

"Owiyo."

"Here is Pingi's kaukau." She placed a bilum by the door. "Oh, I see Kedle bought you a new kettle at the store. How nice!" she lifted the lid.

"Why, fish and rice! How you rate! Mind if I stay and have some too?"

"Not at all! I'd love to have you stay!"

"Shall I cook it for us then?"

"Yes, go ahead."

Keledle-Ma picked up the kettle and then stuck her head out the door and called into the darkness, "Tende-yo. Tende-yo -eyo."

There came an answering little boy yodel.

"Tende-yo. I'm here at the new house. Come here when you want me."

He came immediately. Why, he's just the same size as my own little Teni, thought Totopo and sighed with homesickness.

"Do you have a little brother?"

"Yes, three of them. One is just Tende's size."

"Any sisters?"

"No. My father's other wife has one daughter though, and two sons."

"But your mother has only four?"

"No, I have an older brother also."

The kettle of rice was now hanging over the fire.

"No, he is in his last year of high school at lalibu."

"How interesting. Our school here at Piamble has only been going for three years. Some of our boys attended the school at Kauapena though and have gone on to Mendi and lalibu high schools. We now have the first three grades here, and three teachers."

"I saw the Buka teacher this afternoon."

"Did you? And what did you think of him?" Tende inched closer to Totopo and was soon snuggling against her as she encircled him with her arm. When the rice was cooked Totopo ate her share, plus fish, with a surprisingly good appetite.

Keledle-Ma left her at last, towing the sleepy Tende. She detoured up around by the manhouse. Kedle sat by the fire in the big living-room area of the manhouse. He looked up quickly.

"Any success?"

"Yes, Man. She talked and cuddled Tende and ate a good helping of rice and fish."

"Woman, you amaze me."

"It was nothing."

"Now if I just knew whether or not Diye had eaten hers."

"I imagine she has. I think she's having a hard time refusing kaukau. She's certainly not the girl to let fish and rice set around."

"I'd appreciate it if you'd check."

"I will and . . ."

"Yes?"

She wanted to ask him to leave Totopo alone tonight but that would be overstepping her mark. She had seen something akin to terror leap into the girl's eyes when she bade her good-night with the customary "sleep well". She would have liked to remind him that there were several other wives who had weaned their youngest. But that would be useless too.

"Nothing. I'll let you know if Diye hasn't eaten."

She disappeared into the night and did not return. Kedle relaxed, crawled into the bedroom beside his two older sons and slept.

Totopo woke at dawn relieved to find that she had not been visited, but had slept the night through without interruption.

The hours dragged slowly by. No one appeared. "I'd love to go out but if I do the whole community will stare, or should I say, the whole family?" she asked herself wryly.

When Keledle-Ma came by that evening with Pingi's kaukau, Totopo's question burst from her.

"Can't I make a garden? Am I not to be given a plot of ground to work?"

"Our husband will probably assign you one next week. Why so anxious? The grind will begin soon enough. You need a little get-acquainted time first."

"Get-acquainted time!" Totopo ground out the words between clenched teeth. "I'm going to go crazy sitting here alone all day."

"Were you alone all day?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't even go out?"

"No. I don't know anyone and when everyone stares so I can't face them."

Again Kedle left before Totopo was grateful.

Keledle-Ma came by and had said she could stay below Pingi's pen if she worked. Next week he would work the other side of the garden, the main garden.

Totopo thanked her for her hard all day breaking spade Number One handle right up against and around the talking to the sow as she

"Later, when you are home you will have to grow your own food, Pingi."

Grun, grunt.

"So you had better be penned up and fed your Oink oink."

Totopo walked slowly at dusk. She wondered if she was having every other night

CHAPTER NINE

Just as Totopo finished her kaukau preparatory to sleep she heard a greeting from the door.

"Yes?"

"I've come to talk to you, young and rich but anxious to see the kaukau belonged."

"Owiyo."

The girl (or woman) catcher. Totopo gazed at her face with high cheeks but she looked back at her. For she had a baby in her down her back — was more than Totopo.

"Sit down, please."

The young woman made herself comfortable on the dying fire.

"I'm one of your people, girl would persist until it showed all her

Again Kedle left before daylight and again Totopo was grateful.

Kedle-Ma came by later to say that Kedle had said she could start a small garden just below Pingi's pen if she was that anxious to work. Next week he would show her a plot on the other side of the government road for her main garden.

Totopo thanked her. She worked long and hard all day breaking the ground with the spade Number One had lent her. She worked right up against and around Pingi's pen, often talking to the sow as she worked.

"Later, when you are used to your new home you will have to run free and find your own food, Pingi."

Grunt, grunt.

"So you had better enjoy this time of being penned up and fed your fill."

Oink oink.

Totopo walked slowly up the path in the dusk. She wondered if she could count on having every other night to herself.

CHAPTER NINE

Just as Totopo finished the last bite of her kaukau preparatory to going to the garden, she heard a greeting call from outside her door.

"Yes?"

"I've come to talk to you." The voice was young and rich but unfamiliar. She was anxious to see the person to whom it belonged.

"Owiyo."

The girl (or woman?) was a real eye-catcher. Totopo gazed at the striking broad face with high cheekbones. Lively brown eyes looked back at her. The girl — no, woman, for she had a baby in the bilum that hung down her back — was much larger in frame than Totopo.

"Sit down, please."

The young woman smiled as she made herself comfortable on the other side of the dying fire.

"I'm one of your fellow-wives," the girl said, girl would persist. Her smile widened until it showed all her wellformed teeth.

"Do you mind?"

"Mind what?"

"That one of your fellow-wives should come and intrude so boldly. Maybe you don't want to know us."

"Oh, my no. I do want to know you. I know there are nine of you and I want to get to know each one of you."

The girl took the baby from her bilum and sat him on her lap. Totopo thought instantly of Kariyapa. This baby was just a few months older.

"My name is Nekindi but I am already being called Jeep-Ma. This is Jeep," she said, squinting her nose down at her little son.

"Jeep? How cute! Why did you call him Jeep?"

"Because he was born in the mission jeep. I had a difficult labor and couldn't deliver so the kondodles put me in the jeep to take me to lalibu Hospital. But he was born before we got there. Mrs. Talbot said all those bumps made him come."

Totopo laughed delightedly. She held her hands out to the baby.

"Jeep! Jeep! Come and see me, Jeep."

The baby chuckled but sat contentedly in his mother's arms.

"What number are you?" Totopo grinned.

"I'm Number Eight" Jeep-Ma chuckled.

They sat awhile in companionable silence. Totopo thought how nice it was to sit in silence with a friend again, instead of being alone.

"The reason I came was to ask if you would like to go to church with us this morning."

"Oh, really? Would Kedle let me?"

"Yes. If you go he will probably come along, though he won't go in. Many men sit outside and talk during the service."

"I see you are wearing clothes, Itemo. Do you always?"

"Most of the time. There are three of us wives who really believe in all the church teaches. We would like to be baptized."

"What would our husband say to that?"

"Oh, he wouldn't mind. He encourages us to go to church. He says he can see a real difference in the three of us who really

believe."

"How is that?"

"We don't fight as much."

"Truly?"

"Truly."

"But he doesn't believe himself?"

"No. He says religion is for the women and children. He says he is too old and deaf to understand."

"Who are the wives who truly believe?"

"Number One and Number Six along with myself."

"And you three don't fight?"

"That's right. We don't fight."

"But you used to, before you believed?"

"Oh, I never did myself. My vices lay along other lines. But they way Number One used to be a real scrapper."

"Keledle-Ma?"

"Yes."

"That's hard to believe."

"I know. She's pretty wonderful, isn't she?"

"She is. I could love her like a mother. And Number Six?"

"They say she could hold up her end well enough in a fight at one time too."

"But you never did fight?"

"No, not here. I scrapped as well as the next when I was a child, you understand."

"You didn't feel like fighting when he married Number Nine?"

"Never! That was the day I was set free!" Jeep-Ma paused to release Jeep's fingers from the handhold he had on her hair.

"We are told when we emerge from the cocoon of childhood that life has just begun for us. My happy butterfly days didn't last long. Kedle bought me and I entered a much darker, unhappier life than childhood. So the day he married Diye I emerged for a second time. Maybe not from a cocoon, maybe it is better compared with a cave or a pit."

"You mean it? I thought wives always resented it when their husband married again."

"Most do, I guess, but not I. Being an old man's plaything wasn't my idea of living."

"An old man's plaything," Totopo repeated thoughtfully.

"Yes, half of the time you are like a

singing doll on display while he shows the world his newest piece of merchandise. The other half of the time you are humping it to satisfy a lecherous old man. Some people like the life, would you believe? Number Nine does. She thought she had made a great conquest when she hooked our man. She considered it a tremendous victory over eight other women. It's all in the way you look at it, you see?"

"I hadn't realized there could be more than one way of looking at it."

"Well, we will have to visit again soon. If you are going with us I'll go and inform the Old Man."

"Thank you. Is there somewhere along the way I could wash?"

"There is. I'll show you my favourite bathing spot."

Jeep-Ma hurried away to tell Kedle while Totopo gathered her soap, comb and new clothes. Then they were off to a nearby river together.

The girls washed happily in the cold mountain stream. Little Jeep was given a dunking which caused him to howl in terror.

"This is the Koglodle River, the Dead River," said Jeep-Ma.

"Dead?"

"Yes. It had a fight long ago with the Adleponga River, the Cold-Sweet River. The Cold-Sweet won."

"It did?"

"Yes. See that stone over there with the hole right through it? That was its fatal wound. Cold-Sweet spread it there. Now it's Dead."

"How interesting."

They had washed and dressed and were combing their hair when they heard a woman's yodel from the bridge.

"Ready yet?"

"Ready," they called as they hurried up the riverbank to the road.

Keledle-Ma was waiting for them with another pretty woman.

"Meet Dokta-Ma," she said to Totopo.

Totopo smiled a greeting.

"She is Number Six on the marriage hierarchy," continued Number One. "And this

is Dokta." She laid her shoulder of a little girl at "The aidpost orderly del was named after him."

They heard voices an Kedle coming over the Nine close at his heels. M at a slight distance.

Keledle-Ma frowned Totopo. "Do you want t our man?"

"If you do."

"No? We'll go on the

Totopo and her friend The group who came v outside. However mos behind Mr. Talbot v Glancing around Totoj Kedle nor Number Nin could imagine her out th him as a woman dare thought needed her fo then she reprimanded he him, and I don't! then him? She turned her thoi

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"They are teachers fr our headmaster and she Their names are Joe and

Totopo could not tak She was pretty, so pois reminded her some of Kauapena but she was Nancy. Or wasn't that genteel? More sophistic not quite put her finger o

When Mr. Talbot g singing Tamara played a

is Dokta." She laid her hand on the slim shoulder of a little girl about five years of age. "The aidpost orderly delivered Dokta, so she was named after him."

They heard voices and looked back to see Kedle coming over the hilltop with Number Nine close at his heels. More women followed at a slight distance.

Keledle-Ma frowned and turned to Totopo. "Do you want to wait and walk with our man?"

"If you do."

"No? We'll go on then."

Totopo and her friends entered the church. The group who came with Kedle sat down outside. However most of them filed in behind Mr. Talbot when he appeared. Glancing around Totopo saw that neither Kedle nor Number Nine had come in. She could imagine her out there sitting as near to him as a woman dare sit in public. The thought needled her for some reasons, but then she reprimanded herself. If I don't want him, and I don't! then why can't she have him? She turned her thoughts to the service.

Mr. and Mrs. Talbot sat at the front of the church with their four children. One boy was older than Tamara, and the other two younger, Itemo. Tamara and her mother each held an orphan baby on their laps.

There was also another family up front, brown-skinned and extremely good-looking. The pretty young wife sat closer to her handsome husband than Totopo had ever seen a wife sit in public. They had two darling sons.

"Who are the Real-People couple?" Totopo asked Jeep-Ma in a whisper.

"They are teachers from the coast. He is our headmaster and she teaches first grade. Their names are Joe and Janice Holowi."

Totopo could not take her eyes off Janice. She was pretty, so poised, so graceful. She reminded her some of Nancy Wembi of Kauapena but she was more dignified than Nancy. Or wasn't that the word? More genteel? More sophisticated? Totopo could not quite put her finger on the quality.

When Mr. Talbot got up to lead the singing Tamara played an accordion. Totopo

gave them her full attention. She had never seen an accordion before and she was as delighted with it as with Peter's guitar.

Totopo's thoughts strayed to Peter when the singing was over. "Some day you'll hear me calling," he had sung. Was it only a month ago? It seemed to Totopo that she had lived nearly a lifetime since then. She had been so young and carefree the day she had listened to him. Now she was an old married woman and so much wiser. That is to say, she thought ruefully, I know a lot more about men than I did then. Does that make me wiser?

Tamara and her older brother began playing an accordin and trumpet duet and once again Totopo was all attention. What marvellous music makers there are in this world. A horn! Now that is really something!

The iye kondodle was talking. Totopo's mind wandered. There was so much to think about. At other times she caught quite a bit of what was being said.

The service was over but Totopo delayed going outside as long as possible. She saw Tamara putting her accordion away and slipped up to her shyly.

"May I touch it?"

"Kapogla."

"You look lovely in your blue laplap and blouse," complimented Tamara. "Come and see me sometime."

Totopo smiled wistfully.

Totopo was on her way home from the garden a month later when she heard a truck coming in the distance. She waited at the side of the road to see it pass. She had seen several trucks go by and it was a sight worth waiting for. They sped by like arrows released from their bows.

Before the truck appeared four young girls came in sight.

"Hello," called one.

"Where are you going?" the customary Imbo-Ungu greeting.

"Are you resting?" asked a third.

"No, I'm just waiting to see this truck that's coming."

"Where are all of you going?"

"We're just coming home from school."

"School?"

"Yes," they chorused.

"You mean English school? Aren't you too old to be in school?" They must have all been about her age.

"Yes, we would be too old to go to English school, but this is a special school for wenepoma, teenagers."

Totopo could hardly believe her ears. "Who teaches you?"

"Teddy and Tamara."

"Really? What do you learn?"

"Maths from Teddy, and Tamara teaches us reading, writing and spelling in Pidgin."

The truck had come and gone, but Totopo was more interested in the possibility of going to school.

"Truly! I wish I could go."

"Come along. They would be glad to have you."

"But I couldn't. My husband wouldn't let me."

"Why not ask him? You could still make gardens every morning. As we tell our parents, it is only for part of the afternoon."

"Oh, I'd love it. I'll think about asking him."

Totopo mused about her present life situation as she followed the trail homeward. She had met many new people. She found this stimulating and interesting. However the ugly stark reality of her relationship with her husband consumed her. It had not improved. In the beginning she had thought it might become easier with time. Now she knew it never would.

He came every night now, except when an occasional cardgame kept him home. Some nights he only fondled her, but this too was unbearable. Many nights she feared she would start screaming and never stop. She prayed desperately to Kuro Kelkawe and God. Mercifully They (or was it He? Were they One and the Same?) would make Kedle fall into his deep snoring sleep before her nerves were utterly shattered. Then she could slowly edge away from him in the darkness.

He never left before dawn any more, but stayed in her hut until she left for the garden. If she did not get away early enough she must endure the hostility of some of the wives when

they arrived with his breakfast after searching for him at the manhouse.

Numbers One, Six and Eight were never unkind. Number Two and Three were indifferent. But Number Four, Five, Seven and Nine hated her. Diye never missed a chance of voicing her hostility. Extremely verbal, her cutting words left Totopo lacerated and bleeding emotionally. Even if their husband was present at her diatribes he took no notice, Itemo, except to say occasionally, "Now, now, we must learn to live together peaceably." Lately he only said it if she made some reply to Diye. Accordingly she felt that his quiet rebuke was for her alone. Was he absolutely deaf to all the things Number Nine said? Perhaps that odd deafness he professed in the presence of the kondodle's teachings also overtook him when Diye began her harassment.

