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A JOURNAL OF  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
AFFAIRS, IDEAS  
AND ARTS

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# BIKMAUS

THE RETALIATION OF THE ANIMALS  
Edward L Schieffelin

IMAGES  
Photographs by Richard Buckley

TOTOPO — TENTH WIFE  
Linda Harvey Kelley

REVIEW — Peter Trist  
RECONNAISSANCE PATROL  
by Nicodemus Araho

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Vol. V, No. 4, December 1984.

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# TOTOPO — TENTH WIFE

by Linda Harvey Kelley

Totopo heard the distant call of her best friend. She yodelled an answer. A few minutes later Keri came into view.

"Konopu, my friend, working hard?"

"Not too hard to talk to you at the same time. I'm so glad to see you!"

With a swish of her grass skirt Keri plopped down on the ground.

"You planning on working till late?"

"Not too late. I want to be home when Turi returns from school. Why? What's up?"

"Just wait until you hear! Joseph has a friend visiting him. He came yesterday afternoon. Ere! Is he handsome! You must come and see him just as soon as you can."

"Where's he from?"

"From the coast, same as Joseph. Only he's ever so much younger. Wait till you hear his Pidgin English. It sounds like Jaw's-harp music to your ears! He is the most dazzling fellow I have ever met!"

"True!? I guess I will have to see him, won't I? He sounds too good to miss. How long is he staying?"

"I haven't heard."

"Have you talked with him?"

"Not really. He did speak to me though. He was joking with the catechist and a bunch of us were laughing too. All of the sudden he looked straight at me and said, 'What's your name, Laughing Eyes?'"

"Did he really? Oh, Keri, how nice!"

"I didn't answer, of course. I just hid my face in my laplap, but Joseph told him."

Totopo continued to dig while she listened. Her capable hands were forming a perfectly

rounded mound for the planting of sweet potatoes.

"Tell me more about him. What else did he say?"

Keri reached out and touched her friend's hair. "Oh, Totopo, I wish I had hair and skin like yours. How do you keep them so soft and lovely?"

"By washing, dearest, as I've told you before. I just had a swim in the Pawendo River yesterday."

"St-st-st. Naughty, naughty! 'You'll never catch a man with skin like a frog,'" quoted Keri.

"Nonsense! That's just a ridiculous old wives' tale invented to keep us girls busy in the gardens instead of playing in the water. Bani told me all the schoolgirls bathe and swim every day and none of them have skin like frogs. He even asked one of his teachers for me if girls' skin reacts any differently to water than boys' skin. His teacher said 'No.'"

"No matter how much I washed and combed my hair it would never look like yours though," sighed Keri, fingering her own wiry curls. "May I comb yours while you work?"

"Kapogla."

Keri went to the nearby tree where Totopo's bilum and laplap were hanging. From the bilum she took the bamboo comb which Bani had made for his sister.

"Maybe he won't notice me if you're there," Keri worried, as she shaped Totopo's fluffy halo into a soft Afro.

"Why do you want me to go with you then?"

"Because you're my Konopu. And I want you to see this dazzling fellow who called me 'Laughing Eyes'. Will you quit soon and come with me?"

"Yes, if you do want me to. As soon as I finish these two mounds I'll dig some kaukau for tonight. Ama and my brothers are coming to see my garden soon after big-sun. We'll walk back with them."

An hour later they were showing Ama Totopo's garden. Totopo had her four-month-old baby brother in her arms. His warm, chubby body felt soft against her own. When



she laid him down in her arms he immediately began nuzzling at her bare breast, his little red lips searching for the nipple.

"Oh, little Konopu! I have no milk for you." She cuddled him close and pointed out a patch of bush spinach to her mother.

"But your eat-it-raw (cucumbers) are what amaze me most, daughter. I have never seen any do better. Won't we enjoy serving them to our friends and relatives at the singing?"

"Yes."

"And my little Debutante, if a man wants to show the brideprice for you, I ought to bring him here to see this garden. It should raise your price by at least three pigs!"

Totopo's eyes shone but a lump in her throat kept her from making any reply. All her life she had been alternately spurred on with the words, "If you do this you will bring us a good price," or threatened with the words, "You won't be worth two pigs if you can't do that!" Therefore her parents could not now give her any higher commendation on her striving than to tell her she would bring them a large brideprice. This was the standard or goal set for every baby born of the female sex in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. And Totopo would accomplish it! Her mother had assured her she would.

"I'm going farther into the bush to get home bark for thread, Totopo. Can Teni stay with you?"

"Kapogla, Ama," said Totopo taking her four-year-old brother's hand. "Keri and I are going home soon. She wants me to go with her to see a fellow who's visiting the catechist. Teni can go with us."

"Kapogla then, be good girls." Ama's eyes twinkled at her daughter as she took the baby from her.

Totopo ran quickly to her bilum of kaukau, eat-it-raw, and pitpit shoots. She folded her laplap and balanced it on her head. She knotted the long ends of the big bilum and swung it around, up, and onto her laplap in one swift movement. She had been practicing this act since she was three years old, starting, of course, with much lighter loads. She swung the second bag into place on top of the first and reached forward with one

bare foot for her garden stick. Grasping it firmly between her big toe and second toe she lifted it to her hand as dexterously as if her foot had been a third hand.

"I'm ready," she called to Keri and Teni. "Let's go."

On the long walk home Totopo said little, concentrating on carrying her load up and down the steep hillsides and stepping carefully on the treacherous trail. Her barefeet sought out good grips in the slippery clay and on the single poles that bridged the mountain streams.

Totopo put her bags in the hut. The three of them hurried up the trail to the mountain spring. They cupped their hands under the bamboo water trough protruding from the bank, and splashed the water over their faces. Totopo and Teni drank long and thirstily. Totopo reshaped her crushed Afro and then wrapped her laplap around her body, bringing the two ends up to cross in front and tie behind her neck. It resembled a sunsuit, just covering her hips, with her purupuru flowing out beneath it.

"Why cover up?" asked Keri, eyeing her friend curiously.

"I wish I had a blouse," sighed Totopo. "I've been saving and I have almost enough money to buy one. I'd like to cover up all the time. The boys stare so anymore. And this fellow is from the coast, you say. Bani says everyone wears clothes on the coast. Even the small children."

The girl sauntered up the hill as they talked. The village of Tona consisted of ten huts, one grass church and the catechist's house. His house was made of bush materials also, but it was built on the Western style. It had window to let in light, and a door one could enter standing erect. It was not wind-proof like the low huts but the catechist's family could afford to buy blankets.

"Come and join the fun!" called Ellepe, as the girls drew near the group of young people. "Peter has been playing his guitar and singing for us. Come on, Peter, give us another song. Here are two more to add to your audience."

"Tru tumas. If it isn't Laughing Eyes herself!" exclaimed the young man. "And who

is your friend?"

Ellepe answered for Peter did not hear her Totopo as though he was

Totopo allowed her those admiring eyes dropped her head.

"How long has he whispered to Ellepe wondering how much continue.

"Since big-sun actual He chats and jokes but understood Pidgin better everything he says."

Peter watched the together in a language stand. How could he not look at him again? What under those long, curly,

He strummed a chord instantly. He began to sing

Totopo's eyes never face. She drank in the melody, note, submerging her voice in the singing! There was no doubt Totopo had heard enough competent judge, but anyone she had ever heard a guitar looked like. Bar and she had heard the radio. Two students ukuleles but what were guitar?

Peter tried to glance young faces before kept returning inadvertently revelled in her beauty based in his music. The returned to reality.

"Oh, don't stop," she

How could any man eyes? But he wanted to hear

"You liked my song?"

"Yes."

"Can you sing?"

"No."

"What song would you

"I don't know the name. Please just sing anything."



is your friend?"

Ellepe answered for Keri, though it seemed Peter did not hear her for he was staring at Totopo as though he were bewitched.

Totopo allowed herself one glance into those admiring eyes before she quickly dropped her head.

"How long has he been singing?" she whispered to Ellepe as she sat down, wondering how much longer he would continue.

"Since big-sun actually, but nothing steady. He chats and jokes between songs. I wish I understood Pidgin better. I don't always catch everything he says."

Peter watched the two girls talking together in a language he could not understand. How could he make the little beauty look at him again? What striking eyes she had under those long, curly, thick lashes.

He strummed a chord and she looked up instantly. He began to sing.

Totopo's eyes never wandered from his face. She drank in the music, absorbing every note, submerging her very soul in it. He could sing! There was no doubt about that. Not that Totopo had heard enough singing to be a competent judge, but he sang better than anyone she had every heard. So this was what a guitar looked like. Bani had described them and she had heard them on the catechist's radio. Two students at Kauapena had ukuleles but what were they compared to a guitar?

Peter tried to glance briefly at each of the young faces before him but his eyes kept returning inadvertently to Totopo. He revelled in her beauty as obviously as she basked in his music. The song ended. Totopo returned to reality.

"Oh, don't stop," she begged.

How could any man resist such eloquent eyes! But he wanted to hear her talk.

"You liked my song?"

"Yes."

"Can you sing?"

"No."

"What song would you like me to sing?"

"I don't know the names of any songs. Please just sing anything."

What else could he say to keep her talking?

"Who taught you to speak Pidgin?"

"My brothers."

"Are they here?"

"No."

"Where are they?"

"At school."

"What school?"

"Bani is at Ialibu High School."

"And there is another?"

"Turi is at Kauapena Community School."

"Did you go to school?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to talk. Please sing."

"In a little while. Talk to me first."

Totopo was silent and turned her face away from him.

"Laughing Eyes, do you speak Pidgin?"

"Yes," answered Keri.

"Then talk to me."

"About what?"

"You three girls."

"What about us?"

"Do you come to church here?"

"Sometimes."

"Why not all the time?"

"Mi no save."

"What else do you do?"

"Mi no save."

"Aw, come on, talk to me."

Keri hesitated a moment, then asked, "How long are you staying?"

"Who? Me?"

"Yes, you."

"In the Southern Highlands you mean?"

"I mean here, with Joseph."

"Oh. A few days, I guess."

"How many is that?"

"Maybe three. Maybe ten. Who knows?"

Keri withdrew into her laplap and said no more. So he was just passing through, was he? She might have known.

The girls chatted quietly among themselves for a few minutes. Totopo looked up at Peter.

"If you have finished singing, I'm going home."

"Oh, not so fast! You just got here! Why hurry off?"

No answer.



After a pause he strummed a few chords. Again Totopo was instantly attentive. He sang along this time without bothering to look around.

"Some day you'll hear me calling  
You'll hear me calling you,  
Promise me you'll answer,  
Promise me true.

"Some day I'll stop my wandering  
Some day 'twill all be through.  
Promise me you'll answer  
When you hear me calling you.

"I wandered over mountains  
I wandered through the vale,  
I wandered through the weather,  
Rain and storm and hail.

"I wandered o'er the country  
I saw its every view.  
Some day I'll stop my wand'ring,  
I'll wander back to you.

"Some day you'll hear me calling  
You'll hear me calling you.  
Promise me you'll answer,  
Promise me true."

He strummed the last chord and Totopo sighed. With only short pauses between each song he sang several more in quick succession. Then he put up his guitar saying, "I can't sing any more."

"Just as well," commented one young fellow in his audience. "The rain is coming up river there. We couldn't sit here much longer." Turning to the boy beside him he said, "Come on, I'll race you as far as your house." He nudged his friend in the ribs and they were off.

Totopo and Teni rose. Totopo took a few steps towards Peter.

"Thank you," she said softly. "Thank you for singing. It was . . . it was sweeter than a whole bushful of birdcalls."

"I'd sing all night to you if I could," responded Peter eagerly.

"Thank you," she whispered again, and taking Teni's hand in hers she moved gracefully down the trail.

Peter's eyes followed her until she was out of sight.

## CHAPTER TWO

"Guess what, Totopo?" Teni was tired of his sister's long silence.

"What's that, Pet?"

"I learned of another possum's nest not far from Ama's garden. I found it this morning. I saw its tracks and I followed them straight to its home. I didn't tell any of the boys or their big brothers would get it. I can't wait till Turi gets here. He'll help me catch it and we'll eat it together. Tsingo-we!"

"Good for you, Bright Eyes. I'm anxious for Turi to come too."

"I suppose you want him to teach you something new?" asked Ama.

"Of course," grinned her daughter as she picked up another kaukau to peel with her bamboo peeler.

"You've already learned Pidgin. Why do you want to learn English too?"

"Because the boys are learning English. Because there are no books in Pidgin, the books Turi and Bani show me are all in English. And . . . oh, I don't know. Just because I want to keep on learning and learning."

"You are learning lots more important things. These eat-it-raw are juicy and delicious."

An hour later Ara (father) was there and they were withdrawing the baked kaukau from the ashes.

"Where could that boy be?" fumed Ara.

"He must have got a late start," soothed Ama.

"But I told him once long ago to always come straight home."

"Maybe they had some special activities at school and didn't get out as early as usual," suggested Totopo.

"Yes, it is well that you made two torches, daughter," said Bossboy Pombo glancing at the two long bundles of dried pitpit cane placed near the wall. "One wouldn't be enough if I have to go far. I'll leave as soon as I've eaten. No use going on an empty stomach when I don't know how far I may have to go." As Ara spoke he slapped the ashes from another kaukau and took a huge bite.

"I'll go with you," said Totopo.

"So will I," piped Te.  
"If Totombaiyo's ho  
trail, I wouldn't be nea

"Who is Totombaiyo

"He's a man from  
to live down-river from  
moved up-river a coup  
was a boy my uncle kill  
Imi tribe as a paybac  
years earlier."

"I think they've forg

"Never forget, so  
grievance. Your enem  
certain! You must pay  
if you have to wait till yo  
it."

