

audible for Londari's sharp ears, although little, to hear the big pieces of kaukau going down from the throat to the oesophagus and further down to the stomach, often rattling. Mendaiwan also must have noted this but to keep herself from quarrels, she kept her mouth shut.

As Londari grew older he realized the situation his mother was in, in distress, bitterness, and loneliness (although the neighbouring women folk of the village comforted her). He realized one of the basic principles of life — that one has to live to love and to be loved.

Mendaiwan was the only woman in the village who was from Maramuni, a place that was scarcely heard of by the Sambeok tribe and the neighbouring ones. Maramuni, at that time (even nowadays too) was a place known to be far, extremely far away from wabag. Mendaiwan's village was in a place past Maramuni, just near the provincial boundary of east Sepik and Enga (as we currently understand). The border was only a stone's throw times perhaps fifty.

Being the only woman from a far away place she lacked for love, real fraternal love and affection. The only person who could give this sort of love was her husband but the empty-headed ugly monster was always repellent.

Realizing his faults the village people, both males and females, regularly tried to correct Kandi but with a negative result. Each time an attempt was made Kandi remained stubborn.

Mendaiwan had one soul who was completely hers. Her only source of joy, comfort and happiness was her own son — her own blood.

Had Londari been a little older, he would indeed have noted this. He, however, began to learn things.

On a fine sunny October morning in 1966 a new member appeared to join the family. To Londari's joy and delight it was a male. On Mendaiwan's lap, was the newly arrived member. He was sucking the white milky liquid flowing through the rib of one of Mendaiwan's breasts. He was staring at Londari with a pair of large brown eyes. He

was smiling at his elder brother.

Completely filled with hidden joy and contentment, Londari almost immediately wanted to touch him, hold him and carry him around; as he had seen children of his age carrying their little Siblings around.

"Some other time", Mendaiwan said. "He has had a very long and tiring journey; thus, he needs rest and food. Please mame,<sup>1</sup> go and fetch some water. Your brother is thirsty."

Londari responded at once. He always obeyed his mother. She was his boss.

Grasping the handle of the aluminium cooking pot, the only one the family owned, he hurried away. He ran at full speed, as fast as his little legs could go. He ran down a little pathway on a small hill. The pathway led to a small creek, on inlet of the Pulimbi river.

He developed an habit that whenever his mother assigned him a job, particularly fetching water, he always wanted to get it done in the shortest possible time. He partly did this to please his mother and partly to enjoy her praises that she lovingly threw at him. His mother knew he deserved her praises and habitually it became her delegated duty to give Londari what belonged to him.

As Londari neared the creek, a surprise, almost frightening, awaited him. When he was just about to fill up the pot with water, he looked across the opposite bank of the Pulimbi river for a split-second and something interesting attracted his attention. He fixed his stare there for a while. Then through the thin bush of Kunai grass, ferns and small trees covering the Pulimbi river bank he was able to see something surprising that remained at the back of his mind thereafter. He saw the forms of two human bodies, one on top of the other. Londari was extremely terrified at the sight and would have run back home had he not become the victim of his own curiosity which proved stronger. remaining where he was, he fixed concentrated on the scene on the opposite bank of the river. The two bodies laid motionless without the slightest movement.

"Were his eyes playing tricks?" he questioned himself.

Although he could distinctly see the two

bodies, he could not actually figure out who and what the hell they were doing there at that hour of the day, when the sun was just above his head.

Watching the scene his restlessness and curiosity were doubled. Grabbing a twig within easy reach, he took aim and threw it across the river to the scene. His aim was successful and it did the trick. The two human beings, without trying to give time to each other, were almost at once on their feet. They came into full view but only for a split-second. All of a sudden one of the two, whom he recognized as a woman, headed down valley, crashing into the bushes. The other one, a man, simultaneously looking this way and that in a frightened manner, as if he had just murdered a man; straightening up the loin-clothes hanging loosely from the cane-belts around the waist, took the opposite way. Crashing into the bushes, he went up-valley, heedless of the trees and bushes across his way ready to endanger him. He crashed through, them like a blind pig would when chased away from one's garden. Then all Londari saw was the swaying of the bushes.

As Londari was not able to figure out exactly who the hell they were it would only have become a minor incident or perhaps a little more than a dream. However, he was lucky. He was able to catch a glimpse of the strip of possum skin with beautiful white furs which crowned Kandi's head.

Londari quickly filled up the pot with water and hurried up the hill. As he walked up the slope he was gripped with a sudden mixture of fear and excitement. When he reached level ground on the top of the hill he started to run, determined to break the news to his mother.

When he neared his house he heard three women chattering and sharing jokes. Of the three women he found that two were his haranges,<sup>1</sup> who were married to the neighbouring tribes, one to the nearest tribe to the north with which the Sambock tribe shared the tribal boundary. The other one was married to a man from the tribe beyond that of the former one. They had particularly come to greet and to give their best wishes

and so and so to the newly arrived visitor who was no longer a visitor, but an added member of the family. They had each brought an andapalu<sup>2</sup> as their present.

As Londari approached the entrance porch of the house, a sudden happiness seized him. He saw a heap of edible leaves, particularly fern leaves and a variety of vegetables. According to experience he knew immediately that a feast was soon to be held in the household. The fern leaves told him so.

In Enga tradition the 'tambu', a special kind of fern, has a symbolic meaning. It can be found in profusion in Savannah grasslands or in river banks in the midst of reeds. The use of the 'tambu' is commonly associated with "pig-killing". For example, if an individual is killing a pig and wishes to invite somebody he may pick up a tambu leave and fiddle with it. That is, in the presence of the individual or persons to be invited. Above all the 'tambu' is preferred as second to none among all other types of edible leaves that may be roasted with pork in a pig-killing.

The 'tambu', however, may not be used with any symbolic meanings in any forms of activities associated with live pigs, for example, in a traditional pig-exchange.

Londari put the pot on one side of the entrance porch, opposite to the side where the vegetables and greens were heaped. He went in and as he set his feet on the little aisel just in front of the fire place, separating the women's side from the men's side, he heard his mother saying:

"Lond! Meet your haranges."

No sooner had the words said than one of Londari's two haranges shot out two thin (but firm) arms from the women's side and grabbed him, encircling her arms around the waist. She hugged and kissed him.

"Come here, Aree!, that's not your only harange; said the other harange from across the rear end of the women's side.

Londari made an attempt to break loose from the former harange's strong grasp but was rather reluctant to go to the next harange.

"Come, Aree!" called the harange who had not yet hugged and kissed him.

"Go, Lond! Go to your Aree", Mendaiwan

said.

Londari stood still on the little aisle.

"Come! Come, Aree! Come and see what I have got in my bag. Quick!"

Londari hesitated but finally moved towards the harange calling him. When he was nearer she grabbed him and did exactly as the former harange had done. After a moment of hugging, embracing and kissing, Londari and his harange both searched the bag. After a moment of searching the women pulled out a parcel, the size of a man's fist times three. The wrapping was a roasted yokopari<sup>2</sup> leave tied around tightly with strips of roasted tanget leaves. Londari perhaps already guessed what was inside. His harange handed the parcel to him saying:

"Go some place else and help yourself."

Taking the parcel Londari dashed out, determined to go to his favourite yaoale<sup>1</sup> tree where he could sit and enjoy the content of the parcel. When he was outside he heard Mendaiwan saying:

"Lond! Don't be greedy! Share it with your mother!"

Londari halted and hesitated.

"She is joking. She had hers already. Go and help yourself", one of his haranges was saying

"She is lying!" said Mendaiwan. Don't you feel sorry for your mother?"

Londari still hesitated.

"Yakalumao!"<sup>2</sup> Mendaiwan snapped. "Tomorrow I'll be having my turn so you can have your turn now."

Londari rushed back into the house and offered the parcel to Mendaiwan. Mendaiwan, however, looked at Londari with a pair of loving eyes and said:

"Mono<sup>2</sup>, I was only joking. Now, eat it before somebody else comes."

Londari went to his favourite yaoale tree. He climbed up and seated himself on two sloppy branches running parallel. He unwrapped the parcel and the smell of pork filled the air. In the midst of roasted fern leaves was a huge piece of pork. He sat on the branches of the tree feasting himself till sundown.

"Where the hell is Kandí", inquired one of

Londari's aunts.

"I have no idea", replied Mendaiwan.

Londari cleared his throat and opened his mouth to tell them what he had seen on the western bank of the Pulimbi river but on second thoughts he closed his mouth again. Any child of his age would have excitedly blurted out the incident but he proved different. Instinct warned him again this.

As evening approached the fire had died down except for some glowing remains from wood that had burnt earlier. There was no split-wood ready for the forthcoming night.

Mendaiwan had experienced this during the first month of her married life. She had learnt to clear herself off from these kinds of domestic problems. Besides she was half a man and half what she actually was. In her teenage days she had experienced life the hard way in the jungle terrains of Maramuni. She had learnt to do almost anything a man could do. She had learnt to climb pandanus nut trees; operate pigs and possums; break and split wood; conduct hunting searches; handle bows and arrows; build fences, build emergency houses; dig drainage trenches; and many more. These were skills that the average Maramuni girl had to have before marriage. In such activities Mendaiwan was no match for the women folk of the entire Samboek tribe.

Realizing that the sun was sinking Mendaiwan gave her baby to one of her sisters-in-law and hurried outside, taking with her an axe she found on the men's side of the compartment that served as the dining and living room. She looked up a huge, strong log that stayed upright against a casuarina tree, one end planted to the ground. With a mighty push she let it fall on the ground. Very careful not to jump over the wood she stood on one side of the wood. Holding the axe high above her head she took aim and let the axe fall on one end of the log. There was a crack where the axe had fallen on one end of the log. She inserted a wedge into the crack and hit the head of the wedge with a heavy wedge-mallet. At each stroke the crack opened wider freeing the axe. Where the axe had been, another wedge was inserted and she started

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hitting the head with the wedge-mallet. This time the (wood) log split apart but only as far as the middle. Using axe and wedges, Mendaiwan expertly split up the log in two and then into bits and pieces.

"Londari!" called Mendaiwan.

"Yes!" answered Londari from inside.

"Come out and help me carry these pieces of wood into the house."

"Yes, I am coming."

They carried every bit and piece of wood and left them on the aisle, just in front of the fire place. Mendaiwan put some of the pieces across the fire place. She put the remaining pieces across two poles running parallel above the fire place. The ends of each of the poles were tied to two rafters from either side of the dining compartment. The rafters from either side met at the ridge-pole.

Mendaiwan cooked a late dinner of sweet potatoes. She served dinner in the absence of Kandi.

When darkness took dominion over the earth there was still no sign of Kandi. Where was he? Did he know what was going on in his house? No! He neither knew nor cared what the hell was going on in the house.

"Lond! Lond! Hey Lond!" called Mendaiwan.

"Grrr — rr! Grrr — rr! Haa — a!" grunted Londari.

"Lond! Wake up! C'ommon wake up!"

At last Londari woke up. He stood up, erected himself and stretched his body, ywaning. He rubbed his eyes and wiped his mouth, rubbing off the moist saliva. He went outside and ran down the yard. He ran further down the yard, then across to where there were grasses. On the grasses a butterfly was struggling to fly. Its wings were weak and heavy in the cold of the morning. Each time it made an attempt to fly it collapsed down.

Londari held up his loin-cloth fastened on to a small belt and urinated on top of the butterfly. The butterfly tried its best to avoid the liquid but Londari went after it, here and there, until the very last drop of urine was discharged. The butterfly laid motionless. Londari laughed to himself, thinking he had won the battle.

While Londari was still laughing the butterfly made a desperate attempt and shot up into the air. This time it did not collapse. It shot up into the air and flew away. What Londari and the butterfly did not know was the fact that Londari's hot urine had heated up the butterfly; thus, it renewed its strength.

"Lond!" Mendaiwan called.

"Yes!"

"Come! Run! Hurry up!"

Londari ran back to the house.

"Lond, please go and collect some target leaves. Collect as many as you can. Don't be slow. Okay?"

"Yes, mame," Londari said while hurrying away.

When Londari returned with the leaves, carrying as many as his arms could hold, he found the three women busy doing this and that. One of his aunts was busy collecting stones from the entrance porch while the other was peeling sweet potatoes and straightening up the vegetables and fern leaves. Mendaiwan was taking down the pieces of wood she had stored in the evening of the day before.

The baby was put in a bilum<sup>1</sup> and was left hanging on to one of the stakes encircling the yard.

Mendaiwan chopped down a young Lokai<sup>2</sup> free growing in the back yard. She cut the top off the tree and brought the stem back. She peeled the skin off the stem and put it across the fire. When the oily liquid was dried off the peeled stem she withdrew the stem from the fire.

One of Londari's haranges carried the leaves and greens and heaped them on the far end of the yard. She then spread out some strong yokopari-yokos<sup>3</sup> on the ground. On top of these she put some fresh yokopari leaves. On these she spread out some fern leaves and other edible leaves and vegetables.

Mendaiwan carried a banana stem from the rear yard and dropped it on the ground, an arm's length away from where her sister-in-law had spread out the leaves. She chopped it in the middle and placed the two halves in a parallel direction just beside the leaves. On top of the banana stems she spread out some

logs and pieces of wood which made the whole thing look like a dwarf platform. When she was satisfied she hurried away back to the house.

She returned back with one of the pigs the aunts had brought. She was dragging the pig, holding on to the pig-rope tied onto one of its fore-legs.

One of Londari's aunts threw some sweet potatoes in the space between the platform of pieces of wood and the heap of greens.

Mendaiwan dragged the pig towards the sweet potatoes. The pig, warned by instinct, grunted, but Mendaiwan at last succeeded in getting the pig to where the potatoes were. The pig, rather unwillingly, bite at the tubers.

Londari's brother started crying from within the bilum. One of the aunts pulled the bilum off from the stake and put it lightly on the ground. She opened the bilum and pulled the baby out. It was crying.

Mendaiwan went and got her peeled Lokai stem she had carefully rested against a target tree. She brought it towards the pig and standing along-side she hesitated for a moment. Then she raised the log high above her head taking careful aim. When she was satisfied with her aim she raised the log further up and closing her eyes for a split-second, brought it down. The log landed on the poor pig's snout heavily, causing immediate death.

The dying pig collapsed and fell on the heap of greens with vigorous involuntary movements. Then it laid still. A fountain emerged from the pig's snout. Black-red blood split and shot up through the nostrils.