She tried to avoid her in every way possible but she could not keep her from coming to her home with his breakfast. When she started leaving for her garden earlier each morning, Number Nine began coming earlier. Totopo then began rising well before dawn so she could cook their kaukau and be off before her antagonist's early arrival, but that had led to another problem. In spite of her quiet, stealthy movements her husband had awakened yesterday morning.

"Why, Konopu kogol, it is still dark! No need to get up yet! Come!"

She had cowered in the corner, unable to move, so he had gone to her. He was unusually virile after his good night's sleep and she vowed never to let that happen again. Number Nine was the lesser of the two evils. Far better to endure her hostility than to spark off an extra love scene with her husband!

There were four bright spots in Totopo's dark life: the Saturday morning market on the singing ground and the three church services a week. The latter were particularly good as her husband did not attend them. He usually went to the Saturday market with her if the Buka teacher had not shown up first for a cardgame. At the market she often saw Janice Holowi and Tamara Talbot. And two

weeks ago she had had a Rami, a girl from her o had married a Podlepo n had come to the market. I hour's walk from Piaml Totopo had forgotten Ra been close friends, but t day had really lifted To had come home with her afternoon that Saturday mind turned now from h a minute to ponder Ram

Rami was seven or eig and she was literally sca There had been two di Podlepo since she had be first woman had been c nurse, who sent her, b Provincial Hospital. S arrival. The governmen return fare of any corpse to get patients to the l would bury her body i must get it home themse

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Totopo thought,dea to life.

When Totopo reach place unusually silent, r women talking. She qu the house and went i huts in search of somec met Number Four coi Though the woman's f

weeks ago she had had a real surprise there. Rami, a girl from her own Tona tribe who had married a Podlepo man the year before, had come to the market. Podlepo was only an hour's walk from Piamble. To be truthful, Totopo had forgotten Rami as they had never been close friends, but the sight of her that day had really lifted Totopo's spirits. Rami had come home with her and stayed till mid-afternoon that Saturday and the next. Her mind turned now from her own problems for a minute to ponder Rami's.

Rami was seven or eight months pregnant and she was literally scared almost to death. There had been two difficult childbirths at Podlepo since she had become pregnant. The first woman had been carried to the mission nurse, who sent her, by car, to the Mendi Provincial Hospital. She died soon after arrival. The government refused to pay the return fare of any corpse. It cost them enough to get patients to the hospital. Either they would bury her body in Mendi or the tribe must get it home themselves.

The tribe dared not let her body be buried in a strange area or her spirit would surely return to eat all of them. They raised the money and brought the corpse home, but the men warned the women, "Never again!"

A month later another woman had a bad time.

"Hurry up and bear that child, woman," the men yelled. "You just want a truckride to Mendi. Well, you're not getting it!" The woman had given birth, eventually, but the baby was stillborn and the mother had been very near death. Now, weeks later, she had still not recovered her health.

"I just know I'm going to have a hard time," predicted Rami. "What am I going to do, Totopo? I don't want to die."

Totopo thought death might be preferable to life.

When Totopo reached home she found the place unusually silent, no children playing, no women talking. She quickly put her bilums in the house and went in and out among the huts in search of someone, anyone. At last she met Number Four coming out of her door. Though the woman's face did not encourage

friendliness, Totopo spoke to her.

"Where is everyone?"

"Everyone has gone to see the fight at Siminji's house. He axed his stepdaughter. They say her left arm is cut right off and she is dying!"

"Are you going to Siminji's house now?"

"Yes, come along."

The victim was lying on the ground only partially conscious. The left arm was still connected to the body, but not by much. The bone had been cut. Dokta was there stuffing cotton into the wound to try to staunch the bleeding. Nausea took sudden hold of Totopo's stomach as she looked at the flesh and bone, the fat and tissue of the chubby girl's left breast laid open. She turned aside quickly only to see another young girl vomiting behind some bushes. She whirled away from her and ran to the back of the crowd. She discovered some fellow-wives sitting there and plopped down quickly beside Jeep-Ma.

"Make you sick?" asked Jeep-Ma.

Totopo raised her eyebrows in the affirmative.

"Sorry. Think about something else for a while."

The men were yelling at one another as they assembled a stretcher to carry the girl down to the road. Word had been sent for the mission jeep to come out to meet them.

"Here, man, tie those two poles together, can't you?"

"Where's the rope?"

"I just put some there. Ai, fellows, where's that vine I just put there?"

"Isn't that corner tied yet?"

"No, where's the rope? Are you all deaf?"

Nobody could hear anyone except his nearest neighbor. There were a surplus of bosses among the onlookers as well.

"Hurry up with that corner."

"Faster men, the jeep's down there waiting."

"You're all wasting your time. She's going to bleed to death anyway."

Totopo turned back to Jeep-Ma. "Where's Siminji?"

"He ran off to the bush."

"What kept him from finishing her off?"

"Kimu grabbed his axe and then some other men helped get him away from her."

"Why did he want to kill her?"

"Her mother says Siminji wanted to make the girl his wife, and she rebelled."

"He wanted to marry his stepdaughter?"

"Yes. Now he admits the only reason he married her mother five years ago was because he liked the looks of her daughter. 'Did you think I wanted an old woman like you?' he asked her mother today."

"But she would have been only a little girl then!"

"I know. Isn't it awful?"

"It's terrible."

"She has always been a chubby little thing, even years ago. I suppose that made her extra desirable."

"How come her own father's tribe let her go with the mother instead of keeping her like they usually do?"

"Her father was killed in a land fight," answered Dokta-Ma. "The tribe was small and poor from so many fights over land. Siminji drove a hard bargain paying little for her mother, saying she was 'secondhand' and refusing to take her without the daughter. The tribe was so hard-up that they agreed to it."

"For five years she has thought of him as a father," murmured Totopo. "Today she's supposed to suddenly switch her thinking. Now he's her husband, or wants to be."

"Mm," agreed Jeep-Ma.

"The poor kid."

"Either live with me . . . or die! Not much of a choice, was it?"

CHAPTER TEN

When Rami didn't show up at the market one Saturday Totopo took Tamara by the hand. "My husband left this morning for a big cardgame at Nagapo. He won't be back until tomorrow evening. Please come home with me and teach me to read Pidgin."

"Kapogla nagol . . . if he's gone why don't you come to my house? All the materials are there."

"He said I couldn't go to school at the

mission. If you come to my house he couldn't call that couldn't call that 'school at the mission'."

"Kapogla then. Come with me while I ask my mother and get the books."

Tamara received permission. It was arranged that Teddy would come to walk her home in the late afternoon. Totopo gazed hungrily at the books and pencils in Tamara's hand. She could hardly wait to get home and get started.

"This word is Kowi and this one is Sita," began Tamara when they were seated by Totopo's fireplace. "Kowi is a boy and Sita is his sister. This says 'Book One'."

"So book is spelled b-u-k in Pidgin. That looks funny. I'm used to b-o-o-k."

Tamara stared Totopo. "I thought you never went to school."

"I didn't, but I always wanted to go. I learned all I could from my two brothers."

"You know the alphabet and the word 'book'. What else do you know?"

Totopo recited from memory a page of the second grade reader. Tamara listened with growing astonishment.

"And you want *me* to teach you Pidgin?"

"Yes, please."

"But you already know so much English. Pidgin is so easy! You'll learn it in no time since you already know the letters and can read English."

She opened the book to page four.

"This is 'i stap'. Read me this page now."

"Papa i stap. Mama i stap. Kowi i stap. Sita i stap."

"Good. Now what is this word?"

"Long."

"Yes, and this one?"

"I don't know."

"It's house. See, you can sound it out; au says the same thing as ou or ow in English. Haus."

"Oh, I see."

In no time they had finished the first primer. Pidgin was a phonetic language, Totopo discovered. Once Tamara had taught her the sounds each letter made, she thought it was great fun sounding out new words for herself. Each one seemed like a discovery, a

new world conquered. more excited. Tamara a little.

Totopo immediately second primer. Some children came to watch absorbed she hardly reached the last page. Keledle-Ma entered bananas and sugar cane.

"Oh, thank you, K good as my mother! I v that tamara usually has

Totopo dug coals fr up a fire. They talke kaukau and dried then they were baking in the up the third and last pr

"Wouldn't you like instead?"

"If it's all the same I've spent hours alone l can do that when you know how to spell in that from these books to help me with any w in this last, hardest bo

Their audience left v to reading again. Whe last book she laid it as koinje, her bamboo tor

"Thank you for i Pidgin, Konopu," she the baked kaukau.

"Thank you for let was fun for me, too. I' who learned this fast b come to my classes ar their age who can read

"Everybody says we learn. Why do you try

"Because it's not fai a teenager myself. If I l to learn I'd want one. way I could teach the he doesn't enjoy it. without him though."

"How old are you?"

"Fourteen."

"Bani thinks I'm ab

new world conquered. She grew more and more excited. Tamara only needed to assist a little.

Totopo immediately began to devour the second primer. Some of the other wives and children came to watch them but she was so absorbed she hardly noticed. Just as she reached the last page of the second primer Keledle-Ma entered the hut with some bananas and sugar cane.

"Oh, thank you, Keledle-Ma. You're as good as my mother! I was reading and forgot that Tamara usually has a midday meal."

Totopo dug coals from the ashes and blew up a fire. They talked while they peeled kaukau and dried them by the flames. Once they were baking in the ashes Totopo picked up the third and last primer.

"Wouldn't you like to write for awhile instead?"

"If it's all the same to you I'd rather read. I've spent hours alone learning how to write. I can do that when you're gone. True, I don't know how to spell in Pidgin but I can learn that from these books later. Now I need you to help me with any words I can't sound out in this last, hardest book."

Their audience left when they settled down to reading again. When Totopo finished the last book she laid it aside and picked up her koinje, her bamboo tongs.

"Thank you for teaching me to read Pidgin, Konopu," she said as she withdrew the baked kaukau.

"Thank you for letting me teach you! It was fun for me, too. I've never taught anyone who learned this fast before. I wish you could come to my classes and show the kids a girl their age who can read."

"Everybody says wenopoma are too old to learn. Why do you try to teach them?"

"Because it's not fair to them if I don't. I'm a teenager myself. If I had never had a chance to learn I'd want one. Mom said if I felt that way I could teach them. Teddy helps me but he doesn't enjoy it. I'd be afraid to do it without him though."

"How old are you?"

"Fourteen."

"Bani thinks I'm about fourteen, too. He is

about four years older than I. His teachers figure he is about eighteen."

"Yes. I thought we were about the same age."

The two girls sat together in friendly silence, eating their kaukau.

"Thank you for calling me Konopu," murmured Tamara. "The other girls don't. Only a few old women call me that."

Totopo studied the bagol kondodle. "Cooled-off eyes are hard to read, Konopu. But we'll be friends."

"We can't be very close friends when most of your time is taken up by your husband. He's in the way, you see."

"I know."

"What's it like to be married to an old man?"

"No good. I'd rather be dead."

"I imagined it must be pretty bad. How I wish I could help you!"

"There is no way you can help me unless you'd pray to God to strike my husband dead."

"Oh, I couldn't."

"I could and I have! You could too, if you were married to him. You could do that a lot easier than you could sleep with him!"

"Yes, that's no doubt true."

"Have you thought about what it would be like?"

"Yes."

"How come?"

"Well, since I've met you I've thought a lot about what it would be like to be in your position. I almost said your shoes."

Totopo laughed. "And before that?"

Tamara looked intently at Totopo. "I don't think you have any trouble reading blue eyes."

"I'm learning fast. Go on."

"Well . . ."

"Yes?"

"Your husband has told my father more than once that if he could marry a kondodle he wouldn't take any more wives."

"Oh, I see." Totopo chuckled. "Can we look forward to the day when you will join us?"

"Not on your life! The very idea nearly makes me vomit!"

"Exactly! And what does your father say when my husband tells him that?"

"He never lets on that he has caught the point."

"And my husband never asked him more straightforward?"

"No. Not Kedle. Other men have, but not Kedle."

"What does your father answer them?"

"He tells them there are not enough pigs in the world to buy me."

"Not enough pigs in the world . . ." murmured Totopo, slowly, thoughtfully. "Oh, Tamara, you lucky, lucky girl!"

"You're right, Totopo. I am very fortunate."

"I think there's a great gulf fixed between you and me like the one your father told about last Sunday, between the rich man and Abraham."

"Yes, I know."

"I suppose this gulf is just as everlasting as the one in the Bible."

"It doesn't have to be! It ought not to be! Would to God that I could do something to help change it!"

"Come, let me show you my pig." Totopo rose abruptly, putting the subject behind her, and held out one hand to Tamara. Tamara took it and they walked down the path together.

"Totopo, your hands are so fine. I was reading a book the other day about a family of fine children. The father said that all his babies were thoroughbreds. That's what you are. You're a thoroughbred. I've been thinking it all afternoon."

"What's it mean?"

"Oh, it's hard to explain. It means the best, the very best," floundered Tamara. "The best of birth, of breeding, of heritage . . ."

"Would you call Janice Holowi a thoroughbred?"

"Yes! Yes, I would. You know what I mean then?"

"Yes. I've been searching for a word to describe her to myself. And you would class me with her?"

"Yes, I would. The only difference has been in your opportunities. If you had had equal chances you would be equal."

Totopo said nothing more but hugged the compliment to herself.

They stood at the pen.

"My pig's name is Pingi."

"Pingi, eh? Sooty!"

"Yes."

"She's a big one!"

"Yes. She's due to farrow any day now."

Totopo began scratching Pingi and she flopped over on one side.

"... and great was the fall thereof," giggled Tamara.

"Tell me about white man's marriage customs."

It took some time to explain them. Tamara did her best. At the end Totopo turned to her with a smile.

"Not enough pigs in the world . . . but he will give you away to the man you want to go to!"

"Right."

"I can't fathom it. Such love! For girls, for women. It's beyond me."

The time had flown by and Teddy came to collect his sister.

They had not been gone for more than half an hour when Kedle stuck his head in the doorway. Totopo was startled. She had been sitting by her fire deep in thought.

"Surprised you, didn't I?"

"I thought you weren't coming back until tomorrow night."

"I couldn't stay away from you."

"Did you think I'd be up to no good?"

"Possibly."

"Whatever could I do wrong?" asked Totopo, feeling guilty over her illicit 'schooling' with Tamara.

"Well, you might have been visiting, or entertaining, my son."

"Your son? But he's married."

"Ah, but his wife has a baby."

"Oh, go on, you filthy-minded old man!"

"Thank you, but I believe I'll stay."

Two evenings later Totopo could see that Pingi was ready to farrow. She had refused the food that Totopo had brought to her. The girl gathered lots of soft ferns, of the type that mother's use for babies' bottoms, and prepared to sit up with her. It was a delightful

excuse for an escape!

"Thank you for ch of the day, Pingi."

He came in search

"Don't you think care of herself?"

"Probably, but m them dry immediately she found that more c helps to get them breathe deeper, and g around."

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

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Rami! Dear Rami for two days and wa enter the spirit world.

Just fourteen hou been standing by her longing for the tona s the sun seldom rose in the place was covere

excuse for an escape from her husband.

"Thank you for choosing the night instead of the day, Pingi."

He came in search of her.

"Don't you think that old sow can take care of herself?"

"Probably, but my mother tried wiping them dry immediately after they are born and she found that more of them live, that way. It helps to get them moving, makes them breathe deeper, and gets their blood walking around."

After watching the sow straining with her contractions for a time he announced, "I'm going to bed."

When Totopo didn't respond he ascended the hill and turned left in the direction of the manhouse.

Totopo sighed in relief and smiled into the darkness.

Pingi produced ten lively piglets and was feeding them contentedly when Totopo climbed the trail to her home just after midnight.

The following week Totopo had another new experience. She became a woman at last in the full sense of the word. Physically she could now claim the title which her social position had already given her.

She moved to the kambe ulke, the isolation hut, and decided that the discomfort of the poorer hut was easily outweighed by the fact that it was out-of-bounds for the men. It meant a whole week of freedom from her husband.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The dark figures moving around gathering mown grass were a part of the darkness that covered the whole land and seemed to envelope Totopo's very heart and soul.

Rami! Dear Rami! She had been in labor for two days and was now nearly ready to enter the spirit world.

