meri bilong me a?"

I tried to explain but he would not listen either. He gave me a hard punch on my nose. I staggered backwards and almost landed in the middle of the road. The man followed up, seized me by my collar and tried to do me in again but he was pulled abruptly by the collar from the back. It was Halfman. I felt relieved but I did not want any further trouble. However, it was too late.

He pulled the man up by his collar and growled, "Hey, Mr Little-Big-Fat-Woman's husband, do you know whom you've done this dirty thing to?" then knocked the poor guy out flat on the ground. His fat wife wailed and lunged at Halfman but he pushed her away. She kept coming at him but to no avail.

"The police arrived and pushed their way up to Halfman and inquired, "What the hell's going on here?"

"This little man here asked for it," explained Halfman.

"Do you have to take the law into your own

hands?" asked the policeman who had just arrived at the station.

"Yes," replied Halfman. "You do if your best friend's nose? Would you be stupid? The constable told us to go to the police officer on duty."

When I saw the officer just appeared. He was mine back in the high school days. The constable officer saw me but pretended not to know me. The constable briefly happened.

"Ai meri, dispela man nogut long yu long yu," asked the woman.

"Long antap," she said to the post office.

"Long antap long bilong mi,"

"Nogat, long klos bilong mi," replied,

"Insait o autsaid?"

"Autsait".

"Em laik mekim wanem long mi?"

"Em laik mekim sapos mi laik."

"Em laik stilim san bilong mi?" asked the officer.

"Yes," said the woman.

"Wanem samting bilong mi?"

"Em laik stilim mi, bilong mi?"

"Stilim yu olsem wanem?"

"Yu save, em laik stilim mi," said the woman nervously.

"Mi no save", said the officer. "Soim mi hao em laik stilim mi, getting to the bottom of the matter that this officer knew I was doing."

"Yu laik mi mekim wanem long mi?" asked in confusion.

"Na yu tok em laik stilim mi. Yu giaman bilong mi? Yu save! Nao igo nao!" he said. "Yu bihain moa long yu, I ordered the woman to go home and winked at me and said, 'Goodbye'."

When we were out of the station, he and her husband. When we said "Man ia laik stilim mi," me. We all laughed at the woman and her husband.

lands?" asked the policeman when we had arrived at the station.

"Yes," replied Halfman boldly. "What would you do if your best friend was knocked on the nose? Would you be standing there admiring it?" The constable told us to wait while he went to get the police officer on duty.

When I saw the officer coming all my worries just appeared. He was an old school mate of mine back in the high school. In fact he was a desk mate of mine. I knew I would be free. The officer saw me but pretended not to know me. The constable briefed him on what had happened.

"Ai meri, dispela man laik mekim samting nogut long yu long wamen hap?" the officer asked the woman.

"Long antap," she said pointing out towards the post office.

"Long antap long bush a?" the officer asked.

"Nogat, long klostu long pos opis," she replied.

"Insait o autsaid?"

"Autsait."

"Em laik mekim wanem?" the officer queried her.

"Em laik mekim samting nogut," she said.

"Em laik stilim samting bilong yu a?" asked the officer.

"Yes," said the woman.

"Wanem samting bilong you?" he asked.

"Em laik stilim mi," she said.

"Stilim yu olsem wanem?" asked the officer.

"Yu save, em laik stilim mi," said the woman nervously.

"Mi no save," said the officer. "Inap long yu swim mi hao em laik stilim yu?" Now he was getting to the bottom of the matter. We were glad that this officer knew his job well.

"Yu laik mi mekim wanem?" the woman asked in confusion.

"Na yu tok em laik stilim yu ya. A ting yu giaman. Yu giaman bai yu igo long kalabus, yu save! Nao igo nao!" he ordered. "Mino laik lukim yu bihain moa long hia, yu save?" The officer ordered the woman and her husband out. He winked at me and said, "Yu tu igo aut nao."

When we were out Halfman was at his dirty tricks again. He shouted "Heh!" after the woman and her husband. When they looked back, he said "Man ia laik stilim mi ya", and he pointed at me. We all laughed mockingly. That really put the woman and her husband off.

"You two are lucky, you know," said Yamoka. "If it was not for that officer school-mate of yours, you'd end up in the cell now."

"Did you really do it?" mocked Halfman.

"Did what? I exclaimed.

"What she claimed," he said.

"I don't know what the bitch meant but I remember bumping into her when I turned when you called me from B.P.s", I explained.

"That's typical of most of these local women. If you accidentally bump into them or say hello, they think you are trying to hop on them or something," said Yamoka.

"Yeah, and when a whiteman bumps into them or says hello, they want him to hop on them", said Toma enviously. "I can't understand them", he continued defeatedly.

"It would have been very interesting to see how you hop on that big fat woman in front of everybody" said Halfman laughing, and then continued, "I was very sorry for you when her husband punched you".

"Anyway you did a good job," I said extending my hand to him.

"Shall we go over to the Calypso now for a few sotneks?" said Toma, our most important friend, the man with the dough.

"Yeah, that's not a bad idea," I said.

There were already some people in the Calypso when we arrived. There were a number of students too. They greeted us. We took one of the tables in the open facing the road. That was our favourite spot on Saturdays. From here we could watch people and cars on the road, especially girls.

Toma placed two greenies and two brownies on the table as we seated ourselves.

"We'll have a few more and shoot off to Rouna Hotel; what do you guys say?" asked Toma.

"Whatever you say, boss," replied Halfman.

"You guys sit here and help yourselves. I'll get a bottle for a friend of mine", said Toma as he left for the counter.

"Jeez, the essays is due on Monday and here I am. I haven't even started a thing yet," said Yamoka, really concerned.

"To hell with bloody essays and assignments and all that shit. I've learnt more about life being in places like this than wasting my precious time in the prison they call University. What right have they to tell me to do essays when I could well live in this world without such nonsense,"

said Halfman.