"But how will Tomte

"Totombaiyo," prom

"How will Totomb  
is?"

"He may well have  
find out. If you have a  
duty to learn every deta  
his family."

Teni silently stared i  
all over.

Bossboy Pombo s  
proudly. What other n  
weaned, who asked suc  
What other younges  
mother's breast was rea  
of revenge? The paybac  
important traditions, a  
a boy all about it as ear  
wondered if already T  
his newly learned wi  
grievance with a play  
doubtedly the way to b

The Big-Man's tho  
they had often run be  
will be able to take my  
I am too old to lead n  
Bani and Turi get too  
and never return from  
then it may be Teni he  
Yapa and Yombi too,  
my second wife do not  
as these of my first.

As if in agreement  
voice of his second wif



"So will I," piped Teni.

"If Totombaiyo's house wasn't beside the trail, I wouldn't be nearly so worried."

"Who is Totombaiyo?" asked Teni.

"He's a man from the Imi tribe who used to live down-river from Kauapena, but he moved up-river a couple years ago. When I was a boy my uncle killed a woman from the Imi tribe as a payback for another killing years earlier."

"I think they've forgotten by now."

"Never forget, son! Never forget a grievance. Your enemies won't and that's certain! You must pay back every wrong even if you have to wait till you're an old man to do it."

"But how will Tomtom . . ."

"Totombaiyo," prompted his father.

"How will Totombaiyo know who Turi is?"

"He may well have made it his business to find out. If you have an enemy, son, it's your duty to learn every detail about that man and his family."

Teni silently stared into the fire, thinking it all over.

Bossboy Pombo studied his little son proudly. What other man had a son, newly weaned, who asked such intelligent questions? What other youngsters fresh from his mother's breast was ready to learn the tactics of revenge? The payback was one of the most important traditions, and it was well to teach a boy all about it as early as possible. Pombo wondered if already Teni might be applying his newly learned wisdom to some small grievance with a playmate. That was undoubtedly the way to begin.

The Big-Man's thoughts followed a trail they had often run before. One of my sons will be able to take my place as a leader when I am too old to lead my tribe any longer. If Bani and Turi get too absorbed in education and never return from the white man's world, then it may be Teni here. Of course there are Yapa and Yombi too, though those sons of my second wife do not show as much promise as these of my first.

As if in agreement with his thoughts, the voice of his second wife sounded through the

partition, scolding her son on the other side of their duplex hut.

"Yapa! You stupid boy! You nearly pushed your little brother into the fire! Will you learn to sit still when you are inside?"

They are all my sons, thought the Bossboy, seed of the same man. I made them all. Two different women simply provided the sacs for them to grow in. Why aren't the second wife's sons as smart as the first wife's? He shook his head at this puzzle beyond his comprehension.

Meanwhile Totopo too stared into the fire and thought on her father's words, "Never forget a grievance." She wondered if he had any idea how great the hurt she nursed against him, because he would not let her go to school. She thought of the numerous times she had begged and pleaded to be allowed to go. But her father was adamant. "No! Boys need to learn the language and ways of the white man, and how to get money. But girls only need to learn how to plant gardens and care for childrens and pigs. You can learn from your own mother at home." Even Bani had often teased their father to let her go, telling him of the girls who were in school, and being careful to hide the fact that the ratio of girls to boys in his own class was one to eleven. However Ara had never yielded and now Totopo knew she was too old to go to school.

Suddenly both Totopo and her father's reveries were broken by a distant yodel.

"It's Turi!" breathed Totopo with relief.

"Turi! Turi" shouted Teni scuttling rapidly through the open doorway.

Out in the yard he gave a childish yodel, "Turi-yo-iyoyo!"

"Not bad," grinned his father at his mother. Her dark eyes shone a happy response to her husband's pride in their son.

"Turi-yo-iyoyo!"

"Even better," commented Pombo.

"Turi-yo-iyoyo," came faintly across the gorge. Turi had descended to the same height on the opposite side of the river, as their house on this side.

"He heard me! He heard me! What do you know, he heard me!" shouted the happy little



boy outside their door. His parents could hear the soft thud of his barefeet on the earth as he jumped with glee.

Totopo's torch had just caught flame.

"Come on, let's go!" squealed Teni as she emerged from the hut.

The pitpit torch lit the way down the winding trail to the river below. Turi reached the river soon after they did and Totopo held the flaming cane to light his way across the long single-log bridge that spanned the rushing river. Together they climbed the steep hillside to their home, Teni chattering all the details about his possum until he was too breathless to say more.

"We were concerned about you, nanga magol," said his father as Turi grinned a shy greeting at them and sat down by the fire.

His mother handed him his favorite kind of kaukau. He smiled his appreciation. "I started late, Ara. I worked a couple hours after school in the banana orchard."

"You worked instead of coming straight home?"

"Yes, all the boys in our dorm did, along with our dorm parents."

"You know I commend your ambition, magol, but couldn't you work some other night when you'd be staying there anyway?"

"Yes, we have. We worked every afternoon this week."

"I see. What are you trying to earn?"

"There are special meetings next week including a big mumu. Mr. Jones is killing a cow and our dorm father is killing some chickens. The boys in our dorm voted to work this week and next to earn some meat."

"I see. It wouldn't matter if it weren't for Totombaiyo living beside the trail, you know."

"It was still daylight when I passed his place."

"I realize that now, of course, but I didn't know it yet when it got dark, you understand?"

"Well, he's home now," put in Ama.

"Yes, I just hope you won't do it again, Turi."

"I won't, Ara."

"Turi, how will Mr. Jones kill the cow?",

asked Teni.

"He'll shoot it with a gun."

"Does he have a gun?"

"No, but he'll borrow one from the village magistrate. Aya," continued Turi, turning to his only sister, "do you suppose you could come to Kauapena next week and bring me some more food for the mumu? If you could come on Wednesday I would like some fresh greens and pitpit to add to the feast."

"I'd like to," answered Totopo, delighted at the thought. It was always fun to visit the mission station. She had been so busy making gardens for the singing that she hadn't been there yet this year.

"I guess you could," said her father. "Just make sure you leave plenty of everything for the singsing. We won't want to be short then."

"We won't be," assured Ama. "Totopo has a tremendous garden, and my own are good enough."

"Do you suppose I could have a stalk of cooking bananas, Ara?"

Ara deliberated with drawn brows and pursed lips. "I guess, maybe. There are two stalks that may ripen before the singsing anyway. You may have one of them."

"Tsingo-we! that will be great! I can pay-back some of the gifts of food given to me. And I can make more gifts for boys to pay me back later!"

"Are you coming to Ama's garden with me tomorrow to catch that possum?"

"Kapogla, ango! How right we are to call you 'Bright Eyes'. This is the second possum you have tracked down in the month of July."

"July, July," chanted Teni. What a lovely foreign sounding word.

"You say it well," encouraged Turi. "Say some more. Try January."

"January," echoed Teni.

"February."

"Pebuary."

No, February."

"F-february!" Totopo was trying the words with her little brother.

"Well, I'm off to the manhouse," declared Ara. "There will be a card-game starting soon."

"Sleep well," grinned his wife, knowing he

would probably play card

"Yes, all of you sleep," crawled through the door

"Look what I brought as soon as their father was an exercise book out of h

"Oh, Turi, how nice!"

"It's my Written Comp filled it up this week so could bring it home." He page. "See, I tried to writ be easy for you to read.

"It looks so neat and word?"

"Children."

"What does it mean?"

"Balkangoma in Imt Pidgin."

"But I thought 'balkar girls' in English."

"Well, you can trans children is a shorter way girls."

"I wonder why they d we do."

"English is different. boys to mean children."

"The children are pl

"One boy has a ball. Wh

Teni tried repeating s but soon grew bored a whispered a soft lullaby

"I want to sleep, Am

His mother spread a the floor near the wall. and she spread her lapl instantly. But the baby staring at his brother's out and grabbed a fistf

"Look, Ama. He's never did that before."

"He likes your shir things and people more

Turi took his baby b baby immediately gras little fists and tried to g

"What is this word?"

"Toy. The boy has a and translated. He f shoulder bag again and



would probably play cards all night.

"Yes, all of you sleep," returned Ara as he crawled through the door.

"Look what I brought you, Aya," said Turi as soon as their father was gone. He slipped an exercise book out of his shoulder bag.

"Oh, Turi, how nice!"

"It's my Written Composition notebook. I filled it up this week so the teacher said I could bring it home." He opened to the first page. "See, I tried to write plainly so it would be easy for you to read."

"It looks so neat and nice. What's that word?"

"Children."

"What does it mean?"

"Balkangoma in ImboUngu. Pikinini in Pidgin."

"But I thought 'balkangoma' was 'boys and girls' in English."

"Well, you can translate it that way, but children is a shorter way of saying boys and girls."

"I wonder why they don't say girl-boys like we do."

"English is different. They never say girl-boys to mean children."

"The children are playing," read Totopo. "One boy has a ball. What does 'has' mean?"

Teni tried repeating some of the sentences but soon grew bored and sleepy. The rain whispered a soft lullaby on the grass roof.

"I want to sleep, Ama."

His mother spread a leaf umbrella-mat on the floor near the wall. Teni curled up on it and she spread her laplap over him. He slept instantly. But the baby was wide awake and staring at his brother's red shirt. He reached out and grabbed a fistful of it.

"Look, Ama. He's reaching for me. He never did that before."

"He likes your shirt. Yes, he is noticing things and people more all the time now."

Turi took his baby brother on his lap. The baby immediately grasped the shirt in both little fists and tried to get it into his mouth.

"What is this word?"

"Toy. The boy has a toy truck," Turi read and translated. He fished around in his shoulder bag again and came up with a little

hand mirror.

"Look what I have, ango kogol."

"Where did you get that?" asked Ama.

"I traded for it last Monday."

"What did you give in exchange?"

"Half of my week's kaukau." The boy ducked his head sheepishly. "Didn't you notice how hungry I was when I got here?"

"If you can get along on half the amount I won't need to send so much for next week," threatened Ama.

"Aw, Ama, you know I'm always hungry. But I wanted this mirror so badly I just had to trade."

"Why didn't this boy have any kaukau on Monday? I could understand if it had been the end of the week."

"His mother is dead. He never has enough to eat."

"How did an orphan boy get a mirror?"

"I asked him that. He said his older brother gave him the kariyapa, but he probably stole it. I kept it hidden all week just in case. I'll leave it here with you this week. Look, Ama. See how he likes it."

Kariyapa, kariyapa," cooed Ama. the baby looked at her and back again at the mirror.

"Kariyapa," said Turi. The baby looked at him.

"I know! Let's call him Kariyapa! That would be a good name. He needs a name, Ama. Look how big he's getting. The foreigners name their babies as soon as they're born."

"I know. Your brother told me that when Teni was baby. I still don't think it's wise. Perhaps they don't fear the spirits like we do."

"No, God takes care of them."

"What? Don't their babies ever die?"

"None that I know of."

"Well, our baby is probably big enough. His fontanel doesn't pulsate so obviously any more. He's not as weak as he was at birth, certainly, but I waited longer than this to name you and Bani and Totopo. Teni was named earlier though, to please Bani. The spirits didn't get him. Kariyapa would be a nice name."

So that was settled.

"Kariyapa," called Totopo. The baby



turned to look at her. "He is definitely ready for a name. I almost think he knows it's his name already."

Totopo watched her two brothers.

"Turi, what does 'Some day you'll hear me calling' mean?"

Turi looked surprised, but translated it after a few seconds of thought. Now it was Totopo's turn to look surprised.

"And what about this: 'Promise me you'll answer. Promise me true'? I know the Pidgin words 'pramis' and 'mi' and 'tru' but what is 'answer'? And what does it mean all joined together?"

Turi translated. Totopo thought her heart skipped a beat.

"Where did you hear those sentences?"

"There's a fellow named Peter staying with the catechist. He plays the guitar and he sings better than anyone I know. He sang that song to me. The tunes keeps going over and over in my mind, but I can only remember that much.

"Some day you'll hear me calling," she sang. Then she hummed the second line. "Promise me you'll answer. Promise me true."

"Say, that's pretty."

"Will you come with me to hear him sing tomorrow afternoon, after you have helped Teni kill and eat his possum?"

"Kapogla, Aya."

"I don't like it when Peter talks to me. He seems so bold or forward or something when he talks. But I can't resist his singing."

"I'll be glad to go with you. I'd like to hear him too."

"How long is he staying?" asked Ama.

"A few days, he says."

### CHAPTER THREE

Wednesday morning the sun rose in crimson splendour. Totopo had been up for an hour already, and had eaten a good kaukau breakfast. Now she was ready to depart.

Her mother lifted the huge bilum of kaukau onto her head for her. Next she put the smaller bilum of pitpit shoots, spinach and cress on her daughter. Last of all she added

the two foot stalk of bananas.

"That's a fearful load to carry such a long way!"

"I'm young and strong, Ama."

"I still think you shouldn't take quite so much kaukau."

"I want a blouse so badly. I'm willing to work a bit hard to get it. Aren't you glad for me that it's not raining?"

"Yes, my daughter."

"Don't worry, Ama. I'll see you late this afternoon."

Totopo picked her way slowly down the steep hillside. At the river bank she stopped to check that her load was in perfect balance before she started across the single pole. Trudging up the other side, she stopped a couple times, half-leaning and half-sitting on a ledge to rest her head and neck. A smile flitted across her lips now and then, in spite of the intense physical labor. How she anticipated the new blouse, and here was something else too . . .

The catechist had sent for her father Sunday afternoon. Peter had cared enough to put his thoughts into action.

"What are you asking for her brideprice?"

"At least eight pigs."

"You wouldn't take money?"

"Oh yes, I'd accept some money too."

"But would you accept money instead of pigs?"

"All money?"

"Yes."