Just fourteen hours earlier Totopo had been standing by her hut in the semi-dawn, longing for the tona sunrises. Here at Piamble the sun seldom rose in glory. Usually as now, the place was covered with fog, deep thick

fog. If she came out early enough she could watch the fog move up the valley. Sometimes it came in the form of rolls of cotton wool like she had seen at the clinic; billowy, roll after roll, rolling on and over one another. Other times it was gray and wispy, and yet others, gray and soupy as it had been this morning; ugly, cold, heart-chilling. It came on and on in layer after layer, whatever form it took, until it covered everything and smothered the last bit of early morning joy out of the girl who had always met the day with eager anticipation. If her life had been happy she could have easily overcome the gloom brought on by the fog, but since it was not happy and never could be again seemingly, the fog emphasized and accentuated her unhappiness.

Suddenly out of the thick gray fog came a yodel, calling, yes! calling her!

"Totopo-yo. Totopo-yo-yo."

Fear shut off the source of her blood. What could be wrong with anyone she knew or loved? Who could be calling her?

"Totopo-yo-yo."

She did her best to put a stone in her liver and managed to answer, "Yo-yo. What -iyo?"

Then came the message: "Rami and her mother-in-law are on the government road below your home. They ask for you to come and walk to the clinic with them."

She rushed in to grab her bilum, calling to her sleeping husband, "Kedle! Kedle! Wake up and listen! I'm off to the clinic with Rami. She needs me!"

She had flown out the door and down the trail as though her feet had wings and felt none of the heaviness that weighed on her heart.

Rami was squatting on the ground at the point where Totopo's trail met the government road. Totopo threw her arms around her friend.

"Konopu! Oh, my Konopu!"

With her friend's arm around her, Rami rose and proceeded slowly down the road.

"Ah, yes, Konopu, press there," she said as she pushed the girl's arm harder against her back. Totopo gripped and hugged her friend tightly.

"My pains started yesterday morning. I wanted to come to Piamble but Unjo said no. They got stronger and harder during the day. They let up a bit at dusk and I fell asleep. Then they woke me up, hurting so bad I couldn't stand it. I thought I was going to die!"

"Oh, my poor Konopu! Did Unjo say you could come to the clinic now?"

"No, the last thing he said before he left for the manhouse last night was that I must not go or they might send me away . . ." Rami gasped and collapsed on the road. Unjo-Ma and Totopo squatted solicitously beside her.

". . . away on a truck." Rami gasped.

"It's all right, Konopu. Don't talk now."

"Press hard on my back, Konopu."

Totopo pressed until Rami struggled awkwardly to her feet again.

"The pains have been like this all night, Konopu. Pain is eating me. I can't take it! Then at the hour-of-sweet-sleep my mother-in-law said, 'Let's go to Piamble'."

Rami was panting. The hour-of-sweet-sleep, thought Totopo. Four A.M. She's been on the road two hours.

"I couldn't just let her lie there and die," said Unjo-Ma. "I told her I'd come with her. My son is being unreasonable."

They paused for Rami's contractions three more times before they reached the clinic.

"I'm afraid there is nothing I can do," said the missionary nurse after an examination. "The baby's head is pressed so tightly against the pelvis bone that there will be no moving it without instruments. Rami must go to Ialibu. If they can't help her there they will send her on to the Provincial Hospital where the doctors can do a Caesarian."

She paused while her assistant interpreted.

"But what are we going to do? We don't have a truck here today? The men went to Hagen at four this morning. There isn't another vehicle on the station."

"Nevermind," Rami answered. "My husband said I absolutely could not go on to Ialibu or Mendi anyway. I came here against his wishes but I wouldn't dare get in a truck without his permission."

All morning Totopo sat with Rami.

Tamara joined them at times. Her mother checked on the suffering girl every hour. With the help of the drugs she administered, Rami was able to snatch little naps between contractions. Then fresh pain would jerk her awake and she would cry out to the ambo kondodle, "Don't let me die! Don't let me die!"

Unjo appeared on the scene at big-sun. The ambo kondodle began urging him to let his wife go to the Medical Sub-Centre as soon as a vehicle came.

"No. She is going to die anyway. Let her die here."

"But she may not die if she can get help. You must let her go. She will certainly die if she stays here. Dokta and I cannot deliver the child and it is definitely not going to be born without help."

"Don't let me die!" pleaded Rami with terror in her eyes.

"Just let her die," the young man commanded. "I don't have money to bring her corpse back from Mendi."

"You can't just let her die."

When the ambo kondodle was out of sight the man scolded his wife.

"Get up on your knees and push, you worthless woman! Of course you can't deliver that child lying flat on your back! You're just too lazy to push and you want to go for a ride in a truck."

The exhausted girl struggled onto her knees whimpering, "It's no use. I've pushed and pushed. It won't be born." Leaning forward from the kneeling position she laid her face on the woven pitpit platform-bed and wept.

"Stop bawling and push, woman! What do you think the women did in the days before trucks and clinics came? They went off to their little kambe ulke in the bush and delivered their babies all alone. They were strong. They were worthwhile women! You women nowadays just want attention."

"Many, many women died alone in the bush in those days, Son. If you don't know it you certainly ought to," his mother interrupted.

"Shut your mouth, old woman. You

haven't helped her at all. She's going to die anyway. When the women die they worry. They were in a hurry to get them go trucking her. They will never get her body back. Will I?"

Unjo and the ambo kondodle went off for three hours. The ambo kondodle threatened to report to the district officer. Unjo relented. A vehicle appeared.

At four o'clock P.M. the ambo kondodle pulled into the mission station. It got down and went to the store. The ambo kondodle was the driver.

"Are you going to the clinic?"

"Yes, I am."

"Would you take me with you?"

"Who is it?"

"A woman from Piamble."

"What's wrong with her?"

"She's in labor and can't deliver."

"No, I can't take her. I have other passengers up the road. I can't take anyone else."

"Please! She's going to die. Give her help. Our men would help her here but they are in Hagen till late."

"I told you I'm lost. I can't find the clinic."

The passengers emptied the ambo kondodle then with two bags of food. They hurried for them to hurry. The ambo kondodle accelerated and turned back. They were even seated.

Totopo and Tamara went to the clinic, hoping to find the headpastor, had been with them with the ambo kondodle. They told them what had happened.

"He's lying," said the headpastor. "I'll go to the room for her but she's not going to pick up her baby. I'll go to Ialibu. He won't take her in that condition on the same day. She's not fit to eat meat because she's

haven't helped her any. Let me try my way. If she's going to die anyway, let her die here. When the women died in the bush it was no worry. They were in our own territory. If I let them go trucking her off to Mendi how will I ever get her body back? Tell me that! How will I?"

Unjo and the ambo kondodle argued on and off for three hours, whereupon the latter threatened to report him to the government officer. Unjo relented. His wife could go if a vehicle appeared.

At four o'clock P.M. a Real-People's truck pulled into the mission driveway. Passengers got down and went into the mission trade-store. The ambo kondodle hurried up to the driver.

"Are you going to lalibu?"

"Yes, I am."

"Would you take a patient to the haus-sik for me?"

"Who is it?"

"A woman from Podlepo."

"What's wrong with her?"

"She's in labor and can't deliver her baby."

"No, I can't take her. I have a load of passengers up the road. I'm too full. I can't take anyone else."

"Please! She's going to die if she doesn't get help. Our men would take her if they were here but they are in Hagen and won't be back till late."

"I told you I'm loaded. I can't take her, I said."

The passengers emerged from the store just then with two bags of salt. The driver called for them to hurry. He stepped on the accelerator and turned up the driveway before they were even seated.

Totopo and Tamara were standing in front of the clinic, hoping. Mondí, wife of the headpastor, had been discussing the situation with them with the ambo kondodle joined them and told them what the driver had said.

"He's lying," said Mondí. "He would have room for her but the other passengers he is going to pick up have roast pork to take to lalibu. He won't take a woman in her condition on the same truck as he is carrying meat because she would contaminate the

meat."

"Even if she didn't touch it?" asked Tamara.

"Yes, even if she didn't touch it. Men will not be near women who are haemorrhaging. Such women must not go near any food whatsoever."

Just then another young ambo kondodle Totopo had never seen came from the big square house. She was carrying a little boy.

"The driver wouldn't take Rami to lalibu?" she asked. "I see he went in that direction."

Tamara caught Totopo's questioning glance as her mother explained the situation.

"This is Marilyn and her baby, Ronnie," she whispered to Totopo. "She is married to my oldest brother, Ronald. Ronald and Teddy both went to Hagen with my father today."

"Why haven't I seen them around.?"

"Oh, they work on a station called Tongo River, on the other side of Mendi. We don't get to see them very often. They are only here for a couple days now to get supplies and some mechanical work done."

Tamara allegorized as the two girls started back to Rami. "Womanhood lies on the ground at men's feet. They walk over her never caring. But if she is in labor to bring forth a child they stop to trample her more deeply in the mud. I can't bear it, Totopo."

"And she wouldn't be in that state if man himself hadn't put the seed in her. It's no use, Tamara. When I'm with you I think maybe women could amount to something. But today I realize again that they can't. Men will never think that we are worthwhile. They will never care about us."

"But God cares, Konopu."

"But he doesn't do anything about it. Men rule our wold. Men kill the women one way or another. If they don't kill our bodies they kill our spirits. And who is there to stop them?"

"Some day there will be a reckoning day."

"But it will be too late to help us."

The three iye kondodle finally arrived home after dark. After unloading, Mr. Talbot urged the onlookers to help him gather mown grass from the surrounding lawns for padding

the truckbed. Totopo pondered as she gathered grass. It seems like Rami means more to these foreign men than to her own husband. What makes the difference? The question is too deep for me, but whatever the reason, I know there is no hope for us. Our men will never change.

Mrs. Talbot took a pressure lantern and three assistants to the ward to get Rami, as she was no longer able to walk. She was near death from loss of blood.

"Why don't they come?" queried Ronald when he and his father had finished forming a deep bed of grass on the back of the truck. He took his young wife's hand and they started up the path to the clinic ward. Just then his mother appeared with the lantern and three men came into sight around the corner of the ward carrying Rami. They were only managing it in the most awkward manner possible, because each was trying not to touch her more than was absolutely necessary.

Ronald evidently grasped the situation at once for he ran up to them and took Rami's body in his arms. All three carriers stepped back relieved. Totopo gasped as she realized the young man was carrying her right up against his chest. When he reached the truck he lifted her carefully over the side to his father who placed her tenderly on the bed of grass.

If womanhood had been lying in the mud at men's feet, Totopo's heart told her, it had now been lifted and set on a pedestal by the kindly act of that young man. Totopo felt like rays of warm sunshine had burst upon her sad, shivering heart. As the Imbo driver climbed up into the seat and drove off into the night, Totopo wondered if Rami had been conscious enough to realize what the young iye kondodle had done.

Ronald's wife walked up to him and laid her hand on his arm. Totopo searched the pretty young face in the lantern light for signs of jealousy or anger. Instead she saw the woman giving her husband a big smile. Her cooled-off eyes were shining. She is as glad about his act as I am! Totopo thought. Then she saw with a shock that there was blood on Ronald's other arm. Would he die now? or

grow weak? or become bald? lose his manliness? Would he be eaten by a woman? Totopo's consternation eased as she became aware of the young couple's lighthearted conversation.

"Hungry, Honey?"

"Hungry as a bear!"

"When did you eat last?"

"We ate about eleven."

"Come on then. Your Mom and I have fixed one of your favorite meals. Bet you can't guess . . ."

I wonder what a bear is, thought Totopo, as they entered the big square hut.

CHAPTER TWELVE

"Whack!"

Totopo wakened instantly to the realization that someone must have hit Kedle. She opened her eyes just in time to see two burning sticks being knocked together above her. She screamed as the shower of hot coals and sparks landed on her stomach and upper legs. She had seen the gleeful, demoniacal face of Number Nine in the light of the burning wood.

In a flash she was on her feet wrestling with her assistant while another wife was biting their husband's nose and yet another was clawing and digging him. Somehow the half-dazed, half-crazed man struggled to his feet and began tearing at the faces and breasts of his two wives with his long thumbnails. The women screamed and fled out the door with Kedle hard on their heels. He actually grabbed one heel as he crawled out. The woman fell flat on her face. He jumped on top of her, pulled her hair and pummelled and clawed her.

"Bring me burning wood, Keledle!" A crowd had been drawn by the screams.

Inside, Totopo had finally managed to grab a stick from Diye and turn the hot end into her opponent's fat bare belly. Diye stumbled backwards and fell into a corner, screaming.

"Get up and get out!" hissed Totopo, pressing the wood into the woman's shoulder, and then her back. Diye scrambled heavily to

her feet, dropping the stick. Totopo grabbed it up at bare hip in front of her, "I'll make you not war bottom," yelled Totopo as she came through the door to the other.

"I'll take care of you," she said, simultaneously applying the stick to the woman's bare shoulder. The woman's bare shoulder was sufficiently scorched. Number Nine immediately sat down, and the other women embedded bits of charcoal in their mouths. They themselves into little pots.

"Bring me Kewaml," commanded Keledle when the women had chastened Diye sufficiently.

"So Number Five was the one," said Totopo.

She got up and went for coals on her pitpit. When she lit a torch and made it burn, she went to the nearest stream. She poured water up to her neck. Her head began to chatter but her burns were not so bad. They had been sheer torture.

When she could stand, she went to the stream no longer, she crouched on the bank around her shoulders. The burning drove her back, but she alternated between the burning and the cold, eventually building a little fire. In the aid of her smouldering fire, the burning eased. She sat up, semi-dawn, watching the valleys until it covered the top of the great mountain.

Totopo blew up the fire from her ashes. She lay on her back to the fire. The front of her dress, in proximity to the heat, was exceedingly bitter as she lay there. She warmed her back and legs. She was attacked her so violently that she endured many mental agonies. In months of her married life, she had never on top of it was just too much. She had been cornered. She'd have done it

her feet, dropping the second piece of wood. Totopo grabbed it up and applied one to each bare hip in front of her, aiding her departure. "I'll make you not want to sit on your lazy bottom," yelled Totopo, as, lithe and agile, she came through the door on the heels of the other.

"I'll take care of her," Kedle said, simultaneously applying hotter sticks to the woman's bare shoulders. He felt he had sufficiently scorched Number Seven. Totopo immediately sat down to pick out the embedded bits of charcoal that had burned themselves into little pockets in her flesh.

"Bring me Kewambo-Ma," Kedle commanded Keledle when he thought he had chastened Diye sufficiently.

"So Number Five was the other one," said Totopo.

She got up and went inside again to check for coals on her pitpit floor and walls. Then she lit a torch and made her way down to the nearest stream. She plunged into the cold water up to her neck. Her teeth soon began to chatter but her burns were infinitely soothed. They had been sheer torture.

When she could stand the cold mountain stream no longer, she climbed out and crouched on the bank, hugging her laplap around her shoulders. In a few minutes the burning drove her back into the water. She alternated between the water and the bank, eventually building a little fire on the bank by the aid of her smouldering torch. Gradually the burning eased. She walked home in the semi-dawn, watching the fog roll up the valleys until it covered all that lay at the foot of the great mountain.

Totopo blew up the coals which she dug from her ashes. She lay down with her back to the fire. The front of her could not bear proximity to the heat. Her thoughts were exceedingly bitter as she lay there trying to warm her back and legs. Never had anyone attacked her so violently before. She had endured many mental attacks during the four months of her married life. The physical battle on top of it was just too much. She had to run away. She had been contemplating it for some time. She'd have done it sooner if she hadn't

thought Kedle would go after her. But Diye had told her something surprising recently.

"You aren't really Number Ten. I am."

"Oh?"

"Yes. You are actually Number Eleven."

"How's that?"

"Before Dokta-Ma there was another woman who was Number Six for awhile."

"What happened to her?"

"She ran away."

"And then what?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Yes. Nothing."

"Kedle didn't go after her?"

"No."

"Surely he made her tribe return the brideprice?"

"They say he only demanded half of it back."