"You can say what you like but I don't think that's what your parents say, you know; they've spent a lot of money on you already," said Yamoka.

Toma came back with some more beer, followed by one of his friends.

They placed eight bottles on the table.

"Hey boys! This is Suba, a good friend of mine," said Toma introducing his friend.

"Hello", we all said as we stood and shook his hand.

"All these are Suba's shout," said Toma looking at the beers on the table. We looked up at him and mumbled our appreciation.

"It's O.K., no worries" said Suba. "My friend Toma here told me about you. We all know you students can't afford it so don't bother paying back".

"Thankyou, and may I ask where you come from?" Halfman wanted to know.

"I'm from Daru," replied Suba.

"Is that so! Jeez that's interesting. So you come from the land of the barramundi."

"Yes," said Suba proudly. "That's our main source of protein and income".

"Yes, but I hear that that big gold and copper mine up in the Star Mountains is going to destroy your barramundi".

"I'm not sure, but that might well be", said Suba sadly.

"The sad thing about it is most of the money would go out of this country. It's like a stranger moving into your house, eats up all your food, screws your wife and daughter, smashes your pots and plates, excretes in your bedroom and tells you to clean the mess; and the most distressing part of it is, it's your fathers who arrange this to be done to you. I hope you know what I mean. You know, this is a very strange world we live in." It seemed that Halfman was not as dumb as we thought.

"You can't help it can you?" I joined in.

"That's what everybody seems to believe; but have we looked around enough in this wide world to find a true friend who is prepared to share with us the benefits on a fifty-fifty basis? or even better? Is the present approach the only way? How far have we encouraged our own three-and-half-million people to buy shares. I only get K10 allowance but I am prepared to buy shares with half of it! I know my poor simple village father has a lot of money but has anybody made a

concerted effort to explain to him about this? Can you tell me what our so-called leaders are doing now? This is an issue of national importance and I think we should spend more time, effort and money on this discussion with our people and find a way in which we could get the maximum benefit out of this non-renewable resource. You know, once it's gone it's gone. Sad thing is, it's also going to take your barramundi away as well. Where the hell are we heading for? Can anybody tell me?"

Halfman was very serious about this. He picked up a beer bottle and smashed it on the ground and continued, "If any security or a policeman comes here and sticks his big nose into this I'm gonna ring his bloody neck. I think it's about time somebody did bloody something. I suggest we blow the bloody parliament up with those bunch of pamuk stooges who call themselves leaders. All they bloody ever think of is to get screwed and fill their big filthy pockets. They are nothing but a bunch of greedy traitors. What they really deserve is this!", and he showed his big fist.

Suba sat there gaping.

"O.K., Halfman we are all concerned about this issue but what can we do? We are just students. You know, we are nothing," I said.

"I'm not nothing. I'm definitely something and I know what I'm doing!" he shouted. The shouting brought the most dreaded person, the security man.

"Yes, I see you know what you are doing; and if you don't shut your big mouth I guess you also know where you are going, all right," warned the big security man. He stood there staring sternly at Halfman for a while and left.

"The son of a bitch thinks he can scare me easily," laughed Halfman.

"O.K., Have your beer and let's discuss about something else," said Toma pushing a bottle of beer towards Halfman. Halfman took it and drowned the contents at one go.

Suba could not believe his eyes, but that is now Halfman cools himself in a situation like this. We, the members of 'Four Piss' club, know it.

After drowning the beer he cleared his throat and said calmly, "The security men, the police and most politicians are the ones who are selling this country down the drain. They all work together to suppress the true leaders of this country. Tell me honestly, who owns most

property in this country? money in this country? definitely not my simple village and security men are very politicians are like the t. They open their legs to t along with K2 or even less about the meaning of su

"I see what you mean in any society. I mean, with the police and the security him; but he interjected a believed the police and stooges.

"If we have many people country would not be t. Suba, marvelling at Halfman come from Masingara village the coast. I don't think t very much but I hope t learn to organize themselves rights".

"That's it!" exclaimed very attitude which is We should not look Kiungas, Sepiks or M or Islanders, Papuans this type of issue is co stand together as brother or not, what's happening effect you in your village again?"

"Masingara", said S

"Yes, it's going to a one way or the other wh you should be ready,"

"How do you expect Suba.

"Well you know, cl and bad. Bad changes destroy your barramundi areas moving into your women and your custo about that. The good t could make a lot of n For instance, get ready sell to the people in the apart from barramundi

"Well, let me think, head. "Yes, we have a

"Well go ahead and grow bananas then. Th would want."

property in this country? Who has the most money in this country? Not poor me; and definitely not my simple village father. The police and security men are very good stooges and most politicians are like the two kina bush women. They open their legs to the first man who comes along with K2 or even less. They have yet to learn about the meaning of supply and demand."

"I see what you mean but they are essential in any society. I mean, we cannot survive without the police and the security men," I tried to correct him, but he interjected and insisted that he still believed the police and the security men were stooges.

"If we have many people like you I think this country would not be the same anymore," said Suba, marvelling at Halfman and continued, "I come from Masingara village which is down near the coast. I don't think the mine would affect us very much but I hope the people up in Kiunga learn to organize themselves and fight for their rights."

"That's it!" exclaimed Halfman. "That is the very attitude which is destroying this country. We should not look upon ourselves as Kiungas, Sepiks or Morobeans or Highlanders or Islanders, Papuans or New Guineans where this type of issue is concerned. We should all stand together as brothers. Whether you like it or not, what's happening up in Kiunga is going to effect you in your village. What was its name again?"

"Masingara", said Suba.

"Yes, it's going to affect you in Masingara in one way or the other whether you like it or not, so you should be ready," said Halfman.

"How do you expect us to be ready?" asked Suba.