Mendaiwan quickly ordered that the baby be brought to her. The sister-in-law holding the baby immediately responded. Taking the baby, Mendaiwan sat down, her knees firmly rooted to the ground. She brought the baby closer to the dead pig and forced it to smell the black-red blood still shooting up. Some of the blood split on the baby's chest.

According to beliefs this was the confirmation of the baby's entry into the world, in which it was to be given a name. Another belief associated with this practice is that the baby will, in the future, have easy

accessibility to pigs, in all stages of development into man-hood. It, however, is not very common around Enga. This practice is not necessarily important because it is costly. Only the fortunate ones may practise this practice.

When Mendaiwan was finished with the baby she held the baby up and declared:

"My son shall be called "Kembos".

She named her son Kembos to describe her unexpected marriage which fate alone had decided for her. She had never known her husband nor his place prior to her marriage. Many young man from her place had come begging for her hand in marriage but had refused, only to become the victim of Kandi's animal like behaviour.

The final preparation of the feast commenced. Water was spilled all over the pig's body. It was then dragged to the platform from which flames were already shooting up. More pieces of wood were added to the fire. When the hair on the pig's skin was burn't off Mendaiwan skillfully peeled off the outer skin. The two women joined in.

When at last they were satisfied, they dragged the pig off the fire and put it on some banana leaves, specially put aside for that purpose. Mendaiwan skillfully butchered it.

Londari cut off the two ears.

"Aree! Give me one", begged one of his haranges.

"No!" snarled Londari.

"Give her one", put in Mendaiwan.

Londari gave her one.

"From now on we will call each other "Kale", said Londari's harange taking the ear.

"Okay! I am Aree," Londari said

"I am Londari", said Londari's harange.

"Keke-lyoo, Kambu-lyoo!"<sup>2</sup> they both chorused.

"Kale!" called the woman.

"Yes!" answered Londari.

"Kale!" called Londari.

"Yes", answered the woman.

This is a practise which is very common in Enga tradition although the significance of it may sometimes be doubtful to a foreigner. This practice takes place between a couple who are emotionally attached to each other. It

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"Kale!"

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also takes place between in-laws who aunt address each other by the name. They address each other by the name of anything eatable which they must have eaten together.

In Londari's case he had sworn an oath with his aunt that in future he will address his aunt not by her name but by the word "Kale" and vice-versa, the aunt him because they had each eaten a Kale. This oath was to be kept for life under any circumstances.

When the pig was roasted and ready at last, the nearest neighbours were called in to join the feast. They were all given a piece of pork to take home to their families. At sunset they dispersed, each going to his or her house. The two aunts gave their final blessing and set off.

"Kale!" called one of the aunts.

"Yes!" Londari answered.

"Come! Let's go to my house."

Londari hesitated and then:

"No!"

"Why?"

"I don't want to leave Mama."

"Okay! Good-bye then."

"Good-bye!"

In early 1967 Mendaiwan brought Londari to Par Primary School to sit for the preliminary tests which, if he passed, would enable him to attend the school. He easily passed the test consisting of physical fitness and visual & mental capabilities. He was admitted into Standard one. The failures were told to undergo a preparatory class for one year before they were admitted into Standard One.

In those days Par Primary School was the only junior school available within Enga. It was capable of accommodating up to five hundred students, excluding the day students. Students from far and near attended the school. Many students who attended the school at that time were nearing puberty. Some were adults.

To secure the little ones from being bullied by the bigger students the Catholic nuns and brothers who ran the school set up very strict laws which, under any circumstances, all students were to obey. The little ones were fully secured from the bullies because the breaking of a single rule meant immediate

suspension or termination of a student.

Religious Education was part of the school's aims and objectives. Attendance of Sunday services was compulsory. To prove a student's Sunday Service attendance the teachers asked the students individually what was said on the sermons. Constant failure of Mass attendance resulted in the suspension or withdrawal of a student from the school.

In standard one Londari's teacher was a certain Sr. Singledelle, a German nun, who is now awaiting her death at the Goroka Sisters' Convent. Of all the pupils she favoured Londari most. With her help and encouragement she made Londari progress well. In the first half of his first year Londari topped his class.

He was filled with joy and contentment. Poor Londari! He never knew that in the advancing years bitterness, poverty, unhappiness, and so and so awaited him.

There was a certain widow who lived some three to four kilometers from Londari's home. The woman, whose husband had died without giving any children, remained loyal to her diseased husband by refusing all the "luck seekers" offering to become her second husband. She was attractive for a woman and was just in her early thirties.

Might she be the one Londari once saw on the Pulimbi river bank? To some of the villagers it was probable that Kandi had an affair with the woman. Gossips and rumours were spread in whispers. Mendaiwan probably had some knowledge on this affair but kept her mouth shut. Her silence was partly to avoid quarrels and partly because she never believed what other people told her lest she should be led astray by gossips and rumours.

The affair which was rumoured gradually became known to the general public and became the talking point of the village.

Now, there is a common Enga saying: "Fool is him who tries to avoid wet grasses and bushes when already out in the rain."

When his secrets were unveiled Kandi practically wanted to marry the woman. He looked for excuses and false witnesses to use against Mendaiwan, Londari's dear mother,

to formally divorce her but finding no reasonable excuses there was only one way through — to force the way through — to break open the sealed door.

One afternoon, after school, Londari returned home and found his parents quarelling. He started eating his sweet potatoes hungrily. the quarrels and arguments were already familiar with him. When he ate the roasted tubers the quarell went on.

"Woman! Tonight will be your last night here", boomed Kandi.

"What do you mean?" aksed a surprised Mendaiwan.

"What I mean is what I say."

"How can you say that?"

"Because you will not live to see another day break apart from tomorrow?"

"Do you mean it?"

"Absolutely!"

"Who then is taking my place?"

"Somebody very much like you."

"I have a right to know who that somebody is."

"Remember! You have a right to know the affairs of your brother but not mine."

"I see."

Mendaiwan was caught unawares by Kandi's last remark. She cried at the mention of his brother. She sat in silence for a while. Then:

"You will, err, cry someday."

"Cry for what!" Kandi demandingly asked, his voice becoming.

"By the way", Mendaiwan said ignoring Kandi's demanding question. "Can I guess who my successor is going to be?"

"Did I not tell you that you have a right to interfere in your brothers affairs but not in mine?"

"Which means your two sisters have a right to interfere in this affair?"

"Well, err - yes and no."

"They have a night, or moreover, an obligatory duty to pay part of the dowry; just like you would to your brother's bride, would you not?"

"That is quite true but . . ."

"They don't interfere in this affair, as if they we me, like what you are doing now."

"Then what . . ."

"Hey!!" Kandi cut her short. "Women, I am sick and tired of your stupid questions."

There was silence thereafter.

Kandi broke the silence by asking Londari to fetch water. Londari rejected because it was already past evening. He would not have gone anyway as it was always the case. He really hated his big-mouthed father who always felt big and important.

After what seemed to be an hour Mendaiwan said:

"My good man, please spare me a little of your time. Just spare a very little to me who have spared you so much."

"What for?" Kandi bellowed.

"I should like to ask you a question."

"Okay! But don't ask me any silly questions to allow you another chance to stay here, d'you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Well, go on."

"Since I might probably go back home tomorrow, perhaps never to return, what happens to my little boy?"

"Which boy?"

"My little Lond."

"He is my son! He remains my son! He stays under my absolute care so stop asking any more silly questions."

They slept arm in arm; Londari, Mendaiwan, and little Kembos, all huddled together. That was the last night Londari ever slept with his beloved mother and brother.

At that time the country was under Australian Colonial rule. The indigenous citizens took little or no part at all in local or district administration. The bulk of the people did not care anyway about who was who in the district and local administrations, they had no idea on who was the right person to consult in times of troubles and disputes. The only influential figures in those times tribes in the local government. They were the only ones who linked the villagers and the administrations. They settled disputes and heard court cases. the decisions made at court cases were very much associated with the traditional customs.

Mendaiwan brought her case to the

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councillor who was responsible for the Samboek tribe plus the other four outlying tribes; the tribe of Kalia, Laita, Depau, and Utupaka Iki. There was a large crowd of spectators.

"Silence!" the councillor's clear, authoritative voice rang out.

There was silence. The crowd gathered behind Mendaiwan. Some started whispering words of advice across to Mendaiwan. Not a single soul went to where kandi was. The layout of the crowd clearly indicated that Kandi had no supporters, not a single soul. Everybody knew he was faulty.

"Silence!" the councillor's voice rang out a second time.

"Mother!" he said to the plaintiff.

"Yes! My son."

"What have you against this man?"

"My son", Mendaiwan began. "I am from a far away place, probably never heard of nor seen by my Samboek elders here. I would not have married that pleasure seeking man over there if it weren't for fate. Fate alone had decided that I should marry him, so I did. I married him not because of love, nor of his wealth, nor of his physical build. It was too late when later I found that I have become his fourth wife after the three whom, either he chased away or have deserted him themselves because of his stupidity. Such a woman as I am, from a far away place, I needed love, real fraternal love but I never got it from him. He gave me neither love nor comfort. He never even spared a little of his time to me except, of course, anytime he needed please — that pig of a man. If I were some other woman I would have deserted him a long time ago. On many occasions I was tempted to desert him but have always decided against the temptations. It was only because of Londari, my dear son. Now, however, I am prepared to go. I have suffered enough being the wife of that brutal pig of a man. Last night he himself signed my pass-port.

"Now, my elders and sisters, please do not have any ill-feelings against me. Utterly lonely and nigh heart-broken I am inclined to go. I have already proved that I am a woman whose soul might be turned wrong side

outwards without discovering a blemish. That is all I have to say."

The crowd was gripped with sorrow. Some women, especially her nearest neighbours, cried.

"Silence!" the authoritative voice rang out once again.

"Defend yourself," he said pointing to the accused.

"Well", began Kandi, clearing his throat, "What she is saying is, of course, not true."

"Shut up! Stop lying!" the crowd boomed.

"Silence!" the authoritative voice rang out once more. "I don't want to hear any more of this shouting business. You may continue now but be honest."

"As I have said, what she had said was not quite true."

"Shut up! You stop lying! Young pig!" the crowd boomed again.

The tumultuous uproar of the crowd angered Kandi. In his anger he shouted:

"That stupid daughter of a leper can go! Who cares?"

"What did you say?" the authoritative voice asked.

"I said that that stupid women can go?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because she is a stupid pig."

"I think you are the one who is stupid."

Kandi hesitated. Then:

"Well, the point is, since she wishes to go, I grant her wish."

"But she says you have already signed her passport. Is that true?"

"Mr. Councillor! I am sick and tired of you and your questions. Send that damn woman away. I don't want her anymore."

This angered the councillor. He finally made his decision. with a firm and authoritative expression on his mind, he declared:

"Mother! I now declare that you are free to go. By the way, have you been paid any dowry?"

"Two lve pigs; one waa-gaam<sup>1</sup>; two parekaps<sup>2</sup>; and one mena saipa."<sup>3</sup>

"Okay, good! Now listen everybody. The dowries, I belived, are already in a saline pool soaking. We, the Sambeoks, will enjoy more

of the salt of the dead, soaked logs. In fact we have already enjoyed it. Look at Londari, for example, who will, in only a few years time, turn out to be a man bearing the name of Sambeok. Think of the soils she has tilled on Sambeok land. Think of the labour she has provided. For these reasons I declare that the dowries are in a dead pool.

"Now, for the children, well, it is quite hard to make a firm decision. I have handled similar cases before and have experienced that it is unwise to divide up children among parents or to give all children to one parent according to the nature of the case. Experience shows that a child officially belonging to one parent belongs to both in truth. It is the intellectual and emotional ownership that counts, not the official ownership. On this case I declare that the two children as well as the one in the womb, still to come out into the world, be it a male or a female, are all simultaneously Sambeoks and Maramunis."

"Mother!" he said looking in Mendaiwan's direction. "You must remember that the bulk of the Sambeok people pity you. Any time you feel like seeing Londari or perhaps if you have any problems you must remember that all Sambeok houses are yours. We are really sad to loose you but as fate had sent you here, so it is sending you back.

Mendaiwan did not leave immediately. She stay at around with neighbours for about a couple of weeks to see how Londari would challenge life.

One morning while Londari was in class having a spelling lesson somebody forced open the door and rushed in. It was Mendaiwan. She grabbeed him and hugged and kissed him with tears in her eyes.

The teacher, a certain Sr. Kundigundis, a German nun, and the class sat stunned in open-mouthed bewilderment. This was an uncommon sight, especially in a classroom situation.

When it was over and as Mendaiwan was leaving, Londari found that Kembos had been peeping in through the door which opened more than a crack. The last Londari heard of his brother was:

"Lond! Goodbye?"

Londari broke down and wept. How did Kembos, a small child, know that he was leaving, perhaps never to come back.

When Londari went home in the afternoon an extraordinary surprise awaited him. As he neared the entrance porch he heard the voice of a woman. He went in shouting.

"Mother!"

To his dismay he found that it was not Mendaiwan at all. In his mother's place sat the widow, Pindiam.

In front of his new wife Kandi really felt big and important.

"Londari, go and fetch water?"

"Nope! I am tired."

"Yo are here to obey orders!"

"Says who?"

"Somebody who never likes repeating things twice."

"Me neither!"

Kandi was angered. He slapped Londari on the face saying:

"What does the fourth Commandment say?"

"How much do you know about the Commandments? You know very well that you are not worthy to mention the Commandments?"

"Stop this Commandment business."

"I did not start it. You did it so you finish it off."

"In the name of my mother I command you to stop."

There was silence. Londari was served his dinner but did not eat. He felt a sudden loss. His beloved mother and brother were nowhere to be seen.

"Will I ever see them again?" he thought. "Perhaps yes. Perhaps no."

While he was repeatedly asking this questions Kandi and Pindiam were in a happy mood discussing the possibility of making a new garden.

Londari wondered how many times Kandi had conversed with Mendaiwan, particularly discussing the possibility of making a garden. Probably once or twice when she was only a young wife. He must have done it merely to win her heart.

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When Londari proceeded to Standard Five he proceeded to misfortunes, poverty and bitterness. He often went to school with an empty stomach, let alone bringing his lunch to school. He gradually became the talking point of his class.