"No pigs?"

"That's right. That's what we had in mind."

"No pigs!" Bossboy Pombo had groaned. No, he couldn't consider it. He wanted pigs, big pigs. Pigs that could multiply themselves by at least five in a year's time. He needed to buy a wife for his eldest son. He had even been entertaining some hope of buying himself another wife with Totopo's brideprice. There were other young men in his tribe who needed wives. As chief, much of responsibility of raising their bridewealth rested on him. He had nephews ready to marry. They were his obligation as much as his own son. No, he must have pigs.

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Consequently the cate  
Peter the matter was clo  
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Peter was consider  
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He had said goodbye  
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know anyone around her  
some pigs?"

"No, I don't know of  
"Don't take too l  
warned her father. "I ca  
wait for you. She'll go t  
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Totopo was not too  
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She did.  
Totopo walked with  
"The store will open  
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trucks seemed to have a bad habit of breaking down. People who knew how to fix them were as rare as grass growing on rocks. Pigs were a safer means of exchange.

Consequently the catechist had had to tell Peter the matter was closed unless he could buy pigs with his money.

Peter was considering it. The first proposition was to go home and get the money; bet it, raise it, borrow it. It might take a long time.

He had said goodbye to her on Monday. "Mi go wokabaut gen nau, but this time in my wanderings I'm going to try to raise money and then I'll wander back to you. Do you know anyone around here who would sell me some pigs?"

"No, I don't know of any."

"Don't take too long, young man," warned her father. "I can't let my daughter wait for you. She'll go to the first man who offers me enough!"

Totopo was not too concerned. Peter belonged to a different world. How strange it would be to speak Pidgin to your husband all your life! And anyway, he half belonged to Keri, his Laughing Eyes. But he had not inquired about Keri's brideprice as far as she knew. It was her price he had wanted to know.

Totopo reached Kauapena before eight o'clock. Except for the two deep gorges near Tona it was downhill most of the way. She went straight to Turi's dormitory.

"What a huge load, Aya! I don't need that much kaukau!"

"No, you take out what you want and I'll try to sell the rest. I want to get some more money to buy myself a blouse."

Turi took a few kaukau and put them in his room with the bilum of greens and the stalk of bananas.

"Do you know anyone who might want to buy all this?"

"I'll ask my dorm mother. She might want it."

She did.

Totopo walked with Turi to his classroom.

"The store will open any minute now."

"I'll watch you in your classroom a while

first."

The bell rang and boys came running from every direction. There were some girls too. Totopo watched the class for half an hour before she decided she could delay her desire no longer. She sauntered slowly over to the tradestore.

Totopo considered the array of meri blouses. She immediately knew which one she wanted: one of those bright red ones with the big yellow flowers on it. She laid out her money. She had forty toea extra!

"How much is that yarn?" she inquired.

"Twenty toea each."

"I'll take a red one and a white one."

Her purchases completed, she stood for a few minutes examining all the lovely ware and watching others buy. Then she meandered out and around the store building. Once she was hidden from view she quickly slipped her bilum and laplap off her head and put on her new blouse. She took up her laplap and wrapped it around her legs, tucking the top into her purupuru string. The red wrap-around laplap gave a straight skirt effect and the full meri blouse gathered on a yoke accentuated it just right. Totopo both looked and felt attractive. She recombed her hair, and strolled back to Turi's classroom with her bilum over one arm.

From her position near a window she became completely absorbed in the lessons. She repeated the Language Drills after the teacher in unison with the class, delighting in the sound of her own voice speaking English. In no time the class was dismissed for recess. Turi was beside her in a flash.

"Say! You look real nice, Aya. You look a lot like one of the teachers here."

"Who?"

"Nancy Wembi. She's the first grade teacher."

"Point her out to me if you get a chance, Turi."

Absorbed in their conversation they did not notice Turi's teacher approaching until he was beside them. Turi started but Totopo lifted her face calmly to look at him. Her eyes and smile were still radiant from her brother's compliments. The young man was struck with



her beauty.

"Is this your sister?" he managed to ask Turi as he laid his hand on the little lad's shoulder.

"Yes, Sir. This is my sister, Totopo."

"I noticed you listening to our lessons. Would you be interested in coming in to visit the classroom?"

"Oh, I'd love to if it wouldn't be a bother." Totopo's mind was in a turmoil. What was there about this young man's manner that was so unusual? So striking?

"Come in and I'll show you around the room." He went back to the door and motioned her to follow.

I know, she almost said aloud, as the thought struck her. He treats me as an equal. How strange for a man to speak to a woman in this way, and especially for an educated man to a bush woman.

Meanwhile Turi had grasped her by the hand and was leading her into the classroom. Totopo rose to the occasion. If he treats me as an equal, then I must act like I am on his level and not giggle like a silly girl, she decided.

She listened to his explanations of charts, children's drawings and handcrafts attentively, commenting intelligently when given the opportunity.

"I like that drawing over there. The one entitled 'The children are playing.'"

"You read English?" asked the teacher, amazed.

"Only a very little," she smiled.

"Where did you learn?"

"From my brother here," she laid her arm around Turi's shoulders, "and from my older brother before him."

"Who is your older brother?"

"Bani. He's in Form Four at the Ialibu High School."

"Oh, I see. I've never met him. I'm new to the Southern Highlands. I just came this year. My name is Yurumbagi."

"Oh, is it? I thought it was Mr. Kasi. That's what Turi calls you."

"Ah, yes, that's my surname. My father's name, you understand. In Teacher's College they told us we must always have our students call us by our surnames."

"Oh, I see. And Yurumbagi is your real name."

"Yes." He loved to watch her face as she spoke. Her expressions fascinated him. "And your name is Totopo. Totopo Pombo."

"Mm," assented Totopo and turned away shyly to study a drawing.

"Mr. Kasi," ventured Turi timidly, "Totopo would like to see Mrs. Wembi. I've been telling her about her. Would you take her to her?"

"I'd be pleased to!" He led them to the doorway and invited her to precede them through it. She could not. A woman must always walk behind a man. Totopo could not bring herself to step in front of him and go out first.

Fortunately Turi saved the day. His teacher's word was law to the little fellow and he dare not let his sister disobey him. He pulled on her hand and led her through the doorway in front of Mr. Kasi.

Outside, without thinking, Totopo paused to let Yurumbagi pass her, intending from sheer force of habit to walk behind him. But when he asked her to walk beside him she complied. They crossed the assembly ground to the first grade classroom.

"Nancy," called Yurumbagi at the door.

"Ah, yes, Yurumbagi," she answered, coming toward them.

"My student, Turi, wants his sister to meet you. Her name is Totopo."

"Why, how nice," she smiled, as the two women studied each other in a friendly way. "I was just putting a few sentences on the blackboard. Now I'm ready to go home to my baby. How about coming along for a cup of tea?"

"Ai, just the thing! Eh, Turi?" Yurumbagi accepted for all three.

Turi was thunderstick! All because of his pretty sister he was being invited into the world of his teachers. Tea at a teacher's house! Wait till he told the boys!

Totopo managed superbly. None would have guessed that it was her first time to enter a Western style home with wooden walls and an iron roof. She watched Nancy carefully and followed her every cue.

"I could watch her for a year," thought the day.

Nancy introduced Totopo to the boys and allowed her to hold their hands. Dressed in a snow-white nappy and shirt, Nicky delighted Totopo. Kariyapa's age, thought Totopo. Kariyapa would be, dressed in a shirt.

Nancy poured the tea. Yurumbagi's cup, added sugar and stirred with a flourish. She accepted with a slight smile at the raised eyebrows of Nancy and her husband.

"Thank you, sir."

The day passed all too swiftly. Time Totopo was climbing homeward. How delightful her life had been. She had enough to keep her mind busy pondering. Her feet fairly danced up and down. When she was home in two days her imagination. Finding no more to continue on up the trail in her mother's garden. As she went off to Tona Village she caught a group of young people at a school path.

"Ai! Who's that?" called out.

She stopped and answered herself.

"Why it's Totopo!" exclaimed down to her. "Your blouse is Konopu!"

"I'm happy with it," smiled. "You don't look like one of the boys with a sneer."

Amazed at the tone in which she turned and looked at him she

"She thinks she's a white girl on the trail," he continued in a friendly tone.

"Come, Keri, let's go meet her. Help her carry the kaukau. The rain is coming down river. I decided to ignore the boy. I and Keri proceeded down the trail with the joy in her blouse and hair.



your real I could watch her for a year and never  
up learning," thought the dazzled girl.  
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help her carry the kaukau or the baby. The  
rain is coming down river there." Totopo  
decided to ignore the boy. Nevertheless as she  
and Keri proceeded down the trail, a little of  
the joy in her blouse and happy day receded.

## CHAPTER FOUR

The following day Totopo worked long and hard in her garden to make up for the day she had taken off. Pleasant memories flooded her mind as she dug. New dreams began to take form in her imagination. Often a soft smile parted her full red lips.

The precious blouse was hidden carefully at home, in the plastic bag in which the storekeeper had put the yarn. She did not want to get it dirty and sweaty right away.

What if it doesn't wash well, she worried. She had seen enough clothes to know that some never looked nice once washed, while on others the colors never ran or faded. I wonder if there is a way to tell what it is going to do, she pondered. If so, one could check before they bought anything. I must ask Bani when I see him again. He has worn clothes for ten years now. He probably knows.

It was nearly dusk when Totopo finally loaded the kaukau on her head and started homeward through the drizzling rain. It was hard to keep her barefeet from slipping on the wet trail. As she approached their hut in the darkness, she could see the firelight through the open door. Her mother and the boys were already inside. Then she heard her father's voice also.

She coughed as she lifted down her load to let them know she was there. In two minutes she had put both of her bilums inside and was seating herself by the inviting fire.

"So this is the girl who wears clothes, is it?" Totopo looked up in quick surprise at her father's unpleasant tone.

"You are the one who covers your body, are you?"

"Why, Ara, what's the matter with that?"

"Is there something wrong with your skin that you want to hide it?" Bossboy Pombo yelled.

"Who told you about my clothes, Ara, and what did they say?"

"The young men told me. They asked me the same thing I asked you. Is there something wrong with your skin that you have to hide it?"

Totopo dropped her head. Her father



knew there was nothing wrong with her skin.

"Is there?" he yelled. "What's the matter with your skin? They promised me that they would spread the word around that Pombo's daughter has frog's skin from too much bathing and swimming like a boy, so now she has to cover it with clothes."

How he bristled!

"How many men do you suppose that sort of talk will bring round to discuss your brideprice? Who do you think you are, to bring your father such shame?"

That stung.

"But Ara, I had no idea you'd mind. Remember the blouse you bought me once when I was a little girl? How was I supposed to know I couldn't buy myself one now?"

"Don't go making excuses. The past has nothing to do with the present."

Totopo was aware of people gathering outside. Why did her father have to yell so loudly? Yapa and Yombi, her two half-brothers, slipped in the door and sat down, followed by their sister, Mombo. She knew their mother and perhaps others were just beyond the doorway listening.

"But, Ara, I don't understand," she murmured, her head still lowered.

"What's the matter? Has your brain become water-logged as well as your body? Am I now trying to reason with a frog-brain?"

Silence.

"Don't you realize you have grown up since I bought you that other blouse long ago? Then you didn't have any breasts to cover up! I wasn't trying to hide you. There wasn't anything to hide. But now it's a different matter! Men are trying to see you. They want to know if you'd be worth buying. Why else do you think you have been nourished and cared for all your life?"

Totopo was thoroughly chastened. Her head sunk further down. "Ama wears a blouse when she has one," she mumbled.

"That's a different matter altogether! I might as well be trying to reason with a frog!"

A young passer-by came and sat in the doorway. Pombo never even paused to catch a breath.

"Your mother isn't on the market! I'm not

trying to sell her. What do I care if she covers her body or not? I can see it when I want to. It makes no difference to me whether she hides it from other men or not. Men aren't interested in a woman's breasts after she has nursed six children. It's your fresh untouched breasts they want to see."

Could he humiliate her any further? Totopo had pulled her laplap around to hide her face and the tears that were running down her cheeks and dropping onto her breasts.

"Now I ask you again, where is this beautiful blouse?"

Totopo knew better than to tell him. He would rip it to shreds. She had worked too hard to earn it to sacrifice it to his anger.

Suddenly her father snatched the laplap from her head and hand and swatted her sharply across the face with it.

"Answer me!"

"Keri has it. I lent it to Keri. She wanted to wear it for a day."

"Well, just let her keep it then. I don't want to see it on you, do you hear? I don't want to even hear of it being on you!"

His anger subsided suddenly.

"I haven't seen it yet and I don't want to see it again," he added for the benefit of his audience. They laughed uproariously.

Totopo sat still. Tears continued to drop onto her legs but no sound of weeping could be heard. Tene and Kariyapa were huddled against their mother in fear. Their mother remained as silent as her daughter.

Bossboy Pombo turned and crawled through the door. The onlookers followed, joking loudly.

"Send my kaukau to the manhouse with Yombi, women," the Bossboy called back as he left the yard.

Yomi carried it to him that evening and both Friday morning and evening. He did not even come around as usual to await Turi's arrival.

Late that evening Totopo and Turi were sitting by the fire studying. Their mother and brothers had retired. At last Totopo laid the book aside.

"That's enough for tonight, I guess. You must be tired."

"Aya, I was waiting till asleep to tell you that Mr asking lots of questions abo and today. He wants you to again next week."

"I'm going to be awfully the singsing, Turi. Ara will b I go again before then. After

"Kapogla nago . . . he will I know."

Totopo gave her brother sure he'll get over it. What does he ask?"

"He asked if anyone has his own yet. He asked me if I Ara is asking for you. He w you liked anyone and other

"What did you answer?"