"Well you know, changes can be both good and bad. Bad changes are those that are going to destroy your barramundi and men from other areas moving into your village and abusing your women and your customs. You should be careful about that. The good thing about this is that you could make a lot of money out of this project. For instance, get ready with things that you can sell to the people in the mines. What else do you apart from barramundi?" asked Halfman.

"Well, let me think," said Suba scratching his head. "Yes, we have a lot of bananas".

"Well go ahead and clear more bushes and grow bananas then. That's what people up there would want."

"Anything else?" asked Halfman.

"Would bamboos do? We've got millions", said Suba doubtfully.

"Of course, my friend! People want bamboo ashtrays, combs, rakes, flower containers, and pencil cases. You could do millions of things with bamboo you know. Women can make baskets and grass-skirts out of pandanus and reeds. You know we have so much to offer but it's the people who have to make up their minds and do all this. You can't sit back and complain and expect money to walk into your village. It's all these things that are going to help you. Everything has a use. Otherwise God almighty wouldn't have placed them in this world."

"Thankyou my friend, I'll think about it," said Suba, and tried to go for another load of beers.

"Don't think about it. You don't have much time left. I'd advise you to go back to your village immediately and do something about it right away. I can see you have a great future ahead of you. I'm going back to my place in the Highlands as soon as I get this worthless paper they call a degree. In fact I'm not here for that paper. I could have gone anytime if it was not for my friends like Toma, Yamoka and Misinare here," he said tapping me on my shoulder and smiled. "Well, what do you say?" he said looking at me.

"Well, I think its not a bad idea," I said, "but how many educated people are willing to go back to their village?" I was pretty guilty because here I was consuming my beer and I was not sure whether I would ever end up in the village.

It was pretty hard to decide.

Suba came back with five beers and placed them on our table. We looked up at him with appreciation. He picked one up and explained that he was needed by his own people so he wished us a happy and enjoyable weekend and left us to join people at the table further away near the counter close to the main gate.

"O.K., see you and thanks for the beers," said Toma.

"It's O.K.! Thankyou," said Suba as he left.

Just then there was a lot of whistling here and there everybody was excited and they were looking down towards the road and suddenly "Maiao!, Sweetmore! Yu tasol!, Yellow favour! Blue Favour! Kaikai ia! Kekeni sweetmore! The way you walk! Madio! Red favour! Aleiam! Iorait?" These became the most popular words in

the vocabulary fired from the tavern towards the road. And "E! Look at them! Shame on you! You loose? Like good one! Emarai lasi! Up yours! Spakmen! Rubbish! Ulep! Nogat sem bilong yu! Yu wari? Dry men!" These became the popular counter-attack words fired from the road by the girls. This battle of words and excitement went on everytime girls were seen on the road until the tavern closed at 2pm. From 12 noon the intensity of the battle declined when most girls left when the shops closed on at midday.

"I used to wonder whether similar things happen in other parts of the world", said Yamoka and looked around at us.

"I would be surprised if this happens here only", I said.

"I wouldn't be so sure, the world's so wide and big. There may be some group somewhere who could be worse than us. I heard it said that there is a clan somewhere which walks around naked and actually do the real action in public," said Halfman and we all laughed uproarously.

"Oh come off it, it can't be true," said Toma.

"Can you guys tell me, what is the right way of getting a girl? It seems the girls don't seem to like me. No matter how hard I've tried. I'm not getting anywhere", said Halfman, resignedly.

"For one thing, whistling, winking and carrying on like that is not going to get you any nearer. That I know for sure. My cousin sister told me that girls look upon men who whistle as repulsive monsters. Maybe that's why you've never got anywhere, though you're a pretty handsome bloke. He persisted with this questions

He seemed pretty elated when I said he was a handsome bloke. He persisted with his questions more vigorously.

"There are many ways but I simply go up to a girl and say 'How about you and me tonight' and smile," said Yamoka.

"And how does that serve you?" I was also interested in this topic.

"Well, I've twelve so far that way," said Yamoka proudly and continued. "I think its my manners that are more important than my looks. You can see that I'm not that handsome."

"And maybe your reputation and the size of your weapon," laughed Halfman.

"Well, that could well be," said Yamoka proudly.

"This is what I get my women with," said

Toma holding up a K2 bill and smiling mischievously.

"It's a simple matter back in the village. If it was not for the stupid taboos they have in the village I could have screwed every girl they have. I was halfway through them before they caught me and brought me in front of the village population. They fired me with some stupid taboos and customs. I never knew existed. From what they burbled on I learnt that all those girls are related to me in one way or the other. Well they asked for it," said Halfman defensively.

"Well then, you can't say you don't know how to get girls," I put in.

"No, that's a different situation, I don't ask them. They simply came for me like flies. Maybe because I'm the only person from my village who came this far in the educational ladder. They think I'm the brightest person from my village I don't really consider myself that bright but they worshipped me until they found out that I had been through half their girls." That was Halfman.

"Dale Carnegie in his book 'How To Win Friends and Influence People' says that to get a girl you have to say the nicest thing about her. For instance, 'Jeez, that's a nice, beautiful dress you are wearing; Jeez, I never knew you were so beautiful; Jeez, I heard that you did so well in your exam., how smart you are; Jeez, I wish I were your boyfriend,' and so on and so forth," said Toma. It shows he had been reading some interesting books.

"The problem with most of us is that we look upon women as sexual objects. It is about time we learnt to treat them like human beings. You can't blame them if you don't respect them. I think the first question you should be asking yourself is what is it that you have done that keeps the girls away from you, instead of being frustrated and worried," I told Halfman. And another very important thing, "I continued, "Girls don't like spakmen; yu save, wantok?"

"Yes, a ting mi save, Tasol bia tu i meri bilong mi ya," he said with a big grin and held up a bottle of beer fondly and kissed it. "Swit moa," he said.

While we were drinking and talking, there was a big commotion on the road near the Air Niugini ticketing office. We ran out and looked across. We could not see what was going on because there was a big crowd watching excitedly and jeering at what was going on but we could

hear what was said. It

"Yu Satan tru, y wantaim man bilong

"Yu wari, em tok e tok em bai maritim n shouted another.