The teacher really lacked teaching skills. He had replaced the former teacher, Sr. Kundigundis, who had then been appointed head-mistress of the school. The teacher was an untrained Standard Six drop-out who had been taken in as an assistant teacher because of staff shortage. He was promoted to a teacher — grade one only because of his Christian faith or perhaps his pretence. He was positioned in the Standard Four class which he was totally uneligible to teach. Now he was teaching the Standard Five class, a step beyond his uneligibility.

There was a complete downfall in Londari's studies. He, who sometimes topped his class, dropped right down to the bottom.

The teacher demoralized him, sometimes mocking him. From the very start he had a negative approach towards Londari and Londari him. When Londari came last in term break exams the teacher declared that Londari had topped the class, being the cleverest Standard Five pupil. The class laughed at these remarks.

The only method of maintaining discipline in class was the "black cane". When a simple mistake was made the teacher, with a wicked ugly smile, ordered the wrong-doer to get the "black cane" which, one end tied to a rope, hung down the middle of the black board. He ordered that it be brought to him. He smiled a wicked smile as the wrong-doer went back to his desk with the back of the palms bleeding.

The teachers brutality applied to Londari more than any soul else in the class. He had made a enemy of Londari and Londari of him. More than often the teacher was on the winning side. According to the class rules he had very good reasons to apply the power of the black cane. Some of the rules Londari broke were: cleanliness; going to school without any lunch; going to school without a

spade; and a few more. Had the teacher known Londari's justifications, would he have acted otherwise?

The fortunate ones in the class were those who came from the same tribe as that of the teacher. He favoured them. The teacher ignored the wrongs they did. Furthermore, the class council appointed by the teacher consisted of Neno<sup>1</sup> students. The ruling class comprised the teacher and students, all from the Neno tribe.

Adding to the already existing problems the class captain proved to be Londari's personal enemy. In the teacher's absence the class was under his control. He took the names of students who talked and played.

Londari tried his best not to make the simplest and the slightest movement, let alone talking or playing. To his horror, however, "Londari" always appeared to be the first name on the list when the teacher read out the names of the so called "law breakers."

Having ordered all the law breakers to go to the front the wicked teacher made his wicked cane taste flesh and blood unto the fullest.

Nearly every school day Londari went home with his eyes red and swollen from crying and with bleeding hands.

"Hey! Mendaiwan," called the voice of a woman. Mendaiwan looked up. She was a woman standing on the entrance porch of a garden house. Straining her eyes she did her utmost to identify the figure.

"Oh! Is that you?" She at last inquired doubtfully.

"Yes, it is me. Come and have something to eat."

Mendaiwan, with Kembos on her shoulders, proceeded up the slope. She was still doubtful about who the woman should be who had taken over the garden which was once her's.

"So you have come?" the woman asked offering Mendaiwan her hands.

"I have," Mendaiwan answered shaking the other's hands.

"For a short visit?"

"I am sorry but who might you be?"

"Don't you remember Kolaipwan?"

"Oh!!" Mendaiwan exclaimed grasping Kolaipwan on the shoulders, pulling her forward.

"Oh! That's a beautiful child. Come!" Kolaipwan said pulling Kembos forward.

Kembos resisted, his arms firmly encircled around Mendaiwan neck.

They went into the garden house. Mendaiwan and Kembos helped themselves with roasted kaukaus, sugar cane and some other foodstuff available. While eating Mendaiwan asked for the latest news.

"You may have heard of the old man's death?" asked Kolaipwan expecting a surprise.

"Yes, I have."

"What? Why did you not come for the funeral then?"

"Have you been to the place they call Wabag?"

"Where? Oh yes! Do you mean the place where roaring houses can travel around, occupied by the White man?"

"Not quite. I mean the place you have in your mind is true but the tale of travelling houses is not quite true?"

"What do you mean? Please tell me about it?"

"There is plenty of time for that. Now, first thing first. What were we talking about? Oh yes, I asked you whether you have been to Wabag. Have You?"

"No! Never!"

"Well, the fastest walker will take four days from here. The average walker may take six days?"

"So that was why you did not come for the funeral?"

"I would have come but I unfortunately got the news a year late."

"Well, to me your absence is, I believe, justified but I wouldn't know Kakale's views."

"You should know. He is your husband."

"Do you have a say in your own husband's affair?"

This question brought Mendaiwan back to Par. She thought of the inhuman brute who had been her husband. She then brought her mind back to Kolaipwan. She asked herself a series of questions:

"Does Kakale, my brother, treat his wife likewise? Are all men made of the same material? Have Kakale not been the 'women-hero' because of his gentleness and kindness?"

At sunset they set off home. On Kolaipwan's back, were two huge stringbags full of sweet potatoe tubers. They were to be fed to the many pigs she and her husband owned. On Mendaiwan's back was another bag, less heavier than one of Kolaipwan's, of which the contents were to be fed to human beings. When they reached home the huge axe-sawn timbers still barred the door.

The heavy timbers were pushed to one side of the entrance porch through the timber rails. They went inside.

Kolaipwan excused herself and went out to get some piglets she had left at the rear yard in the morning.

Mendaiwan and Kembos were alone. Mendaiwan started examining the house. It was a new building. A new building — yes — but precisely on the same site on which the house she herself was born had been.

A moment later Kembos and Mendaiwan heard the usual sound of wood against earth. That is, the sound created when wood is dropped to the ground from one's shoulders.

"Au . . . ii! Au . . . ii," Kembos repeated after Mendaiwan.

"Hey! Who's there!" yelled Kakale as he ran towards the entrance porch. He grabbed Kembos and looked inside. He saw her and heaped a sigh of relief.

"So you have come, girl?"

It is strictly against Enga tradition for a brother to address a sister using the title "woman". The title "woman" is only used to describe either one's wife or girlfriend. One may use this title also to describe or address his relatives' wives or girlfriends.

Just as Kakale was talking Kolaipwan entered.

"My dear woman," Kakale addressed Kolaipwan. "Meet your sister-in-law."

"It is me who have seen her first, not you. She seemed doubtful about me when I greeted her."

It was true Mendaiwan was doubtful. She had seen his face but where? The plain fact is,

Kolaipwan's girlfriends was at Wabag.

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Kolaipwan had been one of Kakale's many girlfriends. Kakale had married her while she was at Wabag.

"What prompted you to come?" Kakale said looking in his sister's direction.

"Well, I . . ." Mendaiwan hesitated.

As if reading her mind her brother said:

"Yes, we knew you would come sooner or later. News arrived here before you. We knew of your husbands harsh and inhuman treatment. But, since you have children — Oh! that reminds me, where's the big boy?"

"I left him. He is in school."

"Well, school is one good thing. When he grows up he will always come here, I know. Since you have children you may go back to him, I mean your husband."

Mendaiwan's heart sank.

"You may go back to your husband only if he comes here to claim you back. If he comes here I shall not forget to give him a good beating which shall perhaps prompt him to change his calibre."

"I doubt whether he will come."

"Well, that's his worry."

Kolaipwan went into the pig's compartment. Mendaiwan followed her hurriedly in. They fed the pigs with sweet potatoe tubers. They threw two handfuls of tubers to each pigroom. At the smell of the tubers the pigs yet to be fed grunted terribly. The aisle between either side of the house, separating the row of pig-rooms of either side, leading to the sleeping compartment, seemed to stretch itself, thus, the pigrooms seemed never to end. What surprised her was that there was no vacant pigrooms. Surely her brother had turned out a rich man. When the women had finished feeding the pigs they went back to the compartment that served as the living room.

"Kolaipwan!" her husband called.

"Yes?"

"Shall we not slaughter one pig in honour of my long-lost sister and her son?"

"There is no reason why we shouldn't."

But they waited till the next morning as it was already dusk.

The class captain who was about Londari's own size but a little older sometimes used his

powers against Londari to satisfy his personal needs.

One afternoon during an arithmetic lesson, a piece of paper, crumpled into the size of a marble, went flying towards Londari and landed on his desk. With curiosity Londari straightened out the crumpled paper. It was a letter. It read:

"Dear Londari,

"You know wat? I am your boss.

Tommorw I want you to bring sugar cane for me Ok. If you didn't bring it I can fight you Ok. You bring very good sugar cane for your boss, Ok. If you come nothing tomorrow you cry Ok. If I don't fight you I take your name to teacher and he can fight you Ok. Your boss will dring very good sugar cane tomorrow. Youmast bring it. Ok. I am your boss,

Jobs Peter Kungus."

12/4/1970."

Londari scanned through the lines but did not fully understand the message. He read it once again and yet a third time before he fully understood it. The class captain had used his influence to get something out of him. But where the hell would he get the sugar canes from?

Londari was trapped. Had his mother's departure meant a curse to him? Of all the boys in the class and in the entire school, why had nature picked on him? At school he had a teacher a class captain with whom he had learnt the values of bitterness, hatred, and shame. At home he had a father who treated him not like his own son but like an orphan he looked after. A sudden hatred filled every nerve of his body. Hatred? Hated who?

Londari went home full of thought. Despite the physical similarities he had to find the sugar canes. But where he find them? He sat on the Pulimbi river bank and thought. At last he reached the solution. There was only one way through to "steal."

At night he stole into Pupakai's garden. The garden bordered his house from Pupakai's. He stole two tall juicy sugar canes. The canes had a very soft skin with a mixture of green and yellow colours. The canes were

of a special type which only a few people grew and reared.

"Londari?" his class captain called the next day at recess.

"Yes?"

"Did you bring it?"

"What?"

"What did I tell you to bring yesterday?"

"Oh, yes, I brought them."

"Good! Where are they?"

"Underneath the floor of the classroom, just below the teachers table."

"Good ones."

"Go and fined out yourself."

At that precise moment a boy from Londari's own village appeared. He was a Standard VI pupil.

"What are you two talking about?" the intruder asked.

"Oh! nothing; Londari answered throwing a warning glance at Jos, the class captain.

Jos understood and left immediately leaving the two of them.

"Did I hear you telling your friend to find something under the classroom?"

"Oh, that? Well, we were talking about a soccer ball I had hidden underneath the classroom."

"Oh, yes! I see!"

The intruder left Londari to himself. He joined some of his class mates playing soccer in an unorganised game, virtually kicking the ball up into the air and sometimes kicking a ball deliberately at a player.

Londari underwent a feeling of guilt. He had been a thief. He had stolen something from his own relatives. What would have happened if he had asked Pupakai rather than stealing from him?

Why all these headaches anyway? To feed this son-of-a-bitch who claimed himself as his boss? How he hated the son-of-a-bitch and the wicked teacher. They would one day pay for all the shame, pains, hardships, and above all, the sufferings they caused on him. Yes! They certainly would! They would!

As Londari developed into boyhood he learnt that his mother had been the fourth victim of Kandis cunning tricks to conquer woman. He had divorced all of his three

former wives, the first two with a developing fruit each in their wombs while the third had been divorced with a child, a girl already born into his "would-have-been" family. Then it had been Mendaiwan's turn. Their marriage had not emerged from mutual love but from Kandi's greed.

At that time the health services available around that area was only at Yambu health centre. It was run by Catholic nuns and brothers. It was and is now only around fifteen minutes walk from Par Catholic mission.

People with physical in capabilities and with other sicknesses all came pouring in to Yambu for medical treatment. Mendaiwan had been one of them. She had not come for medical care and treatment, though. She had only brought along her aunt who was a leper. A couple of weeks after their arrival the old woman had died of pneumonia leaving Mendaiwan alone. The missionaries had conducted the little funeral and had buried the corpse with a word of prayer.

It was at this time that Kandi had gone to Yambu and had casted his greedy eyes over Mendaiwan. After several days of attempts and trials he had finally won her heart and confidence. Although the missionaries had assured Mendaiwan that they would bring her to her place, she had already made up her mind to remain back being Kandi's wife.

Now she was gone and Pindiam was in her place. Somebody, perhaps, it would be Pindiam's turn to go.

Londari hated his father for this. The more he thought of this, the more he hated him.

Mendaiwan's departure was a terrible blow to Londari. Utterly troubled and right heartbroken he made several attempts to run away from school and his hard-hearted father. However, to his dismay, he was captured eachtime he made an attempt.

One afternoon, while in an art and craft lesson outside the classroom, the teacher slapped him across the mouth for no reasons. He found his mouth bleeding. He as filled with such an anger that without realizing what he was doing he picked up the nearest stone. He threw it across the teacher with all

his strength.

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his strength. The stone flew straight across, crashing heavily into the teacher's right eye.

Everything that followed happened fast like leaves moving around in a whirl-wind. One moment he saw the teacher fall — the next moment he found himself running hard at full speed towards the Pulimbi river. The bigger boys of the class started running after him.

The incident caused great confusion and excitement. School children were crying and shouting at the top of their voices. Soon the whole school, in a mob, was running after Londari with wild shouts of excitement.

Londari ran as he never did before. He ran for his dear life. He ran down hill till he found himself crashing into the Pulimbi river. In the next moment he started running up hill. The pursuers were just nearing the Pulimbi river — teachers and pupils, all running hard, each aiming to be the first to overtake him.

The villagers were alerted and were exchanging shouts and cries from one side of the Pulimbi river and vice-versa.

Just as Londari neared his house, Pamben, the school's "One hundred meter" hero, overtook him. They were soon exchanging blows after blows at each other. The rest of the pursuers crowded around them as the two fighters both collapsed to the ground, clawing at each other. In the next instant Londari was separated from Pamben and was overpowered. He was one against the whole mob. He was bound hand and foot.

The bigger boys carried him. They headed back to Par. Londari only hoped the dream would soon be over.

"Unbind him", Londari heard Sr. Kundigundis, the head-mistress saying as he lay bound in front of her office.

He was freed of the vines tied around his arms and feet. For a split-second he heaved a sigh of relief as he felt a stream of fresh blood flowing through to his arms and feet.

"All of you, teachers and students, leave", the headmistress ordered.

The crowd dispersed.

"Come", she said entering her office.

Londari followed her in.

"Sit here," she said offering him a chair and

taking one herself.

The two sat opposite each other. They were bordered by a huge table, a little longer than it was wide. On the table, were papers, folders and books neatly arranged.

For a moment Londari forgot what he was brought in for. He sat his eyes wandering around the room. He admiringly glanced at the pictures that hung on the walls. On the front wall, left of him, right above the door, was a strip of golden cloth pinned on either ends. Written on it were the words: "Sainn Martin De Porres School, Par." Nailed to the rear wall on his right, was a portrait of Queen Elizabeth the 2nd.

