

A JOURNAL OF  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
AFFAIRS, IDEAS  
AND ARTS

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# BIKMAUS

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MICHAEL TSIM  
by Wilhelm Tagis

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# BIKMAUS

A JOURNAL OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
AFFAIRS, IDEAS AND THE ARTS.  
Vol. VI, No. 2, June 1985.

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# MICHAEL TSIM

by Wilhelm Tagis

## DESTINATION PLANTATION

A flight of doves flat out over the Solomon sea on their return flight to Ghausarara Island had reminded him and his parents that dusk was approaching. They sighted a lone runner heading towards them as they drew closer to the village. He collapsed at their feet after having told them the big news about a huge canoe called a Siipii anchored off Maponau. The runner reminded him of Phillipides running from the scene of battle to break the victory news to the Athenians.

They had not seen the cutter and were quite amazed at the sight of it. His father who had been to Rabaul had called out that it was a Siipii called a Stimah. He had been a passenger on one of these black, smoke puffing pieces of logs. The deck of the cutter swarmed with a moving mass of dark figures. Anyone would think that a storm was gathering in frenzy before the final fury. Perched on top of the cabin was a white skinned Manawaita. He sat there smoking an over-sized cigar. He stood out distinctly amongst the dark skinned mortals gathered on the cleanly swept deck below.

Every foul mouthed villager swarmed all over him and his parents, in order to narrate the arrival of the big Siipii. Some came to tell them again and again, as if they could not see the blasted steamer themselves, least still if the ship had come to deliver them cargo and riches.

The boy was dispatched by Chief Aito to announce the arrival of the ship, and in a more remote chance, to tell them to hasten to

the village for security purposes. The arrival of the ship did not raise a concern of hope but fear. The entire village population was there. Chief Aito came up to them specially and assured them that it was good that everyone was together, and that there should be no cause for alarm. His red eyes beamed at the cutter and even braved the fiery sunset drowning into the horizon to the west. Likewise, on board the ship every pair of blood shot eyes beamed back at those on the shore, and dwelt on the bare breasted girls who had waded into the 'doowah' despite their parents objections. One elderly woman commented that they only wanted to parade their breasts to the men on board the ship. Later in the evening in their respective houses, of course, they would be thrashed accordingly by their parents for their disobedience.

The ship looked dark indeed as if a storm was approaching. In the twilight, hundreds of small lights could be easily seen moving about on the deck. The sweet smell (disgusting to some) of twisted tobacco rolled in old newspapers floated toward the beach, making people inhale deeply.

"Oh ghe, wait takinna," one labourer explained.

A dingy was lowered and two white men alighted into it. Four oarsmen rowed them ashore. Men fought each other to carry the two men ashore. A concentrated group followed closely after them. They tripped and fought for a place close to the whitemen. Someone up front cursed at someone else who had trodden on his sore heels, which began bleeding profusely.

"Which mother fucker has given much pain?" he shouted.

Another kicked someone and fell down, only to be walked over by those coming after him. He sprang up and those near him leaped out of his reach as he swung his hands in an attempt to hit those who had walked over him. He walked away, spitting sand out in mouthfuls; and cursing at no one in particular, told them to go and feast on their parents' excreta. The crowd continued after the two white men. A fierce fight erupted in the crowd between two boys who wanted to



be at the head of the group. They were thrashed by their parents and tossed outside of the group.

The boy was swamped by the curious group and ended at the *hausu kiapi*. His parents were there like everyone else. He found it amusing today when he thought about his people's ignorance. They had followed two white men like a pack of yelping dogs after a bitch. The crowd surrounded the *hausu kiapi* as the men entered the house after their chief; he was also their *kukurai*. He managed to have a good look at the white men and noticed that they had bush moustaches and one of them had a pot sized stomach that caused him to waddle about like a duck. The pot bellied man whispered something to Chief Aito; The Chief turned around and told the crowd to return to their houses. No one moved. The chief approached the same white man and whispered to him. He looked at the crowd and nodded to his friend. He tucked his shirt in as he moved toward the porch to address the crowd.

"Gut nait ol man. Taim yupela igo bek long haus nau. Sapos no wun i muv, bi mi sutim as bilong em wantaim masket."

He pointed at the 303 lying on the limbun bed and at the same time he squeezed his penis, which had swollen up into a big sized *kalapua* banana. The boy moved away. Meantime he knew not a single one would move away. As he entered his parent's house, he heard a mad stampede of human beings fighting over something.

"Me, me, me masta."

"Mi mangi masta bilong masta Numununa plantesini."

The white men had asked for volunteers to do odd jobs around the house, like fetching water, washing their clothes and many other odd jobs. The stampede had occurred as they fought to mount the steps. The person who mounted it first, of course, was employed. The crowd was told to go back to their own houses. He thought that this was just as well. Many babies, and big babies alike, were crying hysterically for food. Many already tired from their long vigil on the beach.

The night wore on. The boy had his dinner

and debated about whether to sneak out and go and watch the white men in their houses. He attempted to sneak out but each time his father caught him and warned him about moving out without his permission. Later on during the night he managed to slip out when his father had dozed off to sleep. He almost stumbled upon a steamy group of village men and youths squatting there like dwarf Buddhist statues. The whole male population was there. Not a single soul stirred when he bumped into the first one sitting at the rear. He hissed and cursed and limped away toward the dark. He found a space and sat down like the rest. He asked someone next to him what was going on. This man cautioned the boy to keep his voice down and advised him to pay attention like the rest of the men. Everyone was absorbed in his own thoughts about the situation and drew his own conclusions about what he could see.

The amassed group of people smelt heavily of bad odour, foul smelling breaths and strong dried sweat. He became nauseated. Another individual inside the group started emptying his guts out. He had a common cold, ignorantly pronounced *komonkolo*, which he contracted while still young. He had grown up with it and was about to kick the bucket with it so people tolerated him. Anyhow he blasted it and not a single moth-eaten character moved. They all sat there and inhaled the millions of germs that poured out of his foul smelling mouth.

Chief Aito appeared from the darkness carrying an aluminium pot full of boiled *kaukau*; a present to the two white men. He paused at the base of the steps; put the pot down quietly and brushed his shoulders and body with his hands. He sniffed at his body to find out if he smelt of everlasting smoke. After adjusting his new *laplap*, he mounted the steps very slowly as if he was on his way to his own execution. Slowly he rose to his full height as he stepped on the last step. He placed the pot carefully on the floor and his old body jerked up as if struck by an unseen electrifying force. His hand flew up to execute a police style salute.

The two white men, busy playing poker,

looked up in astonishment. They watched in shock as the chief, having got over the initial shock, and returned Chief Aito presented the pot to them. He performed a ritual by taking one potato and putting it in the pot. He then took poison and that it was a matter of time before they would eat. Whether the two white men were interested in the matter at all. They were eating. The rhythm of the meal was interesting to watch. The villagers were hiding their two white men to eat and put their hands back to their *kaukau* of their hands back simultaneously. The chief who assured them that if they used spoons, they would leave his own spoon. The meal was quite untrue because such instruments are not used and one *mangi* man with several tin plates and laid them down exactly as he had. The cooking pot was hot and the two white men burned. Another plate was refused it at first. The two white men emptied the pot's contents. The two white men watched.

The meal took long. The two white men took over and replaced their plates. The attendants moved in and wiped the table clean as quickly as the others. The meal finished when the table was removed. The chief offered the chief a cigar, smelt it and savoured its sweet taste. After a careful examination of the cigar, he displayed numerous cigars as a result of continuous chain smoking clay pipes rotting inside.



looked up in astonishment. For a long time they watched in shocked bewilderment. After having got over their shock, both stood up and returned Chief Aito's salute. Then Chief Aito presented the pot full of cooked kaukau to them. He performed a small civil ceremony by taking one potato and eating it to indicate to the white men that the food was free from poison and that it was quite safe for them to eat. Whether the two understood this did not matter at all. They seemed satisfied with his eating. The rhythm of his mouth's movement was interesting to watch even from where the villagers were hiding. He motioned to the two white men to eat. They eyed each other and put their hands into the pot to pick a kaukau of their choice. Both pulled their hands back simultaneously. They eyed the chief who assured them that it would be safer if they used spoons. He explained that he had left his own spoons in the house; this was quite untrue because no-one possessed any such instruments at this stage. A quick bark and one mangi masta came trotting along with several tin plates forks, knives and cups, and laid them down on the portable table exactly as he had been taught to do. The cooking pot was hoisted onto the table and the two white men began to serve themselves. Another plate was offered to the chief who refused it at first. Later he accepted. He emptied the pot's contents into his plate. The two white men watched in astonishment.

The meal took less than five minutes. The two white men took quick bites each and replaced their plates on the table. Two attendants moved in as if from nowhere and wiped the table clean. The chief finished as quickly as the others. No sooner had he finished when the attendants cleared and removed the table. The pot bellied character offered the chief a huge cigar. He inspected the cigar, smelt it and inhaled deeply, savouring its sweet aroma. After further careful examination, he plugged it into his mouth. In the process of opening his mouth he displayed numerous gaps in his mouth; a result of continuous chewing of betel nut and chain smoking clay pipes with all the much rotting inside.

Proper behaviour could not be maintained. The chief continuously spat over the low wall and opened his mouth very widely. The white men became very annoyed and showed unmistakeable displeasure at the chief's behaviour. They continued to smoke and occasionally someone would crack a joke and the three men would laugh. With great difficulty, would be the best phrase to use to explain the manner by which the dialogue between the two white men and chief Aito was conducted. The chief hardly knew the lingua franca as well as the two white men did, so for the whole evening much application of broken language, which the chief thought to be great, and a great deal of waving and gesturing was used. This confirmed the chief's suspicions that the three were having difficulty communicating and understanding each other.

Later the conversation turned onto more interesting topics. In one instance the slender whiteman demonstrated the practical screwing of something; unmistakeably a female or another male. Using his thumb and the next finger, he created an opening signifying the uterus. With another finger from his right hand, he pushed it in through the opening and gradually pushed it in to and fro at a slower pace and gradually gathered momentum, going faster and faster and ending with a sigh of relief as he pretended to collapse on the chair he was sitting on. The two white men laughed heartily joined by the chief. The chief laughed, throwing his head about as if he was possessed by some unseen forces. The other smacked his lips and beamed at the chief. He whispered something to the other man and turned to the chief once more. He offered the chief another cigar and said something to him. The chief cocked his head to one side to digest the information properly, then he shook his head. He wondered what it was about. He began to fear the worst. He was told by someone once upon a time, that white men have the most peculiar attitudes towards sex. Homosexuality, sodomy, lesbianism and many other were their speciality. If the chief had agreed to the white men to mount him, then



that was bad indeed, but who was there to defend him from these culturless bastards?

This ridiculous practice was also common among Papua New Guineans; especially in plantations and kalabus yards. He feared this because the chief had once worked in a Rabaul plantation and he may have learnt, and perhaps indulged in this devilish act. Someone in the group whispered clearly for the chief to watch his steps. Everyone turned to face him and agreed with him. The white man offered the chief a bag of what appeared to be rice. He moved out immediately laden with his present. Very soon he was swallowed up by the darkness. Several dogs yelped as he passed their sleeping holes in the sand. The night wore on. The mangi-mastas brought cups of drinks after drinks for the white men. The morning breeze began to blow from the east. Their group became smaller and smaller as individuals on the edge began to move in to feel the warmth of the others. Soon they were squashed tightly like sardines. The stench of dried sweat, smoke, urine and bad air intensified. The smell of excreta, the result of people not cleaning their bottoms properly, became intolerable. Several people left with a lunatic who was also the scapegoat of the village. He coughed loudly as he moved out. This caused the two whitemen to look their way. He almost ran away but was dragged back by a pair of very strong hands.

The slender white man got up and pointed a shiny cylinder type thing that brought bright lights from its end. The explosion that followed made everyone so scared, they left their sitting positions and fled in every direction. The boy could hear his shouts as he ran down the steps firing into the crowd. There was a mad rush for the undergrowth that served as a latrine for the village population during the day. He ploughed into a growth of thorny plants; his feet touched something damp. He knew instantly what it was. He dashed out into the sea disturbing sand crabs and soaked himself in the water as he washed the rubbish away. When he walked into his parent's compound, he could hear people shouting and sleeping dogs howling. Some people ran about with flaming coconut

leaf torches. Others headed towards the hausu kiapi to see the manawaita. The boy headed toward the main village centre. People were gathered in groups and they seemed to be talking at the same time. He moved in closer and heard one man narrate an incident.

Some people he said were caught red handed prowling about the vicinity of the hausu kiapi.

"Who were these people?" someone asked no-one in particular. "They bring shame to us."

"True, true," several chorused together.

Someone said that the kids were the culprits. Two boys angrily denied these accusations.

"Very true!" several parents shouted together; their teeth clenched over their smoking pipes which vibrated from the screw end.

Suddenly like thunder, one of the white men shouted. His voice shattered the stillness of the dark night.

"All right yah snooping bastards! Just get a bastard out here. You go fuck all in your ruddy blastered houses. Come on, be off with you! Come on vamoose you fucking, stinking, mother screwing kanakas!" His voice trailed off as he sank back into his chair. A cigar plugged his mouth.

Chief Aito ran around shoving people into their respective houses.

"Go home," he urged. "The manawaita is very upset! We do not know what he will do with us tomorrow!"

Slowly they drifted back to their houses. His father added more dry wood into the dying fire. He kept moaning about what awaited them the next day. His mother was not much better. They talked in whispers. The boy went to sleep while they were still talking, crying, arguing and hoping something would kill them. Somewhere in the bush a dog barked. A rifle shot followed. Soon an owl hooted somewhere in the bush. That confirmed that a new day was approaching. That was the last thing he remembered as he sank into the next world of his forefathers, to dream about their glorious days in some unknown Fijian sugarcane farm. The boy

woke up early the next day to be down by the highest branch of the tree. He was able to see the whole village. No one was patrolling the deck.

Several villages were visible. The undergrowth to the left was watched from the tree. He went away to clean ground. The ground deposited enough sand. He was suffering from acute sunburn. The sand bank and the sea. Yellowish algae were floating from under the water. Ten metres from the shore, a bather in the dead sea. Yellowish matter floated. He ignored the bather. He moaned and cried out.

"Oh tsinaghe, Octopus! Octopus!"

The bather looked up. "Where?"

"There." The boy pointed.

"Kolupetam! Come on, you eat enough and drink. Parents."

The boy picked up a vanipono tree and went above. He caught on to the tree. He surfaced at the water. He surfaced at the sea water mixed with excreta. By this time the boy had already waited with more. The bather turned around. The boy sat on the water. He walked back to the beach. He waited. When he saw the bather, he asked him if he had seen the bather. He walked after him and a group of young people



woke up early the next morning to be the first to be down by the beach. He climbed to the highest branch of the vanipono tree, where he was able to see the moored cutter and the whole village. No one stirred on the cutter except a couple of night guards who were patrolling the deck.

Several villages walked wearily into the undergrowth to relieve themselves. He watched from the top and saw them move away to clean ground as soon as they had deposited enough on the same spot. One suffering from acute diarrhea dashed down the sand bank and dived head-long into the sea. Yellowish algae like matter floated out from under the water's surface. He surfaced ten metres from the shore. He floated like a bather in the dead sea. Meanwhile, the same yellowish matter surrounded him as he floated. He ignored this. Meanwhile the boy moaned and cried out.

"Oh tsinaghe, oh tsinaghe! Octopus! Octopus! Octopus!" he shouted.

The bather looked up and asked, "Where? Where?"

"There." The boy pointed at him.

"Kolupetam! Come and eat it. Make sure you eat enough and get some for your parents."

The boy picked the green seeds of the vanipono tree and pelted the bather from above. He caught one between the partings of his buttocks as he tried to dive under the water. He surfaced and spat out a mouthful of sea water mixed with some of his own excreta. By this time he tried to swim ashore. The boy had already descended and was waiting with more vanipono seeds. The bather turned around and swam back to deep water. The boy sat on the sand and waited. He walked back to his father's house and waited. When he saw the bather passing by he asked him if he had eaten enough from the beach. The bather looked around for a pebble or something to throw at him. There was none. He continued walking without looking back. The boy laughed out very loud; enough to make the bather look back. The boy walked after him and continued to where a group of young people were gathered. A

common whore of nobility came out by the back of the hausu kiapi. Her legs were bowed like a cowboy from continuous horse riding. She waddled along like a duck. Very soon Chief Aito came by and ascended the steps to the official's house. He talked to someone and very soon descended carrying a bag of rice.

"Maybe that's a present to the whole village," someone suggested.

"Who said?" another queried.

"That's the payment for Kevariko's bottom don't you see?" explained another.

"Ma papako meka tebai tengena." one jealous heart sneered. "Why should she offer herself to those men?" the same man continued.

"Very true," someone said sarcastically. Several people laughed.

They remembered that previously the same man had asked to have intercourse with her. She had refused and he had dragged her to a vast growth of *genuwa* dwarf trees. There he had asked her again. When she refused, he flogged her and left her. The chief's who owned her, made him pay several lengths of *kulaga* for that. He left the group that day and headed toward his house murmuring curses at those who had mocked him.

Eventually one of the two white men walked out to the verandah and stretched out his hands. He exposed his penis and toyed around with it until it stood up. They watched in silence. Someone whistled as he went back into the room. It was the biggest thing they had ever seen in the area. They laughed loudly when one of them began to describe it.

The sun's rays pierced through the stillness of the morning. Everyone else was awake. People appeared everywhere in their best laplaps. Chief Aito's principal assistant, tutul Maia, went about explaining the reason for the cutter's visit.

"These people," he said, "were the big people because they were bringing back 'divarapument'. Everyone must come out to see them."