"Yu kolim mi sting Bai mi kilim yu." It arrive on the scene

"There we go," said talking about how to fighting over us."

"How wonderful it Molly fighting over m fully. Edna and Mo beautiful girls on the things worth living for wise life is meaningless

"What are they? I suggested Yamoka.

"Yes, part of it; i Halfman.

"But there are pe contented lives without priests," I said.

"They are insane; th are missing." Halfman know.

"They are individual believe and do what

"But that's not wha fuckwits. The thing is t enjoying life the way They think they own think they are, gods or man with irritation.

"It's the Bible that sa conveying the message,

"Then God must t things here if he reckons to play some dirty tric man.

"Look man! God di sin. There is nowhere it's sin. What I meant sin if you misuse his God's gift to us; but misusing it," I pleaded.

"How do you mean I've been enjoying it all it right now. Here!" and

"It's O.K.! Go ahead sorry, "I warned him.

hear what was said. It was two women fighting.
"Yu Satan tru, yu save pamuk nabaut
wastaim man bilong mi," cried a female voice.

"Yu wari, em tok em i no laikim yu moa. Em
tok em bai maritim mi. Yu lapun sting pinis,"
shouted another.

"Yu kolim mi sting long wanem. Yu pamuk.
bai mi kilim yu." It went on until the police
arrived on the scene and broke up the fight.

"There we go," said Yamoka. "While we are
talking about how to get women, there they are
fighting over us."

"How wonderful it would be to see Edna and
Molly fighting over me," sighed Halfman wist-
fully. Edna and Molly were the two most
beautiful girls on the campus. "There are two
things worth living for," he continued. "Other-
wise life is meaningless."

"What are they? I guess it's Edna and Molly,"
suggested Yamoka.

"Yes, part of it; it's beer and girls," said
Halfman.

"But there are people who have happy,
contented lives without either, for instance some
priests," I said.

"They are insane; they don't know what they
are missing." Halfman does have some ideas, you
know.

"They are individuals and they are entitled to
believe and do what they like," I countered.

"But that's not what they are practising, the
fuckwits. The thing is they want to stop us from
enjoying life the way we want as individuals.
They think they own us. Who the hell do they
think they are, gods or something?" asked Half-
man with irritation.

"It's the Bible that says it's bad. They are only
conveying the message," I reminded him.

"Then God must be mean to place these
things here if he reckons they are bad. Is he trying
to play some dirty tricks on us?" queried Half-
man.

"Look man! God didn't say these things are
sin. There is nowhere in the Bible where he says
it's sin. What I meant was that it only becomes
sin if you misuse his gifts. Beer and girls are
God's gift to us; but looks like we've been
misusing it," I pleaded.

"How do you mean we've been misusing it?
I've been enjoying it all through and I'm enjoying
it right now. Here!" and he gulped down his beer.

"It's O.K.! Go ahead but someday you'll be
sorry," I warned him.

"To hell with someday I'm enjoying it right
now. Enjoy yourself while you're alive. You
never know, you could drop dead any minute,"
and he had another big gulp. "We are all going to
die, someday anyway. So what does it matter?"

"And how about your soul? Don't you want to
go to Paradise? Aren't you interested in ever-
lasting life? The way you're going, you're
definitely heading for everlasting doom," I said.

"You don't sound like a friend. He sounded a
bit cross.

"Well, what better friend can you have than
somebody who is genuinely trying to save your
soul?" I asked.

"You sound like you're spotless," he said.

"I didn't say that, my friend. Nobody on earth
is completely spotless. I believe even the Pope is
not spotless," I preached. Toma and Yamoka
were sitting attentively listening and drinking.

"Then how come you are trying to save my
soul?" he questioned.

"Well, I'm doing my duty. I'm not called
Misinare for nothing. You must understand that
nobody is spotless. If you understand that then
that would be the first step towards saving your
soul. I'm not spotless but one thing I know is that
I'm definitely going to meet my brother Jesus in
Paradise. He is preparing a nice, cosy little place
for me." I was trying to convince him.

"So long then, if you don't find me up there
you are welcome to see me in Hades. When you
come, don't forget to bring a carton of cold beer
along. It'd probably be hot in there". After that,
he said, "Excuse me", and went for a leak.

"How interesting," said Yamoka. "I never
believed drunks could think so well and say such
interesting things."

"Those who behave like monkeys when drunk
are not fit to drink. They are pests," muttered
Toma and left for the toilet.

Yamoka was a bit upset because he thought
Toma referred to his action the previous after-
noon in the mess against the cooks. When Toma
came back from the toilet Yamoka said simply
and quietly, "I'm not fit to drink. Probably
I'm a pest."

"What do you mean?" asked Toma.

"Well, I thought you called me a pest for my
behaviour in the mess yesterday."

"No, man, not at all. I knew you were
genuinely fighting for what you think is right.
I'm behind you, my friend. I would have done the
same thing if I were a student."

"What do you think about Halfman?" Yamoka asked Toma. Halfman was away for a leak.

"He's one of the greatest persons we have in this country though a lot of people who don't know him well tend to think he's a pest. If you listen carefully, you'd learn a lot from him. I think he truly fights for justice and fairness. He's the one person I know who can see what's going on. I think life is worth living when you have interesting people like him around. Just imagine how this world would be like if everybody was docile, spotless, subservient, yes-masta types and wore white clothes with neckties. It would definitely be boring and monotonous," This was Toma talking.

"O.K. Klostu taim nao, dring hariap! Kolstu taim, na drin kwik," repeated the security man while he beat hard on the iron post with the big chain. They would beat the iron posts so hard that if you were close by, you would think your eardrum would soon shatter.