"No to the first two. I t know if you liked Peter or about the songs Peter sa Saturday."

"Hmm."

"Aya?"

"Yes?"

"You . . . you were so ha and then again Wednesday. Why are you so sad and qui

"Do I act sad?"

"Yes."

"I've tried not to."

"You've *tried* not to! Wh try not to be sad? What's th

"Oh, there was a fuss ove I bought."

"But why?"

"Ara has forbidden me to

"But why?"

Totopo shrugged.

"You looked so pretty in see you in it?"

"No, and he doesn't wa smiled a little through the her eyes.

"But I don't see why!"

"Neither did I so he c brain."

"Aw, Aya!" Tears of sym the little boy's eyes as well.

I am thankful he doesn't



"Aya, I was waiting till the others were asleep to tell you that Mr. Kasi has been asking lots of questions about you yesterday and today. He wants you to come and visit us again next week."

"I'm going to be awfully busy until after the singsing, Turi. Ara will be upset with me if I go again before then. After that we'll see."

"Kapogla nago . . . he will be disappointed, I know."

Totopo gave her brother a sad smile. "I'm sure he'll get over it. What sort of questions does he ask?"

"He asked if anyone has marked you for his own yet. He asked me if I knew how much Ara is asking for you. He wanted to know if you liked anyone and other things like that."

"What did you answer?"

"No to the first two. I told him I didn't know if you liked Peter or not. I told him about the songs Peter sang to you last Saturday."

"Hmm."

"Aya?"

"Yes?"

"You . . . you were so happy last weekend and then again Wednesday at Kauapena. Why are you so sad and quiet now?"

"Do I act sad?"

"Yes."

"I've tried not to."

"You've *tried* not to! Why do you have to try not to be sad? What's the matter?"

"Oh, there was a fuss over that meri blouse I bought."

"But why?"

"Ara has forbidden me to wear it."

"But why?"

Totopo shrugged.

"You looked so pretty in it, Aya. Did Ara see you in it?"

"No, and he doesn't want to again." She smiled a little through the tears gathering in her eyes.

"But I don't see why!"

"Neither did I so he called me a frog-brain."

"Aw, Aya!" Tears of sympathy gathered in the little boy's eyes as well.

I am thankful he doesn't have to know the

worst of it," thought Totopo. Perhaps because of the mission school he will grow up thinking differently about girls. Maybe he will even learn to treat them like Mr. Kasi does.

"Mr. Kasi thinks you're real keen. He can't figure out how you learned so much without going to school. He says you beat the schoolgirls."

"Hmm."

"Want to hear what else he said?"

"Yes."

"He saw a play of the royal family when he was in college. He said you remind him of the princes."

"How could I remind him of a princess?"

"In the way you walk and the way you hold your head, he said." A sentence Turi couldn't quite understand, and certainly couldn't translate what was on his mind. "One would think she had been born in a palace instead of in a hut in the heart of the highlands!"

"Thank you for telling me all this, dear little Brother. It helps a lot."

"I like to see you happy, Aya. You ought to always be happy!"

+ + + +

The next three weeks flew by on wings. Bossboy Pombo worked daily with his men completing the longhouse which would house all the guests, gathering huge amounts of firewood and digging mumu pits. This particular longhouse was three hundred feet long and ten feet wide. It crouched low to the ground like all their houses, and curved up and over a hill on one end, resembling a huge grubworm when seen from a distance.

The women worked from dawn till dusk gardening, gathering the right kind of stones for a mumu, and catching the pigs that were to be killed for the feast. Most pigs, excepting a few special pets, ran wild in order that they might hunt their own food. Gardens were fenced in, instead of the pigs. The pigs had the run of the whole countryside and did not require much handfeeding.

This was the reason some of the biggest pigs learned to like their freedom too well and were dangerous to try to catch when



necessary. Often when a woman had tracked down such a creature she had to go and enlist help to get the rope on him.

"Even then my old boar wouldn't coopeate," reported Pombo's eldest brother. "The more I pulled on him the angrier he got. He kept trying to attack me. Finally I worked out a solution. I made my old woman walk in front of him, keeping just out of his reach. He fought and lunged to get at her the whole way home. The old lady's hair was standing on end nearly as straight as the old pig's bristles! But if she got too far ahead the old boar would stop and refuse to go any further. I'd have to make her come back and bait him again. Often he would nearly get her on that first lunge after a halt. That taught her not to get too far ahead of us, believe me! We finally made it home but the wife hasn't been any too friendly since. She pouts and refuses to feed the critter. She says he can starve to death as far as she is concerned. I have to get one of the other wives to take his kaukau to him."

The manhouses had been full of laughter during this recital. The men voted it the best joke of the present moon and repeated it time and again around every fire.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The day of the singsing!

Tona literally hummed. Everyone scurried here and there. Friendly laughter and merry shouts filled the air. Perspiration flowed freely. Pombo killed six pigs of his own, as well as several for older men. In all, the three Tona tribes killed nearly two hundred pigs that day.

Pombo felled several of his with a single blow. He and his men guests singed the pigs over open fires and cut them into quarters.

Totopo, her mother and Mombo's mother caught the blood in three-foot lengths of bamboo, into which they stuffed cress and bush spinach. Separating the edible from the inedible of the stomach and intestines took time but nothing was wasted. Teni and Kariyapa each received a cleansed pig bladder for a toy. They made perfect water balloons.

Fires snapped and crackled the full length of longhouse and singing ground. Smoke filled

the air. Stones popped continually while being heated on the fires, resembling a kettle of popcorn, amplified a hundredfold. Mothers tried to keep children out of reach of the exploding stones. Many an eye has been blinded by the hot stone fragments. Later the iris and pupil turn blue. Accordingly all blue eyes are called "cooled eyes".

Adult guests and children old enough to wield a bamboo peeler all busily peeled kaukau, taro and green cooking bananas. By eleven o'clock the pork and vegetables had been placed between layers of hot stones in the mumu pits and covered with banana leaves.

"Come on, Totopo. Let's go home and get you ready," said her mother.

Totopo took Kariyapa in her arms and jounced him happily. "Isn't this the most exciting day of your life?" she asked the baby.

They collected several items and sat down in the front yard. Totopo combed her hair high in a beautifully shaped Afro.

"I'll put two stripes of red paint across your cheeks diagonally toward your temples and a spot on your forehead and nose. I think that will be enough. I don't want to hide your pretty features." Ama took care to make the stripes parallel.

"Now stand up and I'll pour this grease over you." She held the gourd of warmed pig grease on her daughter's shoulders and let it trickle down, back and front. She rubbed and massaged Totopo's back until every spot was covered, then each arm and around to the front. Cupping her hand she poured more grease into it and held her cupped hand to each breast.

Ama regarded her daughter's bosom proudly. It's evident, Itemo, that I did a good job of massaging her little chest when she was a baby. She smiled at the memory of how concerned she had been lest she fail in that important duty. When she left the isolation-hut with her two-month-old daughter, she had consulted her husband's mother in the absence of her own.

"Did you get any milk from them?" the old one had asked.

"Yes, a little from each side though it did

not look much like mi

"I imagine you did won't hurt for you and now and then."

Another proof that in the fact that none of contemporaries had in she.

Ama finished gr stomach, hips and leg

"My girl, you are resist saying, as she st her for spots she may perfectly and beautiful Spirit, Kuro Kelkawe, giving me such a lo good-looking sons."

"Four, Ama. You c son is good-looking o

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"There, there, nev spot on you that does your shapely ankles. your neck and then yo put on your new pur

Totopo had dyed grass in her new s middle third it's origi front and back.

"Do we wait here your feathers or do w

"Let's wait a bit, felt shy and not anxio

Keri appeared on with grease also. I decorated her face an feathers sprouted from

"Ready, Konopu?"

"Almost. I'm only

The two girls c Bossboy Pombo cam nose stood out in his cassowary tail toppo plumes of which hur his back. His shell chieftood, spanned h



not look much like milk."

"I imagine you did well, daughter, but it won't hurt for you and me to continue it every now and then."

Another proof that they had done well lay in the fact that none of Totopo's poroman or contemporaries had matured any earlier than she.

Ama finished greasing her daughter's stomach, hips and legs.

"My girl, you are striking!" she could not resist saying, as she stepped back to examine her for spots she may have missed. "You are perfectly and beautifully formed. The Good Spirit, Kuro Kelkawe, has truly blessed me in giving me such a lovely daughter and five good-looking sons."

"Four, Ama. You don't know if your dead son is good-looking or not."

"I know he was a pretty little boy before the spirits struck him so I am confident he is a handsome lad in the spirit world."

"Ama!" Totopo remonstrated. It was not wise to speak of the dead.

"There, there, nevermind. There is not a spot on you that doesn't glisten, clear down to your shapely ankles. I'll tie this shell around your neck and then you go into the house and put on your new purupuru."

Totopo had dyed the outer thirds of the grass in her new skirt black, leaving the middle third its original light green, both in front and back.

"Do we wait here for your father to bring your feathers or do we go look for him?"

"Let's wait a bit, Ama" Totopo suddenly felt shy and not anxious to rush things.

Keri appeared on the path. She glistened with grease also. Red and yellow paint decorated her face and three white cockatoo feathers sprouted from her hair.

"Ready, Konopu?" she called gaily.

"Almost. I'm only lacking my feathers."

The two girls chatted excitedly until Bossboy Pombo came in sight. His vermilion nose stood out in his black charcoaled face. A cassowary tail topped his neat bigwig, the plumes of which hung nearly halfway down his back. His shellband, the mark of his chiefhood, spanned his brow.

"My gorgeous father!"

"My two beautiful emerging butterflies! If you didn't belong to my own tribe I would want to marry you myself!"

While speaking, Pombo began unwrapping the string from a bark case.

"I save the best for you, my daughter."

He drew out an exotic King of Saxony bird of paradise plume. It was twenty inches long and as fragile and fine as the most delicate lace. The girls gasped at its beauty.

Pombo experimented with different positions of the feather in his daughter's hair until he found the perfect accent for both the feather and her fine features.

"There may Ambo Mopene, let us be off."

The procession of four started up the hill with Pombo, of course, in the lead, and Ama last. Only Ama was undecorated. Woman's hour of glory was short indeed. Let the girls savour theirs to the fullest while it lasted. Marriage would end it. Thereafter any taste of splendour they enjoyed must be vicariously through their children.

They paused on the hilltop to look down on the singing ground. It was a mammoth nest of exotic birds. Red, black, white, yellow and green plumage on several different shades of glistening brown. Three more descended.

Dancers stood in dance formation. Onlookers surrounded them. The drummers began to beat a rhythm on their long kundu drums.

The soloist led out in the chant:

"Now we are ready to dance!"

A hundred voices joined in on the yodel:

"iyo-o iyo-o iyo-o

"Notice our painted bodies,

"eyo-o eyo-o eyo-o

"Observe our glorious feathers!

"eyo-o eyo-o eyo-o

"We led a mighty hunt

"iyo-o iyo-o iyo-o

"To the big bush on our mountains.

"iyo-o iyo-o iyo-o"

The dancers were bobbing up and down in rhythm with the drums and yo-delling chant.

"We trapped the mighty cassowary

"eyo-o eyo-o eyo-o

"The great bird that will claw you,



"eyo-o eyo-o eyo-o  
 "The bird that will disembowel you.  
 "iyo-o iyo-o iyo-o"  
 "We brought down the bird of paradise!  
 "iyo-o iyo-o iyo-o"  
 "The glorious males of paradise!  
 "eyo-o eyo-o eyo-o  
 "We felled them with our arrows,  
 "eyo-o eyo-o eyo-o  
 "Our swift straight four-pronged arrows.  
 "iyo-o iyo-o iyo-o"

The soloist could go on for hours, sometimes repeating age-old chants learned from his elders, often ad-libbing to fit the present occasion. When his voice gave out there was a stand-by ready to take over.

Sometimes the rhythm of the chant and dance was speeded up as the story reached a climax. The tempo of the drums kept pace.

Sometimes the dancers bobbed; sometimes they jumped. Sometimes they stood in lines, at times they formed a huge circle.

Ninety percent of the dancers were men. The other ten per cent consisted of the young debutantes or butterflies who were making their formal eruption from the cocoon of childhood.

Totopo danced beside her father, studying the observers who were scrutinizing her. Many men stopped to stare long and hard at her. Sometimes the lust in their eyes made her drop her own in shame. At other times the open admiration of some made her eyes glow and encourage her to greater effort in her dancing. Totopo knew many of the people but more were strangers.

Then Totopo happened to glance into the eyes of a man whose stare made her shudder. She dropped her eyes and analyzed her feelings. His eyes were full of lust certainly but many others were just as lustful. Why should her heart seem to stop at his gaze? Why should dread overwhelm her?

She danced on for ten minutes more before she ventured a look out of the corner of her eyes under dropping lids. She had lost all heart for dancing and the minutes seemed hours. She willed him to be gone but there he stood. Through half-closed lids with her head still turned to the right and her eyes to the left,

she studied him. He was years older than her father but not quite as old as her grandfather. His graybeard bespoke his age. His "bigwig", not big at all, confirmed it because only old men wore such small wigs. Men who have had to admit that the bigwigs give them headaches, due to their size, weight and unwieldiness. He had not quite degenerated to the mere woven hat her grandfather wore, but the hair inside his wig was so inconsequential it was only step away from it. Besides, it was lop-sided. It drooped behind his left ear. How revolting, thought Totopo.

She looked again at his eyes and again her heart choked with fear. His eyes, she realized now, said not only, "I want you," but also "I will have you!"

She turned and looked him fully in the face, her eyes wide open now, determined to cow his look, willing herself to defeat his self-confidence. They stared at each other for a full minute, her gaze shouting defiance, his speaking calmly of determination and self-assurance.