A gong went. Everyone rushed to the platform built outside the kiap's house. Chief Aito mounted the platform and re-adjusted his black lavalava trimmed with a red strip on



the hem. He raised a conch shell and blew seven loud blasts; his mouth puffed up like a bottle fish; his eyes almost popped out and tears formed in his eyes. Immediately after the blowing of the conch shell, people who stood directly under the platform began to move back, sniffing and spitting. Those at the back resented this. A few asked aloud what was happening.

"Something horrible was smelling," someone voiced.

"Where?" another queried.

"There," someone said as he pointed at the direction of the platform.

Some children stole quick glances at the chief and giggled.

"Why are you treating me like this?" shouted the chief. "Am I the only one with an arse?"

"Very true," an elderly man puffing a half burnt out bamboo pipe said. "We all throw out bad air. If we don't we'll die."

These comments seemed to have quietened the crowd who had become noisy. Someone at the back however, emptied his guts out and said out aloud he was not a dog to eat someone else's excreta. The chief glared at him but did not utter a word.

In a little while the two white men came marching towards the platform. Several carriers walked behind in goose step style, carrying four large wooded containers. The crowd became silent as the party neared the platform. The chief scrutinised the crowd to see if anyone was making the slightest movement. The boy noticed that one of the white men did not watch where he was going. Very soon he placed his right leg on the lowest step and for a brief moment watched where he was putting his leg. But that was only momentarily. No sooner had he done so, he immediately began to survey the crowd again. Very soon he missed the next step and fell down very heavily between the second and the third step, and broke one as he fell down. He landed very heavily on the damp earth. His pair of trousers tore and showed the parting of his buttocks and his hairy peach dried pair of testicles that popped out on either side of the parting of his oversized underwear. His

colleague was knocked back and he too landed on his buttocks. He sprang up immediately and with the agility of a wild boar, lifted his fallen friend up as if he was a mere nothing. He stood him up and pressed gently on his back and buttocks. His friend cried out very loudly when he touched the part of his body that hurt the most. At the same time he cursed those who built the step for being good at fucking their mothers and not knowing a man's job. The crowd stood dumfounded and the women began to sob easily; some thinking what would eventuate because the white men had just fallen down. The boy for one dreaded that the chief would be flogged for this accident. The white man shouted for them to stand back as some men moved in to assist him. They all moved back as far as possible.

Meanwhile the chief had jumped off the platform and was headed for the bush when his tultul stopped him in the nick of time. Had he succeeded he would have caused the greatest scandal in his life and would have taken all the blame for the incident involving the two white men. He was persuaded to go and assist the two whitemen. Later he apologised for the incident. The two white men however, treated it as a pure joke. In fact the whiteman thought it was all a joke.

"If you would've watched where you were bloody going, you wouldn't have fallen down and landed on your fat bottom. Next time you should be more careful lest you injure your most valuable belonging," one said.

Later they mounted the platform with much more care. Once more the chief made another apology. He further thanked the two white men for their coming and especially for the gifts of two bags of rice which he said he would divide amongst the village people. They were grateful when the chief finished his speech because the sun was already up and they were beginning to perspire. Most of them wished the whole silly business could be over soon. The hog bellied individual who had similar likeness to a hornbill, stood up and waved his hands for silence. They became silent. Everyone stood at attention as they were taught to do in the presence of a big

white man. The old parted with their pip

"Gut moning alg mouth moved in sl suffering from a bad kamap hia and g algeta." He pulled tightened his belt. "Marku and narapek He laid special emp Smith nodded his bilong ol bigpela hap bilong Rabual a Kowkaepu. Planti long ol dispela pl bigpela pe tumas. S laik long kam na w Bihain long toktok y ken kam na givim ne

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Other festivities in ten wild boars, r possums, fish and c



white man. The old men for the first time parted with their pipes and betel nuts.

"Gut moning algeta pipel," he began. His mouth moved in slow motion as if he was suffering from a bad toothache. "Mi hapi long kamap hia and givim toktok long yupela algeta." He pulled his trousers up and tightened his belt. "Nem bilong mi am Masta Marku and narapela nem emi Masta Smith." He laid special emphasis on the master. Mr. Smith nodded his greetings. "Mipela i man bilong ol bigpela coconut plantations long hap bilong Rabual an na long New Ireland na Kowkaepu. Planti pipel long Boukae i wok long ol dispela plantations, na oli kisim bigpela pe tumas. Sapos husat man hia i gat laik long kam na wok hia, emi olrait tasol. Bihain long toktok yupela ol man i laik wok i ken kam na givim nem long mitupela nau."

He continued to ramble on about the advantages of working in the plantations. Men who had just returned from some plantations nodded in approval. (In those days it was laughable the way they used to speak the very nasal, very rough bush Australian accent, often spoken with a deliberate tilt of the head). Question time was allowed. Certain men who had returned from previous plantation recruitment programmes, asked questions to prove their knowledge of the whitemans' language, and at the same time, impress those who did not know the language.

The next two days were occasions of great excitement and festivity. The plantations' recruits on board the cutter came ashore. A game of football was played as a demonstration for the new recruits by those who knew the game. The game was a mixture of wrestling, Thai boxing and many other techniques of martial arts. At least that is what the boy thought before he knew that the game could be played much more peacefully using tactically co-ordinated skills. That afternoon the village bone doctor was kept busy fixing up sprained ankles, broken legs and other injuries received during the game.

Other festivities included the devouring of ten wild boars, numerous numbers of possums, fish and other village food stuff.

Married men, who were going away into the various plantations, were taped and glued to their partners. The village whore, serviced the young and middle aged unmarried men. Hundreds of lengths of *kukaga* beads were paid for her services. Some lucky bachelors managed to seduce virgins from the villages. Chief Aito's two grown up daughters, who were already marked for two other inland village chiefs, were seduced by two bastards. Luckily for the two, the chief found out two months later, or the two culprits would have met an unknown end.

After the departure of the cutter and its load of human labourers, parents, relatives and children, the gifts given out by the two whitemen were displayed; red lavalava, tomahawks, knives, pots, mirrors, smoking pipes, referees' whistles and Australian money were but a few of them. Chief Aito took possession of Mr. Smith's torn pair of trousers, a faded colonial army private's jacket and other priceless rubbish. He stitched the pair of torn trousers with strips of cane and used a sharpened bone of a flying fox as a needle.

The villagers could think of nothing following the departure of the cutter and its load of human cargoes. As all of them knew, some of the men who had gone would not return to their village. Many would marry and settle with their wives in that wives' repsective local communities. Those who returned would be different. They would be men with different experiences and destinies. They would bring different ideas, many of which would be absorbed by the traditional customs and values, others would be rejected while some would contradict the laws and may be rejected in preference to the traditional ones. The old men and women and some younger ones would pass away.

Many parents and relatives went into mourning. Some gave up somking and chewing betel nuts, eating pork meat, possum and some types of fish. Many made promises to eat these things when their loved ones returned. As time rolled by, many individuals passed on. The luckier ones became restless during the long wait. The young unmarried



girls became restless because there were no young men left to marry.

The boy's father became a pastor in the Roman Catholic Church that arrived several months after the departure of the cutter. After seven years of head cracking education at the catholic catechists school, he was promoted to catechist at the new mission coconut plantation and later became an evangelist at the mountain Nagovoisi villages. He was looked upon by the traditional chiefs as a save man. Many people came to seek his advice with cases relating to local village politics. When the boy's family moved to the new mission station he was baptised and given the name Michael Tsim. His father whose reputation spread as a great teacher (some people referred to him as our own prophet) began to teach him about the coming of civilization which he said was the taim bilong Gud tem. Civilization meant the recruitment of their fellow village men by the two white men; one of whom was a human replica of a hornbill, while the other one exposed his private parts to the public when he fell from the platform.

The plantation workers returned with much money and other goods but their knowledge would not equal the power of God who was then their undisputed leader.

Chief Aito and the other chiefs, his father used to tell him, were devils and tyrants. They did not tolerate public prostitution and they themselves seduced any prostitutes anywhere they went. They repeatedly denied the same opportunities to others. They sold out to the whitemen by agreeing to recruit men from their village to work in their plantations for a mere few pounds. The catholic church his father said would wipe out all these sins against the people.

Many times Michael became bored with his father's preaching. What intrigued him more was his thoughts about having been lucky enough to witness the plantation recruitments. His father may have accused Chief Aito and his counterparts, but what they did was the beginning of the big change that eventually restructured this side of his world.

## THE CONTRACTORS

A popular name that echoed in every Toberaki home over mangrove swamps and from point to point was Binistem. So when Waighatsina arrived back on that momentous day, every foul mouthed person bellowed out the ear shattering chorus of 'Binistem'.

Waighatsina and his family arrived by mission coastal boat after three years at Egorist plantation. They were greeted by the whole village at the Catholic Mission jetty. The turn out, which surprised everyone, was unusual in that such turn outs only befitted the coming of the bishop or, on a few occasions, a patrol officer. Waighatsina had earlier written home to his half brother, Topalitsi, about his coming. The letter which took almost a year to reach Molamkomo village arrived by mission boat and was hand delivered by yet another Binistem; a Toberakian of lesser social status than Waighatsina. This was a time when social status was measured by the type of plantation one worked in; the number of years one had been away and the lengths of laplap one received; blankets; pots and occasionally bags of rice and tinned fish or meat.

Dikodiko, the local Catholic Catechist stationed in every village by the Catholic Mission to take care of the people's souls from the Satana and a horde of village Mata Leleku, was one of the minority of intelligentsia of which there were only two in the Toberaki and ten in the whole of the big and small Buka, including Green Island, Carterets and Polynesian atolls. Dikodiko, whose full name was Joseph of Arimathea Dikodiko, read the letter to Topalitsi after morning devotion. The village population had also gathered to listen to the latest news about their wanpin which was read out aloud by the Catechist Dikodiko.

The letter was badly written in a mixture of Pidgin and Toberaki with an English word here and there and was pathetic to say the least. There were corrections with more corrections and double corrections. In the end it was quite difficult to read and understand the letter. Dikodiko, in the process of reading

the letter, was over. Everyone agreed the letter was most difficult to add up to the fact that most highly married person. Secretly, he privately told his father the letter could hardly also told his father the village school, was a member, of course one would know things about one's kept his mouth shut the letter and packed a wooden suitcase. Topalitsi himself made an arrangement the arrival of his brother.

He would receive Molamkomo and the unloading of the cargo. Of course, this was Topalitsi had to satisfy the people informed the status over night before a famous message. again and again told him to tire him of responsibilities, especially person like Waighatsina many were only to get a reward of some tinned fish which was at that time. Now-a-days sugar, lollywater for everyone; including good contributor to kwashiorkor.

Everyone began a great day began to frequent the beach any ships passing leading to the kilometres away, and a group of ten armed with brooms of leaves. (One a biblical version of on the occasion Waighatsina's house



the letter, was overcome with perspiration. Everyone agreed with him that indeed the letter was most difficult to read, which all adds up to the fact that it was written by a most highly masterful (not westernised) person. Secretly, or not so secretly, Dikodiko privately told his father that the writer of the letter could hardly read his own writing. He also told his father that his own students at the village school, of which his eldest brother was a member, could read and write better. Of course one would never say embarrassing things about one's own kinsman. His father kept his mouth shut. Topalitsi folded the letter and packed it away in his prized, red wooden suitcase. The next morning Topalitsi himself made an announcement concerning the arrival of his brother.

He would require all the men of Molamkomo and their women to assist in the unloading of the cargo from the boat. Of course, this was quite unnecessary, but Topalitsi had to say that it was, so as to keep people informed that he too had gained social status over night because he was a recipient of a famous message. The people reminded him again and again that it was unnecessary for him to tire himself. They knew their responsibilities, especially when an important person like Waighatsina returned home — many were only too willing to help in order to get a reward of some pounds of rice and tinned fish which was a rarity to all Toberakis at that time. Now-a-days, rice, tinned fish, tea, sugar, lollywater has become available to everyone; including the Toberakis. It is also a good contributor to infant malnutrition and kwashiorkor.

Everyone began to count the days as the great day began to draw closer. They began to frequent the beaches, watching the ocean for any ships passing through. The old track leading to the mission jetty some six kilometres away, was cleaned by Topalitsi and a group of ten men. The women followed armed with brooms, and swept the track clean of leaves. (One could be reminded of the biblical version of John the Baptist's teaching on the occasion of Jesus' coming.) Waighatsina's house, the only house sporting

a corrugated iron roof, was swept clean; walls were touched up and every other part of the building was done in anticipation of Waighatsina's home coming. Five months earlier, a new kaukau food garden nearing maturity was planted with Waighatsina's favourite kaukau. A hundred chickens and ten pigs were fattened. These were to be devoured in Waighatsina's forthcoming feast.

Waighatsina and his entourage, which included his wife, his elder daughter, an idiot of a son and another odd couple that had gone after them, arrived a day later than stated in his letter. The ship that had transported him and his cargo was the St. Charles; renamed Sallu Salisi by the Toberakis. The captain, being a Toberakian, made people generalise indirectly or directly that St. Charles belonged to them. Especially the people of Namolamkomo. The jetty almost carried twice the weight suggested by the builder. Everyone crammed the whole length of the jetty, all trying desperately to catch a first glimpse of the new arrivals. Much jostling and pushing resulted in some having an impromptu swim in the sea.

Waighatsina emerged from the captain's cabin, followed by his wife and offspring. A pair of pale baggy trousers worn by Waighatsina, similar to the type worn by missionaries, flapped in the wind, showing the mere bone and skin of his leg. An equally oversized shirt, commonly sold by second and third hand clothing dealers, was wrapped around his upper body and his bare ribs. A person not known to him would notice this at a glance. An overpolished ancient pair of shoes covered his feet. A stockmans' battered hat covered his rapidly balding head. He carried a curved cane in his left hand.

His wife, dressed in an Elizabethan styled dress, looked like a carved figure. The absence of the wire frame fitted around the waist that made Elizabethan women look like dancing emus with their oversized featherless body, showed nothing more than an overdressed carved Sepik figure. A pair of old bras, laboriously held up her watermelon sized breasts. She was bare footed, but her fuzzy wuzzy hair was tied in a huge knob with



several rubber bands. Two huge ear-rings hung from her ears. Her handbag hung from her left hand. Their daughter was dressed similarly to her mother; except she had on a pair of sandshoes (probably given by some kind of nun), and a silk handkerchief tied her hair down in a similar fashion to white females. Although she was already past her teens, she still hung onto her mother's hand. The boy, who looked like an idiot from the beginning, was outrageously dressed like a pirate from the buccaneering days. He appeared a most awkwardly dressed bastard. His father explained a little later that he was impersonating a crafty old German Brother who, he said, was his idol. He cried out "Mummy, mummy", at the first boy who touched, or tried to touch him. His mother, who was almost ahead of her husband, stopped in her tracks and sighed.

"Oh Tommy won't yu stap plis!" she explained.

"But mommi, des doti bois de hol me," replied her son.

"Don't yu worries! Only bushi kanakas. De won hurt yu", assured his mother.

Several mothers cautioned their sons. Others just grunted their disapproval. One self-appointed official escort shouted at everyone to give way and allow the new arrivals to proceed without any hinderance. After the crowd had walked off the jetty, Topalitsi and his specially choosen group of men proceeded to unload the cargo from the ship's hold. Case after case and wooden and paper boxes came out of the hold. Then ten bags of rice. Everyones' eyes lit up with delight at the sight of these bags. "Raisi," everyone seemed to say together. Rice was food for the learned only. There was everything one could think of; protein; carbohydrates, energy, long life food and medicine; all too numerous to mention.

All the men from Mamolamkomo each picked up a load and started back for the village. The smaller loads were divided up between the women. Meanwhile, Waighatsina and his family were swarmed all over by their most immediate relatives. Streams of questions were asked, all of which were

answered by Waighatsina or his wife. They appeared to have all the answers to all the questions. Some former Binistemers hit on their own hobby horses of asking about how much change had taken place on some plantations which they had worked in once upon a time. Many asked questions for the sake of asking. They knew very well that nothing changes very dramatically on the plantations. For instance mechanization was unheard of on plantations in an industrialised world. Even in this jet age, every plantation manager still uses huge numbers of labourers.

Others asked questions so as to create an impression on the others that they too, at one stage or another had worked on a plantation. Some asked who the boss boi and big master was and so forth. For all these questions, Waighatsina seemed to have all the answers.

"Master Jim is big master of Kotei plantation. Tuki, Tule, Wamo and Dau are boss bois."

"And who is the big master of Numonuma?"

"That would be master Tom. He was big master last time I went pain boi in that area."

"And who is the big master for Yobusa plantation?"

"Still Harry!"

"Still Harry!" one exclaimed. This was one of the pioneer Binistem in the Toberaki district. He proceeded to explain how he remembered when Master Harry was a bragging young man and he was his boss boi. He was assured by Waighatsina that Master Tom still remembered him and still talked about his boss boi days at Yobuse. This assurance came as an incentive to the pioneer. He became so excited that he asked more questions.

Of course this is all part of the ritual that persisted at these times. A Binistem was the latest contact with the outside world. He became the epitome of sophistication upon his arrival. His trousers, shoes, shirts, bags of rice and tinned fish were evidence of this. He became the centre of attraction; a highly esteemed member of the village society. He was given the best food and best service. Every rule in diplomacy was observed

whenever he paid. Everything he said over again and in still the talk of the

His wife was a sense she had. Although this ev before womens' li that crap about en every Toberakian woman must have her ankle low dress that hung from h hanging from the in ruins.

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"My sister we whitemans' rule. much not to our Tomi's father got Then his big mas must dress accore

To this the fem "looooh . . .!"

"Yes, my sist soon the law will



whenever he paid a visit to any household. Everything he said was repeated over and over again and in many years to come was still the talk of the village and the district.