I think they are one of the main causes of some of the road accidents in the capital city. They force the people to drink so rapidly that most people really get drunk in the last remaining fifteen minutes. To prove this point, you can go to any one of the taverns and see for yourself. People who have been acting normally throughout the drinking session suddenly begin to act like monkeys and pigs in the last minutes and most become drunk at the end. The bar-owners are the murderers. Hey treat us like brainless objects. They do not treat us kindly and let us finish our beers before moving out. All they ever want is our money. I do not blame the security men because they're only stooges. The most fuckwit thing about it is that we do not do anything about this crime against us by the publicans.

"The government is doing more damage than good by limiting liquor trading-hours. People spend more money on grog than if they let it go for twenty-four hours a day. People race against time and they drink as much as they can in the short time given. They get drunk and then spend a lot of money on the black-markets. The government is promoting blackmarket in this country. I pay tax; the blackmarketeers don't. The government and the blackmarketeers are robbing the tax-payers," said Toma resignedly.

"Yes, I believe you on that. Let's look at it this way," said Halfman. "If they let the trading

hours go on for a vary long time, I think people would take their time and spend their money slowly. You'd be a fool to spend all your money right now and have nothing left in your pocket in the next hour; but all this is bloody assumption. We have to try it to believe it's practically. It won't hurt to try. You know we all learn from trial and error."

That's true. It's time now; let's get out of this bloomin' place," said Yamoka and we moved out.

We went over to a Chinese store nearby and Toma bought a large packet of Cambridge. We then went to where Toma's car was parked. We got in the car.

"Bluff Inn, here we come," said Toma as he started the car and headed for the main road. At Four Mile, Toma saw somebody and stopped the car.

"There's a good friend of mine waiting for transport to go to Sogeri National High School. I think we might as well give him a lift up as far as the Bluff Inn. He's one of the two local teachers working up there. He used to be a good drinking-mate of mine when he was a student at U.P.N.G. He might buy us some beer if we gave him a lift. "Toma stopped the car and called out. "Hey Bowan! We are going up your way. You coming?" Then he told us to make space available. I volunteered to give up my front seat. I moved back and took my place with Yamoka and Halfman. Bowan, whoever it was, came and took the seat in front beside Toma.

"Hey, boys, this is a teacher at Sogeri National High School," said Toma, introducing him to us.

"Hi, boys," he said and looked back at us.

"Hi, sir," we answered, greeting him politely.

Toma explained to us that he used to be one of his best friends at U.P.N.G. when he was a student.

"One thing I used to like about him was that he used to have a lot of money when he was still a student and he used to shout us a lot of beer. Can you please kindly explain to us how you used to get all the money?"

"Thanks for the compliment, Toma", the High School teacher began. "Yes, for a start, I was a P.S.B. cadet, so I used to receive part of my salary while still a student. I am not sure but I understand that they have abolished that system. Correct me if I'm wrong."

"Yes, you are correct," I said, quickly.

"Yes, I thought so; anyway that was about

sixty-five kina."

"Wow!" exclaimed

"But that was nothing lot," continued the money from doing co beating copper into w Anyway, I used the mo to buy as many cartor left them with my war a black-market in var Sunday, I used to ge money. At one stage mightn't believe it but i money, I would be so made some money ope the campus club. B practically every day, students used to thin something. I could hav spent all that money o

"That's very into Meanwhile Toma was per hour. He scared th

"Could you kindly get through you studi eness?" asked Halfma

"I spent so much ti believe I would gr managed it," he said. lecturers in particular list all the books an using for the particu the library and borrow gave out the handout to the students. in oth of the rest of the stu the end, you know,"

"Well, I can see applying the idea my

"What I also want the time to do the

"It all depends on I found the best time three a.m. to the time is the quietest part of there is no all-night, n that doing essays or useless. There was alv So I spent most of m around in town getti discussing things wit it with friends to coll given out during my

my-five kina."

"Wow!" exclaimed Halfman.

"But that was nothing for a man who drinks a lot," continued the teacher. "I got most of my money from doing copper-beating; you know, beating copper into whatever design you want. Anyway, I used the money from the copper work to buy as many cartons of beer as possible and left them with my wantoks who were operating a black-market in various part of the city. On Sunday, I used to go around and collect my money. At one stage I collected K550. You mightn't believe it but it's true. If I'd saved all that money, I would be somebody big now. I also made some money operating a barbecue thing at the campus club. But I used to get drunk practically every day," and he laughed. "Some students used to think I was a millionaire or something. I could have been one now if I hadn't spent all that money on grog."

"That's very interesting," said Halfman. Meanwhile Toma was making fifty to sixty miles per hour. He scared the hell out of us all the way.

"Could you kindly tell us how you managed to get through your studies in spite of your drunkenness?" asked Halfman, even more interested.

"I spent so much time making money, I didn't believe I would graduate but somehow I managed it," he said. "Well, I simply asked the lecturers in particular subjects I was studying to list all the books and sources that they were using for the particular course. I would go to the library and borrow all the books before they gave out the handouts on the prescribed sources to the students. In other words, I was a step ahead of the rest of the students. I didn't do so bad at the end, you know," he finished proudly.

"Well, I can see that," I said, thinking of applying the idea myself.

"What I also want to know, sir, is did you have the time to do the essays?" asked Halfman.

"It all depends on how you arrange your time. I found the best time to do my essay was from three a.m. to the time the student woke up. This is the quietest part of the time on the campus, if there is no all-night, noisy party going on. If found that doing essays or studying in the library was useless. There was always someone pestering me. So I spent most of my daylight hours wandering around in town getting drunk and meeting and discussing things with friends. I used to arrange it with friends to collect any handouts that were given out during my absence and in the after-

noon, I'd take them to the club and buy them beers and ask them to brief me on the main points of the lectures I missed. In fact, these student friends were my lecturers. I learnt more from my friends through discussions in the club than from anyone else. I had an Australian lecturer friend who was always very useful to me. He went out of his way to help me on anything I couldn't understand. Another habit I have which I believe got me through the University was that I never hesitated to ask questions when I was not sure about anything. Questioning is the key to knowledge. It says in the Bible somewhere, 'Asked and you shall receive'. Well, I applied that and mind you, I did have an overload and got out a semester early."