He outstared her. She had to look away first. As her eyes slid slowly away from his they fell on something else that jolted her. A girl stood there, only slightly older than herself. This girl was looking at her with black eyes so full of hatred that Totopo was astounded. No one had ever looked at her like that before. No one had ever hated her. Why should this strange girl hate her?

Totopo looked the girl over and slowly realized that she was pregnant though her stomach did not yet show it. She was merely fat. Totopo's mother had pointed out to her changes that took place in a woman's breasts during pregnancy. That meant that this girl was married.

Totopo turned away from them. She danced on, wondering about the girl and trying to forget the old man. Some time later her attention was diverted to a tall young man who was coming slowly but surely through the crowd of on-lookers straight toward her. A perfect bigwig, spanning two feet and topped with a cassowary headdress overshadowed his handsome face. He held his head high as though the weight of the wig and

huge bird tail were n the third row from h fully, his eyes on he and even awe and r her of Yurumbagi's her the cup of tea Yurumbagi in look He's like Ara, she th younger, taller, and just as handsome a completely honest.

The young man s never taking his ey shifted and surged l and strong, sure as a She looked him fu allowed him little knew dancers were expressions. She da she danced well.

Suddenly she re and glanced quickl still there, as well a She tried to avoid d but she could not expression on the his hand motioning farewell expression. he turned and wa hated her gave her and followed him.

Ah, so she is h didn't I think of th young girls. I just d Now I know why s knows her husband have seen the way h more a stab of fear

Unconsciously admirer's face for concerned. He mus she thought. I am n ltemo. She gave hi concern and kept h of the dance.

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Totopo turned house. Was it the c



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huge bird tail were nothing at all. Stopping in the third row from her where he could see her fully, his eyes on her were full of admiration, and even awe and reverence. They reminded her of Yurumbagi's eyes when he had handed her the cup of tea. But this fellow outdid Yurumbagi in looks and sheer male vitality. He's like Ara, she thought with surprise, only younger, taller, and more handsome . . . or just as handsome anyway. She tried to be completely honest.

The young man stood there never moving, never taking his eyes from her. The crowd shifted and surged but he remained still, still and strong, sure as a rekari tree firmly rooted. She looked him fully in the face. She even allowed him little smiles though she well knew dancers were supposed to retain stoical expressions. She danced for him alone and she danced well.

Suddenly she recalled her other observer and glanced quickly in his direction. He was still there, as well as the girl who hated her. She tried to avoid direct contact with his eyes but she could not help noticing an amused expression on the old man's face. He raised his hand motioning her to stay, in the usual farewell expression, and smiled briefly. Then he turned and walked away. The girl who hated her gave her one final, belligerent look and followed him.

Ah, so she is his wife! Now I see. Why didn't I think of that? Old men often marry young girls. I just didn't connect them at first. Now I know why she hates me. She probably knows her husband pretty well and she must have seen the way he was looking at me. Once more a stab of fear pierced Totopo's heart.

Unconsciously she sought her young admirer's face for reassurance. He looked concerned. He must realize how scared I am, she thought. I am no good as a stoical dancer, Itemo. She gave him a faint smile to erase his concern and kept her eyes on him till the end of the dance.

What a relief when the dance finally ended! Now it was their guests' turn to demonstrate their ability.

Totopo turned wearily toward the long-house. Was it the dance or her own emotions

that had tired her so? Anyway she was glad to be off display, sitting in the shade of the little brush arbor. She didn't care if she ever danced again!

"You danced well, daughter," Ama said as she passed Totopo her bilum.

Totopo immediately took out her water gourd. "Dancing in the big-sun makes me ready to die of thirst."

"And ready to rest, too, I imagine."

"Yes, I'll be ready to sleep tonight."

She had only rested a few minutes when her cousin, Koyaiye, came walking up with the tall young man who had watched her dance.

"Small Mama," said Koyaiye, addressing Ama, "This is Poropa. He wants to meet you and Totopo. He already talked to Small Papa. Small Papa told me to bring him to you."

"Fine. Fine. Sit down, young men."

They squatted on their haunches and Poropa turned to Totopo. "I saw you dancing. You were great!"

Totopo ducked her head. She didn't know what to say.

"Inap long yumi tanim het long biknait?" He looked first at Totopo and then at Ama.

"What does the Bossboy say?" asked Ama.

"He gave his permission."

"Kapogla then."

Poropa turned to Totopo. "How about it?"

She raised her eyebrows in silent assent.

"Good. We could gather at my Small Mama's house. That's Kewa-Ma. I'll come by and call for you late tonight. I know where you live."

After a pause Totopo said softly, "Kewa-Ma is from Kumunge."

"Yes, I'm from Kumunge. I've been away for three years though. I worked on a coffee plantation the other side of Minj. My contract was up on the first of July, so now I'm home. It's nice to be lazy and be my own boss again for a change. I sleep till noon and stay up half the night if I want to. I'm enjoying it."

Totopo wanted to keep him talking.

"What's life like on a plantation?"

"It's work, work, work. But the pay is good. The housing and food are fine, but I got



lonesome for my wan-toks. It seems mighty fine to be hearing and speaking my own language again."

I don't think I would like to live where I couldn't hear anybody talk Real-People's-Talk (ImboUngu)!"

"No, I wouldn't want to for always either, but young men feel adventuresome, you know. It was nice to learn about more of the world, and to earn more money than I could have at home."

Totopo noticed the lopsided-wig man, watching her from a hundred feet away. The young girl still accompanied him.

"Are any of the rest of your family here?" she asked Poropa, thinking she must pretend not to notice Lop-Wig.

"Yes, my younger brother and sister and my father are here. We all decided to come when Kewa-Pa invited us to the singsing."

"Please point them out to me if they come in sight."

"That I will."

Totopo stole another sideways glance. Lop-Wig's back was turned to her as he spoke to his wife.

"Who is that old man, Ama?" she pointed in the usual manner, by squinting her nose in his direction.

"Him?" Ama likewise squinted.

"Yes."

"He's Kedle, from Piamble. Don't you remember him?"

"No, I don't. From when?"

"Oh, a few years ago when there was that big court case about Glopa-Pa killing his third wife."

"I remember the murder and the court sessions. But what did this Kedle have to do with it?"

"Do you remember the fellow that Glopa-Pa's third wife had committed adultery with?"

"Yes, I remember the fellow she was said to have slept with."

"Well, Kedle was called on to witness that that young fellow had bought a love potion from him."

"A love potion!" Totopo frowned in concentration. "And was he in trouble for selling him this love potion?"

"Oh, no. All he did was sell it. It wasn't his fault the man chose someone else's wife to give it to."

"And what happened to the young man? I can't remember."

"He was fined. He had to pay Glopa-Pa two pigs."

"And what happened to this Glopa-Pa for killing his wife?" asked Poropa.

"He was sent to gaol for three years," Totopo answered. "He's been out since January. He was there dancing with us today."

"Show me which one he is sometime."

"Kapogla. Know what else he did before they put him in gaol?"

"What?"

"He cut her body in pieces and sent a leg to one village, an arm to another, and so on, for all the young women and girls to see. He said we needed it for a warning of what will happen to us if we aren't faithful to our husbands."

"How awful! How old a woman was she?"

"Not very old. She had one child. My brother, Bani, would say she was still in her teens. Glopa-Pa says that since the white man's government has come to our land women are getting too much freedom. They must be shown that the old ways still hold—a man can still kill his wives if they look at another man. 'This new-fangled business of gaol! What's that matter?' he says. 'Who minds gaol for three years if he can teach his wife a lesson?'"

"Did he talk any different when he got out of gaol?"

Not at all. He learned lots of things in gaol. Now he likes to sleep in a bed so he made himself one. They taught him carpentry and he says he can earn more money than anybody else in our tribe now. He also says he ate fish and rice and lots of other foods three times a day in gaol and that's better fare than three wives could feed him at home!"

"Well, I'll be!" Poropa fingered his well-kept beard. "I had a friend who was put in gaol for three months. He really hated it. The worst thing I guess was having his hair and beard shaved off."

"Glopa-Pa says shaved all that much lice for a change, he kid and would have they got too bad. Si wantoks there to be concerned."

"Perhaps a threat the local government ways than a three-year big provincial gaol."

The afternoon passed and Poropa. Now they to open the pits and

Bossboy Pombo tribe, was the first to roasted pork over a down the singsing ground the pork to his debt could bear witness to that man. Im began at the other end another man came and debtor. These continued for nearly

Pombo had run meat that he was make any more straight to the nearly gone Totopo throat at his next year

"To Kedle, my friend Kedle of Piamble I bring this gift of

He walked rapidly giving him a gift, she has never received called him his friend him about it.

They ate their pig gathering dusk.

"The good Spirit, us a lovely day," said to her friends as Bai that we didn't have

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"Glopa-Pa says he didn't mind being shaved all that much. It was nice to be free of hair for a change, he said, like when he was a kid and would have his head shaved when they got too bad. Since there were none of his wantoks there to see him bald he wasn't too concerned."

"Perhaps a three-month gaol sentence at the local government station is worse in some ways than a three-year sentence at one of the big provincial gaols then," pondered Poropa.

The afternoon passed swiftly for Totopo and Poropa. Now the mumu was ready. Time to open the pits and take out the pork!

Bossboy Pombo, chief of the largest Tona tribe, was the first today to lift a large piece of roasted pork over his head and run yodelling down the singsing ground. As he handed over the pork to his debtor everyone had seen and could bear witness that he had repaid his debt to that man. Immediately another yodel began at the other end of the mumu pits and another man came running to another guest and debtor. These yodelling pork deliveries continued for nearly two hours.

Pombo had run out with so many gifts of meat that he was exhausted. He didn't make any more elaborate detours but ran straight to the receiver. When the pork was nearly gone Totopo's heart jumped into her throat at his next yodel:

"To Kedle, my friend Kedle-yo-leyo-leyo Kedle of Piamble, father of Keledle - yo-yp I bring this gift of pork eye, eyo, eyo."

He walked rapidly to kedle. Now why is he giving him a gift, she wondered. I'm sure he has never received pork from him. But he called him his friend. After the singsing I'll ask him about it.

They ate their pork and vegetables in the gathering dusk.

"The good Spirit, Kuro Kelkawe has given us a lovely day," said Ama, who was known to her friends as Bani-Ma. "Isn't it wonderful that we didn't have a drop of rain?"

The rain poured down with a vengeance when they were all in their homes that night. Lightning struck on a nearby mountain and the thunder rolled. Totopo, sitting by the fire

with her laplap around her shoulders, suddenly snatched off her laplap and threw it against the wall. She had heard that lightning strikes people wearing red. It might be true and it might not, but she didn't want to be wearing it if the lightning were in a striking mood! Who wanted to be struck into the spirit-world on the night of her very first appointed -turning?

She had watched many head-turning ceremonies during her childhood and recently she had even taken part in several, but only as a necessary extra.

A young man sat with a girl on either side of him. He leaned forward on the one side till his forehead touched the girl's. They swayed back and forth, foreheads rubbing. Then he turned to the girl on his other side and rubbed foreheads with her. The ultimate purpose was for him to choose one of the two girls for his own. Whenever Totopo had participated the fellows had all been local boys. She had not felt any emotion for any of them and it had all seemed rather silly. But now, the thought of turning heads with a man she knew she could love, a man she would like to marry, set her skin tingling.

Near midnight the storm abated. Out of the drizzle came the sound for which Totopo waited. The yodelling songs of young men. Soon Poropa was at her door.

"Come on, Ambo Mopene, lady fair, join us!"

Totopo slipped out with her umbrella-mat over her head and followed Poropa up the hill. They collected three more girls, still yodelling. It was wise to sing in the dark. One of Totopo's girlfriends had failed to call out often enough one night, and had been slashed by her own brother's machete. He had taken her to be a spirit. Totopo shivered in the darkness, but more from excitement than fear. Who could be afraid of spirits with Poropa near?

Once inside Kewa-Ma's house, Poropa, being the eldest as well as a natural leader, organized the group the way he desired. Girl, boy, girl, boy, and so on, beginning and ending with a girl. Not wanting to share his darling with anyone, he placed Totopo on one



end with himself next to her.

Kewa-Ma built up the fire and played the part of chaperone. A crowd of children gathered from nearby houses to watch. Ambo Kunana, the love chant, began.

The first time Poropa placed his forehead against Totopo's and began the rubbing motion, a joy surged up in her chest so great it hurt, a delicious hurt. She forgot Kewa-Ma and the children and the words of the chant. She thought only of Poropa — the touch of his head, the smell of his body, the proximity of his eyes. If she opened her own she would be able to look straight into his, but she could not open hers. She enjoyed her emotions behind her shut lids, unaware that they still showed on her face in the firelight.

Then came the turn of the girl on Poropa's left. Totopo sat quietly, eyes downcast, while thrill after thrill of anticipation washed over her like waves.

During her third turn Poropa murmured softly, "Look at me, my love."

She intended to, but that delicious pain surged in her heart again so strongly she lacked the strength to move even her eyelids.

"Open your lovely eyes." The tone of command was strong in his subdued voice this time. Somehow she obeyed. The thick dark lids with the incredible lashes opened slowly. Poropa forgot to continue the rhythm and motion. His eyes were locked with hers. He was absorbed in their depths. They looked into his just a little fearfully, and yet at the same time trustingly. He felt as though he saw deep into her soul and the pure beauty of it made him catch his breath. He knew suddenly that she loved him. Such a love for her in return welled up in his own heart that he was amazed. He had not known he could love like this.

Poropa had turned heads with many girls. Passion and its satisfaction were no new thing to him. But the emotion he felt just now was entirely new. Such a tenderness for her overwhelmed him. He feared that it was unmanly and immediately resolved never to mention it to any man. At the same time he had a strong desire to watch over her and protect her from any harm.