For a second he looked at the headmistress and found that she was deep in thoughts. It seemed she was more understanding. He thought she was allowing him time to finish his study.

He began looking at the pictures again. He let his eyes wandering. At last his wandering eyes came to a sudden halt. His eyes fixedly started at a picture which interested him more than any others. It was a portrait of the Virgin Mary holding lovingly her son, the baby Jesus. The heads were both crowned with a golden, crimson arch containing the colours of the spectrum. The arch illuminated in all directions bright rays of colours in diversity. What interested him most was the baby's steady stare. He became a little frightened and began changing his position, twisting and bending his head forward, backward, to the left and to the right, to avoid the baby's eyes, but his attempts were all in vain.

"Who are they?" the headmistress asked.

"Holy Mary and Baby Jesus", answered.

There was complete silence in the room. the headmistress proceeded with her thinking and Londari with his studying of pictures.

After a long while the headmistress broke the silence.

"What is your name?"

"Londari."

"Thank you, Londari. Tomorrow, come straight here to my office."

"Yes, sister!"

"Now you may go home."

"Thank you, sister."

"By the way", she said as he rose to go.  
 "Yes, sister?"  
 "Bring you parents tomorrow."  
 "I have only one parent, sister."  
 "True?" she asked with a tone of surprise.  
 "Yes, sister."  
 "Which is it that you have, your father or mother?"  
 "My father?"  
 "Where is your mother now, dead?"  
 "No, sister, she went back to her place?"  
 "Why?"  
 "My father divorced her."  
 "When?"  
 "Sister, err . . . . . can you still remember an incident that took place last year in one of your spelling lessons in the Standard Four class you taught?"  
 "I do remember things well but this time, incidents such as . . . . .?"  
 "Such as, err . . . err . . . can you still remember a woman who?"  
 "Yes! Oh yes! I remember!" she blurted out the words as if they were computerised on her mouth. "So the woman was your mother and the little boy was you?"  
 "Yes, sister."  
 "It is a pity, you know, that I am getting old these days and am gradually loosing my memory. Besides, you know, there are hundreds of small children like you, in this school that I barely know who is who, for which reason, I ahve forgoteen you."  
 "Indeed, sister."  
 "Time to go now, Londari. Tomorrow, don't forget to bring your father here at eight o'clock, understand?"  
 "But sister, he is alway repellent," Londari said pleadingly. "If I ask him he will laugh at the request."  
 "Well, don't worry," she said with a tone of understanding. "Just see if you can persuade him, Okay?"  
 "Yes, sister."  
 "Good, now you may go home."  
 "Thank you, sister," he said rising up. "See you tomorrow."  
 "Okay! see you!"  
 When Londari was outside the office the sun was already sinking below the horizon of

the South Western alp that separated the Laae river and the Ambum river. Par school was on the northern half of the Ambum valley. Although it had been a hot day, Londari somewhat totally enjoyed the weak heat of the sinking sun.

He hurried hom. As he walked he recalled the incidents that took place during the day. When he thought of the way he had avenged his teacher, a sudden feeling of triumph and satisfaction filled every nerve in his body. At last he had taken revenge but what would be the outcome? He asked a series of questions himself.

"Would I be terminated from school? If so let the damn thing happen since I hate school anyway. Would I be given several weeks punishment, especially to carry one hundred stones a day from the pulimbi river up to the school? Would I be given a severe beating? Would I be sent to jail for hurting violently a teacher, causing the immediate loss of one of his eyes?"

The last thought penetrated into his heart and mind and took dominion over him. Some seconds ago he had been triumphant and victorious but now his triumph and victory over his teacher were transformed into fear.

When Londari neared the front yard of his house Kandi was sharpening some stakes on one side of the yard. Kandi eyed him for a second, then concentrated on his work.

Londari went past him, into the house, sat at the door post and threw a glance at the fire place, hoping to find something to eat. To his dismay, however, there was nothing. Sitting on the same place, he changed position, faced his father and sat watching him.

All the while Kandi gave his back to Londari and did his work without a single word nor a backward glance.

There was a tense moment of stillness ecept for the sound of steel against wood. Londari grew uneasy at the tenseness. Instinct warned him that some kind of trouble was brewing between father and son. He sat on, wondering what would follow the stillness.

At last Kandi broke the silence.

"Did I hear that my son's bravery is to such an extent that he can violate a teacher?" he

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Londari was caught unaware. He inwardly fought against his conscience over the answer he ought to have given between "yes" and "no."

"I thought I was speaking to some human beings around here," Kandi said still working.

Londari sat still, thinking.

"Londari!" shouted his father.

"Yes!"

"Is it true that you fought your teacher today?"

"Yes."

"I am very proud of you, indeed," Kandi said as carefully as he could "You have indeed proved yourself a man today, for which reason, I am very, very proud and happy indeed."

"Does he really mean what he is saying?" Londari asked himself still thinking.

"My son is not like the other village boys who are shy and incompetent to perform brave deeds."

When these words were said Londari was half convinced that Kandi was speaking the truth.

"Son!"

"Yes!" Londari answered proudly, convinced now.

"Why did you do it? I mean, what was the cause?"

"He slapped me across the face for no reasons."

"Oh! I see."

Londari realized that his father was just close by; the space between them was just about an arm's length. Londari was taken aback by surprise. He realized that while talking Kandi had been moving towards him.

"You said you fought your teacher?" Kandi said in a question-like tone now changed into anger.

Londari rose up, ready to flee but was too late.

"If you can fight your teacher, see if you can fight me," Kandi said with outstretched arms ready to grab Londari.

Londari sprang up to his feet and quickly looked this way and that. He then dashed towards Kandi, hoping to unbalance him;

thus, creating an escape route. To his utter dismay, however, he was caught like a mouse in a mouse snare. He was grasped on both sides of the neck. In the act of trying to free himself from Kandi's firm grasp, he lowered himself to the ground; thus, pulling the other's weighty body on top of him. They struggled on. At one precise point of time during the struggle he freed himself. He would have escaped had it not been for Pindiam, who, at that moment, came to her husband's aid. Wearied from the struggle he was helplessly overpowered and was quickly bound.

When he laid helpless Kandi started beating him severely. He got a beating such as he had never gotten in his life. The beatings he got from his teacher were only scratches compared with the one his father gave.

All the while Kandi was in this brutal act he was shouting and giving orders. Sometimes he was ordering Pindiam to bring him fresh sticks and vines<sup>1</sup> when the ones he was already using worn out.

Pindiam enjoyed every moment of the game. She was always alert, responding to her husband's orders immediately.

While in this brutal act, Kandi was shouting and barking all the time like a dog would, simultaneously barking and clowailing at a cuscus which had become its victim.

"Trying to bring trouble to me, eh?" he was shouting. "I fear the White man and everything in connection with him."

"I think he must have tried to take over the teacher and become the teacher himself," a woman's voice rang out with a giggle.

As the beating declined Londari lost his senses and consciousness. A numbness such as he had never experienced before seized every nerve of his body. Then, all of a sudden a dizziness swept over him. He inhaled a considerable amount of air — perhaps for the last time?

At last they met. He was indeed an extraordinary man. He was tall and well built for a man. The legs were huge and muscular. The feet were huge and the toes were pointing out. The calf muscles on the legs were so huge and muscular that Londari thought the whole Samboek tribe would have its fill, if a feast

was made from them. The arms too were huge and muscular. Londari admired the biceps which, when contracted, looked like "Ambum koe". The chest was broad and hairy. The face somewhat resembled that of Kandi. A straight short nose was running down between two burning brown eyes. The cheeks were well and clean-shavened.

All the while Londari was studying this remarkable man he was battling over his age. The physical characteristics revealed not the slightest hint with which he could judge this remarkable man's age. Every grain of hair was shaved off the head which added to his curiosity.

A pair of shorts, made of a colonial-type khaki material fitted him well. A short sleeve shirt, specially designed for his size, fitted him. On his feet were a pair of sandals.

"Young man," the stranger said.

"Yes?"

"What might your name be?"

"Londari. What might yours be?"

"Just call me, Kauane.<sup>2</sup> Might you spare me a few minutes of your precious journey?"

"Precious? Londari battled over what he meant by precious. Then:

"Yes! Why not?" said Londari giving out his right hand for a handshake.

Ignoring the hand Kauane suggested that they be seated and talk. (The reason for rejecting the handshake shall be revealed in the forth coming chapters hereafter). No sooner had Londari said yes than Kauane seated himself, cross-legged, on the lane, right on the spot he had been standing.

"This is a road," Londari said.

"Don't worry, young man", Kauane said. "We are not expecting anybody today nor tomorrow but the day after tomorrow — yes. At five o'clock in the morning, the day after tomorrow, we will be expecting somebody."

Londari was terrified at the way he spoke. As if reading his mind Kauane said:

"Don't worry, young man. Let's begin the talk. Now, young man, where did you come from?"

"From beyond yonder," Londari said printing the way he had come.

"Indeed! Who brought you here?"

"I came on my own accord."

"Indeed you have! For what purpose might you have come?"

"I know not."

"Eeh?" Kauane asked in a perplexed manner.

Londari's memory seemed to have escaped from him.

"I asked you a question, did I not?"

When asked this time Londari's memory returned as if by magic.

"Oh!" he said. "I escaped from Kandi who was brutalizing me."

"It is true, young man. If it weren't for me, young man, you would have come here for good, never, never to return back. This is, you know, a one way in. People who come here, this way, never return. Usually we know who will come at what hour of what day. In your case we found that there was an accident that prompted you to come this way. When you came I pitied you for you came at Panting and breathing heavily, Londari ran down the hill. All of a sudden he found that he was running along a lane. The lane, although narrow, was smooth and very straight. Stretching on either side of the lane, in linear, were trees that looked like the Mandi<sup>1</sup> tree. At the first glance Londari thought the trees were Mandi trees but a closer look proved otherwise — a totally different tree he never knew of.

Each tree was evenly spaced at intervals. The tops of the trees and the outstretching branches had been skillfully pruned away.

On the space between each tree were cultivated herbs. Flowers in a diversity of colours blossomed in profusion from the cultivated herbs.

As he walked on he noticed a natural perfection. The whiteness of the lane, the greenishness of the trees; the blooming of the flowers in profusion; and the spacing of trees and herbs at intervals, all equally contributed to a natural perfection — a beautiful pattern indeed. Who had been intelligent? Nature or man?

He walked on. The lane seemed endless. He neither knew his destination nor the reasons for his journey; not with standing, he

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pressed on.

Instinct warned him that he was travelling on foreign lands — praise be to instinct. No sooner had this warning entered his mind than he realized and confirmed that he was indeed travelling on foreign lands. This was proved against the geographical outlook.

He observed, with the greatest care and attention, the soils, geomorphology, vegetation, and the surroundings. On every aspect he found that something was faulty. The vegetation proved to be beyond his knowledge. The trees and plants were completely new to him; more over, not any one tree or plant bore any resemblances to any that he knew of. The geomorphology was uncomparatively different, somewhat amazing. Savannah grassland terrains stretched miles and miles to all of the four corners. the soils were of the sandy-loam type revealing a reddish-brown colour.

He accidentally looked up and when his eyes were focussed forward, what did he see? A muring form. Was it a human bieng? It seemed so. It was a mere speck on the horizon, the natural line at which the blue sky seemed to meet with the endless grassy terrains.

The speck gradually developed into it's original form. An emotional feeling, such as Londari had never experienced before, began to evolve within him. The feeling was indeed indescribable. It was neither of fear nor of excitement. He was in a dense situation, with a feeling warming him that he was just about to meet a person unseen and un-heard-of.

Such an early age . . . .

"But what . . .," Londari was interrupted.

"Listen, young man," Kauane said sarcastically. "I precisely know what happened, why you came and how you came . . . ."

"But who . . . .," again Londari was interrupted.

"Questions later, young man," Kauane said in an authoritative manner. "Now listen very carefully, okay?"

"Okay!" Londari assured him of no more interruptions.

"Good! As I have said, I pitied you for

your arrival here at such an early age. Your father owes me some appologies but I did not like the idea of weighing your father's wrongs against you. Why? Beside although you evolved from his seed I consider you as a completely different person. According to my moral understanding, you are not, in any circumstances, attached to your father's wrongs.

"When you came I was at first reluctant to act on your behalf but then pity seized me, so I did. I pleaded with my elders and serius for your safety and your safe return."

"Now, I hold a top level government office and am a very busy man around here. I had been allowed only three hours to meet you, talk to you, and send you home. Of those three hours I have only two hours left. I allow you those two hours so that you shall ask me all the questions floating around your mind. You may start now."

"Who are you?" Londari blurted out immediately. "Yes! I have been waiting for that, young man. You may have heard of me but because of your tenseness I shall answer you. I am the one from whose seed your father evolved, just like you from him.

Immediately, Londari understood but fear fled from him.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"We are in the land of the dead."

"Can't we both go home, you and I?"

"I can't do that because I am no longer one of your people."

"How did you know that I was coming?"

"Everybody who comes here permanently comes according to our hist. We precisely know who will come at what time. Just an hour before one's arrival we prepare a special dinner to welcome him. Very rarely we have unexpected visitors of whom some may go back after a court decision. We have an alarm system for unexpected visitors. When you came the alarm bell rang so that answers your question. However, young man, even before you came, I knew you would.

"How?" Londari asked with curiosity.

"Young man! If I want to, I can see the people in your place, which was once mine, as clearly as I can see you."

"How?"

"Here, young men. Have a look at this," he said handing him a looking glass.

Taking the looking-glass Londari looked into it and — Oh! What did he see? Like in a photograph he saw the peaceful looking, sleeping village of Par.

"Why is it night at Par while here, we are in broad daylight?"

"It is always like that, young man. When we have light here, you have darkness and vice-versa, when we are in darkness you have light. Remember, young man, you thought you fled from your father's brutality but you actually left your place at dusk but all of a sudden, when you arrived in our territory it was broad daylight. Can you remember that?"

"Ye - e s", Londari mumbled. "Can I have a look at my father now?"

"If need be, loosen the screw at the back of the looking glass and see what happens."

Londari did as Kauane bade him and when he looked in — oh — would you believe it? His heart jumped up to his throat and he would have dropped the looking glass had it not been for Kauane's ready hands.

Without touching Londari's hands he caught the glass and pressing it into Londari's hands, said:

"Be firm, young man."