"Do you still operate your blackmarket?" asked Yamoka.

"I don't anymore but if for some reason I'm kicked out from Sogeri, I'll get back to it," he answered without hesitation.

"Do you realize that you are breaking the law?" I asked then realized that was asking a stupid, childish question.

"Of course I do," he said bravely. "Getting slightly out of the law keeps you alert in everything else in life. That's how smart people act."

"We were busy talking away and we did not realize that we had arrive at Fourteen Mile Supermarket until Toma stopped the car. We got out and the teacher bought us each a bottle of coke and a packet of Cambridge. We waited while Toma reversed into the petrol station for a refill. While that was going on, Toma explained that we would be going to Sogeri to spend the afternoon with his teacher friend. We left Fourteen Mile and drove past the Bluff Inn and our next stop was up at the rugged, hillside Rouna Hotel. When the public houses in the capital city close, Rouna Hotel opens, so when we arrived we were able to go in and get some drinks. The teacher did the shouts.

"Jeez, this place is not bad," said Halfman.

"Yes, I like it here more than anywhere else. This is where I intended to be on my way up to the school. In fact that's what I normally do", commented Bowan. And he introduced us to some of his friends who were there.

"Dispela tisa em wanpela gutpela man. Em save mekim gutpela pasin long mipela," said one Highlands man and placed about four bottles on our table. It seemed the teacher was quite a popular guy around the place. His friends who

shouted us beer at Rouna Hotel were mostly from the Highlands, particularly people from Wabag and Gumine. They bought a lot of beer for us.

The teacher gave them five kina and said, "Mi istap wantaim ol sumatim bilong Yunibesity olsem na yupela baim bia bilong yupela yet long dispela moni." They thanked him and went to buy beer for themselves.

"Maybe it's best if we put our beers in a carton and take it up to my house and drink there while we do some cooking," suggested Bawan.

"Yeah, that's not a bad idea," said Toma. We did just that. The trip past Rouna Hotel was the scariest I had ever been on. If you get off the road, that is it, you have had it! Anyway, we arrived safely at Sogeri School after passing Iarowari, which is only a boys Provincial High School. The teacher lived in one of the buildings which was divided in two. He lived in the one facing the road and a young Australian lady lived in the other. We put the beers in his freezer and he sent a student down to the school to collect a couple of girl students from his province who usually cleaned his house and cooked for him to come up and do the cooking for us. When he said the girls were coming up to look after us we were very excited. He put on the music and told us to feel at home and get on with the beers. The girls came in. There were four of them two from his province, Morobe, and one from Goroka and another one from the Central Province.

"Come in girls and do us some cooking. Don't worry about these guys. They are from Uni. and this one here, "and he pointed at Toma," is a mess supervisor at the Uni. mess, so make sure you don't muck up your cooking. "He introduced each one of us to the girls. We did not expect this. It was a big surprise. Our spirits were greatly elated. I could see Halfman trembling with excitement.

"Help yourselves to the soft-drink, girls," said the teacher while we had our beers.

"Can I have a beer too?" called out Monica, a very outward-looking girl and the most outspoken of the four girls, from the kitchen.

"Help yourself if you want but make sure to use a cup and don't get yourself drunk," warned their teacher.

"I'll look after myself, don't you worry," she said, and the other girls burst into girlish laughter.

"Are students allowed to drink?" asked Half-

man.

"It doesn't say they shouldn't but if they do, they are not to get into the school and cause trouble. They know that and stay away from the school when drunk. Some get drunk and sneak into the dorm and sleep," the teacher explained.

"How about drinking in teachers' houses?" asked Yamoka.

"Most teachers here are expatriates. I don't know what they do about that but students come in here and drink freely in my house. Sometimes boys buy beer and smuggled it into my house and drink themselves to sleep here. They only do that on weekends though," said their teacher.

"Yes, we come here and help ourselves to his beer sometimes. It's getting towards the end of the year and so far I haven't got into trouble," said Monica from the kitchen.

"What happens if you are caught now?" I asked.

"Who will catch me? One of my teacher is here," replied Monica defensively.

"How do you like it here, girls?" I mean being here in the school?" asked Halfman, looking towards the kitchen.

"The quicker the end of the year, the better it will be for me, though it will be very sad separating from my goods friends and my favourite teachers," said Monica.

"I never thought I was a favourite teacher," the man referred to commented.

"You are good because you allow me to have this," said Monica and held up her cup of beer, giggling mischievously.

"And how about you, sir, do you like it here?" asked Halfman, looking at him as he opened the freezer to get some more beers.

"If you are comparing Port Moresby with Sogeri, yes; I'd rather be here. But I'd sooner leave for Aiyura if I had the chance," said the teacher. "You see," he continued, "most teacher here are expatriates and I normally feel a bit out of place though they are all good people who go out of their way to make me feel at home with them. I don't think I'd blame them for my own uneasiness. I'm just out from Uni. and maybe I'll eventually learn to adapt myself to the situation here. I think it would have been better if I taught for some years in a provincial high school to get the feel of teaching before coming here. Anyway, whatever it is, I think it's good experience." He placed the beers on the table and asked us to help ourselves.

"Sir, Josephine also Monica from the kitchen."

"Whatever you girls go out causing uneasiness," answered the teacher.

"It's O.K. We are helping ourselves," called back the girls.

"And make sure no more beers," he reminded them.

"There's thousands of them," said Monica, looking in the kitchen. "They're not all mine."

"It's all right, let them have them," said the teacher. He probably had some more.

"We heard about the big march by students in Port Moresby. Can you tell us about it?" asked Toma.