His wife was equally striking. In her own sense she had become her own woman. Although this event occurred in the days before womens' liberation movement and all that crap about emancipation of womenkind, every Toberakian women thought that this woman must have been a real somebody with her ankle low dress and her fancy leather bag that hung from her hand like a flower vase hanging from the frame of a building almost in ruins.

The way the females of Mamolamkomo crowded around her, one could imagine a pack of dogs after a solitary bitch (or was it the other way around?). None of the woman apparently had anything to ask her about, except to listen to her narrate to them their journey from Egorist plantation. They were the kanakas and she was the sophisticated elegant wife of an equally sophisticated Waighatsina. Like all the labourers who had returned to the village — Binistem — they tried to show off their hard own riches. Waighatsina was no acception. He had seen or heard that his wife's blouse, that whipped about her legs in response to the strong sea breeze, was much admired by the women. One asked what type of clothing people wore in the far off white mans' land. To this his wife answered that everyone had to wear the style of dress she wore, because it was the law of the whiteman.

"Do you dress like this in the white mans' place?" one female asked who was quite unsatisfied with her answers and wanted to pursue the topic further.

"My sister we had to. It was, and is, the whitemans' rule. So we had to, although very much not to our liking. We were okay until Tomi's father got this big job of big boss boi. Then his big master said that we, his family, must dress according to whiteman custom."

To this the females would sigh with a huge, "looooh . . .!"

"Yes, my sisters we are changing. Very soon the law will come here too."

"You mean we will dress like you to?"

"Yes, my sister."

"Don't count us in." Several chorused together.

"Just a foolish question, may I ask how we get all this bilasi?"

"Oh no, my sister, it is given free. No payment, no nothing. It is all part of the whitemans' goodness."

A few more grunted their disapproval, but felt quite the opposite inside their guts. All were eager for the chance to put on these marvelous white clothes.

For someone with some common knowledge, all this talk was mere hot air. Who would be in a position to hand out clothes to any Tom, Dick and Harry? The truth about generous hand-outs like this would be true of the missionaries (all denominations). The missionaries have been mentioned because they happened to be the ones who modified, to a certain degree, the people's lives. In this instance the people began to take the goods for granted, which up to just recently was taken for granted as the missions' eternal means of providing for the poor. Then when they began passing out bowls at Sunday services, Michael knew (his father had told him later, always knew), that all this free gift business would not last. He was the only one who never believed in the cargo hurling out of the graveyards, or growing from coconuts or from the sea.

People's misunderstanding of the whitemens' cargo, a doctrine which was presented in parables, had led to many, like Makule, assuming that cargo from the whitemans' world would pop out from any graveyard, or could be picked from any coconut or betelnut tree, or collected from the seashore after having been unloaded from unknown sea crafts. This may appear unrealistic, but to tell you the honest truth, crooks like Makule and his gang of miracle cargo maniacs had spent countless nights and days extending into years, keeping vigil at graveyards, or scanned the horizon and the sky hoping to see their cargo come tumbling down from the sky. Of course they never got anything out of it.



Makule and Mosiama were old time Binistems. They were among the first to be returned by the Germans. When they returned they had a vivid version of the source of cargo received by the plantation owners. The planters' definition of coconuts' sales? It bought manufactured goods. This, however, was interpreted by the people as a mere ritual which should not be taken seriously. What was important was to grow a few coconuts, and sit back and wait for the boatloads of cargo to come. The concept of factories, mechanization and mass production was never drummed into their heads. All this and others, too numerous to record, were an incentive to the now generally accepted practice of 'give me, give me!' No wonder some people regard Papua New Guinea as a land of 'give me people'."

When Mrs. Waighatsina had preached to the women, everyone of them had something linked in their mind. Many had a lot to say to their respective husbands. When they arrived home, many tried to persuade their husbands into taking a job at a plantation. They hoped to be taken with them as soon as their husbands had settled and were assured of a job as a boss boi.

The carrier gang ably supervised by Topalitsi, managed to bring home all the cargo. A few men returned to help carry the two children who could not walk the mere five kilometres to the village. The daughter already past the adolescence stage, could not walk the mere five kilometres distance. Topalitsi bestowed upon himself the task of carrying the girl piggy back all the way to the village. His presence caused all the village women to call out loudly because Topalitsi had to carry his brother's daughter as if there were no other men in the village to help him. Topalitsi waved the women away explaining that everyone else had had their turn. He had carried her and brought her safely home and that was that. It was only his hope that she would be around to drag his useless corpse to the grave when the time came. Everyone applauded.

The setting of the sun and the awakening of the mosquitoes from the backyard swamps

briefly retired the people to their houses. With the resumption of the strong south westerly sea breeze, and with the mosquitoes temporarily thrown back into the swamp by the wind and hundreds of smoky fires, people began to congregate in the village square. Village singers began to get their voice ready to dance a welcome dance for their relatives who had now returned for a brief holding.

Waighatsina and his family sat on folding chairs and watched the dances. At the end of each dance, he clapped and commented on the expertise of the singing and dancing. As the dance continued, Waighatsina and his family joined the dancers. This opportunity gave the village children a chance to get the taste of sitting on a whitemans' chair. Everyone of them wanted to do so even if just to feel the chair. Their experience would later be retold over camp fires. The singing continued even after Waighatsina and his family were forcefully told to retire on the assumption that having had a long day they must have felt tired and so needed to rest.

The crowd dispersed following a scuffle at the back of Waighatsina's house. Two self appointed guards, figuring that the other was a thief trying to rob Waighatsina of his most prized possessions, grabbed each other and so shouted that each one of them had caught a thief. The villagers had a good laugh following this episode. The accusation, or the thought that there would be a thief among the villagers, was ridiculous. Who among them would want to steal something and claim it as his or her own? Such knowledge, or existence of such western rot, was quite unknown at this time.

The days before Sunday were eventful. Singing rehearsals at night in preparation of Waighatsina's coming feast, stories and gossip to be swapped and occasionally several cupfuls of rice and tinned fish or meat was given out free to the villagers.

Petty jealousy, resulting from greed, developed especially amongst Waighatsina's wife's most immediate relatives who thought that every other rubbish should be dumped at their doorsteps or that they should be the sole participant in Waighatsina's immense wealth.

Their jealousy was of children of families who could approach one could

Upon hearing of the cargo, Waighatsina came down to visit his daughters and their children and their included uncles and other member of the numbered eighty number at one hundred half starved dogs dispose of the mound deposited in the bush on the beach at night the Toberaki district could easily be classified tended to regard two lot of people. They of free gifts. Of course Maponau, these people of the amount of was enough. While with their share, around reporting clan members had them. Their own untold amounts of more to come as so back to the Egoris been for the quick a Kukulai Maia who groups, this brief the two clan groups showdown. They and three pigs were occasion. Waighatsina pigs while the other two opposing clans.

The peace feast The three pigs were three empty flavour specially brought by to his wantoks back wife boasted that the some draft biscuits morning everyone agonising bout of continuous jabbing



Their jealousy was later to be revealed to children of families they resented. A cowardly approach one could conclude.

Upon hearing of his arrival with his huge cargo, Waighatsina's own inland relatives came down to visit his grandparents, sons and daughters and their sons and daughters' children and their other relatives which included uncles and aunties, in-laws and every other member of their clan. Their entourage numbered eighty persons. Others put the number at one hundred; excluding a pack of half starved dogs. These dogs helped to dispose of the mountains of refuse that people deposited in the bushes around the village and on the beach at night and early morning. In the Toberaki district such a number of people could easily be classified as a tribe, as people tended to regard twenty or thirty people as a lot of people. They too were given their share of free gifts. Of course, like the people of Maponau, these people too felt that regardless of the amount of goods they were given, it was enough. While many were quite satisfied with their share, many indiscreetly went around reporting that Waighatsina's wife's clan members had been given a lot more than them. Their own houses were filled up with untold amounts of goods, with promises of more to come as soon as Waighatsina came back to the Egorist plantation. Had it not been for the quick action of Waighatsina and Kukulai Maia who diffused the heated groups, this brief state of cold war between the two clan groups would have resulted in a showdown. They were two to shake hands and three pigs were to be killed to mark the occasion. Waighatsina purchased two of these pigs while the others were purchased by the two opposing clans.

The peace feast eventuated two days later. The three pigs were cooked in coconut milk in three empty flavour drums. The drums were specially brought by Waighatsina as a present to his wantoks back in his home village. His wife boasted that they are flavour baked into some draft biscuits called busikete. Next morning everyone went down with an agonising bout of diarrhea, with absolute continuous jabbing stomach pains. Many,

overcome with dizziness, collapsed on the sand amidst their own excreta. The shoreline was smeared in excreta mixed with blood. Apparently a number of them had the end of their anus torn out from constant pushing.

Waighatsina's own house became a temporary medical care centre. Everyone who contacted the sickness was treated by him and his wife who acted as his nursing aid. Several beds topped with mattresses and covered with clean sheets were used by those severely affected. Only old people and dogs seemed to be immune. Those affected by the sickness, recovered very slowly; some were feared to be nearly kicking the bucket.

Waighatsina's sphere of influence caught up with the neighbouring villages very quickly. His fame spread wide and far. References were made that he was a truly masterful Toberakian. His cargo, which he had unselfishly given out as free gifts, his personal possessions, including an ancient gramophone, his heavily starched shoes, his hat and other similar pieces of attire belonging to him and his wife and children, were marvelled at by everyone. His first Sunday back home, was an eventful day. It was the day of the feast day of the 'Assumption of Mary'. That day several hundred boys and girls and male adults received their first Holy communion. The church was packed to capacity and the mass was co-celebrated by two priests. Many came to witness the occasion; some came to see the extra-ordinary event of two priests concelebrating mass. Many others came to get a glimpse of the foursome.

Waighatsina wore his faded woolen suit, a tie, and a matching pair of black trousers complete with a pair of over-polished shoes. Some boys admired themselves in its mirror-like surface. His wife wore a yellow suit and dress, a pair of high heeled shoes and a silvery coloured handbag that hung from her elbow. Her daughter dressed in similar fashion to her mother; except she wore a red coat. Their son was dressed in a pair of trousers, a shirt similar to one worn by crewmen of the late 16th century.



They were invited by the nuns and the lay missionaries to share the raised platform at the centre of the church, where there were chains. Their presence was so exotic and illuminating, the entire congregation was distracted throughout the service; much to the annoyance of the chief celebrant of the mass. The priest directed his sermon at the Waighatsina family. The parable he gave was a peppered, pompously stern, cultivated accusation filled with warnings. He proceeded to warn the multitude to be aware of persons or groups who appeared to be pleasant; hid inside sheeps skins and spoke with a sugarised mouth; satisfied all the obligations in the charitable creed and all the other craft of satanic foul play. The nuns and the lay missionaries caught every single phrase the priest had to say. Waighatsina and his wife sat like statues throughout the service. Occasionally a fly would buzz around them.

During the Holy Communion the Waighatsina family stood with the nuns and the lay missionaries as the youngsters received their first Holy Communion. People in the back pew stood up to catch a clear glimpse of the Waighatsina family as they received their communion and returned to their seats. Had the Benediction and the Adoration of the Eucharist in the tabernacle lasted another twenty more minutes, Waighatsina and his flock of imitation whitemen would have most surely died of dehydration. They were already swimming in their own sweat. Mr. Waighatsina sat still throughout braving the heat. The white blanket-sized handkerchiefs were wet.

At the end of the service, Waighatsina and his family rose and walked down the centre aisle, watched by everyone. No sooner had they left the church when they were engulfed in a wave of human well wishers. Waighatsina and his family were again sweating like defrosted ice cubes and his wife had to cry out that she would collapse if she shook more hands of the several hundred well wishers, some of whom came again and again to shake their hands; many just to be near them and some just to feel the hands of the new arrivals. Many had already heard about his numerous

gifts and thus stood about hoping to be near enough in case he started dishing out more presents.

Topalitsi who had kept out of his brother's way, came to his rescue. He cleared a way for his brother and his family to move onto the mission's canoe shed. There, while the Waighatsinas were resting, Topalitsi asked the crowd to move back further, and allowed only the elderly men and women, and others who claimed to be members of some higher blood to sit with Waighatsina. Those of Maponau should clear out as they had already seen a lot of their man; he reminded some of them who were already pushing into the shed about this. The crowd soon grew thinner as it became apparent that Waighatsina wasn't going to give any presents. A few pressed him for tobacco, a length of laplap, a razor blade to replace an old one given during his last visit, a smoking pipe to replace one already burnt to the screws.

A regatta of canoes of all sizes, lengths and make, accompanied Waighatsina's own specially made canoe to Maponau after the service. The return home was an impressive sight. Canoes sailing the broad Empress Augusta Bay marked a momentous occasion in the annals of Toberakis' homage to its son and his family. The end of Waighatsina's two months holiday leave drew closer. Preparation for his long awaited feast had commenced a month before his departure, thanks to Topalitsi and his marital brothers. The burukutsu, which measured fifty metres in length and ten metres in width, was already stocked with the 100 pigs that would be devoured at the feast. Topalitsi himself contributed ten pigs; a remarkable contribution by Toberaki standards. The Toberakians' argued that such a contribution was not worth mentioning as it was being done in inter-family spheres. After all who had benefited from Waighatsina's home coming except Topalitsi himself?

Other pigs were contributed by Waighatsina's own relatives and his close friends. Most unfortunately, however, was the contribution of one skinny pig by

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Waighatsina's own wife's clan. A down graded and shameful attitude. This, of course, almost caused an uproar. Waighatsina's own wife's people said they were selfish, over avaricious peasants, who they branded as the poorest of the poor who only capitalised on his uncle's own sweat and guts. Had they been educated they would have compared them to the poor of the city of Calcutta. They did not speak out openly for fear of offending the masterful Waighatsina.

On the day of the feast, ninety-eight pigs were slaughtered; leaving two to be eaten by Waighatsina and his family. Waighatsina's wife invited the local parish priest to attend his party (as she called it). After a solemn mass, followed by a lengthy address by Waighatsina from the make shift pulpit of the village chapel, everyone was asked to watch a performance by the village Tsigul dancers. They had been jealously practicing for two solid months for the occasion. One of them sang on a high pitched note about the others. Because of this, she was nicknamed 'glamapaun' by Waighatsina. Chinks of pork meat and mountains of mumued kaukau, sago and other village delicacies were devoured following the performances by the Tsigul dancers.

After the meal, the priest was hastily rowed back to the mission. Waighatsina then further showed himself to be a true master. Ten bottles of 'meri buka', as he called it, were placed on the table. He tasted the first bottle after which he made another speech about the art and advantages of drinking, especially 'meri buka', which he said was an appropriate drink because it bore the people's very heart.

"Meri buka," he added, "is made especially for Bougainvillians."

After more speeches, some nonsense to say the least, he invited all the men to join him and taste the 'meri buka'. The result, of course, was pathetic. Men who tasted this for the first time, had more than they could stand. What followed was a long day and night of continuous wailing and singing. Many pissed in public. A few toyed with their own tools and indulged in all things that were disgusting in the eyes of Taberakians. Some did not get

over the episode for two days at least. Waighatsina himself seemed immune to it. He was jumping about the next day.

The day of the return trip to Egorist came two days after the feast. Everyone was at the wharf to wish them goodbye. Topalitsi's eldest son went with them to help look after the house. Waighatsina's wife said he was too big to look after it. They also wanted to enrol him at the mission school.

"Oh keghot su nobe ghenal!" everyone chorused between sobs.

Waighatsina and company waved back from the departing ship. Women dug wells in the sand as they lamented. The last sight of the half whiteman's presence was a black speck that faded into the endless horizon. Everyone wondered when he would return and if he would be more masterful.

In all Waighatsina had done marvellous things. He had shared his acquired wealth with everyone. Everyone was happy, despite the fact that some people wanted more. In truth, he had shown that he was successful. His success was due to his own hard work, diligence and devotion to his job. He struck up a friendship with a white man; someone who knew that even though the Bougainvillians are black, they have a soul and mind too.

If Waighatsina had been under a tyrant found in every semi-slave plantation, what would have become of him? Would he have been a foreman, a gang leader or a dispirited and over exploited individual? Time and events would give us the correct answer, for a Binistem would have all the answers to the life experienced by a Binistem man.

### THE FAITHFUL

Inside the chapel at Momeno in the Muruwa district, chief catechist, Josepo Damenam gazed at the long wooden crucifix hung on the wall above the wooden altar like a starving dog waiting for a bone from the master. Below him on the wooden benches, with heads bowed like Muslims at mid-day prayer, were the other members of the faithful. For almost a week they had spent long hours in the chapel praying and fasting. Retreats had



been organised in preparation for the on-coming contest between the Popis and the Talatalas, or el Metlesi. Several hours had been spent reading through the bibles, hymn books and the daily missals in Latin and English and other religious books that were available to them.

The members of the group in the chapel were the elites, the save mani, who were experts in the dogma of christian doctrine and were spiritual members of the newly elected solidarity to the Virgin Mary. They also included other village catechists who came with their own copies of song books in the traditional versions of the English daily missal text; teachers from the Mamarego Catholic School; the trainee catechists; seminarians from the Torokina minor seminary college; other evangelists and other self proclaimed theologians. The space in the chapel had become too small, yet more and more learned men were coming in every day. Each one was identified by the pile of books that they could produce. The village people marvelled at the many learned people who arrived every day to join the pre-contest gatherings with their own supplies of books. The sacristy was filled up with books of every description. Many more were laid out on the floor of the altar. Some, like Bongiwanupi were there because they happened to be there because the occasion found them here. Bongiwanupi, and his other likeness, sat rooted among the top contestants. In fact their presence did not produce any real results at all. Catechist Domenam tolerated them because they more or less brought solidarity to the group. At the same time, they did not want to turn away possible converts and spectators. For them alone, their presence gave them social status and an identity and class which they lacked in their normal village society.