Belatedly Poropa realized it must be time to switch girls. Glancing to his left he saw the girl watching him. "I got out of rhythm," he apologized.

When the Ambo Kunana had continued for two hours, onlookers began to depart for their own homes. The fire died down. Men chose the girl they preferred and couples paired off in the darkness of the hut for the finale of the date.

Poropa put his arm around Totopo and drew her closer to him,

"Relax," he chuckled quietly. "I'm sorry the fire is out. I love to watch your eyes. I wish I could see them now."

Totopo's heart was thumping wildly. She hoped he could not hear it.

"But I know what they look like anyway," he murmured.

Totopo could not trust herself to speak.

"Aren't you going to ask me what I think I'd see?"

"Mm," she managed to assent without opening her lips.

"I'd see fear."

He waited for her to deny it.

"I'd see love and trust but I'd see fear too. How can you fear me and trust me at the same time?"

Silence.

"I want an answer, little love." He cupped his free hand under her chin and turned her face to his in the darkness.

"I can't answer your question." Her voice was throaty.

"Try, my Love."

He rubbed his cheek against hers and brushed her lips with his own. She caught her breath but did not pull away.

"I'm waiting."

"I trust you more than I'd trust any man," she answered in a rush, her breathing showing the effort it took her, "but I don't know men." She dropped her head and it rested on his shoulder. She was ashamed of her confession. She felt that he knew women.

Poropa smiled into the dark. He well knew this was her first experience with a man and with love. The wonder of it had been written all over her face.

"I know, my Love, but of it. It makes you all the more."

He kissed her softly and chuckled quietly. "You know you would trust other men. You know how far you can trust them?"

"Mm."

"Darling, you don't want to be hurt. I could hurt you."

Totopo sat within the firelight, loved and secure. What a feeling! Kuro Kelkawe, pleased with her marriage, she prayed. She knew her own feelings, at the response of his. Until tonight she would not have known such a thing possible. Tender. She knew he would not hurt her — completely.

As if he read her thoughts, he met her together behind the end of the singing afternoon.

"No, Poropa."

He had known she would be force her just now.

"But Darling, your heart is already arranged to do tomorrow."

"I'm glad, Poropa."

"It's as good as settle with your wife."

"I'm so glad."

"Will you meet me at the house?"

"No, Poropa, please."

"Let me sing to you and maybe after that?"

"Maybe."

"If your father and I have an agreement? Promise me."

"Kapogla, Poropa, I hope and pray he will agree."

"I too. But if he does not, somehow. I'd go back and earn more but I know I'll get back. I realize it's not easy."

All Totopo's fear was accepted her refusal. She accepted his caress and accepted his caress.



"I know, my Love, but don't be ashamed of it. It makes you all the more desirable to me."

He kissed her softly on the forehead, then chuckled quietly. "You trust me more than you would trust other men but you just don't know how far you can trust any man. Is that right?"

"Mm."

"Darling, you don't need to fear me. I wouldn't hurt you. I couldn't!"

Totopo sat within his embrace feeling loved and secure. What a wonderful man he was! Kuro Kelkawe, please bring about our marriage, she prayed. She was amazed at her own feelings, at the response of her body to his. Until tonight she would not have believed such a thing possible. And he would be tender. She knew he would. She did trust him — completely.

As if he read her thoughts he said, "Let's meet together behind the bamboo at the far end of the singsing grounds tomorrow afternoon."

"No, Poropa."

He had known she would refuse. Neither would be force her just yet.

"But Darling, your father and I have already arranged to discuss your brideprice tomorrow."

"I'm glad, Poropa."

"It's as good as settled. I want you for my wife."

"I'm so glad."

"Will you meet me alone tomorrow then?"

"No, Poropa, please. Not yet."

"Let me sing to you again tomorrow night and maybe after that?"

"Maybe."

"If your father and I can come to an agreement? Promise me."

"Kapogla, Poropa, if you two can agree. I hope and pray he will accept what you offer."

"I too. But if he doesn't, I'll find more somehow. I'd go back to the plantation to earn more but I know you'd be gone before I got back. I realize it's now or never."

All Totopo's fear vanished when Poropa accepted her refusal. She relaxed in his arms and accepted his caresses happily. She felt the

most secure, contented and loved that she ever remembered feeling in all her life.

The bud had opened and experienced such joy in the opening that it had no desire to rush the flowering. The butterfly had emerged from the chrysalis. The air was so sweet on her wings! The freedom so wonderful! Why fly just yet?

She wondered if the other girls around her in the darkness were as reticent as she or were they arranging secret rendezvous for the morrow? Never-mind, she was content and Poropa seemed content to wait.

## CHAPTER SIX

Totopo awoke to the sound of breakfast. She sat up suddenly.

"There's the girl who danced for two hours and said she would be ready to sleep last night. And did she sleep? No indeed! She was up the whole night!"

"Oh, Ama!"

"The whole night, I tell you. She just caught two winks at dawn!"

"Aw, Ama, it was more than two winks."

"Two winks, I tell you. You came in at the hour-of-sweet-sleep just before dawn. I was awake."

"Truly? I feel rested now."

"Nevermind, daughter. You're only young once. You only emerge from your chrysalis once in a lifetime. Did you enjoy yourself last night?"

"Oh, Ama, did I ever! Paa-tingo-we! Poropa is just wonderful! I didn't know a man could be so nice, so great, so understanding, so sweet!"

"Truly?" Ama was grinning at all those adjectives.

"Truly, Ama. And guess what? He's going to talk to Ara about my bride-price today. You never know, Ama, by this time next month I might be married!"

"Hm. Maybe I ought to show him your garden."

Totopo laughed lightheartedly. "I don't think it's necessary."

"The young lady is quite sure of herself,"



Ama said to Turi.

"Poor Mr. Kasi. I'll hate to have to tell him."

"Don't tell him unless he asks," advised Totopo.

"You can be sure he'll ask."

The family ate all they could hold of food left over from the mumu. Guests and relatives came by and the day passed swiftly in happy conversation. On the singing ground dancing continued. Totopo went with her maternal cousin to see the dancing at one stage, hoping she would see Poropa. After determining that he was nowhere on the grounds she returned to her home to wait for him to appear.

Late that afternoon she glanced up the trail to see Poropa slowly descending. She studied him concernedly. He seemed different from the day and night before. Perhaps he is tired, she thought.

He approached the corner of her yard where she sat with her cousin and half-sister. Without a word he sat down near her.

Totopo waited. As he still said nothing, she asked softly, "Are you tired?"

Poropa did not appear to have heard for some time. Finally he mumbled, "Tired. More tired than I have ever been before. Tired enough to lie down and die."

Totopo was deeply concerned. Her heart seemed to suddenly constrict in fear.

"Why, Poropa, why?"

"I cannot have you, my little Love. You have already been sold."

Fear seemed to squeeze the breath out of Totopo. How could her heart go on beating with this band tightening around it?

"How? When? To whom?" She managed to force the words out through lips that seemed paralyzed.

"Just since I talked to your father yesterday. That man, Kedle from Piamble. I hate his guts!"

A cry of pure anguish escaped from Totopo's lips, "Kedle from Piamble!"

"Yes! The beast says he will have you for his tenth wife!"

"Tenth wife? Tenth?" Oh, Kuro Kelkawe, have mercy! Totopo thought she was going to pass out. She could not get her breath. That

band seemed to squeeze her heart and lungs tighter and tighter. A low moan escaped from her as she leaned forward and rested her head on her knees. She remained in that position without speech or even thought, for some time. Then slowly as the blood returned to her brain, thoughts started flooding in again. Suddenly she sat upright.

"But is it final, Poropa? Can't you offer a higher brideprice? He hasn't given Ara the pigs yet. Oh Poropa, help me! You've got to help me!" Her voice rose to a scream on the last sentence. She was totally unaware of the friends and relatives who had gathered around.

"It is final, darling. There is no hope. There is nothing I can do. I tried and tried. Believe me, I tried. I argued and fought for you. But the Beast has offered fifteen pigs, five cassowary tails, fifteen shells and five hundred kina. Who can top that? And if anyone does he promises to raise his offer. He has promised five pigs more than any other man offers your father. If I could get fifteen pigs together, and Darling I can't! That's enough for two wives you know. But if I could, your father wouldn't accept them, knowing he could get twenty from Kedle then, for you."

"By all the spirits of the dead, where can he get so many pigs?"

"Remember, he has nine wives growing gardens and raising pigs for him. Also, mind you, those wives are producing daughters. Your father says Kedle has already sold five daughters in marriage over the past few years."

"Five daughters already married?"

"What's more, he is the only man around who has the materials and recipe for the love potion. It was passed on to him alone by his father. His potions have the reputation of being the strongest, most potent, most effective of any man's in the Imbo-Ungu area. They are said to be effectual nine times out of ten. Who else can boast such a high kill? Men all over, and women too for that matter, will pay a high price for a potion so sure as that!"

Totopo groaned aloud.

"He is the source of pigs and kinas! Who else can compete? I'm going home, Love. I

can't bear to stay any longer. I must come to say 'Good-bye'."

"But it's too late now, Poropa. Kumunge now, Poropa, this morning, at least."

"I can't. I must be near you, knowing you won't mind walking in the dark. I'd welcome that. I want to live without you, broke and rising to the yard, down the trail."

Totopo sat for a while, too stunned to move. Her feet and stumbled back of her head. She was sympathetic onlooker, conscious thought, overgrown path through the refuge, a secluded bamboo nearly five miles home. She parted the ends and sank down. Hours she lay there, finally she fell into a deep sleep.

At midnight she came flooding in on the bone physical heart emotionally. I to fall from the soiled skin. It must have been she thought. Her head unheeded, ear darkness, she found umbrella. Parting the point of her umbrella weary way upward.

The door was unlit by a bright fire as would be.

"My daughter," slipped in. She sat her mother, putting ashes and holding. After a few minutes anguished eyes to mother's eyes were sympathy. She's surprised at once.

"Oh, Ama!" At last!



can't bear to stay around any longer. I only came to say 'Good-by'."

"But it's too late to walk all the way to Kumunge now, Poropa. You better wait till morning, at least."

"I can't. I must be going. I can't bear to be near you, knowing you'll never be mine. I won't mind walking over strange trails in the dark. I'd welcome the spirits or enemy! Who wants to live without you anyway?" His voice broke and rising to his feet, he hurried from the yard, down the trail.

Totopo sat for a time looking after him, too stunned to move. At last she too rose to her feet and stumbled slowly around to the back of her hut out of sight of sympathetic onlookers. Slowly, without conscious thought, her feet sought out an overgrown path that led to a childhood refuge, a secluded spot under a clump of bamboo nearly five hundred feet below her home. She parted the overhanging willowy ends and sank down on the cool earth. For hours she lay there, too shaken even for tears. Finally she fell into an exhausted sleep.

At midnight she awakened. Realization came flooding in once again. She was chilled to the bone physically and chilled to the very heart emotionally. Drops of water had begun to fall from the soaked bamboo onto her bare skin. It must have been raining quite a while, she thought. Her bilum had fallen from her head unheeded, earlier. Now, groping in the darkness, she found it and withdrew her umbrella. Parting the bamboo with the upper point of her umbrella-mat, she made her weary way upward in the darkness.

The door was unlocked and her mother sat by a bright fire as Totopo had known she would be.

"My daughter," she whispered, as Totopo slipped in. She sat down a couple feet from her mother, putting both feet into the warm ashes and holding her hands to the blaze. After a few minutes of silence Totopo raised anguished eyes to her mother's face. Her mother's eyes were dark pools of love and sympathy. She's suffering with me, Totopo realized at once.

"Oh, Ama!" At last the tears welled up and

overflowed.

Her mother slid sideways and took her into her arms, though the two had not embraced for years. She pressed her daughter's head against her bare breasts. Tears poured from Totopo's eyes in torrents as sobs racked her whole body.

Her mother's tears dropped on to Totopo's hair where they glistened in the black ringlets.

"My daughter, oh my daughter -iyo -iyo -iyo," cried her mother softly in a singsong chant, nearly like the death wail. "My daughter with all her beauty -yo. My daughter in her first love -iyo -iyo -iyo." Ama rocked back and forth, cradling her daughter's head with one arm and caressing her hair and back with the other hand. When the sobs did not abate, Ama began to sing a story.

"There was once a beautiful garden yo -iyo

A beautiful maiden lived within this

garden -iyo

Lived among the beautiful trees and

flowers -yo

Beautiful trees, flowers and bamboo-yo

-iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo"

Totopo's sobs lessened and she cried more quietly as she lay listening to her mother's chant.

"Once a handsome young man-iyo

Handsome young man happened by -iyo

Happened by the beautiful garden -iyo

Saw the maiden in the beautiful garden

-iyo

-iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo

"He yodelled to the beautiful maiden -iyo

Yodelled and called to his fair lady-yo

Called and asked admittance to her

garden-iyo

Asked admittance to her lovely garden-iyo

-iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo

"The maiden willingly admitted him-iyo

Admitted him to her lovely garden-iyo

To her trees, bamboo and flowers-iyo

To the very heart of her -iyo -iyo

-iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo

"He held her in his arms and lover her so

He looked into her eyes and workshipped-

yo

Deep into her eyes where fires glow



Fires of love and passion -yo -iyo  
 -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo  
 "Before their love was consumated-yo  
 Before she had drunk his love -iyo -iyo  
 Before he took her into his own soul  
 A snake came into the garden -iyo -iyo  
 -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo  
 "Wormed his way between them-yo -iyo  
 Coiled himself around the lady fair  
 Poisoned her with his deadly fangs-iyo  
 Stunned her, dragged her off into his lair  
 -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo -iyo

An occasional tear still slipped from underneath Totopo's closed lids as her mother related the story of her defeated love in one allegory after another. At last, utterly exhausted, she was lulled to sleep by her mother's singing and rocking.