Londari looked in and saw Kandi, some village, and three of his best friend from the village crowded in a room. On the rear end of the room was Doctor Leo Wolf, the young German Missionary who had volunteered to direct the health centre. He was repeatedly looking down on a bed on which was a body that looked more like a corpse than it was alive. Above the head of the body lying on the bed, were two oxygen flasks from which a pair of cords were plugged to his nose. The body seemed like that of his own.

"I don't understand the meaning of all this."

"Don't worry, young man, you will understand it in an hour from now."

"Can I have a look at my mother?" Londari asked eagerly.

"No," Kauane answered. "She is now in a different territory. It is beyond my power and

jurisdiction to interfere with the affairs of the territory your mother now belongs. However, if need be, I must have to consult my counterpart of that territory."

"Where is the person you call your counterpart? Can I have a look at home?"

"It takes three days from here. If you remain here for three days you will never return home for by then the maing ate will already have closed. Remember, it is only a one way in."

"Might there be any other possibilities?"

"We could use my telephone to contact my counterpart but unfortunately it is too risky. In order to reach my office we have to pass through three highly secured gates. One of our fundamental laws, namely Section Eighteen, Verse One, "(a)", of the constitution states: "that an individual, regardless of sex, age, status, and derivation, who from the outside world, accidentally or deliberately, with or without the knowledge of the constitution, passes through the three "One-way-in" gates will already have declared himself a citizen of the territory. Under no circumstances will this declaration, by way of trade, bribery, appeal, et-cetera, be renewed!!

"Eee-e Tak-at-ae!" Londari exclaimed. "How did you come to . . ."

"Young man", Kauane interrupted. "Why do you want to see your mother?"

"Because I have not seen her since . . ."

"Yes! I understand", Kauane interrupted again. "I do not wish to inform you of the latest news I received from my counterpart during my last encounter with him."

"Please! Why?"

"I am inclined not to tell you lest you return home, the saddest man alive."

"Please, please tell me."

"No! Never!"

"I shall not return home unless I hear of my mother!"

"Okay then! Young man, according to my counterpart your mother's name appeared on his latest list. She will arrive here eight years from now. To be precise, eight years from now is, a-a-a, what is the date today?"

"Sorry, I just can't remember it."

"Then I do — yes — today is the 1st of

November, wait — yes first of November there are three years and a

"Eight years a-a-a- wait! should end No! The 4th days. That backward from to the day counterpart. us backward Therefore fourteen days 21st of October

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November, yes. That means, a — a — a — wait — yes — the date today is, the, aa-aa first of November, Nineteen Seventy. Eee-a-a- there are three hundred and sixty five days in a year and a-a- three-six-six in a leap year.

"Eight years from now should end on the a-a-a- wait! Oh yes! Eight years from now should end on the 4th of November, 1978. No! The 4th of November minus fourteen days. That is to count for the seven days backward from today which would bring us to the day of my encounter with my counterpart. The remaining seven days takes us backward to the day the list appeared. Therefore the 4th of November minus fourteen days is the — what? — a-a- yes! the 21st of October, 1978.

"So! Young man, your mother's arrival is due on the 19th of October, 1978."

"How did you achieve all these?" Londari asked stunned. "I mean your public office, your mathematical understanding, your understanding of your laws, and the like?"

"That, I will not tell you, in fact, it is strictly forbidden. I am supposed not to tell anybody, not even my son Kandi."

"Young man," Kauane said. "An hour from now it will be dawn in your place. In this remaining hour you may ask the questions that are still encircling your mind. You may ask me any questions on the problems you may have in your life as a student."

"Yes, that reminds me," Londari said. "I don't understand multiplications, particularly the 'Times Table.'"

"How often do you eat kaukau?"

"Everyday."

"Do you find it hard to eat kaukau?"

"No! Why?"

"Because multiplication is as easy as eating a piece of kaukau."

"How can you say that?"

"Well, working out multiplication problems is, your know, very easy. In my opinion, your problem is, the lack of recognition of the mechanism involved in the problems. Your problem can be equally compared with a driver controlling the steering wheel and the gear level. What I am saying is, it is very important to know the

mechanism rather than battling against nature to memorize the tables."

"What is the mechanism, then?"

"Well, let me explain it. Multiplication is a-a-a-, by the way, you choose a table so that we can work on it."

"Let's work on the nine's table because it is my deadliest enemy."

"Okay, good. Multiplication is merely a process of procreation. It is what many of our Mathematicians here call the process of continuous addition. For example, using the theory that multiplication is a continuous addition, nine times nine is in other words, nine plus nine plus nine plus nine plus nine plus nine plus nine plus nine plus nine plus nine. Can you get me?"

"Not really."

"Well, I shall think of a better explanation still. Ah-a-this time. I shall demonstrate it. Let's collect some stones first. Let's collect as many as we can."

There was a heap of stones of which each was the size of a marble between them.

"Now," began Kauane. "You may assume that nine times nine is in other words nine groups, each with nine pigs or dogs or cats or stones or name it. In this case we shall make nine groups with nine stones each. When I group the stones you count them. Any questions before we start?"

"No."

"Good. Let's begin. By the way, what is the answer for nine times nine?"

"Nine times nine is a-a-a," Londari battled over the answer.

"Before we proceed with the demonstration we need to know the answer. Can you try it? If you are unsure with the answer you may make a wild guess."

"Okay! I'll try it. Nine times nine is a-a-a-nine, eighteen; twenty-seven; thirty-six; forty five; fifty — ?" Londari was lost. He battled over it again. At last, after more than five minutes of tough thinking he came up with the answer.

Nine times nine equals eighty-one, he said with a smile.

"Good! Thank you, young man. Now, let's begin. As I group the stones you do the

counting."

"One!" began Londari as Kauane put the first stone in the first group. "Two!, Three!, Three!, Four!, Five!, Six!, Seven, Eight!, Nine!"

They proceeded with the second group; the third, fourth, and so on. When they were finished there were nine groups with nine stones each.

"So far, so good!" Kauane exclaimed. "Now, what was the answer for nine times nine again?"

"Eighty-one!"

"Good! Now let's count all the stones in each group together and see what happens. Here we go!" Kauane exclaimed.

"One!" they chorused together while Kauane cleared off the first stone from the first group. "Two, Three, four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine."

The first group was cleared off the universal group of stones. They then proceeded with the second group and on to the third and finally they were on the last group.

"Seventy-three!, —————!, Eighty-one!"

"Kanaui!" Londari roared with laughter as the last stone was counted off from the last group. "It's wonderful!"

"You may apply this method to any other problems", Kauane said. "Are you satisfied?"

"Yes! but I still have difficulties in long problems. For example, One thousand, two hundred, and twenty-three times three."

"Well, in this case you need to know and memorize yet another mechanism."

"What is it, then? Please tell me!"

"It is the same mechanism I showed you but when dealing with long problems you need to break them up into smaller systematic parts first. This process is called "Separate Multiplication."

"Ee-tale-tale," Londari yelled.

"no, no, don't worry. You don't necessary need to know the name of the method. It is the mechanism that counts, not the name of the process. Let's begin. Have we got ink and paper?"

"No." Londari said, scratching his head.

"Wait," Kau<sup>2</sup> said searching his shirt pockets.

He produced a ball pen and a thick, fifteen centimetre notobook.

"I never use my notebook for unnecessary purposes but since there are no alternatives we shall use it. We shall begin now. Can you repeat your problem again? I mean the one you called out as an example of long multiplication problems."

"Oh that? I think I just forgot it."

"Well, you may think of another one instead."

"Okay! Let's try two thousand, two hundred and twenty-two multiplied by five."

"Good. Now, before we go on with the process of separate multiplication we need to know the answer first," Kauane said pressing the nib of the ball pen onto a clean, white page of the notebook.

They worked out the problem together and got the answer.

"Now, what is the answer then," Kauane asked holding the note book closer to Londari.

"Eleven thousand, one hundred and ten."

"So far, so good! Now we shall start on the process of separate multiplication. How many thousands are there in the problem?"

"What do you mean?"

"What I mean is, what I say. How many one thousand might there be in Two thousand, Two hundred and Twenty-two?"

"Oh, that? There are two."

"Good! Thank you! How many hundreds?"

"Two!"

"Good! How many tens?"

"Two!"

"Good! How many units?"

"Two!"

"Good! Now, this is how you do separate multiplication: Two thousand plus how many hundreds. . . ."

"Two!" Londari said with a smile.

"Good! Two thousand two hundred plus how many tens?"

"Two!"

"Good! Two thousand plus two hundred plus twenty plus how many units."

"Two!"

"Very good! be multiplied

"Five!"

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"Two!"

"Very good! Each of this numbers should be multiplied by . . . ?"

"Five!"

"Very good!"

Kauane wrote the method down which looked something like this:

$$\begin{array}{r} 2000 = 200 = 20 = 2 \\ \times \qquad \qquad \qquad 5 \end{array}$$

"Now, let's get going; Kauane said. "Five times two-?"

"Ten!"

"Good! Remember that in this separate multiplication business there should be no "carrying" business. Just bring down the plus sign — like this.

He brought down the plus sign and put it just before the figure ten.

"Five times twenty ——— ?" Kauane paused for Londari's answer.

"One hundred!"

"Good! Five times two hundred ——— ?"

"One thousand!"

"Good! Five times two thousand ——— ?"

"One thousand. Ah no! Ten thousand!"

When the answers were put it looked something like:

$$\begin{array}{r} 2000 = 200 = 20 = 2 \\ \times \qquad \qquad \qquad 5 \end{array}$$

10,000 = 1,000 = 100 = 10 "Now, let's add them together", Kauane said. "Ten thousand plus one thousand equals . . . ?"

"Eleven, thousand!"

"Eleven thousand plus one hundred . . . ?"

"Eleven thousand one hundred!"

"Plus ten . . . . . ?"

"Eleven thousand one hundred and ten."

"What was our answer before?"

"Eleven thousand, one hundred and ten?"

"Any comments?"

"Wonderful! Terrific! Extremely wonderful!"

Questions flared up in Londari's mind in hundreds. He developed a big interest in this remarkable man. A natural teacher — a born teacher, indeed. "If only he were my teacher," Londari thought.

As if guessing his thoughts said, "Yes, son! It is indeed a pity that your teachers are insolent, contemptuous, and ineffective. They don't understand the principles of teaching and learning — the process of passing information from one human mind to another. Anyway, son, this is a very broad subject which is beyond your understanding so I shall stop here; besides, we are running out of time. You only have ten minutes so you may ask your last questions.

"A while ago," Londari began, "you said somebody will come here the day after tomorrow at a-a- what time did you say?"

"Five o'clock."

"Oh, yes, five o'clock! Who then might it be?"

"It is somebody from yor own class but certainly not a Samboek."

"I should like to know the name since it is apupil from within my own class."

"Find out yourself. It is only a day from today."

"How do you know he is coming?"

"It is my duty to know who is coming and at what time. Son! I think it is time we part, you to your place and me to my office. I have gone far beyond the time allocated to me by my superiors. Okay?"

Londari nodded.

"Good! Now, let us part. No! There is one important thing I forgot to ask you. Will you do me a favour, please?"

"Why not?"

"Good! First thing, please pass my greetings to my son, will you?"

"Sure! Why not?"

"Good! Second thing, please tell my son that he must apologize to me for the wrongs he did to me. He must do this in the act of killing the only pig he has an offering to me; consequently, I shall cast away the spell I laid over him, which he is unaware of.

Londari battled over the meaning.

As if reading his mind, Kauane said, "Young man, it is indeed a long story which I am inclined not to tell you about. However, young man, I should like to let you know of the fact that for some wrongs Kandi had done to me, when I was just about to come and

settle here permanently, I have, in my anger, entangled him under a curse which is precisely the motive for his stupidity."

Kauane paused for a moment. Then:

"Young man, tell him that I have decided to free him from the curse in honour of my encounter with my grandson. Tell him that in the midst of my happiness at seeing my grandson I have thus acted."

Kauane paused again and then asked, "Son, do you know what you are going to tell him or do you need more explanation?"

"I distinctly know what I am going to tell him but I have got a question."

"Yes?"

"I wish to describe you to him lest he might think I am only kidding. I mean, when I tell him of my encounter with you and when I forward your request to him."

"Oh! well, if he cannot be convinced and thus remains stubborn tell him about this," he said in the act of giving Londari his back and pulling down the back of the turned-over neck band of his Khaki Shirt, revealing a huge black mole in the centre of the back of his neck.

Londari nodded.

"One more thing, son," Kauane said looking at Londari full in the face. "I wish you a new life full of happiness. I shall do everything that lies under my power to make your troubles and desperation flee from you."

"Thank you very much!"

"Good! The last and important thing I am going to give you is an advice. Since your future is neither foggy nor cloudy, the advice I give to you is, "Let trouble seek you but do not seek it, for if you seek trouble you will easily find it but if otherwise, you will be like a yaoale yoko<sup>1</sup> lost in a Kunai-<sup>2</sup>stack; thus, you shall be safe."

"Thank you very much!" Londari exclaimed.

"Good! It is time now so young man, let us part."

No sooner had Kauane said the words, "let us part" than Londari stirred and opened his eyes, firmly rooting his elbows on to the soft foam rubber on which he had been resting (was he resting?) he made an attempt to rise

up but collapsed, back downwards. He made a second attempt but collapsed again. The third desperate attempt proved successful. He erected himself upright and sat on the bed.

He immediately realized that two cords were plugged onto either of his nostrils. He gently and carefully pulled the oxygen plugs and put them behind him. He looked around the room. The room was lighted with a fluorescent lamp hanging down from above the ceiling.

Londari battled over a series of questions.

"Where am I? How did I come here? Who actually brought me here? When? Why?"

He then battled over whether it was day or night. Just as he was battling over this question, nature helped him. A tinulipi<sup>1</sup> outside his room played its daily role as morning herald, announcing that dawn was breaking.

A side door opened a crack, then a bit wider. A head peeped out. It was that of Doctor Wolf. He opened the door fully and entered the room. He noiselessly closed the door again. He then went straight to Londari and for a moment, stood erect and tall beside the bed, looking down at Londari. He pressed his hands against Londari's chest. He expertly ran his hands up and around Londari's neck, then gently down the backbone aisle and around the waist. Withdrawing his hands he asked Londari as gently as he could:

"Do you feel all right?"

"Yes," Londari answered. "But, Sir, where am I?"

"You are in Yambu hospital."

"Eee-Takataee! What? When did I come? Who brought me here? Why?" Londari blurted out a series of questions at one go.