Catechist Domenam was the lord of the preparation. He chaired every meeting and frequently vetoed any decisions. He surveyed the crowd before him with the look of a night owl. The crowd looked upon him with the expectancy of a very big announcement that was bound to come and would have devastating effects on them.

"In nomine Patre, et spiritui Sanctu. I say hello to you, and all those who are gathered here for this most important occasion in the light of our religious lives. Our church is threatened by the godless protestants, who are but a branch of our faith and will dry away like a branch broken from its stem. The Talatalas had dared challenge the only true church started by the only god." He made a quick sign of the cross. Everyone followed suit. "John Wesley, the son of Satan who began the Methodist Church because he could not cope with the demands of the Pope to build the big Haus Lotu in Rome, had dared to challenge God. I wish to say to you all that we, the Catholics, are the only true church. Our seminarians outnumber the Methodist teachers. Our seminarians are better trained and educated. The on-coming contest is ours. I can feel it in my bones. We pay to the almighty father in heaven to assist us in our course of action in defence of our faith against all harlots and false churches whose prophets are running around hidden inside sheepskins and are spreading false messages. We ask all this through Christ our Lord, Amen." A humming sound could be heard as everyone else repeated the word, "Amen."

There was a neat shuffle as everyone picked up a book from the sacristy. Some of the materials were quite irrelevant. For instance stories of St. Peter Chanel of the Futuna Islands, the daily missal in Latin, a copy of the litany of the Saints, and a copy of the Tsunari translation of the common prayers (evidence of the rapid expansion of the Catholic Church). Everyone flicked through the pages, searching for information that could be used against the Talatala group. Bongi Wanupi and his friends searched aimlessly through their books merely following what the others were doing.

Outside the thatched roof, village chapel, the crowd surrounded the building from corner to corner. Young and old, frail and healthy men and women all stood patiently braving the cold and their hunger. They had kept a vigil since the preparations began. Once in a while the women would go to the

food gardens and return to cook for the contest. They arrived every minute. Some had travelled from as far as Buin Siwal and were with the Aurui as well as the late night prayer. 'Magnificate' the people sleep.

Excitement was hooting, whispering among other persons. Que had been made several times. They were asked again and again to talk about. The Muruans. They enjoyed their accomplishments. In religious contests various jungle clearing trees by river sides from the government.

In the beginning graduated from Methodist Training the Catholic catechists with the hope of winning predominantly Catholics, it was said people who care for the salvation of mankind to build huge coconuts to make money to help of the people. The by the ignorant European Cultist civilisation, beliefs. The Methodists. Their pastors were Christ, who walked the true church. The pharisees who taught opposite to what they said about nothing but gold (small palaces like houses) food and wine. They cooked their food, washed their beds and did the needed doing. The certain missionaries with some village girls by chance was quite



food gardens and return as quickly as possible to cook for the numerous pilgrims who arrived every minute of the day. Many had travelled from as far as Nagovisi, Torokina, Buin Siwal and were being accommodated in the Aurui as well as some village houses. After the late night prayers and the singing of the 'Magnificate' the people left and moved out to sleep.

Excitement was followed by laughing and hooting, whispering and pinching of some other persons. Questions and statements that had been made several hundred times already, were asked again as if there was nothing new to talk about. This was typical of the Muruans. They enjoyed marvelling at their accomplishments. For five solid years these religious contests had been going on in various jungle clearings under huge banyan trees by river sides and any other spots away from the governments' scrutiny.

In the beginning Methodist pastors, newly graduated from the new St. Georgia Methodist Training college, had challenged the Catholic catechists to a religious contest with the hope of winning more souls from the predominantly Catholic population. The Catholics, it was said were Pope worshipping people who cared nothing about true salvation of mankind. Their only concern was to build huge coconut plantations in order to make money to help finance the maintenance of the people. The Catholics were swamped by the ignorant Euro-civilisation, the Judean Cultist civilisation, the old Greek songs and beliefs. The Methodists were the true church. Their pastors were poor people representing Christ, who walked on foot proclaiming the true church. The Catholics were great pharases who taught something and did the opposite to what they taught. They cared about nothing but good clothes, good houses (small palaces like Buckingham Palace) and food and wine. They had servants who cooked their food, washed their clothes, made their beds and did practically everything that needed doing. There were rumours that certain missionaries were involved in adultery with some village girls. This statement which by chance was quite true, was interpreted by

the Catholics as a mockery if not a defamatory remark and falsification of the Catholic church. This was pure nonsense, a bad gesture (endured by a group desperately in need of support) to win converts. Chief Catholic lieutenants immediately took up the challenge and met the well-prepared Methodist team at Mopode. The first contest turned out to be a disaster for the Catholic team. The Methodists were victorious in every question asked.

The report of the loss, was a major set back to the rapidly expanding Catholic faith. The Catholics were mocked by the Methodists. The Catholic doctrine was pronounced as rubbish; a heap of crap writing by uneducated teachers. The Methodists were jubilant. Their pastors were accepted everywhere and certain Catholic converts defected into the Methodists Church. Some reports said that they went over to the other side because they were offered bribes, something which the Catholics did not do. The report of the Methodist victory spread into out-laying villages. It spread like an epidemic. People began to have mixed feelings about the truthfulness of the Catholic Church. The church was no longer invincible and saintly as was once widely accepted. The missionaries at the nearby Momareo Catholic Mission Station reprogrammed its Catechists Training Programme. The two year course was expanded to four years. The course was re-designed to cover more complex areas of studies. An intensive indoctrination programme was under way. Catechists were recalled to the station for inservice training and refresher courses in all aspects of religious studies. The loss was discussed and analysed. Everyone concluded that the loss was unfortunate; the Catholic contestants were ill prepared and many were not well educated. The parish priest made a declaration to clarify the loss and assured the people that in future Catholic victories could be expected.

In the meantime, the Methodists claimed victory after victory in small unofficial contests. Their victories were announced in the Methodists Cathedral. The Catholics were bewildered. The hatred between the two



religious groups spread and reports of violent clashes between unidentified Catholic and Methodist groups began to circulate. Because of the unavailability of proper chalk boards, unofficial contestants used the bark of the Mulin trees to scratch their writings on. In a little while, all the mulin had writings scratched on them, making it look like a plague of tree rats had gone through the forest on its way to the next hunting ground. To the ignorant villagers these forests became sacred grounds and were avoided.

In every village Catholics and Methodists attended nightly indoctrination classes. The Methodists ordered numerous numbers of bibles and issued them to every Methodist convert, regardless of whether they knew how to read or not. The bibles were a sign that they were good Christians. It protected the owners from all evils imaginable; against the temptations of Satan and was a passport to heaven upon death. It was a weapon, a tool, an umbrella, a shield, a head rest, food and a complete part of the owner. The bible was the one thing that Catholics lacked to inspire the pagans and their own converted multitudes to conversion into their faith. The Catholic converts could not produce a symbol of Christianity that would show the true mark of a convert. The Methodist believed that those who possessed the bible (whether they could read it or not) were luckier than most people, even those who were converts. The bible was the church. Every living aspect of it was the church doctrine, dogma, sacraments, the virtues, spirit, the ten commandments and a covenant of God. It further reflected the cross; the owner, an imitation of Christ carrying his cross every day till the time when each one of them kicked the bucket.

The Catholic Church organised the solidarity of Mary, a pioneer group of young children (some displayed whiskers) whose main task was to antagonise Methodist school children in the same manner as their elders. The solidarity of Mary caused a great deal of laughter to the Talatalas who viewed females and the likeness of Eve, the original sinful woman who tempted Adam to eat the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden.

In retrospect, the Catholics were skeptical about the validity of the Methodist supply of bibles to any Tom, Dick and Harry in the Methodist villages. Male students from the Catholic Schools preyed upon old Methodist men and women alike and pestered them to read the bibles. Of course, this was quite useless. Many were plucked straight out of nowhere and given bibles. In fact the Methodists made every attempt to show themselves as good Methodists (Metlesi), in the eyes of all the Catholics and other people. Other than the bibles that everyone was equipped with, women Methodists wore afro hair styles and long Elizabethan type dresses that reached down to their heels. The outside dress covered several layers of other dresses worn underneath (meant as a petticoat). The men wore lavalavas typical of the sulu worn by present day Pacific Islands men. The ridiculous thing about the whole business of giving bibles to anyone in the Methodist Church was that most, if not all, could not read the bible. In other words, the bibles became like the burning stick that many people carried around with them for lighting their smoking pipes. People repeatedly reported seeing them at prayer holding their bibles up-side down. The prayer conducted in English was a memorisation of certain verses and chapters of the bibles. Similarly the Catholics memorised the recitation of the Angelus, conducted in Latin as well as the daily mass; also in Latin. Worse still was the obvious, very crude, native nasal pronunciation, and the localised use of the 'l' instead of an 'r', 'b' for 'p', and so on could not be mistaken.

The second and third contest went to the Methodist by a very small margin. In the fourth and fifth contest, both churches came a draw. The sixth and seventh went to the Catholics. From then on it was all Catholics, with an occasional Methodist win. The SDA pastor, who were conservative and impartial, adjudicated in every contest.

The Methodists, perhaps once too often, relied on miracles. In an instance, perhaps the turning point of their triumph, the Catholics chose to perform a miracle. On one occasion

during a rainy season returning from Nagovisi district despite warning. Previously the lives of two people, dogs, pigs, fowls, and a preacher.

"Nothing is assured the people safe or lost, it was that I must cross.

With that he had his knapsack and in imitation of was impossible to do so; even above. A miracle flood and let his followers across abandoned his possible death. church's district he was back with all armed with continuously praying for a whole week bicycle nor a week the evangel belongings would following week. week neither the surfaced.

"If the belongings God must have concluded.

The location of river side of the black boards were huge tauan tree supplied by the School. Two adjacent by side facing a narrow strips of bamboo strips of cane. Through the path Occasionally they the crowd. They accomplished the



during a rainy season, a Methodist evangelist returning from a mountain mission in the Nagovisi district, crossed the flooded river despite warnings from the local village people. Previously the same river had claimed the lives of two people; including a number of dogs, pigs, fowls and occasionally a white preacher.

"Nothing is impossible with God," he assured the people. "If God wishes, I will be safe or lost, it will be up to him. It is His will that I must cross."

With that he waded into the swollen river, his knapsack and bicycle held above his head in imitation of a weight lifter. Of course, it was impossible to cross despite his enthusiasm to do so; even with God watching from above. A miracle could not hold back the flood and let him cross like Moses and his followers across the Red Sea. The evangelist abandoned his goods to save himself from possible death. He continued on foot to his church's district headquarters. Two days later he was back with a multitude of his followers, all armed with bibles and candles. They continuously prayed and read from the bibles for a whole week, without any sign of a bicycle nor a knapsack surfacing. After one week the evangelist gave his word that the lost belongings would be surfacing by early the following week. Of course, by the following week neither the bicycle nor the knapsack had surfaced.

"If the belongings had not surface then God must have claimed it for himself," he concluded.

The location of the next contest was by a river side of the Puriaka River. Two battered black boards were nailed side by side on a huge tauan tree stem. The black boards were supplied by the local Catholic Primary School. Two adjudicators, both SDA, sat side by side facing a make-shift table made out of strips of bamboo lashed together with thin strips of cane. They sat down and looked through the papers in front of them. Occasionally they would look up and survey the crowd. They were both said to be accomplished theologians; having done their

studies in Rabaul.

Both sides wanted a neutral adjudicator and quiz master; this was to avoid cheating by either side in case one of them was the adjudicator or judge. In past contests, there was outright cheating on both sides. Certain people also manipulated the judge. The judges were easily influenced because most lacked the knowledge of the subject matter and didn't know the answers themselves.

Facing the contestants and the two SDAs officiating at the contest, was a large group of followers. The group sat very still, their eyes set on the contestants. The whole forest seemed to be on fire. Smoke came out of hundreds of smoking pipes and lazily found its way through the entanglement of creeping vines, parasitic plants and numerous trees densely covered with thick cane growth and other climbing lianas. The group looked like a horde of barbarians ready to pounce upon a defenceless Rome. The soil became red as hundreds of mouths emptied its contents of refuse from betel nut chewing. They smelled heavily of dried, sweat caked like dried mud on their skin; sweat from under their armpits that could not be washed away even after they had sweated like pigs all day. Several squatted their knees resting on their chins. They looked like orangutans hunting for crabs in a rice paddy somewhere in south east Asia.

The clapping of hands and hooting ended the applause given for a correct answer or if one side lost. A swarthy Catholic catechist took his seat after his contestant had answered the question asked by the member of the Methodist side. One by one each contestant stood up and answered a question or asked a question of the opposition. Quotations from bibles, phrases, Latin words, abstracts from the bible were but a few of the questions asked.

The contest was a one sided show. The Catholics were victorious. The belting of trees, hooting and jumping up and down could be heard for miles around. The Methodists immediately withdrew into the gully and conceded their defeat.



## NAMAH SCHOOL

Michael remembered the day he was dragged to school as the day he lost his freedom, and the day he entered the Momarego Regional Catholic Education Centre's part slave camp run on strict puritanical rules with laws which were often set down by a self elevated, promoted, appointed, despotic tyrant of a native Toberaki and so called teacher.

His parents accompanied him to the school when he refused to go with a student specially sent by the tyrant to grease him into attending. Momarego Education Centre was an elitist school, of its kind, during the early 1950s. His reluctance to attend this school resulted from rumours which eventuated into facts about the hard life sustained by students most of them men and women themselves. He only went after being threatened by his father that he would be whipped and thrashed if he did not go.

"After all," his father concluded, "it is for your own good."

He refused to sleep with the other students in the boys' dormitory, for the first two weeks. Instead he slept with his parents at his parent's hut built on the outskirts of the Education Centre; the last time lasted a fortnight. Then his parents left for the village. He gave the excuse that he was sick the day they left. He watched them as they moved slowly toward the magnificent Motopena. The sight of his younger brother chasing crabs into the sea made him long to follow them.

That day was also the day that he first entered the boys' dormitory; an old army bungalow. He slept in the corner under an older student who occupied the top bunk. He further probed into the interior of the spartan type life at school, which was run by an ignoramous, so called teacher, and one of the two members of staff. This self proclaimed head teacher was also deputy, disciplinary master and choir master at the school. He frequently spied on the other students hoping to catch them committing one of the many confounded offences under which he would deal out unorthodox punishment. When he found he couldn't master all this he appointed, in secrecy, junior students who

spied on other students and reported them to him.

Michael learnt that a day at school started at 5.30 a.m. Heavy sleepers were usually unceremoniously pulled out of their blankets by prefects. Then they were bullied into jumping into the cold river for an early morning wash. Because he did not have a towel to dry himself with he used his own laplap to dry himself and afterwards used it to wrap himself in. Morning devotions followed. Then a session of singing practice, or the reciting of the daily missal in Latin before breakfast. Breakfast followed immediately. The menu consisted of hard boiled kaukau and occasionally sweetened water flavoured with sprinkles of young citrus fruit leaves. Everyone gulped down their kaukau as quickly as possible. The result being that the slower ones, like himself, only managed to eat one piece. The first day he had his meal, he witnessed a most barbaric attitude displayed by the students. He was still chewing on his first piece of kaukau when all of a sudden he saw students rush madly to the pot and fight over the drumfull of kaukau. The drum, with its contents smashed, was wrestled with all over the cook house. When it was over, there was nothing else left. Everything was spurted about on the dirt floor. That, he learnt later, was called the 'pulim'. Something similar to the scrum formed in a rugby union game. He thought it represented a typical clash between famished village dogs over a solitary bone. What intrigued him was the aparent failure of the prefects to control the hungry human pigs. Infact two prefects who were trying to bring order, were knocked flat on the ground. After that he witnessed the thrashing of the shit out of the bastard who started the scandalous episode. He thought he deserved to be hung for that.

Formal lessons, if one could have called it that, began at 8.00 a.m. The first two hours were spent indoctrinating, scolding, intimidating and carrying out public flogging of offenders. He was subjected to corporal punishment the next day after his parents departed. He had picked up a dry coconut and had eaten it not knowing that students

were not permitted to eat coconuts simply because the t to make himself son the students to do t four hard strokes o He writhed in pain silence. He wanted t the idea and wonder he was bigger. He thought of being o satan-damned coco home village.

His own teacher, a better trained teac was more human. culture and his fr incentive for the stu their devotion towa meaningful. This te Suparo. At home he ignorance, Jion.

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were not permitted to eat any coconuts at all, simply because the tyrant used these coconuts to make himself some extra money; he used the students to do this. That day he received four hard strokes on the bum and the head. He writhed in pain as other students sat in silence. He wanted to run away. He gave up the idea and wondered how he would react if he was bigger. He cursed in silence at the thought of being caned because he ate a satan-damned coconut; a mere waste in his home village.

His own teacher, a fellow Toberakian and a better trained teacher than his predecessor, was more human. His criteria was more culture and his friendly manner was an incentive for the students. His example made their devotion towards their education more meaningful. This teacher's name was John Suparo. At home he was nicknamed, in utter ignorance, Jion.

John was one of the few who had gone through the Momarego Education Centre successfully and afterward had gone to the Haela advanced Regional Catholic Education Training Institute Course after completing standard eight. He was posted to the Morarego Education Centre to head the institution but upon his arrival found an outdated, old fashioned teacher who was unwilling to step down to allow a better educated person to take his place. Not willing to cause a scandal, Jion settled for the job of assistant teacher.