When Ama felt Totopo was sound asleep she gradually ceased her chant and motion and eased her head into a more comfortable position on her lap. She looked long and lovingly at her daughter's tear-stained face.

"My poor daughter, my only daughter, my baby girl. It's so hard, so very hard for you," she murmured. "I was fortunate to be bought by your father when I was your age. He was a young man, strong and handsome, virile. My heartbreak came later, when he took his second wife. I felt at the time that my heart had died, but I had it easier than you do. I was still close to the man I had learned to love. I only had to share him. The spirits know, that was hard enough!"

Fresh tears fell onto Totopo's hair.

"But you, my daughter, must never again see the man you could love. Instead you must go to a man who is older than your father, and share him with nine other wives! Nine others! Many are the girls who must go to older men but most of them are only third or fourth wives. Not that that may make it any easier. I don't know. It just seems to me that this Kedle has had more than his rightful share. Why should he have my pretty baby as well as all of his other nine wives?"

Ama gave her whole mind to praying to the Good Spirit, Kuro Kelkawe to avert the disaster. She felt no confidence that he would answer though unless he were offered a blood

sacrifice. And she could not do that. Only men were worthy of offering sacrifices to the spirits. What was the good of even praying? One ought to do something however. It was no good standing by and watching your daughter break her heart without doing anything! But what could a woman do?

She finally fell asleep, sitting, leaning against the bark wall.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Bossboy Pombo did not visit his first wife's home the following day. He wanted to be certain that Totopo had time to learn of her marriage from someone else. However, the next morning he knew he must not put it off any longer. There were arrangements to make, things to be done before the exchange. He appeared at their door while Ama and Totopo were eating breakfast.

One glance at his daughter told him that what he wanted to know. She knew. Someone had told her. She drooped like a poinsettia broken from its root. His heart smote him at this drastic change. He wondered if she would ever carry her head high again. But immediately Reason began telling Heart the necessity of this marriage. There was no other way. No turning back.

He seated himself at the fire and accepted a kaukau from his wife. Totopo began to nibble on the kaukau she held, to hide her discomposure.

"Kedle will be bringing the brideprice Saturday," Pombo informed them.

Totopo gasped.

"Saturday!" exclaimed Ama. "So soon?"

"Yes, this Saturday."

"But this is Tuesday! We only heard of it Sunday!"

"I know, I know."

"There's no need to get in such a rush. It's indecent!"

"Not at all, woman. There's nothing indecent about it. Kedle simply has the pigs and articles all ready and he says there is no need to delay."

"He's afraid you'll change your mind. I've

never heard of the pigs and exchanged in such a

"He's not one of your go around canvassing to scrape up a brideprice within his own family."

"His family would judge village."

"Right. So he's come must be ready,"

Pombo took a deep

"I've promised him an exchange."

"Ping! Pingi? Why I to give him my best enough of his own. I we've ever had that raise one litter. Why did you Man?"

"Listen, old woman to your daughter. She keeping with it. would best?"

"Ha! Belong to my Nothing ever belongs to

"Of course it does, pigs."

"If I own them why Pingi to Kedle without know I raised Pingi as mother died I chewed s and spat it into her m was going to die anywhere at my own breast. And me? You up and promise a man without even telling

"Kedle's no beast. admire him greatly."

"Ha! You admire him and worse than a bear evil spirit in the spirit for him! And yet your beautiful daughter. Fair pure as one too. All of who has known so more won't mean anything

"Now, now, calm down and let's talk sense against Kedle?"

"His age, of course!



Never heard of the price being agreed upon and exchanged in such a short time."

"He's not one of your poor men that has to go around canvassing the whole tribe, trying to scrape up a brideprice. He has all he needs within his own family."

"His family would just about make a whole village."

"Right. So he's coming Saturday. So we must be ready."

Pombo took a deep breath.

"I've promised him our sow, Pingi, for the exchange."

"Ping! Pingi? Why Pingi? There's no need to give him my best sow! I'm sure he has enough of his own. Pingi is the only sow we've ever had that raised twelve piglets from one litter. Why did you promise him her, Man?"

"Listen, old woman! That sow will belong to your daughter. She will set up house-keeping with it. would you begrudge her the best?"

"Ha! Belong to my daughter! Grubworms! Nothing ever belongs to any woman!"

"Of course it does. You own your own pigs."

"If I own them why did *you* go promising Pingi to Kedle without consulting me? You know I raised Pingi as a special pet. When her mother died I chewed sugar cane and kaukau and spat it into her mouth. When I saw she was going to die anyway, Itemo, I nursed her at my own breast. And yet does she belong to me? You up and promise her to that beast of a man without even telling me first."

"Kedle's no beast. He's a fine man. I admire him greatly."

"Ha! You admire his wealth! He's a beast and worse than a beast. He is as bad as any evil spirit in the spirit world. Pingi's too good for him! And yet you promise him our beautiful daughter. Fair as a flower she is, and pure as one too. All for that beast of a man who has known so many women that one more won't mean anything to him at all!"

"Now, now, calm down, woman. Settle down and let's talk sense. What do you have against Kedle?"

"His age, of course!"

"What about his age?"

"He's older than you are. He's old enough to be your father!"

"He's not as old as my father."

"I didn't say he was. I said he's old enough to be your father. You are your father's youngest child, remember. Your father already had a grandchild when you were born."

"All right! All right! Don't talk to me as though I were a child! Think of his wealth. His wealth easily outweighs his age. It couldn't be an unpleasant thing to be married to such a wealthy man."

"What's wealth to a young girl? Our daughter loves a handsome young man and here she must go to this poor excuse for a man instead. He not only doesn't wear a bigwig but he can't even keep his little wig setting upright on his head!"

Pombo grinned. "Maybe Totopo can straighten it up for him." Then he turned to his daughter. "Is it true that you love a young man?"

Totopo made no response as she stared at the dying fire.

"Paaimbo Itemo," her mother answered for her. "She lost her heart instantly to that young Poropa from Kumunge."

"Give me one of those 'eat-it-raw's', Teni. I'm sorry to hear that, Totopo. But I can't let it change things. I can't go back on my word. If I weren't the Bossboy I might consider accepting less than the most I can get for you. But even then it's doubtful. A father shares the bridewealth with every male relation, with any man who has ever given his daughter so much as a bite of kaukau. You know that. As chief, it is my obligation to increase the wealth of my tribe as much as possible. Why, I'd be cross with my brothers if they accepted less than the most they could get for their daughters. Your brother, two of your cousins, and three other men in your tribe need wives. We have to have all we can get to buy them. I couldn't hold up my head if I accepted Poropa's price for you instead of Kedle's."

His wife eyed him scornfully. "And a man's pride is more important than a woman's heart and soul."



"Oh, go on. There's no reasoning with a woman!" He turned and crawled out the door. His wife was right on his tail feathers, or till leaves.

"You call me an old woman. Perhaps I am. Perhaps I can die soon and come back and eat yet. I took it without a word when you broke my own heart but I'd give my very life to keep you from breaking our daughter's."

Pombo climbed the hill unheeding, it seemed, but he had heard every word. It's true, he thought, she never said a word to me when I took my second wife. She wilted and drooped much like Totopo has done. But she's going to fight like an old sow when one of her piglets squeals. Well, he shrugged, nothing can be done about it now. I wonder how she and the second wife will react when I take a third. I've wanted to for years. This extra big brideprice for Totopo will make it possible. He walked on deep in thought. In the end he concluded he had better wait until there was a little more domestic peace.

"It's no use, Ama, we'll just have to accept it," said Totopo as Ama put Teni's noon kaukau into her bilum.

"I can't see your heart break and not try to fight for you, daughter."

"Tell me about the time you went through heartbreak yourself, Ama."

"Come to the garden with me, nanga bagol kogol, and I'll tell you while I dig kaukau for the pigs."

"Kapogla. I'd like that. I don't feel like going to my own garden today."

"No, there's no need. You only have four days here. Let's spend them together."

"Thank you, Ama, that will help a lot."

Totopo sat playing with Kariyapa as her mother busily dug kaukau.

"Tell me, Ama."

"Well, it was like this. I hadn't known your father at all before we were married but I soon fell in love with him afterwards. We were only married a short while before I became pregnant for Bani. Your father was well-pleased that I gave him a son first. Those were the best years of my life. But before Bani was old enough to be weaned your father was urging me to let him sleep with me again. I

refused until Bani was nearly Teni's age, as my mother had always advised me.

"Well, wouldn't you know, I got pregnant right off, again. It seems I breed as easily as Pingi and I never saw any sow to beat her for easy breeding.

"Then you were born, nanga bagok kogol, and your father wasn't pleased about you being a girl. He said a man wants two sons first in case something should happen to one.

"I had only been back from the isolation-hut a month when your father declared he was getting himself another wife. In desperation I told him we could sleep together.

"He was amazed and said, 'What about the baby?'

"It's only a girl,' I answered. 'You don't care if she dies.'

"He agreed and we began to sleep together regularly. I was pregnant again before you were four months old. Some say you can't get pregnant if you are nursing and haven't had your moon-sick, but don't you believe it. I did.

"Your grandmother and other women urged me to let them about it but I refused. I had seen too many woman die that way.

"So your little brother was born when you only had four teeth and were just toddling. I nursed both of you. People scolded me for it but I kept it up. I always let the baby nurse first, then when he had had all he wanted I let you finish it. You sucked and sucked until you had drained every drop. Kuo Kelkawe was good to me and increased my milk. You didn't get thin and your baby brother grew fat and flourished. I gave you lots of sugar cane to eat and I cooked your kaukau just as soft as I could get it. I loved you, nanga bagol kogol, even though your father had half turned from me ever since your birth. I did pray to the spirits though to never let me bear another girl child. I made the prayer at the same time the men were offering blood to the spirits with another request. Mine has been answered.

"As soon as your brother was born I had to refuse to sleep with your father again. Two babies were all I could manage at once. So he immediately went off in search of a second

wife. Your baby brother toddle before he ex-  
Mombo-Ma though.

"I had worked so father so he wouldn't hadn't succeeded. M somehow in the follo harder than ever to sho wife. It wasn't hard to has always been lazy. concerned about my father all those first fe afraid you didn't babyhood. In after ye neglected you.

"Until your brother you both back and fo with my loads of kau big as you were and You were better at wa You began to follow was surprisingly goo two have always bee so fast. You could ru do everything the b were so tiny."

"And then my lit was about Teni's a knew that story.

"Yes, the spirits a your father the spiri not thinking of his getting another wife knew otherwise. Th sleeping with my hu birth, so they took conception. It was done it. I lost the b never stand against

"How did you Ama?"

"I hated her, husband away from

"And just think women to hate me!

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wife. Your baby brother was beginning to toddle before he exchanged the pay for Mombo-Ma though.

"I had worked so hard to please your father so he wouldn't get a second wife but I hadn't succeeded. My heart broke but somehow in the following years I worked harder than ever to show him I was the better wife. It wasn't hard to do really. Mombo-Ma has always been lazy. But because I was so concerned about my relationship with your father all those first few years of your life I'm afraid you didn't have a very happy babyhood. In after years I realized how I had neglected you.

"Until your brother got too big, I carried you both back and forth to the gardens along with my loads of kaukau. But soon he was as big as you were and I had to let you walk. You were better at walking than he, of course. You began to follow Bani all around and he was surprisingly good to you. That's why you two have always been so close. You grew up so fast. You could run and play and swim and do everything the boys did, even when you were so tiny."

"And then my little brother died when he was about Teni's age," put in Totopo. She knew that story.

"Yes, the spirits ate him and he died. I told your father the spirits were punishing him for not thinking of his son, for thinking about getting another wife instead. But in my heart I knew otherwise. They were punishing *me* for sleeping with my husband too soon after your birth, so they took away the object of that conception. It was fair. I should not have done it. I lost the battle anyway. Women can never stand against men."

"How did you feel toward Mombo-Ma, Ama?"

"I hated her, of course. She took my husband away from me."

"And just think, Ama. There will be nine women to hate me!"

The woman dug in silent thought. Yes, hating the next wife solved nothing. But whom should one hate then? It was impossible to take it without hatred and anger toward someone, something. No use hating

your husband when you had to go on living with him and working to provide for him.

"Did you ever beat her or harm her in any way physically, Ama?"

"No, I never laid a hand on her. I feared your father too much to do that. I did say some pretty cutting things to her on occasion though and once your father came upon us unexpectedly and found her in tears."

"What happened then?"

"After he learned what I had said he warned me never to talk to her like that again or he would chop me in two with his axe."

"Did you ever talk like that again?"

"No, I didn't. I obeyed him."

"You think he really would have?"

"He surely would have. Don't you ever doubt it! He is just as capable of it as Glopa-Pa is."

"Do you suppose Kedle would be capable of it?"

"I don't know, daughter. You'll have to learn that for yourself."

+ + +

In the long, dark hours of night Totopo tossed and turned.

A loving voice murmured, "I'm wide awake, too, nanga bagol kogol, I'll be glad to listen if you want to talk."

Dread filled each hour, and yet the days passed all too quickly. Friday evening a messenger arrived from Piamble.

"Kedle sends word that he won't be able to come tomorrow. His ninth wife is very ill. He will come next Wednesday if she is better."

They talked around the fire. The fellow was friendly and willing to visit while he ate their food.

"What's the matter with the ninth wife?" asked Ama.

"Her ailment wasn't included in the message."

"But you know?"

"Yes, I know."

They chewed in silence before he finally spoke again with some hesitation. "Somebody performed an abortion on her. She nearly died yesterday. Kedle had to take her to the mission clinic as a last resort. She's still alive today, or was when I left at least, but the



ambo kondodle says she is still critical."