"Take it easy, boy!" Doctor Wolf said with a tone of warning. "Your blood pressure is not perfectly normal yet. You will have enough time later to ask these questions. Now, please lay down and sleep!"

Londari did as he was bidden. With the help of Doctor Wolf, he pulled a blanket over his body which fortified him against the cold of the morning.

A satisfied Doctor Wolf strode out through the side door. About an hour later he

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Londi

returned with a plate on either of his hands. On one of the plates were some poached eggs. Sliced toast piled high on the other. Doctor Wolf put both plates on a stool, wide enough to serve as a single-man dinning table. He moved the stool closer to Londari's bed. He quickly strode out again and returned with a big cup of tea.

"Eat!" Doctor Wolf said in a rather commanding voice.

Londari hesitated. He was shy in the Doctor's presence.

Being aware of this, Doctor Wolf got two slices of bread and pressing them together, inserted a poached egg. He gave it to Londari and moved the stool closer to the bed, allowing Londari to have easy access to the cup of tea and the rest of the toast and poached eggs.

"You will stay here for the whole of today because you are not in a perfect condition yet," Doctor Wolf said "I will perhaps release you tomorrow."

Londari nodded and proceeded on with breakfast. He totally enjoyed the breakfast. It was perhaps Londari's first time ever to taste poached eggs moving.

"You have indeed been the most unusual patient I have ever had nor have heard of," Doctor Wolf said more to himself than to Londari. "I just can't believe it. I just can not!"

At last they reached Par and Doctor Wolf brought the car to a halt. He opened the door for Londari and Londari jumped out.

"Take the parcel with you," Doctor Wolf said. "It is yours. If you need something, just come up to Yambu and see me."

"Thank you very much, Doctor Wolf!"

"You are welcome."

On that precise moment Father Henry, the German parish priest approached them. He conversed with Doctor Wolf in an excited but serious tone.

Somewhere in the middle of their conversation Doctor Wolf told Londari to go and joined the school which, by that time, was already assembled.

Londari thanked him and left.

Londari hurried straight to his classroom.

He carefully put his parcel on his desk. He then dashed out immediately and joined his class in the morning assembly.

"Jesus died for all the children, all the children of this world . . . !" began Sister Kundigundis.

The school boomed.

"Stop! Stop!" Sister Kundigundis. "You are singing like old women weiling in a funeral. Who can give us the right note for the morning hymn? Can any body?"

Nobody dared put his hands up. Everybody looked down.

"Okay. After me! Jesus died for all the children, all the children of this world — two! three!"

The school boomed after Sister Kundigundis. The time the song was bettered.

"Good!" the headmistress shouted. "I have several important announcements to make. I want everybody to listen very carefully."

There was immediate silence.

"Firstly, I am very, very sorry indeed to announce that we have unfortunately lost one of our pupils. He has currently been a fifth grader. He belongs to the tribe of Neno. I believe many of you must have seen him around the school."

The school stood still, aghast of the news.

"He is known to be a nice boy with pleasant manners but today the Good Lord has called him back. He had fallen off a log which serves as a bridge across the Ambum river. His name is Jos Peter Kungus."

The news was totally unbelievable to Londari. Although at earlier times he had been looking forward to the day he would avenge Jos for imoderately exercising his powers as class captain against him, he was gripped must see him. When I am definitely sure that he is perfectly normal I shall release him, probably tomorrow."

This time it was one of Londari's trusted play-mates who interpreted Doctor Wolf's words.

The others nodded and left. Wasowan looked back behind her shoulders and saw Londari and Doctor Wolf disappearing into the clinical compartment of the hospital.

In the next morning Doctor Wolf made his

final examination on Londari. He carefully checked his blood pressure and temperature. He made a thorough check-up on physical incapacities against all the senses. He then asked some formal questions, all of which Londari answered with a "yes". He then asked some psychological questions. At last Doctor Wolf heaped a sigh of relief.

"Now that I am absolutely sure that you are your normal self again. I shall release you," Doctor Wolf said.

"Thank you, but err-r-, excuse me Doctor Wolf."

"Yes?"

Yesterday morning you promised me an explanation of how and who brought me here and when. If you don't mind, please, tell me before I leave.

"Yes, young man," Doctor Wolf said thoughtfully. "I am sorry but at this stage I am disinclined to tell you. Would you prepare some other times later?"

"Yes, Doctor Wolf. If it is your wish it shall be granted."

"It is my wish but my disinclination is for your benefit as you will see sometimes later."

"Thank you, Doctor Wolf."

"You are welcome. I will give you a lift to Par."

They went outside to a waiting car. Doctor Wolf opened the door of the driver's side and seated himself. He then opened the other door from inside and Londari jumped in. He started the engine and the engine roared into life. Recalling something he had forgotten, he immediately stopped the engine.

"Just wait", Doctor Wolf said while opening the door and jumped out. "I just forgot something."

He returned a couple of minutes later with a huge parcel. Opening the door, he put the parcel beside Londari and seated himself. In a few seconds the car was.

At noon Doctor Wolf entered the emergency room where Londari was under careful supervision and treatment. He gently touched Londari on the knee and immediately Londari woke up.

"Do you feel all right?"

"Yes! Of course, I do!"

"There are some people outside who want to meet you. Are you prepared to meet them?"

"Who are they? My father and some relatives?"

"Your father is one of them."

Doctor Wolf led Londari to the main door. They walked along a corridor and into a clinical compartment. In a few seconds they were out on the verandah where a group of excited people was waiting.

In contrast to the excitement shown by the faces of the group there was one peculiar face. It revealed neither excitement nor surprise. It was an ugly face that distinctly revealed shame, guilt, and fear. Afflicted with shame and fear he avoided Londari's eyes and looked away and then down to the floor. He stood still, his eyes fixed to the floor, as if wishing the dream would soon be over.

There was another person within the group which attracted Londari's attention. It showed a face full of excitement and hope. Of all the persons in the group this person was completely an unexpected person. She eyed Londari in a peculiar manner but then looked away. It was Wasowan, a girl, a little younger than Londari. She shared Londari's class in the fifth grade. She belonged to the neighbouring tribe of Laita.

The others present were: his two aunts, Yamarak and Korakan, Londari's best and trusted playmates, both from the Sambeok tribe; a middle aged woman whom Londari guessed as Wasowan's mother; and a few other men and women of the Sambeok tribe, including Pupakai, Londari's uncle.

"Yongamao!! Mame," the woman who was supposedly Wasowan's mother said, offering her hands to Londari.

"Yongamao!" replied Londari, shaking the hands.

"I shall want him back in an hour from now. When I come back the hour will have passed," Doctor Wolf told the group through Londari who acted as an interpreter.

The group nodded and Doctor Wolf left.

Londari shook hands with everybody except the man with the ugly, terror-stricken face and the girl called Wasowan.

The man stood  
When Londari  
Wasowan she  
rejected the offer  
why but all the  
symbolic meaning  
hand-shake.

"We heard  
I hope you are  
of Wasowan."

"I am quite"

"Have sorrow  
giving Londari  
equally cut at  
ice-cold.

"Than you  
accepting them"

Londari of  
had some hint  
and impurities

They all sat  
between the  
and one of his  
recent happenings

"Since this  
of this school  
Church service  
Any relatives  
attend his funeral  
announcement"

"Secondly,  
the school  
the talking point  
very rare case  
teacher to look  
Mambisanda  
hospital office  
regain his sight  
perhaps.

"I have experienced  
positive decision  
punishment. I  
and co-operate  
students. Many  
neglected my  
teachers and  
desecration of  
who is not within  
school community.

The man stood still as if nailed to the floor.

When Londari offered his hands to Wasowan she looked away with a giggle and rejected the offered hands. Londari wondered why but all the others laughed knowing the symbolic meaning of a girl refusing a hand-shake.

"We heard that you were sick so we came. I hope you are better?" the supposedly mother of Wasowan asked.

"I am quite all right," Londari said.

"Have some of these," the woman said, giving Londari some sugar cane cutlets, equally cut at intervals. They were fresh and ice-cold.

"Than you, mame!" Londari said, eagerly accepting them.

Londari offered some to those present and had some himself throwing the chewed husks and impurities into a spread-out bilum.

They all sat down and talked. Londari sat between the supposedly mother of Wasowan and one of his aunts. They talked about the recent happenings and many other issues.

"Since this is a peculiar case where a pupil of this school has died we shall all attend a Church service to commemorate his death. Any relatives or anybody else who wishes to attend his funeral may go after I finish the announcement.

"Secondly, an incident that had occurred in the school a couple of days ago has become the talking point of the school. It has been a very rare case; in fact the first time, for a teacher to lose one of his eyes. He is now at Mambisanda hospital. According to the hospital officials and authorities, he might regain his sight in a couple of months, perhaps.

"I have encouraged teachers to exercise positive discipline rather than corporal punishment. I have asked for mutual respect and co-operation between teachers and students. Many of you, however, have neglected my advice. I must warn you, teachers and students, that it is within the discretion of my school to get rid of anyone who is not worthy to be a member of this school community, especially a Christian community.

"In his particular incident that have occurred, I exactly know who, of the two involved, has been wrong. I cannot tell you who, but of the two involved. I have constantly warned one against something I knew would result in the case we all know now. Although I could make a formal decision on this case, I shall leave the case to the School's Board of Governors.

"Now, teachers and students, I urge each and everyone of you to co-operate with each other so that the wound shall be healed. Let us all make our school a decent and prosperous community."

"Thirdly, I would like to see Londari. Kandi immediately after the Church Service.

"Fourthly, I don't want anybody to sneak away after the Church service. Classes will resume immediately after the service.

"Finally, I want everybody to go to the church when I dismiss you. For those of you who are intending to attend the funeral, you may do so but first you must write down your names on a piece of paper and give them either to me or your class teachers.

"Now, everybody! Dismiss!"

After the Church service Londari went straight to Sister Kundigundis' office. He waited on the verandah as the headmistress was not in yet. While he was waiting a little girl hesitantly walked towards him. When she was near enough she threw a neatly folded piece of paper towards him and immediately dashed away.

Londari took the folded piece of paper and unfolded it. It was a short letter addressed to him. It read:

"Dear Londari,

I hope you are fine and well. I would like to ask you if you could come to my house with some of your Samboek boys. I will gather some Laita girls for your Somboek boys. My mother will be very glad to see you because she said I must bring you home today. After school I will be walking very slowly with the other Laita girls so that you will catch up with us. Then we will all go home together. Please don't let anybody see this letter. Also, please say "yes."

Wasowan.

"Yes! Good afternoon, Londari," said the voice of Sister Kundigundis.

Londari stood in open-mouthed bewilderment, unable even to reply her greeting. He crumbled the letter in his hands and pocketed it.

"Come in, Londari," the headmistress said while opening the office door.

Londari followed her in and set on the chair opposite her, the one on which he had seated himself a couple of days earlier.

"I only wanted to let you know of the fact that I have shifted you to the other class, standard Five 'B'."

"Thank you very much, sister."

"Now, for the trouble between you and your teacher, I cannot make a decision. When the teacher is released from the hospital, the School's Board of Governors will hear your case. I am pretty sure that the Board will make a formal decision in favour of you. Please, Londari, beware of bad companions. Avoid any further troubles."

"Thank you very much, sister."

"You are welcome. You may go now."

As soon as Londari was outside, he went straight to the shade of a nearby tree. He fished out the letter from his pocket and read it again. He battled over the answer and at last he declined to the request.

When the one o'clock bell rang he went to his classroom and got his parcel and book bag. He went to the Standard Five "B" class and was welcomed.

After school he opened his parcel and to his utter joy he found a number of items he badly needed. There were seven pairs of trousers, seven shirts, a towel, a comb, a dictionary, some packets of soap, and a yellow envelope. He opened the envelope and the content further added to his joy. It was a ten dollar note on which a piece of paper was stapled. On the piece of paper there was something written. It read:

"Use this money only on soap but not on sweets."

"Certainly, Doctor Wolf is generous; Londari thought."

At home Londari told Kandi of his long dream. He assumed it was a long dream —

poor boy. He told Kandi of his encounter with the extraordinary man but when he started describing the man, Kandi ordered him not to go any further. Despite Londari's argument, Kandi was reluctant to accept it as a fact.

"I really did see him!" Londari shouted.

"In the name of my mother I order you to stop!"

Londari was now in the sixth grade, his final year at Par primary school. He had won the case against the teacher whom he had avenged. As Sister Kundigundis had assured him, the decision the Board of Governors made was in favour of him. The Board suspended the teacher for a year after a careful investigation.

Despite the teacher's protest and complaints the Board had repeatedly told him that his own stupidity had cost him his eye. The teacher, however, had been a split-second lucky that he had recovered his supposedly lost eye.

A successful and prosperous year brought Londari towards the end of the year. He dramatically pushed himself up to the third place in the mid-year exams. Eventually he sat for and passed the Standard Six Final Examination, coming first with ninety-nine points out of a total of one hundred points. He was offered a place at Fatima high school in Mt. Hagen.

Cheers and congratulations were followed by a big burden again — the problem of school fees. Londari brought his problem to the headmistress who then relayed it to the mission authorities. The missionaries, knowing Londari's background very well, agreed to sponsor him.

A total of eighteen passing students, including Londari, had chartered an aircraft belonging to the TAL Air Company. Travel arrangements were made in advance. A date and time for departure was fixed to the satisfaction of all travelling students.

By now Londari had gradually forgotten all about his encounter with Kauane. It became a mere dream. Although the incident frequently recurred in his mind, Londari considered it as a mere dream. He was

ignorant of that than a mere dream.

His longing doubled by his thought that if he failed and sought his decision again and was now given a chance of success.

On his last day Londari made a wash and changed them into a suit, preparations relatives, including the village boys, to spend the last day in a happy mood.

"Kanaua!" with a laugh, coming. We have chased us out.

"Yapa Ipa" villagers cheerfully expecting you.

Of course visitors but Sambocks probably why they were.

When the taken aback right to the first quarter and favourite and

"Bro! You meet her?" inward laugh.

"Sh...sss" whispered back.

Each of the everybody present it was Londari stretched hand.

While the split wood was soon ablaze, themselves. T Wasowan's Wasowan and "We hear

ignorant of the fact that it was more, far more than a mere dream, as he would learn later.

His longing for his mother and brother was doubled by his departure. He had told himself that if he failed the examination he would go and seek his mother and brother but fate had decided against it. He had passed his exam and was now going away. Would he ever have a chance of seeing them again?