Jion's stay at Momarego was temporary. Soon he was removed to head a new school in an inland school. That was also the last time students there ever had a good teacher. Very soon the monstrous tyrant took over. Continuous accusations and intimidation, even to the extent of blaming others for the misuse of tools for a specific job, characterised by lack of understanding of the use of the white man's inventions. This and other derogatory remarks were the order of the day. Caning for the sake of caning was carried out as a form of brutalised stimulation. Being made to stand on the desk with one leg perched on the knee was carried out at random. Some recieved an average of ten

canings a day. Others averaged more. Mysteriously, the oldest girls past their teens, received practically no caning or any detention of any kind at all. This teacher's semi-illiterate wife continuously waged a war with these girls; even to the extent of walking into the classroom and calling them names and accusing her husband of being a pamuk bastard.

Because of the continuous fear of being flogged for the slightest offence, students continuously asked to leave the room. The fact was students were taught to memorise this sentence; "Please teacher may I go out for a moment." Every other student took an opportunity to make this request. Some continuously went out saying that they had a stomach ache or something. When Michael could master this, he was able to ask to go out and sometimes spent the whole day sleeping on the beach thinking about home, the food his parents were eating and the things his younger brothers were doing at home. Often he would forcefully make himself sick so as to avoid attending classes, and be allowed to stay in bed.

Lunch hour, metaphorically speaking as no food was ever ready for lunch, lasted for a mere forty-five minutes. That forty-five minutes was spent by students scrounging in the coconut plantation looking for dry coconuts and other edible foodstuff that they could lay their hands on. Stealing coconuts was an offence that carried a death penalty; well not exactly death, but offenders were tied to the nearest tree and given twenty lashes, which of course, was too much for some younger kids like himself who were only seven years old. Often children of his age collapsed upon the completion of the punishment.

An ancient Kraut manufactured church bell rang in the self-appointed head teacher's house on that day when he first boarded at the boys' dormitory. He sheepishly followed the older students to where the school had its food garden. He soon learnt that the garden was cultivated along side the headmaster's own garden. Half of the students, mostly the bigger students, worked int he headmaster's side of the garden. The smallest kids worked



in the student's side of the garden.

It was during this time that he met another student who was older than himself and who became his friend. He was called Maikolo Malantesin; a short muscular fellow whose interest, he told Michael, was running away from school and being one of the crew men on board one of the many Catholic ships that sailed around the island. When he asked him what fascinated him about this boring job, he told him that he had often longed to sail on ships and wanted to enjoy smoking sweet twisted American tobacco, and hopefully visit all those marvellous foreign centres like Torokina, Tsiroge, Tinputz, Kieta, Buin, Sohano, Nissan, Cartèrets and occasionally the atolls of Tasman and the Mortlocks. His second and equally important reason, was his idea of running away from Tsinkopunu, the self appointed, tyrant of a teacher.

Maikolo Malantesin was a wirey little bugger who was capable of doing anything from deep sea fishing, working in the garden to night hunting in the thick jungle all by himself. He feared nothing that walked on the earth; not even Limowai the legendry ghost who was believed to have dived from some draft location in the south of Bougainville and travelled underground all the way to Momarego.

The only thing Maikolo was unable to do was study. He had a head equal to a rock. Nothing could penetrate it according to the teachers; which was true.

On their way home that afternoon, Maikolo outlined his plans to pay back Tsinkopunu for the beating he gave him for touching an elderly girl's breast; womanising was one of the things he was good at. The girl had reported the incident and Maikolo was thrashed despite his plea for mercy and innocence. Michael marvelled at the daring plan Maikolo had planned; although he had doubts about his success. He wished Maikolo would drop the idea, but secretly wanted him to go ahead and do whatever he planned to do to pay back that bastard Tsinkopunu. Maikolo cut himself a strong branch of casuarina tree, which he jokingly said he would use to kill the flying foxes, which were

plenty in number and were eating low at that time.

After a dinner hard boiled Kaukau washed down with green coconut milk, Maikolo gathered a group of smaller boys, including Michael, and purposely went down to the beach. When Michael asked Maikolo why they were going down to the beach, he winked at him and he knew that Maikolo was putting his plan into action. Night rolled in and the beach was gradually engulfed by darkness. He went with Maikolo. The other boys were left on the beach chasing crabs. Maikolo climbed a tree and hung two cells attached to two dry batteries fitted into a cut out, dried bamboo. He fitted the two batteries and a brilliant light appeared on the branches. Maikolo descended and beckoned to him to follow him. They walked together to the beach where the other boys were playing. There was absolute silence. Michael noticed Maikolo was missing. Very soon they saw Tsinkopunu coming along the beach towards them. One boy started to dance and clown around. Tsinkopunu walked up to the group and commenced to interrogate him. In an instance, a loud chilling scream was heard. The boys rushed forward knocking Tsinkopunu flat to the sand. He was trampled on and in that instance Tsinkopunu let out a blood curdling yell as a heavy object landed on his head; a stinging blow that knocked him out cold. The boys disappeared into the coconut plantation leaving the unconscious Tsinkopunu lying on the sand.

The next morning Tsinkopunu came to school with a heavily bandaged head and limped badly on both legs. He looked at the students with scorn on his face. His hand firmly gripped a cane. He shouted at the boys and commanded them to line up. He commanded each one of them to go forward to say where he had been the previous evening. Michael was called first and he lied saying he had been in the boys' dormitory. The next lot of students said the same thing. When he did not find out who had been down at the beach, Tsinkopunu threatened the boys. No one said anything. He vowed to find out, and promised to properly flog the student

responsible. But quite useless. Not willing to co-operate.

Parents who their children Tsinkopunu head like a man. Michael's parent happy to be united interested in the was asked how they were deeply angry with his father. Michael attended Centre.

During the Momarego Ed continuously pushed times he sat with Sometime later preparatory stage again to standard to preparatory stage.

Maikolo continued managed to carry strikes on Tsinkopunu cruel. At one would become if he would so the down. Unfortunately come true, because insane.

One night after school for two years floggings he had moonlight night playing, some called and reported mentioning him during the interrogation flogged naked in ashamed that he from school. They do to get even with they grabbed the confess. The information excreted. Before him to keep quiet crucified by then



responsible. But of course, his efforts were quite useless. None of the students were willing to co-operate.

Parents who came to the school to visit their children were surprised to see Tsinkopunu heavily bandaged around the head like a mumified Egyptian pharaoh. Michael's parents came and he was again happy to be united with them. His were equally interested in the teacher's forehead. Michael was asked how he got it. He told them and they were deeply moved. His mother became angry with his father for his insistence that Michael attend the Momarego Education Centre.

During the first year he spent at the Momarego Education Centre, he was continuously pushed here and there. Several times he sat with the standard one students. Sometime later he was demoted back to preparatory stage two, only to be pushed up again to standard one. But soon he was back to preparatory stage two again.

Maikolo continued to be his friend and managed to carry out more daring pay back strikes on Tsinkopunu. Meanwhile, Tsinkopunu continued to be even more ruthless. At one stage students thought he would become insane. Everyone prayed that he would so that the school would close down. Unfortunately their dreams did not come true, because Tsinkopunu was far from insane.

One night after Michael had been at the school for two years, he got one of the biggest floggings he had ever had in his life. One moonlight night while he and some boys were playing, some cowardly bastard sneaked off and reported them to Tsinkopunu, mentioning him as the leader. Next morning during the interrogation he and the others were flogged naked in front of everyone. He was so ashamed that he and the others ran away from school. They plotted what they would do to get even with their spies. In the evening they grabbed the informer and made him confess. The informer was flogged until he excreted. Before they left him they warned him to keep quite lest he would be injured or crucified by them.

When other students heard of the midnight, kangaroo type court, they applauded and the informers became the centre of mockery. That of course, did not step them. They continued to report secretly and once or twice reported openly to Tsinkopunu. When their cowardly attitude continued the prefects prepared a plan to catch them. Student sentries were posted along the road to the Tsinkopunu house. Someone climbed a coconut tree and cut down green coconuts. The students applauded. Soon they spotted one edging away slowly. As soon as he had gone past the students boundary, he started to run toward Tsinkopunu's house, unfortunately into the hands of the hidden sentries. They were caught and dragged back. They were then interrogated behind closed doors and every student that had been whipped before was allowed to slap the informers four times. When they refused to promise to stop spying for Tsinkopunu, they were slapped repeatedly until they begged the prefect punishing them, to stop hitting them, and promised not to do it again.

That was the last time; at least for most of them. One occasionally reported students who quarrelled with him. He became a most hated enemy, especially over an incident when the informer, whose name was Paramurum, reported him for giving him a hiding after an argument resulting from the subject of what Jesus was offered during his crucifixion. Later when he and Maikolo had teamed up, they caught their informer stealing pineapples from the mission garden. Caught red handed, the poor informer pissed in his laplap. They forced him to lick up his urine rather than report him to Tsinkopunu. That episode eased his hatred of Paramurum a little until much later. But that is another story.

One of the things he didn't like was the cowardly bullying attitudes of the inland students toward him and two of his own coastal village boys. The island students were older than him and his coastal counterparts. They had a slight advantage over them. Tsinkopunu was an inlander himself, but that did not stop him flogging them. They were



often forced to sweep rubbish created by the students in the cook house a mile high. When girls started attending the school, they became their errand boys carrying messages to older girls from the biggest boys. They were even posted as sentries around the beach undergrowth as the older girls and older boys went about their courting and associated business in the bushes. Somehow this allowed them some sense of immunity from the other bulles. They had the protection of the older students. They were envied by the others and from time to time these bullies would harass them when they were alone. In return they would report them to the older students. They were belted up in return.

Their period of immunity and protection under the older students came to an end as soon as most of the older students left either to become plantation labourers or to become crewmen on the small coastal vessels; a few went to the upper education institutions. A period of terror briefly prevailed until he and his fellow village boys reported this to their parents. The inlanders were sternly warned by the parents to keep away from their children lest they would be dealt with accordingly.

This period of terror escaped Tsinkipunu's notice; either he never cared or did not have one of his informers report it to him, or he purposely ignored it. One could only assume the reasons why. After all it was Tsinkipunu's aim to have terror and similar activities prevail in the centre. This ideology was the order of the day.

Tsinkipunu's involvement in politics soon put the school into disarray. Religious indoctrination ceased and in its place he took up political indoctrination. He ceased to arm himself with the bible given to him by his old German instructor from where he learnt the brutal tyrantical philosophy of terrorising students rather than teaching them. Instead he took up Karl Marx and Engel's books. Singing sessions were used for recitation from these books.

"The proletariat, the peasants must revolt against the bourgeoisie and their associates. Ol rabisman i mas rausim na paitim ol bisnis man, bambai divalem i kamap."

Tsinkipunu's speeches were interpreted by his students in a most effective way. Maikolo and Michael led the way into the fulfillment of the Tsinkipunu's teaching. The first night following his teaching was a disaster for him. Half of Tsinkipunu's chickens were killed, his trade store was broken into and his copra dryer shed was partly burnt. Maikolo and his associates were jubilant. Next day every student was made to stand in the boiling sun with one of their legs resting on the other knee. Tsinkopunu walked around fuming; an old 303 rifle hung over his shoulder.

Michael was the first to fall. Tsinkipunu pulled him up and told him to stand up like the rest of the students. Occasionally he shouted to the students to tell him who was responsible for the damage to his property. No one said anything. When darkness eventually came Tsinkipunu dismissed the students; all of whom could hardly stand. Everyone crawled to the boys' dormitory.

Maikolo gathered everyone together soon after the meal. He outlined his plan to take revenge. In the darkness all of Tsinkopunu's chickens were killed, his two pigs were slaughtered, his best kaukau, bananas, watermelons and vegetables were harvested. All of these were cooked and eaten that night. His dogs were baited and beaten soundly. Weights were tied to their necks and they were drowned in the sea.

In the early morning, the proletariats, as the students called themselves, marched over toward Tsinkipunu's house and barricaded Tsinkopunu's house with heaps of dried coconut leaves. The heads of his two pigs were mounted on stakes and left on his lawn. Someone had crept in and removed his 303 rifle and his garden tools. When Tsinkipunu woke up in the morning he was very surprised to see the heads of his two prized boars grinning at him. The dry coconut leaves barricade was alarming. He found no one as he went to inspect the barricade. He went into his house and failed to locate his garden tools including his 303 rifle. When he rang the morning devotion bell, no one came; likewise when he rang the bell for the start of school. He found nothing in the dormitories but

empty beds and slop wall.

"Man i pris long e"

"Karl Maks na E"

"Yu yet yu memb"

"Ol proletariat o"

"Yu les man."

"Yu skulim ol komiunis bilong yu."

"Yu pakin emti buk na yu ting yu sa"

"Gud bai man l"

Kam traim long tw pis pis stret."

"Mipela i no kop"

After Tsinkopunu comments, he walked his house. Not a single Tsinkopunu's eyes up to the coconut tree branches. The nut which dotted the sea canoe was anchored shore.

Maikolo and the village boys, left Michael and girls at his village thing when they returned home.

"We had to leave subjected to unwarranted flogging by Tsinkopunu"

So when Tsinkopunu attempted to end the situation he was organising a meeting attracted a handful most of whom were who attempted to see his family attended recalled to the main his place. It was at was to leave teaching When school resumed holidays, many students Maikolo was one returned because he he did. The next six to standard one and His new teacher for



empty beds and slogans written all over the wall.

"Man i pris long equality em i parisman."

"Karl Maks na Engel ol i no save kros."

"Yu yet yu memba bilong buewasi grup."

"Ol proletariat ol i skelim skul bilong yu."

"Yu les man."

"Yu skulim ol i pukpuk long wok komiunis bilong yu."

"Yu pakin emti baket tasol! Yu rit long buk na yu ting yu save. Pekpek long as."

"Gud bai man bilong kilim ol pikinini. Kam traim long twenti yia taim, bambai yu pis pis stret."

"Mipela i no kopra pois bilong yu."

After Tsinkopunu had read all the comments, he walked out and headed back to his house. Not a single chicken greeted him. Tsinkopunu's eyes misted. When he looked up to the coconut trees he could only see bare branches. The nuts were harvested, all of which dotted the sea from point to point. His canoe was anchored 300 metres from the shore.

Maikolo and the members of his inland village boys, left Michael and his village boys and girls at his village. Everyone said the same thing when they were queried about their return home.

"We had to leave because we have been subjected to unwarranted and cowardly flogging by Tsinkopunu."

So when Tsinkopunu came to each village and attempted to explain his own version of the situation he was booed at. His attempt to organise a meeting was unsuccessful. He only attracted a handful of interested persons; most of whom were his relatives. The priest who attempted to speak for Tsinkopunu and his family attended the mass. Tsinkopunu was recalled to the main station and another took his place. It was at this time that Tsinkopunu was to leave teaching and take up politics. When school resumed after two months of holidays, many students did not return; Maikolo was one of them. Michael had returned because his father had insisted that he did. The next six months saw him through to standard one and eventually standard two. His new teacher found him a very bright boy

and often commented about his success to his father. He even went as far as to suggest that when the next round of higher education visiting teams came again, he would suggest that they take him to Kieta to attend the higher regional school there.

The next time the team visited Momarego, they took him with them on the St. Joaness. His parents packed his few things in their much prized red wooden suitcase. He was to study with other brains from other areas of the island. Very soon he had adapted to the new environment and in the tests, came out on top in his form everytime. His teachers were equally fascinated by his intelligence, which by some unpredicted reason, far out ranked the other students.

Soon he was on his way to Australia. First he went he met Maikolo, who was then a crewman on the St. Joseph; the flag ship of the Catholic mission. He gave them two pairs of shorts and two shirts. His father came to take him home for the holidays. He left immediately after the christmas holidays were over.

## THE HOME COMING

He was by far the best educated man to evolve from his district. Having been educated overseas by the Catholic missionaries, he had completed all his secondary education and finally passed the entry examination to university.

Now he was undecided. He knew that the missionaries would not be able to help him any more. They were only able to give him a secondary education. Any education after that was the responsibility of the Colonial Administration. During his final years, his guidance master had advised him, and a group of other Papua New Guineas (a term used by the local people), that their government would have to take the responsibility for their tertiary education if they wished to go on to higher education. It was said that they only opportunities open to them were the Fijian school of medicine, some technical institutions in south east Asia, or direct employment in the public service. Scholarships to any Australian university was



open only to the children of expatriate public servants. In retrospect, a few Papua New Guineans were being accepted but that was the prerogative of the Colonial Government; a mere token in comparison to the number of expatriate children who were accepted.

He had met other Papua and New Guineans while in Australia. For the first time he learnt the traditional (colonial) names given to individuals who came from the different areas of Papua and New Guinea. There was a Papuan, a Tolai, a Manus, a Sepik, a Chimbu and a New Irlander. At home he knew that these people had one common name; the red skins. Some names were beginning to come to light, just before he left for his overseas education. For instance, the Tolais lived in the Gazelle Peninsula and they mostly grew kalapua. The Chimbis, including all highlanders, were known for their vicious brawls. New Irelanders were makers of strong puripuri and the Manus people for being 'kau wasi'. He had never heard of the Papuans. In fact many people were quite unknown to him; for instance the notorious Gailalas, the famous Keiaveis who lived in communities around Moresby. These communities were also recruiting ground for the capitals criminal gangs. The Papuans, before his days in Australia, were commonly understood to be Australians. This was quite true in many aspects of colonial marriage of Australia and Papua. At some unforeseeable stage in the past, Papuans may have appreciated the idea of becoming Australians and living like the Thursday Islanders. The Australians were notorious for seducing women and marrying them for their mere sexual satisfaction. They were only interested in this sort of association with Papuans; they still are. One need only make a tally of the number of mix-races in major Papua New Guinean towns.