"Why didn't he ask for all of it? He hadn't told her to go, had he?"

"No, fishbrain. I told you she ran away. I didn't say he sent her."

"Why are you talking with me if you think I'm so stupid you can't be civil?"

"I thought this was something you'd like to know. But about getting the pay back: he did originally ask for all of it back but her tribe had spent some of it, so he accepted the remaining half."

"And let her stay away?"

Diye raised her eyebrows in the affirmative.

"Why do you suppose he let her go?"

"Maybe he didn't care."

Now Totopo understood why Diye had been planting the idea of running away in her mind. They had been planning this attack then. If she ran away she would be doing just what they wanted. Whether it was what anyone else wanted or not, she would do it in a minute if she thought she could get away with it. Her mind was in a turmoil. For hours she pondered the idea, unable to sleep.

Kedle came to her door. "How do you feel, little Konopu?"

"I hurt. How about you?"

She raised up to look at her husband.

"Ama! Nanga Ara-yo!" she exclaimed.

"Whatever did they do to your face?"

"They hit me across the eyes with a fence-post. Then one of them bit my nose while the other one scratched and clawed me. They must have nearly knocked me out because it was a while before I was able to get up."

"Well, I should think so! They must have been trying to kill you!"

"Yes, they admit that was their intention."

"What was their reason?"

"Because I spend too much time with you."

"Oh, I see."

Totopo eased herself into a sitting position.

"But Diye wasn't after you, was she? She was only after me."

"Yes. That's the way it was, Itemo."

So Diye blamed her but the other two blamed him.

"Well, the four of us are ready to go down to the ambo kondodde for treatment of our burns and wounds. Will you go along?"

"Kapogla, pamili."

The next morning Totopo and Kedle were sitting by her fire.

"I'm going home to visit my mother," Totopo spoke suddenly. "I haven't been home yet, you know."

"Well," Kedle rubbed his scraggly gray beard thoughtfully. "It's a bad time to go. Speckled with bandages as you are, they will think you have been through a war."

"Maybe I have."

"Well, maybe so." He was still rubbing his chin. "Perhaps it's not such a bad time after all, come to think of it. Your parents would probably get wind of the fight anyway . . . and since I couldn't be loving you anyhow just now . . ." His voice dwindled off. "And you don't want me touching you . . ."

"You're so right! I don't!"

"But I'll miss your back to sleep next to."

"There are nine other backs you could cuddle up to and maybe help save us from another attack!"

Kedle cackled merrily.

"So you want to share me, do you? Don't you know a new bride is supposed to be jealous of her husband's attention and favours?"

"I'm going to take Pingi the Second to my

mother."

"Well, now." He began rubbing his scraggly chin once again. Seeing this new side of his latest bride, he was not certain how he should react. Certainly the getting-acquainted-time was over, but then on the other hand, she had been through a lot in the last thirty hours.

"Well, now, I guess that might be all right. If your parents should mention anything about reimbursements for your burns you could remind them you had brought Pingi the Second."

"Agreed."

After a short silence Kedle began rubbing his beard again.

"And when would you like to go?"

"Right now. As soon as this kaukau is cooked."

"Oh, I say, you are in a hurry, aren't you?"

"Right."

No more was said just then. When the kaukau was done she removed some for herself and laid them on a banana leaf. She handed the kettle to her husband.

With care, Totopo began to dress. She slipped a blouse over her head and tied a laplap around her waist, gingerly tucking the ends into her purupuru string. This effectively hid most of the bandages except for one on her left arm and another below her left knee. She gathered up her bilums and kaukau.

This time it was Kedle who spoke abruptly. "If you aren't back by this day next week I'll be coming after you."

"Agreed." Totopo selected the largest sooty black gilt from the squarming squealing bunch of piglets. She was elated. She had not expected to be given permission to stay home a whole week.

"I'm taking your best daughter to Ama, Pingi. This one looks so much like you that Ama will think she has you back again."

Pingi grunted softly.

"She has fourteen feeding stations just like you and she even has that little false nipple between the third and fourth ones on the left side just like yours."

More answering rumbles.

Totopo slipped a rope up on Pingi the

Second's right foot tightened the slipknot little joints.

"Owa! It hurts too wise to think of it hurts worse to yesterday."

"You're getting piglets are finishing I'm gone, won't you every night. Moglo

Totopo started -sti," she called to pulling but once she mother's pen the Totopo talked or s

"I guess I need Pingi. I shouldn't along when you Please don't be st carry you in my ar when I lifted you. Of course if you'r put you in my bilt

Totopo stopped there interpreting removed the press care. In spite of them were stuck loose with warm winced she looked eyes.

"Oh, Konopu,

"I'm crying to source of tears! N pain as for the bl many more time And worse? I tell drowned myself t in the stream. I'd would work. But and I can swim a tell that the body in that the case drowning is not f

"Oh, Konopu!

"You mustn't Totopo," said t pray much for y God has the answ

Second's right foreleg as she talked and tightened the slipknot firmly between the two little joints.

"Owa! It hurts to bend! Maybe I'm not so wise to think of walking to Tona today. It hurts worse to move today than it did yesterday."

"You're getting too thin, Pingi. Your piglets are finishing you! You eat lots while I'm gone, won't you? Jeep-Ma will feed you every night. Moglowiyo."

Totopo started down the hill. "Sit - sit - st - sti," she called to the piglet. It took some pulling but once she was out of sight of her mother's pen the piglet followed as long as Totopo talked or st - sti - ed to her constantly.

"I guess I need my head examined Second Pingi. I shouldn't have tried to bring you along when you aren't used to being led. Please don't be stubborn. I absolutely can't carry you in my arms. The burns you touched when I lifted you out of the pen hurt like fire. Of course if you're too stubborn I'll have to put you in my bilum."

Totopo stopped by the clinic. Tamara was there interpreting for her mother. Mrs. Talbot removed the pressure bandages with extreme care. In spite of all her precautions some of them were stuck fast and had to be soaked loose with warm water. Once when Totopo winced she looked up to see tears in Tamara's eyes.

"Oh, Konopu, I could cry for you!"

"I'm crying too. My eyes might be the source of tears! Not so much for the present pain as for the black future still ahead. How many more time will such things happen? And worse? I tell you I'd have liked to have drowned myself that night I cooled my burns in the stream. I'd have tried it if I'd thought it would work. But the stream was quite shallow and I can swim and float too well. I've heard tell that the body saves itself of its own accord in that the case. I don't know. I suppose drowning is not for me."

"Oh, Konopu!"

"You mustn't even think of such a thing, Totopo," said the ambo kondodile. "We'll pray much for you. There are other solutions. God has the answers."

"I've prayed and prayed. These are the only kind of answers I get. There is no solution."

"Have you prayed the prayer of the sinner first of all? Have you asked God to forgive your own sins?"

"Yes, but I only go on sinning."

"How do you mean?"

"I hate! I hate! I hate Kedle with my whole heart and soul!"

"God have mercy on you, my daughter," said the bamboo kondodile, laying a soft hand on the shoulder that was not burned.

"Could you do otherwise if you were me?"

"I don't know. I don't know, daughter. Not in my own strength, certainly."

"Well, anyway," said Totopo turning to Tamara. "I'm going home for a week. For the present I'll try not to think beyond next Thursday."

"Kedle is letting you go?"

"Yes."

"Is there a clinic at Tona?" asked Mrs. Talbot.

"Yes, there is an aidpost there."

"You be sure then that you have these bandages changed every day and get three more injections of penicillin. You can't risk infection."

"Kapogla. Good-by Konopu. See you next week."

"Puyo, Konopu."

"Moglowiyo, Ango."

The fresh Burnalay Cream was extremely soothing. Totopo found it did not hurt her so much to move now. Half a kilometer from Piamble she put Second Pingi into her bilum and sped on her way homeward. She went straight to her mother's garden.

"Ama-yo," she called from a little hill in sight of the garden.

"Totopo! Totopo, my daughter!"

Her mother grabbed up Kariyapa and came running to meet her. Teni was faster, however. He was all ready to fly into his sister's arms when she caught him by the shoulders and held him at arm's length.

"Teni! My dear little brother! How I have missed you my little Possum! But you musn't hug me. Try not to touch me. I hurt."

Her mother ran up in time to hear the last

words.

"How do you hurt? Where do you hurt, daughter? Has he beaten you?"

"No, Ama, I'm going to survive. Just let me hug you instead of you hugging me." Taking her mother's worried face in both of her hands she caressed her and laid her own soft cheek against her mother's rougher one.

"Little Ama, you look older. Have you been sick?"

"No, nanga bagol kogol, I'm just growing old. But tell me about yourself."

Totopo kissed Kariyapa who was staring at her from his mother's shoulders. "My, he has grown!"

She reached down and put her right arm around Teni's shoulders, drawing him up against the right side of her back. "You may touch me there, Little Possum. All my burns are on the front of me."

"Burns?" asked Ama. Standing Kariyapa quickly on the ground she reached for the front of her daughter's full blouse.

"Kariyapa can stand alone, can he? I've been gone so long!"

"My daughter! My daughter! What have they done to you?" Quick tears sprang up in Ama's eyes as she saw that most of Totopo's stomach, left breast and shoulder were swathed in bandages. She lifted the laplap and saw that bandages reached from Totopo's knees to her purupuru string.

"What have they done? Oh, what have they done?"

"Let's go sit down in the shade and I'll tell you all about it, but first, look what I brought you."

"A pig! A piglet!" yelled Teni who had been staring it in the eye through the netting of the bilum, just waiting for a chance to ask his sister about it. Totopo handed her mother the pig in the bilum. Her mother immediately sat down in the shade and opened the bilum on her lap.

"Why, it's just like Pingi! It must be Pingi's. How many did she have this time?"

"Ten again, and they're are still alive. This is the nicest gilt, so I brought her to you."

Teni grasped the rope and Ama set the piglet on the ground. She swung Kariyapa

onto her shoulders.

"Let's go to my garden. I won't do any more planting. I'll just dig enough kaukau for tonight. Then we will go tell your father you are home."

Ama broke a stick of sugar cane and handed it to Totopo, who immediately skinned it with strong teeth and chewed it thirstily.

"Tsingo-we! It tastes extra good! How nice it feels to be home!"

"All right now, tell me the whole story."

Two hours later they were nearing Tona.

"We will go first to the manhouse, nanaga bagol kogol, to see your father."

"You go, Ama, and let me go on home. I don't want to see everybody. I just want to be in your home. I can see Ara there."

"Okay then. Here's the key."

Teni kept the hold of his sister's hand and walked with her.

Ama was deeply disturbed as she went in search of her husband. How could they have treated her little girl so cruelly? And why should Totopo not want to see everyone? Her first visit home after marriage should have been a very happy occasion. Was it just because of her physical wounds? Or were there emotional wounds as well?

Totopo settled contentedly at her mother's fireplace. Before long her father came in and sat on the opposite side.

"How good it is to see your face again, daughter, but you haven't come back to stay, have you?"

"No, Ara. Did you think I might be?"

"Well, I heard you had quite a battle."

"Yes, we did. Five of us did."

"They sure had the advantage over you, sneaking up on you while you were sleeping. Did you repay them as good as they gave?"

"I think Kedle did pretty well. I know I didn't hurt Diye nearly as much as she hurt me but Kedle gave her some more."

"Fair enough."

"He is not done punishing them yet. He won't speak to them or allow them in his sight. He refuses to accept any gifts of food they want to bring or send to him. They must keep right away; can't even bring him the

regular meals. That is the do, you know. They want attention, not less."

"I guess a man could three of his wives when he feed him."

"That's right."

"We have been having I am so weary of trouble."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Problems with return why I wanted to know right thinking of staying."

"Who is it?"

"Wapi, daughter of Po to Orei about ten years come home saying her husband because she gave birth to third. Api has no sons at two daughters so he married specifically that she would"

"But what's the problem you don't have to return you? So why fret?"

"Well, the thing is, A three days later saying he refuses to go back, saying demands either she return brideprice. We have held after another and still do am convinced he did send still have to make Wapi That's the only thing I know"

"And did you say he returned?"

"Yes, Ariye, Lkoraiye's from her husband after a straightforward. She will him and that's all there is"

Totopo imagined what she told him she wanted spite of the provocation adamant with her. And I not sent her away.

"I hear you brought us"

"Yes, I brought Ama P guilt from this litter that I Pingi."

"Kedle is a wise man."

"You think so?"

regular meals. That is the worst thing he can do, you know. They wanted more of his attention, not less."

"I guess a man could refuse meals from three of his wives when he has seven others to feed him."

"That's right."

"We have been having lots of trouble here. I am so weary of trouble."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Problems with returning wives. That's why I wanted to know right away if you were thinking of staying."

"Who is it?"

"Wapi, daughter of Pora. She married Api to Orei about ten years ago. Now she has come home saying her husband sent her away because she gave birth to another girl, her third. Api has no sons at all. His first wife had two daughters so he married Wapi hoping specifically that she would give him a son."

"But what's the problem. If he roused her you don't have to return the brideprice, do you? So why fret?"

"Well, the thing is, Api turned up about three days later saying he wants her back. She refuses to go back, saying he roused her. He demands either she return or we refund the brideprice. We have held one court session after another and still do not have it settled. I am convinced he did send her away, but we still have to make Wapi go back to him. That's the only thing I know to do."

"And did you say more than one has returned?"

"Yes, Ariye, Lkoraiye's daughter ran away from her husband after a beating. But hers is straightforward. She will have to return to him and that's all there is to it."

Totopo imagined what Ara would say if she told him she wanted to leave Kedle. In spite of the provocation he would be just as adamant with her. And Kedle had certainly not sent her away.

"I hear you brought us a pig."

"Yes, I brought Ama Pingi the Second, the gilt from this litter that looks the most like Pingi."

"Kedle is a wise man."

"You think so?"

"Yes, don't you?"

"I don't know."

"He is. He's a wise man. He and I understand each other perfectly."

The days passed all too swiftly for Totopo. She saw there was no opportunity of discussing her impossible situation with her family. She would have to return to her hell-on-earth and search for another way out. She tried to put it out of her mind entirely and dwell only on the present.

She spent many contented hours with each member of her family. She read her father many articles from the Pidgin newspapers Tamara had given her. He seemed to be more interested than he had ever been to anything she had had to say to him in the past.

But the one she had wanted to see most of all was not there. She had hoped that Bani would be home. Somehow she felt if there was any possible solution to her problem Bani would know it. But he had sent word to his parents that he was working on a project in Ialibu and had to complete it before he could come home for his Christmas holiday.

Totopo said good-bye to her family and started back to Piamble about midafternoon. It was raining, but she had known it would be. Still she had put off going as long as possible. Better to have a few extra hours with her family and walk in the rain if necessary.

The closer she got to Piamble the slower her feet dragged through the mud. If it had not been for the promise she had elicited from her mother she thought she would have found a way to do away with herself rather than return. But Ama had promised to implore Bani to come and visit her for a few days before he went away to teacher's college. Somehow she must live through the days until he could come.

She stopped in at the clinic.

"You didn't have these dressed every day, did you, Totopo?"

"No. The aidpost orderly was away getting supplies most of the week. I only had them changed twice."

The ambo kondodle sighed. "You have infection in several places."

"I'll come every day now."

"You'd better!"

It was nearly dark when Totopo reached her own hut. She put her bilums inside and went on down to see Pingi. Later when she was sitting by her fire her husband entered.

"You have returned."

"I have returned."

"Did you have a nice visit?"

"Paa-kawiyo-we!"

"I missed you. It was a long week."

"Oh?"

"What did your parents say about your burns?"

"They expressed their sympathy."

"And what did they say about the piglet?"

"Ara said you are a wise man."

"Oh he did, did he? Pombo and I understand each other perfectly."

They evidently did, at that! She withdrew some topene-pitpit from the fire and handed it to her husband.

"Why, thank you, Konopu kogol! Did you bring this for me from Tona?"

"Yes."

"That means you thought of me while you were away."

"Yes, I did." No need to disillusion the poor man by telling him what sort of thoughts she had been thinking.

"How nice!"

"If you and father understand each other so well why don't you observe the in-law taboos?"