On his last day of the Christmas vacation Londari made his final preparations. He washed and dried all his clothes and packed them into a suitcase. He did all the necessary preparations until dusk. At dusk, his close relatives, including his two aunts, and some of the village boys came one after the other to spend the last night with him. Everybody sat in a happy mood.

"Kanaua!<sup>1</sup> some from outside exclaimed with a laugh." We are some opone<sup>2</sup> people coming. We hope you Samboek people won't chase us out.

"Yapa Ipaka!<sup>3</sup> Kandi and one of the villagers chorused at once. "We were expecting you."

Of course they were totally unexpected visitors but accordingly to tradition the Samboeks present knew who they were and why they were coming.

When the visitors entered Londari was taken aback by surprise. He pushed himself right to the front corner of the men's sitting quarter and hid behind Korakan, his favourite and trusted playmate.

"Bro! Your wife has come. Why don't you meet her?" Karakan whispered with an inward laugh."

"Sh . . . ssss . . . , stop being silly," Londari whispered back with an inward laugh.

Each of the new comers shook hands with everybody present. One of them, sensing that it was Londari, immediately withdrew her out stretched hands.

While the hand-shake was going on, more split wood were added to the fire which were soon ablaze. The new comers all seated themselves. The oldest of the new comers was Wasowan's mother. The other two were Wasowan and one of her cousins.

"We heard that the boy is leaving

tomorrow so we came," Wasowan's mother said.

"That is really good!" the Sambeoks all said at the same time.

"We brought some impurities from some other people who had theirs so you may have them."

According to tradition she did not mean "impurities" but something far more valuable than impurities. The Enga people commonly use the term "impurities" or "bits and pieces of remains" when referring to something very valuable they may have brought.

Wasowan's mother held her huge bilum out with the help of Wasowan's cousin. They both handed the bilum over to the men. One of the Sambeok boys quickly helped them and passed the bilum to the boys and men on the men's side.

The men pulled the huge and heavy bilum to their side. According to tradition one of them heartily thanked the three new comers and started cutting up the pork. Although the pork was practically meant for Londari, neither him nor his parents, nor any of his blood relations were to touch the pork. If the other Sambeoks weren't present, then, any of Londari's blood relatives would have handled the whole side of a pig. In this case, where a girlfriend brought a present to her boyfriend, in the presence of the boy's relatives, tradition disqualified Londari's father or any of his relatives from within the nuclear family. The man who handled the huge side of a pig was a Sambeok all right, but one who did not belong to the nuclear family.

Having heartily thanked them again, the man cut the pork up. It was the whole side of a very huge pig. When the pork was cut up everybody was given a piece to take home to his or her family except the three who brought the pork. As usual the three rejected the pieces they were given.

A smaller portion was sliced into cutlets and everybody feasted. While everybody was feasting Londari noiselessly sneaked out. He enjoyed the cool of the night and sat on the entrance porch. To his utter surprise two people came out and sat on either side of him.

He rose up to go but one of them got hold of him and forced him down. He obeyed.

"Londari!" one of them called.

"Yes?"

"Congratulations for passing the exam?"

"I am very sorry indeed that you failed."

"I hope you won't entangle yourself with the Timai<sup>1</sup> people when you are down at Mt. Hogen."

"If what you mean is bad company, yes, I shall avoid them as much as possible. Otherwise, I have to make friends with decent people when I am in their place."

"I certainly did not mean that."

"What then did you mean?"

"I hope you won't be led astray by Timbai girls."

"I am going there for a purpose, to learn and study, but certainly, not to chase beauties."

"Do you mean you will shut your eyes off from girls?"

"Of course!"

"Then you will be the first man ever to shut his eyes off from girls."

"Call me a boy. I am not a man yet!"

"You are certainly a man."

"Would you be happy if I called you a woman?"

The long debate went on outside. Londari was one against the two cousins. Inside, everybody was talking and laughing about the recent happenings and other issues.

"Londari!" Wasowan said.

"Yes."

"Can you promise me one thing, please?"

"What?"

"I want you to write to me."

"About what?"

"Well, about anything."

"I won't promise you but I shall try."

"Don't say 'I shall try'," Wasowan said in the act of hitting Londari hard at the back.

Londari did the same but a bit harder.

Wasowan clawed Londari and London fortressed himself with out-stretched hands. In the act of fortressing himself Londari unintentionally struck Wasowan's firm, rock-hard breasts. Londari was filled with shame but Wasowan laughed. Londari rose up to go

into the house but Wasowan held him back.

"Sit down! You are not going anywhere. You have not answered my question yet, man!"

"I thought I asked you never to call me a man. Would you be happy if I called you a woman?"

"Well, yes, if you really know the symbolic meaning and really mean the significance of you calling me a 'Woman'."

"Well, do you then, when you call me a 'man'."

"Well, yes."

"Can you elaborate the significance?"

"Who of us was born before? You or me? If it is you then it is you who should explain it."

"I don't know a damn thing about this business."

"That is true. All you know is how to chase beauties."

At these words Londari hit Wasowan hard on the shoulders. Wasowan hit him back. They exchanged blows after blows. By now Londari had developed an interesting in hitting hard at Wasowan's breasts. Wasowan had developed an interest in hitting hard at Londari's back.

At long last they stopped.

"You haven't answered my question yet," Wasowan said demanding.

"What question?"

"Whether or not you will write to me?"

"I told you already that I will try."

"That doesn't reasonably satisfy me?"

"Okay, I promise."

Londari woke up before dawn. He went down to the Pulimbi river and had an ice-cold bath. He dried himself and dressed. When he turned around to go he came face to face with Kandi.

"Apane!"<sup>1</sup> Kandi said.

"Call me Londari. You never called me your Son before?"

"Apane!"

"Say Londari."

"Apane!"

"I am listening."

"Please, please forgive me for what I did to you."

"I have been asked for forgive"

"Please, forgive it."

"Did not mea"

"The harsh on you."

If you think forgiveable, then fogiven but I have carried it as

"Son! I want"

"Listen!" Londari forgave you for the brutality applied to my never, ever, ever

"I shall try an"

"You are a fo say or shall I go"

"Son! Last night saw the person v one of whom yo"

"And so?"

"And so I an what you have to"

"And so?"

"I have decid"

"And so?"

"I want you to the meat." "K"

to fill me with a today is my great be marked in m

am going out fortune. I am

astray by pork. agree upon his

situation. Beside told you of my

therefore your yours, the choic

is yours, and eve

"Son! You s forgotten."

"Not quite! I long been forgo

my time."

"One more thing! Will you

"I have been here all my life but you never asked for forgiveness."

"Please, forgive me. I did not mean to do it."

"Did not mean to do what?"

"The harsh and brutal treatment I applied on you."

If you think what you did to me is forgiveable, then let it be so. It as long been fogiven but I am surprised to see that you have carried it as a burden in your heart."

"Son! I want to . . ."

"Listen!" Londari said interrupting Kandi. "I forgive you for what you did to me but for the brutality and inhuman treatment you applied to my mother, I must say that I will never, ever, ever forgive you."

"I shall try and change my mind."

"You are a fool! You got anything else to say or shall I go?"

"Son! Last night I had a terrible dream. I saw the person whom you have once seen, the one of whom you have told me about."

"And so?"

"And so I am now fully convinced that what you have told me is fact."

"And so?"

"I have decided to kill the pig."

"And so?"

"I want you to stay back and have some of the meat." "Kandi, you stupidity is such as to fill me with anger. You do not realize that today is my greatest day of my life. Today will be marked in my history, the day on which I am going out into the world to seek my fortune. I am no longer a baby to be led astray by pork. Even a baby too would not agree upon his conscience if he were in my situation. Besides it is more than a year since I told you of my encounter with Kauane. It is therefore your problem. The problem is yours, the choice is your; the dearly loved pig is yours, and everything is yours, not mine!"

"Son! You said the past has long been forgotten."

"Not quite! I only said your brutality has long been forgotten. Now, you are wasting my time."

"One more thing, son! Just one more thing! Will you not tell me something about

the visitors?"

"What visitors?"

"The visitors we have in our house."

"What should I tell you about them?"

"Well, we will be staying together. I mean our friendship shall be further negotiated."

"Have you had any interest in my affairs and needs when I was a small school boy?"

Kandi only looked down at his feet.

"If you haven't, then neither should you entangle yourself with my affairs. When I needed your help and care you ignored me. Now, however, I am quite capable of looking after myself. So avoid yourself from my affairs and problems as much as possible."

"But this is a family affair and tradition entitles me to make the decisions, especially in such a situation."

"You have not kept us with the tradition; therefore, our tradition disqualifies you to be the decision maker. You don't seem to notice the fact that many of our village people talk at the back of you. I am really ashamed of having such a father like you."

"What if they come here again and again? As you know it is not me who have triggered off the friendship. They might come here any time in your absence. Yesterday, for instance, they came on their own accord with something quite valuable that we might be unable to pay back. If they come again it will be me who will be responsible for the friendship, despite what you think of me."

"I am not trying to stop them from coming. They may come any time they wish. What I am saying is, don't just positively accept any gifts like a Kamongo<sup>1</sup> would, on behalf of his son. You might suffer the consequences of paying the gifts back if I don't marry the girl according to fate's decision. Now, it is time I should be leaving."

Londari had developed an interest in being a teacher himself. Because of the harsh treatment he got from some of the teachers he really wanted to experience the morals and qualities of a teacher in real-life situation.

His intention of choosing teaching or his career emerged from two distinct points. Firstly, he had admired the good, respectable and trustworthy teachers who had taught

him. He had dreamt for the day he would become a respectable teacher himself. Lastly, he had hated the wicked teachers who, without reasonable justification, had given him harsh and inhuman treatment. He had dreamt for the day he would find out why a teacher should turn out inhuman.

Now he was in his final year at Fatima high school in Mt. Hagen. After the mid-year rating exams he applied for Primary teaching despite the teachers encouragement to apply for further education. After the final exams he easily won a place at Holy Trinity Teachers' College in Mt. Hagen.

Although his home was not too far away he had lost contact with home. For all of his Term-breaks and Christmas vacations he hadn't been home. He had applied for and had won temporary employment with some wholesale stores and other companies. With the salaries he received he had paid back most of his debts he owed the missionaries.

Having successfully completed his first year Londari preceeded with his second and final year at Teacher's College. By that time Londari had gradually forgotten all about his mother and everybody else at home.

One Saturday afternoon, sometimes during the middle of his final year, he received two letters. He carefully checked the sender's name and address for each letter. When he glanced at the first one he noticed that the sender had not identified himself but had written only the address. It had come from Yambu Health Center. The second one had been sent by "Somebody from Kaipu Green Valley."

Londari took the letters to his dormitory and in the stillness of his cubicle he battled over which letter he would read first. After a few thoughtful seconds he tore open the envelope of the one that had come from Yambu Health Centre. The content was rather interesting. Stapled to a very long, three-page letter, was a card that looked like a post-mortem. When Londari glanced at the card he was somehow struck with the terror. The card read:

- "(1) Hospital: Yambu Health Center  
(2) Patient No.: (3) Sex: Male (4) Age:

- (5) Father's name: Kandi  
(6) Given name: Londari  
(7) Place of birth: Par  
(8) Date of Birth: 2/09/1959  
(9) Address: Par Catholic Mission, Wabag.  
(10) District: Western H/D  
(11) Sub-district: Wabag  
(12) Occupation: School pupil  
\* First attendance  
(13) Date: 01/11/1970 (14) Time: 6:30 pm.  
\* Diagnosis/Comments:  
\* Internal Bleeding  
\* Very serious. The bleeding might lead to death. (6.32 pm)  
\* Nearing the verge of death (6.42 pm)  
\* Died with a convulsion (7.00 pm)  
\* Death confirmed (7.03 pm)  
\* The mourning on-lookers took hold of the corpse (7.10 pm)  
\* When the corpse was being carried away I noticed the legs shaking a little, I immediately ordered that the corpse be brought in again.  
\* The circulatory system began functioning (7.15 pm)  
\* The cords of two oxygen flasks were fitted to the nostrils of the then functioning body. (7.18 pm)  
\* The corpse brought itself to life — an undesentable miracle. (7.20 pm)  
\* Contrary to my profession I cannot make any further comments because I am absolutely ignorant of the fact that a corpse should bring itself to life after being a corpse for more than ten minutes.

7.21 pm

1st/November/1970."

When Londari was half way throught the card, the card with the long letter fell from his shaking hands. He left more dead than alive. He immediately wanted to share this unbelievable, rather shocking, medical report with his most trusted Education Lecturer but on second thoughts, he decided against it.

The terror-stricken Londari spent some sleepless hours on his bed. He rose up from the bed and pulled the drawer of his study table. He pulled out two five kina notes, his savings from the last two "pocket allowance"

pay days. He to to a bottle-shop could find.

About an h with a carton him that he Londari's Ten twelve kina.

Londari tha some but his thanking Lond Londari needn' that the Colle avoided when t Campus.

Liquor was Campus but L this unbearable Londari's first beer. He made He then procee he was on the f an overwhelmi brought him fla

Londari wok had a cold sh returned. He b seated himself card with the l on the floor w shaking hands. carefully severa

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"Dear Mr. F

It is almost I believe you young man I am therefo truth — of a

Before I pre question you seven years reluctant to you I would and it must

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pay days. He told a trusted friend of his to go to a bottle-shop in town and bring what he could find.

About an hour later the friend returned with a carton of S.P. beer. The friend told him that he had put two kina on top of Londari's Ten Kina as the carton costed twelve kina.

Londari thanked him and offered him some but his friend declined the offer, thanking Londari heartily and adding that Londari needn't worry for he had made sure that the College authorities were carefully avoided when the beer was brought into the Campus.

Liquor was strictly forbidden in the Campus but Londari had to drink to erase this unbearable terror off from him. It was Londari's first time ever to taste beer — real beer. He made sure that the door was locked. He then proceeded with this business. When he was on the fourth bottle he was filled with an overwhelming dizziness. The fifth bottle brought him flat to the floor.

Londari woke up at dawn the next day and had a cold shower. By now courage had returned. He boldly went back to his room, seated himself on the bed and looked at the card with the letter stapled to it. It was lying on the floor where it had fallen off from his shaking hands. He picked it up and read it carefully several times, word by word.