The only other groups he was quite accustomed to were the Sepiks, whose name was mispronounced Sipiki. A number of them were married to women and men in his district. The Sepiks were known for their carvings (which were pornographic and sexually featured), sago, kundu and the skin

cutting ceremony.

The Fokker Friendship that brought Michael from townsville had already left with a bunch of giggling girls and boys from the territories' two only white secondary schools. He removed his coat and stood directly under the electric fan that swung around lazily. Dust stuck to the blades, and spider webs with their wide eyed owners, formed a temporary ceiling. He sweated easily. The whole atmosphere smelt heavily of coconut oil applied on unwashed bodies and other associated body smells. Occasionally a passerby would smell of high French perfume or deodorant. A rarity to the territory. He looked around for a seat to sit on. His legs wobbled a bit. All the wooden seats were filled up with native women feeding babies with watermelon sized breasts. Opposite them sat whites on cushioned chairs, women feeding their babies with bottles. He wondered why they did not breast feed. He concluded that they had to conceal every part of their body that was likely to attract the attention of every New Guinean hiding behind low quality dark glasses (bought from Konkon trade stores), who were always on the look out for the slightest chance to view the white women's concealed parts.

He ventured outside to the street. Several hundred flies buzzed around him as he stepped out among a group selling smoked maganis by the road. He smiled a little when he imagined how the seller might look if he was smoked the way the wallaby was. He walked inside to ask the New Guinean ticket clerk about his connecting flight to Kieta via Lae and Rabaul.

"Sorry no flights today. There is one early tomorrow," the New Guinean clerk said.

"Hmmn, I wonder what will happen to me?" he said in his cool friendly voice. "I have no friends and wantoks here. I hope you can help me?"

"Let me see your ticket."

Michael handed him the ticket.

"You are a student. That looks good. You are on a 50% concession. The manager should approve one night's accommodation I suppose. Please wait," the clerk said as he

moved into the room. Shortly he emerged with a character. His glasses fell off his thin face and were attached to them. Michael with the ticket officer. He adjusted the ticket and shuffled. He looked up, his eyes bright.

"You're a student. Australia are you?" he blink. He looked at Michael thought that he was him with his eyes.

"If he is a hypnotist," he thought, but one," he thought, but

"What school did you go to?" "Beatitudes!"

"Aha! A Christian!"

"Yes!" Michael replied.

"I am an old boy," he run by the same way for forties."

"Did you like it?"

"Yes, very much."

"Yes, the rules. I like the rules."

"I guess it is all about training. You will be taught by them, you will have accommodation. Please for the flight problem. service with your passport. development is only the Highlands and capitalism; money, and there so they do not being carried out in Rabaul to cater for servants and the urban get to Kieta, and if drop in and say hello please. He's my kid book. "And now for We'll put you at the the night. An Ansett five minutes time. warrant for . . . Michael accommodation, me

When he had finished



moved into the room at the back. Very shortly he emerged with a sleepy looking character. His glasses looked as if they would fall off his thin face without the rope that was attached to them. This man scrutinised Michael with the thoroughness of a gestapo officer. He adjusted his glasses, picked up the ticket and shuffled through the leaves. He looked up, his eyes blinking like a pussycat.

"You're a student back on holidays from Australia are you?" he asked. His eyes did not blink. He looked like a praying mantis; Michael thought that the man wanted to kill him with his eyes.

"If he is a hypnotist, he was not a good one," he thought, but answered, "Yes."

"What school did you attend?"

"Beatitudes!"

"Aha! A Christian college eh?"

"Yes!" Michael replied flatly.

"I am an old boy myself. I attended one run by the same order way back in the forties."

"Did you like it?"

"Yes, very much. But the rules!"

"Yes, the rules. I must say I remember the rules."

"I guess it is all part of the Christian training. You will be grateful that you were taught by them, you'll see. Now for your accommodation. Please accept our apologies for the flight problems. We do not have service with your part of the world. All the development is only based around here, Lae, the Highlands and Rabaul. You know capitalism; money, money! There's no money there so they do not worry. Development is being carried out in Port Moresby, Lae and Rabaul to cater for the bourgeoisie, the civil servants and the urban pamuks. When you get to Kieta, and if you get a chance, please drop in and say hello to brother Tim for me please. He's my kid brother." He picked up a book. "And now for your accommodation. We'll put you at the Hedana Hotel, just for the night. An Ansett bus will take you there in five minutes time. Here Mac, make out a warrant for . . . Michael Tsim, for one night's accommodation, meals paid."

When he had finished, he gave him a card

and said, "If you ever get into trouble simply ask for me. All that you would require is on the card. See you then Mike," he said as he dashed back to the comfort of his air-conditioned office.

As Michael read the contents of the card, he thought how wonderful it had been to run into an old boy of the Marist Brothers. How would he have managed if he had run into one of those buffoons who were educated at the government school? Especially the state schools. He remembered how they had thrashed the school once during a rugby game. He had played five eight and his style of game won many a heart of the school girls from the state school.

The same New Guinean who attended to him before, called to him from behind the counter and reminded him that accommodation had been fixed and he would have to wait for the bus to return from somewhere in the town. He picked up his handbag and milled around in the crowd. A Fokker Friendship landed. He watched the passengers flock out of the plane like herds of merino sheep bound for the shearers shed. They filled the terminal; extended every queue in the effort to check for a connecting flight to some location in the territory. A few smelled of grog. Some staggered off to the toilet labelled, Tatau, Hahine, to piss.

The lobby was full. Michael pushed around. A female smelling heavily of perfume that almost clogged his nostrils brushed past him, rubbing herself against him. She turned around quickly and apologised. Someone beside him said, "Em pamuk meri yah!" He watched her walk out through the door, her bum shook to the rhythm of her movement.

"She must be one of the common whores around the airport," he thought.

He thought about Australia again. The crowd milling about at the airport was large, but most had their reasons for being there. Here the people interpreted coming to the airport as something of a social gathering. Some came out of pure curiosity. His thoughts were interrupted by a firm hand. He turned around and saw a man dressed in a khaki shirt and shorts motioning to him to



follow. He followed him to the door and saw the Ansett Airline bus parked with several people seated inside. He got in and sat on a seat behind an Australian pilot who was busy fiddling around with a Papua New Guinean Ansett Air hostess. He eventually arrived outside the Hedana Hotel. The receptionist asked him his name when he went to enquire at the counter.

"Michael Tsim," he said.

"Oh Michael Tsim!" she exclaimed. "Yes we received word from the Ansett man at the airport that you would be coming."

"She bent down to retrieve something that had fallen down, as she checked through the account book. In doing so, she revealed a pair of white panties; she wore an extremely short mini. She straightened up and folded her hands across her pair of abundant breasts that were thrust out provocatively.

"And now Michael Tsim, we will have to find you a room. Hummm, let's see. Are you married?" she asked.

He thought that that question was quite unnecessary because she could see that he was alone.

"No-Madam," he replied, "I am afraid I haven't had the time to find me the right partner yet."

The woman looked up and smiled; tilted her head to one side and returned her gaze to the accounts book.

"No you are not," she said as she searched for something on the key board. "Well I thought that if you were, we could give you a big room. But since you are not, we'll give you a single room." She found a key and took it off the board. "It isn't often that we have Papua New Guineans staying here," she said. "It is good to have some wantoks here."

She motioned him to follow her. They went along a corridor and passed two rooms that were filled with drinkers humming like bees. They climbed five steps and came to a set of rooms. She stopped beside one at the end of the lobby, unlocked it, walked inside and checked to see if everything was ready. She picked up a card from the coffee table and indicated the meal hours. She then opened the door to the showers and toilet and

showed him the place.

"Well, thoughtful and friendly. What more does she have?" Michael asked himself.

Just as she was about to leave, she suddenly stopped and asked him if he knew how to eat with a knife and fork.

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh nothing. Just asking in case you don't. We will bring your meals to your room."

"I think I can manage," he said.

She eyed him and left.

He took off his clothes, put on a towel and walked out to take a bath. He stood under the cold water, savouring the freshness of the water. His body jumped at the new life that entered it. After having dried himself, he locked the door and lay down on the bed. He dropped into a deep sleep and dreamed about his old school, about the principal farewelling him and his friends at the airport. He dreamed about a girl whom he loved but he could not catch. She seemed so far away. She waved to him to follow her. He walked after her, but every step he took was very heavy, his feet faltered and he began to sink. Suddenly he was engulfed in a foam of cloudless must that vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

He woke up just before lunch. He walked to the dining hall, passed a group of Australian men talking to an Australian girl who appeared to be dying for someone to seduce her. As he passed them, one of the men grabbed him by the shoulder and asked him rather roughly, "When's lunch kanaka boy?"

He turned around and in quite a firm tone asked him to let him go. He told him that he was new and he did not know the meal hours. He left them standing there and walked over to the reception desk. He peeped through the travel brochure and other odd booklets that lined the desk. He heard the tail end of a conversation.

"Just how long did they start accepting kanakas in this hotel?" someone asked.

He turned around, eyed the commentators and resumed reading the papers. He refused to be baited into a challenge.

"Look at him dressed like that. I'll bet he never wore a pair of shoes in his dirty village."

They all giggled and gaze.

"If you are add he interrupted sha modify your langu that I would serio and sleep in this dog prefer me to think t is the result of y against me in my ov the shits that you back down south y sweeper or a mere You bastards think

The group that stood transfixed n Even the three fem him with eyes wide the speaker who caution. His Engli class.

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"Smart guy isn't they walked out the

He selected a ta of the diners. He and read it. A wait took his order. H waiter returned wit silence. Twice he sp looking at him. finished his meal. take away his plate and told him that h been a worker, he bigger tip.

He walked out to dial a number whom he wished to he wanted to talk somewhere in Port number and asked phones on the de and he introduced his house for the a

Michael waited and fetch him. Me



They all giggled and turned away from his gaze.

"If you are addressing yourselves to me," he interrupted sharply and clearly, "please modify your language. So you really think that I would seriously consider coming here and sleep in this dog infested hotel? Or do you prefer me to think that your lying buffoonery is the result of your gross discrimination against me in my own country? Don't give me the shits that you are better off here, while back down south you are a common street sweeper or a mere nobody; a society refuge. You bastards think you own us do you?"

The group that had made the remark, stood transfixed not knowing what to say. Even the three female receptionists watched him with eyes wide open. They wondered at the speaker who spoke with cool stern caution. His English was good; if not first class.

He continued to read a travellers' guide about a trip along the Kokoda Trail. He finished, placed the brochure back on the metal stand and entered the dining hall.

"Smart guy isn't he?" he heard them say as they walked out the door to the main street.

He selected a table far away from the rest of the diners. He picked up the menu card and read it. A waiter came across to him and took his order. He spoke in Pidgin. The waiter returned with his food. He ate in total silence. Twice he spied the three receptionists looking at him. He continued eating. He finished his meal. The waiter came over to take away his plates. He gave him forty cents and told him that he was a student. If he had been a worker, he would have given him a bigger tip.

He walked out and asked the receptionist to dial a number for him. They asked him whom he wished to talk to. He told them that he wanted to talk to a school mate living somewhere in Port Moresby. They dialed the number and asked him to pick up one of the phones on the desk. His wantok answered and he introduced himself. He asked him to his house for the afternoon.

Michael waited for his wantok to come and fetch him. Meanwhile, he sensed that the

three receptionists were dying to speak to him. He turned around and asked them about their work and whether they worked in shifts. (You know, the sweet talk to tame the quarry before the on slaught). They were on 11.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. shift. After that another three girls would take their place until 11.00 a.m. the next day.

"That must be extra-ordinary," he thought. "Every shift only goes for seven or eight hours at the most."

He wondered what their job required of them. Maintaining the switchboard, taking down payments and all sorts of other responsibilities, or did their occupation go beyond that? For instance entertaining the male guests in their room. He eyed them off. Yes, they were a bunch of avaricious female individuals eager to have themselves dug into by any new male guest. Typical European training. These bastards do not much about. They whispered amongst each other and looked at him. They giggled.

"Michael are you married?" one asked.

"Not yet. Still looking around for the perfect one," he replied.

"Are you a Bougainvillean?"

"Yes."

"What part?"

"South, central, north, west, east, islands everywhere!"

"Aoooh come on, stop playing around."

"No madams," he said. His eyes twinkled.

"Where do you work Michael?" another one asked.

"I don't work," he answered.

"How come you don't work? Everyone else does."

"Well not quite yet. Maybe I'll find a job somewhere, or probably stay home and marry a village girl," he said jokingly.

"And what do you do?" another pressed him for an answer.

She wore two diamond shaped ear-rings which twinkled as she moved her head from side to side.

"I am a student," he said. He did not want to tell them that, but said it all the same just to satisfy their curiosity.

A station wagon screamed to a stop



outside. A black hand waved at him from inside the car.

"What school Michael, Fiji?" the same girl asked as he moved down the concrete steps to the vehicle now parked on the road.

"No Australia," he said as he entered the car and waved goodbye to them, saying "See you later."

He asked himself why he had left so abruptly when the conversation was just warming up. They shook hands and moved away. The girls trooped out to see him disappear around the bend.

His wantok, who came from a neighbouring village, lived in a government apartment by himself. He was a magistrate. The flat was among the new sets of flats the colonial government had started building for the territories' mid-level public servants, at the new suburb of Hedana. Before that he had lived in one of the match boxes at Hohola. They entered through the only door into the flat. Another individual was inside absorbed in some reading. Around him lay stacks of books, newspapers and an ashtray that was almost full of cigarette butts. He was one of the few wantoks who had had the good luck to study at the university of Sydney. He was also on holidays and was doing some research work for his degree in Anthropology. They shook hands. Just then he put the book away and sat down on the mat on the concrete floor. There were chairs, but he preferred the mat. He sat on one of the cushioned chairs and accepted the bottle of coke his wantok offered him.

"You wok long stap we Michael?" the anthropology student asked him.

"Long Hedana Hotel," he answered.

"Oh Hedana. Ples bilong ol waitman tasol. Yu yet baim?"

"Nogat. Ansett Airlines is meeting the costs." He could not help mixing Pidgin and English together.

"Oh! Off-loaded laga. Good, let them pay."

"What time bambai you go long ples?"

"Tumora, sapos rot i orait."

"Oh tumora! Man mitu bai mi go tumora. Ating bambai yumi tupela go wantaim." He paused and looked at him and asked him

where he went to school.

"Beatitudes," he said.

"South! Mi bin skul long Catholic Seminary long Ulapia na bihain Madang. Bihainin mi les long skul Patere na mi apli long scholarship long study long university long Sydney. Mi gat two semesters tasol bihain mi pinis."

Another pause. The wantok meanwhile had started boiling some chicken and rice. The two continued to talk. Michael wondered why he studied anthropology. He visualised that it would have been more appropriate to study something like, public administration, economics or any of the more demanding skills needed to guide the territory toward political independence, or political divorce from Australia. Anthropology only interested people like Margaret Mead and other western academics wishing to make a name for themselves in the world. That was beginning to dry out with billions of research characters sweeping into any field of study that would satisfy the ever avaricious, chair-bound academics.

His wantok asked them to the table. They sat down and served themselves to huge mounds of boiled rice and pieces of chopped up chicken boiled with cabbage and a little spring onion to add a little flavour. After having washed the hot greasy meal down with two glasses of cold water, he went into one of the two rooms and laid down. Soon he was sound asleep.

Towards twilight the anthropology student woke him up and asked him to meet a couple of friends. The wife was very fancy, according to the anthropology student. He met them. The couple were back from Australia and were heading toward the island's capital. He shook the husband's hand, who greeted him with equal friendliness. The woman merely nodded to him and resumed her mechanical chattering. A typical native; proud and thirsting to show off her acquired Australian feminism because of her marriage to a white man.

She wore elaborate make up, toe and fingernails were all polished up, plucked eyebrows, a pair of very tight nylon slacks and

an equally tight accommodated her complete with a pair of rings. A pair of spectacles like a starved dragon she explained were for reading purposes; although, contrary, she was not of a great heap of books more than seventy wantok kept on referring to an address she accepted disregarded her own wisher as Lucia, her baptism Mompangau, her true name known that she had other tudaks who called her to call her Mrs. Pat. Since ever since.

Michael told the husband himself involved in a with him, that he Australia.

"Which part of Australia?"

"Pinginganga," he

"Oh Pinginganga? blocks away from you she answered.

"Where's that?" he

"Oh, Victoria," she

"Sorry, I meant I Australia."

"Oh dear me!" she automatically resting thought that was in darling?"

Her husband showed disapproval. One could be ashamed of his wife's knowledge of his father.

"Wui ara on hold continued. "Also, wui some of awa bisinish in

Her husband's business several inter-islands' capital of restaurants in most Papua New Guinea.

"Gii, dis place is hot soaked wet to my bone



an equally tight jerkin hat barely accommodated her abundant bosom, complete with a pair of fullmoon sized earrings. A pair of spectacles that made her look like a starved dragon sat on her nose. These, she explained were very helpful to her for reading purposes; although quite to the contrary, she was not one to be imagined with a great heap of books nor a reading speed of more than seventy words a minute. His wantok kept on referring to her as Mrs. Pat; an address she accepted. She had in the past disregarded her own wantoks who addressed her as Lucia, her baptismal name. More still Mompangau, her traditional name. It was known that she had often pleaded with any tudaks who called her by her maiden names, to call her Mrs. Pat. So it had been Mrs. Pat ever since.

Michael told the husband, who had got himself involved in a friendly conversation with him, that he was a student from Australia.

"Which part of Australia (pronounced Austarealia)?"

"Pinginganga," he answered.

"Oh Pinginganga? We only live several blocks away from you in Collingwood street," she answered.

"Where's that?" he asked.

"Oh, Victoria," she answered.

"Sorry, I meant Pinginganga in South Australia."