Totopo thanked Kuro Kelkawe for the delay, but again the days flew by on wings. Perhaps the ninth wife will die and he will postpone our marriage while he mourns for her, she thought. But again that would only be a temporary reprieve. How much better it would be if Kedle himself would die! Accordingly she prayed to the evil spirits to strike him.

The evil spirits did not answer however. Kedle appeared at the Tona manhouse well and strong on Wednesday morning. A whole retinue of his tribe trailed behind him, leading the fifteen pigs. Totopo stole just one look at her husband-to-be to see if his hat and wig were on straight. No such luck!

The exchange proceeded without a ripple. Totopo's tribe was so pleased with the large brideprice that there was none of the customary bickering. In no time Kedle and Totopo were standing before the chief of the second Tona tribe, with their little fingers crooked together, while he pronounced them man and wife.

Kedle gave the sow, Pingi, into the care of a woman unknown to Totopo and then mentioned for Totopo to walk directly behind him. The others could fall in as they wished.

Totopo knew every detail of her husband's feet and footprints before they completed the two-hour trip to her new home. There were no deep gorges between Tona and Piamble but she became aware that they were climbing, gradually but steadily.

She fingered the lovely bilum she was wearing on her head, the marriage bilum. Her mother had worn it when she was married and her mother's mother before her. Her great-grandmother had made it and dyed it coal black. Whenever Ama had unwrapped it and shown it to her during her childhood, she had woven happy dreams around it. What had ever given her the idea that marriage was a happy occasion? She now knew it to be the most tragic occurrence of her life.

A singsing oval came into view and Kedle turned to her. "This is Peyamo-peli, the home of the Spirit Peyamo. Piamble takes its name from that spirit. Peyamo lives in that tree

right there," he said, squinting his nose at a huge tree.

They walked a little farther and came to a larger singsing area bordered on the upper end by a government road. Totopo wanted to ask if trucks and cars actually drove on the road, but she decided silence was the better policy for the present. She had long, dreary years ahead to satisfy her curiosity on all such matters. She lifted her eyes to the mountain which towered above them. Piamble nestled at the foot of Mt. Giluwe, the second highest mountain in Papua New Guinea.

Kedle pointed out a house on their right. "This is the home of the government medical orderly. We call him 'Dokta'." Squinting to their left he continued. "And that is the Bible Mission station, just across this little stream. They have a nice store, a couple of school buildings and a clinic as well as all the houses in which people live. That longest building is the church. The big square one is the kondodle's home."

Totopo studied the tall buildings favored by expatriates with interest.

"I'll bring you down here to the store tomorrow to buy you some new clothes and things," continued Kedle.

Totopo was so surprised she glanced up at her husband. So she was to be allowed to wear clothes. Her precious blouse was hidden under other things in her marriage bilum.

Kedle turned and walked on. People came out of nearby huts to stare at Totopo and the bridal procession. He did not speak to her in front of them. They reached the government road, turned right and walked along it for one kilometer. Then they branched off on a trail to their left. In a few minutes they were standing on a hilltop looking at a large village of huts spread out on a hillside across a little stream from them.

"This is our home," said Kedle.

He waited while Totopo stood studying the outlay thoughtfully. She picked out the manhouse immediately right at the top of the village about three-fourths of the way up the hill. Each of the other huts must belong to the different wives and the smaller ones might

be pighouses, she su

He led her to a neatly made, small a too far from the ma

"Someone will b and left her there.

## CHAPTER EIG

Totopo awakene She would have lik found a good vant watch the sunrise a but she might mee fire and sat down the matronly woma to be.

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Totopo liked he looked around her so new that there inside of the kunai. That reminded her lonesome that eve would be a comfor

Her kaukau was it slowly, lacking a one would come ar go crazy sitting hen

Three hours late same. At least I d Thoughts of the shudder. I'd rather than with him!

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Finally at big-s outside her door.



the pighouses, she supposed.

He led her to a comparatively new hut, neatly made, small and compact, situated not too far from the manhouse.

"Someone will bring you food," he said, and left her there.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Totopo awakened before dawn as usual. She would have liked to have gone out and found a good vantage point from which to watch the sunrise as she often did at Tona, but she might meet someone. She built her fire and sat down to peel some kaukau like the matronly woman she was now supposed to be.

She was glad Kedle had left her in the night. He had been so thoroughly revolting that it was well she did not have to face him in the light. Her disgust would show in both her manner and expression, try as she might to hide it.

Totopo liked her neat cozy little hut. She looked around her with a sad pleasure. It was so new that there wasn't much soot on the inside of the kunai-grass roof yet. Soot. Pingi. That reminded her. Where was Pingi? I'm so lonesome that even the sight of Ama's pig would be a comfort.

Her kaukau was cooked and she nibbled at it slowly, lacking appetite. How I wish someone would come and talk to me. I'm going to go crazy sitting here alone.

Three hours later she was still thinking the same. At least I don't want Kedle to come. Thoughts of the night before made her shudder. I'd rather be all alone in the world than with him!

I wonder what sort of lover Poropa would have been. I think I can imagine. Just the opposite of Kedle in every way. It would not have hurt. I would have felt passion instead of pain, I'm quite positive, the way I wanted to respond to him that night at Kewa-Ma's house. She stopped her line of thought abruptly and told herself she dare not think of might-have-beens.

Finally at big-sun she heard a low cough outside her door.

"Yes?"

Keledle-Ma, who was wife Number One, stuck her head inside the door.

"Ah, you're up."

"Yes, of course."

"I didn't want to bother you earlier in case you were sleeping."

"Oh, I've been up since dawn."

"Truly? Well, if you'll come with me I'll show you where I've put Pingi."

"Kapogla." Totopo gladly followed her outside and down a path which led to a little pen with a brush arbor over one corner. Pingi came quickly up to Totopo. The girl rubbed the sow behind each ear. Only the fact that the older woman was watching kept her from putting her arms around the pig's neck.

"I'm going to my garden now. I'll bring back some kaukau for her tonight along with some for my own pigs."

Totopo had straightened to look at the woman as she spoke.

"Thank you." She dropped her eyes back to Pingi when she noticed the woman searching her face keenly.

"You're lonely, aren't you?"

Totopo did not trust herself to speak. The sympathy in the woman's voice might start the tears. She must not cry in front of a fellow-wife.

"I'd love to have you come to the garden with me but I heard my husband tell you he'd be taking you to the mission station today. I know he's due there to check on Diye anyway."

"Diye?"

"Yes. She's Number Nine, you know. She had been in the mission housesick."

"Ah, yes, I heard."

"Who knows when Kedle will get around to going. He's playing cards. He could go on all night. On the other hand he could quit right now if he wins all his opponents have to stake. So you'd better stay home."

"Kapogla, then."

"I'll stop in and give you Pingi's food tonight."

Totopo turned to put her arms around Pingi when the woman had passed from sight, but she glimpsed a group of onlookers on the



hill above her just in time. She scratched the sow's ears again instead. As she didn't know what to do while she was being watched she retraced her steps to her hut and sat down by her fire once again.

Mid-afternoon she heard Kedle's voice calling her. She hurried out.

"Let's go now."

As they were walking down the mission station driveway Totopo suddenly gasped in astonishment. Kedle half-turned back to her and then smiled understandingly as he followed her line of vision. The approaching couple was too proximate for him to speak to her then.

"Apinun," he greeted the young man. The two men shook hands and the younger one spoke in Pidgin.

"Mitupela go lukim fren bilong meri bilong mi. Sarere mi kam long haus bilong yu. Yumi tupela plei kat gen."

Kedle nodded vigorously and the young couple passed on. Totopo studied her husband's face to see if he had understood. He probably had not caught it all, but she decided not to interpret. She wouldn't speak unless spoken to.

"What surprised you?"

"I've never seen such black skin!"

"You've never seen a Buka before?"

"A Buka?"

"That man and his wife are from Bougainville. All his people are that dark. They are called Bukas."

"Why, they are as black as Pingi!"

Kedle laughed. "Didn't you think them good-looking though?"

"I didn't even notice their features. I was so surprised by their skin color."

"You look next time. That young man is a fine fellow. He and I have had many a good cardgame. He is one of the teachers at the mission school here. Teachers make good money, you know. He puts up a good stake."

"He works on the mission, yet he gambles?"

"Oh, yes. He's not a believer. And he never gambles on the mission station. The Kondodles can't tell him what to do when he's off the station."

"I wonder what it would feel like to be that black."

"No different than it does to be gorokanut-brown like you or earth-brown like me. But did you ever wonder what it feels like to be white? You would feel so pale you would be ill, I guess."

"Yes, I've often wondered that. But they're not ill, are they? Bani says some of them are very strong and energetic. I came here thinking I might see white people and instead I saw black."

"Just wait a bit. You'll see white, too."

Kedle led his new wife into the mission tradestore and bought her a pretty new meri-blouse of bright blue, with a big red and yellow bird of paradise on it. He bought a blue laplap, a red one, a cooking pot, eight cups of rice, two cans of mackerel and two bars of soap. He slipped one bar of soap into his own shoulder bilum and handed everything else to her.

He left the store while she took time to put everything into her bilum. She longed to put the blouse on immediately but decided she had better not take time to find a place to do it. She hurried out and saw him approaching the big square house. As she came up beside him she saw he was heading for a window.

"You're supposed to tap on the door."

"This works fine."

He looked in the window and called, "Tamara."

A young girl whom Totopo judged to be just about her own age soon appeared at the window.

"Yes."

"Where's your mother?"

"In the other room."

"Go tell her I want to talk to her about my wife."

As the girl disappeared Totopo turned to Kedle, "She can speak like us! She talks Real-People's Talk!"

"Yes, we've taught her. A year ago she only knew a few words and sentences like a baby but now she talks well enough."

Kedle led the way to the front of the house as he heard the front door opening. The girl and her mother were waiting for him.

"Ask your mother if home."

Totopo listened to the speaking English. To recognized some words.

"She says she thinks s better go ask your wife if that far yet."

The ambo kondodles else.

"Ama says, 'Who interpreted, squinting h Real-People fashion."

"This is Totopo, my r

After her daughter answer the ambo kond feelingly. The bagol k obvious embarrassment.

"What does your m Kedle.

She averted her face wicked. Naughty! Na know the Bible says one shall be one flesh, no women, or one man an

Kedle interrupted, "I'm too old to learn this deaf. She must teach i what else did she say?"

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"Abortion! Who sa abortion?"

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"I know, but you asl

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Totopo noticed tha kept glancing at her Totopo smiled in retur her respond whole-he like to get to know her eyes. But I can't rea understand what they ever read cooled-off ey



"Ask your mother if I can take my wife home."

Totopo listened to the girl and her mother speaking English. To her delight she recognized some words.

"She says she thinks so but perhaps we had better go ask your wife if she feels like walking that far yet."

The ambo kondodle was saying something else.

"Ama says, 'Who is this?' the girl interpreted, squinting her nose at Totopo in Real-People fashion.

"This is Totopo, my new wife."

After her daughter interpreted Kedle's answer the ambo kondodle spoke long and feelingly. The bagol kondodle hesitated in obvious embarrassment.

"What does your mother say?" prodded Kedle.

She averted her face. "She says you are wicked. Naughty! Naughty! She says you know the Bible says one man and one woman shall be one flesh, not one man and two women, or one man and ten women."

Kedle interrupted, "You tell your mother I'm too old to learn this new talk. My ears are deaf. She must teach it to the children. But what else did she say?"

"You don't want to hear."

"Tell me."

"She asks if this is why Diye let someone perform this abortion."

"Abortion! Who said anything about an abortion?"

"Ama knew. It was plain to see."

"By all the spirits, you're supposed to be blind."

"I know, but you asked me what she said."

"Let's go see Diye then," said Kedle, turning on his heel and leading the way to the house-sick.

Totopo noticed that the bagol kondodle kept glancing at her and smiling shyly. Totopo smiled in return. Her loneliness made her respond whole-heartedly to the girl. I'd like to get to know her, she decided. I like her eyes. But I can't read blue eyes. I don't understand what they're saying. Who could ever read cooled-off eyes? I do love her long

red hair though. It covers her all around like a purupuru!

Kedle turned back and told Totopo to start for home. She stopped, puzzled, as loneliness swept over her once again. The bagol kondodle had heard and was watching her sympathetically. She raised anquished black eyes to the cooled-off ones, and they now seemed no longer cold. The girl waved and said, "Puyo, angoo, I'll see you later."

Totopo hurried homeward, determined that they should not overtake her since they evidently did not want her company. The words, "Puyo, angoo" kept sounding in her mind, with that slight accent.

She had been sitting by her fire for half an hour before she heard Kedle's voice. He stuck his head in the door.

"You made it home, Itemo." He came in and squatted by the fire, seemingly ill at ease.

"I've got a problem. I would like Diye to share our feast of fish and rice tonight. She needs good food to tempt her appetite. She isn't eating well at all and has lost a lot of weight."

Totopo waited. She determined not to help him with what he was trying to say. Finally he continued.

"Would you mind if I took a can of the fish and half the rice to her?"

"Of course not. Take it all. It's yours."

"No. It's yours. I'll only take half of it for Diye."

"Take it all. I'm not going to eat any of it. I don't want it!"

"Aw, come on, little Konopu, don't be difficult," pleaded the harried man.

Totopo wanted to yell that she was not his little Konopu. She was Poropa's. But she didn't dare.

"Won't you eat half of it?"

She refused to answer.

"Shall I come and cook it for you myself?"

No answer. He sighed and turned to the new kettle. He measured out half the rice and took one can of fish.

Totopo sat nibbling at a kaukau in the dusk when she heard a cough and Keledle-Ma immediately appeared at the door.

"May I come in?"