He tore off the card from the letter and proceeded with the long letter. the letter read:

"Dear Mr. Kandi,

It is almost seven years since I last you but I believe you must have grown into a fine young man and also, I believe, in wisdom. I am therefore inclined to let you know the truth — of a secret I have kept for so long.

Before I proceed I must remind you of a question you asked in my emergency room seven years back; a question I was reluctant to answer but which I promised you I would. Well, a promise is a promise and it must be kept.

What I am intending to write in precisely what is written on the card but I shall elaborate the story in detail.

On the afternoon of the 1st of November, 1970, I sat late till sunset, writing some medical reports in my office. I had nearly finished my report writing when I heard the engine of a car being driven up towards my office. I looked out through a window and saw Sister Kundigundis' car being stopped with a jerk. The doors quickly swung open and the body of a boy was quickly pulled out.

I quickly rushed out and told them to bring the body to my emergency room. I quickly asked everybody present what had happened but not anyone soul responded to my series of questions. I quickly carried out a thorough investigation and found that the motionless body was suffering from Internal Bleeding. I did all I could but I gradually lost hope because such a very serious Internal Bleeding is always followed by death. And it did, death followed.

After ten or more minutes the most unexpected miracle I ever, ever, ever dreamt of happened — the corpse brought itself to life. As I have already mentioned in my comments in the card I am unable to elaborate what really happened — what had caused the corpse to bring itself to life.

While the body was recovering I silenced the mourners and questioned everybody present on what really happened. To my unhappiness nobody seemed to know what had happened.

I managed to write down the names of everybody present and according to the list, the names are: Sister Kundigundis, the headmistress of Par school at that time; Pupakai Langau, a Sambeok clansman; Kandi Langai, a Sambeok clansman; Korakan Dii and Yamarak Yakos, both Sambeok boys; Pindiam, the wife of Kandi Langan; Regina Solowasan, a nursing aid who acted as my interpreter at that time; and Wasowan Tambai, a school girl at that time, from the Laitu tribe.

I, aided by Sister Kundigundis, questioned them for the third time but there was no response again. I thought I must perhaps

have broken a very strict traditional taboo by asking questions over a recovering body which, a few minutes ago, had been a corpse. I was just about to give up the attempt in despair when at length, the girl called Wasowan (I believe she must have grown into a beautiful young woman by now) spoke up and said:

"Sir, I went home from school and on their way I heard the shouting and crying of two people; one shouting and barking, the other crying and begging for mercy. I would have gone on but I was very curious so I went to the house from where the crying and shouting was coming from they would keep the incident secret, that they would tell nobody else not even their best friends. Everybody swore the oath.

So, Mr. Kandi, you were once a deal little body but now a man. Your death and resurrection are known only by the people present in my emergency room on the 1st of November 1970 from 6:30 pm to 10.30 pm. Those are only the people whose names I have mentioned.

I wish to add that Wasowan really the person who saved you. Had she not gone to your house — You should know what should have happened. Then again, had she not applied her mouth to mouth breathing method — you should know what should have happened. I suggest that you owe her your life. When you work and earn money buy her a nice present.

I should like to ask you if you could forget and forgive your father.

Do not panic. Please control your emotions.

I hope I have not shocked you.

Your Friend,

Leo Wolf.

09/08/1977.

P/s. I'll be leaving for Germany on the 15th of September. If you can, please meet me at the airport between 9.00 am and 10.00 am. I should really like to see how big you have grown. If we do meet I might probably see you for the last time.

The house was very close to the road so I arrived just in time to see the falling body of the boy. I thought he was already dead but when I felt his chest I learnt that his heart was still beating, rather weakly. I quickly applied a simple technique my teacher had taught me. I breathed into his mouth and he started breathing, but rather weakly. I quickly shouted for the whole village to hear but a girls voice was heard only by those three people over there, the two boys and that man — not that one with his wife but the others. We searched the house but nobody was present so we immediately lifted the body of the boy and started walking. No sonner had we turned our back than the man and wife rushed out of the house and joined us. We were surprised because we had already searched the house. If they came from the house then I believe they must have been in the pig-room compartment or the sleeping compartment. I was wondering why they hadn't heard me. But there was no time for questions. We carried the body in turns, a couple at a time until we reached the sisters convent and asked for Sister Kundigundis. We told her of the boy and she immediately drove us (here) to Yanbu. That is all I have to say, Sir."

When the girl had finished I asked the man called Kandi what he knew about the incident. Surprising by, all he said was: "I did it! I killed my son! Sent me to jail! Please, sent me to jail! I thought I was teaching him & lesson but went beyond my intention. Please, sent me to jail!"

If need be I would have reported him to the government authorities but I decided against it. My disinclination was for your safety and well-being. If I did it otherwise what effects would it have had against your life? What would people think about you? Would the spread and dissemination of this news have had any food effects in your life? These are some very important questions you must ask yourself and consider concerning my disinclination to report your father to the respective authorities. Besides, I knew you were recovering so I

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wanted you to decide things yourself.

While you were recovering I repeatedly ordered the on lookers never to spread or disseminate the incident. I told them that it must be kept a secret under any circumstances. They nodded but still not satisfied, I bade them to swear an oath that

Having read the long letter several times Londari proceeded with the next. He tore open the envelope and pulled out the letter. It read:

"Dear Londari,

This is my last letter — I repeat, this is my last letter I am writing to you. I have written so many letters to you but have not received a single reply yet. What the hell is wrong with you?

Many a men, from far and near have come pouring into my house asking for my hand in marriage but I have refused them all, knowing that my man is somewhere in the east. But now I am beginning to loose hope I now understand that I have wasted my time on a man who cannot even reply letters.

Londari, as I have stated that this is my last attempt to get you to speak your mind in writing, I shall give you a deadline. If I do not receive your reply within four weeks, I shall marry the next man who comes in. Why? Because a man is a man and that is all I care for. It is the ideal — write quality that I care for, not the physical appearance nor the wealth of a man.

The way I see it, you are only a beauty seeker. You may have under-estimated me concerning my beauty and perhaps my formal education, I believe. I reckon you are seeking educated girls with mini skirts and high-heeled shoes, are you not? My dear, if that is the case, I wish you ill-luck.

Londari, who do you think you are? You think you are a man because I keep writing to you. Well, we'll see. If you are a man try and be sensible. If you don't find me fitting then just tell me so. I have lost a good number of man just because of you. You are no better than them, those who want

me as their wife.

Mono,<sup>1</sup> I admit that I must have hurt your feelings but I have meant to write those words to indicate how angry I am for your constant refusal to reply my letters.

Mono, let me tell you one thing. "The beauty of a women is like the beauty of a flower that withers away, leaving the ugly stem behind. Wise is him who chooses the stem rather than the flowers."

Londari, since this is my last letter I must tell you one thing. It may sound funny but it is true. That is, if I do not call you my husband I shall call you my son. Why.? Because if it weren't for me you should now be nothing better than a heap of dust some six feet under the ground. It may be unbelievable but you actually owe me your life. I will not elaborate this point because I am under a very strong father please believe me. If I do not become your wife then I shall call you my son, in fact I shall start calling you my son on the first day of my marriage. That is, if my husband is not you.

Mono, if you choose me as your wife, do not worry too much about the guide price payment and all that. I will convince my parents and relatives that we will pay them later.

I must warn you that I shall firmly stick to the deadline I have given. If I do not receive a reply within four weeks from today (the date stated here) then goodbye. If you sent your reply four weeks later, I will have married long before your reply gets here, mind you, it shall be your fault. There are many chaps around here booking for an opportunity to grab me.

I must add that my love for you is so great; it is indeed unbearable.

That's all and I am very sorry if I have disturbed you in your stuckies.

Your ??? (I don't know yet what you'd call me).

Wasowan Tambai.

7/8/1977"

Londari read the letter several times. Londari was indeed in a spasm of guilt. It is true he had underestimated Wasowan. He had refused to reply all of Wasowan's letters. He realized that here was one soul who was attached to him emotionally.

Londari quickly took pen and paper and wrote a very long but sweet letter, perhaps the sweetest one he ever wrote in his life. He wrote that he was only three months away from graduation and that right after graduation he would find a teaching position in any schools near Wabag.

He further wrote that he would marry Wasowan under any circumstances and that if Wasowan should not become his wife then no other ladies ever shall.

When Londari had written his letter, he checked through his album and picked a photograph of himself, the best one he had. He enclosed the photographs and posted it immediately on the same day.

Londari went to the Provincial Education Office at Wabag and checked through the Teacher's posting list pinned to a notice board. He ran his eyes down the long list. Somewhere on the middle of the list his eyes rested on the name, of a person. He found that Londari Kandi had won a teaching position at Sari community school near Wabag. So began Londari's teaching career.

Having won himself a teaching position Londari immediately wanted to marry Wasowan but an inconvenience had occurred from which he suffered a big "some other times" constraint. The inconvenience occurred when a tribal war occurred between two clans within the Lairta tribe. The two clans, of which one was Wasowan's, seemed never to stop the war.

Wasowan, however, did visit Londari very often. Anytime she went she did Londari's cooking and washing. She sometimes went with her cousins, sometimes alone. She gradually developed the habit of spending a night or two with Londari. Although she frequently stayed overnight at Londari's house she never had any physical contact with him, which indeed was her wish. She was only betrothed to him, not married.

Londari's views were similar to those of Wasowan. He was not practically minded; therefore, he avoided Wasowan as much as possible. This practice was in contrast to the fact that they slept in the same house and sometimes even in the same room. They each wondered what the other thought about the situation, the fact that they were together in the same house, but they did not dare to mention it.

The people in and around the school, however, had other ideas. They regarded them as man and wife. Some of them even addressed Wasowan as Londari's wife when she was out in the local market or in social gatherings. Wasowan thought it was a bit peculiar but she had no objection to it, knowing that in a short time she would eventually become Londari's wife.

A dog and a cuscus cannot live together in one room. That is what Londari's people thought. When they heard of the fact that Londari and Wasowan were together they immediately formulated in their minds the idea that Londari had married Wasowan on a Yano<sup>1</sup> basis. They had no objection to the fact that Londari had married Wasowan on a yano basis without their knowledge. They were prepared to pay the bride price anytime Londari brought his wife to them.

Wasowan's people would have objected to her marriage on a yano basis had it not been for the war. Many were against Wasowan's marriage without the proper marriage procedures but they just didn't have the time. They had a very serious matter to settle first; it was the war. The war was unfavourable to Wasowan's clan. The clan had already lost two men; therefore, the war had to be fought on until revenge was taken. So Wasowan's marriage, although not in a practical sense as far as she and Londari were concerned, remained unsettled.

The yano system of marriage has emerged recently, partly as the result of Western influence. This system has become widespread in Enga. The principle in the yano system is basically the fact that a couple may become man and wife but without the proper marriage procedures; the payment of dowries,

the exchange feast. The couple stay together for a year or two and then always be a

In some cases the couple stay away or may have dowries. Then the girls return to their families. Failure to get back the bride price usually means the girl is already married.

The end of the exchange feast was advanced by a payment of a week. At night the girl caught a pig and brought it to Wabag to cook. Having collected a few necessities, the girl was going up-valley.

On arrival at Wabag, the girl paid her pay-cheques and then went to her house. When the school was over, the girl and Wasowan sat on a string bag.

When Wasowan eyed him and

"There is a

"Who? So

"No!"

"Who might

"Neither."

"What do

"A young

you."

"Did he tell you from?"

"No! The girl was somewhat disappointed."

"Well, did she eat?"

"That was declined saying it was an unknown word."

"It is indeed

"Inside."

Londari was

the exchange procedures, and the marriage feast. The couple may pay the dowries after a year or two but usually this system may always be a failure.

In some cases, the man may sack the wife away or may be reluctant to pay the promised dowries. The man's reluctance may prompt the girls relatives to claim bride prices from him. Failure of paying the promised bride price usually promotes the wife's relatives to get back the girl but it is usually a pity that the girl is already a mother.

The end of Londari's first year of teaching was advancing. The tenth of October, 1978 was a pay day. Londari was on duty that week. At noon he had a light lunch. He caught a passenger vehicle and went to Wabag to collect the teacher's pay cheques. Having collected the pay-cheques he bought a few necessities, caught a passenger vehicle going up-valley, and went back to the school.

On arrival at the school he gave out the pay-cheques and mails to the teachers. He then went towards his house to supervise the whole school cleaning some bushes behind his house. When he approached his house he saw Wasowan sitting on the verandah knitting on a string bag.

When Wasowan saw Londari coming she eyed him and bade him to come forward.

"There is a visitor here," Wasowan said.

"Who? Somebody from home?"

"No!"

"Who might it be? A man or a woman?"

"Neither."

"What do you mean?"

"A young boy but almost twice the size of you."

"Did he tell you why and where he came from?"

"No! The strangest thing is that he was somewhat disappointed to see me."

"Well, did you offer him something to eat?"

"That was the first thing I did but he declined saying he never accept food from unknown women."

"It is indeed interesting. Where is he now?"

"Inside."

Londari went in and there, in front of him

was the unexpected visitor. He was tall and muscular but was rather too big for his age. In contrast to his physical build of great development his skin distinctly revealed that he was only a youth some years behind Londari. His dressing was purely traditional. Hoops of cane belt were fitted around the waist from which a newly knitted traditional loin-cloth hung down, covering the middle of the body. At the back were fresh tanager leaves. On either of the arms, was an arm-band. The eyes of the stranger were seeking? Londari asked.

"I came looking for a chap called Londari."

"Well, you are in the right house but where might you have come from?"

"From across hills and mountains; jungles and plains; rivers and valleys."

"How and why did you come? Just who might you be anyway?" a stunned Londari asked.

"You have certainly grown into a fine young man", the stranger said as if he had not heard Londari's demanding questions.

"Who are you, please?"

"The same stupid question the Sambocks asked."

"What do you mean? Please, who are you?"

"So you have become a teacher?"

"Hey! do you hear me? Who are you?"

"When did you start your teaching career?"

"I don't understand what you are saying. Who are you?"

"I wish I were a teacher like you. I hope teaching is a good career?" this stranger said questioningly.

"Hey! Fucking shit! Just who the devil are you?"

A surprised Wasowan stood at the doorway in bewilderment. Some of the school children crowded the verandah, each fighting hard to catch a glimpse of what was going on inside.

"Watch your tounge, Mr. Naii! I understand the fact that you have become a Naii but just watch your tongue, or else!" the stranger said looking away.

"Or else what?"