"Oh dear me!" she said, with her hands automatically resting on her breasts. "I thought that was in Victoria didn't you darling?"

Her husband shook his head in disapproval. One could see that he was quite ashamed of his wife's lack of geographical knowledge of his fatherland.

"Wui ara on holadeis mai boi," she continued. "Also, wui ara on our wei tuh see some of awa bisinish interest on the Ailans."

Her husband's business interest involved several inter-islands' cargo vessels and a chain of restaurants in most of the main centres of Papua New Guinea.

"Gii, dis place is hot isn't it? Look at me ole soaked wet to my bones. Di frock I just got

from Brisbane, so wet as if I just came outa the showers. What a mess, having to change clothes every two hours. Sure wish we was back down south."

She sat down and fanned herself, with a Telegraph newspaper that she brought with her from Australia. He noticed that she was perspiring. He visualised that she sweated not because of the tropical heat, though this would surely contribute to this, but quite visibly because of the several layers of thick clothing she wore which she had not bothered to remove. He wondered why. Maybe she was reluctant to part with her new sign of affluence gained by being married to the white Australian man; or the Australian way of life which had formulated her behaviour, interests, social demands that made her artificial and stereotyped. Her facial complexion shone like a polished metallic statue — a buddhist statue inflamed with clear polish which illuminated the dark interior of the pagodas. The tenant of the flat, seeing the woman sweating like a pig, turned the electric fan on to full blast and in due course apologised for the heat and the government for being so inconsiderate by not installing an air-conditioning system — something which he knew was quite irrelevant, knowing quite well that every government house had neither electric fan nor air-conditioning system.

After they had left, Michael asked his wantok who they were. They were a couple he used to know while he was stationed in Rabaul. The woman was from one of the most remote parts of the island. She was said to be the first female from her area to enter primary school. Her husband plucked her out of the primary school and married her. The three joked a little about her afterwards.

Michael was back for dinner at the Hedana. There were more people then. He ate quickly and left, nodded at the receptionist and kept on walking toward his room. He laid down on his bed after he'd taken his shower. He sifted through the newspaper and read about the latest development on the territories' political evolution. The Legislative Council had sent its recommendations to



Canberra for the formation of the territories' first House of Assembly in preparation for eventual independence. The spokesman for the Administrator was quoted as saying that the move taken by the council was a significant move, and showed that Papua New Guineans were quickly learning to make responsible decisions that would benefit their country. It also emphasised Australia's solidarity to the people of the territory of Papua New Guinea by satisfying the resolution passed by the Legislative Council. He noted that nothing was said about the recommendations made by the United Nations' Commission of Enquiry into the Colonial Administration of the territory (called the Traviss report).

He placed the newspaper on the bed beside the table and closed his eyes; thinking and half asleep. He woke up when he heard a knock on the door. He opened the door and was surprised to see the hotel receptionists standing there with a brown parcel.

"Hello," he said, not uttering another word.

"Hello," she answered.

"Can I help you?"

"No."

"Is there anything wrong?"

"No."

He eyed her off. She blinked her eyes. He debated about what to say next. At last he spoke.

"I suppose it would be better if we go inside."

He opened the door and asked her to go inside, and entered after her. He closed the door and asked her if she wanted to sit on the only chair or the bed. She chose the bed. He took the chair and thought about what to say. He was dumbfounded. He'd never stayed alone with a girl inside a room before. He was still trying to find out how to open their conversation when she announced that she had brought some food for him.

"Oh, you needn't have bothered. I've just had my dinner," he replied.

"Oh, I did not see you in the dining room, so I thought you were fast asleep, so I brought you something to eat and a few drinks."

She offered him a cold bottle of fanta. He thanked her and tossed one to her. He drank his halfway and put the bottle on the table. He watched the girl drink hers slowly and when she turned to eye him off, he turned around and pretended to watch the room and the air-conditioner which he forgot to switch on. The girl got up and switched the air-conditioner on. She stopped and quickly switched the machine off again.

"Sorry!" she said. "Do you mind if I switch it on?"

Their eyes met. He quickly turned his head away. He fiddled around with the newspaper and played around with his toes. The girl watched him and smiled as she sipped her orange drink, which she had poured into the glass which she had taken from the small freezer in the room.

"Do you like this room?" she asked.

"Yes," he said.

"Do you mind me staying here?"

"Sure. I am enjoying it."

"Oh are you?" she asked, but rather in doubt because he had so far shown very little interest in her.

"Pardon me please. I am not used to girls, least of all, staying alone with a girl. I hope you don't think I don't want you here. I am enjoying your company. In fact I was feeling a little lonely before you turned up."

For the first time he faced and looked at her in the eyes. She smiled and he smiled back at her.

"I've also brought some South Pacific Lager."

She took one bottle and showed it to him.

"See, very cold. You take beer?"

"No, I've never had the chance. How's it taste like?"

"For a starter, like you, it will taste bitter. But once you've taken several you will no longer feel the bitterness."

She offered him a glass and poured out a glass full. She did the same to her glass from the same bottle. He sipped a little and downed it slowly. It tasted very bitter. She encouraged him to sip some more. He took some more and she refilled his glass from another bottle. When they ran short, she dialed the phone by

the headlamp table and bring some more beer very soon returned with some ice blocks. Their eyes began to clear up longer tied. He began

"Now Michael, were you educated again?"

"St. Mary's Ashgrove"

"Australia. Man you"

"Oh, come on. Don't you know you are being educated in Australia?"

"Why not? Why not anytime?"

He looked puzzled. The girl really meant. There

"Now, won't you tell me your experiences in Australia?"

"That is a little difficult to know. For instance the school I did in Australia, sort of interest you."

"Please tell me!" she

He told her as much as he could remember, exaggerating

"Whew! That is a lot of you Papua and New Guinea. Did you meet any girls?"

"Only during dance two times a year. If only my friend, he'd go to his friend's farm and meet his sisters."

"Oh what a bore!"

"Nothing to worry about. Catholic school which was about boy-girl relations."

"Pretty dry isn't it?"

"Yes something like that."

She got up and switched the table lamp producing its golden rays to the walls. Inside the room the beauty of gleaming light and feeling of glamorous surprised him that she had gone to school on the outskirts. Her mother was a native and her father was an Englishman. She was so fair with skin



the headlamp table and asked someone to bring some more beer. She left the room and very soon returned with six more bottles and some ice blocks. They drank some more. His eyes began to clear up. His tongue was no longer tied. He began to speak freely.

"Now Michael, where did you say you were educated again?"

"St. Mary's Ashgrove in Queensland."

"Australia. Man you are anytime ah?"

"Oh, come on. Don't be silly. Everyone else is being educated in Australia."

"Why not? Why can't I say you are anytime?"

He looked puzzled. He wondered what the girl really meant. There was no answer.

"Now, won't you want to tell me about your experiences in Australia?"

"That is a little difficult to explain you know. For instance there are many things I did in Australia, some of which may not interest you."

"Please tell me!" she begged. "Anything!"

He told her as much as he could remember, exaggerating here and there.

"Whew! That is a lot of things ah? Man you Papua and New Guineans are any ah? Did you meet any girls at all?"

"Only during dances, which occurred only two times a year. If one was lucky to have a friend, he'd go to his friend, he'd go to his friend's farm and maybe meet his friend's sisters."

"Oh what a bore!"

"Nothing to worry about miss. I attended a Catholic school which has very strict rules about boy-girl relationships."

"Pretty dry isn't it?"

"Yes something like that."

She got up and switched the main light off. The table lamp produce a weak light that sent its golden rays to touch the white-washed walls. Inside the oom there was a calm, rich beauty of gleaming light that touched off a feeling of glamorous sexuality. The girl told him that she had gone through a government school on the outskirts of the town. Her mother was a native of the territory but her father was an Englishman, which showed why she was so fair with shapely seductive things.

Her hair stretched down to her bum, which glistened in the sparkling light. She said that she really wanted to go overseas to Australia, or some other place like that.

She ought to join Ansett or TAA as an air hostess, he told her, or if not marry a whiteman. Either way would mean she would be able to go overseas.

"Mary a white bastard and get ditched like my mother? No thank you Michael."

They drank some more beer. They both looked happy. They talked more and cracked jokes. Night had closed in. The drinkers in the hotel's three public bars had gone home and there was silence once more. Out on the street, police patrol cars drove slowly along the road. In the hotel the night shift attendant closed the iron gate. They heard the clanking of the metal frames then the metal bolt shifted into position.

"Well, I suppose we are not going to talk all night. Time one got a night's rest." Michael said.

"You are correct," she said. "I've just remembered I've got to catch my early morning flight to Kieta."

"Will you be all right?"

"Who me? I'll be all right," she said. "How about you?"

"Me? I'll be fine."

He decided to say thank you and good night, but stopped himself from saying it. They looked at each other. He asked her if she was going home or would she like to stay the night. She said she would stay the night. She had told her mother that she was going to work overnight because there was a lot of work to do, and would see her the next morning.

The grog had workd well — four bottles it was. He eyed the girl who sat crossed legged on his bed. He noticed that one of the buttons on her frock was undone, showing her cleavage. He viewed her as his own —trapped and available for his experience. He longed to go over and touch her. His conscience doubted his motives. Did he want her for his mere sexual exploitation? Did he desire to taste that which every living being nourished? Next time he looked over at her he saw two



more buttons undone. Good! He began to build up his appetite. His saliva saturated his mouth. He swallowed hard. He wanted to run and wrestle with her. She stopped him and asked him to undress her. He did so reluctantly, but with burning desire. When he had finished he had transformed her into a shapely succulent figure. She pulled him up and undressed him slowly, caressing him slowly and tenderly. He melted into her arms; her hands soft and beautiful like a mattress. He wrestled her to the bed and made ready to mount her. She stopped him. They kissed, savouring the tenderness of each other lips. They began slowly. The kissing intensified and gathered momentum. She began to moan and cried joyously for her mother to protect her. He slid down and laid on her shapely abundant breast, massaging the other with his hand. Her sharp fingernails dug into his back. He did not feel it. He kissed her more savagely than before and wanted to bite her head off. He got up and wanted to mount her.

"Not yet," she said. "Kiss me more, kiss me more, rub my back, caress my buttocks."

They rolled about and ended on the floor. They kissed again and again. His tool stiffened more than it had ever done before. He wanted her. She said a little more. He begged her to allow him to enter her. He could not hold on any longer. At last she allowed him to enter her. He smashed it in, beating the speed of a fully automatised locomotive. She clung to him, her teeth biting deep into his chest. At last with a final burst it exploded into a blistering climax. They clung onto each other like twin Sepik carvings — unseperable. She poured out from thousands of porous holes in their skin. After what appeared to be an eternity, they parted and laid beside each other exhausted and satisfied. He turned away feeling guilty. He remembered his christian teaching. They did not understand the truth of the reality in the church. Now he was a man. He had done it and it was long and sweet. They shared the same bed and made love once more before daylight. Then they showered together, caressed each other and made love again.

She said she enjoyed a real educated fuck.

She was on top of the world. He was a virgin and she had had the pleasure of opening him. He felt embarrassed and angry. He wanted to beat her up for doing this to him. he had often fancied doing a virgin. He became angry for being tricked by a common whore. He looked at her looking up at him from the bed. He turned away and began to pack his clothes. He finished packing, zipped the bag and placed it on the floor, and looked out through the window into the street. Several early risers were already on their way to some destination in the town. A car was slowly pulling out of the Hedana Hotel parking lot. He turned to look at the driver. It was the shift attendant. At the same time he felt the girl coming up from behind him. He wanted to turn around and move away from her. He did not. He stood there. She slipped her hands around his body and squeezed him. He wanted to jab her ribs with his lebows. He stopped. The girl began to sob. Tears ran down her cheeks. He wondered why she was crying. He pulled her around to face him.

"Why are you crying?" he asked her.

She told him that she was sad because he was going to leave her. She wanted him to stay in Port Moresby and find a job and marry her.

"No," he said. "I must first see my parents. It has been five years since I last saw them."

She told him that she understood, but his going would also mean that he would be leaving her. She resented this. She didn't want to belong to anyone else except him. He was her only one. Her dear beloved. Her animase!

He looked around and fought hard to think about something to say. There was nothing. He concluded that all this was sheer nonsense. He knew that the moment he turned his back she would be out looking for another man. He gathered up his bag and walked out to the lobby to wait for the Ansett bus that would take him to the airport. She followed him out. He sat down on one of the cushioned chairs and looked through some old newspapers. She came and took the chair facing him. He read until the bus came. He got up and as he turned to go he said the only word he wanted to say.

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"See you back in February."

He entered the bus and saw her eyes misting.

"Australian educated bastard," he heard her say.

The traffic officers at the airport checked his ticket, weighed his bags and told him that the plane would be leaving in twenty minutes time. He saw the anthropologist student sitting on one of the chairs reserved for passengers. He went over to join him. They exchanged greetings. As they sat there, he looked around and saw other overnights having their tickets checked. He asked the anthropology student who they were. They were students from the newly established Administrative Institute on their way home. They were mostly men. There were three girls amongst them; one had heavy make-up.

A traffic officer came over to where he was sitting and asked if he was Michael Tsim. He said yes. He told him that a girl wanted to speak to him. He asked him to follow him. He picked up the phone and said, "Hello, Michael Tsim speaking."

"Hello darling," the girl answered from the other end. "This is Rosemary, the one you slept with last night . . . I just want to thank you and wish you an uneventful journey home. But just remember this, if I become pregnant, you'll be held responsible. So remember you are not going to run away . . . Bye now. Next time I'll be writing to you, I'll be signing my name as Mrs. Rosemary Tsim."

He heard a click as she replaced the phone on the other end. He replaced the receiver without saying another word. He thanked the traffic officer who had called him.

The passengers soon entered the plane and were on their way to Bougainville. After a three hour flight, marred by loud drunkenness and utter rubbish eventuating from an impromptu drinking party by the ex-Administrative College students, the plane landed on the grass runway and moved slowly up to stop in front of the terminal building. He picked up his handbag and followed the other passengers to the gangway. He moved slowly, eyeing the building.

Pressed against the mesh wire fence,

extending from the terminal building was a crowd of spectators. No one waved. Many stared wide-eyed like night owls. He didn't recognise anybody. He entered the terminal building like a lonely foreigner. While the other passengers were being swarmed over by their friends and relatives he was left standing there alone. He remembered the first time he had landed in Brisbane; it had been exactly the same. He went out to look for a PMV to take him to the town. There were none. He walked over to the Mission Fellowship Aviation building. He met the pilot who greeted him as if he had known him all his life. He asked him if there was any flight to Boku that day. The man told him that there would be one in the afternoon. Later he asked him where he was staying. Michael told him that he had just arrived from Port Moresby and showed him his Ansett Airline ticket. This man examined him from the tip of his hair right down to his toes as if he was expecting to find him a different person from the tudaks he'd seen all over the island. He nodded his head in approval as he quickly went into his office; a shack consisting of several old army bungalows knocked together, very much in need of several sturdy posts to hold it up.

The man came out and motioned Michael toward a Piper Comanche that was being refuelled for take-off by two Bougainvilleans. The pilot opened the door and told him to get in. He got in after him.

Very soon they were airborne. He experienced his most terrifying flying experience as the pilot took the plane low over tree-tops, and flew nearly touching the tops of the trees. He was more frightened when the pilot did several acrobatic turns. He thought that if he had been travelling on a truck he would have jumped down if the driver had done this. The plane landed at a recently completed airstrip and bumped around as it landed. As soon as it came to rest in front of a sago roofed hut adjoined to a much larger sago roofed and walled house, it was soon surrounded by a multitude of screaming local people. They smelled heavily of smoked home grown tobacco. The adults



were impressive with their betel nut stained teeth which they displayed as they grinned. He got out after the pilot and very soon was sweating from the heat and at the same time become nauseated by the heavy odour that hung in the atmosphere.

"Vamoose yah brus smoking rascals. Come on piss off. Iw ant clean air," shouted the pilot jokingly. He was known to them. Some girls poked their tongues at the youthful pilot.

Michael bade goodbye to the pilot and moved outside of the crowd to the main road. He rested on a broken down caterpillar and watched the workshop crew at the nearby Road Authority workshop drinking beer. He checked his clock. It was only 11 o'clock in the morning and the bastards were drinking already. He shrugged his shoulders, lifted his suitcase and moved to the road, hoping to bail a government car or a PMV to take him to his village which was forty kilometres away. There were none. He sat down, removed his shirt and fanned himself with it. He thought he would catch one at 12.00 noon. But there was none. He had to wait until 3.30 that afternoon. He hailed a truck bound for his home; a Census Division loaded with a pack of yelping, over intoxicated passengers, who looked more like over-fed hippopotamuses being transported to some African national reserve. He refused many but got home eventually.

"Abe meke," his mother replied. He wanted a laugh but held back.

A young boy came in and laid down on the other end of the bed. His father asked him who he was. He identified himself. He asked him who got off at the junction. The young boy said he didn't know. Meanwhile the drunks that he had left at the junction had been joined by other village people. He could hear them singing and shouting. This time he got up and walked slowly to where his father was lying down. He held his hands and at that instance his father sat up and said.

"Who is this touching me like a ghost? His hands are very cold."

"Me!" Michael replied.

"Me who?" his father asked in earnest.

"Me," then he called out his name.

"Oh, you my son. Oh how surprising! Hey mother, it's our son from Australia. He is here. He has arrived," his father shouted at the top of his voice.

"Where is he? My son. Taima meke ghe." She started sobbing and very soon his father had joined her. Shortly the whole village had rushed to his father's *aurui*.