"Don't you agree that it would look silly for a man as old as I am to call your father anything but Pombo?"

Totopo winced as he spoke her father's name. How does he escape retribution from the spirits when he disregards the taboos, she wondered.

"I dispensed with all that long ago. I observed them for the first five mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law and that was enough for me."

How like you, thought the girl. You keep on taking what you want and leaving what you don't want though most people would consider that wives and in-laws go together.

"But I do my duty," he said as though he had read her thoughts. "I let you take that

piglet to your parents, for instance."

"But that was my idea, remember?"

"That's true. But I wouldn't have let you go to them with all those burns without some sort of peace offering. You just saved me the problem of deciding what to send."

"Oh, I see."

Totopo removed a couple of bandages to show her husband the infection in her burns.

"How are your wounds and those of the other wives?"

"My own are healing."

"The swelling has certainly gone down."

"Yes, it has. I don't know how the three wives are doing."

"You haven't made any solicitous inquiries?"

"No, not one! I haven't spoken to them or accepted any food from them all week."

"Think it will help?"

"It should, if they aren't too stupid to learn."

Kedle began rubbing his beard. Totopo wondered what was coming.

"So you don't feel like being fondled too much yet?"

"No, actually, I don't."

"Mm. I see. But your back is all right?"

He waited for a response.

"Isn't it?"

"Yes."

Totopo survived that night and the next, though somehow they seemed so much worse than before she went away. To her great delight she met Rami at the market Saturday morning.

"You're alive and well!"

"Yes, thank God."

"But the baby?"

"My baby boy died."

"Sorry, Ango. Tell me about it."

"They delivered him with instruments at lalibu but he was too weak to live. He took a few breaths but he never even cried. They worked with him but it was no use."

"I'm so sorry, Konopu."

"So am I, but I am thankful to be alive myself. I'm coming back here tomorrow to go to church."

"You are?"

"Yes. I felt God in tl
was so close to death so
here to learn more about

"You felt God?"

"Yes."

"How . . . what was it

"It was heavenly."

"Heavenly? How does
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CHAPTER THIRTE

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"You're here then," sigh

"Of course. I promised

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"When will Unjo be hon

"Tomorrow evening if ai

"Have you decided yet to
or are you just going to
visiting?"

"Yes. I felt God in that place that night I was so close to death so I'm coming to church here to learn more about Him."

"You felt God?"

"Yes."

"How . . . what was it like?"

"It was heavenly."

"Heavenly? How does heavenly feel? All I know is hell-on-earth."

"Sorry, Konopu. I heard about it. Your burns aren't healed yet?"

"No, several are infected. I have to go get my bandages changed now. Come along with me to the clinic so we can talk some more."

The two girls walked off, hand in hand. "I've been wanting to ask you . . ."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Totopo hurried down the road as fast as she could without appearing to be running. She kept checking behind her guiltily but no one was following. In less than an hour she had reached Rami's house without being seen. All the women were at their gardens on this bright Monday morning. Totopo found her friend's house easily though she had never been in this area before. Rami's directions were explicit, Iltemo.

Totopo coughed. Rami's head popped through the doorway.

"You're here then," sighed Totopo.

"Of course. I promised you I would be."

"I know. It's just that I'm nervous. I'm not used to sneaking."

"Anyone see you?"

"I don't think so. I walked through the pitpit until I got well away from home. When I did go out on the road I kept watching both ways. I went off and hid in the pitpit two more times while people passed by."

"Come on in so you can hide easier if anyone comes."

"Do you expect someone?"

"No, but there is always the possibility."

"When will Unjo be home?"

"Tomorrow evening if all goes well."

"Have you decided yet to tell him the truth or are you just going to let him think I'm visiting?"

"No, I haven't decided yet. I'm afraid he will let the possum out of the trap if we pretend you are visiting, but as I said Saturday, I don't know if we can depend on him to be on our side."

"I wish there was somewhere farther to go. I don't feel safe this close to home. It didn't even take me an hour to get here."

"We will have to think on it. Unjo has a sister who married a Kagodle man. Maybe my mother-in-law would consent to us going to visit her."

"How far is that?"

"It's a full morning's walk straight across the Western Highlands border. How soon do you suppose you'll be missed?"

"Probably not before late afternoon anyway."

"That's when you usually come home from the garden?"

"Yes, though I have stayed out till dark a few times."

"Would he go to Tona looking for you after dark?"

"I don't think so. I've never known him to be out after dark for anything but a cardgame."

"Then you are safe here for two days."

"Yes, he probably won't go to Tona until tomorrow morning."

They waited until Unjo got home the next evening. They told him everything and asked his permission to go to Napogla. Totopo was so nervous she couldn't sleep that night. They left before daylight. Napogla was lovely in the noonday sun, situated right along the Kaugel River. Totopo felt greatly relieved. She relaxed and enjoyed swimming, fishing and even frog-hunting by night. It reminded her of the days of her youth!

She refused to dwell on the future, until she looked up to see Keledle standing at the door of Unjo's sister's home one afternoon three days after their arrival.

"How did you find me?" she asked with surprising calm. She realized now she had known she'd be found.

"It's been a long search."

Totopo felt incapable of movement.

"Well, come along, woman. Ara's waiting."

"Where?"

"At Unjo's house."

They walked silently through the rain until darkness fell. Totopo stopped. Keledle turned around.

"Why stop?"

"I can't go on."

"You had better unless you want me to pull you or push you or drag you."

"I'd rather die than go home."

"Is it that bad?"

"Worse than death."

"It will be worse yet after having run away."

"I don't think it could be."

"Wait and see."

Keledle reached for her in the darkness. At his touch she jumped away.

"Don't touch me."

"Touchy as a cassowary, are you? Come on, then."

Keledle yodelled to his father at Unjo's turn-off.

"Ara-yo. Ara-yo-iyo-iyo."

"Yo-iyo."

"We're here-iyo."

Kedle soon joined them.

"Where was she?"

"At Napogla."

"Give you any trouble?"

"No."

For a time only their footsteps could be heard in the darkness. Kedle cursed when he stubbed his toe on a stone.

"Why did you do it?"

No answer.

"I asked you why you ran away!"

Still no answer. Kedle turned around and swung at her. He judged accurately. The slap rang out in the stillness.

"Listen, woman, it isn't wise to make me any angrier. I'm weary. Old man that I am, I walked all the way to Ialibu and back for you."

"Ialibu?" Totopo was startled out of her silence.

"Yes, Ialibu."

She wanted to ask why but decided against it. Eventually he continued.

"Yes, Ialibu, and the road's not growing

any shorter I can tell you. But your parents thought you might possibly have gone there to see your brother. We were not leaving any trail untried in the search."

"Did you see Bani?" She couldn't help asking.

"I did."

"And I went to Kumunge looking for you," put in Keledle. "Poropa has gone back to work on a plantation on the other side of Hagen in case you are interested."

Imagine them thinking I would run away to Kumunge, she thought. Do they think I'm some sort of rubbish meri?

"Did someone put it into your mind to run away?" asked Kedle.

No answer.

"You'd better answer or I'll be tempted to beat you here instead of waiting until we get home. Let me warn you, woman you might not feel like walking when I get through."

"I had thought of running away myself."

"But someone encouraged you?"

"Mm."

"Who was it?"

No answer.

"Was it Diye?"

"Mm."

"You ought to know better than to listen to the prattling of a jealous fellow-wife."

Kedle continued to pursue the subject some time later.

"What did Diye say to make you think it would succeed?"

"That you let the first Number Six go."

"I figured. But what made you think I would let *you* go? Have I ever acted like I wasn't interested in you?"

"No."

"Well, why then?"

Instead of leading her to her own house he took her to the house of Number Two where he had a club ready. There followed the thud of club on flesh and the crack of club on bone. A crowd of family members soon gathered in spite of the hour and the weather.

Totopo lay crumpled at his feet in the mud, wishing he would kill her. She knew it was not to be however. He wanted her alive.

He beat her until he was too spent to raise

the club one more time

"When she feels like tell her what will happen again. And don't let her say you may."

When he was gone Toringi-Ma carried her and placed her gently

Two nights later the on either side of the fire for the first time. Tori corner.

"What will happen if

"Do you really want flat, lifeless voice.

"Yes."

"The same thing that

"So that's why he asked

"Yes."

Many minutes passed began the story with other pauses.

"I was young and life until I was married. Keledle another woman around and her husband. She would run away to my come and get me and away. At last my father returning home and caught was afraid Kedle would demand he return the boy time I ran away to the and her husband. She friend before we were told Kedle some time to find did . . . he gave me . . ."

The pauses were getting wondered if she wouldn't . . . the famous tribal run-away wives."

"Tribal punishment?"

Totopo began to wobble fallen asleep.

"You never heard punishment?"

"No."

"You're so young . . ."

"Not any more. I'm gone"

"The tribal punishment"

the club one more time.

"When she feels like talking, Toringi-Ma, tell her what will happen if she runs away again. And don't let her out of your sight until I say you may."

When he was gone Keledle-Ma and Toringi-Ma carried her into the latter's hut and placed her gently by the fire.

Two nights later the two women were lying on either side of the fire when Totopo spoke for the first time. Toringi was asleep in one corner.

"What will happen if I run away again?"

"Do you really want to know?" asked that flat, lifeless voice.

"Yes."

"The same thing that happened to me."

"So that's why he asks you to tell me?"

"Yes."

Many minutes passed before the woman began the story with obvious effort and long pauses.

"I was young and life had seemed good . . . until I was married. Keledle-Ma didn't want another woman around to share her home and her husband. She would beat me and I would run away to my mother. Kedle would come and get me and beat me for running away. At last my father began to beat me for returning home and causing them trouble. He was afraid Kedle would give up on me and demand he return the brideprice. So that last time I ran away to the village of my cousin and her husband. She had been my best friend before we were both married. It took Kedle some time to find me . . . and when he did . . . he gave me . . ."

The pauses were getting so long Totopo wondered if she wouldn't continue.

". . . the famous tribal punishment for run-away wives."

"Tribal punishment?"

Totopo began to wonder if the woman had fallen asleep.

"You never heard of the . . . tribal punishment?"

"No."

"You're so young . . . and innocent."

"Not any more. I'm getting old and wise."

"The tribal punishment . . . is when . . ."

every man in the tribe . . . lies with you."

Totopo stared at her uncomprehendingly at first.

"All at once?"

"One after another."

"Ama, Nanga Arayo!"

There was a long silence during which Totopo groaned aloud two different times as more complete realization dawned upon her.

"Kedle's tribe is a big one . . ."

"Very big indeed . . . when you number the men that way."

"Ama, nanga Ara-yo!"

"My heart and liver died that day . . . They drowned in shame and humiliation. I have never looked any man in the eyes . . . since . . . and very few women. Only my body lives. I never go anywhere . . . except to the garden and back."

Totopo now understood why the woman had no life in her voice.

"I have never enjoyed anything since . . . I seem to have no ability to take pleasure in anything. I loved my babies. I had two girls. One was married a few years ago. I loved them . . . I cared for them . . . but I can't say I ever enjoyed them. I don't know if I could have if they had been boys or not. I could only think of the sadness that would come in their lives . . . I could only fear for them."

Totopo groaned in sympathy.

"As I said, only my body lives . . . but it lives well somehow. It is strong. When I get sick I never go drink medicine but somehow I always get well again. I have pleaded with the Good Spirit and with the bad ones too . . . to take my life . . . but I live on."

"Toringi is such a lovely child," said Totopo slowly. "She is my favourite of all Kedle's children. I never could understand where she got her vibrancy and her love of life."

"She is like I was before I died. It is dangerous to be so vibrant, so in love with life. The more capacity you have for enjoyment the deeper your capacity is for suffering as well. I had hoped to teach my daughters . . . as stoicism that would shield them from suffering. I think I succeeded in part with my older daughter, but with Toringi

I have failed utterly."

"The way she loves school and loves learning reminds me of my own self at her age. Did you know she often came to visit me, when I had my own house, to share the things she was learning with me?"

"Yes. She has told me you were interested."

The two women slept at last.

"Do you think you might be well enough to go to the garden today?"

"To your garden?"

"Yes. I am not supposed to leave you so I didn't go these past two days but perhaps we could go this morning. I could fix you a shady place to rest nearby if you want to lie down during the day."

"Kapogla. Pamili."

It became a daily pattern. Totopo, Toringi and her mother went to the garden together each morning, came back together each evening, fed the pigs together, did everything together.

School was out for the summer holidays so Toringi became Totopo's shadow. Totopo learned to love the little girl more and more. I could not love her more if she were my own sister, born of my own mother, she thought. Both of them had keen minds and though Toringi was only nine or ten years old they had long stimulating conversations together. Toringi had just completed the third grade and she often thought of some new English word to teach Totopo. They talked together in halting English, laughing over their own and each other's mistakes. Totopo taught Toringi to read her Pidgin books and newspapers.

Toringi's mother watched over them fondly but with fear in her heart.

Kedle could not stay away from Totopo for two weeks though he had meant to punish her longer by snubbing her. He soon realized however that she preferred his absence. He was only denying himself. That night and often thereafter he went to her at the home of his second wife.

Totopo was deeply humiliated. His attentions in the privacy of her own home had been unbearable. There were not words to describe her repulsion and humiliation at

having to receive him in another's house. Though the darkness kindly hid them, it could not dull the sounds.

"God, have mercy!" she pleaded again and again. Her hatred grew in her until it became a cancer consuming both body and soul. Nevertheless it was at this time that she conceived.

The only outlet she had for her disturbed emotions was digging the ground and forming the kaukau mundus next to Toringi-Ma. She dug and poked, beat and pummeled the ground as though it were Kedle's flesh under her fingers or spade or digging stick.

"The girl works like one possessed," Toringi-Ma told Keledle-Ma. "Kedle is going to have to give me a larger plot of ground. We have finished all that he gave me and her too. She even clears and breaks new ground like a man."

"She never voices her anger and hatred," said Keledle-Ma. "She only allows them expression in the form of work. I fear for her."

"So do I. I have come to love her like a daughter. I wish I didn't for I know it will only mean cause for fresh suffering."

"When one is human one cannot help loving. And until woman becomes a spirit there will always be suffering for her. You can avoid neither, my Sister."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Totopo raised up from her kaukau mundo to look straight into the eyes of her brother.

"Bani! Bani!" she screamed and flew straight at him, unheeding the spoiling of her carefully shaped mundus. She was in his arms laughing and crying at the same time.

"My brother, my brother! O my brother, you have come to me at last!"

"I have come, Little Sister, I have come."

He held her for a long time, wondering much at her tears and laughter.

He held her for a long time, wondering much at her tears and laughter. Never had his coming put *anyone* into such happy hysterics before.

That afternoon Totopo approached the manhouse of her own accord for the very first

time. Kedle looked up.

"My brother has come to sleep in my own house there?"

Kedle rubbed his scar.

"I don't know if I can."

"You can."

"How do I know I can do you?"

"I promised you that I would do again."

"I'm an old man. I have many run-away wives."

"If I run away again?"

"Ha! Kill you? I thought I liked me to kill you that I had no assurance you wouldn't."

Totopo had looked at him when she made her decision. She dropped her head and said, "I heard Toringi-Ma's sister run away again."

"Oh, you did, did you? I know that more than you would. I cackled delightedly. "I'll keep it in my mind. I'll return to your own home with my greetings." He reached here. Here's a nut for the nut."

"Thank you," said Totopo. She cloven half of pandanus. She returned to Toringi. Bani waited.

"He says I may, Bani. It is a double blessing."

She turned to Toringi.

"He gave me my first child. I'll return to my own house."

"I shall miss you, da."

"Truly?"

"Truly."

"Then I shall come to you and my little sister. Thank you for your kindness."

She stooped and kissed the leathery cheek. She saw quick tears spring from her eyes.

Bani helped her gather her belongings and carry them to the far side of the family house. She enjoyed serving her brother.

time. Kedle looked up in surprise.

"My brother has come. May I return to sleep in my own house and entertain him there?"

Kedle rubbed his scraggly beard.

"I don't know if I can trust you."

"You can."