"Yeah, that was the Public Order Bill. They were here to introduce a law to restrict our freedom of movement. It would also restrict our freedom of association. We realized that it was going towards a police station throughout the country. The introduction of the bill was going to be a demonstration spearheaded by U.P.N. in the afternoon during the situation to the students. That if they didn't see the situation, they would know that I'd be doing part in the big demonstration. The students would go on."

"There was a big demonstration around eleven o'clock. We went down the school I had and expressing their views to Port Moresby to the government as well. The students made their intention. They had already cooked two meals and it was now ready to eat. We left Sogeri and arranged it so that half of the girls went first. Then the other half went last. At that time I had to go onto the road and we were there. Except for the sick and the government minister involved in this big

"Sir, Josephine also wants a beer," called out Monica from the kitchen.

"Whatever you girls do, don't get drunk and go out causing unnecessary problems for yourselves," answered the teacher.

"It's O.K. We are big enough. We'll look after ourselves," called back Monica.

"And make sure you don't finish all the beers," he reminded the girls.

"There's thousand of beers here," said Monica, looking into the freezer. "Yes, but they're not all mine," replied her teacher.

"It's all right, let them have it," said Halfman. He probably had some funny ideas.

"We heard about your involvement with the big march by students from here down to Port Moresby. Can you tell us something about it?" asked Toma.

"Yeah, that was something to do with the Public Order Bill. The government was trying here to introduce a bill which if passed would restrict our freedom of movement and expression. It would also stop people from free association. We realized that the country was heading towards a police state, so most thinking people throughout the country were up against the introduction of the bill in parliament. There was going to be a demonstration in Port Moresby spearheaded by U.P.N.G. students so on Sunday afternoon during meal here, I explained the situation to the students in the mess. I told them that if they didn't see me the next day, they'd know that I'd be down in the capital city taking part in the big demonstration. I didn't know that the students would go too.

"There was a big commotion somewhere around eleven o'clock that night. When I went down the school I heard the students chanting and expressing their willingness to march down to Port Moresby to take part in the demonstration as well. The student leaders explained to me their intention. They said that they had already cooked two large copper boilers of rice and it was now ready. They had their midnight meal and we left Sogeri exactly at one a.m. We arranged it so that half the boys went ahead and then all the girls were told to fall in the middle. Then the other half of the boys followed. I went last. At that time I had a car so I shone the light onto the road and went very slowly behind them. Except for the sick and the daughters of the government ministers, all the students were involved in this big march. The students were

chanting and singing liberation songs as they marched. People who lived along the way were wondering what the hell was going on. The student leaders took the initiative to explain to the people as we went. One or two persons on the way joined the march. The student were excited and cheerful. I think they enjoyed their march. The first sign of exhaustion took place down at the Ilimo Farm. The girls were the first. Everytime that happened, I picked them up and drove them for some distance ahead then got some boys to guard them while I came back to the tailend of the march. Some students took this opportunity to pair off into the bush and, do you know what? I saw some of them as I drove back and forth.

"We eventually arrived at Four Mile at 7.30 in the morning. They waited there while I drove off to U.P.N.G. with the students leaders and informed the organizers of the big march at U.P.N.G. There was a very big forum at U.P.N.G. when we went in. The U.P.N.G. Students' Representative Council provided two big buses from the city to pick up the Sogeri students and drove them down to Koki market where people were assembling to march off to the national parliament. There were thousands of people down at Koki market and more were coming.

"At ten o'clock we marched from Koki to the national parliament. The leaders of the march submitted the petition to the Deputy Prime Minister to see to it that the bill be withdrawn. We warned him that if they did not we would come back again and burn the parliament down. The Deputy Prime Minister told us that he would talk with the Prime Minister when he came back from his state visit to Tanzania or some place in Africa.

"The Sogeri students were taken to the university mess and they had their lunch there. Then the S.R.C. arranged for them to go back to Sogeri by two city buses. As soon as I saw them off, I drove back to Sogeri. There was no school on Monday due to our absence. Most staff members were sympathetic. They said that we did it for a good cause and that they also enjoyed their day off. They said they would have participated if they were not foreigners. There were one or two teachers who did not approve of our involvement. They called me names. When the students heard about this, they wanted to belt the shit out of them but I stopped them

For my involvement in this, the Teaching Service Commission under the direction of the Secretary, suspended me for two weeks without pay. I went straight to the Secretary and lodged my resignation. He then changed his mind and suspended me for two weeks with pay.

"I spent two weeks in Port Moresby doing nothing. The leader of the opposition called me up and gave me K50 and a very big handshake and a big smile and said, 'Son, you've just saved this country.'"

I said, "Thankyou," and left with my K50."

The schoolteacher left the story there and went to the toilet. The funny thing about his house was that it was so small that whatever sound you made in the toilet, was big news in the room. The girls were really enjoying themselves listening to whatever noise we made in the toilet.

"Sir, I understand that there are two local teachers here. Is that correct?" asked Halfman.

"Yes, came the reply, 'I'm one of them and the other lives just up there. He's probably down in Moresby for the weekend. He's also a Morobeian and a graduate of U.P.N.G. We're just new graduates learning to teach.' Just then there was a knock on the door.

"Come in," called the teacher and two male students came in. The bigger of the two said he wanted some cold water and went straight for the freezer. He brought out a bottle and shared the water with the smaller boy.

"Terry, Max, these are Uni. students," their teacher told them. "By the way, Terry is the school captain and my informer on any funny things that go on in the school," he informed us.

"So you are a big spy for someone, ah?" joked Yamoka.

"Well, probably something like that," laughed Terry.

"Well, Terry, what do you think about the life here?" I asked.

"Well, not bad. I'll be finishing at the end of this year. I guess I've learnt something. I've also made many good friends with students from other parts of this nation."

"Where do you intend to go next year?" asked Halfman.