He felt completely lost sitting there flanked by his parents, while in front of him, a swelling tide of villagers were gradually filling up the small *aurui*. Many had begun crying as well. He could not do anything else, so he just sat there like a wax figure while he drank in the wailing and the crying, laughing and the noise made by the well-wishers. His parents had stopped crying, but both still held on very tightly to his hands. Newcomers were still wailing like a pack of dogs at night. He felt a little sick. His uncle who had just arrived shouted with a booming voice and told everyone to stop the silly nonsense.

"Why welcome him like this? He is not dead!"

He seemed to have sounded everyone out. There was total silence as everyone waited to hear what he had to say next. An elderly woman still sniffed somewhere in the darkness.

"Enough! Enough!" his uncle shouted again.

"Gham te uabubukatsua momona tawana."

"Tee paraanamam," everyone chorused together.

"Mahawea gham! Is he not my grandson? Why shouldn't I cry? Who bore his mother? I ask you. Me! Me! This bundle of old bones."

She jumped about energetically and soon was singing the "He he wui". All the other women joined in. Someone poured a bucket full of water over his head, wetting his 'T' shirt and his pair of shorts. The He he wui continued as he ran out to change into dry clothes. The He he wui and the pouring of the water over his head was a customary practice, performed when welcoming a relative recently returned from a long voyage or for someone who had gone for a very long time. He had

been away for six young boy and h man; a man sophisticated, acc masterful.

His surprised preparation of ar that were in the somewhere in so what hit them as the earth. His par as females help moved out to his he was offered b rest of the villag come and forceful claim him for her she lectured them She openly accu good for nothing for drinking only to pay off fines i village courts. brother of simil petty theft to n brothers replied t too intoxicated defamatory.

Back at the au his mother, he questions; some asked what life i there pigs, mars and what did the asked if there we and what they sneered at this defended himself about black peop who worked i Plantation. She noded his head

"There, who k

"The people a them.

Before he f anxious young book from a h conscious of ligh feel the book lea



been away for six solid years. He had left as a young boy and he came back a fully grown man; a man of many cultures, very sophisticated, according to them, and every masterful.

His surprised arrival sparked off a preparation of an impromptu feast. Chickens that were in the chicken yards or sleeping somewhere in some branches, never knew what hit them as they dropped effortlessly to the earth. His parent's aurui was quickly lit up as females helped with the cooking. He moved out to his elder brother's house where he was offered beer by his brothers and the rest of the village men. His mother had to come and forcefully pull him by his hands and claim him for herself. Before she led him away she lectured them about the evils of drinking. She openly accused his brothers for being good for nothing, adulterous, lazy and good for drinking only. She had to spend a fortune to pay off fines imposed upon them by the village courts. She accused his younger brother of similar offences, ranging from petty theft to manslaughter. None of his brothers replied to the accusations. They were too intoxicated to regard her remarks as defamatory.

Back at the aurui closely watched over by his mother, he was again bombarded with questions; some for the fourth time. He was asked what life in Australia was like. Were there pigs, marsupials, goannas, mountains and what did they eat and so forth. Someone asked if there were black people in Australia and what they called them. Several others sneered at this question, but the person defended himself, explaining that she was told about black people in Australia by her father who worked in the Queensland Sugar Plantation. She asked him to confirm it. He nodded his head in agreement.

"There, who knows better?" she asked.

"The people are called Aborigines," he told them.

Before he finished talking, one over-anxious young man snatched a school text book from a half bald boy who was so conscious of lighting his pipe that he did not feel the book leave his hands. This young man

proceeded to tell everyone else about the Aborigines, whom he explained were like themselves. They lived by wandering from location following game and sleeping in crude huts. They hunted wallabies, emus, goannas and kangaroos. He thought the speaker spoke as if he had been to Australia. The speaker continued.

"The emu is a big bird, like a chicken only bigger. It can easily carry a young boy. A wallaby, or sikan, was something like a possum but bigger than a dog," he said.

"That is very true," Michael agreed with the speaker.

This man must be educated, or had read the Nali and Minara Jacaranda Readers Series, of which he saw several school children carrying around that night. Someone asked why the Lord did not create these animals on the island.

Michael ate that night watched by hundreds of twinkling eyes. He refused the spoon and fork his mother offered him, preferring to use his fingers instead. When he went to bed that night, the last thing he remembered was his drunken brothers shouting away, telling everyone that they had a really masterful relative and anyone, especially from the neighbouring villages who wanted to be smart, should stick it up.

"Yupela is sindawn antap! Paken ase! Any challenges?" they shouted with their mouths full of beer. He laughed softly as he fell asleep. In the background he could hear his parents telling them to stop their drunken sons. He knew no more as he entered into a world of his deceased relatives. He felt himself being led into a place where he met many people; many of whom he had never seen before. There he saw himself partaking in a ceremonial betel nut chewing ceremony. The leader in his dream was an impressive man whose features did not resemble anyone he had ever seen before. His eyes shone with metallic malice that penetrated into one's skull.

His welcome had been fitting. The impromptu feast in which he had partaken in was very well endorsed by his ancestors. He slept peacefully to the imaginary rhythm of bamboo flutes being blown expertly by well



accomplished musicians. The music was exotic, but displayed a lullaby of sweet peacefulness. A great calm had descended upon him. He had the most peaceful sleep that he had ever had.

### AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

Michael's first week was one of receiving guests and well wishers in his father's aurui. His mother insisted that he stay in the house away from the curious eyes of every sticky-beak. His father flatly turned his suggestion down, even when his mother insisted to do so would keep him safe from the ever jealous poison men and women. In reply to this, his father said that anyone who had any plans of doing any harm to his son would have to kill him first. He fished out a queer looking lime gourd and patted it, and reassured his wife that the gourd contained the most powerful waasii any man in the Toberaki, Kalekodo, Gholau, Naghau and Naghovi, including the Kiatas, ever possessed. A Nangnanga chieftain had given it to him. He told his wife that it was his privilege to show off his overseas educated son to all the proud Toberakians. His overnight social status had risen and was evident in the manner in which he first received the people who came to visit him.

Next morning all the village elders came, and there was a great deal of buai chewing. His father's aurui ran red with buai spittle, spat out by every foul mouthed, monkey-faced hangman's meat. His relatives came in with large aluminium pots filled with boiled kaukau, bananas, taros and green vegetables cooked in thick coconut milk. These people ate every scrap and left only to be replaced by yet another multitude. Young boys were dispatched into the forest to get betel nut mustard. Another heavy meal followed. This bunch left as soon as they had disposed of the huge mounds of food. The multitude seemed to increase as his father began to buy rice to feed the never ending stream of well wishers, most of whom came for the fifth and sixth visit. Michael cautioned his parents about their lavish feast, even if they were getting compensation from the huge copper mine. All

through the week, relatives and friends from near and far arrived with food and gifts. They, in return, were fed huge mounds of rice and tinned fish, washed down with over sweetened tea drunk from 44 gallon drum-sized mugs. He ate a little each time he was asked, although he preferred native dishes to the almost unpalatable rice and tinned fish. On Friday the local pop group, code named 'Pyrocks', entertained the visitors, most of whom were drunken bums from the copper mine whom he visualised, must pay weekly visits to the village to get away from the confounded mine life menagerie. That Friday brought in more of these miners; more than those who came home every week to share two days with their families. Many came purposely to see him and to get him drunk, or to grease him to join them at the mine. Each one of them came with his own contribution of five cartons of beer, which they piled in the middle of the village for everyone to help themselves.

When he went to Australia; liquor was an unknown luxury in the Toberaki district. That night he was astonished to see how the people had managed to learn to drink in such a short while. He himself didn't drink (before he had contacted the mixbred bottom at the Hedana Hotel). He was appalled to see even old men and women, feebly take a good swig of the stuff. The band was not very refined; they could not match the contemporary musical achievements attained by many local artists. The lead guitarists, as well as his string and base, lacked proper co-ordination. The singers sang like bull-frogs. Despite this the dancers made use of the music they provided. The band hit the jackpot when two ex-Toki players, among the drunks, came to assist them. Both were well known around there.

He began to visit places and people following the long week of meeting people; eating and ending with a booze-up on Friday. His old grandmothers, whom he had not hoped to see alive on his return, were still alive and reasonably fit although bent with age from continuous rearing of sons and daughters. Now that they had stopped bearing children, they had assumed the

responsibility of grandchildren and He had not had the grandmothers who father was away se mission coastal ve that time was nursi adequately give him motherly love they feebly as each grievances, miseries only one they had hoped that one c morally and finan many times they h his cousins. He we truthful in what th in his present po position to offer m offer them any mo as he had not had a yet.

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When he retur had come knowi offered, but he v back to the busl Australian cosmo mosquitoes were had left six yea people ate more t out carelessly in very useful bree and flies. Childr cuts, resulting fr and broken beer have their legs a died of tetanus;



responsibility of caring for numerous grandchildren and their great grandchildren. He had not had the chance to be near his own grandmothers who reared him when his father was away serving on board a Catholic mission coastal vessel. His mother, who at that time was nursing another boy, could not adequately give him and his elder brother the motherly love they needed. They had cried feebly as each narrated their personal grievances, miseries and injustices. He was the only one they had cared for and the parents hoped that one day he would help them morally and financially. He wondered how many times they had said this to everyone of his cousins. He wondered if they were being truthful in what they said. He told them that in his present position he was only in the position to offer moral support. He could not offer them any money, or any material wealth as he had not had a chance to earn any money yet.

They urged him to find a job at Panguna so as to be as near as possible to them. He weighed up their suggestions and tried to analyse the situation. He wondered why they insisted that he take a job at Panguna. Why they wanted him to be close to them and not the other. Were they the ever avaricious old people found in every society? After having given it more careful thought, he dismissed this. He accused himself of being a selfish, short sighted, greedy young man himself. In the days to come he was to discover more about life in the village.

When he returned back from Australia, he had come knowing full well what village life offered, but he wasn't at all prepared to go back to the bush after the comforts of the Australian cosmopolitan life. The flies and mosquitoes were here, thicker than when he had left six years ago. This was because people ate more tinned food which they threw out carelessly in every backyard, making it a very useful breeding ground for mosquitoes and flies. Children had more sores, mostly cuts, resulting from treading on jagged tins and broken beer bottles. Several had had to have their legs amputated, while one or two died of tetanus; which people attributed to

poison culminating in some innocent person being smoked alive at Kangaroo courts. His parents couldn't understand why he insisted that he take his meals at night. When he explained that he hated having to share his food with flies, and occasionally dogs, his father told his mother to cook at night. Although he managed to temporarily do away with the flies, he couldn't control the mosquitoes.

During the days after his arrival, his parents became more possessive. Each one wanted him to do things or behave in such a way that he or she thought best. In the beginning he tolerated them, but as their rivalry became more frequent, almost resulting in brawls, he got them together and told them that neither of them should try to own him. He belonged to both of them. If this silly conduct did not cease, he would cut short his malolo and go away. The situation ceased between his parents, but it did not stop them from keeping a close eye on him. His father seemed to be everywhere, checking on his food, telling him to eat, go to wash, go to sleep, attend a meeting, mediating at a dispute and discouraging hopeful maidens that seemed to have taken a special interest in visiting or resting at his father's *aurui*. Michael allowed him to do this just to please him, although he really wanted to be free and wander about as his old friends did in the district.

One of the first things he did was build himself a proper pit toilet. After having used his family pit latrine, he was discouraged from going in their again. He vomited the first time he entered the hut. The posts were painted from the top plates to the bottom plate. The seat seemed to be dripping with water all the time. When he asked his father why he didn't get rid of the shit smeared hut, he said that it was good enough. He further explained that if it was good for him it was good enough for Michael too. He disagreed. From that time he did his business in the bush carrying his shovel and burying the muck.

One day Michael got into the family car his brother was taking to town for a service; it was his first time to go to Arawa. He asked



him to take him to the saw mill. When he asked him why, he shrugged his shoulders and said, "Just drop me there". His brother left him there after he told him to pick him up when the vehicle had been serviced. He located the foreman and asked him if he had any waste pieces of timber that he didn't want. He showed him a heap marked 'Labisi timba' and told Michael to help himself. He chose the best pieces, found some rope, fastened them together and wrote him name on them, adding 'for BBA'. He asked his brother to pick him up. When his brother asked him what it was for, he told him, "You'll sell."

Michael got a group of boys to help him build his latrine. He need not have asked them; they all volunteered to help him. He built two, reserving one for himself. His father marvelled at the way he built the two latrines, especially the squatting box. He asked him why he had taken such great care to look after his excreta. Michael told him that it was to stop the flies getting into his food. He burnt his father's old shit house and told him to use one of the new ones. Other villagers saw what he had done and followed suit.

He wanted to do more to improve his living conditions. He instructed his mother on the basics of cleanliness in food preparation and storage. He tried to advise his father to cease spitting on the floor where they ate their food, saying that it was unhygienic. When his father refused, saying it was tradition to do so, he told him it was not traditional, he only thought so because he was a conservative, lazy bugger, too lazy to go out and spit out side. He's father refused to accept his advice. Michael did not intend to be defeated. He continued to advice them on the basics of living a healthy life. His father accepted this very slowly after Michael outlined to him how the villagers lived a dirty, unhygienic life. He pointed out the areas he was most appalled at.

He could not tolerate the absolute ignorance of the people who didn't observe basic health precautions. People who used the small creek further up tended to have a disregard for those using it downstream. They pissed and excreted, washed dirty nappies and cleaned their noses and arses, including pots

and pans, in the creek. Those who lived downstream drank the water and used it for cooking and washing.

People kept pigs under their houses, fed them and did not bother to sweep up their drippings. The same pigs reared piglets. These in turn were fed there and when they were ready for sale, were sold at extravagant prices. Numerous dogs, most starving, wandered around eating any old junk and frequently tore into peoples' houses. They left their shit all over the villages to be cleared up by pecking chickens. Mothers did not take care to wash their hands before preparing the family meals. This was the reason why he refused to eat anywhere other than his parent's house.

Everyone went around with first degree ulcers, yet did not feel bothered about it. Women had lice crawling all over them, yet they refused to have a haircut to remove the itching creatures. And there were people who hardly ever visited the river. They would go for months and years without having a wash, and they smelt like urine troughs. There were babies who were brought up to suck from both the breast and smoking pipes from birth. If he told them that smoking was ruining their lungs, they would reply, "Where? We cannot see it!" Some people had made confounded promises not to eat certain types of food containing vitamin C (these promises had been made because of some past misfortune), and they repeatedly complained about ever lasting illnesses in some part of their guts and veins.

People became ill with tuberculosis common colds, asthma, filariasis and bloated throats, yet they refused to be taken to Arawa Hospital. The few who had gone to the hospital had come back cured, but foolhardily refused, or ignored, the doctor's advice to take life easy for some months after hospitalisation. When the illness struck again they attributed it to witchcraft and the work of sorcerers. Many medical orderlies themselves lacked discipline. They would go away for months, leaving the Aid Posts unattended and the sick people developed complications. This could have been arrested

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with drugs had the medical orderlies been dedicated enough. He saw children with running noses, many yellowish, which their parents did not bother to clean. They lengthened right down to their mouths only to be inhaled in again. They reminded Michael of walrus bulls. He wondered why they didn't take them to the Aid Post when the medical Aid Post orderlies were in attendance.

Michael asked himself whether he would live with all this rot. He mentioned this to his father and was told that life was like that in the village. People were still busikanakas.

"Not bush Kanakas, but ignorant," Michael said to himself.

He discussed this with two other educated men from his village. Both agreed that the peoples' hygiene was pathetic but added that life had always been like that. Changes had been slow; very slow. Development had also been hampered; in some instances, even stopped by the villager's so called leaders, all of whom did not have the slightest idea about the principles of modern government and technology, yet saw fit to acclaim themselves leaders experienced in modern government. One, jokingly, was referred to as 'Gavmani'; upon his insistence that was. He thought that these old fools shelved any form of development knowing full well that if they allowed this to happen, the younger generation would go right ahead and they would lose their social status. The younger generation failed to make any attempts to rectify this situation, or path a way toward achieving this, because they themselves were incapable of doing so, and further, were lazy and good for waiting only on he many gifts from the government rather than starting something, using their own initiative.

It was difficult for Michael to achieve his aims, as he soon found out. His people of the Toberaki district were a difficult lot to deal with. This showed in their unpreparedness to absorb and assimilate western knowledge and foreigners into their society. What was important to them was retention of their culture and traditions which they came to accept as unique, and they were not prepared to part with them come what may. He

thought they reminded him of the indomitable Gauls in ancient French literature.

The nearest primary school, the only acume of western civilization in the district, turned out hundreds of pupils who went back to the village society. Everyone of them went through the school for six years, sat for the exams and failed every subject that they were tested on. One or two got selected for secondary school but went as far as grade eight and became school drop outs. He found out that the same teachers who taught him ten years ago were still teaching at the school. Most had been through the good old standard three and four but now were greatly disadvantaged in the more demanding skills and knowledge and modern teaching methods. All forms of instruction were carried out in local vernacular and the people reacted violently when the department wanted to retire the old teachers and appoint better educated young teachers in their place. He was told that the people, including the Board of Management, stood firmly behind the teachers. They didn't want them retired, not transferred, because they were the best educated teachers available. Any young educated whipper-snapper was too inexperienced to teach the pupils at this school. When asked, indulgently, why they were unable to produce bright enough kids to go to high school while some schools were sending out ten times the number sent out by the Toberakian school, they reasoned that they could not do so because they scored so high in their exams the existing secondary schools could not accept them. Apparently they were too clever to spend their time learning about subjects that did not match their intelligence.

They referred to Michael as the living proof of their arguments. He felt out of place when they started to refer to him as the living example of the unmatched Toberakian intelligence. He told himself that he was not at all a genius. He merely passed the test that gained him admittance to an Australian school because he took his work with determined diligence. Now they were using him to cover up for their own weaknesses.