"How do I know I can? How can I believe you?"

"I promised you that I will never run away again."

"I'm an old man. Too old to be chasing run-away wives."

"If I run away again you can kill me."

"Ha! Kill you? I think you would have liked me to kill you this time. That gives me no assurance you won't run away again."

Totopo had looked him straight in the eye when she made her promise. Now she dropped her head and said in a throaty voice, "I heard Toringi-Ma's story. I vowed I'd never run away again."

"Oh, you did, did you? You would fear that more than you would fear death." Kedle cackled delightedly. "Thank you for letting me know. I'll keep it in mind. Yes, you may return to your own home. Give your brother my greetings." He reached behind him. "And here. Here's a nut for the girl I love."

"Thank you," said Totopo, slipping the big cloven half of pandanus nut into her bilum. She returned to Toringi-Ma's house where Bani waited.

"He says I may, Bani. Your coming is a double blessing."

She turned to Toringi-Ma.

"He gave me my freedom, Ama. I may return to my own house."

"I shall miss you, daughter."

"Truly?"

"Truly."

"Then I shall come again often to see you and my little sister. Thank you for all your kindness." She stooped down suddenly and kissed the leathery cheek. To her surprise she saw quick tears spring into the sad old eyes.

Bani helped her gather her bilums and belongings and carry them to the small hut on the far side of the family hill. Totopo greatly enjoyed serving her brother the nut and other

foods. They talked into the night.

"... and how do the other wives react?"

"In different ways. I think there are as many different reactions as there are wives."

"Tell me about them."

"Number One goes on loving him, it seems, striving to please him, never resenting anything he does. She is an amazing woman, truly!"

"Number Two, whom you met, seems completely indifferent. It seems like she doesn't feel anything toward him. I had often wondered about her and now I know her story. She received a terrible punishment for running away when she was young. She says her heart and liver died then. Only her body lives on. She never goes anywhere but to her garden. She looks a lot older than Keledle-Ma but she is really younger."

"Number Three is an old woman. She had had three children before she married Kedle. Her husband was killed in a tribal war. She asks for nothing and seems content with a tenth of a husband to call her own."

"Number Four is different. I thought she didn't like me at first but I just didn't know her. She is all wrapped up in her children. She has a son. Can you believe this? Kedle only has four sons even though he has ten wives! Imagine that! Number One has two sons, and no daughters. Number Four has one son and one daughter. Number Eight has a baby boy. Ara has two wives and six living sons. Ama alone has had five sons!"

"Ara now has three wives."

"Three?"

"Yes, three."

"Why, when did he take a third one?"

"Three weeks ago."

"Ama-yo! I wonder if it had been already arranged when I was home."

"It was."

"But Ama never mentioned it."

"No? I suppose she thought you had enough troubles of your own."

"I really thought she had aged. I asked her if she had been sick."

"Yes, it has really aged her. Either that, or her concern for you. I don't know. She has just sort of given up; let herself slide into old

womanhood or whatever you'd call it."

"She didn't fight it?"

"No, but she sure would like to fight your cause for you if she could. She is terribly concerned about you. Are your burns all healed?"

"Yes. Two of them got worse after my beating but they are healed now."

Totopo cracked a roasted nut between her strong teeth.

"What is the new wife like?"

"Oh, all right, I guess."

"Describe her to me."

"Well, she is a little older than you. A lot fatter. Not nearly as pretty as you."

"How did Mombo-Ma take it?"

"Not so good."

"Do they fight?"

"Yes. Both with words and with more substantial weapons."

"Owa. I'm glad I'm not there then."

"Yes. It's not pleasant to be around. I'm glad I'm due to go to Teacher's College next week. But tell me about the other wives. You only got to Number Four."

"Oh, yes. Well, Number Four is all wrapped up in her son, as I said."

"Then Number Five is resentful. She hates being an old wife, five-times-replaced already. She is still young and attractive. She has only one child who has been weaned long since. She would like another, I know."

"Number Six is a lovely woman. Happy and kind. I like her a lot. She doesn't seem to resent Kedle's lack of attention though her only daughter has also been weaned for some time."

"Number seven hates me although she never says anything much to me. Neither did she try to hurt me that night she and Number five clobbered Kedle. They just took their feelings out on him. She has a little daughter still nursing. She eye-greases Kedle's son, Keledle, a lot. I rather think he may like her too."

"Then there's Number Eight. She's a delightful person. Her little son is just walking now. She never liked Kedle it seems and she was happy when he got another wife. That was her dancing day! She is supposed to be a

Christian but she is having a flirtation with one of the pastors down at the mission station. When I remonstrated with her she said, 'Oh, don't worry. It's just a harmless flirtation. We won't let it go to far. After all, he's a pastor. Besides, I have my little Jeep to nurse. I wouldn't do anything to jeopardize his progress. It's just that it's important to me to prove to myself that I can attract someone besides our lecherous old man.'

"Number Nine loves Kedle with a very jealous love and she hates me with her whole heart. She was the one who burned me, you know. Also she told me about the original Number Six who ran away and was let go. She helped me think it might be possible for me to run away." Totopo paused thoughtfully. "No, that's not really true. In my heart I knew it wasn't possible. I tried it simply because I was desperate."

"Why does she hate you and love him? It's not your fault you're here. It's his."

"She hates me for living! She hates me for breathing! She hated me the day of the singsing before I even knew who Kedle was."

"And you're terribly unhappy? You don't feel you will ever be able to reconcile yourself to this marriage?"

"No, never. I'd rather be dead."

"Now that Ara has bought another wife he couldn't return the brideprice even if you left Kedle."

"No. If I left Kedle Ara would just make me return. He would have even before he bought this other girl. You know him. That's why I didn't go home when I ran away."

"Oh, Sister, I don't know what you can do. Who can we talk to about it?"

"I've just been waiting to talk to you, hoping you'd have a solution."

"But where will I find the solution, Aya? My, what a mess! I believe I had better marry only one wife and stick to her for life the way the teachers and missionaries do. It would avoid all these problems."

"And don't sell your daughters when they grow up."

"Don't sell my daughters?"

"No. Let them marry who they will. If you want a brideprice you'll have to get the most

you can. You daughter same mess I'm in because the most to offer. They rich."

"But it's our custom Aya. That can't be changed."

"Not everyone does."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Tamara says Joe from Community School Head a brideprice for his wife."

"Where is he from?"

"He's from Manus Province."

"And he didn't pay for

"No."

"What is she like?"

"You are wondering payment?" chuckled Totopo. "Nothing wrong with her. She's not deaf, lame or blind. She's beautiful. And she's educated. She is a teacher."

"That's hard to believe. The people I know pay for their daughters. Coastal girls are dia tum than our highland girls. Thousands of kina!"

"Thousands?"

"Yes, fathers of educated husband will soon get it because their daughters are as stewardesses, secretaries. They charge thousands."

"But Janice is educated. Her father didn't charge thousands."

"She didn't go nothing."

"Of course not. Janice is the very opposite of a lot of way, Bani. She's sweet and feminine and graceful. A thoroughbred. Have you seen her?"

"Yes, that's it. Tamara of race and breeding."

"Maybe we ought to talk to her then, Aya. We could solve the problem."

"Why, I never thought of arranged some half-burned

you can. You daughters will end up in the same mess I'm in because the old men have the most to offer. They've had longest to get rich."

"But it's our custom to accept brideprice, Aya. That can't be changed."

"Not everyone does."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Tamara says Joe Holowi, the Piamble Community School Headmaster, did not pay a brideprice for his wife."

"Where is he from?"

"He's from Manus. She's from Morobe Province."

"And he didn't pay for her?"

"No."

"What is she like?"

"You are wondering if she wasn't worth payment?" chuckled Totopo. "No, there's nothing wrong with her. Her eyes aren't crossed. Her legs are the same length. She's not deaf, lame or blind. What's more, she's beautiful. And she's also intelligent and educated. She is a teacher."

"That's hard to believe. All the coastal people I know pay for their wives. In fact, coastal girls are dia tumas. They cost more than our highland girls — sometimes thousands of kina!"

"Thousands?"

"Yes, fathers of educated girls say the husband will soon get it paid back to him because their daughters can teach, nurse, act as stewardesses, secretaries and whatever. So they charge thousands."

"But Janice is educated. I wonder why her father didn't charge thousands for her."

"She didn't go nothing' to him, did she?"

"Of course not. Janice is not a whore! She's the very opposite of a low woman in every way, Bani. She's sweet and a little shy, very feminine and graceful. Tamara called her a thoroughbred. Have you heard that word?"

"Yes, that's it. Tamara said it was the best of race and breeding."

"Maybe we ought to talk to the Holowis, then, Aya. We could tell them of your problem."

"Why, I never thought of that." She rearranged some half-burned sticks of wood to

make them burn better. "But I'd be afraid to go to their house, Bani. I've only ever talked to Janice at the market. I'd rather go to Tamara's house than Janice's, and that's scary enough."

"Nonsense, I'm not afraid. I'll get permission for you tomorrow from Kedle and we'll go to see them."

He began to chuckle.

"What's funny?"

"I'm more afraid to ask Kedle's permission than I am to approach Mr. Holowi."

"Really?" Totopo laughed too. "Never-mind. I'll ask him. I'm not afraid when you're here."

"Kapogla," said Kedle. "I don't mind if you visit the Holowis, but you don't want to miss the courts, do you?"

"Oh, the courts! I'd forgotten about them. I'll tell Bani."

"Bani, I forgot that today is a special court day. The kiap will be coming out to settle a sorcery case about Kogla's death and some other matters. Kedle's just gone. Shall we go too?"

"Kapogla. Which kiap is coming out from lalibu?"

"I don't know. Are there more than one?"

"There are three."

The kiap was seated behind a table in a small brush arbor.

"Shut up! Shut up!" he bawled.

The crowd fell silent.

"Let's take up the smaller matters first. Once we get started on that sorcery case we'll be here till dark."

Village magistrates immediately brought forward two me.

"He built his store on my land," began one.

"It isn't his land," countered the other. "It belonged to my grandfather. My own father had gardens on that very spot so, of course, the land belongs to me."

"No, my father let his father use that ground for his gardens because one of his wives had swollen joints and couldn't walk far. This plot was close to their house. But my father never gave him rights to the land and since he wouldn't listen to me we chopped his store with axes."

Two hours passed as the patrol officer listened to land disputes, minor theft cases and an adultery case. Tamara had joined Totopo and been introduced to Bani. They chattered together in low tones until their attention was caught by a new case. An old man named Odle was complaining that one of his wives would not obey him. She would not make gardens. She was lazy.

"Well, what am I supposed to do about that?" yelled the exasperated white man. "Beat the jolly woman! Slap her up. Make her listen to you. Aren't you the man in your own house? Don't you wear the pants, I mean the leaves?"

The crowd laughed uproariously. Odle stood silent, sheepishly waiting for the laughter to subside.

"You want me to beat her, do you? Yes, I'm the man in my own home. I killed a wife once ago and I could just as easily kill this one. It's a bit of waste but . . ."

"Stop! Stop! I didn't mean kill her!" The Australian was aghast. "Can't you men find a happy medium? I just meant slap her up a bit. Let her know who's boss. I don't mean kill her." He swore. "Of course you can't kill her. Why, we have a man in the kalabus right now that I wish we could hang for killing his wife."

The crowd gasped when this was interpreted.

"He deserves it!" continued the patrol officer. "He chopped her in two right in front of our office in Ialibu. He told everyone that he is not afraid of the government or the goal, so I wish we could hang him. We've got to do something to show you men you can't kill your wives!"

The man shook his big red head vehemently. "No, no, when I say 'Show 'em boss' I don't mean kill 'em." Another curse. "How can a dead woman learn who's boss?"

Totopo turned to Tamara. "So white men don't kill their wives but they 'beat the jolly woman' to 'sho 'em who's boss', do they?"

Tamara blushed. "Some of them do evidently."

"That's not like your father, though."

"No, it's not like my father or any men I know. But there are lots of bad white men,

Totopo, very bad. Newspapers in America are full of the deeds of wicked men, white men! American men don't buy their wives or sell their daughters but that doesn't mean they all treat women nicely!"

"Maybe not all white women deserve nice treatment either," put in Bani. "Maybe there are some lazy white women just like Odle's wife here."

"Yes, there are. I know some. There's all kinds in any skin color."

"I just can't picture a white man acting like that. When I think of a white man I think of your father, or your brother who carried Rami."

"Just look at the one sitting in front of us."

"Do you suppose the kiap beats his wife?"

"I don't have any idea, except that he seems to think it's a natural solution. 'Beat the jolly woman. Slap her up!' As though it's something you'd do any day of the week!"

"Do you know him, Bani? Does he beat his wife?"

"He's not married."

"Not married! Aminienga glapa! Why he's old enough to be a grandfather! Why isn't he married?"

"I don't know," said Bani.

"Maybe he's just a bachelor," said Tamara.

"What's a bachelor?"

"Someone who never married, or doesn't want to marry."

"But when your women are free why would any man not marry? We don't have any bach —, whatever you call them and our men have to buy their wives."

"Maybe no woman wanted them."

"Do you suppose?" Totopo turned to look the big kondodile over well.

"Or maybe they just don't want to marry."

"What sort of man would not want to marry? Imagine growing old without children."

"But what man wouldn't want sons? And who will take care of him when he gets old?"

"There are homes, institutions, for the old people, Totopo. But I don't think that's a satisfactory solution. It's nicer the way you Real People take care of your old grandmothers and grandfathers."

"But what sort of marry?"

"There are women never marry either."

"Oh, Konopu, you

"No, I'm serious

"What's wrong with

"Nothing, probably chance. Other's don't

"What do you mean chance?"

"No man ever asks

"Aminienga glapa

Totopo pondered. "N be as bad as being n don't like."

"Yes, it might be,"

"Here come the F would you introduce

Tamara would and

"Glad to meet you, extending his hand.

"My sister tells m here."

"That's right. And you still in school or a

"I just graduated fr I'm going on to Go next week."

"That's great. Let shade and talk. We h school resumes."

"How do you like

"Oh, it's a little too liking but at least th firewood."

"There is that!" a wooded steeps of Mt.

"And you're from

"Yes. I'm from M warmer there."

"I guess so. from foot of the second P.N.G.! What do Manus?"

"Other than the f diving and spear fishi

Joe paused and ev young men who walk animatedly. ". . . and

"But what sort of man wouldn't want to marry?"

"There are women in our countries that never marry either."

"Oh, Konopu, you must be joking."

"No, I'm serious. It's true."

"What's wrong with them?"

"Nothing, probably. Some never get the chance. Other's don't want to."

"What do you mean they never get a chance?"

"No man ever asks them to marry him."

"Aminienga glapa! I don't like that idea!" Totopo pondered. "Never being asked would be as bad as being married to someone you don't like."

"Yes, it might be," agreed Tamara.

"Here come the Holowis, Bani. Tamara, would you introduce Bani to them?"

Tamara would and did.

"Glad to meet you, Bani," said Joe Holowi, extending his hand.

"My sister tells me your the headmaster here."

"That's right. And what about you? Are you still in school or already working?"

"I just graduated from Ialibu High School. I'm going on to Goroka Teacher's College next week."

"That's great. Let's sit over here in the shade and talk. We have fifty minutes before school resumes."

"How do you like Piamble?"

"Oh, it's a little too cold and foggy for my liking but at least there is plenty of cheap firewood."

"There is that!" agreed Bani, eyeing the wooded steeps of Mt. Giluwe.

"And you're from Manus?"

"Yes. I'm from Manus. It's a good deal warmer there."

"I guess so. from a coastal island to the foot of the second highest mountain in P.N.G.! What do you miss most about Manus?"

"Other than the family I suppose I miss diving and spear fishing the most. But . . ."

Joe paused and everyone looked up at two young men who walked by them conversing animatedly. ". . . and so he wishes they could

hang him."

"Who do you suppose they are talking about?" Joe asked Bani.

"A man in Ialibu who killed his wife."

"Really? Did you know the couple?"

"I knew her because she worked in the Outpatients Department of the hospital. I saw him once or twice."

"What was he like?"