"They are the pisspots of the school. Be careful with your beers," said the teacher, winking at his two students. "But before you stick your nose into the freezer, run up and get us some cigarettes." and he handed Max two kina. Max went out and ran off to the store.

We drank, smoked and talked and joked and listened to the music. Halfman spent all afternoon looking towards the kitchen.

"Mm, those girls are not doing a bad job at all," said Toma when the smell of roasted chicken drifted into the common room. We swallowed our saliva and continued with the beer. After eating, the girls left. I wished they had stayed on.

"Don't worry boys, probably next time," said Bowan and he looked at his watch. We left some beers for him and said, "Goodbye, thankyou" and "See you!" and left for Port Moresby.

"Call in any time," shouted the teacher as he waved us off.

I wished Toma would not drive so recklessly. When we arrived at the Bluff Inn, Toma suggested that we go in and see what was going on. There was a live band playing and there were many people drinking, talking and carrying on. Some just stood around watching the wild men to men dance. that was going on. There were a few women around, the pamuks. Whenever the band started, the men would rush madly for these women but in most cases they would be unsuccessful. Two men nearly fought over a woman. It was nothing new. We had a bottle each there then left for the capital city. We drove straight to the Uni. club. It was a quarter-past eight when we arrived. Toma gave us two kina each and left for a birthday party at one of his wantok's at Gerehu.

You know, sometimes when a man is in the mood for a party he will suddenly decide to have a birthday. In some cases the same person would have two or three birthdays in a year. You may laugh but Toma had had two birthdays so far that year. We had marvellous parties in both cases.

We went into the club and it seemed half the campus population was there. Here and there people drank and discussed every topic under the sun. There were students, teachers and their wives and children, some other women, and the general staff of the university. It so happened that Mr Bulengi and a couple of members of parliament were there too. When we showed ourselves, Mr Bulengi almost jumped off his seat.

"My good friends, come and help yourselves," he called as he picked up three beers from their table and handed us one each. He introduced us to the two members of parliament. They were only opposition backbenchers.

"Where is Toma?" asked Mr Bulengi.

"He's just gone to party," I replied.

"We had a good Bulengi's house," said I two members.

"Yes, the Minister commented one of the 'How did you go?' a Mr Bulengi.

"Well, you can see th and burst into a hoarse l We heard one particul was looking our way minister is laughing. Pr rabber-rousers."

Halfman went over collar and said, "Hey, I mouth. The man you a to be my good friend, u that nonsense and you'l

The student said, "S joking."

"Yes; only don't jo and pushed him away.

"What do the st government?" asked or benchers.

"I don't know what your government but Halfman. This is pro wanted to hear.

"How do you mea

"Look at the numb have in this little cou necessary? You talk al time you are destroyin at all, you'd be introd tion of any more new or three major ones to ing this country. We a politics. Very soon I'm don't want to see my n games."

"Oh, come on Hal said Yamoka, irritated

"He's just gone to Gerehu for a birthday party," I replied.

"We had a good time last night in Mr Bulengi's house," said Halfman, looking at the two members.

"Yes, the Minister said something about it," commented one of the members.

"How did you go?" asked Yamoka looking at Mr Bulengi.

"Well, you can see that I'm still alive," he said and burst into a hoarse laugh and we all joined in. We heard one particularly drunk student who was looking our way say, Oh, so the new minister is laughing. Probably he thinks we are member-rousers."

Halfman went over and grabbed him by the collar and said, "Hey, little boy, watch your big mouth. The man you are talking about happens to be my good friend, understand? Any more of that nonsense and you'll lose your bloody head."

The student said, "Sorry Halfman, I was only joking."

"Yes; only don't joke again," said Halfman and pushed him away.

"What do the students think about our government?" asked one of the opposition backbenchers.

"I don't know what other students think about your government but I think it's blind," said Halfman. This is probably what the member wanted to hear.

"How do you mean?" the same man asked.

"Look at the number of political parties you have in this little country. Tell me, is it really necessary? You talk about unity and at the same time you are destroying it. If you have any sense at all, you'd be introducing a bill to ban formation of any more new parties and allow only two or three major ones to exist. Parties are destroying this country. We are sick of your petty party politics. Very soon I'm gonna be a taxpayer and I don't want to see my money wasted on your dirty games."

"Oh, come on Halfman, show some respect," said Yamoka, irritated.

"It's O.K., let him talk," said the member.

"Yes, let the talk," said Halfman. He was quite drunk. "I was talking about parties. Yes, maybe you can call this country the land of the petty party politics or P.P.P. for short."

"But this is a democratic country," objected Mr. Bulengi.

"What good is it if it allows parties to destroy people? You'd be talking sense if you save the people who elected you democratically." And he lifted his beer and downed it at one go, then continued, "And another frightening thing that you allow to develop is the size of your public service. It's growing into a monstrous unproductive consumer organization. Half the people in it get paid for doing nothing. That's where you are blind," he shouted and people looked our way but quickly looked away again when they realized it was Halfman.

"Halfman, give 'em some!" shouted someone from among the crowd.

We had some more beers and talked but one of the opposition backbenchers felt quite uneasy when he saw everybody was looking our way and discussing something. So Mr Bulengi suggested that they leave.

"We're going to my house to repeat the same process as last night," he said and got up. We all followed him out. There were two big-white cars outside in front of Niomuro House. The two opposition members got into one and Mr Bulengi, Yamoka and Halfman got into another.

I excused myself saying, "Thankyou for everything Mr Bulengi but I am a bit exhausted. I think I'll have a rest."

So they left, saying, "See you Misinare!"

I went over to the campus canteen and bought myself a packet of biscuits and a bottle of Fanta with the two kina which Toma gave me and I went to the dormitory. I had my wash, got all the necessary study things ready and set my table alarm clock for three a.m. From now on I was going to apply the Sogeri high school teacher's tactics of studying from three o'clock. Then I fell into my bed and went into a deep slumber.

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