"An oldish fellow, short, thin, gray."

"And she?"

"She was young and beautiful. She had the prettiest eyes. She didn't talk much with her mouth but those eyes talked all the time. Young men were just crazy about her."

"And what happened? Tell us all about it."

"Well, the old fellow heard that she was seeing some young man. He promised her if it happened again he would kill her."

"And it did?"

"It may have. Anyway he thought so. He chased her with an axe all the way from their home to the government office."

"I suppose she kept running, thinking if she could make it to the office she'd be safe," shivered Tamara.

"Yes, he could have killed her anywhere along the way but he wanted to do it in front of the office. To show the patrol officers. One of the officer's wives was a special friend of the girl and the old codger wanted to show them he still had control over her even if she was a nurse and working for the government!"

"Ama, nanga Ara-yo!" groaned Totopo.

"He said he wasn't afraid of gaol or anything. He chopped her right in two. I saw her myself. She was lying face down split right in half, each side of her lying open to view. You could see all her organs. It was such a shock. I had seen her just the day before at Outpatients, so much alive! And there she was laid out like that. I'll never forget it."

"Oh, men, men! How can they be the way they are?" moaned Totopo.

Janice turned to Totopo. "I hear you had some pretty rough treatment while we were on holiday. Is that true?"

Totopo raised her eyebrows.

"Did you hear about women burning her

and Kedle beating her?" asked Bani.

Joe and Janice nodded. "Not much fun being the tenth wife of a lapun! I can imagine," stated Janice. "Are you terribly unhappy?"

"I'd rather be dead."

"I hate to go off to Goroka and leave her here in such a situation. Who can tell what might happen next?"

"But your father wouldn't let her return home?" Joe asked Bani.

"No, he wouldn't. You see, Kedle paid a tremendous amount for Totopo and Ara has already used the bridewealth. He bought wives for two of my cousins as well as buying a third wife for himself.

"Mm," from Joe.

"And it's no use running away?" from Janice.

"No, it's not. I'll never run away again," said Totopo.

"Why don't you tell the patrol officer your story while he's here?" asked Joe. "Find out what he suggests."

"Oh, I couldn't. I'd be too scared. My husband is here." Totopo remembered an old custom of unmentionable things being done to the wife who dared to take her husband to court.

"What could he say," asked Bani, "besides telling her to return home and have our father refund the brideprice?"

"I don't know but at least she would complain about her unfair treatment, the burning and the beating."

"A village court would say she had no claim. Kedle gave our parents a piglet when she was burned. And a beating is just punishment for running away."

"So everything's even?" asked Joe, shaking his head. "But it's not. There's a double standard here, Bani, that's not right. Just like that girl you saw chopped in two. How many women had that old codger had already in his lifetime? But the girl is supposed to be content with an old man and not even look at a young one. Do and you'll die!"

"Mind if I asked a personal question?" asked Bani.

"No, I don't think so. Go ahead."

"Is it true that you didn't pay a brideprice for Janice, or is that just a rumour?"

"It's true." Joe glanced at Janice with a little smile.

"But that is unusual? Even on the coast?"

"Yes, it is. You see, Janice's father is the pastor of a Lutheran Church. He feels it is wrong to sell his daughters. He would not take one toea for her. Not even a gift. My brothers and uncles tried to give a gift to Janice herself, but her father would not allow her to accept it. He realized it was in lieu of the brideprice."

"Is this the solution?"

"I don't know, Bani. For us, it's all right. As long as we live away from my tribe. There are so many ins and outs to the question; so many implications. I'm not one bit in favour of inflated brideprices. I think a token brideprice might be the solution myself."

"What do you mean by a token brideprice?"

"A token payment. An amount easily within the means of all young men. Perhaps one or two hundred kina which would be the equivalent of the usual traditional bridewealth value. This could be the seal of the marriage and yet an unhappy wife could find it to refund herself, rather than choosing suicide as the only way out."

"Then there'd be a lot more divorce."

"Yes, and that's not good either. But it may be the lesser of the two evils. There would be fewer suicides and fewer unhappy women in our land."

"But for the present, what can we do for Totopo?"

"I don't know but if she were my sister I'd do something!"

"What?"

"I would go to the patrol officer myself, if need be."

"You don't know our father."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"Here are four of Kedle's wives. Let me introduce them to you. This is Keledle-Ma. She is Number One. This is Dokat-Ma, Number Six. That one is Jeep-Ma, Number

Eight. And this is Totopo. In addition, Number Ten and others." The woman called Diye-yo! Kewambo-Ma. I want you to meet my

Both women got sl sauntered over. It was Market was over. Marapugul, on the negotiations to buy ex had left yesterday morning gone three days.

Totopo watched R daughter-in-law with in be like to have a mo how many years ago K

"Diye's Number Ni here, is Number Five."

"And there are four

"Yes, four more."

"Ten wives! Imagin man!" exclaimed the str

"He is," stated Diye

"And do you love h

"Yes, I love him."

"What makes all the

"Ha!" snorted her

answer that one. It's be love potion from here

Totopo spoke for th all this love potion w some?"

"Don't you love l bridge.

"No. And it would easier if I did."

"You're the odd c Diye. "Out of the last two of us wanted him

"But why? Can you

"The powers of th put in Rare-Ma.

"Maybe because answered Diye.

"Impossible," groa truthfully, why did yo

"Maybe he was th sight."

"What was the chal "Was it a challenge to

Eight. And this is Totopo, his most recent addition, Number Ten. Over there are two others." The woman called to them. "Diye! Diye-yo! Kewambo-Ma! Come on over here! I want you to meet my new daughter-in-law."

Both women got slowly to their feet and sauntered over. It was Saturday morning. Market was over. Kedle was off to Marapugul, on the Kaugel River, making negotiations to buy exotic bird feathers. He had left yesterday morning and was to be gone three days.

Totopo watched Rare-Ma and her new daughter-in-law with interest. What would it be like to have a mother-in-law? I wonder how many years ago Kedle's mother died.

"Diye's Number Nine and Kewambo-Ma, here, is Number Five."

"And there are four more?"

"Yes, four more."

"Ten wives! Imagine! He must be a rich man!" exclaimed the stranger.

"He is," stated Diye.

"And do you love him?"

"Yes, I love him."

"What makes all the women love him?"

"Ha!" snorted her mother-in-law. "I can answer that one. It's because he owns the only love potion from here to the horizon."

Totopo spoke for the first time. "If he owns all this love potion why doesn't he give me some?"

"Don't you love him?" asked the new bride.

"No. And it would make things so much easier if I did."

"You're the odd one for sure," sneered Diye. "Out of the last four wives he married, two of us wanted him before he wanted us."

"But why? Can you tell me why?"

"The powers of the love potion, Itemo," put in Rare-Ma.

"Maybe because he is so lovable," answered Diye.

"Impossible," groaned Totopo. "Tell me truthfully, why did you want him?"

"Maybe he was the greatest challenge in sight."

"What was the challenge?" asked Jeep-Ma.

"Was it a challenge to make a lecherous old

man desire you or was the challenge more in gaining a victory over eight other woman?"

"How was it a victory over you eight women?"

"You know. Making us take a cold back seat while you sat with him right up by the fire."

"Well, one might say it was a challenge all around."

"I think it would be more challenging to make a young man love you," said Totopo. "To be the first woman to awaken love in a young man's heart! Now that would be a challenge. How could it challenge anyone to be a man's *tenth* love?"

"I don't imagine you had a hard time making the young men love you, did you?" asked the new bride.

Totopo smiled.

"Did you?" asked Jeep-Ma.

"There were a couple interested," answered Totopo, trying to act nonchalant.

"And what happened to them?" Totopo looked into the kind, searching eyes of Keledle-Ma. She felt the older woman was reading her very soul.

"What happened to them if there were some?" prodded Diye.

Totopo turned to her. What a contrast in eyes, she thought. I wonder if Diye's will ever deepen.

"Oh, the main one was just a little too late. Kedle had already told my father that he would give him five more pigs than any other man could offer him."

"Aminienga glapa! He must have really wanted you!" exclaimed the bride.

"I suppose so," murmured Totopo studying a little cut on her toe.

When the women reached their hill Totopo turned toward her home.

"May I come along?" asked Keledle-Ma.

"Kapogla, owiyo, Ama." Totopo smiled a welcome.

They sat on opposite sides of the fireplace as Totopo dug out the coals and blew on them. When the fire blazed, she sat in silence while the other woman studied her.

"My soul is bare."

"You are still as unhappy as when you first

came?"

"Mm."

"It has been nearly a year now. I hoped you would become reconciled."

"Oh, I am in a way, Ama. I realize now there is no hope of any change or release. Perhaps I don't hate Kedle as much as I did."

"You asked why he didn't give you any love potion, daughter. He has."

"Oh, he has?"

"Yes. I myself have put it into your food three different times at his bidding."

"Oh. Then it failed."

"Yes, it failed."

"I'm afraid nothing could ever make me love him, Ama. But thank you for trying."

Totopo placed another stick on the fire as the sound of wind and rain enveloped the snug grass hut.

"You love him, don't you, Ama?"

"Yes, daughter, I love him."

The older woman traced a pattern in some ashes with the bamboo tongs.

"Doubtless it is much easier for me to love him than for you. I remember him well as a young man."

She scratched out the pattern, smoothed the ashes flat and drew again.

"... as a young man when his bigwig was the biggest bigwig in the whole of the Piamble area." She looked up at Totopo. "His current little wig bothers you, doesn't it?"

"How did you know?" gasped Totopo.

"I see you looking at it like the least you would do is straighten it up..."

"Or else?"

"Or else tear it off his head?"

"Oh, Ama. Truly my soul is bare to you."

"You wouldn't do it though."

"No. Of course not."

"Even though you hate him you would not shame him."

"No."

"I admire you, nanga bagol. I wish you were truly my daughter."

"So do I! Then I couldn't be married to Kedle!"

"Oh, Totopo!"

"No. I was just teasing. I appreciate you, Ama. You have eased my hard places and

soothed my spirit many times. I don't know what I would do here without you."

"The second wife loves you too."

"Yes, I know. I love her also. She is a fine person when you really get to know her, isn't she?"

"Yes, she is. She has surely suffered much. I am sorry now for the way I added to her suffering in the early days. I was so young and selfish and heedless of others' feelings."

"One lives and learns. You have made it up to her the best you can."

"I have tried." Again she smoothed out her ashes.

"What do you hear from your brothers?"

"All good news. He likes it at the Teacher's College very much."

"He writes often, doesn't he?"

"Yes. I've had six letters from him in the three months he's been there."

"He seemed like a fine young man."

"He has always been good to me."

"Joe and Janice Holowi are kind too, aren't they?"

"Yes, they are. They have invited me to their home several times lately."

"And the bago kondodle likes you."

Totopo studied the older woman quizzically. "Yes, Tamara and I are good friends"

"How did she happen to come here yesterday? Did she know Kedle was away?"

"Yes, I sent her a note. Toringi took it to her on her way to school."

"Oh, I see. Well, just remember, nanga bagol kogol, when you get depressed. There are lots of us who love you. You are not alone."

"Thank you, Ama, I'll remember," she promised, smiling brightly.

She adjusted a smoking piece of wood. "Love. That reminds me of some thing Tamara said. When I told her Rami said she felt God at the mission station that night she nearly died Tamara said, 'She said she felt God? I'm surprised she realized it but she is right. She felt love, and God is love, so she felt God.'"

"Yes, that's true," agreed Keledle-Ma. "The more I learn about God the more I learn to love."

One day not long after Toringi crawled into Totopo the fire looking utterly dejected.

"What's the matter? Spelling word?"

"Oh, Totopo!" exclaimed Toringi burying her face in her knees into tears. Her whole body was with silent ravaging sobs.

"Why, little Sister!" Totopo came around the fire to take her arms. "What can be the matter? No answer but sobs."

"Is your mother all right?"

"Ye-es," Totopo made a sound that heard no more for the sobbing.

"Much later when exhausted Toringi she lay face buried against Totopo occasional long shuddering stillness."

Totopo laid her lips against her nuzzled it fondly and whispered to me now, nanga bagol kogol

It came out in a rush between to quit school and oh, Totopo much! I don't want to quit. my class tied with Meku. And him in New Math and Writing I don't want to quit! I don't

"But why must you quit,

Toringi sat up so quick bumped Totopo's.

"I'm getting married. Have

"You're what?"

"I'm getting married."

Totopo looked at her, absent

"You can't mean it. You girl!"

"I know, Totopo. Could that for me?"

"Yes, I could. And I will!"

"Oh, good! He loves you. I do want to go to school

"Oh, no, Ango kogol, don't up. Men never listen to women talk to him. I'll use all my brain and all my strength and got, but I don't believe it will be good."

One day not long after Kedle's return Toringi crawled into Totopo's hut. She sat by the fire looking utterly dejected.

"What's the matter? Did you miss a spelling word?"

"Oh, Totopo!" exclaimed the little girl, burying her face in her knees and bursting into tears. Her whole body began to shake with silent ravaging sobs.

"Why, little Sister!" Totopo moved quickly around the fire to take the young girl in her arms. "What can be the matter?"

No answer but sobs.

"Is your mother all right?"

"Ye-es," Totopo made out, but she could hear no more for the sobbing.

Much later when the crying had exhausted Toringi she lay still at last with her face buried against Totopo's breast, only an occasional long shuddering sob breaking the stillness.

Totopo laid her lips against Toringi's ear, nuzzled it fondly and whispered, "Can you tell me now, nanga bagol kogol?"

It came out in a rush between sobs. "I have to quit school and oh, Totopo, I like it so much! I don't want to quit. I'm at the top of my class tied with Meku. And last week I beat him in New Math and Written Composition. I don't want to quit! I don't want to quit!"

"But why must you quit, little Konopu?"

Toringi sat up so quick her head almost bumped Totopo's.

"I'm getting married. Haven't you heard?"

"You're what?"

"I'm getting married."

Totopo looked at her, absolutely stunned.

"You can't mean it. You're only a little girl!"

"I know, Totopo. Couldn't you tell Ara that for me?"

"Yes, I could. And I will! Believe me!"

"Oh, good! He loves you. He'll listen to you. I do want to go to school so badly."

"Oh, no, Ango kogol, don't get your hopes up. Men never listen to women. But yes, I'll talk to him. I'll use all my brains and all my wiles and all my strength and everything I've got, but I don't believe it will do one bit of good."

Totopo thought she could not wait until Kedle came in that evening. Her blood was boiling. She felt like she might explode unless she could talk to him soon.

He came in at dusk. Totopo handed him his kaukau. She knew she ought to wait and let him eat first, but she just couldn't hold it in any longer.

"Is it true that you are selling Toringi in marriage?"

"Yes, it's true. Why?"

"How soon is it to take place?" Maybe it was just arrangements being made for future years.

"In a few weeks."

"But she is just a little girl!"

"Oh, not that little."

"Yes, she is! She's far too young for marriage. Why she has no breasts! No breasts at all! She is still as flat-chested as the day her mother weaned her."

"Mm. I know. But living with a man will speed nature up a lot. That's proven fact, you know. It even did in your own case."

"Yes, I know. But I was almost a woman anyway. Toringi is only a little girl. It's not fair."

"Not fair? Not fair to whom?"

"To Toringi, of course! Who else?"

"Well, I thought maybe you meant it wasn't fair to me or to the man she is to marry."

"I don't follow your thinking, Man! However could it be unfair to you?"

"No need to get excited. Let's just talk it over calmly. I thought you might mean it would be unfair to me if I could not get full price for her, and I was going to assure you that the fellow is paying the full price in spite of her size and youth."

Totopo groaned. She would never learn to think like a man!

"And how could it be unfair to the man who is buying her?"

"Well, obviously, because she is not a woman yet! How will she be able to satisfy him? No breasts, as you said. No hips to speak of, yet. She is as slender, straight and shapeless as a young sapling."

"Well, then I guess it is unfair to the man as

well. Why are you selling her to him?"

"Well, I was just going to tell you. It was his own choice. Let me begin from the beginning and explain.

"He is from over on the other side of Marapugul. I don't have any alliances in that area yet and I am happy to establish one now. When I heard he was looking for a girl to be his third wife I invited him to come back with me and look over my daughters. I wasn't expecting him to choose Toringi. Kanambo and Piliembo have both started to mature, you know. But since he asked for Toringi, what difference should that make to me?

"It's his choice."

"I had a daughter once. A full-grown daughter. I lost her just last year, not too long before I married you. I can tell you that made me sick. I had fed her and cared for her all her life only to lose her just when she was old enough to be sold."

"What happened to her?"

"She was drowned in the Cold-Sweet River. She was crossing it with a big bilum of kaukau on her head when it was in flood stage. The current swept her off her feet and the kaukau dragged her down.

"So if a man wants to take a daughter off my hands while she is still little and before any disaster can occur why should I balk? He is paying full price for her as I just said."

"Because it's not fair. That's why you should balk. Because it's not fair to Toringi."

"Why isn't it fair, Woman? For what other purpose is a girl born and raised?"

"Not just for the purpose of satisfying a man! She is born for the same reasons a boy is! To live, and be happy, to love, and enjoy life!"

"Oh, nonsense! Ask the missionaries. Even they say that Adam was created first and Eve was created *for him*! They will also tell you that Eve was the one who sinned and so she was punished."

He had to stop to cough. "She's not supposed to be happy and enjoy life."

"I thought you were deaf to all that the missionaries say. You only hear what you want to hear. Adam sinned too. Eve's punishment was to bear children in pain.

Adam's punishment was to till the ground and raise food. You men have it twisted. You make us women do both."

"Ha, ha, ha! Wouldn't I look cute now, out digging kaukau! Ha! Ha! I'm afraid God made a mistake that time!"

"But you said ask the kondodles. Mr. Talbot is the one who raises their garden. And look at his daughter. He says all the pigs in the world wouldn't be enough to buy her. Why don't you love your daughter like that?"

"Love my daughter? Ah, foolish woman, I only love my wives!"

"Oh, you! You lecherous old man! You don't know what love is!"

"Oh, I don't, don't I?" He reached out for Totopo. She grabbed his fingers and bent them backwards.

"Ouch!" he said, as he raised them to his beard and caressed them.

Looking up at the kunai grass roof he said, "Ten wives and twenty children and she thinks I don't know what love is. What about that?"

"You don't. And don't you dare touch me!" she commanded through gritted teeth. "Don't you touch me again until you tell me you aren't selling Toringi. I'll bite you, kick you, claw you, anything I can do! I hate you, you understand. I hate you! You evil, evil man!"

"Oh, come on, Totopo. Be sensible."

"I am sensible and I tell you, it's not fair to Toringi!"

"But you are being ridiculous. I can't say I won't sell her now after I have already told the man he can have her. How could I do that?"

"You can tell him she doesn't want to be married yet. You can tell him she is just a little girl and she wants to go to school."

"And what would he think of me if I told him my little slip of a daughter didn't want to abide by my wishes?"

"What does it matter what he thinks of you? It ought to matter more to you to treat your own daughter fairly."

"But I told you, stupid woman, that I'm not being unfair to her. I am only giving her a headstart on the fulfilling of the purpose for which she was born and raised."

"And I told you, stupid woman, that the only purpose for which she was born was to be a woman."

"And I tell you, you weren't pregnant I'd tell you now. What's more, you're not going to dictate to me and when I can't tell you want you and if you're pregnant or not!"

With that he rose and went to his house, as well as a man who would stoop to go through the stupidity of his young wife's justice of her! Why the world could withhold her body he had bought with five hundred kina!

Totopo lay down on his mat, praying to God to give him wisdom for some better way to her husband on the island. He was just drifting off to sleep when she felt a slight movement. It was as soft and fluttered like a butterfly and though she didn't know she began to feel, after a while she must have imagined it.

Ten minutes later she felt a little stronger this time. He had forgotten everything but the child.

"My baby! My child! My flesh, my blood!" She had never questioned a hundred times more real to her now than before.

She lay there in the darkness, every detail. The soft black hair, the large dark eyes, the nose, the sweet little red mouth and feet! Suddenly Totopo came out of the darkness. "My baby, my baby!"

"How can I know it? I know that I know! I'm not myself am a female!"

It wasn't an illogical thing. Kedle's daughter within a few percent of his children's twenty children he had

"And I told you, stupid man, that that isn't the only purpose for which girls are born!"

"And I tell you you're wrong! If you weren't pregnant I'd take a club to you right now. What's more, young woman, you are not going to dictate to me when I can touch you and when I can't. I'll have you when I want you and if you resist I'll beat you, pregnant or not!"

With that he rose and stalked out of the house, as well as a man can stalk when he has to stoop to go through a low doorway. He returned to the manhouse to brood on the stupidity of his youngest wife and the injustice of her! Why the very idea, thinking she could withhold her body from him! That body he had bought with his own fifteen pigs and five hundred kina!

Totopo lay down on her leaf umbrella-mat, praying to God to spare Toringi from a hell-on-earth marriage, and begging Him for wisdom for some better arguments to present to her husband on the little girl's behalf. She was just drifting off to sleep an hour later when she felt a slight movement in her womb. It was as soft and fluttery as the struggles of a butterfly and though she was awake instantly she began to feel, after a minute or two, that she must have imagined it.

Ten minutes later she felt it again. It was a little stronger this time. Her heart exalted. She forgot everything but the new life within her.

"My baby! My child! Part of my bone, my flesh, my blood!" She had already asked that question a hundred times, but the baby was more real to her now than it had been before.

She lay there in the darkness imagining its every detail. The soft black ringlets like her own, the large dark eyes, the straight little nose, the sweet little red mouth, the tiny hands and feet! Suddenly Totopo saw her baby in the darkness. "My baby's a girl!" she said aloud. "I know my baby is a girl."

"How can I know it? But I do know it, and I know that I know! I'm as sure of it as that I myself am a female!"

It wasn't an illogical supposition that Kedle's daughter within her was a girl. Eighty percent of his children were girls. Out of twenty children he had only four sons. So it

was logical but it was more than logic. It was more than supposition. Call it woman's intuition. Call it extra-sensory perception. Call it what you will, she knew it was a girl.

Once she accepted her knowledge of its sex, she began to imagine her little daughter's personality. She will be bright, keen, sensitive. She will have a sweet temperament. She will be vibrant, happy. She will love life . . . Totopo sat bolt upright in the darkness and spoke aloud, "and she will have nothing but heartbreak all through her life." She groaned aloud.

"Oh God, what am I doing, bringing a child into this wicked world? How can I bring a baby girl into life as Kedle's daughter? Into this land that is so hard on women? I can't. I mustn't let her live and be born. But how can I stop it? I love her already. My baby. My little girl. My little angel!"

She lay back again on the mat moaning softly. I must not let her be born but how can I kill her? My little daughter. I could not go on living without her now that I have conceived her, now that she is part of me. I could let her be born, and love and cherish her and she would bring me so much happiness that I'd never be sad again. Kedle might buy another wife and leave me alone forever. Marvellous thought. But some day he'd come back and tear my baby from my arms and sell her to some man, maybe even before she has breasts!

Once more a conviction came to her out of again the darkness. Again she started and would have sat up, but lay back instead with a groan. I will kill both of us. That is what I'll have to do. It's the only way. The only way! God, is there any other way? Any other way out for my daughter and I? And other way to escape heartache and suffering for her, her whole life long? She lay there silent then, not thinking, only listening in the darkness. But no answer came. God, it's the only way. There is no other way out.

She lay on her mat, planning feverishly, late into the night. At last she fell asleep, emotionally and physically exhausted.

Kedle crept in and fell upon her.

"No fighting. No biting. No clawing,

woman! Or I am the one who will bite. I will claw. I'll put a knee in your stomach. Lie still."

Totopo's resolve was strengthened within her. I'll only wait to see if I can help Toringi first.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Toringi was gone. Sold. Totopo had waited to the end, hoping against hope, but it had all taken place. The man was not old. He was young in fact. He was in the prime of life, strong, handsome, virile, big. What could make him want a little girl? Totopo shuddered.

She found the vine, the kanda rope she had prepared and hidden at her garden. She walked slowly to the tree she had chosen just a short way beyond her garden. Dropping down beneath it she began hesitantly, dilatorily to fashion the slipknot at one end of the vine.

"My baby, my little girl," she whispered, "Move once more for me." She reclined with her head against the tree for the life within her moved more often when she was lying down.

As she lay there waiting she breathed a prayer.

"God, forgive me. Forgive me for taking my baby's life and my own. But there is no other way, God, You know. You know all things. You are omniscient, they say. You would have told us if there were some other way."

The baby moved in her womb. She laid her hand over it. It was the longest, strongest movement yet. Tears filled the eyes of the fifteen year old girl as she climbed the tree. She murmured aloud. "We're in this together, little daughter. You and I. We're doing it

together."

She found no difficulty in climbing. Her stomach was not yet large enough to hinder her. The tears spilled over and ran down her cheeks as she placed the vine over her head, tied the other end around the limb, and let herself fall.

They did not find the body until dusk that evening, as she had planned.

Tamara looked at the body of the girl she had learned to love. It lay there in its bark wrappings, strapped to a pole which was supported on either end by a forked branch. She could not keep the tears from running down her cheeks. Neither could she understand the surprising silence all around her. Last year they had mourned so wildly for Kedle's daughter, Ena, in this very yard. Why didn't they mourn now? Some of them hated her, she knew. And others were ashamed of her last deed. But even considering that, how could they keep from weeping at the tragedy?

She felt a hand on her shoulder and turned to face Jeep-Ma.

"Don't cry, little Sister."

"I can't help but cry. It's so terrible! So tragic!"

"No," disagreed Jeep-Ma. "It's what she wanted."

Tamara stared at the woman dumb-founded.

At last she found words and spoke them vehemently. "But it's not what she wanted! She loved life! She wanted to live!"

Her words rang out strangely in the death-like stillness. They rang on and on in her own mind through the following days, the following years.

"She loved life! She wanted to live. Oh, how she wanted to live!"

Ai! — Hey!

ama — mother

ambo — woman

ambo kunana — love cl

ambo mopene — beauti

aminienga glapa! — an

ango — brother, sibling

ara — father

aya — sister

bagol — girl

balkangoma — children

"eat-it-raw" — konjo no

Ere! — exclamation Ola

imbo — people, real, nat

Imbo-Ungu — Real Tall

iyé — man

kango — boy

kapogla — all right

kariyapa — mirror

keri — bad

kogol — dear little, tiny,

koinje — bamboo tongs

kondodle — red, red skir

konopu — friend, deares

Kuro Kelkawe — the Go

Itemo — it's evident, or c

magol — son

Moglowiyo — Good-bye

mundu — mound for pla

nagol — but

nanga — my, mine

Owa! — exclamation (lit.

owiyo — you may come

pamili — let's go.

puyo — Good-bye (you n

tsingo-we — delicious, sw

wenepo — young

wenopoma — teen-agers

Ai! — Hey!
 ama — mother
 ambo — woman
 ambo kunana — love chant, head-turning (tanim het)
 ambo mopene — beautiful young girl, debutante
 aminienga glapa! — an exclamation. (lit. "Your mother's father!")
 ango — brother, sibling of the same sex
 ara — father
 aya — sister
 bagol — girl
 balkangoma — children
 "eat-it-raw" — konjo nowi — cucumber
 Ere! — exclamation Olaman!
 imbo — people, real, natural, real people
 Imbo-Ungu — Real Talk, or People's Talk, or Real People's Talk
 iye — man
 kango — boy
 kapogla — all right
 kariyapa — mirror
 keru — bad
 kogol — dear little, tiny, (a term of endearment)
 koinje — bamboo tongs
 kondodle — red, red skins, light-skinned
 konopu — friend, dearest (lit. thought, part of the verb 'to love')
 Kuro Kelkawe — the Good Spirit
 Itemo — it's evident, or on evidence
 magol — son
 Moglowiyo — Good-bye, (lit. you may stay)
 mundu — mound for planting kaukau
 nagol — but
 nanga — my, mine
 Owa! — exclamation (lit. dog!)
 owiyo — you may come
 pamili — let's go.
 puyo — Good-bye (you may go)
 tsingo-we — delicious, sweet (paa-tsingo-we — very delicious)
 wenepo — young
 wenopoma — teen-agers

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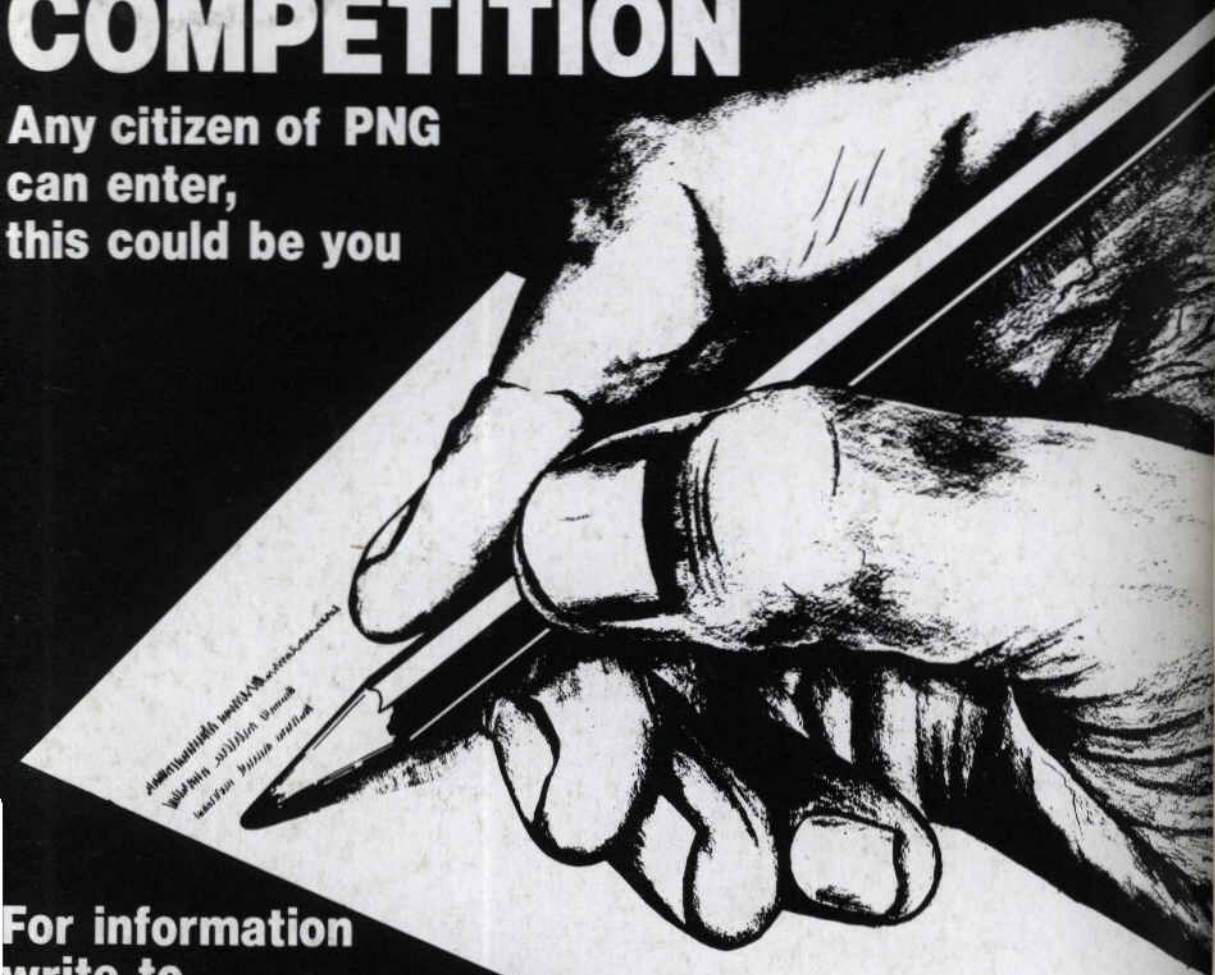
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